

## Pirita as a Bridge over Political Waters

### Views of Finnish and Swedish Archaeologists on a Bridgettine Monastery in Estonia\*

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#### Introduction

The ruins of the Pirita monastery of the Bridgettine Order (fig. 1), near Tallinn in Estonia, became a site of antiquarian interest in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the monumental western façade was restored. The restoration work was financed by Baron Alexander Staël von Holstein, a local magnate. The enormous façade has since been visible from the city of Tallinn as a landmark in the east of the bay outside the city. The ruin and the façade inspired artists and were depicted in romantic paintings, and were used as a symbol for the *Society for the Embellishment of Pirita* (*Pirita Kaunistamise Selts*, 1925-1940s, fig. 2) and to add to the attraction of the Pirita festival in the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup>

In this article I present the views of the antiquarians and medievalists Sigurd Curman (1879–1966) and Juhani Rinne (1872–1950) on the ruins of the monastery of Pirita as a symbol of Western European cultural heritage. They both showed interest in the Bridgettine legacy in Sweden and Finland, i.e. Vadstena and Naantali, and in medieval churches and cultural heritage in general. Curman became significantly involved in excavations and restorations at Pirita in the 1930's. Rinne also shared an interest in the ruins of this Bridgettine monastery. The network of researchers in the early twentieth century and the interwar period was fairly close-knit, and shared many views on the medieval heritage of the countries of Northern Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. <http://www.birgitta.ee/festival-venue/> [accessed 24 August 2011].

Curman and Rinne knew each other well, and worked side by side in the restoration of the Turku cathedral in Finland in the 1920's.<sup>2</sup> The analysis of the views of these two men is based on letters, printed articles and diaries found in archives in Finland, Sweden and Estonia, and presented against the background of the political and antiquarian conditions of their time.



Fig. 1. Pirita's monumental façade (Eva Ahl 2003).

The monument of the ruins of Pirita was a place of interest in Estonian history, and a realm of memory. The ruins of Pirita were of value for instance for the Romantic movement, often depicted by artists and writers. In literature, the nuns were of special interest, with sexual undertones. Researcher Linda Kaljundi of Tallinn has presented a summary of the vast interest in the Pirita ruins, and also commented on Curman's views on the site. She argues that he has some 'Great-Swedish'<sup>3</sup> interest in the area which relates to an overall interest in the Estonian Swedish-speaking minority during the interwar period.<sup>4</sup> This interest is very political and, in fact, nationalistic.<sup>5</sup> I agree with this, but will also include Juhani Rinne's interest in the site, and thus argue for an overall politically western-oriented view<sup>6</sup> on the history of the North, a view that is certainly shared by these scholars and many others.

<sup>2</sup> This will be thoroughly examined in Visa Immonen's forthcoming biography of Rinne.

<sup>3</sup> From the Swedish *storsvensk*, meaning a person who has Swedish national pride and seems to wish that Sweden could have larger territorial influence or be the leading country in 'Norden', i.e. the Nordic countries (Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Denmark and Norway). The term was originally used during the nineteenth century. See s.v. *storsvensk* in Svenska Akademiens Ordbok (SAOB): <http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/> [accessed 5 September 2011].

<sup>4</sup> For a general presentation of Pirita as a symbol in Estonian novels and literature, see Linda Kaljundi, 'Pirita klooster eesti ajaloomälus: mitte ainult kloostri taga metsas', in V. Sarapik ed., *Pirita klooster 600* = *Kunstiteaduslikke uurimusi* 16:4 (2007), 111–144.

<sup>5</sup> With the term "nationalistic", I am here referring to the Swedish word "nationalistisk" (adj.) or "nationalist" (subst.), which describes a person who has a strong feeling for and trust in his/her own people and country, or follows the ideas of the nationalist movement, often with aggression towards other peoples. See SAOB: <http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/> [accessed 5 September 2011]. Hobsbawm, for example, argues that nationalism is both cultural and political. See Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2005, 1–14. In comparison, the term "patriotic" is somewhat milder than "nationalistic", in the sense that "patriotisk" in Swedish means to love one's own country; see SAOB: <http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/> [accessed 5 September 2011].

