



CASTELLA MARIS BALTICI 6

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Front cover: Castle of Trakai

Photos by Albinas Kuncevičius

Back cover: Royal palace in an Upper castle.

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CONTENTS / ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Charlotte Boje Hilligsø Andersen	Material culture in Danish castles9
Aleksander Andrzejewski, Leszek Kajzer	The Chelmno bishops' castle in Lubawa in the light of the latest research17
Lars Bengtsson	Three crowns – the royal castle in Stockholm23
Maria-Letizia Boscardin	Die Wasserversorgung auf Schweizer Höhenburgen35
Tomáš Durdík	Zur Einflussproblematik im Rahmen der böhmischen Burgenarchitektur41
Aleh Dziarnovich	Castella Alboruthenica: castle building in Belarus at the crossroads of cultural influences during the 12 th to 14 th centuries49
Øystein Ekroll	Norwegian castles north of the Arctic Circle55
Nils Engberg	Three castles on Hjelm island – their military, social political and significance.....63
Giedrė Filipavičienė	Retrospection of Trakai fortification system in the 14 th –15 th centuries83
Jonas Glemža	Medininkai castle93
Christofer Herrmann	Deutschordensburgen in der „Grossen Wildnis“97
Napaleonas Kitkauskas	The primeval relief of the Lower castle of Vilnius and the earliest building105
Raman Likhashapka	The Western European articles and innovations in the castles' material culture of the Belarusian Nioman Region in the 14 th –17 th c111
Werner Meyer	Burgenbau und natürliche Umweltbedingungen115
Terhi Mikkola	Spatial organization in the late Medieval castle of Häme, Finland123
Michail Miltschik	Die Verteidigungssysteme von Iwangerod und Narva: Wechselwirkungen in der Entwicklung im 15.–18. Jahrhundert131

Ieva Ose	Die ersten Burgen mit regulärem Grundriss in Lettland141
Tadeusz Poklewski-Koziell	The royal castles and defensive towns on trading routes through Poland to the Baltic Sea in the 14 th–15 th century. A contribution to the history of country defence system planning.....147
Kazimierz Pospieszny	Der preussisch-livländische „Konventshaustyp“ als eine Kloster-und Herrschaftsidee153
Gintautas Rackevičius	The royal palace in Vilnius Upper castle – problems of reconstruction159
Henriette Rensbro	Stige castle 1314 AD – a Danish wooden castle ?.....165
Anders Reisnert	Some Scanian and Scandinavian castles and their relations to the Livonian Order173
Heinz Sauer	Vir nobilis Bernhardus de Lippia (1140–1224), Spurensuche im Balticum185
Daiva Steponavičienė	Gothic period music in the court of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy197
Tomasz Torbus	Die Untere Burg zu Wilna (Vilnius) und ihre möglichen Vorbilder201
Gintautas Zabiela	Castle warfare between Lithuania and the Order in Lower Panemunė in the late Middle Ages211
Algirdas Žalnierius	The first castle of Kaunas219
Rita Mosiejienė	Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI 231
	Bibliography / Literaturverzeichnis235

On September 18–22, 2001 the Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI was held in Lithuania. This is already the 6th symposium for the researchers of the medieval castles. The first symposium was held in Turku, Finland in 1991, the second – in Nyköping, Sweden in 1993, the third - in Malbork, Poland in 1995, the fourth - in Estonia in 1997, and the fifth – in Denmark in 1999.

The topic of the conference held in Lithuania was “Contacts and Genetically Dwellings in the Castle Buildings”. Over 40 scientists participated in the conference from Denmark, Belarus, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Russia, Great Britain, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. In the conference there were not only reports presented but also the most famous castles of Lithuania visited in Vilnius, Trakai, Kernavė, Kaunas and Klaipėda.

The time of this conference coincided with the European Heritage Days “Defensive Fortifications in Lithuania”.

This conference was organised by the Public Institution Academy of Cultural Heritage established by Vilnius University, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and Department of Cultural Heritage Protection. The Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI was sponsored by the Department of Cultural Heritage Protection.

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Especial thanks deserve my colleagues who organised this event Rita Mosiejienė, dr. Justina Poškienė and dr. Gintautas Zabiela.

Dr. Albinas Kuncevičius

Henriette Rensbro

STEGE CASTLE 1314 AD - A DANISH WOODEN CASTLE ?

Ist die Steger Burg eine dänische Holzburg?

Die Steger Burg wurde 1314 auf einer teilweise künstlichen Insel der Stadt Stege gegenüber auf der Insel Møn vom dänischen König Erik Menved gebaut. Weil die Ruinen der Burg im 19. Jahrhundert zerstört wurden, gibt es heute keine Spuren von Gebäuden, Ringwall oder Ringmauer. Nur die untersten Teile der Holzkonstruktion der Burg, die im Mittelalter von Wasser bedeckt waren, sind erhalten. Diese Holzkonstruktionen sind ohne Gegenstück in Dänemark.

