



Fragment of the seal stamp of Thorkill, bishop of Tallinn, discovered in Virumaa

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In March 2017, a licensed metal-detectorist Sergey Zajcev delivered to the authorities of the National Heritage Board of Estonia a fragment of a bronze seal stamp, found in the Pühajõe village near Toila (Tamla 2017, 4). The fragment is relatively small (4 × 3 cm) and constitutes approximately a quarter of the whole stamp (Fig. 1). In order to have a better idea of what was depicted on the stamp I flipped it horizontally, thus getting a mirror image (Fig. 2). It revealed a person dressed in a long folded robe and sitting on a chair equipped with a head and clawed leg of the eagle or gryphon. Two cords were hanging down from somewhere, ending with a tassel on the left (heraldically) side of the person. Unfortunately, nothing but a short fragment (////SDEIGRAC////) was left from the inscription, i.e. somebody (whose name has a Latin ending S) by grace of God. Despite no name and title had preserved, the seemingly peaked oval shape of the stamp as well as the title allowed us to presuppose that the owner of the stamp could have been an ecclesiastic lord. The characteristic form of lettering indicates the 13th century as a possible time of its cutting.

Investigations based on the relevant literature revealed that the once owner of the stamp was Thorkill, Bishop of Tallinn between 1238? and 1260 (Toll & Sachssendahl 1887, 114, pl. D, no. 1). The inscription on the seal is to be read and complemented as [TORKI]LLVS DEI GRACI[A RE]VALENSIS EPISCOP[VS]. The imprints of the seal stamp that constituted the



Fig. 1. Fragment of the seal stamp found in the Pühajõe village.

Jn 1. Pühajõe külast leitud pitsati fragment. (AI 7813.)

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Fig. 2. Fragment of the seal stamp found in the Pühajõe village in mirror image.

Jn 2. Pühajõe külast leitud pitsati fragment peegelpildis.

basis for the edition of Toll & Sachssendahl were formerly kept in the Kukruse manor collection (now in the National Archives, RA EAA.2069.3.173, 174; <http://www.ra.ee/pitserid/>) (Fig. 3: 1–2, the latter in mirror). The original seal was kept in the Swedish National Archives in the 19th century at least, and it confirmed a document dating from 1253 (LECUB 1, no. 258, reg. no. 292). That document appeases a disagreement between Thorkill, Bishop of Tallinn and the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order regarding the tithe from the Järvamaa county. The bishop received five villages (Võhu, Lahu, Kapu, Karunga, Puhmu) and 20 ploughlands in the Järsi village in compensation. All the mentioned places are situated in historical Järvamaa in central Estonia.



Fig. 3. Seal of Thorkill, bishop of Tallinn, and its mirror image.

Jn 3. Tallinna piiskopi Thorkilli pitser ja selle peegelpilt.
(RA EAA.2069.3.173–174.)



Fig. 4. Seal of the Cistercian monastery of Eberbach.

Jn 4. Eberbachi tsistertsaskloostri pitser.
(Rossel 1858, 5, pl. I: 1.)

The two cords suspend from the upper part of the crozier that the bishop holds in his left hand. During the 13th century, the habit occurred to fix a veil called *pannisellus* or *sudarium* at the place where the bishop or abbot would grasp the crozier. However, what we see on the seal is not a veil but cords with a tassel. To my knowledge, the only seal stamp with similar tassels comes from the Cistercian monastery of Eberbach in Rhineland and was in use between 1178–1270 (Rossel 1858, 5, pl. I: 1) (Fig. 4). It seems to be a bit too early for a *pannisellus*. Maybe it is not a coincidence that this comparable seal belonged to a Cistercian abbot. We do not know much about the former life of

Thorkill, just that he has been a priest in Ribe, Denmark (LECUB 1, no. 206). Perhaps he was a Cistercian monk at an earlier time? Be that as it may, it was him who was the bishop when the St Michaels nunnery of Cistercian sisters was founded in Tallinn (Johansen 1933, 147; LECUB 1, no. 283).

