Archaeology and history

Two different views of the past

Georg Haggrén

The aim of both archaeology and history is the research of the human past. The difference between these two disciplines derives from the source materials: historians use written sources while archaeologists concentrate on physical remains. Historical sources are committed to dates while archaeological material is basically connected to spatial origin. This basic difference explains why historians and archaeologists have difficulties in understanding each other. The number of archaeological findings has risen very fast. On the ground of this material it is possible to make convincing analyses of the past on different levels, not only of single finds or sites but on a regional or even global level too. Today archaeology is challenging results made by the historical research. By combining the sources and methods of these two disciplines historical archaeology can offer a much more holistic and thorough view, a deeper understanding of the past than either archaeology or history alone.

Introduction

Archaeology and history are disciplines with a common aim to research the human past. However, during the most of the 20th century research based on methods of both archaeology and history has been quite rare. This was not the case before that. On the contrary, from the 17th into the 19th century the research of the past included methods and sources of several disciplines.

In Finland, the first archaeological excavations on a medieval monument were made in 1867 by Karl A. Bomansson (1827–1906) on the site of the Franciscan convent of Kökar on the Åland Islands. In 1870 he became director-general of the Senate's Archives, later known as the National Archives of Finland. Reinhold Hausen (1850-1942), who in 1883 followed Bomansson as the director of the archives and published most of the medieval written sources

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concerning Finland, also conducted extensive excavations on the sites of medieval monuments, such as the Bridgettine monastery in Nådendal (Naantali) and the bishop's castle of Kustö (Kuusisto). Johannes Reinhold Aspelin (1842–1915), known as the founder of scientific archaeology in Finland, was also employed in the Senate's Archives. Like their Swedish contemporary Hans Hildebrand (1842–1913), Aspelin, Bomansson and Hausen valued and used both archaeological and written sources in their research. (Gardberg 1984, 65–67; Härö 1984, 30–32; Lilius 2000, 52.)

The work of Aspelin, Bomansson, Hausen and Hildebrand reflect this centuries-old bidisciplinary approach. This interaction between the disciplines has been underlined by Hans Andersson and Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen (Andersson 1993; Taavitsainen 1998, 6). However, archaeology and history seldom were treated as equals. As a discipline archaeology was treated like a kind of a little brother to history by scholars of the past. Both historical monuments and written sources such as medieval charters or Icelandic sagas were accepted and analyzed when researching the past. Sometimes this multidisciplinary research happened at the cost of source criticism. An example of this is the 17th century antiquarian Olof Rudbeckius, who tried to write an imposing history of Swedish past. (Eriksson 1998–2000; Härö 1984, 17.)

The differentiation of the disciplines

In the late 19th and early 20th century archaeology and history began to differentiate from one another. Specialization in one discipline and distinct and exclusive disciplinary orthodoxies developed. For the historians the aim was to find the historical truth and avoid any speculation or interpretation of narrative sources, works of arts or ancient monuments. A pioneer in the modern historical writing was German Leopold Ranke (1795–1886) famous for his motto "Wie ist es eigentlich gewesen", in English: "How things actually were." In the early 20th century historians began more and more to emphasize the importance of positivism and an extremely thorough source criticism. Any interpretations beyond the actual words in the written sources were to be avoided. Among the Swedish historians the Weibull brothers and the Lund school of history became famous for their source positivism.(cf. Härö 1984, 14–19; Torstendahl 1964.)

At the same time archaeologists began to concentrate more on prehistory at the expense of the Middle Ages and the early modern era. When publishing the history of archaeology in Finland in 1968 C. A. Nordman systematically ignored research concerned with the Middle Ages (Nordman 1968; Taavitsainen 1998, 6). As a result, for most of

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the 20th century historians had no place in the research of prehistory, and on the other hand archaeologists stayed away from researching historical periods. An exception was classical archaeology which managed to preserve multidisciplinarity. Soon the early historical period became a lacuna between these two academic disciplines. Especially this was the case in Finland, where written sources older than 1320s are extremely rare. However, the beginning of the Middle Ages in Finland was traditionally counted from the 1150s onwards. Soon, the continuity between the prehistory and historical times was lost and the Middle Ages were on their way to become a new kind of dark age, a grey zone between the Viking Age and the early modern era, a grey zone between archaeological and historical research.

