



Enn Tarvel, *Valge kotka tiiva all. Poola võim eestlaste maal 16.–17. sajandil*, koostanud, toimetanud, järelsõna Marten Seppel, Varrak, Tallinn 2024, 327 pp., ISBN 9789985359563.

Enn Tarvel's posthumously published book sums up a lifetime of research on early modern Estonian history with a special emphasis on the so-called Polish period (1561/1582 to 1625/1629), starting with his dissertation, which was published in Russian under the title *Фольварк, пан и подданный* (*Manor, Lord and Serf*) in 1964; a shortened summary in Estonian appeared in the same year¹. Tarvel soon became an authority in the field of agricultural and peasant history, working in the Estonian Academy of Sciences and the Technical University of Tallinn. In 1993, he became head of the Centre of Baltic Studies at Stockholm University.

The author familiarises his readers with what he calls the least researched episode in Estonian historiography. The same holds true for Polish historiography, though for different reasons. Tarvel points to the influence of German Baltic historians and their dislike for the reinstatement of Catholicism after 1582, as well as the alleged hostility of the Polish rulers against the Livonian nobility, but muses whether these arguments should be valid from an Estonian perspective as well. From the peasant's point of view, Polish politics in Livonia looked different. Tarvel cites the old Estonian saying about 'good old Swedish times' ('vana hea rootsi aeg') and concludes that the Polish reign should not be constructed as the negative opposite.

His narration starts with a brief overview of Polish history from the Middle Ages and takes a closer look at the relations to Prussia and Livonia during the first half of the sixteenth century. Then the author turns to the Livonian War and the dissolution of the Livonian Confederation in 1561. A short outline of the Union of Lublin of 1569 between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania completes the background chapter.

Chapter two begins with the campaign of the Polish-Lithuanian troops between 1577 and 1582 and the changed political landscape that resulted from the military victory – symbolised by the *Constitutiones Livoniae* of 1583, which provided a radically altered administrative structure and reversed the massive allodification of noble estates that had taken place since the beginning of the Livonian War. The third chapter turns to the Estonian towns in Livonia. Tarvel briefly explains their history during the Livonian War, their legal position under the new rulers and presents Stephen Báthory's

¹ ЭНН ТАРВЕЛ, *Фольварк, пан и подданный. Аграрные отношения в польских владениях на территории Южной Эстонии в конце XVI – начале XVII в.*, Таллин 1964 [Enn TARVEL, *Fol'vark, pan i poddannyy. Agrarnyye otnosheniya v pol'skikh vladeniyaх na territorii Yuzhnoy Estonii kontsexvi – nachale XVII v.*, Tallin 1964]; idem, *Adratapulpoegade olukorrad Lõuna-Eestis. XVI sajandi lõpul ja XVII sajandi algul*, Tallinn 1964.

plans for a military colonisation of the new province in the direct aftermath of the war. Administrative reforms and the changed feudal policy after 1582 led to a reconstruction of the manorial system, which was remodelled according to the Polish model (Chapter 4). Especially manors that had once belonged to the Livonian Order and the bishops were transformed into state holdings administered by starosts. Tarvel sketches the development of the manor economy at the end of the sixteenth century, its production and revenues.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the Estonian peasantry under Polish rule. It is the central part of the book. At 88 pages, it represents almost a third of the text. Two lengthy subchapters explain the social stratification of the peasants and the burden imposed on them. Tarvel points out that the labour duties were initially lower than in the first half of the sixteenth century but rose noticeably in the last decade of that century. Payments in grain and livestock rose as well, but were still lower than in Swedish (i.e., Northern) Estonia in the same period. The legal position of the peasantry improved significantly because the state-controlled holdings did not enforce the adscription of peasants to the land. This put pressure on noble estate holders who were seldom able to enforce the return of peasants who had left their farms. Still, Tarvel quotes the example of Heinrich von Tiesenhausen, who 'sold' peasants from his Livonian estate at the end of the sixteenth century for approximately half the price of a horse (p. 212). In his remarkable subchapter on political attitudes, the author points out that Livonian nobles warned King Stephen of Poland in 1583, just like Charles of Södermanland (future King Charles IX of Sweden) in 1601, about the dangers of a peasant uprising if the 'strict rule' of the feudal lords were loosened. Tarvel underlines again that the historiographic tradition of constant worsening of the peasants' position under Polish rule, which would have led them to warmly greet the Swedish reign in the seventeenth century, needs to be reevaluated.

The sixth chapter deals with the church policy of Stephen Báthory and Sigismund III Vasa, the Counter-Reformation in Livonia and the activities of the Jesuit Order in the province. Tarvel points out that religious attitudes of the peasants were rather pragmatic, so that the Jesuit reports on their missionary endeavours quickly lost their enthusiastic tone. Nevertheless, the Jesuit school in Tartu offered education not only for young German burghers or Polish nobles, but for Estonians as well. A short chapter on the Polish-Swedish wars in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, from Charles of Södermanland's first Livonian campaign in 1601 to the capitulation of Tartu in 1625, concludes the book. An afterword by Marten Seppel informs readers about Enn Tarvel's scholarly career and his importance for the study of the Polish period in Estonian history.

Tarvel's informative and well-written book is an important contribution, not just because it investigates a neglected and widely misrepresented episode in the history of the 'Baltic World', as Matti Klinge referred to this region². His focus on the history of the peasant population corresponds well with recent historiographic trends rediscovering 'history from below' even in the early modern period. Thus, *Under the Wings of*

² Matti KLINGE, *The Baltic World*, Helsinki 1995.

the White Eagle deserves a wide readership, and funding for a translation would surely be well spent.

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