



Coin deposit from the mid-12th century in Saanika, western Estonia, and other artefacts discovered near the find spot

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INTRODUCTION

On 20 October 2017, a handful of prehistoric coins and around a dozen bronze artefacts were brought to Estonian History Museum. According to the finder, the items were discovered under the following circumstances.

A couple of weeks before the finder had assisted his associate in autumn agricultural work in the village Saanika (Ridala parish, Läänemaa County). After the bulldozer had removed the stones on the plot, he noticed some coins on the ground. By checking the find spot with a metal detector, he found additional coins as well as bronze items. The coins were scattered on the area of 30–40 m². Following the advice of archaeologist Jaak Mäll, who was at that time conducting excavations in the nearby Haapsalu castle, the finder delivered his finds to the Estonian History Museum for expertise.

COMPOSITION AND DATING OF THE COIN DEPOSIT

Saanika coin deposit is a small hoard consisting of 31 whole and fragmented coins: four Samanid dirhams, 20 deniers of German-Roman Empire, a Bohemian coin, five English pennies and a Scandinavian (Danish?) imitation (Table). Almost all the coins were in a rather poor condition – they were worn, scratched and partly broken, probably due to the posterior agricultural work. However, they were not corroded. The bulk of coins in the deposit with a few exceptions date from the 11th century (see the list of coins). The oldest coin here was a Samanid dirham struck in 293 AH = 905/6 AD (Fig. 1), the youngest – a Watford-type penny of the Anglo-Norman king Stephen, which was minted in ca. 1136–45 (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Samanids, Isma`il ibn Ahmad, aš-Šaš 293 AH = 905/6 AD, d = 27 mm.

Jn 1. Samaniidid, Isma`il ibn Ahmad, aš-Šaš 293 AH = 905/6 AD, d = 27 mm.

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Fig. 2. England, Stephen, Watford type (ca. 1136–45), Wareham, h = 18 mm.

Jn 2. Inglismaa, Stephen, Watfordi tüüpi (u 1136–1145), Wareham, h = 18 mm.

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Thus, the *tpq* of the hoard is 1136 and the coins were most probably buried at some time before or in the mid-12th century. In that period, the influx of silver to lands around the Baltic Sea had almost ceased. On Gotland that is legendarily rich in terms of Viking Age silver deposits, there is just a single hoard dating from the 1140s – the famous find of Burge, Lummelunda (Dolley 1969, pl. XI–XII; Hatz 2001). Other areas are almost findless. As the only exception, Estonia continued to receive new coins from the West, but in a very low quantity (Molvõgin 1993). Yet Estonia, too, has yielded just a small number of finds from the mid-12th century. The hoard of Väike-Röude (Fig. 3), which usually has been mentioned in that connection

(*tpq* 1153, according to the presumable dating of numerous Awbridge-type pennies of king Stephen) also contained one bracteate of the Swedish king Knut Eriksson, struck in Sigtuna in around 1180 (Molvõgin & Leimus 1995; Leimus 2000, 926). One Estonian hoard, whose find spot remained uncertain, was published in Germany in 1936 and also included a posthumous penny of Stephen (Molvõgin 1994, no. 79, *tpq* 1153). The tiny deposit from Muraste (*tpq* 1160?) exceptionally consisted mainly of German bracteates (Leimus 2004). The hoard from Padiküla must have been buried after 1170 (Molvõgin 2001, 181). In addition, there was a silver deposit of Haapsalu (*tpq* ca. 1180) partly kept in the British Museum, from which 43 coins are known nowadays (Leimus 1997; Williams 2000). Leaving aside the youngest coins of the hoard, i.e. the three Sigtuna bracteates of Knut Eriksson and one penny from Gotland, the remaining part of that hoard is strikingly similar to the deposit of Saanika. Here as well as there, the coins from the 11th century overwhelmingly dominate and the youngest English pennies are struck by Stephen. The relatively numerous coins of Stephen seem to be a specialty of Estonian finds of the 12th century, whereas they are either extremely rare or completely missing in other Nordic countries (Molvõgin 1990, 247).

