



Archaeological studies in the church of Järva-Jaani

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INTRODUCTION

The rural parish church of St John in Järva-Jaani (Germ. *St Johannis in Jerwen*; in medieval sources *Keting*) is situated in the central part of the province Järvamaa, ca. 25 km north-east of its capital Paide, on the historical road between Tallinn and Tartu, approximately at midpoint. The church (Fig. 1) has been standing in a juncture of a network of roads between historical centres Tallinn, Tartu, Paide and Rakvere. The article introduces results of fieldwork in 2017–2020. Archaeological research was undertaken inside the sacristy because of replacement of the rotten timber floor in 2017 (for a short summary in Estonian, see Kadakas 2017; discovery of an older sacristy was briefly noted in Russow *et al.* 2018, 13; Kadakas 2020, 42), and around the sacristy in 2019 (briefly noted in Russow *et al.* 2020, 16). In 2020, the soil was studied in connection with the reconstruction of the main stairs in front of the western tower (Figs 1–2).



Fig. 1. Järva-Jaani church from the north-east during the soil removal in 2019.

Jn 1. Järva-Jaani kirik kirdes suunast 2019. a pinnase-tööde ajal.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CHURCH

The parish of Järva-Jaani was established in the beginning of the 1220s, and the first timber church was probably built between 1221–1223; in 1253 the parish (*Keytingen*) was first mentioned among the initial three parishes of Järva province (Johansen 1933, 104). According to Villem Raam, the preserved stone church was built as an oblong single-nave church (three vaults) with a narrow quadrangular chancel (Figs 1–2) probably in the third quarter of the 13th century; it lacked both tower and sacristy. The sacristy on the northern side of the chancel and the southern porch are Early Modern additions. Only in 1881 the western tower¹ was

¹ About the tower see: Melder 2015.

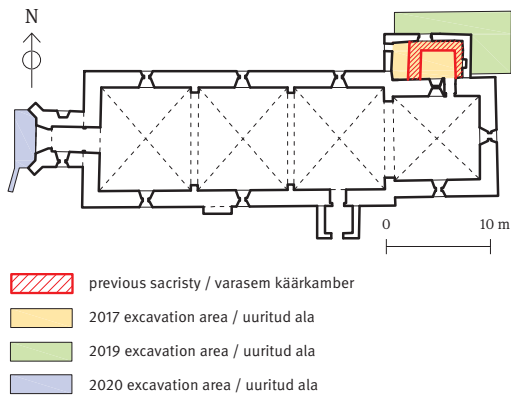


Fig. 2. Plan of Järva-Jaani church and excavation areas.
Jn 2. Järva-Jaani kiriku ja kaevamisalade plaan.
 Drawing / Joonis: Villu Kadakas

PREVIOUS FIELD RESEARCH

No previous archaeological studies had taken place inside or in the immediate vicinity of the church. However, some earlier activities involving large-scale removal of soil can be noted. In 2016 the southern part of the churchyard stone fence and the soil around it was studied (Piirits 2016).

During the fieldwork of 2019 it appeared that in 1989 the upper soil layers were removed right outside, on the northern side of the church nave and the northern and eastern side of the sacristy, up to a line 5–6 m north of the nave. This work was initiated with a goal to reduce moisture in the walls of the nave and sacristy. Probably little else was discovered apart from scattered human bones which were reburied in the churchyard.³

In 2019, plaster of the nave and chancel interior was studied and remains of paintings from various periods were revealed; the earliest paintings with geometrical forms probably date from the late medieval period (Hiiop & Randla 2020).

BUILDING HISTORY OF THE EXISTING SACRISTY

The existing sacristy is a rectangular building (Figs 1–3) with rather thin stone walls (ranging between 60 and 85 cm), built next to the northern wall of the chancel. Its eastern wall is built secondarily against the northern wall of the chancel, the western wall against the north-eastern corner of the nave. Before the field studies and conservation work it was clear that the sacristy is an Early Modern addition, but without details which could enable more precise dating. It has existed by at least 1843 already, when it was depicted on a map of the land estate of the vicarage (RA, EAA.3724.4.398). During the conservation work in 2019 it was discovered that the first interior layer of plaster is covered in particular areas with blue paintings, plant ornamentation in Baroque style (Rohtla & Riigov 2019, 29–30). Based on the style of these decorative elements, it can be concluded that the building was presumably erected either in the second half of the 17th or in the 18th century. The timber floor of the sacristy was built probably during the second half of the 20th century.

planned in front of the nave (Raam 1997). The medieval church was built of limestone and erratic boulders (Raam 1972, 144). Kaur Alttoa has recently supposed that the nave may have been originally with a timber ceiling and the vaults are a secondary addition (Alttoa 2015, 94).

