

Seppo Aalto, Sofia Gustafsson & Juha-Matti Granqvist,
Linnoituskaupunki: Helsinki ja Viapori 1721–1808
[Fästningsstaden: Helsingfors och Sveaborg 1721–
1808] (Helsinki: Minerva kustannus Oy, 2020). 640 pp.

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The book *Linnoituskaupunki: Helsinki ja Viapori 1721–1808* (and the identical Swedish language version *Fästningsstaden: Helsingfors och Sveaborg 1721–1808*) tells the story of Helsinki and Sveaborg fortress. Seppo Aalto, Sofia Gustafsson and Juha-Matti Granqvist have co-written the book and this joint effort makes the book a coherent, well written study. Aalto has written the first three chapters focusing on the early years before the Russo-Swedish war 1741–43. The fourth chapter, illustrating the years of war, is written by all three scholars and the chapters 5–13 are co-written by Gustafsson and Granqvist. The book includes several pictures and maps, and it is introducing people, houses, construction works and landscapes of the time.

In 1721, Helsinki was ruined by the Great Northern War, but during the eighteenth century the town grew together with the Swedish fortress of Sveaborg (in Finnish: Viapori, now Suomenlinna). Sweden started to build the fortress in 1748, after the catastrophic Russo-Swedish war of 1741–43, and Sveaborg became the greatest building project of the time in Europe, creating the twin city Helsinki-Sveaborg. This book tells the story of this twin city from the time when the first stones of the great fortress were laid until the capitulation of the fortress in 1808 during the Finnish war. The book is based on research conducted in several projects at the University of Helsinki, and it is written by three historians whose expertise is military history or eighteenth-century history. Although the focus is put on the military fortress, the book draws on perspectives from social history to study the town and its people. The military-political background is explained, which means that a reader does not need profound previous knowledge on the subject to get something from the book.

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The volume starts from the reconstruction of the town, illustrating the importance of the timber industry and the Swedish mercantilist politics that set the boundaries in the business. Here, Aalto builds his study on the research done by Markku Kuisma, but he has also consulted original documents from the Helsinki town magistrate archives which shed light on the years following the Russian occupation. Aalto stresses the importance of export trade, and especially the timber industry, which tied Helsinki with both local and global politics.

The Russian occupation in 1742 had significant impact on the history of Helsinki. A few years after the war, in July 1747, Sweden sent a commission whose aim was to search for suitable places for new fortresses. Later that year the decision was made to construct a new fortress to protect Helsinki on the rocky islands just outside the town, controlling the sea route to town. The construction started already the next spring, and during the coming years – especially in the summer time – thousands of men worked in Helsinki on building Sveaborg.

Gustafsson and Granqvist illustrate meticulously not only how the enormous building project was carried out, but they also direct the spotlight on the individuals who enabled this massive work. They balance carefully between administration, politics, and economic history, discussing not only the construction work but demonstrating how this military effort affected the everyday life in Helsinki. The investigation illuminates how the construction of Sveaborg especially favoured the local merchants who were selling goods to the Swedish army, and subsequently invested the money they earned in purchasing land and ships to extend their trade to European port cities.

Gustafsson and Granqvist also include the story of minor actors in this vast play of building a fortress. This is particularly illustrative in how they analyze the civilian's life and how the Sveaborg fortress construction project affected everyday life in Helsinki-Sveaborg. The authors point to colliding interests of the local craft masters and the military personnel, who were entitled to produce goods that were normally controlled by the craft privileges. At the same time, wealthy merchants spread their power around the town by building country houses and purchasing estates where they built sawmills, porcelain, glass and tile factories, which produced goods that were sold to Sveaborg. This resulted in that the outskirts of Helsinki were turned into industrial or proto-industrial zones. The new fortress changed the Helsinki city landscape, too, as merchants whose wealth was based on the trade with the Sveaborg military administration built their new stone town houses in the center of Helsinki.

The greatest merit of this book is the combination of the history of Helsinki and Sveaborg. Typically, in local histories, the focus is on the town. Helsinki was not the only eighteenth-century town with a fortress nearby. As historians in Maria

Sjöberg (ed.), *Sammanflätat – Civilt och militärt i det tidigmoderna Sverige* (Uppsala: Historiska institutionen, 2009) have demonstrated, the civilian and military elements in early modern towns were intertwined and the lines between them blurred. Building on source material from both the civil and the military sides, Gustafsson and Granqvist can show how both towns, the civilian Helsinki and military Sveaborg, were dependent on each other.

The book includes both a person and place index, which is a great support for the reader. Many of the key actors of eighteenth-century Helsinki are to be found there, and are still quite silent: for example, we still know very little about one of the richest men of the time Thomas Mattheiszen, or the Clayhills, who spread their family dynasty around the Baltic Sea. Among these actors, numerous women and children participated actively in the Sveaborg building project: not only several daughters and widows of the prominent merchants of Helsinki are named and studied by the authors, but also different social groups that worked and lived their daily lives by the fortress project. In the early nineteenth century, a contemporary Swedish officer once said that the Sveaborg fortress was full of children and flower beds so that the place resembled Noah's ark. I hope that *Linnoituskaupunki: Helsinki ja Viapori 1721–1808* will inspire new studies especially on individuals and their experiences, illustrating the inseparable civilian and military lives in early modern and eighteenth-century fortress towns.

Sveaborg was not the only fortification project which took place during the eighteenth century in Finland or nearby areas. At the same time when Swedes built Sveaborg, Russians constructed the so-called Suvorov's fortifications in what nowadays is Eastern Finland and which then was the border between Sweden and Russia. Similar local interaction between the civilians and the military personnel as in Helsinki-Sveaborg could be found in Lappeenranta (Villmanstrand), for example, as well as in other Nordic countries. By comparing particularly Swedish and Russian fortification projects in eighteenth-century Finland new information not only about military history but also about local history and the history of everyday people and their experiences could be highlighted, as *Linnoituskaupunki: Helsinki ja Viapori 1721–1808* demonstrates clearly.