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Research on Medieval Castles in Latvia: Achievements and Problems

IEVA OSE

This article is devoted to the medieval castle research in Latvia throughout the 20th century. In particular, the major archaeological excavations undertaken during the Soviet period in connection with the construction of the hydroelectric power stations are discussed and their results analysed. Over forty castles have been studied and over thirty conserved during the 20th and early 21st century. The most important outcomes of this research are given in the conclusion. The shortcomings of the present-day castle studies are also mentioned.

The Lexicon of Livonian Castles (*Burgenlexikon für Alt-Livland*, 1922) by Karl von Löwis of Menar and the dissertation on the castles of Estonia and Latvia (*Die Burgen in Estland und Lettland*, 1942) by Armin Tuulse, both published in German, are important achievements in the research on Livonian medieval castles up to the mid 20th century. After the World War II, research was carried out independently in Estonia and Latvia, published in the respective languages – Latvian or Estonian. Both shorter and longer historiographic surveys on medieval castle research in Latvia have been published in Latvian (2001)¹ and German (1998, 2010)². This article will briefly introduce the major sites investigated in Latvia in the last 70 years, outline the main research directions, indicate the most important achievements and mention some problems which hinder the development of future research.

A brief overview of research on Livonian castles from the end of the 18th century up to the World War II

The history of research on Livonian castles is more than 200 years long (fig. 1). Starting from the late 18th century, a variety of material was collected. One group

1 Cf. I. Ose, *Latvijas viduslaiku piļu pētniecība 18.–20. gadsimtā*. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 2.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2001.

2 Cf. I. Ose, *Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Burgen in Lettland während der letzten 50 Jahre*. – *Castellologica Bohemica* 6. Red. T. Durdik. Praha: Archeologický ústav AV ČR, 1998, pp. 117–138; I. Ose, *Überblick über die Forschungsgeschichte der Burgen Lettlands*. – *Burgen und Schlösser: Zeitschrift für Burgenforschung und Denkmalpflege* 2010, Nr. 4, pp. 216–224.

of people collecting such material consisted of Baltic German artists and amateurs, who have drawn castles and ruins and have documented their form, sometimes also presenting rough layouts. Another group represents historians, who collected written documents and in 1853 started to publish the volumes *Liv-, Est- und Kurländisches Urkundenbuch*. They helped to establish the dates of building and destruction of the castles, as well as their owners. However, extensive research started and professional plans were produced only at the end of the 19th century. Some architects should be mentioned, for example Reinhold Guleke, the architect of Tartu University, published *Alt-Livland* (1896) – a collection of photos and plans.³ It can be mentioned that his personal archives, a collections of photos, plans and drawings of Latvian and Estonian monuments, were found in Germany and since the end of the 20th century have been stored in the National Library of Latvia. Architect Wilhelm Neumann published his material on several castle ruins in Latgale,⁴ the eastern part of present-day Latvia, and conducted a survey of the ruins of Holme Castle. Here, major excavations were carried out in 1897 and 1899; the foundations were unearthed by archaeologist Anton Buchholtz.⁵

Especially important in research on Livonian castles is the contribution of Karl von Löwis of Menar, who received technical education, but worked for a large part of his life as a librarian in Riga. He gathered historical information, surveyed several dozen Livonian castle ruins and drew their layouts, discovered the drawings of Livonian castles from the 17th century kept in the Military Archives in Stockholm, made small excavations in some castle ruins in order to ascertain the location of lost walls and published many papers on the castles of Livonia.⁶ His main achievement was publication of the lexicon of Livonian castles in 1922.⁷

The years 1918 to 1940, when the independent republics of Latvia and Estonia existed, can be distinguished as the second period of research on Livonian castles. In Riga in 1923 the Board of Monuments was founded and began to compile lists and photographic records of various sites. However, only a meagre amount of work was done in relation to castles. The only small excavation took place in Valmiera in 1937–1938. Although the initial aim was to search for pre-Christian habitation, archaeologists found only cultural layers and artefacts from the Teutonic Order's castle.⁸

The situation was slightly different in Estonia. In the 1930s, the young art historian Armin Tuulse visited the castles in Latvia and Estonia, and in 1942 he

3 R. Guleke, *Alt-Livland: Mittelalterliche Baudenkmäler Liv-, Est-, Kurlands und Oesels*. Leipzig: Koehler, 1896.

4 W. Neumann, *Die Ordensburgen im sog. polnischen Livland*. – *Mitteilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands*. Bd. 14. Riga: Kymmell, 1890, pp. 299–323.

5 A. Buchholtz, *Bericht über die Ausgrabungen auf dem Martinsholm*. – *Sitzungsberichte der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Russlands aus dem Jahre 1899*. Riga: Häcker, 1900, pp. 109–112; N. Busch, *Burg Holme*. Riga: Häcker, 1908.

6 I. Ose, *Karl von Löwis of Menar (1855–1930) als Erforscher der Denkmäler Alt-Livlands*. – *Geisteswissenschaften und Publizistik im Baltikum des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*.

Hrsg. v. N. Angermann, W. Lenz und K. Maier. (Schriften der Baltischen Historischen Kommission. Bd. 17; Baltische Biographische Forschungen. Bd. 1.) Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2011, pp. 357–371.

7 K. von Löwis of Menar, *Burgenlexikon für Alt-Livland*. Riga: Walters und Rapa, 1922.

8 E. Šnore, 1937. gada izrakumi Valmierā. – *Senatne un Māksla* 1938, nr. 3, pp. 82–98.

published his dissertation *Die Burgen in Estland und Lettland*.⁹ This is a good overview of the history and architecture of Livonian castles, in which he evaluates all the available material of that time and gives information about 91 castles or ruins from the medieval period in the territory of Latvia. Since there were no other summarising publications, the book by Tuulse was used by Latvian historians and archaeologists until the beginning of the 21st century.

A decline in research on Latvian castles, 1945–1960

The next period of castle research began after the World War II, when for nearly half a century the Baltic countries were under Soviet occupation. The initial post-war years were marked by a negative attitude towards the German cultural heritage, even leading to the destruction of architectural remains in the second half of the 1940s. During the war, the towers of the castles in Ērgļi and Bērzaune had been completely ruined. It seems that after the war the rubble was partially removed from the castle grounds, because no high heaps of rubble are to be seen. Demolished without documentation were not only the remains of the Town Hall and Black Heads' House in Riga, which had burned down during the war; in rural areas, too, parts of the walls of some castle ruins (Piltene, Aizkraukle, etc.) were pulled down, the stone being used in construction work.

In the second half of the 1940s and in the 1950s there was no scholarly research on castles in Latvia. However, in the 1950s some conservation work or construction for the safety of tourists was undertaken at some of the most popular tourist sites – the castle ruins in Cēsis, Sigulda, Turaida, Bauska and Dobeles. In 1959, the 'List of Cultural Monuments in the Latvian SSR' was published, in which 55 castle ruins from the Livonian period were placed under state protection.¹⁰ Despite this, the careless attitude toward castle ruins continued in the 1960s; for example, one old wing of the castle in Burtņieki was destroyed because the local authorities had decided to build a new administrative building there. These 'German' monuments were not acceptable to Soviet ideology, and society was not taught to become aware of the importance of medieval castles as part of the architectural heritage and as archaeological sites.

