

ARCHAEOLOGIA MEDII AEVI FINLANDIAE XXXI

SHATTERED AND SCATTERED PASTS

Festschrift for Professor Georg Haggrén

EDITORS

Tuuli Heinonen – Frida Ehrnsten – Janne Harjula – Tarja Knuutinen
Tanja Ratilainen – Elina Terävä – Siiri Tuomenoja – Janne Haarala

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TRACES OF MEDIEVAL INDIVIDUALS

New seal matrix discoveries in Finland

ABSTRACT

In the Middle Ages, people expressed their social differences, positions and roles as well as religious affinities in various ways. One of them was the use of seals, and the present article analyses four recent finds of medieval seal matrices from Finland. Three belong to priests, and based on the use of heraldry, one to a member of the nobility. In terms of materials, one is of silver and the rest bronze alloys. As objects of identity performance, medieval matrices, archival sources permitting, can open large vistas on the genealogical networks of medieval society as well as individuality in medieval culture.

Keywords: Finland, metal detector finds, Middle Ages, seal matrices, stray finds

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes small things can hold answers to big questions, or at least the beginnings of an answer.¹ According to the historian Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, a medieval seal is one of such things, because it represents an expression of medieval individuality.² The emergence of individuality, or the idea that each human being is a unique and autonomous agent and has a sense of a psychological interior or self which sets one apart from others, has been a highly debated issue in scholarship. Individuality is frequently associated with modern Western societies, and scholars such as archaeologists and historians have spilled much ink in discussing whether the term can be applied before the Renaissance.³ Regardless of what view one takes on the historical character of individuality, there were, however, individual human beings in the premodern world, and in the Middle Ages, people expressed their social differences, positions and roles as well as religious affinities in various ways. One of these practices was the use of seals, which marked and materialised the legal authority and agency of institutions and individuals. In fact, possessing a seal was already an expression of certain social rank and connection with literary culture.

Bedos-Rezak argues that medieval sealing practices established a material and symbolic connection between individuals or institutions, their authority and identity.⁴ Seals were used for securing

charters and legally binding decisions of institutions and individuals as well as missives. Moreover, seals and sealing practices have an innate link with the development of writing habits and their media. From the mid-14th century onwards the increasing use of paper and vernacular languages in the written management of information produced a growing need for an ever-increasing number of burghers, merchants, priests, clerics and local nobility to confirm their personal identity in documents and letters. Besides writing material, seal matrices and wax, the complex practices of literacy and document culture involved objects such as books, equipment related to writing and reading, specialised furniture, and even architectural features.⁵

If medieval seals are indeed so crucial for understanding medieval individuality, the matrices for pressing them on wax are equally important. Not only were they the tools for making the impressions but also objects with a close relationship with their owners. Some of the matrices' individual histories are revealed by their physical characteristics, including their wear and tear as well as provenance. However, in many cases, especially with matrices acquired into museum collections decades ago, we do not have very good records on their previous histories. Medieval matrices are rather rare finds in archaeological excavations, but in recent years several have been unearthed by metal detectorists. In this article, we analyse four matrices found by amateurs in Finland and discuss how the objects relate to their owners as well as what their provenance can reveal about the histories of the objects.

It is typical of medieval seal matrices from Finland that they carry names of persons who cannot be identified as any of the individuals mentioned in the surviving corpus of archival sources. Nevertheless, since their designs followed contemporary fashions in size, shape and style, and their coats of arms and inscriptions signal the owner's status, the items can be stylistically dated and their owners' social positions inferred. In addition to the owner's social standing and family ties, the matrices can also reveal their profession and religious sympathies. These bits of information can be further expanded with the help of written and other sources. In addition, the context of discovery can be helpful in disclosing more about the individual in question.

A further crucial context for understanding the matrix discoveries are the practices of discarding them. As personalised artefacts obtained for personal use, matrices belonging to individuals were habitually destroyed or deformed after their owner's death but could also be stolen or inadvertently misplaced.⁶ The written accounts of how lost matrices were annulled in front of public authorities such as town magistrates indicates their value. The harm of losing one's seal matrix was similar to when we misplace our credit and ID cards, access codes to online banking, or mobile phones; a lot of time and effort is and was required to invalidate and replace the lost items of authentication. In medieval urban centres, such as Reval (today Tallinn), annulations were entered in the town's books of memoranda, especially in the late 14th and early 15th centuries. After this period the procedure of annulation appears to have changed in Tallinn, and reporting lost matrices was done in some other format.⁷

