

STUDIES IN POST-MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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*Written and iconographic sources
in post-medieval archaeology*

*Písemné a ikonografické prameny
v archeologii novověku*

*Schriftliche und ikonographische Quellen
zur Archäologie der Neuzeit*



Written sources in post-medieval archaeology and the art of asking the right questions

Písemné prameny v archeologii novověku a umění klást správné otázky

Schriftquellen in der Neuzeitarchäologie und die Kunst, die richtigen Fragen zu stellen

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In der deutschsprachigen Mittelalter- und Neuzeitarchäologie wird häufig postuliert, dass neben den Funden und Befunden auch die Schrift- und Bildquellen wichtige Bestandteile ganzheitlicher Forschungen sind. Für den Bereich der Neuzeitarchäologie hat die Forschung bislang jedoch nur wenig überzeugende Arbeiten hervorgebracht, obwohl die Anzahl der Fundkomplexe aus der Zeit ab etwa 1500 stetig zunimmt. Denn die akademisch geführten Diskurse haben die praktische Arbeit bislang kaum beeinflusst und nach wie vor fehlt es an methodologischen Diskussionen und Richtlinien. Die praktische Arbeit mit Schriftquellen (Archivbenutzung, Transkription, Edieren, Interpretieren) wird nach Möglichkeit den Historikern überlassen, deren Fragestellungen sich in den meisten Fällen allerdings klar von denen der Archäologen unterscheiden. Es ist daher unabdingbar, dass auch Neuzeitarchäologen sich mit historischen Hilfswissenschaften (z. B. Paläographie) auseinandersetzen. Denn nur so gelingt uns ein tatsächlich emischer und etischer Zugang zur Vergangenheit.

Since the beginning of medieval and post-medieval archaeology in the German speaking countries, scholars have stressed the need for a holistic approach towards the discipline and asserted that written sources are an essential element of every analysis (e.g. *Ericsson 1995; Steuer 1997/1998; Scholkmann 2003; Theune 2009; Dejnega – Theune in print*). After roughly 20 years of the existence of post-medieval archaeology in the German-speaking world, this paper aims to draw a balance on the use of written sources in the discipline.²⁾ It is not intended to reflect on the role of history in our discipline, or whether or not written sources tyrannize post-medieval archaeology (e.g. *Scholkmann 2003*). The purpose is rather to assess the application of written sources in German speaking post-medieval archaeology, to examine relevant source types, and to prompt discussions on the methodology of the subject with the intention of lifting the discussion from a theoretical to a more practical level.

To begin with, a few words on the current situation of post-medieval archaeology in Germany, Austria and Switzerland are appropriate, where the archaeology of the period after 1500 is becoming more and more accepted. The development of the discipline is illustrated by the increasing sensitivity to post-medieval deposits in urban archaeology, and the growing amount of published papers. As in other European countries, post-medieval archaeology is mostly field-dominated, and largely practised by people doing urban (rescue) archaeology. This is in marked contrast to the teaching of post-medieval archaeology in universities, where the subject still barely exists, and as a consequence dissertations and research papers are in short supply. There are only two university departments with a special emphasis on the archaeology of the post-1500 period (Bamberg and Innsbruck), but teaching

Note 1:

This paper derives from a lecture I gave at the meeting of the *Forum Archaeologiae Post-Medievalis* held in Prague in 2010. Paul Courtney (Leicester) made my English understandable and conferred with me during the conference and afterwards, at any time of the day. Claudia Theune (Vienna) and Mary C. Beaudry (Boston) commented on some aspects of the paper and Edgar Ring (Lüneburg) provided valuable information on Lüneburg. I am grateful to all of them.

