



RELIGION, CULTS & RITUALS

IN THE MEDIEVAL RURAL ENVIRONMENT

Religion, Kulte und Rituale in der mittelalterlichen bäuerlichen Umgebung
Réligion, cultes et rituels au milieu rural médiéval

edited by **CHRISTIANE BIS-WORCH & CLAUDIA THEUNE**

RURALIA XI

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Foreword

Claudia Theune *

The international association RURALIA – Jean Marie Pesez Conference on Medieval Rural Archaeology provides biannual international conferences on current research questions regarding rural living environments and living conditions. It is one of the major objectives of the association to discuss topics, which are of relevance in a wider chronological frame and in a wider geographical space. Due to representation of archaeological investigations from most European countries RURALIA is able to strengthen the exchange of knowledge in, and the development of, archaeologically comparable studies, and to make the archaeological results available to other disciplines.

In September 2015 about 50 scholars from 23 European countries and even from the United States came to the XIth RURALIA Conference in Clervaux, Luxembourg, to present and discuss research questions and results on ‘Religious places, cults, and rituals in the medieval rural environment’. By doing so they brought new insight to an area that has been neglected in recent decades.

The focus was not on the Christianisation of rural society but rather on the relationship between the people and the religious sites where they practiced their beliefs whether they are Christian, Jewish, Muslim or pagan. This also included phenomena, traditions and practices which characterize the popular beliefs and burial rituals. The comparative approach considered the regional diversity of religious practices in different European regions and the diversity evident in shorter and longer chronological time periods.

The papers included various aspects of religious faith. One focus was set on the relationship between people and sites of religious practice, while another treated popular beliefs, religious ideas, superstitions and rituals, which existed alongside official religions and are of older tradition.

The topic of the first session ‘Buildings and sites without, or near, rural settlements’, referred to springs, caves, quarries and special stones (i.e. menhirs), places in forests or ruins (often with religious connotations), the papers also addressed pagan traditions, popular beliefs and superstitions. The causes of the formation and decline of such places were investigated too. The second topic ‘Buildings and sites within rural settlements’ focussed on rural populations and the religious use of buildings (e.g. Roman buildings, churches and their surrounding graveyards), the topography of their rural layout, not just the churches, but also on priest houses, monasteries, hermitages and hospitals and non-religious buildings. In a third session ‘Special practices in burial rituals in the rural environment’ were the focus; burials not complying with the standard, including burials of children, burials at places of execution, magic, popular beliefs of revenants or vampirism were discussed. Finally in session four ‘Objects of popular belief’ were investigated, for instance, amulets, devotional objects that should protect their owners and their

* President of RURALIA
www.ruralia.cz
Dep. Prehistory and Historical
Archaeology, University of Vienna,
Austria
claudia.theune@univie.ac.at

houses, but also votive offerings and relics (e.g. horse's heads, drinking vessels or eggs).

In this now published conference volume of the XIth RURALIA conference 32 authors have put their lectures into writing; the RURALIA Association is delighted to present the book to the scientific community to participate our research.

I wish to warmly acknowledge and thank Christiane Bis-Worch as organiser for this initiative; she and her team (Romain Bis, Thilo Schiermeyer, Estelle Michels, Claude Klopp, CNRA; Andrea Binsfeld, Michel Pauly, University of Luxembourg; Marianne Thilmany, Permesfrënn) have organised a very fruitful conference. And I would like to thank the Ministry of

Culture, the Direction Générale Tourisme, the Centre National de Recherche Archéologique (CNRA), the University of Luxembourg, the city of Clervaux and Beckerich for the great support including the generous financial support. This subsidy made it possible to publish this book as well. My heartfelt thanks also go to those, who helped additionally editing this volume: Niall Brady, Cynthia Colling, Piers Dixon, Mark Gardiner, Peter Hinterndorfer and François Valotteau. Last but not least I like to thank our new Publisher Sidestone, in particular Karsten Wentink; he and his team ensured the careful and conscientious production of the book and have announced it to a broad international scholarship.

Introduction to the conference papers

Christiane Bis-Worch *

The aim of this 11th RURALIA conference in Clervaux (GdL) was to provide a broad and comprehensive overview of the latest European research on religion, cults and rituals in the rural medieval environment. Participants and organizers were, of course, aware that each individual topic actually deserved a conference of its own, and that individual conferences or exhibitions have indeed already been held on some of the topics. However, scant attention has been paid so far to phenomena that are specifically rural in character. These include topics that have fallen into decades of oblivion and therefore deserve further research: for instance the phenomenon of petroglyphs – known in Luxembourg but forgotten since the 1960s. In line with the European orientation of RURALIA, discussions covered pagan, syncretistic, Christian, Jewish and Muslim aspects from 23 European and non-European countries: the conference included contributions from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Albany/New York.

These conference papers are divided into a number of overarching topics, as was the conference itself. Bert Grounewould's essay on his observations during a pilgrimage along the *Camino Francés* serves as an introduction to the subject, as it illustrates humankind's deeply rooted urge, then and now, for spirituality – an urge that finds material expression in many forms through ritual actions. This spirituality seems timeless and universal.

The following essays by Frode Iversen, Marte Spangen, Juris Urtans, Frédéric Surmely, Finbar McCormik and James Bond present various pagan and Christian cult places in rural environments. How dangerous overly hasty interpretations can be – what German speaker has never heard the saying 'Was ich nicht kenn, ich kultisch nenn' (roughly: if I don't know it, it must be a cult) – is emphasized by Marte Spangen's essay, in which she reinterprets numerous sites so far considered to be 'circular cult sites of the Sami' as wolf traps. Frédéric Surmely's contribution, on the other hand, looks at the interpretation of petroglyphs, which are difficult to date due to a lack of recent archaeological studies, and which, in view of their primitive nature, are often assumed to be 'very old' – an age that cannot always withstand closer examination.

The following group of papers examines the importance of religious buildings in villages and rural areas, for example in an effort to reconstruct several aspects of society and economy by analysing their positioning within the settlement and the surrounding landscape (Constance Röhl). Other texts deal with the foundation of monasteries (Miriam Steinborn, Edith Sarosi/ Szabolcs Rosta) or churches (Phillippe Mignot/Frédéric Chantinne and Cyrille Ben Kaddour). Estelle Michels examines

* Centre National de Recherches
Archéologiques (CNRA) du
Grand-Duché de Luxembourg
christiane.bis@cnra.etat.lu

the phenomenon of churches of the 11th/12th century with obvious Roman *spolia* in Luxembourg. The overall picture is complemented by insights into the rural mosques of Spain (Jorge Eiroa) and a text on Franconian country Jews in Germany (Hans-Peter Süß) as well as an excursus on the importance of the priests' houses for the development of rural residential buildings in Hungarian villages (Tibor Racz).

The third group of papers looks at various forms of burials – a statement about individual religious feelings and ways of thinking on the one hand, but also a symbol of the emergence of group identities: Yves Gleize, Catarina Tente, Inaki Martin-Viso, Nico Arts, Tatjana Tkalčec / Siniša Krznar and Daniel Gutscher. Maria Vargha and Pawel Duma studied graves that fall outside the social norm: these include, for example, places of execution, but also conspicuous graves in cemeteries, located in a manner as to imply superstitious practices. Other phenomena, such as the burial of afterbirths or even of dead premature babies within buildings, point to the next group of subjects.

This fourth section presents numerous religious actions that are not recognized by official churches and represent a form of 'secular piety' (so-called 'folk beliefs'). Miklós Takács introduces the topic with Hungarian examples, while Elisabeth Regner explores possible differences between rural and urban practices. Johan Verspay, on the other hand, shows a new approach to the interpretation of metal objects found in fields and perhaps so far mistaken as simple waste. The essays by Iris Niessen, Morten Søvsø, Heinrich Stiewe, Jean-Marie Blaising, and Walter Wheeler deal with religious objects in buildings – private homes but also churches – that often have mainly apotropaic functions or are believed to keep illness at bay.

This last group in particular shows that such religious practices exist across many national boundaries – and that they can persist stubbornly in rural environments. Some practices even reached America together with the emigrants, and here they intermingled with indigenous and African ritual acts and hoards. Some of these phenomena are still part of our lives, even though their deeper meaning may have been lost.

The conference was rounded off by a visit to several Luxembourg sites that helped supplement the lectures. These included hermitages at healing springs: the spring

and chapel of St. Pirmin on 'Pirmesknupp' and the Hachville hermitage in the north of the country as well as 'Kalenberg' near Beckerich. Participants also visited the sites that particularly interested RURALIA founding member Johnny de Meulemeester – who passed away much too early! – in nearby Belgium: Clairefontaine Monastery and Old Saint Martin beyond the gates of the medieval town of Arlon.

An additional excursion took participants to the Abbey of St. Willibrord at Echternach and to the Church of St. Peter and Paul erected in a late Roman fort. Another interesting visit was the excursion to the Church of St. Lawrence in Diekirch, also built in a Roman structure, as well as 'Girsterklause', St. Mary's Oak tree near Altrier and several venerated places that in the Middle Ages were located just beyond the gates of the town of Luxembourg (e.g. the rock church of St. Quirin and its nearby spring, and 'Petermänchen' (roughly: Little Peterman), a statue of Jesus dating back to the 17th/early 18th century lying in a grotto where, even today, jilted women light candles stuck with needles to cause pain to their 'unfaithful lovers'.

Neither the conference nor the present publication would have been possible without financial support. Important patrons were the Centre National de Recherches Archéologiques, the University of Luxembourg, the Ministry of Culture, the Direction Générale du Tourisme, Clervaux and Beckerich municipalities, Hotel Koener and the Emile Weber bus company.

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our warmest thanks to all the helpers of the conference, in particular Romain Bis, Thilo Schiermeyer, Estelle Michels, Claude Klopp (CNRA), Marianne Thilmany (Permesfrënn) and the colleagues from the University of Luxembourg, Andrea Binsfeld and Michel Pauly.

Haio Zimmermann helped with conference planning, Claudia Theune with the preparation of the conference papers. It is thanks to her energetic commitment that this publication was done in time!

Corrections to the contributions were made by Niall Brady, Piers Dixon and Mark Gardiner for the English texts, Claudia Theune and Peter Hinterndorfer for the German texts and for the French texts Cynthia Colling and François Valotteau.

Our sincere thanks to all for their friendship and support.

Past and present meet: contemporary expressions of faith along the *Camino Frances*

Observations by a modern pilgrim

Bert Groenewoudt *

ABSTRACT

Along the *Camino Frances*, an approximately one thousand-year-old pilgrim way leading from the Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, we encounter not only the familiar (post-) medieval European repertoire of built structures and other landmarks with a specific Christian function and appearance. Also present are small monuments and 'ritual places' which seem to appear spontaneously. The present paper focusses on such phenomena. It briefly discusses their appearance, location, likely age and meaning. Similar expressions of faith and spirituality (today perhaps worn down to a mere habit) may have been part of Europe's ritual landscape along pilgrim ways – and elsewhere – for centuries. That ritual landscape may well have been more complex than is often thought.

Keywords: *Camino Frances, ritual places, Europe's ritual landscape, pilgrimage.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Vergangenheit trifft Gegenwart: Zeitgenössischer Glaubensausdruck entlang des Camino Frances. Beobachtungen eines modernen Pilgers

Der *Camino Frances* ist der ungefähr tausend Jahre alte Jakobsweg, der von den Pyrenäen nach Santiago de Compostela führt. Entlang dieses Pilgerwegs findet man nicht nur bekannte Fundstätten mittelalterlicher und neuzeitlicher Bauwerke und christlicher Funktion und Identität, sondern auch kleine Denkmäler und „Kultstätten“ die offenbar spontan errichtet werden. In diesem Beitrag stehen diese Kultstätten im Vordergrund. Sie werden anhand ihrer Erscheinungsform und ihres Standortes, ihres möglichen Alters und ihrer Bedeutung kurz beschrieben. Es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, dass diese informellen Symbole des Glaubens und der Spiritualität schon seit Jahrhunderten Teil der europäischen rituellen Landschaft sind, und zwar nicht nur entlang der Pilgerwege. Die rituelle Landschaft ist möglicherweise viel komplexer als viele denken.

Schlagwörter: *Camino Frances, Kultstätten, Europäische rituelle Landschaft, Wallfahrt.*

* Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE), Amersfoort, The Netherlands
B.Groenewoudt@cultureelerfgoed.nl

RÉSUMÉ

Le passé et le présent : Expressions contemporaines de la foi le long du Camino Frances. Observations d'un pèlerin moderne

Le long du *Camino Frances*, le chemin millénaire qu'empruntaient les pèlerins à travers les Pyrénées vers Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle (Espagne), on ne rencontre pas seulement le répertoire architectural européen (post) médiéval habituel à fonction et signature strictement chrétienne. On y trouve aussi des monuments et des «sites rituels» qui apparemment émergent spontanément,

qui sont mis en lumière dans cet article. On abordera brièvement la signification, l'apparence, l'emplacement et l'âge possible. Il n'est pas exclu que ces manifestations «informelles» de la foi et de la spiritualité (devenus peut-être des habitudes) fassent partie du paysage rituel de l'Europe depuis des siècles, et non seulement le long des routes de pèlerinage. Ce paysage rituel a pu être plus complexe qu'admis jusqu'ici.

Mots-clés : *Camino Frances, sites rituels, paysage rituel de l'Europe, pèlerinage.*

Introduction

This short contribution was inspired by a pilgrimage from the Netherlands to the tomb of St James in Santiago de Compostela (Spain). The 2700km journey was completed, on foot, in stages between 2012 and 2016. From the Netherlands, our route led us past Namur (Belgium) and the French towns of Reims, Vézelay and Limoges. The final stage, from the pass across the Pyrenees at Roncesvalles to the final destination, we followed the *Camino Frances*. French pilgrims in particular have been following this route for centuries, and it is here in particular that we encounter not only the customary Christian gamut of churches, chapels and monasteries but also small, informal and impromptu monuments and 'ritual places'. They have been and are still being made by the people who walk the route, occasionally by using something which was already there as a starting point. Although this interesting phenomenon raises many questions, it has so far received little scholarly attention (see especially Margry 2008). The present contribution will attempt to address some of the questions. These manifestations are of interest not only as modern phenomena, but also because they may shed some light on the multifarious nature of ritual landscapes in the past. To localise the various sites as well as a source of background information we used a guidebook: Rabe 2016.

The pilgrimage to Santiago is intimately connected to the (re-)Christianisation of the Iberian Peninsula. A short introduction of the phenomenon of Christianisation and its manifestations as well as the origins of the *Camino Frances* is therefore in order. It will be followed by a brief description of the phenomena which are the subject of this paper. We will conclude by addressing their age, physical manifestation, location and possible meaning.

In the following text, the word 'pilgrim' refers to any individual following the *Camino*, not merely those who do so (in part) for religious reasons.

Christianisation

Throughout most of Europe, medieval societies were fundamentally influenced by the Christian faith and its church. Almost without exception, European artistic and cultural expressions therefore bear a distinctly Christian stamp. This is also true of its cultural landscape, which between ca. AD 400 and 1200 changed profoundly under Christianity's influence (*Ó Carragáin – Turner 2016*). It became dominated by the presence of numerous churches, monasteries, chapels, hermitages, road crosses and similar structures which are still prominent landmarks today. Christianity manifested itself not only visibly but also audibly. Church bells could be heard almost everywhere at regular intervals (*Corbin 1994; Smith 1999*). To a great extent, this Christian fabric is not the product of impromptu actions but rather the result of deliberate efforts by ecclesiastical institutions and authorities, directly or indirectly. The material manifestations of Christianisation and Christendom appear highly standardised and codified, thus reflecting the tight organisation and hierarchical nature of the medieval (Roman Catholic) Church with its fixed rules, traditions and customs. Yet, the daily reality was less clear-cut and uniform (*Ó Carragáin – Turner 2016*). Everywhere in Europe, pre-existing, and moreover fluid, local and culture-specific traditions and preferences created a highly diverse range of material and immaterial ritual and religious expressions. The Church, too, modified its actions and practices through time, including the nature and the weight it attached to the ways it manifested itself in society and in the landscape. In addition, religious (or religiously motivated) conflicts and profound religious-societal transformations (Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and revolutions) often had far-reaching consequences which also affected the organisation of the ritual landscape. These are all relevant factors in our attempts to grasp and understand Christendom's material inheritance. In doing so, it is crucial to keep in mind that the Christianisation of medieval Europe was not an event but a lengthy and

multiform process, the beginning and especially end of which are difficult to define, which led Flemish historian Ludo Milis to refer to it as a *'processus sans fin'* (Milis 1986;1991/1998). Baptism in itself does not transform people overnight into devout Christians in all their doings, whether collectively or individually. Moreover, in many areas the process of Christianisation did not proceed smoothly and 'evolutionary'. Occasionally, Christian and non-Christian influences alternated and varied in their nature and intensity. Examples in point are the Islamic conquest and subsequent *Reconquista* of Spain between the 9th and the 15th century; the Islamisation and later re-Christianisation of large swathes of the Balkan from the 14th century onwards; or the 9th- to 11th-century Viking conquests of formerly Christianised regions around the North Sea. Earlier, the 7th to 9th-century northward expansion of the Franconian Empire was likewise hardly an uninterrupted Christian triumph.

Informal expressions of faith

In an earlier publication, we pointed out the diversity of material expressions of ritual and religion, and in particular the lengthy survival of pre-Christian ritual traditions (Groenewoudt et al. 2016). This survival manifested itself in, among others, open-air cult sites – formal (localised) and informal ('sacrificial landscapes') – which persisted alongside monumental Christian cult places. We were able to demonstrate that significant regional differences existed, also with regard to path-dependency in cases where churches were (or were not) established at sites which had been ritually significant in the past. The medieval 'ritual landscape' turned out to be unexpectedly complex, comprising not only Christian built structures and their associated phenomena but also far more intangible aspects. There is a real danger that the seemingly most obvious may blind us to what was also there. The background and time depth of the multitude of elements which together make up the ritual landscape are highly diverse. Equally fascinating are the demonstrably significant regional differences in the continued use of open-air cult places. We concluded that the extent of Christianisation 'was to a high degree context-dependent, and that only by approaching it from a cultural, comparative and long-term-perspective can we begin to understand the various expressions of afterlife of (in origin) pre-Christian ritual practices.'

Apparently, for a more complete understanding of manifestations of ritual and religion it is essential that we look beyond the official, the standard and the monumental (Kong 2001; Brace et al. 2006) and, equally, that we identify informal expressions of faith, regardless of their appearance. This is what the author tried to do in 2016

whilst travelling on foot along the 770km-long *Camino Frances*, the approximately one thousand-year-old pilgrim way from Saint-Jean Pied-du-Port (France) to Santiago de Compostela (Spain) (e.g. Rudolph 2004): keeping our eyes open for whatever might have sprung up spontaneously (or mostly spontaneously) along the route. The result was a rich and intriguing harvest, an impression of which is presented here. We will start by briefly sketching the history of the *Camino Frances*. This will be followed by a concise description and basic analysis of those phenomena which caught our eye. It would be wrong to assume that what we noticed along the old pilgrim way in the form of religious and spiritual expressions constitutes a representative sample of what is actually there in the region crossed by the route. Nonetheless, both in the past and in the present, people from all of Europe (and today also Asia and North and South America) travel along the *Camino*, many of whom even today are at least in part religiously or spiritually motivated. Often, this motivation is rooted in Roman Catholicism, the dominant faith in medieval Europe. Perhaps the past is not such a distant country after all on pilgrim ways like the *Camino*. Most modern pilgrims come from Spain, France, Italy, Portugal or Germany (<https://oficinadelperegrino.com/en/statistics/>) and it is likely that these relatively nearby countries were also well represented in the past. It is therefore safe to assume that it was mainly individuals from these regions who left traces along the *Camino*, although in the Middle Ages the number of French pilgrims (who gave the *Camino Frances* its name) was undoubtedly proportionally greater.

The Camino Frances

Historical background

Medieval Europe was characterised by a dense network of places and routes of pilgrimage (Webb 2002; Sumption 2003). Christian pilgrimages, to whichever holy place, were always (primarily) religious in nature, with pilgrims undertaking the journey in order to venerate holy relics kept there, or to be cured of an illness. Pilgrimages were also undertaken to fulfil a religious vow or as a form of atonement. During the Middle Ages, ecclesiastical or even secular courts frequently ordered convicted felons to go on a pilgrimage. By doing so, such individuals would rid society of their undesirable presence for a long time, perhaps even – the courts may have hoped – forever.

According to legend, in the early 9th century a radiant star appeared to a hermit in Galicia, in north-western Spain, which showed him the grave of the apostle James the Greater. Allegedly the corpse of this Christian martyr had been transported from Palestine to that spot by boat, either by angels or by his own pupils. Alfonso II, King of Asturias (759-842), ordered a chapel in honour of St James

(in Spanish Santiago) to be built at the site, which was called Compostela and marked a cemetery near the former Roman town of *Aseconia*. Within a short period, Santiago de Compostela developed into the third largest place of pilgrimage in Christendom, after Rome and Jerusalem. Two important factors in this development were the fact that the journey to Jerusalem had become too hazardous after the Arabic conquest of the region, and that St James quickly became a symbol of the *Reconquista*, the Christian re-conquest on the Moors of what is now Spain (e.g. *Liere van 2006; Margry 2015a*). That protracted conflict began in the 8th century and ended with the fall of Granada in 1491. St James, in his capacity as ‘Matamoros’ (‘killer of Moors’), allegedly led the Christian troops in the legendary battle of Clavijo (La Rioja). Images of Santiago ‘Matamoros’ can be found everywhere along the *Camino*, particularly in churches. The heyday of pilgrimages to St James fell between the 11th and the early 13th century. Christian Europe came to Santiago in droves. Every day, thousands of pilgrims arrived at the apostle’s tomb. After the completion of the *Reconquista*, the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela greatly lost its appeal and in the 18th century was even banned because of its association with superstition. In the early 19th century, ecclesiastical property in Spain was confiscated, causing much of the *Camino*’s infrastructure to collapse. First General Franco, in the 20th century, by decree reinstated Santiago as the patron saint of Spain. After Franco’s death in 1975, the pilgrimage once again attracted international attention (*Lois Gonzáles 2013; Margry 2015a*). Pope John Paul II visited the apostle’s tomb in 1982. Since then, the appeal of the *Camino de Santiago* (on the Unesco World Heritage list since 1993) has boomed, with over 200,000 pilgrims being registered annually today (<https://oficinadelperegrino.com/en/statistics/>). Most of them complete the journey on foot although many only actually walk the final 100km, the minimum distance to be travelled on foot in order to be entitled to a *compostela*, the official certificate for having completed the pilgrimage. The document is issued upon handing over a pilgrim’s passport with stamps of the designated stops and churches passed en route.

The Celtic connection

Prior to the Roman period, the Iberian Peninsula was largely settled by various Celtic tribes. Those Celtic roots are especially in evidence in Galicia, where Santiago de Compostela is situated. Particularly in the last few decades, the region’s Celtic past has fired the imagination, and is reflected in, for example, the many artistic expressions and posters or in jewellery design and souvenirs. In some places in Galicia, ‘Celtic’ imagery is almost as prominent as Christian iconography. It has been suggested that walking the *Camino* originated as a Celtic ritual that was adopted by the Romans and later Christianised. According

to this view, Compostela derives from the Latin *campus stellae*, ‘field of stars’, and is a reference to the Milky Way. Supposedly, the ritual involved a westward journey under the Milky Way’s light along the *Camino de las Estrellas*, the ‘star way’, to world’s end, *Finis Terrae* – in other words, the same direction as the route to the apostle’s grave. ‘World’s End’, Finisterre, is on the Atlantic coast, 80km west of Santiago de Compostela. To some, this is the real end of their pilgrimage (see *Brierley 2009; Rabe 2016*, and others). To what extent such statements constitute ‘invented history’ is irrelevant here; no doubt much of it is (*Margry 2015a; Kent 2002*). What is certainly relevant is that expressions of these ideas can be observed along the *Camino* and that their application seems to be actively promoted by Celtic-inspired pilgrims (or local residents) and even by local authorities (*Margry 2015a*). This appears to be linked to an emerging regional awareness and a desire for greater regional autonomy, and also with ‘heritagisation’ and specific touristic ambitions (*Sánchez-Carretero 2015*). Occasionally, one even gets the impression that the *Camino* is being ‘claimed’ and its Christian identity disputed: here and there along the route, ‘Celtic’ signs (e.g. spirals) have been spray-painted; occasionally, they have been sprayed over the official *Camino* symbol (the scallop) and signposts (yellow arrows), apparently deliberately. Also the ubiquitous symbol of the European Union, a circle of five stars, has been targeted as providing an excellent background for a blue spiral (many recent improvements to the *Camino* have been financed by grants from the European Regional Development Fund, as many newly placed information panels and signposts testify). There are also unofficial signposts: blue arrows, often pointing in the opposite direction; and other signs even urge the pilgrims to turn around while others invite them to continue to the ‘real’ destination: Finisterre (*Margry 2015a; 2015b*) (On the *Camino Portugués* blue arrows point towards Fatima, another place of pilgrimage). In other words, signs of both an emerging nationalism and a spirituality with non-Christian (including neo-Paganism? See e.g. *Saunders 2012*) roots abound along the *Camino*. Once again, the *Camino* is ‘contested space’, as it was during the *Reconquista*. That conflict also manifests itself in the manner in which the informal ‘cult places’ – the subject of this contribution – are being used today. To some people, these places are spiritually meaningful; to others, they are merely a tourist attraction, to be climbed on for a selfie (Cruz de Ferro, see below).

The route

The *Camino Frances* is neither the only nor the oldest pilgrim way to Santiago de Compostela. That is the *Camino del Norte*, which follows the northern coast of Spain through the mountains. First after the more accessible inland areas had been conquered on the Moors

did it become possible to shift the *Camino* southward along more passable roads. Some of those are in origin Roman, while the pilgrim roads from the south, from regions which remained in Moorish hands for a longer period, are more recent still.

Of course, for many pilgrims, their journey did not begin at the foot of the Pyrenees but at their own front door. All those countless individual roads met at a number of places in France. A 12th-century pilgrim manual, written by French monk Aymeric Picaud and contained in Chapter 5 of the *Codex Calixtinus (Liber Sancti Jacobi)*, mentions four different French pilgrim ways (*Melczer 1993*), starting at, respectively, Tours, Vézelay, Le Puy and Saint-Gilles-du-Gard near Arles. The first three join at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port whence the Pyrenees could be crossed at the Pass of Roncesvalles (famously mentioned in the medieval epic poem *Chanson de Roland*). The route from Arles enters Spain at the Pass of Somport before joining the other routes from France at Puente la Reina, having passed Jaca on the way. Virtually all modern pilgrims from the north and east still take one of these routes into Spain.

The *Camino Frances* was – and still is – much more than a route between two points. Intimately connected to it is a dense network of facilities which enable pilgrims to reach their goal by catering to their every need, spiritually as well as materially: inns, hospitals, hostels, shops, churches, chapels, and so on.

But first, the route itself. In part, this follows pre-existing paths, both long-distance roads (in origin Roman) and organically formed local trails linking villages and small towns. Many improvements were added to this existing network early on, often instigated by members of royal houses and the local aristocracy. In particular, this involved heavy investments in new bridges to make it easier to cross the smaller and larger water courses. A good example is the Puente la Reina (Queen's Bridge), built in the 11th century across the Rio Arga. Also monastic orders (especially the Benedictines) and ecclesiastical authorities invested in supporting infrastructure. Monasteries containing hostels arose in many places, which was essential particularly in thinly populated and rugged mountain areas. Pilgrim hostels frequently developed into villages or even towns (some villages in those parts remained under Royal protection and charged with the care for pilgrims and the *Camino* itself until the 19th century). Like any other long-distance road in the past and the present, the *Camino* was a powerful magnet; areas were opened up and as a result started to develop administratively and economically. In addition, in the early days, settlement by colonists from the Christian north (France) seems to have been deliberately encouraged. The fact that the road was well guarded made it extra attractive. Military religious

orders such as the Templars played an important role. They specialised in the protection of the routes to Christianity's sacred places, including those to the Holy Land (Jerusalem). Templar-built castles can be observed at a number of strategic locations along the *Camino*, such as the enormous Castillo del Temple in Ponferrada, and churches which look like fortresses, like the church at Portomarin. The security of the *Camino* was of paramount importance not only during the protracted conflict for the control of the Iberian Peninsula. Long afterwards, mountainous regions remained unsafe as the dens of robbers and wolves.

Informal expressions of belief

Over time, a dense network of constructions and landmarks (such as road crosses) with an emphatically Christian function and character spread out along the *Camino*. Christian iconography and symbols were everywhere, as indeed they are today. But beside such 'official' expressions of ritual and religion, the *Camino* has much more to offer. Here and there along the route are phenomena which appear haphazardly constructed, apparently by pilgrims. The following list is far from complete.

1. Just past the small town of *Torres del Rio* (652km to Santiago de Compostela: S de C), high up on a slope along the path, sheltered by a clump of pine trees which the traveller has just passed (Fig. 1); within a narrow, 30 to 40m long strip of land. Nearby is a medieval hermitage (Ermita de Nuestra Senora del Poyo). Small piles of stones, with texts written on them, names, portrait photos, In Memoriam cards, notes. Grief and commemoration are the central themes.
2. Just before *Navarrete* (618km to S de C) (Fig. 2). A fence along the trail on the edge of the motorway where it cuts into a hill, over a length of hundreds of meters. Thousands of improvised small crosses, mainly of wood (branches, twigs, planks) but also of other materials: textile, metal, rope, plastic, even a bicycle chain. Virtually no texts. Partly overgrown by shrubbery.
3. In the extensive woodlands of the *Montes de Oca* (536km to S de C), in the middle of a wide, stony path *e.g.* firebreak. Larger (ca. 1m) and smaller hearts formed of river cobbles and pebbles. Written on the stones are smaller hearts and the names of loved ones. The central themes are love and declarations of love. A few kilometres away is a monument raised by the relatives of individuals who were shot there during the Spanish Civil War, far from the inhabited world.



Fig. 1. Torres del Rio (Site 1)
(© Louise van Gaans).



Fig. 2. Navarette (Site 2)
(© Louise van Gaans).

4. Slightly further, approaching *San Juan de Ortega* (535km to S de C). ‘Totem poles’ made by a local resident/artist. Carved and decorated tree trunks placed upright along the path on the forest edge, surrounded by numerous stones and pieces of wood; written on many are a wide variety of texts: declarations of love, messages, blessings.
5. On the *Matagrande*, just after Atapuerca (525km to S de C), on an uncultivated hilltop with sparse vegetation

(Fig. 3). A large spiral of stones placed on the ground; it is not a maze although it appears to be one. Diameter ca. 30m. At the centre, a small open space with a configuration of stones and a small cross made of two sheep bones. At the spiral’s entrance, stones arranged into a heart. Passers-by follow the spiral to its centre; any damage is spontaneously repaired. No doubt the configuration is meaningful, but there are no clues as to what that meaning might be.



Fig. 3. Matagrande (Site 5)
(© Louise van Gaans).



Fig. 4. Between Calzada del Coto
and Bercianon del Real Camino
(Site 7) (© Louise van Gaans).

6. Just after *Castrojeriz* on the pass across the Alto de Mostelares (461km to S de C), at the summit of a steep incline. A roughly made cross, decorated with various odds and ends: strips of textile, plastic, and so on, in a colourful arrangement. Alongside, an official stone road sign marking the route.
7. At the foot of an official stone road sign marking the route, between *Calzada del Coto* and *Bercianon del*

Real Camino (370km to S de C) (Fig. 4). A collection of stones, some carrying texts. At the centre, a small plastic shoe; inside it, a small plastic statue of the Virgin Mary with Child, surrounded by lamps linked by an electrical wire (which leads nowhere).

8. *Cruz de Ferro* (241km to S de C) (Fig. 5). Plateau on the Monte Irago. A long, slender pole of oak with a small iron cross on top sticks out of a cairn that is many



Fig. 5. Cruz de Ferro (Site 8)
(© Louise van Gaans).

metres high. Here, pilgrims place a small stone brought from home, symbolically leaving behind something which burdened their soul. Many stones and cobbles carry a text. The place may be ancient; suggested origins include a Roman milestone, a monument (triumphal/commemorative), a sanctuary, or a medieval boundary mark. A chapel dedicated to Santiago, behind the Cruz de Ferro, was built in 1982. Not only pilgrims visit this monument but also coach loads of tourists.

9. Just after *El Acebo* (233km to S de C), in a barren, uncultivated mountain landscape (Montes de León), on the edge of the path, a few small crosses built up of stones.
10. Just after *Ruitelan*, on the edge of the village (173km to S de C), someone has stuck a large branch into the ground and, on a plank, written an invitation to express one's dreams. Passing pilgrims obey in droves by attaching notes to the branch.
11. In some shrubbery on a plateau, ca. 1km before *Ligonde* (78km to S de C) stands a 17th-century road

cross. Around its base are piled many stones, some with writing on them; also small notes, photos and religious paraphernalia. No specific focus.

12. *Lavacolla* (17km to S de C). In the stream of the same name, medieval pilgrims used to wash themselves so as to approach the apostle's tomb with a clean body, as mentioned in the 12th-century *Codex Calixtinus*. The custom seems to have been transferred to a nameless small stream with water of a striking brown colour (iron oxide), 2km back, in some woodland along the path on the edge of Santiago de Compostela Airport. Nobody actually washes themselves here but some do freshen up. Many also suspend small written notes (sometimes rolled up) from the tree branches with wishes and prayers, observing a remarkable silence while doing so.

Discussion and conclusions

In this section, we will briefly discuss the age, specific manifestation, location and possible meaning of the phenomena mentioned above. With the exception of the Cruz de Ferro (tourist attraction), none of these locations

has an official status. Their age is difficult to establish. Some appear to be relatively recent but this does not mean that the phenomenon itself is also recent. Based on historical information, Location 8 (Cruz de Ferro) is at least several centuries old, although the precise age of the custom to leave behind a pebble brought along from home is unknown. Location 12 (Lavacolla) is already mentioned in the 12th-century travel guide mentioned earlier, but its continuity is by no means certain, at least not with regard to the exact location. The cobbled hearts in the middle of the road in the Montes de Oca (3) cannot be old, as passing vehicles constantly disturb or completely obliterate them – though not all of them at once. As was pointed out, pilgrims appear to spontaneously repair any damage, and it seems that new elements are also added to what is already there. In other words, these phenomena are constantly changing. The endless collection of crosses in the fence along the motorway near Navarette (2) must post-date the construction of the motorway. The large ‘spiral’ on the Matagrande (5), however, looks older. At least some of the stones which make up its shape are firmly imbedded in the soil matrix, and their tops are weathered and in some cases overgrown with lichen. The structure must therefore be at least several decades old. At first impression, it would be impossible to suggest a more precise date. Sheep constantly tread down the area and keep the vegetation short and open.

Material and form

The listed phenomena have in common that they are largely made of locally available materials, stone and wood in particular, or items the pilgrims carry with them: (fragments of) clothing, cast-off shoes and personal possessions (including photos and other items of a personal or religious nature). The form and shape of the local materials determine in part what can be made with them; angular stones, for example, are easier to use in this respect than round river cobbles. The countless crosses in the fence near Navarette (2) are only possible because of the many shrubs (branches and twigs) and other woody plants (stems) that grow on the spot. Many of the crosses are made of wood shavings picked up at a nearby sawmill situated right beside the *Camino*. It seems that opportunity makes not only thieves. Finally, without the presence of a fence with suitable wire mesh, nothing would have happened at this location.

Form and shape vary hugely. Stones have been shaped into crosses, hearts, several smaller stacks or one large cairn. Sometimes objects brought from elsewhere have been added, sometimes not. Some stones have been personalised by adding a text; others carry little or no writing. Occasionally, a pre-existing object was the starting point, such as a road cross, a signpost or a special

stone; or a fence on a conspicuous location. It seems likely that objects with a personal or religious connotation were deliberately carried along by the pilgrims, for example as a reminder, a mascot, to fulfil a promise, or to lend the bearer moral support. Only a few objects appear to have been brought with the explicit purpose of placing them in specific places along the *Camino*. This leaving of objects of a personal character seems to happen spontaneously, to be an impulsive act triggered by what one encounters on the way, by things that are perceived as meaningful. And by what one sees other pilgrims do.

Place

The listed locations do not seem to have been chosen at random, and while some ‘monuments’ take hold and grow, others do not. The faded remnants of initiatives which failed to attract followers can be found in many places along the *Camino*. In addition to the presence of suitable materials, landscape and psychological factors probably also play some part. Intriguingly, many of the listed sites and certainly the larger ones are on elevated spots in thinly cultivated areas. A noticeable exception is the above mentioned fence with the numerous crosses (failed attempts at similar sites can also be found elsewhere along the route). Interestingly, European prehistoric cult places were also in remote locations, ‘natural places’: marshes, rivers, forests, mountains or hills. Such places are believed to have been ritually significant as meeting points between the human world and the supernatural (*Bradley 2000; Fontijn 2002*). Many people in our modern era feel less inhibited to express themselves religiously or spiritually when they are alone than when they are in a public space. In many parts of the modern Western world, such expressions are often regarded as ‘odd’, aberrant behaviour. Psychological factors may also explain the absence of modern ‘cult places’ along long stretches of the *Camino*. These areas appear to have in common that they feature highly monotonous landscapes. The most notorious example is the *Meseta*, the vast, treeless and mostly scorchingly hot plateau of Castile, roughly between Burgos and León. Here, the landscape offers no visual triggers, and no space either, as the grain fields everywhere border directly on the path. Crossing this region requires a sustained effort along a seemingly endless, dead-straight track. It calls for a steady walking pace without interruptions, an empty mind and eyes fixed on the horizon. *Spielerei*, of any kind, holds no appeal, here.

Finally, the stone hearts in the Montes de Oca (3) could be an emotional response to the monument to victims of the Spanish Civil War which the pilgrims just passed.

Meaning

Manifestations of the pilgrims' need to express their feelings, to commemorate or to invoke a blessing can thus be encountered at various locations along the *Camino*. To a certain extent, these places appear to fulfil – and retain – a specific purpose: faith, love, grief, mourning, commemoration, wishes, dreams. We may conclude that the old, Christian infrastructure no longer provides what many of today's pilgrims seek. Indeed, the many churches and chapels along the route still attract many visitors, but by no means everybody. Modern Western individuals are looking for new forms of faith and spirituality and this quest clearly manifests itself in new forms of expression. The revival of the *Camino* and its specific form are inseparable from this overall trend, as P.J. Margry observed: 'Since the 1970s Santiago and its international Camino network has been increasingly connected to spiritually, esoterically, and ideologically inspired communities and life worlds in Europe' (Margry 2015a, 30). This 'spiritual pluralism' (Margry 2015b) may explain the 'seemingly secular' shrines (Margry 2008) and new 'sacred sites' (Attix 2002) along *Camino*. However, could it be that, in fact, 'Informal cult places' have always marked the *Camino*? This seems highly likely, for earlier in this contribution we already pointed out that the religious fabric of medieval society demonstrably involved other aspects besides what was under official and ecclesiastical control. It is a fact that people, and travellers and tourists in particular, feel an apparently instinctive need to leave something of themselves behind, to affirm their own existence (graffiti are of all ages). In recent years, the *Camino* has increasingly grown into a tourist attraction, or more specifically, a focal point of secular forms of tourism (Sumption 2003; Morpeth 2007). With regard to the subject of communication, it is worth adding that on highly visible places along the way messages to other pilgrims can be encountered, or to the *Camino* community in general: notes and texts written on stones and walls or on the pavement. Rarely such messages are present on 'ritual' places; there amidst masses of deposited objects and 'ritual litter' (Houlbrook 2015) they would attract little attention.

To what extent are the doings of modern pilgrims any different from those of their medieval predecessors? Probably not by much. Pilgrims are first and foremost travellers and all travellers bring themselves and their interests, habits and personal needs with them. That leaves visible traces. When studying those, any attempt to separate artificially the sacred from the secular is futile (Kong 2001) and, indeed, hardly possible in the case of the Middle Ages. Then there is the all too human need for entertainment. Also in the Middle Ages, pilgrimages went hand in hand with 'site-seeing' (Morpeth 2007). The

12th-century pilgrim's manual mentioned earlier (Melczar 1993) strongly resembles a travel guide.

Objects and messages are not deposited at random; some locations are better suited than others, for various reasons. Some 'informal cult places' appear to have been initiated by individual, others by collective actions. Today, especially Spanish and Italian youths tend to travel in groups along the *Camino* and also to act collectively. That, too, is similar to the medieval situation, when group pilgrimages were the safest option. In fact, many pilgrims who start out on their own are absorbed into the '*Camino* community' remarkably quickly, also in terms of behaviour. The *Camino* is a social crucible. This process is further accelerated by the fact that many pilgrims prepare themselves not only as far as practical matters are concerned but also as regarding 'how life should be practised on the Camino' (Schire 2007, 77). They acquire knowledge about 'how to behave like a pilgrim' (Vilar 2015, 71). Incidentally, also along 'secular' hiking trails everywhere in the world are stacks and piles of stones ('*Steinmännchen*') spontaneously appearing, and not only for purely practical purposes (e.g. to mark the road). Why then? Ritual, habit, copy-cat behaviour? Probably a bit of everything.

As was argued earlier, it is distinctly possible that this phenomenon has ancient roots, which means that we should be able to find archaeological traces of it. To recognise them for what they are is not easy, for most of these phenomena are neither large nor monumental or durable. They tend to be isolated, fragile constructions, configurations and compilations of mostly locally gathered materials, especially stones, wood and animal bones. But they may also incorporate items brought from a great distance, some of them durable and potentially identifiable as non-local. The huge cairn around the Cruz de Ferro is probably a geological catalogue of much of Europe, besides being the collective fingerprint of generations of pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela.

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Courtyard sites and their cultic context

Frode Iversen *

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the centralisation of religious ritual practices in Scandinavia in the second half of the first millennium. This is explored through detailed investigation of the courtyard sites at Skei and Heggstad, Inner Trøndelag, Norway, set in relation to Mære, a nearby pre-Christian cult site, as well as early 11th-century county churches established by the king. This study establishes that the number of houses in the courtyard sites correspond with the number of local administrative district within the shires (*fylkir*) of Verdal and Sparbyggja. This raises the question whether these sites were ‘shire level’ cult sites, subordinate to Mære, which served all four fylkir of Inner Trøndelag. Both Skei and Heggstad are surrounded by several large burial mounds, and exhibit traces of feasting. It is concluded that the courtyard sites were places where local politics were acted out, together with cultic and religious matters, as politics, religion and law were closely interwoven, and ancestor worship was also important. The last Earl of Lade was exiled from Trøndelag and Norway in ca. 1015 and the town of Nidaros was becoming increasingly important. During this period the king may have taken control of Mære, and other centres associated with the earldom and elites of Trøndelag. The two courtyard sites of Skei and Heggstad fell into disuse in this turbulent period. It is proposed that the pre-Christian cultic and legal system driven by the regional elite was transformed into a royal, Christian, system supporting larger polities and emerging kingship.

Keywords: *Courtyard sites, cult sites, conversion, Trøndelag.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Versammlungsorte und ihr kultischer Kontext

In diesem Artikel wird die Zentralisierung der religiösen rituellen Praktiken in Skandinavien in der zweiten Hälfte des ersten Jahrtausends anhand der detaillierten Untersuchung der Versammlungsorte (Norw. *tunanlegg*) von Skei und Heggstad (Inner Trøndelag, Norwegen) in Bezug auf Mære, einer nahegelegenen vorchristlichen Kultstätte, sowie früher Kirchen des 11. Jahrhunderts, die auf königliche Gründung zurückgehen, diskutiert. Es ist festzustellen, dass die Anzahl der Häuser in den Versammlungsorten mit der Anzahl der lokalen Verwaltungsbezirke in den „Grafschaften“ (*fylkir*) von Verdal und Sparbyggja übereinstimmen. Dies wirft die Frage auf, ob es sich bei diesen Stätten um Kultstätten handelte, die Mære untergeordnet waren. Letzteres bildete das

* Museum of Cultural History,
University of Oslo, Norway
frode.iversen@khm.uio.no

Zentrum aller vier *fylkir* von Inner Trøndelag. Sowohl Skei als auch Heggstad sind von mehreren großen Grabhügeln umgeben und zeigen Spuren von Essgelagen. Es ist zu folgern, dass es sich bei diesen Anlagen um Orte handelte, in denen lokale Politik zusammen mit kultischen und religiösen Praktiken ausgeübt wurde, da Politik, Recht und Religion eng miteinander verflochten waren, wozu auch die Ahnenverehrung zählt. Der letzte Graf von Lade wird 1015 aus Trøndelag und Norwegen vertrieben. Die Stadt Nidaros gewinnt an Bedeutung, wohingegen die beiden Versammlungsorte Skei und Heggstad zur Bedeutungslosigkeit herabsinken. Während dieser turbulenten Periode kann der König die Kontrolle über Mære und andere Zentren übernehmen, die mit dem ursprünglichen *fylkir* und den alten Eliten des Trøndelag in Verbindung standen. Es wird vorgeschlagen, dass das vorchristliche Kult- und Rechtssystem, das von der regionalen Elite getragen wurde, in ein königlich-, christliches System umgewandelt wird, welches eine zentrale Machtausübung und mithin das entstehende Königtum unterstützt.

Schlagwörter: *Versammlungsorte, Kultstätten, Christianisierung, Trøndelag.*

RÉSUMÉ

Lieux de rassemblements et leur contexte culturel

Cet article traite de la centralisation des pratiques rituelles religieuses en Scandinavie durant la seconde moitié du premier millénaire, à travers une recherche détaillée des

Introduction

The aim of this article is to investigate the degree of centralisation of religious ritual in Scandinavia in the second half of the first millennium. The issues under investigation include: the location of the cult sites, their features and characteristics, as well as the areas which they represented. The terminology regarding religious meetings has changed in line with the new results. Earlier terms like ‘Norse’ and ‘Sami’, ‘Christian’ and ‘heathen’ were interpreted as more or less homogeneous groups. However, archaeology has revealed great variations in religious expression within what today is perceived as non-unitarian belief systems in Scandinavia (*Anglert 2003; Svanberg 2003; Andrén et al. 2006; Nordeide 2011*). Therefore, scholars like Peter Brown (2003) and Sæbjørg Nordeide (2011) stress the need for an increasing awareness of local variation in religious expressions and change through time.

The main area of this investigation is Inner Trøndelag in Norway, where I perceive the area representative

lieux de rassemblements de Skei et de Heggstad (Inner Trøndelag, Norvège) en relation avec le site proche de Maere, lieu de culte pré-chrétien, ainsi qu’avec certaines églises établies par le roi au XI^{ème} siècle. Cette étude montre que le nombre de maisons dans les lieux de rassemblements correspond avec le nombre de districts administratifs locaux dans les « comtés » (*fylkir*) de Verdal et Sparbyggja. Cela soulève la question de savoir si ces sites étaient des lieux de culte, subordonnés à Maere dominant ainsi les quatre *fylkir* du Inner Trøndelag. Les deux sites, Skei et Heggstad, sont entourés par plusieurs grands monticules funéraires (tumuli) montrant des traces de banquets. En général, la politique, la religion et le droit étaient étroitement liés. S’y ajoute l’importance du culte des ancêtres. Il est donc conclu que ces lieux de rassemblements étaient aussi bien des lieux d’expression de la politique aussi bien locale que des rites culturels et religieux. Le dernier comte de Lade fut exilé de Trøndelag et de la Norvège en 1015. Pendant cette période la ville de Nidaros monte en puissance, tandis que les deux lieux de rassemblement de Skei et Heggstad tombent en désuétude. Il semble qu’au cours de cette période troublée, le roi prend le contrôle de Maere et d’autres centres associés avec les *fylkir* et les anciennes élites du Trøndelag. Il est proposé que le système culturel et juridique pré-chrétien dominé par des élites régionales ait été transformé en une royauté chrétienne, soutenant un système de pouvoir centralisé et la royauté naissante.

Mots-clés : *lieux de rassemblements, lieux de culte, christianisme, Trøndelag.*

of itself and nothing else. In terms of conversion, it is, however, an interesting area. According to Snorri Sturluson, the people of Trøndelag were the most powerful in Norway ‘because of their chieftains’ and a large population (Hkr, Saga of St. Olaf, ch. 247), and the societal organisation seems to have been rather conservative (*Skevik 1997*). The power of the chieftains in no other area of 11th-century Norway seems to have been as strong, even though the unification and Christianisation of Norway was underway at this point. Inner Trøndelag was also a multi-ethnic society with a Sami-population living in the inner forested areas bordering Sweden. Large pre-Christian feasts are described in narrative dealing with King Hakon I Adelsteinfostre’s (c. AD 934–61) attempt to convert a mainly rural ‘fjord-bound’ society in Trøndelag, as is the more successful Christianisation by King Olav Tryggvason (AD 995–1000).

Inner Trøndelag constitutes the northern half of Trøndelag. This area is highly suitable for the study

of pagan cultic practices and the conversion, for the following four reasons:

1. The youngest courtyard sites of Norway are found here (Fig. 1). These sites had military, judicial and perhaps also cultic functions (Storli 2006; 2010; Grimm 2010; Iversen 2015). In Inner Trøndelag the courtyard sites were in use from the 8th or 9th centuries until the

11th century when Christianity was established and the area became more closely integrated in the Norwegian kingdom (Strøm 2007).

2. Saga evidence from the 1230s provides relatively detailed accounts of pre-Christian cultic practices in Inner Trøndelag. The description of the ON *blót* (sacrificial feast) at Mære is important. The site is

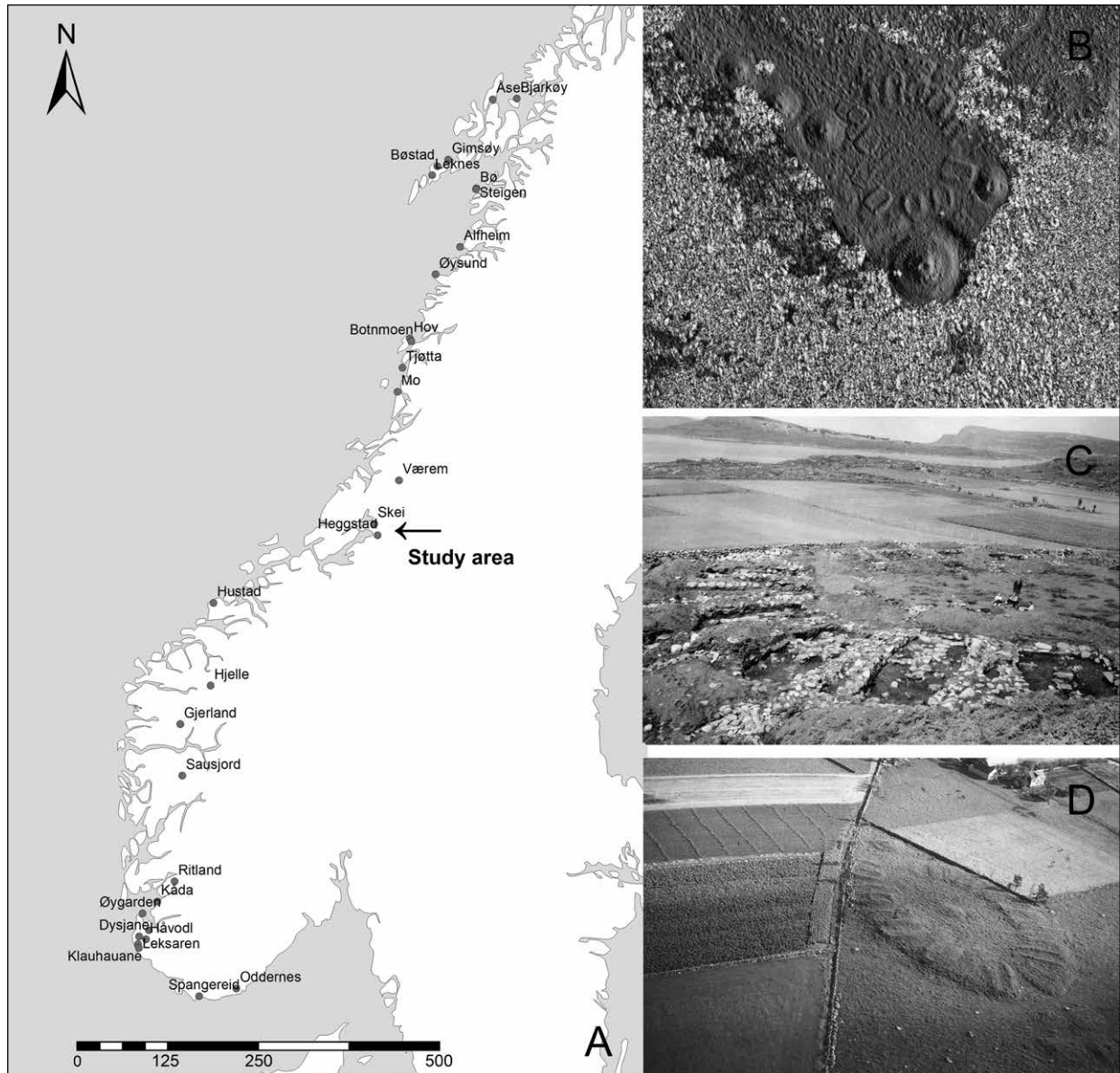


Fig. 1. A) The 30 known Norwegian courtyard sites, of which two are in Inner Trøndelag. Several of the courtyard sites in Agder, Trøndelag and in northern Norway are uncertain (Alfheim, Øysund, Hustad, Spangereid and Oddernes). This study focuses on the Skei and Heggstad sites in Northern Trøndelag (© Frode Iversen). B) Top right: LiDAR scan of the courtyard site at Værem, Namdalen. This site was still in use in the early 9th century (© Lars Forseth, Nord-Trøndelag Fylkeskommune). C) Middle right: The courtyard site of Øygarden, close to Stavanger, during the excavation by Jan Petersen, 1939-1940. The site was still in use in the 8th century (© Arkeologisk Museum, Universitetet i Stavanger). D) Lower right: The courtyard site at Dysjane at Tinghaug, Jæren, c. AD 200-600 (© Ragne Jonsrud, Arkeologisk Museum, Universitetet i Stavanger).

presented as a pre-Christian cult site for all four counties (ON *fylkir*) which historically constituted the Inner Trøndelag area. Archaeological evidence also strengthens an interpretation of Mære as an important pre-Christian cult site (Lidén 1969; 1999). As far as we know Mære was not a *thing* site or a combined *thing* site/cult site with formalised power within a given area. It appears solely as a cult site, seemingly important in the creation of a common religious identity in a larger area.

3. The so called *fylki* churches of Inner Trøndelag are relatively well-known (Hallan 1956; Brendalsmo 2006; 2016) (Fig. 2). These were main churches, built on royal manors in the 11th century, shortly after the Christianisation. They were essential for the emerging 'state' church organisation in Norway, forming the building blocks of bishoprics, emerging in the mid-11th century. Did the *fylki* churches take over some of the functions of the courtyard sites, and if so, did these moves to other places in the landscape which were easier to control by 'foreign' kings and their allies?
4. The medieval administrative geography of Inner Trøndelag is mapped and investigated in detail (Dybdahl 1997). It is therefore known to which *fylki* the various communities of the Middle Ages belonged. This knowledge is highly significant for the examination of which administrative areas that may have been related to the different cult sites.

The new contribution presented in this article does not concern, either the cult site at Mære, or the *fylki* churches, both of which topics have already been comprehensively studied (Lidén 1969; 1999; Hallan 1956; Brendalsmo 2006; 2016). The courtyard sites of Inner Trøndelag have not, however, been included in the study of cultic practices, seen in relation to Mære or the *fylki* churches, and it is this gap which this article will address. Did the courtyard sites have a role in pre-Christian religious practices and, if so, on what level? Did the *fylki* churches subsume the religious functions after the Christianisation? And what was the relationship between the high ranked cult site at Mære and the courtyard sites?

Of the approximately 30 courtyard sites in Norway, only two are found in Inner Trøndelag: Heggstad and Skei, both of which have been partly excavated and dated. While in other parts of Norway the courtyard sites fell out of use in earlier periods, these two sites were used until the Christianisation around AD 1000 (Strøm 2007). In Rogaland, further south, this took place in the 8th century, in Sogn and Fjordane, further north, in the 9th century, and finally in Hålogaland, in northern Norway,

in the 10th century (Olsen 2014; Iversen 2017). It has been suggested that the pattern of site abandonment thus represents a reversed image of the emergence of larger political units. These chronological differences have been interpreted as sign of political centralisation and an emerging coastal kingdom in the south (Iversen 2015; 2017) as well as an Earldom in the north (Storli 2006; 2010). These merged around AD 1015, roughly at the same time as the courtyard sites in Inner Trøndelag were abandoned.

Background and sources

Recent research suggests that in pre-Christian society special cult buildings were erected (Jennbert et al. 2002; Sundqvist 2015). For many years, the archaeological finds from the Viking age farm *Hofstaðir* on Iceland shaped discussions regarding pre-Christian cult buildings (Sundqvist 2015, 151). In Norway, the philologist Magnus Olsen (1926) identified farms with the name *Hov* (ON *hof*) as possible cult sites, proposing cult-site continuity from pre-Christian to Christian times, and that churches were built on the old *hof* sites. This discussion was dormant for a long time, but in 1966 Hans Emil Lidén found buildings remains and gold-foil figures (*gullgubber*) under the church at Mære. He argued that this confirmed the saga accounts of Mære as the site for the annual sacrificial feasts of Inner Trøndelag. The find of 13 gold-foil figures became especially associated with cultic activities going back to the Merovingian Period (Lidén 1969; Tangen 2010, 19-25).

For many years it was argued, on the basis of Magnus Olsen's place-name research, that farms with the name *hov/hof* were pre-Christian cult sites. In the case of Trøndelag, the PhD thesis of the historian Merete Røskoft (2003) is an important contribution on the political development of Trøndelag c. 800-1200. She investigated many of the farms mentioned in the sagas, in terms of ownership, place-names and archaeological material, as well as the farms with courtyard sites (Skei and Heggstad) (Røskoft 2003, 54-77). She has convincingly argued that only a few of the *Hov* farms known in Trøndelag can be related to *hof* in the sense of a pre-Christian cult site (Røskoft 2003, 75).

It is striking that the most convincing examples of *hof* farms with possible cult sites were situated in Outer Trøndelag, and not in the inner area where the two courtyard sites are found. Only one of the nine more likely *hof* farms was situated in Inner Trøndelag (*Hov* in Snåsa), and Røskoft is somewhat uncertain whether this is a 'true' *hof* farm. We can now conclude that there are no known courtyard sites in Outer Trøndelag, but several *hof* farms, while the opposite is the case in Inner Trøndelag. It is not known, however, if a link can be found.

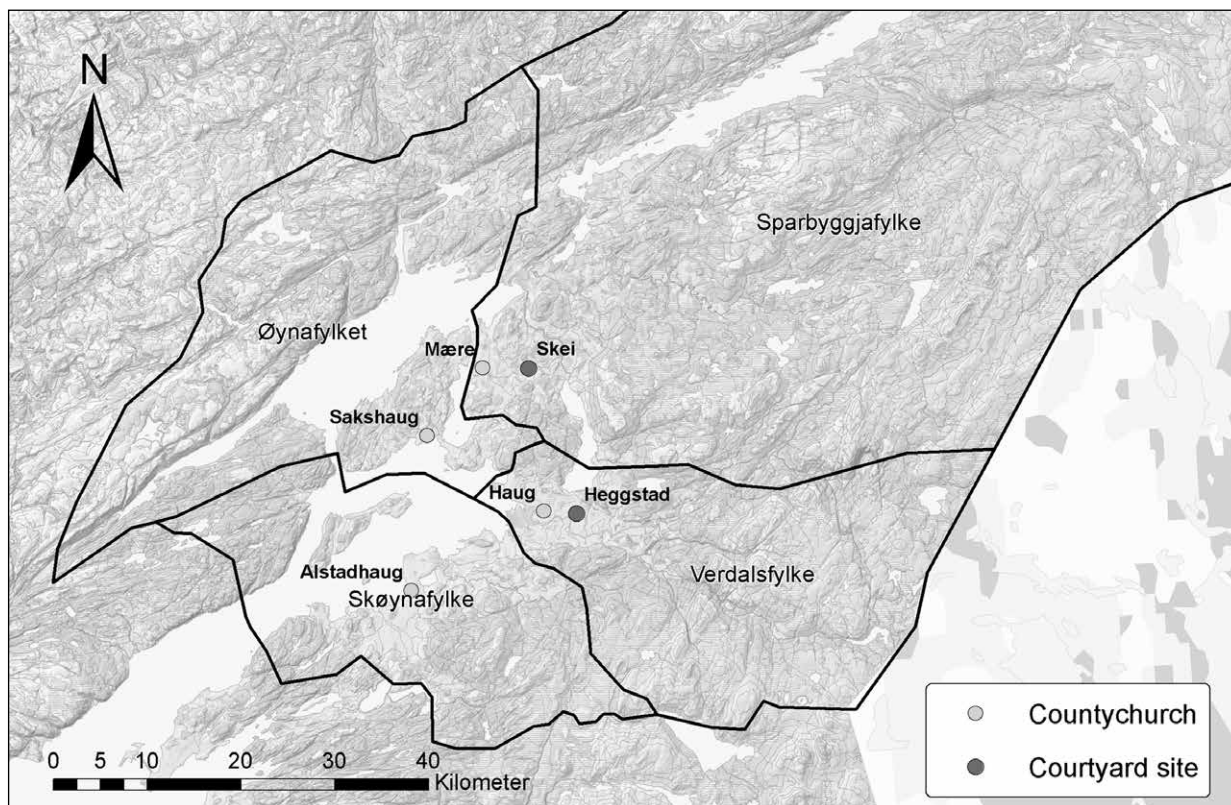


Fig. 2. Map of Inner Trøndelag (the case study area) showing the medieval shire division (ON fylkir), the four fylki churches ('county- or shire churches') from the 11th century and the two courtyard sites investigated in detail in this article (© Frode Iversen).

From the sagas we can deduce that Outer Trøndelag and Inner Trøndelag formed geographically separate areas in terms of pre-Christian religious practice. We are told that regular religious feasts (*blót*) were held both at Lade in Outer Trøndelag, and at Mære in Inner Trøndelag. For Lade, only an autumn feast is known, while for Mære three different types are mentioned: an autumn, a mid-winter and a summer feast (Hkr, Saga of St. Olaf, chs. 108, 109; Saga of Olav Tryggvason, ch. 65; Saga of Hakon the Good, chs. 17, 18). In the *Heimskringla-saga* (Hkr), the Icelandic author Snorri Sturluson (1178/79-1241) portrays Mære as a central cult site for the four counties of Inner Trøndelag (Øyna, Sparbu, Verdal and Skøyne) where all the chieftains of Trøndelag met (Hkr, Saga of St. Olaf, ch. 109).

Snorri provides several details regarding the organisation of the three annual sacrifices at Mære. Twelve men took it in turn, and the one in charge should prepare and was also responsible for acquiring food and other essentials. One of these men is said to have been the chieftain Olve at Egge, who undoubtedly belonged to the local elite in Inner Trøndelag. He is said to have provided food (*veizlu*), household utensils (*húsbúnað*) and clothes (*klæðnað*) for the *blót* (Hkr, Saga of St. Olaf, ch. 109).

Snorri provides the names of the farms where the chieftains in charge of organising the Trøndelag sacrifices lived in the mid-10th century: Alstadhaug (Skøyne), Stav (Verdal), Egge (Sparbu) and Husabø on Inderøya (Øyna or Verdal) (Hkr, Saga of Hakon the Good, ch. 8). It is uncertain how trustworthy this information is; it was written down 200–250 years after the events allegedly took place. Snorri presents a system of permanent cult sites maintained by an elite from particular farms connected to certain shires (*fylki*). Such a strict and clear structure, could be the result of what the historian Knut Helle calls Snorri Sturluson's 'formidable sense of order' (Helle 1993, 150). This, however, calls for an investigation of these chieftain farms and their relationship to the courtyard sites, *fylki* churches and the cult site at Mære.

Jan Brendalsmo examined the *fylki* churches of Trøndelag in his PhD thesis as well as in his later research (Brendalsmo 2006; 2016). These churches form part of a wider debate on the early ecclesiastical organisation of Norway. There is some uncertainty regarding the identification of specific *fylki* churches in Trøndelag and there is a lack of direct references in the sources. According to the Law of the Frostathing, such a system was clearly in place in Trøndelag and two charters provide evidence of two such *fylki* churches. The Church of St. Peter on Veøy in

Romsdal, mentioned as a *fylkis kirkio* in 1488 (DN III, no. 966). For Mære Church in Inner Trøndelag the evidence is more circumstantial; a document from 1279 states that the farmers of the upper half of Sparbyggja *fylki* were obliged to maintain this church (DN II, no. 18). This is in line with regulations regarding the maintenance of *fylki* churches found in the Law of the Frostathing. Apart from these two cases, identifications of *fylki* churches must be based on observations of church size, building materials and location.

Nils Hallan identified eight *fylki* churches in central Trøndelag, one in each of the *fylki*: in Inner Trøndelag these were Mære (Sparbu), Sakshaug (Øyna), Haug (Verdal), and Alstadhaug (Skøyne), and in Outer Trøndelag Værnes (Stjørdal), Melhus (Gauldal), Lade (Strinda) and Gryting (Orkdal) (Hallan 1956, 248). Brendalsmo used the following criteria for the *fylki* churches: they should be episcopal visitation churches in the year 1432, they should pay the highest cathedral tax in the 1530–40s, and finally they should be stone churches at farms associated with the king (Brendalsmo 2006, 166). For Inner Trøndelag, Brendalsmo identified the same *fylki* churches as Hallan, i.e. Mære, Sakshaug, Haug and Alstadhaug. These churches will form the starting point for the further discussion in this article (Fig. 2).

The historian Audun Dybdahl has carried out a thorough investigation of the *skipreiður* organisation in Trøndelag and linked individual units to specific *fylki* (Dybdahl 1979). Dybdahl's main sources include the 1277 Will of Magnus the Lawmender, which lists 59 *skipreiður* in Trøndelag (DN IV, no. 3) and the 1430 Cadastre of Aslak Bolt (AB), in which 33 *skipreiður* are named.

Røskaft argued that the *fylkir* of Trøndelag were not necessarily 'nature-given' entities, but could equally have been established and regulated by the earls in the 10th century. This does not, however, exclude an older organisation. *Fylkir* are mentioned in the skaldic poem Vellekla from the end of the 10th century, in which the achievements of Earl Hakon (935–995) are praised (Røskaft 2003, 167, 185). We shall now move on to examining the courtyard sites of Inner Trøndelag in more detail. Were they sites of cultic gatherings, and if so, for which areas? What is the relationship between them and known pre-Christian and early Christian cult sites in Inner-Trøndelag?

Courtyard sites

Courtyard sites are a specific type of archaeological site found in Norway and on Iceland (Storli 2010; Iversen 2015; Vesteinsson 2015). They are often defined as 'a collection of house foundations around an oval or semi-circular area' (*tun*) (Johansen – Søbstad 1978, 55). Detailed research history overviews are provided by Oliver Grimm (2010) Inger Storli (2006; 2010), and the

author of this paper (Iversen 2015). The view expressed by Oliver Grimm and Frans-Arne Stylegar of the courtyard sites as multifunctional and 'served for social/cultural, judicial, ritual and military purposes, and additionally as places of trade/handicraft' (Grimm – Stylegar 2004, 123) is convincing, and like Inger Storli, I would like to emphasise their role as assembly sites.

In Norway, these sites were in use from AD 100–1000. Several scholars have pointed out that the Icelandic assembly booths constitute later parallels to the Norwegian sites. In Iceland, 27 such sites are known, which have been subject to archaeological investigation in varying degrees. These sites were used from the 10th to the 12th centuries (Vesteinsson 2013, 119), possibly until Iceland was integrated in the Norwegian kingdom in 1262. The irregular pattern of the booths makes them different from the Norwegian courtyard sites.

My own research has shown a possible connection between the Norwegian courtyard sites and administrative areas known from the 12th to 13th century onwards. The number of houses at these sites often corresponds to the number of local assembly units within historically documented areas. This suggests that each local community had its own booth at the site, just as the system seems to have functioned in Iceland with possible correspondence between number of booths and parishes (Vesteinsson 2013). This connection has not been previously investigated in Trøndelag, and will therefore be attempted here. Were the courtyard sites primarily assemblies or did they also have cultic functions?

Courtyard sites in the written sources

The courtyard sites are rarely mentioned in written sources. The Law of the Gulathing refers to *thing* booths in a chapter dealing with murder at the *thing* (G 181). As this regulation refers to the booths of a courtyard site, it has to be old as these sites were abandoned in the Gulathing area in the 9th century. The toponymic sources contain little evidence of cultic activities at the courtyard sites. There is a courtyard site at the farm *Hov* at Løkta, near Dønnes in Hålogaland. This is, however, the only example of a possible connection between the name *hov* and a courtyard site. The name is relatively late, first mentioned in the 16th century (Houff, 1567), and traditionally it is interpreted as a cultic place-name (NG XVI, 110). Some place-names near Norwegian courtyard sites suggest gathering places (Leknes, Leikenga (Tjøtta), Leikvang (Skjelbrei)) (Grimm 2010, 43, 53), but in general there is little evidence of place-names indicating cultic activity.

There are only a few saga accounts with any relevance for the courtyard sites. Eyrbyggja saga, from ca. 1350, is one exception as it provides an account of an early assembly which was also a religious sanctuary. Using the

Eyrbyggja saga as a direct source for pre-Christian matters poses problems, but it does at least portray medieval perceptions of pre-Christian ritual. It is uncertain if this description is applicable to the courtyard sites, but it is important enough to merit a brief discussion.

Eyrbyggja saga tells the story of Þórólfur Mostrarskegg from Hordaland, who had a large sanctuary built at his farm *Hofstaðir* in Iceland. The *hof* had been brought from Moster, together with the sacred soil from underneath the altar. According to the saga, not only the *hof* was holy, but also the area surrounding it. The beach was not to be polluted by blood spilt in anger. In the words of the historian Tormod Torfæus (1636-1719) in his *Historia Rerum Norvegicarum*, it was 'also exempt from the exercise of nature's secret necessities' (Torfæus 1711, 485). A separate islet (*Dritsker*) was set aside for such purposes. The nearby mountain *Helgafell* was also holy, as it was the home of the spirits of the ancestors, who provided help with difficult decisions. After an agonising power struggle where the beach had been soiled with enemy blood and Þórólfur's *thing* men refused to go to the skerry for their needs, the assembly was moved – to a promontory. The new assembly became the gathering place for the Icelandic West fjords.

The courtyard sites of Inner Trøndelag – older cult sites or places of fylki assemblies

The courtyard sites of Trøndelag (and Namdalen) have only recently been subject to research. They were acknowledged as courtyard sites in the 1980s, by the archaeologist Oddmunn Farbregd (1980) and Lars Fredrik Stenvik (1988; 2001). Ingvild Onsøien Strøm (2007) provided a useful overview of the sites in Trøndelag in her master dissertation, together with some new dates for Værem (in Namdalen). These courtyard sites have not, however, been studied in the context of cult and assembly, within its administrative setting, as I will in this article. It is, in my view, precisely here that the potential for new insights is the largest.

Skei in Sparbyggja fylki

Skei (gno. 86) has the largest Iron-Age burial ground in Trøndelag, with more than 100 graves (Strøm 2007) (Fig. 3). In-between large burial mounds, standing stones, star-shaped mounds, long and round barrows of varying size, is a courtyard site with eight house foundations. Relatively little is known about the site and only one of the foundations has been dated (Stenvik 2001, 41; Strøm 2007, 41). Each of the eight foundations has two visible walls, and in some cases a gable wall is visible. The foundations are ca. 12m long and 6.5–7m wide (measurements taken at the top of the

walls). There is some uncertainty regarding the number of foundations; Strøm suggested that there may have been ten, as a modern road may have destroyed parts of the site (Strøm 2007, 46), but this is far from clear.

In 1988 it was established that one of the buildings had been burnt down and later rebuilt (Stenvik 1988, 49; 2001, 41), and as investigations continued in 1995 and 1996, further evidence of fires was found. A sample for radiocarbon dating taken from a wall layer deriving from the last fire, gave a result of AD 1000–1060 (Stenvik 2001, 41–42). This courtyard site is thus the last of the Norwegian sites to have fallen out of use. In the close vicinity, Stensvik also excavated a rich female Viking-Age burial with insular finds (Mound 40). In addition, a cooking pit, located north of the site, was dated to the Merovingian period (Strøm 2007, 46).

How does the courtyard site at *Skei* relate to the administrative divisions of Sparbyggja fylki? There were eight *skipreiður*: Snåsa, Skaun, Vigmundar, Stod, Ognadal, Bågåbu, Idrotter and Sparbyggja (Dybdahl 1997, 218: no. 7–14), and *Skei* was located in Bågåbu, near the borders of Idrotter and Sparbyggja (Fig. 4). The distance to Mære, where according to the kings' sagas, the sacrifices for Inner Trøndelag were held, is 5km.

Røskaft (2003, 144) argues that *Skei* was very well positioned in the middle of the fylki and close to old communication routes. It seems that *Skei* was an important farm with central functions in the late Iron Age (c. 600–1050), but which lost its importance in the Middle Ages (c 1050–1536). This is supported by the lack of references in written sources (Røskaft 2003, 146–147). *Skeið* n. is a fairly common farm name which is often associated with horse-racing, both courses and designated sites. This place-name may indicate a kind of gathering place. Mære is located in the same fylki. It is striking that Mære had a totally different location from *Skei*. Mære fylki church, and the suggested *blót* site, were situated in the innermost part of the fjord (Børgin), central to the four fylkir of Inner Trøndelag. Mære was less accessible than *Skei* for the fylki as a whole, but easily accessible from the fjord and thus also for people from other areas. This wide accessibility presumably reflects important traits. Mære developed from being accessible for the four internal areas to being externally accessible for the royal power, while *Skei* was more accessible from within the fylki.

To sum up, there were eight *skipreiður* in the fylki and probably eight buildings at the courtyard site. This site is well suited as a gathering place for this fylki with eight known local communities. The courtyard site at *Skei* was in use at the same time as regional sacrifices for Inner Trøndelag were held at Mære, but seems to have gone out of use in the

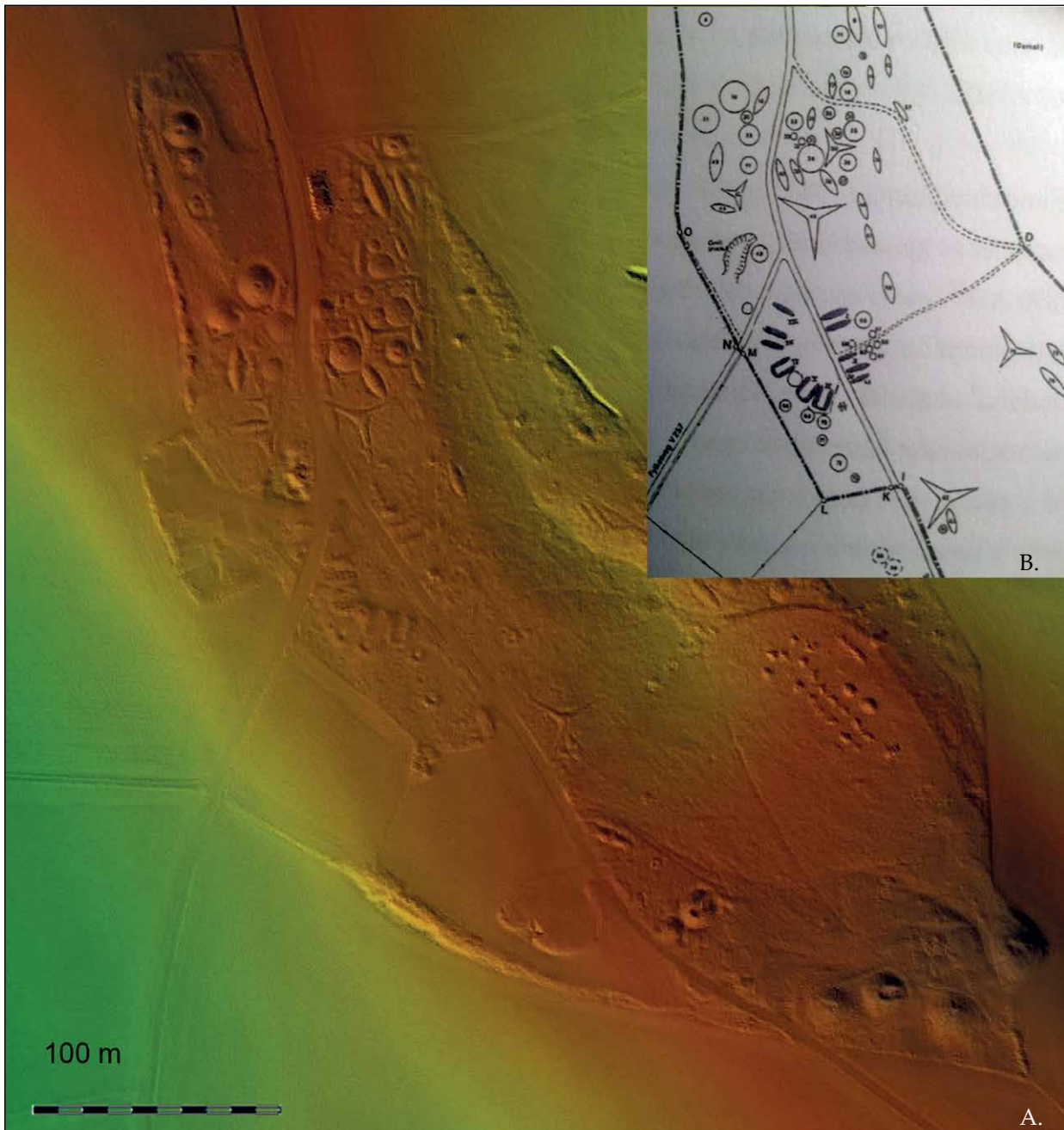


Fig. 3. A) LiDAR scan of the courtyard site at Skei. This site was still in use in the early 11th century. It is located in the middle of the largest burial ground of Inner Trøndelag, dating to ca. AD 600–1000. Today, the cemetery covers ca. 15,000 sq. m with 113 recorded graves and 3 standing stones, although further burials once existed. The largest star-shaped mound has 20-metre long ‘arms’. The three largest circular mounds have a diameter of 17m, 18m and 20m respectively. The oval and the five star-shaped mounds probably are dating from the Merovingian Period (AD ca. 575–800). A mound immediately north of the courtyard site was excavated in 1986. It contained a lavishly furnished female burial from around AD 800, which included four objects from Ireland. Large cooking pits were found nearby, which were used for preparing food, presumably feasts for large numbers of people (© Lars Forseth, Nord-Trøndelag Fylkeskommune). B) Partial site plan (© Lars Stenvik 1988, 49).

11th century when the new *fylki* church was built at Mære. Its location in the middle of one of the largest burial grounds of Trøndelag suggests possible cultic

functions in connection to burials and gatherings. Skei was centrally located in the *fylki* for gatherings of cultic, judicial and military form.

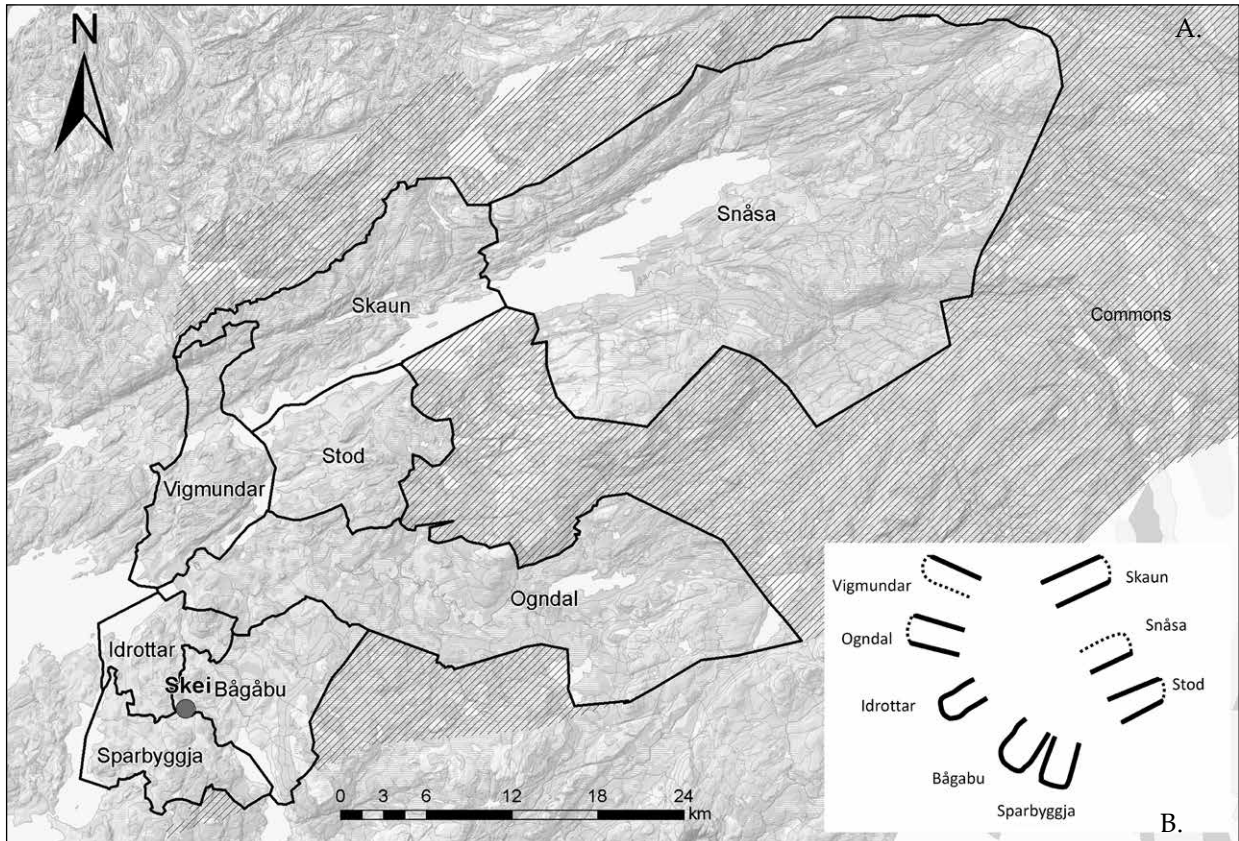


Fig 4. A) The administrative division of Sparbyggjafylke, consisting of eight local thing districts, recorded c. 1430. B) Lower right: simplified site plan of the Skei courtyard site and my interpretation of the relationship between the specific houses and local communities, based on geographical location. Dotted lines = reconstructed walls (© Frode Iversen).

Heggstad i Værdølafylket

The courtyard site at Heggstad is located on a neutral place near a farm boundary towards Agle (32). The farms of Stiklestad (27-30) are the neighbours to the east. This courtyard site was also discovered by Stenvik, who, in 1989, found four or five house foundations. These were 12m long and 6.5m wide (Stenvik 1989, 21). There has been some debate regarding whether there were four or five buildings, but after the site was surveyed by Lars Forseth and the Municipality of Northern Trøndelag about ten years ago, there seems to be an agreement that there were four houses (Strøm 2007, 37). The site is surrounded by four very large burial mounds, and in 1920 a total of ten graves were reported (Fig. 5).

In 2003, a fire-place inside the south-eastern house foundation was radiocarbon dated to AD 990-1025 (Sigma 1) (Tua 4441). This suggests that the site was still in use at the end of the Viking Age. A nearby cooking pit was dated to AD 605-670 (Tua 16776). It is not certain, however, whether it can be linked to the courtyard site, even if it seems likely. This site is similar to the one at Skei, and was in use roughly at the

same time. The difference is that both the site itself and burial ground are a lot smaller.

Heggstad lies in the middle of Verdal fylki, which, according to Dybdahl (1997, 219), had five *skipreiður* in the late Middle Ages: Haug, Ovanmyra, Fåra, Veddrar and Råbyggja (nos. 15-19). This means there is one *skipreiða* 'too many' in the fylki compared to the number of house foundations at the courtyard site. Maybe there really were five buildings at Heggstad, as Stenvik initially suggested, or maybe one *skipreiða* was divided in the Middle Ages, after the courtyard site was abandoned? We do not know. The courtyard site is on the boundary to Stiklestad and the date of the site is close to 1030 when the famous battle of Stiklestad stood. It is tempting to interpret Heggstad as a fylki assembly, which was abandoned during the turbulent period of the early 11th century.

The distance between Heggstad and Haug, where the fylki church was situated, is ca. 3.5km, and the distance from the church to the sea is short (less than 2km) (Fig. 2). This relationship is similar to the Mære/Skei one. Haug was externally accessible, while Heggstad was centrally located for the inhabitants of the area, probably functioning as a fylki assembly for military decisions and religious rituals.

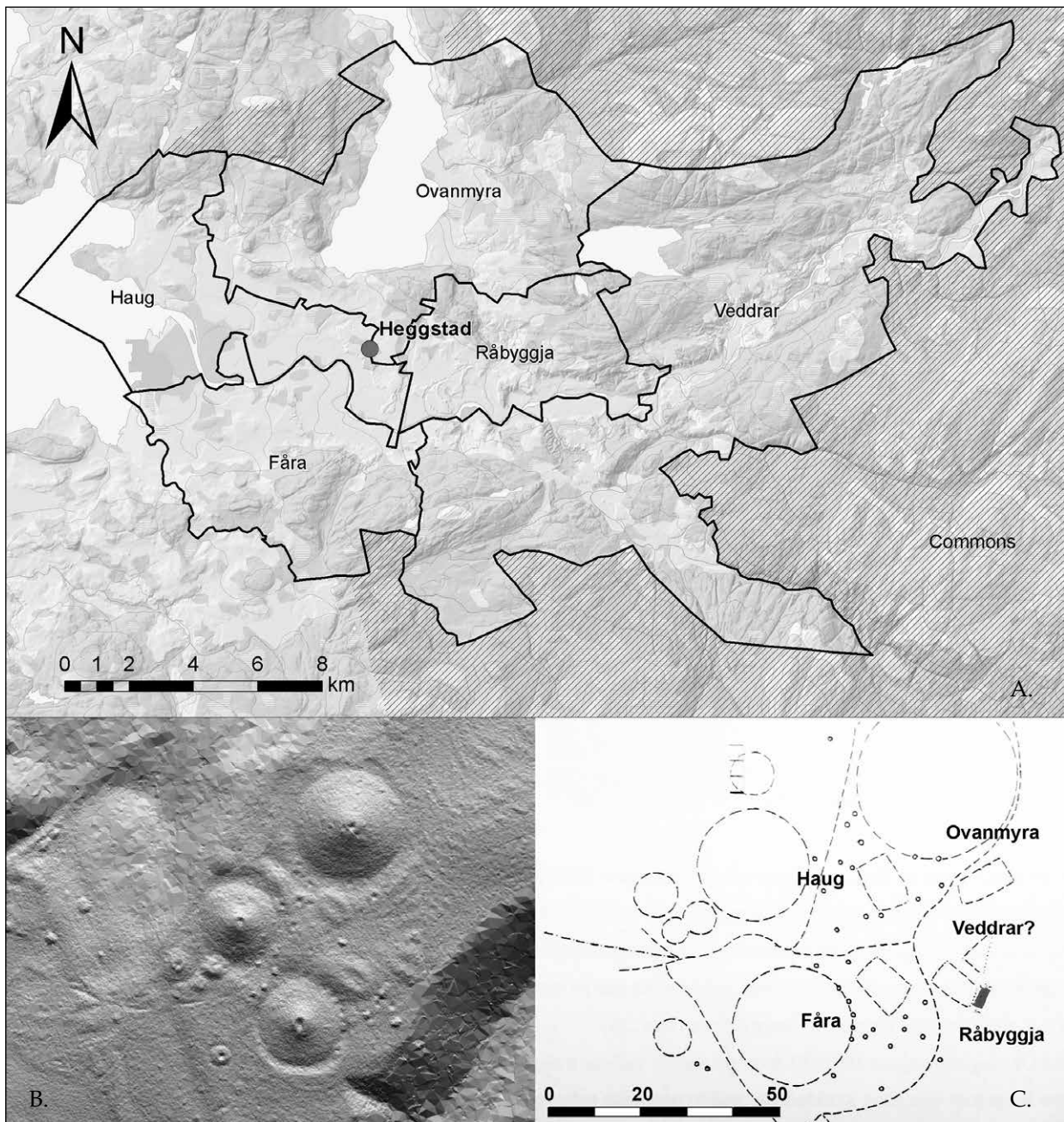


Fig. 5. A) The administrative division of Verdal fylke (© Frode Iversen). The five local thing districts are recorded c. 1430. The large area to the south-east contains various communally held lands. B) Lower left: LiDAR scan of the courtyard site at Heggstad. This site was still in use in the early 11th century. In the north-eastern corner of the image, there was a large mound which now has been removed and therefore not visible on the LiDAR scan (© Lars Forseth, Nord-Trøndelag Fylkeskommune). C) Lower right: The site plan from 1994 also shows a 5th, partially preserved, house. This image also shows my interpretation of the relationship between the specific houses and the local communities, based on geographical location.

Discussion and conclusion

It is clear that the two courtyard sites of Inner Trøndelag fit in well with patterns demonstrated for other Norwegian courtyard sites (Iversen 2015). These sites are positioned in the middle of historically documented units and may be

interpreted as gathering sites for areas extending beyond local communities. In Inner Trøndelag, the two sites correspond well with the number of communities found in both Verdal and Sparbyggja *fylki*. They are therefore likely candidates for gathering sites on the *fylki* level. The

question is whether they were cultic, military or judicial sites, or a combination of the three. It has been established that they were in use until the early 11th century, and were probably abandoned shortly thereafter. It is thus tempting to associate this with the Christianisation which was in progress at this time. However, in other areas, the courtyard sites were abandoned long before the religious conversion, and in Iceland the booth sites were in use through to the 12th century, long after the Christianisation, and maybe until 1262 when Iceland became subordinate to Norway. It seems more plausible that the courtyard sites became obsolete due to political processes involving a power shift from a regional power to a supra-regional and royal elite.

Trøndelag lost some of its provincial autonomy when the Earldom came under pressure in the early 11th century, and the last Lade Earl, Hakon Eriksson (998-1030) was banished in 1015. He reappears in English sources as an associate to King Cnut the Great (*Johnsen 1981*, 8-15). The battle at Stiklestad in 1030 was, to a large extent, part of a political conflict where the Trøndelag elite sought as much autonomy as possible from the Norwegian kingdom, and thought themselves better served by more geographically distant overlords, even supporting Cnut the Great. After Olav Haraldsson came to power in 1015, Trøndelag was gradually integrated in the new kingdom. The abandonment of the courtyard sites at Skei and Heggstad can be interpreted as signs that the regional aristocracy was losing its power over military matters to the king. An important factor may have been that the ON *leidangr*, or fleet levy, came under royal supervision, perhaps in 1015.

Mære remained a central sanctuary and sacrificial site until the Christianisation in the time of Olav Tryggvason, around AD 1000. This site could perhaps be described as an institutionalised cult site, although it was not associated with any formal political activity – this took place at the courtyard sites. The task of organising the sacrifices alternated between the different elite families of Inner Trøndelag, and was therefore not linked to any particular dynasty. Shortly after the Christianisation, the king erected a *fylki* church at Mære, a sign that the king wished Mære to retain some of its role as a central gathering site. At the same time, Mære lost some of its status, as it was now reduced being the religious centre for one *fylki*, and not four as before.

At the same time, the king erected another three *fylki* churches in Inner Trøndelag, which meant that, in practice, local power over cultic practices was decentralised. In AD 1070, or maybe even earlier, a bishopric was established in the royal town of Nidaros, which strengthened central authority, and by extension also weakened local influence, over the cult. The new *fylki* churches became royal strongholds for the transformation of a conservative society. The *fylki* churches were not erected at the courtyard

sites. The courtyard sites were centrally located within the *fylki* to ensure easy access over land, while the new *fylki* churches were located at farms close to the sea, near the *fylki* boundaries, and were thus easy to access for the new external power from the outside, via the fjord. I would like to suggest that cultic, judicial and military matters were moved from the geographically central, although neutral, *fylki* gathering sites, to farms with *fylki* churches, which were under stricter royal control.

The cultic aspects of the courtyard sites of Inner Trøndelag are supported by their cemetery locations. The courtyard site at Skei is situated in the middle of the largest burial ground in Trøndelag and the courtyard site at Heggstad is surrounded by four very large burial mounds. This suggests an intentional ‘link’ to ancestors and former leaders of society. The ancestral worship may have been important for the elite gathering at the courtyard sites. The presence of cooking pits may indicate that feasts were held during the assemblies. The courtyard site at Sausjord in Voss, Hordaland, is the only completely excavated site of its kind in Norway and has revealed multiple phases of human activity, both before and after its main period of use, that is, the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period, perhaps even later. Traces of at least 135 cooking pits were found, of which only four have been dated. These pits suggest that the site also functioned as a gathering place during the Viking Age and into the High Middle Ages (*Olsen 2013*).

In general, the material culture of courtyard sites indicates cultic activity. A bog find close to the Bjarkøy courtyard site revealed the largest ‘Vestland cauldron’ ever found in Norway, with a capacity of ca. 200-250 litres of liquid. When found this artefact was heavily worn, presumably from having been used during the courtyard site feasts (*Hauken 2005*, 90).

In other instances, place-names and gold-foil figures (*gullgubber*) indicate cultic activity at or near courtyard sites (*Grimm 2010*, 40). One of the best examples is the Dysjane site on the Tu mountain ridge. This site is surrounded by a ‘theophoric’ landscape; immediately to the east by Frøylandsvatnet and the Frøyland farm, indicating worship of the god *Freyr*, associated with sacral kingship. A stone cross that stood on the large mound named *Krosshaugen*, by the Dysjane site, may indicate that early Christian ceremonies were held on the hill before the first churches were built (*Grimm 2010*, 40).

At Skei five unusual star-shaped mounds are present. Bjørn Myhre has interpreted the star-shaped mounds at the courtyard site Dysjane (Hauge-Tu) and at the farm of Ullandhaug, in Rogaland, as used for closing rituals and expressions of *Yggdrasil*, the world tree of Norse mythology (*Myhre 2005*, 8-9). Also Anders Andrén has interpreted star-shaped mounds, of which c. 900 are known in Scandinavia, as representations of trees in

general, and more specifically the *Yggdrasil*. He propose such monuments were erected over religious experts/priests or people who had cleared land and established new settlements which figuratively were seen as new 'cosmos' in community (Andrén 2004, 410, 414). The courtyard site at Skei is located close to a boundary of three communities (Fig. 4). It is tempting to suggest that the five star-shaped mounds represent the successive integration of new communities in the *Sparbyggjafylke*. Another, perhaps more likely explanation is that the star-shaped mounds were built over religious specialists who had been active on site.

In my view, in pre-Christian times military and judicial power was executed at the *fylki* level. These areas were bound together by communal religious rituals that took place at higher ranking locations, such as Mære. The courtyard sites were local, political, gathering places under the control of a *fylki* elite, where religious rituals and acts formed part of the proceedings. This changed with the emergence of the supra-regional royal power. In the 11th century, royal control over religion increased through the adoption of Christianity, and the new *fylki* churches were linked to loyal subjects. These may initially have been of lower social rank, such as the king's *ármaðr* and the first priests, as this may have been a way of appeasing the local elite. In pre-Christian times, local chieftains probably met at places like Mære where they negotiated difficult matters during the sacrifices, perhaps forming alliances to counteract the power of the Lade Earls. The king's influence over military matters grew in the 11th century, and local elites lost their influence as the ship levy became centralised. Earlier, the elite in each *fylki* most likely decided if and when they needed to form alliances with other areas along the Norwegian coast. Later, the naval levy became a duty for the *fylki* and local communities, and the voluntary element disappeared.

To conclude: the courtyard sites were places where local politics was acted out, where cultic and religious matters were part of proceedings, as politics, religion and law were closely interwoven. The various *fylkir* cooperated on several levels, but the courtyard sites were not run by any higher, formal institutions. These were places of local, *fylki*, power. The sacrifices at Mære were important for the formation of alliances between the *fylki* units, but at these events formal governance was not enacted.

(Translated by Fredrik Sundman)

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Anomaly or myth?

Sami circular offering sites in medieval northern Norway

Marte Spangen *

ABSTRACT

The category of ‘Sami circular offering sites’ defines certain medieval stone structures in northern Norway as offering sites used by the indigenous Sami population. However, the sources for this interpretation are uncertain and the materiality, finds and topography of the sites in question differ from the extensive record of other Sami offering sites. In this article it is argued that the archaeological material is more compatible with an original use as wolf traps, even if some of the structure may have been re-conceptualised as ritual or sacred sites after falling into disuse. A wolf trap interpretation is also supported by analogies in ethnographic and historical sources.

Keywords: *Sami archaeology, medieval northern Norway, circular offering sites, wolf traps, reconceptualisation.*

RÉSUMÉ

Anomalie or mythe ? Les sites de sacrifices circulaires sames du nord de la Norvège médiévale
Le type des « sites de sacrifices de forme circulaire » définit certaines structures médiévales en pierre du nord de la Norvège comme des sites de sacrifices utilisés par la population indigène des Samis. Néanmoins, les sources prouvant cette interprétation sont incertaines et le matériel, les découvertes et la topographie de ces sites diffèrent nettement des données récoltées sur d’autres sites de sacrifices sames. On donne des arguments dans cet article que le matériel archéologique est plutôt compatible avec une utilisation originelle comme piège à loup, même si certains d’entre eux ont été réutilisés en tant que lieu rituel ou sacré après leur abandon. Une interprétation en tant que fosse à loup est soutenue par des analogies avec les sources ethnologiques et historiques.

Mots-clés : *Archéologie des Samis, le nord de la Norvège médiévale, les sites de sacrifices circulaires, fosses à loup, nouvelle conception.*

* Department of Archaeology,
History, Religious Studies and
Theology, University of Tromsø,
Sweden
marte.spangen@uit.no

Zusammenfassung

Anomalie oder Mythos? Zu den kreisförmigen Opferplätzen der Sami im mittelalterlichen Norden Norwegens

Die Kategorie „kreisförmige Opferplätze der Sami“ benennt gewisse mittelalterliche Steinstrukturen im Norden Norwegens, die von der indigenen Bevölkerung der Sami als Opferplätze genutzt worden sein sollen. Die Quelle dieser Interpretation ist allerdings unsicher und die materiellen Hinterlassenschaften, Funde und Topographie der Plätze, unterscheiden sich von den ausführlichen Berichten der Sami zu anderen Opferplätzen. In diesem

Introduction

The Sami in northern Fennoscandia have some general linguistic, material, religious and other common cultural denominators. However, throughout their history they have had a variety of locally appropriated economic adaptations and cultural expressions. The Sami are typically associated with large-scale reindeer herding, but this is a fairly recent economic and cultural adaptation among parts of the Sami population. Apart from reindeer for draught and as decoys, some small-scale pastoralism, hunting, gathering and fishing, as well as some husbandry and farming have been the most common subsistence strategies until quite recently (*Hansen – Olsen 2014*). The variations in adaptation have left corresponding differentiation in the archaeological traces of Sami cultures, including in their ritual sites. The pre-Christian Sami world view may be called animistic, in the sense that the surroundings were thought to be inhabited by gods, spirits, ancestors and other non-human powers that affected human life and had to be treated with consideration (*Schanche 2004*). Apart from the daily offerings made in, for instance, fireplaces or at cult places, like burial fields, the hundreds of designated Sami offering sites in northern Fennoscandia that have been documented through contemporary written sources, local traditions, place-names and archaeological finds have played an important role in this communication. Most of these sites are related to natural features such as stones, boulders, cliffs, trees, mountains, lakes and rivers (*Qvigstad 1926; Manker 1957; Åikäs 2015*).

Until the 1990s, the dry-stone enclosures called ‘Sami circular offering sites’ comprised only 19 of the recorded Sami offering sites, and they were concentrated in the northern Norwegian counties of Finnmark and Troms (*Vorren 1985*). Only a few smaller stone structures in Sweden had been suggested to be comparable phenomena (*Manker 1957, 26*). However, over the last few decades, an expanding range of more or less similar stone and earth constructions in other areas of Norway, as well as in Sweden, Finland and Russia, have been suggested to be expressions for the same cultural phenomenon of

Artikel wird gezeigt, dass die archäologischen Befunde eher mit Wolfsfallen übereinstimmen, auch wenn die eine oder andere Struktur vielleicht nach Auffassung als Wolfsgrube später vielleicht doch als religiöser Platz genutzt wurde. Die Interpretation als Wolfsfalle findet ihre Unterstützung in ethnologischen Vergleichen und historischen Quellen.

Schlagwörter: *Archäologie der Sami, der mittelalterliche Norden Norwegens, kreisförmige Opferplätze, Wolfsfallen, Neu-Konzeption.*

offerings or ‘Sami ritual activity’ with direct or indirect references to the ‘circular offering sites’ (*Stenvik 1983; Huggert 2000; Manyuhkin – Lobanova 2002; Edvinger – Broadbent 2006; Broadbent 2010; Saloranta 2011; Loeffler 2015*). While the ‘circular offering sites’ in northern Norway consist of rather solid, broad walls built in a certain way in a specific type of terrain, the shape and size of the suggested similar structures in other areas tend to differ quite significantly from these rather large monuments (Fig. 1, 2). This has in part been explained as local variation (*Edvinger – Broadbent 2006, 46*), and indeed it is important to address the chronological and geographical variations in Sami culture described above, including differences in ritual and religious elements. However, unsubstantiated interpretations of various features as offering sites risk consolidating erroneous ideas about past landscapes and mentalities that potentially obscure other significant aspects of pre-Christian Sami history and society. Furthermore, a critical study of the genealogy of the concept of ‘circular offering sites’ and of the morphological, topographical and geographical variations in the archaeological material included in this category indicate that there are other plausible explanations for the larger structures in northern Norway that were first interpreted as Sami offering sites (*Spangen 2016*).

The genesis of the category

Very few Sami offering sites feature manmade structures. Exceptions include the carved wooden figures and/or tables (‘altars’) that were still present on some Sami offering sites in the 17th century. Other descriptions mention enclosures made from reindeer antlers and, in one case, wood, or the use of natural features such as streams as delimitations of offering sites (*Schefferus 1956[1673], 136-38, 146; Beronka 1922, 108; Johansson 1944, 54-55, 71-72, footnote 5; Bergman et al. 2008*). Yet, despite the quite extensive recording of types of and individual Sami offering sites, especially by priests and missionaries



Fig. 1. Some of the so-called 'Sami circular offering sites' in northern Norway, here defined as Type 1 (© Marte Spangen).



Fig. 2. Other structures suggested to be 'Sami circular offering sites' or comparable Sami ritual sites. The structures are located in different counties of Norway, from Finnmark in the north to Hedmark in the south (© Marte Spangen).

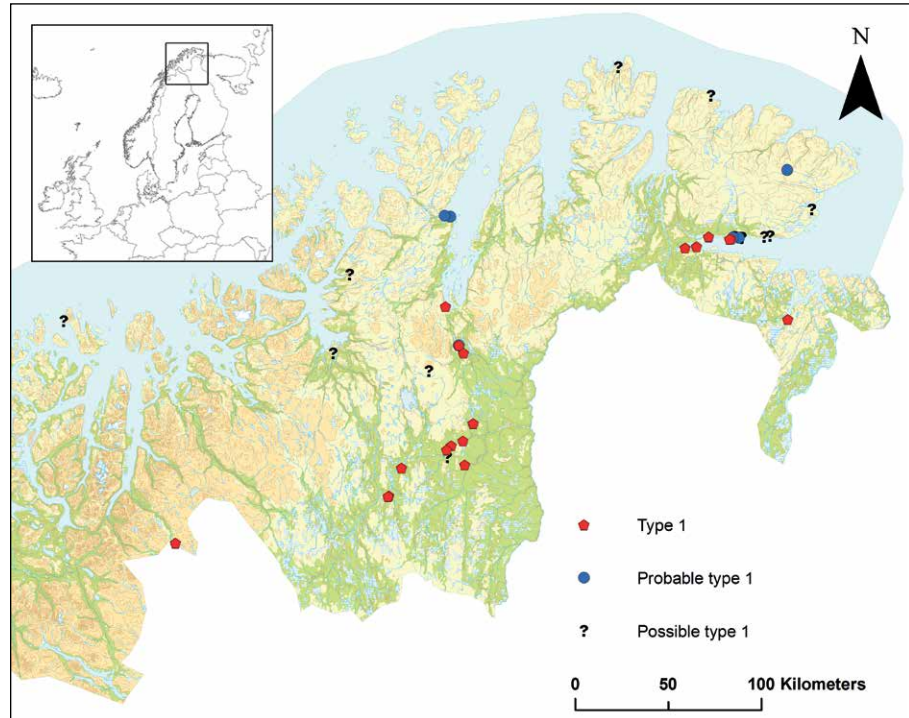


Fig. 3. Map of certain, probable and possible Type 1 structures in northern Norway (© Marte Spangen).

during the intensified Christianisation of the Sami in the late 17th and early 18th century, these older sources do not describe stone enclosures or stone circles as offering sites. A study of the research history confirms that the first mentions of the stone structures now known as ‘circular offering sites’ occur in the mid-19th century in relation to investigations of several stone wall enclosures in Varanger in eastern Finnmark (Spangen 2013). At the time, the researchers expressed doubt about the function and meaning of these structures and discussed various possible uses, such as children’s play, housing, hunting blinds, or milking pens for reindeer. The similarities in building style to the numerous Sami scree graves in the same area also led to the idea that they were built as large unfinished graves for several individuals. These interpretations do not seem to be inspired by any established local traditions related to the sites, even if the researchers appear to have had several suggestions about their possible uses from others (Fritzner 1846; Saxlund 1853). Two somewhat later sources state that the structures are probably related to pre-Christian Sami rituals, or, more specifically, that they are walls around old Sami offering places (Nordvi n.d.; Friis 1871a, 140). However, it is hard to judge whether this interpretation was based on local Sami traditional knowledge or a scholarly consensus (cf. Friis 1871b, 116-119; Spangen 2013). From the 1950s onwards, the structures have become well-known through the work of ethnographer Ørnulv Vorren, who repeated the offering site interpretation in a series of publications (e.g. Vorren 1956; Vorren 1985; Vorren – Eriksen 1993), as

well as in other dissemination and meetings with locals during his extensive fieldwork. This makes it difficult to know if the few and somewhat vague traditions related to such structures in the 20th century and today are in fact remains of an ancient offering tradition or inspired by later academic explanations. Even if they were based on older traditions, these may reflect local reconceptualisations of structures in areas where the original use had been forgotten (Spangen 2013; 2016).

The structures and their context

Surveys of 81 out of 161 structures in Norway that have been suggested to be circular offering sites or similar Sami ritual localities have established that they include many different constructions. The identified structures clearly diverge from the larger dry-stone walls in northern Norway that were first interpreted as offering sites. Based on the similarities in these ‘classical’ structures, a *Type 1* has been defined (Spangen 2016, 131). According to available information, 42 recorded constructions in northern Norway can be defined as such certain, probable or possible Type 1 structures (Fig. 3). Among these, 18 have been further investigated through surveys, studies of finds, various analyses, as well as two minor excavations. The studies show that these structures constitute a relatively homogenous category: they are made from clearing an area and building walls in scree or rocky terrains, creating inner rooms with a diameter of 420-760cm, though three structures measure up to 1070cm. The extant walls in Type



Fig. 4. Photogrammetry orthophoto of the Type 1 structure by lake Geaimmejávri, Karasjok, Finnmark, which has a very obvious hexagonal shape (© Marte Spangen).

Type 1 structures are at least 40cm high and 75cm wide, while some reach 140cm in height and are assumed to have been originally even higher. The walls are sometimes markedly vertical or inward-sloping on the inside. Many of the walls form discernible angular inner shapes. Some enclose central cairns or mounds. With very few exceptions they are situated in sloping or gently sloping terrains, often at the bottom of a scree or below the highest point of a hill or cliff. Twenty-one dates from eight Type 1 sites indicate that they were constructed in the late 13th century or 14th century, while the majority of the animal bone finds in the structures date to AD 1450-1640, with only a few samples stretching on into more recent times (Spangen 2016, 170-74). The remaining structures suggested to be similar phenomena have been sorted into two more generic categories, of which *Type 2* encompasses a range of (mostly) smaller and less meticulously built circular stone structures that have been included in the category 'circular offering sites' through a superficial comparison with the 'known phenomenon' of stone circles on Sami offering sites in northern Norway. This type includes such features as simple delineations made from a few singular

stones or from one or two rows of stones. *Type 3* includes a range of even more dissimilar structures concerning shape and materials, such as horseshoe-shaped features of turf and semi-circular stone walls, which have also been suggested to be Sami offering or ritual sites with direct or indirect references to 'circular offering sites'. Types 2 and 3 most likely include constructions related to a number of different cultural phenomena from different time periods (Spangen 2016).

In many cases, erosion has worn down the walls of the Type 1 structures so that the shape and meticulous construction is less visible, but in the better preserved examples a pentagonal or hexagonal shape is very obvious (Fig. 4). The walls are often systematically built with larger rocks on the inside and a packing of smaller stones on the outside that form slopes that sooner or later aligns with the surrounding terrain. Recorded finds of wood in some of these structures indicate that there used to be some sort of additional log fence or wood construction on top of the stone walls, further enclosing the inner area (Friis 1871a, 140; Friis 1871b, 91; Vorren 1985, 75-76). The small cairns or mounds found in the middle of some of these

structures have been pictured as bases for offering stones or wooden figures (North Sami: *sieidi*) and as 'altars' for the offering matter (e.g. *Friis 1871a*, 140; *Vorren 1985*, 72, 75). However, the absence of entrances means that at the sites with high stone walls and additional wood constructions, these would not only prevent the view but also the access to any features inside them. In addition, standing *sieiddit* (pl.) have not been found at any of the investigated sites, though broken parts of three peculiar stones that were excavated in a structure on Angsnes, eastern Finnmark, have been interpreted as remains of offering stones (*Vorren – Eriksen 1993*, 77). The general lack of this feature has been explained as a result of the 18th-century missionaries' practice of desecration by overturning offering stones, but the sites discussed here seem to have gone out of their initial use centuries before the organised destruction of offering sites in Norway in the 1720s (*Rydving 1995a*, 62-67). It is unlikely that there was a systematic destruction of this particular type of presumed offering site before this time throughout the rather extensive distribution area (see map, Fig. 3).

Despite the wide geographical distribution in terms of travel distances, the number of known Type 1 structures is quite limited, further suggesting they had a specific meaning other than symbolic delineations of ritual sites. Previous research has related them to hunting and burial rituals because of an alleged proximity to wild reindeer pitfall traps, shooting blinds and Sami scree graves (e.g. *Vorren 1985*, 79-80; *Schanche 2000*, 284, 296-97; *Olsen 2002*). However, studies show that the Type 1 structures are more commonly and more closely related to thrown-out meat caches than to hunting and burial sites (*Vorren 1985*, 76-77; *Spangen 2016*, 201-203). Another interpretation has been that the 'circular offering sites', as well as some low stone labyrinths found along the coast of Finnmark and the Kola Peninsula, appeared in the Middle Ages as material and symbolic expressions of resistance against the increased Norwegian and Russian colonisation and Christian appropriation of these areas from the 13th century onwards (*Olsen 2002*). Yet, the Type 1 structures are neither placed at particularly prominent topographical spots, nor in relation to medieval ecclesiastical buildings or non-Sami habitations (cf. *Olsen 2011*, 30-31). On the contrary, and unlike the labyrinths mentioned above, they have a predominantly inner fjord and inland distribution in Finnmark and Troms, corresponding with the core use and habitation areas of the Sami population (*Spangen 2016*, 142-45). The structures could have been related to internal signalling or power relations in Sami communities, expressed through restriction of access to and even visual contact with specific offering sites or *sieiddit*. If so, it is surprising that this particular type of site was treated in this way, and not a variety of other more common Sami offering sites in the same areas.

The osteological material

According to what we know about Sami offerings in other contexts, the offering matter has consisted of live or dead animals or parts of animals, including bones, hides, blood and fat, as well as antlers from reindeer. Reindeer and fish have been particularly popular as offering animals, but a range of other wild and tame animals are mentioned in written sources and found in studies of documented offering sites (e.g. *Manker 1957*; *Salmi et al. 2015*; *Äikäs 2015*). Certain Iron and Middle Age offering contexts have encompassed coins and metal objects, and in more recent times offerings also included tobacco, alcohol and other materials (e.g. *Serning 1956*; *Manker 1957*; *Mebius 1968*; *1972*; *Äikäs 2015*). There are no medieval metal finds in the structures discussed here, but there are several reports on bone finds (*Saxlund 1853*; *Nordvi n.d.*; *Friis 1871a*, 140; *Nissen 1928*, 19; *Vorren 1985*; *Vorren – Eriksen 1993*). In the present project, new analyses have been performed on preserved bones from older investigations and the bone finds made during two smaller excavations in 2013 (*Salmi 2013a*; *2013b*; *Spangen 2016*).

A substantial part of the osteological assemblages from type 1 structures can only be determined as large mammals or canines. Reindeer is the most frequent among the defined species, but the bone finds also include dog and sheep, as well as bird, fish and whale in singular structures. These are all compatible with written sources about Sami offering matter and finds from confirmed Sami offering sites (e.g. *Magnus 1976* [1555], chap. 3:2; *Manker 1957*; *Vorren – Eriksen 1993*, 65; *Salmi et al. 2015*). More peculiar is the presence of bones from arctic fox and ordinary fox in type 1 structures (*Salmi 2013a*; *2013b*), as well as one reported find of a wolverine skull (*Nissen 1928*, 185). Two teeth that could be from either a wolf or a big dog could only be determined through analysis of the DNA, which has not been possible to extract (pers. comm. J. Aspi 27 Nov 2015). These animals are only briefly mentioned as possible offering matter in a couple of written sources, whereof one source is partly based on the other (*Rheen 1983*[1672], 39; *Jessen-Schardebøll 1767*, 27; *Rydving 1995b*, 38-39). There are no fox or wolf bones and only one recorded find of wolverine bones at verified Sami offering sites (e.g. *Manker 1957*; *Okkonen 2007*, 30; *Salmi et al. 2015*; *Äikäs 2015*). Furthermore, the almost complete lack of reindeer antlers on the type 1 sites is striking compared with the high frequency and amount of antlers recorded on many Sami offering sites (e.g. *Rheen 1983*[1672]; *Friis 1871a*, 141; *Manker 1957*).

In short, the construction, distribution, topography, context of and finds in the type 1 structures beg a reconsideration of their assumed symbolic and ritual motivations. Other hypotheses have been that they had a function as graves, falcon catching facilities or dwellings, or that they were installations for storage, preparation of



Fig. 5. Photogrammetry orthophoto of the hexagonal Type 1 structure on Fuonášnjárga ('the Wolf Trap Headland') in Munkefjord, Sør-Varanger, Finnmark (© Marte Spangen).

hunting produce or traps. Most of these suggestions have been dismissed because they are less compatible with the specifics discussed above, while the characteristics of the structures and the osteological assemblages are highly compatible with a function as wolf traps (Spangen 2016).

Type 1 structures as wolf traps? Introducing a new theory

The northern European medieval wolf traps and methods of wolf hunting were very varied, depending on local particularities concerning the terrain, season and wolf population and habits, as well as the economic and social conditions for the hunt (Pluskowski 2006, 101). The well-known wolf pitfall trap could be circular, square or angular and be clad with stones or planks on the inside. Sometimes there would be a pole in the centre of the pit with a platform on top for the bait, or the bait could simply be tied down at the bottom of the pit, alternatively placed on a cover over it. Various covers were used, from sticks and straw to rotating doors. While the trap itself was usually built by digging into the ground, there are also descriptions of how it could be surrounded by stones or a fence to make the wolf jump into it before realising it was a trap (e.g. Broman 1842; Henriksson 1978; Laursen 1991; Lie 2003). Large

enclosures called 'pen traps' above ground are also widely known. The Sami in northern Finland built simple notched log pen traps until the 19th century. An ethnographically and archaeologically documented example in Inari measured ca. 17m in inner diameter, had an angular shape with inward leaning walls and was built around a natural mound where the live bait would be placed. Interestingly, this particular trap is said to have caught no wolves, only foxes and wolverines (Itkonen 1948, 63-64; Joonas 2011).

Three stone structures found in the counties of Kemi and Tornio by the Bothnian Bay in Finland appear to be more direct parallels to the Type 1 structures described above. They are constructed by clearing areas in scree of 8-10m in diameter with angular inner shapes and approximately one metre high walls. A prevailing wolf trap explanation is based on local traditions. One of the structures is situated on Susihaudanmäki, which literally means 'Wolf Trap Hill'. However, because of their similarity to the northern Norwegian 'circular offering sites' they have recently been suggested to be Sami offering sites (Saloranta 2011). It has been argued that the modest height of their walls would not be enough to keep wolves in and thus opposes the trap explanation (Saloranta 2011, 47), but, as described, Type 1 structures in northern Norway with similar extant heights are thought originally

to have been much higher and to have had additional wood superstructures (*Vorren 1985*, 71-72), which rather substantiates a trap function. Though there is obviously no direct connection, more recent wolf traps on the Iberian peninsula consisting of inward-leaning dry-stone walls around small mounds where the bait was placed (*Álvares et al. 2000*), offers another close parallel to the medieval Type 1 structures in northern Norway that substantiates a possible use of these as wolf traps.

An early 20th-century record describes the wolf traps that were used in the East Sami area of Neiden in eastern Finnmark. These were called *fuonáš*, and they were constructed like large traditional conical turf huts, only without doors and with a bigger smoke opening in the roof where the wolf would jump in to get to the bait. The bait would be a living reindeer or sheep that was placed on a pile of lichen inside this structure (*Qvigstad 1927*, 534-37). The account does not describe stone foundations, but it locates the remains of one of these traps to the so-called 'Cormorant Stone' (North Sami: *Skarfageadje*) in Munkefjorden, Sør-Varanger municipality. At the same place, a stone structure has been registered that Ørnulv Vorren, after some deliberation, defined as the stone foundation of a wolf trap, based on the mentioned tradition and the local place name *Fuonášnjárga*, which means 'the Wolf Trap Headland' (*Vorren 1976; 1979*, 83). However, the structure in question was originally recorded by archaeologists as a 'circular offering site' (www.askeladden.ra.no, *Askeladden*, Id 67452-1), and it has several obvious similarities to the other Type 1 structures, being situated in sloping rocky terrain and having a hexagonal inner shape with walls up to 100cm, an inner diameter of approximately 5.5m and featuring a low mound in the middle (Fig. 5). I would suggest that the wolf trap interpretation of this site should be applied to other sites of similar character rather than vice versa.

Evidence for use as wolf traps

The ethnographic parallels show the potential functionality of Type 1 structures as wolf traps but also that the construction details in traps have depended on available materials and other local conditions. The location of the Type 1 structures in screes provided building materials, and the solid and inner vertical or inward sloping walls also would assist in keeping captured animals in, while outer sloping walls aligning with the surrounding terrain would give them easy access. An inner elevated area like a mound or cairn, which is occasionally present in the structures, is not absolutely necessary but it would help to expose the bait. These features may even have supported a mid-pole with a platform for the bait. Removal or erosion of such a pole could explain why several cairns are described as 'disturbed' (*e.g. Vorren – Eriksen 1993*, 66).

The consistent positioning of the structures in sloping and rocky terrains beneath hilltops would accommodate the wolves' preference for higher grounds to get an overview and for terrains with protruding hiding places allowing them to sneak up on the bait (*Brainerd et al. 2008*, 27). The choice of sloping terrain could also be a way of limiting necessary wood builds by utilising the hillside to create part of the wall.

Following a wolf trap interpretation, the osteological finds in Type 1 structures are considered mainly to be remains of various live and dead baits. Dogs have frequently been recommended as bait due to the consistent aggressiveness wolves show towards this animal (*e.g. Asbjørnsen 1840*, 15; *Pluskowski 2006*, 73-74), but the omnivorous wolf could be equally tempted by ungulates or any other animal, live or dead (*Brainerd et al. 2008*, 27). This is reflected in the wide variety of animals and animal remains, including containers for food leftovers or smelly offal, found in excavated German medieval wolf traps (*Müller 1999*, 187; *Nießen 2012*, 25-26, 28-29, 60-61; *Nießen 2015*, 181). Thus, the species and animal parts found in the Type 1 structures, including some marrow split reindeer bones, are compatible with a use as wolf traps, though most of the finds also coincide with known Sami offering matter. The arctic fox and ordinary fox bones, and the find of a wolverine skull in one structure, however, are not likely to be from bait, and they are highly unusual for an offering site context. Interestingly, ethnographic and historical sources frequently describe how these animals in particular were often caught in wolf traps (*e.g. Magnus 1976* [1555], chapter 18:13; *Itkonen 1948*, 64). The remains of these species in Type 1 structures could be from animals that were trapped after the installations had gone out of use, explaining why the animals were not removed.

Reasons for constructing wolf traps

In the farming societies of the Middle and Early Modern Ages in Scandinavia, the decimation of wolves was often a question of lives and livelihood (*e.g. Magnus 1976* [1555], chapter 18:13; *Broman 1842*, 21). There were very aggressive attitudes towards wolves in more recent reindeer herding or farming Sami contexts too, but it must be assumed that the wolves were perceived differently in medieval Sami hunter-fisher-gatherer contexts. There could still be several reasons for investing in the building of wolf trap constructions: very large wolf populations may have been a problem because these predators would compete for and even severely decimate other species of game, as was recorded in parts of southern Norway in the 18th century (*Lie 2003*, 9). The wolves may also have posed a threat to any livestock, which, in medieval Sami contexts in Finnmark and Troms, probably

encompassed dogs, a few reindeer and, in some cases, sheep and cattle (cf. e.g. Hansen – Olsen 2014, 177, 184; Hedman et al. 2015). Wolf furs are likely to have had substantial local use-value, even if they do not seem to have been a central element in the medieval long-distance fur export (Pluskowski 2006, 112-15). More importantly, the frequent connection between the Type 1 structure and meat caches may illustrate a problem of wolves raiding such hiding places for food. This may have triggered the need for hunting installations at the same sites, as has been recorded in ethnographic studies of other hunter-gatherer contexts (Binford 2002, 135-136).

The confirmed large Type 1 structures are mainly found within the area of Finnmark and northern Troms, while possible Type 1 structures have been recorded along the Barents and White Sea coasts in Russia (pers. comm. M. M. Shakhnovich 11 Aug 2014). Though not corresponding on a local level, several phenomena have an equivalent regional distribution from northern Troms to the Kola Peninsula, including outer coast phenomena like the stone labyrinths mentioned above (Olsen 2002; Manyuhkin – Lobanova 2002), slab-lined pits for extractions of blubber oil (Henriksen 1996; Hansen – Olsen 2014, 57-65) and so-called multi-room houses. The latter apparently appear in a multi-cultural environment that can be traced in the finds from these houses (Olsen et al. 2011), but the distribution of Type 1 structures is more likely a result of Sami cultural regionality. The relatively massive stone walls could potentially have gained a status as territorial markers over time, but it appears more probable that they simply reflect core habitation areas. The mutually exclusive distribution of labyrinths by deep sea fishing sites on the outer coast and the Type 1 structures in habitation areas in the inland of Finnmark seems to confirm the same summer-winter mobility pattern for Sami groups in the region in the Middle Ages that is described in Early Modern written sources (Storm 1895, 232; Spangén 2016, 206).

The end of the wolf traps

The initial use of the Type 1 structures seems to have come to an end relatively simultaneously, sometime between AD 1450 and 1650. Considering them as wolf traps, this may have had several reasons. With the 18th-century rise of more extensive reindeer herding, Sami habitation patterns changed, and wolves were presumably more often killed during the perpetual shepherding of the reindeer than in traps. Individual hunting was made easier by the introduction of new efficient weapons like the crossbows, foot-lock traps and guns in the Early Modern Age (Nielsen 1986; Pluskowski 2006, 102), while changes in state influences, taxation and trading patterns affected the exploitation of various areas and types of

produce (Johnsen 1923; Odner 1992; Hansen 2006; Hansen – Olsen 2014). Some evidence and traditions indicate that the idea that these enigmatic structures with their animal bone remains represent old offering sites may have appeared as local reinterpretations at a quite early stage after their abandonment as traps, though it seems this notion primarily has spread, both locally and among researchers, through much later publishing and dissemination (Spangén 2016).

Conclusion

Stone circles are not mentioned in the oldest sources about Sami offering sites. The interpretation of the medieval circular stone walls in northern Norway (Type 1) as ritual sites rather seems to appear among researchers in the mid-19th century, though it is difficult to know whether they based this notion on any local traditions. The transfer of the explanation to a range of diverging stone and turf structures in other areas (Type 2 and 3) is not well substantiated and should be reconsidered. Furthermore, the construction details, local topography and finds related to the Type 1 structures are compatible with an original use as wolf traps as these are known from archaeological, historical and ethnographical sources. A local reconceptualisation of Type 1 structures as offering sites may have taken place fairly soon after the structures went out of their original use and, admittedly, the evidence does not positively refute this interpretation. The collective evidence that has been briefly summarised in this article still leads me to conclude that the concept of 'circular offering sites' is more likely to be a modern myth rooted in the 19th-century scholarly interpretation, than an example of a regional variation in the Sami ritual practices of the Middle Ages.

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Livs' offering cave (Latvia): new discoveries

Juris Urtāns *

SUMMARY

Livs' Offering Cave is situated in North Latvia, in about 10m-high sandstone outcrop on the bank of the Svētupe. After a vast portion of the ceiling in front part caved in at the beginning of the 20th century, two branches of the cave have survived until the present. The first written evidence of the offering of coins and other objects in Livs' Offering Cave dates back to 1641. In 1973, during archaeological excavations, 629 coins and 35 offered artefacts were found. In 2013, as a part of project 'Vidzeme's Svētupe in real and mythical space' research was continued in the Offering Cave itself, and in the Svētupe River below water level. On the bottom of the river, opposite to Livs' Offering Caves, 18 coins of the 16th to 19th centuries were found. The mint years of the earlier coins testify that offering in Livs' Offering Caves began in the 14th and 15th century. It became increasingly intense in the 16th and 17th century. At that time the caves became a sacred site for a wide Liv-inhabited region, but attracted also other people living in the vicinity, and thus the sacred site turned into a tourist site as well. Although offering in Livs' Offering Caves greatly diminished in the 18th century, it still persisted. Four 18th-century coins which were found on the bottom of the river, might testify that offerings had been made also to water. Small-scale offering in caves has been noted in early 19th century, however, the tradition gradually vanished and came to an end. Beginning with the 1970s, a new tradition by visitors of the Livs' Offering Caves has been observed – 'offering' of coins, sometimes other objects. In the Caves and the River 320 contemporary (1957-2014) coins have been found, including many foreign coins. It is possible that the variety of modern coins has something in common with the diversity of early offering coins, where the finds contained a great percentage of coins minted outside the territory of Latvia. The analysed material points to the fact that from the 19th century a sacred site of local significance was gradually turned into one of the country's tourism destinations, whereas at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century it gained the image of a modern sanctuary, but lost its special significance as a sacred place in the interpretation of the local population.

* Latvian Academy of Culture,
Riga, Latvia
juris.urtans@lka.edu.lv

Keywords: *Cave, offering, coins, folk Christianity.*

Zusammenfassung

Livische Opferhöhlen (Lettland): neue Entdeckungen

Die Livischen Opferhöhlen befinden sich im nördlichen Teil Lettlands, am Ufer des Flusses Svētupe in einem bis zu 10 Meter hohen Sandsteinfelsen. Nach dem Abbruch des vorderen Teiles der Höhle am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts, sind heute zwei Zweige dieser Höhle zu sehen. Die ersten geschriebenen Berichte über das Opfern von Münzen und anderen Gegenständen in den Livischen Opferhöhlen sind auf das Jahr 1641 zu datieren. 1973 wurden hier während archäologischer Ausgrabungen 629 Münzen und 35 geopfert Gegenstände gefunden. 2013 wurde die Forschung in den Opferhöhlen und am Ufer des Flusses Svētupe auch unter dem Wasserspiegel im Rahmen des Projektes 'Vidzeme's Svētupe in real and mythical space' fortgesetzt. Im Fluss gegenüber den Livischen Opferhöhlen wurden 18 Münzen aus dem 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert gefunden. Die Prägezeit der älteren Opfermünzen zeigt, dass das Opfern hier im 14. – 15. Jh. angefangen hat. Im 16. und 17. Jh. ist das Opfern intensiver geworden. In dieser Zeit wurden die Opferhöhlen zu einem sakralen Ort einer von Liven besiedelten Region. Das weckte auch Interesse anderer und die Höhlen wurden zu einem Tourismusobjekt. Obwohl im 18. Jahrhundert das Opfern in den Höhlen an Intensivität verlor, wurde es im dennoch fortgesetzt. Auf dem Flussboden wurden 4 Münzen aus dem 18. Jh. gefunden, was auch zeigen könnte, dass das Opfern im Wasser gepflegt wurde. In geringem Umfang wurde das Opfern in den Höhlen auch im 19. Jh. bis zum Untergang dieser Tradition fortgesetzt. Seit den 70er Jahren des 20. Jh. ist eine neue Tradition zu beobachten: die Besucher (Touristen) „opfern“ ebenfalls Münzen, seltener auch andere kleine Gegenstände. In den Höhlen und im Wasser wurden insgesamt 320 zeitgenössische (1957 – 2014) Münzen, darunter viele ausländische gefunden. Möglicherweise ist der hohe Anteil an ausländischen Münzen mit der Vielseitigkeit des Herkunftslandes der Münzen in früheren Perioden zu vergleichen, da der Anteil der außerhalb des lettischen Territoriums geprägten Münzen auch in früheren Perioden prozentuell hoch liegt. Das analysierte Material zeigt, dass diese sakrale Stätte örtlicher Bedeutung seit dem 19. Jahrhundert allmählich zu einem Tourismusobjekt geworden ist. Am Ende des 20. und am Anfang des 21. Jh. wandelt sich das Bild der Livischen Opferhöhlen zu einem zeitgenössischen „sakralen“ Ort, gleichzeitig verlieren die Livischen Opferhöhlen die Bedeutung eines lokalen sakralen Ortes.

Schlagwörter: *Livische Höhlen, Opfergaben, Münzen, Volksglaube.*

Résumé

Les grottes sacrificielles des Lives (Lettonie) : nouvelles découvertes

Les grottes sacrificielles des Lives se situent dans la partie nord de la Lettonie, au bord de la rivière Svētupe et au pied d'une falaise sableuse de 10 m de hauteur. Après l'écroulement du plafond de l'unique entrée des grottes au début du XX^{ème} siècle, deux galeries sont restées intactes jusqu'à nos jours. Les premières sources écrites sur les offrandes monétaires et d'autres objets dans les grottes des Lives remontent à l'année 1641. Durant les fouilles archéologiques en 1973, 629 pièces de monnaies et 35 autres objets anciens ont été découverts. En 2013, dans le cadre du projet *Vidzeme's Svētupe in real and mythical space* les recherches ont été poursuivies dans la même grotte sacrificielle, mais aussi sous la surface de l'eau de la rivière Svētupe. Au fond de celle-ci, en face des grottes à sacrifices des Lives, 18 pièces de monnaie datant du XVI^{ème} au XIX^{ème} siècle ont été découvertes. La datation des pièces de monnaie déposées en offrande attestent que le nombre d'offrandes dans les grottes à sacrifices était le plus élevé aux XVI^{ème} et XVII^{ème} siècle. À cette époque-là, les grottes étaient devenues un lieu sacré pour une vaste région habitée par des Lives, mais elles attiraient également l'attention d'autres peuplades des environs, le lieu sacré devenant ainsi un site touristique. Même si au XVIII^{ème} siècle, le nombre d'offrandes dans les grottes à sacrifices diminue considérablement, on continue néanmoins à en faire. Quatre pièces de monnaie du XVIII^{ème} siècle ont été retrouvées au fond de la rivière, ce qui permet d'envisager que l'on jetait des offrandes dans l'eau. Les offrandes dans l'eau se maintiennent également, bien qu'en quantité plus réduite, jusqu'au début du XIX^{ème} siècle, l'abandon étant entraîné par la disparition progressive de la tradition. À partir des années 1970, on observe un renouvellement de cette tradition d'offrande de pièces de monnaie, voire même de petits objets dans quelques cas, de la part des touristes venant visiter les grottes des Lives. On a pu recenser dans les grottes et au fond de la rivière en tout quelques 320 pièces de monnaie contemporaines (de 1957 à 2014), parmi lesquelles de nombreuses pièces étrangères. La diversité des pièces contemporaines rappelle celle des offrandes anciennes, car parmi les pièces retrouvées, on constate qu'un grand nombre de pièces de monnaie ont été fabriquées hors du territoire de la Lettonie. Le matériel analysé permet de conclure qu'à partir du XIX^{ème} siècle, le site sacré local s'est progressivement transformé en objet touristique. À la fin du XX^{ème} siècle et au début du XXI^{ème} siècle, les grottes ont acquis une image de sanctuaire moderne, mais ont perdu leur caractère sacré auprès de la population locale.

Mots-clés : *grottes de Live, lieu sacré/lieu de sacrifices, pièces de monnaie, le christianisme populaire.*



Fig. 1. *Livs' Offering Caves (Lībiešu Upurālas) and the Svētupe* (© Juris Urtāns).

In the territory of present Latvia and Estonia several small partly independent states were established at the end of the 12th and in the 13th century, during the period which we now call Northern and Baltic Crusades (*Christiansen 1997; Hunyadi – Laszlovszky 2001; Šterns 2002; Urban 1994*). Together they bore the name of Livonia. The Confederation of Livonia disintegrated in the middle of the 16th century. The society of Livonia was divided into two big groups. The upper class of the society were mostly

people of German origin; the local people formed the lower class of society. The difference between those two classes was very significant. German people lived mainly in towns, manors and castles, the local people were mainly farmers. In Livonian time the ruling people had no great interest in the everyday life of local aboriginal people; formally they were Christians, but in fact they were very far from Christianity and followed an amalgam of pre-Christian beliefs and so-called Folk Christianity (*Valk*

2003). This was also evident in cult sites of that time. The Christian world outlook became dominant in the peasants' minds only in late 18th and early 19th century (Ādamovičs 1933, 577; Straube 2000, 233).

In such situation folklore, written evidence and archaeology provide much material about ancient pagan or Folk Christianity offering or cult sites. At present, we have information about several hundreds of such sites. Among them are hills, boulders, trees and groves, bodies of water, meadows and caves.

The caves in Latvia are situated in northern part of the state in the Devonian outcrops of mainly soft sandstone in river valleys and ravines. More than two hundred caves have been found in those outcrops, mainly formed by the process of suffocation. Springs and other waters are the main moulders of the Latvian caves. These caves are not very deep – the deepest natural cave in Latvia seldom exceeds 200m; their usual depth is only 10m to 20m. These small caves often have the shape of niches or widely opened shelters with outflowing springs (Eniņš 2004).

The first investigators who paid attention to caves as cultural phenomena and as peculiar natural formations were Baltic German scientists at the end of the 18th century. In 1876, the first archaeological excavation was made in Latvian cave, but it was only in early 1920s that the first registration, investigation and official protection of Latvian caves was begun. Archaeological excavations were conducted in cult caves in the 1970s (Laipe 2009). In the 1980s and 1990s the investigation of Latvian sandstone caves and cliffs resulted in the discovery of a series of caves and rock outcrops with petroglyphs (Laipe 2003; Laipe 2004; Grīnbergs 2005), which is quite a new type of historical record for Latvia.

Written evidence from the 17th to the 19th century tells us that sandstone caves were used as pagan or Folk Christianity cult sites by the local farmers. This is confirmed by folklore recorded in the 19th century. At present we know more than thirty caves, which presumably were connected with ancient rituals. Many of these caves have names connected with deities or sacral doings such as Devil, Offering, Sacred cave, etc. (Urtāns 1997).

This is the context for the Livs' Offering Cave. The Livs were one of the local tribes of Baltic Finn origin in distinction from the other inhabitants of Latvia who were mainly the Balts.

Livs' Offering Cave (Fig. 1) is situated in North Latvia, in about 10m-high sandstone outcrop on the right bank of the Svētupe near Kuiķule. After a vast portion of the ceiling in front part caved in at the beginning of the 20th century, two branches of the cave have survived to the present day, which make two separate caves – the so-called Great and Small Offering Cave. The greater cave is 46m long, the smaller cave is 18.5m long.

The first written evidence of the offering of coins and other objects in a Livs' Offering Cave dates back to 1641. The offering ritual in this cave was mentioned during the parish visitation in 1674. In the records of the visitation of 1739 it is noted that people made offerings of money, hand-woven ribbons, wool, cabbage, flat cakes and other items on 24 August, St. Bartholomew's Day (*Bregžis* 1931, 11, 44, 88).

Archaeological material provides the earliest testimony of human activity in Livs' Offering Caves. Antiquities and coins of the 14th to 19th centuries found in the caves during archaeological excavations in 1973, as well as marks carved in the walls of the caves and written sources, indicate that the Offering Caves at that time were used as Livs' pagan (syncretic) sacred site of a wider region. In Livs' Offering Cave, where the front part had caved in, 628 coins were found. After the excavation, one more 17th-century coin was inspected and detected, found in the soil removed from the cave; therefore the total number of the coins found and detected in archaeological excavations was 629 coins minted between the 14th and 19th century in Riga, Tallinn, Dorpat, Stockholm and elsewhere, as well as 35 artefacts of similar date. Among them were six bronze finger rings or their fragments, bronze ring brooch and its fragment, two bronze bindings, two bronze tinklers, an iron belt buckle, a bone sewing needle, three fragments of Dutch pipe stems and an iron hook. Organic remains of offerings have been found in cultural occupation: pieces of wax, bones of birds, egg shells, fish scales and bones; while a lot of tiny particles of coal testified to the fact that fire had been made in the caves (Urtāns 1980).

In 2013, research in the Offering Cave and in the Svētupe opposite to the Livs' Offering Caves was continued within the project 'Vidzeme's Svētupe in real and mythical space' (Urtāns – Vītola, 2014; Vidzemes Svētupe 2015). Offerings that might be referred to using the Offering Cave as an ancient sacred site were found in the Small Offering Cave. Two 16th-century coins not far from each other were found by the right-hand wall of the cave (these and previously mentioned relatively early coins were detected by Dr. hist. K. Ducmane). A bit further towards the entrance of the cave, opposite to a graffiti made in 1664, a quadrangular bronze object with a hole was found (binding ?), the more precise dating of which cannot be determined and its connection with early offerings cannot be proved.

Several coins from earlier times were recovered from the Svētupe riverbed opposite to Livs' Offering Caves. The river is about 1-2m deep there, but at Kuiķūļu Rock, which is situated downstream from the Offering Caves, its depth is 4-5m. The river bottom there is mostly covered with soil washed out of the cave in 1972 and 1973, and dug out in archaeological excavations in 1973. On river bottom 18 coins of 16th to 19th centuries were

found. They were located opposite to the Cave, near the bank and several metres downstream from the Cave in shallow water, not in deep water by the Kuiķuļi Rock. One Russian copper coin of the beginning of the 18th century was found on the opposite bank across the river. Fourteen more recent coins of the 20th to 21st centuries have been found in the whole riverbed by the Cave, but not downstream from the Cave. It can be assumed that the tiniest coins of the 16th to 19th centuries might have gone into the river with the soil washed away from the bank or inadequately combed by the archaeologists, but the coins of the most recent times have been thrown into the river after the archaeological excavations.

Minting years of earlier coins show that offering in Livs' Offering Caves had started in the 14th and 15th centuries. Offering at that time was not intense though, because five and 23 coins from these centuries have been found respectively. (The figures here and henceforth have been obtained by comparing the finds of 1973 with the coins found in 2013. To date 649 coins of the 14th to 19th centuries have been recovered in Livs' Offering Caves and in the river near the caves.) These finds show that the beginning of Livs' Offering Caves as cult sites most likely can be identified as the period after the introduction of Christianity into the territory of Latvia.

Offering in the caves became much more intense in the 16th and 17th centuries. It was determined by several circumstances, their aggregate and mutual influence. These circumstances include the end of the long Livonian period, which had been rather favourable to the local population, and was followed by vast military activities in the 16th and 17th centuries, years of epidemics, famine and different economic failures, Reformation and Counter-Reformation movement, which was not comprehensible to the local peasants and gave rise to folk Christianity and syncretic views. During these two centuries 231 and 367 coins were offered in the caves respectively. Judging by the ample scope of offerings, marks carved in the cave walls and comparatively frequent references in historical sources, in the 16th and 17th Livs' Offering Caves century became a sacred site of a broader Liv-inhabited region. Not far from Livs' Offering Caves there used to be Svētdciems rural municipality house and granary, Orthodox and Lutheran schools, a home for the disabled, Kuiķule cemetery and inn (*Balaško – Cimermanis 2003, 207*), which testifies that this important cult site was situated near the administrative centre of the region.

Now available written sources of the 17th century, and graffiti carved by the tourists show that during the period of the most intense offering in the caves, this place attracted other people who were not Livs, from the near vicinity, and consequently the sacred site became a tourist site as well.



Fig. 2. Entrance to Livs' Offering Caves in 1837 (© Kruse 1842, 7, Tab. 67: 3).

Although offering in Livs' Offering Caves grew scarcer in the 18th century, it still persisted nevertheless, to judge by nine 18th-century coins found in archaeological excavations. It is possible that during this period offerings of organic nature were left in the caves, which have not survived in the soil. In 1739 during general visitation the parson of Salaca church pointed out that in this cave on St. Bartholomew's Day money, ribbons, wool, cabbage, meat, flat cakes (*karraschen*) and other things were still offered. Besides Kuiķuļi Niks, a peasant had added that offerings used to be made in the cave in earlier times when it was not forbidden (*Bregžis 1931, 88*).

Four 18th-century coins were found on the river bottom by Livs' Offering Caves in 2013, which, compared with the total number of the 18th-century coins found in the caves, proportionally makes quite a lot. Three of the four 18th-century coins found in the river are bigger and heavier than the copper coins of the Russian Empire. It is supposed that these coins were thrown into the river, during the 18th century because it is unlikely that the bigger and heavier coins should pass unnoticed by archaeologists with the dug-out soil that ended up in the river.

It has been stated that small-scale offering in the caves took place also at the beginning of the 19th century; however it obviously came to an end due to

gradual decline of the tradition. In 2013 a copper coin of Russian Empire minted in 1812 was found in the river opposite to the caves – this is the most recent coin of all the earlier offerings which has been found. It can be concluded that Livs' Offering Caves ceased to function as a cult site at the beginning and middle of the 19th century.

Meanwhile, it can be observed that Livs' sacred site became increasingly popular and was visited by people from more distant regions. Thus, in early 19th century the Offering Caves were visited by several scholars who later published descriptions of the cave. The cave was visited in 1822 by Otto von Huhn, physician and ethnographer, who found clothing items and bread that had been offered there (*Lövis 1908*). On August 15, 1839, on surveying archaeological monuments, the cave was visited by Friedrich Cruse, history professor at Dorpat University, who noticed an offering of dyed wool and rooster's feathers in the cave (*Kruse 1842*, 7, Tab. 67: 3) (Fig. 2). The drawing made during Cruse's visit and later published is the earliest known image of Livs' Offering Caves. It is possible that entrance really caved in during the period between 1839 and 1846, when the ceiling in the front part started to fall down. Filling up of the cave entrance in 1840s and 1850s is likely to have been one of the reasons why offering ceased in Livs' Offering Caves.

The reintroducing of the offering-tradition practised by visitors ('offering' of coins, less frequently, objects of some other type), has been observed beginning with the 1970s, in Livs' Offering Caves. In the caves and in the Svētupe near the caves in 2013 and 2014 a total number of 320 modern (1957-2014) coins have been found and filed, most of them used in Latvia as official means of payment (kopecks of the USSR, Latvian santims and lats, Latvian euro cents), as well as coins from other States (Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, Poland, Ukraine, Sweden, Austria, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Mexico and Thailand). Although it is possible that separate foreign coins in the caves have been offered by foreign tourists, supposedly they are mostly offerings of Latvian people who have travelled to the above-mentioned countries. It is possible that the variety of modern coins has something in common with the diversity of early offering coins, where the finds contained a great percentage of coins minted outside the territory of Latvia (*Laime – Urtāns 2014*).

The archaeological materials have proved that local Livs started to use these caves as sanctuaries in the 14th century. In the 16th and 17th centuries, when sacrifices in the caves were the most intensive, this place, according to the evidence of written sources and graffiti carved in the walls of the caves, became a sightseeing or tourism site for other nationalities too. The analysed

material suggests that from the 19th century a sacred site of local significance gradually was turned into one of the country's tourism destinations. However, at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century it gained the image of a modern sanctuary, but lost its special significance as a sacred place in the understanding of the local population.

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Les gravures de « la Table des Bergers »

Frédéric Surmely *

RÉSUMÉ

La Table des Bergers est un site localisé sur la commune du Mont-Dore (département du Puy-de-Dôme, France), en pleine forêt, qui comprend 10 blocs ornés de croix parfois accompagnées d'initiales. L'une des pierres, une grande dalle de 9 m², est littéralement couverte de gravures (pétroglyphes) de ce type. La datation semble récente, mais se situe vaguement entre le XVII^e et le XIX^e siècle. La fonction du site, à l'écart des zones urbanisées, mais aussi des secteurs de pâture et des itinéraires de circulation, reste indéterminée.

Mots-clés : *Auvergne, Massif Central, pétroglyphes, croix.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Gravuren auf dem „Tisch der Hirten“

„La Table des Bergers“ (*Der Tisch der Schäfer*) liegt innerhalb eines umfangreichen Waldgebietes in der Gemeinde Mont-Dore (Département Puy-de-Dôme, Frankreich) und besteht aus 10 Steinblöcken, die mit Kreuzen und Initialen verziert sind. Einer dieser Steine, eine Platte von 9 m², ist komplett mit diesen Gravuren (Petroglyphen) bedeckt. Die Datierung scheint jünger zu sein, liegt aber wohl zwischen dem 17. und dem 19. Jahrhundert. Die Funktion dieser weit ab von erschlossenen Siedlungen, landwirtschaftlichen Zonen und Wegen gelegenen Fundstelle liegt derzeit noch im Dunkeln.

Schlagwörter: *Auvergne, Zentralmassif, Petroglyphen, Kreuze.*

ABSTRACT

The petroglyphs of 'the table of sheperds'

'La Table des Bergers' (*The Shepherds' Table*) is located in an extensive forest area belonging to the community of Mont-Dore (Department Puy-de-Dôme, France) and consists of 10 stone blocks decorated with crosses and initials. One of them, a slab of 9 m², is completely covered by this type of petroglyphs. The dating seems to be relatively recent, lying somewhere between the 17th and the 19th centuries. The function of this site, far from settlements, pasture and travel routes is unknown.

* DRAC Auvergne et GEOLAB –
Clermont-Ferrand, France
surmely.frederic@wanadoo.fr

Keywords: *Auvergne, Massif Central, petroglyphs, crosses.*

Localisation du site et historique des recherches

Le site de la Table des Bergers se localise sur la commune du Mont-Dore, en plein cœur du massif du Sancy, précisément sur un petit enselement, à 1325 m d'altitude, au pied de la Montagne de Bozat, un vaste plateau volcanique découpé par l'érosion (Fig. 1). Il y a là un chaos de blocs basaltiques de grande taille, provenant de la désagrégation de la coulée volcanique sus-jacente (Fig. 2). Il est important de signaler qu'il s'agit d'un endroit reculé, à l'écart de tout itinéraire naturel et séparé du plateau sus-jacent (la « Montagne de Bozat ») par un escarpement rocheux infranchissable. De même, il n'y a aucune particularité physique notable, telle que source, ruisseau, panorama, ressource minière... L'endroit est humide et l'hypothèse d'une très petite source, aujourd'hui dissimulée sous la végétation ou sous un bloc

d'effondrement récent est envisageable, même si la présence d'eau s'explique plus probablement par des infiltrations diffuses provenant de la base de la coulée volcanique. Ajoutons que l'eau est abondante dans ce secteur de montagne, avec un ruisseau à 500 m en contrebas et, à quelques kilomètres, de très importantes sources minérales ferrugineuses ayant donné naissance aux centres thermaux du Mont-Dore et de la Bourboule.

L'examen visuel approfondi des lieux, comme l'étude des cadastres anciens, n'a pas permis de déceler d'autres traces de fréquentation humaine et surtout de construction aux alentours. Le plateau sus-jacent recèle de nombreuses structures liées à l'exploitation pastorale saisonnière (estive) datant très probablement de l'époque moderne, mais sans communication directe avec le site des gravures.

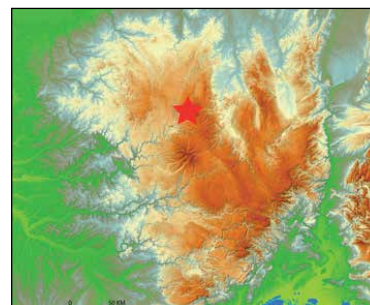
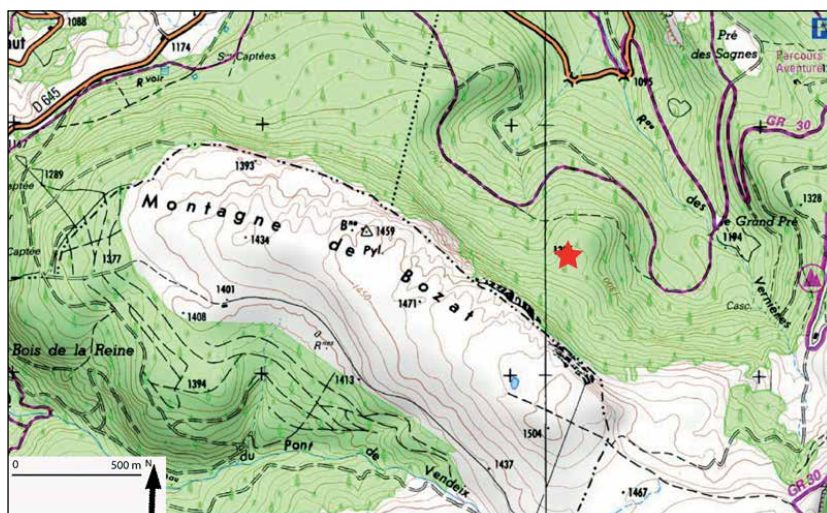


Fig. 1. Localisation du site sur fonds de carte IGN (© Frédéric Surmely).

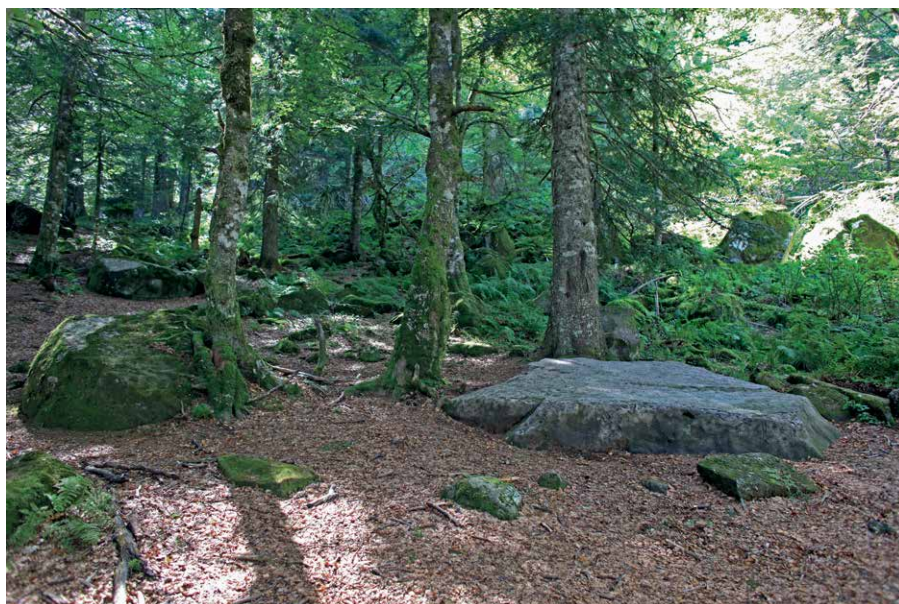


Fig. 2. Vue du site (© Frédéric Surmely).

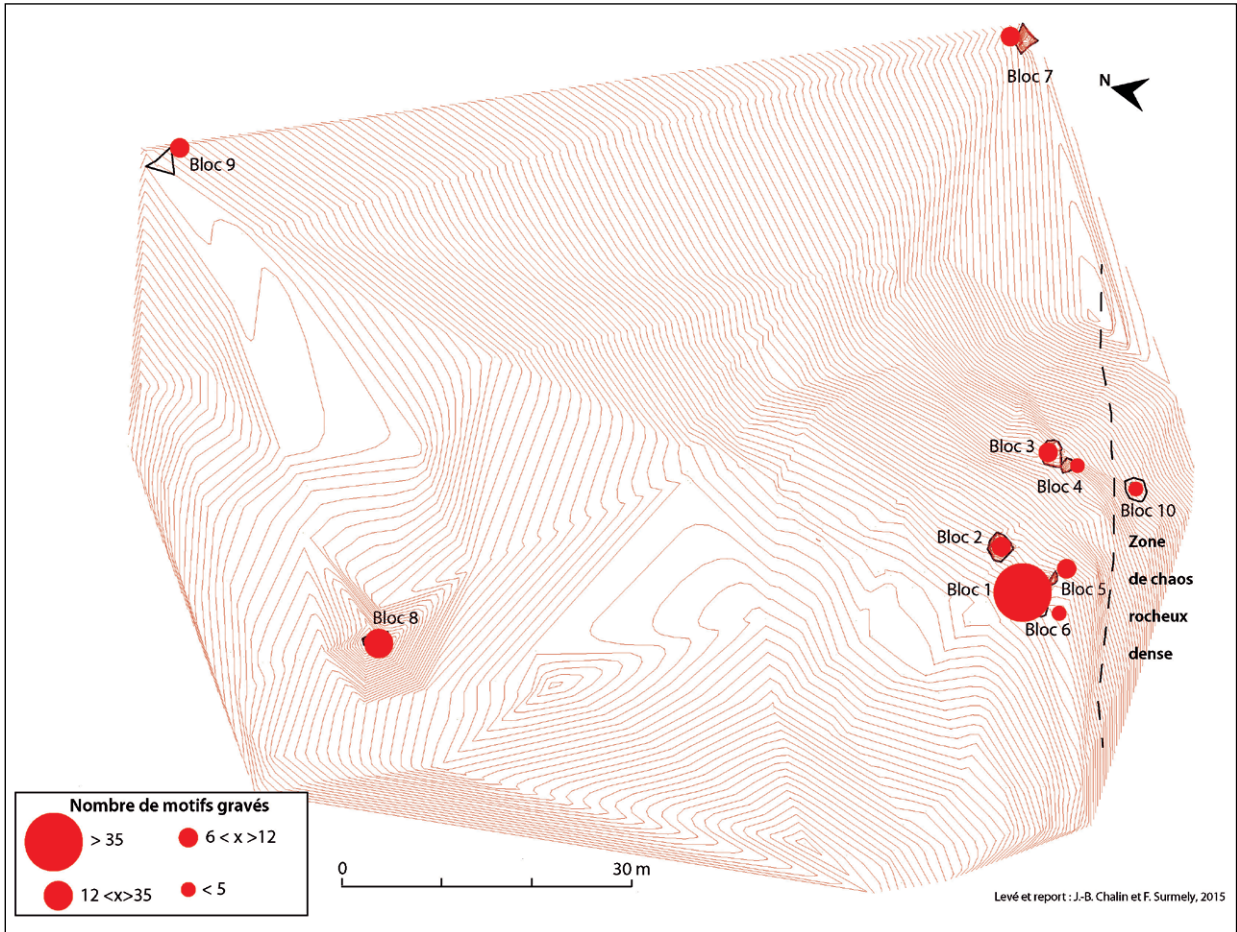


Fig. 3. Relevé topographique et localisation des blocs ornés et des gravures (© J.-B. Chain et Frédéric Surmely).



