

GIFTS OF THE KING. “HANSEATIC” BRONZE BOWLS IN THIRTEENTH CENTURY ESTONIA: SIGNS OF DANISH CRUSADES?

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Abstract

The Virumaa province in northeast Estonia is the area with the biggest concentration of ‘Hanseatic bowl’ finds in Europe. The finds originate mostly from deposits, often consisting of sets of numerous items. This article suggests a connection between these finds and the Danish crusade to Estonia in 1219, interpreting the bowls as the king’s gift to new subjects for their loyalty, also looking at a possible broader context, and drawing hypothetical parallels with the Danish crusade to Samland and Prussia in 1210.

Key words: bronze bowls, Estonia, Denmark, Samland, crusade, mission, gifts for loyalty.

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Introduction: the bronze bowls and their meaning

Among archaeological finds from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, especially in northern Europe, there exists a clearly distinguished find group, plate-sized bronze bowls, sometimes decorated with inscriptions and images, predominantly of a Christian context. As the main distribution area of this find group overlaps greatly with the area of Hanseatic trade, i.e. with the region of the Baltic Sea, as well as areas south of the North Sea in northern Germany, these vessels are often called Hanseatic bowls (*Hansaschüssel*) in archaeological literature. This name, consciously avoided in the present text, is very conventional. The bowls have a much larger distribution area; and, moreover, they come mainly from a pre-Hanseatic temporal context. The flourishing of Hanseatic trade in the thirteenth century started only when the bronze bowls were already out of fashion.

As attractive finds, the Medieval bronze bowls have merited much research attention, both from the point of view of art history and archaeology. Finds from northern Poland and Germany serve as a basis for the monograph by Tadeusz Poklewski (1961), and for an art historian’s study about Romanesque bronze bowls (Weitzmann-Fiedler 1981). There is also a general treatment of bowls from the graves on Gotland (Trotzig 1991). In 2006, Ulrich Müller published a solid monograph on Medieval hand-washing dishes (*Handwaschgeschirr*) (Müller 2006), presenting conclusions about the typology and dates of the bowls, and also shedding light on the purposes of their manufacture and meaning. A summary of the book with some additions was

also published later (Müller 2011), but most of Müller’s ideas had also earlier been presented in different articles (Müller 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c). According to his chronology, based on a thorough study of the archaeological data, the bronze bowls from the High Middle Ages date mainly from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and sometimes also from thirteenth-century contexts (Müller 2006, 125, Fig. 38).

According to Müller, the bowls were profane dishes for food or washing hands. They were artefacts of high symbolic value. In addition to practical and hygienic purposes, they also demonstrated the owner’s status. The bowls can be linked to the behavioural codex, where a pragmatic striving for cleanliness is combined with symbolising rank, status and prestige.¹ The bowls with engraved Biblical or antique-mythological themes, or personifications of Virtues and Vices (*Tugend- und Lasterschalen*), also refer to a society ruled by Christian moral and ethical values. Their iconographic images and inscriptions express Christian moral and pedagogical ideas (Müller 1996, 2006, 237ff., 2011, 256). The use of bowls for washing hands during or before festive meals, and maybe also before greeting or leaving, demonstrated the value system of their owners in a figurative way, expressing ethical and moral cleanliness (Müller 1998b, 327, 1998c, 42). As most such finds in the eastern part of Central Europe come from castles, and proto-urban and urban centre surroundings, the motifs depicted on them can be interpreted as part of the system of knightly values that formed in Europe in the eleventh and twelfth

¹ According to this interpretation, also bowls found in pagan graves could have acted as status symbols which would enable the deceased to host guests and express hospitality in the world beyond (Müller 2011, 255ff.).

centuries, as an expression of Christian moral principles in the sphere of the everyday courtly life of noblemen (Müller 2011, 243, 256ff.). Thus, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, using bronze bowls is an expression of status and social rank, a sign of a superior lifestyle (Müller 1998a, 281). The distribution of these bowls (Müller 2006, List 3, 2011, Figs. 2, 7) stretches mainly from present-day Germany, Scandinavia and Poland to areas east of the Baltic Sea.

Bronze bowls east of the Baltic Sea

East of the Baltic Sea, the number of bronze bowls is highest in Estonia: 13 find spots (villages), with a total of more than 220 bowls, are known from rural areas; whereby 58 items have preserved in archaeological collections (Table). The finds also include four bowls from unknown places, probably from two different contexts (one and three items). Most of the bowl finds and at least 18 (maybe 20) find spots are in the north-east of the country, the historical province of Virumaa (HCL Vironia, German Wirland) (Fig. 1). A survey of bowl finds from Estonia was published in 1998 (Tamla 1998a). Since then, two new finds are known from Puru village, in northeast Estonia (Fig. 1.8), were added – a single bowl in 2012 (Ots, Rammo 2013, 301, Fig. 5) and a set of eight bowls set into each other, found by using metal detector, in the spring of 2017 – in a distance of more than one kilometre from the previous find spot.² The number of bowl finds from other parts of Estonia, as well as neighbouring countries east of the Baltic Sea, is much smaller.

There are 14 bronze bowls from 12 rural find spots in Finland, including one find from ceded Karelia (from Suotniemi) (Ruonavaara 1989; Müller 2006, List no 3, nos 130-140, 260). Finds from Russia are rare: there is one bowl from Yarovschina in the southeast Ladoga region (Edgren 1988; Müller 2006, List 3, no 248), and two from Staryi Ryazan (Müller 2006, List 3, no 259).

There are eight finds of bronze bowls from three different places in Latvia: four from the Livic barrows (two from Krimulda, and two from Pūтели) (Tõnisson 1974, 58ff., 75, 77), and four from Riga (Pāvele 1964, 128, 129, 131, 132; Müller 2006, List 3, no 180). No finds of bronze bowls are known from Lithuania.

A concentrated area of bowls stands out, however, on the Samland peninsula, formerly East Prussia, currently the Kaliningrad district. The number of finds with research status as of 2006 is 44 (Müller 2006, List no

² Five or six bowls found in Kehala village in 1971 or 1972, missing in the Catalogue of T. Tamla (1998a), were also added (Table No 2, RM 3326 and 4352).

3), and later research has provided numerous new data from cemetery excavations.³ Unlike the other concentrated area in Estonia, the finds from Samland originate predominantly from graves, represented mainly by burnt fragments from cremations.

This article focuses on finds from Estonia, also making attempts to hypothetically outline the common features and possible common reasons for the two concentrated areas of bronze bowls east of the Baltic Sea.

