

Northern Emporium Concluding Symposium: New Light on Emporia and Networks

26 October 2023 DGI Huset
27 October 2023 Maritza-salen

Organizers:

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CARLSBERG FOUNDATION



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Outline

In the early Middle Ages, a network of maritime trading towns – emporia – emerged along the northern coasts of Europe. These early urban sites are among archaeology's most notable contributions to the period between the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire and the growth of a maritime-oriented world in the Viking Age. Ribe, on the western coast of Denmark, is one of these sites. In 2017–2018 the Northern Emporium research project conducted seminal research excavations, which provided new foundations for the study of this nodal point between Western Europe, Scandinavia and the world beyond.

The two-volume final publication of the Northern Emporium project, published 2022–2023, presents an overview of the excavations and analyses to piece together the history of the emporium and its social fabric. The research employs novel, high-definition methods to explore the networks of the site, integrating an extensive use of geoarchaeology and 3D stratigraphic recording with intensive environmental sampling and artefact recovery, resulting in more than 100,000 artefact finds.

The results pose many new questions to our understanding of the archaeology and history of the Baltic and North Sea regions in the 8th and 9th century, but much further research is needed to unfold their implications.

The symposium New Light on Emporia and Networks marks the conclusion of the Northern Emporium project. It will bring together a group of leading researchers to debate aspects arising from the Northern Emporium project in a broader context of emporia and networks in early medieval northern Europe. The aim is to bring together people who would have a take about the wider implication of the results coming out of the dig that we could follow up within the project. They could be consequences for the understanding of other sites, particular find groups or for broader themes.

NORTHERN EMPORIUM

Vol. 1 The making of Viking-age Ribe

Edited by Søren M. Sindbæk

NORTHERN EMPORIUM

Vol. 2 The networks of Viking-age Ribe

Edited by Søren M. Sindbæk



Programme

DAY 1 - THURSDAY 26 OCTOBER - DGI HUSET

10:30 – 11:00	<i>Registration and coffee</i>
11:00 – 11:10	Welcome and Introduction Søren M. Sindbæk
	OUTLANDS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS (Chair: Søren M. Sindbæk)
11:10 – 11:30	Bone- and Antler Production in Ribe: Does ‘Weak Ties’ Create Strong Partnership and Complex Production? Axel Christophersen
11:30 – 11:50	The Cultural Context of Half-Double Combs and Other Combs from the Northern Emporium Excavations Steve Ashby
11:50 – 12:10	Glacial Archaeology in Innlandet County, Norway, and the Connection to Ribe Lars Pilø
12:10 – 12:30	Whalebones, Tar, Iron, and Furs: Northern Emporium and Outland Connections Andreas Hennius
12:30 – 12:50	Ecological Globalization in Long-Term Perspective James H. Barrett
12:50 – 14:00	Lunch
	GLASS NETWORKS (Chair: Claus Feveile)
14:00 – 14:20	The Glass Craft’s Melting Pot: Comparisons of Glass Crucibles across Northwestern Europe Line van Wersch
14:20 – 14:40	Exploring Ribe’s Bead Networks Mette Langbroek
14:40 – 15:00	Some Notes on the Blue, White and Red Beads Dominating the First Half of the 8th Century at Ribe in a Wider Perspective Johan Callmer

DAY 1 - CONTINUED

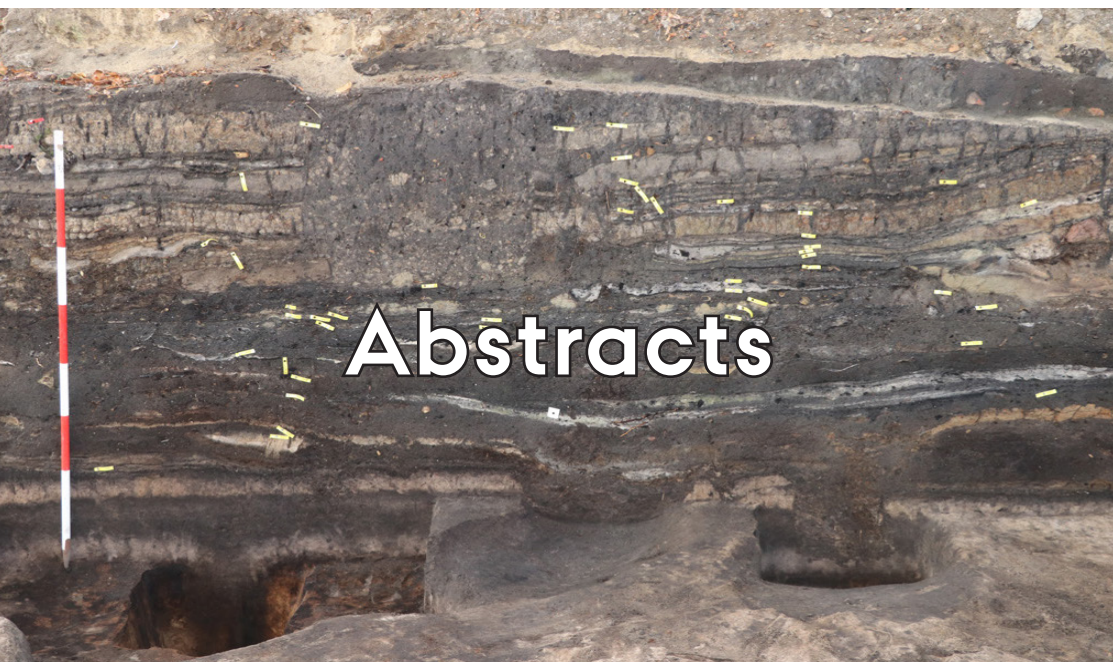
15:00 – 15:20	Implications for the Chronology and Contacts of Graves in Viking-Age Norway in Light of the Results from the Northern Emporium Project, Using the Example of Glass Beads Birgit Maixner
15:20 – 15:40	<i>Coffee break</i>
	ORNAMENTS AND CIRCULATION (Chair: Claus Feveile)
15:40 – 16:00	The Emporia and the Outback Jens Ulriksen
16:00 – 16:20	Comments on Urban Metal Casting in the Light of the Northern Emporium Project Michael Neiß
16:20 – 16:40	Shining a Blue Light: Tracking the Northern Emporium Berdal Brooch Mould Assemblage through 3D Scanning Derek Parrott
16:40 – 17:00	General discussion
18:00	Conference dinner Restaurant ET Mindegade 8 8000 Aarhus C

