

Medieval News

Lisbjerg – an Elite Centre in
Medieval Denmark



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A Danish Viking elite residence or manor, Lisbjerg, has been continuously excavated over the last fifty years. Recently, the story of an impressive proto-industrial textile “factory” has widened the perspective, significantly enhancing our understanding of how the elite operated at the end of the 10th century.

Thus, Lisbjerg, north of Aarhus in Eastern Jutland, Denmark, tells the story of an elite landscape through archaeology, place-name studies, runic inscriptions, art history, and landscape reconstruction. This month’s essay reveals Lisbjerg as an important royal and ecclesiastical centre.

Visitors to Aarhus have the opportunity to learn more about the site by touring the medieval exhibition at Moesgaard Museum. Here, we present an attempt to reconstruct its cultural milieu.

Part of this project has involved using AI to reconstruct the landscape. So far, however, this has proved challenging because present-day Lisbjerg is now a heavily industrialised suburb.

Although the reconstruction on the front page thus conveys a sense of the commanding position of the Viking hall, overlooking the principal road leading north from the river, it has been a particularly daunting undertaking, since the slope of the lið is far too foreshortened. The distance from the present-day church to the river is approximately 1,000 m, while the hill rises about 70 metres above sea level. There would also have been a village or craft-production centre on the other side of the fenced manor.

Thus, this reconstruction should be regarded only as a preliminary suggestion! Obviously, though AI will in the future offer enhanced possibilities for reconstructing historical landscapes to get a sense of place.

Medieval News

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Front Page Photo

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Lisbjerg church ca. AD 1000 – based on a reconstruction by Morten Grønbech at Moesgaard. AI/Schousboe CCBYSA

Lisbjerg Manor and Church ca. 950 - 1200

The church in Lisbjerg is considered the oldest in the Lisbjerg Hundred and dates to c. AD 1100 – 1150. However, a predecessor in the form of a wooden stave church was built as part of a fenced manor c. 1000 – 1100. Before that, a pagan hall complex including a Hof (Old Norse: *hof*) probably dominated the landscape.

Lisbjerg Church, near Århus in Denmark, represents an opportunity to trace the transition from a pagan to a Christian society around AD 1000. Between 1989 and 1994, and again in 2002, archaeologists excavated around and beneath Lisbjerg Church, one of the oldest stone churches in the Århus region of Eastern Jutland, Denmark. Although a full excavation was prevented by the later churchyard, the investigations revealed an impressive record of the transition from paganism to Christianity around AD 1000.

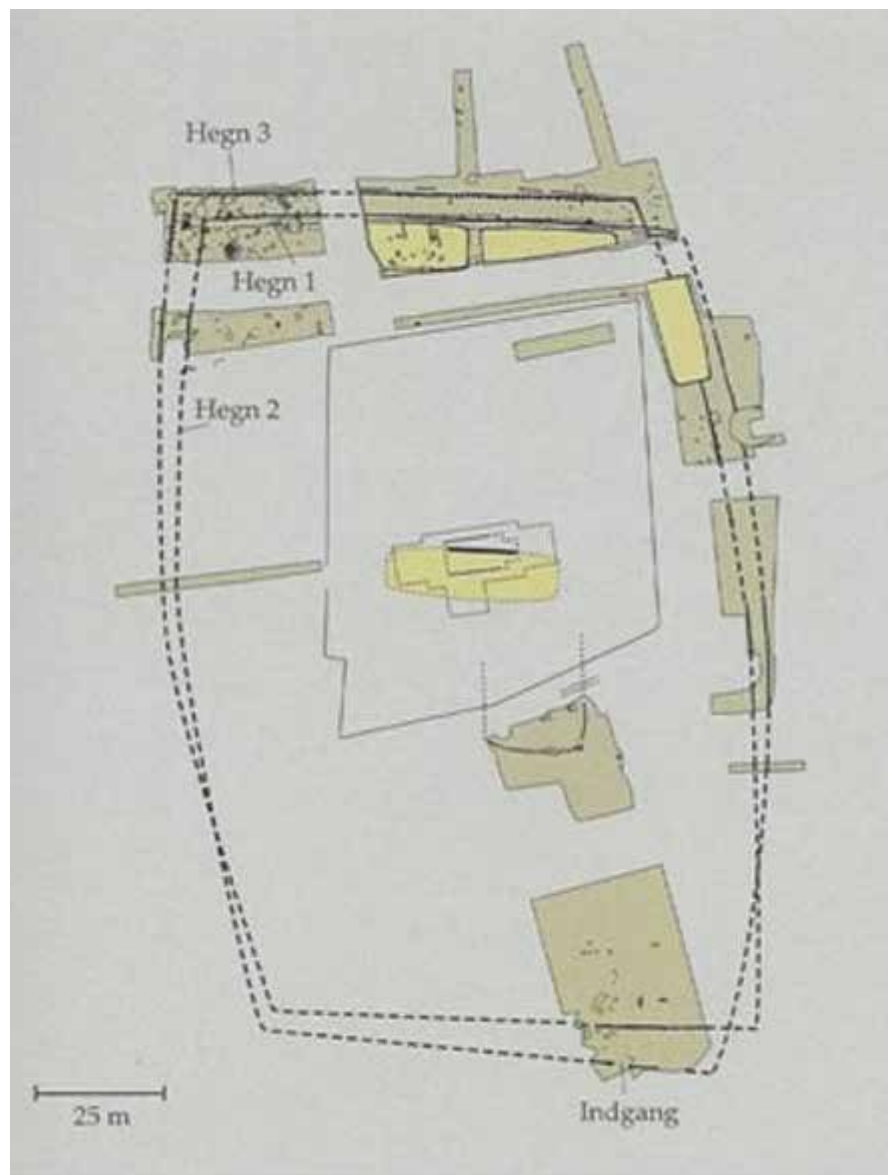
At the earliest level, archaeologists uncovered a fenced enclosure containing at least four buildings, forming part of a magnate's estate. Three of these buildings were constructed with slightly curved walls, characteristic of the so-called Trelleborg houses of the late 10th century. The estate measured approximately 170×100 metres, enclosed by a gently curving fence to the east and west.

