

GERMANIA

ANZEIGER

DER RÖMISCH - GERMANISCHEN KOMMISSION
DES DEUTSCHEN ARCHÄOLOGISCHEN INSTITUTS

JAHRGANG 102

2024

1.–2. HALBBAND

Brenker , Fabian,
Review of: Timo Bremer, Ländliche Herrschaft lokaler Eliten im
Wandel. Die Niederadelsburg Reuschenberg bei Elsdorf vom
Hochmittelalter bis in die Neuzeit

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/ger.2024.112933>

SCHRIFTFÜHRUNG FRANKFURT A.M. PALMENGARTENSTRASSE 10–12

REICHERT VERLAG WIESBADEN

320 SEITEN MIT 31 TEXTABBILDUNGEN, 12 TABELLEN

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ISBN 978-3-7520-0943-9

ISSN 0016-8874

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Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag · Wiesbaden – info@reichert-verlag.de · <https://reichert-verlag.de/>

Graphische Betreuung: Oliver Wagner, Lara Hies, Römisch-Germanische Kommission

Formalredaktion: Nadine Baumann, Bonn; Heiko Fischer, Timo Müller,

Römisch-Germanische Kommission

Satz: Print + design GbR, Frankfurt am Main

Druck: N. N.

Printed in Germany

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TIMO BREMER, Ländliche Herrschaft lokaler Eliten im Wandel. Die Niederadelsburg Reuschenberg bei Elsdorf vom Hochmittelalter bis in die Neuzeit. Rheinische Ausgrabungen volume 80. wbg Philipp von Zabern, Darmstadt 2022. € 69.90. ISBN 978-3-8053-5380-9 (Print). 364 pages with 110 figures, four appendices and 140 plates, one data-CD.

The book under review is Timo Bremer's dissertation, written between 2009 and 2015 and revised as part of the SFB 1167 *Macht und Herrschaft – Vormoderne Konfigurationen in transkultureller Perspektive* (Power and Governance – Pre-modern Configurations in Transcultural Perspective) at the University of Bonn. The documentation and excavation of Reuschenberg Castle near Cologne on the border of the Hambach Forest and T. Bremer's examination of the excavation data were largely funded by the *Stiftung zur Förderung der Archäologie im rheinischen Braunkohlenrevier* (Foundation for the Advancement of Archaeology in the Rhenish Lignite Mining District), whose funds came in big parts from RWE-Power AG, which caused the destruction of the monument for the purpose of coal mining. The same foundation honoured the work with a prize in 2017 and also subsidised the printing of the work.

Reuschenberg Castle, which was actually a listed building, had to make way for RWE's open-cast brown coal mine and was therefore documented from 1997 to 1999, demolished and almost completely excavated together with the outer bailey (totalling around 4ha) in 14 artificial layers. A total of 14 515 finds, 2391 features and 6241 stratigraphic references found their way into the evaluation.

The title of the work already reveals the claim to also contribute to current theoretical discourses. Accordingly, the reader is confronted with names such as Michel Foucault, Bruno Latour and Clifford Geertz in the first chapter (pp. 13–14), although they are barely mentioned in the rest of the book. This is followed by a brief discussion of common definitions of *Burg* (castle) in the second chapter (pp. 15–17), without arriving at a valid draft for the thesis. Both discussions are part of a qualification paper, but do not play a significant role in the following. Chapter 3 (pp. 19–30) provides a successful overview of the research, which reveals little about the following chapters. The fourth chapter (pp. 31–33) gives a brief overview of the history of ownership or, more precisely, of the discussion about the naming of family members after different dominions. Chapter 5 (pp. 35–36) is a brief outline of the excavation history. The following chapter (pp. 37–39) contains the natural and geographical location of the castle, which is particularly important with regard to the water supply.

