

tions. Many interested laymen are likely to be young people who are faced with runic symbolism in their everyday life – especially on the internet, where extremist and esoteric ideas are highly visible. This leads to the question if, in this case, a conventional book is the most suitable medium for educational work at all. Do young people interested in runes buy and read books? Would it be more sensible to aim for a kind of online platform conducted by experts of Old Norse and German Philology, Archaeology, Ancient History and other related disciplines, in order to impart knowledge about “Germanic” topics like runes, far beyond ideological and popular patterns? As long as Germanic history does not play any role in the curricula of our schools and thus this topic is surrendered to extremists, fantasists and popular culture, such an internet platform seems to be an important desideratum. In the meantime, A. Krause’s book will be helpful to educate and fascinate lay readers with its reliable and professional presentation.

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**BARBARA HAUSMAIR, Am Rande des Grabes. Todeskonzepte und Bestattungsritual in der frühmittelalterlichen Alamannia.** Sidestone Press, Leiden 2015. € 135.–. ISBN 978-90-8890-295-6. (Hardback). € 44.95. ISBN 978-90-8890-295-6. (Paperback). 367 pages with 117 figures, 14 tables, and a digital appendix with additional 232 tables.

This publication is the revised doctoral thesis of Barbara Hausmair, which she defended in 2013 at the University of Vienna. It is amended by a digital appendix available online in open access (<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:352-0-283673> [last access 17 October 2018]). In 2014, the doctoral thesis was awarded the Grete-Mostny-Dissertation-Prize of the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies of the University of Vienna.

The book is divided into eight chapters, preceded by a short introduction (pp. 9–11) in which Hausmair emphasises that a close scrutiny of the archaeological material, particularly with regards to typological and chronological indicators, has up until now formed the core of early medieval studies published in German, with a second focus placed on the reconstruction of social structure. Although matters of religion have been taken into account, especially in connection with the transition from paganism to Christianity, the relationship between Early Medieval people and death, as well as Early Medieval people’s ontology and social practices had rarely been discussed. The aim of the reviewed publication, therefore, is to contribute to this underrepresented aspect of research.

The first chapter (pp. 13–31), on “archaeology and death”, summarises the history of research in Early Medieval burial archaeology, focusing in particular on analyses and interpretive models created by German-speaking archaeologists. Starting with the first extensive works on Merovingian burial sites in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Hausmair moves on to a discussion of the publications of important authors such as Joachim Werner, Rainer Christlein, and Heiko Steuer. The research history ends with the recent analyses of social structures which have mainly been shaped by the work of Sebastian Brather. This short overview of Merovingian burial research history might be especially useful for students and readers new to Early Medieval burial archaeology as it provides a well-informed introduction into Early Medieval burial research. This chapter also includes a historical

overview of publications on ‘theory and graves’ where the author draws mainly from English-language publications.

The second chapter (pp. 33–57) discusses death and concepts of death in general and in the archaeology of Early Medieval burial in detail. Hausmair starts with short philosophical insights and some remarks on death from a biological and medical point of view, but also points out that her publication will not provide an extensive presentation of an interdisciplinary thanatology. For this, she directs the reader to the work of Kerstin P. HOFMANN (e. g. *Anthropologie als umfassende Humanwissenschaft. Einige Bemerkungen aus archäologischer Sicht. Mitt. Anthr. Ges. Wien* 136/137, 2006/2007, 283–300). A closer look is directed to concepts of death, the (possible) ideas of an afterworld, and to rites of passage that are connected with death and burial. She examines pagan and Christian burial rites, and the possible characteristics of an Early Medieval Christianity, forming a base from which to formulate her aim of research – to question whether patterns in the archaeological record in the societies under investigation can be related to the time and circumstances of death, thus revealing possible concepts of death through material culture (p. 55).

The cemeteries she inspected are presented in chapter 3 (pp. 59–75): Bad Mingolsheim (Lkr. Karlsruhe) with 67 burials in 61 graves, Horb-Altheim (Lkr. Freudenstadt) with 77 burials in 77 graves, and Weingarten (Lkr. Ravensburg) with 813 burials in 801 graves. To accommodate the different sizes of the cemeteries, she divides Weingarten into an older and a younger phase, which are treated as two separate burial grounds.

