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**CHRIS WICKHAM IN PREOBRAZBE
SREDNJEŠKIH SKUPNOSTI**

**CHRIS WICKHAM AND THE TRANSFORMATIONS
OF MEDIEVAL COMMUNITIES**

← Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Alegorija dobre in slabe vlade*,
detajl Učinkov dobre vlade na podeželju (1338–1339),
Siena, Palazzo Pubblico/
Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *The Allegory of Good and Bad
Government*, detail of the Effects of God Government
in the Country (1338–1339), Siena, Palazzo Pubblico

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Uvodnik

Introduction

Mednarodno središče za primerjalne zgodovinske raziskave (ICCHS) vsako akademsko leto tradicionalno odpre z Uvodnim ICCHS-predavanjem in spremljevalnimi dogodki. Tridnevni program na Filozofsko fakulteto Univerze v Ljubljani pripelje priznane zgodovinarje in umetnostne zgodovinarje. Letos bomo od 16. do 18. oktobra 2025 gostili profesorja Chrisa Wickhama, enega najvplivnejših evropskih medievistov.

Raziskave profesorja Wickhama segajo od družbene in gospodarske zgodovine Italije do primerjalnega preučevanja postrimske in srednjeveške Evrope ter Sredozemlja. Njegovo delo je občutno zaznamovalo naše razumevanje širokih procesov družbene, gospodarske in institucionalne preobrazbe med pozno antiko in srednjim vekom, teme, ki močno sovpadajo s poudarkom Središča na interdisciplinarnem pristopu.

Letošnji bilten je osredotočen na različne vidike preobrazbe srednjeveških družb in vsebuje tudi razmišljanja, podana na mednarodni študentski razpravi »Od bede do blišča? Preobrazbe srednjeveških skupnosti«, ki je potekala 28. maja 2025 v Celjskem mladinskem centru v Celju in na kateri so sodelovali študenti zgodovine z univerz v Ljubljani, Padovi, Trstu in Zagrebu. Prispevki razmišljajo o temah, kot so denimo prehod iz antike v srednji vek, vzpon italijanskih mestnih komun in sredozemskega gospodarstva, pri čemer kot skupno referenčno točko jemljejo tri najvplivnejše knjige Chrisa Wickhama.

The International Centre for Comparative Historical Studies (ICCHS) traditionally holds an opening lecture series to kick off each academic year. The three-day programme brings renowned historians and art historians to the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. This year, from 16 to 18 October 2025, we will host Professor Chris Wickham, a well-renowned historian of the Middle Ages.

Professor Wickham's research ranges from the social and economic history of Italy to the comparative study of post-Roman and medieval Europe and the Mediterranean. His work has significantly shaped our understanding of the broad processes of social, economic, and institutional transformation between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages – themes that resonate strongly with the ICCHS's emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches.

This year's bulletin focuses on several aspects concerning the transformation of medieval societies and includes reflections presented at the international student debate "From Rags to Riches? The Transformations of Medieval Communities," held at the Celje Youth Center on 28 May 2025, with participants from the universities of Ljubljana, Padua, Trieste, and Zagreb. The bulletin's contributions reflect on the major themes explored during the event, including the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, the rise of Italian city communes, and the Mediterranean economy, taking as a shared point of reference three of Chris Wickham's most influential books.



Program Uvodnega ICCHS predavanja –

akademsko leto 2025/26

The programme of the Opening ICCHS lecture –

Academic Year 2025/26

**Četrtek, 16. oktober 2025/
Thursday, 16 October 2025**

18.00

Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta
(Aškerčeva cesta 2, Ljubljana), predavalnica 34/
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts
(Aškerčeva cesta 2, Ljubljana), lecture hall 34

UVODNO ICCHS PREDAVANJE:

Chris Wickham, *Upravljanje italijanskih mestnih
komun v 12. stoletju: pogled od spodaj*

OPENING ICCHS LECTURE:

Chris Wickham, *Governing Twelfth-century
Italian City Communes: the View from Below*

Predavanje bo v angleškem jeziku/
The lecture will be given in English.

**Petek, 17. oktober 2025/
Friday, 17 October 2025**

11.30

Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta
(Aškerčeva cesta 2, Ljubljana), predavalnica 18/
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts
(Aškerčeva cesta 2, Ljubljana), lecture hall 18

Pogovor s Chrisom Wickhamom, moderirata
doc. dr. Dušan Mlacović (Univerza v Ljubljani,
Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za zgodovino;
ICCHS) in izr. prof. dr. Miriam Davide
(Univerza v Trstu, Oddelek za humanistične
študije) (pogovor je odprt za javnost)/
Meet Chris Wickham, moderated by
Asst. Prof. Dr. Dušan Mlacović (University
of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of
History; ICCHS) and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Miriam
Davide (University of Trieste, Department
of Humanities) (open for public)

**Sobota, 18. oktober 2025/
Saturday, 18 October 2025**

Interna ekskurzija članov ICCHS z gostom/
Excursion for ICCHS members and our guest

Chris Wickham

je zaslužni profesor srednjeveške zgodovine na Univerzi v Oxfordu. Med letoma 1977 in 2005 je poučeval na Univerzi v Birminghamu, nato pa je bil profesor za srednjeveško zgodovino na All Souls College v Oxfordu (2005–2016), kjer je opravljal tudi funkciji vodje Fakultete za zgodovino in predstojnika Oddelka za humanistiko. Pozneje se je vrnil v Birmingham in bil tam ponovno delovno aktiven. Med letoma 2020 in 2021 je vodil Britansko šolo v Rimu. Wickham je kot gostujoči profesor predaval na univerzah v Firencah, Barceloni, Gironi, Buenos Airesu, Tübingenu, Parizu in drugod. Je član Britanske akademije, Državne akademije Lincejev ter častni član več evropskih akademij.

