Brutal Vikings and Gentle Traders

BY JÖRN STAECKER

Abstract

Staecker, Jörn. 1997. Brutal Vikings and Gentle Traders. Lund Archaeological Review 3 (1997), pp. 89–103.

In 1995 and 1996 three publications on Viking Age hoards appeared on the market. They cover different regions (Scotland, Northern Europe, Northern Germany) and different traditions of research. A comparative analysis of these publications in combination with new perspectives is undertaken.

Jörn Staecker, Institute of Archaeology, University of Lund, Sandgatan 1, S-223 50 Lund.

The Vikings are coming! One thousand two hundred years after the invasion of Lindisfarne in 793 the Vikings top the charts in the museum bookshops. There is still an unbroken fascination with the untainted North Germanic people, isolated from the decadent Roman Empire and its descendants, the Byzantines and the Franks. Only the Vikings maintained sovereignty against the political and ideological attacks of the Carolingians and Ottonians. This finally resulted in the establishment of the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish kingdoms. Nobody is buying books about the losers of this period, such as the Western Slavs.

The picture which we develop about the Vikings is full of contrasts. On one hand there are men (nobody talks about women) who attacked the whole of Europe and who forced the rulers to get rid of them at any price, at least until the following year. These men killed, robbed, raped, occupied, etc., and the readers think that this must be the real story. This reign of terror also provides us with an explanation for the enormous numbers of silver and gold hoards which were found mainly from the 18th until the early 20th centuries. The hoards reflect the terror and its results: wealthy Vikings, hiding their stolen goods.

On the other hand, the picture was modified in the 1960s. The Vikings suddenly became gentle traders and they underwent a kind of re-education, renouncing their evil ways and becoming farmers and traders instead. The hoards now reflect this peaceful trading activity, a kind of personal safe-deposit box because of the lack of banks in this period.

Three books from three different countries, all of them dealing with Viking Age hoards, appeared on the market in 1995 and 1996. Two of them, James Graham-Campbell's work about the Scottish finds, and Birgitta Hårdh's study of the hoards in the Baltic area, are familiar with the material. A newcomer among these giants is Ralf Wiechmann's Ph.D. thesis on the Viking Age hoards in Northern Germany. A question that I want to discuss here is whether any of these authors succeeds in developing a different picture of the Viking Age, or whether their interpretation follows the standard model. The focus in this review will therefore be on the models of

interpretation, the reason for the hoarding, and the persons behind it. The detailed studies of single objects which we can find in all three books will not be considered in this article.

Viking Age Scotland

J. Graham-Campbell's book (1995) presents a total of 34 hoards and 25 single finds, together with eight arm-rings of gold (of uncertain date) in the text and catalogue; there is no list of the coins. The geographical area of research is limited to modern Scotland. The period is limited to the Viking Age, starting with the first recorded Viking raids at the end of the 8th century and finishing with the late Norse period in the 11th/12th centuries. This period is in some way confirmed by the hoards; none of the coin hoards was deposited before the 930s, and after 1060 there is only one hoard from the 1150s. Dealing with the Scottish hoards, J. Graham-Campbell (and co-authors) have no doubt about their ethnic origin. The hoards are said to be "directly related to the presence and activities of Scandinavian settlers, and their descendants" (1995, p. 1). D. M. Metcalf (1995, p. 16) in his contribution even associates the Viking Age hoards with an "age of conflict, in which Viking raiders and traders prided themselves on their hardness".

What happened to the Picts in this study? Graham-Campbell (ibid., p. 3) argues: "On chronological and as well as cultural grounds, the native Pictish hoards of the late 8th and early 9th century have been excluded". But how can one differentiate between Pictish and Viking hoards? Let us take the hoard from Talnotrie, for example, where some objects "are likely to have passed through Scandinavian hands to have reached their final owner" (ibid., p. 4). Besides this problem, the distribution of Pictish hoards contrasts quite sharply with the Viking Age depositions. We still lack a catalogue of these finds, but it seems as if no more then seven hoards are known (ibid., pp. 3 f.).[1] According to Graham-Campbell, the late Pictish hoards lack the rings, ingots, hack-silver and coins (with the exception of Croy) which constitute the Viking Age hoards of Scandinavian character from Scotland. Why are there only a few Pictish hoards from this period, when this area was under permanent attack by the Vikings? Did the Picts have no time to hide their treasures, overwhelmed by the sudden Viking attack? But then we should expect a higher quota of hoards with a mixed inventory of typical Viking and Pictish items. Or did the Picts have enough time to withdraw and take their gold and silver with them? One thing can be stated: the Pictish hoards only to a limited degree reflect a period of war; the picture is too scattered. The Viking Age hoards give the same result: J. Graham-Campbell (ibid., pp. 61 f.) states that there is no inevitable correlation between the hoards and known historical events.[2]

Saxons, Danes, Frisians and Slavs

The challenger is R. Wiechmann's Ph.D. thesis on the Viking Age hoards in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein (Wiechmann 1996). With altogether 745 pages and a weight of 3050 grams, this work is of enormous value for research on hoards. The heavy catalogue raises a question: does this type of publication have a future? A lot of information, such as the descriptive parts, lists of coins and artefacts, could have been stored on CD-ROM, reducing the volume and making it a bit more handy.

The investigation focuses on Schleswig-Holstein, where three different areas were populated by four different tribes, the Danes and Frisians in the north and on the islands in the west, the Saxons in the south and the Slavs in the east. This gives Wiechmann an ideal opportunity to undertake a regional analysis. He asks how different spheres of power might have influenced the distribution and composition of the hoards. Chronologically he covers the period 750–1100; the hoards fall into this period, and in 1106 a new numismatic system was introduced under the reign of Saxonian earls. Wiechmann's aim is

to investigate which "role the Viking Age hoards played in society" (ibid., p. 11).

