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Collected information for teachers

Topic: Trade

As an outstandingly well preserved archaeological landscape, Hedeby and the Danevirke are manifestations of the development of political and economic power in old Denmark and bear witness to its conflicts, and to exchange and trade between people of various cultural traditions in the Viking Age. Because of its unique situation in the borderland between the Frankish Empire in the South and the Danish kingdom in the North, Hedeby became the essential trading hub between continental Europe and Scandinavia as well as between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea.
With its strategically situated location, Hedeby and the Danevirke were part of this transnational trading network.

By means of Hedeby and the Danevirke it was possible to mark out and control the isthmus not only as the nodal point of important trading routes of the eighth to eleventh centuries but also as the crossover point between different domains. Thus, the border landscape of Hedeby and the Danevirke manifests political power and cultural interaction. The importance of the border landscape is showcased by large quantities of imports among the rich find assemblages in Hedeby. The remains of structures of a notably defensive character, buildings, harbour jetties, burials and settlement infrastructure of Hedeby and the Danevirke are well preserved. The archaeological evidence, including large amounts of organic finds, provides an outstanding insight into the significant political power exercised by Danish kings, the expansion of trading networks and cross-cultural exchange over several centuries in the Viking Age.

As a result of planned development and the sub-division of the flats on the shoreline, Hedeby developed during the Viking Age from an unfortified eighth-century settlement to the south of what was to be the Semicircular Wall into a trading and crafts centre for several regions. Hedeby began to serve as a nodal point for long-distance trade and mass production between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, playing an increasingly important economic and political role in the Nordic region. The development of the settlement in Hedeby intensified and the harbour facilities were expanded in the 880s. Landing stages for heavy merchant ships served as a market area. The mass production of goods was as important for the new economic developments as trade. Specialised craftsmen produced items for the home market as well as for export. Thus, the production of craft goods from Hedeby grew considerably. This prime time for Hedeby lasted throughout the tenth century. Further inland, other areas were developed for settlements, workshops and graves. Around the middle of the century, the centre was surrounded by ramparts and structurally connected to the Danevirke. When changes in around the year 1000 put an end to the old emporia

in many parts of Northern Europe, the focus of the settlement on the Schlei also successively shifted to the opposite north bank. However, there are only clear archaeological traces of the subsequent settlement at Schleswig from the 1070s on. The shore areas served as hithes (i.e. small havens/landing places for boats) with an associated market. The intensive development of the settlement in the boggy zone by the water's edge eventually coincided with an expansion of the harbour facilities in the 880s. Landing stages, where heavy merchant ships could also berth, were built extending far out into the water. They also served the trading centre as a market area, which is shown by the large number of finds of items lost during trade activities on the landing stages. Besides scales, balance weights, coins and pearls, 41 press dies used for modelling golden pendants were among the most notable objects. Besides long-distance trading, economic life was also characterised by the intensive and highly specialised production of craft items made both for the home market and for export.

The Danevirke closes off the main north/south transport route through Jutland, known as the Haervejen (Heerweg or Army Road; later Ochsenweg or Ox Road). This north/south passage through Jutland, via the relatively easily traversable Schleswig Geest, was probably used as far back as the Bronze Age, as can be seen from the numerous tumuli along the way. In mediaeval times and during the modern age (as the Ox Road), it became extremely important for long-distance trading via Jutland. Until very recently, the geological foundations of the Schleswig Isthmus were a crucial factor in the selection of transport routes such as the A7 motorway, Federal Road B77 and the Flensburg-Hamburg rail connection. The gates excavated in the Danevirke's Main Wall and Kovirke show that this route was travelled throughout the period in which the Danevirke was in use. From the Viking Age there is evidence of the roughly 18 km portage over the Schleswig Isthmus through the harbours of Hedeby and Hollingstedt. This route made it possible for goods to be traded between the North and Baltic Seas without having to travel all the way around the Jutland Peninsula. Ships could also pass into the inner reaches of the Schlei as far as Hedeby. There, the goods were transhipped and taken along the Treene to Hollingstedt. Small trading ships were able to reach the harbor from the North Sea via the Eider and Treene. In 2013, however, a small Viking Age settlement was found near Ellingstedt with a mediaeval route which was probably also used before in the Viking Age. The western section of the trade route between Hollingstedt and Hedeby (and later Schleswig) may have taken this path. The western route from Hedeby probably went through Hedeby's south gate in a western direction up to the gate through the Main Wall. Goods were transported between Hedeby and Hollingstedt on foot and using beasts of burden. Using parts found in Hedeby it has been possible to reconstruct carts. Near Ellingstedt, the remains of workshops have been found along with metal items from the ninth and tenth centuries, such as dress pins, clasps from bridles, Arab coins, a key to a chest and the pommel of a sword. The landing site and later harbour in Hollingstedt were on an outcrop of the geest which extended into the Treene, offering good conditions for transhipping goods. Whereas

there was just a simple landing stage in the Viking Age, in the twelfth century the harbour was stabilised with wooden platforms. Rural settlements from the eighth to eleventh centuries, such as Elisenhof on the mouth of the Eider, benefited from trading with Hedeby and were probably used to provide supplies and reload goods onto larger ships. Towards the end of the eleventh century, Schleswig was founded on the northern bank of the Schlei and appears to have taken over Hedeby's function as a North Sea harbour within just a few years. Nonetheless, some trading with Hollingstedt seems to have continued through the gateway in the Danevirke. The finding of a flat-bottomed barge known as a pram indicates that ferries passed from Schleswig over the Schlei, with the route then again passing south of the Danevirke to the gateway.

