

Apardjón

VOLUME 2

Apardjón Journal for Scandinavian Studies

University of Aberdeen, UK

2021

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First published in 2021

ISSN 2634-0577 (Online)

ISSN 2634-0569 (Print)

Published in Aberdeen, United Kingdom

Apardjón Journal for Scandinavian Studies

Centre for Scandinavian Studies

University of Aberdeen

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Editors: Hannah Booth, Heidi Synnøve Djuve, Deniz Cem Gülen, Ingrid Hegland, Jennifer Hemphill, Simon Nygaard, Alessandro Palumbo, Solveig Marie Wang, Jessie Yusek.

Cover image: © 2021 Karine Djuve Riisdal

Creative and type: Heidi Synnøve Djuve and Jennifer Hemphill

Special font design: Blake Middleton

Back cover illustration: The Aberdeen Bestiary (MS 24), Folio 8r – Tigris/the tiger (University of Aberdeen)

The present volume of this periodical was financially supported by the University of Aberdeen Development Trust Experience Fund.

Crusades, Cities and Castles: Finland as Sweden's Militarised Borderland c. 1150–1300

Caroline Wilhelmsson

Finland was part of the Swedish kingdom for about six hundred years until 1809, when it fell under Russian rule (Sjöstrand 1996: 7). Historical evidence, which includes papal letters, ecclesiastical documents and testimonies of Swedish military expeditions to Finland, point to it having formally been incorporated into the kingdom of Sweden sometime in the thirteenth century. However, Sweden may have exerted political influence over its eastern neighbour since at least the mid-twelfth century as suggested by thirteenth-century sources including *Erikslegenden* (Bengtsson and Lovén 2012: 24), as well as letters written by the popes Innocent III and Alexander III referring to past political manoeuvres in the region (Christiansen 1997: 114–115). Medieval Finland is a particularly interesting region to study because of how the power dynamics between its native populations and the Swedish colonists shaped the country's history. Indeed, many important milestones in Finnish history were the product of these interactions, from Finland's Christianisation to the development of its legal tradition, from the establishment of its government and administration to the building of its most important towns (Line 2007: 410–462). Less positive events were also the result of the fusion of these two societies: many of Finland's deadliest armed conflicts were conducted under the Swedish flag, including but not limited to the Thirty Years War (Kirby 2006: 30–32). In this context, the present article aims to answer a simple question: why and how was Finland militarised following its conquest by Sweden?

The article will start by summarising the political process through which Finland became a militarised borderland under the authority of Sweden starting from the mid-twelfth

century. The study is limited to the years 1150–1300 to stay in line with the approximate dating of the three so-called Swedish crusades, with the first commonly thought to have happened in the mid-twelfth century, and the last having been launched in 1293 — more on this shortly. Out of convenience, the names *Sweden* and *Finland* are readily used to denote the areas that gave birth to today's states, but the political situation at the time was more complex (Sawyer 1989; Ahola, Frog and Tolley 2014). Similarly, the term *Scandinavian* will be used to refer to anyone coming from anywhere in modern Norway, Denmark or Sweden. The first part of this article will be a justification of my interpretation of Finland as a borderland which, like Bradley Parker, I define as 'areas between political or cultural entities' (Parker 2006). This is an important step, because the Swedes' interest in Finland came from the fact that it was strategically located at a crossroads between cultures and trade routes. Finland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is therefore a region that lends itself naturally to this volume's theme about northern peripheries.

The preliminary aspect of this research paper will include a discussion surrounding the Northern Crusades, their likely aim and the reason why Finland may have been a strategic target for Christian settlers. Again, the term 'crusade' will be used freely because it easily conveys the idea of religious conflict, but the question of whether Swedish expeditions to Finland truly fit the definition of a crusade has been the subject of considerable debate over the years (Lind 2005). Secondly, the article will discuss how the newly arrived colonists changed Finland's landscape through the combination of urbanisation and the fortifying of new settlements. The southern Finnish city of Åbo, widely known as Turku, will be taken as a case study. The study will thereafter examine a selection of four prehistoric and medieval castles either built or used by Sweden during the period under study. These four examples will allow for a discussion of four aspects of castle-building. The first castle, Viborg, will provide an example of a secondary settlement growing into a city. Haga will be discussed in light of its function as a stand-alone fortification, while excavations at Lieto may help redefine the timeline of Swedish military activity in Finland. Finally, Stenbergå will allow for the investigation of private ownership in an environment heavily dominated by the Swedish Crown. The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the development of these structures in the context of Swedish-Novgorodian conflicts and religious warfare, and the questions that their study may raise.

Medieval Sweden and its dominions are notoriously difficult to study. This is because sources are extremely scarce: the fire at Tre Kronor in 1697 and the subsequent destruction

of Åbo in 1827, also by fire, have deprived us of most archives regarding the early history of Sweden and its territories. The scarcity of local sources can be compensated by using continental sources but makes research concerning medieval Sweden and its territories more laborious and uncertain than desirable. Nevertheless, each generation of scholars has produced works concerning most aspects of medieval Sweden and medieval Finland as far as feasible, especially during the twentieth century. Of course, earlier scholars all worked with the source material available at the time and presented their interpretations of it partly based on the religious, ideological and political contexts in which they wrote. This inherent subjectivity is an important aspect of scholarship to keep in mind, especially when studying areas occupied by foreign forces, such as Finland. Indeed, Finland belonged to Sweden for seven centuries. As a result, a significant proportion of the early scholarship concerning Finnish history was written by members of the Swedish intellectual elite with the linguistic, cultural and political bias that came with their backgrounds (Kirby 2006: 96–98). Among other pioneers of Finnish nationalism such as novelist Zachris Topelius, Finnish historian Väinö Voionmaa largely contributed to the beginnings of medieval Finnish history as its own discipline (rather than as a segment of Swedish history). He notably wrote about taxes and institutions in medieval Finland (1912) but also land administration (1924) and royal manors (1911), all of which are directly linked to the militarisation of Finland by Sweden. But the most famous historian of medieval Finland is perhaps Jarl Gallén, whose most famous work, *Nöteborgsfreden och Finlands medeltida östgräns* (1968), is a study of the peace treaty of 1323 confirming the border between Finland (then part of Sweden) and Novgorod. In his influential article ‘Kring Birger jarl och andra kors-tåget till Finland’ (1946), Gallén successfully argued for an earlier dating of the Second Swedish Crusade, which permanently influenced later scholarship on the subject. Other important historians of northern crusading history include Eric Christiansen, who authored *The Northern Crusades* (1980, reedited 1997), but also Alan Murray who has recently edited several volumes dedicated to these expeditions including *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier 1150–1500* (2001, reedited 2017) and *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier* (2009, reedited 2016).