As a result, at least in Finland, during the most of the 20th century archaeology and history were almost completely differentiated. The historians used ancient monuments and archaeological finds only when they need something to illustrate history. On the other hand, understanding and analyzing prehistory was solely a task for the archaeologists. Beginning from 1155 AD, or the end of the so called Crusade Period the historians took responsibility for the research. In this kind of academic climate the archaeologists hardly had any possibilities to interpret the Medieval Period, but with a few exceptions they did not care about it either.

The way out of the schism

In the late 20th century, beginning from the 1970s and 1980s a more holistic view began slowly to develop in the research of the past again. Of course, already before that there were some individuals who tried to combine archaeological and historical records, but in contrast to the mainstream there were not many of them. In Finland the new pioneers were art historians who saw the possibilities of combining several disciplines. Most important among them were Knut Drake (1927–2013) and C. J. Gardberg (1926–2010). Drake became acquainted with medieval archaeology when studying in Lund in the early 1960s. At the same time the academic discipline of Medieval Archaeology had been founded in the University of Lund. The pioneer in Lund was archaeologist-art historian Eric Cinthio (1921–) who later on, in 1969, got a personal professorship in medieval archaeology. Finally, in 1982 his appointment in Lund was changed to an ordinary professorship.

During the long scholarly separation of history from archaeology during the 20th century the archaeological methods developed and became much more scientific. For example the field work on historical sites was not only uncovering masonry, sketching structures and collecting finds any more. Beginning from 1970s in medieval archaeology a great leap took place when the contextual

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method based on stratigraphy was launched by Edward C. Harris. He was soon followed especially by the archaeologists excavating medieval urban sites containing complicated structures and thick cultural layers. As a result, from now on the chronological analysis of the archaeological record was on much firmer ground than before.

In the late 20th century medieval archaeology – and nowadays also a wider historical archaeology – has succeeded in establishing its position somewhere between the disciplines of archaeology and history. Today, in the early 21st century, we are heading to a more open-minded view when researching the past. The historical archaeologists try to use as wide source materials as possible … or use the source pluralistic method Janken Myrdal has formulated (Myrdal 2007).

Despite this growing cross-disciplinarity there are certain fundamental differences between archaeology and history. These differences complicate the discussion and interaction between these disciplines.

The focus of the research

Historians use written sources in their research, while archaeologists analyze physical remains. When researching the Middle Ages the historians often have a lack of sources. The medieval archaelogists have long ago been able to offer complementary information of this period and in a smaller scale of the early modern era too. This kind of relationship has brought on an idea of medieval archaeology as a discipline complementing the proper research of history. (See Andersson 1993; Andrén 1997, 40–41.)

For historians the focus of the research is always on human beings. The research objects are: 1. The human past 2. Humans as social creatures and 3. Human relationships or relationships between humans. (see Florén & Ågren 1998, 14.) On the other hand, the archaeologists focus on physical remains produced and left by humans but not forgetting the humans themselves. To get the archaeologists better involved in the discussion we should make an addition to the research objects: 4. The reasons and effects of the human activities.

In historical archaeology both written sources and physical remains are used, but in addition to history various scientific methods are exploited too. The scientific methods, such as dendrochronology, osteology, palaeobotany, are relevant in all archaeology but the well preserved organic materials make them extremely important for the medieval and early modern archaeology.

Date and place in historical and archaeological research

Dating characterizes historical research. A written source can usually

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be dated precisely. One of the first tasks in a source critical analysis of a historical record is the dating of the source. A lot of sources have a precise date written on them and for the majority of the rest we can usually find out at least the year when it was written. Most medieval charters or modern letters belong to the first group. Sometimes historical events have succeeded each other so close that while interpreting the sources the researcher needs certain dates or even hours. On the other hand, for example tax registers, cadastral records or trade accounts reflect results of a longer process or data from annual or seasonal events.

The spatial extent of a historical record or the things and places mentioned in the record is far more complicated than the dating. Some of the sources consist of information of the location where they have been authored but there are other spatial dimensions too. What and where is the place the text concerns? Sometimes it is very difficult to identify the locality even if its name is mentioned in the text. The new castle of Wartholm in Nyland in Finland mentioned twice in the 1390s is a good example of this kind of problem. In this case, we do know the name of the castle but we don't know where it was located. (Salminen 1998, 460–463) Slightly different kind of problems in historical record represents the charter authored by Bishop Magnus I and dated 7 November 1295 "in Custu" (REA 17). A couple of decades later there was a bishop's castle in Kustö but what kind of place it was in 1295? What was actually meant by this "Kustö"? Was it a manor? … or already a bishop's castle? Or did the dating take place on a ship in a harbor near the island of Kustö. Similarly, the precise locating of a certain peasant farm or an urban craftsman's plot mentioned in an early tax record often is quite challenging.

