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THE SACK OF TURKU IN 1509  
RECOVERING FROM A CATASTROPHE\*\*


**Abstract**

In August 1509, the town of Turku (Swe. Åbo) in southwestern Finland, then a part of the Swedish realm, was attacked by a Danish fleet. The sources tell of great material devastation and loss of life. However, although the sack of 1509 has been mentioned in numerous works treating the history of medieval Turku or medieval Finland in general, historians have not so far analysed how the recuperation process actually looked and which individuals and institutions involved in it were the crucial actors. Contemporary sources, especially the correspondence between higher authorities, cast light on Turku's urban recovery. Such sources may exaggerate the role of ecclesiastical authorities as leaders of the process, we get only sporadic glimpses of the actions of the town council. But it seems there were no plans to send material relief – at least not foodstuff – to Turku. Instead, the authorities were more interested in preventing further attacks and maintaining societal peace. The higher clergy focused on the restoration of the cathedral and retrieving stolen cult items. It is also possible that the translation of a local saint in the summer of 1514 was utilised as a unifying and healing event for spectators and participants.

**Keywords:** Turku, Finland, Middle Ages, warfare, raids, historiography, city biographies, communal survival

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The beginning of the Kalmar Union (1397–1523) was mostly a peaceful time in Finland, then part of the Kingdom of Sweden. Turku (Swe. Åbo) was among Sweden's most important commercial centres as well as host to the seat of a bishopric consisting of all Finnish areas that had been annexed to the Swedish realm<sup>1</sup>. The population of Turku was likely 2,000 at the most – a modest figure to modern eyes, but in the fifteenth century sufficient to make Turku one of the largest towns in the kingdom<sup>2</sup>. In the early fifteenth century, the king strengthened Turku's position as the main centre in Finland by founding a higher court there. This Land Court (Swe. *landsrätten*) was allowed to execute royal authority in certain jurisdictional issues<sup>3</sup>. As a sign of Turku's growing importance, the town appeared on a world map probably for the first time in 1450, under its Latin name Abo; the map was drawn by Fra Mauro in Venice<sup>4</sup>.

Towards the end of the century, times became increasingly insecure in Finland because of power struggles between the leaders of the realm as well as the threat from the east<sup>5</sup>. In 1495, Russians attacked Finnish areas. According to a Swedish chronicle, Russian troops were, at nearest, just two days' journey from Turku<sup>6</sup>. Viipuri (Swe. Viborg) in the far east was the only town in Finland with a fortifying wall around the settlement. Adjacent to the town, but on a small island of its own, was a castle built in the late thirteenth century<sup>7</sup>. But the other Finnish towns, Turku included, remained unwalled even though the earliest known sack to which Turku was subjected, a raid carried out by Russians from Novgorod, occurred in 1318<sup>8</sup>. The reason for this risky openness was most likely the lack of resources: neither the local communities nor the Swedish authorities could afford such costly constructions, which would have required great amounts of stones, tiles, and labour. After the raid of 1318, a wall

<sup>1</sup> Erkki KUUJO, *Åbo stads historia 1366–1521*, trans. Brita LÖFLUND, Åbo 1985, pp. 45, 120–137, 142.

<sup>2</sup> Mika KALLIOINEN, *Kauppias, kaupunki, kruunu. Turun porvariyhteisö ja talouden organisaatio varhaiskeskijalta 1570-luvulle* (Bibliotheca Historica, vol. 59), Helsinki 2000, pp. 49–50.

<sup>3</sup> E. KUUJO, op.cit., pp. 21–22; M. KALLIOINEN, op.cit., p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Piero FALCHETTA, Marino ZORZI, *Fra Mauro's World Map: With a Commentary and Translations of the Inscriptions*, Turnhout 2006, p. 119.

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the outlines of the political history during the Kalmar Union, see e.g. Herman SCHÜCK, *The Political System*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, vol. 1: *Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut HELLE, Cambridge 2003, pp. 683–709.

<sup>6</sup> *Svenska medeltidens rim-krönikor*, Bd. 3: *Nya krönikans fortsättningar eller Sture-krönikorna. Fortgången af unions-striderna under Karl Knutsson och Sturarne, 1452–1520*, ed. Gustaf E. KLEMMING (Svenska Fornskriftsällskapets samlingar, Bd. 17), Stockholm 1866–1868, p. 136.

<sup>7</sup> Marianna NIUKKANEN, Liisa SEPPÄNEN, Mervi SUHONEN, *Kaupunkirakentaminen Suomessa keskijalla*, [in:] *Suomen kaupunkirakentamisen historia*, ed. Henrik LILIUS, Pekka KÄRKI, Helsinki 2014, pp. 39, 52.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

was built around the cathedral of Turku. It was completely renovated during the latter half of the fifteenth century. The funding was most likely provided by the bishop and the chapter, but because the wall was demolished after the great town fire of 1827, its actual height and thickness are unknown. Archaeologists have presented differing interpretations on its purpose and its usefulness as a defensive fortification. In any case, it did not protect the whole town<sup>9</sup>.

A couple of important castles had been built in the vicinity of Turku, but they were situated too far to give townspeople any protection against unexpected attackers. Turku Castle, despite its name and status as a royal castle, lay on a small island approximately three kilometres to the west of the town<sup>10</sup>. Kuusisto (Swe. Kustö), the castle of the bishop of Turku, lay likewise on an island, only even further away, approximately eleven kilometres southeast of Turku<sup>11</sup>. Further away were other castles and fortifications built by the Swedish Crown and scattered along the Finnish territory<sup>12</sup>.

During the early sixteenth century, the main adversaries in the competition over the control of Sweden were the King of Denmark Hans (also known as John) and the Regent of Sweden Svante Nilsson Sture. In 1507, in order to get back the Swedish throne which he had lost some years earlier, King Hans ordered his naval forces to launch attacks against Swedish coastal areas. In 1509, one such raid was directed against Turku<sup>13</sup>. In his *Swedish Chronicle*, Protestant reformer Olaus Petri states laconically that '[in] 1509, King Hans's troops fleeced the town of Turku and burnt it'. He wrote this information in the 1530s at the latest. Although he wrote no more about the destruction, he gave the event great importance, for he began this account of the happenings in 1509 with the sack of Turku<sup>14</sup>.

The most detailed description of the attack is found in *Chronicon episcoporum finlandensium*, a chronicle work narrating the history of the bishops of Finland. Based on both medieval history recording within the Turku chapter and oral tradition, it was written by Bishop Paulus Juusten during the 1570s<sup>15</sup>. Translated into English, it gives the following grim report of the pillage:

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 50–51.

<sup>10</sup> Carl J. GARDBERG, Per-Olof WELIN, *Suomen keskiaikaiset linnat*, Helsinki 1993, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>12</sup> Most of them are described in C. J. GARDBERG, P.-O. WELIN, op.cit., passim.

<sup>13</sup> Torsten EDGREN, Lena TÖRNBLOM, *Finlands historia*, Bd. 1, Esbo 1992, p. 398; C. J. GARDBERG, P.-O. WELIN, op.cit., pp. 34–35.

<sup>14</sup> *Olai Petri Svenska krönika*, ed. Gustaf E. KLEMMING, Stockholm 1860, p. 302. For the sources used by Olaus Petri and the chronology of his chronicle writing, see Gunnar T. WESTIN, *Historieskrivaren Olaus Petri. Svenska krönikans källor och krönikeförfattarens metod*, Lund 1946.

<sup>15</sup> For the history of this chronicle, see Simo HEININEN, *Suomalaisen historiankirjoituksen synty. Tutkimus Paavali Juustenin piispainkronikasta* (Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimintuksia, vol. 147), Helsinki 1989.

