

Buried in the Archives

Medieval Graves at the Dominican Convent of St Olaf in Turku, Finland*

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Burials in the Monastic Setting

Burials form a fundamental part of medieval monastic spaces. Caroline Bruzelius argues that they in fact had a particular importance for the organisation and structure of mendicant architecture as a whole. The buildings integrated the significance of burying practices and graves into their physical fabric. A possibility that outsiders could be buried in the monastic complex gave the mendicants means to engage with the surrounding community and enhance their finances.¹

In friaries burials are usually concentrated in the monastic church and the adjacent churchyard, but they are known from other parts of the architectural complex as well. The location of the graves, their forms and possible architectural features as well as the orientation of the burials and the objects put in the graves provide information on devotional views, the social use of space, and material culture. In the same vein, modern osteological analyses of the human remains can give detailed data on the life of the deceased.² However, in spite of burials being potentially so vital for the understanding of monastic life, numerous monastic sites have fallen prey to the hastily and carelessly conducted excavations of the 19th and 20th centuries. Consequently, the documentation is poor and haphazardly made while the bone material has been reburied long ago. If this is the case, how

* I am grateful to Jukka Tuominen for his help with revising the language of the article.

¹ Caroline Bruzelius, 'The Dead Come to Town: Preaching, Burying, and Building in the Mendicant Orders', in Alexandra Gajewski & Zoe Opacic (eds), *The Year 1300 and the Creation of a New European Architecture* (Architectura Medii Aevi 1), Brepols: Turnhout 2008, 209–230; Caroline Bruzelius, *Preaching, Building, and Burying: Friars in the Medieval City*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2014.

² On the possibilities of modern fieldwork, see e.g. Hanna Menander & Caroline Arcini, 'Dominikankonventet S:t Olof', in Rikard Hedvall, Karin Lindeblad & Hanna Menander (eds), *Borgare, bröder och bönder – Arkeologiska perspektiv på Skänninges äldre historia*, Arkeologiska uppdragsverksamheten (UV), Riksantikvarieämbetet: Stockholm 2013, 191–228, at 216–218; Hanna Menander & Caroline Arcini, 'Trångt om saligheten: Populär gravplats där omstuvade ben avslöjar nyheter: S:t Olofs konvent i Skänninge', *Arkeologi i Östergötland* 2013, 26–27.

can burials in the medieval monastic context be studied, and what kind of information can dated archival records contribute to contemporary scholarship?

The medieval Dominican convent of St Olaf in Turku, Southwest Finland, is a good example of deficient fieldwork and meagre documentation (Fig. 1). In the present article, I will use the convent as a case study of the limitations and possibilities of analysing monastic burials on the basis of old archaeological archives. My aim is to survey all the material at hand and assess its value for interpreting the burials and associated medieval practices in Turku. I will start with the history of research and the current understanding of the convent, and then describe what little there is available on the excavated burials. What is the reliability of this documentation, and how much of the original findings can actually be reconstructed?



Fig. 1. In 1909, architect Alex Nyström made observations on brick structures and graves when a new large building was erected at 2 Kaskenkatu Street (area A). Numerous human bones were collected from the site. The photograph is published by courtesy of the Åbo Akademi Picture Collections.

The reassessment of available documentation requires a meticulous and somewhat repetitive treatment. It shows the limitations that the material sets for any further study, but also highlights details that bring into question earlier interpretations of the graves and architectural

features in Turku. Two points of interest emerge. The first is the distribution of burials in the church, churchyard and passageways around the monastic

complex, while the second is the orientation of the graves which in many cases do not seem to follow the common east–west orientation. After these initial discoveries, I will proceed to analysing what the graves reveal about monastic burial practices and beliefs, and how they are connected with the use of different architectural features in the convent. Answers to these questions are sought by combining the reconstruction of the burials in Turku with modern archaeological and historical literature on monastic sites in Northern Europe. I will argue that some of the atypical characteristics that the burials of Turku display can be explained by both religious and pragmatic concerns.

The Dominican convent of Turku is of particular interest because of the low number of convents in medieval Finland – i.e. the eastern province of the Kingdom of Sweden. While 200 monasteries or convents were founded in Scandinavia during the Middle Ages, there were only six in Finland. Of these, five were friaries for men. In addition to the convent of Turku, Dominicans were established in another important town, Viipuri, near the eastern border. Viipuri also had a Franciscan convent. The two other Franciscan friaries were situated in the town of Rauma and on the island of Kökar, part of the Åland Islands. The only actual monastery in the diocese was a Bridgettine one for both nuns and monks in Naantali, relatively near Turku.³

The convent of Turku has a special importance among the monastic institutions in Finland. It left a major impression on the liturgical and cultural makeup of the Diocese of Turku.⁴ Moreover, according to Markus Hiekkänen, Dominicans played a crucial role in the foundation of the town of Turku itself,⁵ and throughout the Middle Ages they had a considerable position in its urban life. Despite the importance of the Turku convent,

³ Markus Hiekkänen, 'De finska klostren under medeltiden: Arkeologiskt och byggnadshistoriskt perspektiv', *Hikuin* 20 (1993), 123–154, at 123. On the medieval use of the terms 'convent' and 'monastery' in the Nordic context, see Christian Lovén, 'Kloster, klosterliknande inrättningar och klostertraditioner', *Fornvännen* 96 (2001), 243–266.

⁴ E.g. Aarno Malin, *Der Heiligenkalender Finnlands: Seine Zusammensetzung und Entwicklung* (Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimituksia XX), Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura: Helsinki 1925, 184; William R. Bonniwell, *A History of the Dominican Liturgy 1215–1945*, Joseph F. Wagner: New York 1945, 2nd ed., 205–206; Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner, 'Mendikantisääntökunnat, etuoikeutena köyhyys', in Tuomas Heikkilä & Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner (eds), *Keskiajan kirkko: Uskonelämän muotoja läntisessä kristikunnassa* (Tietolipas 185), Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: Helsinki 2002, 198–288, at 240.

⁵ Markus Hiekkänen, 'Die Gründung der Stadt Turku', in Ēvalds Mugarēvičs & Ieva Ose (eds), *Civitas et castrum ad Mare Balticum: Baltijas arheoloģijas un vēstures problēmas dzelzs laikmetā un viduslaikos*, Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds: Rīga 2002, 156–177; Markus Hiekkänen, 'Turun kaupungin perustaminen – Tulkintayritys uusien arkeologisten tutkimusten perusteella', in Liisa Seppänen ed., *Kaupunkia pintaa syvemältä: Arkeologisia näkökulmia Turun historiaan* (Archaeologia Medii Aevi Finlandiae IX), TS-Yhtymä & Suomen keskiajan arkeologian seura: Turku 2003a, 42–52; Markus Hiekkänen, 'Turun Pyhän Olavin konventti ja sen rakennusmuistot', *Turun maakuntamuseo: Raportteja* 18 (2003b), 89–104, at 90–91.

however, the history of its archaeological research is characterised by inadequate fieldwork.

