

High and Late Medieval Ceramics in Czech lands – Production, Regionalization, Methods and Interpretation

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ABSTRACT

The book *High and Late Medieval Ceramics in Czech lands – Production, Regionalization, Methods, and Interpretation* is a comprehensive synthesis of the current state of knowledge in the research of high and late medieval pottery (12th/13th–15th century) in the Czech Republic. The book is concurrently the output of a four-year grant project of National and Cultural Identity NAKI II financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

The book is subdivided into three main sections with thematic chapters and four additional practical excursions. The first section contains chapters on the history of research, ceramic technology, regionalization of pottery types, and evaluation of archaeological contexts with ceramic assemblages. The first chapter presents an overview of the formative study of high and late medieval ceramics in the Czech lands, subdivided into several key periods (antiquarian, beginnings of typological study in the 1950s–1960s, the influence of processual archaeology in the 1970s–1980s, the contextual analysis in 1990s). In each period, new theories, various methods, and attempts were tested and practiced with the cooperation of other sciences (especially history, ethnography, ceramic petrography, experimental archaeology). The current state of research with future perspectives is also outlined. The second chapter describes in detail the technology of medieval ceramics in the *chaine opératoire* framework, from the initial acquisition and processing of raw materials (clay, temper) to the primary techniques of forming vessels (coiling, wheel coiling, and wheel-throwing), secondary techniques of surface treatment (including glazing) and the subsequent drying and firing of the finished vessels. For each of pottery technique, certain evidence is mentioned in archaeological, iconographic, or ethnographic records. The development of types of potter's wheels from a simple wooden hand-turned wheel (a turntable) with a fixed vertical axis to potter's wheels with a movable axis (cartwheel, spoked wheel, flywheel – kick wheel) is described based on iconography, ethnography, or unique archaeological finds known from abroad. Attention is also paid to the typology and development of firing facilities – from pit firing (bonfire) or clamp kilns to vertical or horizontal up-draught kilns. The third chapter is devoted to the regionalization of ceramics based on the current state of knowledge and evaluation of published ceramic assemblages. The regional variability and typology of pottery are described for individual regions in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia from the late hillfort period of the 11th–12th century until the end of the 15th century based on the main regionally-defined attributes (fabrics, forms of vessels, types of rims and decorations). The fourth chapter of the first section introduces the specific archaeological context of medieval ceramic assemblages in the varied social milieu (urban,

rural, secular, ecclesial) and their diverse structures influenced by the various formative and post-depositional processes.

The next section is purely methodological and deals with the methods of analysing and synthesizing ceramic data. The fifth chapter is focused on methods of description of qualitative attributes of medieval ceramics (fabrics, technological traces, morphological elements, decoration). Formalized methods of description are preferred, enabling an objective comparison of the data set between ceramic assemblages from various contexts and sites. This chapter contains the method of typological classification of vessels and an overview of all forms of the kitchen, table, storage, technical and other vessels with their typological and functional characteristics. The emphasis is placed on methods of correct quantification, therefore methods of measuring the fragmentation, variability, and diversity of the ceramic assemblages are discussed, including methods of determining minimum numbers of vessels (MNV). The sixth chapter introduces the methods of synthesis of ceramic data for detecting the structures of ceramic assemblages. The basic principles of sampling methods and inference statistics are explained, especially multidimensional statistical methods (seriation, correspondence, cluster, and principal component/factor analysis). These methods allow for the study of correlations and associations between ceramic data or identify descriptors that are structured for the given context, features, or data sets. They can be successfully used to support the dating based on the correlation of ceramic and stratigraphic data and to identify similarities and differences between ceramic assemblages for their socio-economic interpretation. Pottery also has spatial attributes; therefore, attention is paid in a separate chapter to the study of spatial patterns and distribution of pottery types on a micro-scale for the study of the intensity of settlement (intra-site analysis) or on a macro-scale for study of circulation of pottery between production and consumption areas (inter-site analysis, trading patterns). The seventh chapter discusses relative and absolute dating methods and problems with creating the correct chronology of ceramic assemblages.