<sup>6</sup> With 'western-oriented', concerning the views of Finns and Swedes, I refer to the Swedish *västorienterad* (adj.), which here means 'politically and culturally oriented towards Western Europe'

The present article is informed by fairly recent research in the field of the history of ideas concerning the political use of history<sup>7</sup> and archaeological sites as *lieux de mémoire* (realms of memory), highlighting the symbolic significance of the sites.<sup>8</sup> Realms of memory can be material places or sites, symbolic or functional.<sup>9</sup> In the western nationalistic tradition, the landscape is strong as a bearer of myths and memories: the topography forms a fatherland.<sup>10</sup> The Pirita site is also seen as a national landscape, and thus as a site for commemorative and monumental use of history. Forms of commemoration include for example historical jubilees or re-enactments.<sup>11</sup> The public texts or speeches of scientists, during jubilees for example, by adding meaning to a site, can be understood as use of history.<sup>12</sup>

Through scholarly interest in historical sites, the romanticism of ruins, and popular interest via education of the public as a means of nation-building<sup>13</sup> in the nineteenth century, tourists were attracted to historical sites in the Nordic countries, such as ruins, castles and churches. Parallel to this, societies were formed in the interests of local heritage. At the same time, the need for museums and the restoration of sites grew. Guides to the sites were published by societies and/or historical scholars, thus adding to the number

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(compared to 'eastern-oriented', i.e. politically and culturally oriented towards/interested in Eastern Europe, in this case either Imperial Russia or the Communist Soviet Union).

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Peter Aronsson, *Historiebruk – att använda det förflutna*. Studentlitteratur: Lund 2004; Peter Aronsson (ed.) *Platser för en bättre värld. Auschwitz, Ruhr och röda stugor*. Nordic Academic Press: Lund 2009. The subject of this article is also discussed, with further discussion on the theoretical basis of the analysis of the use of history, in Eva Ahl-Waris' recent *Historiebruk kring Nådendal och den kommemorativa anatomin av klostrets minnesplats* (Skrift utgiven av Societas Sanctae Birgittae), Vadstena 2010 (also available as e-thesis: [URN:ISBN:978-952-10-6674-0](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:isbn:978-952-10-6674-0)). Eva Ahl has also discussed Curman and his views on Pirita in her article 'Sigurd Curman och den antikvariska forskningen i Pirita. Några drag ur forskningshistorien kring Birgittinerklostret utanför Tallinn', in *SKAS* 1/2007, 3–18.

<sup>8</sup> The term derives from Pierre Nora: see Pierre Nora ed., *Realms of History. Rethinking the French Past*, volumes 1–3. Columbia University Press: New York 1996–1998. Regarding archaeology, see e.g. C. Raudvere, A. Andrén & K. Jennbert (eds) *Myter om det nordiska – mellan romantik och politik*. (Vägar till Midgård 1), Nordic Academic Press: Lund 2001; Bodil Petersson, *Föreställningar om det förflutna. Arkeologi och rekonstruktion*. Nordic Academic Press: Lund 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History", P. Nora ed., *Realms of Memory* vol. 1, 14–20.

<sup>10</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*. Fontana Press: London 1996, 15.

<sup>11</sup> On the commemorative and monumental use of history see Peter Aronsson, "Historiekultur i förändring", P. Aronsson (ed.), *Makten över minnet. Historiekultur i förändring*. Studentlitteratur: Lund 2000, 19.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. M. Kiikeri & P. Ylikoski, *Tiede tutkimuskohteena. Filosofinen johdatus tieteen tutkimukseen*. Gaudeamus: Helsinki 2004, 23.

<sup>13</sup> The term 'nation building' is used here as defined for example by William Bloom: "'nation-building' describes the process whereby the inhabitants of a state's territory come to be loyal citizens of that state". See William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1990, 1, 54–55..

of viewers of the sites.<sup>14</sup> In the case of Pirita, the Society for the Embellishment of Pirita published books based on the views of researchers, and also other publications that scholars participated in either by writing or by other means, to promote the site. Rinne did not especially promote tourism in Pirita, but merely expressed his wishes for cooperation in the scientific and cultural fields at large in an interest in the Bridgettine bond between the sites of Naantali and Pirita, while Curman's promotion of tourism in Pirita is limited to his participation in the site's Jubilee publication in 1936.



Fig. 2. The emblem of Pirita Kaunistamise Selts in the 1920's (Tallinn, Tallinna linnaarhiiv, Pirita Kaunistamise Selts arhiiv).

### **The background of Pirita, and of the political and antiquarian ideologies of the first half of the twentieth century**

The Bridgettine Order was founded in the fourteenth century by St Birgitta of Sweden. The main monastery of the order was founded at Vadstena, in Central Sweden, and flourished as a cultural centre up to the Reformation in the sixteenth century and the abolition of religious orders in Sweden. Daughter houses were founded all over Europe in the Late Middle Ages,

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. J. af Geijerstam, *Miljön som minne. Att göra historien levande i kulturlandskapet*. Riksantikvarieämbetet: Stockholm 1998, 13–16; Pertti Anttonen, "Myytin ja todennäköisyyden historiaa. Piispa Henrikin surma viimeaikaisen suomalaisen historiankirjoituksen valossa", S. Loukari & A. Sivula (eds), *Historioita ja historiallisia keskusteluja*. Historia mirabilis 2. Turun historiallinen yhdistys ry.: Turku 2004, 13-41, here 107, 112; C. af Forselles-Riska, "Menneisyyden muuttuvat paikat", S. Knuuttila, P. Laaksonen & U. Piela (eds), *Paikka. Eletty, kuviteltu, kerrottu*. Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja 85. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: Helsinki, 227; A. Eskilsson, "Att leva som man lär. Gemenskap i hembygdsföreningar", P. Aronsson ed., *Platser för en bättre värld*, 91-124.