Wickhamove raziskave zajemajo širok spekter tem srednjeveške zgodovine. Obsežno se je posvečal družbeni in gospodarski zgodovini Italije med 5. in 12. stoletjem, pri čemer je posebno pozornost namenil podeželskim skupnostim, poselitvenim vzorcem, mestnemu življenju ter mehanizmom razreševanja sporov. Njegovo dolgoletno zanimanje za primerjalno zgodovino ga je vodilo v raziskovanje širših evropskih in sredozemskih preobrazb – od prehoda med antiko in srednjim vekom do tako imenovane »trgovinske revolucije« v srednjeveškem Sredozemlju –, ki jih preučuje z regionalnega vidika ter s kombinacijo arheoloških in pisnih virov.

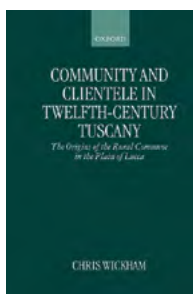
→ **Chris Wickham** is Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at the University of Oxford. He taught at the University of Birmingham from 1977 to 2005 and then held the Chichele Professorship of Medieval History at All Souls College, University of Oxford (2005–2016), where he also served as Head of the History Faculty and of the Humanities Division. He subsequently returned to Birmingham and served as Director of the British School at Rome (2020–2021). Wickham has also taught as a visiting professor at universities in Florence, Barcelona, Girona, Buenos Aires, Tübingen, Paris, and elsewhere. He is a Fellow of the British Academy, a member of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, and holds honorary memberships in several European academies.

Wickham's research covers a wide range of themes in medieval history. He has written extensively on the social and economic history of Italy between the 5th and 12th centuries, with particular attention to rural communities, patterns of settlement, urban life, and mechanisms of conflict resolution. His long-standing interest in comparative history has led him to explore broader European and Mediterranean transformations – from the transition between Antiquity and the Middle Ages to the so-called "commercial revolution" of the medieval Mediterranean – which he examines from a regional perspective and through a combination of archaeological and written evidence.

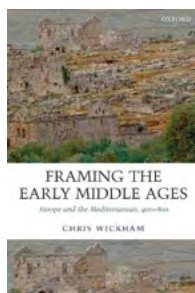


Izbrana bibliografija Chrisa Wickhama Selected bibliography

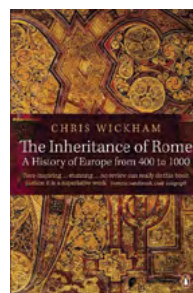
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the Origins of the Rural
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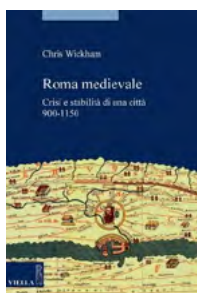
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University Press, 2023.





*Upravljanje italijanskih mestnih komun
v 12. stoletju: pogled od spodaj
Governing Twelfth-century Italian City Communes:
the View from Below*

Kako so italijanske mestne komune vladale na podeželju in kaj je pomenilo biti pod oblastjo mesta? Zmaga mestnih komun nad cesarjem Friderikom Barbarosso v letih 1176 in 1177 je bila zmaga za mestno avtonomijo, a z vidika podeželja je to pogosto pomenilo le zamenjavo oddaljene oblasti za drugo, bližjo in bolj dominantno. Sledeč sporom glede pravic v ruralni Italiji poznega 12. stoletja lahko vidimo, kako so kmetje dojemali to oblast: bila je res dominantna in pogosto samovoljna, kmetje pa za to niso bili hvaležni. Predavanje bo obravnavalo dvoumnost izvajanja mestne oblasti nad podeželjem v prvih petdesetih letih polne avtonomije.

→ How did Italian city communes rule their countryside, and what did it feel like to be ruled by a city? The victory of the city communes over the emperor Frederick Barbarossa in 1176–1177 was a victory for civic autonomy, but, from the standpoint of the countryside, it often just seemed like the substitution of one distant power for a closer and more domineering one. We can see, by examining instances of contested rights in rural late twelfth-century Italy, how peasants perceived that power: it was indeed domineering and often arbitrary, and the peasants were not necessarily grateful for it. This lecture will discuss the ambiguities that arose due to the exercise of urban power in the first fifty years of full autonomy.



↑ Udeleženci celjske študentske debate
(foto: Matija Terglav)/

The participants in the students' debate in Celje
(foto: Matija Terglav)

Chris Wickham in celjska študentska debata

Chris Wickham and students' debate in Celje

Karieri Chrisa Wickhama, enega vodilnih zgodovinarjev srednjega veka, je vselej lastna težnja po preseganju intelektualnih, disciplinarnih in geografskih meja. Od svojih zgodnjih študij o Toskani v 8. stoletju do novejših obsežnih in ambicioznih analiz Evrope in Sredozemlja od pozne antike do visokega srednjega veka Wickham dosledno izkazuje svojo zavezanost primerjalni zgodovini, poglobljenemu raziskovanju gospodarskih in družbenih struktur ter odprtosti do novih metod in pristopov. Njegova dela nas zato vedno znova vabijo, da premišljamo ustaljene pripovedi o srednjeveških družbah ter interpretativne okvire, na katerih temeljijo.

Da bi lahko srednjeveški svet razumel v vsej kompleksnosti, se Wickham pri svojem delu ne omeji zgolj na tradicionalna orodja zgodovinarja. To se nazorno zrcali v njegovem doslednem pritegovanju arheoloških virov ter pristopov socialne antropologije, področij, ki jih spretno vključuje v svoje zgodovinske analize, kar mu slednjič omogoča, da srednjeveške družbe osvetli z izjemno globino. Pri tem se zdi, da so tudi Wickhamove analize lokalnih dinamik in procesov dosledno usmerjene k razumevanju širših strukturnih vzorcev družbenih in gospodarskih sprememb med pozno antiko in poznim srednjim vekom.

