

HAITHABU BOOK REVIEW

Birgit Maixner: Haithabu. Fernhandelszentrum zwischen den Welten. Begleitband zur Ausstellung im Wikinger Museum Haithabu. Archäologisches Landesmuseum. Schloss Gottorf. Schleswig 2010 (Haithabu – A long-distance trading-center between two worlds). Reviewed by Christian Keller

The Viking trading-center which the Danes called Haithabu and the Saxons called Schleswig was located at the root of the Jutland peninsula, in present-day Germany. For three centuries it represented the cross-roads by the overland passage between the North Sea and the Baltic. The land-route was fortified by a defensive wall called 'Danewirke', which was built and extended in stages through the centuries. Haithabu was a commercial center from the mid 700s until its destruction in 1066.

The book was produced to back up the new Viking exhibit in the 'Wikinger Museum Haithabu' near Schleswig in Germany; it features material from the excavations and is clearly intended for the general public. The language is German; which is the traditional language for Iron Age publications in Europe. It is therefore good news that the Schloss Gottorf Museum is contemplating an English edition down the line.

The present volume contains 212 pages with extremely beautiful lay-out, high-quality color photographs, attractive maps, and is packed with useful information.

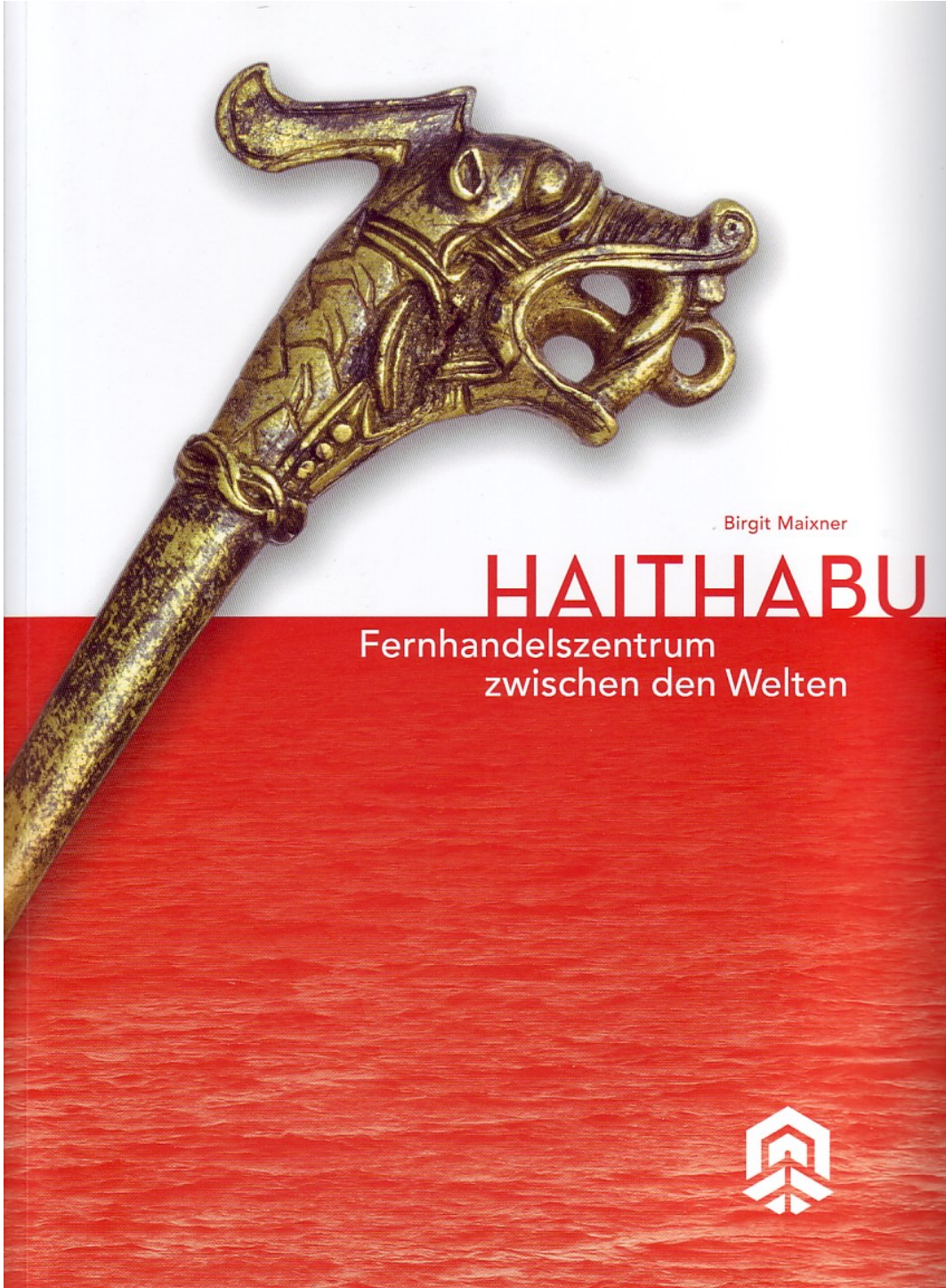
Combining archaeological and historical sources against the background of more than one hundred years of research about Haithabu and its hinterland, the author develops a new picture of the interrelationship between external and internal factors determining the balance of power in Haithabu. The text is organized in small chapters on topics which obviously reflect the organization of the exhibition, such as "Interface Between Worlds", "Daily Life", "Power Display", "Trade Networks", "The Harbor" etc. Text-and-picture-boxes are used to allow deep-dives into subject such as 'kids', 'bronze casting', 'amber', 'bead-production' etc. Artwork and photographs, basing on experimental archaeology, demonstrate the working processes of different handicrafts in a highly illustrative manner.

Haithabu is the archetype of Late Iron Age trading-centers of North Europe; a 'wick', a 'port-of-trade', or a 'proto-town'. The artifacts from Haithabu are extremely important as comparative material for other Viking Age finds; and the photographs give a good impression of what commodities were traded long-distance during the Viking Period.

The many excellent artifact photographs in the book will be extremely useful both as comparative material and as a teaching tool.

The book can be obtained at the Haithabu Museum, and will also be made available through the museum web-site:

<http://www.schloss-gottorf.de/wmh/publikationen.php>



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