‘This time, namely Anno Domini 1509, on the second day of August, which then was Thursday, and the following day, Friday, around 12 o’clock in the night, as people were in the deepest sleep and suspected no harm, suddenly and unexpectedly, the army of the King of the Danes John entered into the town secretly with a horrible noise and with a terrible sound of drums and piercing trumpets. They plundered the town and therein miserably and brutally slaughtered and lacerated people and slayed the more powerful inhabitants. At the same time, they also robbed the cathedral of the bishop’s precious mitre and crosier and other precious things and treasures in great quantities as well as excellent books, copper, tin, iron and other movable goods of all kinds. They took along with them all what was valuable in the town and they took also several inhabitants as captives to Copenhagen. The chief of this army and its main captain was a certain robber Otto Ruuth, son of the iniquity, who remained in Turku until the following Tuesday, stripping the town of all the goods and transporting them to ships, along with the costly ornaments of the church, of which a long complaint has been made in vain. But this robbery, the massacre of the slain ones and the cruelty of the Danish, unjustly inflicted on the Finns, will be avenged by God who is the rightful judge of the whole world and who seeks the blood of His own from every living thing’<sup>16</sup>.

Although this report is considerably younger than the incident, its main details are confirmed by contemporary sources. The preserved accounts, from the autumn of 1509 onwards, also tell of great material devastation and the loss of numerous lives. These documents are the main sources for the analysis in this article.

The raid of 1509 has been mentioned in several studies and local historical works, but merely as a part of the aggressions during the final years of the

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<sup>16</sup> *Chronicon episcoporum finlandensium*, ed. Henrik G. PORTHAN, Aboae 1799, pp. 31–32: ‘Hujus tempore, videlicet anno D:ni 1509, die 2 Augusti, qui tunc suit dies jovis, & sequente die veneris, circiter horam 12 noctis, hominibus velut in prosundiori somno exilientibus & nihil mali suspicantibus, subito & improvise exercitus Regis Danorum Johannis latenter civitatem intraverant, & suscitato horribili clamore, cum terribili sonitu tympanorum atque clangore tubarum, civitatem hostiliter diripiunt, homines hinc inde miserabiliter & crudeliter trucidando & laniando, civibus potioribus intersectis. Tunc temporis etiam spoliabant Ecclesiam Cathedrallem preciosa mitra Episcopali, & baculo, pastorali, atque aliis preciosis rebus, & clenodiis quam plurimis, nec non libris melioribus, cupro, stanno, ferro & aliis rebus mobilibus quibuscunque; auferendo etiam omnem substantiam civitatis, & ducendo secum cives complures captivos usque ad Haffniam. Dux ejus exercitus & capitaneus principalis fuit quidam praedo Otto Ruuth, filius iniquitatis, qui mansit Abo usque ad feriam tertiam proxime sequentem, spoliando omnia bona civitatis, & deportando ad naves, una cum pretiosis ornamentis Ecclesiae, de quibus frustra longior instituitur querela. Sed hanc rapinam, caedem intersectorum, & crudelitatem Danicam, Finnonibus injuste illatam, ulciscatur Deus omnipotens, qui justus judex est totius mundi, & requirens sanguinem suorum ab omni animante.’

Kalmar Union or as a sad local historical event – as one of the manifold catastrophes which pre-modern Turku encountered in the form of plundering, fires and epidemics<sup>17</sup>.

But what has fallen outside the interest of historians are the recuperation processes following raids and destructions in medieval reality. We know little of anything of what happened in sacked communities, how the inhabitants reacted to the pillage, how slow or fast the recovery processes were and which actors – individuals and institutions – participated in them and in what ways. This article attempts to find answers to these questions regarding the recovery in Turku from the sack of 1509.

Besides individual townspeople and their friends, relatives and business associates in other places, several institutional actors were connected to Turku at the local, regional, national and international levels. The nearest was of course the town council. Like all other towns in the Kingdom of Sweden, Turku was led by a council consisting of local burghers. Its functions and responsibilities were dictated by the Swedish Town Law and it represented the town towards higher authorities and other communities<sup>18</sup>. The Crown, in turn, was represented by the royal bailiff who also controlled the castle outside the town; occasionally, as when the raid took place, the castle was left in the hands of another official acting as a vice bailiff<sup>19</sup>. The third important local actor was the bishop of Turku, who held the highest ecclesiastical authority in medieval Finland. He also commanded troops of his own<sup>20</sup>. There existed moreover other parties of probable importance, most of all members of the chapter led by the bishop, other domestic high officials, town councils in other towns, the regent of Sweden, the king of Denmark as the highest representative of the adversary, the pope as the leader of the Catholic Church, and the pope's officials. Although the contemporary literary evidence is scarce and fragmentary, it is possible occasionally to combine the information in several literary sources from the weeks, months and years following the raid thanks to the preserved correspondence of several authorities and institutions. The bulk of the sources were collected from *Diplomatarium Fennicum*, an online text repository containing thousands of documents related to the Finnish Middle Ages<sup>21</sup>. Also consulted is its Swedish counterpart, *Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek*,

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Oskar A. FORSTRÖM, *Suomen keskiajan historia*, Jyväskylä 1898, pp. 467–469; E. KUUJO, op.cit., pp. 34–35; T. EDGREN, L. TÖRNBLÖM, op.cit., p. 398.

<sup>18</sup> E. KUUJO, op.cit., pp. 103–106; M. KALLIOINEN, op.cit., pp. 59–68.

<sup>19</sup> E. KUUJO, op.cit., pp. 17–19; M. KALLIOINEN, op.cit., p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> Kauko PIRINEN, *Suomen kirkon historia*, vol. 1: *Keskiaika ja uskonpuhdistuksen aika*, Helsinki 1991, pp. 146–147.

<sup>21</sup> *Diplomatarium Fennicum*, <http://df.narc.fi> (hereafter cited as DF) [accessed online 16 December 2022].

and likewise the contemporary records of the town council of Stockholm, published as source editions and available via the GUPEA online text repository<sup>22</sup>.

The analysis of the recovery process and the different actors' roles in it comprises the period between the beginning of August 1509 and May 1522, when the Danes attacked again<sup>23</sup>. The analysis will be presented chronologically. Based on what can be found out about the events following the sack of 1509, the analysed time period can be divided into four phases. The first is the time immediately following the sack, that is from early August to the end of the year 1509 when winter and the freezing of the sea brought a yearly pause to the sailing season and interregional connections. The second phase covers the years 1510–1513, when the living conditions in Turku appear mostly normalised according to contemporary documents. The third phase consists of the translation feast of Bishop Hemming in the summer of 1514 and its preparations: apparently, the occasion was utilised as a unifying event, meant to heal the last wounds left by the raid. But the restoration of the cathedral of Turku was still unfinished at the time of the feast. Consequently, the fourth and final phase consists of the period following the translation feast up to the sack of 1522. During that time, the chapter worked to complete the restoration simultaneously as new fears and threats started to appear.



THE FIRST PHASE:  
THE AUTUMN OF 1509  
THE NOBLE RESPONSE

This period was regarded as dangerous, as new attacks were possible. The sea routes were still open, so news crossed the sea between Finland and Sweden rapidly. All the initial documents reporting on reactions to the raid come from correspondence between higher authorities. It is apparent that Regent Svante Nilsson was informed quickly, most likely by the bishop, vice bailiff or both. The information must have reached the regent only days after the raid, as a surviving letter to him from Archbishop Jakob Ulfsson of Uppsala, written in Uppsala and dated 11 August 1509, contains an answer to the regent. Svante Nilsson aimed to travel to Finland and had asked the archbishop for men from his own troops<sup>24</sup>. The archbishop refused the request, pointing out that he needed his soldiers in case the enemy attacked Uppsala or its vicinity.

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<sup>22</sup> *Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek*, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/SDHK> [accessed online 16 December 2022]; *GUPEA – Gothenburg University Publications Electronic Archive*, <https://gupea.ub.gu.se> [accessed online 16 December 2022].

<sup>23</sup> E. KUUSJO, *op.cit.*, pp. 37, 178.

<sup>24</sup> DF, no. 5395.



