

Call for papers

Glass in Western Europe AD 700-1600

8th International Congress of the *Association Française pour l'Archéologie du Verre*

5-7 December 2016, Besançon (France)

The 8th International Congress of the *Association Française pour l'Archéologie du Verre (AFAV)* will be held on 5-7 December 2016 in Besançon (France). Archaeologists, historians, archaeometrists, restorers, glass professionals and enthusiasts will be gathering around a common topic: "Glass from the eighth to the sixteenth century in Western Europe".

Middle Ages were highlighted since the very beginning of the association especially through the exhibition catalogue "*À travers le verre, du Moyen Âge à la Renaissance*" in 1989 and the conference proceedings *Le verre de l'Antiquité tardive et du haut Moyen Âge* in 1995. One must recognize that since then, no significant state-of-the-art overview has been published. An issue also noticeable at European level since the last relevant document is the exhibition catalogue "*Phönix aus Sand und Asche. Glas des Mittelalters*" published in 1988.

One must acknowledge that the increasing number of rescue and systematic excavations on medieval sites, and the democratization of new conservation methods have allowed a considerable improvement and renewal of this thematic. However, as it was already stated above, the lack of comprehensive overviews is still greatly hindering local studies. Therefore, this congress intends to provide the opportunity to think about the significance of glass products in medieval societies. The eighth century is an especially significant period for Western Europe, where new political, economic and cultural systems are flourishing in every part of the area. In this respect, for example, we have to ask ourselves what was the influence of the Islamic world on glass consumption in the Iberian Peninsula and beyond? Furthermore, in the northern part of the continent, the remains of the Viking trade *emporium* allow us to consider long-distance trades of glass manufactured goods. Whence did these luxurious objects, found in settlements and tombs of the Scandinavian elite, come from? And what about the Antique legacy in the Frankish kingdom? Finally, a major transformation of glass manufacturing occurs at the end of the eighth century in Western Europe, a manufacturing process which was previously largely dependent on Near Eastern raw material imports. The use of plant ash for glass making had necessarily an impact on the location of workshops, but also on the way they were functioning and the management of raw materials resources. Should we speak of a breaking point in the glass manufacturing process, or should we consider a gradual evolution from one process to another? Is there one prominent model in the overall area, or is it possible to identify local disparities?

Beginning from the High Middle Ages, glass has become increasingly important in various fields such as tableware, jewellery, architecture, lighting, optic and medicine. Does the only common denominator for the success of these objects is their shared plastic properties: malleability, transparency and colorability? Or should we also take into consideration its symbolic value, especially in liturgical and funerary contexts? The use, meaning and value of such uncovered artefacts are not always well defined. Those social and economic markers have necessarily changed over time or can be subject to regional dissimilarities. In this regard it seems relevant to raise the possibility that glass is indeed a social marker. And, as such, glass artefacts need to be brought back in their historical context,

connected back to territorial entities and populations, in order to question the socio-economic status of consumers and production sites.

If exhaustively is out of reach, this congress intends, however, to achieve an updated state of research. For this purpose, original works and thematic overviews, whether chronological or geographical, are expected on the subject of production, distribution and uses of medieval glass in Western Europe. Overcoming academic and national boundaries is also one of the primary objectives. This exercise will certainly require not to reason in quantitative terms but rather in qualitative ones, especially for the earlier periods which are more dependent on discoveries and their state of conservation.

The 8th International AFAV Congress therefore wishes to highlight the progress in glass history but also to draw attention to the shortcomings of this thematic, in order to give guidelines for researches to come on a material which has already proved its relevance for a better understanding of medieval societies. Submitted papers will be reviewed by a scientific committee. Interdisciplinary approaches based on exploitation of archaeological, historic and archaeometric sources, and collaborations between researchers, will be flavoured. Oral and poster presentations can be submitted in English or French.