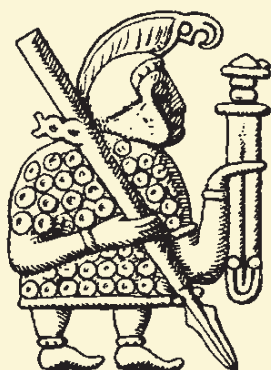


.. FORN VÄNNEN

JOURNAL OF
SWEDISH ANTIQUARIAN
RESEARCH



2026/2

A Livonian pilgrim badge from Masku, South-West Finland

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In 2016, a metal detectorist found several fragments of objects in a field belonging to Juva Farm on the north side of the Maskunjoki River (Leppänen 2022, pp. 74, 79, Appendix 1:6, 2:3, 3:10). The location is about 3 km North-East from the medieval church of Masku. The finds date broadly to the Late Iron Age and the Middle Ages, and among them was a roughly almond-shaped plate of metal (fig. 1). The reverse of the piece is unornamented but with a remnant of a fastening pin near the lower edge. The front is decorated with a relief of the seated Virgin Mary with the Christ Child on her lap. The Virgin is haloed, and she holds a long, narrow object in the crook of her left arm, while Christ, also haloed, is reaching towards or holding something on the right side of the Virgin. Stylistically the object is medieval, but the cramped relief shows that its original edges have broken off and are missing.

The shape of the plate and the pictorial motif resemble pilgrim badges produced in Rocamadour, France, where the mountain shrine of the Church of the Blessed Mary was highly popular in the Middle Ages. Numerous pilgrim badges produced there are known across Europe (Spencer 1998, pp. 233–235; Rasmussen 2021, pp. 126–128). They are almond-shaped with an inscription running around the edge and furnished with four fastening loops. However, although the central motif depicts the seated Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child on her lap, there is one significant difference compared with the fragment from Masku. The Virgin holds a sceptre with a lily on its top on her right side, whereas in the Masku item, the sceptre is on her left side.

Alongside the Rocamadour badges, there exists a small group of closely related items linked with Livonia. They are shaped similarly and have four fastening loops, but the mirrored



Fig. 1. Pilgrim badge of pewter found in the field of Juva Farm in Masku, South-West Finland in 2016 (National Museum of Finland, inv. no. KM 41582:1). Size c. 3 x 2 x 0.6 cm. Photo: the Archaeological Collections, Finnish Heritage Agency.

inscription around the edge states *SIGNVM S MARIE IN LIVONIA REMISSIONIS PECCATORVM* ('The sign of St Mary for the forgiveness of sins in Livonia'). In these badges, the Virgin holds a lily sceptre on the crook of her left arm, while the Christ Child carries a Greek cross on his outstretched right hand. Although the Masku find is a fragment, it shares so many similarities with other Livonian badges that it clearly belongs to the group.

In addition to the find from Masku, six or seven such badges are known. Two of them are from Latvia, one from Sweden and four from Germany. The first of the Latvian finds was discovered during urban excavations in the town of Kuldīga, West Latvia. The fragmentary item is the lower half of a badge unearthed in connection with a 13th-century street (Lūsēns & Kalējs 2014, p. 140; Ose 2015, pp. 67, 74). The other Latvian find is also a half of a badge and discovered during archaeological excavations on 4 Miesnieku Street in Riga (Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation, inv. no. VRVM 185163/3; <https://digitalbiblioteka.lv?id=oai:the.european.library.DOM:1552632>). The badge bears an inscription, but it is illegible, making its identification as Livonian uncertain.

The fragmentary badge from Sweden was discovered in archaeological excavations at the medieval town of Lödöse. The location of discovery was not stratigraphically clear, but the object is nevertheless dated to the end of the 13th century (Statens historiska museum, inv. no. SHM 27600:65; Rydbeck 1967; Ekre 1986, pp. 14–15; Andersson 1989, pp. 54–55).

