

Excavations in Ribe 1979–82

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Archæological investigations in the town of Ribe commenced with an excavation in Grønnegade (Stiesdal 1968) undertaken in 1955–56 by the National Museum. Since then an almost continuous series of investigations has been carried out by *Den Antikvariske Samling* in Ribe. In recent years these were undertaken in a most profitable co-operation with »The medieval town«, a project sponsored by the Danish Research Council for the Humanities (Olsen 1981; Schiørring 1982), and in one other instance with the National Museum.

The purpose of the very first excavations was to establish the origin of Ribe and its further evolution from the Viking Period up through the Middle Ages – an intention which has been of continual interest up to this day.

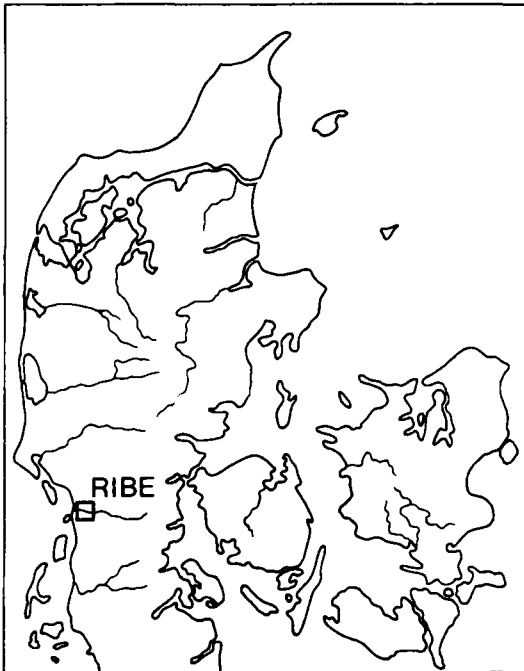


Fig. 1.

In the years 1979–82 twenty-three excavations were effectuated in Ribe (fig. 3), ranging from rather extensive investigations to smaller, less comprehensive ones. Two of these have been published elsewhere (Madsen and Schiørring 1981; Madsen 1982), and it is to be hoped that additional articles will be prepared independently later on. The intention of this article is to go briefly over the results we have so far gained, placing them in relation to the various periods and to the areas of the town, hereby seeking out spheres for our future work.

THE BACKGROUND

For many years the aim of the archæological investigations has been to find the Ribe of the Viking Era. The town is mentioned in written sources from the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries, and this leads us to believe that there was – and still is – a reasonable chance of finding traces from this period, although the preserved sources only give us scanty information about the town.

These written sources have been published and commented on by Inge Skovgaard-Petersen in 1981 (*Ribe Excavations 1970–76*, vol.1, 21ff); therefore, only the most important facts are mentioned here.

Ribe is first mentioned in Rimbert's *Vita Ansgarii*, where there is a description of how the Danish king in approx. 860 granted Ansgar permission to erect a church in Slesvig/Hedeby, after which it continues: »He also presented another plot of land elsewhere in his kingdom, namely in a town called Ribe, upon which a church might be built, and, by virtue of his royal power, he granted permission for a priest to take permanent abode there« (*Ribe Excavations 1970–76*, vol.1, 39f). Whether this church was ever built, or where, and whether Ansgar or his emissaries ever came to Ribe we do not know, but the fact that Ribe was chosen on a level



Fig. 2. The Cathedral from the south-west, with the apse, the transept and nave of the 12th–13th century. The outer naves were added in the 14th and 15th century, the Great Tower shortly after 1300. From a drawing by Harald Bruun 1906, after conservation works 1904 by H.C. Amberg. Photo: The National Museum.

with Slesvig/Hedeby, as a place from where the missionary work could emit, indicates the significance of Ribe. The king's right of disposal, which lies behind his presentation of a plot of land in Ribe, can also be interpreted as proof of a royal execution of power in the town itself, called *vicus* by Rimbart.

Several accounts of Ribe's bishops have been handed down from the 10th century. Bishop Leofdag of Ribe is named as a participant of the synod in Ingelheim in 948, and *Ribe Bispekrønike* (The Chronicle of the Bishops of Ribe), from shortly after 1230, states that he died in Ribe as a martyr for his faith (*Ribe Excavations* 1970–76, vol.1, 41f and 59). Two imperial letters of immunity from 965 and 988 to the contemporary Danish bishoprics include Ribe, the latter also naming special trade privileges for the bishop in Ribe (*Ribe Excavations* 1970–76, vol.1, 43f).

From the beginning of the 11th century another type of source appears, namely coins. King Canute the Great (Knud den Store) (1018–1035), his son Harthacnut

(Hardeknud) (1040–42) and Svend Estridsen (1047–74) all struck coins in Ribe, likewise King Niels (1104–34). A work from the 1070's by Adam of Bremen on the history of the archbishops of Hamburg refers to Odinkar, who was bishop in Ribe at least from 1005 until his death in 1043 (*Ribe Excavations* 1970–76, vol.1, 45ff). Furthermore, Adam describes the town of Ribe, which he characterizes with the Latin denomination *civitas*, as being surrounded by a river which flows out to the ocean, and on which ships can navigate out to Friesland or to England, or at least to our Saxony (*Ribe Excavations* 1970–76, vol.1, 51). From the 12th century and onwards the written sources become more abundant and also start giving topographic information that can be localized. *Ribe Bispekrønike* states that Ture († 1134) was the first bishop to let the Cathedral be built of stone, and in 1145 two parish churches, St. Clemens and St. Peter, are also mentioned for the first time, apart from the Cathedral (*Ribe Excavations* 1970–76, vol.1, 60; *Diplomatarium Danicum* 2, II, 87). The building of the present

sult of the coins found there, be dated to the 8th century (*Ribe Excavations* 1970–76, vol.1, 7 and 63ff). The archaeologists thus proved that Ribe must be at least a hundred years older than we first had been led to believe, judging from the earliest preserved reference from the middle of the 9th century. None of the diggings revealed buildings, other than a couple of pithouses but there were, however, a lot of findings in the waste from artisans' workshops.