He suggested the regent summon a meeting for higher noblemen to discuss how the kingdom could be protected.

Despite the differing ideas on how to tackle the Danish threat, this letter shows how the highest authorities in Sweden were more interested in preventing further attacks than in giving any concrete help to the plundered community. The tone is similar in a letter dated 13 August to the regent from one of his military officials stationed in the archipelago outside Stockholm. The officer stresses the need for protecting the people, but regarding Turku, he simply states that according to the news, 'Turku is besieged' (*Aabo är belagth*)<sup>25</sup>. Apparently, the information on the raid had yet to reach him.

On 30 August, almost a month after the sack, the vice bailiff of Turku Castle Sander Arendsson wrote a letter to the regent informing him of the departure of one part of the enemy. But before leaving, they had looted elsewhere on the southern coast of Finland. There were also enemy ships still nearby, preventing commercial sailing to Tallinn (Ger. Reval). Moreover, the vice bailiff told of a shortage of beer and food in Turku: no matter how much one was prepared to pay one could not buy a barrel of beer in town. The doors of the local houses and the shops along the streets were 'all' open. Those who had managed to flee to the countryside had not returned<sup>26</sup>.

The vice bailiff asked the regent to come personally to Finland or at least send someone representing his authority, for among the population were several who needed to be punished. The vice bailiff asked also for raw materials to produce gunpowder as well as a gunpowder maker and a good gunner. He apologised that he had not had any when the enemy had passed nearby together with the booty from the town.

Although the vice bailiff, too, focuses on military issues, in this letter we get a glimpse of the living conditions in the town and elsewhere in Finland. The shortage of foodstuff in Turku was most likely caused by the raiders who had consumed, destroyed and taken with them as much food and beer as possible. The enemy ships hiding in the archipelago prevented imports from Tallinn, but the raid must also have caused a rupture in the business contacts between the town and the countryside. There were most certainly merchants among the people killed or taken away, so their networks were no longer of any help to the townspeople.

It was still early autumn: while the harvest was about to end, the slaughtering of animals was beginning, so there should have been opportunities to buy foodstuff from local farmers. Yet apparently many townspeople had lost all their money and other valuables and were unable to buy anything. The people

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<sup>25</sup> DF, no. 5396.

<sup>26</sup> DF, no. 5405.

in the countryside, in turn, may have been fearful of visiting the town to buy and sell anything. But many burghers owned estates in the region outside Turku and many also had relatives there<sup>27</sup>. Those lucky ones had a possibility of staying away and awaiting securer times. Their living conditions in the countryside may even have been better than those of the town for people who had not managed to escape or who had nowhere else to go to.

The vice bailiff's description paints a picture of a town still in disorder. Yet, it is understandable that those who had fled wanted to wait and be sure of no new attacks – a wise survival strategy after such a horror. There may have also been all kinds of rumours circulating and creating uncertainty among the population. After all, it was difficult to receive information and sort reliable news from loose rumours. The vice bailiff's letter reveals that the attacks of the enemy had created discontent among Finns. This discontent was apparently directed towards the representatives of the government who had been unable to protect them.

The vice bailiff feared the actual bailiff's possible displeasure that he and his men had been unable to interfere in the raid. So later in September he wrote to the chancellor who was working within the central administration and asked him to take his side should any accusations be posed against him<sup>28</sup>. On 4 September, Knight Åke Göransson wrote a letter to the regent<sup>29</sup>. He was the commander of Häme Castle (Swe. Tavastehus) which was situated further inland. This was one of Finland's most important royal castles. Åke Göransson informed the regent that when the news about the raid had reached him, he had ridden with sixty of his men to confront the attackers. He was *en route* when he received a letter announcing that the enemy had left, and so he turned back. He does not mention who it was that had sent this letter. It is also unknown how he became informed in the first place: perhaps one of the local authorities had sent a message and asked for help or perhaps the information came along with refugees or as rumours – after all, Häme Castle was joined to Turku by a main road<sup>30</sup>. The news must have come during a relatively early phase because Åke Göransson mentions in his letter that he had tried to come to the town's aid or to prevent the enemy from proceeding to the inland.

The beginning of the letter, where Åke Göransson reports that Turku has been sacked, reveals he was unsure if the regent already knew of the raid. Apparently, this was his first letter to the regent after the raid. It is also obvious that the regent had not written to him, at least regarding this matter. It is unknown why Åke Göransson waited so long before contacting the regent, but

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<sup>27</sup> E. KUUJO, *op.cit.*, pp. 163–165; M. KALLIOINEN, *op.cit.*, pp. 110–112, 147–151.

<sup>28</sup> DF, no. 5410.

<sup>29</sup> DF, no. 5406.

<sup>30</sup> C. J. GARDBERG, P.-O. WELIN, *op.cit.*, p. 51.



perhaps he assumed – based on the letter received from Turku – that the local leaders had things under control or at least were monitoring the situation.

But like the vice bailiff of Turku Castle, Åke Göransson hinted that people would become disobedient if they were exposed to such violence too often. He told also that ‘his host in Turku’ was among those taken away, but whose wife had written to him. She had bid him to write to the regent, who had provided her husband with a fief, requesting that he be allowed to keep it. Apparently, it was a question of a wealthy burgher, perhaps even a man belonging to the lesser nobility, in whose house Åke Göransson had dwelt during his visits to Turku. The wife in question wanted no doubt to ensure the family, who had suffered losses, would nevertheless receive revenues from her husband’s fief. Thus, Åke Göransson’s letter also casts light upon individuals’ survival strategies and how they utilised their networks. The nobleman was willing to help the wife in question, but evidently only because she and her husband were business associates.

In the correspondence analysed above, we do not see any idea of helping the suffering urban community. The focus is on actions to prevent further attacks. The population in Finland were even depicted partly as a threat themselves, with their discontent directed against the representatives of the Crown.

#### THE EPISCOPAL AND CAPITULAR RESPONSE

As appears above, it is possible the bishop of Turku or some of the members of the Turku chapter sent the very first pleas for help to the lay leaders. But we cannot know for sure. Bishop Johannes Olavi had apparently already moved to his stronghold, Kuusisto Castle, by the time of the raid. At least when writing to the regent on 16 August, he did not imply he had been personally present in the town when it was sacked. However, he did describe the devastation: the enemy had plundered both the cathedral and private homes and killed members of the town council as well as priests and other people. An unknown number of the ‘best’ burghers and their aids had been taken as prisoners. The bishop also informed the regent of the presence of the enemy on the southern coast. He asked the regent to immediately come together with ‘a good number of folks’ (*med got taall folk*) and protect the inhabitants of Turku and the rest of Finland from further aggressions<sup>31</sup>.

The bishop’s perspective comprises, at least nominally in this letter, the whole bishopric and not just Turku. He practically claims to act on behalf of all the inhabitants of Finland and requests protection for them. He must have thought his own troops insufficient because he hoped to receive the necessary assistance from the regent, the highest military chief in the Swedish realm and

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<sup>31</sup> DF, no. 5398.

who had the best resources for gathering men for warfare. Simultaneously, the chapter of Turku, whose leader was the bishop, focused on attempts to acquire the cult items which had been taken from the cathedral. Therefore, the chapter wrote to the archbishop of Uppsala asking him to write a petition to the king of Denmark. Apparently, the chapter and the bishop of Turku lacked direct contact with the Danish leaders, although they might have got to know several of their Danish counterparts when studying at universities on the European mainland<sup>32</sup>. But there is no evidence of the chapter contacting or attempting to contact the archbishop of Lund or any other Danish bishops. It may have been the case that the bishop and the capitulars of Turku felt there was no use in contacting the ecclesiastical leaders of a country regarded as an enemy.

It is not known either if they contacted the pope to ask for help, but most likely they informed the Holy Father of the sacrilege. The pope was a potential agent also in this matter, and in the fifteenth century, occasionally both clerics and laymen appealed to him or, in practice, the papal central offices, for example in cases which dealt with inheritance disputes or vacancies within clerical administration and economy<sup>33</sup>.

