

CONFERENCE

The 4th European Conference “Europa Postmediaevalis 2024: Patterns and Inspirations”, Warsaw, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology Polish Academy of Sciences, Faculty of Archaeology Warsaw University, 23-25.04.2024.

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The conference was the fourth in a series of meetings organised in various European countries in the last six years under the common title *Europa Postmediaevalis* (2018 in Prague, 2020 – cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2022 in Coimbra), on the initiative of the international association ‘Europa Postmediaevalis Research Group’ (see: <https://www.europapostmed.eu/en/>). Its founders and main activists are Gabriela Blažková and Kristýna Matějková, who were also the initiators and co-organisers of the Warsaw session. The primary goal of *Europa Postmediaevalis* is to improve the knowledge of the post-medieval ceramics (15/16th–19th centuries) from archaeological excavations and integrate the community of researchers specialising in post-medieval archaeology. The main focus is various categories of ceramic vessels: from everyday-use vessels, such as red-, white-, and greyware, through glazed pottery, to high-quality products such as majolica, faïence, and porcelain. Other pottery products are also in the scope of interest, such as stove tiles, clay smoking pipes, and clay figurines (see Bis 2021).

Each of the previous meetings was dedicated to different issues: post-medieval ceramics from a transcontinental perspective (2018), objects made of clay used

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in spare time activities (2020), and pottery as a material trace of connections and networks (2022). The leading topic of this year's conference was issues related to the dissemination of technologies, styles and ideas manifested in post-medieval ceramics and their impact on the transformation of patterns of everyday life and social relations in post-medieval Europe.

The event was held thanks to the involvement and cooperation of several Polish and Czech institutions: the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Archaeology of the CAS Prague, and the Centre for the Processing, Documentation and Recording of Archaeological Finds (Czechia). It was financed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Poland, as part of the 'Excellent Science II – Support for Scientific Conferences' program, obtained through the Foundation of Friends of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (project No: KONF/SN/0475/2023/01).

Given the growing interest in historical archaeology and material sources from the post-medieval period, the conference was part of current research trends. The high attractiveness of the subject is evidenced by the participation of representatives from more than a dozen countries: Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine (Fig. 1). This provided the opportunity to study the typological and stylistic diversities of the presented ceramic collections and to trace heterogeneous phenomena in post-medieval pottery manufacturing and use. They stemmed from the constant circulation of cultural influences and inspirations, transfers of technology, forms, and decorative patterns, and resulted in direct or creatively adopted borrowings. Otherwise, these processes contributed to the development of distinctive techniques and decorations, individual and specific features in pottery production in particular regions. The total of 34 lectures focused on the issues mentioned above covered three conference days. The proceedings were broadcast online, and the recording is available on the ArcheoTV channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@archeotv9617/streams>).

The papers were grouped territorially: into finds from Central, Northern and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, and thematically: into vessels, stove tiles, smoking pipes and entire collections of wares from specific sites. Most of the presentations were devoted primarily to the decoration of vessels (covering a whole range of motifs and techniques evolving over time), reflecting craft skills and artistic sensibilities on the one hand, and the taste and status of buyers on the other. These issues were discussed in relation to various ware groups and decoration types (Mário Bielich, Marián Čurný, *Pottery from the 16th–17th century from Upper Hungary based on finds from Tvrdomestice*; Gabriela Blažková, *Early modern pottery*



Fig. 1. Participants of the conference 'Europa Postmediaevalis 2024: Patterns and inspirations'.
From the authors' archives.