Eine bis auf 3,5 Meter hohe Palisade von leicht abfallenden, aufrechtstehenden Eichenplanken stabilisiert den Rand eines großen Wallgrabens zwischen der Burginsel und der Stadt, während ein anderer Typ von Konstruktion, eine Bohlenwand von waagerechten Eichenplanken befestigt in eingerammten Pfählen, die Burginsel umgibt. Es erhebt sich die Frage, ob die Verteidigungsanlagen aus einem Erdwall oder einer Backsteinmauer bestanden.“

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Stege castle is situated at Stege town on the island of Møn close to the border between the Danish inland sea and the Baltic Sea. Presumably Stege castle was a royal castle built by the king Erik Menved as one of his military centres set up to suppress revolts, which were all built in AD 1314 (Jaubert 1986). Stege castle though is the only 1314-castle in this part of Denmark and was never mentioned in the written sources alongside with some of the others (Kalø castle north of Århus on the east coast of Jylland is the best known of king Erik Menved's castles dating from 1314. The ruin of this spectacular castle, built of stones and bricks, is today a tourist attraction.). It is possible that the castle in Stege was built for other purposes, i.e. a starting point of the king's policy of aggrandizement in the Baltic, or as a royal stronghold in an area, which was often in pawn to foreigners. It is also possible that Prince Vitzlav of Rygen, who had a mortgage on Møn for several periods in the years around 1314, built Stege castle. Vitzlav was a vassal of king Erik Menved, but probably never personally set foot on the island of Møn.).

After the death of king Erik Menved in 1319 Denmark came through almost one hundred years of civil war. Stege castle's part in this is not revealed in the written sources. The only traces of maintenance of

the castles defences are dated to late 14th century. Perhaps the castle very soon after 1314 lost its military importance and was transformed into an administration centre.

Stege town and castle

Stege town of today is a small provincial town with a well preserved medieval town plan (Figs. 1,2), an early 13th-century church and a late 15th century defence wall. Stege castle though was demolished centuries ago and the exact place of the castle was forgotten until 1976 when a small archaeological excavation revealed the castle's entrance gate (Fig. 6) (Bekmose, Nielsen 1978).

Stege town was in the Middle Ages and is today situated on a peninsula pointing to the south. Stege castle was built on an artificial island south of the town, behind the harbour. Since the Middle Ages the town has expanded to the west and south and the area of the castle is today part of the modern harbour.

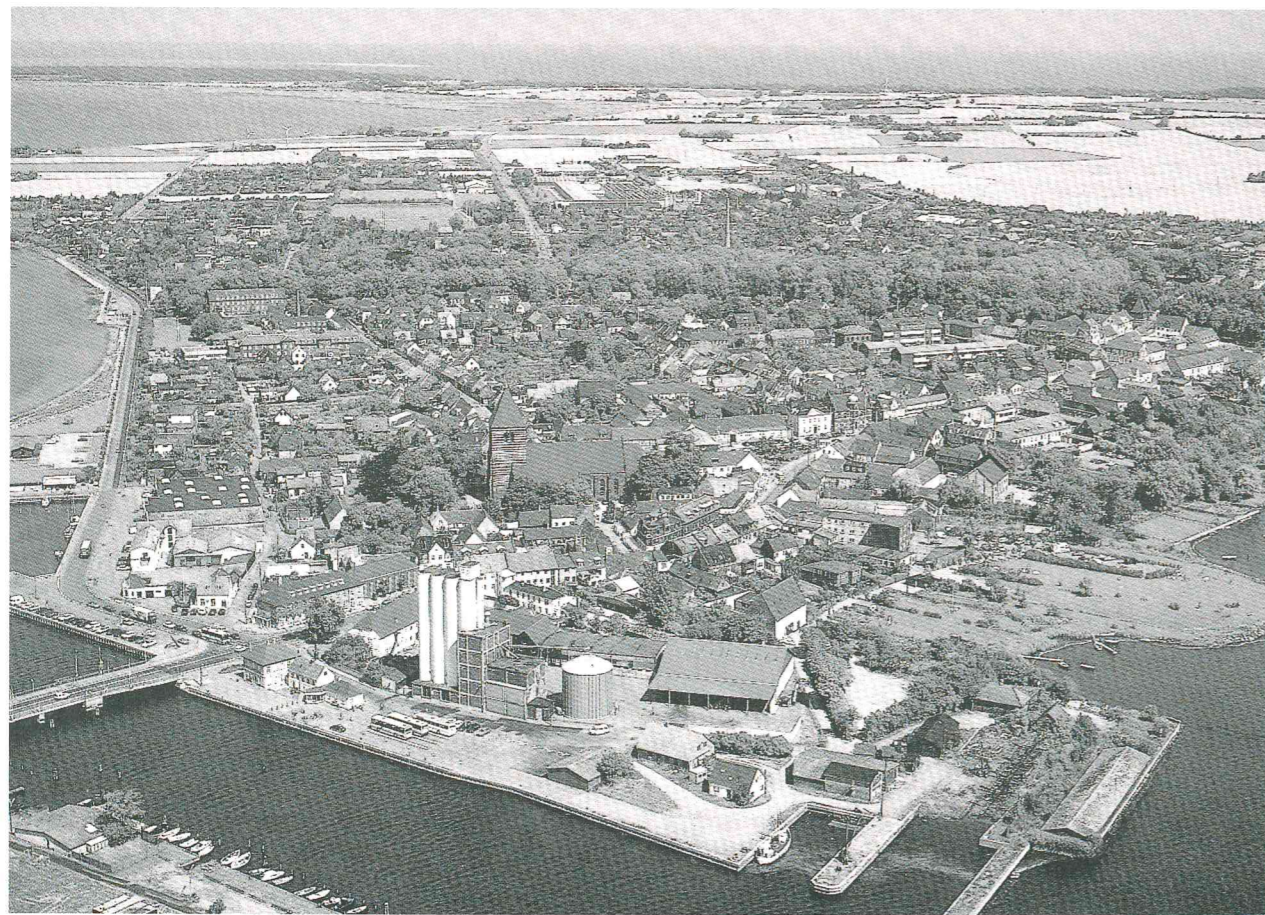


Fig. 1. Aerial view of Stege town, from the south. In the foreground are the silo warehouses built on top of Stege castle. The silos were demolished before the excavation in summer 2000. Postcard