But it seems that the Turku capitulars preferred to act within the 'national' framework and let the archbishop take care of the 'transnational' communication. After all, the archbishop of Uppsala was their superior and far nearer than the pope. Furthermore, the archbishop held the highest rank within the Council of the Realm which assisted the king or the regent<sup>34</sup>. This position gave him enough authority for correspondence with the Danish king. However, it seems that the archbishop negotiated with the Council of the Realm before he composed and sent his letter. It is unknown whether it also dealt with those townspeople taken as prisoners and shipped to Denmark or if it only focused on the damage to Turku's cathedral and valuables<sup>35</sup>.

#### THE MONASTIC RESPONSE

At the time of the raid, the general confessor of the Birgittine monastery in Vadstena, Sven Tordsson, was visiting the monastery of Naantali (Swe. Nådendal) approximately 14 kilometres north of Turku. News of the sack had soon reached Naantali, most likely already the same day, and the monastery was

<sup>32</sup> A survey of Northerners' studies at medieval and early modern European universities has been presented in *Ur nordisk kulturhistoria. XVIII Nordiska historikermötet Jyväskylä 1981. Mötesrapport*, vol. 1: *Universitetsbesöken i utlandet före 1660*, ed. Mauno JOKIPII, Ilkka NUMMELA (Studia historica Jyväskyläensia, vol. 22:1), Jyväskylä 1981.

<sup>33</sup> E. KUUJO, op.cit., p. 86; Kirsi SALONEN, *Papal Justice in the Late Middle Ages: The Sacra Romana Rota*, Abingdon–New York 2016, pp. 82–96.

<sup>34</sup> Jan LIEDGREN, *Riksrådsbrev*, [in:] *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid*, Bd. 14, ed. Ingvar ANDERSSON [et al.], Malmö 1969, col. 257–258.

<sup>35</sup> DF, no. 5454.

quick to send Birgittine brothers to Turku to negotiate with the attackers the sparing of both the monastery and the small town around it. The sum was set to 25 marks, a relatively modest amount of money at that time. In 1509, an imported bottle of wine could cost more. The ransom and other happenings are recounted in a letter, dated 10 October, which the general confessor composed for the monastery of Vadstena<sup>36</sup>.

Sven Tordsson was in no hurry to report the incident to the sisters and brothers in Vadstena. He wrote his letter only after having received one himself from Vadstena. Moreover, the raid was only one of the many topics treated in his letter. All in all, he told more of matters vital solely to the Birgittines than of the raid and its consequences. But he did mention that the raiders 'destroyed' (*fördærffwadhe*) Turku and took away so many treasures in gold, silver, coins and other valuables that it was impossible to describe the losses in more detail.

Sven Tordsson did not mention that Naantali monastery would have made no concrete attempt to help suffering townspeople in Turku. Of course, it is possible that it did so nevertheless. After all, former inhabitants of Turku counted among the nuns and lay members of the monastic community, and especially nuns also had relatives in Turku<sup>37</sup>. But if the monastery sent no aid, the reason must have been the fact that it had recently been weakened during the plague epidemic of the previous year: in total 36 sisters and brothers – half of the monastery's population – had perished<sup>38</sup>.

In any case, the Birgittine brothers and sisters were able to at least send inquiries – written or oral – to their loved ones. Moreover, the Birgittine brothers were less bound to the monastery than the nuns, so it is possible they personally travelled to Turku and perhaps helped those in need of medical care. They may have given such help also to refugees if any came to the monastery. And even those who did not leave the monastery were able to help by way of prayers, intercessions and requiems, which in medieval Catholic practice were valued as concrete actions<sup>39</sup>.

Sven Tordsson did not request any help from Vadstena monastery, most likely because it would have taken too long to obtain foodstuff, for example, from there. It was already October and the general confessor stated that he expected no answer back before next spring when the sea was again free of ice.

<sup>36</sup> DF, no. 5414. For examples of contemporary wine prices, see DF, no. 5407, 5408.

<sup>37</sup> The monastic folk's genealogical bonds are described in Birgit KLOCKARS, *I nådens dal. Klosterfolk och andra c. 1440–1590* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, Bd. 486), Helsingfors 1979.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>39</sup> Albrecht DIEM, *The Gender of the Religious: Wo/Men and the Invention of Monasticism*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. Judith M. BENNETT, Ruth M. KARRAS, Oxford 2013, p. 441.

Sven Tordsson's letter is a good example of how slow communication could be in premodern reality, and how contemporaries were accustomed to and took as natural this slowness.

There was also a Dominican convent on the southern outskirts of Turku. Its history dated back to the mid-thirteenth century, but nothing can be known of its role during the recuperation process. Due to the paucity of sources, we do not know if and to what extent the convent was looted during the sack. We know only that the convent persisted and was abandoned during the Reformation in 1529<sup>40</sup>.

#### REACTIONS IN OTHER TOWNS

By 13 September at the latest, the inhabitants of Gdańsk (Ger. Danzig) became aware of the raid of Turku, and the inhabitants of Tallinn by 18 November. Because these dates refer to letters composed in these towns, the news of the sack had likely arrived somewhat earlier to both towns. Because of the shorter distance between Turku and Tallinn, it is also likely that the news reached Tallinn sooner than Gdańsk<sup>41</sup>.

In both known cases, the person aware of the raid was a business associate of Pål Scheel, the archdeacon and, from 1513, dean of Turku. Scheel was actively involved in interregional commerce<sup>42</sup>. A couple of letters addressed to him touch upon the raid. In the first of them, a merchant of Gdańsk named Hans Chonnert, asked Scheel to take care of goods sent to a certain Peter Wije should this person happen to be dead. Apparently, Wije was a burgher in Turku and Chonnert was uncertain if he had survived the attack<sup>43</sup>. In another case, Hans Suurpää, a merchant of Tallinn, asked Pål Scheel to collect the debts of three men living in Turku. Hans had been told that at least one of them had not been at home 'when the king's folks were there' (*do des konynges folck dar wasz*)<sup>44</sup>. Apparently, Suurpää assumed his debtor was alive. His choice of words when he referred to the raid resembles a euphemism – perhaps he did not want to take a side in this political matter. After all, his letter could fall into the wrong hands on its journey to Turku.

On 20 October a burgher woman living in Gdańsk issued a letter to the bishop of Turku asking him to punish and send back her husband who had committed adultery and fled away, apparently to Turku<sup>45</sup>. The abandoned wife

<sup>40</sup> Carl J. GARDBERG, *Veritas – totuus! Turun dominikaanit keskiajalla*, Espoo 2005, p. 67.

<sup>41</sup> DF, no. 5408, 5422.

<sup>42</sup> Kauko PIRINEN, *Turun tuomiokapituli keskiajan lopulla*, Helsinki 1956, pp. 441–457; Ilkka LESKELÄ, *Kauppa, verkosto ja kaapparisorsa. Turkulaisen kirkonmiehen Paavali Scheelin ja Danzigin porvarin Hans Chonnertin kauppayhteydet 1509–1516*, Helsinki 2007.

<sup>43</sup> DF, no. 5408.

<sup>44</sup> DF, no. 5422.

<sup>45</sup> DF, no. 5417.

seems to have assumed society was functioning normally in Turku. Later the same year, we meet a similar attitude in a youngster, the son of a merchant in Tallinn. The boy fled from home and came to Turku, where he had previously lived. This happened at the beginning of the winter of the same year<sup>46</sup>.