Finds from Estonia

Find circumstances, contexts and dates

As is noted above, there are at least 220 recorded finds of bronze bowls from Estonia,⁴ which makes up almost half of all known bowls (450) in Europe (Müller 2011, 236). The quantity of finds is even somewhat larger, as the number of some lost bowls from Sompā and probably Kahula and Kehala is not exactly known. Ten of the 13 find places,⁵ those from Virumaa, are located within an area of around 30 to 80 kilometres. The three finds from outside the borders of this concentrated area are from the village of Tamse on Muhu island (a set of 34 bowls), from Maidla (two bowls) in continental west Estonia (Kullamaa parish), and from Kuude near Viljandi in southwest Estonia (one bowl). Most of the find spots are located inland, far from major trade routes and from the sea, the main route for long-distance trade (Fig. 1). In seven cases, the bowls were found in occupation layers of settlement sites, in two cases from a field not far from the settlement site (ca. 500 m and 1 km); in four cases the bowls formed a part of a hoard, being used as containers for jewellery and/or coins (see: Table; Tamla 1998a).

A typical feature of the Estonian bowl finds is their occurrence in sets: at least 208 out of the 220 known bowls are from such context.

The sets are sometimes large: there are eight cases where the assemblage consisted of eight or more bowls, whereas in one case 65 (52+13), 35 and 34 bowls were found in one village (Table). As far as is known about the find circumstances, the bowls had mostly been put

³ Data by Roman Shiroukhov (Kaliningrad) in the joint presentation with Heiki Valk *Hanseatic Bowls in Prussia and Estonia: possible Routes, Meanings and Contexts* on the conference *The Sea and the Coastlands* dedicated to the 70th birthday conference of prof. Vladas Žulkus in Klaipėda. 7–10 October 2015.

⁴ Here and in forthcoming numeric data the number of bowls from Sompā where 10–12 vessels were found (Tamla 1998a, 27) has been regarded as 10.

⁵ Thereby, from the villages of Kahula, Sompā and Puru bowls have been found twice, from Kehala even at three different times, and, probably, from different places.

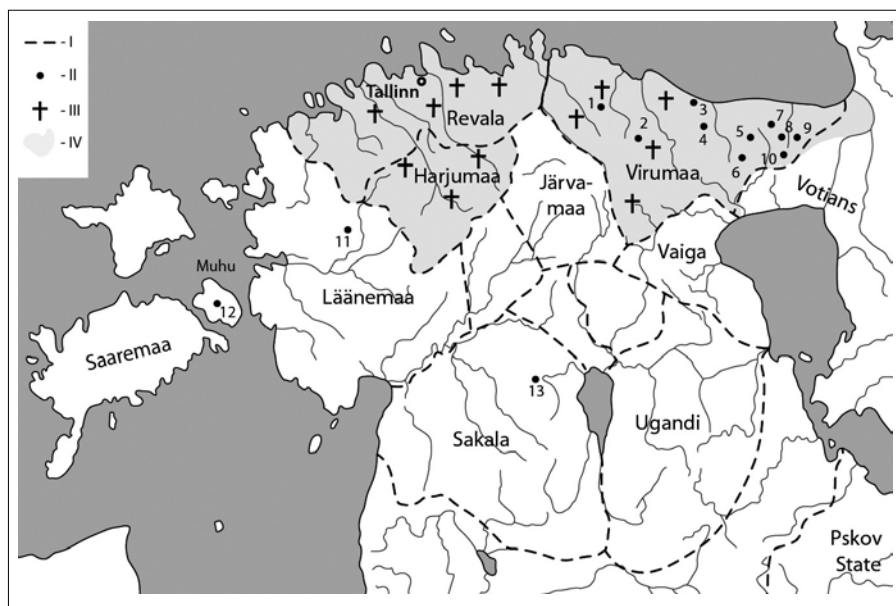


Fig. 1. Finds of bronze bowls in Estonia. I the borders of early thirteenth-century provinces; II find spots of bronze bowls: 1 Veltsi; 2 Kehala; 3 Aseri; 4 Rannu; 5 Sompä; 6 Mäetaguse; 7 Kahula; 8 Puru; 9 Vasavere; 10 Tarakuse; 11 Maidla; 12 Tamse; 13 Kuude; III parish centres mentioned in Liber Census Daniae circa 1240; IV the area of Danish rule in the mid-thirteenth century (according to Johansen 1933). Drawing by Maria Smirnova.



Fig. 2. The bowl assemblage from Puru, eastern Virumaa in finding context. Two bowls have been removed from the set (photography by Kalle Merilai (2017)).

Table 1. Bronze stray finds included in the study.
The numbers correspond to those in Figs 1–2; fr = fragmentary.
See Abbreviations for explanation of inventory numbers

No in map	Village	Province	No.	Number of assemblages per village	Number of found bowls	Number of preserved bowls	Inscriptions	Context	Position and number of bowls in the sets	Date	Items in find complex	Bibliography
1	Velisi	Vironia	AI ¹ 2506	1	1	1		Hoard	Container for hoard	Late 12th – early 13th c.	6 penannular brooches, 1 sheet pendant	Tamla 1998a, No 1; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 121
2	Kehala	Vironia	AI 2643,	2 or 3	1	-		Hoard, Settlement site	Hoard	1st half of the 13th c.	2 neck rings, 4 penannular brooches, 2 bracelets, 1 sheet pendant	Tamla 1998a, No 2; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 112
			AM ² 177		19	1		Field	Set into each other (19)			
			RM ³ 3326; RM 4352		5–6	1		?	Set into each other (?) (5–6)			
					Total: 25–26	1						
3	Aseri	Vironia	AI 91, 92	1	35	2	Virtues and Vices (1)	Settlement site	Set into each other (35)			Tamla 1998a, No 3; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 110
4	Rannu	Vironia	AI 3965	1	8	1		Settlement site	Set into each other (8)			Tamla 1998a, No 4; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 116
5	Sompa	Vironia	AI 3793	2	at least 10–12	2			Set into each other (10–12)			Tamla 1998a, No 5; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 117
6	Mäetaguse	Vironia	Hermitage Museum ⁴	1	16	4		Hoard, settlement site	Set into each other (16); lowest bowl – container for silver items	1st half of the 13th c.	1 bracelet, 4 neck rings, 4 sheet pendants, penannular brooch, 4 silver bars, 4 silver coins (<i>tpq</i> 1232)	Tamla 1998a, No 6; Müller 2006, Liste 3, nr 115

No in map	Village	Province	No.	Number of assemblages per village	Number of found bowls	Number of preserved bowls	Inscriptions	Context	Position and number of bowls in the sets	Date	Items in find complex	Bibliography
7	Kahula	Vironia	AI 4113; RM 500 AI 4141 AM 877	1 or 2	52 13 1 fragment Total: 65 (66?)	20		Settlement site	Set into each other (52+13=65)		A hoard nearby	Tamla 1998a, No 7; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 111
8	Vasavere	Vironia	AI 773	1	1	1						Tamla 1998a, No 8; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 120
9	Tarakuse	Vironia	AI 4143	1	8	6	Virtues and Vices (6)	Field; ca. 500 m from settlement site	Set into each other (8)			Tamla 1998a, No 9; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 119
10	Puru	Vironia	AI 7110 AI 7711	1	1 8 Total: 9	9			Single find, Set into each other (8)		Detector finds since the Roman Iron Age until the 16th century; 11 silver coins (<i>tpq</i> 1068). AI 7072, 7110, 7176–7178, 7180, 7185, 7200, 7223, 7242 Separate find of 8 bowls	Ots & Rammo 2013, 303, Fig. 5