Tri dela Chrisa Wickhama, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (2005), *Sleepwalking into a New World* (2015) in *The Donkey and the Boat* (2023), so predstavljala tudi osnovo za mednarodno štu-

dentsko debato, ki je potekala 28. maja 2025 v Celjskem mladinskem centru v Celju. Enajst študentov zgodovine iz Slovenije, Italije in Hrvaške, z univerz v Ljubljani, Padovi, Trstu in Zagrebu, se je v debati, odprti za javnost, z naslovom »Od bede do blišča? Preobrazbe srednjeveških skupnosti« posvetilo temeljnim spremembam v srednjem veku, ko je iz agrarne družbe izšla družba cvetočih urbanih naselij, živahne trgovinske dejavnosti in kompleksnih političnih struktur. Dogodek je predstavljal eno od skupnih aktivnosti Mednarodnega središča za primerjalne zgodovinske raziskave Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani in Oddelka za humanistične študije tržaške univerze. Gre za sodelovanje, ki je bilo vzpostavljeno na področju proučevanja zgodovine in umetnostne zgodovine na podlagi bilateralnega sporazuma o sodelovanju med univerzama v Ljubljani in Trstu. Namen tovrstnih skupnih aktivnosti in dogodkov je povezati (doktorske in magistrske) študente, ki nameravajo svojo poklicno kariero posvetiti raziskovanju regionalne srednjeveške zgodovine.

Na debati v Celju so sodelovali študentje štirih univerz: Klemen Bergant, asist. Matic Kristan, Aja Onuk, asist. Aljaž Sekne, Matija Terglav in Katarina Tič z Oddelka za zgodovino Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, Filippo Vigni, ki je diplomiral na Oddelku za zgodovinske, geografske in antične vede Univerze v Padovi, Davide Santoro, Daniel Venturuzzo in Davide Vitali z Oddelka za humanistične študije Univerze v Trstu ter Ivan Mrnarevič z Oddelka za zgodovino Filozofske

fakultete Univerze v Zagrebu. Dogodek sta povezovala doc. dr. Dušan Mlacović z Oddelka za zgodovino Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani in izr. prof. dr. Miriam Davide z Oddelka za humanistične študije Univerze v Trstu.

Dogodek so organizirali Mednarodno središče za primerjalne zgodovinske raziskave, programska skupina Slovenska zgodovina ter Katedra za zgodovino srednjega veka in pomožne zgodovinske vede Oddelka za zgodovino Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, Mestna občina Celje, Celjski mladinski center, Pokrajinski muzej Celje in Zgodovinsko društvo Celje.

→ Chris Wickham's career as one of the leading medieval historians has been characterised by a constant drive to transcend intellectual, disciplinary, and geographical boundaries. From his early studies of 8th-century Tuscany to more recent, broader, and more ambitious analyses of Europe and the Mediterranean from Late Antiquity to the High Middle Ages, Wickham has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to comparative history, in-depth exploration of economic and social structures, and openness to new methods and approaches. His works thus continually invite us to rethink familiar narratives about medieval societies and the interpretative frameworks that underpin them.

To understand the medieval world in all its complexity, Wickham has never limited himself to the traditional historian's toolkit. This is exemplified by his consistent inclusion of archaeological sources, along with approaches drawn from social anthropology – fields that he

has skilfully woven into his historical analyses and that have allowed him to reconstruct medieval societies with exceptional depth. Wickham's analyses of local dynamics and processes are always formulated with a broader ambition in mind, namely, to understand the structural patterns underlying the social and economic transformations from Late Antiquity to the late Middle Ages.

Chris Wickham's three books, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (2005), *Sleepwalking into a New World* (2015), and *The Donkey and the Boat* (2023), formed the focal point for an international student debate held at the Celje Youth Center on 28 May 2025. Eleven students from the universities of Ljubljana, Padua, Trieste, and Zagreb took part in the discussion, entitled "From Rags to Riches? The Transformations of Medieval Communities", which cantered on the Middle Ages' paradigm shifts in society, as agrarian settlements gave rise to budding urban centres with bustling trade infrastructure and complex forms of political rule. The event, which was open to the public, was one of the many activities spearheaded by the University of Ljubljana's ICCHS and the University of Trieste's Department of Humanities. It was a collaboration launched by both universities to study history and art history, giving opportunities to magisterial and doctoral students intending to dedicate their careers to researching regional matters from the Middle Ages.

The following students took part in the debate: Klemen Bergant, Assist. Matic Kristan, Aja Onuk, Assist. Aljaž Sekne, Matija Terglav, and Katarina Tič of the University of Ljubljana's

Department of History, Filippo Vigni, graduate of the Department of Historical, Geographical and Antiquity Sciences at the University of Padua, Davide Santoro, Daniel Venturuzzo, and Davide Vitali of the University of Trieste's Department of Humanities, and Ivan Mrnarević of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb.

The event was coordinated by Asst. Prof. Dr. Dušan Mlacović of the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of History, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Miriam Davide from the University of Trieste, Department of Humanities. It was hosted by the UL ICCHS, the Slovene History Programme Group, and the Chair of Medieval History and Auxiliary Sciences of History (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of History), along with the Municipality of Celje, the Celje Youth Center, the Celje Regional Museum, and the Historical Society of Celje.

Zapletene transformacije postrimskega sveta



The Complex Transformations of the Post-Roman World

Knjiga *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, objavljena leta 2005, nedvomno ostaja eno najvplivnejših del Chrisa Wickhama. Obravnava prehod Evrope in Sredozemlja iz antike v srednji vek skozi prizmo gospodarske in družbene zgodovine. Na prvi pogled se nemara zdi, da gre zgolj za še eno izmed številnih monografij, posvečenih tej kočljivi historiografski problematiki. A Framing, ravno nasprotno, zavzema prav posebno mesto. Medtem ko številni moderni znanstveni pregledi obdobja v ospredje postavljajo politične ali kulturne vidike, Wickham zgodnjesorodnjeveške spremembe razume kot procese, ki temeljijo na preoblikovanju zemljiške posesti, obdavčitve, družbene hierarhije in načinov produkcije.

