



Finds from Nõo churchyard and its vicinity: material evidence of Medieval and Early Modern church fairs

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INTRODUCTION

The parish church of Nõo (Germ. *Nüggen*), dedicated to St Laurence and located 17 km south of Tartu, by the historical road to Valga, Valmiera and Riga, was built in the third quarter of the 13th century already (Alttoa 1994). In 2019, the paths within the churchyard and the east–west directional way on its southern side were re-constructed, and a new parking-lot was made west of it. In connection with these works up to 25–30 cm of top soil had to be removed from the construction areas. The area of archaeological monitoring (Figs 1–2) involved ca. 761 m²: 177 m² within the churchyard and ca. 584 m² outside.¹ Formerly, small archaeological rescue excavations had taken place in the churchyard in 2015 (Malve 2016). Heiki Valk supervised the fieldwork, analyzed the finds and their context; Mauri Kiudsoo identified the coins and is the author of the numismatic part of the present article.



Fig. 1. Investigations in front of Nõo churchyard. View from the south, from the direction of the Tartu–Valga road.

Jn 1. Uuringud Nõo kirikaia esisel alal. Vaade lõunast, Tartu–Valga maantee poolt.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

WORK PROCESS

To find possible archaeological objects, metal detector studies were undertaken in the construction area before removing soil with backhoe by 10 cm layers.² Detector signals from the uppermost 10–12 cm revealed mostly 20th century refuse – metal rubbish and bottle caps. No archaeological finds were gained outside the churchyard from that depth and only a few

¹ The finds: TÜ 2771: 1–486.

² Monitoring the construction areas was performed by Aleksandr Kotkin and Igor Tsakuhhin.

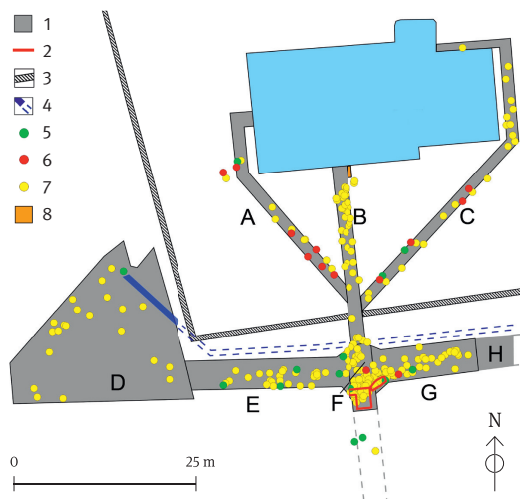


Fig. 2. Investigation area and detector finds from the depth of until 25/30 cm at Nõo church. 1 – metal detecting area, 2 – excavation area, 3 – the present-day churchyard wall, 4 – basement of the medieval churchyard wall, 5 – rings, 6 – brooches, 7 – coins, 8 – wall fragment of the southern entrance hall.

Jn 2. Uurimisala ja detektorileiud Nõo kiriku juures maapinnast kuni 25/30 cm sügavusel. 1 – detektoriuuringute ala, 2 – kaevandite ala, 3 – praegune kirikaia müür, 4 – keskaegse kirikaia müüri põhi, 5 – sõrmused, 6 – sõled, 7 – mündid, 8 – lõunaeeskoja müürijäänus. Map / Kaart: Ragnar Saaga

within it which might be an indication of former looting with metal detectors. After the removal of top soil numerous coins, as well as some jewellery items and dress accessories were unearthed, both inside and outside the churchyard. While human bones were almost absent outside the churchyard, they sporadically occurred within it, whereby ca. 5–8 m south of the choir a compact assemblage of commingled, evidently re-buried bones came to light under the turf.

After the removal of the top layer of road gravel, disturbed sandy loam appeared on the east–west directional 3 m wide way south of the churchyard – seemingly, dark soil had once been removed from here to avoid the ground from getting muddy in wet seasons. South of the way dark grey soil with several finds followed the turf. Such soil could be observed in the distance of ca. 9–13 m from the churchyard wall: further south, towards the historical Tartu–Valga road disturbed mineral ground followed. Most likely, cultural layers had fully been removed here by some earlier bulldozer work.

After reaching the required depth of ca. 20 cm for construction, a 2 × 2.7 m research trench (Fig. 3) with extensions to the north-west and north-east (in total 7.8 m²) was made south of the crossing of ways, south of the churchyard gates. Its purpose was to get information about the cultural layer which continued deeper there. All soil from the trench was sieved on 5 mm eye meshes.

The heaps of removed soil from the churchyard and its outer side were used as fill nearby. When spread and levelled in its new location, the soil was reviewed once more by using metal detectors. The process yielded some new finds without a definite context.

CONSTRUCTION REMAINS AND STRUCTURES

Basement of a medieval churchyard wall

West of the present churchyard, in the area of the parking lot a massive stone foundation, ca. 10 m long and 1.25–1.4 m wide, came to light under the turf (Fig. 4). It was made of two parallel rows of large granite rocks (diameter from 50/60 to 70/85 cm), with surfaces slanting towards the axis of the structure. Fill soil between the stones contained gravel and loose mortar rubble. Here and there smaller stones (diameter ca. 15–20 cm) were placed on/between the big stones.

While the existing west wall of the churchyard³ was constructed of bricks and was oriented in the N–S direction (355°), the old basement followed the SE–NW line (133°–313°),

³ According to the words of congregation member Vello Brett (*1938), the present-day churchyard wall was built in 1921 with money collected from the congregation.

being located in the eastern part of the area opened for the parking lot. Its north-western end appeared in the distance of ca. 5.8 m from the present-day churchyard wall. Tops of big stones emerged from the turf on the same line also near the south-western corner of the churchyard, passing under it: the existing brick wall rested on the old basement.

Some stones of the old foundation could be observed also south of the present-day churchyard (Fig. 2: 4) whereby their distance from it was ca. 2 metres near its south-western corner and ca. 4 metres in its eastern part, ca. 10 metres before its south-eastern corner. The easternmost part of the basement had at least partly been destroyed by digging. The massive foundation evidently originates from the medieval churchyard boundary, showing that the churchyard has been larger before, at least towards the west and the south, and, judging by some stones, also towards the east. Supposed fragments of a similar medieval churchyard boundary were recently discovered also in Kodavere parish centre (Valk *et al.* 2019, 120). In the area of the parking lot the foundation of the old churchyard was covered with sand and preserved in its original position.

Just in front of the churchyards gate a big flat red granite slab of ca. 1 m in diameter with a strongly worn-out surface came to light under a thin layer of fill gravel. The slab may have functioned as a churchyard gate threshold stone in medieval times already.

Ca. 1.3 m from the south-western corner of the churchyard stands a ca. 80 cm high upright granite stone 33 × 40 cm in diameter. According to oral tradition, people who had broken moral rules, e.g. unmarried girls with babies, were attached to this stone for Sunday worship times for public shaming. A hole drilled on top of the stone gives evidence of some iron stick once fastened there.



Fig. 3. Trench in front of Nõo churchyard gates.

Jn 3. Kaevand Nõo kirikaia värava ees.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk



Fig. 4. Foundation of Nõo medieval churchyard wall, view from the south-east.

Jn 4. Nõo keskaegse kirikaia alusmüür, vaade kagust.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

Southern entrance hall of the church

Above the southern portal of Nõo church two dark granite stones stretch out of the wall. The stones have formerly been interpreted in connection with *Wehrkirche* (defence church) concept – as traces of a defence structure (Tuulse 1945, 233), but Kaur Alttoa (1994, 239) has presented an alternative interpretation, regarding them as supports for the rafters of the hypothetical demolished southern entrance hall. To check the assumption, turf was removed with backhoe at church wall east of the southern portal where the foundation of the entrance hall was expected to appear.

The bottom of the brick wall of the entrance hall (Fig 2: 8; Fig. 5) was discovered just under the turf whereby medieval bricks visible on the ground immediately beside the church wall turned out to be its *in situ* remains. The wall was 1.5 bricks thick (53–55 cm) and was preserved up to the height of one or two stones from the floor level, until the distance of 1.33 m from the church wall. The wall bricks rested on brick basement laid on granite foundation levelled with lime mortar. Presuming a symmetric structure, the internal width of the entrance hall (E–W direction) was 3.05 m.

The extent of the entrance hall towards the south remained unclear since the massive stones of its southern foundation had mostly been shifted from their original location by some earlier digging. Only two large rocks, located beside each other and having a V-like



Fig. 5. Wall and floor remains of the southern entrance hall of Nõo church, view from the south.

Jn 5. Nõo kiriku lõunaeeskoja idaseina ja põranda jäänu-
sed, vaade lõunast.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

groove between their slanting surfaces – the same handwriting as it appeared in case of the medieval churchyard wall basement – had remained in their original position. These stones, bound with white mortar, indicated a ca. 1.4 m wide foundation with its outer side ca. 3.4 m south of the church wall. On the top of these basement stones two *lühise* pennies (Table 1: 42, 48) from ca. 1413–20 (or 1415) were found from loose mixture of soil and mortar rubble. Near the south-eastern corner of the entrance hall also some floor remains – seven *in situ* bricks laid diagonally in the north-east–south-west direction had preserved. The remains of the southern wall and the floor of the entrance hall were covered by soil again.

