

The Sources of Kėdainiai Town

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Kėdainiai is a middle-size periphery town, situated on the pictorial banks of the Nevėžis River, in the centre of Lithuania. The town's kernel is the Old Town, which covers 87 hectares and is an urban monument of the Republic. There are 29 historical streets and 4 market squares, each located on the Old Town's edges by the ancient roads, which led at that time from Kėdainiai to Vilnius, Kaunas, Samogitia, Prussia and Livland.

The 15th century Gothic St. George's Church and now one of the last three remaining town halls, built in the middle of the 17th century is a beautiful feature of the Old Town. Other surviving buildings include the 17th century Reformed and Lutheran churches, 18th century St. Joseph's Church, three 18th–19th century synagogues, the Russian Orthodox church and some 17th–19th century guilds', merchants' and townspeople' houses (Fig. 1).

The early past of Kėdainiai is not described in historical sources. The locality, that can be linked with Kėdainiai, was mentioned for the first time in 1372, when a troop of the Livland Order, led by a Marshal Andrew von Stenberg, ravaged villages of the Nevėžis river basin (Livonijos kronikos 1991: 198). Up to the first half of the 15th century Kėdainiai had belonged to the Great Duchy of Lithuania (Buszynski 1973: 25). From the middle of the 15th century the town was owned by Lithuanian noblemen Radvilos (Litovskaja Metrika 1915: 77, 118). At the end of the 15th century the Polish chronicler Janusz Dlugosz used the term "oppidum" ("oppidum Kieidany") or town, in reference to Kėdainiai (Dlugosz 1877: 19).

Historical sources do not provide with information about Kėdainiai in the 14th century and the town in the 15th century.

More information about the early past of Kėdainiai comes from archaeological investigations, which have been conducted since 1985. In 1992–1993 a cultural layer of the 14th–15th century with fragments of wooden buildings and numerous findings was excavated during the investigations of the two oldest approaches – the Old Market square and the Great Market square (Juknevičius 1994: 70–77; 1995: 10–13). The findings provided with information how the small village, situated on the Right Bank of the Nevėžis, in the beginning of the 14th century developed into a large town-type settlement.

A small village covering about 4 hectares was established in the beginning of the 14th century on the Nevėžis river right bank's marshy lower terrace, on the place that is now the Great Market square. At that time, the level of the Nevėžis bank, where the first farmsteads were established, was 2 metres lower than the

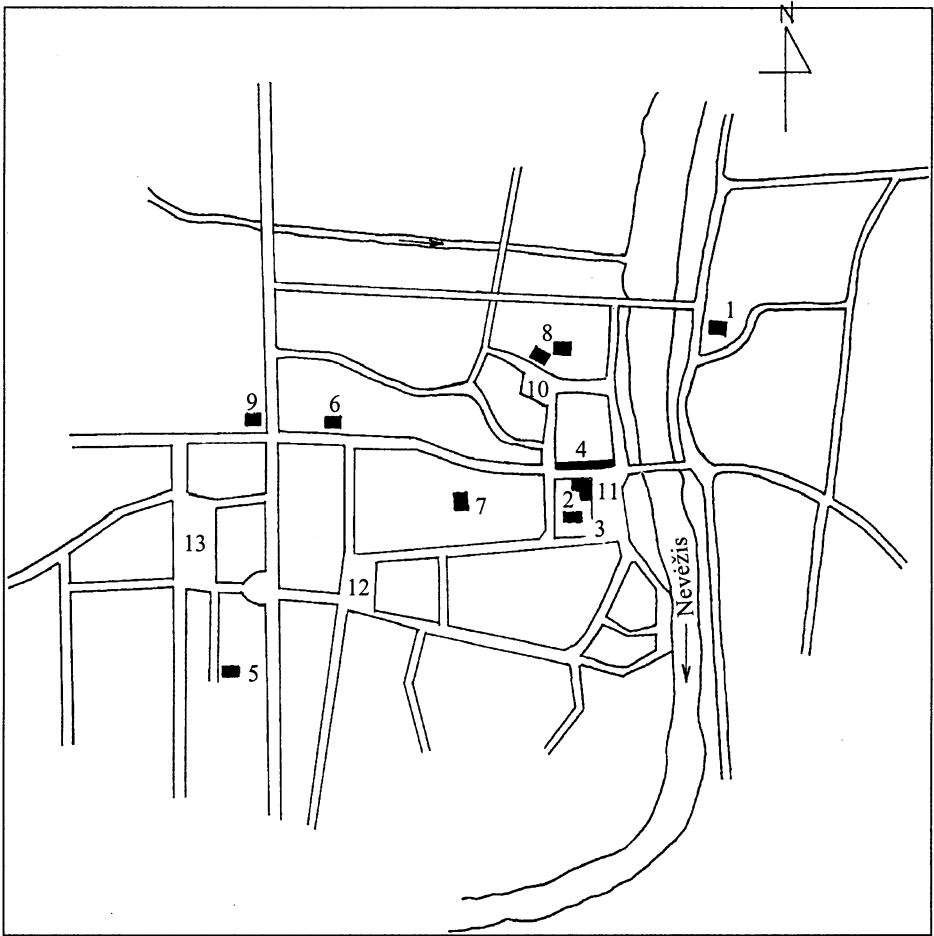


Fig. 1. The lay-out of Kėdainiai in 14th–15th c. 1 – St. George's Church, 2 – a Town Hall, 3 – the reformed Church, 4 – The buildings of artisans guilds, 5 – the Lutheran Church, 6 – gymnasium, 7 – St. Joseph's Church, 8 – Synagogues, 9 – the Orthodox Church, 10–13 – the market squares.

present surface. It is established, that the farmsteads were surrounded by a steep slope of the Nevėžis terrace in north and west, which protected the houses from the prevailing north and west wind. Lots of farmsteads were rectangular, about 10 metres in width and approximately 20–30 metres in length. Wattle fences, that bordered the lots, are partly destroyed during the buildings of the 17th–19th century. The birch pegs of the fences are 7–8 cm in diameter and hammered in every 80–100 cm. Their ends are sharpened with an axe and scorched to prevent them from rotting. The lots are oriented to east–westward and north–westward – south-eastward directions, to the steep slope of the Nevėžis terrace and to a wooden pathway 4 metres in width.