The scarce written sources do not mention any medieval events or building campaigns of the church. The building was probably damaged during the Livonian Wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, probably again during the Great Northern War², but no written sources regarding the church building of Järva-Jaani in particular have survived.

² It is known that the pastor was killed during an attack by the Russian troops in 1704 (Paucker 1849, 216).

³ Conversations on 9 July 2019 with congregation chairperson Kuno Agan and former pastor of Järva-Jaani Peeter Parts (1987–1997).

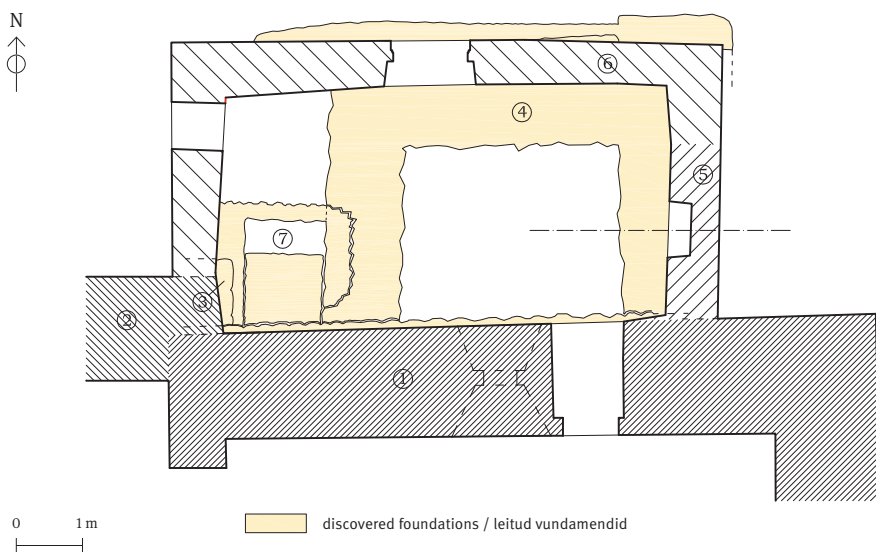


Fig. 3. Plan of the sacristy: 1 – chancel wall, 2 – nave wall, 3 – foundation of the nave, 4 – foundation of the medieval sacristy, 5 – wall of the existing sacristy, supposed phase I, 6 – wall of existing sacristy, supposed phase II, 7 – lime box.
Jn 3. Käärkambri plaan: 1 – kooriruumi sein, 2 – pikihoone sein, 3 – pikihoone vundament, 4 – keskaegse käärkambri vundament, 5 – praeguse käärkambri, oletatava I etapi sein, 6 – praeguse käärkambri, oletatava II etapi sein, 7 – lubjakast.

Drawing / Joonis: Villu Kadakas

FLOOR LEVELS OF THE SACRISTY

After removal of the remains of the rotten timber floor organic rich soil came to light at the depth of ca. 30 cm under the room (Fig. 4). It was studied with a metal detector and three small test pits. It appeared that this soil layer includes also various demolition debris and fragments of human bones. The layer has become very hard probably because of walking on it for a long period. Such a hardened surface cannot evolve under a timber floor, but in case of a dirt floor or may indicate to a slab floor, which has been later removed. However, the inner surfaces of the walls of the sacristy do not correspond to such a deep floor level but indicate that the floor has been on the same level with the present chancel floor all the time. The soil under this hardened level contains sherds of window glass, but also three coins from the 16th century could be gathered from it, indicating a much earlier period than the existing sacristy. Although originally it was planned to remove this soil layer in order to build a steady base for the new floor, finally it was agreed to keep it for study in the future.



Fig. 4. Interior of the sacristy after excavations in 2017: contours of the foundations of the medieval sacristy are marked in a dashed line. View from the north-eastern corner.

