

## BOOK REVIEWS

Gabriela Blažková and Kristýna Matějková (eds), *Europa Postmediaevalis 2018. Post-Medieval Pottery Between (its) Borders*. Gloucester 2019: Archaeopress, pp. 297, colours illustrations

**Reviewed by Magdalena Bis<sup>a</sup>**

The reviewed publication, published in 2019 by the British publishing house Archaeopress, is a collection of texts based on papers and posters presented at the international conference under the same title held in Prague in April 2018. This meeting brought together archaeologists from many European countries – including Croatia, Czechia, Germany, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Italy, and Hungary – who conduct research on the early-modern period and the pertaining material culture. Both this event and the book in question were a response to the needs of the academic community, due to the ongoing development of historical archaeology in Europe and an increase in research on artefacts and other evidence recovered during fieldwork related to this. The time-frame of the *post-medieval period* differs slightly across particular European countries, encompassing artefacts from between the 15th and 18th centuries.

The contributors focus on the most common items found at archaeological sites of the period, i.e., ceramics, particularly vessels and tiles. The work under discussion demonstrates how heterogeneous these finds are, how many unanswered questions they provoke, especially regarding their production, exploitation, and trade, and at the same time what progress has been made in these fields of research, but also what remains unclear and in need of further studies.

The book consists of 24 articles preceded by a “Preface”. The papers are grouped into four thematic sections: 1. “Pottery throughout Europe” (includes 7 texts), 2. “Pottery production and decoration” (7 texts), 3. “About stove tiles around Europe” (6 texts), 4. “Varia” (4 texts). In terms of topics, the majority of the texts are devoted to ceramics of average quality, such as kitchen- and tableware, commonly used in various countries

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of our continent. This is an undeniable value of the publication, as it provides a window into the realities of household pottery exploitation in the early-modern period as well as the variety of types, styles, and assortment. The volume includes also texts on more luxurious vessels (Chinese porcelain) and utensils serving unusual purposes (toys, measures for grain used in trade, and clay lids for metal cauldrons). Only the last of the published papers is not related to the main topic of the publication, but nevertheless falls within the scope of historical archaeology – it is dedicated to fortifications built in the Czech lands during the Thirty Years' War.

The contributions cover a broad territorial range, including finds from distant regions – from Norway to Portugal and from Germany to Russia. They include both broad-based comparative studies, summarising the results of analyses of numerous collections, often of a wide geographical distribution, and narrower ones, focused on selected smaller groups of finds.

In the introduction, the editors of the volume – Gabriela Blažková and Kristýna Matějková – explained why and how the conference (and its subsequent publication), was initiated and organised. In organising this meeting, their basic intention was to create a platform which would bring together researchers dealing with the archaeology of the early-modern period both in the Czech Republic and other areas of Europe, thereby creating a place where experiences from narrow specialties could be exchanged. They aimed in particular to gather researchers dealing with post-medieval ceramics. This has been a topic long neglected in the field of European archaeology, and there has only been dynamic development in the recent few decades.

The first part of the publication includes studies that encompass many types of post-medieval ceramics found across various sites. This allowed for adopting multiple approaches and tracking diverse trends in the consumption of these products. It opens with an article titled *Pottery Use and Social Inequality in Mid-18th Century Lisbon. An Initial Approach* by a quartet of authors – Tânia Manuel Casimiro, José Pedro Henriques, Vanessa Filipe, and Dário Neves (Portugal). The aim of the researchers was to compare finds from three sites in the Portuguese capital reflecting different social environments – a poor house, a middle class dwelling, and a palace belonging to a noble family. All of these buildings were destroyed at the same time – by an earthquake followed by a tsunami and a fire on November 1st, 1755. The forms and shapes of the recovered vessels – tin glazed ware, redwares, glazed wares, porcelain, and stoneware – as well as their functions were presented. The similarities and differences between the collections were scrutinised, thus reflecting, among others, the wealth of inhabitants and their food processing and eating habits (see also Casimiro *et al.*, 2018).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am only providing here examples and the latest publications tackling the presented issues. A complete list of literature is provided after each article.

