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NOTES ON THE ACCOUNTS OF TYRVÄÄ CHURCH AS A SOURCE ON THE HISTORY OF CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH

Abstract

The stone church of Tyrvää in the province of Satakunta has been traditionally dated to the 14th or 15th century. Recent studies suggest that the church was not built until the period 1490-1550. The present article analyses the accounts of Tyrvää Church from 1469-1524 in order to investigate the history of building the church. Although the account lack data on the expenses of the parish over a long period in the early 16th century, the analysis shows that there was exceptional building activity in the parish during the first two decades of the 16th century. Changes in the prices charged for grave sites in the church show that the wooden church was replaced at this stage by a church built in stone.

Keywords: Finland, Tyrvää Church, the accounts analysis.

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There are hardly any written medieval sources available in Finland on the building of churches in the Middle Ages. As a result, it has been necessary to establish the age of medieval stone churches with reference to building techniques and the history of architectural and art styles. Accordingly, the dates suggested by experts vary considerable. Basing on a systematic analysis of numerous building components, Markus Hiekkänen has come to the conclusion, in contrast with earlier research, that except for the episcopal churches of Koroinen and Turku, the medieval stone churches of the Finnish mainland were not built until the 15th century.¹ Previous studies date several stone churches to the close of the thirteenth century and the following century.

Among the churches to which Hiekkänen assigns a new date is the stone church of Tyrvää, or Kalliala, in the historical province of Satakunta. It has been previously dated to the middle or close of the 14th century. The 15th century has also been suggested.² Hiekkänen, however, places the church in the period 1490-1550.³ Tyrvää is an exception among Finland's parishes in that it is the only one

to have surviving medieval local records and accounts. This material covers the period 1469-1524.⁴ The following article is on the accounts of Kalliala (Tyrvää) Church with regard to their possible bearing on the history of construction of the church.⁵

Tyrvää (Kalliala) became an independent parish by the early 14th century at the latest and remained so until the mid-1480s, when it was joined for over fifteen years as a chapelric to the parish of Karkku, or Sastamala. It regained independence most probably in 1504.⁶

The accounts of Kalliala Church contain several mentions of purchases of grave sites in the church (*loco sepelecionis* or *pro sepultura*). From 1481 until 1500 a grave site usually cost 3 marks, sometimes 2 marks are mentioned, but these cases seem to represent partial payments. There is an individual mention from 1506 of a three-mark grave site, after which such entries are lacking until 1516, when five grave sites are mentioned. The price now was 5 marks, but also a 4 marks payment is recorded, again for a partial payment.⁷ In most of the Diocese of Turku, grave sites within the church



Fig. 1. The Church of St Olof in Tyrvää (Kalliala), west view.
Photo Markku Piri.

were priced in the Late Middle Ages so that a grave in a wooden church cost 3 marks and one in a rural stone church cost 5 marks.⁸ The change in the prices suggests that at Tyrvää a wooden church was replaced after 1506 by a stone structure by the year 1516.

The Kalliala church accounts are generally characterized by a detailed listing of parish income and payments due, such as tithes, grain, bequests, payment of debts, loaned grain etc. On the other hand, expenses, i.e. use of funds for salaries and purchases, appear to be given summarily. The costs of communion wine, hosts, beeswax and chrisms are listed in detail, but it appears that it was not regarded as necessary to make detailed entries of all expenses. For example, there are only isolated items of information on the remuneration paid to the stewards of the church (*tutor ecclesie*). Nor do the accounts include any actual records of the considerable stores of grain belonging to the church.⁹

Labour and materials provided by the parishioners were the main resources for building and maintaining churches. It is obvious that between 1469 and 1524 Tyrvää Church, either as a wooden structure or a wooden church followed by one in masonry, required repairs and maintenance calling for considerable resources, as was the case in the parishes of Funbo and Kumla in Sweden.¹⁰ The accounts, however, list only random entries on construction and repairs from the close of the 15th century and the first two decades of the 16th century. This suggests that either the necessary resources were managed without written accounts or separate accounts were kept.

Expenditure on goods and salaries was mainly recorded under the heading *exposita*. Until the first years of the 16th century, there are continuous entries of small expenses for purchasing iron, but also other expenses. In 1476 14 *spann* (1 *spann* = one half barrel or 20 gallons) of rye (worth ca. 5 marks) were spent on repairs to the church and the granary; in 1481 3 *pund* (1 *pund* = 6-8 *spann*) of rye (worth ca. 6 marks) were used for repairs to the church. In 1486 tar was bought for 8 *spann* of rye (worth slightly less than 3 marks). A blacksmith was paid in 1484 and 1486. Also entered under *exposita* is expenditure for moveable items for the church. In 1471, the parish purchased a valuable crucifix (*crux*) for 30 marks, and 1487 a manual (*manuale*) was bought for 15 marks.¹¹

At the beginning of the 16th century the church records changed with regard to expenses. The heading *exposita* was used until 1504, listing the expenses of a few acquisitions and payments, but after this date this section is completely missing until 1515, when expenses are again listed under it.¹² The intermediate period lacks entries on money and grain paid for goods and labour required by the parish.

