



Medieval well found in a wall of Kuressaare prince-bishop's castle

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INTRODUCTION

Restoration work began in the autumn of 2022 in the cellar of the Kuressaare *Konventhaus* (convent building) and will continue until the end of 2023. Saaremaa Museum Foundation, which manages the territory of Kuressaare prince-bishop's castle together with its buildings, (Fig. 1) commissioned this restoration work. The last restoration project was completed nearly 40 years ago (1985) and its aim was the restoration of the entire *Konventhaus*. Now the lower storey of the *Konventhaus* will be modernised, its interior design will be altered, and part



Fig. 1. View from the west to the Kuressaare Castle-Fortress and its settlement situated on the southern coast of Saaremaa. This water castle built on a low-lying coastal site in the 14th century was enclosed by earthwork fortifications by the start of the 17th century. The Sturvolt tower can be seen at the northern corner of the *Konventhaus* (on the left), the Pikk Hermann tower is at the eastern corner.

Jn 1. Vaade Saaremaa lõunarannikul asuvale Kuressaare linnus-kindlusele ja asulale läänest. 14. sajandil madalale rannaalale rajatud vesilinnus ümbritseti 17. sajandi alguseks muldkindlustustega. Konvendihoones põhjanurgal (vasakul) on näha torni Sturvolt, idanurgal Pikk Hermann.

Photo / Foto: Valmar Voolaid

of the museum's new exposition will be built in the course of the current ongoing renovation work. Earlier plaster layers will be cleaned off the stone walls of the cellar rooms and those same walls will be jointed.

Quite extensive building archaeological surveys OÜ Muinaslabor, which are a continuation of the previous surveys, are being conducted in the cellars in parallel with construction work. The first fieldwork was conducted in the castle over a hundred years ago (1904–1912; see Seuberlich 1905; 1907), intensifying in the 1960s and 1970s in connection with the restoration works (Aluve 1980). The building archaeological surveys conducted from 2010 to 2014 were an extensive continuation of this work (Püüa *et al.* 2012; Püüa *et al.* 2013; Püüa & Altoa 2015). The monograph published in 2016 sums up all previous research work and the current state of research on the castle (Püüa *et al.* 2016), an alternative interpretation of the castle construction history is presented by Hermann (2021).

OUTLINE OF THE CASTLE'S HISTORY

The Island of Saaremaa surrendered to Christian crusaders in 1227. The prince-bishop of Saare-Lääne (*Oesel-Wiek* in German) gained control of most of the island, but some of the land went to the Brothers of the Sword (later to the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order). The Saare-Lääne Prince-Bishopric was formed in 1228 out of the territories of Western Estonia; from 1265, Haapsalu was the centre of the diocese (see Püüa *et al.* 2012). Pöide (*Peude* in German) Castle was built in the 13th century as the centre of the Order's territories in Saaremaa. After its destruction in the mid-14th century, a new central castle of the Order was established at Maasi (*Soneburg* in German, see Sepp 2018; Püüa 2020).

At the current stage of research, it can be said that the construction of a stone castle began in Kuressaare (*Arensburg* in German) probably at the end of the 1320s. A fortified harbour site quite likely already existed here before the construction of the prince-bishop's castle. The original stone castle in Kuressaare was a simple regular surrounding wall, or *castellum*. The Sturvolt defensive tower was built in its northern corner together with an auxiliary building consisting of a single room. Construction work on the castle was discontinued due to troubled times, evidently in the 1340s. After the last major rebellion mounted by the islanders (the St George's Night Uprising, 1343–1345) was crushed, a major change was implemented in the construction plans. In the second half of the 14th century, the castle was constructed as a *Konventhaus*. Its outer walls were supported by the surrounding wall of the earlier *castellum*. The massive Sturvolt defensive tower was preserved in the northern corner of the *Konventhaus* and the Pikk Hermann (Tall Hermann) watchtower was added in the eastern corner (Figs 1–2). Together with the *Konventhaus*, a curtain wall was built around it along with the outer bailey I protected by a nearly 20 m wide moat (Püüa *et al.* 2016, 240–241). Based on archaeological finds, it can be assumed that construction work on at least the outer perimeter of the *Konventhaus* had been completed by the end of the 14th century (Püüa & Altoa 2015, 135; Püüa *et al.* 2013, 184).