The enclosed area covered around 2 hectares. To the south, a three-metre-wide gateway was identified; an echo of this has been reconstructed as the entrance to the nearby Lisbjerg Forest.

Within the enclosure, archaeologists also discovered several pit houses containing evidence of textile production, together with remains of bronze- and silver-castings and a smith's workshop. Other finds included imported glass, amber, garnets, ingots and an Arabic silver coin. The ceramics recovered date to the 10th century, and were imported from the Southern Baltic. The archaeological finds clearly demonstrate that Lisbjerg was a place where goods arrived and changed hands.

Later excavations have supplemented these discoveries by uncovering 22 pit houses in the village itself. At the centre of the estate, beneath the present church, the remains of what is believed to have been the principal hall were uncovered. This building had its own surrounding ditch and fence. The surviving planks were exceptionally substantial, set to a depth of one metre and measuring approximately 30–40 cm wide and 7 cm thick.

The manor complex occupied a hill adjacent to the principal village of the hun-



Excavations at Lisbjerg. the presumed Hof/Hov may have been located in the angled outline below the church © Moesgaard

dred. Extending down to the River Egå, the estate was strategically situated east of the ancient highway leading north from Århus. Immediately north of the river, a two-kilometre-long moat had been dug to protect the southern boundary of the hundred near the ford, while controlling and supervising traffic crossing the river and joining the road that passed through the village. The complex may also have been associated with one or more watermills, known from later sources. A comparable mill further upstream has been dendrochronologically dated to around AD 1100.

The Hall on the Steep Hill

Today, this landscape is not immediately apparent. The medieval church at Lisbjerg no longer dominates its surroundings. Instead, the ancient setting is hemmed in by manufacturing plants, a biogas facility, roads, and modern infrastructure. The village itself has expanded dramatically, its suburban sprawl engulfing what, only a few decades ago, remained a remarkably traditional Danish settlement.

Yet the older landscape has not entirely vanished. It survives in the place name itself.

A careful reading of Lisbjerg offers a glimpse of the countryside as Ketil would have known it. He lived on the Bjerg — the hill — while below it stretched the grass-covered, brushy Li or Lide: the long, sloping hillside descending towards the broad valley and the waters beyond.

The word is known in Old High German as *hlīta*, in Proto-Germanic as *hlīdō*, and ultimately derives from the Indo-European *kleytéh₂*, meaning something that leans or inclines. In English, it survives in the Old English *hlið* and in its Old Norse cognate *hlíð* (plural *hlíðar*). In Danish, the word appears as *Li*, *Lid*, or *Lide*.

Lith is therefore one of those beautiful West Germanic words that gradually disappeared from everyday speech during the later Middle Ages. It nevertheless survives fossilised in place names such as Hanlith and Upleatham in Yorkshire, as well as Le Lys near Quettehou in Normandy, literally the

Quettehou – Ketil's Holm – at Cotentin. Notice the church on the lith (Le Ly or Lys) in the background, which is located approximately in a similar location as Lisbjerg © Normandie Touristique



Lith near Ketil. Across Scandinavia and the wider Norse world, the term was – and in many places still is – remarkably common. Everywhere, its meaning is much the same: a slope, an incline, a ravine, or simply the side of a steep hill.

The Danish landscape preserves the word in numerous place names, almost invariably describing striking topographical features. One example is Lien in Northern Jutland, where a dramatic escarpment rises above the foreland and beaches along Jammerbugt. Perhaps slightly less dramatic, Lisbjerg belongs to the same family of landscapes. Here, a broad hilltop plateau commands a long descending slope leading down to the River Egå, which, a thousand years ago, formed the brackish inner reaches of a shallow fjord. Further inland would have been a forest. Unfortunately, pollen analysis has not been carried out near Lisbjerg and we don't know whether the forest was as “open” as was the case further to the south at

Once this is recognised, the landscape begins to reveal itself. Modern contour maps still preserve its essential form. What they cannot show, though, is the world that has disappeared: the motorway erased, the river restored to its Viking Age course, and the suburban estates replaced by open grazing, scattered woodland, and brush-covered slopes.

Nevertheless, with a little imagination, the landscape and not least the setting for his Elite Hall emerges once more. The name Lisbjerg is no longer merely a place

Landscape in Lisbjerg Forest © Rune Engelbreth Larsen/Danasrige. By kind permission.





Uppåkra Hall and Temple In Southern Scania. Lunds University. Uppåkra – Hallen på Höjden under järnåldern. Open Domain

on a map; it becomes a remarkably precise description of the world as people experienced it a thousand years ago. And a landscape, which we can delve into through the archaeology and art history.

Administrative and Cultic Centre?

When the first excavations were undertaken at Lisbjerg, archaeologists interpreted the building beneath the church as the principal hall of the estate. Unfortunately, the archaeological evidence was limited. Little is known about the structure beyond the fact that it was built using exceptionally substantial posts (40 × 15 cm) and heavy planks.

