

Steinsetzungen, Ringburgen oder Bildsteine – als Manifestationen eines sich beständig wandelnden Weltbildes neu zu deuten. Was Andrén auf kaum 190 Textseiten – die zudem eine Fülle erhellenden Bildmaterials enthalten – an neuen Deutungsperspektiven unterbringt, ist durchaus bewundernswert, doch ist diese weite Perspektive auch mit einigen Verkürzungen erkauft – schon aus diesem Grund kann „Tracing Old Norse Cosmology“ kaum als Einführung in die Materie dienen. Wenn der Verfasser etwa auf die „high-seat pillars“ als mögliche Repräsentation der Weltachse verweist (S. 43), so muss der Leser selbst das Vorwissen mitbringen, dass es sich bei diesen ‚Hochsitzpfeilern‘ keineswegs um Realia handelt, sondern um ein lediglich in den Isländersagas vorkommendes literarisches Motiv. Hier wie an anderen Stellen werden Weltenbaum und Weltachse im Übrigen umstandslos miteinander identifiziert – möglicherweise zu Recht, doch hätte man sich einen Hinweis darauf erwartet, dass diese Gleichsetzung aus religionsphänomenologischer Perspektive keineswegs unumstritten ist. Ebenso vermisst man bei der Deutung der Anlage Ismantorp als ‚Midgard‘-Repräsentation eine Diskussion dieses mythologischen Begriffs, die dessen problematischer Unbestimmtheit Rechnung trägt, denn Midgard kann außer der Menschenwelt auch die göttliche Sphäre umfassen. Abzuwarten bleibt schließlich, wie die Bildforschung auf die Interpretation der Goldbrakteaten-Ikonographie als Manifestation eines ‚solaren‘ Herrschaftskonzepts reagieren wird, denn dieser Ansatz spielt in den aktuellen Diskussionen kaum mehr eine Rolle (zur rezenten Forschung vgl. W. HEIZMANN / M. AXBOE [Hrsg.], *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit. Auswertung und Neufunde*. RGA-Ergbd. 40 [Berlin, New York 2011]).

Bei einer Monographie, die auf knappem Raum ein überaus weites Feld religionshistorischer Forschung in den Blick nimmt und mit einer Reihe neuer Perspektiven aufwartet, kann es kaum ausbleiben, dass manche der Deutungen auf Widerspruch stoßen und vielleicht auch als spekulativ abgetan werden. Doch unabhängig von der Frage, welche Deutungsansätze Andrén sich tatsächlich durchsetzen werden, zeigt diese anregende Monographie beispielhaft, wie die Archäologie zu einem tieferen Verständnis der vorchristlichen Kosmologie im nördlichen Europa beitragen kann – daher ist diesem Buch zu wünschen, dass es viele interessierte und kritische Leser finden wird.

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**SUNHILD KLEINGÄRTNER, Die frühe Phase der Urbanisierung an der südlichen Ostseeküste im ersten nachchristlichen Jahrtausend.** Studien zur Siedlungsgeschichte und Archäologie der Ostseegebiete 13. Wachholtz Verlag, Neumünster 2014. € 50.00. ISBN 978-3-529-01373-7. 503 pages with numerous illustrations and tables.

For decades, researchers have been aware that the southern coasts of the Baltic Sea were home to several early medieval trading places that could be compared, in some respects, to the contemporary “emporia” in Scandinavia and the North Sea area. The early phase of urbanisation associated with the emporia thus seemed to have been an active dynamic in the Baltic Sea region as well in the first millennium CE. Yet until recently, the evidence of these sites was sparse and difficult to assess. A researcher wishing to compare the archaeology of early northern trading sites was faced not only with a dearth of written sources pertaining to sites in the Baltic Sea area, but also with a state of research and publication for the Baltic Sea sites that was rudimentary at best, compared to long-standing research foci such as Hamwic, Dorestad, Hedeby, Ribe or Birka.

Since the turn of the millennium, the active research on Groß Strömkendorf (“Reric”) near Wismar has deservedly captured attention. Meanwhile, research on other sites has progressed as well. The present study by Sunhild Kleingärtner, submitted and accepted in 2011 as a “Habilitationsschrift” at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, brings a long-awaited overview and comparative analysis to this challenging subject. It is now published as a sizable and notably well-produced monograph with excellent maps and full colour illustrations as volume 13 of the “Studien zur Siedlungsgeschichte und Archäologie der Ostseegebiete”.

