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Paviken Paper for 2013 Excavations
Coins and Silver
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In this essay I will briefly outline the Viking Age on Gotland with particular attention paid to trade and the silver economy of the island. I will then go on to outline the excavations of Pers Lundstrom at Paviken as well as include some information from the excavations carried out by Arendus at Paviken this summer. The main focus of this paper is to analyze Viking Age coins silver excavated from Viking Age archaeological sites with a strong emphasis on Paviken. I will then conclude with my thoughts on the possibilities of a silver hoard of substantial size being found at Paviken from the evidence illustrated in this essay.

Gotland was and is ideally located for trading within the Baltic Sea area (Viking Heritage, 1996, 11). The islands naturally protected beaches were ideal for the shallow hulled ships of the Viking Age to land (Viking Heritage, 1996, 11). It was during the early Viking Age that trade centers, settlements that became permanent places of trade, mainly harbours began to develop for example Birka on the Swedish mainland (Jonsson, Malmer, 1989, 152). Settlements on the European mainland surrounding the Baltic Sea show signs of Viking influence in the style of crafts that were being made there (Viking Heritage, 1996, 12). With transit trade (goods moving through areas) moving through Gotland the island became wealthier during the Viking Age (Jonsson, Malmer, 1989, 152). Materials found at Frojel such as rock crystal from the Arabian Peninsula, glass from Italy, Iron possibly from Estonia are all indicative of a vast trade network that the Vikings were apart of (Carlsson, 1999, 132). The Vikings were able to develop this trade network through a natural network of rivers that run from the Baltic Sea down to the Black Sea as well as into Russia and following the coast to places like Dublin (Domeij, 1999, 4). The most important import to Gotland, for this essay, is silver coins from the Islamic Empire in the Middle East (Domeij, 1999, 11).

There are over 700 silver hoards found on Gotland throughout the island (Domeij, 1999, 4). The vast amount of silver hoards found on Gotland illustrates the wealth that the island enjoyed (Viking Heritage, 1996, 11). These silver hoards are found with such frequency and in a context that indicates that the majority previous owners of these hoards were not extremely

wealthy but of average income for the time period (Jonsson, Malmer 1989, 11). Archaeologists, for example Mats Burstrom, speculate that the silver hoards on Gotland are meant to be bridewealth or a dowry this could explain why so many farms are found with silver hoards (Burstrom, 1993, 35). The majority of silver hoards are found under the floor boards in settlements or in bronze or other types of pots, like the Stumle silver hoard found in Alva Parish (Jonsson, Malmer, 1989, 152). This hoard was discovered by a local Gotlandic farmer on his farm, silver coins had been scattered at the surface (Jonsson, Malmer 1989, 152). When archaeologists were notified and excavation began they found a bronze pot filled with two stacks of silver coins (Jonsson, Malmer, 1989, 152). The plough had lifted the lid of the bronze pot and scattered a few coins at turf level (Jonsson, Malmer, 1989, 153). The older coins of Arabic origin were largely at the bottom of the stacks with English and German coins mainly the top of the stacks (Jonsson, Malmer 1989, 153). This type of orientation may indicate that the hoard was added to over time (Jonsson, Malmer 1989, 153). The silver hoards can be dated by discerning the type of coins that are situated within the hoard and the year that they were minted (Domeij, 1999, 29). Fortunately we can always date the excavation in other ways that allow us to get a better grasp on the journey that the pieces in the hoard have taken (Domeij, 1999, 29). The amount of silver hoards found on Gotland peaks around the late 10th and early 11th centuries (Domeij, 1999, 17). The Gotlandic silver hoards yield 73% of all silver coins found from the Viking Age within Sweden (Domeij, 1999, 11). The majority of coins that are found during the early Viking Age silver hoards yield mainly Arabic dirhams (Domeij, 1999, 11). During the latter half of the 10th century a shift in the coins be traded occurred, now more and more western coins were being revealed in younger silver hoards on Gotland (Domeij, 1999, 13). The majority of these western coins came from England and Germany (Domeij, 1999, 13). It wasn't until the 1140's that Gotland began to mint its own coins, this is from the youngest silver hoard on Gotland (Domeij, 1999, 30).

Paviken is located on the south central western coastline of the Swedish island Gotland. The site is about a mile long by quarter of a mile wide at the furthest away from the previous shoreline. On the north end of the site is where excavations were carried out during the 1960's and 1970's by Pers Lundstom. Excavations also began this year in which the trenches were

connected to Pers excavations carried out by Arendus whom plan to excavate a further two years with a final year of analysis. These excavations are situated along a former river bank running into inland Gotland, the remnant of which is now a small stream. The site continues south and west towards the shoreline running along the current shoreline for around a half a mile. Here along the shore of a strait traveling inland from the Baltic Sea stone walls are found running into the water in some instances and stopping near the water in others. The stone walls are believed to be remnants of ports or areas designated for the building of ships. The age of the site is dated to the Viking Age 800AD- 1050AD from the artefacts excavated by Pers in the 1960's and 1970's. The site is believed to be a harbour settlement that flourished during the Viking Age as one of the main trading centers on Gotland. The stone constructions along the coast are indicative of ship building and the harbouring of ships.