It has since been suggested, that the central building may have served less as a residential hall than as a Mead Hall with an attached religious temple featured in a smaller associated building. Similar interpretations have now been proposed for comparable complexes at Tissø, Uppåkra and the recently identified *Hov* at Lejre. At the time of the Lisbjerg excavations, however, the significance and prevalence of these angled buildings at Tissø, Uppåkra and elsewhere had not yet been fully understood.

Also, it is believed that the Viking Age manor complex functioned as a royal administrative centre. The lord of the estate would have been responsible for organising the local defence, perhaps collecting tolls from travellers crossing the ford, as well as controlling the watermills along the river. Attached to the elite residence was thus a community of highly skilled craftsmen and, most likely, a cultic centre.



Egå Runic Stone © National Museum of Denmark. The stone has been flipped here to indicate how central the “nickname” Nuruna features in the inscription

Ketil the Nuruna at Lisbjerg

Sometime between 970 and 1020, Alfkiel and his sons raised a Runic stone at Egå Bridge to commemorate their kinsman, “Manni”, who had served Ketil the Nuruna as his “land steward”. The Runic stone was discovered at the beginning of the 19th century in a dry-stone wall near the estuary of Egå, a small river north of the city of Aarhus in Eastern Jutland. Allegedly, local people said that the stone had originally stood near a bridge across the Egå. Judging by similar monuments, the runestone may have formed part of a donation to the local community, consisting of at least the monumental erection of both the bridge and the stone.

The transliteration of the Runic inscription reads:

alfkil : uk : hns : suniR : rispu : stin : þansi : ift : | : mana : sin : frinta : þans :
uas : lantirþi : kitils : þis : | nuruna :

while the transcription reads:

Alfkæll ok h[a]ns syniR respu sten þannsi æft Manna, sinn frænda, þann’s
vas landhirðir Kætils þess norrøna.

Based on this, the official translation reads: “Alfkell and his sons raised this stone in memory of Manni, their kinsman, who was Ketill the Norwegian’s estate steward.”

Thus, in the official translation in the database, the Old Runic word *norrøna* is understood to mean that Ketil was a Norwegian, that is, a person from Norway. However, taken literally, Ketil is not described as a Norwegian; he is merely identified by the epithet *norrønn* (Norse). The inscription therefore does not identify him by his place of origin, which would more likely have been expressed by a form such as *Noregi*, derived from *Nuruiak* (Jelling Stone 2) or *Nuriki* (Ketil Stone), both of which are understood to refer to Norway. Rather, Ketil is identified as a *norrønn* person. Most likely, *nuruna* here refers to someone who spoke Old Norse rather than dansk tunga, corresponding to the explanation of *norrøna*, f. (3), as the Norse language. The flipped stone shown as featured photo marks the importance of the “Nuruna”-part of the inscription – as seen in the middle part. Maybe Ketil was just called his nickname?

Apart from that, we can be certain that Ketil must have been an important man. Remember that the stone, and probably also a bridge, were erected to honour his man, the steward responsible for Ketil’s estate. The word *landhirðiR* is also known from the stone Ravnkilde 1. Here it is plausibly indicating an estate stew-

An old medieval bridge, Gråmølle Bro, may still be seen bridging Egår river a short distance from Lisbjerg. © Danske Fortidsminder



ard. Manni may, however, have fulfilled another role, namely that of priest. The title *landhirðiR* is not as widely used as *bruti*, *bryde*, which apart from three Runic stones is also known from early written sources in the 11th and 12th centuries. Perhaps it is significant that the stone was carefully decorated with an early Christian cross? In addition, an early bronze cross was discovered in a grave in the burial ground excavated at Egå. The stone must have been raised around the time when Christianity was becoming more prevalent in the landscape.

Ketil — the Name

Ketil means “cauldron” or “kettle”, and it has been suggested that the name referred either to the vessel containing the sacred mead or beer, indicating a man who provided feasts. Alternatively, it has been interpreted as referring to someone wearing a kettle-shaped helmet, making it a nickname denoting a warrior. Perhaps the infamous Ketil Flatnose, who for a short time ruled the Isles, derived his name from wearing a helmet with a prominent nose guard, such as that seen on the Coppergate Helmet.

Ketil was a very common name throughout the Viking diaspora. The Icelandic *Landnámabók*, for instance, lists approximately forty-three different individuals named Ketil, either as a simple or compound name, indicating that it was wide-

Elstedgaardskatten found between Lisbjerg and Egå consists of seven silver armrings apparently of West Nordic design © Moesgaard/Poul Madsen





Map showing location of Lisbjerg, Elsted and Egå to the north of the river Egå and the estuary of the former fjord ending in the bay north of Århus. © Høje Målebordsblade 1850-1890.

spread throughout the North Atlantic settlements. One Ketil, as mentioned above, became ruler of the Northern Isles (Ketil Flatnose), while another settled in Greenland, giving his name to Ketilsfjörður.

In Denmark, at least fifteen place names derive from Ketil, including Ketilstorp, now known as Kelstrup. In England, about eighty people named Ketil were recorded as landowners in the Domesday Book. Approximately two-thirds of these estates were located along the eastern coast between Norwich and York, and about 85 per cent are known to pre-date the Norman Conquest. The name was also not uncommon in Normandy, where at least ten place names incorporate Ketil, for example Quettehou on the Cotentin Peninsula. In short, the name was ubiquitous.

Thus, Ketil of Egå may have come from Norway, Iceland, or even Greenland, but he might equally well have originated in the British Isles or Normandy. Accordingly, we refer to him here as Ketil the Northman. The fact remains, however, that he spoke *nuruna* or *norrœna*.

We have absolutely no way of identifying the lord of the manor at Lisbjerg as identical to Ketil the Northman. But it is an intriguing suggestion.