THE FINDS

Coins

The most numerous find group of metal items were coins – in total 304 finds from the 13th century to the end of the 18th century (Table 1).⁴ 262 coins (86.2%) originate from a definite context, in 42 cases (13.8%), mostly gained during the secondary review of the removed soil, the context remains unclear.

⁴ Later coins from the early 19th century to the present time (126 items) are not included in the table. The Russian Empire (1721–1917) is represented from 1800 by 22 coins (8 from 1801–1850, 10 from 1851–1900, 4 from 1901–1917), the Republic of Estonia (1918–1940) by 21 coins, the German occupation period (1941–1944) by 4, the Soviet occupation period (1944–1991) by 38 coins from 1940–1988, the Republic of Estonia (since 1991; own currency in 1992–2011) by 37 coins, the European Union (represented since 1999) by 4 coins.

120 coins (Table 1: 1–120), mostly minted by local landlords, belong to the era of Medieval Livonia (until the beginning of the Livonian War in 1558), and their share in the assemblage is significantly high (ca. 39%). The turmoil of the Livonian War and the following wars between Sweden and Poland (1558–1625) is represented by 52 coins (Table 1: 121–172), the time of the Swedish rule (1625/29–1710) by 109 (Table 1: 173–281) and the period of the Russian Empire (from 1721 to 1800) by 23 items (16 of them from before 1750).

Table 1. *Coins from the churchyard and surroundings of Nõo church. In the case of foreign coins, not the time of their minting, but the date of their first appearance in circulation in Livonia has been considered when connecting them with time periods.⁵*

Tabel 1. *Mündid Nõo kirikaiaist ja selle ümbrusest. Välismaiste müntide seostamisel kindlate ajastutega pole arvestatud nende vermimisaega, vaid aega, mil nad ilmusid Liivimaa raharinglusse.*

BR – bishopric / piiskopkond, ABR – archbishopric / peapiiskopkond.

Compiled by / Koostanud: Mauri Kiudsoo

| No / Nr | Issued by / Müntija | Denomination / Vääring | Items / Münte |
|--|---|---------------------------|------------------|
| MEDIEVAL, before the monetary reform of 1420s | | | |
| 1 | Denmark, Tallinn, ca. 1265–1332 | penny | 1 |
| 2–4 | Tartu BR, 13th–14th cc. | penny | 3 |
| 5 | Livonia, 13th–14th cc.? | penny? | 1 |
| 6 | 13th–14th cc.? | penny | 1 |
| 7 | Northern Germany (Mecklenburg), 2nd half of 14th c. | penny | 1 |
| 8 | Tartu BR, Johann I Vyffhusen, ca. 1364/5–78 | penny | 1 |
| 9 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, ca. 1395–1420 | lübische | 1 |
| 10–29 | Tartu BR, 'Damerow', ca. 1396–1420 | penny | 20 |
| 30 | Tartu BR, ca. 1397–99? | lübische | 1 |
| 31 | Tartu BR, ca. 1400–140? | lübische | 1 |
| 32–39 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, ca. 1406?–15 | lübische | 8 |
| 40–47 | Tartu BR, ca. 1413–20 (1415?) | lübische | 8 |
| 48–49 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, ca. 1415–20 | lübische | 2 |
| MEDIEVAL, after the monetary reform of 1420s | | | |
| 50 | Riga ABR, Hennig Scharpenberg (1424–48) | scherf | 1 |
| 51 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, ca. 1426–30 | scherf | 1 |
| 52–56 | Tartu BR, Dietrich IV Resler, ca. 1426–41 | scherf | 5 |
| 57–60 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, ca. 1430–65? | penny | 3 |
| 61–62 | Tartu BR, Bartholomäus Sawijerwe (1441–59) | penny | 2 |
| 63–65 | Tartu BR, Bartholomäus Sawijerwe (1441–59) | scherf | 3 |
| 66–67 | Tartu BR, Helmich von Mallinkrodt (1459–68) | penny | 2 |
| 68–71 | Tartu BR, Helmich von Mallinkrodt (1459–68) | scherf | 4 |
| 72 | Tartu BR, Andreas Peper (1468–73) | penny | 1 |
| 73–74 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, after 1480/81? | penny | 2 |
| 75–76 | Tartu BR, Johannes II Bertkow (1473–85) | penny | 2 |
| 77–78 | Tartu BR, Johannes II Bertkow (1473–85) | scherf | 2 |
| 79 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, after 1480/81? | schilling | 1 |
| 80–84 | Tartu BR, Dietrich V Hake (1485–98) | scherf | 5 |

⁵ It has formerly been indicated that concerning coins discovered from settlement cultural layers, cemeteries or offering sites, the year of minting of a particular coin is not so important for dating, but rather of primary importance is to consider the duration of the coin type in circulation and, in the case of coins minted outside Livonia, also the date of their appearance in Livonia (Kiudsoo 2007, 40).

| No / Nr | Issued by / Müntija | Denomination / Vääring | Items / Münte |
|---|--|---------------------------|------------------|
| 85 | Germany, 15th c. (?) | scherf | 1 |
| 86–88 | Tartu BR, Johannes III Rope (1499–1505) | scherf | 3 |
| 89 | Lithuania, Vilnius, Alexander (1492–1506) | penny | 1 |
| 90 | Livonian Order, Riga, Wolter von Plettenberg (1494–1535) | penny | 1 |
| 91–93 | Tartu BR, <i>sede vacante</i> (1515 or 1528)? | scherf | 3 |
| 94 | Tartu BR, Christian Bomhower (1515–18) | penny | 1 |
| 95–96 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, Wolter von Plettenberg, 1515–22 | penny | 2 |
| 97–98 | Tartu BR, Johannes V Blankenfeld (1518–1527) | penny | 2 |
| 99 | Denmark, Gotland, Visby, ca. 1520s | hvid (4-penningar) | 1 |
| 100–101 | Tartu BR, Johannes VI Bey (1528–43) | penny | 2 |
| 102–103 | Livonian Order, Riga, Wolter von Plettenberg, 1532 | penny | 2 |
| 104–105 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, Wolter von Plettenberg, 1532–34 | schilling | 2 |
| 106–110 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, Wolter von Plettenberg, 1532–34 | penny | 5 |
| 111 | Livonian Order, Riga, Wolter von Plettenberg, 1533 | schilling | 1 |
| 112 | Livonian Order, Riga, Hermann Brüggenei-Hasenkamp, 1536 | schilling | 1 |
| 113 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, Hermann Brüggenei-Hasenkamp, 1539 | schilling | 1 |
| 114 | Tartu BR, Johannes VI Bey, 154... | schilling | 1 |
| 115 | Sweden, Stockholm, Gustav Vasa, 155... | 4-penningar | 1 |
| 116 | Livonian Order, Tallinn, Heinrich von Galen, 1554 | schilling | 1 |
| 117 | 15th/16th cc.? | schilling? | 1 |
| 118–119 | Poland(?), 16th c. | penny | 2 |
| 120 | 16th c. | ? | 1 |
| EARLY MODERN TIMES, Livonian War and time of Polish Rule | | | |
| 121 | Poland, Sigismund I (1506–48) | groschen | 1 |
| 122–126 | Russia, Moscow, Ivan IV (1533–84) | denga | 5 |
| 127 | Russia, Tver, Ivan IV (1533–84) | denga | 1 |
| 128 | Russia, Novgorod, Ivan IV, 1560s | kopek | 1 |
| 129 | Russia, Ivan IV?, 16th c. | kopek | 1 |
| 130 | Russia, 16th/17th c. | denga | 1 |
| 131–133 | Russia, 16th–18th cc. | kopek | 3 |
| 134–138 | Sweden, Tallinn, Eric XIV, 1561, 1562, 1564 (2), 1565 | schilling | 5 |
| 139–140 | Riga ABR, Wilhelm von Brandenburg, 1563 | schilling | 2 |
| 141 | Sweden, Stockholm, John III, 1570 | 1/2 öre | 1 |
| 142–152 | Riga Free town, 1571 (4), 1572, 1574, 1575 (2), 1576 (2), 1577 | schilling | 11 |
| 153–157 | Sweden, Tallinn, John III, 1571–85 | schilling | 5 |
| 158–160 | Poland, Dahlen (Dole), 1572 | schilling | 3 |
| 161–162 | Duchy of Curonia, Jelgava, 1576, 1577 | schilling | 2 |
| 163–170 | Sweden, Riga, Sigismund III, 1597, 1598, 1616, 1618, before 1621 (4) | schilling | 8 |
| 171 | Russia, Moskva, Vassili Ivanovič Šuiski (1606–10) | kopek | 1 |
| 172 | Lithuania, early 17th c.? | schilling | 1 |
| EARLY MODERN TIMES, Period of Swedish Rule | | | |
| 173–174 | Sweden, Riga, Gustavus Adolphus, 1621–32, 1630s | schilling | 2 |
| 175–186 | Sweden, Riga, Christina, 163., 1632–54 (5), 164... (2), 1646, 1648 (2), 1652 | schilling | 12 |
| 187–188 | Sweden, Riga/Livonia, Christina (1632–54) | schilling | 2 |
| 189–191 | Sweden, Nyköping/Säter/Avesta, Christina (1632–54) | 1/4 öre | 3 |
| 192–193 | Sweden, Nyköping, Christina, 1634 | 1/4 öre | 2 |
| 194–201 | Sweden, Nyköping/Säter, Christina, 1635 (6), 1636 (2) | 1/4 öre | 8 |