Jn 4. Käärkambri interjäär pärast 2017. a kaevamisi: keskaegse käärkambri vundamentide kontuurid on rõhutatud katkendjoonega. Vaade kirdenurgast.
 Photo and drawing / Foto ja joonis: Villu Kadakas

REMAINS OF AN OLD SACRISTY INSIDE THE NEW ONE

During the excavation, a stone structure was first unearthed next to the eastern wall and the eastern part of the northern wall of the sacristy (Fig. 3: 4; 4). At first glance it seemed to be a protruding foundation of the existing sacristy walls. The protrusion (80–95 cm) is obviously too wide for foundations of the existing rather thin (65–85 cm) walls. The walls in the western part of the sacristy lack such a protrusive foundation. Soon another thick (ca. 115 cm) foundation, running in the north-south direction under the western part of the floor came to light. In this research phase it became clear that all the three foundations were probably not originally built for the existing sacristy but for a previous, considerably smaller sacristy which has been demolished before building the present one, apart from the foundation. The eastern wall and the eastern part of the northern wall of the existing sacristy have obviously been built on top of the foundations of the old one. This interpretation also explains the existence of the hardened floor level with 16th century finds: this floor level belonged to the earlier sacristy, although the floor itself (probably limestone slabs) has been completely removed. Roughly estimating, the floor level of the old sacristy could have been ca. 25 cm lower than that of the new one.

After the identification of the remains of the old sacristy, it was noticed that one built element of it has always been visible, but left unregarded. Although the present door between the chancel and the sacristy, with its diagonal boards (Fig. 4) comes from the Gothic Revival period (Rohtla *et al.* 2014, 18), the segment arched niche of the doorway and probably also the simple portal with plaster cover and a pointed arch seem to originate from the Middle Ages. It may have hinted that there must have been a sacristy in the Middle Ages already, but until now, this portal has somehow evaded professional description.

The old sacristy was a rather small building compared to the new one: its ca. 2.7 × 3.2 m interior had 2.5 times less floor surface, only ca. 9 m² compared to the ca. 24 m² of the later sacristy. Because of thick walls the outer dimensions did probably not differ so much: it was shorter but probably not much wider. The small portal of the chancel led right to the south-eastern corner of the old sacristy. It probably lacked an outer exit as the medieval sacristies usually did not have any. There was probably one window in one of the walls.

The existence of a medieval sacristy has not been supposed before the field study of 2017, because many medieval rural churches of Estonia apparently were without a sacristy, some have not got it even later (see Kadakas 2020, 42). Until this case it has been automatically presupposed in Estonia that if no medieval sacristy exists by an otherwise preserved medieval church, there has never been one. In the case of Järva-Jaani this presupposition seemed very solid because there is a medieval window in the northern wall of the chancel (Fig. 1-3; 6) which would be in clear contradiction with any sacristy. Although improbable, it cannot be excluded that some churches which have apparently never had a sacristy, had a timber sacristy in some period.

OUTER CONTOURS OF THE OLD SACRISTY

The question of the thickness of the northern and eastern wall remained unclear. They could have been as thick as the western wall, the foundation of which was revealed in its full thickness (ca. 115 cm). The wall on top of it was probably somewhat thinner: 90–110 cm. However, rural churches of Estonia often had sacristies with much thicker walls: 1.2 m or even 1.5 m (e.g. sacristy of Väike-Maarja church). Because of the unconventional location of the western wall (see below) it is possible that it was exceptionally thin compared to the other two.

It would be logical to assume that the thin northern and eastern walls of the new sacristy were built on the outer edge of the foundations of the medieval walls. In such a case the foundations must have been ca. 1.5 m thick. If the foundations were thinner, the builder of the new sacristy would have erected the new walls partly on the old, partly on new foundations. Such a solution might have brought along structural problems, uneven sinking of the new walls, and therefore was better to be avoided.

In 2019 the foundation of the northern wall of the existing sacristy could be studied from the outside during soil removal work (Fig. 3). The main goal of this study was to find remains of the medieval sacristy, to identify the exterior size of the demolished building. The results were rather contradictory. Most of the exposed foundation surfaces could be connected with the new sacristy. The easternmost part of the foundation of the northern wall, ca. 160 cm long, protrudes significantly more (ca. 40 cm) than the rest of the foundation (ca. 25 cm) and therefore may belong to a different building phase (Fig. 3). The length of this protrusive foundation corresponds with the width of the foundation of the eastern wall of the old sacristy, found two years before in the interior. It is difficult to explain such a limited protrusive element as a surviving part of the old sacristy. Possibly, there was a buttress on the north-eastern corner of the old sacristy. In conclusion, it was not possible to obtain clear knowledge about the outer contours of the old sacristy during the soil removal of 2019. The foundations of the northern and eastern walls must have been at least 1.2 m thick, but not more than 1.5 m.

