



# Late Viking Age silver hoard from Kirisaare, Järva County

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## DISCOVERY OF SILVER ARTEFACTS AND INVESTIGATION AT THE FIND SPOT

During the recent three years nearly twenty silver ornaments and their fragments have been discovered with the aid of metal detector from a pasture in the village of Kirisaare, Järva County (AI 7680, 7854, 7999). Although they were not discovered as a single assemblage but dispersed over a large area, the similar artefact types and identical dating suggest their belonging to the same hoard (Tamla 2017a; 2017b). To check this assumption, and hoping to establish the original location of the hoard, the authors of the paper decided to survey the site of discovery in September 2018. The discoverer of the artefacts was included in the team, to perform an additional search with metal detector.

The mapping of the discoveries points to an area of 10 × 30 m at the western fringe of the pasture. About 30 years ago it was still a field belonging to the collective farm. On the topographic map of 1939 this area was also marked as a field, as well as on the map of Livonian Province from 1884. At that time it was a property of the Koordi private estate.<sup>1</sup>

To investigate the soil of the site, three trial pits were dug, measuring 20 × 20 cm and 30–35 cm deep, two of which were located in the area of concentration of silver artefacts, pointed out by the finder. The profile in all three pits was identical. Beneath the 3–5 cm thick sod layer, thickly grown with grass roots, lay evenly beige-grey sandy loam moraine, typical to Central Estonia. To a depth of 23–25 cm from the verge of the trial pit the soil was not dense, as is characteristic to plough layer, but did not contain any material characteristic to habitation layer (e.g. fragments of charcoal and clay, burnt stones, bone fragments, etc.). Deeper down the moraine became close-textured, considerably lighter by colour, and displayed no traces of human activities. The additional search with metal detector did not produce additional finds either (Tamla 2018).

## COMPOSITION AND DATE OF THE HOARD

A total of 19 artefacts were found from the Kirisaare pasture, 18 of which were of silver and one of aluminium. Beads are most numerous of silver artefacts. There are seven of them, all biconical, but slightly varying by size (2.1–1.7 × 1.4–1.3 × 1.1–0.9 cm). On the basis of decorations soldered upon their wider part the beads can be divided into two groups. On four beads, one of them gilded, there are two wavy rows of filigree or thin flat wire (Fig. 1: 1–4), the other

<sup>1</sup> Data from Estonian Land Board geoportal, historical maps application (<https://geoportaal.maaamet.ee/est/Kaardiserver/Ajaloolised-kaardid-p95.html>; visited 2.08.2019).

three have triangles and strips of tiny granules (Fig. 1: 5–7). Beads of a similar shape and design have been found in several hoards in Gotland, Öland, South Sweden, Finland, Russia and Latvia, which have been deposited in the 11th – 12th cc. (e.g. Stenberger 1947, Abb. 250: 9, 12, 13; 259: 1, 2; Stenberger 1958, Abb. 51: 11; Duczko 1987, 19 and references, figs 8: h–k, m–p; Kivikoski 1973, Abb. 1156; Urtāns 1977, fig. 9: 1, 4; Gushchin 1936, pl. XIV: 7, XV: 8). In Estonia such beads have been found in the hoards of Olustvere (*tpq* 1080) and Kukruse (*tpq* 1093) (Tamla & Kiudsoo 2009, no 18; Jonuks *et al.* 2017, 55, fig. 8). As the place of manufacture of Viking and Late Viking Age beads, pendants, temple rings and other ornaments decorated in filigree and granulation techniques, workshops on the bank of Dnieper River, in the centres of onetime Moravia and Bohemia have been suggested as one possibility (Duczko 1985, 111). These were specialized in rather mass production and dealing in such technique of ornaments. The craftsmen working there were influenced by Carolingian, Byzantine, Eastern Mediterranean, and Adriatic styles (Poulik 1978, 169).



Fig. 1. Silver beads.

Jn 1. Hõbehelmed.

(AI 7680: 3,4; 7854: 1,2; 7999: 5–7.)