Wiechmann's methodical part, clearly structured, is based on B. Hårdh, but with one great difference: the analysis of the coins is his own work.

The first of his four major questions is how the precious metal was used in society. The answer is already given in his history of archaeological research. The development of monetary systems is divided into three phases: currency, money and coinage. The hoards here reflect steps one and two, whilst the last step is combined with the establishment of the state, which gives the ruler the possibility to introduce and guarantee the coinage. The unfragmented and fragmented objects indicate whether we are close to the centre or the periphery of their production places. The less fragmented the objects are, the closer they are to the centre and the shorter is their circulation. The hoards are closely connected with the Viking Age economy, they reflect the already highly developed stage in the monetary system.

The second question about the ownership of the precious metal and its users is mainly given for the Slav area. Wiechmann (ibid., p. 189) follows the thesis of Tabaczynski (1960), who observed that a high proportion of the hoards is situated close to Polish hillforts. It seems as if the nobility which ruled the hillforts also deposited these hoards. For the other places Wiechmann argues that the hoards can be linked to the local population close to the trading places. The hoards in the hinterland, according to Wiechmann (ibid., p. 192), were deposited by traders. In this context it would have been interesting to study the medieval taxation-lists for Schleswig-Holstein. Is there a connection between high-taxed land and hoard deposition?

The question of ethnicity is not discussed. The area of investigation with four different ethnic groups and perhaps four different economic systems in a limited area directly raises the question whether this is also reflected in the hoards. The answer could have been given through Wiechmann's reply to the question of which influences and contacts are visible in the hoards. The German school, known for its detailed distribution maps, can demonstrate its strengths here. The visualization of parallels between objects in the hoards and other finds in Europe is impressive (see lists 1–30; maps 50–79). This gives him an important tool to determine the origin of each piece in the various hoards. But the last step – to compare the origin of the jewellery, hack-silver and coins – is unfortunately not taken. A visualization of the contacts, based on Wiechmann's investigation, shows obvious regional differences. The jewellery and hack-silver in the hoards clearly reflect the four different regions and tribes (Fig. 1). In the west, where the Frisians settled, the contacts with England and Denmark dominate. Only one hoard also has items from the Frankish and Slav areas, and another one with Russia. The Danish zone is quite isolated, with only contacts with Scandinavia being provable. A similar picture is shown by the Slav area, but here there are contacts on the northern coast with Scandinavia and Russia. The Frankish hoards have almost no contact with these regions. A different picture can be developed with aid of the coins (Fig. 2). The English coins (with a minimum of 20 in the hoard) are again represented in the Frisian, but also West Slav hoards. Astonishingly there are no English coins in Denmark. The Scandinavian coins are distributed in three regions; there are no hoards in the Saxon area in this period, hence the absence. The Arabian coins reflect a similar picture. The German coins penetrate the West Slav and Frisian area, but interestingly not Denmark, with one exception on the border line. In the centre of these different contact spheres is Haithabu, which in some way combines all the different influences. The hoards clearly reflect different economic systems, as Wiechmann also states (1996, p. 72). The degree of fragmentation in regions far from the centre of production, such as the Scandinavian jewellery in the West Slav hoards on the south coast of the Baltic, also reflects

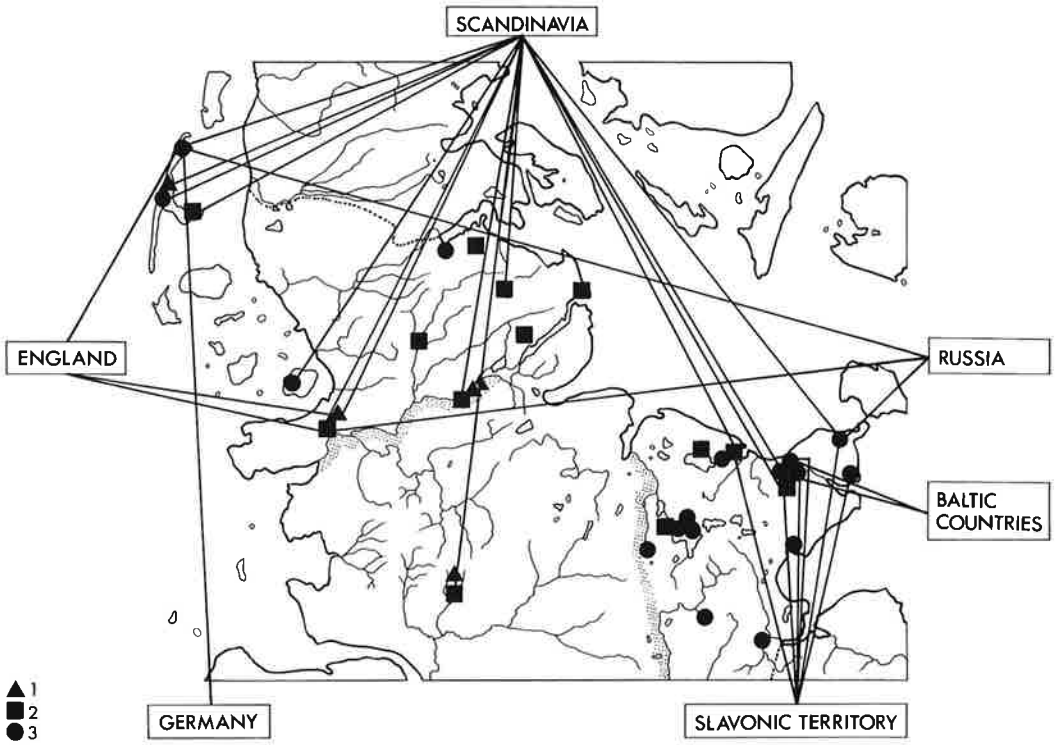

Fig. 1. The origin of jewellery and hack-silver in Viking Age hoards in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. The medieval borderline between Germany, Denmark and the West Slavs is marked. 1. 9th century hoards; 2. 10th century hoards; 3. 11th century hoards.

the different levels of the economic systems, where items of alien origin become part of another economy. But the hoards reflect ethnicity too. The area of investigation shows the contacts and non-contacts in a region where four different tribes fought for their territory and non-interference in their personal affairs.