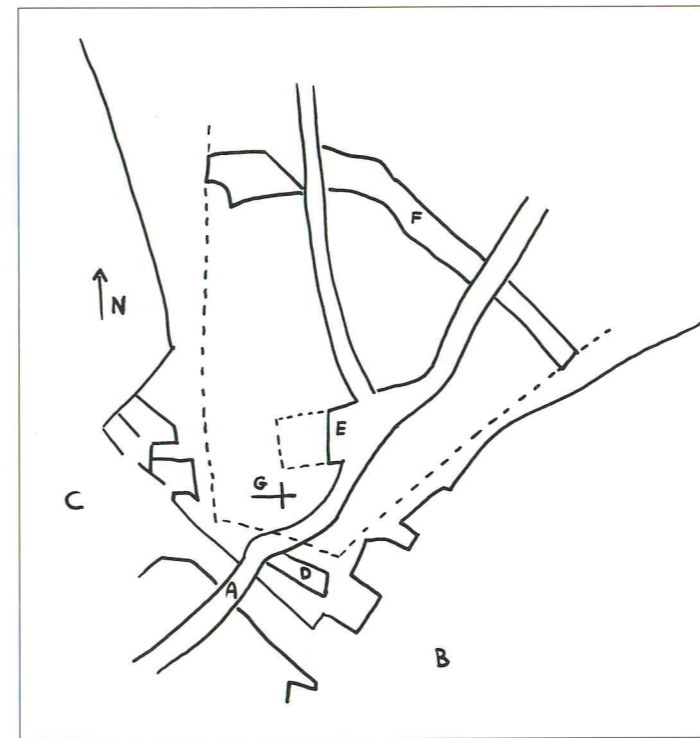


Fig. 2. Stege town today. A: bridge, B: Stege Cove, C: Stege Bay, D: archaeological excavation, E: town square, F: late 15th century town defence, G: church. The medieval coast is indicated by a dotted line

The excavation

In the summer of 2000 due to modern building activities the north western quarter of the 1314 castle was excavated by The Museum of South Zealand (fig. 2) (Sydsjællands museum, Vordingborg). The castle ruins were thoroughly demolished during 19th century building activities, and a possible rampart or ringwall have left no traces. The only exception is the wooden foundation of a gate building excavated in 1976.

Only the lowest parts are preserved. These wooden constructions were originally erected under water and have since the filling up of the area been covered by water soaked gyttja and earth, which has preserved most of the wood but none of the iron.

There are indications that, during a period in or after the Middle Ages, the water level in Stege was app. half a meter higher than today. The sea deposits (gyttja) which have gradually filled up the moats were settled right up to modern water level, which means that at some time, during a period, the water level must have been higher than today. But this observation is not confirmed elsewhere. In any

case what is preserved today is the lowest part of the constructions, which were covered by water in The Middle Ages.

The old stege castle

The castle built in 1314 has a predecessor which is briefly referred to in written sources and registered during the archaeological excavations. Very little is known of this castle. It dates back to early 13th century or even before and was situated on the same site south of Stege town. The artificial island though was much lighter supported than the 1314 castle. One of the excavated wells most likely belongs to the old castle. (fig.3)

To remove the large quantity of earth covering the remains of the castle an excavator was working for the archaeologists from start to end of the archaeological excavation. Samples for dendrochronological analysis were collected from all the different constructions. A total of 39 samples are examined and 30 samples are dated. (Fig. 4) The results of the dendrodating are unambiguous, Stege castle was radically rebuilt in 1314 BC (Daly 2001). 25 planks and beams were during the excavation-period closely examined for traces of reuse, transportation, saws