The source material of the archaeologists consists of finds, monuments and other structures, cultural layers, landscape among other source materials and is always connected to the place. A spatial or contextual element is a common character for all these sources. Landscapes, settlement sites, activity areas, structures, cultural layers and find contexts or distributions are all elementarily spatial phenomena. The archaeologists document these phenomena's relation to the space and place as precise as possible. This work is often rather mechanical routine. The context or place of finding is extremely important when analyzing the archaeological finds. On the other hand, for the archaeologists the dating and especially a precise absolute dating are much harder and, in practice, usually almost impossible to achieve.

Historical sources

Medieval written records concerning Scandinavia and especially Finland are scarce. Practically all of them are published in the case of

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Finland, and a great deal in Scandinavia too. New ”finds” of medieval written sources are rare. The register of Swedish Diplomatarium consists information of more than 40.000 medieval charters. From Finland there are less than 8000 charters, note books or short notes dated before 1530. More than 90 % of the Finnish material is published, most of them in ten volumes edited by Reinhold Hausen between 1881 and 1935 (BFH I; FMU I–VIII; REA).

The written sources from medieval Finland are fragmentary, but as a result of King Gustaf Vasa's thoroughly controlled bailiff administration beginning from about 1540 systematical series of records from Sweden and Finland have survived. There are cadastral records, tithes records, fines records and later on court records too. (cf. Brunius 2010.) It is possible to use these records retrospectively or retrogressively. Later on the number of survived written sources increases remarkably during every century, making an almost exponential curve.

In Finland, with Turku as an exception, the number of the archaeological find material from historical times is rather limited, but it is increasing quickly. Before 1990 there were practically no finds from medieval rural sites – except a couple of manors. Today the picture is rather different and there is lots of archaeological record from medieval villages. The largest archaeological collections are in the National Museum and in the Museum Center in Turku. In the latter the number of cumulated finds from 1881 to 1997 was about 40000 find numbers. After that there has been a remarkable increase of archaeological find material, and between 1998 and 2010 about 60 000 new find numbers has been recorded. (Pihlman 2010.) Today there is a continuously increasing number of new excavations, documentation and finds, not only in Turku but everywhere in Finland. However, it is still hard, often impossible to reach reliable large overviews based on the medieval archaeological material. Usually the conclusions made by archaeologists are based on a small number of cases or finds, often on one single case study. As a result of this, one always has to keep in mind that new finds can soon change the conclusions or the interpretations in archaeology. On the other hand, possibilities for research and conclusions are growing every year.

Historical maps are a source material somewhere between written sources and archaeological record. Until recently old maps were mostly used by cultural and human geographers. Maps are source material which was for a long while neglected among the historians. Only the old maps of historical towns made a major exception. For the historians the maps were not any ”real” written sources. On the other hand historical maps were too recent source material for prehistorical archaeology. Like most

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of the written sources the maps are usually well-dated. However, they consist of information from different times. The maps are always closely related to the place. In matter of fact they consist of a strong spatial element like most of the sources used by the archaeologists.

Land surveyor Hans Hansson mapped several hamlets in the Parish of Tenala (Fi Tenhola) in 1647. One of

Figure 1. Kårböle, a single farm or a former hamlet in Tenhola parish, Uusimaa (Swe. Nyland), Finland, on a map drawn by Hans Hansson in 1647. In the NW one can still see that a meadow as well as some fields of a deserted medieval hamlet called Gullböle are still in use by the neighboring hamlets. (Finnish National Archives)

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the maps shows a single farm called Kårböle (Finnish National Archives: Lantmäteristyrelsens arkiv: Geografiska jordeböcker B Ia Tenala, p. 25.). Fifty years earlier there was another farm in Kårböle but it had been deserted afterwards. The map visualizes the world of the peasants making their living on the fields, the meadows, the mills and on the sea. The agricultural landscape shown in the maps reveals layers of medieval settlement history too. In this map (fig. 1.), in northwest there still are visible some small fields illustrating the site of a medieval deserted hamlet called Gullböle. While using retrogressive method, from this map made in 1647 it is possible to peel out older layers of the cultural landscape and human activities in Kårböle (see Karsvall 2013).