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER - MARITZA-SALEN

	SITES AND REGIONS (Chair: Sarah Croix)
9:00 – 9:20	Ribe and Hedeby: Traders, Moneyers, Artisans and Kings in the 8th and 9th Centuries CE (Title TBC) Volker Hilberg
9:20 – 9:40	What Happened during Ribe's Phases 4 to 14 on the Emporia on the West Slavic Baltic Coast? Hauke Jöns
9:40 – 10:00	Ribe and Truso: Similarities, Differences and Connections Mateusz Bogucki
10:00 – 10:20	<i>Coffee break</i>
10:20 – 10:40	Birka in the Light of Ribe: Implications and Reflections Initiated by the Northern Emporium Project Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonsson
10:40 – 11:00	Ribe-Kaupang Connections Unn Pedersen
11:00 – 11:20	Living with a River: Rethinking Dorestad, Emporia and Waterways Annemarieke Willemsen
11:20 – 11:40	The Emporium of Ipswich (Gipeswic) Keith Wade
11:40 – 12:40	Lunch
	SITES AND REGIONS - continued (Chair: Sarah Croix)
12:40 – 13:00	Rethinking Tating Ware in the Light of the Ribe Finds Richard Hodges
13:00 – 13:20	'...ad Portum cui Nomen est Quentavic': A Portus among the Emporia? Inès Leroy

DAY 2 - CONTINUED

13:20 – 13:40	Next Stop, Ribe: Production, Trade and Interaction on the North Frisian Islands in the 8th Century Bente Sven Majchczack
13:40 – 14:00	Along the Sailing Route to Ribe: News from the Viking-Age Stronghold Borgsumburg on the North Frisian Island of Föhr Martin Segschneider
14:00 – 14:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
	COMMUNITIES AND DYNAMICS (Chair: Pieterjan Deckers)
14:15 – 14:35	Sceattas and Ribe and Wodan Monster Frans Theuws
14:35 – 14:55	Peasants, Ports and Specialist Producers: Alliance of Interests, Consensus and Social Change in Northwest Europe, c. 650–1000 CE Chris Loveluck
14:55 – 15:15	The Bottom-Up or Top-Down Question: Social Dynamics and Economic Infrastructure in the North Sea Region Dries Tys
15:15 – 15:35	Housing Culture in Viking-Age Dublin and Other Emporia Sites Rebeca Boyd
15:35 – 15:50	<i>Coffee break</i>
15:50 – 16:10	Plot Layouts in the English Emporia; Models for Ribe? John Blair
16:10 – 16:30	Emporia and Maritime Communities from Ribe's Perspective Lucie Malbos
16:30 – 17:00	General discussion and closing remarks



Section through stratigraphy at SJM 3 Posthustorvet, looking SE. The microlaminated stratigraphy offers a rare high-definition archive of developments in the emporium.

Bone- and Antler Production in Ribe: Does 'Weak Ties' Create Strong Partnership and Complex Production?

*Axel Christophersen
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In volume 2 of the Northern Emporium publication, an interesting hypothesis has been launched, based on Mark Granovetter's theory put forth in his paper, 'The Strength of Weak Ties' (1973). The social relations and practice patterns dominating gateway communities are still quite unclear, which makes Granovetter's theory a bit more complicated than presented in the volume: Nevertheless, the proposed hypothesis provides an innovative and refreshing approach to better grasp how bone- and antler craft activity in Ribe gained access to necessary raw materials, to solve complex production processes and to realize how innovative technical knowledge, design elements transferred etc. A crucial question, however, is whether the presupposed effects of 'weak ties' relations under any given social establishment will support and thus contribute to develop productive activities within dynamic gateway communities? If the craft production in question is subjected to magnates living outside the emporia, then the magnates' intentions and demands, and the way he is able to facilitate the production with e.g. a place of residence, raw materials etc., will act as an actant in the network, and thus interfere with the 'weak ties' abilities to act on the creation of complex production environments. My comments will concentrate on a) how 'weak ties' may have functioned within social practice patterns where intentions, knowledge and material prerequisites depended on magnates as the organizers of production, and b) how 'weak ties' may have contributed to develop productive environments where the craftsmen were not independent actors, but a collaborator for magnates embedded in different social relations outside the emporia.

