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*The Archaeology of Wild Birds in Britain and Ireland.* By DALE SERJEANTSON. 290 mm. Pp xvii + 230, 21 col pls, 104 figs, 73 tabs. Oxbow Books, Oxford, 2023. ISBN 9781789259568. £60 (hbk).

The Glastonbury Lake Village reports were on our reading lists when I was a student, and among all the extraordinary finds from the excavations were bones of a Dalmatian pelican. This startling find, identified as early as 1917, revealed to me the potential of bird bones for telling us much on the ecology and history of species now extinct in the British Isles. As might be expected, pelicans are discussed in Dale Serjeantson's excellent survey of wild birds in archaeology and history. There have been other pelican finds since the Glastonbury excavations, notably from Haddenham in the Fens. It is clear from the cut marks that this species was very likely to have been eaten by the Iron Age peoples of the Fens and Levels. There may have been a consequence, as pelican bones are not found later than the Roman period, with inevitable questions to be posed concerning their regional extinction – was it predation and consumption, or disturbance and loss of habitat due to increasing human exploitation of these landscapes? By the Middle Ages the pelican had become a semi-mythical creature, whose appearance was only vaguely known to illustrators.

The story of the pelican in Britain encapsulates the archaeological reality and the human impact on wild bird populations. Serjeantson's book systematically surveys human–wild bird interaction from prehistory to the early modern period, taking groups such as the crow family, fenland birds, waders or pigeons as chapter headings. Inevitably there is overlap with domesticated species, especially of ducks and geese, but the book does not aim to discuss the domestic birds of the *basse-cour*. Rather, it puts the wild bird remains into their historical and archaeological context, including economic, dietary and ritual usages. There are good illustrated surveys of medieval and early modern exploitation, with much interesting and helpful data, often tabulated, covering all periods further back in time as well.

This book is a major resource for archaeologists seeking to understand and interpret the bird species on their sites and in their periods of study. Dale Serjeantson has given us a rich pageant of the archaeo-sociology of humans and

wild birds, and the volume will undoubtedly become a standard work on the subject.

ANTHONY C KING 

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*Making Money in the Early Middle Ages.* By RORY NAISMITH. 240mm. Pp 544, 41 figs. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2023. ISBN 9780691177403. £38 (hbk).

Written by Rory Naismith, professor of early medieval English history at Corpus Christi College (University of Cambridge), *Making Money in the Early Middle Ages* is an imposing, 500-page volume that covers a large spectrum of topics related to medieval numismatics. Recently published by Princeton University Press, the book offers an accurate inquiry into the production of coins, their distribution and their use in the aftermath of the Roman age and onwards. Naismith's approach to such an elaborate and wide-ranging subject is certainly broad-minded; in fact, the author does not limit his focus to a specific and narrow area or region, but rather discusses all topics, benefitting from wide geographical perspectives. Nonetheless, as seen later, there are some targeted and more specific case studies that the author pinpoints separately at the end of some chapters.

Undoubtedly, assessing a masterpiece like *Making Money in the Early Middle Ages* in a book review is not an easy task. Considering the substantial amount of information provided by the author, I will mostly outline the main structure of the volume, the major topics discussed in each chapter and, last but not least, all the good and exceptional qualities – and some (light) defects/lacks – that I noticed when examining the book.

Excluding the initial short sections, namely 'Illustrations', 'Preface' and 'Acknowledgements and Note on Values', Naismith's volume includes ten chapters that he has grouped as Part I (chs 2–5) and Part II (chs 6–9), excluding Chapters 1 and 10, which act as the book's introduction and conclusion. This division can be easily explained as follows. Part I mostly focuses on several aspects of theory and methods and outlines medieval coin production, guiding and preparing the reader for the more substantial Part II. This part is fully dedicated to medieval coinage between the fall of the Roman Empire and the late

eleventh century. Thus, Part I is organised mostly by thematic perspectives while Part II follows a strictly chronological order. Therefore, the book's structure is certainly solid and effective, offering the reader all the knowledge and perspectives necessary to understand the development of coinage in medieval Europe. The author's approach is very welcome to navigate through such a complex topic as medieval numismatics.

