



Kari Uotila, Terhi Mikkola, Anna-Maria Vilkuna (eds.), *Castella Maris Baltici X* (Archaeologia Medii Aevii Finlandiae XVIII), Keskiajan arkeologian Seura – Sällskapet för medeltidsarkeologi i Finland: Helsinki 2012. 218 pp.

The latest instalment of *Castella Maris Baltici* contains a series of articles dealing with various aspects of castle studies in the Baltic region, with the occasional ecclesiastic building and non-Baltic site discussed. It is based on a colloquium held in September 2009 at Raseborg, Olavinlinna and Häme Castles in Finland, all of which feature in the volume. The majority of the articles employ the standard castellological tool kit, i.e. a mixture of archaeology, art and architectural history, and historiography, with the addition of more recent additions to the canonical methodology such as historical geography, palaeoecology and statistics, with archaeology here taking the lead role in the analysis.

The *Castella Maris Baltici* series, dealing with it does with a region characterised by great linguistic diversity, is to be commended for its commitment to publish its proceedings in a mixture of English and German, which ensures that as wide a readership as possible is reached. The way in which the articles are presented indicates that a certain level of knowledge of Baltic castellology is assumed in the volume's projected readership in order to fully benefit from the volume's contents. This might be regarded by some—present author included—as somewhat of a shame, considering the low level of knowledge of Baltic castle studies amongst many Anglophone medieval archaeologists. It would have been of great benefit to this group to have had some sort of general overview article introducing the volume, which would have perhaps secured a wider readership for the series, which would at the very least aid in easing the financial constraints the editors complain about in the preface. At the very least, a map of the region containing all of the sites discussed in the volume would also have been a welcome addition for the volume's potential readership, whatever their level of knowledge, as would a concluding article looking at the processes at work in the entire region such as infeudation, colonialism, socio-economic and landscape change.

The volume is divided into five sections: 'New ideas and methods in castle studies;' 'Castles and their surroundings – the environmental aspects;' 'Castles, castle rulers and their residents;' 'Restoration of castles and ruins;' and 'On-going

research projects in castle studies.’ The title of the first section might be regarded as somewhat misleading. Hillogso Andersen’s comparison of the artefactual assemblages from a series of castles to each other, while a worthy exercise, is hardly a new approach. Furthermore, while perhaps all the articles in this volume are too short, this one in particular suffers from its brevity. It consists of a series of very short summaries of the finds from various Danish castles treated together in small groups. There is little justification of why these and not other castles were studied. Moreover, there is little or nothing regarding the artefacts’ taphonomy, the percentage of each castle excavated and the implications of this for the findings (surely an extremely important consideration), the stratigraphic locations of the finds, their provenance and broader parallels, or the contemporaneity of the artefacts and/or castles, and a rather basic linking of these artefacts to various activities and as indicators of power. Furthermore, epistemological bases of the study outlined at the beginning of the article are not justified in terms of the vast literature available on each subject, nor is the designation of various artefacts as being related to social action and actors’ positions in social space. In addition to the lack of a detailed treatment of the pottery, the reader is left with more questions than answers, such as were artefacts such as crossbow bolts found in a random pattern, or focused in an area possible associated with a battle, or were they found together in a cache, all of which would imply different activity. Another would be how were (probable) high status objects such as swords left on site, surely it is difficult to lose such a valuable piece of equipment and for it to remain lost to contemporaries? Perhaps a detailed publication based on this research might address these issues, and perhaps they already have been in the author’s PhD thesis, which provides the basis for the article.

Perhaps Hermann’s statistically comparing the construction phases and the appearance of various architectural features between castles might not be an entirely new approach either, but that does not detract from its usefulness, and the methodology could be applied elsewhere to good effect. Also useful is Pospeiszny’s thought-provoking discussion in terms of the recent debates on interdisciplinarity and classification in Germanophone castle studies and their relevance to aspects of the Prussian corpus of evidence.

Turning to the second section, most of the articles focus on fairly micro-level landscapes. The most micro-level of these is the account of the excavations at Pořešín in the Czech Republic by Tomáš Durdík, which focus on the series of gates there in particular, and provides a decent contribution to the better understanding of the chronology and morphology of castle gates in Bohemia, in addition the overall body of knowledge of European castles.

Moving up slightly in terms of spatial scale, Brillowski and Koperkiewicz’s discussion of the *Wildhaus* at Beławki is quite interesting in number of ways, not because of any innovation, but because of the dangers in relying on desk-based research it draws attention to. It would seem as though the authors were the first recent scholars to actually survey the castle properly, or even visit it, when using it in their research. It also provides a useful example of the way in which architectural vertical stratigraphy and archaeological excavation can be employed

to understand morphological change over time.

