



SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY STUDENT COLLOQUIUM 2011

ABSTRACTS

SESSION 1: DEVIANCY AND BURIAL

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Back from the Dead? Reassessing Early Anglo-Saxon Revenantism

Revenants are individuals believed to have returned from the dead, usually in physical form, to wander amongst and potentially torment the living. Medieval and post-medieval examples across Europe have been historically and archaeologically documented, creating a compendium of revenant indicators used by burial scholars to identify individuals who appear to have been feared by the living and treated accordingly (e.g. Barber 1988, Bynum 1995, Caciola 1996; Murphy 2008). Key criteria involve forms of physically restraining or confusing the corpse, including prone burials, post-mortem mutilation, and/or restrictive placement of objects placed in proximity to the cadaver. Similar evidence observed in early Anglo-Saxon burials, particularly inhumations, has created a long-standing application of 'revenantism' to unusual cases (e.g. Meaney & Hawkes, 1970; Reynolds, 2009).

Yet this interpretation remains under-theorised for early Anglo-Saxon burials, lacking contextual anchoring due to intangible death and afterlife beliefs of the period. Furthermore, as Barber's pan-cultural and trans-historical survey revealed, responses to revenantism are rarely uniform; contradictory methods may exist within the same cemetery and motives may shift within a generation.

The proposed paper discusses inherent assumptions underpinning revenantism interpretations for this period and reconsiders criteria currently employed to identify examples. More prosaic explanations are suggested which may hold validity in certain cases, while other types of evidence previously unnoticed may reveal revenantism concerns. Christian cosmological influence, retrospective application of medieval examples and contemporary judicial punishments may help illuminate elusive perceptions of the literal and conceptualised dead in early Anglo-Saxon communities.

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Meeting a Transylvanian Early Medieval Community. Osteoarchaeological analysis of Skeletal remains from the Cemetery of Jucu (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), VII-X Century AD.

The research presented herein was aimed at reconstructing, through osteological analyses, demographic features such as age at death, sex and general health status of an early medieval skeletal assemblage (700-1000 AD) unearthed in 2007 in the village of Jucu (Cluj-Napoca, Romania).

This analysis revealed several interesting demographic trends within the population. Mortality appeared to be highest among children and middle aged women. However, men seemed to be affected with more diseases and traumas than their counterparts. In addition, physical similarities were identified between some individuals implying that burials may have been organized according to kinship relations.

Significantly, the period covered by the cemetery of Jucu was characterised by intense population movements. Given the lack of written documents pertaining to the Early Middle period in the Transylvanian area, archaeological and osteological evidence is vital to our understanding of this region's history. The research presented here serves as an introductory study that paves the way for more detailed analysis. Stable isotope



analysis may help answer several unresolved historical questions. Are the individuals from this site recent arrivals or do they represent a continuous settlement from previous historical periods? How does marriage and kinship interact with migration?

This research was a pilot study; it has given us a valuable insight into the lives and deaths of this post-roman community and has shown that additional advanced analysis can yield valuable information about the history of settlement in this region.

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'Heads You Lose': Decapitation, Domination and Display in Anglo-Saxon England

In a telling remark, Ryan Lavelle recently suggested that the display of Viking heads recorded in descriptions of the early eleventh century siege of Durham might reflect the influence of 'Celtic practices'. Indeed, the very notion that the early English might of their own accord have engaged in something as seemingly 'uncivilized' as head-taking has rarely been countenanced; the recourse to 'Celtic' behaviours perhaps reveals an ingrained reflex deriving from the way that historical ethnographers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries characterised the English as practical and sensible (if a little dour) and 'Celts' as wild, romantic and ultimately barbaric. And yet, the evidence of deviant burials (not least the recent discovery of up to 60 decapitated Vikings on the Ridgeway), suggests not only that decapitation was relatively common, but that heads were not always interred with the body but retained for some other purpose. Furthermore, the evidence of place names (especially of the 'man-head' and 'head-stake' type) and a range of historical, literary and hagiographic sources, all point towards an emphasis on the head in ritualised expressions of domination and supernatural mediation at various times and places during the Anglo-Saxon period. This paper will explore the evidence for an Anglo-Saxon 'cult of the head', its analogues and its origins.

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Child burial in 11th-16th century English Christian parish churchyards – preliminary observations.