EVIDENCE OF THE BUILDING PROCESS OF THE NEW SACRISTY

The survey of the interior plan contours and discovery of a blocked window in the eastern wall of the new sacristy (Figs 3; 5) gave indications that the building process of the new sacristy was probably not as simple as it seemed at first glance. It is possible that the old sacristy was not replaced with a new one during one demolition and construction campaign but it was rather a step-by-step process.

During the survey of interior walls in 2017 it appeared that the walls of the new sacristy do not meet at a straight angle. Furthermore, the eastern and northern walls consist of segments of walls which are not aligned,



Fig. 5. *The interior of the sacristy after conservation works in 2019: the contours of the foundations of the medieval sacristy have been marked in the floor with irregular limestone slabs. Blocked window in the eastern wall. View from the west.*

Jn 5. *Käärkambri interjööri pärast 2019. a konserveerimistööd: keskaegse käärkambri vundamentide kontuurid on märgitud põrandasse vabakujuliste paeplaatidega. Idaseinas kinni müüritud aknaava. Vaade lääne suunast.*

Photo / Foto: Villu Kadakas

but have points in between, where the wall surface changes direction. Especially noteworthy is the point in the eastern wall, which divides the wall into two segments. Curiously, this turning point is aligned with the inner edge with the northern wall of the old sacristy (Fig. 3). In 2019, during conservation work a blocked window was discovered in the eastern wall (Figs 3; 5; Rohtla & Riigov 2019, 6, 29–30). It has remains of timber jambs and paintings with Baroque style plant ornamentation on the first layer of plaster around it (Rohtla & Riigov 2019, 6, 29–30). One could expect that such a window should be positioned symmetrically as regards to the interior of the new sacristy, but surprisingly it follows the symmetry axis of the old one (Fig. 3).

Such a location of the window and the point of alignment change of the wall make sense if this part of the eastern wall would be interpreted as an independent building stage (Fig. 3: 5). Possibly the process of replacing the sacristy started with the eastern wall: the old thick eastern wall (but not the corner) was demolished and replaced with a much thinner one together with a window. Replacement of the old eastern wall with a new one was probably done with a purpose to obtain more interior space – ca. 1.9 m² of floor surface could be added to the previous 9 m². After some time, this gain probably turned out to be insufficient, so demolition of the rest of the old sacristy followed. This hypothesis of two building stages in the Early Modern sacristy is supported by the fact that in 2018, a crack was cleaned and anchored in the outer surface of the eastern wall, close to the north-eastern corner (Rohtla & Riigov 2019, 6). Remains of similar mural paintings with blue plant ornamentation in Baroque style were also found around the window of the northern wall. This indicates that the reconstruction process of the sacristy was completed in the 18th century already.

SECONDARY BUILT ELEMENTS IN THE EXISTING SACRISTY

In the western part of the existing sacristy, next to the western foundation of the old sacristy, a stone box, built of limestone with lime mortar was discovered (Fig. 3: 7). It is built in a manner the burial vault boxes inside rural churches usually are, but is too small to fit a single coffin (1.6 × 1.2 m). It could have been built only after the demolition of the old sacristy, because part of the foundation of the old sacristy has been demolished in order to fit it. Probably it was made to keep lime during the construction of the new sacristy, as evidenced by a thick layer of lime, which still covers the walls inside. Later, a filling masonry was fitted into part of the box, probably as a foundation for an oven or mantelpiece which probably stood in the corner. Eventually the rest of the box was filled with demolition debris, probably from the walls of the old sacristy.

BUILDING SEQUENCE OF THE CHANCEL AND OLD SACRISTY

In which phase was the earlier sacristy built? Was it planned and built already together with the nave and the chancel in the second half of the 13th century, later or even earlier? The foundations of the eastern and western walls of the old sacristy are both separated by a vertical joint from the foundation of the chancel (Fig. 3). It means that these have not been built during one phase, as a whole. It may seem apparent by default that the old sacristy was built secondarily against the chancel wall. However, a contrary building sequence cannot be automatically excluded: a stone sacristy might have been initially built as the earliest stone building against a timber chancel. Such a sequence is known in many medieval churches of Finland (Tuulse 1951; Hiekkanen 1992, 25; 1994, 31–34; 2018, 85) and has also been supposed in one medieval church in Estonia – Jõelähtme (Kadakas 2010, 105; 2020, 43).