No in map	Village	Province	No.	Number of assemblages per village	Number of found bowls	Number of preserved bowls	Inscriptions	Context	Position and number of bowls in the sets	Date	Items in find complex	Bibliography
11	Tamse	Saaremaa/Mõne	AI 2635	1	34	1			Set into each other (34)			Tamla 1998a, No 10; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 118
12	Maidla	Läänemaa	AM 21772	1	2	2		Hoard, settlement site	Containers for hoard	2nd half of the 11th c.	2 neck rings, 4 silver beads, 2 silver bars, belt mount, 1074 silver coins (tpq 1066)	Tamla 1998a, No 11; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 114
13	Kuude	Saccala		1	1	1	HIERVSALEM VISIO PACIS OTTO	Field	?	11th–12th cc.	1 bracelet, axe (?)	Vassar 1970; Tamla 1998a, No 12; Müller 2006, Liste 3, No 113
14	Unknown	Unknown	AI 4160	1	1	1		?	?			Tamla 1998a, No 13
15	Unknown	Unknown	AI 7655	1	3	3		?	?			
Total				24 (or 25 or 26)	220 (at least)	58			208 (at least)			

- 1 Archaeological Research Collection of Tallinn University
- 2 Estonian History Museum
- 3 Foundation of Virumaa Museums
- 4 The State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg



Fig. 3. The finding situation of the bowl assemblage from Puru, eastern Virumaa (AI 7711) (photograph by the finder, Ilja Shakirov (2017)).

inside each other. There are eight definite assemblages with such a positioning of bowls, and that was probably also the case with the Aseri assemblage, with 35 items and Kehala assemblage with 5-6 items. In the recent find from Puru, the only case with documented finding situation, the bowls, set into each other and turned upside down, were found in a field, in the depth of ca. 70 cm, in the distance of about 1 km from the settlement site, laid on top of virgin loam (Figs. 2, 3). The Maidla hoard included, as an exception, two bowls which formed a container for coins and jewellery. Only four or five bowls were single finds.

Not a single bowl has been found in Estonia in a grave, although several cemeteries from that time have been archaeologically investigated in their concentration area. Thus, there are no finds either from Pada cemetery, with 172 excavated inhumations (Tamla 1998b, 291ff.), dated approximately to between the 1170s and 1250s, or from Kukruse cemetery, with 40 inhumation graves (Lõhmus et al. 2011), from the end of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries (around 1200 AD). There are also no finds from the cemeteries of Tammiku, with 12 known graves (Tõnisson 1973), and Kūti (Selirand 1974, 72ff.), with 17 known burials from that period. Until now, no bowl fragments are known from Late Iron Age cremation graves. These data show that, unlike west Slavic areas (see: Müller 1998a, 274,

278, 1998b, 315ff.), Gotland (Trotzig 1991), Finland (Ruonavaara 1989), Latvia (Tõnisson 1974, 58ff., 75, 77) and Samland (see above), bronze bowls were not used as grave goods in Estonia.

There are data from Estonia (also concerning lost items) about the appearance of 90 bronze bowls: 80 are simple and unornamented, ten items (four from Aseri and six from Tarakuse) represent personifications of Virtues and Vices (Fig. 1), both in textual form (e.g. *SVPERBIA*, *IDOLATRIA*, *INVIDIA*, *IRA*, *LUXURIA*, *SPES*, *FIDES*, *CARITAS*, including derived forms of words) and pictorial form (Tamla 1998a, 22-31). An exceptional item in terms of ornamentation style is the Kaiser-Otto-Schale from Kuude, unlike other bronze bowls found in Estonia (1970).⁶

Although the simple unornamented bowls (Müller: Gruppe F, Poklewski: Type VI) are mainly from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Müller 2006, 125, 2011, 251ff.),⁷ from all the Estonian find complexes,

⁶ Probably, this bowl has a different origin than finds from Virumaa: it may come from the German colony in Riga. It has been suggested that the vessel may originate from the early church in Viljandi castle, looted during the Estonian uprising of 1223 (Vassar 1970; see: HCL XXVI: 5).

⁷ Poklewski dates the bowls until the end of the thirteenth century (1961, 48ff.) but the reason for this upper limit is the erroneous date of coin from Mäetaguse which has been re-dated as having the date *tpq* 1232 (Leimus 2009, 7).



Fig. 4. Bronze bowls from Estonia: ornamented and not ornamented bowl from the find at Aseri, Virumaa, north Estonia (AI 91, 92) (photograph by Heiki Valk).

only the Maidla hoard can be dated to this period (*terminus post quem* 1066, Leimus, Kiudsoo 2015, 45). In the vicinity of the first find spot in the village of Puru (from 2012), 11 silver coins from the second half of the eleventh century (*tpq* 1068, Kiudsoo 2014, 223ff.; Leimus, Kiudsoo 2015, 43ff.), together with a number of artefacts dating from the Roman Iron Age to the Modern Age, were found at different times by using metal detectors, so it is difficult to connect these coins firmly with the bowl. In three cases, however, at Veltsi, Kehala and Mäetaguse, the bowls (one, 19 and 16 items respectively) belonged to a hoard which was deposited in the first half of the thirteenth century (Tamla 1998a, 13ff.).

Most of the Estonian finds, including the largest assemblages, unfortunately have no definite date: there were no other artefacts which could serve as a basis for this. The form and ornamentation of the vessels offers only a few footholds for chronology. In general, bowls with images of Virtues and Vices (Müller Gruppe B, Poklewski Type II) are dated to the twelfth or early thirteenth centuries (Müller 2006, 125, 2011, 244).⁸ However, the date of the Veltsi, Kehala and Mäetaguse hoards, with numerous bowls set into each other, a context unknown from other parts of northern Europe, enables us to regard other Estonian finds, especially similar find assemblages, as also belonging to the same historical and chronological context.

⁸ Poklewski's date is twelfth – mid-thirteenth century (1961, 44ff.).

Estonian bowl assemblages: the need for explanation

As the Estonian assemblages with several bronze bowls set into each other have no parallels in other parts of Europe, in 1994 a hypothesis was presented about a possible connection between these finds from the area of concentration in Virumaa and the Danish crusade to northern Estonia and the Christianisation of the province (Tamla 1998a). Henry's Livonian Chronicle talks both about the raid by the Danish King Valdemar II on Estonia in 1219, and about the Christianisation of Virumaa by the Danes in 1220 (HCL XXIII.2; XXIV.1, 2, 5, 6; Bysted et al. 2004).