including the one in Pirita in the first decade of the fifteenth century. Another monastery which was founded in the eastern part of the kingdom of Sweden (i.e. Finland), in the late 1430's, moved to its present location, *Vallis Gratiae* (Naantali), in the early 1440's. A town (likewise called Naantali) developed in its vicinity. Naantali monastery became a ruin in the seventeenth century, and Pirita was ruined in the Livonian wars of the 1570's.<sup>15</sup>

Antiquarian interest in Estonian monastic sites in general has been vast: the earliest excavations were conducted on the site of Kärkna in 1888.<sup>16</sup> In Finland the beginning seems similar: monastic sites were clear evidence of a past worth remembering. One of the first to be excavated was the site of the Franciscan convent in Kökar in the archipelago in the late 1860's.<sup>17</sup> This aligns with trends in contemporary European scholarly activities: monastic sites were easy to identify, and were places where written sources and archaeological traces met. Historical institutional buildings, such as churches and monasteries, were researched as a part of the ongoing process of nation-building through the creation of national narratives.<sup>18</sup> An interest in various kind of traces of the past – sites, finds, folklore<sup>19</sup> – was typical of early research. The medieval period was idealized by the romantic movement, and there were projects to create national identities on bases other than the Classical past. Outside the former Roman empire the medieval past was more visible and monumental, in castles, monasteries, and churches, which also represented Christendom. Medieval churches and ruins were investigated as monument buildings up to the 1960's, with the buildings as sources.<sup>20</sup>

Overall, the science of archaeology seems to have been established in Northern Europe in the late nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, new demands for the research and restoration of historical

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<sup>15</sup> E.g. Bertil Berthelson, *Studier i Birgittinerordens byggnadsskick I. Anläggningsplanen och dess tillämpning*. Lund 1946.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. E. Russow, H. Valk, A. Haak, A. Pärn & A. Mäesalu, "Medieval Archaeology of the European Context: Towns, Churches, Monasteries and Castles", W. Lang & M. Laneman (eds), *Archaeological Research in Estonia 1865–2005* (Estonian Archaeology 1). Tartu University Press: Tartu 2006, 159–192.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Markus Hiekkänen, "De finska klostren under medeltiden. Arkeologiskt och byggnadshistoriskt perspektiv", *Kirkearkeologi i Norden* = Hikuin 20 (1993), 123–154.

<sup>18</sup> H. Andersson, "Medieval Archaeology in Scandinavia", H. Andersson & J. Wienberg (eds) *The Study of Medieval Archaeology. European Symposium for Teachers of Medieval Archaeology. Lund 11–15 June 1990* (Lund studies in Medieval Archaeology 13). Almqvist & Wiksell International: Stockholm 1993, 7–21, here 9.

<sup>19</sup> Mikko Härö, *Suomen muinaismuistohallinto 1884–1917*. Museovirasto: Helsinki 1984, 15, 23, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Anders Andrén, *Mellan ting och text. En introduktion till de historiska arkeologierna*. Stockholm 1997, 35–36.

buildings and archaeological sites were launched by scholars. In Finland, a Chair in Archaeology was founded at the University of Helsinki in 1921.<sup>21</sup> A western-oriented, patriotic view of history competed in Finland with a protectionist, patriotic view that was expressed for example in the Karelianism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This could also be seen in the field of archaeology.<sup>22</sup> During the interwar period, new laws for the treatment of historical monuments came into effect in Sweden, at the time that Curman became head of the national board of antiquities, *Riksantikvarieämbetet*, in 1921.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1920's, patriotic interest in the Bridgettine heritage also awoke in Sweden, and societies for the study and restoration of Vadstena were founded. The 550<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the death of St Birgitta was greatly celebrated in 1923, which must have been partly responsible for the increased popular interest in Bridgettine history.<sup>24</sup> Interest in the Bridgettine sites spread to countries where it seemed to work to emphasize not only common cultural heritage, but also local memory within a national framework. Similarly, in Estonia, a local *Society for the Embellishment of Pirita* was established to revive the Order's memorial site.

The ideological framework against which the study of Bridgettine sites must be set is the political climate in Sweden and Finland in the first half of the twentieth century. The union between Sweden and Norway, established after the Napoleonic Wars, had ended in 1905, when Norway became an independent monarchy. At the turn of the century, nationalism thrived among certain political groups in the Grand Duchy of Finland under Russian rule, some more radical than others. In December 1917 Finland declared independence during the tumult of revolution in Russia. Tension

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. Andrén 1997, 35–40; Evert Baudou, *Den nordiska arkeologin – historia och tolkningar*. Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien: Stockholm 2004, 165–177, 205–208; Derek Fewster, "Arkeologisen tutkimuksen historia Suomessa", P. Halinen et al. (eds) *Johdatus arkeologiaan*. Gaudeamus: Helsinki 2008, 97–107.