Wooden houses were 520–620 cm in width, situated in front of the lots, by a plank pathway (Fig. 2). Attempts to establish plan of the houses failed, as their lower logs had been destroyed by buildings of the 17th–19th century. The detected

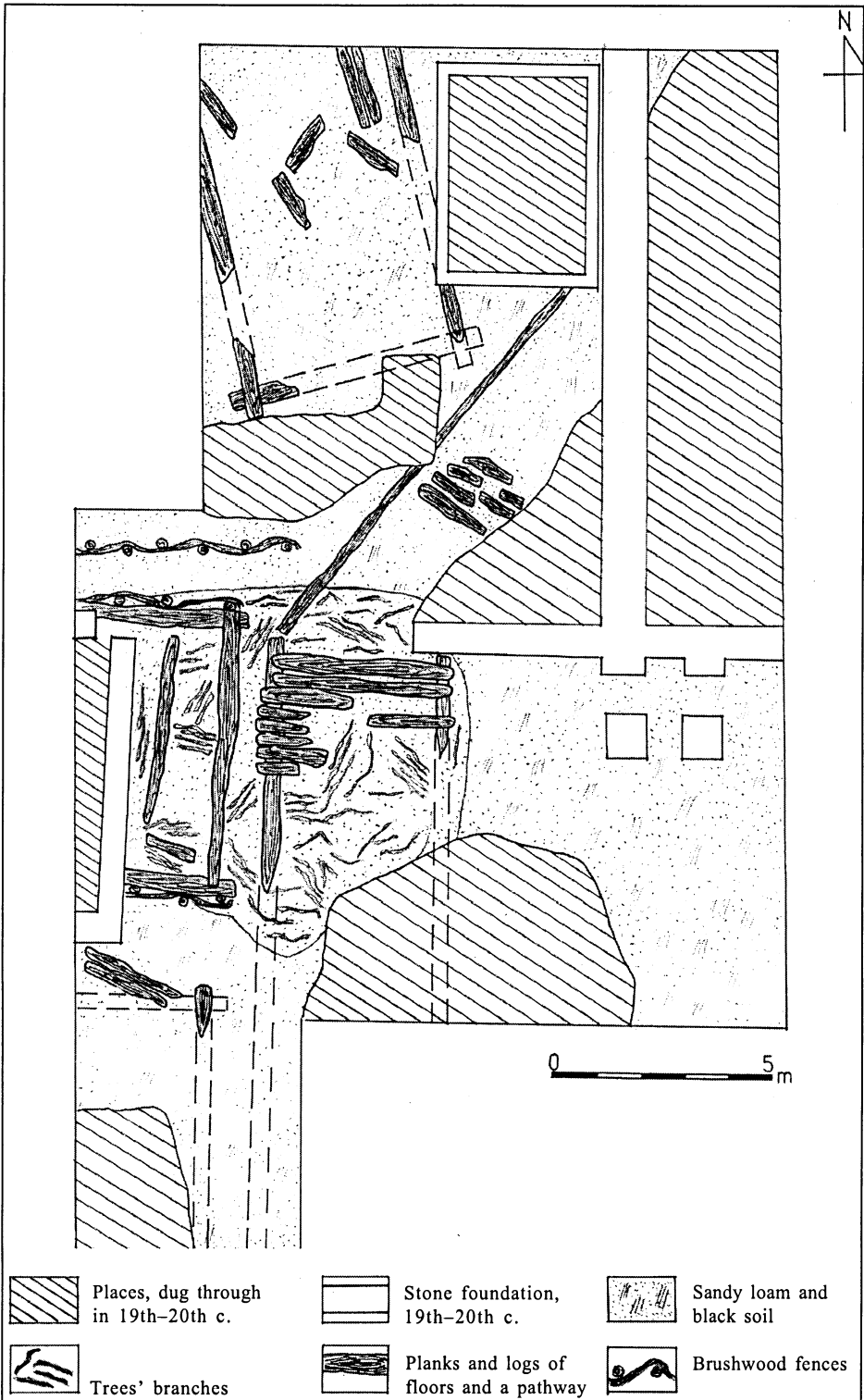


Fig. 2. A scheme of wooden constructions. The first half of the 14th c.

remains showed, that the houses were built of unhewn pine and fir logs 23–25 cm in diameter and had no stone foundation. The lower logs were laid down on the ground. Their ends were hollowed out to ensure a good adhesion.

Similar buildings, built of conifer logs and without stone foundations, were spread in wooded Northeast and Central Europe in the 9th–14th century. Such buildings were detected in neighbouring Latvia (Caune 1984: 35–36), Estonia (Sedov 1975: 286–296), northwest Russia (Drevnaja Rusj 1985: 139–143), Byelorussia (Zagorulskij 1982: 93–130), Ukraine (Tolochko 1981: 70–71) and Poland (Barnycz–Gupieniec 1974: 15–18). In Lithuania such buildings were detected in Vilnius (Tautavičius 1960: 10), Kernavė (Luchtanas 1986: 33), Palanga (Žulkus 1986: 28–30) and Žardė (Klaipėda district) (Genys 1992: 47).