Unfortunately, none of the decorative surfaces of the excavated caskets has survived. We therefore cannot determine whether they were as lavishly embellished as the Bamberg Shrine. Also, we do not know whether they were painted. However, we know that most medieval ivories were originally painted. Whether the same was true of Viking carvings fashioned from walrus ivory remains uncertain. However, the carved wooden objects from the Oseberg ship burial were richly painted, as was the furniture recovered from the royal graves at Jelling and Ladby. The colours used in the present reconstruction of the Bamberg Shrine have been copied from the surviving paint traces preserved on Jelling Stone 2. Source: Wikipedia and "painted" by AI

The Cemetery and the Bamberg Shrine

In AD 973, The German Emperor, Otto the Great, finally returned from Italy to spend time in his Saxon homeland. The highlight of this journey was the Easter celebration at Quedlinburg, where his mother, Matilda, had died in AD 968 during his Italian sojourn and been laid to rest beside his father, Henry the Fowler.

This imperial assembly had clearly been planned well in advance. The rulers of Poland and Bohemia attended in person, while embassies arrived from across Europe and beyond, including the Spanish Caliphate, Byzantium, Hungary and Bulgaria. Denmark, too, sent an official delegation to take part in the political negotiations with the emperor.

Such gatherings were as much displays of diplomacy as of piety. Hence, prestige objects, lavishly crafted and rich in symbolism, played a central role in expressing alliances, respect and political ambition.

Against this background, it has been suggested that the Bamberg Shrine, currently exhibited in Munich, was one of the ceremonial gifts presented to Otto by the Danish envoys. Both its date and its distinctive artistic vocabulary—the Mammen style—fit remarkably well with such an interpretation.

The Bamberg Shrine is a sumptuous Viking casket crafted from wood, mounted with a gilt-bronze framework and embellished with finely carved walrus-ivory plaques. Its distinctive Mammen-style ornaments places it in the second half of the tenth century. The casket measures 26 × 26 × 13 cm, is made of oak and is fitted with a gently vaulted lid. The gilt-bronze mounts are covered in an exuberant display of Viking animal ornament, featuring entwined gripping beasts. The walrus-ivory plaques have been suggested to depict the symbols of the Four Evangelists—the lion, the ox, the eagle and the man. On the basis of this Christian iconography, scholars have proposed that the shrine originally housed either a Gospel manuscript or sacred relics.



Excavating the shrine at Lisbjerg © Moesgaard.

A Royal Design?

Whatever its original function, the Bamberg Shrine was clearly not a unique creation.

In 2004, an iron fitting from a casket of the same type was recovered from a Viking Age grave at Haldum, some 20 km north-west of Aarhus.

Then, in 2012, a remarkably similar casket was excavated among the grave goods from Haarup, near Silkeborg. It belonged to an elite woman buried in a wagon and dressed in garments trimmed with silver braid. The casket was secured with a lock, and the deceased was accompanied by two keys, one of which fitted the lock.

Most recently, in 2025, the remains of another casket of the same type were discovered in a grave within the burial ground associated with the elite settlement at Lisbjerg.

Because this casket had survived in a highly deteriorated state, it was first examined by X-ray in order to preserve as much information as possible before excavation began. The radiographs revealed several broad iron straps spanning the casket, a handle mounted in the centre of the lid, and an elaborate locking mechanism. They also showed that a pair of scissors lay inside.

Subsequent excavation established that the casket had originally been clad in thin iron sheet and ornamented with small bronze nails. Hinges decorated with incised grooves and finely modelled animal heads had been mounted on the lid together with a twisted handle, whose details only became apparent after careful sandblasting.

Microscopic examination also revealed traces of silver corrosion, probably originating from a textile woven with silver thread that had been draped over the casket before burial. Similar traces were found around the skull and were initially interpreted as the remains of an elaborate headdress. It is equally possible, however, that they derive from a larger cloth covering both the deceased woman and the casket.

Conclusion

The archaeological report on the Lisbjerg burial ground has yet to be published, while the Haldum find likewise remains unpublished. The Næsby casket, however, has been fully documented, and additional information about the other discoveries has emerged through museum press releases and newspaper reports.

Lady buried in a wagon box at Haarup near Silkeborg © Silkeborg Museum





The map shows how the finds of Bamberg Caskets in Northern Jutland are piled up in the area around Århus. Perhaps, Lisbjerg was home to the workshop, which created the Bamberg Shrine? The evidence from Hallby at Sjælland consists of non-fitted frames discovered in a workman's basket lost near a river.. Source: Google Earth.

Taken together, the available evidence indicates that all three archaeological caskets share the same fundamental construction, although their locking mechanisms differ in detail. Equally striking is the fact that every example has been recovered from a burial of exceptional status.

Their overall form also displays a remarkable affinity with the Bamberg Shrine, suggesting that all four caskets may have originated from the same workshop—or, at the very least, from a closely related artistic tradition serving the Scandinavian elite during the late tenth century.

Unfortunately, none of the decorative surfaces of the excavated caskets has survived. We therefore cannot determine whether they were as lavishly embellished as the Bamberg Shrine. Also, we do not know whether they were painted.

However, we know that most medieval ivories were originally painted. Whether the same was true of Viking carvings fashioned from walrus ivory remains uncertain.

Thus, there is good reason to think that colour formed an integral part of elite Scandinavian craftsmanship. The carved wooden objects from the Oseberg ship burial were richly painted, as was the furniture recovered from the royal graves at Jelling and Ladby.



Hobro - Fyrkat - Vikingecenter -Pithouse. Source Wikipedia/Västgöten CCBY4.0

Weaving Sails for Viking Ships?