When a person died, the matrix lost its previous function. In some parts of Europe, it was customary not to put matrices into the owner's grave but deposit the deceased's matrix into the landscape, into soil or water, possibly after obliteration or annulation.⁸ In Finland, however, it is not possible to confirm or rule out such practices based on the available evidence. Many of the matrices found in the country are, in fact, still in a relatively good condition, not too worn to be used. Yet, in the Finnish material, two matrices found at the church ruins of Koroinen in Turku, and one in Perniö Church are in pieces, and thus possibly deliberately broken up.⁹ Such a suggestion is supported by the fact that matrices as lumps of solid metal are very difficult to accidentally break. Since both sites of discovery are ecclesiastical, the matrices could have been part of grave deposits. When considering metal de-

tector finds, worn-out, tiny fragments of matrices can be difficult to identify, especially in the field, which might explain their absence among recent discoveries.

In this article, we will first describe the four new matrix finds and identify their possible owners together with the date of production and use, and then discuss the sites where they were found to give light on the circumstances in which the items were deposited. What can the matrices and their contexts of finding reveal about their medieval owners in Finland? However, before proceeding to the newly discovered items, we will start by discussing the bulk of matrices and seal impressions from Finland.

THE CORPUS OF MEDIEVAL SEAL MATRICES FROM FINLAND

Finland today more or less covers the area of the medieval Diocese of Turku which was part of the Kingdom of Sweden. From this geographical territory, before 2009, eleven medieval seal matrices had been placed into museum collections and published on several occasions.¹⁰ These items are mostly from ecclesiastical or monastic sites or belong to individuals associated with such institutions. About half of the matrices are with poor provenance information or stray finds and half from archaeological excavations. Of the matrices with legible inscriptions, two belong to priests, while other owners include a noblewoman and two burgher men.¹¹

In the 2010s and 2020s, the number of known seal matrices has increased significantly. Although some have been unearthed in archaeological excavations, the primary reason for the growth is the boom of the metal detecting hobby and the subsequent new discoveries.¹² Because the Finnish Heritage Agency has a long delay in cataloguing detector finds, the exact number of newly discovered matrices is difficult to estimate, but based on the already catalogued items and the photographs of such finds on amateur sites, the number of matrices found after 2009 is already higher than the number known before that year. Moreover, the new discoveries have made the corpus more diverse. Although most of them are still from ecclesiastical contexts and belonged to churchmen, burghers are now, relatively speaking, better represented.¹³ Yet the total number of medieval matrices from Finland, around twenty, is still very low compared with the number of seal impressions documented from medieval documents. There are nearly four hundred published seal impressions of institutions, their agents, nobility, clergy and other people in Finland from 1253–1530.¹⁴

For a more detailed description, we have picked out four matrices among the recent metal detector finds. The criteria for selection have been the availability of information on the context of discovery, the good condition of the item which allows its inscriptions and heraldry to be analysed, and the wider medieval context with which the matrix can be associated. Despite relatively good contextual information and the clarity of visual motifs, the owners of some of the matrices can be deduced only tentatively.

The seal matrix from Lempan, Sjundeå

In 2017, a medieval seal matrix of bronze was found in Lempan village in Sjundeå (Fi. Siuntio), Western Nyland in South Finland (Fig. 1).¹⁵ On the reverse, the plate has a ridge with a suspension loop. The legend reads *S[igillum] Io[a]n[n]is Wolde[ma]rzo[n] p[re]s[b]yte[ri]*, or ‘the seal of Johannes Woldemarsson, priest’. The central motif is a gothic three-pointed shield with a diagonally placed object which has been interpreted either as a fire steel (*Feuerstahl*), hinge or door plate (*Thürangel*, *Thürbeschlag*, *Türhaspe*), or leather knife (*Ledermesser*, *Liedhänge*).¹⁶ The design of the item along



FIGURE 1. A copper alloy seal matrix found in Lempans village in Sjundeå (Fi. Siuntio) in 2017 (NM inv. no. 41830:1). The measurements of the matrix are 30 x 30 x 3 mm. Photo: Visa Immonen.

with the lettering and shield date the matrix to the mid- or late 14th century.

