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ESTER ORAS, ERKI RUSSOW

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTATION OF THE REMAINS OF A STONE BUILDING AT MÕNISTE

ARVI HAAK
arvi.haak@katarina.ee

Tartu Linnamuuseum
(Tartu City Museum)
Narva mnt 23, 51009 Tartu, Estonia

MARTTI VELDI
martti.veldi@muinas.ee

Muinsuskaitseamet
(National Heritage Board)
Uus 18, 10111 Tallinn, Estonia

INTRODUCTION

In January 2008, Helve Tulviste from Mõniste Open Air Museum contacted the National Heritage Board to inform that during extensive excavations on the shores of Lake Mõniste, a series of stone walls had been unearthed. The walls were found while digging a new outlet from the northwestern corner of the lake to the River Mustjõgi (Fig. 1). The old outlet was somewhat longer, and was located *ca.* 30 meters further to the north. As the walls were situated deeper than three meters from the present ground level, and were quite massive, it was supposed that the walls might be of archaeological interest. Earlier very little information about Mõniste manor and its surroundings was available.

The main purpose for carrying out small-scale archaeological investigations was to find material for dating the remaining parts of the walls, and to interpret the possible function of the building(s).

Profane stone houses from the medieval and early modern period are extremely rare outside towns in Estonia. In addition to castles, these are mostly restricted to fortified manor houses (e.g. at Kaarma, see Pärn &

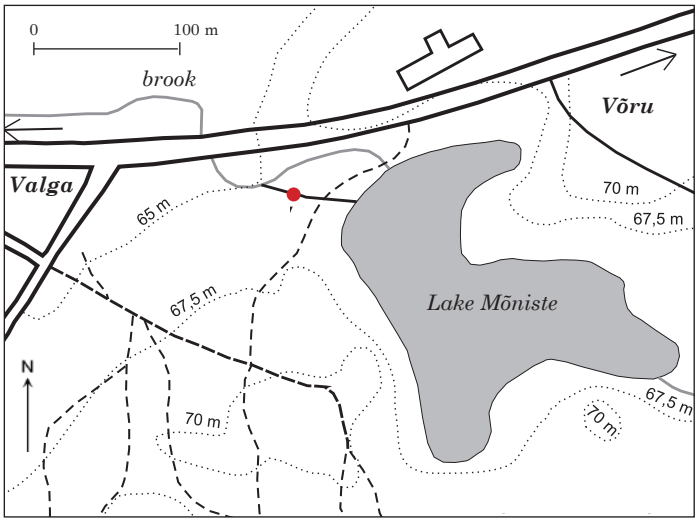

Fig. 1. Location map of the site next to the western bank of Lake Mõniste.
Jn 1. Mõniste järve läänekalda lähedal asunud kivihoone asukohaskeem.
Drawing / Joonis: Arvi Haak, Martti Veldi

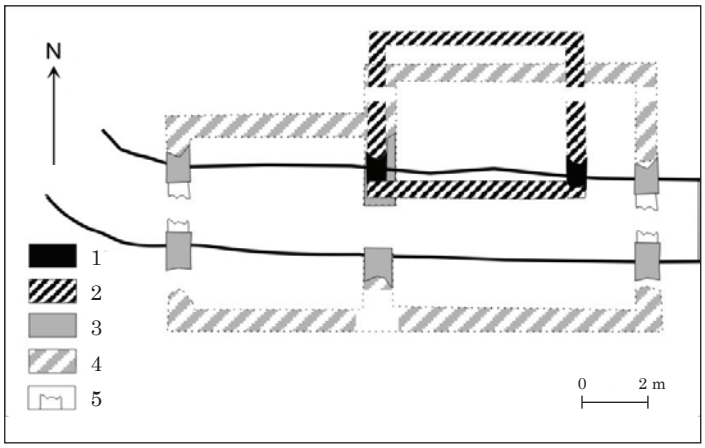

Fig. 2. The wall remains identified and hypothetical reconstruction of the buildings.
1 – wall remains of the earlier building
2 – reconstruction of the earlier building
3 – wall remains of the later building
4 – reconstruction of the later building
5 – beams used as foundation of the later building.
Jn 2. Leitud müürijäänused ja hoonete oletuslik rekonstruktsioon.
1 – varasema hoone müürid
2 – varasema hoone rekonstruktsioon;
3 – hilisema hoone müürid
4 – hilisema hoone rekonstruktsioon
5 – palgid, mis moodustasid hilisema hoone seintealuse toestuse.
Drawing / Joonis: Arvi Haak

Russow 2005; or Piigaste, see Mäll & Kadakas 1997). Thus, such remains in the countryside are certainly of archaeological interest.

DESCRIPTION OF REMAINS

The trench dug for the new outlet from Lake Mõniste had crossed three stone walls, which could be identified in the remaining sections (Fig. 2). The preliminary investigations documented these sections and as a result, it became evident that these remains originated from at least two buildings of different age.

