



Anna-Maria Vilkuna, Johanna Onnela, Terhi Mikkola, Päivi Luppi, Markus Hiekkänen & Knut Drake, *At Home Within Stone Walls: Life in the Late Medieval Häme Castle*. *Archaeologia Medii Aevi Finlandiae VIII*. Suomen keskiajan arkeologian seura – Sällskapet för medeltidsarkeologi i Finland: Turku 2003. 173 pages.

A study by Anna-Maria Vilkuna is the most substantial and compelling justification for publishing this book, in fact a collection of one major and several shorter articles. Her contribution makes it a good book for anyone interested in the manorial economy in Finland during the sixteenth century. The other articles deal with various aspects of the building history and usage of Häme Castle. It actually took a little while before it dawned upon me that "Häme Castle" and "Tavastehus", situated on the banks of the serpentine rift valley lake of Vanajavesi, is one and the same site. Placing this information in brackets somewhere on the cover or the title page of the book would have been a kind gesture to foreign readers like myself.

Of other localities nearby, special attention has been paid to Hattula Church, lying just six kilometres from the castle. Traditionally, the construction history of the church has been closely linked to that of the castle, which, in turn, relies on a proper dating of the curtain wall of Stockholm Castle, at presently dated sometime after the middle of the fourteenth century. This revised date of earlier assessments has set off a chain reaction. A new date of the first traceable phase of building Häme Castle subsequently worked out by Knut Drake therefore adds another important element to this book.

I would have preferred a more detailed explanation as to why we may assume such a close link between a phase in the building of the curtain wall at Stockholm Castle and an apparently visually similar “greystone-castle” phase at Häme Castle. Of course, in a situation where we lack any direct dating of the walls of Häme Castle itself by absolute chronology, such as it may be achieved by the use of the thermoluminescence or carbon-14 methods, a dating by comparing building techniques for example is not unheard of. Still, this does not resolve the innate methodological worry – how far can we push an argument of this kind?

All in all, Drake should be commended for revising his own earlier assessment from a previous dating to the 1260s. Even then, we must take care not to overstretch the historical extrapolations. Thus, Drake links the “grandiose building project” with the governorship of Bailiff Magnus Kase, a nobleman from Uppland; a project which then ended abruptly in 1389 as Queen Margaret took power in Sweden from the defeated king, Albrecht of Mecklenburg. The new date and the proposed historical context may alter our perception of these political events and – if the dating holds true – show that the new ruler of Sweden and Finland immediately gained a firm grip of the entire realm. Perhaps this indicates a more direct form of government, preceding the Wasa dynasty?

The endeavours by Terhi Mikkola to make sense of the castle interior, the discussion of the stages of building the outer bailey by Päivi Luppi, or Markus Hiekkänen’s linking of the late fifteenth-century castle – “the brickwork castle” – with the construction of Hattula Church as representing “an integrated landscape of Power” are not in my view the most interesting sections of the book. This distinction belongs to Anna Vilkuna’s calculations concerning the subsistence economy of the castle and its staff during the sixteenth century.

The book’s title might render the reader to expect also some social history, but what we are given is not the kind that deals with people’s behaviour or local customs. The contribution by Vilkuna includes vast amounts of information from her reading of the castle accounts, but the people who lived there are viewed predominantly from a perspective of production, not for their individual life stories. To help us picture the castle as a lively place Vilkuna does introduce, among other things, an account of a springtime cleaning at the castle in April 1562. Painting a small scene before our eyes might sometimes lighten up things, but this one seems too much of an irrelevant detail.

Vilkuna deserves praise for a very thorough analysis of the castle fief, where the surrounding area formed the castle's economic base during the time, when it served as a part of the centralised Swedish economy, created by King Gustav Wasa. When Vilkuna describes the amounts of milk, grain, tallow, lard or whatever used at the castle, she is always careful to explain the grounds for her later calculations. Yet, I admit to a certain degree of personal fatigue, as I tried to absorb the immense quantities of information. History writing of this kind is impressive because of the concise data it brings to our attention, but it is almost always the deductions that can be drawn from such calculations, rather than the calculations themselves, which render to us a more memorable impression of our past.