Image at left is of Paviken with both Pers Lundstrom and Arendus 2013 excavations.

The many glass beads, glass, iron, bronze, precious stones such as rock crystal, gold and silver found at Paviken strongly suggest an active trading center, as none of these materials are native to Gotland. Iron fishing hooks and tools were also found at Paviken during Pers excavations indicative of a fishing community. However a vast amount of burnt and unburned bone was excavated by Pers with the majority being from cattle, and cattle of a young age prime for butcher. The import of beef into the port settlement of Paviken could

indicate that the place was both wealthy enough and large enough to support this type of local trade.



Pers excavations yielded 64 pieces of silver, this includes hacksilver, silverbleck, silverten, and silver arm rings. The excavations yielded 54 silver coins, with all being of Arabic origin with the exception of one Gotlandsk silver coin

and one Vasterlandskt silver coin. There were also three copper coins found which Pers notes indicate that two are from 1724 and the other believed to be from the year 1800 respectively. My only explanations for the three more modern copper coins is that they were likely found just beneath the turf in layer A. The two silver coins that are not Arabic in origin are from the late Viking age or early medieval period. All the silver coins found by Pers excavations are in fragments with the exception of five of the coins. See image above. During the 2013 excavations two Arabic silver coin fragments were found both in trench 2.

The spatial orientation of the silver coins and all other silver are illustrated in *fig.1.* and *fig.2,* see below. Only the three squares 35:77, 35:8 and 36.1 had more than one silver coin and even then it was only two silver coins or fragments of coin. Since the silver coins are scattered almost one per square this amount of silver coins cannot be considered a silver hoard as it takes anywhere from 2 to 5 coins at least to be considered a silver hoard in a single location (Domeij, 1999, 11). Paviken is unique in that there is no record of it ever being ploughed and therefore the orientation and space between each coin cannot be explained as such, even though to me it seems to fit. Coins that have been scattered are usually due to farming taking place sometime after they were deposited or lost (Johnson, Malmmer, 1989). I can't say that I can define why these coins are found where they were, they are spread out over such a large area; 208 square metres to be

more precise. The best estimate that I could give would be that it is an area that was used to weigh silver because of the amount of bronze, lead and iron/brass weights found within the same squares and vicinity. The fragmentation of the coins then could be explained better as silver was valued by its weight on Gotland during the Viking Age rather than the mint that it carried (Domeij, 1999, 28). Marks were often made in the coin to test its purity and it was common to break the coins in order to get a more accurate weight for possible payment on goods (Domeij, 1999, 28). I think that the area was some type of marketplace because of the amount of space between each coin as well as the amount of weights found from Pers excavations. The small amount of “other silver” as I have labelled them is not enough to sway the argument in either direction as any of the pieces could be used in trade and weighed. If there is a silver hoard at Paviken I don’t think that it would be kept in such a public place as a marketplace even if it was kept under the floorboards or in a bronze pot.

Paviken is site with tremendous potential and a lot of ground to be excavated, not only is there the possibility for more silver to be found but in multiple locations. If excavating for the purpose of finding a large amount of silver, bronze or gold then it would be not only the easiest but probably the most efficient to scan the area with a metal detector, marking any potential hotspots and following up with single 2x2 meter square. I know that this is not an easy task, my limited experience with the metal detector was not without its challenges, rain and equipment failure primarily and not related to one another. The area would require a large amount of time but could provide fruitful, as with my experience we did still find some bronze decoration. All data on Paviken is from Pers Lundstroms database and from the wonderful Arendus team and the Paviken 2013 field school that they held.

Fig. 1. Map illustrating the spatial distribution and amount of coins at Pers Lundstroms Paviken excavations.