Note 2:

With the term “post-medieval archaeology” I mean the archaeology of the period after the Middle Ages, up until today. The German term “Neuzeitarchäologie” is less deceptive as it starts roughly at 1500 and includes also the contemporary period. Since the conference focused on the role of written sources for post-medieval archaeology, other major source types such as pictorial sources and oral history are not covered in this article. Of course, these kinds of sources are of equal importance and should be treated under similar assumptions.

medieval archaeology is their main task and post-medieval courses are held only on a small scale. Other departments at Vienna, Halle, Kiel and Tübingen offer an occasional course. Teaching post-medieval archaeology is hampered because most archaeological departments aim at a broad education, ranging from the Palaeolithic to the medieval period, and are dominated by prehistorians who remain unaffected by the pleasures and significance of post-medieval archaeology. Due to the insufficiency of university teaching, post-medieval archaeology has problems in gaining ground in the academic field, which again results in a deficiency of theoretical discussions (see also Courtney 2007, 39-41; Scholkmann 2001, 76 f.; Klein 2009, 147; Gaimster 2009, 526 f.).

Because post-medieval archaeology is field-led, papers are mostly to be found in annual field-report journals of the various federal states. At a progressive rate, papers can also be found in the journals dedicated mainly to the medieval period: in the *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, and frequently also in the *Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters*. Austria offers the journal *Beiträge zur Mittelalterarchäologie in Österreich*, but most remarkably the series *NEARCHOS*, which already in 1993 started publishing post-medieval topics on a monograph basis. Swiss post-medieval papers are occasionally to be found in the *Schweizer Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Archäologie des Mittelalters*. In 2009, *Historische Archäologie*, the first journal exclusively dedicated to post-medieval archaeology, was launched online.³⁾

Note 3:
www.histarch.org (last accessed
21 July 2011).

It is certainly a disadvantage that no association such as the British or Italian Society of Post-Medieval Archaeology exists which could serve as a supportive forum for post-medievalists in our countries. German archaeologists with an interest in the post-medieval period are mostly members of the German Society of Medieval and Post-Medieval Archaeology (*DGAMN*) or the German Society of Clay Pipe Research (*Arbeitskreis Tonpfeifen*), both publishing their own journals. Initially, the *DGAMN* was restricted to the medieval period only, but in the early 1990s its focus was expanded with the aim to also promote post-medieval archaeology (e.g. Theune 2009, 759 f.). However, as its main focus has been elsewhere, it has only been partially successful in advancing post-medieval archaeology. It was only in 2006 that for the first (and also the last) time the annual meeting was dedicated solely to the centuries after c. 1500.

Despite such unfavourable conditions and shortcomings in methodological and theoretical discussions, post-medieval archaeology is advancing in the German speaking countries. Even the published statement "Away with post-medieval archaeology!" of a former high-ranking archaeologist (Behrens 1996, 229) did not cause too much damage. The field has generated some outstanding examples of work demonstrating the rewarding interaction of documents and archaeology, for example, from Bavarian industrial archaeology, but these works seem to be little perceived by others. The excavation of the 19th century stoneware factory at Aystetten led to an in-depth study of the written and pictorial evidence. The analysis included not only the building remains and technological structures such as kilns of both the English and Koblenz types and stoneware products of various kinds (structural and household ceramics), but also a discussion on the craftspeople, traders and the tenant, including a transcription of the most relevant sources (Czysz 1992). Equally vital is the study of the sulphuric

acid plant near Bodenmais, operating from 1787 to 1829, which deals with a forgotten aspect of central European chemical and technical history. A potter's workshop, providing the plant with technical stoneware, was part of this complex. Again, structural and technical remains were excavated and interpreted in combination with written and pictorial sources (*Lehrberger – Haller – Schink 2006*). Other commendable examples will be discussed below.

Academic parameters

Papers reflecting on the development and perspectives of medieval and post-medieval archaeology have stressed that the discipline obtains its synthesis with the help of written sources that have to be incorporated into archaeological analysis, and that written sources are an intrinsic component of the discipline (e.g. *Scholkmann 2003; Schreg 2007; Theune 2009*). Most of these publications have discussed the problem from a medievalist's perspective, concentrating solely on the quality of both written and archaeological records, and that both should be combined in the most rewarding way. The following lines summarize these academic viewpoints in chronological order to illustrate the theoretical background that sets the parameters for post-medieval archaeology as it is practised today.