One of the main purposes of the investigations carried out in the more recent years has therefore been to locate and examine the habitation of the 8th century and the subsequent Viking Age.

The medieval findings, especially ceramics, cannot, apart from a very few samples, be dated earlier than the second half of the 12th century, at which time the present Cathedral was under construction. The continued investigations have thus not only been aimed at searching for the settlement of the Viking Age, but just as much at finding out where the town of the Earlier Middle Age was situated.

It has also been important – and still is – to find out when the present township emerged. The townscape, as we see it today, is to a large extent medieval, but we do not know whether it came into being in one or more stages. Middle Age written sources concerning Ribe's topography and history are very numerous, compared with material on other Danish towns. Never-the-less, most of the sources are from a time when most of the decisive functions had already started up. This applies for instance to the placing of the churches, most of the monasteries, part of the fortifications, the watermill, and the street pattern.

Finally, a general theme throughout all the investigations has been to collect information about the area's original topography, i.e. what it looked like before any settlement took place, and how the landscape influenced the placing of that settlement.

THE NORTH-TOWN

The excavations under and near the Kunstmuseum (The Museum of Art) in the middle of the 1970'ies (fig. 3, 1) led to new, unique information about the oldest Ribe, a trading centre on the north bank of the river (*Ribe Excavations* 1970–76, vol.1). The massive deposits with their thousands of finds, have in turn posed new questions, which are roughly outlined in the following.

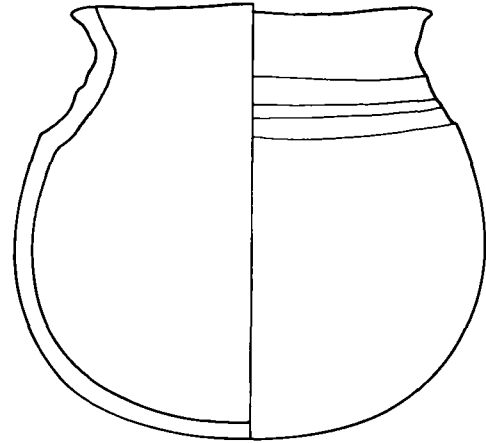


Fig. 4. A globular pot from the dendrochronologically dated well beneath Pajpøt. Drawing: Jens Kirkeby. Scale c. 1:2.

As mentioned, the excavations did not expose any buildings other than a couple of pithouses. Thus we do not know much about the nature of the buildings. Findings of sheep-bones, spindling-wheels and loom-weights prove that the population was settled, but we do not know whether their main pursuit was agriculture or trade and handicraft. A large number of findings have been extracted from the layers of refuse, and these indicate extensive trade connections with northern Europe, e.g. steatite and whet-stones from Norway, pottery from the Rhineland, and Friesian coins. A number of handicrafts are moreover represented in these layers, e.g. comb making, shoe making, amber cutting and polishing, smith's work, bronze-casting, and the fabrication of glass beads. The workshops of the two latter professions have even been found represented in the uppermost layers; the bronze-founder and the bead-maker worked side-by-side, and seem to have settled down on the same spot on several occasions.

The question is therefore, whether the settlement exposed during these excavations is a combined trade- and handicraft centre, located on the outskirts of an actual urban settlement, or whether it is a marketplace with a small resident population. If the latter is the case, the many findings of artisan and commercial objects must originate from recurrent market situations. In both cases, one would expect that some form of local ruling would be necessary to sustain law and order for the trading to take place, and to assign the same working places to the artisans over and over again.

