



CASTELLA MARIS BALTICI 6

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Front cover: Castle of Trakai

Photos by Albinas Kuncevičius

Back cover: Royal palace in an Upper castle.

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On September 18–22, 2001 the Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI was held in Lithuania. This is already the 6th symposium for the researchers of the medieval castles. The first symposium was held in Turku, Finland in 1991, the second – in Nyköping, Sweden in 1993, the third - in Malbork, Poland in 1995, the fourth - in Estonia in 1997, and the fifth – in Denmark in 1999.

The topic of the conference held in Lithuania was “Contacts and Genetically Dwellings in the Castle Buildings”. Over 40 scientists participated in the conference from Denmark, Belarus, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Russia, Great Britain, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. In the conference there were not only reports presented but also the most famous castles of Lithuania visited in Vilnius, Trakai, Kernavė, Kaunas and Klaipėda.

The time of this conference coincided with the European Heritage Days “Defensive Fortifications in Lithuania”.

This conference was organised by the Public Institution Academy of Cultural Heritage established by Vilnius University, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and Department of Cultural Heritage Protection. The Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI was sponsored by the Department of Cultural Heritage Protection.

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Especial thanks deserve my colleagues who organised this event Rita Mosiejienė, dr. Justina Poškienė and dr. Gintautas Zabiela.

Dr. Albinas Kuncevičius



Fig. 6. Excursion party near walls of the Kreva castle. Photo of the beginning of the 20th c.

(the historic region of Ukraine) which made part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as well. The historical sources directly say that the building of the Upper and the Lower castles in Luck / Lutsk was launched by the prince Lubart (Gedymin / Gediminas's son; the prince of Volhyn in 1340–1384) (Pamyatniki, izdannye vremennoy komissiiy dla razbora drevnich aktov 1859: 66). It was really significant castle ensemble more complex than regular castles. Some researchers consider that Lubart has only erected the walls and the towers of the Lower castle (G. N. Logvin 1967: 102–107). But anyway it was a grandiose building enterprise which proved that the central authorities of the state had been acquainted with the stone castles building. Most likely that Volhyn craftsmen themselves took part in the construction. Yet there must be no doubt that the information and technological exchange with the Belarusian and Lithuanian territories of the GDL existed. Again it is necessary to mention the fact that in the middle of the 14th century the prince Koriat's sons (who was the duke Alhierd / Algirdas's brother) constructed the complete system of fortifications (the strong stone castle in Kamenech as its part) in Podolsk lands (south-west of Ukraine). No stone fortifications existed there before when the territory was controlled by the Tartars (M. Hruševski 2001: 134).

The large-scale castle building in the first half the 14th century demanded enormous expense of finan-

cial resources and labour forces of the state. The traditional Belarusian curse is one of the evidences of the efforts: «Let you carry the stones to the Kreva castle!»

But by the middle of the 14th century the castles are not built any more. The castle building in Belarus was renewed only by the end of the 14th century. If we compare the course of events and some indirect evidencies from the annals we shall come to the conclusion that this happened as a result of the plague pandemic of 1347–1351. In these conditions the government could not mobilize the population for large scale building. The government could only afford to modernize the state castles at the end of the 14th century. New towers were built in the castles of Kreva and Lida. That was the time when the GDL together with the Polish Kingdom was preparing for the war against the teutonic Order.

Afterwards these regular castles were not rebuilt. Has been preserved the 14th century lay-out. At the same time many European regular castles were rebuilt. For this reason the archaic types of regular castles in Belarus and Lithuania are of great value.

I have not mentioned all Belarusian castles. I have just tried to illustrate the difficult and sometimes unexpected history of castle building in Belarus and to show the different factors which affected this process.

Øystein Ekroll

NORWEGIAN CASTLES NORTH OF THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

Burgen in Norwegen nördlich des Polarkreises

Drei mittelalterliche Burgen sind in Norwegen nördlich des Polarkreises bekannt. Die runde Burg Tromsø, deren Durchmesser 60 Meter beträgt, wurde um 1250 höchstwahrscheinlich von König Hakon IV. errichtet, zum Schutz vor russischen Angriffen. Sie markierte damals die nördliche Grenze des Königreiches. Um 1300 wurde die zweite königliche Burg in Vardo, im nördlichsten Teil von Norwegen gegründet. Diese erste Burg, über die nichts bekannt ist, wurde im 15. Jahrhundert durch eine quadratische An-

lage ersetzt. Sie mass 39x39 Meter im Quadrat und war mit hölzernen Türmen und Befestigungen ausgestattet. Diese Burg wurde 1734 zur noch heute bestehenden Festung umgebaut. Eine katholische Kirche wurde in Trondenes errichtet, wo eine grosse Steinburg im 15. Jahrhundert gegründet worden war. Die Burg war später von einer 4 bis 5 Meter hohen Mauer mit mindestens zwei Türmen umgeben. Nach der Reformation verschwand die Mauer, weil man sie nicht mehr benötigte.