The last question, the reason for deposition, is only answered to a limited degree. This is a pity because this involves a challenge to develop new models (see below). Wiechmann divides the hoards into commercial and non-commercial, or in other words into all-purpose money and special-purpose money or status money. Wiechmann suggests that arm- or neck-rings can be regarded as symbols of the gods and of high social rank (ibid., pp. 184 ff.). In this context it is worth mentioning another phenomenon: graffiti on coins. Research on this special subject has developed in the last few decades but it covers only a few countries in Northern Europe (Wiechmann 1996, pp. 107 f.). Of special interest here are the coins with runic inscriptions or single runes with religious or magical contents, and illustrations of religious symbols such as Thor's hammer and the cross on the coins (Wiechmann's types II & V). The graffiti were obviously carved during the transactions or before the deposition. The function of this type of graffiti was interpreted by Linder Welin (1955/56, p. 150) as protection for the hoard. The meaning of this dualism coin (money) – graffiti (religion) will be discussed below.

From the point of view of medieval archaeologists, it would have been interesting to study the reason for deposition by comparing the his-

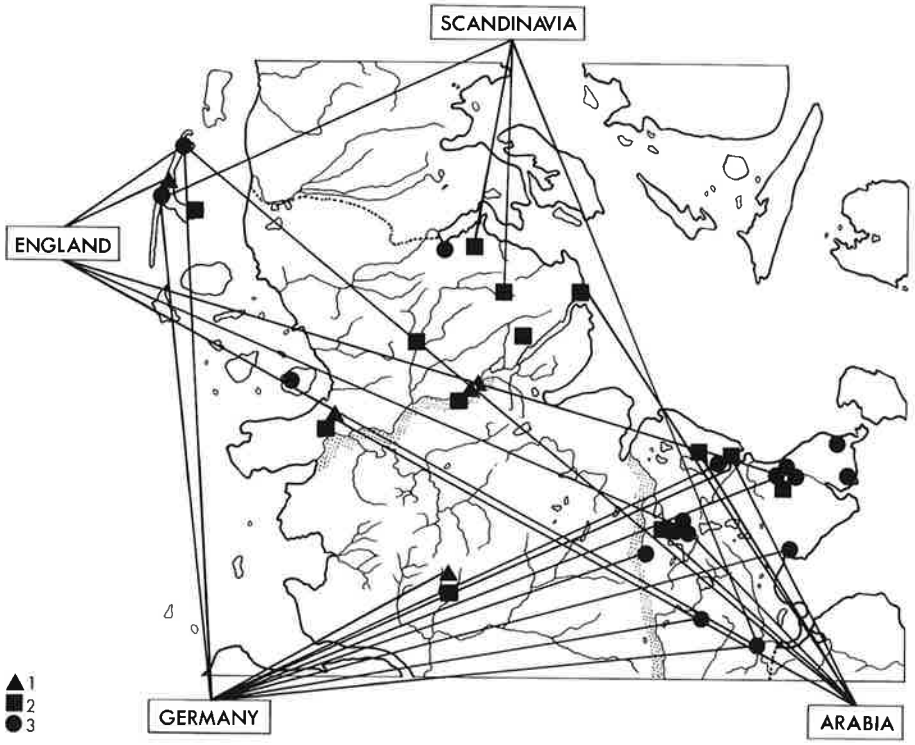

Fig. 2. The origin of coins in Viking Age hoards in Schleswig-Holstein. 1. 9th century hoards; 2. 10th century hoards; 3. 11th century hoards.

torical events (outlined by Wiechmann 1996, pp. 15 ff.) with the archaeological record. If the hoards are mainly commercial, then the reason for deposition should be connected with warfare or unrest. Schleswig-Holstein had close contacts with the Carolingian and Ottonian empire, which means that there are well-documented sources concerning warfare and revolts. By taking a closer look at the hoards, leaving single coins and jewellery finds aside, one may arrive at interesting results. Out of twenty hoards, with a more or less reliable *terminus post quem*, twelve hoards cannot be connected with any historical event in the territory where they were found. Three hoards come within five years of a recorded event; these are Pöschendorf in Saxon territory, with a *terminus post quem* 790/794, close to the date of 798 when the Franks defeated the Saxons; Husby in Danish territory with a *terminus post quem* 980, which is close to the date of the Danish revolt in 983; and finally Waterneversdorf II with a *terminus post quem* 1103–1134, which is close to the date of 1138/39 when the Germans took control of the Slav territory. Four hoards are within ten years of a historical event (Flensburg I & III; Hasselberg; Waterneversdorf I), and one within twenty years (Schleswig). This is quite a disappointing result: only in three cases do the hoards reflect warfare or unrest confirmed by written sources. The result is also mentioned by Wiechmann, but here explained by the different economic system. But why are there no more hoards in 934 (Heinrich I conquers Schleswig), 983 (Danish and Slav revolts) and 1139? If the local nobility and the traders were threatened at any time, it was during these years.