| No / Nr | Issued by / Müntija | Denomination / Vääring | Items / Münte |
|---|---|---------------------------|------------------|
| 202–203 | Sweden, Säter, Christina, 1637 | 1/4 öre | 2 |
| 204–206 | Russia, Moscow, Mikhail Fyodorovich (1613–45) | kopek | 3 |
| 207–223 | Sweden, Livonia, Christina, 1644, 1644–49 (6), 1647, 1648 (2), 1649 (2), 1651 (2), 1652 (2), 1654 (1) | schilling | 17 |
| 224–225 | Suczava?, imitation of a schilling of Riga, after 1644, 1660 | schilling | 2 |
| 226–227 | Russia, Alexei Mikhailovich (1645–76) | kopek | 2 |
| 228 | Sweden, 1st half of 17th c.? | schilling? | 1 |
| 229–230 | Sweden, Livonia, Charles X Gustav, 1654–1660 (2) | schilling | 2 |
| 231–235 | Sweden, Riga, Charles X Gustav, 1656, 1657, 1658, 1659, 1660 | schilling | 5 |
| 236 | Sweden, Stockholm, Charles X Gustav, 1657 | öre | 1 |
| 237–240 | Russia, Moscow(?), Alexei Mikhailovich, ...–1662 (copper) | kopek | 4 |
| 241–243 | Sweden, Stockholm, Charles XI, 166..., 1667, 1672 | öre | 3 |
| 244–246 | Sweden, Livonia, Charles XI, 1660–65, 1661, 1662 | schilling | 3 |
| 247–255 | Sweden, Riga, Charles XI, 1661, 1661–65 (4), 1662, 1663 (2), 1664 | schilling | 9 |
| 256–273 | Sweden, Avesta, Charles XI, 1666 (8), 1667 (2), 1669, 167..., 1671, 1673 (3), 1676, 1686 | 1/6 öre | 18 |
| 274 | Sweden, Stockholm, Charles XI, 1670 | 4 öre | 1 |
| 275 | Sweden (?), Riga, Livonia, Tallinn? | schilling (?) | 1 |
| 276–281 | Russia, Peter I, 1696(?)–1718 | kopek | 6 |
| EARLY MODERN TIMES, Russian Empire | | | |
| 282 | Russia, 1730–54 | denga | 1 |
| 283–291 | Russia, Anna Ivanovna, 1730 (2), 1731 (2), 1734, 1735?, 1736, 1737, 1739 | denga | 9 |
| 292 | Russia, Anna Ivanovna, 1735 | polushka | 1 |
| 293–301 | Russia, Jelizaveta Petrovna, 1743, 1746, 1747 (2), 1749, 1750, 1752, 1753, 1759 | denga | 9 |
| 302 | Russia, Jekaterinburg, Paul I, 1798 | kopek | 1 |
| 303–304 | Russia, 18th c.? | polushka | 2 |

The earliest group of coins (Table 1: 1–6) is from the 13th–14th centuries. The oldest among them is a Danish bracteate penny from ca. 1265–1332 minted in Tallinn, the others are three pennies of Tartu prince-bishopric approximately from the same time period, and one Livonian and one unidentified penny from the 13th or 14th century. Only one bracteate penny of North German towns (Mecklenburg) from the second half of 14th century (Table 1: 7) was found in Nõo. Such coins played a very important role in the 14th century coin circulation currency of Livonia. North German bracteates prevailed in local circulation since 1332 when coining in the mint of Tallinn was interrupted, but they still clearly predominate in the composition of hoards deposited in the second half of the 1360s. However, at the end of the 1370s the amount of these coins decreased considerably. The main reason for their disappearance lies in the decrees of the Livonian authorities prohibiting their import and circulation because of their low content of silver (Kiudsoo 2004, 79–80 and references).

The rapid accumulation of coins in Nõo started in the end of the 14th century.⁶ 41 coins represent a rather short period – the very end of the 14th and the first quarter of the 15th century, the time before the monetary reform of 1422/26 (Table 1: 9–49). This fits well with former conclusions that consistent and frequent offering of coins in churches started around the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, i.e. in the beginning of the so-called depression period (1390s–1470s) that sorely affected the local population at that time (Kiudsoo 2011, 79–80;

⁶ Dietrich III Damerow was the bishop of Tartu from 1379 to 1400, but the bracteates from Nõo cannot be earlier than the end of the 14th century – otherwise their silver content would be higher.

Kiudsoo in print). Although the monetary system with its three denominations had developed in Livonia by the end of the 14th century, being one of the most advanced in the Baltic region (Leimus 2002, 129–130; 2004, 1101), coin finds with cultic background indicate rather the low level of monetarization of the society than the intensity of circulation.

Rare coins representing the local monetary system of the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries are the so-called ‘Tartu pennies’ minted between 1363 and the monetary reform of 1422/26 by the bishops of Tartu, most probably only for local circulation in the prince-bishopric. These coins, both one- and two-sided, were later made of pure copper (Kiudsoo 2019, 52 and references). Besides one specimen struck by bishop Johann I Vyffhusen (1364/5–1373) (Table 1: 8) the finds from Nõo include 20 later ‘Tartu pennies’ (sc. ‘Damerow bracteates’) (Table 1: 10–29; Fig. 6: 1), which date from the time range between 1379 and 1420 and can be attributed either to Dietrich III Damerow (1379–1400), Heinrich II Wrangel (1400–1410), Bernhard II Bülow (1410–1413) or Dietrich IV Resler (1413–1420).⁷ Until now the largest number of ‘Damerow bracteates’ (12) have been found from the chapel site of Loosi (see Valk *et al.* 2018, table 1).



Fig. 6. Coins of Tartu prince-bishopric from the vicinity of Nõo church: 1 – penny struck around the turn of 14th/15th century, 2 – scherf, probably from the sede vacante of 1515 or 1528, 3 – scherf of Johannes III Rope (1499–1505), 4 – the so-called ‘heart bracteate’ of Helmich von Mallinkrodt (1459–1468).

Jn 6. Tartu piiskopkonna münte Nõo kiriku juurest. 1 – 14./15. saj vahetuse penn, 2 – šerf, tõenäoliselt 1515. või 1528. a interregnumi ajast, 3 – Johannes III Rope (1499–1505) šerf, 4 – Helmich von Mallinkrodt'i (1459–1468) nn südabrakteaat.

(TÜ 2771: 447, 24, 35, 38.)

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

It is important to note the presence of 27 *schers*, struck by local authorities in the 15th or 16th centuries (Table 1: 50–56, 63–65, 68–71, 77–78, 80–84, 86–88, 91–93). The *Landtag*⁸ in Cēsis (Germ. Wenden, Est. Võnnu) decided to start minting new *artigs* (people soon began to call them *schillings*) in 1422, and also pennies and *schers* in 1426 (Leimus *et al.* 2018, 57–58). The *schers* which were less numerous than *schillings* and pennies and were minted of silver of considerably lower quality occur primarily among finds from offering sites. Since *schers* of the 15th century hardly ever occur in the composition of hoards, we have no possibility to establish the period during which they remained in circulation (Kiudsoo 2004, 80–81 and references). From the perspective of coin history in Livonia the

most unique find from Nõo is undoubtedly a *scherf* type represented even by three specimens (Table 1: 91–93; Fig. 6: 2). Such *scherf* type with a circle of rays around the edge and the coat of arms of Tartu diocese in the centre, was completely unknown before. Based on the appearance of these coins⁹ they were most likely minted in the 16th century during a *sede vacante* (Germ. *Sedisvakanz*) period, i.e. during the interregnum between the terms of two consecutive bishops (1515 or 1528).

Extremely rare finds from Nõo are also the *schers* minted in Tartu diocese by Johannes III Rope (1499–1505) (Table 1: 86–88; Fig. 6: 3) – the first of such coins to reach Estonian museum collections. Formerly that type was known only from private collections (see Haljak 2010, no 581, 5 R: 5–10 private specimens). Relying upon published information, a *scherf* with the

⁷ Although Resler's rule lasted until 1441, the coins date from the time before the monetary reform as a prelude to which coinage in Livonia was disrupted in 1420 (Leimus *et al.* 2018, 57).