Fig. 4. Vue zénithale du bloc n° 1 (© Frédéric Surmely).

Ces dernières étaient connues de longue date de quelques agriculteurs locaux, avant d'être « redécouvertes » par un petit groupe d'amateurs d'histoire du secteur. Un relevé a été fait à l'initiative de la Direction régionale des affaires culturelles d'Auvergne et du conseil général du Puy-de-Dôme en 1993. Un réexamen général du site a été fait récemment par l'auteur (*Surmély 2012*). Aucun sondage n'a été effectué.

Description générale, emplacement et technologie des signes gravés

Bien que le site soit connu sous le nom de « Table des Bergers », les motifs gravés se retrouvent en fait sur 10 blocs, dans un rayon d'une trentaine de mètres (Fig. 3). Le centre est une grande dalle de basalte d'environ 9 m², à la surface très plane et quasi-horizontale et qui a donné son nom au site (bloc 1 ; Fig. 4). Tout laisse à penser qu'il s'agit d'un bloc naturel, qui n'a pas subi de modification ou de transport par l'homme. Les gravures, au nombre de plusieurs centaines, recouvrent toute la surface, mais aussi ses flancs. Dans un rayon de moins de 20 m, 6 autres blocs portent chacun quelques motifs gravés :

- Bloc 2 : 12 gravures
- Bloc 3 : 10 gravures
- Bloc 4 : 2 gravures
- Bloc 5 : 10 gravures
- Bloc 6 : 2 gravures
- Bloc 10 : 1 gravure

Les gravures sont cantonnées à certaines portions, particulièrement planes, de ces rochers.

Trois autres pierres isolées complètent le site. À 50 m à l'est, un gros rocher (bloc 7) a été orné de 6 croix. À environ 70 m au nord de la « Table », une autre grande dalle à la surface régulière (bloc 8), a été presque totalement couverte d'une trentaine de motifs gravés et d'initiales, qui ornent également ses faces latérales. Enfin, au nord-est, le bloc n° 9 porte 8 croix.

Il est possible que la mousse abondante, qui recouvre une bonne partie des pierres du lieu, nous cache encore des inscriptions. Quelques gravures ont d'ailleurs été découvertes, à l'occasion d'un récent réexamen du site.

Les principaux blocs ornés sont de belles dalles à la surface régulière, mais certaines autres ont été délaissées. Les rochers entassés formant le chaos rocheux dense, au sud du site, n'ont pas été ornés.

Les superpositions sont rares. Ajoutons que les gravures ont des dimensions assez voisines, mais sont disposées sans ordre apparent et sans orientation préférentielle.

Technologie

Les gravures ont été, pour leur très grande majorité, réalisées avec soin et il ne s'agit pas de simples graffitis tracés à la hâte. Certaines sont réalisées en haut-relief (Fig. 5). Le basalte est une roche dure, difficile à graver. Le profil des traits indique un instrument métallique à lame fine, comme un simple couteau. Aucune étude tracéologique n'a été effectuée.

Thèmes

Croix

Le motif figuratif quasi unique est la croix latine (branche inférieure plus longue que les autres branches), avec de nombreuses variantes graphiques (Fig. 5). Très fréquemment, la croix est représentée fixée sur un support, lui-même reposant sur un socle parfois compartimenté. Les bras des croix sont souvent reliés par un cercle, qui peut être externe ou bien intérieur, ou, cas fréquent, par des traits rectilignes, formant un triangle (sommet vers le haut ou sommet vers le bas), voire un losange. Il y a ainsi, selon la nomenclature des spécialistes, des croix pattées, potencées, discoïdales, nimbées, « toitées »... De petits détails graphiques ont souvent été ajoutés : hachures, croisillons...

Ces motifs évoquent des représentations de calvaire à degrés, d'ostensoir ou de croix d'autel, qui présentent la même morphologie, avec une croix fixée sur un fût supporté par un socle reposant lui-même sur un piédestal, pouvant comprendre plusieurs degrés dans le cas des calvaires.

Quelques représentations ont un caractère vaguement anthropomorphe. C'est le cas des « évêques », figures comprenant deux cercles superposés, surmontés d'une croix et reposant sur un rectangle hachuré (Fig. 6). Il y a une seule représentation humaine certaine, schématique, gravée sur le bloc n° 4.

Initiales et dates

Les autres motifs sont des lettres et des chiffres, constitués sous forme d'initiales groupées le plus souvent par deux autour de la croix et de dates, ainsi que quelques rares noms de famille.

Beaucoup de représentations sont « signées » par deux initiales apposées de chaque côté du support de croix, ou bien sous sa base. Les mêmes paires d'initiales se retrouvent à proximité de plusieurs motifs. Il s'agit incontestablement des initiales de personnes, nom et prénom. Dans un cas, l'association A et E, autour d'un motif évoquant la lettre V, pourrait être l'abréviation d'AVE MARIA, invocation à la Vierge Marie (inf. orale J.-M. Poisson). Il y a aussi quelques rares noms propres rédigés en entier. Les dates gravées, rares, sont toutes de la fin du XIX^e siècle (1881, 1898 ; bloc 1 et 8).

Le tout forme un ensemble spectaculaire, très esthétique et un brin mystérieux, mis en valeur par l'isolement du lieu.

Datation

Les véritables superpositions sont assez rares et des analogies profondes sont observables entre les différentes figurations. Il ne semble donc pas que l'ornementation des lieux se soit échelonnée sur une longue période. Tout juste peut-on observer quelques variations dans les sujets et les traitements graphiques et une altération inégale de certaines figurations, qui pourraient indiquer une chronologie décalée. Ainsi, les « calvaires » de la

partie orientale sont plus profondément gravés que les « évêques » de la portion occidentale de la Table (bloc 1).

L'omniprésence du motif de la croix latine, l'absence de toute représentation zoomorphe, les lettres et dates, indiquent un âge indubitablement historique. D'autres indices permettent d'affiner la détermination chronologique. De l'avis des spécialistes, la graphie des initiales est sans conteste postérieure à l'époque médiévale (com. orale d'É. Bouyé). La lettre A avec la barre transversale en chevron inversé se retrouve sur des inscriptions lapidaires du XIX^e siècle. La figuration des croix donne également des indications. Les motifs représentés sur le site ont des traits morphologiques (fût allongé, croisillon aux bras reliés par des branches droites



Fig. 5. Différents types de croix gravées (© Frédéric Surmely).



Fig. 6. « Les Évêques », Bloc n° 1 (© Frédéric Surmely).

ou ovales, piédestal à degrés ...) qui sont caractéristiques des calvaires construits entre le XVII^e et la fin du XIX^e siècle (Moulier 2003 ; Bouquerel 2015). Des rapprochements plus étroits encore peuvent être faits.

Ainsi les motifs gravés sur le site se retrouvent sur des linteaux ou des façades de bâtiments, tous construits après 1750. La « croix solaire » se retrouve presque à l'identique sur un calvaire situé sur la commune même du Mont-Dore et daté de 1780. De même une croix « toitée », en tous points semblables à celles qui figurent sur la Table, a été gravée sur le mur pignon d'un « buron » de Malbo (Cantal), construit en 1787. Les exemples datés de telles représentations en dehors de l'Auvergne, comme le site de la Hohlay (Berdorf, Luxembourg), la Savoie (Ballet 2010) ou la Cerdagne (Campmajo 2008 ; Campmajo et al. 2015) se rapportent tous à la période contemporaine. Il est donc possible d'affirmer que les gravures sont relativement récentes, d'époque moderne ou plus probablement contemporaine (XIX^e siècle). Le site a été fréquenté au moins jusqu'en 1898, comme le montre une date gravée dans le rocher. Cette hypothèse d'un âge

récent est confortée par la relative fraîcheur des motifs gravés, dans un environnement où l'érosion naturelle est particulièrement forte du fait de l'altitude et de l'ampleur des précipitations.

Un lieu de dévotion en marge de l'Église ?

L'interprétation du site est encore difficile. Le caractère relativement standardisé des figurations, leur nombre, l'absence de tout motif figuratif autre que la croix chrétienne, semble exclure également l'idée d'une simple distraction, née du désœuvrement ou d'un acte individuel.

Comme nous l'avons dit plus haut, aucune trace de construction ou de lieu de sépulture n'a été découverte. Le cadastre de 1828 de la commune montre que le lieu offrait une physionomie proche de celle d'aujourd'hui, c'est-à-dire une grande parcelle boisée (n° 43, section D), appartenant à un grand propriétaire privé, qui possédait également le moulin à scie situé un peu plus bas, le long de la rivière. Pas de chapelle, d'oratoire ni même de calvaire. Aucune mention d'un lieu de dévotion ou pèlerinage ne figure dans les archives publiques et privées, alors même que des recherches approfondies sur le clergé et les pratiques religieuses du secteur ont été effectuées par E. Guillaume (Guillaume 1999).

L'idée qui vient naturellement est donc celle d'une expression vernaculaire collective liée à une cérémonie ou un pèlerinage. Le thème des gravures, qui évoque les ostensoirs ou les croix promenés lors des processions, va bien dans ce sens. Le nom donné aujourd'hui au site évoque inévitablement les bergers, dans un secteur où l'élevage est le fondement de l'économie depuis la fin du Moyen-Âge (Surmely et al. *in press*). On sait que les éleveurs cherchaient fréquemment la protection céleste face aux éléments ou aux maladies, en demandant des messes et en faisant bénir les animaux ou des aliments qui leur étaient destinés. Ils pouvaient se regrouper en confrérie pour une action commune, ou bien participer collectivement à des « reinages ». De telles cérémonies sont connues sur d'autres lieux, notamment dans le département du Cantal. Le plus souvent, elles avaient lieu dans le cadre de l'estive, c'est-à-dire lors de la montée des troupeaux sur les pâturages d'été, les « montagnes ». Il y a bien de telles montagnes à proximité immédiate de la Table des Bergers, notamment sur le plateau sus-jacent de la Montagne de Bozat ou bien celui, tout proche, du Clergue. Dans le cas de la Table des Bergers, le rapport à l'estive semble pourtant improbable, car le site est à l'écart des chemins menant aux secteurs de pacage d'été et ne peut donc correspondre à une étape sur un chemin de pèlerinage. Il faudrait alors penser plutôt à des éleveurs menant paître les troupeaux dans les zones boisées sous-jacentes, peut-être à l'automne ou même durant l'hiver. À moins que les gravures n'aient

été faites par un autre groupe professionnel fréquentant la forêt, des charbonniers ou des bûcherons ?

Dans tous les cas, si l'on retient comme probable l'hypothèse d'un lieu de dévotion, se pose le problème de sa place dans les pratiques religieuses de l'époque. On pourrait y voir une conséquence de l'élan de renouveau impulsé par l'église catholique à partir du XIX^e siècle et concrétisé par l'érection de croix de « mission ».

Mais les processions et autres cérémonies que l'on connaît étaient rigoureusement encadrées par l'Église, qui les organisait autour de lieux officiels consacrés. Cela n'excluait pas des lieux privés, comme des chapelles ou des oratoires, mais ces endroits étaient toujours reconnus, contrôlés et consacrés par l'Église, avec au moins une construction. Il faudrait donc supposer que la Table des Bergers était un de ces lieux de pratiques officieuses, dont les archives officielles ne parlent pas, dans un lieu considéré comme propice, mais non reconnu par l'Église.

Enfin, il faut se demander pourquoi ce lieu précis a été choisi. L'endroit est isolé de tout, à l'écart de tout chemin ou itinéraire de parcours. Est-ce justement pour cela qu'il a été fréquenté ? Et pourquoi une concentration de gravures sur et autour de la grande « Table » ? La morphologie exceptionnelle de cette grande dalle plate à la surface lisse peut expliquer l'attrait qu'elle a suscité. De telles surfaces planes, offrant un champ propice à la gravure, sont en effet rares dans le secteur. N'y a-t-il pas eu d'autres facteurs ? À moins que le site n'ait été le cadre d'un événement particulier, qui poussait ensuite les hommes à le fréquenter ? La réponse à cette interrogation sera assurément l'objectif des recherches futures.

Conclusion

Le site de la Table des Bergers est à ce jour unique en Auvergne. Sans doute y en a-t-il d'autres, qui ont disparu ou restent encore à découvrir, enfouis sous la terre ou la mousse ! Ces gravures sont le reflet des croyances des populations locales, où se mêlaient

assurément l'influence du christianisme dominant, la volonté de marquer un territoire et des réminiscences de cultes plus anciens, dans lesquels les éléments naturels jouaient un grand rôle. Quelle que soit l'interprétation du site, ce dernier mérite d'être préservé en tant que témoin historique.

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Struell: bathing at midsummer and the origins of holy wells

Finbar McCormick *

ABSTRACT

Holy wells are common across much of Europe and are particularly common in Britain and Ireland. They are generally associated with local saints but can also be dedicated to members of the holy family or St John. They are commonly believed to have curative powers and they are especially frequented on the anniversary of the saint to whom they are dedicated. Devotional activity focused on holy wells was especially important in Ireland as pre-Reformation churches passed into Protestant ownership and thus became unavailable for worship for the Roman Catholic majority of the population. There has been a general assumption that at least some holy wells had their origin in pre-Christian times. This theory can be supported by a late 7th-century Life of St Patrick which states that the druids regarded wells as sacred and made offerings to them. Struell Wells, County Down, is an early well associated with St Patrick. An 8th-century text describes the saint immersed in the well at night, singing psalms and resting on a nearby stone slab during the day. The main devotional activity at the well however, took place on Midsummer Eve rather than on the anniversary of the saint (17th March). Description from between the 17th and 19th centuries record that large numbers of pilgrims bathed in a naked state in the wells at midsummer. It can be suggested that these activities are a continuation of pre-Christian midsummer rituals associated with the promotion of good health, not only for humans but also for animals. There are records from Ireland and elsewhere of livestock being bathed at midsummer in order to protect them from illness. Additionally, there are records of early church condemnation of midsummer bathing as such activities were regarded as pagan.

Keywords: *Struell Wells, holy wells, midsummer, continuation of pre-Christian rituals.*

RÉSUMÉ

Struell : se baigner à la Saint-Jean et les origines des sources sacrées

Les sources sacrées sont très connues dans toute l'Europe, mais surtout en Angleterre et en Irlande. Elles sont en général associées avec des saints locaux, mais peuvent également être dédiées à un membre de la sainte famille ou à St Jean. On leur attribue des pouvoirs de guérison et on les fréquente surtout pour l'anniversaire du saint auquel elles sont dédiées. Les pratiques de dévotion liées à des sources sacrées sont particulièrement importantes lorsque les Protestants reprennent possession des églises durant la préRéforme, à un

* School of the Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University Belfast, Great Britain
f.mccormick@qub.ac.uk

moment où la vénération y est devenue impossible pour la majorité de la population de confession catholique. La théorie que certaines des sources sacrées remontent à une époque préchrétienne est étayée par le livre « la vie de saint Patrick » du VII^e siècle dans lequel on parle des druides qui font des offrandes aux sources. Le site de « Struell » (County Down) est une vieille source dédiée à Saint Patrick. Un texte du VIII^e siècle parle du saint qui s’y baignait la nuit, en chantant des psaumes et qui restait assis sur une pierre durant la journée. Les pratiques de vénération se concentraient surtout à la Saint Jean (au moment du solstice) et moins à l’anniversaire du saint (le 17 mars). Des descriptions, datant du XVII^e au XIX^e siècle, évoquent un grand nombre de pèlerins se baignant nu dans la source lors des solstices. On suppose que ces pratiques se développent dans la continuité des rites préchrétiens liés au solstice visant à assurer une bonne santé aux pèlerins et aux animaux. Certaines sources écrites, entre autres originaires d’Irlande, décrivent le bain rituel de bovins durant la Saint Jean afin de les protéger des maladies. S’y ajoutent des sources écrites de l’église primitive condamnant le bain dans les sources à la Saint Jean en tant que pratique païenne.

Mots-clés : *Struell wells, sources sacrées, solstice, continuité des rituels préchrétiens.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Struell: Baden zu Mitsommer und die Ursprünge der heiligen Quellen

Heilige Quellen sind in vielen Teilen Europas bekannt, besonders aber in England und Irland. Sie sind in der Regel mit lokalen Heiligen verbunden, manchmal aber auch mit Mitgliedern der Heiligen Familie oder St.

Introduction

The concept of sacred waters is a world-wide phenomenon in ancient and modern religions (Ray 2014, 1). The role that water plays varies greatly. For instance, the river Ganges is considered sacred to those of the Hindu faith because it is the personification of the god Ganga, and bathing in its waters purifies body and soul and washes away sin (Bhardwaj 1973, 4; Dublois – Beauchamp 1897, 200), while at the Japanese Shinto shrine of Zeniarai Benzaiten Ugafuku it is believed that the washing of money in the sacred spring waters will increase one’s prosperity in business (Mutsu 1918, 208-09). The word ‘sacred’ can cover a multitude of roles and meanings and it is often not possible to ascertain why a particular body of water was regarded as sacred. The deposition of large quantities of material in ‘watery’ places across prehistoric

Johannes. Allgemein heilende Kräfte zugesprochen, werden sie besonders an den Geburtstagen der Heiligen besucht, denen sie geweiht sind. Zeremonielle Aktivitäten an Heiligen Quellen waren in Irland besonders zu dem Zeitpunkt wichtig als Vorreformatoren Kirchen in protestantischen Besitz übergaben und entsprechend unerschwinglich für die römisch-katholische Mehrheit der Bevölkerung wurden. Es herrscht allgemeine Übereinstimmung in der Annahme, dass einige der Heiligen Quellen in vorchristlichen Zeiten zurückreichen. Unterstützt wird diese Theorie durch das Buch „Das Leben des Heiligen Patrick“ aus dem 7. Jh., in welchem davon berichtet wird, dass Druiden die Quellen als heilig ansahen und Opfergaben machten. Struell (County Down) ist eine frühe Quelle, die dem heiligen Patrick geweiht ist. Ein Text aus dem 8. Jh. beschreibt wie der Heilige, Psalmen singend, mitten in der Nacht in der Quelle badet und sich am Tag auf einem nahegelegenen Stein niederlässt. Die religiösen Feiern an der Quelle konzentrieren sich jedoch eher auf Mitsommer und weniger auf den Geburtstag des Heiligen am 17. März. Schriftliche Urkunden aus dem 17. bis 19. Jh. berichten von zahlreichen Pilgern, die zu Mitsommer nackt in der Quelle badeten. Es wird angenommen, dass diese Aktivitäten in direkter Kontinuität zu vorchristlichen Mitsommer-Ritualen stehen und eine gute Gesundheit versprachen, nicht nur für die Menschen, sondern auch für die Tiere. Erzählungen aus Irland und anderswo berichten, dass das Vieh an Mitsommer gebadet wurde, um es vor Krankheiten zu schützen. Es kommt hinzu, dass die frühe Kirche das Baden zu Mitsommer als pagane Handlung zu unterbinden suchte.

Schlagwörter: *Struell wells, heilige Quellen, Mitsommer, Kontinuität vorchristlicher Riten.*

Europe (Bradley 1990) might imply that such places were considered the dwelling places of gods, but in the absence of documentary sources this is at best informed speculation. The documentary evidence certainly indicates that the Romans worshipped rivers and springs, and the late 4th – early 5th century *Marus Servius Honoratus* noted that, ‘there is no spring that is not sacred’ (Campbell 2012, 128). Camp (1988, 172) may have been exaggerating that ‘all water in antiquity was sacred’ but there was clearly a range of ways in which water and wet places were regarded as sacred. This article considers the case of holy wells in Ireland and seeks to identify their source in the pre-Christian world with specific reference to Struell Wells, a particular site in County Down, in Ireland’s northeast.

Holy wells occur over much of Europe but are particularly numerous in Britain and Ireland (Board –



Fig. 1. Pattern day at St Ronogue's Well, County Cork (© Barrrow 1836, 350).

Board 1985; Logan 1980) where they are still often a focus of modern religious devotion. The most recent survey (Ray 2014, 4) indicates there are about 3000 in Ireland, 2000 in England, at least 1719 in Wales and over 1000 in Scotland. Holy wells are generally spring wells but can also be ponds lakes, inter-tidal pools or occasionally hollows in rocks. In Ireland they are generally associated with a saint, and less commonly Jesus and Mary (Carroll 1999, 26). The vast majority of the saints associated with wells are Irish, the most popular being Patrick and Brigid (Carroll 1999, 27). The devotions associated with specific holy wells usually occurred on the saint's day, i.e. the anniversary of the death of the saint. The devotion days were generally referred to as 'pattern' days, derived from the word 'patron' as in 'patron saint' (Fig. 1). The patterns that occurred at the wells usually comprise of a series of rituals comprising of 'rounds' of the stations associated with a well. Stations usually took the form of piles of stones, but could occasionally include earlier prehistoric cairns or megaliths, standing stones or cross-inscribed slabs. Flat stones were often referred to as 'saint's beds'. The 'rounds' generally comprised of walking in a right-hand direction round the 'station' reciting a designated number of prayers, usually Our Father's and Hail Mary's. Such rituals rarely occur in Britain, and Rattue (1995, 91) argues that the such rituals, if they existed, would have been suppressed after the Reformation.

As well as being a focus of pilgrimage, holy wells are also generally regarded as having curative powers and are visited at all times of the year in order to seek relief from pain and sickness. Persons attending the wells for this purpose usually take away holy water from the well and leave behind devotional objects such as holy pictures, statues rosary beads, candles, etc. In some cases, pieces of clothing belonging to the sick person are tied to nearby bushes or trees.

Pre-Christian origins?

Archaeologists have tended to avoid the study of holy wells for the reason that the structures associated with holy wells tend to be relatively modern and almost invariably post-Reformation in date. Ray (2014, 44) describes Irish holy wells and being 'archeologically-resistant sites' because of the paucity of early material found during excavation (Ray 2014, 128-29). Additionally, historical references to pilgrimage to holy wells almost invariably date from the 16th century onwards, with the majority dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. There is a general assumption that holy wells are of a pre-Christian origin but there is usually little evidence to substantiate this in the case of individual wells. Furthermore, there is relatively little solid documentary evidence of their use as places of pilgrimage and devotion prior to early modern times.

This widespread assumption of pre-Christian origin for holy wells has led Rattue (1995, 2) to conclude that, 'holy wells has been and continue to be appallingly served by scholarship'. He is particularly critical of folklorists in this respect as they have tended to monopolise holy well studies. He notes that they have a tendency to regard the recently recorded devotional rituals practiced as survivals, 'of ancient custom and untainted relics of pure antiquity', and that they extend the 'motifs they found still in existence backwards to a prehistoric past' (Rattue 1995, 2-3). There is, however, a least some historical and archaeological evidence that could be used to argue for a pre-Christian origin but this evidence is in many cases equivocal. There is clear evidence for ritual practice Iron Age and Roman wells, ponds, lakes and rivers (Rattue 1995, 21-32; Ray 2014, 11-20; Ross 1967), and it could be argued that rituals associated with holy wells are derived in some way from these practices. But if, as Servius noted, there was 'no spring that is not sacred' virtually any post-Christian rituals associated with wells or water, could have its origins in pagan practice. Could not the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan, for instance, not be related to the ritual of washing away sin in the Ganges? The difficulty is in demonstrating a clear connection between pre- and post-Christian associated ritual at holy wells.

One could argue that the Church deliberately set out to Christianise pagan sacred sites, thus formally establishing continuity in use. It is often argued that the rationale for this approach is set out in Pope Gregory's letter to the St Mettius and fellow missionary St Augustine in 601, as recorded in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English people* (I. 30), which states that:

I have decided after long deliberation about the English people, that the idol temples of that race should be by no means destroyed, but only the idols in them. Take holy water and sprinkle it in these shrines, build altars and place relics in them. For if the shrines are well built, it is essential that they should be changed from the worship of devils to the service of the true God. When this people see that their shrines are not destroyed they will be able to banish error from their hearts and be more ready to come to the places they are familiar with, but now recognising and worshipping the true God. And because they are in the habit of slaughtering much cattle to devils, some solemnity ought to be given to them in exchange for this. So on the day of dedication or the festivals of the holy martyrs, whose relics are deposited there, let them make themselves huts from the branches of trees around the churches which have been converted out of the shrines, and let them celebrate the solemnity with religious feasts (Colgrave – Mynors 1969, 107-09).

The above would suggest that it was Papal policy to convert pagan shrines to churches and by extension it could be argued that pagan wells could be converted to

Christian use. There are problems with this, however. There is little evidence for well-built pagan 'temples' that could be converted to churches in Britain or Ireland at this time. The archaeological evidence for the early church in Ireland indicates they were built on green-field sites and, if anything, deliberately avoided previously occupied sites either ritual or secular (O'Sullivan et al. 2014, 143-45). Fuglesang is of the opinion that Gregory's advice is not offered in the context of 'Germanic timbered temples, but rather in the context of contemporary discussions in Rome on the transformation of Roman stone temples in Italy and Gaul' (Fuglesang 2015, 26). The Pantheon in Rome, for instance, was consecrated as a church in 608. Fuglesang concludes, 'as far as I can see there is no further suggestion on the transformation of Germanic temples by either Pope Gregory or his successors and, on balance, I suggest that we regard Pope Gregory's words to St Augustine in 601 as a topical notion reflecting ongoing ecclesiastical deliberations in Italy'. Indeed, Bede elsewhere makes it clear that the retention of pagan shrines under new Christian management was not the policy practised when he records that the Northumbrian pagan priest Coifi, having undergone conversion, 'ordered his companions to destroy and set fire to the shrine and all the enclosures' (Colgrave – Mynors 1969, 187).

Irish holy wells

Most of the studies on Irish holy wells have dealt with recording contemporary ritual and folklore associated with a particular well or wells in a particular area. The first critical overview of Irish holy wells was Patrick Logan's *Holy Wells of Ireland*, which took a thematic approach to the subject and has yet to be surpassed. The work does not deal with the origins in depth but it assumes that their genesis lies in the pre-Christian past (Logan 1980, 13).

The pre-Christian origins of holy wells and their associated rituals however were categorically rejected by M. P. Carroll (1999), an American sociologist who specialises in the sociological and psychological aspects of Catholic religious practice. Carroll, while accepting there are references to sacred and miraculous wells in medieval sources, argues that there are no references to pilgrimage and especially the 'rounding' and penitential aspect of the ritual devotion recorded in later sources. These core aspects of holy well use he sees as the product of the unique situation in Ireland after the Reformation where the majority of the population practised a religion that was different from that of the ruling elite. The Reformation in Ireland was essentially a failure in that the great majority of the population did not accept the new reformed faith, as they had done in Britain. While the practice of Catholic worship was never banned as such, all church buildings and lands were confiscated

and hierarchical administrative functions of the Catholic Church were curtailed severely. Carroll argues that new alternative forms of Catholic devotion and rituals were developed in which holy wells played a primary role. Carroll argued that the rounding rituals which are a central part of holy well devotion worship in Ireland, but absent at holy wells elsewhere, were a post-Reformation invention that went into decline after the Catholic Church was fully re-established in the 19th century.

Celeste Ray (2014) in her monograph, *The Origins of Ireland's Holy Wells*, rejects Carroll's thesis and sets out to defend the pre-Christian origins theory of wells. She provides extensive evidence for pre-Christian sacred wells in Europe but there is difficulty in demonstrating direct continuity across the introduction of Christianity. She also seeks to identify pre-Reformation evidence of 'rounding' and 'stations' as a component of pilgrimage. Ray (2014, 100) suggests that Gerald of Wales, writing in about 1186, provides evidence for the presence of 'stations' on the pilgrimage island of Lough Derg, Co. Donegal, but the evidence is problematic. Gerald refers to nine 'pits' on the island which might be interpreted as stations. He states that anyone who spends a night in one of these pits would be 'seized immediately by malignant spirits, and is crucified all night with such severe torments, and so continuously afflicted with many unspeakable punishments of fire and water and other things, that, when morning comes, there is found in his poor body scarcely even the smallest trace of life surviving' (O'Meara 1982, 61). It is more likely that these were the caves that allowed pilgrims to have the visions of purgatory for which the island was famed in medieval times. Perhaps better evidence for stations at the same site can, however, be found in later medieval sources. In 1515, Francesco Chiericati, the Italian bishop and Papal Nuncio to the English Court, made a visit to Lough Derg. He noted that bell-shaped cells (*campanas*), were a focus of the pilgrim's devotion. He stated that 'the ordinary penance is a fast on bread and water for nine consecutive days; they must also visit the cells of the three saints where they recite a certain number of prayers. Besides this they must stand in the lake, some knee-high, some waist-high and some to the neck; less penance for some, more for others' (Purcell 1987, 8). A mid-17th century map indicates that the 'stations' consisted of the foundation of several cells, each named after a saint (Harden – de Pontfarcy 1988, 186). The Italian pilgrim, Antonio Mammini visiting Lough Derg in 1411, records that he walked around the chapel on the island three times (Harden – de Pontfarcy 1988, 184). While Lough Derg is not technically a holy well site, the whole lake can be regarded as the sacred waters. The holy well at Gougane Barra, Cork, which will be discussed below, comprises of a walled-off area of a lake. The 16th century bardic poet Tagh Dhall Ó Huiginn (d. 1591)

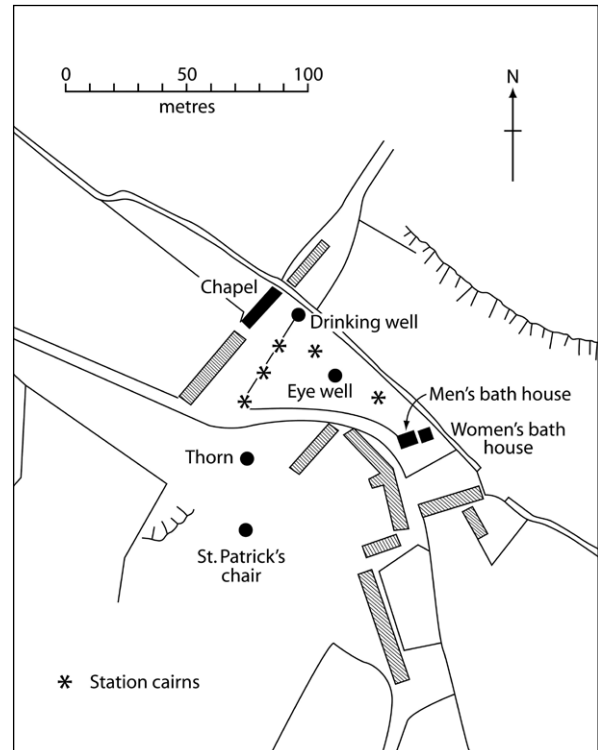


Fig. 2. Struell Wells. Shaded buildings are those shown on 1836 Ordnance Survey map. The location of station cairns are based on O'Laverty 1878 (© Finbar McCormick).

refers to the waters of Lough Derg as, 'a lake-spring to bathe all from their wounds'. The same poet also refers to pilgrims 'leaving their garments of sickness' at Lough Derg (Harden – de Pontfarcy 1988, 207). The lake clearly functioned in the same way as a holy well as far as pilgrims were concerned.

None of the pre-Reformation evidence for rounding, however, is completely convincing and it may well be that Carroll is correct and that the practice is a product of the Reformation. It could be that the origins for rounding are to be found in the rituals and liturgy of pre-Reformation and pre-Tridentine masses (pre-1570). Yates (2008, 6) notes that it was much like the Eastern Orthodox Church today with, 'the liturgy of the clergy on the one side of the screen and the private devotion on the other'. These two liturgies coincided only at the time of the Consecration with the bell being rung to draw the attention of the laity to its occurrence. The private liturgy involved devotion to relics and saints, and the offering of prayer to the departed (Duffy 1992, 118). Orthodox masses often involved constant movement between altars, icons and other sacred objects and it is likely that in pre-Reformation Ireland the laity moved around the church, offering prayers and private devotion at various altars and statues. With the Reformation and the confiscation of the churches, it may

well be that these rituals was transferred to the holy wells with the station cairns representing the altars and shrines that were previously present in the churches.

Struell Wells

All the basic physical and ritual components associated with holy wells were present at the site of Struell Wells in County Down: pattern day, rounding, curative powers, and penitential practices, which would absolve pilgrims of their sins. In addition to this, Struell can be documented in the Early Medieval period and had documented bathing practices that were almost unique in Ireland when recorded during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. It will be argued that these bathing practices can provide an explanation for the origins of the holy well phenomenon.

Struell Wells is located close to both Saul, the site identified in early sources as the place where St Patrick began his mission in Ireland, and Downpatrick, where the saint was buried (Bieler 1979). The earliest reference to Patrick's presence at the site is preserved in the *Liber Hymnorum*, an 11th- to 12th-century compilation that contains an earlier hymn to St Patrick which dates, 'at the latest not later than 800' and which was attributed to the 5th-/6th-century St Fiac (Stokes – Strachan 1903, ii, xxxvii, 307-21). The verses describe Patrick spending the nights in pools singing psalms and resting during the day on a flagstone having a pillar as a 'bolster'.

The cold of the weather used not to keep him from spending the night in pools: he strove after his kingdom in heaven; he preached by day on heights. In Slane north of the Benna Bairrche – neither drought nor flood used to seize it he sang a hundred psalms every night, he was a servant to the king of angels. He slept on a bare flagstone

then, and a wet quilt about him: his bolster was a pillar-stone; he left not his body in warmth (Stokes – Strachan 1903, ii, 315).

The well is called 'Slán' in the text, which in early and middle Irish means 'whole, sound, unimpaired, healthy' (Quinn 1983, 547). The well is stated to have been north of the Mourne Mountains (*Benna Bairrche*) and a gloss in the *Liber Hymnorum* identifies 'Slán' as being near Saul, which is about two miles from Struell, 'because every person over whom the water passed used to become whole (slán), and it is by Saul' (Stokes – Strachan 1903, 315). Thus, the earliest source implies that the waters were associated with the maintenance of health and curative powers. Furthermore, a gloss on the manuscript records that the site had become a place of pilgrimage, and disturbance, during the early medieval period. It records that the *Ulaid*, the local ruling dynasty, 'filled it [the well] in because of the troublesome crowds going out to it' (Stokes – Strachan 1903, ii, 315). The belief in the curative powers of other holy wells at this time is demonstrated in the Life of St Finnian of Clonard, written about 1200 (Ó Riain 2011, 319-20). When referring to a well at Ardronry in Co. Sligo, the Life states that, 'whatsoever sick man shall go into the well, he will come from it whole. Whatever troublesome party shall come to the *erenagh*, his honour (viz. the *erenagh's*) will not be taken away provided he repeat his *pater* at that flagstone (Hughes 1954, 262). Ray (2014, 99) regards the saying of a *pater* at a flagstone at the well as early evidence for rounding.

In terms of its physical appearance, Struell contains the most extensive range of buildings associated with a holy well anywhere in Ireland, comprising both wells and bathing houses dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods (Figs 2, 3) (McCormick 2009). The



Fig. 3. Struell. Eye well in foreground with men's (right) and women's (left) bath houses in background (© Finbar McCormick).

site also contained a church which is documented in 1306. The present church remains, however, are of 18th-century date.

Three separate rituals occurred at Struell: the rounding of the stations; penitential ritual associated with the chair where St Patrick rested after his nights in the pool; and curative activities associated with the wells and bath-houses. The rounding was associated with the stone cairn stations (now gone) and the extant buildings on the site, and followed the usual formula noted on other sites with pilgrims walking round the stations reciting prayers (*O'Lavery 1878, 251; Viator 1825, 108*). The penitential aspect ascending to St Patrick's seat, 'few, whose sins are of a milder cast may run up the path barefoot; but those who have been guilty of black and grievous offences, besides crawling upon their knees, must carry a large rough stone, with their hands placed upon the back of their necks' (*Viator 1825, 108*). This aspect of the rituals was completed when 'each penitent takes a seat in this chair, and is turned in it trice' (*Viator 1825, 108*).

The final part of the pattern comprised of bathing in the wells. A mid-17th-century observer had noted that St Patrick had been 'stark naked' when in the wells (*Reeves 1854, 53*) and pilgrims felt obliged to imitate this. From the 17th century, there are records of large numbers of people, sometimes several hundred, attending Struell and bathing naked in its waters, a practice that led to its suppression in the 19th century (*McCormick 2009; 2011*). While the waters at Struell had curative powers for particular ailments and could be visited at any time of the year, the mass bathing on the pattern day for most had a different purpose. The great majority of the pilgrims were in good health and as one 19th-century observer noted, 'the physically strong and healthy bathed themselves as a shield against future affliction' (*The Downshire Protestant (newspaper) 28/6/1861*). The waters at Struell therefore had preventative as well as curative powers.

Another unusual feature of Struell Wells is that the time of pilgrimage did not coincide with the saint's day. The wells are exclusively associated with St Patrick, but yet the pilgrimage occurred at Midsummer on St John's Day. St Fiacc's hymn appears to describe Patrick bathing in the well reciting psalms, in an act of Christianising a site that was of significant pagan importance associated with Midsummer. Tírechán's late 7th-century Life of St Patrick also describes several instances where Patrick 'converts' wells to Christianity, usually by using their waters for baptism. He baptised the daughters of Loíguire at a well called *Clébach*, near Tusk, Co. Roscommon (*Bieler 1979, 143-5*), while he baptised St Eric at a well near Tara (*Bieler 1979, 135*). At the well of Sine, Co. Mayo, he is said to have baptised 'many thousands of people' (*Bieler 1979, 152-153*). Tírechán's Life describes a particular incident at a well also called

'Slán', which seems to have been located in the same area in Co. Mayo, in which the pagan nature of the well is explicitly expressed. He states that, 'the druids honoured the well and offered gifts to it as to a god' (*Bieler 1979, 153-5*). Patrick 'converted' the well and demonstrated its new status by baptising someone with its waters.

Description of Struell indicates that crowds gathered for several days around Midsummer, and that the midnight on St John's Eve was regarded as the moment when the powers of the waters were considered to be at their greatest, and a 'miraculous' surge in the waters was supposed to occur at this precise time. *Viator (1825, 110)* records that '[a]t the midnight hour, precisely at the point of time which separates midsummer eve from midsummer day, when all is silence, and all expectation, the channel that forms the communication between the wells, becomes insufficient to contain the increasing stream; and its waters burst forth, overflowing the entire plain'. He continues, '[a]ll modesty is here thrown aside. As they approach the well they throw off even their undergarments; and with Lacedemonian [Spartan] indifference they go forward in a state of absolute nudity, plunge in, and bathe promiscuously'. The Downshire Protestant (*28/6/1861*) further elaborates on the approach to midnight, '[a]s the time approached, the excitement increased. The bath-house was full. The eye-well was crowded. Bottles, jars and portable pitchers were brought into requisition to carry away the 'first shot' of the doubly distilled holy water! As the hour of twelve approached a considerable number of men and women, perfectly nude, and closely crammed together, waited in that Bath-house and struggled against each other, to get first serves with the water. We cannot go further into this description of this abominable scene – so disgraceful to our county.'

Conclusions

The condemnatory nature of these reports echoes the criticism of midsummer activities by some early Church fathers. St Augustine of Hippo (d. 430), in modern Algeria, condemned Christians who continued to observe the pagan practice of bathing in the sea at midsummer, '[o]n the Birthday of St John the Baptist ... in celebration of a pagan superstition, Christians come to the sea and there they baptized themselves' (*Muldowney 1959, 47*). The custom was also practised, and likewise, condemned in Europe. A sermon of St Caesarius of Arles (d. 542) stated, '[I]et no one on the feast of St John dare to bathe in the fountains or marshes or rivers either at night or early in the morning; that wretched custom still remains from pagan observances' (*Mueller 1956, 167-8*).

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the midsummer bathing at Struell demonstrates continuity from these pre-Christian midsummer bathing practices.

Bathing rituals are also traditionally associated with midsummers elsewhere which again seem to be related to the activities condemned by St Augustine and St Caesarius. Westermarck (1905, 32; 1926) noted that midsummer ceremonial bathing in the sea, springs or rivers was practised in Morocco as it was believed that those who partook in the custom would 'suffer from no disease during the whole year'. Bathing in the sea or ponds sometimes accompanied the St John's Eve fires in parts of southern France in order to ward off sickness for the coming year (Frazer 1914, 194).

Animals were also bathed at midsummer for curative purposes. Neville (1713, 264) noted that at Lough Neagh, Ireland's largest lake, 'crowds come here on Midsummer eve and all sorts of sick, and sick cattle, are brought there likewise and driven into the water for their cure'. At Gougane Barra, Co Cork, the pattern, like Struell, is held at midsummer rather than on the saint's day. The 'well', as noted above, is in fact a walled-off section of the lake. Logan (1980, 128) states that 'at the time of the pilgrimage, people drove their cattle through part of the lake as a method of preventing the murrain'. Bathing animals at midsummer for their health had a wide distribution. Westermarck (1905, 31) noted that the people of the Andja, in Morocco, bathed their livestock, 'horses, mules and donkeys, cattle, sheep and goats', in the sea and rivers at midsummer. The contemporary festival of goat-washing in the sea on midsummer at Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, is a likely survival of the same tradition.

The evidence outlined above, though circumstantial, strongly suggests the existence of a pre-Christian midsummer pagan bathing festival associated with the promotion of health in both humans and livestock. St John's association with baptism would therefore have made him a fitting choice by the early Church for patronage of midsummer. It might further be suggested that all 'holy wells' were originally associated with midsummer but later moved to the feast days of saints, thus removing their pagan midsummer associations. In some instances, however, the mid-summer tradition was so powerful that it proved resistant to change. Thus while Struell is associated with St Patrick (17th March) and Gougane Barra with St Finbarr (25th September), the patron's day remained midsummer down to the present. It could also be argued that bathing, rather than rounding of stations, comprised the original rituals performed at holy wells. St Patrick was essentially bathing in the waters of Struell while St. Monenna of Killeevy, Co. Armagh, is described in her 12th-century hagiography as 'sitting up to her breasts in water' in her holy well (*Ulster Society for Medieval Latin Studies* 1979, 269). Pilgrims immersed in the waters of Lough Derg have already been referred to, while a 17th-century account describes 'a great multitude of persons, men women and children, assembled to bathe in a well

near Galway' (Lynch 1662, 57). Although no detail of the bathing is given it may have comprised of naked bathing as noted at Struell. An early 19th-century description of activities at an inter-tidal holy well at Malin Head, Co. Donegal, indicates that the bathing activities described at Struell were not unique. McParlan (1802, 17) noted 'a general ablution in the sea, male and female all frisking and playing in the water stark naked and washing off each other's sins'. Church intolerance for such activity probably explains the disappearance of bathing rituals at most sites.

The hypothesis forwarded here is, however, based on the evidence from a few sites providing evidence for curative bathing at midsummer. Investigations need to be made of traditions associated with wells across Europe in order to ascertain if similar midsummer practices existed elsewhere.

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Medieval hermit caves and rock-cut hermitages in Great Britain

James Bond *

ABSTRACT

Caves and artificial rock-cut chambers are the most durable of many different types of habitation used by medieval hermits. Traditions relate to their occupation from the earliest periods of Christianity. Their distribution extends from the deserts of Egypt across Europe to Ireland. In Britain there are traditions of hermits occupying caves from the 4th and 5th centuries, but the earliest surviving accounts were written several centuries after the events they purport to describe, and cannot be regarded as reliable historical sources. Authentic contemporary documentation before 1100 is rare. Archaeological evidence is equally elusive, since few sites have been excavated using modern scientific methods. At least 50 caves or rock-cut sites in Britain have indications of some form of medieval religious use. About half of these are natural caves around the coasts of Scotland, Wales and Cornwall, associated with missionaries and hermits of the insular 'Celtic' church, especially during the 6th and 7th centuries. In England, by contrast, inland artificial rock-cut hermitages predominate, none of which can certainly be dated before 1100. Greater regulation by the mainstream church authorities gradually modified the ethos of hermits and, by the later middle ages, many effectively became chantry priests, maintained by endowments. From the early 14th century a few English rock-cut hermitages adopted more elaborate architectural forms, and traces of internal and external paintings have been recorded. Although hermits were suppressed in Britain during the 16th-century Protestant Reformation, some of their caves continued to be occupied and modified by secular uses into the 20th century.

Keywords: *Caves, Chantry priests, 'Celtic church', hermits, missionary monks, rock-cut chambers.*

RÉSUMÉ

Les grottes d'ermites et les ermitages troglodytes en Grande-Bretagne durant le Moyen Âge
Les grottes et les chambres artificielles creusés dans la roche font partie des nombreux types d'habitations les plus durables qui étaient utilisées par les ermites médiévaux. D'après les traditions, elles étaient utilisées au tout début du Christianisme. Elles se répartissent depuis les déserts égyptiens jusqu'en Irlande, à travers l'Europe continentale. En Grande-

* Clevedon, North Somerset,
Great Britain
jimserf@aol.com

Bretagne, les traditions liées à l'utilisation des grottes par des ermites ont vu le jour aux IV^e et V^e siècles, mais les premiers témoignages qui ont été conservés furent rédigés plusieurs siècles après les événements qu'ils sont censés illustrer et ne peuvent être considérés comme des sources historiques de confiance. Il est rare de trouver des documents contemporains authentiques ayant été rédigés avant l'année 1100. Les preuves archéologiques sont également équivoques car peu de sites ont été fouillés au moyen de méthodes scientifiques modernes. En Grande-Bretagne, au moins 50 grottes ou sites taillés dans la roche témoignent d'une utilisation plus ou moins prononcée à des fins religieuses à l'époque médiévale. Environ la moitié de ces lieux sont des grottes naturelles situées sur les côtes d'Ecosse, du Pays de Galles et de Cornouailles, et sont associées à des missionnaires et à des ermites de l'église « celtique » insulaire, notamment aux VI^e et VII^e siècles. En Angleterre, c'est en revanche principalement dans les terres intérieures que l'on trouve des ermitages artificiels creusés dans la roche, dont aucun ne peut être daté avec certitude avant l'année 1100. Une plus grande réglementation imposée par les autorités ecclésiastiques dominantes a progressivement modifié la philosophie des ermites et par la suite, dès le Moyen-Âge, bon nombre d'entre eux sont en réalité devenus des prêtres de chapellenies conservés par dotations. Dès le début du XIV^e siècle en Angleterre, quelques sites creusés dans la roche ont adopté des formes architecturales plus raffinées et des traces de peintures internes et externes ont été découvertes. Bien que les ermites aient disparu du Royaume-Uni pendant la Réforme protestante du XVI^e siècle, quelques-unes de leurs grottes ont continué d'être habitées et modifiées jusqu'au XX^e siècle, dans le cadre d'utilisations séculières.

Mots-clés : *grottes, faux-prêtres, 'l'église celtique', ermites, moines missionnaires, habitat troglodyte.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Mittelalterliche Einsiedlerhöhlen und in den Fels geschlagene Einsiedeleien in Großbritannien

Höhlen und künstlich in den Fels geschlagene Kammern sind die dauerhaftesten vieler unterschiedlicher Behausungstypen, die im Mittelalter von Eremiten

Introduction

Hermits who chose to live alone in inhospitable places seem now to represent an eccentric backwater of religious life, but in the early middle ages their reputation stood high. The most durable of their habitations were caves, symbolically liminal places, offering seclusion for ascetics seeking withdrawal from worldly life. Caves featured in many early Christian traditions. St John's vision of the

bewohnt wurden. Es ist überliefert, dass diese bereits seit frühchristlicher Zeit genutzt wurden. Deren Verbreitung erstreckt sich von der ägyptischen Wüste über Europa bis Irland. In Großbritannien beginnt die Tradition der Höhlennutzung durch Eremiten im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert, aber die frühesten erhaltenen Aufzeichnungen wurden mehrere Jahrhunderte nach den Ereignissen verfasst, die sie angeblich beschreiben und können nicht als zuverlässig geltende historische Quellen angesehen werden. Authentische, zeitgenössische Aufzeichnungen sind vor 1100 kaum vorhanden. Archäologische Zeugnisse sind ebenso kaum erkennbar, da nur an einigen Stätten Ausgrabungen mithilfe moderner wissenschaftlicher Methoden durchgeführt wurden. Mindestens 50 Höhlen oder künstlich in den Fels geschlagene Kammern lassen Anzeichen irgendeiner Form religiöser Nutzung erkennen. Etwa die Hälfte sind natürliche Höhlen rund um die Küsten von Schottland, Wales und Cornwall und werden mit Missionaren und Eremiten der insularen „keltischen“ Kirche in Verbindung gebracht, insbesondere während des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts. In England dagegen sind künstlich in den Fels geschlagene Einsiedeleien im Landesinneren vorherrschend, wobei keine davon mit Sicherheit vor 1100 datiert werden kann. Eine stärkere Regulierung durch die etablierten kirchlichen Autoritäten modifizierte den Ethos der Eremiten und im späteren Mittelalter waren viele davon anerkannte singende Priester zur Altarpfunde, die durch Schenkungen unterhalten wurden. Ab dem frühen 14. Jahrhundert nahmen einige englische in den Fels geschlagene Behausungen aufwendiger ausgearbeitete architektonische Formen an, wobei Spuren von Innen- und Außenmalereien nachgewiesen worden sind. Trotz Unterdrückung der Eremiten in Großbritannien während der protestantischen Reformation im 16. Jahrhundert wurden einige ihrer Höhlen weiterhin bewohnt und in abgeänderter Form bis in das 20. Jahrhundert säkular genutzt.

Schlagwörter: *Grotten, falsche Priester, „Keltische Kirche“, Eremiten, missionierende Mönche, in den Fels geschlagene Kammern.*

Apocalypse traditionally occurred in a cave at Chóra on Patmos. A 9th-century legend places St Mary Magdalene's last years in a cave at Ste Baume in Provence.

While many caves became permanent abodes of solitary hermits, others served as temporary refuges, episodic retreats or places of penance. Some were occupied by coenobitic communities or by priests exercising pastoral or intercessory functions. A

few later became places of pilgrimage. Some caves were occupied without modification, others were reshaped or enlarged. Built structures were occasionally added within or beyond them. Single or multiple artificial chambers were also cut in tractable rock, some employing the architectural vocabulary of built structures, with columns, arches and domed or rib-vaulted roofs. Pits or tunnels originally dug for other purposes were also occasionally utilised.

Despite numerous traditions of early cave hermits, secure documentary or archaeological support is elusive. Most biographies of early hermits are a mélange of hagiography, plagiarism and fiction. Though episcopal records reliably document later institutions to hermitages, they rarely illuminate their origins. Archaeological stratigraphy in caves is often much disturbed. Antiquarian excavations had many limitations, and there have been few modern scientific investigations.

The continental background

Cave hermitages and rock-cut churches occur widely across Europe. The provisional map offered here (Fig. 1), undoubtedly incomplete, derives from a rapid trawl of accessible records.

From the mid-3rd century desert caves in Egypt provided refuges from religious persecution. Some individuals sought communion with God by remaining there in solitude: St Anthony (d. 356) stayed in a remote cave on Mount Kolzim for over 40 years (Meyer 1950). In Palestine eremitical colonies known as *lavras* emerged in the 4th century, where hermits lived alone, except when attending communal services and meals two days each week. Cyril of Scythopolis in the mid-6th century describes several cave-based solitary hermits and *lavras* (Price 1991, 15.15-17.6, 93.20-94.14, 100.1, 101.20-102.9).

The volcanic rocks of Cappadocia accommodated many monastic complexes and individual hermit cells between the 9th and 13th centuries. Examples in

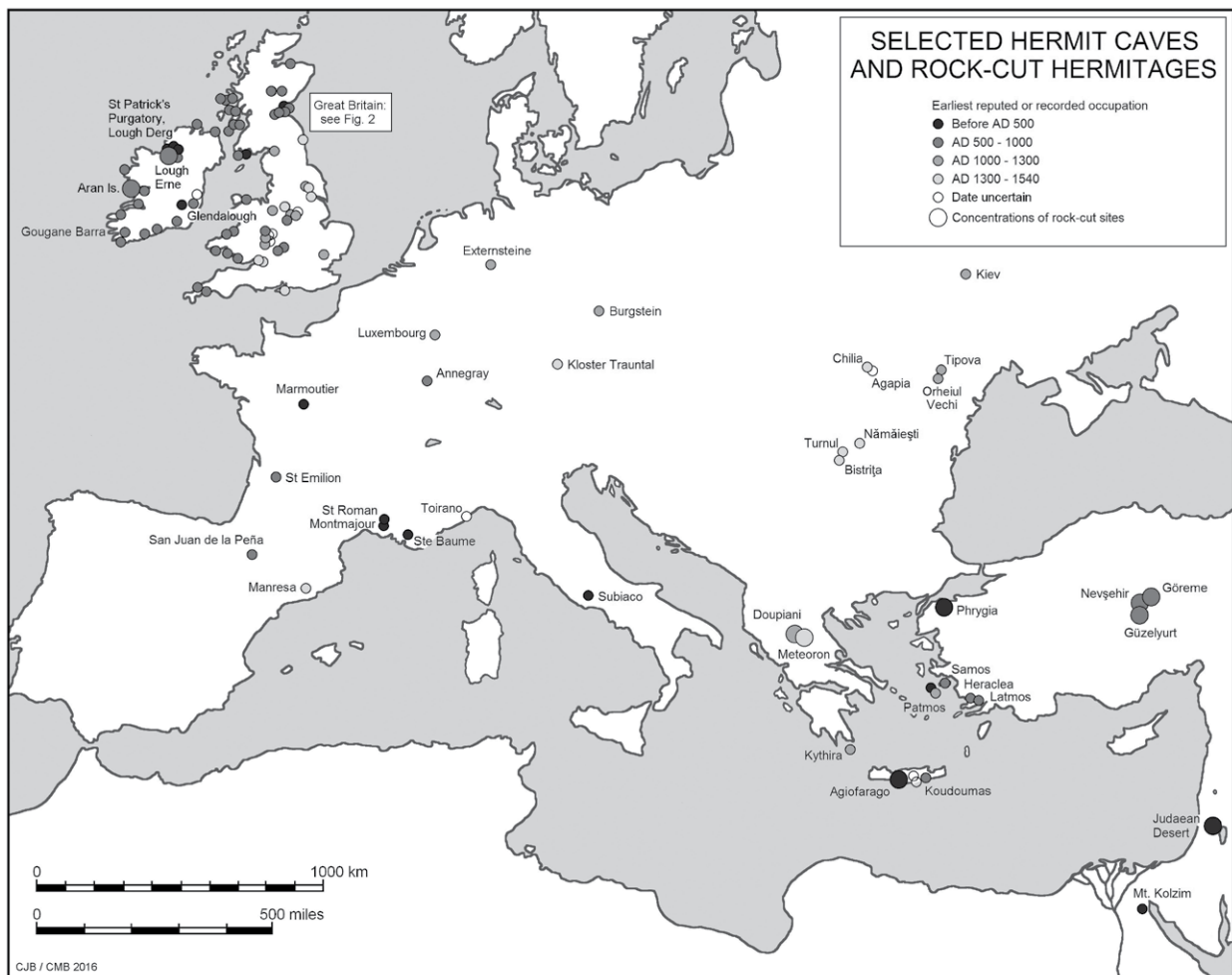


Fig. 1. Provisional distribution of hermit caves and rock-cut hermitages in Europe (© James Bond).



Fig. 2. Distribution of hermit caves and rock-cut hermitages in Britain (© James Bond).

Göreme have complex architectural forms and richly painted interiors (*Yenipınar – Seracettin 1998*). Other colonies developed from the late 12th century in the Meteoron district of Thessaly, where hermits occupied precarious platforms set in niches in sheer cliffs, and even some monasteries were perched on shallow ledges, with stone-fronted buildings recessed into the rock (*Hellier 1996*, 14, 173-203). Further examples occur elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

Western churchmen became familiar with such practices from the 350s, when the exiled Bishop Hilary of Poitiers saw cave hermits in Phrygia. In 371 his disciple Martin of Tours founded the monastery at Marmoutier, where some monks lived in caves dug into the rock (*de Montalambert 1905*, I, 271). In the late 490s Benedict of Nursia settled in a cave at Subiaco, still preserved beneath the later monastic buildings (*Tosti-Croce 2002*). In Ireland the original ‘cave’ at St Patrick’s Purgatory probably reutilised a prehistoric souterrain, while the rock chambers of St Kevin’s Bed at Glendalough and St Crohane’s Hermitage in Co. Kerry appear to be prehistoric mines (*Dowd 2015*, 55, 216, 221).

Later cave hermitages and rock-cut churches occur in many parts of Western Europe. At San Juan de la Peña in Navarre and Kloster Trauntal in Bavaria, monastic churches and cloisters were built beneath huge shelves of overhanging rock. Rock-cut churches at Matera in Basilicata have elaborate architectural details and frescoes. Some caves were used into the 16th century and beyond. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order, lived in a cave in Catalonia for eight months in the 1520s.

The distribution of hermit caves and rock-cut hermitages in Britain

Natural caves occur in various geological strata, most commonly on coasts. The Carboniferous sandstone caves of Fife in eastern Scotland contained a concentration of hermitages. Many rock-cut hermitages in the English Midlands were made in the tractable red Triassic sandstones.

Any attempt to classify and map cave hermitages involves subjective decisions based upon inadequate evidence. The distinction on Fig. 2 between ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ caves is simplistic, since natural caves could be artificially extended. The reputed date of earliest occupation often rests upon unreliable later traditions. Yet, despite some uncertainties, a clear distinction emerges between early-occupied natural caves around the coasts of Scotland, Wales and Cornwall, associated with figures of the insular ‘Celtic’ church, and later constructions of inland artificial rock-cut hermitages between about 1100 and 1400, concentrated in the north, Midlands and west of England.

Hermit caves in northern and western Britain

At least 24 caves around the Scottish, Welsh and Cornish coasts were reputedly occupied by early missionaries and hermits of the ‘Celtic’ church. Most medieval biographies of these men were composed centuries after the events described, by clerics aiming to enhance their own church’s prestige, promoting cults of local saints and associating them with tangible nearby landscape features. Yet some may relay fragments of genuine memory.

Two Scottish caves are linked with particularly early figures. The legendary 4th-century abbot St Rule, credited with bringing St Andrew’s relics from Greece, traditionally occupied a cave near St Andrews Cathedral (*Rees 2000*, 123), but this story is not recorded before the 9th century. A more authentic pioneer of the early Scottish church is St Ninian (d. ca. 432), whose foundation of a religious community at Whithorn was described by Bede. The *Miracula Nynie Episcopi*, written later in the 8th century, records Ninian studying in ‘a cave of horrible blackness’ (*MacQueen 2005*, 3-4, 101), traditionally located near Physgyll, 5km from Whithorn (Fig. 3).

Caves in south Wales feature in two texts concerning St Illtyd (d. ca. 505), founder of the monastic school bearing his name at Llanilltyd Fawr (Llantwit Major, Glamorgan). The *Historia Brittonum* of Nennius, assembled from earlier texts around 800, includes a story of Illtyd praying in a cave in Llwynarth when a holy man’s body was brought ashore for burial. Illtyd subsequently built a church around his tomb (*Morris 1980*, 41-42). The district of Ystum Llwynarth included the isolated St Illtyd’s church near Oxwich, which occupies a cliff-edge site matching Nennius’s description. A later biography, compiled around 1140-50 by an Anglo-Norman cleric at Llantwit Major’s college of secular clergy, relates how Illtyd sought refuge from a local ruler in a hidden cave by the River Ewenni. After a year, his refuge was revealed when a bell carried past the cave miraculously rang of its own accord, and he returned to his community. The description implies personal familiarity with the cave’s setting, but no later traditions survived and its precise site is unknown (*Doble 1993*, 113-15, 131-33).

The oldest surviving biography, of St Samson of Dol (ca. 490 - ca. 565), written around 610-15, probably contains some genuine historical detail. It records two episodes in caves. After training at Llantwit Major, Samson became abbot of another monastery, where he undertook regular retreats to the ‘solitude of a cave on the banks of the Severn’. Subsequently, he sailed to Cornwall as a missionary, crossing the peninsula to the Fowey estuary, where he drove a fierce serpent from a cave near Golant before converting it to a hermitage (*Taylor 1925; Doble 1960-70*, 5, 87-89).

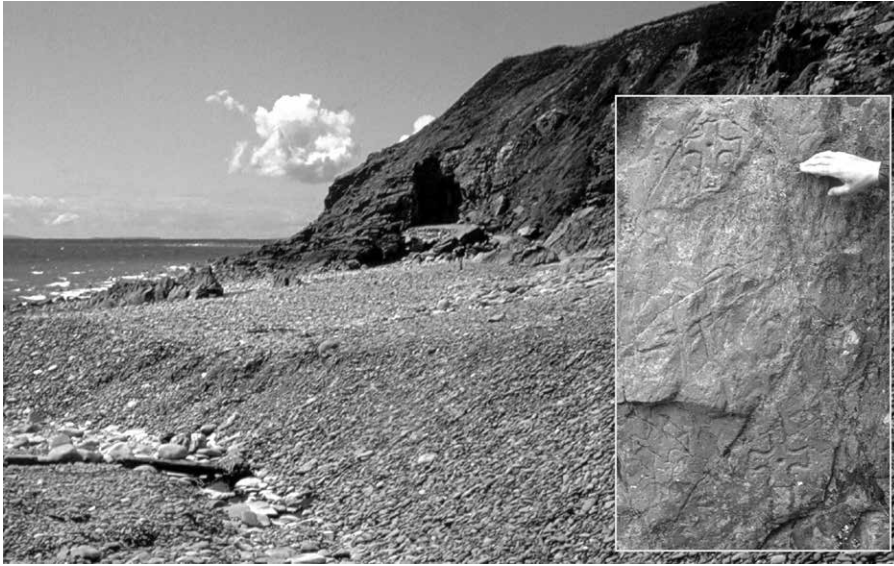


Fig. 3. St. Ninian's Cave, Physgyll, Whithorn, Wigtownshire: (inset) votive crosses carved on cave wall (© James Bond).

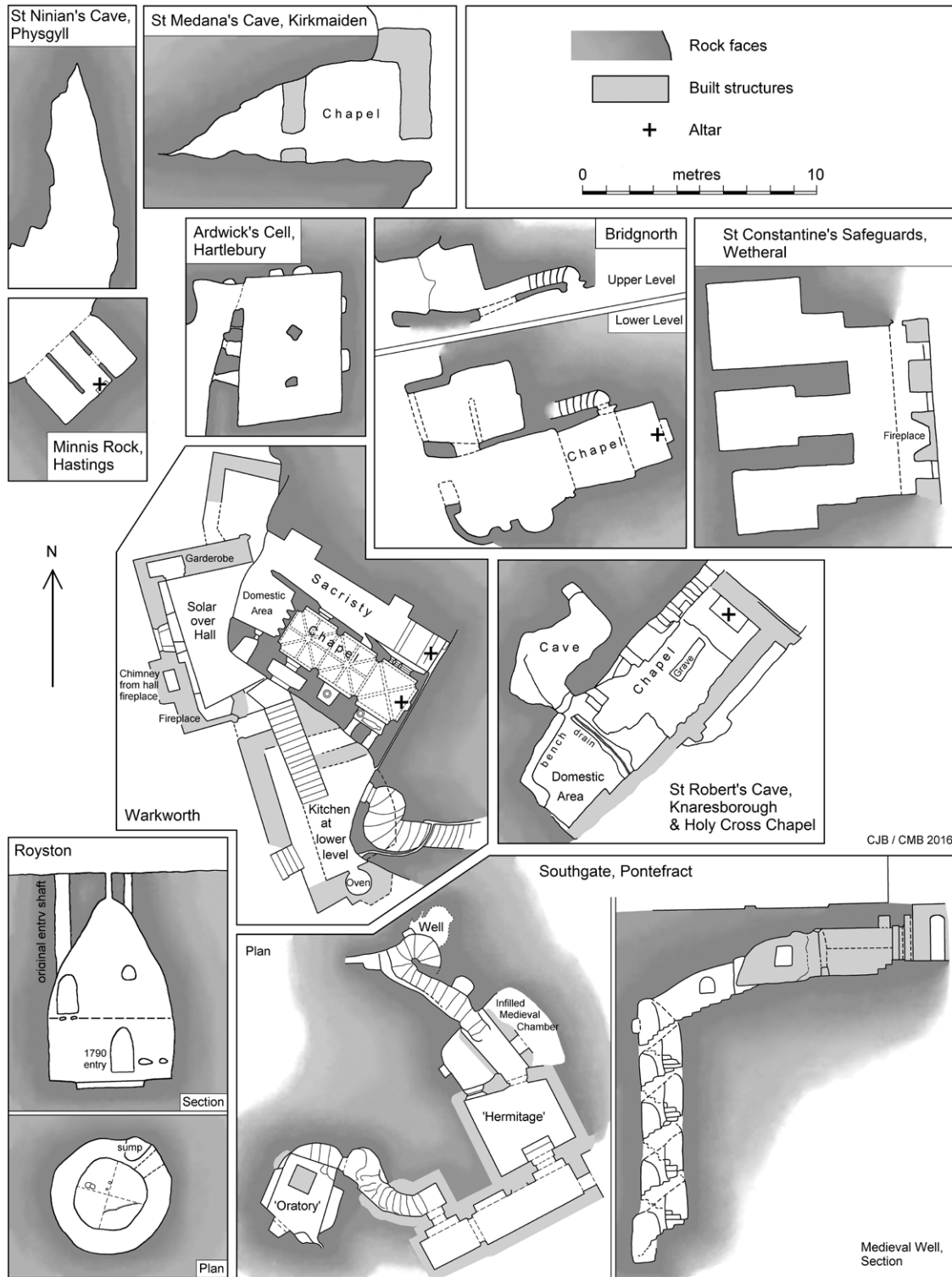
Many traditions relate to the 6th century, attaching the names of St Tudno, St Carantoc and St Cubert to sea-caves on Great Orme's Head near Llandudno, at Llangranog and Gwbert in Cardigan Bay, and at Holywell Bay near Cubert in North Cornwall (Rees 2000, 149; 2001, 172-73). Irish missionary-hermits intermittently occupied caves in western Scotland, including St Ciaran (d. 556) at Campbelltown on the Kintyre peninsula and St Molaise (566-639) at Eilean Molaise (Holy Island) off the coast of Arran (McLellan 1970, 92-94). St Colmcille or Columba (ca 521-97) found shelter in a cave near Ellary on Loch Caolisport in Argyll. On the east coast a cave at Dysart (Latin *desertum* = 'empty place', commonly associated with early monastic settlements) was used by St Serf (d. 543), founder of the Culross monastery.

Reputed later settlements of Irish hermits in Scotland include St MacCharmaig's Cave on Eilean Mór, island retreat of the 7th-century St Cormac MacCormac. A remote cave at Kirkmaiden near the Mull of Galloway was associated with the 8th-century recluse St Medana. In Fife a cave above Pittenweem harbour was used in the 8th century by St Fillan. Chapel Cave at Caiplic was a retreat of St Adrian (d. ca. 875), founder of the monastery on the Isle of May. A cave at Holyman Head near Lossiemouth was occupied by St Gervadius (d. 934), who patrolled the shore with a lantern to warn ships off the rocks, anticipating a more widespread later medieval practice of coastal hermits acting as lighthouse-keepers. Inland cave hermitages are rare in Scotland, but an Irish biography of St Cuthbert (ca. 635-87) records his retreats from the Melrose monastery to a cave at Weem (Gaelic *uaimh* = 'cave') in the Tay valley (Rees 2000, 127). Another cave in the Sidlaw Hills at Glamis was reputedly occupied by the Irish-trained missionary St Fergus in about 715.

At least ten Scottish caves had single or grouped crosses incised on their walls or on separate stones, stylistically dated from about AD 600 to 1100. At East Wemyss in Fife about 80 early carvings, including 7th-century crosses, have been identified, some since lost through erosion and rock falls (Gibson – Stevens 2007). At St Ninian's Cave at Physgyll 18 loose stones carved with crosses have been found, in addition to votive crosses on the walls (Radford 1951; 1955-56, 156-59, 161). Groups of crosses also appear on the Ross of Mull, in Scoors Cave and in Uamh nan Cailleach (Nuns' Cave) near Carsaig (RCAHMS 1980, 166-67; Fisher 2001, 125) and at Caiplic in Fife. A chi-rho symbol appears in St MacCharmaig's Cave and Viking and ogham inscriptions in two caves on Arran (McLellan 1970, 54, 94-95, 103-04, 106; Fisher 2001, 61-65, 144). The Campbelltown cave contains a boulder with a marigold cross bounded by a simple T-fret design, and a socket for an upright cross. St Columba's Cave at Ellary has two incised crosses above its altar (Fisher 2001, 151; Dowd 2015, 176; Rees 2000, 105-06).

Unlike St Patrick's Purgatory in Ireland, which drew pilgrims from all over north-western Europe (Dowd 2015, 217-20), most British caves attracted only local pilgrims. Early pilgrimage rarely focussed upon a single shrine, circulating instead around several stations associated with the local saint. St Ninian's cave was thus much visited by Irish and Manx pilgrims travelling to Whithorn, while St Martin's Cave on Iona may have been a satellite station to St Columba's shrine.

Some natural caves show evidence of modification. At Kirkmaiden the floor was levelled, the flanks cut back, and walls inserted to form a square space used as a chapel (Fig. 4), with steps from the rear door to an upper room (Trotter 1889; RCAHMS 1985, 38). The Ellary cave contains a rubble altar, and remains of a medieval chapel



CJB / CMB 2016

Fig. 4. Selected plans of rock hermitages in Britain: Physgyll, Wigtownshire (after Radford 1955-56); Kirkmaiden, Wigtownshire (after Trotter 1889); Minnis Rock, Hastings (© Gattie 1892); Hartlebury, Worcestershire (© James Bond and Stuart Davies, 1973); Bridgnorth, Shropshire (© Smith 1878); Wetheral, Cumberland (© Moses Griffith, engraved by Peter Mazell, c.1788); Warkworth, Northumberland (© Blair and Honeyman 1936); Knaresborough, Yorkshire (© Harrogate Museums and Art Gallery Service, reproduced in Gilchrist 1995); Royston, Hertfordshire (© Beamon – Donel 1978); Pontefract, Yorkshire (© P.F. Ryder 1992, reproduced in Gilchrist 1995).

stand alongside (*Ritchie 1997*, 90; *Rees 2000*, 105-06). Chapel Cave at Caiply has an arched doorway cut through to a neighbouring cave. A wall partly spanning the gully leading to St MacCharmaig's Cave was perhaps intended to regulate pilgrim access. The Lossiemouth cave, destroyed by 19th-century quarrying, had an arched doorway and mullioned window indicating later medieval use. A staircase in the Pittenweem cave was probably cut by the Augustinian canons who later occupied the land above. The cave at Weem was reused in 1440 when the local laird took the Cistercian habit and used it as a retreat. Fresh water was available in some caves from seepages. At St Ninian's Cave at Physgill (*Radford 1955-56*, 152) and St Cuthbert's Cave at Weem nearby sources were channelled into stone basins.

Artificial rock-cut hermitages in England

Four claims of pre-Norman use of English rock hermitages appear only in later sources. The Anchor Church caves near Repton are uncertainly associated with a hermit mentioned in John of Tynemouth's chronicle who was spiritual mentor to Modwen, 6th- to 7th-century anchoress of Burton-on-Trent (*Clay 1914*, 32-33). The medieval romance of Guy of Warwick recounts the return of the legendary hero after many arduous adventures (dated 927 in another chronicle). His wife failed to recognise him, and he retired to the cave of Guy's Cliffe by the River Avon to live out his last years in penance. As his death approached, he sent his wife a message that his body would be found before the hermitage altar, requesting that she bury him there. Having followed his instructions, she then flung herself in grief from the cliff to her own death (*Edwards 1866*, 122-23; *Zupitza, 1875-91*). Around 1540 John Leland wrote that a brother of King Athelstan (925-39) lived as a cave hermit on the east bank of the River Severn opposite Bridgnorth (*Smith 1964*, ii, 86), but no independent evidence for this tradition is known. Finally, a bogus Anglo-Norman chronicle actually compiled in the 14th century records the hermit Wulsi occupying a cave near Evesham (Worcestershire) from about 1042 to his death in 1097 (*Riley 1854*, 252-25). Authentic records of these sites only appear much later.

No artificial rock hermitages in England can be dated before 1100. An early example in Deepdale (Derbyshire) was created by a Derby baker, who had abandoned his home and trade to follow a life of solitary prayer and poverty (*Hope 1883*, 5-7, 18-20). The cells of St Constantine's Safeguards, cut before 1122 in a cliff overlooking the River Eden at Wetheral (Cumberland), though named from the hermit to whom the local Benedictine priory was dedicated, served mainly as a refuge during Scottish incursions (*Gough 1789*, 191-92). Southstone hermitage, in a tufa outcrop near Stanford-on-Teme (Worcestershire),

was occupied by 1140 (*Winnington 1863*). Redstone hermitage, cut in a river-cliff below Stourport-on-Severn, is first recorded in 1182, and mention of 'brethren' there in 1260 implies a small community (*Simkins 1924*, 231). Three rock-cut chambers near Dieulacresse Abbey may represent a hermitage antedating the arrival of the Cistercians in 1214 (*Fisher 1969*, 8).

Few cave hermits acquired more than local fame. An exception was Robert Flower (1160-1218), son of a York merchant. Around 1180 Robert sought seclusion in a cave by the River Nidd in Knaresborough Forest, later returning to spend the rest of his life there. His reputation for sanctity was considerable, and after his death in 1218 healing miracles were reported at his hermitage, where his former servant Yves continued his way of life. Although never formally canonised, he acquired popular acclamation as St Robert of Knaresborough (*Clay 1914*, 40-44; *Bazire 1968*).

Several rock hermitages have no record before the later middle ages. Occupants of the Southgate hermitage in Pontefract (Yorkshire) are named in 1368 and 1404 (*Clay 1914*, 69-70, 278-79). Around 1480 William Worcestre described the perilous position of St Vincent's Hermitage in the vertical face of Ghyston Cliff in the Clifton Gorge near Bristol, 36m below the cliff top and 72m above river level (*Neale 2000*, 34-35, 42-45, 44-47, 252-53). The style of the hermitage in Warkworth Castle's park indicates an early 14th-century origin, but uncompleted architectural details may result from the Scottish raid of 1341. First recorded in 1487 under the patronage of the Earls of Northumberland, it was still occupied in 1531, but vacant by 1567 (*Blair – Honeyman 1936*, 1-2, 4-5).

Concerns about unregulated solitary hermits eventually prompted the authorities to require their adherence to a recognised Rule (*Clay 1914*, 85-100). Resulting pressures to engage more with lay society, through charitable works or as spiritual advisors or intercessors, modified their earlier ethos. The Redstone hermitage overlooked a river crossing, and its occupants acquired the duty of maintaining a ferry, its open-air pulpit perhaps used for prayers for the safety of passengers (*Noake 1856*, 247; *Clay 1914*, 37, 57; *Simkins 1924*, 231-32). Bristol's Redcliffe hermitage was probably associated with the nearby St John's Hospital. Endowments provided support. The Deepdale hermit was granted the title of Borrowash Mill by the local lord. In 1408 the Guy's Cliffe hermit received a £5 stipend from the Earl of Warwick (*Allison 1969*, 534). In the late 15th century the Warkworth hermit had pasture for 12 cattle, a bull and two horses and was allowed to net salmon in the River Coquet on Sundays, also receiving 20 marks a year and 20 loads of firewood; in 1537 the profits of a chapel and hospital were added and the cash stipend halved (*Clay 1914*, 47, 190; *Blair – Honeyman 1936*, 2). In 1492 indulgences were offered to pilgrims visiting the Ghyston

Cliff hermitage or contributing towards its preservation or the maintenance of its lights (*Clay 1914*, 44).

Some rock hermitages were converted to chantry foundations in the later middle ages. In 1346 Edward III permitted Robert de Burghon to occupy the vacant hermitage opposite Bridgnorth to pray for the king, queen and royal children (*Clay 1914*, 36, 244-45). In 1347 Thomas, Lord Berkeley, appointed John Sparkes chaplain at the Redcliffe hermitage to pray for him and his family (*Pritchard 1911*; *Clay 1914*, 71). The patronage of Guy's Cliffe hermitage, formerly held by Warwick Priory, was taken over by Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, who in 1422 obtained licence to convert it to a perpetual chantry for two priests to perform divine service for the king's soul and his own. A new chapel was then built, partly cut into the rock (*Clay 1914*, 35; *Allison 1969*, 534-35). In 1531 the Earl of Northumberland appointed his chaplain to the rock hermitage in Warkworth Park to pray for all nobility, living and deceased (*Blair – Honeyman 1936*, 2).

As in Scotland and Wales, pilgrim traffic was limited. Robert of Knaresborough was the only English cave hermit to acquire popular cult status. Soon after 1252 a Trinitarian community, continuing his interests in redeeming captives, settled near his cave, successfully promoting it as a place of pilgrimage. In 1408 an additional rock-cut wayside chapel was constructed, 2km higher up the Nidd valley to the west of the town, probably for the use of pilgrims travelling to the cave (*Clay 1914*, 43-44, 134; *Gray 1993*, 115-18).

Several rock chambers are first identified as former hermitages in post-Reformation sources. An example at Sneinton (Nottinghamshire) was so described in a 1544 rental (*Clay 1914*, 48). The name of Holy Austin Rock near Kinver (Staffordshire) indicates a medieval occupant following the Augustinian Rule. Further identifications rest only upon plausible traditions, including the Isis Parliss rock chambers near Brougham (Westmorland), inconclusively excavated in 1913 (*Heelis 1914*), caves near St Gregory's Minster in Kirkdale (Yorkshire) (*Morris 1989*, 118), and Culver Ness on the Isle of Wight. A cave at Buxted (Sussex) has a pointed arch with a possible image niche, but no authentic record is known. Chambers at Minnis Rock, Hastings (Sussex), interpreted as a vestry and lodging flanking an oratory with a cross carved over a niche in its east wall (*Gattie 1892*), remain somewhat suspect.

Plans, architecture and decoration of rock-cut hermitages

The simplest rock-cut hermitages have a single chamber. That at Redcliffe is fronted by a rubble wall with a chamfered arched doorway (*Pritchard 1911*; *Clay 1914*, 71). The larger Deepdale hermitage has a central entrance flanked by arched openings (Fig. 5) (*Clay 1914*, 39-40). Ardwick's Cell near Hartlebury (Worcestershire) is a trapezoidal chamber with a wide door, internally-splayed light and internal recesses, its roof supported by two rough sandstone pillars. One 14th-century Rule for hermits

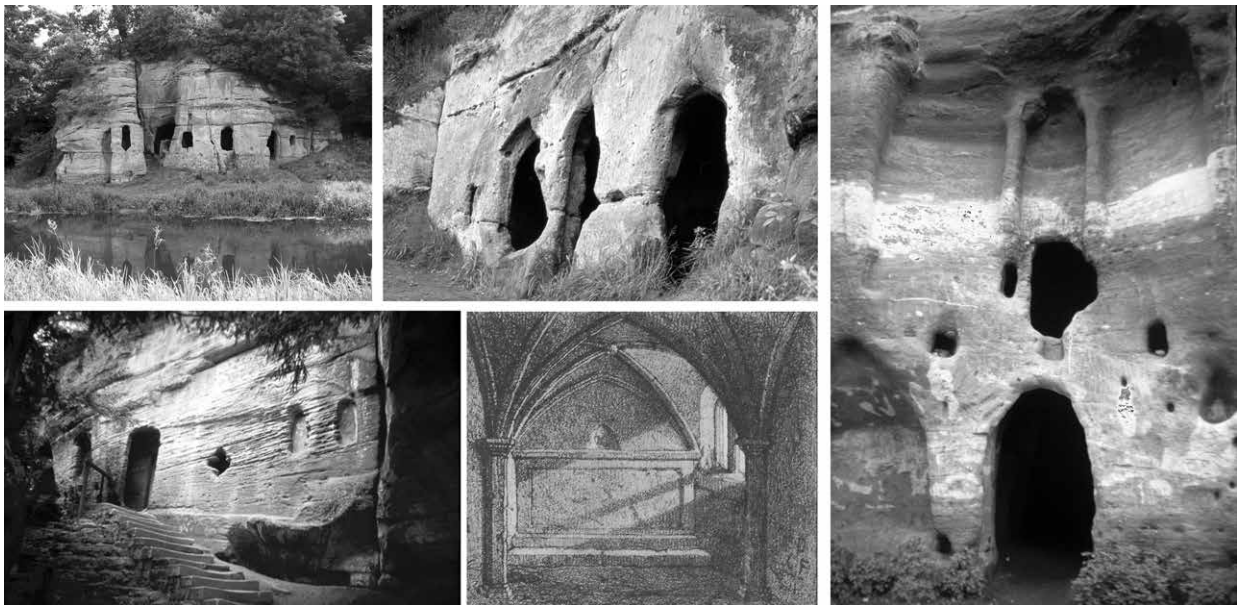


Fig. 5. English rock-cut hermitages: (top left) Anchor Church, Repton, Derbyshire (photo: Teresa Hall); (top centre) Deepdale, Derbyshire (© James Bond); (right) Redstone, Worcestershire (© James Bond); (bottom left) Warkworth, Northumberland, exterior (© James Bond); (bottom centre) Warkworth, chapel interior (© Duchess of Northumberland, engraved by Harding 1823, reproduced in *Clay 1914*).

required a Crucifixion image over the altar. Deepdale has a plain incised Latin cross. A cave at Cratcliffe Rocks near Stanton-in-Peak (Derbyshire) has a more elaborate crocketed crucifix evoking the foliage of the Tree of Life (*Clay 1914*, 32).

Two or three chambers, as illustrated by Stukeley at Blackstone near Bewdley (Worcestershire), may reflect segregation of religious and domestic space (*Stukeley 1724*; *Nash 1782*, ii, 47). At Bridgnorth the largest room was the chapel, with adjoining chambers at two levels, the upper reached by a rock-cut stairway (*Smith 1878*). Wetheral's three rectangular cells open to a gallery built out over a ledge (*Gough 1789*, 191-92). The dubious sites at Brougham, Buxted and Minnis Rock all have three chambers. Anchor Church near Repton comprises four chambers in a river-cliff overlooking an abandoned course of the River Trent (Fig. 5) (*Clay 1914*, 33; *Gilchrist 1995*, 165).

Larger numbers of rooms usually indicate post-medieval extensions. At Redstone the medieval chapel connects with a partly stepped passageway parallel with the rock face, giving access to four chambers, interpreted in the past as refectory and sleeping-quarters (*Noake 1856*, 247). Further chambers to the west appear to be later. Stukeley (1724) illustrated the ruined rock chapel of St Mary de Roche (attributed to the Carmelite Friars) alongside abandoned later rock dwellings overlooking the old River Lene within the park of Nottingham Castle.

A few later medieval examples adopted architectural forms and painted embellishments. At Redstone the chapel had an image-niche with a cusped arch above the outdoor pulpit (Fig. 5). Armorial paintings formerly identified the Beauchamp Earls of Warwick and the Mortimer Earls of March as benefactors (*Noake 1856*, 247). Internal paintings above the altar depicted an archbishop saying Mass and the instruments of the Passion, while an inscription declared indulgence to pious visitors (*Nash 1781*, i, 40). No paintings survive there. The Earl of Warwick's plans for embellishing Guy's Cliffe in the 1420s included painting Guy's image, presumably the existing large medieval rock-cut statue. A panel in the rock wall opposite the cave entrance once bore a runic inscription claimed to be a prayer of Guy of Warwick, but of dubious authenticity (*Clay 1914*, 35-36; *Allison 1969*, 534).

The hermitage in Warkworth Castle's park (Fig. 5) is particularly sophisticated, consisting of three linked rock-cut chambers. A shallow vestibule leads into a three-bay chapel where the shafts, capitals and ribs of its roof, the quatrefoil window, altar and piscina are all cut entirely in solid rock. Its west wall, pierced by four lancets, abuts against the original domestic

chamber, where a window looks south over the river. A north doorway and traceried window connect the chapel with a long, narrow barrel-vaulted sacristy containing cupboard recesses, steps up to an altar with a lamp recess or aumbry, and a squint to the chapel altar. Within the chapel vestibule is a carved rood, and the instruments of the Passion appear on a shield in high relief above its north door. White painting with a coloured shield, inscriptions from Psalms LXIX and XLII over its doors and a cruciform nimbus over the reredos were formerly visible (*Clay 1914*, 45-46; *Blair – Honeyman 1936*, 4-6). The early 15th-century wayside pilgrimage chapel near Knaresborough also contains an altar before an arched niche, a piscina, rib-vaulted roof and bench, all carved out of the rock. Alongside its entrance is another large carved figure, with a drawn sword (*Clay 1914*, 44).

Additional space could be gained by building forward from the rock face. Robert of Knaresborough initially sheltered the mouth of his cave by winding branches over stakes, but his brother, the mayor of York, wishing to support him in providing alms for the destitute, shelter for pilgrims and redemption for prisoners, soon had this replaced with a domestic room and a new stone chapel dedicated to the Holy Cross. The chapel was equipped with an altar platform, the domestic area with a stone bench along the rock face (*Clay 1914*, 42-43; *Gilchrist 1995*, 166-167). At Warkworth the original domestic chamber was partly cut away around 1500 in order to add external buildings alongside the cliff's south-western face. The presence of fireplaces, an upper-floor garderobe and an oven probably identify them with the hall and kitchen mentioned in a survey of 1586 (*Clay 1914*, 46-47; *Blair – Honeyman 1936*, 2-4). William Worcestre's description of St Vincent's Hermitage in the Clifton Gorge suggests that the hall and kitchen occupied the surviving cave, while the chapel was built out over a projecting ledge of the cliff face which has since fallen (*Neale 2000*, 34-35, 42-45, 44-47, 252-53). A fragmentary mullion of a gothic window and an encaustic tile found when a new cave entrance was made in 1835 probably came from this chapel (*Clay 1914*, 44-45, plate XIX).

A few sites resemble underground cellars. At Southgate in Pontefract two separate subterranean chambers with adjoining entrances were discovered in 1845. That now known as the 'Hermitage' is actually a brick-vaulted post-medieval trapezoidal antechamber, but its medieval rear wall formed the front of an infilled medieval chamber, beyond which a stepped barrel-vaulted tunnel gives access to a remarkable rock-cut spiral stairway leading down to a well chamber. The nearby 'Oratory' is a domed chamber approached by a curving flight of steps, its east wall having an altar shelf

and fireplace (*Fowler 1869*; unpublished 1992 report by P.F. Ryder, cited by *Gilchrist 1995*, 166, 168-69).

The most unusual subterranean example is a bottle-shaped chamber cut in chalk beneath Melbourn Street in Royston (Hertfordshire), discovered in 1742. William Stukeley interpreted this as a hermitage or oratory of about 1170 (*Stukeley 1743*). Its lower walls have numerous naïve low-relief carvings, including the Crucifixion, Christ's entombment, St Catherine, St Christopher and St Lawrence, and traces of colour are recorded. There is some evidence for a wooden platform or partial gallery at the level of the original entrance shaft, which was replaced in 1790 by a floor-level entry. The Knights Templars used Royston's market and had several nearby properties, and the chamber has been attributed to them on the basis of similarities with carvings in the Castle of Chinon, and a suggestion that the round plan and quasi-domed roof was modelled upon the rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (*Beamon – Donel 1978*).

Burials

Some hermits prepared their own grave within or just outside their cave, to remind them of their mortality. Robert of Knaresborough made his grave in the rock platform before the altar of Holy Cross Chapel. When he died in 1218 the Cistercian monks of Fountains sought to bear away his body to their abbey, but his servant Yves ensured that he was laid to rest as he had intended (*Clay 1914*, 42, 113-14). Human remains found at several other sites have yielded no reliable dating evidence (*Nash 1781*, I, 40; *Radford 1955-56*, 152, 161; *Beamon – Donel 1978*, 48), but more recently two burials from a cave at East Wemyss have been dated to AD 970-1120 and 1020-1190 (*Gibson – Stevens 2007*, 92-93).

Post-Reformation uses

Many medieval rock hermitages found new uses after the Reformation, and subsequent conversions for domestic, communal, industrial and recreational purposes often altered their form. Sham hermitages became a fashionable feature of landscaped gardens in the 18th century. William Stukeley, pioneer recorder of cave hermitages, could not resist making a grotto in his own garden at Stamford in 1738. The cave 'hermitage' at Oxton (Devon) dates from about 1790.

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Klostergründungen

In mystischen Wäldern oder an urbaren Feldern?

Miriam Steinborn *

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Wahl des Standortes frühkarolingischer Klostergründungen basierte auf subjektiver Wahrnehmung der Umgebung und war eher von einem pragmatischen Ansatz als der Vorliebe für „spirituelle“ Orte geleitet. Die Untersuchung von zehn Fallbeispielen aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum zeigt die Präferenz unterschiedlich ausgeprägter Tallagen und einer Nachbarschaft verschiedener Bodentypen, schiffbarer / fischbarer Gewässer und Straßen. Ein guter Baugrund und ein Frischwasserzugang waren dagegen keine ausschlaggebenden Faktoren. Vielerorts knüpfen die Klöster an existierende ländliche Besiedlung an, oft in der Nähe von Befestigungen.

Schlagwörter: *Klostergründungen, frühe Karolingerzeit, Ortspräferenz, Quellenkritik, Mythos versus Realität, Mentalitätsgeschichte.*

ABSTRACT

Foundation of monasteries – places in mystic woods or at arable fields?

Choosing a location for the foundation of a monastery in the early Carolingian period was a subjective process based on the perception of the environment. The decision was influenced more by down-to-earth considerations than a preference for “spiritual” places. Ten case studies show that the places chosen guaranteed access to different types of soil. The monasteries were situated in valleys close to (seasonally) navigable waterways and roads. Agrarian settlements in the vicinity of the monasteries could also be parts of the initial donation. Fortified potential places of refuge can be detected in the surrounding area. An advantageous building site, safety from floods or a convenient supply of drinking water were not determining factors.

Keywords: *Foundation of monasteries, Early Carolingian Period, choice of location, source criticism, myth versus reality, history of mentalities.*

* Römisch-Germanisches
Zentralmuseum, Mainz,
Germany
steinborn@rgzm.de

RÉSUMÉ

Les fondations du monastère – dans les forêts mystiques ou au bord des champs cultivables?

La sélection du site pour la fondation des monastères à l'époque carolingienne ancienne était le résultat de processus subjectifs basés sur la perception de

l'environnement. Il est frappant de voir que les choix d'emplacement étaient pragmatiques plutôt qu'inspirés de lieux spirituels. L'analyse de dix exemples montre que les monastères sont situés dans les vallées et à proximité de sols de nature différente. Par ailleurs, ils sont proches de voies de circulation et de cours d'eau navigables. Toujours à proximité de ces monastères, on observe la présence de bourgades

Datengrundlage – Fallbeispiele und ihre Überlieferung

Die Wahl des Standortes ist essenziell für den Erfolg einer Siedlungsgründung – ihr liegen Entscheidungsprozesse und natur- und siedlungstopographischen Faktoren zugrunde, die im Folgenden untersucht werden sollen. Gerne werden und wurden für Klöster die asketischen Ideale der monastischen Ursprünge auf die Standorte projiziert, während praktische oder persönliche Bedürfnisse der Stifter und des Konvents unberücksichtigt bleiben. In der Gründungsphase waren eine ausreichende Versorgung der Mönche aus dem lokalen Umfeld und daher eine umsichtige Standortwahl notwendig, die im Spannungsfeld zwischen leiblichen und geistigen Anforderungen und topographischen Möglichkeiten verwirklicht wurde. Einen wichtigen Bezugspunkt stellt das Gefüge bestehender ländlicher Siedlungen dar, in das sich die Klöster eingliederten und die es gegebenenfalls modifizierten. Ziel der folgenden Ausführungen ist es darzustellen, welche Standortfaktoren für Klostergründungen ausschlaggebend waren und welche Rolle bestehenden ländlichen Siedlungen zukam.

Da sich Verallgemeinerungen wegen der verschiedenartigen monastischen Lebensweisen verbieten, wird die Auswahl der Untersuchungsobjekte eingegrenzt. Die betrachteten Gründungen liegen im Zeitraum der Etablierungsphase der Karolinger bis zum Tode Karls des Großen im achten und frühen neunten Jahrhundert. In dieser Zeit festigte sich die Rom zugewandte Kirchenpolitik der Karolinger, einhergehend mit der Durchsetzung der benediktinischen Lebensregel. Während zu dieser Zeit im Alpenraum verstärkt Klöster gegründet wurden (*Holzfurtner 1984*, 1), geht die Aktivität der ersten Welle iroschottischer Mission auf dem Kontinent zurück. Der Zeitraum markiert somit eine Umbruchsphase der Klostergeschichte.

Die Auswahl der untersuchten Fallbeispiele (Fig. 1) folgt mehreren Kriterien: Die Klöster sollten dem Prinzip einer „freien Standortwahl“ folgen, weshalb Gemeinschaften bei einem *Coemeterium* oder Eremiten nicht mit einbezogen wurden. Die Untersuchungsergebnisse würden in diesen Fällen die Standorte der Gräberfelder und Einsiedeleien widerspiegeln. Die Klostergründungen sollten von Beginn

mit des terres agricoles ainsi que des fortifications. L'accès à l'eau potable ou à des terrains propices à la construction ne sembleraient pas avoir eu d'influence dans la sélection du site.

Mots-clés: *fondation des monastères, époque carolingienne ancienne, sélection du site, critique de sources historiques, mythe contre réalité, histoire des mentalités.*

an wirtschaftlich auf sich selbst gestellt sein und nicht planmäßig von einem Ursprungskonvent unterstützt werden. Die Fallbeispiele sollten archäologisch untersucht sein und Schriftquellen zur Gründungszeit aufweisen, obwohl beides die Einbeziehung kleinerer Klöster einschränkt (s.u.). Dennoch wurden sowohl Klöster, die es zu höchster Blüte brachten, als auch kleinere Konvente berücksichtigt, um mögliche Umwelteinflüsse auf den Gründungserfolg zu identifizieren. Um die generellen räumlichen Präferenzen zu ergründen, wurden Klöster aus unterschiedlichen Landschaftstypen und historischen Situationen gewählt. Aus diesen Kriterien ergibt sich eine Verteilung der Fallbeispiele entlang der Ostgebiete des fränkischen Reiches zu Beginn der Karolingerzeit.

Als Informationsquellen zu den Gründungsbedingungen können neben Kopialbüchern die Viten der Klostergründer herangezogen werden. Diese unilaterale Schriftgattung ist, wie auch andersartige Gründungslegenden, als Abbild historischer Realität mit Vorsicht zu behandeln. Im Hinblick auf mentale Fragestellungen sind beide umso wertvoller. Daher ist das Verständnis ihres Zwecks und der verwendeten Narrative notwendig. Die Hauptaufgabe der Texte ist die Darstellung der Heiligkeit des Ortes oder der Persönlichkeit (*Holzfurtner 1984*, 19). Dazu bedienten sich die Autoren bestimmter Topoi wie der Schilderung unwirtlicher Wildnis, die das Wüstenmotiv *in extremis* aufgreift. Den Dämonen der Versuchung hier außerhalb des Schutzraumes von Siedlungen oder der (christlichen) Gemeinschaft (*Meier 2009*, 124) zu widerstehen festigt den asketischen Willen. Mit dem symbolischen Akt des Schlangenvertreibens und Erschließens der Insel Reichenau in der Vita Pirmins werden Motive merowingischer Legenden aufgenommen, die jüngere Viten der Karolingerzeit später nicht mehr führen. Die Grabungsergebnisse in Reichenau belegen, dass der Konvent auf einer unbewohnten Insel gegründet wurde. Über das Zähmen der Wildnis zu einem „hortikulturellen“ Paradies als Sieg über das Böse berichtet bereits die Legende von der Gründung des Inselklosters Lérins durch Honoratius (*Nahmer 1973*, 232). In der Natur kann jedoch neben den Dämonen der Wildnis auch die Schönheit der

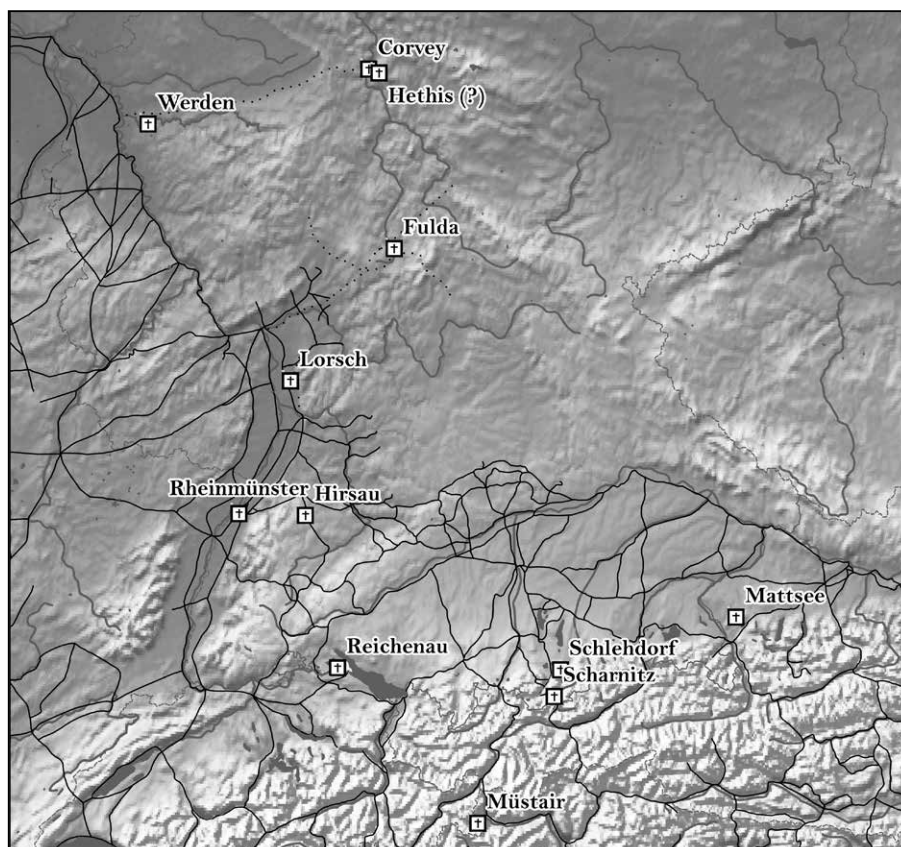


Fig. 1. Übersichtskarte mit Fallbeispielen und antikem Strassennetz (© Miriam Steinborn).

Landschaft den Mönch verführen (Nahmer 1973, 232), da sie zum Müßiggang, der „Seele Feind“ (RB 48), einlädt. Der ambivalente Charakter der Schönheit zeigt sich dagegen im preisenden Motiv des *locus amoenus* – die von Gott gegebene Lieblichkeit eines Ortes, die sich in seiner Nutzbarkeit niederschlägt (Nahmer 1973, 241). Im betrachteten Zeitraum finden sich kaum noch Wunderelemente und auch das Motiv des *locus amoenus* tritt zurück (Meier 2009, 131). Dagegen sind die karolingerzeitlichen *Vitae* biografisch geprägt (Grundmann 1978, 31). Die Chance historischer Überlieferung der Gründungsumstände ist oft von der benediktinischen Schreibtätigkeit in den folgenden Jahrhunderten und damit von den Hochphasen der Konvente abhängig (Holzfurtner 1984, 4-17). Da in den Reformzeiten legitimierende Klostergeschichten *ab initio* verfasst wurden, basieren nicht alle der in dieser Zeit niedergeschriebenen Berichte und Urkundenabschriften auf originalen Überlieferungen (Schlehdorf, Müstair). Diese Quellengeschichte ist für die Rekonstruktion der Gründungsausstattung problematisch und erfordert unbedingt eine archäologische Gegenprüfung der Siedlungsbelege. Der historischen Situation entsprechend wenig wurde von kleineren Klöstern überliefert, insbesondere wenn sie nicht in benediktinischer Tradition standen, in ein

Stift umgewandelt wurden oder in die Abhängigkeit und damit in die Buchhaltung größerer Konvente oder Bistümer gelangten. Auch mindern Zerstörungen der Informationsträger die Überlieferungschancen, wie etwa der Klosterbrand von Müstair 1078 (Sennhauser 2013, 5, 85-86). Den Eindrücken der historischen Überlieferung können sowohl die Entwicklung der Klöster als auch die architektonischen Gegebenheiten gegenüber gestellt werden.

Die Suche nach dem Standort – eine Frage des Konzepts

Die Suche und Wahl eines Klosterstandortes sind subjektive Prozesse der Entscheidungsträger, wobei sich das Vorwissen und die Ideenwelt des Akteurs von unseren unterscheiden. Es gibt eine Vielzahl „rationaler und irrationaler Standortfaktoren“ (Eismann 2004, 13), die zu fassen allein für eine Gründung bereits komplex ist. Eine Orientierung bietet die Annahme wertrationalen Handelns, das rationales Handeln mit der Erfüllung von Wertvorstellungen verknüpft (Doneus – Kühntreiber 2013, 343). Ein vergleichender Ansatz liefert eher Einblicke in bevorzugte Strategien als dass er generelle Aussagen hervorbringt. Ein Blick in die *Regula Benedicti* ist dabei kaum hilfreich. Hier wird kein Standort empfohlen,

sondern auf die klösterliche Infrastruktur verwiesen. „Das Kloster soll, wenn möglich, so angelegt werden, dass sich alles Notwendige, nämlich Wasser, Mühle und Garten, innerhalb des Klosters befindet und die verschiedenen Arten des Handwerks dort ausgeübt werden können“ (RB 66.6). Der Bereich außerhalb des Klosters bleibt bis auf den Rat, sich möglichst lokal zu versorgen (RB 55), unberücksichtigt. Dies spiegelt sich im St. Galler Klosterplan wider, der ebenso das „Außerhalb“ des Klosters ignoriert.

Die Wahrnehmung des Ortes und der Beweggrund der abschließenden Standortwahl werden, wenn überhaupt, legendarisch überliefert und bleiben zumeist verborgen. Durch eine Auswertung der historischen Situation im Umfeld der Gründung ist es möglich, einen gedanklichen Entscheidungsrahmen zu rekonstruieren, innerhalb dessen sich die Standortwahl zugetragen haben kann (siehe Tabelle). Im Vorfeld der Gründung bringen drei Perspektiven je eigene Motive ein: die des Initiators, des Stifters und des Gründers.

In das Anlagenkonzept fließen sowohl der gesellschaftliche Hintergrund des Initiators als auch seine Idee der zukünftigen Funktion des Klosters ein. Je nach persönlichem Motiv wird ein Ort für die Erfüllung von Frömmigkeit, privater Vorsorge und/oder politischen Überlegungen erstrebt. Diese grundlegenden Vorstellungen sind die Basis der Standortüberlegungen auch wenn sie selten aus den Schriftquellen hervorgehen. Die historische Exegese basiert oft auf Genealogien und der Analyse der historischen politischen Situation.

Auch aus der Perspektive des Stifters wird die freie Standortwahl eingeschränkt, da die Gründungsausstattung nur aus verfügbarem Vermögen gestiftet werden kann. Anhand überlieferter Urkunden zur Stiftung selbst und weiteren Schenkungen lassen sich in einigen Fällen die Identität des Stifters und Teile seines Vermögens fassen. Als Motiv für die Stiftung von Gütern wird bei privaten Stiftungen oft das Streben nach individuellem Seelenheil unterstellt. Bei vielen Stiftungen aus Familien, wie im Fall von Lorsch, kann zusätzlich die Sicherung des Familieneigentums angenommen werden. Bei kaiserlichen Stiftungen wie Fulda oder Reichenau ist außerdem ein politischer Hintergrund wahrscheinlich. Das gezielte Zusammensammeln von Ländereien, aus dem ein Klosterstandort gewählt werden konnte, ist dagegen sehr selten überliefert, so etwa für Liudgers Gründungstätigkeit in Werden.

Diese Überlegung wird durch Informationen über die Gründerpersönlichkeit und ihre Motive ergänzt. Bei der Gründung, die durch den / die Stifter/in selbst oder eine beauftragte Person geschehen kann, wird die finale Standortentscheidung getroffen. In vielen Fällen waren Gründer religiös-moralische Instanzen, deren Handeln das Ermöglichen monastischen Lebens

unter Berücksichtigung des Ideals zugrunde gelegt werden kann. Chroniken und Urkunden schweigen meist über die persönlichen Motive, sodass auch sie aus den historischen Umständen rekonstruiert werden (s.o.). Aufschlussreicher sind einige Heiligenviten oder Reliquientranslationsberichte, die retrospektiv die Wahrnehmung der Landschaft schildern. So spiegelt sich in der Fuldaer Gründung Bonifatius' Missionstätigkeit wieder, während die aufwendige Vorbereitung, Aufnahme von Wegbegleitern und Familienangehörigen und Grablege in Werden von der persönlichen Motivation Liudgers zeugen.

Das resultierende Anlagenkonzept ist ein Kompromiss unterschiedlicher Motive eines oder mehrerer Akteure. Werdens Initiation, Stiftung und Gründung blieb in der Hand des Missionars Liudger. Hinter der Idee und dem Gründungsakt von Reichenau-Mittelzell und Corvey standen einzelne heilige Männer, während die Stiftung aus dem Vermögen der Karolinger stammte. Die Idee zur Fuldaer Gründung hatte Bonifatius, während die Hausmeier das Land stifteten und Sturmius das Kloster gründete. Ohne religiöse Persönlichkeiten dagegen kamen die vermögenden Familien der Scharnitzer und prinzipiell auch der Lorsch Gründung aus. Oft sind jedoch alle Akteure unbekannt, sodass über die Hintergründe auf mehr oder minder validen Indiziengrundlagen spekuliert wird.

Suchen – Erschließen – Bauen. Drei Schritte zur Klostergründung

In einigen Berichten finden sich Informationen zur Standortsuche, die Rückschlüsse auf die Landschaftswahrnehmung zulassen. So führte der gescheiterte Siedlungsversuch im kargen Hethis nach einem Hungeraufstand der Mönche zur Gründung Corveys in einer als paradiesisch beschriebenen Auenlandschaft. Eine sorgsame Auswahl geeigneten Siedlungsgrundes dagegen illustriert das mühevoll gesammelte und eintauschen der Ländereien für Werden. Eine bemerkenswerte Anekdote ist die Suche nach dem Klosterstandort Fulda. Mehrfach in den wilden Wald geschickt folgt Sturmius einer Straße, auf der ihm gut- und böswillige Leute begegnen, wobei er stets die Bodengüte und die Wasserversorgung im Blick hat (*Engelbert 1980, 26.7*). In anderen Fällen wie Lorsch und Scharnitz entfiel eine Suche durch die standortbestimmende Schenkung des Stifters.

Alle Fallbeispielklöster befinden sich in einer unterschiedlich ausgeprägten Tallage. Extreme wie Scharnitz, Schlehdorf, Hirsau oder Müstair lagen zwischen steil aufragenden Hängen, während Reichenau die Niederung statt dem benachbarten Höhenrücken bevorzugt wird. Auch die erste Lorsch Gründung befand sich am Fuß einer höheren Düne und erst später

auf dem Hauptkamm. In vielen Fällen liegen westlich der Klöster Erhebungen, was sich gerade bei Gebirgszügen auf trockeneres Mikroklima auswirkt. Besonders die Klöster Reichenau, Fulda und Müstair wurden an im Vergleich zur Region klimagünstigen Orten gegründet. Einzig Lorsch fällt regional negativ auf, wobei überregional die Bergstraßenregion klimatisch jedoch durchaus begünstigt ist. Eine Klosteranlage mit leicht erhöhter Kirche (Reichenau, Fulda, Lorsch, Müstair, Werden, Corvey) begünstigte den Wasserabfluss und führte zu einer optischen Dominanz der Kirche im Klostergelände. Klostergründungen an Flüssen liegen nicht selten auf Kies- und Sanderhebungen, Felsenrippen oder Geländekanten (Corvey, Schwarzach, Lorsch, Mattsee, Fulda), sodass sie relativ hochwasserfrei blieben. Eine Ausnahme ist das sehr feucht gelegene Reichenau-Mittelzell, das wohl zugunsten einer guten Verkehrsanbindung am nahen Seeuferbereich gegründet wurde, aber eine zusätzliche hölzerne Pfahlroststabilisation erforderte. Durch ihre Lage in Flusstälern waren die meisten Klöster von Auenböden umgeben, die sich für Grünland- und Waldnutzung eignen. Die Hälfte der Fallbeispiele liegt in der Nähe zu Lössanwehungen, die sich als Ackerland nutzen lassen.

Der Baugrund musste nicht direkt bebaubar sein. Rodungen werden in den historischen Quellen überliefert (s.o.). Sowohl in der Pirminsvita (*MGH SS XV 25.6*) als auch indirekt zu Fulda wird von Anfängen im Wald berichtet. Im Fall von Werden ist der Rodungsbericht der Stiftervita (*Diekamp 1881, 75-77 Vita II 29*) durch archäologische Befunde belegt (*Borger 1959, 90*). Zusätzlich werden archäologisch oft Geländeplanierungen festgestellt, etwa in Reichenau (*Zettler 1988, 140, 188*), Müstair (*Goll 2013, 60-63*) oder in Fulda, wo zu diesem Zweck das anstehende Gestein abgetragen wurde (*Platz 2009, 75*). Ein gezielter Abtrag bis auf geeigneten Baugrund lässt sich ebenso in Müstair beobachten (*Goll 2016*). Andere Klöster wurden im Kontext bereits bestehender Siedlungen gebaut. Seit kurzem ist eine profane Vorbesiedlung von Lorsch im siebten Jahrhundert sehr wahrscheinlich, wie ¹⁴C-Untersuchungen der Rodungsschicht ergaben (*Lammers 2014, 184, 188*), die von Funden aus dem sechsten und siebten Jahrhundert (*Schulze-Dörrlamm 2011, 362-633, Katalog S. 546 Nr. 3*) und der dendrodatierten Schiffslände von 721/722 (*Platz 2011, 160, 175*) gestützt werden. Auch für Müstair konnte jüngst eine profane frühmittelalterliche Vorbesiedlung identifiziert werden (*Neukom 2015, 70*). Dagegen fehlen von dem „Waldhaus“ Erlafrieds der Hirsauer Gründungsgeschichte (*Stuttgarter Passionale Vita Aurelii II*) und der *villa Hucxori* aus der Corveyer Überlieferung (*Wilms 1867, Nr.7*) sichere archäologische Nachweise – einzig die bearbeitete Weserbucht auf dem Corveyer Klostergelände datiert bereits vor die Klosterphase (*Stephan 2000, 35*).

Der Bauprozess der Klostererrichtung selbst wird selten beschrieben. Der Gründungsbericht von Corvey legt dar, wie als erste Baumaßnahme das Einmessen und Ausrichten der Kirche (*MGH SS XV 2*) mittels Holzpflocken geschah. Die geschilderten Bauarbeiten in Werden charakterisieren die persönliche Bindung Liudgers zu seiner späteren Grablege. Archäologische Nachweise der Arbeiten sind rar. So wurden etwa in Müstair unter anderem hölzerne Vermessungspflocke nachgewiesen wurden (*Sennhauser 2003, 34-37; Goll 2016*). Dass zuerst die Kirche als zentraler Punkt des monastischen Lebens errichtet wurde, scheint naheliegend und wird durch viele archäologische und historische Indizien unterstützt. Eine bereits existierende Kirche ersparte Zeit und Aufwand bei einer Klostergründung, doch wird dieser potentielle „Standortfaktor“ selten in den Schriftquellen erwähnt. In der Gründungsurkunde von Lorsch findet sich etwa der Hinweis, das Kloster sei „ad sacrosanctam ecclesiam sancti Petri“ gelegen (*Glöckner 1929, CL Nr.1 [Reg.2]*). Recht ähnlich liest sich die Scharnitzer Urkunde (*Bitterauf 1905, Nr.19 46-47*) „in solitudine Scarantiense ubi ecclesiam in honore beati apostolorum construxi“. Auch die Gründungsgeschichte von Hirsau überliefert ein Kirchlein oberhalb des Bauplatzes, das bis zur Weihe des Klosters genutzt wurde „reliquie deposite sunt in ecclesiola (...) sita in vertice prominentis collis“ (*MGH SS XVI 255*). Einen weiteren Hinweis findet man für Werden, wo Schenkungen zunächst an die Kirche und erst später an das Kloster adressiert waren. Archäologisch ist die Baureihenfolge nur selten so eindeutig festzustellen, wie im ganz in Stein errichteten Müstair: Es zeigt sich, dass Klosterkirche und Kreuzgang in einem Arbeitsgang errichtet wurden, die Klosterkirche aber früher fertig gestellt wurde (*Neukom 2016, 107*).

Für die frühen Klöster sind Holz- oder Mischbauweise mit Stein und Holz ebenso anzunehmen wie Steinbauten, wodurch die archäologische Überlieferung und Deutung der frühen Bauphasen erschwert werden. Baumaterial und Ausstattung stammten in den meisten Fällen aus dem unmittelbaren Umfeld oder ließen sich über kurze Distanzen heranschaffen (Reichenau: *Zettler 1988, 81-86*. Fulda: *Krause 2002*. Müstair: *Goll 2013, 61-62; Brombacher et al. 2007, 70*. Hirsau: *Putze 1991, 22*). In Müstair wurden Lesesteine verbaut (*Goll 2016*), in anderen Fällen lassen sich nahegelegene Steinbrüche identifizieren (Scharnitz: *Sage 1977, 52*. Werden: *Winkler 2005, 33*). Leicht verfügbare Baustoffe waren demnach ein gern angenommenes Angebot der Klosterumwelt. Diese Beobachtung ist jedoch nicht im Umkehrschluss anwendbar. So wurden in Müstair die in der Antike für Ziegel genutzten Tonvorkommen (*Neukom 2016, 77*) im Mittelalter vermutlich nicht verwendet – die Klosterdächer blieben mit organischen Baustoffen gedeckt (*Goll 2016*). Ortsfremde Materialien wurden seltener und für spezielle Baudetails eingesetzt, wie etwa die Grabplatte

der Scharnitzer Kirche (Sage 1977, 66-67) oder der gelbe Lehmfußboden in Hirsau (Putze 1991, 23-24). Die Frage von antiken Vorgängerbauten als Steinbruch lässt sich nur individuell beantworten. Auch Spolien, die in den ausgewählten Fallbeispielen eher selten zu finden sind, wurden oft eigens herbeigebracht, wie C. Forster für das Lorscher *Opus Sectile* nachzeichnen konnte (Forster 2011, 246). Nach sorgsamer Arbeit in den letzten Jahren stellte sich die frühere Annahme, Lorsch gründe auf einem römischen Siedlungsareal, als falsch heraus (Helfert 2011, 28-29). Auch andere Fallbeispiele mit Spolien wie Rheinmünster-Schwarzach (Marzolff 2010, 258; Marzolff 1978, 250) und Mattsee (Melzer 1979, 132) liegen nicht über römischen Mauern. Dagegen deuten die jüngst in Müstair entdeckten Befunde im Westhof (Neukom 2015, 70; Neukom 2016, 62-106) auf ein spätantikes und frühmittelalterliches, vorkarolingisches Siedlungsareal, dennoch wurden Spolien nur in geringem Maße verwendet. Zermahlene antike Ziegel wurden wahrscheinlich mit Mörtel gemischt und für einen Fugenstrich verwendet – allerdings nicht in einem Ausmaß, dass das schnell verfügbare Baumaterial ein wichtiger Standortfaktor gewesen wäre. Für die Fallbeispiele mit römischen Fundgut entfällt die rechtsgeschichtlich komplexe Frage nach einer möglichen Fiskalsukzession (dazu Binding – Untermann 2001, 19-22; Eismann 2004, 143-152, bes. 148-149). Archäologisch identifizierbar und juristisch relevant wären etwa Ruinen, ehemalige Befestigungen oder christianisierte heidnische Kultplätze, die in den genannten Fallbeispielen jedoch

nicht genutzt wurden. Allenfalls ist die Wahl eines Ortes mit Siedlungstradition, sei es antik oder frühmittelalterlich, im Hinblick auf das Abschätzen der Siedlungsgunst ein möglicher Standortfaktor.

Planung auf lange Sicht – der Betrieb des Klosters

Die Bedürfnisse des Konvents verändern sich in den verschiedenen Einrichtungsphasen von der Gründung über die Errichtung bis zum Unterhalt (siehe Tabelle). Da Klöster sich möglichst selbst versorgen sollten, wurde auch Handwerk und Landwirtschaft betrieben, die Energie, Werkzeuge und Werkstoffe benötigten. Es ist davon auszugehen, dass die abschließende Standortwahl dies beachtete. Der Einfluss der Mönche auf die Standortwahl ist kaum einzuschätzen – es geschah jedoch durchaus, dass sie als Gemeinschaft einen Standort ablehnten, wenn er das monastische Leben nicht ermöglichte. Dieser Fall ist aus der Gründungsgeschichte von Corvey überliefert, in der die Mönche wegen ihrer schlechten Versorgung einen Umzug erzwangen.

Die Versorgung mit Frisch- und Brauchwasser gilt als klassischer Umweltparameter der Siedlungsarchäologie. Für das Kloster Lorsch konnte sie archäologisch bisher nicht nachgewiesen werden und bleibt vorerst rätselhaft. Andere Klöster lösten das Problem artifizuell. Zunächst führte eine Zuleitung in Müstair von außen Wasser herbei. Nur kurze Zeit später installierte der Konvent

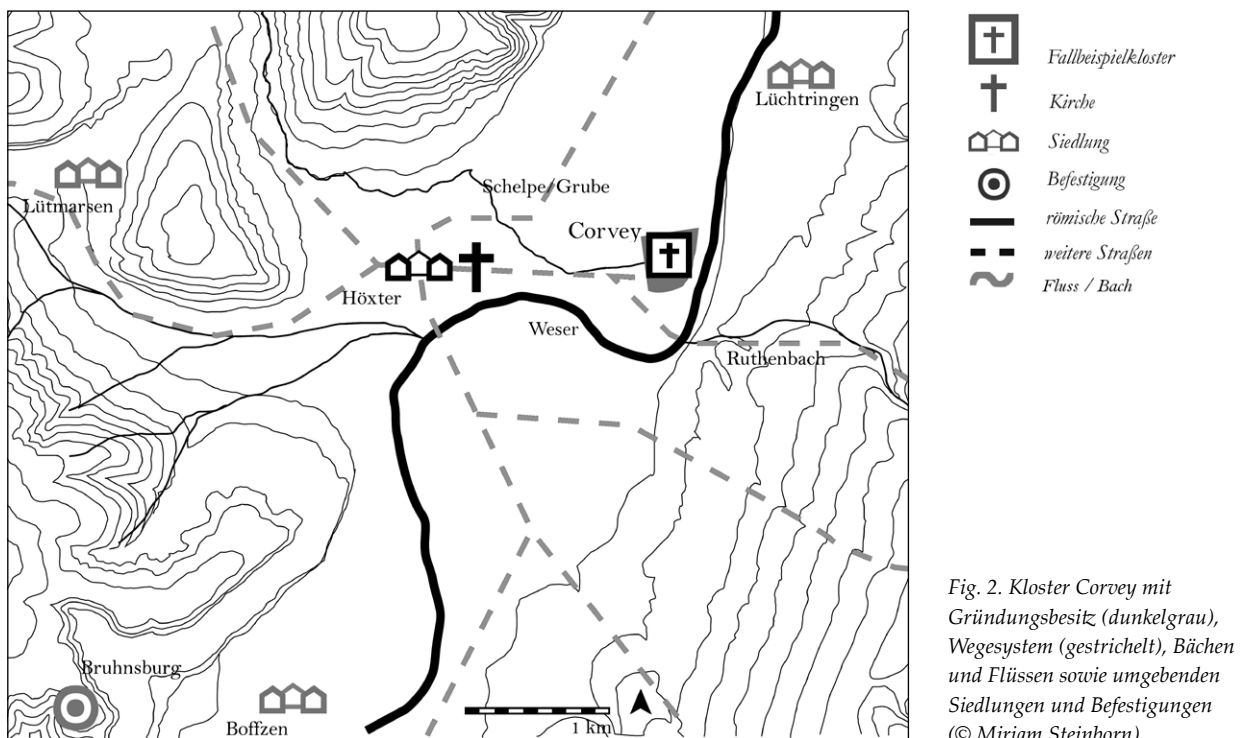


Fig. 2. Kloster Corvey mit Gründungsbesitz (dunkelgrau), Wegesystem (gestrichelt), Bächen und Flüssen sowie umgebenden Siedlungen und Befestigungen (© Miriam Steinborn).

eine Zisterne, die Wasser als Waschmöglichkeit und die Entsorgung von Fäkalien und als Kühlmöglichkeit für Fisch bereithielt (Hüster-Plogmann 2007, 233; Sennhauser 1996, 42). Für das Kloster Corvey wurde die Schelpen über das Klostergelände umgeleitet (Fig. 2) und für eine Mühle genutzt, ähnlich in Werden (Brand – Schönfelder 2011, 151-153). Das Frischwasser schöpften die Corveyer Mönche aus mehreren Brunnen (Stephan 2000, 143 und 198). Entgegen der intuitiven Vermutung stellte eine gut zugängliche Frischwasserversorgung demnach keine Notwendigkeit dar, da sie durch wassertechnische Installationen erreicht werden konnte und ist somit als unentbehrlicher Standortfaktor auszuschließen. Häufig liegen die Klöster dagegen an Seen und Flüssen. Es ist anzunehmen, dass diese auch der Fischversorgung der Konvente gedient haben. Das Fischereirecht tritt erst später regelhaft explizit in den Schriftquellen auf, und so geben neben seltenen Urkunden wie in Scharnitz (Bitterauf 1905, 47) vor allem archäozoologische Auswertungen Einblicke in den Fischkonsum. Das Reichenauer Fischknochenspektrum zeigt lokale Arten (Schlichtherle 1988, 322), und auch Münstair deckte seinen Bedarf größtenteils aus der Umgebung, wie Nachweise von Bachforelle und Seesaibling zeigen. Importware wie Äsche, Felchen, Aal und Muscheln bereicherten das Angebot (Hüster-Plogmann 2007, 233 und 236). Die Mönche des in der Ruhrschleife gelegene Werden hingegen errichteten früh einen Mühlteich, der vermutlich auch der Fischhaltung diente (Brand – Schönfelder 2011, 151-153).

Neben der Versorgung aus den Gewässern dienten sie als Verkehrswege für das Heranschaffen von Gütern wie Nahrungsmitteln oder Keramik (Wedepohl et al. 2002, 45-46). Daher finden sich in Corvey, aber auch in Lorsch und Reichenau Landstellen (Stephan 2000, 35; Platz 2011, 160, 175; Zettler 1988, 143-144). Häufig besaßen die Klöster auch eine Anbindung an Fernstraßen, über die neben Abgaben der klostereigenen Landgüter auch Reisende kamen (Meier 2009, 140-142). Da fromme Privatleute oft Stiftungen verhiessen, hatten die Klöster Interesse an gepflegten Wegen (MGH DD Kar.1 Nr. 144). So war der Andrang der Pilger Grund und Grundlage von Umzug und Vergrößerung des Lorschers Klosters. Ein derart belebtes Kloster widerspricht dem Ideal der *solitudo*. Monastische Alltagspraxis und geistliche Aufgaben griffen hier ineinander. Neben der Bereitstellung von Infrastruktur und der Versorgung von Reisenden boten die Klöster sowohl ein Pilgerziel als auch geistlichen Beistand in der Bewältigung von Problemstellen wie Kreuzungen und Passagen (Meier 2009, 140-142). Ein solches Modell ist besonders für Alpenklöster wie Scharnitz oder Münstair denkbar. Im Gegensatz zu dem relativ hohen Verkehrsaufkommen durch Handels- und Pilgerfahrten im Hochmittelalter ist im Frühmittelalter allerdings eher mit politisch

motiviertem Reisen zu rechnen (Jürgens 2015, 19). Wenn die Konvente Gäste aufnahmen, so waren dies daher entweder Kleinstgruppen allein Reisender oder ganze Gefolge ihrer Herren, etwa von Bischöfen oder dem Kaiser. Letzteres traf auf die sog. Reichsklöster zu, die mit dem *servitium regis* unter anderem auch die Herbergspflicht erfüllten. In der *Notitia de servitio monasteriorum* von 816 (MGH LL II 350-651) wurden 85 dem Kaiser verpflichtete Konvente im Frankenreich aufgeführt. Dazu gehörten neben Lorsch auch Fulda und Mattsee. In dieser Liste ist das Kloster Münstair, das als einziges der Fallbeispiele seine Gründung direkt auf Karl den Großen zurückführt, nicht dabei. Dennoch ist es in der architektonischen Auswertung das einzige, bei dem explizit auf einen Gästeflügel in der Anlage verwiesen wird (Sennhauser 1996, 24). Auch andere größere und kaisernahe Anlagen wie Reichenau oder Corvey stehen nicht auf der Liste, während etwa das architektonisch eher unauffällige Mattsee (Melzer 1979, 150) sowohl Abgaben als auch ausreichend Vorrat für die Herbergspflicht erwirtschaften musste. Da in Mattsee, wie so häufig, nur innerhalb der noch stehenden Kirche gegraben wurde, lässt sich über die architektonische Ausstattung und Entwicklung des Klosters kaum etwas aussagen.

Die Klöster wurden oft in altesiedelten Regionen, vornehmlich aber in dünn besiedelten Gebieten gegründet. Gerade Konvente mit einer überwiegend monastischen Gründungsintention wie Werden oder Hirsau liegen an Rändern der Siedlungslandschaft. In den Urkunden aus der Vorzeit Werdens wird deutlich, dass Liudger diese Art von Siedlungsdichte bevorzugte. Er sammelte und tauschte gezielt in der Region, um selbst genutzten, unbesiedelten Wald nahe des zukünftigen Klosters zu erhalten, aber in der Nähe bewirtschafteter Hufen zu sein (Lacomblet 1840, Nrn. 7, 11, 12 u. 13). Im Fall dicht besiedelter Regionen fanden die Konvente andere Wege der Isolation. Zum Beispiel wurde Reichenau auf einer Insel errichtet, Corvey in einer Flussschleife und Lorsch/Altenmünster auf einer Erhebung des Flüsschens Weschnitz. Häufig lagen die Gehöfte und Ländereien der Gründungsausstattung, die zur initialen Versorgung der Konvente herangezogen werden konnten, im Umfeld der Klosterstandorte, sodass mindestens eine partielle Erschließung des Siedlungsgebietes angenommen werden kann. Der Schenkungsumfang der Kirchen, Siedlungen und Gehöfte geht jedoch selten aus den Schriftquellen hervor, da das Zubehör zumeist formelhaft aufgezählt wird. In einigen Fällen bildeten sich relativ kurzfristig nach der Gründung in direkter Nachbarschaft zum Kloster profane Siedlungen, etwa bei Corvey oder Fulda. Bis auf die von Missionaren gegründeten Klöster Werden und Fulda lagen alle Fallbeispielklöster in sakral

Anlagenkonzept „Ideal“	Mentalität Funktion Sicherheit Versorgung	Initiator/Politik Wahrnehmung Topographie (Relief/Siedlung/Verkehr) Umwelt
Standortsuche	Verfügbarkeit Funktion	Stifter/Gründer Historische Situation Wahrnehmung
Klostererrichtung	Versorgung (Baumaterial, Nahrung, Wasser, Ausstattung)	Topographie (Siedlung/Verkehr) Ressourcen
Laufender Betrieb Monastisches Leben Nahrungsversorgung Handwerk Handel Herrschaft	Sicherheit Mentalität Versorgung/Ökonomie Garten- und Ackerbau Viehhaltung Wasser-/Waldwirtschaft Handwerk Handel Funktion Politik	Wahrnehmung Topographie (Relief/Siedlung/Verkehr) Umwelt Klima Besitz

Tabelle mit den möglichen Faktoren und Motiven zur Standortwahl eines Klosters (© Miriam Steinborn).

erschlossenen und somit christlich durchdrungenen Gebieten, wobei die Dichte der kartierten Kirchen in den Regionen variiert. Von den zehn Fallbeispielen lagen drei in der Nähe zu anderen Konventen und vier in der Nähe zu Bischofssitzen.

Trotz der schützenden Erhebungen im Umfeld der Klöster (s.o.) liegen sie prominent in der Landschaft. Auf Gemälden und Stichen tritt die Wirkung der (Halb-) Inseln und Berge besonders hervor. Neben dem abgeschiedenen Charakter *in eremo / in extremis* bleiben sie dennoch sichtbar und erfüllen somit die Funktion von Landmarken, die bei der Gründung durchaus intendiert gewesen sein kann (Meier 2009, 123-124, 140-142, 145). Neben Orientierungshilfen konnten diese Marken als Kennzeichen des Einflussbereiches in der Landschaft dienen, sei es zur Landeserschließung, Christianisierung usw. Dies wird besonders im Hinblick auf den bayrischen Raum und die Machtbestrebungen des Agilolfinger und anderer noblen Familien diskutiert (Prinz 1988, 413), oder im Hinblick auf die Beobachtung und Sicherung von Bistumsgrenzen (z.B. Chur: Sennhauser 2013, Frontispiz 3).

Diese Sichtbarkeit führt aber auch die Verwundbarkeit der Klöster vor Augen, die sie zu einem attraktiven Ziel für Angreifer machten. Wenn die wikingschen Invasionen auch erst nach dem beobachteten Zeitraum bedeutsam werden, anders als in der Gründungslegende Werdens in der *Vita Liudgeri* II beschrieben, sind generelle Sicherheitsüberlegungen bei der Gründung doch anzunehmen. So zeigt die Geschichte der Ungarneinfälle in St. Gallen, dass ein See sowohl schützende Pufferzone mit weiter Sicht als auch Fluchtweg sein kann. Es bleibt die Frage, was die des Kampfes ungeübten Mönche außerdem schützen sollte. Eine Kartierung der vorgeschichtlichen, römischen und frühmittelalterlichen Befestigungen zeigt, dass nicht selten potenzielle Rückzugsorte in der Nähe der

Klöster zu finden waren, etwa die Brunsburg bei Corvey, die Alteburg bei Werden oder der Rudersberg bei Hirsau. Dabei ist unklar, ob die Topografie ein unbewusstes oder bewusstes Anknüpfen an strategisch günstige Orte vorgab.

Fazit

Nimmt man die Einzelsituationen zusammen, ergeben sich bestimmte Tendenzen. Die Ideen der Initiatoren und Gründer, etwa Klöster als familiäre Kultstätte oder in dezidiert zurückgezogenheit, sind in den Anfängen teilweise erkennbar, doch wurden sie oft sehr bald von der historischen Realität überholt. Da der Zweck der Klöster neben der Kultpflege in der physischen Existenzerhaltung der Gemeinschaft liegt, verwundert der praktische Ansatz in der Standortwahl nicht. Bedingt durch die den Stiftern verfügbaren Ländereien lagen nicht selten kleinere Siedlungen mit erschlossenen Wirtschaftsflächen und Kirchen im Umfeld der Klöster, die als Teil der Gründungsausstattung die Versorgung der Klöster in der Gründungsphase sichern konnten. Die Präferenz einer bereits existierenden Kirche als Keimzelle der Konvente ist denkbar, auch wenn archäologische und historische Belege dünn sind. Die Lage inmitten verschiedener Bodentypen ermöglichte den Konventen eine agrarische Risikoverteilung. Die archäologische Auswertung der Klöster zeigt geringe Ansprüche an den Baugrund und die Trinkwasserversorgung, da oft Modifikationen des Terrains und Eingriffe in den lokalen Wasserhaushalt nachweisbar sind. Alle Klöster, auch in kaum besiedelten Gebieten, waren über Fernstraßen und/oder, zumindest saisonal, über Wasserwege für Produktlieferungen und Besucher erreichbar. Ihre Spenden bildeten einen Teil des klösterlichen Einkommens und trugen so zum Wachstum und dadurch zum Ruhm des Klosters und seines Stifters

bei. Diese Betriebsamkeit verwundert im Hinblick auf das monastische Einsamkeitsideal. Das geistige Ziel der Mönche ist jedoch die innere Isolation, sodass das Motiv der *solitudo* symbolisch gesehen werden kann und sich nicht räumlich auf die Umgebung des Klosters auswirken muss. Außerdem bietet die Klausur als abgeschlossener Raum den Rückzugsort des geweihten Klosterpersonals. Die Umwelt des Klosters mochte nur eine sekundäre Rolle spielen. Mystische Wundereingebungen treten in der historischen Überlieferung kaum auf, eher finden sich Landschaftsbeschreibungen. Das Motiv des *locus amoenus* als Symbol der Nutzbarkeit des Ortes erscheint vor dem Hintergrund der geschickten Auswahl von Regionalklima, Böden und Gewässern plausibel (*Nahmer 1973*, 237). Erfüllte der Standort die monastischen Ansprüche nicht, wurde er, wie in den Fällen von Corvey und vermutlich auch Scharnitz, verlassen. Die oben diskutierten Einzelfaktoren können im komplexen Prozess der Standortwahl nicht isoliert betrachtet werden, da sie einander beeinflussen. Die aufgezählten Beispiele bezeugen, dass es keine Richtlinie gab, an der sich die Klostergründer orientierten. Jede Gründung war ein singuläres Projekt unter eigenen Voraussetzungen.

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Privately founded Benedictine Monasteries in medieval Hungary – a case study

Pétermonostora, the monastery and a settlement without written history

*Edit Sárosi & Szabolcs Rosta **

ABSTRACT

The paper gives an overview on the development and morphological characteristics of privately founded Benedictine monastic complexes in medieval Hungary between 1000- 1300. More closely, the essay focuses on the affiliation and topography of the monastic sites in the Great Plain Region, drawing conclusions about the role of the monasteries in the contemporary settlement and road network, and their relations to noble residences. The discussion is supplemented with the case study of Pétermonostora, which is interpreted as a representative development model in the context of privately founded monasteries of this region.

Keywords: *Privately founded Benedictine monasteries, Pétermonostora, medieval Hungary.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Benediktiner Eigenklöster im mittelalterlichen Königreich Ungarn – eine Fallstudie:

Pétermonostora, das Kloster und die mittelalterliche Siedlung ohne schriftliche Geschichte

Die Studie gibt einen Überblick über die Bildung und den morphologischen Charakter der Benediktiner Eigenkirchen zwischen 1000 und 1300. Bei näherer Betrachtung fokussiert die Untersuchung auf die Verbindung und die Topographie der Klöster der Großen Ungarischen Tiefebene und zieht Rückschlüsse über die Rolle der Klöster in dem zeitgenössischen Netzwerk der Siedlungen und Wege und ihre Beziehungen mit Residenzen. Die Diskussion wird mit der Fallstudie des Klosters Pétermonostora erweitert, welches ein Beispiel für ein typisches Entwicklungsmodell im Rahmen der regionalen Eigenklöster ist.

Schlagwörter: *Benediktiner Eigenkirchen, Pétermonostora, mittelalterlichen Königreich Ungarn.*

* Katona József Museum,
Kecskemét, Hungary
edit.sarosi@freemail.hu
rosta@kkjm.hu

RÉSUMÉ

Les monastères bénédictins de fondation privée en Hongrie médiévale – une étude sur un cas précis : Pétermonostora, le couvent et l'agglomération médiévale sans histoire écrite
L'étude donne une vue globale sur l'évolution et les caractéristiques morphologiques des monastères bénédictins de fondation privée entre 1000 et 1300. La relation entre les monastères de la « grande plaine hongroise » et la topographie sera examinée plus particulièrement, permettant de tirer des conclusions

Early monastic communities in Hungary

Monasticism appeared from the 970s in the Hungarian territories, parallel with the Christianisation of the region and the formation of the medieval Hungarian kingdom. Among the various approaches of the surveys aimed at studying Hungarian monastic culture, there is one crucial point that almost all surveys agree: the exact number of the monastic communities in Hungary cannot be convincingly stated; moreover, it is difficult to explicitly confirm the filial connections of all communities, it is especially problematic in case of the early foundations (*Kosztá 2000; Takács 2001*).

Monasteries are increasingly represented in the documentary sources from the late eleventh- to twelfth-century documents onwards, in a period, when monasticism basically meant the Benedictine, the Cistercian and the Premonstratensian orders in this region. As regards for identification, the detection of early Premonstratensian and Cistercian houses seems less problematic in Hungary, since these highly centralised orders' central administration made regular notes on their communities (*F. Romhányi 2008*). The same is not true for the early Benedictine communities, as there are no documented regular, direct connections between the abbeys in the early period; the foundation and operation of early Benedictine houses were most probably approved and supervised by the responsible bishops, and no central recordings were made by the order. Despite the general lack and inconsistent nature of survived written documents about medieval Hungary, the histories of a number of Benedictine monasteries are well known from the sources. However, in many cases, not only the circumstances of the foundations, but also the history and in many case even the existence or the sites of the early communities are very difficult to detect.

The affiliation of early communities

Traditionally, Hungarian historiography divides Benedictine abbeys on the basis of the personality of the founder, which defines distinct chronological and

sur le rôle des monastères dans l'organisation des agglomérations et des routes qui leur sont contemporaines, ainsi que leur relation avec les résidences nobiliaires. La discussion est complétée par le cas précis du monastère de Pétermonostora, qui est interprété comme un modèle représentatif de l'évolution des monastères de fondation privée de cette région.

Mots-clés : *les monastères bénédictins de fondation privée, Pétermonostora, la Hongrie médiévale.*

legal groups, beside the topographical context of the communities. On this ground, there are basically two types of monastic houses in the medieval Hungarian Kingdom: royal monasteries founded by the king or the royal family, and privately founded monasteries, often referred to as 'kindred monasteries' by Hungarian scholarly literature. It is no surprise that the earliest monasteries were founded by the king and the royal family, for instance Pannonhalma (996), Zalavár (1019), Pécsvárad (1015), Bakonybél (ca. 1030), Tihany (1055), but as early as 1030-1040, the first Benedictine abbeys under private patronage were founded at Abasár, Feldebrő, and not much later further private abbeys were founded at Százd (1061) and Zselicszentjakab (1067). Interestingly, there are only scarce data on monasteries founded by bishops or other ecclesiastical institutions. All studies agree that the period between the 11th and 13th century can be interpreted as a flourishing period of monasticism; from about the total of 480 documented monasteries in Hungary, roughly the half were founded before 1400. According to the sources, the most active period of monastic foundations were the 12th and 13th century; by the mid-13th century there might have been around 160-180 Benedictine communities in the country, around half of which were founded by private persons (*Kosztá 2000 ; Szovák 2001; F. Romhányi 2008 ; Szócs 2014*).

The pattern of private monastic foundations in the Great Plain Region

In the overall pattern of the early Benedictine monasteries, it is striking that while the royal foundations dominate in the Transdanubian territories, east of the Danube the overwhelming majority of communities were founded by private individuals, or families (Fig. 1).

This means that while in the western part of the country monasticism was introduced by and with royal support, in the central-eastern regions the increasing wealth and political influence of the local noble families was notable. Groups or chains of monasteries can be observed in the regional distribution pattern of the monasteries in the

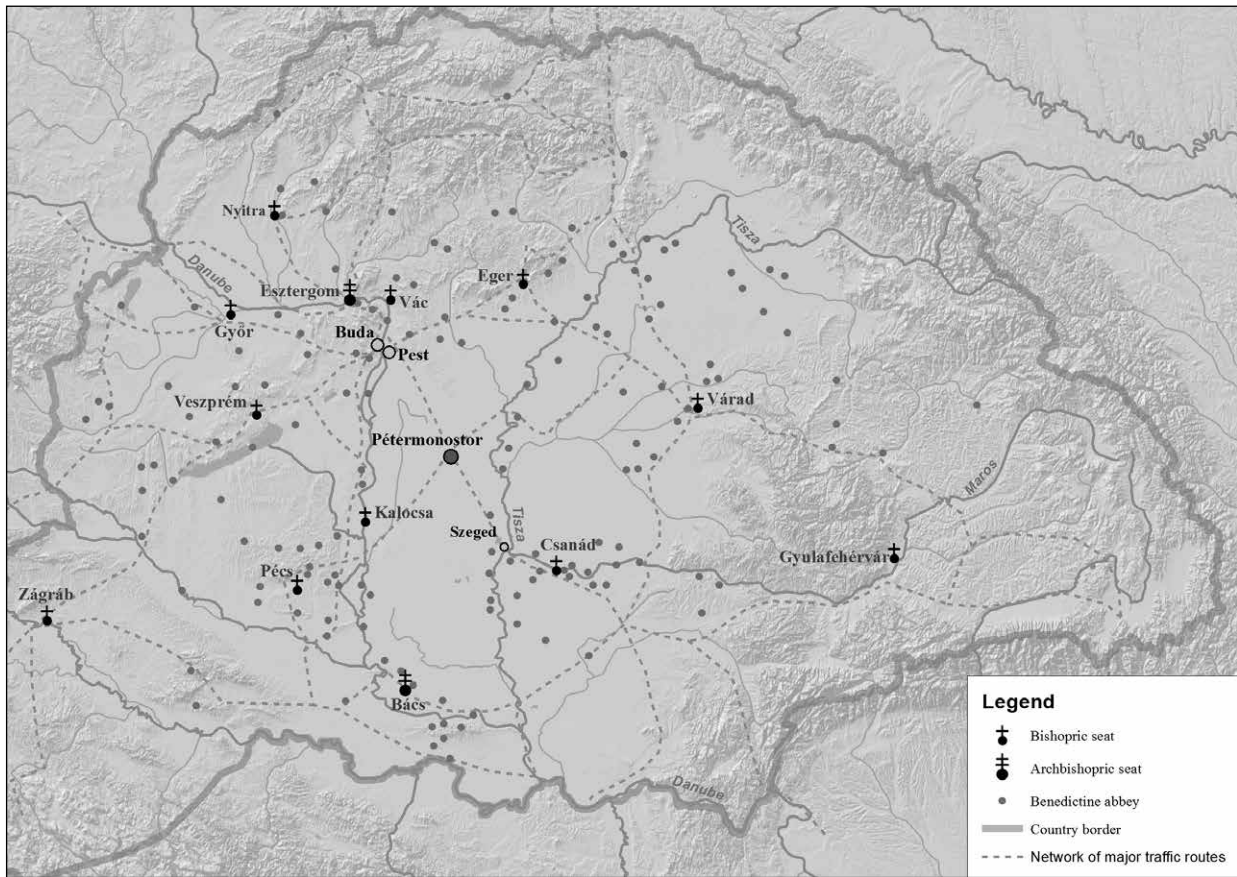


Fig. 1. Benedictine monasteries and major traffic routes in Hungary (11th to 13th century) (© István Pányi).

eastern and southern part of the Kingdom. These are obviously situated along major internal and international traffic and trade routes along the main rivers, such as the Danube, the Tisza and the Maros, which highlights the strategic importance of site selection (Kosztá 2000).

The most remarkable cluster of privately founded monastic houses is located along the Maros River, including Bizere (Frumușeni, Romania), Csanádmonostor (Cenad, Romania), Hodosmonostor (Bodrogu Vechi, Romania), Kenézmonostor (Nădlac, Romania), Kemece (unidentified, between Igrış and Cenad in Romania), Ajtonymonostor (unidentified, near Semlac, Romania), or Szőreg (today in the territory of Szeged, Hungary) and Pordány (Pordeanu, Romania). This chain of monasteries is obviously connected to the salt trade from Transylvania to the other parts of the country. The mining and distribution of salt remained one of the most important royal monopolies in the Árpádián Period (997-1301); it is suggested that around 6-10% of the total royal incomes originated from salt. One part of the extracted salt was stored and distributed through the royal salt chambers (*camera salium*), and another significant part of the salt trade was allocated as royal privilege to

various ecclesiastical institutions, including monasteries. The salt was cut in cubes and was carried by boat on the Maros River to Szeged, or by wagon to Szalacs (Salacea, Romania). Then, from these two main distribution centres salt was delivered to various parts of the country on the network of salt roads (*via salica*) (Szilágyi 2014).

The elite families attempted at having a share from the political as well economic advantages of this promising enterprise and were eager to get landed properties along the trading route where they found private monasteries. These institutions, being solidly built, fortified sites, were not only suitable for safely depositing goods, but could serve as accommodating facilities for royal dignitaries and office holders.

Another well noticeable cluster of monasteries is observable in the Szerémség/Srijem/Srim Region (today in Croatia and Serbia). Here again, all the monasteries were deliberately sited along the significant road leading towards Constantinople along the Danube. This route that followed the former Roman *limes* road, which was open for international traffic from the time of King Stephen I (997-1038). The richness of the early foundations in the 12th century, such as Aracs (Arača, Serbia),

Dombó (Rakovac, Serbia), Garáb (Grabovo, Serbia), or Bánmonostor (Banoštor, Serbia), denotes the strategic importance and outstanding economic prosperity of this area. This channel of transport was one main route of long distance trade between the western and the eastern territories. Besides, this road was one of the oldest military roads of medieval Hungary, often used by the king's army, but the troops of the Crusaders in 1096 and in 1147 also marched on this route. Moreover, western pilgrims often chose this overland itinerary to the Holy Land (*via Hierosolymitana*) (Szilágyi 2014).

Both historical and archaeological sources suggest that the early flowering of the monastic system stopped around the mid-13th century. Besides the physical destruction following the Mongol Invasion in 1241-42, in particular the royal reorganisation of the salt distribution and the settlement of the Cumans were the two key factors that had brought about the realignment of the estate structure along with the main traffic routes in the region. Besides, changes in the pattern of private sponsorship, as a result of the spreading of the mendicant orders, were among the main reasons why majority of these institutions both disappeared from the written documents and were abandoned as built features in the landscape. The deserted monasteries were finally listed in the larger group of deserted possessions from the 15th century, and apart from toponyms, and scant references in written documents or on maps, almost all memory of these institutions vanished.

The morphology of the monastic sites

The study of connections between monasteries and private founders, especially noble kindred constitutes a distinct research area within the fields of history, art history and archaeology in Hungarian scholarship (Fügedi 1991; Marosi 1996; Szűcs 2014). According to recent discussions the foundation and patronage of monasteries were part of the concept of the social elite, who, influenced by the royal model, stated and testified their power and prestige through such costly representative investments. Sources suggest that private foundations were always made by individuals, but due to the special inheritance laws, the monasteries were often referred to as being in the collective patronage of different members of the family. In that regard, an important purpose of founding a private monastery was to link the different branches of the kindred, as they are known to serve as common burial places and centres for veneration of the common ancestors. Still, the conception behind the foundations was more complex than that: monasteries were valuable and strategic part of the founder's immobile properties. In theory, the monastic communities were only subjected to ecclesiastical principals, and functioned independently from the founder based on the facilities provided: the *ius*

patronatus only consisted of a number of personal rights (*ius praesentationis, ius sepulturae, ius spoliis*, etc.), which the church provided in exchange for the establishment of the monastery. In reality, most of the private monasteries remained integral part of the patron's domain who possessed full proprietary rights and controlled the administration of the monastic estate. However, the control of the patrons gradually weakened after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). In fact, most of the monasteries were located in the heartlands of the founders' landed properties, and were surrounded by the estates of their patrons (Szűcs 2014).

There has been little attention given to the situation that monasteries were not only consciously established in the heartlands of the estates of the founder families, but, more closely, they were built in settlements, which – from chronological point of view – often preceded the date of the monasteries' foundation. Unfortunately, in most cases the surveys focused on the monastery itself, its ground-plan and art historic compositions, beside the fragmentary data of written sources, and only deficient archaeological information is available about the settlement at which they were established. Survey reports usually mention that 'around the monastic complex' the archaeological material of large settlements were observed and collected, but hardly any systematic research had been conducted, such as in case of Szermonostor, Ellésmonostor, Csoltmonostor, Pétermonostor or Bátmonostor (Pávai 2000; Juhász 2000; Vályi 2010; Biczó 1985; Rosta 2014)

An important observation regarding the context of connections between Benedictine monasteries and the surrounding settlements is that a separate parish church was commonly built not far (100-200m) from the monastic complex. It means that monasteries, although located within villages, lay apart from the spiritual needs of the villagers, who attended mass in a separate parish church and were buried in the churchyard cemetery surrounding it.

Another important, however unexplored factor is the connections between the founder's residence and the monastery. We do not know, especially in the context of the earlier period, whether the founder have already had permanent or temporary dwelling or residence at the sites of monastic foundations in the Great Plain Region. Considering the strong social, spiritual and economic correlations between the monastic sites and the estate structure of the patrons, it is likely that the site of the monastery was deliberately selected to be near to the residence of the patrons. However, there are examples when the monastery was established at a recently acquired estate, e.g. Zselicszentjakab, which was outside the inherited estates of the Győr kindred. For the later period, there are some well documented cases for that model. For instance, at Szer, where the Szeri Pósa family

located their residence, which apparently stimulated the urban development of the local settlement, mentioned as *oppidum* in the 15th century (Vályi 2010).

Case study: Pétermonostora, the medieval monastery and the settlement

Pétermonostora is located 22 km south-east of Kecskemét in the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium Region, in the territory of the former Monostor estate, that is the outskirts of the present-day Bugac village. Until recently, Pétermonostora was one of the less known minor deserted medieval monastic sites of the Great Plain Region. Due to the general lack of detailed documentary sources, and the limited nature of archaeological surveys, the site displayed the common features of research situation regarding many early privately founded monasteries in Hungary. The results of the latest archaeological survey fundamentally expanded the frameworks for interpreting the site, thus it is worthwhile to present it as a case study for displaying a representative development model.

Documentary sources and research

The first record that can be connected to Pétermonostora dates from 1219, when a certain Stephan is mentioned together with members of the *Beche* kindred, as the abbot of St Peter's monastery. Not much later, in 1258, members of the same *Beche* kindred, made an agreement about the patronage of *monasterium Peturmonustra*. Then the territory disappears from the written documents, and only appears in the sources almost a century later, in 1347, when *possessio Peturmonustra* and *Palmonustra* with their appurtenances were in the property of *Töttös of Beche*. In 1349, Lucas of *Peturmonustra* and his sons committed themselves to hand over the privilege letters that had been issued by King Béla IV concerning the estates of *Peturmonustora* and the neighbouring *Palmonustora* to the same *Töttös of Beche*. Unfortunately, none of the mentioned privileges was described in the document. In 1359, new owners, Nicholas, son of Paul, and Martin, son of Elias were introduced into the possessions of *Peturmonustra* and *Palmonustra*, in county Pest. From the 15th century onwards the territory is mentioned without any definite reference to the monastery as *possessio Pétermonostora*. During the Ottoman occupation, the territory was attached to the *sanjak* of Buda as a deserted land, used by the inhabitants of Kecskemét. The territory appears as being deserted in written sources until the late 18th century, when the first isolated farmsteads appeared. Then the territory was united with the neighbouring deserted land Bugac, later fully owned by the town Kecskemét. The estate became (re)populated in the 19th century (for detailed references of historical documents see *Sárosi 2003*).

The first reference to archaeological research in this area originates from the 1880s, when scholars from the Hungarian National Museum excavated the church ruin in the southern part of Monostor. Unfortunately, no detailed report had survived about this project, except for a fragment of a Limoges-type pectoral cross, and the drawing of the ground plan of the excavated church. In the 1930s, Kálmán Szabó and László Papp carried out small-scale archaeological excavations at Monostor, both in the southern Alsómonostor, and the northern Felsőmonostor part. Regrettably, Szabó only gave a short overview on his research in his book and presented the layout of a small church excavated at Felsőmonostor. It was a simple single nave building with a semi-circular apse. Interestingly, Szabó did not connect his findings to the monastery; he referred the building as a parish church and a churchyard cemetery (*Szabó 1938*). The territory of Bugac Monostor was first connected with Pétermonostora by György Györffy, who identified the monastic site with the church formerly excavated by Szabó (*Györffy 1963*).

The modern interdisciplinary research of Monostor began in 2000, when intensive field surveys located the site of the monastery, moreover, mapped the medieval settlement network of the area, including two large, village-type nuclei, which have not been referred to in the documentary sources (*Sárosi 2003*). The monastery and the settlement of Pétermonostora had been archaeologically surveyed between 2009 and 2011 in the framework of the IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme, a research project of the Katona József Museum (*Rosta 2014*).

The architectural history of the monastery

The most recent excavations at Pétermonostora revealed that the monastery was established at the site of an early row cemetery dating from the 11th to 12th century, which was abandoned around 1130-50, precisely dating the earliest monastic structures. This earliest complex included the abbey church and a separate stone building east of it, which might have been the monastery, or the noble *curia* of the founder. Not much later, a small side-chapel with semi-circular apse was constructed between the church and the building, which were probably used by the monks by that time. Parallel, this eastern cloister wing was enlarged and its foundation was strengthened, suggesting that one storey was added to its structure. In that phase the complex was encircled with a simple stone wall creating a 28m by 14m rectangular inner cloister yard (Fig. 2).