This paper will show the different ways children (those aged younger than 18 years at time of death) have been observed buried in high and late medieval Christian parish churchyards in England. Children have previously been noted as treated in "special ways" in burial, such as burial with included objects or in clusters in prominent locations within a graveyard, but parish churchyards of this period have received less academic focus than those of the later Anglo-Saxon period or monastic churchyards. Examples of the various burial treatments that have been observed during the author's research, from majority practices to the unusual, will be discussed from both well-known and lesser-known excavated sites. Comparison between the burial of children and the burial of adults at investigated sites will also be discussed, and thoughts regarding these preliminary observations will be presented alongside information from contemporary and modern historical and religious sources.



SESSION 2: LANDSCAPE 1

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The Effects of Anglo-Norman Lordship: Landscape Change in Post-Conquest Monmouthshire

This paper explores the extent to which the Anglo-Norman Conquest of Wales shaped and altered the historic landscape of the county of Monmouthshire. In particular it will review to what extent manipulation of the landscape was a key social and political tool of the ruling Anglo-Norman elite and an underlying basis of their imposed ecclesiastical and secular power. Using landscape archaeology techniques and GIS mapping, it aims to explore the myriad of landscape changes that are traditionally attributed to the Marcher Lords.

The traditional perception is that Monmouthshire is a highly 'anglicised' county, conquered early by the Anglo-Normans and thereafter becoming irredeemably 'English' with the imposition of castles, monastic foundations and boroughs as well as the other accoutrements of Anglo-Norman lordship. Using GIS mapping, this paper investigates the links between lordly sites such as castles and the other important features of the seigneurial landscape (monastic sites, boroughs, 'designed' landscapes etc.), in addition to assessing the extent to which this change of lordship affected other key features of the historic landscape, such as the rural settlements pattern, landscape management and the ecclesiastical landscape of the county. The discussion will conclude with an assessment of the impact that these landscape transformations had upon medieval society within Monmouthshire and if such dynamics can be associated with a 'top-down' seigneurial impact or whether there was a greater influence from less historically prominent 'bottom-up' forces in articulating settlement patterns and farming techniques outside of the immediate vicinity of the lordly sites.

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A Different World? Reconstructing the Peasant Environment in Medieval Elton

The abundant documentation of the thirteenth and fourteenth-century manor has long been considered central to the reconstruction of the socio-economic world of lords and peasants. But historians have rarely questioned the validity of the seigneurial view of the manorial environment that survives through surveys and extents, despite this being the observation of elites who were frequently absent from their lands. Assessing the chronological development of the manorial extent, it is evident that there was a deliberate seigneurial distancing from manorial land, which was increasingly being seen dispassionately and simply in fiscal terms in the post-Conquest period. In considering peasant naming strategies, it is possible to recognise the local environment as an intimately known place, something much closer to modern ideas of landscape as opposed to the arid lordly descriptions of mere land. Looking at the manorial environment through the eyes of resident peasants it highlights that our understanding of how local landscapes were seen has perhaps been one-dimensional. Lords traditionally associated peasants with the soil they tilled, but there is evidence that free tenants attempted to sever this connection, preferring to emulate elites in viewing the natural world as symbolic. And yet, assessing peasant furlong names alongside the manorial documentation, the negative connotations are called into question and we can begin to detect evidence of scientific knowledge and close observation of the natural world amongst a group almost exclusively portrayed as uneducated and ignorant.

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Identification and interpretation of seasonal activities on Viking Age shielings in Iceland: a geoarchaeological case study from Pálstóftir, east Iceland, and its wider implications

Transhumance is believed to have been a common economic practice from at least the Iron Age in parts of the British Isles, Ireland, and Scandinavia with significant upland pastures, and the seasonal movement of livestock