<sup>22</sup> Derek Fewster's research of the *Fennoman paradigm* has deconstructed this early protectionistic patriotism; see his *Visions of Past Glory. Nationalism and the Construction of Early Finnish History*. Studia Fennica Historica 11. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: Helsinki 2006. See also Kati Parpei, *Saints, Legends and Forgeries. The Formation of the historiographical Image of Valaam Monastery* (Publications of the University of Eastern Finland, Dissertations in Social Sciences and Business Studies 5), University of Eastern Finland: Joensuu 2010.

<sup>23</sup> P.-O. Westlund, "Fornforskning och minnesvård. II. Byggnadsminnen", A. Schück & B. Thordemann (eds) *Ad patriam illustrandam. Hyllningsskrift till Sigurd Curman 30 april 1946*. Uppsala 1946, 324–348.

<sup>24</sup> Ingemar Lindaräng has made a resume and analysis of the old and new jubilees of St Birgitta. See Ingemar Lindaräng, *Helgonbruk i moderniseringstider. Bruket av Birgitta- och Olavstraditionerna i samband med minnesfiranden i Sverige och Norge 1891–2005* (Linköping Studies in Arts and Science 392) Linköpings universitet: Linköping 2007.

between socialists and conservatives ended in a bloody civil war in the spring of 1918, in which the conservative 'whites' prevailed, steering the young country towards western-oriented right-wing politics. The conservatives had planned for the new state to become a monarchy, and had chosen a German prince to become the ruler, but the outcome of World War I brought a change in plans and Finland became a republic in 1919.<sup>25</sup>

In the beginning of the twentieth century Estonia, like Finland, was also a part of Russia – Sweden had lost the area during the Great Nordic War in the early eighteenth century – and declared independence in February 1918.<sup>26</sup> The Estonians fought a war of independence against both Germany and Russia. In 1919 Estonia and the other new Baltic states, together with Poland and Finland, met in Helsinki to discuss their position as states with borders with Soviet Russia. A treatise on mutual support in the event of a military crisis was signed in 1922, but Finland was soon drawn to cooperate with the Nordic countries, drawing it away from cooperation with the Baltic states. Estonia particularly sought an alliance with Finland, and also looked to Sweden. From the 1920's the political climate of the young republic turned towards the right, culminating in 1934 with a coup led by Konstantin Päts. Political and cultural cooperation between Sweden and Estonia became closer, although Sweden remained true to the country's policy of military neutrality.<sup>27</sup> It is obvious that scientists like Sigurd Curman, visiting Estonia in 1929 and taking an interest in the common history of the Estonians and the Swedes, were a part, in the field of culture, of such political cooperation.

### **Sigurd Curman and Pirita**

Sigurd Curman was a professor of architectural history in Sweden, and had been doing extensive studies of medieval Swedish churches from around the turn of the century. He was also involved in restoration works. In 1923 Curman was appointed state antiquarian, from which position he retired in 1946. In the 1930's he took part in the creation of the Historical Museum in Stockholm, which opened during the war, in 1943, as a form of national

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<sup>25</sup> E.g. Matti Klinge, "Omvälningarnas år", H. Ekberg ed., *Finlands historia* 4. Schildts: Helsingfors 1999, 11–32; Henrik Meinander, "Självständighetstiden", H. Ekberg ed. *Finlands historia* 4, 35–63.

<sup>26</sup> Meinander 1999, 72; Seppo Zetterberg, *Viron historia*. Suomen kirjallisuuden seuran toimituksia 1118. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: Helsinki 2007, 517.

<sup>27</sup> Zetterberg 2007, 500–562.

symbol.<sup>28</sup> He also participated in the organisation “Nordens frihet” in 1939, supporting Finland during the war against the Soviet Union. Participants in Nordens frihet saw Finland as the western outpost against the Communist east. Curman reached out to the public, almost as an apostle, for the Finnish case.<sup>29</sup>

Sigurd Curman was one of the main figures in the arrangements for the 1923 jubilee in Vadstena, so naturally he was among those contacted by the people in Pirita in 1929. Curman was also state antiquarian, a position that enabled him to visit the site in 1929. At the jubilee in Pirita in 1936, he wrote in the jubilee publication about his encounter with the monument site:

Its [i.e. the monastery's church's] magnificent western façade bathing in sunshine was the first sight that caught my eye when the ship drew near to the Estonian shore. It seemed to light a giant sign towards the sea, raised to show the path to the harbor for seafarers from abroad. [...] The monastery's church in Pirita suddenly seemed to me to turn into an outer symbol of the bond that since past times has existed between Estonia and Sweden, between Estonians and Swedes, a bond that has been of various kinds – political, cultural, commercial – in flux over the passing centuries.”<sup>30</sup> Thus to Curman the symbolic value of the mere ruin itself was significant. The Bridgettine church seemed like a bond between his homeland Sweden and his brothers, the now newly independent Estonians.