The Cultural Context of Half-Double Combs and Other Combs from the Northern Emporium Excavations

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The combs from the Northern Emporium excavations show significant potential for our understanding of the organisation of North Sea trade in the pre- and early Viking Age. With stratified examples of Scandinavian and 'North Sea' types, there is an opportunity to explore the dynamics of contact, communication and innovation. The artefacts have been catalogued and published in some detail by Sarah Quistgaard, and this paper will broaden the discussion to consider their North European parallels and cultural context. Particular attention will be paid to a group of objects that I refer to as 'semi-double combs', for which close parallels are few. Do these combs suggest Frisian, Anglo-Saxon or other North European contacts?

Glacial Archaeology in Innlandet County, Norway, and the Connection to Ribe

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The high-altitude glacial ice is undergoing global retreat as a consequence of climate change. In Norway, the melting ice has released hundreds of artefacts and palaeozoological materials, shedding new light on the Viking Age. Examining the quantity of lost arrows at the Langfonne ice patch in Innlandet County, reindeer hunting on the ice peaked during the 8th century CE, coinciding with the emergence of combs crafted from reindeer antlers in Ribe. The traffic through the nearby Lendbreen pass started about 200 CE, peaked around 1000 CE, declined through the medieval period, and ultimately ceased around 1500 CE. There are indications that certain traffic traversing the pass extended beyond mere transit to and from summer pastures; it also encompassed long-distance journeys to the Sognefjord in the west. The remarkable decline of traffic during the early medieval period, a time when trade and commerce were on the increase, may be linked to unsustainable hunting of the reindeer and a simultaneous collapse in the reindeer population. The finds from the ice in Innlandet reveal that the remote mountains were not as isolated as once believed, rather they were an integral part of the wider Viking world, offering important evidence on trade in the Viking Age.

Whalebones, Tar, Iron, and Furs: Northern Emporium and Outland Connections

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When discussing trade and the networks connecting north European emporia in the 8th and 9th centuries it is easy to get carried away by far-away southern and southeastern imports. However, these networks also continued into the sparsely populated outlands of northern Scandinavia. In the last decade, new archaeological methods, as well as the development of scientific analyses, have been used to study questions of raw material utilisation and provenance determination of artefacts. This has resulted in new knowledge concerning resource exploitation in northern Europe, connecting arctic Scandinavia with the continent.

Much of the Scandinavian exports emanated from the boreal forests, for example iron or tar, but also products from intensive hunting or harvesting animal products – furs, antler or bone, and perhaps even live birds of prey. Even further north, along the arctic Norwegian coast, it is possible to identify an increased utilisation of the maritime resources, such as blubber production and large-scale fishing. Gaming pieces found in northern Europe, manufactured from bone from the North Atlantic right whale, might also indicate an active hunt for whales in this area.

This new research has shown that large-scale exploitation of non-agrarian outland resources was initiated already during the Roman Iron Age but began to decline already during the Viking Age. These new chronological insights provide interesting perspectives on both the Viking-Age expansion and the establishment of the northern emporia.

Ecological Globalization in Long-Term Perspective

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Early urban centres were, by definition, nodes in networks of long-range exchange. Past generations debated the relative importance of luxury goods and staple products in the trade of northern Europe's earliest post-Roman towns. It is now moderately clear that both played a role. Among luxuries and staples, many early trade goods were derived from harvests of wildlife – mammals, fish and birds – sometimes extracted from distant ecosystems. Over the long term, these harvests unfolded as serial exploitation and serial depletion. This paper will outline briefly the process of ecological globalization, as evident in the medieval north through examples of trade in preserved fish and walrus ivory. It will then note the long-term trajectory of these trades, into the late Middle Ages and beyond.

The Glass Craft's Melting Pot: Comparisons of Glass Crucibles across Northwestern Europe

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By combining practices and materials coming from different regions, periods and cultures, early medieval glass craft is by essence a melting pot. In secondary glass productions, the crucibles are certainly crucial but, as broken and burnt pieces, their study is still too often neglected.

Many sherds from crucibles were found in Ribe. They are described as wheel-thrown, hard-fired vessels and are supposed to be brought specifically for glass-working and beads production. Therefore, it is interesting to compare them to those of other regions.

Around early medieval Europe, most of the technical ceramic found in or around workshops showed that common cooking pots were used or reused in glass craft. However, in some sites such as Aux Ruelles in Huy (Belgium), craftspeople attended a new solution to provide specific containers, trying to find an adapted and sustainable solution for the glass-working reaching a turning point with the shortage of freshly imported natron glass.

In this talk, we propose to review the crucibles from early medieval workshops and to compare their forms and fabrics to reveal the potential common practices and their evolution as well as the possible exchange networks.