The evidential basis of the work is presented in two appendices that take up nearly half of the volume. The first (pp. 251–302) is a detailed survey, which charts the maritime topography of the coastal landscapes from the Kieler Förde to the Oder, and assesses the potential for early medieval landing sites in this region, based on a combination of all available geological / geographical, archaeological and onomastic sources. The second (pp. 303–450) is a systematic compilation and critical evaluation of the evidence pertaining to the four most thoroughly researched trading sites in this area. Here, among succinct summaries of research on the well-known sites Groß Strömkendorf, Rostock-Dierkow and Ralswiek, one finds a hidden bonus: a 105 pages long presentation of recent and mostly unpublished research, in part directed by the author, at Menzlin and adjacent sites in the region of the lower Peene river. The presentation includes the notable results of large-scale metal detecting surveys, and the detailed publication of excavations of an elaborately built road and bridge constructed in the eighth century to facilitate traffic across the Peene river valley.

The results from Menzlin, and the profound re-assessment they enable, might have been more than enough to fuel a dissertation. Indeed, much of the present work could have been structured with a point of departure in this key site was it not for a basic theoretical tenet, which the author presents at the outset of the work. Urbanisation, in her view, is not primarily important as a process that concerns the development of places, but as a dynamic which affects the evolution of societies – a “gesamtgesellschaftlicher Prozess”. For this reason, the focus on individual sites, which has been a common approach in urban archaeology, needs to be supplemented with a more dedicated, comparative analysis of settlements as systems – a move from “urban history” to “history of urbanisation” (p. 15).

Following this lead, the book is deliberately organised to minimise discussion of the sites individually: Groß Strömkendorf, Rostock-Dierkow, Ralswiek and Menzlin are not the foci of analysis as individual places, but in so far as they contribute jointly to characterise wider types and trends. This choice is well-reasoned in light of the present state of knowledge. Notwithstanding the quality of the new data on Menzlin, the author demonstrates in chapter 4 (pp. 67–86) that all sites except Groß Strömkendorf currently have a rather inconsistent record of investigation, which leaves fundamental questions unanswered. Indeed, the reassessment of the data from Ralswiek leads to the conclusion (p. 152) that this site, long seen as the text-book example of an early coastal trading place in the Western Baltic, was probably not engaged in long-distance communication before the time when the other three sites declined in the second half of the ninth century. Conversely, the analysis of the maritime landscape leads to the suggestion that at least two other sites, at Barth, west of Rügen, and Wittow, on the northern tip of Rügen, are more likely candidates for early trading places in this region.

In light of this and other basic uncertainties, it makes good sense, regardless of theoretical approach, to approach the sites comparatively, with a focus on common trends and with a critical view to the incomplete record. In a research tradition where a mainstream trend in recent years has been to highlight detailed site history and dismiss typological approaches as concealing individual reality, this is a bold and welcome move.

Defining the sites as a group proves more difficult than one might at first expect. As the author shows in chapter 4, research history offers a plethora of names and definitions to conceptualise the set: emporia, landing places, colonies, etc. She notes that most of these concepts express regional research traditions rather than deliberate distinctions. In reviewing historical usage and the functional implications of a variety of concepts (chapter 7, pp. 175–199), she concludes that no term makes a comfortable fit with the known character of the sites. Neither the concepts of emporium, gateway-community, port of trade nor colony describe the functions of the sites adequately (p. 198). She therefore decides to revert to the traditional usage for the region in question: coastal trading places (“Seehandelsplätze”).

This is a surprising conclusion for a chapter that sets out by declaring the intention to pursue cross-cultural research based on generalising models. The argument is consistent as such, though: by considering the set of sites in light of the available, generalising models, it is concluded that the models in question misfit the case. But what *kind* of places are the southern Baltic “coastal trading places” then in a cross-cultural sense – if they be neither emporia, gateway-communities, ports of trade or colonies (albeit a little of each)? Even if the conundrum will remain, the analysis might have found more clarity by either developing a classification based on the particular practices concerned (as the reviewer has argued elsewhere, see S. M. SINDBÆK, *Networks and nodal points: the emergence of towns in early Viking Age Scandinavia*. *Antiquity* 81, 2007, 119–132), or by adopting an established frame of cross-cultural comparison, as presented, for example, in Chris GOSDEN’s “*Archaeology and Colonialism: Cultural Contact from 5000 BC to the Present*” (Cambridge 2004).

