

# A European Middle Ages

## Circulation of Objects, Practices, and Techniques between Central and Western Europe (1000–1600)

Titles and abstracts of presentations by participants (in alphabetical order):

**Diane BAUSTERT-BIANCARDINI** (Cergy Paris University – EHESS, Paris)

### **Producing Basse-Taille Enamels in Late-Medieval Europe: Approaching Craftmanship Network with Interdisciplinary Methodologies**

Enamelling production certainly experienced quite a turn at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century: silver was introduced, along with translucent glass and delicate chasing, forming an innovation known as basse-taille enamelling. Soon the lavish objects would overflow gold smithery production, from Siena to Paris, and art history would gather these objects under an excessively generalised term, "International Gothic". This teleological and forced homogenisation has been widely criticised since Louis Courajod first theorised it. Despite the limited conceptual significance attributed to this term, it seems the transfer of techniques, the circulation of objects and dissemination of production centres seem to weaken the traditional categories and characteristics by which we identify object corpora.

Therefore, International Gothic could be approached more as a process than as a style. This process would be marked by a mechanism for the exchange of goods and techniques. The singularity production centers, whether in terms of formal or stylistic features, is thus safeguarded. However, this perspective enables us to highlight the changing logics and strategies of production in this late medieval period, which seems to herald both an industrious revolution and an object-based society - a precursor of a consumer society.

An interdisciplinary approach allows us to confront material and social paradigms in hope of shedding light on specific production organisations. Through a statistical treatment of beam particle analysis of museum collections and a formal approach of the objects, the aim is to identify characteristics that can be used to delimit a production network whose methods are, if not uniform, at least the result of technical and organisational transfers.

**Góra BENCE** (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)

### **Graphite-Tempered Pottery in Late Medieval Hungary: New Insights into Local Production and Foreign Influences**

Grey kitchenware tempered with graphite was a common pottery type in Hungary during the late Middle Ages. Early research initially suggested that these vessels were exclusively imports from the West. While it is clear that some pieces bearing the coat of arms of Austrian towns are of Austrian origin, Hungarian sites have yielded many non-stamped pieces, as well as others tempered solely with sand. Recent studies have recognized distinct characteristics of this pottery type as a quality mark, though the term is still often used to reference its supposed Austrian origin. It is now also believed that such vessels may have been produced in Hungarian urban workshops, either as imitations or by immigrant potters. The raw materials used in these pieces, as well as the origin of the graphite mixed into the clay, remain subjects of ongoing debate. Modern research, especially through petrographic analysis, holds the potential to deepen our understanding of these ceramics in various ways. Pottery excavated from Visegrád, the king's residence town, offers fresh insights into the perspectives on this type of vessels.

The analysis revealed that the potters of medieval Visegrád used both local and distant raw materials, mixing their clay with purified graphite, probably imported from southern Bohemia. Additionally, the distant raw materials, including clay with natural graphite content, likely originated from the geological regions of Český Krumlov or Chvalčice.

**Konrad BUREK** (University of Wrocław)

### **'The Poor and Defenseless' Peasants? Consumption of "Elite" Material Culture in the Rural Areas of Central Eastern Europe**

Preliminary archaeological research on Goschwitz - the abandoned medieval village in Silesia - opens the door to new research questions and hypotheses on the accessibility of material culture among the rural dwellers. The significant prevalence of military items, especially the Messer (fighting knives) among archaeological evidence from the village is particularly interesting. Some artifacts, such as spurs, traditionally considered items for the elite, also appear in rural contexts. Examples found at other rural sites in Bohemia, Moravia, and Hungary indicate that weapons and equestrian equipment were significant elements of rural culture in Central Europe. It should be mentioned that long knives and spurs are often depicted in works of art as belonging to all social classes. This paper discusses the production, distribution patterns, and accessibility of such objects between urban and rural areas in Central Eastern Europe. Illuminating these facets may provide fresh insights into medieval village life's social and economic conditions. This study implies that rural communities actively engaged with the networks related to trade and large-scale production.

**Jorge GARRIDO LÓPEZ** (University of Granada)

### **The Transit of Nasrid Leather across the Mediterranean (14th–15th Centuries)**

The Nasrid Emirate of Granada (1238-1492) relied on the commercial dimension of its economy as its primary mechanism for survival in a context where, having long lost its former centrality, its integrity was seriously threatened by the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. This commercial orientation had silk, sugar, and various dried fruits (almonds, figs, raisins, etc.) as its undisputed protagonists, products that were in high demand among the leading businessmen of the Italian republics (Genoa, Pisa, Florence, etc.) as well as Catalan-Aragonese merchants. However, alongside these goods were other less economically central products that have received little attention from historical and archaeological research to date. Among these we can find leather goods.

My contribution to this doctoral workshop will focus on the trade of hides and leather from the last territories of al-Andalus to the Italian republics and North Africa between the 14th and 15th centuries. Additionally, I will touch upon the early years of the 16th century following the Castilian conquest, employing a retrospective analysis to contextualize the situation before the end of the Middle Ages.

This work forms part of my broader doctoral research on the production of textiles and leather in the Nasrid Emirate. The analysis presented here will draw on unpublished documentation from local (Real Chancillería de Granada, Archivo Notarial de Granada) and national (Archivo General de Simancas) archives as well as international sources (Archivo di Stato di Prato). This will be combined with an examination of the archaeological record from the Nasrid region to assess the significance of these industries within the economic framework of this polity.