Exploring Ribe's Bead Networks

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The Northern Emporium project has demonstrated that beads were both made in Ribe and imported to Ribe on a large scale. During the 8th century, the majority of beads consisted of those produced on site, whereas beads found in the 9th-century contexts were mostly imported from the Mediterranean and further afield. In this paper, I would like to reflect on the networks these locally produced and imported beads circulated in, by focusing on several specific bead types (wasp beads and segmented metal foil beads, amongst others). By following these bead types across time and space and presenting the promising results of chemical analyses conducted on Merovingian bead sets, I would like to explore several research avenues that could help us understand these networks much better.

Some Notes on the Blue, White and Red Beads Dominating the First Half of the 8th Century at Ribe in a Wider Perspective

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The remarkable production of the blue, white and red beads poses a number of important questions. How did these activities start? The influence could derive from the west, but it is difficult to pinpoint the exact whereabouts. Quite early production also started in the Baltic region, i.e. eastern Sweden. With regard to design production in the two zones developed some differences although the main characteristics are the same. In terms of artisans of metal and wood this must mean that groups of bead makers somehow split but kept the close contact.

The close connections between bead making and trade networks must not be underestimated. The first half of the 8th century is, as we all know, a period of rapid development of trade networks. These networks reached both far north and east. Of special interest is evidence of the infiltration of the north into the lands of the Sami. Recent finds in southern Lapland seem to confirm earlier hints in this direction. A similar indication is given by studies of blue, white and red beads in Finland where they appear on the main trail to the fur hunting grounds on the Finnish lake plateau and the Sami lands. By the middle of the 8th century, these links to the east had reached as far as Staraja Ladoga, the Il'men basin and the neighbourhood of Pskov. This field of research calls for further efforts.

The final question is of course why and how the production of blue, white and red beads collapsed so very rapidly.

Implications for the Chronology and Contacts of Graves in Viking-Age Norway in Light of the Results from the Northern Emporium Project, Using the Example of Glass Beads

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The Northern Emporium project's high-definition dating of object groups common in graves provides an excellent basis for dating late pre-Viking and early Viking-period graves in Norway. Of particular importance for Norwegian archaeology are also the results on the beginning of the regular overseas trade of non-local raw materials, especially reindeer antler from phase F8, and Mostadmarka whetstones from phase F9.

Taking as a starting point the 9th century travel account of Ottar, which describes a trade journey along the coast undertaken by a local Norwegian chieftain, and assuming a mutual demand for raw materials on the one hand and refined materials on the other, one might expect a temporal and perhaps even spatial correlation between the regular export of raw materials and the occurrence of refined materials in the Norwegian graves.

Using the example of the temporal and spatial distribution of Norwegian graves with glass bead types, whose production in Ribe is proven and dated to phases F6–F9, and Middle Eastern bead types of the phases F10 and 11, different implications of the results of the Northern Emporium project for questions of overseas trade and networks will be discussed. For example, the great majority of beads manufactured in Ribe from Norwegian grave finds belong to types from phase F6–F7 workshops, and were thus produced before the regular export of reindeer antler and Mostadmarka whetstones. Norwegian graves with mosaic beads are particularly numerous, for which again only comparatively modest production remains are available from Ribe. These paradoxes require new explanations.

The Emporia and the Outback

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Excavations at Ribe during a handful of decades have offered significant information on the profile of an international trading site. The suite of finds and the site structure of Viking-Age Ribe reflect a highly specialized location with a clear strategic focus towards the North Sea but with lines of interaction reaching into the Inner Danish Waters and the Baltic. These directed lines seem to have been focused on a few sites like Gross Strömkendorf, in Mecklenburg and Havsmarken on the island of Ærø, i.e., other specialized trading sites. Thus, a question of interest is how Ribe may have been perceived in farms and villages for instance on the Danish Isles. Was Ribe the place one visited regularly in order to sell 'homespun' products and purchase exotic raw materials and high-quality products made by skilled artisans? It is noteworthy that the hinterland of Ribe showing a direct spin-off of goods and economic structure is rather limited, and the 'market coin' (sceattas) is extremely rare elsewhere in South Scandinavia. Observed from East Denmark, Ribe may have been far away with uneasy access from the East, while trading sites in the Baltic may have been preferred.

To establish a footprint of Viking-Age Ribe in East Denmark we have to identify the archeological objects that reveal the contacts. The cast metal objects produced at Ribe may play a key role if it is possible to connect the Ribe moulds with some of the many stray finds retrieved by metal detectorists in East Denmark.

Comments on Urban Metal Casting in the Light of the Northern Emporium Project

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Material culture is the cardinal source of archaeology and a natural starting point for all theorising research. The main power of empirically grounded studies lies in the possibility to give material culture a voice of her own. The act of restoring this material eloquence through strategic case studies sets archaeologists in a position to weigh theoretical arguments of a general nature against newly gained testimonies and, thus, to reach new insights on the human condition. Our Viking-Age materials have long been yielding hidden data in regard to urban network evolutions – which are finally coming into our reach, as a result of an accelerating progress within the natural and digital sciences, as well as in archaeological theory! In line with this, the Northern Emporia Project has been implementing an innovative research strategy which combines meticulous excavations with a string of high-definition methods from the natural sciences, as well as novel digital methods. I have been invited to reflect on the project's results in regard to non-ferrous metalworking: Do they give us reason to reconsider certain ideas in regard to the role that metal craftspeople played at other Viking-Age sites?