Ta metodološka drža izhaja iz Wickhamovega temeljitega proučevanja raznolikosti postrimske stvarnosti v nekdanjem imperiju. Pri tem presega tradicionalno, ozko osredotočenost na zahodno Evropo in vključuje tudi vire z bizantinskega vzhoda, Severne Afrike in Bližnjega vzhoda. Medtem ko je na nekaterih območjih nekdanjega imperija prišlo do izrazitih diskontinuitet (denimo v Britaniji), so se drugod odvili dolgotrajnejši procesi preoblikovanja (na primer v Bizancu ali zgodnjem islamskem Bližnjem vzhodu). Avtor regionalno raznolikost postavlja v ospredje ter spodbuja zgodovinarje k preseganju poenostavljenih modelov »propada« rimskega sveta. Njegov pristop sovпада z aktualnimi težnjami številnih raziskovalcev, ki

omenjeno obdobje vse pogostejše osmišljajo kot »preobrazbo rimskega sveta« – postopen, neenakomeren proces, v katerem so se rimske institucije in pripadnosti postopoma spremenile, prilagodile ali izginile, vsaka s svojim ritmom in na svoj način.

Na podlagi tega Framing razvije primerjalni model strukturnih preobrazb v postrimskih družbah. Namesto da bi se osredotočil na propad imperija ali na »barbarske« vpade, Wickham zasleduje, kako so različne regije nekdanjega rimskega imperija prešle iz gospodarskih sistemov, utemeljenih na pobiranju davkov, v sisteme, ki so temeljili na zemljiški renti. Pri tem se je poznorimski davčni sistem, zgrajen na prefinjenem aparatu za pobiranje davkov, postopoma umaknil političnim strukturam, v katerih je zemljiška renta postala glavni vir ustvarjanja presežka. Regije, kot so Galija, Italija, vizigotska Španija, bizantinski Vzhod, Danska in Irska, torej niso obravnavane kot različice ene teme, temveč kot ločene študije primerov, ki zasledujejo, kako se je preoblikovanje odvijalo glede na preživele institucije in prilagoditvene strategije.

Osišče analize zavzema upad aristokratske moči in bogastva, kar je imelo po Wickhamovem mnenju odločujoče posledice za gospodarsko izmenjavo. Ker je bilo aristokratsko povpraševanje temeljno gonilo trgovine na dolge razdalje, je njegova oslabitev vodila v zmanjšanje intenzivnosti izmenjav. Obenem je ohromitev

aristokratske moči v številnih regijah med 5. in 9. stoletjem domnevno omogočila večjo mero samostojnosti kmetov. Wickham tako pokaže, kako so premiki v razmerjih moči, zemljiški posesti in delovnih odnosih občutno preoblikovali lokalne družbe ter ponuja temeljno družbeno in gospodarsko razlago sprememb, ki so zaznamovale zgodnji srednji vek. Njegov fokus se odraža tudi v uporabljenih virih. Knjiga se v veliki meri opira na listine in druga pravna besedila ter narativna zgodovinska dela, poleg tega pa vključuje tudi arheološko gradivo, zlasti keramiko, s katerim osvetljuje vzorce gospodarskih sprememb.

Wickhamova metodologija v knjigi *Framing* je v osnovi strukturna in primerjalna ter temelji na dinamičnem neomarksističnem pristopu. To pa nikakor ne pomeni ideološke togosti – ravno nasprotno. Wickhama v prvi vrsti zanima, kako so bile družbe organizirane: kdo je imel v lasti zemljo, kdo je nadzoroval delovno silo, kako je bilo razdeljeno premoženje in kako sta se ohranjali politična in ekonomska moč. Pri tem se vsekakor opira na marksistične koncepte, kot so razred, načini proizvodnje in ustvarjanje presežka, vendar jih uporablja kot dinamična analitična orodja, in ne kot toge kategorije ali modelov. Čeravno deloma sprejema tradicionalno interpretacijo, da so številni deli postrimske Evrope prešli iz sužnjelastniških k zemljiškim oblikam ustvarjanja presežka, velja opozoriti, da Wickham pri tem ne izhaja iz okornega teleološkega razumevanja tega procesa, značilnega za tradicionalno ortodoksno marksistično misel. Namesto tega poudarja, da se je ta tranzicija v posameznih regijah odvila različno, saj je bila pogojena s vsakokratnimi lokalnimi pogoji in tamkajšnjo institucionalno dediščino.

Avtorjeva odločitev za družbeno in gospodarsko perspektivo je bila izrazita in premišljena. Teme, ki se jim posveča – kmečki načini proizvodnje, ustvarjanje presežka, aristokratska

prevlada in regionalne menjalne mreže – so bistvene za razumevanje družbenoekonomskih preobrazb. Gre za temeljna izhodišča za sleherno analizo zgodnjega srednjega veka, saj vzpostavljajo okvir, v katerega gre umestiti tudi siceršnje dimenzije tega obdobja, vključno s kulturnim in verskim razvojem. Kot izhaja že iz samega naslova, Wickhamov namen torej ni bil ponuditi poenostavljenega odgovora, marveč zagotoviti analitični okvir za razumevanje zapletenih transformacij postrimskega sveta.

→ *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, published in 2005, undoubtedly remains one of Chris Wickham's most influential works, as it examines the transition that Europe and the Mediterranean underwent from Antiquity to the Middle Ages through the lens of economic and social history. At first glance, it might seem like just another among many monographs devoted to this complex historiographical issue, yet *Framing* holds a distinctive position: whereas many modern scholarly surveys of the period emphasize political or cultural developments, Wickham interprets early medieval transformations as rooted in the reshaping of landholding, taxation, social hierarchy, and modes of production.

