



Viipuri (Sw. Viborg, Ru. Vyborg)

Both Finnish and Russian scholars have recently shown considerable archaeological, antiquarian and historical interest in medieval Viipuri (Sw. Viborg, Russ. Vyborg). The Finns have concentrated on the inventory work and the Russians on archaeological excavations. In 2000 the Department of Archaeology at the University of Turku launched the project *Suomen asutusdynamiikka ja rajamaakunnat arkeologian näkökulmasta (Uukuniemellä ja Viipurissa)* [The dynamics of settlement and border provinces in Finland from the perspective of archaeology (Uukuniemi and Viipuri)] funded mainly by the Alfred Kordelin Foundation. The main issue in the Viipuri part of the project is an urban archaeological inventory based on Finnish, Swedish and Russian sources. This basic research provides prerequisites for evaluating the processes and dynamics of Viipuri's *hinterland* and the founding of the town. The project will also provide Russian antiquarians with information presently lying beyond the language barrier to promote their work for the protection of the old town. Finally, the Viipuri inventory is to be considered the last Finnish contribution in the *Medeltidsstaden* project. It is worth mentioning that related topics such as an inventory of architectural heritage also have been addressed earlier (Neuvonen 1994). A comprehensive history of the Viipuri province is also in the process of being published (Saarnisto 2003; Korpela 2004).

The Vyborg archaeological expedition of the Institute of History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences has been active since the mid-1970s, first headed by V. A. Tjulenev. In 1998 when Aleksandr Saksa became the leader of the expedition, a new stage began in the archaeological investigations of Viipuri. Regular excavations as well as continuous supervision of construction work came under way. The main supporting body of the excavations has been the Foundation for the Promotion of Karelian Culture, Finland.

A considerable number of preliminary reports, reviews and articles have been published so far. The most important among many contributions are Tjulenev 1987, Saksa 2002a, 2002b, 2004 and Saksa et al. 2002, Belsky et al. 2003, Hiekkänen 2003 and 2007, Korpela 2004:240–270, Suhonen 2006 and Ruuth 1982. This review is based on these contributions as well as some later observations.

Viipuri Castle was officially founded in 1293 to protect the church, kingdom and trade by Marshal Torgils Knutson, the leader of the so-called third crusade to the east. According to Niitemaa (1965), it was this trinity and especially trade that was the real reason behind the founding of the town. The site of the castle is in Suomenvedenpohja, a bay of the Gulf of Finland, into which one of the branches of the River Vuoksi fell in the Middle Ages. This was an important junction at the mouth of the main waterway to the Karelian Isthmus and Lake Ladoga.

A short presentation of the sources

Written sources

The written sources are relatively sparse, especially concerning the physical features of the town. The few available documents are mostly related to the castle, the lords of the castle and the collection of taxes. Only a few of them are concerned with the church and its activities. Proper archive series are lacking. In 1336 Viipuri is mentioned as *civitas*; ten years later it is called *köpstad*. In 1351 an area around a dense settlement – *ohaben* – is mentioned, and the congregation of Viipuri is referred to in the following year. In 1387 the settlement acquired an independent administrative role opposite the castle. In 1389 the Town Hall is mentioned and in 1403, 110 years after the founding of the castle, King Erik of Pomerania granted Viipuri its first known town privileges (e.g. Saksa et al. 2002 with references). The earliest map of Viipuri is that by Olof Gangius from the year 1638 (Kostet 1995:40 f, 194). The first so-called regulation plan was made by Anders Streng in 1640 (Kostet 1995:90 f, 195). This map also informs us about medieval buildings (see also Kauppi & Miltsik 1993:12 ff). Quite recently a highly important document was found by Georg Haggrén. Engineering Captain Lorentz Christoffer Stobaeus made measurements and drawings of the medieval town wall in 1703 (Fig. 1). This document is kept in the library of the University of Uppsala (Kart- och bildenheten).