The major investigated sites and publications of 1960–1990

The next period of medieval castle research began in the 1960s. Because of plans to build two hydroelectric power stations on the Daugava River large areas were to be flooded. Since the Daugava had always been an important waterway, along its banks there were many archaeological sites from various periods, and these had to be

9 A. Tuulse, *Die Burgen in Estland und Lettland*. (Verhandlungen der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft 33.) Dorpat: Dorpater Estnischer Verlag, 1942.

10 Kultūras pieminekļu saraksts Latvijas PSR teritorijā. Rīga: Latvijas PSR Kultūras ministrija, 1959.

excavated before flooding. As the hydroelectric power stations were part of a Soviet state plan, funding for archaeological research came from Moscow. Massive funding for fifteen years made possible large-scale excavations, which were organised by the Institute of History of the Latvian SSR at the Academy of Sciences. During this time excavations were carried out at eight medieval castle ruins: Koknese (1961–1966, directed by Adolfs Stubavs), Lokstene (1962–1964, Ēvalds Mugurēvičs), Altene (1963–1964, Jānis Graudonis), Sēlpils (1963–1965, Elvīra Šnore, Anna Zariņa and Māris Atgāzis), Salaspils (1967–1975, Adolfs Stubavs), Mārtiņsala/Holme (1966–1974, Ēvalds Mugurēvičs, fig. 2), Ikšķile (1968–1975, Jānis Graudonis) and Vecdole (1966–1968, Māris Atgāzis).¹¹

Archaeologists had to excavate large areas to collect as much information as possible. Since there had not been any major investigation of castles in previous years in Latvia, the experience of Russian archaeologists working in Novgorod was taken over: excavation was carried out in large areas, where the whole layout of a building could be uncovered. During the construction of the hydroelectric power stations, long excavation seasons were organised, lasting from early spring until late autumn. By the time construction of the hydroelectric power stations began, the archaeologists had excavated huge areas: of the above-mentioned eight castle ruins, the smallest area – 1400 m² – was uncovered at Koknese, with the biggest – 5300 m² – at Salaspils.

When the Pļaviņas hydroelectric power station went into operation the castle ruins of Altene and Lokstene were completely flooded, whereas at Koknese and Sēlpils the water rose up to the level of the foundations. When Riga hydroelectric power station was built, a large part of Dole Island as well as the castle ruins of Holme, Ikšķile and Salaspils were flooded. In Ikšķile only the upper parts of the church ruins were exposed on an artificially created island a few hundred metres from the riverbank. Holme and Ikšķile were particularly significant because it was here that the Christianisation of Livonia had begun at the end of the 12th century. Therefore, archaeologists provided all possible protection: the walls of both castles were covered with a thick layer of earth to safeguard them from water level fluctuations, in the hope that maybe in the future the water level of the hydroelectric power station might be lowered and that something would remain of the castle ruins.

The main achievement of these castle excavations was determination of the previously unknown castle layouts and collection of a large number of artefacts. At several castles, the lower horizons of the cultural layers were found to contain artefacts from the Iron Age. It was discovered that the Germans had chosen to locate their stone castles on the hill forts of the native inhabitants. Unfortunately, during excavation the archaeologists did not pay much attention to the uncovered stone walls; their connections to cultural layers were not always understood and remained unrecorded. Generally, there were no architects who could measure the uncovered walls – they were only marked in archaeological drawings. The only publications

11 E. Mugurēvičs, *Zur Archäologie mittelalterlicher Burgen in Lettland*. – Lübecker Schriften zur Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte. Bd. 12. Bonn: Habelt, 1986, pp. 242–243.

during the 15-year-long excavations of the castles were a few pages in the annual reports presented in the periodical editions of abstracts of Latvian archaeological conferences.¹²

There were objective as well as subjective reasons behind such an attitude towards the promotion of the new discoveries among the public. The long excavation seasons, when almost half the year was spent in fieldwork, as well as the continuous succession of archaeological sites to be excavated prevented scholarly study of the new material. Besides this, Latvian archaeologists lacked knowledge of medieval archaeology; almost no foreign literature was available and foreign conference attendance was difficult for political and ideological reasons. Publishing opportunities for the medieval cultural heritage were limited because of the lack of professional periodicals. Also, the administration of the Institute of History, an ideological institution, was more interested in popularising research concerning the history of the Soviet era, while other periods of Latvia's history were neglected. For example, the archaeologist Jānis Graudonis was not allowed to publish a monograph on the material from the excavation of Altene Castle.

The next phase of castle study began in the mid 1970s. At this time, extensive conservation of ruins or restoration work was planned in several castles that were popular tourist sites with local museums, organised by the Restoration Project Office of the Ministry of Culture of the Latvian SSR. Before the ruins were conserved it was necessary to lower the ground level at their foot or uncover the layout of the castle. Excavations were undertaken by archaeologists from the Institute of History. At the same time, historians collected historical data and historical images of the castles. Therefore, the work on the castles of Latvia from the mid 1970s up to 1991 can be regarded as marking the beginning of comprehensive study.

From the mid 1970s, major research was carried out on three castle ruins in particular: Cēsis, Turaida and Bauska. Archaeologists along with architects and conservators worked at these castles for several decades. At the beginning of the study, historical data on all three castles was collected by historian Roberts Malvess (1905–1982). His works were not published during his lifetime.

The Cēsis castle was excavated in the course of 35 summers from 1974 to 2008 by archaeologist Zigrīda Apala¹³ (fig. 3). The uncovered structures include the cellars of the western and northern wings as well the courtyard down to the last pavement in the core of the castle, the former moat in the southern outer bailey and the area outside of the western defensive wall; thousands of artefacts were recovered.

12 A. Stubavs, *Arheoloģiskie izrakumi Koknesē 1961. gadā. – Referātu tēzes zinātniskai atskaites sesijai par 1961. gada arheoloģiskām un etnogrāfiskām ekspedīcijām.* Rīga: LPSR ZA Vēstures institūts; LPSR Kultūras ministrija, 1962, pp. 19–21; J. Graudonis, *Arheoloģiskie izrakumi Ikšķilē 1974. gadā. – Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas materiāli par arheologu un etnogrāfu 1974. gada pētījumu rezultātiem.* Rīga: Zinātne, 1975, pp. 34–39.

13 Z. Apala, *Archäologische Zeugnisse aus der Burg Cēsis/Wenden zur Zeit des Livländischen Krieges. – Wolter von Plettenberg und das mittelalterliche Livland.* Hrsg. v. N. Angermann, I. Misans. Lüneburg: Verlag Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 2001, pp. 199–228.

Architect Ilgonis Stukmanis has measured the layout of the ruins and identified building details.¹⁴ Conservation of the castle ruins continues until today.

In the Turaida castle, where some conservation or restoration work had been carried out already in the 1950s and 1960s, archaeologist Graudonis directed excavation every summer from 1976 to 2000 and uncovered the layout of the whole castle.¹⁵ In the main yard the locations of buildings were determined and two outer baileys unearthed. From 1969 to 1991, reconstructive restoration of the Turaida castle took place in accordance with a design by architect Gunārs Jansons (fig. 4 and 5).