Fig. 3 shows the location of the investigations carried

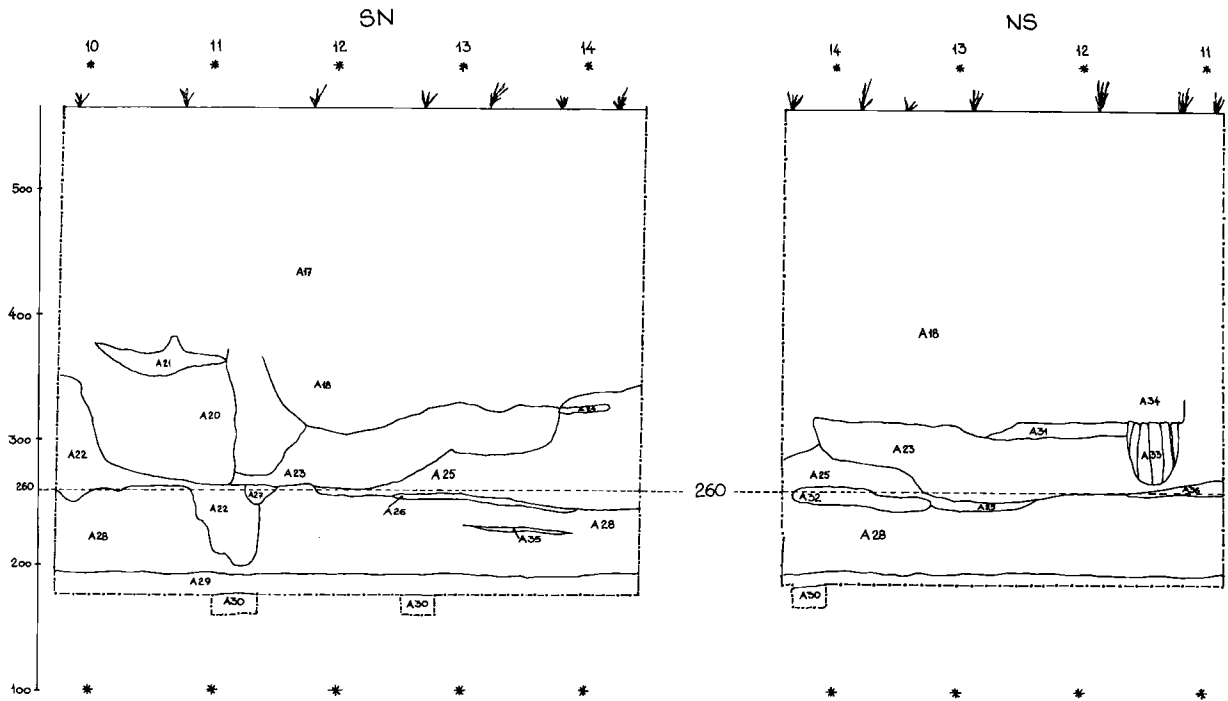


Fig. 5. The western section of the trench in Tvedgade, fig. 2, no.3. A25 is the mire-deposits of Pajpøt, lying on top of A28, which constitutes a series of layers from the 8th century. A25 has been partly removed by much later pits, but Pajpøt has hardly gone much further southwards. Drawing: Mogens Bundgaard.

out on the north bank of the river since 1979. They have been implemented partly as a result of the fruitfulness of the diggings in 1973–79, and partly in connection with the construction of new buildings.

1. While new foundations for the steps to Ribe Kunstmuseum (The Art Museum), facing Sct. Nicolaigade, were being built in April 1981, there was again an opportunity of viewing the conditions in this area (fig. 3, no. 1). As was to be expected, heavy dung layers were found, with layers of activity resembling the ones found earlier. The findings consisted mainly of sherds from earthenware pots – including imported ceramics – but also contained remnants from the fabrication of combs and glass beads.

2. A small trial excavation north of Tvedgade, in the western end of this street, executed in 1976, showed that the waste-layers from the 8th century extend to this area (*Ribe Excavations 1970–76*, vol.1, 6f). Construction work was to take place just north of this plot (fig. 2, no. 2) in 1979. A series of trial ditches proved that the patch of mire deposit called Pajpøt, which is mentioned in the Late Middle Age as lying east of Saltgade, and which

has previously been shown to lie further to the north, also extended to this area. When the construction work started, it was supervised by the museum; some wells made of barrels were excavated, and a dendochronological analysis dated them to be after the year 1200 (1). The wells were not sunk through the deposits of Pajpøt, which covered them. According to this, the formation of Pajpøt cannot have taken place earlier than after 1200. The ceramics that were found in the wells confirmed the above dating (fig. 4).

3. The Pajpøt plays an important role in the understanding of the topography of the region north of Ribe Å, both from the Viking Age, the Middle Age and the present. The character and dating of Pajpøt was further investigated in April 1981, when a house at the west end of Tvedgade was demolished (fig. 3, no. 3). A trench 1.75 m wide was excavated by machine, exposing a profile stretching from the side-walk on the northern side of Tvedgade and 14 m northwards. In the southern end of this profile a layer of dung from the 8th century was to be seen, and above this a layer from the Middle Ages. In the northern end (fig. 5) a layer (A28) from the 8th

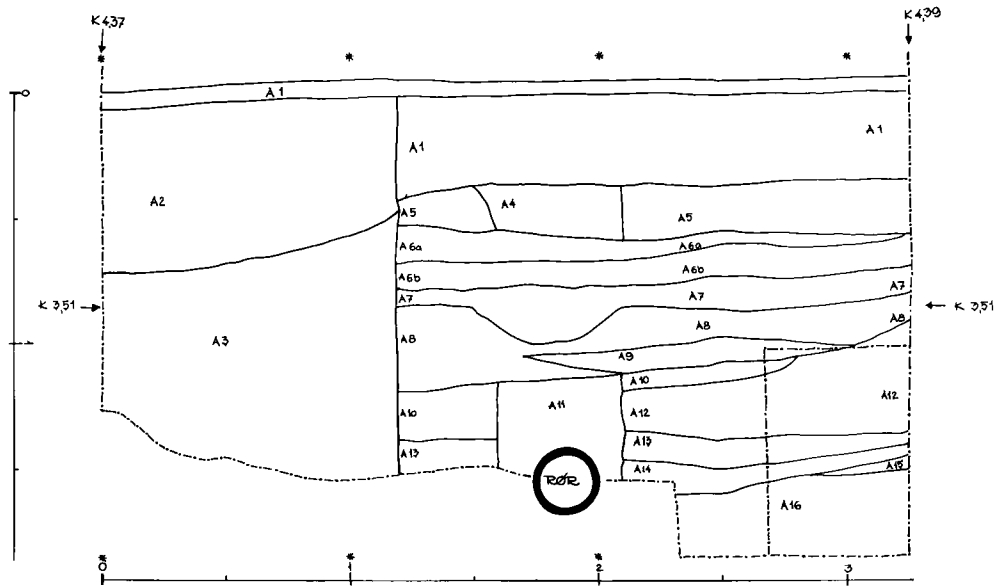


Fig. 6. The northern section of the excavation in Saltgade, fig. 2, no.8, A16 is the subsoil, A15 is bleached sand. The layers A12, A13 and A14 have been deposited during the 13th and 14th centuries. Drawing: Mogens Bundgaard.

century was likewise established above the subsoil. On top of this was a silt deposit (A25), similar to Pajpøt on the adjoining plot towards the north.