As said, Chapter I (pp 1–19) is placed as the first main and independent book section before Part I. Of course, every monograph needs an introduction, but Naismith's is more than an introduction: in this section, the author focuses on some crucial issues of medieval numismatics, starting from the canonical question of whether it can be properly considered 'the Dark Age of Currency' or/and 'the Dark Age of Money'. The distinction opens up several other issues that the author tries to solve, benefitting from the vital works of Philip Grierson, FSA (1910–2006), well-known numismatist and historian, who can probably be considered the leading authority in this field of research. Overall, Naismith pinpoints that money often 'carried a large social premium': thus, in his opinion, coins were probably utilised only by a strictly elite group of people, while the rest (called 'secondary users') could make use of 'a small slice of an already small pie available to them' (p 14). Naismith's hypothesis is certainly credible, but needs to be evaluated area by area and site by site, benefitting from substantial data from monetary circulation. Subsequently, the author highlights that the book mostly focuses on Western Europe. He justifies this choice in consideration of some vital historical and geographical factors, such as the potential wide-range contact with other areas further afield such as the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, parts of the Middle East and Africa and Central Asia (p 16). Lastly, Naismith carefully ponders the possible scarcity of written sources for studying and understanding medieval coinage, often caused by the loss of previously available documentation and the strictly reduced percentage of people who were able to write and read in that long period of time (pp 18–19).

Part I begins with Chapter 2, entitled 'Bullion, Mining and Minting' (pp 23–46), an accurate examination of the coin production process from locating metals to striking the coins. As a starting point, the author considers coins made of gold and silver, also tracing the origins of such materials and assessing the distribution of mines in Europe (pp 25–6). He then outlines the bullion production, assessing the various dynamics of its

circulation in Europe (pp 33–6). Related to Chapter 2 is the subsequent section that discusses the importance of coin production ('Why Make Money?', pp 47–72). It also assesses the amount of the currency produced in Western Europe with the help of some statistical approaches (pp 51–2). It is certainly hard to explain why coins were produced in the early medieval times, but the author formulates two credible patterns: the state demand model and the local demand model, distinguishing the upper and lower political and social scales at the same time (pp 54–5).

Subsequently, Chapter 4 includes a long examination of the use of money in medieval times (pp 73–138) in which the author considers the different economic, practical, religious, ritual and social implications of utilising coins. In this regard, of interest are the sections entitled 'Money and Gift-Giving' (pp 75–85) and 'Making a Statement: Money, Status, and Ritual' (pp 85–91), since the author cleverly combines the numismatic aspect of coin circulation with the religious and social dimensions, the latter also highlighted in 'Peasants and Coined Money' (pp 130–46). 'Money, Metal and Commodities' is the last chapter of Part I (pp 139–83). The wide range of topics covered in this section testifies to the remarkable acuity of the author, who often considers and assesses a variety of sources, including archaeological finds. They were considered exchangeable commodities, circulating simultaneously with coins (see, for instance, the Forsa Ring) (p 140, fig 5.1). In terms of its content, this chapter might be considered unconventional for a numismatic book on coinage, but is in fact strictly correlated with the wider practice of economic, social and ritual exchanges performed especially in northern Europe in the early Middle Ages. Particularly, these aspects are successfully and fully outlined in the subsection entitled 'The Social Dynamics of Mixed Moneys'. The author also highlights the following cases studies: Northern Spain (pp 156–60), the Viking World (pp 160–72) (including the stunning Spillings Hoard buried in AD 870 and containing hundreds of silver bracelets, arm rings and even 14,300 dirhams) and Tang and Song China (pp 172–82).