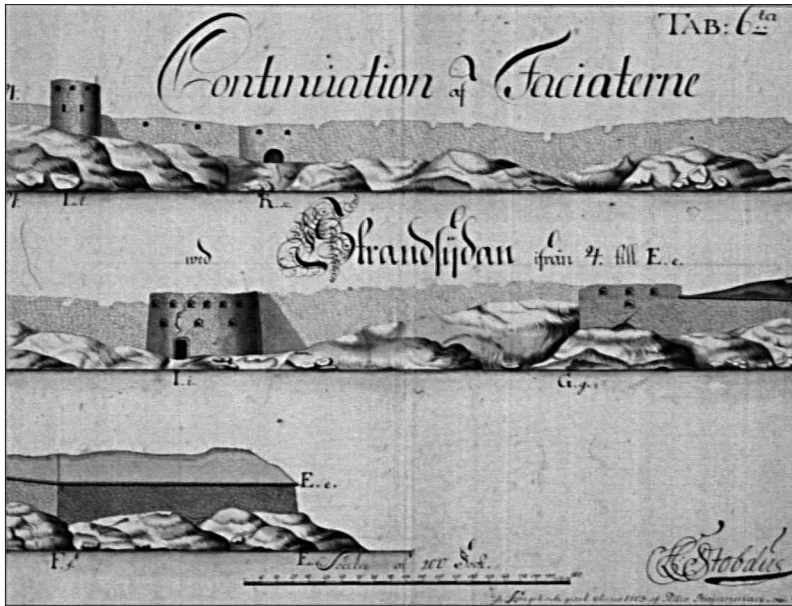


Figure 1. In 1703 Engineering Captain Lorentz Christoffer Stobaeus (raised to the nobility as Stobée) prepared measured drawings of the medieval town wall of Viipuri. Shown here is part of the wall. (Photo Uppsala University Library).

Archaeological sources

The castle has long been the focus of scholarly interest, but will not be commented upon here (on the castle, see Drake 2001, see also Taavitsainen 1990:140 and the latest Russian summary Matveev 2004). In 1883 J. R. Aspelin carried out the first excavation in the former town church in the town area. A unique case in Finnish antiquarian history is the work by the architect Otto-Iivari Meurman as the custodian of ancient monuments of Viipuri from 1927 to 1937 (Kojamo 2008; Suhonen 2005; Salmela 2004). After the Second World War the Estonians performed the first excavations in Viipuri. Their subject of interest was also the castle (Kaljundi 1970). The Vyborg expedition has been in charge of town archaeology since the middle of the 1970s. Except for one excavation and numerous test pits in the town area, much of the work has been concentrated on the castle (Tjulenev 1987). Since 1998 A. Saksä's excavations have produced a wealth of new information on the history of the town. Initially, his expedition has been concentrated on the following features: (1) architectural features of the town wall and its towers: initial profiles, subsequent acts of re-building and reasons for these; (2) the exact location of the town wall and the towers on the present map of the town (Fig. 2) ; 3) the approximate location of the perimeter of the built town area in the 1470s and its relationship to the wall. The interest in the wall is natural, because along with Kalmar, Stockholm and Visby, it was one of the four town walls in medieval Sweden.