In an interdisciplinary conference on historical science and archaeology, held in 1979, historian Reinhard Wenskus concluded that archaeologists and historians both focus mostly on written sources that tell of events and report on actions. In his view it is not the written sources that are in the foreground or that overshadow archaeology, but the questions asked from the sources. Without the right questions, such as enquiring about the processes of change, archaeology will only be able to record, but unable to interpret, and archaeology will thus only result in typologies and chronologies, or "antiquities brought into order". Wenskus' methodological reductionism proposes that any objectives should be orientated towards the kind of source (*quellengerecht – Wenskus 1979, 640, 643, 648*).

In 1995, the 20th meeting of the DGAMN offered the next forum for discussion. Heiko Steuer emphasized that archaeological, iconographic and written sources are of different character but do mirror the same reality. Hence, an archaeologist has also to be a historian, and the historian also has to be an archaeologist (*Steuer 1997/1998, 38*). During the same meeting, Gabriele Isenberg got more specific for the post-medieval period, but came to a rather harsh conclusion. She took the view that the more documents are available, the less archaeology is necessary to really contribute to history. If people decide to draw upon written sources, the work gets more expensive and thus needs to be justified (*Isenberg 1997/1998, 51*).

A couple of years later, in 2003, Barbara Scholkmann picked up the discussion on the so-called tyranny of the written sources that had previously started in Great Britain (*Austin 1990; Champion 1990*) and put it forward to a German speaking readership. Her paper is restricted to the medieval period and she calls for the reciprocal use of written sources and archaeological sources to allow conclusions by analogy. This notion is based upon the earlier and influential paper of Reinhard Wenskus, which also agitated for conclusions achieved through analogy (*Scholkmann 2003, 246, 250*).

Recent discussions include Sören Frommer's monograph on historical archaeology, pointing out that written sources are in most cases only brought into connection with structural remains, and almost never with artefacts (Frommer 2007, 123, 124). He also states that the integration of written sources into archaeology leads to a "historisation" of the interpretation (Frommer 2007, 28 ff.; 124; Frommer 2009b, 28 ff.). More interdisciplinary cooperation between historians and archaeologists is necessary, and he criticises the universities for failing to teach both history and archaeology in joint courses (Frommer 2007, 343). While his book concentrates on the medieval period, his conclusions are also valid for the archaeology of subsequent centuries.

Rainer Schreg argues that written sources are only applied in archaeology to help answer questions of political history (*Ereignisgeschichte*) and he criticises the lack of methodological discussion on how to integrate written sources into archaeology. He refers to the work of Swedish archaeologist Anders Andrén (1998) as a possible role model to demonstrate the successful interaction of text and artefact (Schreg 2007, 13-16; Schreg 2010, 338; Frommer 2009a).⁴⁾

Note 4:

The integration of text into an archaeological context to, for example, date buildings and objects, the identification of individuals and classification of artefact types with the help of written sources, the correlation of archaeological and historical processes and eventually the contrasting of archaeological and written sources (Andrén 1998, 153-175).

When discussing the role of written sources for post-medieval archaeology, these statements are problematic in two ways. Firstly, they seem to have developed into a popular and often repeated literary *topos* with a great danger of turning into empty words. There is neither a methodological framework and guidance for students nor a discussion about the practical use and integration of documentary evidence into post-medieval archaeology. The second problem is that all speak of medieval and post-medieval archaeology without a clear distinction between the two. It is clearly too simplistic to see the transition from the Middle Ages to the post-medieval period as a sharp break. Nevertheless, such an all-embracing approach is confusing for those on the look-out for guidance in post-medieval archaeology, and it furthermore implies that both periods can be studied under the same conditions when it comes to the use and integration of the written evidence. But language, writing and literacy were in constant development from the late Middle Ages onwards and written sources of the medieval period are in many ways different from those of the post-medieval period. Documents with Carolingian and Gothic minuscules of the Middle Ages are far less frequent, far more difficult to access, and much easier to read than the various stages of Cursive and Kurrent, and the so-called *Humanistenschrift* and *Kanzleischrift* of the post-medieval period, to name just a few (e.g. Sturm 1955, 57-95; Tischler 1994). As a consequence, the preconditions to work with written documents from those two periods are different.⁵⁾

Note 5:

The same could be argued for the archaeological material: not only does the amount of artefacts increase considerably in the post-medieval period, but also new types of materials and finds categories (smoking utensils, porcelain, firearms, industrial products, etc.) appear.