In the case of Bauska it was decided that the latest part of the castle would be completely rebuilt: these were the three wings of the palace built by the Duke of Courland at the end of the 16th century, situated in the outer bailey of the previous castle of the Teutonic Order and together with the courtyard occupying an area of about 2000 m². The palace and remains of the castle were excavated from 1976 to 1992 by archaeologist Andris Caune,¹⁶ with subsequent excavation as needed by the local museum's archaeologist Jānis Grūbe (fig. 6). In parallel with the excavation, several architects created a design for restoration of the north wing of the palace, building new blocks on the uncovered old foundations of the southern and eastern wings. At each of the mentioned three castles the cultural layer in an area of several thousand square metres was excavated, the greatest area – about 9000 m² – being uncovered in the Cēsis castle.

Although research at all three restored castles, Cēsis, Turaida and Bauska, was carried out by archaeologists, architects and historians, some problems emerged in this cooperation. The archaeologists were more focused on artefacts, while the uncovered walls were measured and studied by architects. Unfortunately, not all researchers were able to date the walls and determine the building periods. At Bauska and Turaida, the architects began restoration and reconstruction before the end of the excavation, which meant that later discoveries were sometimes not considered in the designs. As there were no older images of the castles, some uncertain aspects of the restoration designs were interpreted wilfully. Comparative material – images of medieval castles in Western Europe – was lacking, and sometimes examples for the restoration designs were taken from similar medieval monuments in the neighbouring countries of Lithuania or Estonia, such as the relatively well-preserved castle of Kuressaare and Tallinn city wall. For example, an explanatory note to Jansons's design for the restoration of the semicircular tower in Turaida mentions the Assauwe tower in Tallinn as one of the models.¹⁷

In the 1970s and 1980s several other castles were also investigated. First, some sites may be mentioned that show the Soviet authorities' negligent attitude towards

14 I. Stukmanis, Cēsu ordenpils 1975.–1987. gada arheoloģiskajos izrakumos atrasto arhitektūras detaļu fiksācijas materiāli. – Pētījumi un avoti par ordeņa un bīskapu pilīm Latvijā. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 8.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2014, pp. 294–310.

15 J. Graudonis, Turaidas pils: I – Arheoloģiskā izpēte; II – Atradumi. Rīga: Jāņa sēta, 2003.

16 A. Caune, Einige während der Ausgrabungen 1976–1990 erworbene Erkenntnisse über die Ordensburg Bauske in Lettland. – *Castella Maris Baltici* 1. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1993, pp. 19–26.

17 G. Jansons, Turaidas pils lielā pusapaļā rietumu torņa arhitektoniskā izpēte un restaurācija 1969.–1985. gadā. – Pētījumi par Vidzemes, Kurzemes un Zemgales pilīm. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 9.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2016, pp. 104–148.

the cultural heritage. The list of cultural monuments published in 1959 included castle ruins in Skrunda and Saldus. In the 1960s, without carrying out any investigation, a big open-air stage was built in the centre of Skrunda castle ruins, and construction of a new hospital began on the site of Saldus castle. Only in Saldus in the spring of 1970 did archaeologist Ēvalds Mugurēvičs achieve temporary interruption of the work; in the course of a brief rescue excavation he unearthed the foundations and drew the previously unknown layout of the castle.¹⁸ In the Alūksne castle ruins the building of an open-air stage was started without excavation, and part of the cultural deposit was removed from the southern outer bailey. Only after the intervention of archaeologists was it possible to conduct a rescue excavation in some areas (1978–1983, Māris Atgāzis).

Some other smaller-scale or short-term excavations and conservation works may be mentioned. When an Iron Age settlement with wooden buildings was reconstructed in Āraiši, before conservation of the nearby castle ruins the buildings in the western part of the castle were excavated, revealing the layout (1972–1992, Jānis Apals, fig. 7).¹⁹ An excavation in the Ludza castle ruins did not confirm the hypothesis that an Iron Age Latgalian hill fort had existed on the same site (1976, Jolanta Daiga). However, in the course of the excavation of Rēzekne castle ruins (1980–1982, Mugurēvičs) cultural layers of the native inhabitants were found under the stone castle which date back to the 9th–10th century.²⁰ In the 1980s a new hydroelectric power station was planned near Daugavpils, which, however, was not built. In preparation for the construction works, the ruins of Daugavpils/Dünaburg castle on the bank of the Daugava were partly excavated (1982–1987, Mugurēvičs, Ingrīda Ozere).²¹

In summary, during the 1960s and 1970s castles were an object of intensive research, where a large amount of material was collected. However, only some archaeologists studied their new material and published it. Along with some articles, there are two monographs, covering the excavations in Lokstene (1977)²² and Sēlpils (1980)²³.

In the 1980s, the situation regarding publications on castle research improved to some extent. The major contribution of Ēvalds Mugurēvičs, long-serving head of the Department of Archaeology of the Institute of History, should be mentioned. He not only conducted his own excavations and published material on the castles, but also stimulated his department to study the excavation material. As a result of efforts by Mugurēvičs, in 1983 a collection of articles devoted to medieval period was published in the series *Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija*, including articles about

18 Ē. Mugurēvičs, Saldus pils (Frauenburg) XV–XVII gadsimtā. – LPSR ZA Vēstis 1972, nr. 2, pp. 54–64.

19 J. Apals, Āraišu mūra pils arheoloģiskā izpēte. – Cēsu novada vēsture I. Cēsis: Cēsu Vēstures Muzejs, 1995, pp. 59–76.

20 Ē. Mugurēvičs, Rēzeknes pils un novada vēsture 9.–17. gs. pēc rakstītiem avotiem un arheoloģisko izrakumu datiem. – Pētījumi un avoti par Livonijas ordenpīlim Latvijā. (Latvijas viduslaiku pilis 7.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2011, pp. 238–274.

21 Ē. Mugurēvičs, Dinaburgas pils un pilsapmetne pēc rakstīto avotu un arheoloģisko izrakumu liecībām. – Pētījumi un avoti par ordeņa un bīskapu pīlim Latvijā. (Latvijas viduslaiku pilis 8.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2014, pp. 143–165.

22 Ē. Mugurēvičs, Oliņkalna un Lokstenes pilsnovadi: 3.–15. gs. arheoloģiskie pieminekļi. Rīga: Zinātne, 1977.

23 E. Šnore, A. Zariņa, Senā Sēlpils. Rīga: Zinātne, 1980.

excavations in the Altene, Cēsis and Alūksne castle ruins, as well as a summarising article on the classification of medieval castles in Latvia based on archaeological material.²⁴ In the 1980s, Mугурēvičs was the main researcher of Latvian castles. In 1983 he defended his doctoral thesis on the material culture of medieval castles in Latvia, prepared on the basis of the excavations in the 1960s and 1970s. In the abstract of the dissertation published in Russian, Mугурēvičs pointed out that the emphasis on coexistence of the native and German inhabitants in the castles and their mutual influence in the Middle Ages demonstrates the need for research on castles as important cultural monuments.²⁵ This statement, voiced in the context of Soviet-period ideology, was an important argument for continuing the excavations as well as for conservation or partial restoration.