A new excavation at Søjten, near Lisbjerg, has revealed an extensive production environment that may have supplied Viking Age Aarhus with textiles and other craft products. Another buyer may be the local elite at Lisbjerg engaging in trade- or viking raids.

At Søjten near Lisbjerg, just 10 kilometres north of central Aarhus in Jutland, Moesgaard Museum is investigating a large Viking Age settlement. The findings point to a specialised production environment, with a particular emphasis on textile manufacture.

The excavation is located only four kilometres from Lisbjerg, where Moesgaard has previously uncovered a high-status settlement closely connected to the Viking town of Aros, which served as a centre of royal power and international trade. In addition, a young archaeology student discovered a Viking Age silver hoard at Elsted—approximately five kilometres from Søjten—in 2024.



Sølften excavations 2025-26 © Moesgaard Museum

The settlement at Sølften appears to have accommodated extensive and organised production. Among the features uncovered are areas associated with flax processing, as well as a large number of pit houses—sunken workshop buildings typically linked to craft activities and production. In total, 82 pit houses have been identified at the site.

The ongoing excavation at Sølften covers an area of just over 60,000 m². Previous investigations south of the current excavation area have revealed similar settlement and production features dating from the same period. Overall, the settlement is estimated to have covered at least 100,000 m². During the current excavation, 48 pit houses have been identified. Earlier excavations uncovered a further 34, bringing the total number of pit houses discovered at the site to 82.

On the square at Sølften, weaving scales and tenweights have been found, which testify to extensive textile production. In addition, silver clippings, coins and beads have been found, which testify to trade and economic activity at the site. Whether or not sails or tunics were the main product, it appears to have been an impressive factory.

But then, the conquest of England in 1016 took the combined effort of 17,500 persons working for a whole year to outfit and organise Cnut's war on England. With

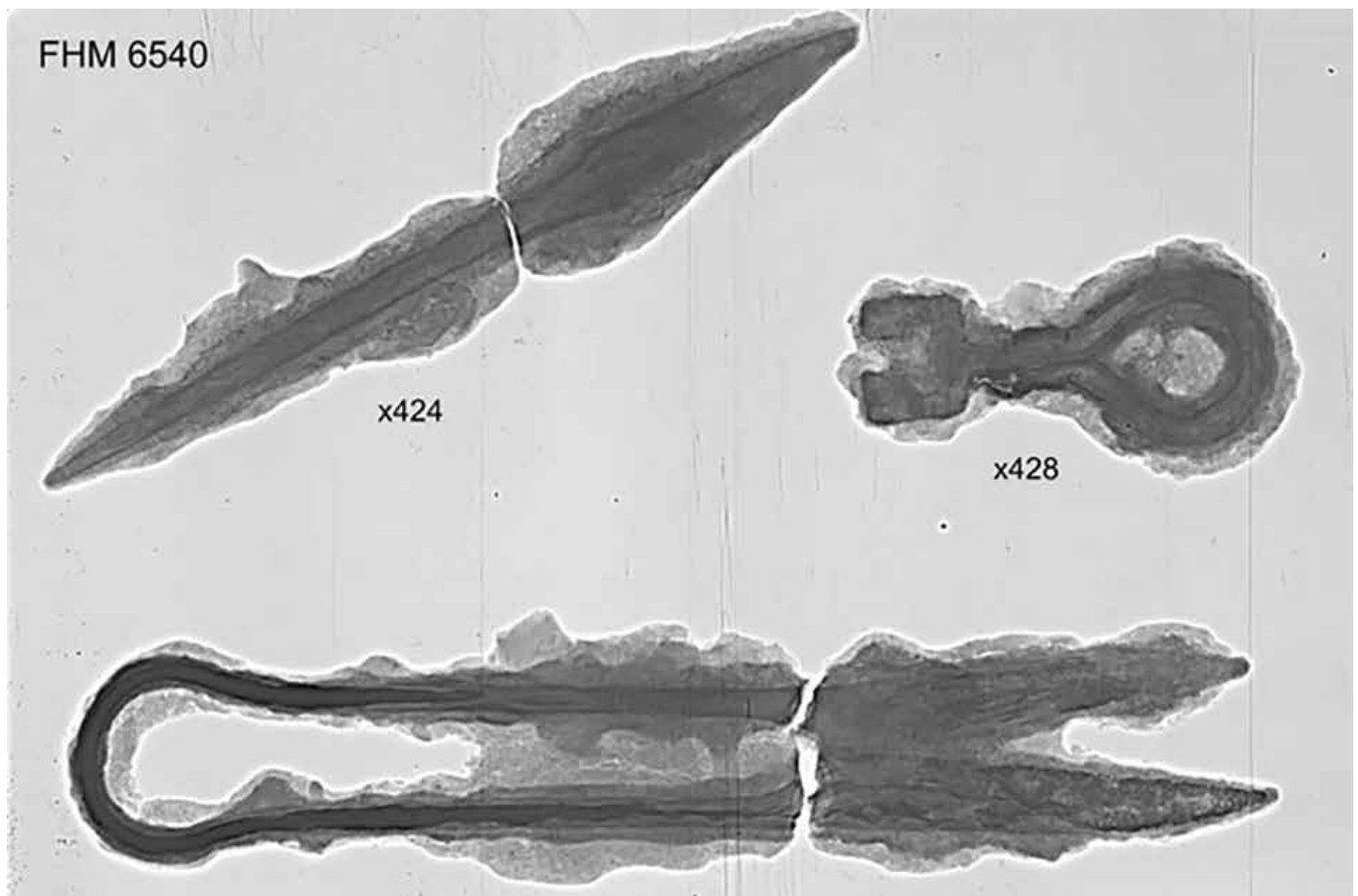
an estimated population of no more than 5-650.000 people in wider Denmark at this time, and with the possibility of a agricultural yield of no more than 3 to 1, it may be estimated that these 17.500 people at least needed a backing group of more than 35.000. Around 10% of the population were thus directly involved in this venture.