These problems led to the general discussions on the term "Historical Archaeology" taking place in the German speaking countries, where many people take the view that Historical Archaeology is the archaeology of all literate societies (e.g. Andrén 1998). To me, such a notion seems not to be well-thought-out as it does not take into account the history and development of writing, transmitting and reading. It implies that archaeologists working on an early medieval grave field, for example, are able to make equal epistemological use of written sources and archives for their interpretations as archaeologists working, for example, on a 18th century manor house do, which in practice is simply not possible.

Working with documents

Post-medieval archaeology is characterized by a seemingly insurmountable dichotomy between theory and practical work. Academic statements are mostly too vague, giving no practical guidelines at hand. As a consequence, post-medieval research still remains predominantly on a theoretical level and good practice lies at the other end of the tunnel. It is an implicit understanding (and wishful thinking) that archive work and the study of written sources relevant for an archaeological objective should entirely be carried out by historians who are, ideally, employed to do this kind of work. One argument for such a view is the need for source criticism which requires solid training in historical sciences (*Theune 2009, 760, 764*). Alternatively, post-medieval archaeologists seek historical information in editions of transcribed primary sources (*Quelleneditionen*). However, such editions focus mostly on aspects of political history. Their use in answering archaeological questions is limited and their interpretation furthermore depends on the knowledge of general history and the nature of the text.

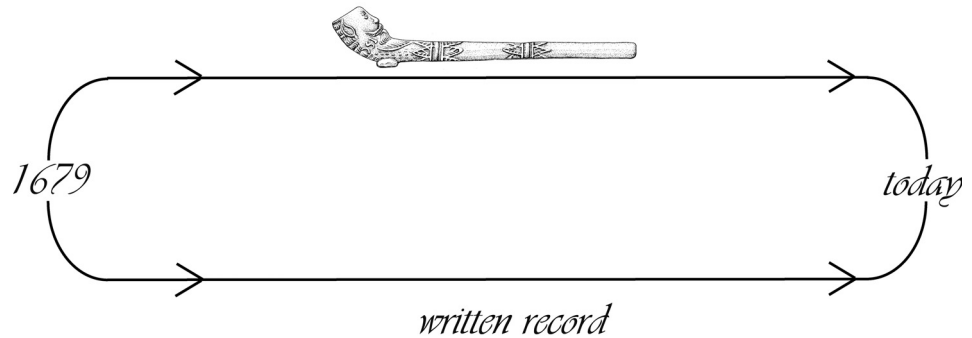
Indeed, some of the few existing examples of publications integrating the written record into the analysis and interpretation of the archaeological record show an insecurity in the handling the written record. This becomes, for instance, evident in a terminological shortcoming when speaking of the written evidence as “ethnological sources” (*Lippok 2009, 12*) or when distinguishing between “archaeological sources” and “historical sources”, implying that archaeological sources are not historical sources (*Tarcsay 2008, 31*). Very often a lack of source criticism inevitably follows, and sometimes the archaeological data seems to have been made fit to the known historical tradition (*Young 1992, 135 f.*). Such examples, while being valuable contributions from an artefactual point of view, create a feeling of incredibility in the scholarly reader, and it is no surprise that many historians regard our work with suspicion. “If we let the historian see that our historiography is shallow, he will assume that our archaeological credibility is equally poorly rooted” (*Noël Hume 1973, 9*).

It is problematic that students wishing to focus on post-medieval archaeology get no training in palaeography, and the editing and critical interpretation of written sources. The absence of a methodological framework that should be taught at universities hampers the improvement of the quality of interpretations and the discipline as a whole. When confronted with a post-medieval find assemblage, some, including myself, learn how to read early-modern manuscripts by painful experiences, and become mere autodidacts. This is especially the case with poorly funded projects with no resources to employ a historian to search the archives and interpret the texts.