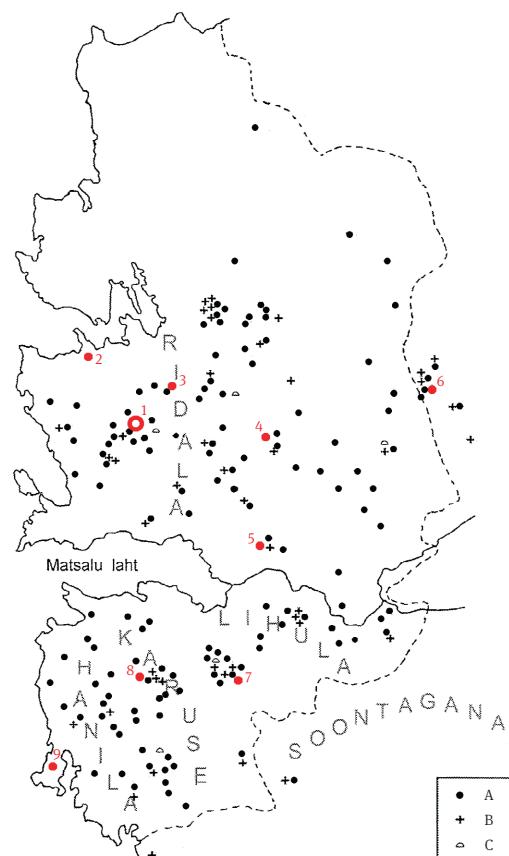


Fig. 3. Antiquities of the Final Iron Age (11th–13th cc) from Läänemaa county (after Mandel 2003, fig. 22) and contemporary coin hoards: 1 – Saanika, 2 – Haapsalu, 3 – Võnnu, 4 – Suure-Lähtru, 5 – Väike-Röude, 6 – Maidla, 7 – Parivere, 8 – Järise, 9 – Virtsu. A – settlement site, B – grave, C – hill fort, D – hoard.

Jn 3. Läänemaa hilisraauaja muistised (Mandel 2003, jn 22 järgi) ja samaaegsed müündiaarded. 1 – Saanika, 2 – Haapsalu, 3 – Võnnu, 4 – Suure-Lähtru, 5 – Väike-Röude, 6 – Maidla, 7 – Parivere, 8 – Järise, 9 – Virtsu. A – asulakohad, B – kalmed, C – linnused, D – aared.

Aluskaart / Base map: Mandel 2003, fig. 22; additions / täiendused: Ivar Leimus, Arvi Haak

The western part of Estonia is not rich in prehistoric hoards discovered so far (Fig. 3). From the closer vicinity of Saanika, apart from the hoard of Haapsalu, the deposits of Võnnu (*tpq* 1037) and Suure-Lähtru (*tpq* 1017), allegedly also that of Väike-Röude (*tpq* 1018) nothing much could be mentioned

(Molvõgin 1994, nos 17, 19, 24). The find spot of a substantial hoard of Maidla (*tpq* 1066) as well as these of Parivere (*tpq* 952/3), Järise and Virtsu (which were discovered in the 17th century and whose composition and dating are uncertain, though from the 11th century), are located at a further distance (Molvõgin 1994, nos 28, 45; Leimus 2007, no. 12; Leimus 1996). Thus the new deposit of Saanika, despite its smallness, constitutes a remarkable addition to the monetary history both of Estonia as well as in a broader context. At the same time, it fulfils the chronological gap of more than a hundred years on the map of western Estonian finds.

The smallness of the deposit, its composition as well as the poor condition of coins suggest that it was a saving of the impecunious period, when all the remnants have been scraped up from the circulation and hoarded. Yet thanks to the relatively late date of burying, there are some rarities in the hoard like German deniers struck in Dortmund by the king/emperor Heinrich IV (Fig. 4) and in Corvey by the abbot Markward (Fig. 5). Also, some Anglo-Saxon coins or their imitations deserve attention.

