

Dies hatte zur Folge, dass bei separater Beigabe des Mantels auch die Fibel nicht in Trachtlage ins Grab gelangte (z.B. Aesch, Kt. Baselland, Grab 19: R. MARTI, *Zwischen Römerzeit und Mittelalter. Forschungen zur frühmittelalterlichen Siedlungsgeschichte in der Nordwestschweiz* [4.–10. Jahrhundert]. Arch. u. Mus. 41 [Liestal 2000] 66 Taf. 9,19,2). Verlässlicher als die Grablage allein wäre für die Klärung der Trageweise deshalb die zusätzliche Analyse der Textilien, die dank Metalloxiden praktisch regelhaft auf der Unterseite von Metallfibeln erhalten sind.

Stefan Thörle legt eine wichtige und gut aufbereitete Materialsammlung vor, deren Reiz nicht zuletzt darin liegt, dass sie die üblichen Grenzen der beigabenreichen Regionen Nordgalliens und Südwestdeutschlands sprengt und auch über die chronologische, durch die Aufgabe der Grabbeigabensitte in der späten Merowingerzeit bedingte Grenze hinaus führt. In Anbetracht der Bedeutung und der Verbreitung der behandelten Fundgruppe hätte eine ausführliche französische Zusammenfassung dem Werk sicher gut angestanden.

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**DENNIS H. GREEN/FRANK SIEGMUND (Eds), *The Continental Saxons from the Migration Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*.** *Studies in Historical Ethnoarchaeology*, volume 6. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2003. £ 60,—. ISBN 1-84383-026-4. 393 Seiten mit zahlreichen Abbildungen.

The latest book in a series whose aim is to consider the peoples of Europe from an interdisciplinary – especially ethnographic – perspective follows the same format as previous volumes, namely papers originally delivered at a symposium followed by transcripts of the ensuing discussions.

In the opening paper, M. Springer subjects ‘the received opinion’ regarding the origins of the Saxons based on Late Antique and early medieval sources to a severe critique; he helpfully locates the Saxons both in time – from the second to tenth centuries – and in space, while warning against equating the spread of the Saxon name beyond its ‘core’ in northwest Germany with mass migration. D. Meier then examines the most intensively studied area of Saxon landscape, namely the North Sea coast, emphasising the importance of trade relations with the Empire and the relationship between settlement patterns (especially the construction of Wurten), sea-level changes and ecological conditions. The difficulty of identifying 5<sup>th</sup>- and 6<sup>th</sup>-century settlements and burials in this region inevitably raises the question of emigration to Britain.

Two papers consider the social structure of the Saxons as suggested by archaeological evidence (F. Siegmund) and contemporary laws (G. Ausenda). Siegmund stresses the difficulties of squaring the archaeological evidence with statements by Late Antique authors regarding the Saxons, and questions whether it is possible to regard them as a single, unified ‘people’. Here again we encounter the apparent demographic disaster of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, resulting in dramatically reduced population levels until the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century, when evidence for settlement resurfaces; again the issue of migration is confronted. The author – rightly in

my view – is sceptical about accepting the absence of evidence as evidence of absence, and points to research further north in Angeln, where the paucity of archaeological evidence for the sixth and seventh centuries has been convincingly explained by a change to less visible burial rites and a concentration of the population into fewer, larger settlements. He also considers what cemeteries can teach us regarding ancestor cults and the demographics of Saxon communities in the Merovingian period, particularly as regards male versus female mortality.

The rural and proto-urban economies of the Saxon regions are examined by W. Dörfler and H. Steuer respectively. Following a review of how the disciplines of archaeobotany and archaeozoology may help us to reconstruct early farming practices, Dörfler revisits the issue of a ‘gap’ in settlement from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries from a new perspective, namely that of pollen evidence, which convinces him, contra Siegmund, that there was indeed an abandonment of settlement on a large scale. Steuer examines the economic changes in Saxonia in the period leading up to its incorporation into the Carolingian empire. He discusses the emergence of a network of pre-urban centres such as trading and production sites, fortresses, royal villas and palaces, and of course monasteries, and the means by which goods such as cloth, ores, salt and pottery circulated. He makes the crucial point that missionary activity among the Saxons had an important economic dimension, namely to integrate them into a wider north-west European economic and political sphere. He concludes with a discussion of the importance of the Carolingian reform of coinage in enabling Saxonia to engage fully in supra-regional, monetised trading activities.

K. Høilund-Nielsen, the only contributor to engage primarily with artefactual evidence, examines the various influences on Saxon art, tracing a development from Late Roman (e.g. chip-carved, geometric designs), to Scandinavian (e.g. bracteates), Frankish (e.g. ring-swords) and – most decisively – Christian influences (e.g. the Tassilo style).

Two papers deal with the conversion of the Old Saxons. D.H. Green contributes a piece on the Old Saxon Heliand, a ninth-century life of Christ, which is compared and contrasted with Caedmon’s Hymn to reveal how each demonstrates in different ways the Christian reaction to (and accommodation of) traditional Germanic values, while Hines provides a critical analysis of the Frankish-Christian sources that depict the forcible conversion of the Saxons.

Finally, I. Wood argues that by examining sources for the social and political structures of the Saxons in strict chronological order (from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries), changing attitudes towards these structures and towards the Saxon ethnogenesis can be detected.

This is a well-presented and welcome set of studies of one of the more neglected peoples of northwest Europe, although the ethnographic perspective promised in the title is little in evidence. While the data and arguments presented in some of the papers are not entirely new, many will find it useful to find syntheses in English. The reader may, however, feel disappointed to find that fully one quarter of this (costly) volume consists of transcripts of the ‘discussions’ that followed each paper. A further twenty-three pages at the end of the volume consist of ‘discussions, notes and comments’ on the subject of ‘current issues and suggested future directions in the study of the Continental Saxons’. While undoubtedly containing information of value, it would surely have been preferable for participants to be allowed to incorporate the most significant points raised in the discussions in their published papers, rather than to include them in this ‘raw’, and too often indigestible, form.

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