Thus, the seal stamp really dates from the mid-13th century. Seal stamps of such age are extremely rare in Estonia. Let us look at a few examples. At some time in the early 19th century a bronze secret seal stamp with the name of King Eric (+S`ERICI·DEI·GRA·DANOR`ET·SCLVOR`REGIS) depicting a crown was discovered on the lands of the Ropka manor near Tartu; presently it belongs to the collections of Estonian History Museum (Körber 1802, 13–14; Fig. 5). There were three kings named Eric in Denmark in the 13th century: Erik IV Ploughpenny (1241–1250), Erik V Klipping (1259–1286) and Erik VI Menved (1286–1319). It is difficult to guess, to which one of them it belonged, or how a royal seal stamp could end up in Ropka, which was the territory of the Tartu bishopric then. However, this seal stamp looks brand new and, judging by its appearance, has never been used. It also does not have any grip or handle on the reverse, and that would have made the use of the stamp very uncomfortable. That is why its authenticity is disputable (written communication with Dr Michael Andersen, National Museum of Denmark, 1.03.2018). On the other hand, the lettering, the style and the king's title on the stamp are perfect, its main motif – the crown – is very characteristic for the Danish coins of the time, incl. the Tallinn ones. Also, there is a seal of king Christoph II (1320–1332) with the very same motif (Nottbeck 1880, 44, no. 316, pl. 22). Thus, if this stamp is genuine or not, remains a mystery so far.

After World War I, the owner of the Koila farmstead in the Jõelähtme parish found a seal stamp with the inscription +S`AGONIS FILII SAXONIS during ploughing; that stamp belonged to Aage Saxesen Munk, a son of the Danish vice regent in Estonia Saxe Aagesen (Johansen 1935, 63; AM 6519: 1/1, P 3731). According to Johansen, his activities in Estonia are recorded *ca.* 1289–1295 (Johansen 1933, 883–884). However, Danish scholar Christian Hau has rather convincingly argued that he could have been the same person who subsequently became vice regent of Estonia, too (1304–1314). Aage Saxesen died probably in 1314 and was buried into the Franciscan convent in Aalborg. His skeleton with a half broken seal stamp depicting his coat of arms and inscription +SIGILLVM:AGNONIS:SAXI:SON: was discovered during archaeological excavations in the convent church in 1994–1995 (Hau 2006). Most probably, it is the same stamp, by which in 1313 the seal was impressed that pastor of Võnnu Eduard Philipp Körber recorded in his manuscript in the early 19th century (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5. Seal stamp of Erik, king of Denmark found in the Ropka manor.

Jn 5. Taani kuninga Eriku pitsat Ropka mõisast.
(AM 13738: 54/1, P 3580.)

Photo / Foto: Vahur Lõhmus

Aage Saxsohn.
 Der Königlicher Capitaneus oder Rathfalkner
 zu Riga - mit Befehl des Königs - ein
 mit Leinwandtbl. versehen v. J. 1313. Darnach
 sein gemachtes Siegel in runder Form u. gelben Wachs
 also gesaltent ist.



Fig. 6. Seal of Aage Saxesen, Danish vice regent in Estonia.
 Jn 6. Taani asevalitseja Aage Saxeseni pitser 1313.
 (Körber 1804, 184.)



Fig. 7. Seal stamp of the bailiff of the bishopric of Wiek.
 Jn 7. Saare-Lääne piiskopkonna foogti pitsat.
 (AM 6494: 6, P 3709.)
 Photo / Foto: Vahur Lõhmus

Estonian History Museum holds also a seal stamp of the bailiff of the bishopric of Wiek (West-Estonia) from the early 14th century bearing the inscription +S+ADVOCATI. MARITIME (Fig. 7; AM 6494: 6, P 3709; Toll & Sachssendahl 1887, 81, pl. 17: 5), the use of it for the first time is recorded in 1319. Judging by the lettering of the inscription also a seal stamp, found in the ruins of the Maasilinn castle on Saaremaa, dates from the late 13th – early 14th century (Luce 1827, XIV; Toll & Sachssendahl 1887, 85, pl. 19: 7). Its legend +SIGILLVM♣CIVITATIS♣OSILIENSIS does not give us any clue to decide, which town has been meant in the inscription, yet it was the magistrate of Haapsalu who signed its correspondence with this very seal in the 16th century, till *ca.* 1550. Hence, Haapsalu

most probably used the stamp starting from the very beginning, for there were no more major cities in the bishopric: the town of Old-Pärnu that was destroyed in 1263 by the Lithuanians but rebuilt afterwards never gained any significant importance.

Archaeologist Mati Mandel unearthed another seal stamp from the late 13th – early 14th century in the ruins of a cellar in Lihula (Mandel 2000, 41, fig. 10; AM A 592: 128). Its legend S-LEBTI-HEREDIS:LVDOLFI-ALBI names some Ludolfus Albus (i.e. Ludolf Witte in German), heir of Lebtus, which could have been the Libadu village in Raplamaa County, recorded as Lepat, Lepede, Lepte, etc. in sources starting from 1421 (Johansen 1933, 479). There are other private seal stamps from the 14th century known, but none of higher authorities.