Floors of the houses were made of split off planks 30cm in width. The planks were laid between the first and the second frame of the logs. The lower logs' frame was twined with rods from the outside to protect the house from wind and cold (Fig. 2). Supposedly, fencing of the rods was covered with soil. Such outward fencing of similar purpose, covered with soil or made of logs, are characteristic of the houses of western and eastern Slavs (Tarasenko 1967: 216; Shtikhov 1975: 45; Barnycz–Gupieniec 1974: 19–24). In Lithuania such fencing have been detected so far only in Kėdainiai.

Facades of the houses faced wooden pathway 400 cm in width, which was built parallelly to the turn of the Nevėžis terrace's slope and led to the river. The pathway was built of split off planks 30 cm in width, which were laid down across two lengthwise poles in dry places and across two unhewn conifer logs in marshy depressions.

In the courtyards and inside the houses animal bones, iron knives, bronze rings, limestone and reddish slate spindles were detected. The limestone spindles are of local production, but the reddish ones are imported, since there is no reddish slate raw material in Lithuania. The strata of the mineral lie in Ukraine, by the Ubarta river. The reddish slate spindles were made in Volynia (Ribakov 1948: 190) and brought to Lithuania by the trading roads (Kuncienė 1981: 49–76).

Fragments of the pots make the most part of the all findings. Pot clay is of inferior quality and non-plastic. The clay contains a considerable admixture of coarse-grained and average coarse-grained pounded granite. Walls of the fragments are rough, 7–9 mm thick. White granules of limestone did not burn away and showed, that the pots were kilned in 750° C temperature. It is known, that limestone burns out in higher temperature and clay mass becomes porous. The detected fragments showed no such indications. The pots were kilned in the oxidational and reductional mediums. Presumably, the pots were kilned in the reductional medium for not long, as their walls were light grey. Colour of the pots, kept in the reductional medium longer is usually dark grey or blackish. Some fragments of the pots are burnt or sooty, their walls inside are covered with charred remains of food and presumably served for cooking, while others – not sooty – served for food keeping.

Fragments of the rims are homogenous, more or less bent and not profiled. Their edges are plane or rounded. The mouths are short and narrowed, the shoulders are bent out. The fragments are decorated with stamp, impression and cut ornamentation. The stamped ornamentation consists of rectangular (Fig. 1, 1–3) and triangular wedges (Fig. 1, 4, 5) and a combination of both (Fig. 1, 6). This ornamentation is distinguished for its decorations, covering walls from the mouth to the bottom. Ceramics decorated with analogous wedges was detected in the layers

of Kaunas castle, destroyed by Crusaders in 1362 (Žalnierius 1989: 146) and in cemeteries of Kaunas environs (Sadauskaitė-Mulevičienė 1965: 45–51). According to the available data ornamentation is mostly detected in Central Lithuania, between the Nemunas, Neris and Nevėžis rivers. In Kaunas and Kėdainiai the stamped ornamentation of wedges was used from the beginning to the second half of the 14th century. Another ornamentation was impressions and cuts with which pot shoulders, and in rarer cases, mouths and rims were decorated. Shoulders were mostly decorated with impressed pits (Fig. 1, 7–9), but winding lines (Fig. 1, 10), slanting wedges (Fig. 1, 11) and lines of transverse crosses (Fig. 1, 12) were cut in.

Judging by poor clay quality, homogeneously shaped rims and smart ornamentation, the pots were made by villagers, but not by artisans.

The detected animal bones showed that the inhabitants mostly reared cattle, rarely – sheep, goats, pigs and dogs.

Presumably, the houses disappeared gradually, as no considerable traces of destruction or charred logs were found. In their places, new houses, consisting of one room and of rectangular plan, 450–550×780–800 cm in size, were built in the second half of the 14th century. The houses, as the earlier ones, had no stone foundation and were built of unhewn conifer logs 23–25 cm in diameter (Fig. 3). The lower logs were laid down on the ground in dry places, but in marshy depressions they were laid on unhewn piles 20 cm in diameter, hammered in the corners. The lower log frame were fastened with trimmed oaken piles 35–40 cm in diameter, hammered in the outside of the foundation. It is not known why earlier houses were built on the ground in marshy depressions, but later ones were built on the piles. Supposedly, the piles in the house buildings were used after the climate got colder and waters of the Nevėžis' continually irrigated the marshy depressions in the river valley.

Floors of the houses were made of planks, which were laid down between the first and the second log on the 12–20 cm thick layer of gravel. The gravel with shell temper was taken from the banks of the river and spread to prevent the floor from the wind and cold. The fencing outside of the houses of analogous purpose of rods and soil was used no more.

Clay cupola shaped, 130 cm in diameter and 80 cm high hearths, built in the corners heated the houses. Similar hearths were spread in the Eastern Europe in the 10th–14th century. In Lithuania they were built from the second half of the 10th century (Žulkus 1986: 32).

A wattle fence surrounded infields of the farmsteads. Fence birch pegs were hammered in every 80–100 cm. Their ends were sharpened and scorched to prevent them from rotting. The detected remains of the fences showed, that the infields were 10 m in width and approximately 20–30 m in length. The houses were built in front of the lots by the rebuilt wooden pathway 400 cm in width. The planks of the pathway were laid down across two lengthwise poles in dry places, but in marshy depressions – across two unhewn conifer logs. The logs were laid down on piles and fastened by trimmed oaken logs 40 cm in diameter.