to pastures some distance from the main farm played a particularly important role in the subsistence economics of small farms during the Viking Age/Early Medieval and High Medieval Periods. Historical sources, saga literature and place name evidence strongly suggest that transhumance of livestock away from the home farms during the summer months had been practised in Iceland since the settlement period in the late ninth century, and that it formed an important part of a decentralized farming economy. However, since only three shieling sites dating from the Viking Age have so far been identified and excavated in Iceland, little is known about the size and character of these sites, or the full range of activities that took place in them. This paper examines the potential of microscopic analysis of floor surfaces to aid the detection of seasonally occupied sites and to improve our understanding of livestock management in the Viking Age. For this research, six micromorphological samples were taken from a putative Viking Age shieling site at Pálstóftir in eastern Iceland. The analysis of the samples showed that the floor deposits at Pálstóftir exhibited a pattern of thin, short-term, periodic occupation surfaces, separated by thicker and less compacted accumulations of aeolian sand. This pattern reflects the periods of intermittent occupation of the site, separated by the periods of abandonment, and therefore it is consistent with the interpretation of the site as a periodically occupied shieling. By comparing Pálstóftir with other Norse shielings, the authors place the site in the context of research into Viking Age transhumance economics in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic region, and discuss the potential of micromorphological analysis of occupation surfaces to aid future research on transhumance and other seasonal economic practices in northern, coastal, and desert regions where aeolian sedimentation is commonplace.

Elena Chirico, University of Siena, Matteo Colombini and Alessandro Sebastiani, Penn Museum of Philadelphia (chiricoelena@gmail.com, alessandro.sebastiani@gmail.com, colombini.matteo82@gmail.com)

South coastal Tuscany in the 5th century AD

South Tuscany has been the focus of intensive archaeological research in the last 30 years. Much of the interest has been focused on early to late medieval castles while less attention has been paid to the Roman and Late Antique settlements.

Recently, thanks to new archaeological projects and reviews of old excavation data, new hypotheses have come into being on the urban and rural settlement trends in the period between the 4th and 6th century AD.

This paper would like to gather information and data from the urban context of Rusellae and its surrounding ager in order to analyse how late antique changes afflicted the classical Roman system in terms of political, economical and social life. Our attention will be focused on the new discoveries made in the territory of Alberese where two important sites have been recently uncovered: the temple area at Scoglietto and the Roman cabotage port at Spolverino. Both sites present a mutual 5th century AD phase allowing us to speculate on the deep changes at the dawn of the Middle Ages by comparing maritime infrastructures and urban theoretical concept of society and economy.



SESSION 3: IDENTITY

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'Everyone's doing it'-but not in the same way: Island identity a case of doing the same things differently?

What is it about places that people identify with? Why do so many Shetlanders 'go back'? What is it to be an Islander, and in the Viking Age? This paper approaches being 'Scandinavian' in the Viking Age as a systematic form individualism, albeit one practiced in similar ways. It seems clear from literary sources that groups, whether on farmsteads, following magic banners in Ireland or in boats on the Volga were to a large extent contained units of self-expression. Central to this projection- was clothing, and the ability to manufacture one's image using the warp weighted loom. The women who wove them-'selves', not only created this 'outer face', but continually reshaped what it was they were representing. In communities of practice women were educated and came to 'understand' their world as they picked up the embedded skill-set needed to clothe their families. Women armed with these ideas, stories, anecdotal maps of their surroundings, attitudes to everything from food and social etiquette, to slaving, raiding, sex and love were subject to movement in marriage, migration and slavery, bringing new understandings to areas and social groups. It is the intention of this paper to investigate this constant re-weaving of the self, and the changes induced by the social and physical environments on the daily practices of women in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland, notably in textile production, and their affect on the 'meanings' they produced.

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Women, Knowledge and Power: Cruciform brooches and Anglian identity in Migration Period England

My doctoral research has focused on the cruciform brooch: a distinctive dress fastener worn during the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. in eastern England. This paper provides a summary of my research findings. Firstly, the changing distribution of the cruciform brooch over time is shown to represent the evolving, crystallising and finally fragmenting utility of (Anglian) ethnicity as an empowering identity. An analysis of grave context and osteology defines a particular group of women who displayed and possessed this identity, and who may be seen as the bearers of the Anglian tradition. A closer look at the garments the cruciform brooch fastened reveals a particular costume, and one that was gained gradually over the course of these women's lives. These brooches and the costumes they fastened helped inform perceptions of a particular female body, from which they ultimately became inseparable and inalienable. Finally, the iconography of the cruciform brooch is considered. Particular attention is focussed on its dual imagery and restricted range of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic motifs, which are examined in the context of myth and cosmology, and these women's potential roles in the communication of social memory and knowledge. In sum, it is hoped that this research represents the breadth of social interpretation that can be drawn out from just one object type by the application of both traditional and contemporary methodology and theory.