This methodological stance stems from Wickham's sustained engagement with the diversity of post-Roman realities across the former empire. He moves beyond the traditional, narrow focus on Western Europe by incorporating sources from the Byzantine East, North Africa, and the Middle East – regions that followed markedly different trajectories during this turbulent era. While certain areas of the former empire experienced sharp discontinuities (as in Britain), others underwent more gradual processes of transformation (as in Byzantium or the early Islamic Middle East). The author places this regional diversity at the heart of his narrative, urging historians to move past simplistic models

of Roman “decline” or “collapse”. His approach aligns with current scholarly trends that increasingly conceptualize this period as a “transformation of the Roman world” – a slow, uneven process in which Roman institutions and identities gradually changed, adapted, or faded away, each in its own rhythm and form.

Building on a broader understanding of complexity and regional diversity, *Framing* develops a comparative model of structural transformations across post-Roman societies. Rather than focusing on imperial collapse or “barbarian” invasions, Wickham traces how the various regions of the former Roman Empire underwent a transition from tax-based to land-based states. In this process, the late Roman fiscal state, built upon a sophisticated apparatus for extracting taxes, gradually gave way to successor political structures in which land rent became the primary source of surplus extraction. Regions such as Gaul, Italy, Visigothic Spain, the Byzantine East, Denmark, and Ireland are not treated as mere variants of a central story but rather as distinct cases, each analysed in relation to its own institutional survival and strategies of adaptation.

A central focus of Wickham’s analysis is the decline of aristocratic power and wealth, which, he argues, had decisive consequences for patterns of economic exchange. Since aristocratic demand was the primary engine of long-distance trade, its weakening led to a marked reduction in the intensity of exchange networks. At the same time, the erosion of aristocratic dominance between the fifth and ninth centuries is thought to have enabled a greater degree of peasant autonomy in many regions. Wickham thus demonstrates how shifts in power relations, landholding, and labour structures profoundly reshaped local societies, offering a fundamentally social and economic explanation for the changes that marked the early Middle Ages. The book relies primarily on written

sources (charters, legal texts, and narrative histories) but also integrates archaeological material, particularly ceramics, to shed light on patterns of economic transformation.

Wickham’s methodology in *Framing* is fundamentally structural and comparative, grounded in a dynamic neo-Marxist approach. This is by no means a mark of ideological rigidity – quite the opposite; Wickham is concerned, above all, with how societies were organised: who owned land, who controlled labour, how wealth was distributed, and how political and economic power was maintained. While he does draw on Marxist concepts such as class, modes of production, and surplus extraction, he employs them as dynamic analytical tools rather than rigid categories or prescriptive models. Although Wickham partially accepts the traditional interpretation that many parts of post-Roman Europe underwent a transition from slave-based to land-based forms of surplus extraction, he does not approach this transformation through the lens of teleological orthodoxy characteristic of classical Marxist thought. Instead, he emphasises that the transition unfolded in diverse ways across regions, shaped by local conditions and specific institutional legacies. The author’s decision to highlight the social and economic perspective was deliberate and profound. The topics he addresses – peasant methods of production, the creation of surplus, aristocratic dominance, and regional exchange networks – are crucial for understanding the period’s socioeconomic transformations. They constitute the foundation from which any analysis of the early Middle Ages must take root, as they form the framework upon which all the period’s other dimensions must be hung, including cultural and religious development. As the title itself suggests, Wickham’s aim was not to offer a simplistic answer, but to provide an analytical framework for understanding the intricate transformations of the post-Roman world.

Misliti in razumeti komunalni razvoj



To think and understand the communal development

Razvoj komun v severnih in osrednjih italijanskih mestih predstavlja eno osrednjih historiografskih vprašanj italijanske srednjeveške zgodovine. Chris Wickham je s svojim delom *Sleepwalking into a new world: The emergence of Italian City Communes in the twelfth century* (Princeton University Press, 2015) ponudil teoretski razmislek, s pomočjo katerega je mogoče bolje razumeti ključno obdobje prehoda iz predkomunalne v komunalno družbo. Uvodno študijo je dopolnil s tremi med seboj različnimi primeri komunalnega razvoja v Milanu, Pisi in Rimu – gre za mesta, za katera je poleg dobro ohranjenih arhivskih na voljo tudi dovolj narativnih virov. Posebej zanimiva je jukstapozicija dveh severnoitalijanskih mest z Rimom, vendar ob poznavanju Wickhamovega opusa ne ravno presenetljiva; zdi se, da je s knjigo *Sleepwalking* ob spremembi fokusa na fenomen razvoja komun ter vključitvi več drugih primerov nadgradil svoje delo *Medieval Rome: Stability and Crisis of a City, 900–1150*, s katerim je »papeško« mesto predstavil predvsem kot – mesto. *Sleepwalking* zaključuje pregled več primerov iz posameznih regij, kjer se avtor ukvarja predvsem z lokalnimi posebnostmi in odstopanji, ki so se posledično kazala v komunalnem razvoju. Ključna teza Wickhamovega dela se zrcali v sámem naslovu knjige, ki v ospredje postavlja vprašanje o lastni in sočasni percepciji dogajanja, do katerega je v 11. in 12. stoletju prišlo v mestih. Komunalnega razvoja ne dojema kot

oblikovanja institucije od začetka do konca, temveč se primarno osredotoči na družbenopolitične spremembe v mestih v tem obdobju in opazuje nastanek komune kot rezultat teh procesov. Odmik od retrospektivnega, teleološkega in izrazito institucionalno osredotočenega pogleda, značilnega za večino dosedanjih obravnav komun v Italiji, omogoča svež, mladane otroško radoveden pristop. Zakaj kot zgodovinarji pogosto domnevamo, da so imeli prebivalci mesta jasno in konsistentno idejo, kaj so počeli ali kot Chris Wickham sam zapiše s poudarkom: »What did they think they were doing?« (str. 6).