Still, in all such cases, the stone sacristy was built as a fully independent structure, with all four walls of stone, but the old sacristy of Järva-Jaani had only three, it lacked the southern wall. While analysing the vertical joints, it is difficult to exclude the possibility that the initial southern wall of the sacristy was demolished when the stone chancel was built. However, it seems that the lime mortar of the foundations of the sacristy walls has flown against the stones of the foundation of the chancel during the construction work. Therefore, it is more probable, that the sacristy was built secondarily against the stone chancel already. Furthermore, it would have been more reasonable to integrate the southern wall of the earlier sacristy into the northern wall of the chancel, not to demolish it.

UNCONVENTIONAL PLAN OF THE OLD SACRISTY

The western part of the medieval sacristy deserves special attention. A sacristy of a medieval rural church was usually built with its western part next to the north-eastern corner of the nave; usually this corner supports the western wall of the sacristy. The old sacristy of Järva-Jaani has been built with an unusual plan solution – there was a 1.5 m wide gap between the north-eastern corner of the nave and the sacristy. It is also noteworthy that the western wall of the sacristy is not positioned at a straight angle towards the other walls, but a bit aslant, at ca. 86°–87°. Such a peculiar ground plan neither follows any known local or international pattern nor can be easily explained.

Surprisingly, there is another church in Estonia, which has a medieval sacristy with a very similar ground plan preserved – the church of Väike-Maarja, situated in the neighbouring province Virumaa, only ca. 23 km as the crow flies. However, the building history of Väike-Maarja church is very different from Järva-Jaani: it is a three-aisled hall church which was built according to the present state of knowledge only in the 15th century.⁴ The only similarity between the two seems to be the ground plan shape of the sacristy. Whatever the reason for this unconventional plan, the reasons for it are probably similar in both cases and are possibly connected with more complicated building history than known this far.

Leaving a gap between the sacristy and the nave corner is clearly irrational because extra space could have been obtained with minimal extra masonry, especially in case of Väike-Maarja, where the corner of the very wide nave could have easily functioned as the western wall of the sacristy. It seems as if at the time of planning the sacristy there was an obstacle in this area, which limited the extent of the planned sacristy. The aslant western wall of the sacristy might have reflected the direction of some previous building part. It seems as a temporary solution which eventually turned out to be permanent.

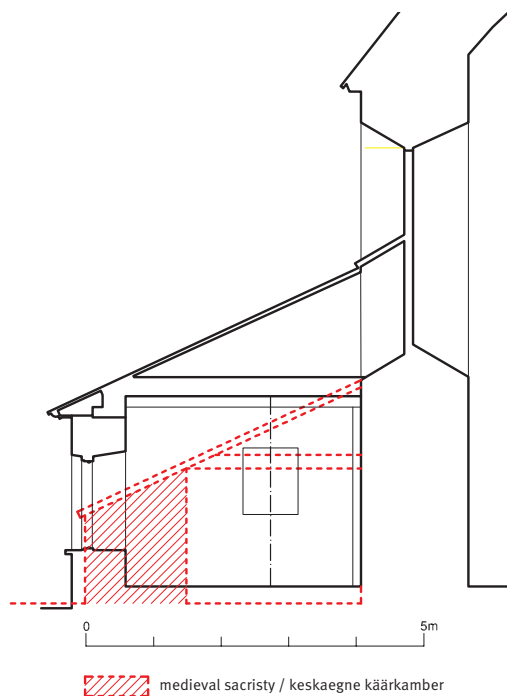
In case the stone chancel was built some time before the stone nave, standing against the previous, probably timber nave, one could imagine, that while planning the sacristy, the north-eastern corner of the timber nave might have theoretically blocked the space for the stone sacristy (Fig. 2). However, in order to block the space for the sacristy, the timber nave must have embraced the western part of the stone chancel. Such arrangement would be difficult to explain in a rational way and has not been a common pattern. Rebuilding patterns of medieval churches, including the replacement processes of the initial timber churches, have not been studied much in Estonia, mostly because of scarce information (see Kadakas 2020, 46–47).

⁴ Recently the existence of earlier building parts within the present nave has been supposed (Alltoa 2015, 94).