Rather atypical, for instance, is a Helmet-type penny of Aethelraed II (Fig. 6). Its obvers is poorly and double struck, the inscriptions contain errors (+EDEL'REPRE+ANG instead ÆDEL'RÆDREXANG). A very similar die in at least four copies has been well known for years and was published by Mark Blackburn (1990, 15). An additional penny from this very die, which was also badly struck, was auctioned by Spink in 2015 (<https://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=4078570>). All these coins share one and the same reverse die that indicates Ipswich as the possible mint and Godric as the moneyer (+GIO DCIC MOG IDES). There are some features characteristic to the Hiberno-Norse imitations of Anglo-Saxon pennies in legends of these coins (e.g. + instead of X, see Dolley 1981, 97) and thus the experts of Spink did not exclude the possible Irish origin of the coin. On the other hand, Mark Blackburn has shown that there is a whole group of the genuine Anglo-Saxon pennies with similar mistakes and upside-down lettering. Thus Blackburn still considered this particular coin group for the official output of the Ipswich mint (Blackburn 1990, 16).

However, on the reverse of the Saanika coin, the blundered name of moneyer Aethelberht stands instead of Godric. Moreover, the inscriptions here are incorrect, too, in the same manner having some



Fig. 4. Germany, Dortmund, Kg/Emp. Heinrich IV (1056–1106), $d = 18.5$ mm.

Jn 4. Saksaamaa, Dortmund, kuningas/keiser Heinrich IV (1056–1106), $d = 18,5$ mm.

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus



Fig. 5. Germany, Corvey, abbot Markward? (1081–1107), $d = 19$ mm.

Jn 5. Saksaamaa, Corvey, abt Markward? (1081–1107), $d = 19$ mm.

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus



Fig. 6. England, Aethelraed II, Helmet type (ca. 1003–9), Ipswich, moneyer Aethelberht, $d = 19.5$ mm.

Jn 6. Inglismaa, Aethelraed II, Helmet-tüüp (u 1003–1009), Ipswich, müntmeister Aethelberht, $d = 19,5$ mm.

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus



Fig. 7. England, Aethelred II, Last small cross type (ca. 1009–1017/8), London, moneyer Aethelwi, d = 20 mm.

Jn 7. Ingismaa, Aethelred II, Last small cross tüüp (u 1009–1017/8), London, müntmeister Aethelwi, d = 20 mm.

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus



Fig. 8. Denmark?, Cnut, Short cross type (ca. 1029–35), Lund?, d = 17.5 mm.

Jn 8. Taani?, Knud, Short cross tüüp (u 1029–1035), Lund?, d = 17.5 mm.

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus



Fig. 9. Bronze artefacts collected on the find spot.

1 – crossbar fibula, 2 – strap end, 3–5 – belt mounts, 6 – fish-shaped plaque, 7–9 – hasps of the book clasps, 10 – catch plate of a clasp

Jn 9. Aarde leiukohalt kogutud prunksesemeid. 1 – kärbisölg, 2 – rihmaotsik, 3–5 – vöönaastud, 6 – kalakuju-line naast, 7–9 – raamatusulguri kinnitushaagid, 10 – raamatusulguri plaatvastus.

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus

characters cut upside down. Thus this coin certainly belongs to the group mentioned above. Yet, at the moment, it remains unclear whether it belongs to the official series from Ipswich or has been produced somewhere else.

Somehow unusual is also a penny of the Last small cross type of Aethelred II (Fig. 7), whose die is perfectly cut, indeed, but there are some inaccuracies in the legend of the obverse (+ÆDELRDRE+ANGLO, notice a cross instead of X in REX). The inscription of the reverse (+ÆDELPIMOONLVNDi) states that the coin has been struck by moneyer Aethelwig in London. A die-duplicate of this particular coin was found in Norway and has been published as genuine penny from London by Elina Screen (Screen 2013, no. 1306). Most probably, the same is to be said about the Saanika coin.

Finally, a Scandinavian imitation of an Anglo-Saxon penny of Cnut's Short cross type has to be mentioned (Fig. 8). The king's portrait on the obverse is crudely cut, the legend is somewhat incorrect (+CIV TREC++). Also, the double-cross of the reverse is coarse and the legend here starts with a T instead of + (TLIOFRICOONLVND). This coin, possibly, could have been minted in Lund, Denmark.