According to this excavation, the age of Pajpøt may be considered established; it is later than the 8th century activities on the site, and it has not, in agreement with the written sources (Nielsen 1979 (I): 55), reached further towards the south than the northern edge of Tvedgade. The relative dating is further confirmed by the dendrochronological dating of the wells found on the adjoining plot to the north. Finally, it must be pointed out that the profile (fig. 5) renders probable that Pajpøt was artificially made, by the removal of some topsoil, and not a natural phenomenon, as previously suggested (Nørnberg 1979: 60).

4. In the area west of Saltgade a sequence of diggings has likewise taken place, in the continued search for the Viking Age Ribe. In April 1981 an east-west running trench (fig. 3, no. 4) was dug between St. Pedersgade and the foundry (*Jernstøberiet*). This did not expose any culture-layers, but a thick layer of recently deposited soil directly on the subsoil, which fell steeply towards the east. The original layers seem to have been removed some time or other, and only a few small pits in the subsoil were left. In one of these, some Badorf-ceramics were found – dating from the 8th–9th century – similar

to the finds in the layers around the Kunstmuseum (The Art Museum), (fig. 3, no. 1).

5. Two trenches (fig. 3, no. 5) were likewise dug further westwards, immediately south of the site of Sct. Peters church, which was excavated in the middle of the 19th century. Contrary to expectation these disclosed neither culture-layers nor graves, but only waterlogged layers with a few scattered finds from the Middle Ages. An observation in connection with some construction work in the spring of 1982 has confirmed this – by all accounts the church was situated quite close to the river, probably on a small hillock.

6. A small trench north of the foundry buildings (fig. 3, no. 6) failed to show any culture-layers from either the Viking Age or the Middle Ages.

Thus, the many investigations in the north part of the town revealed no trace of a settlement which could be connected with the refuse-layers of the 8th century or with the Viking Age at all. The most surprising result is probably, that the excavation west of Saltgade did not disclose culture-layers from the Middle Ages, in spite of the fact that *Ribe Bys Jordebog* (The Cataster of the Town of Ribe) from the 1450'ies states that the town »had« streets – although not inhabited in that district (Nielsen ed. 1979 (II): 37f). The question is, whether the *Jordebog* should be interpreted as stating that the area was divi-

ded by streets, so enabling smaller sites to be rented, for instance when a market was held here. But if this is the case, it is difficult to imagine where the parishioners of St. Peter's church lived in the late Middle Ages.

Never-the-less, the investigations have certainly cast new light upon the dating and character of Pajpøt. We now know that its southern boundary flanked the north side of Tvedgade. It has likewise been documented, that Pajpøt was formed later than the 8th century. Barrel-wells were found below the bottom of Pajpøt, and they must have been there before Pajpøt appeared. As they are dendrochronologically dated to the beginning of the 13th century, Pajpøt cannot have come into existence earlier than this date.

The trench north of Tvedgade (fig. 5) seems to reveal that Pajpøt has been formed by human deposits in a man-made, water-filled excavation and not by sedimentations from the meandering river. The issue is then, whether the removal of soil seen west of Saltgade can have any connection with the removal of soil that led to the formation of Pajpøt. If this is so, we are dealing with an impressive and comprehensive piece of construction work.

7. Geological drillings followed up by further trenches in the autumn of 1981, show that the deposits of Pajpøt, and probably also the preceding removal of soil, extend eastwards as far as the Health Centre (*Lægehuset*) (fig. 3, no. 7). It has therefore been suggested, that this very extensive removal of soil might have a connection with the construction of the dam, built when the King's mill was established (Schjørning 1982). This will be dealt with later, but this theory explains the missing Viking Age, in that its evidence has been removed and now lies in the embankment, which carries the main street of medieval and modern Ribe (fig. 3).

8. In October 1981 there was an opportunity of following some construction work in Saltgade (fig. 3, no. 8). Nearby – just east of Saltgade – a three-foliated buckle from the 10th century had previously been found (Bencard and Wiell 1975), so the issue was, whether some layers were preserved under Saltgade, with either material from the 8th century or the Viking Age proper. The investigation showed Saltgade to be an earthen balk – a northern extension of the built up mill embankment – with the previously mentioned earth removals on either side (fig. 6). The subsoil lay at 2.92 m above sea level with podsol bleached sand as the top layer (A15). Above this followed three layers (A12–A14),

which must be regarded as primary, not disturbed deposits. The finds in these layers – for instance glazed ceramics – can be dated to the 13th or perhaps the 14th century. It is noteworthy, that no traces of road construction were found in these layers. This could indicate that Saltgade did not become the main radial road out of town from Nørreport (the northern gate) before after the year 1300, and that the traffic going north followed Tvedgade instead, running south of Pajpøt, as commented upon in the above.

9.–10. The various fruitless efforts to locate the Viking settlement in the Saltgade quarter led to excavations in the eastern area of Ribe (fig. 3, no. 9–10) in August 1981. The investigation took place a little to the east of the site where a grave from the 8th century and scattered finds of the same period were discovered in 1970 (Rasmussen 1971). However, neither of these excavations brought forth findings from the Viking or Middle Ages.

11. Observations in the spring of 1982, to the northeast of this area, during work at the railroad crossing (fig. 3, no. 11), also gave negative results. The elevation of the subsoil here was c. 3.50 m. above sea level.