⁸ *Landtag*, the assembly of the representatives of estates was the highest legislative body of Medieval Livonia since the early 15th century.

⁹ For example, specific decoration of the edge, lack of coat of arms of some definite bishop, key head shape are characteristic for 1515–1528.

Rope's (Buxhövdén's) family coat of arms was found in the 1990s on three occasions (see Sarkkinen 2001, 231), but the find places are unfortunately unknown.

Four *scherfs* with the heart image in the centre (Table 1: 68–71; Fig. 6: 4) struck in Tartu during the rule of Helmich von Mallinkrodt (1459–1468) are also worth extra noting. Until these finds, Estonian museum collections had only six coins of such design whereby four of them had come to light from Loosi (Valk *et al.* 2018, 162). Although the increased use of metal detectors had revealed at least nine so-called 'heart bracteates' in 2000–2010, none of these had reached the museums (Kiudsoo 2010, 240).

Coins from the period of the Livonian War (1558–1583) when medieval state formations of Livonia vanished, and from the time of the Polish rule (1582–1625/29) (Table 1: 121–172) are in general typical for Estonia's coin circulation of that time.¹⁰ They are represented by various Swedish coins struck under the rule of Eric XIV and John III, *schillings* of Riga free town (1561–1581), Russian wire kopeks¹¹, *schillings* of Poland minted in Riga during the rule of Sigismund III (before 1621), etc.

16th–17th centuries coin material from Nõo carries essential information about the circulation areas of different coin types. The era of the Swedish rule in southern Estonia (1625/29–1704) is represented by 109 coins (Table 1: 173–281): mostly by *schillings* from municipal (1621–1665) or state (1644–1665) mints of Riga and Swedish 1/4-öre and 1/6-öre copper coins (Christina, Charles XI). Considering Estonian coin hoards we may assert that the last-mentioned coins did not spread in the southernmost part of Estonia. This knowledge is also supported by finds from the village cemeteries and offering sites of the region. By the mid-17th century, two main circulation areas were established in Estonia: coins of the Polish system (factually represented also by Swedish *schillings* minted in Riga) circulated in the southern part and those of the Swedish system in the northern part of Estonia (Kiudsoo 2000, 22–23). These two circulation areas coincided more-or-less with the spheres of commercial influence of Riga and Tallinn (see Dunsdorfs 1962, 299). Southern Estonia together with the Latvian part of Livonia, Curonian Duchy, Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, etc., belonged to the circulation area of coins of the Polish system.

On the basis of some coin hoards it has been assumed that the southern part of Tartumaa district (including the surroundings of Nõo) belonged to the mixed, overlapping zone of Polish and Swedish monetary system areas (Kiudsoo 2000, 26–27; see map in Kiudsoo 2002, fig. 2), although only parts of these hoards have reached the museum collections (Kiudsoo 2002, appendix I: 114, 118, 124). Finds from Nõo have provided additional support for the assumption about the mixture of two monetary systems in the southern part of Tartu County.

Regarding the circulation time of later coins found at Nõo church we must consider that although the minting of *schillings* in Riga ended in 1665, these coins still circulated in large numbers in Livonia during the initial period of the Great Northern War. We also have evidence about the circulation of Swedish 17th century copper coins at the beginning of the 18th century (Kiudsoo 2004, 86; 2007, 29–30).

In addition, it is noteworthy that the 16th and 17th century coin assemblage from Nõo contains several coins of bigger value, usually not occurring among grave goods and at chapel

¹⁰ Since the coins that circulated in the territory of Medieval Livonia during the Livonian War (1558–1583) include many from the last quarter of the 15th century, we should always, when dating archaeological layers on the basis of numismatic evidence, consider the possibility that the specimens minted in that period were deposited into the ground in the second half of the 16th century. Generally, local coins minted before 1561 clearly prevail in Estonian hoards of the 1560s, since then their share starts to decline. The latest hoards containing single coins of the archdiocese of Riga and the Livonian Order have been deposited at the beginning of the 17th century (Kiudsoo 2004, 81).

¹¹ The first Russian kopeks and *dengas* appeared in the hoards on the territory of Estonia in the 1570s (Kiudsoo 2004, 85).

sites of southern Estonia. Such coins are represented by a Swedish and a Danish 4 penny from the 16th century, four 1-öre and one 4-öre silver coins.

Finally, we should note that the proportion of Russian 16th and 17th century wire kopeks and *dengas* (17.6% of Early Modern times coins) is much higher in Nõo coin assemblage than in the rural cemeteries of that period. Seemingly, wire kopeks of good silver were either considered too valuable for grave goods or they did not fit with the traditional concepts of funerary practices.

Artefacts and pottery

From the surroundings of Nõo church 23 brooches or brooch fragments (incl. 2 loose pins) were found. The oldest among the five round brooch fragments dates from the 13th–14th cc. and is decorated with triangle ornamentation (Fig. 7: 1), three are later medieval (Fig 7: 2) and one (Fig. 7: 3) is of 18th century or later origin. The two penannular brooches (Fig. 7: 4–5) and a fragment of such item might date from the 16th century. From the seven tiny 17th–18th cc. round brooches (diam. 20–29 mm) (Fig. 7: 6–12) two were decorated with groove ornamentation. Two small star-shaped brooches with dotted surfaces (Fig. 7: 13–14) and two heart-shaped brooches (Fig. 7: 16–17) represent artefact types which appear in southern Estonia since the 1630s and were in use until the early 18th century. A round brooch of lead alloy (Fig. 7: 15) dates, judging by its dotted edge, from the 18th or 19th century (Reidla 2012, 110–111).

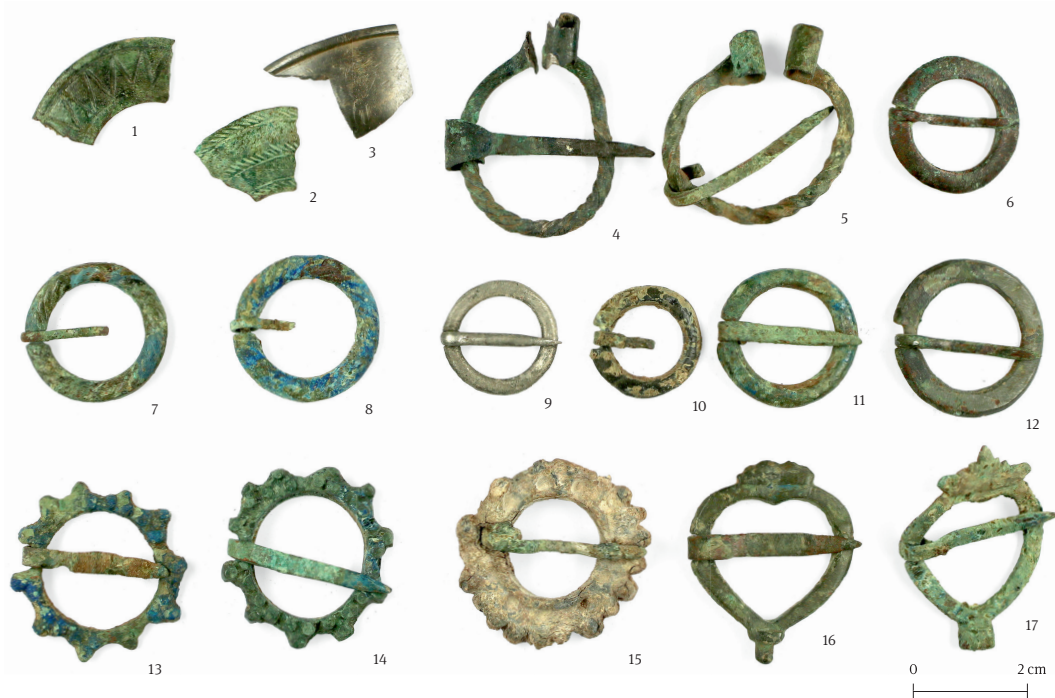


Fig. 7. Brooch finds from the vicinity of Nõo church. 1–3 – fragments of round brooches, 4–5 – penannular brooches, 6–12 – tiny round brooches, 13–15 – star-shaped brooches, 16–17 – heart-shaped brooches.

Jn 7. Sõleleitud Nõo kiriku juurest. 1–3 – rõngassõlggede katked, 4–5 – hoburaudsõled, 6–12 – väikesed vitssõled, 13–14 – tähtsõled, 15 – prees, 16–17 – südassõled.

(TÜ 2771: 471, 80, 126, 16, 469, 13, 15, 21, 90a, 22, 74, 470, 12, 14, 79, 78, 17.)