Ulrich Müller, who has studied the history of High Medieval bronze bowls thoroughly, excludes the connection, including those depicting Virtues and Vices, with Christianisation: '*In jedem Falle wird man die Schalen nicht als alleiniges Zeugnis für einen Glaubenswandel heranziehen dürfen ... Als ein Zeugnis der Mission wird man die Gefäße indes nicht sehen dürfen*' (Müller 2011, 255). We would like to shed more light upon the context and reasons for making deposits of bowl sets. Evidently, the large number of bowls deposited inside each other, including large assemblages, cannot be incidental. The practice of depositing bowls and their remaining in the ground on a large scale in a limited area must be caused by definite historical, social and political circumstances, specific and common to the region. While the eleventh-century bowl from Maidla can be

regarded as a container for coins and may have arrived together with them, the thirteenth-century finds, often consisting of several items, must have another explanation.

The possibility of a new, popular trading article, introduced after the conquest, cannot be considered, as there is no reason to suggest the distribution of new fashion goods only in Virumaa and not in other parts of northern Estonia, including those located closer to Tallinn. Another argument is that the bowls were never found together with artefacts which could be regarded as merchants' ware, and in the case of fashion goods, a much higher number of single finds might be expected.

The assumption that the large number of bronze bowls in Virumaa might be interpreted as Church property, either stolen by the Estonians or hidden in the ground by the Danish priests (Müller 2006, 235ff.), can easily be disproved, by comparing the distribution map of the bowls, and a map of the network of churches in northern Estonia around 1240. Most of the finds come from an area where no churches existed at that time yet (Fig. 1). Moreover, Müller himself denies the liturgical purpose of the vessels (Müller 2006, 204). Thus, the extremely large number of bowls from Estonia (if the number of recorded finds exceeds 220, the total original number of bowls must surely have been several times higher) and their high concentration in Virumaa need some other explanation.

Estonian bowls and the Danish crusade

Whatever the primary purpose of the bowls and the meanings of the images depicted on them, one fact that cannot be denied is that the distribution of bronze bowls fits well, both in spatial and temporal terms, with the Christian mission in Estonia. A connection between the Estonian bowl finds and the Danish crusades (Tamla 1998a) must be suggested as the most plausible one. This hypothesis about the use of bronze bowls in the Christianisation of Virumaa is based on extracts from Henry's Chronicle which mention the competition for baptism in 1220: in the context of political rivalry, both the Danish and the German authorities wanted to be the first to baptise the provinces of Virumaa and Järvamaa (HCL Gerwa, in German Jerwen) in northern and central Estonia.

According to Henry, the Danish priests sent holy water to the villages in Virumaa, telling the Estonians to baptise themselves. This is noted in his chronicle in two cases: '*Sed Dani ipsam terram sibi vicinam preoccupare cupientes sacerdotes suos quasi in alienam messem miserunt. Qui baptizantes villas quasdam et ad alias suos mittentes, ad quasi psi venire tam subito non*

potuerunt, et cruces magnas ligneas in omnibus villis fiery precipientes at aquam benedictam per manus rusticorum mittentes et mulieres ac parvulos aspergere iubentes, sacerdotes Rigenses taliter prevenire conabantur et hoc modo totam terram ad manus regis Danorum preoccupare studebant' (HCL XXIV.2).⁹

Henry also reports the words of an Estonian nobleman ('*rusticus, qui fuit senior eorum*'): '*... sacerdos ... sacerdos Danorum ... baptizavit viros quosdam ex nostris et dedit nobis aquam sanctam, et reverse sumus ad proprias villas et cum eadem aqua asperimus et baptizavimus unusquisque nostrum familiam, uxores et parvulos ...*' (HCL XXIV.5).¹⁰

The competition and rushed baptism were caused by the circumstance that just the fact of baptising an area was the main argument to determine its further political belonging and subordination in the broader context of the Danish-German conflict (see: Mäesalu 2013). The political aspect of Christianisation is most clearly reflected in Henry's note that the Danes hanged Tabelinus, the head of Pudiviru province in Virumaa, for accepting Christianity from the Germans (HCL XXIV.1). He was probably not the only person from the Estonian nobility executed for accepting 'the wrong' Christianity, i.e. the wrong loyalty. Considering the extraordinary situation of the need for the urgent baptism of Virumaa, it seems likely that the bowls may have served as tools used for baptism (Tamla 1998a), as miniature and portable 'baptismal fonts'. The hypothesis about their use for baptism is supported by an image in the Ål church in Denmark, in frescoes from between 1200 and 1225. In one of them, baptism is established by pouring water from a round bowl over a person's head (Fig. 5). This hypothesis is also currently valid, expanded, however, with additional explanations for the reasons and circumstances why such large quantities of bowls reached and were left just in Virumaa.

The need for competition in baptism could not, however, have been foreseen by the crusaders when leaving Denmark for the Estonian crusade. In the context of introducing a new power system, a most plausible

⁹ „But the Danes, willing to possess this neighbouring area, sent out their priests as if to harvest the crop which did not belong to them. They baptized some villages, sent their men to others, to which they could not come so quickly, ordering big wooden crosses to be erected in every village and sending blessed water with hands of the peasants, telling them to sprinkle the women and children, trying to anticipate the Rigan priests, aiming this way to seize the whole land to the possession of the King of the Danes.” English translations of abstracts from the chronicle by Heiki Valk.

¹⁰ „... Danish priest ... baptized some of our men and gave us holy water and we returned to our villages and each of us sprinkled and baptized our families, wives and children...”

interpretation for the large number of the bowls is to regard them as gifts from the King of Denmark to local noblemen, gifts for the loyalty expected of the new subjects, taxpayers and tax collectors: a sign to simultaneously commemorate baptism and becoming subjects of the King of Denmark. The practice of giving gifts to local noblemen in connection with their Christianisation is also expressed in the chronicle after the arrival of the Danish army in Lyndanise (German Reval, Estonian Tallinn) in 1219: '*Et credidit eis rex ... et dedit eis munera, et baptizaverunt eos episcopi, remittentes eos cum gaudio*' (HCL XXIII. 2).¹¹ Thus, the chronicle gives evidence of the Danish policy, attempts at the 'positive possession' of the native nobility.

From a royal perspective, that of High Medieval European culture, the bowls had a definite semantic meaning: they were a status symbol, of belonging to the world of knightly values, status and lifestyle (see Müller 2011, 256-257), in our case, becoming the king's vassal. However, the bowls can be regarded not only as status symbols, but also as memorial items, to commemorate the day of becoming a Christian and receiving a gift from the king.