The network between Swedish and Estonian scholars at Tartu University became close in the 1920's during efforts for cultural cooperation. Thus excavations and restorations were planned and started in 1930 as a joint venture between Estonian and Swedish researchers – for example Estonian researcher Armin Tuulse (Fig. 3).

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<sup>28</sup> For recent biographies of Curman see Richard Pettersson, *Fädernesland och framtidsland. Sigurd Curman och kulturminnesvårdens etablering*. Umeå universitet: Umeå 2001; Anders Åman, *Sigurd Curman. Riksantikvarien – Ett porträtt* (Svenska lärde). Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien & Atlantis: Stockholm 2008. Curman's interest in Nordic cooperation has also been examined recently in Tora Byström, *Nordens frihet. Samfundet, tidningen, kretsen*. Sekel Bokförlag: Lund 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Byström 2009, 195–202.

<sup>30</sup> Sigurd Curman, 'Pirita kloster och det kulturella samarbetet mellan Estland och Sverige', in *Pirita klooster Birgittaklostret vid Tallinn 500. 1436-1936*, [1], (Pirita Kaunistamise Selts Väljanne 12), Pirita 1936, 15–20, here at 15.





Fig. 3. Armin Tuulse and an unidentified girl examining the finds from Pirita. Notice the two flags at the end of the table (Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Sigurd Curmans baltiska samling).

Curman and the other Swedes provided their expertise gained from the restorations of medieval churches they had initiated in Sweden a few decades earlier. Curman also had close connections with the restorations of the Bridgettine church in Vadstena in the 1920's.<sup>31</sup>

One of the scholars participating in the work in Pirita was antiquarian Bertil Berthelson, who had also taken part in the restorations at Vadstena. He went on to write his Ph.D. thesis (1946) based on material collected at Pirita. His work analysed Bridgettine architecture in Northern Europe generally, examining, among others, Vadstena, Naantali and Pirita.<sup>32</sup> In several letters in the 1930's Berthelson reported to Curman on the work at Pirita.<sup>33</sup> Curman's personal interest in Pirita may also have been strong due to his ancestry: his forefathers had moved to Sweden from the Baltic countries in the seventeenth century.<sup>34</sup> Curman's agenda was obviously not limited to Great Sweden; he also aimed to bind the Estonian brothers more tightly to the west – a somewhat anti-communist agenda, it seems, in accordance with the political climate in both countries.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Berthelson 1946, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Berthelson 1946.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. Tallinn, Tallinna Linnaarhiiv, Pirita Kaunistamise Seltsi arhiiv, vol. 3, B. Berthelson to Pirita Kaunistamise Selts 21.7.1930; Stockholm, Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet, Sigurd Curmans arkiv, vol. 127, B. Berthelson to S. Curman 12.8.1930.

<sup>34</sup> K. Asplund, *Sigurd Curman. En minnesteckning*. Stockholm 1966, 23.

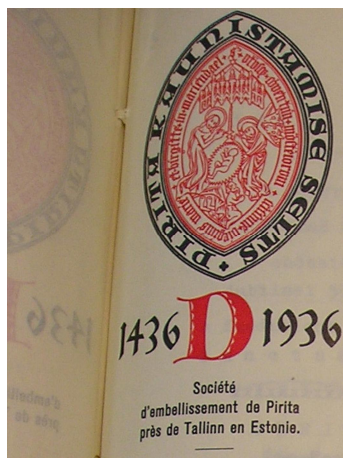


Fig. 4. The logo of the jubilee in Pirita 1936, using the medieval monastery's seal with the nativity scene according to St Birgitta (Tallinn, Tallinna linnaarhiiv, Pirita Kaunistamise Selts arhiiv).

The excavations and restorations of the church in Pirita culminated in 1936, when the Society arranged a big 500<sup>th</sup> jubilee on the site, in commemoration of the consecration of the monastery's church.<sup>35</sup> A similar jubilee celebration of the consecration of the Vadstena abbey church had been arranged in 1930.<sup>36</sup> The use of history can be discerned for example in the logo of the Pirita jubilee, which was taken from the medieval seal of the monastery, depicting the revelation of St Birgitta in which she witnessed the birth of Christ (fig. 4). The jubilee became an obvious bridge to the west. In the jubilee book the Society expressed the following:<sup>37</sup>

The excavations in Pirita and the restorations of the monastery's ruins have become a sign of the common cultural work between the Estonians and the Swedes. The bonds between the two peoples are as old as the ruins of Pirita. [...] The memory of this time as a good era still lives today among the Estonians.