The archaeological studies have been ongoing since August 2025 and are expected to be completed by the end of June 2026.

“We are not seeing the remains of an ordinary village but rather a production complex that was specialised and organised on a large scale. The settlement comprises distinct areas dedicated to production and craft activities, together with a single residential building. This organisation suggests that the activities were directed by a central authority exercising control over resources and production.” says Liv Stidsing Reher-Langberg.

SOURCE:

Press release from Moesgaard Museum: Contact: Lisbjerg Church and Manor ca. 950 - 1200 Liv Stidsing Reher-Langberg, Excavation Director and Archaeologist, Moesgaard Museum



Two Churches

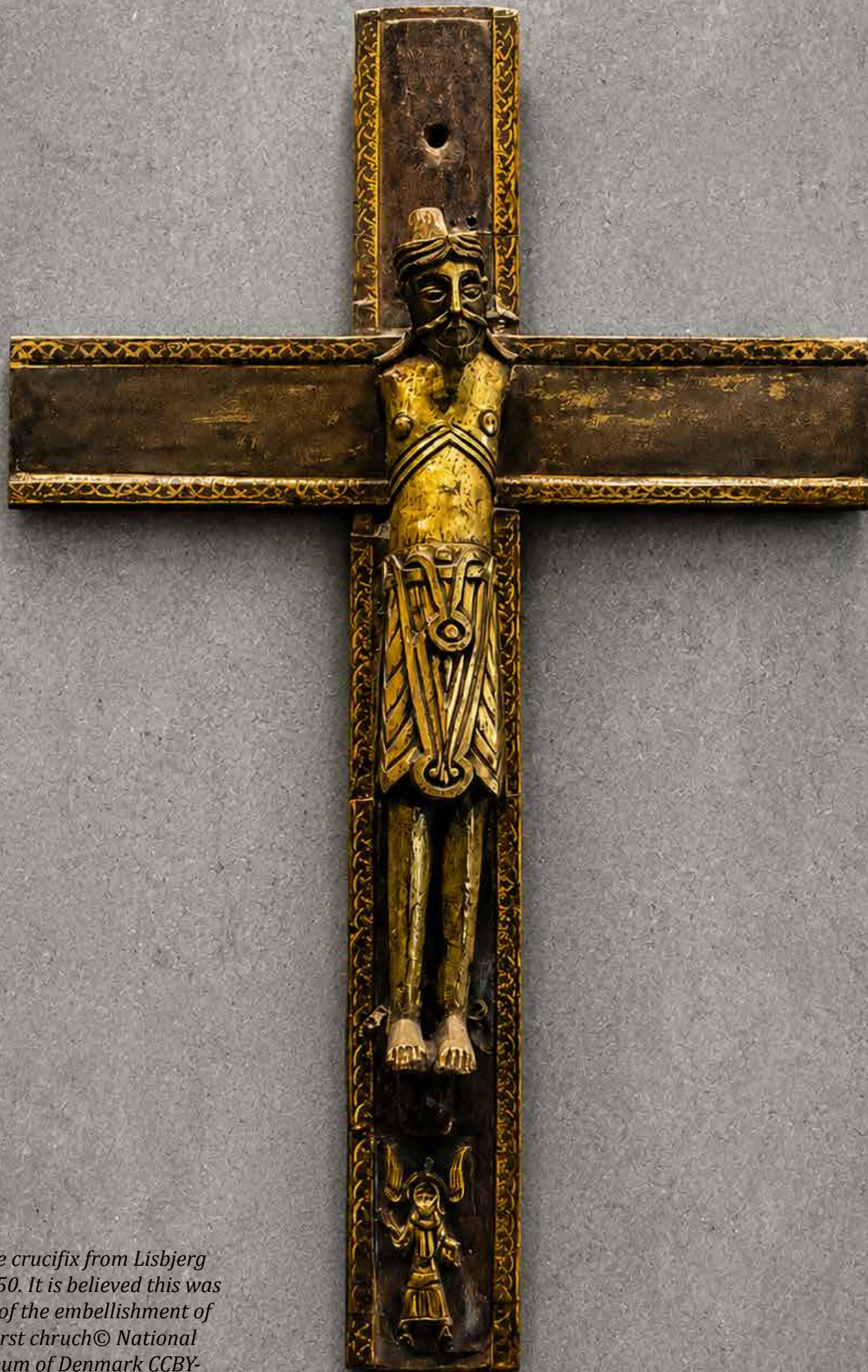
At some point at the turn of the millenium, a stave church was erected beneath the present stone church. The principal evidence consists of six postholes. These had been filled with lime plaster, all painted in either red or yellow ochre, suggesting that the timber posts had been removed and reused elsewhere before the holes were backfilled with debris. Little evidence of the church's decoration survives apart from traces of red painted lines on a yellow background. A small number of burials within the church appear to date from this phase. The building measured approximately 6 × 8 metres.

In the early 12th century, the present stone church was constructed. Built of lime mortar, local travertine and granite, it was probably erected around 1135, the approximate dendrochronological date of the celebrated Lisbjerg Altarpiece. The large crucifix at the centre of the altarpiece, however, is believed to be around half a century older and may originally have formed part of the decoration of the earlier stave church.