BRONZE ARTEFACTS

A number of bronze artefacts was picked up on the find spot. The most ancient item among them certainly was a small (h = 32 mm) Roman iron-age cross-bar fibula from the 3th–4th cc. (Fig. 9: 1) (Moora 1929, pl. VI: 1–2; Moora 1938, 88–90).

The three belt mounts belong to the 11th–12th centuries. They are square (d = 15–16 mm), with a motif of the isosceles cross and widely spread in Estonia as well as neighbouring countries (Fig. 9: 3–5) (Selirand 1974, 131–132, pl. XIX: 8). A strap-end (13 x 56 mm) dates from the same period (Fig. 9: 2) (Selirand 1974, 130, pl. XIX: 2). A fish-shaped plaque (10 x 33 mm), possibly, also may have

decorated the belt end and can also date from the same period (Fig. 9: 6) (Selirand 1974, 132, pl. XXI: 8).

Three other plaques ($h = 23\text{--}25$ mm), on the contrary, are rather late and constitute hasps of the book clasps from the 18th–19th centuries (<http://sulgurid.tlulib.ee/>) (Fig. 9: 7–9). One single mount is of a different shape, latticed and could be used as a catch plate of a clasp (Fig. 9: 10). It is remarkable to have that much book furniture from a remote village.

Thus the bronze ornaments found in Saanika obviously have no connection to the coin deposit, but rather originate from the once nearby graves. The book furniture, on the other hand, obviously comes from the settlement layer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Table. List of coins.

Tabel. Müntide loend.

Compiler / koostaja: Ivar Leimus

Islamic coins

No. / nr	Dynasty / dünastia	Ruler / valitseja	Mint / müntla	Year AH / hidžra aastal	Weight / kaal
1	Samanids	Isma'il ibn Ahmad	aš-Šaš	293	2,12
2	Samanids	Nasr ibn Ahmad	aš-Šaš	309?	3,14
3	Samanids	Mansur ibn Nuh	Samarqand	356?	2,58
4	Samanids	Unidentified ruler	Unidentified mint	xxx	0,71

German coins

No. / nr	Mint / müntla	Ruler / valitseja	Year / aasta	Reference / viide	Weight / kaal	Comments / märkused
5	Deventer	Kg. Heinrich II	1002–14	Ilisch 2000, 1.5	1,01	
6	Tiel	?		Ilisch 2000, 5	1,28	
7	Leeuwarden	Count Brun III	c. 1050–60	Ilisch 2000, 21.14	0,8	
8	Köln	Emp. Konrad II & AB. Pilgrim	1027–36	Häv. 222	1,24	
9	Köln	AB. Hermann II	1039–56	Häv. 278	1,31	
10	Köln	AB. Sigwin	1079–89	Häv. 391	1,4	
11	Soest	Imitation on Köln	c. 1050 –?	Häv. 854	1,45	
12	Dortmund	Heinrich IV	1056–84–1106	Dbg. 766a; Berghaus 1978, 38	1,28	
13	Corvey	Abbot Markward?	1081–1107	Hatz 1967, 1a	0,73	
14	Goslar/Gittelde	Kg. Heinrich IV	1056–84	Hatz 2001, 62:1/2	0,76	
15	Goslar jt.	Imitation of Otto-Adelheid-denier		Hatz 1961, V2g	1,28	
16	Goslar jt.	Imitation of Otto-Adelheid-denier		Hatz 1961, V2	0,97	
17	Mainz	Emp. Otto III	996–1002	Dbg. 778/9	0,98	
18	Speyer	Kg./Emp. Heinrich III	1039–56	Dbg. 829; Ehrend 1976, 2/27	0,97	
19	Speyer	Kg./Emp. Heinrich III	1039–56	Dbg. 829; Ehrend 1976, 2/27	0,5	frg.
20	Speyer	Kg. Heinrich IV & B. Heinrich I.	1067–73	Dbg. 1218; Ehrend 1976, 2/57	0,71	
21	Worms	'Kg./Emp. Heinrich II'	c. 1024–46	Dbg. 845 var.; Leimus 1993	0,4	frg.