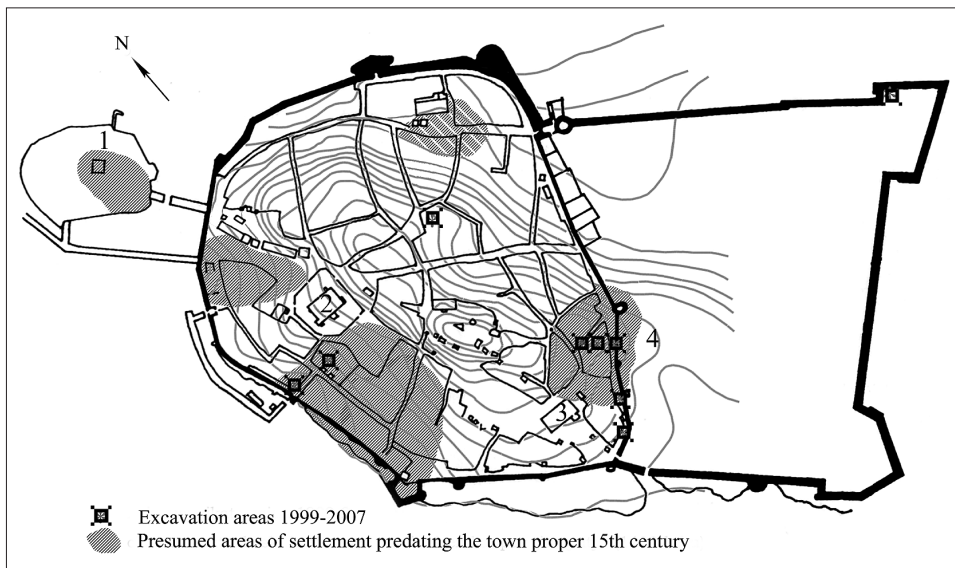


Figure 2. Medieval (within the town wall) and 17th century Viipuri. The 1999–2007 excavation areas are marked with □ on the map. Presumed areas of settlement predating the town proper (15th century) are marked with oblique lines. 1 – the castle, 2 – the town church, 3 – the church of the Dominican convent, 4 – the Raatitorni tower, 5 – the church of the Franciscan convent.

Since the beginning of the third millennium building pressure has determined the choice of excavation sites. Saksä's main excavation areas are: (1) The Raatitorni tower (the tower of the town council) and the town wall 1998–2000. (2) The corner of Possenkatu (ulitsa Titova) and Vahtitorninkatu (ulitsa Storozevoj Bashni) streets 2000–2002. (3) The corner of Etelävalli

(Juznyj Val) s and Uudenportinkatu (Ulitsa Novoj Zastavy) streets 2003. (4) The so-called Kiltatalo building at Luostarinkatu 8 (Vybořskaja ulitsa 8) 2004, 2006–2007. (5) Myllysaari island opposite Monrepos 2006. (6) Harmaidenveljestenkatu (Krasnoflōtskaja ulitsa) street in 2007.

Grouping the sources into horizons/periods

The chronology and other observations related to the excavated sites and the results obtained so far can be summarized as follows:

- (1) The Raatitorni tower: A so-called cast or shell wall of filled sandwich-type construction from 1475, the course of the town wall has been verified. It corresponds to the map of 1638 and its height was over 5 m. At the south-western corner of the tower, remains of wooden constructions, i.e. support for the exterior of the wall, were found.
- (2) The corner of Possenkatu and Vahtitorninkatu streets revealed many finds and structures, but no remains of medieval stone buildings were found. Floor levels of different age were uncovered, and water channels and large amounts manure and wooden chips were found, implying that cattle were kept in the town. Both coins and dendrochronological dates extend the dating to the end of the 15th century. This may support Saksä's suggestion of three villages in the town area during the Middle Ages, and also comes close to Anders Andrén's idea of a town as a congested countryside (cf. Hiekkänen 2003). The settlement seems to have been extended to the southern part of the town surrounded by the wall. Whether there was settlement outside the wall is not yet known. One radiocarbon date from a floor plank found in the lowermost cultural layer along with finds of fishing equipment, gave an unexpected result: AD 1270s. It came from an area assumed to have been founded later than the western part of the town, which is closer to the castle. The date is even older than the foundation of the castle. One date is however not enough; it may come from a recycled plank (Saksä et al. 2003).
- (3) Etelävalli (Southern Wall) street is situated closer to the castle, which traditionally has been regarded as the oldest part of the town community. Here, wooden structures were found, dated to the beginning of the 15th century. In the lowermost cultural layer reaching the bedrock or intact sand, fishing tackle (net sinkers, floats, gathering pegs for a net) was found as well as wooden chips, animal bones and manure containing the seeds of grasses typical of cattle pastures of the period. A radiocarbon dating of lambsquarters seeds was obtained, with the most probable date being AD 1310 (Saarnisto & Saksä 2004:260).
- (4) Kiltatalo (Guildhall): Building remains, wells, floor and street levels were found. The lowermost level dates to the 1410s.
- (5) Myllysaari island is strategically situated approximately 1.4 km northeast of castle on the other side of Monrepos, a manor mentioned in 16th century sources. The location led Saksä to test excavate in order to find out whether the island could have been the predecessor of Viipuri. So far the excavations have not yielded any results.
- (6) The excavated area (1568 m²) of Harmaidenveljestenkatu street close to one of the few standing houses predating the town-plan regularization of 1640 did not reveal any finds or constructions from before the 17th and 18th centuries.