The pots' fragments, detected in the lots and inside the houses, showed, that there were potters artisans in Kėdainiai in the second half of the 14th century. The fragments are distinguished from the earlier ones for their well-done clay mass, more precise rims and the prevailing ornamentation of the horizontal lines.

Walls of the fragments are thinner – 4–7 mm. The clay mass is more plastic, with granite temper and fine granular structure or sand. The white granules of

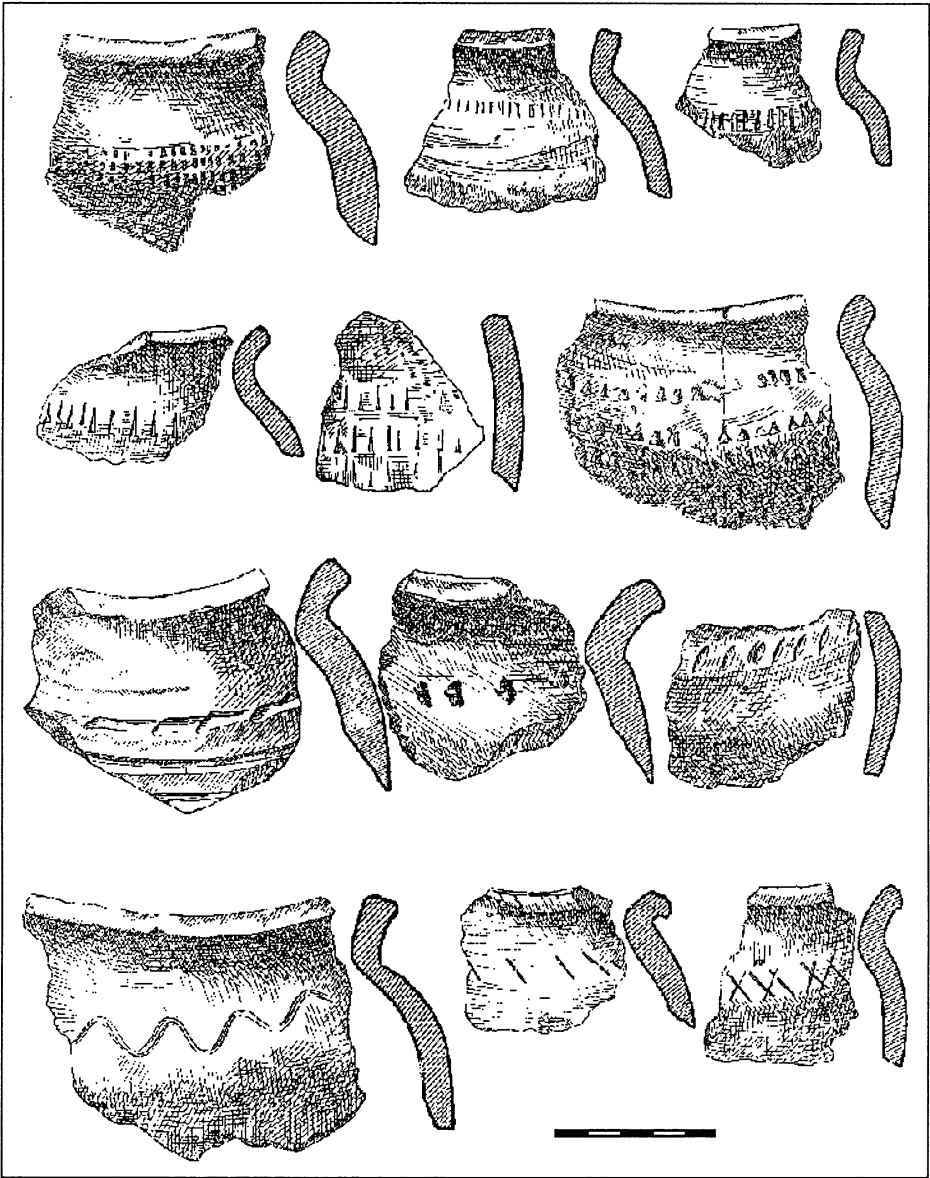


Fig. 3. Pots' fragments. The first half of the 14th c.

limestone showed, that the pots were kilned in 750°C temperature. The most part of the detected fragments were kilned in the reductional medium. The reduction quality is high – the fragments are dark grey or blackish.

The rims are more various, more or less bent, some of them slightly profiled, made with artisans featuring precision. The edges are plane, rounded, sharp or bent inwards. The profile of the mouths and shoulders are more distinct. The mouths are more narrowed, shoulders are bent and underscored with a narrow and high edge (Fig. 2).