decoration techniques in Bohemia using assemblages from Prague-Hradčany; Ladislav Čapek, Michal Preusz, and Pavlína Schneiderwinklová, Traditions and changes in the practice of rouletting decoration on late medieval and post-medieval pottery in South and West Bohemia; Lesia Chmil, Common features of Ukrainian and Central European ceramic ornamentation of the Early Modern period; Oksana Kovalenko, The decoration of kitchenware according to materials from the end of the 17th century to the beginning of the 18th century of the Poltava regiment of the Cossack hetmanate; Kristýna Matějková, Decorations – inspirations – patterns. Certain aspects of 17/18th-century ceramics from Bohemia; Adrienn Papp, Ottoman – Hungarian reflections; Michal Preusz, Decorative techniques in the pottery production of southern and western Bohemia from the end of the 15th to the middle of the 17th centuries; Samuel Španihel, Similarities and differences in the decorative patterns of pottery on both sides of the Western Outer Carpathians; Maciej Trzeciecki, Patterns of the past in the lands apart? Early medieval pottery-making traditions in post-medieval North-eastern Europe).

Much attention was also paid to products that can be described under the common term 'slipware' (slip-coated lead-glazed earthenware). These wares were a cultural phenomenon on a European scale, and studies on their production and use cumulated a vast array of issues related to patterns and inspirations (Magdalena Bis, *What came first: inspiration or demand? A new look at slipware in post-medieval Poland*; Volker Demuth, *Slipware in northwestern Europe from the 16th to 18th*

centuries – innovation, trade and migration vs. cessation and degeneration; Paweł Duma, *Wrocław as an important centre for the production of slipwares in the modern period in the context of the European tradition*). Similar ornamentation also characterised the other types of vessels analysed (Maija Helamaa, *Red earthenware in Early Modern Finnish households*; Ricardo Costeira da Silva, Tânia Manuel Casimiro, *From Coimbra to the world: Early Modern sgraffito painted redwares*; Rodrigo Banha da Silva, Sara Ferreira da Cruz, André Bargão, and Jorge Branco, *Lisbon pottery and mudejarism in the late 15th to mid-16th centuries*; Frauke Witte, *Cultural identity in post-medieval times based on earthenware*). An equivalent to slipware in terms of quality and functionality was the so-called Pomeranian faïence (Joanna Dąbal, *Blue and white pottery in Gdańsk*; Mateusz Szeremeta, *Stettiner Ware – a typical product of a local workshop, or just a cheap imitation of Dutch goods?*). In turn, majolica, faïence, and porcelain from the Far East and from renowned European factories were luxury products. Their decoration patterns marked out stylistic trends and were a constant source of inspiration for potters (Shanshan Li, Mário Varela Gomes, Xiong Huan, Rosa Varela Gomes, and Joana Gonçalves, *Gilded and colourful at the convent table*; Marco Milanese, *Ceramic markers of globalization from European and non-European archaeological contexts of the 16th century. The case studies of Ligurian majolica*; Ewelina Więcek-Bonowska, *Faïence and porcelain dishes in the sociotopographical perspective of Warsaw in the 18th century*; Fig. 2).

Heterogeneous pottery assemblages from different contexts, their varieties, and decorative values were also among the issues discussed (Marin Matkovic, *Changing patterns of pottery consumption in post-medieval Osijek (Croatia)*; Yuriy Puholovok, *New markets – new common ware: the expansion of the pottery range in Poltava in the 18th century*; Michał Starski, *Well of finds. An assortment of ceramic vessels from 17th and 18th centuries from a dump in a well in Puck (Gdańsk Pomerania)*; Roko Surić, Maja Kaleb, Luka Bekić, *Archaeological material from underwater excavation of post-medieval ballast piles near Brbinj, Dugi otok, Croatia*).

Decorative motifs on stove tiles – their features, production techniques, origins, and socio-cultural impact were also the subject of studies (Olga Krukowska, *Feasting and dancing motifs on vessels and tiles from Early Modern Period as a source of knowledge about the customs of past societies*; Bartłomiej Makowiecki, *Renaissance stove tiles from Wawel Royal Castle as an example of the transfer and spread of patterns*; Liudmyla Myronenko, *European and local features in the decoration of Baturyn's stove tiles of the 17th-early 18th century*; Harald Rosmanitz, *Prestige versus local traditional – potters working exclusively for the upper class*; Irena Taranta, *Decoration on stove tiles from Supraśl monastery*; Fig. 3).

