



**Norway**  
grants

**Beyond the Centres of Power.**  
Rulers' Negotiation of Power,  
Legitimacy and Communication  
with the Peripheries of their Realms  
(Central Europe and Scandinavia, 900–1350)

**March, 22-23, 2023**

**Niemiecki Instytut Historyczny**

**Deutsches Historisches Institut**

Pałac Karnickich, al. Ujazdowskie 39, Warsaw

# Abstracts



UNIVERSITY  
OF WARSAW



UiO : University of Oslo

 NATIONAL SCIENCE CENTRE  
POLAND



The Research Council  
of Norway



Deutsches  
Historisches Institut  
Warschau

Niemiecki  
Instytut Historyczny  
w Warszawie



Faculty of History  
University of Warsaw

# **Beyond the Centres of Power.**

**Rulers' Negotiation of Power, Legitimacy and Communication  
with the Peripheries of their Realms  
(Central Europe and Scandinavia, 900–1350)**

**Wednesday, 22.03**

## **Constructing Periphery in the Twelfth Century: Central European Evidence**

**Marcin R. Pauk**

**14.10–14.35**

The workshop will focus on an issue that seems to be essential for the functioning and coherence of early and high medieval polities in Central Europe and Scandinavia – the ruler's communication with the periphery in order to legitimise power. Although the topic of power rituals is frequently explored in medieval studies, its spatial dimension is very often reduced to the central places with capital functions as a scene. At the same time, Central European medieval studies are to some extent dominated by the notion of the centralisation and uniformity of early medieval polities, which only in the course of time, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, gave way to more permanent territorial-dynastic divisions. The latter are usually understood in terms of decline of political power, weakening of the state and the rise of aristocratic lordships at the expense of the monarchy. This view is imposed primarily by the perspective of the narrative sources, which were usually produced in the centres of power, whether in the courts of rulers or in the central ecclesiastical institutions. It is reinforced by the conviction, well established in nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography, of a unified and implicitly strong national state as a timeless and universal value. Overcoming this perspective therefore seems necessary and fruitful for further research.

Using the examples of Bohemia and Poland in the twelfth century, I will try to show how the sources allow us to go beyond the pattern. Without abandoning the ambition to formulate more synthetic assessments, I will take a particular example of the relationship between the centre of Přemyslid rule and its northern periphery as a starting point. The case of the northern Bohemian provinces of Žatec, Bilín and Litomerice will allow me to raise the question of the development of local identity and elite consciousness in the twelfth century, the nature and intensity of contacts with the centre of 'state' power in Prague, the purpose and nature of visits by Czech rulers to the north of the country, the depersonalised forms of their local presence and the methods of resource management. The starting point will be the account of Cosmas, a Prague canon, on the 'prehistory' of these provinces - mainly the construction of an 'epic' about a war between Bohemians and the Loucane tribe - juxtaposed with contemporary information on this part of Přemyslid rule. Polish examples from the same period (i.e. the first half of the 12th century), in particular the *Chronica Polonorum* by Anonymous called Gallus, complete the picture of possible modes of communication with the periphery.

**Communities of the Realm:  
Mediation of Royal Power at the Peripheries of Medieval Norway**  
**Ben Allport**  
**14.35–15.00**

There is a strong undercurrent of regional and local identity in the Old Norse literary output of medieval Norway and Iceland. This can be traced already in skaldic poetry from the turn of the millennium, in which many of Norway's regional and communities are mentioned for the first time. These references appear in verses attached to various rulers and stress the relationship between the ruler and the named communities. Thus, it seems to have been important for early Norwegian rulers to establish their positive relations with the communities that were increasingly becoming (at least symbolic) peripheries in a larger conceptual realm centred on the person of the king.

The relationships between regional elites and royal power are an oft-repeated theme of the Old Norse sagas produced in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Different regional communities are depicted acting collectively as a political force that either supports or opposes royal power, whereas individual magnates sometimes act as representatives or even symbols of their regional community. When we come to *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, commissioned shortly after the death of King Hákon Hákonsson (by his son Magnus, we are presented with the most developed picture yet of the royal relationship with peripheral communities. This is particularly evident in the saga's various depictions of assemblies in which attending regional representatives are listed in exhaustive detail and are shown interacting with the king directly in seemingly ritualised mediations of royal power.

