

Klinge, Matti. 2007. *Ancient Powers of the Baltic Sea, An Illustrated Historical Outline*. Translated from Swedish by Ain Haas. Beaverton, Canada: Aspasia Books. 198 pages. ISBN: 978--0-9783488-0-9.

The author is among Finland's most prolific historians, now retired, but sufficiently respected to have several books translated and to merit a festschrift. He is known for his somewhat eccentric views—not only regarding how the past should be interpreted but also how an argument should be documented in footnotes—yet his ideas are taken seriously well beyond the Baltic Sea, even across the Atlantic.

This collection of essays was written for the 150th anniversary of the great Finnish epic *Kalevala*, but published in Finnish two years early, in 1983, and the next year, slightly enlarged, in Swedish. The author's intent was to bring the evidence of historical events and customs provided by the folk poem to a larger audience, one that has grown significantly in recent decades. His thesis is that two Finlands existed before the era of the crusades, north and south, both part of a sea empire extending well beyond the current boundaries of Finland. He attempts to prove that there was a confederacy of "Wendish" peoples stretching all along the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea; there were indeed peoples who shared the same language group, which is not quite the same as a confederation. The existence of a real Wendish state in what became Mecklenburg, is passed over rather quickly except to note that in 1364 Albert of Mecklenburg first used the coat of arms with three crowns—i.e., the Swedish, Gothic and Wendish. Klinge asserts that the third crown stood for Finland, an identification which depends on the closeness of the pronunciation of the words Vandal and Wend. This is a subject over which much beer has been spilled without reaching agreement.

Klinge says the Roland statues in Finland demonstrate that a state existed there when the crusaders arrived; elsewhere it is a symbol of Christian law and eastward expansion, or evidence of a non-Christian presence. He clearly delights in bringing such seeming paradoxes or contradictions to the reader's attention. He posits that statues on columns represent places where trade could be conducted safely, then he discusses the dragon cult, drinking horns, stone statues and the royal coat-of-arms. The concluding essay is a digression on the historical importance of the seas for trade, ending with a note that it was the sea that bound Swedish and Finnish culture and politics together.

Klinge's discursive style is not easy to follow. On page 115 he describes how an idol was destroyed by the Teutonic Knights in 1227. Quoting Henry of Livonia "populo ...baptizato, Tharaphita eiecto, Pharaone submerso" [people baptized,

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Tharpitha driven out, Pharaos submerged], he argues that this cannot mean the Egyptian pharaoh, but only the Pharos lighthouse. Hence it had to be a pillar used as a navigational aid. He does not explain why Christian seafarers would want to destroy a beacon.

Klinge presents his evidence so often using “if,” “perhaps,” “it is possible,” and “it could be” that one quickly realizes that his is a reconstruction of a possible past that cannot with certainty be proved to have existed. The influence of Foucault shows clearly. There are minor errors, such as identifying Semgallia as a Lithuanian province on the Baltic Sea. There are no footnotes, no bibliography, but, as the title indicated, there are numerous illustrations with accompanying text.

Everyone above a certain age has surely met with intelligent people who are caught up with ideas that would revise everything we know about the past and the present. Klinge is one of those individuals.

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