Haggrén and Jansson take an empirical approach in their study of Raseborg and its immediate hinterland. They employ the now standard methodological package of map work, documentary work, aerial photography, excavation and geophysics. Perhaps more nuanced discussion of the implications of their findings, perhaps in terms of the social differentiation of space, or even a more in-depth discussion of 'the economic, cultural and social context of the castle,' which they state as being the project's focus, would have further strengthened the article. The findings thus far certainly should provide the basis for further discussion. Staying in Finland, the short palynological study by Grönlund and Simola provides further evidence for the changes in land use and their relationship to settlement in the lakelands around the castle at Häme in south-central Finland.

Kock's discussion of the series of late medieval and early modern settlement foci at Vosborg on the west coast of Jutland employs a similar methodology to the Raseborg study, with the addition of a vertical stratigraphic approach to the upstanding buildings, and with the role of the environment, and in particular erosion, providing an interesting further strand of analysis. Moving to the eastern Baltic, Ose and Jurkāne provide an outline of the recent archaeological, art historical and conservation activity at the thirteenth-century Turaida Castle, a major tourist attraction in Latvia, and a site at which two landslides occurred in 2002. Landslides at the site seem to have been nothing new, and the archaeological investigations there in the late twentieth century uncovered evidence for a series of landslides there in the fourteenth century. As part of the conservation work, geological research and geoengineering work was carried out at the site, which in turn provided insight into the fourteenth-century events.

Moving up in scale, Lauritson's provision what is basically a gazetteer of the series of Danish royal castles on the two Baltic islands of Lolland and Falster, in terms of apparent changes in both locational and morphological patterning in the thirteenth century. The standard package of empirical landscape archaeology/historical geography is employed, with the addition of some excellent relief maps, which seem to be LiDAR derived. The study provides some interesting results, including the movement of castle locations to prominent coastal locations and their apparent downsizing, and their data set should provide the grounds for further studies not just on the castles and their role in the shifting patterns in the exercise of social power in the region, but also for more micro-level landscape studies.

Also in this section is a brief discussion of late fifteenth-century north-eastern Fennoscandinavia by Jukka Korpela places the building of the castle at Nyslott in its proper context, where the castle was built not in a *terra nullius* environment, but rather was a means of bringing the region's population under stronger Swedish administrative control and to counter Muscovite expansion into the region. While the article is short, the problematic seems to have been scaled accordingly, so brevity does not detract from the analysis as occurs elsewhere in this volume on occasion, and the extensive use of referencing provides a good basis for the reader to further explore the issue.

The third section is more historiographically orientated, and none the articles depart from the traditional methods of castle studies. Andrzejewski and Kajzer provide a parallel biography of Ujazd Castle in central Poland and Piotr, a member of the noble house Łazęka who held the castle in the fifteenth century. Waltraud Friedrich attempts to assign the lordly occupants of Romrod in Hesse a position in social space based on the findings arising from her archaeological investigations at the site, while taking the known macro- and micro- historical narrative into account. The third article in this section, and perhaps in some ways the most interesting, is Anu Lahtinen's use of literary sources to provide a partial reconstruction of daily life in Swedish castles, which should certainly provide a foundation for further, more in-depth treatments of the topic.

A particularly welcome addition to the volume is the section on the restoration of castles. Frustratingly, discussions such as these often only take place in the realm of heritage studies and public archaeology, as though they were somehow separate issues from the academic study of castles. Considering that it was one of the three venues for the colloquium, it is perhaps unsurprising that two of the four articles in this section are on Olavinlinna, with Terhi Mikkola dealing with its construction and Selja Flink the restorations up until the nineteenth century, with the other dealing with the modern restorations there. Also included is Elisabeth Crettaz-Stürzel's brief discussion of the (distinctly non-Baltic) Savoyard Château Ripalle on the shore of Lake Geneva and its conversion to a neo-medieval country seat around the year 1900, which provides some perspective on the Baltic material. Also discussed here, by Ulrika Mebus, is the heritage project assigned the unfortunate moniker 'St Nicholas Culturaldal,' which is based around the Dominican site at St Nicholas's at Visby, but the article is perhaps too brief to provide anything other than the most general advice for groups engaged in similar activities at various castles and beyond.