Curman concluded in his own text that the ruin was a symbol of cooperation: "...it was Vadstena in Estonian translation. [...] The monastery's church in Pirita suddenly appeared to me as the outer symbol of the bond that has always existed between Estonia and Sweden..."<sup>38</sup> Pirita became a site for the use of history for nation-building in both Sweden and Estonia. The importance of the political bond with Western Europe was thus stressed. On a personal level, the contacts between Curman and the people of Pirita remained for the rest of their lives.

<sup>35</sup> *Pirita klooster* [1]; and *Pirita klooster Birgittaklostret vid Tallinn 500. 1436–1936*, 2 (Pirita Kaunistamise Selts Väljanne 15). Pirita 1940.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. Berthelson 1946, 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Pirita klooster* [1], 12–13.

<sup>38</sup> Curman 1936, 15–16.

## Juhani Rinne and Pirita

Unlike Curman, Juhani Rinne had already visited Pirita at an early stage in his career. A trip to Pirita in 1904 is mentioned in his letter to the *Society for the Embellishment of Pirita* in the 1930's.<sup>39</sup> Rinne was born in Piikkiö in South-Western Finland. After his studies at the Imperial Alexander University of Helsinki, he started working in the State Museum in 1900. His main interest was in medieval sites, and he completed his Ph.D. in 1914. During the 1920's he worked as head of the Archaeological Commission (nowadays the National Bureau of Antiquities). His main works concern the restoration of the Turku Cathedral and include an important study on the national saint of Finland, St Henry (1932). During the interwar period he also took an interest in the possibility of restoring the ruins of the Bridgettine monastery of Naantali, near Turku.<sup>40</sup> His overall interest in the medieval period obviously also included an interest in monastic sites. Rinne also promoted medieval history as a member of a society for the promotion of tourism in Finland, writing texts for brochures, etc.<sup>41</sup>

In his 1936 letter to the *Society for the Embellishment of Pirita*, in response to a request to contribute to the publication connected to the jubilee at Pirita, Rinne mentioned his great interest in the site of the former Bridgettine monastery, born perhaps out of his general interest in the monastic sites in Finland and its neighbouring countries. In the letter, Rinne claims that he had visited the site already in 1904, and many times after that.<sup>42</sup> In Rinne's archives there are undated photos of Pirita that could date from a visit in the early twentieth century. This is also suggested by the fact that no restoration of the church ruins seem yet to have been undertaken, and a person seen in one of the pictures is wearing a student's cap which was fashionable among Finnish students at the turn of the century (fig. 5).<sup>43</sup>

During the interwar period, interest in the Bridgettines was significantly revived among western-oriented scholars and enthusiasts in Finland. Thus, in 1922, Rinne took another trip to the Baltic countries, also

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<sup>39</sup> Tallinn, Tallinna Linnaarhiiv, Pirita Kaunistamise Seltsi arhiiv, J. Rinne to Pirita Kaunistamise Selts 17.8.1936.

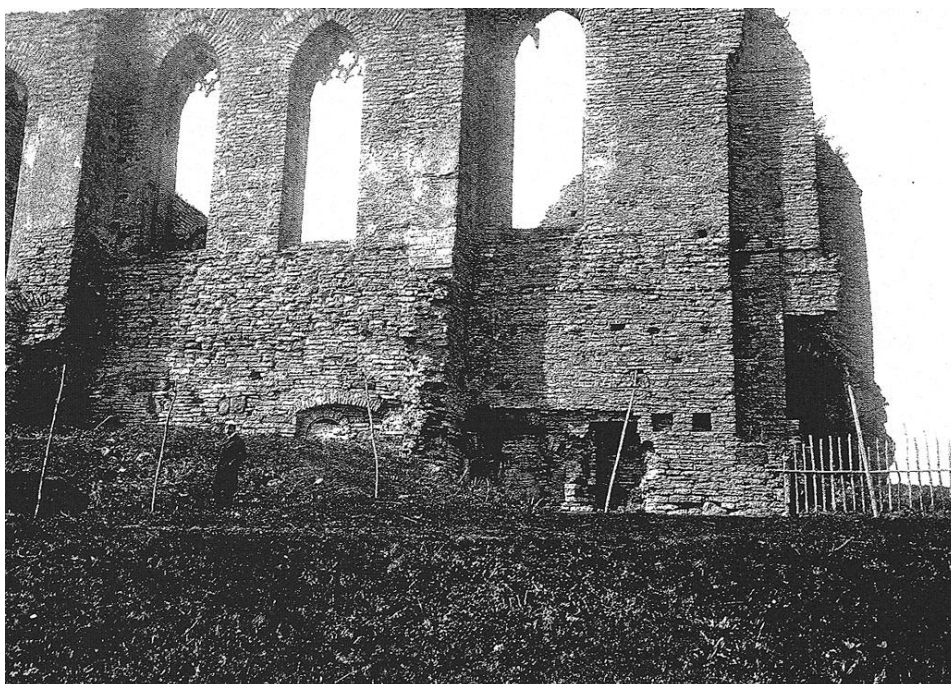
<sup>40</sup> C. J. Gardberg, 'Rinne, Juhani', in *Suomen kansallisbiografia* 8. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: Helsinki 2006, 302–303..