Photo / Foto: Ülle Tamla



Fig. 2. The design of pendants imitates Arabic dirhams (1, 2) and silver-sheet pendants with embossed ornamentation and with riveted band loops (3, 4).

Jn 2. Araabia dirhemite mündikirju jäljendava kujundusega ripatsid (1, 2) ning kohrutatud mustri ja needitud paeljate kandadega rimmalehed (3, 4).

(AI 7854: 3; 7999: 8, 3, 13.)

Photo / Foto: Ülle Tamla

The second largest group of ornaments consists of six pendants. The design of two pendants imitates Arabic dirhams (Fig. 2: 1, 2), but different dies have been used to make them. In Estonian hoards pendants with designs inspired by Arabic coin inscriptions have been found also in Paimre, Kõue I, Kukruse hoards (Tamla 2005, 112, fig. 8; Tamla & Kiudsoo 2014, figs 4: 5, 6, 217; Jonuks *et al.* 2017, 57, fig. 7), and a hoard from South Estonia with unspecified site of discovery (Leimus 2009, 100–101, fig. 2: 3), but the Kirisaare specimens are undoubtedly most skillfully made and both of them had a frame of beaded wire. On the basis of Estonian hoards they can be dated to the last quarter of the 11th century. Beyond Estonia pendants of such design have been found in Sweden, Ukraine, Poland, Latvia, and their datings coincide with Estonian ones (see Berga 2017, 173 and references). Analogous pendants found in Finland have been regarded as somewhat earlier, and as their date the period from the 1st half of the 10th century until the 12th century has been suggested (Talvio 1978; 2002).

The four circular small pendants are made of a thin silver sheet, and on two of them a riveted band loop is preserved, one of silver and the other of bronze sheet (Fig. 2: 3, 4). All four have evidently had quite similar embossed relief decoration, but due to the deformation of the breakable silver sheet it cannot

be determined more precisely. On the basis of Estonian hoards the local manufacturing of pendants cut from silver sheet and furnished with band loop started at the latest in the 11th century (Tamla & Kiudsoo 2014, 216–217).

The penannular finger-ring with plaited front part and overlapping ends (Fig. 3) is quite bulky (17.3 g). It represents a type spread in the Baltic countries but also, e.g., in England, Scotland and Ireland, since the Late Bronze Age. In the Baltic countries such rings are most numerous after the Late Viking Age, and they have been regarded as status jewellery belonging to the elite (Tamla & Kallavus 1998, 32–33 and references). Among the analogous rings found in Estonia, the stray find from the Vahetüki village, Harjumaa, is closest to the Kirisaare specimen (Kiudsoo 2018).

The two long pins of penannular brooches, one of which is twisted and partly molten in the heat, also belong among ornaments (Fig. 4: 1, 2). They have a broad foot ornamented with different stamps and engraving tools, and thin band-shaped end. Such pins are typical to penannular brooches with a thin arc with a longitudinal ridge, which were made in Estonia after the 2nd half of the 11th century (Tamla & Kiudsoo 2014, 216–217). However, the pins of brooches found in Kirisaare do not allow more accurate determination of penannular brooch types to which they belonged.

Special mention should be made of a pin of a penannular brooch, a part of which has been hacked off from each end (Fig. 5). It is a 3.6 g piece of hacksilver, i.e. an artefact fragmented at trading silver (Kiudsoo 2016a, 100). In Estonian hoards hacked silver ornaments appear at the turn of the I and II millennia (e.g. the Räägi hoard, *tpq* 998; see Molvõgin 1994, no 6).

The thin aluminium pendant, the front face depicts the Virgin Mary, and the rear one St Kazimir (Fig. 6) may have been brought as a pilgrim souvenir from Vilnius (Vilno), from the Carmelite chapel built beside the town gate named *Aušros Vartai* (Eng. ‘the Gate of



**Fig. 3.** Penannular finger-ring.

**Jn 3.** *Lahtiste otstega sõrmus.*

(AI 7999: 1.)

Photo / Foto: Ülle Tamla



**Fig. 4.** Two pins of penannular brooches.

**Jn 4.** *Kahe hoburaudsõle nõelad.*

(AI 7680: 1; 7999: 2.)