DATING PROBLEMS OF THE EARLIER SACRISTY

Was the old sacristy planned with the stone chancel already or considerably later? There is one element in the northern wall of the chancel which seems to be in contradiction with the idea that the sacristy was planned in the beginning. There is a blocked window in this wall. This narrow window with a pointed arch was obviously built together with the chancel wall, as can be easily observed in the attic of the sacristy, where the wall surface lacks plaster, although some remains indicate that the surface has once been plastered. During the period of the existing sacristy most of this window has been blocked, only the tip is visible from outside above the sacristy roof (Figs 1; 6). The lower edge of the window is located at the level of the ceiling of the existing sacristy (Fig. 6). At first glance, this seems to be an unavoidable contradiction, clear evidence that the old sacristy could not have been planned together with the chancel already. A gable roof would not fit with the window at all, because the gable and window would have been aligned.

However, when estimating possible coexistence or planning together of the old sacristy and the chancel window, it should be taken into consideration that the interior of the old sacristy was ca. 90 cm narrower, and its floor was probably ca. 25 cm lower than the later one. One can imagine on top of the medieval sacristy a lean-to roof with the same sloping angle as the roof of the present sacristy has (ca. 25°). Because of a rather thick northern wall, like the medieval sacristy probably had (120–150 cm), and the long slope of the rafters above it, the eaves could have been located 40–50 cm lower than the ceiling inside.



a narrower interior, a thicker wall and a lower floor level, the lean-to roof of the medieval sacristy could have been located much lower than the similar roof of the Early Modern one. Such a roof would have left the chancel window exposed in its full extent, yet there could have been a 2 m high room under the ceiling of the sacristy (Fig. 6).

Therefore, it cannot be excluded that the medieval sacristy of Järva-Jaani church was planned from the beginning, although the existence of the high window in the chancel wall suggests it was added later. If it were planned from the beginning, a small round window would have been more suitable in the side wall of the chancel, like there is e.g. above the sacristy of Ambla church in the neighbouring parish. Comparison with the situation in the similar sacristy of Väike-Maarja does not help to solve the dating issue of the old sacristy of Järva-Jaani, because according to the present state of research there has been no window in the chancel side wall above the sacristy of Väike-Maarja. Theoretically it may have been blocked and hidden behind plaster.

Fig. 6. Cross-section through the sacristy: reconstruction of the extent of the medieval sacristy.

Jn 6. Käärkambri ristlõige: keskaegse käärkambri mahu rekonstruktsioon.

Drawing / Joonis: Villu Kadakas

BUILDING SEQUENCE OF THE NAVE AND CHANCEL

Although it has been supposed that the nave and chancel of Järva-Jaani date from the same period, the fieldwork did not focus on it. The building sequence of the nave and chancel could be easily specified during the floor replacement in the sacristy. A clear vertical joint, positioned in the east-west direction, was discovered between the two building parts: the nave corner has been built secondarily towards the chancel (Fig. 3). In a peculiar way, the corner and the quoins of the north-eastern corner of the nave do not have a straight but an obtuse angle (ca. 97°). It seems to be a deliberate, but rather an aesthetical, not a functional solution.

STUDY UNDER THE WESTERN STAIRS

In 2020 the main stairs in front of the western tower entrance were reconstructed to solve structural issues (uneven sinking). In order to make a solid foundation for the steps a deeper pit than before was dug under it (Fig. 2). The protruding foundation of large boulders of the western wall of the tower came to light, including the foundation of the diagonal corner buttresses. The main research question – if people have been buried in the area under the symmetry axis of the church, right in front of the path leading to the western portal, could not be answered because the pit was not sufficiently deep. The soil included fragments of human bones, but it could not be specified, if these initially came from burials situated right on the symmetry axis of the church or from nearby areas.

ARTEFACTS

The fieldwork of 2017 inside the sacristy brought to light a small collection of coins. Three coins came from the hardened layer, interpreted as the floor of the old sacristy: a penny of the Teutonic Order, minted in Tallinn (1422–1555), ½ grosch (1510) of Sigismund I the Old (Poland/Lithuania) and a schilling of John III (Sweden), minted in Tallinn (1568–1592). Three copper coins of the Russian Empire were gathered from the top of the foundations of the old sacristy: a poluschka of Anna of Russia (1731), 1 kopeck of Nicholas I (1842) and 1 kopeck of Nicholas II (1897). The earliest one of these may have been dropped during the reconstruction work of the sacristy, the last two must have gotten into the floor of the new sacristy. In 2020 a schilling of Eric XIV of Sweden (1564) was gathered from under the stairs of the tower. Other finds from the sacristy include a possible fragment of a heart-shaped bronze brooch (16th–17th c) and a fragment of a 16th – early 17th century Polish / Bohemian grayware with slip decoration (e.g., Russow 2006, 104ff).