Marcella Giorgio (Italy), tackled the issue of *The Production and Export of Pisan Pottery in the 16th and 17th Centuries*. She focused on various aspects of the evolution of late archaic majolica and different types of scraffito slipware – *a punta*, monochrome slipware, *a stecca*, and *a fondo ribassata* created in local workshops. These vessels were ornamented, inexpensive, and produced in large quantities, mainly as bowls, dishes, basins, and jugs. The author described their relationship to other contemporaneous kinds of ceramics from the Florentine area and outlined the directions and scope of their export (see also Giorgio 2018).

The cross-border transfer of technology is the leading subject of the article by Eva Roth Heege (Switzerland), *A Potter's Workshop from the Renaissance Period at Zug. Swiss Faience Production in the Second Half of the 16th Century*. The reason for her considerations was a discovery of the remains of a pottery kiln in Zug, operating from the mid-16th to the beginning of the 17th century, as well as the ceramic artefacts found there. The author, among other things, verified the origins of early earthenware and owl-shaped vessels, previously considered to be imports in Switzerland. Their production by local artisans is a testimony to the application of international trends and innovations in local pottery industry (see also Roth Heege 2017).

Ladislav Čapek and Michal Preusz (Czech Republic) examined *Changes in Pottery Production, Distribution and Consumption in the Post-medieval Period in South Bohemia* and, above all, the processes of continuity and discontinuity occurring in the investigated area from the mid-15th century to the mid-17th century. This was manifested by the introduction of new forms of vessels, a proportional decrease in greyware coinciding with an increase in vessels fired in the oxidising atmosphere and glazed on the inside, and the appearance of foreign products such as goblets from Loštice, German stoneware, slipware, faience, etc. (see also Čapek and Preusz 2016).

*Post-medieval Pottery from Small Townships of Gdańsk Pomerania. A Preliminary Evaluation* was discussed by Michał Starski (Poland). He characterised pottery from the 16th to 18th centuries found in Puck, Lębork, Chojnice, Człuchów, Gniew, and Skarszewy in terms of morphology and technology, broken down into types, local and foreign products, and taking into account the transformations in the assortment of ceramic vessels in use. The author emphasised the possibility of researching selected cultural and economic processes on this basis, including changes in consumption styles, or the marginalisation and elimination of local pottery craftsmanship (see also Starski 2018).

On the other hand, Volker Demuth (Norway), *Post-medieval Pottery in Norway - an International Affair*, described types of products from the 16th and 17th centuries obtained in the town of Bergen: decorated earthenware, including Weserware and Werraware, tin-glazed ware, glazed earthenware, stoneware, and stove tiles. The author stressed their significance mainly for research into international trade networks, cultural exchange, and migration in early-modern Europe (see also Demuth 2019).

Mariana Alameida and Jaylson Monteiro (Portugal) discussed *The Pottery Assemblage from the Trindade Archaeological Site, Santiago Island, Cabo Verde*. The collection includes vessels from between the 16th and 18th centuries, used mostly in the production of sugar and other sugar cane products. These are, for instance, sugar loaf moulds, some of which bear potter's marks. They were dominated by items imported from the European continent (Portuguese, Dutch, and Italian), but African products were also present.

The articles grouped in the second part of the book (with the exception of the article about Chinese porcelain imported to modern-day Hungary) concern several categories of products – representing similar average level of local workmanship – which were often widely distributed. Three of them are devoted to vessels referred to in the archaeological literature as *slipware* or *Malhornware*. In the first, by Andreas Heege (Switzerland), *Springfederdekor - Chattering - Décor guilloché - Hemrad dekor. The History and Development of a Decorative Technique Found on 17th- to 19th- Century Earthenware Ceramics from Scandinavia, Poland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Lichtenstein*, a decoration method was presented using numerous items collected in various regions of Europe. It comprises an analysis of how the spread of ceramics decorated in this way relates to its origin and provenance, the adaptation of decorations to local standards of pottery production, and the flow of ideas in Europe at that time (see also, e.g. Heege and Kistler 2017).