Družbeno orientiran pogled na formiranje komune v ospredje postavlja analizo odločitev in vzorcev delovanja posameznih akterjev in skupnosti v tem obdobju. Avtor zapiše, da je imela komuna v svojih začetkih pravzaprav aristokratski predznak (primer Rima tu služi kot izjema, ki le potrjuje pristop z družbenega in ne institucionalnega vidika), torej so jo predstavljali predstavniki urbane aristokracije, ki so v duhu ne konflikta, temveč iskanja kompromisov želeli ohraniti moč družbenih skupin ter njihov položaj v okviru sprememb, ki so zajele italijanski polotok v 11. stoletju. Organska širitev delovanja komune ter vključevanje različnih družbenih skupin se pravzaprav skladata z idejo, da je šlo pri formiranju za dolgotrajen proces, ki se je razlikoval od mesta do mesta predvsem glede na prevladujočo družbeno sliko.

Wickham tu izpostavi, da celotna mestna skupnost, torej politično aktivno moško prebivalstvo mesta, v začetku k njenemu delovanju ni bila v celoti pritegnjena. Sčasoma se je aristokratski predznak predstavnikov komune izgubil in je ta zajela večje število aktivnega prebivalstva mesta, vendar je v osnovi šlo za iskane soglasij med različnimi frakcijami.

Iz tega izhaja še ena pomembna teza, ki jo Wickham v svojem delu predstavi. Osredotočenost na transformacijo družbe je ključna pri razumevanju neformalnega predznaka komune v začetnem obdobju. Če se odrečemo ideji samoniklosti komune in damo prednost družbenemu vidiku pred kronološkim ali institucionalnim, je jasno, da komune v njeni začetni fazi delovanja ne moremo enačiti s celotno mestno skupnostjo. Zbor politično aktivnih prebivalcev mesta v tem trenutku še ne predstavlja formalnega združenja z avtonomnimi pristojnostmi. Še več – tudi sama prisotnost konzulov, izpričana v instrumentih, še ne govori v prid izoblikovani instituciji. Že Ottavio Banti je v prispevku »Civitas e Commune nelle fonti italiane dei secoli XI e XII« izpostavil, da je za začetno obdobje delovanja komune značilna nestanovitnost posameznih uradov, Wickham pa je stopil še korak dlje. Izpostavil je, da gre v začetni fazi komunalnega razvoja v več primerih za zgolj reprezentativno funkcijo, ne pa dejanski urad. To pomeni, da nas mora zanimati ne zgolj prisotnost posameznikov, ki nosijo naziv *consules*, temveč tudi stalnost urada, način izbire posameznikov ter nenazadnje njihova vloga v pravnih dejanjih. Z drugimi besedami, sprašujemo se po vsebini za nazivom in dejanski aktivnosti v tej vlogi.

Neformalni predznak komune ter dejavnosti konzulov nas pripeljejo do vprašanja: kaj potemtakem sploh je komuna kot institucija? Wickham poskusa opredelitve komune ne ponudi v obliki klasične enciklopedične definicije. Nasprotno karakterizira komuno kot nabor

med seboj povezanih elementov, ki so ali niso dejansko istočasno prisotni v posameznem mestu. Predvsem za italijanske komune 12. stoletja so ti naslednji: zavestna urbana kolektivnost, ki je vključevala bodisi vse moške prebivalce mesta ali večji del njih, ki so bili skupaj vezani s prisego, redno rotiranje magistratur, katerih predstavniki so izbrani ali vsaj potrjeni s strani mestne skupnosti (in ne drugega nosilca oblasti), *de facto* avtonomija delovanja mesta in njegovih uradov, kar vključuje tudi vojsko in sodstvo ter sčasoma še davčne obveznosti in legislatura. Če se zavedamo, da ti elementi predstavljajo idealni tip z institucionalnega vidika, naše izhodišče pa je v specifičnem primeru oziroma medsebojni primerjavi posameznih mest, se lahko osredotočimo na vprašanje, *zakaj* so določeni elementi odsotni in kako je to vplivalo na proces izoblikovanja komune.

→ How communes developed in northern and central Italian cities comprises one of the primary historiographical questions of Italian medieval history. In his work *Sleepwalking into a New World: The emergence of Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton University Press, 2015), Chris Wickham provides a theoretical reflection that helps lead us to a better understanding of the critical period of society's transition from pre-communal to communal. He fleshed out his introductory study with three diverse examples of communal development in Milan, Pisa, and Rome – all cities with a sufficient amount of narrative sources complementing the well-preserved archival material. It is particularly interesting to juxtapose the two northern Italian cities against Rome, though this comes not exactly as surprising given the rest of Wickham's opus; it nonetheless seems that, by shifting focus to the phenomenon of the development of communes and including several other examples, *Sleepwalking* serves to

upgrade his work *Medieval Rome: Stability and Crisis of a City, 900–1150*, in which he characterized the "papal" city precisely as such – a city. Sleepwalking concludes with a review of several studies from individual regions, in which the author deals primarily with local idiosyncrasies and unique approaches that later proved consequential in communal development.

Wickham's central thesis is reflected in the work's very name, which calls into question people's contemporaneous perception of the changes occurring in the urban centres of the 11th and 12th centuries. He does not see communal development as the formation of an institution from start to finish, but focuses on the sociopolitical changes in the period's cities and views the rise of communes as a result of these processes. His departure from the retrospective, teleological, and markedly institutionally focused view, so characteristic of most previous discussions of communes in Italy, allows for a fresh approach, almost childlike in its curiosity. Why, as historians, do we so often assume that urban citizens had a clear and consistent idea about the ends of their endeavours, or, as Chris Wickham himself muses with emphasis: "What did they think they were *doing*?" (p. 6).