Shining a Blue Light: Tracking the Northern Emporium Berald Brooch Mould Assemblage through 3D Scanning

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During the Northern Emporium excavations, over 600 ceramic casting mould fragments with object impressions were found, used to cast various types of jewellery, coins, amulets and fittings. Approximately 250 of these fragments were used for the casting of oval brooches of Jan Petersen's so-called Berald group (P11-P24). There is significant research potential in matching these fragments to extant brooches from around Scandinavia, as previous research has demonstrated that no two oval brooches, or at least no two pairs of oval brooches, are exactly alike, indicating the possibility of tracing individual craftsmen and craft networks. However, the nature of the casting process means that these moulds are often very scorched, heavily fragmented, and only contain negative impressions of the brooches they were used to cast. The object impressions are thus difficult to discern, and their potential remains to be fully unlocked. This paper presents a selection of preliminary results from the author's ongoing PhD project utilizing a new method of visualization with 3D scanning to match mould fragments with extant brooches. Multiple potential matches are identified within the Northern Emporium corpus with individual brooches in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, highlighting both the range of Ribe's networks, and the varied techniques used by its sought-after metal casters.

Ribe and Hedeby: Traders, Moneyers, Artisans and Kings in the 8th and 9th Centuries CE (Title TBC)

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TBA

What Happened during Ribe's Phases 4 to 14 on the Emporia on the West Slavic Baltic Coast?

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When Ribe was founded at the beginning of the 8th century, several emporia also emerged on the West Slavic-populated coast between the Bay of Lübeck and the mouth of the Oder river. Their exploration may partly look back at a long research tradition, some of them are a focus of interdisciplinary investigations since the 1960s. They were recently re-examined as part of a Priority Program of the German Research Foundation. This produced new insights into their founding phase but also to their social and economic development. The most recent results will be presented, with particular attention to the developments and possible connections to Ribe.

Ribe and Truso: Similarities, Differences and Connections

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Except the well-known big Viking-Ages towns – Haithabu, Birka, Wolin and Staraja Ładoga, which have been well described in written sources and have been well excavated – there were several other important central places, where crafts and both long distance and local trade developed. Ribe on the North Sea and Truso on the eastern Baltic Sea were some of the most important trading sites in the early Viking Age. Both have also been recorded in written sources (though not to the extent of the largest towns), and both are also relatively well-studied archaeologically.

A short comparative study will show what the similarities and differences were between these two centres – how and when they developed as well as the chronological differences in their development. Furthermore, we will consider whether the dynamics of their development were similar or different, whether they had a similar settlement structure, whether and how the commercial contacts differed areas of both centres. Finally, based on the various categories of archaeological finds discovered in both centres, we will consider whether the population of both emporia had contact with each other.

We will also devote some attention to methodological issues such as how to compare similar centres that have survived to this day in a different state of preservation: While Ribe has been preserved relatively well, retaining the original archaeological layers (sandwich layers), the Truso area was subjected to intensive agricultural cultivation and archaeological layers were largely destroyed.

Birka in the Light of Ribe: Implications and Reflections Initiated by the Northern Emporium Project

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Ribe has long served as a natural comparison in discussions around Birka, where both similarities and differences have come to influence the interpretations of Birka's structures and chronologies. Although the long-awaited report of Birka's settlement stratigraphy now has been published, much work remains with the find material. Furthermore, our knowledge of the oldest and youngest phases of the settlement is still very limited, and the overall understanding of the site continues to rest on the grave material. With the extensive results from the Northern Emporium project, a new focal point has been provided for further research on the development, organisation, function and interaction of Viking-Age towns. The publications deliver accessible, applied stratigraphy and materials studies – the simple model that enables continued studies in Ribe, but perhaps more importantly, at other Viking-Age sites. Comparing Ribe and Birka now reveals their different geographical arenas in even more detail, further underscoring the North Sea's west-oriented trade network and the Baltic's eastern focus. With the high resolution of the Ribe chronology, it is also possible to start unravelling Birka's oldest history.

Ribe-Kaupang Connections

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The Ribe Excavations 1984–2000 formed an important backdrop for the Kaupang Excavations 2000–2003 and the following publications. The Northern Emporium project publication 2022–2023 serves as an inspiration to return to the Kaupang evidence anew, highlighting the new insights on urbanism and social life. The paper will explore how the connections between Ribe and Kaupang appear today, reinvestigating the wider context of Kaupang.

Living with a River: Rethinking Dorestad, Emporia and Waterways

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The emporium of Dorestad was not coastal. Rather, it was characteristically riverine. Unlike other emporia, it was invisible when sailing along the North Sea coast or entering the river delta that is the Low Countries. Even sailing up the Rhine with its many bends, only at close range the castellum and churches would rise on the horizon. If you wanted to go to Dorestad, and many people did for various reasons, you had to know where to go.

