

Hoard! A new perspective: wear, landscape, provenance analysis

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Abstract:

In prehistoric archaeology, especially hoard research, interest in objects was traditionally limited to cataloguing artefacts by type and placing them in chronological sequence. Sometimes, artefacts of exceptional aesthetic value were described in greater detail, highlighting their unique depositional context or a specialised method of production. Numerous theories and interpretations of the mass deposition phenomenon have been proposed; however, their empirical foundations have often been questionable, as they relied on the same limited corpus of information.

Recent years have witnessed a significant expansion of analytical perspectives, both in understanding the role of metal hoards within cultural landscapes and in examining assemblages and individual artefacts. This progress has been driven by advances in wear analysis, compositional and provenance studies, and a growing range of archaeometallurgical techniques. Established research questions are being revisited using experimental archaeology, statistical modelling, and 3D documentation technologies.

Equally important has been the recognition of non-metallic artefacts within hoards. Materials such as pottery, stone, and bone are now studied alongside metals and, in some cases, constitute the sole components of Bronze and Iron Age deposits. As a result, hoards are no longer viewed merely as collections of attractive objects without context, but as complex archaeological phenomena examined and recorded with rigorous methodological precision.

This session invites scholars engaged in the study of hoards comprising diverse materials and spanning different chronological periods. We particularly welcome contributions that apply

innovative analytical and methodological approaches to this category of evidence, including but not limited to:

contextual and regional analyses;

landscape archaeology, geostatistical analysis, and non-invasive prospection;

investigations of mixed or exclusively non-metallic deposits;

archaeometallurgical research

traceological studies.

We also encourage contributions from researchers addressing other aspects of hoard studies who employ statistical tools, artificial intelligence, or any other methods we might not yet have considered, but are particularly eager to learn about.