Two subsequent texts discuss results of studies on analogical pottery from the territory of Bohemia, dated to between the 16th and 18th centuries. Gabriela Blažková (Czech Republic), *Painted Pottery in Bohemia. Slipware of the 16th and the 17th Centuries*, focused on the morphology and a method of decorating vessels, corresponding to the European standards of the time. The main types of items registered were bowls, jugs, and pots of various shapes and sizes with decorations painted in white and green, sometimes also engraved, with dominant geometric motifs, used next to plant and anthropo- and zoomorphic patterns. Due to the colour of the bodies, the products were divided into two groups – red and white. The former were manufactured in the town of Beroun, near Prague, a famous pottery centre flourishing c. 1600, while the vessels representing the latter group were most likely produced in the region of Upper Lusatia (see e.g., Blažková 2018).

Kristýna Matějková (Czech Republic) tried to answer the question asked in the title of her contribution – *Bohemian Slipware from the Second Half of the 17th Century until the End of the 18th Century – a Lost Tradition?* Her research was hampered by the fact that most finds were preserved in fragments only and information about production workshops of that time was scarce. The analyses were based on artefacts from Prague. The author concluded that Bohemian slipware in that period declined in popularity and became a solely regional product (manufactured in smaller pottery centres, such as Levín, because production in Beroun discontinued) catering for the

needs of recipients outside the urban contexts. These vessels have more simplified decorations in terms of design and technique (e.g., splashing, dripping, and marbling) than those used in the Renaissance (see also Matějková 2018).

The phenomenon of high demand for and wide spread of another type of ceramics – the so-called white pottery between the mid-16th and the mid-17th centuries in Poland was investigated by Magdalena Bis (Poland), in a text entitled *White Pottery in Early Modern Poland: Local Production or Regional Fashion?* The author discussed the factors behind this favourable economic situation, such as the appropriate functional features of the vessels, their more attractive appearance compared to those of redware and greyware, accessibility to middle-class recipients, manufacturing possibilities at the time (appropriate raw material base), and distribution (especially by waterways) (see also Bis 2014).

On the other hand, the issue of continuity of production and popularity of greyware in the 16th to 18th centuries in Masovia and Podlasie was addressed by Maciej Trzeciński (Poland), *'Medieval' Greyware in Post-medieval Northeast Poland. Backwardness or Genius Loci?* These products, of late-medieval origin, are considered to be a material manifestation of the social-cultural changes occurring in the process of town location under the German law in Poland. As has been shown, these vessels were readily acquired and used in the area under discussion. Analysis shows a variable frequency of the finds, their formal and stylistic transformations, as well as the interaction between a town and its settlement hinterland (see e.g., Trzeciński 2017).

Ricardo Costeira da Silva (Portugal) concentrated on *Lead-Glazed Ware from Coimbra: 1550-1600*, a kind of pottery manufactured in the town of Coimbra in the 16th century exclusively by local craftsmen called *Malegueiros*. The author discussed the specificity of these vessels as reflected by a collection from the old Episcopal Palace of Coimbra and data from written sources from the era. The vessels were made of ferruginous clays and covered with a brown-honeyish lead glaze on the entire inner surface and partially on the outside, but they were otherwise undecorated. Their assortment was limited to cooking pots with one or two handles, jugs, double-handle saucepans, skillets, or frying-pans (see also Silva 2018).

In terms of provenance and quality, Far Eastern porcelain vessels differ from the artefacts presented in this part of the publication. Their analysis was discussed by Tünde Komori (Hungary) in *The Topographical Distribution of Chinese Porcelain Sherds in Ottoman Buda and Eger Castle and its Implications*. These are vessels imported to these centres during the Turkish occupation (1526–1699), manufactured in China during the Wanli and Kangxi dynasties, and fired in the private kilns of Jingdezhen. Their quality and value were indeed lower than in the case of the products of the imperial kilns, but in Hungary they were considered luxury items and indicators of the high status of their users – mainly Pasha and Ottoman officials. The analysis of distribution of selected types of products was used to reconstruct the settlement of

the town of Buda and the castle complex in Eger during the 16th and 17th centuries (see also Komori 2014).

The third part of the publication features studies devoted to plate tiles and tiled stoves, approached primarily as an important element of interior decoration, a medium for artistic expression, as well as statements of aspirations and social identification. It opens with a text by Olga Krukowska (Poland) on *Heraldic Stove Tiles from Gdańsk*. The researcher presented artefacts from the 16th and 17th centuries from this Baltic centre and compared them to similar specimens from other Polish collections. Most of the items were decorated with the coat of arms of Gdańsk. Some of them bear the image of a single-headed eagle – the emblem of the Kingdom of Poland – or a double-headed eagle symbolising the Kingdom of Prussia. There is a unique tile with the coat of arms of the Italian house of Sforza, i.e., family of Bona d'Aragona, wife of King Sigismund I of the Jagiellonian dynasty since 1518 (see also Babińska 2009).