The main task of the architects developing conservation and restoration projects was practical restoration and monitoring in the castle ruins. Generally, they have only measured the foundations or walls relevant for their works. Their reports, containing copies of the designs, sometimes have a brief explanation attached, but more extensive research results have rarely been published. These reports are now kept in the archives of the Latvian State Inspection for Heritage Protection. Also kept here are several reports on Polish restoration work carried out in Riga in the 1980s, among them the building history and excavation records for the Church of St George – the chapel of the castle of the Livonian Order of Sword Brethren. Only in the late 1980s were two popular booklets published, written by Latvian architects and conservators: a publication by Gunārs Jansons on medieval castles and churches in the Gauja National Park (1987)²⁶ and a work by Gunārs Erdmanis on five castles in the Kurzeme region of western Latvia, altered in the Modern Age, for which Erdmanis had produced restoration designs – Ēdole, Dundaga, Aizpute, Alsunga and Ventspils (1989).²⁷

Castle research from 1991 to 2015

In 1991, Latvia regained its independence. The next years brought important changes in political and social life. There were no longer any ideological barriers to the study of medieval monuments, and the prevailing view was that all periods of Latvia's history deserve equally profound study. However, the poor economic situation prevented scholarly research and the employment of new researchers. In the first half of the 1990s, large-scale excavations were completely suspended. Processing and publication of the extensive corpus of archaeological material recovered, as well as conservation of the castle ruins, took place on a small scale. However, some castles

24 Apcerējumi par viduslaiku pilim un pilsētām Latvijas teritorijā. (Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija 14.) Rīga: Zinātne, 1983.

25 Э. Мугуревич, Замки и сельские поселения средневековой Ливонии (по археологическим материалам и письменным сведениям Латвии конца XII – середины XVI века): Автореферат диссертации на соискание степени доктора исторических наук. Москва: Институт археологии АН СССР, 1983.

26 G. Jansons, Arhitektūras pieminekļi Gaujas nacionālajā parkā. Rīga: Zinātne, 1987.

27 G. Erdmanis, Kurzemes viduslaiku pilis. Rīga: Zinātne, 1989.

were restored in the second half of the 1990s, when certain municipalities, too, gave financial support for archaeological or architectural study. Several major sites may be mentioned.

In connection with improvement of the grounds of the Valmiera castle ruins, situated in the centre of the town, excavation was begun here already in the late 1980s. In the 1990s rescue excavations were organised because of some small-scale building activities (1988–1996, 2004; Tatjana Berga).²⁸ The Ventspils castle was used by Soviet troops until 1983. Excavation began in the late 1980s (1988–1992 and 1997–2001, Mārtiņš Lūsēns) along with architectural research (1995–1997, Ilmārs Dirveiks).²⁹ The castle was completely restored; a museum opened on the ground floor in 2001 and the upper stories in 2011. When trenches were dug for rainwater drainage near Jelgava Palace some old building remains were recovered; in 2001–2002 a rescue excavation was organised, directed by Guntis Zemītis, and parts of a basement were unearthed belonging to the late-16th century block which enclosed the Teutonic Order's castle.³⁰ In Bauska, three wings of the palace of the Duke of Courland had been restored already during the 1970s and 1980s. In 2000–2014, with European Union funding, Czech restorers conserved the ruins of the Order's castle, restored the black-and-white sgraffito decoration of the facades and reconstructed the interiors of the palace (fig. 8 and 9).³¹ Since the mid-1990s, in connection with restoration work, rescue excavation has been organised at the Riga castle (1994–1995, 2001–2003, 2007–2008; Jānis Ciglis³² and other archaeologists). New restoration and research began in 2012. In the coming years, the residence of the President of Latvia in Riga castle will be completed, along with the premises of the National History Museum of Latvia. In connection with the replacement of underground services or conservation work, some rescue excavation or architectural study has taken place in several other castle ruins, too.³³ It should be mentioned that in the past 25 years no more large-scale excavations have been conducted, and no more than some hundreds of square metres have been excavated in any one castle.

As a positive result of Latvian castle research in the 25 years of independence the publication of material obtained in the Soviet period should be mentioned. Architect Gunārs Jansons has published monographs on the architecture of Ikšķīle³⁴

28 T. Berga, Valmieras ordeņpils arheoloģiska izpēte (1988–1996). – Pētījumi par ordeņpili Latvijā. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 3.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2002, pp. 269–295.

29 M. Lūsēns, Arheoloģiskie pētījumi Ventspils pili; I. Dirveiks, Ventspils Livonijas ordeņa pils būvvestures agrīnais periods, 13. gs. otrā puse – 14. gs. – Ventspils muzeja raksti IV. Rīga: LU žurnāla „Latvijas Vēsture” fonds, 2004, pp. 19–106, 133–174.

30 G. Zemītis, Arheoloģiskās liecības par Jelgavas pili Kurzemes hercogu Ketleru dinastijas laikā. – Pētījumi par Kurzemes un Zemgales pili. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 5.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2005, pp. 185–202.

31 V. Girsas, Characteristic and Implementation of the Project of Bauska Castle-ruin Conservation. – Vēsturisko drupu konservācijas problēmas = The Problems of historical ruin conservation: Materials of international symposium and conference organized during the implementation of the Project of EC program 'Culture 2000' 'Renaissance of the historical handicrafts and synthesis of the modern Technologies in conservation of the 15th century Bauska fortress-ruin'. Bauska: Bauskas pils muzejs, 2002, pp. 15–28.

32 J. Ciglis, Arheoloģiskās liecības un hipotēzes par ordeņa pili Rīgā 14. un 15. gadsimtā. – Pētījumi par Vidzemes un Zemgales pili. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 6.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2010, pp. 171–192.

33 U. Cīne, Latvijas viduslaiku pīļu arheoloģiskā izpēte 2004.–2011. gadā. – Pētījumi un avoti par ordeņa un bīskapu pili Latvijā. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 8.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2014, pp. 71–82.

34 G. Jansons, Ikšķīles viduslaiku baznīca un pils. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2004.

and Turaida castles, with analysis of the building periods and approximate dates³⁵. In two books on the Riga castle, historian Māra Caune studied mostly the modern period, although there are also some chapters devoted to the medieval period.³⁶ Archaeologist Jānis Graudonis published descriptions of the excavation areas and photos of the best preserved artefacts in Turaida.³⁷ Popular books have been published by the archaeologists studying the Valmiera³⁸ and Cēsis³⁹ castles. Ēvalds Mugurēvičs has written a monograph on the Holme castle, which summarises the material of his excavations.⁴⁰

First arranged in Finland in 1991, the conferences of Baltic Sea castle researchers under the title 'Castella Maris Baltici' are held every second year in a different country. The 8th meeting was held in Latvia in 2005, and in 2007 the papers were published in a symposium book.⁴¹ In 2015, the 13th conference was held in Denmark. Ten volumes of conference papers have been published in total, each including at least one article on the castles of Latvia.