12. The most recent excavation north of the river in the summer 1982, took place east of the railway, north of Tangevej (fig. 3, no. 12). The elevation of the subsoil here was 3.23 m. above sea level, and there were no culture-layers from the Viking or Middle Ages.

13. The layers in the eastern part of the meadow (*Hovedengen*) in front of the dam were examined with the help of two machine-dug trenches (fig. 3, no. 13). The sections were excavated as deep as the penetrating ground water permitted, i.e. to approx. level 0.20 m. above sea level. The profile showed that the layers must have been formed in the course of a stagnation process, while salt marsh clay (Danish *klæg*) was being deposited in the area. As the lowest of these layers contained fragments of medieval bricks, the deposits cannot have been formed before about the year 1200.

Considering the above results, there is every probability that *Hovedengen* was formed after 1200, and that the area was much more waterlogged than it is at present. Whether this fact applies only to this area, or shows a general tendency, cannot as yet be ascertained. But the possibility of the marsh-formations around Ribe – or at least some of them – being as recent as indicated above, ought to be considered, when discussing the primary settlement and the later urban development (2).



Fig. 7. The earthworks of the castle of Riberhus. Photo: Hans Stiesdal 1959 (The National Museum).

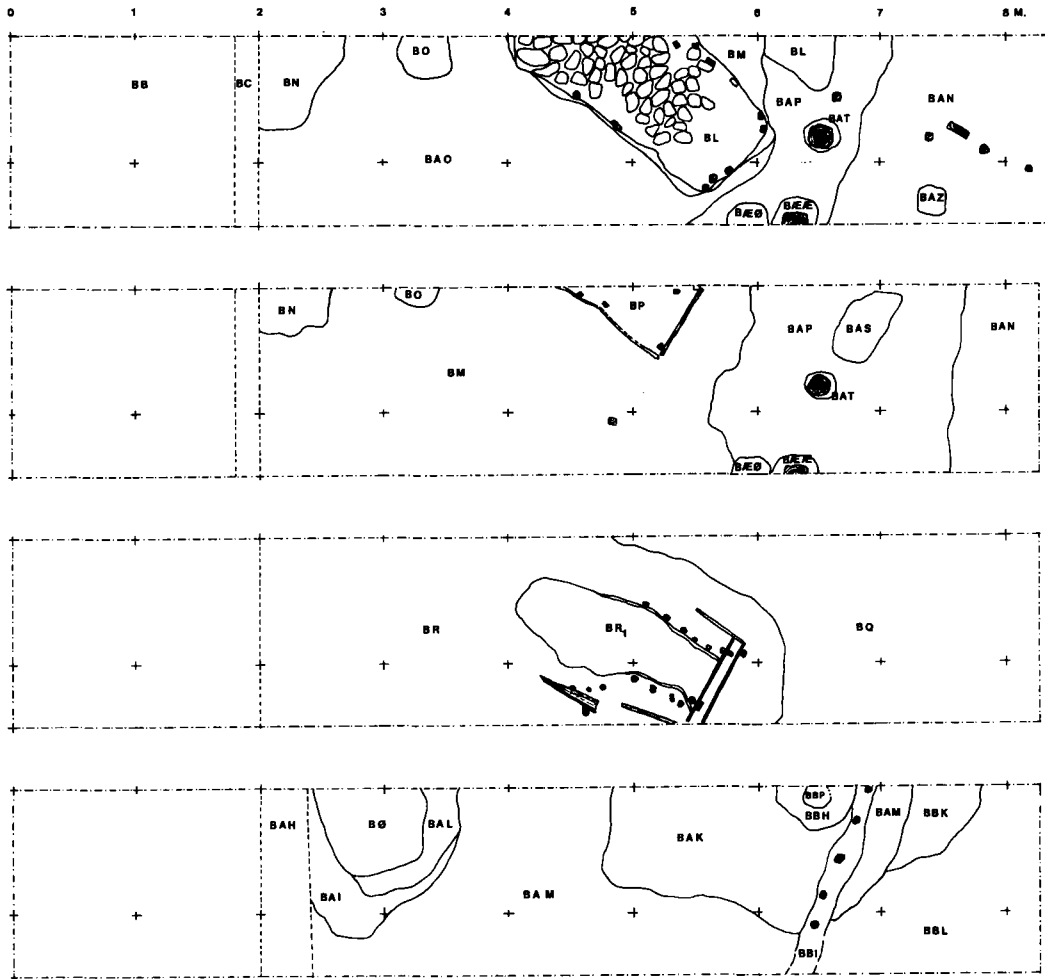
THE MEDIEVAL FORTIFICATIONS

Actual fortifications usually only appear in Danish medieval towns when the town in question is of importance for the defence of the country in general. This seems to be the case in Ribe, which was strongly defended, with moats, canals and the royal castle, Riberhus. In an attempt to explain how the partially still existing system of moats and dams, including the mill-embank-

ment, has come into existence, a series of investigations has been carried out.

14. The first of these took place in Gravsgade in 1979 (fig. 3, no. 14). A letter from 1394 mentions »the new ditch« (*fossura nova*), and from this and other sources, the position of this stream or moat can be affirmed to the south side of Gravsgade (Thorup 1833, supplement p. 3).

The excavation revealed that the ditch and its ram-



a collaboration between Ribe Amt (the county of Ribe), the National Museum, and Den Antikvariske Samling.