Part II starts with Chapter 6 discussing the impact of the Roman civilisation on early medieval coinage in Europe (pp 187–220). The Roman coinage's legacy was mostly determined by the strong importance of gold – especially monetised as the *solidus* – in the late antiquity period. Moreover, Naismith pinpoints the essential concept of coins as a source

of power, also a fundamental aspect of Roman coinage in the very last centuries of the Empire. Thus, it is obvious that the main aim of this section is to provide the reader with a valid background before facing Chapter 7, entitled 'Continuity and Change in the Fifth to Seventh Centuries' (pp 221–61), a substantial analysis of the relationship between Roman and early medieval coinages. However, the author discusses some long-standing issues, such as the spread of low-value/denomination coins in northern Europe between the end of the Roman Empire and the fifth and sixth centuries. In addition to this, Naismith considers the role of tax payments and the 'gold economy' in the Barbarian world that has certainly influenced the shape of the whole 'monetary landscape' in some regions and settlements such as Gaul (pp 235–7) and post-Roman Italy (pp 237–9). Thus, he identifies three major 'New Gold' macro regions, namely the Merovingian Gaul (pp 239–46), Visigothic Iberia (pp 246–53) and Anglo-Saxon England (pp 253–8).

Following a chronological order, the substantial Chapter 8 (pp 262–316) focuses on the essential introduction of the new silver denarius, which circulated approximately between AD 660 and 900. Other currencies, however, were introduced in some areas of Europe, such as the new penny launched in England. In addition, the chapter outlines some matters related to the origins of the denarius. The author also considers archaeological sources, especially some remarkable finds in Anglo-Saxon graves (p 273). He wisely pinpoints the political aspects of the new silver coinage in relation to the role of local elites in early medieval Europe (pp 297–313).

Before the concluding remarks, the last major section of the book can be considered. Chapter 9 evaluates the inseparable bond between money and power during the tenth and eleventh centuries (pp 317–91). Considering the remarkable increase in trading routes and exchange throughout Europe, the author suggests that several states and societies were experiencing a sort of 'Commercial Revolution' from the tenth century onwards. This theory was previously formulated by other scholars, such as Raymond de Roover, but mostly in relation to the thirteenth century (pp 320–1). However, at the end of the eleventh century, we can properly speak about 'a monetising economy' in which coin production, distribution and use played an essential role in trading and other economic activities on a local and national scale (pp 322–3). The evolution of such a new phenomenon is

masterfully described in the section 'Money, Markets, and Lands: Mechanisms of Monetisation' (pp 333–9). Having outlined the wide context, Naismith identifies some noteworthy case studies, including Italy (pp 345–52), West Francia (pp 352–66), East Francia/Germany (pp 366–76) and, last but not least, England (pp 376–88).

The book's conclusion (pp 392–9) offers a final, overall assessment of coinage in the Middle Ages. Owing to the complexity and variety of topics assessed in the previous chapters, the author decides to sum up his concluding remarks in nine essential points of relevance. The first of these is that people continued mostly 'to think with money' in Western Europe during the early medieval period. Moreover, as point number three makes plain, there was a lack of homogeneity in the vast area of medieval Europe, which followed several paths and outcomes while producing and utilising coins. Coinage can be often associated with the social dimension if we consider the diversity of medieval communities in which wealthy elites, merchants, lords and landowners operated. The eighth concluding point highlights the essential interpretation of how people used coins in medieval times and how the coins finally circulated. There is not, however, a unique interpretation here: it mostly depended on the regional and social context in which coins were practically utilised in major transactions or daily trading activities (pp 397–8).

Following the conclusion, the volume includes additional sections such as Abbreviations and the Bibliography (pp 405–97). The long and thorough list of references is very substantial, including primary sources and secondary up-to-date sources on medieval numismatics, history, social studies, economic history, archaeology and much more. Works are in different languages (English, French, German, Italian, Latin, etc). Furthermore, the index, an essential searching tool for the reader, facilitates the tracing of the names of places, things and people that are mentioned in the volume.