But while the scholars I just mentioned have all contributed to our understanding of the political and religious reasons behind the Swedish conquest of Finland, few have studied the topic from an archaeological perspective. In fact, the specific study of Sweden’s medieval castles as part of the state-building process is a relatively new area of scholarship. Finnish archaeologist Juhani Runne produced several of the first scholarly studies of Finland’s

medieval castles including *Suomen keskiaikaiset mäkilinnat (Finnish medieval hill castles)* (1914), and *Tanskalaisten ristiretket Suomeen linnatutkimuksen valossa (Danish crusades to Finland in the light of castle research)* (1923). Birgitta Fritz was the first scholar to focus on Sweden's medieval castles and their role in administration. Her PhD thesis, *Hus, land och län: förvaltningen i Sverige 1250–1434* (1972–73) was very influential in advertising this new area of study. Other relevant works by Fritz include the article 'The Building of Castles and the Administration of Sweden' (1997) which highlights the links between state formation and the fortification of Sweden including Finland. Since Fritz, the study of castles in Sweden and its territories has flourished with archaeologist Knut Drake notably helping to popularise the field (1989). One of the first works on medieval fortresses in Sweden to attract a wider audience was however art historian Christian Lovén's book titled *Borgar och befästningar i det medeltida Sverige* (1996). This followed a similar book on Finland's castles written in 1993 by Carl Jacob Gardberg and Per Olof Welin, *Finlands medeltida borgar*. More recently, Martin Hansson (2011) published an analysis of Sweden's medieval castles and their role in politics, *Medeltida borgar: maktens hus i Norden*. For more detailed analysis of archaeological elements concerning Finland's castles, one needs to delve into excavation reports and analyses such as those presented by Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen (1990). If scholarship concerning medieval Sweden, especially that written in English, is generally rare, it is even more so concerning Finland. Early Finnish researchers, often basing their works on national romantic ideology, usually wrote in Finnish only, thus making it difficult for an international audience to access this field. In addition, it is also a result of some of the historical events I shall discuss in this article that medieval Finnish history has often remained in the shadow of its Swedish and Russian neighbours. However, the past couple of decades have seen the emergence of a new generation of scholars based in Finland and the Baltic region striving to make up for this imbalance, and this paper will also help complete the picture.

Northern and Southern Finland as Meeting Points

Finland may be considered a borderland from different perspectives. Firstly, from a geo-climatic point of view, it occupies an interesting location. In terms of climate for instance, the Gulf of Bothnia, situated between Sweden and northern Finland, can be seen as a frontier. South of the gulf, land was arable, and people lived sedentary lives in permanent settlements (Christiansen 1997: 8–10). However, north of the gulf, people relied on hunting, fishing and tracking skills, and followed a nomadic lifestyle (Christiansen 1997: 8–10). These stark

differences in lifestyle north and south of the gulf show that this climatic frontier was also a cultural one. From this perspective, Finland served as a link between continental and Arctic cultures. Finland is also lodged between Scandinavia and Russia, and today it shares land borders in the north with no less than three countries (Sweden, Norway and Russia) within just a few hundred kilometres. Long before the violent clashes that would later involve Swedish colonists and Finnish populations, there had been exchanges including trade but also intermarriages and migration, between Finland and Sweden. This is reflected in several sagas but also in the archaeological material (Mägi 2018: 167–171). For instance, there are a few examples of runestones which mention men called ‘Tavast’. In Uppland, two stones were erected by sponsors named as such. The first one, U 722, says that *Tafæistr let rceisa stcein at ... brodur sinn. [...]*. This means: ‘Tafaist erected this stone [...] after his brother’. The second stone is U 467 which explains that *Tafæist(r) . . . [ræi]sa stæin penn[a] [...]*. This translates as: ‘Tafaist [...] erected this stone. [...]’ (Roslund 2017: 188). Both artefacts have been dated to the eleventh century, thus at least a century before the conquest of Finland by Sweden. This ethnonym has been interpreted notably by Mats Roslund among others as direct reference to the region of Tavastia, an inland region of southern Finland. These men may therefore have emigrated from Tavastia. Alternatively, their ancestors may have done so (Roslund 2017: 188). In any case, the presence of this ethnonym in runic inscriptions from Sweden is evidence that there had been immigration and integration into Swedish society before the Baltic crusades.

In Southern Finland, Tapani Tuovinen also likened the Finnish archipelago to a borderland due to its changing nature, from coast to islands, islands to rocky islets, and islets to the open sea (Tuovinen 2011: 28–29). This landscape was a meeting place in medieval (and probably earlier) times for the inland populations and the coast dwellers, where cultures met, goods were traded, and individuals encountered each other (Tuovinen 2011: 28–29). Still today, the Gulf of Finland remains a geo-political meeting point between Finland, Estonia and Russia, with modern Saint Petersburg located at the eastern end of it. In medieval times, its proximity to Novgorod made the area ideal for trade. However, archaeological remains of early harbour sites in the Baltic region can be difficult to detect. Marika Mägi explains that there are several reasons for this. Firstly, the harbours may have been infrequently used. Secondly, these structures are ‘difficult to find because of fewer metal items in their culture layer’ (Mägi 2018: 93). Thirdly, prior to the Viking Age, river-cruising

may have been a more popular option, making these harbours ‘particularly complicated to distinguish from “ordinary” settlement sites’ (Mägi 2018: 94).

In the specific case of the Finnish archipelago, the rocky islets, and numerous islands which Tuovinen (2011: 28–29) points out as being a borderland may in fact have hindered Finland’s access to the main trade routes. While the Estonian coasts are incredibly rich in artefacts and archaeological remains evidencing vibrant trade over the centuries, the evidence is sparser for Finland (Mägi 2018: 93–99). It has been suggested that the rocky coast of southern Finland would have been difficult to navigate, while the lack of arable land meant that crews overwintering or stopping for a while risked supply shortages (Mägi 2018: 98). Tuovinen however proposes that some of the harbours situated along this inconvenient coast may have served as transshipment stops where ships were reloaded (Tuovinen 2011: 44). Nevertheless, there are also archaeological imprints of cargo and shipments outside of settlements and possible harbour sites which suggest that at least part of the sea traffic did have Finnish ports as destination (Tuovinen 2011: 44). As Mägi pointed out, the difficulty associated with navigating Finnish waters does not invalidate the possibility that some seafarers would have done so anyway (Mägi 2018: 99). The fourteenth-century Codex Holmensis A41, which Gallén (1993) argued was written by a Franciscan monk, contains an itinerary (possibly in use as early as the thirteenth century) which shows that safer routes were used to reach Finnish ports such as the southern harbour at Hangö (Zwick 2017: 55–63). In addition to this, there is evidence of inland trade in Finland as well, where commodities such as fur and food would have been exchanged (Ahola, Frog and Tolley 2014: 495–498). Land and river routes running from Scandinavia and Russia led to Finland, and traders could therefore easily reach the region without requiring open sea travel (Ahola, Frog and Tolley 2014: 495–498).