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Vikings, Picts & Scots: Biocultural Identity in Medieval Scotland

Relatively prolific evidence of Norse settlement in England and Ireland has been used to form a model of Norse influence in Scotland. However, the scattered and modest nature of the archaeology in Scotland suggests that a model based on sites such as York or Dublin could be a bit presumptuous. Are the assumed facts about the Scottish-Norse contact as credible as previously accepted, or is there another reality just waiting to be discovered?

Grave deposits are an important source of knowledge about the life left behind, information that is unrivalled



in artifact data alone; yet the human osteology of Scottish Norse era burials has been poorly researched and no compilation or systematic, synthetic study of the osteological data has been undertaken. A key issue to be resolved will be to view these remains in the context of medieval Scotland and not medieval England or Ireland. This paper outlines my dissertation work thus far. An investigation into the employed burial practices and an analysis of the skeletal information has begun, and an archive of the excavated data is well underway. Defining identity and territorial boundaries is a central issue to this thesis and it is my hope that analysis of both the burial practices and the human remains will reveal significant insight into solidifying those definitions. The goal of this thesis is to further the understanding of Norse settlement in Scotland and its influence on the so-called Scottish identity and the future Scottish nation.

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Girdle-Hangers in 5th and 6th Century England – A Key to Early Anglo-Saxon Identities

A characteristic part of the early Anglo-Saxon female dress is the 'girdle-group', consisting of objects which are believed to have had special significance for the owner. Many of its elements, having no obvious functional use, are still little understood, and under-researched. One artefact group in particular has long attracted scholarly attention: the so-called girdle-hangers, decorated copper-alloy pendants copying keys.

Throughout 5th and 6th century Anglian England these ornaments were deposited in a small number of female graves. These graves stand out through exceptional features, and the buried women, it is believed, must have fulfilled special roles within their communities. Girdle-hangers are commonly interpreted as symbols of female household authority – analogous to a comparable meaning of keys in weddings and marriage – and as social status symbols. However, despite these inspiring implications, they have neither been approached archaeologically nor anthropologically. Thus, until today these assumptions are unsupported, the interpretation unchallenged.

The archaeological evidence available today allows for a systematic material and contextual investigation of the use(s) of girdle-hangers both in every-day life and burial ritual. Against this background the meaning of girdle-hangers as material symbols can be revisited, new interpretive approaches be applied.

By conducting this investigation, this study will offer significant new insights into gender roles within Migration Period society, and contribute to recent discourses on the link between material culture and identity. It shares with other current artefact studies the aim to further illuminate the meaning of personal adornment in practices of constructing and communicating identities in Anglo-Saxon England.



SESSION 4: ELITE LANDSCAPES

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Power of place in an 11th Century Elite Landscape: Nantwich Castle and Acton, Cheshire

Power of place and the dynamics of landscape manipulation are the focus of ongoing research into the number, location and distribution of castles raised in Cheshire in the period of the Earldom of Chester, c.1066 – c. 1237. Predominantly historiographical in approach, previous studies have focused on individual castles within the county, underlining the need for a holistic, multidisciplinary research method to further our understanding of Norman lordship and the Norman Conquest in the rural landscape of this strategic border territory. The examination of builders' personal power, and the extent to which castle locations were influenced by their desires to appropriate pre-Norman power centres and ancient locales in the landscape, is one aspect of such a study.

This paper reviews the evidence that many of Cheshire's castles appropriated existing centres of power. Nantwich castle in south east Cheshire, however, is considered as an exception that sheds light on the rule: the eleventh-century baronial construction apparently ignored the pre-existing symbolic significance of the neighbouring township of Acton.

While this paper highlights the importance of establishing power of place for each castle, equally it stresses the need for the context in considering a castle's strategic role and the builder's overall distribution of landed holdings within and without Cheshire. By exploring continuity and dislocation in power centres soon after the Norman Conquest, a landscape perspective on Cheshire's castles refines our understanding of the shifting power of place in eleventh-century England.

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The visibility of early Anglo-Norman stone castles in Ireland

This thesis examines the effectiveness of the use of GIS and GIS viewsheds as tools in the study of medieval castles in Ireland, to establish whether visibility from (projective views) or of (reflective views) the castles played a role in siting. A comparable set of twenty sample castles were taken from a particular period in one social/geographical context: the first century of English lordship in Ireland. The concept of 'communities' of viewers was used; three communities within the castle walls, and two communities outside the castle walls were identified. Viewing positions for these groups were predetermined, and a combination of viewshed/experiential observation analysis was performed from these positions. The results suggest that visibility did play a role, and that the castles were positioned to view and be viewed principally within an effective 1km radius.