Besides the matrix, the discovery of a Danish coin from 1518 and a 16th-century silver *klipping* indicate late medieval activities at the site. In fact, it lies next to a brook on the edge of fields by the location of the medieval Lempans village, situated halfway between the medieval churches of

Lojo (Fi. Lohja) and Sjundeå. The medieval finds in the area might be explained by a winter route following the brook and connecting the churches. The village of Lempans is mentioned in written sources for the first time in 1442, and in 1540, it consisted of six farms.¹⁷

In the Baltic Sea region, the motif of priest Johannes' seal is rather rare. It has traditionally been identified with the vassal family of Scherembeke active in Danish Harrien-Wierland (Est. Harju-Virumaa) already in the late 13th century. The family originated from Scharnebek, Northeast of Lüneburg, where its first known member was active as a ministerial of the archbishop of Bremen in 1201 and 1218. In 1271 the Queen Dowager of Denmark enfeoffed Knight Christiarnus de Scherebeke, his wife Helena, and their sons Henricus and Bernhardus the village of Maart (Est. Maardu) some 15 km East of Reval (Tallinn) together with two other villages. Christiarnus had bought them from the previous owner Nicolaus Moltke. King Erik V Klipping of Denmark confirmed the act a month later, King Erik VI Menved for Christiarnus' widow Helena and sons the knight Cristernus (cited 1288–1322) and Claus (1288) in 1288. The fief was renewed by King Erik VI for Cristernus in 1314. Christiarnus de Scherebeke of 1271 is very likely the same knight Christianus who had in 1267 sold his possessions in the village of Lankow in Schwerin to the provost of the diocese of Schwerin.¹⁸

The coat of arms of Scherembeke in Maardu is known from 1359, when two sons of Christiarnus de Scherembeke, Knight Christianus (cited in 1341–59) and Squire Willekinus (1341–59) donated, together with Christianus' son Cristianus junior, the village of Hirwen (Est. Iru) to the church of the Holy Spirit in Tallinn. The donation was witnessed by Johannes (1351–60), Canon of the Diocese of Ösel-Wiek (Est. Saare-Lääne), brother of Christianus senior and Willekinus.¹⁹ In Christianus senior's seal, the family name reads as Scherebeke. The arms of all the three brothers are alike with rivets in the corners of the hinge plates. This image is very close to the matrix found in Sjundeå. Knight Cristianus junior is cited in documents in 1359–79 and his brother, Knight Johannes in 1373–99. In the 15th century Maardu was held by Hinrik (1422–38) and Kersten (1448–94). However, the Scherembekes left the manor in 1498, when Kersten's son Reynold sold it. The family was among the leading vassal families of Harrien-Wierland and active as counsellors of the vassal corporation from the 13th to 15th century.²⁰

Based on the legend on his seal, Johannes was a priest who used the Scandinavian patronym of Woldemarsson, and a heraldic shield like the Scherembekes in 1357. At least two members of the

family – Canon Johannes Christerni, and his nephew, Knight Johannes Christerni – bore the name Johannes in two different generations in the 14th century, but the extant sources are silent on the use of Woldemar in Maardu. The name Woldemar is common in Denmark, and its use as a patronym may instead suggest that the priest's origins were in the Danish areas. Whatever the case, the very motif of priest Johannes' seal matrix and his name suggests interesting connections between the members of the late medieval aristocracy in Estonia, Finland and Sweden.

In March 1423, Kristern Nilsson (Vasa), the castellan of Viborg (1417–41) sent a missive to the council of Reval to further his position in a court case between him and a Revalian merchant Johan Purin over Kristern's father-in-law's inheritance. The missive was to be amended through an oral message delivered by Kristern's 'uncle' or male relative (*mynem ome*) Hinrik Scherenbeke and Revalian merchant Hinrik Gruwel.²¹ Apparently an older and respected kinsman, Hinrik Scherembek active in Maardu in 1422–38 was in some way related to Kristern Nilsson, whose father Nils Kettilson's (Vasa) seal from 1355 had a coat of arms with a heraldic lily rising from the stem of a sceptre. The device is not far from that of the Scherembekes.²²

The later heraldic symbol and the name of the Vasa family (Vase = sheaf) was introduced as the family emblem by Kristern's great-great-grandson King Gustaf I of Sweden who had it minted on his coins in 1528.²³ Nils Kettilson first emerges in documents in 1355 when he was active as a district judge in Frötuna in Uppland and as the bailiff of Stockholm Castle. In 1367 he supervised the demolition of Kumo Castle (Fi. Kokemäki) in Finland. His manor, Penningby in Uppland, controlled the area where the sailing route from Finland entered the Northern archipelago of Stockholm, and remained in the possession of his daughter Ramborg and her son Karl Tordsson until the 1440s. Nils' son-in-law Tord Röríksson (Bonde) oversaw the construction of Raseborg Castle in Western Nyland in the 1370s and was its first castellan till 1399.²⁴