Photo / Foto: Ülle Tamla



**Fig. 5.** A pin of a penannular brooch hacked off from both ends.

**Jn 5.** *Kahest otsast maha raiitud hoburaudsõle nõel.*

(AI 7999: 4.)

Photo / Foto: Ülle Tamla



**Fig. 6.** Aluminium pilgrim souvenir from the Carmelite chapel in Vilnius (Vilno). *a* – front side, *b* – back side.

**Jn 6.** Alumiiniumist palverännumedaljon Vilniuse (Vilno) karmeliitide kabelist. *a* – esikülg, *b* – tagakülg.

(AI 7999: 11.)

Photo / Foto: Ülle Tamla

Dawn<sup>2</sup>). An icon with similar Virgin Mary to which miracle power is attributed is located there and therefore it is a destination of pilgrims to this day.<sup>2</sup> The aluminium pendant belongs to the modern era and certainly cannot be related to the same hoard as the earlier silver ornaments.

There is no reason to doubt that the silver ornaments and hacksilver found in Kirisaare belonged to the same find assemblage. It is possible that it mainly consisted of a jewellery set that was hidden, along with other valuable items, near to the surface, hoping to be recovered later. This would also explain the discovery of items of the treasure in the uppermost part of plough layer. The dispersion of the treasure is certainly related to the cultivation at the hiding place.

The Kirisaare hoard does not contain any coins that could help to date it with a certain precision. The dating of the items is based on similar finds discovered and dated in the Baltic Sea region, including Estonia. The preliminary dating of artefacts suggests that the hoard has remained in the ground from the 2nd half of the 11th century or in the very beginning of the 12th century.

## HOARDS OF KIRISAARE AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

The period of Estonian Late Iron Age that is richest in hoards is the 2nd half of the 11th century (beginning from 1060). The settlement area near the Pirita River in NW Estonia is outstanding for the density of hoards of the turn of the 11th – 12th centuries. Silver hoards and deposits of bronze ornaments most likely deposited at about the same time have come to light from the Gulf of Finland to the SW corner of Järvamaa County. The importance of the Pirita River, emerging from Pususoo mire located beside the settlement unit of Harmi-Kõue, as an important route of communication can be observed already since the 3rd century AD by exceptional finds of Roman coins (Kiudsoo 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b). The course of the communication route running south from the Tallinn Bay is well marked by the discovery of hoards from the turn of the 11th–12th centuries (Fig. 7). From the rest of Rävåla and ancient Harju no hoards of that period have been discovered. The only exception is the hoard from Vatsla (Fig. 7: 1), remains of which were recovered in 2015 from the lower reaches of the Vääna River, about 10 km from Tallinn. Some silver coins of the 10th – 11th century were also found from Tallinn, from the SE part of Tõnismägi (Fig. 7: 2) in the course of archaeological rescue excavations in 2017. At least a part of them may also come from a hoard deposited around 1100 AD (Varul *et al.* 2018; Kiudsoo 2019, 117 and references).

Besides Vatsla and Tõnismäe the large hoards of Lagedi and Ubina, consisting mainly of coins and deposited at the end of the 11th – beginning of the 12th century have been also discovered on the territory of ancient Rävåla (Molvõgin 1994, no 66; Tamla *et al.* 2006, 231–238)

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., <http://www.pilgrimai.lt/ausros-vartai/> (last visited 2.08.2019).



**Fig. 7.** Distribution map of 11th–12th cc hoards of NW-Estonia. 1 – Vatsla, 2 – Tõnismägi, 3 – Lagedi, 4 – Ubina, 5 – Vaida, 6 – Harmi, 7 – Kirisaare, 8 – Silmsi, 9 – Kõue/Nutu, 10 – Mustla, 11 – Öötla, 12 – Jüri, 13 – Kurna.