Of the earlier building, remains of its eastern wall, made of granite stones, limestone, and a few bricks, could be identified without doubt; it ran in the north–south direction and was cut by a trench for the ditch. Its width was 55–60 cm. The wall, or probably the corner of the building, rested upon a wooden post (Fig. 3). According to the material preserved, it seems that the few stones from the basement, running parallel to the ditch erected as the new outlet from the lake, originated from the southern wall of the building. Thus the post mentioned above may have been rammed to support the corner of the building in the wet area.

The western wall of the building could be identified on the basis of the layers inside the building. According to these, it seemed that there was a small retraction next to the western wall of the building. The western wall (width 50–60 cm) consisted of limestone joined with mortar, which also included fragments of brick and smaller granite stones. The distance between the walls was 5.7 m.

The layers inside the building had deposited upon undisturbed turf. The earliest layer consisted of greyish sandy loam, with lenses of sand and charcoal in its upper part (Fig. 3). Most likely it was connected with the construction of the basement, which consisted of granite stones (20–40 cm in

Fig. 3. Section within the remains of the earlier building. View from S.
Jn 3. Profiil varasema hoone sisemuses. Vaade lõunast.
Photo / Foto: Arvi Haak

diameter) that rested just above it. The foundation stones were packed with clayish sand, in some areas turf and charcoal fragments were present. Two larger fragments of brick could be collected, one measuring 14.5 × 8 cm (width × thickness).

Above the presumable foundation, the stratigraphically later layer consisted mostly of clay with charcoal fragments, and included fragments of brick and limestone, and some birch bark. Two animal bones were the only finds from the layer. In all likelihood the layer originated from the burning of the building. Above the burnt layer, a layer of debris existed, consisting of lime mortar, fragments of brick, limestone and roof tiles. It seems likely that this layer originated from the destruction of the earlier building, as the stratigraphically later layers already crossed the earlier wall (Fig. 3).

In order to obtain a dating for the period of usage of the building, a radiocarbon sample was collected from the layer just west of the western wall of the building, which had deposited upon a sand layer with a lens of charcoal in its upper part. Thus, the sample definitely dated human activities and most likely the layer had deposited after the construction of

[1] Tln-3077.

Fig. 4. Mõniste manor on the Swedish cadastre map from 1684.
Jn 4. Mõniste mõis 1684. aasta Rootsi katastrikaardil.
(EAA 308-2-172.)

the western wall. The sample was dated 353±45 BP (cal. 1453–1639 AD with 95.4% probability).[1]

Remains of a later building could also be identified in the section. It was partially erected on the earlier walls, but the eastern wall was located *ca.* 1.5 m eastwards from the earlier wall and it rested upon a horizontal wooden beam. The same can be said about the western outer wall of the new building. While its foundation was made of limestone and smaller granite stones, with a row of bigger granite stones just above the beams, its upper part consisted of brick with the dimensions 14.5 × 6 cm (width × thickness). According to the appearance and limited thickness of the bricks, the later building originates most likely from the 19th century. The burnt layers crossing the earlier outer wall, visible in the profiles, can also be connected with the existence of the later building. The westernmost wall, 6 metres west of the earlier western wall, was also founded upon a horizontal beam.

DOCUMENTARY DATA AND POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION OF THE REMAINS

As stated above, we are dealing with two buildings at the same site, one of the late 16th or 17th century origin, while the other most likely dates from the 19th century. Thus it is possible that their functions are not interconnected. The earliest data about buildings in Mõniste are listed below.

Though the earliest mentioning of the manor (Ger. *Menzen*) is dated to 1529 (Pirang 1930, 58) or 1542[2], assumptions of a possible medieval vassal

[2] Register of Estonian manors, EAA – http://www.eha.ee/andmed/search.php?type=mois. 12.05.09.

stronghold situated in Mõniste have been put forward (Hermann 1974, 77–81). However, these rely on depictions of the besieging of the fortified manor in 1702 (Gadebusch 1782, 199), as palisade and moat are mentioned. The site has not been located with certainty; as suggested by Hermann (1974, 79), it might have stood east of the later manor house, on the bank of the lake.

The land revision of 1627 depicts the manor house as a three-room building with a central entrance and two or three additional chambers. Of the auxiliary buildings, a sauna, three storages, a kitchen, a stable and a cellar are listed (Hermann 1974, 79). The map of 1684 also marks the manor at the western bank of Lake Mõniste (Fig. 4).

Thus, the manor complex dates from the late medieval and early modern periods, but most likely the walls unearthed do not belong to the main building. The foundations documented (with the width of 50–60 cm) are too weak for a larger stone building; it seems more likely that these had to carry a wooden building, or a lighter brick building. The great amount of charcoal from the remains also supports the assumption of a largely wooden building. In that connection, it might be of interest that in the description of besieging of Mõniste in 1702, a wooden building is mentioned, which was set on fire (Gadebusch 1782, 199). Thus, in addition to a fortified stone manor, some kind of wooden building(s) must have existed. Without further evidence for dating, any speculation on the time of destroying the building unearthed remains purely hypothetical.