The Swedish Crusades to Finland

As mentioned previously, Finland is located at a crossroads between nations, and shares a particularly long border with Russia. This proximity to both Scandinavia and Russia has played a major role in Finnish history since the early Middle Ages. It was notably a fundamental aspect of the religious wars that raged in the Baltic Sea region between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. These religious conflicts are known by scholars as the Northern (or Baltic) Crusades (Christiansen 1997: 1–8). They were expeditions conducted in the name of the Catholic Church against the pagan communities of the eastern Baltic region

and had a profound effect on Finland. These expeditions led to Finland's permanent integration into the Swedish kingdom during the thirteenth century (Westerholm 2002: 129–130). There were several documented crusades launched from Sweden to Finland during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Although they were never explicitly described as such in contemporary documents, similarities with their counterparts in the Holy Land are obvious, hence the denomination ('Northern Crusades') they were given by scholars (Christiansen 1997: 50). It is unclear when and where exactly the first wave of attacks took place. According to late thirteenth-century sources such as *Erikslegenden* (*The Legend of King Eric*) now preserved in the *Registrum Upsalense* (Bengtsson and Lovén 2012: 24), the so-called First Swedish Crusade took place sometime in the mid-twelfth century. The story tells of King Eric's voyage to Finland accompanied by a bishop, Henry. There, they preached to the native populations; when the local populations refused to convert, they were attacked by the king's troops, after which a Christian community was established. Eric sailed back to Sweden while Henry supposedly went on to become the first bishop of Finland (*Sankt Eriks legenden*, ed. Schmid 1954: xix). Most aspects of this episode are regarded as a literary construction and it remains debated whether the Swedes went on a crusade to Finland before the thirteenth century (Christiansen 1997: 114–115). However, the *Novgorod First Chronicle*, which covers various political events from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, clearly states that in the year 1142, '(...) a Knyaz of the Svei with a Bishop in sixty boats attacked merchants who were coming from over sea in three boats (...)’ (*The Chronicle of Novgorod*, ed. Michell and Forbes 1914: 17).¹ In addition, several papal letters also seem to suggest that Swedish attempts to convert Finland did take place during the twelfth century. In 1165, Pope Alexander III wrote to the archbishop of Uppsala and Jarl Guttorm to complain about the Finns who, he wrote, kept pretending to accept the Christian faith but always reverted to their old beliefs as soon as the Christian armies withdrew:

Phinni semper imminente sibi exercitu inimicorum, fidem seruare Christianam promittunt, et praedicatorum et eruditorum Christianae legis desideranter requirunt, et recedente exercitu fidem abnegant, praedicatorum contemnunt, et grauius persequuntur. (SDHK 207)

Finns always promise to serve the Christian faith following the threat of their enemies' army, and longingly seek the preachers and scholars of the Christian

law, and upon the army withdrawing, deny the faith, disregard the preachers and persecute them severely.²

This indeed seems to confirm that Swedish armies had been involved in Finland since the mid-twelfth century, although control of the area may have been brittle. What is more certain is that Swedish troops launched several expeditions to Finland during the thirteenth century with the clear aim of gaining and keeping control of the native populations.

The Second Swedish Crusade is said to have been headed by Birger Magnusson (later known as Birger Jarl) either in 1249, the date that Christiansen retains (1997: 117) or 1239 as supported by other scholars such as Jarl Gallén (1946). This discrepancy will be explained shortly. Again, direct evidence for the expedition is meagre. The only surviving medieval source for the expedition is the fourteenth century *Erikskrönikan* known in English as the *Eric Chronicle* (Line 2016: 73), which is the oldest surviving Swedish chronicle. It was probably written in the first quarter for the fourteenth century but now only survives in later manuscripts, including Codex Holmensiens D2 dated to ca. 1470 (Österberg 2012: 13). Because the chronicle is our only written source for this event, the possibility of a significant crusade has sometimes been met with scepticism (Line 2007: 438; Lind 2017: 143). Most scholars, including all those referenced so far, nevertheless accept that there was some expedition to Finland around the mid-thirteenth century. The lack of sources is a typical problem when it comes to studying medieval Sweden, and lack of contemporary writings about an event should therefore not be taken as definite proof that it did not happen. Indeed, there are reasons to believe that the Second Crusade did take place as it is told. Complaints about the Finns' lack of cooperation with the Catholic authorities did not stop in the twelfth century. A letter from 1237 written by pope Gregory IX expresses the exact same concerns as the ones quoted above, namely that the Finns reverted to their old beliefs and persecuted the Christians again:

Nam sicut transmise ad nos vestre littere continebant illorum qui tauesti dicuntur, nacio que olim multo labore ac studio uestro & predecessorum uestrorum ad fidem Catholicam conuersa extitit nunc procurantibus inimicis crucis prope positis ad antiqui erroris reuersa perfidiam cum quibusdam barbaris nouellam ecclesie dej plantacionem de tauestia funditus dyabolo coadiuuante subuertunt (...) (SDHK 514)

In fact, as transmitted to us by your letters which contained all that the Tavastians are said to be, a people once converted to the Catholic faith through your hard work and zeal, as well as your predecessors', now returned to the faithlessness of the old pagan beliefs by close, instigating enemies of the cross, [who] with the devil's help, along with some savages, completely upset the new establishment of God's church in Tavastia [...].

In the same letter, the pope goes on to urge the archbishop of Uppsala and his suffragans to go on a crusade to Finland. In this context, it is not surprising that an attack was launched a few years later.

