

Anna-Elisabeth Jensen. *Freunde und Feinde. Dania Slavica. Südseeland, Lolland-Falster und Møn in der Wikingerzeit und Hochmittelalter.* Aarhus University Press 2023. ISBN 978-87-7219-320-5. 357 pp.
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This is an extensive book about the relationship between the Danes and the Slavs (or the Wends) in the Baltic Sea Region during the Viking Age and the Medieval period (AD 800-1200). It is a well-known fact that during the Viking Age there were strong contacts between the Danes and western Slavic peoples, or the Wends, who lived in the coastal areas of present-day Germany and Poland (mainly between the Rivers Elbe and Oder). Several Wendish tribes lived in this area and traded with the Danes, of which several silver hoards tell. This large geographical area, from southern Zealand, Lolland, Falster, and Møn in Denmark to the western Slavic areas of Holstein and western Pomerania, became a cultural melting pot, which this book is all about.

This in-betweenness and co-existence was not peaceful at all times suggested by the title of the book. The author, archaeologist Anna-Elisabeth Jensen, is deputy director at Museum Lolland-Falster in Denmark. She and her museum have been involved in several research and dissemination projects about these Wendic contacts for a long time. I must admit that I have often wondered who these people were when I have visited archaeological museums in Denmark and Scania. There has not been much background information on who these people were and why this type of pottery (Baltic Ware) is found in these areas, so I was curious to read this publication.

This is a result of a research project established in 1999 called *Freunde und Feinde. Das dänisch-wendischen Verbindungen in der Wikingerzeit und im Hochmittelalter* (roughly translated by the author as “Friends and Enemies. The Danish-Wendish connections in the Viking Age and the High Middle Ages”) which was followed up by several other collaborative projects in Denmark



and Germany. There is also a Danish language version of this book for those who are not so comfortable with reading German.

The book is divided into eleven chapters and 4 appendixes. It is richly illustrated with both photographs, reconstructions, drawings, and several colorful maps. In the preface, the reader is introduced to the background and to the different aspects that led to the outcome of this book, for example the creation of a database with some 1000 archaeological sites discovered by the year 2000, which is now forming the catalogue in Appendix 4. This extensive work consists of a thorough landscape analysis (GIS) and a close examination of (some) archaeological find categories, place names, and written sources. These analyses form the basis of the book. The main argument is that the sea was a connector rather than a barrier and this led to a Slavic cultural sphere in Lolland-Falster and Møn that the author calls *Dania Slavica*.

The strength of this study lies in the combination of large data sets and in the way this data is introduced to the readers through maps.

But at the same time, grasping these vast and diverse topics is a difficult task. While certain aspects get more thoroughly examined in the book, others are not as meticulously evaluated. Although Baltic Ware is the topic of one chapter, other find categories are not given much attention at all. For example, soapstone vessels, originally quarried and produced in western Norway and (perhaps) southwestern Sweden, were valued trading commodities during the Viking Age. From the 9th century onwards, they were distributed also to Denmark where they are frequent finds (e.g., Baug 2016; Sindbæk 2008). However, they are seldom found on Møn or the Lolland-Falster area, which indeed suggests that this area was culturally different. To involve this artefact type in the argumentation would have brought more breadth to the book. So, although artefacts illustrate the book in a beautiful way, they do not play a major role in this study.

It also becomes clear while reading the book that the author is perhaps more comfortable with handling certain topics than others. The historical and political landscape (Chapter 3) and the coastal resources (Chapter 6) have got most room in the book. Chronologically the book is perhaps also more about the transition period between the Late Viking Age and Medieval period (after 11th century) and not so much about early Viking Age. There is no harm in that, but it leads to a little less comprehensive understanding of this geographical area and its meaning during the Viking Age.

Chapter nine discusses the Baltic Ware also known as Wendic type pottery, a flat-bottomed ceramic type with patterns of wavy horizontal lines. Baltic Ware was the most common type of ceramic in southern Scandinavia, Northern Germany, and Poland during the Early Medieval period. But the pottery type is known in these areas already during the Viking Age. Traditionally it has been suggested that the technology behind Baltic Ware is likely to have been introduced by the Slavs, but further studies have shown that most of the vessels in the Scandinavian area have been locally produced. The chapter gives a comprehensive research history of this pottery type and its typology and serves as such a valuable contribution to the discussion. The chapter is complemented by a ceramic analysis by Torbjörn Brorsson from KKS (*Kontoret för Keramiska Studier in Sweden*) in Appendix 1.

The silver treasures (Chapter 10) show parallel features in Lolland-Falster and on the western Slavic side of the Baltic Sea. Especially during the 11th century, the fragmentation in the hacksilver hoards seem to rise in both areas which supports the author's arguments of a common cultural sphere.

The author concludes that Møn and Lolland-Falster were borderlands that were perhaps not under the control of the Danish king. Instead, they were in the middle of a Slavic influence, *Dania Slavica*. This included dynastic intermarriages, political, cultural, and economic connections but probably also immigration of a Slavic population. She backs this up by the evidence of Slavic place names ending in *-itse* in Lolland and Falster, the Wendic type pottery (Baltic Ware), the combination of the treasure finds and finally the written sources (*Saxo Grammaticus*).

This is an important piece of work and many people have been waiting for the results from these projects for a long time. Now it is finally here and beautifully put together in a book format.

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