The next significant rebuilding phase of the monastery can be dated to the early decades of the 13th century. In that period, the cloister yard was levelled as the western and the northern wings of the monastery were built. At the same time the abbey church was significantly enlarged; the total length of the church

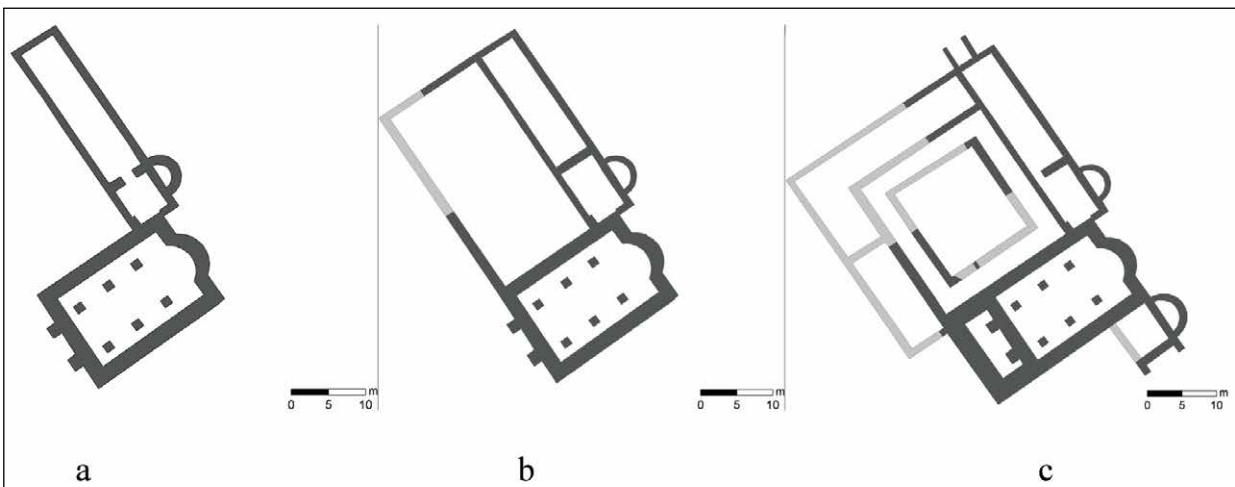


Fig. 2. The archaeological plan of the monastery at Pétermonostora; (a) ca. 1150; (b) end of the 12th century; (c) early 13th century (© Szabolcs Rosta).

had become 29m, its width was 14.5m. The basilica-type ground plan of the church consisted of a nave and two aisles, which were separated by three pairs of piers. The main nave was semi-circular, the two side aisles had straight ends. The choir was separated from the main nave by a brick-built rood screen. In addition, a solid, 1.6m by 1.6m tetragonal foundation of a possible altar was documented in the central axis of the main nave,

meaning that the church had been used most probably as a parish at that time. The massive west porch and a southern side chapel were also added to the church in that period. Unfortunately, larger part of the western porch had been destroyed by modern construction works, thus its original structure cannot be definitely reconstructed. Still, the massive, 2.6m-wide foundations suggest that the porch included two western towers. The prosperity



Fig. 3. Enameled reliquary of St. Peter from Pétermonostora (Rhine Region, c. 1180) (© Ferenc Veszely).

of the site is reflected in the lavishness of the finds: the abundant usage of limestone is in itself remarkable as this area basically lacks stone as raw material. The presence of the red, marble-quality limestone, and the beautiful carved architectural details all represent the wealth and affluence of the patron family. Beside the architectural details, the lavish archaeological find assemblages also highlight that the greatest flowering period of the monastery was around the turn of the 13th century. One remarkable find from the site is the St Peter reliquary made ca. 1180 in the Upper Rhine region, and the several gilt, enamelled pieces originating from Limoges (Fig. 3).

It seems that the quick expansion of the monastery

stopped in the second half of the 13th century: the complex is basically missing from documentary sources from that time; moreover there is a clear hiatus of coin finds from that period. Regrettably, the archaeological context of this period does not allow drawing definite conclusions whether the monastery was destroyed during the Mongol Invasion in 1241-42, or abandoned in the second half of the 13th century. However, it is apparent that by the early decades of the 14th century, the buildings were deserted and deliberately knocked down. Many relics of the monastic culture were intentionally destroyed, as it is testified by a huge, burnt, ashy pit that was uncovered in the middle of the church, filled with metal book bindings and mounts, fittings of pectoral crosses, pieces of stone figurines (Rosta 2014) (Fig. 4).

The settlement of Pétermonostora in the context of the monastery

The medieval documentary sources mention no settlements in connection with Pétermonostora. One could suppose that the monastery was founded far from inhabited places, resembling a hermitage in the 'wilderness'. Since there were some references to medieval settlement features in the earlier archaeological reports, one ambition of the current research was to explore and study the settlement network around the monastery in order to place the monastery into a proper topographical context. Accordingly, parallel with the investigation of the monastic site, the medieval settlement network has been mapped by the results of systematic field survey, aerial photos and limited archaeological testing (Fig. 5).

The evaluation of the available data highlighted that both the closer and the wider surroundings of the monastery at Pétermonostora had been relatively densely populated throughout the medieval period. There were two main foci of habitation, one at the southern Alsómonostor part of the territory, which been deserted at latest in the early 14th century, and another large settlement was located at the northern Pétermonostora part of the surveyed area, at and around the monastic complex. The assembled information revealed that there are significant differences in the pattern of habitation in the earlier period and the later, 14th- to 16th-century phase. The transformation in the settlement network not only manifested in the extension of the sites, but also the quality and quantity of find material differed from various periods and sites.

The village at Pétermonostora was populated from at least the 11th century, as is attested by the early cemetery, which was given up when the first monastic buildings were constructed around 1130-50. The settlement most probably reached its biggest extension around the turn of the 12th and 13th century, simultaneously with the most flowering period of the monastery. In



Fig. 4. Selected finds from the monastic site (© Szabolcs Rosta).

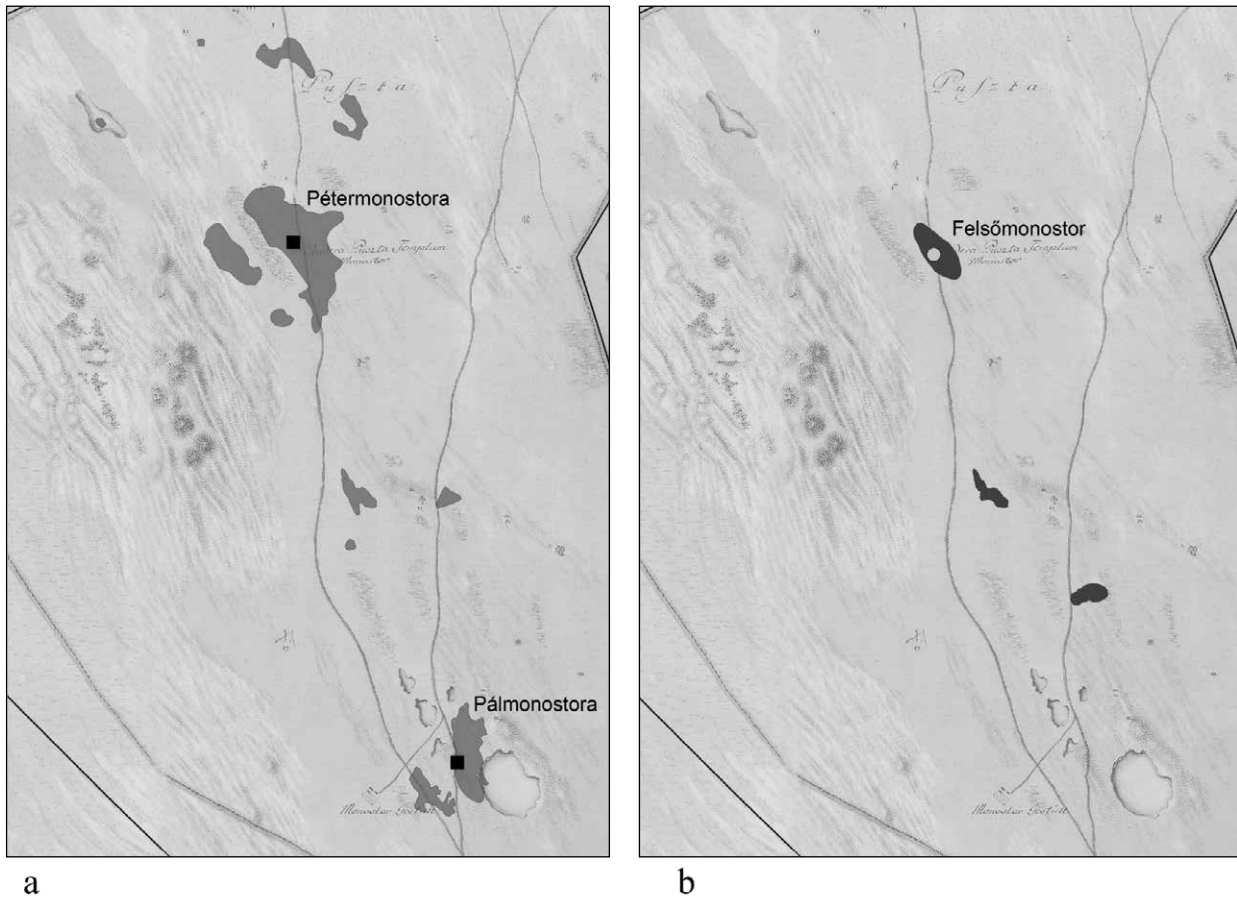


Fig. 5. The archaeological topography of Monostor in (a) the Árpádian Period (10th to 13th century), and (b) in the 14th to 16th century period, as projected on the First Ordnance Survey of Hungary mapped in 1783 (© István Pányi).

that period, the core area of the settlement extended to an approximately 1800 by 800m² area, which was surrounded by smaller dispersed settlement parts. This phase produced the most lavish finds from the settlement, including numerous gold, or gilt cast bronze artefacts and jewellery, abundant coin finds, as well as significant metal assemblages, such as bronze scales, iron tools and plentiful pottery (Rosta 2014, figs. 32-36).

The pastoral care and cemetery of the early population was managed by the abbey church which was the earliest church of the settlement, and most probably functioned also as parish church, as it is indicated by the presence of the rood screen and the outer altar, and by the presence of the cemetery around the church. Until the turn of the 13th and 14th century the surroundings of the abbey church and the cloister yard had been used as the cemetery of the community: 550 graves were excavated in that area from the 12th- to 13th-century period. It is striking that eight houses were documented with stone-built foundations among the surface features of the settlement beside around one hundred additional wattle-and-daub house-sites. Although no regular street

system had been confirmed from the early period of the site, one remarkable observation in connection with the early settlement is that both the monastery and the village were laid out along a north-south oriented road that had been depicted from the earliest 18th-century maps and is still in use.

In contrast to the early period, the late medieval village was a smaller, nucleated street village that mainly occupied the northwest- to southeast-oriented, elevated sand ridge north of the monastery. So far, approximately 15 to 20 houses or house plots have been identified from the late medieval period. Apparently, the site and close surroundings of the monastery was not used for regular habitation as no late-medieval settlement features were excavated at the complex, which was deserted by that time. In that period the community built and used a new, small single-nave church 80m south of the monastic complex, which building was identified with the church explored by Kálmán Szabó in the 1930s. The earliest graves from this churchyard cemetery correspond with the latest graves near the monastery, dating from the turn of the 13th to 14th century. The later medieval

phase produced significant and abundant finds material, as well; the thin, pressed silver ornaments and jewellery, and the coins are especially notable. Interestingly, some of the uncovered finds can be defined as artefacts typically connected to Cuman population, such as earrings with spherical ornaments, question-mark-shaped earrings, oval stirrups with bent tread, or maces. However, it is unclear whether this means that Cuman people actually lived at Pétermonostora in the late medieval period (*Rosta 2014*, fig. 37 and fig. 43).

Although the settlement did not reach the area and material quality of the earlier period, the archaeological finds suggest that it was an average-sized village with the standard material culture known from other locations in the region until the mid-16th century, when it was finally deserted.

Conclusions

The archaeological survey at Pétermonostora significantly contributed to the understanding of privately founded monasteries in medieval Hungary. The results allow us to draw both general and specific conclusions. The extension, range and quality of finds material from Pétermonostora emphasise its regional as well nationwide significance among early Benedictine monasteries. As regards methodology, attention must be drawn to the interdisciplinary approach towards monastic site which considerably expanded the framework of interpretation: it is now possible to sum up the history of the deserted monastery and the settlement which are poorly endowed with documentary evidences.

The survey confirmed that the monastic complex at Pétermonostora was established in the middle of a previously populated area, and was surrounded by an intensive belt of infield structures. With regard to the monastery, one of the main debates has arisen about the reason and process of its desertion after its short-lived flourishing around the turn of the 12th to 13th century. Although there is no direct archaeological proof that the area was directly affected by the Mongol Invasion, it is obvious that there was a serious break in the development of the site in the second half of the 13th century. The life at the settlement restarted in the first half of the 14th century when a new church was built not far from the deserted monastery, and the houses of the nucleated street village were placed in a planned order.

The evidences suggest that Pétermonostora was among the important regional centres and part of the long-distance traffic network in the Árpadian Period. It was observable that the main core of the settlement together with the monastery, and all the dispersed settlement parts were oriented and aligned along a road, which is represented on historical maps and is still detectable today. According to

the available evidence, this road can be identified as part of a main traffic route leading from Szeged to Buda in the Árpadian Period. This road, correspondingly to the Maros region, possibly passed private Benedictine monasteries, such as Dorozsmamonostora and Pétermonostora, and possibly the royal Premonstratensian provostry at Ócsa, before arriving at Pest and Buda. Yet, the pattern of settlements significantly transformed in the 13th century, especially after the Mongol Invasion (1241-42), when, along with major transformations in the political and economic system, a significant wave of settlement desertion is documented. The immigration and settlement of the Cumans was another important aspect of the development in the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium Region. This realignment generated the emergence of a new estate structure in the area, and modified the settlement system, as well as land management practices (*Sárosi 2009; 2013; Rosta 2014*). Obviously, parallel with these processes, the regional pattern of traffic routes changed considerably in the region, as the main track of the *via magna* between Szeged and Pest was relocated towards the eastern border of the Cuman settlement area, passing by the developing market towns of Félégyháza, Kecskemét, Kőrös and Cegléd, but avoiding the central territories where Pétermonostora is located.

Eventually, irrespectively of the fact whether the monastery was physically destroyed by the Mongols, or continued to exist for some more decades, the territory got into unfavourable setting in the middle of the Cuman settlement area by the 14th century, which significantly influenced its future prospects. At last, the disappearance of the former position in the settlement hierarchy was the final reason why Pétermonostora was not viable in the late medieval period.

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The Byzantine settlement of Shivta in the Negev Desert and its churches

An analysis of their spatial arrangement within the settlement and its social implications

Constanze Röhl *

ABSTRACT

The Byzantine settlement of Shivta is located in the central Negev Desert within the context of the contemporary settlements of Rehovot, Mampsis, Eboda, Nitzana, Elusa and Horvat Sa'adon, ca. 43 km southwest of the modern city of Beersheba. At the latest during the course of the 6th century, the settlement underwent modifications of differing levels due to the building of three clerical complexes; the 'Southern', 'Central' and 'Northern' church, two of which became incorporated into former domestic dwellings and one being part of a supposed monastic complex. The churches of Shivta might very well, apart from their implications concerning religious changes, have provided a further economic factor due to an increased influx of pilgrims who crossed the region on their way to Sinai. Even though the churches of the Negev Desert show some definite traits that are characteristic exclusively to the region, the rather abrupt appearance of a larger number of clerical buildings within one small settlement itself must be seen as part of a phenomenon within the wider context of the Eastern Mediterranean. This paper presents the churches of Shivta and tries to reconstruct aspects of society and economy by analysing their positioning within the settlement as well as the surrounding landscape. It is part of an ongoing project to analyse the settlement of Shivta in a supra-regional context via the Space Syntax Method. This Method is a set of techniques used in contemporary city planning for analysing settlements as networks of space formed by the placing, grouping, and orientation of buildings; and observing how these networks of space relate to functional patterns like movement, land use, area differentiation, etc. Furthermore, based on these empirical observations, it is possible to assess how urban space networks relate in general to the social, economic and cognitive factors that shape them.

* Römisch-Germanisches
Zentralmuseum, Mainz, Germany
roehl@rgzm.de

Keywords: *Space Syntax Analysis, Byzantine settlement, Byzantine agriculture, Byzantine churches.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Kirchen der byzantinischen Siedlung Shivta in der Negev-Wüste: Eine Space Syntax Analyse zur Positionierung der sakralen Bauten innerhalb der Siedlung und zur Entwicklung eines Szenario der Sozialstruktur

Die ländliche Siedlung Shivta liegt in der zentralen Negev-Wüste im Umfeld der byzantinischen Orte Ruheibeh, Mamshit, Eboda, Nessana, Elusa und Saadi, etwa 43 km südwestlich des modernen Beersheba. Spätestens im 6. Jh. sah der Ort strukturelle Änderungen unterschiedlicher Tragweite: Zwei Kirchen, eine im südlichen sowie eine weitere im zentralen Bereich wurden in bereits bestehende Gebäude inkorporiert, eine weitere Anlage entstand vermutlich als Kloster im Nordosten. Diese Entwicklung könnte unabhängig von ihrem religiösen Aspekt zu einer wachsenden wirtschaftlichen Bedeutung der Sinai-Pilger für die sonst stark auf die Landwirtschaft ausgerichtete Siedlung geführt haben. Obgleich die Sakralbauten der Negev-Wüste ausgeprägte regionale Charakteristika aufweisen, muss das abrupt erscheinende Auftreten einer verhältnismäßig hohen Anzahl christlicher kultischer Bauten innerhalb einer Siedlung als Ausdruck eines weiter verbreiteten Phänomens im östlichen Mittelmeerraum betrachtet werden. Der vorliegende Beitrag stellt, basierend auf der Positionierung der Bauten innerhalb des Siedlungskontextes sowie der umgebenden Landschaft, als Teilanalyse einer überregionalen Studie, ein mögliches Szenario der Sozialstrukturen und sozio-ökonomischen Gegebenheiten mittels der *Space Syntax Analyse* vor. Diese Methode wurde aus den Anforderungen zeitgenössischer Städteplanungen entwickelt. Sie analysiert Siedlungen als räumliche Netzwerke, welche durch die Anordnung, Gruppierung und Orientierung von Gebäuden gebildet werden. Diese Netzwerke wiederum werden hinsichtlich ihres Bezuges zu funktionalen Aspekten wie Bewegungsmustern, Landnutzung und Raumnutzung ausgewertet. Auf dieser Basis kann untersucht werden, wie urbane räumliche Netzwerke mit sozialen, ökonomischen und kognitiven Faktoren zusammenhängen.

Schlagwörter: *Space Syntax Analyse, byzantinische Siedlung, byzantinische Landwirtschaft, byzantinischer Kirchenbau.*

Introduction

The Byzantine settlement of Shivta, known to scholars since the late 19th century, is situated at about 43 km to the southwest of the modern city of Beersheba in the arid northern hilly region of the Central Negev Desert at 340 m above sea level in the Nahal Lavan; in the context of a strongly frequented route system in the hinterland of 'Incense and Spice Route', Via Maris and 'King's Highway' (Fig. 1).

RÉSUMÉ

Les églises du village byzantine de Shivta au Désert du Néguev : Une analyse par « Space Syntax » concernant leur arrangement et les implications sociales

Le village byzantin de Shivta est situé dans le centre du Désert du Néguev près des villages contemporains de Rehovot, Mampsis, Eboda, Nitzana, Elusa et Horvat Sa'adon, à environ 43 km au sud-ouest de la ville moderne de Beersheba. Au plus tard durant le VI^{ème} siècle, le village est l'objet de modifications plus ou moins importantes liées à la construction de trois complexes cléricaux ; les églises « sud », « centre » et « nord », dont les deux premières sont intégrées à des bâtiments déjà existants et la troisième à un supposé complexe monastique au nord-est. Le développement de l'agglomération, parallèlement aux aspects religieux, est aussi lié à son rôle économique et agricole en relation avec l'accroissement de l'afflux de pèlerins traversant la région lors de leur parcours vers le Sinäi. Même si les édifices religieux du Désert du Néguev montrent des traits caractéristiques de la région, la rapide construction d'un nombre relativement élevé de lieux de culte chrétiens dans une petite implantation rurale doit être interprétée dans le contexte plus large de la Méditerranée orientale. En se basant sur la position des églises dans le village de Shivta ainsi que dans le paysage environnant, cet article tente de présenter un scénario des structures sociales et des réalités socio-économiques. Cette étude fait partie d'un projet en cours dont le but est d'analyser le village de Shivta dans un contexte supra-régional par la *Space Syntax Method* (méthode de syntaxe spatiale). Cette méthode est utilisée dans l'urbanisme contemporain, analysant les sites urbains comme réseaux d'espace, formées par le placement, le groupement et l'orientation des bâtiments. Elle permet d'observer la relation de ces réseaux avec des aspects fonctionnels comme par exemple le mouvement, l'occupation du sol, l'occupation des différents espaces etc. Se fondant sur ces observations, il est possible de déterminer les relations des réseaux d'espace urbains avec les facteurs sociaux, économiques et cognitifs.

Mots-clés : *méthode de syntaxe spatiale, village byzantin, agriculture byzantine, églises byzantines.*

Shivta might have come into existence during the 4th century, as indicated by undocumented excavations during the 1930s (in fact, it seems that the documentation got lost during the Arab Revolt) and continued to exist in some form until the 8th/9th century (Moor 2013); contemporary to the settlements of Rehovot, Mampsis, Eboda, Nitzana, Elusa and Horvat Sa'adon which can be located within a maximum radius of 40 km from Shivta. Each of the

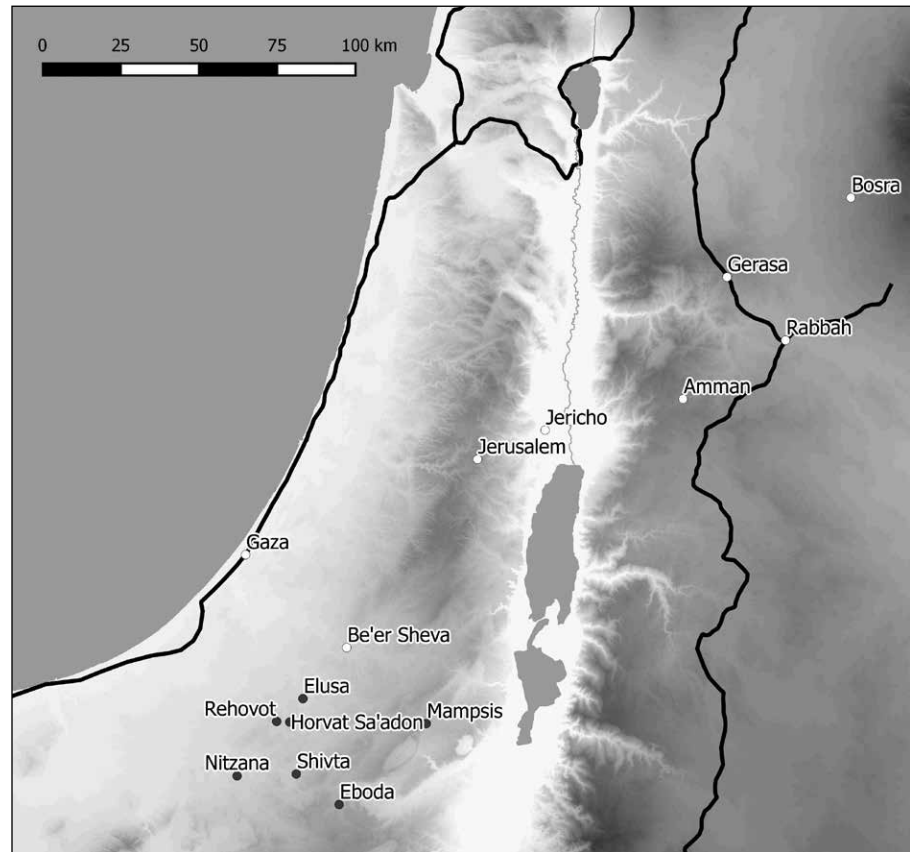


Fig. 1. Negev Desert in antiquity
(© Rainer Schreg).

Negev settlements has its very own unique characteristics concerning architecture and layout, and presumably also concerning its economy. The only common denominators are the regional and chronological aspects.

The complexity of the architecture present at Shivta implies a multifaceted society. This idea is further propagated by the presence of various agricultural installations in its vicinity. In particular in an arid region with limited access to water, but also in regard to the presence of nomadic groups in the Negev Desert, access to and use of resources must have been coordinated via highly differentiated regulations. By means of applying the Space Syntax Method, a technique used in contemporary city planning, an attempt will be undertaken to reconstruct a potential scenario of the society present at Shivta. The Space Syntax Method is a set of techniques used in contemporary city planning for analysing settlements as networks of space formed by the placing, grouping, and orientation of buildings. Observing how these networks of space relate to functional patterns like movement, land use, area differentiation etc., it is possible to assess how urban space networks relate in general to the social, economic and cognitive factors that shape them. The topic addressed in the following deals with three main questions. Does the analysis of spatial properties and patterns of movement relating to the three churches in the

settlement indicate different groups of users? If so, how might these relate to the architecture of Shivta in general? Which further conclusions regarding the settlements' society might this imply?

The settlement of Shivta

According to a survey conducted in 2009 (Röhl 2011), Shivta comprises 75 domestic dwellings, 29 service buildings, two buildings of a potential administrative function and three churches, one of these part of a supposed monastic complex within an area of 113.100 m² (Fig. 2). They all were built using the three different varieties of limestone local to the region and featuring a quite unique type of building ornamentation.

Dealing with the settlement's youngest phase during the Byzantine era, as later alterations can widely be excluded as non-existent, the domestic architecture can be categorized in groups based on repetitive features. In order to start from a neutral point of analysis and contrary to typological approaches, neither a unified societal consensus concerning the legitimisation of building types; nor a hierarchical development from simple to complex on the basis of supposed vertical societal structures is being assumed. Each building was the result of complex social, historical and environmental preconditions.

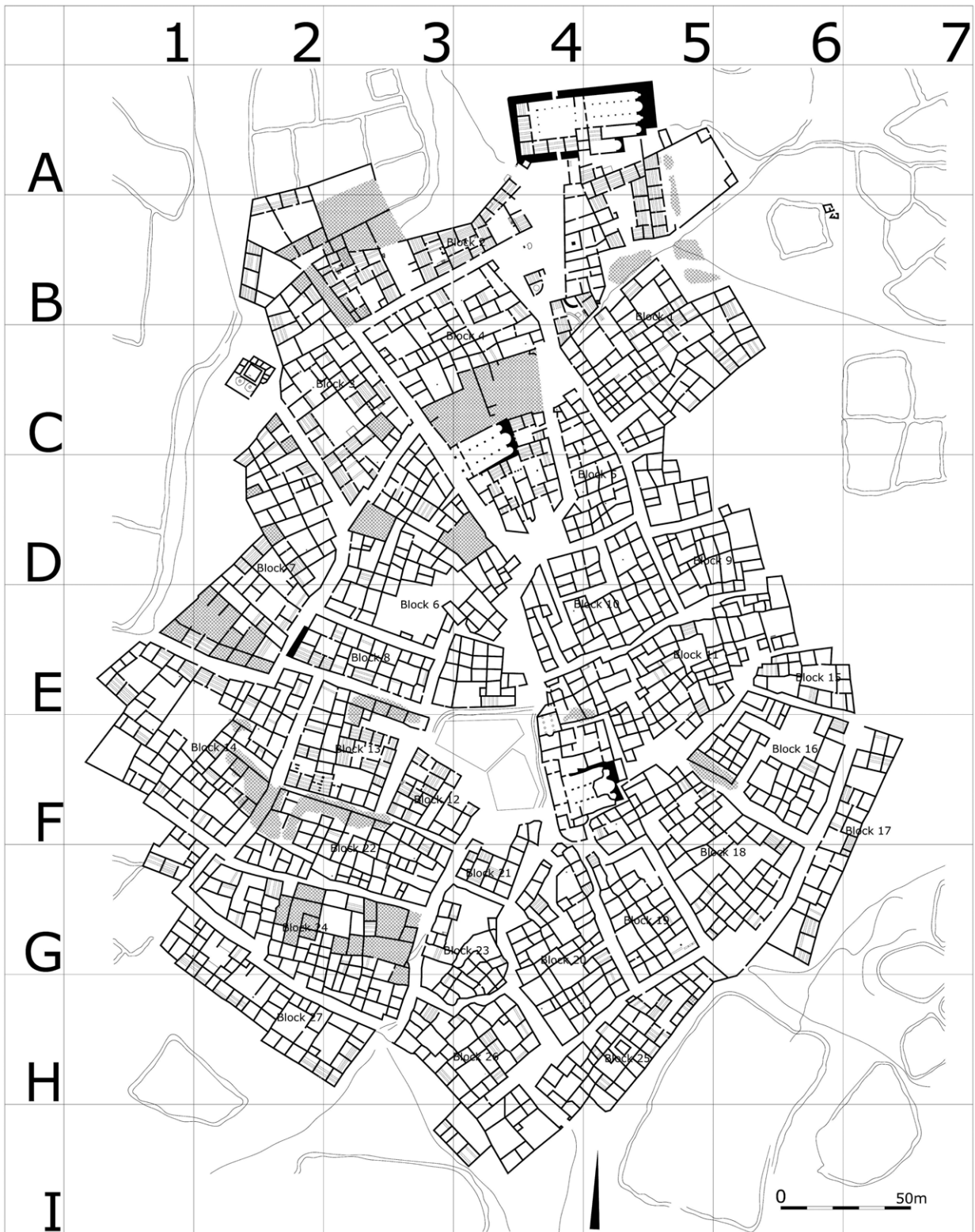


Fig. 2. Shiota: complete map of settlement (© Constanze Röhl).



Fig. 3. Shivta: aerial view of 'South Church' with adjoining reservoirs from northwest (© Itamar Grinberg).

Based on the classification established by Yizhar Hirschfeld for Roman-Byzantine domestic dwellings (Hirschfeld 1995), the three basic structural types of 'Simple House', 'Complex House' and 'Courtyard House' can be discerned; leaving aside the multitude of variants present at Shivta for the purpose of this study. The 'Simple House' consists of at least one room behind or in front of an open courtyard area. It can also feature rooms on two sides of the courtyard or a tower. The 'Complex House' consists of rooms on three or more sides of a courtyard. It proves often to be an organically grown expansion of the 'Simple House'.

The 'Courtyard House' features a layout with rooms on four sides of the courtyard.

As there are no permanent sources of water in the region, and the groundwater is very brackish, a sophisticated system of cisterns, reservoirs and channels to collect rainwater allowed the permanent habitation of the site all year round.

Even though often postulated, there is no evidence for a Roman or Nabatean origin of the settlement; still it must be noted, that its two central water reservoirs are thought to date before the Byzantine period (Erickson-Gini 2012). Shivta was partially excavated during the 1930s by the Colt Expedition (Segal 1983), but neither

finds nor documentation survived; the question of its exact chronology is further complicated and at this point has to remain open. OSL dates provide evidence for the use of agricultural structures in the vicinity from the 3rd until the 11th century AD (Avni et al. 2013).

The churches of Shivta were the subject of a PhD thesis by Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom in 1982 stating that, in general, the churches of the Negev Desert do not differ markedly from those in other regions (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1982). The typical layout is that of a three-naved basilica oriented to the east with three portals in the West and a tripartite eastern part, which can either feature one apse with adjoining rooms on both sides or three apses. Further entrances in the side walls are possible. Inside, rows of pillars divide the naves, slightly elevated sanctuaries can be found either in the central aisle or in all three. Altar, *synthronon* (the place for the assembly of the clergy, situated in the apse of a church) and ambo constitute the main furnishings. Mosaics, marble incrustations, frescoes and sculptured building elements, none of which in the case of Shivta remain *in situ* as they were completely dismantled in the 1930s by the Colt Expedition, are common means of ornamentation. Mosaics, marble incrustations,



Fig. 4. Shivta: aerial view of 'Middle Church' from northwest (© Itamar Grinberg).

frescoes and sculptured building elements are common means of ornamentation. In the case of Shivta, none of these remained *in situ* as they were completely dismantled in the 1930s by the Colt Expedition. The central nave was presumably covered by a saddle roof, the sides with pitched roofs. There is also no obvious microregional differentiation which, in combination with the lack of absolute dates, provides a difficulty concerning the chronology. Therefore, the churches of Shivta can only roughly be classified as belonging

to the latest phase in the development of religious buildings in the region, albeit with reservation as modifications cannot be excluded.

The dimensions of the 'South Church' (Fig. 3), excavated by the Colt Expedition, are 23,35 x 17,30 m. The main entrance is in the west via a vestibule. The building is divided into seven bays by a row of six columns and two pilasters on each side. Its three apses are not on the same axis, so that the southern wall is slightly tilted to the south. The lateral apses have niches with

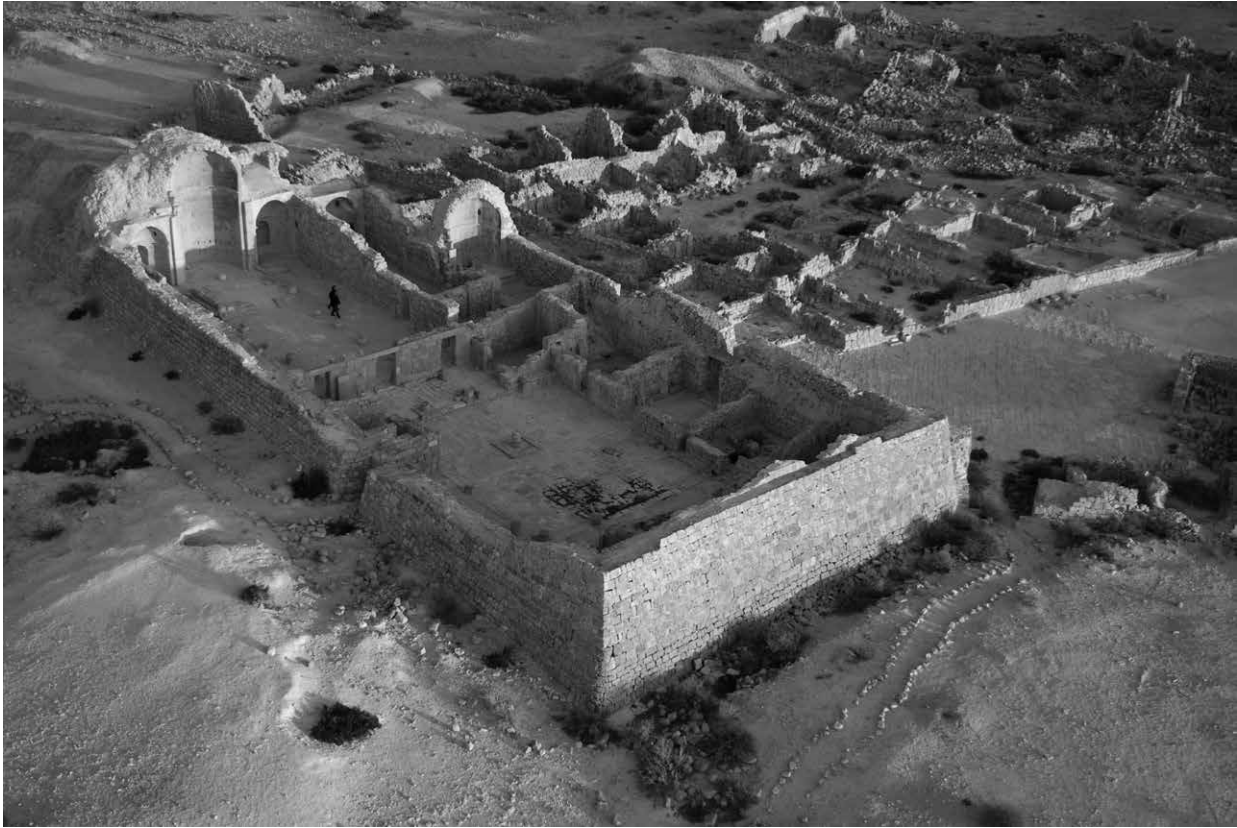


Fig. 5. Shivta: aerial view of 'North Church' with adjoining monastical complex from northwest (© Itamar Grinberg).

semi-domes designed to hold reliquaries and frescoes. The topics of the latter cannot be specified today. To the north of the church is a *baptisterium* with a monolithic cruciform baptismal font and a chapel. An inscription dates the floor in the southern nave to the year 640 AD. Another inscription on a door lintel suggests a potential date in the 5th century for the construction of the building. The church was incorporated into an already existing building, possibly a towered farmstead. A proposed interpretation as potential headquarters of the clerical administration with an adjoining guest house (*Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1982*) is debatable as it lacks any further evidence. In the 9th century, a mosque was built in the northern part of the complex.

The 'Middle Church' (Fig. 4) was incorporated into an existing towered courtyard building, wrongly and misleadingly called the 'Governor's House'. Its dimensions are 22.37 x 15.60 m. The main entrance is in the west via a monumental porch. The building is divided into five bays by a row of four columns and two pilasters on each side. Its annex buildings have not been investigated further. An inscription, possibly dedicated by a pilgrim, mentions Saint Stephanos.

The complex of the 'North Church' (Fig. 5) is the only one to show regular dimensions of around 20 x 13 m. The

main entrance is via an open space south to the atrium. The building is divided into seven bays by a row of six columns and two pilasters on each side. The lateral apses have niches with semi-domes designed to hold reliquaries and frescoes. In the case of the northern apse, a sarcophagus reliquary is being proposed. As it is also the case in the 'South Church', rooms above the lateral apses constitute a special case of architectural layout. The atrium is 26 x 19 m wide. In its centre stands a column drum within a square of 2,0 x 2,0 m. The supposed identification as the place of worship of a stylite is doubtful. There is a chance of this feature being a later addition from the 1950/60s as during this time reconstruction work took place. To the south of the church lies a chapel which, according to an inscription, was dedicated in 607 AD. The outer wall of the whole complex was massively reinforced at an unknown date during the Byzantine era. The block to the south, which again had been excavated by the Colt Expedition, is being interpreted as a monastery. The existence of a separate entrance to the church speaks in favour of this, even though the idea that parts of the complex served different purposes should not be dismissed.

22 stelae testify to the burials of members of the clerical community as well as lay people from 505 to 679 AD in the area of the 'North Church'. From these

inscriptions, six presbyters, a vicar and a monk are known for the 7th century. Further mentioning is made of the bishop of Elusa, to whose parish Shivta belonged.

In conclusion, the Northern Church is laid out quite differently to the South and 'Middle Church'. Unrestricted by the presence of older buildings, the Northern Church shows the characteristics of a well-planned small site of pilgrimage, possibly with the addition of an organically grown monastic complex to the south.

It is not known who initiated the building process or who carried it out. It should be remarked that the building ornamentation, which so far has always been considered unique to the Negev Desert has unpublished parallels in Umm er-Rasas close to Madaba. Therefore it is safe to assume that some sort of supra-regional contact concerning architectural concepts took place during the Byzantine era. This might for example have been the case via travelling craftsmen carrying out the building of the churches, with their ornamental canon then being incorporated into the local one and copied as stylistic features of the domestic dwellings.

Space Syntax Analysis

Space Syntax is a method that can be applied to settlements (*Alpha analysis*) as well as single buildings (*Gamma analysis*) in order to analyse spatial layouts, and was devised in 1972 at the University College London (Bartlett Space Syntax Laboratory) by Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, who by then filled a theoretical and methodological gap with their ground-breaking publication 'The social logic of space' (Hillier – Hanson 1984).

40 years of continuous application and improvement as a method to represent, simulate, analyse and compare spatial layouts and their respective social impact, leave a wide range of possibilities to apply Space Syntax Analysis as an empirical method for contemporary settlements respectively city planning. Space Syntax Analysis has also been used in archaeological and ethnographical contexts, but never achieved a use as widespread as within contemporary settings.

By quantifying potential patterns of movement it is possible to make statistically sound assumptions as to the accessibility of specific areas within a settlement, set up a hierarchy of use for rooms within a building, spot safe and unsafe regions or parts of a building equivalent to low and high permeability in urban planning, calculate traffic and potential paths of movement of outsiders within a settlement etc.

By analysing the visibility of certain buildings or parts of buildings within the general field of vision, it is possible not only to relate to the social relevance of single buildings; but also to other, rather more abstract aspects like for example the modern term of 'privacy' within an archaeological context.

These observations are based on the notion that space has intrinsic properties, dealing with the visible aspects of how spatial units relate to one another. Intrinsic properties can be derived from assessments of geometric properties of buildings/a settlement. Space has also extrinsic properties, dealing with the invisible aspects of how spatial units relate to one another. Extrinsic properties allow assessing functional aspects of buildings/a settlement.

In particular with regard to its roots in structuralism, the method is of course not immune to criticism. The above mentioned fields of application already indicate that this is especially the case when it comes to archaeology. Even though the underlying notion of architecture as the 'ordering of space' and thereby 'the ordering of relations between people' is clearly correct, at the same time this approach might result in reconstructing social phenomena as generalisations in an over-simplified manner; leaving aside the subtleties of human interaction. A further danger lies in the possibility of unknowingly transferring Western notions of abstract concepts like regularity or supposed social preferences. In conclusion, it will be explicitly stated at this point that what is being presented here is not only a work in progress that is currently in the process of being complemented by *gamma-analysis* and comparisons with the sites of Horvat Sa'adon in Israel, Umm el-Jimal in Jordan, Sergilla in Syria and Caričin Grad in Serbia; but also only one possible scenario and is of course open to discussion.

Practical requirements of the method

The decomposition of a map into a complete set of intersecting axial lines, in this case paths through the settlement, produces the *axial map* (Fig. 6). Hereby, any point is seen as part of a linearly extended space while at the same time being part of what is called a *fully convex fat space*, meaning the maximum extension of the point in a second dimension. Therefore, the *axial map* shows the least set of straight lines passing through each void, respectively squares and roads, in the settlement.

Accordingly, the decomposition of a map into *convex spaces* produces the *convex map*, the least set of *fattest spaces* that covers the system (Fig. 6). Urban space areas differ from each other according to the degree of axial and convex extension and the relation between these two.

From these two preconditions, various aspects can be analysed.

If *convex spaces* become very elongated like *axial spaces*, this indicates a highly regular system, as it is the case in the southwestern and northern part of Shivta.

Furthermore, when buildings are directly accessible to an *open or convex space*, this space is *constituted* by the buildings. If the space is adjacent to buildings to which it is not directly permeable, then it is *unconstituted*. Due to the state of research, this question can not be answered for

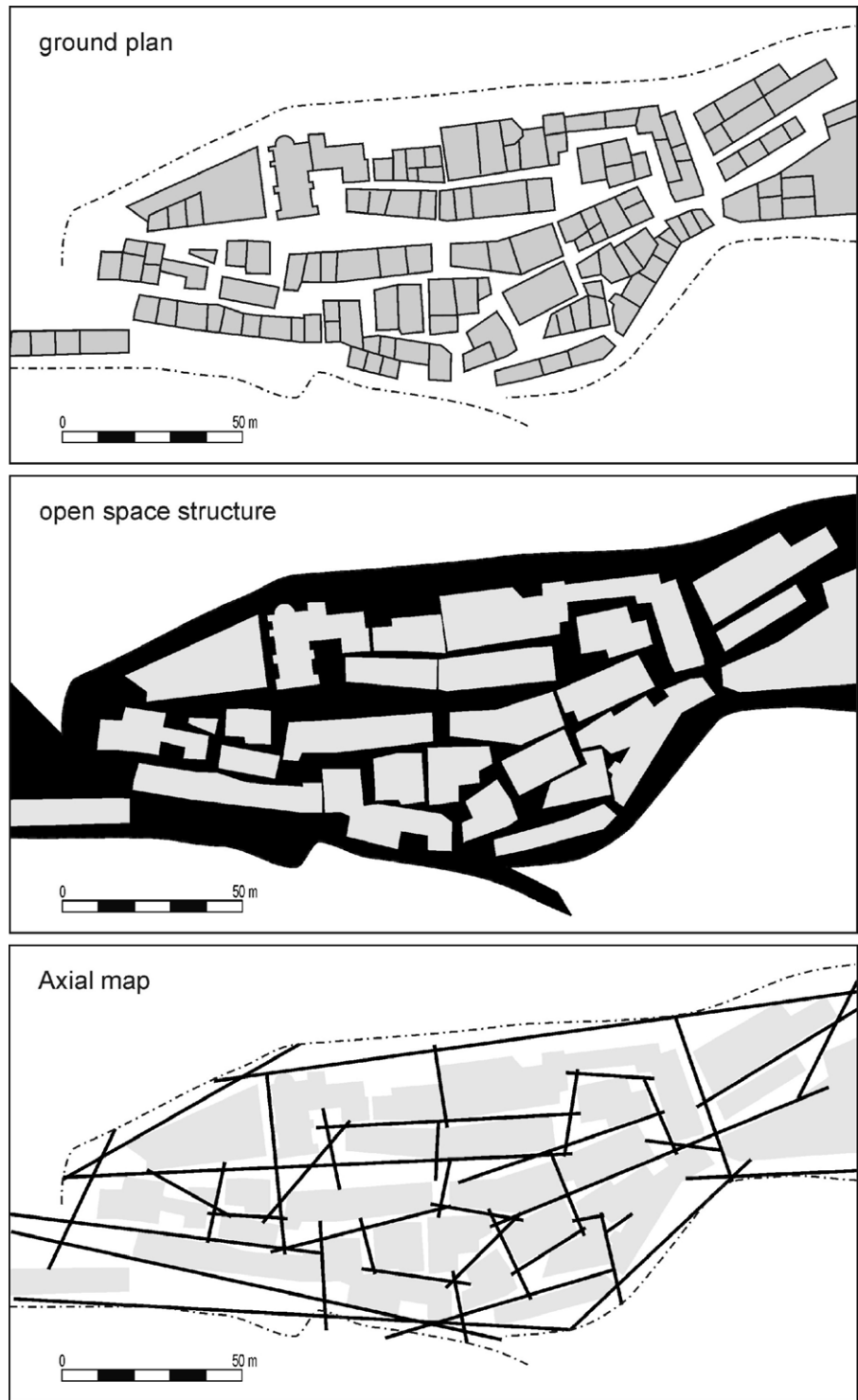


Fig. 6. Transferring a map into an axial map and a convex map as introduced in 'The social logic of space' (© Hillier - Hanson 1984).

the whole settlement. Nevertheless, at least the northern part is clearly highly *constituted*.

Convex synchrony increases with the quantity of convex space invested, leading to a higher perceptibility of movement. There is a high amount of *convex space* in the northern part, therefore it is strongly *synchronised* but

not very *descriptive* in the sense that there are not many buildings relating to that space.

The southern part has a low amount of *convex space*, being less *synchronised* but a lot more *descriptive* by showing repetitive versions of architectural characteristics. This repetition relates to *building genotypes*, implying

that reality generates a programme whose description is retrievable, thereby leading to self-reproduction under stable conditions, allowing society to be seen as a discrete artefact whose embodiment is its output.

There are also asymmetrical relations of spaces in the southern part, called *distributed*, as there is more than one possibility to reach B from A, the latter indicating the churches, without intersections. This situation is completely different in the northern part.

In general, *high convexity* indicates a strong breakup of settlement. It has to be noted though, that so far the analysis does not include the outside perimeter. The *convexity* is higher in the northern than in the southern part, indicating less breakup and correspondingly less possibilities of circulation. Hereby, a higher degree of control is possible.

Grid convexity compares the *convex map* to an orthogonal grid and calculates the deviation. For the whole settlement, the value ranges within the lowest possible values, suggesting a high degree of deviation from a regular grid, even though the settlement, despite its air of an organically grown place must have been planned at least to a certain degree, as the water system, in particular the cisterns, indicate. Potentially, reasons of security come into play here. Again, the *grid convexity* is lower in the northern part than in the southern part, indicating a more regulated layout and possible other means of security via high *convexity*.

The southern part shows a lower *axial articulation and integration* than the northern part. This is of course in accordance with the *grid convexity*.

Complementing this would be the *axial link index*, indicating how aware one is of their surroundings. Coming back to possible criticism of the method, unfortunately this is not applicable in the case of Shivta, the results would be misleading because of the winding streets. As the latter poses a problem in general, this is also the reason why the maps and calculations were done by hand rather than using a software.

Referring to *convex ringiness*, in most cases, there is more than one *locus of control* for specific spaces, with the exception of the 'Middle Church'. This again implies a high degree of control over movement.

Another factor deals with the respective distance of X from Y. Every settlement is at least made up of a grouping of *primary cells* or buildings X, corresponding to its inhabitants, the surrounding space outside the settlement corresponding to strangers. Every settlement therefore is a sequence of the above mentioned, bi-polar system with the most local X and the most global Y. For the northern part the distance from Y shows a much higher value than the southern part. Therefore, looking at the total of access routes into the settlement, the outside was easier to reach from the south. The 'Middle Church' was strongly

segregated from the system outside, more so than the 'South Church'.

The *axial connectivity* is stronger in the northern part. This might have constituted a control system with clear lines of view.

'Middle' and 'South Church' have relatively high values of local control compared to the 'North Church'.

A potential scenario of the society at Shivta

Concerning the society at Shivta, the economy and its implications of course play an important role. The economic factor most strongly to be associated with Shivta derives from an abundance of various agricultural features; different types of installations associated with rainwater harvesting, field structures, field towers, threshing floors, wine presses, olive presses and dovecotes directly bordering the settlement's outer perimeter as well as within its vicinity (*Baumgarten 2004*). Due to climatic preconditions, the method used for agriculture was runoff-farming (*Bruins 1986*), a practice common to the whole Mediterranean region, as the climate of the Central Negev region is arid with an annual average precipitation of 80 – 100 mm (*Shereshevski 1991*), with rainfall starting in October with a maximum between December and March; being absent from June to September.

Furthermore, the region of Shivta is cut through by wadis and characterized by very fine loessial and sandy deposits concentrated in the plains, on plateaus, and in the valleys; whereas the higher areas are covered with hamada, brown lithosols with a dry layer of stone chips (*Kedar 1957*).

Due to these preconditions, the agricultural use of the whole region is also influenced strongly by topographical features, as saline hamadas and brown desert soils, in contrast to loess sediments, do not have extremely favourable features for agricultural activities (*Kedar 1957*). Cultivation therefore mainly took place on terraces in the Wadi beds and on the lower slopes of the tributary Wadis by means of harvesting the winter rains from the higher areas. The cultivable area around Shivta is estimated to be 2.874 m² of open field systems and 2.097 m² of field systems fenced in by stone walls (*Kedar 1957*). Analogous to historical sources concerning the settlement of Nitzana from the 6./7. cent., the Nessana Papyri, the main factors of economy were wheat, barley, grapes, dates and olives, complemented by peas, figs, pomegranates, peaches and almonds (*Mayerson 1962; Kraemer 1958*). An approximation to this data is plausible, as palynological evidence indicates (*Ramsay – Tepper 2010*). Ownership, use and organisation of the agricultural activities as well as possible surplus production for export prove difficult to reconstruct. No hint indicating land tenure exists in the historical sources, even though this is a very likely

system. In analogy to the written sources from Nessana, an intense use by private owners can be assumed during the Byzantine period (Mayerson 1960). In analogy to the 20th century, a rotation system concerning the use of the most arable plots of land might very well have been in use (Kark – Oren-Nordheim 2001). As in the case of the maintenance of the Shivta water system, which the find of several ostraca shows to have been a communal task (Tsuk 2002), a similar system might have been in place concerning specific plots of land.

Animal pens directly bordering the settlement as well as in the vicinity prove animal husbandry. Finds from Nessana indicate sheep, goat, gazelle and pigs for the region (Colt 1962). As flocks of small animals usually graze within an area of the width of 50 – 200 m, their presence in larger number close to Shivta is quite unlikely, as they would have endangered the field systems (Levy 1992). Even though these structures might also have served the inhabitants of Shivta, a use by a nomadic population is most likely; so that milk, meat and other products might have been traded in high quantities (Avni 1996) as the absence of mention of these products in the Nessana Papyri indicates furthermore. In general, a combination of extensive and intensive farming is likely. Nevertheless, the length of nomadic stays and therefore also the potential seasonal use of resources and field systems by groups which were not primarily engaged in agriculture as well as their yields can at the moment not be defined. The supposed antique name of Shivta, ‘Sobota’; is mentioned in a list of komai megaloi, and can therefore be categorised as a large rural settlement (Hirschfeld 2006). In this context, there is also another term which is very befitting, the biblical one of ‘haser’, referring to bronze- and iron age permanent settlements without walls, typical for semi-nomadic populations in border regions and emphasizing the aspects of fluctuation of parts of their society. Shivta functioning as sort of a regional centre, taking care of logistics concerning subsistence economy is a viable possible scenario.

Conclusions of the Space Syntax Analysis

The Northern Part’s very regular, and even though deviating from a symmetric grid thoroughly planned space is primarily constituted by its buildings, which nevertheless do not show a strong presence of repetitive patterns. In stark contrast to the southern area, a lot of open space was invested as well. Judging by the architectural features, there seems not to have been a great need to emphasize traditional patterns of living.

Contrary to the conditions in the southern area, where control of movements seems to have been generated by the prevailing social patterns themselves, very symmetrical relations of space in combination with

less possibilities of alternative routes and high *axiality* with clear lines of view provide control of circulation patterns even though it must be mentioned, that these aspects at the same time also allow for less complicated processes of movement for outsiders.

When taking into consideration that there were 11 points of entry into the settlement in total – leaving aside that potential regulations of access are unknown – the northern part was much more difficult to enter from the outside than the southern part.

So even if we were devoid of any other indicators, the spatial arrangement alone of the Northern Church within the settlement would suggest this complex in comparison to the other churches to be primarily destined and planned to deal with a strong influx of outsiders, in this case most likely pilgrims. Trade by comparison seems to have taken place mainly outside the settlement, implied by numerous permanent camp sites directly adjacent to it and the absence of a market square inside

The Southern Part shows a stronger deviation from a regular grid than the north and less open space was invested. Lower *axiality* and less clear lines of view, but a higher number of possibilities for circulation routes imply, that not only did people have to know their way around this area in order to move without getting astray, but also that in general less traffic of outsiders was wanted. The building patterns with a clear prevalence of the complex house imply a rather traditional way of living and subsistence, an established system flourishing under stable conditions, in high demand probably due to not only its plain functional but also social aspects. Questions of security might have been handled via the factor of a more ‘secluded’ type of society as it is for example the case with extended families, guaranteeing immediate recognition of strangers moving or lounging in inappropriate spaces. This could also explain the comparatively easy access to the outside. Therefore, the ‘South Church’ might have been intended primarily for the use by the local population, showing greater control values than the ‘North Church’ and in general not being as readily accessible due to the cisterns facing it.

The ‘Middle Church’ is strongly separated from the settlement with a very high level of local control, while at the same time showing a very low level of general control. In order to understand this phenomenon, which might constitute a special case, further analysis, in particular *gamma-analysis* of the surrounding buildings is necessary.

In conclusion, the results suggest that there was a presence of sedentary, nomadic and semi-nomadic people at Shivta, further complemented by passing caravans and pilgrims on their way to Sinai. Therefore, the concept of inhabitant and outsider or ‘stranger’ must take into account that these statuses do not only exist to varying degrees, but can also change. Changes occur due to established social

patterns like in the case of semi-nomadism, but can also be brought about by external factors like, for example, a change in climate. The climate at the end of the Byzantine period is assumed to have been less favourable than before (*Fischer 2006*), and might potentially have caused nomadic or semi-nomadic people to become sedentary, forcing them to turn to different sources of subsistence. With this background, also Christianity, having arrived in the Negev in the fourth century might have taken on a more 'rational' character, with a strong focus on its economic value in the sense of providing a new source of income, not only by welcoming strangers into the settlement; but also by providing guides, camels and all the necessary provisions for a pilgrimage to Sinai, a practice that is known to have been provided for merchants from the Nessana Papyri (*Kraemer 1958*).

The application of this model of alternating phases of sedentarisation and nomadism shows, that the society of Shivta can neither be defined in terms of definite groups of inhabitants, nor were these always present all year round at the settlement. As for example potential population sizes are difficult to estimate, because estimations based on consumption of water, numbers of persons per dwelling unit, agrarian yields or the number of members of religious communities each have their own uncertainty due to the lack of reliable data and therefore prove futile, this might also in the long run have consequences concerning respective estimations. Even more important is the potential changeability of self-conception, which implies changing affiliations to groups associated with a particular lifestyle. This is even truer in a case like Shivta, where the very basis of social structure itself – concepts like core family, extended family or multiple family – remain impossible to reconstruct.

Instead of the reconstruction of ethnic entities, we have to consider a definition of ethnicity, which is in constant flux. Instead of factors like language, territory or biological aspects or religion, the self-perception of society and its individuals is the deciding factor (*Herzog 1994*). This allows for a context-related construction of identity on different levels within a society. Due to this, these can only be partially and discursively reconstructed from the material record.

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Réflexions topologiques sur les églises antérieures à 1050 dans l'ancien diocèse de Tongres-Maastricht-Liège

*Philippe Mignot & Frédéric Chantinne **

RÉSUMÉ

La réflexion tente de répondre à la question des modalités qui ont prévalu au choix des sites d'implantation des premières églises en milieu rural depuis les origines, dans la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle – mais semble-t-il pas avant l'extrême fin du VII^e siècle ou le début du VIII^e siècle – et la mise en place du réseau paroissial qui s'étale entre le premier quart du VIII^e siècle et le début du XI^e siècle. La réforme grégorienne provoqua à son tour la restructuration de ce réseau avec une séparation nette entre biens laïcs et biens d'églises. Dès lors, les exemples choisis démontrent qu'il faut se méfier de la méthode régressive car la catégorisation des églises et chapelles paraît en grande partie forgée à la fin du XI^e siècle et au début du XII^e siècle. Par conséquent, toute modélisation de topologie n'a de sens que si elle se fonde sur les circonstances de fondation et le contexte d'occupation du sol et non des critères d'ordre topographique.

Mots-clés : *paroisse, église, chapelle.*

ABSTRACT

Topological reflections on churches prior to 1050 in the former diocese of Tongeren-Maastricht-Liège
This paper examines the reasons behind the choice of the sites of the first churches in rural areas, from their origins in the second half of the 6th century – or at least not before the end of the 7th century or the beginning of the 8th century – and the establishment of the parochial system between the first quarter of the 8th century and the beginning of the 11th century. The Gregorian reform, in turn resulted in the restructuring of this network, with a clear separation between secular and church property. Consequently, the chosen examples show that we must be wary of the regressive method, as the categorisation of churches and chapels seems to have been established only at the end of the 11th century and at the beginning of the 12th century. Therefore, any topology model makes sense only if it is based on foundation circumstances and on land use context, and not on topographical criteria.

* Direction de l'Archéologie, Service public de Wallonie, DG04, Namur, France

Philippe.mignot@spw.wallonie.be
Frédéric.chantinne@spw.wallonie.be

Keywords: *Parish, church, chapel.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Topologische Überlegungen zu den vor das Jahr 1050 zurückreichenden Kirchen in der alten Diözese von Tongeren-Maastricht-Lüttich

Der Artikel versucht der Frage nachzugehen, welche Bedingungen die Ortswahl der frühen Kirchen begünstigten, die in ruraler Umgebung seit ihren Anfängen von der zweiten Hälfte des 6. Jh. – oder zumindest dem Ende des 7. / bzw. dem Anfang des 8. Jh. – entstanden. Außerdem wird der Aufbau und die Organisation der Pfarreien zwischen dem ersten Viertel des 8. und dem Anfang des 9. Jh. untersucht. Die gregorianische Reform bewirkte zudem eine

Restrukturierung dieser Organisation mit einer klaren Trennung zwischen säkularem und kirchlichem Besitz. Demnach gilt es, wie die angeführten Beispiele zeigen, die regressive Methode mit Vorsicht anzuwenden, da die Kategorisierung der Kirchen und Kapellen scheinbar erst grösstenteils am Ende des 11./ bzw. am Anfang des 12. Jh. erfolgte. Daraus folgt, dass jedwedes topologische Modell erst dann Sinn macht, wenn es sich die Gründungsbedingungen und der Nutzungskontext auf die jeweiligen Grundstücke bezieht und nicht nach rein topographischen Kriterien.

Schlagwörter: Pfarrei, Kirche, Kapelle.

Introduction

Vu l'indigence des sources écrites, l'approche archéologique paraît aujourd'hui incontournable si l'on veut aborder le Premier Moyen Âge et entre autres le processus de christianisation et de la mise en place des réseaux paroissiaux. Grâce à la remise en contexte des sites et à leurs comparaisons, il devient possible d'ouvrir de nouvelles réflexions sur le fonctionnement de cette société en particulier avant les bouleversements de l'époque de la réforme grégorienne, que certains historiens appellent « La mutation de l'an 1100 » (Barthélemy 2005) et que les archéologues médiévistes considèrent comme le tournant du Premier au Second Moyen Âge (Burnouf 2008, 8-10).

L'analyse convergente des sources disponibles, y compris archéologiques, pour la construction de l'Histoire, permet de s'interroger à nouveau sur les choix d'implantation des églises et de la structuration de leurs réseaux. Toutefois, si les comparaisons sont utiles et nourrissent la réflexion, il ne faut pas négliger pour autant le fait que chaque site reste un cas unique, à la fois dans son contexte d'implantation et dans son évolution. C'est là un intérêt majeur du projet CARE – *Corpus Architecturae Religiosae Europae (IV^e-X^e saec.)* –, en cours de réalisation en Wallonie depuis 2012 (Chantinne – Mignot 2012). Cette enquête a d'ores et déjà permis de revisiter nombre de dossiers de sites ayant fait l'objet d'études

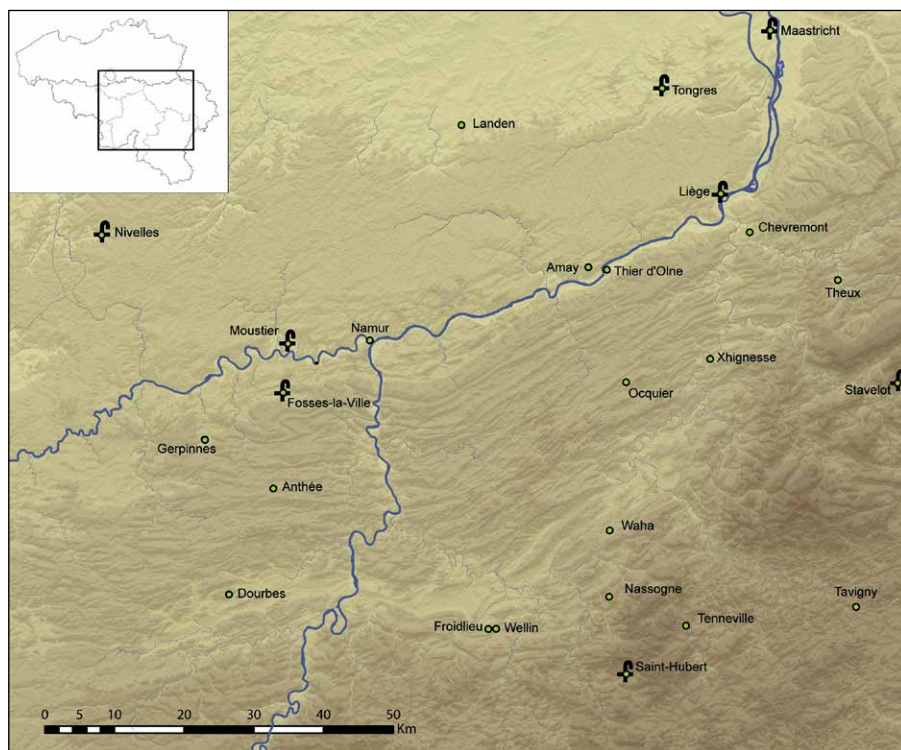


Fig. 1. Carte des lieux cités
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SPW/Direction de l'Archéologie).

archéologiques et textuelles. Cette révision concerne avant tout les chronologies et l'interprétation des fonctions remplies par les édifices religieux, les replaçant dans leur contexte topographique et institutionnel.

Le statut originel des plus anciennes églises attestées par l'archéologie demeure incertain. En ce qui concerne les églises paroissiales, la classification traditionnelle entre églises-mères et filiales n'explique pas les variations formelles des édifices ni leur implantation. Sur ce point, il faut aussi envisager les relations qui les lient. Nous traiterons d'une autre interaction, celle récurrente entre les églises paroissiales et les abbayes ou chapitres dont elles dépendaient. Le choix d'implantations des églises ne repose pas sur des critères géomorphologiques ou mémoriels, mais bien sur des critères de gestion sociale et de politique territoriale dans des espaces déjà occupés.

Afin de restreindre le champ d'étude, nous avons choisi de n'évoquer que l'espace de l'évêché médiéval de Tongres-Maastricht-Liège (*de Moreau 1945*, 66).

La naissance des paroisses: schéma classique

Considérations générales

La christianisation en Gaule du Nord paraît avoir été lente et progressive (*Perrin 2010* ; *Prinz 2010* ; *Dumézil 2010* ; *Dierkens 1986*). Si le christianisme finit par s'imposer comme religion d'État au cours du IV^e siècle, il faut cependant attendre la seconde moitié du VIII^e siècle avec l'obligation de prélèvement de la dîme, l'impôt pour les pauvres et l'entretien du culte, soit du prêtre et du bâtiment, pour envisager une christianisation en profondeur des campagnes qui concorde avec la mise en place du réseau paroissial (*Devroey 2003*; *2006*; *2012*). Encore faut-il s'entendre sur le sens à donner à *parochia* au Haut Moyen âge : une circonscription bien délimitée au niveau de son territoire ou sur base de ses occupants ? Les avis sont partagés (*Lauwers 2005a*). Cette époque devait marquer le début de l'*encellulement* tel que défini par Robert Fossier pour finir par donner naissance au village du XI^e siècle (*Fossier 1982*, 288 ; *Noël 2010*). Depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle, les historiens ont développé l'idée que la paroisse primitive ne ferait que reprendre les limites d'un domaine ancien existant au moment de la création de la paroisse (*Dierkens 1997*, 40). Ce postulat a généré par la méthode régressive des tentatives de restitutions des limites de domaines (*Dierkens 1997*, 40; *Renard 2010*, 160-161). La méthode régressive fut cependant critiquée pour ses associations anachroniques (*Hautefeuille 2005*). Il est vrai que l'enquête n'a été menée que sur quelques doyennés et ne fut en réalité jamais systématique tant il existe d'inconnues dans les sources écrites dont

les plus anciennes ne sont pas antérieures à la fin du XII^e siècle, donc largement postérieure à la Réforme grégorienne.

L'église-mère ou *ecclesia matrix*, qui sera aussi appelée baptismale, serait devenue le centre du village existant ou à naître (*Lauwers 2010*). Le baptême, prérogative de l'évêque, se déroulait, à l'origine, au sein du siège épiscopal, puis fut délégué aux paroisses (*Dierkens 1997*, 31-33). Pour nos régions, les plus anciens fonts baptismaux avérés en milieu rural, en pierre avec cuve à décor sculpté sont datés au plus tôt du second tiers du XII^e siècle uniquement sur des critères stylistiques ; encore faut-il souligner qu'aucun élément n'a été retrouvé à son emplacement d'origine (*Ghislain 2009*).

L'église-mère aurait ensuite connu des démembrements en fonction du peuplement et de la croissance démographique sur le domaine (*Fournier 1982*). On parle alors d'églises-filles ou filiales, donc plus récentes. Les églises avaient par conséquent des statuts distincts selon leur ancienneté et selon le montant de la dîme annuelle (*Van Rey 1977*, 330-350 ; *Dierkens 1997*, 43-44). Dans les pouillés les plus anciens conservés, pas avant 1558, l'église « entière » reçoit l'entièreté de la dîme ; la *médiane*, la moitié ; la *tertiane*, le tiers et celle qui ne paie que le quart, est dite « quarte-chapelle ». L'église « entière » est presque toujours une église-mère et à l'opposé, la quarte-chapelle, une église-fille, donc issue d'un démembrement. Ce prélèvement de la taxe impliquait bien sûr une délimitation du territoire. L'autorité devait savoir qui ponctionner et chacun savait où il devait payer. Quant à l'organisation globale du diocèse, en théorie, c'est à l'évêque, et à lui seul, que revient la tâche d'organiser le clergé des paroisses (*Aubrun 2008*, 47; *Dierkens 1997*, 29-30). Mais entre cette doxa et la réalité de terrain, les choses ne sont pas si claires.

Ces dernières années, la territorialisation de la paroisse a suscité de vifs débats en France (*Delaplace 2005* ; *Zadora-Rio 2008* ; *Mazel 2016*). Aux limites tracées, certains ont préféré les points, ce qui du niveau visuel, et par conséquent de la représentation de l'espace, ne veut pas dire grand-chose. Quant aux grands domaines, les recherches ont montré qu'ils ne formaient pas d'office de grands blocs et qu'ils étaient bien plus fragmentés qu'on ne le pensait (*Renard 2010*, 157-164).

En 2005, Michel Lauwers a défendu la thèse que le monde des morts avait précédé le groupement des vivants (*inecclesiamiento*). En effet, la consécration du cimetière sur base de rites édictés à partir du X^e siècle marque une étape décisive dans cette configuration de l'espace. Cependant, force est de reconnaître, que l'environnement immédiat de l'église, y compris l'évolution des limites du cimetière, reste très mal connu faute d'études archéologiques extensives en nombre utile. D'ailleurs, si parfois l'église apparaît isolée aujourd'hui, il ne faut pas croire que ce fut

toujours le cas. L'absence d'habitat ne signifie pas village disparu. L'église est avant tout le cœur d'une entité, qu'on l'appelle paroisse ou *villa* (Lauwers 2005a).

Par ailleurs, l'archéologie extensive depuis plusieurs années a mis au jour des groupes de tombes en dehors des cimetières paroissiaux (Pecqueur et al. 2015; Cartron 2014). Ces nouvelles données permettent de reconsidérer des trouvailles anciennes de tombes à inhumation isolées, sans mobilier, attribuées de manière systématique à la fin du VII^e ou au VIII^e siècle, à la période de transition avant le regroupement des sépultures dans un cimetière consacré.

Le droit ecclésiastique devient clair à ce sujet à partir des VIII^e-IX^e siècles (Dierkens 2006). On ne peut enterrer les chrétiens en dehors des zones prévues à cet effet, strictement délimitées. Les églises et leurs cimetières sont alors des lieux assurant la cohérence religieuse et sociale d'un espace défini : la paroisse. Leur statut paroissial est en outre confirmé par le prélèvement des dîmes. Le paroissien paie cette taxe là où il reçoit les sacrements et où il devra se faire inhumer. Cette règle sera maintenue quasi jusqu'à la fin de l'Ancien Régime.

Les lieux

De manière générale, pour l'ancien diocèse de Liège, les historiens ont mis en avant certains critères topographiques ou d'occupations antérieures comme lieu de prédilection d'établissement des églises (Dierkens 1997, 30-31):

1. La christianisation d'un lieu de culte païen : construction d'une église à l'emplacement d'un *fanum* de l'époque romaine ;
2. Un cimetière antérieur à l'église et donc la christianisation d'un cimetière païen ;
3. Une hauteur comme repère dans le paysage

Mais en vérité, cette approche n'est pas très satisfaisante et manque d'arguments archéologiques.

1) La christianisation d'un sanctuaire païen

À y regarder de plus près, à Tavigny, c'est dans les ruines du temple romain abandonné depuis 300 ans que l'on inhume d'abord et que l'on érige ensuite une église (Mertens - Matthys 1971). Le lieu a parfois été qualifié d'isolé or il y a bien des traces d'habitations autour, au

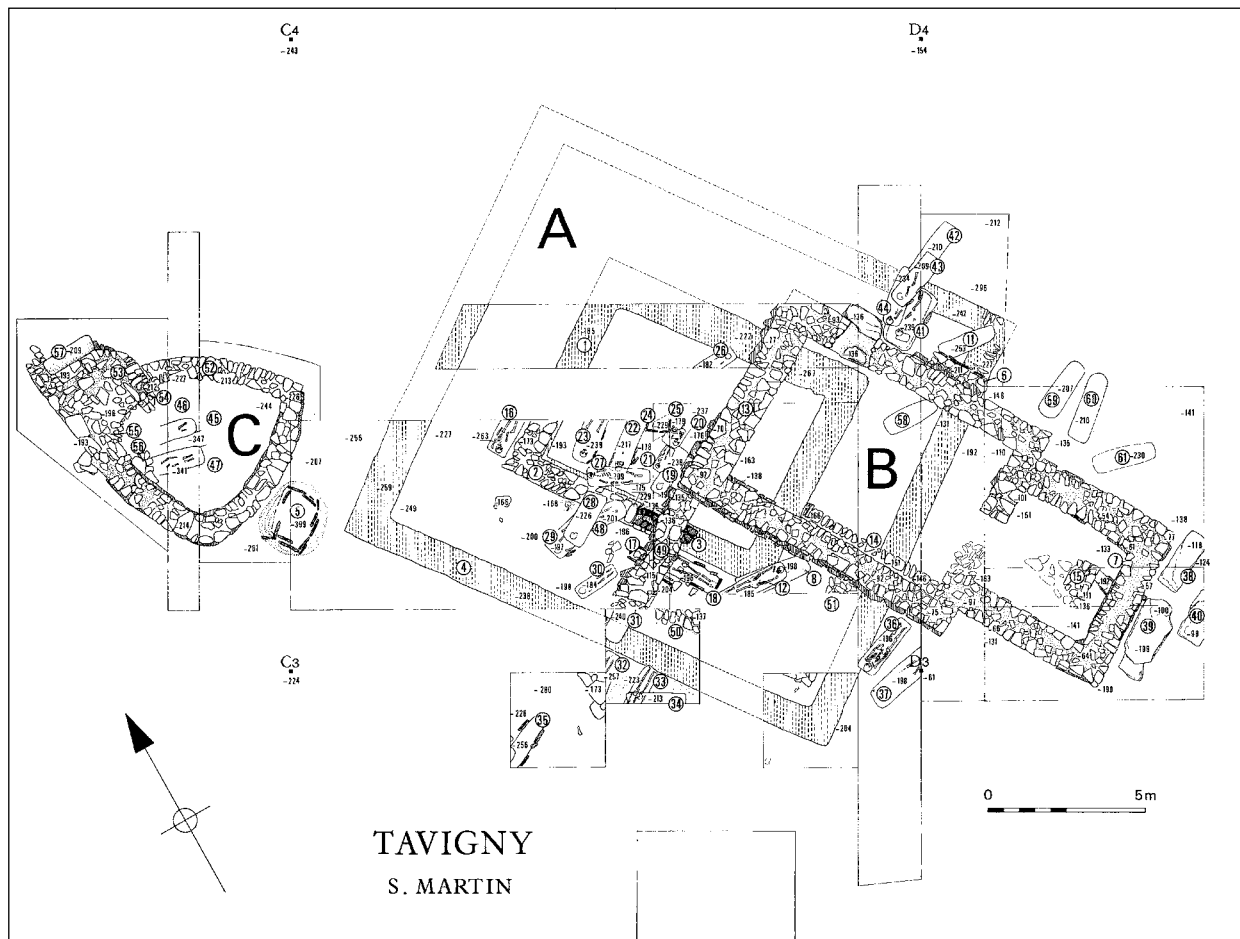


Fig. 2. Plan de Saint-Martin de Tavigny (© J. Mertens - A. Matthys 1971).

moins jusqu'au XIV^e siècle, hormis le fait qu'elles n'ont pas fait l'objet d'investigations archéologiques. Dans le cas de Tavigny, il s'agirait davantage de consacrer un cimetière en usage que de christianiser un ancien lieu de culte païen.

D'ailleurs, si on connaît des récupérations de bâtiments antiques dans le diocèse, ils sont plus souvent civils ou profanes que religieux. À Liège, qui n'est à l'époque pas un *vicus*, encore moins une ville, la *villa* dans laquelle l'évêque Lambert se fait assassiner, reprend des pans de murs, encore en élévation, d'une *villa* gallo-romaine (Henrard et al. 2008; Henrard 2014). Celle-ci déterminera l'orientation de la *villa* mérovingienne puis de la basilique érigée à l'endroit de sa mort en 743. C'est le cas aussi pour les monastères contemporains d'Amay (Thirion 1969) et de Fosses-la-Ville (Mertens 1953).

À Nivelles, l'église funéraire abbatiale reprend au milieu du VIII^e siècle un bâtiment profane (Hoebanx 1951; Chantinne – Mignot 2014). Même à Tongres, l'ancienne capitale de cité, la première église cathédrale s'installe à l'emplacement de bâtiments civils, dans le *castrum* du Bas Empire (Vanderhoeven 2014) et non à l'emplacement du grand temple. D'ailleurs, à l'échelle de l'ancienne cité des Tongres, les sanctuaires sont dans leur grande majorité abandonnés et détruits dans le courant du III^e siècle déjà (Van Andringa 2014). Dans un premier temps, l'Église n'a pas cherché à s'approprier ces lieux païens. Les exceptions de Tavigny, d'Anthée (Dierkens 1980) – un temple découvert au XIX^e siècle auquel fut adjoint une abside et où furent trouvées plusieurs inhumations – sont des cas de remplois tardifs où la continuité d'occupation n'est pas démontrée. On pourrait ajouter ici le site du Thier d'Olne, si le bâtiment originel sur lequel fut construite l'église funéraire était un temple (Witvrouw et al. 1991-1992, 61-62).

Bref, dans tous les cas, il s'agissait de s'installer dans des lieux abandonnés et non de chercher à éradiquer de quelconques rites païens. Le choix du lieu relève de l'opportunisme. La topographie relève dès lors d'un choix antérieur.

2) Du cimetière païen au cimetière chrétien

L'archéologie de la période mérovingienne, longtemps focalisée sur le funéraire, a accumulé les données d'un grand nombre de cimetières de plein champ caractérisant les VI^e et VII^e siècles. La présence même de simples édifices en bois ou en pierre, identifiés comme oratoires, y est exceptionnelle. Il faut en général y reconnaître tout au plus une *memoria*, sans autel.

La plupart des cimetières explorés connurent un abandon au profit d'un autre lieu d'inhumation. Leur déplacement s'est produit sur des distances fort variables. Cette relation entre culte et sépultures ne va pas de soi à l'époque. En effet, l'église, depuis la fin du V^e siècle s'est opposée à l'inhumation à l'intérieur de l'édifice et il ne fallait pas non plus consacrer une église bâtie sur un

cimetière antérieur car elle risquait d'être en contact avec des tombes de païens ou d'hérétiques (Lauwers 2005b, 132-135). Néanmoins, les recherches archéologiques ont mis au jour, à plusieurs reprises, comme à Tenneville (Hoebanx 1984; Mertens J. 1961b; Hannecart 1980), Dourbes, Ocquier, Tavigny, un cimetière antérieur à l'église paroissiale, en général avec des tombes dépourvues de mobilier. Il serait tentant d'en faire des tombes chrétiennes ce qui justifierait l'édifice. Pourtant, ailleurs, certains cimetières antérieurs aux églises comprennent du mobilier, comme Froidlieu (Mignot 2003; 2010a; 2010b; 2012), Landen, Waha. Alors comment justifier que des cimetières anciens reçoivent des églises et pas d'autres ?

À Froidlieu, l'église primitive fut construite, dans la première moitié du VIII^e siècle, sur une crête à l'emplacement d'un cimetière d'une trentaine d'individus établi à partir du milieu du VI^e siècle. À l'intérieur du premier édifice plusieurs fosses alignées avaient été taillées dans la roche, toutes vides ou soigneusement vidées. On passerait alors d'un édifice funéraire à une église paroissiale.

Le cimetière paroissial prend une configuration très différente des cimetières antérieurs. Là où le cimetière de plein-champ s'étendait et où les sépultures n'étaient quasi jamais recoupées par de plus récentes, on passe à un cimetière concentré autour de l'église et où les tombes vont très vite se superposer.

Contrairement au cimetière de plein-champ, l'implantation de l'église paroissiale va de pair avec une infrastructure de vie, celle du prêtre entre autres, avec des bâtiments de stockage, liés à la gestion de revenus, pouvant être en nature, dont les dîmes.

Les cas de villas royales peuvent donner un autre éclairage sur l'organisation à proximité et autour de l'église et de son cimetière. Parmi les composantes essentielles des palais carolingiens figure, avec l'*aula* et la *camera*, la *capella* (Renoux 2001). La *capella*, à l'époque qui nous occupe, recouvre des prérogatives paroissiales, au même titre que l'*ecclesia*. Le *De ecclesiis et capellis* d'Hincmar de Reims ne laisse pas de doute à ce sujet. Aucune hiérarchie n'y transparait, hormis avec l'église « métropolitaine » (Stratmann 1990, 75).

Au sein de la villa fiscale ou du palais, la *capella* n'est pas une chapelle privée. Elle apparaît comme une église à fonction liturgique et un lieu solennel servant à poser des actes importants où la fonction funéraire est réservée à certaines sépultures privilégiées. Par exemple, l'église Saint-Hermès et Saint-Alexandre de Theux a pour origine la *capella* du palais mentionné à deux reprises en 820 et en 827 (Halkin – Roland 1909, 73-75 ; Hörgers-Weirich 1936, 49-51). Ses dimensions mais aussi le fait qu'on y percevait les dîmes pour l'abbaye de Stavelot montre qu'elle remplissait des prérogatives paroissiales.

Dans le cas des villas royales, l'église et son cimetière ne président pas au choix des lieux, puisqu'ils sont intégrés ou

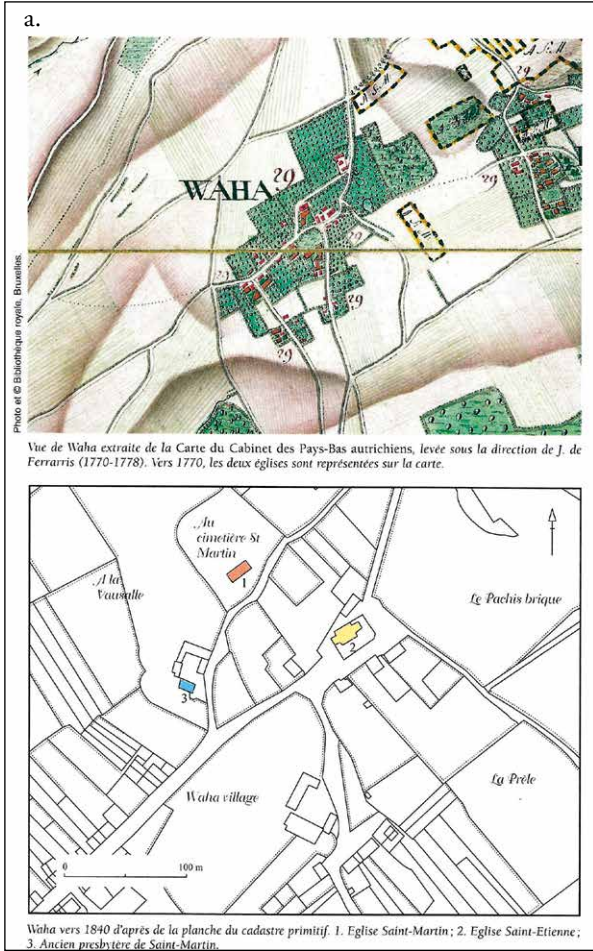
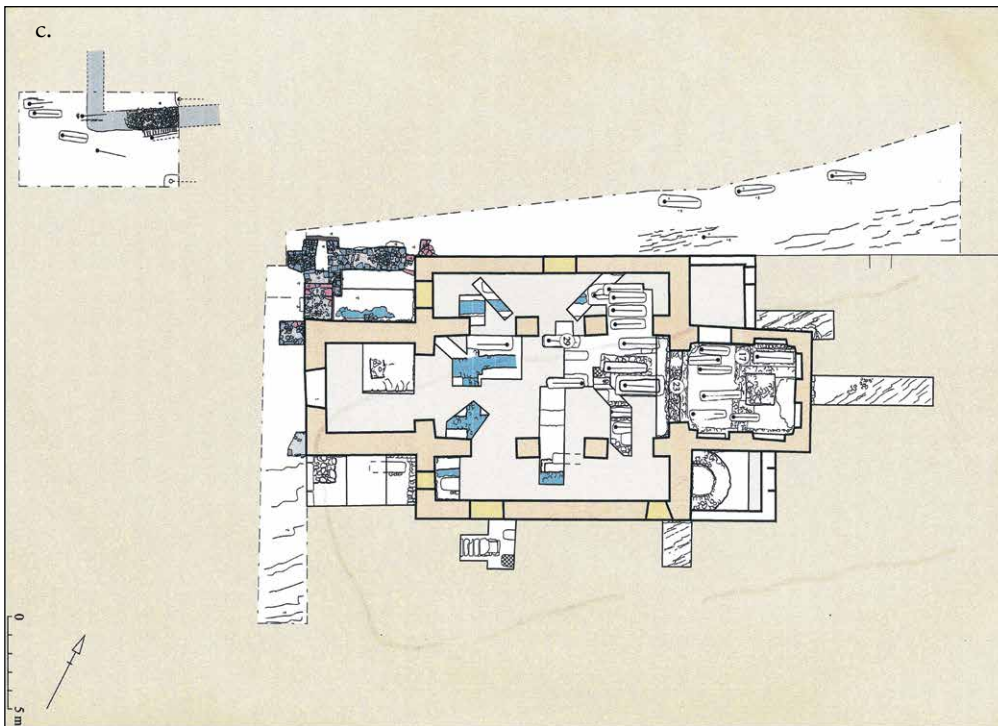
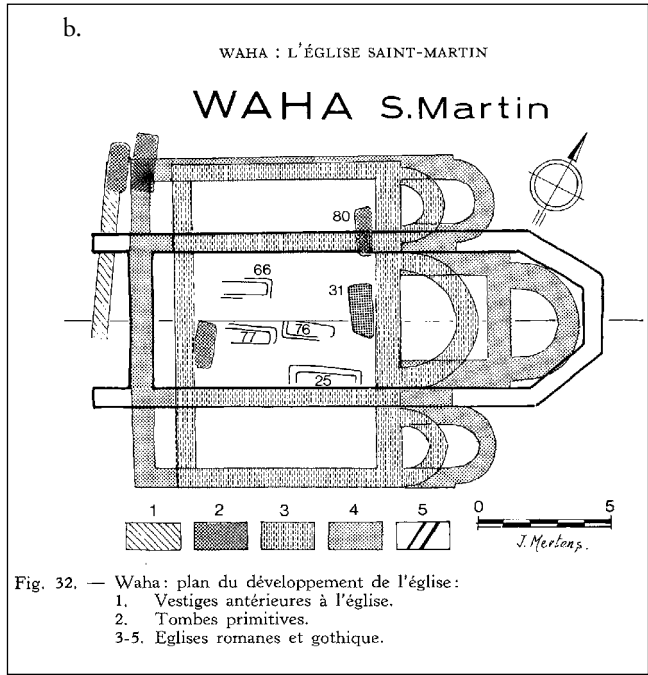


Fig. 3. Les deux églises de Waha: a) Les deux églises de Waha sur le plan cadastral vers 1840 (© Denis Henrotay - Philippe Mignot 2000); b) Plan de Saint-Martin de Waha (© Joseph Mertens 1976); c) Plan de Saint-Etienne de Waha (© Joseph Mertens 1961b; Denis Henrotay - Philippe Mignot 2000).



associés à des centres de gestion domaniaux préexistants. Nous y reviendrons.

3) un repère topographique

Que l'église constitue un repère dans le paysage, c'est une évidence mais encore faut-il comprendre dans quel sens. Profiter d'une élévation naturelle visible de loin, c'est souvent vérifié, mais s'agit-il de la perception originelle ? L'église actuelle est souvent remarquable dans le paysage mais dans beaucoup de cas le site d'origine apparaît anodin d'un point de vue topographique. Les positions de hauteur s'expliquent souvent soit par son intégration dans un complexe existant, soit par le développement de son cimetière et l'accumulation des terres au fil des siècles. Perception anachronique.

Catégorisation ou hiérarchie des édifices

L'organisation paroissiale et son schéma classique d'églises-mères et de filiales est tout aussi problématique. Dans le rapport paroisse, église et

territoire, comment pouvait fonctionner une paroisse avec deux églises côte à côte ?

À Waha, l'église Saint-Martin, considérée comme l'église-mère disparue à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, était située à une centaine de mètres de l'église Saint-Etienne (Fig. 3a). Les deux églises furent fouillées par Joseph Mertens (*Mertens 1967; 1976, 40-45*). Il montra que Saint-Martin avait été implantée sur un cimetière mérovingien et avait fonctionné en continu depuis cette époque jusqu'à sa désaffectation (Fig. 3b). L'église Saint-Etienne fut construite en une fois, mais sur un édifice antérieur dont on ignore tout ou presque (Fig. 3c). Y est associée une pierre de dédicace relatant que l'évêque Théoduin consacra un *oratorium* en 1050 ; pierre qui pose question puisqu'elle fut retrouvée, au XIX^e siècle, en deux morceaux, réemployés dans l'église comme dallage (*Henrotay – Mignot 2000*). Saint-Etienne passe pour avoir été l'église-propre de la famille éponyme de Waha attestée à la fin du XI^e siècle (*Nemery de Bellevaux 1989, 116-134*). La morphologie du chœur, la démultiplication des portes, mais aussi la mention de quatre prébendes au XIII^e siècle, font penser à une petite église communautaire dès sa

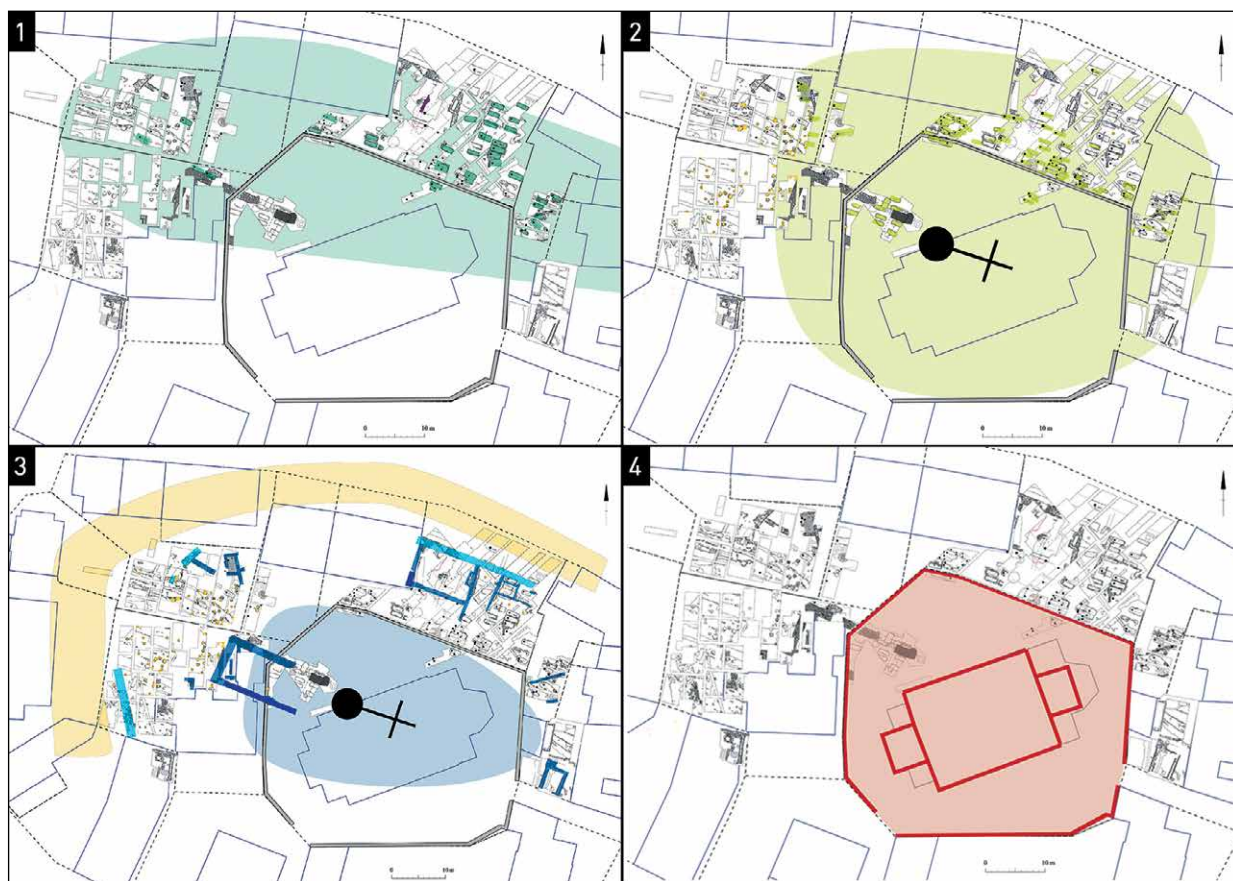


Fig. 4. Plan des phases successives d'occupation du site de Saint-Remacle à Wellin. 1) Cimetière du VI^e – VII^e siècle ; 2) Église et cimetière aux VIII^e-IX^e siècles ; 3) L'église, d'autres bâtiments du prieuré et le cimetière vers l'An Mil ; 4) L'église et son cimetière à partir du XVI^e siècle (© Philippe Mignot).



Fig. 5. L'église des Saints-Michel-et-Rolende de Gerpennes
(© Frédéric Chantinne).

fondation. Il pourrait s'agir d'une église priorale ou celle d'un petit chapitre, qui devint une dépendance du chapitre de Nassogne à qui Saint-Etienne paya la dîme à partir du XIII^e siècle. Quoiqu'il en soit, ce constat ne résout pas le problème de leurs modes de fonctionnement parallèles : leur rôle était-il distinct ? Comment la petite communauté de paroissiens était-elle répartie pour les offices et le versement de la dîme ?

Le hameau de Xhignesse présente une situation forte similaire. Une église disparue et son cimetière furent retrouvés à 200 m au sud-est de l'église Saint-Pierre (Alénus-Lecerf 1975). Édifiée vers le VIII^e siècle (?), sur un cimetière existant, elle paraît avoir fonctionné jusqu'au XIV^e siècle. De cette église, on ne connaît ni la titulature ni le statut ou la fonction. L'église Saint-Pierre, toujours debout, date du XII^e siècle au plus tard et aurait pour origine une église funéraire fondée au VIII^e siècle par l'abbé de Stavelot (Mignot 2006, 146-148).

À la différence de Waha, les deux sanctuaires sont placés sous la même autorité de l'abbé de Stavelot mais les questions de pratique liturgique entre les deux lieux restent à éclaircir.

À Wellin (Fig. 4), au sein de la *villa* donnée à l'abbaye de Stavelot par Carloman, maire du palais, en 747, la zone entourant l'église Saint-Remacle a fait l'objet de fouilles archéologiques (Évrard 1997). L'intérêt de ce site réside dans l'étude de son environnement, depuis l'implantation d'un cimetière de la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle jusqu'à nos jours. Il se caractérise par de l'habitat, un oratoire et un cimetière sur une butte fossoyée dont on peut suivre l'évolution, l'ensemble succédant à un cimetière mérovingien en rangées. L'habitat n'est pas celui d'un village fortifié mais bien

celui du centre domanial devenu celui de l'abbaye (Mignot-Schroeder 2016, 268-270).

Wellin est à rapprocher d'une autre église paroissiale dépendant autrefois de l'abbaye de Stavelot, Saint-Remacle d'Ocquier. Elle a fait l'objet de fouilles, révélant deux édifices antérieurs à l'actuel daté au plus tard du XII^e siècle (Mertens 1955). Le dispositif du chœur est prévu pour plusieurs officiants, reposant la question de son fonctionnement et de qui la desservait. Ocquier paraît devenir au XI^e siècle un centre économique qui se développe dans le cadre d'une réorganisation de la gestion des anciens domaines de Stavelot des environs (Schroeder 2015, 251-253).

Wellin, Ocquier ou Xhignesse s'apparentent à des prieurés, alors que l'abbaye de Stavelot n'en détenait pas au sens canonique du terme bien qu'en 1130/31 lui soit confirmées soixante-trois églises (Schroeder 2010).

Rien ne dit que le rôle et le rang paroissial surtout renseignés à partir du XII^e siècle correspondent aux situations antérieures. Le cas de l'église des Saints-Michel-et-Rolende de Gerpennes l'illustre bien. Celle-ci est considérée comme l'église-mère de celles environnantes (Fig. 5). Ce cas est sensé refléter le parfait exemple du développement d'un réseau de paroisses filiales au sein d'un domaine ancien subdivisé (Roland 1977, 13). Pourtant, Saint-Michel – sa première titulature – apparaît d'abord comme une église relevant d'une abbaye, celle de Moustier-sur-Sambre (Roland 1974-1978, 58). Selon le récit hagiographique, sainte Rolende serait décédée sur le domaine de Gerpennes vers 774-775 (Dierkens 1983, 44-45). Son corps aurait été alors placé dans un sarcophage – conservé et daté du VII^e siècle – le long du côté sud du chœur de l'église. Son culte n'est attesté qu'à partir du XII^e siècle, au moment où le prince-évêque de Liège investit



Fig. 6. La crypte lors de son dégagement (© Joseph Mertens).

les lieux. L'église fit l'objet d'une étude archéologique approfondie qui montra l'influence du développement du culte dans l'agrandissement de l'édifice depuis le VIII^e siècle (Mertens 1961a). Le réexamen des données permet aujourd'hui de constater combien l'étude fut influencée par la tradition hagiographique. L'examen des niveaux de circulation montre qu'en réalité, la crypte, sensée accueillir les reliques de la sainte dans un second temps, existait avant le placement du sarcophage (Fig. 6). Dans la crypte, plusieurs laïcs ont été inhumés dans des caveaux à encoches céphaliques, que la typologie situe entre le IX^e et le XII^e siècle. Les dimensions réduites et la morphologie de cet espace sont mal adaptées à la présentation d'une châsse. L'ensemble de ces observations pose à nouveau la question de la fonction « paroissiale » de cette église avant le XI^e siècle. La crypte et ses sépultures militent en faveur d'une église communautaire liée à une résidence aristocratique, une église priorale qui aurait dépendu de l'abbaye de Moustier.

Conclusion

Il y a 40 ans les archéologues ont posé les jalons pour appréhender les origines des premières églises (Mertens 1976; Dierkens 1997). Il leur fallait s'accorder avec un discours établi, lui-même élaboré a posteriori à partir des décrétales reformulées au fil du temps. D'autre part, les exemples qui entraient en ligne de compte étaient trop peu nombreux. Ils furent malgré tout érigés en modèle. Depuis, plusieurs certitudes se sont avérées soit forgées par les autorités ecclésiastiques soit reposant sur des postulats d'une tradition historiographique aujourd'hui remis en question (Mazel 2016). Citons la fixité des limites de

diocèse héritées de celles des cités de la fin de l'Empire romain ou les rangs établis des églises et chapelles et leurs droits respectifs.

L'espace paroissial a été considéré depuis le XIX^e siècle comme organisé de manière systématique avec l'église au centre comme logique. On aurait pu croire alors à un choix de lieu qui aurait participé du rite de consécration. L'archéologie montre qu'il n'en est rien : l'église ne préside pas à ce choix puisque soit elle s'insère dans un site antérieur, soit elle n'est que partie d'une nouvelle implantation comprenant d'autres prérogatives.

La question du choix des lieux est donc partie d'un schéma de pensée « canonique » tel que formulé par la Réforme grégorienne. La doxa veut que toute l'organisation paroissiale relève de la seule autorité de l'évêque. Les abbayes ont pourtant joué un rôle déterminant dans la mise en place des premières paroisses rurales dès la fin de l'époque mérovingienne et durant l'époque carolingienne. Nous l'avons constaté au travers d'observations archéologiques, des églises paroissiales détenues par des abbayes, pouvaient être gérées par une petite communauté, un prieuré. C'est ce qui peut aussi expliquer la multiplicité des formes architecturales.

La règle voudrait que le prêtre ne dépende que de l'évêque et que, d'autre part, le moine ne puisse pas dire la messe et officier en dehors de sa clôture (Aubrun 2008, 49). Mais rappelons que l'exemption des abbayes s'étendait à leurs domaines, même éloignés. Dès le milieu du VII^e siècle, elles étaient des centres névralgiques de territoires composés de domaines et de leur population, où elles édifièrent des églises en fonction de leurs besoins.

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Le site de Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois (Indre-et-Loire, France)

Un nouvel exemple d'édifice religieux/funéraire
alto-médiéval en contexte d'habitat rural

Cyrille Ben Kaddour *

RÉSUMÉ

La fouille préventive réalisée à Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois a livré, sur près de 3 hectares, environ 850 structures datées entre la fin de La Tène et le XII^e ou le début du XIII^e siècle. Seuls quelques fossés arasés et quelques trous de poteau attestent de l'occupation du site à la période protohistorique. Les vestiges du Haut-Empire sont, eux, beaucoup plus nombreux. Ils témoignent d'un établissement agricole antique que l'on peut qualifier de petite *villa*, notamment grâce à la présence d'un petit bâtiment fondé en pierre avec des éléments de confort (système de chauffage par hypocauste et balnéaire). Le site est abandonné à la fin du III^e ou dans le courant du IV^e siècle. Il est ensuite réinvesti au VII^e siècle. Le bâtiment résidentiel antique est alors réoccupé et ses matériaux sont en partie récupérés. Un petit habitat constitué de bâtiments sur poteaux prend place au nord du bâtiment résidentiel antique. La plupart des structures datent de la période VII^e-VIII^e siècles mais certaines pourraient dater des IX^e-X^e siècles. Dans l'emprise de l'autre bâtiment antique fondé en pierre (à vocation agricole) est créé, probablement dans le courant du VIII^e siècle, un édifice monumental sur poteaux plantés. Son plan, restitué à partir de 12 trous de poteau de grandes dimensions (jusqu'à 1,30 m de diamètre et jusqu'à 1,40 m de profondeur) est typique des bâtiments religieux ruraux du haut Moyen Âge : une nef prolongée par un chœur rétréci à chevet plat. Cet édifice succède probablement à une petite nécropole en rangées. Les inhumations continuent après l'édification du bâtiment religieux et se poursuivent après la destruction de celui-ci (et l'abandon du petit habitat proche) jusqu'au XII^e siècle au moins. Ce nouvel exemple d'un édifice religieux rural abandonné à la fin du haut Moyen Âge est l'occasion de réévaluer les connaissances sur la pénétration du christianisme dans les campagnes, avant le grand mouvement de création des paroisses.

* Responsable d'opération
(Antiquité/Moyen-Âge),
Bureau d'études Éveha,
Saint-Avertin, France
cyrille.ben-kaddour@eveha.fr

Mots-clés : *habitat d'époques La Tène final, gallo-romaine et médiévale ; nécropole de type Reihengräberfeld, cimetière, église.*

ABSTRACT

Saint-Catherine-de-Fierbois (Indre-et-Loire, France): a new example of an religious/funeral medieval building in context of an rural settlement

The excavation at Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois was prompted by the construction of the high-speed railway line 'LGV Sud Europe Atlantique' between Tours and Bordeaux. It led to the uncovering, on nearly 7 acres, of around 850 structures, dating from the end of the La Tene period to the 12th/early 13th century. Only a few levelled ditches and possibly some postholes attest to the occupation of the site during the protohistoric period. Remains of the Imperial Roman period are much more numerous. They reveal an ancient agricultural settlement which can be seen as a small villa, above all because of the presence of a small building on stone foundations with comfort items (hypocaust system and baths). The site was abandoned by the end of the 3th or during the 4th century, but then re-exploited in the 7th century. The ancient residential building was partly reused, recycling some of the materials in the process. A small complex of new buildings on wooden posts appeared to the north of the ancient residential building. Most of the structures date from the 7th to 8th centuries, but some may date from the 9th or 10th centuries. A monumental building based on wooden posts was erected within the shell of the other Gallo-Roman building on stone foundations (which served agricultural purposes), probably during the 8th century. Its ground plan can be reconstructed from 12 large postholes (diameter up to 1,30 m, depth up to 1,40 m). The plan – a simple nave with a square chancel – is typical of rural churches in the High Middle Ages. This building probably appeared shortly after the little cemetery laid out in rows. Burials continued after the construction of the church and also after its destruction (and the abandonment of the nearby houses), until the 12th century at least. This new example of a rural religious building abandoned in the late High Middle Ages is an opportunity to reassess our knowledge of the penetration of Christianity in the countryside before the development of the parish system.

Keywords: *Protohistoric-, Gallo-Roman- and medieval agricultural settlement, cemetery of Reihengräberfeld-type, churchyard, church.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Saint-Catherine-de-Fierbois (Indre-et-Loire, France) : ein neues Beispiel eines mittelalterlichen religiös genutzten Gebäudes im Zusammenhang mit einem Friedhof und einer ländlichen Siedlung

Die Präventivgrabung in Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois hat auf einer Fläche von 3 Hektar ca. 850 Strukturen zu

Tage gebracht, welche von der Spätlatenezeit bis in das 12. resp. frühe 13. Jahrhundert reichen. Während nur wenige Gruben und Pfostenlöcher der Frühgeschichte zugeordnet werden können, sind die kaiserzeitlichen Spuren recht zahlreich. Sie gehören zu einem landwirtschaftlich genutzten Komplex, der eventuell als *Villa* angesprochen werden kann, denn ein Gebäude war mit einer Hypokaustanlage und einem Bad ausgestattet. Der Komplex wurde am Ende des 3./Anfang des 4. Jahrhundert aufgelassen, jedoch ab dem 7. Jahrhundert neu genutzt. Dies gilt für das Wohngebäude, dessen Materialien zum Teil wiederverwendet wurden. Nördlich davon entstanden mehrere Pfostengebäude die sowohl dem 7./8. als auch dem 9./19. Jahrhundert angehören. Im Bereich des anderen landwirtschaftlich genutzten Gebäudes wurde (vermutlich im Laufe des 7. Jahrhunderts) ein Gebäude bestehend aus 12 großen Pfostenstützen errichtet, die einen Durchmesser von 1,30m und eine Tiefe von bis zu 1,4m erreichen. Im Plan erkennt man den typischen Grundriss eines religiösen frühmittelalterlichen ländlichen Gebäudes: ein rechteckiges Hauptschiff mit angeschlossenem Rechteck-Chor. Dieses Gebäude könnte mit einem Reihengräberfeld zusammenhängen, aus dem heraus ein Friedhof entstand, der auch über die Auffassung der Kirche und der Siedlung hinaus, bis ins 12. Jahrhundert, genutzt wurde. Dieses jüngste Beispiel eines christlichen ländlichen Gebäudes, aufgelassen gegen Ende des Frühmittelalters, gibt erneut Anlass zur Überdenkung unserer Vorstellung zur Christianisierung der ländlichen Bevölkerung vor der Entstehung des Pfarrsystems.

Schlagwörter: *Ländliche Siedlung aus Spätlatene, Römerzeit und Mittelalter, Reihengräberfeld, Friedhof, Kirche.*

1. Présentation

La fouille du site « Pré de la Fosse/Les Clavaux », au lieu-dit « La Croix de Berre » (*Ben Kaddour et al. 2015*) a eu lieu dans le cadre de l'aménagement de la ligne ferroviaire à grande vitesse « LGV Sud Europe Atlantique », sur le tronçon Tours-Angoulême. Les origines du village de Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois restent mal connues : les premières mentions textuelles remontent seulement au XIV^e siècle. L'église Sainte-Catherine, située au centre du bourg actuel, à environ 1300 m du site archéologique, n'accéda au rang de paroissiale qu'en 1704.

Le site archéologique, décapé sur 2,7 hectares, se trouve en bordure du ruisseau des Coudrais, qui reprend probablement le tracé d'un cours d'eau ancien. Le site présentait une déclivité de l'ordre de 3 %. Les vestiges consistent exclusivement en structures en creux apparaissant dans un substrat hétérogène (argile à perron, limon, sables grossiers). La fouille a été réalisée

entre le 8 avril et le 2 juillet 2014 avec une équipe de 18 à 27 archéologues. Les conditions d'intervention étaient particulièrement médiocres en raison de pluies continues et d'orages réguliers.

Malgré ces difficultés, les résultats sont riches : plus de 850 structures archéologiques ont été observées, dont 110 sépultures, ainsi qu'une quarantaine de fossés ou tronçons de fossés, deux bâtiments avec fondations en pierre et plus de 600 trous de poteau (Fig. 1).

2. La Protohistoire et l'Antiquité gallo-romaine (I^{er} av. J.-C. – IV^e s. ap. J.-C.)

Hormis quelques éléments lithiques préhistoriques, les structures les plus anciennes remontent à La Tène finale (voir moyenne). Elles sont assez peu nombreuses, mal conservées et sont liées à un petit habitat enclos.

À l'époque gallo-romaine (entre la première moitié du I^{er} s. et la fin du III^e s. ou le IV^e s. après J.C.), le site est de nouveau habité et exploité. Plusieurs systèmes de fossés

parcellaires se succèdent, constituant des enclos dans lesquels étaient construits des bâtiments sur poteaux de bois, ainsi que deux bâtiments en pierre.

Le premier (bâtiment 1, Fig. 1, n° 1) est un édifice à vocation résidentielle avec des thermes privés. Il s'agit d'un rectangle presque exactement orienté ouest-est avec une petite exèdre sur la façade sud couvrant plus de 153 m². À noter son implantation en fond de vallon, probablement à proximité d'un petit cours d'eau ou au moins d'une zone humide. La construction est partagée en huit espaces d'inégale importance, sans galerie de façade. La partie méridionale du bâtiment 1 présente l'organisation logique d'un petit balnéaire, comptant deux pièces chauffées (*tepidarium* et *caldarium*) équipées probablement de deux piscines. Un second système d'hypocauste, au nord, a vraisemblablement un usage de chauffage domestique. La pièce orientale, dans laquelle devaient être entretenus les foyers des deux systèmes de chauffage correspond vraisemblablement à un espace de préparation alimentaire. Le bâtiment 1 combine donc des fonctions domestique et balnéaire.

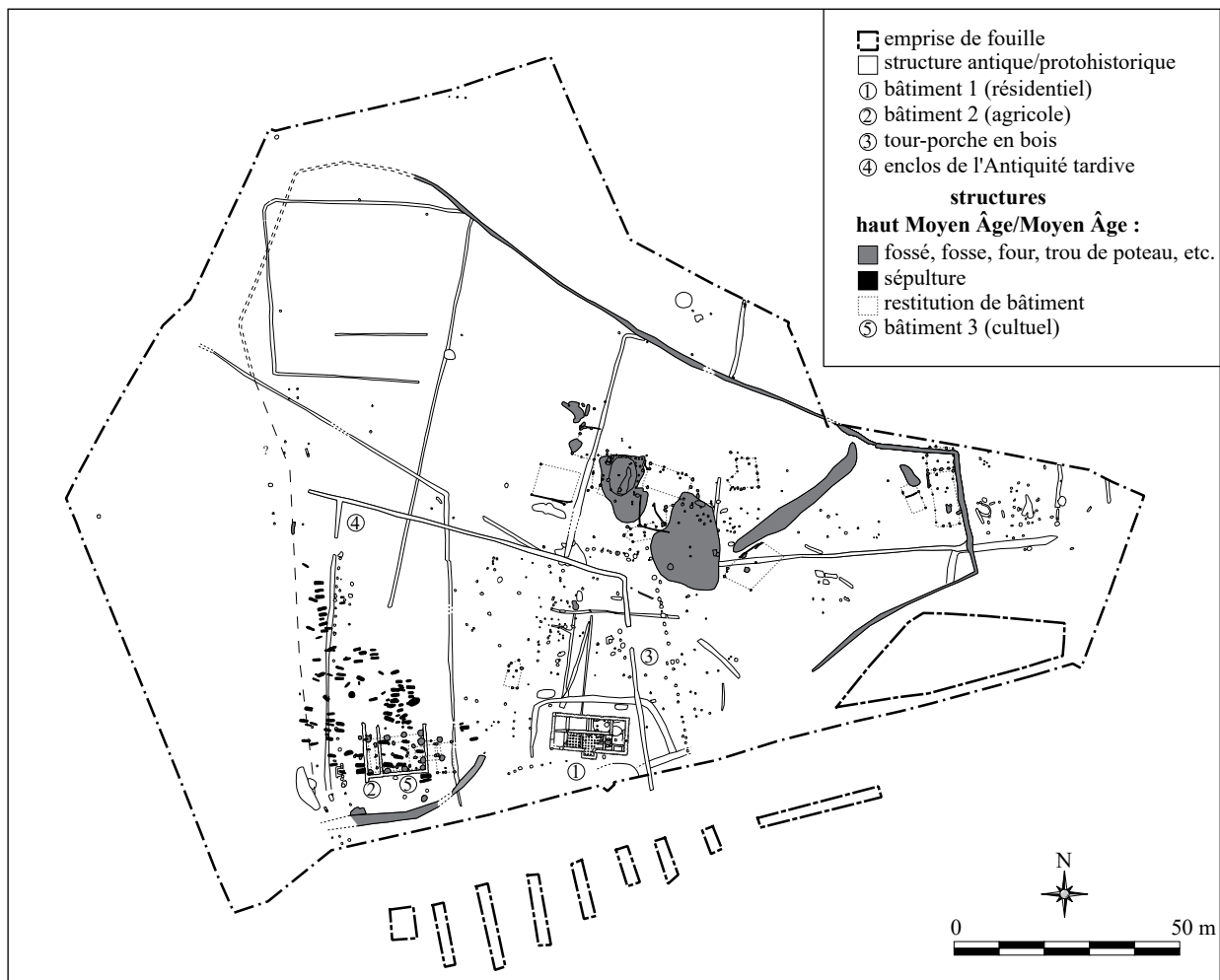


Fig. 1. Plan général des vestiges, toutes périodes confondues (© Relevé topographique: Nicolas Tourancheau, DAO : N. Tourancheau, C. Ben Kaddour).

Le deuxième bâtiment fondé en pierre serait une construction à vocation agricole, du type dit des « bâtiments standardisés » ayant probablement plusieurs usages, dont celui de grange pour les productions céréalières (bâtiment 2, Fig. 1, n° 2).

Il est possible qu'un fossé constituait la limite entre le secteur résidentiel (avec le bâtiment 1) et le secteur agricole (avec le bâtiment 2). Au II^e siècle, l'établissement agricole se dota d'un enclos palissadé de plus de 2800 m² constitué de nombreux poteaux d'assez gros gabarit. La palissade ouvre à l'est par une tour-porche en bois matérialisée par deux profondes tranchées de fondation, dans lesquelles étaient installées six poteaux de gros gabarit (Fig. 1, n° 3). L'enclos palissadé et la tour-porche doivent être considérés comme des marqueurs de la puissance ou de la richesse du propriétaire. L'utilisation du bois pour ce type de structures à l'époque antique est une particularité notable.

Le dernier système d'enclos reprend approximativement l'emprise du fossé palissadé (Fig. 1, n° 4). Une entrée avec porche sur deux poteaux est située un peu au nord de la tour-porche du II^e siècle. Cet enclos est daté de l'extrême fin du Haut-Empire ou du Bas-Empire (il recoupe un fossé qui a livré une monnaie datée 265-266). Mais les comblements des fossés de l'enclos n'ont pas livré de mobilier datant clairement de la fin du III^e ou du IV^e s. Il n'y a pas non plus de bâtiments ou de fosses qui ont livré du mobilier de cette période (seul un foyer a été daté par radiocarbone de cet horizon chronologique). Il est donc difficile de savoir quelles sont les structures qui sont synchrones de ce dernier enclos. Il semble, en tout cas, encore visible dans le paysage au VII^e-VIII^e siècles, comme l'attestent l'organisation des premières sépultures ou la présence de céramique alto-médiévale dans les comblements de certaines portions de fossés.

3. Les structures d'habitat du haut Moyen Âge (VII^e-X^e s.)

Cette période, qui n'avait été que fugacement perçue lors du diagnostic (seulement huit tessons prélevés) est bien représentée à la fouille (500 tessons par rapport au 2600 tessons antiques). Cependant, il est difficile, pour plusieurs bâtiments sur poteaux et fossés d'être catégorique quant à leur attribution chronologique (Antiquité ou haut Moyen Âge). Cela limite la compréhension de l'organisation et l'évolution du site entre Antiquité et Moyen Âge. La plupart des contextes alto-médiévaux ont livré de la céramique datée entre le milieu du VII^e et le milieu du VIII^e s., mais quelques tessons sont plus tardifs (IX^e-X^e s.)

Outre la récupération des matériaux et probablement le réinvestissement du bâtiment résidentiel antique (bâtiment 1), il existe manifestement deux concentrations de structures du haut Moyen Âge (Fig. 1). La première est située au centre de l'emprise de fouille. Son organisation

est assez lâche, avec des tronçons de fossés, des bâtiments sur poteaux et des fosses. On ne note pas de petits enclos parcellaires délimitant une ou plusieurs unités d'habitation ou d'exploitation. Même si on constate assez peu de recoupements, les bâtiments s'imbriquent, ce qui suggère des reconstructions successives au sein d'un espace assez limité. Une grande mare est postérieure aux bâtiments sur poteaux.

La plupart des plans de bâtiments en matériaux périssables restent très hypothétiques, soit parce qu'ils sont lacunaires (à cause de l'arasement du site, des perturbations agricoles récentes – les drains, les labours profonds – ou de la mauvaise lisibilité du substrat), soit parce qu'il y a superposition de plusieurs constructions dans un espace restreint. La majorité des groupements de trous de poteau forment des nébuleuses. On peut cependant noter plusieurs éléments : les surfaces semblent assez petites, les constructions sont majoritairement à une seule nef, les dimensions des avant-trous sont réduites et les calages assez rudimentaires. L'étude anthracologique montre le recours exclusif au chêne pour les poteaux plantés.

Des structures linéaires peu larges (entre 10 et 15 cm) et peu profondes (autour de 5-10 cm) pourraient constituer des négatifs de sablières basses enterrées ou de petites tranchées pour des palissades. Elles pourraient, dans certains cas, être associées à des trous de poteau. Les comblements de ces structures linéaires sont similaires aux comblements des trous de poteau du site (un limon plus ou moins argileux ou sableux, de couleur grisâtre). Ils sont assez stériles et ne présentent pas une concentration particulière en charbons, en pierres de calage ou en clous. Les profils sont en cuvette. Les sections fouillées n'ont pas livré de négatifs de piquets. Notons l'absence sur le site de cabanes semi-excavées. Il faut aussi souligner la rareté des structures de combustion (seulement un four en sape et deux foyers).

L'occupation du haut Moyen Âge comprend aussi de vastes structures relativement peu profondes qui sont difficiles à caractériser. La fosse 1226 est une grande fosse au creusement en V très évasé. Elle présente une stratification bien marquée, avec des concentrations en blocs de pierre. Sa fonction initiale n'est pas connue. Il pourrait s'agir d'une fosse d'extraction. Elle recoupe une petite fosse cylindrique au comblement verdâtre qui pourrait être une latrine. La structure 916, encore plus grande (22 m par 15 m), s'apparente à une mare. Elle recoupe plusieurs trous de poteau et a vraisemblablement entraîné la destruction d'autres structures peu profondes. Son comblement est assez organique et verdâtre. Au fond, des fragments de terres cuites architecturales et des petits blocs de grès et de silex pourraient constituer un radier destiné à éviter l'enlèvement du bétail. La structure, fouillée à 100 %, a livré un mobilier céramique relativement riche. La majeure partie de celui-ci (NR : 225) est daté

de l'Antiquité et donc est en position résiduelle. Le mobilier céramique du haut Moyen Âge se limite à neuf tessons des VII^e-VIII^e s. Des analyses XRF, notamment pour appréhender la teneur en phosphore, n'ont pas été véritablement pertinentes et ne peuvent conclure quant à la présence continue de bétail. La fonction de la structure 916 comme mare-abreuvoir n'est donc pas confirmée.

Les objets métalliques clairement datés du haut Moyen Âge sont quasi inexistant. Les rares monnaies retrouvées sur le site, ainsi que les éléments de parure, sont exclusivement datés du Haut-Empire. Le spectre des animaux du haut Moyen Âge est assez limité : boeuf, cheval, porc, ovi-caprinés, coq et oie. Quelques restes de cerf sont liés à la chasse. Malheureusement, la petitesse du corpus alto-médiéval (400 restes pour seulement 24 structures) invite à ne pas sur-interpréter les pratiques de consommation ou de production sur le site. Les résultats de l'analyse anthracologique sont sans ambiguïté : seulement cinq espèces rencontrées (chêne, hêtre, prunier, pommier, noisetier) et le chêne est nettement prééminent dans tous les types de contextes (charbons issus de négatifs de poteaux, charbons de structures de combustion, restes de bois utilisés dans les tombes, etc.). Malgré l'indigence du mobilier et des écofacts, on peut tout de même envisager une population alto-médiévale peu aisée.

4. La nécropole (VII^e-XII^e/XIII^e s.)

L'aire d'inhumation, localisée au sud-ouest du site a vraisemblablement été fouillée dans son intégralité (Fig. 1). Cependant, au vu de l'affleurement de certaines tombes, il est possible que d'autres inhumations peu profondes n'aient pas subsisté. Elle regroupe 108 creusements sépulcraux (pour 110 individus). Ils sont tous orientés est-ouest (la tête à l'ouest), sauf une sépulture, un peu à l'écart (au sud) axée nord-sud. Trente-neuf échantillons, à partir du bois des couvertures, des ossements ou des dents ont été datés par radiocarbone. Seuls 20 datations ont été possibles, en raison de la mauvaise conservation du collagène des os. Les datations radiocarbones s'échelonnent entre le milieu du VII^e et la fin du XII^e, voir le début du XIII^e siècle. Elles donnent toujours des dates postérieures au mobilier céramique résiduel présent dans le comblement des sépultures (généralement VII^e-VIII^e s.). Aucun dépôt volontaire de mobilier n'est présent dans les tombes, ce qui concorde avec les pratiques funéraires connues pour la période.

Les ossements humains du site sont généralement très mal conservés et les os se distinguent très mal de la terre qui remplit les tombes. Ceci interdisant une étude biologique réellement poussée de la population inhumée. Seuls 83 sujets ont pu faire l'objet d'identifications biologiques (41 immatures et 42 adultes, avec une répartition hommes/femmes équilibrée). Pour les adultes, il n'est souvent

possible de ne reconnaître que leur condition d'adultes, sans déterminations fiables de l'âge au décès précis, ni du sexe. En revanche, la meilleure conservation des dents permet d'estimer l'âge des immatures avec plus de précision et 24 d'entre eux ont moins de 4 ans ce qui suggère un recrutement « naturel » de la population. Le fort ratio d'enfants résulte de la forte mortalité infantile, commune à toutes les populations antérieures aux premières vaccinations. Les immatures sont présents sur les 2/3 sud de la nécropole mais on constate une forte densité directement au nord de du bâtiment 3 (voir plus loin). On constate une tombe comportant deux individus inhumés en même temps ou probablement successivement dans un court laps de temps, ainsi qu'une sépulture multiple. Celle-ci contient trois enfants, peut-être apparentés, comme le suggère la présence, sur chacun d'eux, d'un caractère discret. Cette sépulture atteste d'un pic de mortalité dont la raison nous échappe (accident, épidémie, famine?).

Certaines tombes sont de type rupestre à banquettes (avec des fonds de creusement anthropomorphes présentant un élargissement au niveau des épaules et une logette céphalique). Des vestiges de bois attestent l'existence de planches recouvrant certains défunts. Des calages rudimentaires de petites pierres complètent ces architectures funéraires.

Les tombes les plus anciennes sont organisées en rangées le long du fossé d'enclos tardo-antique (Fig. 1, n° 4).

5. L'édifice cultuel sur poteaux plantés

Outre le petit habitat daté VII^e-IX^e s., qui ne se distingue ni par sa taille, sa densité, ni par la richesse du mobilier, existe un autre pôle d'occupation plus atypique (Fig. 1 et 2). Il est situé dans et aux abords du bâtiment antique n° 2. Il comprend un édifice peu ordinaire : le bâtiment 3. Ses vestiges consistent en 12 trous cylindriques de grandes dimensions (1 m à 1,30 m de diamètre pour des profondeurs entre 1 m et 1,40 m, Fig. 2) dans lesquels étaient fichés des poteaux d'une trentaine à une quarantaine de centimètres de côté. Il mesure 16 m par 7,65 m, pour une superficie de 110 m².

Dans les comblements de trous de poteau ont été retrouvés quelques tessons de céramique datés entre la fin du VII^e et le IX^e siècle. Trois mesures par radiocarbone confirment cette datation, avec des pics de probabilités aux VIII^e-IX^e siècles (Fig. 3). Deux sépultures dont une datée X^e-XII^e siècles recoupent les deux poteaux de la façade occidentale. Les poteaux ne devaient pas s'être totalement décomposés lorsque les deux individus ont été inhumés car des effets de soutirages nets et directement imputables à leur pourrissement sont visibles.

La présence de tombes aux abords de cette construction, sa taille, la puissance de ses fondations, ainsi

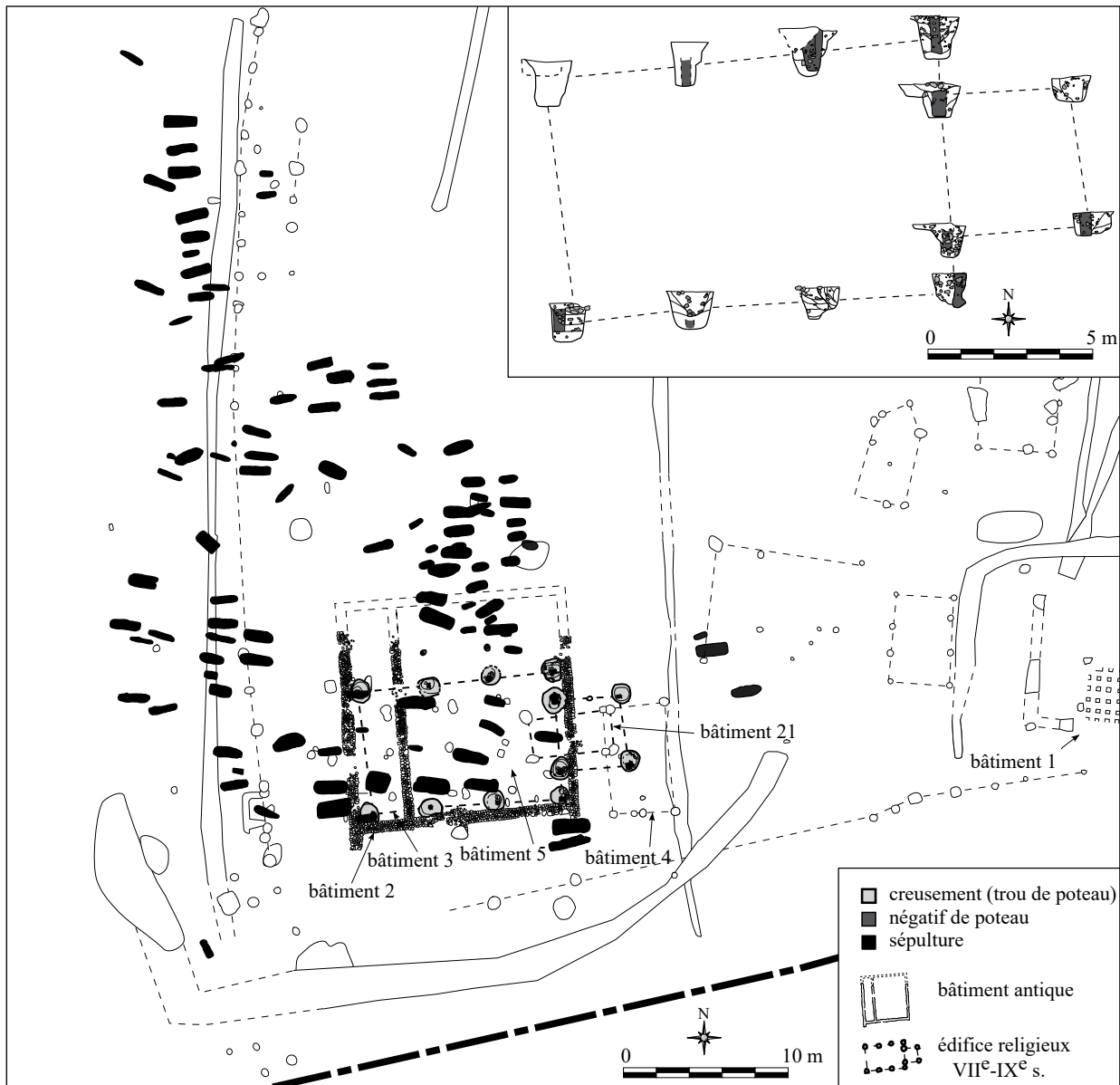


Fig. 2. Plan de la nécropole, de l'édifice cultuel et des bâtiments attenants. Coupes stratigraphiques des trous de poteau de l'édifice cultuel (© DAO: Cyrille Ben Kaddour, Nicolas Tourancheau).

que son plan (un grand rectangle associé à un plus petit rectangle à l'est), laissent penser qu'il s'agit d'un édifice religieux ou funéraire.

Cet édifice est implanté sur des ruines du bâtiment agricole de la *villa* antique, encore partiellement visible, mais aussi à proximité des tombes organisées en rangées (probablement antérieures : VII^e-VIII^e s.). L'implantation d'aires funéraires au haut Moyen Âge au sein d'anciennes *villae* antiques, notamment aux abords des bâtiments, est un phénomène bien documenté (Colin 2008, 232). Sur le site de Chessy (Seine-et-Marne), par exemple, des inhumations entre la fin du V^e et le milieu du VIII^e s.

sont installées dans l'emprise d'une grange antique, qui a peut-être été réutilisée en édifice funéraire (Peytremann 2003, 301 et 303). Cependant l'archéologie ne peut généralement pas attester la réutilisation de ces bâtiments antiques comme édifices du culte chrétien (Le Maho 1994, 13-14). Il est malaisé, en l'absence de mobilier datant et de la difficulté à dater par radiocarbone les ossements humains du site, de savoir avec certitude le nombre d'inhumations effectuées au moment où le bâtiment religieux 3 était en fonctionnement. Mais il est certain qu'après sa destruction (entre le IX^e et le début du XI^e s.), la population locale continua à inhumier ses

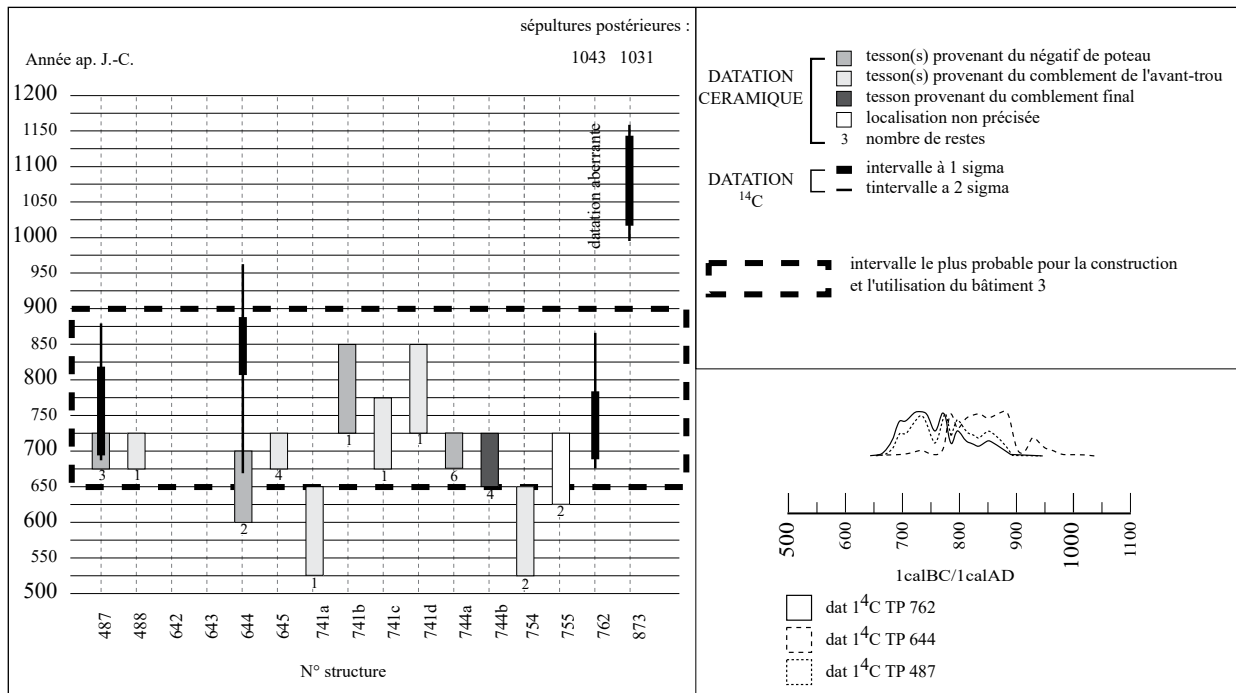


Fig. 3. Éléments de datation du bâtiment 3 (© DAO: Cyrille Ben Kaddour).

morts *in situ*, peut-être jusqu'au début du XIII^e s., mais au moins jusqu'à la fin du XII^e s., d'après quatre datations par radiocarbone. L'abandon de l'édifice est probablement dû à la restructuration monumentale ecclésiastique à partir des X^e-XI^e s. (« du réseau des *loca sancta* au réseau paroissial »), bien appréhendée en Indre-et-Loire (Zadora-Rio 2008, 267).

Nous parlerons d'« édifice » car nous ne connaissons pas le statut exact de cette construction : véritable église où se déroulaient des offices ou simple chapelle funéraire ? Rappelons tout de même qu'au haut Moyen Âge, les offices restaient rares dans les campagnes. Les sépultures datables installées à l'intérieur du bâtiment 3, contre ses murs et à sa périphérie, lui sont postérieures, à un moment où le bâtiment n'est plus en élévation (à l'instar des inhumations à proximité de la chapelle fondée en pierre des « Ruelles » à Serris, en Seine-et-Marne ; Foucray – Gentili 1996, 200). L'absence de recrutement spécifique dans la nécropole, ainsi que le faciès du mobilier archéologique retrouvé au sein de l'habitat permettent d'évacuer l'hypothèse d'une fonction monastique du site. Aucune tombe privilégiée ne semble dicter l'implantation de l'édifice.

Il est toujours malaisé de restituer l'architecture de la charpente à partir des seuls négatifs des poteaux verticaux, mais on peut proposer un système de chevrons-formant-fermes. Cette hypothèse s'accorde en tout cas avec les connaissances actuelles des techniques de constructions alto-médiévales et médiévales (Epaud – Gentili 2009, 130). On peut proposer, pour la nef et le chœur, des couvertures

à deux versants, avec ou sans croupe (comme la plupart des essais de restitution de bâtiments à chevet plat du haut Moyen Âge). La toiture était vraisemblablement végétale (bardeaux ou chaume). Le site n'a, en tout cas, pas livré d'accumulations de tuiles datant clairement du haut Moyen Âge aux alentours du bâtiment 3. Aucun vestige de l'accès (probablement à l'ouest) n'a subsisté. Deux hypothèses existent quant à la réutilisation des murs antiques du bâtiment 2 (Fig. 4). Dans la première, les murs étaient complètement ruinés et n'étaient visibles qu'à l'état d'arase (hypothèse plausible dans le cas d'élévations en terre et bois de la grange antique). Les poteaux de l'église n'étaient alors pas liés aux murs, mais seulement alignés avec eux. Dans la seconde hypothèse, les murs antiques étaient encore partiellement en élévation et utilisés par les constructeurs du bâtiment alto-médiéval pour asseoir la charpente (peut-être après les avoir restaurés ou rehaussés). Plusieurs églises plus tardives, notamment en Normandie, illustrent ce schéma (avec ossatures bois collées contre des maçonneries antérieures), par exemple l'église Saint-Ouen d'Epreville-en-Roumois (Eure) du XVI^e s. ou l'église Notre-Dame à Huisseau-en-Beauce (Loir-et-Cher) du XII^e s.

Un autre bâtiment sur poteaux, apparemment sans chœur ou abside, est inscrit dans l'emprise du bâtiment 3 (bâtiment 5, Fig. 2). Il est daté du même horizon chronologique. Il pourrait également correspondre à un édifice à vocation funéraire ou religieuse. Mais son plan, peu caractéristique ne permet pas d'aller beaucoup plus loin dans son interprétation. Cependant, il s'agit d'un des

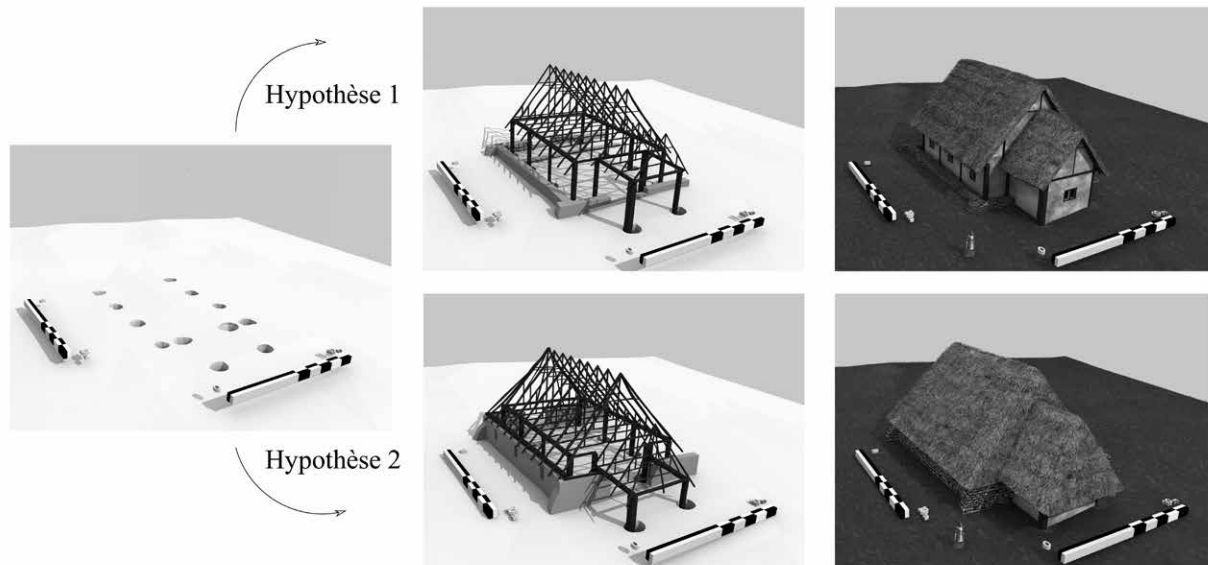


Fig. 4. Hypothèses de restitution du bâtiment 3 en fonction de la réutilisation ou non des murs antiques du bâtiment à vocation agricole (© Cyrille Ben Kaddour).

rare plans de bâtiments sur poteaux du haut Moyen-Âge du site bien lisible. Il s'agit d'un rectangle assez régulier, avec quatre poteaux corniers, un poteau médian sur chaque paroi et un poteau central. Certains poteaux sont doubles et semblent attester du remplacement ou du renforcement de certaines pièces de bois. Ils ont livré trois tessons de céramiques datés VIII^e-X^e siècle. Une mesure par radiocarbone confirme cette datation (769-944 ap. J.-C.). Les trous de poteau de ce bâtiment 5 sont beaucoup moins imposants que ceux du bâtiment 3 (environ une cinquantaine de centimètres de diamètre, pour des profondeurs de moins de 30 cm).

Deux autres bâtiments rectangulaires alto-médiévaux ont également été perçus aux abords du bâtiment 2 (bâtiments 4 et 21, Fig. 2). Il aurait été tenté d'associer bâtiments 5 et bâtiment 21 pour obtenir un plan d'église avec chœur rétréci à chevet plat. Cependant la file centrale de poteaux du bâtiment 5, la différence de gabarit entre trous de poteaux des deux bâtiments et l'épaulement biaisé entre les deux excluent cette hypothèse. En l'état, on peut suggérer que ces bâtiments aient pu avoir aussi une fonction religieuse ou funéraire sans qu'aucun élément archéologique probant ne puisse légitimer cette proposition.

Plusieurs tronçons de fossés laissent envisager la possibilité d'un vaste enclos grossièrement triangulaire, englobant à la fois l'habitat, le ou les bâtiment(s) religieux et la nécropole (Fig. 1). Cela reste une hypothèse. Mais il est certain que bâtiment religieux et nécropole sont légèrement à l'écart du pôle principal d'habitat.

La présence d'un édifice religieux (voire de plusieurs édifices successifs) pour un habitat restreint et modeste

est assez étonnant. Se pose alors la question de l'initiateur de la construction. Pour la grande majorité des sites ruraux présentant un lieu de culte, l'archéologie est difficilement en mesure de rendre compte de l'initiative de la construction des bâtiments culturels (grandes instances religieuses ou politiques, leurs relais locaux ou alors les communautés rurales elles-mêmes) et donc du statut exact de ceux-ci (chapelle, oratoire, abbatale, *memoria*, etc.). On estime que la plupart des fondations d'églises rurales primitives relèvent des évêques. Mais à l'époque carolingienne, un certain nombre d'églises rurales sont construites par les seigneurs laïcs (*Eigenkirche* ou *Proprietary Church* du monde anglo-saxon, *ecclesia propria* en latin) ou peut-être par des communautés rurales elles-mêmes (Schneider 2014, 456).

6. Les édifices religieux sur poteaux plantés en Gaule et en Europe occidentale

Les édifices religieux ruraux de la fin de l'Antiquité ou du premier Moyen Âge retrouvés dans la moitié nord de la France restent peu nombreux. Et l'extrême majorité est construite en pierre. Il est possible qu'en Gaule, dès l'époque mérovingienne, les constructeurs d'édifices du culte chrétien privilégiaient la pierre (Gauthier 1997, 240). Certains des exemples connus d'édifices religieux en bois, en France (Saleux et Tournedos-sur-Seine: Catteddu et al. 2009), en Belgique (Roksem: De Meulemeester 1995, 168), en Allemagne ou dans les pays scandinaves (Ahrens 2001) et surtout en Suisse (Bonnet 1997) sont, en tout cas, semblables au bâtiment 3 (quoique généralement un peu

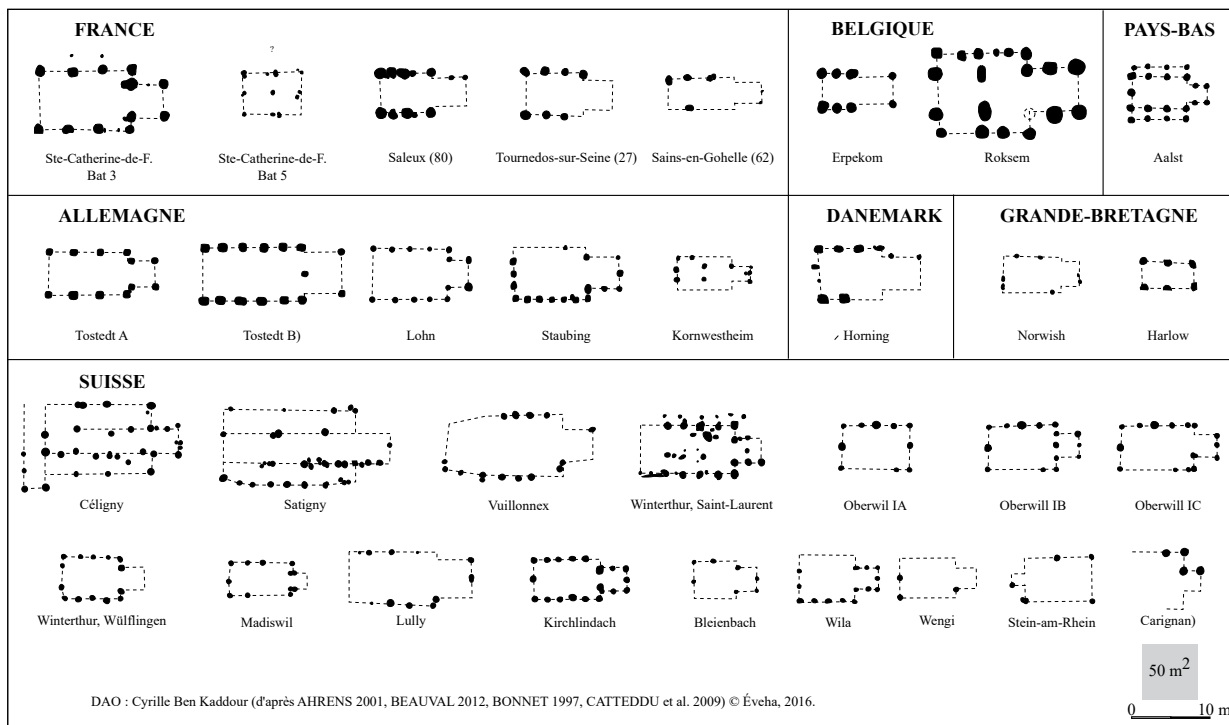


Fig. 5. Plan des principaux bâtiments culturels du haut Moyen Âge sur poteaux plantés restituables en Europe occidentale (© Cyrille Ben Kaddour, d'après Ahrens 2001, Bonnet 1997, Beauval 2012, Catteddu et al. 2009).

plus petits, Fig. 5). Sur d'autres sites, des constructions en bois situées à proximité d'aires sépulcrales pourraient constituer des bâtiments culturels. Cependant, l'absence de plan significatif ou de possibilité de datation précise (permettant d'attester leur contemporanéité avec les sépultures) ne permettent souvent pas d'en être certain. C'est, par exemple, le cas du bâtiment à deux nefs sur poteaux plantés localisé dans le secteur de la petite aire funéraire (36 tombes) du site des « Dix-huit Arpents » à Bussy-Saint-Georges (Mabé-Hourlier 2013, 215).

La relative rareté des découvertes d'édifices religieux en bois peut s'expliquer par au moins deux raisons. Premièrement les recouvrements postérieurs (sépultures et reconstructions en pierre) ont certainement fréquemment oblitéré les fondations de poteaux des édifices primitifs, deuxièmement nombre d'édifices en bois se trouvent probablement au cœur de villages actuels (Catteddu et al. 2009, 222), assez peu concernés par l'archéologie préventive. Beaucoup des nombreux édifices religieux en bois allemands recensés par Klaus Ahrens ont été remaniés et reconstruits en pierre. De ce fait, la plupart des plans restitués des édifices primitifs sont incomplets et hypothétiques. Dans certains pays, notamment en Scandinavie, les églises complètement en bois sont loin d'être rares mais pour des périodes plus récentes (Moyen Âge, époques Moderne et Contemporaine) et sont souvent construites sur solin de pierre.

Aux deux édifices religieux français sur poteaux aux plans restituables et bien publiés par différents travaux de Florence Carré et Isabelle Catteddu, s'ajoute, outre celui de Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois, un autre exemple récent : l'édifice de Sains-en-Gohelle « Rue Lamartine » dans le Pas-de-Calais (Beauval 2012). D'autres édifices en bois, aux plans non restituables existent : on peut citer le bâtiment de Largillay-Marsonnay dans le Jura, où sous la Burnkirch d'Illfurth dans le Haut-Rhin.

7. Conclusion

Signalons que même si la christianisation de la Gaule est un sujet de recherche dynamique (e.a. Gaillard 2014; Paris-Poulain et al. 2006), notamment la christianisation des campagnes alto-médiévales, les découvertes de bâtiments religieux en contexte de fouille préventive rurale sont encore peu nombreuses (surtout en plaine dans la moitié nord de la Gaule, les petits habitats perchés avec édifices culturels étant un peu plus nombreux, Schneider 2014). Cette rareté s'explique par les difficultés d'interprétation des vestiges, leur mauvaise conservation et certainement aussi car les fenêtres d'observation sont souvent partielles et n'englobent pas l'intégralité de l'occupation alto-médiévale. En outre, la plupart des bâtiments qualifiés de culturels ou funéraires sur les sites ruraux de Gaule sont édifiés en pierre.

Il ne faut pas négliger non plus l'existence de lieux de cultes précoces dans les villages actuels, sous ou à proximité directe d'églises encore en élévation. En effet, la plupart des sites ruraux du haut Moyen Âge étudiés dans le cadre de l'archéologie préventive concernent des habitats abandonnés ou déplacés, soit des échecs dans le maillage démographique et religieux. Les habitats en relation avec des bâtiments chrétiens qui ont perduré du haut Moyen Âge à nos jours restent mal connus, car peu concernés par des projets d'archéologie préventive d'envergure.

Le cas de Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois reste donc un des rares exemples, pour le haut Moyen Âge dans la moitié nord de la France, d'un triptyque « habitat, nécropole et édifice cultuel » (plus ou moins contemporains). Même si certaines questions demeurent (chronologie exacte des bâtiments, réutilisation ou non des murs en pierre du bâtiment agricole antique, nombre de tombes strictement synchrones du bâtiment, etc.), l'occupation alto-médiévale de Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois donne de précieux renseignements sur les pratiques religieuses et funéraires d'une petite communauté rurale.

Dans la moitié nord de la Gaule, la majorité des sites d'habitat rural qui ont livré un ou des édifices de culte ont fait l'objet de décapages sur de grandes superficies (à Serris, Saleux, Portejoie, Sains-en-Gohelle, La Grande Paroisse, etc.). De manière générale, ceux-ci sont des créations des VII^e-VIII^e siècles (*Catteddu et al.* 2009, 205), comme à Sainte-Catherine. L'église est souvent au cœur de l'occupation et si elle est en marge au moment de sa construction, elle ne le reste pas longtemps (par exemple à Portejoie). Les sites ruraux avec bâtiments culturels paléochrétiens concernent généralement des habitats groupés denses et étendus. Le site de Sainte-Catherine présenterait une première originalité dans le fait que nécropole et église restent en marge de l'habitat et que cet habitat reste particulièrement modeste (seulement quelques bâtiments).

En parallèle, les édifices religieux ruraux sont souvent entourés de nécropoles vastes et regroupant une population importante. On peut ainsi comparer les 110 inhumations de Sainte-Catherine (sur plus de quatre siècles) aux 1660 tombes de Tournedos, aux plus de 1300 de Saleux, aux plus de 1200 de Sains-en-Gohelle (*Beauval* 2012) ou aux près de 1000 de Serris.

La dernière originalité est la poursuite de l'activité funéraire, alors que l'habitat est déserté et déplacé et l'édifice cultuel détruit. Si plusieurs cimetières ruraux ont perduré après l'abandon (ou plutôt le déplacement) de l'habitat contigu à la fin du haut Moyen Âge, ils étaient généralement toujours en relation avec un édifice de culte (qui a souvent fait l'objet de réaménagements à la fin du haut Moyen Âge, notamment des reconstructions en pierre pour les rares édifices religieux français sur poteaux connus). À Sainte-Catherine, les dernières inhumations

(à la fin du XII^e ou au début du XIII^e s.) ont eu lieu dans un espace (à l'échelle de l'emprise de fouille et du diagnostic) qui n'était plus habité et qui ne possédait plus de bâtiment cultuel. On ne sait pas exactement quand ce bâtiment a été détruit, mais l'absence de signe de reconstruction, en l'état de connaissance de la durée de vie des bâtiments sur poteaux enterrés, induit une durée d'utilisation assez courte (probablement moins d'un siècle). Il est en tout cas déjà détruit, lorsque sont creusées les tombes 1031 et 4043 qui recourent les négatifs de poteaux de la façade occidentale. On peut envisager la poursuite de l'activité religieuse par l'intermédiaire du bâtiment 5. Mais celui-ci, au vu des datations, ne serait que légèrement postérieur au bâtiment 3. De plus, il est, lui aussi, recoupé par une sépulture.

Ces originalités confirment l'hétérogénéité des manifestations du culte chrétien et des pratiques funéraires au haut Moyen Âge dans les campagnes.

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Le phénomène de pierres antiques incorporées dans des édifices chrétiens au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg

État de recherche et nouvelles questions

Estelle Michels *

RÉSUMÉ

Le phénomène d'incorporation de pierres antiques dans les édifices chrétiens au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg a été observé dès le XI^e siècle jusqu'au XIII^e siècle. Ces fragments, connus essentiellement sous le nom « spolia », ont pendant longtemps été considérés comme de simples réutilisations. L'étude ci-présente vise à montrer que l'incorporation de reliefs antiques dans un édifice religieux présente une fonction allant au-delà de la simple réutilisation. L'inventaire des fragments gallo-romains observés sur les bâtiments religieux (église, chapelle, abbaye etc.) se base surtout sur des sources historiques, telles que l'œuvre d'Alexandre Wilhelm *Luciliburgensia Romana* (XVII^e siècle, édité en 1842) qui contient toutes les observations de l'auteur sur les vestiges romains visibles au Luxembourg à ce moment-là ainsi que *l'Itinéraire du Luxembourg germanique* (1844) de Louis Charlemagne Joseph L'Evêque de Basse-Moûturie. Ils confirment l'incorporation de fragments antiques sur 26 édifices chrétiens (état de recherche mars 2015). L'étude de ces encastresments a permis d'établir quatre grands points de réflexions : l'interprétation chrétienne, l'intérêt apotropaïque ainsi que son emplacement, l'importance commémorative et l'aspect économique. On constate donc que divers fragments étaient volontairement ou involontairement réinterprétés en scène/image biblique. Certains reliefs antiques présentaient également une fonction apotropaïque pouvant faire suite à l'art roman qui foisonnait aux XI^e et XII^e siècles. L'emplacement (intérieur ou extérieur) des pierres dans le bâtiment ainsi que leur visibilité face aux fidèles pouvaient amplifier la portée de leur message. Les pierres antiques pouvaient ainsi servir de pierres commémoratives, confirmant le statut/l'ancienneté du village. Enfin, l'intérêt économique se constate avec quelques cas de pierres voyageant d'église en église.

* DokuPlus s.à r.l.,
Büro für Dokumentation in
Archäologie und Denkmalpflege,
Stadtbredimus,
Grand-Duché de Luxembourg
flauto19@live.fr

Mots-clés : *incorporation de pierres antiques, spolia, Grand-Duché du Luxembourg, édifices religieux, interprétation chrétienne, apotropaïque, pierre commémorative.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Phänomen der in religiösen Gebäuden verbauten antiken Steine im Großherzogtum Luxemburg

Das Phänomen der in religiösen Gebäuden verbauten antiken Steine im Großherzogtum von Luxemburg kann vom 11. bis in das 13. Jahrhundert beobachtet werden. Diese Fragmente, allgemein als "Spolien" bezeichnet, wurden lange nur als schlichte Wiederverwendungen betrachtet. Die folgende Untersuchung soll zeigen, dass der Einbau von antiken Reliefs in einem religiösen Gebäude weit über eine einfache Wiederverwendung hinausgeht und eine spezifische Funktion darstellt. Zu diesem Zweck wurde zunächst eine Bestandsaufnahme der gallo-römischen Fragmente an religiösen Gebäuden (Kirche, Kapelle, Kloster etc.) in Luxemburg durchgeführt. Ergänzt durch schriftliche Quellen, wie z.B. die *Luciliburgensia Romana* von Alexander Wiltheim (17. Jh., 1842 publiziert) sowie *l'itinéraire du Luxembourg germanique* (1844) von Louis Charlemagne Joseph L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie, konnte die Präsenz von antiken Fragmenten an 26 christlichen Gebäuden nachgewiesen werden (aktuelle Recherchen, Stand März 2015). Die Recherche ermöglicht die Vertiefung von vier Reflexionspunkten: die christliche Interpretation, die apotropäische Bedeutung sowie seine Lage, Gedenksteine und das wirtschaftliche Interesse. Die Studie stellt fest, dass verschiedene Fragmente gewollt oder ungewollt in biblischen Szenen uminterpretiert wurden. Antike Reliefs hatten zudem eine apotropäische Funktion und stehen in enger Beziehung zur romanischen Kunst, die besonders vom 11. bis 12. Jh. florierte. Die Anbringung der Steine, ob Innen oder Außen am Gebäude, in direkter Blickrichtung auf den Gläubigen, verstärkte die Botschaft zusätzlich. Die Fragmente dienten ebenfalls als Gedenksteine, die den Status resp. das Alter des Dorfes unterstreichen. Schließlich zeigt sich das wirtschaftliche Interesse durch einige Fälle von Steinen die zwischen Kirchen "wandern".