The most significant results were obtained in the middle of the earthwork (fig. 3, no. 15), where the excavation went 6m. vertically down, through thick culture-layers (fig. 8). The oldest layers containing finds were from around 1200, but we cannot be certain that these were traces of the earliest activities in the castle. The layers in question did not have remnants of any buildings, but the fact that there were alternating layers of refuse and levelling of the surface, indicates that the area was intensely made use of. Here the question has not only been one of filling up a low-lying area – the layers levelling the ground show that one has moved back and forth and worked here; this is furthermore confirmed by some wooden containers used for collecting refuse in.

The excavation showed clearly, that the site on which Riberhus was founded was low-lying, even after Ribe-conditions. The subsoil sand lay around 1.9m above sea level, and it is astonishing, that the founder of the castle did not choose to place the fort elsewhere, for instance near St. Clemens church, where excavations in the bishop's garden have testified a much higher level (see below).

Maybe the purpose was to be as close to the river as possible. In this way the castle could control the trade and collect duties. Irrespective of whether Riberhus was founded around 1200 or maybe still earlier, it seems most likely that it was crucial to the defence of Ribe. The Crown had its base here, corresponding to the bishop's Cathedral; incidentally, the Romanesque, western part of the Cathedral was probably arranged

precisely for the king's use (Vellev 1981: 135; *Danmarks Kirker*, Ribe amt 3–4: 180).

Another royal construction to be included in the investigations was »Dammen« (fig. 3, nos. 16 and 17). The »Dam« is first mentioned, indirectly, in 1255, where the bishop is granted damages, as his meadows in Lustrup, south-east of Ribe, were flooded, due to the river being dammed-up for the King's Mill (*Diplomatarium Danicum* 2, I: 156). A claim such as this has certainly been raised without delay, so there is reason to believe that the King's Mill, situated where the *Toldbod* now lies (fig. 3, C), and the »Dam«, where founded shortly before 1255.

A series of drillings in the Dam and observations during the autumn of 1981, show that it was constructed on low-lying, probably marshy terrain, between 0.7m.–1.0m. above sea level. The Dam is thus a very comprehensive construction, and the earth-filling has undoubtedly been supported by wooden bulwarks. Additional filling-in, to render housing possible, has been carried out later.

An embankment of these dimensions has needed an enormous amount of earth, and this can, as mentioned in the comments on Pajpøt, have been obtained north of the river. The dating of the removal of earth in the Pajpøt area corresponds with the assumed building of the Dam.

17. An effort to solve the problem of whether the filling in the Dam contains displaced finds from the Viking Age, was attempted at in an excavation of the *Mellemdam* in October 1981 (fig. 3, no. 17). Furthermore, one hoped to find evidence that could date the founding of the Dam archaeologically. However, penetrating ground-water prevented the digging from reaching the bottom of the embankment, and no layers of the Dam itself could be examined. It is therefore still an open question whether layers from the Viking Age were removed from north of the river, when material was needed to build the Dam.

The establishment of the Dam has enabled defence purposes to be co-ordinated with the purpose of regulating the level of the various water-ways, in order to work the mill. It is also conceivable, that the king has enforced his authority by compelling the people of Ribe and the vicinity to let their corn be ground in the King's Mill. Such a monopoly was granted by the king in 1175 to the monastery of St. Canute in Odense, and investigations made in Aalborg show that here, as in Ribe, a

water-dependant defence-system was combined with milling-plants (*Diplomatarium Danicum* 1, III:49; Møller Knudsen 1980: 10f). The stemming-up of water behind the Dam must have flooded the riverbanks, and, as previously stated, »the new ditch« was probably constructed to remedy this.

18. An excavation in the summer of 1982 near the east wing of St. Katharinæ Monastery (fig. 3, no. 18), showed that the base of the earliest building-phase on this spot was around 2.60m. above sea level. The monastery was founded 1228 at the latest, presumably before the Dam was built (Madsen and Schiørring 1981), and the oldest, still standing parts of the eastern wing are dated to the second quarter of the 13th century. The excavation revealed that the ground outside this wall had been heightened by a 40cm. thick layer of clay – which leads us to consider the possibility of this being done to counteract problems due to the water level of the river rising.

THE WEST-TOWN

This heading implies the region west of Korsbrødregade-Sviegade (fig. 1). Towards the south-west, west and north-west it is bordered by fortifications, including Riberhus. Several of the medieval ecclesiastical institutions were within this area: the parish church of St. Clemens, the monasteries of the Franciscans and of the order of St. John of Jerusalem, and The Hospital of The Holy Spirit, which lay in a street that used to go from *Horstov* (i.e. Horse-market) near Sønderport to Riberhus. St. Clemens is mentioned already in 1145; the Franciscan monastery, from 1232, was situated near Horstov, where it could benefit by some income from the traffic and trade. The same applies to the Monastery of St. John of Jerusalem, which lay where the present bishop's residence now lies, and even moreso to The Hospital of The Holy Spirit, both of them facing onto the road that lead to Riberhus, which must have been very lively and busy (*Diplomatarium Danicum* 2, II: 87; Nielsen 1981: 17ff).