The section dedicated to ongoing research projects contains some interesting and useful material, not just for local specialists, but for medieval scholars in general. The excavations at Vyborg, in what is now Russia, provide an opportunity to test different sources of evidence against each other, at is to be hoped that future publications on this project will really get to grips with its usefulness for this purpose. In this volume, Alexandr Saska provides an outline of the excavations there in recent years, focusing in particular on the walls, for which he also provides a historical outline and a discussion of the available cartographic evidence. Staying in Russia, Petr Sorokin provides an outline of the preliminary finding of the excavations at the late medieval castle and settlement at Landskrona. Both articles, as is the nature of such outlines, focus on the data, and seem to be more concerned with establishing morphology over time as opposed to investigating more theoretical issues.

Considering the large number of sites excavated by antiquarians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Baltic, as elsewhere, Harjula and Immonen's project examining the artefactual assemblage from Koroinen, near Turku in Finland is to be commended. While their short article is more of a discussion of their intentions rather than results, those results when they do come should help to begin redressing the balance between the volume of finds from old

excavations and their scientific and theoretical discussion. Staying near Turku, Oininen et al's wiggle-matching approach to absolute dating, using radiocarbon determinations and dendrochronological evidence is an interesting case study. High and late medieval archaeology often suffers from the fact that many of the processual phases of the period are shorter than the statistical margin of error associated with most absolute dating techniques, so the final results of this project should be thought-provoking indeed.

Tanja Ratilainen employs an innovative approach using digital surveying methods to the study of brick building techniques at Holy Cross Church at Hattula and Häme Castle. In particular, she employs a combination of image rectification, total station survey, laser scanning and 3-D modelling to provide bring her project to fruition. However, the whole discussion is very brief, and further space could easily have been giving to a discussion of the results thus far, in addition to the largely methodological sections of the article.

The volume closes with a discussion of the management of archaeological research data on the internet, which seems aimed specifically at the conference delegate and regular readership of *Castella Maris Baltici*. The various challenges associated with the management of information from various, often overlapping, sources are discussed in terms of the recent literature on the subject, in addition to various possible solutions, such as wiki approaches and the related semantic wiki and Mneme systems, which the authors seem to favour. Perhaps the article could have been strengthened with the inclusion of a discussion of how various countries and regions have been dealing with this particular problem.

As implied throughout this review, it might be argued that there is not enough space given to each contribution, and perhaps half the amount of articles in the same amount of space might have been a better option, which might have been more feasible than doubling the size of the volume itself, in the light of the financial constraints currently experienced by the society publishing it. Something which also needs to be considered for future editions is the need for a more professional editorial job. The level of English varies throughout, and in some instances could have done with considerable editorial intervention. The German does not seem to suffer in the same way, but this observation might be due to it being this particular reviewer's fourth language. There are also typographic errors occurring at least once in most of the articles, with some approaching double figures in this respect, something which could have easily been avoided, and something which has the potential to detract from the volume's impact. Perhaps one solution for this in future would be to have an experienced proofreader assess the volume, and it might also be recommended to have a native speaker of English (and possibly German) with editorial experience either as one of the editors or to peer-review each article.

There has been much navel-gazing in Anglophone medieval archaeology in particular in recent years, with its epistemological foundations in addition to its relationship to archaeological theory, geography and textual evidence examined in

particular.¹ It is disappointing to note that there is almost nothing of these debates here. Surely, the volume would have been improved by a greater engagement by more of the contributors with broader ways of thinking in castle studies, historiography and archaeology, especially in terms of theoretical approaches and a critical approach to the epistemology underpinning the basic assumptions employed in their analyses. While it is pleasing to note the number of studies involving the utilisation various landscape approaches, the study of everyday life based on a critical use of literary sources, the questioning of systems of classification and occasional discussion of the relationships between categories of evidence, it might be argued that even these could have had a more in-depth critical approach taken, with recourse to the considerable relevant literature generated across the social sciences in recent decades.

To sum up, the volume provides an interesting cross section of ongoing and recent research into high and late medieval archaeology, art history and historiography around the Baltic, with occasional use of case studies from elsewhere. It is not a volume for the interested amateur, rather a volume aimed at specialists focussing on a particular spatio-temporal milieu. It could perhaps have been subjected to a more rigorous editorial process, which might detract from its overall impact, especially outside its region of focus. It is data-heavy, like so many publications in medieval archaeology, and while the level of detail might not on occasion be sufficient, the majority of the studies contained within should provide ammunition for further research in the region, and perhaps even for transregional comparison with case studies elsewhere in Europe, and so would be a worthwhile addition to many a medieval scholar's bookshelf.

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¹ The literature generated by this debate is extensive, coming from series of discussions in print and at conferences. A good overview is contained in Christopher Gerrard, *Medieval Archaeology: Understanding traditions and contemporary approaches*, Routledge: London 2003.