Schlagwörter: *Verbaute antike Steine, Spolien, Luxemburg, religiöse Bauten, christliche Interpretation, apotropäisch, Gedenkstein.*

Introduction

Le cas d'encastrement de fragments antiques dans des édifices de manière à les rendre visibles du public a été observé dans plusieurs régions méridionales. Des maisons de particuliers, des moulins, des monuments civils (tels que des hôtels de ville...), mais aussi des châteaux, des ponts et des bâtiments chrétiens (église, chapelle, presbytère, mur d'enclos...) présentent des fragments antiques dans leur architecture dès le début du Moyen

ABSTRACT

The phenomena of antique stones incorporated in religious buildings of Luxembourg

The integration of antique stones into Christian buildings is known in Luxembourg from the 11th to the 13th centuries. These fragments, generally known as 'spolia', were for a long time seen only in terms of 're-use'. This present study aims to show that the integration of ancient reliefs into a religious building served a function beyond simple 're-use'. Luxembourg has several written sources which make it possible to establish an inventory of religious buildings (church, chapel, abbey etc.) possessing Gallo-Roman fragments. Among the most important are Alexander Wiltheim's *Luciliburgensia Romana* (17th century, published in 1842), which contains remarks on all Roman remains visible in Luxembourg at that time, and Louis Charlemagne Joseph L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie's *l'itinéraire du Luxembourg germanique* (1844). The presence of antique fragments at at least 26 religious buildings in the country can be proven (research state: March 2015). The study of the use of these stones can be seen in four ways, through a Christian interpretation, an apotropaic meaning connected to its location in the building, commemorative importance and an economic aspect. The study shows that various fragments were deliberately or unintentionally reinterpreted in a biblical image/scene. Some antique reliefs also had an apotropaic function, which had to do with the Romanesque art which abounded in the 11th and 12th centuries. The location of the fragments, whether interior or exterior, as well as their visibility to the faithful, could amplify the scope of its message. The ancient stone could also serve for commemorative purposes, confirming the status/antiquity of the village. Finally, an economic aspect has been observed, with cases of stones 'travelling' from church to church.

Keywords: *Integration of ancient stones, spolia, Luxembourg, religious buildings, Christian interpretation, apotropaic, commemorative stone.*

Âge. L'emplacement de ces derniers est souvent orienté de façon spectaculaire (par exemple à l'entrée de la porte, à l'angle d'une fenêtre...).

On distingue deux catégories : le rempli d'un bloc antique pour combler une construction non visible (ce qui n'est pas l'objet de la présente recherche) ainsi que les reliefs antiques intégrés dans les murs. Ces fragments provenant le plus souvent du milieu funéraire ont longtemps été considérés à tort comme

une preuve de tolérance de l'Église (Pétry 1983) ou une simple nécessité économique voire esthétique. Connus globalement sous le nom de « spolia », ils mériteraient pourtant une meilleure définition.

La présente étude se concentrera sur les reliefs antiques présents dans les édifices chrétiens au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg. Il s'agit d'abord de mettre en évidence la présence de ces fragments dans le pays grand-ducal, puis d'essayer de comprendre leur signification en lien avec leur emplacement. L'étude étant à ses débuts, elle permettra avant tout de se poser les premières questions en vue d'une recherche plus approfondie.

Définition du mot « spolia » : qu'est-ce qu'une spolia ? Pourquoi on ne peut-on pas parler de spolia ?

La définition du mot *spolia* se traduit du latin par « dépouille, butin pris à l'ennemi, déposséder, priver d'un bien » (Greenhagh 2011). L'étymologie se veut donc assez péjorative et la méthodologie a buté au début de l'archéologie sur de nombreux problèmes. La vision des premiers archéologues était restreinte, peu engageante. Un fragment gallo-romain dans un bâtiment médiéval n'y avait *a priori* pas sa place et appartenait à l'époque antique. Le mot *spolia* a donc été utilisé en toute circonstance sans chercher une véritable signification. La méthodologie était absente. La signification de l'utilisation d'une *spolia* s'est souvent arrêtée sur la simple réutilisation lors d'une crise économique, militaire ou sociale (Hansen 2013).

Le mot *spolia* voit son apparition au XVI^e siècle (Kinney 2012). Les antiquaires ne connaissant pas de termes préexistants pour les emplois gallo-romains, décidèrent de lui donner un mot emprunté au vocabulaire de la guerre. L'absence de sources écrites peuvent nous amener à croire qu'il n'y avait probablement pas de termes spécifiques et que le remploi était fréquent et ordinaire.

Le mot est donc en soi anachronique et représente les préjugés des premiers antiquaires. Il démontre aussi une vision métaphorique des temps modernes pour le remploi tandis qu'à l'Antiquité les *spolia* relevaient d'un rituel de guerre bien définie. Des *spolia* d'art étaient avant tout un symbole de victoire placé de façon distinctive aux yeux des vainqueurs, mais une fois incorporé, elles prenaient un rôle politique.

De plus, la vision des archéologues s'entrechoquait avec celles des historiens et historiens d'art qui propre à leur domaine d'études se posaient d'autres questions. Pour ces derniers, le fragment gallo-romain était un fragment *réceptionné* par l'Antiquité (Esch 2005). Le terrain de la « réutilisation » présente donc des difficultés de compréhension entre collègues. Il s'agirait ici de mettre ses préjugés de côté et d'engager un véritable domaine de pluridisciplinarité.

Les débuts de la recherche des Spolia

L'étude des *spolia* touche plusieurs domaines des sciences historiques dont notamment l'histoire de l'art. Pendant longtemps l'étude des *spolia* n'a pas été considérée être de grand intérêt d'un point de vue universitaire. L'intérêt se développe à partir de 1950 avec un pic d'affluence dès 1980. Les premières études concernaient la fin de l'Antiquité au Haut Moyen Âge dont notamment l'architecture paléochrétienne (Deichmann 1983). On y voyait avant tout une imitation de l'art antique. Par la suite l'étude se dispersa dans plusieurs champs, ex. géographiques et thématiques. Les premiers essais se sont concentrés à Rome, là où se trouve le plus grand nombre de *spolia*. D'autres cas se sont tournés vers l'utilisation de colonnes en marbre porphyre importé de Rome pour décorer la basilique d'Aix-la-Chapelle (Binding 2007).

L'utilisation de *spolia* voit le jour dès le IV^e siècle apr. J.-C. à Rome. À ce moment-là, l'utilisation appartenait au milieu public et elle était mal perçue. Pour une ville telle que Rome, proposer du remploi pour ses temples devait s'apparenter à une forme de décadence sociale. À partir du V^e siècle le remploi devient plus « universel » et donc mieux accepté (Liverani 2011).

Globalement, l'utilisation de fragments antiques au Moyen Âge a été très forte au XI^e avec un déclin dès le XIII^e siècle en faveur de l'art gothique. Ce dernier utilisait très peu de remploi comme par exemple la façade de Saint Rémi à Reims (Poeschke 1996).

Les premières études ont proposé deux théories qui présentent des lacunes trop basées sur des préjugés et souvent trop arbitraires :

a) Victoire du christianisme sur le paganisme

Une interprétation qui est à prendre avec modération. Les études scientifiques faites au XXI^e siècle ont eu l'occasion de remettre à jour ces deux définitions. La frontière entre paganisme et christianisme était très mince, à partir du VI^e siècle ces deux voies ont commencé progressivement à se mélanger. Le paganisme du Haut Moyen-Âge ne correspondait donc déjà plus aux idées préconçues des chercheurs des XIX/XX^e siècles.

b) L'esthétisme

Le problème rencontré face à cette interprétation c'est que la beauté au sens même correspond au regard du XXI^e siècle, mais pas à celui du Moyen Âge. L'utilisation d'un fragment antique par pur souci esthétique reste hypothétique. Il faut en effet se demander quelle était la différence au Moyen Âge entre « beau » et « bien » et quels en étaient les critères ?

L'étude des spolia au Luxembourg

L'étude du remploi au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg est pratiquement inexistante, mais n'est pas pour

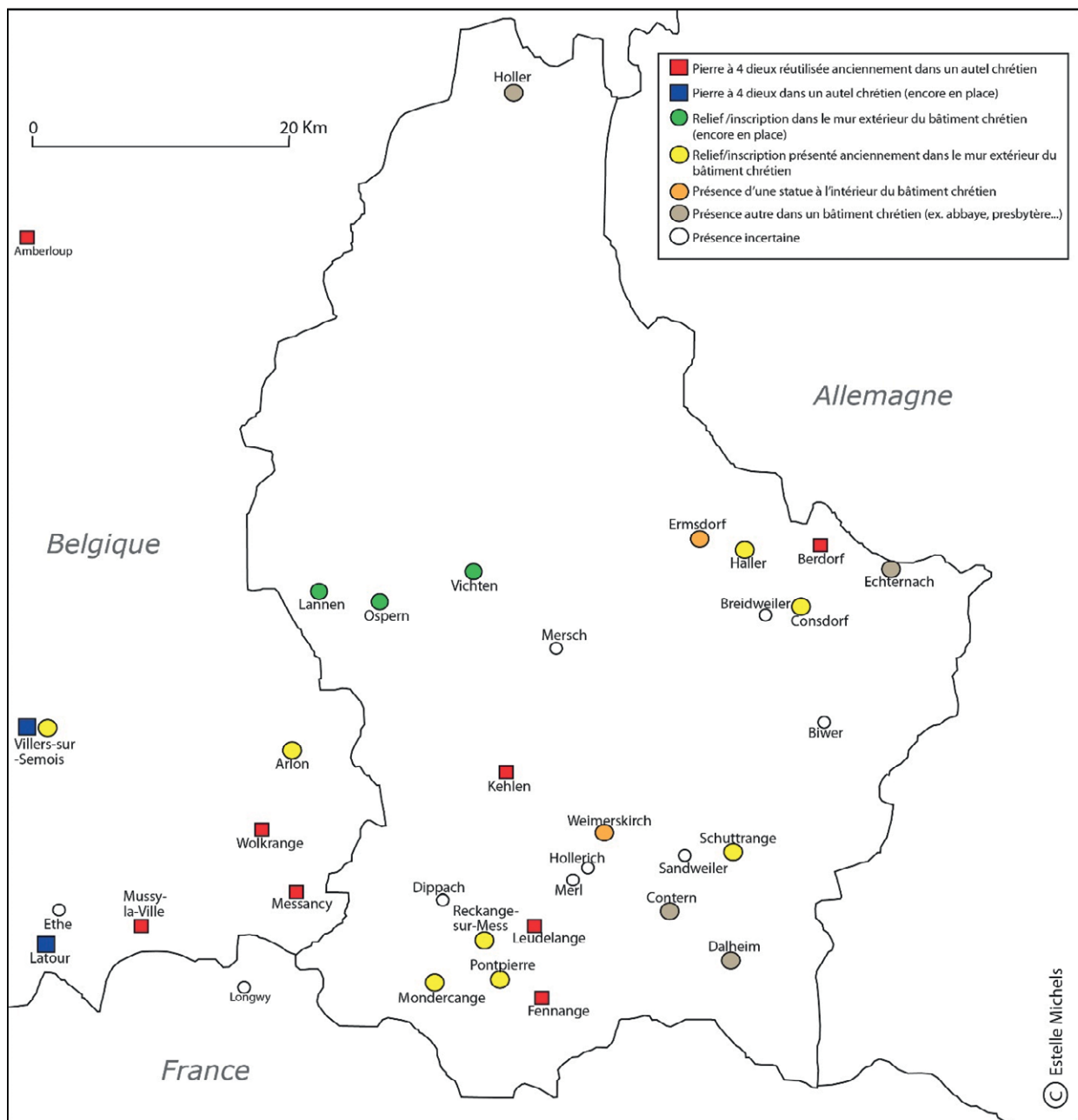


Fig. 1. Carte de répartition des églises et des bâtiments présentant des pierres antiques visibles au public (état de la recherche mars 2016, © Estelle Michels).

autant une exception. L'étude reste assez fragmentaire. Bien qu'elle semble plus prolifique dans certains pays (par exemple l'Italie) que d'autres, elle ne touche essentiellement que des domaines phares (par exemple la réutilisation du marbre, des colonnes/chapiteaux, statues, pierres précieuses etc.). À cela s'ajoute que l'étude est régionale et souvent trop légère pour pouvoir établir une synthèse à échelle nationale.

D'un point de vue géographique, l'encastrement des pierres antiques au Luxembourg n'est pas un

cas isolé. Il semble particulièrement foisonner dans la partie orientale de la Belgique (la province du Luxembourg), le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, la Lorraine (avec un intérêt particulier pour le département de la Moselle), l'Alsace ainsi que le sud de l'Allemagne (par exemple le Bade-Wurtemberg) : le tout formant un semblant de croissant de lune. Sa présence est également attestée, mais plus rarement, en Suisse, en Autriche, en Slovénie ou en Croatie (Colling – Muller 2008, 14).

Pour prendre le cas du Luxembourg, cette étude permettra d'approfondir l'évolution des églises, un champ de travail déserté depuis les années 1970. Outre ce hiatus aberrant, la plupart des églises/chapelles grand-ducales ont été détruites suite aux ravages de la guerre (par exemple la seconde Guerre Mondiale) ou d'un changement de style architectural. La plupart ont été modifiées et ces changements n'ont pas tous été scrupuleusement archivés, sans compter que les fragments antiques n'ont été, dès le début du Moyen-Âge, que très peu décrits.

La recherche a néanmoins permis d'établir un inventaire d'églises/chapelles contenant ou ayant contenu des fragments antiques (visages, reliefs, inscriptions ou statue). Il s'est avéré que le Luxembourg présentait un vaste programme de remploi. Des questions se posent donc : quelles significations particulières représentaient ces fragments? L'emplacement même permet-il de donner une meilleure réponse? Peut-on automatiquement parler de remploi « économique » ou d'une « victoire sur le paganisme »?

La mise en évidence d'églises à reliefs antiques au Luxembourg s'élèverait pour l'instant au nombre de 26 cas dispersés au Luxembourg avec une présence plus forte au sud (Fig. 1). La majorité de ces reliefs ne décorent plus les murs de l'église actuelle.

Les sources écrites

Comme précédemment évoqué, l'acte du remploi n'a été que rarement mis par écrit. De ce fait, il est donc très difficile de trouver des sources directes mentionnant ces remplois au Moyen-Âge. Par chance, le Luxembourg offre quelques précieuses sources, et ce dès le XVII^{ème} siècle, tel que le prêtre jésuite Alexandre Wiltheim (*Wiltheim [ed. Neyen] 1842*) qui consacra la majeure partie de son temps à son œuvre : *Luciliburgensia Romana*. Pendant des années Wiltheim sillonna le Grand-Duché et ses environs (Arlon, Trèves etc.), notant scrupuleusement toutes présences antiques encore visibles au regard de l'homme de la Renaissance. Si Wiltheim n'a pas porté d'attention particulière aux encastresments de fragments antiques dans des édifices religieux, il ne manqua néanmoins pas de les archiver dans son œuvre.

En 1844 Louis Charlemagne Joseph L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie, publia son œuvre *Itinéraire du Luxembourg germanique ; Voyage historique et pittoresque dans le Grand-Duché (L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie 1844)* où il y décrit son voyage de trois jours partant de la ville du Luxembourg jusqu'à Trèves ainsi que les détours qu'il a effectué. Tout comme Wiltheim, L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie est attentif à ce qui l'entoure et est particulièrement sensible à la richesse historique du pays. Bien que son trajet soit très agrémenté de légendes, on constate néanmoins que

certains fragments aperçus au XVII^{ème} siècle, étaient encore en place au XIX^{ème} siècle.

Enfin, Émile Espérandieu publia de 1909 à 1938 son vaste *Recueil général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Gaule romaine* en plusieurs volumes qui reprend pour le Luxembourg essentiellement les inscriptions d'Alexandre Wiltheim dont notamment celles du jardin du comte de Mansfeld (*Espérandieu 1913*).

Les premières pistes d'interprétations

Quel regard posait l'homme médiéval sur ces fragments antiques ? Considérait-il ces derniers comme un héritage d'une époque révolue ? Les premières interprétations se tournaient vers une utilisation avant tout économique, voire fonctionnelle et pratique (*Stocker 1990*). L'homme médiéval se contentait de prendre ce dont il avait besoin pour combler certains défauts lors de la construction (par exemple des vestiges gallo-romains pour combler les bords de fenêtre, portes etc.). Cette première interprétation a tendance à présenter une image peu glorieuse du Moyen Âge, pouvant qualifier la population d'opportuniste ou peu sensible à la beauté artistique romaine. Il en résulte que les hommes avaient bel et bien une sensibilité face aux œuvres antiques.

a) Interprétation chrétienne

Différents cas nous démontrent clairement que les médiévaux n'hésitaient pas à reprendre divers vestiges romains, mais que le fragment était minutieusement choisi et retravaillé, afin de permettre une parfaite adaptation au bâtiment chrétien ! Nous parlons ici d'une *Interpretatione Christiana* (*Kinney 2006 ; 2007 ; 2011*).

Une étude intéressante réalisée à Arlon confirmerait cette théorie. Une pierre antique était encastrée dans la tour, à gauche et au dessus de la porte de la seconde église Saint-Martin. Elle a été vue et décrite par Alexandre Wiltheim puis retirée en 1935 lors de la démolition de l'église et remise au Musée luxembourgeois (Belgique). Wiltheim décrit la façade principale : l'époux tenant dans sa main gauche un rouleau et de sa droite la main de sa femme. En vrai, il s'agirait plutôt d'un renvoi symbolique à la profession de l'époux (probablement d'un magistrat) (*Colling - Muller 2008, 19*). La pierre a été datée vers la fin du II^e siècle.

Pour le regard d'un médiéval, cette image pouvait représenter le symbole d'une union sacrée renforcée par la présence du parchemin, à l'image même d'un mariage chrétien, Wiltheim s'étant lui aussi laissé leurrer par cette interprétation. Les faces latérales quant à elles ont été peu préservées et laisse suggérer une mutilation volontaire. La face de droite a été évidée en tant que niche et n'a conservé qu'une danseuse avec des courbes peu définissables. D'anciens témoignages confirmeraient la présence de

badigeon détruisant encore plus les formes. On peut donc estimer que les bâtisseurs n'avaient aucun intérêt pour les faces latérales. Elles devaient contenir des éléments difficilement transposables pour la tradition chrétienne (par exemple génies, satyres...).

Le cloître d'Echternach au Luxembourg présentait sur un de ses murs un fragment antique avec la scène d'un marché ou d'un dîner. La vie d'un moine se basant avant tout sur la communauté, à l'image du Christ et de ses apôtres, cette scène pouvait évoquer la vie commune ou la représentation d'une communion chrétienne.

Si certaines interprétations se voulaient volontaires, d'autres ont été réinterprétées de façon hasardeuse. En effet, l'imagination humaine n'a pas de limites.

Ainsi, il n'est pas rare de voir des dieux antiques prendre le rôle d'un saint. L'église de Weimerskirch a longtemps eu pour objet de vénération une statue d'Epona reprise en saint Martin (*Wiltheim [ed. Neyen] 1842, 224; Schmitt 1992, 20-21*). Au Moyen Âge, les saints chrétiens sont reconnaissables par des attributs propres et il n'est pas facile de trouver une représentation antique correspondant à ces critères. Il se peut que dans la plupart des cas, ces transfigurations soient involontaires. La statue d'Epona de Weimerskirch a des formes très peu distinguables et floues, si ce n'est que le personnage est assis sur un cheval pareil aux premières représentations de saint Martin.

La chapelle de Kehlen était dédiée à saint Antoine l'Ermite et gardait quant à elle, une pierre à quatre dieux sous la boiserie de l'autel (*Wilhelm 1974, 48* et conservé aujourd'hui au Musée National d'Histoire et d'Art de Luxembourg). Le personnage d'Hercule a été retaillé puis honoré sous l'inscription d'ANTONIV(S). À ses côtés se distingue Apollon, les autres faces ont été détruites.

D'autres pays présentent le même cas : une Epona emmurée dans l'église de Königsbach (Bade, Allemagne) devient sainte Dorothee. Tandis qu'à Geboldsheim (Bas-Rhin, France) une Minerve est vénérée en tant que sainte Pétronille (*Pétray 1983, 50*).

À cela, se pose le rôle du prêtre dans l'intégration des cultes anciens. Était-il assez « compétent » pour déceler d'éventuels fragments antiques ou était-il également victime de sa propre imagination ? Certaines sources mentionnent la crainte des habitants face aux témoignages d'anciennes époques (vestiges romains, mais aussi objets préhistoriques retrouvés fortuitement). Il revenait au prêtre de consolider cette force « malveillante » et de la soumettre aux autorités de l'Église. Le plus souvent s'instaurait une pratique « magico-religieuse » qui consistait à intégrer l'objet au bâtiment chrétien afin d'annihiler tout pouvoir ou d'y déclarer une représentation officielle d'un saint (*Pétray 1983*). Voici d'autres exemples de pierres antiques intégrés dans l'église ou le presbytère :

Le presbytère de l'église de Dalheim offrait sur un de ses murs une représentation grossière sculptée

d'une divinité antique supposant être Nehalennia (*Liez 1852, pl. XI, fig. 1*).

L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie quant à lui ne manqua pas d'admirer lors de son passage à Contern une pierre en hémicycle dans le mur du jardin du presbytère « représentant une Diane à cheval tenant sur les genoux un petit chien » avec « deux pieds de haut sur dix-huit pouces de large » (*L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie 1844, 93*).

La pierre à quatre dieux de l'église de Berdorf est estimée avoir d'abord décoré le maître-autel de l'église Saint Michel au Grundhof (*Engling 1849 ; Espérandieu 1913, fig. 4225 ; Ternes 1970, fig. 12-19 ; Wilhelm 1974, 48; Wilhelm [ed. Neyen] 1842, 294, pl. 35, fig. 377*).

Lors de la rénovation de l'église d'Aldringen (Belgique), ses habitants trouvent une nouvelle fonction pour la colonne romaine en porphyre. Ils la réhabilitent en base d'une cuve baptismale.

La chapelle de Haller est reconstruite en 1921 et reprise sur son ancien modèle. Un relief romain qui se trouvait dans l'ancienne chapelle, n'a pas été abandonné, mais encastré dans le mur extérieur de cette dernière (*Wilhelm 1974, 44; Wiltheim [ed. Neyen] 1842, 297, pl. 87, fig. 394*).

Grâce à ce processus les fragments incrustés changent de statut. Ils deviennent une partie intégrale du bâtiment et ne sont plus à considérer comme un objet externe.

b) Présence apotropaïque et son emplacement

Si l'interprétation chrétienne semble être évidente pour un grand nombre de cas, il ne faut pas pour autant exclure les croyances et la superstition humaines. Certains des éléments peuvent être accompagnés d'une fonction apotropaïque. Les fragments de têtes, de lions ou de génies adoptent le rôle de protecteur de l'église et leur valeur magique était très liée à leurs emplacements.

Les têtes d'animaux avaient en règle générale une expression farouche et intimidante. Placées devant la porte d'entrée, elles devaient sans aucun doute protéger cette dernière. Le lion était l'animal le plus souvent placés à côté de ces portes médiévales. C'est également un puissant symbole chrétien : animal emblématique de l'évangéliste saint Marc, il était dans l'esprit des hommes un fauve androphage. Le lion évoque ainsi la mort, car il dévore l'être humain. Dans les écrits bibliques, le prophète Daniel, jeté dans la fosse aux lions, ne se fait pas dévorer par les fauves, sa foi chrétienne le protégeant. À l'image même du prophète, la tête du lion suspendue au-dessus de la porte d'entrée sert d'admonition morale pour les fidèles qui espèrent échapper à la mort horrifique de l'animal.

Le lion funéraire antique retrouve quant à lui cette même fonction. Dans l'Antiquité grecque, étrusque et romaine, les statues de lions se retrouvaient fréquemment placés à l'entrée des sépulcres monumentaux et veillaient

sur les défunts. Elles servaient à intimider et effrayer les profanateurs de tombeaux. Le lion funéraire antique a continué à être réemployé au Moyen Âge (Trivellone 2008).

Faisant suite à cette réflexion, il nous faut évoquer le voyage de L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie qui finit par s'arrêter à Schuttringe. Il y constata la présence de ce qui lui semblait être la tête d'un loup au-dessus du portail de l'église. « *Le portail est surmonté d'une énorme tête de loup à la gueule béante. La raison qui a fait encastrer cette sculpture romaine dans le mur d'une église moderne, vient sans doute de ce qu'elle avait jadis la même place sur l'ancienne église. La tête du loup était chez les anciens le symbole du soleil couchant, auquel celle-ci fait face. Cet animal était considéré comme le gardien des monuments et la sentinelle des sarcophages (...)* » (L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie 1844, 187). L'Évêque de la Basse-Moûturie y voit plutôt un « héritage » des temps germaniques où le loup aurait été associé au soleil ainsi qu'à une association assez hasardeuse avec le dieu Lugh (Theisen 1954, 92). L'église de Schuttringe se trouve en effet sur une butte d'où on peut admirer le coucher du soleil. La tête du « loup » fait également face aux tombes de l'église, protégeant ces dernières, face aux actes malintentionnés.

En vrai, il s'agirait plutôt d'une tête de lion. La pierre se retrouve aujourd'hui dans le dépôt du CNRA et a été identifiée en tant que telle (Fig. 2) (Wilhelm 1974, 44). Malgré ces confusions, la fonction de ce fragment correspond aux actes apotropaïques. Ici l'animal antique semble bel et bien faire office de protecteur des tombes.

Malheureusement, l'emplacement et les fonctions exactes de ces encastresments sont souvent exempts de sources et à cet état, nous ne pouvons qu'essayer de nous mettre à la place des hommes de cette époque.

Certains cas de figure ne manquaient pas d'inspirer de la crainte ou de la méfiance. Les visages auraient pu également être intégrés dans des pratiques magico-religieuses. On retrouve dans certaines églises des masques funéraires encastres dans les murs extérieurs. Peuvent-ils être considérés comme une forme de continuité de l'art roman ?

En effet, la plupart de ces reliefs étaient encastres sur des bâtiments allant du XI^e au XII^e siècle. L'art roman foisonne surtout dès le XI^e siècle. Ce mouvement artistique trouve ses racines en Allemagne dès 1030. C'est un art rural qui touche avant tout les églises de campagnes.

L'iconographie romane est vaste et complexe et peut être divisée en deux types de scènes. À l'intérieur de l'église se multiplient les scènes bibliques. C'est un lieu sacré entièrement dédié à la dévotion et fermé du monde terrestre. L'extérieur de l'église fait face à la vie terrestre et offre des scènes profanes voir « choquantes » (Vergnolle 2005). En effet, l'art se veut didactique. Il s'agit ici de montrer au fidèle des scènes du catéchisme, mais aussi des scènes d'horreur qui visent à prévenir ces derniers de ne

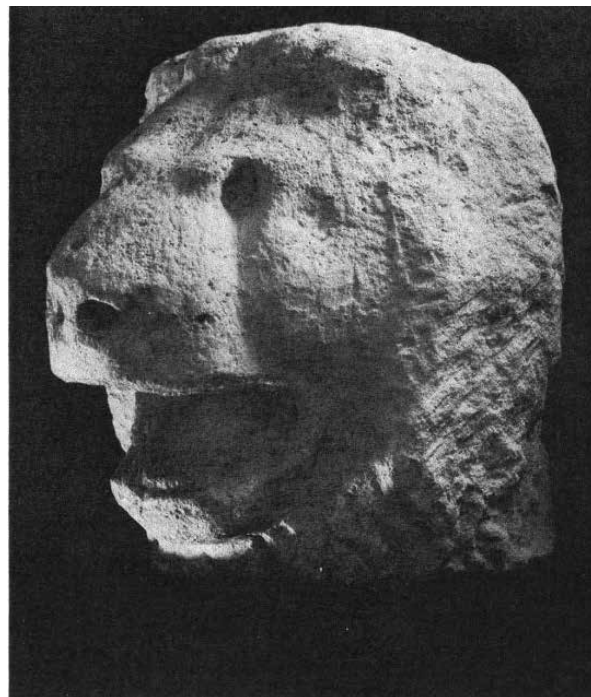


Fig. 2. Le lion de Schuttringen (© A. Biver, MNHA, 1974, 299).

pas s'égarer du droit chemin. On retrouve un mélange de cultes locaux et de fables dans l'iconographie romane. La présence de ces reliefs antiques issus pour la plupart des tombes étaient des exemples parfaits pour inciter la crainte et un rappel à l'ordre.

Un exemple serait celui de Vichten (Fig. 3 a et b). À l'église de Vichten se trouvent à la pointe du clocher trois fragments dont deux têtes humaines et un relief d'un génie tenant une grappe de raisin (Wilhelm 1974, 26). Un de ces deux visages attire particulièrement l'attention. La statue semble porter son regard au loin, la bouche est ouverte.

Cependant, l'emplacement des reliefs antiques dans une église reste complexe. L'église d'Ospern nous offre un autre tournant d'interprétation. Cette dernière se doit d'être évoquée, car elle présente un cas unique pour le Luxembourg (Arendt 1859). Sur le mur latéral nord, dans le coin à hauteur humaine, est encastree une pierre gallo-romaine (Fig. 4). Un génie ailé chevauche un monstre marin, mais la pierre a été retournée de 180°. Si on se base uniquement sur l'inclinaison de la pierre, on serait tenté d'y voir une victoire évidente du christianisme sur le paganisme. Or, l'emplacement pose problème. Une telle manifestation d'autorité cléricale aurait dû être plus visible aux yeux de tous : par exemple sur le portail d'entrée ou près de l'autel etc. La victoire de la foi chrétienne étant un symbole fort, il semble incompréhensible que cela n'ait pas été plus mis en avant.

En revanche, on constate que le relief se trouve sur la partie murale ajoutée au XVI^e siècle (la tour de



Fig. 3 a-b. Vue des fragments antiques sur la tour de l'église de Vichten (© Christiane Bis-Worch, CNRA) et en détail (© N. Graf).



Fig. 4. Relief d'Ospern incliné à 180° (© Estelle Michels).

l'église date du XI^e siècle), à une époque où l'utilisation des reliefs se voit doter d'une autre interprétation. En effet, la Renaissance regardait avec fierté et vénération l'héritage antique. Il n'était pas rare d'intégrer dans sa demeure/jardin/bâtiments chrétiens des trésors antiques et de commencer une véritable collection (par exemple la vaste collection du comte de Mansfeld). Une victoire sur le paganisme peut donc être exclue,

mais l'emplacement ainsi que sa position retournée restent inexplicables.

c) Tradition/pierre commémorative

Sa possibilité d'interprétation ouvre néanmoins un autre chapitre dans la fonction des fragments : les pierres commémoratives. Alexandre Wiltheim mentionne lors de son voyage à Schuttrange que les villageois avaient pour habitude d'ajouter des pierres antiques à la construction de leurs maisons, mais surtout des bâtiments chrétiens tels que les églises (Wiltheim [ed. Neyen] 1842, 224). Nous parlons ici de pierres commémoratives qui selon leur emplacement renforcent le lien avec les villageois. Cela serait surtout évident pour des reliefs placés en hauteur dont notamment sur les clochers qui tel un beffroi dominaient les plaines.

Outre l'église de Vichten déjà mentionnée, voici quelques autres exemples : Mondercange, Reckange-sur-Mess et Lannen, mais aussi Usselskirch (Moselle), Gumbrechtshoffen (Bas-Rhin) et Asswiller (Bas-Rhin) ... (Pétry 1983).

Pour le cas d'Ospern, cette théorie pourrait être envisageable. Une légende affirmerait en effet la présence d'un temple païen sous l'église d'Ospern qui se trouve en élévation au milieu du village. Aucune fouille archéologique ne confirme cette hypothèse, mais la pierre retournée pourrait faire allusion à cette légende. Son emplacement est maladroit, mais nul ne doute qu'une pierre commémorative « validerait » l'authenticité du bâtiment. Le relief antique deviendrait un moyen sûr pour légitimer la présence et le pouvoir d'un village.

Le Luxembourg présente une vaste richesse antique. On constate que la majorité des villages ont un site gallo-romain à proximité et qu'un large nombre d'entre



Fig. 5. Dessin de la pierre de Mondercange (© A. Wiltheim, *Luxemburgum romanum*, fig. 457).

eux ont au moins un fragment antique intégré dans l'église. L'emplacement à hauteur de la tour serait donc symbolique car elle engloberait le village et les terres qui lui appartiennent. Cela nous montre que les villageois au Moyen Âge étaient pleinement conscients de leur entourage et qu'ils y voyaient un atout majeur à leur ancienneté qu'ils souhaitaient valoriser.

d) Un aspect économique ?

À cela se pose néanmoins la question du bénéfice économique. Certaines sources pour la construction de bâtiments d'importance nous confirment que les autorités ecclésiastiques et royales n'hésitaient pas à passer commande jusqu'à Rome ex. Charlemagne pour la basilique palatine à Aix-la-Chapelle ou l'évêque Suger pour Saint-Denis à Paris (*Binding 2007*). L'utilisation de fragments antiques dont notamment des colonnes en marbre porphyre servait avant tout à montrer son statut social. Tout le monde n'était pas en mesure de se faire livrer des statues antiques.

Ce sont donc des pierres qui voyagent et le Luxembourg possède au moins un cas de « livraison » constaté : Mondercange. Le sens de l'observation de Wiltheim est si précis qu'il est en mesure de reconnaître un relief à Latour (Belgique) provenant de Mondercange (Fig. 5) (*Wiltheim [ed. Neyen] 1842, 406*). Les circonstances de ce voyage restent méconnues. S'agissait-il d'un don ou d'une commande spéciale ? Qui en était le commanditaire ? Est-ce que Mondercange effectuait des commandes régulières ou s'agit-il ici d'un cas isolé ? Le manque de sources ne permet pas de répondre à ces questions pourtant essentielles à sa compréhension. Pour autant, il serait intéressant de ne pas ignorer l'enjeu économique que ces livraisons auraient pu apporter aux villages ex. elles auraient pu engendrer des recettes conséquentes pour la survie du village, les dons quant à eux auraient pu

permettre la création d'alliances etc. Dans ce cas-là, les fragments antiques seraient en effet des matériaux d'exploitation à bénéfice économique, mais aussi social.

Conclusion

Ce premier travail de réflexion nous a permis de comprendre que dans sa méthodologie, il est important de tout prendre en considération, sinon le sens de l'objet est faussé. Lui seul ne suffit pas à expliquer l'intention.

En premier lieu, nous avons donc pu dégager les points majeurs et les questions nécessaires à sa compréhension. Néanmoins, le sujet est vaste et complexe. Sa difficulté majeure réside dans l'absence de sources médiévales. Face à ce hiatus, on doit en conclure que l'intégration d'une *spolia* dans une église devait être une chose « ordinaire » et fréquente. Elle devenait pourtant un outil politique lors de grandes constructions telles que l'église de Saint Denis ou la basilique d'Aix-la-Chapelle. Néanmoins, l'encastrement de reliefs n'était pas uniquement réservé aux grands édifices puisque même la plus petite chapelle d'un village en était décorée, comme par exemple la petite chapelle des Sept-Dormants à Pontpierre (*Folmer et al. 1982, 53*).

Les quatre grandes idées de cette réflexion sont : l'interprétation chrétienne, la fonction apotropaïque, la fonction de pierres commémoratives ainsi que l'aspect économique. L'emplacement va de pair avec les interprétations et ne peuvent pas être dissociés.

L'interprétation chrétienne semble être l'une des significations les plus présentes. Cela nous montre que contrairement aux premières théories, le fragment antique ne doit pas être considéré comme un fragment « volé » de sa période, mais doit être vu comme une continuité. Le relief devient une part entière de l'église et perdrait tout son sens une fois détaché.

L'apport apotropaïque est une forme dérivante de l'interprétation chrétienne. Ici, le fragment est utilisé de façon à guider l'homme médiéval à une meilleure compréhension de sa foi. Le lion à la gueule béante empêche le fidèle de s'engouffrer dans le vol ou le pillage des tombes tandis que les visages aux grimaces effrayantes rappellent les fidèles à la mesure et à l'acceptation de la mort.

Enfin, la pratique de pierres commémoratives nous fait comprendre que l'homme médiéval au Luxembourg était pleinement conscient de son entourage. La plupart des villages présentant non loin d'eux un site gallo-romain, ils étaient donc habitués à vivre avec les vestiges encore bien visibles jusqu'au XIX^{ème} siècle dans le paysage luxembourgeois. Ces derniers deviennent pareils à un cachet régional confirmant l'authenticité/la particularité du village.

L'inventaire des églises au Luxembourg n'a pas permis de mettre en avant toutes les églises à fragments

antiques, mais face à une telle richesse antique, il est probable que la plupart des églises luxembourgeoises possédaient leurs fragments.

Plusieurs questions restent ouvertes. L'étude a permis de montrer que les pierres voyageaient. Or l'impact économique est encore méconnu. Provenaient-elles automatiquement du site gallo-romain à proximité du village, car moins cher ? Quel était le prix pour faire livrer une pierre ? Quant à l'emplacement des pierres, elle mériterait d'être approfondie. Le premier inventaire n'a pas permis de définir avec précision l'emplacement de tous les fragments recensés. La recherche des fragments au Luxembourg n'est donc qu'à ses débuts, mais promet d'être passionnante. En effet, face au potentiel historique du Luxembourg, ce dernier n'a pas encore livré tous ses secrets.

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Rural mosques and settlements

Some reflections from the archaeology of
al-Andalus (11th-13th centuries)

Jorge A. Eiroa *

ABSTRACT

Rural mosques in al-Andalus have been much less studied through archaeology than urban ones. In all these studies, the buildings have been analysed from multiple perspectives, especially from an artistic standpoint, but almost always as isolated elements. Its spatial relationship with rural settlements, which justifies and explains the mosques, has barely been investigated. This paper analyses the connection between mosques and networks of *alquerías* from an archaeological point of view. To do this, first the role of mosques in the Andalusian countryside, its architectural style and its evolution throughout the Middle Ages is defined. From these bases, the integration of mosques in rural settlements is analysed through a systematic study of the Andalusian preserved examples. A classification of the different variables in the location of the mosques in relation to settlements is proposed, as much as for those located inside the rural habitat cores as for those situated outside, even in seemingly isolated contexts. The categorisation of the cases analysed and their chronology allows us to establish some conclusions concerning the evolution of these buildings over time and their important role in the social organisation of rural territory.

Keywords: *Rural mosques, al-Andalus, Middle Ages, social organisation of rural territory.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ländliche Moscheen und Siedlungen: Reflexionen auf Grundlage der Archäologie in Andalusien (11.-13. Jh.)

In Andalusien sind ländliche Moscheen bisher weit weniger archäologisch untersucht als die urbanen Moscheen. Alle bisherigen Recherchen über die Gebäude finden zwar unter verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten statt, nehmen sie aber als isoliertes Phänomen wahr und konzentrieren sich zudem vor allem auf kunsthistorische Aspekte. Ihre räumliche Beziehung zu den ländlichen Siedlungen, die die Moscheen überhaupt erst rechtfertigen und erklären, wurde dagegen kaum betrachtet. Diese Arbeit analysiert die Beziehung zwischen Moscheen und dem Netzwerk der *alquerías* aus archäologischer Sicht. Dazu werden zunächst die Rolle der Moscheen im ländlichen Andalusien, ihre architektonischen Stile und ihre Evolution durch das Mittelalter hindurch definiert.

* Departamento de Prehistoria,
Arqueología, Historia Antigua,
Historia Medieval y CC. YTT.

HH., Universidad de Murcia,
Murcia, Spain
jorgeir@um.es

Darauf basierend, wird anhand erhaltener andalusischer Beispiele die Integration der Moscheen in die ländlichen Siedlungen studiert. Es wird eine Klassifizierung zu möglichen Positionierungen der Moscheen zu den jew. ländlichen Siedlungen vorgeschlagen. Zu unterscheiden sind innerhalb und außerhalb befindliche Anlagen, zusätzlich gibt es noch Anlagen, die zunächst isoliert liegen. Die Klassifizierung der analysierten Fallbeispiele und ihre chronologische Entwicklung geben Rückschlüsse über ihre Entwicklung und über ihre wichtige Rolle innerhalb des sozialen Gefüges des ländlichen Raumes.

Schlagwörter: *Ländliche Moscheen, Andalusien, Mittelalter, soziale Organisation des ländlichen Raumes.*

RÉSUMÉ

Mosquées et peuplement rural: quelques réflexions à partir de l'archéologie de Al-Andalus (XI – XIII^e s.)

Mosquées rurales dans al-Andalus ont été beaucoup moins étudiées par l'archéologie que les mosquées urbaines. Dans toutes ces recherches, les bâtiments ont été analysés à partir de plusieurs points de vue, en particulier d'un point de vue artistique, mais presque toujours en tant que élément isolé. Leur relation spatiale avec les établissements ruraux, ce qui les explique et justifie, a été peu étudiée. Cet article analyse le lien entre les mosquées et les réseaux d'*alquerías* d'un point de vue archéologique. Pour ce faire, d'abord, leur rôle dans la campagne andalousien, son style architectural et son évolution tout au long du Moyen Age sont définis. A partir de ces bases, l'intégration des mosquées dans les établissements ruraux est analysée par le biais d'une étude systématique des exemples conservés en al-Andalus. Une classification des différentes variables pour localiser des mosquées par rapport aux villages, à la fois celles mises en place au sein des communautés rurales comme l'extérieur, même dans des contextes apparemment isolés, est proposé. La catégorisation des cas analysés et la chronologie nous permettent d'établir

1. Introduction: an archaeological problem

The study of the mosques in al-Andalus is quite developed. In the last century, many works were published that placed the particular details of al-Andalus within the overall context of the medieval Islamic world (the best synthesis about the mosques of al-Andalus published to date is the recent book by Susana Calvo 2014). Many solid cases have been studied, including mosques that have been preserved because they were transformed into churches after the Christian conquest and, to a lesser extent, mosques discovered by archaeological excavation work.

quelques conclusions concernant l'évolution de ces bâtiments au fil du temps et de son rôle important dans l'organisation sociale du territoire rural.

Mots-clés : *mosquées rurales, al-Andalus, Moyen-Âge, organisation sociale du territoire rural.*

RESUMEN

Mezquitas rurales y asentamientos: algunas reflexiones desde la Arqueología de Al-Andalus (ss. XI-XIII)

Las mezquitas rurales en al-Andalus han sido mucho menos estudiadas a través de la Arqueología que las urbanas, tanto principales como secundarias. En todos esos trabajos de investigación, los edificios han sido analizados desde múltiples perspectivas, especialmente desde un punto de vista artístico, pero casi siempre como elementos aislados. Su relación espacial con los asentamientos rurales, que las explica y las justifica, ha sido muy poco investigada. Este trabajo analiza la conexión entre las mezquitas y las redes de *alquerías* desde un punto de vista arqueológico. Para ello, en primer lugar, se define su papel en el espacio rural andalusí, así como su estilo arquitectónico y su evolución a lo largo de la Edad Media. A partir de estas bases, se analiza la integración de las mezquitas en los asentamientos rurales mediante un estudio sistemático de los ejemplos andalusíes conservados. Se propone una clasificación de las diferentes variables en la localización de las mezquitas en relación con los asentamientos, tanto de aquellas emplazadas dentro de los núcleos rurales como de las situadas fuera, incluso en contextos aparentemente aislados. La categorización de los casos analizados y su cronología nos permiten establecer algunas conclusiones relativas a la evolución de estos edificios en el tiempo y su importante papel en la organización social del territorio rural.

Palabras clave: *mezquitas rurales, al-Andalus, Edad Media, organización social del territorio rural.*

However, most of the cases studied are urban mosques and mostly monumental mosques. Bibliographic production focuses on the cases of the *masjid al-yāmi'* ('Friday mosques') in major cities of al-Andalus. Here we refer to the caliphal mosque of Córdoba and to the Almohad mosque of Seville, mainly; and to a lesser extent, to the congregational mosques in cities of different entities, such as Almería, Medina Azahara, Vascos or Murcia. Urban secondary mosques, the neighbourhood prayer-halls, have also been studied, especially in the cities of Cordoba, Toledo, Granada or Guadalajara. In short, we can say that almost all the cases studied are limited to



Fig. 1. Map of the Iberian Peninsula, showing the location of the mosques discussed in the text (© Jorge A. Eiroa).

an urban context. The mosques of rural areas have barely been analysed (Calvo 2004; Trillo 2011; 2012).

We have enough data on mosques in the rural context from the Arab written sources; there are many references to rural religious centres in the legal texts, especially in the compilations of *fatāwā* (Lagardère 1995). Such textual information has helped to confirm the importance that religious buildings had in the Andalusi countryside, and has allowed us to characterise their functions.

From a strictly archaeological point of view, we know very few examples of rural mosques (Fig. 1). There are only six cases of rural mosques that have undergone systematic archaeological excavation: the rural mosques of ‘Las Sillas’ (Marcén, Huesca), Almisserà (Villajoyosa, Alicante), Cortijo del Centeno (Lorca, Murcia), Cabezo de la Cobertera (Blanca/Abarán, Murcia), El Molón (Camporrobles, Valencia) and Miravet (Cabanes, Castellón).

Other rural mosques have been partially preserved by their transformation into churches and the reuse of some of their most significant elements. In such cases, it has been possible to study the preserved elements, usually the minaret, but the information arising is much less than in the previous cases because only a part of the mosque is known. There are also qualitative issues because this surviving element has been significantly modified. This is the case of the mosques of Velefique (Almería), Hacienda de Lerena (Huévar, Sevilla), Cuatrovitas (Bollullos de la Mitación, Sevilla), Sanlúcar la Mayor (Sevilla), La Xara (Simat de Valldigna, Valencia) or Almonaster la Real (Huelva).

In all these cases, the mosques have been the subject of a stylistic and formal analysis. The building is analysed from the methodological assumptions of art history and, in some cases, also from the bases of modern building archaeology. However, rural mosques of al-Andalus have not been the subject of a study that attempts to explain them in relation to the territory and the settlements in which they are inserted. The mosques were built to serve small rural populations who lived far from urban centres. When we study them as isolated buildings, the mosques offer many relevant data (chronological, constructive), but cannot be completely understood if we do not properly explain their archaeological context. That is precisely the objective of our work: to investigate the spatial relationship between the mosques and rural landscape, exploring the ways and the means of their connection to the networks of settlements from an archaeological point of view.

2. The mosques in the Andalusi rural areas

Before analysing the historical dimension of the mosques in the Andalusi countryside, we will address some generalities about the rural settlements in al-Andalus.

In the period on which this analysis is focused (11th-13th centuries), all data suggest that the rural regions of al-Andalus were occupied and exploited mainly by small groups, which were organised around the exploitation of agricultural spaces, mainly irrigated, and controlled by the state in the context of a tributary society. The place they chose to settle, that is, the *alquería*, could be defined as a small rural community made up of some

houses, homes or families, who worked the land without social or economic dependence on an eminent land owner. The term of *alquería*, when used in the Arabic texts, usually means a relatively homogeneous group of houses and lands. From there, we begin to understand the *alquería* as an area of influence, where it is possible to find several places of residence and where it is very difficult to set limits. Therefore, residential areas and work-spaces must be united in the analysis, because they are as inextricably connected as they are in reality. From the 1980s, it was possible to identify the existence in al-Andalus, of a clear association between the residential spaces, these rural settlements, and the defensive spaces – the *ḥiṣn*, a fortification constructed as a refuge and linked to one or more settlements. The three elements identified (*alquerías* or villages, *ḥuṣūn* or castles, and the fields) could be combined and reformulated in a wide range of ways (for further information about the social organization of rural territories in al-Andalus and the role of the *alquerías*, see *Eiroa 2012*). Rural mosques were built to satisfy the religious needs of the rural population who lived within this scheme.

In principle, we think that they are minor religious centres, but nevertheless they play a vital socio-economic role. Mosques in rural areas also act as spaces of justice and economic centres, as they housed the *waqf* (the treasury of religious assets). They were also used as teaching spaces and places of religious instruction, even after the onset of the *madrasas* (especially from the 11th century), which were essentially urban institutions.

From some textual references, we know that some rural mosques can be understood as main mosques or *masʿūd* (*masāʿūd*) *al-yāmiʿ*, mosques where the citizens were obliged to go on Fridays to hear the *khuṭbah* or sermon delivered from the pulpit or *minbar*. These mosques also have an important political function. The *khuṭbah* not only transmitted a spiritual message; it also served to pass on a message from the political authorities. It thus helped to structure and to control the rural territory.

However, we must not forget that it was the rural community who normally took the lead in building rural mosques and who would have been responsible for repairing the building and paying the religious personnel. Some texts, such as a known *fatwā* of Ibn Ruṣd (s. XII), show that the *alquerías* would have had full autonomy from the central powers for the management of rural mosques and their worship (*Calvo 2014*, 320).

As we have seen previously, we know of only six cases of rural mosques that have been investigated by archaeological excavation and some more cases about which we have partial information regarding the reuse of any of their elements.

In this list we have intentionally omitted some specific cases. Firstly, some mosques that in the synthesis published

on the subject are usually included in a section under the ambiguous title of ‘rural and small city mosques’ (the authors of these syntheses forget that urban reality is very different to rural). We refer, in particular, to the cases of the mosques of Niebla (Huelva), Puerto de Santa María (Cádiz) and Fíñana (Almería) which, from our point of view, are clearly urban centres and have little to do with the rural context that we discuss.

Secondly, the two examples of *rābita* (*ribāt*) that have been excavated in the Iberian Peninsula have been intentionally omitted. Here we refer to the Arrifana *ribāt*, in the Portuguese Algarve (*Varela Gomes – Varela Gomes 2007*), and the *ribāt* of Guardamar del Segura, on the Mediterranean coast of Alicante (*Azuar 2004*). In both cases we have a series of small oratories that make up a well-defined architectural ensemble, in which we can identify a main mosque. However, despite its rural character, the *ribāt* is, in itself, a type of religious building or building complex; it reflects a specific, highly institutionalized, religious practice that involves a life of collective retreat and asceticism as part of militarized defence of Islam. A very simplified view has compared this type of housing complex with Christian monasteries; beyond the error of this comparison, it is clear that it is not useful in our case; it is unnecessary to understand their relationship with rural communities since the *ribāts*, themselves, constitute rural settlement cores.

Finally, neither the known cases of *zāwiya*, such as Cobertizo Viejo of Granada (*Álvarez – García 2006*) or El Pocico of Murcia (*Bellón – Martínez 2001*) will be analysed because, in spite of being religious centres with an important centralising role in the social organization of the rural territory, they are not strictly mosques. Nor will the cave mosques, such as those possible examples of Priego de Cordoba (*Carmona 2012*), which are still waiting for a systematic study to confirm their identification and chronology.

All the examples that will be considered show the elementary features of Islamic religious buildings, the basic elements of the mosques: prayer hall, *qibla* (a long wall of the prayer hall orientated towards Mecca) and *mīhrāb* (a niche, in the *qibla*). These are the essential constituent elements for an archaeological identification of a building as a mosque. Moreover, in some cases, other elements that usually appear in medieval mosques are present, for example the minaret, the courtyard or the *minbar* (the pulpit).

The mosques of the Iberian Peninsula, from a general perspective, have been classified according to their plan in various groups. In most cases, the Mosque of Cordoba seems to be the imitated example, with the naves perpendicular to the *qibla* (following the model of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, instead of that of Damascus, in which the naves were parallel to the *qibla*).

It is not always possible to reconstruct the plan of a mosque where sufficient elements are not preserved; as is the case of Velefique mosque in Almeria; of the Almohad mosque of la Hacienda de Lerena in the Aljarafe; or of the Mosque of Sanlúcar la Mayor, in the same region of Seville. In all these cases, only the minaret has been preserved and we have only a vague idea of its size.

Most of the mosques that follow the model of Cordoba, with the naves perpendicular to the *qibla*, are longer than they are wide. There are mosques wider than they are long, with three to five naves perpendicular to the *qibla*, but we do not know of any cases of rural mosques that can be ascribed to this type. The best-preserved examples of this model, the mosques of Vascos, Archidona, Puerto de Santa María (Cádiz) or Antequera, cannot be understood as cases of rural mosques, and are more like cases of mosques of small urban centres.

The mosques that follow this model of Cordoba, with the naves perpendicular to the *qibla*, are often longer than they are wide. They have from three to five naves perpendicular to the *qibla*. In addition to some urban mosques, such as Medina Azahara or Niebla, in this group the cases of the rural mosques of Almisserà, Almonaster, Cuatrovitas (Sevilla), La Xara, and Cortijo del Centeno could be framed. The model of this scheme would be the phases two and three of the Cordoba mosque (from the late ninth century to mid-tenth century).

Almisserà mosque (in the region of Alicante) was discovered through an excavation in 2002 (García *et al.* 2004). It is a rectangular building, of approximately 12 m in length, with a rectangular *mihṛāb* partially preserved and a prayer room that appears to have three naves perpendicular to the *qibla*. The mosque seems to have been built in the 11th century; in a second phase, during the Almohad period, one nave to the west facade has been added, the place where the minaret would have been located. The building would have been used until its abandonment, in the 13th century, as a burial place: 79 tombs are located around and inside.

The mosque of Almonaster la Real is located on a hill overlooking the village of the same name (Jiménez 1975). One of the most spectacular buildings; it has retained most of the Andalusi construction, transformed into a church of Nuestra Señora del Castillo. The plan, of 120 m², has five irregular naves, a semi-circular *mihṛāb* and a four-sided minaret that lies outside the main structure. Subject of a major debate, it seems to be a building of the early 10th century.

The mosque of Cuatrovitas (Seville), which seems to be an Almohad building, was located in one of the many *alquerías* that the region of the Aljarafe had. It has preserved a prayer room of three naves perpendicular to the *qibla* wall (110 m²) and a spectacular minaret (Fig. 2), thanks to its transformation into a hermitage (Torres Balbás 1941; Gurriarán 2000).



Fig. 2. Minaret of Cuatrovitas (Bollullos de la Mitación, Sevilla) (© Jorge A. Eiroa).

The mosque of La Xara, in Simat de Valldigna (Valencia) is an interesting building that was built around the 12th century and remained in use until the 16th. Known since ancient times, it was the subject of an archaeological excavation in 1991, which allowed for the differentiation of various stages of construction (Tórró 1995). Overall, this is a prayer hall of three naves and about 120 m², which preserves remains of the *mihṛāb* and a small rectangular niche that may be employed for the housing of the *minbar*. The minaret and the courtyard have not been preserved, but an extraordinary collection of *socarrats* (painted clay tiles with Koranic phrases) have been.

The rural mosque of Cortijo del Centeno (Lorca, Murcia) is a small square building with a prayer hall that consists of three naves perpendicular to the *qibla* (Pujante 2002, 70-77). It is 9.8 x 9.30 m. (about 91 m²). At one end of the building the base of a square minaret is easily recognizable. Both *mihṛāb* (pentagonal in shape) and a small rectangular niche in which, judging by the marks of wheels on the ground, the portable *mimbar* that would be used in the collective prayer Fridays would have been stored, can easily be identified in the *qibla* (Fig. 3). The building would have been intentionally strengthened with a series of buttresses. A small room attached to the wall of the *qibla* would have been built at



Fig. 3. 12th-century mosque excavated at Cortijo del Centeno, in Puentes (Murcia) (© Jorge A. Eiroa).

a later stage; it can be interpreted as a *mas'jid al-yanā'iz*, a room for funerary use in which the bodies were veiled before the funeral (Calvo 2004, 51). This mosque has been dated back to the 12th and 13th centuries.

We can also identify another group of mosques in which the prayer room is a single nave or has two long naves parallel to the *qibla*. This is a series of very basic examples, in which the Cordoba model is abandoned to create simple buildings, of modest dimensions. The series is focussed on rural contexts, as is the case of the mosque of the *ribāʿ* of Guardamar del Segura, of Miravet Mosque, of El Molón in Valencia and of Marcén. It is also the case of the mosque of the fortified granary of El Cabezo de la Cobertera.

Miravet mosque was excavated by a French team in 1976 (Bazzana 1992, 239, 242). It is located in a deserted fortification of Sierra de Segura, in Castellón. It is a building of a single extended nave of nearly 15 m in length and a width of 3.20 m. It has preserved a semi-circular *mihrāb* and was transformed into a church at a later stage. The chronology seems late, immediately preceding the Christian conquest, in the late 12th century or early 13th century.

The mosque of El Molón is a strange caliphal rectangular building (about 56 m²) that rises in a fortified

rural settlement, systematically excavated between 1995 and 2002 (Lorrio – Sánchez 2004; 2008); the building is partitioned into two areas, each provided with a *mihrāb* on the *qibla* wall and with a door. From these particular features and from the presence of two tombs inside, some authors have raised the possibility that the building was a *zāwiya* or a part of a *ribāʿ*.

The mosque of the site called 'Las Sillas' in Marcén (Huesca) is another interesting case of a mosque in a rural settlement built in the mid-10th century and in use until the end of 11th (Sénac 2009). Although it would have been of a considerable size, since a population of about 150 inhabitants is calculated, the settlement indicates a very simple organization. In one sector of the site a large building called 'Building A' was excavated and interpreted as a mosque. It would have been a small prayer room of approximately 60 m² with two naves separated by pillars. Its interpretation presents some problems because, although it has a *qibla* wall oriented correctly, there is no evidence of *mihrāb*, much less other elements. Sénac explains this absence by interpreting the building as a *muṣalla* or open prayer hall. The building would have had a courtyard (*ṣahn*) with an ablution pool.

The mosque of the so called 'Cortijo de las Mezquitas' in Antequera (Malaga) was only discovered ten years

ago (Gozalbes 2006). Much of the building remained inserted, hidden in the construction of a farmhouse that had been in use until a few years ago. It is a large building, which has a prayer room of 338 m², of a total of 450 m².

All the cases mentioned can be dated back to the central centuries of al-Andalus. The earliest cases, such as Velefique, El Molón or Antequera, could be up to the end of the 10th century. The most representative cases, however, belong to the Almohad period and the period immediately after, as they are mosques excavated in villages deserted after the Christian conquest of the territories of Valencia, Murcia and Seville, with the breakthrough of the Christian kingdoms in the mid-13th century.

3. The integration of the mosques in rural settlement networks: systematization of the archaeological cases into groups

From these bases, we have analysed the integration of mosques in rural settlements and we could propose a classification of the different variables regarding the location of the temples in relation to the settlements, both in cases where they are located within the nuclei of rural habitations as well as where the mosques are located outside, even in seemingly isolated contexts.

1. The first possibility: The mosque is located where rural communities understand to be the symbol of their collective administration.

Miravet mosque is housed inside the *ḥiṣn*, a fortification built by several *alquerías* to take refuge in case of danger, which later hosted a village inside. The same applies in the case of the mosque of Almonaster la Real, which was also located inside the fortress that dominated the whole settlement.

On the other hand, for its part, the mosque of the fortified granary of el Cabezo de la Cobertera is constructed in the real and symbolic space that is the collective fortified granary (Eiroa 2011). It may just be possible that each of these buildings needed a small oratory for their service. These are therefore particular cases and unrepresentative of our study.

2. The second possibility of integrating the mosques within the networks of rural settlements is where the mosque is housed inside a core habitat, within an *alquería*.

Sometimes, mosques are located within walled or fortified *alquerías* that are situated on high. This is the case of the mosque of 'Las Sillas' in Marcén (Huesca) or of the mosque of the *ḥiṣn* of El Molón (Valencia). It would also be the case of the Almohad mosque of Sanlúcar la Mayor, in Seville, which would be located inside the walled *alquería* of Solucar. In the case of the latter, we do not know the

exact location of the mosque within the whole walled enclosure. In the case of Marcén, the mosque would have been built in a non-central area of the settlement, in the extreme southeast. Similarly, in the case of El Molón, the mosque is not located in a central place but in the transition area between the clearly defensive space and the residential space. This also seems to happen in other comparable rural cases outside the Iberian Peninsula, such as Calatabarbaro Mosque, in the ancient Segesta, in Sicily, of the 12th century, which was located in the area of contact with the outside fortified space (not walled). This location seems also to occur in cases of mosques of small cities, such as Mértola or Vascos: the mosques are located in places close to the fortified area, in its path or at its beginning, and are at the same time accessible to the population of the village.

At other times, the mosques are located inside non-walled *alquerías* and are not located on high. This is the case of the mosque of La Xara, in Simat de Valldigna. The building was apparently exempt and stood at the centre of a non-walled *alquería*, on flatland (García-Oliver 2003). That also seems to be the case of the mosque of Cortijo del Centeno. Though apparently it is a case of an isolated mosque, since only the building has been excavated, remains of rural houses surrounding the building are easily identified; a building that would have been on a small promontory of the valley, not on high or fortified (Pujante 2002). The same applies to the mosque of la Hacienda de Lerena in Huévar (Sevilla), of which only the minaret is known; even though it was transformed into a chapel and converted into an isolated location, it would have been erected inside a settlement, now depopulated and undocumented. That would also be the case of Cuatrovitas mosque. Although at present it seems to rise in a totally isolated rural context, it would have been located within an inhabited nucleus, now disappeared. In a recent excavation the remains of houses were uncovered near the mosque (Corzo 2015). However, it is impossible to pinpoint their exact location within the settlement.

It is reasonable to think that in an advanced stage of the Andalusi period, around the 12th century, most of the *alquerías* had their own mosque for daily prayers and for the night prayers of Ramadan. However, not all the mosques had the rank of *aljama* or Friday Mosque; some of them had to concentrate the cult of different *alquerías* on Friday. These mosques would have an *imām* or *khaṭīb*. A document of the 13th century, immediately after the Christian conquest, describes an interesting situation in rural areas dependent on the city of Murcia: three *alquerías* (three settlements), called Benibarriba, Alquibir and Tel Benieça, of similar size and population, had a mosque, but only one of them had been designated as Friday mosque and had been provided with *minbar* (Calvo 2010, 694).

From a strictly archaeological point of view, it is difficult to differentiate when we are faced with a rural

mosque with a range of *aljama* and when not. Some authors are inclined towards using the size of the prayer hall or the presence of a minaret, but these do not seem clear distinguishing features. However, explicit mentions in Arabic texts to these mosques as ‘*masʿūd yāmic wa-minbar / wa kḥuḇba*’ (literally ‘congregational mosques with *minbar* or *kḥuḇba*’) may offer more clues. It seems useful to find the remains of the presence of a *minbar*. That would confirm the range of Friday mosque to the mosques of la Xara and el Centeno, because in both cases the buildings have a rectangular niche, parallel to the *mihrāb*, which can be interpreted as the place where the portable pulpit would have been saved after the congregational prayer (in the case of el Centeno it is clear, where even the marks of the wheels on the pavement are still visible). Thus, the mosques of El Centeno and la Xara would cover not only the worship of its inhabitants, but also receive on Friday the inhabitants of the *alquerías* of their surrounding areas.

With regard to the development of rural mosques both in fortified *alquerías* (walled and on high) and *alquerías* on the plain, which do not exhibit a fortified enclosure and have built a castle (a defensive structure without domestic structures) to take refuge in case of danger, everything indicates that this is an expression of the variety of rural settlements in al-Andalus and of the changes experienced throughout the central centuries of the Middle Ages. The texts reflect several cases of *alquerías* (and mosques) abandoned to seek refuge in settlements on high, especially from the 11th century. So, we are referring to rural mosques in fortified and unfortified settlements.

In a famous *fatwā* of the 11th century, there is a reference to the disorders that this variety of situation caused: the inhabitants of a network of fourteen *alquerías* prayed in a mosque built at a central place; with the *fitna* (civil war) forced to move to a fortified settlement on high and where, upon reaching the truce, they moved again to the nearest *alquería* of the network of 14, in whose mosque they started to pray. Upon returning to their *alquerías* of origin some years later, the *faqīh* was asked: which of the two mosques must hold the rank of Friday mosque? The *faqīh* chose the most recent: the mosque of the last *alquería* would be the Friday mosque, because it had more people, and not that of the first *alquería*, despite being older (Lagardère 1993, 176). The criterion of size prevailed over that of antiquity in this instance; the text provides insight to the juxtaposition and hierarchies of rural spaces of worship.

3. The third way of integration of the mosques in the rural settlement network is one in which the mosque is housed outside a settlement, in the open field, in an equidistant place from the *alquerías* that have to provide coverage.

Almisserà is a very significant case. The mosque (and its cemetery) was found in an area of about 4 km² in which several settlements of the same chronology (11th – 13th centuries) were located. The mosque appears to be located in a central space, outside of any settlement, equidistant from the three main *alquerías* (Tossal d’Almissera, Foietes de Dalt and Alfarella), whose houses have been excavated (García et al. 2004). The mosque would have therefore been a congregational mosque of all the *alquerías*, that would shape what is known as a rural district. That would also be the case of Velefique Mosque (Almería): it is set on a hill outside a settlement, but in a fairly central location with regard to the settlement of their immediate environment. Moreover, its hypothetical size and the presence of a minaret seem to confirm its character of Friday mosque (Angelé – Cressier 1990).

4. There is one last case that allows us to raise a fourth possibility; that of the isolated mosques. Here we refer to the case of the Andalusí mosque of Cortijo de las Mezquitas in Antequera: unknown until a few years ago, Gozalbes identified it inside of a farmhouse; it is an exceptional case (Gozalbes 2006). We have already seen that this is a large building. Surprisingly, it appears as an isolated building, with no settlements in its surrounding area, as was the case of the caliphal mosque of Medina Sidonia (Gurriaran et al. 2002). This situation has led interpretation to consider it as a unique building, a sanctuary. We should not rule out any hypothesis, but it is likely that this is a misunderstanding, where archaeological contexts were interpreted poorly and where there was a lack of research. Should archaeological fieldwork be carried out in the environment of these mosques, it will be found to be no longer be isolated and will appear to be surrounded by dense networks of rural settlements.

4. Conclusions

The systematization of the cases analysed and their chronology allow us to establish some conclusions regarding the evolution of these buildings over time and their important role in the social organization of the rural territory.

Firstly, rural mosques can be placed in the interior of the spaces of collective defence, as fortified granaries or fortified enclosures of shelter but, generally, are located inside the *alquerías*, whether they are fortified or not. There are some isolated cases of mosques located in an open space, but equidistant from several settlements.

Secondly, it is very difficult to draw conclusions about the location of mosques within rural settlements because in most cases the extent of the original village and the location of its main elements are unknown. Some clues can be noted, however, which suggest the location of the religious buildings in the areas of transition between

areas of common public use (defensive) and private use (houses). There does not seem to be a search for central locations within the settlements.

Thirdly, we know that the mosques were common in many of the *alquerías* in the middle centuries of the Andalusí period (11th – 13th centuries). However, there is insufficient evidence to establish a hierarchy of the Muslim religious buildings of rural areas, although the presence / absence of some elements, especially the niches to save the *minbar* and, to a lesser extent, the minarets, allow us to differentiate congregational mosques or Friday mosques from secondaries and, consequently, the main *alquerías* from the minors.

In any case, it is beyond doubt that rural mosques have been insufficiently studied at the expense of large urban monumental mosques, and deserve an intensification of our efforts because the key to understanding the sometimes unintelligible Andalusí rural world may lie in many of them.

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Landjudentum im nordbayerischen Franken

Geschichte und Archäologie

Hans-Peter Süß *

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Im bayerischen Franken sind Juden seit dem 11./12. Jh. in Städten nachgewiesen, auf dem Land lebten sie nur vereinzelt. Im 13./14. Jh. kam es zu furchtbaren Pogromwellen, da sie als Hostienschänder und Ritualmörder beschuldigt und als Brunnenvergifter für das Ausbrechen der Pest verantwortlich gemacht wurden. Das Landjudentum in Franken entstand, als die Juden als Geldverleiher nach dem Fall des Zinsverbotes für Christen entbehrlich und im 15./16. Jh. auch wegen der Konkurrenzangst der Zünfte aus den Städten (Bamberg, Nürnberg, Würzburg, Rothenburg) vertrieben wurden. Warum so viele Juden hier Wohnstätten in Dörfern fanden, sodass sogar vom „fränkischen Galizien“ gesprochen wurde, erklärt sich aus der territorialen Zersplitterung des Landes. Die sehr zahlreichen fränkischen Reichsritter erteilten gerne „Judenschutz“, natürlich gegen klingende Münze. Den Lebensunterhalt verdienten sich die Juden mehr schlecht als recht im Vieh-, Getreide- und Hopfenhandel, auf dem Land waren sie unentbehrlich als Hausierer und Makler. Die allgemeine Verarmung führte zu einer Auswanderungswelle nach Übersee und mit der beginnenden Emanzipation im 19. Jh. zu einer Abwanderung in die nun wieder zugänglich gewordenen großen Städte. Bereits lange vor der NS-Zeit waren viele jüdische Gemeinden auf dem Land nicht mehr existent, auf jeden Fall kam es zu einem drastischen Einwohnerschwund. Nach 1980 begann die Archäologie sich für die verbliebenen jüdischen Monumente zu interessieren. Funde und Befunde aus dem Mittelalter gab es naturgemäß eher in den Städten. In den Dörfern waren die Ergebnisse der etwa 30 Untersuchungen weniger spektakulär, unterschieden sich doch die Synagogen und Wohnhäuser der Juden äußerlich kaum von den Anwesen ihrer christlichen Umgebung. Trotzdem konnten wichtige Erkenntnisse gewonnen werden, wie das Beispiel des Dorfes Veitshöchheim bei Würzburg zeigt. Bei der bauarchäologischen Untersuchung der Synagoge wurden nicht nur die Mikwe und eine Sukka gefunden, sondern auch eine deutschlandweit bedeutende Genisa mit Handschriften und vielen bisher völlig unbekanntem Drucken (13.-18. Jh.). Die folgende Renovierung des Synagogenkomplexes mündete schließlich in ein beispielhaft gelungenes Museumskonzept.

* Neustadt bei Coburg, Germany
Hans-Peter_Suess@gmx.de

Schlagwörter: *Landjuden, Franken, Veitshöchheim, Synagoge, Mikwe, Sukka, Genisa.*

ABSTRACT

*Judaism in the countryside of north Bavarian Franconia:
History and Archaeology*

Evidence of Jewish communities living in cities in Bavarian Franconia is available from the 11th and 12th centuries onwards, but only very few Jews lived in the countryside. Throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, Jewish communities suffered terrible waves of pogroms, being accused of host desecration and ritual murders, and being made responsible for the outbreak of the plague by poisoning wells. Rural Jewish life arose once Jews were no longer considered indispensable for moneylending. Interest was no longer prohibited for Christians and urban guilds (Bamberg, Nuremberg, Würzburg, Rothenburg) feared competition through the 15th and 16th centuries, driving the Jews out of the cities. The reason why so many Jews settled down in villages, even leading to the term 'Franconian Galicia', lies in the territorial fragmentation of the country. The numerous Franconian Imperial knights were very keen to deliver some kind of 'Jewish protection', translated into hard cash, of course. The Jews made their (barely sufficient) living from the cattle, corn and hop trades and in the countryside they were essential as hawkers and brokers. Their general impoverishment resulted in a wave of emigration to countries overseas and – with the begin of emancipation in the 19th century – in a return to the big cities which were now open again. Long before the outbreak of the National Socialism, many Jewish communities in the countryside had disappeared, in any case there was a dramatic decrease in rural population. From around 1980 onwards, archaeology showed a growing interest in the remaining Jewish monuments. Obviously, most of the medieval finds were made in cities. The results of approximately 30 investigations in villages were far less spectacular because of the similarities between synagogues and Jewish houses and those of their Christian neighbors. Nevertheless, some of the findings were quite interesting, as can be seen in Veitshöchheim, a village near Würzburg. During archaeological examinations of the synagogue, not only the mikvah and a sukka, but also a genizah of national importance were found, from which manuscripts and numerous previously unknown printed works (13th – 18th century) were recovered. The following renovation of the synagogue complex went on to lead to an exemplarily successful museum concept.

Keywords: *Rural Jews/Landjuden, Franconians, Veitshöchheim, synagogue, mikvah, sukka, genizah.*

RÉSUMÉ

*Le Judaïsme rural au nord de la Bavière franconienne:
Histoire et archéologie*

En Franconie, en Bavière, des communautés juives sont attestées dans les villes depuis le XI^{ème}/XII^{ème} siècle, tandis que leur présence en campagne était plutôt réduite. Aux XIII^{ème} et XIV^{ème} siècles, les juifs souffraient de terribles vagues de pogrome, ils étaient notamment accusés de profaner des hosties et de perpétrer des meurtres rituels, on les rendait même responsables de l'éruption de la peste par empoisonnement des sources. La communauté juive rurale en Franconie se forma quand les villes ne dépendirent plus des juifs en tant que prêteur d'argent, suite à l'interdit de l'intérêt pour les Chrétiens, et que les corporations des villes (Bamberg, Nuremberg, Wurtzbourg, Rothenburg) développèrent une peur de la concurrence durant les XV^{ème} et XVI^{ème} siècles, chassant ainsi les communautés juives. Le nombre de juifs vivant à présent dans les villages était tel qu'on parlera même de « Galicie franconienne », ce qui s'explique par la fragmentation territoriale du pays. Les nombreux chevaliers impériaux franconiens offraient volontiers leurs services de « protection juive », contre monnaie sonnante et trébuchante, évidemment. Le moyen de subsistance principal des juifs, bien que peu rentable, était le commerce du bétail, des céréales et du houblon. En campagne, ils étaient indispensables en tant que courtiers et colporteurs. Cet appauvrissement général entraîna une vague migratoire vers l'Outre-Mer et, avec l'émancipation naissante du XIX^{ème} siècle, au retour dans les grandes villes désormais accessibles. Ainsi, de nombreuses communautés juives avaient déjà disparu des campagnes bien avant l'arrivée du Nazisme, en tout cas on constate une diminution drastique du nombre d'habitants. À partir de 1980, l'archéologie développe un intérêt croissant pour les monuments juifs disparus. La découverte d'objets ou de complexes datant du Moyen-Âge se limitait au milieu urbain. Dans les villages, les résultats d'une trentaine d'investigations étaient beaucoup moins spectaculaires en raison de la ressemblance entre les synagogues et habitations juives et les habitations de leur entourage chrétien. Toutefois, certains éléments importants ont été révélés, notamment au cours des recherches entreprises dans le village de Veitshöchheim, près de Wurtzbourg. En effet, durant les recherches archéologiques du bâti de la synagogue, on mettra au jour non seulement le *mikwe* et la *soukka*, mais aussi une *genizah* renfermant de nombreux manuscrits et des impressions jusqu'alors totalement inconnues (XIII^{ème}-XVIII^{ème} siècle), faisant de cette pièce une découverte hautement importante pour l'Allemagne. La rénovation de ce complexe de synagogue aboutira ensuite à un concept muséographique réussi et exemplaire.

Mots-clés : *communautés juives rurales, Franconie, Veitshöchheim, synagogue, mikwe, soukka, genizah.*

Zur Geschichte der Juden in Bayern

Juden sind wohl mit den Römern in der ausgehenden Antike in die späteren deutschen Lande gekommen. Archivalisch können sie für Köln durch die Dekrete Kaiser Konstantins aus den Jahren 321 und 331 nachgewiesen werden, in denen ihnen Sonderrechte eingeräumt wurden. Die merowingischen und karolingischen Frankenkönige nahmen Juden unter ihren Schutz, Karl der Große bestellte einen Juden Jacob (oder Isaak?) zum Dolmetscher für seine Gesandtschaft an den Hof des abbasidischen Kalifen Harun al-Raschid in Bagdad. Aus der Zeit Ludwigs des Frommen sind Privilegien bekannt, eine Reihe von Schutzbriefen hat sich erhalten (*Battenberg 1990*, 45f., 52f.). Die Juden waren im Fernhandel tätig mit Luxusgütern: Gewürze, Edelmetalle, Pelze, Sklaven. Größere jüdische Gemeinden entstanden dann in *Aschkenas* (hebräisch für Deutschland) im 9. Jh. im Rheinland: Speyer, Mainz, Trier und Worms mit seinem berühmten Friedhof „Heiliger Sand“.

Das anfangs in der Zeit der Ottonen und Salier nahezu problemlose Zusammenleben mit den Christen endete im Vorfeld des Ersten Kreuzzugs mit den furchtbaren Massakern von 1096.

Die jüdischen Memorbücher verzeichneten allein für Mainz 1014 und für Worms 800 Opfer, insgesamt dürften in den europäischen Judengemeinden etwa 20 000 Tote zu beklagen gewesen sein (*Battenberg 1990*, 62f.). Im 12./13. Jh. wurden die Juden zwar unter den Staufern als „Kammerknechte“ dem Königsschutz unterstellt, aber dabei auch Objekte hemmungsloser finanzieller Ausbeutung. Das IV. Laterankonzil von 1215 unterwarf sie einer Kennzeichnungspflicht (gelbe Stoffringe auf der Bekleidung, Judenhut), und durch das im Verlauf der Cluniazensischen Reformen erlassene Zinsverbot für Christen verblieb ihnen zur Berufsausübung fast nur das Geldverleihwesen, da Landerwerb und Handwerk fast überall verboten waren.

In Nordbayern lassen sich Juden erst relativ spät nachweisen, als älteste jüdische Gemeinde gilt Regensburg. Dort wurde 1020 eine „*habacula Judaeorum*“ genannt, und schon 981 hatte der Jude Samuel ein *praedium* (Gut) an das Kloster St. Emmeram verkauft.

In Franken werden erst im ausgehenden 11. und dann im 12. Jh. Juden in den Archivalien genannt: 1096 in Bamberg, 1146 in Nürnberg, 1147 in Würzburg und 1180 in Rothenburg (*Wiesemann 2007*, 469-473). In dieser Zeit war das Verhältnis zwischen Christen und Juden im nördlichen Bayern bis auf den Würzburger Pogrom im Zusammenhang mit dem Zweiten Kreuzzug offenbar unbefangen.

Das Zinsverbot für Christen verschaffte den Juden einen lukrativen Erwerbszweig, was zum Aufblühen ihrer Stadtgemeinden führte. Ihre Ansiedlungen in Würzburg, Nürnberg und Rothenburg gehörten im 13. Jh. zu den

bedeutendsten in ganz Deutschland (*Germania Judaica 1963/1968/1987-1995/2003*).

Auf dem Land lebten Juden damals nur ganz vereinzelt. In den Städten wohnten sie sowohl mit christlichen Nachbarn zusammen in einer Straße wie in Bamberg, aber auch schon von diesen separiert wie in Speyer, wo bereits 1084 ihre Wohnviertel und Gassen mit Mauern umgeben und mit Toren versehen waren. Dies geschah anfangs jedenfalls auch auf Wunsch der Juden hin und ihrem Schutzbedürfnis entsprechend (*Töch 1998*, 35). Bis zu ihrer Einsperrung in einem strikt abgeschlossenen Bereich, dem Ghetto nach unserem Sprachgebrauch, dauerte es noch bis 1462 (Frankfurt am Main).

Der wirtschaftliche Erfolg der Juden erzeugte bei den christlichen Nachbarn Neid und Missgunst, und die unselige Verquickung von wirtschaftlicher Konkurrenz mit religiösem Fanatismus führte so zu den Katastrophen vom Ende des 13. bis zur Mitte des 14. Jhs., die besonders heftig in Franken tobten und zumeist hier ihren Anfang nahmen.

Allgemein als vermeintliche Mörder Christi angeklagt, wurden die Hebräer zusätzlich auch als Kindesentführer, Ritualmörder, Gotteslästerer und Hostienschänder verleumdet und schließlich als Brunnenvergifter für das Ausbrechen der Pest verantwortlich gemacht. Genannt seien hier die nach ihren Anführern benannten Pogrome (Rindfleisch 1298, „König“ Armleder 1336), die viele Tausende Opfer forderten.

Höhepunkt der Judenverfolgungen waren die Pestpogrome in der Mitte des 14. Jhs. (1348/49), wobei sich in Franken besonders die Städte Würzburg und Nürnberg hervortaten, die sich so in zynischer Weise nach den folgenden Abrissen der Judenviertel ihren Wunsch nach einem jeweils neuen Marktplatz erfüllen konnten!

Als im ausgehenden Mittelalter das Zinsverbot für Christen gefallen war, wurden die Juden von den aus der Lombardei kommenden großen Banken und Handelshäusern als unliebsame Konkurrenz aus dem Geschäft gedrängt. Sie waren nun aus der Sicht der Bürger und der Obrigkeit entbehrlich geworden und letztere suchte sich ihrer zu entledigen. Auch den erstarkenden Handwerkerzünften waren sie im Wege. In Franken machte das Hochstift Bamberg 1478 mit einem allgemeinen Ausweisungsbefehl den Anfang, 1499 folgten Nürnberg, 1515 die brandenburgischen Markgrafschaften Ansbach und Bayreuth, 1555 die Reichsstadt Schweinfurt und schließlich 1575 das Hochstift Würzburg. Immerhin verliefen die Ausweisungen mehrheitlich gewaltfrei. Die Finanzkraft der Juden verminderte sich stark und sollte nie mehr das mittelalterliche Niveau erreichen.

Zusätzlich verschlechterte die aufkommende Reformation die Situation der Juden. Vor allem der anfangs judenfreundliche Martin Luther tat sich hier hervor mit seinen judenfeindlichen Schriften „*Wider die Sabbather*“ (1538) und „*Von den Juden und iren Lügen*“ (1543).

Das Landjudentum

Die Ausweisungen der Juden aus den Städten wurden in Franken zur Geburtsstunde des Landjudentums. Warum gerade hier so viele ein neues Lebensumfeld finden konnten, zunächst vor allem im Umfeld der Ausweisungsstädte, sodass später vom „Galizien Deutschlands“ (*Daxelmüller 1988, 37*) gesprochen werden konnte, erklärt sich aus der territorialen Zersplitterung des Landes. Die politische Landschaft Frankens bestand im Spätmittelalter, wie die Landkarte zeigt, aus einem Flickenteppich verschiedener Herrschaften. Da waren die Hochstifte Würzburg, Bamberg und Eichstätt, auch Mainz und Fulda hatten Besitzungen. Dazu gab es die Brandenburg-Hohenzollerschen Markgrafschaften Ansbach (das „Unterland“) und Bayreuth-Kulmbach (das „Oberland“). Dazwischen lag das Sextett der freien Reichsstädte Nürnberg, Rothenburg, Schweinfurt, Dinkelsbühl, Weißenburg und Windsheim. Sogar zwei Reichsdörfer bei Schweinfurt, Gochsheim und Sennfeld, waren damals nur dem Kaiser untertan. Der Deutsche Orden besaß Ländereien um seine Komtur Mergentheim.

Damals existierten etwa 150 freie Reichsritterterritorien, die sich in sechs Kantonen der „reichsfrey ohnmittelbaren Ritterschaft Landes zu Francken“ zum Fränkischen Reichskreis formten. Diese Reichsritter nahmen gerne Juden in ihre Ländereien auf, ebenso kleinere Landstädte und Dörfer. Natürlich nicht etwa aus Toleranz, ließen sie sich doch den Judenschutz teuer bezahlen. Besonders die Kantone Rhön und Werra, Steigerwald, Baunach, Gebürg (die Fränkische Schweiz) und das Fürstentum Schwarzenberg, dazu Orte im oberen Maintal, im Aischgrund, in der Regnitzfurche und im Maindreieck wurden zu bevorzugten Ansiedlungszielen der Juden. Der Niederadel hatte das Judenregal in der Reichspolizeiordnung von 1548 endgültig erhalten.

So begründete sich das Landjudentum. Intern organisierten sich die Juden in den Landjudenschaften und den Landesrabbinaten. Diese prägten nachhaltig das jüdische Leben und daraus folgend auch das Bild bei der christlichen Bevölkerung. Die Juden wurden zwar aufgenommen, die notwendigen Existenzgrundlagen waren aber nicht vorhanden. Wohlhabende Juden auf dem Lande waren selten. Denn viele Berufe und der Zugang zu den Zünften der Handwerker waren ihnen zumeist nicht erlaubt. So verblieben vor allem der Viehhandel und -verleih, der Handel mit Agrarprodukten wie Getreide und Hopfen, und die Tätigkeiten als Geldverleiher, Gütermakler und Heiratsvermittler („Schmuser“). Als unbeliebte „Güterschlächter“ wurden sie wegen ihrer Tätigkeit bei Zwangsversteigerungen verhaßt. Aber hier handelte es sich schon um die Mittelschicht, die immerhin ihr Auskommen hatte. Die Masse konnte als „Schnorr- und Betteljuden“ kaum ihr Existenzminimum erwirtschaften. Die Vielzahl dieser sozial entwurzelten

Wanderjuden wurde bald zu einem allgemeinen Ärgernis. Manche davon glitten in die Kriminalität ab, sogar jüdische Räuberbanden gründeten sich, Steckbriefe haben sich aus dieser Zeit erhalten (*Daxelmüller 1988, 32*). Die Hausierer handelten mit allerlei Textilprodukten, Schnitt-, Kurz- und Galanteriewaren, mit Eisenartikeln, Gewürzen und allerlei Tand. Bei der Versorgung der ländlichen Bevölkerung machten sie sich quasi als „lebendes, wandelndes Warenhaus“ unentbehrlich. Besonders diskriminierend war für diese Händler die Einführung des Leibzolls, der bei jedem Überschreiten einer der zahllosen Landesgrenzen entrichtet werden mußte. Um diesen Kontrollen zu entgehen, entstanden die „Judenwege“ zum Umgehen der Grenzposten. Rund 300 solche Schleichpfade konnten in Bayern nachgewiesen werden (*Rösch 2012, 115-138*). Überhaupt war die Obrigkeit sehr erfinderisch beim Bemühen, die Juden zu schröpfen, so wurde in Bayreuth beispielsweise eine „Gänsesteuer“ erhoben! Es gab einen goldenen Opferpfennig (Ludwig der Bayer 1342), Beiträge für Reichstage und Konzilien, Neujahrgelder an die Kirche, Abgaben, wenn ein Fürst in eine Stadt einzog, ein Wachgeld (Nördlingen, 15. Jh.), ein Grabgeld zum Stadtgrabenausbau, ein Reisgeld zur Deckung der städtischen Kriegskosten, in Ansbach einen Leibzoll (von 1473 bis ins 19. Jh.), einen Jahresbeitrag an die Schützengesellschaft (Gunzenhausen), ein Karfreitagsgeld in Hof, weil die Juden ja Jesus Christus umgebracht hatten und vieles mehr (*Daxelmüller 1988, 31*)! Auch sonst waren die Lebensumstände meist alles andere als angenehm. Denn obwohl der Anteil der jüdischen Bevölkerung allmählich anwuchs, blieben die Anzahl und Größe der Häuser in vielen Orten reglementiert, was zu teilweise katastrophalen Wohnverhältnissen führte. In Ottensoos bei Schnaittach im Nürnberger Land etwa wohnten 1703 in einem Haus 26 Juden! In den Dörfern lebten die Juden eher für sich, der Kontakt mit der christlichen Nachbarschaft war begrenzt. Es gab natürlich Ausnahmen.

Statt durchschnittlich etwa 2% Anteil an der Gesamtbevölkerung führte in Franken die unbeschränkte Aufnahmewilligkeit der Reichsritter und Reichsgrafen zu den sogenannten „Judendörfern“, Orte, in denen die Juden zeitweilig die Hälfte der Bevölkerung stellten, wie Demmelsdorf, Zeckendorf und Bischberg im Bamberger Land.

Vom Dreißigjährigen Krieg waren die Juden meist noch stärker als die christliche Bevölkerung betroffen. Im ausgebluteten Franken wurde verstärkt eine weitere Ansiedlung von Juden betrieben. Die allmähliche Besserstellung der jüdischen Gemeinden führte dann im 18. Jh. zum Entstehen zahlreicher Landsynagogen, die teilweise heute noch erhalten sind.

Indessen entwickelte sich die Judenschaft allmählich zu einer Zwei-Klassen-Gesellschaft. Schon bald nach der Ausweisungswelle des 16. Jhs. erkannten

	1818	%	1867	%	1871	%	1880	%	1895	%	1900	%
Oberbayern	489	1,2	2.154	5,9	3.033	7,9	5.090	12,1	7.411	17,1	9.076	20,2
Niederbayern	5	0,0	36	0,1	111	0,3	183	0,4	240	0,5	294	0,7
Oberpfalz	991	2,3	1.045	2,8	1.221	3,2	1.435	3,4	1.486	3,4	1.472	3,3
Oberfranken	6.286	14,7	4.129	11,2	4.045	10,6	4.024	9,5	3.516	8,1	3.322	7,4
Mittelfranken	11.816	27,7	10.522	28,6	10.830	28,4	12.138	28,8	12.291	28,4	13.111	29,3
Unterfranken	16.637	38,9	14.400	39,1	14.573	38,2	14.939	35,4	14.157	32,7	13.641	30,4
Schwaben	6.514	15,2	4.512	12,3	4.369	11,4	4.362	10,4	4.226	9,8	3.904	8,7
	42.738	100,0	36.798	100,0	38.182	100,0	42.171	100,0	43.327	100,0	44.820	100,0

Tab. 1. (© Baruch Zvi Ophir – Falk Wiesemann 1979).

die fürstlichen Residenten, dass sie zur Befriedigung ihrer Hofhaltungsbedürfnisse die Juden mit ihren internationalen Handelsverbindungen benötigten. So entstand die elitäre Klasse der Hoffaktoren oder Hofjuden, die es in Würzburg, Bamberg, Ansbach und Bayreuth zu beachtlichem Einfluss und Wohlstand brachten. Die barocken Fürstenhöfe hatten einen enormen Geldbedarf für Lebenshaltung und Repräsentationsbauten, der nur durch Kredite finanziert werden konnte. Die Hofjuden waren weiterhin tätig in der Versorgung mit Luxusgütern, vor allem aus Übersee, in der Heereslogistik und sie kontrollierten das Münzwesen.

Im ausgehenden 18. und im 19. Jh. begann ein neuer Zeitabschnitt für die Juden. Die Ideen der Aufklärung führten allmählich zu einer liberaleren Haltung ihnen gegenüber. Speziell für die jüdische Bevölkerung Frankens brachte die Einverleibung der Region in das Königreich Bayern 1806 deutliche Verbesserungen mit sich. Schon zuvor, 1801, wurde in Bayern eine allgemeine Neuregelung der Judenfrage formuliert. 1804 war den Juden der Zutritt zu den öffentlichen Schulen gestattet worden, 1805 konnten sie in die Bürgermiliz aufgenommen werden, der Leibzoll wurde aufgehoben und es bestand Militärpflicht. Mit dem „Judenedikt“ von 1813 konnten sie Bürgerrechte und Grundeigentum erwerben.

Die allgemeine Verarmung der Landjuden führte im Laufe der Zeit zu einer Auswanderungswelle nach Übersee und mit dem Fall des berüchtigten Matrikelparagraphen (1861), der die Juden an einen bestimmten Wohnsitz gebunden hatte, zu einer Abwanderung in die nun wieder zugänglichen großen Städte. Um 1800 lebten etwa 80% der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Franken (Tabelle 1). Die Zunahme der Juden in Oberbayern war die Folge der Emanzipation und weitgehend dem Zuzug nach München geschuldet. Der Wegzug aus den ländlichen Regionen dagegen hatte zur Folge, dass viele jüdische Gemeinden auf dem Land nicht mehr existierten, auf jeden Fall kam es zu einem deutlichen Einwohnerschwund, bereits lange vor der NS-Zeit.

Die vollständige Gleichstellung der Juden wurde in Bayern 1868 erreicht, 1871 auch in der neuen

Reichsverfassung. Seither durfte nicht mehr zwischen Juden und Nichtjuden unterschieden werden. Bei aller Annäherung kam es aber selten zu Ehen zwischen Juden und Christen.

Innerhalb der Judenschaft führte der Kampf um die Emanzipation zu einer Spaltung in Orthodoxe und Liberale. Letztere waren besonders die Intellektuellen, die als Bankiers, Rechtsanwälte, Mediziner, Schriftsteller, Künstler und Wissenschaftler beträchtlichen Einfluss erreichten und vorwiegend die jüdische Oberschicht in den Städten stellten. Sie suchten das Heil in einer Annäherung an die Kultur der christlichen Umwelt. Diese Assimilation ist heute noch auf den Friedhöfen und in den Synagogen sichtbar. Tragen ältere Grabsteine nur hebräische Inschriften, sind die seit dem 19. Jh. aufgestellten zunehmend zweisprachig oder gar nur noch deutsch. Auch in der Form ähneln die jüngeren Monumente nun den christlichen. Vor allem wegen der Synagogenarchitektur kam es zu einer erbitterten Auseinandersetzung der zwei Richtungen. Viele Gotteshäuser glichen jetzt mehr der christlichen Kirche, etwa durch Versetzung der Bima, der Kanzel, aus der Raummitte nach Osten und durch Veränderung der Bestuhlung. Dazu wurde die Orgel eingeführt und der Chorgesang versucht. In der Festkultur nahm Chanukka, das Lichterfest, Züge des christlichen Weihnachtsfestes an, und Purim, das Losfest, glich immer mehr dem bayerischen Fasching. Dieser Streit führte in größeren Städten zur Existenz getrennter Synagogen für Orthodoxe und Liberale.

Der Wandel des aus dem Mittelalter stammenden Antijudaismus in einen aggressiven Antisemitismus, der die Juden für den verlorenen Weltkrieg verantwortlich machte, und dazu die schlechte Wirtschaftslage zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik, führte schließlich in die Katastrophe des „Dritten Reichs“ mit der „Endlösung“ der „Judenfrage“.

Nach dem Ende des 2. Weltkriegs regte sich nur langsam neues jüdisches Leben. Das Landjudentum mit seiner traditionell orthodox-religiösen Lebensweise aber existiert seither nicht mehr. 1992 lebten in Bayern wieder etwa 6000 Juden in 12 Gemeinden. Vor allem durch

den Zuzug von Juden aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion ist die Tendenz in den letzten Jahren stark ansteigend. 2009 wurden in Bayern über 18 000 Gemeindemitglieder gezählt, davon knapp 5 000 in Franken in 7 Gemeinden. Einst gab es allein in Unterfranken, wo zeitweise ein Drittel der gesamtbayerischen Juden lebte, 223 Gemeinden, in Mittelfranken 99 und in Oberfranken 90. Derzeit (2016) haben in der Bundesrepublik 200 000 Juden ihren Wohnsitz.

Zu den Ausgrabungen

Ab den 1980er Jahren begann die Archäologie, sich für die im nordbayerischen Franken verbliebenen jüdischen Monumente zu interessieren, die sich zumeist in einem bedauernswerten Zustand befanden. Viel zu viel war schon verschwunden, es galt zu retten und zu sichern, was noch vorhanden war. Die Ergebnisse sind indessen publiziert worden (*Süss 2010*).

Unter der Bezeichnung „Jüdische Archäologie“, genauer der Archäologie der jüdischen Kulturdenkmäler, wurde zunächst die „Wissenschaft von den Zeugnissen der älteren Geschichte des Judentums“ verstanden, also die Untersuchung der Kulturrelikte im Heiligen Land. Im deutschsprachigen Raum der Diaspora des aschkenasischen Judentums liegt ihr Schwerpunkt seit Mitte der 1950er Jahre in den besonders seit dem Hochmittelalter bevorzugten Siedlungsgebieten am Rhein und in Süddeutschland (*Harck 2014; Krause 2010; Paulus 2007*). Durch die Traumata der jüngeren Vergangenheit stellte sie lange Zeit ein Tabu dar und wurde mit Skepsis betrachtet.

In der Jüdischen Archäologie kann die klassische Gliederung der archäologischen Quellen in Siedlung, Grab, Depotfund und Einzelfund gleichfalls angewendet werden. Mit der Etablierung der Mittelalterarchäologie stieg auch das öffentliche Interesse an den früheren jüdischen Kult- und Wohnbereichen. Dabei ergab sich bei Stadtkerngrabungen die grundsätzlich große Schwierigkeit, jüdische Wohnstätten eindeutig als solche anzusprechen. Denn das Fundmaterial wie Geschirrbruchstücke, unterscheidet sich nicht von den Gegenständen christlicher Sachkultur. Und eindeutige Funde wie hebräische Gebäudeinschriften sind sehr selten. Zur möglichst genauen Feststellung der Lage und Topographie jüdischer Wohnquartiere ist man letztlich oft auf die Archivalien angewiesen. Erfolgreich verliefen die Ausgrabungen von jüdischen Gotteshäusern, den Synagogen, deren Lage meist bekannt war. Und immer wieder kommt es zur Auffindung von Tauchbädern, den Mikwen (*Mikwa* (Pl. *Mikwaot*): hebräisch für Ritualbad). Zu Untersuchungen auf jüdischen Friedhöfen kommt es kaum. Bei bestehenden darf die Totenruhe nicht gestört werden, die Lage vergangener ist oft nicht mehr zu identifizieren.

Im nordbayerischen Franken begannen die archäologischen Untersuchungen jüdischer Kulturdenkmäler und Relikte im Jahre 1985 (Fig.1) (*Süss 2010*, 163). Funde und Befunde aus dem Mittelalter gab es, wie aus dem geschichtlichen Überblick oben hervorgeht, naturgemäß nur in den Städten. Die einzige vollständig erhaltene, wenn auch baulich veränderte Synagoge aus dem Mittelalter in ganz Bayern steht in Miltenberg (13. Jh.), deren Bauphasen erforscht wurden (1997/98). Auch die 1349 zerstörte Nürnberger Synagoge als Vorgängerbau der Marienkirche auf dem Hauptmarkt konnte nachgewiesen werden (1986). Und es war die Datierung von zwei untersuchten Mikwen ins 15. Jh. möglich, sowohl in Bamberg (2003) als auch in Rothenburg ob der Tauber (1985/86), dort wurden auch noch etwa zeitgleiche Judenhäuser erforscht (1996, 2000/2001). Unklar ist noch der Befund einer Mikwe in Nürnberg (1999), deren Datierung ins 12./13. Jh. nicht mit den Archivalien korrespondiert. Sie wäre dann das älteste erhaltene Ritualbad in ganz Bayern. Vielleicht handelt es sich „nur“ um eine Kelim-Mikwe wie eine in Rothenburg aufgefunden wurde, also um ein rituelles Reinigungsbad für Geschirr und andere Gegenstände (*Harck 2014*, 336-339).

Die Forschung erbrachte auch Überraschungen. In Bamberg hat sich die bisherige Annahme von Resten der mittelalterlichen Synagoge in der heutigen Christuskirche nicht bestätigt. Und ein besonders spektakuläres Ergebnis lieferte 2006 die Grabung unter der Marienkapelle in Würzburg, wo sich die bisher vielfach in der Literatur genannte hochmittelalterliche Mikwe aus dem 11. Jh. als modernes Bauteil herausstellte (*Süss 2010*, 156-161)! Immerhin erwies sich die bisher nur archivalisch belegte Vermutung als richtig, dass die Kirche auf den Fundamenten der 1349 verbrannten Synagoge steht.

Dazu wurden zahlreiche jüdische Grabsteine aus dem mittelalterlichen Franken aufgefunden. Vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg und kurz danach erschienen nur gelegentlich Berichte über die Auffindung alter jüdischer Grabsteine, die oft als zweitverwendetes Baumaterial in Kirchen und Wehranlagen entdeckt wurden oder bei Baumaßnahmen zutage traten. Sie kamen in die Judaika-Abteilungen der Museen oder wurden an geeigneter Stelle zur Erinnerung an die jüdische Vergangenheit aufgestellt. So beherbergt das Steindepot im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg einige Funde und im Reichsstadt-Museum von Rothenburg sind sie in einer beeindruckenden Installation zu sehen.

Erhebliches Aufsehen erregte der Fund großer Mengen jüdischer Grabsteine, die beim Abbruch des ehemaligen Dominikanerinnenklosters St. Markus in Würzburg aus den Mauerresten geborgen werden konnten (1987). Insgesamt 1508 Objekte fanden sich, vollständig oder als Fragment. Das Material entpuppte sich als die

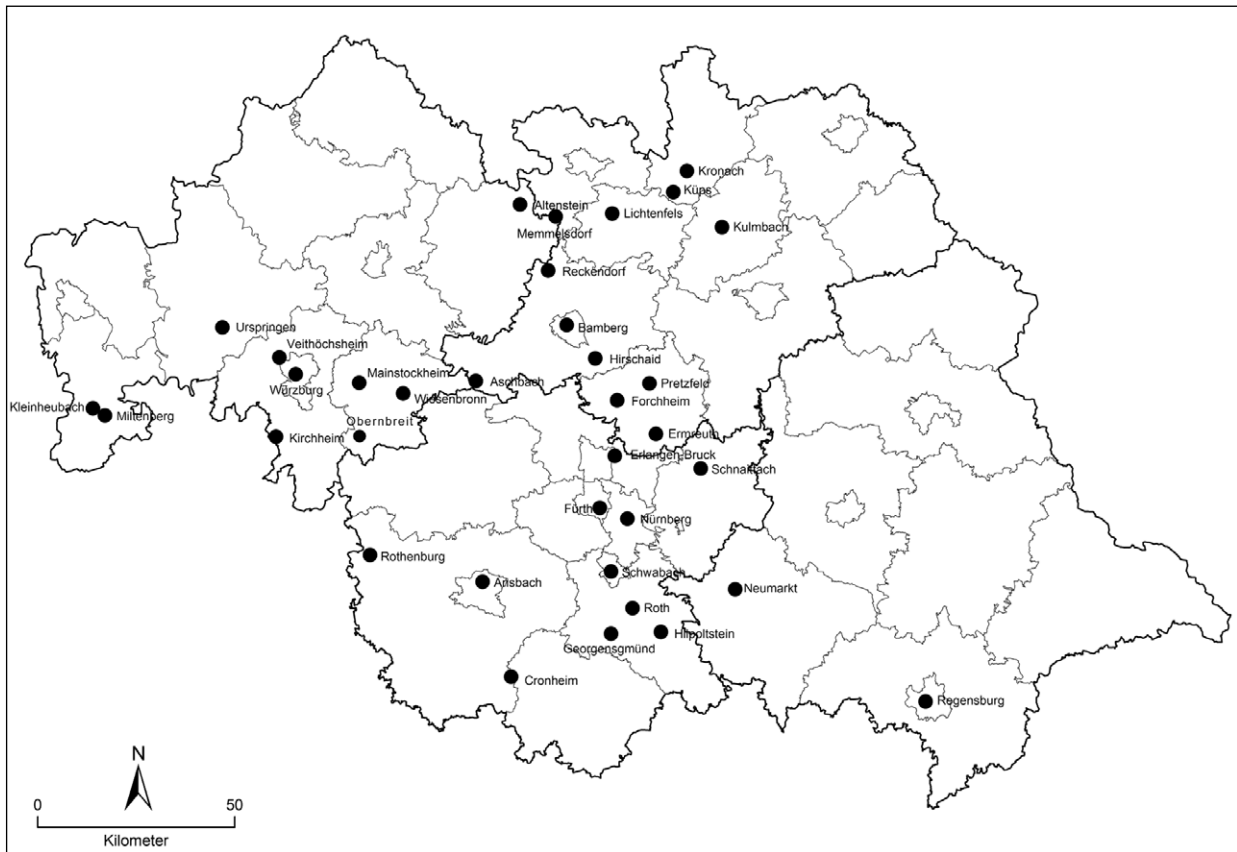


Fig. 1. (© Hans-Peter Süss 2010, Grafik Lukas Werther).

weltweit größte Anzahl jüdischer Grabsteine von einem mittelalterlichen Judenfriedhof aus der Zeit von 1148 bis 1346. Sie befinden sich jetzt im Depot vom Würzburger Museum „Shalom Europa“, die interessantesten sind ausgestellt. Die Bearbeitung der „Würzburger Judensteine“ nahm fast 30 Jahre in Anspruch!

Auch in neuester Zeit werden bei Grabungen immer wieder Grabsteine aufgefunden, wie 2007 in Rothenburg und zuletzt in Bamberg bei der Untersuchung der Dominikanerkirche. Neben Fragmenten wurde der fast vollständig erhaltene Stein der am 11. August 1400 verstorbenen Rekle, Tochter des Barukh, ausgegraben, der wohl wiederverwendet ursprünglich vom mittelalterlichen jüdischen Friedhof vor dem Sandtor stammte, der nach der Vertreibung der Juden aufgelassen wurde (*Aas – Pfaffenberger 2014, 135-137*).

Bei den Grabungen auf dem Land konnten die frühesten Monumente ins Spätmittelalter, also ins 16. Jh. datiert werden, was mit der historischen Entwicklung übereinstimmt, wie die Synagoge von Schnaittach bei Nürnberg und die Mikwe in Erlangen-Bruck. So überrascht es nicht, dass die Synagogen von Ansbach, Aschbach, Cronheim, Ermreuth, Hirschaid, Kronach, Lichtenfels, Memmelsdorf, Obernbreit, Reckendorf, Schwabach,

Urspringen und Wiesenbronn ebenso der Zeitperiode vom 17.-19. Jh. angehören wie die entdeckten Mikwen in Altenstein, Forchheim, Fürth, Georgensgmünd, Kleinheubach, Mainstockheim, Obernbreit und Roth.

Mikwen waren besonders für das orthodoxe Landjudentum von großer Bedeutung, in Franken auch „Judentauchen“ genannt. Bei ihrem Bau müssen besondere, strenge Vorschriften beachtet werden. Es darf nur „lebendes Wasser“ verwendet werden, also Quell- oder Grundwasser oder zugeleitetes Regenwasser. Die Mikwe ist besonders für Frauen von Bedeutung, sie dient der Reinhaltung des jüdischen Ehelebens. Nach Geschlechtsverkehr, der Monatsregel oder nach der Geburt muss die Jüdin durch vollständiges Eintauchen für ihren Ehemann wieder rituell rein („tahor“) werden. Aber auch Männer bedürfen der Mikwe, etwa nach einem Friedhofsgang oder nach der Berührung mit einem Toten (zu Mikwen in Franken *Groiss-Lau 1995*).

Das Beispiel Veitshöchheim

In den Dörfern waren die Ergebnisse der etwa 30 in Franken stattgefundenen Untersuchungen naturgemäß weniger spektakulär, unterschieden sich doch die Synagogen,

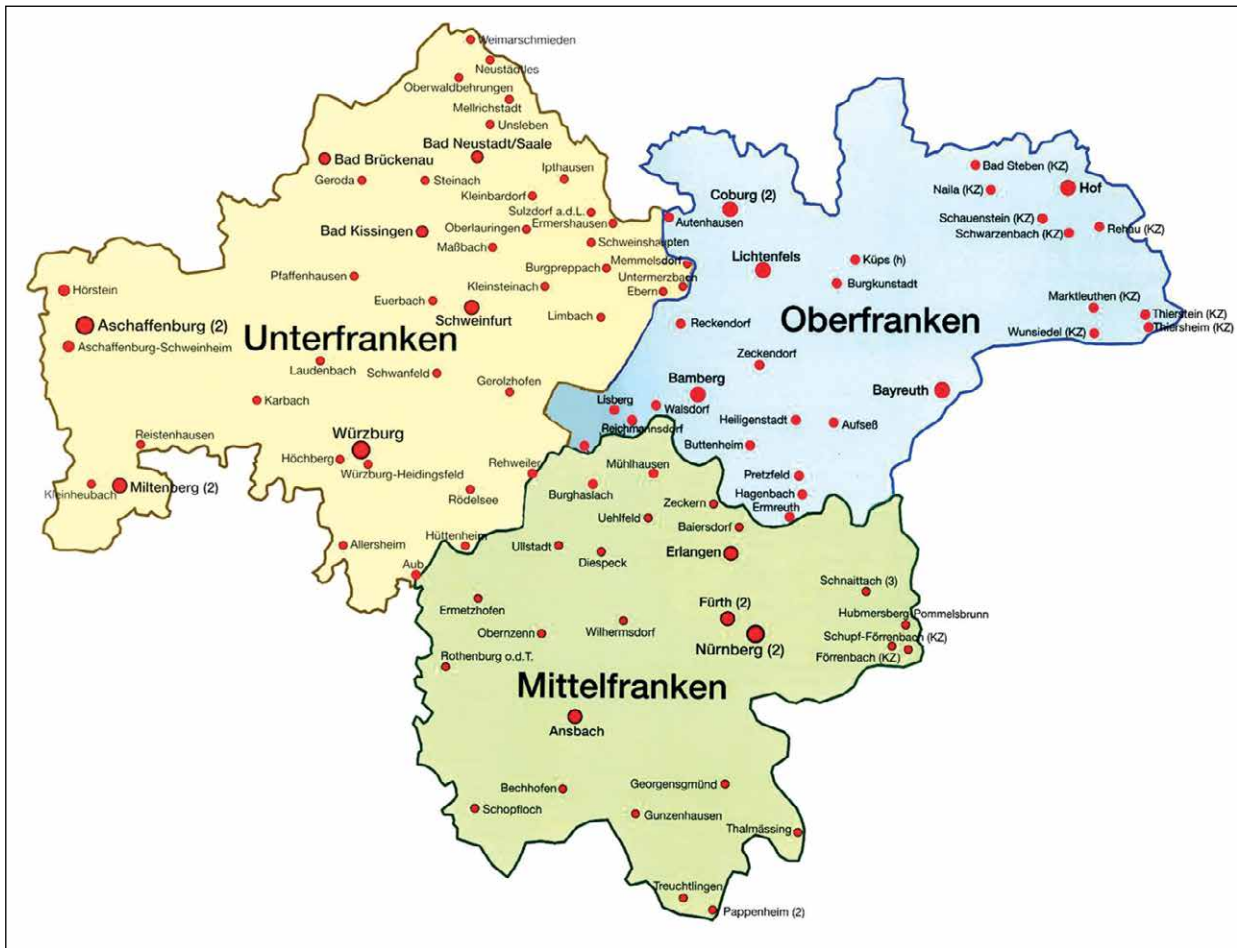


Fig. 2. (© Lothar Mayer 2010; 2012).

Gemeindeeinrichtungen und Wohnhäuser der Juden äußerlich kaum von den Anwesen ihrer christlichen Umgebung (zu Landjuden: Guth 1988; Guth – Groiss-Lau 1999). Es findet sich ein breites Spektrum von stattlichen Gebäuden bis zu Bethäusern, die aussehen wie schlichte Scheunen. Trotzdem konnten wichtige Erkenntnisse gewonnen werden, wie am Beispiel des Dorfes Veitshöchheim, 8 km mainabwärts nahe Würzburg gezeigt werden soll.

Das erste Anliegen jüdischer Siedler bei Gründung einer neuen Gemeinde war, sich um einen Friedhof zu bemühen, was noch wichtiger als die Errichtung der Synagoge war. Die Begräbnisstätten der Juden befinden sich überwiegend außerhalb der Ortsgrenzen in Wäldern, auf Bergkuppen und steilen Hängen. Zum einen duldeten die christlichen Nachbarn meist keinen Judenfriedhof in Dorfnähe oder gar im Dorf selbst, zum anderen war das entlegene Gelände auf landwirtschaftlich nicht nutzbaren Flächen billig. Das konnte auch ein Vorteil sein, schützten doch die abgelegenen, oft geradezu versteckten Standorte auch vor Schändung, wie sie leider auch heute noch zu beklagen sind. In Franken sind rund 100

solcher Friedhöfe bekannt, die Juden nennen sie „Guter Ort“, „Haus der Ewigkeit“ oder „Haus des Lebens“, Hebräisch: *Bet Hachajim* (Fig. 2) (zu den fränkischen Judenfriedhöfen bes. Schwierz 1992; Wiesemann 2005; Daxelmüller 2009). Da nicht jede jüdische Gemeinde sich einen eigenen Friedhof anlegen bzw. sich leisten konnte, entstanden Verbandsfriedhöfe für manchmal zahlreiche Orte, die oft einen weiten Weg zur Beisetzung notwendig machten. Und das Sterben konnte noch dazu teuer werden. Falls bei einem weiten Weg zum Friedhof vielleicht mehrere Herrschaftsgebiete zu durchqueren waren, waren bei jedem Grenzüberschritt neuerliche Geleitgelder zu entrichten. Für Veitshöchheim lag der zugehörige Friedhof im 16 km entfernten Laudenschloß, wo insgesamt 23 Gemeinden bestatteten.

Juden werden in Veitshöchheim erstmals 1644 erwähnt, 1674 gab es 3 Familien, den größten Anteil an der Gesamtbevölkerung mit 11 %, das waren 32 Familien mit 160 Personen, erreichten sie 1843 (Tabelle 2).

Zwar keinen Friedhof, aber eine Synagoge mit einer Mikwe, konnte sich die Veitshöchheimer

Bevölkerungsentwicklung			
Jahr	Einwohner	davon Juden	%
1674	–	3 Familien	–
1750	–	22 Familien	–
1814	1.282	90 Personen	7,0
1837	1.346	105	7,8
1867	1.517	98	6,5
1880	1.549	70	4,5
1890	1.539	90	5,8
1900	1.606	55	3,4
1910	2.042	75	3,7
1925	2.213	53	2,4
1933	2.285	36	1,6
07.05.1937	–	31	–
1939	2.484	12	0,5
07.02.1942	–	7	–
25.04.1942	–	3	–
19.09.1942	–	2	–
18.11.1944	–	1	–

Auflösung der Gemeinde 1935 bis 1944:		
verzogen	ausgewandert	deportiert
13	18	6

Tab. 2. (© Jutta Sporck-Pfitzer 1988).

Judengemeinde 1727-1730 erbauen, dazu ein Haus mit Schulraum, Lehrer- und Vorsängerwohnung („*Mehr als Steine...*“ 2007; 2010; 2015; *in Vorb.*). Sie blieb von der Zerstörung verschont, da sie kurz vor der Reichspogromnacht von der Gemeinde Veitshöchheim für 200 Reichsmark „günstig“ erworben werden konnte, die nicht einmal mehr ausgezahlt werden mussten. Seit 1940 diente sie als Kfz-Abstellhalle und Feuerwehr-Spritzenhaus. Dazu war das Gebäude völlig entkernt und über den geglätteten Bauschutt eine Betondecke gezogen worden. Der Beschluss der Gemeinde in den 1980er Jahren, das Anwesen in würdiger Form wiederherzustellen, sollte sich als archäologischer Glücksfall erweisen (Fig.3).

Beim Aufbrechen der 12 cm starken Betonschicht stellte sich heraus, dass praktisch die komplette Innenausstattung, natürlich zerbrochen, noch vorhanden war. So konnten durch die Untersuchung der Grundriss der Synagoge und die Gesamtanlage des Judenhofes rekonstruiert werden (Fig.4).

Im gegenüberliegenden Haus konnten eine *Laubhütte* entdeckt und ein Wandfresko freigelegt werden, was auf eine Nutzung zum *Sukkot* hinweist (*Sukka*: hebräisch Laubhütte, *Sukkot* (Pl.): Laubhüttenfest).



Fig. 3. Die Synagoge von Veitshöchheim vor (© Ulrich Wagner 1987) und nach der Restaurierung (© Hans-Peter Süß).

Als besonderer Glücksfall sollte sich die Entdeckung der *Genisa* herausstellen, auch wegen der Fundumstände. Denn während der Ausgrabung wurden die Archäologen auf einen Container aufmerksam, der von der an der Synagoge arbeitenden Dachdeckerfirma mit vermeintlichen Abfällen aus dem Dachraum gefüllt und zum Abtransport bereitgestellt worden war. Die sofort eingeleitete Nachschau ergab, dass es sich um die *Genisa* handelte, einen für den deutschen Sprachraum singulären Fund von literaturgeschichtlicher Bedeutung!

In der Literatur des Talmud wird unter einer *Genisa* ein Raum verstanden, „in dem etwas geborgen oder verborgen“ wurde (ursprünglich: Schatzkammer). Beschädigte Thorarollen und alle weiteren mit hebräischen Buchstaben geschriebene oder gedruckte und den Namen Gottes enthaltende Schriften, etwa Briefe, Bücher und Zeitungen, wie auch Zeremonialgeräte, die unbrauchbar oder nicht mehr benötigt waren, durften nicht einfach weggeworfen werden. Diese *Schemot* (Pl. von hebräisch *Schem*: Name, eine Umschreibung für den Namen Gottes, der als solcher nicht ausgesprochen wird) wurden zunächst in der *Genisa* versteckt, um ursprünglich später rituell beigesetzt zu werden. Größere Mengen begrub man in Kisten auf dem Friedhof. In

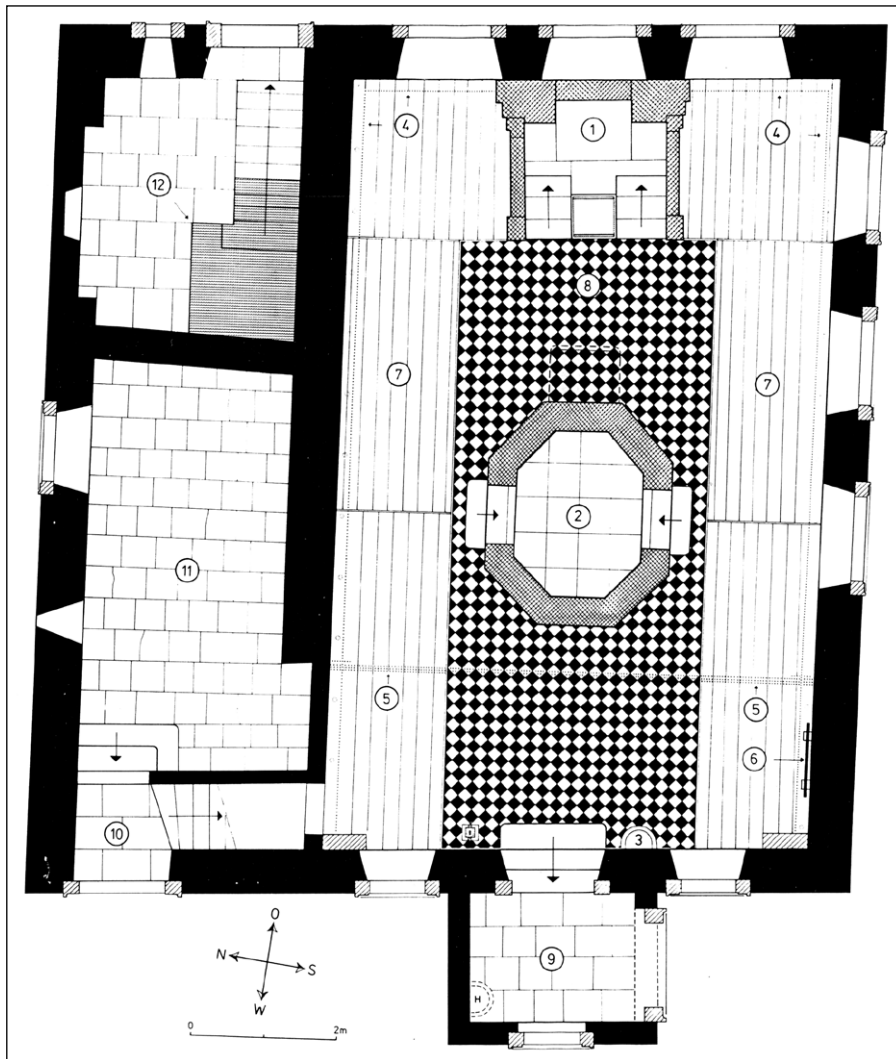


Fig. 4. Grundriss der Synagoge
 (© Egon Wamser 1987): 1)
 Aron Hakodesch, 2) Almemor
 (Aron Hakodesch: Thoraschrein,
 Almemor oder Bima: steinerne
 Lesekanzel), 3) Handwaschbecken,
 4) Lichtergesims, 5) Brüstung der
 Frauenempore, 6) Gedenktafel,
 7) Holzfußboden mit Sitzplätzen,
 8) Steinfußboden, 9) Vorhalle,
 10) Nebeneingang mit Aufgang
 zur Frauenempore, 11) Raum,
 12) Mikwe.

Altengronau in Hessen, ein Judenfriedhof, auf dem auch fränkische Juden bestatteten, hat sich ein kleiner Grabstein mit der Aufschrift „Sefer Thora“ (*Sefer*: hebräisch Buch) erhalten, auch auf dem großen Berliner Judenfriedhof Weißensee ist so ein Thoragrab zu sehen.

Als Versteckort eignete sich besonders der Dachbereich der Synagogen. Unter dessen Dielenbrettern, in Hohlräumen zwischen Dachhaut und Dachstuhl und bei tonnengewölbten Betsälen in den Zwischenräumen über der Tonnendecke wurden die ausgesonderten Ritualien verborgen (Fig.5).

Diese Einrichtung der *Genisa* wurde im streng orthodoxen Landjudentum bis zu seinem Ende wahrgenommen. In den Städten mit überwiegend liberalen jüdischen Gemeinden geriet der Brauch im Laufe der Zeit in Vergessenheit. Für die Forschung stellen *Genisot* (hebräisch Pl. von *Genisa*) ausgesprochen wertvolle und oft reichhaltige Zeugnisse der jüdischen Kultur und des Gemeindelebens dar, aus denen sich wichtige Erkenntnisse gewinnen lassen.

Die Untersuchung der im Dachschutt der Veitshöchheimer Synagoge entdeckten *Genisa*-Funde brachte hauptsächlich eine Vielzahl von alten Druckschriften aus dem 17. und 18. Jh. zutage und sogar eine Pergamenthandschrift aus dem 13. Jh., wohl als Bucheinband zweitverwendet. Die Drucke stammten aus den berühmten hebräischen Druckereien in Fürth, Sulzbach und Wilhermsdorf, aber auch aus Prag, Krakau, Venedig und Amsterdam. Das Material ließ sich einteilen in ein Drittel hebräische Texte, ein Drittel hebräische Texte mit jiddischer Übersetzung und ein weiteres Drittel von rein jiddischen Druckwerken. Dazu fanden sich Zeremonialobjekte wie das Fragment eines *Schofarhorns* (Widderhorn, wird an den „Hohen Feiertagen“ geblasen), *Tefillin* (Lederne Gebetsriemen für den Kopf und den linken Oberarm mit einer Kapsel, in der sich auf Pergament geschriebene Abschnitte aus der Thora befinden), *Mesusot* (Pl. von hebräisch: *Mesusa*. Türpfostensymbol, an der rechten oberen Seite am Türrahmen angebrachte Kapsel,

die ein Stück Pergament mit dem Anfang des jüdischen Glaubensbekenntnisses enthält) und Textilien wie Thorawimpel und Gebetsmäntel. 1988 wurden 43 dieser Funde in der Nürnberger Ausstellung „Siehe, der Stein schreit aus der Mauer“ gezeigt.

Aufsehen erregte ein erstmals vollständig aufgefunder Druck des Textes „Eine schöne wunderliche Geschichte von ein Fischer und sein Sohn“ (*Fürth 1788*), die jiddische Fassung oder sogar ein Vorläufer des Grimm'schen Märchens „Der alte König vom goldenen Berg“.

Weitere wichtige Funde waren:

- *Buchstabiertafel*, Fürth 1750-1770, im Schmuckrahmen Darstellungen zum Pessachfest und Neumondweihe sowie Morgenbenedictionen für Kinder und Psalm 23.
- *Machsor* (Pl. *Machsorim*, hebräisch: Wiederholung), Wilhermsdorf 1720, enthält Fest- und Feiertagsgebete

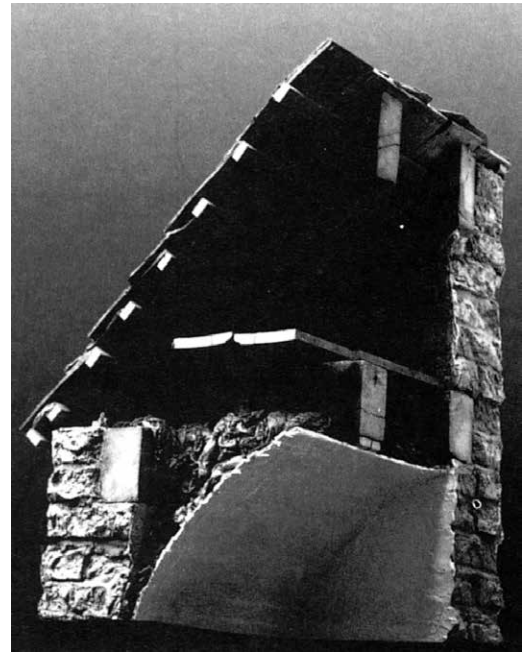


Fig. 5. Foto (© Falk Wiesemann).



Fig. 6. Schofarhorn und Holzschmitte aus Minhagim (© Egon Wamers 1986).

Figur 6 zeigt oben ein Schofarhorn mit einer hebräischen Inschrift (1), darunter Holzschmitte aus Minhagim (Pl. von hebräisch: Minhag, Sammlungen von örtlichen und regionalen Überlieferungen über Sitten und Gebräuche, vor allem zu Gewohnheiten beim Vollzug des Gottesdienstes). Zuerst eine Trauungszeremonie, Venedig 1593 (2), und Lichtanzünden am Sabbat, Prag 1660 (3), unten Schofarblasen am Neujahrsfest (4) und eine Bußpredigt (5). Die beiden letzten Holzschmitte stammen aus einem bisher unbekanntem Minhag-Druck, Amsterdam, nach 1662.

innerhalb des Jahreszyklus. Die Wilhermsdorfer Druckerei lieferte für lange Zeit solche Gebetsdrucke, während Sulzbach und Fürth die Nachfrage nach den *Siddur* (tägliche Gebete) befriedigten.

- *Bentscherl* (Benedictionen), Prag 1660, sind Sammlungen von Segenssprüchen mit Illustrationen für die Mahlzeiten mit beigedruckter Ordnung für den Pessach-Abend.
- *Birchot hanehenim*, 18. Jh., Segenssprüche nach dem Genuß von Speisen und Getränken, eine Handschrift auf bemaltem Papier.
- *Mayse Bukh*, 18. Jh., bedeutet soviel wie Buch der Geschehnisse. Die Sammlung vereinigt märchen- und legendenhafte Erzählungen mit moralisierender Tendenz aus der jüdischen und abendländischen Tradition, wie das „Urteil des Salomo“, die „Weisheit des Rabbi Meir“, „Salomo als Schachspieler“ und andere.
- *Herzog Erinst*, Frankfurt am Main oder Fürth, 1777, eine Geschichte aus der deutschen Spielmannsdichtung, handelnd im 10. Jh., mit einer eingeflochtenen märchenhaften Orientfahrt. Dazu fanden sich ein Kalender für das Jahr 5510 nach Erschaffung der Welt, das ist das Jahr 1750 unserer Zeitrechnung, Rechnungen, Lieferzettel, ein Doppelbrief in deutsch (geschäftlich) und in jiddisch (privat) und das Mohelbuch (das Buch des Beschneiders der Gemeinde) der jüdischen Gemeinde um 1800.

Die zahlreichen *Genisot*-Entdeckungen der letzten Zeit in Franken regten an zum Kulturprojekt „Abgelegt“. Diese Exposition, erstmals gezeigt 2009 in Veitshöchheim, ist seither als Wanderausstellung in Franken unterwegs.

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Priest houses in rural settlements of medieval Hungary

Tibor Ákos Rácz *

ABSTRACT

In the spiritual and intellectual life of medieval communities the priest played an important role. Our new archaeological data provides information on the living conditions of the parish priests, standing on the lowest level of ecclesiastical society. The parsonage partially satisfied the needs of the priest, but also served the interests of the community. It was architecturally superior to the ordinary rural houses and served as a model for the development of rural residential buildings. Some of the functions of the medieval church were transferred to the priest's house as well. After a summary of the development and structure of the medieval parochial system in Hungary, this paper summarizes the archaeological information on layout and function of these buildings. Most of the examples come from the late Middle Ages, so an examination of the 11th – century building complex at the power centre of Visegrád is particularly important for understanding early church organization and its contemporary architecture.

Keywords: *Priest houses, pile-structured buildings, Visegrád.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Priesterhäuser in ländlichen Siedlungen im mittelalterlichen Ungarn

Im geistigen und intellektuellen Leben der mittelalterlichen Gemeinschaften spielten die Priester eine wichtige Rolle. Neue archäologische Daten liefern Informationen über die Lebensbedingungen der Priester, die auf dem untersten Niveau der kirchlichen Gesellschaft standen. Das Priesterhaus diente den Bedürfnissen der Priester, aber auch den Interessen der Gemeinschaft. Architektonisch repräsentiert es einen höheren Entwicklungsgrad als die gewöhnlichen ländlichen Häuser und dient als Modell für die Entwicklung der ländlichen Wohngebäude. Einige Funktionen der mittelalterlichen Kirche wurden auch auf die Priesterhäuser übertragen. Nach einem kurzen Ausblick auf die Entstehung und Struktur der mittelalterlichen Kirchengemeinde in Ungarn, fasst diese Arbeit die archäologischen Daten über das Layout und die Funktion dieser Gebäude zusammen. Die meisten Beispiele kommen aus dem späten Mittelalter, daher ist die Untersuchung des Baukomplexes aus dem 11. Jahrhundert im Kraftzentrum

* Ferenczy Museum Centre,
Szentendre, Hungary
racz.tibor.akos@gmail.com

von Visegrád besonders wichtig für das Verständnis der frühen kirchlichen Organisation und der zeitgenössischen Architektur.

Schlagwörter: *Priesterhäuser, Gebäude mit Holzpfeilerstruktur, Visegrád.*

RÉSUMÉ

Les maisons des prêtres dans les villages rurales médiévales en Hongrie

Le prêtre joue un rôle non négligeable dans la vie ecclésiastique et intellectuelle des communautés médiévales, même s'il était en bas de la hiérarchie ecclésiastique. Les fouilles archéologiques récentes livrent des informations sur les conditions de vie des prêtres. Leur maison servait non seulement pour

Introduction

László Papp, a founding leader in Hungarian medieval archaeology reported on the excavation of a medieval priest's house as early as in 1931 (*Papp 1931*, 139), but there are still only a few examples of these buildings that can be identified clearly from the period across Hungary. It might explain why settlement archaeology has not touched on the problems of these buildings. Works of ecclesiastical topography or church history have not dealt with the topic, because priest's houses did not belong to the sphere of religious buildings (churches, monasteries, chapels, hospitals, *etc.*) even if they were inhabited by clergymen and possessed by the Church. Parish priests themselves were frequently attested in charters, but historians were more interested in the upper clergy of noble origin who often played a political role as well. Parsonages rarely appear in documents, and in most cases only the very existence of the building is recorded. Charters, for their part, only contain additional information on a building's characteristics and topography of the houses in exceptional cases.

The destruction of medieval buildings across Hungary has also hindered the identification of priest's houses. Based on archaeological data, they usually appear in the immediate vicinity of the church, sometimes even within the churchyard or attached to the cemetery wall from the outside. This practical location was strengthened by early legislation: the decrees of the synod of Esztergom (around 1100) stated that every church should have its priest's house in the immediate vicinity: *Presbiteri quoque ecclesiarum iuxta ecclesiam domum habeant* (*Závodszky 1904*, 199, 205). The identification of priests' houses is often based on this close spatial relationship. Typically, they come to light as by-products of the excavation of churches.

leur besoins, mais également pour les intérêts de la communauté. Son architecture est donc plus élaborée que la maison ordinaire d'un village, servant ainsi de modèle pour l'évolution de ce dernier. Certaines fonctions de l'église médiévale ont été transmises à la maison du prêtre. Après un bref résumé sur l'évolution et la structure des communautés ecclésiastiques en Hongrie, on fait un résumé des faits archéologiques sur le plan et la fonction de ces bâtiments. La plupart des exemples cités n'appartenant qu'au haut moyen-âge, l'analyse du centre Visegrád remontant au XI^e siècle est donc importante pour notre connaissance sur l'organisation précoce de l'église et de l'architecture contemporaine.

Mots-clés : *maisons des prêtres, maisons à construction sur poteau, Visegrád.*

After a short review of the development and structure of the medieval parochial system in Hungary, this paper summarizes the archaeological evidence that exists for these buildings in terms of layout and the function. There is scant evidence for buildings and material culture from the early phase of the conversion to Christianity. The 11th – century pile-structured house from Visegrád – excavated in the 1970s, but unpublished so far – is presented in detail. The building complex is an outstanding example that illustrates the problems of interpretation of archaeological data.

The medieval parochial system

The emergence of the parochial system was closely linked to the process of settlement network development across regions, to the social and legal status of the inhabitants and to the interrelations between the landowner/settler and the community. Historical studies (*e.g. Körmendy 1986*) pointed out that this complex process revealed different characteristics in different periods and places. Apart from the question of whether the Christianization of Hungarians was rapid or gradual, the establishment of the institutional background must have been a longer process. The contribution of archaeology to the investigation of the parochial system is essential in the High Middle Ages because of the lack of written sources. The location of churches can often be defined with the help of archaeological survey (*K. Németh 2010*). The precise development of the early parish network of Medieval Hungary is still not clear because essential data collection remains incomplete in large areas of the country. At the beginning of the 11th century the bishoprics – established during or shortly after the foundation of the state – exercised direct control over

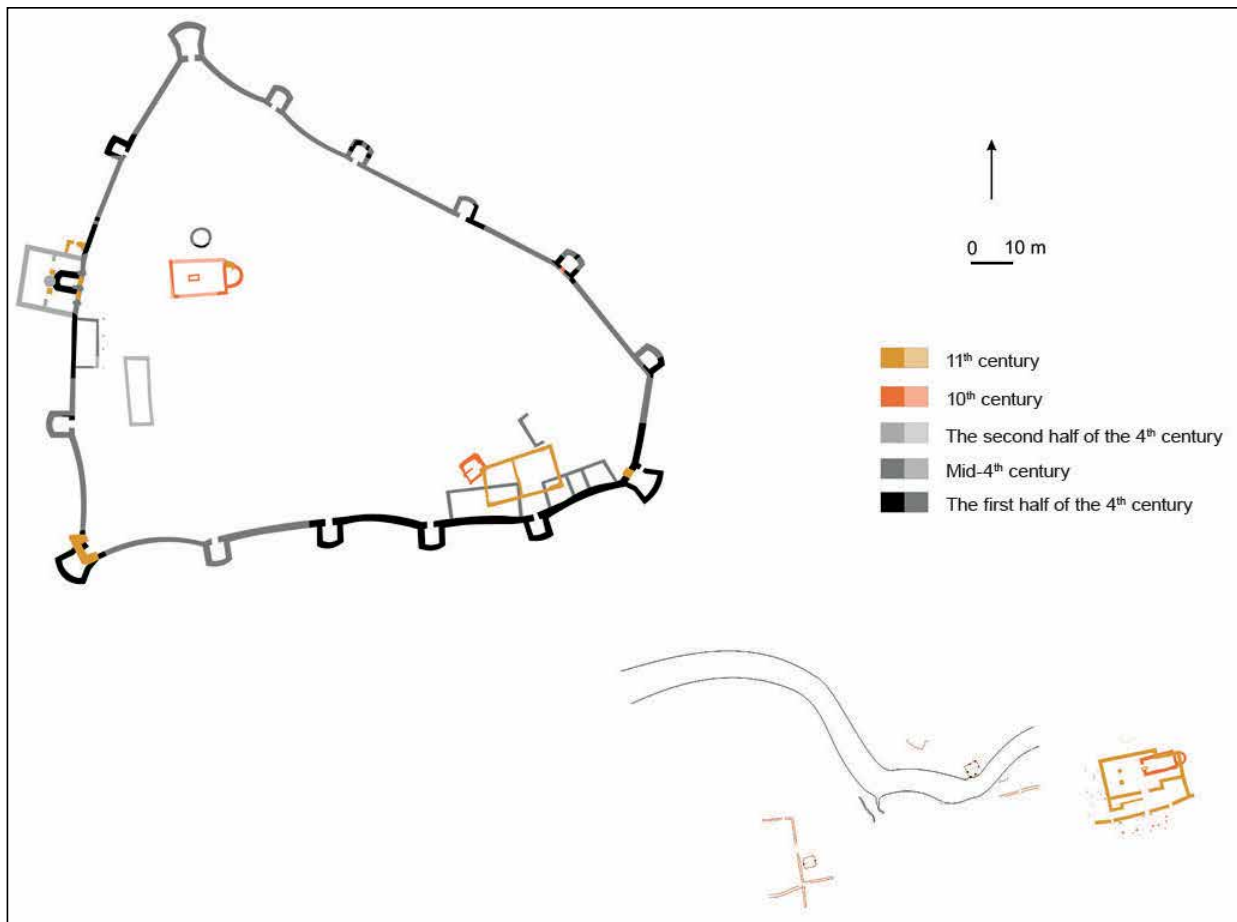


Fig. 1. Ground plan of the comes' centre of Visegrád with the parish church outside the castle (© Gergely Buzás et al. 2014).

the churches. The first churches functioned as baptismal churches and were built up in county seats (Wolf 2005). As the parochial system gradually developed, these ancient parishes became centres of the archdeaconries. The decree of King St. Stephen (1000-1038) that every ten villages should build a church (Závodszy 1904, 45) is often quoted as the evidence for the establishment of the base ecclesiastical institutions. King St. Ladislaus (1077-1095) already took measures for the rebuilding of destroyed churches. However, there is not enough proof that a real system of churches existed in the early period (Berend et al. 2007, 355). Archaeological data is scarce and cannot support the theory for a whole network based on historical narrative. Churches served pastoral and missionary tasks, but their territorial rights were surely not clarified. The dominance of the territorial principle is dated by the appearance of the archdeaconries. The formation of a middle stratum of Church districts began in the second half of the 11th century (Kosztá 2000, 50-51). In the course of the 12th – 13th centuries, the archdeacons gradually moved to the bishoprics and administered the districts assigned to them as canons of cathedral churches.

In general, settlements belonging to the same possessor – whether the king, a religious institution or a private owner – were sought to be united into a single parish organization. A rapid development of the parish system began from the end of the 12th century, as mirrored in the appearance of new church buildings. Royal foundations slowly lost their domination as secular participation advanced. Foreign settlers (mostly Saxons) introduced a special self-governing system and church organization: they brought into effect the 'one village – one parish' principle (Körmendy 1986, 149-152). The community had the obligation to build and maintain the church, but they also possessed an important patronage right: the right to elect the priest. The rights of the *hospes* granted special autonomy to their settlements and, as part of that, the priests could keep the tithe. This meant that a significant source of income remained 'on site' to maintain the church or to support the living of the parish priest. The *Libertas Saxonum* became a desired pattern in the 13th century, at a time of the strengthening of private possessions, when the new landowners settled large, formerly uninhabited lands. Of course, not all managed

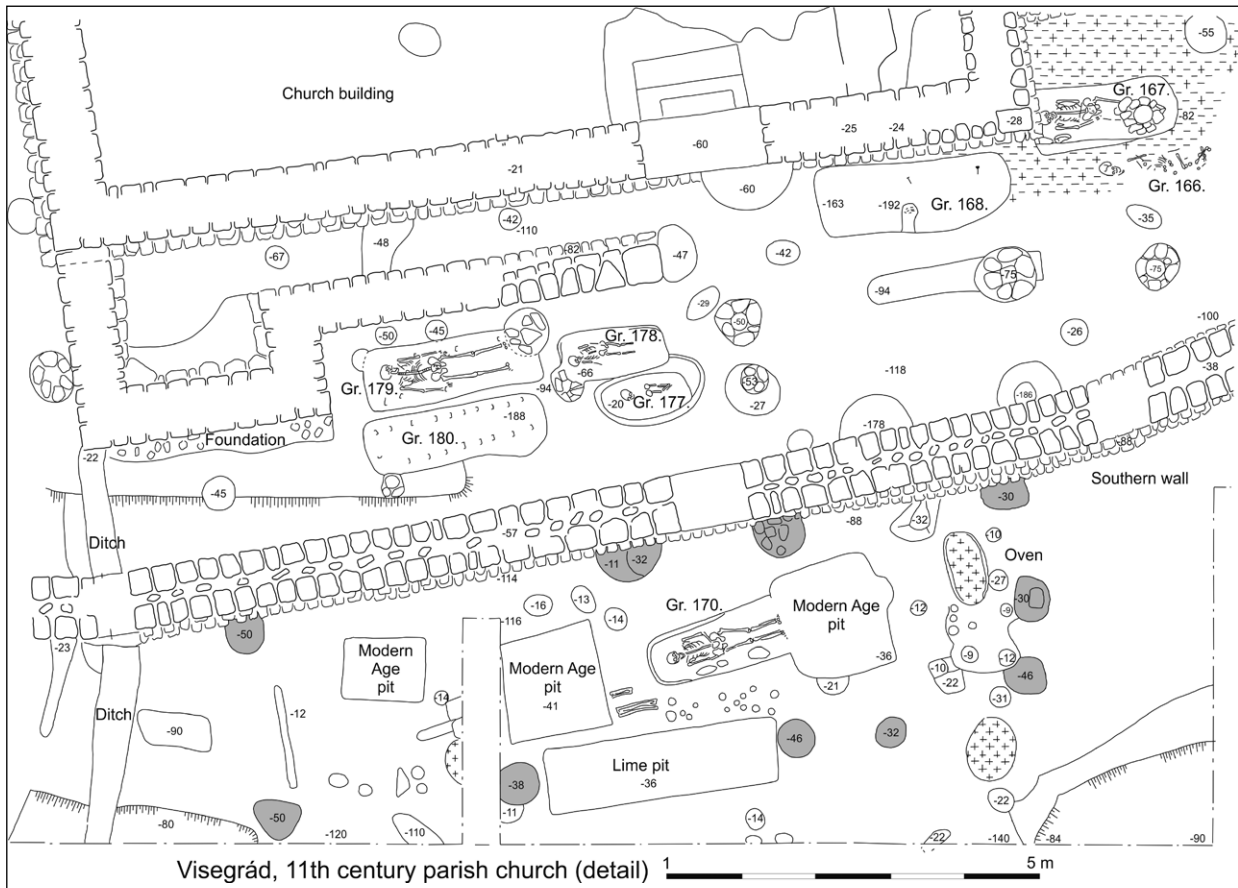


Fig. 2. Ground plan of the pile-structured house from Visegrád: section 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 18 of the excavation (© Dániel Giedl based on the original documentation).

to set up their own village church and much less won the right to elect their priest. Indeed, villages that were owned by several people very often had more than one church.

The papal tithe lists recorded between 1332 and 1337 already testify to the presence of a solid parish network, which had existed for centuries. This has generated more useful information for assessing the lower ecclesiastical system. In the Late Middle Ages, lords initiated the construction of churches and became the effective patrons. As a result, the dependency of the priest was reduced to that of the serfs. Most parish priests came from the serfs' class, few came from the owner's family. The right to appoint priests was not always clear; many documents testify to the conflicts issued regarding the appointment of village priests. However, compared to the European average, in Hungary the right of priest election was rather widespread (Kubinyi 1999). Villagers could partake in the patronage through the right of *aedificatio* or through autonomy guaranteed by the king. This situation meant that the villagers had to take part in the subsistence of the parish priest.

The legal differentiation between the *plebania* and *rectoria* (Mályusz 1971, 123-128; Aradi 2005) meant not only a difference in prestige, but in wealth as well. Churches belonging to the first category were either royal foundations or churches of the privileged nations (Saxons) with *antiqua consuetudo*. They were directly subordinate to the archbishop of Esztergom, received the right of tithe collection (*libera decima*) and the right of priest election. The parishes that were liberated from the authority of the archdeacons and only submitted to bishops were also called *plebania*. These *plebania* appeared during the process of urbanisation and enlargement or rebuilding of the churches. Before the Reformation, 70 *plebania* fell under the jurisdiction of the archbishop and 74 under the bishops, this latter group was complemented with the Saxon congregations. The number of *rectoria* or *ecclesia parochialis* – led by the *presbyter parochialis* – exceeded the number of exempt or urban churches. They were subjected to visitation and to payment of *cathedraticum* – a sum paid yearly to the archdeacon. They usually received a quarter of the collected tithe or less. Furthermore, filial churches or chapels did not dispose of full parish rights, their authority was usually restricted to

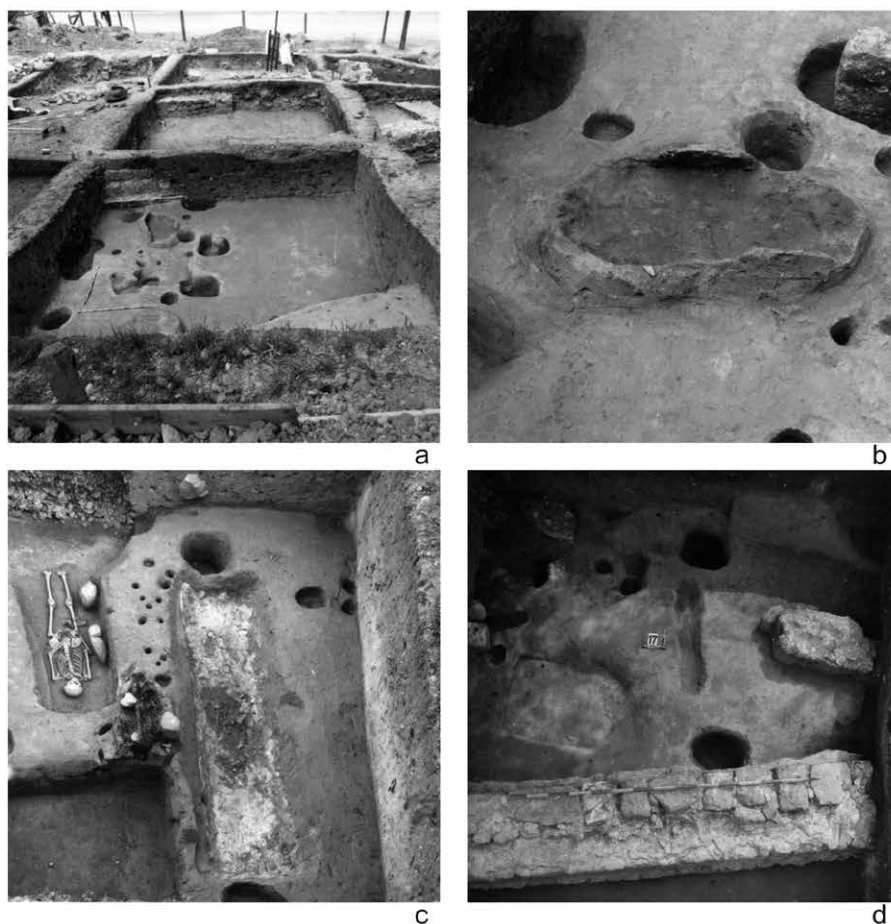


Fig. 3. Different views from Visegrád during excavation: a) The eastern part of the pile-structured house (© Archive photograph. Inv. nr. 9412). b) The oven built of clay (© Archive photograph. Inv. nr. 9402). c) The southern part of the pile-structured house with the lime pit, the stake holes and the carbonized beams (© Archive photograph. Inv. nr. 9433). d) The western pile holes of the building (© Archive photograph. Inv. nr. 9651).

the celebration of Mass and occasionally to funeral rights. Usually the priest of the mother church chose the priest of the chapel as his substitute.

An early example: the 11th – century pile-structured house from Visegrád

Under the rule of King St. Stephen, a system of royal counties came into existence strengthened by castles, where the county head (called *comes* in historical sources, *ispán* in Hungarian) resided. He was the representative of the king, the supreme judge in his territory and the collector of fees and payments in kind for the king. The *civitas* of Visegrád was mentioned in 1009 in the deed of gift of the Veszprém bishopric. The parish church in the *comes'* centre of Visegrád (Fig. 1) is a monument of great importance, as it represents clear evidence of the early Hungarian church organization. From the beginning it must have provided care for the settlers occupying the surroundings of the castle, since another early church – probably a chapel – was found in the *comes'* castle itself (Buzás et al. 2014). The parish church – later archdeaconry – was excavated by Mátyás Szőke in 1976-1979 (Szőke 1980; 2000), its ground-plan and

hypothetical reconstruction were published several times by Gergely Buzás (Buzás – Mészáros 2008, 71-72; Buzás 2015, 594-595, 598-600). The small early church with a semi-circular apse was renewed and expanded into a more prestigious building in the middle of the 11th century. A choir supported by ornate columns (Tóth 1994) was erected in the western end of the new single-nave church and the interior of the church was covered with frescoes. The grave goods found in the churchyard graves (gold jewellery, chalice, paten, etc.) denote the presence of secular and religious dignitaries. A curved wall was built to the temple from the south, creating a large, undivided interior space with a stone-built edifice in the north-western corner and perhaps a foundation of stairs. Archaeological evidence indicates that the stone wall was attached to the temple in a subsequent building phase. Visitors could enter the church through the south door from this space. On the contemporary surface traces of firing were documented.

During the excavation, the outbuilding was thought to be a priest's house but, according to the latest interpretation an alternative is proposed; namely a porch that served for burials and the pile-structured house, attached to the stone wall from the south, could be the

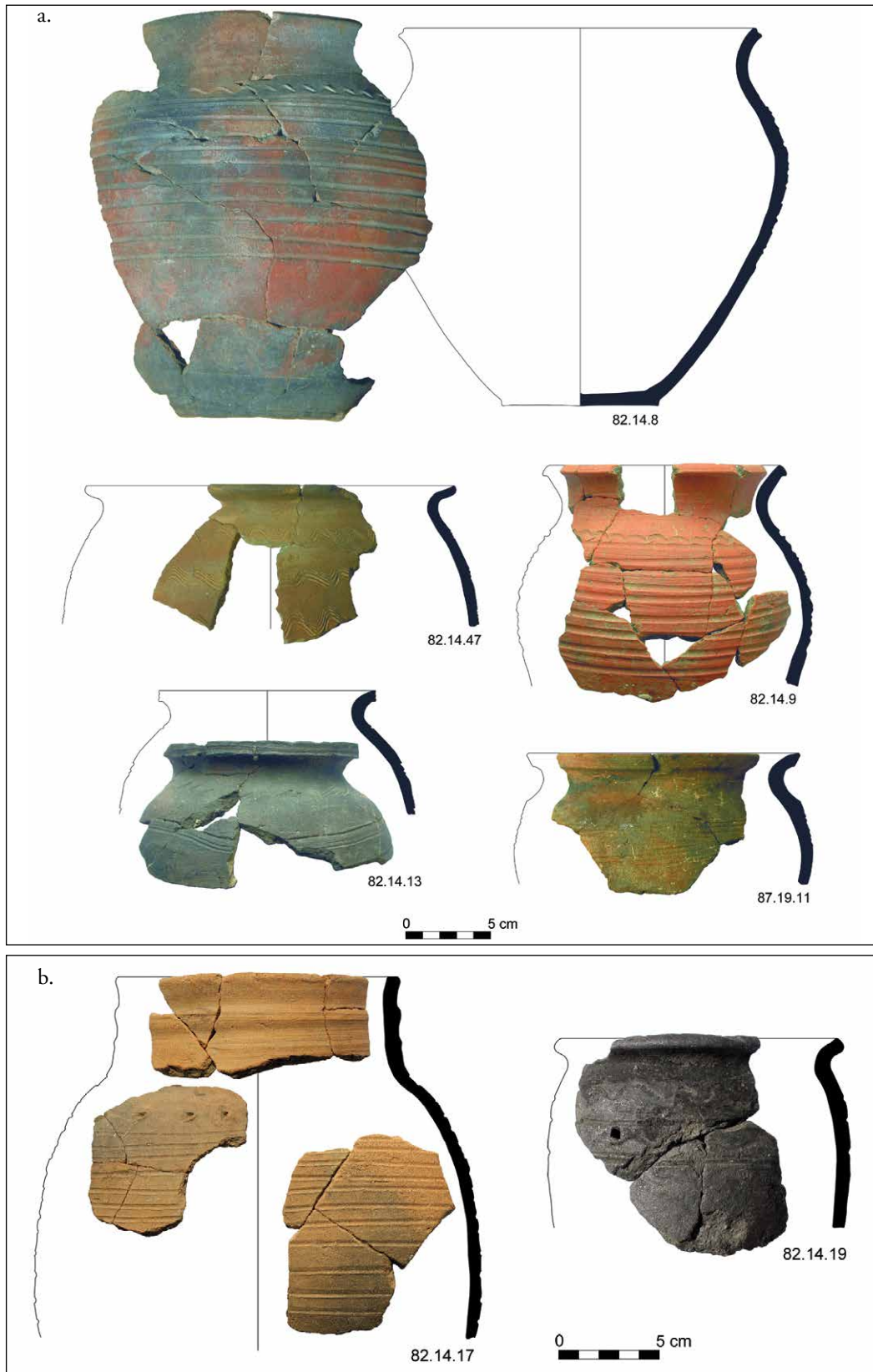


Fig 4.a) 11th – century pots from the pile-structured house; b) 11th – century pot with ribbed neck and graphite ware from the pile-structured house (© Tibor Ákos Rácz).

priest's house (Buzás 2015, 595). Although this building complex raises a number of problems (e.g. the function of the outbuilding, art-historical evaluation of the murals, questions of the religious personnel serving in the church, etc.), only short reports have been published so far and the elaborate processing of the excavation data has not reached completion. By favour of Mátyás Szőke and Gergely Buzás, we now have the opportunity to examine the southern pile-structure building in detail (Fig. 2).

The foundation pits of the massive piles (Fig. 3/ a, c, d) were uniform in size, depth and layout, and were placed in a line parallel to the above-mentioned stone wall, forming a 10 m-long and 3–4 m-wide inner space. In the area of the outbuilding the row of piles no longer continued, only the traces of the church scaffolding were unearthed here. Based on the excavation diaries and drawings of section walls beneath the upper stratum containing stone and mortar in the area of the pile-structured building, a layer with charcoal and daub was discovered with traces of heavy burning, including ceramic fragments and animal bones. This filling may refer to the destruction of the building. In the middle of the house, several pieces of carbonized beams were also found lying parallel with the wall. The residential function of the building is confirmed by the oval oven (Fig. 3/ b) found near the eastern wall. It was built of clay and was furnished with a working pit on its south side. Near the oven, fishbone, fish-scale and egg-shells were found referring to the meal preparation. A chisel and several iron arrowheads also came to light. The entrance of the house opened from the north and faced the south entrance of the church. Two postholes were next to the entrance. The eastern posthole cut the foundation walls of the outbuilding, which proves a later construction of the house. The floor of the house was documented on the level of the out-thrust of the foundation wall, i.e. the rock-bottom of the wall. At the foot of the southern wall smaller stake holes were also found. The internal division of the building cannot be proved, or excluded. The topography and stratification of the site indicate that the steep hillside was cut to create a flat surface for the building. The grave (nr. 170) found in the eastern part of the house must have been older, just like the lime pit (Fig. 3/ c), which may be associated with the stone constructions. The feature was later disturbed by Modern Age diggings.

In the destruction layer of the building and even above it large quantities of pottery from the 11th century were found, mainly pots with diverse forms and mugs (Fig. 4). They were manufactured on a slow wheel and were burnt to reddish brown or grey in colour. The rim forms show great variation, the decorations – straight and wavy line bundles on the body, with slant cuts on the shoulders – are typical for the century. The pot with ribbed neck was decorated with a spiral line; its raw material is coarse, pebbly, micaceous clay. More pieces of graphite ware

appeared with a rounded rim and a varied decoration of straight and wavy incised lines (Fig. 4).

The determination of the function of the pile-structured building is complicated by the outbuilding to which it was attached. There are only unconfirmed assumptions to suggest what purpose the girdle of wall served. The pile-structured building lies in the sacred area, but clearly outside the liturgical space. Architecturally, it is sharply separated from the block of the church and of the outbuilding. We may exclude the suggestion that it was some sort of portal since the church could not be approached from the south because of the hillside. The connection it has with the church suggests that it may well have been to serve the ecclesiastics. Several clergymen had to be accommodated and sustained in an archdeaconry requiring a certain infrastructure. This stone-walled and possibly storied outbuilding may well have served in this capacity. Its complex designation could be complemented with that of a dwelling and/or the cooking function of the pile-structured building.

