

**The Hoen Hoard. A Viking gold treasure of the ninth century. Utgitt av Signe Horn Fuglesang and David M. Wilson (eds.), 340 p., 72 ill. Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia. Institutum Romanum Norvegiae XIV. Norske Oldfunn XX. Kulturhistorisk museum. Universitetet i Oslo. Oslo 2006. Bardi, Roma. ISBN 88-88620-21-4,h.**

### **Reviewed by Bergljot Solberg**

The Hoen hoard, found in 1834 in Øvre Eiker, Buskerud, is probably the most important Viking-period hoard known from Norway. It includes 206 pieces, of which 54 are gold or silver-gilt objects, twenty coins, also of gold, and 132 beads of glass or semi-precious stone. The hoard has not been considered as a whole since 1929 when it was included by Sigurd Grieg in his catalogue of the Viking-period hoards found in Norway. In 1996 Signe Horn Fuglesang and the Centre for Viking and Medieval Studies of the University of Oslo initiated a renewed study of the Hoen hoard drawing on the expertise of scholars in various disciplines. Fourteen authors have contributed to the monograph.

#### *Ambition, research priority and organization of the book*

In David M. Wilson's introduction and summary (chapter 1), we learn that the project was initiated "in order to produce a worthy publication of this great hoard and its context" (p. 14).

According to Fuglesang (p. 83), "One of the first priorities of the present project was to discuss the problem of geographical attribution". This to a very large degree defines the organization of the book. Apart from chapter 2, which focuses on the history of the find and its environment, upon the name Hoen and on pollen analysis on the site, the monograph concentrates upon the various object categories. The chapters follow the geographical attribution of the various items; chapter 3 covers the Scandinavian and chapter 4 the European items. The coin pendants (foreign) are discussed in chapter 6, the beads in chapter 7. Goldworking techniques, chemical analyses of the pendants of gold and silver are discussed in chapter 5, the loops in chapter 6.

The catalogue entries (p.223-288) are written by the respective authors. The book has 72 plates. Two appendices, A & B, are included; A represents a copy of Chris-

tian Anders Holmboe's publication of the find in 1835, written in Latin, B represents Graham-Cambell's description of 'the silver arm-ring in Hamburg'.

### *Geographical attribution*

Since geographical attribution is the main objective one should expect the criteria for such attribution to be explicitly formulated, except when they are so obvious that a discussion would be superfluous, as when David M. Wilson identifies the ring (no. 37) as Anglo-Saxon because of its form and execution belonging to "the English ninth-century Trewhiddle style" and when the disc (no. 39) is defined as Byzantine due to the Greek inscription.

In other instances the absence of clearly formulated criteria sometimes leaves the reader in doubt. When Graham-Campbell concludes that the neck and arm-rings of gold represent Scandinavian manufacture, the basis for this attribution is not obvious. Clearly it is not the shape of the terminal points that define the origin, even though Birgitta Hårdh (1996) in her analysis of the neck and arm-rings of silver from Scandinavia, Finland and the Baltic found that the terminal points represent the most distinct geographical variation. None of the Hoen neck-rings fit into any of Hårdh's six groups of end plates.

Also when there is disagreement between Fuglesang and Westermann-Angerhausen about the geographical attribution of the pendants nos. 30 and 33 this seems to be based upon individual evaluation of craftsmanship and not upon agreement of criteria for such attribution. Fuglesang defines the items as Scandinavian, whereas Westermann-Angerhausen includes nos. 30 and 33 among the Carolingian objects. Also pendant no. 8 is important in this connection. Fuglesang admits that no. 8 is "the Scandinavian piece in Hoen which most clearly incorporates Carolingian motifs (...)" it seems a distinct possibility that the pendant could actually have been made at Hoen. (...) The suggestion that no. 8 was locally manufactured has consequences for two other pieces, nos. 30 and 33" (p. 89f) as Scandinavian. According to Westermann-Angerhausen, "the combination of wires of two gauges, used with more skill on no. 29 (Carolingian object) than on no. 30, is similar to that found on the reverse of nos. 26 and 27 (also Carolingian objects). This together with the very characteristic, short filigree stems with grape-like clusters of granules which surround the central interlace motifs, points to a continental origin." (p. 115).

Could the disagreement about origin have been solved by Eva A. Astrup's non-destructive chemical analyses? The analysis demonstrates that no. 8 shows the same values as the Carolingian pieces. This result, however, has not affected the attribution of no. 8, and chemical analyses have to a very limited degree contributed to the definition of origin of the various objects in the Hoen hoard.

In other cases the team has succeeded in a more precise geographical attribution of objects. For instance Birgit Arrhenius, by identifying the type of cell work used, has suggested that the garnet stud (no. 38) was made in the western Byzantine Empire, and Peter Steppuhn in chapter 7 discusses the beads of glass and stone which have never previously been examined in details. Steppuhn draws on important comparative material and demonstrates that the beads from Hoen represent a mixture of imported and locally manufactured beads.

### *Chronology*

In 1966 David Wilson and Ole Klindt-Jensen (1966:92) saw the Hoen hoard as important to the dating of the Borre style<sup>1</sup>. One should therefore have expected that a special chapter would have been reserved the dating of the find. This is not the case, and information relevant to the dating of the find is found scattered in different chapters.

As in previous discussions of the Hoen hoard, the coins (chapter 6) are important to the dating. The coins range from 346-47 to 848-49, the latter represent a *terminus post quem* for the find. Does typology and wear on various objects indicate a later date? In her discussion of the Carolingian objects Westermann-Angerhausen (chapter 4) compares the three-armed mount in the Hoen find, originally a particularly precious strap-distributor, with other pieces of Carolingian jewellery with plant ornament and with manuscript illumination. These comparisons point to “the art of the time of Charles the Bald, for the Hoen mount” (p. 113), concluding that the Hoen mount can not be earlier than the latest coins in the hoard.