The Rediscovery and Scholarly Study of the Convent

The Dominican convent of Turku was closed down in 1536 as a consequence of the Reformation, and brothers were dispersed around the diocese as they became ordinary parish priests. In 1537, the convent and the town were badly damaged by fire,⁶ and the friary along with its lands were taken over by the Crown. Townspeople began to use the ruins as a handy supply of building material, and in 1543 King Gustavus Vasa ordered some of the bricks and other architectural elements of the convent to be used for renovations in Kastelholm and Turku Castles.⁷ Many convent plots were rented to burghers, and gradually they ended up in private ownership. New buildings started to emerge on many of the plots, but it seems that initially the church and the cemetery were excluded from construction activities. Their land was made into a herb garden named 'Kryydimaa' by 1609. By 1754 the same area had become two separate fields called 'Kryydimaa' and 'Haveman's Garden',⁸ and the exact location of the convent had been forgotten.

⁶ Karl Gabriel Leinberg, *De finska klostrens historia* (Skrifter utg. af Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 14), Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland: Helsingfors 1890, 79; Johan Wilhelm Ruuth, *Åbo stads historia under medeltiden och 1500-talet: Första häftet* (Bidrag till Åbo stads historia: Andra serien 9), Bestyrelsen för Åbo stads historiska museum: Helsingfors 1909, 108, 122; Oscar Nikula, *Åbo stads historia 1521–1600*, Åbo stad: Åbo 1987, 99.

⁷ Ruuth 1909, 108; Nikula 1987, 99; Tapio Salminen, 'Dominikaanit Tallinnassa, Viipurissa ja Turussa', *Turun maakuntamuseo: Raportteja* 18 (2003), 37–46, at 39–40; Carl Jacob Gardberg, *Veritas – Sanningen! Dominikanerna i Åbo under medeltiden*, Schildt: Esbo 2005, 67–69; Markus Hiekkänen, *Suomen keskiajan kivikirkot* (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia 1117), Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: Helsinki 2007, 183.

⁸ Ruuth 1909, 116–118; Heljä Brusila, 'Pyhän Olavin dominikaaniluostarin raunioista', in Helena Soiri-Snellman & Heljä Brusila, *Kaskenlinna: Asunto Oy Kaskenlinnan rakennushistoria ja Pyhän Olavin luostarin rauniot* (Turun maakuntamuseo – Julkaisuja 1), Turun maakuntamuseo: Turku, 107; Hannu Laaksonen & Rauno Lahtinen, 'Bostadsaktiebolaget Asunto-osaakeyhtiö Pantern 100 vuotta', in Paavo Toivanen & Nina Ekholm (eds), *Pantern: Talo luostarin raunioilla* (Turun museokeskuksen julkaisuja 55), Turun museokeskus: Turku 2011, 15–134, at 26.

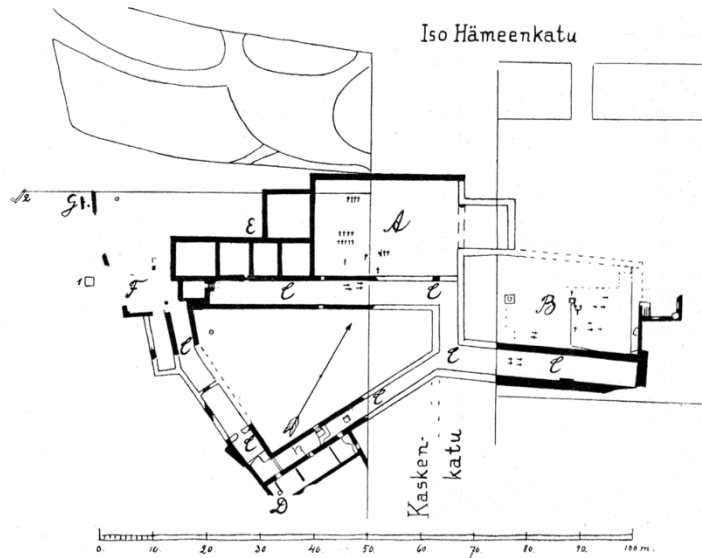


Fig. 2. Archaeologist Juhani Rinne's reconstruction of the convent's plan published in 1928: A – Church, B – Chapterhouse, C – Cloister, D – Domestic buildings, E – Residential buildings, F – Remains of walls, G – Corridor, 1 – Well, 2 – Remains of a log frame (a pier?). Plan: Rinne 1928, 91.

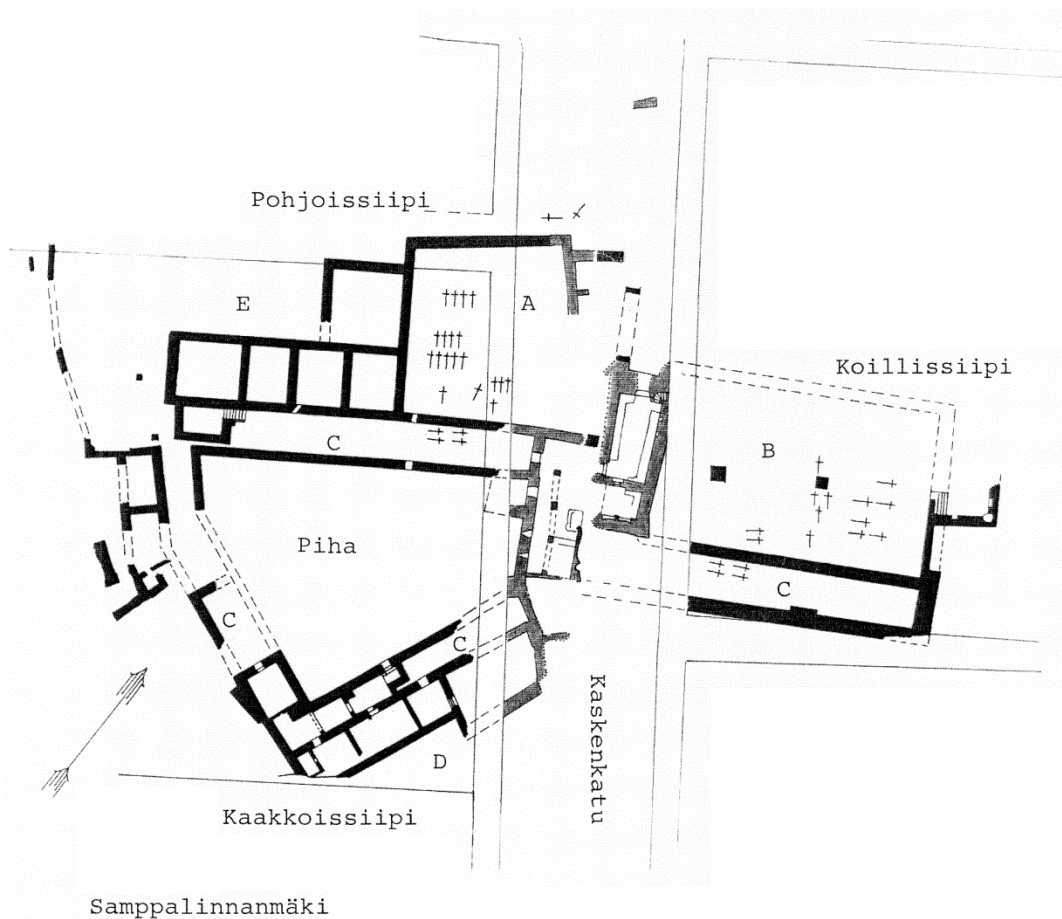


Fig. 3. Archaeologist Lasse Laaksonen's reconstruction of the convent's plan from 1969, first published in 1986: A – Church?, B – Church or chapterhouse, C – Cloister walk, D – Domestic building, E – Residential building. Plan: Brusila 2001, 87.