**Jn 7.** Loode-Eesti 11./12. saj vahetuse peitvarade levikukaart. 1 – Vatsla, 2 – Tõnismägi, 3 – Lagedi, 4 – Ubina, 5 – Vaida, 6 – Harmi, 7 – Kirisaare, 8 – Silmsi, 9 – Kõue/Nutu, 10 – Mustla, 11 – Öötla, 12 – Jüri, 13 – Kurna.

Map / Kaart: Kersti Siitan

(Fig. 7: 3–4). It is also possible that the earlier part of the Vaida hoard (Fig. 7: 5) as well as the hoards discovered in Harmi, South Harjumaa (Fig. 7: 6) and Kirisaare, western Järvamaa (Fig. 7: 7), containing silver ornaments, also belong to the same period. For the silver hoards discovered between the villages of Nutu and Silmsi (Paunküla II, Kõue I–IV) (Fig. 7: 9, 8) the depositing time about 1100 AD has been already formerly suggested (Kiudsoo 2016a, 179–189). By now a jewellery assemblage of the same date (Ratas & Kiudsoo 2017, 61–67) and a silver ring of the 11th century (Kiudsoo 2018) have been also found from the Kõue region. The discovery of the ring may be also connected to a hitherto unknown hoard, but it would be untimely to draw conclusions about the accurate date of the latter. Further, some objects, interpreted as remains of a ploughed-over hoard (jewellery box?) (Kiudsoo 2019, 122–123) were discovered in the village of Mustla, Järvamaa (Fig. 7: 10), the area between Kõue and Kirisaare hoards, in April 2017 (Kiudsoo 2017).

As for the Viking and Late Viking Age hoards discovered in Järvamaa, their number is minute compared to the respective finds from the coastal area of North Estonia. Apart from the finds from Koigi, 10th century (Leimus 2007, no 14) and Ambla-Jõgisoo, beginning of the 11th century, the few silver hoards of the 2nd half of the 11th century all come from the eastern part of the county, which is connected with the important centre of Äntu Punamägi (*Agelinde*), located at the border of Virumaa and Järvamaa (Kiudsoo 2013, 6–21). Therefore the brand-new find from Kirisaare, together with the formerly known Öötla hoard (AM A 119; Fig. 7: 11), are of considerable importance for the ascertainment of the inland (trade) routes. While the presumable *Agelinde* fort district communicated with the outer world evidently via the catchment area of Peipsi and Pskov lakes, the inhabitants of the area of Kareda – Öötla – Kirisaare had to turn north. Considering the distribution pattern of the hoards (Fig. 7) and

their composition, as well as the contemporaneous artefacts of Finnish types found from the region it seems possible that one of the important routes from South Harjumaa to Järvamaa ran precisely across Mustla. This supposition is also confirmed by the distribution map of ancient villages of this part of Harjumaa, i.e. the settlement region stretched out in NW – SE direction, comprising Paunküla, Silmsi, Ardu and Mustla (Kiudsoo 2019, 124 and references).

The researchers of the road network of Estonia have presumed that the predecessor of the Tartu road, the section Mõigu – Järveküla – Assaku – Lehmja – Vaida – Saula – Kolu – Kose – Ravila, following the Pirita river, is one of the oldest routes connecting the neighbourhood of the Tallinn Bay with the inland areas. Paul Johansen (1933) held that the route forth from Paunküla, i.e. Ardu – Mustla – Võõbu – Puiatu – Purdi section was used only for sledding until the beginning of the Middle Ages (Raid 2005, 179 and references). According to Valdo Praust (2012, 71, 83–84; 2015, 101–102), who has, alongside with thorough analysis of maps, also carried out landscape surveys in the mentioned region, the summer route, however, extended to the Kaguvere bog island, which was most likely the southeasternmost inhabited place in the ancient county of Kose (?). Beyond Kaguvere the section existed that was passable only in wintertime (so-called Kareda winter route), which headed towards Otiku across Rõamäe and Lintsi. Beyond that the dry land route was passable all the year round, running over Korba, Kirisaare and Öötla to Kareda.