The study has shown that while the castles share many aspects, the sites as a whole did not fall into distinctive groups. One of the most revealing points established by the research was that essentially, these castles were designed for a formal way of life, not for war. While visibility and socio-cultural priorities have already been suggested as important aspects of site choice within castle studies, this is the first work involving a large sample population which has been able to supply data establishing actual patterns in castle visibility in Ireland or the United Kingdom.

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Aristocratic Designed Landscapes in Anglo-Saxon England

Over the past three decades the study of medieval castles had been revolutionised by the work of Charles Coulson and others at places such as Bodiam Castle in Sussex. These studies have sought to demonstrate that military



effectiveness was not the only, nor even the primary, motivation for the architecture and landscape context of many medieval castles. Instead, they stood as symbols of aristocratic power and authority within 'designed landscapes' of deerparks, fishponds, dovecotes, windmills, churches and planned settlements. The deployment of each of these elements embodied particular aspects of medieval aristocratic life, and foreshadowed the development of post-medieval country houses, parks and gardens.

It is increasingly clear that the Anglo-Saxon elite occupied private fortified residences much in the manner of their later medieval successors, and that the introduction of castles into Norman England was to a large degree a continuation of pre-existing aristocratic behaviour. Assuming this to be true, this paper seeks to establish whether these Anglo-Saxon lordly residences lay within aristocratic designed landscapes in a comparable fashion to later castle sites, finally allowing us to move beyond utilitarian considerations of defence as the sole motive for the construction of Anglo-Saxon fortifications.



SESSION 5: NETWORKS

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Vikings on the fringe: life on the north-east frontier of the Irish Sea

Viking activities in the Irish Sea region have long been known and are becoming increasingly better understood each year. New research from Ireland, Wales, and the Wirral has greatly increased our knowledge of the Viking-age communities in these regions, adding to the wealth of information available from the older Isle of Man and Dublin excavations. One area of the Irish Sea that has not been studied intensely, however, is the north-east frontier. From the Rhinns of Galloway to Morecambe Bay, this frontier region has produced some of the most disparate and seemingly-contradictory pieces of evidence of Viking activities and settlement in the Irish Sea region. This paper attempts to redress that problem by taking a multi-faceted approach to studying the Viking-age communities in this region. It begins by drawing upon theoretical ideas derived from postcolonial studies, through which it is understood that there is not one possible outcome to cultural contacts and interactions, but many different ones that are dependent upon the contexts in which they occur. With this framework laid out, the place-name, historical, sculptural, and archaeological records are examined together to discover which contexts the Vikings and non-Vikings of this region interacted with each other. Through these contexts of interaction, it is possible to recreate life in a frontier region on the Irish Sea, and comprehend the identities of those people who called it home.

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Sat-Nav or Sunshine: On-board navigation of the Viking longships

Master mariner and navigation historian Søren Thirslund provides two simple questions that successful navigation methods must answer, 'Where am I?' and 'What course should I be on?' The navigational tools and practises used by the Vikings to answer these questions have long been a question that archaeologists, historians, and mariners have tried to answer. Some argue that the magnetic compass was a complete reform of navigation, turning course-keeping from an imperfect art to an exact science, however, others suggest that the sun, stars, and sea, along with the knowledge of a skilful navigator provide all the tools that a ship's crew would need to reach an exact location and that Norsemen were no strangers to observing these marine and celestial markers. Viking sailors had reached the other side of the Atlantic well before the 12th century appearance of the magnetic compass and had also managed to find their route back as well as settle and regularly communicate with communities along the way. A number of archaeological artefacts have been brought to light over the past seven decades that have added greatly to the debate on how Viking navigators were able to not only cross open water but eventually know where they were headed and also find their way home again. This paper examines the principles of open water navigation without an arrow pointing to magnetic north and methods and tools that may have been used during the Viking period that helped the Norse find their way on a theoretically limitless sea.