Written sources show that, during the later Middle Ages, Lisbjerg belonged to the Diocese of Århus. Perhaps, when the episcopal residence in Århus was completed in 1102, the bishop moved from Lisbjerg to Århus. It is possible that the manor with its residence was abandoned or demolished at this time, while the new stone church was erected, its design inspired by the emerging cathedral in Århus.

Lisbjerg Kirke © Lisbjerg Kirker





*Large crucifix from Lisbjerg
c. 1050. It is believed this was
part of the embellishment of
the first church © National
Museum of Denmark CCBY-
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Detail: Lisbjerg Altar © National Museum of Copenhagen/Lennart Larsen/CC-BY-SA

The Golden Altar from Lisbjerg

The Lisbjerg Altar belongs to a group of eleven golden altars from c. 1100 – 1200 Scandinavia. Two remain in their original surroundings, while five are kept in the National Museum in Copenhagen, and four more abroad.

The Lisbjerg Altar is composed of two parts, a crucifix from c. 1050 – 1080 and the frontal, retablo (reredos) and “Arch of Heaven” from c. 1135. The latter part has been dendrochronologically dated.

Measuring 57 cm, the crucifix has lost its arms. It is carved out of oak and covered with chased and gilded copperplates. Afterwards, the plates have been varnished to deepen the reliefs. The figure of Christ belongs to the very early type, where he is rendered as a mighty king. The size, the style and the construction indicate that this crucifix is slightly earlier than the frontal and retablo including the heavenly arch above. It belongs to a group of similar crucifixes like the one from Åby, c. 1050 – 1075 and another from Tirstrup c. 1150 – 1200. The motive of the victorious Christ-King is similar to the carved figure of Christ on the large Jelling Stone.



The main motive of the chased, embossed, engraved, and gilded plates covering the frontal is the enthroned Maria holding an apple in one hand while the other is busy cuddling Jesus sitting in her lap. Surrounding her are scenes from the life of Maria, six prophets, a number of virtues and symbols, signs for the evangelists and fabled animals and figures. Impressive are the ornamented leaves and vines encircling medallions holding more or less fabled figures. While the other altars are constructed with a similar large panel depicting either Christ in the Mandorla or the Virgin, the Lisberg altar differs in its meagre use of narrative scenes.

The retable shows the enthroned Christ, one hand raised as in a blessing, the other hand holding a book. At his feet are two lions. To each side, the apostles are lined up. Beneath is a band with an inscription (Math. 19,27 – 28).

The decoration is inspired by English, Irish and Norman design as well as late Viking styles with its interwoven snakes, animals and plants (“dyreslyng” and “ormeslyng”).

It has been speculated whether the altar was made for the new Cathedral in Århus in the beginning of the 12th century. And afterwards presented to Lisbjerg in the later half of the 16th century. More likely, though, is the hypothesis that the altar was made for Lisbjerg at the beginning of the 12th century, when the bishop was still residing at the manor, excavated in the late 20th century.

In 1862, the altar was transferred to the National Museum of Copenhagen, since the congregation had moved it aside in order to get a more romantic “look”.

Detail: Lisbjerg Altar © National Museum of Copenhagen/Lennart Larsen/CC-BY-SA



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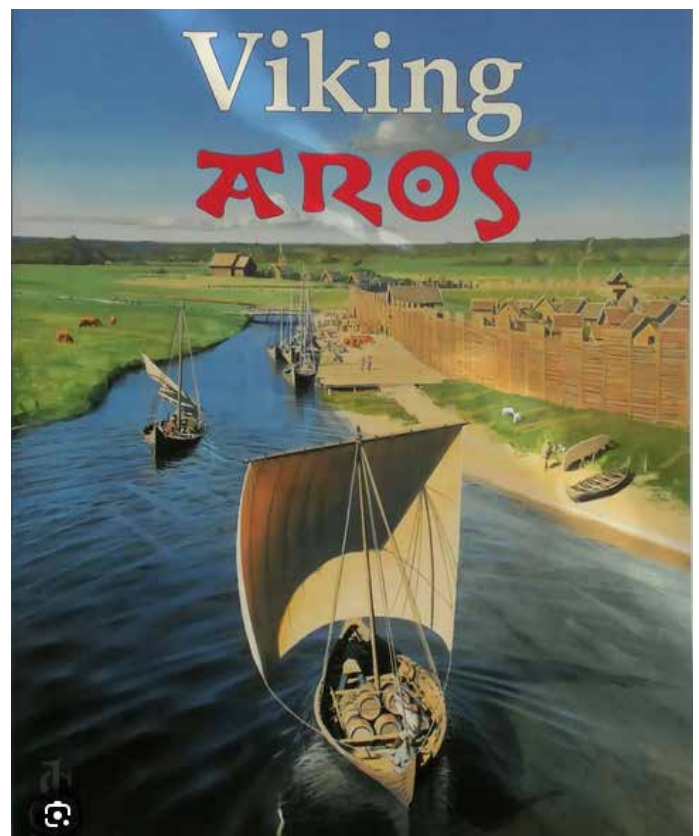
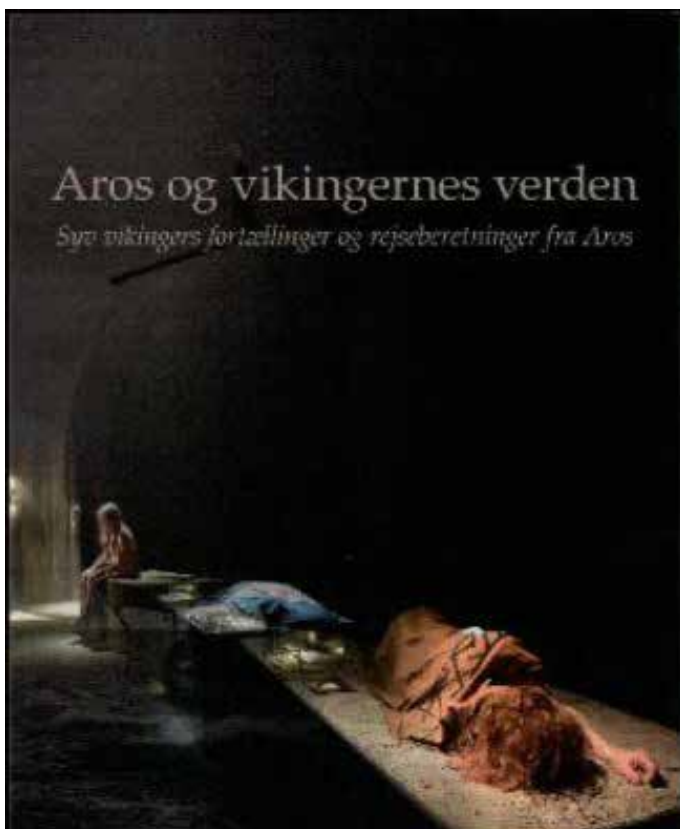
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Moesgaard 2012