Apart from St. Clemens, these ecclesiastical institutions did not appear before the first part of the 13th century, or later. Horstov is first mentioned, together with Sønderport, in 1224 (*Diplomatarium Danicum* 1, VI: 30), but the market place, and dealings with horses, can have existed before the ecclesiastical institutions

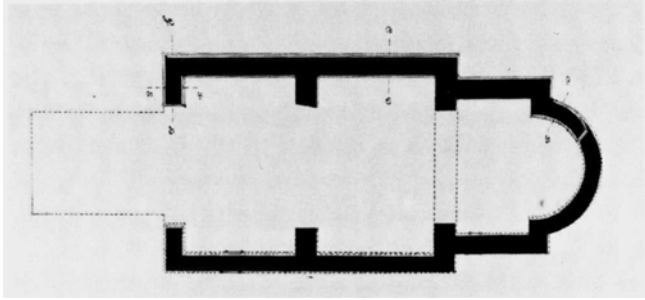


Fig. 9. Excavation-plan of the parish church of St. Clemens (above), and floor of re-used tufa-blocks, probably from the church excavated in the Bishop's garden, fig. 3, no. 19 (to the right). Only the northern part of the church-foundations was excavated. After Termansen 1905 and photo by Per Kristian Madsen, 1980.

turned up, and given the urban life a background of a different nature than the clergy. In any case, the placing of a parish church here implies the existence of, or the expectation of, a population of a certain size.

19. In the above, the excavation at Riberhus is commented upon. Simultaneously, an excavation was performed in the garden of *Korsbrødregård*, the present bishop's residence (fig. 3, no. 19). The excavation was placed north of the site of St. Clemens, known to us from excavations in 1902 (fig. 9), and far from existing streets, in order to avoid as many recent disturbances of the layers as possible. Traces of brick-built houses were found, and also, in the southern end of the field, the corner of a timber-framed house, the floor of which had been relaid four times. Coin findings date this series of layers to be from about 1250–1400 (4).

The lowest activities, underneath this series of layers, were characterized by deep pits. The original level of the subsoil has been at least 3.40m. above sea level, which is remarkably high, according to Ribe standards.

These results indicate that a radical change in the use of the area has taken place no later than approx. 1250. Several of the finds point at an activity on the site before the time of the preserved layers; one is tempted to assume that the alterations were in some way connected with the clergy's taking over the area. If this was the case, it must almost have required the participation of either the town as such, or rather maybe of the king himself, who must in any case have played an important role, especially in the West-town, just outside the castle. In this connection it is worth noting that the



founding of the St. Clemens churches is perhaps mostly due to the king (Cinthio 1968: 107).

20. To gain more knowledge of the West-town, quite a small hole was dug in a garden on the corner of Kongensgade and Albert Skeelsgade (fig. 3, no. 20); this was in the late summer, 1981. The site was only 50 m. from the town's western moat, *Tilløbskanalen*, and disclosed a culture-layer more than one meter thick, from approx. 1250–1350 (Madsen 1982).

Both in this layer, in filled-in pits above this, and in the more recent layers which covered these, there was a pronounced occurrence of older ceramics, namely sherds of grey-fired globular pots. Presumably, this pottery has come from disordered layers that were formed in the 12th century, but it is still too early for us to really draw conclusions regarding these finds. There is reason to believe that further research in the West-town would give valuable results, particularly concerning how this part of the town was made use of before the church started to dominate it (5).

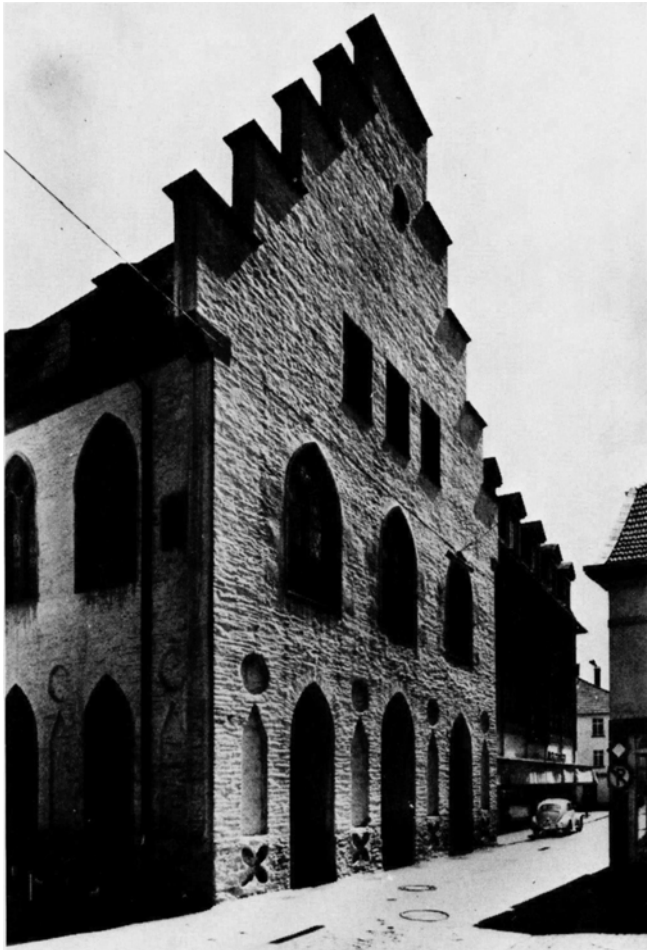


Fig. 10. The Town Hall in the German town Attendorn, from the middle of the 14th century. After Meckseper 1982.

THE AREA AROUND THE CATHEDRAL

21. One often hears postulated that the Cathedral (fig. 2) is situated on what was originally the highest point in the town, and that the reason why it now lies so relatively deep down, is because refuse has accumulated around it. The latter is correct, but there are some facts that point at the area north-west of the Cathedral having been higher than the actual site of the church, although it seems to be part of the self-same sandbank or inland dune. The level of the subsoil in the garden of the bishop's residence was min. 3.40m., and a digging (fig. 3,21) north-west of the Cathedral showed that the subsoil here was 3.90m. above sea level.