In the seventh chapter (pp. 41–47), the author focuses on the methods of analysing finds and takes a critical look at the previous ways of evaluating ceramics. Among other things, he presents a table with 37 common or newly defined types of wares from the High Middle Ages to the most recent modern period with the characteristics attributed to them. He analysed around 30 pieces of each type of ware. The parameters of the defined ware types compiled in a correspondence analysis reveal that the characteristics of the clay composition in particular were not meaningful. A neutron activation analysis was also unable to link the ware types with their postulated places of origin. This is followed by a critical examination of various quantification methods (minimum number of individuals, number of fragments, addition of the percentage of edge and base pieces, mass) of ceramic finds, the last three of which were carried out in parallel and compared by the author (p. 46 fig. 8). The results could be far-reaching, but the judgement of these results should be left to specialists in Rhenish pottery.

In Chapter 8 (pp. 49–76), Bremer explains his computer-based processing of the features, using both correspondence analysis and stratigraphy. His understanding of and enthusiasm for digital solutions can also be seen in the fact that he (co-)programmed new programmes for stratigraphic analysis. In his statistical analyses, he always arrived at a classification based on quantitatively dominant characteristics and combinations of characteristics, both in terms of the finds and of the features. Using cluster analysis, he was able to differentiate between six phases of the castle. However, they cannot be clearly distinguished from one another in the printed 2D diagrams. Compared to the conventional dating of a feature based on the most recent find, this may minimise some inconsistencies, but it also risks overlooking special features. Two different programmes resulted in strikingly different assignments of the features to the phases, as shown in some figures (pp. 62–63 figs. 21; 22). The qualitative recording of thousands of finds, features and stratigraphic references between them as well as the programmed conclusiveness analysis alone show that the author dealt intensively and critically with each individual unit. The amount of time needed is almost unimaginable. The main innovative achievement of the work may lie in this computer-based management of the large amount of data and in calculating the phases and correlating the features to the phases, rather than in the social archaeological results that are discussed later in the book. Due to a lack of own IT knowledge, the judgement here is also left to the appropriate experts.

The argument put forward in the following sub-chapters in favour of the absolute dating of phases 1 to 6 are entirely understandable. For all those readers who think of castles primarily in terms of architectural building phases, it should be made clear that the phases represent changes in the quality and composition of the pottery finds deposited in the archaeological layers. They allow deposits to be assigned to a phase, but do not necessarily correlate with building phases. After

phases 1 and 2 there was a hiatus. Phases 3 to 6 appear to be characterised by continuous use. The only reference to the building history is the dendrochronological dating of the tower house to the early 16th century. It was therefore built in the middle of phase 3a, which is dated from the middle of the 15th century to around 1540.

Based on this, Chapter 9 (pp. 77–119) presents plans showing reconstructions of the individual phases. As is so often the case, few traces of Iron Age and Roman remains can be found in the excavation area. Bremer reconstructed phase 1 (2nd to 4th quarter of the 13th century) based on post positions, among other things, as a motte-and-bailey with a hill diameter of around 15 m, a building in front of it and a two-part outer bailey with buildings. In between and around it, he reconstructed a moat and an irrigation system. For phase 2, he was able to determine the decay of the building structures and the filling in of the ditches as well as numerous plough marks. After a period with no detectable traces on the site, renewed building and settlement activities began in phase 3 (2nd half of the 15th century to 1st half of the 17th century). The bricks for these buildings could have come directly from a kiln found outside the castle. Whether the features in the inner courtyard really are the remains of a crane is unclear. The lower part of the late Gothic tower, which stood until its demolition in 1998/99, was dendrochronologically dated to around 1500/20 and was extended in the following decades. There is also evidence of several buildings and a deep well. A polygonal moat was created at a greater distance from the castle centre. As standing structures were preserved from this phase onwards, these are now also included in the discussion, but only as long as they are relevant to the archaeological remains. The results of the research in the standing structures are not part of the work. At this point, the reader is provided for the first time with detailed photos of the castle building that stood until its demolition (pp. 90–94 figs. 49–56). A general view of the demolished castle follows a few pages later and shows the condition around 1900 (p. 109 fig. 76). The unfortunately rasterised black and white aerial photograph from 1997 (p. 113 fig. 81) – taken immediately before the demolition – would have made it easier for the reader to visualise the situation on site right at the beginning of the book. Phase 4 (1st half of the 17th century to last third of 18th century) is reconstructed primarily from historical drawings and the standing structures hitherto unknown to the reader. In the following phases 5 (late 18th century to around 1900) and 6 (late 19th and 20th century), additions and modifications are made to the buildings and the trenches, which will not be reproduced here. Each phase is concisely summarised again at the end of its respective sub-chapter. As the chapter on the reconstructions deals with the structural development within the phases, the impression may arise that the phases are treated here as construction phases.