Martina Wegne (Germany) in his *Saxon Stove Tiles Among the Priorities of 3D Scanning and Bohemian Portraits* outlined the possibilities offered by application of modern visualisation methods in reconstruction of the tile manufacturing process, which led to revealing details obscured by the covering layer of glaze. It was applied to the stove tiles discovered in Leipzig in the remains of a pottery workshop from the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, and depicting important personalities of that time – Czech monarchs, probably Władysław II Jagiellończyk or his son, Ludwik II, as well as Ferdinand I and his wife, Queen Anna Jagiellonka, and besides them, count Stefan Schlik and the reformer Jan Hus.

Michaela Balášová and Markéta Soukupová (Czechia) focused on *Replication of Renaissance Motifs: from Aristocratic Terracotta to Burgher House Stove Tiles* on the basis of example of furnishings of the Chomutov Castle in the 16th century. They compared patterns decorating terracotta blocks and stove tiles while analysing possible sources of inspiration for manufacturers and identifying available analogies. It is also a reflection on the dissemination of decorative motifs in the Renaissance era, taken from the printed works of the so-called 'Little Masters' and reproduced in different branches of contemporary craftsmanship discussed here (see also Balášová 2009).

Ornamentation of tiles and stoves assembled from them is also a prominent problem engaged by Ivana Škiljan (Croatia) in her *Early Modern Period Stove Tiles from Slavonia*. An analysis conducted by the author indicated that the 16th- and 17th-century tiles from this area were distinguished by a rich set of ornamental motifs, usually included in architectural elements (pillars, arcades, or frames). These are mainly allegorical and biblical scenes, portraits of contemporary characters, or mythological figures. Various cultural traditions and technical innovations have influenced the development of this field of production within the borders of modern-day Croatia (see also Škiljan 2015).

Another text was contributed by three researchers – Ksenia S. Chugunova, Irina A. Grigorieva, and Roxana V. Rebrova (Russia) – and is titled *A Multi-Analytical*

*Comparative Examination of 18th-Century Dutch Tiles and Russian Imitations. Preliminary Results.* It was devoted to archaeometric analyses using the OM, XRF, SEM-EDS, and RS methods and scrutinised their usefulness in determining the provenance of ceramic wall tiles. Specimens found in St. Petersburg, in the Winter Palace of Peter the Great and the Menshikov Palace, which were attributed to Dutch (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Harlingen) or Russian (Strelna) factories, were examined. As a result, several features were selected to enable distinguishing foreign products from their local imitations.

The same issue is addressed in an article by Roxana V. Rebrova (Russia) who presented *Typology of 18th-Century Stove Tiles from the Historical Centre of St. Petersburg.* The author managed to specify, among other things, the characteristic features of the tiles used in the construction of stoves during the initial period of urban expansion. They were intermediate products between the ‘old Russian’ stove tiles and St. Petersburg items, imported from other centres, and displaying a small relief and a high back rim. Other, separate types of St. Petersburg tiles produced in that century were also listed – smooth green monochrome, smooth white, and smooth cobalt with different patterns. Some were ordered in Poland or Germany; others were probably painted on the spot by foreign artists.

Studies of artefacts made of clay, but serving different purposes, fill the fourth part of the publication – “Varia”. One of the most intriguing ones are mugs with similar shapes, manufactured using the same technique, with markings on the outer surface, differing in capacity (from approx. 0.05 litres to approx. 1.2 litres). They served as trade measures in the port of Lisbon. In an article dedicated to them, titled *Size Does Matter. Early Modern Measuring Cups from Lisbon* and contributed by Tânia Manuel Casimiro and António Valongo (Portugal), introduction of the standardised ceramic measuring cups was associated with regulations in the system of weights and measures in Portugal taking place from the beginning of the 16th to the second half of the 19th centuries.

