

**ULRIKE MÜSSEMEIER, Die merowingerzeitlichen Funde aus der Stadt Bonn und ihrem Umland.**

Rheinische Ausgrabungen volume 67. Philipp von Zabern, Darmstadt 2012. € 98.50. ISBN 978-3-8053-4794-5. 548 pages, 233 plates, 9 maps, 2 supplements.

This volume is the published version of Ulrike Müssemeier's dissertation, which was finished in 2003. It is one in a series of publications on the Merovingian finds in the German Rhineland. An important part of this work was done by four female scholars united in the Franken AG at the University of Bonn: ELKE NIEVELER (Die merowingerzeitliche Besiedlung des Erftkreises und des Kreises Euskirchen. Rheinische Ausgr. 48 [Mainz 2003]); RUTH PLUM (Die merowingerzeitliche Besiedlung in Stadt und Kreis Aachen sowie im Kreis Düren. Rheinische Ausgr. 49 [Mainz 2003]); HEIKE PÖPPELMANN (Das spätantik-frühmittelalterliche Gräberfeld von Jülich. Bonner Beitr. Vor- und Frühgesch. Arch. 11 [Bonn 2010]) and Ulrike Müssemeier who were also responsible for refining the typo-chronology for Merovingian grave goods in the Rhineland, a work commenced by Frank Siegmund (U. MÜSSEMEIER / E. NIEVELER / R. PLUM / H. PÖPPELMANN, Chronologie der merowingerzeitlichen Grabfunde vom linken Niederrhein bis zur nördlichen Eifel. Mat. Bodendenkmalpf. Rheinland 15 [Köln, Bonn 2003]; F. SIEGMUND, Merowingerzeit am Niederrhein. Die frühmittelalterlichen Funde aus dem Regierungsbezirk Düsseldorf und dem Kreis Heinsberg. Rheinische Ausgr. 34 [Köln, Bonn 1998]). The whole project is an excellent example of how to rework ancient and more recent finds from the Merovingian period so that *screened* data become available for further research. A book like this helps to shape the future of Merovingian cemetery archaeology. To shape this future, we need to follow three avenues: a theoretical one to reflect on the basic elements of our interpretations, an empirical one by creating new *screened* databases, and a scientific one to extract new interesting data from our finds. This book is an important contribution to the second avenue.

The goal of Müssemeier's work was 1.) to collect as complete as possible the sites and their material culture from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century in the town of Bonn and the surrounding countryside; 2.) to carry out a chronological-antiquarian analysis of the finds; and 3.) to analyse the distribution of the sites in the countryside.

The structure of the volume reflects these goals. After two short introductory chapters on the "Forschungsgeschichte" and "Quellenlage", a part is dedicated to the habitation history in the region, a second part to the typo-chronological analysis of the finds, a third part comprises an extensive catalogue of the sites and their finds. All this is lavishly illustrated with drawings, photographs and maps.

The catalogue must have been the product of a painstaking and persistent search for evidence on each site which commands our respect. On the other hand it shows that only a limited number of them provide sufficient evidence for a further analysis of the site with new modern research questions. Many sites were discovered already long ago and 'excavated' according to the standards of those days. Of the 120 sites listed only 20 were discovered after 1970 and another 25 between 1950 and 1970. This is not a characteristic of the Bonn area but goes for the entire Rhineland. One can of course make the assessment that it is not worthwhile to invest this amount of work in those sites, but fortunately this assessment was not made (see below). The screened data presented by Müssemeier do provide possibilities for further research. It is no coincidence that the chapter on habitation history precedes that of the typo-chronological analysis which I take as a sign that Müssemeier understood the importance of the material recovered for that part of the research.

The typo-chronological analysis is of a structure with which we are by now familiar in this type of work. It is related to the chronological schemes set up by SIEGMUND (1998 op. cit.) and the FRANKEN AG (2003 op. cit.) although Müssemeier allows for deviations due to regional variability.

The Bonn region is the southernmost region of the larger study area and shows influences from the Middle Rhine area. A point of debate that should be mentioned is the use of relatively short phases (at times less than a generation) in the chronological ordering of grave goods although many types seem to have been deposited in more than one phase. One would have wished that the author had spend some thoughts on the implications of the use of such short phases for a cultural-historical analysis of the meaning of the grave goods.

The catalogue allows asking the question where this region stands in a wider landscape of grave good deposition. Only 22 ear rings (or pairs) were found, only 21 bow brooches, only 5 garnet disc brooches, but the substantial number of 10 filigree disc brooches. One would expect more in such a region, close to an important centre and along a major river. Are these low numbers or is this a regular image? Regional differences in deposition patterns (and thus distribution maps) are however determined by many factors not the least the research and recovery history in an area. That is why a detailed analysis of ancient sites is so important. Now we can evaluate distribution patterns more thoroughly than we could do before.

Müssemeier recorded 120 sites of which 84 were certain cemeteries, 7 possible cemeteries, 10 settlements, eight pottery production sites and 13 indeterminate sites. The cemeteries counted in total 860 graves. This distribution of contexts shows that rural settlement research is still an under-developed field in the Rhineland Merovingian archaeology.

