

Congress Theme: Making a Living: Trade, Networks and Towns

Hoarded Die-identical Coins Reveal Network Dynamics between Core Sites and their Peripheries in the Non-urbanised Viking Society of Bornholm, Denmark.

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Analysis of die-identical Anglo-Scandinavian coins in Bornholm hoards contributes to a nuanced understanding of the network system of the island. Coin rich hoards with several shared die-identical coins stands out, as central players in a complicated network, where well-connected core sites show ties to a number of peripheral sites. In this paper, the network analysis stands as the focal point of a discussion of how internal and external trade was organised in non-urbanised societies.

Site analysis including excavation data and detector surveys demonstrate that many hoard sites show signs of different forms of specialised production, as horse breeding, lamb -, textile- and ceramic production, iron - and silver work or tanning. Additionally, many sites display an unusually high number of balance scales and bronze weights often associated to silver weight economy transactions. This implies that silver was involved in the exchange of surplus goods on Bornholm.

The intense hoarding of imported silver points towards comprehensive trade activity. Towns were central in the exchange of goods and ideas throughout the Viking World, though Bornholm stands out by an absent urbanisation. Instead, the island displays a decentralised settlement pattern well into the Middle Ages, and large-scale trading sites are undocumented. Hence, how did the islanders generate and distribute the large quantities of silver deposited on Bornholm?

The hierarchical system with core and peripheral sites displayed in the network analysis of die-identical coins, is underlined by context analysis of hoard sites. The silver hoards appear on a heterogeneous group of sites. Some hoards are deposited in or near by small modest dwelling houses, which stands in contrast to the wealth displayed by the silver hoards, while other sites are characterised by more comprehensive settlement structures with a central dwelling area and a surrounding workshop areas. The latest may be candidates to trading sites, but the relatively modest settlement character seem to display local rather than regional trade.

As large-scale trading sites are un-documented, it is likely that large parts of the hoarded silver was accumulated outside the island. Detailed analysis of hoard compositions indicates that people from different sites went on joined trading or raiding expeditions. Hence, a group of hoards stands out with an unusually high number of Slavic jewellery, some hoards share the presence of rare Baltic jewellery, and some hoards show a similar composition of German mints, while others share batches of die-identical coins from Lund and Sigtuna strongly suggesting accumulation at the same occasion.

Thus based on the combined evidence of network, hoard and site analysis it is argued that members of the local elite went on joined expeditions exchanging Bornholm products for silver. At their return silver was distributed to the smaller farms, exchanging goods at the local centres.