CONCLUSION

Of the recent finds in the church of Järva-Jaani the most remarkable is the discovery of the foundations of a medieval sacristy during the replacement of the floor of the existing Early Modern sacristy. It had a peculiar ground plan: built with a 1.5 m distance from the corner of the nave. A nearby parish church of Väike-Maarja has a sacristy of a very similar plan, but the reasons behind such a particular plan are unknown, probably related to aspects of the complicated building history of these churches. The discovery of the old sacristy of Järva-Jaani church indicates that some medieval churches in Estonia may have lost their sacristy in the Early Modern period.

Although the foundations of the sacristy have been built secondarily against the chancel, it is not clear if the sacristy was planned from the beginning in the 13th century or added

much later. The high window with a pointed arch in the chancel wall seems to speak against planning the sacristy together with the chancel, but it cannot be excluded, because the sacristy could have theoretically fit under the window due to its small size. Hardened soil was discovered in between the foundations of the old sacristy, interpreted as remains of its floor and dating, as suggested by the discovered three coins, from the 16th century.

The old sacristy was probably replaced in the second half of the 17th or in the 18th century with the present one, which has 2.5 times more interior space (ca. 9 m² compared to ca. 24 m²). Possibly the reconstruction took place in two phases: first the eastern wall and then the rest of the sacristy.

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ARHEOLOOGILISED UURINGUD JÄRVA-JAANI KIRIKUS

Villu Kadakas

Varem arheoloogiliselt uurimata Järva-Jaani kirikus (jn 1–2) on viimasel ajal toimunud mitu väiksemat väliuuringut: 2017. a leiti põranda vahetusel varasema käärkambri jäänused (jn 1–2; 3; 4; 5–6), 2019. a uuriti käärkambri ümbrust ning 2020. a läänetorni peatrepi alust pinnast. Ühelõvilisest pikihoonest ja kitsamast kooriruumist koosnev kirik ehitati tõenäoliselt 13. saj III veerandil; sellel puudusid torn ja käärkamber. Praegune käärkamber ehitati 17. saj II poolel või 18. saj, läänetorn 1881. 2019. a selgus käärkambri ümbruses, et pinnase ülaosa on seal ja pikihoone põhjaküljel juba 1989. a seintes niiskuse vähendamise eesmärgil eemaldatud. Õhukeste seintega (60–85 cm) käärkambri kohta teati, et tegemist on täpselt dateerimata varauusaegse juurdeehitusega. 2019. a leiti interjööri töödel idaseinast kinni müüritud aknaava (jn 2–3; 5–6) ning selle ümbrusest taimornamendiga sinist värvi maalungute jäänused, mille järgi otsustades pidi käärkamber olema olema juba 18. saj.

Käärkambri mädanenud põranda jäänuste alt eemaldati 2017. a väliuuringutel õhuke kiht kõduga segunenud hõredat lammutusrustu, kust saadi üks 18. saj ja kaks 19. saj vene münti. Sügavamalt leiti ruumi põhja- ja idaseina ääres 80–95 cm võrra seintest eenduvad vundamendid, samuti kolmas, põhja-lõuna suunaline vundament käärkambri lääneosas (jn 2–4). Selgus, et tegemist on varasema, praeguse käärkambri ehitamise eel täielikult lammutatud käärkambri jäänusega. Selle müüride vahelt leiti tallamisest tihenend pinnasekiht, mida tõlgendati vana käärkambri kivipõranda aluse pinnasena. Sellest leiti kolm münti, mis osutavad põranda kasutamisele 16. sajandil. Varasema käärkambri põrand on praegusest olnud u 25 cm võrra sügavamal (jn 6).