SESSION 6: CHURCH IN CONTEXT

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The Social identity of Sacred Spaces relating to the Collegiate/Cathedral Church of St. John the Baptist and the Benedictine Abbey of St. Werburgh's, Chester

The established history of the church in Chester between 1070-1200AD is a fight for power within a cityscape. Between 1070-1200AD, large churches within cities became more common, and the simplistic ownership and community relationships between the parish church and small communities were challenged by the construction of these new ecclesiastical complexes. The new Norman earldom had a profound effect on the church structure of Chester, seemingly centralizing the main ecclesiastical power to the new Norman Magnates' Abbey of St. Werburgh, and away from the Collegiate church of St. John, causing a power struggle, the outcome of which was rarely again challenged after 1200.

But how true is this? Different sources give us different stories. In this paper, I plan to challenge the conclusion that 1200 marked a death knell for the collegiate church of St. John as a place of importance to the people of the city, and to argue that the Abbey's presence, only served to antagonize the populace, and show that despite distinct diocesan problems, the people were ultimately closer to the church/cathedral of St. John with its subtle anti-Norman leanings than to the Earl's Abbey. Piecing together elements of both contemporary and later historical research, original archaeological theory, I plan to reveal, through archaeological interpretation, a hidden history of the increased strength of relationship between the populace and St. John's, as well as highlight the antagonism between St. Werburgh's and the city at large, creating a very different social picture of the history of the major church institutions within the city.

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Royal Fortress to Sedes Episcopalis – Cashel and the 'Bishop-kings' (800-1150)

In 1101, Muirheartach Ua Briain handed the Rock of Cashel, seat of Munsters over-kingship, over to the Church. References to a church on the Rock from the 9th C, and the fact that some of Cashel's kings also held ecclesiastical offices, has led to Cashel's kingship often being categorised as exceptionally Christian and/or benevolent. While Cashel remains unique in an Irish context, as the only major royal site known to have had such prominent ecclesiastical connections, or indeed, a church, this paper argues that the bishop-king phenomenon, and the presence of a church on the Rock of Cashel from the 9th century, directly reflects a re-composition of Cashel's ceremonial campus and ideology. More pertinently, it is suggested that this itself results from a re-composition of Munster's geo-political landscape during the 8th and early 9th centuries in which tribal groups such as the Muscraige and Ciarraige rose to power. The paper attempts to analyse the results of excavations on the Rock in the mid 1990s which produced evidence of burial and three churches predating AD1134, in light of new evidence. It will narrate the development of the Rock between the 9th and 12th centuries by examining the manner in which it was manipulated to constitute varying types of authority as it transformed from the preminent royal fortress of southern Ireland into the seat of one of Ireland's most powerful archbishoprics.

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Contested Landscapes: Buddhism, patronage and diversity in an early medieval Sri Lankan landscape

Chronicles written during the medieval period in Sri Lanka have emphasised the importance of 'orthodox' Buddhist monasteries within society, not only in relation to their role as religious centres but also as



institutions galvanising the authority of rulers and the State. Though these texts assert that monasteries were not involved in 'worldly' affairs, recent archaeological survey in the hinterland of the city of Anuradhapura has provided evidence that suggests that such institutions performed economic and political functions, acting as both secular and religious administrative centres for disparate communities. However, in the early medieval period (c. 700 – 1200 CE), rather than forming a uniform system of 'orthodox' monasteries, as would be expected from textual sources, competing Buddhist monastic fraternities are archaeologically visible in the hinterland. In addition, contemporary to these networks, there is evidence of non-Buddhist religious practices represented by a corpus of terracotta figurines comprising representations of humans, animals, demons and phalli. Traditionally viewed as 'primitive', 'folk art' or spontaneous productions, recent excavation at the site of Nikawewa has placed such assemblages firmly in the early medieval. This corpus exhibits a high degree of uniformity throughout the Anuradhapura hinterland and may represent a formalised ritual structure parallel to that provided by Buddhist monasteries. Rather than a monolithic 'orthodox' Buddhist landscape as would be expected from texts, the archaeological evidence suggests the presence of a series of interdependent and competing hierarchies (heterarchies) of various Buddhist and non-Buddhist institutions active within the early medieval hinterland of Anuradhapura.