Building solutions of priest houses in medieval Hungary

This building of High Medieval county centre of Visegrád was built completely above the surface, which may indicate the prominent status of the structure. The whole area around the church was investigated archaeologically and no other wooden or stone building was found, only a few pit houses. Pile-structured buildings were rare in the 11th century, but in other county centres, for example in Győr and Sopron similar architectural solutions occurred (Tömka 1997, 12; Gömöri 2002, 136–139; Takács 2008, 413).

Stone buildings in residential architecture of the High Middle Ages are also scarce. The building complex of Zirc has a special history. In 1942–43 the walls of a medieval church were unearthed, while outside the cemetery wall to the north the remains of a bigger building was found, while a smaller structure was found to the south (Koppány 1972). The northern house, having 1 m-thick walls was built of carved limestone, as were the church walls, suggesting they are broadly contemporary. The southern house was built in the Late Middle Ages and belonged to a local nobleman. Based on its analogies, the church of Zirc was built in the first decades of the 11th century. According to historical sources, a royal mansion (*curtis*) stood here by 1060, and the northern house could have belonged to the estate. In the context of contemporary villages the size, layout and building technique of the church are unusual so we may assume it belonged to the royal manor. In 1182, King Béla III founded a Cistercian Abbey in Zirc. The manor and the church were donated to the Cistercians until they managed to build their own monastery. The construction lasted about 20 years and



Fig. 5. The priest's house of Alsódörgicse (© Tibor Ákos Rácz).

after that the old chapel of the royal manor became the church of the newly born village, while the northern building was occupied by the priest.

The majority of the priest's houses excavated so far can be dated to the Late Middle Ages. The 13th – 14th centuries mark the end buildings being dug into the ground. From this time, houses in villages were built on the surface, but these buildings – according to our written and archaeological sources – were mainly made of wood. Only the upper strata of rural society could afford stone buildings. In towns, however, stone architecture was more widespread. In the Late Middle Ages, wooden churches and chapels were frequent, though these could hardly reach the status of a parish (Aradi 2005, 195-197).

Wooden architecture was common also in regions where stone was easily available, such as Sarvaly, a village in Bakony Mountains, inhabited by lower nobility (Holl 1979). The houses and farm-buildings were without exception placed on basalt foundations. Only the cellars were entirely made of stone. The houses in Sarvaly village were partly built in the 14th century, but their use can be dated mostly to the 15th century. Three buildings were exceptional regarding their material culture, including No. 23, which was identified by the leaders of the excavation as belonging to the priest or to a wealthy nobleman. Based

on its position it could be one of the most prestigious buildings, since it stood right next to the church.

Szentkirályszabadja was also a village of lower nobility in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. The research and restoration of the church was carried out in the early 1990s (Rainer 2011). The uneven surface behind the sanctuary indicated building remains, so a long trial trench was unearthed here. A rectangular stone building was documented divided into two rooms by a wall running North-South. A barrel-vaulted stone cellar was found under the eastern room, its bottom was cut into the rock. The distance between the western wall of the building and the sanctuary was less than 4 m and only 2 m of free space were left at the cemetery wall. The building was dated to the 15th – 16th century, and was destroyed during the Turkish wars.

There are some cases where historical sources confirm the existence and the position of the priest's house. The church of Ecsér and the priest's curia were mentioned in 1353. According to the charter, the house stood near the church on its western side. In 1433 the patron, Ladislaus of Ecsér acquired papal privileges in Rome to the Virgin Mary church. The village was destroyed together with the church by the end of the 16th century. The three-roomed house was built in several phases following the curve of the

cemetery wall (Sz. Czeglédy – Koppány 1964). The earliest, southern room could be dated to the 14th century. It was a living room with plastered stone walls and a rammed clay floor. In the north-western corner a stove was built later. The stokehole overlooked the neighbouring room. A 15th – century Gothic rib, and 16th – century pottery sherds were also found here. The rib belonged to the vault of the room, since other types were found in the church. The middle room was built later near the southern room with different masonry. The bigger, northern space served economical purposes, and much less pottery was found here. All three rooms had separate entrances, but probably they all opened from a common space, namely an open porch.

A charter mentions the parsonage of Vilonya in 1499. The house of medieval origin was completely rebuilt later, but during renovation work in 1978 large parts of the plaster were removed and gothic window and door frames were found *in situ* and in secondary positions. No excavation took place, only buildings' research (Koppány 1993). The priest's house of Vilonya, in its first period was divided into three separate parts with a large basement, and represented a typical and widespread residential form in the Late Middle Ages.

The excavations conducted at site Ságpuszta yielded a complex ground plan of a medieval church and its surroundings (K. Palágyi 2008). The medieval walls were built on the ruins of a roman villa, which was used as a source of building material. The large building northeast of the cemetery was identified as the priest's house by the directors of the excavation. The building layout was adjusted to the cemetery wall, the arrangement of the rooms is extremely irregular and the quality of the masonry differs in the different parts, so it is likely that it was built in several phases.

In Alsódörgicse south of the 13th – century church, a roughly L-shaped stone building built on the churchyard wall was excavated (Fig. 5), comprising two essentially independent rectangular houses (B. Wellisch 2008). The larger room of the north building could be a living room furnished with an oven. No heating facility or floor was in the other room. Both spaces could be approached from the yard. The north structure was linked to the south by a wall of lower quality with clear economic function. A large furnace occupied one of the rooms with traces of molten bronze. The south building, probably the latest part of the complex, was made up of a kitchen and another room with a stove, both sided by a porch.

The layout of Late Medieval priests' houses shows several simple forms. The base form of double-chambered and three-chambered stone houses goes back to the early times of the state foundation and appears in power centres. The architecture of the priest's house had close ties to the manors of the nobility. The double-roomed stone building was wide-spread among the rural manor houses by the 15th century (Buzás 2013, 12-14). In the second half of the 15th

century, the number of the trigeminal buildings increased. Often the entrance to the cellar was combined with a tower on the facade of the building, but priest's houses – according to our archaeological data – lacked the tower.

The function of the buildings

It is well-known from historical sources and archaeological data that such buildings served to protect the churches and cemeteries and as storage (Ritoók 1997, 166). Villagers usually found refuge in the church when under attack, even for several days, and storage chests of the serfs were often taken there for safety. We also know of chasubles, altar items, chalices, and books looted from parish houses (Szabó 1969, 195-207). The cemetery, often surrounded by a stone wall, served as a place for safe-keeping of goods. In the fortified walls of Tartlau (Prejmer, Prázsmár – Romania) special chambers were designed to protect the valuables of rural households (Szentpétery – Kerny 1990, 134-136). In the cemetery of Cegléd-Madarászhalom a significant hoard was excavated containing money and iron tools. It appears that the objects were not only hidden in the churchyard, but within a building of the cemetery (Müller 1975). In 1279 the synod of Buda forbade the accumulation of goods for priests in churches except in case of fire or attack, and also prohibited buildings in cemeteries. The regulation proves that these buildings surely existed, and for example in Balatonszárszó the traces of wooden warehouses were unearthed close to the church (Belényesy 2001).

The 13th – century sunken dwelling structure in Tápiógyörgye was located only 2.5 m from the church (Dinnyés 1994). It was devastated by fire most probably during the Mongol Invasion. On the floor and in the layers of ashes lay an unusually large amount of agricultural tools and house equipment, but there was also a candelabrum, fragment of an armour, more fittings for doors and chests, and even a dagger. Through the artefacts and its position in the village it must have been a building of special importance, although we cannot decide whether it was a priest's house or a storage building for valuables, or maybe both. Only a part of the objects could belong to the installation itself, several incomplete or faulty tools were apparently only stored here. The house was primarily used for living: the floor, the oven and the pots used for cooking refer to this. Regarding its structure and size it perfectly fits into the image of the 13th – century houses dug into the ground. The house was not strengthened in any way and nor was the cemetery protected by a wall. Those seeking refuge could only rely on the sacred character of the area.

The main function of priest's houses was of course residential. Since they were bigger, more strongly-built than the average buildings and located beside the church, the villagers could hide their valuables here in case of danger.

The cellars and pruning shears prove the existence of vineries and wine making. Historical sources record several cellars built inside cemeteries, for example in 1435 in the village of Szakácsi: *parte cuiusdam cellarii in cimiterio dicte parochialis ecclesiae* (Borsa 2002, No. 896). Taverns operating in the priests' houses are known from Hungary as well as from Western Europe (Collins 1930, 315). In the attached buildings, workshops could be built, like in Alsódörgicse. And, of course, there is written evidence for parish schools, which provided elementary education at the lowest levels of social structure. Apart from book mounts, no concrete archaeological evidence has yet been found for this function.

Priest's houses were situated close to or in the sacred areas. Did they ever fulfill sacral functions or were they purely secular buildings? There is only one aspect where the sacred nature of the building prevailed, and it was the right of asylum. Mainly parishes, chapels and cemeteries received this right as recorded in several 14th – century sources, but there is an example from a market town, where the parish priest's house had such a function. At the turn of the 15th – 16th century, the stone house of the priest of Miskolc located on the market was mentioned several times. The house disposed of several privileges: ecclesiastical funds and donations were handled here; charters were read, and the men of the church and monks were given shelter (Gyulai 1996). The right of asylum of a priest's house was obviously not general, it was an exception and presumably went back to royal liberties.

Summary

In a period from which the written sources do not provide information on churches and the living conditions of their priests, the value of archaeological evidence rises. The church discovered in Visegrád supplied the spiritual needs of an early Christian community, and the signs of everyday life suggest that the community had an appointed priest. The pile-structured house (Fig. 2) is a rare example for an 11th – century dwelling built on the surface. It confirms opinion that argue that wooden houses erected above the ground played a significant role in contemporary architecture (Wolf 2014, 20-22). Wattle-and-daub could be used to build the walls, while the beams on the floor could belong to the roof. This architectural design is superior to the standard subterranean structures of the time (Rácz 2014, 167-173). Regarding its function it could be a residential building or a cooking house of the religious centre. This is confirmed by the existence of the floor, the oven and the large amount of pottery, among which special types occur (Fig. 4b). The graphite ware appears in early power centres, mainly along the Danube (Gömöri 2002, 133-135; Tömka 2011, 275-279; Rácz 2015, 279). The pot with ribbed neck is not so frequent a find but it is typical of the Conquering Age, and its presence in the house confirms that it remained in use even in the 11th century (Merva 2014, 201).

Priest's houses were built near the church, in a central position. As there are not too many excavated examples, it is difficult to draw general conclusions regarding the architectural characteristics, especially in the High Middle Ages. In addition, where the parsonage is known, the other buildings in the village have typically remained unexplored. It is probable that in the majority of cases compared to the other village buildings the residence of the parish priest showed a difference in the quality of construction. In the Late Middle Ages almost all the known priests' houses were already built of stone. Their layout never became too complex, and the rectangular, two- or three-roomed stone buildings, often furnished with a cellar served as a model for the development of rural architecture. Archaeological finds indicate that the material culture of the priests was often more comparable to the urban middle class than to the simple rural milieu. The building partially satisfied the needs of the priest, but also served the interests of the community. Stone buildings could be better protected in case of danger, and their defence was enhanced by the sacred area. The occurrence of the cellars is frequent; they allowed the storage of wine, and also suggest that the priests occasionally traded in wine.

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Sépultures des marges et sépultures marginales

Sur quelques exemples médiévaux de la moitié sud de la France

Yves Gleize *

RÉSUMÉ

La multiplication des découvertes de sépultures en dehors des ensembles funéraires a été un des grands apports de l'archéologie préventive à l'étude des pratiques funéraires médiévales ces dernières années. Ces tombes sont encore bien souvent interprétées globalement et on peine à s'extraire de la problématique de l'exclusion pour les expliquer. Si une grande partie des tombes dispersées dans les campagnes durant le haut Moyen Age témoigne d'une certaine liberté dans les choix des lieux d'inhumation, ce fait n'explique que partiellement ces pratiques. Il est ainsi nécessaire de tenter une hiérarchisation de ces ensembles, d'autant plus qu'il apparaît des sépultures isolées datées de la deuxième moitié du Moyen Age. A partir d'exemples issus de la moitié sud de la France, on discutera la diversité de ces tombes en questionnant les marqueurs de leur atypisme et les interprétations archéologiques. Aussi certaines inhumations par la position des défunts, par les pratiques funéraires et leur situation sortent encore des schémas établis. Leur marginalité pose la question de l'identité sociale de ces défunts au regard de l'organisation de l'espace rural. Pour aller au-delà d'une observation topographique, il faudra à l'avenir intégrer ces tombes dans l'analyse spatiale et fonctionnelle de micro-territoires.

Mots-clés : *inhumations dispersées, archéologie funéraire, topographie, analyse de micro-territoires.*

ABSTRACT

Graves of the margins and marginal graves: some medieval examples from south of France
The increase in the discovery of graves outside cemeteries has been one of the most important contributions of rescue archaeology to the study of the medieval funerary practices in recent years. The dead in these graves are all too often interpreted as excluded persons. The majority of the graves scattered across the countryside during the early Middle Ages testify to a certain freedom in the choice of burial site, but this fact explains these practices only in part. It is therefore necessary to attempt to rank the facts, all the more so, as some isolated graves date the second half of the Middle Ages. With the help of archaeological examples from the southern half of France, we discuss the diversity of

* UMR 5199 PACEA Université de
Bordeaux, France
yves.gleize@u-bordeaux.fr

these graves, examining the markers of their difference and the possible archaeological interpretations. Some burials remain outside the known schema because of the posture of the deceased, the funerary practices and their location. Their marginality raises the question of the social identity of these deceased with regard to the organization of rural space. To go beyond topographic observation, it will be necessary in the future to integrate these graves into the spatial and functional analysis of micro-territories.

Keywords: *Scattered burials, funerary archaeology, topography, analysis of micro-territories.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Gräber in Randgebieten – Gräber der Randgruppen : Einige mittelalterliche Beispiele aus Südfrankreich

Das System der präventiven Archäologie hat in den letzten Jahren durch die Vervielfachung der Funde an Grabstätten ausserhalb regulärer Friedhöfe stark zur Erforschung verschiedener Grabpraktiken beigetragen. Die Verstorbenen in diesen Gräber werden allzu oft nur global als „Ausgeschlossene“ interpretiert. Wenn die

1. Objectivation de l'étude des pratiques atypiques

Les campagnes ont été le lieu d'inhumation d'une grande partie des populations médiévales et l'utilisation de ces espaces funéraires, en tant que lieux de mémoire, dépend à la fois des traditions des populations, des relations sociales et de l'usage des territoires. Leurs vestiges archéologiques ne sont bien souvent que les traces partielles de rituels qui n'étaient quant à eux que le reflet déformé de choix et de réalités sociales. L'interprétation des sépultures se distinguant des pratiques connues pour un contexte chrono-culturel particulier est donc bien plus délicate.

Si les données archéologiques et historiques montrent que bien souvent, durant la période médiévale, les tombes étaient installées à proximité des églises, il est légitime de s'interroger sur les pratiques qui se détachent de cette situation. Pour le Moyen Age, notamment en milieu rural, les fouilles archéologiques depuis les années 1980 mettent en évidence une diversité de sites remettant en cause les schémas qui voyaient avec une certaine généralisation le passage des nécropoles, dites en plein champ, aux cimetières paroissiaux, ces derniers densément occupés par des tombes caractérisées par une morne homogénéité (orientées est-ouest, inhumations sur le dos, absence de mobilier) (*Galinié – Zadora-Rio 1996*). Les sépultures rompant avec cette monotonie sont bien souvent classées comme des pratiques atypiques voire déviantes. Cependant le développement du concept de tombes

Mehrheit der auf dem Lande verstreut liegenden Gräber des Frühmittelalters durchaus Ausdruck einer gewissen Freiheit in der Wahl der Grabstätte sein können, so kann dies doch nur ein Teil der Interpretation sein. Es soll daher versucht werden eine Hierarchie aufzustellen, vor allem, da sich jüngst herausgestellt hat, dass ein Teil dieser isoliert liegenden Gräber wohl erst in das späte Mittelalter datieren. Anhand einiger Beispiele aus der Südhälfte Frankreichs sollen die verschiedenen Besonderheiten dieser Gräber herausgearbeitet- und die bisherige archäologische Interpretation hinterfragt werden. Die jeweilige Besonderheit kann sich durch die Lage des Verstorbenen ausdrücken, aber auch durch ihre Ortslage bzw. durch Grabpraktiken, die aus dem bekannten Schema fallen. Ihre „Randposition“ wirft die Frage nach der sozialen Identität des Verstorbenen im Hinblick auf die Organisation des ländlichen Umfeldes auf. Um über eine reine topographische Betrachtung hinaus zu gehen, muss man zukünftig diese Gräber in die räumliche und funktionelle Analyse des Mikro-Territoriums einbeziehen.

Schlagwörter: *Verstreute Grablegen, Grabarchäologie, Topographie, Analyse von Micro-Territorien.*

atypiques pose le problème de l'interprétation des faits singuliers. En général, les termes utilisés pour définir ces pratiques ont une connotation négative et ces faits sont vus en opposition avec les pratiques courantes (*Treffort 2004*, 137). Ces observations englobent généralement des structures archéologiques bien différentes. En France, Garnotel et Paya (1996) avaient tenté de les distinguer en trois catégories : intégration, relégation (aux marges sans être exclus) et exclusion. Cette mise au point, somme toute louable, était sûrement desservie par une classification interprétative aux limites parfois opaques.

À nos yeux de contemporains du XXI^e siècle, ces tombes se distinguent par leur singularité. Mais toute la difficulté est d'identifier ce que les hommes du Moyen Age considéraient comme particulier, voire anormal. Si l'on considère la norme comme une pratique institutionnalisée pour formaliser des situations atypiques, on pourra avoir recours aux textes, s'ils sont conservés. Les sources textuelles, selon leur nature, témoignent de réalités différentes ; parfois normatives (*Treffort 2004*), elles ne peuvent pas toujours être utilisées. Comment identifier des pratiques issues d'une norme plus objective et pragmatique, liée aux habitudes d'un groupe ? Les faits risquent d'être sur-interprétés. Ainsi si l'on considère la norme comme un principe d'exclusion ou d'intégration (*Macherey 2009*), on a toutes les peines en archéologie à définir le groupe à laquelle elle s'applique. Il est donc nécessaire d'avoir conscience de notre subjectivité et il

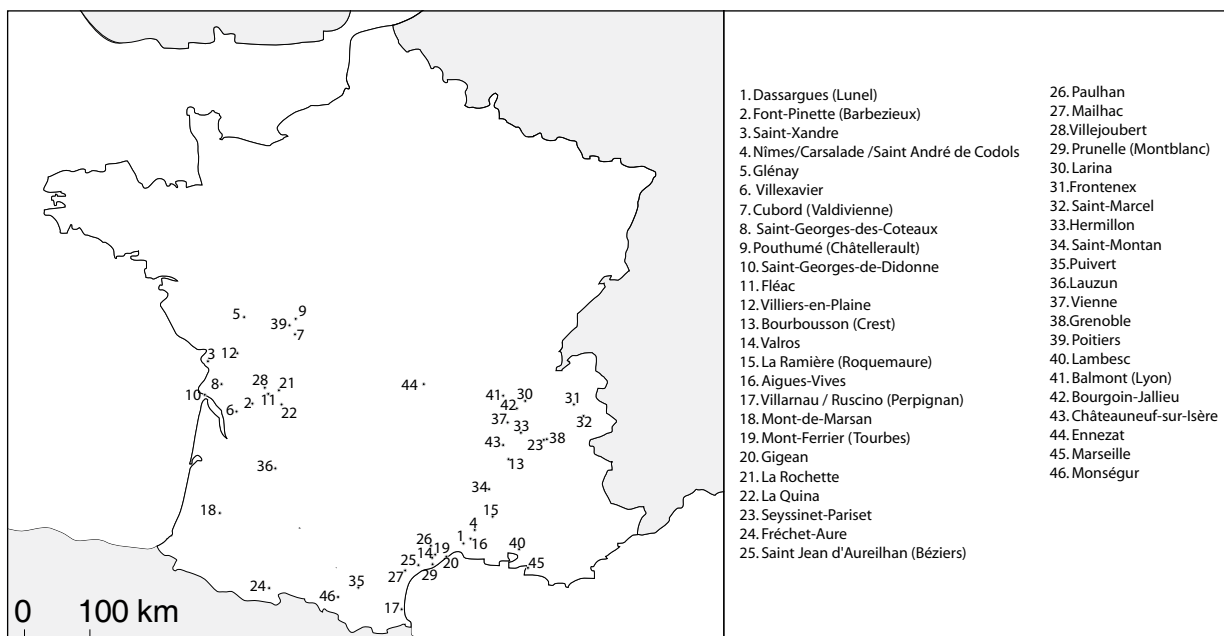


Fig. 1. Localisation des sites cités dans l'article (numérotation par ordre d'apparition dans le texte) (© Yves Gleize).

semble important de s'interroger sur les éléments qui permettent de considérer une tombe comme particulière.

Toutefois, il ne faut pas se résigner à faire un catalogue des pratiques atypiques sans tenter de les interpréter. Le croisement des données archéologiques et anthropologiques ainsi que leur contextualisation peuvent apporter des pistes d'interprétation selon les situations. La moitié sud de la France a livré de nombreuses tombes singulières qui ont pu être considérées comme marginales. Il nous a semblé intéressant de nous pencher sur plusieurs exemples datés entre le V^e et le XVIII^e siècle (Fig. 1).

2. Les sépultures en marge des ensembles funéraires

Hormis quelques sépultures particulières, les interrogations se posent principalement pour les tombes à l'extérieur des espaces funéraires communautaires. La mise en place du cimetière chrétien consacré s'étant faite petit-à-petit pour arriver à un espace institutionnalisé aux XII-XIII^e s (Lauwers 2005), être inhumé à l'extérieur d'un cimetière n'a pas la même réalité suivant les périodes et il est nécessaire de distinguer les interprétations des tombes avant et après cette période.

Le site de Dassargues (Hérault) (Garnotel – Raynaud 1996) permet d'illustrer la diversité des tombes sur un même territoire durant le Moyen Age. Ainsi, se côtoient à peu de distance à la fois un petit groupe de tombes contemporain d'une ferme distante de 30 m (VI^e s.), une sépulture isolée datée du VIII^e s. dans les champs aux abords des chemins proches de cette occupation et des

sépultures de sujets périnataux plus tardives dans les ruines de la ferme. À une centaine de mètres, au nord et au sud de ce regroupement se trouvent des cimetières, associés pour l'un à une église (XII^e s.) et enfin plusieurs inhumations (X^e-XIII^e s.) isolées, disséminées aux alentours et installées dans des fossés.

2.1. Inhumations dispersées et isolées durant le haut Moyen Age

Le haut Moyen Age se distingue par un nombre très important de petits ensembles dispersés en dehors des espaces funéraires collectifs. Ce phénomène ne se limite pas au territoire français et est bien connu en Europe occidentale pour le haut Moyen Age (Lorren – Périn 1995).

Du fait de la diversité et du nombre des découvertes, approche globale et interprétation générale sont bien souvent difficiles. Des essais de catégorisation ont été tentés suivant soit le type de tombe, soit les effectifs. E. Peytremann (2003, 307) propose de distinguer les sépultures isolées et les sépultures dispersées (2 à 5) des groupes funéraires (6 à 40 tombes). F. Blaizot et V. Savino (2006), quant à elles, distinguent les groupes de 30 à 40 tombes des petits groupes de 2 à 10 sépultures.

La distinction est parfois difficile suivant la taille des groupements de tombes. Est-ce que les sépultures dispersées sont de petits groupes qui ne se sont pas développés, suivant différents choix comme la mise en place à proximité d'un cimetière plus grand, plus attractif ? Mais il faut également être attentif à la taille de la zone explorée. La poursuite de la fouille du site de Font-Pinette a montré qu'il s'agissait d'une nécropole

de plusieurs dizaines de sépultures et non d'un petit groupe de tombes (*Gleize – Scullier 2010*).

2.2. Inhumations dispersées et situation topographique durant le haut Moyen Age

En grande majorité, les tombes dispersées en petits groupes (2 à 10 tombes) ont des modes d'inhumation semblables à ceux des grands ensembles collectifs (*Garnotel – Raynaud 1996* ; *Blaizot – Savino 2006* ; *Gleize – Maurel 2009*) et ne se distinguent que par leur situation topographique. Ces tombes sont maintenant considérées comme relevant d'un phénomène bien connu dans les campagnes du haut Moyen Age où leur éparpillement témoigne d'une diversité des espaces funéraires avant la mise en place du cimetière chrétien. Cette dispersion serait une manière tout à fait particulière d'implanter l'espace des morts, voire une alternative aux grands ensembles funéraires.

Des tombes sont dispersées, isolément ou en petits groupes, à une distance plus ou moins importante de bâtiments (*Pecqueur et al. 2015*). On peut supposer que l'utilisation de ces petits groupes est d'une courte durée mais la principale difficulté reste leur datation et celle des structures à proximité. Parfois, des petits groupes contemporains peuvent être nombreux dans un même territoire. Ainsi à Saint-Xandre (Charente-Maritime), plus de dix petits groupes de tombes répartis sur plus de 4000 m², se trouvent à la périphérie d'un habitat daté entre le VI^e et le IX^e siècle (*Gleize – Maurel 2009*) (Fig. 2). L'implantation de cette occupation antérieure à l'installation des sépultures semble avoir ensuite perduré et être liée à ces dernières.

Parfois, la nature de l'occupation et sa synchronie avec les tombes à proximité sont difficiles à établir. Est-ce que les tombes sont installées à proximité immédiate d'un habitat encore occupé ou non ? On parle bien souvent de sépultures médiévales installées dans les ruines d'un établissement antique. Toutefois la proximité de ruines peut être en fait liée à la réutilisation des bâtiments comme habitat. Le site de la Carsalade 53 à Nîmes (Gard) (*Vidal et al. 2005*) en est un bel exemple. Il faut donc être conscient pour certains sites de la possibilité d'occupations altomédiévales domestiques courtes ou occultées. Enfin, il faut garder à l'esprit l'hétérogénéité des formes de l'habitat du haut Moyen Age (*Schneider 2007*). Il y aurait tout un travail à faire croisant formes de l'habitat et présence ou non de ces tombes.

Si l'on dresse un rapide et incomplet bilan sur leur situation topographique, certains traits peuvent être notés. Des sites, datés entre le VI^e et le XII^e s., découverts entre Loire et Garonne peuvent servir d'exemples. Outre aux abords d'aires domestiques, les tombes dispersées peuvent se trouver plus spécifiquement près de zones d'ensilage comme à Champ Rossignol à Glénay (*Devals 2002*)... mais aussi artisanales comme au Ménéis à Villexavier

(métallurgie et silos) (*Nibodeau 2001*), à Pouthumé (forgeron) (*Cornec – Farago 2010*) ou à La-Maison-Neuve à Cubord (fours de potiers) (*Boissavit-Camus et al. 1990*)... Les liens directs avec ces installations restent souvent difficiles à attester.

Étant donné le caractère dispersé de ces groupes de tombes, on peut s'interroger sur leur lien avec les éléments structurant le territoire. Si un lien direct ne peut être toujours être fait avec un habitat précis, il faut noter que ces inhumations peuvent également être installées à proximité d'axes de circulation, comme par exemple à Champ Rossignol (*Devals 2002*), à Saint-Georges des Coteaux (*Gerber et al. 2010*), vraisemblablement aux Moulins à Saint-Georges-de-Didonne (*Baigl et al. 1999*)... Les exemples doivent être probablement plus nombreux eu égard à l'arasement des systèmes viaries.

Certaines inhumations sont installées le long d'autres éléments structurant le paysage. Aux Bouchéaux (Fléac), deux tombes se trouvent à l'entrée d'une parcelle ou du rétrécissement d'une voie (*Bolle et al. 2001*). Au Ménéis (*Nibodeau 2001*), des inhumations sont localisées autour d'un angle de fossés parcellaires, voire au sein d'enclos fossoyé comme à Villiers en Plaine (*Bolle et al. 2009*) ou aux Moulins (*Baigl et al. 1999*).

Malgré l'absence d'une proximité avec un édifice de culte, dans une large majorité, ces petits groupes de tombes sont bien intégrés dans l'espace visible et le territoire (*Pecqueur et al. 2015*). Il faut remarquer que considérer seulement ces tombes comme dispersées dans l'espace domestique ne témoigne pas de la diversité des implantations ; se trouvent-elles réellement toutes au sein de l'habitat, comme on a coutume de le lire ? Les observations en Poitou-Charentes se rapprochent de celles faites près du littoral méditerranéen (*Garnotel – Raynaud 1996*) et dans la vallée du Rhône (*Blaizot – Savino 2006*) où les petits groupes se situent à la périphérie des occupations, soit en bordure de voies ou de fossés, soit en marge de l'espace domestique, soit en limite des zones d'activités spécialisées ou d'ensilage. S'il n'existe sûrement pas de modèle unique mais des pratiques à étudier au cas par cas, il semble que l'hypothèse la plus souvent retenue, du fait de la proximité d'occupations domestiques, soit qu'elles soient liées à l'organisation dispersée des habitats (*Garnotel – Raynaud 1996*). Mais il est clair qu'il est difficile de calquer la forme de l'habitat sur celle des espaces funéraires. Par exemple, ne peut-on pas suggérer la polarisation d'inhumations venant de différents habitats au niveau d'un lieu remarquable ou d'un axe de circulation comme durant l'Antiquité (*Theriot et al. 2004*) ? Les situations sont sûrement diverses puisque ces tombes peuvent être implantées parfois à distance des habitats contemporains, mais au sein des zones agricoles ou artisanales. Le choix des lieux de sépulture n'a donc pas été toujours déterminé par la recherche de la proximité de l'habitat.



Fig. 2. Répartition des structures domestiques et funéraires médiévales du site de Saint-Xandre (© Yves Gleize d'après Léopold Maurel).

Enfin on a vite fait d'expliquer la situation de certains petits groupes de tombes par la proximité d'un chemin ou d'un fossé. Pour le haut Moyen Age, ces inhumations s'intègrent dans l'évolution des espaces funéraires et leurs situations près des voies et/ou dispersées dans le finage des habitats ne sont pas sans rappeler les traditions antiques. Tout en coexistant avec le cimetière, elles pourraient être en continuité avec certaines formes d'ensembles funéraires antiques (Pecqueur 2003; Blaizot – Savino 2006). La dispersion et le fait de ne pas retrouver ces tombes dans un espace collectif interrogent, comme pour la période antique, sur leur implantation dans l'espace public (le long des voies ?) et/ou dans l'espace privé (dans les champs et les domaines). Si l'on n'a bien souvent aucune réponse, une telle dichotomie pourrait permettre de distinguer plusieurs catégories au sein de ces ensembles de tombes.

2.3. Interprétations sociales et organisation des sépultures dispersées durant le haut Moyen Age

La fréquence des découvertes de petits groupes de tombes dispersés datés du haut Moyen Age montrent qu'il est difficile de parler de sépultures d'exclusion (Pecqueur 2003), ni de les considérer comme des tombes de non-chrétiens (Zadora-Rio 2003) puisque à cette période le cimetière chrétien n'est pas encore institutionnalisé comme espace d'inhumation pour tous les chrétiens. L'utilisation de l'archéo-anthropologie a également permis de rejeter les hypothèses de victimes d'épidémie en l'absence de mode d'inhumation témoignant de crise de mortalité.

Selon C. Treffort (1996, 170), leur existence est liée à une certaine liberté qui semble régner dans le choix de l'emplacement de la tombe qui est du ressort de la famille à cette époque. Plusieurs hypothèses sociales ont été proposées pour expliquer l'existence de ces petites entités dont en premier lieu les liens familiaux (Treffort 1996; Raynaud 2010).

Toutefois peu d'études s'intéressent au recrutement de ces ensembles, notamment à cause de la difficulté de travailler sur de petites séries. Or pour les inhumations dispersées, une certaine organisation spatiale semble parfois se dégager. Les croisements entre données archéologiques et biologiques ont montré l'existence d'organisation par pôles dont le recrutement paraît quelquefois spécialisé. À Saint-Georges-des-Coteaux, il a été remarqué que les tombes d'enfants gravitent plutôt autour des sépultures féminines (Gerber et al. 2010). À Saint-Xandre, nous avons identifié une partition suivant l'âge des défunts. Si l'on prend en compte toutes les tombes identifiées, il y apparaît un recrutement particulier pour les immatures et une distinction spatiale pour les adultes, concentrés dans la partie nord de l'ensemble (Gleize – Maurel 2009). De même, la zone sud de Bourbousson renferme un groupe de cinq individus immatures (Blaizot – Savino 2006). Ces

recrutements suivant les âges ou le sexe ne témoignent donc pas forcément pour ces ensembles de groupes familiaux (Gleize – Maurel 2009) ou du moins il ne s'agit pas de la seule raison ayant conduit à leur mise en place. L'organisation par pôles des nécropoles du haut Moyen Age se retrouverait ainsi pour certains petits ensembles funéraires mais avec une densité plus lâche.

Il pourrait être important de distinguer la situation des tombes. Peut-on considérer de la même façon une implantation le long d'une route (à la frontière entre les espaces public et privé) ou celle dans une parcelle (plus en lien avec le domaine privé) ? De même qu'en est-il des localisations près de certaines zones artisanales ?

Plusieurs auteurs ont souligné à travers l'exemple du *De institutione laicali* de Jonas d'Orléans (IX^e s.) la possibilité du choix personnel du propriétaire d'être inhumé sur ses terres, *in agris suis* (Treffort 1996, 168). Si des propriétaires sont inhumés sur leur parcelle et que celle-ci change d'acquéreurs, on peut s'interroger sur l'arrêt de l'utilisation d'une zone funéraire par un groupe et de son devenir, conduisant à une occupation funéraire courte et peu développée. Une telle hypothèse semble tout à fait plausible, la mobilité foncière étant importante durant le haut Moyen Age (Bougard et al. 2002). L'arrêt des inhumations sur une terre revenant à un propriétaire ecclésiastique peut aussi être supposé. Dans la région de Brioude, une charte du XI^e siècle fait état d'un don par Odilon à Cluny d'un manse où se trouvait la sépulture de son frère (Lauwers 2005, 237).

Le lien à la terre n'est toutefois pas l'apanage des propriétaires. Peut-on également supposer l'inhumation de dépendants d'un domaine, voire de travailleurs serviles ? De même, la question peut être posée dans le cas d'inhumations à proximité de zones artisanales ou d'ensilage. L'hypothèse de la domesticité a plusieurs fois été évoquée (Roig – Coll 2011; Blaizot 2011). Pour le haut Moyen Age, les textes montrent une diversité des statuts des libres et non-libres avec une évolution tout au long du haut Moyen Age (Goetz 1993). Ainsi dépendants qu'ils soient libres ou non peuvent être pourvus d'une maison et d'une terre. Si propriétaires et clergé demandent un prix pour l'inhumation sur leurs terres, on pourra s'interroger sur le lieu de sépulture de ceux qui n'ont pas les moyens de payer ; au plus près de leur habitat ?

Les sépultures dispersées pourraient être en lien avec le statut des inhumés mais aussi avec le territoire voire avec la forme d'habitat. Comme pour l'organisation des habitats, il ne faut pas rechercher un modèle unique mais des schèmes à étudier au cas par cas. Ces tombes pourraient témoigner de divisions sociales sans être des exclusions. Leur dispersion pose également la question de leur maintien dans l'espace mémoriel (marquage, visibilité) et des rites de commémoration. Ces sépultures ont ainsi pu contribuer à la construction,

symbolique ou réelle de certains territoires. Il manque pour l'instant des analyses croisant données archéologiques et biologiques sur plusieurs groupes de tombes proches. Un espoir serait de travailler au niveau de micro-territoires conjointement sur les structures de l'habitat et le recrutement des sépultures.

Enfin il est bien difficile d'évaluer la taille de la population à laquelle ces tombes dispersées sont liées; s'agit-il ou non d'un phénomène largement numériquement minoritaire par rapport aux milliers de morts que renferment les grands ensembles funéraires ?

2.4. Des inhumations isolées postérieures au XII^e s. : privation de l'accès au cimetière ?

Étant donné l'importance prise par l'inhumation en cimetière consacré autour des XII-XIII^e s., les tombes orientées est-ouest découvertes isolées ou en petits groupes sont bien souvent considérées, à l'absence de mobilier, comme datant du haut Moyen Âge. Or les datations radiocarbone ont montré que certaines tombes isolées sont datées après le XII^e s. et qu'elles se détachaient ainsi du modèle de la précédente période (Pecqueur et al. 2015).

Pour le sud de la France, on pourra citer une inhumation des XIII-XIV^e s. à La Ramière (Gard) (Blazot et al. 2003), deux inhumations des X-XII^e s. dans la villa de Pataran (Gard) (Provost 1999, 117-118) ou une inhumation des XIII-XV^e siècle au Ménis (Charente-Maritime) (Nibodeau 2001). Des inhumations datées des XIII-XIV^e s. ont aussi été découvertes dans des fossés comblés comme à Vilarnau (Pyrénées-Orientales) (Passarrius et al. 2008) ou à Lunel (Hérault) (Garnotel – Raynaud 1996).

Contrairement au haut Moyen Âge, ces tombes hors du cimetière semblent beaucoup moins nombreuses, sans lien avec les occupations environnantes et se distinguent nettement par l'absence de réels regroupements. On pourra toutefois citer à Mont-de Marsan (Landes) l'inhumation d'un nouveau-né dans un habitat du XIV^e siècle (Souquet-Leroy 2016). Cet exemple pourrait témoigner de sujets non-baptisés enterrés en contexte domestique (Gélis 2006, 238-239) en dehors des cimetières à répit.

Ces tombes isolées postérieures aux XII-XIII^e siècles posent la question de la privation de l'accès au cimetière. Les causes de cette interdiction peuvent être diverses à cette époque (Lauwers 2005, 166 ; Vivas 2012). Toutefois il faut rester prudent avec ces raisons puisque les peines n'ont pas toujours été appliquées et des inhumations temporaires pouvaient être réalisées à l'extérieur du cimetière avant le rapatriement du corps dans l'espace consacré.

3. Des morts particuliers ?

Au regard de la multiplication des découvertes, la question de l'exclusion de morts particuliers peut toutefois être réellement posée dans plusieurs cas, pour le sud de la France.

Durant toute la période médiévale, certaines tombes restent ainsi difficilement interprétables car elles ne s'intègrent pas dans le schéma des tombes « conventionnelles » dispersées.

3.1 Des corps et des inhumations dissimulés ?

Ainsi plusieurs exemples d'inhumations de la fin V-VI^e s., pour lesquels des corps ont des positions particulières, sur le ventre notamment (Gleize – Castex 2012 ; Raynaud 2010) (Fig. 3) ont été identifiées dans des ruines. La concomitance de la position du corps, semblant avoir été jeté, et de la situation de l'inhumation pose ici la question du statut du défunt. Nous sommes confrontés à la difficulté de l'interprétation de ces différents éléments, s'agit-il réellement de sépultures ? Ces inhumations pourraient être la conséquence du choix de dissimuler ou de cacher un corps ou d'enterrements faits dans la hâte. De même, on pourra s'interroger sur l'inhumation sur le côté d'un homme, dans un dépotoir, contre le mur d'une abbaye à Saint-Félix-de-Montceau (Gigean) (Garnotel – Paya 1996).



Fig. 3. Inhumation sur le ventre du site de Mont-Ferrier à Tourbes (© Michel Compan).

Certaines découvertes anecdotiques en milieu karstique pourraient éventuellement témoigner du désir de dissimuler un corps comme, à La Rochette (Charente), un individu daté du haut Moyen Age avec les poignets dans le dos vraisemblablement liés (Lepetz et al. 2014). Mais inhumation médiévale en grotte ne doit pas être synonyme d'exclusion. On pourra ainsi citer les tombes mérovingiennes de la Quina en Charente (Henri-Martin – de Saint-Mathurin 1962-63) ou bien la sépulture double de la grotte des Sarrasins en Isère (Bocquet – Colardelle 1973)..., ce type de sépultures pouvant être lié avec des habitats en grotte. La sépulture d'un périnatal dans la grotte du Lierre à Fréchet-Aure (Hautes-Pyrénées) (Mourre 2013) pourrait être mise en parallèle avec la découverte de céramiques médiévales (Omnes 1987).

Plus fréquents sont les cas d'inhumations dans des structures de stockage. Il faut bien sûr exclure les inhumations recoupant le comblement des silos comme à Villarnau (Passarrius et al. 2008) ou à Saint-Jean-d'Aureilhan (Hérault) (Jandot et al. 1999) qui pourraient témoigner de petits groupes s'installant près d'une zone d'ensilage désaffectée. La majorité des découvertes en silo correspondent à des dépôts de corps sur le côté, dans des fosses en cours de comblement. On retrouve ainsi des inhumations du haut Moyen Age qui diffèrent des observations faites pour les sépultures dispersées de la même période comme à Ruscino (Rébé et al. 2014). Ce phénomène n'est pas sans ressemblance avec les découvertes faites au sud des Pyrénées pour la même période supposées être des inhumations d'esclaves (Roig – Coll 2011).

Pour la période qui voit la mise en place du cimetière consacré, il existe plusieurs exemples d'inhumations en silo (X-XII^e s.). On peut citer celles de Saint-André de Codols à Nîmes (Gard) (Pomarèdes et al. 2012), de Paulhan (Hérault) (Ginouvez – Schneider 1999), de Saint Jean de Caps (Aude) (CATHMA 1993)... Pour l'instant, il n'existe pas de réelle étude pour vérifier si ces cas procèdent du même phénomène et s'il s'agit d'actes de violence ou non. Pour ces différents cas, à notre connaissance, l'absence de lésions traumatiques ne permet pas d'assurer qu'ils soient liés à des morts violentes. En majorité, ces dépôts individuels se trouvent dans la partie basse du comblement. Ces inhumations pourraient être contemporaines de l'utilisation des zones d'ensilage ou juste postérieures à leur abandon. Enfin s'agit-il de privation de sépulture, d'utilisation pragmatique de ces structures ou tout au moins d'une dissimulation de cadavres. La fouille souvent rapide dans ces contextes inattendus limite les éléments d'interprétation. Il semble que l'on puisse formuler une absence de prise en charge du corps par la communauté. Mais est-elle induite par le statut social du défunt (esclave, exclu, étranger) ou un événement plus ponctuel (maladie) ?

3.2 Mort violente et exécutions

Les découvertes de traumatismes apportent des éléments complémentaires sur le statut de certains défunts. Près du castrum d'Andone (Charente, X-XII^e s.), les squelettes de quatre hommes inhumés simultanément dans une fosse présentent des lésions non cicatrisées dues à des coups portés par un outil tranchant ou une arme (Bourgeois – Sansilbano-Collilieux 2009). Mais s'agit-il d'assaillants dont les corps n'ont pas été récupérés après un combat par leur groupe et/ou du choix délibéré des occupants du castrum de mettre ces morts à l'extérieur de leur cimetière collectif ?

Si la découverte de dépôts multiples de corps présentant des traces d'actes de violences peut témoigner de faits de guerre et de la prise en charge collective de tels morts, que peuvent refléter des cas plus ponctuels ? Au lieu-dit Prunelle (Hérault), une inhumation en coffrage mixte, datée des IX-XI^e s. est isolée de tout espace funéraire. La tête du défunt présentait des coups portés à l'arme tranchante et, après avoir été décapitée, avait été placée dans la tombe en position anatomique (Gleize 2010) (Fig. 4). Ici ce n'est pas seulement l'isolement de la tombe qui la rend particulière. Cette découverte pose la question de la possibilité de bien traiter un corps « maltraité », corps éventuellement récupéré par la communauté mais dont l'inhumation est restée hors de tout espace funéraire collectif. À Larina (Isère, V^e s.), au contraire, un corps décapité a été découvert, sous un dépotoir, avec la tête placée sur le bassin (Porte 2011, 198).

Ponctuellement, d'autres cas peuvent témoigner d'événements plus récents comme des tombes dispersées mises en lien avec les guerres franco-savoyardes du XVII^e s. (Frontenex, Saint-Marcel et Hermillon) ou avec les guerres de religions comme à Saint-Montan (Ardèche) (Blaizot – Gleize 2013). Enfin, à Puivert (Aude XVIII-XIX^e s.), un squelette présentant une main amputée et découvert dans les ruines du vieux château (Sarret – Sarret, 1983) pourrait témoigner du souhait de se débarrasser d'un corps après exécution.

S'il est difficile de préciser les événements belliqueux liés à ces différentes inhumations, il est clair que la mort violente de ces défunts n'est pas sans lien avec leur installation hors d'un espace funéraire collectif.

3.3. Malades et inhumations

Si les épisodes épidémiques ne permettent pas d'expliquer le phénomène des sépultures dispersées, une telle hypothèse ne doit pas être exclue notamment pour certaines inhumations simultanées. Hormis les cas où des lésions pathologiques sont mises en évidence, il est délicat de préciser le caractère de crise de mortalité. Que dire par exemple, des deux corps inhumés simultanément sur le ventre, à Lauzun (Lot-et-Garonne) aux XI-XII^e s. (Faravel et al. 2006), à



Fig. 4. Sépulture de Prunelle à Montblanc avec un détail des vertèbres cervicales montrant les traces de la décapitation (© Yves Gleize).

l'extérieur de tout espace funéraire: condamnés (Vivas 2012) ou victimes d'épidémie ?

À Vienne (VII-IX^e siècle), plusieurs corps inhumés simultanément ont été associés à une épidémie de peste grâce à la paléobiochimie moléculaire (Rigeade et al. 2009). D'autres inhumations simultanées en contexte périurbain à Grenoble (Blairot 1998) et à Poitiers (Le Masne de Chermont 1987) pourraient être liées également à des épisodes épidémiques comme en témoignent leur recrutement particulier. Les exemples en milieu rural restent peu nombreux mais le site des Fédons à Lambesc (XVI^e s.)

a montré qu'il existait des cimetières spécialisés liés à une épidémie, ici de peste, identifiée par les textes et les analyses paléobiochimiques (Bizot et al. 2005). La mise en place de nouvelles identifications biochimiques pourrait permettre d'expliquer d'autres inhumations isolées.

Outre les inhumations liées à des crises de mortalité, certaines tombes en marge des cimetières peuvent également être en lien avec des établissements hospitaliers. Dans ce cas, il s'agit en majorité de regroupements de tombes individuelles souvent à proximité de bâtiments. Dans le sud de la France, peu de tombes ont été identifiées comme à la maladrerie de Balmont (Vicard – Speller 1996) ou peut-être à Bourgoin-Jallieu (XVI^e-XVII^e s.) en lien avec l'Ordre des Antonins, réputé pour sa gestion hospitalière (Baucheron – Gabayet 1996). Un petit ensemble (XII-XIII^e s.) à Beaume (Châteauneuf-sur-Isère) pourrait être lié à un hospice. La population inhumée était en grande partie composée par des adultes âgés présentant de nombreuses pathologies (Blairot – Martin-Dupont 2006).

3.4. Des identités religieuses différentes

Au terme de cette analyse, il est intéressant de revenir sur la possibilité d'une distinction suivant l'identité religieuse pour certaines tombes à l'écart des cimetières. Quelques réflexions peuvent être ébauchées montrant tout un domaine à analyser grâce aux données archéo-anthropologiques dans les contextes ruraux médiévaux.

Concernant les tombes juives, dont les modes d'inhumation ne diffèrent peu des tombes chrétiennes, si ce n'est la stricte absence de recoupement dans les cimetières, les sources textuelles indiquent que la majorité des cimetières juifs connus pour le sud de la France se situent directement à l'extérieur des villes ce que confirment des découvertes archéologiques comme le « Champ des Juifs » à Ennezat (Puy-de-Dôme) (Parent 2011).

De même les découvertes de tombes de rites musulmans, encore plus rares, restent limitées pour l'instant, à des zones périurbaines comme à Marseille (Bouiron 2001) et à Nîmes (Gleize et al. 2016). La découverte de tombes musulmanes isolées datées du VIII^e siècle rend tout à fait imaginable l'existence d'inhumations musulmanes en pleine campagne, étant donné la présence arabo-berbère dans le sud de la France à cette période.

Les mêmes perspectives de recherche peuvent être proposées pour la présence des tombes protestantes durant l'Ancien régime. La révocation de l'Édit de Nantes en 1685 prive les protestants de l'accès au cimetière paroissial. Typologiquement, leurs inhumations autour du XVII^e siècle ne se distinguent pas réellement de celles des catholiques. Dans plusieurs régions du sud de la France, il existe encore visibles de petits espaces funéraires enclos protestants disséminés dans la campagne (Saulo 1998). La découverte à Nîmes (XVII-XVIII^e s.) de sépultures

dispersées (Monteil 1993; Gleize 2017) pourrait ainsi témoigner de petits groupes de tombes protestantes.

Alors que l'identité religieuse avait été écartée pour expliquer globalement les sépultures en dehors des ensembles funéraires, les mises en contexte montrent qu'elle peut être un des éléments culturels ayant conduit à des regroupements isolés. Les groupes hérétiques ont ainsi pu être poussés à inhumer les leurs dans des lieux particuliers. Les inhumés découverts dans un aven à Montségur (Ariège) dont certains portaient des signes de mort violente pourraient ainsi être associés aux cathares (Sarret 1984). Dans ce cas, il est difficile de prouver une prise en charge par le groupe. Ici pourraient se rejoindre différentes particularités dont témoignent à la fois le contexte historique, l'archéologie et l'anthropologie : acte de violence, dissimulation en milieu karstique et identité religieuse.

Des marges ou de la marginalité

Ce tour d'horizon très imparfait des inhumations médiévales dispersées de la moitié sud de la France montre toute la difficulté de les traiter de façon globale. Leur atypisme est généralement caractérisé par des critères visibles ce qui dénotent la part de subjectivité d'une telle analyse. Deux niveaux d'observations semblent se distinguer : la tombe elle-même et sa topographie. Certaines tombes peuvent se différencier nettement du mode d'inhumation « conventionnel », dans le sens où il s'agit de celui pratiqué dans les ensembles funéraires. À partir des exemples présentés, il semble important de faire la différence entre sépultures dispersées (groupe(s) entre 2 et 10 tombes) et sépultures isolées et entre mode d'inhumation conventionnel ou non.

Pour aller au-delà d'une simple constatation, les gestes funéraires, restitués par l'archéo-thanatologie peuvent ainsi être comparés aux sources et données régionales ce qui implique l'importance de la datation des faits. Il est cependant difficile d'expliquer une inhumation atypique isolée et l'on ne doit pas céder au désir de rendre typique l'atypique. Nous avons toutefois montré l'apport des arguments anthropologiques et paléobiochimiques et l'importance du contexte historio-archéologique.

Les tombes à l'écart des espaces collectifs ont souvent été expliquées par une volonté d'exclusion mais se situer spatialement à l'écart n'est pas obligatoirement synonyme de marginalité sociale. Notre titre jouait avec l'ambiguïté des termes « marges » et « marginales ». La marge est un concept flou (Prost 2004) qui se définit par rapport à un ensemble organisé, ici le cimetière. Il ne s'agit en rien d'un espace différent mais d'un espace de transition. Toutefois, être en marge signifie être plus ou moins en dehors, notamment de la société pour les marginaux. On retrouve toute cette imprécision avec les tombes isolées ou dispersées. Mais être à l'écart d'un espace funéraire n'est

pas synonyme de marginalité sociale. Pour le haut Moyen Âge, des inhumations aux marges des cimetières sont vraisemblablement associées à des formes d'habitat ou d'occupations du territoire particulières et au statut social des défunts. Ces tombes dispersées pourraient être liées à la faible polarisation induite par les espaces funéraires et surtout à l'attraction d'autres éléments. Ainsi ce n'est pas le fait d'être à l'extérieur du cimetière qui prévaut mais bien l'intégration aux territoires sous d'autres formes.

Toutefois nous avons montré des cas où marginalités spatiale et sociale coexistent assurément. Après l'institutionnalisation du cimetière, quelques inhumations isolées restent difficilement interprétables. Le croisement des données archéo-anthropologiques permet parfois de préciser l'identité des inhumés mais souvent la question de l'intégration ou de l'exclusion ne peut être arrêtée. Les inhumations isolées sont-elles visibles ou non et donc intégrées ou non dans l'espace vécu ? Comment les inhumations de morts au combat et de malades sont-elles intégrées par le groupe qui les enterrent ? Les tombes marginales sont-elles des exemples pour la communauté ou des groupes isolés sans être exclus ? Si des sources textuelles témoignent de la possibilité d'exclure des morts, s'agit-il d'exemples coercitifs ou d'une réalité et la véritable exclusion ne serait-elle pas plutôt l'absence de tombe voire l'annihilation du corps ? On voit bien ici que l'interprétation dépend du point de vue et du contexte.

Pour sortir de cette impasse, la perspective de ces prochaines années sera de ne pas rechercher l'exclusion dans les faits funéraires mais de multiplier sur des microrégions des travaux en parallèle de ceux sur les formes de l'habitat rural, et de voir comment ces différentes tombes peuvent être intégrées ou pas dans les marges de l'habitat et du cimetière, dans l'environnement et le contexte historique. Il faut réfléchir aux implications de ces situations dans la commémoration des morts et la sacralité de l'espace. Ainsi on peut supposer une pérennité plus fragile pour ces petits groupes de tombes que pour les espaces funéraires institutionnalisés. Comme les fossés parcellaires et les voies, ces tombes aux marges des espaces funéraires, parfois en marge, doivent être prises en compte dans l'analyse des territoires et il faut inverser la problématique car ce n'est pas leur marginalité qui importe mais bien leur nature et leur intégration dans l'espace.

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Rock-cut graves and cemeteries in the medieval rural landscape of the Viseu region (Central Portugal)

Catarina Tente *

ABSTRACT

Viseu and its territory are located in central-northern Portugal, between the Douro and the Mondego rivers. This was a frontier territory between Christians and Muslims from the 8th to the 11th centuries. A large number of rock-cut tombs are known in the area. These sites, which are devoid of grave goods, are generally organized in small scattered groups (one to ten tombs) and are seldom clustered in large cemeteries. As far as the available evidence shows, the majority lack any close relationship with religious buildings, whereas some are known to be located in proximity to habitation places. Available data on these religious and socio-economic phenomena indicate we are dealing with segmentary societies in which family and kinship relations played a structuring role in the funerary landscape of the region.

Keywords: *Early medieval territories, local communities, rural churches, Christian Conquest Period.*

RÉSUMÉ

Tombes taillées dans la roche et les cimetières dans le paysage rural médiéval de la région de Viseu (centre du Portugal)

Viseu et son territoire se situent au Portugal centre-nord, entre les rivières Douro et Mondego. Cette région fut une terre de frontière entre chrétiens et musulmans du VIII^e au XII^e siècle. Un grand nombre de tombes rupestres sont connues dans la région. Ces sites, dépourvus de mobilier funéraire, sont organisés en petits groupes dispersés (1 à 10 tombes). Plus rarement, les tombes sont regroupées dans de grands cimetières. L'information disponible montre que la majorité de celles-ci ne présente pas de relation étroite avec les édifices religieux, dont certains se sont implantés à proximité des lieux d'habitation. Les données actuelles sur ces phénomènes religieux

*Instituto de Estudos Medievais
– FCSH, Universidade Nova de
Lisboa, Portugal
catarina.tente@gmail.com

et socio-économiques indiquent que nous sommes face à des sociétés segmentaires, dans lesquelles les relations familiales et les liens de parenté prirent un rôle structurant dans le paysage funéraire de la région.

Mots-clés : *territoires médiévaux, communautés locales, églises rurales, période de la conquête chrétienne.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In Fels gehauene Gräber und Friedhöfe in der mittelalterlichen ländlichen Landschaft der Region Viseu (Zentral Portugal)

Viseu und sein Umland zwischen dem Douro und den Mondego Fluss liegen im zentral-nördlichen Portugal. Die hier behandelte Region stellte im 8. bis 11. Jahrhundert ein Grenzgebiet zwischen Christen

Introduction

Rock-cut graves are known in several western European countries, but they are a particularly common phenomenon in the Iberian Peninsula, where this type of funerary structure and its associated practices were a long-lasting tradition, in use from the 6th to the 12th centuries AD. In many parts of Iberia rock-cut graves are the most abundant funerary remains left by early medieval communities. They are particularly common in central Portugal, where they are the most outstanding medieval testimony in the region's rural landscape. This is clearly related to the fact that they were carved in a durable material and therefore remain highly visible in the archaeological record. However, they are far from being evenly distributed in the territory (see below).

At the same time, rock-cut graves are enigmatic archaeological monuments that present a number of difficulties for interpretation. This is due to the lack of their original contents: grave goods, human remains or even their infill. Despite being extremely difficult to analyse and study, their distribution and spatial relationship with habitation sites allows us to approach the creation of the rural landscape in the region. These necropolises are also testimonies to a deliberate intention of marking the landscape in various ways, from long-lasting places for the dead to the economic, social and symbolic appropriation of a rural territory in Early Medieval times. The durability and location of graves was clearly intentional. Rock-cut graves were in many ways the most permanent human-made monuments in this landscape, and it seems likely that they were a focus for remembrance, expressing a connection to ancestors, and perhaps a way of legitimizing control over land by

und Muslimen dar. In dem Gebiet sind zahlreiche Felsengräbern bekannt, die keine Grabbeigaben enthalten. Sie sind oft in kleinen verstreuten Gruppen von 1 bis 10 Gräbern organisiert, seltener in Form großer Friedhöfe. Bisher konnten keine engeren räumlichen Beziehungen zu religiösen Gebäuden belegt werden, jedoch liegen einige in der Nähe von Wohnplätzen. Die bisher verfügbaren Daten zu diesem religiösen und sozioökonomischen Phänomen weisen in Richtung segmentärer Gesellschaften, in denen die Familien- und Verwandtschaftsbeziehungen die strukturierende Rolle in der Grab-Landschaft der Region spielen.

Schlagwörter: *Frühmittelalterliche Territorien, Landgemeinden, Landkirchen, Periode der Christlichen Landnahme.*

specific kin groups (*Martín-Viso 2012a; 2014, see also Martín-Viso in this volume*).

The present study focusses on the Viseu territory in central Portugal between the 6th and the 12th centuries, the time when rock-cut tombs are thought to have been used. A total of 522 sites have been recorded in 26 modern municipalities, covering a total of 6150 km². This inventory is, however, only a first approach within a wider analysis. It is far from being exhaustive or finished. The database is founded mainly on three sources with variable degrees of reliability. First, data was obtained in field surveys carried out by the author and her team mainly in the western and south-eastern sectors of the region. Other data derives from the Portuguese archaeological database (available online at www.portaldoarqueologo.pt), where all archaeological work taking place in the country is recorded. And thirdly, some other data was retrieved from the available literature, either more general in scope or more specialized. Overall, it forms a dataset dependent on the more or less intensive nature of the research and its diffusion. There are municipalities whose archaeology is well known but others with a complete absence of information on their heritage sites. A clear example of the latter is the Penacova municipality, which contrasts with cases such as Celorico da Beira, Guarda, Viseu or Gouveia. Information is sometimes rather incomplete regarding the number of rock-cut tombs per cemetery, their typologies or sizes. There are also cases, albeit scarce (3.4% of total sites), for which we do not possess precise cartographic information; these cases are not represented in Figure 1. Despite this limitation, the retrieved data allows a regional-scale analysis. The results obtained will be briefly presented and discussed in this paper.

1. The Viseu region

Viseu and its territory are located in the highlands of central-northern Portugal, between the Douro and the Mondego river basins (Fig. 1). These highlands are bordered by a series of mountains, of which Estrela Mountain to the east is the highest summit, at 1,993 m asl. To the north, the territory is delimited by the left banks of the Douro River and its surrounding hills. It is also separated from the coastal plain to the west by a chain of mountains. Within these vast plateaux, the city of Viseu is remarkable for its centrality and two important river basins—the Mondego, the Vouga and their tributaries—that drain to the Atlantic, by the south-west and the west respectively.

In Roman times, Viseu was capital of a *civitas*, centralizing the road system that connected the northern, southern and inland sectors of Iberia with the nearest Atlantic coast. After the fall of Rome, Viseu became an episcopal centre, as documented at least from the 6th century. Its limits are not well known; however, we can tentatively propose this map as a reliable proposal, based on the available written records. By the middle of the 7th century, Viseu lost part of its territory in favour of a then newly-founded diocese, Calábria, located between the

Côa and Douro rivers, in the region's north-east sector. From the 8th to the 11th centuries, these territories were a frontier land between Christians and Muslims.

In geological terms, the region is characterized mainly by granites and schist, covered by relatively thin and acidic soils that compromise the preservation of organic remains. Due to human-induced deforestation since Neolithic times and to subsequent erosion, the most fertile soils can be found today mostly in lower lands and river valleys.

2. Rock-cut graves and cemeteries

In the Viseu region, 522 sites are currently known with rock-cut tombs, which constitute the basis for this study. The minimum number of graves has been calculated as 1,726. These sites display variable patterns of geomorphologic location and grave typology. Moreover, the intra-site arrangement of the graves differs greatly from site to site. What these structures have in common is their apparently deliberate purpose of being a long-lasting funerary monument, marking this medieval rural space.

Most cemeteries consist of fewer than 10 graves, normally dispersed. Few sites have a larger number of

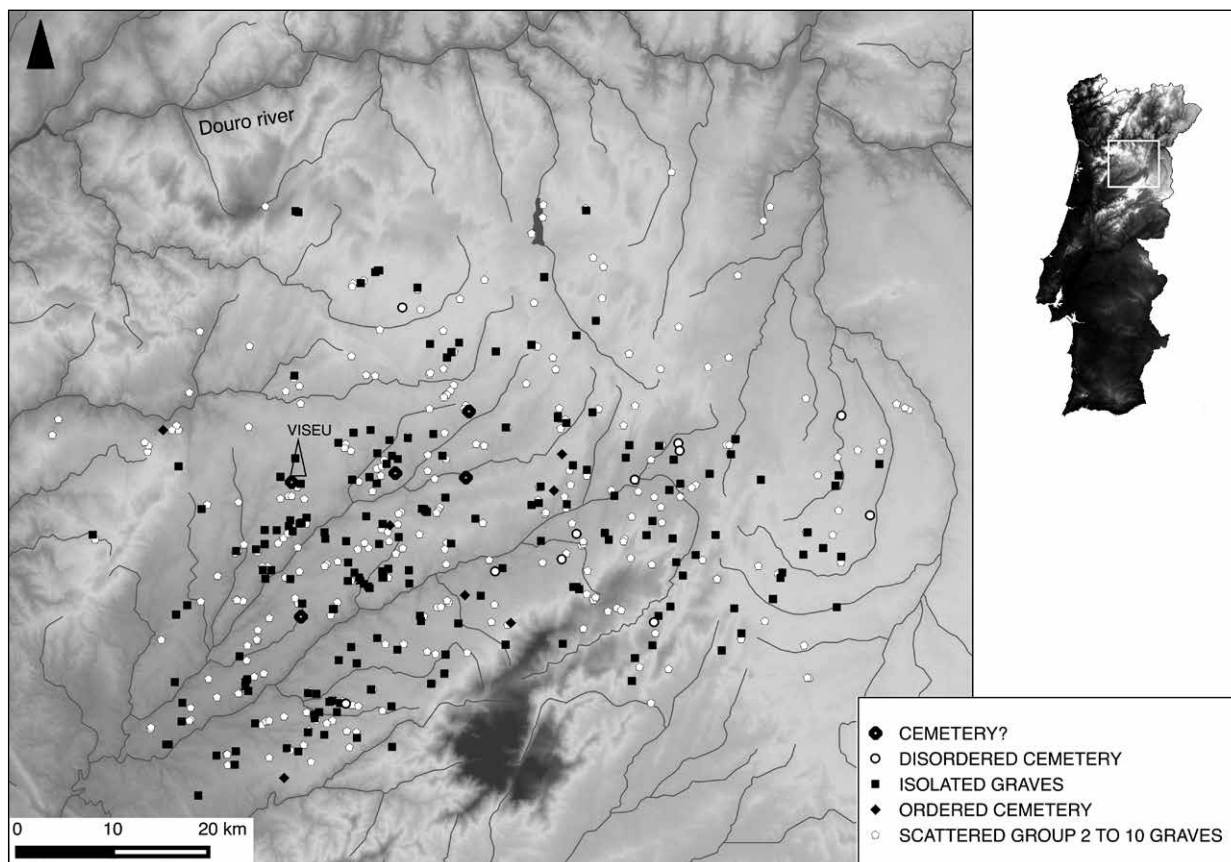


Fig. 1. Distribution map of sites with rock-cut graves. There is a classification in the different categories: isolated graves; scattered groups of 1 to 10 graves, ordered cemeteries and disordered cemeteries (© Catarina Tente and Tomas Cordero).

graves. Since A. del Castillo's seminal works (*Castillo 1970; 1972*), rock-cut graves have been analysed in terms of typology and sites classed according to their number of graves (isolated or in small groups). For this author, rock-cut graves were a funerary phenomenon spread by Christians who came from the south to the centre and north of Iberia to populate these areas. This model—and especially its chrono-typological features—was criticized by several authors who considered its proposed evolution from simple to complex types was unsupported, and that both coexisted at some point in time and space, namely when pairs were found placed side-by-side as indicating kinship relations (e.g. *Reys – Menéndez 1985; Barroca 1987; Tente – Lourenço 1998; Tente 2007*). They also contested the idea of a close relationship between this kind of funerary manifestation and the repopulation of the area (*Bolós – Pagés 1982; Barroca 1987; Vieira 2004; Lourenço 2007; Martín-Viso 2007; 2009; 2011; Tente 2009; 2010; Padilla – Álvaro 2010, 2012*). Recently Martín-Viso (*2012a*) has put forward a new classification of these sites in three main categories: isolated graves, ordered cemeteries, and disordered cemeteries. The advantage of this model is that it attempts a correlation between the arrangement of the graves and the social organization of their builders. It also predicts that the graves' location may reveal their role as landmarks (*Martín-Viso 2012b; 2014; Tente 2015*).

This paper applies an adapted version of Martín-Viso's classificatory model (Martín-Viso, 2012a; see also Martín-Viso in this volume, whose paper is framed under the same theoretical perspective), because it is considered important to separate isolated graves from the scattered groups, which are in the same category in his model. There are some sites with a single grave that are interpreted differently regarding the social organization and memory of the peasant communities, such as the example of Penedo dos Mouros (municipality of Gouveia), which will be discussed below. Consequently, for this paper the sites have been classified in four different types: isolated graves (a single grave); scattered groups of 2 to 10 graves (small necropolises consisting of scattered graves); disordered cemeteries (with more than 10 graves apparently disposed in a non-patterned way); ordered cemeteries (with more than 10 graves where there is apparently an intentional spatial arrangement).

In the Viseu territory, this kind of funerary manifestation is dominated by isolated graves and scattered groups of 2 to 10 graves. Around 93% of the known sites are organized this way. Larger cemeteries are more scarce. The few clustered graves are not confined to a well-delimited area and are randomly scattered, at least apparently, or follow a norm or logic we find today difficult to understand (Fig. 1). Each of the categories will be described in more detail.

Isolated graves represent 37.7 % of the total inventory of sites. This category includes 197 graves of various types (Tab. 1). Most are of adult size but in three cases these seem to have been intended for children. In terms of geographic location, isolated graves are found either in valley bottoms, mid-slopes, near water bodies, swamps or even on mountain plateaux, above 1,000m asl. Thus, it is not possible to recognize a dominant pattern (Fig. 1). Similarly, no recognizable pattern can be identified in their orientations. Many would have been in the vicinity of workplaces or near habitation sites of small family-groups.

There is, however, one case that suggests other interpretations. The site of Penedo dos Mouros was excavated archaeologically in 1998, 2008 and 2009. This work revealed a fortified settlement located on a platform overlooking the fertile Boco stream valley (Fig. 2). A few huge granite boulders on its eastern side supported a complex wooden superstructure. The valley must have been exploited by the human group established in the site, since hundreds of burnt broad beans, among other botanic remains, were recovered during the excavations. The site was abandoned after a fire that took place sometime in the second half of the 10th century, leading to its destruction and the collapse of the wooden structures (*Tente 2010; 2015; Tente – Carvalho 2011*). Penedo dos Mouros possess only one rock-cut grave, on top of the highest granite boulder. It is not possible to claim that the 10th-century habitation structures were coeval with the tomb, but its location and direct access by rock-cut steps is very suggestive of some kind of relationship between the two. The most likely explanation is that the grave was cut after the destruction and abandonment of the fortified site, which occurred in the second half of 10th century. If so, we are forced to consider that whoever built and used the tomb lived in a time when the memory of the site, and possibly of the event that caused its destruction, was still in the oral tradition. In this hypothesis, this tomb would have been, above all, a place of remembrance.

Scattered groups of two to ten graves are the most common type of cemetery, representing 55.2% of the inventory of sites (Tab. 1). Altogether, this category includes a minimum number of 987 tombs of diverse types. These cemeteries are dispersed across the whole territory (Fig. 1). Scattered groups are clusters of graves rather than necropolises, if these are understood as community cemeteries. These sites are not organized; quite the contrary, they are found scattered across the landscape in no apparent pattern. At their intra-scale of analysis, the graves also display what seems to be a chaotic dispersal.

It is common, in these scattered groups, to find direct spatial associations between graves. In these cases, graves show similar orientations but there are cases in which side-by-side graves were orientated towards opposite

Municipality	N. of sites	N. of graves	Isolated Graves		Scattered Group		Disordered Cemetery		Ordered Cemetery		Cemetery undetermined	
			Sites	%	Sites	%	Sites	%	Sites	%	Sites	%
Oliveira de Frades	3	7	1	33.3	2	66.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vouzela	8	11	1	12.5	6	75	0	0	1	12.5	0	0
São Pedro do Sul	3	10	0	0	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Castro Daire	3	4	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vila Nova de Paiva	12	34	5	41.7	6	50	1	8.3	0	0	0	0
Sátão	25	71	8	32	16	64	0	0	0	0	1	4
Aguair da Beira	18	57	8	44	9	50	1	6	0	0	0	0
Penalva do Castelo	11	31	3	27.3	6	54.5	0	0	2	18.2	0	0
Gouveia	28	88	11	39.3	14	50	1	3.6	2	7.1	0	0
Fornos Algodres	22	87	7	32	11	50	2	9	2	9	0	0
Celorico da Beira	40	199	13	32.5	22	55	5	12.5	0	0	0	0
Trancoso	13	174	0	0	9	69.2	1	7.7	3	23.1	0	0
Guarda	48	107	24	50	23	47.9	0	0	0	0	1	2.1
Pinhel	23	138	3	13	17	73.9	3	13	0	0	0	0
Meda	7	28		0	7	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sernancelhe	22	73	7	31.8	12	54.5	1	4.55	0	0	2	9.09
Seia	16	28	9	56	7	44	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oliveira Hospital	32	111	15	46.9	15	47	1	3.13	1	3.1	0	0
Mangualde	43	134	21	49	21	49	0	0	1	2	0	0
Viseu	63	145	27	43	35	55	0	0	1	2	0	0
Nelas	25	45	12	48	12	48	0	0	0	0	1	4
Carregal do Sal	17	40	5	29.4	10	58.8	2	11.8	0	0	0	0
Tábua	16	33	7	43.8	9	56.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Santa Comba Dão	10	29	5	50	4	40	0	0	0	0	1	10
Tondela	14	33	3	21.4	11	78.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Penacova	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	522	1726	197	37.7	288	55.2	18	3.4	13	2.5	6	1.1

Tab. 1. General inventory and cemetery types (© Catarina Tente).

quadrants; here, the deceased were buried facing each other, as in the case of the Tapada da Serra graves, located on Estrela Mountain (Tente 2007, 73). It is also common to find two adult graves in association or one adult and one juvenile or infant. The available data indicate a minimum number of 35 child graves within this category. Everything seems to point to a kinship relation in these cases. Although normally one child grave is found per site, there are a large number of sites without any, and in one case the three graves recognized seem to have been for children (Três Rios, in Tondela municipality).

The disordered necropolises aggregate more than 10 graves. These represent only 3.4% of the analysed sites,

representing a total of 280 graves (Tab. 1). However, the majority of these necropolises revealed a small number of graves—indeed, nine of them have fewer than 20 graves and a further three cases do not exceed 31 graves. The outstanding exception is São Gens, in the municipality of Celorico da Beira, where there are more than 54 graves.

The highest density of cemeteries is found around the foothills of Estrela Mountain or, in other words, away from the urban and diocesan centre of Viseu and lordships.

These cemeteries are arranged in a dispersed pattern very similar to that of the scattered groups. Direct associations between graves are also very common. As



Fig. 2. Penedo dos Mouros (municipality of Gouveia). The 10th – century site has a single grave cut in the major boulder that supported a complex wooden superstructure. The rock-cut grave is signed by the arrow (© Catarina Tente).



Fig. 3. Casal das Pias (Estrela Mountain). An example of side-by-side rock-cut graves that reveals an eventual kinship relation (© Catarina Tente).

in scattered groups, it is possible that we are dealing in these cases with kinship relations.

One site stands out from the others. São Gens (Fig. 3) covers all these characteristics, but also displays a further notable aspect: this is the largest of all rural necropolises known in the region. São Gens is an archaeological complex with a disordered cemetery. Overall, these graves are scattered across a large area and no internal organization is evident. This necropolis, with 56 graves, was built around a Roman farm that was abandoned by the end of the 4th century. The number of graves may originally have been slightly higher, since we know from oral traditions that some graves were destroyed. São Gens is almost imperceptible in the landscape, revealing a very limited visual control over the horizon.

The medieval settlement had a walled perimeter, oval in shape, enclosing an area of around 0.5 ha. This site was under excavation between 2008 and 2012. From the datable material culture and radiocarbon dates, it is clear that occupation of the settlement was restricted largely to the 10th century. The enclosure contains within it a large number of granite boulders and evidence of hut structures. It is likely that the structures were constructed entirely in perishable organic materials, the remains of which only survive in cases of fire-induced preservation. Two radiocarbon determinations were obtained (short-lived samples such as cork and bushes) to date a great fire that occurred around the second half of the 10th century. This was responsible for the complete destruction and abandonment of the site (Tente – Carvalho 2011). The

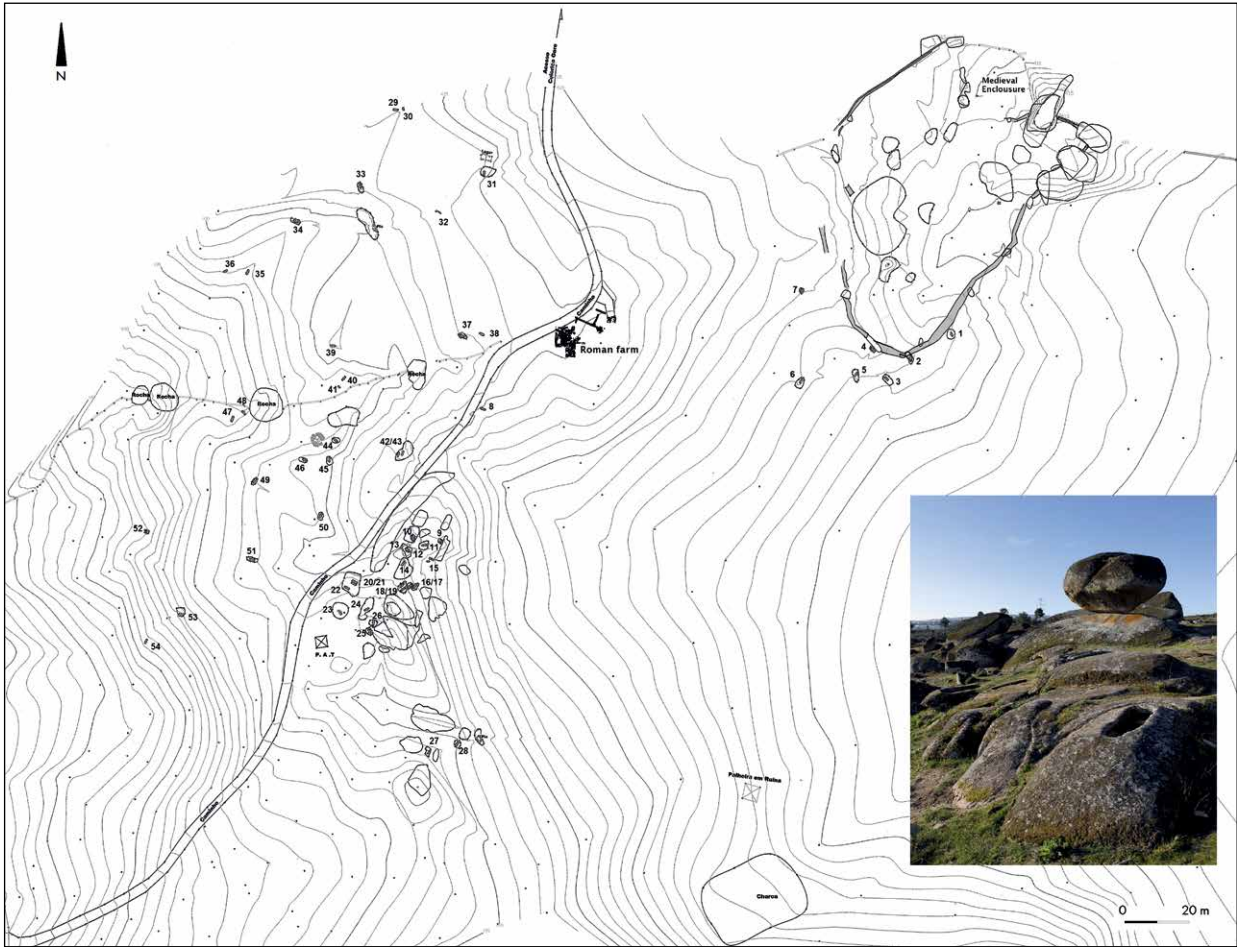


Fig. 4. Plan of São Gens (municipality of Celorico da Beira), with the Roman structures (1st to 4th centuries), the medieval enclosure and the disordered cemetery (10th century), with graves indicated by numbers (© Catarina Tente and José António Tomás).

archaeological excavation revealed that occupation was concentrated within the enclosure.

Although the occupied area was concentrated, the cemetery was not: the graves are scattered across an area of 6 ha. Some graves are relatively isolated; others are grouped into small clusters, just as in the category of scattered groups. Within the small groups, graves show some sign of patterning, however the level of dispersion and the general layout of the graves suggest that there was no formal organisation of the funerary space. Great diversity is seen in terms of both grave types and orientations, in spite of a slight tendency of them to point to the east, north-east and south-east. Based on their dimensions, six of the 54 graves (11%) would appear to belong to children; ranging from 64 cm to 125 cm in length. In addition, there are six unfinished graves, two of which are child sized (Brookes *et al. forthcoming*).

Both the spatial analysis of the cemetery layout and the archaeological data from the enclosure suggest that the site was used by a community comprising

three or four self-identifying groups, over a period of around four generations. The general lack of spatial differentiation within the cemetery may suggest these were the graves of relatively equally-ranked members of the community, albeit reflecting a household organization (Brookes *et al. forthcoming*).

Ordered cemeteries represent a very small percentage, totalling only 2.5% of all known sites. When located near modern churches, it is often difficult to determine the total number of rock-cut graves; indeed, only excavations would allow these to be counted (and individualized from other types of graves), but usually only part of the total cemetery area is studied.

Their main characteristic is the clustering of a very high number of graves in a reduced space, usually cut side-by-side and following a dominant orientation. In the majority of the cases, these necropolises were built in close association with churches, such as São Pedro da Lourosa, one of the few 10th – century churches known in the region (Fig. 5). Its construction has been

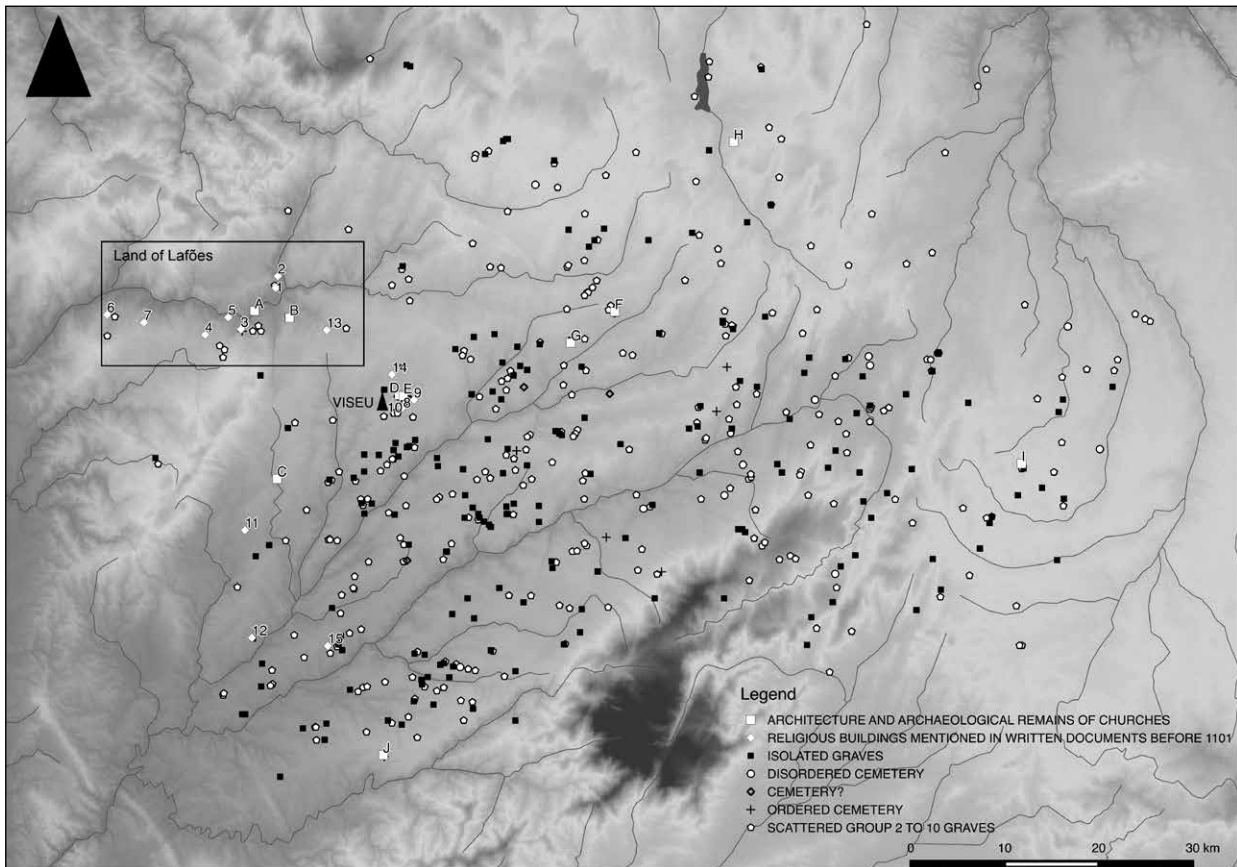


Fig. 5. Distribution map (© Catarina Tente and Tomas Cordero Ruiz) of sites with rock-cut graves, and location of churches that are mentioned for the first time before 1101, and architectonic and archaeological remains of churches before the 12th century (Rodrigues 1999).

Churches: *São Pedro [do Sul]* (1085), *Santa Maria de Vouzela* (1070), *São Vicente de Lafões* (1092), *Santa Maria do Arcozelo* (1083), *São Tiago do Mato* (1083), *Monastery of Vouzela* (1082), *Santa Maria da Várzea* (1070), *São Gens de Nespereira* (1078), *São Miguel Fetal* (880?), *Santa Eugénia* (1099), *São Martinho* (1066); *Monastery of Seperandei* (957), *Monastery of Fráguas* (1129), *Monastery of Currelos* (981), *Molelos* (1101), and *Treixedo* (981).

Architecture and archaeological remains of churches: *São Martinho* (c. 10th), *Figueiredo das Donas* (c. 10/11th), *Monastery of Fráguas* (c. 10/11th), *Sé de Viseu* (c. 6/7th), *Nossa Senhora do Barrocal* (971), *Casal de Cima* (c. 10/11th), *Sernancelhe* (c. 9/10th), *Jarmelo* (c. 10th), *São Pedro da Lourosa* (912).

attributed to an important elite established in Viseu (Fernandes 2005; Real 2014).

Ordered cemeteries increase in number in the second half of 12th century and mainly during the following. In Portugal, the parochial system emerged first in towns, and spread later and more slowly in rural areas. It must have been in the wake of the Gregorian reform, along with the later implementation of the tithe, that parish churches would start to be systematically built and have their jurisdiction legally defined (Mattoso 1985, 401–405). This was a time when the parishes were being established in the region. This phenomenon implied the building of churches that aggregated the parish interments. This changing funerary behaviour had as a consequence the progressive abandonment of the scattered-type groups of graves and disordered cemeteries. In these parishes, rock-cut graves

are found alongside other forms of inhumation. Graves are often found overlying each other, and several events of disturbance of the older ones are frequently identified. This may reflect depersonalization of at least some of the graves. Here, identity and ancestry do not seem to be as important as before. These notions are replaced by the feeling of belonging to a broader community that shares, above all, a common faith and church. This phenomenon irreversibly changed the inhumation practices but reflects, above all, the existence of an external and supra-local power that regulated and organized the religious and social lives of the communities.

From the few preserved bone remains so far exhumed from rock-cut graves (because of the acidity of granitic and schist substrata), only two radiocarbon determinations were obtained in this area (see also

Provenance	Lab Number	Date BP	cal BC/AD
Alto da Quintinha	Sac-2333	1080 ± 50	778-791 (1,4%), 805-842 (2,7%), 861-1032 (91,2%).
Algodres (grave nº23)	Sac-2207	710 ± 40	1356-1389 (17,7%), 1224-1315 (77,7%).

Tab. 2. Radiocarbon determinations of human bones exhumed in rock-cut graves from Viseu region (Tente – Carvalho 2015, 131).

Martín-Viso, this volume): one from an isolated grave (Alto da Quintinha), and the other from the first phase of occupation of one of the parish cemeteries (Algodres). The results are very interesting in spite of the skewed available radiocarbon evidence (Tab. 2). Indeed, they suggest that the necropolises scattered throughout the landscape are a much older phenomenon, whereas cemeteries aggregated to parish churches occur mostly after the end of 12th century.

In the older phase, the ‘architectonic’ option was to cut the graves in granitic outcrops, but through time and with the increasing number of burials in restricted spaces, an option for simpler and faster solutions becomes more common, such as inhumations in earth graves and the use of stone slabs.

3. Discussion

Despite the large number of sites in the territory of Viseu, only a few have been studied archaeologically. Available data show diversified realities, as is the case of the two sites discussed in this chapter: Penedo dos Mouros and São Gens. Given the state of research, a larger set of sites needs to be studied. However, it should be noted that this will not change a well-established scattered pattern across the region’s rural landscape during the 6th – 12th centuries. In the Viseu region, rock-cut graves cluster generally in small dispersed groups and often seem to be connected with living/working areas rather than with religious structures. Indeed, the distribution map of these sites shows an image of fragmented space, thus suggesting a segmented social reality in which the household is its main structuring feature. This is in perfect accord with the lack of written documents mentioning churches before the 12th century. Churches are also very scarce in the rural archaeological record (Fig. 5), and were probably correspondingly rare in the landscape.

Therefore, churches must have been very few in number and were, in most cases, away from the populations. The distribution of graves in the territory reflected the presence of household and local groups only, thus testifying a segmentary type of social organization. Ancestors served not only to mark the space but also to legitimate control over a certain terrain by their descendants (Martín-Viso 2014).

In this regard, it is interesting to note that more labour was applied in cutting the outcrops, where long-lasting graves could be dug, than at habitation sites, which were built with perishable materials. The durability and location of the graves was, therefore, intentional and can only be related, in the Early Middle Ages, with the exploitation of agricultural land and forests.

It should be mentioned that, according to what can be inferred from written sources, the location of churches and monasteries does not overlap with the distribution of rock-cut graves. The largest concentration of religious buildings before the 12th century was in the city of Viseu and its immediate surroundings, where they were probably founded by the Diocese. A similar trend can also be observed to the north-west of Viseu. In this part of the region (the Lafões area), a larger number of written documents (Rodrigues 1999) attests to the presence of counts and their courts from the 9th century onwards, who would have been responsible directly or indirectly for the foundation of several churches and monasteries.

In rural spaces located in more remote areas, or away from the areas of interest of the dominating powers, churches were scarce and populations had more liberty to choose where to create their scattered necropolises. Conversely, in Lafões, the presence of so many churches and monasteries in a rural area seems to have implied a more restrictive control over family or community funerary practices by the ruling social groups.

This phenomenon will eventually become common in the whole region after the end of 12th century, a moment in time when the Church definitively disrupts the household and community logic that was being expressed, until then, in the funerary manifestations of the Early Middle Ages.

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A place for the ancestors

Early medieval burial sites in the central area of the Iberian Peninsula

Iñaki Martín Viso *

ABSTRACT

Considering the importance of burial sites in the construction of social memory we offer a theoretical overview of the central Iberian Peninsula in the Early Middle Ages. Specifically, this paper studies rock-cut graves and their link to the territory in a broad regional framework that includes areas that are now part of Spain and Portugal. The analysis of specific cases shows the way in which early medieval burial sites participated in the construction of a symbolic landscape. The role of rock-cut graves was related to the claim of rights over agrarian and pasture lands and to the formation of a communal identity, the key being the memory of the ancestors buried in those tombs. Communities and families created and managed these burial sites, which were very diverse. The implanting of parishes and churchyards took place within a long and complex process during the 12th and 13th centuries. As a result, early medieval burial sites were deserted, although some of them were able to survive as hermitages where festivals were held periodically and attended by the inhabitants of neighbouring villages.

Keywords: *Burial sites, Early Middle Ages, construction of communal identities, implantation of parishes, central Iberian Peninsula.*

RÉSUMÉ

Un emplacement pour les ancêtres : espaces d'enterrement durant le Haut Moyen Âge dans le centre de la péninsule Ibérique

À partir de l'importance donnée aux espaces funéraires dans la construction de la mémoire collective, cet article analyse le cas du centre de la péninsule ibérique durant le Haut Moyen Âge. L'objet de l'étude sont les tombes creusées dans les roches et leur articulation avec le territoire dans un vaste cadre régional comprenant des zones actuellement portugaises et espagnoles. L'analyse de cas spécifiques permet d'observer le fonctionnement de ces espaces funéraires dans la construction d'un paysage symbolique. Le rôle des tombes creusées dans la roche est lié à la réclamation des droits sur des zones agricoles et d'élevage et à la formation d'une identité communautaire grâce à la mémoire des ancêtres y enterrés. Les communautés et les familles ont créé et géré ces espaces funéraires caractérisés par leur grande diversité. L'implantation des paroisses et des cimetières associés aux églises a eu lieu dans le cadre d'un processus complexe et long

* Historia Medieval,
Moderna y Contemporánea,
University of Salamanca, Spain
viso@usal.es

durant le XII^e et XIII^e. La conséquence en est l'abandon des espaces funéraires du Haut Moyen Âge bien que certains d'entre eux aient subsisté comme des ermitages où les villageois des alentours vont en procession de manière périodique.

Mots-clés : *les espaces funéraires, le haut moyen-âge, la formation d'identités communautaires, la formation des paroisses, centre de la péninsule ibérique.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ein Platz für die Ahnen: Frühmittelalterliche Grabstätten im Zentrum der Iberischen Halbinsel

Aufbauend auf der Bedeutung, Grabstätten generell im gesellschaftlichen Gedächtnis zu behalten, beleuchtet dieser Artikel das Zentrum der Iberischen Halbinsel im Frühmittelalter. Untersuchungsgegenstand sind insbesondere in Fels gehauene Gräber und ihre Verzahnung in einem weiten regionalen Raum, welcher heute sowohl spanische als auch portugiesische Gebiete umfasst. Die Untersuchung spezifischer Fälle

A regional history

The main axis of the relationships between the living and the dead in Early Middle Ages was memory (Geary 1994; Williams 2006). But social groups are particularly active in the formation of memory, as remembrance is conditioned by belonging to a certain social group, which frames the individual memories (Halbwachs 2004). The different human groups select the elements that are of use for that remembrance, through which the groups' present claims and rights are legitimised, partially conditioning the memory of each individual (Traverso 2007, 18). Therefore, social memory should be seen as a process undergoing permanent evolution and change, despite the image of uninterrupted continuity (Fentress – Wickham 2003, 23). Given the special importance of the dead in the construction of this social memory, one important aspect is the control of memory (Lauwers 1996, 205). Accordingly, burial sites should be understood as spaces of memory and of power, chosen not as a 'natural' consequence of death but through decisions marked by social context, by the social representation of the dead and by the messages intended to be transmitted (Härke 2001).

This theoretical background is useful to approach the particular case of central Iberia and specifically the centre-west of the peninsula. The area of study lies to the south of the Duero and to the north of the Central System, and is divided between the Spanish provinces of Salamanca, Ávila and the south of Zamora, and the Portuguese region of Beira Alta. In the Early Middle Ages,

führt zu Fragestellungen nach der Art und Weise der Funktion der Grabstätten in einer symbolischen Landschaft. Die Rolle der Felsengräber ist verbunden mit der Frage nach Rechtsansprüchen über Felder zur Landwirtschaft und zur Viehzucht resp. mit der Bildung einer gemeinschaftlichen Identität aufgrund des Gedenkens an die in den Felsengräbern bestatteten Ahnen. Es waren die Gemeinden und die Familien, die diese sich durch eine grosse Verschiedenartigkeit auszeichneten Grabstätten schufen und verwalteten. Die Einführung von Pfarrgemeinden und an den Kirchen angegliederten Friedhöfen vollzog sich in einem komplexen und langen Prozess während des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts. Die Folge war das Aufgeben der frühmittelalterlichen Grabstätten, obwohl einige von ihnen als Einsiedeleien bestehen konnten und zu denen regelmässig Pilgerwanderungen der Einwohner der benachbarten Dörfer durchgeführt wurden.

Schlagwörter: *Grabstätten, Frühmittelalter, Identitätsräume, Bildung von Pfarrgemeinden, Iberische Halbinsel.*

this division did not exist and the region possessed a series of characteristics in common. One of those traits was the limited importance of the cities. Although several cities existed that were also episcopal sees (Salamanca, Ávila and Viseu), their influence over the territory was not very effective. In contrast, the whole region was characterised by its rural nature, although the identification of rural settlements is still at an early stage. At the same time, the region was peripheral within the Iberian Peninsula as a whole, remote from the main centres of power, with no powerful aristocracy and unimportant in economic terms.

In addition, the region changed in a particular way between the 5th and the 11th centuries. The disintegration of the Roman system in the beginning of 5th century was gradual but did not give rise to the construction of a new centralised political structure. The result was the effervescence of very different kinds of local powers. The affirmation and consolidation of Visigothic dominion took place 150 years later, in the last quarter of the sixth century. The integration of this region probably occurred through the mutual recognition of the authority of the local elites over small districts and that of the kings as the maximum political point of reference (Castellanos – Martín-Viso 2005). A new cycle began in the 8th century. The Islamic invasion caused the disintegration of the Visigothic *regnum*. The retreat of the Berbers towards the south in the 740s, within a large anti-Arab uprising, left a vacuum of power in the whole Douro Basin that the new Kingdom of Asturias was unable to fill. The outcome

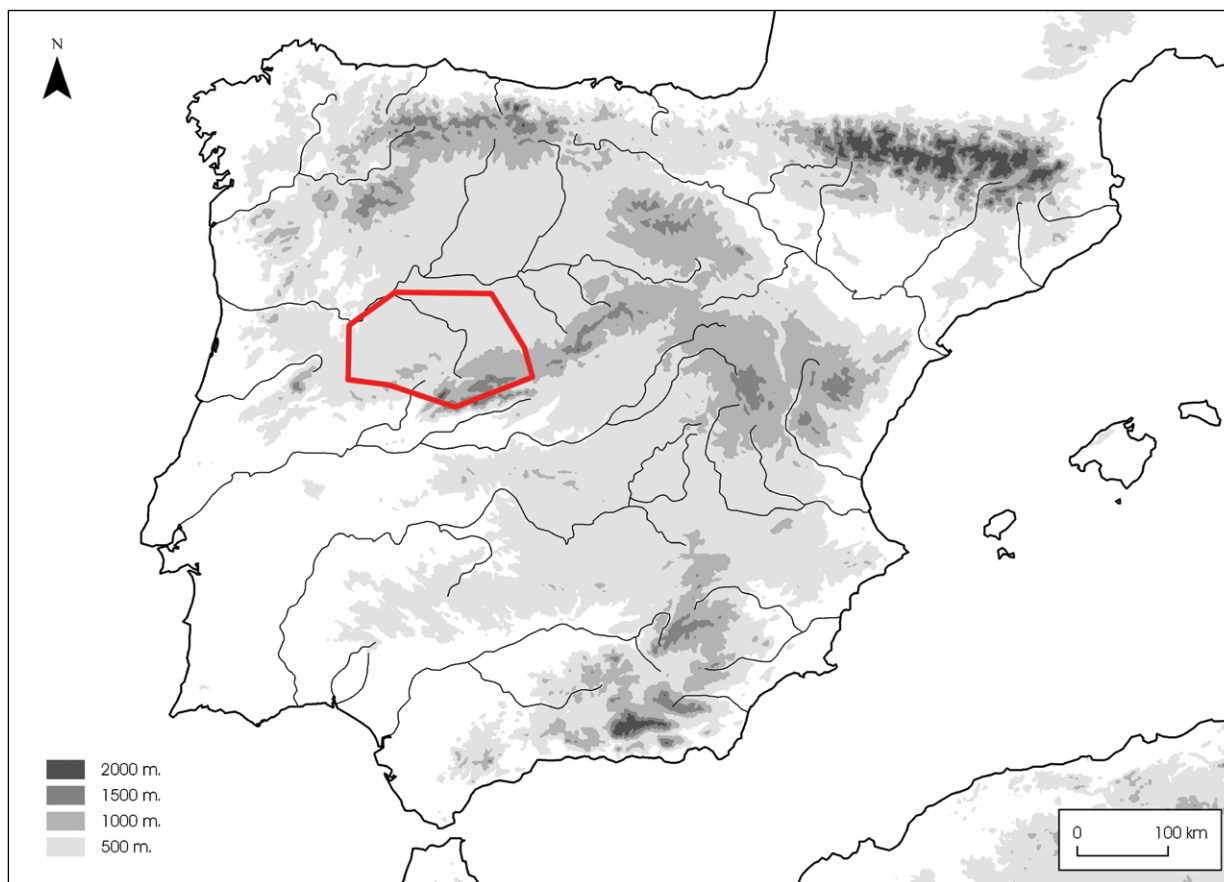


Fig. 1. Location of the study area within the Iberian Peninsula (© Iñaki Martín Viso).

was an absence of any centralised power structure, the permanence of peasant communities that enjoyed great autonomy, and the formation of new elites on new power bases (Martín-Viso 2009; Tente 2012). The region became part of the Asturian-Leonese kingdom in the last third of the 9th century and the first third of the following century (Minguez 2007). However, in the late 10th century, a new political collapse was the consequence of the repeated attacks of Almanzor, *hajib* or palace steward of the Caliph of Cordoba Hisham II. A new period with an absence of centralised political dominion ensued until late 11th century, except in the case of Viséu, whose elites must have agreed to their entry in the Andalusian world (Picard 2000, 125).

Rock-cut tombs and burial sites

One question is to know how the local communities were organised and affected during those centuries. The study of burial sites is a valid way to approach the local communities. In the case of west-central Iberia the most easily identifiable mortuary sites are the rock-cut tombs. These tombs were usually carved in granitic rocks. The

careful preparation of the tombs, many of them in a well-cut anthropomorphic shape, with rims to hold the covers, as well as the high-quality work in the granite, contrast with simple construction forms. Therefore, this type of burial would be within the reach of very few individuals. The human groups who managed these burial grounds made a large economic, social and symbolic investment in the tombs. They co-existed with simpler forms, such as slab graves, even in the same burial sites. However, the simplicity of those graves, the acidity of the granitic soil, the changes to the rural landscape in the last thousand years and limited research carried out to date means that these other patterns are more difficult to identify (see also Tente in this volume, whose paper is close connected with this one, using a common theoretical framework).

It is striking that this form of burial is specific to communities not associated with centres of power. From the 5th century onwards, a series of fortified settlements were built on high ground in west-central Iberia. It is interesting that no rock-cut tombs are known in these *castella*. This type of burial in ‘central places’ is only documented in urban or semi-urban



Fig. 2. Rock-cut graves. Álamo Blanco (Villar del Ciervo, province of Salamanca) (© Iñaki Martín Viso).

centres within the Asturian-Leonese kingdom in the 10th century, although with different characteristics from those in rural areas (Martín-Viso 2016). It might be said, therefore, that these tombs are a specific trait of rural communities and their possible leaders.

A total of 639 sites with rock-cut tombs have been documented in west-central Iberia. Most of these contain fewer than 10 tombs and are generally small groups of two or three tombs or even a single isolated tomb (Martín-Viso 2012a). They do not constitute cemeteries but form part of a complex 'mortuary geography' in an open relationship to the surrounding landscape (Williams 2006, 191). In any case, in rural parts of west-central Iberia, another pattern of burial site is represented by large areas used for burials, with over ten graves that are distributed in small groups or single tombs. These disordered or segmented rural cemeteries possibly corresponded to communities that segregated an area for burials, but where the management of the burial was still in the hands of the families (Martín-Viso 2012a, 171-172).

Burial sites consisting of rock-cut tombs can be extremely difficult to study. The main handicap comes

from the fact that these tombs have not preserved either human remains or grave goods. This is because of the acidity of the granite in which the tombs were cut, but also because of other factors, including the reuse of the tombs for other functions such as water troughs for livestock. It is consequently difficult to date the tombs. Alberto del Castillo (1970) developed a chrono-typological sequence that has proved to be of little value. At the present time, it should be accepted that the rock-cut tombs were in use during a long period of time from the 6th to the 11th centuries, with a few examples outside those dates (Barroca 2010-11; Martín-Viso 2014). In the region of study, a radiocarbon determination for the femur of an individual in a tomb at Alta da Quintinha (Mangualde) gave a result of AD 810-1040, calibrated to 2σ (Nóbrega et al. 2012) (See also Tente in this volume). This does not mean that all the tombs date to the same period, but shows they were in use in the Early Middle Ages. However, the problem of the chronology is not easily solved as it is very likely that the same kind of tombs were in use in different times and with different significances. It appears more

practical to integrate the tombs in the landscape and understand how they functioned in it.

Until a short time ago, a relationship between burial sites with rock-cut tombs and ecclesiastic centres is all that had been proposed. This link was established in Alberto del Castillo's pioneering studies and has been demonstrated in certain cases in Iberia (*Padilla – Álvaro 2013*). A link with monastic communities that were founded spontaneously has been suggested more recently (*López-Quiroga 2010*, 335-358). However, studies in the region refute the link in general terms (*Barroca 2010-11*, 137-138; *Martín-Viso 2012b*). In most cases, the hypothetical connection with a centre of worship is based on the proximity of the tombs to modern hermitages or an agio-toponym. This is weak evidence that has been disputed in places for which more precise information is available. For example, São Gens is a burial site formed by 54 tombs with an agio-toponym, which suggests some type of centre of worship. However, a 9th – 10th century village has been identified archaeologically next to the tombs, with no remains of religious buildings (*Tente 2012*, 390-1). It should be borne in mind that a common practice in the construction of local landscape memory is to designate an agio-toponym to any place that has lost its function, whatever this had been.

This pattern is not unique in Early Medieval Europe, when burial sites were generally unrelated to centres of worship (*Zadora-Rio 2003; Lauwers 2005*, 132-135). It is true that there are burials associated with churches and monasteries, but these are not in the majority. Ecclesiastic burials in the 5th – 7th centuries were regarded as prestigious and it was not until the 8th – 11th centuries that parish cemeteries slowly began to develop (*Blair 2005*, 58-60, 228-233; *Schneider 2010; Zadora-Rio 2011*). The consequence of this is that it was the families and communities who played a central role in forming and managing the burial sites. This was especially true in the centre and west of the peninsula. Naturally, in some cases, burials were associated with churches. At San Pedro de Lourosa (Lourosa da Serra), 22 tombs are preserved around the church, which is dated by an epigraph to the year 910 (*Barroca 2000*, II-1, 31-33; *Lourenço 2007*, 152-153). However, a part of the tombs are concentrated in an area away from the entrance of the modern church and some do not follow the orientation of the church. It is therefore possible that the tombs formed part of a previous burial site that was recovered and reused by the 10th – century church (See also Tente in this volume).

Ancestors and new landscapes

If the places with rock-cut tombs are unrelated to ecclesiastic centres, the meaning of these burial sites should be analysed in relation to the communities and

landscapes of which they formed part. The management of these places was in the hands of very diverse kinds of local communities. We should therefore consider a range of situations and meanings that cannot be reduced to a single pattern. Some of them are explained here without aiming to cover all possible situations.

One key aspect is the role that ancestors played in those societies. Ancestors were the deceased who offered protection; real or invented ancestors on which stories were constructed, making them active agents within the local communities. In fact, ancestors played a key role within the social and cosmological order and were sometimes regarded as the true owners of the land. Their memory may have been managed through several media, above all through monumentality, although that was not the only possible way (*Roymans – Theuws 1999*, 14; *Theuws 1999*). Our initial hypothesis is that in early medieval communities in west-central Iberia the ancestors' role must have been significant.

One example is the site of La Genestosa (Casillas de Flores, Province of Salamanca, Spain) in the foothills of the Sierra de Gata, an area of predominantly granitic soils. This place is around the stream of Mazo del Prado Álvaro, which rises on the border with Portugal and flows west to east for 5 km. The most fertile land is around the stream, thanks to the water it brings, especially in spring. Two areas with different occupations can be recognised. One of these is La Genestosa itself, next to the road from Casillas de Flores to Navasfrías, about 500m south of the water-course. This was an estate of the Military Order of Alcántara (*Sánchez-Sánchez 2008; Palacios-Martín 2000*, doc. 353), founded in the 13th century and which lasted until 1753, when it is cited as a depopulated place in the *Catastro de la Ensenada*. The second occupation area is around the course of the stream and is the site of the early medieval phase (*Paniagua-Vara – Álvarez-Rodríguez 2013*).

A total of 21 rock-cut tombs are located along the water-course, forming small clusters or in isolation, without making a true cemetery. Next to the tombs, just a few metres away, on the top of a small pediment over the stream, some buildings with granite foundations are still clearly visible. At least four groups of these structures have been identified, although others are apart, but always near the isolated tombs. One of these is the area of El Cañaverel, where excavations were performed in 2012, 2013 and 2015. This is a hamlet consisting of about a dozen buildings on the pediment overlooking the stream. Two buildings have been excavated and yielded evidence of an early Roman Empire occupation (1st – 2nd centuries AD), abandonment in the 2nd – 4th centuries, and much more intense post-Roman phase (5th – 7th centuries). The study of the remains is still provisional, but it seems to have been a peasant hamlet,

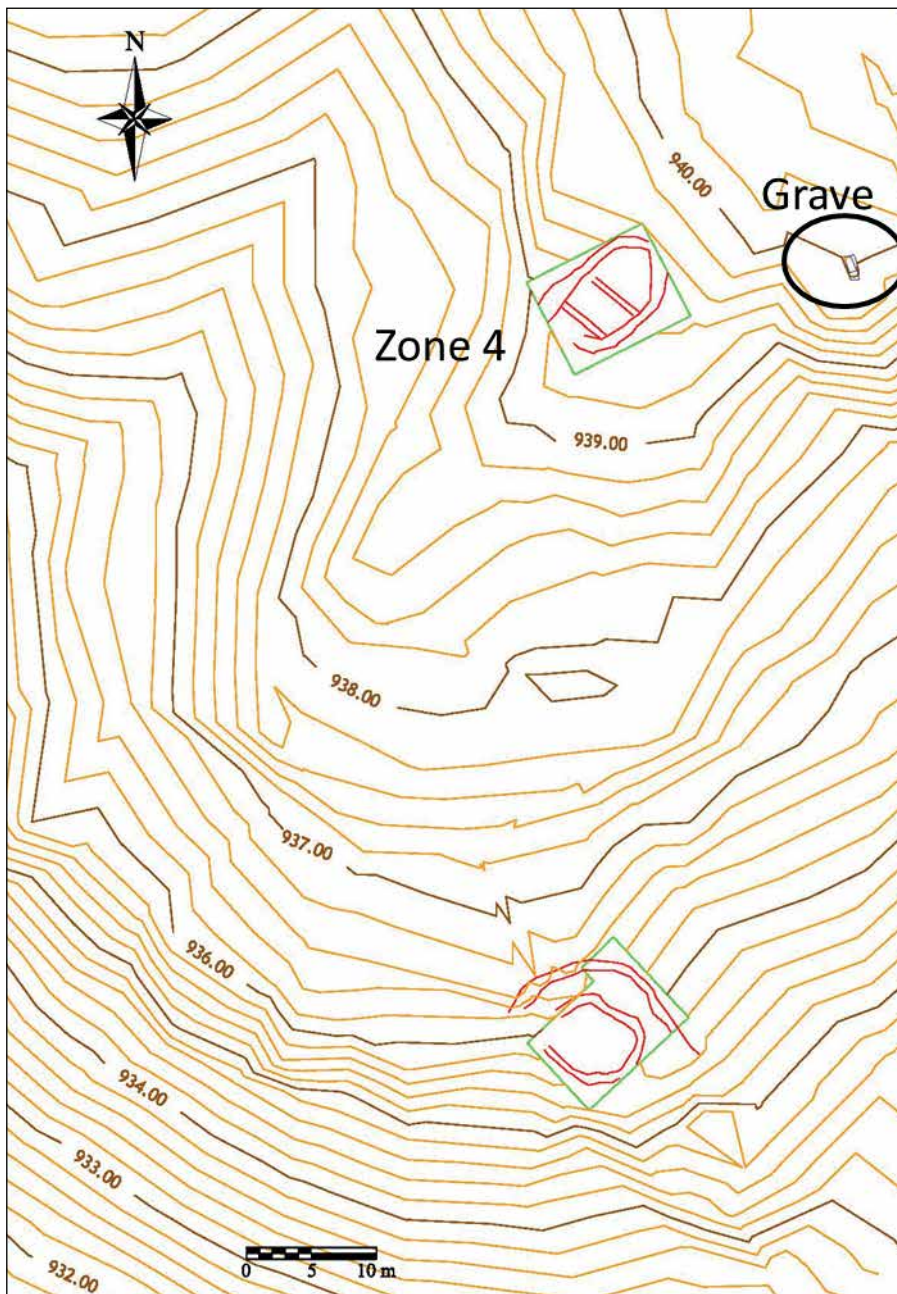


Fig. 3. El Cañaveral at La Genetosa: grave and residential area (© Econtop SA).

although some potsherds with stamped decorations and slates suggest a connection with elites who accessed certain distribution networks and needed to keep accounts (*Martín-Viso 2015*).

An anthropomorphic rock-cut tomb is located barely 15m from one of the excavated buildings. As usually occurs, the absence of human remains means that the use of the tomb cannot be dated, but the most feasible hypothesis is that it corresponds to the time when the hamlet was occupied. The proximity of the tomb to the possible dwellings is significant, and also that there is only one tomb, despite a dozen possible buildings

being documented. In addition, there is no evidence of a centre of worship in the hamlet. One explanation is that this tomb is connected with the memory of an ancestor, whose prestige was remembered without any need for ecclesiastic mediation. Located near the hamlet, it was a point of reference for the community who lived there, a territorial marker that defined the land belonging to the community. It should be borne in mind that other similar hamlets seem to have existed in the area around Mazo de Prado Álvaro stream. Perhaps the occupation of the whole area intensified in a form of colonisation, which allowed the emergence of new hamlets and communities.

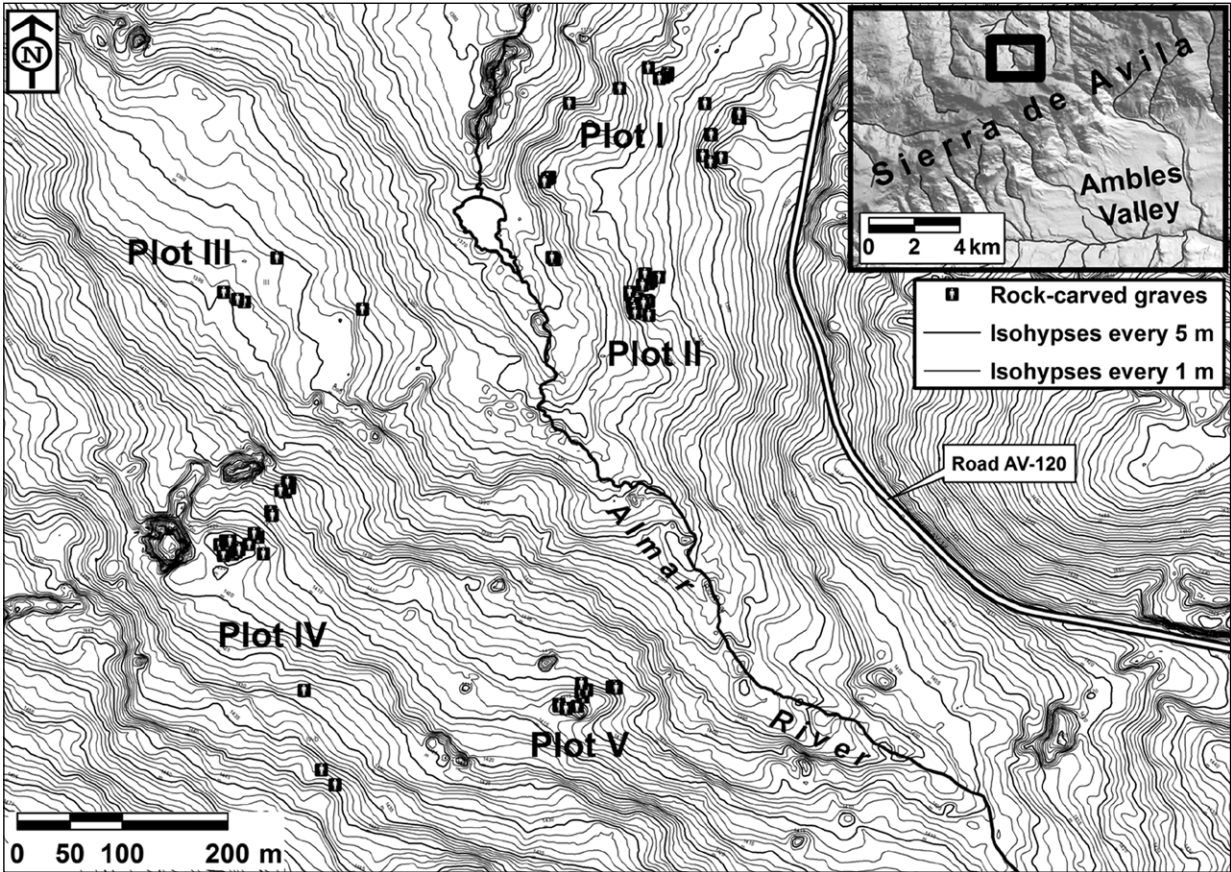


Fig. 4. General map of La Coba (San Juan del Olmo, Ávila, Spain). (© Topography: M. Sánchez, design: Antonio Blanco-González).

The ancestors' tombs would have acted as landmarks that were used to claim rights and legitimise the control of these agrarian territories, as has been suggested for other areas (Rubio-Díez 2015, 148-50; Laliena - Ortega 2005, 180-183; Martín-Viso 2007). For this reason, many of them were located in prominent places in the landscape and were easily visible (Barroca 2010-11, 129). In addition, the tombs would have been a source of the identity of the communities, who would have considered themselves the descendants of the ancestors or linked to them, within a memory that may have changed over time. This pattern of a few rock-cut tombs associated with small hamlets is repeated in other places, such as El Pueblito, about 4km to the west, next to the Portuguese border, or the area now cut through by the modern road, about 500m to the west of El Cañaveral (Paniagua-Vara - Álvarez-Rodríguez 2013; Rubio-Díez 2015, 82-86).

La Genestosa is an example of the construction of a local landscape in which the memory of the ancestors played a major role. However, this is not the only pattern. A different type is found in Sierra de Ávila, an area of about 700km², with a small mountain range reaching 1,600m asl where the platform of the Plateau

is at about 1,000m, separating the sedimentary basin of the Plateau from the Ambles valley, where the city of Ávila is situated. In this area, 24 sites with rock-cut tombs are known, of which 8 (i.e. a third of them) are classified as disordered rural cemeteries (Díaz de la Torre et al. 2005). The high percentage of this type of burial site contrasts with the general predominance of single tombs or small groups. This is therefore a local feature that remains to be explained.

A GIS analysis of the sites with rock-cut tombs reveals certain significant aspects (Martín-Viso - Blanco-González 2016). One important point is that the places with single tombs and those with disordered cemeteries tend to differ in that the former are located in the northern foothills, generally near water courses, whereas the latter are most common in more mountainous environments and on the southern hillsides facing the Ambles valley. This differentiation is interesting, given the importance of mountain areas for livestock. Palynological studies in the Central System show that in these medium-altitude mountain areas, from the 4th century onwards, indicators of livestock farming (coprophilous fungi) and zooanthropic pressure on woodland (relative increase

in fires, clearances in pine and oak woods, and their replacement by undergrowth) tend to increase (*Blanco-González et al. 2009*, 293-6; *López-Sáez et al. 2014*; *Blanco-González et al. 2015*). In Sierra de Ávila itself, these trends are to date only suspected, due to the lack of good chronological resolution, in the peat bogs of Narrillos del Rebollar and Puerto de las Fuentes (*Andrade et al. 1994*, 250-254; *Hernández-Beloqui et al. 2013*, 351). The sporadic early medieval sites and isolated finds in the Amblés valley display a clear preference for mountain environments, used for livestock, contrasting distinctly with Roman population patterns (*Blanco-González 2009*, 167-169). The creation and use of these medium altitude burial sites therefore seems to be connected with an increase in farming pressure, seeking areas of summer pasture possibly with short routes for the movement of livestock. Owing to the absence of centres of power in Sierra de Ávila, the most reasonable hypothesis is that this was a peasantry initiative.

One of the most interesting of these cemeteries is La Coba (San Juan del Olmo). On a high point in Sierra de Ávila, at 1,400m asl, it is located near the rising of the River Almar, a tributary of the River Tormes. Out of 81 tombs identified in five clusters in an area of nearly 20 ha, nine are slab graves and the others are cut in the rock. These five clusters are in different parts of the site; four of them on the terrace of the River Almar and the other in a higher place, overlooking the whole valley. In addition, five structures have been identified south-west of Cluster 1, and these may be evidence of a settlement. Some remains possibly date the site, as one of the stone-lined graves, which may or may not be contemporary with the rock-cut tombs, contained grave goods consisting of a glass jar, a ring and a necklace bead, which can be dated in the 7th century by similarities with the nearby site of Cabeza de Navasangil (*Martín-Viso et al. 2012*). While the tombs may not all be contemporary, this gives an approximate idea of the chronology. However, the high number of tombs in a large area does not square with the possible references to a small settlement.

In the surroundings of La Coba, no other sites with rock-cut tombs have been documented. Consequently, it is very likely that several communities in the vicinity concentrated their inhumations at La Coba, creating a burial community. One reason for this choice is that it is an area of critical pastures, on high ground, which may have been a destination of livestock routes. Indeed, it is next to a traditional mountain pass in Sierra de Ávila: El Paso de Las Fuentes. Still in the late 15th century this area was especially important for livestock and was used communally by the inhabitants of hamlets belonging to the city of Ávila (*Luis-López – Ser Quijano 1990*, doc. 155). These may have been much-changed reminiscences of communal uses originating in the Early Middle Ages.

Furthermore, this is where one of the main water courses in the area rises. It would therefore have been a place of special interest where families from different settlements would have gone to bury their dead in order to show they belonged to a larger community that held control over the terrain. It would work as a focus of supra-local community identity, expressed in a shared and acknowledged mortuary landscape. Not all the members of the community would be buried there, only the most prestigious and it is possible that the different clusters involved different groups inside the wide community.

The case of La Coba may not be so exceptional in Sierra de Ávila. It was possibly similar in size to other burial sites that are known more fragmentarily. One example would be the burial sites around the modern village of Vadillo de la Sierra (at over 1,200m asl). The sites of Carrilejos (five tombs), Lancha del Trigo and La Lancha de la Lana (eleven tombs in each), all in the immediate surroundings of Vadillo, may be clusters similar to those studied at La Coba. The foundation of a settlement, first documented in 1283 (*Barrios-García 2004*, doc. 120), would have changed the landscape and halted the use of the burial sites. The same pattern of location on high ground near the summits and next to routes over the hills is seen in other sites, such as Dehesa de Montefrío (Padiernos), San Simones (La Torre), Serranos de Avianos (Cabezas del Villar) and Canto de los Pilones (La Torre). It was therefore a burial landscape associated with new strategies to claim rights, based on the memory of the ancestors controlled by the communities.

The formation of parish cemeteries and the resilience of early medieval burial sites

Parish and episcopal structures were established in the 12th and 13th centuries in the west-central Iberian Peninsula. This was late if compared with other European and Iberian regions. In addition, the previous absence of monasteries or local churches meant that this process took place *de novo*. Controversies about the rights over a certain church and agreements to cede a church in the hands of a community to a bishop in order to convert it into a parish, relatively common in other areas, were practically non-existent in this region. Conflicts arose mainly over the territorial boundaries between different bishoprics, as it was necessary to create a completely new geography, like the problems between the Sees of Zamora and Ciudad Rodrigo (*Guadalupe-Beraza et al. 2009*, docs 26, 47, 56, 66, 74 & 83). At the same time, the mention of parishes in documents should not be understood automatically in terms of buildings used as churches. Parishes are rather identified with the communities subject to episcopal control and the payment of certain tributes. Churches must have been built in a slow process after this

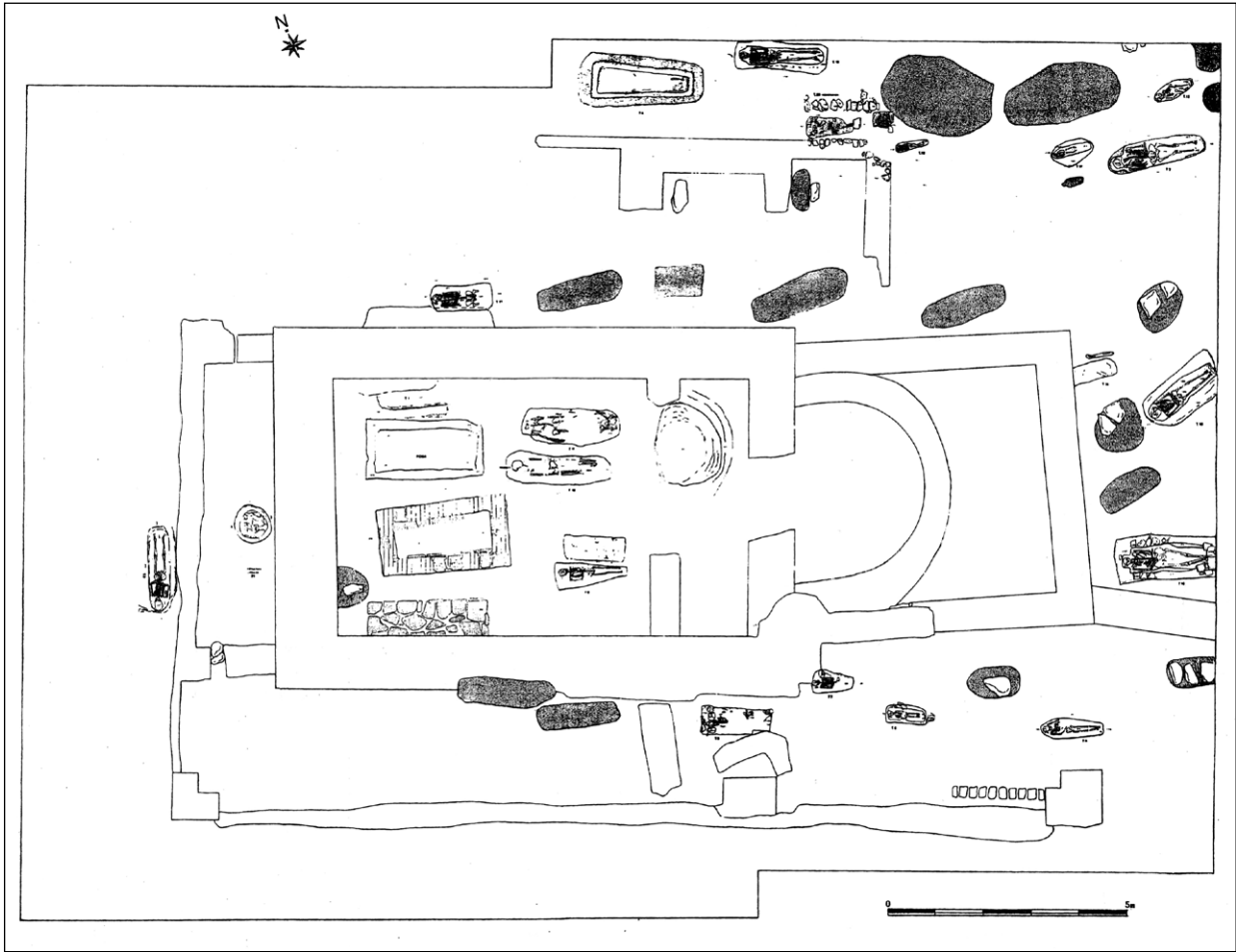


Fig. 5. San Martín de Bercial de Zapardiel (© Miguel Ángel Martín-Carbjao et al. 1996, 192).

identification. The formation of the parish cemetery must have equally been a long-lasting phenomenon.

The introduction of the parish cemeteries completely changed early medieval mortuary geography. Churches and their cemeteries are rarely placed in old burial sites, at least as regards rock-cut tombs. One example is the region of Ciudad Rodrigo, where only two of the 63 burial sites with rock-cut tombs can be associated with the later presence of a church. However, in the case of the church at Robleda, the free-standing grave in its atrium was probably taken and left there, and therefore has no real link. The case of the cemetery reused by the church of San Pelayo in Ciudad Rodrigo (*Viñé-Escartín – Larrén-Izquierdo 1996; Martín-Viso 2012a, 181*) is a feature of the urban and semi-urban centres that appeared from the 10th century as ‘central places’.

Another similar example is the Sierra de Ávila. An interesting charter gives an inventory of the parishes in the diocese of Ávila in 1250 (*Barrios-García 2004, doc. 83*). There is no connection between the 27 parishes in Sierra de Ávila cited in the charter and the early medieval

burial sites defined by rock-cut tombs. A correlation only exists in three places: Brieva, Cornejuelos and Serranos de Avianos. At Cornejuelos, a single grave has been documented near building ruins. It is not known whether a church existed there, but the grave was not reused by any type of later structure and therefore it cannot be said that a church was superimposed on the burial site. Brieva is identified with a cemetery arranged in several groups and some of the graves are inside the residential area. The village, abandoned in the late Middle Ages, was shaped after the burial site was abandoned. In addition of this, the existence of a church has not been documented archaeologically. Finally, Serranos de Avianos appears in some charters from the 13th – 15th centuries as a large village articulating a series of smaller hamlets, one of them was Cornejuelos (*Barrios-García 2004, doc. 129*). However, the village, now deserted, was to the south of the cemetery without a clear relationship with the cemetery and there is no evidence of a place of worship. So the parishes and churchyards do not seem to have made use of previous burial sites.

Archaeological evidence supports the idea of a gradual consolidation of the churchyard, which should be dated to the Central Middle Ages. Unfortunately, little information is available for rural areas. One example is the place of San Martín, in Bercial de Zapardiel (Ávila, Fig. 5), where a church or chapel with about 40 tombs was excavated, mostly graves dug in the ground, and dated to the 12-13th century (*Martín-Carbajo et al. 1996*). The church may have been linked to the village of Bercial de Zapardiel, barely 500 m away, and it may have initially acted as the parish centre during an early phase and been abandoned when a new church was built. However, the transition towards the churchyard pattern was slow. At Cantiveros, very near Bercial, an excavation in the cemetery of Valdehorcajo detected 13 anthropomorphic graves, which must be dated in the 12th century. However, there is not any place of worship associated (*Martín-Carbajo et al. 1999*). Therefore, it was a long-lasting process, with different contemporary cases just a few kilometres apart.

Early medieval burial sites were abandoned with the creation of churchyards. The deceased were still ancestors, but now they formed part of a community of the dead, awaiting the day of the Last Judgement, assisted by the prayers of the living and buried in common holy ground (*Lauwers 2005*, 125-132). This change brought about the loss of the meanings associated with early medieval burial sites. However, some of them could be adapted and displayed a form of resilience in Sierra de Ávila. At San Simones (Sanchicorto, La Torre) a disordered rural cemetery next to a route across the mountain range has a large wall that is preserved and has been associated with a late medieval place of worship (*Larrén-Izquierdo 1985*, 116). But San Simones was not cited as a parish in the charter of 1250. It may be a late medieval or modern edifice built in a place still remembered as possessing a special significance by the inhabitants. The memory of a burial ground may have been lost, but some type of story about the place might have survived. This seems to be the situation of the chapel of Nuestra Señora de las Fuentes, 500m away from La Coba. It is a modern, possibly 18th – century building, where an annual festival is held, attended by the inhabitants of neighbouring villages. This may be an adaptation of the previous significance of a burial site to a new context, without a parish being formed but maintaining a special importance.

Conclusions

It is proposed that the burial sites in the west-central Iberian Peninsula consisting of rock-cut tombs were prestigious within the rural setting in which they are located. This may have favoured the conversion of the deceased, or rather the memory developed about those buried there, into ancestors. The absence of a relationship

with ecclesiastic centres is evidence that the choice and management of those burial sites was not in the hands of the Church, but this need not be regarded as a pagan phenomenon. Christianity had been well established in the area from the later Roman period. However, the almost total non-existence of churches and monasteries in the early medieval rural landscape in west-central Iberia supports the idea of the agency of families and communities about the burial. The functionality of those ancestors was connected to claiming rights over farmland in a context of ‘internal colonisation’, in which certain areas with a small population density in the late Roman period acquired new importance. However, they were also the focus point of a new identity of the communities that traced their past through the memory of certain ancestors.

This plurality of situations corresponds to the lack of a generalised pattern. In fact, we find local solutions, adapted to each place and each community. The plurality became homogeneity with the establishment of churchyards linked to parishes in the Central Middle Ages. Their implementation was a process lasting through the 12th – 13th centuries and it involved a radical change from the earlier mortuary geography. The burial sites associated with rock-cut tombs were abandoned as a new way of managing the memory of ancestors was favoured. However, some places, particularly some disordered rural cemeteries, may have stayed in the memory of the inhabitants as sacred places. This explains chapels and festivals as examples of the resilience of these old burial sites. But this was a limited phenomenon, as in general the old sites were abandoned.

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Mortuary archaeology and variation in death culture in eastern North-Brabant (The Netherlands), c. 900-1900 AD

Nico Arts *

ABSTRACT

As is the case almost everywhere, the opportunities for excavating and analysing late medieval and post medieval burial grounds has only become of interest to archaeologists at a late stage. The archaeology of burial grounds has developed rapidly in recent decades in The Netherlands but that has not been without its shortcomings. In analysing such excavated populations, random sampling techniques are too frequently applied. Further research is often pre-empted because the remains have frequently been reburied. This study focusses on developments in mortuary culture in the eastern part of the province of North Brabant in the period c. 900-1900 AD. Variations in the manner of where and how people were buried will be highlighted.

Keywords: *Mortuary archaeology, ethics, (secondary) deposition of skeletal remains, funerary rituals.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Archäologie des Todes und Variationen des Totenkultes im östlichen Nord-Brabant (Niederlande), von 900 bis 1900 n. Chr.

Wie fast überall, ist das Interesse an Ausgrabungen und Analysen von spät- und nachmittelalterlichen Bestattungsplätzen erst spät in den Fokus der Archäologie gerückt. Eine solche Archäologie hat sich aber dann in den Niederlanden in den letzten Jahrzehnten schnell entwickelt, doch dies ging auch einher mit Schwächen. So wurde bei der Analyse solcher Friedhöfe zu häufig nur Stichproben ausgewählt. Zukünftige Forschungen werden zudem dadurch erschwert, weil die Überreste meist wieder begraben werden. Diese Studie behandelt die Entwicklung der Grabkultur im östlichen Teil Nord-Brabants in der Zeit zwischen 900 und 1900. Dabei werden einzelne Varianten der Bestattungsarten betont.

* Heritage Centre Eindhoven,
Eindhoven, The Netherlands
n.arts@chello.nl

Schlagwörter: *Archäologie des Todes, Ethik, (sekundäre) Deponierung von Skelettresten, Grabriten.*

RÉSUMÉ

Archéologie de la mort et variations dans la culture mortuaire dans l'est du Nord-Brabant (Pays-bas) de 900 à 1900 après J.-Chr.

L'intérêt pour la fouille et l'analyse des cimetières médiévaux et postmédiévaux n'est née que très tard dans l'archéologie. Celle-ci s'est cependant rapidement développée durant les dernières décennies aux Pays-Bas, mais avec certains défauts : la méthode pour effectuer des analyses par échantillons a été

Introduction

Archaeological research into medieval burial grounds has a long history in The Netherlands but has been largely limited to those from the Merovingian period (c. 550-750 AD). Following the destruction during the Second World War, church buildings have played an important role in archaeological research of the Middle Ages. However the emphasis was at first almost exclusively on building's archaeology (Stoepker 1990). The human remains in and around the churches were pretty much systematically discarded. Any data regarding burial rituals, such as the relationship of a skeleton and accompanying grave goods and the actual skeleton were ignored. Dutch archaeology was not alone in this (e.g. Haiduck 1992). Church archaeology really only came into its own in the period 1960-1970 (e.g. Mays et al. 2007; Rodwell 2012, 305; Sennhauser 2008). Interest in burials younger than the Middle Ages arose even later. The oldest Dutch examples are excavations in the towns of 's-Hertogenbosch in 1984 (Portegies 1999) and Zwolle in 1987-1988 (Clevis – Constandse-Westermann 1992). Research into late medieval and post-medieval human remains has become an integral part of Dutch archaeology during the past 25 years, such as in Alkmaar (c. 1450-1573 AD: Griffioen et al. 2015 and c. 1700-1830 AD: Baetsen 2001), Eindhoven (c. 1200-1850 AD: Arts 2013b), Groningen (c. 700-1827 AD: yet unpublished), Haarlem (c. 1435-1480 AD: Van Zalinge – Van der Linde 2015) and Oldenzaal (c. 600-1829 AD: Williams 2016) and in the villages Sint Pancras (c. 1050-1300 AD: Alders – Van der Linde 2011) and Tegelen (1867-1909 AD: Houkes – Bunier eds. 2013).

Human remains should be considered as the richest archaeological source of information about past societies. Besides the advanced developments in physical anthropology, there are pioneering techniques offering new insights into people from the past both at individual and complete population levels. Perhaps the most promising of these is ancient DNA research, which has made spectacular progress in The Netherlands in the past ten years. Archaeological DNA is not only of interest for archaeological research questions but also for modern

trop souvent utilisée et une recherche approfondie était impossible étant donné que les ossements ont été ré-inhumés. La présente étude se concentre sur l'évolution de la culture funéraire dans la région orientale du Nord-Brabant entre 900 et 1900. S'y ajoutent les variations dans les modes et les lieux d'inhumation des défunts.

Mots-clés : *archéologie funéraire, éthique, dépôts (secondaires) de squelettes, rites funéraires.*

medical applications (Altena et al. 2013). Research into the isotopes of strontium and oxygen from tooth enamel is a further promising field of research in determining the geographical origins of individual people. Clearly such data must be integrated with the archaeological context of the burials so that more conclusions can be drawn about a society and its mortuary culture in its totality. This would include such features as grave goods, the individual's body position, the construction of the burial ground and the position of the individual's remains within it.

The ethical aspects of archaeological research of burial sites are almost completely ignored. Modern society could

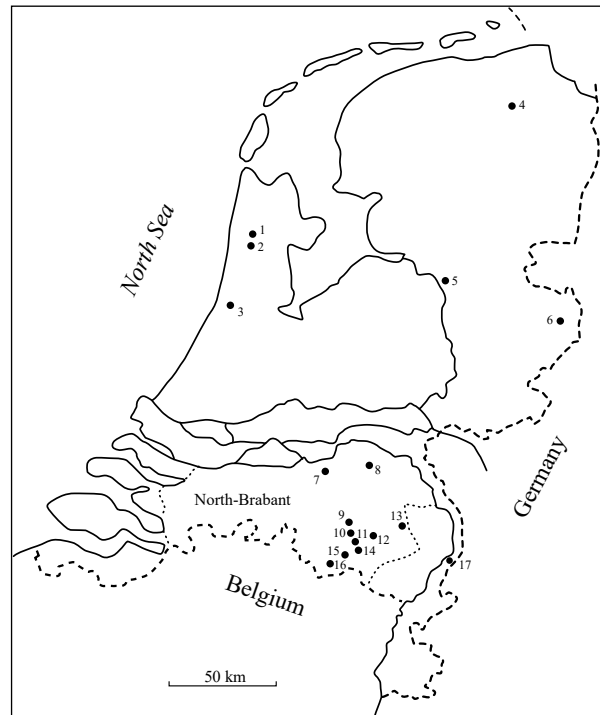


Fig. 1. Map of the places mentioned in the text. 1 Sint Pancras, 2 Alkmaar, 3 Haarlem, 4 Groningen, 5 Zwolle, 6 Oldenzaal, 7 's-Hertogenbosch, 8 Zevenbergen (Oss), 9 Woensel, 10 Eindhoven, 11 Stratum, 12 Mierlo, 13 Deurne, 14 Aalst, 15 Dommelen, 16 Luijkgestel, 17 Tegelen (© Koen Goudriaan).



Fig. 2. Children looking at human skulls in a display case at the Heritage Centre Eindhoven (© Laurenz Mulkens).

very well ask itself if it has the right to disturb the physical remains of its ancestors from the distant or even recent past. And also what should become of skeletal remains once they have been excavated?

This article gives an overview of the present body of knowledge about burial grounds in the eastern region of the Dutch province of North Brabant from c. 900 to 1900 AD with, in particular, a number of examples from Eindhoven and surrounds. A chronological picture will be drawn of what is known and what remains unknown about burial rituals and the long-term changes occurring in them. As a precursor to this are some short, critical remarks on ethics and the role of selection in mortuary archaeology.

Everlasting peace?

The skeletons of people from the past comprise far more than purely biological data, such as their sex, age at death, their diseases, geographical origins and diet. They are primarily the remains of individuals who, in life, were members of a society in a particular environment. Since the dead can continue to play a role in the emotional lives of a society for generations, archaeologists should, on principle, treat the burial grounds they are investigating with respect (e.g. Sayer – Sayer 2016). It is possible that a conflict of interests

could arise between scientific research and the emotional connection of the living with their deceased ancestors. It sounds gruesome but should archaeologists be allowed to brush sand out of the eye sockets of our forebears? Should they be allowed to casually take samples from the pubic area of skeletons for parasite analysis? And should they extract teeth from the jaws for DNA research? Is it ethically correct to put the remains of our ancestors on display? Or are these questions that are posed here but do not actually impinge on modern society? That may very well be the case in present-day Dutch society in general, with the exception of Jewish burial grounds, the burial chambers of the royal family and the military cemeteries from the Second World War, where the deceased must remain undisturbed. Apart from this, in today's society in The Netherlands there is little respect shown for the remains of the dead. They are only guaranteed to rest in their graves as long as the plot is paid for. When this time has expired the remains are often unceremoniously crushed or cleared away by diggers to make room for new burials. There are also no impediments for dealing with prehistoric burial grounds with cremated remains, but perhaps ethical concerns are only of relevance for the more recently deceased.

Despite this, it would seem that a large proportion of society today is fascinated by the sight of the remains of the dead. To the public, the most appealing type of archaeological research seems to be excavations involving

clearly visible human remains. This is also true for exhibitions of human remains. Archaeologists have thus only a supporting role in society where in the interaction between the living and their dead, the dead have the starring role. Evidence of this is the success of the travelling exhibition 'Cold Cases in Dutch Towns' organized by the Dutch Society of Municipal Archaeologists and TGV (Leiden) and on show in various locations since 2014. Ethical taboos that archaeologists consider may still exist in The Netherlands do seem to belong to the past.

A remarkable thing happened to me while on site in May 2004 during the excavation of part of a medieval churchyard in Stratum, a former village and now suburb of Eindhoven. At the same time as the dig was under way, a funeral service was being held in the nearby 19th – century church, the successor of the medieval church. The priest mentioned the excavation of the old church site during the service. Afterwards, two women dressed all in mourning black visited the excavation at the very moment that a skeleton was uncovered at the bottom of a grave. The funeral service had been for the husband of one of these two women but she stated how particularly interested she was in what was going on in the old churchyard. She was clearly unfazed by the excavations, especially taking into consideration her personal circumstances.

Why selection?

Since commercial archaeology was introduced to The Netherlands in 1997, the term 'selection' has been appearing more and more frequently. It has become assimilated into archaeological jargon with the meaning that it is too expensive to comprehensively dig up everything on a site or that it is too expensive to include every detail in the final report. Clearly then, scientific accuracy of archaeological reports is the price of selection and this applies to burial sites too. Additional selection is taking place in what is stored in accessible archaeological depots after completion of analysis and report. In the case of excavated human remains, ethical taboos still carry some weight and, in fact, they seem to weigh more heavily than the legal requirements. Dutch law requires archaeological finds to be accessible for further research even after the initial report. However, this law is regularly broken. Such attitudes are tolerated by the Dutch Cultural Heritage Inspectorate without any form of discussion.

In Tegelen in 2007 and 2010 almost 500 burials from 1867-1909 were excavated. Only 155, that is just 31%, were further examined by physical anthropologists (*Houkes – Burnier 2013*). What other role the remaining skeletons played in the analysis is not divulged in the report. The skeletons were reburied in 2010, albeit after a complete Catholic funeral mass.

There was selection also in Oldenzaal, where a section of the churchyard around the medieval St. Plechelmus Church was excavated in 2011-2013. The burial ground had been in use from c. 660 to 1829 AD for both the dead of the town itself and twelve surrounding villages. There were as many as 2,750 skeletons excavated from primary graves. In the final report, only 200 were selected for further research; that is only 7%. The archaeologists involved are quite aware that this is not a representative sample of the population from that time (*Altena et al. 2016*, 212). Here too, there is no mention of the role that the unstudied skeletons had in the total research. Equally, there is no mention of whether the remains are stored in an archaeological depot as is legally proscribed.

The skeletal remains of at least 130 individuals from the 15th century were excavated in Haarlem in 2012. In 2014 they were reburied with funerary rites in a wooden box, and the site marked with a specially made gravestone (*Van Zalinge – Van der Linde 2015*, 123-124). A similar funerary ritual also took place in Emmen. The remains of some 300 individuals were excavated in 2014-2015 dating from c. 800 to 1827 AD (yet unpublished). All were reburied by October 2016.

These examples of the way in which archaeological finds are treated, and there will be others, are cause for great concern. In this way archaeologists are denied any chance of supplementary research in the future. That there actually is a demand has been clearly demonstrated in Eindhoven. In 2002 and then in 2005-2006, an area including the choir of the town's only medieval church and part of the graveyard was excavated. The remains of at least 1,055 individuals from c. 1200-1850 AD were excavated of which 752 were primary burials. Following research of all these remains, without selection, and publication of the results (*Arts 2013b*), all the bones have been stored in the archaeological depot in Eindhoven and remain accessible for any future research. This has indeed been the case (e.g. *Hollund et al. 2015*) and in particular, from 2016, students at the Laboratory for Human Osteology at the University of Leiden have conducted further analyses. Eindhoven also benefits from these studies as they generate supplementary data to enrich the research goals of the original excavation; an increase in our body of knowledge of the past inhabitants of the town.

Before archaeologists start selection, some degree of natural selection has already taken place. In the acidic ground that occurs across The Netherlands, skeletal remains are often poorly preserved or even completely dissolved away. In respect of the churchyard in Eindhoven, and based on the demographics of the town, it has been estimated that about 55,000 people must have died through the years c. 1200-1650 (*Arts in press*). Of these, the remains of a minimum of only

357 have been recovered so far. This represents only 0.65% of the estimated population of Eindhoven in that period. Even though all these remains are included in the report, the question is how representative they are of past society in the town. What is quite clear, however, is that had there been any selection, the picture would have been even less representative.

Looking for the Carolingian dead

There is a relatively large body of knowledge about mortuary culture in North Brabant in the earliest phase of the Middle Ages, the Merovingian period (e.g. *Theuws – Van Haperen 2012*). The interments are found deep in the ground and sometimes the silhouette of coffins and bodies are still discernible. Occasionally, the contours of a wooden burial chamber can be made out too. The wood itself and the skeletal material has usually completely decayed in the local low-chalk earth. There is a distinction between the grave goods accompanying men (sword, seax scabbard, shield, lance, axe, arrow) and women (e.g. bead necklaces). The graves from this period are typically associated with collective burial grounds with tens of interments each. Most frequently they are inhumation burials but there are also some cremations. The graveyards are mostly found at some distance from the settlements, as is the case elsewhere in western Europe (*Meier – Graham-Campbell 2007, 432*), and occasionally on the yard.

The tradition of burials with grave goods ceases in *c.* 750 AD. It is supposed that this is related to the Christianization of the region. There has been only one burial ground discovered in North Brabant that is supposed to be ascribed to the Carolingian period (*c.* 750-900 AD) (yet unpublished). It was just 50 m away from the church in the village of Mierlo, where an excavation of part of a burial ground revealed 15 graves orientated East-West. All that remained were the silhouettes of the coffins and bodies and there were no grave goods. During the many and extensive excavations in the sandy ground of North Brabant, dozens of Carolingian settlements have been discovered in the past twenty-five years. There is a remarkable discrepancy between the presence of settlements and absence of burial grounds. Is it possible that the Carolingian burial grounds are all located on sites in parts of the landscape that have so far escaped the attention of the archaeological excavators?

Buried near the church

The gap in the body of knowledge about burial culture after *c.* 750 AD covers the following two centuries. From *c.* 900/950 AD, the deceased are interred in burial grounds where, in some settlements, at a later date a church or a chapel is built. This is clearly the case in the

village of Luijksgestel where a wooden chapel was built on an existing burial ground in the 12th or 13th century (*Theuws 1989, 104, 106*). There is also special significance associated with the churchyard in the village of Aalst in Waalre. In the second half of the 9th century, a relatively small but, for the region, exceptional hoard of coins was buried (*Arts et al. 2000*). It consists of twelve imitations of Carolingian coins of the emperor Louis the Pious (814-840 AD) and emperor Lothar (840-855 AD). They have the image of a church and copies of the letters from the original coins spelling out 'CHRISTIANA RELIGIO' (the Christian religion). The deposition of this coin hoard could indicate a special ritual use of the site before its use as a graveyard and even before a church was built. An interesting additional point of possible relevance is the toponymical meaning of the place name 'Aalst', which could be derived from the old German 'alha' or 'al haz' with the meaning pagan shrine (*Quak 2002, 63-65*).

There is very little archaeological information on these early burial grounds. In fact, it is so sparse that it is not possible to make general statements about their organisation with regard to distinct areas for men and women, family groups and local dignitaries or even burials within the church itself. The shortage of information is, on the one hand, due to a lack of excavations of the region's oldest churches and, on the other, the poor conservation of skeletal remains. Most of the information about early Christian mortuary ritual comes from the church site in Aalst. Post-holes of two consecutive small wooden church buildings dating from the 12th century were excavated and also parts of the surrounding graveyard and a settlement from the 10th – 12th centuries. The graves probably all date from the 11th or 12th century. There is some variation in the construction of the 62 excavated graves. Most of the coffins are rectangular, of wood and without nails. The lack of nails would indicate that the planks for the coffins were joined by wooden pegs. There are also a few burials in hollow tree trunks and also a number of anthropomorphic interments. In two instances, the contours of a ladder or stretcher were discernible at the bottom of the grave. In one case, the hollowed-out tree trunk coffin was placed on the ladder. In the other case it was an anthropomorphic burial. One of the coffins had one tapering end rather like the shape of a boat. Since there were no grave goods, it is not possible to date the graves accurately. In one of the graves was a single iron spur. It can possibly be an indication of some relationship with horses, which could in turn be an indication of an individual of high social status (*Pluskowski 2011, 84*).

Tree trunk coffins and anthropomorphic burials have also been recorded in the churchyard of the village of Dommelen. In one of the anthropomorphic graves, there were grave goods. These were some coins from Buchard, bishop of Utrecht in 1100-1112 AD (*Van Regteren*

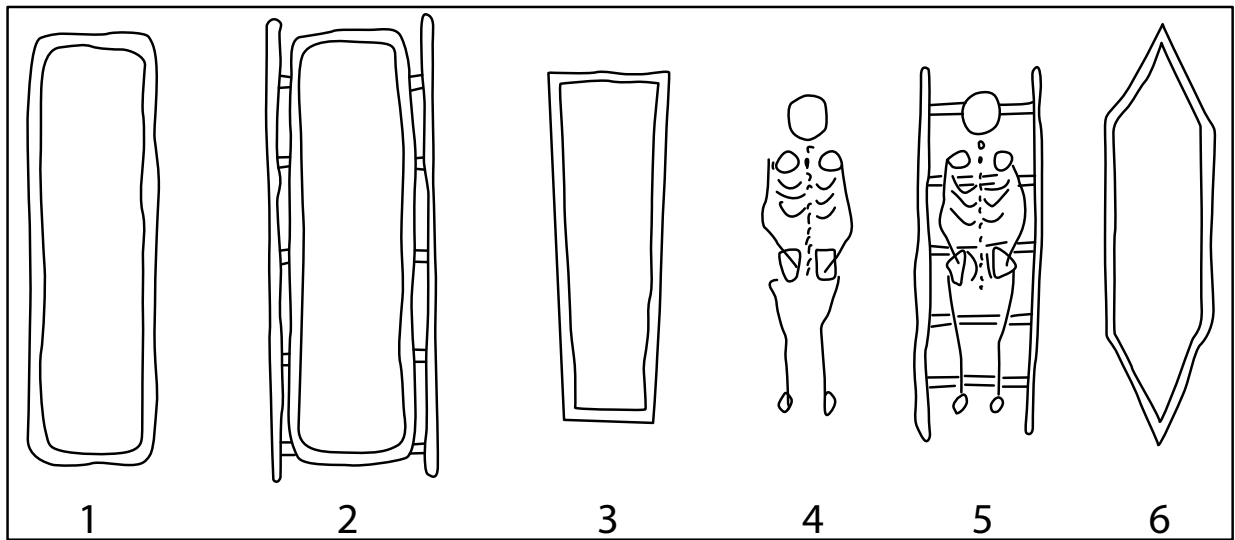


Fig. 3. The variation of grave shapes from tenth – eleventh and twelfth centuries: 1 tree trunk coffin, 2 tree trunk coffin on a ladder, 3 rectangular coffin, 4 anthropomorphic, 5 anthropomorphic on a ladder, 6 boat-shaped coffin (© Koen Goudriaan).

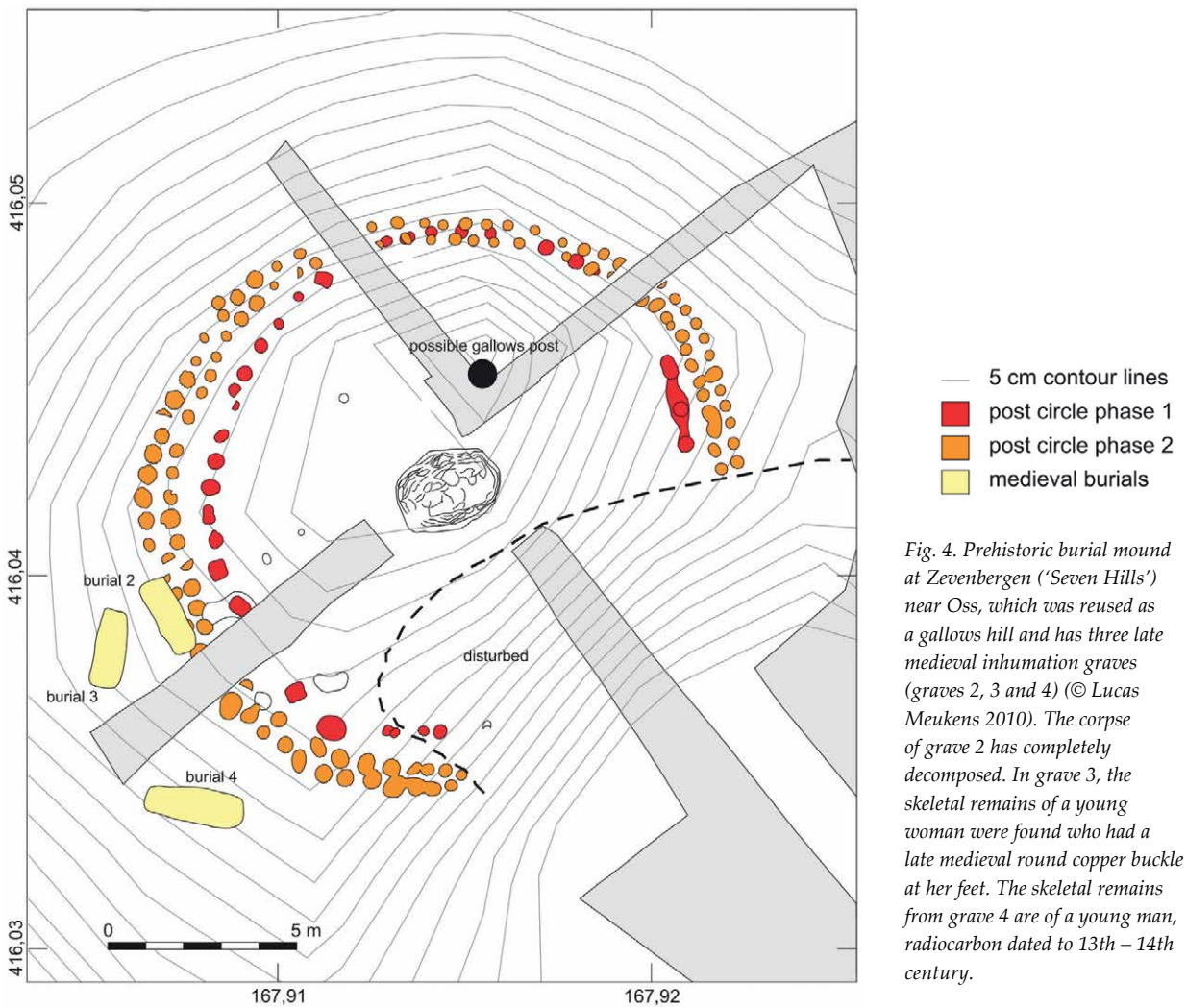


Fig. 4. Prehistoric burial mound at Zevenbergen ('Seven Hills') near Oss, which was reused as a gallows hill and has three late medieval inhumation graves (graves 2, 3 and 4) (© Lucas Meukens 2010). The corpse of grave 2 has completely decomposed. In grave 3, the skeletal remains of a young woman were found who had a late medieval round copper buckle at her feet. The skeletal remains from grave 4 are of a young man, radiocarbon dated to 13th – 14th century.

