

namen in den Kreisen geordnet. Der Fundstellennachweis für die frühe Eisenzeit bis römische Kaiserzeit ist zusätzlich nach der Zeitstellung sortiert. Hier hätte man sich ergänzend ein alphabetisches Ortsregister gewünscht, um bestimmte Fundstellen schneller finden zu können.

Insgesamt wird in der vorliegenden Arbeit der untere Oderraum geoarchäologisch umfassend betrachtet. Das Gebiet wird dabei, sowohl archäologisch als auch in Bezug auf die Geoindikatoren, stets in einen größeren Zusammenhang gestellt. Die erfolgreiche Anwendung moderner geoarchäologischer Methoden zeigt, wie sich die in den letzten Jahrzehnten durch die Landesämter für Bodendenkmalpflege erstellten Datenarchive nutzbar machen lassen. Die erkennbaren Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Aussagefähigkeit bei den einzelnen Geoindikatoren sind sicher Gegenstand weiterer Diskussionen. Aus den vielfältigen Analysen ergibt sich für diesen Raum jedoch ein fundierter Beitrag zur Frage der Besiedlungsgeschichte in der Völkerwanderungszeit und dem Beginn der slawischen Besiedlung. Darüber hinaus wurden Möglichkeiten aufgezeigt, die wirtschaftliche Situation in frühgeschichtlicher Zeit genauer zu rekonstruieren. Als prägnantes Beispiel sei nochmals auf die Kartierung von Salzquellen verwiesen, deren mögliche Nutzung während der römischen Kaiserzeit und Völkerwanderungszeit bisher viel zu wenig untersucht wurde.

D-14195 Berlin
Im Dol 2-6
E-Mail: Erdmute.Schultze@dainst.de

Erdmute Schultze
Eurasien-Abteilung
des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts

KAI MÜCKENBERGER, Elsfleth-Hogenkamp. Archäologische Funde des 1. Jahrtausends n. Chr. am Zusammenfluss von Hunte und Weser. Mit Beiträgen von Ulrich Schmölke, Martina Karle, Annette Siegmüller und Imke Brandt. Studien zur Landschafts- und Siedlungsgeschichte im südlichen Nordseegebiet volume 4. Niedersächsisches Institut für historische Küstenforschung, Wilhelmshaven 2013. € 54.80. ISBN 978-3-86757-334-4, ISSN 1867-2752. 244 pages, 149 figures, 16 tables, 10 plates.

One of the most popular recent research themes in the early historical archaeology of southern Scandinavia and northern central Europe is the character and development of trade and communication, and the way these aspects are reflected in settlements and material culture (e. g. B. LUDOWICI et al. [eds], *Trade and Communication Networks of the First Millennium AD in the Northern part of Central Europe* [Hannover 2010]). Initially, the main focus was on famous Early Medieval 'trading centres' like Birka in Sweden, Haithabu in northern Germany and Dorestad in the Netherlands. In the last decades, gradually a more detailed image has emerged, especially in well-researched parts of southern Scandinavia. Recent evidence points to a large diversity in site types with regard to their topographical setting, morphology, functions and connections to trade networks. Some of these sites appear to have origins predating the Early Middle Ages. Until recently, little was known about the northwest German coastal area with regard to 'trading centres'. An exception is the Roman-period site of Bentumersiel that has been interpreted as a redistribution centre for cattle and agricultural produce to be sold to the Roman military during the summer season (K. BRANDT, *Die Ergebnisse der Grabung in der Marschsiedlung Bentumersiel / Unterems in den Jahren 1971–1973. Probleme der Küstenforschung im Südlichen Nordseegebiet* 12, 1977, 1–32). This undetailed picture is starting to change. As a result of metal detecting, field surveys and excavations, knowledge on the habitation of this region in the 1st millennium A. D. and its relations to other regions is rapidly increasing. One of the most notable sites is Elsfleth-Hogenkamp (Lower Saxony). This site is the subject of a monograph written by Kai Mückenberger, which is the fourth volume in the series *Studien zur Landschafts- und Siedlungsgeschichte im südlichen*

Nordseegebiet. The book is based on Mückenbergers dissertation that he defended at the University of Münster in 2012. The author of this review would also like to point the attention to an earlier paper by J. SCHESCHKEWITZ that, amongst others, discusses the Elsfleth site (Water transport – specialized landing-places in the coastal areas of northwestern Germany in the first millennium AD. In: Ludowici et al. 2010, 289–308). This paper was reviewed by J. ULRIKSEN (A comment on: Water transport – specialized landing-places in the coastal areas of northwestern Germany in the first millennium AD [J. Scheschkewitz]. In: Ludowici et al. 2010, 309–314). Ulriksen's response addresses various discussion points that are roughly similar to the ones raised in this contribution.