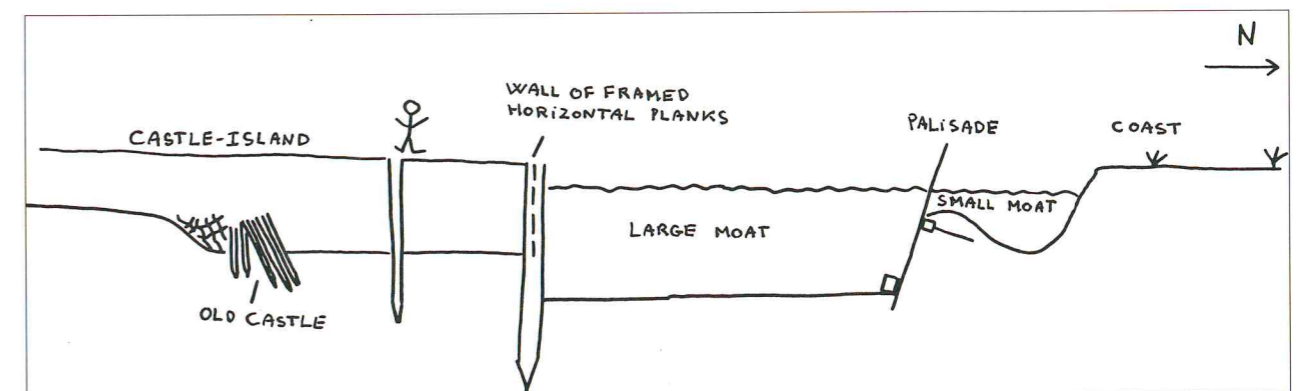


Fig. 3. Sectional view of castle-island and moats from the east. To the left are the original island and the row of piles, which hold the artificial island of the old castle. The rest of the structures belong to the 1314 Stege Castle. In the left side of the large moat is the wall of framed horizontal planks. In the right side is the small moat behind the palisade

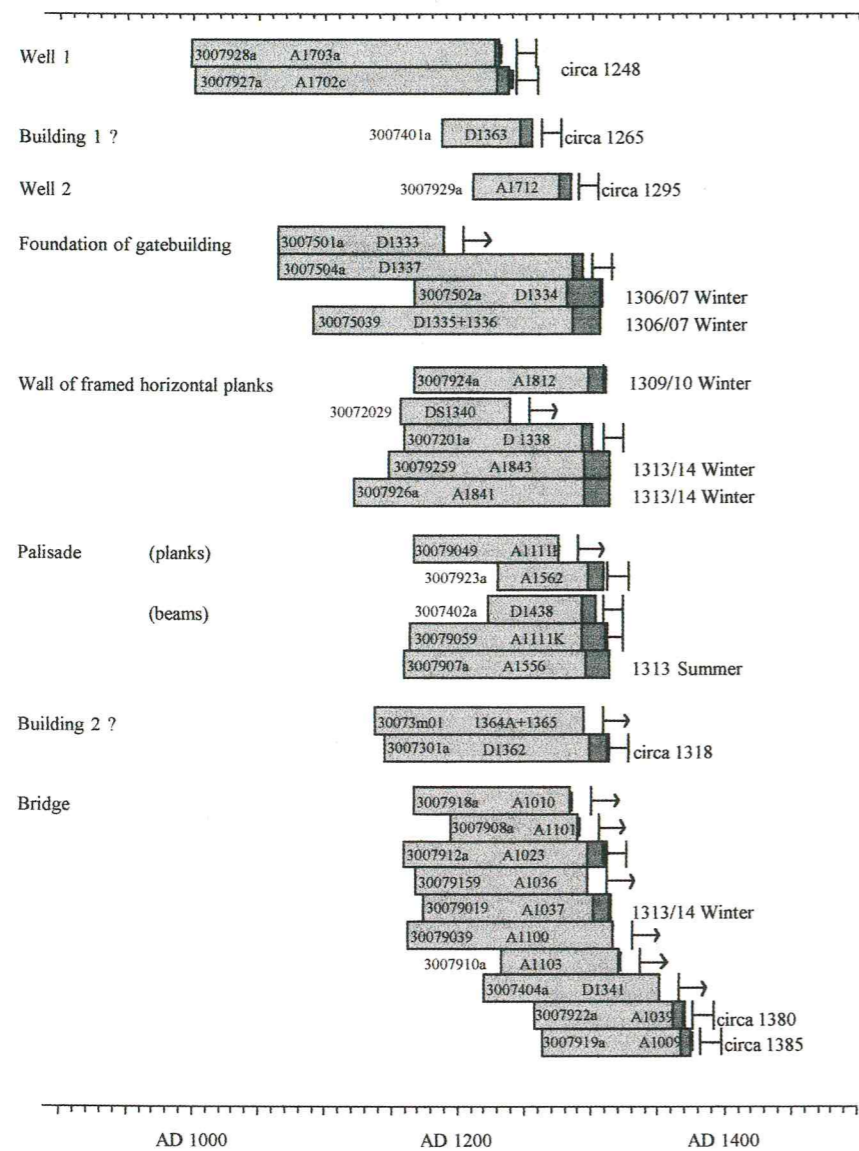


Fig. 4. Dendrochronological datings of timber from Stege castle, by Aoife Daly, NNU Copenhagen (Daly 2001). Buildings 1-2 and foundation of gate building were excavated in 1976-77 (Bekmose, Nielsen 1978).

and axes and for how the trees were cut up. Samples for macrofossil analyses and pollen analysis were collected from moats and wells and are still under examination.

Wooden constructions like Stege castle are till now unknown in Denmark and many measures were taken to preserve the oak planks and beech beams. At the end of the excavation a small part of the structures was taken away for preservation by freeze drying and the rest was covered with earth. The modern constructors are aware of the placing of the castle and bound to avoid destroying it. But what damage the archaeologists have caused by exposing the medieval wood to air and light will not be known for many years.

The earthworks

The castle-island, which is artificially enlarged, was originally situated 20 meters south of the coast in a shallow area. Before deepening the moat between the castle-island and the coast the whole area in question must have been diked and continuously drained during the extensive earthworks and the erection of the wooden constructions.