The first written mention of Kuressaare Castle dates from the early 1380s, in other words from the period when Kuressaare became the new centre of the prince-bishopric alongside Haapsalu at the time when Winrich von Kniprode, the prince-bishop of Saare-Lääne (ruled from 1383 to 1419), resided in Kuressaare. Unlike many other Estonian medieval castles, Kuressaare was spared from any serious damage at the time of the Livonian War (1558–1583) and the development of this region continued under the direction of its new owners. The medieval castle was transformed into a fortress surrounded by earthworks and bastions by the

17th century and it was later modernised step by step. Saaremaa became part of the Swedish state under the terms of the Peace of Brömsebro that was signed in 1645. It became part of Russia, in turn, in 1721 under the terms of the Peace Treaty of Uusikaupunki (*Nystad*). The castle lost its military importance early in the 19th century due to the altered political situation in Europe and was deleted from Russia's list of fortresses in 1834, thereafter in 1836 it was sold to the Knighthood of Saaremaa. The Knighthood started holding its official and formal social gatherings at the *Konventhaus* in the beginning of the 20th century. Additionally, a museum and several administrative agencies found a home in the *Konventhaus*. In 1920, the castle became the property of the Republic of Estonia (Püüa *et al.* 2016, 245).

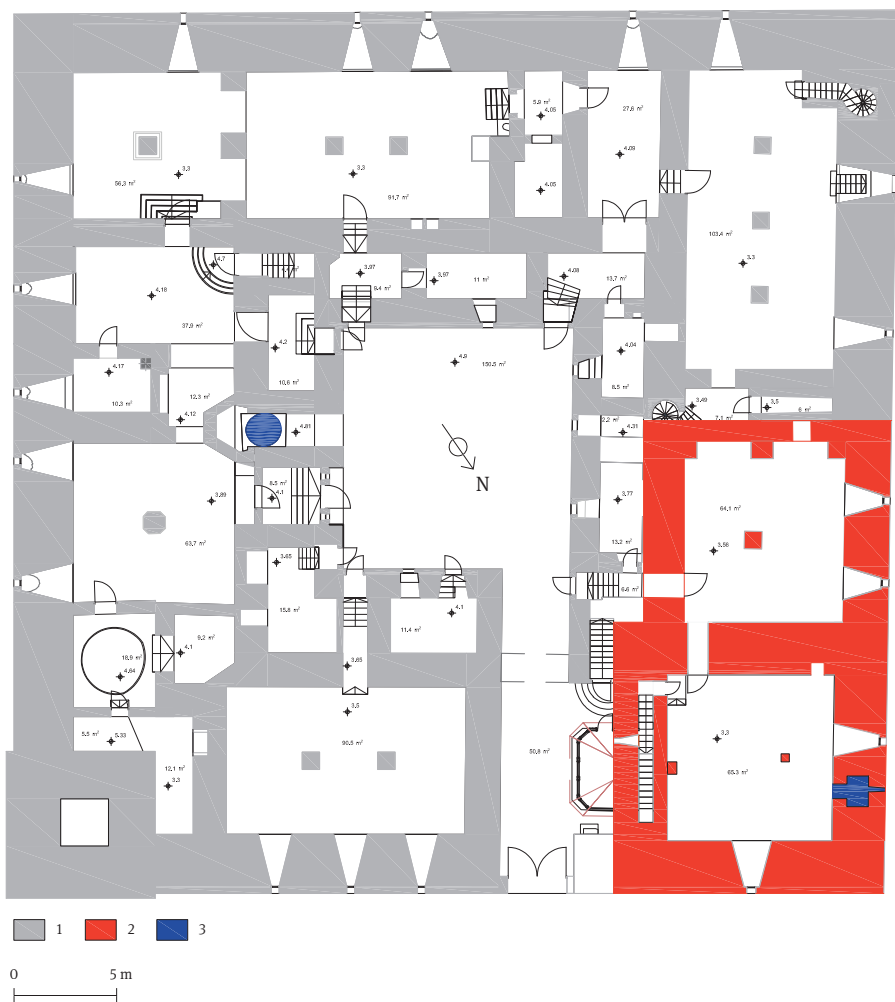


Fig. 2. Ground plan of the cellar storey of Kuressaare Konventhaus. 1 – walls of the cellar storey, 2 – building volume preceding the Konventhaus: the Sturvolt tower and a single-room auxiliary building, 3 – the well found in the Sturvolt tower wall and a larger circular well in the Konventhaus.

Jn 2. Kuressaare konvendihoone keldrikorruse plaan. 1 – Kuressaare konvendihoone keldrikorruse müürid, 2 – konvendihoonest varasem ehitusmaht: torn Sturvolt ja üheruumiline kõrvvalhoone, 3 – torni Sturvolt seinast leitud kaev ja suurem ringikujuline kaev konvendihoones.

Drawing / Joonis: Garel Püüa

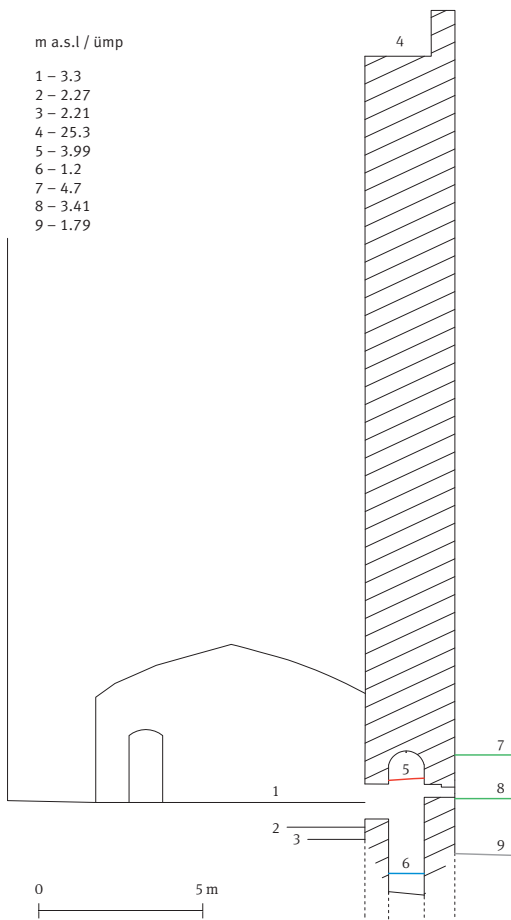


Fig. 3. Section drawing of the well found in the wall of the Sturvolt tower. 1 – the existing stone floor of the tower (1985), 2 – elevation of the tower's original floor, 3 – elevation of the tower's foundation base, 4 – elevation of the tower's former defensive platform, 5 – filler soil from the well, 6 – the current water level, 7 – the current ground surface in the courtyard, 8 – elevation of the ground surface from roughly 1390 to 1600, 9 – natural limestone.

Jn 3. Torn Sturvolt seinast leitud kaevu lõikejoonis. 1 – torni olemasolev kivipõrand (1985), 2 – torni algse põranda kõrgus, 3 – torni taldmiku põhja kõrgus, 4 – torni endise kaitsekorruse kõrgus, 5 – kaevu täitepinna, 6 – praegune veetase, 7 – olemasolev maapind hoovis, 8 – maapinna kõrgus u 1390–1600, 9 – looduslik paas.