**Milan MATĚJKA** (Charles University, Prague)

### **The Healing Glow: Queen Sophie's Amber Lamp and Its Voyage**

The Municipal Museum of Bratislava (Múzeum mesta Bratislavy) secures a remarkable object: an amber sculpture of St. Catherine seated under a silver tabernacle positioned on a piece of walrus skull and tusks. Truly an unparalleled artifact, the object was identified by J. Vitovský (1991) in the posthumous inventory of Sophie of Bavaria (1376-1428), former Bohemian Queen-Consort and the most prominent refugee of the impending Hussite Wars (1419–1436), who spent her final years in the safety of Bratislava Castle (Slovakia, formerly the Kingdom of Hungary). Beyond its visual appeal, the lamp is a product of a collaborative effort that transcended the borders of several late medieval states and cultures: the raw materials had to be scavenged either on the shores of Greenland or the Baltics, shipped to the merchant hubs of Western Europe, crafted by specialists, and then transported eastward to the royal court in Prague either as a gift or a direct commission for the Bavarian-born queen, who later brought the artifact to her Bratislava exile.

But were the circumstances of its creation as unique as the artifact itself? Or does the lamp exemplify a luxurious object with the defining attributes of Europe's dynastically interconnected royal courts around 1400, referred to as the International Gothic? How does the lamp as the oldest surviving amber of the West' (R. King) anticipate the amber production (and widespread consumption patterns) of the early modern period?

Secondly, I will examine the significance of the object to its owner-user. Was the artifact taken and packed by the fleeing Queen as a status symbol, a witness to conspicuous consumption, and desired royal Magnificence (S. Charron 2022), or did it bear another medicinal or even magical potency? To address this issue, I will focus on the object with methodologies informed by the recent material turn (B. Buettner 2022), medieval textual tradition, and an intersectional analysis of the Queen's identity within her unique circumstances.

**Anna NEVÁLOVITS** (Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest)

### **The Hacksilver Hoards in the Carpathian Basin of the 10th–11th Centuries**

The hacksilver (broken silver) treasure hoards are an important archaeological group of finds from the 10th to 13th centuries in Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe. These hoards are named after the notable feature of containing pieces of broken and unused precious metal items buried together with complete ones in the ground. In many cases, contemporary Muslim and Western as well as Eastern European coins, various wire jewellery, and fragments of costume fittings made of precious metals are found together in these hoards. In our presentation, we aim to present the current state of research on hoards in the Carpathian Basin. Currently, five important hoards from the 10th–12th centuries are known in the Carpathian Basin. These are the dirham hoard from Maramureş County, as well as the treasures from Zsennye, "Királyföld" (Rom. "Pământul Crăiesc"), Darufalva (Aust. Draßburg), and Richárdpuszta. The finds are not only and exclusively silver objects or fragments as the gold hoard from Zsennye clearly demonstrates. The presentation wants to bring to the horizon of research again the assemblage unearthed in the 20th century – the hoards of Darufalva/Drassburg and Zsennye, and to highlight what types of connections the 11th century Carpathian Basin had with the regions mentioned. These hoards reveal that they are related to the Kievan Rus, the finds in modern-day Poland, and comparable artifacts found in the Scandinavian region. I would like to discuss our most recent research on the similarities and wider web of relationships surrounding the Darufalva hoard and the Zsennye hoard in the presentation.

Jenni SAHRAMAA (University of Helsinki)

### **Copper Alloy Belt Buckles and Fittings in 10th–12th Century Southern Finland: International Influence and Local Production?**

Copper alloy belt buckles and fittings of various types have been found in 10th–12th century male inhumation graves in Southern Finland. While female clothing in this period exhibits a strong local character, male dress has been interpreted as more influenced by international fashions. The belt, an essential element of male attire, not only carried practical accessories such as knives and pouches but also held symbolic meanings of honor and status. Yet, despite their significance, belt components receive little attention in Finnish archaeological literature and are often published only as illustrations.

This paper examines belt finds from male graves, including buckles, fittings, and preserved leather fragments. I explore methodological approaches for analysing these artifacts, focusing on their production techniques, usage, and potential connections to both local craftsmanship and international trade networks in the medieval period.

Carmen SÁNCHEZ CASTILLO (University of Granada)

### **Rhenish Stoneware in the Southeast of the Nasrid Kingdom during the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period (15th and 16th Centuries)**

The trade between Central Europe and the southeastern Iberian Peninsula during the transition from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period almost remains an understudied topic. A new ongoing investigation, as part of my doctoral thesis, addresses this gap through the archaeological and archaeometric analysis of ceramics recovered from excavation sites in the southeastern Iberian Peninsula.

This communication focuses on imported ceramic pieces found in Bayra (Almería, Spain), a frontier settlement of the Nasrid Kingdom conquered in 1488 and destroyed by an earthquake in 1518. Among the findings are fragments of Rhenish stoneware, a high-quality ceramic produced in the Rhineland region. These pieces are distinguished by their hardness, density, and impermeability, properties that make them optimal for the transportation and storage of goods. Their technical characteristics are the result of firing in high-temperature kilns and the application of salt to their surface, which created a vitrified and impermeable body with a granular finish. Many of these ceramics also feature ornamental decorations, including moulded reliefs and applied patterns. The production of these ceramics was consolidated between the 15th and 16th centuries, achieving significant diffusion thanks to their extensive commercial export.

This research analyses the technical, morphological, and decorative characteristics of the Rhenish stoneware repertoire found in southeastern Iberia, situates it chronologically, and examines its integration into the region's trade dynamics. The findings highlight the participation of southeastern Iberian territories in large-scale medieval trade networks,

typically associated with the Atlantic and, to a lesser extent, the Mediterranean coasts. This work also establishes a connection between this area and Central European territories during the Middle Ages, offering a valuable opportunity to analyse early trade dynamics within this broader context.