Regional comparison

B. Hårdh's *Silver in the Viking Age: A Regional-Economic Study* from 1996 is her second book about Viking Age hoards after her Ph.D. thesis of 1976. While the latter focused on the hoards in Southern Scandinavia, namely Skåne, Halland and Blekinge, the new book is now an analysis of the prevailing economic systems in the various parts of the Baltic region. The central question for Hårdh (1996, p. 14) is "to what degree precious metals were used as means of payment, and whether it is possible to trace regional variations". Hårdh (ibid., p. 14) does not only focus on regional differences, but also on ancient societies and their changes: "the variations in the use of precious metals are closely connected to essential characteristics of past societies". To underline this she refers to the Finnish philosopher F. Lång (1982) who studied the introduction of a monetary system in Asia Minor and who concluded that monetary system and rational thinking, expressed in early Greek philosophy, are closely connected (ibid., p. 70). Lång (ibid., p. 64) cites Thales, that "anyone who walks about with coins in his pocket also carries quite special conceptual abstractions in his head, whether he is aware of it or not".

The spatial parameters have already been mentioned, the analysis itself concentrates on unminted silver, both the objects themselves and the composition of the hoards. Numismatics, this is stressed by Hårdh, were not included, even if she is aware of the loss of information.

The study itself focuses on the necklets as indicators of regionality (because of their shape) and the hoards with hack-silver as indicators of the development of a monetary system. Hårdh (ibid., p. 22) wants to examine the relationship between centre and periphery, meaning the regions in which we have a development of a primary coin economy (the centre) and those with a secondary coin economy (the periphery). By investigating the necklets Hårdh succeeds in developing a model of regionality which gives everybody dealing with the Scandinavian Viking Age a stimulating result. It will be very interesting to see in the future whether other researchers arrive at the same result. The regionality of the hack-silver hoards in chapter 5 is then based on the previous results.

The dualistic thinking with a division of the hoards into sacral and/or profane, as we can find it in Graham-Campbell and Wiechmann, is also accepted by B. Hårdh. It follows from the interpretation of the hoards: either the hoard has a function as means of payment, and then it is profane; or it has a special-purpose function, and then it becomes sacral. Let us take an example. Hårdh (ibid., p. 150) mentions the hoards from Gåtebo, Alvidsjö, Gamla Uppsala, Kärven, Gullunge, Elmsta, Älvkarleby and Allmänninge. Because of their inventory these hoards give "the impression of being fortunes, family property or the like, rather than means of payment" (ibid.). In the cases of Gåtebo, Gullunge, Gamla Uppsala and Allmänninge, we must consider an alternative interpretation. These hoards are furnished with silver items, which in one or another way are connected with the Christian church, such as the reliquary crosses, crucifixes, chains and bowls. According to Blomkvist (1970–71, p. 25) they reflect a structured nobility, indicated by hoards with royal (Gamla Uppsala) and aristocratic settings (Uppland hoards). My own opinion is that the hoards could be depositions of church silver, made by persons in close contact with the church. How should we then interpret the deposition? The silver belonging to the ecclesiastical sphere was perhaps deposited in times of warfare or unrest. I would suggest that the cross pendants in the hoards were meant to protect the silver from the enemy. This custom is not unusual, as the above-mentioned examples showed, and we can even find it in pagan times when there is a Thor's hammer instead of the cross. However fragmented the hack-silver is, the pendants – quite often useless because of a lost loop – are never fragmented, they are a kind of taboo (Staecker 1995, pp. 45 ff.). The deposition in combination with these

pagan or Christian symbols is now becoming religious. Our modern thinking in terms of separate spheres of economy and religion (what could be termed dualistic thinking) makes it difficult for us to see connections where they may have existed in the past. The interpretation of unfragmented and fragmented silver as means of payment is without question (for its period of active use), but is the reason for its deposition necessarily profane, or could it also be sacral?

An interesting alternative is offered by Hårdh (1996, pp. 151 ff.) concerning the persons who might have deposited the hoards. Although she is fond of the economic interpretation with traders as former owners (as in the case of Skåne), she presents different explanations for the other regions. The Estonian hoards, for example, may be interpreted as wealth of chieftains or leaders, they "reflect a formalized prestige" (ibid., p. 163).

Finally the chapter about politics and economy is of great interest for future interpretation. Hårdh succeeds in showing that the economy of south-west Scandinavia is closely linked to the western coast of Sweden (Västergötland) and Oslo Fjord. This result fits very well with P. Sawyer's (1989, pp. 33 ff.) study of the political structure in Västergötland where he argues that the Danish kings had a strong influence over this region during the Viking Age.

At the end of the book I missed the return to F. Lång's ideas of the connection between economy and philosophy. With the formation of the Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Polish and Russian states during the 10th and 11th centuries the Baltic region was undergoing an enormous social change. The former Late Iron Age structures with small kingdoms and international trading-places changed into a proto-feudal system where the kings established their power and forced other members of society into a relationship of dependence. The pagan cosmology and philosophy was replaced by Christian ones. This radical change in society must have been based on the mental willingness for a change, a society prepared for a huge quantum leap. The introduction of coinage is part of this enormous programme, and it reflects the change of mentality at the end of the first millennium.

Offering, war or trade?

We are facing here an almost intimidating phalanx of scholars dealing with the Viking Age hoards. Their arguments are elaborate, there do not seem to be any weak points, and their interpretations focus on the economy. This is demonstrated in all three books, which in one way or another follow the economic model. But are there no alternatives, are the hoards now locked into these interpretations?

Before new interpretations are discussed here, it seems to be necessary to present a history of research into the reasons for hoarding. The following discussion is based mainly on the overviews given by M. Stenberger (1958, pp. 307 ff.), G. Hatz (1974, pp. 157 ff.), B. Hårdh (1976, pp. 7 ff.) and M. Östergren (1989, pp. 25 ff.).