Drawing / Joonis: Garel Püüa

STURVOLT TOWER AND THE WELL FOUND IN THE TOWER'S WALL

The architecture of Kuressaare Castle derived from its functions. The castle was the centre of secular and religious power for quite a large region. It was meant to accommodate gatherings of large numbers of people and to provide them with living quarters in a monastic style. It was also meant to provide people with reliable protection in the event of the threat of rebellion or war. Auxiliary rooms were located on the lower storey of the *Konventhaus*. The prince-bishop's official reception rooms were on the main storey. The third storey and the Sturvolt tower were meant for the servants and the defence garrison.

As a rule, the construction of a castle started from its largest tower. The oldest tower of Kuressaare Castle, which is known by its historical name Sturvolt, had to initially fulfil a defensive function as well as a residential function. The most favourable natural site at the highest elevation on the coast was selected for the building. The tower is founded on firm limestone ground that extends 1.7 m above sea level. Narrow stairs built into the walls connected the Sturvolt's vaulted cellar to its lower storeys with ceilings supported by beams. Such stairs were easier to defend. The rooms of the top two storeys were supplied with fireplaces and were meant to house the defence garrison. The sixth storey was an open defence platform with a floor that was probably waterproof. Water from melting snow and rainwater was channeled into the courtyard by way of gargoyles that are still visible to this day. Passage from the platform down to the two lower storeys was by way of a wooden stair or ladder (Püüa *et al.* 2016, 36). The tower was evidently provided with its first roof around the mid-16th century and a seventh storey was also added

to the tower later. The height of the Sturvolt tower, located in the northern corner of the *Konventhaus*, is currently 41 metres but the probable height of the floor of the medieval upper storey, in other words the platform storey, is approximately 25.3 metres.

In the autumn of 2022, a mysterious walled-up door opening was found in the cellar storey of Sturvolt tower in the course of restoration work. A little door (approximately 100×70 cm) opened up into a shaft measuring 150×105 cm built into the tower's 265 cm thick exterior wall. The shaft was filled with soil and was covered by a barrel vault (Figs 2–6). The shaft and the vault were made of dolomite blocks and were built together with the tower, evidently in the second quarter of the 14th century. An iron rod had been bricked into the middle of the vault. The presumable hook part of the rod that was meant for winching had already broken off earlier (Fig. 7). An illumination opening measuring 15×40 cm, which barely extended above the ground surface in the Middle Ages, was found in the 90 cm thick exterior wall of the shaft (Fig. 3; 8; 5). After the nearly 3.5 m thick filler layer was removed, it turned out that the shaft was most probably the oldest well of Kuressaare Castle. The well had been hewn into the natural limestone stratum to a depth of at least 1.2 m, yet the actual bottom of the well was not reached during the cleaning process. A relieving arch, which was evidently needed for redistributing the load of the wall, had been built into the well's wall at the boundary of the limestone stratum (Fig. 6).

Cleaning out the well, which was filled with stones and soil, revealed a few fragments of glazed vessel tiles from the 16th and 17th centuries in addition to animal bones. Based on the scant archaeological finds from this site, it can be estimated that the well was not filled in before the 17th to 18th century. According to historical ground plans of the building, the well was filled in even later. The well in the Sturvolt tower wall is still shown in the ground plan and section drawing of the cellar storey of the *Konventhaus* drafted by Ingenieur-Oberst (Engineer-Colonel) Johann Tunzelmann in 1797 (RGVIA 349.3.1561). The well's window opening is no longer drawn on the plan. The window on the exterior side of the *Konventhaus* had evidently already been buried beneath early modern filler strata by then. The well has disappeared from the plan of 1828. The cellar window that had been situated beside it had in the meantime been reconstructed as a door (RGVIA.349.3.1650).



Fig. 4. Workman Heigo Leemet at the opening to the chamber found in the Sturvolt wall after the removal of the plaster covering the wall. The well's door opening remained partially concealed by the cellar's current floor.

Jn 4. Töömees Heigo Leemet pärast krohvi eemaldamist Sturvolti seinast leitud kambri ava juures. Kaevu ukseava jäi poolenisti keldri praeguse põranda varju. Photo / Foto: Maanus Masing (Saarte Hääl)



Fig. 5. The cellar's original floor was around 75 cm lower than the current floor (1985). A wooden hatch covered the well's door opening (100×70 cm). The locations of its hinges are still identifiable. A small illumination opening can be seen in the well's outer wall in the background.

