Medieval Construction Sites

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The crane of the Brunswick Cathedral

Background

How did a construction site look like in the Middle Ages? When dealing with Medieval architecture, questions concerning the construction site and process bear interesting insights into the historical process of making architecture. The construction process had a great influence on the appearance of the building and its construction, but examining the building process and its organization also provides us with insights into the social and technological history from the period when the building was erected: how did building technologies develop? How was the construction site organized? How long did the construction site exist?

Machines, especially cranes, played a major role during the construction of grand medieval buildings as they were needed to move bulky and heavy building parts across the construction site to their intended places. Nowadays, traces of these machines are exceptionally rare due to the fact that they were dismantled right after the construction was finished – they were simply not needed anymore. Fortunately, parts of a Medieval crane are still standing today in the Brunswick Cathedral. Dating back to the 13th century, the crane is known to be the only Medieval crane still existing today. The research project aims at examining the crane in depth to learn more about the history of the Cathedral, the Medieval construction site and, first of all, the crane itself.

Aim of the Project

The team, consisting of scientists from the Anhalt University of Applied Sciences, Technische Universität Braunschweig and BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, plans to pursue different approaches analyzing the construction.



Figure : Rotary bearing of the crane mast

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