Recorded in 1504, the last year when expenses were listed according to the older system, is a sum of 4 marks paid to bricklayers. There are no previous mentions of bricklayers in the accounts. When the expenses were again recorded in 1515, they include a payment of 18 *spann* of grain (worth ca. 6 marks) to a bricklayer. The records for 1511 mention a bricklayer as an intermediary in a payment of a small sum of money to the church.¹³ These entries

Fig. 2. The Church of St Olof in Tyrvää (Kalliala), west view after arson on September 21, 1997. Photo Markku Piri.



show that just before the accounting procedure changed activities that were exceptional in comparison with earlier conditions came under way at Tyrvää Church. These activities required the services of bricklayers and they continued until 1515, when the old accounting procedure was resumed. As there are no entries of payments due to bricklayers after 1515 we may conclude that the building work requiring bricklayers was coming to an end at the time. The payments to bricklayers in 1504 and 1515, totalling roughly 10 marks in currency, were only a fraction of the wages for the craftsmen required for the masonry work for Tyrvää Church, even though a major part of this work could have been managed through day-labour services provided by the parishioners. Since there were no actual building accounts, or these have not survived, the available information on the bricklayers' wages tells nothing of the size or extent of the building project.

There are several entries from 1515 and a few following years showing that a major project demanding resources was under way at Tyrvää. The accounts for 1515-1517 include several entries on transport of goods to the church. Some of the parishioners paid their outstanding debts by providing transport services, while others appear to have paid their dues for the fiscal year in this manner. Church steward Henrik Köpil is mentioned as having provided transport as partial payment for his father's grave site in the church. Transport services provided by a total of 15 persons amounted in value to 13 spann (*spann/modius*) and 2.25 mark in currency, i.e. a total of ca. 7 marks. The accounts pre-

viously mention transport only in 1487, 1488 and 1489, when their value was 0.33, 0.33 and 0.37 marks respectively, i.e. a total only slightly more than one mark.¹⁴ It appears that the normal situation in the upkeep of the church was that transport was provided as part of the normal labour dues of the peasants. Between 1515 and 1517 a great deal of transport was apparently needed and, for some reason, could not be managed in the normal manner.

There are also exceptional features in compensation paid for certain labour services between 1515 and 1518. In 1515 a payment was made in grain to a bricklayer by order of the bishop (*ex mandato Domini meji*). In the following year the church stewards were paid considerable amounts of grain apparently by order of the bishop (*ex mandato domini generosi*), which seems to be exceptional, because the payment of stewards apparently followed a standard procedure in the Diocese of Turku and did not require action by the head of the diocese. In connection with the steward who received the larger payment is an entry noting that this payment was a salary for four years (*pro mercede 4or annorum*). This is to be noted for one would not expect the term *merces* to be used for compensation for a position of trust in the church. It primarily points to a wage paid for someone in a subordinate position. This suggests the assumption that the payment defined as wages was for some special task related to the construction of the church such as the work of a foreman. In addition to the payments discussed here, the accounts for 1515 and 1516 show that the church stewards were allowed to keep their grain tithes, which was standard practice.¹⁵

The random information presented here suggests that works of considerable scope related to Tyrvää Church were being finished in the late 1510s. The bricklaying and masonry work was apparently coming to an end in 1515, but considerable transports were still needed during the next couple of years. The completion of the building is also suggested by the fact that from 1516 it was possible to buy grave sites in the church and that in 1517 the clergyman Magnus Fleming was buried in the church.¹⁶ In 1515, or alternately in 1514, the accounts show that Bishop Arvid Kurck made a visitation in the parish of Kalliala (*Anno domini mdxv: primo post visitacionem Domini mej*), in which connection the church was most probably consecrated.¹⁷ The ending of the building project is also suggested by the fact that in 1519 a master-glazier was paid for his expenses (*Item pro expensis vitrisicatoris ij spen*).¹⁸

The above interpretation of the structure and entries in the church accounts of Kalliala leads to the conclusion that considerable building works were carried out in Tyrvää Church during the first two decades of the 16th century and that the resulting costs were only exceptionally recorded in the preserved accounts. It appears that separate, unrecorded, accounts were kept of the building project. The intermittent items of information on the building project do not permit conclusions as to whether the project was for a completely new stone church or the repairs or extension of an existing stone church. The long duration of the work points, however, to a new stone church. The decisive factor is the price for a grave site within the church. Until the first years of the 16th century, this sum was 3 marks, the price charged for a grave in a wooden church, after which it rose to 5 marks, the price of a grave in a rural stone church. The change in the price can be regarded as a decisive factor permitting the conclusion that the building activity associated with Tyrvää Church in the first two decades of the 16th century signified the construction of a new church in stone for the parish of Tyrvää which had again become a separate entity.

NOTES

¹ Markus Hiekkänen, *Stone Churches of the Medieval Diocese of Turku. A Systematic Classification and Chronology*, Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistyksen Aikakauskirja 101, Helsinki 1994.