Unfortunately, the maps showing the reconstructions are at different scales and with different sections of the site, which makes comparison difficult. The only fixed points are the remaining features of all periods, which are sometimes underlaid in grey. Throughout the chapter on the reconstructions, many logical conclusions are drawn, which are, however, difficult to understand based on the photos and diagrams in the text. The chapter is concluded by a digital landscape reconstruction of phase 1 with visual axes and perspectives during the contemporary access to the castle complex.

The previous discussions form the basis for the tenth chapter (pp. 121–150). In this chapter, the author focusses on his main topic, the social interpretation of the finds, features and animal bones. Bremer discusses a broad spectrum of methodological approaches to each category, referring to archaeological comparative studies as well as to literature on pictorial and written sources. However, most of the social theory and historical background in chapters 10.1 and 10.2 remain unmentioned in the following. With well-founded criticism, the author puts many of the archaeological

approaches into perspective, as he has already done in chapter 7 with the pottery. In his analysis of the animal bone finds, Bremer applies stratigraphic calculations using χ^2 and Cramer's V to show the possibilities for comparing differently recorded find complexes. As a result, the animal bones belonging to phase 3 in particular show a strikingly high proportion of cattle bones for castles.

The author has clearly endeavoured to filter out the meaningful aspects from the quantity of finds and to interpret these sensitively and without overestimating them. In the end, a relatively simple and somehow familiar result remains: a few areas around the central buildings are interpreted as zones of a higher standard of living due to the presence of stoneware, flat glass, stove ceramics or roof tiles. There are no finds relating to playing or hunting and extraordinary few related to riding and war. Based on these results alone, the presence of nobility could only be inferred for phases 1 and 3. It are precisely these two phases that the author attributes to a deliberate overall conception of the complex, an essential criterion of an aristocratic castle according to Thomas Biller. This chapter is fascinating in that the archaeological record of Reuschenberg Castle can be considered exceptionally good due to the extensive excavation. The exemplary restrained interpretation of such an extraordinary excavation thus impressively demonstrates the methodological limits of social archaeology based on settlement finds. Based upon a wide theoretical discussion and a great deal of computer-based, state-of-the-art analysis, the result in the end is a well-known picture. It is possible that a similar result, although not quantified in this way, would have been reached in the 20th century without computers. However, the rather banal result in relation to the effort involved in no way takes anything away from Bremer's work! It just shows how predictable the results can be if one takes a critical look at the sources and focusses on the safest and therefore smallest part of their informative potential. As chapters 10.3 and 10.4 were probably swapped before printing, the references to chapter 10.3 within chapter 10.3 actually refer to chapter 10.4.

Chapters 11 (pp. 151–153) and 12 (pp. 155–157) contain two summaries. While excavation analyses and written sources suggest a decline in settlement in the late Middle Ages, the written sources from the modern period attribute more importance to the castle than the findings. According to archaeological sources, the castle was only of greater importance to its owners in the 13th and 16th/17th centuries. In these times of social upheaval for the lower nobility, the architectural appearance of the complex and the performance of the lords living there played a major role, according to Bremer. An English summary is missing. This is followed by various indexes and tables. The book concludes with 140 plates with a few elevations and sections of some demolished buildings, excavation plans and profiles, samples of ceramics and rim profiles as well as excellent photographic and profile drawings of the finds. In addition to a few shoe and leather finds, a wooden bowl and a few bone, stone, and metal artefacts, most of the finds presented are ceramic and glass artefacts.

