

Armin Tuulse and Estonian Medieval Castles

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Summary

Abstract: In the 1930s, Armin Tuulse's research was mainly focused on castles. He summed up the results in his doctoral dissertation on Estonian and Latvian castles, published in 1942. The book is constructed on the typology of castles. Research of the following decades has revealed new data on Estonian castles, complementing and sometimes correcting Tuulse's views. But, on the whole, his book has maintained its importance.

Armin Tuulse is internationally renowned mainly for his book *Castles of the Western World (Burgen des Abendlandes)*, published in English and German in 1958. Tuulse started to study castles while he was a student at the University of Tartu in the 1930s. His research carried out in Estonia was summed up in his doctoral dissertation *Die Burgen in Estland und Lettland* in 1942.

Tuulse constructed his monograph on a typological basis. The whole era is divided into two periods – before and after the introduction of firearms. During the first period, immediately after the conquest of the area, three types of castles were used: a fortress with an irregular ground plan surrounded by a circular wall, a tower-castle and a castell castle. To these three can be added a development of the latter in the areas controlled by the German Order – the convent-house. The era of firearms and mercenaries is characterised by the re-emergence of the castell castle.

What is the value of this monograph, pub-

lished more than half a century ago, for today? We must not forget about the research situation of the time. We know that field research is unavoidable when studying medieval architecture. There were very few opportunities for archaeological excavations in the Estonian Republic of the early 20th century. Under such conditions, Tuulse had to rely on earlier works written by Baltic-Germans, which, unfortunately, later proved to be quite inaccurate.

Later examinations, naturally, added new information. For example, Tuulse considered the Paide tower fortress to be the main representative of the 13th-century *Bergfried*-type tower fortress. However, current research has shown that the Paide tower was never an independent construction and that it was built later than first supposed. Today, we have no definite information about any tower fortresses that could have been built in the 13th century. We also know that the general ground plan characteristic of the convent house was used here much later than it was believed in Tuulse's time – excavations in Rakvere and Narva have shown that, in some cases, this scheme was used even in the early 16th century.

The knowledge concerning the castles of the era of firearms has changed most drastically. First, Villem Raam added important information. For a long time, this era had been treated as a whole, but actually two different periods can be distinguished here. Starting from sometime in about 1500, embrasures were built in the lower zone of castle walls as well, and the earlier principle of vertical defence was complemented by horizontal defence. As examples, we can name the Tallinn tower Fat Margaret and the Kiiu and Toolse fortresses.

The adoption of firearms introduced changes in warfare, specifically the arrival of the

era of mercenaries. According to Tuulse, this was also seen in the typology of castles – it was necessary to build camp castells to accommodate mercenaries. He believed that this type of castle can be found in Paide, Laiuse and Vastseliina. Later studies proved him wrong. However, the construction of spacious outer bailies, such as those at Haapsalu, Rakvere and Narva castles, was begun at that time. One of the main reasons for that was the need to offer fortified camp sites for mercenaries.

To sum up, we can say that, although new information and interpretations have emerged since the publication of Tuulse's monograph, his main conception has mainly been proven to be correct.

*Translated by Marika Liivamägi
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