Fig. 4. Map of the convent area marked with structures found in various stages of fieldwork. The present-day town plan is marked with light grey colour. Plan by Panu Savolainen.

The Great Fire of 1827 destroyed most of the town of Turku, and in the following year, a completely renewed urban plan was introduced. When the remains of old buildings were torn down and foundations for new ones dug in the subsequent years, ancient brick walls and graves were found around the city. In 1829, a large number of human bones were found when a pit was excavated for a new building to be erected on the plot at 2 Kaskenkatu Street.⁹ More human bones and an old brick structure were unearthed across the street on the plot of 1 Kaskenkatu Street in 1830. Although there was no definite proof, these discoveries were provisionally thought to be the remains of the monastic cemetery.¹⁰ The two plots are situated about 100 meters from the present-day bank of the River Aurajoki, the major water route in the region. They lay just outside the southern edge of the medieval

⁹ Carl von Bonsdorff, *Åbo stads historia under sjuttonde seklet: Första bandet* (Bidrag till Åbo stads historia: Andra serien 1–4), J. Simelii Arfvingar: Helsingfors 1894, 43.

¹⁰ Brusila 2001, 81, 84; Gardberg 2005, 74.

town in a dell formed by the steep slopes of Vartiovuori Hill and Samppalinna Hill. Consequently, the height differences in the area are quite significant and the topography challenging.¹¹

In spite of ancient remains being found and destroyed, the relatively light 19th-century building activities, like all previous post-medieval activities, did not drastically disturb the remains underneath.¹² The situation changed at the turn of the 20th century with the introduction of modern building techniques. The first archaeologist to investigate the ruins of the convent was Hjalmar Appelgren. In 1901 he documented some of the walls before the first multi-storeyed stone building was constructed on the plot of 1 Kaskenkatu Street.¹³ All the structures he saw were laid of bricks, and in the best-survived places they reached the height of three meters.

On the basis of these early observations, archaeologist Juhani Rinne presented the first reconstruction of the convent's plan in 1908.¹⁴ He identified the almost triangular garth and the surrounding cloister walks (J, K and R) (see Fig. 4). He also suggested that the rectangular space on the northern side of the north range (L) was the location of the church.¹⁵ Rinne also assumed that the large hall divided into two sections by two pillars in area A was the chapterhouse.

During the next decades, as more stone buildings were erected in the area, archaeologists and architects documented as much as they could and deposited some of the revealed finds in museum collections, but the soil itself was not sifted. In 1909, architect Alex Nyström made scanty notes and sketches on brick structures and graves when a new large building was erected at 2 Kaskenkatu Street, and in 1927–1928, Rinne monitored the discovery of ancient structures as another major building was constructed across the street on the plot of 1 Kaskenkatu Street (Fig. 2).

It was not until the 1960s, however, that the first modern archaeological excavations were carried out on the site. They took place mostly on Kaskenkatu Street, the modern street line dividing the convent area into two parts. Even this fieldwork was problematic, however, since no excavation reports were filed. The aim of the excavations seems to have been

¹¹ Juhani Rinne, 'P. Olavin luostari ja rauniot Kaskenkadun ja Ison Hämeenkadun yhtymän tienoilla Turussa: Rakennushistoriallinen tutkimus', *Lännetär: Varsinaissuomalainen osakunta: Uusi jakso* 1 (1908), 106–168, at 107–108.

¹² See Ruuth 1909, 122; Gardberg 2005, 72.

¹³ Hjalmar Appelgren, 'Det underjordiska Åbo', *Finskt Museum* 1901 (1902), 49–65.

¹⁴ Rinne 1908; Juhani Rinne, 'Pyhän Olavin luostari Turussa', *Suomen Museo* 1928, 89–92. The plan was republished in Juhani Rinne, *Turun tuomiokirkko keskiaikana III: Turun tuomiokirkko hiippakunnan hallinnon elimenä*, Turun tuomiokirkon isännistö: Turku 1952, 201. See also Eva Ahl, 'Kloster och konvent i Finland under medeltiden: Dominikanerna', *Arkeologia NYT!* 1/2007, 5–10.

¹⁵ Rinne 1928, 91; 1952, 199–201.

to unearth and document architectural features, and the fieldwork stopped when the first floor level was uncovered.¹⁶

The 1960s excavations nevertheless revealed that Rinne's reconstruction and interpretations had to be updated, and a revised plan was published in 1986 (Fig. 3).¹⁷ Subsequently, Markus Hiekkänen argued that the remains in area A, when compared with other medieval Finnish churches, were more likely to have been the church.¹⁸ In 2014, I together with Janne Harjula, Tanja Ratilainen and Heini Kirjavainen compiled a new critical plan of the site, and presented a revised interpretation of its spatial use (Fig. 4). On the basis of the distribution of pieces of mortar painted with typical ecclesiastical murals, and the revised architectural plan, we concluded that Hiekkänen's idea that the church was situated in area A was very likely, whereas the building in area L does not seem to have been a roofed one at all. The walls around the area are too irregular for a covered space, and no signs of floors have been documented there. Moreover, we proposed that the vaulted room E was actually the chapterhouse.¹⁹

Because there are neither sufficient archaeological finds nor architectural features to date the monastic complex, the exact age of the structures remains debatable. According to the Annals of the Dominican convent of Sigtuna, the order founded its first convent in Finland in 1249.²⁰ Occasionally this passage has been seen to support the conception that the first Dominican convent is actually the same as the archaeologically identified convent of Turku.²¹ On the basis of the archaeological excavations made during the last three decades, however, it has become apparent that the town of Turku was not founded until around 1300.²² In other words,

¹⁶ Hanna-Liisa Kolehmainen, *Turun Pyhän Olavin dominikaanikonventti: Asiakirja-aineisto ja arkeologiset lähteet*, Unpublished MA thesis, Department of Archaeology, University of Turku: Turku 2008, 67–69.

¹⁷ Aki Pihlman, 'Materialsamling', in Aki Pihlman & Juhani Kostet, *Åbo (fi. Turku): Medeltidsstaden 3*, Åbo landskapsmuseum: Åbo 1986, 63–190.

¹⁸ Hiekkänen 1993; 2003a; 2003b.

¹⁹ Visa Immonen, Janne Harjula, Heini Kirjavainen & Tanja Ratilainen, 'The Dominican Convent of St Olaf in Turku, Finland', in Manfred Gläser & Manfred Schneider (eds), *Lübecker Kolloquium zur Stadtarchäologie im Hanseraum IX: Die Klöster*, Schmidt-Römhild: Lübeck 2014a, 545–558; Visa Immonen, Janne Harjula, Heini Kirjavainen & Tanja Ratilainen, 'Turun Pyhän Olavin dominikaanikonventti – aineksia tilankäytön tulkintaan', *SKAS* 3/2013 (2014b), 3–23.

²⁰ *Finlands Medeltidsurkunder* (henceforth FMU), Reinhold Hausen ed., Finlands Statsarkiv: Helsingfors 1910–1935, no. 98; Aarno Maliniemi, 'Grundandet av dominikankonventet i Åbo och dess förhållande till Sigtuna: Några kritiska randmärkningar', in Holger Arbman, Wilhelm Holmqvist & Rolf Hillman (eds), *Sigtuna Mariakyrka 1247–1497*, Sigtuna Fornhems förlag: Sigtuna 1947, 83–95, at 87–88.