However, the dating of the Second Crusade is problematic. Two dates are usually proposed, 1249 and 1239 (Line 2007: 439), although other alternatives exist. The dating of 1249, which was for a long time accepted but is now rejected by many modern scholars, is based on a particular interpretation of the *Erikskrönikan* and the events it relates. But the chronicle gives no date and is generally considered unreliable because it is at odds with other, more chronologically accurate sources such as *Hákonar saga* (Line 2007: 438). The dating of 1239, initially proposed by Gallén (1946), is more coherent notably because the crusade would have been a direct reaction to the papal letter quoted above. It would also fit with other diplomatic events happening in Germany during the same year, as the Danes were granted lands in Estonia. Therefore, the Swedes may have wanted to consolidate their position in Finland in order to repel the Danish threat (Line 2007: 439). Leading such an expedition as early as 1239 would have allowed Birger Magnusson to improve his reputation as a leader in preparation for his later career as Sweden's most powerful medieval statesman. However, the lack of mention of this crusade in contemporary sources suggests that the expedition was not as successful as it was intended to be (Line 2007: 440). John Lind agrees that the event was probably insignificant although this expedition indicated Sweden's political ambitions clearly (Lind 2017: 143). Nevertheless, by the mid-thirteenth century, Sweden's lasting influence over Finland was a lot more obvious. While papal legate William of Modena held authority over the bishopric of Finland in 1234 (SDHK 40858), Philip Line and Per Olof Sjöstrand (1996: 23) among others posited that by 1241 this authority was held by the bishop of Linköping (Line 2007: 433). By 1245, the administration of the Diocese of Finland was the archbishop of Uppsala's responsibility as evidenced by the pope's requests that he financially support and later formally punish Bishop Thomas in Finland (SDHK 547, 549). In 1253, the first historically attested Swedish bishop of Finland, Bengt, was listed among other Swedish

bishops belonging to the archdiocese of Uppsala (SDHK 682). Bengt was Birger Magnusson's son, which shows that Sweden's grip over Finland was now firmer than it had ever been before.

The Northern Crusades in general targeted many more areas besides Finland. But the latter was an important battleground because of its location on the doorstep of the Orthodox Church. Indeed, while the crusades, both southern and northern, primarily targeted pagans and heathens, increasing tensions between the Catholic and Orthodox churches seem to have justified some of the attacks perpetrated by the crusader states against non-Christian Baltic populations (Nielsen 2016: 231–233). Until the thirteenth century, relations between Catholics and Orthodox Christians were mostly peaceful, as evidenced by the trade relations they maintained not only with the Swedes but with the Germans as well and many others (Ekdahl 2016: 4). At least, there are few mentions, if any, of obviously religious conflicts between both groups. However, in 1229, a papal letter was sent to the bishop of Linköping, rector of Visby, and Cistercian abbot in Roma (Gotland) which forbade traders from doing business with the Russians because they harassed the Christians of Finland (SDHK 460). There is a small chance that some of these Russians were pagan, but we know that the traders visiting Visby from Novgorod were generally Orthodox as evidenced by the Russian churches that were built in Visby itself (Blomkvist 2005: 498–500). Therefore, the hostility shown in this papal letter (SDHK 460), and many similar ones across the Baltic region, is indicative of a deterioration in relations between the two churches. Reasons for this change of mood have been studied by scholars such as Mark Muzinger (2006: 167) and Torben Nielsen (2016: 231–253) who blame the hostile attitude towards the Orthodox on a clash of cultures between East and West. Muzinger argues that this clash went beyond religion, with a different ideology such as that evidenced by legal practices and interpersonal relations playing a role in the growing schism between the two churches (Muzinger 2006: 167). Line (2016: 89–97) focuses instead on the trade arrangements in place between East and West at the time and the increasing need for western kingdoms to control access to Lake Ladoga. This very large lake, situated near modern-day Saint Petersburg just across the Finnish border, serves as meeting point for several important waterways. These waterways, in turn, provide access along the Russian river and water networks to the White Sea in the north, and to the Black and Caspian seas in the south (Line 2016: 89–97). This strategic position necessarily led to competition over the lake's control. This tense geopolitical situation may have precipitated the Third Swedish Crusade launched in 1293 against the Karelians (Christiansen 1997: 118–122; Line

2016: 89–97). Genuine religious fervour can never be discounted either. There may therefore have been a mix of different reasons behind these military expeditions towards Finland, with the result being that by the mid-thirteenth century, the region was under Swedish control.

Urbanisation and Fortifications: Åbo and its Castle

Up until the Swedes' mass arrival in the thirteenth century, Finland had been a sparsely populated area. By the twelfth century, it is estimated that the population of the whole of Finland was only about 40,000 people (Westerholm 2002: 124). One of the first effects of Swedish rule in Finland was to allow for the immigration of Swedish settlers, many of whom were farmers simply looking for new arable land and relief from increasingly heavy taxes (Westerholm 2002: 124–125). As discussed previously, Finland had already been on the political periphery of Scandinavia for some time. It had a diocese, initially under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Lund and later the archbishop of Uppsala, since the twelfth century (Andersson 1990: 54–55). The diocese was first established in Nousis (Fin. Nousiainen), which is a settlement about twenty kilometres north-west of Åbo. Archaeological remains point to the bishop's seat having later been moved to the settlement of Korois, before it was subsequently moved to Åbo during the thirteenth century (Harjula and Immonen 2012: 2–3). However, there are no written records of this move. Dating these developments is difficult as contemporary sources are very scarce. Rather than being distinct seats, Mikko Heikkilä (2012: 455–456) proposes that Åbo initially referred to the bishop's official residence while the actual seat was in Korois. Following the growth of the settlement around the bishop's palace, he posits that the surrounding area and eventually the cathedral came to be known as Åbo (2012: 455–456). Korois is now a recreational green space which lies in the centre of modern-day Åbo. In any case, two letters from the bishop of Finland, Thomas, were written in 1234 from Nousis (SDHK 496; 497). What happened in the few years after this is unclear but, in 1259, a letter from Pope Alexander IV (SDHK 778) was addressed to 'Capitulum aboensi', the chapter in Åbo. It is difficult to determine how many settlements existed in Finland before the arrival of the Swedes, or how big they were. However, the parochial system, with Åbo at its heart, started taking hold in Finland in the 1220s and 1230s (Haikinen 2010: 343–344).