No. / nr	Mint / müntla	Ruler / valitseja	Year / aasta	Reference / viide	Weight / kaal	Comments / märkused
22	Erfurt	AB. Adalbert?	1111–37	Dbg. 2109	0,74	frg.
23	Erfurt	AB. Adalbert?	1111–37	Dbg. 2109	0,33	frg.
24	Unidentified mint				0,58	In two pieces

Bohemian coins

25	Praha	Kg. Oldřich	1012-34	Cach 1970, 296	0,93
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English coins

No. / nr	Ruler / valitseja	Type / münditüüp	Mint / müntla	Moneyer / müntmeister	Weight / kaal
26	Aethelraed II	Helmet	Ipswich	Aethelberht	1,2
27	Aethelraed II	Last small cross	Lincoln?	?	0,57
28	Aethelraed II	Last small cross	London	Aethelwi	1,11
29	Cnut	Short cross	Thetford	Brunstan	1,09
30	Stephen	Watford	Wareham	?	0,66

Scandinavian imitation

31	'Cnut'	Short cross	'London'	'Liofric'	1,09
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MÜNDIAARE LÄÄNEMAALT SAANIKALT 12. SAJANDI KESKELT JA MUUD LEIUKOHA ÜMBRUSEST AVASTATUD ESEMED

Ivar Leimus

Oktoobris 2017 toodi Eesti Ajaloomuuseumisse eksertiisiks peotäis muinasaegseid münte ja kümmekond pronkseset, mis olid samal kuul leitud talutööde käigus Läänemaalt Saanika külast. 31 mündist ja mündikatkest on neli löödud Kesk-Aasias Samaniidide emiraadis, 20 Saksa-Rooma keisririigis, üks Böömimaa, viis Inglismaa ja üks arvatavasti Skandinaavias (Taanis?). Enamik münte, v.a islami dirhemid, kuulub 11. sajandisse, aarde noorim verming, Watfordi tüüpi penn, on löödud anglonormanni kuninga Stepheni ajal 1136–1145.

Niisiis on aardeke peidetud 12. sajandi keskel või natuke varem. Selleks ajaks oli hõbeda sissevool Läänemere maadesse peaegu täielikult lakanud. Aarderikkuselt legendaarselt Ojamaalt on pärit vaid üks aare 1140. aastatest, mujalt pole sedagi. Erandiks on Eesti, kuid siitki teame antud perioodi leide vähe. Seejuures iseloomustab peaegu kõiki neid Inglise kuninga Stepheni (1135–1154) müntide kohalolu.

Läänemaa kontekstis täidab Saanika mündileid suure ajalise lüngu, mis jäab Maidla (*tpq* 1066) ja

Haapsalu (*tpq* u 1180) aarete peitmise vahele. Seega on Saanika aardekese näol niihästi Põhja-Euroopa kui ka kohalikus kontekstis tegemist tähelepanuvääärse leiuga, mis liiti sisaldab mõne haruldase Saksa ja Inglise mündi.

Leitud pronksesemetest vanim on 3.–4. sajandisse kuuluv väike kärbissõlg. Kolm ruudukujulist ristimotiiviga kaunistatud vöönaastu, nagu ka rihmakeel ja kalakujuline naast peaksid pärinema 11.–12. sajandist. Seevastu kolm raamatustulguri kinnitushaaki ja üks plaatvastus dateeritakse 18.–19. sajandiga. On tähelepanuvääärne, et ühest eemalasuvast külakohast on leitud suhteliselt arvukalt raamatute kasutamisele viitavaid esemeid.

Pronksesemetel lai ajaline diapasoon töendab, et mündiaardega neil seost pole. Muinasaja lõppu kuuluvad ehted kujutavad endast tõenäoliselt matusepanuseid, uusaegsed raamatustulgurid seevastu pärinevad asulakihist.