Fuglesang (chapter 3) finds that the Scandinavian metalwork represents at least two, probably three, periods of early Viking art. The earliest phase is in the main coeval with the wood carvings from Oseberg which have a *terminus ante quem* of 834. The second group represents the Oseberg style as it had been developed after the Oseberg carvings, probably by the third quarter of the ninth century. The third group contains pieces which either anticipate or are influenced by jewellery which otherwise occurs in tenth-century contexts. According to Fuglesang, a cross-shaped fragment (no. 14) represents the only piece attributable to the Borre style, with a probable manufacture in the third quarter of the ninth century. Accordingly, no. 14 becomes very important. Fuglesang argues that it originally may have been the centre of an ornament similar to a Terslev-type pendant and refers to Eilbracht’s (1999) conclu-

<sup>1</sup> Wilson and Fuglesang disagree with regard to stylistic attribution of some cast silver-gilt objects. Wilson refers them to the Borre style, Fuglesang to the Oseberg style (p. 17, note 21 and pp. 85-87).

sion that the production of Terslev-type pendants of gold began in the second half of the ninth century. She does not consider finds of Terslev-type pendants from the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Friis Johansen 1912, Duczko 1985).

Steppuhn (chapter 7) finds that the bead-string from Hoen was assembled over a period of one or at most two generations and/or put together from several different sources. He also finds that the beads demonstrate that the earliest possible date for the necklace is the third quarter of the ninth century.

In her examination of no. 14, the youngest among the Scandinavian style decorated objects, Astrup states: "The beaded wires which border the suspension loop of no. 8 and the rim on no. 29 (pl. 66D) are also smoothed, so that the beading is practically lost. On no. 14 the field granulation is so worn that the individual granules are partly rubbed away, while the ring knobs made of composite beaded wires have lost their structure (pl. 62B). It is evident from the extent of the wear that the pendants have been used frequently".

According to Wilson (p. 16) there is consensus among the members of the team that a date in the third quarter of the ninth century for the production of the latest objects is likely. This is closely similar to his own and Klindt Jensen's (1966) dating of the hoard to 860 AD. But then the wear on no. 14 has not been taken into consideration. The open question will then be how long it takes for gold to become very worn and whether the necklace has been used on a daily basis or on special occasions only.

#### *Technical analysis, analysis of loops, graffiti*

Chapter 5 is devoted to techniques, craftsmanship and composition of gold. Eva E. Astrup, who has performed this part of the project, concentrates upon filigree, granulation, insets and joining. The composition of the ware was defined by means of non-destructive quantitative chemical analysis by the use of a scanning electron microscope with an attached X-ray analyser. Astrup's analysis brings forth valuable data of techniques, material and wear and the data brought forward also seem useful for identifying products from individual workshops.

Mark Blackburn in chapter 6 has concentrated upon the loops as a guide to how and when the coins were acquired. Several features are distinctive and might be used as criteria to separate the work of one craftsman from another. He arrives at interesting conclusions. Looking especially into type of construction, method of fixing and form of decoration he is able to define six types. He also finds that the twenty Hoen coins have passed through the hands of gold- or silversmiths for mounting on at least eleven different occasions. A basic difference in the construction of most of the loops on Arabic and Carolingian coins indicates that different groups of goldsmiths were responsible for the two series, and it is suggested that soldering had

been the more common practice in Scandinavia and riveting in Francia.

In his discussion of the graffiti, in the same chapter, James Knirk finds that ten coins have graffiti, nine of them being Arabic coins. Knirk assumes that the occurrence of pattern graffiti on the coins should most likely be connected with their conversion into pendants. In one case the loop has been applied after the graffiti, and therefore in Scandinavia.

### *Conclusion*

The various contributions are written by specialists in their respective fields. Individually they are knowledgeable and informative, especially with regard to the provenience of the various objects in the Hoen hoard. The analyses of techniques, material composition, loops of pendants and beads provide new and valuable data. The catalogue gives additional information on the various objects. The book has very good illustrations of the objects in the Hoen hoard as well as illustrations of comparative material discussed in the book.

However, the team has chosen a rather narrow perspective, assuming that the hoard represents the accumulated wealth of one family, hidden in time of trouble and never reclaimed. By excluding old theories and not adopting new theories of depositions and hoards the team excludes itself from views that might lead to new and interesting research objectives.

As already mentioned, chronology seems not to have been one of the main research objectives. In spite of this the individual scholars contribute with important information. One might have wished a more explicit discussion of the dating of the deposition of the hoard. For this perspective the wear of the youngest items becomes important.

The find context and the Hoen farm itself – except for being treated in chapter 2 – is remarkably absent in the later chapters. Fuglesang's mention (p. 90) of a "distinct possibility that the pendant could actually have been made at Hoen" and Step-puhn's (p. 216) comment that "these beads were added to the necklace as a single set, some exclusive gift to the lady of Hoen", represent exceptions. A further elaboration of what kind of farm/estate Hoen was in the Viking period and the status of the "lady of Hoen" would have been interesting. As it is now, the people and society behind the deposition of the Hoen hoard remain in the dark.

Even though the monograph might have profited from a broader approach, there is no doubt that "The Hoen hoard" represents a valuable piece of work – especially with regard to the provenience of the various objects – and that it will be valuable to future scholarship.

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