In this chapter, I will consider the construction of the communities of the Norwegian realm and the depiction of their relationship with royal power in Old Norse narratives throughout the period from ca. 1000–1300. I will focus my attention primarily on the start and end of the period – respectively on the corpus of eleventh-century skaldic poetry and on the accounts of assemblies found in *Hákonar saga* – to gain a broad sense of how this depiction (and the motivations behind it) changed in this period. In pursuing this line of enquiry, I will address the following research questions:

· How is power mediated between the central figure of the king and 'peripheral' regional communities in these texts? Are the depicted relationships primarily negative or positive, and does this change?

· What were the ideological motivations behind these depictions, particularly in literature that was associated with – if not explicitly endorsed by – Norwegian royalty?

In line with the aims of the ELITES project, I will be particularly interested to explore these depictions as strategies of legitimisation by both Norwegian rulers and members of their secular elites. However, I will also conclude with some speculation about how such sources may reflect on political realities, particularly in *Hákonar saga*. In particular, I will consider the composition of the assemblies found in *Hákonar saga* as well as depictions of individuals who have been identified as regional representatives in previous scholarship.

**Local Absence and Central Presence. Mediating and Communicating Royal Power in the Norse Island Communities [Orkney (Shetland), Man and the Hebrides], 1035–1267**

**Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl**

**15.00–15.25**

The framework for this chapter is the lengthy process that resulted in the Norse island communities becoming, or not becoming, the Norwegian king's tributary lands. I have formerly studied this process in depth (Wærdahl 2011), by focusing on the establishing of direct royal lordship, the implementation of a royal administrative apparatus, the legal framework, and especially the socio-political aspects, from c. 1200 to c. 1400. These geographical areas were rarely, and in the case of Iceland, Greenland, Shetland, and the Faroes, never, visited by kings of Norway. Additionally, the local rulers were not members of the kings' family, and there was no stable presence of royal officials who were solely accountable to the king alone. Furthermore, insular rulers and members of the local elite habitually held dual loyalties, having sworn oaths of allegiance to Scottish and/or English kings.

Against this backdrop, I intend to do an analysis of the form, function, and consequences of the king's communication with local rulers and members of the elite in the southern island communities, where the king's overlordship and authority, or attempts thereof, was challenged by other royal powers and/or local rulers. Local rulers and members of the elite were responsible for mediating and communicating on behalf of the king locally, thus wielding an indirect form of communication on behalf of the king. However, the king and the magnates who counselled him, were in direct contact with insular rulers and magnates at court. A direct centre-periphery line of mediation and communication was present at court, where local rulers and magnates who had sworn allegiance to the king were in principle forced to meet upon his summoning. Those acting on the king's behalf and those representing the local communities were members of a socio-political network centered on the king's court and which put demands on their presence.

I will pay particular attention to the socio-political context the men responsible for mediating and communication royal power formed part of, and what this meant for the way the king communicated with and exerted, or attempted to exert, his power in the insular communities. How and through whom did kings of Norway or claimants to the throne communicate their policy in areas where they depended on semi-loyal or even disloyal local rulers and/or elites with dual loyalties to safeguard their interests? What role did the royal court play in tying this group to the king and the crown, thus centralising a social group the crown relied on to implement its policy locally? Building on the premise that the insular rulers and magnates were subjected to the same pressure to mediate and communicate royal power from the expanding royal power of Scotland and England, an analysis of how the centre-periphery communication developed when the kings faced different challenges than they did in Norway, will expand our knowledge of the mechanism the kings relied on to increase his influence in the areas that were located at the fringe of their territorial, political, and military scope.



## **Royal PR: Communication Visibility, and Legitimation of kingship in Early Medieval Sweden**

**Caroline Wilhelmsson**

**15.25–15.50**

This chapter will look at how the early kings of Sweden communicated with their alleged subjects, how they advertised their authority, and how they tried to legitimise a new emerging type of centralised authority in what was still a very fragmented territory dominated by regional assemblies. Its aim is to understand what strategies these kings, who faced the challenge of uniting several ancient independent regions into one, employed to cement their claim to power and convince local populations, which were sometimes very remote, that they should abandon the traditions and legal framework which they had always known to submit to an outsider promoting a new type of politics, and religion.