We can differentiate between three reasons: offering, war or trade. At the beginning of this century the idea of combining the reports in the Scandinavian sagas about Vikings who offered their silver to Odin (*Ynglinga saga*) or in general for the hereafter (*Egils saga*, *Landnámabók*), dominated archaeological research (Almgren 1900; 1904; Lindqvist 1920). Reports about the life of the Lapps during the 17th and 18th centuries also contributed to this subject. Here it is the male head of the family who is hiding the treasure without the knowledge of the others, for his own comfort in the hereafter (Almgren 1900, p. 232; Thordeman 1941, pp. 20 ff.).

This national-romantic view of hoards was followed by the trauma of the First World War, after which a military explanation was provided for the hoards: they were a result of warfare and unrest. The hoards were only deposited because of war, they were not interrupted by war. It was especially the historian S. Bolin (1926), who analysed the hoards in *Germania libera* and of the 16th–18th centuries in Scania (Bolin 1932),

and drew conclusions concerning the Viking Age hoards (Bolin 1963, p. 41). M. Stenberger (1958, p. 313) likewise regarded the hoards as a sign of the economic wealth that accumulated in times of war. A differentiated explanation was presented by the numismatist Grierson (1959), who postulated that there might be many reasons such as trade, plundering, pay, ransom, gifts, penalties and testimonies.

Since the 1950s with the economic upswing and the 1960s with the peace movement, the thesis of trade has dominated research until now (Nordman 1942; Hatz 1974). It was G. Hatz who for the first time made a clear distinction between the reason for collecting the hoard and the reason for deposition (ibid., pp. 150 ff.). The hoards are regarded as an accumulation of silver and gold, collected by tradesmen (Hårdh 1976). B. Hårdh's research focused specially on the structure and the contents of the hoards, comparing them with their geographical localization to obtain a closer view of the economic system. Bolin's war thesis was rejected by M. Malmer, who was able to show, for example, that the Finnish and Swedish 18th-century hoards are not concentrated in periods of warfare, but deposited in periods of peace (Malmer 1972; Sarvas 1972). According to Malmer, the hoards do not necessarily reflect war, but more the misunderstanding between the idea behind the coin and its function. The findings of earlier research, that the areas with a dense amount of hoards reflect a developed economy, was corrected by Mats and Brita Malmer. In fact it is exactly the opposite. For example, Gotland, which has the highest concentration of hoards in Scandinavia, represents a primitive economy in comparison with highly developed countries like Germany or England (Malmer 1972; Malmer 1981).

The results of the survey combined with maps of the 18th century led M. Stenberger (1958, pp. 15 ff.) to the demand that hoards and settlements should lie close together. This thesis was supported by phosphate investigations and the use of metal detectors in the 1980s, which confirmed the close connection between house and hoard (Callmer 1979–80, pp. 132 ff.; Östergren 1989). The call to regard the hoards as indicators of regional social structures was made by K. Randsborg (1980), Å. Hyenstrand (1985) and M. Gaimster (1991). The peaceful activity behind the hoards was again denied by P. Sawyer (1982), who postulated that they reflect pirate activity, an economy of plunder. This thesis was later supported by the historian T. Lindkvist (1988) and the archaeologist A. Carlsson (1983). On the other hand, Noonan (1986, pp. 321 ff.) argued that the peaceful trading contacts with the Baltic countries gave no reason for plundering.

Hoards and Viking Age cosmology

During the last decades a return to the thesis from the beginning of the century can be noted in research. The interpretations are inspired by the Russian historian A. Gurevich, who points out the change of mentalities from the Viking Age to the Middle Ages. In his view, the treasures are part of this thinking (1992, pp. 145 f.). Gurevich warns against the tendency to "divide people's life into separate compartments, according to the speciality of the scholar, since such an operation makes it impossible to understand their life [the ancient Scandinavians] and behaviour, as well as their ideas about the other world" (ibid., p. 146).

If we follow Gurevich's model, things can be seen in a different light. Gurevich argues that "the dependence of the Scandinavians on nature was so intense that their perception of the world had many features which showed their inability to separate themselves sharply from their environment" (Gurevich 1969, p. 42). The farmstead was a prototype model of the universe, which is reflected in mythology and its cosmology. The human beings lived in a cultivated and populated part, Midgarđr. In the extreme zones of this safe world, beyond the fence, lay the uncultivated and chaotic part of the world, named

Utgarđr, the realm of giants and monsters who threatened the human world. The contrast of Midgarđr and Utgarđr have their parallel in the legal concept of *ingarđr* (inside the fence) and *utgarđr* (outside the fence). The farm and the fields represented the safe world and the bogs and woods represented the dangerous and mysterious world. The odal, the family's hereditary possession,[3] was enclosed by a fence and marked the borderline between safe and unsafe. Through the connection with mythology an analogy between the world of human beings and the farmstead was established. At the same time the dualism of inside and outside mirrored the private and common land ownership (ibid., p. 43).

If we now analyse the localization of the hoards according to these criteria, we can find hoards inside the farmstead (Östergren 1989), within the *ingarđr* or odal (Zachrisson 1996) and in the *utgarđr*. This might reflect different reasons for deposition. Hoards which are deposited inside the *ingarđr* still belong to the human sphere, while the hoards of the *utgarđr* are exposed to the dangerous sphere, they can come into possession of the giants. Hoards within or close to the farm could therefore still be interpreted as a safe-deposit box, but hoards on the borderline of the *ingarđr* fulfil another function. The hoard here has a mythological function to protect the *ingarđr* from attacks; the ground is paid to the gods. This is in fact confirmed by *Svarfdæla saga*, where it is mentioned that a Viking, when taking possession of land in Iceland, walks along the acquired area and erects a marker at the furthest point. Here he breaks his comb into three pieces and throws them on the ground, then he buries hack-silver at three spots, half a silver mark on each spot (Hatz 1974, p. 161).