While the Swedish crusades reaffirmed Christianity in regions which may still have practised paganism to an extent, the Swedes were not the first Christians in Finland. There is no indication that the first bishops of Finland were Swedish, and we know that the region's

Christianisation process started during the Viking Age (Ville Laakso 2014: 110). There is also archaeological evidence that Christian (or at least Christian-inspired) practices such as inhumation instead of cremation had been taking place long before the crusades (Fewster 2016: 98–99). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the oldest church building identified in Finland might have been built by Swedes. In 2013, the remains of what is thought to be Finland's oldest church were found and excavated in Ravattula, about three kilometres from Korois. These were dated to the second half of the twelfth century (Ruohonen 2017). All coins found at the site so far came from Gotland. Furthermore, the design of the chancel is reminiscent of what Ruohonen calls 'Scandinavian' examples (Ruohonen 2017: 50–52). Although Ruohonen does not explain what he means by 'Scandinavian', the plan of the church at Ravattula (with the chancel built lower than the nave) was very common in Sweden during the same period (Linscott 2006: 14–18). Even more strikingly, the church, presumed to have been wooden, was built on top of a stone foundation: a design rarely seen in Finnish architecture of that period, if ever (Ruohonen 2017: 50). But stone was commonly used in Sweden: by the first half of the twelfth century, all churches on Gotland were made entirely of stone (Ranta et al 2009: 85). It is therefore possible that this church was built by Swedish or Gotlandic people, or according to their fashion. The church was most probably abandoned around the time when the bishop's seat was moved from Nousis to Korois (Ruohonen 2017: 57–58). Despite the evidence found at Ravattula, the building of Finland's earliest churches cannot systematically be attributed to the Swedes because there were Christians in Finland before the Swedish conquest. The result of the ongoing excavations at Ravattula shows that from the thirteenth century onwards, the urbanisation of Finland accelerated under the Swedes' influence. In order to illustrate the process, I shall focus on two examples: Åbo and Viborg.

There had been another wooden church about a kilometre away from Korois since at least the mid-thirteenth century (Andersson 1990: 55). By the 1270s, it had been upgraded with stone additions and scholars such as Andersson have speculated that by the 1290s it had become the cathedral of Åbo (Andersson 1990: 55). However, Drake (2003: 129) posits that this church was probably mainly made of wood until at least the fifteenth century before stone elements were added. It also remains debated whether the cathedral of Åbo was purpose-built in anticipation of a move from Korois, or if, as Andersson argued, an earlier church was reused. As Bertil Nilsson (2017: 663–664) points out, neither the archaeological evidence nor primary sources give a clear answer to this question. In any case, the evolution

of Åbo Cathedral from wooden to stone church mirrors the increasingly systematic conversion of wooden churches into more imposing and permanent stone churches which took place during the same period elsewhere in Finland (Drake 1989: 5). Markus Hiekannen has produced many studies on the subject and identified the period between 1430 and 1560 as particularly dynamic in terms of the replacement of wooden churches with stone ones (Hiekannen 2020), which is in line with Drake's assumption. In any case, Åbo was referred to as a city by 1309 ('civitatis', SDHK 2289), and might have enjoyed that status before that. Norman Pounds defines a medieval town as 'a human settlement, larger than a village and not primarily dependent on agriculture for the employment and support of its inhabitants' (Pounds 2005: 1). In western Europe, for a town to be granted the superior status of city, certain requirements had to be met. These requirements and, indeed the very concept of *civitas*, were based on urban systems stretching back to the Romans (Pounds 2005: 125–132). Few places met all criteria, but some of the most important were to have a cathedral, a sufficiently numerous and dense population, as well as an advanced infrastructure including fortifications. Intense economic activity through the holding of markets and fairs was expected as well (Pounds 2005: 125–132). Another useful indicator of how established and powerful a town was, is the presence of authority seats such as a court of justice but also any other building from where legal authority and administrative duties were exercised (Pounds 2005: 130–131). The concept of the medieval *civitas* developed chiefly in England, France and the Mediterranean regions on the example of Greco-Roman central administrative towns (Pounds 2005: 6–7). Many European cities such as London, Byzantium and most of the French cities were in fact initially founded as *civitates* by the Romans and kept a similar function during the Middle-Ages (Pounds 2005: 6–7; 86–87). By the twelfth century, Sweden was undergoing a process of Europeanisation of its culture and practices (Lindkvist 2006). There is therefore no reason to believe that the pattern of development for northern cities was any different.

For Åbo, the change from town to city probably happened relatively slowly, however. For instance, while there is evidence of Swedish coins being minted in Åbo, it was not before the very early fifteenth century (Jonsson 2014: 10–11). There are a couple of possible reasons for the late establishment of a mint in Åbo. Firstly, it may have been part of King Erik's plan to help Finland become more autonomous in the context of the Kalmar Union (Jonsson 2014: 10–11). Secondly, giving Finland its own supply of Swedish coins spared it the need to rely on foreign currencies, which depreciated significantly at the turn of the century (Jonsson

2014: 10–11). In addition to the establishment of a mint, Erik also gave Åbo its first court, the *landsrätt*, thus fulfilling another criterion of importance (Jonsson 2014: 10–11). But in any case, the fact that Finland (despite belonging to Sweden for over a century) did not strike coins and did not have its own judicial premises unlike the rest of the kingdom, emphasises the idea that the region was still peripheral. It also shows that Åbo, despite its local importance, may not have had the same privileges as other cities in Sweden until at least the fifteenth century, which gives a rough idea of how long the urbanisation process took in Finland.

I mentioned that a good indication of whether a settlement was a city was the presence of fortifications. Many castles were built by the Swedes over the six hundred years that Finland belonged to Sweden. Carl Gardberg's *Finlands medeltida borgar* (1993) gives a general overview of their development over the centuries, while Knut Drake's article 'Borgar, kyrkor och ekonomi i Finland 1220–1520' (1989) gives a more precise classification of each type of fortress represented in Finnish history and their function within society. I thus recommend both these works, should the reader wish to delve deeper into the subject. In Åbo, a castle was built in the middle of the thirteenth century by the Swedes. As with anything concerning medieval Sweden and Finland, the exact date of construction remains unclear (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 27). It is also unclear whether an earlier, wooden fortification had been erected there, and if so, by whom. It is generally the case that stone churches and castles in Finland replaced earlier wooden structures (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 27), a phenomenon which is witnessed all over Europe as well. A date of ca. 1280 is often proposed for the erection of the stone castle of Åbo (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 27). This date was notably suggested by Ericus Olai in *Chronica regni Gothorum* (ed. Heuman and Oberg 1993–1995), although the historicity of the events presented in the source itself is contested (Drake 1989: 4). For reasons expressed below, the present author however agrees with the date of ca. 1280 for the fortress's construction.