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Closed or Open for the Public? The Changing Role of Monasteries during the Early Medieval Period

During the late antique and early medieval period, Christianity manifested itself in a variety of different buildings for a number of purposes, such as a small shrine dedicated to a local martyr or a colossal cathedral established as headquarters for a bishop. Monasteries, in particular, continue to evoke an image of space used for the prayer and meditation of monks attempting to become closer with God. Moreover, it is commonly perceived that these communities were detached from society, in hopes to emulate the ideal of retreating to a 'desert' for solitude, austerity and sacrifice. Yet how isolated were monasteries in the early medieval period? This paper seeks to examine whether these communities were initially designed to be open or closed to the public (both local and regional) and how their use of space changed between the fourth and eighth centuries. In recognition that Christian monasticism varies region to region, this research will focus on the monasteries established in the Alpine regions of Churrhaetia and the Jura District (western Switzerland). While historical and hagiographical resources are necessary to discuss aspects of patronage, pilgrimage and visits by the local population, examination of archaeological data will be essential to illustrate how changes in function resulted in different architectural layouts. By taking this diachronic and interdisciplinary approach, this paper will show that monasteries in this region initially set out to emulate the traditional 'retreat to the desert' ideal but eventually developed to become important public communities.



SESSION 7: MATERIAL CULTURE

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Beer, Butter and Burial: the pre-burial origins of cremation urns from the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery of Cleatham, North Lincolnshire.

The pre-burial origin of early Anglo-Saxon cremation urns is a subject which has long been debated. Julian Richards (1987), for example, has suggested that they were produced for a specific individual, at the time of their death, whilst Hirst and Clarke (2009) advocate that cremation urns were obtained from the domestic sphere. Yet, as this paper will demonstrate, neither theory allows us to identify the pre-burial origin of individual vessels and as a consequence neither can be claimed to be based on anything more than circumstantial evidence. A re-assessment of the pottery from the recently published cemetery of Cleatham (North Lincolnshire), however, demonstrates that by taking a use-alteration approach to the study of Anglo-Saxon cremation urns a wealth of information can be revealed which allows us to consider and identify a pre-burial biography for each individual vessel. By focussing on specific attritional markers, it will be shown that the pre-burial function of cremation urns may have been an extremely significant concern in the selection of an appropriate vessel for burial.

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Ceramic trade in the Western Indian Ocean 1300-1600: An incomplete assemblage

Excavations and fieldwork over the last 50 years have backed up written records showing that the trade routes which operated across the Western Indian Ocean in the mid and late Islamic period were highly interconnected and extensive. Evidence of a general ceramics assemblage made up of wares from India, East Africa, the Far East and the Persian Gulf is found around the Indian Ocean at trading ports on the coast. This presentation seeks to address these findings and begin to bring them together to demonstrate the nature of trade in the area during the mid and late Islamic period, as well as highlight the problems in doing so, including incomplete reports, inconsistent dating and a lack of a systematic way to record the assemblage. It will draw preliminary conclusions on the nature of the assemblages and the similarities/dissimilarities between them. It is based on work conducted on the assemblage at Julfar al-Nudud by Oxford Brookes Archaeology and Heritage in 2010.

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Children, Loomweights, and Skulls: Liminal placed deposits in Anglo-Saxon settlements

Over the past thirty years, placed deposits of specially selected, treated or arranged material, deliberately deposited for symbolic or 'ritual' purposes, have increasingly figured into discussions of the spatial structure, domestic lifecycle, and worldview of later prehistoric settlements and their inhabitants. Similar deposits in early medieval settlements have only recently attracted attention, but preliminary surveys have indicated their potential to reward more detailed study. This paper presents a selection of results from the speaker's doctoral research, the first thorough examination of placed deposits in Anglo-Saxon settlements, in which criteria derived specifically for early to middle Anglo-Saxon settlements were used to identify 152 placed deposits from an examination of 130 settlements. Patterns in terms of composition, context, spatial distribution and depositional timing were then revealed with the help of exploratory statistical techniques such as correspondence analysis. From these patterns it has been possible to infer some of the circumstances in which placed deposits were made and to interpret their purposes. For example, this paper argues that placed deposits made at spatial and temporal boundaries in Anglo-Saxon settlements played a leading role in defining social units in space and time and in mediating their social and economic interactions.