The presence of Estonian nobles among thirteenth-century vassals is reflected in different sources (Valk 2009; Mägi 2002a, 148ff.). According to the Danish census book *Liber Census Daniae*, originating in around 1240 (Johansen 1933), judging by personal names, at least 10% of the vassals were of native origin (Mooraa, Ligi 1970, 84-91). The continuity of power, at a local or regional level, although within the framework of the new feudal system, is also shown by the continuous use of pre-crusade strongholds with no signs of the presence of a new 'European' cultural pattern, a phenomenon characteristic of western and northern Estonia, including the province of Virumaa (Valk 2014).

The king's investment in a large number of bowls was facilitated by the fact that by the early thirteenth century, bronze bowls were out of fashion in northern Germany and southern Scandinavia, having been replaced by other hand-washing items, such as aquamaniles, and by that time their production had ended, for there was no demand for them in society any more (Müller 2006, 240). In such circumstances, it was most likely possible to obtain them for crusading purposes from tradesmen and craftsmen for a moderate price, maybe just for their value as metal, and also as second-hand items. The large sets of unornamented bowls from Estonia have been interpreted as unfinished goods, half-fabricates (Müller 1998a, 274, 1998b, 323). But they should be regarded more likely as artefacts which had lost their former value in their country of origin, as

¹¹ „And the king trusted them... and gave them gifts, and the bishops baptized them, sending them back with joy.“

waste or scrap (although we cannot include the possibility that stored half-fabricates of goods not in demand any more had also obtained the status of waste or scrap). Indirect support for this suggestion is provided by XRF-surface analysis, which shows that the chemical composition of the bowls found in Estonia is variable, including brass, bronze and a number of ratios of gunmetal,¹² Therefore they may well have come from different manufacturing events, possibly from different workshops.¹³ Although old-fashioned and out-of-date in the homeland, the bowls may still have seemed good enough to be used as gifts for the newly converted pagans.

When judging the function of the bowls, we must not ignore the different spatial and temporal contexts of their occurrence, as well as the differences in the social and political developments of different areas (e.g. Müller 1998a, 279; Wrzesiński 2000; Rębkowski 2011, 120; Cohen, Safran 2012, 212). When interpreting the Estonian bowl finds, we must bear in mind that the cultural context of Virumaa differed considerably from that in High Medieval Germany and Denmark. In pre-crusade Estonian society, the bronze bowls were surely not perceived as an expression of the noble courtly lifestyle and the related system of values. Even when considering the presence of Christian ideas and influences, in the early pre-crusade thirteenth century, several people, and maybe even some communities, may have identified themselves as Christians, but society was far from being Christian yet. In the context of religious pluralism and syncretism, the old traditional world-view was intertwined with the new Christian one, or existed parallel to it (see: Leimus 2009; Jonuks, Kurisoo 2013).

In this context, the Christian system of morality, based on Virtues and Vices, was not present in Estonia yet, and bronze bowls with respective inscriptions could also not have this meaning. Unlike neighbouring areas, the bowls also had no status meaning in pre-crusade Estonia. This is confirmed by their absence among grave goods (see above). The remarkably large amount of bronze bowls in Virumaa can be explained only by their secondary and tertiary meanings (gifts for loyalty, and tools for 'rushed baptism') and quaternary meaning –deposited as valuable raw material. However, the bowls were a valuable gift anyway. The lack of

¹² XRF analyses concerning 15 bowls was performed by Marcus Roxburgh (PhD student of Leiden University, Faculty of Archaeology, Department of Roman Provinces, Middle Ages and Modern Period), using the methodology published in Roxburgh et al. 2016.

¹³ Although Ulrich Müller (2006, 126-130; 2011, 234) has stated that there were no notable differences within the bowl compositions, the variability in the Estonian compositions as interpreted above is notable in itself.

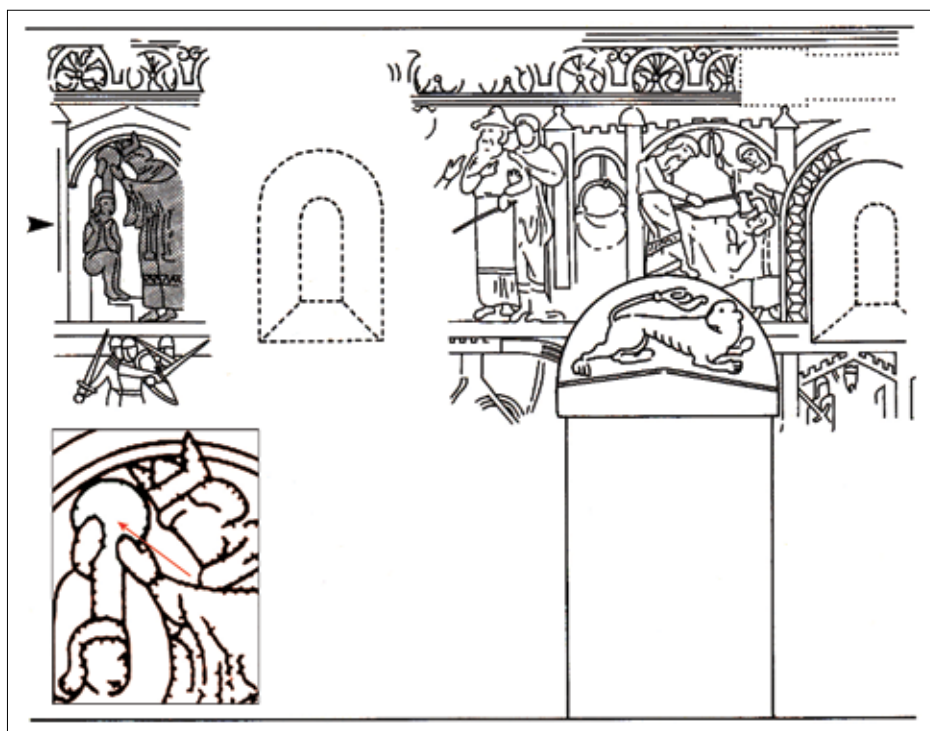


Fig. 5. The act of baptism: a fresco from between 1200 and 1225 in the church in Ål in Denmark (after Danmarks kirker 1984, Fig. 26).

the primary meaning which the bowls had in the land of their origin, that of status symbols, also explains why large sets of bowls became not in use in Estonia, but were deposited (and remained) in the ground.

Bowls and provinces

Having arrived at Lyndanise in the summer of 1219, the Danes first conducted negotiations with the Estonian nobility. Evidently, after these negotiations, they considered peaceful subjection. That option failed, however, since three days later the Estonians from the provinces of Revala (HCL Revele) and Harjumaa (HCL Harria, German Harrien) attacked the crusaders (HCL XXIII.2). This attack ended the plans for the positive possession of Revala and Harjumaa, and further plans for gift giving.¹⁴ Thus, the bowls meant for the nobility of these two provinces remained unused.¹⁵

However, the failure of the positive possession of Revala and Harjumaa did not mean the same for Virumaa.