<sup>41</sup> Immonen, forthcoming.

<sup>42</sup> Tallinn, Tallinna Linnaarhiiv, Pirita Kaunistamise Seltsi arhiiv, J. Rinne to Pirita Kaunistamise Selts 17.8.1936.

<sup>43</sup> Helsinki, National Bureau of Antiquities, Historiallis-topografinen arkisto, Rinne's archives, six pictures.

visiting Pirita. His short account of his travels remains. In his diary, Rinne also mentions a meeting and dinner with Baron Staël von Holstein, who had conducted antiquarian studies in Pirita at the turn of the century.<sup>44</sup> What they discussed is unfortunately not recorded. It appears that he visited Pirita on the feast day of St Birgitta (October 7<sup>th</sup>). He recorded his observations: “This interesting ruin should definitely be researched in detail. It looks totally different from the general design of Bridgettine monasteries. In the east an entrance for the public is lacking. The church is rather sort of divided in two lengthwise.”<sup>45</sup> Bertil Berthelson, who, as already mentioned, later analysed the remains of various Bridgettine monasteries, also concluded that the Pirita site was unique in combining the Bridgettine and Baltic types of medieval architecture.<sup>46</sup>



*Fig. 5.* Photo from Pirita in Juhani Rinne’s archive, undated, probably early twentieth century. Helsinki, National Bureau of Antiquities, Historiallis-topografinen arkisto, Rinne’s archives.

<sup>44</sup> Helsinki, National Bureau of Antiquities, Historiallis-topografinen arkisto, Rinne’s archives, Rinne’s diary 1922.

<sup>45</sup> Helsinki, National Bureau of Antiquities, Historiallis-topografinen arkisto, Rinne’s archives, Rinne’s diary 1922: “Tämä mielenkiintoinen raunio olisi ehdottomasti seikkaperäisesti tutkittava. Se näyttää kokonaan poikkeavan brigittalaisluostarien [sic] yleisestä suunnitelmasta. Itäpäästä puuttuvat yleisön sisäänkäytävät. Sen sijaan jakaantuu kirkko tavallaan pituussuuntaan kahteen osaan”.

<sup>46</sup> Berthelson 1946.

In his letter of 1936, Rinne saw the site as one of his "...most fruitful places of 'pilgrimage'", and states that he often "...had enjoyed the intriguing memories the site produced" for him. Rinne declined to contribute to the publication connected with the 500<sup>th</sup> jubilee celebration of the consecration of the church at Pirita, but sent a book by Reinhold Hausen, the former head of the state archives, about Naantali.<sup>47</sup> This book, published in 1922,<sup>48</sup> was based on Hausen's excavations of the Naantali site in the early 1870's, and remained the only report of excavations at the site until the 1990's.

Rinne was very concerned with emphasising the importance of the bonds formed between the Bridgettine monasteries in Naantali and Pirita. In Rinne's archives, there survives an undated speech, delivered to "Baltic guests" travelling in Finland, most likely in Naantali. The speech was probably delivered in German, but both German and Swedish records of the speech remain. My assumption is that it dates from the interwar period. In his speech, Rinne refers to the flowering Finnish summer and says: "In many places you have probably also walked on historical ground, where tale and reality meet. It is in such a place that you dwell right now."<sup>49</sup> In the speech, Rinne presented a sketch of the history of the Bridgettine Order, and mentioned both the Naantali and Pirita sites. The glory of the monasteries had faded, leaving only ruins, but according to Rinne they still played an important political and cultural role:<sup>50</sup>

Nowadays it is but a memory, a memory that is still present in the little town [i.e. Naantali] that once was built as an annex to the monastery and faithfully upholds its name and traditions. I am convinced that lasting culture can only be built on historic foundations, in which Finland has so much in common with the

<sup>47</sup> Tallinn, Tallinna Linnaarhiiv, Pirita Kaunistamise Seltsi arhiiv, J. Rinne to Pirita Kaunistamise Selts 17.8.1936: "...antoisimpia 'pyhiinvaellus'-paikkojani ", "...sen sytyttävistä muistoista nauttinut."

<sup>48</sup> Reinhold Hausen, *Nådendals kyrka och klosterruiner*. Amos Andersons Förlagsaffär: Helsingfors 1922.