The comparative approach is pursued more directly on the level of material evidence of what is termed material, personal and institutional infrastructure (chapter 5, pp. 87–153). The first of these headings covers features such as roads, bridges, houses, wells or boats. The item-by-item comparison, which also draws in other regional sites and trading places such as Haithabu or Wolin, gives a rewarding group portrait and emphasises the similarities within the group (with the exception of Ralswiek, as noted above). As “personal infrastructure” the study considered the demographic profile, which can be gleaned especially from site cemeteries, as well as from the activities documented in the settlements. Menzlin and Groß Strömkendorf, which have the best evidence in this respect, both show a mixed population in terms of age, gender, status and cultural affiliations, pointing to settled residents of a mixed origin, and to a notable degree of occupational specialisation. “Institutional infrastructure”, finally, concerns common social norms and structures such as cultic activities and relations of power. The latter are discussed in terms of the influence of local resp. non-local elites and the relations between coastal trading places and fortified centres.

The analysis continues with discussions concerning local hinterland interactions (chapter 6, pp. 155–173), the functions of sites (chapter 7, pp. 175–199), the demise of the sites in the late ninth century (chapter 8, pp. 201–206), and the subsequent changes to social relations and settlement patterns, which may have been occasioned by this development (chapter 9, pp. 207–222). The latter of these chapters concludes, importantly, that the long-distance trade and crafts associated with the coastal trading places were not simply relocated to near-by fortified centres when the coastal sites ceased, as has often been suggested. Rather, their demise was associated with a more thorough re-orientation of exchange and social networks (as well as with the growth of competing centres such as Haithabu or Wolin).

Having established these frames of reference in terms of the structure, function and development of the coastal trading places, chapter 10 (pp. 223–233) moves on to assess the wider social effects of the communications facilitated in these sites. The analysis issues from the concept of cultural transfer, borrowed from the usage in Germanistic research (s. M. ESPAGNE / M. WERNER,

Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu einem neuen interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des C.N.R.S. Francia 13, 1985, 502–510). The concept and model is designed to allow for a two-way receiver-focussed frame of analysis of cultural change, as an alternative to more common centre-periphery models, which regards receivers as (relatively) passive. In an intriguing adaptation, the author offers a quantifiable version of the cultural transfer model, enabling a comparative study of the selection, transmission and reception of a range of cases relevant to the study, ranging from burial customs to pottery technology and dynastic gifts. The analysis raises an intriguing perspective for the discussion of early urbanisation, albeit the application is restricted to a proof of concept without detailed integration into the main analysis of the coastal trading places.

The study concludes by returning to the conceptual point of departure to see urbanisation as a “gesamtgesellschaftlicher Prozess” (chapter 11, pp. 235–241), and reviews the implications of this perspective for the understanding of the regional trajectory, which has been charted in the previous chapters.

As the saying goes, this is not a book to be tossed aside lightly. It is a profound source of arguments, perspectives and evidence for research on early medieval (proto-) towns and exchange to get to grasp with. It also holds important implications for the archaeological study of cultural interaction in general and Slavic-Scandinavian interaction in particular. The study puts the unjustly neglected southern Baltic coastal trading places firmly back in the discussion about trends towards urbanisation in Early Medieval Northern Europe, along with Scandinavian and North Sea emporia. It brings much-needed clarity and pertinent arguments to this field of study – in addition to a greatly augmented evidential base for Menzlin, a most intriguing site. It refrains from presenting a unifying model or a specific, historical narrative for the process considered, but concludes on the methodological approach, which has been the main focus throughout the text. In the genre of archaeological “Habilitationssarbeiten”, this decision deserves no small praise.

Above all, this book deserved credit for the effort to pursue comparative research based on detailed, quantitative evidence, and to do so on an erudite and critically researched basis. Early medieval urban sites are equally rich and riddled contexts. To expel the riddles, the richness must be properly invested. This investigation makes a fine start.

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**ULRICH BACK / THOMAS HÖLTKEN / DOROTHEA HOCHKIRCHEN (eds), *Der Alte Dom zu Köln. Befunde und Funde zur vorgotischen Kathedrale*.** With contributions by K. H. Wedepohl, A. Kronz, R. Stinnesbeck, C. M. M. Bayer, V. Holtmeyer-Wild and conclusion by G. Hauser. Studien zum Kölner Dom Volume 12. Verlag Kölner Dom, Cologne 2012. € 129.00. ISBN 978-3-922442-77-6. VIII and 660 pages, with numerous figures and plates, 1 DVD.

In 1946, shortly after the Second World War and in a time of great needs and uncertainties, one of the most long-lasting and ambitious excavation projects in Germany started: beneath the floors of one of Europe’s largest Gothic cathedrals its predecessors were sought, notably the “Alte Dom”, an episcopal church attested by written sources of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The first head of excavation, Otto Doppelfeld, was able to open large floor sections within the church damaged by war and thus