The above-mentioned set of lectures was complemented by studies on ceramic toys (Tânia Manuel Casimiro and Ricardo Costeira da Silva, *Tiny things: 17th-century*



Fig. 2. During the conference proceedings at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 23.04.2024. Photo: M. Bis.

miniatures, dolls and toys from Coimbra (Portugal) and decorative patterns on smoking pipes (Ionuț-Cosmin Codrea, Tobacco clay pipes under the influence of the baroque goldsmithing. The acanthus leaf decorative motif). Eventually, there was also a space for reflections on what ‘Europa Postmediaevalis’ had achieved so far and questions about further directions (Joel Santos, Tânia Manuel Casimiro, Where do we draw the line? Post-medieval material culture in a broader perspective).

Ukrainian researcher’s – Yuriy Puholovuk’s paper was read in his absence, and one of the other participant – Liudmyla Myronenko ended her presentation with dedication to four members of the excavation expedition that had died during Russian invasion.

The presentations made it possible to compare the research methods used and the ways of interpreting the post-medieval finds. Furthermore, they revealed current research fields being explored and the prospects for new fields of study. The confrontation of knowledge and experiences of researchers from different parts of Europe manifested in lively discussions after each session. In this way, another of the objectives of the *Europa Postmediaevalis* conference, i.e., to facilitate



Fig. 3. During the conference proceedings at the Faculty of Archaeology of the Warsaw University, 25.04.2024. Photo: M. Bis.

and strengthen mutual contacts between the participants, was achieved. We hope that this was fostered by the friendly atmosphere.

The proceedings were accompanied by additional events, including the Ceramic Workshops, organised on the first and third day of the conference (Figs 4 and 5). The workshops were held in the round table formula – breakout exercise and was a ‘live’ meeting with artefacts from selected sites from Mazovia and Lesser Poland (Płock, Solec nad Wisłą, Warsaw, and Żelechów) and from Gdańsk Pomerania (Gdańsk and Puck). These included both kitchen- and tableware used in middle-class households, as well as sets belonging to the wealthy bourgeoisie, adhering to cosmopolitan consumption patterns. These collections illustrated the structure of Polish archaeological collections and showed the heterogeneity of local pottery and the wide range of imported products available on the domestic market.

Conference participants also visited the Museum of Warsaw and the Royal Castle. During the tours guided by employees of these institutions (respectively): Zuzanna Różańska-Tuta and Agnieszka Bocheńska, the history of excavations in the city of Warsaw and the area occupied by the princely and later royal residence was presented. The discoveries crucial for understanding Warsaw’s past and reconstructing



Fig. 4. During the Ceramic Workshop at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 23.04.2024. Photo: K. Blusiewicz.



Fig. 5. During the Ceramic Workshop at the Faculty of Archaeology of the Warsaw University, 25.04.2024. Photo: M. Miścicki.

the everyday life of its inhabitants from the Middle Ages to the modern period were also highlighted. As may be expected, pottery was one of the categories of artefacts discussed.

In line with past practice, the publication of post-conference materials is planned in the British publishing house Archaeopress in 2025. So far, three books have been published with articles based on papers from previous sessions (*Europa Postmediaevalis* 2019; *Europa Postmediaevalis* 2021; *Europa Postmediaevalis* 2023). The aforementioned publications serve as reference materials for researchers working with post-medieval and modern period pottery.

The Warsaw conference, like the previous ones in this series, was inspiring on many levels. It proved that the research on post-medieval ceramics on the European continent is a dynamically developing and exciting discipline. The stories of the presented finds reveal fragments of a complex but also fascinating picture of the past itself and the past societies. Like a jigsaw puzzle, the analysed pottery fragments, create our image of this bygone world. How reliable it is – it depends on us, the researchers.

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