²¹ Tapio Salminen, 'Dominikaanit Tallinnassa, Viipurissa ja Turussa', *Turun maakuntamuseo: Raportteja* 18 (2003), 37–46, at 38.

²² E.g. Markus Hiekkänen, 'Domestic Building Remains in Turku, Finland', in Manfred Gläser ed., *Lübecker Kolloquium zur Stadtarchäologie im Hanseraum III: Der Hausbau*, Schmidt-Römhild: Lübeck 2001, 627–633, at 627; 2002, 157–158; 2003a, 42–48; Aki Pihlman, 'Varhainen Turku -tutkimushanke: Uusia arkeologisia tulkintoja Turun kaupungin muodostumisesta', in Kirsi Majantie & Katri Motuste

when the convent was established in 1249, the town did not yet exist. The original location of the first convent should thus be searched for somewhere else than in Turku, perhaps at the fortified site of Koroinen, which lies two kilometres up the River Aurajoki from the Turku convent site. Koroinen has the remains of a 13th-century cathedral and two secular buildings, interpreted as the bishop's residence.²³

Whether the convent was transferred to its present location at Kaskenkatu Street around 1300 is unknown. Similarly obscure is the age of the architectural structures discovered on the site. The literary sources do not reveal the material of the first buildings of the friary.²⁴ It may well be that they were built of wood.²⁵ The town along with the convent burned down in 1429, and in 1431 the master mason Simon of Tallinn directed some construction work at the friary.²⁶ Hiekkänen suggests that the architectural features documented during the 20th century are probably from this period.²⁷ Liisa Seppänen, in contrast, points out that they may be even earlier, since the first masonry structures appear in Turku in the first half of the 14th century.²⁸ By and large, the precise age of the architectural features cannot be determined, although most of them are medieval in date.

Burials in the Turku convent

The problems regarding the sketchy documentation of the convent site are particularly acute with burials. The discoveries made in the nineteenth

(eds), *HIT – History in Turku: Tietoja, taitoja ja löytöjä: Näyttely Turun linnassa 15.6.–23.9.2007* (Turun maakuntamuseo: Näyttelyesite 42), Turun maakuntamuseo: Turku 2007, 10–15; Liisa Seppänen, 'Town in Transition – Outlining the Construction Activities in Medieval Turku', in Hanna-Maria Pellinen ed., *Maasta, kivistä ja hengestä – Earth, Stone and Spirit: Markus Hiekkänen Festschrift*, Arkeologia, Turun yliopisto; Taidehistoria, Helsingin yliopisto, Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura & Suomen keskiajan arkeologian seura: Turku & Helsinki 2009, 240–249, at 242–243; Aki Pihlman, 'Turun kaupungin muodostuminen ja kaupunkiasutuksen laajeneminen 1300-luvulla', *Turun museokeskus: Raportteja 22* (2010), 9–29, at 11–12; Liisa Seppänen, 'Stadskulturens djuprotade rötter ligger vid Aura ås stränder', *Finsk Tidskrift* 10/2011, 475–487; Liisa Seppänen, *Rakentaminen ja kaupunkikuvan muutokset keskiajan Turussa: Erityistarkastelussa Åbo Akademin päärakennuksen tontin arkeologinen aineisto*, Turun yliopisto: Turku 2012, 941.

²³ Janne Harjula & Visa Immonen, 'Reviving old archaeological material: A project analysing finds from the early medieval fortified site of Koroinen in Turku', in Kari Uotila, Terhi Mikkola & Anna-Maria Vilkkuna (eds), *Castella Maris Baltici X: Finland 24–29.8.2009 Raseborg, Olavinlinna and Häme Castles* (Archeologia Medii Aevi Finlandiae XVIII), Suomen keskiajan arkeologian seura: Turku 2012, 183–196.

²⁴ FMU 259; *Registrum ecclesiae Aboensis eller Åbo domkyrkas svartbok med tillägg ur Skoklosters Codex Aboensis*, Reinhold Hausen ed., Finlands Statsarkiv: Helsingfors 1890, no. 98.

²⁵ Hiekkänen 2003b, 92; Gardberg 2005, 48, 52.

²⁶ FMU 1901, 1902, 1910, 1917, 1977, 2005; Ruuth 1909, 107–108; Erkki Kuujo, *Turun kaupungin historia 1366–1521*, Turun kaupunki: Turku 1981, 180.

²⁷ Hiekkänen 1993, 128; 2003b, 92; 2007, 182.

²⁸ Seppänen 2012, 647–649, 668; see also Tanja Ratilainen, 'Tiilen käytöstä 1300-luvun Turussa', *Turun museokeskus: Raportteja 22* (2010), 31–55.

century are only recorded in the form of brief newspaper articles reporting numerous human remains being found in the area. At best the locations can be identified on the level of plots.

The first references to human bones being found on the plots of 1 and 2 Kaskenkatu Street are from 1829 and 1830. Similar observations are frequent in the course of the 19th century. In 1873, human bones were discovered when a road to the Vartiovuori Hill was levelled. The remains were reburied in a chest in the city cemetery in Skanssi.²⁹ In 1876, small houses were constructed at 2 Kaskenkatu Street, and human bones, especially jaws, were unearthed 'in a thin layer of soil covering old cellars or other yet-uncharted rooms built of brick and grey stones'.³⁰

When a trench was dug for a water pipe in 1902,³¹ a great number of human bones along with rotten remains of coffins were found in the northernmost corner of the plot of 2 Kaskenkatu Street. They were oriented 'from east to west'. A large packing box full of these bones was reburied in the cemetery of Röntämäki.³² During the next year, a trench for a sewer was opened along Kaskenkatu Street, and foundations of brick-built walls and human bones were observed.³³ In 1906, a new bridge, continuing the line of Kaskenkatu Street across the River Aurajoki, was constructed, and human bones and building fragments were encountered.³⁴

In the summer of 1906, an area on the north corner of the 1 Kaskenkatu Street plot was opened for the construction of a new building. Graves were uncovered on both sides of a gateway to the plot.³⁵ Rinne

²⁹ von Bonsdorff 1894, 43; Appelgren 1902, 56; Jenny Montin-Tallgren, 'Hvar låg Åbo dominikanerkloster?', *Finskt Museum* 1906 (1907), 59–72, at 63; Pihlman 1986, 81.

³⁰ 'I dessa dagar har man äfven vid ett mindre byggnadsföretag i herr Törnudds gård, n:o 42 vid Stora Tavastgatan, påträffat människoben och käkkar, liggande bland ett tunt lager mylla, hvilket betäcker några af tegel och gråsten murade gamla källare eller andra ännu icke undersökta rum.' *Åbo Posten* 11.7.1876; *Morgonbladet* 13.7.1876.