Altena 1989, 53). Similarly, there have been some very old graves excavated in the churchyard of Woensel; the oldest probably dating from the 10th century. Here too, there were tree trunk burials as well as wooden coffins and anthropomorphic interments. Interestingly, the name 'Woensel' also has pre-Christian connotations meaning house of Wodan. It is thus one of the very few place names in the Dutch speaking region that can be associated with a Germanic deity (*Quak 2002*, 60-61). The difference in density of burials between Aalst and Woensel is remarkable. The archaeological information seems to show that the burials in Aalst are quite far apart while those in Woensel are packed very closely together and even overlap in places. The burial ground in Woensel would appear to have been used more intensively than that in Aalst. This could be explained due to Woensel being a religious centre for longer with possibly a more widespread regional function.

Not all medieval burials are to be found in normal burial grounds. The corpses of people sentenced to death were often displayed for months on the gallows or on the rack after execution. Suicides were often treated the same way. As often as not, the gallows or rack were to be found alongside a through road on the higher ground of the outlying countryside. In some places, prehistoric burial mounds were used for the gallows (*Coolen 2013; Meurkens 2010*). At a later date the remains were then buried in the same hill.

Late- and post-medieval mortuary ritual

Most of the information concerning people's behaviour with the deceased comes from the late Middle Ages and more modern times (c. 1200-1800). In eastern North Brabant, such information is largely from the excavations of the choir and part of the churchyard of St. Catharine's Church in the centre of Eindhoven, which was demolished in 1860. This church was probably built on a previously existing burial ground from the beginning of the 13th century, corresponding with the date at which the town was founded. Building the choir of the church on an existing burial ground, leads to the problem of distinguishing whether some of the burials pre-date the choir or were placed in the choir after it was built. As a general rule, burials in the choir are ascribed to local high status individuals, such as church dignitaries. To facilitate the numbers of burials both the floor inside and the ground outside the church were considerably built up over the years. The final result was an almost 2 m deep layer of dark sand containing a complex stratigraphy of stacked and criss-crossed graves interspersed with secondary burials of unarticulated human remains. By 1802, there were complaints about the stench of this overfilled cemetery,

the decomposing corpses which were bared to the air when the coffin lids had rotted away.

A number of techniques were used to date the primary burials at St. Catherine's Church. They fall between c. 1200 and c. 1850 AD and can be divided into four periods: c. 1200-1350 AD (82 graves), c. 1350-1500 AD (134 graves), c. 1500-1650 AD (141 graves) and c. 1650-1850 AD (162 graves); 233 graves could not be ascribed to any of these periods. Almost every individual was buried facing east as this is the direction in which Christ was believed to appear at his resurrection. Seven individuals were facing precisely in the opposite direction and one of these, a 63-75 year-old man, had been placed in a brick-built tomb dating from the 17th or 18th century. The usage of burials facing the west was reserved for the clergy. It would be their task, on the day of resurrection to address their flock and would thus simply need to stand to be facing them. A curious detail is that there was also a 50-70 year-old woman interred in this same tomb with her head at the feet of the man.

About a third of the graves were of children but only in the period 1500-1650 AD does there seem to be a segregated area for the children. Almost all of the deceased were interred in tapering, wooden coffins with the planks fastened together with iron nails. Over this whole period, there is very little variation in the type of coffin. One woman of about 50 years of age from the 16th century lay in a coffin with a pane of glass fitted in the lid at the height of her face. Only 13 of all the coffins had been fitted with iron handles and these were all found within the perimeters of the choir. They dated from c. 1550 – c.1850 AD. In a number of cases, although the wood had rotted away, traces of lime could still be seen which had coated the inside of the coffins. Three of these coffins with lime, date from the period 1350-1500, ten from 1500-1650 and eleven from 1650-1850 and they were all found in pretty much the same area of the churchyard. It is assumed that they all died of some highly infectious disease, such as the plague. There is not known to have been a separate plague burial ground in Eindhoven, so it is reasonable to assume they would have been interred in the main town churchyard.

Relatively large amounts of pollen from heather were found in four of the graves from c. 1200-1350. In one of the lime-coated coffins, from the period c. 1500-1650, there were imprints of straw. It would seem the deceased had been laid out on a bed of heather or straw. Virtually all of the individuals were buried supine with some variation in the position of the arms. Most have the hands folded in their lap and others with the arms alongside their body. A small minority had the hands crossed on their chest.

The skeletal remains of at least 20 individuals were found in a crypt in the medieval village church in Deurne. An inscription in the tombstone indicated that this tomb was for members of the aristocratic family Van Doerne, who were interred there in the 15th and 16th centuries.



Fig. 5. St. Catharina churchyard Eindhoven: the skeleton of a woman, of about 50, from the 16th century, showing the remains of a pane of glass from the lid of her coffin (© Laurens Mulkens).

The remains were ‘excavated’ and were no longer *in situ* but all jumbled together in one corner of the vault. To determine any familial relationship between seven of the people, DNA samples were taken of *in situ* molars from the skulls. It was shown that not all the individuals were from the same family genetically, but two of them were probably father and son (Smeding 2011).

Grave goods

It was not usual for Christians to place goods with their deceased in the grave, with the exception of secular and church elite. There were no grave goods discovered in the tomb in Deurne. In the Catharina churchyard, a small number of goods were encountered. These were both jewellery such as earrings and beads and clothing accessories such as pins, buttons, aiglets and one coat brooch and also coins, prayer beads and one copper and one bone crucifix. The beads, such as those of the rosaries, are mostly of glass or bone with an occasional one of amber or jet. Amber is traditionally ascribed the power of vitality and protection from the plague (Gratz *et al.* 2008). The jet beads came from the pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostella in northern Spain.

A 9-11 year-old child was holding a purse containing four copper and one silver coin along with an aiglet and a little bell. Coins were found in other graves too; between the lower legs, clasped in the hands or on the chest. These coins are all from the 16th and 17th centuries. The most exclusive gift was that in the grave of a child who, from DNA analysis, was shown to be a boy. It can be dated

to c. 1300 AD. On the boy’s chest was a small, much worn, silver coin, a Venetian groat, which had been used as a necklace hanger. There was a length of silk threaded through the hole and a fragment of linen fused to one side. The coin had probably seen service as a pilgrim’s badge for Saint Mark.

To summarise, it can be said that in Eindhoven the deposition of grave goods took place almost exclusively in the earlier modern period. Just two of the medieval graves contained grave goods and that of the little boy can be attributed to his having special social status due to the exotic coin on a silk thread (Arts 2003).

Archaeologists are well aware of the phenomenon of many finds of coins in churchyards. They are indeed sometimes the richest source of coins. This was also the case with the St. Catharine’s churchyard excavation where a total of 114 coins were recovered from a relatively small area and most of which loosely scattered across the terrain. Coins from graves will have had the function of Charon’s obol. This ritual usage dates back to the classical era. These coins were placed in the mouth, in the hand or under the head of the deceased or in the coffin or grave. This ritual is supposed to be related to a symbolic legal proceeding allowing the deceased to live on and continue his ownership of some of his estate which had been paid for by his descendants. These are always well worn coins of small monetary value (Dezutter 1975, 199). How the presence of coins other than Charon’s obols can be explained has not been sufficiently researched but must indicate some purposeful intention.

The nineteenth century

The tradition of burial in and around the church came to an abrupt end in the 19th century. In The Netherlands burials in the church were banned for reasons of hygiene in 1829 and in 1869 burials within the urban precincts were also prohibited. This meant that medieval churchyards were closed and new graveyards were set up away from the town centre and on unsanctified ground. As a result large numbers of medieval churches were demolished in Brabant. From c. 1850 there was a wave of new church building of all sorts, sometimes on the same site as their medieval predecessor sometimes on a new site. Disused medieval church sites were even reused for new houses, some of which still stand today. The deceased had been traditionally promised everlasting peace but in the second half of the 19th century, the Church determined that 'eternity' lasted no longer than 25 years from then onwards. This created the opportunity to clear graves so that the cemeteries did not become overfull. As an alternative to a church burial, new types of grave monument came into fashion for the elite, sometimes established on the old medieval churchyards.

In 2004 there was an excavation in the area of the churchyard of the old village of Stratum where the 19th – century grave monuments of the local elite were located (*Arts et al. 2005*). All seven were grave vaults, two of which still contained the original contents. The other tombs were cleared out when the graveyard went into disuse in 1903 and their contents reburied under new monuments in the new cemetery beyond the built-up urban area. The original tombstone covers of the two graves with contents had been removed and were found beside the graves. Both tombstones weighed 2.5 tons and each was engraved with the name of the deceased. They were a nobleman, landowner and local magistrate who had died in 1864 and his wife, a noblewoman who had died in 1879. The skeletons were accompanied by metal crucifixes and copper medallions inscribed with in French a charm against cholera. The handles and large ornamental screws from the lid were all that remained of the coffins. In the woman's coffin were small amounts of the partially preserved straw on which she had been laid. Depositing grave goods was a relatively new phenomenon which became popular from around 1850. Usually they are medallions and crucifixes, hundreds of which have been recovered from churchyards in Aalst, Stratum, Woensel and 's-Hertogenbosch. The medallions are often 19th century equivalents of medieval pilgrim's badges with the inscription showing which was the relevant site of pilgrimage. These sites are often within a radius of 100 km of the site of the grave but medallions from as far as Jerusalem and Rome have also been found.

Conclusion

It is possible to draw a general picture of the development of mortuary rites in Brabant from the relatively scarce and fragmentary archaeological information for the period from the early Middle Ages to c. 1900. Medieval churches and churchyards, which were in use until the 19th century, provide a wealth of opportunities to study of burial practices. Despite the limited amount of data, it would seem there was some variation in the style of graves. This is particularly true of the 10th – 12th centuries. Only from later centuries is there any information about the adornment of the deceased, such as clothes' accessories and other goods. The question is what is the deeper meaning of these differences in graves and grave goods. Do they indicate social status differences? The answers can probably best be found from study of the actual remains of the dead themselves, taking into account such factors as their sex. There is then a future for the deceased.

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The identity of the community and the identity of the individual

The burial of the deceased within the settlement in the Middle Ages in Northern Croatia

*Siniša Krznar & Tatjana Tkalčec **

ABSTRACT

Burying the deceased within the settlement area but outside of consecrated ground of the cemetery that belonged to the community was considered as unusual throughout the Middle Ages. A relatively small number of burials within settlements were found in Northern Croatia. There are burials of three men, two very small children (a foetus and a new-born), and one individual of unknown sex and age. The burials of two men can be dated to the 8th century, one to the 14th century, a foetus to the second half of the 14th century and the new-born in a pot to the period from the 15th – 17th century. This paper presents possible interpretations of these unusual burials that occur within the settlement but outside of regular cemeteries. Although there a number of interpretations offered by Western and Central European archaeologists for such burials during the early Middle Ages, they emphasise the need for a special consideration of similar cases in subsequent periods when Christianity was fully established. Some historical sources testify to cases of hidden burials of small children within the settlement or settlement structures – in such cases it usually occurred because of infanticide, but for other age categories these historical sources mostly remain silent. Archaeology may provide a large contribution by defining whether the burial took place within the village on a private household plot or on the communal village property. Only within the well-known archaeological context can we discuss with more certainty specific relationships between the particular identity of the deceased and community identity.

Keywords: *Unusual burials, cemetery, medieval northern Croatia.*

RÉSUMÉ

Identité de la communauté et identité de l'individu: l'inhumation des défunts au sein des cités du nord de la Croatie au Moyen Âge

L'inhumation des défunts au sein-même des cités, mais en dehors du sol béni des cimetières appartenant à la communauté, était un acte rare tout au long du Moyen

* Institute of Archaeology,
Zagreb, Croatia
skrznar@iarh.hr
ttkalcec@iarh.hr

Âge. Dans le nord de la Croatie, peu de tombes ont été identifiées au sein des agglomérations. Ainsi les tombes de trois hommes, de deux enfants en bas âge (un fœtus et un nouveau-né) et d'une personne de sexe et d'âge inconnus ont été identifiées. Deux des hommes datent du VIII^{ème} siècle, le troisième du XIV^{ème} siècle, le fœtus dans la deuxième moitié du XIV^{ème} siècle alors que le nouveau-né a été inhumé dans un pot entre le XV^{ème} et le XVII^{ème} siècle. Cette étude fournit les interprétations possibles de telles inhumations inhabituelles au sein du village, en dehors des cimetières prévus à cet effet. Alors que de tels cas d'inhumations constatés au haut Moyen Âge ont été interprétés à plusieurs reprises par l'archéologie d'Europe de l'Ouest et Centrale, il conviendrait de se pencher tout particulièrement sur les cas de ce type constatés à l'issue du processus de christianisation. Certaines sources historiques témoignent de cas d'inhumations secrètes d'enfants en bas âge au sein de l'agglomération ou de structures de peuplement, qui étaient la plupart du temps consécutifs à des infanticides; cependant, les sources historiques ne fournissent généralement pas d'explication pour les enterrements d'individus plus âgés. La contribution de l'archéologie pourrait ici s'avérer cruciale dans la mesure où elle pourrait permettre de définir si l'inhumation est intervenue sur la parcelle privée d'un ménage au sein-même du village ou sur les terres collectives du village. En outre, un débat sur les rapports spécifiques entre l'identité d'un défunt donné et l'identité de la communauté sera possible seulement dans un contexte archéologique bien défini.

Mots-clés : *inhumations inhabituelles, cimetières, le nord de la Croatie médiévale.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Gemeinschaftsidentität und Einzelidentität:

Siedlungsbestattungen im mittelalterlichen Nordkroatien

Die Beerdigung eines Verstorbenen innerhalb des Siedlungsareals, jedoch außerhalb des geweihten

Introduction

A common form of burying the deceased in the Middle Ages in northern Croatia depends on the time period within which the deceased was buried. The so-called cemeteries in rows are characteristic of the Early Middle Ages, where the deceased were buried in the burial places (without the church) in the graves properly lined up next to each other, and organised in regular rows. The cremation practice is also present at several sites during the same period. Between the late 7th and mid-8th century, the deceased's cremated remains, deposited in urns or directly in grave-pits which were usually formed

Bodens eines zu einer Gemeinschaft gehörenden Friedhofes, war während des gesamten Mittelalters ein unüblicher Akt. Auf dem Gebiet Nordkroatiens wurde eine relativ geringe Anzahl von Beerdigungen in Siedlungen vorgefunden. Es handelt sich um drei Männer, zwei ganz kleine Kinder (einen Fötus und ein Neugeborenes) und eine Person unbekanntes Geschlechtes und Alters. Die Datierung lässt sich für zwei Männer auf das 8. Jh., für den dritten Mann auf das 14. Jh., für den Fötus auf der zweiten Hälfte des 14. Jh. und für das in einem Gefäß bestattete Neugeborene auf die Periode vom 15. Jh. bis zum 17. Jh. festlegen. Im Beitrag werden mögliche Interpretationen dieser ungewöhnlichen, in Siedlungen, jedoch außerhalb von regulären Friedhöfen erfolgten Beerdigungen erörtert. Während für solche Bestattungen aus dem Frühmittelalter eine Reihe von der west- und mitteleuropäischen Archäologie angebotenen Interpretationen in Betracht kommt, wird für derartige Fälle aus späteren Zeiträumen, als das Christentum schon völlig in der Gesellschaft etabliert war, die Notwendigkeit besonderer Überlegungen betont. Zwar zeugen die historischen Quellen vereinzelt von Fällen heimlicher, sich meistens infolge Neonatizides zugetragener Bestattungen von Kleinkindern innerhalb von Siedlungen oder Siedlungsobjekten, aber im Großen und Ganzen schweigen sie in Bezug auf sonstige Alterskategorien. Die Archäologie kann einen großen Beitrag leisten, indem sie definiert, ob sich die Bestattung innerhalb des Dorfes auf der Privatparzelle eines Haushaltes oder auf dem Gemeinschaftsgrund des Dorfes ereignet hat. Erst dann können wir über die spezifischen Verhältnisse zwischen der Identität des jeweiligen Verstorbenen und der Identität der Gemeinschaft diskutieren.

Schlagwörter: *Irreguläre Bestattungen, Friedhöfe, mittelalterliches Nordkroatien.*

as ordinary pits of circular or oval layout, were recorded at the Vinkovci – Duga ulica site and Belišće site in the north-eastern Croatia, and were associated with the Slavic population (*Sekelj Ivančan – Tkalčec 2006; Filipec 2009*). On the other hand, at the same time at nearby Avar and Avar-Slavic cemeteries in Stari Jankovci – Gatina, Privlaka – Gole Njive, Otok – Gradina and Nuštar inhumation was practised continuously (*Sekelj Ivančan – Tkalčec 2006, 196-197*). Inhumation was the only burial rite practised in the later centuries of the Middle Ages in Northern Croatia during the so-called Bijelo Brdo culture, dating from the mid-10th – late 11th century. From the 12th

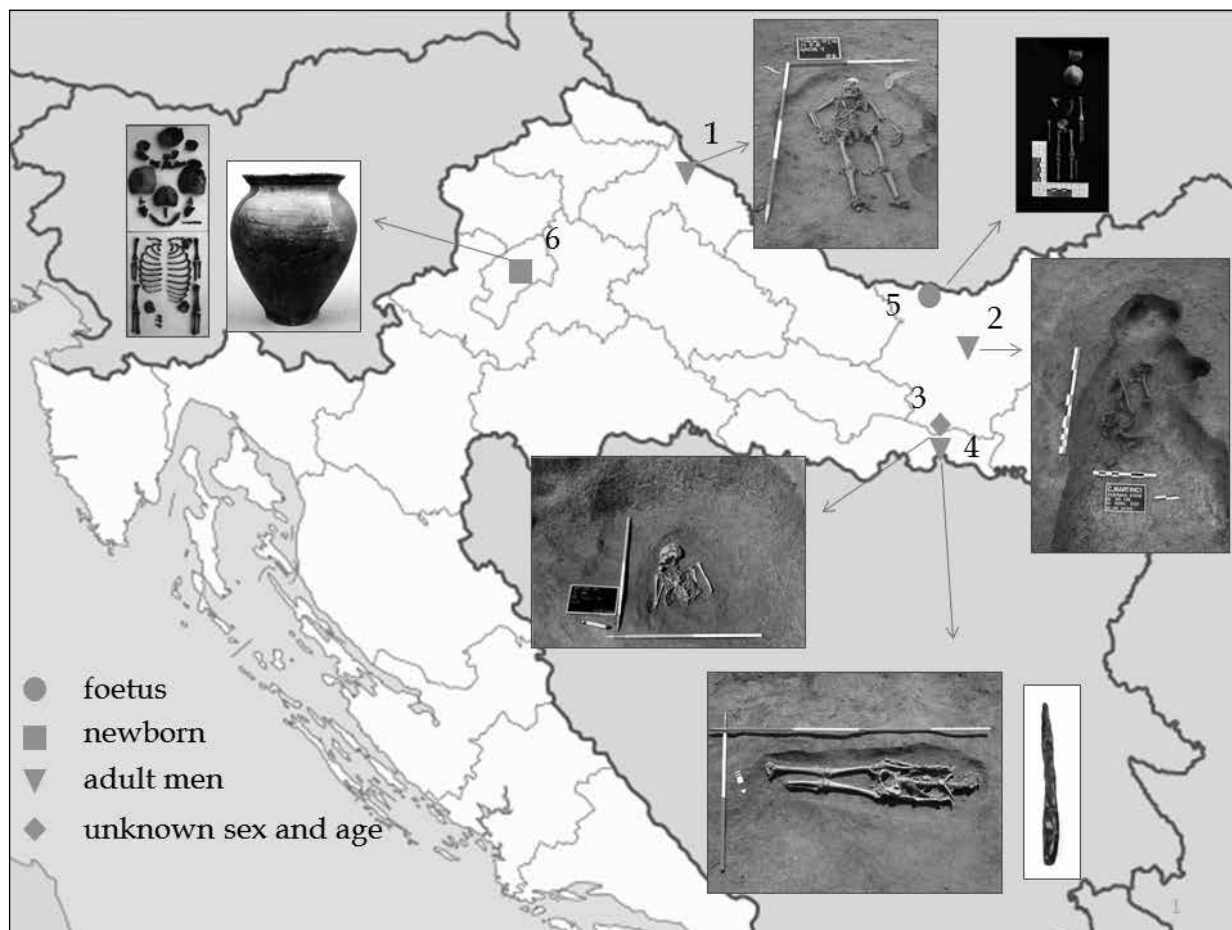


Fig. 1. Medieval settlements with burials in Northern Croatia: 1. Torčec – Prečno Pole I; 2. Čepinski Martinci – Dubrava; 3. Stari Perkovci – Debela šuma; 4. Stari Perkovci – Sela; 5. Donji Miholjac – Danovci; Zagreb – Zagreb City Museum (© Siniša Krznar, Tatjana Tkalčec).

century, Church organisation significantly strengthens and a network of parishes develops with a number of churches being built. Cemeteries were formed in those churchyards as the only licenced funeral places.

Sometimes, however, due to certain circumstances, there are deviations from the usual rite. Although the historical sources do not mention these occurrences, archaeological evidence shows several examples of non-usual funeral practice where the deceased were not buried at the holy place (graveyard or cemetery) or where the manner of the burial practice itself has no correspondence to the accepted burial rites and regulations. One of these unusual ways of funeral practice is the occurrence of the burials within the settlement. As the archaeological research of medieval rural settlements in Croatia in the past was occasional and of a quite small extent, these types of burials were extremely rare. Since 2005, with the increased number of archaeological excavations on the motorway routes and roads, the number of medieval village excavations has also increased and several such unusual burials within the settlements

were found. So far, there are six examples of such burials. Only two have been published – a child found in a pot at the site of the Zagreb City Museum and the discovery of a grave of an older man in the rural settlement in Torčec (Mašić 2002; Novak – Krznar 2010; Sekelj Ivančan 2010, 28, 36, fig. 5). Other examples are only mentioned in the preliminary archaeological reports. This paper is the first attempt to present them all in one place and to try to discuss their meaning in the context of the medieval settlements of Northern Croatia.

Archaeological evidence

Torčec – Prečno Pole I

The archaeological site of Torčec – Prečno pole I is located north of village Torčec in the western part of the Croatian Drava River valley. The excavations have been conducted by the Institute of Archaeology from 2005 to 2008. Seven trenches were investigated, occupying the total area of 1,635.26 m². The archaeological context indicates that the site was inhabited throughout the medieval period.

Five settlement phases spanning from the second half of the 6th century to the beginning of the 14th century were distinguished based on the findings and radiocarbon determinations (*Sekelj Ivančan 2010*, 165-177, 309-330).

A human skeleton was found next to the burial of a pit-structure (*Sekelj Ivančan 2010*, 28, 36, fig. 5). It was not possible to differentiate the backfill of the grave from the surrounding soil. During the cleaning of the skeleton no other items were found except a fragment of pottery beside the left foot of the deceased. The bone sample was dated to the mid-8th century using (SU 47 – cal AD 776; *Sekelj Ivančan 2010*, 75, fig. 79), indicating that the burial took place at the end of the Torčec II phase, which is dated to the period from the first half / mid-7th to the first half / middle of the 8th century.

The deceased was a man aged between 50 and 60 years at the time of death. He was about 170 ± 4 cm tall. Moderate degenerative osteoarthritis was recorded on several vertebrae, both hips, knees and shoulders. Schmorl's nodes (skeletal indicators of hard physical labour) were recorded on several thoracic vertebrae. The deceased broke his left fibula, and the fracture had healed well.

Čepinski Martinci – Dubrava

The site is located on the route of the highway 5C which runs through Croatia from Beli Manastir and Osijek to Svilaj, respectively on the Osijek – Đakovo route section. The excavations were conducted by the Institute of Archaeology in 2007 and 2008. The site covers an area of 220,000 m² and includes several lowland settlements from different periods. Eneolithic (Lasinja, Retz-Gajary and Baden cultures) settlements, Bronze Age settlement and cemetery, as well as settlements from the Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages have been excavated. The later settlements were situated in two locations of the excavated area (*Kalafatić 2009*, 22, fig. 1). On the northern part, in the surrounding of settlements features (dwellings, pits, wells, etc.), the skeleton of an adult male was discovered. It was found in an elongated pit of an irregular shape, stretching west-east (SU 6283). It was buried in the eastern part of the pit and placed along its northern edge. Although the skeleton was quite damaged, it was obvious that the deceased was laid on his back with the legs bent over at the knees. Radiocarbon analysis of the charcoal found next to the skeleton dates the burial to the late 7th and the 8th century (Laboratory number: Beta-278778, Conventional radiocarbon age: 1280±40 BP, 2 Sigma calibrated result: Cal AD 660 to 810). The deceased was a man aged between 35 and 50 years at the time of death. He was about 171 cm tall. Moderate degenerative osteoarthritis is recorded on the hips, the right knee and several vertebrae. Indicators of rheumatoid arthritis have also been implicated (*Vyroubal – Bedić 2015*, 6-10).

Stari Perkovci – Debela šuma

Like the previous site this one is also located on the route of the highway 5C, further south to the river Sava, on the Đakovo – Sredanci section. The site covers an area of 59,000 m² and it was investigated by the Department of Archaeology of the University of Zagreb in 2006. Prehistoric (Starčevo, Sopot and Lasinja cultures) as well as early and late medieval settlements were discovered. Early medieval settlement is dated to the 8th and the 9th century. The high and late medieval settlement dates from the 12th to the 16th century. A medieval burial was found at the site; it was oriented west – east, with minor deviations to the north. On the eastern side in the area of the elbow, the skeleton was cut by a pit dated to the 14th century. More detailed information on the context of the findings, dating and the sex and age of the deceased have not yet been published. However, according to the primary investigator, Krešimir Filipec, the grave could be dated either to the 12th/13th century or to the 8th/9th century. He also thinks that it is possible that the individual was not buried in the settlement, but close to the settlement, most probably during the phase dated to the 12th century. In that case it is also an unusual example of a solitary grave so close to the village. Here we must highlight that the features and structures from the 14th century were widespread all around the grave, one of the pits cutting the very grave. The settlement from the 8th/9th century is around 80 m away from the grave, and traces of the 12th century settlement were found already 40 m from the grave. So the question remains open.

Stari Perkovci – Sela

The Stari Perkovci-Sela site lies also on the route of the highway 5C, on the Đakovo – Sredanci section. The site covers an area of 40,000 m² and it was investigated by the Croatian Conservation Institute in 2006. The prehistoric and Roman settlements as well as the medieval settlement were found. Based on the findings and 14C dates it was established that the medieval settlement existed during the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century (*Haraša – Bekić 2007*). A grave was found on the presumed north-eastern edge of the medieval settlement. It was a shallow burial (c. 10 cm) oriented northwest – southeast. A well preserved male skeleton, whose age at the time of death was estimated at 20 to 25 years, was found in the grave. The arms of the deceased were extended and placed on the pelvis. Traces of a severe infection were observed on the left shin. Schmorl's nodes on several vertebrae indicate an intense physical activity during his life (*Šlaus 2006*, 12-13). Two pottery shards were found in the grave backfill as well as one iron object next to the right foot, probably a wedge (*Janeš et al. 2016*). Now, we can think of some intriguing possibilities for the interpretation of that item in a given context. However, there was no damage

to the foot bones which would certainly occur in case that the wedge served as some kind of a protective object which should prevent the dead to leave the grave.

Donji Miholjac – Đanovci

The site of Donji Miholjac – Đanovci is located on the route of the south ring road around the town of Donji Miholjac and covers an area of 6,600 m². The excavation of the site has been conducted by the Institute of Archaeology during the spring 2015. This is a site with a wide horizontal stratigraphy where the Eneolithic, Roman and medieval settlements were found (*Tkalčec 2015*). Within the late medieval settlement at the bottom of a shallow pit (SU 60, dimensions 2.5x2.15 m and a depth of 25 cm), a partially preserved skeleton of a foetus aged 30-32 weeks was unearthed (*Tkalčec 2015*, 36, 39, fig. 45-46; *Vyrubal – Bedić 2015*, 4-5). Pottery shards, daub, animal bones and charcoal were also found in the backfill of the pit. There were no indications of pathological changes on the foetal bones. The pit and the burial of the child can be dated to second half of the 14th century. Radiocarbon analysis of the child's bone resulted with conventional radiocarbon age: 560±18 BP (DeA-7936, Isotoptech Zrt., Debrecen), eg. Calendaric age 1365±38 AD (calibration: <http://www.calpal-online.de>).

Zagreb – Zagreb City Museum

A specific example of the child burial was found in Zagreb in the area where today the Zagreb City Museum is situated. Archaeological excavations at the site were conducted by the Department of Archaeology of the University of Zagreb from 1990 to 1995. It is a multi-layered site inhabited from prehistoric times until today. The bones of a new-born were placed in a ceramic vessel in a layer of mud which has filled the basement dug into sterile soil. Silt and mud have been deposited during the period after the collapse of the building to which the basement belonged. This former cellar has later functioned as a drainage pit for the surrounding area. The collapse of the building can be dated to the beginning of the 15th century. In the first half of the 17th century the entire area was overlain by the convent of the Poor Clares. According to this context, the pot and the infant in it can be dated to the period between the 15th and the 17th centuries. Boris Mašić believes that this act is a cover-up of infanticide of an unwanted child. In this case, a drainage pit on the edge of town was an ideal place to hide the act (*Mašić 2002*).

Discussion

The burial of a deceased individual within settlement during the Middle Ages is not a usual occurrence. This way of burial raises many questions about the reasons leading to it and questions concerning the identity of

the deceased, and of a community that has decided to bury a certain individual in such an unusual way. Of course, we should also take into consideration the mutual relationships and intertwining of these two identities.

Of the small number of such burials discovered to date, both male burials dated to the 8th century have some similarities and differences. The similarities are related to sex and age at death – in both cases the buried individual was an adult man, one was between 35 and 50 years old and the other between 50 and 60, which was quite an advanced age for the period of the 8th century. The main difference between these two burials lies in the fact that the deceased from Čepinski Martinci was buried inside the settlement, moreover inside the feature or a dwelling, while the deceased from Torčec was buried within the settlement area but outside of any facility. According to this characteristic, the latter is more similar to the much younger burial found at Stari Perkovci – Sela, dated to the 14th century. The deceased from Stari Perkovci – Sela differs from the two previously mentioned in two aspects: a) a much lower age-at-death of only 20 – 25 years, and b) the presence of a metal object in the grave.

No specific pathological changes indicating severe diseases or any traces of violence indicating a possible murder were observed on any of the three male skeletons. Since the settlements where these skeletons were found have yet not been fully investigated or published, their spatial organization is still not well known. Therefore, at the moment we cannot discuss the relationship between the deceased and some significant boundaries in the landscape, for example boundaries of villages, individual yards or residential buildings.

Burials of children in settlements from Croatia belong to the late medieval and early modern period. In Catholic societies of that time, an individual became a member of the community only after baptism. Then the community was taking care of one's soul, and one could be buried with funeral rites practised by the community. The effort to bury the unbaptised children at the cemetery, in the church or at least next to the cemetery, had already appeared in the High Middle Ages, but mostly in the Late Middle Ages. However, social consciousness of wider social classes about the acceptance of children as members of the society from their very birth developed much later, along with the development of the secular civil society (*Unger 2007*, 211-220).

The foetus found inside the shallow preserved pit at Donji Miholjac – Đanovci site was between 30 and 32 weeks old at the time of death. This was certainly a premature birth. It was perhaps put into a pot (the bones were found on the fragment of the bottom of a pot) and then buried in the pit on the edge of the village. Maybe this was a still-born child who did not manage to be baptised and did not have the right to be buried in the churchyard.

But the question is why it was not buried where the other unbaptized children were buried? There must have been a lot of them, because the death rate of new-borns and still-borns at that time was very high. Did the community have a special relationship to this premature infant or was it just a case of a hidden pregnancy and deliberate abortion? The circumstances of the burial of a new-born in Zagreb are clearer. Its dead body was deposited in the pot at the edge of the settlement and thrown into a muddy drainage pit. Here we can agree with the opinion of Boris Mašić that this was most probably a cover-up of infanticide. This opinion is also confirmed by historical evidences on court proceedings that took place in Zagreb and Varaždin against a women accused for such a crime. These historical examples suggest that the most common victims of infanticide were illegitimate children, due to a mother's fear of social condemnation and material problems associated with the maintenance of a child born outside legitimate marriage (*Horvat 1942, 134; Karbić 2002*). In medieval Slavonia, infanticide was punishable by death, so it is very likely that the women attempted to conceal such crime by throwing and hiding the dead children bodies in the drainage or waste pits.

Although this topic has yet not attracted the attention of Croatian archaeologists, the issue of burials outside the regular graveyards in the Middle Ages has been discussed by European scholars in a number of papers and several synthetic studies showing all the complexity of possible interpretations. There are two basic approaches to the issue: the burials in the settlement had a sort of negative connotation to the community, or indeed such burials might have had a neutral or we could even say a positive connotation.

In the latter aspect the interpretations of such funeral activities are much more oriented to the identity of the community while the buried individual itself had no crucial role. The graves of adult men in Merovingian settlements dated to the 7th century are sometimes interpreted as graves of 'founding fathers'. These individuals were not necessarily the actual heads or founders of the communities. What matters is the ritual of the burial and creating a common identity and memory of a common ancestor who was directly connected with the settlement and whose role is now to protect the community and confirm their land rights (*Theuvs 1999*). Furthermore, the burials within the settlements in such an early medieval period are discussed in context of 'special or placed deposits', as can be seen on the examples of Anglo-Saxon graves from the 5th to the 9th century (*Hamerow 2006; Sofield 2015*). It is proposed that the very act of deposition had an important role. The burials have marked some crucial events and milestones such as the establishment or abandonment of the settlement. As they are mainly associated with certain spatial boundaries

(the house walls, ditches and fence yards or village fences), they have probably served to highlight certain physical but also conceptual boundaries, as marking spots for the separation of the community inside the boundaries from those outside them (*Sofild 2015, 379-380*).

While previously mentioned theories refer to burials in settlements in a very early medieval period in the area of Western Europe, Central European scholars take into consideration these possibilities but they are more concerned with the identification of the deceased buried in a settlement as outcasts who have gained an uncommon, mostly negative, status within the community. These were the individuals who in some way had blemished and violated valid norms and laws of the society, and death prevented them from making repentance and making amendment for their bad actions (*Hanuliak 2010a*). Another possible reason is the unusual death or unclear circumstances of the death of the deceased that have led to the fact that they could not have been buried in consecrated ground of the common cemetery. For the period when Christianity has already been established we have even more explicit written evidence on those who were considered not to have been full members of Christian community or whose death was considered as 'unclean'. Some examples of such 'unclean deaths' are rapid and unexpected deaths due to an accident, drowning, painful death or death in childbirth. Furthermore, excommunicated individuals, committers of serious crimes, pagans, heretics, usurers, foreigners, suicides, those who have died in the mortal sin, people of other faiths, and practitioners of magic, but also unbaptised children were not allowed to have been buried on the consecrated Christian cemeteries. However, the community did not want to reject them completely, and there was no fear of them, so they were buried within or at the edge of the village. As we can see there were many categories of people who were not allowed to have been buried in a common cemetery and hence some of them might have been buried in the settlement area.

A large number of burials inside the settlement area were recorded in south-western Slovakia and date back to the 9th and the 10th century. There were 194 such burials (mainly children and adult men) found on 35 sites. These graves are scattered around the village, away from each other, and often differently oriented. Anti-vampire activities were often observed. In most cases, no other objects and findings except the skeleton were found (*Hanuliak 2010a; 2010b*). There are a large number of children in this group probably because of the fact that they have not yet become full members of a society, and the child mortality rate was high due to sickness and accidents (*Hanuliak 2006, 383-384*). Apart from being buried in graves within the settlement, on 14 sites 43 deceased were buried in the very settlement structures, features and dwellings. In these cases, these were mostly adults of both

sexes, and only exceptionally children. In these burials anti-vampire activities are also frequently found, while other finds and objects in graves are also rare. Dangerous people (in the eyes of the community) such as victims of conflicts and also hidden victims of murders could have been buried inside settlement features (*Hanuliak 2006, 372-380*). After the 10th century such unusual burials in the area of the present-day Slovakia have become rarer, but occasionally they occur also in the late medieval and early modern periods. The reasons for these later unusual burials usually refer to various epidemics or violent deaths, often caused by unsafe state of war or criminal activities (*Hanuliak 2006, 377-378*).

Burials found within early to high medieval period settlements were also in the focus of academic research in Moravia and Bohemia (*Tomková 2010; Krupičková 2010*). Some possible reasons for the occurrence of burials within the settlement areas were examined from different viewpoints: chronological aspects, social, religious or ritualistic aspects, and the violent and criminal acts (*Unger 2010*). Burials in settlements occur from prehistory to the Middle Ages in a wide area of Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and in general they represent an anomaly, which one should not connect to the elite, but rather to the fate of the poor and unfortunate, especially for the later periods (*Bozuek 2010*).

There are indeed many reasons that could lead to the burial of an individual in the settlement area but often it is very difficult to make confident conclusions and to determine why the community have buried this particular deceased at that particular place.

Perhaps we could perceive the case of burial of a man in Torčec, who was buried just in time of the abandonment of the settlement (the end of the second phase of the settlement in the 8th century), in the context of the theory of special or placed deposits that marked the abandonment. For the men from Čepinski Martinci-Dubrava, according to the irregular or non-standard position of the deceased's body in the elongated pit we could perhaps consider the option that the one or ones who have buried his dead body have had a negative perception of him. However, there is not enough information about the stratification and the settlement infrastructure so that deeper reflections on the internal reasons of the community to bury the deceased in that specific manner couldn't have been set out. In the case of the individual from Stari Perkovci-Debela šuma site we lack even basic information about the age and sex of the deceased, and it is also doubtful if the burial took place in the early Middle Ages or in the 12th century. In contrast to the burial of the 8th century, a man buried at the edge

of the settlement at the Stari Perkovci – Sela site belongs to the time of the 14th and at the beginning of the 15th century when the Christian identity of the community certainly was entirely established and it is unlikely that he was buried in terms of special deposits. As there were no traces of lethal violence on his skeleton and because of his age of 20 to 25 years, we may assume that it was a death due to an infection. For the burials of small children from Donji Miholjac – Đanovci and Zagreb, especially for the latter, we can assume with great probability that they were hidden burials due to infanticide or, in the case of Donji Miholjac, deliberate abortion.

And while for pre-Christian populations and communities in whom the Christian doctrine still was not fully stabilised we could apply almost all provided interpretations, the burials in settlements in later periods leave us with even more unanswered questions. With the exception of cases that conceal the murder by burying the dead body, for example in the basement or in a pit, burials within settlements were probably public events which the whole village community was acquainted with. If the identity of the deceased, his way of life and the circumstances of death led to the fact that the person could not have been buried in the hallowed ground of the cemetery, the question is why did the community allow that burial to take place within the village and not somewhere else in the landscape, outside the village boundaries? Is it perhaps that the strong emotional ties of living family members with the deceased caused them to want to bury the deceased within their household? The strong emotional bond between the living and the dead becomes more prominent particularly in the case of a burial within a certain private household or yard. In cases of burials on common land in the village or at the edge of the village, we could think of the perception of the general community regarding the deceased. Unfortunately, archaeological information often does not provide enough insight about the infrastructure of the village, and the borders of private and common plots. The situation is no better with historical sources, as they rarely reflect the marginalised and risky manner of burial of the dead within the settlement area.

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A village is cleared

The pilgrimage with stillborns to the Holy Shrine of the Virgin Mary in Oberbüren (Canton of Berne, Switzerland)

Daniel Gutscher *

ABSTRACT

As is common in the Early Middle Ages, a rural settlement developed on the ruins of a Roman villa at Oberbüren. Three large residential buildings, numerous storage pits, a wooden granary, the hearth of a forge and the central well of this farming village that endured until the 14th century, were found through archaeological excavation. At the end of the 15th century, a break occurs: the village is relocated two hundred metres to the south. In its stead a large church with a vast enclosure and a clergy house were built. Hundreds of pilgrims came from the bishopric of Constance, even from Augsburg at its peak, at the end of the 15th century, to see the miraculous image of Mary, in front of which the stillborns would experience a brief revival, just long enough to baptize them and then give them a dignified funeral. About 250 skeletons of fetuses, neonates and small children were uncovered during the archaeological excavations between 1992 and 1997 by the Archaeological Service of Canton Bern, under the direction of the author, and scientifically studied. At the Reformation in 1528, the pilgrimage was forbidden and the buildings were systematically razed to the ground. Oberbüren is the best archaeologically studied pilgrimage centre in Switzerland and the outstanding written sources linked to this rural site are exemplary.

Keywords: *Roman villa, medieval farming village, relocation of the village, church with pilgrimage centre, stillborn.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ein Dorf wird verdrängt – die Marienwallfahrt mit Totgeborenen nach Oberbüren (Kanton Bern, Schweiz)

Der Anfang ist geläufig: Über den Resten eines römischen Gutshofes entwickelt sich im Frühmittelalter eine ländliche Siedlung. Von der bis ins 14. Jahrhundert bestehenden landwirtschaftlichen Siedlung konnten drei grosse Wohnhäuser, zahllose Vorratsgruben, ein hölzerner Korn-Speicherkasten, die Esse einer Dorfschmiede sowie der zentrale Dorfbrunnen archäologisch gefasst werden. Im späten 15. Jahrhundert erfolgt ein Einschnitt: das Dorf wird zweihundert Meter nach Süden verlegt. An seine Stelle tritt

* Bern, Switzerland
gutscher@bluewin.ch

eine grosse Kirche mit einem mächtigen eingefriedeten Hof und einem Haus für die Geistlichkeit. Zu Hunderten pilgerten Fromme aus dem ganzen Bistum Konstanz, ja gar aus der Gegend von Augsburg zur Blütezeit im späten 15. Jahrhundert zum wundertätigen Marienbild, vor dem Totgeborene ein kurzes Lebenszeichen von sich gaben, gerade genug, um sie taufen und anschliessend kirchlich bestatten zu können. Anlässlich der Rettungsgrabungen des Archäologischen Dienstes des Kantons Bern konnten unter Leitung des Referenten 1992 – 1997 rund 250 Skelettreste von Foeten, Neonaten und Kleinkindern freigelegt und anschliessend naturwissenschaftlich untersucht werden. In der Reformation von 1528 wurde die Wallfahrt verboten und die Anlage in der Folge systematisch geschleift. Oberbüren ist archäologisch das bestuntersuchte Wallfahrtszentrum der Schweiz, die hervorragende schriftliche Quellenlage ist für diesen Ort im ländlichen Umfeld exemplarisch.

Schlagwörter: *Römischer Gutshof, frühmittelalterliche Siedlung, Ortsverlagerung, Kirche mit Wallfahrtszentrum, Totgeborene.*

RÉSUMÉ

Un village est écarté – Le pèlerinage avec des mort-nés vers Oberbüren (Canton de Berne, Suisse)

Le prélude est courant: un habitat rural du haut Moyen Âge se développe sur les vestiges d'une villa romaine.

In the Late Middle Ages, rural settlements often acquired additional functions. These helped remote villages gradually to acquire a supra-regional and central importance. Often methods of production are at the roots of these new roles, such as the cultivation of certain agricultural products, like vegetables or fruits for the urban market. Particular resources can also stimulate a specialised production, such as clay deposits for the production of ceramics, *et al.* In my paper, I would like to highlight another type of specialised function: religious practices and more specifically pilgrimage (Fig. 1) (*Febring 2000*, 148; *Descoedres 2002*, 47-56; *Scholkmann 2009*; *Gutscher 2003a*, 379; *2003b*, 381-384).

The 15th century, more than any other, is characterized by a variety of religious movements (*Gutscher et al. 1999*, 380; *Ulrich-Bochsler – Gutscher 1998*, 247 f. – *Gutscher 2000*). This is hardly surprising: the vagaries of the weather, with subsequent crop failures and mass disease – not only the Black Death – led to large declines in the population. This can explain the massive growth of the worship of saints and relics. The willingness to accept gratefully any concrete offer of help is understandable.

Les vestiges archéologiques de trois grands bâtiments d'habitation, de nombreuses fosses de stockage, un grenier en bois, le foyer d'une forge et le puits central de ce village agricole, qui persiste jusqu'au XIV^e siècle, ont été mis au jour. Une rupture survient à la fin du XV^e siècle: le village est délocalisé deux cent mètres vers le sud. À sa place apparaît une grande église, avec une vaste cour clôturée, et une maison pour le clergé. Les pèlerins y sont venus par centaines de tout le diocèse de Constance, voire même de la région d'Augsbourg à son apogée, vers la fin du XV^e siècle, pour voir l'image miraculeuse de Marie, devant laquelle les mort-nés donnaient un bref signe de vie, le temps de les baptiser, pour leur offrir ensuite une sépulture en terre consacrée. À l'occasion des fouilles de sauvetage menées entre 1992 et 1997 par le Service archéologique du canton de Berne sous la direction de l'auteur, environ 250 restes de squelettes de foetus, nouveau-nés et petits enfants ont été mis au jour, puis étudiés scientifiquement. Avec la Réforme en 1528, le pèlerinage fut interdit et l'établissement systématiquement rasé. Oberbüren constitue le centre de pèlerinage suisse le mieux étudié d'un point de vue archéologique et les sources écrites remarquables associées à ce site en milieu rural sont exemplaires.

Mots-clés : *villa romaine, habitat rural du haut moyen-âge, délocalisation du village, église avec centre de pèlerinage, mort-nés.*

In the Late Middle Ages, the fear of death was however less important. It was already ubiquitous. Salvation of one's soul was more important to people (*Jetzler 2000*, 20-27). Today, we wish for a quick death – like an on-off switch. For medieval man, to be surprised by death without provision was the worst that could happen. Men feared the sudden, unprepared death. Pilgrimage could help to prepare, but a trip to Rome, Jerusalem or Santiago de Compostela was unaffordable for most of the population. The local and regional saints filled this gap, with strong ecclesiastical support. Their relics and portraits were like personal confidants to the devout (*Vischer et al. 1994*). Their places of worship were accessible to all and became popular. It was a new source of income for rural areas, almost like tourism "avant la lettre". The altarpiece in the Carmelite monastery of Frankfurt am Main in Germany, dating around 1495, illustrates it very well (Fig. 2). It depicts such a pilgrim group, recognisable by their hats, with a large front brim that provided space for pilgrimage insignia, like the one from Oberbüren (Fig. 3). A cape could protect against wind and weather, as a find from Lourdes dating from



Fig. 1. Oberbüren could also have looked like this in around 1500: Diebold-Schilling-Chronik 1513, fol 283r (© Korporation Luzern).



Fig. 2. Pilgrim group dating around 1495, detail of the altarpiece from the Carmelite monastery of Frankfurt am Main in Germany, now in the Historisches Museum Frankfurt (© Historisches Museum Frankfurt, Inv. Nr. B 323).

around 1500 shows us. Pilgrim badges could also be attached to it (Mitchiner 1986, 7), representing not only souvenirs, but also a specific meaning. Those wearing such an insignia were recognisable as pilgrims. They enjoyed not only inviolability, but also privileges such as tax exemption, which was most welcome to medieval travellers. In short, the pilgrim badge was something like today's diplomatic license plates.



Fig. 3. Pilgrim badge from Oberbüren, about 1485, cast lead, Museum Zofingen (© Archaeological Service of Canton Bern).

The pilgrims on the road to the miraculous Mother of God at Oberbüren may also have looked like those on the altarpiece; each bear a bundle on their back that was probably quite smelly after such a long journey. Oberbüren is located on the south-western edge of the bishopric of Constance, above the small town of Büren, on the marshy lowlands of the River Aare. Its position is strategic, because the boundaries of the dioceses of Basel, Lausanne and Constance met there in the Middle Ages.

The history of this place is very old. This is what the archaeological investigations conducted between 1992 and 97 showed, for which I was in charge of the overall coordination at the time (Fig. 4).

1. People first settled on top of the hill in the late Bronze Age. Very few traces of this were preserved, because the hill was leveled to create a flat terrace in the next occupation phase.
2. It allowed the building of a large Roman-villa complex, occupied from the 2nd to the 4th century. Continuity in the Early Middle Ages cannot be established, as the hill was made flatter again for the next occupation phase. Thus, only the foundations of the Roman construction were found.



Fig. 4. Location of the dig facing south. The foundations of the clergy house are in the foreground, Oberbüren's pushed aside hamlet in the background (© Archaeological Service of Canton Bern).

3. In the Early Middle Ages, a wooden building with strong posts was constructed on the site. Although it could be a church, it cannot be proven. However, it was surrounded by a densely occupied cemetery, with rows of burials without offerings, which is gradually built over by a village from the 11th to the 14th century. Remains of three farmsteads with buildings supported on posts were discovered, 28 storage pits, a forge and a well, containing a well-preserved wooden bucket. A chapel was built where the earlier wooden building had stood, around which more burials took place. The chapel is probably the one mentioned for the first time in 1302: the nucleus of the pilgrimage. In the 15th century, its growing need for space appears to have pushed the village further south, where it still lies today.

Around the chapel – or most likely around the place where a statue of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus was erected – a pilgrimage site developed. Its drawing power reached as far as the environs of Ulm and Augsburg. Thousands supposedly came here with a dead child wrapped in linen, to experience a brief revival, subsequent baptism and finally a dignified funeral (Hess 1985, 13f.)

Theology calls such pilgrimage centres 'sanctuaires à répit' (Gélis 1993, 183-222).

For Büren, the year 1485 is crucial (Hess 1985, 9; Anshelm 279). At that time, a thief who had stolen the monstrance and the sacrament was caught. Hänsli Steffen was his name. The High Court sentenced him to death. With a millstone around his neck, he was to be pushed from the wooden bridge into the river Aare. A huge crowd of people was following the event. Many were stunned when, after a few minutes, Hänsli Steffen emerged unharmed from the waters, with a palm branch in his hands. Down at the bottom of the river, the Virgin of Oberbüren had appeared to him and told him: 'Hänsli, Thou shall not die.' So there he stood now. The authorities responded and commuted the death sentence to a pilgrimage. He would make a pilgrimage to Rome and, as a 'punishment', tell his story at every place he was to cross. Who could ask for a better promotional tour?

And this proved effective. Oberbüren grew. If in 1482, total revenue amounted to 534 pounds, profits increased to 1432 pounds in 1492 and even reached 2344 pounds in 1504. This comes as no surprise, because the city-state of Berne took the management out of the hands of the

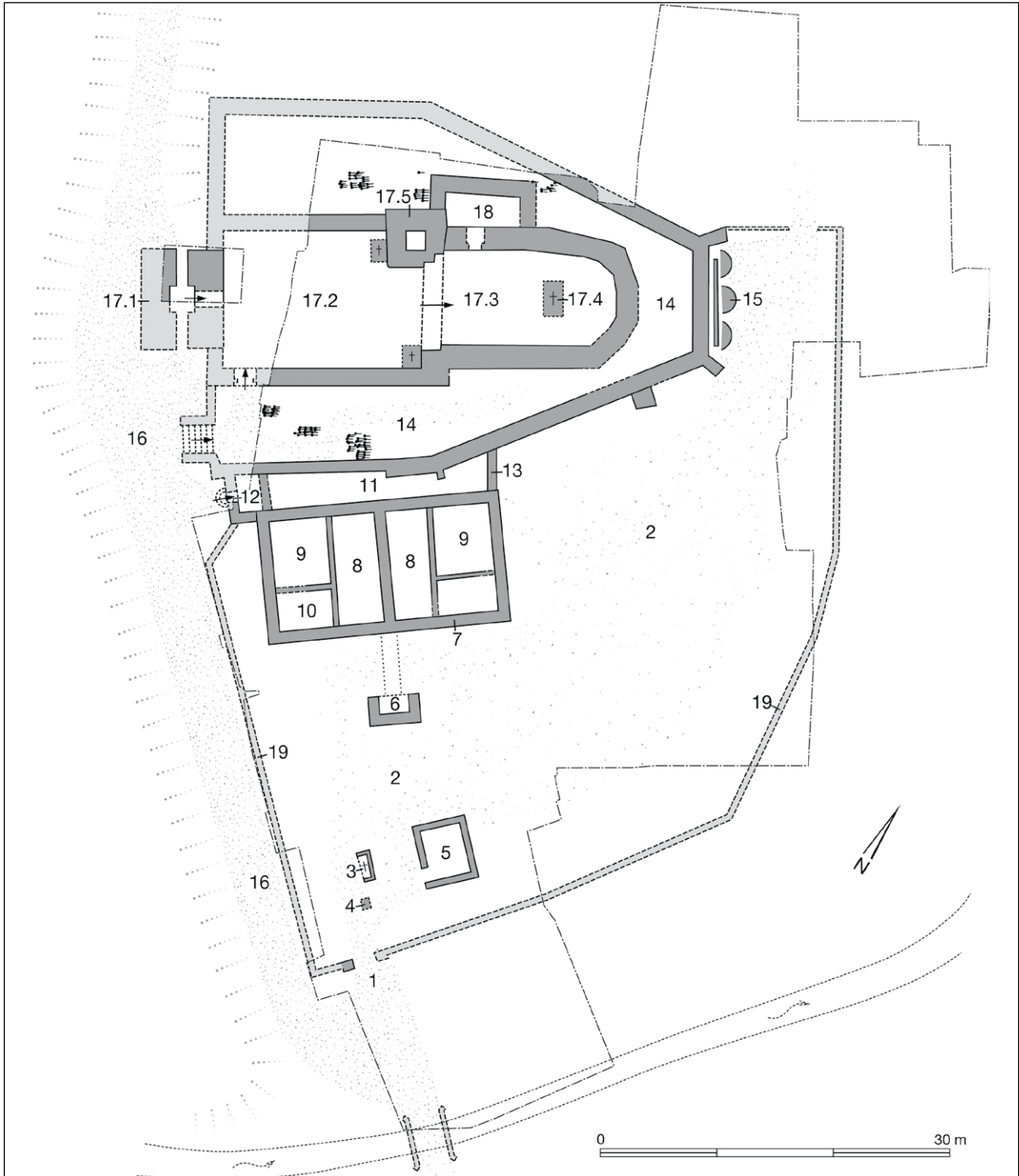


Fig. 5. Plan of the 15th century pilgrimage buildings according to the archaeological excavation:

■ Structures

▨ Complementary structures

☩ Stillborn burial area

1 Door, 2 Pilgrimage enclosure (19), 3 Field altar, 4 Offering box (maybe holy water vessel) on a base, 5 House (reception/devotional objects), 6 Pilgrimage pulpit, connected via a walkway to 7 Chaplain house with 8 Corridor-like anteroom, 9 and 10 Rooms, 11 Free space between terrace and chaplain house, 12 Charnel house or ossuary, 13 Dividing wall, 14 Elevated terrace around the church, 15 Fountain, 16 Church path, 17 Church with 17.1 Entrance tower, 17.2 Nave, 17.3 Choir, 17.4 High altar (revival site), 17.5 Old tower, 18 Adjoining room (sacristy), where the stillborns were warmed, 19 Fence (wall to the south, wood to the east) (© Archaeological Service of Canton Bern).

local chaplains and entrusted it to its own Master of the Mint in 1492. The place was obviously good against the sudden, unprepared death. Thus was born the 'sanctuaire à répit': here were stillborn children brought back to life for a short time.

How did that happen? In a room next to the church, the stillborns were warmed over hot coals and then brought into the (cold) church, where they were placed in front of the Madonna and Child statue (fig. 2), with a small duck or goose feather on the lips. By thermal lift, the feather moved briefly upward. It was visible to all the believers gathered in the church: a sign of life. The child could be baptized and buried afterwards.

How do we know this story? The bishop of Constance, Otto von Sonnenberg, a strong promoter of the Marian pilgrimage to Einsiedeln himself, emerged as a critic of this practice and went to the Curia in Rome, with a detail report against the Bernese authorities, which stood behind the pilgrimage – after all, Berne was still building its cathedral and it was costing a lot of money (Hess 1985, 13).

What persuaded the people of that time to come to Oberbüren, even if they had knowledge of the critical opinion of their bishop? We need to know that, according to the conceptions at that time, no dead children could be baptized (Vasella 1966, 1-70; Jetzler 1999, 13-26). The original sin had not been washed from them. An unbaptized dead child could therefore not go to paradise, but had to wait until doomsday in limbo for its salvation. It could neither go to hell, because it was not yet loaded with self-inflicted sin. In late medieval popular belief, it was a widespread opinion that these children could take revenge on the living. The high mortality rate supplied assumed evidence. For example, in February, when vitamin levels were at their lowest for children, whole groups of them were snatched away by the flu each year. Had parents lost a baby by stillbirth, it was soon rumoured in the village that their child was dead. It would now take revenge on its small fellows. This means that everyone was coming to Oberbüren, even if they were informed of their bishop's doubts: because parents who had brought their child to Oberbüren needed henceforth not be afraid of suspicions any more. Anyone who had come to Oberbüren burdened, left the place in genuine relief. Allow me to digress to our time. Thanks to psychiatrists, we learn merely to live with our burdens: so much for the so-called Dark Ages. Close the digression.

What is the archaeological evidence of this incredible story? In the 1990s, we could dig up all the essential elements of this site of supra-regional significance, so as to paint a pretty complete picture of it (Fig. 5).

The site was divided in two areas, both walled. To the north, the church (17) was situated on an elevated terrace (14); to the south was the vast pilgrimage enclosure (2), covering approximately 1500 m². The pilgrims could enter

the courtyard either from the south over a stream, where they could tidy themselves up by the water, or from the northeast, where they encountered a large fountain (15), with one long trough and three vats. The fountains were fed from a source still flowing today, north of the church. The courtyard contained all the necessary infrastructure, such as a wayside shrine or field altar (4), a base (3) probably for a holy water vessel or an offering box, a small building with a floor space of 5×5 m (5) – probably a reception and information booth – and a kiosk for devotional objects. In the middle of the courtyard, stood a construction interpreted as a pilgrimage pulpit (6). It might have been connected via a walkway to the adjacent chaplain house behind (7). In the written sources, this building appears as the Pfaffenhaus that is the residence of the clergy in charge of the cult. Its interior was strictly symmetrical: a corridor-like anteroom (8) opened on two rooms (9 and 10). There was a gap (11) against the elevated terrace, which contained the gate (12) and probably the connecting stairs to the churchyard. The church was located in the middle of this polygonal yard (14): a late Gothic nave (17.2) with an axial entrance tower (17.1), a retracted polygonal choir (17.3) and the high altar with the miraculous image of Mary (17.4), which stood at the center of the cult. With its 16.5×9 m, the choir was the largest of its time in the region: in the city-state of Berne, it was only surpassed by the cathedral of Berne. The strength and depth of the foundations strongly suggest vaulting. To the north, it was connected to a small room (18), the sacristy: the place in which the dead children could be warmed before their baptism in front of the miraculous image (Hess 1985).

Thus we have all the elements that can be inferred from the report of the bishop of Constance.

The contemporary Diebold Schilling illustrates his chronicle with an illustration of a rural procession, dating from 1513 (fig. 1). It is not Oberbüren, but it presents all the elements with which we are now familiar from our site: a procession led by altar boys with crosses and flags, followed by the clergy in surplice, the men with a flag of Mary – note the similarity with our miraculous image from Oberbüren – and finally the colourful crowd of women and children. The train proceeds through a hamlet comparable to the one pushed aside to the south at Oberbüren, with its thatched farmsteads. It approaches a walled cemetery, in which we perceive a church and tower, next to an annexed sacristy and chaplain house. This is exactly how we may imagine the Chilchmatt in Oberbüren around 1500.

But, where are the numerous, stillborn children? The bishop mentions that people brought little children, whose extremities were not yet fully developed limbs, but lumps. The bishop mentions over 2000 dead. Perhaps archaeological evidence could provide answers on this topic, supported by the anthropologist Susi Ulrich-

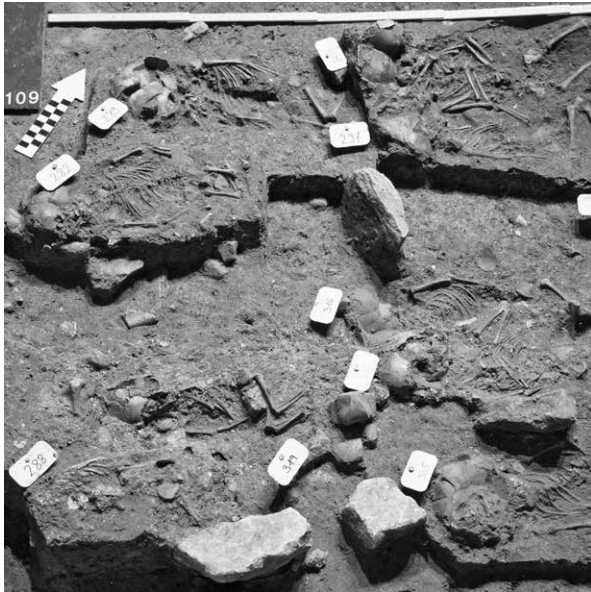


Fig. 6. Skeletons of babies during the excavation (© Archaeological Service of Canton Bern).

Bochsler. In the north and the south of the sanctuary, large numbers of infant skeletons were excavated. Many had fallen victims to the plough when later agriculture took place. Nevertheless, the remains of over 250 well preserved skeletons were discovered in six spots. The fetuses, neonates and infants seem to have been buried systematically, but very carefully, sometimes several of them in a common pit (Fig. 6). They were laid so closely together, that it was barely possible to separate them. For the first time in the archaeology of the Middle Ages, it has been possible to find evidence for extremely premature births, with fetuses as little as 15 cm in length. In the late Middle Ages, newborns and infants have a body size of around 45 cm; anything less is premature. In the archaeological record, the bones of fetuses have been preserved from the 4th month of pregnancy. This means the report of the bishop was also right on this point. Although fetuses without limbs were not found, they would have completely dissolved in the soil and would not have been preserved over such a long period of time.

The end of the pilgrimage in the Reformation period was as steep as its rise. For the reformers, the need for a newborn to be washed from sin was incomprehensible. They understood baptism as a promise from God. Those who came into the world were at first pure from all sin. With the adoption of the Reformation in 1528, Berne therefore abolished the cult in Oberbüren overnight. Only the village still exists today.

However, that was not so easy to implement. On February 22 1528, the order to lock the church doors was issued (RMI 53, 96, 187, 189, 204, 206, 216, 217,

226, 246). Four days later, it was ordered to publicly burn the miraculous image, probably in the large courtyard. The Büren region resisted, which was understandable in view of the economic situation alone. The pilgrimage continued, so that the Council ordered the church to be demolished in 1530; the recovered construction materials were to be used to repair the fortifications of Büren – a spoonful of sugar for the complaining population. The chaplain house would for now remain. However, in the autumn of 1532, the church tower and everything else were also to be knocked down ‘to the roots’. Our excavation showed it clearly: they had even systematically cleared the foundation trenches of the walls! Finally in 1543, the pilgrimage had to be suppressed by force. Archaeology also proves how long the practice apparently still persisted. Skeletons of newborns were found in the already cleared and refilled foundations trenches. This attests that even without the miraculous image, the place still retained its attraction for some time.

To conclude, Oberbüren is a unique example of how a purely rural village quickly gains central local significance. It is not only the extent of the pilgrimage that is unique about Oberbüren. The abundance of written sources is equally sensational, touching upon the pilgrimage itself as well as the criticism levelled against it even before the Reformation. Oberbüren probably still remains the only attested *sanctuaire à répit*, which has been fully archaeologically investigated, and where the findings – the structural as well as the skeletal remains – coincide remarkably well with the written record. After many preliminary reports, an exhaustive monograph from the research team in charge, led by the anthropologist Susi Ulrich-Bochsler, the historian Kathrin Utz Tremp, the theologian Elke Pahud de Mortanges and the archaeologist Peter Eggenberger is due to be published in 2017.

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Deviant burials in rural environment in the High Middle Ages

Ritual, the lack of ritual, or just another kind of it?

Mária Vargha *

ABSTRACT

The present article revisits the term deviant burial. It argues that this term is rather subjective, as each case depends on our present interpretation, contemporary practice and contemporary understanding. Furthermore, most of those deviant burials that do not occur in cemeteries are individual, isolated cases, and therefore a comprehensive interpretation is difficult. As a solution, this article explores deviant burials that have occurred in a single community, a village that existed in the High Middle Ages in the area of present day Budapest. The article reviews the burials, which were placed inside the churchyard (or at least in its immediate environment), but not according to the contemporary norms and practice. Such acts are the rituals and superstitions of everyday life, and are rather different from the ideal picture we derive from written sources (where they either do not or rarely appear). For this reason, when one is studying the ritual behaviour of people, material evidence should not be neglected, as it is only through such evidence that valuable details may be perceived. In the light of such evidence, this article distinguishes between, atypical, non-normative, and deviant burials.

Keywords: *Deviant burials, atypical burials, remains of critical events.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Mittelalterliche Sonderbestattungen im ländlichen Umfeld – Ritual, kein Ritual oder nur eine andere Art?

Der vorliegende Artikel greift den Ausdruck ‘deviant burial’ (Sonderbestattung) wieder auf. Im Artikel wird argumentiert, dass dieser Ausdruck eher subjektiver Art ist, da er in jedem Fall von unseren gegenwärtigen Interpretationen, unserer zeitgenössischen Praxis und unserem Verständnis abhängt. Die meisten jener abweichenden Bestattungen, die nicht in den regulären Gräberfeldern auftreten, sind Einzelfälle, weshalb deren umfassende Interpretation schwierig ist. Als Lösung erforscht dieser Artikel an einem Fallbeispiel jene Sonderbestattungen, die in einer Gemeinschaft auftraten, in einem Dorf, welches im hohen Mittelalter in der Gegend

* Dep. of History,
University of Vienna, Austria
maria.vargha@univie.ac.at

um das heutige Budapest existierte. Der Artikel betrachtet jene Bestattungen, die zwar innerhalb des Kirchhofs (oder zumindest in dessen naher Umgebung) lagen, jedoch von der zeitgenössischen Norm und Praxis abweichen. Sie sind Ausdruck von Kulthandlungen, von Ritualen und Aberglauben im Alltagsleben und unterscheiden sich somit stark von unserem idealisierten- resp. aus den seltenen schriftlichen Quellen abgeleiteten Bild. Aus diesem Grunde sind die materiellen Nachweise unabdingbar zum Studium von Ritualen, denn so können Details freigelegt werden, die auf keiner anderen Art spürbar wären. Entsprechend unterscheidet dieser Artikel zwischen, atypischen, nicht-normativen und Sonderbestattungen.

Schlagwörter: *Sonderbestattungen, untypische Gräber, Überreste kritischer Ereignisse.*

RÉSUMÉ

L'enterrement de déviants médiévaux dans l'environnement rural – rituel ou non, ou bien seule une autre manière ?

L'article revisite le terme 'sépulture déviante'. Il argue du fait que ce terme est plutôt subjectif, car dans

Introduction

The term deviant burial is a rather subjective one. Each case should be reviewed to determine whether it is deviant according to our present interpretation, contemporary practice or contemporary understanding. Of these, the latter two are always influenced by the first, and thus, a definitive answer to that question does not exist. Another significant issue is deviant behaviour in life, which could have had an effect on the burial as well. Furthermore, the term deviant is itself debatable, despite being used purely as a neutral term it carries negative, or even negative sexual connotations towards the dead and/or the burial (*Aspöck 2008, 29*). Another problem is that the term is widely used in archaeology to describe special burials from prehistoric to early modern times. However, normative burial customs are not the same in all these time periods. In consequence, the term deviant burial is not only excessively used, but also not neutral enough to be a collective term for those graves that differ from the norms of a given time period. Of these, the High Middle Ages is well defined, as the burial customs were much more clearly stated by the church than in preceding eras, and therefore it is easier to define what differs from normative practice.

An additional problem is that in most cases such burials have been studied as individual, isolated finds. In consequence their interpretation has mainly relied

chaque cas il dépend de notre interprétation actuelle, ainsi que de notre pratique et notre compréhension contemporaines. La plupart des sépultures déviantes à l'extérieur des cimetières réguliers sont des cas isolés rendant leur interprétation difficile. Cet article analyse des cas de sépultures déviantes dans une communauté précise : il s'agit d'un village de l'époque du haut Moyen Âge situé dans les alentours de Budapest. L'article passe en revue les sépultures placées à l'intérieur du cimetière (ou au moins dans son environnement proche), mais pas selon les normes et les pratiques contemporaines. Elles montrent des actes rituels et de superstitions de la vie quotidienne, et sont plutôt différentes de l'idéal évoqué par les sources écrites (où elles n'apparaissent pas, ou plutôt très rarement). Pour cette raison, en étudiant le comportement rituel des populations, des preuves matérielles ne devraient pas être négligées, car elles peuvent nous faire découvrir des détails non perceptibles d'une autre manière. Cet article fait donc la distinction entre des sépultures atypiques, hors normes et déviantes.

Mots-clés : *sépulture déviante, sépulture atypique, restes d'événements critiques.*

on similarly isolated analogies. This is a huge drawback in understanding the context of atypical burials. Their interpretation has relied mostly on ethnographic evidence, which is without doubt an important element in the research of these burials. However, it also has to be noted that the anachronistic projection of data that was recorded (in many cases) hundreds of years later, is misleading. It is hard even in a given time and space, but especially when identifying such deviant customs and beliefs with geographically and culturally different cases (*Barrowclough 2004, 9; Gardela 2013, 120-122*). The most obvious place to find social deviants and deviant burials is in the execution cemetery (*Reynolds 2009, 96-97*). However, such isolated cases are usually not part of a burial ground, and therefore in this study the execution cemeteries will not be considered.

To test this problem unusual burials that occurred within one community have been investigated, and its results evaluated by comparing them to the general theories about deviant burials.

In the present paper I would like to explore deviant burials in a rural environment, and especially those burials that were placed either outside the churchyard, or inside, but not according to contemporary norms and practice. I will present the case study of Kána village, which is the largest or rather the most completely excavated village dated to the later High Middle Ages in the Carpathian

basin, and thus, it provides ideal material to examine atypical burials in the context of a completely investigated settlement and cemetery. Still, before examining this case study more closely, it is important to state what is a typical or atypical in the burial customs of rural Hungary in the High Middle Ages.

What is a non-deviant, typical burial?

Legislation relating to burials and funeral rites was controlled by the church, and regulated by canon law. Of the canon law collections the most important in this period is the *Decretum Gratiani*, which was the first legal code that dealt with death and burial in a comprehensive way. Of all the factors concerning burials in this period the most important one is the location of the grave, and with it, the fact that the buried remains within the community of the church, because by placing the dead within the consecrated area of the churchyard, the soul remains a part of the spiritual community.

Besides establishing the possible funerary places, the *Decretum* also stated those people and those circumstances, when the burial should be declined by the church and thus could not take place within the churchyard. Some other parts dealt with last wills, but most of them referred to the intercession for the salvation of the deceased.

The normal procedures of funerals were found mostly in contemporary codices rather than canon law. An example is the Pray codex that originated from 12th century Hungary, which contains the text and description of diverse ecclesiastical rites, including the description of the funeral rite. According to this text, the rite started with sprinkling the body with holy water and the burning of incense, followed by a prayer at the altar. After that, the congregation walked the dead to the grave whilst chanting psalms. At the graveside, a prayer was made and the rite of sprinkling water and burning incense was repeated. After all that, the body was interred and a final speech was made (*Szuromi 2002*, 43-48, 203-205).

What is the most striking concerning the understanding of what is a typical, normative burial, is that in the contemporary sources, both in canon law and in the description of rites, many regulations are described, but none of these leaves any archaeological trace (except the internment of the body outside the churchyard, which can be perceived in most cases), as there is no regulation, nor even indication concerning the position of the corpse, which is, in archaeological literature, the most important factor when labelling a burial as deviant. The only concern for the cadaver itself was connected to the belief in bodily resurrection. Because of that, it is rather hard to define how the beliefs of contemporary people influenced funerary rites. These are often apparent as diverse objects in graves, such as the use of shrouds and coffins, or the

positioning of the body (*Gilchrist 2014*). It also has to be noted, that in consequence of the limits of archaeology, there could have been non-normative treatments of the body, which have left no archaeological trace. Thus, there can be normative burials in our understanding, which were originally as atypical as one that left an archaeological trace of such a treatment.

Thus, it seems that the definition of what is a typical, normative burial is a purely archaeological, modern construction. It is thus even more important to distinguish between atypical and deviant burials.

What is a deviant or atypical burial?

In Christian understanding, or rather according to canon law, many things were understood as deviant, but they were still practised in everyday life. Most such deviations were minor and frequent things, such as disturbing a previous body with a new grave, and putting the bones aside. Sometimes there are serious issues, such as burying women inside the sacred area of a churchyard who died during pregnancy while carrying a foetus. This should have meant the desecration of the churchyard, because a stillborn baby has original sin and should be taken out of the body of the mother to be buried somewhere else. However, according to archaeological evidence, this was not always the case (*Gilchrist 2013*, 209-210; *Harhoiu-Gáll 2014*, 199, Pl. 4/M 31).

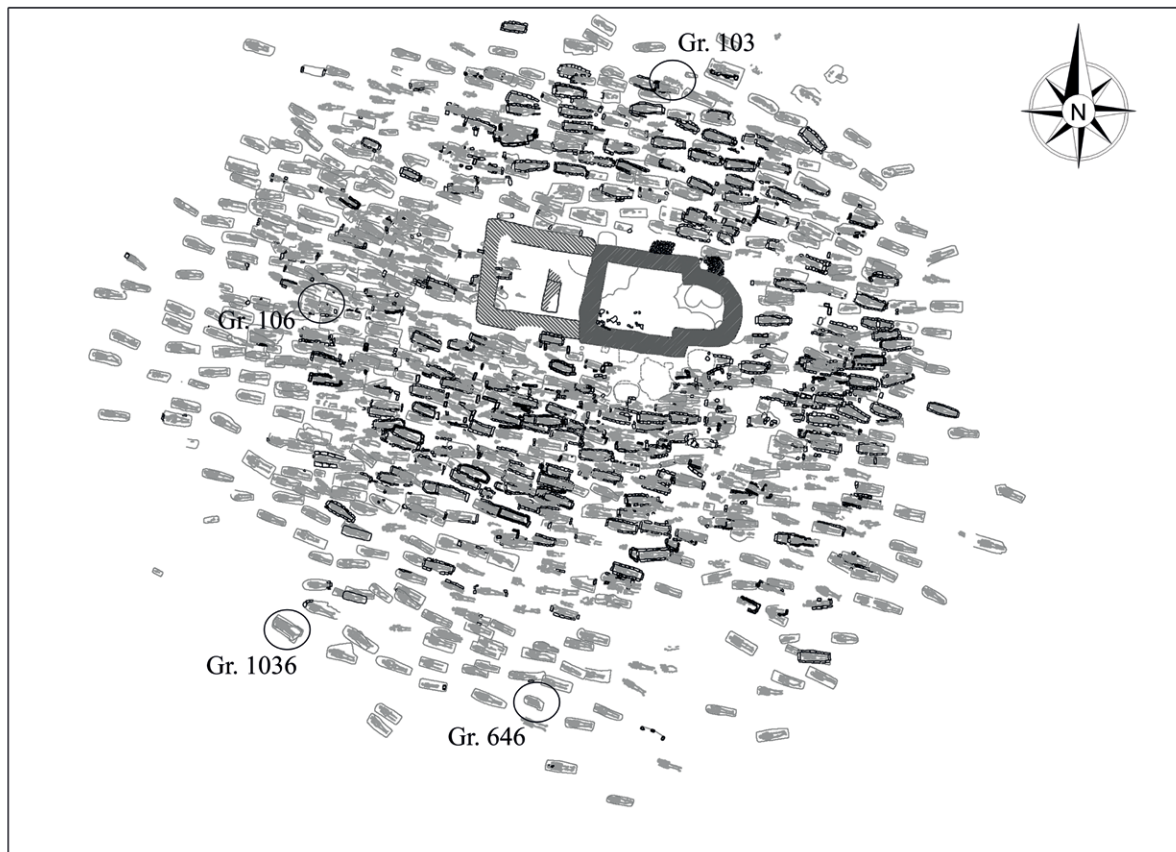
Another type of deviant burial within the churchyard is reminiscent of practices that do not appear in canon law. These are diverse treatments of the body that are in our understanding different from the norm, and are reflected in the abnormal position of the body, for example crouched or prone burials. These were practised in the pre-Christian era, and were most probably the sign of the fear of the deceased (*Reynolds 2009*, 63, 68-69). As the most clear deviancy in Christian understanding is not burying the body in the consecrated area, these are most probably surviving superstitious practices, which probably were not considered deviant in contemporary understanding, although they definitely reflect some kind of non-normative social behaviour in the life of the deceased.

Besides these, burials that were not in the closed environment of the churchyard should also be mentioned. These graves were made for those people, who – for diverse reasons – could not be buried within the churchyard. Still, the creation of a grave-pit and the positioning of the body, and most importantly, the location of the grave shows care for the deceased, and thus a trace of at least some kind of funerary ritual, even if it was not the one performed by the church.

What is common in these ritual acts is that these can be understood as rituals and superstitions of everyday



1



2

Fig. 1. Kána village. 1: plan of the excavated features; 2: The church and churchyard of Kána village, and the location of atypical burials (© Mária Vargha, György Terei).

life, and are rather different from the ideal picture of funerals we derive from written sources (where they do not, or rather rarely appear). For this reason, when one is studying the ritual behaviour of people, material evidence should not be neglected, as often it can uncover details, which would not be perceivable in any other way.

Therefore, those of the above mentioned acts that leave archaeological traces can all be understood as atypical burials, mostly manifested in the position of the body, which sometimes occur together with unusual material or artefacts appearing in the graves. However, it has to be noted, that when such burials appear within the sacred area of the churchyard, in most cases it would be hard to understand them as deviant burials, as – at least most of them – should have received an ecclesiastical funeral. On the other hand, those cadavers, who were placed outside the churchyard, without question reflect some abnormality, either in their life, or in their death. In the following, I would like to explore these cases one by one, using the case study from Kána village. It should be noted that the special treatment of burials of children would go beyond the limits of the present study, and thus, the discussion will be limited to the atypical burials of adults.

The site (Fig. 1)

As the most fully excavated Arpadian era village in the Carpathian basin, Kána, located in the XIth district of Budapest, is the ideal starting point for an investigation into diverse aspects of the High Middle Ages. Just as today, the village was centrally located: it is situated in the heart of the Middle Kingdom, located next to the main road that connects the royal centres of Székesfehérvár, Óbuda and from there, Esztergom. György Terei directed the excavation in 2003-2005, a rescue operation carried out prior to the construction of a new housing estate. The whole settlement was excavated: 200 houses, 4 huge storage pits, a large number of other archaeological features, including the village church and churchyard that contained nearly 1100 burials. The scale of the project was exceptional, as it examined a medieval village in its entirety. The settlement existed from roughly the mid twelfth to the end of the thirteenth century (*Terei 2004*, 37-39; 2010, 81).

Atypical burials within the churchyard (Fig. 2)

In the churchyard of Kána, several examples can be found of the above non-normative burials. A remarkably common aspect – with one exception – of these is that they are all placed on or near the edge of the churchyard. Another advantage of this site is that the churchyard has been analysed and divided into eight chronological phases (*Vargha 2015*, 31-34).

Burial no. 103 was located on the northern edge of the cemetery. The body of a 30-45 year old man was laid on previously disturbed bones, on its side, in a crouched position. Another similar example is burial no. 646, situated on the southeast edge of the churchyard. The body of a 30-45 year old woman was placed in a carefully dug grave-pit, but in a rather abnormal position with the legs bent double. This is a position which is quite hard to maintain, thus, most probably her legs were tied up.

Burial no. 1036 represents a somewhat different situation. The grave was placed on the southwest border of the churchyard. It was a burial of a man older than 60 years, and by the position of the body, it seems that it was put in a roughly dug grave-pit in abnormal circumstances; his arms lifted above the head and his legs crossed. This position implies that people held him by his hands and feet, and they put him in the grave like this, and did not bother to arrange his body afterwards. Another important feature of this burial is that it was superimposed by another, completely normal grave, which belonged to the first phase of the cemetery.

Burial no. 106 is completely different from the previous ones. It was located in the western part of the cemetery, not on its edge, but in the middle, among other, completely normal graves. In this grave four people were placed, lying upon each other. All of them were young; a young adult of 21-24 years, two juveniles and a child aged 10-11 years. One juvenile skeleton was placed normally in the bottom of the grave. The child was laid directly on him, in a prone position. Right on top of the child, the second juvenile skeleton was placed, lying on its side, in a crouched position. On it – also in a prone position – a young adult was laid. The burial was clearly coterminous, judging by the position of the skeletons; they were placed directly on each other, there was no earth layer between them. This makes the burial even more awkward, as some body parts are missing; for example only one of them had a skull, and some more bones are missing which cannot be explained by later disturbance of the grave. It is difficult to find any parallel to this situation. The closest is perhaps grave no. 119 from Sighișoara. Here four individuals – also with some missing body parts – of diverse ages were buried together in one grave, in a rather similar manner to that observed in Kána; the first individual on the bottom was laid in the grave in a normal way, and the other three cadavers were placed or thrown on it without any care, in diverse positions. The most significant difference is that judging by the layers of earth between the individual burials it appeared to the excavators of the cemetery that these burials did not happen at once. Furthermore, in this case the burial assemblage was located on the very edge of the cemetery, and therefore, may actually have been outside of the consecrated ground. On this basis, it was

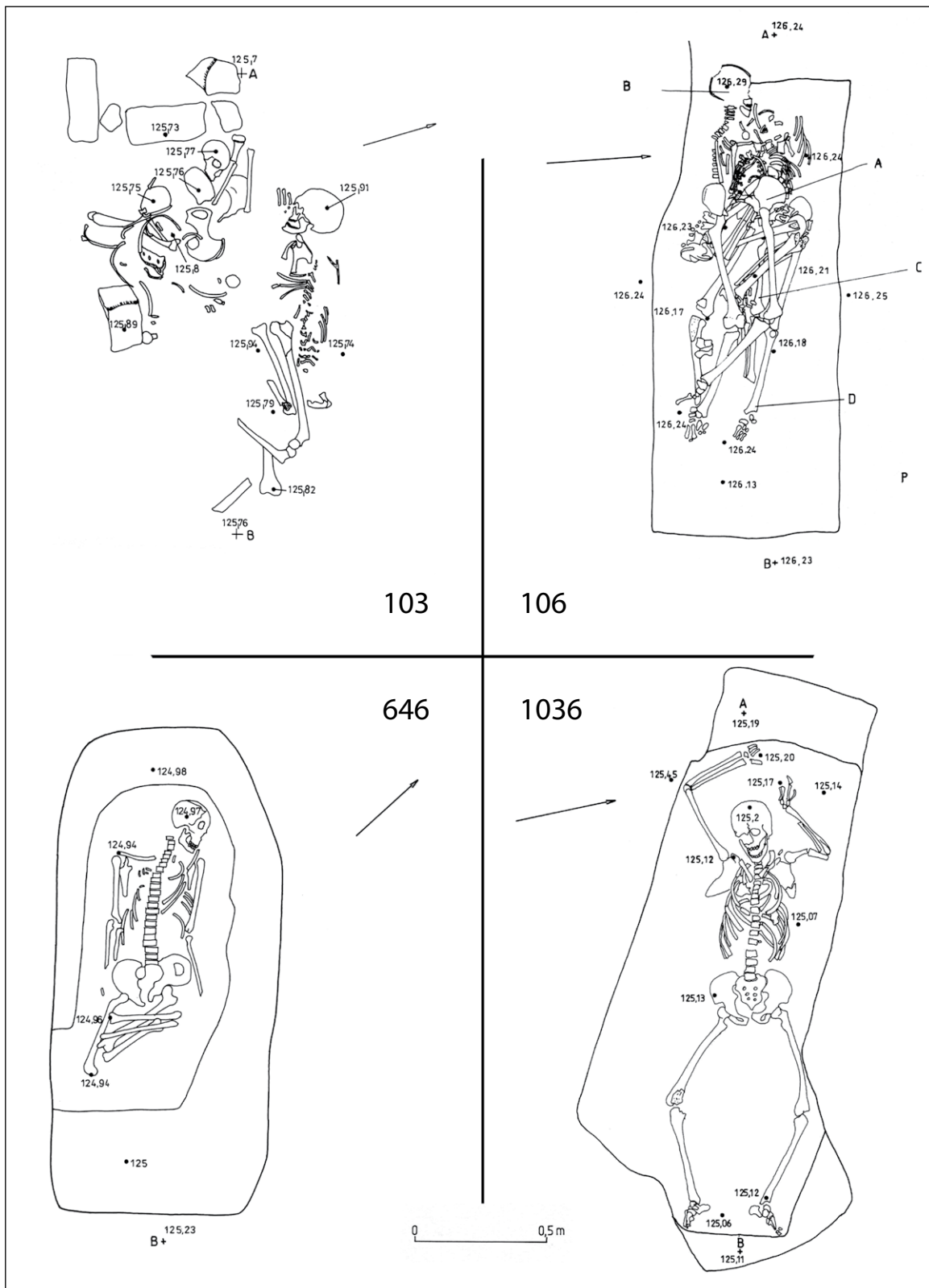


Fig. 2. Atypical burials in the churchyard (© Mária Vargha, György Terei).

interpreted as probably a mass grave of individuals who were denied an ecclesiastical funeral (*Harhoiu-Gáll 2014*, 201, 214). Another probable parallel is grave 235 from Dăbâca – Castle Area IV, where two individuals were thrown in a pit together. Again, the burial was located on the edge of the cemetery (*Gáll 2013*, 160, 229). Although the similarity of the two burials is remarkable, the only explanation can be stated is that in case of Kána, especially because of its location, this burial surely did not take place under the observance of the church, and most probably can be connected to some critical situation or action. Without more data, unfortunately these remain only assumptions.

Regarding the deviant burials within the churchyard, three different types can be distinguished. First those, which were buried within the cemetery, although on its edge and were placed in the grave in a deviant position (burials no. 103 and 646). These are an indication of the deviant behaviour of the deceased in life, and superstitious beliefs and/or apotropaic acts attached to this person in death. Grave no. 1036 presents a different situation. Because the grave is superimposed over another, which belonged to the first phase of the cemetery, it can be argued that when this person was buried, the border of the churchyard did not extend this far yet. This also reflects that – at least in the first phase – the border of the churchyard was not fixed. The way they put the corpse in the grave shows no sign of respect, or any kind of ritual. On the contrary, its position – next to the churchyard – implies that it was not a secret burial after a crime, but rather a grave of somebody who died, but did not deserve to be buried in the consecrated ground of the churchyard, or have the ritual of any (not even a non-Christian) kind of funeral. At this point the few burials of neonates in the enclosed area of the graveyard should be mentioned. They can be understood as the graves of unbaptised babies. Burial no. 106 shows a complete new level of deviancy. This grave would be extremely peculiar even outside the churchyard. Inside it, considering the strict rules of the church, where even minor things could mean its desecration, it is almost incomprehensible. The superposition of graves show the grave was dug after the second phase of the cemetery. The chronology cannot be more precise than this. It is possible also that they were buried in a period when the churchyard was not in regular use, temporarily or permanently.

Burials outside the churchyard (Fig. 3)

Burials discovered outside the churchyard in the area of the settlement should be considered atypical by their very location. However, this shows no pattern either spatially or of custom, and thus all of them represent different situations and reasons for burial.

The skull placed on the top of the pit no. 5201 (Fig. 3/2) is not even a real burial, as only the skull was uncovered, without any vertebrae. The skull most probably was first discovered in the cemetery, perhaps during the creation of a new grave, and could have been stolen from there to be placed later on top of that pit. The explanation for this is not clear, as there are no parallels for the phenomenon, but most probably it was connected to some superstitious belief.

Another, even more horrible example is the pit, which was dug in that of an outside oven. In this pit (no.242, Fig. 3/3) diverse body parts were placed, and immediately back-filled. First two female skulls were put on the bottom, and then on top of them the torso (in anatomical order) of a young adult was placed. After that, in the right-hand corner, another female skull was placed with a left leg, a right arm, and parts of a hip, which did not belong to the female skull, as the leg belonged to a male. On the top of the pit another female skull was placed, facing east. The *prima facie* interpretation was that the people buried there were battle victims, buried unceremoniously by the enemy (*Reynolds 2009*, 40-44). However, the large number of female parts suggest otherwise. The custom of secondary burial (to re-bury people, or some body parts) is not known in a medieval, and especially not in a Christian context. The anatomical order of the remains shows that these body parts were not yet (completely) decomposed at the time of the burial. Parallel phenomena are not known, and therefore the interpretation is difficult. The fact that the process – burying the remains and covering the pit – has been a prompt action suggests that this may be connected to the removal of the evidence of a criminal act (although the missing body parts cannot be explained by this), or the remains are from some kind of critical event.

In all the other cases, whole bodies were involved, but intentional burial can be questioned. An example is the body of a 10-11 years old child recovered on its side of the bottom of pit no. 3209 (Fig. 3/1). The child was lying on his back, but not in any kind of formal position, and the body was a little twisted. Under the right arm an iron pike was discovered, which makes the explanation even more complicated, as iron tools were considered to be valuable objects. Thus, it would seem to be senseless that anyone would throw a body into a pit with such item. Another explanation is that the child was working in the pit and it collapsed, burying him. However, it is rather suspicious that no one tried to rescue the infant, or pull out the body after the accident.

The last example for burials outside the churchyard was a pit (no.6830, Fig. 3/4), located towards the edge of the village, in which one and a half body and some other body parts were discovered. First the lower half part of a 12-14 year old child was put into the pit (most probably put, not thrown, as the legs were laid straight), then a

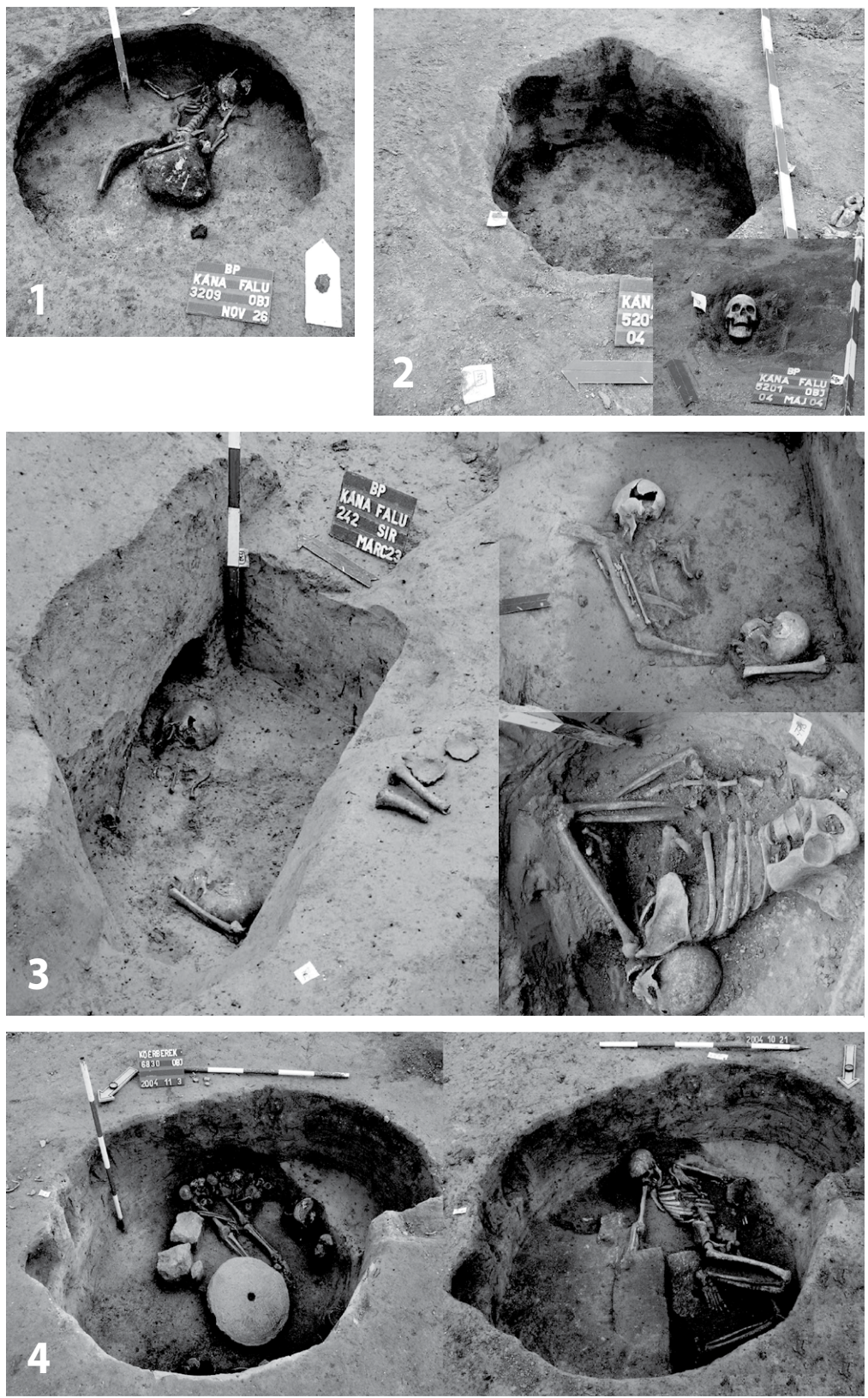


Fig. 3. Burials outside the churchyard (1: Feature no. 3209, 2: Feature no. 5201, 3: Feature no. 242, 4: Feature no. 6830) (© Mária Vargha, György Terei).

grindstone was placed on the middle of the pit, partly over the legs of the child. Then a old man was put or thrown into the pit lying partially on his side (his upper body lying on its back), in a somewhat twisted position with his legs bent double. Beside them, there were some more disturbed bones in the bottom of the pit. Except for the grindstone, there was no other object in the pit. In this case many explanations can be made; it could be remains of a crime, but it could also be connected to clearance after a crisis. However, it should be mentioned that in case of clearance after a battle, it would be more likely to bury the dead in the churchyard, or, if that was not possible, at least not within the area of the village, where burials were not usually allowed.

Summarising the burials outside the cemetery, two, or perhaps three groups can be distinguished, although it is not always clear where the examples belong. First of all, there are features representing superstitious behaviour, because these reflect some kind of ritual. The next group consists of those cases, which are the remains of crimes (either murder, or clearance after a battle). As I mentioned in connection with the last example, burials within the area of the village were unlikely to be allowed by the inhabitants. Thus, bodies and body parts recovered here are more likely to be the remains of secret actions, which were not to be seen by a large audience. Because of this, there was no evidence of formal burial. The same conclusion can be drawn from the third group that it was the result of accidents, but it has to be said such an explanation is questionable.

Conclusions

Even within one single community, many kinds of atypical burials have been observed, which surely do not all fit into the deviant burial category. To get a clearer picture of this phenomenon, and to have a more unambiguous terminology, these burials first should be separated into two groups; those that were connected to ritual actions and those which were not. The latter occurs only outside the consecrated ground of the cemetery¹, and may be the remains of a variety of activities; in most cases probably crimes, or sometimes more innocent acts, yet definitive interpretation of such actions can rarely be made. These burials, which carry signs of ritual behaviour, mostly appear within the churchyard, where superstitious actions may be suspected. In addition, burials outside the enclosed environment of the churchyard should be mentioned. These graves were made for those people, who – for some reason – could not be buried within the

churchyard, yet the grave-pit and the position of the body, and most importantly, the location of the grave shows care was taken, and thus, at least, some kind of funerary ritual, even if it was not the one performed by the church. Signs of ritual or rather superstitious behaviour in features outside the enclosed area of the churchyard may be observed only in those cases where incomplete bodies (mainly skulls) were involved. All the other cases where the lack of ritual is evident, can be interpreted as the remains of some sort of criminal act. It is also notable, that such actions only took place outside the churchyard.

When deciding on what is an atypical, or a deviant burial, it is crucial to note additional, different, or absence of ritual. Accordingly, all those burials that are placed within the churchyard should be treated as atypical burials, and the location of the grave, the characteristics of the grave pit, and the general circumstances suggest that the interred received the ecclesiastical, normative burial, but also showed some signs of a different ritual that would not be expected by the church. Deviant burials represent a group, where the lack of normative burial is evident, but another kind of ritual is observable. This group of burials rarely appear within cemeteries, but the exception could be the burial no. 106 at Kána, and burial no. 119 at Sighișoara. Those features that contained the remains (diverse body parts or complete bodies) of people who died as a consequence of violent actions (whether crime, combat, or accident) are difficult to interpret, and therefore it is difficult to label these features with a comprehensive term. The contemporary practice of the church would grant all those people an ecclesiastical funeral who were not explicitly forbidden to have one, such as those that sinned against the community and/or denied the church. Therefore, even if people died without the last sacraments but in penitence, the ecclesiastical funeral would have been allowed (*Szuromi 2002*, 64-65, 112-113). In this situation, the internment of the victims of combat or accidents – those for whom some kind of ritual would be expected, would also be possible within the churchyard. Accordingly, bodies buried outside the churchyard most probably lacked any kind of ritual. It is even questionable, whether it is justified to call it burial, when bodies were thrown into a pit. Similarly, when only body parts were interred, it was either the consequence of a violent action, in which case the conclusions are similar, or they have been used in some kind of ritual action, in which they most probably only had a partial role and the ritual was not focused on the burial of the body parts, as in case of pit no. 5201, where a secondary use of a skull can be detected. These rituals however, cannot be considered as burial rituals, and thus, such features cannot be understood as burials. Besides, these phenomena also

1 Although in the case of burial no. 106 it is questionable whether it can be interpreted as such. However, the location of the grave suggests that it should not.

suggest that even within churchyard cemeteries, certain (micro) regional characteristics and pagan traditions may have been continued.

The enumerated cases exemplify the diversity of deviant behaviour and thus, atypical, non-normative, or deviant burials. Even within one community, it is not possible to draw patterns, or to give broad explanations of these phenomena. However, the close examination of their context allowed a more precise categorisation about the kind of ritual and the lack of it, which is a great help when distinguishing a deviant burial from a cadaver thrown into a pit. Thus, in case of more isolated finds, the context, and also the interpretation should always be carefully considered.

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Der würdige und der unwürdige Tod im schlesischen Dorf des 13. bis 18. Jahrhunderts

Paweł Duma *

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In diesem Artikel werden besondere Phänomene der Bestattungspraktiken der vormodernen Gesellschaft innerhalb schlesischer Dörfer diskutiert. Der Autor erforscht hierbei spezifische Personengruppen: ungetaufte Kinder, Selbstmörder und Verbrecher, denen eine ehrenvolle Bestattung im geweihten Boden untersagt wurde. Des Weiteren werden verschiedene Bestattungssitten-, und die Gründe, die zu dem jeweiligen Umgang mit den Toten geführt haben, untersucht sowie diese Praktiken in ihren jeweiligen zeitlichen Kontext gestellt. Die Arbeit wird durch eine Analyse aus der aktuellen archäologischen Forschung ergänzt, die sich mit der Feldarbeit an Hinrichtungsstätten (*Modrzewie*) beschäftigt.

Schlagwörter: *Das vormoderne Dorf, Bestattungspraktiken, unehrenhaft Verstorbene, ungetaufte Kinder, Hinrichtungsstätten.*

ABSTRACT

The worthy and unworthy dead in a Silesian village (13th-18th century)

The article discusses phenomena characteristic of the funeral practices of the pre-industrial society of a Silesian village. The author explores specific groups of people: unbaptised children, suicides, convicts who were refused an honorary burial in consecrated land or had ceremonies conducted on special terms. The reasons behind such treatment of the dead and the evolution of these practices in time are also examined. The study is supplemented by an analysis of the results of archaeological research, which mainly involved fieldwork carried out at former execution sites (*Modrzewie*). Archival research was also conducted in order to deliver additional information.

* Institute of Archaeology,
University of Wrocław, Poland
pawelduma84@gmail.com

Keywords: *Silesian village, funeral practices of the 'unworthy deceased', unbaptised children, execution sites.*

RÉSUMÉ

La mort digne et indigne dans un village Silesian (13^e – 18^e siècle)

L'article discute plusieurs phénomènes et caractéristiques des pratiques funéraires de la société préindustrielle des villages silésiens. L'auteur explore des groupes spécifiques comme les enfants décédés sans baptême, les suicidés, les criminels exclus d'un enterrement honnête sur un cimetière sacré, ainsi que des cérémonies spéciales. Les raisons qui entraînent

ce type de traitement du défunt et l'évolution de ces pratiques dans le temps sont aussi examinées. L'article est complété par l'analyse des recherches actuelles sur le terrain, notamment sur les fouilles archéologiques de lieux d'exécution (*Modrzewie*) et les recherches historiques y afférant.

Mots-clés : *la société préindustrielle d'un village silésien, pratiques funéraires des morts indignes, enfants morts non baptisés, lieu d'exécution.*

Einführung

In der traditionellen Gesellschaft, vor der Zeit der so genannten industriellen Revolution, haben besonders in Bezug auf die Bestattungsriten viele Vorschriften gegolten. Die strengen Richtlinien der christlichen Liturgie nahmen einen großen Einfluss auf den Umgang mit den Menschen nach dem Tod gemäß dessen Lebensweise, Gewohnheiten, Vergehen. Dieses Verfahren war mit der starken Überzeugung verbunden, dass die Erlösung nur durch die Beerdigung in einer geweihten Erde erreicht werden kann und somit eine Belohnung darstellte. Abweichungen jeglicher Art wurden als schwere Strafe und Entehrung angesehen. Der „schlechte Tod“ hat nach dem damaligen Glauben viele Menschengruppen betroffen. Dabei ist erwähnenswert, dass nicht nur die betreffende Person nicht erlöst werden konnte, sondern auch dessen Familienmitglieder darunter gelitten haben und manchmal entwürdigt wurden. Zu den Ausgeschlossenen gehörten die Selbstmörder und Strafgefangenen, aber auch Kinder, die vor der Taufe gestorben sind, sowie Alkoholiker und die nicht Praktizierenden, die sich vor ihrem Tod nicht mit Gott versöhnt hatten.

Das Phänomen des „unwürdigen Todes im schlesischen Dorf“ ist ein großes Thema, aber leider noch nicht archäologisch erforscht. Man gewinnt den Eindruck, dass die bisherigen Studien über Bestattungspraktiken, mit der Ausnahme der Studien des frühen Mittelalters, vor allem die städtischen Agglomerationen umfasst haben. Trotz der Zunahme der Forschungen in den ländlichen Gebieten in der letzten Zeit, gibt es in diesem Bereich noch ein großes Wissensdefizit. Somit müssen wir, um die Trauerrituale innerhalb des Themas zu rekonstruieren, auf zusätzliche Quellen zurückgreifen. Dazu gehören vor allem schrift-historische Quellen (handschriftliche Urteile, chronistische Aufzeichnungen), die kirchlichen Verordnungen, ethnographische Quellen und einige archäologische Funde. Letztere umfassen auch ältere Funde, deren Resultate oft noch nicht veröffentlicht worden sind. Die meisten verfügbaren Informationen beziehen sich auf die Kinder, die vor dem Empfang der Taufe gestorben sind und auf Menschen, die an den

Hinrichtungsplätzen begraben wurden (dazu gehören zumeist Sträflinge, aber auch Selbstmörder, denn bis in die Neuzeit wurde ein Selbstmord als ein Verbrechen an sich selbst angesehen).

Vom Umgang mit ungetauft verstorbenen Kindern

Bis zum 16. Jahrhundert wurde allgemein angenommen, dass die ungetauften Kinder kein Recht auf die Bestattung in der geweihten Erde haben. In vielen theologischen Debatten herrschte die Ansicht, dass die Kinder, die vor der Taufe gestorben sind, keine Mitglieder der Kirche waren und somit die Kirche keine Verpflichtungen gegen sie hatte (*Labudda 1983, 225*). Diese Verbote wurden in unterschiedlichem Ausmaß umgangen, wie zum Beispiel in Oberbüren (Kanton St. Gallen, Schweiz), wo die toten Kinder im Zuge der Wallfahrt „wiederbelebt“- und daraufhin getauft und in geweihter Erde begraben werden konnten (*Ulrich-Bochsler 1997, 113*) (siehe Beitrag Gutscher in diesem Band).

In Schlesien verfügen wir leider nur über wenige wissenschaftliche Analysen zum Thema der Vorgehensweisen mit den Kinderleichen und in der Literatur finden wir nur oberflächliche Informationen in Bezug auf einzelne Dörfer. Es ist daher ungewiss, ob man die Einzelinformationen generalisieren kann und ob das gleiche Verfahren auch in anderen Orten praktiziert wurde. So schrieb zum Beispiel der evangelische Theologe Leonhard Krentzheim im Jahre 1592, dass ungetaufte Kinder nicht in geweihter Erde bestattet wurden und das sich daraufhin verschiedene Bräuche entwickelt haben: Die Mädchen wurden in den Scheunen und die Jungen in den Ställen oder sogar unter den Futtertrogen begraben, in dem Glauben, dass davon die Tiere besser wachsen würden. Allerdings war Leonhard Krentzheim der Meinung, dass man die Eltern, deren Kinder nicht die Sakramente der Taufe empfangen hatten, nicht verurteilen sollte und ihnen zugleich ein normales Begräbnis ermöglichen müsste (*Bunzel 1981, 177*).

Wir können durchaus davon ausgehen, dass es in Schlesien keine signifikanten Abweichungen von den Sitten und Vorschriften der Nachbarländer gegeben hat. In ganz Mitteleuropa wurden die ungetauften Kinder sowohl unter den Dächern von Kirchen-Gebäuden als auch in den Kirchen selbst begraben, da man glaubte, dass das fließende Dachwasser in den Gotteshäusern heilig wird und so die Seele der Kinder erlöst. Später, mit der Lockerung der Einstellungen, wurden die ungetauften Kinder in getrennte Bereiche der Friedhöfe, in sogenannte „unschuldige Kinder-Friedhöfe“ begraben, die oft hinter der Leichenhalle lagen (Döring 2002, 36).

Ab dem 18. Jahrhundert wurden in der schlesischen Region die ungetauften Kinder in einigen Fällen unter den Friedhofsmauern beerdigt, zusammen mit den Selbstmördern und den Unfalltoten (Duma 2010a, 23-24).

In der Fachliteratur findet man die Beschreibung eines interessanten Phänomens in Bezug auf die Bestattung der ungetauften Kinder, deren Genesis schwer erklärbar ist: In Mitteleuropa wurde während verschiedener „Kultstätten-Grabungen“ (meist Kapellen und Kirchen) an der Grenze zwischen der sakralen und profanen Zone, Keramik gefunden, in welchen sich die Überreste von Säuglingen befanden. Eine ähnliche Art der Bestattung wurde in Polen, Deutschland, der Slowakei und Ungarn beschrieben. An einigen archäologischen Fundorten in der Region Masowien in Polen wurde die Keramik mit den sterblichen Überresten aus dem 16.-17. Jahrhundert per Zufall während Erdarbeiten an prähistorischen Friedhöfen gefunden. Die slowakischen Forscher sind der Meinung, dass solche Art der Bestattung sich im Mittelalter in Europa verbreitet hat, aber höchste Popularität in der Neuzeit erreichte (Slivka 1997, 74). In Deutschland wurden solche Bestattungen in Hessen und in Niedersachsen gefunden: so berichten z.B. die schriftlichen Quellen aus dem 18. Jahrhundert aus Wolfenbüttel, dass an der Friedhofsmauer eine Gruppe von Gefäßen mit Knochen von Kleinkindern entdeckt wurde. Laut Quellen wurden solche Orte immer „Heidenkirchhof“ genannt (Weber 1987, 101), wodurch eine Interpretation ähnlicher Funde ermöglicht wurde.

Bis heute ist es unmöglich eine eindeutige Antwort auf die Frage der Genesis der Gefäße mit den Kinderknochen zu geben. Die Analogie zwischen der Form des Gefäßes und dem Mutterleib, und – im weiteren Sinne – die Symbolik des Gefäßes in der christlichen Welt und Volkskultur, geben uns einige Hinweise dazu (Duma 2010b, 32). Gefäße haben im Christentum eine große symbolische Bedeutung. Ihre Anwesenheit im Grab neben dem Verstorbenen kann auf verschiedene Weise erklärt werden: so wissen wir aus Schriftquellen, dass man in Westeuropa den getauften Kindern einen Wachsbehälter mit der Hostie in die rechte Hand und in die linke Hand ein Gefäß (wahrscheinlich eine Miniatur) mit dem geweihten

Wein gelegt hat (Unger 2002, 86). In Mönchsgräbern aus dem späten Mittelalter und der Neuzeit wurden wiederum Gefäße gefunden, in denen sich ursprünglich Weihwasser und Weihrauch zur Abschreckung der bösen Mächte befand (Mašková 2009, 78).

Kurt Sartorius hat in der Gegend von Baden-Württemberg zahlreiche Gefäße mit postnatalen Plazenten entdeckt, die in Kellern vergraben worden waren (Beitler – Sartorius 1997, 11). Dieser Brauch sollte dem Neugeborenen im späteren Leben Erfolg gewährleisten. Das Thema ist genügend interessant und breit, um es an anderer Stelle separat zu analysieren (vgl. Gärtner 2007; Štajnochr 2001).

Die meisten Überreste der Bestattungen solcher Kinder wurden an Orten gefunden, an denen sich keine geweihte Erde befand, die jedoch an diese angrenzte oder eine Art Ersatz für sie gewesen ist (vgl. Walter – Palm 2012; Grefen-Peters – Teuber 2006; Liebert 2003). Trotz der Tatsache, dass die Präsenz von ähnlichen Überresten der Bestattungen in ganz Mitteleuropa zu sehen ist, gibt es relativ wenige Funde dieser Art und dazu repräsentieren sie ganz unterschiedliche Zeitperioden. Die Gefäße, die in Deutschland entdeckt worden sind, stammen aus dem 14.-15. Jahrhundert, wobei die aus Zentralpolen aus dem 18. und 19. Jahrhundert stammen.

Man kann feststellen, dass ähnliche Bestattungen fast ausschließlich in ländlichen Gebieten entdeckt wurden. Man kennt keine ähnlichen Funde aus der Stadt. Allerdings wurde eine Bestattung dieser Art während den jüngsten Ausgrabungen im Bereich der Siedlung aus der Zeit vor der Vergabe des Stadtrechts, die sich am linken Ufer des Oder Flusses auf dem Gebiet der heutigen Breslau befand, gefunden. Es ist auch die erste derartige Entdeckung in diesem Gebiet. Das Gefäß mit den Knochen des Kindes kam während Rettungsgrabungen im Jahr 2011 auf dem Neumarktplatz zu Tage, auf dem sich im 13. Jahrhundert die proto-städtische Siedlung entwickelt hat. Das Gefäß mit dem Skelett wurde im südlichen Teil des Platzes gefunden (Fig. 1). Es handelt sich um ein Gebäude, dessen ehemalige Fachwerkwände bei der Zerstörung den dazugehörigen Keller verschlossen haben. Aus den Holzstücken, die sich unter den Schuttschichten befanden, konnten mehrere dendrochronologische Daten gewonnen werden: 1249 1239 1236 (-6 /+ 9) n. Christus.

Das Gefäß selbst wurde mit der Öffnung nach oben eingegraben aufgefunden, allerdings war es durch den Druck der oberen Schichten gebrochen und gepresst. Das Gefäß, auf dessen Boden ein Töpferzeichen in der Form eines Kreuzes in einem Kreis eingraviert ist, gehört zur sogenannten Grauwaren-Küchenkeramik und datiert in die zweite Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts, ist also jünger als die dendrochronologisch datierten Hölzer, die vermutlich der Erbauungszeit des Gebäudes entsprechen. Die Kinderknochen lagen am Boden des Gefäßes in einer



Fig. 1. Wrocław/Breslau,
Nowy Targ/Neumarkt.
Säuglingsbestattung in einem
Topf in situ (© Paweł Duma).

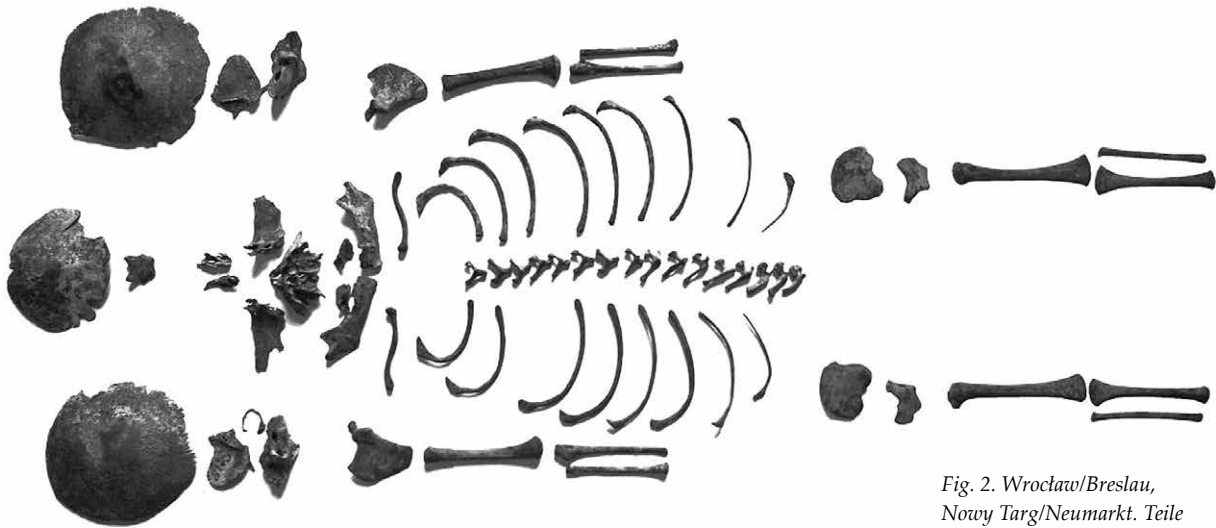


Fig. 2. Wrocław/Breslau,
Nowy Targ/Neumarkt. Teile
des Säuglingsskeletts nach der
Bergung (© M. Bonar).

schwer rekonstruierbaren Position. Sie waren in einem guten Zustand (Fig. 2). Nach der anthropologischen Analyse, die von Małgorzata Bonar durchgeführt wurde, hat man festgestellt, dass das Kind zum Zeitpunkt des Todes entweder im perinatalen Alter – (sehr später Fötus im 8./9. Monat) oder ein Neugeborenes gewesen ist. An den erhaltenen Knochen wurden keine Anomalien festgestellt.

Es ist auch das älteste Grab dieser Art innerhalb der heutigen polnischen Grenzen und entspricht chronologisch ähnlichen Befunden aus der Gegend von Hessen und Niedersachsen. Wir stellen jedoch fest, dass im Fall von Breslau der Fund eine andere Bedeutung hatte, denn die

deutschen Funde stammen aus dem Kirchhofbereich. Sie wurden in der Regel auf der Außenseite der Kirchenmauer oder in dessen Nähe eingegraben. Gleiche Gräber wurden in polnischen und slowakischen Regionen gefunden. Die Gefäße mit den Kinderknochen wurden in Gruppen bei den Kirchenmauern, in den Schreinen oder innerhalb der zerstörten Kirchen entdeckt. An einigen polnischen Fundstellen wurden die Knochen innerhalb vorgeschichtlicher Friedhöfe festgestellt. Der Breslauer Fund ist somit ein Einzelfall dieser Art. Es gibt keine Gewissheit, unter welchen Umständen die Beerdigung stattgefunden hat (und ob evtl. im Geheimen). Hoffentlich

werden uns die künftigen Forschungen mehr Beispiele ähnlicher Art liefern und zugleich helfen festzustellen, ob das Bestatten der Kinder in den Gefäßen gemeinsame Wurzeln hat oder die Praxis unabhängig voneinander in verschiedenen Teilen des Kontinents entwickelt wurde.

Zum Umgang mit den Körpern Hingerichteter

Eine weitere zum Thema des unwürdigen Todes gehörige Gruppe sind die zum Tode Verurteilten. Das Thema der ehemaligen Hinrichtungsplätze war bis vor kurzem vor allem Ziel der historischen Forschung, doch seit Kurzem wird die Problematik in vielen Ländern Mitteleuropas (Polen inbegriffen) auch von Archäologen erforscht. Die jüngsten, vom Autor durchgeführten Studien zeigen Bestattungen, welche sowohl mit als auch ohne anatomischen Verbund innerhalb den ehemaligen Hinrichtungsstätten in den Städten Lubomierz (Liebenthal), Złoty Stok (Reichenstein), Jelenia Góra (Hirschberg) und zuletzt Kamienna Góra (Landeshut) aufgefunden wurden. Eine der Fundstellen lag auf einem Grundstück, welches wahrscheinlich zum Dorf namens Modrzewie (Gieshübel bei Wleń) gehörte.

Die Orte, an denen die Leichen der Hingerichteten begraben worden sind, nannte man „falsche Friedhöfe“. Denn auch wenn der Platz nicht offiziell war, funktionierte er doch durch die Anzahl der Begrabenen wie eine offizielle Grabstätte (*Ariès 1989*, 55-56). Die Gesellschaft hat selten zugelassen, dass die Leiche eines Kriminellen in geweihter Erde begraben wurde. Die häufigsten Ausnahmen dieser Art waren den Adligen vorbehalten oder für diejenigen, deren Schuld kleiner war und sie somit milder von dem Gericht bestraft worden sind.

Die Gräber, die man für die Verurteilten an den Richtstätten vorbereitet hat, waren in gewisser Weise ähnlich und zugleich unterschieden sie sich von gewöhnlichen Bestattungen auf einem Friedhof. Die Gruben, die für den Verurteilten gegraben wurden, waren in der Regel kürzer und tiefer. Sie glichen eher den Gruben, die man für das Aas verwendet hat (*Genesis 2009*, 329). Ein großer Teil der Gräber ist zweifach oder mehrfach belegt. Nebst den Knochen der Verurteilten befanden sich dort auch Asche oder sonstige Abfälle, wie z.B. Tierknochen. Die Anordnung der Skelette weicht ebenfalls von den regulär Bestatteten ab (*Genesis 2009*, 329). Die Richtstätten waren somit Orte, an denen die Menschen den Tieren gleichgestellt- und an denen sie entsprechend von den Henkern und ihren Helfern behandelt worden sind.

Die bis zum neunzehnten Jahrhundert bestehenden Richtstätten waren mit der Kolonisierung nach deutschem Recht verbunden und bildeten in der Regel einen eigenen Bezirk. Sie waren seit dem Mittelalter in

den Städten präsent, seltener in den Dörfern. Heutzutage ist es sehr schwer zu bestimmen, wie groß die Richtstätten gewesen sind, wobei der Galgen natürlich ein elementarer Bestandteil war. Im Mittelalter wurde er aus Holz gebaut, ab dem 15. Jahrhundert wird er in vielen Ortschaften in Schlesien allerdings durch gemauerte Konstruktionen ersetzt, wo er seitdem den dominierenden Galgen-Typen darstellt.

In der Regel handelt es sich um eine Konstruktion mit einem Kreisdurchmesser von 5 bis 7 Metern. Sie bildete einen Zylinder mit einer Höhe von 2,5 bis zu 3 Metern, in welchem sich ein Eingang mit schließbarer Tür befand. Seine Krone beinhaltete drei oder vier Säulen, auf denen die Hinrichtungsholzbalken montiert wurden. Der große Durchmesser des Galgensockels ermöglichte es zudem in seinem Inneren Grabgruben einzurichten.

Der Bau der Galgen sagte auch etwas über den Reichtum des Dorfes und dessen Prestige aus. Aus den Schriftquellen geht hervor, dass die Besitzer eines Dorfes, die das Recht auf das Hochgericht besaßen, die Urteile bestimmen durften und sie auf eigenen Richtplätzen mit der Hilfe eines Scharfrichters, der von außen geholt wurde, ausführten.

Archäologische Forschungen ergaben, dass auch in Schlesien die Leichen von den Kriminellen bis zur vollständigen Zersetzung öffentlich ausgestellt wurden. Dieser Prozess konnte bis zu zwei Jahre dauern. Die Knochen haben sich innerhalb des Galgensockels angesammelt oder wurden dort vom Henker reingeworfen.

Eine solche Schicht (sie bestand vornehmlich aus Männerknochen) wurde z.B. innerhalb des Galgens in Jelenia Góra (Hirschberg) entdeckt. Der Galgen war vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zu dessen Abbruch im Jahre 1778 im Gebrauch. In Złoty Stok (Reichenstein) wurden sowohl die Reste des gemauerten Galgens, als auch einige Gräber gefunden. Die Konstruktion aus Backstein wurde kurz nach 1558 gebaut und im Jahre 1831 (oder kurz danach) abgerissen (*Wojtucki 2009*, 516). Wie angedeutet, wurden auf der östlichen Seite vom Fundament des Galgens mehrere in Teilen erhaltene Gräber entdeckt. Innen befand sich zudem eine Abfallgrube, in welcher menschliche Knochen ohne anatomische Ordnung lagen. Es handelte sich um ca. 80 ganze und teilerhaltene Fragmente von menschlichen Knochen. Zwischen den Knochen befanden sich Abfälle und das vollständige Skelett einer Katze – ein Beweis, dass es hier auch eine Schinderei gegeben hat. Die entdeckten Gräber wurden stark durch den Pflug zerstört. Sie waren sehr flach und erschienen bereits in einer Tiefe von nur 30 cm.

Das Errichten eines festen Galgens wurde von einer umfangreichen Zeremonie begleitet, und auch deswegen war der Bau, zusammen mit den Investitionen in Baumaterialien und Arbeitskräften, teuer. Aus diesem Grund wird häufig angenommen, dass auf dem Land die hölzernen Galgen und in den Städten der Neuzeit gemauerte Galgen dominiert haben. Die untersuchten



Fig. 3. Freigelegtes rundes Galgenfundament und Negativ in Modrzewie/Gieshübel
(© Paweł Duma).

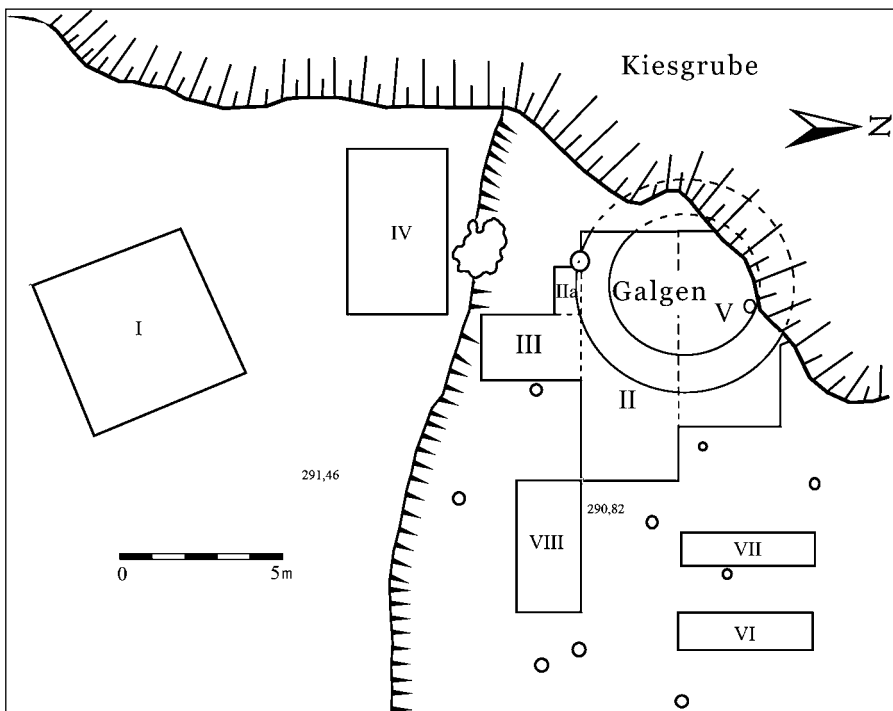


Fig. 4. Befundplan von Modrzewie/Gieshübel mit dem runden Galgenfundament
(© Paweł Duma).

Galgen in Reichenstein, Liebenthal und Hirschberg gehören zu den städtischen Beispielen (Duma – Wojtucki 2012). Es ist also kein Wunder, dass ihre Konstruktionen stabil und haltbar gewesen sind.

Modrzewie, das Beispiel eines ländlichen Galgens

Das Finden und exakte Lokalisieren eines dörflichen Richtplatzes ist aufgrund ungenauer historischer kartographischer Quellen oftmals sehr schwierig. Im Zuge

archäologischer Recherchen gelang es, einen gemauerten Galgen in einer Dorfgegend, in der Nähe von Modrzewie neben Wleń, zu lokalisieren.

Der Richtplatz in der Ortschaft Modrzewie unterscheidet sich etwas von den zuvor erwähnten Stellen. Dies gilt besonders für den Informationsmangel über den Erbauer und darüber, welche Hinrichtungen hier durchgeführt wurden (Wojtucki 2009, 375-376). Aufgrund der Karten- und Grenzanalyse können wir nur sicherstellen, dass der Hinrichtungsort sich innerhalb

des Dorfgebietes befand. Er lag wohl in der Nähe der alten Dorfgränze, in Sichtweite gegenüber dem zur nahe gelegenen Ortschaft Wleń gehörigen Galgens.

Der Fundplatz lag am Rande einer Kiesgrube, deren Abbau leider dazu geführt hat, dass ca. 15% der Strukturen durch Erdbeben zerstört wurden. Dennoch konnten die Fragmente eines Fundamentes freigelegt werden, der mit Kalkmörtel gebunden war und dessen Negativabdruck einen Außendurchmesser von 6,3 Meter zu rekonstruieren ermöglicht (Fig. 3).

Zusätzlich wurden im Verlauf der Untersuchungen mehrere Suchschnitte eingerichtet, so dass die Gesamtfläche der Studie mehr als einen Ar erfasst hat. Dabei wurde festgestellt, dass die weiteren Reste des Galgens nicht an der höchsten Stelle, sondern ganz klar in der tieferliegenden Fläche lagen. Außer den Resten des Galgens wurden keine weiteren Strukturen gefunden (Fig. 4). Ungeklärt bleibt, ob sich evtl. ursprünglich noch weitere wichtige Strukturen an der vom Erdbeben zerstörten Stelle befunden haben.

Direkt im Innerraum des Galgens, im Humus, wurde das Fragment einer menschlichen Rippe entdeckt. Unter dem Humus, in der abdeckenden Schuttschicht an der östlichen Seite des Galgenfundamentes, befand sich eine Ansammlung von zerbrochenen, menschlichen Knochen. Es handelt sich um die Fragmente des oberen Schenkels einer erwachsenen Person. Diese Knochen könnten sowohl von einem zerstörten Grab stammen, als auch von einem am Galgen aufgehängten verwesenden Körper abgefallen sein.

Da nur so wenige Knochen gefunden wurden, ist es durchaus möglich, dass an dieser Stelle nur eine einzige Hinrichtung durchgeführt wurde. Die Größe des Galgens beweist jedoch indirekt, wie wichtig das Prestige für den Gründer war, entsprechend dem Hochgericht-Privileg, einen gemauerten Galgen zu errichten und seine Bauern „an der Kehle“ zu bestrafen.

Der Galgen ist noch auf der Karte von 1824 zu erkennen und ist daher wohl erst nach diesem Datum abgerissen worden. Danach wurde der ehemalige Richtplatz für die Landwirtschaft genutzt, darauf deuten zumindest die Pflugspuren hin, die in einigen Suchgräben gefunden wurden. Zusätzlich kamen hier auch stark fragmentierte Tonscherben zu Tage, deren jüngsten Exemplare aus dem 19. Jahrhundert stammen (was auf die systematische Befruchtung des Feldes durch Düngergabe hinweist).

Der gefundene Galgen unterscheidet sich zweifellos durch seine dörfliche Lage von denen der schlesischen Städte. Er lag allerdings nicht weit von dem Richtplatz der Stadt Wleń (Lähn) entfernt. Von der Höhe des Stadtgalgens, wie auch vom beschriebenen Hinrichtungsort, konnte man die jeweilige Nachbarkonstruktion sehen. Es kann daher angenommen werden, dass die hier vorgestellte Steinkonstruktion eine Manifestation des Reichtums des

Dorfbesitzers gegen die städtischen Behörden gewesen sein könnte; vielleicht im Zusammenhang mit einem Konflikt. Leider ist diese Annahme aufgrund des Mangels an schriftlichen Quellen nur eine Vermutung.

Vom Umgang mit Selbstmördern

Außer für die Strafgefangenen, waren die Hinrichtungsplätze auch für die Selbstmörder gedacht. Je nach der Region wurden ihre Leichname anders behandelt. Im Extremfall war die Zeremonie der Bestrafung der Person, die sich das Leben genommen hat, sehr umfangreich.

Auch in Schlesien hat man ihnen eine Bestattung in der geweihten Erde praktisch bis zum Anfang des 19. Jahrhundert verweigert. Während in den schlesischen Städten schon seit dem 16. Jahrhundert Veränderungen bei der Behandlung der Leichen von Selbstmörder erfolgten, gab es in den schlesischen Dörfern einen spürbaren Widerstand bei der Einführung neuer Lösungen. Lange unterschied man auch, ob es sich um einen freiwilligen- oder durch psychische Erkrankung ausgelösten Selbstmord handelte. In letzterem Fall wurde ein stilles Begräbnis, meistens niedrigerer Kategorie, in geweihter Erde genehmigt. Aber im Allgemeinen beobachten wir viele Versuche unter den Christen der evangelischen Kirche, eine Entehrung der Selbstmörder zu beschränken. Nach den Rechtsordnungen sollten die Leichen der Selbstmörder in die Hände des Scharfrichters abgegeben werden, der dafür eine entsprechende Bezahlung erhielt. Meistens wurden die Leichen der Selbstmörder unter einem lokalen Galgen beerdigt. Wie die Chroniken berichten, wurde diese Vorgehensweise bis zum 18. Jahrhundert, und manchmal auch länger praktiziert. Als im Jahre 1798 ein Gärtner in Chlebice (Wiesenthal bei Żarów/Sorau, Niederlausitz) in seinem Teich ertrank, wurde er bei dem lokalen Galgen begraben. Es wurde jedoch dazu erwähnt, dass es der letzte solche Fall in dieser Ortschaft war (*Duma 2015, 33*).

Die Informationen, wie die Selbstmörder jahrhundertlang auf dem schlesischen Dorf behandelt wurden, entnehmen wir vor allem aus den Chroniken und seltener aus den Gerichtsakten. So erhängte sich zum Beispiel 1721 eine Bäuerin in Łaziska (Looswitz bei Bolesławiec/Bunzlau). Um den Vorfall zu klären, schickte die Stadt Bunzlau ihre Beamten vor Ort. Die Beamten stellten eine Leiter auf, schnitten die Schnur ab und warfen danach die Leiche durch ein Loch im Dach der Scheune, in der sie sich aufgehängt hatte, auf einen Wagen. Der Körper wurde anschließend von Stadtbeamten in die Nähe des Galgens gebracht. Hier fand dann ein eher ungewöhnliches Verfahren statt, denn man schnitt der Selbstmörderin den Kopf ab, bevor man sie auf der südlichen Seite des Galgens begrub (*Wernicke 1882, 420-421*).

Nicht jeder Ort hatte eine eigene Hinrichtungsstätte. In den Dörfern wurde über Jahrhunderte hinweg der „traditionelle Glaube“ gepflegt, welcher die Hinrichtungspraxis sehr beeinflusst hat. Wir finden entsprechende Beschreibungen in den Chroniken. Laut einer von ihnen hat sich im August 1716 Johan Aust auf einem Baum in der Nähe von seinem Haus in Brochocin (Brockendorf) bei Złotoryja/Goldberg aufgehängt. Der Selbstmörder wurde auf dem Grenzweg zur Ortschaft Łukaszów (Seifersdorf) gebracht, wo sein Körper in einem vorher vorbereiteten Loch begraben wurde (*Bergemann 1830*, 169). Wie das Beispiel schön zeigt, fand die Bestattung an einer Ortschaftsgrenze statt. Der Grund hierfür dürfte sein, dass man den Grenzgebieten seit Jahrhunderten magische Eigenschaften zugewiesen hat; dazu zählte auch die Hinderung der Seele des Verstorbenen am Zurückkommen in die Welt der Lebenden. Zwischen den vielen verfügbaren Berichten aus den schlesischen Dörfern finden wir viele ähnliche Informationen.

Wie bereits erwähnt, wurden die meisten Leichen der Selbstmörder bei den Richtplätzen, an den Stadtgrenzen oder an den Ortschafts-Kreuzungen begraben. Im Extremfall wurden zusätzliche Maßnahmen vorgenommen: die Leichen wurden enthauptet oder geröstet. In anderen Berichten finden wir die Information, dass die Selbstmörder auch in Schindergruben begraben wurden.

Im Jahr 1930 in Miękinia (Nimkau bei Środa Śląska/Neumarkt in Schlesien) untersuchten die Archäologen ein Skelett, das per Zufall in einer ehemaligen Schindergrube entdeckt wurde. Aus den teilweise erhaltenen Dokumenten weißt man, dass das Skelett in einer atypischen Anordnung gelegen war. Neben ihm befanden sich Tierknochen, die normalerweise an solchen Stellen zu finden sind. Die Forscher haben diese Art von Bestattung als neuzeitlich bezeichnet. Wir können vermuten, dass in der untersuchten Schindergrube die Person begraben wurde, die „unwürdig“ oder durch einen Selbstmord gestorben ist.

Fazit

Der hier vorliegende Bericht bezieht sich auf jene Gruppen von Menschen, deren „würdeloser Tod“ die lang anhaltenden Traditionen im vormodernen Dorfmilieu Schlesiens bestätigt.

Während die Forschungen in urbanen Zentren intensiv betrieben werden, sind die Archäologen bei der Analyse in den Dörfern mit einem Quellenmangel konfrontiert, der als eine der Hauptursachen für die bisherige schlechte Forschungslage gilt. Selbst eine oberflächliche Analyse zeigt jedoch, dass das Thema interessant und forschungsbereichernd ist. Basierend auf den Ausgrabungen im Dorf Modrzewie sehen wir,

dass sich das Bild der ländlichen Richtplätze stark von der bisherigen, auf schriftliche Quellen basierende, Vorstellung unterscheidet. Diese Diskrepanz zwischen schriftlichen und archäologischen Quellen taucht häufig auf bei jüngeren archäologischen Grabungen und belegt die Bedeutung der sich entwickelnden „historischen Archäologie“. Das Thema des unwürdigen Todes spiegelt zudem die Brauchveränderungen in der Gesellschaft, die einen direkten Einfluss auf die Vorgehensweise mit den „unwürdigen“ Menschen hatte. Von einem allgemeinen Standpunkt aus gesehen, verliefen die Veränderungen in ganz Europa ähnlich, jedoch langsamer in den ländlichen Gebieten als in den Städten. Auffallend sind auch die regionalen Unterschiede in Bezug auf die unwürdigen Verstorbenen und das Vorgehen gegenüber diesen Gruppen. Um ein vollständiges Bild des Phänomens zu geben, sind jedoch weitere Forschungen und Veröffentlichung der Ergebnisse vor allem im Bereich der archäologischen Forschung erforderlich.

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The investigation of traces of religious cults and practices in the medieval rural archaeology of Hungary

Miklós Takács *

ABSTRACT

The aim of the present paper is to give an overview of the archaeological traces of religious cults and practices in the medieval rural environment of Hungary. The material is divided into four sections on the basis of the physical form of the artefacts or features suitable for this type of analysis. The following types of buildings or artefact are analysed: churches with their graveyards; cemeteries of so called *Reihengräberfeld*-type; various types of settlement features or parts of these and single artefacts. The greatest attention was given to those complete ceramic vessels, that contained eggs, skeletons of little animals, nails, or other iron artefacts.

Keywords: *Archaeology of medieval settlements, Hungary, religious cults and practices, whole vessels containing eggs, skeletons of little animals, nails, or other iron artefacts.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Zu den Untersuchungen der Spuren religiöser Kulte und Praktiken in der mittelalterlichen Siedlungsarchäologie Ungarns

Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist eine Übersicht über die Forschungen zu den religiösen Kulturen und Praktiken in der mittelalterlichen Siedlungsarchäologie Ungarns zu bringen. Das Fundmaterial ist in vier größere Sektionen geteilt, jeweils basierend auf solchen Funden und Befunden, die für die Beantwortung der hier gestellten Fragestellung geeignet sind. Die folgenden Typen an Funden und Befunden wurden analysiert: Kirchen samt ihrer Friedhöfe; Reihengräberfelder; verschiedene Typen von Siedlungsspuren oder Teilbefunde; spezielle Typen von Einzelfunden. Die größte Aufmerksamkeit galt dabei jenen Tongefäßen, die im ganzen Zustand gefunden wurden und Eier, Skelette von Kleintieren oder aber verschiedene Eisengegenstände enthielten.

Schlagwörter: *Archäologie mittelalterlicher Siedlungen, Ungarn, religiöse Kulte und Praktiken, Gefäße mit Eiern, Skeletten von kleinen Tieren, Nägel oder anderen Artefakten.*

* Hungarian Academy of Sciences,
Institute of Archaeology,
Budapest, Hungary
takacs.miklos@btk.mta.hu

RÉSUMÉ

Les investigations des traces de culte et des pratiques religieuses par l'archéologie médiévale rurale en Hongrie

Le but de cet article est de donner une vue générale sur l'état des recherches archéologiques sur les cultes et rites religieux des villages médiévaux hongrois. Le matériel archéologique peut être divisé en quatre sections en se basant sur les découvertes et les structures mises au jour permettant de trouver des réponses à différentes questions. Les types suivants ont été analysés: les églises et leur cimetières respectifs; les nécropoles de type

Introduction

The investigation of archaeological artefacts or objects connected with religious cults and practices in medieval rural Hungary has several aspects to it that are difficult to relate with each other. Medieval archaeology as a branch of science emerged in Hungary in the second half of the 19th century with the excavation of rich graves and the investigation of the architecture of the most important medieval churches (Nagy 2003, 33-35). One would therefore expect a consistent level of interest in the results of research connected with religion and religious practices in the last 80 years, following the establishment of the archaeology of medieval rural settlements as a branch of medieval archaeology. The primary focus of rural archaeology was the analysis of the vernacular architecture, especially the presumed development of the so-called peasant house (an overview of the earlier investigation on this topic: Holl 1970, 370-375; Holl 1979, 45-50). Later on, medieval rural archaeology in Hungary inherited an interest in the analysis of village churches (Holl 1970, 378-383). However, the focus has lain on an architectural interpretation of the excavated remains, while in the case of burials the greatest attention was paid to grave goods, especially when they were made of gold or silver. Obviously only the last one was connected with the analysis of cults and religious practices. Yet, these branches of investigation have yielded a large amount of data connected with the theme of cults and religious practices. Therefore the researcher's aim, to present an overview of the archaeological data from Hungary dealing with this topic, is actually a double task: not only to collect data focusing on religious practices, but also to retrieve data connected with this issue from a body of publications that deal with many other questions in order to evaluate religious practices in the rural environment.

The medieval archaeological remains connected with cults and religious practises are divided into four

Reihengräberfeld; différents types d'agglomérations rurales respectivement des structures partielles; des types de découvertes isolées. On se focalise surtout sur des récipients en terre cuite, trouvés entiers et contenant des œufs, des squelettes de petits animaux, des clous ou d'autres objets en fer.

Mots-clés : *archéologie des villages médiévaux, la Hongrie, cultes et pratiques religieuses, récipients contenant des œufs, des squelettes de petits animaux, des clous ou d'autres artefacts.*

groups on the very simple basis of their physical form. These four categories are:

- churches within their graveyards
- flat cemeteries in rows of the *Reihengräberfeld*-type
- smaller groups of archaeological features, single items, or parts of these
- single artefacts or groups of items discovered on a single site.

I will review these categories in turn, and I will begin with a review of the literature dealing with the remains of churches and their cemeteries, since these analyses have – as previously mentioned – the longest tradition in Hungarian archaeology.

Churches with their graveyards

As indicated above, the investigation of village churches and their graveyards has a historiography that is longer than a hundred years in Hungary. These sites have the greatest potential for evidence of folklore in local communities, providing scholars with various aspects of the popular religion. The graveyards around medieval churches were usually delimited and therefore where almost always 'over-buried'. The skeletons usually lay in many layers, one over the other (recent examples of multilayer churchyard-cemeteries excavated in the last few years: Kulcsár 1995, 229; M. Aradi – Bajzik 2008, fig. 4; Kovács 2013b, 1-5; Rácz 2014, Pl. 2/1-3, Pl. 14/2; an overview of the issue: Ritoók 2014, 480-482, fig. 1-6.). The local inhabitants tend to interpret these graveyards with many skeletons as the results of epidemics or executions carried out in the wars of late medieval or modern times (usually the Ottomans or their allies are the supposed perpetrators). For the adherents of these interpretations two facts were and are dismissed: firstly, although the corpses lie very closely to each other they also bear clear signs of regular burial, i.e. the bodies are in an outstretched position, and secondly, one can also find pieces of clothes and jewellery as grave-goods (for some

examples for the jewellery excavated in the last few years: *Kulcsár 1995*, 228-230; *M. Aradi – Bajzik 2008*, 228; *K. Németh – Rácz 2012*, Pl. 10-13; *Kovács 2013b*, 1-5; *Rácz 2014*, Pl. 15/2-6, Pl. 16-21, Pl. 22/1-13, Pl. 23/1-14.).

The multi-layered strata of these graveyards posed a big problem for the excavation of this type of site. Only in the early 1940s did István Méri develop the methodology of the excavation of church graveyards (*Méri 1944*). In the last six decades many excavations have been carried out in cemeteries of this type. These works were mostly initiated by chance, i.e. when parts of medieval churches and their graveyards were disturbed by various types of agricultural or building activity. There is also a huge quantity of literature, mainly preliminary reports, dealing with these excavations, predominantly in Hungarian. There are also several overviews on these excavations mainly written by Ágnes Ritoók, only published in Hungarian, but with German or English summaries (*Ritoók 1984*, 93-106; *Ritoók 1997*, 165-177; *Ritoók 2004*, 115-123; *Ritoók 2014*, 473-494).

These excavations give us a picture of the church graveyards of the central part of the medieval Hungarian kingdom dated between the 11th and 18th centuries, with graves buried according to the rites of Christian churches. These were usually carried out with the rules of the Catholic church, in spite of the fact, that the Byzantine church was also present to a limited extent, mainly in the eastern and south-eastern parts of the country, and from the second half of the 16th century the burial practices of various Protestant confessions, Lutheran, Calvinist, *et al.* can also be observed. Social stratification is also present in an explicit way. Pieces of jewellery or remains of richly decorated clothes are typical of the graves excavated in the inner part of the churches, the usual burial place for the members of the elite of the medieval Hungarian kingdom.

There are only few artefacts that suggest the presence of cults and practices that are not explained by the burial rites and practices prescribed by the Christian churches. These include, for example, a set of tools for viticulture in a grave at the site of Gyöngyöspata (Fig. 1) (*Szabó 1982-1983*, 135-186) a massive lock of iron in the grave of a little girl in Bata (Fig. 2) (*K. Németh – Rácz 2012*, 154-155), and exceptionally some vessels were found as grave goods (see *e.g. Topál 1972*, 78-79).

But there are also some features excavated in church graveyards which point to practices other than those regulated by the funeral rites of Christian churches. At several excavations round pits were found containing iron artefacts that were precious to their owners: usually tools for agriculture, even parts of ploughs (*Topál 1972*, 85-94). The use of graveyards as depositories for large artefacts is explained by the presence at many churches of graveyards surrounded by walls, not only in Transylvania, but also in the middle parts of the medieval Hungarian kingdom (*Ritoók 2004*, 116). Most curious was the coincidence of

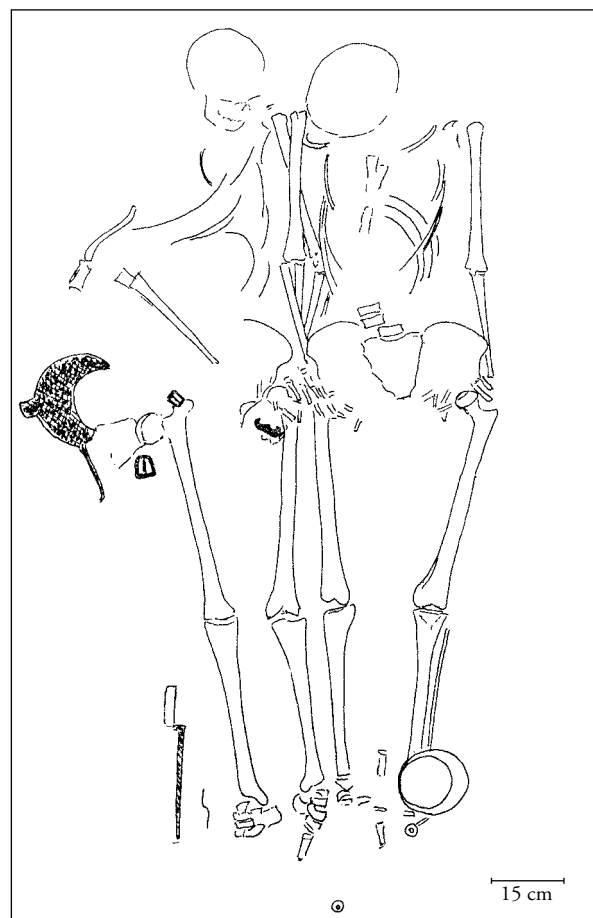


Fig. 1. Gyöngyöspata – Előmal: a sketch of the grave 13-14 with a set of tools for viticulture (© János Győző Szabo).

funeral and storage function observed at the excavations in Balatonszárszó – Kis-erdei-dűlő, where – according to the post-holes – a line of buildings was set along the inside of the churchyard-wall (*Belényesi et al. 2007*, 82-89). As none of these buildings possessed an oven or hearth, it was presumed that they only served as rooms for storage.

In the case of medieval church buildings, one would not expect the presence of any traces of non-Christian religious practices. In spite of these expectations, one can find several examples for so-called building sacrifices, *e.g.* clay vessels, not only pots but also jugs, which were either built into the walls, or put in the holes dug in the floor of the respective church (Fig. 3) (*H. Gyűrky 1967*, 80-83). I will analyse this specific type of archaeological feature in the fourth section of my presentation.

Flat cemeteries in rows of the *Reihengräberfeld*-type

The investigation of early medieval row cemeteries forms a special branch of archaeology in Hungary, separate from the investigation of church graveyards. The separate

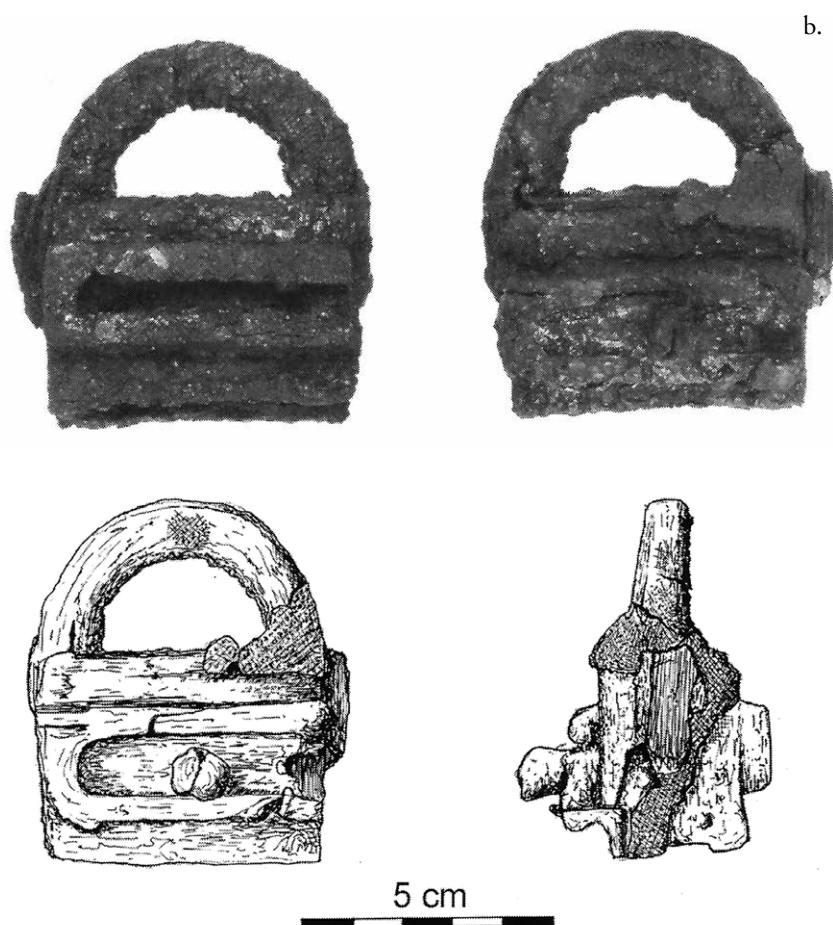
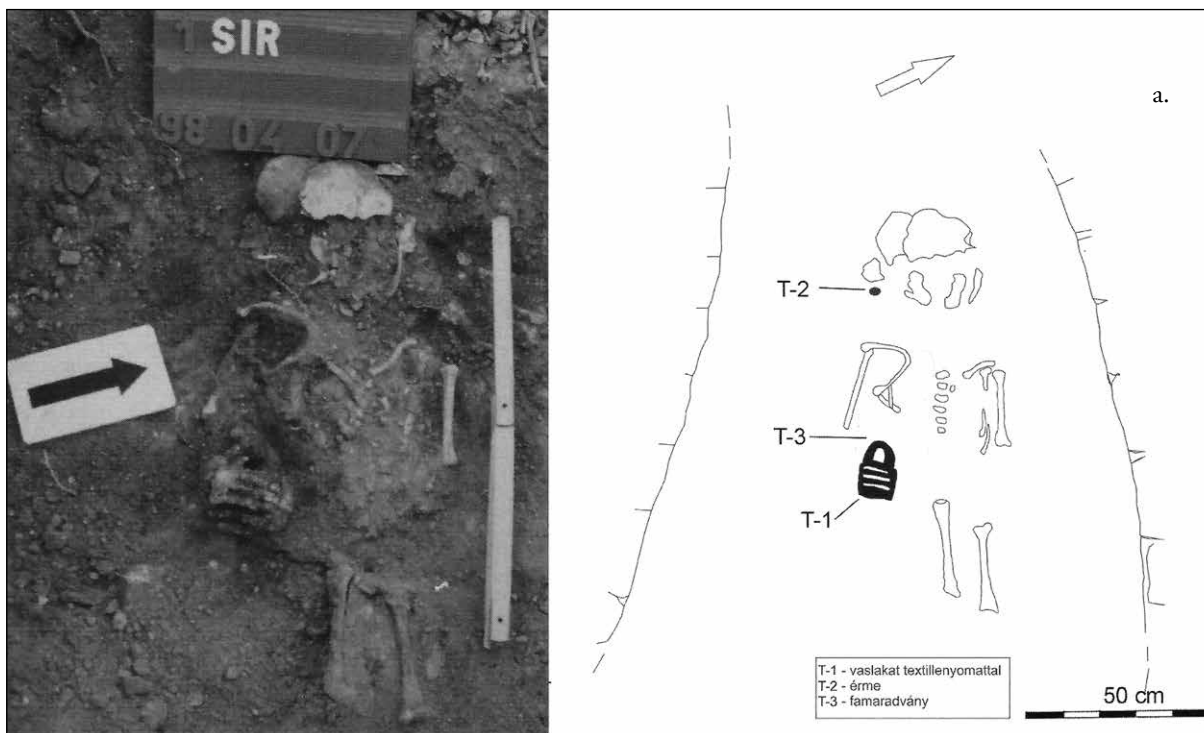
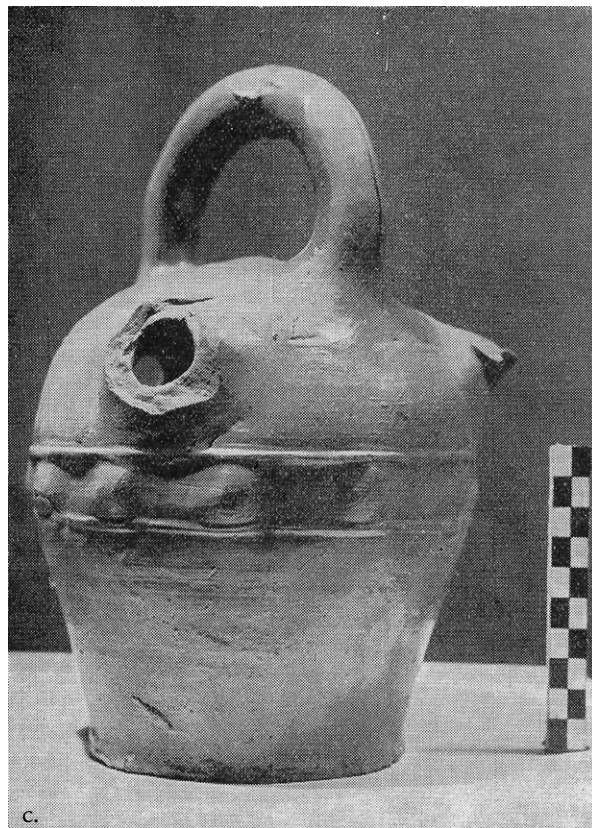
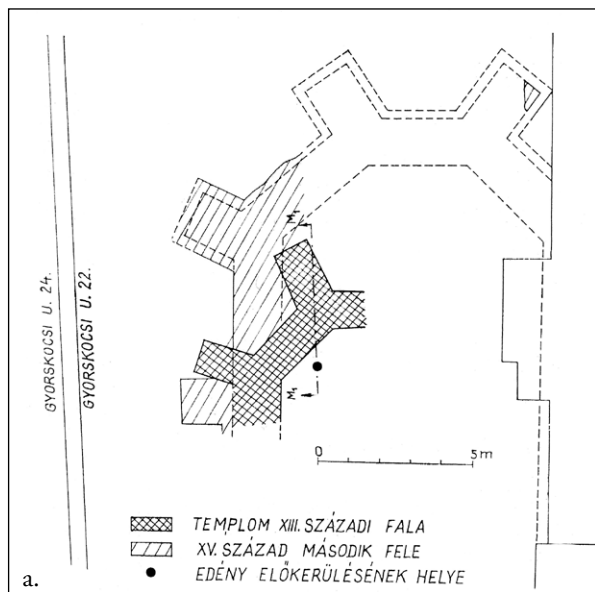


Fig. 2. a) Bába – Kossuth Str., grave 1: a photo and a sketch of the grave. b) a massive lock (!) of iron found in the grave of a little girl (© K. Németh-Rácz 2012, 174, pl. 10, 1-3).

Fig. 3. a) Budapest I. (St. Peters suburb of the city of Buda) – St Peters church: a drawing of the excavated walls of the apse. The place of the vessel is pointed with a dot. b) Photo of the vessel in situ. c) Photo of the vessel after the restoration (© H. Gyürky 1967, 80-81, fig. 1-3).



b.