Of the four badges from Germany, one was found in a body of water at Stülper Huk, downstream from the medieval town of Lübeck. The find is stylistically dated to the 13th century (Focke-Museum, inv. no. 1953-36; Warncke 1931, pp. 175–176; Wittstock 1984, pp. 16–17). Another badge is from Kiel and discovered during urban excavations at the Castle Quarter in a late-medieval layer dated to the late 13th and the early 14th centuries (Archäologisches Landesamt Schleswig-Holstein, inv. no. SH2016-23.351; Kühlborn & Schlisio 2016, p. 111; Kühlborn & Schimmer 2017). The last two German badges are both from Wismar. The first was unearthed during urban excavations of a ditch backfill deposited around 1250–1255 (Radohs & Kaute 2021, pp. 176–178), while the second was discovered in a shipwreck at Wismar Bay (Radohs & Kaute 2021, p. 183). The latter one differs from all the other badges by having a negative depression of the relief on its reverse side. In addition, the details of the motif are more elaborately executed, and the inscription is not mirrored but set correctly (Haasis-Berner 2003, pp. 199–200).

Despite such differences, archaeological contexts and stylistic analysis date all the Livonian badges to the latter part of the 13th or early 14th century (Mänd & Selart 2024, p. 36; 2026). This dating can also be employed on the badge from Masku.

The discussion on the Livonian group of pilgrim badges has focused on two issues. Firstly, the striking affinities in the shape and design of the badges of Livonia and Rocamadour have led scholars to suggest that an item from Rocamadour has been used as a casting model for the Livonian objects (Johansen 1961; Rydbeck 1967, p. 147; Haasis-Berner 2003, p. 199; Kühlborn & Schlisio 2016, p. 111). The Rocamadour badge, in turn, probably replicates a seal stamp with its shape and the placement of the inscription around the edge (Schmidt 2009, pp. 99–100). The second point of discussion has been the location from which the Livonian badges originate, since the inscription refers only generally to Livonia, a region under the patronage of the Virgin Mary (Mänd 2009). Many scholars have argued that Riga was the very likely pilgrimage destination (Warncke 1931, p. 176; Rydbeck 1967; Wittstock 1984, pp. 16–17; Andersson 1989, pp. 54–55; Haasis-Berner 2003, pp. 199–200; Ose 2014a, p. 475; Kühlborn & Schlisio 2016, p. 111; Kühlborn & Schimmer 2017). For instance, its cathedral was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and known as St Mary's Church, *ecclesia beate Marie* (von Bruiningk 1904, Appendix II, pp. 293–613). There are several medieval written references to pilgrim journeys made from the Nordic countries to Riga (e.g. Rydbeck 1967, pp. 147–148).

The context of discovery for the Masku badge is somewhat enigmatic. The Maskunjoki River Valley was densely populated in the Late Iron Age and Middle Ages, and Masku was among the oldest and the richest parishes in Finland (Oja 1966). In written sources, Masku was mentioned for the first time in 1232 (DF 79), and as a parish Masku was referred to in 1234 (DF 81). However, although several Late Iron Age and medieval finds were discovered on the field of Juva Farm, no archaeological sites have been identified on or in the vicinity of the location. The name 'Juva' refers to a riverbed or small stream and is not an uncommon place name. In

written sources, Juva Farm is attested only once during the Middle Ages, when Johan Anundsson, archdeacon of Turku Cathedral Chapter, donated land from various parishes and locations, Juva among them, to the altar and prebend of St John at Turku Cathedral in 1416 (DF 1471). Juva Village had only one farm, and it remained in the possession of the altar until 1551 when the crown took it over (Oja 1966, p. 68). Since the history and possible archaeological remains of the village are so poorly known, the context of discovery cannot be analysed further at this point. The Masku find is, nevertheless, a significant northernmost addition to the small group of pilgrim badges from Livonia.

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