Jn 5. Keldri algne põrand jäi praegusest (1985) u 75 cm madalamale. Kaevu ukseaval (100×70 cm) oli ees puidust luuk, mille hingede asukohad on veel äratuntavad. Tagaplaanil on näha väikest valgusava kaevu välisseinas.

Photo / Foto: Garel Püüa



Fig. 6. *The current water level in the well that has been hewn into the natural limestone is 1.2 m above sea level, yet before the moats were dug for the castle-fortress, water level extended to a considerably higher elevation. A relieving arch is visible in the wall of the well.*

Jn 6. *Praegune veetase loodusliku pae sisse raiutud kaevus on 1,2 m üle merepinna, kuid enne linnus-kindluse vallikraavide kaevamist ulatus see oluliselt kõrgemale. Kaevu seinas on näha kergenduskaart.*

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Fig. 7. *An iron rod was bricked into the well's ceiling. A bucket hung from a rope tied to that rod. Traces of the rope worn into the doorjamb indicate that the well was used intensively in the Middle Ages.*

Jn 7. *Kaevu lakke oli müüritud rauast varras, mille külge kinnitatud nõõri otsas rippus ämber. Uksepiida sisse kulunud nõõrijäljed annavad aimu kaevu intensiivsest kasutamisest keskajal.*

Photo / Foto: Garel Püüa

The sondage that was dug in front of the well showed that the foundation of the tower, which was covered with mortar, could be followed up to 1.1 m below (Fig. 3: 1–3) the current stone floor (1985). The floor, which partially concealed the well's door, had already been raised to this height at the time of the restoration work that was conducted from 1904 to 1912 (Fig. 4). The tower's original floor was situated 0.7 m lower than the current floor. Burned fragments of a wooden floor, covered by a layer of mortar, were found at this elevation (Fig. 5). A series of samples was successfully extracted from the burned wooden floor, but datable finds were not discovered in the filler soil beneath the floor.

The collected radiocarbon analyses offer some additional interpretation possibilities. The ^{14}C -sample taken from the charcoal found from the mortar unearthed at the lower edge of the tower foundation gave the result 590 ± 30 BP (Table 1: 4), thus the probable building time of the Sturvolt tower is the first half of the 14th century. This confirms our previous assumptions about the building history of the Kuressaare castle (Püüa *et al.* 2016). The fragment of a wooden construction from the well was dated to 305 ± 30 BP (Table 1: 1). Apparently it is a secondary detail from the 16th century. The wooden floor of the tower was dated to 630 ± 90 BP (Table 1: 3) and the fire that destroyed the floor to 330 ± 30 BP (Table 1: 2). The heel bone from the destruction layer belonged to 440 ± 30 BP (Table 1: 5) and the cranium of the sheep to 355 ± 30 BP (Table 1: 6). Thus the wooden floor of the Sturvolt tower was probably built during the 14th century or the first half of the 15th century when the ground was covered with a considerable amount of animal bones. The significant number of animal bones might indicate that in the 15th century, the basement developed into the depot of the taxes in kind collected from the local peasants.

Table 1. Radiocarbon datings from Kuressaare**Tabel 1.** Kuressaare radiosüsinikdateeringud