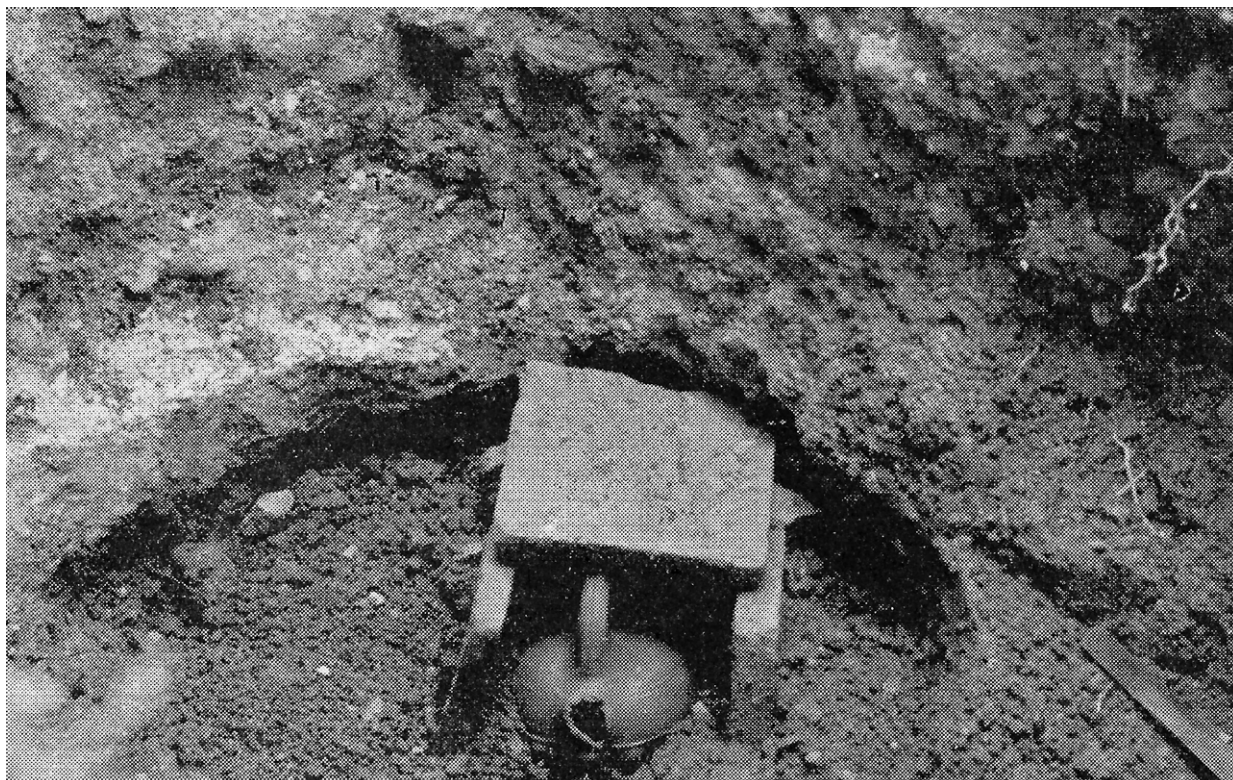




Fig. 4. Bácskossuthfalva / Stara Moravica (Serbia, province of Vojvodina) – Kisjárás: a clay cauldron with a broken element of a winding staircase, next to the grave Nr. 11 (© Miklós Takács 1986, Tab. 33/2).

treatment has its roots not only in the different chronology of these two site-types, but also in the structure of the burials and their grave-goods. The vast majority of the row cemeteries are to be dated to the early Middle Ages, i.e. to the Great Migration Period, and a good part of the burials bear clear signs of non-Christian burial practices, expressed in the structure of the grave-goods. The analysis of tools, weapons, vessels or animals, usually horses, put in the graves either as whole skeletons or parts of them, represents the best understood topic in the archaeology of the Great Migration Period in Hungary. One could also say that the investigation of these topics form the core of the archaeology of this period, not only in Hungary but also in the other countries of the region (for the late Avar period see *Szőke 2003a*, 308-311; for the Carolingian period see *Szőke 2003b*, 314; for the Conquest period see *Révész 2003*, 338-343; *Langó 2005*, 175-340). The diverse results are hard to summarize in a few words. Let me point out only some facts that are important for the archaeology of rural settlements.

The first point is the explicit social stratification of row cemeteries, given that the number and the quality of grave goods to some extent reflect the social status of the buried person in some way. The sets of gravegoods are not the accurate reflections of the social stratification also concerning the early middle ages, and despite of many positive statements of the older literature. In spite of this obstacle, some conclusions are to be formulated.

The differences in the number and quality of grave goods are especially typical of row cemeteries with a considerable number of graves. This is important for the archaeology of rural settlements. There are good reasons to interpret the row cemeteries of considerable size as cemeteries of village-like settlements, as shown in a recent study of László Kovács (*Kovács 2013a*, 511-604). If this interpretation is correct, it suggests that the village-like settlements of early medieval times are not to be treated solely as living places of the ordinary people, since some of the elite must also have lived in village-like settlements in buildings that are much harder to be identify than the standard Grubenhau-type dwellings (*Takács 2002*, 282-286).

The second point is the question of the micro-topographic separation of the living areas from the cemeteries in an early medieval village-like settlement. The vast majority of row cemeteries and settlements lie in topographically separated locations, and it is often not even possible to determine the link between them. The ditches discovered at the edges of cemeteries also point to a need to physically separate the areas of the living from the area of the deceased (János Győző Szabó was the first scholar in Hungary, who thoroughly analysed this question: *Szabó 1970*, 265-270). The intentional topographical separation has – it seems – not reduced the links between the living areas of an early medieval village-like settlement and its graveyard solely to the

time of burial. Though hearths were uncovered in some early medieval row cemeteries, e.g. the cemetery of Győr-Téglavető (Tomka 1971, 59, 62-63), there is not a single excavation with firm evidence of a contemporaneous use of hearths and burials. Despite this deficiency, one can also find some positive examples in the literature that demonstrate more substantial links between the living areas of the village and its cemetery. In Bácskossuthfalva / Stara Moravica (Serbia, Vojvodina province) part of a row cemetery from the 11th or the beginning of the 12th century was discovered with a curious feature (Fig. 4) (Takács 1986, Tab. 33/2). Next to grave 11, a circular pit was excavated containing a fragment of stone masonry: the broken step of a spiral staircase placed in a large ceramic cauldron. As the piece of spiral staircase is most likely to date from the 13th-14th centuries, this curious deposit was put in the ground of the graveyard a century or two after the period of the burials. The exact motives of those burying a piece of stone masonry and a cauldron within a cemetery could be the subject of a study in itself. I hope I am not being foolish in suggesting fear of ghosts as an explanation.

Beside hearths, empty spaces were also observed during several excavations of early medieval row-cemeteries (for the first time in Halimba – Cseres: Török 1962, Plan (= Kartenbeilage) IV). In some cases the spaces without graves were treated as places for sacrifices connected with pre-Christian cults (Szöke 1956, 119-120, 137; Török 1962, 108-109). Subsequently, the land occupied by cemeteries was reconstituted as sacred areas covered with exuberant vegetation, where the roots of trees could also affect the formation of empty spaces.

Smaller groups of archaeological features, single items, or parts of these

In Hungary, the interpretation of specific archaeological features at medieval villages relating to cults or religious practices is almost always connected with problems. Interpretation is difficult in the absence of ethnographic parallels and written sources for the late medieval – early modern period. Even so, they invariably testify the spread of religious cults and practices outside churches and churchyards.

For the period between the 5th and 10th century, historically, the period prior to the formation of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom, the Christian religion spread only around the power centres in the North-western, or South-western parts of the Carpathian basin, and only from the 9th century on. Therefore the village-like settlements of the second half of the first Millennium in the central parts of the Carpathian basin are characterised by a general lack of churches. As a consequence, the identification of buildings or parts of buildings connected

with religious practices is even more difficult than in the later centuries. At practically every excavation there are huge empty spaces, i.e. parts of the excavated surfaces are not covered with any early medieval settlement features (cf. the site of Lébény – Kaszás-domb: Takács 1996, plan). But even so, it is hard to avoid the implication of a lack of evidence. Positive evidence for empty spaces in the excavation reports of village-like settlements is not to be found, and they do not mention any artefacts firmly connected with religious cults and practices. Therefore, it would make no sense to connect these empty spaces with the subject of our study.

For the following period, between the 11th and the 16th centuries, the situation is quite similar to the one outlined above, especially in the Árpadian Age (i.e. in the time of the kings of the Árpád-dynasty, ruling between the 11th and the 13th century), not only because of the relatively rare appearance of churches in the rural environment, but also due to the fact, that the Grubenhause-type building was the main, but of course not the only dwelling type at village-like settlements (Takács 2002, 272-290). There is only one new element to be described. Some complete vessels were found buried in the buildings and others outside in open spaces, sometimes containing eggs, skeletons of little animals, nails, or other iron artefacts (Sági 1967, 55; Horváth 1979a, 42; Horváth 1979b, 86; Kovalovszki 1980, 47; Fodor 1986, 139-145; Takács 1986, 35, 41, 54; Jankovich 1991, 185; Takács 1993, 207, fig. 6; Wolf 1993/94, 543-562; Tomka 2007, 84, 86; Daróczi-Szabó – Terei 2011, 198-226; Szabó 2013b, 11). Finds of complete vessels are somewhat rare, but even so one can find data in the literature about other sites with sacrificial vessels. I will analyse this specific type of archaeological feature in the next section of my presentation.

Let us establish an overview of the possible traces of religious cults and practices that can be collected from the archaeological literature of medieval villages or village-like settlements. The general conclusion is easy to be drawn: traces of this kind are rarely found, no matter what chronological date an object belongs to. There are also several possible interpretations. Let us examine one of these first. In the ethnographic material describing the vernacular architecture of the 19th and 20th centuries one can find a large body of data about the central post in the most important and only heated room of the so-called three-room peasant house bearing the curious folk name of St. Mary, or St. Mary's stock (*boldoganya*, or *boldogasszonyfája* in Hungarian). Because of its curious name, Béla Gunda and László Vajda treat the central post as a possible survival from the most archaic Obi-Ugric period of prehistory relating to the Hungarians (Gunda 1947, 71-75; Vajda 1951, 50-62; Filep 1979, 507; K. Csilléry 1982, 98; an overview and evaluation of these analyses Takács 1993, 205). Archaeological research

of the remains of medieval vernacular architecture do not support this possibility. The central post appears in the excavation of medieval villages quite rarely, usually without any archaeologically perceptible sign of its presumed importance (Takács 1993, 205).

The elaboration of the theory connected with the central post in the vernacular architecture has underlined an important fact in the analysis of religious cults and practices within domestic buildings. It is not whole buildings but parts of them that were connected with these practices. One can find many descriptions of the so-called 'sacred corners' in the investigation of the vernacular architecture, usually in the heated room of the three-room peasant house (Balassa – Ortutay 1980, 148). These show us why archaeological analysis of cults and practices within the living area is so difficult, since most of the objects leave no archaeologically recordable trace.

However, let us examine two definite examples. The first are the whole vessels already mentioned above. Here, only the most often cited sacrificial vessel is mentioned, which was found in a little hole dug in the floor of one of the Grubenhau-type dwellings of Kardoskút-Hatablak dated to the 12th-13th century (Méri 1964a, 16, 17). This vessel contained the skeleton of a chicken. The second example is a peculiar type of find from the fill of some Grubenhau-type dwellings or pits (Méri 1964b, 111-115; Takács 1993, 206). These are the skulls of horses, or – rarely – dogs, with a *post mortem* enlargement of the *foramen magnum*. These skulls were interpreted by István Méri as objects that were placed on the top of the gable of some Grubenhau-type dwellings. The majority of the animal skulls with an artificially enlarged *foramen magnum* are dated to the Árpáadian age, but in the literature one example of this practice is from the Avar Age: the skull of a dog found in the filling of the Grubenhau-type dwelling of Szabadbattyán (Fülöp 1984, 262).

Single artefacts or groups of items discovered on a single site

In the last short chapter of this study I want to present further information about the finds of complete vessels mentioned above. Let me repeat some of the above data. These vessels are usually pots, with some exceptions. They can be dated, according to their shape and form, to the second phase of the Middle Ages, i.e. the Hungarian Kingdom between the 11th and the 16th centuries. The vessels of this group are always deposited in an upright, but usually upside down position, though there are several exceptions, where a vessel literally stands upright in its hole. The usual contents of these vessels are eggs, skeletons of birds or small mammals, iron nails, but they can also be 'empty', i.e. with only earth in them (Sági 1967, 55; Horváth 1979a, 42; Horváth 1979b, 86; Kovalovszki



Fig. 5. Szőny – Dunapart: pot containing an egg from the debris of a Roman-Age hypocaustum (© Miklós Takács 2016).

1980, 47; Fodor 1986, 139-145; Takács 1986, 35, 41, 54; Jankovich 1991, 185; Takács 1993, 207, fig. 6; Wolf 1993/94, 543-562; Tomka 2007, 84, 86; Daróczi-Szabó-Terei 2011, 198-226; Szabó 2013b, 11).

As previously said, there is a big variety in the locations in which these vessels were deposited. They can be found inside dwellings or houses, not only in village-like settlements, but also in towns (Jankovich 1991, 185; Daróczi-Szabó – Terei 2011, 198-226). Sometimes, as remarked, there were deposits of ceramic vessels even inside churches (H. Gyürky 1967, 80-83). In spite of their overall abundance, vessels deposited inside houses themselves are generally rare in that they do not appear in every house, or even every second one, and, as far as I know, there was no single occurrence of more than one vessel. Another common place in which to find deposited vessels is in between the archaeological structures of villages. When we analyse the phenomenon at the level of sites, we have to conclude that only a few of the excavated village-like settlements produced a deposit of this type, but there are also a few sites like Budapest – Kána, or Jászfényszaru – Szőlők-alja with an abundance of them (Daróczi-Szabó – Terei 2011, 198-226; Bíró 2014, 385-397, 454). Fortunately in both cases the deposits have been analysed. The publication of 21 deposited vessels from Kána by H.

György, Terei and Márta Daróczy-Szabó in 2011 gave a new impetus to the investigation of cult practices, not only by a thorough archaeological, but also an archaeozoological analysis (*Daróczy-Szabó – Terei 2011*, 198-226). This showed that the vessel of feature No. 3054 contained the skeleton of a new-born dog and of a pike. Dénes Szabó prepared an overview of cult practices in English for the 19th Annual Meeting of the EAA in 2013 in Plzen (*Szabó 2013a*; the whole text of the study *Szabó 2013b*, 11-18). Last but not least Gyöngyvér Bíró remarked in the analysis of the deposited vessels of Jászfényszaru in 2014 that the inhabitants of this settlement preferred to use pots with a mark on the base in the shape of a cross as vessels for pit deposits, whereas basal marks were not common among the sherds of ceramics found without a ritual context (*Bíró 2014*, 385-397, 454).

The most curious locations lay outside medieval sites at the sites of earlier settlements or graveyards. At the excavation of the remains of the vicus by the Roman fort of Brigetio (today Szőny, Hungary) on the Danubian limes, led by László Borhy and Dávid Bartus (*Bartus et al. 2014*, 437-449), a deposited Árpadian Age pot was found in 2014, containing a complete egg (Fig. 5) (*Takács 2016*). This deposit lay in an upright position in the debris of the hypocaust of a 3rd-4th century building. It should be stressed that no other artefact or object from the Árpadian Age had been found at the site.

Conclusions

Let me finish my presentation with a few short remarks. The archaeology of the medieval village-like settlements of Hungary does not support the point of view of Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn published in 2005, according to which the archaeology of cult, despite its presence as an obvious field of research, is substantially neglected (*Renfrew – Bahn 2005*, 33). In the case of the medieval archaeology of Hungary one can find a large body of data, but most of it has yet to be analysed and is available only to researchers familiar with the Hungarian language. There are of course some exceptions mainly connected with the archaeology of church graveyards, or with specific find types or rituals observed in row cemeteries. The largest number of studies is focused on analyses of whole vessels containing eggs, skeletons or iron artefacts, mainly published in Hungarian.

It is in my opinion essential to submit this huge quantity of literature to a thorough analysis in order to answer the big questions connected with cults and ritual practices. These questions are: what can archaeology say on the issue of beliefs in the central parts of the Carpathian basin prior to the spread of Christianity in the 11th century? How is the religion of the inhabitants of village-like settlements to be described for the

time span between the 11th and the 16th century on the basis of our source material? Are there signs in the archaeological sources for the presence of other religions: Judaism and Islam, which, according to the written sources, were also present in medieval Hungary (Concerning the topic of the presence of Muslims and Jews in Medieval Hungary see: *Berend 2001*; *Hatházy – Szende 2003*, 395-397; *Rózsa et al. 2014*, 1-7).

Finally, I want to point out two possible dangers. We have to be aware of an obvious and previously mentioned negative trend in archaeology – as put forward by Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn in 2005 in their key concepts (*Renfrew – Bahn 2005*, 33), which is to skate over or neglect the traces of cults and religious practices. But we also have to stay clear from another danger, a trend especially characteristic of the archaeologies of the countries of Eastern-Central Europe, namely the tendency to connect archaeological artefacts or objects that cannot be interpreted with religious factors.

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Lay devotion in rural and urban contexts in medieval Sweden

Elisabet Regner *

ABSTRACT

While some aspects of medieval religion and ritual, for instance burial practices, church architecture and monasticism, are established fields of research the archaeology of lay religious life outside the church remains largely unexplored. This paper examines lay devotional practices in both urban and rural communities through finds of devotional objects and their archaeological contexts. The study focuses on finds' contexts as traces of ritualized social practices to provide a database and explores both the active use of devotional objects and depositional practices indicating possible ritualization of the discarding of devotional objects. Questions regarding the social and economic contexts of lay devotion are also discussed. The study proposes that for some types of devotional practices, there are clear similarities between urban and rural areas and between elite and non-elite environments indicating shared religious practices. However, there are also clearly urban phenomena such as the use of certain types of devotional images, which should be understood within the context of urbanity.

Keywords: *Lay devotion, ritual practice, devotional objects, rosaries, pilgrim badges.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Säkulare Pietät im ruralen und städtischen Kontext im mittelalterlichen Schweden

Während einige Aspekte mittelalterlicher Religion und Rituale, wie z.B. Grabpraktiken, Kirchenarchitektur und Klosterwesen, etablierte Forschungsfelder sind, führt die Archäologie des säkularen-/inoffiziellen religiösen Lebens ausserhalb der Kirche ein Schattendasein. Diese Arbeit behandelt mittels verschiedener Funde und Devotionalien aus archäologischem Kontext sowohl städtische als auch ländliche religiöse Praktiken. Die Studie basiert auf erkennbaren Spuren ritualisierter sozialer Praktiken, die sowohl den aktiven Gebrauch der Devotionalien umfassen als auch die Deponierung solcher Objekte, die u.U. auch mit einer ritualisierten Handlung einhergehen können. Hinzu kommt die Diskussion um Fragen zum sozialen und ökonomischen Kontext der säkularen Pietät. Für für einige der Praktiken lassen sich klare Parallelen sowohl im urbanen und wie im ländlichen Milieu aufzeigen, daneben scheint es auch solche religiöse Praktiken gegeben zu haben, die gemeinsam von Eliten und Nicht-Eliten gelebt wurden.

* The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm, Sweden
elisabet.regner@historiska.se

Allerdings gab es auch klar feststellbare urbane Praktiken, wie die Verwendung bestimmter religiöser Bilder, die als Ausdruck einer städtischen Lebensweise gelten können.

Schlagwörter: *Säkulare Pietät, rituelle Praktiken, Devotionalien, Rosenkränze, Pilgerzeichen.*

RÉSUMÉ

La dévotion séculaire en contexte rurale et urbaine en Suède médiévale

Alors que certains aspects de la religion et des rituels du Moyen Âge, comme par exemple les pratiques funéraires, l'architecture religieuse et le monachisme, sont des champs de recherche bien établis, l'archéologie de la vie religieuse séculière en dehors de l'église reste largement inexplorée. Cet article examine les pratiques pieuses séculières dans les communautés urbaines et rurales à travers certains

Introduction

In this paper, I will discuss urban and rural private devotion based on archaeological finds of devotional objects. My main interest is not forms of worship or religious institutions, but rather quite mundane and everyday ritual practices. For late medieval Sweden, some lay religious practices, such as pilgrimage, prayers, runic amulets and burial, have been extensively studied (see for instance *Carlsson 1947; MacLeod – Mees 2006; Andersson 1989; Fröjmark 1992; Cinthio 2002; Fallberg Sundmark 2008; Jonsson 2009; Aldrin 2010*). Many of these studies have shown differences between social groups, for instance in the popularity of certain saints and pilgrimage sites or differences in burial practices. The more personal and domestic devotional life of the laity remains largely unexplored as do some of the objects used. This article is based on preliminary results from an ongoing research project, and aims at drawing up some general tendencies concerning urban and rural lay devotional practices.

Devotion is a term used for prayers, worship and other religious activities outside of the liturgy, and in the medieval context it includes complex prayer rituals such as the rosary, but also for instance pilgrimage. Some rituals could take place in the church, but they were also done in the home. As medieval archaeologists, we are familiar with the concept of a particular urban lifestyle expressed and maintained through material culture (see for instance *Gaimster 2005; Immonen 2007*). Ritualized practices were part of the formation of this urban society, and some were specific to urban communities (see for instance *Mänd 2005*). In the context of this paper, I will explore the existence in

objets de piété et de leur contexte archéologique. L'étude se focalise sur les contextes de découverte comme les traces de pratiques sociales ritualisées instaurant un cadre, et explore à la fois l'utilisation active des objets religieux et les pratiques de dépôt indiquant une possible ritualisation de l'abandon d'objets pieux. Les questions concernant les contextes sociaux et économiques de la dévotion séculière seront également discutées. L'étude propose que pour certains types de pratiques pieuses, il y ait clairement une similarité entre les milieux urbain et rural, ainsi qu'entre les élites et les non-élites, ce qui implique des pratiques religieuses communes. Cependant, il y a des phénomènes clairement urbains, comme par exemple l'utilisation de certaines images pieuses qui ne peuvent être comprises que dans le contexte urbain.

Mots-clés : *dévotion séculière, pratiques rituelles, objets pieux, rosaires, insignes de pèlerin.*

the archaeological record of traces of ritual practices specific to rural communities, focusing in a broad sense on lay devotion.

I will attempt to approach medieval private devotion from a theoretical framework of practice theory (*Mauss 1979; Bourdieu 1977*), which has had a wide influence on ritual studies. Catherine Bell sees practice as an innate and irreducible term for human activity. It is situational, strategic and unconscious, and furthermore it reproduces or reconfigures the vision of the order of power in the world (*Bell 1992, 81*). Ritualization is the process through which some social actions are designed and shaped to distinguish and privilege what is being done over other social actions. The practice perspective is developed by Bell to discuss ritual not as an object nor as a subjective experience, but as the very act of doing ritual – after all that is what ritual does. Practice theory has been used in archaeological studies of pre-historic ritual, however much less frequently for the medieval period despite its frequent use in urban studies (for instance *Nilsson Stutz 2003; Christophersen 2015*). I am specifically interested in what Henning Laugerud and Laura Skinnebach (*Laugerud – Skinnebach 2007*) called the instruments of devotion, objects and images through which practices that constitute devotion are expressed and articulated.

In the context of this paper, working from practice theory means studying how the objects were used and how these actions were ritualized. I will explore differences and similarities between rural and urban ritual practices, and whether or not there were in fact ritual practices specific to rural communities.

The source material

This study is based on finds of specific objects used in ritual practices, with a focus on objects that can be related in different ways to personal devotion as practiced by lay people. Many of these objects would have been used in particular devotional spaces created in a domestic environment (Webb 2005; see also Aldrin 2010, 91), however some were not. For practical purposes, the study encompasses finds from present day Sweden. This means that the study includes Scania which was part of Denmark, but excludes Finland.

Devotional objects, like devotional images, are defined not by their form or subject matter, but rather by their function (see Marks 2004, 11-37; Ringbom 1965). Archaeologically, these finds can be rare and they are sometimes seen as elite objects. As a field of research, art-historical studies of devotional objects have certainly tended to focus on ivories, alabasters and polychrome sculpture, and on elite environments such as monasteries (see for instance van Os 1994; Hamburger 1997; Marks 2004). In the medieval period, there was certainly a production of devotional objects as luxury items; however there was also a production of much simpler objects intended for a much wider segment of society.

Swedish finds of pilgrim badges and runic inscriptions have been researched and published to a much higher degree than rosaries and portable devotional images. This paper presents preliminary findings based primarily on the collections of the Swedish History Museum (SHM) in Stockholm together with published finds. The analysis will focus on instruments of devotional practice and their use by primarily lay people outside the liturgy. In some instances, the paper also touches on domestic devotional practice among the clergy. Finds of devotional objects from monastic sites are included in the analysis to give the reader a more comprehensive overview of the categories of finds. However, the reader should be aware that this paper does not aim to explore the issue of monastic private devotional practice and that finds from monastic institutions come from a fundamentally different religious and social setting than finds from secular sites. They are therefore discussed separately. This is particularly important when discussing rural finds. Within a given urban settlement, there is always a possibility that finds have been re-deposited from another part of town and so the separation between different social categories is less clear-cut from an archaeological point of view.

Pilgrimage and pilgrim badges

Medieval pilgrimage has for a long time been a central research topic in medieval studies in general, and pilgrim badges have been extensively studied within medieval archaeology and art history (for example Spencer 1998). Several studies have focused on the badges themselves,

their identification, chronology and iconography and their relationship to the history and popularity of specific pilgrimage sites. In 1989, Lars Andersson published an extensive survey of Swedish finds of pilgrim badges and ampullae. Based on finds of pilgrim badges Andersson suggested that pilgrimage was an elite, and predominantly urban, phenomenon in the period from about 1000 to 1300. He also found that badges from the late middle ages were predominantly found in rural contexts, suggesting a change in the social recruitment (Andersson 1989, 196-198).

While Andersson's study remains important, his conclusions concerning rural pilgrimage are problematic. Andersson uses badges from a range of different social settings – rural parish churches, monastic institutions as well as settlements – as reflective of rural pilgrimage. However, the frequency of pilgrimage within large religious institutions with far-reaching international contacts is not representative of the rural population as a whole. As shown in figure 1, the rural monastic institutions have yielded a large number of pilgrim badges. The absolute majority, 11 badges, come from the Cistercian abbey of Alvastra. Among these are two badges from Wilsnack and one from Aachen, both uncommon in Swedish finds and probably reflecting the extensive trade connections between the abbey and the German area in the late Middle Ages evidenced in the rest of the finds material (see Regner 2014). None of the finds from rural monastic institutions are from graves or monastic burial grounds.

In contrast to the number of finds from secular contexts, church finds are more common from rural than from urban areas. Lars Andersson has suggested that in the later Middle Ages pilgrim badges were deposited as votive offerings in churches (Andersson 1989, 192), as exemplified by finds in altars and under floors from both urban and rural communities. Finds of pilgrim badges from rural settlements are very rare despite the fact that the written sources show that rural populations were well represented particularly at the more well-established shrines (Fröjmark 1992, 79-84; Bäärnhielm – Myrdal 1994). The scarcity of rural excavations is important for understanding the small number of finds, but there are also other factors to consider. For England and Wales, William Anderson estimates that as much as 85% of all *ampullae* recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme were found on cultivated land, and he suggests that *ampullae* may have been used in blessing ceremonies and ritually deposited in the fields (Anderson 2010, 197-200). As there are legal restrictions on metal detecting in Sweden, the absence of data does not reflect the frequency of rural pilgrimage. During archaeological excavations of Barsebäck village in Scania, metal detecting of topsoil yielded a large number of finds among which was an ampulla (Knarrström 2014, 60). However, the extensive metal detecting done on Gotland has not yielded any significant finds of either



Fig. 1. Pilgrims badge from Vadstena abbey, found in Uppsala (SHM 33914:F1367; © Gabriel Hildebrand).

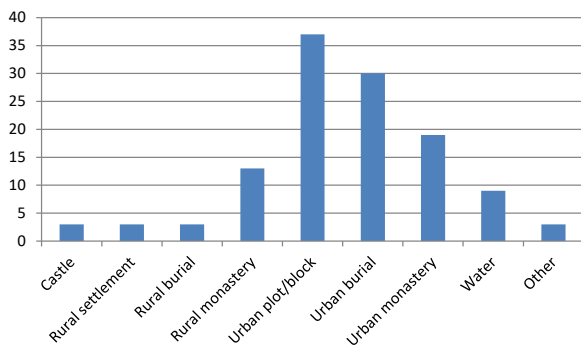


Diagram 1. Finds of pilgrim badges in secular contexts (© Andersson 1989, updated with more recent finds by the author).

ampullae or badges (see catalogue in Östergren 1989). I will return below to the issue of possible traces of ritual practices in connection to fields and farms.

In Sweden, urban excavations tend to dominate over rural settlement excavations both in terms of the number of excavations and the volume of finds recovered and pilgrim badges are much more common from urban than

from rural settlements. In the urban context, burial finds appear to dominate, however all of these are from the region of Scania. In fact, all graves with badges recorded by Andersson are from medieval Denmark (see Andersson 1989, 223-228). Finds from urban monastic institutions are relatively rare, especially considering that 13 out of 19 badges are from graves.

Many of the urban finds are from excavations that pre-date modern stratigraphic analysis, and there are source-critical problems stemming from a risk that the finds have been re-deposited with infill from other parts of the town. However, some observations can still be made on the social setting and possible contexts of the badges. The pilgrim badges found on town plots in Lund in Scania come from present day areas of Sankt Clemens, Sankt Botulf and Stortorget (Andersson 1989, *passim*). The ecclesiastical residences as well as plot ownership is fairly well known for Lund, and it is clear that none of the pilgrim badges come from the parts of town dominated by the archbishops' and canon residences (see Andrén 1982, map 9). There is a certain correspondence with the degree of excavation (see Andrén 1980, map 4), but most of the finds are from the area around the market-place. In Old Lödöse, two badges and two *ampullae* were found in the burgess areas of the town. The *ampullae* were found within a house. In Malmö, badges have been found in the Claus Mortensen area close to the town square (Andersson 1989, 75, 125). During the ongoing excavations at Nya Lödöse, one badge from Vadstena abbey and one from Wilsnack was found in one of the houses (Alfsdotter 2014), and further stratigraphic analysis might possibly confirm a connection to the domestic environment.

In some European regions, pilgrim badges became devotional objects themselves through inclusion in prayer books (Foster Campbell 2011). They were also worn proudly as a sign of pilgrimage, and should be understood in relation to the wearing of other kinds of signs and badges (Koldewij 2011). While badges are seldom found in primary contexts and urban materials will tend to dominate any quantitative analysis, it is possible that badges were used differently in the urban setting with a possible connection to the domestic environment.

Rosaries and devotional images

A key find category for tracing personal ritual practices in medieval communities is rosary beads, since they are so intimately connected with devotional practices such as prayers. A rosary is a string of beads, often divided into groups of ten beads separated with a bead of different shape, size or material and used to keep count of prayers. In Sweden, the late-medieval spread of Marian devotion is connected to St Birgitta and Vadstena abbey, and this would also have been a key factor in the late-medieval use of the Rosary (Carlsson 1947).



Fig. 2. Yellow glass rosary from Söderköping, Bryggaren (SHM 341183; © Helena Rosengren).

When studying the medieval use of rosaries in Sweden, it is clear that this is a finds category that is frequently overlooked in both rural and urban contexts. As a general tendency, there is a reluctance to define single finds of beads as rosary beads and they tend to be seen as dress accessories. However, the use of beads as dress accessories seems to have declined during the high- and late medieval period (Salminen 1997). The exception is the increasing popularity of rosaries.

There are few Swedish finds of more complete rosaries from dated contexts, however a few dated examples have been found. Two examples, one from the Bryggaren excavations in Söderköping and one from the Helgeandsholmen hospital in Stockholm are dated to the 14th century, indicating a slightly earlier spread of the use of prayer beads than is normally assumed (SHM 34183; SSM Helgeandsholmen F20909). A rural find from a grave in Appuna parish church dated to 1520-1670 indicates that they may in fact have continued in use for quite some time after the Reformation (Feldt 2010). At the Scanian village of Bunkeflo 47 beads from a rosary were found in backfill for the construction of a new house in the mid-16th century (Ingvald – Lövgren 2005; Lövgren – Svensson 2007, 264), perhaps representing late usage as well. It is of course tempting to view this as examples of more conservative religious practices in the rural context, however, the sample is very small and further research is needed.

Images were also important instruments for prayer. High quality ivories were produced in France during the 13th and 14th centuries, but ivories were also produced, for instance, in the Netherlands and Denmark (Koechlin 1924; Liebgott 1985; Randall 1994). Devotional images were also mass produced from pipe-clay with production centres, for instance, in Germany and the Netherlands



Fig. 3. Devotional figurine, Vadstena, Sanden (SHM 35211:F4111; © Helena Rosengren).

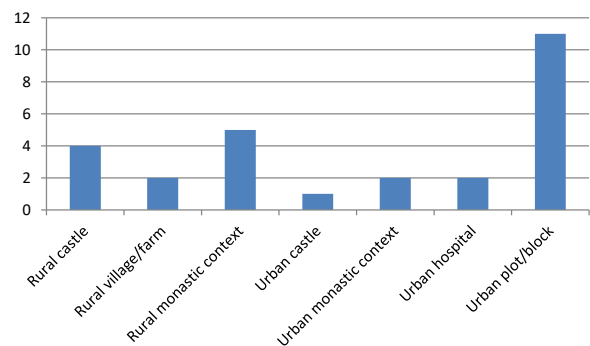


Diagram 2. Devotional images (© Augustsson 1996; Hedvall (ed.) 2000; Romberg 1978; Ingvald – Lövgren 2005; Falk et al. 2007 and inventories of finds in the Swedish History museum, Stockholm City Museum and Gotlands fornsal).



Fig. 4. Lead tablet from Käulinge (SHM 33768: © Gabriel Hildebrand).

(Gaimster 2003; 2007; Ostkamp 2001. For an overview of Swedish finds see Augustsson 1996). Eventually, devotional images were also produced with the advent of print, and sometimes used in the home (Areford 2012). The ivories were very costly – one 14th century Swedish will puts the value of an ivory piece at ten marks silver (SDHK 2907) – and catered primarily to an elite market, while the pipe-clay figurines would have been accessible to a larger social segment. The woodcuts, on the other hand, could be used for many different purposes ranging from their inclusion in books to single prints used for Christmas greetings (see examples in van Os 1994). There are also examples of simple, probably locally produced figurines made from bone.

Small devotional images, portable and made for use either in a domestic or an ecclesiastical context, seem to have been closely connected with urban life. In contrast to the other types of objects discussed here, rural finds of small devotional images are nearly always from high-status environments such as castles or monastic institutions. The absolute majority of portable devotional images found in Sweden come from urban sites (Diagram 2). Some are from larger religious institutions such as monasteries or hospitals and others from the town castle, but the majority of them come from secular town plots. The largest group is pipe-clay figurines; ivories are very rare in Swedish collections, and so far only two fragments have been identified from secular contexts both from the large trading town of Kalmar on the east coast of Sweden (SHM 1304). One is probably part of a relief of some kind while the other is most likely part of a figure of Christ.

The lay congregation was as likely to encounter religious imagery in the rural as in the urban parish church, and an unusually large amount of medieval art has survived

in Swedish parish churches (Thordeman 1964). Many of the towns where small devotional images intended for domestic use have been found were important Hanseatic trading towns, such as Stockholm, Kalmar, Malmö and Visby. Possibly this urban form of devotional practice was adopted as part of Hanseatic urban culture (see Gaimster 2003; 2007). While there are always difficulties comparing urban and rural finds materials, due to the larger volume of urban excavations, it still appears likely that the use of religious imagery in a domestic context may have been more of an urban phenomenon.

Priests and practices

The instruments of devotional practice include not only objects, but also acts and prayers (Laugerud – Skinnebach 2007). Medieval lead tablets inscribed with prayers therefore seems to constitute a very interesting category. Some of these tablets have been folded together, and were never meant to be read again. In contrast to, for instance, prayer books, where the act of reading and repeating is important, it appears that with lead tablets it is the act of writing the prayer and giving it material form that matters.

Prayer inscriptions, particularly runic inscriptions, on lead tablets and other objects have been seen largely as amulets and magic and not formal religion (see for instance MacLeod – Mees 2006, 184-210). In a recent study by Viktor Aldrin on prayer in Swedish peasant communities, runic inscriptions are not considered to have any relation to the prayer life of rural communities (Aldrin 2010, 52). While not strictly a devotional object, objects with longer Latin prayers are still of interest in order to understand the contexts in which prayers were known and incorporated as texts into ritual practices. Here, I will limit this discussion to runic inscriptions

on small lead amulets; however the argument could be extended to other types of inscriptions as well.

While runic amulets with longer Latin prayers have been found in both rural and urban areas in Denmark and Norway (Liestøl 1969, 462-466; Steenholt Olesen 2010), they are not as common from rural settlements in Sweden. Two finds, one from the monastic precinct at Alvastra abbey and one from Borgholm castle, are from rural areas. However, both come from high-status environments. One rural find of a runic tablet comes from Västannorstjärn in Dalarna contains a long Marian prayer (Gustavson 1979).

Several of the Swedish finds of amulets with Latin prayers come from urban, rather than rural, contexts, for instance, from Lödöse, Uppsala, Visby and Skänninge. A lead cross from Lödöse bears a *Commendatio animae*, used in connection to death and burial, and has been interpreted as a burial cross (Svärdström 1971). A lead cross found in Visby, on the other hand, bears a prayer for the intercession of the living (Gustavson – Strid 1977, 161). A wooden handle from Lödöse bears an inscription taken from the Psalter (Vulgate 50:6) (Svärdström 1970). A tablet from the Dominican convent in Skänninge which was found in one of the graves should also be seen as part of burial practices, and contains one of the most common medieval prayers, the Hail Mary (see Björkhager – Gustavson 2004; Menander – Arcini 2013, 211). As a whole, the variety of prayers is itself interesting, and poses questions regarding the involvement of the priests in lay or popular religious practices.

A key find for understanding ritual practices in rural settings was found in the Swedish region of Skåne in 1992 (SHM acc nr 33768, Gustavson 1999). Previous excavations at the site of the medieval village of Kävlinge had revealed settlement remains from the Viking period to the 13th century (Ericsson Borggren 1996). An accidental find on the spoil heap recovered a tablet with a depiction of Christ in Majesty on one side and a Latin benediction for a farm and its inhabitants on the other, written by someone who was well acquainted with the liturgical handbook or manual used by the priests (Gustavson 1999).

Professor Anders Piltz (Piltz 2014) has connected the inscription on the Kävlinge tablet to a homily written in 1552 in Holmby close to Lund. The prayers in the homily and on the tablet are largely the same as in an older manuscript, a manual from Notmark, which is earlier than 1480. In both manuscripts there is a ritual for blessing a farm, where lead crosses are blessed and then placed at the base of four wooden posts placed around the farm, and a central cross in the center of the yard. These blessings and the accompanying rituals were performed by the priest (Piltz 2014, 24-32).

Piltz' discussions concerning the Kävlinge tablet points towards the importance of what Scribner (Scribner 1987) calls para-liturgical practices – rituals that grew

around the liturgy and were often performed by the priest. For rural archaeology, where at least some of these practices may have taken place in connection with places in the landscape such as fields there are particular problems. As mentioned earlier, there is a lack of large-scale data concerning finds from cultivated land and data from rural settlement archaeology tends to be very geographically uneven. The material traces of these practices can sometimes appear scattered and difficult to interpret. At the Scanian village of Örja, seven small lead crosses were found in and around farms 1, 12 and 20 (Schmidt Sabo 2013, 51-52). Looking at the instructions from the Notmark manual, it can be expected that such small crosses would over time be re-deposited, and at Örja four were found in ploughsoil and older topsoil, while two were found in trench infill. Similar small lead crosses have also been found during archaeological excavation of a priest's farmhouse in Hellvi parish on Gotland and at the site of the medieval Sigfride farm in Öja parish on Gotland (Andersson G. 1980; Östergren 1989, 166-167).

The ritual practices associated with farmhouses, and perhaps even more importantly the surrounding landscape with fields and meadows is central for our understanding of rural religious life. The surprising frequency of fragments of processional crosses retrieved from cultivated land, in particular figures from Limoges crucifixes of the late 12th to 13th centuries could perhaps be connected with blessings and processions (for examples see Andersson B.M. 1980, 78-80).

The importance of water

Throughout prehistory, watery spaces seem to have formed a focus for long-term ritualized practices often spanning centuries or even millennia. Depositions of valuable objects in lakes and streams and human sacrifices in bogs are only a few examples. In medieval studies, finds of pilgrim badges in larger rivers like the Seine and the Thames have been interpreted as votive offerings by returning pilgrims (see Spencer 1998, 18), an interpretation that has been criticized as not being substantiated (Lee 2014).

The importance of watery spaces and the rituals performed there create a sense of the landscape as a sacred space. Apart from open or running water, springs and wells were also important not least in connection to the cult of St Olaf in Nidaros and the springs along the pilgrim route from Sweden (see for instance Andersson 1997; Lidén 1999, 21). Sänga church functioned as a pilgrimage church on the route to Nidaros, and there was also a sacred well adjacent to the church (Jonasson 2011, 30-39). Therefore, votive practices here may have differed from other rural parish churches. A pilgrim badge from Nidaros was found in the base of an altarpiece of St Anne (SHM 4001), a parallel to finds from Voss in Norway and Toijala, Finland (see Andersson 1989, 192).

In a recently published study, Christina Fredengren identifies continuity into the 12th century not only in the deposition of objects in water but also of human and animal remains (*Fredengren 2015*). The question of the meaning of watery spaces in medieval ritual and religious practices in Sweden remains to be explored. However, there are clear similarities to, for instance, England in the continued importance of wells and springs well after the Reformation (*Walsham 2011*, 395-470). The recurring finds of votive coins from the Early Modern period in connection with wells and springs also indicates at the very least continuity beyond the Reformation, and possibly even a growth in popularity. There is also an absence of medieval finds in many springs and wells that have been excavated. During an excavation in 1935 of ruins close to the spring in Svinnegarn, the finds material recovered was primarily of 17th-19th century date, suggesting continued use well into modern times (SHM 21274).

As water and watery spaces seem to have had such forceful connotations in prehistory, a discussion of water finds remains relevant as evidence of long-term continuity in ritual practices. While there is a fair amount of source-critical problems in dealing with ritual intentionality in urban watery finds – in particular in relation to the often large amounts of obvious refuse also recovered – water remains a recurring finds context for some of the objects studied here. A rural example comes from the lake Västannorstjärn in Dalarna. The residents of the nearby farm had used the lake for discarding refuse. At the same time, excavations also uncovered a large number of coins, small personal objects such as silver clasps and a lead tablet with a Marian prayer which was wrapped around bone, possibly a relic. These objects – unlikely to be just lost or thrown away – were in all likelihood part of ritual practices at the lake (*Gustavson 1979*; *Ersgård 1997*). In Sweden as elsewhere in Europe, pilgrim badges have been found in water, particularly close to the harbours of larger merchant towns such as Kalmar and Old Lödöse as well as in the rivers flowing through Uppsala and New Lödöse (*Andersson 1989*, 226). At least in Kalmar the same harbour area was also used for the deposition of all kinds of debris from the city as well as from the castle, but medieval silver coins were also found (SHM/KMK 21144: 792, 1398, 1399).

The interpretation of finds of devotional objects in watery contexts is complex. On the one hand, it is clear that in several cases devotional objects have been found together with large amounts of apparent refuse material such as in the bay of Kalmar and lake Västannorstjärn. On the other hand, these objects are bearers of religious meaning and therefore perhaps less likely to have been simply discarded as refuse. I would argue that this merely highlights the complexity of human behaviour. There are few medieval finds of any kind from apparently special

waters such as holy wells and springs. Instead, devotional objects seem to appear in very ordinary watery places. Following Bell, ritualization works through distinguishing some practices from others, the way communion distinguishes itself from a more everyday meal (*Bell 1992*). Throwing a devotional object into water is perhaps the ritualization of a very everyday act.

Conclusions

There have been very few studies of lay religion in rural areas in medieval Sweden, and most of our knowledge concerns devotional life inside the church building or in relation to the liturgy. In archaeological field reports, finds of devotional objects appear to be difficult to interpret, leading to tentative conclusions regarding social status rather than religious practice.

When studying the ritual practices of the medieval rural population, it is very easy to fall into the trap of equating rural, everyday religious practices with witchcraft, magic and lingering pre-Christian traditions. Magic practices existed as well, of course, but in all social groups and side-by-side with Christianity. The boundary between magic and devotion can sometimes appear to be quite fluid, such as, for instance, in the case of the lead tablets which carry complicated Latin prayers and occur in monastic environments. In this paper, I have attempted to study devotional objects from a framework of practice theory, focusing more on how the objects were used than on their formal qualities. The central question has been whether or not there were devotional practices specific to rural lay communities and what if anything defined that devotional practice.

In his very influential 1992 study *The Stripping of the Altars*, Eamon Duffy emphasizes the importance of the liturgy as source of belief for ordinary men and women, and that there was no substantial separation between the religion of people in general and that of the clergy and educated elite (*Duffy 1992*, 2-3). The analysis presented here indicates that while the liturgy was clearly important in both urban and rural communities, there were social differences in the instruments used, but perhaps more importantly there were also differences in the spaces used for devotion.

While there are examples of devotional objects found in rural settlements, the source material is not very strong and there is a clear regional bias towards the regions of Scania and Gotland probably due to the amount of rural excavation. But there are other reasons as well. A recurring issue throughout this paper has been the role of the landscape in rural religious life – as opposed to the domestic space that appears more important in the urban environment. There are examples from rural areas of devotional objects found in places such as prehistoric

mounds, mountain crevices and fields which indicate that these objects may have been involved in ritual practices well beyond the domestic sphere. Unfortunately, these spaces are not necessarily the subject of archaeological investigation, the evidence is scattered and at this point it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions.

A ritualization of larger spaces was not particular to peasant populations. Devotion in the urban context could also be practiced in a larger cityscape – in the city of Kalmar there was a pietà next to the town square (*Ferm et al. 1987, 285*), and in Stockholm you could walk the stations of the cross. However, urban private devotion may to a greater degree have been practiced in a domestic setting. Indeed, there is some evidence for devotional practices in the domestic sphere in the urban environment. However, future research will need to focus on a closer contextual study of particular cases to gain an understanding of the role of devotional objects in particular environments, especially in relation to domestic space.

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Brabantian fields, blessed land

A study about the origins of artefacts found in arable land

Johan Verspay *

ABSTRACT

Sometimes it's the most humble finds that provide us with the most interesting insights into the world as it was perceived by the rural communities we study. In 2010 a study was carried out on the origins of artefacts found in the arable soil of open fields in Brabant (NL). These items are commonly regarded as (urban) household waste brought onto the fields mixed in with the manure or objects lost during labour on the land. Occasionally, however, artefacts are found here that do not seem to fit this interpretation well, such as papal bullae, or the seal matrix from a distant monastery. To test these presumed origins, a metal detector survey of an early modern tillage layer at the Kerkakkers in Veldhoven was carried out. Statistical analysis of the distribution of artefacts showed that some types appeared in significant concentrations which do not correspond with a random scatter. Moreover, some items bore characteristics of intentional deposition. These artefacts, coins and religious pendants, are similar to the items that are traditionally used as votive offerings in the veneration of Mary or the Saints. Their presence in the fields could indicate a votive practice to plead for a good harvest or to deter malevolent influences. This reveals the arable fields as an unexpected scene of popular devotion and provides a rare glimpse of the beliefs of a community in the Early Modern Period.

Keywords: *Landscape archaeology, rural landscape, arable fields, post-medieval archaeology, early modern archaeology, metal detection survey, metal detector.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Brabantische Felder, gesegnetes Land – Eine Studie zu den Ursprüngen der im Ackerland zu findenden Objekte

Manchmal sind es die unscheinbarsten Funde, die uns die interessantesten Einblicke in die Welt der ländlichen Bevölkerung erlauben. 2010 wurde eine Studie zu den Ursprüngen von Objekten, die in den Ackerschichten offener Feldkomplexe in Brabant (NL) gefunden werden, durchgeführt. Diese Funde werden gemeinhin als (städtischer) Haushaltsabfall betrachtet, welcher zusammen mit dem Mist auf den Äckern landet, oder die hier vom Bauer während der Feldarbeit verloren gegangenen sind. Darunter befinden sich jedoch auch Objekte, wie z.B. eine Pabst-Bulle oder das Siegel eines weit entfernt liegenden Klosters, die nicht in das zu erwartende Fundspektrum passen. Um

* University of West Bohemia,
Plzeň, Czech Republic
jverspay@telfort.nl

dieses Phänomen besser hinterfragen zu können, wurde eine Ackerschicht, (der *Kerkackers* / Kirchenacker) bei der Ortschaft Veldhoven, aus der frühen Neuzeit datierend, systematisch mittels Metall-Detektor untersucht. Die statistische Auswertung der gefundenen Artefakte nach Gruppentypen ergab u.a. auffällige Fundkonzentrationen, die nicht mit einer willkürlichen Streuung übereinstimmen. Einige Funde scheinen zudem bewusst vergraben worden zu sein. Diese Funde, Münzen und religiöse Anhänger, weisen die gleichen Merkmale auf wie jene, die mit der Verehrung der Hl Jungfrau und anderer Heiliger in Verbindung gebracht werden. Ihre Präsenz auf dem Acker könnte daher auch eine Votivgabe als Hintergrund haben, beispielsweise als Bitte für eine gute Ernte oder um boshafte Einflüsse abzuwehren. Damit ergeben sich für den Ländlichen Raum unerwartete Einblicke in den Volksglauben der frühen Neuzeit.

Schlagwörter: *Landschaftsarchäologie, ländliche Landschaft, Ackerfelder, postmittelalterliche Archäologie, frühneuzeitliche Archäologie, Metalldetektorsuche, Metalldetektor.*

RÉSUMÉ

Champs brabançon, terre bénie – Une étude sur les origines des objets trouvés dans la terre arable

Ce sont parfois les plus humbles trouvailles qui nous livrent d'intéressants aperçus sur le monde tel qu'il était perçu par les communautés rurales que nous étudions. En 2010, une étude avait été réalisée concernant l'origine des artefacts découverts dans la terre arable de complexes de champs libres en Brabant (NL). Ces

Introduction

Although archaeological excavations in rural areas usually focus on the remains of deserted settlements, the agricultural landscape itself is also a valuable source of information. Not only is its examination necessary for an adequate understanding of the predominantly agricultural communities, it also presents an unexpected perspective on how these people experienced their world. Insights here can be found in the arable fields and the artefacts that they contain.

The Veldhoven Kerkackers case study

Generally, not much attention is paid to the medieval or post-medieval artefacts found in the topsoil of the arable fields of Brabant. These are considered, as a matter of course, to have been brought to the fields mixed with the manure, or where more particular finds are concerned,

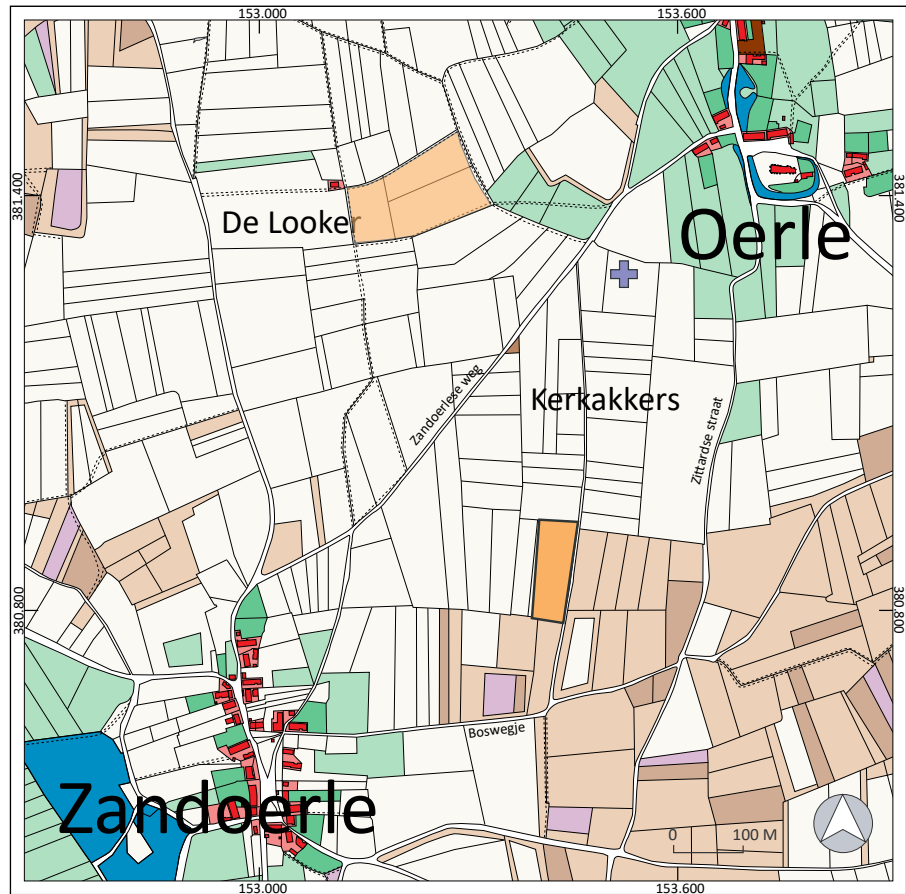
objets sont généralement considérés comme des déchets ménagers (urbains) mélangés à la terre avec le fumier, ou des objets que le fermier aurait perdu en travaillant son terrain. Cependant, on y retrouve occasionnellement des artefacts qui ne semblent pas vraiment se prêter à cette interprétation, tels qu'une bulle papale ou la matrice d'un sceau issu d'un monastère éloigné de l'endroit de trouvaille. Afin de mieux comprendre l'origine présumée de ces objets, une étude au moyen de détecteurs de métaux a été réalisée dans une couche de labour datant du début de l'ère moderne au lieu-dit «Kerkackers» à Veldhoven. Les analyses statistiques de la répartition des artefacts montraient alors que certains types d'objets apparaissaient dans des concentrations significatives qui ne correspondaient pas à un éparpillement aléatoire. De plus, certains de ces objets présentaient des caractéristiques propres à un dépôt conscient. Ces artefacts-là, des pièces et des pendentifs religieux, ressemblent aux objets traditionnellement utilisés comme offrandes votives dans le contexte de la vénération de Marie ou des Saints. Leur présence dans les champs pourrait alors indiquer une pratique à caractère votif, dans le but de prier pour une bonne récolte ou de détourner les influences maléfiques. Cette découverte confère aux terres agricoles une signification inattendue, celle de lieu de dévotion populaire, et nous donne un des rares aperçus des croyances d'une communauté au début des Temps Modernes.

Mots-clés : *archéologie du paysage, paysage rural, champs arables, archéologie postmédiévale, archéologie des temps modernes, étude par détecteur de métaux, détecteur de métal.*

they are presumed to be lost during work on the land. A short survey shows that this explanation is hardly ever backed by arguments or evidence. It is a widely held assumption which is usually not explicitly articulated. While this in itself is sufficient reason to look into the matter, there are also some indications that perhaps something else is going on.

Every now and again metal detector enthusiasts discover rather remarkable objects on the fields, like papal *bullea* or the seal matrix from the Hooidonk priory (*Arts 1994*, 65-70). Since it is unlikely that these objects were present in an average farmer's household, still less that they were discarded on the waste heap, the question is – how did these artefacts get onto the farmland, and why? And if these artefacts were not discarded as waste or lost in the fields, may we still make that assumption for other objects found here?

Fig. 1. The location of the survey area (orange) in the open field system of Kerkackers. To the north (blue) the two devotional pendants were found corroded to each other. On a plot (light orange) in the neighbouring field system of De Looker a similar survey study was conducted at a later stage (© Johan Verspay).



In early 2010 an opportunity presented itself to test these questions during an archaeological watching brief of an explosive clearance in the Kerkackers open field system in Veldhoven (Verspay 2012). Because the site potentially contained unexploded ammunition, the top soil of an entire historical plot of arable land was removed for sifting (Fig. 1). This exposed the underlying part of a plaggen soil, dating to the early modern period. The watching brief provided an opportunity to conduct a systematic survey in an undisturbed tillage layer, aimed at gaining an insight into the kind of artefacts that this plough soil contains, their quantity and, in particular, their origin. In order to do so, it was decided to focus the survey on non-ferrous metal objects. These artefacts are usually well preserved and therefore identifiable and can often be dated with great precision. Moreover these objects are considered to be suitable indicators to distinguish between goods that were discarded as waste, goods that were lost during work on the fields and goods that may have been deposited in other ways. This is because the primary context of use of these artefacts (the activities for which these were used, the area in which these were used and the people who used them), differs considerably and corresponds to a greater or lesser degree with their provenance in the fields.

Research method

Prior to the removal of the topsoil a number of small test pits were dug across the plot to gain a detailed insight into the stratigraphy of the field. After the topsoil was removed mechanically, the exposed tillage layer was surveyed systematically using a Tesoro Lobo SuperTrac metal detector with a 10 inch wide elliptical scan search coil. The discrimination level was set at 1.8 to ensure smaller non-ferrous artefacts were also detected and kept consistent throughout the survey. All finds were collected in a 10 x 10 m grid.

Stratigraphy

The field was covered by a substantial plaggen soil with a layered structure as is typical for the old open fields in the cover sand areas of Brabant. This soil is a man-made tillage layer that accumulated through the use of turf mixed with the manure. This was done to increase the amount of available nutrients for these poor soils. The turfs were cut from the heathland and generally contained a fair amount of sand. Since this sand does not decay, the volume of tillage layer on the Kerkackers increased in the course of time up to a thickness of 1.2 m and in some places even as much as 1.4 m (Verspay

2011, 107-108). Since our plot was on the edge of the complex the plaggen soil was on average 0.7 m thick. As a result of this increase over time the deeper parts of the tillage layer ended up lying below the reach of the plough and became fossilised. The removal of the topsoil created a new surface on top of this inactive, old plough soil.

Results

In total 5800 m² of arable soil was surveyed. This produced 174 metal artefacts, of which 158 were made from a non-ferrous metal. These objects can be attributed to 24 artefact categories (Tab. 1). The largest category consists of coins, followed by lead bullets. Other major groups are copper rivets, buttons and fragments of copper strips and sheet metal. Only a small group of artefacts or fragments could not be identified after cleaning and conservation.

The integrity of the dataset

Because ammunition clearance was the prime consideration in removing topsoil from the plot, the surveyed surface was a relatively arbitrary horizontal section through the arable layer. This did not necessarily correspond to the archaeologically desirable, stratigraphically consistent layer. This leads to the inevitable question as to whether the dataset I collected was a representative sample suitable for further analysis.

To gain a better understanding of the extent to which the surface matched the stratification of the plaggen soil, the correlation between the dates of the artefacts and their spatial distribution was analysed. The idea was that where the survey surface did not match the stratigraphy of the arable soil and cut through separate layers, distinct chronological breaks would show up in the distribution.

For this analysis I decided to use the coins. These were found in sufficient quantity and were preserved so well

Object type	n	Material						
		silver	copper	nickel	pewter	lead	iron	zinc
BARREL TAP	1		1					
BOOK CLASP	2		2					
BOW BROOCH	1		1					
BUCKLE	5		2				3	
BULLET	30					30		
BUTTON	10		8	1	1			
CAST VESSEL	1		1					
CATTLE SHACKLE	1						1	
CHISEL	1						1	
CLOTH SEAL	1					1		
COIN	35	9	26					
CONNECTOR	3		3					
HANDLE LOOP	1		1					
HOOKED CLASP	1		1					
HORSE SHOE	3						3	
KEY	1						1	
KNIFE HANDLE CAP	1		1					
LACE CHAPE	4		4					
MOUNT	6		6					
NAIL	4		3				1	
PENDANT	3	2	1					
RIVET	15		15					
SCREW	1		1					
SEALING	1					1		
SHEET VESSEL	2		2					
SHEETMETAL	9		9					
SOLIDIFIED MELT	5					5		
STRIP	14		14					
SWIVEL	1						1	
THIMBLE	2		2					
WINDOW CAME	1					1		
UNIDENTIFIABLE	8		4				3	1
Total	174	11	108	1	1	38	14	1

Tab. 1. Overview of metal artefacts (ferrous and non-ferrous) from the metal detector survey per object type and material. All copper-alloys are listed as copper except for billon, which is grouped with silver objects (© Johan Verspay).

that they could be identified and dated accurately. With the exception of one Roman specimen, the coins formed a series dating from the middle of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century. Because of their distinctly extensive wear it is assumed that the two late medieval coins found had circulated for a prolonged period of time and thus do not present a deviation from this time frame. From this analysis we can conclude that on the whole our artefacts date between 1550 and 1700.

The distribution map clearly showed that the coins were not evenly spread across the field. Instead, distinct clusters could be discerned with finds from different periods (Fig. 2). Coins dating to the sixteenth century (including the worn late-medieval pieces) were located in the centre of the plot, whereas the seventeenth century pieces were

found at the outer edges. Moreover these clusters showed very distinct breaks with hardly any chronological overlap. We therefore had to conclude that the surface that was created by stripping the topsoil of the field did not match the stratigraphy of the arable soil (Fig. 3).

As it would seem, this rendered our data set unsuitable for further analysis, since the artefacts were apparently collected from two different layers. On closer inspection, however, the situation was not that bad after all. First, the composition of the finds from both clusters showed no real differences, indicating that the practice behind the accumulation of these artefacts was similar for both periods. Furthermore, the coin dates showed an uninterrupted series. This suggests that this practice took place throughout this period.

It is important to realise that the plaggen soil was formed as a result of a gradual rise in the level of the plough soil over an extended period of time, during which artefacts accumulated in the soil. During the same period the soil was occasionally dug deeply with spades. This resulted in the formation of the layers that were found at the site, which means that that it was a secondary process that had nothing to do with the accumulation of the artefacts. This also means that the finds collected in the survey were part of a regular deposition process. It follows that they still present a representative overview of the range of artefacts in this arable soil.

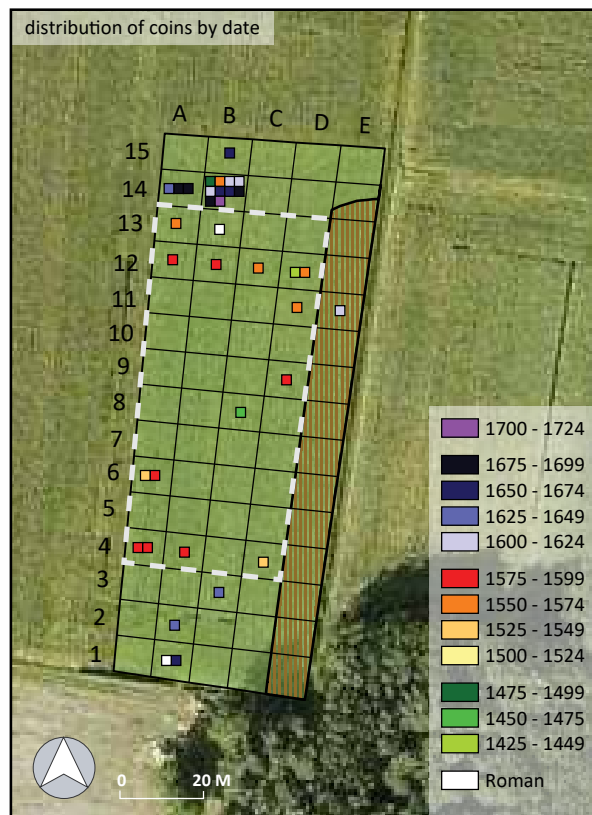


Fig. 2. Overview of the coins from the survey by date (© Johan Verspay).

Deposition groups

Next, it was necessary to work out how these items got here. In order to test the general view, I wanted to establish whether the artefacts found in the field were originally discarded as waste, lost by labourers or found their way here through other means. Each of these three modes of deposition can presumably be associated with a fairly distinct set of objects and spatial distribution. For example, if artefacts were discarded as waste and brought onto the field together with the manure, I would expect to find a random distribution with a low density of broken household objects or artisanal residue such as scrap metal. Objects lost during labour on the field, on the other hand, would be more likely to be dress accessories. The distribution of these artefacts should be random and also

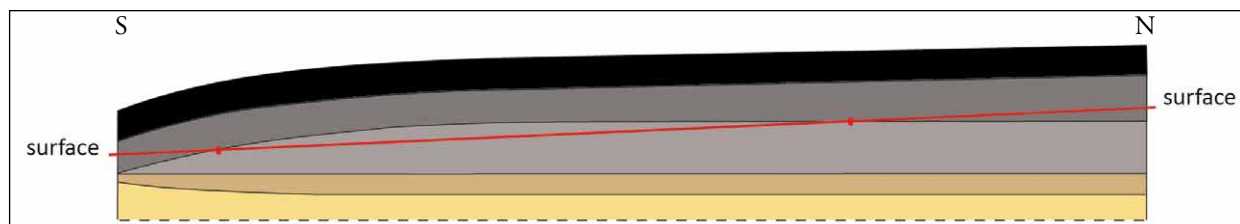


Fig. 3. Schematic reconstruction of the surface (red) in relation to the stratigraphy (© Johan Verspay).

Object type	n
COIN	34
BULLET	30
RIVET	15
STRIP	14
BUTTON	10
SHEETMETAL	9
MOUNT	6
SOLIDIFIED MELT	5
LACE CHAPE	4
CONNECTOR	3
NAIL	3
PENDANT	3
BOOK CLASP	2
BUCKLE	2
SHEET VESSEL	2
THIMBLE	2
BARREL TAP	1
CAST VESSEL	1
CLOTH SEAL	1
HANDLE LOOP	1
HOOKED CLASP	1
KNIFE HANDLE CAP	1
SCREW	1
SEALING	1
WINDOW CAME	1
UNIDENTIFIED	5
TOTAL	158

Tab. 2. Overview of non-ferrous metal artefacts per object type. The colours correspond to the presumed deposition group: waste (blue), lost objects (green), projectiles (grey), coins (light orange), devotional objects (orange), miscellaneous (light blue) and unattributable items (white) (© Johan Verspay).

extensive. On the basis of this hypothesis, the artefacts were attributed to the so-called deposition groups (Tab. 2).

Amongst the non-ferrous artefacts the fragments of copper plate and strips were classified as scrap. So too were the separate rivets and the lumps of solidified lead and bronze. These were all regarded as waste. A few decorative nails, a lead plug, a cloth seal, pieces of lead window came, fragments of a bronze kettle and brass vessels and a broken barrel tap were also attributed to this group. In all 55 items were classified as waste, 35% of the total number of finds.

The second group consisted of the dress accessories: buttons, buckles and lace chapes. These are presumed to have come loose during work on the land and have been lost. This is most likely to be what happened with the pieces of horse harness too. This group of lost objects consists of 27 items, 17% of the total.

Besides waste and lost objects, another four groups were discerned. The first consisted of 30 lead bullets. Nearly all of these were small calibre projectiles and were, together with the lead shot, most likely to have been used for hunting.

After careful deliberation I decided to treat the coins as a separate group, for three reasons. First, a large number of coins were found: 34 pieces. They make up more than one-fifth of all of the collected artefacts and constitute the second largest deposition group on their own. Several larger nomination coins were also present. The chance that all these coins were simply lost on the field I consider to be small. First, it is questionable whether farmers would take their purses with them when working in the fields. Secondly, there is no reason to assume that these purses did not close properly as I found out during tests with replicas.

Moreover a large number of the coins were bent or pierced. The type of markings and the fact that the soil is soft and sandy rule out any theory that the coins were damaged accidentally during ploughing. Also the damage cannot be linked to counterfeit or foreign currency. These coins were damaged deliberately and with intent (*Merrieffield 1987, 92; Kelleher 2011, 1499; Verspay 2013, 42-43 text box Gebogen Geld*).

The main argument, however, against classifying this group of finds as waste or lost objects was the specific deposition of some of the coins. Three coins were found corroded together with remains of a leather wrapping (Fig. 4a). If a purse with coins were lost on the field or brought onto the field together with the manure, the leather would soon degrade in the sandy soil. Repeated ploughing would subsequently scatter the coins. The fact that these coins were stuck together indicates that these were buried here at a depth beneath the reach of the plough.

The religious objects were also classified as a separate group (Fig. 4b). Although these could be considered as personal accessories, there are reasons to assume that they were not lost. I will return to this point below.

The remaining objects, namely thimbles and book clasps, could not be distinctly associated with a specific deposition group, since they were neither related to activities that normally take place on the fields nor broken. These objects were classified as miscellaneous.

Spatial distribution

To be able to assess the significance of the distribution of the various artefacts, a statistical analysis was made. Using a Poisson distribution, I determined the probability that an object would be found in a certain quantity in a square in a random scatter. This method was selected because it expresses the probability of a given number of events occurring in a fixed interval (e.g. of space) if these events occur with a known average rate (see *Kennisbasis*



Fig. 4. a) Small stack of coins corroded together with the remains of a leather wrapping (© Restaura); b) Devotional pendants found during the survey: (1) a copper cross representing the crucified Christ; (2) a silver medal with a depiction of the crucifixion at Calvary (front) and the Blessed Virgin Mary as *Sedes sapientiae* (reverse); (3) a silver reliquary in the shape of a cross engraved with an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary with child (front) (© Restaura).

Statistiek). By this method we can test the actual findings and determine the likelihood that a particular frequency of objects in a square simply occurred by chance.

The distribution of the items I classified as waste was characterised by a fairly random dispersion with a low density, as was expected (Fig. 5). However, the frequency table shows that the number of finds does not fully correspond with dispersion by chance. The number of squares with one find is lower than expected. This difference can be traced to the slightly higher number of squares without any finds on the one hand and with two to four finds on the other. This means that the waste was slightly clustered.

The frequency of dispersion for the lost objects very neatly matched the statistical expectation for a random scatter. This, too, corresponds with what was expected for this mode of deposition. A similar pattern with a low density was found for the projectiles, albeit there seemed to be a bias to the western side of the field. This could indicate a shooting position from the dirt track on the east side.

In contrast, the distribution of the coins showed a more distinct pattern. The frequency of dispersion indicates at least one, but possible two, statistically significant clusters. Most striking was the cluster of coins found in the northern part of the plot. This consisted of twenty-one

coins scattered over an area of 40 x 40 m. At the centre was a square in which ten coins were found together. The probability of this happening by chance is statistically negligible because the probability that ten coins end up in a single square as a result of a random distribution is less than one in 500 billion. That holds good even if we count the small stack of coins as one. Hence, it is unlikely that these coins came here as waste or through accidental loss. The presence of the stack combined with the statistics indicates an intentional deposition.

A second concentration was found in the southwest corner of the field. Statistically, however, this could still have occurred within a random distribution.

The religious objects were too small in number for reliable statistics. Nonetheless it is noted that they were evenly distributed on the field and correspond with the coin clusters.

Interpretation

Although the discarded-and-lost-objects hypothesis seems to be valid for a number of artefacts that were found in our field, the survey indicated that for some of these objects there is more to the story. At least a number of the coins that were found here were part of a distribution in which statistically significant clusters occurred.

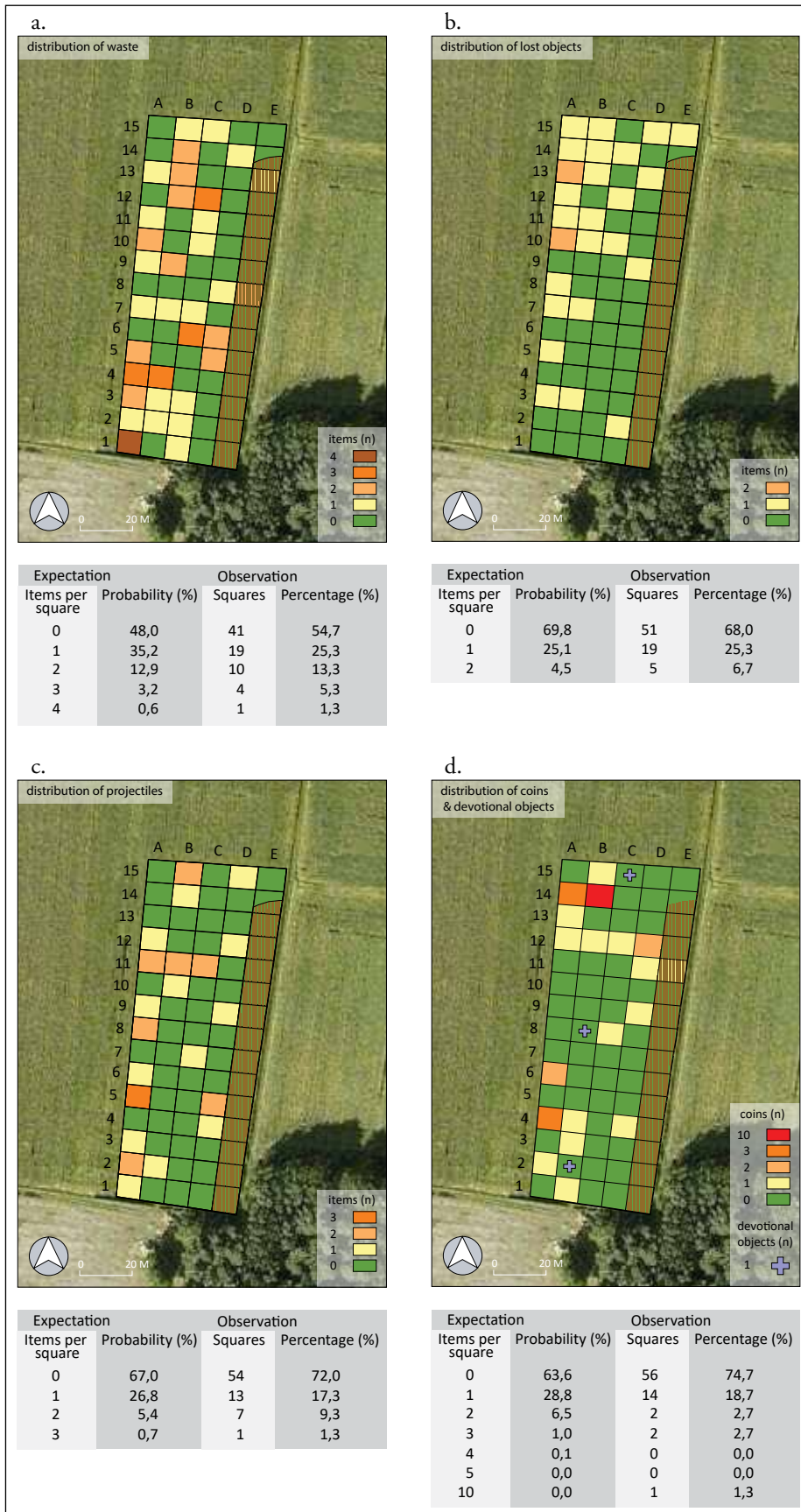


Fig. 5. The distribution of artefacts per deposition group. A calculation of probability (based on a Poisson distribution) indicates the probability of finding one or more artefact(s) in a square if those objects are distributed randomly across the grid. By comparing this calculation to the number of artefacts actually found in the survey, we can indicate how far their distribution could arise by chance. When major differences are observed between the Poisson distribution and the observed numbers, there is a high probability that the distribution is the result of non-arbitrary activities (whatever these may be) (© Johan Verspaj).

To get an understanding of the meaning of this deposition pattern it is important to remember the nature of the artefacts involved. The presence of a stack of coins indicates an intentional deposition. From the dates of all the individual coins from the square in which that stack was found, it can be concluded that the cluster was not the product of one single burial, but instead the result of a practice of deposition over an extended period of time. That would tend to indicate a custom rather than an incidental event.

But if we are dealing with a custom, what was it for? An answer may be found in the presence of the religious objects. In a subsequent excavation on the other side of the field complex, two pendants were found in the plaggen soil. Like the stack of coins these were corroded to each other, indicating that these were also deliberately buried (Fig. 6a). This suggests that the religious items were probably part of the same practice of deposition as the coins.

Coins and religious accessories are the traditional artefacts that are given as offerings to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the saints to implore their intercession or in gratitude for a favour obtained. To find these objects in the arable fields, with evidence for deliberate burial, indicates to me that we are dealing here with a custom in which offerings were presented to seek, or to express gratitude for, a good harvest and/or to avert evil or dangerous influences. Given the vital role the arable fields have in a rural community this would be a very logical location.

That the fields formed a setting for popular devotion is already known from other religious customs, such as the annual processions through the fields, planting palm branches in the corners of one's plots on Palm Sunday and marking a field with crosses after it was sown (e.g. *Van Dam 1972, 47; Vangheluwe*

et al. 2009, 666-667). A votive practice ties in neatly with these other customs.

This idea of a votive offering and/or ritual to avert evil was further reinforced by the discovery of a chrismatory during a subsequent survey conducted in the adjacent De Looker open field system (*Verspay 2013*) (Fig. 6b). This liturgical vessel, used for keeping consecrated oil, was found together with its lid, indicating that this extraordinary artefact was brought there as a complete object. Since it is rather unlikely that a farmer had direct access to this kind of object and even unlikelier that it would end up on his dung heap, the find demonstrates that the practice of votive offerings not only took place at an individual level, but was embedded in a communal practice. The chrismatory (as well as the *papal bullae* and seal matrices found elsewhere) point to active involvement of the church, or at least of the village priest. We can thus conclude that these customs should not be regarded as some sort of secretive pagan practice, a remnant of the pre-Christian folklore, but rather a sincere part of the Catholic, religious experience of these people.

Conclusion

The survey in Veldhoven set out to put some very basic assumptions to the test, with surprising results. The mundane artefacts discovered in this field provided us with a rare glimpse into the beliefs of a rural community in the early modern period. Most interestingly, these were not limited to individual devotion in a private setting, but extended to the arable fields as well. This changes our perspective of the landscape in which these people lived and worked. These fields were far



Fig. 6. a) Two copper crucifixes corroded together, found on the north side of the Kerkackers field system; b) Lead chrismatory complete with lid, discovered in the arable soil of the neighbouring field system De Looker (© Johan Verspay).

more than just economic productive units. They were revealed as an unexpected scene of popular devotion. The farmers of Brabant knew that they themselves lived in a religiously imbued landscape, a landscape blessed by God.

Further research

The outcome of this study illustrates the value of the agricultural landscape itself as a source of archaeological information. At the same time it evokes a whole range of new questions. Can similar customs also be found on other field systems and in other parts of the rural landscape: the tofts, gardens, meadows and hay fields, or the common waste? How far do these practices date back and did they undergo a certain development? How does this votive practice relate to other religious expressions in the landscape, such as wayside chapels or shrines, crosses and wells? And, if this deposition practice is truly an expression of Catholic devotion, does it disappear after the Reformation in the Protestant parts of the Netherlands?

The potential of the rural landscape as a source of information, in my experience, remains largely un(der)exploited, particularly in development-led archaeology. As a result a valuable opportunity is missed to further our understanding of the past communities we study. Apart from new aspects that integrated research of the cultural landscape would bring to light, such research could also broaden and deepen our understanding of these people. Our current understanding is predominantly based on the study of settlements which presents a distinct bias. A landscape nevertheless is a different type of site from a settlement or a burial place, with its own characteristics and formation processes. Studying it requires a specific approach and methodology. The precise techniques we should apply depend on the questions we wish to pose. It is my hope that the examples discussed in this paper may provide a fresh impetus for such work.

Acknowledgements

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Building sacrifices and magical protection

A study in canton of Grisons (CH)

*Iris Nießen **

ABSTRACT

Superstition and magical practices are hard to interpret from archaeological sources, particularly so-called building sacrifices. A study of hitherto unknown examples from the canton of Grisons in Switzerland will be presented. The basis of this study are the 218 objects found in holes in the structure of Chur cathedral, together with numerous other examples in Chur and in the north part of the canton, which represent a forgotten custom: the ritual deposit of animal bones in buildings. These objects are found not only in religious buildings such as the cathedral, churches, a chapel and a cloister, but also in secular places such as a town hall, various rural habitats and even a castle. Most of the time, these deposits were placed in niches after fires during repair work. All examples that can be dated are placed chronologically after 1450. This study highlights the diversity of superstitious customs relating to the construction and use of a variety of buildings that show the different ways in which people tried to control their surroundings in the past.

Keywords: *Archaeology, Middle Ages, Modern Period, ritual deposits, building studies, building sacrifice, church, superstition, popular belief, canton of Grisons, Switzerland.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

“Bauopfer” und magische Schutzzauber. Eine Studie im Kanton Graubünden (CH)

Magie, Zauber und Rituale an Gebäuden sind schwer anhand archäologischer Quellen zu erforschen. Eine Studie aus dem Kanton Graubünden in der Schweiz erforscht nun eine bisher unbekannte Form von Deponierungen, die durch historische und volkscundliche Forschungen nicht erfasst wurden. Ausgehend von der Untersuchung der bischöflichen Kathedrale in Chur, bei der 218 Objekte aus den Gerüstbalkenlöchern im Dach geborgen wurden, untermauern zahlreiche Beispiele aus Chur und der Region Nordbünden einen neuzeitlichen Brauch der Deponierung von Tierknochen in Gebäuden. Die Beispiele finden sich sowohl in sakralen Gebäuden, wie der Kathedrale, Kirchen, einer Kapelle und einem Kloster als auch in Profanen, wie einem Stadthaus, ländlichen Wohn- und Wirtschaftsbauten sowie einer Burganlage. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf der Niederlegung von Extremitäten nach Bränden und bei Umbauten. Alle datierbaren Beispiele sind nach 1450 einzuordnen. Die Studie beleuchtet einen Ausschnitt der vielfältigen und regional

* Bamberg, Germany
niessen.iris@web.de

sehr unterschiedlichen Bräuche bei der Errichtung und Nutzung von Gebäuden und bietet so Einblicke in vergangene Vorstellungswelten.

Schlagwörter: *Archäologie, Neuzeit, Mittelalter, Depot, Deponierung, Hausforschung, Bauopfer, Kirchenarchäologie, Aberglaube, Volksglaube, Kanton Graubünden, Schweiz.*

RÉSUMÉ

Les „dépôts de fondation“ et autres sortilèges de protection. Une étude du canton des Grisons (CH)

La magie, l'enchantement et autres ensorcellements de bâtiments sont difficiles à étudier par le biais de l'archéologie. Une étude dans le canton des Grisons se consacre actuellement à une forme de dépôt n'ayant jusqu'à présent jamais attiré l'attention de la science folklorique et n'apparaissant pas dans les sources écrites. Ce sont les 218 objets trouvés dans les trous des poutres de la charpente de la cathédrale de Coire

Introduction

Evidence for superstition has not been well researched archaeologically. But in some cases archaeology offers the opportunity to learn more about ideas, customs and rituals of the medieval and modern rural population, which are not referred to in written sources. The following study in the canton of Grisons in Switzerland investigates superstitious activities at buildings with a focus on deposits of animals, which seems to be a special local custom. The many examples from diverse types of buildings show that there are no differences between ecclesiastical and lay deposits or between the urban and rural environment. Mostly they were parts of animals, like bones or entrails, deposited in the course of renovations. This practice was previously unknown in the canton of Grisons and this study offers a new perspective.

Research questions, state of the source and method

At the beginning of the study several research questions arose. What kind of magical practices can be recognized in the archaeological record? What is the state of research and what is a suitable method with which to handle with these complicated sources? What is typical for the canton of Grisons and are there regional differences? How can intentional deposits be identified and is it possible to interpret them?

The quality of the data is random. Usually the objects are missed or ignored during the restoration of

qui forment la base de cette étude, auxquels s'ajoutent de nombreux autres exemples à Coire et dans la région au nord du canton et qui nous remémorent une coutume oubliée des temps modernes : celle du dépôt d'ossements animaux dans des bâtiments. Ces exemples se trouvent non-seulement dans des édifices religieux tels la cathédrale, des églises, une chapelle et un cloître, mais aussi dans des lieux profanes tels une mairie, divers habitats ruraux et même un château fort. La plupart du temps, ces dépôts ont été placés dans les niches après des incendies et lors de travaux de réparation. Tous les exemples pouvant être datés sont à placer chronologiquement après 1450. Cette étude met en avant la diversité régionale des coutumes liées à la construction et à l'utilisation de divers édifices et permet d'entrevoir les différentes conceptions de l'homme sur son entourage par le passé.

Mots-clés : *archéologie, Moyen Âge, temps modernes, dépôt, bâtiment sacrificiel, église, superstition, croyance populaire, canton des Grisons, Suisse.*

the buildings. Most are chance finds that are poorly documented. Therefore, there is a preselection of the material brought to professional attention according to the whim of finder, and less dramatic objects, like eggshell or fragments of leather, are overlooked. Even official researchers hardly ever investigate a complete building from base to roof, so that mere parts are known. Another problem is dating the objects. Most of the objects cannot be intrinsically dated, such as animal bones, or by the construction phases in which they are found. Also radiocarbon dating is very imprecise especially for the Modern period. Furthermore a lot of objects are not from a closed find deposit. Relics of magical activities at buildings vary regionally, but why this occurs is complicated.

Due to the random nature of the data, we have to be careful with our interpretations. So, before a deposit can be explained, all the available information should be considered. First, what was found? Second, has the object a symbolic, magical or practical meaning? Next, when was it deposited? In this case, not only is the date important, but also the construction phase of the building. How can the object and the practice be integrated in the contemporary world view? Where was it found? That means where inside the building and in which type of building. The final question is who deposited the object, for example, the inhabitants, the owner, the architect or the builder? After discovering all this, it is necessary to ask why it has been put there.

Before we think about superstitious behaviour, there could be a lot of other reasons, like safe custody, hiding place, casual loss, waste, votive deposit or even placenta burial.

Definition of terms

In this context, building sacrifice is used as an umbrella term for a few phenomena. The term integrates deposits as a memorial, as well as expiatory sacrifice, protective magic, guardian spirit and sympathetic magic. These categories were identified by Paul Satori in 1898. Satori's interpretations present a very old strand of research and new approaches are necessary. The use of an umbrella term is needed, because the intention of the depositors cannot be resolved. However, researchers do not agree about the terms, especially about the classification of sacrifice (Nießen 2015a, 23-24; Beilke-Voigt 2007, 71). The term sacrifice is itself problematic, because it indicates a recipient. Nevertheless the term is established in research (for example: Koschik 1982) and is used hereafter. Building sacrifice is used as an umbrella term for deposits, which refers both to the building and the people as well. Because the specific reasons are hard to define, the term involves gifts for a divine power as well as magical and symbolic objects. Such deposits can be brought in during construction, use or reconstruction. The phenomenon of building sacrifice is not limited to a particular period, region or specific functions.

Other problems are the terms magic and superstition. For both terms there is no established definition in research. Good overviews are the work of Ralph Merrifield, 'The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic' (Merrifield 1987; Birkhan 2010), and the companion volume of an exhibition at the Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe (LWL)-Freilichtmuseum Detmold in Germany (Apel – Carstensen 2013) as well as a collected edition by Eva Kreissl (2013). In the German-speaking areas in particular the term superstition had changed over the time repeatedly and suggests a negative connotation with a strong separation between theology and folk belief (Nießen 2015b; Harmening 1979). The basis for superstitious behaviour and magic, as a part of it, is the belief of a connection between human and cosmos (Apel – Carstensen 2013, 18). Superstition can be interpreted as a psychological reaction of the human to his environment. Through external factors or individual crises, a person can lose their sense of security. The sensation of helplessness requires a defensive reaction with the aim of getting back control (Petzoldt 1990, 467). As an example a talisman in the car has rational no influence, but it helps to give a feeling of safety. In this case, superstitious behaviour and magical practices are interpreted as a reaction with the aim of controlling the environment. In current research superstition is understood as a technique of culture,

which helps people to cope with life (Kreissl 2013). The forms of superstitious behaviour are dependent on the established world view and also on other systems of belief and knowledge. Because people change their beliefs, superstitious behaviour changes as well (Nießen 2015b).

Research history

Research into building sacrifices was first carried out by ethnologists. A very early article by Paul Satori in 1898, 'Über das Bauopfer', is still important for the interpretation of the phenomenon (cf. Satori 1908, 172-184; 1911; 1922). As early as the late 19th century, Felix Liebrecht published a book about German folklore, in which he discussed building sacrifices as a replacement for human sacrifice (Liebrecht 1879). In 1882 Julius Lippert accentuated the importance of a guardian spirit. Other important essays are those published by Albert Becker in 1928 and Gerda Grober-Glück in 1985 (Becker 1928; Grober-Glück 1985, 141-160; cf. Hungerland 1935, 158-561; cf. Schukowitz 1897, 367).

In the late 20th century archaeologists got interested in the subject. For example, Manfred Rech worked on building sacrifices during the Neolithic and Torsten Capelle the Iron Age (Rech 1995, 17-34; Capelle 1985, 498-501; 1987, 182-205). In 2007 Ines Beilke-Voigt offered the first comprehensive overview with her treatise on sacrifices in archaeological record. Other recent important articles were published by Klaus Freckmann in 2007 concerning sacrifices in buildings and in 2013 about building sacrifices and other magical practices (Freckmann 2007, 134-146; 2013, 75-84). Attempts to establish this type of research in medieval archaeology have been carried out by the University of Innsbruck during recent last years. Under the direction of Professor Dr. Harald Stadler, several theses on the subject have been produced: Bernadette Walterskirchen in 2010 on a single archaeological record at Lienz in Austria and Miriam Krög wrote her thesis about building sacrifices in medieval and modern times with examples from the Tirol in 2011 (Stadler – Torggler 1999; Walterskirchen 2010; Krög 2011).

In the context of our theme, two international studies are relevant: Ann-Britt Falk worked on building offerings in Scania and Denmark (Falk 2008) and M. Chris Manning studied examples from the USA (Manning 2014, 52-83). Both offer a very good overview of the theme.

Magical practices at buildings

Most customs relating to buildings do not leave any visible marks and there is a high variability of practice in different regions. Because of that it is necessary to study them for each specific region, especially by ethnological sources. Unfortunately there is no comprehensive work for the canton of Grisons, just general books on folklore like that by Dietrich Jecklin and Richard Weiss (Jecklin 1980; Weiss

1984). In case of other regions, there is a better current strand of research, for example, in France and the region Upper Harz in Germany (*Fillipetti–Trotterau 1987; Griep 1975, 173-176*). For our topic, a study of farmhouses in the canton of Grisons published by Christoph Simonett is most interesting. He discusses some aspects of ancient traditions like marks and symbols, inscriptions as well as patters at farmhouses. It is obvious that the whole building is steeped in magic. Simonett differentiates between Christian symbols, like an inscription of Christ's sayings, a cross, fish, chalice, cock or a star as an icon of Mary (*Simonett 1968, 191-194*), and pagan symbols. The latter can indicate the devil, such as grotesque faces, a mask, hand, lily, pentagram, number, magical inscription, mythical creature, animal figure, plant or a light symbol (*Simonett 1968, 194-205*). Figures of bears, bulls and ibex are much important for the interpretation of the objects that are the subject of this article. For the canton of Grisons there are several examples of the heads of animals nailed to a house wall. Of course they could be a tribute to the hunter and animal breeder, but a wooden replica above the door of the stables illustrates the apotropaic meaning. The ibex is a very important animal for the canton of Grisons as the symbol of the diocese of Chur. Certainly the ibex is also found out of this heraldic context as an apotropaic symbol. Simonett offers several examples for the ibex as a symbol at churches and farmhouses. Even common goats have a special role in the popular believe: A free-wheel black goat in the stables protects against witches as well as its horn above the door (*Simonett 1968, 200-202*). Furthermore the lexicon of superstition records that the devil created the goat and appears with the feet of a goat. Because of that the feet are not allowed to be eaten in Swiss belief (*Herold 2000a; 2000b*). In context of the examples that are presented below, a lot of feet from sheep, goat and chamois were found.

Every building phase is accompanied by practices and rituals. So it is necessary to differentiate between these customs as follows; first, during the preparation of the site, second, at the start of the building process, third, after the finish of a phase, forth, after completion, fifth during use, sixth, at rebuilding and seventh, between rituals after leaving the building. The deposits studied in this article are from the fifth phase, during its use and the sixth at rebuilding. Accordingly, the place inside the building is very important for the interpretation of the function of a deposit. For example, an object in the foundations has different purpose from that in the doorsill, the cooking pit or the roof. Therefore we can divide the building into three parts; the first as being the roof, the spire, the ridge beam and holes in the wall, the second as the body of the building where there are inserted floors, holes in the wall and distinctive places like the kitchen, entrances and windows and the third as the basement and foundations.

On this basis it can be pointed out that there are very different deposits covered by the term building sacrifice and that we know just a little of the complexity and variability of the customs and rituals. The following study is focused on deposits in the roof and the body of the building, which were brought in, mainly during rebuilding.

Study at canton of Grisons (CH)

The Grisons is a rural canton in Switzerland with Chur as its capital city. Based on the research at the cathedral, several examples from different types of buildings in Chur and the region in the north of the canton of Grisons were investigated: the cathedral of the Assumption, the church of St. Luzius, the former monastery of St. Nicolas and a city hall at Chur as well as the church of the Assumption in the village of Sagogn, the chapel St. Luzius in Siat, two rural houses in Felsberg and Fürstenau and the castle of Castels at Luzein-Putz in the Prättigau-Valley (Fig. 1). Most of them are deposits of pieces of animals, brought in after a fire during rebuilding. All known age determinations are after 1450 and in some case it is difficult to differentiate between intentional deposits and waste. The examples are from surveys of the Archaeological Service of the canton of Grisons, or objects, which were collected by the Museum of Nature (Bündner Naturmuseum) in Chur that were found by laymen. Most of the material is already published in the volume *Archäologie Graubünden 2 (Nießen 2015a, 23-52)*.

Material

The first example is the cathedral of the Assumption in Chur. The diocese of Chur is one of the oldest in Switzerland and the cathedral has a long building history too (*Durst 2001*). The cathedral has several previous phases, which go back to the second half of the 5th century. The existing construction was originates in 1150 and was consecrated in 1272 (*Poeschel 1930, 165-186; 1948, 36-40; Sennhauser 2003, 9-221, 691-706*). After that there was a major rebuilding necessary by reason of a large fire on 13th May 1811. The roof trusses were replaced and the tower completely rebuilt. This disaster was a heavy burden on the diocese, because it was already limited by the Reformation and secularization. The rebuilding took until AD 1900 and was a financial challenge (*Dosch 2008, 9-133; Fischer 2011, 227-256; Schlapp 2007*).

Altogether there are three ritual deposits known at the cathedral. One official deposit was placed in the spire of the rebuilt tower in 1828/29. Several handwritten and printed texts, handwritten notes, seven coins and relics were brought in (*Dosch 2008, 29-30*). In contrast to that there are two unofficial deposits in the roof and the nave, which are not recorded by contemporary written record. During the restoration of the cathedral in 1924-1926 by



Fig. 1. Position of the find spots (© Archaeological Service of the canton of Grisons).



Fig. 2. Chur, cathedral of Assumption, restoration 2001-2007, example of a finding spot in the central roof (© Archaeological Service of the canton of Grisons).

Walter and Emil Sulser (*Lanfranchi 1925*), objects, which can be interpreted as building sacrifices, were found for the first time. The finds were deposits in holes in a scaffold in the wall of the central nave. Unfortunately the objects are not preserved, so that we have to revert to the contemporary descriptions from Walter Sulser and Bishop Christian Caminada, who first interpreted the objects.

They opened about 20 holes and found many objects, the detailed number is not certain. Sulser describes the foot of a goat, a pigeon, a hen's egg, fragments of poultry, bones of mammals and fragments of leather (*Sulser 1924-1926*). Caminada wrote about hen's egg, skeletons of hens, birds and bones of small domestic animals (*Caminada 2006, 69-70; Poeschel 1930, 165-186; 1948, 56*). It's not possible



Fig. 3. Chur, cathedral of the Assumption, restoration 2001-2007, examples of findings; 1 chamois, forefoot; 2 sheep, forefoot; 3 sheep, hind foot; 4 indefinable rind?; 5 indefinable rind?; 6 chamois, forefoot; 7 chamois, metacarpus; 8 mummified fat; 9 indefinable entrails (© Iris Nießen).

to date the objects, because all of them were removed during the restoration as well as the plaster. The foot of a goat and other bones from mammals can be compared with the findings in the roof.

In 2006 218 objects were found in the roof of the cathedral during a survey by the Archaeological Service of the canton of Grisons (Nießen 2015a, 26-36). Like in the nave the objects were found in holes of the scaffold, but in contrast to them the holes in the roof were not closed (Fig. 2). So it is important to underline, that we have no closed context in this case. The holes have the dimensions of 20 x 20 cm and there were finds in about half the visible holes, that is 54 of them.

The objects have a total weight of 7463.17 gm. Most are the bones of animals (84.86%), of which 55.68% are from domestic cattle (*Bos primigenius taurus*), 25.4% from sheep (*Ovis orientalis aries*), goat (*Capra aegagrus hircus*) and chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), 6.49% from pig (*Sus scrofa domestica*), 2.7% from cat (*Felis silvestris catus*) and 9.73% from others. In addition to these, animal products, like mummified fat and fitted skin as well as linen, a fragment of paper and several ropes and laces were recovered. Half the cattle bones are from meat joints and in equal shares from young and adult animals. On the contrary from sheep, goat and chamois there are only the extremities of adult animals. The focus on extremities,

with half being forefeet, is notable. These were deposited with the flesh and skin still adhering from sheep, goat and chamois in contrast to the bones from cattle (Fig. 3). Because of the good climatic conditions some of them are totally mummified.

Furthermore the bones of three to six cats were found. In contrast to analogous deposits (Schad 2005, 151-161), only parts of them were deposited and not the whole animal. All in all, the finds can be classified as waste from food, slaughter and handicrafts, in particular the production of glue. The distribution of the objects in the roof is not regular. It seems that the deposits were important as an assemblage, instead of the individual object.

To provide a basis for dating, eight C14-tests were analyzed. The deposits date to the Modern period and have two chronological concentrations. One dates to the 16th century and the other to the 18th and 19th centuries (Fig. 4). Of course the data-base is too small for a valid determination and also the method is imprecise for that period. But we can record that the deposits are very young with a time spread from the second half of the 15th century to the early 20th century (Nießen 2015a, 36-37). It is most likely that the objects were brought in after the fire in 1811, respectively during the rebuilding works.

The church St. Luzi is located in the hillside above the cathedral in Chur and was also damaged during the big fire in 1811 (Durst 2007). In 1950/51 Walter Sulser restored the church and discovered 17 bones of goats in a closed hole of the Romanesque wall in the southern nave. Because the bones are not now available, it is not possible to date them (Sulser 1954, 163-164; Nießen 2015a, 37-40).

Another example from Chur was found in the monastery of St. Nicolas (Nießen 2015a, 38-40). The forefoot of a mummified sheep or goat and a leather shoe were found in a closed hole in the wall of the choir, which was built between 1280 and 1300. It is probable that the deposit was brought in after a fire 1574 (Fulda et al. 2002). The dating of the shoe substantiates this theory. For deposits of shoes, there are many analogies (Freckmann 2013, 80). For the canton of Grisons we know an example of a stable in Tiefencastel, Cumpogna: In the inserted floor, two pairs of shoes and a mummified cat were found. The cat could have got into it by herself, but in contrast to that the symmetrical arrangement of the shoes indicates intentionality. The stable was built between 1890 and 1896 (Nießen 2015a, 45-46).

Twenty-five kilometers southwest of Chur a mummified forefoot of a goat was found in a hole in the wall of a rural house in Fürstenuau on the first floor above a window. The building burned in 1742, but the dating of the deposit is not clear (Nießen 2015a, 40-41).

Three different deposits with all in all 17 objects were discovered in the inserted floors of a rural house in Felsberg. Most of them are bones from dog and sheep

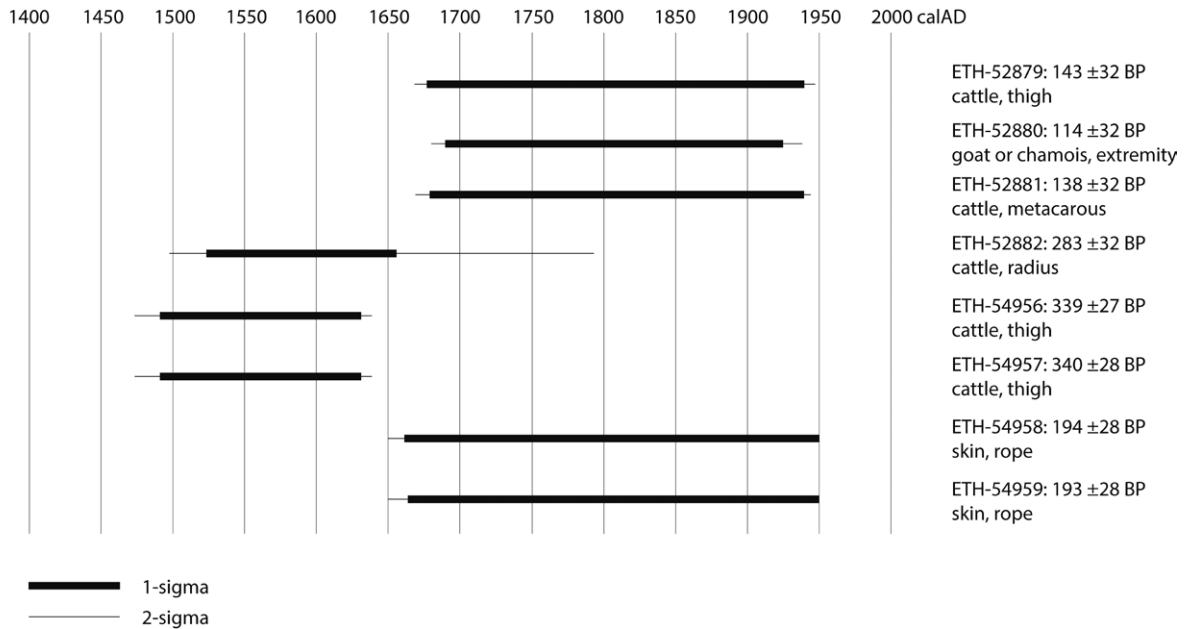


Fig. 4. Chur, cathedral of the Assumption, restoration 2001-2007, calibrated dates of eight findings, AMS-method, ETH-Zürich (© Archaeological Service of the canton of Grisons).

with a focus on extremities. Notably is the treatment of the five or six dogs: they were beaten and killed by a shot in the head and after that skinned before they were deposited without being butchered. The position of the objects above the kitchen and the sleeping room seems to be intentional. The building was constructed about 1850 and it is probably that the objects were brought in during the building process (Nießen 2015a, 41-45).

A further example is the castle of Castels at Luzein-Putz in the Prättigau-Valley. The castle was under Habsburg control and inhabited until the Thirty Years War (Clavadetscher-Meyer 1984, 277-279). A still ongoing survey by the Archaeological Service of the canton of Grisons discovered several bones in the holes of a wall, which dates after the High Middle Ages. Fragments of an upper jaw and a cranium of pig, the forefoot of a sheep or goat as well as a cervical vertebra of a cow, which was less than three years old, were found. The cow vertebra has a fracture, perhaps because of a fall, and the marks of modern slaughter. The holes were not closed so the original intention cannot be totally demonstrated and a final interpretation is not possible before the survey is completed.

Most of the presented examples are in the context of rebuilding. Beside the deposition of bones we have coins as well. On the one hand coins jog the memory, but on the other hand they can have a magical meaning as well. An interesting deposit of the 17th century is from a lay building at Chur (Sennhofstrasse 12). It was discovered during a survey of the Archaeological Service of the canton

of Grisons in 1989. Nine coins, dated between 1639 and 1666, were shrouded in textile and sealed by the plaster of the cellar during rebuilding (Mühlemann 2007, 61-67; Janosa 1992b). Another deposit of a coin was documented in 1987/88 by the Archaeological Service of the canton of Grisons at the Church of Assumption in Sagogn. In a circular hole in the floor of the church a coin was found, dated 1652 (Stadtchurer Blutzger). The floor is part of a baroque conversion in the 17th century (Janosa 1992a). The hole was closed with plaster, so that the deposit is demonstrably intentional (Fig. 5).

Interpretation

The interpretation of these findings is a challenge. We can conclude that all datable examples are after 1450. It is not possible to decide if it is because of the method of research or if it is custom of the Modern period. However, most of the deposits were brought in after a fire and during rebuilding. According to this they seem to be a reaction to such catastrophes.

Folklore research offers a few ideas for interpretation: Heinrich C. Affolter reported for the canton Bern in Switzerland that heads of bulls in the roof protect the building from lightning stroke and in case of a disaster a dead calf in the roof prevents more harm (Affolter 2001, 442). As already discussed the extremities from sheep, goat and chamois have a special position in folk belief, because they are associated with the devil. In that context the deposits could be sympathetic magic to protect the building. While there are known deposits of complete

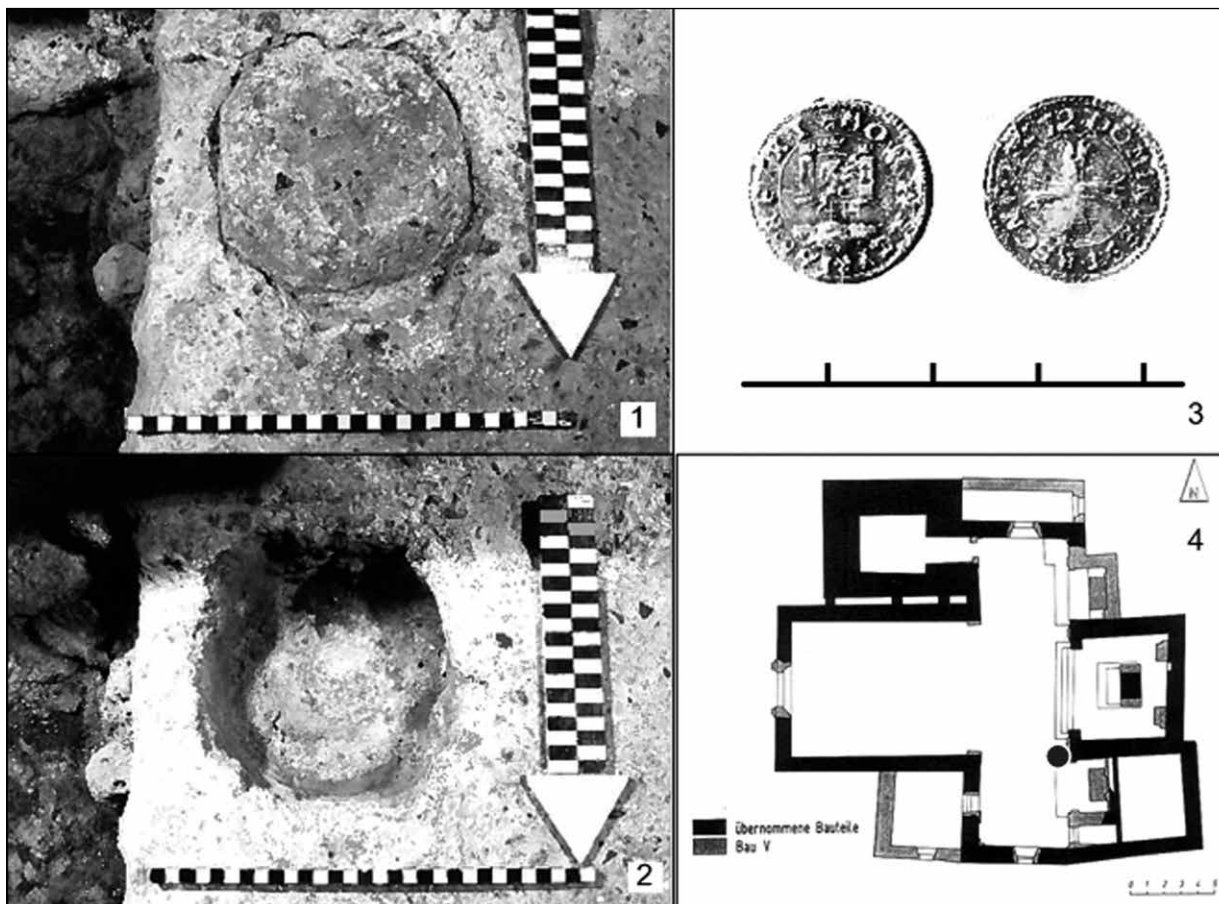


Fig. 5. Sagogn, church of Assumption; 1 closed circular hole in the baroque floor; 2 opened hole in the baroque floor; 3 coin (Stadtchurer Blutzger) dated 1652 out of the hole; 4 plan of the baroque phase with location of the hole (© Archaeological Service of the canton of Grisons; Plan after Janosa 1992, 301).

animals from other regions (Schad 2005, 151-161), which are interpreted as guardian angels in most cases, the deposits of animal bones seems to be a regional practice particular to the canton of Grisons.

In a report from the village Obersaxen near Chur that has been passed down, they immured animals and the hair from animals hold the stones together like meat and bones, which contain glue (Büchli 1989, 301-302). In which case, it is interesting that a few bones from the cathedral of Chur were waste from the production of glue. In this context, the deposits can be interpreted as a custom for the magical stabilization of a building (Nießen 2015a, 46-49). In addition also the use of blood in the plaster could have a similar meaning (Fillipetti – Trotreau 1987, 63).

Similar to this is the custom of banning something or someone with the help of a deposit in a building. Such relics of Bannzapfen were discovered by Heinrich Stiewe for timber houses in northwestern Germany (Stiewe 2013, 59-74). Affolter describes the same custom for the canton Bern. He added that especially the capuchins

were familiar with such magical practices. This is interesting, because the capuchin were in charge of the pastoral care at the cathedral in Chur until the late 19th century (Dosch 2008, 32). Still after the Reformation there were catholic parts in the canton of Grisons under the direction of the prince-bishop. It is clear that there is no separation between folk customs and the church. It seems to be very likely that such deposits were also practiced by clerical persons. Of course it is still possible that the deposits were brought in by builders or the lay inhabitants. But it is still likely that the capuchins in Switzerland were important in this context.

A case study at Denmark and Scania by Ann-Britt Falk also underline the role of the church. Falk mentions deposits at 15 churches, from which nine date to the medieval period. It becomes apparent that first coins were deposited and later the increased use of animal bones, as is known from Grison. Falk points out that these rituals were not prohibited as heresy and she conclude that the depots were classified as harmless folklore and were

made by the building proprietor and sometimes also by representatives of the Church (*Falk 2008*, 208).

The deposits of bones of animals are only one little part of a large variety of practices. From other regions concealed witch bottles, coins, footwear, cats, garments and textiles, dolls and poppet, horse skulls, horseshoes and other iron implements, printed texts and written charms are known. A study in the USA shows that the custom was not only common in Europe, but was also taken to America and Australia by European settlers (*Manning 2014*, 52-83). It gets clear that there are a lot of regional differences. Furthermore Falk could demonstrate a chronological dynamic on the basis of her case study: Deposits do not occur in the Christianization period in Scania. Two major changes can be detected at the High Middle Ages and after the Reformation. Falk says that in pre-Christian times the positions of the deposits in buildings were both external and internal. In the medieval period, external positions dominated with 65%. In contrast nearly 80% of the deposits were internal after the Reformation. The reason is a change of the world view. Because of the personalization of the devil in the 12th and 13th century the protection of the house against external imminence became of major significance. In the course of the Reformation it became common to make deposits in the middle of a house. At this time the devil lost his impact on earth and was waiting in hell. The devil acted through the superstitious behaviour of the people. So the true danger now came from inside (*Falk 2008*, 209-211).

Unfortunately the state of the date is too poor to make such conclusions for the canton of Grisons. A trend of internal and external positions can't be verified. But it is noticeable, that all known examples date to the Modern period and that the canton of Grisons was much influenced by the Reformation.

The comparison with other regions underlines the interpretation of the deposits as a custom for the protection of the house and the fortune of the inhabitants. The intention of the deposits had a private impact which is hardly to discover. The custom changed dynamically and was adapted to the contemporary world view that can be discovered in lay and ecclesiastical buildings in the city as well as in rural environment.

Conclusion

The presented material from the canton of Grisons is unique. The data is poorly recorded and researched. A methodology of research and the education of the wider population to their importance are needed to discover more material. It can be concluded that the interpretation of these deposits is speculative, but it is obvious that they are part of the magical protection of the buildings, as well as marks, symbols or relics.

Acknowledgement

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Votive offerings in buildings from rural settlements

Folk beliefs with deeper roots

Morten Søvsø *

ABSTRACT

The deposition of votive objects in buildings as an expression of folk belief is a well-known phenomenon in Danish ethnological research. A growing body of archaeological data has provided the opportunity to research these practices. This article presents the different types of votive offerings that have been identified in the archaeological record from Jutland and compares them with those documented by ethnographers in the 19th and early 20th century. It is argued that most ethnographically documented practices have their roots in the past, with some originating in the Iron Age or earlier, while others emerged during the Christian period.

Keywords: *Votive offerings in buildings, folk belief, rural archaeology, magic.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bauopfer in Höfen auf dem Land – Ein Volksglaube mit tiefen Wurzeln

Bauopfer als Ausdruck eines Volksglaubens sind ein wohlbekanntes Phänomen innerhalb des ethnologischen Materials aus Dänemark. Eine ständig wachsende Menge an archäologischen Funden bietet die Möglichkeit diese Tradition in der Zeit zurückzuerfolgen. Der Artikel präsentiert verschiedene Bauopfergruppen, die aus dem archäologischen Material aus Jütland heraus identifiziert werden konnten und verbindet sie mit ethnologisch dokumentierten Vorstellungen. Es wird argumentiert, dass die meisten dieser Traditionen weit in der Zeit zurückverfolgt werden können. Einige davon gehen bis in die pagane Eisenzeit oder sogar noch weiter zurück, während man andere so deuten kann, dass sie erst mit der Verbreitung des Christentums entstanden sind.

Schlagwörter: *Bauopfer, Volksglauben, rurale Archäologie, Magie.*

* Sydvestjyske Museer,
Ribe, Denmark
mosvs@sydvestjyskemuseer.dk

RÉSUMÉ

Dépôts votifs domestiques en contexte rural, témoins de croyances populaires aux racines profondes

Les dépôts votifs domestiques sont des phénomènes bien documentés par l'ethnologie au Danemark et témoignent de diverses croyances populaires. L'accroissement constant des découvertes archéologiques permet d'étudier ces pratiques et leur évolution dans le temps. Cet article présente différents groupes de dépôts votifs identifiés dans le matériel archéologique retrouvé dans la péninsule

du Jutland et les associe avec des croyances décrites par des sources ethnologiques plus récentes. Il cherche à démontrer que certaines de ces pratiques peuvent être retracées sur plusieurs siècles, parfois même jusqu'à l'Âge du Fer scandinave et au-delà, tandis que d'autres sont considérées comme étant liées à l'introduction du Christianisme.

Mots-clés : *dépôts votifs domestique, croyances populaires, archéologie rurale, magie.*

Introduction

In Denmark, there are no surviving medieval rural buildings and in many regions the oldest standing structures are from the 19th century. Much of our knowledge of early rural farms is based on map-studies, written sources and archaeological excavations. Every year archaeological excavations are providing an ever-growing body of data and in some cases include unusual or enigmatic finds that seem to be traces of various forms of folk belief. More often than not, these finds are difficult to interpret because the intentions behind them are unknown. Some can be understood through documented folklore from the 19th and early 20th centuries, while others remain enigmatic. The

problem is further compounded by the fact that in recent decades this field of study has not received much attention in Denmark.

In this article the following types of votive object found in buildings will be presented and discussed:

- Pointed or sharp iron objects like knives and axes
- Pottery vessels, placed either upright or inverted
- Fossils or stone axes
- Animal skulls

The different types of votive objects in buildings have various meanings and it is intended to demonstrate that several of these practices can be traced back to

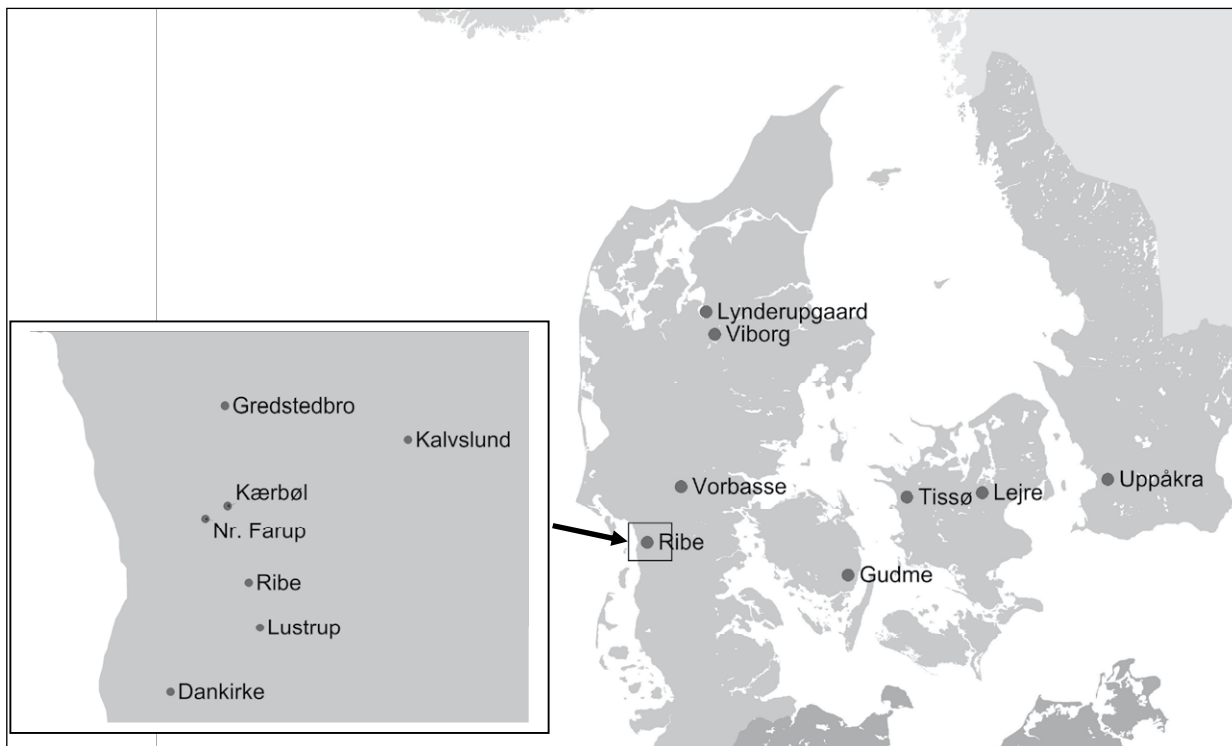


Fig. 1. Sites mentioned in the text (© Morten Søvsø).

the Iron Age and in some cases still exist in parts of Denmark today. These practices reflect a rich but more or less lost world of folk belief.

Votive objects in buildings

In 2015, a young father from the village of Nørre Farup, located near Ribe in southwest Jutland, informed the local museum that there was a dead calf, naturally mummified, in his attic that had many years ago been killed by a lightning strike. As you know, lightning never strikes twice – at least not within folk belief, thus he believed it could protect his house against lightning strikes. A visit to the village revealed that another resident had buried iron objects in his yard, as it would stop witches from flying over his farm. His father who had learned it from his father had passed the tradition down to him.

Despite centuries-long opposition from different parts of society – from the church in the early modern period and later on from science – it is still possible in today's high-tech world to find traces of alternative beliefs. Many would even argue that these kinds of practices constitute a growing phenomenon in our modern society that fill a religious or spiritual gap created by the decline of traditional Christian beliefs (*Højsgaard 2011*).

Research into apotropaic offerings in buildings has not attracted much attention in Danish archaeology and has been ignored by those who work in the field of medieval and renaissance archaeology. There are a few scattered works by folklore researchers, local historians and archaeologists (*Falk 2008; Carelli 1997; Kristensen 1968; Jensen 1984*). On the other hand, this subject has received far more attention by researchers outside of Denmark in recent years (*Herva 2010; Merrifield 1987; Jones 2002*).

In Scandinavia, research in folk beliefs has traditionally belonged to ethnology, which has for many years been a slowly dying discipline in line with the decline of traditional agricultural society during the 20th century. The collecting and research of folksongs, music and stories had its heyday in the 19th century and early 20th century. In particular, two individuals stand out in the Danish research history: Evald Tang Kristensen, who collected and published an enormous amount of material, mostly from Jutland, and Svend Grundtvig, who collected and documented musical tradition in the form of traditional folksongs (*Christiansen 2011* with references). They both worked in a period where folk belief was still a living part of rural agricultural society.

There has not been much development in the field since this initial collecting phase. However, over the last decade, as a result of developer financed excavations, a whole range of new archaeological observations has come to light. By its very nature, this new material is scattered and incomplete, and has not been systematically collated.

Despite this, there seems to be a series of interesting commonalities that will be discussed below.

Some types of apotropaic practices seem to be part of a continuous tradition that can be traced back to the Iron Age, and have thus survived the conversion to Christianity at the end of the Viking Age, the Reformation's harsh actions against superstitions, and the enlightenment. Other types of practice seem to have disappeared due to a Christian tradition where sound played a prominent role.

The arrival of Christianity brought with it writing, administration and long lived institutions that guaranteed that a large body of written theological material has survived to the present day. Therefore, the history of Christianity and its theology can be studied in detail. Among more ordinary people, there was another world of popular beliefs handed down through generations without being written down. During some periods, the Church fought against these superstitions, while in other periods they were more tolerant. We know a great deal about changing theological discussions within the Church, but except for a few exceptions, there was no tradition of documenting what people actually thought and did, and a wide range of aspects concerning their view of the world is more or less lost to us. Perhaps the analysis of unusual finds that occasionally occur in archaeological contexts could shed some light on this lost folk cosmology?

The following presentation is based upon material from the southern and western parts of Jutland, and it is far from complete. There is little doubt that many more examples could be found in other parts of the country or more intensive study of the grey literature. The following presentation is not intended as a complete overview of the subject, but rather aims to demonstrate that the subject is an important source for understanding life in rural society. It is also a field of study that deserves more attention in the future.

Source criticism

Archaeological field-methods define the framework for creating the dataset that archaeological research is based upon. Since the 1970's Danish excavations have been carried out following two main methodological approaches.

- Area excavations on ploughed sites
- Stratigraphic excavation of sites with intact culture layers

Area excavations represent by far the most common type of archaeological excavation and are carried out with techniques and methodology that developed through the Vorbasse-excavations carried out in 1974-87 (*Hvass 1986*). Here the plough layer is machine stripped to the subsoil where features such as postholes, pits, wells and burials

are revealed. Since the vast majority of archaeological sites in open land have been ploughed for hundreds or even thousands of years, the original occupation layers have long since been transformed into a uniform, un-stratified plough layer. Machine removal of this layer is thus an affordable and methodologically sound approach, despite the fact that, as metal detecting has demonstrated, the vast majority of the artefacts from these sites are found in this plough layer (Feveile 2014).

Since only the structural features that have been dug into the subsoil are preserved, there will often be some doubt about which features relate to each other, particularly if they do not fall within known patterns such as well-known house types. With one or two phased sites, it is normally easy to interpret and unravel the relations between well-known structural features in houses, but when dealing with features that fall outside the norm, for example, votive objects in buildings, the situation is more complicated. This problem is greater the more complex the excavation is. Often the correlation between a potential offering and a building can only be made if the object is placed in direct relationship with the building, for example in a posthole.

The second type of archaeological excavation is a stratigraphic excavation, which is primarily undertaken upon the cultural layers in medieval towns. This costly form of excavation is typically restricted to small areas within towns but can still provide a wealth of information that creates just as many questions as it answers. Since features and structures are often only partially uncovered, there can be uncertainty about their interpretation.

In some fortunate cases, stratigraphic excavations can provide exceptional examples of relationships between archaeological remains. One such example comes from the excavation of a smithy, dated to 1020, that was built on the shores of Lake Sønderø in Viborg, Jutland (Christensen *et al.* 2006). In a shallow pit inside the workshop, which was stratigraphically demonstrated to be contemporary with the building, a box-wood bowl had been placed upright on the bottom of the pit. Although there were no preserved food remains in the bowl it was may have been a food offering. However, the bowl was only preserved by virtue of the waterlogged conditions in this area. Organic finds on most archaeological sites have rotted or have been ploughed away. This example shows what can be preserved in exceptional circumstances. Consequently, many forms of offering are likely to have disappeared without trace.

Pre-Christian votive offerings

Votive offerings are a common occurrence on Iron Age sites and are often found at settlements and particularly on high-status farms. Numerous types of votive object

from high-status sites have been recorded, such as Gudme on Funen, Lejre and Tissø on Zealand, Sorte Muld on Bornholm and Uppåkra in Scania (Jørgensen 2014). These include human and/or animal remains, food, precious metals, gold-foil figures, weapons, copper-alloy jewelry and glass beads.

These wealthy high-status sites were probably religious centres for pagan cults and at several sites traces of temple buildings have been found. One such example from southwest Jutland is Dankirke located 8 km south of Ribe that was excavated by the National Museum in 1965-70 (Hansen 1990). A significant amount of deposited jewellery and weapons were excavated that, together with a cult-wagon and burned down halls, presents a picture of systematic offering and sacrifice during the 1st – 6th centuries AD.

Apparently, Christianity ended many of these practices with the possible exception of precious metals. Buried coin hoards from the 11th and 12th centuries have been found in several churches (Olsen 1961, 11; Cinthio 2002, 142), and other late Viking hoards show clear Christian traces. A sacred Christian vessel, the Ribe-chalice is a Carolingian Pyxis of silver from around AD 800, which was buried in the late Viking period near where a road splits to the north north-east of Ribe (Wamers 1991). It also contained six smaller silver drinking vessels. In Danish archaeology, these hoards have traditionally been interpreted as deposited wealth that was meant to be retrieved, but one could ask whether the Ribe-Chalice could also be an offering? There can be many different interpretations. It could be a Christian protective offering, placed by the road leading to the town, or the drinking set might have played a special role in the Christian mission that originated from the town.

Types of apotropaic offering in buildings

1. Pointed or sharp iron objects deposited in postholes

In 2006, during excavations at Gredstedbro, 8 km north of Ribe, an axe was found that had been buried in a posthole placed with its edge facing upward. The posthole was from a house dated to the Early Germanic Iron Age (4th – 6th centuries AD). There are other examples of axes being deposited in this manner from other Iron Age houses. In 2015, parts of a large farmstead were excavated in Lustrup, 2 km southeast of Ribe. The farmstead was dated to the 12th and 13th centuries and belonged to the Bishop of Ribe (Søvsø 2013a). From written sources, we know that a cellarius, a cellar master, managed the farm and may have resided in a brick tower on the site that was built around the year 1200. Although the Bishop did not live on the

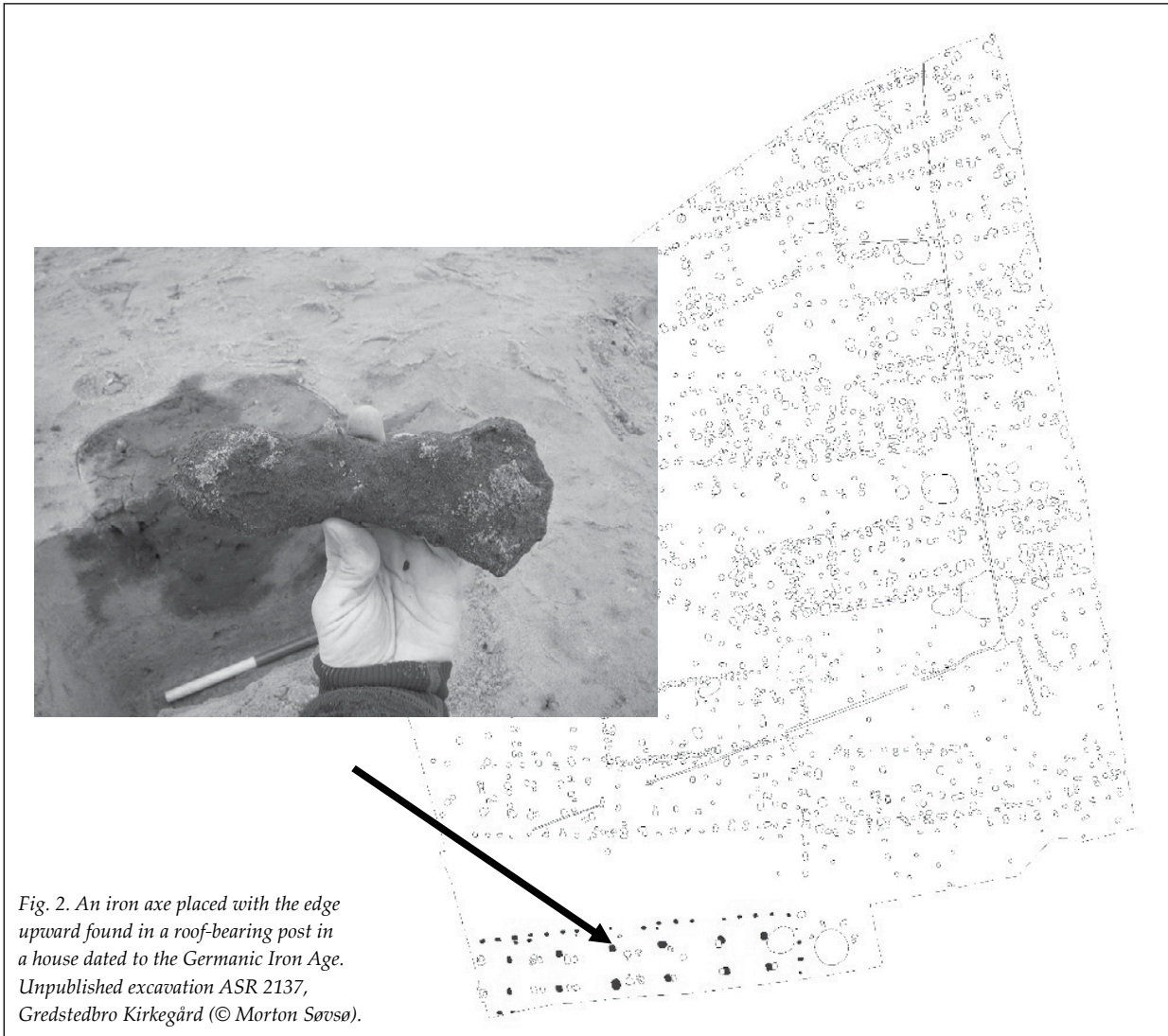


Fig. 2. An iron axe placed with the edge upward found in a roof-bearing post in a house dated to the Germanic Iron Age. Unpublished excavation ASR 2137, Gredstedbro Kirkegård (© Morton Søvsø).

farm, the brick tower and artefacts indicate that the site was high-status. The 2015 excavation uncovered the farm's main building dating from the middle of 12th century. In one of the house's roof-bearing posts a meat fork was found with the fork ends pointing upwards.

Despite the long time span between these pre-Christian and medieval examples and those from recent times, there are some similarities, such as the case of the farmer from Nørre Farup who had buried iron objects in his yard to protect himself against witches. In early modern times it was common to place a sharp knife in the cradle next to newborns in order to protect the child against evil (Troels-Lund 1914; Kristensen 1968, 15f). Iron's apotropaic properties is well documented and presumably the practice of using pointed or sharp iron objects as protection against evil has had a long history that is reflected in the archaeological examples from Gredstedbro and Lustrup.

2. Fossils and other unusual stones

Fossilized sea urchins and squid are sometimes found in archaeological contexts and are often explained as a random occurrence or the result of being collected in the past because of their unusual appearance. Fossil squids, belemnites, are called either *vattelys* (Wight's candle) or thunderstones. Wights are known from both folklore and Old Norse and were protective spirits residing under houses or among people. The name thunderstone is due to the idea that fossils were created through lightning. Fossilised squids were associated both with the underworld, wights, and lightning. Fossilised sea urchins were known as thunderstones, but in the Jutland dialect they were also called *sebedejesten* after Zebedaus, the father of apostles James and John who were also known as the thunder sons. The name *sebedejesten* is thus a Christian version of the same idea that fossilised sea urchins were created by thunder or lightning.

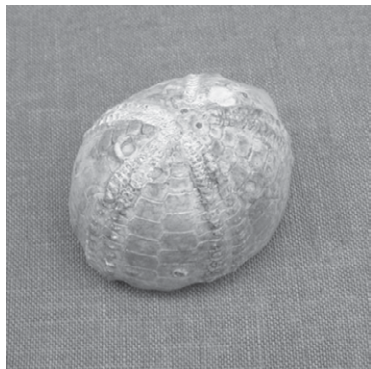


Fig. 3. Fossilized sea urchin found within the main building of late Viking farmstead, ca. AD 1000. Excavation ASR 1906 Kalvslund Kirkebakke (© Morton Søvsø).

Since according to folk belief lightning never strikes the same place twice, thunderstones could be used as protection against lightning strikes. Ethnology and philology can document this belief some centuries back in time, but what has the archaeological record to offer on this topic?

In the collections of the Museum of South West Jutland 75 fossils from archaeological sites, 56 sea urchins and 19 belemnites are registered. They can of course occur naturally in the morains that characterise the area surrounding Esbjerg, but not on the plains of sandy heath around Ribe where the most fossils have been found, and therefore must have been brought in from elsewhere. Most are found in villages, but there are also a number of examples from the Ribe, where they are found in stratigraphic contexts ranging from the 8th to the 15th century in date. Their use in the town during this time is thus securely dated. Most are small but complete and beautiful examples.

The use of sea urchins as amulets is well known in a variety of Viking period contexts (*Schietzel 2014*), but

whether the examples in the Museum's collections were originally kept in houses as protection against lightning or rather, judging by their size, as personal amulets cannot be determined. Nevertheless, their significant presence in the archaeological record gives little reason to doubt that they were thought to possess symbolic powers. In eastern England, fossilized sea urchins were also known as thunderstones, a name linguists consider to originate from Old Norse during the Viking period. This is another strong indication that they were thought to be created by thunder and lightning during the Viking Age.

Other kinds of unusual stones were also considered to be created by lightning and therefore able to be used as protection. The 16th century manor at Lynderupgaard, located by the Limfjord in northern Jutland, belonged to the Bishop of Viborg during the Middle Ages and excavations have uncovered the remains of a medieval stone building on the site. Under the threshold a thin-necked flint-axe from the Funnel Beaker Culture was found. It had no traces of wear and was therefore already a votive offering 5500 years ago, only to be reused again



Fig. 4. 16th-17th century farmstead excavated in Kærbøl consisting of a central building with living quarters and byre (Wohnstallhaus). To the north a barn building was situated. In the byre the central dot marks the position of a buried horse skull. Excavation ASR 2147, Præstegårdstøften (© Morton Søvsø).

for this purpose in the Middle Ages. And it must be remembered that a well-educated Christian, the Bishop of Viborg, had the house built.

3. Animal votive offerings

During the pre-Christian period, personal animals such as horses or dogs occasionally were buried with their owners. Food offerings were also very common. The conversion to Christianity seems to have brought to an end to the first of these practices, but burials of animals in various symbolic contexts continued.

A large barn was built in the 13th century at the previously mentioned Bishopric farm in Lustrup. In the stables a skull of a cow was deposited in a pit, which did not have room for much else other than the skull (Søvsø 2013a).

A similar type of offering was uncovered in 2006 during the excavation of a well preserved farmhouse from the 16th and 17th centuries at village of Kærbøl 4 km northwest of Ribe. (Søvsø 2008). The main building was constructed with robust wooden posts and was probably of timber-framed construction. The living area was located in the east while the stables were located in the western part of the building. There was a deep pit centrally located in the stables where a horse skull was deposited. Only the teeth were preserved, but teeth from both the upper and lower jaw were present indicating that an entire skull had been buried in the pit. The pit seems to have been purposely dug for depositing the horse skull.

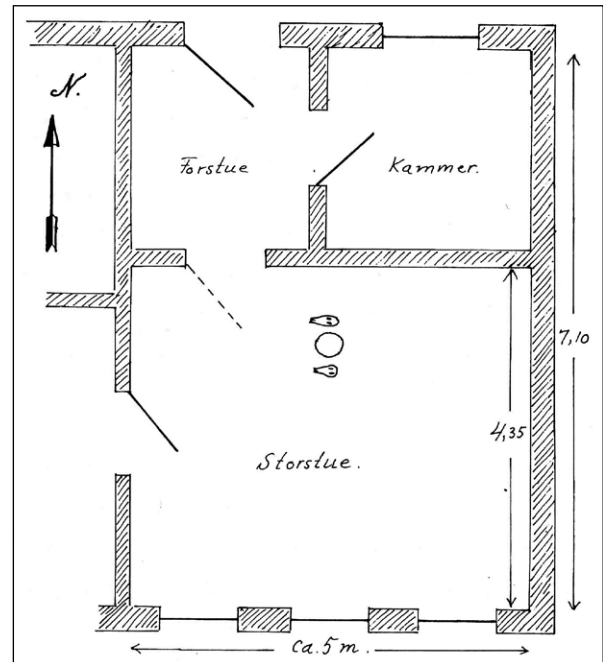


Fig. 5. Horse skulls found under the floors of a 19th century farmstead (© Knud Jensen 1984).

Folklore research has documented many examples of the practice of offering animal or animal parts due to their protective qualities against evil, disease or witchcraft (Jensen 1962; Hansen 1971; Falk 2008).

4. Apotropaic sounds

From several parts of Denmark and in particular western Jutland there are many documented examples of buried horse skulls deposited under floors with their foreheads facing upwards (*Jensen 1984*). Folklore research has suggested that the intention behind this practice was to ward off evil through sound. The act of depositing horse skulls under floors was thought to give the floor just the right sound when for example dancing was going on in the living room or threshing on the threshing floor. This sound was thought to be able to keep evil at bay and it is characteristic that it was in connection with dancing, threshing and other physical activities where participants could lose themselves allowing evil easy access. Horse skulls also appear in a host of stories where it was common that by stepping on it would produce the right sound allowing the main character to cross a river or other symbolic narratives.

The same idea of protective sounds lies behind the many examples of local greyware pots buried beneath the floors of old farms (*Jensen 1962*). Most of the finds originate from farms dating from the late 18th century to the mid-19th century that represent the oldest intact farms when recording was undertaken. Most of the pots were found inverted forming a cavity beneath the floor. Folklore research suggests that the intention behind this was to give the overlying plank floor just the right sound. Whether there were any real acoustic effects is probably doubtful, but it is also irrelevant because the practice was about belief.

The question is, is it possible to trace this practice further backward in time? There are a number of examples of inverted pottery vessels from excavated medieval houses (*Hartwig 2015*). The practice can be traced back to around the year 1200 but it is unknown whether the same meanings or intentions lay behind this practice as with those from the late 18th and mid-19th centuries. Yet, if we turn our attention towards religious architecture there are some suggestions that it might.

Acoustic jars are sometimes found built into the walls of Romanesque and later church buildings in Denmark and other countries. Their openings face the inside of the room thereby creating cavities within the stone walls of the buildings. Acoustic jars are mentioned as far back as classical antiquity, as in the writings of Vitruvius from the 1st century BC, and continue through to the end of the Middle Ages (*Merrifield 1987*). Although the real acoustic effect of these jars is questionable, their presence seems to have added a special quality to the churches acoustics. They are found bricked in into walls or placed in brick-built underground sound boxes under choir stalls. Again, one may doubt their real effect, but just note that they must have been imbued with an important function, presumably as symbolic amplifiers

of prayers and perhaps facilitators of holiness to those buried under church floors?

Sacred protective sounds are a guiding principle in Christian liturgy and are represented in church bells, singing, music and architecture. Presumably, this mindset is manifested through deposition of pottery vessels under farmyard floors. A second group of pottery vessels is found standing upright and could have been containers for offerings of food or vipers (*Jensen 1984*).

Conclusion

The purpose of this brief, and far from complete, presentation of the various types of votive practices in rural contexts is to draw attention to a neglected field of research. In recent decades, archaeological discoveries have been able to supplement folklore research with an entirely new dataset that seems to demonstrate that a number of the so-called superstitious practices, remains of which still exist today, have their origins in the Iron Age and perhaps even earlier. Other practices, such as protective sounds, played a central role and were likely to have been a Christian inspiration.

Evidence of superstitious practices is difficult to identify archaeologically as the remains are often not preserved and are easily misunderstood. There is a high risk that the traces are either overlooked or simply not documented sufficiently if the excavator is not aware of the possibilities.

As presented above votive offerings are far from limited to just the pre-Christian period, these practices continued throughout the Christian period and to a certain extent still exist today. As they appear in the archaeological record they reflect the general population's beliefs in the pre-industrial world, where evil, in the form of death, disease or crop failures, was close to all, as was the intimate world populated by a cosmology of supernatural beings.

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Archéologie des pratiques apotropaiques entre Lorraine et Luxembourg

Jean-Marie Blaising *

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article deux types de vestiges de pratiques apotropaiques connues entre Lorraine et Luxembourg, ont été regardé de plus près: d'une part, il y a les signes ostensibles généralement placés sur les encadrements des ouvertures ou sur les taques de cheminées, d'autre part, les signes ou objets cachés, découverts fortuitement dans les murs, les planchers ou les charpentes. La rareté de ces découvertes s'explique par la fréquente modestie des dépôts et la situation de leurs cachettes qui font qu'ils ne peuvent être découverts que lors de travaux de rénovation ou de démolition. Seul un œil avisé permet de les repérer. L'information du public et des intervenants dans le bâti ancien permet de rapidement augmenter le corpus des découvertes.

Mots-clés : *Pratiques apotropaiques, bâtiments ruraux, Grande-région Lorraine/Luxembourg.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Archäologie der apotropäischen Praktiken zwischen Lorraine und Luxembourg

In diesem Artikel werden zwei apotropäische Praktiken aus der Region zwischen Lorraine und Luxemburg behandelt: zum einen die sichtbaren Zeichen an Fenster- und Türrahmen der Häuser resp. an den Takenplatten, zum anderen versteckte Zeichen und Objekte, die oft nur zufällig in den Mauern, Fußböden und Dächern entdeckt werden. Diese Zufälligkeit erklärt sich aus der Tatsache, dass ihre Existenz nicht bekannt ist und sie erst bei größeren Umbauten resp. Abrissarbeiten zu Tage treten. Ohne geschulten Blick auf diese in der Regel sehr dezenten Objekte, werden sie allzu oft übersehen und gehen verloren. Eine wissenschaftliche Aufarbeitung ist daher derzeit schwierig, aber umso wichtiger damit das Wissen um diese Praktiken erhalten bleibt und die Bevölkerung sensibilisiert wird.

Schlagwörter: *Apotropäische Praktiken, ländlich geprägte Häuser, „Grossregion“ Lorraine/Luxembourg.*

* Association pour le développement de la recherche archéologique en Lorraine, Université des Lorraine, Nancy, France
jeanmarie.blaising@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Archaeology of apotropaic practices between Lorraine and Luxembourg

Two types of apotropaic practices from the region between Lorraine and Luxembourg are discussed in this article: Firstly, the visible signs on the window and door frames of houses, and on chimney plates, and on the other hand hidden signs on objects discovered accidentally in walls, floors and roofs. The randomness of such finds is explained by the fact that their existence

Introduction

Les sites dont il est question dans cet article sont répartis au nord de la région lorraine (France) et au Grand Duché de Luxembourg. Aux confins des parlers romanophones et germanophones, tiraillée entre Saint Empire et France, la région présente une géopolitique ancienne complexe et enchevêtrée. Par contre, les pratiques culturelles sont relativement homogènes. Durant le Moyen-Âge, la zone d'étude comprenait des parties du Comté puis Duché de Luxembourg, du Duché de Lorraine, de Bar, de Pays Messin, partie des Trois évêchés Metz-Toul-Verdun, pour ne citer que les plus imposants.

Les pratiques de protection des bâtiments ont fait l'objet de nombreuses études et synthèses avant de tomber en désuétude (entre autres *Westphalen 1934; Cuisenier 1975; Fillipetti – Trotereau 1978; Mousset 1983; Berton 2008; Alexandre-Bidon – Lorcin 2006; Barou et al. 1998*). Le but de cette étude n'est pas de refaire un inventaire des pratiques et rites de protection, mais à partir d'exemples récents et bien documentés de vérifier quels peuvent en être les restes matériels. Quels vestiges ont pu être produits par les pratiques apotropaïques, comment les mettre au jour et jusqu'où peut aller l'interprétation archéologique de ces restes ? Les cas présentés concernent les ouvertures et plus particulièrement les portes, la cheminée, les murs, les planchers et les toitures, d'une manière générale, les interfaces entre le microcosme de la maison et le monde extérieur.

Insignes sur les bâtiments

Sur les bâtiments ruraux encore visibles dans nos campagnes qui sont généralement datés du XVII^e au XX^e siècle, les symboles protecteurs et/ou décoratifs se rencontrent sur les encadrements de portes extérieures de bâtiments : niches à saints, croix, monogrammes du Christ, pentagrammes, svastikas courbes, spirales, rosaces, losanges, fers à cheval ...

Ainsi, à Fillstroff en Lorraine, la façade d'une construction remaniée en 1832 présente des motifs courants sur le linteau de la porte d'entrée, un soleil tournoyant lévogyre à 11 branches en motif central et

is unknown and comes to light only during larger conversions or demolition work. Without a trained eye, these important objects are normally overlooked and lost. As a result, academical analysis is difficult at the moment, but it is all the more important that the knowledge of these practices survives and that the public is informed.

Keywords: *Apotropaic practices, rural houses, Lorraine/Luxembourg region.*

des marguerites dans des losanges de part et d'autre (Fig. 1-1 et 1-2). La clef d'arc de l'encadrement en pierre de la porte de grange présente une étoile à cinq branches avec une pointe vers le haut (Fig. 1-5). Les deux montants de cette même porte comportent côté rue chacun une étoile à cinq branches tête en bas (Fig. 1-4) et, se faisant face des svastikas courbes à cinq branches lévogyres (Fig. 1-3). Le svastika courbe à cinq branches est plus rare que celui à quatre branches que l'on retrouve dans toute l'Europe.

À Haute-Sierck (Moselle-France), sur les montants de portes de granges, le svastika dextrogyre côté rue est associé aux rosaces à six pétales se faisant face (Fig. 1-8 et 1-9). Il s'agit généralement de blocs de pierres dont la forme visible est quasi cubique situés entre les parties verticales et le départ de l'arrondi de l'arc ou sur la clef d'arc des portes de granges.

Sur des représentations à caractère sacré, l'association du svastika avec des cercles, roues, astres radiés, croix inscrite ou non dans un cercle et signes en S est connue depuis la protohistoire en Europe de l'ouest (*Déchelette 1928*). La présence d'un soleil rayonnant ou tournoyant sur un linteau peut être une évocation de Jésus-Christ, une croix de chemin à Mandray (Vosges-France) dans le sud lorrain figure un soleil au milieu de la croix. Représentation volontaire ou fortuite de SOL INVICTVS tel qu'hérité de la transposition effectuée par l'empereur Constantin ?

Des symboles similaires sont représentés en décors de 20 moules à gaufres du Musée Lorrain de Nancy du XVII^e au XX^e siècle (rosaces à six pétales, octogrammes, tulipes, soleil tournoyant...). Les signes géométriques sont facilement obtenus à l'aide d'un compas même sommaire, qu'il soit à verge ou à branches.

Des multitudes de traçages au compas plus ou moins abouties sont visibles sur des surfaces tendres comme les enduits au plâtre, dans une grange d'Eincheville (Moselle-France), sur le dessus d'un plancher en plâtre (technique connue sous le nom d'*Estrich* dans la région), à Fillstroff (Moselle-France) ; sur des meubles en chêne à Peppange au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg (collection Quintus) ou dans les combles du château d'Aspelt où une rosace au tracé complexe figure sur

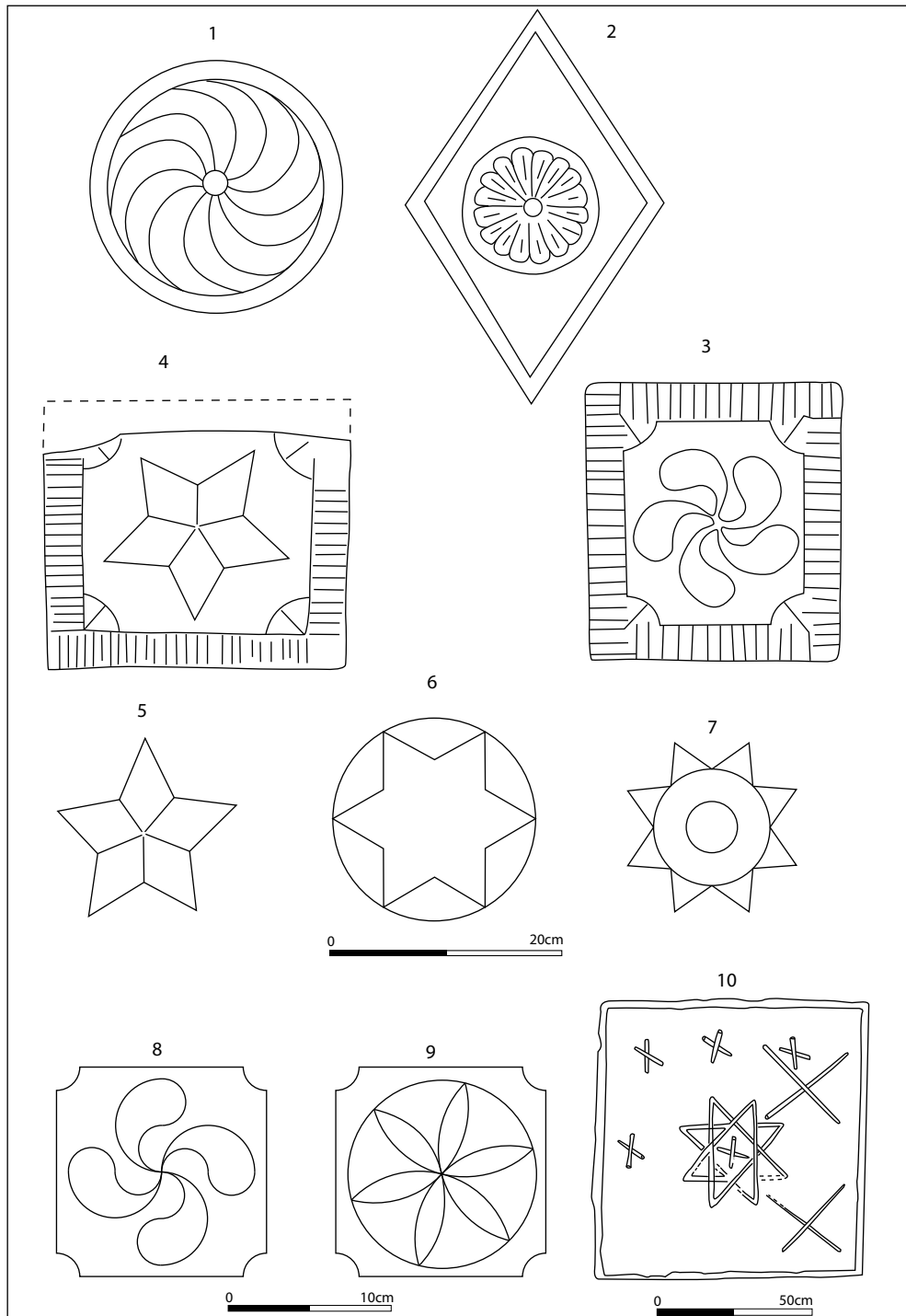


Fig. 1. Exemples de signes visibles dont la valeur apotropaïque et/ou décorative n'est pas toujours discernable (XVIII^e-XIX^e s.) (© DAO de Sabine Baccega d'après les relevés de J-M Blaising): 1 et 2 : Fillstroff (France), astre tournoyant lévogyre à 11 branches et fleur à 16 pétales inscrite dans un losange sur un linteau de porte d'entrée en pierre. 3 et 4 : Fillstroff (France), étoile à cinq branches, une pointe vers le bas et svastika à cinq branches. Ces deux figures sont situées sur les montants en pierres de la porte de grange. 5 : Fillstroff (France), étoile à cinq branches, une pointe vers le haut, située sur la clef d'arc en pierre de la porte de grange. 6, 7, 8, 9 : Haute Sierck (France), étoile à cinq branches inscrite dans un cercle, soleil rayonnant à deux cercles concentriques, svastika à quatre branches, rosace à six branches inscrite dans un cercle. Ces figures sont placées sur les encadrements en pierres des portes de grange. 10 : Yutz (France), taque en fonte de cheminée de 92 centimètres de côté décorée par impression directe dans le sable du moule, la figure centrale est un octograme entouré de croix couchées. Le décor était situé du côté du placard de taque.

l'enduit des combles sur le côté nord d'une tour près du conduit de cheminée. Cette dernière est proche des tracés de rosaces gothiques de Laon ou Saint Denis, son tracé est cependant basé sur la rosace simple à six pétales. On retrouve la rosace simple à six ou quatre pétales associée aux octogrammes sur six des vingt moules à gaufres du Musée Lorrain à Nancy (France).

La question du sens que l'on peut donner à ces signes se pose, les intentions profondes ou superficielles de leurs auteurs sont définitivement perdues, cependant, même si elle n'est que décorative, la reproduction d'une figure symbolique en assure la pérennité et permet d'en faire renaître la fonction magique ancienne aux regards avertis. Il s'agit d'un savoir tacite qui n'est pas explicité, même par les membres de la société qui les utilisent, le symbole peut remplir sa fonction même si sa signification échappe à la conscience (Rueg 2011, 230-233). Ces signes sculptés ou simplement tracés restent en place tant que les bâtiments restent debout et ne sont pas modifiés au point d'en entraîner la destruction.

La restauration des constructions, qu'il s'agisse de simples maisons paysannes ou de châteaux et églises ne tient généralement pas compte de ces signes discrets, faute de connaissances. Un cas particulier peut illustrer ce propos : lors d'une visite au château d'Aspelt pour y voir un tracé de rosace dans les combles dont il est fait état plus haut, j'exposais quelques exemples de dépôts votifs tels que les vieilles chaussures ou les chats desséchés... Monsieur Frantzen qui s'occupe de l'association qui gère le château, surpris, me dit qu'il avait vu un chat momifié entre les deux couches de planches du sol des combles du château. Après vérification, il s'avère qu'un chat ne pouvait pas s'être faulilé sous le plancher et y mourir par hasard, mais qu'il s'agissait en l'espèce, d'un dépôt volontaire. Si l'on tient compte des traditions récentes d'Europe et d'Amérique du nord, d'un dépôt apotropaïque, probablement d'un « *Bauopfer* » comme dit dans le domaine germanophone (Freckmann 2013 ; Fennel – Manning 2014; Rueg 2011, 224). Ce cas est symptomatique de l'intérêt d'informer non seulement les décideurs, mais également les ouvriers qui interviennent sur les vieilles bâtisses. Il est également représentatif du mode de transmission d'une croyance, ce chat mort desséché est passé en un instant de déchet à jeter à celui d'objet quasi sacré digne de la vitrine d'un musée. L'objet n'est magique que par le regard porté qui lui donne son sens. Il est à espérer que le bâtiment privé de son « *Bauopfer* » ne va pas en souffrir.