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Castles are usually associated with the more densely populated areas of northern Europe. Towards the Arctic north, the density of castles diminishes greatly. Norway contains only a dozen royal castles and only a very few and small private ones (Fig. 1). The lack of castles can be partly explained because Norway was a poor and sparsely populated country, and partly because it was a corner of Europe, mostly isolated from neighboring countries. Invading Norway was very costly and would give little gain. There are, however, some castles that are usually not included in the lists of medieval Norwegian medieval castles, because they are situated in the remotest parts of the country. They were also built in a context that today is almost unknown to most Norwegians.

Parallel with the eastwards expansion of German settlers into Slavonic and Baltic lands, there was a northward movement in Norway, Sweden and Russia/Novgorod to gain control of the northern part of the Scandinavian peninsula. The aim was to gain control of new territories, exploit the natural resources and tax the indigenous population.

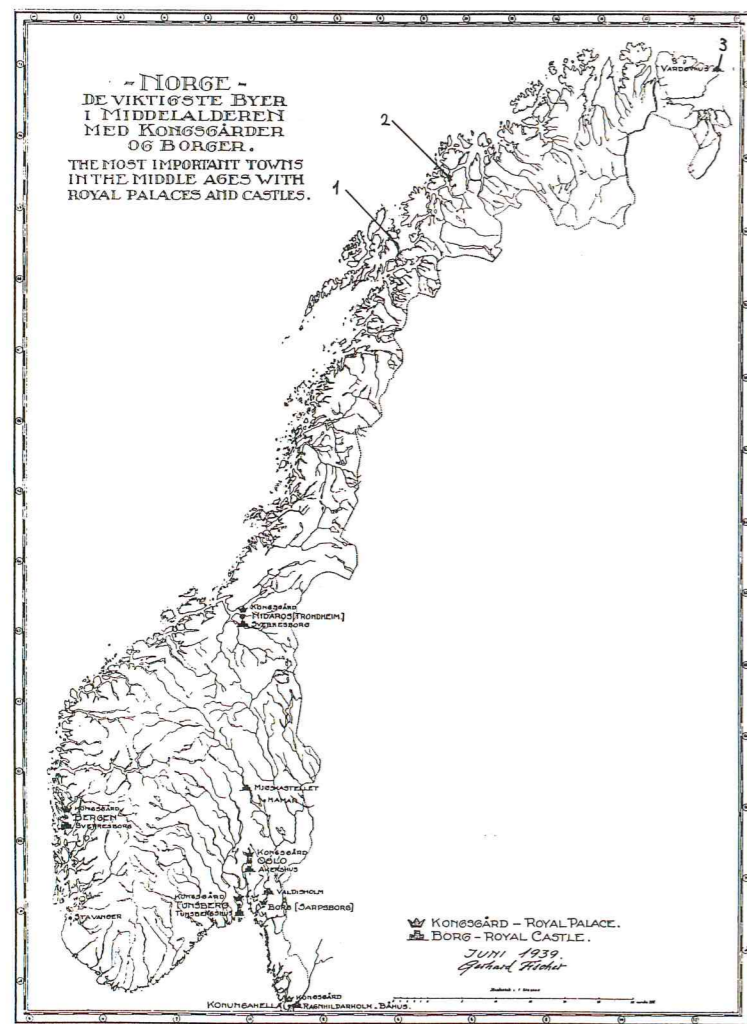


Fig. 1. Map of Norway with the 3 castles mentioned in the article: Trondenes(1), Tromsø(2) and Vardøhus(3). After Fischer 1950

The oldest history of this region is still difficult to interpret. There are very few written sources until the late Middle Ages, and modern political difficulties have created many more problems. In Norway, a burning political question is the ethnicity of the various prehistoric or even medieval cultures. Can archaeology tell whether the remains come from people who called themselves Norwegians, Swedes, Sami or Russians? Or did the people whose remains we excavate think of themselves in any of these terms at all?

The 13th century: Tromsø

Norwegian sources tell that around the middle of the 13th century, the first direct conflicts took place between the states of Norway and Novgorod. In 1250/51, a peace treaty was agreed between King Håkon of Norway and Prince Alexander Nevski of Novgorod, settling the conflicts in the Arctic areas. However, this treaty did not last long, and over the next 200 years

there were innumerable raids and fights. (The history of this conflict is discussed by Ragnhild Høgsæt 1994).

Soon after, the onslaught of Mongol armies caused havoc in Russia, and some peoples from the White Sea region migrated westwards to avoid this danger. The saga of King Håkon tells that he gave them land in the fjord of Malangen near Tromsø and made them Christian. (The Saga of Håkon Håkonsson, chapter 333). The settling of people in this area was not incidental. The area around Tromsø seems to have been the Northern border area of the Kingdom of Norway in the 12th–13th centuries. The settling of peoples in the border region acted as a protection for the rest of the kingdom. This area is also the northern limit for the cultivation of grains and thus a farming culture. Combined with fishing and hunting it was possible to establish stable, permanent frontier settlements. This peaceless situation lasted until the end of the 15th century. In 1478 Novgorod was conquered by Czar Ivan of Moscow and its power was broken. Thereafter the Russian expansion turned more eastwards than northwards, and the pressure on Finnmark was lifted.