By December at the latest, but most likely even earlier, news of the raid had reached the inland Swedish town of Linköping. A member of the local clergy, perhaps Canon Erik Svenonis, wrote to someone in Turku who must have been Archdeacon Pål Scheel, because the letter is preserved among his letter collection<sup>47</sup>. The writer expressed his sorrow because of the 'reckless and sacrilegious crime' (*temerarium et sacrilegum scelus*) which had taken place in Turku. He mentioned that he had also previously sent letters and received no response. He assumed this was because the addressee had had to focus on the 'reforming and restoration of the church and the town' (*reformande et restaurande ecclesie ac ciuitatis*). He thanked the addressee for taking care of his nephew, who apparently had returned from Turku even before the raid. Furthermore, he promised to take care of the pupil of the addressee, whom the addressee had sent to him.

The end of the letter mentions that a certain Sven Myre would give a report of the latest happenings 'in a lively voice' (*viva voce*) as he had been involved in them. This tells us that the letter was to be carried to Turku with this man. He was a burgher and merchant in Turku, but he had also served within the Crown's administration<sup>48</sup>. We do not know what occurrences in Linköping the letter refers to, but it is likely that Sven Myre had given an equally lively description of the sack in Linköping. We see in these cases how individuals living in other towns started to contact local authorities within a relatively short time. However, they were mostly focused on their own affairs, such as personal profit, which the raid had jeopardised. They were not offering help to the townspeople of Turku. But as the reference to Sven Myre at the end of the last-mentioned letter shows, written messages could be completed with oral additions. What the messengers were supposed to say and what they said is something we cannot access by means of the available sources.

#### THE QUESTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ROLE

We can assume that Turku's town council too sought to do something for the recovery, at least by restoring and maintaining the societal order. Most likely, the council organised a guard so that a new surprise attack would not be possible. Unfortunately, all the medieval record books of the town council are lost, making it difficult to analyse in detail its role during the recovery process.

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<sup>46</sup> DF, no. 5471.

<sup>47</sup> DF, no. 5425.

<sup>48</sup> E. KUUIJO, *op.cit.*, pp. 32–33.

The same holds true for the number of burgomasters and councillors among the burghers killed or taken as hostages: we do not know how severe a blow the raid caused to the town council. Bishop Johannes Olavi mentioned in his letter to the regent that 'some' burgomasters and councillors had been slain among other laypeople and priests and 'some' of the best burghers together with their aids had been taken as prisoners, but he did not give any names, nor did he provide any figures<sup>49</sup>. We do not know even when or if the hostages were released. It is apparent, however, that several councillors left no traces in the sources after the raid. Burgomaster Olof Andersson may have been one of the victims: he is mentioned in a letter sent to Pával Scheel from a merchant in Gdańsk in late August 1511, where the writer states that contrary to their agreement Olof Andersson had not sent any pikes<sup>50</sup>. This may have been because Olof Andersson, too, had perished in the raid, or that he breached a contract, resulting in this written complaint – one could suppose that two years after the raid, a merchant in Gdańsk would have known if his business partner in Turku had been killed or shipped away.

An open letter issued by the council in Turku on 21 January 1510 is the earliest written evidence of the resumed activities of the council after the raid. All in all, only nine letters have been preserved from the correspondence of the town council of Turku during the time between the raids in 1509 and 1522. Of these, only four were issued by the council of Turku. Three other letters were written by the town council of Tallinn. There is also a letter written on behalf of a burgher woman and another written by the king of Denmark<sup>51</sup>.

Although much of the correspondence of the town council of Turku has apparently been lost, something can be concluded based on the contents in the town archives of Tallinn and Stockholm as well as *Sturearkivet*. The last of these is the most important late medieval Swedish collection of documents produced within the national administration<sup>52</sup>. None of such documents contain any traces of petitions from the councillors to their peers in other towns. Apparently, it was not customary for a sacked urban community to turn to other towns for material help. The reason was most likely practical: there were no quick methods of communication or transportation available. Thus, it was more reasonable for each violated community to try to cope independently, by its own means, and try to negotiate reductions in the future taxes as it seems the burghers of Turku did. In 1526, the yearly tax which burghers paid to the

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<sup>49</sup> DF, no. 5398.

<sup>50</sup> DF, no. 5544; M. KALLIOINEN, op.cit., pp. 120, 307.

<sup>51</sup> DF, no. 5511, 5549, 5772, 5876, 5885, 6003, 6012, 6064.

<sup>52</sup> Lena TÖRNBLOM, *Finska arkivbestånd i Sture-arkivet?*, Historisk Tidskrift för Finland, årg. 17: 1991, nr 3, pp. 377–395.



Crown was merely 200 marks even though in 1413 it had been 600 marks. Only later in the 1500s did the tax return to 600 marks. The recovery seems to have been slow, and Turku was in fact attacked by the Danes again in 1522. This in part explains the low level of taxation in 1526<sup>53</sup>. It was likely the town council which negotiated with the representatives of the Crown and received that reduction.

THE SECOND PHASE:  
POSSIBLY NORMALISED LIVING CONDITIONS  
IN THE YEARS 1510–1513

The letter issued by the town council on the aforementioned day, that is 21 January 1510, deals with a quite mundane court case of alleged defamation. It also mentions an administrative organ – ‘the 24 burghers’ – which had been involved with the investigation of the case<sup>54</sup>. Apparently, by this time, the urban administration and jurisdiction were functioning quite normally, and most burghers were able to take part in communal activities. But we do not know whether living conditions had been normalised for all.

The higher clergy continued to work to recover the stolen religious treasures. In April 1510, Dean Henrik Wenne travelled to Uppsala to meet the archbishop and to hear what kind of answer the king of Denmark had sent. It is not totally clear on the basis of the archbishop’s formulations if an answer had come; in any case, the archbishop says nothing of what the possible answer from Denmark contained<sup>55</sup>.

Archdeacon Pål Scheel contacted in turn at least one of his business associates, the previously mentioned Hans Chonnert in Gdańsk, asking him to find craftsmen, especially a glazer and a gunpowder maker, and send them to Turku to serve the bishop<sup>56</sup>. There had been at least one glazer living in Turku in March 1509<sup>57</sup>, but perhaps he was among those killed or captured or who had managed to flee and not returned. The raid had most likely caused such damage that a glazer was needed. The need for a gunpowder maker recalled what had been expressed by the vice bailiff already in the autumn. Both the lay and religious authorities wanted to ensure that, in future, the region would be better prepared for attacks. Yet by summer, the situation was considered so peaceful that Hans Chonnert sent one of his sons to Turku to live in the

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<sup>53</sup> M. KALLIOINEN, *op.cit.*, pp. 82–83.

<sup>54</sup> DF, no. 5439.

<sup>55</sup> DF, no. 5454. The name of the dean is not mentioned in the document. The publisher of the document, Reinhold Hausen, calls him Jakob Wenne, but during that time, the name of the dean was Henrik Wenne, see e.g. DF, no. 5416, 5503.

<sup>56</sup> DF, no. 5459.

<sup>57</sup> DF, no. 5373.

archdeacon's house and to learn Latin and Finnish<sup>58</sup>. The situation was evidently so stable that the bishop was able to travel far from Turku. Thus, Bishop Johannes Olavi carried out an episcopal *visitatio* to the easternmost parts of the realm. But in June 1510, soon after his return to Kuusisto, he died<sup>59</sup>. Dean Arvidus Kurck was elected as his successor<sup>60</sup>. Arvid Kurck composed a letter to Regent Svante Nilsson on 3 August 1510, that is exactly one year after the sack of Turku. Arvid Kurck thanked the regent for the letter he had sent to the pope in support of Kurck's appointment as bishop. But he explained that the chapter of Turku was unable to send any troops to Kalmar, as the regent would have hoped, because they were needed in Finland to protect the area against renewed attacks<sup>61</sup>.

Indeed, at the beginning of 1511, many Finns feared a new attack from Denmark, and rumours were circulating<sup>62</sup>. Referring to the uncertain situation, Bishop-elect Arvidus Kurck informed the regent then that he would not attend a meeting taking place in Stockholm<sup>63</sup>. On the other hand, the preserved business correspondence of Archdeacon Scheel hints that commercial ties between Turku and the rest of the Baltic region were functioning quite normally in the summer of 1511<sup>64</sup>. Scheel himself visited Stockholm in the autumn of 1511. During his stay, he acted also as a witness for reconciliation between certain local burghers<sup>65</sup>. Next year, Kurck in turn travelled to Sweden, where he was anointed as a bishop. In July 1512, he was in Stockholm and participated in a meeting between ecclesiastical and lay leaders of the realm<sup>66</sup>.