Le fer à cheval au dessus des portes reste un des rares signes avec une fonction de porte-bonheur toujours affichée ; par contre, les niches à saints sont très souvent dépouillées de leurs statuette. Dans les maisons visitées, souvent inoccupées depuis plusieurs décennies, les signes religieux sont parmi les tout derniers meubles à rester en place, images saintes encadrées, croix avec un brin de

buis passé derrière les jambes du Christ, pierres de foudre (Blaising 2014a). On peut noter parfois la présence de statues de saints en bois, dont une Sainte Barbe, placés dans la charpente à la ferme Immerhof à Hettange-Grande (information : Philippe Stachowski, historien) ou une statue de Vierge médiévale en bois retrouvée dans un grenier de maison de vigneron à Beuvange-sous-Justemont (Commune de Vitry-sur-Orne en Moselle) qui fut transformée en Notre-Dame de Justemont à l'église paroissiale de Vitry en 1935 (Christophe 2008). Le buis est encore souvent présent sur les portes, sous les appuis de fenêtres, dans les charpentes, derrière les jambes du Christ, parfois c'est aussi une fleur séchée (rose, antennaire...) que l'on rencontre. La présence de ces objets jusqu'à l'extrême fin de l'occupation des maisons pose question. Là encore, on ne peut pas extrapoler une intention précise chez les propriétaires qui épargnent les objets à caractère sacré, la charge symbolique des objets est probablement toujours présente dans l'esprit de ces personnes, ce qui les dissuade de se débarrasser d'eux au contraire d'une vieille poterie ou d'un matelas.

Un exemple frappant concerne Clouange en Moselle (France) où une maison datée de 1636, démolie dans les années 1980, était pourvue d'une niche à saint remarquable au-dessus de la porte d'entrée. Cette niche était garnie d'une statue en pierre de Saint Norbert qui a été donnée par le locataire à un passant qui l'admirait, au grand dam des indigènes. Aujourd'hui, il n'en reste qu'une photo floue. Ce locataire d'une autre culture, n'était pas originaire du lieu et n'avait aucune idée du caractère symbolique, sacré ou patrimonial de cet objet qui pour lui n'était qu'une vieille pierre taillée.

Dans les maisons, la cheminée était une autre « porte » vers l'extérieur et se devait d'être également protégée par l'arsenal de la religion officielle et naturelle. On y trouvait les croix sur pied, souvent en cuivre ou en bronze avec un brin de buis, le fer à cheval, l'œuf du vendredi saint, éventuellement une hache polie... (Westphalen 1934, 251). Dans les foyers, on trouvait des taques en fonte décorées et connues mais également des taques carrées d'environ 90 centimètres de côté, de facture fruste avec un octogramme en décor central (Fig. 1-10). Dans l'état de la recherche, elles sont localisées dans l'ancien Luxembourg. Ces taques ne nécessitaient pas l'utilisation d'un modèle en bois pour le moulage, elles étaient composées, c'est-à-dire décorées par impression directe dans le sable du moule de tiges de fer, cordées ou non. Le type des motifs utilisés, leur nombre, leur taille et leur disposition varient d'une taque à l'autre ; de plus leur alignement, leur inclinaison, leur profondeur, ne sont jamais parfaits, montrant ainsi le coté succinct et rapide de cette impression dans le sable. D'après Monsieur Gérard Colin de Marange-Silvange (France), collectionneur, ces taques sont présentes dans toute la Lorraine. Peu connues

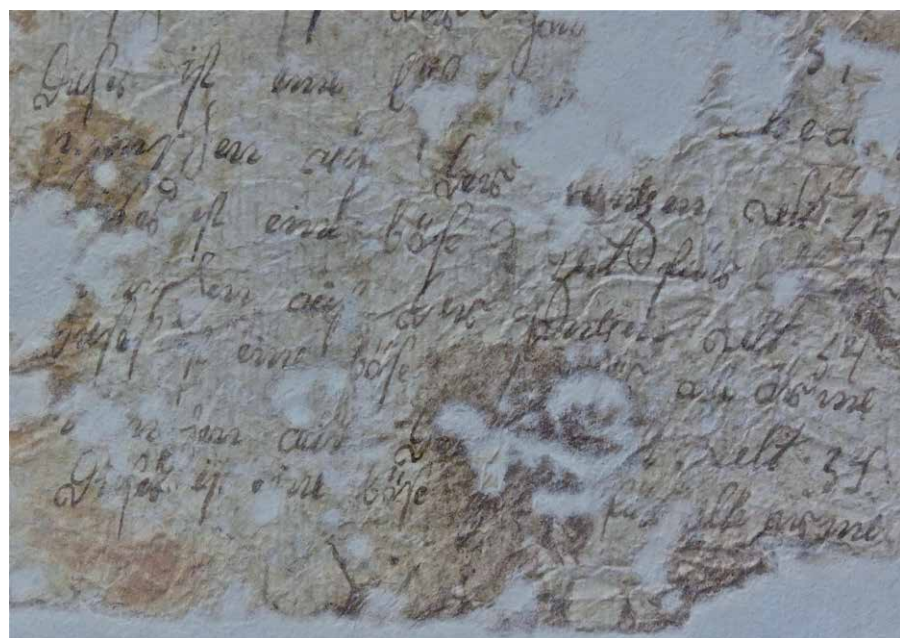


Fig. 2. Narbéfontaine (France), en haut, pochette en tissu retrouvée sous l'enduit du mur de la cuisine avec le papier manuscrit dont un extrait figure en bas, probablement vers 1670 (© Jean-Marie Blaising).

car peu prisées par les collectionneurs, elles ne sont pas étudiées dans les ouvrages de référence.

Une rapide recherche a été ciblée sur ce type de taques lorsque leur origine était connue. Quelques-unes ont été répertoriées : à Thionville au Musée de la Tour aux Pucés (provient d'une maison de Thionville) ; à Yutz, rue de la Culture dans l'ancien hameau de Maquenom, la taque est à ce jour dans un local de la mairie de Yutz ; à Lommerange (actuellement chez Alain Simmer à Audun-le-Tiche) ; à Audun-le-Tiche, deux autres plaques m'ont été signalées par l'archéologue Alain Simmer ; une autre provenant d'Altwies est au Musée National d'Histoire et d'Art de Luxembourg (MNHA) qui détient aussi une crémaillère également décorée d'un octogramme (Mousset 1983, 16). Au Luxembourg belge, une de ces plaques à octogramme central est présentée au Musée gaumais de

Virton, cette dernière présente en plus une croix couchée près de chaque angle.

L'octogramme est une de ces figures géométriques universelles que l'on peut trouver du royaume d'Akkad au XXIV^e siècle avant notre ère jusque chez les amérindiens du XX^e siècle. Dans notre cas c'est probablement la connotation d'« Étoile de Bethléem », qui a guidé les mages depuis la Mésopotamie vers le lieu de la nativité, qu'il conviendrait de retenir, mages également présents sur une médaille du dépôt de la maison Klotz à Grevenmacher (Mousset 1983, 11).

Ces signes sont absents du catalogue des plus de 600 taques du musée de Metz, dans le sud lorrain. Au Musée Lorrain à Nancy, une seule plaque à octogramme à fronton triangulaire (III.1140), datée de 1574, est de facture soignée et donc très différente de celles du nord de

la région. Reste à noter qu'on retrouve les octogrammes sur 18 moules à gaufres en fonte exposés dans la section « Art populaire » dudit musée montrant ainsi que ce signe est tout de même bien connu dans la région, mais on constate un certain manque sur les taques.

Sur la taque de Thionville, l'octogramme figure seul, sur les autres, il est accompagné de semis plus ou moins réguliers de croix couchées à la manière des croix dites de Saint André ou de Bourgogne (Yutz), de croix doubles à la manière des croix patriarcales (Lommerange) ou des deux (MNHA de Luxembourg).

Quand à l'interprétation de ces signes, la fonction protectrice est probable car le peu de soin apporté à la composition peu décorative renforce l'impression du caractère strictement apotropaïque de ces signes en comparant avec les habitudes au Pays Messin de tracer une croix sur le mur de l'âtre pour se prémunir contre le feu du ciel et l'incendie (*Westphalen 1934*, 155). On peut voir dans ces taques une matérialisation plus durable des croix et symboles par rapport à de simples traçages.

Dépôt d'objets dans la construction des bâtiments

En 2005, à Narbéfontaine près de Boulay, monsieur Pascal Wolff, propriétaire d'une ancienne maison de laboureur au n° 10 rue Principale, avait demandé une étude sommaire du bâtiment en cours de réhabilitation et, en particulier, une datation par la dendrochronologie de la construction de la maison. Celle-ci présentait la particularité d'avoir une hotte de cheminée et un mur de refend en pan de bois inclus dans la construction en maçonnerie et ce, largement en dehors de la cartographie régionale du pan de bois. La dendrochronologie a permis de dater la construction vers 1670 (*Blaising 2007*). Lors de travaux de décrépissage de l'enduit de mortier de chaux dans l'ancienne cuisine, monsieur Wolff découvrit un papier froissé et un « chiffon » entre deux pierres derrière l'enduit (Fig. 2). Il se trouvait près de la porte d'entrée de la cuisine, qui est également la porte d'accès à l'ensemble du logis par le couloir traversant le bâtiment. Monsieur Wolff mit ces objets de côté sans y prêter attention outre mesure. Si bien qu'il ne se souvient plus si le papier était dans la pochette en tissu ou en dehors, ni s'il y avait ou pas d'autres artefacts plus discrets tels que des plantes séchées.

Le papier, en très mauvais état, a une largeur de 19,5 cm et une hauteur de 20,7 cm. Il est couvert sur les deux faces de phrases répétitives manuscrites en alphabet cursif gothique allemand. Narbéfontaine se situe en Lorraine germanophone. Les phrases comportent : « *Dies ist eine böse Zeit für alle...* » Ce qui se traduit approximativement par « C'est une mauvaise période pour tous » et « *Gott und seine große gebott...* » « Dieu et ses grands commandements... » (*Blaising 2014b*). On peut tenter un rapprochement avec des textes bibliques : le *Livre de Michée*, 2.3 : « C'est

pourquoi, ainsi parle le Seigneur : Voici que je projette contre ces gens là un malheur ; vous ne pourrez en retirer votre cou ni marcher la tête haute, car ce sera un temps de malheur »; *Ephésiens*, 5.16 : « Rachetez le temps, car les jours sont mauvais ».

La pochette en tissu est de facture grossière et d'aspect chiffonné, certaines coutures sont soigneuses d'autres moins, une partie du tour est ourlée, le reste est sommairement découpé en dehors de la couture. L'ensemble donne l'impression d'une pièce constituée de fragments de tissus rapiécés et reprisés. Cette manière de traiter les textiles était encore d'actualité dans les années 1950-1960 où tous les tissus étaient réutilisés de la taille du drap à celle du mouchoir, voire moins, jusqu'à épuisement total de la matière. Il ne s'agit pas à l'évidence d'un élément de parure. L'ensemble est composé d'une partie carrée de 9 cm de côté prolongée par une lanière de 3 cm de largeur prolongeant un côté du carré, le tout mesure environ 35 cm de longueur. La moitié du carré et 5 cm de la lanière sont en double épaisseur formant une « poche de revolver », l'ouverture de cette enveloppe est déchirée ou sommairement découpée sur une des faces au niveau de la lanière. À l'extrémité de celle-ci, du mortier de chaux est mélangé aux fibres, témoin du scellement de l'ensemble sous l'enduit. La pièce peut être comparée à un scapulaire, sorte d'habit miniature qui protégeait celui qui en est revêtu (www.patrimoinevivantdelafrance.fr). Elle diffère du modèle qui est en principe composé de deux surfaces portées devant et derrière la poitrine et reliées par des sortes de bretelles plus ou moins sommaires et est plus proche des sachets et billets talismaniques, portés sur soi ou déposés en un lieu (*Berton 2008*, 40, 156). Dans l'hypothèse où la pochette de Narbéfontaine a été faite un temps pour être portée sur le corps, ses dimensions ne permettent guère que de l'enrouler autour d'un bras ou d'une cheville. H. Fillipetti et J. Trotureau (1978, 147, 243) parlent de papiers manuscrits roulés en boules ou de billets de Sainte Agathe placés au dessus du lit en Champagne et en Alsace.

De par sa situation, ce dépôt peut dater de la construction de cette partie de la maison, vers 1670, une datation par le radiocarbone des fibres de tissus pourrait permettre de le préciser. La fin du XVII^e siècle correspond à la période des reconstructions du pays aux lendemains de la guerre de Trente ans, temps calamiteux entre tous pour la région ! Cette période se situe également après la période de chasse aux sorcières du XVI^e au début du XVII^e siècle qui a été particulièrement furieuse en Lorraine avec Nicolas Rémy, juriste du duc de Lorraine qui a publié un traité de Démonolâtrie en 1595 et a été à l'origine de plusieurs milliers d'exécutions de présumés sorciers (*Boes 1998* ; *Delumeau 1978*).

Cette vague de chasse aux sorciers et sorcières a profondément marqué les esprits, elle fut suivie par les



Fig. 3. Rodemack (France), « Première pierre » d'une chapelle du XVIII^e siècle à l'angle nord-ouest d'une chapelle de caserne. Le trou au milieu du cœur était vide, Jean-Denis Lafitte (Inrap) responsable de la fouille pense qu'une hostie consacrée pouvait y avoir été déposée (© Jean-Marie Blaising).

calamités de la guerre de Trente Ans. L'idée que le diable existait réellement et qu'il avait sur terre des serviteurs capables de s'affranchir des signes apotropaïques visibles et même des rites religieux était durablement ancrée dans les mentalités. La croyance dans le pouvoir de métamorphose du sorcier en animal exposée par Raphaël de Westphalen en 1934 était encore vivace en la fin du XX^e siècle.

Dans le cas de Narbéfontaine, s'il y a eu un choix de lieu de dépôt, le mur près de la porte choisie est stratégique, cette porte donnait accès à tout le logis par la cuisine. La porte d'entrée ne comporte aucun signe ni inscription. La cuisine est un carrefour de la maison, l'on y recevait tout visiteur, bon ou mauvais. De cette pièce, on accédait à la belle chambre de devant plutôt réservée aux visiteurs de marque et aux fêtes, à la chambre à coucher, strictement privée et à l'étage par l'escalier situé à la cuisine où étaient souvent stockées les céréales, les fruits séchés (*Früchtekammer*), et parfois les semences.

Un dépôt d'objets a été retrouvé en 1959 à Grevenmacher au Luxembourg dans la maison de J. Ph. C. Klotz, datant de 1754, sous le seuil de la porte, entre deux pierres évidées (Mousset 1983, 9 – 11). Ce dépôt peut être considéré comme un dépôt de fondation à caractère prophylactique. Il est composé de onze objets :

deux feuilles de papier dont une manuscrite ayant contenu des fragments de cierge de Pâques, un Agnus Dei en cire et des grains d'encens, un *Daiwelgässel* (fléau du diable) pièce maîtresse du dépôt, c'est un papier imprimé couvert de formules de conjurations et de mentions du nom de Dieu et des saints, deux images en papier de Saint Donat (protection contre la foudre), de Saint Louis de Gonzague, une image sur soie de Saint Anastase (contre le diable, les revenants et les maladies), une petite croix de deux par un centimètres avec les cinq plaies du Christ (contre la mort subite), quatre médailles en bronze, Saint Anastase, Saint Hubert (contre la rage), Saint Benoit (protège des sorciers) et une médaille des trois Mages (détournent le mal et protègent les voyageurs). Lors de la démolition de la maison, ce dépôt fut recueilli par le propriétaire qui le confia au MNHA de Luxembourg.

Les pierres de fondation de bâtiments, sont moins discrètes que les dépôts d'objets et susceptibles d'être plus facilement découvertes lors d'une démolition. Le Musée Lorrain à Nancy en possède neuf exemplaires provenant de contextes urbains, trois d'établissements religieux et six de bâtiments civils (Numéros d'inventaire au Musée Lorrain : 95.137 ; 2279 ; 5452 ; D.95.41 ; D.95.48 ; III.439 ; III.854.A).



Fig. 4. Boevange/Attert (Luxembourg), ensemble d'objets découverts dans l'encadrement d'une porte à l'étage d'une maison d'habitation. Le dépôt est constitué d'un confessionnal portable en bois, de deux livres et de cartes à jouer, du buis était également présent © T. Lucas, MNHA).

Quatre de ces pierres sont munies d'un logement circulaire ou carré pouvant recevoir des monnaies ou autre dépôt de moins de 5 cm. À l'exception d'une seule, il n'y a pas d'indication précise du lieu de découverte dans les bâtiments, d'où l'intérêt de la pierre de fondation d'une chapelle découverte dans l'ancien château de Rodemack (Fig. 3) lors d'une fouille (Jean-Denis Laffite/Inrap, information inédite). La fouille a permis la découverte d'une première pierre gravée à l'angle nord-ouest, sur la fondation, en premier rang de l'élévation, sa face supérieure est décorée de deux croix couchées aux angles, d'un cœur surmonté d'une croix et de deux clous, sous le cœur figure la date de 1774. La partie centrale du cœur est pourvue d'une cavité circulaire dans laquelle rien n'a été découvert, ce qui donnait à penser à l'archéologue que le dépôt pouvait consister en une matière périssable telle qu'une hostie. La pierre d'angle est une fois et demie plus haute que l'appareil des pierres d'élévation restées en place. La fouille archéologique favorise les découvertes, mais dans ce cas, le hasard a néanmoins eu sa part.

Un autre dépôt d'objets, découvert vers 1986 au n° 19 rue de l'Attert à Boevange/Attert, fut remis en 2014 au MNHA de Luxembourg (*Bis – Moes 2014*). Il était caché au dessus d'un encadrement de porte entre deux chambres à l'étage d'une maison. Il est composé (Fig. 4):

- d'un judas de confessionnal portable en bois daté de 1777;
- d'un recueil de législation (?), rédigé en langue allemande en très mauvais état dont la première page fait référence à Philippe II d'Espagne et à l'archiduc Albert d'Autriche ;
- d'un catéchisme impérial en langue allemande, également en mauvais état, promulgué par Napoléon Ier en 1806;
- d'un ensemble de cartes à jouer incomplet et en mauvais état dans lequel l'absence de cartes de cœur est cependant remarquable ;

- de trois branches de buis d'environ 15 centimètres, tombées en poussière depuis.

Cet ensemble présente un mélange d'objets religieux et profanes qui n'est pas sans rappeler les mélange de signes religieux (niches à saint, IHS, croix...) et symboliques (étoiles, rosaces, svastikas, fers à chevaux...) sur les portes des maisons.

En Lorraine, à Eincheville près de Faulquemont (Moselle-France), c'est un livre seul qui a été retrouvé par le propriétaire Monsieur Wolfersberger au n° 6 rue de l'église sous le plancher de l'étage d'une maison datée par dendrochronologie du début du XVIII^e s. Il s'agit de *Medulla oratoria continens omnium transitionum formulas, quibus ornari possit oratio rhetorica* de Adolph Iver Pederssøn et Masen Jakob, Anvers, éditions Hovius, 1666.

Les macro-restes présents dans ces dépôts sont souvent perdus, l'exemple d'un billet protecteur (*Däiwelgaisel*) de Péppange (Luxembourg, collection Quintus) est exemplaire. Le billet imprimé de neuf images de saints replié comme une enveloppe contenait des « choses » dont une grande partie a été perdue à la suite de manipulations malheureuses. Il en reste quelques gouttes de cire avec de la suie en surface qui proviennent probablement d'un cierge de Pâques et d'un fragment de 3 mm de bryophyte mousse ou hépathique, la précision n'est pas possible (identification par Anne Dietrich/Inrap).

Conclusion

Les pratiques apotropaïques anciennes relèvent plus de la pensée universelle que du folklore local. Ces restes témoignent de la prétention des anciens à être plus malins que le diable, cette croyance a été construite sur un modèle d'action dont l'efficacité résulte de leurs rapports avec le « réseau de nécessité » de leur monde (*Sigaut 2012*, 68; *Bronner 2013*). Les objets et signes témoignent d'un sens commun de la magie et de la religion, qui explique que

ces « flèches » ultimes contre le mal que sont ces billets et objets cachés apparaissent peu ou pas dans les ouvrages sur les traditions populaires. Pour qu'elles soient efficaces, certaines pratiques devaient rester secrètes, aujourd'hui, il en reste du papier, de la cire, du tissu, des signes et l'archéologue est mis à contribution pour tenter d'en donner la signification en sachant que l'intention réelle de l'auteur est perdue à jamais. Mais ces restes matériels disparaissent en même temps et au même rythme que les maisons du village d'avant. Même en présence d'un archéologue, la recherche et la découverte d'artefacts parfois tenus dans la masse des matériaux reste peu probable, le bâti rural échappe généralement à l'archéologie. Hormis les signes sculptés sur les façades et compte tenu de leur fragilité et de leur situation, la programmation d'une recherche de ces vestiges est illusoire. Pour augmenter le corpus actuel, il importe de faire connaître ces pratiques à tous les intervenants dans le bâti ancien, propriétaires, architectes, superviseurs et ouvriers. L'histoire du château d'Aspelt est édifiante à cet égard.

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Zauberbohrungen, magische Zeichen und „Hexenbriefe“

Spuren von Alltagsmagie in Bauernhäusern aus Nordwestdeutschland

Heinrich Stiewe *

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In älteren Bauernhäusern in Nordwestdeutschland sind vielfältige Spuren alltagsmagischer Praktiken des 16. bis 20. Jahrhunderts zu beobachten, die behutsam zu interpretieren sind. Eindeutig magisch zu deutende Zeichen (z.B. Pentagramme) kommen nur selten vor. Häufiger sind organische Funde aus Bohrlöchern in den tragenden Ständern des Hauses (z.B. kleine „Kükeneier“), die eine magische Verwendung nahelegen. Herausragend sind einige „Hexenbriefe“ oder Zaubersprüche, die in solchen Bohrlöchern „verpflockt“ waren. Diese Texte dienten explizit zur Abwehr von Hexerei und Schadenzauber. Weitere Befunde von magischen Zeichen und Deponierungen aus älteren Häusern – auch in Freilichtmuseen – werden vorgestellt und diskutiert.

Schlagwörter: *Bauernhäuser, apotropäische Praktiken, Alltagsmagie, Nordwestdeutschland.*

ABSTRACT

Magic drillholes, marks and 'witch letters' - Traces of everyday-magic in farmhouses of Northwest Germany

Many traces of everyday magic practices from the 16th to the 20th century can be found in early modern farmhouses in Northwest Germany. They have to be interpreted cautiously. Explicit magic symbols like pentagrams occur only rarely. More frequent are organic finds (e.g. small eggs) in drillholes in the main posts of timber-framed houses which suggest a magic purpose. Finds of 'witch letters' or written charms, which were plugged in such holes, are particularly outstanding. These texts were explicitly written as protection against witchcraft. Further examples of magic marks and deposits in old houses – including some from open-air museums – are presented and discussed.

* Westfälisches Landesmuseum
für Volkskunde, Detmold, Germany
heinrich.stiewe@web.de

Keywords: *Farmhouses, apotropaic practices, everyday magic practices, northwest Germany.*

RÉSUMÉ

“Lettres de sorcières”, forages et marques magiques – Traces de la magie quotidienne dans les fermes du nord-ouest de l’Allemagne

Dans la région du nord-ouest de l’Allemagne, on trouve de nombreuses traces des pratiques magiques quotidiennes dans les vieilles fermes du XVI^e au XX^e siècle. Néanmoins, ces traces doivent être interprétées avec prudence car les marques à connotation purement magique (par exemple les pentagrammes) sont plutôt rares. Or, plus fréquentes sont les découvertes d’objets organiques provenant des forages dans les poteaux porteurs de la maison à pans

de bois (par exemple de petits « œufs de poussin ») qui suggèrent un usage magique. Remarquables sont des « lettres de sorcières » respectivement des « formules magiques » qui étaient cachées dans des trous dans le bois soigneusement rebouchés. Ces textes servaient à protéger contre la sorcellerie et la magie nuisible. S’y ajoute la présentation et la discussion d’autres exemples de marques magiques et de dépôt d’objets apotropaïques dans les vieilles maisons – venant même des musées de plein air.

Mots-clés : *fermes, pratiques apotropaïques, pratiques magiques quotidiennes, l’Allemagne du nord-ouest.*

1. Einleitung: „Aberglaube“, Symbole und Inschriften

Thema des folgenden Beitrages sind Spuren des sogenannten Aberglaubens (lat.: *superstitio*): Alltagsmagische Praktiken und tief sitzende Ängste vor Hexen und Schadenzauber, Geistern und „bösen Mächten“ spielten eine wichtige Rolle im Leben vergangener Generationen. Neben dem vorherrschenden christlichen Glauben katholischer oder evangelischer Konfession praktizierten viele Menschen der frühen Neuzeit ihren „Beiglauben“, wie der Aberglaube in Westfalen weniger negativ konnotiert genannt wurde. Aber auch in der Gegenwart haben Horoskope, „abergläubische“ Vorstellungen, „Glücksbringer“ und ähnliches eine große Bedeutung (Apel 2013). Der vorliegende Beitrag beruht auf Recherchen zur Ausstellung „Verflixt! Geister, Hexen und Dämonen“, die 2013 im LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Volkskunde, gezeigt wurde (Carstensen – Apel 2013), ergänzt um einige aktuelle Befunde.

In alten Bauernhäusern in Nordwestdeutschland finden sich vielfältige Spuren von alltagsmagischen Praktiken, die bis ins 16. Jahrhundert zurückreichen. Diese Spuren liegen oft im Verborgenen und müssen sehr vorsichtig interpretiert und gedeutet werden. Auch sind sie von anderen Bau- und Nutzungsspuren an alten Gebäuden sorgfältig zu unterscheiden; die Hausforschung hat dazu differenzierte Methoden entwickelt (Bedal 1993; Klages 1991; 1994). In vielen Fällen ist die magische Bedeutung von Zeichen oder Ornamenten an oder in älteren Fachwerkbauten unklar oder zweifelhaft – weil eindeutige Hinweise dazu in schriftlichen Quellen fehlen. Auch konkrete Befunde in der hauskundlichen Literatur sind eher selten; einige Beispiele werden in diesem Beitrag diskutiert.

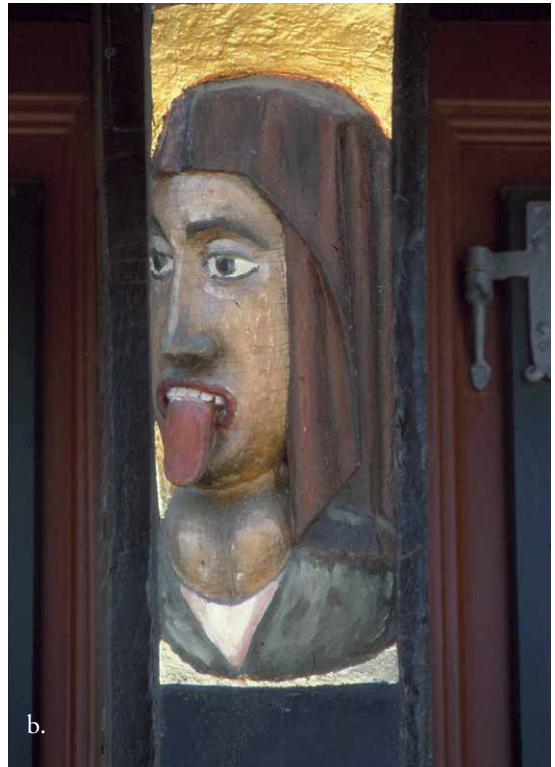
In einzelnen Fällen wurden Schriftstücke, sogenannte Zauberkärtchen oder „Hexenbriefe“ in Bohrlöchern in alten Fachwerkbauten gefunden, in denen die Hexe, das „böse Weib“, ausdrücklich angesprochen wird – einige Beispiele werden im Folgenden vorgestellt.

Die oft reich geschnitzten und farbenprächtig bemalten Torbögen westfälischer Bauernhäuser zeigen religiöse Inschriften, aber auch vielfältige Ornamentmotive (Schmülling 1951; Stiewe 2011). Zu ihrer spekulativen Deutung als „Symbole“ oder „Sinnbilder“ ist viel geschrieben worden, dabei wurden oft völkisch-ideologische Deutungen hineininterpretiert, die einer wissenschaftlichen Überprüfung nicht standhalten. In der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus erlebten diese germanophilen Deutungen einen Höhepunkt, sie sind aber dennoch bis heute in heimatkundlichen Veröffentlichungen und vereinzelt Fachpublikationen zu finden (Langewiesche 1935; Weigel 1939; Gerner 2000, 57-74; kritisch dagegen Brednich 1985; Freckmann 1997; Großmann 2012). Nur wenige der Schmuckmotive an den Torbögen sind unzweifelhaft zu deuten – etwa als Wappen der Landesherrschaft, Berufszeichen oder eindeutig christliche Symbole (Angermann 1983; Stiewe 2011).

Hausinschriften enthalten üblicherweise fromme Segenswünsche oder Zitate aus Bibel und Gesangbuch, doch gibt es auch Inschriften, die aus Furcht vor dem Neid der Nachbarn entstanden. Menschen der frühen Neuzeit hatten große Angst vor dem „bösen Blick“, der Unglück bringen konnte, und vor Verwünschungen durch neidische Nachbarn. Davor versuchte man sich durch sog. „Neidsprüche“ oder Neidinschriften zu schützen. Ein Beispiel findet sich über dem Hinterausgang eines Hauses in Reelkirchen bei Blomberg (Kreis Lippe): BEHÜTE MICH MEIN GOTT VOR BÖSE MISGÜNSTIGE MENSCHEN DENN SOLCHE SIND VIEL SCHÄDLICHER DENN BÖSE TIERE – DEN 15TEN JUL. 1769. (Fig. 1a, Stiewe 2011, 267f). Weit verbreitet waren auch Texte wie ALLE DIE MIR KENNEN DEN(EN) GEBE GOTT WAS SIE MIR GÖNNEN (Wöbbel, Kreis Lippe, 1688) oder DIE MIR NICHTS GÖNNEN UND NICHT GEBEN MÜSSEN DOCH LEIDEN DAS ICH LEBE (Horn, Kreis Lippe, Scheune von 1775). Diese Inschriften bewegen sich zwischen Selbstvergewisserung, öffentlicher Rechtfertigung eines



a.



b.



c.

Fig. 1. a) Neidinschrift von 1769 über dem Hinterausgang des Hauses Schönfeldstr. 10 in Blomberg-Reelkirchen (© Heinrich Stiewe); b) „Blecker“ am Haus Brüderstr. 26 in Herford, 1521 (© Herbert Kreft, LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold, Bildsammlung); c) Pentagramm am Haus Kupferschmiedestr. 13 in Hameln, 1560 (© Sabine Mirbach).

teuren Bauvorhabens und Neidabwehr (*Schmüling 1951, 184f.; Stiewe 2011, 268; Maschmeyer 2011*).

1789 forderte der Amtsvogt Ehrenreich Benjamin Ahle aus Heiligenkirchen (Grafschaft Lippe) von der lippischen Regierung ein Verbot der „*Biblischen Sprüche und frommelnden Ausbrüche zur Verzierung der Häuserbogen*“ und bezeichnet diese ausdrücklich als „*fromme Neidsprüche*“ (LAV NRW OWL, Detmold, L 92 A Nr. 1503; *Stiewe 2011, 267f.*). Die Eingabe, die im geistigen Klima der „Volksaufklärung“ des späten 18. Jahrhunderts entstand, blieb folgenlos.

2. Magische Zeichen?

Auf Balkenköpfen oder Knaggen von Fachwerkhäusern finden sich gelegentlich geschnitzte Figuren, Masken oder Gesichter (Fratzen), manchmal als sog. Blecker mit herausgestreckter Zunge (Fig. 1b). Diese Darstellungen werden in der Literatur oft als „Neidköpfe“ bezeichnet und ihnen wird eine dämonen- oder unheilabwehrende (apotropäische) Bedeutung zugeschrieben (*Hansen – Krefz 1980; Großmann 2006; Bigalke 2008*). Allerdings ist dies in der Regel nicht durch schriftliche Quellen belegbar; Ulrich Großmann lehnt daher eine unheilabwehrende Deutung derartiger Fratzen generell ab. Er deutet sie als „Narren und Spottfiguren“ und rechnet sie zum „komisch-grotesken Figurenvokabular“ des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit, sie „sollten zum Lachen reizen und besaßen vor allem Unterhaltungswert, wie aus der spätmittelalterlichen Literatur bekannt ist“ (*Großmann 2006, 34f., 68f., 129f.*). Im Zusammenhang mit den oben zitierten, häufig vorkommenden „Neidinschriften“ erscheint eine neidabwehrende Funktion von geschnitzten Fratzen aber zumindest naheliegend.

Eindeutig magische Zeichen finden sich dagegen ausgesprochen selten an Fachwerkhäusern. Das bekannteste magische Symbol ist der fünfzackige Stern (Pentagramm, Drudenfuß). Ein frühes Beispiel erscheint 1550 an einer Knagge am Torbogen eines Bauernhauses in Detmold-Schönemark, der sich heute im Lippischen Landesmuseum Detmold befindet (*Hansen – Krefz 1980, 106: 22; Stiewe 2013, 61: 4*). Pentagramme sind auch verschiedentlich an städtischen Häusern zu finden, z.B. in Hameln, Goslar oder Osterwieck. Nicht immer ist eindeutig zu klären, ob das Pentagramm als Zauber- oder Hexenabwehrzeichen oder einfach als dekoratives Element angebracht worden ist (Fig. 1c).

Im Unterschied zum östlichen Westfalen sind die Dientore im Westmünsterland und den ostniederländischen Landschaften Twente und Drenthe relativ schmucklos – hier fehlt der Torbogen als Dekorationsträger und es gibt in aller Regel auch keine Inschriften. Einziger Schmuckträger ist der herausnehmbare Mittelpfosten des Tores, der plattdeutsch

häufig „Dössel“ genannt wird – der „Dussel“, der im Weg steht. Im Westmünsterland und den östlichen Niederlanden heißt dieser bewegliche Torpfosten dagegen „Stiepel“ – und wird regelmäßig mit einem eingeschnittenen Zeichen, dem „Stiepelteeken“ verziert (*Schepers 1960, 84, 153: 107; Jans – Jans 1973; Stiewe 2013, 62: 6, 7*). Meistens ist es ein diagonales Kreuz (Andreaskreuz), das auch „Malkreuz“ genannt wird – ein ideologisch problematischer Begriff, der aus der völkischen „Sinnbildforschung“ stammt (siehe Diskussion oben). Das Zeichen wird manchmal auch in Form einer Sanduhr dargestellt, gelegentlich kommen eingeschnittene Jahreszahlen, Initialen oder christliche Kreuze hinzu. Die ältesten Beispiele stammen aus dem 17. Jahrhundert. Dem „Stiepel“ und dem „Stiepelteeken“ werden in der mündlichen Überlieferung unheilabwehrende Kräfte zugeschrieben: Der niederländische Architekt und Hausforscher Jan Jans überliefert dazu ein volkstümliches Gedicht, das davon handelt, wie ein Bauer in der Nähe von Enschede in den östlichen Niederlanden mit dem Torpfosten die Pest vertreibt: Er steht im Dientor seines Hauses und sieht, wie sich die Seuche in Form einer bläulichen Wolke dem Haus nähert. Hinter ihm auf der Diele ist die entsetzte Hausgemeinschaft versammelt. Der Bauer nimmt den „Stiepel“ heraus und stößt ihn durch die Pestwolke, die er damit vertreibt (*Schepers 1960, 84; Jans – Jans 1973, 107ff.*).

Eine ähnliche unheilabwehrende Funktion von Kreuzen am Torpfosten beschreibt der lippische Volkskundler August Meier-Böke für ein Haus von 1792 im Dorf Lieme bei Lemgo. In diesem Fall sollen die Kreuze als Abwehrzeichen gegen Hexen gedient haben: „*Auf dem ‚Dössel‘, dem Mitteltürständer, zwei Malkreuze: ‚Dat es wegen de Hexen‘, sagt die Oma, die just Kartoffeln schält, gegen de Wedderwuiwer‘ [Wetterweiber, H. St.]. Und erzählt von der Windhose am 14.11.1940, sie hat gerade Rotkohl gerichtet, die anderen tranken Kaffee, die Ständer haben geknirscht, aber gehalten: ‚Wegen de Kruize.‘ Sie haben früher auch Kreuze mit Kreide an die Tür und mit Teer auf den Rücken der jungen Ziegenlämmer gezeichnet, Nägel in die Ständer geschlagen: ‚Olles wegen de Hexen.‘“ (*Dröge 2001-2002, Lemgo, Dörentrup, 33*).*

August Meier-Böke hat in den 1930er und 1940er Jahren nahezu alle Dörfer in Lippe besucht, Hausinschriften notiert und mit den ältesten Einwohnern gesprochen. Dabei hat er sich besonders für alltagsmagische Vorstellungen und Spukgestalten interessiert, die noch um die Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts in der Vorstellung älterer Menschen lebendig waren. Das Ergebnis war eine Artikelserie in der Lippischen Landes-Zeitung unter dem Titel „Meine Zick-Zack-Fahrt durch Lippe“, die von 1954 bis 1958 erschien und 2001 bis 2002 von Kurt Dröge neu herausgegeben worden ist (*Dröge 2001-2002*). Wie viele Volkskundler seiner Zeit war auch Meier-Böke

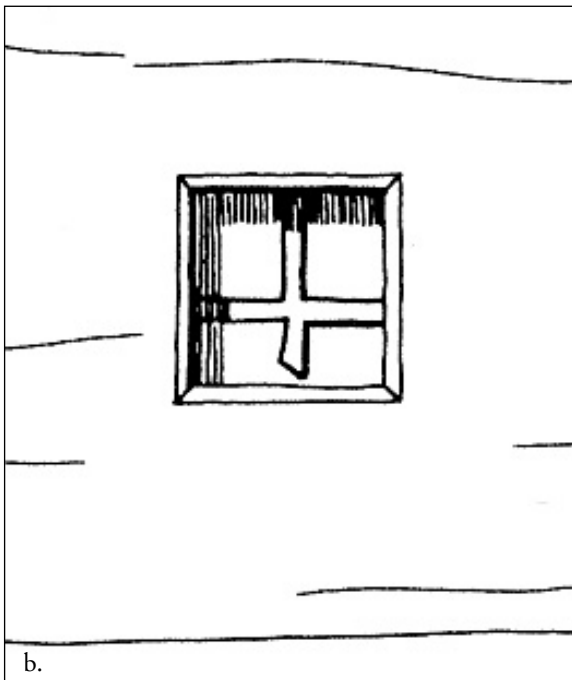


Fig. 2. LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold, Lippischer Meierhof, Leibzucht aus Oettern-Bremke, 1619. Quadratische Vertiefung als mutmaßliches „Hexenzeichen“ im Deckenbalken an der Bodenluke. a) Decke der Diele mit Bodenluke und quadratischer Öffnung im Deckenbalken (© Wolfram Bangen, LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold); b) Zeichnung von 1982 (© Dieter Potthoff, LWL Freilichtmuseum Detmold); c) Zustand 2012 (© Wolfram Bangen, LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold).

stark von dem völkisch-germanophilen Zeitgeist der 1920er und 1930er Jahre geprägt, hatte aber zugleich eine ausgezeichnete ethnographische Beobachtungsgabe. Die von ihm Dorf für Dorf notierten Erzählungen sind

natürlich keine Reste heidnischer Glaubensvorstellungen, wie er annahm – aber hochinteressante Zeugnisse der alltagsmagischen Vorstellungswelten der vorindustriellen Landbevölkerung, die heute fast völlig vergessen sind.

Man fürchtete sich vor Werwölfen, Aufhockern und Wiedergängern, aber auch vor Hexerei und Schadenzauber als Ursachen für Krankheiten bei Menschen und Vieh (Dröge 2001; 2013; Scheffler 1994).

Auch der Münsteraner Volkskundler und Hausforscher Josef Schepers (1908-1989), Gründungsdirektor des Detmolder Freilichtmuseums, erwähnt in seinem bekannten Darstellungswerk „Haus und Hof westfälischer Bauern“ mutmaßliche Abwehrzeichen gegen Hexen, die er in Lippe gefunden hat: In einem Haus von 1660 in Brakelsiek (Schieder-Schwalenberg) – es konnte als Leibzucht (Altenteilerhaus) des Hofes Schlütsmeier Nr. 6 identifiziert werden (abgebrochen in den 1960er Jahren; Eckart 2006, 41: 3.2) – fand Schepers ein sogenanntes Hexenzeichen, plattdeutsch „Hexentoiken“ (Schepers 1960, 84: 46; Stiewe 2013, 63: 8, 9). Seine Zeichnung zeigt eine quadratische, zapflochähnliche Vertiefung im Deckenbalken und daneben ein eingeschnittenes Kreuz. Schepers schreibt dazu: „In südlippischen Dörfern (z.B. in Brakelsiek u. Wöbbel) wurden bis ins 17. und 18. Jh. an der Unterseite des Lukenbalkens quadratische, umrandete Vertiefungen und daneben oder darin ein Kreuz eingeschnitten. Diese sog. Hexentoiken (Hexenzeichen) sollten offenbar das Eindringen unholider Mächte verhindern.“ (Schepers 1960). Auch Meier-Böke berichtet, dass die Menschen Angst davor hatten, dass Geister oder böse Mächte durch die Dachbodenluke über der Diele ins Haus eindringen konnten.

Später fand Schepers ähnliche, von ihm ebenfalls als „Hexenzeichen“ gedeutete Löcher in zwei Gebäuden des „Lippischen Meierhofes“ im Detmolder Freilichtmuseum: dem Haupthaus von 1570 vom früheren Hof Meier Barthold in Wittighöfen bei Leese (Stadt Lemgo) und der Leibzucht (Altenteilerhaus) von 1619 vom Hof Böltke in Oettern-Bremke (Stadt Detmold). In beiden Fällen handelt es sich um eine quadratische Öffnung an der Unterseite des Deckenbalkens an der Dachbodenluke (Fig. 2a). In seiner Publikation über den Lippischen Meierhof bildete Schepers das „Hexenzeichen“ aus der Leibzucht auch zeichnerisch ab – mit einem eingeschnittenen Kreuz in der Vertiefung, das bei einer aktuellen Überprüfung im Freilichtmuseum allerdings nicht bestätigt werden konnte (Fig. 2b, c) (Schepers 1982, 24, 28, 124: 116; Stiewe 2013, 63f.: 11).

Dennoch ist Schepers' Deutung als „Hexenzeichen“ nicht völlig aus der Luft gegriffen. Als Student der Volkskunde in Münster habe ich Josef Schepers noch kennengelernt und ihn auch nach dem geheimnisvollen „Hexenzeichen“ gefragt. Er sagte mir, dass ihm die plattdeutsche Bezeichnung als „Hexentoiken“ von alten Hausbewohnern mitgeteilt worden sei, doch leider konnte er sich nicht mehr an eine konkrete Gewährsperson erinnern.

Etwa ein Dutzend ähnlicher Befunde konnte ich in weiteren alten Häusern in Lippe dokumentieren, so z.B. in Blomberg-Dalbörn, Hauptstr. 37 von 1691 und in Blomberg-Höntrup, Kötterhaus Hofstr. 1, 17. Jh. (Stiewe 1985, 176, 196). Ein weiteres Beispiel von 1654 stammt aus Oettern-Bremke bei Detmold (Stiewe 2013, 64f.: 12f.). In allen Fällen handelt es sich um ältere Bauten aus dem 16. oder 17. Jahrhundert, in denen eine quadratische oder rechteckige Öffnung an der Unterseite des Deckenbalkens an der Bodenluke zu finden ist. Eine konstruktive Funktion als Zapfenloch, eine Zweitverwendung des Deckenbalkens oder ähnliches kann in allen Fällen ausgeschlossen werden. Auch waren keine Abnutzungsspuren etwa von einem eingestellten Pfosten, z.B. für einen Riffelbaum zur Flachsbearbeitung oder ähnliches, zu erkennen. In keinem der von mir untersuchten Gebäude war ein eingeschnittenes Kreuz in oder neben der Öffnung zu erkennen, wie Schepers es gezeichnet hat.

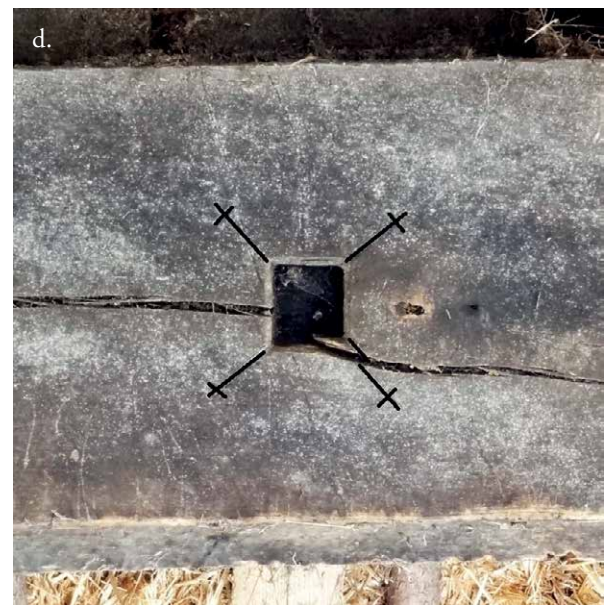
Das änderte sich 2014, als ich Gelegenheit hatte, mit Michael Sprenger und Nadine Behrmann das Bauernhaus Brinks in Mosebeck bei Detmold zu besichtigen, ein typisches lippisches Vierständerhaus mit Brettergiebel von 1678 (Fig. 3a) (Sprenger 2014). Das Gebäude ist ein früheres Flettdielenhaus, ein Kammerfach als separater Wohnteil wurde erst 1841 angebaut. Auch hier befindet sich mitten über der Diele, am vierten Deckenbalken an der Bodenluke eine quadratische Öffnung, die sorgfältig in den Eichenbalken eingestemmt ist und keine Abnutzungsspuren zeigt (Fig. 3b, c). In diesem Fall sind an den Ecken der quadratischen Öffnung im Balken feine, mit dem Reißhaken eingeschnittene diagonale Linien zu erkennen (Fig. 3d). Sie sind an den Enden mit kurzen Querstrichen versehen, die vier lateinische Kreuze bilden. Natürlich ist dieser Befund kein zweifelsfreier Beweis für eine Funktion als Hexenabwehrzeichen – doch machen die eingeschnittenen Kreuze eine rituelle oder magische Funktion der Öffnung im Deckenbalken zumindest wahrscheinlich. Ich halte diesen Befund für eine Bestätigung von Schepers' Deutung dieser Öffnungen im Deckenbalken als „Hexenzeichen“. Das Kreuz ist das wichtigste Symbol der christlichen Religion – und zugleich ein sehr mächtiges Zeichen gegen das Böse, als solches fand es auch in vielen magischen Kontexten Verwendung. So finden sich zahlreiche Kreuze auf sogenannten Zauberzetteln oder Hexenbriefen, die manchmal in Bohrlöchern in Fachwerkständern gefunden werden – einige Beispiele seien im Folgenden vorgestellt.

3. Zauberbohrungen und „Verpflockungen“

In den Ständern älterer Fachwerkbauten sind immer wieder Bohrlöcher zu beobachten, die keinen erkennbaren konstruktiven Sinn haben und auch nicht ohne weiteres



Fig. 3. Bauernhaus Brinks in Detmold-Mosebeck, An der Mosebecke 4, erbaut 1678. a) Giebelansicht (© Heinrich Stiewe); b) Blick in die frühere Flettädie. Im Deckenbalken an der Bodenluke befindet sich ein mutmaßliches „Hexenzeichen“ (© Nadine Behrmann); c) An den Ecken der quadratischen Öffnung sind diagonale Kreuze eingeschnitten. d) Hervorhebung der kreuzförmigen Linien (c und d © Nadine Behrmann, Bearbeitung Heinrich Stiewe).



aus der Zweitverwendung älterer Bauhölzer zu erklären sind. Diese Bohrungen befinden sich oft in 1 bis 1,5 m Höhe und sind häufig mit Holznägeln oder Pflöcken verschlossen. In einigen Fällen fanden sich darin Inhalte wie Pflanzenteile, Fasern, Textil- oder Lederreste sowie kleine Eier. Vereinzelt wurden auch Papiere mit gedruckten oder handschriftlichen Texten religiösen oder magischen Inhalts in solchen Bohrlöchern gefunden.

Josef Schepers berichtet über einen solchen Bohrlochfund in einem der ältesten Bauernhäuser des Tecklenburger Landes, dem Haus Pinke-Meier in Lage bei Mettingen (Kreis Steinfurt) (Schepers 1960, 294, vgl. auch 64: 33). Das altertümlich wirkende Zweistöckerhaus

mit tief herabgezogenem, strohgedecktem Vollwalmdach war am Torbogen auf 1558 datiert (Fig. 4a). 1956 wurde das Haus abgebrochen, die Balken wurden zu Feuerholz verarbeitet. Dabei fanden die Arbeiter zwei alte Papiere, die sorgfältig in Leinen gewickelt in Bohrlöchern in den Torständern versteckt waren. Die Löcher waren mit hölzernen Pflöcken und Wachs verschlossen. Eines der Papiere zerfiel bei der Auffindung, das andere wurde von Experten untersucht; eine Fotokopie befindet sich im Museumsdorf Cloppenburg (Fig. 4b). Das Papier wurde nach der damaligen Begutachtung um 1602/03 in der Papiermühle Oesede bei Osnabrück hergestellt. Es zeigt verschiedene handgeschriebene Zaubersprüche,

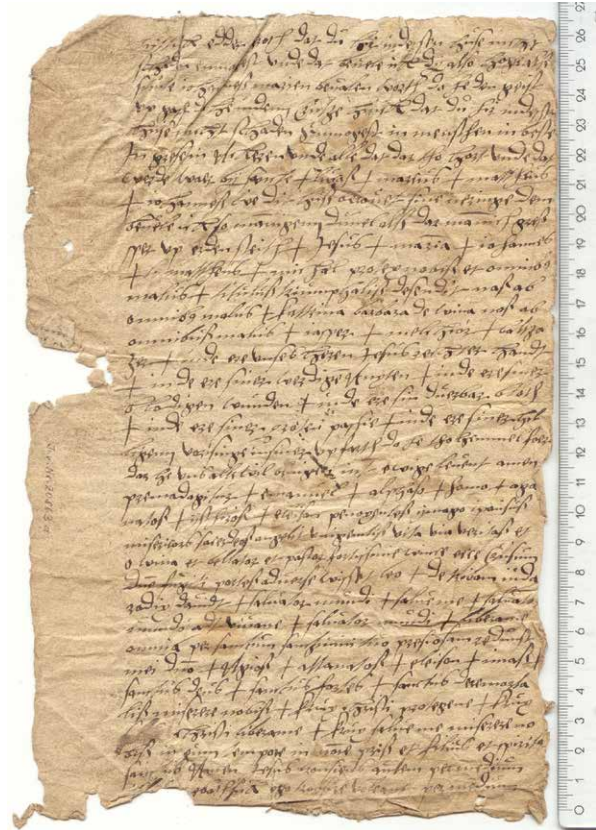
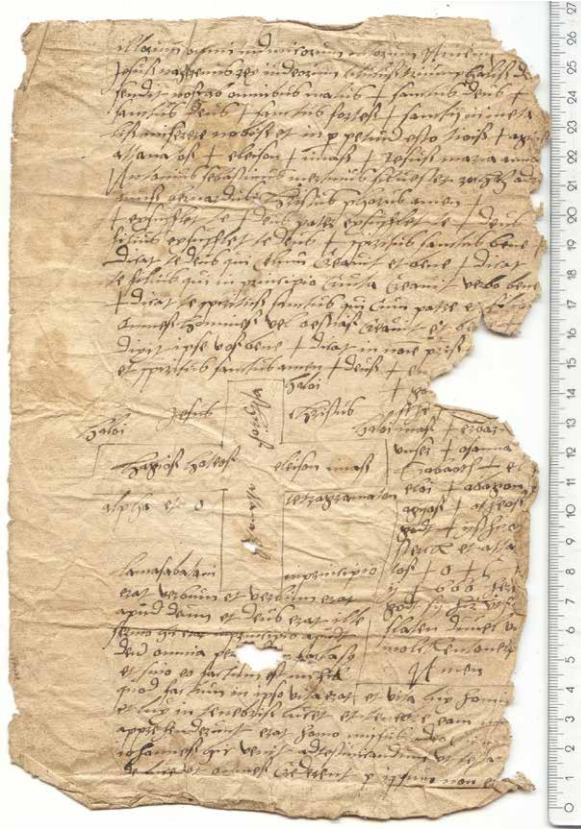
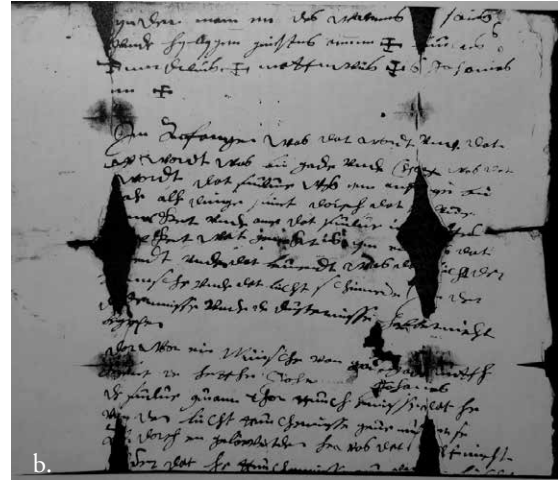


Fig. 4. a) Lage bei Mettingen (Altkreis Tecklenburg), Hof Pinke-Meier, Bauernhaus von 1558, abgebrochen 1956 (© Josef Schepers, um 1940, LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold, Bildsammlung); b) Zettel mit Zaubersprüchen und dem Anfang des Johannesevangeliums, gefunden in einem Torständer des Bauernhauses Pinke-Meier in Lage bei Mettingen (© Sammlung Museumsdorf Cloppenburg - Fotokopie); c) Einer von vier etwa gleich lautenden „Hexenbriefen“ (Ende 16. Jahrhundert) von Gut Harne bei Bakum (Lkr. Vechta), die in Bohrlöchern in den Torständern des Haupthauses gefunden wurden (© Museumsdorf Cloppenburg, Sammlung Museumsdorf Cloppenburg, Inv.-Nr. 20863b); d) „Hexenbrief“ vom Hof Hufmann in Borg (bei Quakenbrück, Lkr. Osnabrück). Der niederdeutsche Text enthält ausführliche Beschwörungen gegen Schadenzauber an Vieh und Vorräten im Haus durch eine Hexe, die als „quade wyf“ (böses Weib) und „molckentouersche“ (Milchzaubersche) angesprochen wird (© Museumsdorf Cloppenburg, Sammlung Museumsdorf Cloppenburg, Inv.-Nr. 20863a).

Segensformeln, Gebete und Beschwörungen, die an Jesus Christus gerichtet sind – und zahlreiche Kreuze. Auf der anderen Seite des Blattes finden wir einen handschriftlichen Text aus der Bibel, die Einleitungsworte des Johannesevangeliums in niederdeutscher Sprache: *“Im Anfange was dat wordt und dat wordt was bie gade und Gott was dat wordt (...)”* (Im Anfang war das Wort und das Wort war bei Gott und Gott war das Wort..., Joh. 1, 1ff.). Der Text stammt aus der niederdeutschen Lutherbibel des Reformators Johannes Bugenhagen (1485-1558), die 1596 in Hamburg gedruckt wurde. Das Johannesevangelium gilt als einer der wirkmächtigsten Texte in der Bibel und wurde seit frühchristlichen Zeiten für magische Zwecke benutzt. Diese Praktiken wurden von der Kirche als Missbrauch angesehen und waren streng verboten. Daher können wir den Zettel aus dem Bauernhaus in Lage bei Mettingen als Zauberspruch oder Amulett bezeichnen, er dürfte kurz nach 1600 in den Torständen verpflockt worden sein, um das Haus und seine Bewohner vor Unheil zu schützen.

Das Museumsdorf Cloppenburg besitzt mehrere „Hexenbriefe“, die in Bohrlöchern von alten Fachwerkbauten gefunden worden sind und ebenfalls Zaubersprüche mit dem Beginn des Johannesevangeliums enthalten. Allein vier derartige Briefe wurden 1956 bei Umbauarbeiten im Haupthaus des Gutes Harme (Kirchspiel Bakum, Landkreis Vechta) in Südoldenburg gefunden; zwei davon gelangten ins Museumsdorf (Fig. 4c) (Museumsdorf Cloppenburg, Inv.-Nr. 20863b und 20867; *Hellbernd 1950*). Das Gutshaus ist ein niederdeutsches Hallenhaus in Vierständerbauweise aus dem 16. Jahrhundert. Die vier annähernd gleichlautenden Schriftstücke waren in Bohrlöchern in den Torständen verborgen. Hier ist der magische Zweck der Deponierung im Text eindeutig belegt: Auf den Briefen findet sich jeweils ein großes Kreuzzeichen mit dem Namen „Jesus Christus“ und vielfältigen lateinischen Segensformeln sowie griechischen und hebräischen Anrufungen von Gott. Am Ende des Textes neben dem Kreuz heißt es auf Niederdeutsch: *„here godt, sy hir uthbeslaten du düvel undt du molcken touersche – Amen“* (Herr Gott, sei hier ausgeschlossen, du Teufel und du Milchzaubersche). Damit richten sich diese Hexenbriefe ausdrücklich gegen Milchzauber, also den Diebstahl oder das absichtliche Verderben von Milch durch Hexerei (*Schürmann 1996, 29ff.*). Die wahre Ursache der verdorbenen „blauen“ Milch war häufig Euterentzündung bei den Kühen, was sich die Menschen der frühen Neuzeit nicht erklären konnten. Milchzauber galt als ein weit verbreitetes und gefürchtetes Hexereidelikt, das vor allem Frauen unterstellt wurde.

In anderen Zaubersprüchen in der Cloppenburger Sammlung, die aus dem Artland nördlich von Osnabrück stammen, wird die Hexe als „*quade wyf*“, als „böses Weib“ und wiederum als „*molckentouersche*“ („Milchzaubersche“) angesprochen.

Das folgende Beispiel wurde auf dem Hof Hufmann in Borg bei Quakenbrück gefunden, es stammt möglicherweise aus dem 16. oder 17. Jahrhundert (Fig. 4d). Unter anderem enthält der Text eine Beschwörung, einen Bannspruch gegen die Hexe in niederdeutscher Sprache, Übersetzung:

„In Gottes Namen Amen. Ich beschwöre dich du böses Weib (*quade wyf*), du Milchzaubersche (*molckentouersche*) dass du hier in diesem Hause nicht schaden mögest in Pferden, in Kühen, in Kälbern, in Schafen, in Bienen (*Immen*), in Milch, in Butter, in Gerste, in Hafer, in Hanf, in Roggen, in Weizen, in Bier, in Brot, in Fleisch, in Bier (*Koite*) in all den Stücken (sollst) du diesem Hause nicht schaden...“ (Museumsdorf Cloppenburg, Inv.-Nr. 20863a.). Weitere „Hexenbriefe“ in der Sammlung des Museumsdorfes stammen aus Grothe, Lkr. Osnabrück, Hof Meyer zu Bergfeld (Inv.-Nr. 20864) und aus Herbergen, Lkr. Osnabrück (Inv.-Nr. 20862) (*Stiewe 2013, 68f.*).

1935 wurden fünf nahezu identische Zaubertzettel in einem Bauernhaus von 1691 in Trebel (Landkreis Lüchow-Dannenberg, Niedersachsen) gefunden; die Funde gelangten damals ins Heimatmuseum Lüchow (Fig. 5a) (*Plath 1937; Stiewe 2013, 69*). Die Papiere waren jeweils zu kleinen Päckchen gefaltet, mit einer Spitze einer Gänsefeder versehen, mit Wachs versiegelt und in Bohrlöchern im Kuhstall verpflockt. Sie zeigen mehrere Kreuze und Andreaskreuze sowie ein großes Pentagramm („Drudenfuß“) mit vielfältigen magischen Abkürzungen. Diese konnten als hebräische und lateinische Gebete identifiziert werden, die als Zaubersprüche verwendet wurden. Die Handschrift wird in die Zeit um 1800 datiert (*Plath 1937*).

Die Hausforscher Ulrich Klages (†) und Heinz Riepshoff entdeckten zahlreiche sogenannte Zauberböhrungen in alten Bauernhäusern in Norddeutschland, deren Inhalte sie untersucht und sorgfältig dokumentiert haben (*Klages 1987; 1999; Stiewe 2013, 65ff.; Riepshoff 2016, 99ff.*). Nur zwei Beispiele aus der früheren Grafschaft Hoya zwischen Nienburg und Bremen seien kurz vorgestellt: In einem Bauernhaus von 1590 in Bassum (Landkreis Diepholz) fand Heinz Riepshoff im Luchtbalken, dem schweren Unterzug über einer seitlichen Sitznische im Flett (Herdraum), ein kleines „Kükenei“ in einem Bohrloch (*Riepshoff 2016, 100*). „Kükeneier“ sind auffallend kleine Eier, die Hennen oft zu Beginn der Legeperiode legen. Sie wurden häufig zu magischen Zwecken verwendet, z.B. um Krankheiten zu bannen. In einem anderen Bauernhaus von 1543 in Hilgermissen (Lkr. Diepholz) fand Riepshoff in einem Bohrloch eine Druckseite aus einem alten Gesangbuch des 18. Jahrhunderts (Fig. 5b). Sie zeigt die 4. Strophe eines Weihnachtsliedes: *„Todt, Teuffel und die Hölle haben den Sieg verlorn – das Kindlein thut sie fällen, gantz nicht(s) gilt jetzt ihr Zorn.“* (*Riepshoff 2016, 101*).

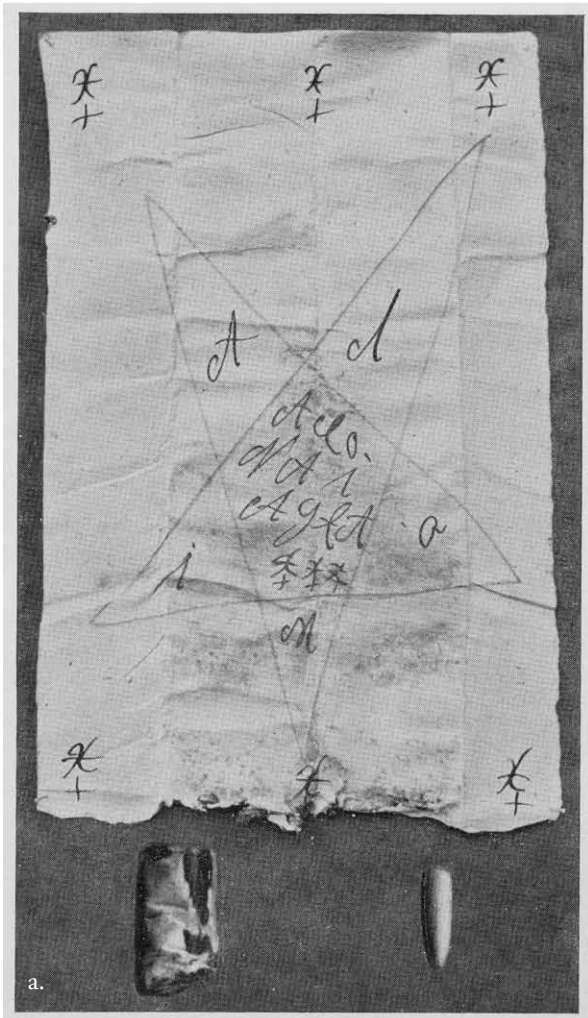


Fig. 5. a) „Hexenzettel“ mit Pentagramm aus Trebel (Lkr. Lüchow-Dannenberg), um 1800, gefunden in einem Bohrloch im Kuhstall eines Bauernhauses von 1691 (© Plath 1937); b) Gesangbuchseite (17./18. Jh.) mit der vierten Strophe des Weihnachtsliedes „Freut euch ihr lieben Christen“, gefunden im Bauernhaus Warneke in Hilgermissen (Lkr. Nienburg/Weser) (© Heinz Riepshoff, Bauernhausarchiv Hoya/Diepholz); c) Balkenstück mit Bohrloch und darin „verpfloctem“ Zauberspruch aus einem abgebrochenen Fachwerkhaus aus Elmshorn (Kr. Pinneberg) (© Industriemuseum Elmshorn, Inv.-Nr. A-0944).

Das Weihnachtslied „Freut euch, ihr lieben Christen“ entstand 1540 in Magdeburg und steht noch heute unter der Nummer 540 im Evangelischen Gesangbuch (Ausgabe 1996). Die gegen Tod, Teufel und Hölle gerichtete vierte Strophe war offensichtlich gut für magische Zwecke geeignet.

Das Industriemuseum Elmshorn (Kr. Pinneberg, Schleswig-Holstein) besitzt ein Stück eines Balkens aus einem Fachwerkhaus in Elmshorn (Friedrichstr. 43), das 1927 abgerissen worden ist (Fig. 5c) (Industriemuseum

Elmshorn, Inv.-Nr. A-0944; www.museen-nord.de). In dem Holz befindet sich ein Bohrloch, in dem ein gefaltetes und zusammengerolltes Stück Papier deponiert worden ist; ursprünglich war das Loch mit einem hölzernen Pflock und Bienenwachs verschlossen. Auf dem Papier steht der folgende Zauberspruch:

*„Hogas Hoorß du böser wiede Kopf
Ich verbiete dir mein Haus und Hoff
Alle Viebhage und weyde alle brünlein Kleide
Dieweil Du solches Thuß muß du (in) der Hölle Toben.
M E d d Z G d H g G H d H g XXX.“* (Struve 1927)

Ein nahezu identischer Zauberspruch wurde 1930 beim Abbruch eines Bauernhauses in Kronsnest (bei Elmshorn) „in einem dicken Eichenbalken“ gefunden (Struve 1930). Der Heimatforscher Konrad Struve, der die beiden Funde publizierte, fügte 1937 einige aufschlussreiche archivalische Nachrichten zur Praxis des „Bohrens in die Balken der Häuser“ hinzu: 1696 berichtete der Elmshorner Hauptpastor Magister Nikolaus Petersen über „*verdämlliche abergläubische zaubermäßige argernüße, (...) überdaß H. Evang. Johannis mit Currirung von Menschen und Vieh nach Seegen sprechen, bohren in den balcken der Häuser und seltsamer Händel*“, auch sei er „*mit notarium und Zeugen aus Hamburg (...) belanget*“ worden, „*da ich eine sogenannte Doctorin ihre profession nicht wollte abkündigen*.“ Weiter zitiert Struve eine Zeugenaussage in einem Prozess vor der Elmshorner Kirchspielvogtei vom 19. März 1695, nach der „*eine Frau Catharina Gerdt in Vormstegen sich bei ihren Kuren des Bohrens in die Balken der Häuser bedient habe, neben der Anwendung anderer Volksmittel in Form von Trünken und Salben*.“ (Zitate nach Struve 1937). Struve fügt hinzu, gegen die Frau scheine „von Obrigkeit wegen (...) nichts unternommen“ worden zu sein – die Aussage hätte auch eine Hexereianklage zur Folge haben können.

Auch August Meier-Böke ließ sich mehrfach von Gewährspersonen in Lippe berichten, dass Krankheiten oder andere Übel durch „Verpflocken“ in ein Bohrloch in einen Ständer verbannt wurden. So erfuhr er etwa von der 89-jährigen Karoline Klare aus Loßbruch bei Detmold: „*Die Krankheiten aber haben sie, auch wegen jener Unholdinnen und Antuer, verpflockt, in Tür-, Tisch- und andere Ständer. Wie die ‚Pinn- oder ‚Kummereier‘ zu Beginn der Legezeit*.“ (Dröge 2001, (Stadt Detmold), 28f.). Meier-Böke berichtet wiederholt von Personen mit der besonderen Begabung, Krankheiten bei Mensch und Tier in Fachwerkständer oder lebende Bäumen zu „verpflocken“ und damit zu verbannen.

Das Phänomen dieser „Verpflockungen“ oder Zauberböhrungen, in denen Zaubersprüche oder organische Materialien deponiert wurden, ist offenbar weit verbreitet. Im „Handwörterbuch des deutschen

Aberglaubens“ (Bächtold-Stäubli – Hoffman-Krayer 1927-1942) werden die Begriffe „verbohren“, „verkeilen“ und „verpflocken“ synonym gebraucht, sie gehören aber zu den „ausgefallenen“ Stichworten, zu denen es auch im Nachtragsband (Bd. IX) des Werkes keinen Artikel gibt, obwohl in Bd. VIII (Sp. 1550, 1613, 1615) auf den Nachtrag verwiesen wird. Entsprechende Funde von „Verpflockungen“ sind aus Nord- und Süddeutschland, der Schweiz, Frankreich und Großbritannien bekannt. Der britische Archäologe Ralph Merrifield hat allein etwa 20 Beispiele aus England und Wales dokumentiert (Merrifield 1987, 137ff.; vgl. im Internet: <http://www.apotropaios.co.uk/written-charms.html>; Zugriff Dezember 2016). Erhard Preßler und Haio Zimmermann fanden zwei alte Papiere in einem Bohrloch in einem mittelalterlichen Herrenhaus in Aclou in der Normandie in Frankreich (Stiewe 2013, 69f.: 22, 23). Das Gebäude ist in die Zeit um 1360 dendrodatiert; die Bohrlochdeponierung wurde aber erst sehr viel später angebracht. Die Bohrung befindet sich in einem Ständer im oberen Bereich der früheren zentralen Halle des Hauses. Sie enthielt ein Fragment einer Druckseite aus einem lateinischen Messbuch (Missale Romanum) des 18. Jahrhunderts. Auf einem weiteren Zettel stehen Gebete in französischer Sprache. Beide Papiere wurden vermutlich im 18. oder 19. Jahrhundert in dem Bohrloch deponiert.

Wenn Menschen im Mittelalter oder in der frühen Neuzeit Fossilien oder archäologische Artefakte auf den Feldern fanden, wussten sie nicht, was diese merkwürdigen Objekte bedeuteten – und benutzten sie für magische Zwecke: Steinbeile aus der Jungsteinzeit oder Fossilien von Belemniten (Kopffüßern) wurden „Donnerkeile“ genannt und unter oder neben der Herdstelle deponiert, um das Haus vor Blitzschlag zu schützen. Auch versteinerte Seeigel wurden als „Gewittersteine“ zum Schutz gegen Blitz und Donner verwendet; August Meier-Böke überliefert einen solchen Fund aus Westorf-Hemmensiek (Kalletal, Kreis Lippe), den er von einem Gewährsmann geschenkt bekam (Dröge 2001-2002, Gemeinde Kalletal, 48). Zwei weitere versteinerte Seeigel, hier „Donnersteine“ genannt, befinden sich im Kreismuseum Syke (Landkreis Diepholz). Eine systematische Durchsicht von Museumssammlungen würde sicher zahlreiche Beispiele für die magische Verwendung von fossilen oder ur- und frühgeschichtlichen Objekten erbringen – sofern diese denn dokumentiert sind.

Aktuelle Funde aus Freilichtmuseen

Im Museumsdorf Hösseringen (Landkreis Uelzen) wurde 1979-82 der „Brümmerhof“ wiedererrichtet, ein großes Zweistöcker-Hallenhaus von 1644 von einem Einzelhof aus Moide (Landkreis Soltau-Fallingb. b. B.). Während der Restaurierung wurden mehrere Bohrlöcher in den Ständern



a.



c.



d.



b.

Fig. 6. Funde aus Freilichtmuseen:

a) Museumsdorf Hösseringen, Brümmerhof von 1644. stark fragmentierter Zettel mit handschriftlichem Text aus dem Lukasevangelium, Bohrlochfund aus einem Hauptständer (© Museumsdorf Hösseringen);

b) LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold, Benedictus-Plakette (19./frühes 20. Jh.?), gefunden an einem Ständer im Bereich des Pferdestalles im Bauernhaus Kuhlmeier aus Kohlstädt (Kr. Lippe) (LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold Inv.Nr. 2005:001), (© Rolf Lüttmann, LWL Freilichtmuseum Detmold); c) LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold, Lippischer Meierhof, Haupthaus von 1570. Reste der Füllung einer mutmaßlichen Zauberbohrung aus dem linken Hauptständer am Vorgiebel: kleine Bruchstücke von Eierschalen, zerbrochene Holzstäbchen, ein toter Nagekäfer (© Wolfgang Bangen, LWL Freilichtmuseum Detmold);

d) LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold, Lippischer Meierhof, Leibzucht von 1619. Reste der Füllung einer mutmaßlichen Zauberbohrung, Bohrloch Nr. 23 an einem Dielenständer: Holzklötzchen mit anhaftenden Eierschalen, Getreidereste (© Wolfram Bangen, LWL Freilichtmuseum Detmold).

auf mögliche magische Deponierungen untersucht. In einer Bohrung im „Höftständer“ (Hauptständer) mit dem Abbundzeichen (Bauteilnummer des Zimmermanns) VI wurde ein gefalteter und stark fragmentierter Zettel mit einem handschriftlichen Text aus dem Lukasevangelium (Lk. 1, 63-76) gefunden (Fig. 6a). Ein weiterer Text auf der Rückseite konnte bisher nicht entziffert werden. Der Historiker Hans-Jürgen Vogtherr, der den Fund bearbeitete, bleibt in seiner Deutung sehr vorsichtig (ALWM, LWM 5100, Dokumentation Brümmerhof, LWM 2110). Er datiert den „Schriftduktus“ ins 17. oder frühe 18. Jahrhundert und hält den Schreiber für „nicht ungeübt“, auch wenn dieser einzelne Wörter falsch abgeschrieben hat. Der Text handelt von der Taufe des Johannes (Lk. 1,63-68) und der Weissagung des Zacharias (Lk. 1, 69-76). Auffällig ist, dass die beiden Kolumnen auf dem Blatt vertauscht sind: Der Text beginnt oben rechts (Verse 63 bis 68) und setzt sich oben links fort (Verse 69 bis 76). Vogtherr hält eine Deutung dieser Deponierung für „spekulativ“ und äußert sich sehr vorsichtig: „Wenn man vor Spekulationen keine Scheu hat, könnte man vermuten, dass am Tage des Richtfestes das entsprechende Evangelium verlesen worden und der entsprechende Text anschließend niedergelegt worden ist. – Eine Erklärung ist also nicht zu geben.“ (ALWM, wie vor; *Vogtherr 1986*, 258f.).

Die oben zitierten archivalischen Nachrichten aus Elmshorn zeigen, dass der Johannistag (24. Juni) bei magischen Praktiken eine wichtige Rolle spielte – daher ist auch hier mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit anzunehmen, dass dieser Text aus dem Lukasevangelium, der üblicherweise am Johannistag verlesen wurde, zu zauberischen Zwecken in dem Ständer des Brümmerhofes „verpflockt“ worden ist. In einem anderen Ständer am Flett (Herdraum) des Brümmerhofes fanden sich Fragmente einer Rechnung von 1810 oder 1820 (ALWM wie vor; *Vogtherr 1986*, 258f.). Hier ist unsicher, ob es sich um eine magische Deponierung handelt – möglicherweise wurde das alte Papier auch verwendet, um eine Fuge in der Fachwerkwand abzudichten.

Auch im LWL-Freilichtmuseum Detmold wurden in den letzten Jahren mehrere historische Gebäude auf Veranlassung des Verfassers auf mögliche „Zauberbohrungen“ oder „Verpflockungen“ untersucht (*Stiewe 2013*, 70ff.). Die bisherigen Ergebnisse sind zwar nicht spektakulär, erbrachten aber doch einige Hinweise auf alltagsmagische Praktiken: Schon während seiner Restaurierung 2004 war der Hof Kuhlmeier aus Kohlstädt (Kreis Lippe, heute Teil der Museumsgaststätte „Im Weißen Ross“) untersucht worden. Der Zweiständerbau ist 1559 dendrodatiert. Etwa ein halbes Dutzend Bohrlöcher in den Ständern wurden in den Plänen kartiert und geöffnet – aber ohne signifikante Ergebnisse. Der interessanteste Fund war eine kleine Benedictus-Plakette aus Metall, die an einem Ständer im Bereich des

früheren Pferdestalles angenagelt war – vermutlich sollten damit die Pferde vor Krankheiten geschützt werden (Fig. 6b). Es ist überliefert, dass auch die evangelisch-reformierten Lipper katholische Symbole zu magischen Zwecken benutzten. Möglicherweise wurde die Plakette aber auch von einem katholischen Landarbeiter aus dem benachbarten Hochstift Paderborn angebracht.

2012 wurden gemeinsam mit dem Restaurator des Freilichtmuseums, Wolfram Bangen, das Haupthaus und die Leibzucht (Altenteilerhaus) des Lippischen Meierhofes auf Zauberbohrungen untersucht. Das Haupthaus stammt von dem früheren Hof Meier Barthold in Wittigenhöfen bei Lemgo-Leese und wurde 1570 erbaut. Hier wurden insgesamt 18 Bohrlöcher fotografiert, kartiert und geöffnet. Die Inhalte wurden protokolliert und für weitergehende, z.B. paläobotanische Untersuchungen aufbewahrt. Die meisten Bohrlöcher fanden sich im Stallteil – doch musste hier sorgfältig unterschieden werden zwischen möglichen Zauberbohrungen und Zweitverwendungsspuren (z.B. alten Klobenlöchern an den Torständern), Reparatur-Bohrungen (für angeschuhte Ständerfüße oder Zapfen), die erst beim Wiederaufbau entstanden sind oder Bohrlöchern von dendrochronologischen Probenentnahmen.

Am Vordergiebel gab es in nahezu allen Ständern „verdächtige“ Bohrlöcher. Einige von ihnen waren noch mit alten Pflocken verschlossen, andere waren erst bei der Restaurierung um 1970 verpflockt worden. Die Ergebnisse waren zunächst nicht sonderlich signifikant: Es fanden sich Staub und Spinnweben, Reste von Holzpflocken, Pflanzen- und Getreidereste, Kokons und tote Insekten – auch Kaugummipapier von Museumsbesuchern haben wir gefunden. Doch schon im ersten Bohrloch im linken Hauptständer fanden sich Hinweise auf eine Zauberbohrung: Das Loch war mit einem alten Pflock verschlossen und enthielt neben einem toten Nagekäfer ein zerbrochenes helles Holzstäbchen und kleine Bruchstücke von Eierschalen, wohl Reste eines „Kükeneis“ als Hinweise auf eine magische Deponierung (Fig. 6c).

In dem kleineren Leibzuchtshaus (Altenteilerhaus) des Meierhofes von 1619 wurden insgesamt 39 (!) Bohrungen untersucht und kartiert. Das Loch Nr. 13 enthielt ein Stück Baumrinde und zwei Eicheln – doch war es nicht verpflockt und es muss unklar bleiben, ob es sich um eine alte Deponierung handelt oder ob Kinder von Museumsbesuchern die Eicheln hineingesteckt haben. Im Bohrloch Nr. 23 fand sich ein kleines, offensichtlich älteres Holzklötzchen, an dem winzige Bruchstücke von Eierschalen klebten – also wieder ein Hinweis auf ein „Kükenei“ und eine mögliche Zauberbohrung (Fig. 6d).

Natürlich waren diese geheimnisvollen Bohrloch-Untersuchungen auch ein Gesprächsthema unter den Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern, die im Aufsichtsdienst in den Museumsgebäuden tätig sind –

und einer konnte noch einen interessanten Hinweis aus eigener Erinnerung beisteuern: Der Mitarbeiter erzählte, dass er von einem kleinen Hof in Pottenhausen bei Lage (Kreis Lippe) stammt. Auch dort gab es ein Bohrloch in einem Dielenständer – und eine unverheiratete Tante (Jahrgang 1896) steckte noch um 1970 regelmäßig zu einem besonderen Feiertag (möglicherweise Palmsonntag) einen Buchsbaumzweig in dieses Loch. Außerdem ging sie mit den Kindern zu dem Bohrloch und veranlasste diese, ihre ausgefallenen „Mausezähne“ (Milchzähne) hinein zu stecken – mit der Erklärung: „Das bringt Glück!“ Ähnliche Erzählungen sind auch in der Literatur oder aus anderen Museen überliefert (*Stiewe 2013*, 74 -Anm. 44).

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Magical dwelling

Apotropaic building practices in the New World Dutch Cultural Hearth

Walter Richard Wheeler *

ABSTRACT

Protective rituals and practices associated with undertaking building and occupation of dwellings and public buildings were brought to North America by early European immigrants. There they met aboriginal magical practices, and were transformed over time. Talismanic rituals included scribing symbolic markings or carvings on the building (particularly at entrances and stairways), foundation deposits (coins, quartz crystals, cornerstone deposits), and site-specific deposits such as broken ceramics placed under hearth stones, shoes placed in walls or floors, horse shoes over doors, and horse skulls at eaves, etc., and topping out ceremonies. These practices were actively engaged in until the middle decades of the 19th century; some survive today. Evidence for these practices has been found at early 17th century archeological sites in Albany, New York, and can be traced through archeological sites and standing structures in the New World Dutch Cultural Hearth. My paper will present examples of these practices from c.1625 to the present, with an emphasis on early examples and will contextualize these by comparison with European precedents.

Keywords: *Protective building rituals, early European immigrants, interaction of Slave, Native American and Euro-American practices.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Magisches Haus: apotropäische Haus-Praktiken im kulturellen Herzen Neu-Hollands

Unheil abwehrende Rituale und Praktiken in Verbindung mit der Errichtung von Gebäuden zu Wohnungszwecken oder im öffentlichen Gebrauch, wurden durch die ersten europäischen Immigranten nach Nordamerika gebracht und wandelten sich im Laufe der Zeit durch den Kontakt mit einheimischen Bräuchen. Zu den glückbringenden Ritualen gehörten u.a. das Einritzen von Zeichen oder Einschnitzen von Symbolen (vor allem im Bereich von Eingängen und Treppen), Grundsteindepots (Münzen, Quarz-Kristalle, Eckpfeilerdepots), spezifische Bräuche wie z.B. Keramikbruchstücke unter Kaminplatten, Schuhe in Mauern oder Böden, Hufeisen über der Türe, Pferdeschädel am Dachvorsprung, usw., sowie Richtfeste. Diese Praktiken waren bis Mitte des 19. Jh. weit verbreitet, einige sind heute noch üblich. Zu den Belegen dieser Praktiken gehören Funde aus archäologischen Stätten aus dem frühen 17. Jh. in Albany, New York, aber

* Troy, New York,
United States of America
wtheb@aol.com

auch aus anderen Orten im kulturellen Herzen der Neu-Niederlanden – mit z.T. noch bestehenden Gebäuden. Vorliegender Artikel zeigt Beispiele dieser Praktiken von 1625 bis zur Gegenwart, mit besonderer Beachtung für frühe Beispiele, und kontextualisiert diese im Vergleich zu europäischen Präzedenzen

Schlagwörter: *Protektive Gebäude-Rituale, Frühe europäische Immigration, Interaktion von Praktiken der Sklaven, Einheimischen und Euro-Amerikanern.*

RÉSUMÉ

La maison magique: pratiques de construction apotropaïques au Coeur des Nouveaux Pays Bas

Les rituels et pratiques protecteurs associés à la construction de bâtiments et à l'occupation d'habitations et de bâtiments publics ont été apportés en Amérique du Nord par les premiers immigrants européens. Ils ont évolué au contact des pratiques magiques amérindiennes et ont été transformés au cours du temps. Les rituels talismaniques incluent l'inscription de marques ou de gravures symboliques

1. Introduction

Protective rituals and practices associated with undertaking building and occupation of dwellings and public buildings were brought to North America by early European immigrants and represent the successful transmission of late-mediaeval beliefs to the New World. There they met aboriginal and African magical practices, and were transformed over time. Talismanic rituals included scribing symbolic markings on the building (particularly at entrances and stairways), foundation deposits (coins, quartz crystals, cornerstone deposits), and site-specific deposits such as broken ceramics placed under hearth stones, shoes placed in walls or floors, horse shoes over doors, and horse skulls at eaves, etc., and topping out ceremonies. A number of related practices were intended to protect persons, crops, or livestock (Tomlinson 1839, 22). These traditions were in decline during the 19th century; a few survive today, albeit with an altered interpretation of their meaning.

Such practices may have served other purposes in addition to protection from bad luck or mal intent. Some evidence points to the possibility of the appeasement of local gods in claiming a place for a home, and the sanctification of the home as a place for dwelling as being among the intentions of these depositional practices (Lecouteux 2013, 18-34). Interpreted through the lens of these beliefs, these deposits take on different meanings.

sur les bâtiments (particulièrement sur les entrées et dans les escaliers), les dépôts de fondation (monnaies, cristaux de quartz, pose de la première pierre), et des dépôts spécifiques comprenant des poteries cassées placées sous les pierres du foyer, des chaussures mises dans les murs ou les sols, des fers à cheval au-dessus des portes ou des crânes de chevaux sur l'avant-toit, etc., ainsi que des cérémonies particulières. Ces pratiques ont été activement utilisées jusqu'aux décennies du milieu du XIX^{ème} siècle; certaines survivent aujourd'hui. Des preuves de ces pratiques ont été retrouvées dans des sites archéologiques du XVII^{ème} siècle à Albany, New York, et peuvent être détectées dans les sites archéologiques et les structures encore existantes dans le cœur culturel des nouveaux Pays-Bas. Cet article présente des exemples de ces pratiques depuis environ 1625 jusqu'à présent, en mettant l'accent sur les exemples précoces, et en les contextualisant grâce à des précédents européens.

Mots-clés : *rites protecteurs dans la construction, l'immigration précoce européenne, interaction entre les pratiques des esclaves, des Amérindiens et des Euro-américains.*

Recent scholarship on these practices in North America has focused on areas settled by people of British and Irish heritage (Manning 2012; Manning 2014, 52; Evans et al. 2016). The nature of scholarly studies in the United States, which remains regional in some respects, has resulted in the under-reporting of evidence from within the New World Dutch Cultural Hearth (hereafter, NWDCH) area. Among its goals, this paper is intended to address that imbalance and will compare the practices encountered within that area with those recorded in other areas of North America and in Europe. Differences in the pattern of practices, if any, will be examined.

The NWDCH is an area broadly described as the lands within 50km adjacent to the Hudson and Mohawk rivers, and takes in much of eastern New York State, northern New Jersey, and western portions of Vermont, Connecticut and Massachusetts (Fig. 1). Within the region, evidence for the application of apotropaic magic in association with the construction and occupation of buildings has been found at early 17th century archeological sites and can be traced through the mid-19th century, and in some cases, to the present. This paper will present examples of these practices from c.1625 to the present, and will contextualize these by comparison with European precedents.

Because of the generally accidental discovery of these practices, information on them is necessarily incomplete, and inordinately dependent upon oral history. Although some references to these practices within the region can be

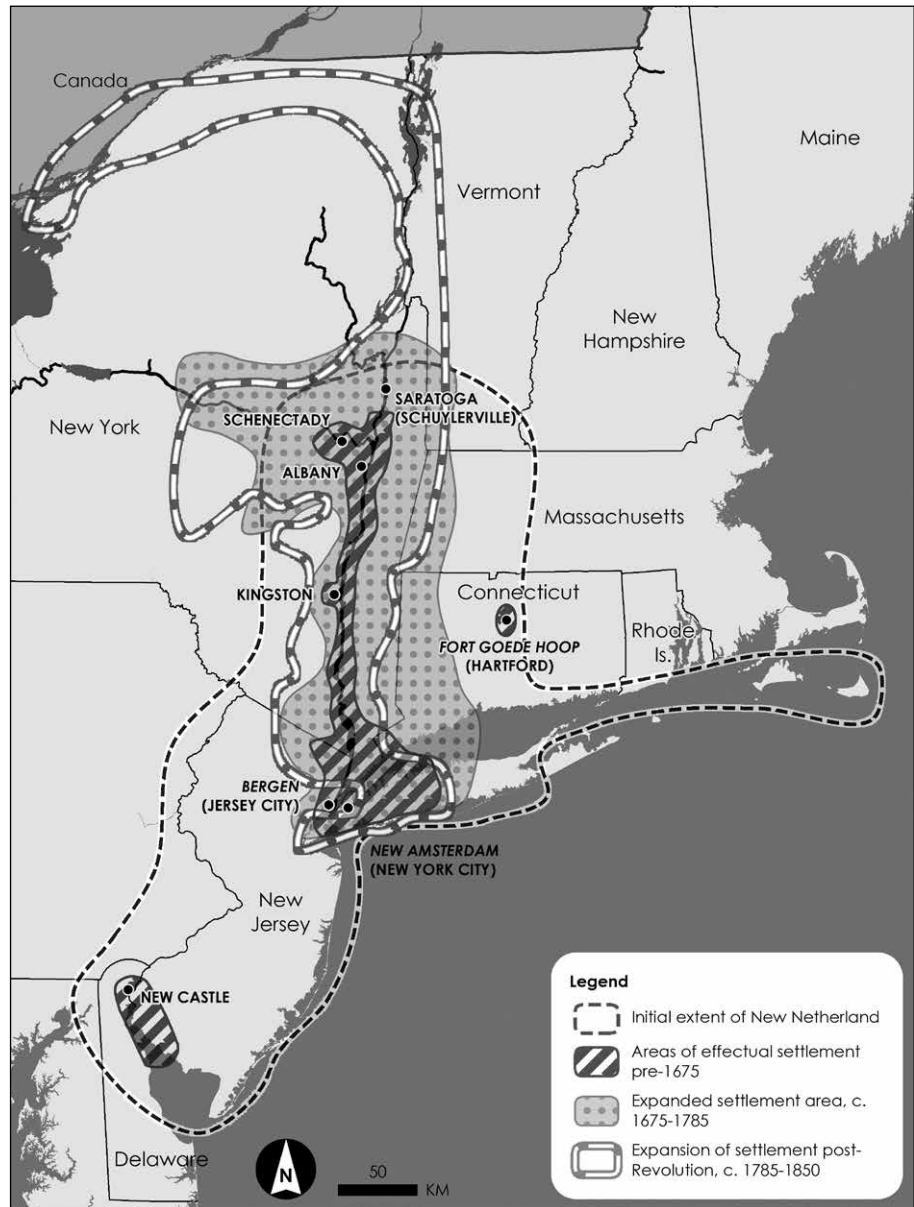


Fig. 1. *The New World Dutch Cultural Hearth* (© Tracy S. Müller).

found in scholarly literature, the greater number of examples can only be traced through newspaper accounts and the recollections of homeowners and restoration professionals who have worked on older buildings. As a result, the examples presented here largely concentrate in the portion of the NWDCH closest to the author’s home, near Albany, NY.

This paper concerns itself chiefly with the period c.1600-1850, the temporal limits during which most of the practices presented herein flourished. Previous to this time, Native American tribes had occupied the region for thousands of years. Interaction between Native Americans, European peoples and the enslaved Africans they brought to the region resulted in a creolization of some of these practices, examples of which will be presented.

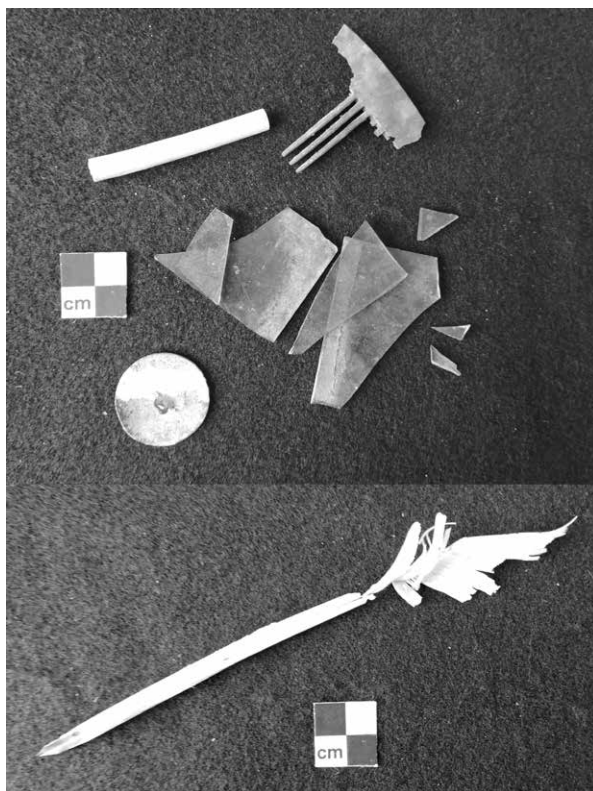
2. Background

The region identified as the NWDCH was originally occupied by several different tribes of Native Americans, including the Algonquian Lenape, Mohawks and Mahicans. Settlement in the region by people of European extraction began in 1614 with the establishment of a trading post near today’s Albany, New York, and at about the same time on Manhattan Island. Although the initial European settlers in this region originated from many different countries, the largest number were Dutch and the largest tracts of land were purchased or controlled by families from that country. The establishment of a system of manors slowed the development of the areas in which this system of ownership was most firmly ensconced; where most successful claims to manorial possession

were made, such as by the Van Rensselaers in the north-central Hudson Valley, the strength of their claim was a disincentive for settlement, since there were available lands outside of the manor to be had not far off. The result was that outside of urban areas, much of the region remained underpopulated. The Treaty of Westminster conceded New Netherland to the English in 1674 but the cultural values of the settlers remained firmly ensconced for the next 100 years or more.

Population expansion in the region was curtailed during the pre-1760 period by wars between the British and French, which because of the strategic location of the region, was a theatre of war for much of this time. After a brief period of peace, for similar reasons the Hudson and Mohawk valleys became a battleground between the English and the American Colonists from 1775 to 1783. After the close hostilities, English, Scots-Irish and German settlers arrived, and expansion of the development of the western portion of the state was supported by land grants to war veterans. This influx of new settlers began a period of change which witnessed the diminishing importance of Dutch-related culture in the region.

The population of the area was greatly augmented in the 1820s and 1830s by Irish immigration. German immigration in the 1840s and 1850s was the result of the revolution of 1848 and events leading up to it. These immigrants settled both in urban and rural areas, replacing slave labor in New York beginning in the 1820s



in rural areas, and working in factories and at trades in the cities. The late 19th and early 20th centuries brought a much larger influx of immigrants from Italy, central and Eastern Europe to the region. The arrival of these populations continued the gradual decline in importance of New World Dutch material culture in the region, a process which was complete by about 1860.

At its largest extent, the NWDCH extended approximately 520 kilometers north-south and 222 km east-west. The large size of the area, and differences in local building materials and settlement patterns, resulted in the establishment of regional vernacular building practices. Framing traditions generally reflect late-mediaeval types common in the Netherlands, with some influences from German and English customs.

3. Practices still in use today

A number of apotropaic practices associated with the erection or occupation of buildings survive in the region today; these can generally be found throughout North America. No practices that could be called 'regional' survive today. Remaining popular are door protection strategies including upturned horsehoes (over doorways) and mezuzahs (on door jambs), deposition of coins or other materials in foundations, cornerstone deposits and topping out ceremonies; the last two are now typically reserved for public structures or office buildings (Melnick 2000; Schultz 2016).



Fig. 2. Assemblage of sharps from the Van Alen house, DeFreestville, NY (© Walter Richard Wheeler).

4. Euro-American Intentional Deposits, Incriptions and Symbols

A range of artifact types and deposit strategies that can be attributed to European-Americans are encountered in the region. The artifact types fall into several groups.

4.1. Coins

Coins have long been used as a token of good luck, perhaps in part due to their inherent value, and because they typically feature a portrait on one face. Although the practice is known to continue to the present, the inaccessible nature of most of these deposits, which are frequently placed in foundations or under thresholds, means that the number that have been identified in situ is small. An examination of the few recorded examples within the NWDCH will provide a sense of the extent and form of this practice.

- A halfpenny ‘of Queen Anne’s time’ (1702-1714) was found ‘in a recess in the thick two-foot walls’ of a stone house razed some time before 1879 on Staten Island (*Anonymous 1879*).
- A coin dated 1711 and bearing the inscription ‘Ann[e] by the Grace of God’ was found under the hearth in a house constructed between 1796 and 1805 in Herkimer Street, Albany, when it was being demolished in 1870 (*Anonymous 1870b*).
- A worn copper alloy coin with the partially legible legend ‘FRANC A’ embossed on it, together with

two fleur-de-lis, was found embedded in mortar at an entrance to the Duyckinck house, built in the 1730s in Raritan Landing, NJ (*Yamin 2011, 36*).

- A well-worn 1787 Connecticut penny was found in 1980 under the threshold of the Coeymans-Bronck house in Coeymans, NY (C. Kunz (owner), personal communication, 24 January 2009, and examination by author on 18 June 2016.)
- An identical coin to the previous example—a well-worn 1787 Connecticut penny—was found c. 2014 under the basement hearth in the north portion of the Coeymans house, in Coeymans, NY. This example was intentionally gouged out in the chest area of the male portrait bust on the obverse. The close familial and spatial connection between the two families occupying these houses may have informed the deposition of identical coins. (Paul Lawlor (owner) interview, and examination by author, 18 June 2016).
- A half-cent bearing the date 1804 was found in an internal wall cavity of a house in Shekomeko, NY, during renovation work in the late 1970s. The coin had an inscribed ‘W’ on one face. An informant indicated that the local belief is that coins deposited in similar situations were placed by builders, and that the engraving represented the initial of the builder’s last name (Robert M. Hedges (restoration professional), personal communication, 31 August 2015).



Fig. 3. A dirk found under the Button house, Canajoharie, NY (© Walter Richard Wheeler).

Site	Where found	Other artifacts in house	Estimated date of deposition	Reference
Verplanck house, Stony Kill Estate, Beacon, NY	Behind chimney			Mills 2008
Gayhead Hamlet, East Fishkill, NY	Child's shoe in 'inner wall by a kitchen window' and 'two very worn adult shoes: a man's shoe and a lady's slipper' from the kitchen ceiling between beams	Horse bit	Child's shoe, pre 1790? Two adult shoes, pre-1850.	Mills 2008
Smit house, New Paltz, NY	Shoe found in vicinity of chimney in wall		1709 or later	Heins 2001
Gomez house, Town of Newburgh, NY		Shoe form and pewter spoon	Found in c. 1772 portion of house; possibly deposited during early 19th century renovations	
Philip Deyo house, New Paltz, NY	Shoe found between roof laths, near base of front slope of roof; second shoe found in a wall			K. Kimble (owner), personal communication, 17 September 2009
Cunning house, South Street, Galway, NY	A single child's shoe was found inside the north wall of the back wing, near a window during renovation work in 2008.	Unidentified mammalian limb bone, found about two feet below the bottom of the northwest corner of the foundation.	c. 1850	L. Conrad (owner), personal communication, 24 February 2016
Gamage house, CR 67, Town of Saratoga, NY	Adult shoe found in exterior wall, said to have been over front door	Broken key	Late 18th or very early 19 th century	A. Gamage (owner), personal communication, 14 October 2013
Sanders house, Charlton, NY	Approximately a dozen shoes, found within walls of house	An 1817 large cent, found under threshold; pottery sherds and a carpenter's folding bevel square with the name 'P. Knox' inscribed on it, found in walls	During construction of house, believed to be 1817	D. Collins, interview, 14 May 2016
Philip Schuyler house, Schuylerville, NY	Wood-sole shoe, found behind stairs in kitchen wing; c. 1860s rubber overshoe marked 'Priscilla Stover' found in a wall; additional shoes found in walls including a c. 1790 woman's slipper—all found in 1958		Deposited between the late 18th century up to c. 1870	C. Valosin (site curator), personal communication, 26 April 2016
John E. and Ann Freyenmoet van Alen house, DeFreestville, North Greenbush, NY	Child's leather-soled shoe, found in interior wall	Broken ceramic under hearth, sharps (quill, broken glass), scribed circles on one door	1793 (shoe), and later (est. 1820s)	S. Swanson (former owner), personal communication, 2002
Van Loon house, Athens, NY	Ten shoes found in various locations within interior walls of this stone house; five are adult shoes (one possible pair), the remainder are children's shoes	Compass roses, date stones with symbols, stake with glass insert, also metal shoe mould	1724 and later	
Schoolcraft house, Guilderland, NY	A small leather shoe.		c. 1850 or later	Begley 2005, 7
Coeymans-Bronck house, Coeymans, NY	A moccasin, between second floor joists above southwest room	1767 Coin under threshold.	Between c. 1780 and 1810	C. Kunz (owner), personal communication, 24 January 2009
Graham-Brush house, Pine Plains, NY	A single shoe, between an internal chimney and an outside wall, found in the 1990s. Its location indicated its placement during construction of the house.		Late 18th century?	R. Hedges (restoration professional), personal communication, 31 August 2015

Site	Where found	Other artifacts in house	Estimated date of deposition	Reference
Ebenezer Jarvis house, Huntington, NY	under attic floorboards	Articles of wearing apparel including a man's straw plaited hat, a man's waistcoat, a woman's parasol and some additional items. Also 'all of the fireplaces in this house feature a sword blade (infantry hanger) set into the masonry of the flue, just above the smoke chamber...with the blade edge facing up'	1838	R. Metcalf (owner), personal communication, 31 July 2009
O. Button house, Canajoharie, NY	One adult male and two mismatched children's shoes	Also a dirk carved from wood, found under the house	c. 1830	
Latting's Hundred, Huntington, NY	a woman's shoe, under attic floorboards above the northwest bed chamber; a boy's leather shoe and a 19th century cloth-topped baby shoes, under the attic floorboards of the main house	Other items include an nkisi bundle, a coin.	shoes deposited c. 1792 and in the early 19th century	R. Metcalf (owner), personal communication, 31 July 2009
Winan's Tavern, Vernon Township, NJ	child's shoe found in wall		Additional examples from the same township have been 'frequently found in walls of homes slated for demolition'	Jessica Paladini to Paul Huey (archaeologists), 26 July 2002
Updike farmstead, Princeton Township, NJ	single adult shoe, in a wall cavity near a brick chimney stack,		c. 1865-75	
Cooper-Mann house, Sussex Borough, NY	shoe found in fill under kitchen area of house	other items include a locket in an interior wall and a hoe blade, adjacent to chimney	1862-1909	Springate 2010. The author connects these deposits to the occupation of the house by a free black family.
Johnson Hall, Johnstown, NY	A child's moccasin, in exterior wall at north end of central hallway	Together with other items including a redware teapot, corn cobs, and a bone comb, a wooden brush back, a candlestick mould, and some pieces of wallpaper, found on top of an outside wall girt, at the second floor level of the back wall of the central hall	c. 1762	Feister 1995; Fisher and Huey 1996
Clapp house, Buskirk, Pittstown, NY	A single shoe, found in an exterior wall (exact location unrecorded)	No other items	c. 1790	C. Kheel (owner), personal communication, 16 May 2016
Peter Vrooman house, Schoharie, NY	A single women's shoe dating to about 1870 found between second floor ceiling and attic floor, 2013	No other items	c. 1870	Information from owner of house

Tab. 1. Shoes found in architectural contexts within the New World Dutch Cultural Hearth (© Walter Richard Wheeler).

- A large cent bearing the date 1817 was found under the threshold of the Sanders house in Charlton, NY when it was taken down c. 2005 (D. Collins, interview, 14 May 2016)
- A deposit made upon the completion of one of the Delaware Canal aqueducts in High Falls, NY in 1826 included three coins (dated between 1806 and 1821), two small rectangular silver plates (with sponsor and construction information engraved on them), and an engraved medallion fashioned from a medal or coin, bearing the faint inscription 'Benedictum 1727 Nomen Domini' The obverse had been buffed smooth, and engraved with the legend 'MOUNT HOREB Chapter Sept 5826 Kingston Ulster County N York' (Jones 1966, 4-5).

- In about 2008, a United States cent bearing the date 1850, and having several years of wear was found in a beam pocket near a window that was replaced in the later 19th century in the Benjamin Ten Broeck house in the Town of Kingston, NY (R. Sweeney (owner), personal communication, 11 July 2015).
- Two Chinese coins were found under porch posts at the Neilson house, in Bemis Heights, Stillwater, NY. These coins were placed during renovations undertaken in the 1950s (C. Valosin, Curator, Saratoga National Historical Park, personal communication, 24 May 2016). This deposit represents the most recent of the historically-recorded examples.

It is probable that the date on a coin was irrelevant to its use as an apotropaic device. However, in at least one case it does appear to represent the date of construction. It is likely that the inscription, portrait, or metal itself was held in regard for its magical properties. The range of locations where this artifact type has been encountered does not generally serve to elucidate the intentions associated with the deposit. Modern oral history ascribes good luck to the practice; a builder in 1967 rationalized that the owners of a house where money was placed in the corners of the foundation would 'always have money' (M. Wheeler, personal communication, 1 August 2015).

4.2. Sharps

Artifacts which feature sharp edges, either because of their form or because they have been intentionally broken, are frequently encountered as part of caches deposited in houses or other buildings. A typical example is the assemblage deposited between 1793 and c. 1825 in the Van Alen house, DeFreestville, NY, which included a broken plate, pieces of glass, combs, nails, and a quill pen, most of which were found under a hearth (Fig. 2). Sherds from a broken slipware mug were found to be pressed into the mortar at a basement entry to the Duyckinck house in Raritan Landing, NJ, constructed in the 1730s (Yamin 2011, 36).

The late Rex Metcalf reported that 'an 18th Century earthenware inkwell with manganese glaze (cleanly broken in two) and one half of an 18th Century earthenware, drape molded dish with white slip decoration under clear lead glaze, were found together in the space between the southeast corner post and the front door stud of the main block' of the Dr. Daniel Kissam house, in Huntington, NY. The deposit dates to 1795 (R. Metcalf, personal communication 31 July 2009).

A wooden dirk, carved from a piece of pine, was found under the Button house in Canajoharie, NY. It likely dates to the mid-19th century (Fig. 3). Oral tradition attributes the purpose of this artifact type as protective, the sharp edges being meant to dissuade negative intruders. Scholars

have generally accepted this interpretation, which appears to be supported by use at entrances and hearths.

4.3. Shoes

Probably the most frequently encountered type of deposit, both within the NWDCH, and in the balance of North America as well as England and some other European countries is shoes. Numerous examples have been recorded throughout Europe, Asia, Australia, and the United States (Merrifield 1987, 133; Swann 2016; Manning 2012). Swann has recorded examples dating as far back as the 13th century. Table 1 presents 23 previously under-recorded examples within the NWDCH. Additional previously published examples include 24 sites in New York State and two in New Jersey (Manning 2012, 458-60).

Jessica Costello relates the English tradition of 'concealing shoes upon the death of a loved one' and that they were sometimes retained as mementoes (Costello 2014, 46). There is no evidence to support this use of shoes within the region. Because of their discreet placement, the occasion and identity of the agent are typically unknown, and the relationship of the shoe to the occupants of the house is typically impossible to determine. In one example however, something of these can be inferred.

A small child's shoe, bearing signs of wear, was discovered in an internal wall of the Van Alen house, in DeFreestville, NY. The house was constructed in 1793 for John E. and Anne Freyenmoet van Alen, who were childless. After the completion of the house their nephew Evert moved in with them, but the couple never had any children of their own. The couple was practicably past child-bearing age, and so it is unlikely that the intention was to invoke fertility, and the shoe did not come from a member of the immediate family. It is possible that one of family's 10 slaves provided the shoe; alternatively, it may have been contributed by one of the builders. In either case, a more complex intention is suggested by this example. Popular thinking on the subject assigns magical value to all articles of clothing, 'from their intimate association with [a]...person.' This notion is extended to the belief that even footprints cut from the earth have magical potential (Anonymous 1909).

4.4. Daisy wheels

The daisy wheel, compass rose, or compass-scribed hexafoil as it is sometimes known, can be found on furniture, spoon racks, as a piercing pattern for food and wine strainers, and on tombstones throughout the region. It is commonly encountered in these contexts in the northeastern United States, and is well-documented as having been used for apotropaic purposes in Europe and the Middle East from ancient times (Easton 2016, 47-50). Associations with Christ and the sun are pointed out by Easton (Easton 2016, 48).

Site	Location of building	Location of mark	Other artifacts found in building	Estimated date of inscription
Benjamin Ten Broeck house	Town of Kingston, Ulster County, NY	On second floor framing, adjacent to opening for staircase	Coin bearing the date 1850, found in beam pocket at south side of house	c. 1750
Van Loon house	Athens, Greene County, NY	Inscribed on the side wall of the main staircase. Second grouping is painted in green-blue and orange paint, at second floor level at top of stairs	Shoes, other objects—see below	c. 1750-70
Benjamin Hasbrouck house	High Falls, Ulster County, NY	On a date stone, between owner's initials, under an engraved ogee arch		1752
House on Rte 67	Town of Hoosick, Rensselaer County, NY	Drawn on beam adjacent to bulkhead door connecting cellar with the yard		c. 1770 or later
Henry Brodhead house	Marbletown, Ulster County, NY	On face of mantle of fireplace in south parlor; originally covered with paint.	With numerous other intersecting lines and other markings	c. 1784 or later
William Brandow house, 'The Willows'	Athens, Greene County, NY	On the back of vertical boards enclosing the stair to the basement	A six-point star, together with three interlocking circles, and other intersecting lines	c. 1788 or later
Vosburgh Barn (razed c. 1980)	Pownal, Bennington County, VT	On vertical face of one of the anchorbeams, covered by a board (possibly at a later date)		c. 1790
Timothy Crane house	Town of Charlton, Saratoga County, NY	A crudely drawn star on a structural member not intended to be visible, within the kitchen		Between 1791-c. 1830
Abraham Hasbrouck house	New Paltz, Ulster County, NY	Crudely drawn stars in circles on lintel over a window		18th century
Van Houten Barn	Middleburgh, Schoharie County, NY	Inscribed on the underside of anchorbeam adjacent to entrance		c. 1800?
Fredericks Barn	Stone Arabia, Montgomery County, NY; removed to Buskirk, NY	On framing		c. 1800
Alexander Hill House	Coila vicinity, Town of Jackson, Washington County, NY	On framing at attic floor level, adjacent to stair opening		c. 1800
Shop Barn, Sherman farm	Pittstown, Rensselaer County, NY	Two scribed marks, drawn on the door of the barn.		c. 1820
East 12th Street house	Brooklyn, Kings County, NY	On façade of building near the top of the wall, two daisy wheels worked in stucco	Daisy wheels are flanked by embossed diamonds.	c. 1920

Tab. 2. Buildings in which daisy wheels have been found (© Walter Richard Wheeler).

Sometimes the daisy wheel is encountered inscribed on artifacts which may have been repurposed. An example of this is a lead bottle seal converted to a small plaque, which has this pattern inscribed on it (Louise A. Basa, personal communication, 30 August 2012). This object was found in Schenectady, NY, in an archeological context and was likely deposited in the middle of the 18th century. Its association with the still-standing early 18th century structure on the site is, however, unclear. A single example of the use of this symbol on an object used by a Native American, a shell ornament, is known (Smith 2014).

The device has been found inscribed within several buildings in the region; surviving examples date to between 1750 and 1800 (Tab. 2). Its use appears to be concentrated in transition areas and apertures, such

as near stairs, windows and doors. The hexafoil can be generated by the use of a single tool—a divider or compass—and results from inscribing the radius of a circle from a point on that circle, and using the two resulting points of intersection as points from which to draw additional arcs. Repeated six times, twelve arcs are generated, forming six petals of a flower-like form, enclosed in the original circle. Perhaps the mystery associated with the mathematical relationship that makes this operation possible, and/or the association of the divider to the creator are responsible for its use for magical purposes.

Identified on thirteen buildings in the region, it is with greater frequency encountered on vernacular buildings throughout Europe, where it is used in both interior and exterior applications.

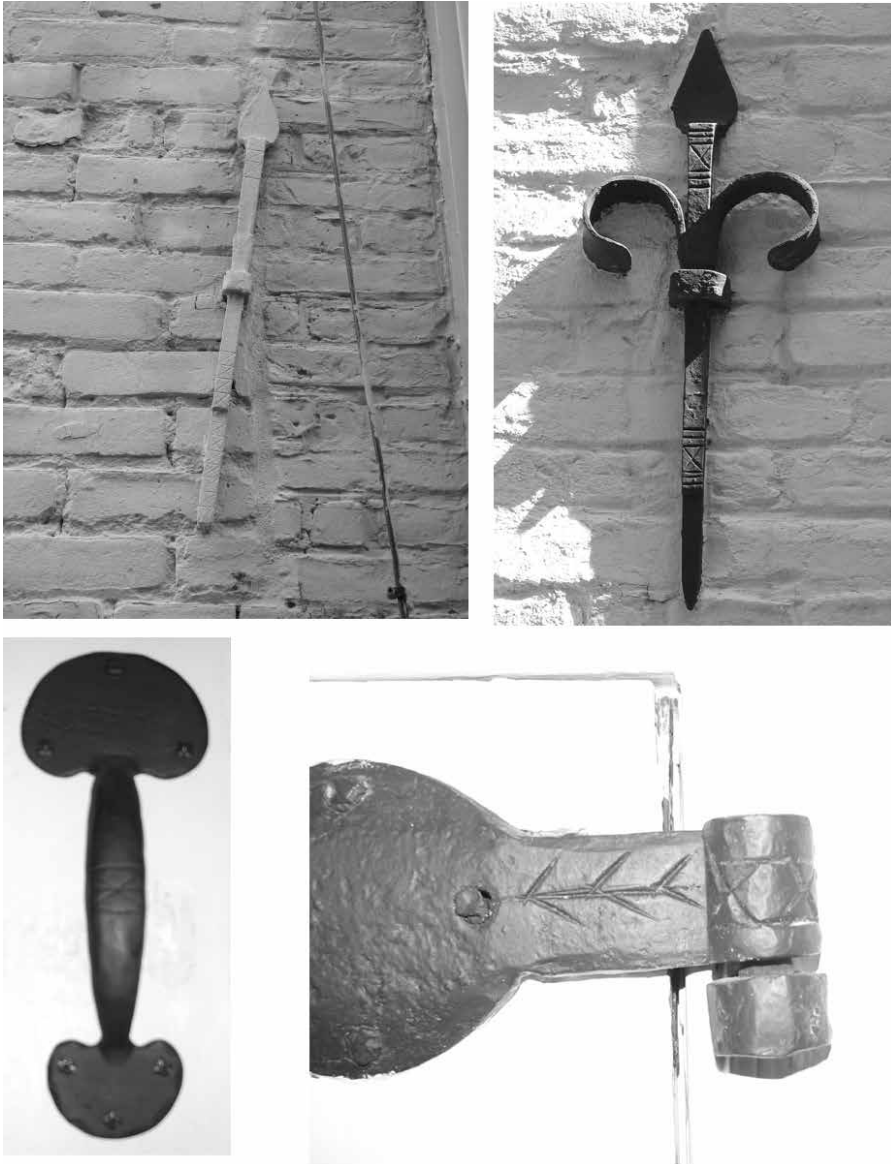


Fig. 4. House hardware with inscribed « X » marks, from Schenectady and Dutchess counties (© Walter Richard Wheeler).

4.5. The Saltire, or Saint Andrew's Cross

Another device found not infrequently in architectural contexts, and apparently bearing apotropaic meaning is the Saltire, or 'X' mark. It is encountered with some frequency in Europe (an example can be seen in a fireback at Clervaux castle, Luxembourg), and particularly in England. A large body of iron castings used in association with fireplaces there has been well documented (*Hodgkinson 2010; Easton –Hodgkinson 2013*). While no examples of this type of use of the saltire are known within the NWDCH, it was employed for what are perhaps similar purposes by different means. Most-commonly encountered in houses constructed in the 17th century and up to about 1775 is the use of the device on building hardware—specifically for door latches, shutter hinges and wall anchors (Fig. 4). One example of a piece of repurposed ironwork bearing

this same device (engraved after its modification from a file) was found wedged between roof structure and boards in the Houck house (c. 1805) formerly in the Town of Florida, Montgomery County, NY.

A single house in the region (the Edmund Wells house, Cambridge, NY, c. 1787) displays the saltire on its façade, worked in brick; within the house, the same device (using the same type of braided sticks impressed into the iron castings) is worked into the design of one of the mantels—it is also used in the same manner in his son's house (the Austin Wells house, White Creek, NY, c. 1805) (Fig. 5). The application of the device in the mantels of these two houses may be connected to its fireplace-associated uses in England and Europe.

Although it's possible that the use of the saltire is merely a decorative device, it seems improbable given



Fig. 5. The façade and one of the mantles in the Wells house, Cambridge, NY (© Walter Richard Wheeler).



Fig. 6. The Tullar house, Egremont, MA (postcard view, 1905).

that its use is consistently in association with entrances or apertures in buildings, including doors, windows, and fireplaces. Interestingly, the same device is closely associated with African slaves in the western hemisphere; this application of the X symbol will be discussed later on in this paper.

4.6. Hearts

The conventionalized illustration of the human heart (♥) is found both on buildings and personal items used by persons of German or Dutch heritage within the NWDCH. Among these is the Tullar house, in Egremont, Massachusetts, bearing as well, the date 1761 and the original owner's initials (Fig. 6). A house formerly standing on State Street in Albany, NY had five hearts emblazoned in its gable (recorded in a watercolor

by Anne Marguerite Hyde de Neuville in 1807), and the Governor's house in that place was described in 1755 as having '2 Hearts in Black brick' worked into its façade; these last were on the Lydius house, built in the late 17th or early 18th century (*Munsell 1867, 2: 374*). The Pruyn house in Kinderhook, NY (1766) bears a heart and the date in its gable end brick. The Wolfert Acker house (aka Gomez house), in the Town of Newburgh, NY, features the same device worked into its brick on a gable end, completed c. 1772. The Paris-Bleecker house in Fort Plain, NY (1787) features a raised heart as the central decorative motif on the mantle in the principal bedchamber. Several examples of the use of a heart as a backplate for door pulls, door knockers and window hardware are known. The Bronck house in Coxsackie, Greene County, NY provides a good example of this

practice, particularly in the portions of the house constructed in 1738.

Footwarmers, spoon racks, case furniture and other personal items owned or made by people in the NWDCH not infrequently also bear this symbol. A large body of these objects is also documented as having been made within the German-settled areas of Pennsylvania, as well as being a common device used in the Low Countries and in Germany (*Garvan 1982*). While not specifically apotropaic, the invocation of what is presumably meant to be a positive sentiment in such a public manner has some of the same characteristics as other signifiers reviewed here. Merrifield mentions heart-shaped pieces of felt as components of witch bottles, and Easton presents evidence confirming a protective role for this device (*Merrifield 1987*, 163; *Easton 2016*, 50-52).

4.7. Diamonds

Diamonds (◆) are thought by some to have an apotropaic purpose. They are encountered with some frequency in association with fireplaces. Vertically attenuated diamonds are used, for example, at the Van Alen house, in DeFreestville, NY, around a fireplace which had a hearth deposit (c. 1815), and flank the raised heart device on the mantle in the Paris-Bleecker house, previously mentioned (1787). The two principal first floor mantles in the Elmendorph Inn, at Red Hook, Dutchess County, NY have elongated embossed diamonds in their friezes (mantles installed c. 1800). Four skewed diamonds flank the central paneling of the chimney breast in the north parlor of the Coeymans-Bronck house in Coeymans, NY; four additional diamonds of the same form flank adjacent closet doors (c. 1790?). A five-plate cast iron stove bearing the date 1760 and used in the Nellis house, St. Johnsville, NY, bears 12 raised diamond patterns on its face, each of which is comprised of nine diamonds.

One unusual example found in the George Gross house, in Stone Ridge, Ulster County, NY (1797) is in the form of a tabernacle, its fixed door embossed with a large diamond. This may be an example of a type of *seelenfenster*—a ‘soul window’—examples of this Germanic tradition have been identified in the Pennsylvania Dutch cultural hearth. Only one example of an actual operable window (unlike the Gross house example) that appears to have been intended as a *seelenfenster* is known in New York State, in a house in Rhinebeck, Dutchess County.

Exterior gable end walls of masonry houses are another site where this device is sometimes found. The Rhinelander sugar house, New York, NY (1763) had a diamond device worked into its gable-end wall, as does the Wolfert Acker house (1772), which features a heart-shaped device enclosed within a diamond. An early twentieth-century house with this device worked into

the brickwork (together with six-point stars) is located on East 12th Street in Brooklyn, Kings County, NY.

A small group of dwellings constructed in the 1760s in southern Rensselaer and northern Columbia counties feature inscriptions, including dates, owner initials and other devices, inscribed on square tiles set on a corner and worked into their gable end walls, near the apex of the roof. The purpose of these inscriptions is likely to have been memorial, but the diamond-shape of the tile may have had a magical function as well. Easton presents some evidence supporting the interpretation of diamonds as having a magical function in England (*2016*, 52-54).

4.8. Other inscriptions

More complex inscriptions, in wood, brick or stone, are sometimes encountered. Their nature makes interpretation of their meaning difficult, and indeed this may have been their creator’s intention.

One such inscription, formerly engraved on the bottom of the ceiling beam in front of the principal fireplace of the Van Curler house in White Creek, NY (c. 1761) has been identified as representing the ‘Wakon-bird symbol’ which is said to have also been engraved on the gates at the entrance to the Knickerbocker property in nearby Schaightcoke, NY (*Jones 1959*, n. p). The interpretation of this image as representing a wakon-bird or ‘spirit dove’, a being associated with Native American spiritual practices is questioned; rather it is likely that the symbol was generated as a palimpsest—a layering of letters over each other. Several Roman capitals, a barred ‘I’, and a ‘B’ among them, can be teased out of the confusion of lines, but it has yet to be fully decoded or interpreted. Another example of this type of engraving, in a similar location in the Winne house, Bethlehem, NY (1726), has been reported but not confirmed by the author.

An inscription, formed using a similar palimpsest method, can be found on the south wall of one of the barracks at Crown Point, a fort built in 1759 (*Lossing 1851*, 1:152). These inscriptions have so far eluded interpretation (Fig. 7).

4.9. Date stones

Many structures within the NWDCH are inscribed with their date of construction. Typically these are stone or brick masonry dwellings or public buildings. Although in many cases these inscriptions can be associated with the initial owners or builders, and may serve to memorialize or lay claim to the work, this attribution cannot be assigned to some examples which feature numerous similarly inscribed blocks, such as the Reformed Church (aka the Old Stone Fort) in Schoharie, NY. The lower portion of the east wall of this building has a large number of stones engraved with male names. These

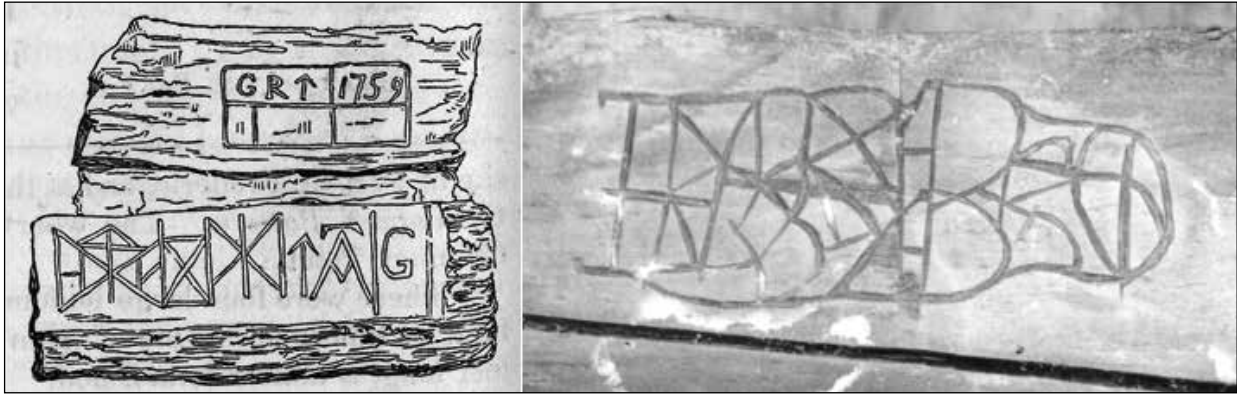


Fig. 7. Inscriptions from the barracks at Crown Point (at left) and the Van Curler house, in White Creek, NY (© Walter Richard Wheeler).



Fig. 8. Date stones from central Hudson Valley houses (clockwise from upper left), a house in Greene County 1729 ; Myderse house, Saugerties 1743 ; Conyes house, Saugerties 1792 ; Felton house, Lake Katrine 1798 ; Appeldoorn house, Rochester 1758 ; Ousterhoudt house, Lake Katrine 1740 ; Van Loon house, Athens 1731 (© Walter Richard Wheeler).

cluster around the main entrance, but can be found throughout the building.

A concentration of stones bearing dates, initials, and frequently symbols, is found in southern Greene County and adjacent Ulster County, NY. These stones are almost always located on the front elevation of the house, usually in close vicinity to the principal entry, but sometimes over a window. Symbolic devices used on these stones include snakes, arrows, crosses, stars, hourglasses, and what appear to be alchemical symbols (Fig. 8). They are associated with houses built in the period c. 1720-1780. The wide range of symbols used makes definitive interpretation of any of them difficult.

4.10. Human remains and their avatars

A human skull was found during the course of renovation work at the Coeymans house in Coeymans, NY in 2008. This artifact had initially been recovered in 1971, but had been redeposited in the sealed alcove provided for it in the foundation wall, and subsequently was forgotten. Staff at the New York State Museum have conducted tests on the skull, and have determined it to have belonged to a woman who lived during the 18th century, who died between the ages of 30 and 50, and who was scalped shortly before her death (Bryce 2008; Fitzgerald 2012). The foundation that the skull was found within dates to c. 1720.

Several examples of the incorporation of human remains within a dwelling were reported in 19th century media. An adult human skull was found in the wall of 26 Downing Street in New York City, during the course of renovations in 1870 (*Anonymous 1870a*). A complete skeleton was found ‘walled in the cavity between the two fireplaces’ of an ‘old house’ that was taken down in Plainfield, NJ in 1872. It was accompanied by ‘an old flint musket of English make and two knives’ (*Anonymous 1872*). During the course of repair work to a staircase in a house at 486 Greenwich Street, New York in 1876, workmen found ‘a pasteboard box behind one of the steps. It contained a human skull...’ (*Anonymous 1876*). Examples of this practice are known in North America from outside of the study area; most famously a human skeleton was discovered buried within the foundation of the White House in Washington, DC, when renovation work was undertaken in 1902 (*Anonymous 1902*).

The Odd Fellows, an international fraternal organization having its origins in England in the 18th century, interred whole skeletons within coffins inside their lodge buildings, typically under the floor of their meeting room. These skeletons are typically found when their lodge buildings are taken down or remodeled (*Morey 2013*). The practice is not particularly limited to the NWDCH.

A small marble bust of a child on socle, apparently a reproduction of a Roman sculpture, was found between the second floor joists of a house constructed in 1812 in Troy, NY (*Martinez 2009*) (Fig. 9). Its placement indicates that it was deposited when the house was being constructed. The intention of the depositor—whether related to those who deposited skulls in houses or not—remains unknown.

4.11. Horse skulls

The skulls of horses—either entirely separated from the rest of the skeleton or purposefully deposited with other parts of the body (typically two crossed leg bones), or with bones of other animals, have been excavated from several contexts in the Netherlands (*Groot 2009*). A number of these concentrations of bone were found in wells, and all appeared to have been intentionally deposited. Two of these have been interpreted as foundation deposits (*Groot 2009*, 65–66, 69). Merrifield reported on the frequency of this practice in sites occupied by Anglo-Saxons (*Merrifield 1987*, 117). He also researched folklore associated with the placement of skulls within buildings to improve acoustics, particularly as practiced in Ireland and England, possibly from Scandinavia (*Merrifield 1987*, 121–125).

Few examples of this practice are known in North America. Outside of the region, horse skulls have been found at the Bryant Homestead in South Deerfield, Massachusetts, possibly placed c. 1848; and four skulls were found in the Jarrot house at Cahokia, Illinois, a house that was built 1807–1810 (*Manning 2014*, 71).



Fig. 9. A marble bust on socle, found between second floor joists near a chimney, Troy, NY (© Walter Richard Wheeler).



Fig. 10. A horse skull, pictured as found under the attic floor boards of the Sternberg house, Schoharie, NY (© Bart Finegan).

A single example is known within the NWDCH. The Sternberg house in Schoharie, NY was constructed in 1795-96. During recent renovations, a horse skull was found under attic floorboards, in a location halfway between the stairs to the attic and the chimney (Bart Finegan, Personal Communication, 2015). The limited area of flooring which was opened up during the course of work leaves the question of whether or not it is the sole example in the house open to speculation (Fig. 10).

4.12. *Cats and other quadrupeds*

While encountered with some frequency, particularly on the British Isles, intentional placement of cats or other quadrupeds within buildings is uncommon in the NWDCH. However, a few examples have been recorded.

The earliest reference to the discovery of this practice dates to 1832, when 'workmen engaged in tearing down the old Stone House Tavern [in Albany]...discovered a quantity of bones in the basement wall, masoned in with new Holland bricks...the work was supposed to have been done a century before, at least, no Holland brick having been imported within a century. The bones on examination were pronounced to be those of a quadruped' (Munsell 1858, 9: 248).

Several small mammals were found within the walls and ceilings of the Jennings House, in Ballston, NY, during renovations undertaken in 2005. A large rodent, identified as a 'very large wood rat' at the time, but possibly another mammal, was found in a flattened condition above a plaster ceiling, in the vicinity of an early exterior entrance. A cat was found within a small compartment above the ceiling of a built-in cupboard, near the chimney. Another cat, with a kitten, was found at a juncture with a later 19th century addition. These last two cats may represent accidental deaths, however (L. Conrad (owner), personal communication, 24 February 2016).

4.13. *Witch bottles*

The use of 'witch bottles', which are encountered with some frequency in Great Britain during the 17th and 18th centuries, is documented by only a few known examples in the region, although the practice attained some popularity in New England during that period. This disparity is likely due to the close cultural connections between New England settlers and England, and the lack of similar connections on the part of those living in New Netherland. A few possible examples have been uncovered, however.

One such example was encountered in an archaeological context in Raritan Landing, NJ, in 2000-2001. A glass wine bottle was discovered within the foundation of the Duyckinck house, built in the 1730s. Its contents, which may have included bent pins, were analyzed but did not include traces of urine (which is typically part

of this deposit type) or 'anything else that might be associated with conjuring' (Yamin 2011, 36-37). A glass example discovered in Lewes, Delaware, in a pit near a door to a rural house constructed in the first half of the 18th century, was filled with pins (Manning 2014, 55).

A sealed stoneware bottle containing turpentine or other strong-smelling liquid, was found in the second floor of the south gable end wall of the c. 1750 Rysedorph house in North Greenbush, NY, when the house was undergoing renovations in 1978. The bottle dates to the early 19th century. Its contents have not been fully examined.

A sealed clear glass bottle believed to date to the early 19th century and containing fingernail clippings was found in an area at the southern portion of the Schuyler Flatts in the Town of Colonie, NY, between 1971 and 1974. The context in which the bottle was found was not associated with a construction episode, but was however, in close proximity to much earlier burials (Paul R. Huey, personal communication, 4 June 2010). The folklore of nearby Schoharie County attributes magical powers to fingernail clippings, including the ability to attract a love interest, and protection against rheumatism (Gardner 1914, 324). This belief is related to English folklore, which in recorded examples dating to as late as 1939 identify nail clippings as principal components of witch bottles (Bales 1939, 67).

Glass bottles, apparently empty of contents but with interior staining, are not infrequently found in the vicinity of the Mohawk Valley. They are typically found in inaccessible parts of the structure of wood-framed houses and are believed to have contained urine, but none have been tested. Local lore indicates that when constructing a new house one should place such a bottle in the framing 'for luck' or in defense against witches. One such example was found in the Houck house (c. 1805), Town of Florida (Montgomery County), NY, in the north wall of a second floor bed chamber (R. Strunk, interview, 27 April 2016).

Bellarmines, frequently associated with intentional deposits in European contexts, are sometimes encountered archeologically in the region. To date, this author is unaware of any examples of this type of artifact having been used for magical purposes within the NWDCH, however.

4.14. *Other types of intentional deposits*

A rod measuring 92.7cm in length and approximately 2cm in diameter, of cherry or apple wood, was discovered lodged between the roof boards and a truss during renovations of the former Phoenix Hotel in Lansingburgh, NY, in about 1995. This object must have been placed during renovations which occurred after a fire ravaged the building in October 1851, the last time the roof boards were removed (Anonymous 1851). This rod does

not appear to have been intended as a walking stick—both ends have been whittled to hemispherical ends, and there is no use wear to either. Examples of similar deposits have been identified in Ireland and England. Three examples of similar sticks were found in a deposit at Cutchey's farm in Mid Suffolk, England; their placement appears to date to the early 18th century. Timothy Easton speculates that these sticks were used for driving flocks of geese (*Easton 2014*, 20-21). An alternate interpretation may be related to a bit of folklore recorded in Dutchess County, NY. It was said that 'the twig of any stone fruit' (cherry, plumb, peach, etc.) could be used to divine the location of a water source as a 'witching rod', or 'dowsing rod' (*Barnes 1923*, 18; *Evans 1962*). This stick may represent a curated example of this type of rod, although these are more frequently of V-shape.

Among oral traditions current in Schoharie County at the beginning of the last century was the belief that a 'lock of a child's hair mixed with plaster and put in the walls of a house will prevent the child from having the croup' (*Gardner 1914*, 324). No examples of this type of deposit have been identified.

5. Native American practices

Native American spiritual practices included symbolic uses of color, including blue (or black), white, and red. European-Americans parlayed this interest into an industry, utilizing blue and white wampum (or sewant) beads as a type of currency with the native peoples in the region. Black was symbolically connected with maturity or life, while white is associated with death.

Quartz crystals are believed to have been imbued with similar symbolic functions and are thought to have been associated with light and wellbeing in the Native American imagination, and were used in the sanctification of spaces. Two examples of this mineral, placed in the corners of what has tentatively been identified as a Native American trader's house, were found at a site in Albany, NY, dating to the mid-17th century, approximately 70km from their source (*Moody 2002*, 3.16-3.18).

Spirals, either inscribed or painted, are thought to have had a symbolic function as well. Spiral ornaments comprised of rolled brass have been found in Native American contexts, on both Mahican and Mohawk sites, and on personal items, worked in wampum and embroidery. The design has been associated with the 'celestial tree' and thus connected to the origins of life, and, collaterally thought to refer to 'life, living, and light' by some scholars (*Parker 1912*, 612-614; *Bradley 2007*, 26-27) (Fig. 11). A petroglyph featuring the same design is located in the Catskill Mountains, within the region.

Corn cobs and moccasins (Native American footwear) are sometimes found as components of



Fig. 11. A petroglyph featuring spiral design, Frost Valley, Catskill Mountains, NY (© Walter Richard Wheeler).

deposits found in houses in the region, and may reflect the direct contribution of Native Americans to these ritual placements. In support of this interpretation, a large number of corn cobs, together with a moccasin, were found in a wall of the William Johnson house, in Johnstown, NY. Johnson was Indian Superintendent at the time his house was being constructed in the early 1760s; his household included Molly Brant, a Mohawk, with whom he parented a number of children.

Finally, the daisy wheel or compass rose is known from at least one example to have been appropriated on shell ornaments fabricated by Native Americans (*Smith 2014*). While none of the intentional deposits located in the NWDCH and associated with buildings can be definitively connected to Native Americans, their system of beliefs and its physical manifestations may have had an influence on the types of symbols and materials incorporated into dwelling deposits by African-Americans in the region.

6. Deposits by enslaved people

Slavery was early adopted as a practice and institution among the occupants of the NWDCH; the first slaves on Manhattan arrived by 1625. Genetic analysis of remains found in two burial grounds—one in Albany County, NY, and one on Manhattan Island—indicate that the homelands for these individuals varied, with East Africa, West Africa and Madagascar as frequent points of origin (*Cole 2009*; *Anderson 2016*).

A number of scholars have identified collections of artifacts found within spaces known to have been occupied

by enslaved Africans in the period up to about 1850 as 'nkisi (alt minkisi) bundles.' In central Africa's Congo basin this term refers to spirits or the objects a spirit inhabits. The contents and manner of deposition of these bundles vary somewhat, but many include pins, shell ornaments, crystals, personal items, and fragments of earthenwares, sometimes altered by the addition of markings (*Leone – Fry 1999*, 382; *Smith 2015*, 20). Artifact assemblages of this type have received considerable attention in archaeological literature treating sites in the southern United States, but sites within the NWDCH have had little coverage (*Leone – Fry 1999*; *Samford 2007*; *Young 2007*).

A site from Annapolis, Maryland will serve as representative of southern examples. A cache found buried in the basement of a house constructed in that city in 1774 for John Ridout included black and white pebbles, bent pins, buttons, pierced disks, and crystals. Mark Leone, an archaeologist working at the site, interpreted these as having 'been used to predict the future, heal the sick and protect the slaves' (*Anonymous 1997*). While the exact purpose of these bundles remains conjectural, most scholars interpret them as relating to traditional African spiritual practices that included protective spells, conjuring, healing, and divining. Not all scholars agree with this interpretation, however (*McGovern 2010*, 17-19).

For the most part these assemblages are identified by their place of deposition as well as their contents. The artifacts are either deposited in a confined place such as a wall, behind a chimney or under floor boards, or are secreted within a container or piece of fabric and buried

in the earth within a building. The rooms in which these deposits are found were historically occupied by enslaved people. These include basement kitchens and sleeping rooms, and attic spaces. Deposition of these assemblages was frequently made in the northeast corners or rooms, or structures (*Leone – Fry 1999*; *Smith 2015*, 20). A review of the contents of several of these assemblages uncovered in archaeological contexts within the NWDCH will facilitate a better understanding of the variations of this practice.

A house known as Latting's Hundred, built in phases between 1653 and 1702 in Huntington, NY, and renovated in 1792, contained a cache of artifacts which according to the discoverer, 'consists of 2 bent wrought iron nails with simple curve, 2 bent wrought iron nails with compound curve, 2 matched brass waistcoat buttons, 1 flat bone disc button, 1 glass Indian Trade seed bead with red exterior over white core, 2 bent brass hand-headed pins, 1 small scallop shell, 1 upholstery tack with brass head and iron shank, 1 small sliver of rawhide, 2 shards of green bottle glass, 2 shards of salt glazed stoneware with cobalt blue spirals over a white clay body and 1 quartz crystal spearhead with a broken tip (Native American Archaic Period). They were placed together, on top of a twisted cellar beam, between the beam and the floorboards and were contained or held in place with a rolled piece of sheer linen, about 18 inches long.' (Fig. 12) The bundle was found under the top of a stair leading to a basement room occupied by one of the family's slaves. A second deposit, consisting of an 18th century brass waistcoat button matching those in the nkisi bundle and a small piece of



Fig. 12. Nkisi assemblage found at Latting's Hundred, Huntington, NY (© Rex Metcalf).

window glass, was found under a door saddle between the parlor chamber and the northwest bed chamber, another space occupied by the family's slaves (R. Metcalf, personal communication, 31 July 2009).

A third assemblage, consisting of two necklaces made of blue and white glass Indian trade beads was found in the cellar of the main house, on top of an exposed portion of the northwest end sill, behind the parlor chimney stack. The colors and placement of these necklaces on the northwest wall of the house are thought to have apotropaic connotations (R. Metcalf, personal communication, 31 July 2009).

Barrel deposits, containing a variety of personal items as well as 'sharps' were found under the cellar floorboards of two houses in the City of Albany, both of which burned in 1797, and their contents lack the nightsoil deposits that would associate them with use as a privy. The Bogart house barrel feature measured 60cm in diameter and 83cm in height and contained a meat hook, a clay marble on which was crudely scratched the letter 'B', whole and partial blue glass medicine bottles, a copper spigot key, iron chain links, an axe head, nails, a crushed pocket watch, ceramic sherds and a bone utensil handle scratch engraved 'GW' on one side, among other items. Also found under the floorboards of this house were blue and white glass gems, a blue glass button, and a partial calumet pipe engraved 'Johannes De Graef Syn' (*Kirk 2002*, 5.13-5.19; 5.29-5.33). The basement kitchen, in which both of these groups of deposits were found, was occupied by the four Bogart family slaves.

The Winne house barrel, a similar feature measuring 50cm in diameter and 63cm deep and also abandoned in consequence of the 1797 fire, was filled with burned debris from the house (indicating that it was open at the top when the house burned, and that it was only partially filled at the time), food remains, ceramics including blue and white Delftware, shell, pipe stems, brass pins, bottle glass, glass trade seed beads and a wampum bead. A second barrel feature of similar size contained a smaller assemblage including ceramic and glass fragments, and pipe stems (*Kirk 2002*, 5.2).

A complex artifact assemblage found under floorboards in two rooms occupied by the 12 slaves of the Lott family in Brooklyn, NY, included a cloth bag tied with hemp, an oyster shell, a fragment of a sheep or goat's pelvis, and a large number of corncobs with kernels intact, five of which appear to have been arranged in a star-pattern (*Bankkoff et al. 2001*; *Staples 2001*). A redware plate fragment with 'X' inscription, was found elsewhere on the same property, and is discussed below.

Additional examples of this type of intentional deposit are known only from 19th century newspaper accounts. Among these, 'an old iron kettle...containing old Dutch coins, a knife and fork of exceedingly rude manufacture,

and some Delft crockery' which was found in the Battery at Manhattan in 1869, may represent the same type of intentional deposit (*Anonymous 1869*).

A cross or 'X' mark, inscribed on earthenwares or other objects, has been associated with enslaved Africans in America. Well documented in Virginia and South Carolina is the practice of inscribing these marks on the bottoms (inside or outside) of bowls formed of colonoware—a low-fired utilitarian earthenware frequently manufactured and used by slaves. Leland Ferguson has discussed this practice, and interprets it as representative of a cosmogram associated with the Bakongo people (*Ferguson 1992*, 25-32; 110-117). Frequently these objects are found in rivers, and are believed to have an association with water.

A few examples of this practice, chiefly confined to marks on personal objects, have been encountered in archaeological contexts in the NWDCH. Colonoware was not manufactured in the region, and so other expressions prevailed. The majority of these involve the recycling of household objects for new purposes, a trait associated with West African cultures (*McGovern 2010*, 15).

In 1972 a Brazilian 10 réis coin bearing the date 1736, and drilled twice for wearing as a pendant was uncovered in excavations on State Street—the principal street of Albany in the 18th century. The coin features an 'X' prominently on one of its faces; it has been speculated that this may be another example of the use of this device, as a personal charm, in this case (*Huey 2005*, 7-8). A repurposed metal file with an 'X' inscribed on one face, subsequently wedged in the framework of the roof of the Houck house (previously mentioned) may represent another example of reuse of a common object for apotropaic purposes by enslaved people. A spoon with the 'X' mark was found in an archaeological context in New York City; while it demonstrates this practice on Manhattan Island, it cannot be associated with a particular site (*Cantwell – Wall 2001*, 240).

The only example of this practice by enslaved persons found within the NWDCH which can firmly be sited in close proximity to a building, and thus potentially be associated with spiritual practices associated with inhabiting a place, is the redware bowl fragment with 'X' mark inscribed on its outside bottom, found near the foundation of the summer kitchen associated with the Lott House in Brooklyn, NY (*Bankkoff et al. 2001*, 38 and 40).

7. Interaction of Slave, Native American and Euro-American practices

Africans, Native Americans and recently immigrated Whites were all potentially subject to enslavement in the NWDCH. Their similar status encouraged social

connections, and intermarriages were not uncommon. As such, some sharing of traditions between the three groups can be expected. Due to the anonymous nature of the authorship of almost all apotropaic deposits, attribution of these phenomena to a particular deposit is necessarily conjectural; a few examples will prove instructive however.

The use of blue and white shell beads (wampum or sewant) by Native Americans is well documented. Spiral designs have also been associated with Native American spiritual beliefs in the region; both have been discussed in this paper. Blue and white glass beads and spiral designs on stoneware fragments were among the components of a cache attributed to an enslaved African in the Latting household, previously noted. The Latting's Hundred deposit also contained a quartzite projectile point, probably manufactured by a Native American.

Excavations of slave burials in Manhattan have uncovered examples of the use of similar symbols and materials among grave goods. Glass beads, both clear and dark colored, ceramic sherds decorated with blue spirals, and quartz crystals have all been found in this context. Some scholars have associated these types of grave goods with rites of passage, attributing to them powers of protection (*Cantwell – Wall 2001*, 290-91).

Corn (maize) cobs were components of deposits located in the mixed Native-European American household of William Johnson and Molly Brant. A multi-component deposit, discovered during restoration work undertaken at the house in 1978, is located in the rear wall of the central passage of the house, on the northwest side of the building. The deposit includes a large number of corn cobs, a redware teapot, a child's moccasin and a sash, together with a bone comb. This complex deposit can be firmly dated to 1761-62, when the house was under construction (*Feister 1995*).

The moccasin found between second floor joists in the Coeymans-Bronck house in Coeymans, NY, may represent another example of this interaction of cultures; caution is warranted however, since nothing is known of the social context in which it was deposited.

8. Metaphysics of the practice

Each of the artifact types briefly reviewed above has typically been assigned a protective, or 'good luck' intention by modern scholars. However, some scholars have suggested that household depositions could represent an attempt to recruit the local place spirit to serve as the house spirit, or conversely, to appease local spirits or gods for taking a place to dwell (*Lecouteux 2013*, 15). At least one scholar has noted a relationship between the parts of a house to the human body, using the words that describe these features, 'hearth' (heart), 'jamb' (leg), etc., as a starting point, and attributing a symbolic or corollary

meaning to activities which involve these building components (*St. George 1998*). It will thus be useful to look at the artifact types and their placements as possibly reflective of intention or meaning.

8.1. Entry, threshold, transition spaces

Intentional deposits are most frequently associated with points of entry, apertures, or openings in a building. Deposits are found under thresholds or in the walls immediately adjacent to entrances. Symbols are inscribed on the faces of doors, on stones adjacent to them (in stone or brick dwellings) or on the door hardware.

In most instances where the compass rose or daisy wheel is inscribed in or on a building in the NWDCH, they decorate stairwells or doors. The additional use of these devices on objects owned or curated by women—spoon racks, silver or pewter serving pieces and blanket chests—possibly reveals a connection between the device and women's power, or the protection of women. Easton suggests, counter to this interpretation, that the symbol has male attributes, and is historically associated with Christ, the sun, and Apollo. Easton's English examples of this symbol appear to not have the same use pattern; he finds them more often near hearths, inscribed on internal doors, and most frequently in agricultural buildings (*Easton 2016*, 47-48).

A popular belief held that 'witches cannot come under a horseshoe' (*Bayless 1908*, 363). This supports the attribution of a protective function to deposits located at entrances. However, a tradition in the Baltic region considered at least one form of threshold deposit to be a ritual sacrifice, and so this intention, too, must be considered (*Lecouteux 2013*, 21).

8.2 Fireplace hearth and flue

Together with entry deposits and inscriptions, fireplace inscriptions and deposits under hearths appear to primarily serve a protective function in areas of the house which are most vulnerable. A folk belief said to have been recorded in 1828 in Shaftsbury, VT, held that 'it often happened that a witch would come down the chimney in the form of a black cat', recite an alliterative rhyme, resulting in sickness or death of one of those sitting about the fire (*Bayless 1908*, 363). Deposits of sharps under hearths, and inscriptions carved into beams in the vicinity of hearths are two of the protection strategies known to have been made use of in the NWDCH, and are discussed elsewhere in this paper.

8.3 Roof deposits

The small number of roof deposits, and their variety, do not support a definitive interpretation, but may represent attempts at protection of their respective buildings. Known examples within the NWDCH include a shoe

found at base of the roof rafters, on top of an exterior wall at the Deyo house in New Paltz, NY (*K. Kimble (owner), personal communication, 17 September 2009*); the Phoenix Hotel switch stick, found wedged above a roof truss under floor boards; and a similarly located repurposed file, marked with X inscriptions, found in the Houck house, Town of Florida (Montgomery County), NY. The region's sole example of the use of a horse skull was found under attic floor boards, near the base of rafters in the Sternbergh house in Schoharie, NY. All of these examples date to the period c. 1780-1850.

Several examples of weapons or firearms having been discovered between rafters of houses, as in the case of the c. 1730 Ryerson House, formerly in Brooklyn, NY, and razed in 1887, are recorded. The assemblage at the Ryerson house included an English cavalry sabre with the date 1655 engraved on it and a horse pistol (*Anonymous 1887*). No oral tradition indicates an apotropaic purpose for these deposits; rather they likely represent secreted means of defense, afterward forgotten.

8.4. Foundation deposits

Foundation deposits recovered during excavations in the Netherlands include horse, dog and pig bones (in that order of frequency) and deposits of coins (typically cuprous, rather than silver) and/or earthenware. The coins and earthenware were most frequently encountered at the base of postholes; the ritual animal burials were most frequently located near the exterior of foundation walls (*Groot 2009*).

Within the NWDCH, deposits of this form appear to be confined to coins placed in foundations, and collections of objects deposited in cornerstones. Both are still practiced today, particularly in association with the construction of public buildings. Masonic organizations consider the latter to be their particular province, and privilege the northwest corner of a building as the site for this deposit. It is possible that the nkisi caches that are believed to have been deposited by people of African ancestry within foundations (frequently in the northeast corner) have a function that relates to the building they are located in. This however, is speculative.

8.5. An example of a multi-component site

A number of the intentional deposits presented in this paper are themselves components of more complex deposits, located in multiple sites within a building or deposited over a period of time. Some sense of this can be gathered from Table 1, which describes items discovered at sites which contain concealed shoes. Perhaps the most complex of these multi-component sites is the Albertus van Loon house, in Athens, NY.

The assemblage encountered at the Van Loon house includes multiple date stones, some of which

have symbolic markings on them, and numerous shoes secreted in walls and in the roof rafters of various portions of the building. Daisy wheels, or compass roses, were inscribed at the base of the main staircase, and later, at the top of the stairs a similar device was painted. Two wooden objects—a small square piece of wood with the impression of a coin burned into it and a pointed carved flat tool with a tiny circular glazed window in it—were also found in the walls of the house (Fig. 13). The components of this assemblage were found in various parts of the house, spanning likely depositional dates between 1724 and about 100 years later.

9. Conclusion

The practice of placing intentional deposits in dwellings constructed for Euro-Americans within the NWDCH is well-documented in all areas settled by them previous to 1850. The practice appears to have had its greatest extent in the 18th and early 19th centuries; however this observation may be the result of the small number of 17th century buildings and sites which survive.

Most of the apotropaic practices presented here ceased during the course of the 19th century. Although early 19th century Irish and German immigration to the region may have extended these habits into the middle of that century, subsequent immigration by people from Italy and Eastern Europe did not have the same effect. This is likely due to changes in the construction industry—new immigrants chiefly settled in urban areas and didn't participate in the construction of their own dwellings by the middle decades of the 19th century—rather than the national origin of the immigrant groups. In addition, the advent of the industrial revolution resulted in the application of mass-production techniques to the acquisition and fabrication of building components, so that stone and wood were no longer fashioned on site by craftsmen and owners were increasingly left out of the construction process.

While a number of different artifact types are known to have been employed, only a few are found with any frequency. The most commonly encountered—coin and shoe deposition and the inscription of daisy wheels—also appear to have been the longest lived practices in the region. Each of these has its source in European traditions, some going back more than 2000 years. In a possible variation from its European use, one of the oldest symbols, the daisy wheel, was most frequently inscribed in the vicinity of liminal spaces—entries and staircases—and on gravestones (thus marking a different type of liminal space), but also on furniture and personal objects associated with or used by women. This practice extended throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic, and appears to have reached its zenith during the mid-to-late 18th century.

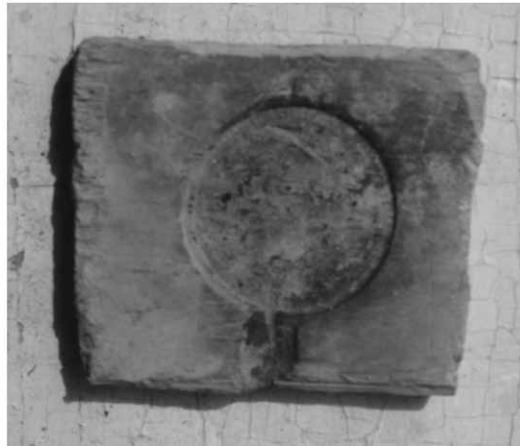


Fig. 13. Flat spike with viewing window and block of wood with burned inset bearing the mark of a coin, both found in walls at the Van Loon house, Athens, NY (© Walter Richard Wheeler).

The prevalence and widespread nature of these traditions notwithstanding, examples of houses in which none of these practices came into play are frequently encountered. While a great majority of deposits either go unidentified, or are not uncovered due to the limited scope of work being undertaken in an older building, examples of structures which have been carefully disassembled with an inquisitive approach to these practices and in which no traces of these traditions can be found are common.

Ritual deposits made by enslaved Africans and their descendants incorporated artifacts reflecting their belief system and apparently were connected with place making or spiritual intentions. Their contents were chiefly selected from the Euro-American and Native American material cultures that were available to them and sometimes involved alteration of these items. The use of shared symbols and materials, including spiral designs, quartz, and blue and white beads, points to a close relationship between Native American and enslaved African cultures. Native American and slave artifacts and ritual deposits similarly reflect the influence of European traditions.

It remains unclear whether the deposits attributed to slaves and Native Americans represent protective (or antagonistic) charms related to the building itself, or to its occupants, or if they instead represent a continuation of a more general spiritual practice on the part of an enslaved or otherwise disenfranchised person. It is, however, likely that these deposits typically occurred after the completion

of the structure within which they are found, and so are not associated with construction activities.

The majority of apotropaic practices commonly encountered in other parts of North America where Europeans settled are also found within the NWDCH. Some—such as the placement of cats in walls or chimneys, the use of written charms or spells (frequently found in Germany, England, and in German-settled parts of Pennsylvania), or the use of witch bottles—are rare or unknown in the region. Conversely, those practices which represent an interaction between Native American, Euro-American and enslaved African peoples are infrequently encountered outside of the NWDCH, except in the areas where slaves were held in the south, but are well-documented within the area.

Many of the traditions outlined in this paper appear to have been chiefly associated with builders, in particular carpenters, and masons. When traditional patterns of work were supplemented by the mass-production of building materials during the course of the 19th century, the majority of these practices fell into disuse. This phenomenon has also been attributed to the large-scale relocation of populations from rural to urban areas during the same period (*Lecouteux 2013, 2*). Those traditions which survive today are promulgated by fraternal organizations such as the Masons, who routinely oversee cornerstone deposits, and steelworkers and ‘timberframers’, who have taken over the traditions of earlier joiners.

The examples presented in this paper demonstrate the successful transmission of mediaeval folk beliefs to the North American colonies, particularly within the New World Dutch Cultural Hearth, and their subsequent relationship with African and Native American spiritual beliefs. Practices within that region varied in subtle ways from those of contemporary English and German settlers in New England and Pennsylvania. Their long continuance demonstrates the strength of these beliefs, particularly in rural areas.

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Some of these practices discussed in this book can be investigated through archaeology. Important religious sites like churches, monasteries, mosques and synagogues as well as caves, holy wells and hermitages are discussed. Furthermore burials of children, revenants and the condemned are analysed, as they often deviate from normal practice and shed light on particular communities and their beliefs. Rituals concerning the protection of buildings and persons which focus on objects attributed with religious qualities are another area explored. Through archaeological research it is possible to gain an understanding of popular religion of medieval and early modern times and also to draw conclusions about religious ideas that are not written in documents. By bringing together these topics this book is of particular interest to scholars working in the field of archaeology, history and cultural anthropology.

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