Macrohistory and microhistory

For historians large, systematically produced series of written sources offer good possibilities for a research on the macro level. The historians are able to make quantitative overviews of large regions or the whole country. Silver tax records from 1571 offer a good example from the macro level. Silver tax was a possession tax collected by the Swedish Crown with an aim to redeem the Castle of Älvsborg back from the Danes. The fortunes of all peasants, burghers and priests were invented. These records have special value giving a unique view to stables, sheds and piggeries in every corner of the realm. Already in the 1870's Hans Forssell employed this possibility when he published an economic historical overview of Sweden in 1571 (Forssell 1872). Archaeologists will never be able to get this kind of information of the animal husbandry in every farm in a whole country.

On the other hand, a deep analyze of detailed source materials like court records, inventories and inspection records makes it possible to do micro historical research. Inspired of the French Annales School these possibilities brought about a rise of microhistory and research of the history of everyday life in the late 1980s. A classic example of the micro historical research is Emanuel Le Roi Ladurie's Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village, 1294–1324 (1980). It was published in French in 1975, after which it was soon translated to various languages, including Swedish and Finnish. Medieval written sources similar to those Ladurie was able to use have not survived in Scandinavia but different kinds of court records dating to the early modern era offer great possibilities for microhistorical research here in the north too. In these records these are lots of extensive but at the same time very detailed descriptions especially in the cases concerning severe crimes or capital offences.

Trustworthy interpretations on a macro level need a large number of records. In archaeology there usually is a less than desireable source base

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for research. The record is seldom large enough to offer a solid ground for reliable and justified conclusions. On the other hand, on the micro level, archaeology can offer a great deal to researchers. It is possible to make deep analyses of a single medieval farm or a specific urban plot or household. Based on one well-documented case study the archaeologists can make micro archaeological research of great value like Katalin Schmidt Sabo has made in the case of a medieval tenant farm in Kyrkheddinge in Scania (Schmidt Sabo 2001).

In some exceptional cases with a long history of field work and large archaeological record the archaeologist might already now be able to make a thorough work of research comparable to the best history books written about larger societies such as medieval towns. In Scandinavia we have such an exception in Lund, a kind of pioneer in medieval archaeological research in Sweden. It is a place where so much archaeology has been done that it has already been possible to write a history of the medieval town on the ground of the archaeological material (Carelli 2012). The largest archaeological rescue projects can also produce extensive historical overviews when the authors have had enough time to analyze their results and compare them to the older both archaeological and historical record. An impressive example of this kind of research offers a recent book of a small medieval town of Skänninge in Sweden (Hedvall & al 2013).

In history a large part of the sources can be connected to individuals. Many of the written sources, such as letters or court records or wills tell about individual human beings. In archaeology this is very exceptional. Even if the archaeologist is able to analyze a site on a micro level hardly any finds have such a dimension that the object could be identified as belongings of a certain individual. One can sample and analyze archaeological finds but on the ground of the archaeological record it is almost impossible to know who has used a tool, who has emptied a glass or who has lost his keys. In the best cases we can imagine who have used the finds or made the structures. We can only connect the archaeological record to a household or a society. The majority of the finds are anonymous and they will always remain so. Even a body found from a graveyard usually stays anonymous even if we can see what she has been wearing or what he has been eating at his last supper. Rare cases where a researcher can identify the individuals behind the archaeological record reveal wide possibilities for a discussion between archaeologists and historians.

The dating of the archaeological source material

In contrast to historical research, in the archaeology exact dating is extremely difficult, a precision to a certain year is nearly impossible, and even to a certain decennium is a ra-

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rity. Dating on the ground of finds, traditional radiocarbon dating as well as AMS-dating is far from precise. Here we have a fundamental difference between archaeology and historical research based on written sources.

However, quite paradoxically, one of the first aims of the archaeological research is the dating of the research objects. Usually the archaeologists have to settle for relative dating instead of absolute dating. Today, in contextual archaeology, relative dating based on stratigraphy – on contexts, structures and relations between them – is routine. From some of the contexts we can get one or several dating based on well datable finds (coins, clay pipes etc) or scientific dating (^{14}C, AMS, dendrochronology etc) and afterwards it is possible to make typological dating on the ground of structures or finds, based on analogies. All this helps much when analyzing and structuring the past. However, we have to keep in mind that one stratigrafical phase might represent or cover some years – or a couple of centuries. Luckily, the possibilities for more precise dating have recently increased – and will surely increase in the future too.

