



Silver and Society in Late Antiquity: Functions and Meanings of Silver Plate in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries

By Ruth E. Leader-Newby

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The spectacular hoards of late antique silver - Mildenhall, Thetford, Sevso - discovered since the middle of the last century have aroused much interest in this luxury art form. But what did these pieces mean to their owners, and why was silverware so important in late antiquity? Silver and Society in Late Antiquity examines such questions through an integrated, synthetic analysis of the history of silver in the Roman empire between 300 and 650 AD, focusing upon the cultural significance of this luxury art form in all its different manifestations-- sacred, imperial and domestic. Ruth Leader-Newby looks at a wide range of objects from both the eastern and western halves of the Roman empire - including Britain - in order to determine silver's role in the wider sphere of late antique visual culture, asking questions about the relative significance of individual forms of artistic production, and their relationship with each other. In doing so, key issues for the artistic and cultural history of late antiquity are raised - the use of the imperial image, the visual construction of the sacred in Christianity, the cohesive social role of elite intellectual culture, and the Christianization of the domestic sphere. As this book demonstrates, when studied in its historical context, silver can substantially enrich our understanding of late Roman art and culture.

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Editorial Review

Review

'I am struck by what an excellent book this is - careful, considered but with some very significant new challenges and ways of approaching the silverware of antiquity. I think the way the book is structured with two chapters on imperial and sacred silver and two on different aspects of paideia is not only satisfactory in its own right, but feeds well into the much broader current interest in cultural matters in the history of late antiquity.' Jas Elsner, Corpus Christi College, Oxford '... handsomely produced and well illustrated...' Antiquity 'With a generous number of high quality illustrations, and useful, short overviews of the relevant archaeological vital statistics (date, provenance, and the often tortuous and murky history of modern ownership), the volume is quite accessible to the non-specialist. This is a rewarding study of a luxury art form as a cultural phenomenon.' Ancient History '... Leader-Newby has made a valuable addition to the study of late-antique silver. The book is well illustrated in black and white; the bibliography, part of which is to be found in the notes only, is reasonably full. This account of silver makes a large field accessible to the nonspecialist.' Speculum

About the Author

Ruth E. Leader-Newby, University of Warwick, UK

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