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

The find assemblage also includes 14 rings – eight signet rings or their fragments (Fig. 8: 1–6, 11–12) the shields of which were decorated with lattice ornamentation (3), a bird image (2), a human figure (1), geometric ornamentation (1) and a stylized image, possibly an animal (1). Also a damaged medieval spiral ring (Fig. 8: 7), four simple closed rings (Fig. 8: 8–10) dating not earlier than from the 18th century (Valk 2001, 49) and a fragment of a lead alloy ring with a rhombic shield (Fig. 10: 1) – a rare ring type in southern Estonia (Valk 1991, 193; table XXXI: 10) – were found.

Metal accessories of clothing are represented by seven copper alloy spiral tubes of different size (Fig. 9: 1, 2), which probably originate from 13th–14th cc. clothing items, a fragment of a fine bronze chain (Fig. 9: 5), a trapezoid pendant (Fig. 10: 10), a pin (Fig. 9: 6), two small belt buckles of iron (Fig. 11: 3, 4) and a fragment of a strongly worn, big gilded buckle (Fig. 10: 14).



Fig. 8. Ring finds from the vicinity of Nõo church. 1–6, 11–12 – signet rings, 7 – a spiral ring, 8–10 – narrow closed rings.

Jn 8. Sõrmuseleidud Nõo kiriku juurest. 1–6, 11–12 – pitsatsõrmused, 7 – spiraalsõrmus, 8–10 – vitssõrmused.

(TÜ 2771: 159, 75, 297a, 335, 416, 155, 417, 406, 159a, 472, 11, 161.)

Photo / Foto: Jaana Ratas



Fig. 9. Finds from the vicinity of Nõo church. 1–2 – copper alloy spiral tubes, 3 – a metal bead, 4 – a mount, 5 – a bronze chain fragment, 6 – a pin, 7–8 – mounts (7 is gilded, 8 is silvered).

Jn 9. Leiud Nõo kiriku juurest. 1–2 – vasesulamist spiraaltorukesed, 3 – metallhelmes, 4 – naast, 5 – pronksketi katke, 6 – nõõpnõel, 7–8 – ehisnaastud (7 kullatud, 8 hõbetatud).

(TÜ 2771: 296, 302, 261, 319e, 303, 271, 259, 473.)

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk



Fig. 10. Finds from the vicinity of Nõo church. 1 – a lead alloy ring fragment, 2–6 – mounts, 7 – mount for a timber object, 8 – fragment of a bell or button, 9 – a bell, 10 – a pendant, 11 – a pipe cover, 12 – a key, 13 – a silver bar, 14 – fragment of a gilded belt buckle.

Jn 10. Leiud Nõo kiriku juurest. 1 – pliisulamist sõrmuse katke, 2–6 – ehisnaastud, 7 – puitese pronksnaast, 8 – kuljuse või kuljusnõõbi poolmik, 9 – kuljus, 10 – ripats, 11 – piibukaas, 12 – võti, 13 – hõbedakang, 14 – kullatud pandla või vöösirgu katke.

(TÜ 2771: 114, 115, 408, 232, 358, 353, 156, 474, 160, 231, 158, 403, 319, 404.)

Foto / Photo: Heiki Valk



Fig. 11. Finds from the vicinity of Nõo church. 1 – a bronze needle, 2 – tweezers, 3–4 – buckles, 5 – a key, 6 – fire steel, 7 – a splinter holder, 8 – fragment of candlewick scissors, 9 – a rowel, 10 – fragment of a lead bar.

Jn 11. Leide Nõo kiriku juurest. 1 – pronksist õmblusnõel, 2 – pintsetid, 3–4 – pandlad, 5 – võti, 6 – tuleraud, 7 – pilak, 8 – tahikäärde katke, 9 – kannuseketas, 10 – pliikangi katke.

(TÜ 2771: 301, 412, 123, 411, 349, 348, 361, 438, 354, 125.)

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

Eight mounts from textile or leather objects include two lead alloy (Fig. 9: 4; 10: 3) and six copper alloy items (Fig. 9: 7, 8; 10: 2, 4–6). Among the latter one tiny flower-shaped mount is gilded (Fig. 9: 7), one item is silvered (Fig. 9: 8), leaded (Fig. 10: 4) and tinned (Fig. 10: 5).

Finds also include a massive mount from some wooden object, maybe a club (Fig. 10: 7), a slightly oval metal bead (Fig. 9: 3), a bell with a slot (Fig. 10: 9), the upper half of a two-part bell or button (Fig. 10: 8), and nine round firearm bullets of lead alloy. Exceptional items are a silver bar (Fig. 10: 13) and a fragment of a lead bar (Fig. 11: 10), probably raw materials for craft production.

Finds of tools and utensils and their fragments were not numerous, including a tiny bronze key (Fig. 10: 12) and three iron keys (Fig. 11: 5), a bronze needle (Fig. 11: 1), tweezers (Fig. 11: 2), a fire steel (Fig. 11: 6), broken candlewick scissors (Fig. 11: 8), a splinter holder (Fig. 11: 7), a hand-made iron rowel (Fig. 11: 9), a pipe cover (Fig. 10: 11) and a clay pipe fragment. Numerous context-free horseshoe nails with possible dates from medieval times to the mid-20th century were not collected. Although iron knives or their fragments are common among 13th–17th century finds from rural cemeteries of southern Estonia (Valk 2001, 54–55), including those in Nõo parish, they were represented only by a fragment inside and another (mount from handle tip) outside the churchyard. Nor were they discovered during earlier excavations in Nõo churchyard (Malve 2016, 199–203). Since only very weak signals of iron, referring to tiny objects or fragments were not checked, the lack of knives might be not of occasional character, but rather reflect peculiarities of burial rites in the parish churchyard.

Pottery was represented with ca. 140 mostly tiny sherds of wheel-thrown vessels with brownish, pinkish or dark grey surfaces, and only six redware items. Four sherds are decorated with line ornamentation (: 256, 289, 204, 316), indicating Final Iron Age settlement traces in the locality; rim finds are rare.

The finds include also five stoneware fragments, including three fragments of 14th century Siegburg stoneware (: 286, 324, 414; Russow 2006, SIEG3b), two of them since ca. 1350, and two fragments of Frechen stoneware (: 364, 365) from the late 16th century or later.¹²

Human bones

Human bones were represented by 998 bones or bone fragments from both sexes and different age groups, as well as by 25 teeth (Malve 2020) – material typical for medieval churchyards. Because of the commingled character and extremely fragmented state, the number of individuals could not be identified. On the bones traces of spondylosis and osteoarthritis, in two cases of osteitis were discovered; tooth bore traces of tooth scale and periapical abscesses. Several bones had traces of green copper oxide indicating the presence of copper alloy objects in the grave. The surface of several bones was bleached and eroded which confirms their long-term being in open air before getting re-buried.¹³

THE TRENCH

Character of the cultural layers

After the removal of ca. 20 cm of top soil the trench area (Fig. 3) was dug by 10 cm thick layers. The thickness of the dark grey cultural layer, together with removed top soil was up to 65 cm. Such thickness can partly be explained by erosion, since ground slanted towards the south,

¹² Estimations by Erki Russow (TLÜ AT).

¹³ For possible explanation see the article on investigations in Helme chapel and churchyard in this volume.

but probably also by adding soil from the way south of the churchyard. Sieving soil from the trench revealed numerous coins, bone and pottery fragments. In some places the dark grey soil contained tiny particles of charcoal and an 1/4-öre coin was found from a dark patch of soot – indication of a fireplace.

In the western part of the trench fine dirty gravel with no finds in it, except for some pieces of medieval bricks, stretched from the depth of ca. 30 cm until the bottom of cultural layer. Probably, it was a fill to replace soil in an area which tended to be wet in rainy times. The brownish soil between the cultural layer and intact mineral loam did not contain any finds.

In the north-eastern corner of the trench a post hole with a flat bottom of 46–47 cm in diameter and of oval shape in its upper part, stretching until 40 cm into virgin mineral loam and having no finds in it was found. Since the feature appeared only ca. 10 cm higher than the virgin loam, it seems to represent an early stage of human activities and could hypothetically be connected with the primary churchyard wall or its gate.

As shown by pottery with line ornamentation, the earliest traces of human activities in the area may date from the final stage of the Iron Age. Probably of similar date is also the trapezoid pendant (Fig. 10: 10) which represents items typical for that time. The date of the earliest coin find (Table 1: 1) concurs with the construction time of the stone church.

Finds from the trench

Coins gained by sieving were represented by 52 items¹⁴ from the 13th/14th to the 17th century in the trench area. Also most of local pottery was found from that context. Other finds were of diverse character: two rings, a bead, a pin, a chain fragment, five mounts, seven spiral tubes, a button, a belt buckle, a bronze needle, a clay pipe fragment, a fire steel, an iron key, a splinter holder, a silver bar, and four lead bullets.

