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A RARE MACEHEAD FROM THE VILLAGE OF TAMMEKÜLA, HARGLA PARISH

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INTRODUCTION

In August 2009 a bronze macehead (Fig. 1), found already in June 2008 from the yard of the Pihlaka farm in Hargla Tammeküla¹, south-east Estonia was handed over to archaeologists. The macehead was discovered in the soil of the farm yard belonging to Marko Atso in the course of ground levelling, but its original location cannot be established. The archaeologists Martti Veldi and Ester Oras who surveyed the find spot found no traces of archaeological cultural layer either in the yard or in the vicinity. Hence the object must have been incidentally lost in the past.

THE APPEARANCE AND MEASUREMENTS OF THE MACEHEAD

The bronze macehead has been cast using a lost-wax method in a bivalve clay mould, deciding by the casting ridge on its two opposite sides (Fig. 1). On the sides of its middle part four large pyramidal projections can be seen, and upwards and downwards of these, there are eight smaller three- or four-part knobs. Besides projections and knobs, relief lines (flanges) resembling cords decorate the macehead. The height of the macehead is 5.3 cm, the diameter in the middle is up to 4.5 cm (together with pyramidal projections up to 6.8 cm).

In the top and bottom parts of the macehead there are low knuckles, the height of which is between 5–6 mm and 8–9 mm. The haft-hole is not quite round and in each end its inner diameter is 2.2–2.3 cm. In the middle of the macehead the cavity widens and it is the widest at the pyramidal projections. The maceheads of this type, found from Russia and Byelorussia are said to have a bronze case filled with lead (Kirpitsnikov 1966, 51; Plavinskij 2009, 372). The specimen from Tammeküla, however, is hollow inside and therefore stands out for its relatively light weight – only 184.7 grams.

ANALOGOUS FINDS

According to the typology of maceheads compiled by the Russian archaeologist Anatoli Kirpitsnikov the specimen from Hargla Tammeküla belongs to type III, which, by the mid-1960s, was represented by 8 finds from the territory of Ancient Russia (Fig. 2: 1; Kirpitsnikov 1966, 51–52, fig. 2: 5–7). These were mostly found from the middle course of the Dniepr River, but a couple of them also came from north-west Russia (Kirpitsnikov & Medvedev 1985, 311, tab. 129: 3, 10; Artemjev 1990, 12, fig. 10: 2). Besides Russia several maceheads of this type (4 specimens) have been found in

¹ The macehead and relating issues are discussed in depth in another paper (Mäesalu 2010).



Fig. 1. Casting ridge proves that the macehead was cast in a bivalve mould.

Jn 1. Valurant näitab, et nuiapea on valatud kahepoolses vormis.

Photo / Foto: Ain Mäesalu

types are quite similar, they may be regarded rather as two variants of the same type.

The distribution area of maceheads of type IV is quite similar to type III. The largest number of them (26 specimens) has been found from the territory of Ancient Russia, whereby their concentration is higher in Kiev Land, and the town of Kiev is regarded as the centre of their manufacturing (Kirpitišnikov 1966, 52–53, 55). Single maceheads of type IV have been found in Volga-Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Poland, East-Prussia and Lithuania (Kirpitišnikov 1966, 52–53; Plavinskij 2009, 375). In addition to these, three specimens have been found from Latvia (Atgāzis 1999, 21–23, fig. 3: 2–3), two from Byelorussia (Plavinskij 2009, 375–376, fig. 4: 5–6) and at least five from Sweden (Sanstedt 1992, type A: 5–7, 10–11).

DATING

Kirpitišnikov has dated the maceheads of types III and IV found from the territory of Ancient Russia to the 12th century and the first half of the 13th century, whereby he asserts that their manufacturing ended in connection with the destruction of urban centres of Ancient Russia during the Mongol campaign in 1240 (Kirpitišnikov 1966, 51–55). Various similar finds have been dated to more or less the same period also in other places. For example in Byelorussia two maceheads of type III were found from hill forts that were destroyed by fire in the mid-13th century, and one specimen came to light from the cultural layer of the beginning of the 13th century in the town of Slutsk (Plavinskij 2009, 374).

Of Latvian maceheads, two fragments of a macehead of type IV have been dated more accurately: they were discovered in the cultural layer of the second half of the 13th century on the hill fort of Asote (Šnore 1962, 46–47, fig. 63; Atgāzis 1999, 20–21,

Byelorussia (Plavinskij 2009, 372–375, fig. 4: 1–4).