The chapter will focus on the years between about 1000 and 1250, because it was a crucial period of state formation during which the kingdom of Sweden evolved and emerged as a fully defined and recognised political entity. It is also during this period that much of the kingdom was Christianised, which had profound effects on the development of a centralised administration. Elsewhere, the period studied would be referred to as the “High Middle Ages” but the lack of infrastructure, the scarce written record, the slow rate of Christian conversion and the overall state of the region’s economic development is more in line with the idea of an early medieval polity.

Early Swedish kings initially had little influence. Local assemblies, which were spearheaded by members of the local elites (such as lawspeakers and landowners) still held much authority until the thirteenth century. We know from several sources, notably Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* and *Västgötalagen*, that early Swedish kings were elected by the Svear. The relatively small pool of electors means that these elections could be (and were) contested by those outside of Svealand, adding another obstacle for these ambitious early kings who thrived to unite the kingdom. Infighting was common, and dynasty clashes recurrent throughout the period studied. It is well-known that some royal families were more popular in some areas than in others, with religion playing an important part in these divisions. Paganism was still common throughout Sweden until at least the twelfth century and Christianity, far from becoming a unifying common dominator, led to various magnates, religious orders and ambitious clerics vying for power. No single law code was applicable throughout the realm until the fourteenth century, and different regions obeyed their own laws. In this context, how did early kings impose themselves to the local populations?

This article will answer this question by looking at how, in practical terms, kingship was practiced and new ideals spread throughout the realm. Several strategies will be investigated. Firstly, the chapter will re-evaluate the role of Viking Age *husabyar* – or royal farms – identified by Stefan Brink, in light of new research about the diplomatic and political arrangements in place in Sweden in the long Viking Age (until c. 1100). The *eriksgata*, a processional journey undertaken by a king-elect through the realm to be confirmed by the local assemblies, will also be discussed. It will notably be necessary to question whether this journey had any real legal value. It will also be useful to identify the exact route which was followed, and it will become obvious that entire parts of the realm were ignored – not least the islands of Öland and Gotland and, in the thirteenth century onwards, Finland. This observation will lead to a further discussion on how kings interacted with their subjects located on the geographical peripheries of the realm. Finally, the chapter will try and identify the legal mechanisms through which the early kings of Sweden tried to exert political influence on the regional assemblies. It is known that from the thirteenth century onwards, the role of local lawspeakers was dramatically reduced and replaced with administrative clerks and clerics, a phenomenon linked to

the centralisation of power. But what were the links between lawspeakers, assemblies, and early kings before the thirteenth century? Did early kings manipulate the existing legal framework to advance their position, or was there always resistance to this new form of authority? A study of the role of Jarls and other similarly new administrative positions mentioned in the early medieval laws will shed light on the emergence of a new elite representing the king at local level.

It will be concluded that at a time when infrastructure was still poor and many areas of the realm isolated physically and culturally, the early Swedish kings employed various means to try and reach the local population in an effort to unite the kingdom. Firstly, there were attempts at establishing physical bastions of kingship and central authority through the establishment of royal farms, the maintenance of which must have required the collaboration of local landowners. The kings themselves toured the realm not only during their processional eriksgata but possibly also at different times of the year. But it is likely that there were also more complicated attempts at manipulating existing institutions into slowly adapting traditional customs to a new centralised model of power. The creation of new positions of power such as jarls allowed the king to reach his remote subjects and ensure the physical representation of royal authority. It will come to light, however, that parts of the realm were not included in this giant PR exercise. Some may have been too remote, such as Småland and Öland; others may have been disputed borderlands such as the wooded areas in the north which were fought over with Norway; but others still may have simply been too resilient, as may have been the case with Gotland.

As a result, the chapter will further knowledge of the intricacies and mechanisms behind the adoption of a new form of centralised kingship between 1000 and 1250, and will contribute to our understanding of the borders and extent of the Swedish kingdom before the adoption of a national law in the fourteenth century.