Hoards which are deposited in the *utgarđr* would then – despite the fact that one might have access to them – be offerings to the giants to hold a kind of armistice. This thought cannot be further developed here; the future will show whether Zachrisson's (1994) investigation is a viable new way of interpretation, also it was considered and rejected by Hatz (1974) as an explanation of the Scandinavian hoards.

Gift-giving and hoarding

Another angle from which to try to trace the mentality of the Viking Age world is that of gift-giving. It was back in the twenties that M. Mauss (1972) pointed in that direction. A. Gurevich (1968) has developed this aspect; according to him "the constant transference of items from one owner to another was a way of ensuring social contact between the exchanging parties. [...] The concept of the value of gifts was deeply affected by various phenomena of a magic, religious and ethical nature". The Viking Age hoards are therefore not only interpreted by Gurevich as an accumulation of silver and gold, but as a means of preserving and increasing success and luck. In this process the actual gold and silver "did not themselves contain these blessings", they "'absorbed' the prosperity of the person who owned them and of his ancestors, and they retained those qualities" (ibid.). The theses of Mauss and Gurevich have also found support from the anthropologist E. Vestergaard (1991) in interpreting the Viking Age hoards. R. Wiechmann, B. Hårdh and M. Gaimster (1991), with their definition of "special-purpose money", likewise show a tendency in this direction. But there is still the open question why these gifts were later buried in the ground. Gurevich offers two solutions: either the Vikings intended to conceal their wealth or the objects were buried "with a view to their being useful in another world after death".

A similar interpretation, but here about the hoards as part of the dowry or as part of the bridewealth, is put forward by G. Burenhult (1984, p. 160) and M. Burström (1993). Burenhult only tries to explain the hoards which contain exclusively jewellery, while Burström tries to explain all the hoards and the fact that they were permitted to stay in the ground. The 400 Viking

Age hoards, according to Burström, are the remains of approximately 8000 hoards, and the number of farmsteads is calculated to a total of 1200 to 1500. Burström (ibid., p. 33) is convinced that a large number of the hoards are still hidden in the soil. Using the silver as bridewealth on the island of Gotland, where there limited opportunities to acquire new land, would according to Burström explain the deposition of the hoards, with an estimated number of 6 hoards within 200 years (one each generation), distributed on the 1500 farms, which means a total of 9000 hoards. But mistakes in interpretation make it impossible to give this explanation a realistic chance. Taking into regard other regions in Scandinavia and around the Baltic, a clear increase in the discovery of hoards between the late 17th and early 20th centuries may be noted. This is largely due to the intensive agriculture, which at the end of the 19th century took almost all available land into possession. Even before the 1930s, with the introduction of machinery in agriculture, a decline in the discovery of hoards can be observed. Only in the 1980s, with the use of metal detectors, does the curve rise again, but not so much concerning the hoards, more in general for settlement finds. Taking this fact into account, Burström's calculations are much too high, while Östergren's estimation of 2000 original hoards seems to be much more realistic. The second crucial point is the fact that the recently excavated hoards show a clear stratigraphy (see the hoard from Stumle below); they were not closed after their deposition (or in this case according to Burström's thesis after the marriage). Thirdly there is a clear rise and fall of the hoards between 900 and 1100, as shown in Östergren's distribution map (ibid., fig. 13 A–M). There is no continuity in the number of hoards, as one should expect. Finally, the comparison with other regions in Scandinavia is missing; problems like those on Gotland do not exist here, where internal colonization could be established (see also Burström 1993, p. 34). Burenhult's theory is not tenable either, since the hoards with jewellery alone first appear in the late Viking Age and exist during the Middle Ages, but this is a general phenomenon in Scandinavia and Europe which is closely connected to the economic systems and the introduction of coinage.

Hoards and Christianization

Another starting-point was taken by L. Thunmark-Nylén (1986). She tried to show that the absolute dates of the Gotlandic churches given in the chronicle of H. N. Strelow in 1633 can be linked with the *terminus post quem* of the hoards. These historical dates, severely criticized by D. Wase (1995), show a link in the peaks of hoards and churches. Thunmark-Nylén (ibid., p. 36) explains the link by arguing that Gotland should be more closely connected with a foreign spiritual or secular authority. Another explanation, that the peaks could reflect economic trends, as argued by J. Wienberg (1993, pp. 130 f.) concerning the Gothic churches in medieval Denmark, is rejected. But there is unfortunately a serious methodological mistake in Thunmark-Nylén's work: the spatial relationship between hoards and churches is completely neglected (criticized by Nordanskog 1996, p. 34). Out of 38 parishes with early churches, only 8 have a hoard with a corresponding *terminus post quem.*

In the same article, however, she develops another aspect, which is worth noting. Thunmark-Nylén (ibid., pp. 24 ff., fig. 1) recognizes different modes of deposition during three centuries of hoarding. According to her the hoards in pagan times were private, and in Christian time they were used as a family hoard. The private hoards are used in the sense of an offering to Odin, while the family hoards have more the character of a safe-deposit box.