Regent Svante Nilsson passed away in late 1511 or early 1512. After a short power struggle, Sten Sture the Younger was elected as the new regent. In the autumn of 1512, he travelled to Finland to fight the Russians<sup>67</sup>. He remained in Turku for a while after arriving. During his stay he witnessed court hearings:

<sup>58</sup> DF, no. 5459.

<sup>59</sup> *Chronicon episcoporum finlandensium*, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 32; Seppo SUVANTO, *Kurck, Arvidus*, [in:] *Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu* (Studia Biographica, vol. 4), Helsinki 2000, <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:sks-kbg-000027> [accessed online 16 December 2022].

<sup>61</sup> DF, no. 5469.

<sup>62</sup> DF, no. 5505.

<sup>63</sup> DF, no. 5514.

<sup>64</sup> DF, no. 5537, 5539, 5549, 5554, 5558.

<sup>65</sup> *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1514–1520. Jämte utdrag ur de förlorade årgångarne 1520–1524 samt stadens kopiebok 1520–1522*, ed. Johan A. ALMQUIST (Stockholms stadsböcker från äldre tid, Ser. 2:5), Stockholm 1933, p. 219.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 302; S. SUVANTO, op.cit., <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:sks-kbg-000027> [accessed online 16 December 2022].

<sup>67</sup> DF, no. 5602.

in September 1512, at least two were held in the town hall of Turku in his presence. The hearings were part of processes which had been raised against alleged malpractices of the Crown's officials in Finland. The potential role of the town council is not described in the document telling of these hearings, but it is possible, because of the physical appearance of the text and the document itself, that it is a fragment from the court records otherwise lost<sup>68</sup>. The same may hold true for a long description dealing with a dispute between a local merchant together with his son and a judicial official inland<sup>69</sup>.

It is possible that these processes were part of the regent's attempt to calm general opinion in Finland. Although he was unable to reach and punish the raiders or prevent the rumours of renewed attacks, he could gain popularity as a ruler by keeping his officials in line, at least temporarily. The town hall of Turku was a suitable venue for meetings between the regent and displeased commoners – or at the minimum those relatively well-to-do landowners whose socio-economic status was comparable with that of the lesser nobility<sup>70</sup>. The role of the town council was most likely to assist during the sessions and offer its meeting localities for use by the regent.

In August 1513, the regent was again in Turku and residing at Turku Castle. During this visit, he exempted certain estates owned by the cathedral from taxes which otherwise should have been paid to the Crown. This was meant as compensation for the losses the cathedral had suffered in August 1509. The donation letter makes it understood that the cathedral was currently undergoing renovation<sup>71</sup>. The need for renovation was most likely at least partly caused by the damage during the raid. It is also likely that the initiative for the tax exemption had come from the chapter.

The correspondence between capitulars and their business associates shows that interregional commerce was again lively and even luxury goods were once again being imported to Turku<sup>72</sup>. There was apparently no longer any shortage of beer or strong drinks, as Dean Henrik Wenne managed to drink so much that he died<sup>73</sup>. Archdeacon Scheel was elected his successor<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> DE, no. 5598.

<sup>69</sup> DE, no. 5628; *Nya källor till Finlands medeltidshistoria. Första samlingen*, ed. Edward GRÖNBLAD, Köpenhamn 1857, no. 303.

<sup>70</sup> The processes of social stratification and homogenisation in early sixteenth-century Finland are discussed in Lena HULDÉN, *Maktstrukturer i det tidiga finska 1500-talssamhället*, Genos, årg. 69: 1998, nr 3, pp. 111–118, 156–157.

<sup>71</sup> DE, no. 5675.

<sup>72</sup> DE, no. 5688, 5737, 5760, 5762, 5788, 5797, 5805, 5815, 5825, 5827, 5834, 5837, 5818, 5838.

<sup>73</sup> DE, no. 5714; Birgit KLOCKARS, *Biskop Hemming av Åbo*, Helsingfors 1960, p. 219.

<sup>74</sup> Ari-Pekka PALOLA, *Scheel, Paulus*, [in:] *Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu* (Studia Biographica, vol. 4), Helsinki 2000, <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:sks-kgb-000273> [accessed online 16 December 2022].

Of course, such notices do not say anything about the living conditions of the lesser social strata.

THE THIRD PHASE:  
THE CELEBRATION OF 'SAINT' HEMMING

Although the restoration of the cathedral was still unfinished, in the autumn of 1513 at the latest, the chapter of Turku and the other leaders of the Swedish Church were planning a great celebration which was to take place in Turku the following summer. It had been referred to in a letter from Arvid Kurck to Regent Svante Nilsson in August 1511<sup>75</sup>. The saint in question, Hemming, had been of Swedish origin and had served as the bishop of Turku for almost three decades between 1338 and 1366. After his death, he was soon venerated as a saint locally. During the fifteenth century, the Swedish bishops wanted Hemming as well as two other bishops and a Dominican nun officially canonised as saints. In 1497, the pope had given his approval to the idea<sup>76</sup>. Officially, Hemming was to be regarded as *beatus* ('blessed') and not *sanctus*, but for example, Archbishop Jakob Ulfsson spoke of him as a 'Saint Hemming' in his letter to the regent in September 1513<sup>77</sup>. Originally, Hemming's translation feast was meant to be celebrated already before the beginning of the sixteenth century, but it appears that when the time came, Regent Sten Sture the Elder had 'borrowed' the funds reserved for the festivities. It was no earlier than the beginning of the 1510s when his widow and her heirs began repaying this 'loan' to the chapter of Turku<sup>78</sup>.

In his letter to Regent Sten Sture the Younger, dated September 1513, the archbishop hinted that the celebration could take place around the feast of another saint connected to Turku and Finland, namely St Henrik's Day, 18 June<sup>79</sup>. St Henrik (or St Henry, to use the English name) was a mythical figure. He lived in the middle of the twelfth century and was, allegedly, of English origin, and became the first bishop of Finland. According to his legend, he died as a martyr at the hands of a heathen Finnish peasant<sup>80</sup>. By the 1500s St Henrik remained the only officially recognised 'Finnish' saint, so it was understandable

<sup>75</sup> DF, no. 5541.

<sup>76</sup> B. KLOCKARS, *Biskop Hemming*, pp. 211–212; Kirsi SALONEN, *Promoting Bishop Hemming: A New Phase in the Cult of Saints in the Late Medieval Diocese of Turku*, [in:] *Helgener i nord. Nye studier i nordisk helgenkult*, ed. Magne NJÅSTAD, Randi BJØRSHOL WÆRDAHL, Oslo 2010, pp. 90–94.

<sup>77</sup> DF, no. 5684.

<sup>78</sup> B. KLOCKARS, *Biskop Hemming*, pp. 206–216.

<sup>79</sup> DF, no. 5684.

<sup>80</sup> Alban BUTLER, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, vol. 1: *January*, ed. Paul BURNS, Tunbridge Wells 1995, p. 129.

to connect the translation of Hemming – one of Henrik's successors – to an established national feast day. Moreover, St Henrik's feast was an important local market day, visited also by many people from other towns and parishes. It is evident that the celebration was meant to have a trans-local character. But St Henrik was commemorated in Turku also in January, and the market organised on that feast day was even more popular among those living in the countryside. This is because winter made inland journeys easier and left fewer agricultural tasks to be carried out<sup>81</sup>. By choosing the 'Summer Henrik' instead of the 'Winter Henrik', the leaders of the Church prioritised sea travel over land travel, that is the participation of the ecclesiastical and lay elites.

