

'hot topics'. Chapter 3 ('Where did the Slavs in the Polish lands come from?') discusses the 'Prague' style of pottery in the context of the perceived poverty of Slav material culture, relating it to the mobility of the Slavs in this period. Chapter 8 ('The oldest traces of writing?') discusses three fragments of fired clay, known as the Podedbocie tablets, found in a 9th-century settlement. They are inscribed with signs resembling writing, thought by some to be Turkish runes, and by others to be Greek. In the same context were found ceramic vessels with unique solar and zoomorphic motifs, making Podedbocie an enigmatic site. The most thoroughly 'ceramic' chapter is 14 ('The puzzle of the century: marks on pottery'), which discusses the marks found on the exterior of the bases of some vessels of the 10th to 13th centuries. Most are an impression of a mark cut into the potter's wheel, rather than stamped or incised directly into the clay, and many can be linked to solar themes. They have in the past been interpreted in both economic and magical terms. The author considers them to be a distinguishing feature of Slavic pottery, and favours a magical (protective) interpretation.

So, out of fifteen chapters, two are devoted to ceramic issues and one sets ceramics in a wider social context. I wonder how medieval ceramic would fare if a parallel book were written about Early Medieval Britain?

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Rosa Fiorillo

La tavola dei d'Angiò. Analisi archeologica di una spazzatura reale. Castello di Lagopesole

[The table at the Anjou's Court. Archaeological analysis of a royal garbage. Castle of Lagopesole]

2005. All'Insegna del Giglio. Firenze

This book, as the title itself suggests, analyses the finds from the kitchen waste excavated at the Castle of Lagopesole: the summer residence of the Anjou's court. For those not familiar with the area, the site is in the environs of Potenza, in Basilicata (southern Italy). Charles I of Anjou used to spend several months there each year together with his court, which in some cases numbered up to 200 people. The finds were re-covered from a pit, dug as a cave for constructing the donjon and then filled with waste.

At first sight this work does not look like a 'traditional' catalogue of pottery sherds, providing a

classification and description of ceramic types found during the excavation. In fact, it is not. The author attempts a multidisciplinary approach in reconstructing what used to be eaten at the Anjou's Court. In doing so a reconstruction of how a laid table should have looked like in different circumstances and according to the guests' status is made as well. The author succeeds in sketching the court's habit in consuming and preparing food by using both archaeological and written sources. Records of ordered supplies, records of guest's names and the number of people present at different times, pottery and glass sherds, animal bones and kitchen waste in general are all taken into account. This analysis occupies pages 16–69.

No wonder if, concerning pottery, focus is on function rather than on technological devices. This serves the purpose, but it should be remarked that indicating the colour of the fabric without giving any further details about the nature of the temper and about technical devices, ends up in being unnecessary information. The presentation and interpretation of the data is followed by the catalogue, divided into two parts: one on animal bones, the other on pottery and glass. Concerning the first one, the author provides a well organised and detailed presentation of records. There are clear tables and charts containing all the information about percentages and numbers of minimal individuals belonging to different species; their distribution in each phase is provided as well. For each species details about the quantities of different joints are given as well. The pottery catalogue presents the sherds by functional and technical devices, providing for each class a description of form variations and of decorations, but a systematic study of the association between forms and decoration is missing. A detailed description is provided for a selection of objects identified as the most representative ones for a certain form or class. The glass catalogue is organised in the same way. What shows up is that quantities are not given at all for pottery, while for glass percentages are provided. The catalogue refers to the layer in which the objects were found. The dating range of the layers is based on coins found, each recorded and described in the first part of the volume, but the division in different phases is left to the drawing of the pitch-section. Plates of pottery and glass forms close the volume, some with pictures of the best preserved or highly decorated objects.

As a whole this book is an excellent work, as the author, by using different sources is able not only to reconstruct the habits connected to food consumption, but shows us how it is important to combine the information deriving from them. She drives attention as well on how the quality and quantity of finds should make us reconsidering what is commonly supposed to be a period when the circulation of goods is regarded as 'rare'.

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