The hoards can also be investigated from a regional perspective combined with Christianization. This was done for the island of Öland by M. Larsson (1996, pp. 35 ff.). She came to the conclusion that the conversion must have started in the southern half of the island and then

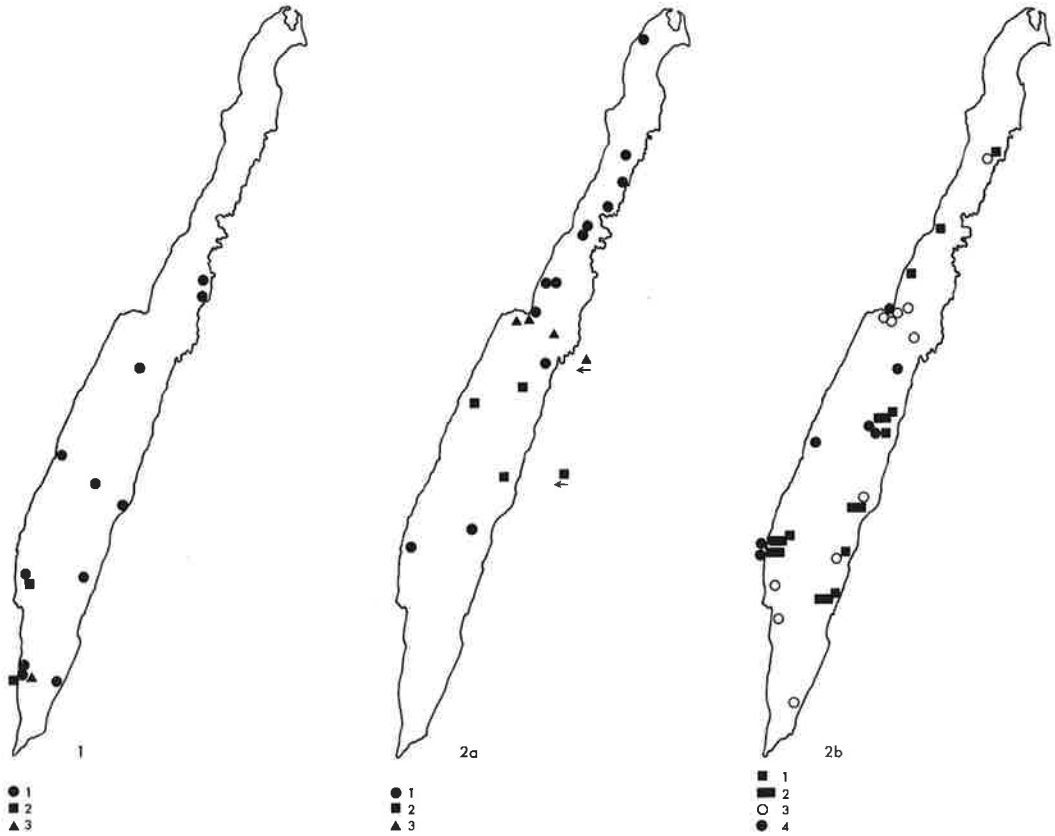

Fig. 3. Viking Age hoards and indications of Christianization on Öland. Left: 1. 10th-century hoards with coins; 2. Cross or crucifix pendant; 3. Thor's hammer (all 10th-century). Middle: 1. 11th-century hoards with coins; 2. Cross or crucifix pendant; 3. Thor's hammer (all 11th-century). Right: 1. 11th-century timber church; 2. 11th-century sarcophagus; 3. Runestones from the first half of the 11th century; 4. Runestones from the second half of the 11th century.

extended to the northern half. The interesting fact is that the Viking Age hoards (with coins) follow this pattern. Most of the 10th-century hoards are concentrated in the southern half, while the 11th-century hoards are situated in the northern half (Fig. 3). If we assume that there is a connection, then we have to answer the question why and how hoards and Christianization are connected in some way, as already seen on Gotland.

The theory of an influence of an external power, which invested in the still underdeveloped regions, as Thunmark-Nylén tried to prove for Gotland, must be excluded. The hoards reflect the presence of a nobility which had both the power and the means to promote Christianization, as shown by M. Anglert (1995, p. 29) for Scania. But their regional appearance and disappearance are not explained by this. Again following Gurevich, one explanation could be that the still pagan nobility deposited the hoards shortly before or during the first phase of the arrival of the priest, in the hope of saving their wealth for Valhalla, and not standing in the hereafter (perhaps already baptized) with empty hands. Interestingly enough, even the Gotlandic

hoards show an enormous increase during the late 10th and 11th centuries in the period of conversion. This might be a result of the growing wealth, which is also reflected in settlements like Birka, where an increase of single coins can be registered towards the end of the 10th century (Gustin forthcoming),[4] but it could also be a result of the fear of losing the pleasure of enjoying the hoards in the hereafter.

Conclusion

It seems as if the reason for hoarding in the Viking Age is much more complex than recent research makes us believe. The dualistic thinking, that the hoards are either "all-purpose money" or "special-purpose money", must be replaced by new terms. Gurevich's analysis of the Viking Age mentality, based on Old Norse literature, shows a much more complex way of thinking during this period. Behind every transaction, such as gift-giving or trading, there is also a socio-religious context, and they cannot be divided according to the modern way of thinking. The same can be said of the reason for depositing. No matter whether it was because of warfare, to make an offering, to deposit wealth in safety, or to mark the odal, there is always a meaning behind the deposition, which combines the profane act of depositing with the religious act of keeping it safe for the future or even for the hereafter.

The theory of the use of the hereafter was heavily opposed by Stenberger (1958, p. 317) and later by Hatz (1974, p. 161) because of the appearance of similar hoards in the Slav area. But this is no argument against its use, since only little is known about why the Slavs deposited their hoards. Their religion and its cosmology are only fragmentarily recorded. It could be worth questioning the difference in the way of depositing, which might possibly reflect whether there were different mentalities. The area of Schleswig-Holstein with its close contact zone is an ideal object of investigation here (Table 1).