**The Presence of the Absent Monarch: The Peripheries of Governance  
in the Early Monarchy of the Piasts**  
**Krzysztof Fokt**  
**16.30–16.55**

In the paper, several topics concerning the governance of the monarchy of the Piasts under the rulers from the seven earliest generations of the dynasty (cca. 963–1202 AD) will be discussed. The governance as such will be understood as a set of challenges in the field of logistics and communication. Established opinions and theories of historians concerning the social and political structures of the Piast realm will be challenged in order to achieve more convincing results. Following questions will be raised: How many centres were there that functioned as main seats of the monarchs and their military power? How were they controlled when not being visited by the dukes? How did the control of those main centres over the surrounding areas look like? Who made it work?

## **Seeing the Ruler in Contested Lands: Piast's Exercise of Power in the Testimonies of Witnesses of the Warsaw Trial**

**Michał Machalski**

**16.55–17.20**

The reunification of the Polish lands in the first decades of the fourteenth century came about as the result of lengthy political upheaval. The crisis that preceded the reunification had been largely characterized by the competition between two socio-political models: one represented by new social elements created by the so-called “German colonization,” and one represented by Władysław the Short’s supporters—the traditional vision of the Piast patrimonial state. Władysław’s victory in this struggle shaped how Piast rulership was seen and communicated, but even as he was crowned king of the reestablished kingdom in 1320, Władysław’s grasp on power was uncertain. He spent the rest of his reign in conflict with the Knights of the Teutonic Order, who used the instability of the 1300s to occupy Pomerania and northern borderlands of Cuyavia, trying to regain contested lands through war and legal suits brought in front of the Papal curia. As famously pointed out by Sławomir Gawlas in his analysis of the testimonies given by the witnesses of the 1320-1 trial, while the local intellectual elites slowly explored the idea of a territorial “Regnum Poloniae,” the patrimonial vision of rulership built on personal ties of loyalty and obedience remained dominant among the broader community of Piast subjects.

This paper expands on observations made by Gawlas by investigating how the exercise of power by Piast monarchs was described by the witnesses of the subsequent Warsaw Trial in 1339. As the proceedings aimed once again to adjudicate the rights to Pomerania and further disputed borderland territories, descriptions of Piast rulership in these contested lands became an important part of the testimonies. Thus, they present an unparalleled opportunity to explore the aspects of the Piast’s exercise of power that were seen by their subjects as important indicators of the dynasty’s rule over the disputed territory.

Analysis of witness’s statements reveals many similarities between the concept of rulership based on personal ties described by witnesses from the first trial in 1320-21 and the one found in testimonies from 1339. These statements reveal that the ruler’s presence was the fundamental element of his exercise of power, with many witnesses emphasizing seeing the Piast monarch and his entourage traveling to contested lands, or even accompanying him themselves. While the presence of royal officials did not necessarily carry the same weight, the act of distributing offices was also seen by witnesses as an important part of rulership and further proof of the Piasts’s control over distant parts of their domain. Further underscoring the personal dimension of Piast rule is the regularity with which reports of dining and drinking together with the monarch appear in the testimonies. On the other hand, the witnesses of the later Polish-Teutonic trial described some notable changes in the methods in which the Piasts exercised their power. In contrast to the statements made during the proceedings in 1320-21, the exercise of judicial or economic power does not feature prominently in the descriptions of secular rulership. The sheer scope of the 1339 proceedings allowed for the inclusion of voices that break the mold of the communal opinion of outlined above, some surprisingly critical of how Piasts exercised their power. In sum, the testimonies speak to the longevity of an idea of rulership based on physical presence and personal bonds in Polish lands, while containing germs of later developments to come.

## **A New Centre and New Peripheries. Silesian Principalities vs. The Kingdom of Poland at the Turn of the 13th and 14th Centuries**

**Andrzej Marzec**

**17.20–17.45**

The end of the 13th century was the time of important political, constitutional and social changes in the Polish lands. Two key phenomena must be mentioned: breaking of the Piast dynasty's monopoly of power in the dependent principalities and the beginning of the process of integration of the Polish lands and of establishing the Kingdom of Poland. The result was the emergence of new centres and peripheries in the Piast world. Its most important element was the newly grounded Kingdom of Poland in 1320, even though it stayed in the hands the Piasts for a relatively short time because after 1370 none of the monarchs belonged to that dynasty.