In the late 20th and early 21st century dendrochronology has made (quite) accurate dating of heavy wooden structures like timbers and planks possible. This has been extremely useful when dating buildings and wrecks. For example Markus Hiekkanen has managed to make a chronology of the building of stone churches in Finland in the Middle Ages (Hiekkanen 1994; idem 2007). Similarly Titta Kallio-Seppä and Liisa Seppänen have successfully used dendrochronological dating when analyzing the archaeological record from medieval Turku and early modern Oulu (Seppänen & Kallio-Seppä 2014). Dating of the structures has also helped the dating of the contexts under – or above – the dated structures. Quite recently a bayesian model dating combined to a systematic wiggle matching of AMS-/radiocarbon dating of a set of stratigraphical units has made it possible to get very accurate dating of contexts in a small excavation in the area of the Aboa Vetus Museum in Turku. In this case there was not enough dendrochronological material for the dating of the structures and contexts but the bayesian model dating and systematic wiggle matching made it possible to get valuable new information of the early urbanization of Turku. (Oinonen et al 2013.) Even in this case the dating is far from that of the written record (fig. 2).

Sometimes the archaeologists are able to find closed contexts. Such time capsules are rare exceptions among the archaeological record. One example of such closed context consist if great fires which have produced distinct fire layers. Even if great fires have been usual in medieval towns the archaeologists seldom

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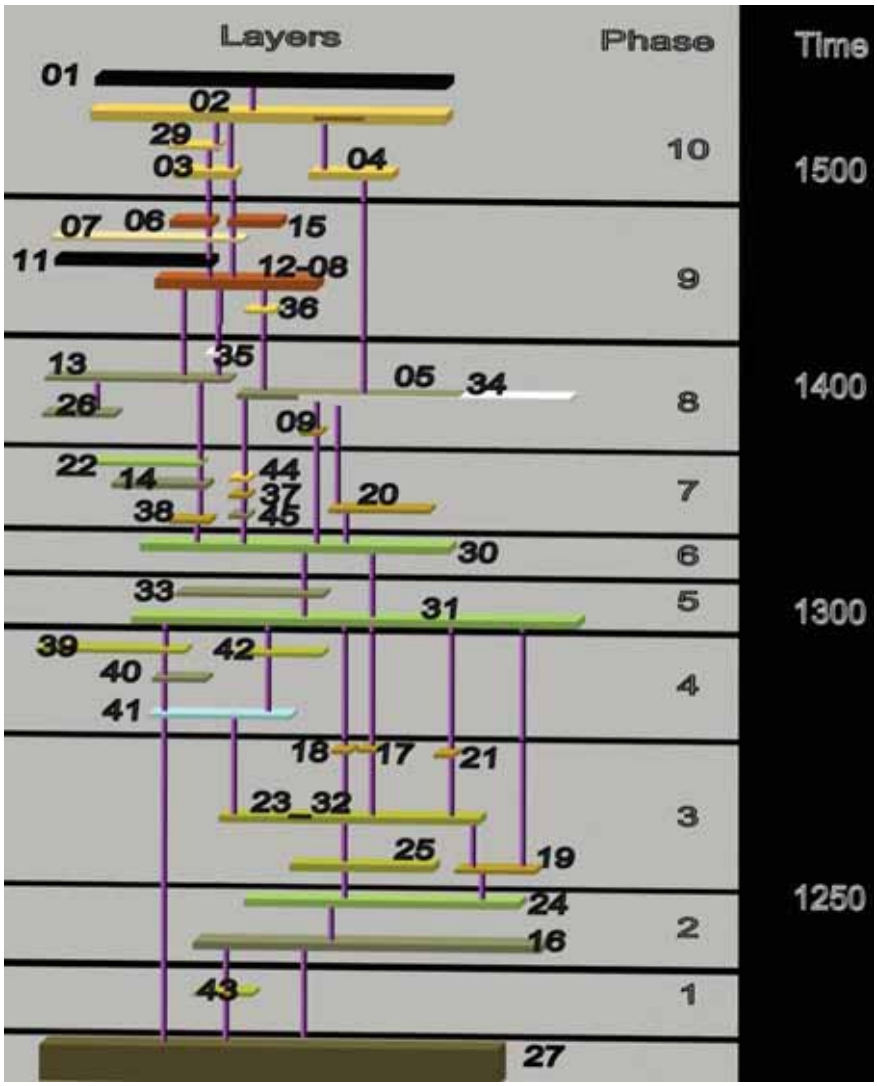

