

Bishop and town – aspects of urbanisation and social space in medieval Linköping

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Henrik Tidemansson (1465–1500) was a long-lived bishop of Linköping who was very fond of building stone houses. He expressed his world-view in a couple of rhymes in which he praises a decent and practical life. A sane man takes care of his family and his household, works well, eats and drinks moderately, worships God – and builds stone houses. Modern scholars tend to interpret the erection of stone houses as a symbol of wealth and power and emphasise the permanence of the building material and the possibilities of building bigger and higher constructions. With this in mind, it is very interesting to listen to Bishop Henrik, who places the stone houses in a certain context – a late medieval view of the good life.

Is it possible to understand a society and a certain place that is long since gone? The aim of my doctoral thesis in medieval archaeology, which I wish to present in this short paper, is to study and analyse a historic period and its people through the remains of their material culture and how these social relations were materialised in an urban setting. The main subject of the empirical study, the medieval town of Linköping, is not an obvious choice. The episcopal town of Linköping has previously never played a part in the discussion of urbanisation or medieval archaeology in Sweden.

The earlier picture of Linköping was a non-problematic view of a town, an early medieval central place, which grew gradually in the 13th century because of the cathedral and against the background of the general development of the townscape of high medieval Central Sweden. During the large-scale excavations of the 1980s, however, we could not find anything dating back to the 13th century.

At the same time we could see that the tiny traces of sparsely populated town plots were altered and more well-built plots were established at the end of the 14th century. Why could we not find anything from the time when the town was supposed to have been established? And what did happen at the end of the 14th century?

Urban archaeologists in Sweden have long been very busy discussing towns in terms of *urbanisation*, that is, how the townscape was established especially in the 13th century and how these great efforts at urban development were preceded by small central places at the beginning of the Middle Ages. The discussion in Sweden, as elsewhere, has slowly changed from an emphasis on a gradual development, with trade and economic functions as the main explanatory forces, to a view strongly emphasising the purpose and the will of the would-be kings of the nascent central state. At the beginning of the 13th century, there was a profound change in Swedish society. A central state developed and a royal dynasty grew more powerful, with the birth of the feudal classes, monetarisation, the creation of the tax collection districts with boroughs and so on.

If the mainstream archaeology of the 1970s and 1980s was studying the major societal processes, and seeing the towns as part of big systems and structural changes, urban archaeology in the 1990s has gradually returned to the towns themselves. Today we are rather more interested in finding out what was special about the towns as a living environment and trying to discern when the urban character was established and what it was about. We want an archaeology that is more interested in the town as a special place in its surroundings,

the town in its historical context and its geographical landscape. Questions about the mentality and the life of the inhabitants as well as the town as societal space are very important. In the last few decades many archaeologists as well as other scholars studying society have been interested in questions about space. We have been influenced to a large scale by sociology and anthropology, trying to study the topography as a social space, created by certain people, individuals or groups. Social space has long since been interpreted as a passive mirror of social conditions, i. e. we look for social inequalities in the material culture, in the distribution of imported luxuries, and then we see this as a hint of different classes and segregation in the town.

Recently, scholars have started to interpret the built environment as active symbols and a language, i. e. a view emphasising material culture like the stone buildings in the town as being erected for the purpose of showing something, such as membership of a special social group, or wealth or power.

The aim of my thesis is:

- to problematise social relations in medieval society and discern how these were materialised in the physical reality, i. e. in spatial structure and material culture;
- to discuss more specifically the economic, social and ideological relations between the Church and the town;
- to study and analyse a body of empirical material, the medieval episcopal town of Linköping, and compare the results with the other episcopal towns of medieval Sweden.

The general scientific outlook is very much inspired by the contextual archaeology of Ian Hodder, which in my opinion solves the general problem of the intellectual relativism in much of present-day post-processual archaeology. Hodder's statement about extending the archaeological agenda and the contexts of research has much in common with a certain cultural-historical archaeology, studying the past through spatiality and the remains of material culture. The subject of social relations should be interpreted as social structures. According to Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, social structure is both the medium and the result of social practice. This means that material culture and spatial contexts are not just a reflection of the social relations in the

past, but should be interpreted as meaningful and active symbols and as the medium of the social structures.

The turn in Swedish research from a medieval archaeology to a historical archaeology means a greater emphasis on methodological problems, i. e. the relations between archaeological sources and written records. In the present study, the problems of societal relations and the use of space are more important than the study of a certain medieval period. For example, urbanism has previously been studied and interpreted as one of the most important aspects of medieval society. Recently, however, the study of urbanism has been seen as a way of studying changes in history. A very broad definition of the town as an urbanised place, with reference to Swedish scholars such as Adolf Schück, Hans Andersson and Anders Andrén, makes it possible to study the changes of appearance, the settings and the functions of a town like Linköping in terms of societal change. The outlook on the town of Linköping is very different in different historical contexts, a phenomenon that can be interpreted as the town being a place for quite different social relations in different historic periods. Recently, the study of the urban centres has once again turned back to the towns themselves, as an important place for living and acting – the town as the arena for social relations. An ecclesiastical town such as Linköping is in this respect a very good example of a place for ideological settings.