Some kilometres southeast from Kirisaare the village of Öötla is located, where an assemblage of bronze ornaments was discovered before 1896 (Fig. 7: 11), probably a set of jewellery that had belonged to a wealthy woman. Hoards of similar composition and date have been found in NW Estonia in the immediate neighbourhood of Järvamaa only on the mentioned line of the Pirita river: from the villages of Jüri (Fig. 7: 12), Kurna (Fig. 7: 13) and Kõue (Fig. 7: 9; Kiudsoo 2019, 124 and references).

Although the densest concentration of the hoards of that period in Harjumaa as well as in the whole of Estonia can be observed within the settlement unit of Harmi – Kõue, it indicates only the better state of investigation of the upper reaches of the Pirita river (*Hirwenoye*) and nothing else. Although systematic landscape surveys like in Kõue have not been carried out in the rest of Harjumaa, the concentration of hoards of the late 11th – early 12th century known from NW Estonia along a common line allows us to presume that the plundering raid or campaign, previously mentioned in connection with the finds from Kõue, concerned a very certain district along the inland road starting from the Tallinn Bay. Certainly these cannot be treasures left in the ground as a result of famines, crop failures, etc., as has been suggested about the hoards from 860ies and the mid-10th century (Leimus *et al.* 2018, 25–28). Otherwise contemporaneous hoards would have been found also elsewhere, not only in the immediate neighbourhood of the mentioned NW – SE-oriented inland route. Apparently the mentioned campaign was one of the many bloody events that occurred in these parts in the Late Viking Age, which regrettably are not recorded in chronicles.

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## HILISVIIKINGIAEGNE AARE JÄRVAMAALT KIRISAAREST

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Järvamaalt, Kirisaare küla piiridesse jäävalt endiselt põllumaalt on viimastel aastatel avastatud metallidetektori abil ligi paarkümmend hõbeehet ja ehete fragmenti. Kuigi need ei tulnud päevavalgele kitsalt alalt ühe kogumina, osutab leidude liigiline koostis ja vanusemäärang nende kuulamisele ühte ja samasse aardesse. Lootuses teha kindlaks peitvara algne asukoht, korraldati 2018. aasta septembris leiuala ülevaatus.

Leidude kaardistamine osutas u 300 m<sup>2</sup> suurusele maa-alale, kus on vähemalt viimase 150 aasta jooksul haritud põldu. Leiuala pinnase uurimiseks kaevati prooviaugud, neist kaks hõbeesemete kontsentratsioonialale. Kõigis prooviaukudes puudus kultuurkiht; kuni 30 cm sügavuseni oli pinnas läbi küntud. Künnikihist sügavamale jäi inimtegevusest puutumata looduslik aluspõhi, kus sissekaevaid ei täheldatud. Ka metallidetektoriga tehtud täiendav otsing ei toonud leidudele lisa.

Kirisaarest saadud hõbeesemete hulgas on seitse granulatsioon- ja filigraantehnikas kaunistustega poolikujulist helmest (jn 1). Samasuguseid helmeid sisaldavad ka mitmed Ojamaa, Ölandi, Lõuna-Rootsi, Soome, Vene ja Läti 11.–12. sajandisse dateeritud aarded; Eesti aardest nt Olustvere (*tpq* 1080) ja Kukruse (*tpq* 1093). Selliste helmeste üheks tõenäolisemaks valmistamiskohaks peetakse käsitöökodasid, mis asusid Dnepri jõe ääres, samuti omaaegses Moraavias ning Böömis ja olid spetsialiseerunud just sellises stiilis ja tehnikas ehteasjade meisterdamisele.

Leikogumi kuuhest ripatsist jälgendab kahe kujundus Araabia dirhemeid (jn 2: 1, 2). Kõigist Eestist leitud ja 11. sajandi viimase veerandiga dateeritud analoogsetest ripatsitest eristuvad Kirisaare omad erakordselt meisterliku teostuse poolest ja on ühtlasi ainsad, mille servas on pärltraadist raam. Ülejäänud neli on kohrutatud mustri ja needitud paeljate kandadega hõbeplekist rinnalehed (jn 2: 3, 4). Eesti aardeleidude põhjal nähtub, et kohalikud ehtemeistrid hakkasid selliseid rinnalehti valmistama hiljemalt 11. sajandil.