However, Silesia and Mazovia, the peripheries, stayed Piast. The accompanying events shed an interesting light on the process of the fall of the political power of the Polish princes who were unable to keep sovereignty in the realities of the 13th century. The example of Silesia is particularly striking: in the last two decades of the 13th century, when the Polish Kingdom began to emerge, Silesian princes increasingly fell into the sphere of influence of the Kingdom of Bohemia. Extant documents testify to fief homages paid by subsequent Silesian princes, also mentioned in many narrative sources of the time, which together help us to understand an interesting process of political culture and tradition which took strong root among the Silesian Piasts and kept pushing them towards the peripheries of the political scene.

To understand this fully, one must have a good grasp of the period which in Polish historiography is called feudal fragmentation (*rozbiecie dzielnicowe*) and which until today is a subject of vivid arguments among Polish historians. In this context it seems that an answer to the question about a possible existence of the concept of a political and ideological centre of the Polish lands in the 13th century is of significance. There has been a strong conviction in Polish historiography concerning the leading role of Cracow and the Wawel Castle based on the idea of constant unification aspirations among the Piasts; this conviction dominates and weighs down on the debate about mutual relations among the Piast realms in the 13th century and obstructs an exact understanding of the relative importance of particular political centres. Thus a glance at the decisions of the Silesian Piasts at the beginning of the 14th century may help us better grasp those processes.

The erosion of the 13th-century reality has been noticed by the contemporaries; e.g., Jan of Czarnkow in his chronicle described the dynastic and political tradition of the Piasts stressing, first of all, equality and complete lack suzerainty between particular princes. Piotr of Byczyna in the *Chronicle of the Polish Princes* described the situation in a similar way. However, it is worth noting that the process of degradation of the political independence of the Silesian princes was an attempt at keeping their autonomy and functioning according to the old norms of equality which are mentioned by Jan of Czarnkow. It is possible that a fief homage and acceptance of the Bohemian suzerainty could have been taken for a lesser threat to their status than breaking the time-honoured equality by elevating one of them to the royal dignity.



## **The Lion, Duke and Common Origin. Ensuring the Authority of the Czech King on the Periphery of his Lands**

**Václav Žurek**

**17.45–18.10**

The domain of the Czech kings under the last two Přemyslids kings (1278-1306) and the first two kings of the House of Luxembourg (1310-1378) was very variable (except for the stable core lands of Bohemia and Moravia), constantly expanding or shrinking, and under each ruler it had a different extent. The dynamic transformation of the domain, especially its expansion into new territories and political units, led to the need for a comprehensible symbolic representation of royal authority on the periphery of the family domain. Especially in territories that were newly annexed or acquired for the dynasty, it was usually necessary to remind that they were now under the rule of the Bohemian kings. Whether it was the last Přemyslids or the first Luxembourgs, the various forms of symbolic identification that were used were primarily associated with the Bohemian kingdom rather than with a particular dynasty. Due to the aforementioned dynamics, the forms of the Czech ruler's representation changed and it was only during the reign of the Czech king and emperor Charles IV that we can say that the strategy of visibility of the royal majesty on the periphery reached a sophisticated concept.

As far as the geographical scope of my contribution is concerned, Silesia and its individual principalities, with Wrocław as the centre, Upper and Lower Lusatia, and Brandenburg, but also the special case of New Bohemia in the Upper Palatinate, which was under Luxembourg rule for only a short time. It is also possible to look at the border areas of the Bohemian lands. It is particularly a very obvious attempt to dominate public space - Lauf Castle near Nuremberg provides a good example. The statue of St Wenceslas and the Bohemian lion above the entrance were intended to symbolically represent the monarch in the space even in his absence as a form of substitute physical presence (*presentia corporalis*) and to help maintain royal authority. Similarly, the emblems of the Bohemian Kingdom - a two-tailed lion depicted on houses or in churches - could have served this purpose. The aforementioned "Bohemian" saint and patron saint St. Wenceslas, who often appeared in the areas of Luxembourg rule in the form of statues in public spaces or churches, but also used to be depicted on murals in churches and secular houses, could have served a similar purpose. His frequent depiction in these politically peripheral areas can be interpreted as a representation of Bohemian royal authority.

