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Medieval pottery production in South Limburg: a renewed perspective on the high medieval ceramics chronology and the pottery production sites at Brunssum, Schinveld, Waubach, Nieuwenhagen and surrounding villages

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Propositions

1. Ceramic sherds are the most common find category at any excavation and hence are utilised to date contexts, structures, sites, and even other find categories alike; alterations to an existing ceramics chronology will have implications for the understanding of any previously appointed date range and hence on our perception of society in the period under study.
2. The dating of high medieval settlements and contexts within these settlements at a supraregional level (encompassing the South Limburg region and areas beyond) has, although often expressed in calendar years, not in fact been chronologically fixed; such dating would be better understood as relating to a presumed but never established dating of a burnt layer at Valkenburg Castle.
3. Medieval archaeology in the Low Countries is heavily dependent upon longstanding chronological frameworks; we must increase our efforts to test these frameworks, lay bare the reasoning behind them and understand their limitations to better comprehend the society we study.
4. Sequencing find-rich high medieval contexts from the South Limburg region, studied integrally and with stratigraphic awareness, provides a way to build a fine-meshed material culture chronology, which may eventually make the chronology as proposed in my dissertation obsolete.
5. Idealised linear developments of the complexity of ceramics production (e.g. firing temperature, production techniques) are no substitute for assessing the actual developments exhibited by a particular ceramic trait.
6. South Limburg pottery has long been regarded as imitating the products of Andenne and Pingsdorf; reframing this subordinate relationship between production sites to a more neutral relationship – a network of actors – allows for an appreciation of the craftsmanship at a particular workshop and to evaluate the relationships between production sites on their own merits.
7. A lowest-expenditure model of the material culture exchange network in the high medieval period masks actual complexity in the modes of exchange – this is especially true for certain high-status sites as Susteren for example; a more detailed study of objects – using typology, fabric, and chemical fingerprinting – can uncover the actual exchange of objects and the relationships expressed through the exchange of material culture
8. The building and upkeep of the palatia, churches and secular buildings in the region of Aachen and Maastricht would have required a functioning regional economic framework extending beyond the merely rural level; archaeology is par excellence the type of scholarship to analyse this framework and lay bare its structural elements.
9. Excavation, documentation and archiving is the archaeological equivalent of a scientific experiment; if any of these steps are not conducted properly, it becomes impossible to reproduce the experiment as a whole.
10. With the many circles painted on the jugs, the South Limburg potters have anticipated the way of reasoning that shaped our chronological understanding of their work.