Viking Aros

Ed. By Anette Damm et al

Moesgaard Museum 2005



READ MORE:

Viking Age Aristocratic Residences in Northern Europe

Ed. By Mads Ravn

Aarhus University Press, Aarhus 2024

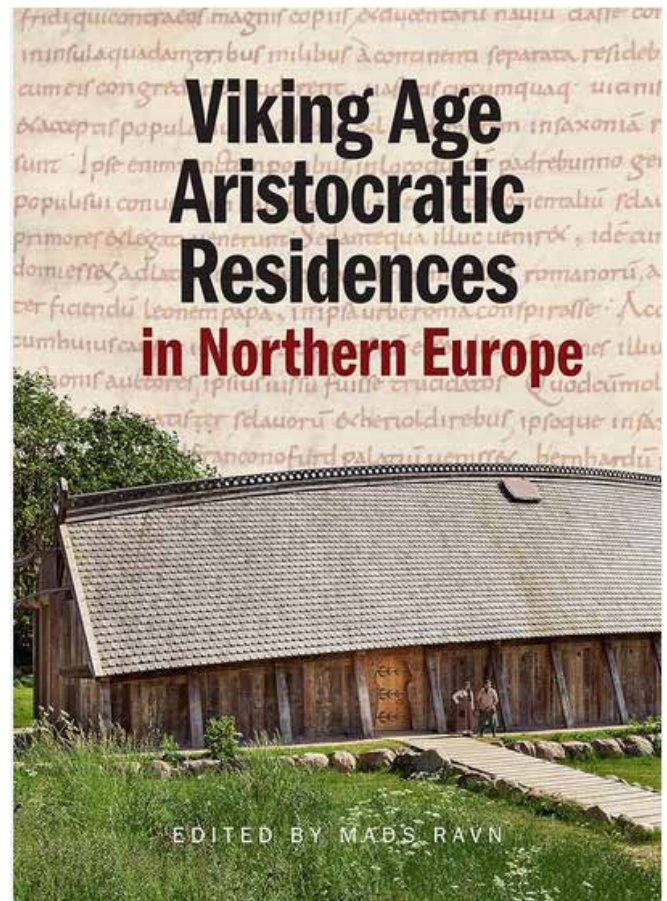
ABSTRACT:

Viking Age Aristocratic Residences in Northern Europe explores the dynamic political and social landscapes of Northern Europe from AD 600 to 1000. This comprehensive volume delves into the aristocratic centres that played a pivotal role in shaping the Viking Age, offering fresh perspectives on royal power, landscape of power, defence, and societal organization.

Featuring new archaeological data from major sites like Erritsø, Munkebo Bakke, BirkaKorshamn, Borre, Tinghaug, Rendelsham etc. it challenges traditional views on Viking Age kingdoms and their rulers, proposing a nuanced understanding of itinerant kingship local differences and its impact on local and regional governance.

Bringing together leading scholars from across Europe, this anthology uncovers the multifunctionality and strategic importance of these sites, revealing their role not just in local defence but also in the collection of tribute, production of luxury goods, and as centres of political and ritual activities. Drawing parallels with Anglo-Saxon England and the Carolingian Empire, the book widens the concept of aristocratic power in the Viking Age.

This book is an essential read for anyone interested in Viking Age archaeology, medieval history, and the intricate connections between geography, power, and society in Northern Europe.



READ MORE:

Visions of Heaven and Earth. Romanesque Golden Altars and Crucifixes from Medieval Denmark

By: Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen et al

University Press of Southern Denmark, Odense 2025

ABSTRACT:

Eleven golden altars and seven crucifixes from Medieval Denmark are presented and analyzed as central manifestations of the contacts to leading European centers of art and theology during the long 12th century.

Shaping and installation of the golden works of art were done to the praise of the Lord and to the benefit of the individual congregation, the clergy and the church patrons or benefactors.

The two volumes present 16 thematic chapters by 25 authors and a catalogue with 51 numbers, including archaeological findings and objects, which according to documentary sources are known to have been lost.

New results are exposed, based on technical and scientific analyses of the wood, the fire-gilded copperplates and the precious rock crystals, along with dendro-chronological dating.

The iconography, liturgical function and style of the individual works are interpreted in context, comprising a close reading of the inscriptions on the altars and a presentation of the history of the altars and crucifixes since the Middle Ages with a particular description of the musealization of nearly all of these during the 19th century.