According to the Swedish genealogist Hans Gillingstam, the name Kristern was very rare among the Swedish nobility beyond the Vasa family. Together with the coat of arms, this may hint at their joint ancestry with the Scherembekes of the Danish Harrien-Wierland. The most probable candidate for the link is Cristiernus or Kristern of Öland, who was active as King Birger Magnusson's bailiff in Öland 1297, Örebro Castle in 1301, and Stockholm Castle in 1303. As a close adherent of the King, he was imprisoned with Birger by the King's brothers Dukes Erik and Valdemar in 1306 but released in 1308. At that time, he and his homonymic son were among the King's guarantors in his agreement with the dukes. Cristiernus is last mentioned alive in 1309 when he and his wife Margareta made their last will with the consent of their son Kristiern. Both Margareta and Cristiernus died soon afterwards. Their three sons Kristern, Erik and Likved acted together with their brother-in-law Nils Jonsson (Rickebyätten) in a matter concerning their inheritance in 1310. In later documents Nils Jonsson's wife and Cristiernus' daughter is named as Kristina. Widowed in 1319, she is last mentioned alive in 1349 when she acted with his son Knight Jons Nilsson, the father of Nils Kettilson's wife Kristina Jonsdotter.²⁵

According to the Chronicle of Duke Eric, when King Birger imprisoned and starved Dukes Erik and Valdemar to death in Nyköping in 1317, the two dukes were under the supervision of Knight Cristiern Skärbeck from Estonia. The chronicle considers him responsible for the ill fate of the dukes. Even if the Cristern in question and King Birger's adherent and bailiff Kristern of Öland in Sweden in 1298–1306 cannot have been the same as Christianus, the son of Christiarnus de Scherebeke (whose fiefdom of Maardu the Danish king Erik Menved had renewed in 1314 and who was active in Estonia in 1319–22), he may have been closely related to the Scherembekes in Maardu. Since King Birger Magnusson's wife Märta was King Erik Menved's sister, Cristern Skärbeck's activity in Sweden indicates not only his personal relationships with the Swedish nobility but also the

Danish interests in early 14th century Sweden. These interests may have been implemented through the King's vassal families in Estonia. When the castellan of Viborg, Kristern Nilsson, referred to Christiernus Scherembeke senior's grandson Henrik respectfully as his male relative in 1423, this suggestion of kinship was not so far-fetched. A past relative of Henrik's had been Kristern's maternal great-great-grandfather.²⁶

After this complex genealogical account, we can turn to the question who the owner of the seal matrix was. We know that in the latter half of the 14th century priest Johannes Woldemarsson lost possession of his matrix in Sjundeå. If he had contacts with parish churches in the region, the church was very likely that of Lojo.

The parish of Lojo was established already in the 13th century, while its chapel in Sjundeå was founded only sometime in the early 15th century and is mentioned for the first time in 1476. The known 14th-century parish rectors of Lojo were Ingvaldus (1323), Pedher (1382), and one Johannes Frononi, whom the Pope made a canon in the cathedral chapter of Ösel-Wiek in Haapsalu in 1377. Johannes Frononi was very likely the same person as the later dean of the cathedral chapter of Turku Hans Frunnesson mentioned in 1385 and 1387.²⁷ He may never have entered the chapter in Ösel-Wiek and was a different person than Johannes Woldemari. In the early 15th century, the known rectors at Lojo were Herman Jacobsson (1430) and Jakob Röd (1433).²⁸

Because nothing connects Johannes Woldemarsson to ecclesiastical offices in Lojo or elsewhere in the province of Western Nyland, he may have been a priest just travelling through the area. Since the 1370s, the region was made part of the Bailiwick of Raseborg Castle and had close contacts to the coastland of Estonia and the town of Reval in the Middle Ages. Should he have wanted to visit relatives, the nearest ones were some 35 km Southwest from Lempan in Raseborg Castle. Since the 1370s, it was captained by Nils Kettilmundson's son-in-law Tord Röríksson, and Tord's brother-in-law Kristern Nilsson may have been part of his armed entourage already in the late 14th century.