Different source types for different questions

Many archaeologists in the German speaking countries share the opinion that the greatest contribution of archaeology is that of researching the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte* – e.g. *Hundsichler 1991; Courtney 2009, 171 f.; Stephan 2011, 147 ff.*), a micro-historical concept developed by, most of all, social-historian Alf Lüdtke (*Lüdtke 1989*). This view is often contrasted with

Fig. 1. Model of the emic interplay of text and artefact. Two formerly inherent source types become inherent again after a period of separation. According to Mehler 2010, fig. 40. **Obr. 1.** Model vzájemného emického vztahu textu a artefaktu. Dva původně inherentní typy pramenů se po jistém intervalu oddělení stávají opět spojitými. Podle Mehler 2010, obr. 40.



Note 6:

See, for example, the work of historians Carlo Ginzburg on the life of a 16th century miller (Ginzburg 1980) or Alain Corbin on the life of a 19th century clog maker (Corbin 2001). These micro-historical studies can be contrasted with works of archaeologists concentrating on events of political history (e.g. volume 16, 2005, of the DGAMN on historic events and archaeology).

Note 7:

On the emic quality of inventories see Yentsch 1988, 151.

the notion that historians generally are more concerned with the investigation of political history (*Ereignisgeschichte*). This is, of course, a much simplified summary of a general tendency which, although partially outdated by now, still lives on.⁶⁾

Generally speaking, *Alltagsgeschichte* and *Ereignisgeschichte* are very often based on different source types, to add another simplified synopsis. To name just a few, diplomatic sources, decrees or social documents are the main sources for historians investigating political aspects important for the understanding of societies and political processes. For archaeologists researching material culture or the remains of buildings, most significant are e.g. parish registers, inventories,⁷⁾ wills, bills, commented maps and plan drawings (Beaudry 1988; Beaudry 1988b, 43; Yentsch 1988; Leone 1988; Schön – Wawruschka 2002). Combining archaeology with documents reveals an underlying concept of time (fig. 1). Two inherent and formerly coeval source types, that of an artefact and a relating document, become separated in the course of history and are united again through the analysis (Mehler 2010, 128 f.).

Some years ago, I investigated a large assemblage of clay pipe fragments found during excavations in Bavaria (Mehler 2009; Mehler 2010). At that time the general assumption was that clay pipe production had not taken place in Bavaria and all pipes were imported (although no one knew from where). As I started browsing the archives to search for written evidence of local production I became acquainted with a historian who was consulting the archives for similar reasons. But while I was trying to examine the implements necessary to make tobacco consumption possible, he was interested in the financial politics of Bavarian electors, investigating import, local growth and taxation of tobacco (Nadler 2008). Hence, we both were occupied with several aspects of the tobacco history of Bavaria, but each of us had different objectives and dissimilar questions to seek answers for in the documents. While my archaeology-driven approach of studying material culture with the help of texts probably can be regarded as a contribution to the history of Bavarian everyday life, his task was examining political history. It also turned out that each of us achieved results with the different kind of source types discussed above.

A commendable integrative study of documents and artefacts is provided by the analysis of late 16th and early 17th century Siegburg stoneware vessels found at Münster, Germany, together with contemporary inventories and orders (Thier 1999; Thier 2007). It was possible to link certain vessels with their producers and subsequent owners and the study showed furthermore that the sites where the vessels were found were in most cases not the primary places of use. Urban archaeology at Lübeck and Lüneburg, to give more examples, also makes extensive use of wills and inventories to analyse

not only types and function of material culture, but also social structures and social topography within the two cities (Falk – Hammel 1987; Kühlborn 1999; Kühlborn 2005, 270 f.; Brohm 2006). The authors also critically discuss potentials and limitations of the informative value of the source types. Urban post-medieval archaeology in Austria and Switzerland has also produced a number of valuable contributions, e.g. a ceramics assemblage dating to c. 1800 from Bern, Switzerland (Heege 2010), or the large scale study of Kaiserebersdorf Castle in Vienna (Müller et al. 2008). Another story of success is that of clay pipe research, initiated in Germany by cultural anthropological studies⁸⁾ (e.g. Kügler 1995). The field is exceptionally interdisciplinary and archaeologists working with clay pipes also make extensive use of written records. Again, it is mostly wills, bills, inventories and parish registers that provide information on clay pipe workshops, the pipe makers, their genealogy, and their products (e.g. Böhmer 2001; Standke 2007; Mehler 2010, 79, 239 ff.).