King Håkon had an active policy of securing the northern part of his kingdom. He built a church on the site of the present town of Tromsø ("Troms Island"). It seems probable that he also built a small castle there, to give the se-

cular power a seat as well. The site of the church at Tromsø is on a small promontory sheltering the bay where the first settlement grew up in the 13th century.

On the other side of the bay, another promontory harbours a circular earth wall, locally called "Skansen" (fig. 2). This name is only a couple of centuries old, probably deriving from the Napoleonic wars 1807–12 when cannons were put up here to defend the town from English naval attacks. It is situated on the narrowest point in the strait (c.600m wide) between the island and the mainland, where all ships sailing along the coast had to pass. It could therefore control the communications in an excellent way.

It was first described in 1743 as the ruin of an old fortress surrounded by a moat. Local tradition told that it was built as protection against the Russians. The officer who made the description observed that the fortress was defenceless against cannons which in a siege could be placed on surrounding hills (Nissen 1960:21). This implies that it was built before the introduction of firearms. The moat was still visible and filled with water in the early 18th century (Arntzen 1971:5). Later urban development has pushed the water further back.

Only a small part of the circular earthen castle – two sections of the walls – have been excavated in 1973 and 1990 by archaeology students of Tromsø University (Fig. 3) (the most recent discussion has been made by Bertelsen 1994 in vol. 1 of "The History of Tromsø"). The castle has today an external diameter of c.60 m. The semicircular moat was probably filled with water from a small brook, and the castle was therefore connected to dry land only in each end of the moat. The gravel dug up from the

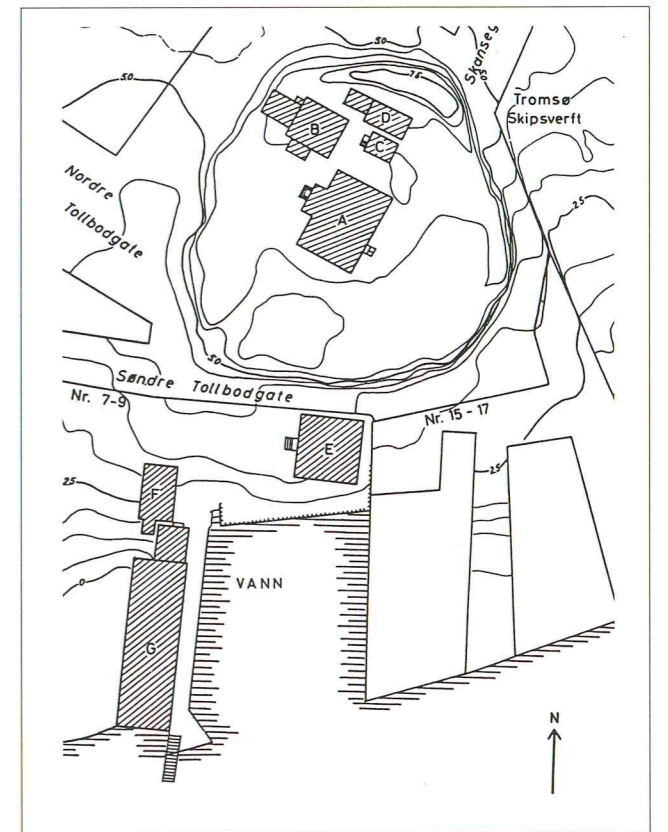


Fig. 2. Map of the castle of Skansen, Tromsø, and its surroundings. A-G are the Customs Houses. After Arntzen 1971

moat was used to built up a plateau higher than the surrounding area.

The circular wall was made of turf, kept in place by a dry stone wall on the outside. On top was pro-

