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Building of Estonian Wooden Manor Houses During the 18th and First Half of the 19th Century. Role and Meaning of Wood and the Reception of Architectural Theories in the Local Architecture

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When thinking about the architectural heritage of the former Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire – modern-day Estonia and Latvia – one envisions a dense network of thousands of manorial ensembles that once covered the landscape. While the Baltic manor houses have long been a subject of interest for art and architectural historians, the research on the topic has been predominantly focused on the most architecturally significant or noteworthy buildings. Many aspects of this built heritage, including lesser-known manors and construction practices, remain up till this day underexplored.

On the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, where coniferous forests abound, timber has been a fundamental building material of the local nobility's housing construction since the earliest settlements, having even gained dominance in certain periods. According to the latest research on the topic (Pärn, "Wooden Manor Houses in Estonia 1700-1850: From Archaic Traditions to Modern Ideas", *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 2022), the material was not only predominately used during the Swedish Era (1561-1701), as proved by ethnologist Gustav Ränk, but also during the so-called "Golden Era" of Baltic manorial architecture. This recent find challenges previous assumptions about the exclusive use of masonry in prestigious buildings and underscores the need for further investigation into the topic of Baltic wooden manor houses.

As the beginning of the 18th century marks the rise of "high culture" and more grandiose manorial ensembles in the Baltic provinces, this doctoral research examines the reception of architectural theories of the 18th and early 19th centuries in relation to the development of wooden architecture. In addition to paying close attention to the manor house as a building type, a key question is when and whether wood as a material, and in particular log houses as such,

appear in the architectural literature of the time. Addressing this not only enhances the understanding of the Baltic wooden manor, also highlights the broader role of wood in Northern European architecture. Although the research considers works by English, Italian and French authors, the primary focus is on the text published in German. Interwoven with the architectural

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analysis are the references to key concepts of the era, such as pastoralism and economics and forest conservation.

The study of reception also brings attention to the broader issues of manorial construction, including patronage, craftsmanship and the role of dilettantism in the architectural practice. In this doctoral thesis, individual manor houses and their construction histories are examined in detail, with a focus on the landowners and the circulation of architectural knowledge. This includes an exploration of the book trade, bookshops, and both public and private noble libraries, shedding light on the intellectual landscape in which these buildings were conceived. Furthermore, the perspectives of local authors (for example, August Wilhelm Hupe and Wilhelm Christian Friebe) provide insight into the evolving attitudes towards architecture and built heritage among the nobility and the enlightened bourgeoisie.

As Baltic German landlords served the Russian Empire, this research also considers the potential influence of courtly life and imperial building policies on regional architectural developments. Crucial aspect of this study is the accurate dating of manor houses, though political upheavals and the loss of archival sources over the past century pose certain challenges. Despite these difficulties, this doctoral thesis not only contributes to art historical scholarship but also aims to raise awareness of the heritage conservation issues surrounding this building type.

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