SESSION 8: LANDSCAPE 2

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Early Medieval Antwerp and its Dark Earth – a micromorphological study

Archaeological excavations and historical sources report the presence of a 9th century AD settlement on the bank of the river Scheldt, from which further development of medieval Antwerp took place. Recent excavations in this area, the so-called Burchtsite, took place between July 2008 and April 2009. Archaeologists discovered the remains of a 9th to 11th century AD portus and early town surrounded by an urban rampart. This settlement seems comparable with contemporary early towns such as Haithabu. Beneath the 9th century structures, humus-rich, non-peaty, strongly melanised and apparently homogeneous units known as Dark Earth have been encountered. A micromorphological study of these units was undertaken in order to obtain a better understanding of the site stratigraphy and to evaluate the nature and significance of the Dark Earth formation. Moreover, by examining earlier excavation reports this research enabled me to tentatively locate other sites where Dark Earth had previously been found in Antwerp but was not recognised as such.

The first results of the micromorphological analysis suggest the presence of a trampled surface, probably an area where animals were kept, on top of part of the Dark Earth. Underneath, evidence for grassland and cultivation has been found within the Dark Earth, strengthening the hypothesis of anthropogenic influence before the 9th century. The precise impact of this influence within its historical context has yet to be assessed in future research.

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'Should I Stay or Should I Go? Urban Mobility as an Adaptive Strategy in Early Mediaeval Sri Lanka'

The 11th century abandonment of Anuradhapura as an urban centre, and the subsequent southerly relocation to a new capital at Polonnaruwa, has been long portrayed as an example of collapse. The city in all of its constituent parts abandoned in the face of South Indian military aggression; the monumental palaces and temples of the city left ruined and drowning beneath the jungle tide, the intricate system of tanks and canals slowly choked by weeds and silt. However, far from being the collapse that this has been portrayed as, I argue that the move from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa was in fact a deliberate decision that not only reversed centuries of alienation of land, power and wealth by the Buddhist monastic orders, but also refreshed an economic hinterland that had reached maximum efficiency of exploitation and had reached a stage of declining marginal returns. This move was thus, not a collapse, but a deliberate adaptive strategy that enabled the avoidance of true "collapse" – as seen in the neighbouring Cola Kingdom.

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The Utilisation and Control of Wood Resources in Viking Age and Early Medieval Iceland

Archaeological studies and historical sources suggest that after the colonisation of Iceland around AD 870, the Viking settlers cleared the native woodland to make way for hay fields, and for use as fuel and construction material. Consequently, archaeologists have been engaged in a debate on how, why and when this woodland decline began. Palynological studies estimate that Icelandic woodland cover has declined from 25-40% at the time of colonisation, to 1% in the present day. However, throughout the Viking and Medieval periods in Iceland, wood remained a vital resource for fuel, artefacts and construction. This project aims to understand the relationships between sites in terms of wood procurement, control and sharing, and to identify how the use of various wood resources - native wood, driftwood and imported wood - changed over time. Due to the limited tree flora of Iceland, it is possible to separate these resource groups by identifying the species of the wood used for artefacts (preserved on anaerobic sites) and as fuel (preserved as charcoal) through wood anatomical analysis. Understanding the distribution of non-native woods and their specific uses is essential to



the understanding of how wood resources were used on the island. Although sites with well-preserved wood remains are rare in Iceland, a number have been excavated recently. This presentation will compare results from both charcoal and artefact analyses from Viking age and early medieval sites across Iceland, and discuss the implications of these findings for the utilization and control of wood resources during this period.

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Cemeteries and peasant societies in the the Duero Basin (Vth-VIIIth)

The disintegration of the oman economy in the Iberian Peninsula caused the change of settlement patterns related to new economic, social and political structures. This re-adaptation of the Early Middle Age societies to the new postroman world had as its main consequence the apparition of the village as the axis of rural settlements.

The present paper analyses the cemeteries of the Duero Basin between Vth and VIIIth centuries, specifically in the north area between de Guadarrama mountain range and the river Duero, linking them with the domestic and productive spaces. By this way, some classic sites within the Spanish Medieval Archaeology (as Duratón, Espirido-Veladiez, Madrona) will be contrasted with some archaeological sites excavated in recent years which have allowed us to suggest alternative hypothesis to the classical ones about Early Middle Age cemeteries.

We will defend that this new forms of rituality are not the expression of a Germanic Volk that came at the beginning of the VIth century, as it is suggested from germanist and ethnicist theoretical frames, but the expression of a peasant social structure, characterized by the development of communitary forms of relations of production and a weak social stratification that uses the funerary spaces as a main place of socialization and social negotiation.