Figure 2. By combining the stratigraphical excavation methods and a wiggle matching of a series of AMS-dating it has been possible to make a very detailed stratigraphic sequence on a small scale excavation in Aboa Vetus Museum, Turku. This sequence produces detailed and rather precisely dated information of the early urbanization of Turku in the late 13th and early 14th century. Figure: Kari Uotila (Oinonen et al 2013).

find well preserved fire layers. For example in Turku they are rare even if only during the 16th century large areas of the town were destroyed in more than ten fires (Nikula 1987, 85–86). In Bergen in Norway there have been nine great fires between the 12th century and 1955. Several of them are visible as distinct fire layers deep under the present surface. (Dunlop 1998; Hansen 1998). Some hastily destructed buildings,

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such as Otepää Castle in Estonia or Kajaani Castle in Northern Finland, offer similar possibilities. One of the best examples is Pompei, the famous Roman town which fell offer for a volcanic eruption on 24th August 79 AD.

Another kind of time capsule consist of certain battle fields where a short campaign has produced plenty of objects on the ground. Especially today, while we can use metal detectors it sometimes is possible to figure out different events and phases before, during and after the battle. Most of the battle fields are destructed or at least more or less contaminated because of modern activities. Some examples like Battle of Little Bighorn in Montana on 25-26th June 1876 (Fox 1993) or the Danish campaign during the Seven Year's War of the North in 1560s on Getaryggen in Sweden in 1567 have shown a remarkable record connected to the short battle on the area (Engkvist et al 2103).

Burials represent also narrow time capsules. In the Middle Ages the Church monopolized or at least tried to control burials. Normally most of the medieval burials were made in churchyards and in some cases in churches. There are some exceptions like mass graves, temporary graves, half-Christian graves and graves made for deceased far from church yards. Grave goods are rare and it often is hard to date the remains of the body. In some rare cases there are datable finds, such as coins. Only occasionally it is possible to find the identity of the human remains that archaeologists have excavated – especially when they hardly ever excavate graves linked to well-preserved tombstones with detailed data of the deceased. There are also ethical reasons why archaeologists prefer to excavate anonymous graves. Practically the only exceptions are ancient graves of members of elite, such as kings and queens or famous noble men and women. The modern DNA technology has opened new possibilities but the use of them is still expensive and far from common. In the future we probably can expect more cooperation between archaeologists and historians in the field of the archaeology of burials.

The best examples of archaeological time capsules are probably shipwrecks. Most of them are results of abrupt accidents when a ship has sunken after running aground, in a furious storm or during a naval battle. Medieval wrecks are often hard to date but they still represent a short incident and often reveal much information not only of the ship itself but also concerning navigation, trade and economy not forgetting the small society made by the crew. For example a small cargo ship shipwrecked probably in the 1280s near the island of Egelskär in the TurkuArchipelago has given invaluable information of the Baltic trade and trading network during

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those early days (Wessman 2007). "Prince's ship", a Swedish man-of-war lost in about 1525 in the Archipelago of Stockholm is another example of important wreck finds. This still unidentified carrack has probably been part of King Gustaf Wasa's navy. (Adams & Rönnby 1996.)

Many early modern shipwrecks have proved to be extremely valuable for not only archaeological but also historical research too. Large men-of-war were miniature societies full of information of the everyday life of their own time. The Mary Rose, the flagship of King Henry VIII sunk in 1545 not far away from Southampton. The Wasa, the flagship of King Gustaf II Adolf shipwrecked in 1628 on its maiden voyage in the harbor of Stockholm. A half century later, in 1676 another Swedish flagship, the Stora Kronan, exploded during a naval battle near the island of Öland. All these large men-of-war have turned out as enormous and invaluable sources for the research of the past (see for example Gardiner ed. 2005). We should not forget wrecks of some well-preserved merchant ships from the 17th and 18th century either. Good examples of them are the Dutch merchant ships the St. Mikael and Vrouw Maria. The former sunk in the Finnish Archipelago in 1747 and the latter met the same fate in October 1771. (Ehanti & al 2012) In all these cases it has been possible to combine a unique and extremely informative wreck with the written sources concerning the ship while it still sailed and when it sunk. In the case of these wrecks the archaeological record has proved to be from a certain date which opens a fruitful co-operation and discussion with historians.