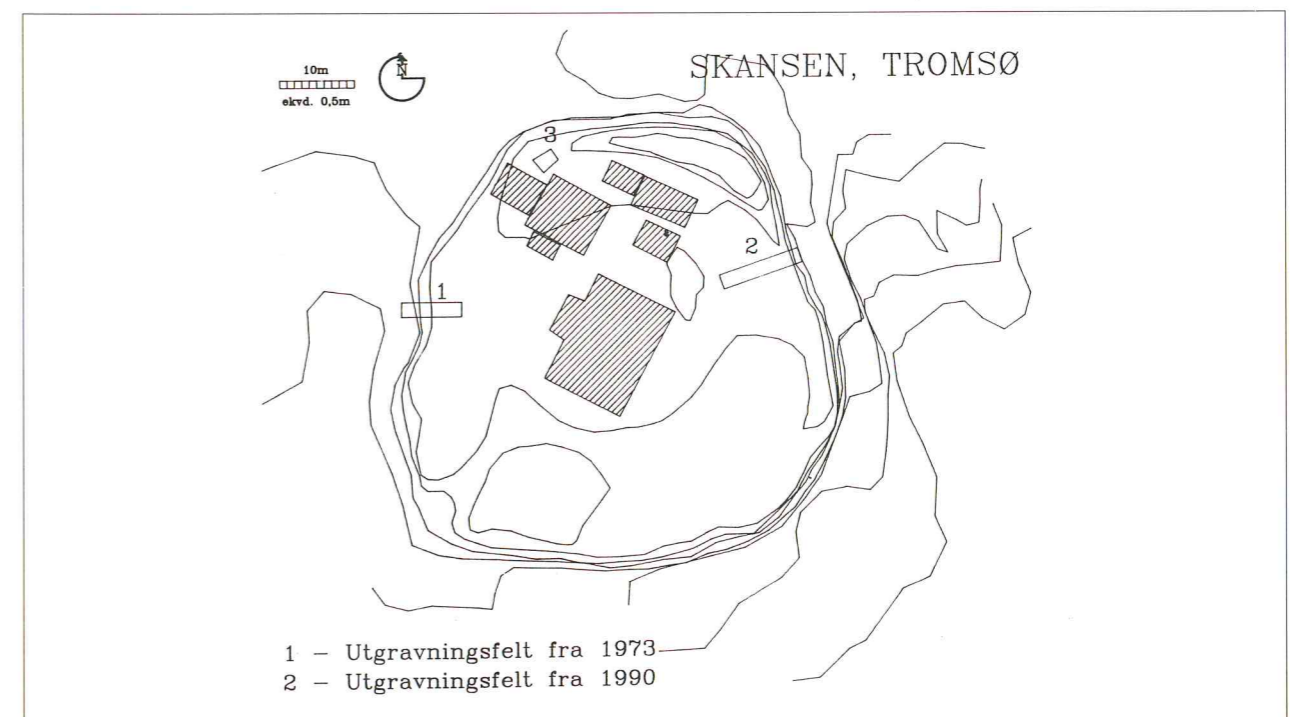


Fig. 3. Plan of Skansen, Tromsø, with the excavations of 1973 and 1990(1,2,3). After Bertelsen's Excavation Report

bably a wooden palisade (Bertelsen 1994:234). The walls were probably 3-4 m tall, and including the moat and the wooden ramparts they presented a fortress that could resist an attack from a band of raiders, but not an army.

The only datable find is an arrowhead shot into the turf wall from the seaside. It is of a type that was used in Russian and Karelian areas in the Viking Age and early Middle Ages (Bertelsen 1994:234). A dating to the middle of the 13th century is therefore possible.

Inside the castle stands today the 19th-century Customs House, presently the town museum, but traces of older, wooden buildings have been observed.

The 14th century: the royal castle of Vardøhus

Towards the end of the 13th century the Norwegian kingdom pushed its borders much further to the east. The whole present province of Finnmark was claimed for the Crown, and Norwegians settled along the coast to harvest the rich resources of fish, birds and sea mammals. The maximum point of expansion became the small island of Vardø, just off the eastern point of the Varanger peninsula. This is still today the easternmost point of Norway. Its exact geographical position is 70°22'11" N/20°23'45" E. On the mainland, the exact border between Norway and Russia was not settled until 1824.

The Icelandic annals tell that in the year 1307 archbishop Jørund consecrated the church at Vardø Island. ("Herra Jorundr for norðr a Halogaland j Varsøyiar oc vigði þar kirkiu". Storm 1888:74). This must have been a symbolic political act, showing that the powers of both Kingdom and Church now were established as far east as this point.

Very little is known about the castle in its first hundred years. In 1340 King Magnus Eriksson ordered the archbishop to make repairs to the castle (Diplomatium Norvegicum Vol.VIII, no.125). This can be a response to a raid in 1338, when a church near Tromsø had been burnt down (Høgsæt 1994: 252). It also shows that the Royal power was very weak in this region, so that the king had to rely on the church organization for getting his own castle repaired.

The remains of this castle have not yet been identified. Local tradition since the 17th century tells that it was situated on the northern part of the island, where the distance between the island and the mainland was shortest. This setting would make it very reminiscent of Tromsø. On this location there are place names like "Gammelstøttet" (Old Palace), "Bus-sesundet"(busse=medieval ship type) and "Tyveholmen"(Thief islet=execution site). (Kavli 1987: 104).

Excavations on the presumed site in 1953–54 have not yielded any trace of this castle (Eriksson 1995: 153). It is therefore possible that this first castle stood on the same site as its successor, where the best harbour was. To judge from the later castles, the walls were probably made of turf and dry stone, with timber buildings inside the walls.

The climate in this region is severe, and constant repairs were necessary. Some time in the second half of the 15th century a new castle was built on a site called "Østervågen" (Eastern Bay), which is the old harbour of Vardø. The castle is first mentioned in 1490, but may be older. It was known as "Slottet" (the Palace) and existed until 1734, when it was replaced by the present star-shaped fortress on a different site. The second castle was fortunately mapped and drawn so that we have a good impression of what it looked like, at least in its latest phases.