*Ceramic Toys and Miniatures from the 16th–18th Century Found in Lisbon* is a topic discussed by three researchers – Mário Varela Gomes, Rosa Varela Gomes, and Tânia Manuel Casimiro (Portugal). Apart from whistles and anthropo- and zoo-morphic figures, there are also tiny ceramic vessels imitating the shape of their full-size models – cooking pots, chaffing dishes, jars, bowls, and cups. These items are usually interpreted as toys, essential tools in the process of children’s education. However, it is possible, as the authors suggest, that they had a different function as well, for instance as containers for expensive or rare cosmetic specifics, medicaments, or served as representative miniature items made by craftsmen (see also Mills 2015).

On the other hand, *Lids Made of Brick Clay from Wittenberg and Central Europe - a Mysterious Type of Archaeological Artefact from the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period* are discussed by Ralf Kluttig-Almann (Germany). Such products were

manufactured by brickmakers, massive and flat, with double-shaped edges, large handles, and oftentimes – decorations. Finds of this category from Wittenberg were a starting point for an analysis of forms and verification of the use of such products throughout the 12th to 17th centuries, also known from other Central European countries. The author suggested that these lids were used to cover bronze vessels – tripods used as cooking utensils (see also Kluttig-Altman 2015).

In the next article, *The Bohemian Bitter Water Trade, 1721–1763*, Patrick Schlarb (Germany) addressed the problem of terminology used in relation to healing water and mineral water. He emphasised the need to distinguish between these products – with different properties, intended for distinct markets and for other recipients. He presented the history of the discovery of valuable bitter water springs, in 1717 and 1725, respectively, in the Czech towns of Sedlec (Sedlitz) and Zaječická (Sajdschitz) as well as their exploitation and distribution in the 18th century. He also discussed markings used on stoneware bottles for the transportation of healing water (see also Schlarb 2018).

The book closes with the text by Václav Matoušek (Czech Republic) concerning *Field Fortification from the Thirty Years' War in the Czech Lands in the Field and in Period Engravings*. The author considered several battle sites – between Rozvadov and Waidhaus (1621), the siege of Tábor (1621), battle of Přísečnice (1641) and at Třebel (1647) – and two Swedish military camps – in Stará Boleslav (1639–1640) and Horní Moštěnice (1643). He compared the elements of the fortifications erected there – their size and distribution depicted on iconographic sources from the era – with the present state of their preservation, relics discovered during contemporary field research, and data obtained with the use of aerial imaging and the LiDAR technology (see also Matoušek *et al.*, 2017).

The electronic version of the publication is expanded by including five posters presented at the conference that were not developed into papers.

The reviewed book confirms the multifarious importance and usefulness of ceramics in the process of comprehensive reconstruction of the past reality. This category of finds witnesses the state of development of pottery-making in the early-modern period – it comprises utility items, goods circulated in local and supra-regional trade, valuables, means of artistic expression, elements of social, ethnic, and cultural identification, and material evidence of cultural changes. The texts also confirm the circulation and prevalence of specific technical solutions and trends in ceramic production across the European continent, as well as shed light on development of similar aesthetic preferences among users. Thus, they also pave the way for investigating demand, supply, and fashion of the period. At the same time, this diversity reflects a broad spectrum of issues that are currently being examined through the study of modern ceramics by European researchers active in the field.

The literature cited in the work is extremely useful, especially the latest publications; it is a basic, up-to-date bibliographic list, an excellent vantage point for comparative



research. On the other hand, carefully selected illustrative material of appropriate quality is a valuable supplement to the presented content and descriptions of artefacts.

Although similar meetings are regularly organised in other European countries, for instance on the Baltic coast, lately in Estonia (“Meetings of Baltic and North Atlantic Pottery Research Group”), in Germany (“Internationales Symposium Keramikforschung”), Poland (“Porcyllena, farfury i glina... Nowożytna naczynia ceramiczne jako źródła archeologiczne” – „Porcelain, faience and clay... Post-medieval ceramic vessels as archaeological sources”), or Italy (“Convegno Internazionale della Ceramica”), the Prague conference has a chance to integrate an international group of researchers and provide them, according to the initial idea, with an excellent forum for exchange of experience and knowledge. And the reviewed book may enter the canon of obligatory reading for archaeologists dealing with the early-modern period and ceramics from that time.

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