The work's socially oriented view of the rise of communes centres on analysing the decisions and patterns of behaviour of specific individuals and communities in the period. The author writes that the commune actually had an aristocratic character at its onset (Rome serves here as the exception that confirms the validity of tackling the subject from a social rather than an institutional approach), that is, it was represented by members of the urban aristocracy, who, in the spirit not of seeking conflict but compromise, sought to preserve the power and position of social groups in the wake of the changes that swept the Italian peninsula in the 11th century. The communes' organic expansion and incorporation of other social groups

thus quite accord with the postulate that their formation was a gradual process that differed from city to city depending on the particularities of its social milieu. Wickham stresses here that the entire urban community, i.e. its politically active male population, was not initially involved in the commune's establishment. Over time, the aristocratic nature of the commune's representatives faded and a greater share of the city's population was incorporated, but, at the beginning, it was a matter of seeking consensus among factions.

This leads to another important point that Wickham presents in his work: focusing on societal transformation is indispensable in understanding the commune's informal nature in its infancy. Abandoning the idea of the commune's spontaneous origin and prioritizing social aspects over chronological or institutional ones, it becomes clear that, at its start, the commune could not be equated with the whole of the urban community. The union of the politically active urban population at that time was still not a formal assembly based on autonomous competencies. Sooner the opposite: the very existence of consuls, as attested in the notary documents, speaks against the formation of popular institutions. Already Ottavio Banti's work "*Civitas e Commune nelle fonti italiane dei secoli XI e XII*" noted that the commune's initial period of formation was characterized by the instability of individual offices, and Wickham goes a step further, stressing that positions in the beginnings of communal development were largely figurehead functions and not proper offices. This means that we should not be so interested in the existence of people bearing the moniker *consules* so much as the permanence of that office, how its representatives were elected, and, most importantly, their actual role in legal matters. In other words, we are interested in the content and scope and not the mere name of their office.

The commune's informal character and the ambiguity of the office of consul thus lead us to the question of what exactly the commune was as an institution. Wickham does not attempt an encyclopaedic definition of the commune; instead, he characterised it as a mesh of interconnected elements that may or may not have been present in a given city at the time. Especially for the Italian communes of the 12th century, the following elements are characteristic: a conscious urban collective that included, if not all a city's male inhabitants, at least a majority of them, who were bound together by an oath, the regular rotation of magistrates who were elected or at least ratified by the city community (and not by another authority), the de facto autonomy of the city and its offices, which also included the military and the judiciary, and eventually also tax obligations and legislature. Keeping in mind that this list represents an institutionally ideal type and that our starting point is in specific cases or mutual comparisons between individual cities, we can focus on *why* a certain element might have been missing and how that fact influenced the process of the commune's formation.

*K razumevanju gospodarskih
preobrazb Sredozemlja
v srednjem veku*



*Understanding the economic
transformations in the
Mediterranean in the Middle Ages*

The Donkey and the Boat: Reinterpreting the Mediterranean Economy je delo, v katerem Chris Wickham ponudi novo razlago gospodarskih preobrazb v Sredozemlju med letoma 950 in 1180. Pri tem se osredotoči na obravnavo naslednjih regij: Egipt, Severna Afrika in Sicilija, Bizantinsko cesarstvo, islamska Španija in Portugalska ter severna in osrednja Italija. Kot pove že naslov, gre za premišljeno zasnovano primerjavo pomorskih in kopenskih oblik trgovanja, ki ju ponazarjajo »osli« in »čolni« kot simboli dveh vzporednih, a v sodobnem zgodovinoписju pogosto neenakovredno obravnavanih ekonomskih svetov. Wickham zagovarja tezo, da se razumevanje srednjeveške trgovine skriva v soodvisnosti ter da prevlada pomorske paradigme v zgodovinoписju vodi v metodološki redukcionizem.

Wickham predstavi dve izhodiščni točki. Prva je regionalna ekonomska kompleksnost, ki izhaja iz notranjih dejavnikov posameznega območja in je predvsem in v prvi vrsti povezana z lokalnimi potrebami in zmogljivostmi. S tem zavrne osredotočenost na trgovino na dolge razdalje kot osrednji element ekonomske pestrosti. Iz tega izhajajo tudi drugačna vprašanja, ki si jih moramo postavljati – kdo proizvaja, kdo prodaja in kdo kupuje na regionalnem nivoju? S tem je povezano drugo izhodišče Wickhamovega pristopa; indikator pestrosti izmenjav dobrin niso luksuzne dobrine, ampak transport in prodaja večjih količin vsakdanjih dobrin, kot

so pšenica, vino, olivno olje, sir, lan, bombaž, volna, les, kože, tkanine, kovinski in usnjeni izdelki, papir in ne nazadnje keramika. Pri tem ne zanika doprinos trgovine s svilo, začimbami ali dragimi kovinami, ampak jo dojema kot enega od vidikov ekonomske kompleksnosti, ki je specifičen zgolj za določena mesta v določenem obdobju. Pestrost trgovanja se namreč ne začne z vstopom dobrin v pristanišče ali, bolje ponazorjeno, s pojavom dobrine *ex nihilo* na ladji, temveč že veliko pred tem – pri kmetu na začetku proizvodne verige, ki ima dovolj presežka za prodajo. To predstavlja neposredni prispevek k razvoju lokalne, tudi urbane proizvodnje in posledično k razvoju izdelkov, s katerimi se trguje tako znotraj manjšega območja kot drugod.

Delo temelji na preudarni kombinirani rabi pisnih in arheoloških virov, pri čemer Wickham arheološkega gradiva nikakor ne uporablja zgolj kot potrditve apriorističnih argumentov, utemeljenih na pisnih virih, temveč mu priznava lastno analitično vrednost. Distribucija keramike in pojav kamnite arhitekture tako, denimo, služita kot kazalca gospodarske aktivnosti in kupne moči, zlasti v okoljih, kjer pisni viri umanjajo. Na ta način se v zgodovinoписju uveljavlja pristop, ki enakovredno obravnava kvantitativne in kvalitativne kazalce ter upošteva regionalne posebnosti.