The castle was square, with two diagonally placed bastions, on the NE and SW corners, armed with 11 cannons. Inside the walls were several wooden buildings. According to a survey of 1694 it measured c.126 x 126 feet (39 x 39 m) externally. The walls

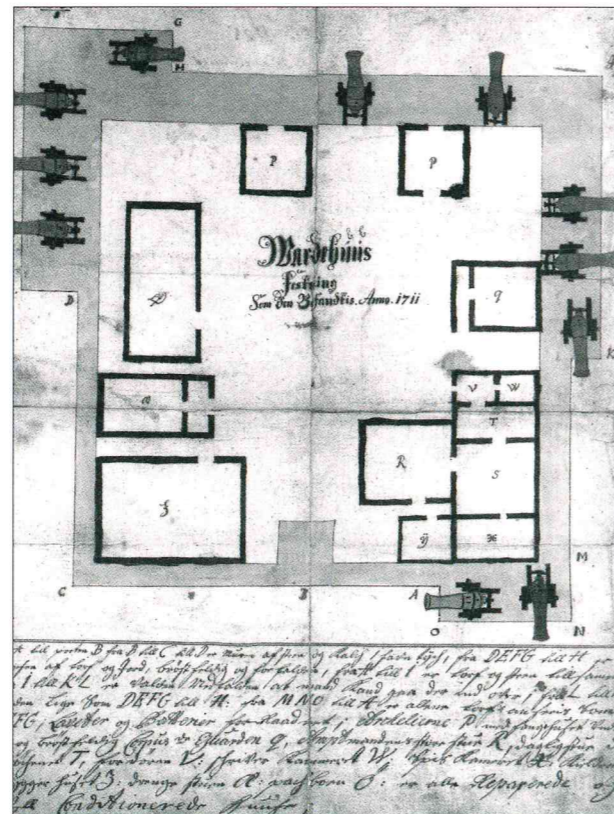


Fig. 4. Plan of Vardøhus Castle dated 1711, by Isaac Olsen. The explanation for the letters: B: The gate. PP: The artillery store with prison underneath. Q: Corps de garde. R-X: The Governor's residence and office. Z: Brewery. AE: Male servants' house. Ø: Store-house. The walls from ABCD are solid masonry, 6 feet thick. DEFGH is a bastion of turf and earth. The walls from HIKL are built of stone and earth, and collapsed so that one can walk into the castle. LM is a wall built of turf and earth. From MNO to A the bastion is built of turf and earth. Original in Riksantikvarens archive, Oslo

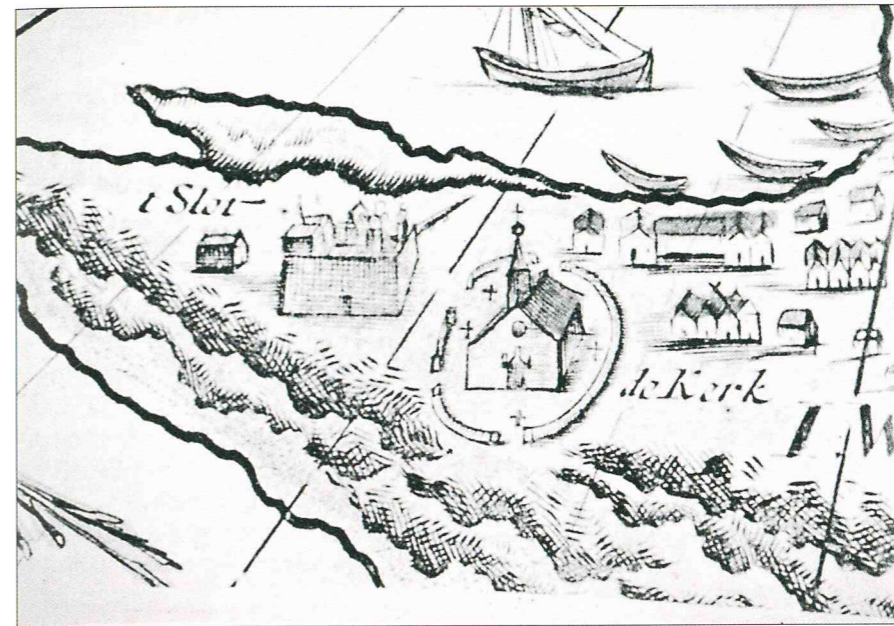


Fig. 5. Vardøhus Castle and the church depicted on Johannes van Keulen's map from 1692, based on Jan van Linschoten's description from 1694. After Willoch 1960b

were of different height, but mostly 12–14 feet (3.7–4.3m) tall, with battlements 3 feet (1m) tall (Willoch 1960a: 67) A detailed survey of 1711 tells that the walls to the west and north were of solid masonry, 1,8m thick, while eastern and southern wall were constructed of stone and turf (Fig. 4). The two bastions were built of turf and earth. They seem to be later additions, probably from the early 17th century, as they are not shown on the oldest depiction of the castle, made in 1594 by the Dutch explorer Jan H. van Linschoten and copied on a later Dutch map by Johannes van Keulen from 1692 (Fig. 5). Linschoten describes the castle thus: "Close to the beach of the south harbour lies the palace, which is not strongly armed. It is constructed of masonry with spires and battlements of wood that are half decayed, so that it could hardly resist an attack from a well-armed ship" (Nissen 1960: 41 (author's translation)).

The small engraving on the map shows a square castle ("t Slot"), seen from the east, with straight walls and no bastions, seemingly constructed of solid masonry. There is a small gate in the eastern wall. On top of the two southern corners can clearly be seen timber-built towers, and on two northern corners thin "spires", probably the ones Linschoten refers to in his text. A road or walkway leads to the harbour (Figs. 6-7).

