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Review of Mairat, J.; Wilson, A.; Howgego, C. (2023) Coin Hoards and hoarding in the Roman world

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Citation

Claes, L. M. G. F. E. (2025). Review of Mairat, J.; Wilson, A.; Howgego, C. (2023) Coin Hoards and hoarding in the Roman world. *Journal Of Archæological Numismatics*, 13, 357-358. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4211937>

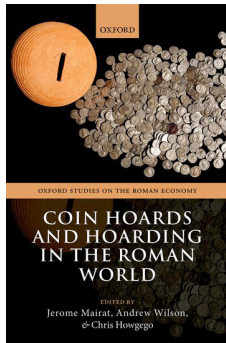
Version: Accepted Manuscript

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

RECENSIONS ET NOTES DE LECTURE



Jerome MAIRAT, Andrew WILSON & Chris HOWGEGO (eds.), *Coin Hoards and Hoarding in the Roman World*. Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2022, 23,4 x 15,6 cm, XVIII + 350 p., 86 fig.
ISBN 978-0-19-886638-1
Price: £90,00 / \$115,00

This volume is the product of a first conference on coin hoards and hoarding organised by the team of the “Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire”-project in Oxford, 2016^[1]. Under the auspices of a small core team, the CHRE project has assembled a dazzling number of coin hoards from “all coinages in use” during the Roman Empire, from ca. 31 BC to AD 400. The project’s open access website displays all hoards geographically and facilitates to search on various fields, making it an excellent research tool for bigger questions related to monetary and economic questions^[2]. At the publication of this review, the CHRE project has valorised more than 14,500 hoards, and this number will increase even further with the ongoing collaborations for the regions covering the north African coast and the Southeast of Europe [3].

The volume presents fifteen articles that are divided into three themes: i) approaches to coin hoard material; ii) regional hoarding patterns, and iii) longevity of coin circulation. Apart from various other ones, these three themes can be brought back to the volume’s two major contributions to numismatic scholarship.

A first contribution of the volume is that the volume sketches the potential for future research questions, themes and methodologies that can be analysed through the hoard material that has been assembled by the project. As such, the authors of the articles of theme ii, regional hoarding patterns, provide an overview of the number and variety of hoards and hoarding practices in the different parts of the Roman Empire: Grey on Britain; Hostein, Nouvel, Soum and Trommenschlager on Burgundy; Mairat on the Gallic Empire; Iakovidou and Kremydi on Southern Greece and Macedonia; Găzduc on Dacia; Bonchev on Moesia Inferior; Goldman on Roman Palestine and Faucher on Roman Egypt. The latter also gives some important information on the scholarly history of the ‘survival’ and registration of Roman coin hoards. This theme is also included, but elaborated in a lesser way, in the articles on Britain, Burgundy and Moesia Inferior.

The articles of theme iii, five in total, go a step further by discussing a specific case study on coin circulation from the available hoard material within the CHRE database. A very valuable contribution is made by Woytek, who not only presents the longevity of the Republican coins during the Roman Empire, but also demonstrates how Republican denarii were restored under Trajan in reaction to their disappearance. The article of Ponting and Butcher

^[1] A second conference entitled ‘Crossing Frontiers: the Evidence of Roman Coin Hoards’ was held in a 2022 dealing with the theme of Roman gold coins and coin hoards found outside the Roman Empire. The proceedings of this second conference are expected to be published in the near future.

^[2] Check for the potential, but also the biases of the CHRE database, R. BLAND, Coin Hoards in the Roman Empire: A Long-Range Perspective. Some Preliminary Observations. *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology* 7/1, 2020, p. 119-132 and O. HEKSTER & E. MANDERS, Coinage in the Roman Provinces: the RPC and CHRE Projects. *Journal of Roman Studies* 112, 2022, p. 199-213. In addition, the introduction of the volume discussed here addresses these issues as well.

^[3] The project’s website is: <https://chre.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/> (last accessed on 24/08/2023).

discusses the effects of the monetary reforms during the reigns of Nero and Septimius Severus – and in relation to those also the ones under Domitian and Caracalla – on hoarding practices. Their research shows that hoarders did not always discriminate on different levels of silver content, nuancing the effect of the workings of Gresham's law on hoarding practices. Hellings presents three case studies related to hoards in the North-West of Europe, showing how hoards can be used to study coin supply, but also its subsequent circulation through the Roman Empire (and beyond). The two last articles are dedicated to monetary practices in the Late Antiquity. In his article, van Heesch analyses for how long Roman small change, the so-called aes-4 coins, continued to circulate throughout the later Roman Empire and the early Middle Ages, and subsequent, how these coins were used. Hobbs deals with the relation between Roman silver coinage and silver flanged bowls, whose standardised weights in late antique hoards suggest a continuation of one denominational system during the second half of the 4th century.

The second contribution of the volume lays in the field of interpreting Roman hoards, because this requires a set of various methodologies. As such, the volume acts as a kind of seminal of different methodological frameworks of how to analyse, study and interpret hoard material, but also of how to reflect on the potential of the assembled hoard material and the biases and pitfalls involved. Previously, scholars, such as Creighton, Guest, Reece and Lockyear, have already provided valuable methodologies in interpreting hoard material to answer bigger monetary and historical questions, but most of these methodologies are very technical and statistical. Moreover, these studies have appeared scattered in articles or edited volumes, having often a focus on the situation on the British island during Roman times.^[4]

Throughout the different articles in this volume, a set of some valuable methodological approaches come to the fore. Lockyear's article explains how to use the statistical method of 'Correspondence Analysis' (CA) through a couple of case studies, although this statistical method proves to remain quite complex and no other study in the volume discussed retakes it. Furthermore, the article of Hostein, Nouvel, Soum and Trommenschlager presents how hoards can be analysed on a micro scale in relation towards different sizes of settlements and sites in Burgundy. Găzduc's article on the other hand analyses on a bigger regional level the later Roman hoards of the province of Dacia, combined with an imperial reign-based approach. Hellings' framework demonstrates how to trace the circulation of individual coin types through time, by using a regional set of hoards (with a total number of denarii of 10 and more) and their individual closing dates (TPQ dates).

Of course, we may not overestimate the potential of research with coin hoard material, a warning Howgego addresses himself in the introduction of this volume. This critical introduction forms a valuable eye-opener on the presented volume, addressing also the aims, biases and the future of the CHRE project. On her side, the reviewer hopes that the volume will be the first of a long-living series dedicated to coin hoard research.

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Hoard Structure and Coin Production in Antiquity: An Empirical Investigation. *The Numismatic Chronicle* 159, 1999, p. 215–243.

^[4] I give a random selection of some of their relevant publications: J. CREIGHTON, The Supply and Movement of Denarii in Roman Britain. *Britannia* 45, 2014, p. 121-163; P. GUEST, The Burial, Loss and Recovery of Roman Coin Hoards in Britain and Beyond: Past, Present and Future. In: J. NAYLOR and R. BLAND (eds.), *Hoarding and the Deposition of Metalwork from the Bronze Age to the 20th Century: A British Perspective*. Oxford, 2015, p. 101-116; R. REECE, Interpreting Roman Hoards. *World Archaeology* 20/2, 1988, p. 261-269; J. CASEY & R. REECE (ed.), *Coins and the Archaeologist* (2nd edition). London, 1988; K. LOCKYEAR, Coin Hoard Formation Revisited... In: J. ANDRESEN *et al.* (eds.), *Computing the Past. Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology*. Aarhus 1993, p. 367-376; K. LOCKYEAR,