The North Schleswig town of Apenrade was among the most important ports in the Southern Baltic until late into the nineteenth century. Already during the Danish period, individual shipowners, socially and spiritually rooted deep in Apenrade and its hinterland, operated on a global level, giving evidence of that fact. Worldwide trading networks were established from Apenrade which continued to progress and to develop during the Prussian period. A particular feature of the local shipping industry was that the town relied on sailing ships for much of the second half of the nineteenth century while in neighbouring Flensburg modern steamships gained the upper hand and finally overtook them in competition.

Michael Jebsen was the most important protagonist in the global awakening of Apenrade during the Prussian period. Under the municipal seal of the three Apenrade mackerels (although turning the fish in the centre in the opposite direction) he founded a worldwide operating enterprise which still exists after nearly a century and half: nowadays however no longer steered from the little dependence in North Schleswig but for a long time from Hong Kong, one of the economic centres of the present time.

It is doubly fortuitous for German business history research that a complete company archive should have survived intact during the course of the twentieth century, and that a historian who is globally-minded along with his research, takes care of such an archive. Bert Becker with his voluminous biography Michael Jebsen, 1835-1899: Shipowner and Politician, presents a fact-rich and weighty book in which the many-faceted life of his protagonist is precisely portrayed in its global context. (...) 

It is the special merit of Bert Becker to have recorded the impressive life of Michael Jebsen in around eight hundred highly readable pages. To characterise the work as a mere biography would fall short, and in addition the book title seems to be a little too modest considering the immense content. Becker when using the Apenrade shipowner as an example succeeds to draw the theoretically well-founded portrait of an entire period which was not only characterised by the economic awakening of the Founders’ Years and by global politics but also and always by Danish-German tensions. Accordingly, the specific strength of Michael Jebsen, 1835-1899: Shipowner and Politician is the broad framework and the multi-perspective contextualisation of the ship owner’s biography in its economic, political, cultural, and familial aspects. The book is a significant contribution to the entrepreneurial and business history of Imperial Germany and allows insights into such spheres of life, sources of which from other entrepreneurs are either silent or missing. The book is both intellectually stimulating and is exceptionally enjoyable to read with numerous pictures and maps adding to the already very good text. An extraordinary, recommended work!