Bookreview

K.-E. BEHRE

ERNÄHRUNG UND UMWELT DER WIKINGERZEITLICHEN
SIEDLUNG HAITHABU

(Die Ergebnisse der Untersuchungen der Pflanzenreste)

Karl Wachholz Verlag, Neumünster, 1983, 218 pp., 46 tables and 18 figures in text, 24 diagrams and 33 tables in Appendix.

In German and European archaeology, Haithabu represents one of the biggest excavation sites. It is of extraordinary importance both for archaeology and history and for other scientific discipline including botany and palaeoethnobotany. The excavations in ancient Haithabu (9–11 th century AD), situated at the southern margin of the town of Schleswig, started before World War II, but only from the early sixties have they been organized on a large scale. Palaeobotanical analyses have become a very important part of those investigations because of exceptionally favourable circumstances. First, a huge collection of well-preserved plant remains (seeds, fruits, wood, charcoals, mosses, pollen, etc.) was found and, second by, the archaeologists realized how valuable this was for interpreting the natural and living conditions of the settlement, the type of agriculture and perhaps even horticulture of the old Vikings, and for obtaining further information on the life of the ancient local population, on their trade contacts with other countries, etc.

The book by Professor BEHRE, who has made use of this unique coincidence, provides a full answer to all these and other questions. The author who willingly faced so many problems, had to perform thousands of determinations concerning the remains of more than 240 vascular plants, to introduce new working methods and to invent new interpretation approaches.

His investigations show that in Haithabu about a thousand years ago the most common cereals were barley and, that old Vikings planted, e.g., *Vicia faba* and *Linum usitatissimum*, that they knew some fruit trees, that they collected fruits or berries of several other wild plants and that they imported other plant foodstuffs as well. These ethnobotanic results are compared with investigations in other similar sites of NW and Central Europe, including Mikulčice in Czechoslovakia, Tornow in East Germany and Lubomia in Poland.

Pollen analyses and finds of plant remains enabled the author to reconstruct the vegetation and type of landscape in the northern part of Schleswig-Holstein and in the southern part of the Jutland peninsula. In one of the main tables (Tab. 40) the finds are arranged according to the phytosociological affinity of various plants; this is a great help for the above-mentioned reconstruction and for the evaluation of the character of vegetation in general. The author suggests that oak and beech forests were the main climax types in the area. They were affected by forest clearing and partly changed into heaths, fields, meadows and pastures. Brackish waters of the neighbouring Baltic inlets were surrounded by reed stands and salt marshes.

A chapter on the systematic survey of plants and on the morphological description of their plant remains, together with size diagrams and excellent photographic tables, represent another valuable part of the book. It offers substantial assistance to those who want to determine similar material in other localities.

A German summary is followed by the English, French and Russian counterparts. An extensive and precise bibliography and useful index of the Latin and German names of plants are also included.

We admire BEHRE's Haithabu both for the enormous quantity of material studied and for the quality of its elaboration, the high level of interpretation and the presentation. The book is indispensable for those who work in palaeoethnobotany, the history of agriculture, etc., and has also great value for phytosociologists, phytogeographers, palaeoecologists and palaeogeographers, who, among other things, can get new information about the human impact on vegetation and landscape. Haithabu is an example of the modern interdisciplinary approach to archaeological investigations; it shows the usefulness of close collaboration between botanists and archaeologists.

KAMIL RYBNÍČEK
ELIŠKA RYBNÍČKOVÁ