In order to encourage researchers to publish the results obtained in the course of architectural and archaeological studies on medieval castles, as well as materials from historical archives, in 1999 the Institute of Latvian History established the book series *Latvijas viduslaiku pilis* (Latvian medieval castles). Volume 9 was published in early 2016. Seven of these volumes are collections of articles, while two are monographs. Volume 2 is a historiography of Latvian medieval castle research⁴², while the volume 4 is a lexicon of German castles in present-day Latvia from the end of the 12th up to the 17th century, with brief information on 136 medieval and early modern castles or ruins⁴³.

At the same time it should be mentioned that new problems have appeared in the research on medieval castles in the first 15 years of this century. Archaeological research on a particular castle is not always undertaken by one and the same archaeologist. Thus, in the competitive tendering procedure a different institution may win the contract the following year, as happened, for example, in the case of the archaeological and architectural investigation of the Riga castle. Consequently, no individual will be able to produce an overall picture of building development and give a summary of the research results. Excavation and architectural research in the castle ruins has been taken over almost entirely by private companies, whose employees work continuously on one site after another and are not interested in the preparation of scholarly publications. Brief information on the latest excavations in medieval castles is given only in a periodical publication with reports by

35 G. Jansons, *Turaidas pils arhitektūra: 13.–17. gadsimts*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2007.

36 M. Caune, *Rīgas pils*. Rīga: Zinātne, 2001; M. Caune, *Rīgas pils – senā un mainīgā*. Rīga: Jumava, 2004.

37 J. Graudonis, *Turaidas pils*.

38 T. Berga, *Valmieras pils arheologa stāsts*. Valmiera: Valmieras novadpētniecības muzejs, 2003.

39 Z. Apala, K. Ducmane, *Cēsu pils dārgumi*. Cēsis: Vidzemes vēstures un tūrisma centrs, 2006.

40 Ē. Mugurēvičs, *Viduslaiku ciems un pils Salaspils novadā*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2008.

41 *Castella Maris Baltici 8: The proceedings of a Symposium held in Turaida, Latvia, on 5–9 September 2005*.

Eds. A. Caune, I. Ose. Rīga: Institute of the History of Latvia Publishers, 2007.

42 I. Ose, *Latvijas viduslaiku piļu pētniecība 18.–20. gadsimtā*.

43 A. Caune, I. Ose, *Latvijas 12. gadsimta beigu – 17. gadsimta vācu piļu leksikons*. (Latvijas viduslaiku pilis 4.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2004.



1.

Medieval castles in the territory of Latvia: 1 - Order's castle, 2 - castle of the Bishop or Archbishop, 3 - vassal's castle, 4 - Bishopric of Courland, 5 - Archbishopric of Riga.

Keskaegsed linnused Lātis: 1 - ordulinnus, 2 - piiskopi- vai peapiiskopilinnus, 3 - vasallilinnus, 4 - Kuramaa piiskopkond, 5 - Riia peapiiskopkond.

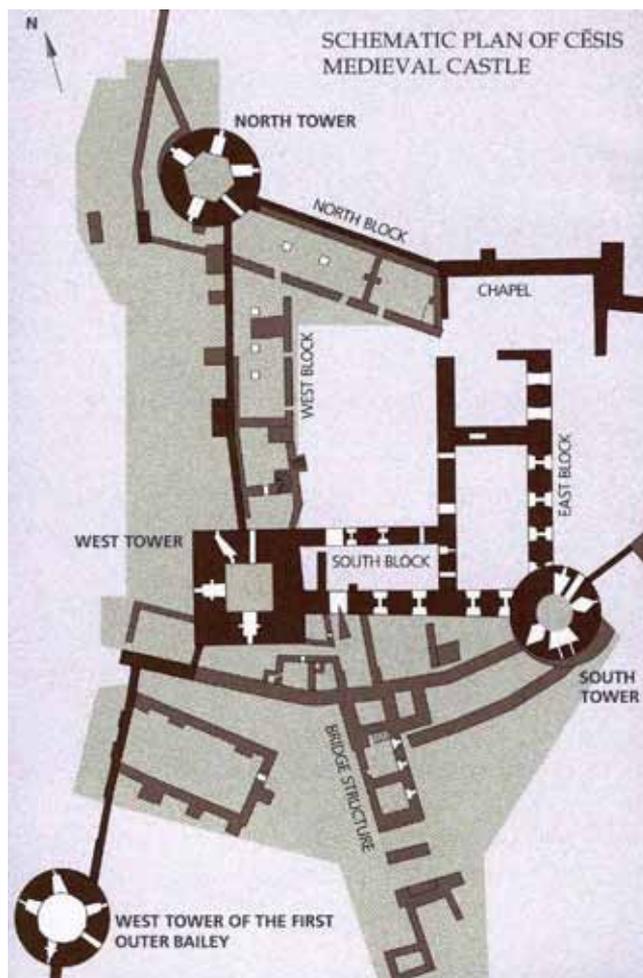


2.

Excavation on the south-western side of the Mārīņsala/Holme castle in 1967.

Mārīņsala linnuse edelakūlje kaevamised 1967. a.

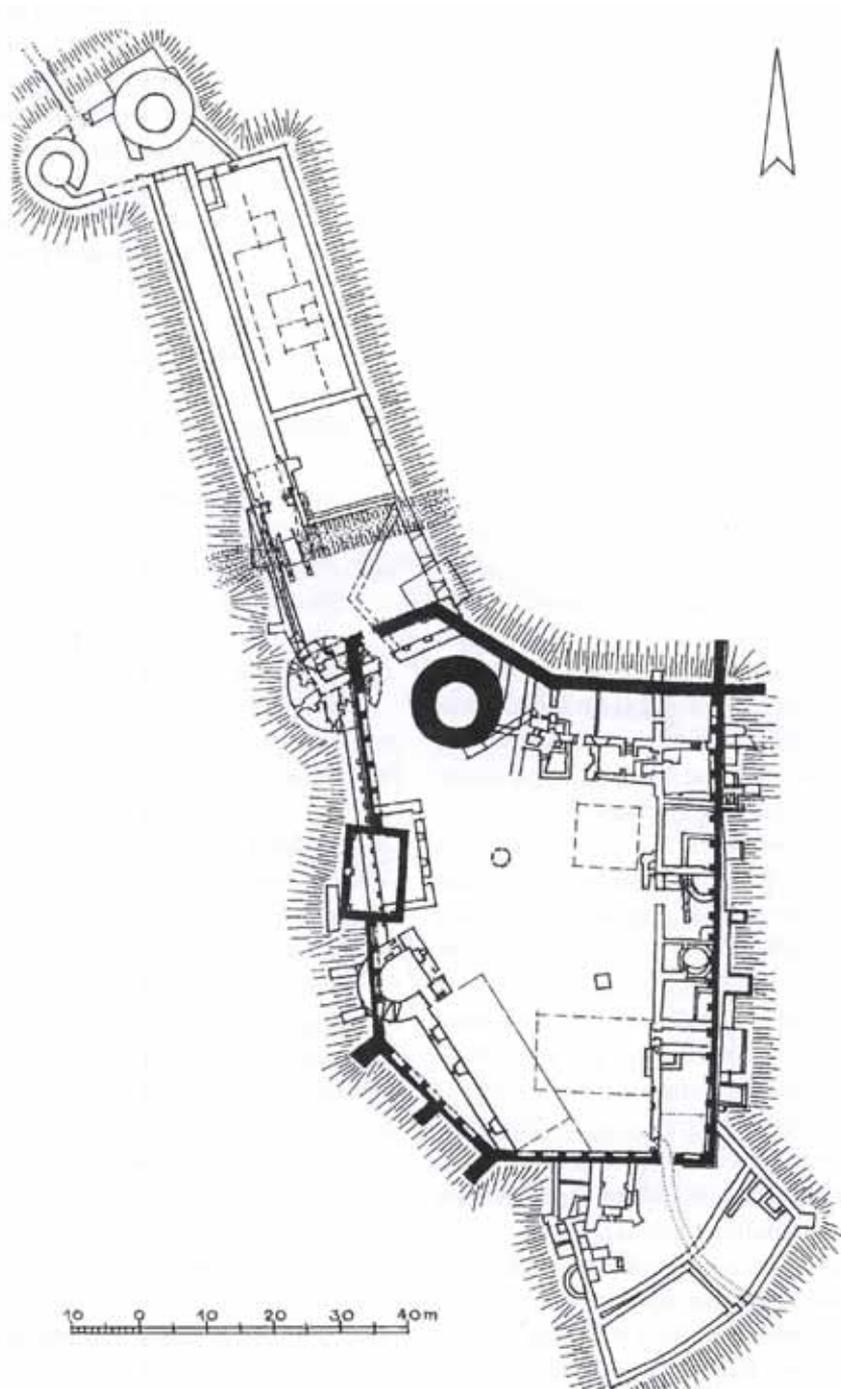
Ē. Mugerēvičs, Viduslaiku ciems un pils Salaspils novadā. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2008, p. 39.