³¹ Rinne (1908, 111) argues that another potential instance of burials being found in the convent area was in September 1882, when a building was erected on 'the southeast side of Luostarimäki Hill'. During the digging of new foundations, fragments of four rotten coffins with human bones were uncovered ('Vid grundgräfningsarbetet till stenfoten å den nybyggnad, som fröken Fatima Schalberg f. n. låter uppföra å sydöstra sidan af den s. k. Klosterbacken härstädes, påträffades i förgår på särskilda ställen en fot under jordytan icke mindre än fyra st. fragmenter af likkistor med i desamma befintliga lämningar af ben.' *Åbo Underrättelser* 16.9.1882; *Uusi Suometar* 18.9.1882). However, the construction took place on a plot belonging to Miss Fatima Schalberg. Her land was situated at 4a–4b Vartiovuorenkatu Street, not near the convent (Pihlman 1986, 109). It is thus more likely that the graves were part of another cemetery situated on Vartiovuori Hill, usually interpreted as the cemetery of the Holy Ghost Hospital. I am grateful to Panu Savolainen for his help in locating the plot.

³² 'Kun näinä päivinä vesijohdon laskemista varten tehtiin kaivauksia porttikäytävässä talossa n:ro 32 Ison Hämeenkadun varrella (Kaskenkatu 2), löydettiin noin puolentoista metrin syvyydestä ihmisen pääkallo sekä 50 cm. syvemmällä ihmisenluita sekä ruumisarkun jätteitä.' *Uusi Aura* 14.5.1902; Montin-Tallgren 1907, 63; Rinne 1908, 110.

³³ Rinne 1908, 127–128; Pihlman 1986, 84.

³⁴ Montin-Tallgren 1907, 64.

³⁵ Pihlman 1986, 112; Kolehmainen 2008, 40–41.

recorded these extensive discoveries, and they resulted in the 1908 publication which included the first reconstruction of the entire complex, and a lengthy commentary on the burials.



Fig. 5. Four coffins were discovered in a row on the plot of 1 Kaskenkatu Street in 1906. Photograph by Juhani Rinne / Turku Museum Centre.

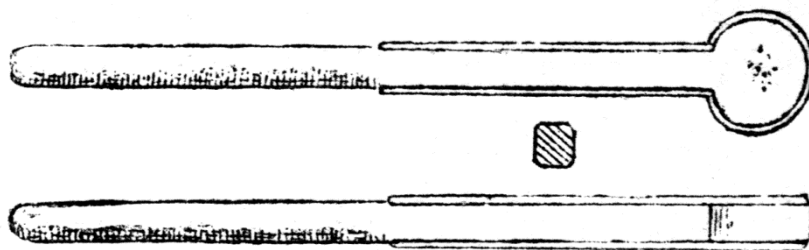


Fig. 6. A baton-like object of oak was found next to a coffin in area L in 1906. Juhani Rinne (1908, 133) identified the object, 53 cm in length, as the handle of a stretcher.

Rinne had documented several skeletons as well as the remains of graves in areas R and L. The four graves in area R were placed in even rows following the orientation of the wall, i.e. from northeast to southwest (Fig. 5). The six or seven graves in area L were so badly decomposed that their orientation was not certain, but the better preserved ones were all oriented from northwest to southeast and arranged in even rows. In other words, they also

followed the wall alignment. The coffins were made of straight planks, and they narrowed towards the feet. The lids of all the coffins had fallen in and rotted away, and there were no discernible remains of clothes or other items.

Next to one of the coffins was found a baton-like object of oak, measuring 53 cm (Fig. 6). Rinne identified it as the handle of a stretcher.³⁶ A number of medieval burials in Northern Europe are known to have been equipped with wooden rods or staffs, but they mostly date to the 12th century, a period older than the convent of Turku.³⁷ Moreover, the baton-like object from Turku had a wide, circular bulge on its one end, while the other was intentionally rounded. Hence it seems unlikely that it was a fragment of a rod or staff.

One of the graves in area L was distinctive (Fig. 7). It was lined with a rectangular brick structure which stood on two layers of flat stones. The bricks were of the same size as the ones used in the surrounding buildings and laid without any mortar their long, narrow side exposed. The walls of the grave were thus only 14 cm thick. Because the grave was located exactly on the border of the plot and the street, it collapsed immediately when the workmen began to dig around it. The width of the grave could not be measured, but its length was 225 cm, and the head end of the coffin was three meters underneath the modern street pavement. No remains of a cover were found.

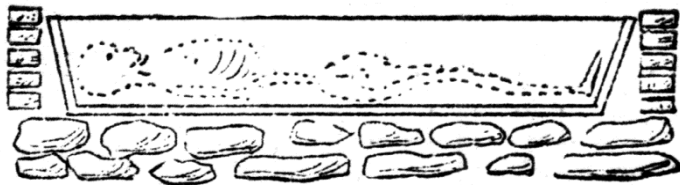


Fig. 7. The profile of the leather-covered coffin found inside a brick-lined grave in area L (Rinne 1908, 133).

A coffin of wood had been lowered inside the brick structure. It was the same shape as the other coffins in the area, but covered with leather. The bovine³⁸ hide was lined with a canvas of thin linen fixed with some adhesive, and then fastened to the coffin with iron nails (Fig. 8). On the basis of holes in the leather, and the abrasions left by the nail heads, the nails were rather sturdy and furnished with large, perhaps ornamental heads. A piece of this leather lining is stored in the collections of the National Museum of Finland, but has been

³⁶ Rinne 1908, 128, 131–132.

³⁷ Roberta Gilchrist & Barney Sloane, *Requiem: The Medieval Monastic Cemetery in Britain*, Museum of London Archaeology Service: London 2005, 169–176; Jonsson 2009, 111–122.

³⁸ I am indebted to Janne Harjula for the identification of the species; Janne Harjula's e-mail to the author, 20 January 2015.

conserved with modern resin, making any radiocarbon dating impossible.³⁹ Nothing else was discovered inside the coffin except a few decomposed bones.



Fig. 8. A piece of leather that covered the wooden coffin found in the brick-lined grave in area L. A canvas of thin linen was fixed to the hide with some adhesive. Photo: Aki Arponen / Conservation Laboratory, National Museum of Finland.

In 1928, Rinne published an updated version of his reconstruction. It included the results of observations made on Kaskenkatu Street in 1909 and 1927–1928. In 1909, architect Alex Nyström followed the discovery of walls and graves in area A at 2 Kaskenkatu Street.⁴⁰ He made some sketches of these finds in notebook, but no report or publication was ever written. Although Nyström documented several intact graves, many scattered pieces of human remains found on the site appeared to have been coarsely moved around in post-medieval activities.⁴¹

In 1927, a trench was opened across Kaskenkatu Street, and in 1928–1929, an excavation took place at the corner of the streets Kaskenkatu and Olavintie on the plot of 1 Kaskenkatu Street (M–Q). Rinne made observations on both occasions, but he did not leave any other documentation than the publication of 1928. In the text he summarily notes

³⁹ The National Museum of Finland, Historical Collections, inv. no. 5211:1; Rinne 1908, 132–133; Brusila 2001, 103; Prof. Göran Possnert's letter to Prof. Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen, 3 October 2013.

⁴⁰ Pihlman 1986, 111; Helena Soiri-Snellman, 'Asunto Oy Kaskenlinnan rakennushistoria', in Helena Soiri-Snellman & Heljä Brusila (eds), *Kaskenlinna: Asunto Oy Kaskenlinnan rakennushistoria ja Pyhän Olavin luostarin rauniot* (Turun maakuntamuseo – Julkaisuja 1), Turun maakuntamuseo: Turku 2001, 9–77, at 32.