Üsna kogukas (17,3 g) on punutud esiosaga sõrmus (jn 3). Sama tüüpi hõbesõrmuseid on Läänemere ruumi maades teada alates viikingiaja teisest poolest ja neid peetakse toonasele eliidle kuulunud staatuseheteks. Eesti leidudest sarnaneb Kirisaare sõrmusega kõige enam Harjumaalt Vahetüki külast 2018. aastal juhuleiuna saadud eksemplar.

Ehteasjade hulka kuuluvad ka kaks hoburaudsõle nõela, millel on ornamenditud lai esiosa ja õhuke lintjas tagaosaga (jn 4: 1, 2). Seda tüüpi nõelad on ise-

loomulikud harikaarega hoburaudsõlgedele, mida kohalikud ehtemeistrid hakkasid valmistama hiljemalt 11. sajandi teisel poolel. Kuna Kirisaare leidude hulgas sõled puuduvad, siis pole võimalik täie kindlusega väita, et mõlemad nõelad kuulusid just sellistele sõlgedele.

Eraldi tähelepanu väärib ühe hoburaudsõle laiakannaline nõel, mille mõlemad otsad on maha raiutud (jn 5). Eestist leitud aarretesse ilmuvad hõbedaga kauplemiseks tükeldatud hõbeehet (nn hakkhõbe) I ja II aastatuhande vahetuse paiku (nt Räägi aare, *tpq* 998; vt Molvõgin 1994, nr 6).

Hõbeehete leiualalt päevavalgele tulnud alumiiniumist õhukese ripatsi esiküljel kujutatakse Neitsi Maarjat (jn 6: a) ja tagaküljel Püha Kazimiri (jn 6: b). See on uusaegne palverännumetaljon, mis on saadud Vilniusest karmeliitide kabelist, kus on samasuguse Neitsi Maarja kujutisega ikoon. Sellel arvatakse olevat imeline vägi ja seetõttu on see palverännukoht tänaseni. Alumiiniumist ripatsi kuulumine oluliselt varasema dateeringuga Kirisaare hõbeaardesse on kindlalt välistatud.

Kõik Kirisaarest leitud hõbeesemed kuulusid ühte ja samasse hilisviikingiaegsesse aardesse, mis ilmselt peideti üsna maapinna lähedale või jäi sinna mingil muul põhjusel. See põhjendaks ka esemete avastamist üksnes künnikihi ülemisest osast. Aarde laialikandumine oma algest kohast on seletatav maaharimisega.

Kirisaare aare kuulub Eesti noorema rauaaja kõige aarderikkamasse perioodi, milleks on 11. sajandi teine pool (alates 1060. aastast). Kuigi see aare ei sisalda täpsemat dateerimist võimaldavaid münte, on tõenäoline, et vara peideti millalgi 11. ja 12. sajandi vahetuse paiku. Sama dateeringuga aarete tihedusega paistab silma eelkõige Piritajõe äärne asustusala Loode-Eestis. Ilmselt ühel ja samal ajal maapõue jäänud hõbeaardeid ja pronksehetest koosnevaid peitleide on sealt päevavalgele tulnud alates Soome lahest kuni Järvamaa edalanurgani (jn 7), kus paikneb ka Kirisaare leiukoht (jn 7: 7). Tollaste leidude levikukaart markeerib tähtsat sisemaist liiklussoont, mida Eesti teeduurijad on pidanud tänapäevase Tartu maantee eelkäijaks. Nende aarete peitmine võis toimuda seoses rüüsteretkega, mis puudutas üht kindlat Tallinna lahe äärest alguse saanud maismaatee äärset ala. Kindlasti ei saa tegemist olla näljahädade, ikalduste vms tagajärjel maapõue jäänud varandustega, kuna vastasel juhul oleks samaaegseid peitvarasid pidanud tulema päevavalgele ka mujalt kui üksnes kõnealuse loode–kagu-suunalise maismaatee lähiümbrusest.