3.

Schematic plan of the Cēsis castle with archaeologically excavated area (1974–2003) and walls discovered through the excavations.

Cēsisē linnuse skemaatiline plaan arheoloogiliselt lābikaevatuvā ala (1974–2003) ja leituvā mūrifrāgmentidegā. Z. Apala, Cēsis Medieval Castle. Riga: Vidzeme History and Tourism Centre, [2004]. 1 sheet folded in pages; p [1].



4.

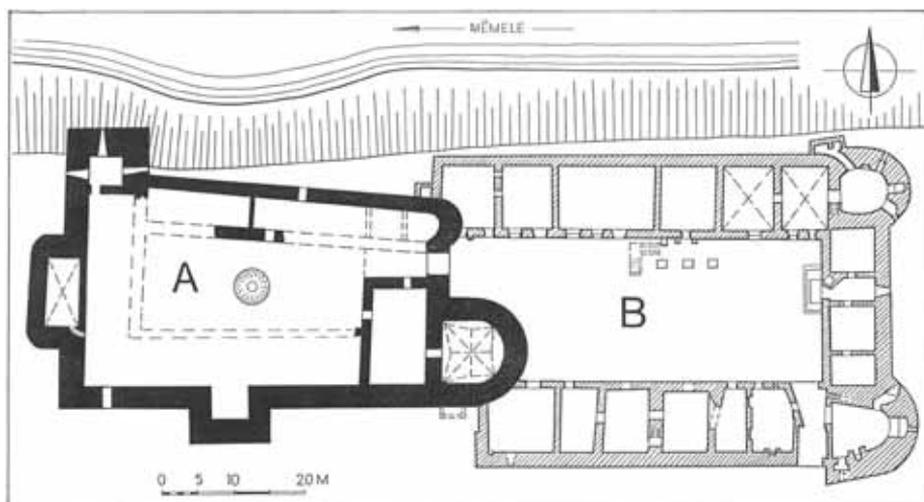
Plan of the Turaida castle after archaeological excavations. Marked in black is the first building phase.

Turaida linnuse põhiplaan pärast arheoloogilisi kaevamisi. Mustaga on märgitud esimene ehitusjärg.

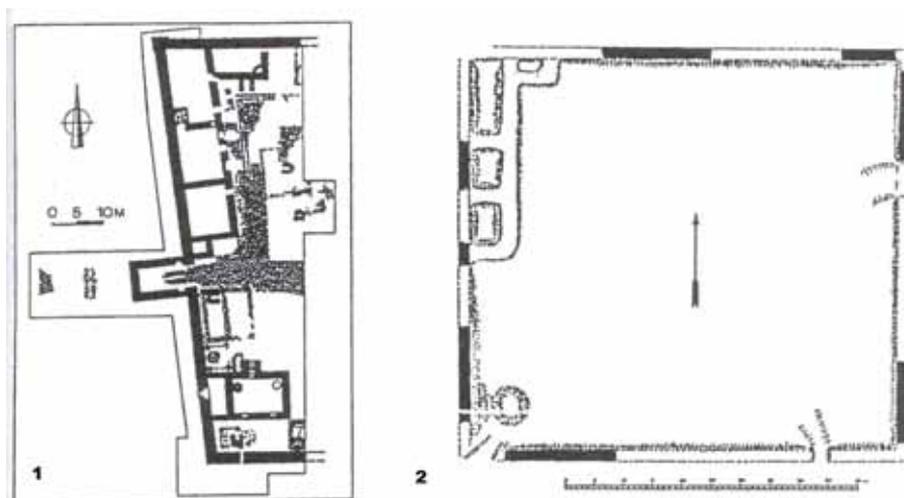
G. Jansons, Turaidas pils arhitektūra: 13.–17. gadsimts. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2007, p. 43.



5. Reconstructed buildings on the west and south side of the Turaida castle.
Photo by Ieva Ose, 2015.
Rekonstrueeritud hooned Turaida linnuse lääne- ja lõunaküljel.
Ieva Ose foto, 2015.

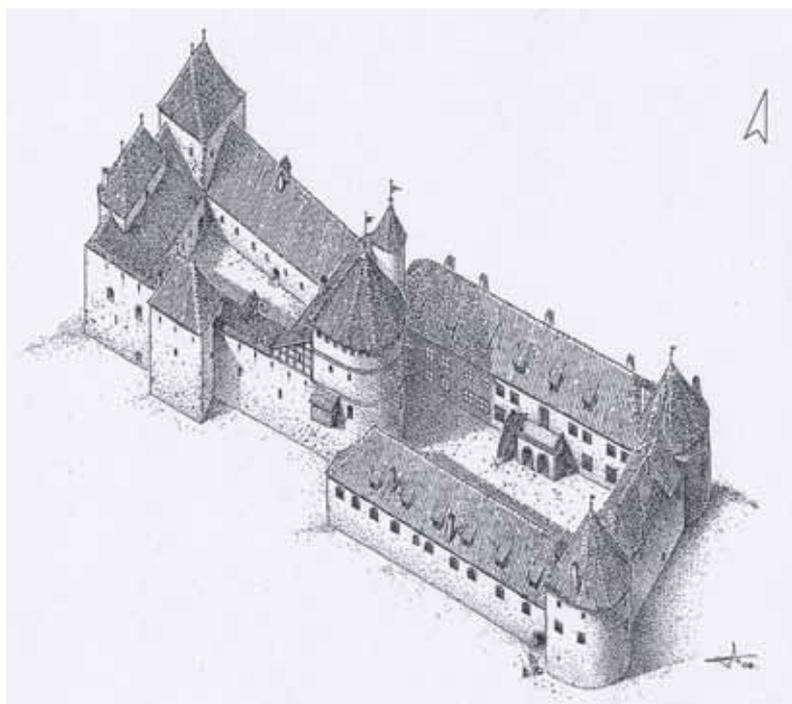


6. Bauska: A – plan of the Order's castle, B – plan of the Duke's residence revealed in the course of archaeological excavation.
Bauska: A – ordulinnuse plaan, B – arheoloogilistel kaevamistel leitud hertsogilossi plaan.
A. Caune, Einige während der Ausgrabungen 1976–1990 erworbene Erkenntnisse über die Ordensburg Bauske in Lettland. – *Castella Maris Baltici* 1. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1993, p. 21.