⁴¹ Brusila 2001, 99.

that burials were discovered in areas A, B and L, and the northern cloister walk (R).⁴² The plan accompanying Rinne's article has the locations of several graves marked on it.⁴³ They are indicated with a cross so that the crossbeam appears to denote the position of the shoulders. If this is the case, the orientation of the cross parallels the orientation of the corpse.

The plan shows several graves in area L. There appears to be four lines of graves, and three scattered burials, all oriented from northwest to southeast. The graves in area A, in contrast, appear more dispersed. Their orientation seems to be from northeast to southwest with a few exceptions aligned from northwest to southeast. In the adjacent cloister walk (B), there is a group of four graves with the same alignment.

The plan of areas A and B that Alex Nyström drew in his notebook differs from Rinne's plan. In Nyström, the number of graves in the cloister walk (B) is not four but six, and their orientation along with other similarly aligned graves in area A is opposite to Rinne's plan, i.e. from southwest to northeast. However, Nyström's sketches are too simple to allow the number of the graves in areas A and B to be properly estimated. The situation is even more problematic with areas L and R, since the only available documentation is Rinne's published plan.

After Rinne's reconstruction of 1928, human remains have been found whenever new trenches and pits for new buildings have been opened in the first plots of Kaskenkatu Street. In 1938, sixty-six human skulls were discovered when a new corner building was constructed on the northern side of the plot at 2 Kaskenkatu Street.⁴⁴ More human skeletons along with the remains of four wooden chutes were encountered under Kaskenkatu Street when a trench was dug for a sewer line in 1956. The bones were in a filling layer peppered with pieces of coal and bricks. Two intact graves were also uncovered, both in the middle of the street. They were located on the northern side of the convent complex, approximately in area L, or where Rinne had discovered burials already in 1906. One of the corpses was placed on its back, and oriented from south to north, while the other body was positioned on her or his side, head oriented towards the southwest and feet to the northeast.⁴⁵

In 1967 scattered bones appeared in the soil when an area was excavated in the yard of 1 Kaskenkatu Street.⁴⁶ The latest discovery of

⁴² Rinne 1928, 90.

⁴³ Rinne 1928, 91; Brusila 2001, 103.

⁴⁴ Knut Drake, 'Stadsarkeologisk forskning i Åbo', *Åbo landskapsmuseum: Rapporter* 6 (1984), 92–101, at 98–99; Pihlman 1986, 111; Kolehmainen 2008, 60; Laaksonen & Lahtinen 2011, 72, 79.

⁴⁵ Pihlman 1986, 81; Kolehmainen 2008, 61.

⁴⁶ Pihlman 1986, 113; Kolehmainen 2008, 61–63.

human remains is from 1970, when a trench for a sewer line was dug on Kaskenkatu Street, stretching from 1 Kaskenkatu Street to 2–4 Olavintie Street. One grave was found in the profile of the trench on the northern side of the convent complex, approximately in area L. The head of the skeleton was oriented towards southeast and the feet towards northeast. The burial was left intact in the ground.⁴⁷

In addition to the burials on the plots of 1 and 2 Kirkkokatu Street and the riverbank, there are several 19th- and 20th-century observations of human remains and coffins on Vartiovuorenkatu Street, approximately 400 meters southeast from the convent complex on the opposite slope of Vartiovuori Hill. Although none of the discoveries have been properly documented, examined or dated, and no building remains have been unearthed, it has been suggested that the graves are part of a chapel and cemetery belonging to the Holy Ghost Hospital. This institution for the poor and the elderly is mentioned in the written sources for the first time in the late 14th century. The idea of its original location being on Vartiovuori Hill is based on the fact that a town house called 'Holyghost' existed in that area at the beginning of the 17th century. Written sources also suggest that the hospital was transferred to its later location on the other side of the River Aurajoki in the early 15th century.⁴⁸

The Dating of the Graves

Although Rinne has been the only scholar to discuss the burials of the Turku convent in detail, even for him the documentation of the graves was motivated by the need to identify and date architectural spaces. He was mostly interested in locating the convent church, and Rinne thought that the graves could provide some help in the quest. He argues that in any medieval monastic complex, the convent cemetery was placed immediately adjacent to the church, usually to its northern or eastern side, although it could extend on the western side as well. The monastery wall nevertheless always enclosed it. Moreover, he continues, brick-lined graves are mainly found inside monastic churches, and also the graves which diverge from the east–west orientation were usually placed within the church. Consequently, if the graves in area L were dug as part of a churchyard, they would not follow the orientation of the adjacent walls. Area L must therefore be the site of the

⁴⁷ Pihlman 1986, 84; Brusila 2001, 103; Kolehmainen 2008, 81–82.

⁴⁸ FMU 649, 1061–1062; Kuujo 1981, 60–61; Seppänen 2012, 751. On the human remains, see e.g. Dr. Axel R. Spoof's postcard to the Detective Department of Turku Police, 2 September 1927; Turku, Archives of Turku Museum Centre; Pihlman 1986, 99, 109, 181.

convent church. The cemetery was on its northern side, extending towards east to the northern side of area A.⁴⁹

In addition to identifying the church, Rinne wanted to provide some estimation of the age of the graves. Since they did not yield any pieces of clothing or other items, the dating of the burials had to be based on other factors. Wrapping corpses in shrouds and carrying them to the grave on stretcher are both medieval practices, he argued. Even the shape of the coffins pointed towards the Middle Ages. Moreover, the bricks in the walls surrounding the leather-lined coffin were from the same period as the convent walls. Lastly, since the brick lining did not have a separate niche for the corpse's head, it was more likely to have been younger than the 13th century, whereas the foundation of flat stones was a feature typical of older cist graves. This led Rinne to date the graves to the 14th century.⁵⁰

Rinne built his argument in the early years of the 20th century and had limited access to international scholarly literature. The corpus of reference material has expanded and the understanding of medieval burials has developed immensely in subsequent years. With the help of careful and critical contextualisation and modern scholarship, a revised understanding of the graves in the Turku convent can be achieved.

Cemeteries and Burials in a Wider Context

The re-evaluation of the burials in the Turku convent begins with the church and the adjacent churchyard. As a general rule, the principal cemetery around a medieval church lay immediately around the building. It was bounded by a wall on all four sides which defined the sacred space of consecrated ground. However, in contrast to parish churchyards, monastic cemeteries were not always delineated on all four sides as some of them may have merged with areas of the wider precinct in a more fluid arrangement.⁵¹ Following this idea, in our new reconstruction of the convent plan, we suggested that the space Rinne originally identified as a church (L) was actually never roofed, but functioned as a churchyard.⁵² On the basis of frequent discoveries of graves and human bones in the area, the churchyard may have been at least 25–30 meters in width and continued as far as 60

⁴⁹ Rinne 1908, 149, 152; Brusila 2001, 92, 103.

⁵⁰ Rinne 1908, 143–144, 275.

⁵¹ Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 31–32, 34.

