

pottery finds using numerous maps, with special attention paid to the Late Roman Amphora 2/13. Joanita Vroom's chapter is an excellent example of how an overview of the distribution of a pottery type should be written and how it can be used convincingly to highlight, in this case, the strength and resilience of the city of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire.

To summarise, this volume covers all geographical areas of the Byzantine sphere, from Hispania to Aksum, contrasts little-known places of the Byzantine world, and publishes new material pertinent to the discussion topics. This book is vital for anybody exploring this time period and is an important addition to the academic scholarship of the Byzantine period, especially given the increased interest in the alleged consequences of epidemiological and climatic events.

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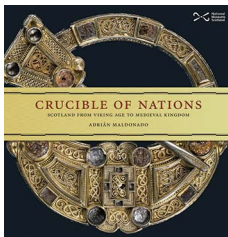
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ADRIÁN MALDONADO. 2021. *Crucible of nations: Scotland from Viking Age to Medieval Kingdom*. Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland; 978-1-910682-43-2 paperback £25.



Previous research undertaken within the remit of the Glenmorangie Research Project, on behalf of National Museums Scotland (see 'Glenmorangie Research Project into Early Medieval Scotland' website), resulted in the publication of *Early Medieval Scotland* (2012) and *Scotland's Early Silver* (2017). The volumes investigated and celebrated Scotland's early medieval material culture and heritage through the collections of National Museums Scotland. In the third volume, which is the outcome of a research fellowship, Adrián

Maldonado tackles the Viking Age from the fall of the Picts to the rise of Alba.

Maldonado's ambition for his fellowship was to investigate the transformations that occurred during the late first and early second millennium AD, and to explore the changes and continuities which resulted in a unified kingdom of Scots. This substantial publication successfully meets that objective with its eight richly illustrated chapters and highlights, which focus on individual projects, ideas, sites and finds.

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Martin Goldberg, a curator at National Museums Scotland, wrote the introductory chapter which is inspired by the carved cross-slab from Hilton of Cadboll, in north-east Scotland. It sets the scene for the book by discussing this early Christian sculpture curated by the community of the Fearn Peninsula from the ninth to the twelfth centuries: “The cultural context that produced the [...] cross-slab was very different to the time of its re-erection. What changes in society, in how people lived, had swirled around this stone during those centuries?” (p. xiv). Maldonado picks up that question in Chapter 1 ‘Naming nations’, introducing the names, languages and people associated with the patchwork of kingdoms that occupy the landscape: “This is not just the story of Scotland, but of the medieval kingdoms of England, Ireland, Isle of Man, and Norway, and many others ...” (p. 3). In Chapter 2 ‘An Imperial Age’, the beginning of the Viking Age is contextualised with a review of the Pictish kingdom that preceded it. We learn of power, wealth and production, from the grain-rich agriculturalists to the wealthy and industrious monastic communities providing centres for production, trade and redistribution in a region with no established emporia.

At this point Maldonado looks beyond Scotland’s horizons to the earliest recorded raids on England’s Dorset coast (AD 789), and the “growing entanglement of Scandinavian seafarers in the burgeoning maritime trade opportunities across the North Sea and the Baltic” (p. 37). The chapter concludes that, while the Viking Age introduces a new cast of characters, the story of Scotland’s development continues to involve a host of usual suspects—Picts, Vikings, Gaels, Britons and Northumbrians—all with as much to gain as they had to lose during this period.

Chapter 3 ‘Worlds of the dead’ breaks from the historical narrative and its interplay with the archaeological record, to focus on the burial archaeology from the period. Through graves, we encounter narratives of both the buried and the living, with the striking conclusion that some of the ostentatiously ‘Viking’ burials were “aspirations to a certain kind of world [...] as it was being re-made” (p. 69). The following chapters continue to investigate the period through its material evidence for Viking activity (Chapter 4 ‘Age of raids’), dress and fashion (Chapter 5 ‘The serpent and thorn’), and wealth and economy (Chapter 6 ‘A silver age’).

Some of the objects discussed that evoke the act of raiding include: two hinged strap mounts converted to shoulder straps recovered from a boat grave in Oronsay; and an ornate bronze crozier with artistic parallels to Iona from a royal house hall site at Helgö, Sweden. Hoards are discussed in detail, examining how they document increased access to distant networks and record wealth created during a tumultuous period. Evidence for personal dress items increases through the period, with evidence for new materials, such as flax for linen, as well as distinctive new fashions, such as oval brooches and penannular brooches, associated with status and competitive display.

Discussion of silver and hoards leads on to recognition of the existence of different ‘common markets’. Some, such as the Anglo-Saxon *burh* market towns, were accessed using coinage; others, such as the beach markets in Viking Age Scotland, using silver bullion; and still others, for example the ‘Scoto-Scandinavian’ context, using ring money. In turn, discussion of money and economy leads on to consideration of more mundane goods. Using the Orkney

earldom as an example, the location of the Northern Isles, today perceived as rural and distant, is shown to be located in “an ideal nodal position” (p. 148) to control major exports such as fish and steatite (soapstone) vessels. Wider discussion of such commodities then loops back to silver and the big question “which, if any, of these trade goods might explain the masses of silver flowing into Britain and Ireland by the tenth century?” (p. 154).

The final two chapters focus on belief and enchantment (Chapter 7 ‘An animated world’), and the ‘long eleventh century’ and the changes of the twelfth century (Chapter 8 ‘An experimental age’). This last chapter neatly brings together the evidence discussed throughout the volume, highlighting the establishment of a newly settled warrior class, who were “not Vikings, but knights and earls” (p. 196), occupying new landscapes of power with interacting elites from “the kings of Scots, the kings of the isles and the earls of Orkney” (p. 205). The author concludes with the bells that signal a change in the air, with discussion about the Kilmichael Glassary bell reliquary, an artefact that first rang in a pre-Viking Age and was enshrined in the twelfth century.

In producing this publication, Maldonado has created an engaging and essential read for anyone with an interest in Vikings and the early development of Scotland. This research into the National Museums of Scotland collections tells a much bigger story of peoples and places which is skilfully threaded through the landscapes of Scotland and beyond. The context for this exploration is provided with a deeply researched narrative and clearly presented historical backdrop, which sets the scene for an up-to-date, extensive review and interpretation of the archaeological material. The result navigates many aspects of the period, offering numerous insightful observations within a far-reaching and generously illustrated analysis that captures an energetic and effervescent period of Scotland’s development.

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GLENMORANGIE RESEARCH PROJECT INTO EARLY MEDIEVAL SCOTLAND.

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