The social issues from the era of Gustav Wasa, discussed in the book, include an attempt, also known from e.g. Denmark, to absorb the poor and unemployed work force in the *corvée*, performed for the castle bailiff. It was explained, in those days, as all happening for the common good of the society. Vilkuna manages to cast a glance at the role of the female workforce, the female prisoners and the ladies attending the bailiff's wife. Thus a small gender perspective has crept in and is most welcome, but tends to look hard pressed, like the author never found the proper context for this tiny topic.

It is a shame that the general focus of Vilkuna's analysis lies so overwhelmingly on the potential of her evidence as a source of economic data, thus hampering Vilkuna's attempts to construct a coherent picture of social life at the castle or the individuals living there. The great value of the author's analysis is found in its coverage of every thinkable aspect of the castle's subsistence economy that can be extrapolated from the preserved documents. E.g. she discusses, among other things, whether the castle's bread was baked according to the western or eastern Finnish custom, the growing numbers of oxen and cows, seeming to be replacing horses during the 16th century, the importance of fishing as a source of in-kind payments to the Swedish crown is documented, and the castle's limited role as a military garrison is not forgotten either. These are obviously all important issues. Yet why do we, in this context, need to know the exact numbers of the implements found in the castle chapel and why should I have to learn the names of all the people working in certain branches of the castle economy? It seemed to me that the lists both hidden and openly presented within the main text together with the plenitude of lists given in appendices are not all equally relevant to the book's intended audience. The danger of overburdening the poor reader with an abundance of what seems for them, all too often unimportant information, is a very widespread phenomenon. A

good editor should point out, what belongs within the main text or in an appendix.

Let us now turn towards the illustrations within the book. The close-ups of charred grains in the short contribution to the book by Johanna Onnela may not look of much, but they add greatly to the thrust of her text. Both Päivi Luppi's article on the castle's outer bailey and Markus Hiekkänen's article about certain building details of Hattula Church are accompanied by telling illustrations, so it is a shame that the same has not been possible in Anna-Maria Vilkuna's most valuable contribution.

In my view, it is not enough to print a map with the names in such small type that one can hardly read them (e.g. Vilkuna, Map 2) or spend half a page on a table, which does not lead towards any particular point in the text. A substantially improved description of the area surrounding the castle could have been achieved by using, for example, MapInfo illustrations. The scant attention paid to training in illustration skills at universities, seems a widespread phenomenon. Compared to the time-consuming efforts of drawing up such illustrations, a "naked" text without such illustration, unfortunately counts for just as much in many formal evaluations. This seems unfair, since the readability of one well-made illustration can make up for half of the words in an article, without any exaggeration.

Now we will return to review the text of Vilkuna. It is striking how much the volume of written sources on household economy grows as we enter the later Middle Ages or the Renaissance, coinciding with the development in the Nordic countries of proper state bureaucracy. Unfortunately, the short introduction by Vilkuna to the *militärstat* of Gustav Wasa feels somewhat out of place among the other sections. It would have contributed to the general usefulness of Vilkuna's efforts, if a diachronic perspective had been included. We are told about growing enfeoffments and some changes in the economic strategies of the royal administration, but did the governance of Häme Castle under Gustav Wasa differ from of its governance in the fifteenth century only in terms of effectiveness or were there corresponding shifts in types of production? It is probably asking too much from the evidence, but I was left wondering, whether the mode of production described from Häme castle fief was already typical of the Middle Ages? How boldly may we deduce back in time from evidence of the sixteenth century? Given the date of the castle's presumed foundation, at the end of the thirteenth century, it is a relevant query, but perhaps impossible to answer from the castle accounts alone?

I am grateful for the accurate calculations of, for example, the daily consumption of calories for each individual occupant and for the list of craftsmen working at the castle, yet I very much regret the lack of a discussion by Vilku on the wider perspectives.

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