A moat 15–20 meters wide and 3,50 meters deep was dug into the seabed between the castle-island and the coast and at the west side of the castle-island. Between the large moat and the coast is another much smaller moat, 4 meters wide and 2 meters de-



Fig. 5. The palisade from the south-east. The palisade forms an angle to the north and west side of the castle-island. The corner is in the central part of the picture. The northern palisade is partly hidden by large piles of earth

ep. The two moats are right next to each other, mainly separated by the palisade and by their different depths. As both moats were originally full of (salt) water the impression must have been: one big moat with a palisade in the water 4 meters from the coast. If there is even further defence-works to the north of the small moat, closer to the town, is unknown.

ep. Perhaps the water level was considerable higher in 1314 and would allow for deep-draughting ships to sail into the moat. But it is striking that a meant-to-be passage would be least deep. Therefore it is more likely that from the start ships were not allowed into the moat and some other kind of defence was chosen, in the sea to the south and south-west.

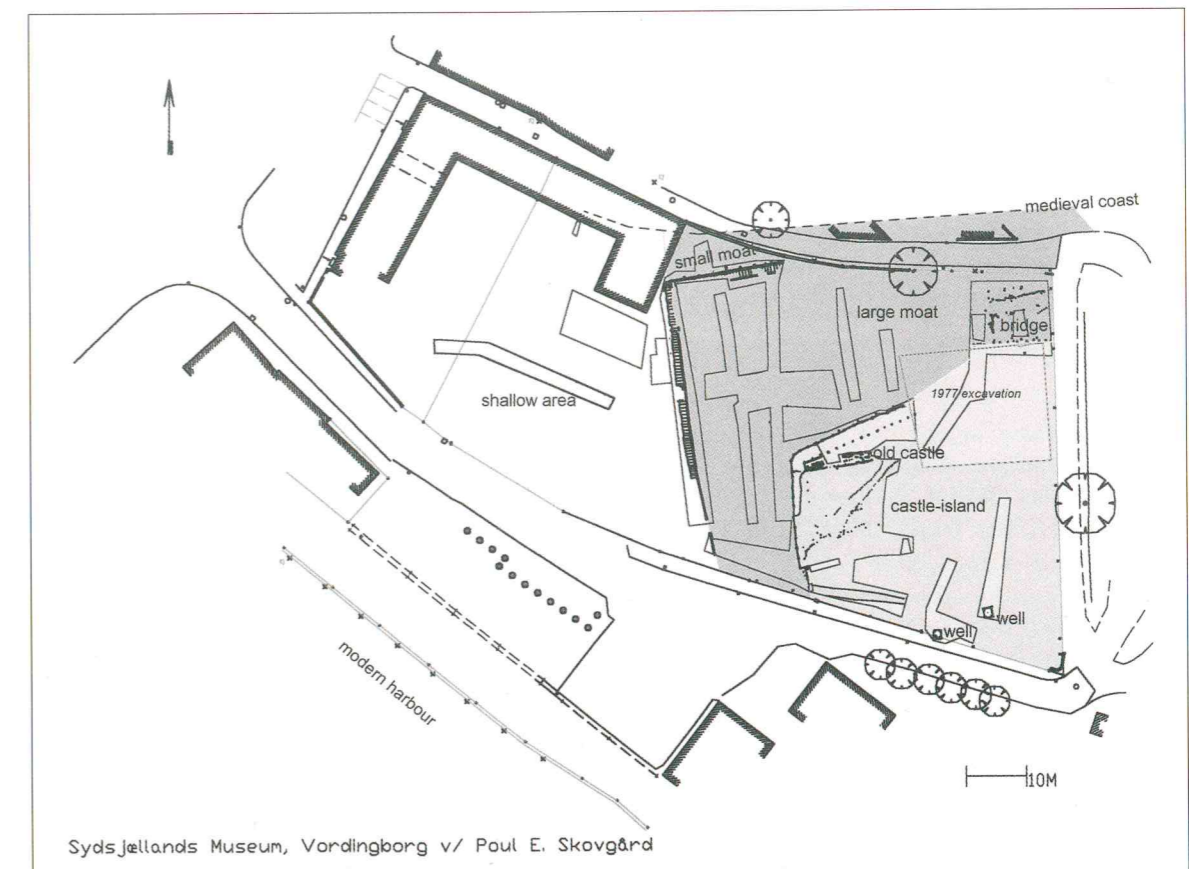


Fig. 6. Survey plan of the excavated area and surroundings showing the archaeologists' trenches and the medieval wooden structures. The presumed site of the coast is indicated by a dotted line. The hatched area indicates where the excavations in 1976-77 took place



Fig. 7. The western part of the Palisade, from the south. As regards all of Stege Borg the wooden palisade is preserved up to modern water level. Above this level is more than 1 meter of modern, disturbed layers. In the background is the tower of Stege church

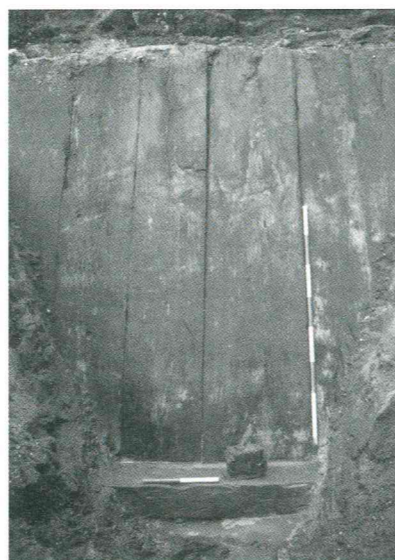


Fig. 8. The northern part of the palisade from the south. At the bottom of the moat is the beech beam, which holds the planks