The conditions for archaeological fieldwork have generally been extremely difficult. Non-archaeological causes have guided the choice of excavation sites. All except the so-called Guildhall excavation area are located on the eastern side of the town, which means that the presumed oldest Viipuri to the east of the castle remains unexcavated. A couple of building projects (the Borchart and Hackman houses) in the area demonstrated that earlier building activities have destroyed cultural layers in those places. The attitude of the local administrative and building community towards cultural heritage has, however, improved and become more positive towards archaeology.

Land divisions (plots etc.) according to the horizons

The development of land divisions and plots is difficult to assess on the basis of the present observations. Except for the corner of Possenkatu and Vahtitorninkatu streets, layers older than the beginning of the 15th century have so far not been reached anywhere. An unexpected observation is the small number of masonry buildings. Their expansive period seems to fall between the years 1550–1650, although many cellars in these houses have medieval features.

Due to the steep and rocky topography it was difficult to build the town and divide it into plots. The steepest parts within the area, demarcated by the town wall, were settled late after levelling and filling the uneven slopes. Kari Uotila (2006) has brought an interesting element into the discussion, by discussing the line of vision between the castle, the town and the town wall as the castle and town formed a fortificatory entity. The use of direct gunfire when the town is under siege would be difficult. Signalling and preparing for siege demanded above all good visibility. This may be one of the reasons for the small number of buildings on the hilltop and the highest slopes. In addition to the difficult topography and the early town as a congested countryside also defensive-strategic factors may explain the large unbuilt areas.

Every now and then the question of the predecessor of the Viipuri has come up. Niitemaa (1965), for example has suggested that this *suburbium* could have had a Viking Age predecessor (Uiburkum mentioned in a rune-stone in Uppland) and that Viipuri would have been a trading place. At the same time it could have been a Vi-named pagan cult site and the castle would have been on the island. The name «Gamble Wiborg» (Old Viipuri) appears in several written sources from the 16th–19th centuries (Niitemaa 1965:194; see also Saksa et al. 2002:42, 44 and cited literature). Arguments that Old Viipuri was located on the large island, known as Linnansaari on the north-western side of the castle, have been presented. Saksa has later suggested Myllysaari as a possible site for Old Viipuri. The question of the predecessor of the settlement which later existed in the town area might be answered by archaeological material. The earliest finds from the castle island can be dated to the 11th–13th centuries. In addition there is a find from the 12th century from the churchyard of the town church and two stray finds of 12th–14th centuries from the island of Kirkkosaari to the west of the castle island. No archaeological finds from the period in question are known from Linnansaari Island, the most popular candidate for the site of «Gamble Wiborg» (Saksa et al. 2002:42 and the literature cited).

Monumental buildings and constructions (e.g. harbours)

With regard to the castle, we must refer to Knut Drake's study (2001) and its cited references. The town wall and its towers and gates as part of the defensive structures are already indicated by some excavation results and above all by the above-mentioned map by Stobaeus, which still remains to be analysed and presented in detail.

The town council of Viipuri is already mentioned in Tallinn sources dating from 1393, i.e. 10 years before the known town privileges. The location of the oldest town hall, which was subsequently completely destroyed and has disappeared, remains unclear. The highest location in the town has been suggested as its site.