According to the author, these cemeteries were chosen due to the availability of anthropological determinations of sex and age of the deceased; although, as she admits, this data would have also been available for many other burial places in southwest Germany (p. 59, footnote 40). Additional support for the selection of these three sites is provided by the availability of palaeogenetic research in Bad Mingolsheim and Horb-Altheim, the results of strontium isotope analyses for some burials in Horb-Altheim and Weingarten, and some results of an aDNA examination of the relationship between the deceased in some burials in Weingarten. As, besides the determination of sex and age, none of these other analyses were conducted in all three burial places, we are left to wonder if other criteria such as the accessibility of the material also played a part in the choice of cemeteries.

To date the graves and burials in the cemeteries, Barbara Hausmair uses the “Kleiderphasen” (“clothing phases”, KP) set up by Constanze Döhrer in her dissertation (p. 59, footnote 41). DÖHRER’S work (*Komplexe Identitäten. Dissertation Universität Wien [2011]*) can be found as an e-thesis on the server of the University of Vienna (<http://othes.univie.ac.at/17316> [last access 17 October 2018]). Since Hausmair unfortunately does not explain the KP in detail, the chronology of the discussed material is only understandable after the reader consults Döhrer’s publication. Hausmair remarks (p. 73, footnote 56) that the dating of the Weingarten burials is also based on an unpublished examination by Claudia Theune. As neither of these sources is necessarily easily accessible for the readers, it would have been very helpful to connect these chronologies with other, well-established Early Medieval chronologies.

Chapter 4 (pp. 77–112) is dedicated to methodology and focuses especially on the hierarchical database the author used. Unfortunately, the reader is not directed to the additional data which are available online: this would have been very useful, since the tables available online help the reader to follow the structure and design of the database more easily than the descriptions given in the chapter. Furthermore, in the online data all possible input options for the database can be followed, while only examples are shown in the publication.

In the database, special attention is paid to the recording of data linked to ritual practices, i. e. information on the architecture of the grave, the position of the deceased inside the grave, and the

layout of the grave goods. Hausmair applies statistical methods extensively, favouring in particular Contextual Statistical Analysis after Catalin N. Popa (see e. g. C. N. POPA, *Till death do us part. A statistical approach to identifying burial similarity and grouping. The case of the Late La Tène graves from the Eastern Carpathian Basin*. In: S. Berecki [ed.], *Iron Age Rites and Rituals in the Carpathian Basin* [Târgu Mureş 2012] 401–412). This method was developed specifically for analyses of multi-dimensional datasets from archaeologically examined burials. Using Contextual Statistical Analysis, the collected ritual data and the collected data of the archaeological inventory are first analysed separately to define ritual groups and inventory groups, before the data are combined in a matrix to find overall combination groups in a second step.

The methodology outlined in chapter 4 is applied to the cemeteries of Bad Mingolsheim (pp. 113–145), Horb-Altheim (pp. 147–191), and Weingarten (pp. 193–298) in chapters 5–7. These chapters are very well structured, clearly explaining how groups and classifications for each site were established before Hausmair turns to interpretation. Each group is also represented in a diagram. However, especially in the case of very small groups, the value of these diagrams is quite limited. The scatterplots and dendrograms of the determined clusters are much more informative.

In the final chapter 8 (pp. 299–318), Barbara Hausmair summarises the previous chapters and compares the concepts of death and the burial rituals of the Early Medieval societies that created the three cemeteries. She then interprets these results using the concept of an afterworld developed by Werner ENNINGER and Christa SCHWENS (*Friedhöfe als kulturelle Texte*. *Zeitschr. für Semiotik* 11, 1989, 135–181) and Heinrich HÄRKE's semiotics of grave goods (*Beigabensitte und Erinnerung. Überlegungen zu einem Aspekt des frühmittelalterlichen Bestattungsrituals*. In: J. Jarnut / M. Wemhoff [eds], *Erinnerungskultur im Bestattungsritual* [München 2003] 107–125). These models were first presented in chapter 2. Hausmair points out that in all three communities basic social categories like gender and age are emphasised in the burial ritual and are regularly reflected in the architecture of the grave and the presence or absence of age and gender-specific objects in the layout of the grave goods. Furthermore, she points out that the manner in which objects are given into the grave shows that supplying the dead for their time in the afterworld was an important element of the burial ritual (p. 304). These interpretations are finally discussed in the context of Early Medieval Christianity.

With her publication, which she describes as a theoretically founded material study (p. 13), Barbara Hausmair has made an important contribution to the discussion of the significance and interpretation of Early Medieval burials and cemeteries. It needs to be emphasised that Hausmair shifts the focus from interpretations of social structure to rituals of and religious thought – in a very general sense – in Merovingian societies. She succeeds in combining a theoretical approach with the results of meticulous recording of the archaeological material and statistical analyses to gain a plausible picture of Early Medieval worldviews.

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