The third section deals with the interpretation of ceramics themselves. All relevant theories and approaches to the interpretation of material culture (materiality) are mentioned and discussed in the introduction, primarily rooted in post-processual archaeology, anthropology, and social sciences including ceramic ecology, behavioral archaeology, actor-network theory, theory of entanglement, biographical and relational approaches, and symmetrical archaeology. These object-based approaches deal with the relationship between people and their objects and demonstrate how the use of things (on the example of pottery) and their meaning and perception are changing in the context of the different social milieu and during the social practices (agency) in which they are involved. The study of ceramics and their context provides information about the production aspects of ceramics, including the issue of craft specialization and its organization, which is related to societal complexity and economic system. Archaeological and anthropological studies (D. Peacock, C. Costin, and others) operate with the evolutionary modes of production based on observed variables in the archaeological records. The relevance of these modes of production is discussed using the examples of pottery production and its organization from the early medieval to the late medieval period in Czech lands. The illustrative examples of different modes of production are shown – from household and subsistence production within

the rural community to individual and nucleated workshops of attached or independent potters with more specialized and standardized production intended for the urban market. A part of the chapter is devoted to the issue of the distribution and exchange of ceramics, where all possibilities of circulation of pottery are mentioned and discussed – tributary or free-market exchange, barter trade, or social exchange. An ample space is dedicated to the issues of changes and innovations in ceramic production. Instead of the traditional diffusion model caused by colonisation and migration/mobility of inhabitants, the model of acculturation and transfer of innovation in a “leap” manner – the so-called impedance model, according to C. Orton, is more preferred. This chapter also discusses the economic and social status of potters and the relation of pottery with other objects from other materials (glass, wood, metal). The contrasting patterns in consumption of ceramics between urban and rural households are also shown. Pottery under the paradigmatic influence (actor-network theory, relational archaeology) is considered as an object that also allows the study of social relations, as the use of ceramic in everyday practise (e.g. cooking, serving, drinking) helped maintain contacts between individuals, on a community level, or different social groups. For this reason, the emphasis is placed on the study of social identity, habitus, and gender, which emerge through social practise. The last chapters demonstrate other secondary functions of pottery and non-verbal symbolic interpretation of pottery.

The methodological and theoretical part of the book is followed by four practical and methodological excursions, which are focused on methods of documentation (drawing, photographic, three-dimensional), conservation-restoration of vessels, ceramic petrography, and experimental archaeology.

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**Vrcholně a pozdně středověká keramika v českých zemích – výroba, regionalizace,
metody, interpretace**

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Autorský podíl

Dr. Ladislav Čapek je hlavním editorem knihy, který se autorsky významně podílel na všech kapitolách knihy, kromě kapitoly *Regionalizace keramické produkce na Moravě ve středověku*, jejímiž autory jsou Dr. Rudolf Procházka, Lenka Sedláčková a Kateřina Těsnohlídková (kapitoly 3.11–3.21), kapitoly 5.6 *Přehled tvarů středověké keramiky* (autorka Mgr. Lenka Sedláčková, Ph.D.), kapitoly 10. *Konzervování-restaurování keramiky* (autorka Bc. T. Zemancová, Dis.), kapitoly 11.1. *Archeometrie keramiky ze Žďáru nad Sázavou – Staré město* (autor Mgr. et Mgr. Karel Slaviček) a kapitoly 12. *Experimentální výzkum keramiky* (autorka Mgr. Kateřina Těsnohlídková, Ph.D.)

U kapitol, kde jsou uvedeni další spoluautoři, bylo přihlédnuto k již dříve publikovaným odborným textům a výsledkům jejich výzkumů. Vlastní sestavení kapitol, jejich struktura a obsahová náplň byla v kompetenci hlavního autora-editora knihy.

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Dr. Ladislav Čapek is the main editor of the book who contributed significantly as an author to all chapters of the book, except for the chapter *Regionalization of ceramic production in Moravia in the Middle Ages*, which was authored by Dr. Rudolf Procházka, Lenka Sedláčková and Kateřina Těsnohlídková (chapters 3.11–3.21), chapters 5.6 *Overview of forms of medieval ceramics* (author Mgr. Lenka Sedláčková, Ph.D.), chapter 10. *Conservation-restoration of ceramics* (author Bc. T. Zemancová, Dis.), chapter 11.1. *Archeometry of ceramics from Žďár nad Sázavou – Old Town chapter* (author Mgr. et Mgr. Karel Slaviček), 12. *Experimental research of ceramics* (Mgr. Kateřina Těsnohlídková, Ph.D.). The chapters with the listed co-authors were partly based on their previously published texts and the results of their research. The actual compilation of the chapters, their structure, and content was the responsibility of the main author-editor of the book.

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