

SUMMARIES

TRADE AND COMMERCE BETWEEN THE MIDDLE DANUBE AND THE BALTIC SEA IN THE FIRST CENTURY AD

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The habit of viewing the prehistoric or protohistorical past from the perspective of the modern era leads to misjudgements that are not so easy to correct because they seem highly plausible to the layman. Thus it is almost universally accepted that there was lively commercial traffic between free *Germania* and the Roman Empire in the early centuries of the Christian era. Historical sources provide but little tangible evidence on this point. The Roman and provincial Roman products found in ancient Germany must be considered the most important. Although they are, as a rule, carelessly termed „imports“, they can with equal justification be regarded as spoils of war, gifts, or even payments in kind for road tolls and protective duties, as Tacitus and other historians have hinted. The author shows that the potential market for Roman and provincial Roman luxury goods — the respective upper strata — was much too small to allow the development of any significant exchange of goods. Especially striking are the so-called princely graves richly adorned with bronze and silver vessels. These and other graves with rather opulent objects are probably associated with the trade in amber verified by Pliny the Elder; this trade originated not only from the East Prussian Samland but from the Jutland peninsula, as „princely graves“ in Denmark, Mecklenburg and Pomerania would seem to prove. The author concludes with a discussion of the Roman and Byzantine coins found in ancient Germany. He takes issue with the romantic idealization of the early Germanic period, and attempts to replace still existing biases by an interpretation corresponding to reality.