The site of Elsfleth-Hogekamp is situated on the left bank of the river Hunte, which issues into the river Weser a few kilometres to the northeast. The environment consists of the flat marshlands of the lower Weser valley, which to the west, south and east are bordered by coastal sandy and gravelly deposits (*Geestrücken*). In the transitional zones between marsh and *geest* various raised bog complexes have developed. The marshlands around the confluence of Hunte and Weser certainly were not isolated or remote areas unattractive for settlement (*siedlungseindlich*). The opposite is rather true: several settlements and surface artefact scatters have been documented, especially on river banks. Many appear to date from the Roman period; the Elsfleth site is one of them. The location has been known through surface finds since the late 19th century. Two small test trenches were dug in the 1930s, but the site especially gained attraction when numerous mainly Roman-period artefacts were collected with metal detectors in recent years. A large research project was initiated that was conducted by the *Niedersächsisches Institut für Historische Küstenforschung*. It mainly concentrated on a detailed analysis of the find material. Geological and geophysical data were collected in the field, and two small test trenches were dug.

The introduction of the book does not contain an explicit formulation of its research goals. They basically come down to (1) arriving at a first integral presentation and analysis of the find complex and (2) establishing the character and function of the site, especially with regard to its position in Roman-period (supra-) regional trade networks. Furthermore, it is stated in the preface that the research raises the awareness that surface collections can be far more informative than is often thought. Obviously this is not a new observation, but it is relevant here because of the recent steep increase in sites discovered by metal detecting in the coastal areas of northwestern Germany. It is mentioned that this site category forms a new challenge for both scientific research and heritage management, without elaborating on it any further. It might have been an interesting addition to the book to place these topics in a somewhat wider framework, or to make suggestions on how to deal with these sites in future research. More specifically for the Elsfleth site, the study could have benefited from a more thorough discussion of post-depositional processes and how they affect the representativity of the available dataset.

The book consists of 15 chapters written by Kai Mückenberger, and three appendices. The first short appendix (Ulrich Schmölcke) addresses the animal bones collected in one of the test trenches. The second (Martina Karle) and third (Annette Siegmüller and Imke Brandt) report on prospective geological research undertaken on a micro-regional and site level. These geological studies provide valuable data on the setting of the site and dominant landscape processes in this dynamic area. These elements are essential building blocks in the interpretation of the site. After all, it is important to establish whether a navigable watercourse existed in the immediate vicinity of the site in the relevant period of time. Therefore it is not fully clear why these data were not incorporated better in the main text.

The 15 chapters can be divided into three parts. Chapters 1–7 set the scene. They describe previous research into early historic trade, introduce the site and its research history and discuss its (micro-) regional context. Chapters 8–14, which form the largest part of the book, present and

analyse the find material (pottery, metal, glass, stone) in detail. Chapter 15 summarizes the previous chapters and gives an interpretation of the site. This overall structure is clear and easy to follow. It has to be noted though that the presentation of the data starts from the preconception that Elsfleth was no 'ordinary' settlement but some sort of specialized landing site, taking a prominent position in (supra-) regional trade networks. As early as in chapter 2 an overview is given of previous research into early historical trade. It would have been methodologically more sound to leave room for alternative explanations by presenting the actual data on the Elsfleth site first.

The author is successful in reaching the first aim of the book: giving a thorough presentation and analysis of the find complex. Especially the metal objects, which besides pottery make up the largest part of the assemblage (c. 700 bronze, lead, silver and iron objects), are discussed in detail. This part of the book provides a valuable basis for future comparisons with other sites, both in and outside northern Germany. In this respect the chapters on pottery and metal could have benefited from the depiction of a limited selection of (supra-) regional distribution maps of important artefact types that are used in the interpretation of the site.

The exact position of all finds collected during recent fieldwork has been recorded, leading to detailed spatial information. This results in several distribution maps of artefact types. These are frequently used to hypothesize on the presence of specific activity zones. As it is risky just to interpret patterns that are visible with the naked eye, it might have been worth the effort to explore the possibilities of GIS-based spatial distribution analyses.

The second and most interesting theme of the book is to determine the character and function of the site of Elsfleth in the 1st millennium A. D. The main focus is on the period between the 1st and 5th century. Most finds by far are dated to that period. Additionally, a substantial number of Carolingian-Ottonian metal artefacts have been found, especially disc brooches. This is interesting because contemporaneous other find categories such as pottery appear to be lacking. However, no attempts are made to explain this phenomenon.