From the trench also 505 fragments of animal, bird and fish bones (Rannamäe 2020) were found, and in addition to them also some tiny human bone fragments were distinguished. From the very strongly fragmented material only 111 items (22%) could be identified at the level of species. Among mammal bones (112 fragments) there were 40 cattle (35.7%), 47 sheep/goat (42%) and nine pig (8%) bones, one rodent bone, as well as 15 (13.4%) unidentified ungulate bones. Among eight bird bones Galliformes, chicken and black grouse could be distinguished. The 21 fish bones included perch, pike, cyprinids, bream and whitefish. High fragmentation of bones, whereby cut marks could be observed on 37 (7%) and chew marks on 23 (5%) fragments, gives evidence of a typical assemblage of butchery and food remains. 111 bone fragments (9%) were burnt, but this number can eventually be higher since bone fragments with slightly brownish surfaces were not regarded as burnt.

Stratigraphy

The dates of coins and stoneware from the trench and its extensions give evidence of quite clear vertical stratigraphy of the cultural layers (Table 2). Thus, later coins were found from higher, older ones from deeper layers, as a rule, – in spite of some disturbances caused by rats, moles or tramping. All four lead bullets and most of the pottery fragments come from the top layers. The lack of modern trash also indicates the lack of later disturbances. Thus, finds from the trench give evidence of persistent and continuous deposition of a cultural layer in front of Nõo churchyard.

¹⁴ Coins from removed top soil are not included.

Table 2. Vertical stratigraphy of finds in the excavated and sieved area (2×2.7 m + extensions; see Fig. 2: 2). The 13th century must be questioned since all coin data referring to it were gained by sharing vague 13th–14th cc. dates between the two centuries. The ‘Damerow pennies’ (ca. 1396–1420) were considered as 15th century coins.

Tabel 2. Leidude stratigraafia kaevandis ($2 \times 2,7$ m + laiendid). Andmed 13. sajandi kohta on küsitavad, sest need tulenevad 13.–14. sajandi dateeringuga müntide sajandite vahel jaotamisest. Nn “Damerowi pennid” on arvatud 15. sajandi leidude hulka.

Compiled by / Koostanud: Heiki Valk

| Layers / Kihid | Pottery / Keraamika | Bones / Luud | Coins / Mündid | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| | | | 13th c. | 14th c. | 15th c. | 16th c. | 17th c. | Total |
| Top soil (20 cm) removed by backhoe | - | - | - | - | 2 | 5 | 9 | 16 |
| Layer 1 (10 cm) | 28 | 52 | - | - | 2 | - | 6 | 8 |
| Layer 2 (10 cm) | 50 | 155 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 11 |
| Layer 3 (10 cm) | 15, incl. SIEG3b | 104 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 13 |
| Layer 4 (10 cm) | 12 | 80 | 2 | 2 | 16 | - | - | 20 |
| Layer 5 (5 cm, brown natural soil) | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 105 | 391 | 3 | 3 | 32 | 10 | 20 | 68 |

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

The rich find assemblage from the surroundings of Nõo church is extraordinary in the context of church archaeology in Estonia, considering the character and high number of finds, especially coins. Differences in the distribution of finds could be observed during the fieldwork already which gave reason for further deeper analysis.

Spatial distribution of finds

To see differences in the concentration of specific find groups, the research area was divided into seven zones, three of them inside and four outside the churchyard (Fig. 2: A–G).¹⁵ Mapping the finds gained from top soil by using metal detectors showed distinct differences both in their concentration and character (Fig. 2; Table 3), indicating different use of the areas.

While a coin was found per 2.9 opened square metres in the churchyard, the respective average number was 1.5 south of it and 17.8 for the parking lot. The concentration of coins was the highest outside the medieval churchyard on the way south of the churchyard gates – 0.7 m² per coin (Fig. 2: F). Also within the churchyard the path from the southern portal to the churchyard gate was the richest in coins – 1.3 m² per item.¹⁶ Within the churchyard the high frequency of coins and lack of brooches on the way between the churchyard gates and the southern portal must be noted, especially when compared to paths leading from the gates to the western portal and the sacristy. The difference can be explained by different functions of the areas: while the central path has functioned as such since the time of church construction, other paths were laid through churchyard cemetery area. The only finds from the east and north of the choir were 11 coins.

Outside the churchyard, on the east–west way south of it the concentration of coins was smaller in its western (Fig. 2: E) than its eastern part (Fig. 2: G) – 3.1 m² and 1.1 m² per coin, respectively. The poorest in finds was the area west of the churchyard (Fig. 2: D) where in the area of 373 m² only 21 coins and 15 other artefacts or their fragments were found. The low number of coins from the parking lot area shows that the intensity of activities related to coin

¹⁵ Areas where cultural layers appeared to have formerly been removed, i.e. those south of zone F and east of zone G were not considered.

¹⁶ The lack of coins near the present-day churchyard gate may be explained by possible earlier removal of cultural layers.

deposition was greatly smaller there than south of the churchyard. Since the oldest coin is from 1472–1484, the area seems to have been taken into use only since the late 15th century.

Since some of the churchyard coins originate from disturbed graves, it is hard to estimate the difference in the intensity of activities related to ‘non-grave-good’ coin deposition inside and outside the churchyard. However, the high number of coins from the pathway between the southern portal and the churchyard gates enables to suggest that ‘non-grave-good’ coins are frequent also among finds from the churchyard.

A difference in the number of rings and brooches within and outside the churchyard must also be noted: while most brooches and brooch fragments with known find context originate from inside the churchyard, rings were found mainly out of it.

Table 3. *Spatial distribution of find groups up to ca. 25/30 cm from the ground surface.*

Tabel 3. *Leiurühmade ruumiline jaotumus maapinnast kuni 25/30 cm sügavusel.*

Compiled by / Koostanud: Heiki Valk

| Find group | Metal detector finds from top layers | | | | | Excavation area below detecting depth (7.8 m²) | Stray finds without context | Total |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-------|
| | Churchyard (177 m²) | Parking lot (373 m²) | South of the churchyard (189 m²) | | | | | |
| | | | Way west of gates (93 m²) | Pathway south of the gates (incl. top layers of the trench) (29 m²) | Way east of gates (area F; 66 m²) | | | |
| Coins | 62 | 19 | 30 | 43 | 57 | 52 | 42 | 305 |
| Brooches (incl. fragments) | 15 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 22 |
| Rings | 3 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 14 |
| Total | 80 | 21 | 35 | 46 | 60 | 54 | 45 | 341 |

Interpretation: traces of church fairs

While finds from Nõo churchyard can be regarded as typical for the context, the cultural layer with its rich find assemblage in front of main entrance to the churchyard must specially be outlined. An explanation to its presence can be found from the written records, noting popular festivities and church fairs at Nõo church.

Lutheran church visitation reports from the 17th century tell about popular assemblies with feasting and drinking at Nõo church on St Laurence Day – the 10th of August. In 1677 the pastor complains that local landlords send their beer and distilled vodka for sale there and ‘all kinds of dealers’ offer different food and drinks to the people, turning the devout ‘repentance, fasting and praying day’ (Germ. *Buss-, Fast- und Behttag*) into the day of sin, feasting (Germ. *Fress*), drinking and damnation. To avoid trouble, the pastor suggests the goods ought to be confiscated by soldiers and distributed to the poor, but beer and distilled vodka should be prohibited (Köpp 1959, 229). According to the church visitation report from 1683, offering wax and ‘other superstitious practices’ still continued, accompanied by food and drinks sold by dealers from Tartu (*ibid.*)

These descriptions give evidence of a specific cultural phenomenon of medieval Catholic culture – popular festivities on dedication days of churches, known as *Kirchmess(e)* in German tradition. The *Dictionary of German Language* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (DWB) explains the word as follows: ‘*Kirchmesse* is a worship celebrated annually on a definite day to commemorate the foundation and consecration of a local church, together with related entertainments and feasting on the spot, as well as with annual fair held here and there at the

same time; all this is one of the most important annual celebrations of the congregation.¹⁷ The word *kirmas(k)* which designates an ordinary village dancing party in the dialects of Lutheran southern Estonia¹⁸ might have its origin in the German word *Kirchmess(e)*.¹⁹

Kirchmess(e) (Low German *Kerckmisse*) festivities with related feasting and revelry, with dancing, bagpipe music and large quantities of beer on church holidays and their eves were common also in Late Medieval Livonia, as reflected in the chronicle by Balthasar Russow (1584, 31).²⁰ The tradition of popular assemblies at churches and chapel sites on their dedication days continued in Estonia in the second half of the 17th century, in spite of condemnation and prohibition by Lutheran church authorities (Westrén-Doll 1926; Köpp 1959, 220–231).²¹

While in Lutheran Estonia the *kirmas* festivities in churchyards vanished long ago and village *kirmas* parties had lost their religious meaning by the late 19th century, the original meaning of the events and connections with church holidays has survived in Orthodox context among the Setos in Setomaa district. Although all kinds of religious activities outside church buildings were prohibited in the Soviet time, the tradition of *kirmas* parties, although with decreasing number of participants, continued at some villages, often at village chapels until their revival in the late 1980s. The closest parallels to former events in Nõo can presently be found in Saatse where *kirmas* with related fair takes place just in front of churchyard gates, after the worship and the following ritual meals on the cemetery. Popular assemblies at churches on local church holidays in Setomaa (Fig. 12) make it possible to imagine the character of activities and the number of crowds at the churches of presently Lutheran Estonia during such events in the Catholic Period.