Vana käärkamber oli tunduvalt väiksema põrandapinnaga (u 9 m² praeguse u 24 m² asemel) ning märgatavalt paksemate seintega (läänessein u 115 cm). Keskaegse käärkambri põhja- ja idaseina paksust

üritati välja selgitada 2019. a pinnase ülaosa eemaldamisel käärkambri põhjaküljel, mil puhastati välja vundamendi välimine kontuur (jn 3). Siiski ei selgunud, kui suur osa paljandunud vundamendiastmest võiks kuuluda vanale käärkambrile. Käärkambri kunagisele olemasolule vihjas tegelikult kooriruumi ja uue käärkambri vaheline ukseava (jn 3; 4), mille teravkaarsed krohvitud piidad pärinevad arvatavasti keskaegast. Varasema käärkambri jäänuste avastamine varauusaegse alt on Eesti keskaegsete maakirikute uurimises esmakordne. Seni eeldati, et kui keskaegsel maakirikul keskaegne käärkamber puudub, siis järelikult pole seda olnudki. Järva-Jaani näitel selgub, et osa käärkambreid võib olla hiljem lammutatud.

Järva-Jaani keskaegse käärkambri täpne vanus ei selgunud. Leitud müntide järgi kasutati seda kindlasti 16. sajandil. Käärkambri leitud otsaseinte vundamendid on tõenäoliselt laotud vastu kooriruumi lõunaseina, millest ei saa automaatselt järeldada, et seda ei kavandatud koos kooriruumiga. Võimalik, et käärkamber ei kuulunud algsesse ehituskavasse. Selle vastu räägib ka kooriruumi põhjaseinas paiknev aknaava, mis on kinni müüritud ja suures osas praeguse käärkambri katusega varjatud (jn 1–3; 6). Arvesse võttes vana käärkambri hilisemast paksemat müüri, kitsamat interjööri ja madalamat põranda pinda, oleks siiski põhimõtteliselt võimalik ära mahutada selline käärkamber, mille katus ei kataks kinni kooriruumi akent (jn 6). Maakirikute käärkambrid ehitati üldjuhul kooriruumi külje vastu ja lääneotsaga vastu pikihoone idaseina. Seevastu Järva-Jaanis oli pikihoone ja vana käärkambri vahel 1,5 m laiune tühimik (jn 2–4). Täpselt samamoodi pikihoonest lahus paikneb ka Väike-Maarja kiriku praeguseni säilinud käärkamber. Kummalise ja erandliku paigutuse põhjus ei

ole teada, kuid tõenäoliselt on see kahe naaberkihelkonna kiriku puhul sarnane.

Praeguse käärkambri idaseinast kinni müüritud idakna (jn 2–3; 5–6) avastamine andis vihje, et ruum võib olla ehitatud kahes etapis. Nimelt paikneb kinni müüritud aken mitte praeguse, vaid vana käärkambri interjööri sümmeetriateljel. Samuti ei ole uue käärkambri seinad interjööris sirged, vaid koosnevad erisuunalise pinnaga lõikudest. Üks idaseina murdekohti on vana käärkambri põhjaseina sisepinna joonel. Need asjaolud näivad osutavat võimalusele, et vana käärkambri asendamine uuega toimus kahes järjus: kõigepealt asendati algne paks idasein praeguse, poole õhemaga (jn 3; 5), kusjuures selle uus aknaava paigutati vana interjööri laiuse sümmeetriateljele. Niiviisi võideti ruumi pinda u 1,9 m² juurde. Mingi aja pärast järgnes ülejäänud vana käärkambri asendamine (jn 3: 6).

Selgus, et vana käärkambri lammutamise järel on selle ja pikihoone kirdenurga vahele laotud paekividest kast (sisemõõdud 1,6 × 1,2 m; jn 3: 7), mis lubja jälgede järgi otsustades oli kasutusel lubjakastina. Hiljem täideti kast osaliselt müüritisega, mis võis olla uue käärkambri edelanurgas seisnud ahju või kamina vundamendiks. Seal selgus ka pikihoone ja kooriruumi ehitamise järjekord: ilmekas püstvuuk osutab, et esimene on ehitatud sekundaarselt teise vastu (jn 3: 1–2). Tegemist on tüüpilise ehitusjärjekorraga, kusjuures mõlemad võisid olla korraga kavandatud. 2020. a läänetorni esise peatrepi rekonstrueerimise käigus paljandus 1881. a ehitatud torni eenduv maaividest vundament (jn 2). Maapind sisaldas segatud inimluude fragmente, kuid ei selgunud, kas otse kiriku ette, keskse käigutee kohale on kunagi maetud või pärinevad luud külgneval alal asunud matustest.