Compiled by / Koostanud: Garel Püüa

No. / Nr	Lab. No. / Lab. nr	Radiocarbon age / radiosüsinikuaastad	Calibrated with 95.4% probability / kalibreerimisvahemik 95.4%	Calibrated with 68.3% probability / kalibreerimisvahemik 68.3%
1	Poz-165016	305±30 BP	1492–1653AD (95.4%)	1521–1586AD (52.6%) 1623–1643AD (15.7%)
2	Poz-164839	330±30 BP	1480–1640AD (95.4%)	1502–1529AD (17.4%) 1540–1598AD (38.3%) 1616–1635AD (12.6%)
3	Poz-165268	630±90 BP	1228–1442AD (95.4%)	1290–1399AD (68.3%)
4	Poz-164862	590±30 BP	1302–1369AD (69.1%) 1380–1412AD (26.4%)	1319–1359AD (52.4%) 1389–1403AD (15.9%)
5	Poz-161674	440±30 BP	1419–1495AD (94.2%) 1602–1610AD (1.3%)	1431–1464AD (68.3%)
6	Poz-161649	355±30 BP	1458–1529AD (42.7%) 1540–1635AD (52.8%)	1476–1522AD (32.8%) 1575–1626AD (35.5%)

The well with a circular ground plan that had previously been known in the *Konventhaus* is situated in the well niche currently located on the south-eastern side of the courtyard (see Fig. 2). The selected location of the well appears to be quite inconvenient for use, considering the fact that the kitchen rooms were situated on the cellar storey. For this reason, it is possible that the origin of this well was also already associated with the *castellum*, which definitely had to have a well in the courtyard protected by the enceinte, where economic activity was conducted (Püüa *et al.* 2016, 44 and fig. 22). Hence, besides the shaft well found in the Sturvolt tower wall, the round well in the courtyard may also predate the current *Konventhaus*.

IN SEARCH OF ANALOGUES

The author of the present article has hitherto not succeeded in finding an analogue for the Kuressaare Episcopal Castle's shaft well in Estonia or in the neighbouring countries. A shaft resembling the Kuressaare *Konventhaus* well is also found in the Maasi castle of the Order in Saaremaa, but it has not yet been archaeologically studied. The shaft situated in the south-eastern wall of the earlier stage of construction of the Maasi residential building extends through two storeys in the castle (its dimensions in the cellar storey are 1.2 × 1.3 m). The shaft has low door openings yet there is no information on its depth. It is difficult to say at the current stage of research whether this is a well or some other building structure. Another shaft that extends through two storeys is situated in the southern corner of that same room and this is evidently a *dansker* (Sepp 2018, fig. 3: 4–5).

There is information on a well in the cellar of the northern tower of Laiuse Castle, and one has been found in Põltsamaa (Altoa 1974, 69), but these were most likely regular wells inside the towers, not constructed into tower walls.

To a certain extent, the Kuressaare shaft well also resembles two wells with round ground plans at Padise Monastery. The first of them, a well with a diameter of 1.1 m, is situated partly within the southwestern external wall of the cellar. A larger well (diameter roughly 2 m) is situated within the wall that separates two buildings and water could be drawn from two storeys. The wells are easily accessible and convenient to use (Kadakas 2015, 117–118 and fig. 3).

Latvian architect and historian of architecture Ilmārs Dirveiks refers to Riga Castle as an example, where a well was built in a similar way into the north-western external wall of the

castle's *Konventhaus* in the latter half of the 14th century.¹ This is once again a more typical circular well in terms of its ground plan, which partially extended into the building. At the same time, the well was sufficiently important, so that at the time of restoration work that was carried out in Riga Castle in the 16th century, the well was preserved in the wall beneath a special relieving arch. In 2015, the Riga *Konventhaus* wall was braced but archaeological surveys of the well were postponed.

DISCUSSION. WHY SUCH A WELL?

As a rule, wells situated within castles or monastery buildings were conveniently located in the cellar room or they were situated in special well niches. Contrary to this trend, the Kuressaare shaft well is exceedingly inconvenient because of the complexity to draw water from it. Its little door opening is situated practically at the tower's floor level. In order to hoist water, one had to stoop on one's knees at the threshold. The tower's exterior wall was only 90 cm thick above the well shaft. It was thus easier for attackers to breach that part of the wall. The shaft well built into the tower's wall was evidently meant more as an emergency solution in the event of attack, not for everyday use. The well would provide water in situations where only the Sturvolt tower remained in the hands of the defenders. The little low door would act as a defensive element to be used if, for instance, enemies were to force their way into the tower through the well's wall. At the same time, the traces of the rope for drawing water worn into the doorjamb suggest that the well was used quite intensively.