The answers that archaeologists seek to find in such documents very often aim at the identification of people and things through names and dates. We are fascinated by identifying persons: the former owner of a certain drinking glass, the producer of a certain pot, or an inhabitant of a building, to name just a few. Alternatively, we want to find dates that we can put in context with our findings: when was this building erected, when was this oven in use, etc.? Such questions, rather positivistic at first glance, can become essential for the wider understanding of the data collection. Ideally, and essential for our interpretation, we also want to understand all source types from moments of actions to long term processes, and from individual to global. We want to know how processes such as urbanization, industrialization or trade were organized and conducted and what impact they had (e.g. Baeriswyl – Gerber 2009; Mehler – Gardiner in print). Such objectives require a firm knowledge of political, legal and theological history and sometimes it is indispensable to involve diplomatic or normative sources. In such cases it can be questioned whether the un-epistemological division of source types into those for *Alltagsgeschichte* and *Ereignisgeschichte* is practical at all.

Essential methods

During the formation process of post-medieval archaeology, Ingolf Ericsson asked for the subject to be an independent discipline (Ericsson 1995). His viewpoint was objected to by the argument that medieval and post-medieval archaeology have too many methodological common grounds, which therefore does not justify post-medieval archaeology to be a separate discipline (Schreg 2007, 11 f.). I don't wish to take a stand in that discourse, but would like to add that the refutation of a common methodology is not entirely true. With the growth of the amount of written documents after c. 1500 the diversity of the written record gets as rich as the archaeological material and working parameters change. Post-medieval archaeologists not only need knowledge of materials and artefact types from that period, but are also required to have a solid background in historical sciences, especially those enabling us to work with written documents. It is essential to understand how an archive works and where to find relevant documents, how to read, transcribe and understand historical texts and how to obtain synthesis

Note 8:

This discipline was originally known as *Volkskunde* (folk studies) but has generally renamed itself as European Ethnology or Cultural Anthropology.

from archaeological and written sources in order to reach the best possible interpretation. Without an understanding of the different types of documents it is impossible to frame questions we want to have answered from the sources. A basic knowledge of history of law is also vital for the study of documents since a reputable application of source criticism implies an understanding of the function of a certain document, for what reason it was created and by whom.

In American historical archaeology, the appeal to actively use and handle the documentary evidence has been stressed many years ago (e.g. *Beaudry 1988*; *Wheeler Stone 1988*, 68), arguing that such a “Documentary Archaeology” is self-determined and a discipline taking control of the use and interpretation of written and pictorial sources as well as the archaeological and environmental data (*Beaudry 1988*).

It can be argued whether the growing interest in the so-called parallel record results from an unsatisfying transmission of the archaeological data (*Hundsichler 2009*, 19). But the threshold before the practical work with written sources is actually amazing, regarding the fact that the subject of archaeology is so closely connected to that of history in our countries. But perhaps this is the reason for the problem: it is too tempting to leave the responsibility for the text work to the experts who seem to be so close to us. But in taking this easy road we tend to forget that historians carry a different intellectual baggage with them, often standing in the way of replying to the questions that archaeologists want to see answered. Furthermore, we also disregard that we seldom have the money to employ historians for our work and these problems are an obstruction to asking the right questions.

Essential methods for holistic and epistemologic post-medieval archaeology thus include palaeography, the teaching and ability to read and understand handwritings of the 16th to 20th centuries, a knowledge of the recommended practice of transcribing and editing written documents, a critical interpretation of the written word and basic skills of text related law history. Such training can also help to handle semantic problems that often follow when dealing with documents.⁹⁾

Most archaeology departments have their curricula filled to bursting capacity and are hardly able to provide training of such methods for post-medieval archaeology. But departments with a specialization in the medieval and later periods should include such courses of historical auxiliary sciences into their curricula, preferably designed for the questions and historical needs of post-medieval archaeologists. If this is not possible students with a special interest in the post-medieval period should be encouraged to take relevant courses at the departments of history. Post-medieval archaeologists should be qualified to find their way around an archive and be able work with texts on their own, and academic education should enable us to address relevant questions to archaeological and written sources. Only then can we use emic and etic sources in the most rewarding way.