Dorestad developed alongside the river. Over 3 km long and only 500 m wide, the settlement was a chain of functional clusters, that gave the town a certain rhythm. All houses faced the Rhine, the main street ran along it and extra space had to be conquered on the river. For the people of Dorestad, the river determined life and identity: They had to adapt, think fluvial, go with the flow. They depended fully on river-born wealth (fish, goods, culture) and suffered only river-born threats: floods, pirates, silting up.

The river also determined the fate of Dorestad. The shifting course of the Rhine flooded the settlement in the 11th century and swallowed the castellum area. But it also determined late medieval Wijk to be built up in a different location, saving early medieval Dorestad for archaeology, especially what was in the river – the largest town area excavated in the Netherlands.

The Emporium of Ipswich (Gipeswic)

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Ipswich (Gipeswic), like Southampton (Hamwic) and London (Lundenwic), grew to some 40–50 hectares in the first half of the 8th century with an economy based on craft production and international trade.

All three also have 7th-century precursor activity represented by cemeteries which include burials of individuals from the European mainland but very limited evidence of occupation. At Ipswich, two 7th–early 8th-century cemeteries have been excavated, but contemporary occupation is sparse, apart from two sunken-featured buildings and pits with a high proportion of imported Frankish pottery. Taking all the evidence into account, it is likely that Ipswich in the period c. 640–720 CE was the principal arrival point for foreign visitors to the East Anglian Kingdom and from which they travelled to inland estate centres for various purposes including the exchange of goods.

From c. 720 CE, a town is laid out with a grid iron pattern of gravelled streets. Most sites have produced evidence for craft activity including bone and antler working, metalworking and textile manufacture, but the dominant craft was the ceramics industry. The Ipswich ware produced has a very wide distribution across the Kingdom of East Anglia and beyond. All sites also produced imported Frankish pottery and some have wooden barrels, re-used to line wells, which are from the Rhineland.

The diet of the inhabitants included estuarine and marine fish, probably the product of a fishing industry based in the town.

Unlike, Southampton and London, Ipswich has continuous occupation thereafter on the same site as it is today.

Rethinking Tating Ware in the Light of the Ribe Finds

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This paper takes its starting point from the new dates for and interpretation of Tating ware found (and now splendidly published) in the Ribe excavations at Posthustorvet. This shows certain types of Tating ware date to the first half of the 9th century as opposed to the period after c. 775 following Wilhelm Winkelmann's (1972) dating on the bases of the sherds found at Paderborn. The Ribe discoveries also lay emphasis upon this pottery type belonging to a Carolingian era mercantile/artisanal culture as opposed to being principally associated with liturgical practices. These two points provide an opportunity to re-examine the dating of the emporium at Hamwic, Anglo-Saxon Southampton as well as other Anglo-Saxon emporia, and to reconsider the early history of new Carolingian values introduced as the 'correctio'/Admonitio Generalis on economic circumstances around the North Sea.

'...ad portum cui nomen est Quentovic': A Portus Among the Emporia?

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Although Quentovic has been explored since the 1980s by means of test pits and preventive archaeology, until now there has been no overall view of the site. This work, which has now been completed, has made it possible to define four major phases of occupation and a diachronic spatial analysis between the end of the 6th century and the 10th century. In addition, a regressive landscape analysis applied to the whole of the lower Canche valley has placed Quentovic in its contemporary environment, providing an insight into the resources available for its development and its integration into the trade flows of the early Middle Ages.

The results of the Northern Emporium project could have three major implications for research into Quentovic. Firstly, the implementation of a - however hypothetical - programmed excavation, using high-definition field methods and an exhaustive post-excavation study is an example of the wealth, finesse and quality of information that such an undertaking can provide. Secondly, it is crucial to compare the characteristics of the finds assemblages from Quentovic in regards to the other contemporaneous emporia, within long distance networks. In addition, the results obtained now serve as a guideline for defining, within the various emporia, the development of specialized production closely linked to the resources available and their integration into market exchanges.

Next Stop, Ribe: Production, Trade and Interaction on the North Frisian Islands in the 8th Century

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A couple decades before the founding of the Ribe marketplace, immigrating Frisians settled the Wadden Sea islands of what is today known as North Frisia. On Föhr and Sylt, settlements have been founded along the coast in favourable positions with easy access to navigable routes. In the first half of the 8th century, these sites were thriving and show a high degree of craft production based on local raw material (especially textile working and amber cutting), but also import of Scandinavian and continental goods and raw materials. Recent excavations and material analysis proved local production of glass beads, which are made in the style known from the workshops in Ribe. It is noteworthy that this specialized craft can be found on several North Frisian sites, which are also interconnected through the find material. In the glass, but also in other find categories such as coins, a strong connection to Ribe is evident, which is only one or two days away by ship. Therefore, it seems quite evident that Ribe, located at the northern end of the Frisian settled coastal zone, was the main hub of trading and interaction with the Danish realm in the 8th century. Since specialized craft production, but also the presence of foreign traders appear in many places, we find it likely that people from the North Frisian Islands were active on the Ribe marketplace as well as on thriving, but smaller hubs at home. The results from the recent settlement excavations on Föhr and Sylt will be compared with the findings of the Northern Emporium project.