7. Plan of the Āraiši castle: 1 - structures revealed in the course of archaeological excavations.

Āraiši linnuse plaan: 1 - arheoloogilistel kaevamistel väljapuhastatud linnuse osad
 2 - skemaatiline plaan. 1 - J. Apals, Āraišu mūra pils arheoloģiskā izpēte. - Cēsu novada vēsture I. Cēsis: Cēsu Vēstures Muzejs, 1995, p. 62; 2 - A. Tuulse, Die Burgen in Estland und Lettland. Dorpat: Dorpater Estnischer Verlag, 1942, p. 240.



8. The Bauska castle - reconstruction of the buildings as they looked in the late 16th century. Drawing by Gunārs Jansons, 2008.

Bauska linnus - ehitiste rekonstruktsioon 16. sajandi lõpu seisuga.
 Gunārs Jansonsi joonis, 2008.

G. Jansons, Bauskas pils grafiskā rekonstrukcija. - Pētījumi un avoti par Livonijas ordenpili. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 7). Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2011, p. 418.



9. Bauska – ruins of the Order's castle and the restored Duke's palace.
Photo by Andris Caune, 2015.
Bauska – ordulinnuse varemed ja restaureeritud hertsogiloss.
Andris Caune foto, 2015.

Latvian archaeologists.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, there is no similar publication on annual architectural research. Consequently, a new corpus of unpublished documentation on medieval castles in Latvia remains in the archives of various institutions, and artefacts not subject to further research are kept in several museums.

Achievements and challenges – some conclusions

In the past 70 years archaeological and architectural research has taken place at more than 40 medieval castles in Latvia, and conservation and restoration work has been carried out at more than 30. These studies differ both in terms of the duration and scale of work. In the Soviet period there were long-term archaeological research projects on several castles, whereas in the last 25 years rescue excavation and brief architectural studies have dominated. From the Soviet period there are large numbers of artefacts, which are all kept at the National History Museum of Latvia, and reports in the archives of the Institute of Latvian History or Latvian State Inspection for Heritage Protection in Riga. During the last 25 years, material from castle research has been left in local museums. This is a new challenge for summarising research on the material from all the medieval castles in Latvia, which could be problematic. The lack of a new book of this kind means that Latvian researchers do not have a complete overview, and it creates in foreign countries a misleading picture of research findings relating to the medieval castles in Latvia, their development and architecture. Therefore some conclusions may be mentioned.

Ēvalds Mugurēvičs emphasised already in his publications in 1983 that from the beginning of the 20th century the opinion existed that the German castles had been built on previously uninhabited sites. The excavations in the Soviet period have shown that at least some of the 13th–14th century castles of the Sword Brethren and later the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order, as well as castles of the bishops of Riga and Courland, were placed on the sites of Iron Age hill forts of the native inhabitants.⁴⁵ This means that the Germans selected strategically important places used by the native population and partially took over the established territorial-administrative divisions. Some German castles were built on local hill forts immediately after their devastation (Koknese, Dobele, Rēzekne, Turaida, etc.).

Previously it was believed that the German bishops and the Order built stone castles immediately after their arrival in Livonia. However, the excavations in the 1960s–1980s have shown that a proportion of the first German castles in the 13th century were wooden fortifications. Some of them were temporary fortresses used by the Germans during the conquest of the land, for example Asote, Jersika, Mežotne, Tērvete, etc.⁴⁶ In some other castles Germans lived together with the

44 V. Muižnieks, *Arheoloģiskie izrakumi Ropažu viduslaiku pili 2012. gadā. – Arheologu pētījumi Latvijā 2012.–2013. gadā*. Rīga: Nordik, 2014, pp. 163–168.

45 Ē. Mugurēvičs, *Latvijas viduslaiku piļu klasifikācijas un arheoloģiskās izpētes jautājumi. – Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija 14*. Rīga: Zinātne, 1983, pp. 3–13.

46 A. Caune, *Vācu piļu celtniecība Zemgalē 13.–15. gadsimtā. – Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija 23*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2006, pp. 59–70.

native population and erected some stone walls in the early 13th century. These were originally built on small hills (Kraukļakalni in Aizkraukle, Dievukalns in Lielvārde, Riekstukalns in Cēsis, Krustakalns in Sigulda); later, however, big German castles were built nearby.⁴⁷

The big excavations of the 1960s–1980s revealed the layout of several castles not known before, for example Vecdole,⁴⁸ Holme, Lokstene, Altene, etc. These castles are important because they had been abandoned by the 15th century or even earlier, and therefore reveal defensive systems not rebuilt for firearms.

Excavations sometimes made it possible to identify building periods, for example in Salaspils Castle evidence was obtained of two phases in the 14th and 16th centuries. The initial regular castle was expanded, adding a new outer bailey and several towers for protection with firearms.⁴⁹ Excavation in Bauska showed that before the ducal residence of the 16th century, the outer bailey of the Order's castle had existed on the same site.⁵⁰

In the castles of Salaspils, Cēsis, Bauska and Turaida courtyard pavements from the last period of habitation were discovered, and evidence obtained regarding the rainwater drains and sewerage system. At eight medieval castles – Holme, Koknese, Salaspils, Turaida, Valmiera, Cēsis, Bauska and Dundaga – wells were unearthed and excavated.⁵¹ Remains of warm-air heating systems were found in Altene, Koknese, Vecdole, Salaspils, Turaida, Bauska and Ventspils castles.⁵² In the Bauska palace, several rooms were unearthed with original brick and ceramic tile floors from the 16th and 17th centuries.⁵³

Overall, it must be concluded that archaeologists have given less attention to building evidence than to artefacts. Excavations have made a significant contribution to research on the material culture of medieval Livonia. Based on the archaeological fieldwork in the Holme castle, Mugurēvičs concluded that in the 13th century it had been not only a place of refuge (as the Baltic German researchers had considered), but a continuously inhabited castle, in which a large part of the population were local Livs.⁵⁴ Similar conclusions were drawn with regard to several

47 Ē. Mugurēvičs, *Arheoloģiskās liecības par Livonijas ordeņa piļu apbūves attīstību Latvijas teritorijā*. – *Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija* 16. Rīga: Zinātne, 1994, pp. 93–109.

48 M. Atgāzis, *Vecdoles pils nocietinājumi un apbūve*. – *Pētījumi par Rīgas arhibīskapijas pilim*. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 1.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 1999, pp. 312–348.