As modern as the content of the book is, the technology of the enclosed CD-ROM, containing Appendix 15.1 with ceramic sample and the catalogue of features, is unfortunately already outdated at the time of publication. Due to the lack of a CD drive on today's laptops, it will probably share the fate of microfiches in the foreseeable future if the two PDFs are not made available on a server of the publisher or the editors. Unfortunately, there is no catalogue of the objects depicted on the plates. However, some information can be found in the catalogue of features on the CD-ROM, for which the full-text search or the order according to feature numbers is useful. As the author devotes his attention to the castle and hardly considers the usual antiquarian treatment of finds, these are used solely to date the features and define social activity zones. No single find is analysed and interpreted individually in the text. In principle, this is regrettable, but in view of the quantity of finds as well as their less spectacular character, this approach is understandable.

Overall, Bremer's dissertation is the careful and critical analysis of an extensive excavation. The main criticism is the lack of photos of the demolished castle or the excavation in earlier parts of the

book. From an epistemological point of view, this might be an interesting experiment, however, as for large parts of the book the reader has no idea what the complex looked like. The structure of the volume is coherent, the central theme easy to follow. Only the *Herrenhaus* (manor house), which is always placed in inverted commas, is not really introduced, but is used insidiously in the arguments from phase 3 onwards. Thankfully, the author usually mentions the phase and dating together, so there is no need for tiresome page-turning. Bremer meticulously analysed the immense number of features and finds using modern, IT-supported methods. Such forward-looking methods will certainly be critically questioned and adapted in the future. The judgement of statistical methods is left to others. Since he applies considerable source criticism to the finds and does not allow himself to be seduced by conventional narratives, the result is ultimately far less spectacular than the title would suggest. In this respect, the work is perhaps typical of university research into medieval and modern archaeology since the turn of the millennium: The actual potential of the source situation often does not match the desire for theoretical discourse. This makes it all the more important to view sources critically and not to draw any far-reaching conclusions from them. Bremer seems to have succeeded in this, not least thanks to his differentiated language. He always remains exemplarily brief and concise.

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MAX VAN DER SCHRIEK, Archaeological Approaches to and Heritage Perspectives on Modern Conflict. Beyond the Battlefields. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2022. € 146,00 exkl. MwSt. ISBN 978-94-6372-985-7 (Paperback). € 145,99. ISBN 978-90-4855-414-0 (PDF e-Book). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789463729857>.

Bei dem zu besprechenden Buch handelt es sich um die Dissertation von Max van der Schriek, die er zwischen 2014 und 2019 verfasst hat. Die meisten Literaturzitate und bibliografischen Hinweise enden mit dem Jahr 2017, einige reichen bis in das Jahr 2018, die konkrete Druckvorbereitung erfolgte 2021, veröffentlicht wurde das Buch 2022. Diese Rezension wurde 2024 geschrieben und 2025 veröffentlicht, also rund sechs Jahre nach den intensiven Forschungen des Autors. So ist es nicht ganz einfach eine kritische Würdigung zu einem Buch in einem sehr prosperierenden Zweig der Archäologie zu schreiben, in dem sich in den 2010er- und nun den 2020er-Jahren archäologische Aktivitäten, Forschungsfragen und Fragen bzgl. Denkmalpflege, des (archäologischen) Erbes und der Erinnerungskultur von modernen Konflikten immens weiterentwickelt haben. Zahlreiche grundlegende überblicksartige Publikationen und unzählige Einzelstudien sind in diesen sechs Jahren veröffentlicht worden.

Im Fokus des Autors steht insbesondere die Entwicklung der Konfliktarchäologie in den Niederlanden, und er insistiert auf etlichen Implementierungen insbesondere in der niederländischen Denkmalpflege und Forschung, sehr häufig nimmt er aber auch Bezug auf Entwicklungen in anderen Teilen Europas. Hier ist zu differenzieren und zu beachten, was bis 2017 Status quo war. Zudem sind manche von M. van der Schriek als neu bezeichnete und zu implementierende theoretische und methodologische Ausführungen heute längst allgemein in der Archäologie, in der universitären