The literary production of the Prague court, which was also mediated outside the political centre, deserves special attention in the context of the communication of Czech royal power. A suitable example is the *Chronicon Bohemiae* by Přebík Pulkava of Radení, which was written in Latin at Charles's court and received a rich reception in Latin, Czech and German. And not only in Bohemia and Moravia, but also in the peripheral German-speaking countries in the union of the Bohemian Crown (E.g. Silesia). The prologue of the Chronicle recounts the story that all these areas were settled by one people under the leadership of the forefather Bohemus and later by his descendants. The narrative of a common *origo gentis* among the otherwise relatively heterogeneous population of the lands under Charles's hereditary rule helped to build a shared identity and helped to reinforce the authority of the Bohemian king beyond the centre of Bohemian royal power.

In my contribution, I will focus on various forms of strengthening the symbolic visibility of the authority of the Czech king in space on the one hand, and also on the literary communication of building a common identity and associated loyalty to the distant royal power and its local representatives on the other.

**Thursday, 23.03**

**“Boten sach man in senden in die stete allen enden”. Communication  
Between Rulers and Local Representatives in the Styrian Rhymed Chronicle  
of Otacher aus der Gaal**

**Daniel Bagi**

**10.00–10.25**

The so called Styrian Rhymed Chronicle composed by Ottacher aus der Gaal (around 1309-1320) is one of the first narratives in Medieval German language, giving historical overview about the history of Austria, Styria and the neighboring countries (Bavaria, Bohemia, Poland, Silesia, Hungary). The author was one of the familiars of an important ministerial-family of Styria, possessing knowledge both about local and central politics, knowing perhaps all of the local representatives of his life age and their relationship to Albrecht of Habsburg and his sons.

The text is very long, consisting of more than 98000 verses, and therefore it is an excellent historical source for many matters of historical, cultural etc. nature. The narratives contains a large scale of communicative techniques exercised by rulers depicted in the chronicle (Béla IV., Steven V., Ottokar II, Rudolf I of Habsburg, Wenzel II., Albrecht of Habsburg etc.), giving the opportunity to analyze them.

In the present paper I will try to present the communication network between the rulers and their officers, “men” etc. living in the peripheries of the countries of the kings, to show the modus of political interactions with local elites and communities, giving a structured overview of communicative situations classified after invitations to wars, wedding parties, coronation and other ceremonies etc. Furthermore, I will present the communication channels between the rulers and the local communities, officers etc., focusing on the diverse ways of notification, information telling etc. On this point, the most important question is the modus of the notification (oral and written forms, proven and unproven sources etc.). The next point of my presentation will affect the way of the communication, the diverse argumentative strategies, including the basic terms used by the communication.

**From Royal Periphery to National Centre for Learning – Scania as Periphery  
for the Danish Valdemarian King**

**Helle Vogt**

**10.25–10.50**

In 1103-04 the bishop of Lund in Scania, the most eastern of the three provinces that the Danish realm consisted of, was made archbishop and primate not only over the Danish, but also all the Nordic bishoprics. The Danish archbishopric was a huge political triumph for the Danish king, Erik I (r. 1095-1103), and the obviously idea was that it should place Lund and the province of Scania as an important powerbase for the Danish kings. However, the opposite happened. From 1131 on and off until 1157, the realm was hunted by dynastic struggles. And during the reign of the first Valdemarian kings (Valdemar I r. 1156/7-1182 and Knud VI r. 1182-1202) the kings together with their supporters

– as for instance archbishop Absalon (archb. 1178-1202) – struggled to get control over the province, something that only was completely achieved during the reign of Valdemar II (r. 1202-1241). It is my claim that in the early thirteenth century law and legislation actively was used as a very important tool to obtain that politic. This explain why Scania, as the first of the Danish provinces got written legislation in the early thirteenth century. Legislation functioned as a tool to strengthen the royal power, and to bring Scania legally and, hence, ideology closer to the other parts of the realm.