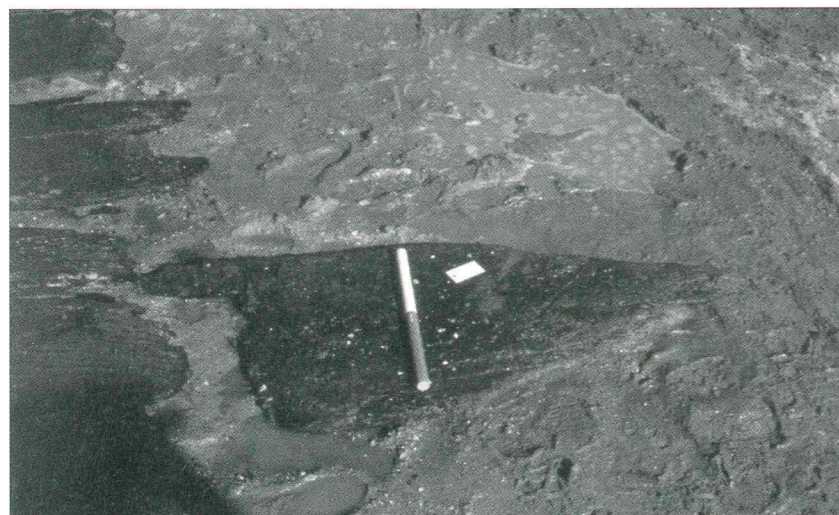


Fig. 9. Tapered top of a palisade plank found in the bottom of the large moat

Perhaps sea blockages were established to the seaside of the castle-island (Stege probably has an old tradition for searoute blockage which perhaps is indicated by the name "stege"="stickæ).

The palisade

As regards all of Stege Borg the wooden palisade is preserved up to modern water level. The palisade forms an angle to the north and west side of the castle-island. It is situated at the farthest side of the large moat (Fig. 5). The palisade consists of vertical oak planks, up to 3,50 meters long and 0,45–0,70 meters broad. The planks lean by 15° backwards to the

abrupt slope of earth and clay created when digging the large moat (Figs. 7,8). At the bottom of the moat the planks are fixed by beech beams (5–7 meters long and 0,40x0,40 meters thick), which are hold to the bottom by beech pegs (0,50 meters long) (Fig. 8). A necessary fixation at a higher level of the planks is not preserved. At the top of what is preserved are, behind the planks, oak beams (5–7 meters long and 0,25x0,25 meters thick) which the planks rest onto and which are fixed to the earth and clay slope by (1 meter long) oak pegs (Fig. 3). The original height of the palisade is not known, but it is known that, at the top, the planks

were tapered, so as a general impression the palisade was jagged (Fig. 9).

The palisade served at least two purposes. First of all it was designed to hold the abrupt slope of earth created when digging the large moat. Secondly it was a traditional palisade. Further more it has contributed considerably to Stege castles imposing outlook.

The castle-island

The castle-island was enlarged with material from the deepening of the large moat, mainly clay. To hold the clay from slipping into the moat a wall of framed horizontal planks surround the island (Fig. 10). The wall

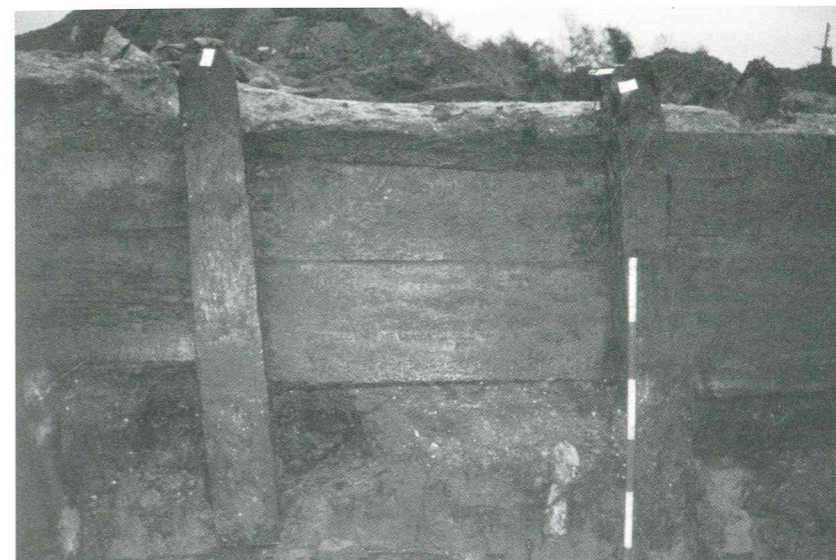


Fig. 10. Wall of framed horizontal planks surrounding the artificial castle-island