Surprisingly, there were hardly any culture-layers to be seen here. One would think there had been an in-

tense activity so close to the Cathedral, at least from the period when the present church was commenced upon in 1150–1175 (*Danmarks Kirker*, Ribe amt 3–4: 160). The lack of findings can be due to the removal of some soil, maybe when earth was needed to fill up the river, to form the *Slippe*-area in the 15th century (cf. Bencard 1977: 61f). However, in another part of the town, namely the Cathedral-school quarter, it has been demonstrated how the inner part of a block was not built up, but was presumably used as a garden most of the Middle Ages (Madsen 1978: 27). This can also have been the case in this investigation.

22. Another, later, alteration in the urban picture was shown by a minor excavation underneath Hotel Dagmar (fig. 3, no. 22). The results correspond with observations from the plot directly east of this site, which was investigated in the mid-1960'ies. They suggest that the area south of *Overdammen* was a market place until the middle of the 15th century. Written sources name buildings on this site in the middle of the 1450'ies, so the market must have been closed down by then, only to reappear to a certain degree in the second half of the 16th century, when the present *Torv* was laid out (Nielsen 1981: 24f and 27).

23. North of the medieval market place, in *Tingslippen* (fig. 3, no. 23), during drain-work in the autumn 1981, parts of a medieval street appeared. On the west side of the alley-way two heavy pillars, laid with the big bricks characteristic of the Middle Ages, were disclosed; they were presumably part of a construction supporting a brick-built house, maybe a wall dealt up in arches, forming an arcade, as seen elsewhere (fig. 10) (Meckseper 1982: T68).

About 2m. down, roughly in the middle of the alley, a gutter made of wood was found, and also some wooden paving, consisting of a very stout oak plank, laid down flat. Marks from fire and chopping show that this was a piece of reused wood, maybe a plank from a stave-built house. When sewers were being established in Ribe, in the 1880'ies, several such pavings were found (Kiær 1888). Up till now, the age of these wooden pavings has not been known, but a dendrochronological examination of the plank from *Tingslippen* was able to date the year that this piece of timber was felled to precisely 1233 (6).

It was presumably not laid down before the last half of the 13th century. We do not know if the other pavings of such wooden planks are from the same period, but it

seems quite plausible that one, during the 13th century, when Ribe Town Council and Town Law manifested itself (*Ribe Stadsret*, the Town Law of Ribe, was given 1269), started to bring such things as paving in order.

CONCLUSION

The continuing urban-topographical investigations in Ribe will be based partly on some of the same questions as mentioned above, and partly on an entirely new set of problems. The question of where the settlements from the 8th century and the Viking Age were situated is still not answered. The possibilities inside the medieval town seem nearly exhausted. Evidently, it would be desirable to carry out more investigations in the areas east of Pajpøt and east of Nicolaigade. Maybe, with the help of special drilling equipment, it will be possible for us to examine the earth in the Dam, and see whether there are Viking Age findings here, in order to verify the theory of the destruction of the Viking Age settlement north of the river.

It would also be of great significance to locate graves from the 8th century and onwards. An examination of these would probably be able to cast light on whether the population of the earliest Ribe was settled, or maybe came in to the town in seasonal fluctuations.

It is important, in the continued search for the Viking and Early Middle Age town, to collect data about the original terrain, in particular about the marshlands. Such investigations have, as already mentioned, been commenced.

As far as the Middle Ages are concerned, Ribe is the most intensely investigated town in present Denmark, seen from an archaeological point of view. There are, however, still considerable tasks left to carry on with.

Concerning the High Medieval town, a number of the main topographic problems seem to be nearly solved. Because of this, and because we have quite a number of facts on this, also from written sources, it is now possible to go thoroughly into the individual districts of the town, and to compare them. It should not be taken for granted that changes in the overall topography will influence or alter all areas of the town to the same extent. In the coming years, the collected results must be gone over thoroughly, particularly the archaeological findings, which are of vital importance in the search for the Ribe of the Early Middle Age. These findings can also

tell us about social and economic conditions in the urban community.

The increased insight into the general topographic outlay of Ribe in the High Middle Age, impells us to go into »cause and effect«, to seek out which factors cause the changes to occur. In the above, the Crown has been pointed out as being the most likely incentive, at least as far as we can judge up till now. But we might have underrated other instances, e.g. the church, or, with regard to the Late Middle Age, the town itself. In making these assumptions, we might even have neglected to take some influential elements from outside the country into consideration.

In all circumstances, we must remember that one cannot just draw comparisons between the 8th century Ribe, the still unknown Ribe of the Viking Age, and the Middle Ages. The urban communities of the various periods had entirely different possibilities and demands on their functions. In the course of time, the authority of the Crown and the municipal administration also underwent changes.

It is still almost impossible to find an archaeological common denominator for the concept: a town, if it is to be valid for such a long spell of time, as the more than 1000 years it has taken for Ribe to develop.

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NOTES

This article is an extended version of Jensen, Madsen and Schiørring 1982.

¹ The analysis was performed by Skalk's dendrochronological laboratory.

² Scientific investigations of the age and development of the marshlands have currently been started, in connection with a project that is examining the history of settlements in the Ribe area from the Stone Age to the present day. This is being carried out with the support of the Danish Research Council for the Humanities and under the direction of Stig Jensen.

³ The excavation was conducted by Hans Stiesdal on behalf of The National Museum, and the daily management was attended to by architect Søren Gottfred Petersen.

⁴ Identification by Kirsten Bendixen, The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, The National Museum.

⁵ A new excavation campaign is to be started in the spring, 1983, with the support of Queen Margrethe II's Archaeological Fund, in the western part of Ribe.

⁶ The analysis was performed by Skalk's dendrochronological laboratory.

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