As the comparison shows, we can see similar find circumstances in both the Danish and the West Slav regions. The number of hoards in medieval settlements is higher than in Denmark, but this might be explained by source criticism. Also the hillforts are a special phenomenon for the Slav area, which explains the dominance of hoards in this category. In comparison with the settlement hoards their number is quite low, as noted by Herrmann (1968, p. 130). The number of hoards within a burial mound is much higher in the Slav part of Schleswig-Holstein than in the other parts, but this is not reflected for the whole West Slav area. In general we can state that it seems as if there are no profound differences between the reasons for hoarding in the Danish and Slavonic areas. On the basis of the data for the Slavonic area, J. Herrmann (ibid., p. 114) postulates that no parallel can be drawn with Scandinavian sagas for the reason for hoarding. Nothing similar to Odin's law is known in Slavic mythology. According to Herrmann (ibid., p. 117), the thesis of a purely secular use is also supported by the written sources, as Helmold of Bosau mentions that in "the case of an attack the Slavs hide their grain, the gold and silver, including all objects of value, in pits and they bring their wives and children for protection in the fortifications or at least in the forest" (Helmold II, 109).[5] But Helmold also mentions a religious use of the hoards in his report about the temple of Arkona on the island of Rügen. "After the victory the Slavs collect gold and silver for the treasure of their god and the rest they divide among each other" (Helmold I,36).[6] This shows that the treasures may have served different purposes, and a combination of the two factors cannot be ruled out.

Finally, one of the weighty arguments for the defenders of the theory that most of the hoards were placed in safe-deposit boxes, can easily be turned into the opposite. The hoard from Stumle on Gotland, where the recent excavation showed that the oldest coins were lying on the bottom and the youngest coins on the top of the vessel, indicates an accumulation of silver over a long

Table 1. The find circumstances of the Schleswig-Holstein hoards compared with Danish and Slav hoards (only hoards with more than two pieces were taken into account; the hoarding of single pieces might have different reasons and is therefore excluded). The data for the Schleswig-Holsteins hoards are taken from Wiechmann (1996), for Denmark from Staecker (1990) and for the West Slavs from Herrmann (1968). Herrmann's data are unfortunately incomplete. The Danish and West Slav data exclude Schleswig-Holstein.

	Schleswig-Holstein				Denmark	West Slav
Place	Saxons	Frisians	Danes	Slavs		
Field (ploughed)			2 (22.22%)	2 (10.53%)	25 (12.69%)	?
Field (newly ploughed)					5 (2.54%)	?
Meadow		1 (16.67%)		1 (5.26%)	43 (21.83%)	?
Forest					2 (1.01%)	?
Dune/Dyke		1 (16.67%)			2 (1.01%)	?
Gravel pit				1 (5.26%)	5 (2.54%)	?
Bog					19 (9.65%)	?
Close to stream			1 (11.11%)	1 (5.26%)	7 (3.55%)	?
Ditch		1 (16.67%)				?
Embankment		1 (16.67%)	1 (11.11 %)	1 (5.26%)	9 (4.57%)	?
Hill					14 (7.11%)	?
Burial mound	1 (100%)	1 (16.67%)	1 (11.11 %)	4 (21.06%)	6 (3.05%)	2 (1.24%)
Churchyard					7 (3.55%)	?
Church					2 (1.01%)	?
Hillfort		1 (16.67%)		3 (15.79%)		6 (3.73%)
Medieval settlement			2 (22.22%)	1 (5.26%)		17 (10.56%)
Close to old road				1 (5.26%)		?
Farm (modern)					4 (2.03%)	?
Town (building)			1 (11.11%)	2 (10.53%)	5 (2.54%)	?
Private collection					7 (3.55%)	?
No record			1 (11.11%)	2 (10.53%)	35 (17.77%)	?
Total	1 (100%)	6 (100%)	9 (100%)	19 (100%)	197 (100%)	161 (100%)

period (Jonsson & Östergren 1989, p. 87). The reason could be profane, but it could also be a slow deposition for the hereafter, saving piece by piece depending on the circumstances. This is demonstrated by a report about the customs of the Lapps by a French lady in 1839. She reports that when she gave him money, "the Lapp turned the money in his hand with an eternal salvation, without doubt he dreamed about that moment when he could put it in his safe-deposit box and increase his fortune. [...] According to their religion he would in the hereafter have use for what he had collected on earth" (Thordeman 1941, p. 20).

Notes

I am very grateful for the useful comments which Anders Carlsson and Heinrich Härke gave on the manuscript of this article. Special thanks to Heinrich for help with translation.

1. St Ninian's Isle, Shetland; Broch of Burgar, Orkney; Rogart, Sutherland; Croy, Inverness-shire; Norrie's Law; Talnotrie, Kirkcudbrightshire; Lochar Moss, Dumfriesshire.
2. There are exceptions such as the raid on Iona in 986, resulting in the Iona Abbey hoard, and the plundering of Lowland Scotland by Ivarr and his kinsmen during the year after his expulsion from Dublin in AD 902, resulting in the Gordon, Berwickshire, hoard.
3. Gurevich (1968) also offers other translations for the odal, such as patrimony, birthplace, fatherland and native land.
4. The investigation of the presence of silver in Viking Age settlements might provide new angles for the future study of this effective trading activity.
5. "Quociens autem bellicus tumultus insonuerit, omnem annonam paleis excussam, aurum quoque et argentum et preciosa quaequae fossis abdunt, uxores et parvulos municionibus vel certe silvis contutant."
6. "Victores aurum et argentum in erarium Dei sui conferunt, cetera inter se partiuntur."

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English revised by Alan Crozier