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VIKING MONUMENTS AND SITES / Danevirke and Hedeby

 [Germany](#)

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Description

Part of transnational serial nomination

Danevirke N54 27 21,99 E9 20 38,66 to N54 28 48,97 E9 47 24,38

Hedeby N54 29 33,40 E9 34 02,51

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Viking serial nomination comprises land-, sea- and townscapes stretching from the North Atlantic to the Baltic Sea. Among the thousands of Viking sites from the eighth- to the twelfth centuries AD, these nine nominated properties from six nations are outstanding examples representing the wide diversity of this early maritime culture.

In the Viking Age the Norse peoples - the Vikings - developed a maritime culture which had an enormous impact on Northern Europe and beyond. Within Scandinavia the Viking Period witnessed the transformation from tribal to state societies and a change of religions. The three Christian kingdoms that developed from this transformation, and out of which the present Nordic States evolved, were by the end of the Viking Age an integral part of Europe. Thus, in modern times, Viking culture has contributed significantly to the creation of cultural coherence, symbolic values and cultural identity in the Nordic region, and it continues to hold immense public appeal world-wide. This culture and its heritage developed in close interaction within a unique natural environment. It is composed of distinctive urban landscapes and monuments. The culture also produced one of the world's great literatures: the Sagas, Eddic poetry and runic inscriptions.

Harnessing the technology of the ship, Vikings used the sea for expansion, exploration, long-distance trade and overseas settlement. The travels of the Vikings brought them across the Baltic Sea and down the Russian rivers as far as the Black and Caspian Seas to Byzantium and the Caliphate of Baghdad, as well as west out into the Atlantic. They were the first to settle in Iceland and the first Europeans to reach Greenland and North America about 1000 AD. In so doing, the Vikings were the first people to succeed in opening routes across the northern hemisphere from North America to Asia, thus connecting different

cultural regions of the earth. Adapted to very diverse types of natural environments, success was on the one hand in the use, and at times ecological misuse, of regional resources, and, on the other hand, in the development of social and political systems. This combination formed the basis for a rich cultural region. Internally, Scandinavia witnessed an economic, religious and social transformation aided by a boom in internal and cross-cultural communication during the Viking period. New institutions were developed, smaller regions were merged into larger units and the Scandinavians took part in European development on a larger scale. Scandinavia at the time of King Knut, in the early 11th century, was vastly different from the Scandinavia that was visited by the missionary Ansgar in the early 9th century.

The component parts cover a wide temporal and spatial range. They are of exceptional quality and diversity. They include trading towns, harbours, defensive structures, production sites, burial monuments, and assembly sites. Viewed as a whole these sites bear witness to the extent of Viking social and cultural development.

DESCRIPTION OF COMPONENT PART

From the early eighth century AD onwards the Danevirke, a system of earthen and wooden ramparts and stone walls connected with defensive ditches, protects Denmark's southern border. It allowed safe passage for goods and travellers between the North Sea and the Baltic. The Danevirke is connected with the early urban center of Hedeby. Between the ninth and eleventh century this largest of Viking Age towns developed into one of the most important long-distance trading and production centers in Scandinavia. The well-preserved urban remains and extensive harbour facilities point to economic expansion and the significance of maritime communication in Viking culture. From Viking to modern times Danevirke has played an important symbolic role for Danish identity and like Jelling, Thingvellir and Birka has attained iconic status.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The selection of sites bears an exceptional testimony to a unique cultural tradition in which the ship became the essential feature. Due to the natural environment of lakes, rivers and sea the use of waterways and the development of navigational skills had a long tradition. In the Viking Age ship technology was taken to a new level. Vikings were the first to settle in Iceland and the first Europeans to reach Greenland and North America about 1000 AD. In so doing, the Vikings were the first people to succeed in opening routes across the North Atlantic to North America and eastward to the Russian Plain and Byzantium, connecting continents and cultural regions. Internally, Scandinavia witnessed an economic, religious and social transformation aided by a boom in internal and cross-cultural communication during the Viking period. The component parts represent key attributes of Viking culture while the ship is the common feature throughout. In modern times, Viking culture has contributed significantly to the creation of cultural coherence, symbolic values and cultural identity in the Nordic region, and it continues to hold immense public appeal world-wide. The component parts demonstrate clearly the key features; expansion, cultural communication and a strong narrative tradition past and present.

Danevirke and Hedeby

In their combination of rampart system and settlement, port and cemetery, the Danevirke and Hedeby constitute for the Viking Age of Northern Europe a unique archaeological ensemble of the highest historical value and of great scientific complexity. The Danevirke is an outstanding testimony and a symbol with far-reaching effect for the early structures and territories of power in Northern Europe during the Viking period. Among the few early Scandinavian urban trading centres, Hedeby forms the most important interface for trade and communication between the large supra-regional areas of the North Atlantic, Europe and Western Asia.

Statements of authenticity and/or integrity

Danevirke and Hedeby are exceptionally well-preserved archaeological sites and structures of the Viking Age. As an archaeological complex, Danevirke and Hedeby are entirely authentic, and no reconstruction has been carried out. The State Party has endeavoured intensively and successfully in recent decades to preserve this historical-archaeological site and to care for it with lasting effect.

The authenticity of the site is verified impressively by numerous archaeological and scientific investigations conducted over one hundred years as well as ample written sources.

Comparison with other similar properties

General

The transnational project unites properties already appointed as Viking Age World Heritage with the newly nominated sites of

Danevirke and Hedeby as well as Grobina and the Danish fortresses. They all rank among the most important historical places in the Viking Age and have moreover, as archaeological sites, contributed essential insights into Scandinavian culture of this period. In this period the Nordic region developed from being a peripheral zone of Europe to being an integrated component of the Christian West. Of exceptional value is the good condition of preservation displayed by the project's combined monuments, ideally complemented by Old Iceland's rich supply of written records and by other outstanding archaeological finds such as the ships from Gokstad, Oseberg and Roskilde. Corresponding nominations for the period between the 8th and the 12th century AD have to date not been represented on the World Heritage List.

Danevirke and Hedeby:

The Danevirke and Hedeby complex is an important archaeological ensemble illustrative of the elaborate trading networks of Viking Age Europe and their influence on the subsequent history of Scandinavia as well as of the developing national states and of structures of power.

Hedeby has to be seen against the context of the other emporia of this period, from Staraya Ladoga to Dublin. The only sites that are comparable with Hedeby in terms of the degree of conservation and accessibility are Birka (Sweden) and, to a lesser extent, Dorestad (Netherlands). Most of the others, such as Ribe, Aarhus, Hamburg, York and Dublin, are beneath the existing towns and cities. The wealth and diversity of the material excavated at Hedeby indicates that it was one of the most important sites of this group. The Danevirke has no comparison in a Viking Age context and can only be compared with other defensive border structures such as Hadrian's Wall or the Chinese Wall, which were, however, connected with large developed empires and not with societies at the start of their territorial organisation. The extraordinarily good state of preservation of the find material and the structural features, not only of the rampart system but also of the port and the settlement of Hedeby, finds no parallels in the Scandinavian Viking Age.

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