The reason for building the shaft well, however, might initially have been entirely different – as construction work progressed on the tower, it might have been necessary to draw surface water out of the foundation trench to enable masonry work to proceed with constructing the tower walls. If the everyday drawing of water had been its only aim, the well would likely have been built in the cellar room. There was evidently not such a lack of space in the 65 m² cellar to necessitate building the well into the tower wall, making it very inconvenient for users. It is more likely that the well was initially a collection well that helped to dry the tower's foundation. Since the aim was to carry out the construction work as rationally as possible, the foundation trench was dug only to the depth of the natural limestone stratum and the base of the tower was not dug out more extensively. Evidently, some locations emerged that were at a lower elevation than the lowest point of the tower's footing. Surface water accumulated in those places. Dams could have been used to keep most of the water away from the construction site or to channel it somewhere else. In such a case, the well would have collected the water that drained from the adjacent ground surface and from the foundation itself. It cannot be ruled out that there was a natural hole or fissure in the base limestone at the site of the well that contributed to the drainage of water. That would explain the need for a relieving arch. There could have been even more artificial collection wells of a similar kind beneath the foundation, in addition to this one, and presumably the largest or deepest, was supplied with a service shaft. When the surface water level rose to an elevation that was too high, some of the water was removed using buckets. When the masonry work already rose above the water surface, there was no longer any need for the collection well. A ceiling was built over the shaft and the shaft was put to use as a castle well. Investigations continue in the Kuressaare Episcopal Castle and plans call for opening the newly found well to museum visitors.

¹ Written communication with Ilmārs Dirveiks, 12 January 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation team would like to thank Tõnu Sepp, Villu Kadakas and Erki Russow.

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KURESSAARE PIISKOPILINNUSE SEINAST LEITUD KESKAEGNE KAEV

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2022. aasta sügisel algasid Kuressaare konvendihoone keldrikorrusel restaureerimistööd, mis kestavad 2023. aasta lõpuni. Paralleelselt ruumide uuendamisega toimuvad keldrites küllaltki mahukad ehitusarheoloogilised uuringud (OÜ Muinaslabor), mis on jätk varasematele uurimistöödele.

Kuressaare kililinnuse ehitamist alustati arvatavasti 1320. aastate lõpul. Tõenäoliselt eksisteeris siin kindlustatud sadamakoht juba enne piiskopilinnuse rajamist. Kuressaare algne linnus oli lihtne korrapärane ringmüür ehk kastell, mille põhjanurka rajati torn Sturvolt koos üheruumilise kõrvalhoonega. Ehitustööd katkesid ilmselt 1340. aastatel ning pärast Jüriöö ülestõusu (1343–45) mahasurumist toimus plaanides suur muudatus. 14. sajandi teisel poo-

lel püstitati juba konvendihoone, mille välisseinad toetuvad varasema kastelli ringmüürile. Kuressaare konvendihoone põhjanurgal säilis massiivne kaitsetorn Sturvolt ja idanurka lisati vahitorn Pikk Hermann (jn 1–2).

2022. aasta sügisel leiti restaureerimistöödel Sturvolti keldrikorruse seinast salapärase kinni müüritud ukseava. Väike uks (u 100 × 70 cm) avanes torni 265 cm paksuse välisseina sisse ehitatud 150 × 105 cm suurusesse ja pinnasega täidetud šahti (jn 2–6), mida kattis silindervõlv. Dolomiitplokkidest laotud šaht ja võlv olid rajatud koos torniga, ilmselt 14. sajandi teisel veerandil. Võlvi keskele oli müüritud rauast varras, mille arvatav vintsimiseks mõeldud konksoosa oli juba varem murdunud (jn 7). Šahti 90 cm paksuses

välisseinas leidis 15 × 40 cm suurune valgusava, mis ulatus keskajal maapinnast napilt kõrgemale (jn 3: 8; 5). Kaevu ette kaevatud šurfis selgus, et torni algne põrand jääb praegusest, 1985. a paigaldatud kivipõrandast 0,7 m madalamale (jn 3: 1–3; 5).