In 1599 the castle received its only royal visit before Oscar II's visit in 1873, when the young King Christian IV travelled all the way to the Russian borderland to inspect this remotest part of his kingdom. It was also clearly a political act, to demonstrate that the king was willing to defend his border region against both Swedish and Russian expansion. This king modernized several of the Norwegian medieval castles into modern fortresses, and it is probable that he also gave instructions to modernize this old fashioned and badly maintained castle during his visit (Nissen 1960: 36 f). In 1609 several pieces of artillery were

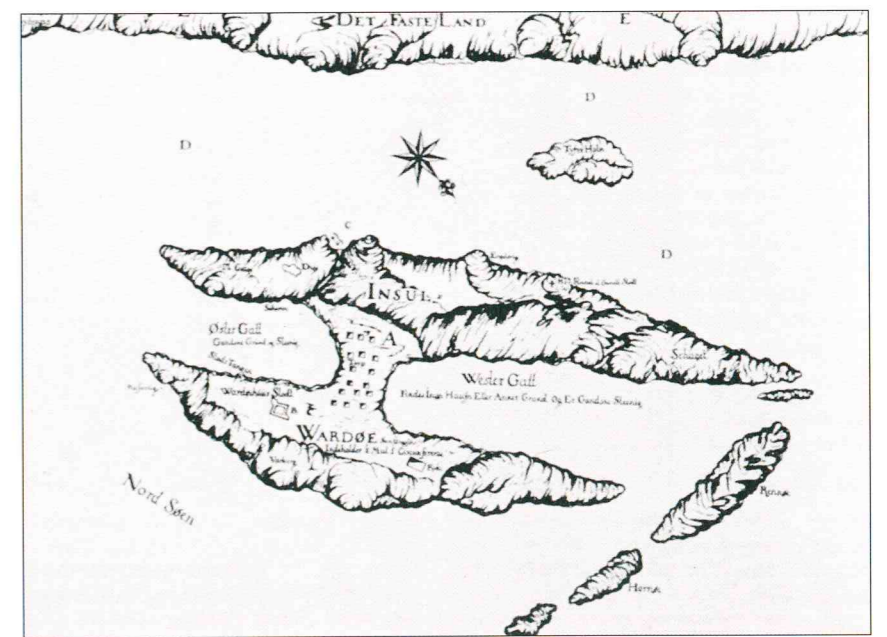


Fig. 6. Map of Vardø Island made by Michael Jansen Sundt in 1727. After Willoch 1960b

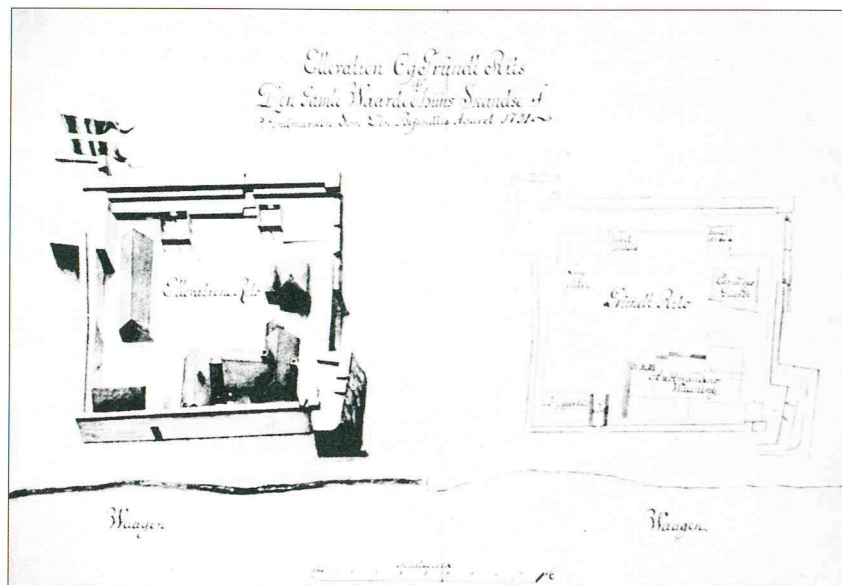


Fig. 7. Plan and perspective of Vardøhus Castle made by Michael Jansen Sundt in 1727. After Willoch 1960b

sent from the Arsenal in Copenhagen to Vardøhus (Willoch 1960b: 177). This probably marks the completion of the two bastions.



Fig. 8. Vardøhus Castle from 1738, looking west. In the background the mainland of Finnmark. Photo from the 1950s in Riksantikvaren's Archive, Oslo

One of the king's companions, Jonas Carisius, wrote a diary in which he describes the castle: "...the palace, which is such a modest building, that one has hardly seen a more decrepit castle. It was surrounded by a wall built of slate stones, one put on top of another without mortar and covered with turf which constituted a wall supporting 4 iron cannons. Inside the castle stood 6 small wooden houses without order" (Willoch 1960b: 165 (author's translation). Excavations after 1945 on the site of the castle have exposed parts of the curtain wall, built of slate stone, lime mortar and clay (Willoch 1960b: 168).