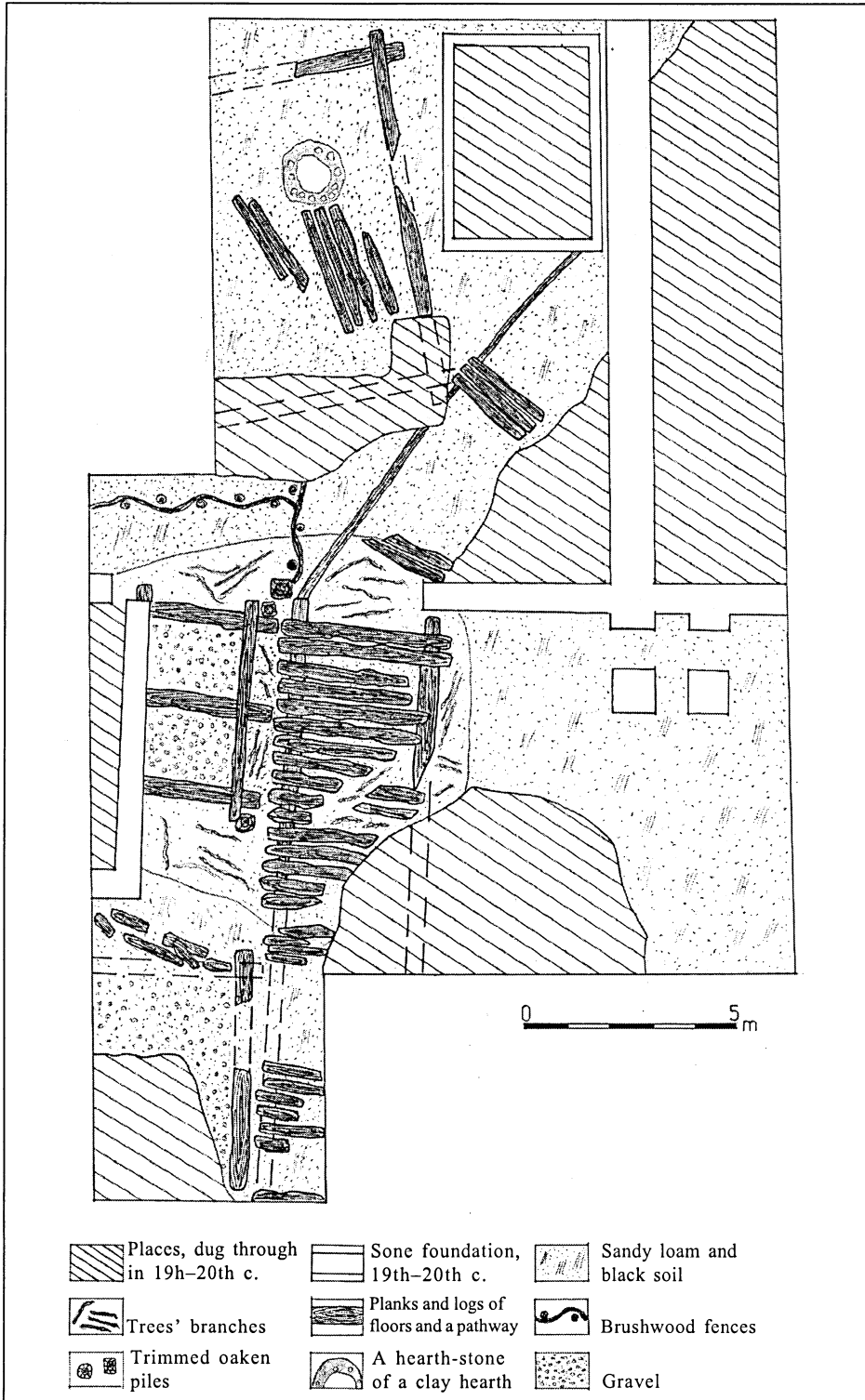


Fig. 4. A scheme of wooden constructions. The second half of the 14th c.

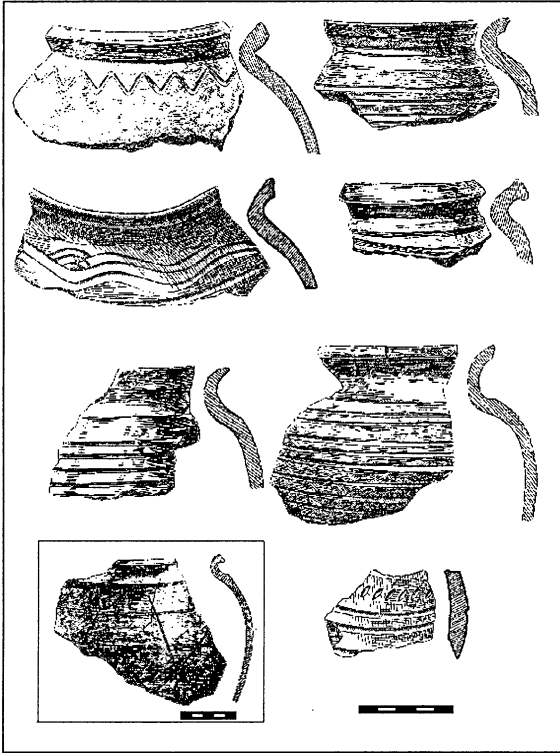


Fig. 5. The offering, laid under a house's foundation.

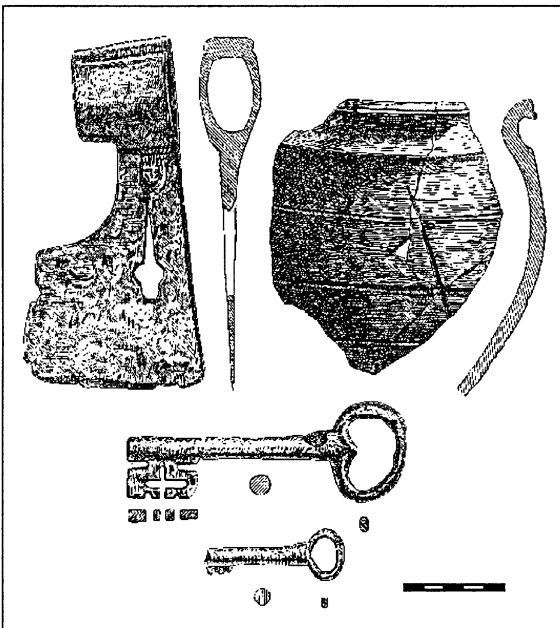


Fig. 6. Pots' fragments. The second half of the 15th c.