<sup>49</sup> Helsinki, National Bureau of Antiquities, Historiallis-topografinen arkisto, Rinne's archives, handwritten undated speech: "På många ställen haven I säker[t] rört Eder också på historisk mark, där sagan och verkligheten mötas. På en sådan plats befinner I Eder också nu."

<sup>50</sup> Helsinki, National Bureau of Antiquities, Historiallis-topografinen arkisto, Rinne's archives, handwritten undated speech: "Numera är det ett minne blott, ett minne, som uppbäres ännu av den lilla staden som en gång uppstått till dess annex och troget bevara dess namn och traditioner. Övertygad om att en varaktig kultur kan byggas blott på en historisk grund i vars enskildheter Finland har så mycket gemensamt med länderna söder om Finska viken har jag vågat... beropa [?] de lokala minnena för denna ort, också de gemensamma för dessa länder, genom Brigitta [sic] kultens utbredning också i baltikum. Även i Estland bevaras minnet av en centralort för dem [i Reval ---]. Leve de gemensamma historiska minnena för baltikum, leve våra gemensamma strävanden att bevara en del av vår kulturella och politiska självständighet på politisk grund...".

countries south of the Gulf of Finland. I am not afraid to claim that local memories of these sites, including those shared by these countries, were spread through the cult of Brigitta [sic] in the Baltic countries. In Estonia, too, the memory of a central site remains [in Tallinn...]. Long live the shared historical memories of the Baltics, long live our shared struggle to preserve a part of our cultural and political independence on historical grounds...

The last sentence should be considered against the background of the political struggle for independence in both Finland and Estonia in 1918–1919. Both countries shared an eastern border with the Soviet Union, and politicians in both looked for western support. These scholars argued that common history with Sweden provided a cultural bridge that supported such political interests.

### **Final remarks**

The excavations at Pirita continued during the Soviet period. Vast digs were conducted by Jaan Tamm, among others, from the 1970's onwards. Pirita was a site of the Moscow Olympics in 1980 (the boat races), which was a motivation to conduct research at this monument site.<sup>51</sup> The Bridgettine ruin could represent a foreign element that was neither of hated German nor of feared Russian origin: Estonian enough, but still a representation of Western culture. Some of the most notable finds of the excavations are on display in the City Museum of Tallinn.

Today, the *Society for the Embellishment of Pirita*, which was abolished in the Soviet era, has been revived, and has been active at the site since the early twenty-first century. Every summer, in August, an art festival is organised at the monument site. The Bridgettine Order (the modern one, revived and founded by Elisabeth Hesselblad in the twentieth century) has returned to the site, and their new monastery has been built next to the ruins of the old one.<sup>52</sup> The Pirita site today once again maintains a strong link with Rome, where the mother house of the Bridgettine order can be found.

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<sup>51</sup> E.g. Jaan Tamm, *Eesti keskaegsed kloostrid. Medieval Monasteries of Estonia*. Tallinn 2002, 5–6, 9–10, 33, 163, 166.

<sup>52</sup> The Bridgettine Order returned to the immediate vicinity of Pirita in 2001. See <http://www.piritaklooster.ee>. The *Society* was formed again in 2005. A new brochure about *Pirita kaunistamise Selts* and its founder will be presented in September 2011, but was not available for this

Finally, comparing Curman's interest in and view of Pirita to that of Juhani Rinne, it is obvious that the history of St Birgitta and her Order, and of the historical sites connected to the Bridgettines, served for both scholars as political bridges to common Western European culture and heritage. Curman's case expresses the scholar's interest in Great Sweden, which was basically nationalist in its core. But the research was still international, as the object of study was, after all, the Bridgettines. One could claim that the networks between these scholars guaranteed a degree of openness in their patriotic views. Rinne's views on Pirita, and thus on the Order in general, was likewise politically western-oriented. He also expressed an obvious interest in the local area of his own origin, western Finland. This seems to have been common among Finnish scholars from the south-western part of the country in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The geographical proximity to Sweden and Estonia obviously also affected their views.<sup>53</sup> This was in contrast to the more militant view of the historical Finland 'taken by Sweden' during the Middle Ages, and the scholars who fuelled the myth that Finland had in some way been 'independent' in the Iron Age.<sup>54</sup> More examples of such western-oriented views of Finnish history should be taken into consideration, in comparison with protectionist views, in future studies of the historiography of the early Finnish republic.

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article. See Tomas Abiline (forthcoming), Albin Strutzkin - Pirita süda ja hing. See <http://www.piritaselts.ee/> [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011].

<sup>53</sup> E.g. S. G. Elmgren (d. 1897), K. A. Bomansson (d. 1906); R. Hausen (d. 1942), See Ahl-Waris 2010.

<sup>54</sup> See Fewster 2006.