

schematischen Reliefkarte sicher hervorheben können; gerade in einem doch durch erhebliche Unterschiede in der Siedlungsbegünstigung charakterisierten geografischen Raum würden sich die Intensitäten der einzelnen Fundkartierungen so auch in ein Korrektiv setzen lassen.

Dass die Autoren in diesem Zusammenhang bewusst auf die in älteren Darstellungen oftmals kontrovers und vereinfachend dargestellte ethnische Diskussion über die verschiedenen politischen Einheiten zur Zeit der römischen Okkupation und über die größeren frühgeschichtlichen Ethnien im schottischen Raum verzichten bzw. diese kritisch beleuchten (vgl. S. 90), ist erfrischend.

Auch wenn die Begrenzung auf eine Objekt- oder Materialgruppe in der Darstellung – sowohl in Ausstellungs- als auch in Forschungsprojekten – immer auch die Schaffung einer erheblichen Asymmetrie im Forschungsstand nach sich zieht und vielleicht die Vielfalt der Einflussfaktoren hinter dem im Moment fokussierten Forschungsgegenstand (hier eben das Material Silber) etwas in den Hintergrund tritt, so kann dem schottischen Nationalmuseum zu dieser Publikation nur gratuliert werden. Trotz der angemerkten kleinen Monita liegt mit der besprochenen Publikation mehr als nur eine weitere Verschriftlichung einer Ausstellung, sondern ein ganzes Update zu einem auch für weite Regionen des frühgeschichtlichen Europa elementaren Forschungsfeld vor. Man darf mit Spannung die Vorlage sowohl der einzelnen Neufunde als auch eine tiefere Diskussion der angesprochenen übergeordneten Aspekte abwarten.

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AGNES MAAGH, Die merowingerzeitliche Siedlung von Meerbusch-Strümp, Rhein-Kreis Neuss.

Universitätsforschungen zur prähistorischen Archäologie volume 295. Verlag Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn 2017. € 96,-. ISBN 978-3-7749-4075-8. 450 pages with 17 partly coloured illustrations, 122 plates, 4 plans, and 1 insert.

Only very few settlements of the Merovingian period were excavated, and so Agnes Maagh's publication of the village of Meerbusch-Strümp, which was excavated between January and October 1991, arouses curiosity. The place was inhabited for only a short period of time from the late 5th to the second half of the 7th century – there is no indication of occupation until the high Middle Ages, just as is the case for many other settlements starting in the early medieval period. The quantity of the features and finds is a manageable amount, and with these preconditions the excavation seems to be perfectly suitable for a graduate thesis. Unfortunately, the quality of the excavation and the conditions of the features, respectively, are not that good. Large parts of the settlement fell prey to erosion and no ground level buildings were traceable; most of the sunken huts were preserved only in the trench floor. The lack of stratigraphy, overlaps, or closed finds turned the analysis of this settlement somehow into a thankless task. Anyhow, the site is situated in the well-researched region of the Lower Rhine. A complete inventory of the known places and finds, and hence for the surroundings of the Strümp settlement, was published in 1998 by Frank SIEGMUND (Merowingerzeit am Niederrhein. Rhein. Ausgr. 34 [Bonn, Köln 1998]).

Agnes Maagh's book is the slightly revised version of her PhD thesis, submitted in 2012 at the University of Munich. She scarcely names the goal of her thesis, which is the publication of the excavation and of the development of the settlement of Strümp. The first topic is discussed exhaustively, the latter rather marginally, however, this may be caused by the bad conditions of

preservation. All in all, the entire book could have been improved by professional editorial work. Many chapters could be tightened, or rather more focussed. For example, the chapter about the research history (pp. 15–24) is a listing of published articles, but without any emphasis on which results were important and why, and is written without further developing or defining the author's own research questions. Only one representative example should be mentioned: on page 21, the author states that Frank Siegmund asserted a “very regular settlement pattern” for the Lower Rhine region, but what this pattern looks like, and how Siegmund's results affect the analysis of Strümp, remains unclear. The chapter about the processes of erosion and accumulation (pp. 30–31) is well written and explains the bad preservation conditions.

The largest chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the ceramics (pp. 32–92), which constitute the largest part of the finds. It is a little bit bewildering to read multiple times that fragmented ceramics from settlements are much more difficult to distinguish than complete vessels from burials and that even the supervisor of the thesis is quoted for this insight (p. 32). Maagh sorted the material following the ceramic wares (in a slightly modified way) defined by Kurt BÖHNER already in 1958 (*Die fränkischen Altertümer des Trierer Landes*. Germ. Denkmäler Völkerwanderungszeit B 1 [Berlin 1958] 35–63). The second criterion for classification is the typology of the vessels, or rather the shape of the rims. A larger amount of sherds belongs to the coarse ware (“rauwandige Ware”, Böhner D), in particular to the rough-walled cooking pots (“Wölbwandtöpfe”) type Alzey 32/33 (n = 169), types that occur only rarely in graves. Furthermore, at least 57 decorated biconical pots (“Knickwandtöpfe”) are found, in addition to bowls, jugs, and bottles. Maagh deals with this in a confident way and establishes the basis for a chronology through the comparison with vessels from other places. The rough-walled cooking pots follow late Roman types, and because of their similarity to the early medieval forms, are difficult to date. The biconical pots are more suitable for chronological purposes because a greater number is known from well dated grave contexts. In Strümp, early forms date the first phase of the settlement. The end of the settlement is dated by Maagh into the first half of the 7th century (p. 86), but there are some types of rims (e. g. Pls 3,4,6; 6,8; 28,5) that are more likely to belong to the second half (or the end) of the 7th century (cf. STEGMUND 1998, 205 “phase 10” and 429–430 no. 110).