Single specimens of maceheads of type III have been found from the region of the middle course of the Kama River, the former Volga-Bulgaria and present-day Bulgaria, Poland and from former East-Prussia (Kirpitišnikov 1966, 52; Plavinskij 2009, 374), Latvia (Atgāzis 1999, 21–23, fig. 3: 1), Lithuania (Kirpitišnikov 1966, 52, pl. XXVI: 3), Sweden (Sanstedt 1992, type A: 2) and Finland (Rinne 1909, fig. 3). In the whole world only about a couple of dozens of maceheads of this type are known.

In Kirpitišnikov's classification the maceheads of type IV strongly resemble those of type III, only they have pyramidal projections instead of 8 small knobs (Fig. 2: 2; Kirpitišnikov 1966, 52–53, fig. 2: 8–10). Since other elements of these

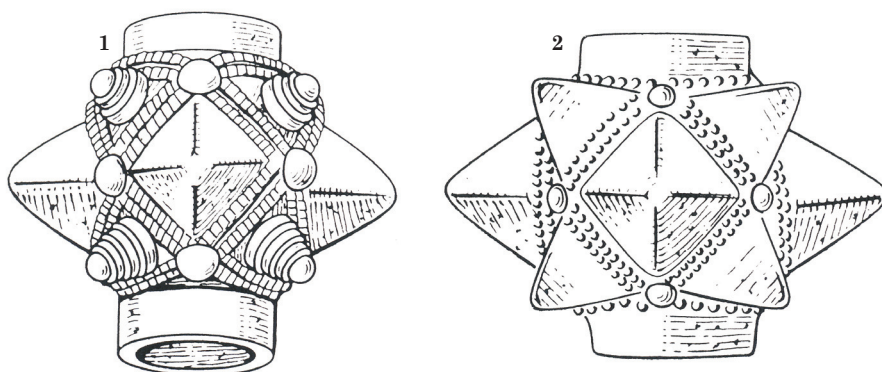


Fig. 2. Maceheads of types III (1) and IV (2) found from Russia (after Kirpitsnikov 1966).
 Jn 2. Venemaalt leitud III (1) ja IV (2) tüüpi nuiapead (Kirpitsnikov 1966 järgi).

fig. 2: 3). The only macehead of type III from Novgorod was also found in the cultural layer of the second half of the 13th century (Artemjev 1990, 12, fig. 10: 2). Hence the weapons of the type under discussion could have been manufactured also somewhat later, it is equally possible that some specimens were just used for a longer time.

A WEAPON OR A SYMBOL OF POWER?

The mace of Hargla Tammeküla was definitely used as a weapon, as can be seen by percussion traces on its large projections. Repeated blows have partly damaged also the smaller knobs. However, the damage is greater on the knobs located on the same side of the larger projections, and their damage is uneven. Most likely it indicates the position of the macehead on a wooden haft with a length of about 60–80 cm. If the mace was used mainly by a horseman to attack the foot soldiers, the upper knobs evidently wore more heavily, but if the mace belonged to a foot soldier, his blows probably caused the wear of lower knobs.

Many archaeologists and weaponry-historians who have discussed various medieval metal maceheads have accentuated that although maces were used as weapons, they could have possessed also the meaning of a symbol of power, indicating higher social status (Boenheim 1890, 357–363; Dolínek & Durdík 1995, 147–149; Müller & Kölling 1982, 90; Seitz 1981, 397–407; Tarassuk & Blair 1982, 313–315, etc.).

In Estonian archaeological record three metal maceheads were hitherto known (Fig. 3; see also Mäesalu & Peets 2010), but these differ from the specimen under discussion. They resemble a cube with faceted corners and belong, according to Kirpitsnikov's typology, to type II (Kirpitsnikov 1966, 48, pl. XXV: 2). The appearance of the maceheads proves that they were definitely used as weapons, but their find context indicates that they could have been symbols of power of somebody of a higher status as well.

In the excavations of the Pada cemetery, directed by Toomas Tambla, a macehead of this type came to light in grave XXII, where a 50–55-year-old man was buried together with rich grave goods. On the basis of the 12 silver coins found there a numismatist Mauri Kiudsoo dated the burial to the beginning of 1220s.² The bronze

² Pers. comm. Mauri Kiudsoo (AI).



Fig. 3. Maceheads with faceted corners found from Estonia.

- 1 – Pada cemetery;
- 2 – Siksali cemetery;
- 3 – Otepää hill fort.