But if it was indeed built in 1280 and if the Second Crusade took place in 1239, there may have been a forty-year gap between the establishment of Åbo as an important ecclesiastical settlement and the building of its first stone castle. This seems a rather long time span. Of course, I already mentioned that there may have been an earlier structure there, made of wood, which is obviously less advanced than a stone castle. If a wooden castle was enough to protect Åbo for four decades, warfare in the region cannot have been very intense. This would confirm the view, held by scholars such as Line (2016: 97) and Lind (2017: 142–

143), that the Second Swedish Crusade and its short-term aftermath were not as intense as what transpired in their later historiography. Indeed, as the papal bull from 1237 showed, the Holy See's primary concern was to return pagan populations to the Catholic faith. The local populations lacked the know-how and means to resist the Swedish forces, let alone take down a castle, even a wooden one (Line 2016: 97). There was probably no immediate need to invest heavily in military infrastructure for simple peacekeeping. However, towards the last years of the thirteenth century, tensions with Novgorod escalated especially in terms of trade domination, which partly explains the Third Crusade (Line 2016: 89–97; Lind 2017: 143–144). The Novgorodians started building their own stone fortresses in Karelia, the region lodged between central Finland (which the Swedes had by then well under control) and Russia. These new opponents were a lot more powerful and skilled than the farmers the Swedes had faced during their first two Crusades. It is therefore probably not a coincidence that Åbo's castle was upgraded from its originally rudimentary design to the mighty structure that still stands today around 1280. In fact, several waves of castle-building have been identified in Finland, the first one starting in the late thirteenth-century. All other imposing stone fortresses built by the Swedes, such as Viborg, were also either built or significantly upgraded starting from 1280 (Gardberg and Welin 1993), which shows that this was a period of transition in the region's militarisation. The development of Åbo from a small episcopal settlement during the first half of the thirteenth century to acquiring city status by the 1300s and the growth of its wooden church into a stone cathedral also help illustrate the region's urbanisation during the same period.

The Castle of Viborg and its City

While an important city for ecclesiastical and political reasons, Åbo was not the only area to experience rapid growth or development following the Swedish conquest. Viborg is another settlement worth mentioning. The town of Viborg (also known as Vyborg), which is not to be confused with its Danish namesake, was strategically situated on the Finnish side of the border region with Russia, only three hundred kilometres away from Novgorod. Today, Viborg is in fact located in Russia. What is interesting about Viborg is that rather than starting as a settlement to which a castle was added, it seems to have been the other way around. Its construction may have been a direct consequence of the beginning of the Third Swedish Crusade (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 65) and the Novgorodian raids that occurred during that time. Both the *Novgorod First Chronicle* and *Erikskrönikan* clearly mention the construction

of Viborg. The *Novgorod First Chronicle* says that in 1292, ‘the Svei, 800 of them, came in arms to ravage, 400 went against the Korel, and 400 against the Izhera’, and the next year, in 1293, ‘The Svei having come put up a town in the Korel land’ (Michell and Forbes 1914: 111). While *Erikskrönikan* does not give an exact date, the chronicle emphasises the impenetrability of the fortress. Concerning the Swedes, it says:

Sidhan foro the til hedna landa // ok lösto skadha ok mykin wanda // the
hedne men gingo them alt affnär // thet war thera mesta ärende ther, // ok
bygde eth hus a then ända, // ther cristin land ather wända // ok hedhin land
taka widher. // Ther er nu swa goder frider, // mere liise ok mere roo // ok
flere the ther a Gudh troo. // Thet hus heter Wiborgh ok ligger öster, //
thädhan warder mangel fange löster. // Thet hus er hedna manna atherhald,
// swa at the haffwa ther nu minne wald // rytsa än the haffdo föör // utan
finna skadha för sin dör. // The lotho thet hus alt mura aff steen.
(Erikskrönikan ed. Sven Bertil Jansson 2003: 72)

Then to the heathen lands they went // To end the damage and great torment
// (too close to them the heathens were) // that was their main task over there,
// and built a castle at that end // to which the Christian lands extend // and
heathen lands in turn begin. // Firm peace does now hold sway therein, //
with greater calm and more relief // and more who have in God belief. // That
castle, called Vyborg, lies in the east; // from there many captives are released.
// The castle keeps the heathen men at bay, // so that now the Russian men
hold less sway // than they used to before, // but now are menaced at their
own backdoor. // The whole castle they built of stone. [Carlquist and Hogg
2012: 92–93]

As suggested in the rhyme and as can be witnessed on the ground, the castle held a particularly strategic location in the Karelian Isthmus, being located at the crossing point of several waterways. This gave it a prominent position in a region known for the logistical and commercial opportunities it offered, as well as its fertile lands suitable for agriculture (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 65–68). The Karelian Isthmus thus became a fortified borderland tightly kept under the grip of Viborg. The implicit border between Swedes and Novgorodians, which Viborg was clearly meant to protect, was confirmed in writing in 1323 (Roslund 2017: 196–197, Gallén 1968). As with most other castles, excavations revealed an earlier wooden

structure under the current building, together with evidence of Viking-Age culture layers in the nearby town of Viborg (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 66). It has been suggested that this settlement may have been established by the native population as far back as AD 900 and possibly earlier (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 66). My interpretation is thus that upon conquering the region, the Swedes may have replaced this settlement with their own castle. In any case, its position at the border with the Novgorod territories means that the fortress would also have been more exposed to warfare. In fact, there is archaeological evidence that the houses built around it regularly burned down and kept being rebuilt (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 67–68). Unlike Åbo, the Swedish settlement at Viborg was secondary to the castle. Indeed, a large range of amenities were required to run such an imposing castle. Food supplies had to be provided of course, but craftspeople were also required, alongside specialist workers such as farriers. These people needed to be close by and that is probably how Viborg went from being a simple castle to a larger community (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 67–68). By the mid-fourteenth century, it was also referred as a *civitas*, although its amenities were nowhere near as abundant as Åbo's (Andersson 1990: 55).

Stand-Alone Fortifications

It has now become clear that the period starting from 1280 was a turning point in the development of military infrastructure in Finland. As we can see from the examples of Viborg and Åbo, the development of large settlements and castles were often linked. Either the castle was built to defend the settlement, or a settlement naturally formed around it. Although for practical reasons this article cannot discuss this aspect of urbanisation and militarisation, it is also worth highlighting the development of infrastructure between the different strongholds, especially in the form of road networks (Masonen 1988). The castles that the Swedes built often had administrative and economic functions as well (Ehrnsten 2019: 159–160). We know for instance from a letter dated to 1281 written by King Magnus Ladulås that the castle of Borgholm situated on the island of Öland was used to collect taxes (SDHK 1197). It is likely that this sort of administrative duty would have taken place at the local castle, especially if it had been built by the central authorities themselves.