The stamped ornamentation was not detected, while the impressions prevailed. The shoulders are decorated with the impressed winding lines (Fig. 2, 1), interlaced winding lines (Fig. 2, 3) or with ornamentation of cut in pits and horizontal lines (Fig. 2, 8). The fragments are mostly decorated with ornamentation of horizontal lines (Fig. 2: 2, 4, 5-7) covering all the outward side of the fragments, from the shoulders to the bottom.

The heathen faith of the inhabitants is indicated by some findings detected in one of the farmsteads. There was an iron axe, marked with a bronze monogram of a galloping deer, two iron keys, pot fragment, marked with a transversal cross and a pig's jaw laid under a foundation as a sacrifice (Fig. 3). It is known that house foundation was paid a special heed in all Europe from the times of the primitive communal system to feudalism. It was believed that a sacrifice, put under the foundation would prevent the house from disasters. Horses', wild boars', pigs' skulls and various household things were mostly sacrificed. In Lithuania, the relics of such faith in wooden houses are detected even in the beginning of the 20th century. In some cases, the lower logs of the house were marked with transversal crosses in their ends. Such cut out crosses used to be filled with various sanctified herbs or candle bits. This sacrifice, as it was believed,

prevented the building from lightning or fire (Čiubrinskas 1990: 32–34). Fragment of the pot, marked with a transversal cross and detected under a house foundation indicated that this tradition reached Kėdainiai in the 14th century.

The settlement of Kėdainiai began to grow from the middle of the 15th century. It was caused by economical activity, increase of artisans and trade.

The settlement grew to the west of the Nevėžis, in the wide river valley. The administrative and religious centre was founded on the other bank of the Nevėžis. Here, on the left upper steep terrace of the river a mansion of Kėdainiai owner Radvila Astikaitis was built. Near the mansion, over the Varlupis rivulet – the Gothic St. George's Church was built. There was also a parochial cemetery by the church.

In the second half of the 15th century Kėdainiai covered 25 hectares and in comparison with the settlement in the beginning of the 15th century it has grown even 8 times. From the middle of the 15th century two trading roads passed through the town. One of them stretched from Vilnius to Samogitia (Jablonskis 1979: 59; Jasas 1980: 330), the other passed from Kaunas to Riga (Kovenskaja gubernija 1861: 61). The first market square of an irregular plan appeared alongside this road. In historical sources of the 17th century it was called the Old Market Square (Fig. 4).

The right side of Kėdainiai was built with small, single level houses 480–550×850–900 cm in width. Their facades faced the trading roads and the Market Square. The houses were built of unhewn conifer logs 22–25 cm in diameter, which were laid down on a stone lengthwise foundation or on four big stones, put in the corners. Floors of the houses were made of split off planks 30 cm in width, laid down between the first and second log. The planks were laid on a layer of gravel 20–30 cm in width, which protected the floor from wind and cold.

A wattle fence surrounded the farmsteads' infields. Fence birch pegs were 7–8 cm in diameter and hammered in every 50 cm. There were pathways 200 cm in width between the farmsteads (Fig. 5). In the marshy depressions the pathways were made of planks, laid on two lengthwise logs, in dry places – trampled down. The houses were heated by clay cupola shaped hearths 180cm in diameter and 100–120 cm high. In their building pot shaped stove tiles with a cross-shaped mouth were used at that time (Fig. 4, 5). In the neighbouring Poland the stove tiles were made since the 15th century (Dąbrowska 1987: 83–84). In the 15th century artisans of Vilnius, Kaunas, Trakai and Klaipėda made such stove tiles (Tautavičius 1969: 2–3; Žulkus, Genys 1984: 56–63]. Supposedly, in Kėdainiai there were stoves of intricate construction built of bricks and even of laminar stove tiles. The detected burnt fragments of the bricks and one fragment of a laminar stove tile with an impressed rhombi ornamentation indicated the building of such hearths (Fig. 4, 6). This stove tile is the earliest artifact of such type, detected in Lithuanian periphery.

Fragments of plane and clear glass, detected in the courtyards and inside the houses indicated that the windows were glazed.

Fragments of thin-walled white clay dishes were found among numerous fragments of pots, jugs and platters. Supposedly, the thin-walled dishes were imported to Kėdainiai from Germany or Prussia.

Economical activity in Kėdainiai in the second half of the 15th century is indicated by wealth, consisting of the first Lithuanian silver coins. The wealth was detected in ruins of clay hearth, in one of the houses and consisted of 68 Lithuanian silver denares. The coins were minted in the second half of the 15th century under the ruling of the Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland Kazimieras Jogailaitis