The question remains how a stamp of such a distinguished person as the bishop of Tallinn could end up in a remote village in Virumaa. Confirming Thorkill to his high position, King Valdemar II donated him 80 ploughlands in Rävåla County. He also supplemented 40 ploughlands in Virumaa in 1240, but just until a special bishop would be consecrated for Virumaa (LECUB 1, no. 165, reg. no. 185). In 1246 the pope, indeed, confirmed a Franciscan Dietrich of

Minden to that post. However, Dietrich never came to Estonia but remained as titular bishop in homey Westphalia (Evest 1869, 19–23). The possible whereabouts of the 40 ploughlands in Virumaa were specified neither in the document of 1240 nor in the next donation letter, given by the subsequent king Erik Ploughpenny (LECUB 1, no. 207; Johansen 1933, 143). Paul Johansen has suggested that the promised income of the bishop initially remained just on paper. It became real only in 1249 (Johansen 1933, 145–146) when Erik Ploughpenny granted Thorkill with 14 ploughlands in Kohatu village, Hageri parish. At the same time the king renewed the donation act on the lands in Rävåla and in Virumaa, specifying finally that the 40 ploughlands of Virumaa were located in the Selja village, Haljala parish (LECUB 1, no. 206). However, Selja is situated quite far from the find spot of the seal stamp in Pühajõe. Neither were the villages in Järvamaa, received by the bishop from the Order in 1253, closer to Pühajõe. Almost all the land property in the eastern part of Virumaa (Alutaguse) belonged to the Danish king then and was rather thinly populated (Johansen 1933, 551, map 14). During the 13th century, Pühajõe was an insignificant village of six ploughlands (Johansen 1933, 551) and there is neither data nor reason to believe that the bishop had any personal contacts or relations to that area. Thus, it remains unclear how a seal stamp of Thorkill made its journey from Tallinn to Pühajõe. It cannot be excluded that it was broken after the owner's death as the habit was and preserved afterwards just as a piece of bronze.

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TALLINNA PIISKOPI THORKILLI PITSATI KATKE VIRUMAALT

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2017. aasta märtsis anti Muinsuskaitseametile üle Virumaalt Toila vallast Pühajõe külast metallidetektori abil leitud pronksist pitsati katke. Leitud tükk on suhteliselt väike (mõõtmed 4×3 cm) ja moodustab kogu pitsatist umbes veerandi. Sellel kujutatakse pikas rohkete voltidega rüüs isikut, kelle istet kaunistab kotka või greifi pea ja küünistega jalg. Pealiskirjadest on säilinud nime ja kohamääratluseta tekstikatke (jn 1–2). Kuid kirjanduse ja Rahvusarhiivi andmebaasis kättesaadava digitaalse pitserikoguga tutvumisel selgus, et kujutis leitud fragmendil on identne Tallinna piiskopi Thorkilli (1238?–1260) pitseriga (jn 3) ja pitsat kuulus seega talle.

Nii vanad pitsatid on Eestis haruldased. Tartumaalt Ropka mõisa maadelt leiti millalgi 19. sajandi alguskümnenditel 13. sajandi sekretepitsat Taani kuninga Eriku nime ja krooni kujutisega (jn 5), kuid selle autentsus pole kindel. Eesti Ajaloomuuseumis säilib Taani läänimehe ja arvatavasti hilisema asevalitseja Aage Saxeseni pitsat 13. sajandi lõpust. Samas hoitakse ka Läänemaa stiftifoogti pitsatit (jn 7) 14. sajandi algusest (varaseim teadaolev kasutus 1319).

Nähtavasti 13. sajandi lõppu – 14. sajandi algusse kuulub šrifti põhjal otsustades pitsat, mis leiti 19. sajandi alguses Maasilinna varemestest ja mida 16. sajandil kasutas Haapsalu magistraat. Veel on leitud üksikuid eraisikute pitsateid 14. sajandist, kuid kõrgemate võimukandjate omi rohkem mitte.

Kuidas võis Tallinna piiskopi pitsat sattuda Virumaale? 1249. aastal määratles Taani kuningas Erik Plovpenning, et Tallinna piiskop saab muu kõrval elatiseks 40 adramaad Virumaal Selja külas Haljala kihelkonnas. 1253. aastal sai Thorkill kompensatsiooniks kümnnise eest ordult valdusi Järvamaa küladest, kuid niihästi need kui ka mainitud Selja asuvad pitsati leiukohast üpris kaugel. Pühajõe oli tollal tähtsusetu kuue adramaa suurune küla ja pole andmeid ega ka põhjust arvata, et piiskopil võis sellega olla mingeid isiklikke sidemeid. Nii jääb pitsati tee Tallinnast Pühajõe meile nähtavasti igaveseks teadmata. Oletamisi võidi pitsat pärast omaniku surma katki murda ja 2017. aastal leitud katkend säilis lihtsalt kui tükk pronksi.