

EAA session proposal (MERC session)

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The Archaeology of Magyar Raids in Western and Eastern Europe

In the 9th and 10th centuries Western and Eastern Europe suffered from the raids of highly mobile Magyar horsemen. Only with the Battle at the Lech in AD 955 the East-Frankish King Otto I put an end to nomad incursions into Western Europe, while attacks on the Byzantine Empire continued until AD 970.

Whereas the contemporaneous “Viking raids” are almost omnipresent in the scholarly and public discourse, the “Magyar raids” are comparably little established. Nevertheless, material evidence of the Magyar can be found both as direct evidence in the context of single finds and graves and as indirect evidence in the form of fortifications as attempts of countermeasures. In various regions the interaction between Magyar and other ethnicities is archaeologically visible through a hybridisation of material culture, in particular relating to weaponry and martial attire. On the Eastern spheres of the continent e.g., evidence of Viking and Magyar warfare even merge in joint campaigns and court services performed in territories from Scandinavia to the Kievan Rus and Byzantium.

This session – which originally was accepted for the 2020 EAA Conference in Budapest – wants to discuss the Magyar evidence in Western and Eastern Europe between the poles of warfare and cultural adaptation (in the light of the written sources) during the period preceding the settlement of the Carpathian Basin and especially at the dawn of the Kingdom of Hungary. The session will address the following questions:

What is the material evidence of the Magyar within the Carpathian Basin? How do we interpret Magyar armoury from different contexts found outside their homelands? What made the Magyar raiders so successful? What countermeasures were undertaken by their opponents? Is it possible to identify plundered objects from Eastern and Western Europe in the Carpathian Basin? Can we pinpoint the interfaces of technology transfer and cultural adaption?

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