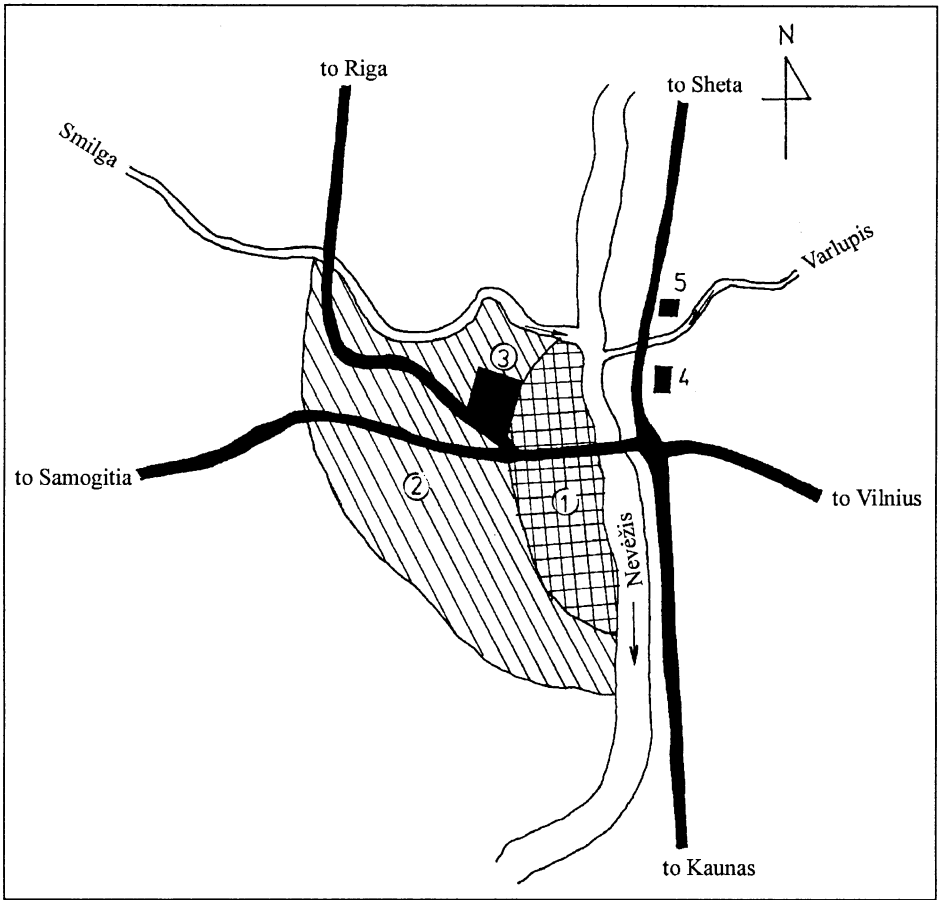


Fig. 7. A map of Kėdainiai. The second half of the 15th c. 1 – a boundary of the settlement in 14th c., 2 – a boundary of the settlement in the 2nd half of the 15th c., 3 – a market square, 4 – the mansion of Kėdainiai, 5 – St. George's Church.

(1440–1492) (Aleksiejūnas 1994: 299; Ivanauskas 1995: 24). Presumably, a merchant of means hid the coins in the hearth.

The correspondence between the merchants of Kėdainiai and Dancing indicated, that there were merchants in Kėdainiai from the middle of the 15th century (Ivinskis 1934: 190). According to historical sources Kėdainiai was under the influence of Hansa merchants' activity from the middle of the 15th century. Their Trade Mission or Kontor was established in about 1440 in Kaunas, 50 km south of Kėdainiai. The environs of Kėdainiai attracted Hansa merchants by its woods and considerably comfortable communication with Kaunas down the Nevėžis river. Timber was floated through Kaunas down the Nemunas river to Dancing. In 1471 Kėdainiai name was mentioned among the five Lithuanian towns: Kaunas, Vilnius, Gardinas and Naujieji Trakai, which traded with Hansa (Ivinskis 1934: 190). Not accidentally the Polish chronicler Janusz Dlugosz called Kėdainiai a town in the end of the 15th century, however Kėdainiai was granted the Magdeburg Rights only after a hundred years – in 1590.

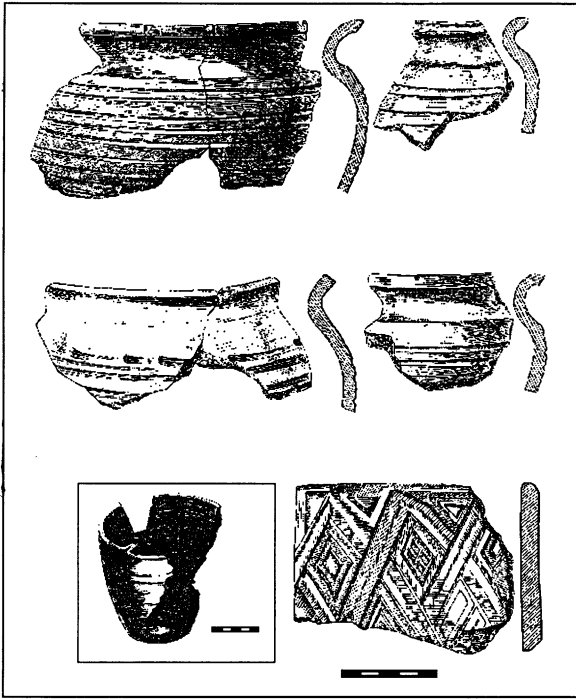


Fig. 9. Artifacts of ceramics. The middle of the 15th c.