49 A. Stubavs, *Salaspils arheoloģiskās ekspedīcijas 1971. gada darba rezultāti*. – *Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas materiāli par arheologu, antropologu un etnogrāfu 1971. gada pētījumu rezultātiem*. Rīga: Zinātne, 1972, pp. 91–96, I. Ose, *Salaspils pils plānojuma rekonstrukcija*. – *Senā Rīga: Pētījumi pilsētas arheoloģijā un vēsturē*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 1998, pp. 378–414.

50 A. Caune, *Der südöstliche Vorburgsturm der Burg Bauske*. – *Castella Maris Baltici* 8. Rīga: Institute of the History of Latvia Publishers, 2007, pp. 23–30.

51 Ē. Mugurēvičs, R. Spirģis, *Arheoloģiskās liecības par akām Latvijas mūra pils (12. gs. beigas – 18. gs.)*. – *Pētījumi par ordenpīlim Latvijā*. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 3.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2002, pp. 349–370.

52 I. Ose, *Heizanlagen in den mittelalterlichen Burgen Lettlands*. – *Castella Maris Baltici* 5. Rodkøbing: Langelands Museum, 2001, pp. 129–136.

53 A. Caune, *Arheoloģiskās liecības par Bauskas pils hercogu daļas grīdu segumu 16. un 17. gadsimtā*. – *Pētījumi par Vidzemes, Kurzemes un Zemgales pīlim*. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 9.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2016, pp. 51–103.

54 Ē. Mugurēvičs, *Viduslaiku ciems un pils Salaspils novadā*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2008, p. 247.

other castles.⁵⁵ Only step by step did a common medieval material culture develop, as can be seen from the artefacts of the 15th and 16th century.

Latvian medieval castle excavations provide a major corpus of ceramic material, but it has been studied only partly. Stove tiles have received the most attention: these were used in some castles from the late 15th century, but mostly in the 16th and 17th centuries. There are publications on stove tiles from castles in western Latvia⁵⁶ and two catalogues with finds from Turaida Castle – on stove tiles⁵⁷ and building ceramics (bricks, tiles and floor tiles)⁵⁸.

In summary, it could be concluded that in cases when hydroelectric power stations on the Daugava River flooded large areas and several castle ruins were destroyed largely or completely, excavation of large areas was justified, because in this way the whole layout could be unearthed and many artefacts collected. In some later excavations of castles where stone walls had to be conserved or restored it would have been better to make only the necessary small rescue excavations and preserve more of the cultural layers for the future. On the other hand, a lot of material from the old excavations remains unresearched and unpublished. It loses its scientific value because of the old methods that were used, and it is no longer possible to renew the original context of the cultural layers.

Also important for the Latvian castle research is material in the historical archives. There are inventories of castles from the late 16th and 17th centuries in Russian, Polish and Latvian archives, which have been studied only partly. In the Soviet period historian Roberts Malvess prepared studies on the history of Bauska, Dundaga, Koknese, Turaida and other castles. Some of this material has been published in recent years.⁵⁹ The second group of sources found in the archives are the oldest depictions and plans of Latvian castles. Representing unique material from the 17th century, kept in the Military Archives in Stockholm, are designs for new earthen fortifications around medieval castles by Swedish military engineers. Research into this material should be continued in the future. Castles and ruins were documented as historical monuments only in the 19th century. In this respect, an important source is the so-called Paulucci Album, in which 66 monuments in Latvia and Estonia, mostly castles or ruins, were documented in the late 1820s on the order of the governor of the Russian Baltic Provinces. Since the album was

55 Ē. Mugarēvičs, *Similarities and Differences among Lettgallian and German Castles in Eastern Latvia during the 9th–15th Centuries*. – *Castella Maris Baltici* 2. Nyköping: Södermanlands museum, 1996, pp. 117–124; Ē. Mugarēvičs, *Wechselbeziehungen der deutschen und ostbaltischen Kulturen im Lettland des 13. bis 16. Jahrhunderts*. – *Lübecker Schriften zur Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte*. Bd. 12. Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt, 1986, pp. 229–239.

56 I. Ose, *Podiņu krāsni Kurzemes un Zemgales pilīs: 15. gs. beigas – 18. gs. sākums*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 1996.

57 *Turaidas pils 16.–18. gadsimta krāsns keramika: Katalogs*. Sast. I. Ose. [Rīga]: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2013.

58 *Turaidas pils 13.–17. gadsimta būvkeramika: Katalogs*. Sast. I. Ose. [Rīga]: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2015.

59 R. Malvess, *Bauskas pils vēsturiskās izpētes materiāli; Dundagas pils būvvesture*. – *Pētījumi par Kurzemes un Zemgales pilīm*. (Latvijas viduslaiku pils 5.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2005, pp. 56–146.

available in a single copy in the Academic Library in Riga, in 2008 it was published in a commented edition.⁶⁰

Although architects have made many drawings of layouts and masonry remains in the medieval castles of Latvia before developing conservation and restoration projects, only a few books and some articles have been published with their results. A major collection of measurements and drawings in many volumes of reports is kept in the Archives of the Latvian State Inspection for Heritage Protection. Investigating these is a challenge for the future.

It should be mentioned that researchers in Latvia have identified and described more castles than have been taken into state protection. The book by Armin Tuulse published in 1942 mentions 91 castles in present-day Latvia. The 2004 *Lexicon of Latvian Castles* mentions as many as 136 sites, among them several early castles temporarily inhabited by Germans in the 13th century and late medieval residences built only in the 16th century. By contrast, far fewer monuments have been listed as national monuments. In 1940, only 46 castle ruins were registered, but nowadays 75 medieval castles or ruins are included in the list of cultural monuments under state protection as archaeological or architectural sites.⁶¹ These do not include four castles near the Daugava River which were flooded in the reservoirs of hydroelectric power stations, some castles from the written sources which cannot be located, as well as several medieval castle ruins which were destroyed by new buildings. Some early German fortifications where no visible masonry is preserved are protected as archaeological monuments, namely as Late Iron Age hill forts. However, some other medieval castle sites should be included in the list of cultural monuments. Among them is the Ādaži castle site, which until the beginning of the 1990s was in the territory of a Soviet military base, and Order's castle in Jelgava, the remains of which lie beneath and adjacent to the Baroque palace built in the 18th century.

This article has attempted to briefly outline the main directions of Latvian medieval castle research, a number of significant achievements and also some problems and challenges. In future it is important to attract young researchers to Latvian castle research; they could carry out new studies as well as continue evaluation and publication of the previously collected material. At the same time it is desirable to develop similar research activities in Estonia. These are tasks for Latvian and Estonian researchers in the development of cooperation in order to write a new work dedicated to the history and architecture of Livonian castles.

60 Livonijas piļu attēli no marķīza Pauluči albuma. Koment. I. Ose. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2008.

61 J. Asaris, Latvijas viduslaiku piļu aizsardzība Pieminekļu valdes laikā 1923.–1940. gadā. – Pētījumi un avoti par ordeņa un bīskapu pilīm Latvijā. (Latvijas viduslaiku pilis 8.) Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2014, pp. 46–70.