In the paper I will try to explain how Scania, with Lund founded as a royal power centre in the early eleventh century, went from being a royal centre around 1100 to being a hotspot for rebellion in the twelfth century. The sources for twelfth century Scanian history are few and scattered, but I will try to make some kind of coherent picture, but primarily focus on the following events:

- The civil wars (Battle of Fodevig, Olav Haraldsen's Scanian kingship 1140-43, Svend Grathe's powerbase in Scania, and the Valdemarian kings' in Zealand and Jutland).
- Archbishop Eskil and his grandsons' opposition to Valdemar I.
- The compromise between archbishop Eskil and the Scanians about tithe resulting in the Church law of Scania, 1171.
- The Scanian rebellion 1180-82.
- The royal Ordinance of Homicide, 1200, the Law of Scania (1202x1215) and Valdemar II's ordinance of ordeal by hot iron c. 1215.

At the end of the paper I will discuss if it is a coincidence that when the struggle between the archbishop Jakob Erlandsen and the crown (1256 – 1272), the right to legislate in Scania became one of the most important argument in both sides claims and accusations toward each other.

## **Silver as a Fiscal Resource in Tenth-century Poland. Changing Patterns between “Peripheral” Settlements and the Piast Central Strongholds**

**Dariusz Adamczyk**

**10.50–11.15**

In order to explore mechanisms how early rulerships worked we have to distinguish between three levels of action: political culture, political ideology and last but not least political economy. In my paper, I would like to analyse the role of political economy playing in the forming of the Piast lordship during the tenth century. I will try to answer the question how local resources were exploited and how executing power in peripheries did intertwine with symbolic communication. Finally, I ask which fiscal, political and symbolic roles tributes, taxes and gifts fulfilled.

The emergence of power centres in Wielkopolska (in English known as Greater Poland) is reflected by several strongholds built around the 920s/930s; these are significantly different from the older hill forts in Central Poland. We know of six central strongholds, all situated within a square of around fifty square kilometres: Poznań, Gniezno, Ostrów Lednicki, Giecz, Grzybowo and Moraczewo. They can be seen as a core area of the Piast power. The second important indicator of political shift in Central Poland constitute silver hoards appeared from the late 930s onwards. As Greater Poland was separated from cross-continental trade routes and from communities, which already disposed of dirhams (most important currency circulating in Eastern Europe at this time), people later called Piasts had to expand into the neighboured regions. Thus, the Piast expansion was triggered primarily by demand for silver and other luxury goods or for slaves who could be exchanged for silver and

luxury goods. The directions of expansion did determine the patterns of relationships between the Piast central strongholds and “peripheral” settlements: from external contacts to internal dependency.

But why the Piasts needed precious metals? The hoards in Greater Poland containing particularly fragmented coins and jewellery may well have been the property of the Piasts or of their followers. However, neither hacksilver nor the associated weights and scales can directly reflect the commercial logic of silver use. The strongholds in Greater Poland may have concomitantly served as centers of tribute collection for the Piasts, and as sites for various forms of exchange, including retinue payments and (ceremonial) gift-giving. This may explain why both jewelry and dirhams found in hoards were fragmented – to serve a fiscal and social prestige purpose, for which weighing was sufficient; they were not necessarily currency for commercial purpose. Several fragments of dirhams and silver jewelry are minuscule (sometimes less than 1 g, even 0.1 g). This suggests prestige and ritual functions, of a kind associated with potlach-like ceremonies. During such ceremonies, members of the elite redistributed or destroyed their property in order to maintain or strengthen their social status. The redistribution was meant to strengthen symbolic and political ties with the retinue. In addition, silver may have been a significant mechanism for regulating and a universal medium for influencing political relationships between the elites of Piast's polity, on one hand, and various local clans or groups in peripheral areas on the other hand.



# ELITES Project

[elites.historia.uw.edu.pl](http://elites.historia.uw.edu.pl)