The rest of the finds consists of beads, small fragments of glass vessels, two brooches, iron dross, and a fragment of a mill stone. All these objects fit perfectly into the chronological frame given by the ceramic. The iron dross was found over the whole excavated area but unfortunately without context, which was due to the bad preservation of the features. Botanical rests seem to be non-existent, and animal bones were mentioned only in the form of a complete horse skeleton found in a sunken hut.

The features were not analysed in detail. Slightly hidden on page 160 are some remarks about the typology of the sunken huts. Chapter VII (pp. 114–152), dealing with “Features”, surprisingly starts with a consideration of written sources on settlements before the single farmsteads of Strümp are discussed. As already mentioned, only the sunken huts survived at this site. For the chronology of these farmsteads, the problem of backfilling is discussed, i. e. there is no stratigraphy inside. Maagh argues that the settlement was abandoned intentionally, and all pitches were filled deliberately (p. 149), but the reason why the inhabitants would have spent the energy on this before leaving remains unclear. Also, the question of how the sunken huts of the older phases were filled remains unanswered. The author reconstructed twelve farmsteads for Strümp, but some questions remain open: How precise are the sunken huts dateable? What is the meaning of contemporaneity considering the limited life span of wooden architecture of c. 30 years? Could some of the farmsteads be the result of small-scale displacements caused by the new construction of rotten buildings?

In chapter VIII (pp. 153–161), a compilation of settlements in the “nearer and farer surrounding” of Strümp is given. Again, the criteria for this compilation are unclear, and both the list of the settlements and the bibliography are sketchy. Maybe this chapter was intended to provide a wider context, but there is no purpose specified and, to be honest, no result.

The last part of the book is dedicated to the catalogues. Every material group (ceramic, glass, beads, etc.) has its own catalogue. Luckily, the ceramic is sorted by features and not by wares. A catalogue with the descriptions of the features is a chapter of its own. The finds are documented on 72 plates in very good quality. This is the important part of the publication that will persist in the future.

All in all, the larger parts of the publication by Agnes Maagh remain only descriptive – this may, in part, be due to the bad preservation of the features. However, questions about the number of inhabitants, the connections to neighbouring settlements, or a wider debate of issues which emerged with the “spatial turn” cannot be found. Finally, the slim bibliography demonstrates that the author was clearly concentrated on the publication of her excavation, one of her main objectives. Be that as it may, the publication of the ceramics will ensure the value of this book and make it another important piece in the puzzle of the Merovingian period of the Lower Rhine region.

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CHARLOTTE FABECH / ULF NÄSMAN (Hrsg.), The Sösdala Horsemen and the Equestrian Elite of Fifth Century Europe. Jutland Archaeological Society Publications Band 99. Jutland Archaeological Society, Højbjerg 2017. € 46,71. ISBN 978-87-93423-15-2. 451 Seiten mit zahlreichen Abbildungen.

Völlig zutreffend stellt Per Karsten im Vorwort (S. 7–8) fest: „Some objects in our museums attain with time a status as national treasures, and we find them often depicted in standard handbooks about our prehistory. In spite of frequent exposure, the underlying context and the find circumstances as well as the significance of this information may be almost unknown and unpublished“ (S. 7). Sösdala gehört zu eben jenen zentralen Fundkomplexen, die aus der völkerwanderungszeitlichen Archäologie nicht wegzudenken sind. Mit verschiedenen dieser Komplexe verbindet ihn aber auch das von P. Karsten geschilderte Schicksal, dass eine grundlegende Aufarbeitung nach der richtungweisenden Erstpublikation von John-Elof FORSSANDER (Provinzialrömisches und Germanisches: Stilstudien zu den schonischen Funden von Sösdala und Sjörup) aus dem Jahr 1937 über Jahrzehnte ausstand. Diese ist – dies darf schon jetzt festgestellt werden – vollauf gelungen.

Dass Sösdala und Fulltofta nun in einer exzellenten Monographie vorliegen, ist dem Engagement von Charlotte Fabech und Ulf Näsman zu verdanken. Der Band ist das Ergebnis eines sechsjährigen Forschungsprojekts von Ch. Fabech und U. Näsman sowie eines internationalen, im Jahr 2015 abgehaltenen Workshops. In insgesamt 17 Kapiteln, die hier keinesfalls hinreichend gewürdigt werden können, werden durch 15 Autorinnen und Autoren die Fundkomplexe selbst, ihre Bergung, das jeweilige regionale Umfeld, ihre Interpretation und nicht zuletzt ihre Einbindung in den europäischen Raum des 5. Jahrhunderts sowie technische Aspekte vorgestellt. Den einzelnen Beiträgen sind jeweils Abstracts zur schnellen Orientierung vorangestellt und eine russische Zusammenfassung beigelegt.