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A different perspective on the Carolingian economy: Material culture and the role of rural communities in exchange systems of the eighth and ninth centuries

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Propositions

1. Rural communities in the early middle ages, as a group of consumers, encouraged the transportation over large distances of both luxury and bulk goods, as did the crown, ecclesiastical institutions, town dwellers and lay aristocrats.
2. It is the combination of the dispersal of various artefact categories that provides the best manner in which to determine the scale and complexity of exchange systems, not any single category on its own.
3. The nature of soil conditions and past land-use practises make it inherently difficult to compare inland, and coastal or riverine sites in terms of (the richness of) artefact assemblages.
4. Attempting to identify the most important or ultimate instigator or cause of economic developments in the early middle ages is a red herring.
5. Though formation processes certainly play an important role in determining the composition of archaeological data, at this time variations in excavation methods and publication practises form the greatest restrictions on the comparability of datasets.
6. Despite its limitations, the wide application of the Dorestad-typology over a period of more than 50 years has made it relatively easy to compare eighth and ninth century ceramic assemblages between sites in the Netherlands, meaning that, except where specific research questions require it, it is undesirable to replace the typology for a wholly new one.
7. For studies at site level, dating of artefacts is too often unquestioningly derived from established typo-chronologies, without examining whether the assemblage itself may contribute to existing typo-chronological frameworks.
8. In the current archaeological field in the Netherlands, inference is not only hampered by externally imposed time or financial constraints, but to a considerable degree also by ideas implicitly held by its practitioners on what constitutes a well-executed excavation.
9. The 'market' which is supposed to have been created by introducing contract archaeology in the Netherlands is fundamentally flawed, as virtually none of its consumers is interested in the product, beyond its legislative aspects.
10. If you think you have an original idea, you probably haven't done enough research.