

### **What was the function of the Olger Dyke?**

During the first centuries of the Common Era, southern Jutland was characterised by conflicts and contention about the rights of land. The first conflicts were between Angles and *Varini*, later between Angles and Jutes.

The Olger Dyke was not a border which separated the lands of the Angles and that of the *Varini*. The Olger Dyke should rather be understood as a bulwark which protected the hinterland. Here, one could seek refuge if the situation further north grew critical.

While the Angles in South Slesvig were organised in a form of early state formation with centralised weapon control and a collective protection of the population, the *Varini* were organised in at least seven loosely structured autonomous enclaves in which each village was self-defendant and had their own warriors; here, weapons were personal possessions.

In order to gain control of weapons in the conquered areas, the angles took up the old tradition of sacrificing the weaponry of the conquered enemies in bogs – perhaps as part of a triumphal procession like that of the Romans. Subsequently this custom spread further north in Jutland, to Funen, southern Zealand, Bornholm, and the Baltic area states.

Captions:

*Drawing: Jørgen Andersen, MSJ.*