Coins



Legend

Per Lundströms Excavation

 Grid system

Number

 No Coins

 1

 2

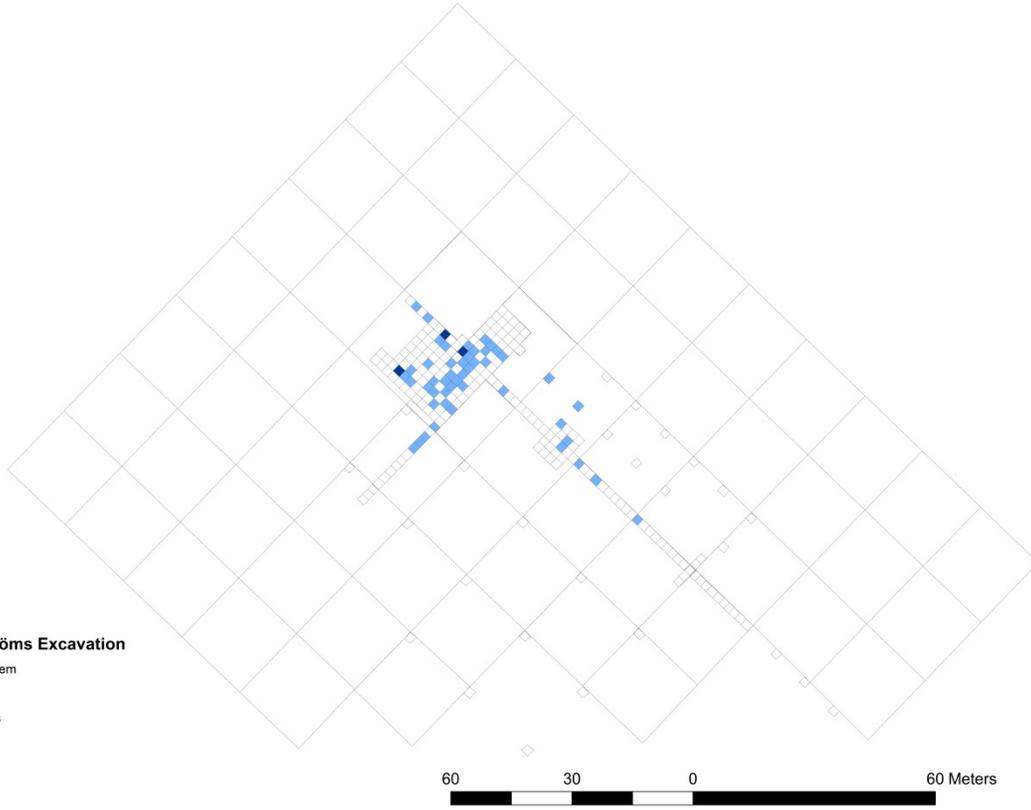
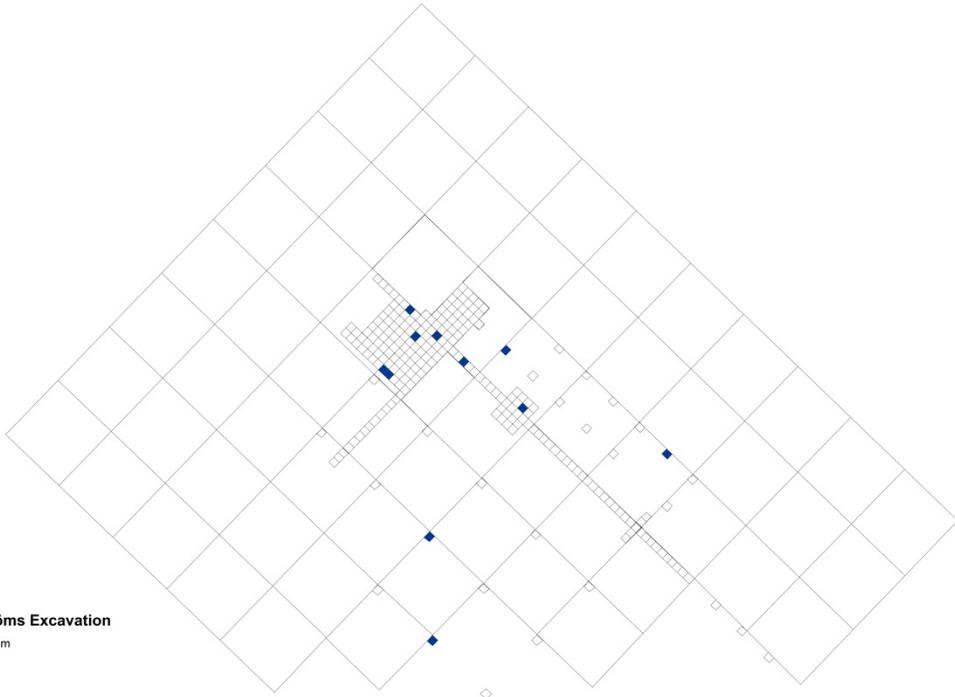


Fig 2. Map illustrating all other silver objects from Pers Lundstroms Paviken excavations.

Other silver objects



Legend

Per Lundströms Excavation

 Grid system

Number

 0

 1



Bibliography

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