⁵² Immonen et al. 2014b.

meters to the northeast. It therefore seems to have been partly located on the north side of the church (A).⁵³

Placing the cemetery between the town and the church might appear as an odd solution, but the reason might well have been practical. The steep hillside did not allow the continuous digging of graves in other places, and the arrangement does have a parallel in the Dominican convent of St. Catherine in Tallinn, Estonia.⁵⁴ It also conforms to the tendency of the mendicant orders to favour open spaces around churches, which gave them a better contact with the surroundings and enhanced preaching in the open air.⁵⁵

In the Middle Ages, the placement of graves in the church or the nearby cemetery was determined by the wish to be close to the relics of martyrs and saints, deposited inside the altars or near them.⁵⁶ The saints could transmit and amplify the prayer for the deceased to God and thus facilitate access to the divine. Accordingly, the main altar and – in the broader landscape – the church were the foci of the religious topography, and the closer you came to them, the more sacred was the ground.

The organization of medieval cemeteries, reflected in the Nordic laws, was a system of concentric circles in which the most holy area was located around the high altar.⁵⁷ The location of individual graves in the system was conditioned by the identity of the deceased. Persons of higher rank were buried close to, or inside, churches, while those from the lower social strata were placed on the peripheries of the churchyard. Anders Andréén points out, however, that after 1300 the commercialization of burial places, i.e. the possibility of paying more for a better location, became a major factor in the grave distribution. This fractured the earlier, strictly socially conditioned placement. Nonetheless, the east and south areas around the church were the most prestigious, while gender distinction conditioned the choice between the north (women) and the south (men) side. Conversely, the north and west areas had the lowest value, and they were also the areas where cemeteries were seldom established.⁵⁸

⁵³ See Brusila 2001, 103; Per-Erik Stenlund, *Dominikankonventets byggnader i Åbo under medeltiden*, Unpublished MA thesis, Department of Church History, Åbo Akademi University: Åbo 2010, 47–48.

⁵⁴ Elfriede Tool-Marran, *Tallinna Dominiiklaste klooster*, Eesti Raamat: Tallinn 1971.

⁵⁵ Bruzelius 2008; 2014.

⁵⁶ Bertil Nilsson, *De sepulturis: Gravrätten i Corpus iuris canonici och i medeltida nordisk lagstiftning* (Bibliotheca theologiae practicae – Kyrkovetenskapliga studier 44), Almqvist & Wiksell International: Stockholm 1989, 37–38; Anders Andréén, 'Ad sanctos – De dödas plats under medeltiden', *Hikuin* 27 (2000), 7–26, at 7–8, 20.

⁵⁷ Kristina Jonsson, *Practices for the Living and the Dead: Medieval and Post-Reformation Burials in Scandinavia* (Stockholm Studies in Archaeology 50), Stockholm University: Stockholm 2009, 52–53.

⁵⁸ Nilsson 1989, 137; Andréén 2000, 8, 15; Hans Krongaard Kristensen, *Klostre i det middelalderlige Danmark* (Jysk Arkæologisk Selskabs Skrifter 79), Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab: Moesgård 2013, 416.

In a monastic setting, the hierarchy of graves is made more complicated by the existence of the monastic community vis-à-vis the laity. Although in the early stages of monasticism the right to be buried inside the cloister was restricted to the monastic community, the common people were gradually given more access to the burial places. In fact, friaries had become a popular place for the laity to be buried by the thirteenth century.⁵⁹ Many monastic complexes had separate cemeteries for their own community and for the laity, or the only cemetery was clearly divided between the two groups in some manner.⁶⁰ In Turku, a similar division could have been made between the burials in the cemeteries of the convent and the hospital. At least the hospital was intended for the less well-off members of the urban community.

Although the ranking of the burial locations was in principle hierarchic, the medieval reality was much more flexible, following local traditions and particular topographical conditions. This is particularly the case with monastic cemeteries.⁶¹ In a convent, the church was not the only place where liturgical activities took place. Actually it was the cloister that formed the spiritual heart of the institution, and liturgical processions frequently took place in the cloister around the open garth. The garth, in turn, was paralleled with eternal paradise and the Garden of Eden and had strong associations with death and burials. Therefore, although the garth itself was not often used as a place for burials, graves in the cloister were common, especially in friaries.⁶² Although abbots were often buried under the floor of the chapterhouse,⁶³ graves in cloister walks were granted to members of the monastic community as well as outsiders.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the excavations conducted in areas C–F of the Turku convent – area E being the location of the chapterhouse – never went deeper than the floor level. Hence we do not know whether there actually are burials under the suggested chapterhouse.

The Orientation of Graves

In addition to their distribution, another significant factor in medieval burials is their orientation. A distinctive medieval Christian practice is to place the corpse so that the head is to the west and the feet to the east. In this

⁵⁹ Krongaard Kristensen 2013, 408.

⁶⁰ Krongaard Kristensen 2013, 417.

⁶¹ Gilchrist & Sloane 2000, 32.

⁶² Gilchrist & Sloane 2000, 57–58.

⁶³ Krongaard Kristensen 2013, 412.

⁶⁴ Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 60–61; Krongaard Kristensen 2013, 413.

way the body is ready to rise facing Christ who comes out of the east on Doomsday. Although the custom was followed in the large majority of the burials during the Middle Ages, there is also a fair number of diversions from it.

In Britain, medieval burials oriented on the north–south axis are encountered in the greatest numbers in mass burial pits where the unusual orientation allows placing more corpses into one grave.⁶⁵ In the Nordic context, graves deviating from the common orientation are more frequent. Particularly graves in the cloister walks follow the alignment of the surrounding walls, not the usual east–west orientation. The reason is not necessarily merely practical. Maria Cinthio analysed a Nordic case where, instead of the traditional alignment, the graves placed inside a passageway near a church followed the orientation of the walls. She argued that this orientation is due to the liturgical processions which moved through the passageway. They were occasions in which the dead buried under the passageway came closest to the holy relics, received a blessing, or even a few drops of holy water. To lay bodies along these routes or as close to them as possible must have been more advantageous than adhering to the strict east–west orientation.⁶⁶

In Turku, the burials in areas A and B seem to have more or less conformed to the east–west (or west–east) orientation, although three graves in area A have a northwest–southeast orientation. The rows of graves in the cloister walk (R) follow the alignment of the surrounding walls. In area L, all the graves have a northwest–southeast orientation, aligning with the surrounding walls. Rinne suggests that the digression from the tradition supports his identification of the area as the location of the convent church: if the burials were in a cemetery, they would not follow the wall alignment.⁶⁷ Such an argument, however, is unfounded. In fact, the graves in area A, oriented towards the altar, are more indicative of the church functioning there.

The Brick-Lined Grave

To support his identification of the convent church in Turku, Rinne also drew on the discovery of the brick-lined grave in area L. He argued that such structures are known mostly from churches.⁶⁸ Had he had access to

⁶⁵ Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 152.

⁶⁶ Maria Cinthio, *De första stadsborna: Medeltida gravar och människor i Lund*, Symposion: Stockholm 2002, 205–206.

⁶⁷ Rinne 1908, 152.

⁶⁸ Rinne 1908, 152.

modern surveys on the subject, Rinne would have concluded differently. Similar brick-lined graves of a simple form without a set cover are found in almost every excavated Scandinavian monastery.⁶⁹ Moreover, in the town of Lund, where brick-lined graves are not common, they have been found in churches and cloister walks, but also outside them, especially on the eastern side of churches, and close to their gateways.⁷⁰ On the basis of the distribution of cist graves and brick-lined graves in cemeteries in Britain and the Nordic countries, they had a particular affinity with the higher ranks of the monastic community and the profane elite.⁷¹

A grave lined with bricks was either covered by a tomb monument or a slab of some sort, or it was without any permanent structure above. The former type is more typical of churches and required a sound foundation for carrying the stonework above, while the latter could be of a lighter construction, and covered with a capping placed some way down in the grave.⁷² The brick-lined grave in the Turku convent, which was constructed without any mortar, must be of the lighter type. As such it does not support the identification of area L as the site of the church.