The high concentration of coins, jewellery items and dress accessories outside the churchyard of Nõo, as well as the presence of food remains, fragments of local pottery and imported stoneware jugs, and coins of bigger value than common for grave goods and offering sites, can be explained with *Kirchmess(e)* festivities and church fairs on St Laurence Day or with similar festivities on other holidays (although losing coins and jewellery on ordinary church days must also be considered). A cultural layer of similar character from the 16th and 17th centuries, with numerous coin finds and other small items has been studied and interpreted as a market place also in the outer bailey of Vastseliina castle (Valk 2006, 132–136). The total lack of fire-cracked stones in the cultural layers excludes the possibility to explain the finds as originating from cultural layers of a settlement site.

¹⁷ *Kirchmesse: gottesdienst, eig. jährlich an einem bestimmten tage zum gedächtnis der stiftung und einweihung einer ortskirche gefeiert, die damit verbundenen lustbarkeiten und schmausereien im orte, und der hie und da zugleich abgehaltene jahrmart, alles das als ein ganzes das wichtigste jahresfest der gemeinde /---/. The dictionary presents, together with references, the following variations, reflecting the distribution of the word and the concept: mhd. kirchmesse(?), nd. kerkmisse, now karkmisse, nl. kerkmisse, kerkmis., nordengl. Kirkmass, 'still mostly with the loss of the second vowel'. http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/call_wbgui_py_from_form?sigle=DWB&mode=Volltextsuche&hitlist=&patternlist=&lemid=GK05679 (accessed 28.09.2020).*

¹⁸ <https://www.eki.ee/dict/ems/index.cgi?Q=kirmass&F=M&C06=et> (accessed 28.09.2020).

¹⁹ As the word has been recorded mainly from south-eastern Estonia, and it is known also in Setomaa, both in Seto and Russian language (*кярмау*), it has been suggested to be a loanword from Russian (EES 2012, 160). However, in Russian the word is known only in the western dialects, designating a fair, market, and a non-Orthodox popular festivity (<http://slovari.ru/search.aspx?s=0&p=3068&di=v&wi=67145> (accessed 06.10.2020)). The local Russians of Setomaa used the word *кярмау* for Seto festivities only (oral data from archaeologist Lyubov Grushina). The word *кярмау* exists in Belarusian (<https://classes.ru/all-bylorussian/dictionary-bylorussian-russian-bul-term-4417.htm>), being explained in Russian as 'fair' or 'noise'. To the Belarusian language the word has been borrowed from Polish *kiermasz* which means a fair, a sale of goods of various kinds, especially home-made or second-hand. (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/polish-english/kiermasz>)

²⁰ Text about the church fairs is on the back of page 31 which has no numeration.

²¹ The opposing attitudes of the Lutheran Church towards *Kirchmess(e)*, as well as the profanization of the festivity belong to a broader context of Early Modern times. Catholic practices related to the cult of saints, including celebrating *Kirchmess(e)* on the days of saints with related eating and drinking were locally prohibited in Lutheran Germany soon after the Reformation already: *es sollen in allen steten, flecken und dörfen kein kirchmes von essen und trinken gehalten werden. (Landgrave Philipsen (von Hessen) reformation u. ordenung u. s. w. 1526)* (DWB, Vol. V, 822). By the mid-19th century *Kirchmesse* festivity had lost its former religious meaning in Germany long ago, having been transformed into 'some very non-sacral' yearly feasting festivity celebrated at certain time: *Jetzt dagegen und schon lange ist die kirchmesse etwas sehr unheiliges, die jährlich zu gewisser zeit gehaltenen schmausereien und festlichkeiten, namentlich im mittleren Deutschland (auch in Franken)* (ibid.).



Fig. 12. Celebration of St Paraskeva's Day at Saatse church (Setomaa) in 2019.

Jn 12. Päätnitsapäev Saatse kiriku juures 2019. aastal.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

Finds from Nõo allow hypothetical insights into Medieval and Early Modern *kirmas* festivities. The character of finds refers to the presence of different social strata – local peasants of different prosperity, dealers, craftsmen. The large number of coins in front of the churchyard is an indication of intensive market activities. Pottery fragments refer to food and meals, stoneware – to drinking, bone finds – to eating meat and fish. The finds of cremated animal bones are a sign of throwing food remains into bonfires, indicating the duration of St Laurence day festivities with their numerous drunk participants, as known from written data, into dark evening and night hours of August. Making fire in front of the church was also shown by the find of an $\frac{1}{4}$ -öre coin from a patch of sooty soil in the depth of 25 cm. The spatial distribution of finds (Fig. 2) suggests that fair activities were more intensive outside the churchyard than within it, although some of the churchyard finds also might relate to that context.

The find assemblage from Nõo is a valuable source material about the chronology of church fairs in Estonia, whereby information about the beginning of these festivities is of special importance, due to the lack of written evidence. The chronology of coin finds indicates that their consistent deposition began in the late 14th century.

Church fairs have also a broader cultural meaning. They give evidence of the introduction of cultural phenomena characteristic of medieval Europe among the natives of Livonia, being an important landmark also in terms of history of religion. Numerous attendance in these celebrations is a testimony of accepting church holidays in Estonian popular calendar and, on a broader scale, of the reception of important elements of Catholicism.

The high number and continuous row of coins indicates the continuity of church fair tradition throughout the Middle Ages, and the periods of the Livonian War, Polish and Swedish rule. Since Swedish coins minted in the 1660s circulated in Livonia also in the first decades of the 18th century, the tradition of St Laurence Day festivities probably continued until the Great Northern War (activities in Estonia in 1700–1710) and the Great Plague of 1710–1711. As the number of victims of the epidemic in Nõo parish (1215 people in all) is higher than in Tartumaa province in general (Kõpp 1929, 19), we may hypothetically even suggest that assemblies on St Laurence Day during the plague may have contributed to the high mortality. As shown by Russian copper coins from the 1730s and 1740s, represented by 19 items, the tradition of St Laurence Day festivities seems to have lasted, although gradually decreasing, until the middle of the 18th century. From then onwards coins occur in the find assemblage only in rare cases.

CONCLUSIONS

Investigations at the church of Nõo revealed entirely new information about popular festivities in the surroundings of Medieval and Early Modern Period churches of Estonia. Written evidence from the 16th and 17th century makes it possible to relate the rich find assemblage of numerous coins, food remains, pottery fragments, jewellery and costume accessories from outside the medieval churchyard greatly with annual church fairs – *Kirchmess(e)*. Coin finds suggest the beginning of these fairs to be in the 14th century, especially since its end, shedding also new light upon coin circulation in southern Estonia in the 13th – early 18th centuries.

Investigations in Nõo confirm the need to carry out archaeological monitoring and research in case of construction work also outside present-day churchyards, especially near churchyard gates.

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LEIUD NÕO KIRIKAIAST JA LÄHIÜMBRUSEST: KESKAEGSETE JA VARAUUSAJA KIRMASTE JÄLJED

Heiki Valk ja Mauri Kiudsoo

Nõo kirikaia ja selle lähiümbruses toimusid arheoloogilised päästeuringud seoses jalgradade ja kirikaia lõunaküljel oleva tee uuendamisega ning parkimisplatsi rajamisega kirikaia lääneküljele (kokku u 761 m²) (jn 1–2). Teede alal kuni 25/30 cm paksuselt 10 cm kaupa kopaga eemaldatav pinnas vaadati eelnevalt läbi metallidetektoritega; lisaks tehti kirikaia värvakoha ees olevast teeristist lõuna poole hiljem laiendatud proovikaevand (jn 3; kokku 7,8 m²), et uurida kultuurikihi alumist osa. Arheoloogilisi leide mitte sisaldavast pealmisest pinnasekihist sügavalt leiti rohkelt münte, samuti ehteid ja rõivastuse metallmanuseid (jn 2). Kirikaia tuli koorist 5–8 m lõuna pool nähtavale tagasimaetud inimluude lasu.

Kirikaia lääneküljel parkimisplatsi alal avastati kamara all keskaegse kirikaia suurtest maakividest müüripõhi (jn 4). 1,35–1,4 m laiune vundament koosnes kahes reas suurtest maakividest ja oli praeguse, 1921. aastal ehitatud kirikaia müüri suhtes 47-kraadise nurga all. Kivide tasased pealispinnad langesid vundamendi pikitelje suunas. Maapinnale ulatuvate kivinukkide põhjal otsustades jätkus vana müüripõhi kagu poole, joostes läbi praeguse kirikaia edelanurga alt ja keerates siis nürinurga all itta (jn 2: 4). Sama müüripõhja kivinukke võis kohati jälgida ka kirikaia lõunaküljel. Märkimist väärivad veel kirikaia värvakohas avastatud, tugevalt kulunud pinnaga suur graniidist lävekivi ja kivist häbipost praeguse kirikaia edelanurga lähistel.