Around 1280 is also when an aristocracy, constituted of those who owned horses, was first established in Sweden by King Magnus Ladulås (Line 2007: 136–140). The creation of a new social class whose main duty was to provide armed service to the Crown shows an obvious militarisation of Swedish society which is illustrated through the fortifying of the

landscape. Nevertheless, while the building of many imposing castles and the growth of associated settlements evidences a dynamic defence policy, not all Swedish castles in Finland were built to protect large urban centres or became surrounded by one. The Swedes had started building fortifications earlier than 1280, and these were usually stand-alone fortifications which had an exclusively military role. This is especially true of the earliest castles (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 21–26). Those built during the Crusades would have served for warfare only. They would have been required to pacify the population before the possibility of establishing any permanent Swedish settlement could be considered (Taavitsainen 1990: 167).

Haga (Fin. Hakoinen)

These earlier castles include, for example, the hillfort of Haga. Haga was built on top of a rocky hill which provided it with natural protection against assailants. It is located about seventeen kilometres away from the better-known castle of Tavastehus, which was also built by the Swedes (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 23–24). Haga overlooks a lake and would have provided easy access to the shores of the Gulf of Finland (Taavitsainen 1990: 165). Unfortunately, few archaeological investigations have taken place at the site of Haga and it remains unclear when the structure was first erected. But its location on top of a natural promontory is reminiscent of similar hillforts found not only elsewhere in Finland but also all over the Baltic region. Finnish forts built in similar settings include Rapola, Lieto (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 21–26), and dozens of others as well (Taavitsainen 1990). Hillforts in Scandinavia were usually built during the Migration Period and periodically reused over the centuries (Taavitsainen 1990: 127–132). However, the abundance of specifically medieval finds at Haga has led archaeologists such as Taavitsainen (1990) and economic historians such as Frida Ehrnsten to mostly dismiss the possibility of earlier activity at the site (Ehrnsten 2019: 159–160). Furthermore, *Erikskrönikan* mentions a ‘Taffwesta borg’ having been built by Birger Jarl during the Second Crusade: ‘*Thet hus heyter Taffwesta borg, // the hedno haffwa ther än fore sorg*’ (*Erikskrönikan* ed. Sven-Bertil Jansson 2003: 32) which translates as: ‘That castle is called Tavastehus, // it still gives the heathens trouble’ (Carlquist and Hogg 2012: 236). It remains debated whether this line refers to Haga, or to Tavastehus. Taavitsainen reviewed all arguments for the two alternatives and argues that the text passage refers to Haga (1990: 165–167). It is interesting that the author specifically mentions that ‘Taffwesta borg’ *still* gives the heathen trouble, which shows that the castle was

still in use as the chronicle was written, in ca. 1325. Unfortunately, this indication does not help since both fortresses would still be contenders, as Haga did not fall into disuse until the fourteenth century.

Indeed, Haga's later use is easier to determine. Archaeological finds such as coins from the reign of King Birger Magnusson (b. 1280, not to be confused with Birger Jarl) prove that the fortress was still actively being used in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (Ehrnsten 2019: 159–160). Nevertheless, because of the proximity of Haga to Tavastehus and their slightly overlapping periods of activity, I stand by the hypothesis that Tavastehus, regardless of its exact origin, replaced Haga as the latter lost its importance. A possible reason for the relocation of Haga to the modern Tavastehus at the turn of the fourteenth century might have simply been a lack of space. Indeed, I posit that its position on a hilltop with sharp ridges on each side, while naturally advantageous, may not have allowed for the fort's expansion. As conflicts worsened with Novgorod, this expansion would have probably been necessary. Pooling resources further inland may also have helped the Swedes settle more permanently, in which case a castle practical enough to be used as an administrative centre would have also been a requirement (Taavitsainen 1990: 168).

Lieto (Fin. Vanhalinna)

The castle of Lieto was built inland at the top of a rocky hill similar to Haga. It is located very close to Åbo and occupies a vantage point over the river Aura, which connects the area directly to the sea. There are clear archaeological clues suggesting that the castle was in use since at least BC 500, possibly before that too (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 21). It may have been in near-permanent use until the thirteenth or fourteenth century (Drake 1989: 4). What is particularly interesting with the hillfort of Lieto is that it might be evidence of the twelfth-century First Swedish Crusade. Indeed, it has been discussed already that this event has often been dismissed as mythical because the only extant source about it is *Erikskrönikan*. However, it has also been mentioned that contemporary Russian chronicles did record an expedition led by a Swedish king, a bishop and sixty boats. Several papal letters also suggest that expeditions took place in the twelfth century and there is no doubt that the site of Lieto was eventually taken over and fortified by the Swedes (Taavitsainen 1990: 139–141). The question is when.

Archaeological excavations at Lieto have shown that activity at the site may have paused in the second half of the twelfth century before it resumed thereafter until the mid-

fourteenth century (Drake 1989: 4). Artefacts retrieved from the site, which include coins, brooches, and scrap metal, have been dated to the crusading period. Many of them have been identified as Scandinavian (Taavitsainen 1990: 139–141) but coins found in the vicinity of the site also included English and German examples (Jonsson 2010: 25). The fact that Lieto seems to have experienced a dip in activity precisely around the time of the supposed First Crusade could suggest a link between the two events. Drake (1989: 4) points out that the Swedes may have taken over the structure as early as 1200. Before this, the fort was most probably used by the local population (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 22). The papal bull sent by Pope Alexander III to the archbishop of Uppsala (SDHK 207), which was partly quoted previously, allowed for the confiscation of local castles and military gear. It says: *‘[...] si ingruerit necessitas ad auxilium & defensionem vestram non possint recurrere, nisi munitiones, si quas habent, vobis tenendas assignent’*, which translates as *‘[...] they cannot use your help and defence in case of need unless they hand over their equipment to you if they have some [...]’*. It is therefore possible that the dip in activity at Lieto may be linked to such a case of requisition, especially as there is no evidence of the castle burning down or otherwise experiencing severe damage during this period. Nevertheless, Swedish occupation at Lieto during the twelfth century remains hypothetical. Novgorodian attacks could provide an alternative explanation for the fort’s quieter period as evidenced by finds of Novgorodian arrows during the excavations at the site (Taavitsainen 1990: 139–141). Indeed, while these arrows were dated to the fourteenth century, it has been noted that the original design and location of this hillfort indicate that it may have served as defence against inland threats rather than overseas attackers (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 22). The concordance between the fort’s chronology of use and apparent Swedish efforts against Finland during the twelfth century might therefore prove coincidental. However, these two hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. I argue that the castle could have been initially designed by the local population to protect the area against inland threats, while also having been taken over by the Swedes in the twelfth century. There would have been no need to modify the structure’s design following the Swedish takeover, as Novgorod was also an inland threat for the Swedes. Therefore, based on the archaeological evidence from Lieto, it can be inferred that Swedish military activity in Finland took place decades before the Second Crusade.