There are no finds that could be used to establish the function of the building, and the remaining constructional details did not give a clear clue, either. The location next to water would be suitable for some kind of a mill, but as the outlet from the lake was situated *ca.* 30 m further north, at the northern end of the lake, this would not be very likely. The amount of water would anyway be insufficient for a larger watermill. The lack of any household items would only strengthen the argument that it was not a dwelling, also any technical waste was absent. The fact that turf formed the undisturbed ground level, and the stone buildings rested upon rafts, stresses that it was erected in wet conditions, and thus unsuitable for a storage or a cellar. So, none of the auxiliary buildings listed in the revision of 1627, would form a suitable interpretation for these remains.

CONCLUSIONS

At Mõniste, the foundation of a stone building was unearthed. It had been burnt, but the material obtained from the profiles gave no clue for its function. The existing documentary data allows us to conclude that at least from the 16th century, the main building of the Mõniste manor was situated on the western bank of Lake Mõniste, but most likely southwards of the remains discovered. Thus, it seems most likely that the walls originate from an auxiliary building of the manor, but its exact form and function remain unclear at least until further investigations.

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MÕNISTE JÄRVE ÄÄREST LEITUD KIVIHOONE DOKUMENTEERIMISEST

2008. aasta jaanuaris võttis Muinsuskaitseametiga ühendust Mõniste Vabaõhumuuseumi juhataja Helve Tulviste, teatades, et Mõniste järve süvendustööde käigus on avastatud massiivsed kivimüürid. Müürid leiti järvele uue väljavoolu kaevamise käigus Mõniste järve loodenurgast (jn 1). Kuna avastatud müürid paiknesid tänapäevasest maapinnast kuni kolme meetri sügavusel, tekkis kahtlus, et tegemist võib olla arheoloogiliselt huvipakkuva leiuga.

Eeluuringute käigus oli kaevandis võimalik eristada kolm müürilõiku (jn 2), mis kuulusid vähemalt kahele eriaegsele hoonele. Varasema hoone idamüür, millest järve väljavoolu kraav risti läbi lõikas, kulges põhja-lõuna-suunaliselt ning oli laotud maa- ja paekividest ning üksikutest tellistest. Hoone arvatav nurk toetus puitpostile (jn 3). Vaadeldava hoone läänemüür, mida oli võimalik tuvastada ehitise sisse ladestunud kihtide põhjal, asus idamüürist 5,7 m eemal ning koosnes lubimördiga laotud paekividest. Hoone sisemuses olevatest kihtidest seostus kõige alumine hallikas liivakiht vundamendikividega, mille peal paiknes ilmselt hoone põlemise tagajärjel ladestunud rohkelt sütt, tellise- ja paetükke ning puidujäänuseid sisaldav kihistus, mis oli omakorda kaetud hoone lagunemisel tekkinud rusukihiga. Viimasele viitas ka asjaolu, et hilisemad kihistused paiknesid stratigraafiliselt juba müüri peal. Ehitise kasutusaja dateerimiseks võeti hoone välismüüri suhtes sekundaarse kihi ülemisest osast radiosüsinikuproov, mis dateeriti 353±45 radiosüsinikuaastat (kalibreerituna 95,4% tõenäosusega 1453–1639 pKr). Hilisem hoone oli osaliselt rajatud varasemale müürile, kuid selle idapoolne osa ning läänepoolne välissein toetusid horisontaalsetele puuprussidele. Kui antud hoone vundament koosnes pae- ja graniitkividest, siis selle ülemine osa oli laotud põletatud tellistest mõõtudega 14,5 × 6 cm, mis kivide paksuse ja välisilme põhjal otsustades on ilmselt valmistatud 19. sajandil. Seega leiti kahe hoone fragmente, millest varasem on ehitatud 16.–17. sajandil ning hilisem 19. sajandil.

Kuigi kirjalike allikate põhjal on Mõniste mõisakompleks hiliskeskaegne või varauusaegne (mainitud aastal 1529 või 1542; kaardil 1684; vt jn 4) ning selle varaseim periood võis olla seotud kindlustatud vasallilinnusega, ei võimalda dokumenteeritud müürilõigud hoonete täpset funktsiooni tuvastada. Võib oletada, et tegu on mõisa abihoone, mitte 1702. a piiramiskirjelduses mainitud kindlustatud mõisahoonega. Veelähedus võiks viidata veskikohale, kuid suurema vooluvee puudumine muudab selle ebatõenäoliseks. Samuti puuduvad igapäevaelule viitavad leiud, mis annab mõista, et tegemist oli pigem kõrval- kui eluhoonega. Ka ei ole liigniiskuse tõttu vaivundamendile rajatud hoone sobilik keldriks või muuks hoiuruumiks.