Kiriku lõunaportaali juures leiti Kaur Altoa hüpoteesi kontrollimisel nüüdseks hävinud lõunaeeskoja idaseina ja sellega külgneva tellispõranda jäänused (jn 5). Maakividest vundamendile laotud 53–55 cm tellisseina põhi oli säilinud 1,33 m ulatuses kuni kahe kivi kõrguselt. Ida-lääne sihis u 3,05 m laiuse siseläbimõõduga eeskoja lõunaseina maakivivundament oli varasemate kaevetöödega lõhutud. Idaotsas paika jäänud kahe aluskivi põhjal otsustades on see olnud u 1,4 m laiune ning ehitusviisilt sarnane keskaegse kirikaia müüripõhjaga. Vundamendikivide peal lahtises mõrdipurus oli kaks 1410. aastate münti.

Kaevamistel leiti kokku 304 münti, mis olid vermitud 13.–18. sajandil, neist 120 keskaegsed (tabel 1). 262 münti (86,2%) avastati kindlast piirkonnast, teised teisaldatud pinnase täiendaval läbivaatamisel. Vanimad mündid pärinevad 1260.–1330. aastatest, kuid rahade järjepidev jada algab nn Damerowi brakteaatide näol 1395. a paiku. Keskaegsete väikemüntide (jn 6) seas on 1420. aastate rahareformi järgseid rariteete, samuti kolm Tartu piiskopkonna senitund-

matut vermingut 16. saj algupoollest (jn 6; 2). Varauusaegsed mündid esindavad kalmetes ja ohvrikohtades tavalisi tüüpe, kuid märkida tuleb suuremate, hauapanustena mitte esinevate nominaalide suhtelist arvukust ja Vene traatrahade rohkust. Rõhutamist väärib nii Rootsi mündisüsteemi rahade (vasköörid) kui ka Poola mündisüsteemi kuuluvate Riias löödud killingite esinemine, mis viitab kahe mündisüsteemi segaalale Tartust lõuna pool.

Veel leiti 23 sõlge ja sõlekatket (jn 7) või -nõela, sh 5 rõngassõle tüüki (jn 7: 1, 2), 2 hoburaudsõlge (jn 7: 4, 5) ja pool sellise sõle kaart, 7 väikest vitssõlge (jn 7: 6–12), 2 täht- ja südasõlge (jn 7: 13, 14, 17, 18), varajane prees (jn 7: 15) ja 18.–19. saj hõbedase kuhiksõle katke (jn 7: 3). 14 leitud sõrmuse seas on 8 16.–17. saj pitsatsõrmust (jn 8: 1–6, 11, 12), keskaegne spiraalsõrmus (jn 8: 7), 4 vitssõrmust (jn 8: 8–10) ja pliisulamist sõrmuse rombiline kilp (jn 10: 1). Leiti mitmeid riie- tuse metallmanuseid, sh 7 spiraalitorukest (jn 9: 1, 2), 2 raudpannalt (jn 11: 3, 4), pronksketi jupp (jn 9: 5), 8 naastu (jn 9: 4, 7, 8; 10: 2–6), metallhelmes (jn 9: 3), piluga kuljus (jn 10: 9), trapetsripats (jn 10: 10) ning kahepoolmelise kuljuse või nõõbi katke (jn 10: 8). Üks ümar naast (jn 9: 7) ja võõsirgu või pandla tükk (jn 10: 14), mis leiti väljastpoolt kirikaeda, on kullatud, üks naast (jn 9: 8) hõbetatud. Haruldased leiud on väike hõbedakang (jn 10: 13) ja pliikangi ots (jn 11: 10). Tööriistu ja tarbeasju esindavad pronksist õmblusnõel (jn 11: 1), pintsetid (jn 11: 2), noa katke ja pideme otsanaast, tuleraud (jn 11: 6), pilak (jn 11: 7), tahikäärde katke (jn 11: 8), 4 võtit (jn 10: 13; 11: 5), puueseme ehisnaast (jn 10: 7), piibukaas (jn 10: 11), luust ehisplaadi ja savipiibu varre katke. Leiti ka 9 ümarat pliisulamist musketikuuli.

Enamasti pinnase sõelumisel saadud keraamika, kokku u 140 väikest kildu (neist 2 joonornamendiga) on kedranõudest. Viiest kivikeraamikakillust kuulub kolm 14.–15. sajandisse ja kaks 16. sajandisse.

Enamik inimluudest pärineb kirikaia leitud lasust. Väga tugevalt fragmenteerunud luud kuuluvad eri vanuserühmadele, leitud patoloogiad (spondüloos, osteoartritis, osteiit) on iseloomulikud keskaegsete kalmistute luuainesele. Paljude luude erodeerinud ja pleekinud pind viitab kauasele õhu käes olemisele enne tagasimatmist.

Proovikaevandit kirikuesise teeristi lõunaküljel kaevati 10 cm korraste kaupa ja kogu pinnas sõeluti. Tumehall muld sisaldas münte, keraamikat ja loomaluud, kuid põlenud kivide puudumine näitab, et tegemist ei ole asulakihiga. Kultuurikihi kogupaksus

(sh kopaga eemaldatud u 20 cm paksune pealmine kamara- ja mullakiht) oli kuni 65 cm. Kaevandi kirde-nurga põhjas paljandus 40 cm võrra mineraalpinna-sesse ulatuv postiauk (põhja läbimõõt 46–47 cm). Kultuurikihi stratigraafia oli üsna hästi säilinud: hili-semad mündid paiknesid kõrgemal, vanemad sügava-mal ja erandeid esines vähe (tabel 2).

Sõelumisel leitud, enamasti väga fragmenteeru-nud luukillud (505 katket), millest osadel leidis löike- ja närimisjälgi, kujutavad endast toidujäätmeid. Väheste määratavate luude seas olid imetajatest esin-datud lammas/kits (42%), veis (36%), siga (8%) ja täp-semalt määratlemata sõralised (13%), linnuliikidest ühe leiuga teder, kana ja kanalised, kaladest üksikute luudega ahven, haug, siig, latikas ja karplased. Osa loomaluid (9%) oli põlenud, mis viitab näritud kon-tide tulle viskamisele.

Maapinnast kuni 25 cm sügavusel olnud, detek-tori abil kogutud leidude ruumiline jaotumus (jn 2; tabel 3) ei olnud ühtlane. Münte oli kõige rohkem lõu-naportaalist lähtuva tee alal, samuti kirikaia lõuna-küljega paralleelse tee piires värvast kuni 15 meetrit ida pool. Kirikaia lääneküljel oli münte vähe, vanimad neist olid 15. saj lõpust. Sõled leiti enamasti kirikaia-st, enamik sõrmustest aga väljastpoolt. Leidude erinev esinemissagedus viitab piirkondade erinevale funktsioonile.

Rootsiaegsed luterlike kirikuvisitatsioonide proto-kollid (1677, 1683) taunivad Nõo kiriku juures lauritsa-

päeval toimunud rahvakogunemisi – kirikulaatade pidustusi, mille käigus söödi ning tarbiti ohtralt Tartu kaupmeeste ja mõisnike alkoholi. Toimuva sobi-matuse tõttu nõudis kirikuõpetaja sõdurite kohale toomist äritsemise lõpetamiseks. Katoliku ajal saksa kultuuriruumis laialt levinud kirmased (< sks *Kirch-mess(e)*) olid Russowi kroonika teatel keskaegsel Liivimaal tavalised. Nõo kirikaia ees leiduva rohkelt münte, toidujäänuseid ja keraamikat sisaldava kul-tuurikihi teke seostub suures osas ilmselt just lauritsa-päeva aegsete kirmastega, kuid välistada ei saa teis-telgi kirikupäevadel toimunu jälgi. Eesti piires on pühade ajal kiriku juures toimuvate suurte rahvakogu-nemiste (jn 12) ja kirmaste traditsioon tänini säilinud õigeusulisel Setomaal.

Eesti kirikute juures kohaliku kirikupühaga seotud laatade ja kirmaste traditsiooni algus kirjalikes alli-kates ei kajastu. Leiud Nõost on esimene pidepunkt selle kultuurinähtuse alguse määratlemiseks Eesti alal: sealsete mündileidude jada algab 14. saj lõpust. Müntide rohkus ja ühtlane aegrida osundavad tradit-siooni järjepidevusele läbi keskaja, Liivi sõja, Poola ja Rootsi aja. Kuna 17. saj II poole mündid olid käibel veel ka Põhjasõja ajal ning Nõost leiti ka 1730.–1740. aastate Vene vaskrahasid, näib kirmaseid olevat pee-tud 18. saj keskpaigani, pärast sõda küll juba langevas joones. Nimetatud sajandi teise poole müntide väike arv viitab traditsiooni kadumisele.