Along the Sailing Route to Ribe: News from the Viking-Age Stronghold Borgsumburg on the North Frisian Island of Föhr

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Located about 1 km north the village Borgsum on a moderate raised moraine crest, a circular rampart, visible from afar, still bears witness to the monument preserved above ground. The Borgsumburg on the North Frisian Island Föhr has a height of nearly 8 m and an inner diameter of almost 100 m. Excavations in the 1950s uncovered parts of several well-preserved buildings with sod walls in the inner area, which can be dated to the period from the 9th to late 10th century. Geomagnetic and -radar surveys in 2001 and 2003 revealed further remains of numerous closely spaced sod buildings along the inside of the circular fortification.

Both dating and use still raise many questions. Since June 2021, a project funded by the Frederik Paulsen Foundation investigates the interior of the Borgsumburg according to current questions based on archaeological excavations, pedological investigations and botanical analyses. Summerly excavations have revealed many new insights. The youngest of the four settlement phases is dated dendrochronologically to the years of around 980 CE. This is the time of Harald Bluetooth's Trelleborgen, indicating that there is some sort of connection, i.e., it seems that the refurbishment of an already existing circular rampart was favoured over building a new one.

Sceattas and Ribe and Wodan Monster

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Claus Feveile did a wonderful job with the study of the Wodan/Monster type of sceattas. They share a number of characteristics with other sceattas, especially their anonymity. They also share the kind of distribution pattern of sceattas on the continent: many of them in centres or places related to long distance trade, few of them outside those places. I will argue that such coins are not 'regular money', but tokens, a special means of exchange shared only by those involved in long distance trade. I will shortly explain how their anonymity and their difficult-to-decipher iconography are crucial in intercultural exchange.

I will also explain why Woden/Monster sceattas were produced and circulate much longer than other sceattas, which quite dramatically disappear around the middle of the 8th century. It has everything to do with the first Carolingian coin reforms and the possible reasons for them. I will argue that the first objective of them was to control the silver circulation of the long-distance traders, those ungrappable 'floating aristocrats', which were not possible to control otherwise because of their ephemeral existence inside and outside the empire. The reason why Wodan/Monster sceattas were still produced and used after c. 750 is that the place where they were probably minted (Ribe) and used widely was outside the control of Pippin and Charlemagne. Traders, especially Dutch traders (!), were happy to fly to this tax-evasion centre in the north.

Peasants, Ports and Specialist Producers: Alliance of Interests, Consensus and Social Change in Northwest Europe, c. 650–1000 CE

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In the light of new research and paradigms of interpretation, this paper will explore our changing understandings of the context of the foundation of port settlements of specialist artisans and traders around northwest Europe during the course of the 7th century CE. Forty years ago, researchers emphasized elite agency for the foundation of these port settlements, often termed emporia, following 'port-of-trade', 'gateway community' and 'prestige-good' models. Yet as more surveys, excavations and metal-detector discoveries were made in coastal regions since the 1990s, it became evident that the full social spectrum of coastal and also major river corridor populations had access to apparently 'exotic' imported luxuries that were inappropriate to prestige elite-led models alone, and that there were a multitude of smaller ports and landing places around the coasts of northwest Europe in addition to the larger emporia (first summarized in Loveluck and Tys 2006). So, why were emporia necessary and what were the full range of social dynamics that resulted in their foundation?

This paper will explore some of those dynamics from both new discoveries, and theoretical re-evaluation of the agency of different social actors (from peasants, specialist commodity producers and traders, and landed elites). These dynamics include a much greater appreciation of peasant agency, age and gender phenomena that will have led to alliance of interests between emerging specialist producers, artisans and elites to create emporia port settlements/spaces; and transformation of the alliance of interests between port-based specialists, traders and landed elites during the 9th to 11th centuries CE, when the basis of wealth of growing port-town patricians diversified from portable goods to include landed estates, governmental offices and urban collective political power. Brief case studies will be used from the Channel, North-Sea and Atlantic coastal regions of northern and western Europe.

The Bottom-Up or Top-Down Question: Social Dynamics and Economic Infrastructure in the North Sea Region

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The historiography on social and economic dynamics in the early Middle Ages is often biased. One of the biases is the historical construct that one needs dynamic elites with large landholding to develop intraregional trade on a larger scale. Another states that luxuries and wealth indicate gift-exchange and power networks, and yet another states that peasants cannot have had significant contributions to production and trade. And yet another bias is the anachronistic view that governance structures in early medieval Europe were effective in managing the social and economic processes, let alone that the church had any influence in these.

In the Low Countries the production of wool and fleeces in the coastal areas seems to have been entirely controlled by allodial freeholders, so-called peasants. The same appears for the cattle farmers in the Dutch Rhineland. Ecclesiastical and aristocratic estates existed but did not dominate the social agro-structure. One can discuss the role of powerful agents in the control of the production and trade of iron but even there a major role seems to have been played by the group of the free landholders. It appears that no ruling class or 'elite' had the means by which to impose unilateral decisions about production, consumption, distribution of wealth, until at least the late 8th century, if not later. This poses an important caveat for those who want to explain the rise of the larger ports of trade (emporia) from an elite point of view.