Note 9:

On semantic problems occurring when combining the archaeological and written record see, for example, *Yentsch 1988*, 151-154; *Mehler 2010*, 80 f.).

Conclusion

Almost 40 years ago, Herbert Jahnkuhn regarded medieval and post-medieval archaeology as the continuation of prehistory (Jahnkuhn 1973, 9). This view had a profound impact on the development of medieval and post-medieval archaeology in Germany and beyond. It is problematic as it implies that the methodologies of both subjects are generally equal (Schreg 2007, 9). But literacy grew, especially from the 15th century onwards, and the amount of written sources available grew steadily over the course of time. We cannot understand the past by only using one category of evidence for our interpretation, simply because “artefacts are not enough” (Wheeler Stone 1988). And we have to bear in mind that texts, artefacts and images were not made and used by the same people, meaning that both types of evidence therefore can lead us to different interpretations when analysed separately. Querying both source groups through one person, the archaeologist, offers unique possibilities for our discipline (Leone 1988, 33; Beaudry 1988a, 3; Deagan 1988, 8; Wilkie 2006, 13). Very often, archaeologists have different questions than historians, and with an archaeological question in mind written sources can be analysed from a different point of view. The practical implementations of interdisciplinary cooperation are our own responsibility (Müller-Scheefel – Burmeister 2010, 18). All source types should be treated with the same openness and curiosity and post-medieval archaeologists should not only be able to analyse the artefacts, but also know how to read and understand the contemporary written record. University departments should include courses on palaeography and other auxiliary sciences of history into their curricula of post-medieval archaeology. The greatest potential of such practice of post-medieval archaeology, which would be our own and unique approach towards the documents,¹⁰ is the achievement of a true emic insight into the past.

Some of you will argue that post-medieval archaeology can also be practised without written sources. This is true, and very often it is simply not possible to make use of the written record: there may be no surviving documents because an archive has burnt down, or the archaeological questions addressed need no written record (e.g. the stratigraphic sequences of a post-medieval site, or the distribution of a certain post-medieval ceramic type – Little 1992, 2). Others will argue that work with texts cannot be administered by archaeologists because their workload is already beyond its limits (Igel 2009, 41). However, such arguments are paradox. “There seems little point in working in the archaeology of a document-rich period if one has no interest in history or documents” (Courtney 2007, 40). We need to appreciate the full potential of the written sources for our archaeological analysis, we should have the technical and intellectual skills to use written documents of the period we are working with, and we need an understanding of the nature of the documents to frame our objectives. If we leave this type of evidence aside, we create a “text-free zone in which archaeologists can play without fear of contradiction from history” (Moreland 2001, 109). Only if we overcome the inhibitions of working with texts will our interpretations gain in quality and will we be able to ask the right questions.

Note 10:
See Beaudry 1988a, 1.

Resumé:

Již od počátků rozvoje archeologie středověku a novověku v německy mluvících zemích zdůrazňovali badatelé potřebu holistického přístupu ke svému oboru a tvrdili, že písemné prameny jsou základním prvkem každé analýzy. Účelem tohoto textu je zhodnotit využívání písemných pramenů v archeologii novověku, povšimnout si příslušných typů pramenů a podnítit diskusi o metodologii daného oboru se zbožným přáním posunout tuto debatu z teoretické na poněkud praktičtější rovinu.

Archeologie novověku, tedy archeologie zkoumající období po roce 1500, je v Německu, Rakousku a Švýcarsku stále více uznávána. Podobně jako v dalších evropských zemích je postmedievální archeologie praktikována v převážné míře v terénu, a to většinou badateli věnujícími se zejména záchranným výzkumům v městském prostředí. To je v příkrém kontrastu s výukou postmedievální archeologie na univerzitách, kde tento obor doposud pouze živoří, takže disertační práce a vědecké studie lze spočítat na prstech jedné ruky. Výuka archeologie novověku je komplikována tím, že většina kateder archeologie se snaží o co nejširší záběr od paleolitu až po středověk a je ovládána prehistoriky, kteří si stále neuvědomují potřebnost a význam postmedievální archeologie. V důsledku nedostatečnosti univerzitního zázemí má postmedievální archeologie problémy etablovat se na akademickém poli, což se zase projevuje v nedostatečně širší teoretických diskusí.

