

Danish bishop's 300-year-old poo offers whiff of history

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A 300-year-old lump of faeces from a Danish bishop has shown researchers that he had a cosmopolitan diet that included grapes, figs and pepper, a Danish archaeologist said on Friday.

The faeces were originally found in a latrine box in 1937 when bishop Jens Bircherod's manor was excavated in the northern city of Aalborg.

But they were only recently analysed as part of a research project on diaspora communities in Danish cities between the early 15th century and the late 17th century.

"Now we have a specific lump of faeces that we can match to a person we actually know, and through that we can study his diet," the archaeologist heading the project, Jette Lindegaard from the Moesgaard Museum outside the Danish city of Aarhus, told AFP.

While most other latrines from the late 17th century were used by many different people, this one was only used by Bircherod and his wife.

The presence of buckwheat, a local speciality on the Danish island of Funen where the bishop grew up, was further evidence that the sample came from him.

Researchers were also able to compare the findings with the Bishop's diaries, in which he detailed some of the "opulent" dinners that he had.

While most Danes at the time had to settle for regional staples like pork, rye bread and cabbage, the [bishop](#)—along with other wealthy residents of Aalborg—appears to have had a penchant for berries and nuts.

A peppercorn that was found would have had to travel all the way from India, while cloudberry eaten by Bircherod could have come from Norway.

"The exotic products were traded by some very specialised merchants in the city, and Aalborg was special because there was a class of very prosperous merchants who were all either migrants from Germany or from the Netherlands," Linaa said.

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