Wickham zavrača tezo o »trgovski revoluciji« kot nenadnem in linearnem prelomu ter namesto

tega predlaga model postopnega povečanja ekonomske kompleksnosti, opredeljene kot rast omrežij izmenjav znotraj različnih družbenih okvirov. Severna in osrednja Italija tu služita kot eden od primerov. Po Wickhamu kljub razvitemu urbanemu okolju do 1180 še ni dosegla ravni preobrazbe, ki bi upravičevala rabo koncepta revolucije; pravi preboj naj bi se zgodil šele v 13. stoletju. S tem se kritično odziva na prevladujočo literaturo, ki vidi italijanske komune 12. stoletja kot gonilno silo gospodarskega vzpona Evrope. Čeprav je po letu 1200 na voljo več arheoloških najdb ter arhivskega gradiva, ti za obdobje 950–1180 ostajajo razpršeni in težko razložljivi. Zgodnji zapisi o trgovcih in trgovanju so pogosto osamljeni primeri, ki ne kažejo na trajno gospodarsko preobrazbo. Wickham sklepa, da pred letom 1200 v severni in osrednji Italiji še ni obstajalo v celoti razvito regionalno gospodarstvo.

Najpomembnejši prispevek knjige je Wickhamova razlaga vzrokov za gospodarsko preobrazbo. V nasprotju z institucionalnimi pristopi, ki poudarjajo pomen avtonomnih mestnih oblasti, Wickham predlaga neomarksistični okvir, v katerem ključno vlogo odigrajo razredna razmerja in dinamika med elito in nižjimi sloji. Povečanje kompleksnosti izmenjav razume kot posledico širšega ravnavesja interesov: elita ustvari osnovno mrežo povpraševanja in s tem pogoje za vključitev širšega prebivalstva. Pri tem zavrača novejšo paradigme (npr. novo institucionalno ekonomijo), ki zanemarljivo razredno pogojenost ekonomskih struktur.

→ *The Donkey and the Boat: Reinterpreting the Mediterranean Economy* is a work in which Chris Wickham offers a new interpretation of the economic transformations in the Mediterranean between 950 and 1180. The book focuses on the following regions: Egypt, North Africa and Sicily, Byzantium, Islamic Spain

and Portugal, and northern-central Italy. As the title suggests, it is a carefully constructed comparison of maritime and overland forms of trade, symbolized by “donkeys” and “boats” as representatives of two parallel but in contemporary historiography often unequally treated economic worlds. Wickham argues that the real understanding of medieval trade lies in their interdependence, and that the dominance of the maritime paradigm in historiography leads to methodological reductionism.

Wickham is working from two starting points. The first is regional economic complexity, which stems from internal factors governing a given area and is, above all, tied to local demand and supply capacity. He uses this point to reject the emphasis on long-distance trade as the central component or driver of economic diversity. This also raises a range of other questions that must be asked, for instance, who are the producers, the vendors, and the buyers at the regional level? Wickham's second starting point follows from the first: the diversity of exchange is not indicated by luxury goods, but rather the sale and transport of bulk quantities of everyday commodities such as wheat, wine, olive oil, cheese, flax, cotton, wool, timber, hides, textiles, metal and leather goods, paper, and ceramics. This point does not serve to deny the contribution made by trade in silk, spices, or precious metals, but regards such trade merely as one dimension of economic complexity, specific only to certain cities at certain times. Trade is not made diverse by the arrival of goods to port — or, more vividly, by the sudden, *ex nihilo* appearance of a commodity on a ship — but much earlier, with the farmer at the start of the production chain who has produced enough surplus as to be able to sell it. This represents a direct contribution to the development of local, including urban, production, and consequently to the creation of goods that are traded both within smaller regions and beyond.

Wickham's work is based on a careful combined use of written and archaeological sources. The author does not use archaeological material merely to confirm arguments derived from written records, but acknowledges its own analytical value. The distribution of pottery and the emergence of stone architecture, for example, serve as indicators of economic activity and purchasing power, especially in contexts where written sources are lacking. In this way, the historiographical approach gives equal weight to both quantitative and qualitative indicators and takes into account regional specificities.

Wickham rejects the thesis of a "commercial revolution" as a sudden and linear break, and instead proposes a model of gradual increase in economic complexity, defined as the growth of exchange networks within different social frameworks. Northern Italy serves as one of the case studies. According to Wickham, despite its developed urban environment, the region had not yet undergone a transformation by 1180 that would justify deeming it a revolution; the real breakthrough, he claims, occurred only in the 13th century. In doing so, he critically responds to the predominant literature that sees the Italian communes as the driving force behind Europe's early economic rise. While archaeological and documentary evidence improves after 1200, it remains scattered and difficult to interpret for the 950–1180 period. Early records of merchants and trade transactions are often isolated cases that do not indicate a sustained economic transformation.

The book's most important contribution is Wickham's explanation of the causes behind economic transformation. In contrast to institutional approaches that emphasize the role of autonomous urban governments, Wickham proposes a neo-Marxist framework in which class relations and the dynamics between elites and lower social groups play a key role. He sees the increase in exchange complexity as the

result of a broader balance of interests: elites create a basic network of demand, which then provides the conditions for the broader inclusion of the population. In this, he rejects newer paradigms (such as new institutional economics) that overlook the class-based nature of economic structures.



Uvodno ICCHS predavanje in ICCHS bilten 2025 sta nastala v okviru dejavnosti Mednarodnega središča za primerjalne zgodovinske raziskave (ICCHS) in projektov **Oblikovanje regionalnega umetnostnega središča v zgodnjem novem veku: primer Ljubljane** (J6-50205), **Urbana morfologija Kopra v poznem srednjem veku** (J6-50188) ter raziskovalnih programov **Slovenska umetnost in umetnost srednje Evrope in Jadrana** (P6-0199) in **Slovenska zgodovina** (P6-0235) (projekta in raziskovalna programa financira ARIS – Javna agencija za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije) ob podpori Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani.



<https://www.ff.uni-lj.si/raziskovanje/raziskovalni-centri/icchs-mednarodno-sredisce-za-primerjalne-zgodovinske-raziskave>



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