¹⁴ Henry also notes that the Danes were fighting with the Revalians “all that year”, until the March of 1220 until those accepted baptism (HCL XXIV. 2).

¹⁵ Here it should be noted that, in spite of metal detecting, legalized in Estonia since 2011 for those who have a state licence, from Harjumaa and Revala – provinces where detecting is most numerous due to the vicinity of capital and abundance of Viking Age and Post-Viking Age silver hoards – there is no information about new finds of bronze bowls. From Virumaa, however, there are two new finds (both from Puru village).

The lack of bowl sets from the two provinces mentioned above and their abundance in Virumaa might be regarded as a sign of different royal policy towards the different provinces of Estonia.

In early 1220, Virumaa was not yet subjected to Danish power. According to Henry, the inhabitants of the province ‘... *audentes Danos utpote sibi vicinos ad se vocaverunt et baptizati sunt ab eis*’ (HCL XXIV.1).¹⁶ This note which tells about the initiative of Virumaa concerning further subordination to the Danish king, evidently, caused by the preceding German looting raids to the province, makes gift-giving even more likely. Soon afterwards, the competition began to be the first to baptise the rest, evidently the majority of Virumaa. As baptism was a strong argument to determine the future political affiliation of the area, both the Germans and the Danes strove to be the first. The Germans, having organised several plundering raids to Virumaa, regarded the province as their future possession. But the Danes declared that ‘... *totam Estoniam, sive a Rigensibus expugnatam, sive nontum adhuc subjugatam regis Dacie esse dicebat*’ (HCL XXIV. 2).¹⁷

In addition to the political, ideological and economic aspects, the occupation of Virumaa was also strategi-

¹⁶ „... called the Danes as their neighbours to them, and they baptised them.”

¹⁷ „...all of Estonia, whether conquered by the Rigans or not yet subjugated, belonged to the Danish king.”

cally important: whoever held its coast could also control Russian trade along the coast of northern Estonia.

Political competition for Virumaa and the strategic importance of the area evidently forced the Danes first to pay extra attention to obtaining the loyalty of the nobility of Virumaa: offering gifts to them was essential. Thus, it seems likely that in the spring of 1220, the stored bowls, and also those originally meant for the nobility of Harjumaa and Revala, were taken to Virumaa to be distributed there. The activities of German priests coming from the south forced the Danes to change the original purpose of the bowls. Besides being gifts for loyalty, in the context of the political competition, they also acquired another function: in view of the urgent need to baptise the province, they became tools for Christianisation, probably being involved in the factual process of baptism. The large sets of bowls (including 35 or 52 items) were probably not meant 'for personal use' only, but might have been items meant for further distribution, such as redistribution among local leaders who were not present when the bowls were presented by the Danish authorities.¹⁸

In the context of rushed baptism, it should also be outlined that the concentration of bowl sets in Virumaa is the highest in the more remote peripheral areas, stretching to the eastern border of the province and the woodlands of Alutaguse (German Allentacken), inhabited by an alien, probably semi-Orthodox Votic (eastern Finnic) population (Ligi 1993; Valk 2015, 68-74). The peripheral status of the distribution area of bronze bowls is also shown by the fact that, as is noted above, there are no data about parish churches from most of their distribution area from as late as about 1240 (Johansen 1933, 211). The easternmost parish (*parochia*) mentioned in *Liber Census Daniae* was Maum (German Maholm, Estonian Viru-Nigula) (see: Fig. 1). However, it should also be noted that there is no bowl find from the province of Pudiviru, south-westernmost corner of Virumaa – an area which accepted baptism from the Germans in the spring of 1220 (HCL XXIV.1).

The numerous deposits of bowls which remained in the ground are a clear sign of serious human losses among the local nobility of Virumaa. Respective data also come from written sources. After the unsuccessful siege of the Danish castle in Tallinn after Easter

¹⁸ A special discussion need the cases when there exist data referring to more than one assemblages of bowls from one village – Kehala, Kahula, Puru and Sompaa. Maybe these finds are an evidence about bowls re-distributed with village or the kin the kin, e.g. giving them to a friend or to brother's or sister's family. The origin of bowls from different assemblages is, however, not very clear, because there are no data about the exact find place in case of earlier finds: also the origin of finds from the same assemblage (or household) cannot be excluded.

1221, the Danes hanged the leaders of the provinces of Revala, Harjumaa and Virumaa (HCL XXIV.7). In this context, it should be noted that the villages of Kahula, Sompaa, Mäetaguse, Puru and Vasavere (the number of bowls being 65, 10–12, 16, nine and one, respectively), according to *Liber Census Daniae*, belonged to the king around 1240. Maybe the owners of these villages were regarded as 'treacherous', had been executed by the Danes, and the villages were taken into the king's possession? Here we should mention the case of Tabe-linus again. The political struggle which caused losses among the native vassals also continued after Christianisation. In 1227, the Order of the Sword Brothers captured the Danish areas in northern Estonia. In this context, around 100 vassals of northern Estonia, loyal to the Pope (to whom Virumaa, together with Lääne-maa [HCL Maritima, German Wiek] and Järvamaa were subjected), many of them probably representatives of the local nobility, were killed by the Order in Tallinn in 1233 (Hildebrand 1887, no. 21, art. 12 and 16).

This circumstance may also have contributed to remaining the bowls deposited in the ground. Thus, the lack of large deposited bowl assemblages in Germany, Poland, Denmark, Gotland, and other countries east of the Baltic Sea, on the one hand, and the lack of local traditions to use them, both in Virumaa and Estonia in general, on the other, enable us to connect the high concentration of finds in Virumaa with the subjection of the area by the Danes, i.e. with the Danish crusade and its peculiarities in the remote periphery.

In the context of the Danish crusades, we might also regard the set of 34 bowls from the village of Tamse on Muhu (HCL Mone, German Moon) island. The territorial distance of this find from Virumaa may at first seem big and unexplained, but there were also Danish raids to Saaremaa (HCL Osilia, German Ösel) in 1206 (HCL X.13) and 1222 (HCL XXVI.2-4).¹⁹ Administra-

¹⁹ An indication of the Danish campaign of 1206 to Muhu island is from the same village – Tamse – where a silver hoard (*tpq* 1205) consisting of 400 coins was found in 1967: this hoard has been associated with the raid of 1206 (Molvynin 1970, 126-132). Although there is no reason to suggest the bowls and coins to originate from the same hoard, the two finds from the same village give reasons for different speculations. On the one hand, they may indicate a conflict between the rich inhabitants of Tamse with somebody, e.g. the Danes or Osilians (in the last case, maybe, for having become loyal to the Danes). On the other hand, the deposits may indicate different attitudes towards the Danes among the native nobility: while one, resistant household was destroyed, the other got a large set of bowls for gift. However, as a context and date for gifting the bowls, the raid of 1222 seems most plausible. In this case, the bowls may have remained in the ground after the German raid of 1227 when Muhu island was fully looted (HCL XXX.4).