V průběhu uplynulých dvaceti let se nad úlohou a vývojem archeologie novověku zamýšlelo mnoho badatelů. Dodnes však neexistuje ani metodologický rámec či základní metodologické vodítko pro studenty, ani diskuse o praktickém využití písemných pramenů a jejich pevném začlenění do arsenálu postmedievální archeologie. Problém spočívá i v tom, že všichni hovoří jedním dechem o archeologii středověku a novověku, aniž by mezi těmito dvěma obory archeologické vědy jasně rozlišovali. Takový všezahrnující přístup je pro ty, kteří se chtějí v archeologii novověku zorientovat, matoucí; navíc de facto tvrdí, že z hlediska úlohy písemných pramenů a jejich využití lze ke studiu obou období přistupovat stejným způsobem. Avšak jazyk, písmo a psaný projev i gramotnost se od pozdního středověku neustále vyvíjely a písemné prameny středověku se od novověkých v mnoha ohledech liší. V důsledku toho se rovněž liší předpoklady k práci s písemnými prameny daných období.

Tyto problémy vyústily v obecnou diskusi o termínu „historická archeologie“, jež proběhla v německy mluvících zemích a v níž mnozí zastávali názor, že historická archeologie je archeologie všech literárních společností. Takový význam tohoto termínu se mi nezdá být dost dobře promyšlený, neboť nebere v potaz historii a vývoj písma a psaní, předávání literárního odkazu a čtení. Předpokládá, že archeolog zabývající se např. raně středověkým pohřebištem je schopen k interpretaci svých poznatků gnoseologicky využít písemných pramenů a archivů stejným způsobem jako archeolog, zabývající se třeba panským sídlem z 18. století – což je ve skutečnosti očividně nemožné.

Velkým problémem je to, že studenti, kteří se chtějí věnovat postmedievální archeologii, nejsou školeni v paleografii a v kritickém hodnocení písemných pramenů. Absence metodologie, jež by měla být na univerzitách vyučována, brzdí zvyšování kvality interpretačních schopností i rozvoj oboru jako celku. Archeologům novověku nestačí jen znát materiál a druhy artefaktů daného období; potřebují mít rovněž solidní základy historických věd, zejména těch, jež umožňují pracovat s písemnými prameny. Je naprosto zásadní znát, jak fungují archivy a kde nalézt odpovídající dokumenty, jak číst a přepisovat historické texty a jak jim rozumět i jak dospět k syntéze vycházející z archeologických a psaných pramenů, abychom dosáhli nejlepší možné interpretace. Bez znalosti různých typů psaných dokumentů nelze formulovat otázky, na něž chceme získat odpovědi založené na výpovědi pramenů. Pro studium psaných dokumentů je nezbytná rovněž základní znalost právní historie, neboť smysluplná aplikace kritiky pramenů předpokládá porozumět funkci daného dokumentu, tomu, za jakým účelem byl vytvořen a kým.

Základní metody holistického a epistemologického přístupu k archeologii novověku tedy zahrnují paleografii, znalost a schopnost číst rukopisné prameny 16.-20. století a rozumět jim, povědomí o postupu při sestavování psaných dokumentů, schopnost kritické interpretace psaného slova i základní výcvik v právní historii k daným textům se vztahující.

Detailní zkoumání obou skupin pramenů, hmotných i písemných, jednou osobou – archeologem – skýtá našemu oboru jedinečné možnosti. Archeologové kladou velmi často jiné otázky než historikové, takže písemné prameny mohou být s uplatněním přístupu archeologa analyzovány z odlišného úhlu pohledu. Praktická realizace interdisciplinárního přístupu je v našich vlastních rukou. Dosažení skutečně emického vhledu do minulosti prostřednictvím našeho vlastního a jedinečného přístupu k písemným pramenům je velkou možností, jež se v takovém přístupu k postmedievální archeologii skrývá.

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