The seal matrix from Hällsby, Tenala in Raseborg

In 2022, a metal detectorist found a matrix of bronze in the field of Hällsby village in Tenala (Fi. Tenhola), Raseborg, South Finland (Fig. 2).²⁹ The matrix is oval in shape and has a low ridge as a handle on the reverse side. The legend circles around the central motif. It starts and ends with a cross and reads *S[igillum] : Henrici : Sac[erdotis] : Finuelen[sis]*, or 'the seal of Henrik, priest from Finuelen (or Finnveden)'. The central motif depicts a head with prominent hair. It



FIGURE 2. A seal matrix of bronze found in the field of Hällsby village in Tenala, Raseborg (Fi. Raasepori) in 2022. The find is at the Finnish Heritage Agency, but it was not yet processed and catalogued at the time of this article's publication. Photo: Henrik Nygård.

is flanked by three dots in both lower corners, and a heater-shaped shield presenting a horizontal grapevine with two leaves in the upper and one in the lower section.

The shape of the matrix, and the style of the inscription dates the object to the late 13th or early 14th century. The oval shape along with the text evince that the item belonged to a priest named Henrik. If the word *Finnveden* or *Finnheden* is correctly read, it refers to one of the ancient small lands of Småland in Southern Sweden.

The place of discovery, Hällsby or Helvetesby, was the centre of the medieval taxation area of Hällsby. The earliest mention of the village dates to 1451, and the village had four houses in the 1540s.³⁰ They were situated in a small river valley that continued eastwards, and the object was found quite near the area in which object fragments and remains related to the medieval and later village plot can be found.³¹ Presently it remains a mystery how a matrix possibly belonging to a priest from Småland has ended up in Hällsby.

The seal matrix from Teivaala Manor, Ylöjärvi

In 2020, a matrix of bronze was discovered near Teivaala Manor in Ylöjärvi, North of Tampere (Fig. 3).³² The site is on an open field close to a known late-18th-century winter route which crossed the area Southwest of the late medieval village of Teivaala.

The object, circular in shape, is in poor condition and the inscription is difficult to read. The legend surrounding the central motif, a heraldic shield, has no visible signs of surrounding circular lines. The start and end of the legend are separated with a triangle of three heraldic roses placed right above the shield. Almost illegible, the text consists of three words, preceded, separated and closed with a Latin cross (?) and heraldic roses. It reads + S * [?]u?iui * Kii?[?]e?s? *.

While the exact name of the seal's owner remains indecipherable, the coat of arms of the shield consisting of a cross, star and an axe is a well-known combination from surviving seals and other heraldic material from late medieval Finland. The diagonally oriented shield on the matrix has a rounded tip, which dates the matrix to the closing decades of the 15th or the turn of the 16th century. The arms are those of the Kirves-Särkilahti (Kirves = Axe) family originating possibly from Kirvilä in Nousis (Fi. Nousiainen) where the nobleman Olaf (Turesson?) Kirves the younger had the same emblem in his seal in two documents from 1468 and 1469. Olaf's apparent kinsman Olaf Kirves the elder is mentioned among the local nobility in 1405. Married already in 1458 to Märta Nilsdotter of the influential Särkilax (Särkilahti) family from nearby Tövsala (Fi. Taivassalo), Olaf the younger appears to have combined his family emblem, the axe, to the cross and six-pointed star of Särkilahti. This was then possibly used by his male offspring.³³



FIGURE 3. A seal matrix of bronze discovered near Teivaala Manor in Ylöjärvi in 2020 (NM inv. no. 45929:2). The diameter of the seal impression is c. 26 mm. Photo: Jussi Moisio, Finnish Heritage Agency.

The diagonal positioning of the cross and the star in the shield in also characteristic of the coats of arms of Märta's brother's Magnus Nilsson's (Särkilax) two known seals from about 1467–86 and 1490, whereas both Magnus' secretum and smaller personal seal from the 1490s present a vertical arrangement of the motive. Magnus Nilsson was in 1460–89 the dean of the cathedral chapter and in 1489–1500 the Bishop of Turku (1489–1500). This obviously affected the social status of his brother-in-law Olaf Kirves the younger's family. Märta is last mentioned alive in 1469 after which Olaf the younger remarried and is last cited alive in 1476. Olaf the younger's and Märta's daughter Karin's children with Turku mayor and councillor Nils Persson took the Särkilahti coat of arms as their emblem.³⁴