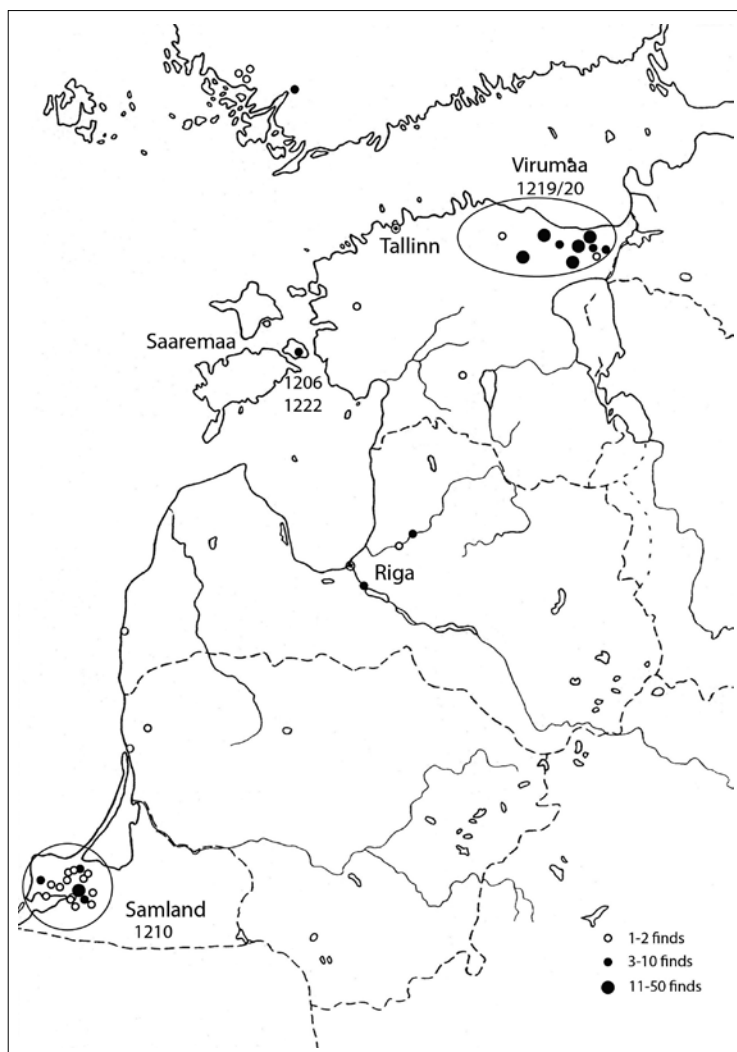


Fig. 6. Bronze bowls east of the Baltic Sea, and the Danish crusades (the map of the general distribution of bowls is based on Müller 2006, data about Estonia: see Table 1; updated data about Samland according to Shiroukov 2012, Fig. 1; drawing by Maria Smirnova).

tively, the island of Muhu was part of Saaremaa (Mägi 1998, 2002b, 181ff.). Probably also during these crusades (or one of them),²⁰ a similar policy of gift giving was practised. The uniqueness of the Tamse assemblage out of all the Estonian islands can be explained by the circumstance that, unlike Virumaa, the raids to Saaremaa caused no major population losses among the nobility: the island accepted Christianity as a result of negotiations, and the bowls, the original use of which did not correspond to local practices, were not hidden in the ground, but were used for other purposes, probably, as raw material. The ring fort of the island of Muhu (HCL *castrum* Mone) was the only stronghold in Saaremaa province which was conquered in 1227, with a large number of defenders killed, as is noted by Henry (HCL XXX. 4).

²⁰ The failure of the violent raid of 1206 may also have been the reason for the plans of „positive possession“ of northern Estonia in 1219.

Discussion and conclusions: Estonian bowl finds and their broader context

When regarding Estonian bowl finds in a broader context, the question arises about the reasons for the presence of two large concentrated areas of bowls east of the Baltic Sea, in Estonia and Samland (Fig. 6).

In Estonia, the bowls appear suddenly and most numerous in the early thirteenth century. The exceptional case of Maidla from the eleventh century does not enable us to speak about any continuity of tradition. The Estonian bowls were often deposited in sets, sometimes in large assemblages, in the ground, often in the occupation layers of settlement sites. Similar and unique find circumstances in the broader context – in other regions of Europe bowls occur, if not functioning as late pre-Christian grave goods, mostly in strongholds, central places, towns and water bodies, and only most rarely in rural settlements (Müller 2011, 236, 238) –

suggest, as is noted above, their deposition within the same historical context, the Danish crusades of the early thirteenth century. Originally meant as royal gifts from the king to his new vassals, the bowls were not used 'for purpose' as planned before. The plan for the distribution of the bowls probably changed during the competition for the baptism of Virumaa in 1220: now they were not delivered personally, but were distributed by a limited number of people in large amounts for further distribution to contribute to the rushed baptism. For some reason, probably, caused by several different factors, many of the bowls were not redistributed, and remained deposited in the ground, evidently because of the unexpected deaths of their possessors.

Differently from Estonia, in Samland the bowls have a broader date range, from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, but also there most of them date from the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries (Shiroukhov 2012, 226). While in Estonia the bowl finds appear as deposits, in Samland they are present as grave goods in elite warrior graves (Shiroukhov 2012, 226ff., Fig. 3).²¹ A fact which complicates the study of the bowls from Samland is that they occur in collective cremation graves (*Aschenplätze*), and are only fragmentarily preserved. The different find contexts indicate the different meanings of the bowls in the two societies: deposited in graves in Samland, they might have been valued as status symbols of the elite; but in Estonia more for their material value, and most likely just as raw material.

In spite of these differences, when considering the broader historical context, in both cases, the presence of a common factor behind the high concentration of the bronze bowls can be suggested: both in Estonia and Samland they can be bound with the Danish crusades.

While a big Danish crusade to Estonia took place in 1219, Danish annals also mention a crusade to Prussia and Samland in 1210 (*Annales* 1920, 98, 99) or 1209 (*ibid.*, 97)²² (see also Szacherska 1988, 54ff.).²² As is mentioned in different annals, and in *Liber Census Daniae*, this crusade was not marginal, but aimed to permanently subjugate the area (Szacherska 1988, 45).