The choice of raw material for lined graves is of significance, as Andrén points out. Brick-lined burials, like the grave in the convent of Turku, created a metaphorical link with church buildings constructed of the same material. In other words, the choice of grave material established a connection between the buried person and the church. Such graves are particularly common in the convent churches of the Dominicans and Franciscans who were famous for their churches of brick in the Baltic Sea region. Another symbolic association could exist between the brick-lined graves and urban houses built of the same material.⁷³

Like his colleagues, Rinne assumed that lined graves could be dated on the basis of their form: graves with a niche were considered Romanesque and ones without Gothic. He therefore dated the brick-lined grave in Turku to the 14th century.⁷⁴ Although Rinne's argumentation is plausible, more recent work on medieval burials has shown that the datings based on grave forms are not so clear-cut. For instance, Hans Krongaard Kristensen states that the two basic types of lined graves were used simultaneously during a transition period which stretched from the mid-13th century to the early 14th century.⁷⁵ Rinne's dating of the brick-lined grave should thus be

⁶⁹ Krongaard Kristensen 2013, 421.

⁷⁰ Andrén 2000, 16–17.

⁷¹ Cinthio 2002, 152–156; Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 133–137; Krongaard Kristensen 2013, 417.

⁷² Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 133–134, 137.

⁷³ Andrén 2000, 17–18.

⁷⁴ Rinne 1908, 143–144, 275.

⁷⁵ Cinthio 2002, 152, 156; Krongaard Kristensen 2013, 421–422.

supplemented with other means of determining its age, but none are available at the moment.

Coffins, and Burials in Shrouds

In addition to the leather-covered coffin in the brick-lined grave, at least four other wooden coffins were discovered in area L. A coffin was a communal, reusable resource which was used to bear the corpse from the infirmary or home all the way to the graveside. At this point, many corpses were removed from the coffin and laid in the grave in shrouds, but some were lowered in the grave inside the coffin. Unlike with brick-lined graves, the significance of choosing to be buried in a coffin remains rather elusive.⁷⁶

Cinthio points out that if the use of wooden coffins were of ceremonial or religious significance, many more would have had the means to acquire them. Nonetheless, medieval coffins are more commonly encountered in churches than in cemeteries. This might have been just a matter of convenience. Lowering the deceased into a grave in shrouds was impractical if the burial ceremony was performed several days after the person had died, for example, whilst travelling.⁷⁷ Because the graves of the Turku convent are so sketchily documented, little more can be said about their distribution or statistics.

The rest of the burials in the convent consist of skeletons or parts of skeletons without any other finds. When the necessary documentation is available, they appear to be quite typical medieval burials. There is, however, one exception discovered in area L in 1956. The deceased was in a partially flexed position, resting on her or his right side. Similar non-standard body-positions are periodically encountered in medieval cemeteries in Northern Europe. Scholars have not attributed any particular religious significance to them, usually considering them as pragmatically motivated. Such persons might have had some deformity which made placing them in a supine position impossible, or they could have died in such a posture.⁷⁸ However, due to the inadequate documentation in Turku, it is also entirely possible that the unusual position is just a matter of post-depositional processes affecting the corpse.

⁷⁶ Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 111.

⁷⁷ Cinthio 2002, 192.

⁷⁸ Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 154–155; Jonsson 2009, 96–97.

Re-evaluating the Old Fieldwork Data

Medieval archaeologists are nowadays interested in the social use of space and the religious practices that burials can reveal. The material available from the Dominican convent of St Olaf in Turku is, however, a patchy assemblage of newspaper clippings, sketches, photographs, highly schematic plans, and dated publications. There are no proper excavation reports, or finds that could be scientifically dated. The data that survives is even riddled with contradictions: the reconstruction published by Juhani Rinne in 1928 does not conform to the sketches made by architect Alex Nyström in the field in 1909.

It is a painstaking process to trace the relevant documents, photographs and plans in the archives, and parse them together in order to determine what actually was seen during the fieldwork. Regardless of how well this work is done, in the end one remains bound by the quality of the available archival material, which sets the limits for new interpretations. In Turku, the uneven quality of documentation is a particular hindrance with regard to the observations made on areas A and B in 1909. There are no proper plans, or even a summary of the findings, and the graves are just crosses on the pages of Nyström's sketchbook. It is not known, for instance, whether any coffins or their fragments were discovered in this area in contrast to area L with four individual coffins and the brick-line grave. The initial analysis of the fieldwork material nonetheless shows that the graves in the Turku convent concentrate in the northern parts of the plots at 1 and 2 Kaskenkatu Street, i.e. areas A and L. The two areas form the limits within which the convent church and churchyard must have been located.

The next stage of the research was to contextualise the details of the data in terms of modern scholarship and reference material. Placing the graves into a wider framework leads to a re-evaluation of Rinne's argumentation. His interpretation of the burials is based on the premise that the convent church was situated in area L. My assumption is, instead, that Markus Hiekkänen is correct in his suggestion that the church was in area A and area L was actually the churchyard. The cemetery thus stood between the convent church and the town of Turku.

In the light of more recent scholarship, many of Rinne's assertions on the burials in area L are not accurate. Comparing the Turku convent with other monastic complexes in Europe shows that medieval burial traditions were more flexible and diverse than Rinne assumed. The new analysis of the material, however, cannot refute Rinne's dating of the graves to the 14th

century. On the other hand, it does not fully support his views either. The age of the burials thus remains an open issue.

Besides the burials made in shrouds, and graves with coffins of wood, there is one distinctive brick-lined grave containing a coffin covered with leather. The use of leather in such a way is a unique feature in Finland and rare in Scandinavia, usually associated with the highest aristocracy. For instance, the coffins of King Christian I (1426–1481) and Queen Dorothea of Brandenburg (1430/1431–1495) in Roskilde Cathedral are said to have been furnished with leather.⁷⁹ Hence the burial in Turku must have been reserved for a person of high status, but it is unknown whether this was a member of the monastic community or the laity. The use of brick nonetheless established a connection between the grave and the Dominican church. In a stark contrast, the possible cemetery of the Holy Ghost Hospital on the other side of Vartiovuori Hill was the resting place of the lower social ranks.

The most interesting and relatively typical feature of the graves in Turku is the diversion from the traditional east–west orientation. Such graves are known from the cloister walks (B and R), but also from the church (A) and particularly area L. The reason for the unusual alignment seems to be both religious and pragmatic: religious in the sense that orienting burials in cloister walks according to the walls allowed a more complete contact with liturgical processions, and pragmatic in the sense that the topography and the soil layers in the convent area dictated where and how graves could be dug.

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⁷⁹ Erich Christian Werlauff, *De hellige tre Kongers Kapel, stiftet af Kong Christian den Første og Dronning Dorothea i Roskilde-Domkirke En hist.-antiqvarisk Beskrivelse*, Kjøbenhavn 1849, 59; J. Kornerup, 'Om middelalderens begravelsesmaade i Danmark', *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed* 1873, 251–276 at 275.