The empirical material concerning the town of Linköping consists of archaeological excavations, stone buildings, maps from the 17th century and historical documents. One way of explaining the discontinuous history suggested by the archaeological material is to try to study the town in relation to the ecclesiastical economy. The idea is that it is possible to seek an explanation for the development of the town in the relation between the town and the burghers on the one hand and the cathedral, the chapter and the bishop on the other hand. Recently, my interest has shifted to the relationship between the people in the town and how role-play and strategies can be discovered in the source material. Here it is not just economic circumstances that are important, but also how identity and group affiliations are expressed and configured in the form of material culture and spatial structure through

streets and alleys, plots and their content, architecture and so on.

To be able to cope with the questions above, the source material has mainly been treated in two different ways. First, the different source material has been analysed and synthesised in chronological periods, in order to discern the impact of different actors in the town. Period 1, the 11th and 12th centuries, gives a picture of the advent of the central place *Liunga kaupinga*. During the period, there was a shift from the old central place of Stångebro – a ford/bridge with adjacent prehistoric settlement, a royal farm/estate and a stone setting indicating the place of the provincial court or *thing* – to the eastern bank of the river Stångån. At the place of the present town, in those days uninhabited land, a Christian church was established, with a churchyard, runic stones, a couple of farms and later on the cathedral and the bishop's manor. Period 2, 1230–1287, is the period of consolation of the episcopal see and an immense building programme at the cathedral, the bishop's palace as well as the foundation of the chapter and the coming of paved streets, but still nothing that could be interpreted as an urban settlement.

Period 3, 1287–ca. 1350, saw the birth of the town. It is interpreted as a deliberate foundation by the king, Magnus Ladulås, and his brother Bengt, bishop of Linköping. The Franciscan friary was established in 1287 and was the first urban feature, probably a deliberate act of the bishop. Around 1300 we have the first indications of the legislative and administrative network, i.e. urban seal, burghers, urban court judges, chief magistrate, urban laws etc. At the beginning of the 14th century there are also the first archaeological indications of an urban settlement. Finally, the written records give a very clear indication of urban plots being established at the turn of the century. Interestingly, this profound urban expansion takes place in a period of occasional stagnation of the Church ca. 1290–1310. Later on in the first half of the 14th century, however, we have clear indications of ecclesiastical expansion, with tendencies to integration between the church and the town.

Period 4, the 1350s–1370s, is the period of the Great Plague and the economic and political crisis. There are no indications of further activities in the building of the cathedral or

foundations of any new prebends at the chapter. The civil war of the period did harm to the farms and the economy of the Church, with the murder of Bishop Gotskalk Falkdal in 1374 as the greatest outrage. Earlier in the 1350s, his predecessor Bishop Nils Markusson was taking steps to restore the Church by trying to found a resident chapter at the cathedral, an intention that was fully realised by Bishop Nils Hermansson in the 1370s–380s.

During period 5, 1370s–1465, about 20 residences were established in the town, with stone houses on large plots, almost all of them distributed around the cathedral and in the western part of the market place. The effects on the town can be studied in the archaeological records, with profound changes in the settlement, new building techniques, plot regulations, clear indications of functional households such as wells, denser settlement and a more abundant and varied material culture. At the same time, an older market place, a High street, was changed to a quadrangular market place, with continental references. For the first time in the history of Linköping, we have clear indications of a parallel development in the town and in the church.

In period 6, 1465–1540, the efforts of the previous period are continued and with the same settlement patterns. The period is defined by the efforts in the building programme at the cathedral and at the bishop's palace by Bishop Henrik Tidemansson (1465–1500), which was converted into an episcopal fortress. At the same time, two large and contemporary buildings, the chapter house close to the cathedral, and the courthouse at the market place, can be interpreted as symbols of the two parts of Linköping, the Church and the town, indicating a possible ongoing polarisation between these two groups of people.

In period 7, 1540–1630s/40s, the age of the Reformation, the chapter and the residences were dissolved, and the ecclesiastical plots were handed over to the winners of the age, the king's men. The urban settlement was profoundly altered, which has previously been interpreted as a period of stagnation and perhaps devastation, as a result of the big fire in 1546 and the fire and the looting of the town during the Nordic War in 1571. There are no hints of urban recovery during this period. At the same time, there were immense efforts at rebuilding the old bishop's fort into a royal

castle in Renaissance style at the end of the 16th century.

Period 8, finally, from the 1630/40s until the great fire in 1700, sees the recovery and new efforts of the new regime in the days of Sweden as a great power. The new administrative network in Sweden had special effects on a town like Linköping, which was the provincial centre of the state bureaucracy in Östergötland. The provincial governor (*landshövding*) started to reform the town plan, first by ordering a new straight High street through the town, a new bridge and new street paving. The built-up area was extended with new parts, especially between St Lars' church and the new bridge. At the same time, the inner structure of the plots and the material culture were altered, tendencies that have been observed during archaeological excavations.

