

## Call for Papers

### Workshop: Heterarchies and Power Dynamics in Post-Roman Europe (4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century AD)

**Date:** 05-07.11.2025

**Location:** University of Bonn

Political, economic, cultural, and religious factors intricately interplay and contribute to the formation of power structures within complex societies. Individuals in positions of authority utilize these factors to gain support and legitimize their status within communities. Conversely, communities may challenge authorities if there is dissatisfaction with their roles. When a social equilibrium is disrupted, communities reassess their priorities and leaders' ability to adapt is tested, resulting in highly dynamic environments where various power hierarchies coexist. This condition is aptly described by the concept of heterarchy, which denotes groups whose elements are "unranked or [...] possess the potential of being ranked in a number of different ways" (Crumley 1995).

Traditionally employed to avoid evolutionist perspectives on the development of complex societies, heterarchy can serve as a valuable conceptual tool for examining transformative periods. In post-Roman Europe, the disintegration of centralized imperial authority led to the decentralization of power among entities of various nature and scale. Consequently, the adaptable concept of heterarchies is proposed as a more appropriate framework for understanding the interactions between vertical power structures (hierarchies) and horizontal social relations (communities) within post-Roman society, at both local and regional levels. This approach aids in systematizing knowledge about early medieval societies and offers new frameworks for developing inter-regional comparisons.

This workshop seeks contributions that examine the role of heterarchies—defined as multi-ranked community systems—in the social, political, and economic transformations of post-Roman Europe. We are particularly interested in analyzing the diverse and nonlinear processes that influenced the transition from antiquity to the medieval world, focusing on how heterarchical frameworks can reveal the significance of overlooked or marginalized groups in societal transformation. The event aims to promote interdisciplinary discussions on power dynamics beyond traditional hierarchical models, incorporating perspectives from archaeology, history, art history, and related disciplines.

The workshop will be organized in thematic panels that include case studies from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, addressing the following key topics:

- **Materiality:** Examining material evidence of heterarchies.
- **Urban and Rural Contexts:** Comparing and analyzing possible interdependencies.
- **Long-term Perspectives:** Investigating power structures in Europe over extended periods.
- **Actors and Agency:** Exploring roles of individual actors and groups within heterarchical frameworks.
- **Communication:** Evaluating the media used for power negotiation.

**Submission Guidelines:**

We welcome abstracts (max. 300 words) for 20-minute presentations incorporating the concept of heterarchy in practical case studies. Please include your name, affiliation, and a short bio (max. 100 words). Submissions should be sent to [heterarchies@uni-bonn.de](mailto:heterarchies@uni-bonn.de) by **04.05.2025**. Acceptance notifications will be provided by **31.05.2025**.

Accommodation in Bonn is provided (2 nights; 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> November).

For further inquiries, please contact Dr. Luigi Pinchetti: [pinchetti@uni-bonn.de](mailto:pinchetti@uni-bonn.de).

We look forward to your contributions and an engaging exchange on the dynamics of power in post-Roman societies!

**Organizing Committee:**

Dr. H. C. Jacobs, Art History

J. A. Knechtel, M.A., Christian Archaeology

V. E. Palmowski, M.A., Pre- and Early Historical Archaeology

Dr. A. Paradzinski, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies

Dr. L. Pinchetti, Christian Archaeology

Dr. J. I. O. van't Westeinde, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies

**Financing:**

The workshop is sponsored by the "Transdisciplinary Research Area 5- Presents Pasts" of the University of Bonn. Funded as part of the Excellence Strategy of the federal and state governments.