Housing Culture in Viking-Age Dublin and Other Emporia Sites

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Research across the past two decades in Ribe, Kaupang, York and Dublin has established the presence of a common housing culture across these areas beginning in the 8th century and persisting into the 12th century. This paper will consider questions of differences and similarities across this common housing culture, reflecting on how Ribe's structures fit into this common culture. These houses are built of lightweight post-and-wattle. While this contrasts with Scandinavian longhouses, it is in keeping with Irish architectural norms. Post-and-wattle is the mode of construction for domestic housing across early medieval Ireland with stone construction generally limited to ecclesiastical or isolated rural contexts. There is, as yet, no firm evidence for daub at these structures, leading some to question the suitability of such structures for year-round occupation. Although Ireland features similar temperatures to Denmark, our climate is significantly wetter and duller. Experimental work at reconstructed post-and-wattle houses shows that such constructions are reasonably weathertight, even when undaubed. The main disadvantage of such construction is the requirement, in Ireland's wetter climate, to repair and replace the lighter structural elements and, thus, the houses on a more frequent basis, perhaps every 10 to 20 years. This timescale of rapid replacement contrasts with the patterns of familial and generational association with pre-Viking Age or pre-Emporia housing. This paper will consider what this difference in timescales and associations with architecture may tell us about the nature of life in these early urban places.

Plot Layouts in the English Emporia: Models for Ribe?

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Of the four English emporia (Lundenwic, Hamwic, Eorforwic, Ipswich), the first two have so far provided evidence for systematic planning of plots during c. 670–700. These are relevant here, since they might – like other northern emporia – have provided models for the plots at Ribe. The main site at Lundenwic (Royal Opera House) has buildings and plots that were not regularly planned, but use the apparently Frankish module of 5.5 m (the ‘long perch’). At Six Dials in Hamwic, by contrast, the settlement is based on a formal grid of 4.57 m (the Anglian ‘long perch’), although the settlement itself not laid out in squares but in linear plots like the other emporia. The underlying grid (so far unique among all the emporia) is surprising, both because the short perch was not normally used in Wessex, and because grid-planning at that date mainly occurs on monastic and monastic-related sites. The explanation may be the presence of powerful Mercian or Northumbrian ecclesiastics at the West Saxon court, who imported technologies used for their own projects. This, then, is a purely technological and cultural factor in the layout of Hamwic, with little bearing on how the settlement would actually be used. In turn, however, the form could have been copied in other emporia by people who had no knowledge of its origins.

Emporia and Maritime Communities from Ribe’s Perspective

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While the notion of maritime community is of interest to researchers, the two-part publication about Ribe confirms some theories and opens up new issues for emporia studies. After a brief definition of the concept of maritime community (with two key points: the awareness of forming a specific group and shared practices, including also a spatial dimension), we will try to see if Ribe can be qualified as such, thanks to the results of the ending project. Whereas a community presents a form of stability and structuring, can we use such terms to define shifting and heterogeneous populations living in emporia? Can’t there be other common features, creating a specific standard of living? In the absence of many texts on the subject, objects, buildings and burial spaces can provide us with valuable insights: Clothing or eating practices, for example, can contribute to define a specific standard of living, which also helps to define a community. Finally, we will conclude by stressing the importance of the Northern Emporium project for emporia and maritime communities’ studies, in Scandinavia but also in all northwestern Europe. The Northern Emporium project is a major one, but also a unique one, providing lots of information enriching emporia studies. However, it is also quite difficult to compare with other sites and maritime communities.

Symposium venues

Thursday 26 October

DGI Huset

Meeting room M5, 2nd floor

Værkmestergade 17

8000 Aarhus C

Friday 27 October

Maritza-salen

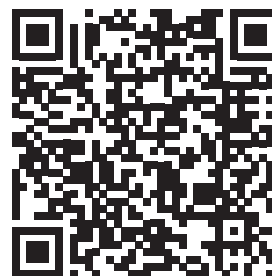
Frederiksgade 78C

8000 Aarhus C

Online via zoom

<https://aarhusuniversity.zoom.us/j/62324264538?pwd=U0h1c3lOR0dFajNTaGh2ZjMyYUtmZz09>

Map of venues



Scan this QR code to open a map with all venues on your smartphone!

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Note: We may take photographs during the symposium, which we store and use for e.g. reporting purposes. If you do not want us to use photos in which you are depicted, please contact Christina Levisen (levisen@cas.au.dk).



Map of Ribe north of the river (Ribe Å).



CARLSBERG FOUNDATION



Northern Emporium Concluding Symposium: New Light on Emporia and Networks
26-27 October 2023

Book of abstracts: Edited by Søren M. Sindbæk and Mie Egelund Lind.

Front cover: *Aerial photo of Ribe, looking W. The cathedral and surrounding medieval town are seen in the centre, while the emporium emerged to the north of the Ribe Å, on the lower right-hand side of the picture.*

Back cover: *A collection of beads and bead fragments imported from the Middle East, all found in the floor layer of the youngest phase of phase F9. The beads are faulty, discarded pieces, and must have come from merchants sorting their stock in the building.*