In the eighth century, economic structures in Northern Europe began to change together with the early development of trading centres, known as emporia. These “emporia” (a re-used term from Antiquity) were situated in borderlands or along coasts and along key trade routes. The trading centres can be described as gates between different cultural and economic traditions. The local inhabitants consisted of gateway communities of trade specialists coming from different trade systems. Often administered by a central or royal power, the emporia provided a safe place and the necessary infrastructure for exchange between faraway places and the hinterland enabling long-distance trade. Among the earliest examples of medieval emporia were Quentovic and Dorestad, Frankish emporia established in the sixth and seventh centuries at the main shipping routes in the North Sea. In Scandinavia the earliest of these trade settlements were established in Ribe in Denmark and in Birka in Sweden as far back as the eighth century, but a small settlement also emerged in Hedeby in the second half of that century. Fundamentally to this development, the Schleswig Isthmus constituted the narrowest land bridge between navigable waterways leading to the Baltic Sea and the North Sea. Serving as a trans-shipment centre, Hedeby evolved in the Viking period from an unfortified eighth century settlement into an international hub for trade and crafts which today provides us with excellent insights into the development of urban settlements in Northern Europe.

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Hedeby differs from other urban or trading centres of the Viking period due to its unique location at the portage between the trading networks of the North Sea and the Baltic Sea and the Frankish empire and the Danish kingdom as well as due to the connection with the Danevirke securing and controlling the isthmus. Hedeby held a key role among the trading centres connecting different networks. As opposed to places like Kaupang, Ribe, York, Dublin and Aarhus, the visibility and integrity at Hedeby is not compromised by modern urban development. The various components of an Emporium and its layout, such as its town wall, harbour, craft and housing areas, as well as the burial grounds, clearly demonstrate urban development, as seen at Birka in Sweden or, to lesser extent, Kaupang in Norway. In Hedeby, each of these features is expressed in an outstanding way compared to the other trading towns of the 8th to 11th centuries. The remains of Hedeby are distinctly visible even today and in extremely good condition. The extraordinary diverse archaeological structures and finds include large quantities of elsewhere rare organic material. Because of these qualities, Hedeby and the Danevirke are unique among the archaeological sites in Western and Northern Europe of the time.

Urban settlements in Western Europe often developed from earlier Roman towns, which the urban settlements in Northern and Eastern Europe could not - not least due to the lack of Roman occupation. Thus, the early development of towns in Northern Europe was only indirectly influenced by the Mediterranean towns from Roman times. Instead, they are particularly closely linked to seafaring, long-distance trade and the mass production of diverse wares. Urban settlements based on maritime trade, so-called emporia or wīcs in Anglo-Saxon, developed in the Early Middle Ages in Scandinavia, the British Isles and in the Frankish, Frisian and Slavic areas. In the late 1st millennium the development of emporia bridged the gap between the decline of the ancient cities and the rise of the medieval towns. Originating at the coasts of the North Sea, the development soon spread into Scandinavia, the Baltic Sea area and to the Continent. At the same time in the Mediterranean places like Venice also started as new trading towns, linked by trading routes to the emporia of the West and North. Only a few political centres existed in Scandinavia in

Roman and post Roman times, like Gudme in Denmark and Uppåkra in Sweden from the 4th cen. These centres had no links to important waterway. From the end of the 6th to the end of the 7th centuries small periodic fairs were established at frontiers and coasts which were very small in size from 0.5-3 ha and showed no urban characteristics. At a later phase of the development a larger number of emporia established in the early and middle 8th century in Scandinavia and the Baltic with still often only temporary character. Some of the larger trading centres linked Western Europe to the East and North (Ribe, Reric, followed by Birka, Hedeby, Kaupang). The earliest emporia around the North Sea show distinctive characteristics different from these earlier centres and became central places in trading networks with the post-roman towns along the Rhine like Cologne and Strasbourg. The earliest small settlements in Ribe and Hedeby suggest a transfer of concept from Frisia. The large permanent trading centres developed at strategically well-situated natural harbours. Emporia seem to emerge at systemic threshold locations in places of transition between different transport infrastructures like land and sea as well as at or near borders. The development of emporia as central hubs was accompanied and complemented by the establishment of many smaller local trading sites around the North Sea and at the Baltic Rim between the late 7th and the early 9th centuries. They were non-permanent, probably served also other purposes than trade and are elusive in the archaeological record. In the late 8th century the establishment of emporia boomed in Northern Europe (at least a dozen), a development which subsided just about 100 years later. Their number declined in the late 9th century. Fortification of the remaining emporia began only in the 10th cen. Around 970 it seems the production milieu of emporia collapsed, shown in the decline of most of the remaining places, like Birka. However, a few towns like Hedeby, Ribe or Wolin, continued. In the East-Frankish Empire or the Kingdom of Wessex urban centres became important for administration and the church. In the late 10th and 11th centuries this trend arrived in Northern Europe, often interpreted as the primary urban phase in medieval Northern Europe. Kings and the church founded new large centres in excess of 10ha in size based on the establishment of a Christian infrastructure, like Roskilde, Lund, Sigtuna, Oslo or Trondheim. Many were close to earlier political centres, like Roskilde or Lund which replaced former the royal seats Lejre and Uppåkra, respectively. Others continued from former emporia and were still largely based on harbours and maritime trade but were also used as administrative or episcopal centres, like Sigtuna or Schleswig, which succeeded Birka and Hedeby, respectively. Furthermore, a number of smaller, local centres emerged which had a role as administration centres for kings and the church as well as for production and trade like Aarhus, Viborg or Horsens in Denmark.