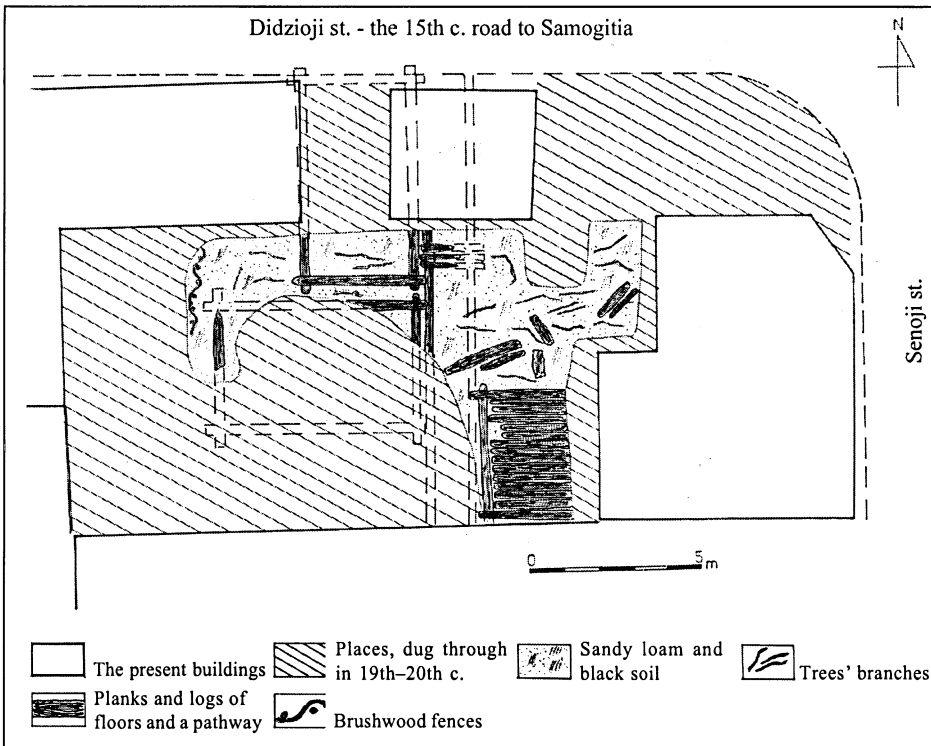


Fig. 8. A scheme of wooden constructions. The middle of the 15th c.

CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological investigations of Kėdainiai Old Town provided with information about the early past of the town and let us know better not merely about Kėdainiai, but also other towns of Lithuania, their origin and development.

Cultural layer of the 14th–15th century with fragments of wooden buildings and numerous findings showed, that Kėdainiai was a small village, situated in a convenient geographical situation in the beginning of the 14th century, that grew into a town. No doubt that the convenient situation with trading roads from Kaunas to Riga and from Vilnius to Samogitia in the first half of the 15th century induced Kėdainiai development and its prosperity in the 16th–17th century.

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Kėdainių miesto ištakos

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Santrauka

Kėdainiai – vidutinio dydžio miestas, įsikūręs centrinėje Lietuvoje. Miesto branduolys yra 87 ha senamiestis, kuriame yra 29 istorinės gatvės ir 4 turgaus aikštės. Jos išsidėstę senamiesčio pakraščiuose prie senųjų kelių į Vilnių, Kauną, Žemaitiją, Prūsiją ir Livoniją. Senamiestyje yra XV a. gotikinė Šv. Jurgio bažnyčia, viena iš trijų Lietuvoje likusių miesto rotušių, statytų XVII a. viduryje, evangelikų reformatų ir liuteronų bažnyčios, XVIII a. Šv. Juozapo bažnyčia, trys XVII–XVIII a. sinagogos, XIX a. rusų stačiatikių cerkvė, XVIII a. miestiečių namai ir amatininkų cechų pastatai (1 pav.).

Rašytinių šaltinių apie Kėdainių miesto pradžią nėra. Pirmosios žinios apie vietovę, kuri galėtų būti siejama su Kėdainiais, paminėtos 1372 metais, kada Livonijos ordino būrys, vadovaujamas Ordino maršalo Andrėjaus iš Stenbergo, niokojo Nevėžio baseino kaimus. XV a. pirmojoje pusėje Kėdainiai priklausė Lietuvos didiesiems kunigaikščiams, o nuo XV a. vidurio – Lietuvos didikams Radviloms.

Daugiausia duomenų apie Kėdainių pradžią suteikia archeologiniai tyrinėjimai, kurie sistemingai atliekami nuo 1985 metų. 1992–1993 metais kasinėjant dviejų seniausių miestų turgaviečių Senosios ir Didžiosios rinkų prieigas, buvo aptiktas XIV–XV a. kultūrinis sluoksnius su medinio užstatymo fragmentais ir gausiais to meto radiniais (2–9 pav.).

Nedidelis apie 4 ha kaimas įsikūrė dešiniajame Nevėžio krante, ant užpelkėjusios žemutinės upės terasos. Sodybos buvo stačiakampio plano, apie 10 m pločio, neaiškaus ilgio. Jų ribas žymėjo žabų tvoros, apnaikintos XVII–XIX a. statybų. Sodybų kiemuose aptikta gyvulių kaulų, geležinių peilių, žalvarinių žiedų, kalkakmenio ir rausvo šiferio versptukų, daug žiestos keramikos šukių.

Gyventojai daugiausia augino stambius raguočius, mažiau – avis, ožkas, kiaules ir šunis. Vertėsi puodininkyste, kalvyste, spalvotųjų metalų apdirbimu, kitais amatais.

Gyvenvietė augo ir plėtėsi į vakarus nuo Nevėžio. Kitame upės krante kūrėsi administracinis ir religinis centras. XV a. antrojoje pusėje Kėdainiai užėmė apie 25 ha plotą ir lyginant su XIV a. pradžia, padidėjo net 8 kartus.

Kėdainių senamiesčio archeologiniai tyrinėjimai teikia žinių apie ankstyvąją miesto praeitį ir leidžia geriau pažinti ne tik Kėdainių, bet ir kitų Lietuvos miestų atsiradimo bei jų raidos savitumus. Patogi geografinė padėtis lėmė Kėdainių augimą XV a. ir jo klestėjimą XVI–XVII a.

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