In terms of structure, methodology and scientific value, I do not see any considerable mistakes or faults to be reported. There are a few minor deficiencies: the photographic material could perhaps have been richer in some book sections; on the other hand, all available pictures and maps are certainly high quality. We can also report the lack of a potential documentary appendix, which could have collected (at least) a selection of records with their relevant transcript and translation (for instance, in case they were in Latin). The author has, however,

briefly inserted and mentioned some documents, such as an original diploma signed by Otto I (pp 93–73) in which the sovereign allowed the establishment of a mint at Rorschach (Switzerland) (p 70, fig 3.4), though this has only been summarised.

Finally, *Making Money in the Early Middle Ages* is a masterpiece, a detailed and well-documented work on medieval numismatics mostly due to its in-depth theoretical approach and the wider, overall perspectives that the author utilises to navigate such a complex subject. The structure works very well, offering the reader a valid numismatic and historical approach in Part I to help understand the evolution of coinage from the end of the Roman Empire until the eleventh century in Part II. Thus, Naismith's monumental volume can be defined as a research monograph, or, as an alternative, a valid and thorough handbook on medieval coinage that numismatists, historians and others proficient in related disciplines might profitably utilise for several purposes for many years to come.

ANTONINO CRISÀ 

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*Archaeology, Economy, and Society: England from the fifth to the fifteenth century.* By DAVID A HINTON. New edition. 232 mm. Pp viii + 357, 47 figs. Routledge Archaeology of Northern Europe. Routledge, London, 2022. ISBN 9780367440824. £36.99 (pbk).

Here's an admission. I had never read the first edition of this book, published in 1990. I had opened it countless times, read and referred to many of its sections and chapters and set it as essential reading for students studying medieval archaeology. But only when asked to review this revised edition have I had occasion to read it from cover to cover. To do so underlines the qualities of thoroughness and practical good sense in interpretation that it offers, with an ability to encompass abundant and precise detail and yet remain succinct, and showing where and how views differ in an even-handed manner. In the latter respect, indeed, one might occasionally upbraid the author for being too habitually non-committal; nonetheless at the heart of this monograph lies the principle that it is the evidence that is fundamental, and which

eventually will settle debates, if ever at all. It is salutary that these revisions were completed just before the publication of the new aDNA data (Gretzinger *et al* 2022) that have transformed the basis on which the model of an *adventus Saxonum* has to stand. Arguably the most important general point about the archaeology of England in the long Middle Ages from the end of Roman rule just post-AD 400 to AD 1500 surveyed by Hinton is how substantially and significantly this field continues to grow through new discoveries.

After a very short 'Introduction', really a preface to the second edition, this volume proceeds chronologically, with a chapter per century. As the title implies, evidence of economic and material life is typically treated as central, usually preceding social topics, and with little inclination to go far into ideological interpretations of the archaeological record. Discussing fifteenth-century churches, for instance, the first point made (p 250) is that urban parish church closures of that time reflect the shrinkage of most towns. A following section (pp 262–4) does present the evidence for changes in religious attitudes, lay piety and investment in rebuilding in this century, but with no suggestion that this anticipates the Reformation. The approach could not be clearer than where the book ends (p 273): this was the dawn of the Tudor period, but Hinton stresses that no one in 1500 knew that. They would not, he says, have foreseen the coming changes in the organisation of domestic space, or productive improvements in land-management; they could not have imagined a schism in the Church and something called Protestantism. 'They would probably not have placed their money on a Tudor still ruling England [a century later], let alone a queen.' These statements are narrowly true, but long-term changes, the cultural shifts we call the Renaissance and the birth of the modern era, were both surely and visibly under way.

One point needs to be made about production standards. The quality and clarity of most of the illustrations is dreadful, and the publishers owe it to their customers to make better efforts to achieve satisfactory resolution and contrast in greyscale figures. With the continuing supply of new information, we may yet see a third edition, even with the author now in well-earned retirement. If so, I hope he will also regain the confidence to employ the shift key and write 'Christianity' and 'Anglo-Saxon' in the conventional manner for proper nouns and their associated attributive adjectives rather than