The planning of the feast took place multi-locally. Bishop-elect of Linköping Hemming Gadh participated in the preparations during the spring of 1514, remotely and by means of letters. He was already experienced in the matter, as he had been in Rome and seen how similar festivities were celebrated there. In a letter written at Stockholm Castle and addressed to the chapter of Turku, Hemming Gadh promised his assistance in organising the feast<sup>82</sup>. He wrote also to the bailiff of Turku Castle giving instructions regarding a shelter which should be built in the cathedral, and under which the chest containing the saint's relics should be placed. He was uncertain whether there was luxurious cloth available for the baudekin, which was supposed to be carried over the chest; if necessary, it could be substituted with paper sewn on a piece of silk<sup>83</sup>.

Drawing from his memories of similar celebrations in Rome, Hemming Gadh composed a detailed plan for the whole procedure. The main part of this plan deals with how the cathedral should be furnished and decorated for the ritual. The ceremony required also effects which could be created using fires, live birds and some kind of fireworks. Because no painter in Turku would have been capable of painting the necessary images, such an expert was to be sought in Stockholm and Tallinn. The event was so important that Hemming Gadh took for granted that the archbishop and all or at least several bishops would attend. Likewise, he gave to the regent the important role of bearing the chest containing the saint's relics during one part of the ceremony. His plan mentions furthermore the presence of other noblemen, although these are omitted from a preserved memo by an unknown writer which contains a list of those to be notified of and invited to the feast: the regent, the archbishop, the local capitulars, the rest of the clergy, and also the commoners<sup>84</sup>. The inhabitants of Turku were not supposed to be mere spectators; instead, according to Hemming Gadh's plan, they should also participate in preparations by cleaning the

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<sup>81</sup> E. KUUJO, op.cit., p. 131.

<sup>82</sup> DF, no. 5714; K. SALONEN, *Promoting Bishop Hemming*, pp. 96–97.

<sup>83</sup> DF, no. 5714.

<sup>84</sup> DF, no. 5715; K. SALONEN, *Promoting Bishop Hemming*, pp. 97–101.

streets and furnishing them with leaves and grass. Between houses should be hung floral wreaths and leaf branches. This was one of many practical and inexpensive ways to decorate the urban space made possible by the ceremony taking place in summer. Hemming Gadh stressed the importance and unique character of the event for everybody: ‘Such a feast occurs never again in the days of them and us who are now alive, there is no doubt about that’ (*Tolkin högtiid skeer aldrig mer i theres och ware daga som nw leffua; thet är uthen twekan*)<sup>85</sup>.

According to another much shorter memo, most likely written by Pål Scheel, who had recently become the dean, the town council also should participate in preparations: it was expected to ‘reform’ (*reformat*) the streets as well as the bridge over the river<sup>86</sup>. This ‘reform’ consisted most likely of reparation or merely cleaning measures, but we cannot know for sure if Scheel also referred to the damage which had been caused during the sack in 1509 and which perhaps remained visible. The memo also obliged the council to ensure the streets were decorated before the eminent guests arrived in the town. Scheel took for granted that the councillors, too, should walk in the procession during the ceremony. Correspondingly Hemming Gadh’s plan mentions that each *senator urbis* should bear two candles in his hands like the other notable participants<sup>87</sup>. Thus, the inhabitants of the town – high and low alike – were given an important and active role in the celebration.

Feasts of these proportions were rare in late medieval Turku. This one may have made a great impact on the minds of its participants and witnesses. Festivities and rituals tend to have a unifying effect on communities. In premodern societies, people could feel they shared something in common despite social hierarchies and antagonisms<sup>88</sup>. In this case, a great celebration took place less than five years after a devastating raid. The feast may have had a healing effect, as the townspeople would have been able to see their town as intact and garnished.

But there was still another group present, and it posed a threat. Its presence was so evident that neither Hemming Gadh nor Pål Scheel felt it necessary to mention it, but its awaited arrival nevertheless made at least Hans Chonnert worry. He wrote to Pål Scheel requesting he guard his son so that the young

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<sup>85</sup> DF, no. 5715.

<sup>86</sup> DF, no. 5716.

<sup>87</sup> DF, no. 5715, 5716.

<sup>88</sup> Gerard J.M. NIJSTEN, *The Duke and His Towns: The Power of Ceremonies, Feasts, and Public Amusement in the Duchy of Guelders (East Netherlands) in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, [in:] *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, ed. Barbara A. HANAWALT, Kathryn REYERSON (Medieval Studies at Minnesota, vol. 6), Minneapolis 1994, pp. 235–270; Andrew BROWN, *Civic Ceremony and Religion in Medieval Bruges c. 1300–1520*, Cambridge–New York 2011, pp. 16–20.



man would not get into trouble with the noble lords' soldiers<sup>89</sup>. Indeed, Hemming's translation feast meant that the town would once again be visited by a great number of soldiers – not foreign ones this time, as they belonged to the troops of the domestic clerical and worldly elites, but strangers nevertheless. This, combined with heavy drinking during the feast, meant possible tensions and even aggressions.

Preserved sources show that the archbishop of Uppsala as well as the bishops of Strängnäs and Västerås indeed participated in the translation feast<sup>90</sup>. But there is no evidence of either the participation of the regent or his presence in Turku during the feast or even the whole of that year. But we can assume at least the royal bailiff was present, and perhaps also bailiffs from other castles in Finland as well as other members of the nobility. After all, the feast was meant to be shared with ordinary townspeople as well as others who had come to see it. Some may have come from far away.

The feast may have had multi-local character, depending on how one interprets Hemming Gadh's words: 'It will be around one o'clock when everything is finished, for the pope begins the officium between 12 and 13 o'clock and does not finish before between 18 and 19 o'clock'<sup>91</sup>. This can simply mean an estimate for the translation feast in Turku, but also an attempt to link the two rituals together. Unfortunately, Hemming Gadh does not say precisely when the translation ceremony was supposed to begin and what he meant by 'one o'clock'; clearer wording would have helped to understand the above passage more reliably. The manifold references to candles, lamps and fires in his plan could refer to either an early or a late start, but in the summer there was plenty of daylight in Turku, meaning that at least outside the cathedral building, the lights mentioned had more symbolic than practical significance. Moreover, the emphasis on pictures, decorations and other visual delights hints that much was supposed to take place during the daytime. Perhaps, then, Hemming Gadh really meant that the ceremony would be over by 13 o'clock, when the pope had begun his ceremony, most likely aware of the feast in Turku and most likely referring to it during the service.

Of course, it was impossible in medieval circumstances to synchronise the rites so that the pope could have begun the ritual promptly at the same moment, even approximately, that the archbishop ended the ceremony in Turku.

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<sup>89</sup> DF, no. 5726.

<sup>90</sup> *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1504–1514*, ed. Johan A. ALMQUIST (Stockholms stadsböcker från äldre tid, Ser. 2:4), Stockholm 1931, p. 370. Olaus Petri does not mention the bishop of Västerås, but on the other hand, he refers to 'some other persons' who were present together with the archbishop of Uppsala and the bishop of Strängnäs, see *Olai Petri Svenska krönika*, p. 305.

<sup>91</sup> DF, no. 5715: '[...] thet bliffuer wäl klockan widh eth for alt är wthe, thij poffuen beginner pa officium i Rom mellan xij och xij, och är ey wthe for i mellom xvij och xix'.

Yet it was the thought that counted most: the event was supposed to strengthen the mental bond between the remote town in the far North and the centre of Western Christianity.

The multi-local character of the feast was extended by the fact that the translation was celebrated also in Stockholm. The records of the town council of Stockholm have an entry regarding 12 July. That day, the archbishop and the bishops of Strängnäs and Västerås returned from Turku together with a holy relic, namely a piece of Hemming's backbone. The high prelates joined local priests and members of the mendicant orders and walked in a procession through most of the town to the parish church<sup>92</sup>. The ceremony in Stockholm seems not to have been quite so extravagant as the feast in Turku but it, too, gave the townspeople opportunities to participate at least as spectators. Moreover, it helped to form a mental bond with Turku, as these two towns on opposite sides of the sea now shared the relics of the saintly bishop.