More important issues relate to how a 'trading site' should be defined, and how such sites manifest themselves in the archaeological record. The author rightly makes some comments on the lack of clear definitions of 'trade' in earlier studies ("nicht näher definierten Handel") and on the often uncritical use of denominations such as landing places, trading sites, market sites, craft centres, central places and so on. However, he does not escape this problem himself, as no clear definitions of these terms are given. He confines himself to testing Elsfleth against four basic criteria developed by Ulriksen for early historical southern Scandinavia (e. g. J. ULRIKSEN, *Anløbspladser. Besejling og bebyggelse i Danmark mellem 200 og 1100 e. Kr. en studie af søfartens pladser pø baggrund af undersøgelse i Roskilde Fjord* [Roskilde 1998]). Mückenberger states that a site can be classified as a 'trading site' if there are indications for:

- seafaring or the use of supra-regional traffic routes;
- a dominance of specialized crafts over agricultural activity;
- the presence of sunken huts (*Grubenhäuser*) or other buildings used for craft and specialized activities;
- a diverse find assembly, with pottery and animal bone as main find categories. Metal finds amongst others consist of coins, dress accessories, weapons or scrap.

Testing the Elsfleth site against these criteria – which actually are used by Ulriksen to identify 'specialized landing places' rather than 'trading sites' – is not unproblematic, to say the least. Any interpretation is seriously hampered by the lack of large scale and detailed excavation data. We simply cannot tell yet whether sunken huts are present – besides the fact that these features occur in many 'ordinary' Roman-period and Early Medieval rural settlements. Also, the exact relative

importance of specialized craft and agriculture is difficult to establish for excavated sites, let alone for surface sites. According to Ulriksen, especially the diversity in craft activities is informative in distinguishing between agrarian settlements and specialised landing sites (ULRIKSEN 2010, 310–311).

Resulting from the above, all preliminary interpretations of the Elsfleth site are mainly based on its site location and find complex (specifically the metal objects). In these respects, the data presented by Mückenberger do appear to support his theory that we are not dealing with an 'ordinary' settlement. The site indeed is located on a strategic position. Both the North Sea coasts and routes leading further inland can easily be reached using the Hunte and Weser rivers. The site is also thought to have served as a 'bridgehead' connecting the *geest* areas west and east of the Weser marshes. Compared to the average rural settlement, especially the diversity in metal working crafts (proven by the presence of slags, ingots, scrap and so on) is large.

The numbers, character and provenance of the 'imported' objects change significantly through time, but point to both connections with areas in the northern Roman provinces and nearby parts of *Germania Magna*. Various Roman objects are connected to the military. According to Mückenberger, the composition of the metal finds shares remarkable similarities to some find assemblages from auxiliary camps and *vici*. This leads him to suggest that Germanic auxiliary troops probably were responsible for distributing Roman metal to the site. It would have been interesting to materialize this general observation by making more formal comparisons to those find assemblages that are thought to have a similar composition.

The author rightly states that if Elsfleth was some sort of 'trading site', regardless of its exact definition, it has a relatively early date. In this book frequent comparisons are made to Early Medieval sites in southern Scandinavia, but these must have functioned in very different socio-economic settings. Fabech published a classification of surface sites that uses the find composition to distinguish between agrarian settlements and 'central places' of regional and supra-regional importance (C. FABECH, Centrality in sites and landscapes. In: C. Fabech / J. Ringtvedt [eds], Settlement and Landscape. Proceedings of a Conference in Århus, Denmark, May 4–7 1998 [Århus 1999] 455–473). According to Mückenberger, Elsfleth would at least be classified as a 'central site' of regional importance. However, both the find complexes and surface sizes of southern Scandinavian sites are generally far larger. The site only has a surface of about 2.5 ha. Due to seasonal floodings it may not even have been occupied all year round, but there is not enough geological and archaeological data available to tell yet. The author suggests that the cluster of Roman-period sites in the marshes near the confluence of Hunte and Weser may together have formed a sort of 'central region', dividing specific functions over different locations. This is one of the thought-provoking hypotheses that deserve more detailed analysis. The last word on Elsfleth certainly has not been said yet. This monograph gives a valuable first overview and forms an excellent starting point for future research.

NL-6708 PB Wageningen
Droevendaalsesteeg 3
E-Mail: roy.vanbeek@wur.nl

Roy van Beek
Soil Geography and Landscape Group
Cultural Geography Group
Wageningen University