Jn 3. Eestist leitud fassetitud nurkadega nuiapead.

- 1 – Pada kalmistult;
- 2 – Siksali kalmistult;
- 3 – Otepää linnamäelt.

Photo/ Foto: Mats Õun

(AI 5366: XXII: 1; 5101: XLI: 14; 4036: III: 188.)



Fig. 4. Sculptural group in the Karja church, which presumably depicts an Estonian chieftain together with a son recovered from hostage.

Jn 4. Karja kiriku skulptuurigrupp, kus kujutatakse arvatavalt eestlaste ülikut koos pantvangis olnud pojaga.

Photo / Foto: Rein Maran

macehead discovered in the excavations of the Otepää hill fort, directed by Osvald Saadre, came to light in the layer containing finds from the 12th–14th centuries. In the 12th and early 13th centuries the Estonian chieftains dwelling in the Otepää hill fort had a high social position. Relying upon written sources the Otepää hill fort can be regarded as one of the most important centres of south-east Estonia. In the excavations of the Siksälä cemetery, an iron macehead was found from the grave XLI. It was dated to the second half of the 13th century. The burial of a young man aged 18–19 belonged among the richest in this cemetery by grave goods (Peets 2007, 195; Laul & Valk 2007, fig. 91, 100).

A macehead with faceted corners is depicted also in a sculptural group in the Karja church, Saaremaa. There we can see a man, holding a mace of this type in his left hand and a little boy with his right hand (Fig. 4). Art historians have expressed the opinion that the scene was based on the legend about a miracle performed by St. Nicholas: according to this legend the saint brought back home a youth who had been abducted to be a cup-bearer of a heathen chieftain. Helen Bome and Kersti Markus have suggested that since in the 13th century noblemen of Saaremaa had sons who were held hostage by crusaders; it is possible that the man with a mace symbolizes the local chieftain who has got back his son from abroad (Bome & Markus 2005, 24). Hence the mace in the man's hand may be the symbol of power of the local chieftain. In recent times the completion of the Karja church and the sculptures have been dated to 1262–1285 (Bome & Markus 2005, 10).

SUMMARY

The Hargla Tammeküla macehead is a very rare object – the only representative of the type in Estonia. The total of maceheads of this type known today in the world is but slightly over 20. Since the finds of this type are most numerous in Russia, we can assume that the discussed macehead was cast by a skilled master on the territory of Russia.

The discussed specimen was definitely used as a weapon in its time, but at the same time it could have been also a symbol of power of a nobleman, as has been assumed about the other metal maceheads found in Estonia. This is supported by the fact that compared with other weapons like spearheads, battle-axes and swords, metal maceheads were relatively rare here in the 12th–13th centuries.

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HARULDANE SÕJANUIAPEA HARGLA KIHELKONNAST TAMMEKÜLAST

Ain Mäesalu

2009. a augustis jõudis arheoloogide kätte pronksist valatud sõjanuiapea (jn 1), mis leiti 2008. a juunis Kagu-Eestist Hargla Tammekülast Pihlaka talu õuelt maapinna planeerimistöde käigus. Kuna leiukoha ümbrusest arheoloogilist kultuurkihti ei tuvastatud, on tõenäoliselt tegemist omal ajal juhuslikult kaotatud esemega.

Nuiapea külgedel paiknevad neli suurt püramiidjat nukki ning neist üleval- ja allpool on kaheksa väiksemat kolme- või neljaosalist nuppu. Eseme pinda kaunistavad nõore meenutavad randid ja nende ühinemiskohades kühmud, mis sarnanevad needipeadega. Nuiapea kõrgus on 5,3 cm, tema väline diameeter ulatub keskosas 4,5 cm-ni, koos suurte nukkidega 6,8 cm-ni. Varreõõnsuse sisemine läbimõõt on otstes 2,2–2,3 cm, aga keskosas nukkide kohal suurem. 184,7 gr kaaluv nuiapea on valatud kadunud vaha meetodil kahepoolses savivormis, mida näitab kohati säilinud valurant kahel vastasküljel (jn 1).

Hargla Tammeküla nuiapea kuulub Anatoli Kirpitsnikovi tüpologia järgi III tüüpi, mille esindajaid tuntakse kokku veidi üle kahekümne. Arvukamalt esineb neid Vana-Vene riigi territooriumil (jn 2: 1), üksik-eksemplaridena on vaadeldavat tüüpi esemeid leitud peaaegu kõigist Läänemere maadest, aga ka Kaama jõe keskjooksu piirkonnast ning omaaegse Volga-Bulgaaria ja tänapäeva Bulgaaria alalt.