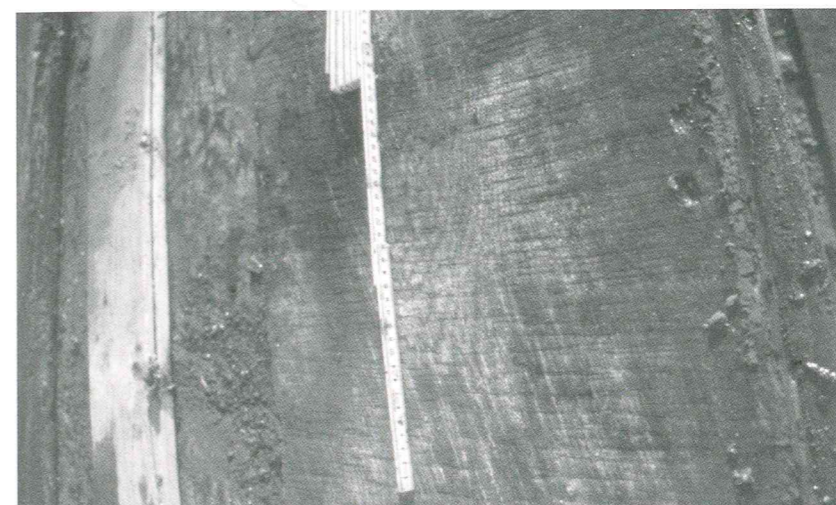


Fig. 11. Oak plank showing saw marks. Saws were used to cut out all planks from Stege Castle and the edges are cut to shape with an axe

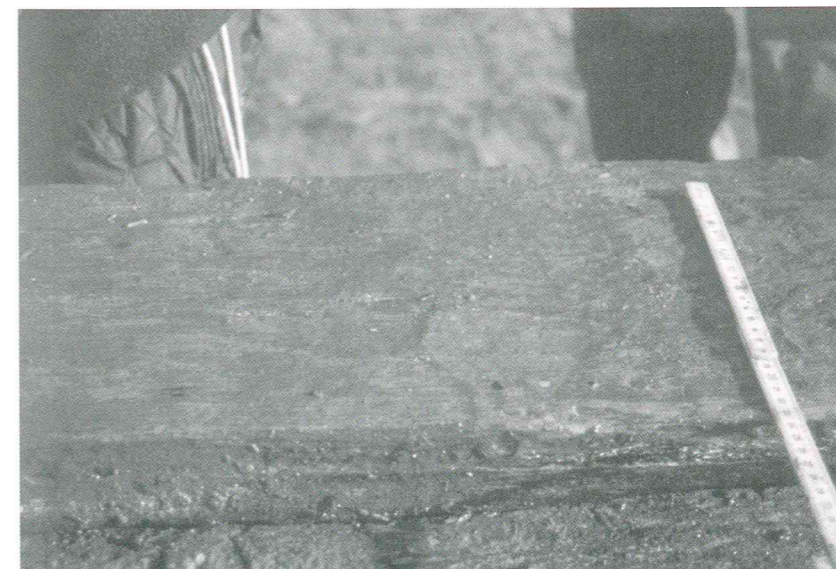


Fig. 12. Beech beam showing axe marks. Most of the beams from Stege castle are cut with axes on two sides and with saw on the other two sides

consists of vertical oak posts (0,20x0,35 meters thick) pointed and hammered into the seabed and of horizontal oak planks (0,9–1,30 meters long and 0,30–0,60 meters broad). The planks are joined in rabbets cut in the posts. It is not known whether this wall originally rose above the water level.

The excavated north-west corner of the castle-island forms an acute angle, which fits into the shape of a trapezium quadrangle seen on a 17th century map showing the castle-ruins ground plan (Bekmose, Nielsen 1978:100).

The bridge

The bridge is situated on the north side of the castle-island. In this place the large moat was presumably 15 meters wide. Pointed oak-pillars (0,30x0,40 meters thick) were hammered 2–3 meters into the seabed to support an almost 6 meters wide bridge of unknown construction. According to the dendrodating the bridge was only repaired once in the late 14th century.

On the castle-island part of a wooden foundation of a gate-building or gate-tower was excavated in 1976. It has not been possible to reconstruct this building.

Rampart or ringwall ?

In the large moat, on top of the natural sea deposits, just outside the castle-island are several piles of broken bricks and mortar. These are the remains of buildings pulled down for reuse of the bricks. It is formerly conjectured that Stege castle had a ringwall of bricks. But if that was so, the remains probably would have been found all the way around the castle-island and not as it is in well-defined piles. Possibly the

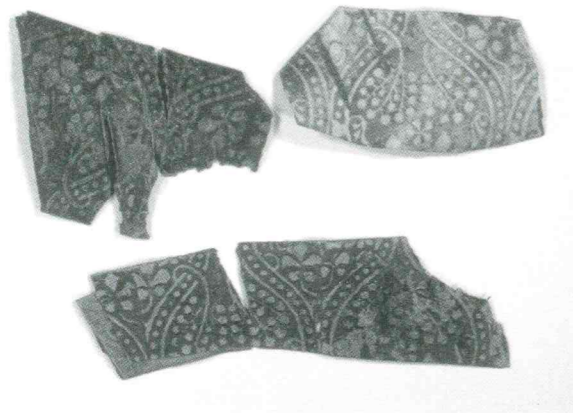


Fig. 13. Ornated birch bark from Stege castle

defence of the island consisted of an earth rampart and a wooden palisade. It is impossible to determine whether the brick-buildings were houses or towers and whether they date back to 1314 or if they are much younger.