Besides the chronological framework, the development of the town may be studied through the urban spatiality, which is defined in four different spaces: the landscape, the town, the plot and the stone house. In the first part, it is possible to state that the previous view of the town in its surroundings has focused on the term hinterland. I argue that it should be replaced by a view of the town as one of many possible network nodes. Linköping can be interpreted as a central place in a large landscape – the diocese, the judicial district, the middle central settlement district of Östergötland – as well as a central place in the immediate surroundings. The making of the new place – the new churches – on the western bank of the Stångån is interpreted as a deliberate act of creating an ideologically important place, sustaining the claims of the new kingdom to come.

The town plan is interpreted in terms of different aspects. The two churches situated in two different places, at the very top and at the bottom of the western slopes of a ridge, indicate differences in values: the cathedral as a church well visible to the whole diocese, the provost's church of St Lars in the middle central area of Östergötland. The importance of the two churches is enhanced, indicating that a conceptual space was created in between the churches, where different functions were gathered: the market place, the crossroads, the site of the provincial court. When the town was founded, this space was further bordered and defined to the south by the friary. This founda-

tion was the first step in defining the borders of the town, and later on this space was filled in with urban plots and further institutions, a border not surpassed until the 17th century. The development of Linköping may be compared with the general discussion of sacral space in towns and the role of the mendicants in town foundations on the Continent. It is possible to discuss the conceptual and functional delimitation of the town, as well as the differences of form and content. The town plan may be analysed in terms of functional and topographical conditions as well as plan ideals and the town as a tool for royal control. The rise of the residential town can be followed very precisely, and the construction of a special part of the town with clerical residence plots may be compared with parallels in Germany and in Lund, Scania.

The town plot can be seen as a social space, a private property very much a symbol of its inhabitants. The advent of fully inhabited plots as the living area for fully functional households is a phenomenon parallel to the advent of the residence plots, a development that obviously involved and changed the whole urban community. The differences between plots turned inwards and plots turned outwards, the residence plots of Linköping can be interpreted with reference to the model of residence plots described by the Danish scholar Engqvist. Other parallels suggest that this special form of plots can be interpreted as small aristocratic urban manors.

The stone house, finally, can also be interpreted as an aristocratic feature, especially with the advent of multiple storeys, the permanent building material and the two-room plan, suggesting a different social life allowing greater separation and privatisation in the households. Finally, the results of the study can be presented in four pictures, emphasising the town as a meeting point and a focal point of social interaction. The Bishop's Civitas, ca. 1000–1287, sees the advent of the central place Liunga kaupinga, as a newly constructed place for the bishop in Östergötland. The importance of the new place can be understood against the background of the struggle of the very weak royal power to obtain a firmer grip of the province, and later in the 12th and 13th centuries over the Swedish State. The central place had no economic function, instead it should be seen as an ideological node in a feudal net-

work. With the establishment of Liunga kaupinga the spatiality of the place was deliberately used, i. e. the topography and the siting of the churches on the eastern slope.

The foundation of the town in the 1280s can be understood against the background of the strong royal power at the end of the 13th century, a period with a deliberate royal urban policy. The foundation of towns during this period testifies to strong influences from abroad and a good acquaintance with continental urban situations. At the same time, the urban settlement is rather tentative, showing a division between the royal will and the actual function of the town.

The residential town was constructed at the end of the 14th century. The various features, such as large residence plots, stone buildings, the concentration of the urban space in the area between the cathedral and the town centre, were all aristocratic and ecclesiastical symbols, which can be found in episcopal towns all over Europe. At the same time, the actual construction in the latter part of the 14th century can be interpreted as being a response to a specific historic context – the restoration of the Church after the violations in the middle of the 14th century. The residential town is a par-

allel phenomenon to the cult and the efforts to canonise Bishop Nils Hermansson, as well as his magnificent grave-slab in the cathedral.

The indications of polarisation in the town may however be questioned. The material culture should be interpreted as active symbols for different groups. The bishop's palace can be interpreted as a powerful symbol of the magnate bishops of the late Middle Ages. The appearance of the residential part of the town may be interpreted as a polarisation between Church and town. At the same time, we have indications of the close connections between the burghers and the clerics, suggesting that the chapter and the local burghers had much in common. There are strong indications of an urban mentality at the end of the Middle Ages – guilds, private chapels, banks for shooting competitions, communal baths etc. Alternatively, the residential town may be interpreted as a common project for the urban gentry, burghers and clerics of the chapter.

The town of the Reformation, finally, was a place for new social relations during the advent of an absolute monarchy. After the crisis in the 16th century, the urban expansion in the 1630s and 1640s was due to the new role of a provincial administrative central place.

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