If numerous bowls were brought to Virumaa as gifts for the local nobility in 1219, a similar practice can also be suggested for Samland nine years earlier. This seems more likely, since the key people behind the campaign were the same: King Valdemar II and Andreas Sunonis (Anders Sunesen), the Archbishop of

Lund in 1201–1228 (Nielsen 2001). Moreover, the Danish crusade to Prussia and Samland also took place in conditions of 'baptism competition'. The King of Denmark and the Archbishop of Lund were competing with the Archbishop of Gniezno (Poland) (Bysted et al. 2004, 232ff.). This context makes the strategy of 'positive possession' of the local nobility by giving gifts even more essential (Bysted et al. 2004, 232ff.). The fact that most of the bowls from Samland date from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, as well as the lack of bowl finds from neighbouring Curonian and Scalvian lands (Shiroukhov 2012, 227), also speaks in favour of the hypothesis about the connection of these finds with the Danish crusades.

The idea of using out-of-date bronze bowls as gifts for the king's new subjects in Virumaa may even have been inspired by the circumstance that in Samland, as is shown by earlier Prussian grave finds, bronze bowls were regarded as status symbols. This fact was probably known for the Danes as a result of earlier contacts, and knowledge about high esteem of the bowls among the "eastern pagans" was maybe also confirmed by the positive experience of distributing the bowls among the Sambian nobility during the crusade of 1210. Thus, the status meaning of bronze bowls among the Prussians (as in Christian northern Europe in general) may have been considered when planning and preparing raids to northern Estonia in 1219, and to Saaremaa in 1222. The knowledge of what was considered valuable and of high esteem by the pagans of Samland may automatically have been applied by the Danes to all east Baltic areas. The fact that the use of bowls, and the reason for their positive reception, was different in different regions (in Samland as grave goods, in Estonia as valuable raw material, good for use or exchange) has no importance in the present context.

To sum up, the presence of two contemporaneous areas of concentration of bronze bowls east of the Baltic Sea, in Virumaa in northern Estonia, and in Samland in the former East Prussia, enables us, when combined with written data, to suggest the use of bronze bowls as gifts from the King of Denmark (and the Church) to reward the loyalty of the local nobility in the newly subjected territories. This hypothesis is based on the fact that large concentrations of bronze bowls, including Estonian deposits consisting of several bowls inside each other, have been found only in areas of the Danish crusading mission. Finds of large numbers of bronze bowls enable us to suggest the practice of this policy during the Danish crusading raids to Samland of 1210, to Estonia of 1219, and to Saaremaa (or more precisely, the island of Muhu/Mone) of 1206 or 1222. However, to prove or disprove the hypothesis about the use of old-fashioned bronze bowls as a tool for positive

²¹ By 2015, the number of known find places had increased from 21 to 30 already. Data presented by Roman Shiroukhov in Klaipėda on the conference *The Sea and the Coastlands* (see footnote 3) in 2015.

²² The source of this date – the Lund annals – are generally considered less trustworthy and reliable.

possession of the local nobility, further work on the chronology and contexts of late twelfth and thirteenth-century bowl finds in Samland and Estonia, as well as further finds, are needed.

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KARALIAUS DOVANOS. „HANZOS“ BRONZINIAI DUBENYS XIII A. ESTIJOJE: DANŲ KRYŽIUOČIŲ ŽENKLAI?

TOOMAS TAMLA, HEIKI VALK

Santrauka

Bronziniai dubenys, archeologinė literatūroje žinomi kaip Hanzos dubenys, buvo naudojami dabartinės Vokietijos, Lenkijos, Pietų Skandinavijos ir gretimose teritorijose XI, XII ir dar XIII a. Nobiliteto jie buvo naudojami kaip indai rankoms plauti, bet buvo ir socialinio statuso ženklas. Dubenys, puošti simboliniais dorybių ir blogybių vaizdais, buvo ir moralinio tyrumo bei ištikimybės krikščioniškoms vertybėms ženklai.

Baltijos rytinėje dalyje tokių dubenų nėra gausiai randama. Išsiskiria du jų koncentracijos arealai – istorinės Virumaa provincijos šiaurės rytų Estijoje ir Semba buv. Rytų Prūsijoje (dabar Kaliningrado sritis). Estijoje rasta 220 dubenų (1, 4 pav.), kurių 208 yra iš tarpusavyje susijusių komplektų. Aštuoniais atvejais komplektai susideda iš 8 ir daugiau dubenų, kitais atvejais vienoje vietoje buvo rasti 65, 35 ir 34 dubenys (1 lentelė). Estijoje tokių dubenų dažniausiai aptinkama gyvenviečių kultūrinuose sluoksniuose ir lobiuose, kapuose jų nerandama. Veltsi, Kehala ir Mäetaguse lobiuose, kurie

buvo paslėpti XIII a. pirmojoje pusėje, buvo rasta atitinkamai 1, 19 ir 16 dubenų.

Didelė dubenų koncentracija ir jų datavimas leidžia siekti dubenis iš Virumaa su Vokietijos ir Danijos valdžių varžytynėmis pakrikštyti šią teritoriją apie 1220 m. Tokia prielaida grindžiama dviem argumentais: Henriko iš Livonijos kronikos žinia, kurioje kalbama, kad danai, norėdami aplenkti vokiečius, siuntė šventintą vandenį į kaimus, ragindami estus priimti krikštą iš jų, ir ikonografija, liudijanti, kad aprašomi dubenys buvo naudojami krikštui (5 pav.).

Bronzinių dubenų koncentracija Virumaa ir Semboje (6 pav.) nėra atsitiktinė. Reikia pažymėti, kad Semba 1210 m. taip pat buvo danų krikšto žygių taikynys. Didelis dubenų skaičius Virumaa ir Semboje gali būti aiškintinas panašiai: išėję iš mados dubenys, faktiškai laužas, buvo naudoti krikšto žygiuose kaip karaliaus dovana, norint pelnyti vietinio pagoniškojo nobiliteto palankumą, sukurti naujus subordinacijos ryšius, siekiant įvesti naują, krikščionišką, religiją. Nors dubenys Semboje kaip įkapės buvo naudoti nuo XI a., didesnė jų dalis datuojama XII a. pabaiga arba XIII a. pradžia. Reikia pažymėti, kad danų krikšto žygiai į Saremą 1206 ir 1222 m., Sembą 1210 m. ir šiaurės Estiją 1219 m. buvo suplanuoti ir vadovaujami tų pačių asmenybių – karaliaus Valdemaro II (valdė 1202–1241 m.) ir Andreaso Suneseno, Lundo arkivyskupo (1201–1228 m.). Priklausomai nuo vietinių sąlygų, karaliaus dovanos Semboje ir Virumaa buvo naudojamos skirtingai: pirmu atveju, pagal senąją tradiciją, kaip įkapės, kitu atveju – kaip vertingos žaliavos lobiai. Gali būti, kad didelė bronzinių dubenų vertė Semboje inspiravo danus juos naudoti kaip karaliaus dovanas ir krikšto žygių į Estiją metu.