It is possible that the Stege castle which was built in 1314 was a genuine wooden castle. On the other hand the fact that the under-water constructions are made of wood must not lead to overreaching interpretations. The well-defined piles of bricks in the moat do as mentioned above indicate an earth rampart. But a ringwall of bricks is not definitively out of the question.

Artefacts

Artefacts are found in the moat close to the bridge and in the wells. Down-at heel leather shoes and

small, manufactured, wooden sticks, presumably parts of furniture, bone material and potsherds are the most common artefacts in Stege Borg. But there are also parts of cross bows, dice, pieces, handles of knives, a seal, a sword pommel etc. The most remarkable finds are the ornamented pieces of birch bark (Fig.13), which have never been seen in Denmark before. Similar pieces are excavated in Kernavė in Lithuania along with a stamp used to strike the ornaments on to the birch bark. The ornamented birch bark and the stamp from Kernavė are on view in the Kernavė museum of archaeology and history (Vitkūnas, Luchtanas, Grigonienė 1999. Ornamented birch bark and other artefacts from Stege castle are on view in Møns Museum in Stege, Denmark. Possibly these pieces of ornament have been used to decorate baskets, boxes, quivers etc.

Future excavations of Stege Castle

Only one quarter of the 1314 castle has been excavated. The two quarters of the castle to the south are occupied by modern harbour-activities and have been exposed to many building-activities during time. Probably little is left of the castle in that area. But the area to the east, which is today undeveloped, apparently has never been demolished to the same degree as the now excavated area. If the future building-activities cause archaeological excavation in this area, perhaps foundations of buildings and the layout of this part of the castle-island will be brought to light.

Anders Reisnert

SOME SCANIAN AND SCANDINAVIAN CASTLES AND THEIR RELATIONS TO THE LIVONIAN ORDER

Einige skanische und skandinavische Burgen und ihr Verhältnis zum Livischen Orden

Schonen ist heute das südliche Provinz Schwedens, aber war vor 1658 ein bedeutendes Landesteil von Dänemark. Das frühe Teil des 16. Jahrhundert war eine unruhige Zeit mit sozialen Spannungen in Dänemark sowie in Deutschland. Das Kampf zwischen verschiedenen sozialen Klassen wurde ganz deutlich, und zwei grosse Aufstände, erstens das Versuch Sören Norby den Macht in Schonen zu übernehmen 1525 und zweitens die sogenannte Grafenstreit (Grevefejden) 1534, veranlassten schweren Schaden an die privaten Burgenanlagen in Schonen. Als die Streiten sich legte, und den Adel als Sieger dar stand, begann eine febrile Bauverksamkeit um die Herrensitze zu wiederherstellen. Der Adel hatte sich eine vorgeschobene wirtschaftliche und politische Position erungen, und könnte den Bauernstand tiefer exploatieren. Die Voraussetzungen waren gut für einen Wiederaufbau von den rasierten Herrenhäuser, und man hatten gleichzeitig interesse seine neue Machtstellung durch die Architektur zu manifestieren. Es ist gegen diesen Hintergrund dass man eine gruppe von Burgenanlagen, die alle zwischen 1530 und 1550 errichtet wurde, und die alle diagonalgestellten Kanontürme haben, verstehen soll. Diesen Burgenanlagen haben grosse ähnlichkeiten mit gesprächende anlagen in den Gebieten die vom Schwertritterorden kontrolliert wurden. Die ähnlichkeiten sind so gross dass man eine direkte Kontakt annehmen musste. Leider gibt es keinen schriftlichen Beleg für sowas, aber die Ordensburge wurden moderni-

sierunter die führung von Wolter von Plettenberg, und zähligen Burgenanlagen wurden dann mit diagonalgestellten Kanontürme verstärkt. Das Schwertritterorden wurde successiv abgewickelt in den Jahren zwischen 1520-1540, und eine grössere menge von Baumeistern, und Bauarbeitern wurden arbeitslos. Baumaterial und Baumeistern wurden vorher von Gotland geholt, und man muss annehmen dass diese sich Menschen sich neue Arbeitsmärkte suchten nach dem Zusammenbruch des Ordens. Die Nachfragefrage auf Leute mit gutem Baukompetenz steig gleichsetig in Schonen. Die Idee mit diagonalgestellten Kanontürmer kam also von Livland nach Schonen. Die Idee wurde dann, durch die enge adeligen Vervandtschaften, von Schonen aus verbreitet zu den übrigen Teilen Dänemarks, und auch zum Schweden. Eine Ausnahme in diese Kette von Indizien findet man in Steinviksholm in Norwegen. Hier haben aber Norwegische Forschern haben aber hier die Möglichkeit von einer direkte Kontakt zwischen den Bauherr, Erzbischof Olav Engelbrektsen und die Bautätigkeiten des Papstes in Rom vorgehoben. Ein Anzahl von Pläne verschiedenen Festungstypen waren für den Papst gerade bei Leonardo da Vinci verfertigt, als Olav Rom besuchte in 1523. Man kann sich gut vorstellen dass der Bischof von Nidaros gerne nahmen teil von den letzten Innovationen in der Befestigungskunst als er die Burgenanlage von Steinviksholm planierte, die ausserhalb von Trondheim aufgeführt wurde in 1524.

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