Müssemeier analysed the settlement history on the basis of this database. She compared the distribution of sites with the natural environment of the area, the previous Roman habitation patterns, a historiography of Frankish expansion, later settlement and place names. In the end she analysed the relation between the location of cemeteries and (relatively modern or late medieval) settlements using five “Entfernungsgruppen”. This analysis maybe useful for modern heritage strategies (prediction of locations) but its value for an analysis of the Merovingian use of the landscape is not immediately clear after reading a page earlier that none of the excavations in villages of the brown coal area showed traces of Merovingian and Carolingian habitation. The late medieval and modern villages seem to be in new locations which urges for a search for the Merovingian and Carolingian settlements in the landscape.

In late Roman times habitation contracted considerably and in many areas there does not seem to be continuity of habitation. The region was thus to a large extent recolonized in Merovingian times. Müssemeier tries to connect this re-colonization with the expansion of the Franks (pp. 57–58) but fails for which she credits the insufficient documentation and lack of the proper finds in the research area compared to for instance Jülich (PÖPPELMANN 2010 *op. cit.*). On the other hand one wonders whether this approach – linking (mostly rural) cemetery finds to (supposed) political expansion – is the right method to interpret a re-colonization of an area. Migration might have many forms and contexts. In this Müssemeier has not liberated herself from the ‘tyranny of the historical record’. Settlement history and political history written on the basis of a variety of incoherent ancient texts, which are by now intensively scrutinized by historians under the influence of linguistic and literary turns, should initially be considered two different research avenues.

Müssemeier however points to other interesting aspects of the distribution of sites in the landscape. The research area is (in an oversimplification) basically divided in three natural zones: the Rhine river and its banks, the lower terraces which become ever wider in a northern direction, and the higher terraces to the east and the west with their slopes towards the lower terraces. The reality is of course more complicated. Müssemeier shows that most sites are related to the slopes of the higher terraces towards the lower ones. Relatively few sites are located in the area of lower terraces.

Hardly any sites can be found on the high terraces themselves. On the other hand many sites are located along the River Rhine. Müssemeier, however, interestingly observes that the sites are neither at random nor regularly located along the river. Settlements (cemeteries) are usually on the erosion side of the river, not wise at first sight in terms of sustainability but it allows for a location very close to the river itself. So the River Rhine (and what happens on or along it) must have had a predominant influence on site location choice. This means that other sites may have been washed away by the river since then. This observation has interesting effects. First, there are relatively few sites on the left bank of the Rhine. From the point where the Rhine river leaves the middle range mountains to Bonn there are only two sites on the left bank, and north of Bonn one has to go again quite some distance to arrive at the next site. One would expect more sites along the old Roman road along the Rhine river. Second, Bonn's rural hinterland is rather situated at the opposite bank of the river where abundant sites were found. This makes Bonn an interesting case to study 'centre'-'hinterland' relations because of this situation and the lack of sites to the west of the 'town'.

Bonn, of course, figures prominently in Müssemeier's work. One of the great achievements is the screening of the data of the Münster excavations. This led to a reinterpretation of the ancient-Christian finds and a dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> century of building D (whatever its function). Moreover, Müssemeier finds it difficult to sustain the idea of a continuity of burial at the site on the basis of the present evidence. So, the idea of a straightforward development of early Christian Bonn from late antiquity into the early Middle Ages with which a generation of scholars, including this reviewer, was raised is shattered. Again a perfect example of the value of screening old data. However this should not be taken as an argument to stop excavating new cemeteries because there is still so much to be done on the basis of existing material. True, but we need new state of the art excavations to create high quality new evidence, to develop the other two elements crucial to the advance of early medieval archaeology and our knowledge of early medieval European society: theory and scientific research.

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**MICHELLE WALDISPÜHL, Schreibpraktiken und Schriftwissen in südgermanischen Runeninschriften: Zur Funktionalität epigraphischer Schriftverwendung.** Medienwandel – Medienwechsel – Medienwissen Band 26. Chronos, Zürich 2013. € 52,-. ISBN 978-3-0340-1026-9. 408 Seiten, 134 Farbabbildungen.

Das Korpus der südgermanischen Runeninschriften ist wahrlich kein leicht zugängliches sprachwissenschaftliches Material. Die Inschriften sind oft schwierig zu lesen – sowohl aufgrund der ursprünglichen Ritzungstechnik als auch wegen Beschädigungen – und, ist eine Lesung etabliert, schwierig zu interpretieren. Sie sind meist kurz und in einer Sprachstufe geschrieben, die anderswo nicht bezeugt ist. Es handelt sich um ein Material von 83 Runeninschriften plus ca. einem Dutzend Ritzungen, die keine Runen im engeren Sinn beinhalten, aber in denselben Kontext gerückt werden müssen. Die Ritzungen befinden sich zumeist auf Objekten aus Metall, die vordringlich in Gräbern aus dem 5. bis 7. Jahrhundert gefunden wurden.

Michelle Waldispühls Dissertationsschrift ist ein beeindruckender Versuch, der schwierigen Quellenlage Herr zu werden. Das Buch kann als Vertreter einer aktuellen Strömung in der Runo-