Between 1734-38 a new, star-shaped fortress was built some hundred meters further to the west (fig. 8). This fortress did miraculously survive World War II, when the town of Vardø was bombed and almost completely destroyed.

The 15th century: the fortified church of Trondenes

Towards the end of the 14th century the position of the Catholic Church in northern Norway grew stronger. This was the archbishop's own diocese, and gradually the archbishops also assumed secular powers on behalf of the king, who by now resided in Denmark, a very long distance away. This also included the defence of the region. The bastion of the Church in the north was to be the church of Trondenes south of Tromsø, near the modern town of Harstad (Fig. 9). This was commercially an important area because of the cod fisheries, which gave the Church large incomes, both in tithes and taxes. Trondenes became an collegiate church, where the priests serving 13 parishes resided together, travelling by sea to their separate churches. Trondenes had the largest income of all parishes in the diocese of Nidaros, and it belonged to the archdeacon of the cathedral chapter. In the very long period between 1427- c.1487 the archdeacon Svein Eiriksson resided here, and he was in all probability the builder of the nave and responsible for the richly decorated interior with choir stalls and several altars.

Towards the end of the 14th century started the building of a church here, which took more than a century to finish. In Norwegian circumstances, this is a large church. The nave measures externally 24 x 17 m and the chancel 13,5 x 11,5 m. Recent dendrochronological datings show that the timber in the chancel roof was felled in the winter of 1399/1400, and that the timber in the nave roof was felled in 1434 or shortly after, at least before 1442. The east gable of the nave was finished or repaired with timber felled 1504/1505 (Storsletten 1995: 154). This coincided

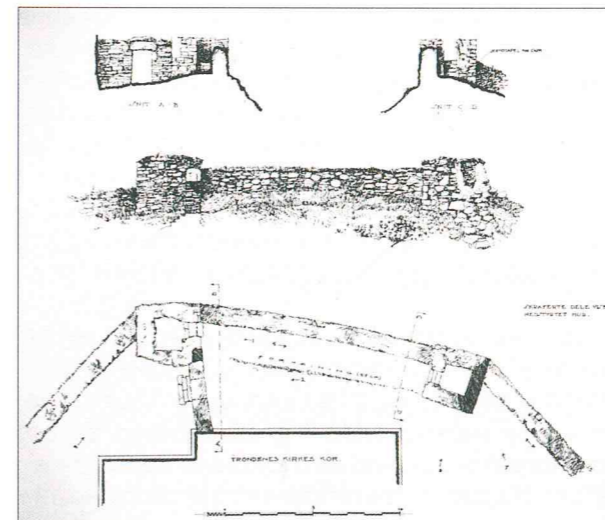


Fig. 9. Trondenes church. Plan of the remains of the curtain wall, made by Harald Sund 1927. Original in Riksantikvaren's Archive, Oslo

with an inscription on the now recast large bell telling that it was cast in Amsterdam in 1507 and donated by the archdeacon Mogens (Ryjord 1913: 16. He writes 1500, but the inscription gives the year as MCCCC VII, which must be read as 1507).

The church is built on a small promontory, and the walls stand directly on the rock. The church was surrounded by a still partly preserved curtain wall (Figs. 10-11), which must have covered an area of minimum 60 x 40 m, perhaps more. The best preserved part lies east of the chancel and has three sides. In the corners stand two small towers. Between them the terrain is raised c. 50 cm, perhaps as a sort of battlement. The two towers are entered from this raised area. The walls are 1 m thick, and are today preserved up to a height of 3 m above the churchyard surface.

Both towers measure c. 3 x 3 m externally, and they contain each a small room that measures only 1 x 1 m. Both have doorways with steps, and the doorway of the southern tower has remains of iron hinges for a door that opens outwards, not inwards as was common in the Middle Ages. The steps would have prevented this. But it also means that the to-



Fig. 10. Trondenes church and the curtain wall seen from the north c.1910. Photographer unknown. Riksantikvaren's Archive, Oslo

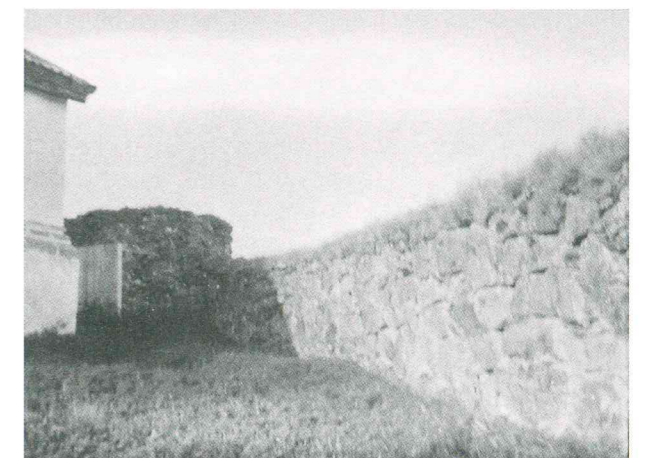


Fig. 11. Trondenes church. The northern stretch of the curtain wall, with the church to the left, c.1910. Photographer unknown. Riksantikvaren's Archive, Oslo

wers were difficult to defend against an enemy inside the curtain wall. The small dimensions of the towers also means that only a few men could stand inside them. They might have been watchtowers, and from them men armed with crossbows or possible handguns could defend the church against a small force, like a band of raiders.