#### THE FOURTH PHASE: CONSOLIDATION BEFORE A NEW RAID

Most physical signs of the raid in the urban space would likely have been repaired by, at the latest, the time of the translation feast. However, the most visible building in the town, the cathedral, was still undergoing restoration and remained unfinished when the feast took place. Pål Scheel's correspondence shows that the chapter still needed at least carpenters, bricklayers, a copper roofer, and a bellmaker. The chapter tried to recruit them from Hanseatic towns via their business and clerical contacts<sup>93</sup>. A glazer must have been working in Turku by 1516 at the latest as at that time the cathedral was acquiring a great amount of glass from Lübeck<sup>94</sup>. Regarding the cathedral interiors, there were plans to buy at least one painting from abroad<sup>95</sup>. Moreover, donations were collected, including from outside Finland, in order to cover the costs of the restoration<sup>96</sup>.

There seems also to have occurred at least one major setback during the restoration: in August 1515, Bishop of Strängnäs Matthias wrote to Dean Pål Scheel and mentioned: 'bad news from the town and church of Turku, which causes us sorrow' (*audiuimus malas nouitates de ciuitate et ecclesia Aboensi, de quibus ex intimis dolemus*)<sup>97</sup>. That the bishop mentions both the cathedral and the town in a short letter which otherwise focuses entirely on the restoration

<sup>92</sup> *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1504–1514*, p. 370.

<sup>93</sup> DF, no. 5720, 5726, 5739, 5751, 5818, 5828, 5832, 5834.

<sup>94</sup> DF, no. 5870.

<sup>95</sup> DF, no. 5759.

<sup>96</sup> DF, no. 5828.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

project, hints that an accident had taken place, perhaps during the renovation work. The bishop also asked the dean to send an alms collector who would collect money for the restoration. That is why at least one overseas bishopric participated in the restoration project. Bishop Matthias expressed his own certainty that the collector would not return emptyhanded.

In early 1516, the chapter received good news as Pålval Scheel was informed of the return of the episcopal mitre. It was now back in Uppsala and could be sent to Turku as soon as the sea became free of ice. At last, the archbishop's efforts were rewarded, even though the mitre had been robbed of its most valuable gemstones<sup>98</sup>. However, the peace was once again shadowed by rumours according to which the Danes were planning new attacks against Finland. In May 1516, Bailiff Krister Klasson Horn wrote to Peder Jopsson, the parson of Stockholm, asking him to personally appeal to the regent to send one gunner to Turku Castle. The bailiff needed also malt, which had run out at the castle and was impossible to replenish in the Turku region<sup>99</sup>. It is unknown why the royal bailiff who was directly subordinate to the regent needed an intermediary, especially the parson of Stockholm, for such a logical appeal.

Somewhat later, Pålval Scheel turned to the council of Tallinn and asked them to help the bell caster, whom the chapter had managed to hire, to acquire copper for a new bell<sup>100</sup>. This was one of his last actions for the renovation project, as he died later the same year<sup>101</sup>.

The feared attacks began the following year, taking place on the southern coast of Finland as well as on the archipelago outside Turku<sup>102</sup>. The aggressions must have disturbed opportunities for interregional commerce and worsened living conditions for many in Turku. But as late as summer 1521, the situation in Turku was regarded so positively that the town council of Stockholm asked Bishop Arvidus Kurck, the royal bailiff and the town council of Turku to send to Stockholm all kinds of groceries, one hundred sailors and boatmen as well as carpenters<sup>103</sup>. But the following summer, after Christian II had acquired the Swedish throne, sailing out of the town was prohibited by a royal edict. In November 1521 the king issued a letter formally regretting this measure but explaining that it had been in Turku's best interests. Apparently, the king meant that the period had been too dangerous for commercial trips. In the same letter, he obliged the town council to punish all who came to Turku

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<sup>98</sup> DF, no. 5870.

<sup>99</sup> DF, no. 5881.

<sup>100</sup> DF, no. 6704.

<sup>101</sup> A.-P. PALOLA, *op.cit.*, <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:sks-kbg-000273> [accessed online 16 December 2022].

<sup>102</sup> DF, no. 5945.

<sup>103</sup> DF, no. 6046.

acting on behalf of his opponents<sup>104</sup>. Yet by then, Bishop Arvidus Kurck had changed sides and begun supporting Gustav Vasa's rebellion. That is why, on 5 May 1522, the king's admiral Sören Norby and his fleet attacked Turku. It is assumed this new raid was not as devastating as that of 1509, but the bishop nevertheless fled the town. Later, when he was crossing the sea to become the new archbishop as Gustav Vasa had planned, the ship carrying him sank and he and all other passengers drowned<sup>105</sup>.

#### CONCLUSION: A RECOVERY WITHOUT A HAPPY ENDING

The fourth phase, following the translation feast, was a sort of epilogue for the recovery from the raid of 1509. It is impossible to determine exactly when the recuperation process ended – and for those whose voices we do not hear in the sources, the trauma of the event may have been lifelong. But regarding the urban community in general, it is difficult to determine how long the consequences of a crisis lasted: in the case of Turku, the power struggle between Christian II and Gustav Vasa as well as the raid of 1522 created new problems. Furthermore, regarding later decades, the history books tell of renewed struggles and disasters such as great fires affecting Turku. Thus, the recovery processes started by one crisis overlapped with other, later crises and became mixed up with the new recoveries they required. Of course, this was not characteristic of merely Turku, but something which must have been typical of all premodern urban communities facing periods of hardship.

In the case of Turku, the preserved sources casting light upon the recovery from the raid of 1509 originate mainly from the chapter and noble officeholders. That is why the picture which we can draw based on them may be deceptive. The biggest loss is of course that of records produced by the town council of Turku.

But the source material is clear and sufficient to prove that apparently, no one thought of sending material relief to Turku during those critical first weeks and months. It is even likely that the town council requested no help. None of the preserved documents mentioned the necessity of providing the townspeople with food. Instead of helping them materially, the high authorities focused on the need to protect the whole region against future attacks. Naturally, by keeping society as secure and peaceful as possible, the Swedish leaders would facilitate the recovery process for Turku's surviving inhabitants, as they

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<sup>104</sup> DF, no. 6064.

<sup>105</sup> S. SUVANTO, op.cit., <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:sks-kbg-000027> [accessed online 16 December 2022]; Jason LAVERY, *Reforming Finland: The Diocese of Turku in the Age of Gustav Vasa 1523–1560* (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, vol. 210), Leiden–Boston 2018, pp. 47–48.

protected their lives and what was left of their houses and belongings. Furthermore, several townspeople had fled to the countryside, where many had property as well as kin. Moreover, the promise of economic revival was better with the burghers' business associates unharmed. But all this was no doubt a consequence more of the noblemen's actions than of their expressed goals.

The burgher community seems to have been functioning relatively normally at least from the beginning of 1510 onwards, although we do not know what happened to those who had been taken as prisoners to Copenhagen. The sources dealing with the following years focus on the higher clergy's efforts to retrieve the stolen cult items and have the cathedral renovated.

Bishop Hemming's translation feast in the summer of 1514 was perhaps utilised as a demonstration of strength, unity and healing. Although the renovation of the cathedral was still unfinished, all inhabitants and visitors had then the possibility of seeing the town in an unusually tidy and decorated condition. Furthermore, the visit of the archbishop and two more bishops together with their retinues was something unusual. And Bishop Hemming, who was to be beatified, had above all been a local saint. His translation emphasised at the time the status of Turku and its cathedral. The feast itself displayed several trans-local and multi-local dimensions, creating mental bonds between Turku and other, even distant, places. Although the recovery process lacked any clear ending, it at least had a clear culmination.



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