Possibilities of the archaeological research

Two case studies from Finland show some of the possibilities of historical archaeology. Jutikkala in Sääksmäki and Laukko in Vesilahti were among the few medieval manors in the inland of Finland. Jutikkala was first mentioned in 1340 and according to the written sources it was a noble manor in the middle of the 15th century at the latest (REA 100). On the other hand, Laukko is known from 1416 when Johan Anundsson, the Archdeacon of Turku Cathedral donated one farm from the village to the Altar of St John (REA 362). Laukko was probably the birthplace of Arvid Kurck, the last Catholic Bishop of Turku. The written record reveals some of the medieval owners of these two manors but not much else. On these both sites archaeological surveys and excavations have been conducted under several seasons resulting a huge amount of new information. Now we are able to reconstruct long settlement continuity from the Viking Age, get some hints of the local Christianiazation, an idea of the formation of the manorial properties as well as an

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overview of the material culture of the nobility in the late Middle Ages. But with an exception of a coin hoard from the first decade of the 16th century found from Laukko, the archaeological record is hardly able to produce any precise dating. (Haggrén et al 2002; Uotila (ed) 2000.)

Medieval written sources often stay on a relatively general level and on upper class contexts. Only seldom historians are able to get a large amount of detailed information from one farm or urban plot – or from a single person belonging to ordinary people. Luckily there are exceptions which have made the microhistory possible.

Archaeological excavations produce often rich, varied and detailed research material. On the ground of this record it is possible to make deeper analyses of the research object. Typical examples of them are ruins of a house or stratigraphical contexts. The archaeologists have always to keep in mind the dating problems while interpreting the results. There are often ostensible differences between the archaeological and historical record. We can illustrate this problem by a simple but telling example. In a 17th century written inventory record after a deceased inhabitant there might be only one stone ware jug listed, while the archaeologists find pieces of a dozen such vessels when they excavate the site. This apparent contrast is easy to explain when we keep in mind that the inventory record represents only one year while the find material might have been cumulated during several decades. Quite naturally, when a vessel has broken the people have acquired a new one.

The aims and purposes of the research of the past

Today the historians are much more open minded than their positivistic predecessors were a hundred years ago. Historical research is not only some source critical analyze of the written sources any more. The aim is to research the human past. There are several kinds of historical research and in contrary to the positivism of the early 20th century many of them are based on far reaching interpretations. The history of mentalities and the oral history typical for Africa are telling examples of new branches of history. In historical archaeology we can employ the methods of the modern historians too.

Swedish historians Anders Florén and Stellan Dahlgren (1996, 75–76, 285–288) have stressed the value of making questions to the past: ”Fråga det förflutna!”, Make questions to the past! According to them we can divide the research objects on three groups and make our questions to them. Single events? State of affairs? and Progression/development? It is possible to make these questions – and to get answers – on the ground of archaeology in a similar way as on the ground of history.

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Archaeology and history have their own strengths and weaknesses, but historical archaeologists can make profit of the both disciplines. When combining archaeological and historical data one have to keep in mind the basic differences between them: the historical data is closely related to the time – and often to individual human beings too – while the archaeological data is always spatial and usually quite anonymous. Contextual methods on archaeological excavations, modern dating methods and new scientific openings, like ancient DNA, help us in combining archaeology and history and open relevant discussion between archaeologists and historians. A dialogue between history and archaeology is invaluable – it opens fruitful ways to the research and interpret the past.

Most fertile ground for the discussion between archaeologists and historians is there where the date and the place meet each other. In recent times the dating possibilities in archaeology have increased remarkably. As a result the possibilities for interdisciplinary discussion have increased too.

Combining methods and sources of these two different disciplines it is possible not only to achieve a more diverse and trustworthy information of the research object or the actual phenomenon we are interested in but also to get an overview with less gaps. History and archaeology offer two different perspectives to the past but combining them we can get a more comprehensive view to the past.

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Georg Haggrén
PhD, docent in historical archaeology.
Archaeology, University of Helsinki.
E-mail: ghaggren@mappi.helsinki.fi

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