III tüüpi nuiapeadele on suhteliselt sarnased ka Kirpitsnikovi IV tüübi esindajad (jn 2: 2), millel on 8 väikese nupu asemel hoopis püramiidjad nukid. IV tüüpi nuiapäid tuntakse üle neljakümne ja nende levikuala on eelmise tüübiga suhteliselt lähedane. Kirpitsnikov dateeris mõlemad tüübid 12. sajandisse ja 13. sajandi I poole. Tema arvates valmistati neid peamiselt Lõuna-Venemaa linnades kuni mongolite sõjakäiguni 1240. aastal. Lätist Asote linnuselt on ühe IV tüüpi nuiapea katked ja Novgorodist III tüübi esindaja leitud siiski 13. sajandi II poole kultuurkihtidest.

Hargla Tammeküla sõjanuia kasutati kindlasti relvana, mida tunnistavad lõõgijäljed tema suurtel nukkidel. Löömise tagajärjel on kannatada saanud ka väiksemad nupud. Ilmselt näitab see nuiapea asendit umbes 60–80 cm pikkuse puuvarre otsas. Kui nuiaga löi peamiselt ratsanik ja esmaajoones vastu jalameeste kiivreid, siis kulusid enam ülevalpool asunud nupud, aga kui nui valdajaks oli jalasõdalane, siis võisid tema

hoopide tagajärjel kuluda arvatavasti hoopis alumised nupud.

Paljud arheoloogid ja relvaajaloolased, kes on käsitlenud mitmesuguseid keskaegseid metallpeadega nuiasid, rõhutavad, et vastavad esemed olid kasutusel küll relvadena, aga samas võisid omada ka võimusümboli tähendust. Eesti arheoloogiliste leidude seas tunti seni kolme metallist nuiapead (jn 3), mis meenutavad “äralõigatud” ehk fassetitud nurkadega kuupi. Nuiapeade välisilmest järeldub nende relvadena kasutamine, aga esemete leiukontekst viitab võimalusele, et tegemist võis olla ühtlasi teatud kõrgema staatusega isiku võimusümbolitena.

Toomas Tamla juhendatud Pada kalmistu kaevamistel leiti seda tüüpi pronksist sõjanuiapea 1220. aastate algusesse dateeritud 50–55 aastasel mehe hauast, kuhu oli pandud arvukalt teisigi esemeid sh hõbemünne. Otepää linnamäelt Osvald Saadre juhendatud kaevamistelt leitud pronksist nuiapea avastati 12.–14. sajandi leide sisaldavast kihist. Kirjalike allikate põhjal oli Otepää linnuses 12. ja 13. sajandi alguses elanud eestlastest vanemate positsioon küllaltki kõrge. Silvia Lauulu ja Jüri Peetsi juhendatud Siksälä kalmistu kaevamistel leiti kalmistu rikkaimast XLI noormehe hauast rauast sepistatud nuiapea, mis dateeriti 13. sajandi teise poole. Fassetitud nurkadega sõjanuia näeme ka ühel Saaremaal Karja kiriku skulptuuril (jn 4). Hüpoteesi järgi kajastatakse sellel Püha Nikolausega seotud imetegu, mille põhjal tõi Nikolaus koju tagasi paganliku üliku juurde veinikallajaks röövitud nooruki. Helen Bome ja Kersti Markuse arvates võib kujutatud “nuiamees” sümboliseerida ühtlasi kohalikku vanemat, kes oli oma poja võõrsilt tagasi saanud. Seega võib mehe käes olev nui kujutada endast ka Saaremaa üliku võimutähist. Karja kiriku ehitamise ja skulptuuride valmimise ajana on viimasel ajal välja pakutud ajavahemikku 1262–1285.

Hargla Tammekülast leitud pronksist nuiapea on väga haruldane ese – selle nuiatüübi ainus esindaja Eestis. Kuna põhiosa vaadeldavat tüüpi nuiapäid on leitud Venemaalt, siis oletatakse, et siin käsitletud eksemplari on valanud heade oskustega meister Vana-Venes 12. või 13. sajandil. Nuiat kasutati omal ajal kindlasti relvana, aga samaaegselt võis ta endast kujutada ka üliku võimutähist nagu seda on oletatud Eestist leitud teiste metallist nuiapeade kohta.