Non-Royal Private Fortifications?

Lastly, this article will focus on the status of these fortifications. All Swedish castles built during the early phase of Finland's integration within the kingdom of Sweden are assumed to be *riksborgar*, that is, royal castles. In the absence of evidence suggesting otherwise, royal ownership seems the most plausible option. In well-documented cases such as Åbo, Viborg or Tavastehus, there is no reason to believe that anyone else than the king was behind the building of these fortresses. But there are always castles of which there is no mention anywhere despite their remains being clearly visible. The castle of Stenbergå is one of them. It is located about twenty kilometres north of Åbo and was also built on top of a promontory overlooking a river (Suhonen 2002: 16). Because of this, archaeologists tend to give it a similar dating to Haga and Lieto (Drake 1989: 4). Extremely little is known about the site. Basic excavations were carried out in the early twentieth century but direly require further, modern investigation (Suhonen 2002: 16). It was originally assumed by Juhani Rinne (1932), to whom we owe the first scientific study of Stenbergå, that the castle predated the thirteenth century, because of its basic structure. This is however contestable, as castles were built according to their owners' goals and wealth (Suhonen 2002: 16). A small and simple castle could therefore be much younger than a sophisticated one.

The first written mention of Stenbergå can be found in a charter from 1398 in which Stenbergå is listed among other estates being exchanged between a German knight and Jakob Abrahamsson (SDHK 14946). Abrahamsson appeared in other sources as well under the name of Jeppe Djäken (Fritz 1972: 130–131). He was the bailiff at the castle of Åbo already in 1377 (SDHK 10955) and was named *lagman* of Finland in 1386 (SDHK 13181). He evidently owned several estates in Finland, and it is likely that he received some of these directly from the Crown. Indeed, among his responsibilities, he was entrusted with several estates that he was to administer on behalf of Queen Margaret (Fritz 1972: 131–132). However, the transaction involving Stenbergå in 1398 makes no mention of it being carried out on behalf of anyone, which might mean that Stenbergå was by then no longer a royal castle (if it had ever been one), or that it was at least not under direct royal control. It is therefore possible that the castle may have been an example of a fortification owned by a private individual and, considering that nothing is known of its early history, it may have been so already in the thirteenth century. This obviously raises questions, which cannot be covered in this article alone, concerning the power yielded by wealthy individuals and families in a region only recently absorbed into the Swedish Crown's jurisdiction.

It is generally accepted that not all fortresses in early medieval Sweden were built or owned by the king. Many fortifications were either built by the lesser nobility directly or were somehow acquired by wealthy private owners. Private ownership is particularly apparent in the case of coastal fortifications in Norrland, which also never appear in any sources (Line 2007: 313–315). Similarly, on Gotland, the apparition of freestanding towers (*kastaler*) in the twelfth century has been attributed to local initiative, either private or collective (Johansson 2011). While the purpose of these towers remains unclear, it is likely that they played several roles including that of granary and social space, but perhaps also served to defend their local parish (Johansson 2011: 3–8; 25). The simple design of Gotland's *kastaler* is reminiscent of Stenberg's architecture, which Juhani Rinne thought was very basic. Perhaps the castle was designed with a focus on other functions rather than only warfare, as can be assumed from Gotland's *kastaler*. The idea that castles would have been built privately in Finland during the same period is thus plausible. Of course, the building of such an imposing and expensive structure would have been undertaken by a wealthy family with enough authority to fortify its land. There were such powerful landowners in Sweden long before the establishment of an aristocracy (Line 2007). But what about Finland? Following the conquest of Finland by Sweden, it is likely that the local noble families were integrated into the Swedish elite.

Marko Lamberg has written extensively about the perception of the Finns in Swedish society during the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. He has discussed how the Finns, following their integration into the kingdom of Sweden, received the same legal rights as native Swedes (Lamberg 2004: 6–7). The conquered were therefore officially treated in the same way as the conquerors and this has been cited as the main reason why Finland's conquest was so successful (Line 2016: 97–98). Line argues that the native Finnish elite may have been allowed to retain their status. Indeed, he claims that it is probable that some Finns were integrated into the newly established mounted aristocracy (Line 2016: 97–98). He illustrates this argument by pointing out the proximity between, on the one hand, pre-crusade private churches and rich Iron Age burial grounds, and on the other hand, post-crusade medieval manors. Line interprets this proximity as evidence that pre-conquest local places of power retained their influence even after the Swedes' arrival (Line 2016: 98). This apparent continuity leads me to argue that powerful local families may have been allowed to keep hold of their strongholds. In this case, it may be that Stenberg initially belonged to a local Finnish family who may have retained it until it somehow fell into Abrahamsson's possession. Of course, this is just one possibility, but I suggest that some of these fortifications, especially

when they do not appear in any sources, may have been under private ownership, possibly that of the local elite.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has shown that while urbanisation and the building of fortifications in Finland between 1150 and 1300 were obviously linked, the Swedish authorities prioritised military development over urban growth. While fortifications were swiftly built in significant numbers, the late development of administrative institutions (such as a court of justice and a mint in Åbo) show that Finland remained administratively peripheral until the late medieval period. The article also pointed out that unlike Åbo, the town of Viborg grew around a pre-existing fortress. This development illustrates a different type of urbanisation with warfare, rather than civil administration, at its core. In addition, this paper suggested that the hillfort of Lieto may show traces of Swedish military activity preceding the Second Swedish Crusade. If further investigations supported this theory, this could confirm reports of a First Crusade, an event which is so far mostly considered mythical. Lastly, the uncertainty surrounding the history or purpose of the fort at Stenbergå allowed the author to speculate on a possible private origin for a castle which otherwise does not appear to be connected to any royal initiative. The present article has suggested that native Finnish strongmen and powerful local families may have served as members of the lesser nobility in post-conquest Finland, thus ensuring continuity in the possession and expression of power at local level. It is hoped that this paper sparks further discussions concerning the different aspects of Sweden's use of Finland as military ground between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, especially concerning the role and influence of non-royal powerful families.

Notes

¹ *The Chronicle of Novgorod* (also known as the *Novgorod First Chronicle*) was initially written in Old Slavonic but I have been unable to access an edition in the original language. Thus, only the translations in English will be quoted.

² Unless referenced otherwise, all translations are my own.

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