² Seppo Suvanto, *Satakunnan historia III*, Pori 1973, pp. 403; Olavi Tapio, 'Varhaisia esinelöytöjä Tyrvään vanhan kirkon kaivauksista', *Suomen Museo* 1966, p. 62.

- ³ Hiekkänen, *Stone Churches*, p. 229, 250; idem, 'Sten-kyrkorna i Åbo stift under medeltiden', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 1994, p. 457.
- ⁴ *Kyrkoräkenskap för Kalliala (Tyrvis) socken i Satakunta*. Bidrag till Finlands historia (BFH) I, utg. av Reinhold Hausen, Helsingfors 1881–1883, pp. 357–420.
- ⁵ On the Kalliala church accounts, see Mauno Jokipii, 'Kallialan keskiaikaiset kirkontilit' *Sukuviesti* 7–8/1985, pp. 4–7, 9/1985, pp. 8–12.
- ⁶ Until 1487 the accounts systematically use the term *ecclesia Kalliala*, after which the term *capella Kalliala* appears, being in use until 1504. In that year the term *ecclesia Kalliala* reappears, remaining in use throughout the accounts. BFH I, pp. 381, 385, 399, 402.
- ⁷ BFH I, pp. 376, 378, 382–384, 396–398, 403–405; an example of partial payment: one Laurentius Karhu obtained a 5 mark grave site for his wife in 1516, paying in two instalments 2 marks and 1 mark respectively. The next year he paid another 3 marks for the grave. BFH I, pp. 405, 411.
- ⁸ Kauko Pirinen, *Kymmenysverotus Suomessa ennen kirkkoreduktiota, Historiallisia Tutkimuksia* 55, Helsinki 1962, p. 203; Olavi Rimpiläinen, *Läntisen perinteen mukainen hautauskäytäntö Suomessa ennen isoavihaa, Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran toimituksia* 84, Helsinki 1971, pp. 73.
- ⁹ On July 2, 1487, the granary of Tyrvää Church lent, depending on the alternative relations between the measurements used, ca 28–31 pund of rye. The tith grain collected by the church in 1482–1487 amounted to only 11.7 pund. BFH I, pp. 378–387, 393–395.
- ¹⁰ Göran Dahlbäck, 'Stockpenningar, tjärtunnor och beläten. Något om den senmedeltida sockenkyrkans ekonomi', *Kyrka och socken i medeltidens Sverige, Studier till Det medeltida Sverige* 5, Stockholm 1991, pp. 370–373.
- ¹¹ BFH I, pp. 375–376, 380. – The considerable value of the crucifix and the manual is demonstrated by the fact that the total costs of a three-storey brick building 6 x 7 metres in base area built in Stockholm in 1517–1518 was 367 marks. Göran Dahlbäck, *I medeltidens Stockholm*, Monografier utgivna av Stockholms stad 81, Stockholm 1988, p. 110. – One mark in currency was equivalent to 8 öre, and a *spann* of rye is estimated here as being worth 2.66 öre. This price was common in the last decades of the 15th century and was still current in Tyrvää in the 1510s, by which time 3 öre per *spann* was, however, the general price. Around the middle of the 15th century, the price of a barrel of tar in Sweden was 1 mark. BFH I, pp. 385, 406–407, 409, 414; Eljas Orrman, *Bebyggelsen i Pargas, S:t Märtns och Vemo socknar i Egentliga Finland under senmedeltiden och på 1500-talet, Historiallisia Tutkimuksia* 131, Vammala 1986, Appendix 2 p. 236; Dahlbäck, 'Stockpenningar, tjärtunnor och beläten', p. 373.
- ¹² BFH I, pp. 399–403.
- ¹³ 1504: "*Item muratoribus iij marce*"; 1515: "*Item muratorij thome xvij modios ex mandato Domini mej*"; 1511 (?): "*Item laurencius pappi proconsul wlsbydensis ligatur Ecclesie kalliala v öre soluat nicolaus murator*". BFH I, pp. 399, 402–403.
- ¹⁴ BFH I, pp. 383, 404–405, 410.
- ¹⁵ BFH I, pp. 403–404, Aulis Oja, 'Kirkeværger. Finland', *Kulturhistorisk Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid* VIII, Malmö 1963, col. 419–420.
- ¹⁶ Julia Ramsay suggests that the clergyman, dominus

Magnus Fleming was the son of Magnus Fleming, knight and owner of Villnäs (Louhisaari) Manor. Jully Ramsay, *Fräsesläkter i Finland intill Stora ofreden*, Helsingfors 1909–1916, p. 121.

¹⁷ BFH I, pp. 403–405, 410. – Counting the years from a bishop's visitation, the year of the visitation is apparently given as the first one; cf. the visitation of

1518 and the recording of the following years in the accounts. BFH I, pp. 44–415. Lempiäinen maintains that the inspection was carried out in 1514. Pentti Lempiäinen, *Piispan- ja rovastintarkastukset Suomessa ennen isoavihaa*. *Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran toimituksia* 73, Helsinki 1967, pp. 15–16.

¹⁸ BFH I, p. 415.