The northern tower is connected to the church by a secondary wall with a doorway which has no trace of a door. The date of this wall is unknown, but it is probably medieval. It is clearly secondary to the chancel.

According to an 18th century source the curtain wall was raised as a defence against the "Russians", a name that can mean all eastern people. There are stories of raids by Karelians to this region in the 15th century. In 1338 the neighboring church of Lenvik and the manor of Bjarkøy were plundered and burnt by a band of raiders (Bertelsen 1994: 252).

Such raids are the probable explanation for both the concentration of the priests and the defensive wall.

Bishop Nannestad notes in his diary of 1750 that "the churchyard has been surrounded by a beautiful tall wall, a part of which is preserved on the eastern and southern side. On the eastern side by the chancel have been in the churchyard wall two watchtowers that still have their vaulted (i.e. arched) doors, corridors and stone stairs, and also a parapet. Through the said beautiful, but now delapidated wall is a vaulted (e.g. arched) doorway to the (north), and a large gate to the south (Figs. 12-13), above which is said to have been a tower, in which the great bell is said to have hung" (Ryjord 1913: 33 (author's translation)). The curtain wall was earlier taller than today, 14-16 feet /4.2-4.8 m (Ryjord 1913: 34).

Next to the church, on the present minister's residence, remains of medieval cellars have been observed, and many finds, e.g. imported pottery, tell about affluent inhabitants. This must have been the residence of the priests' college in peaceful times.

A church surrounded by a curtain wall is known only in one other place in Norway, at Gran north of Oslo, where two 12th-century churches were protected by a wall dating to the late 13th century or later. Today, only a square corner tower is preserved (Ekroll 1995: 96).

The wall and towers of Trondenes were strong enough to resist attacks from raiding bands of robbers, but not an organized attack by an army. It was only the former that posed any threat to this area, as it was too far to the south for Russian armies to reach. In case of an attack, the local population could retreat behind the walls for protection and defence. The coastal population of Norway was organized in



Fig. 12. Trondenes church. The secondary gate between the church and the northern tower, c.1910. Photographer unknown. Riksantikvarens's Archive, Oslo



Fig. 13. Trondenes church. The southern tower with its entrance door, looking north, c.1910. Photographer unknown. Riksantikvarens's Archive, Oslo

small areas called skipreider, each of which should maintain and man a ship for the defence of the country, the leidang. In the roofwork of Trondenes, a cut-up sail is used to cover up cracks between the planks. The enormous attic above the nave could well have been used to store the sails and other equipment belonging to the leidang ship of Trondenes. However, by the middle of the 15th century the leidang organization was hardly functioning any more, and it is just as probable that the sail belonged to one of the archdeacon's ships. The attic could also be used to store the large quantities of dried codfish before it was shipped to Bergen and sold to Hanseatic merchants.

There is no indication that the secular powers had anything to do with the building or the maintenance of the defensive wall at Trondenes. It is a purely ecclesiastical establishment. When the threat of attacks from the east subsided after 1478, and especially after the Church was reformed in 1537, there was no longer any need to maintain this wall. It gradually fell into disrepair, until in 1750 less than half of it was preserved and today even less.

Nils Engberg

THREE CASTLES ON HJELM ISLAND – THEIR MILITARY, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Die Burgen auf der Insel Hjelm – ein Nest für Gesetzlose

Im Jahre 1286 wurde Erik Klipping, König von Dänemark, ermordet. Einige Adelige aus führenden Familien, die heute als „die Gesetzlosen“ bekannt sind, wurden des Mordes schuldig erklärt. Sie verliessen das Land und verbündeten sich mit dem König von Norwegen, der zu dieser Zeit im Kriege mit Dänemark stand. In 1290 landeten die Gesetzlosen auf der unbewohnten Insel Hjelm. Sie begannen falsche Münzen herzustellen und befestigten das Zentrum der Insel. Überdies – wie die Ausgrabungen von 1999–2000 gezeigt haben – errichteten sie auch Burgen auf der Ost- und Westseite der Insel, so dass die drei Burgen eine zusammenhängende Befestigung der Insel bildeten. Die be-

iden Burgen an der Küste dienten dazu, die Schifffahrt längs der Insel zu beobachten. Sie ermöglichten, den Feind zu verwirren im Falle eines Angriffs, der die Verteidigung zersplittert hätte, und einen Gegenangriff aus verschiedenen Stellen zu führen. Aber warum eine Insel befestigen, die mitten in feindlichem Territorium liegt und wo falsche Münzen hergestellt wurden? Wahrscheinlich versuchten die Gesetzlosen, den dänischen König zu erniedrigen und zu provozieren. Im Jahre 1295 wurde ein Vertrag geschlossen und die Herstellung falscher Münzen hörte auf, aber erst 1306 war der König von Dänemark mächtig genug, um die Insel zu erobern.

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