Pärast ligi 3,5 m paksuse täitekihi eemaldamist selgus, et šahti näol on tegemist Kuressaare linnuse tõenäoliselt vanima kaevuga. Kaev oli raiutud vähemalt 1,2 m sügavusele looduslikku paekihti, kuid päris põhjani puhastamise käigus ei jõutud. Paekihi piiril oli kaevu sein laotud jaotus- ehk kergenduskaar, mis oli ilmselt vajalik müüri koormuse ümberjaotamiseks (jn 6). Kivide ja pinnasega täidetud kaevu puhastamisel leiti lisaks loomaluudele üksikuid 16.–17. sajandist pärinevaid glasuuritud ahjupottide katkeid. Ajaloolistele plaanidele tuginedes täideti kaev 19. sajandil.

Artikli autor pole seni suutnud Kuressaare piiskopilinnuse šahtkaevule Eestist ega naabermaadest analoogi leida. Kuressaare konvendihoone kaevule sarnanev šaht leidub ka Saaremaal Maasi ordulinnuses, kuid on seni arheoloogiliselt uurimata. Maasi eluhoone varasema ehitusjärgu kagupooles seinas asuv šaht ulatub linnuses läbi kahe korruse (mõõtmed keldrikorrusel 1,2 × 1,3 m). Šaht on madalate ukseavadega, kuid tema sügavuse kohta andmed puuduvad.

Kuressaare šahtkaevul on teatav sarnasus Padise kloostri kahe ümmarguse põhiplaaniga kaevuga. Esimene neist, 1,1 m suuruse läbimõõduga kaev, asub pooleldi edelapoolse keldri välisseinas. Suurem kaev (läbimõõt u 2 m) paikneb kahe hoone vahelise müüri sees ning vett sai võtta kahelt korruselt. Paralleele

võib tõmmata ka Riia linnusega, kus 14. sajandi teisel poolel ehitati samuti konvendihoone loodepoolsesse välisseina kaev. Tegemist on põhiplaanilt jällegi pigem tüüpilise ringikujulise kaevuga, mis ulatus osaliselt hoonesse sisse.

Kuressaare šahtkaev on vee võtmise seisukohalt äärmiselt ebamugav. Väike ukseava asub praktiliselt torni põranda kõrgusel ning vee vinnamisel tuli lävepakul põlvili olles küürutada. Ilmselt oli torni sein ehitatud šahtkaev mõeldud pigem hädalahenduseks rünnaku korral, mitte igapäevaseks kasutamiseks. Kaev pakkus vett olukorras, kui kaitsjate kätte oli jäänud vaid Sturvolt. Samas näitavad uksepiita kuldunud nõõrijäljed, et kaevu kasutati ilmselt küllaltki intensiivselt.

Šahtkaevu rajamisel võis olla aga hoopis teine põhjus – torni ehitusaegne vajadus vundamendikraavist pinnavett välja tõsta, et saaks üldse müüritöödega tegeleda. Kui eesmärgiks oluks vaid igapäevane vee võtmine, oleks kaev tõenäoliselt ehitatud keldriruumi sisse. Pigem oli algselt tegemist kogumiskaevuga, mis aitas torni vundamenti kuivendada. Suurem vesi võis olla tammide taha kinni püütud või ära juhitud ning kaev korjas kokku külgnevast pinnasest ja vundamendist endast nõrguva vee. Sarnaseid kunstlikke kogumiskaeve võis vundamendi all rohkemgi olla, aga vaid üks ja eeldatavalt kõige suurem või sügavam varustati teenindusšahtiga. Kui müüriladu ulatus juba üle veepinna, kadus ka vajadus kogumiskaevu järele. Šahtile ehitati lagi ning ta võeti kasutusele linnuse kaevuna. Uuringud Kuressaare piiskopilinnuses jätkuvad ning leitud kaev on plaanis külastajatele avada.