The survey of the medieval churches of Viipuri is based on Hiekkänen (2007). The town church is dating to the 1430s and 1440s. The church of the Dominican Convent is mentioned in 1392, but its stone church was built c. 1480. The Franciscan convent with its church predates the year 1403. The construction of the stone church started in the beginning of the 16th century but it was never finished. So far no signs of earlier wooden churches have been detected. The founding of the convents must be connected with the rise of the status of Viipuri and the granting of the town privileges. The harbour must have been a necessity, but so far no evidence of its existence exists (Saksa et al. 2002:42, 44).

What do the archaeological sources tell about the actual function of the different horizons?

Although analyses are still under way, the overall impression of the archaeological finds and other excavation from Viipuri is that they are highly similar to those from other medieval towns in Sweden and along the Baltic Sea.

We should point out that all the net floats and sinkers were found from the lowermost layer in the excavations at the corner of Possenkatu and Vahtitorninkatu streets and Etelävalli street. They are similar to finds from the lowest, 13th and 14th-century, layers in Käkisalme Castle (Saksa 1998:121, k. 43). No sources mention fishing as any significant means of livelihood for the population of Viipuri, nor have the same numbers of similar finds been recovered from upper cultural layers. Possible further dating, new fieldwork and closer inspection of the items from the layer of finds may elucidate the nature of the cultural layers and its significance for investigating the earliest history of Viipuri: whether we are dealing with rural settlement or a congested countryside.

How do the written sources fit into this image?

The written sources are generally sparse, especially those concerning the earliest history of the town, which underlines the importance of archaeological observations. So far, both source groups correspond with their first evidence around the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, when written documents, building activities and archaeological observations give evidence of the rise of the status of Viipuri.

Who were the actors during the earliest phases of the town?

The actors of the earliest phases have been discussed above, when the central issue of the possible predecessor of Viipuri was presented. Being the easternmost border town of medieval Sweden and in close proximity to Novgorod different opinions aroused on the direct trade relationships with the east. These relations were influenced in a complex way by the varying political and commercial relations between the Hanseatic League and Novgorod, Sweden and the Hanseatic League, and Novgorod and Sweden. There is, however, written information on Novgorodian merchants in Viipuri. Relations with the east are also indicated by the fact that Livonian burghers sent their children to Viipuri to learn Russian. Changes are also indicated by the fact that a decision is known to have been made in 1506 whereby no members of the Hanseatic League were to send their children to Viipuri to study Russian. The available sources, however, are not sufficient to deduce the general picture (Korpela 2004:174–183). Except for a few sherds of eastern pottery, the archaeological evidence does not illuminate the relations with the east. The material culture of the Baltic towns with their Hanseatic influence characterizes the finds.

The predominance of Livonian coins indicates that the economic relations of Viipuri were markedly directed towards the south as also was the case in the northern coastal area of the rest of the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland and Tavastia in the Finnish inland.

Summary

This article presents the history of town archaeology in the town of Viipuri during the years of Finnish and Soviet/Russian rule. Archaeological excavation and the systematic supervision of municipal works were considerably activated during the second half of the 1990s. Despite this, the number of archaeological excavations is not particularly large, nor sufficient for tenable conclusions. The analysis of the large bodies of excavated materials still remains to be completed.

Viipuri Castle was founded in 1293 to safeguard the eastward expansion of Sweden. On the shore opposite the castle a community emerged which gained its first known town privileges in 1403. Written sources on this period are scant. The lowermost layers of two excavation layers can be dated to the late 13th and early 14th century, i.e. predating the town privileges. In other respects, layers of typical urban character date from the first half of the 15th century. The sharply uneven topography of the town may be one reason for its «patchy» settlement. The steep slopes were levelled and apparently settled only at a later date. Factors of defensive strategy, including the town wall, could have influenced the urban fabric and its evolution.

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