Another member of the Kirves-family, also named Olaf Kirves, is featured in his supplication of 1475 to the Apostolic See. He needed dispensation because as a schoolboy in the Cathedral School of Turku, he had involuntarily injured a schoolmate when they had been fooling around and throwing things in the classroom. Olaf had thrown his mate Ragvald Gici with a *stipula* (pen or stylus) which had blinded Ragvald's left eye. Consequently, both had to turn to the Pope in 1475 to be able to be ordained as priests: Ragvald because of his injury and Olaf for his deed. Both boys had apparently finished their schooling not long before and were born sometime in the late 1460s. Not identifiable from other sources, the exact relationship of the schoolboy Olaf Kirves to Olaf Kirves the younger remains unknown, but the latter's connections to the contemporary dean of the cathedral chapter and later Bishop Magnus Nilsson may support a close relationship.³⁵

In surviving original Swedish and Latin documents, the name Kirves is written as Kyrffues (1468), Kirwis (1475), Kirffwes (1486), and in contemporary or later copies as Kirwis/Kirffues, Kirffwis/Kerfwis, Kirffues and Kirffuis. In Olaf the younger's seal from 1468 the form is Kirues.³⁶ In the matrix found in Teivaala, both the arrangement of the coat of arms of the Kirves-Särkilax family, and the round tip of the shield date the matrix unequivocally between about 1460 and 1500, more likely to the last quarter of the 15th century. The last word in the legend is very likely some form of the family name Kirves. The conical form of the matrix may also reveal that the owner was a distinguished member of the society, though not necessarily a cleric.

The seal matrix from Halikko Vicarage, Salo

In 2021, a metal detectorist found a silver matrix in a field belonging to Halikko Vicarage in Salo, Southwest Finland (Fig. 4).³⁷ This well-made object has a semicircular handle on a hinge at the back. The seal depicts St Andrew with his cross, and the inscription around the motif reads *s(igillum) haquini + haquini : presbyter*, indicat-



FIGURE 4. A silver seal matrix found in the field of the vicarage of Halikko in Salo, Southwest Finland (NM inv. no. 43702:1). The measurements of the matrix are 29 x 2 mm. Photo: Anssi Vuohelainen.

ing that the seal belongs to a priest named Håkan or Hakon, the son of Håkan. Based on the style of the motif and lettering, the seal seems to date to the late 15th or early 16th century.

There are references to priests with the name on the seal in Finnish written sources, for instance, in Tövsala in 1506,³⁸ but not in the parish of Halikko. The site of discovery, however, suggests a link between the item and the vicarage. Moreover, the choice of material, silver, is quite remarkable, because previously only one matrix of silver had been found in Finland. The item had been discovered in Tavastehus Castle (Fi. Hämeenlinna) and belonged to Bengta Bengtsdotter (Oxenstierna) (c. 1356–1422), the wife of Bailiff Magnus Olofsson Kase (1371–1401).³⁹ Silver as the choice of material for the matrix from Halikko Vicarage suggests a person of high social ranking.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we have presented four recent finds of medieval seal matrices from Finland. Three belonged to priests, and based on the use of heraldry, one to a member of the nobility (Sw. *frälse*). In terms of materials, one is of silver and the rest bronze alloys. These variations in materials and social ranking follow roughly the pattern of the known seal impressions and the corpus of previously known matrices.

Although tiny objects, seal matrices convey a wealth of information about the public role of their institutions or owners. They usually express whether the owner was a member of the clergy or nobility, or whether they were merchant burghers. Moreover, the coats of arms express family connections, and variations in heraldry can indicate genealogical affiliations. Especially in the case of the matrix from Lempan, the genealogical network reconstructed based on archival sources and the matrix's legend and coat of arms is very complex and expansive. In addition to the individual's family connections and official roles, the selection of religious imagery can also disclose the devotional associations which the owner wanted to express.

The context of discovery can complement the information extracted from the matrix itself. Especially items found near manor houses or churches and vicarages are likely to have been connected with the places in some fashion. Yet it is typical that matrices belonging to priests cannot be associated with the parish priests who are known from written sources. In addition to high-status places, it is also common that matrices are found in the plots of medieval villages.

The question whether the items were lost unintentionally or discarded on purpose is difficult to tackle. They might have ended up in the fields with dung and dirt brought from residential areas and places where domestic animals were kept. Another correlation might exist between the finds and the alignment of ancient roads and other routes of transportation. Yet losing matrices due to carelessness, whether in dung or along a road, is only one possibility, especially because mislaying one's matrix caused a lot of trouble, requiring the old one to be nullified and a new one to be acquired. They were thus probably looked after well.

Whatever the reasons for medieval seal matrices to end up in soil, they appear highly performative objects. In addition to expressing the identities of their owners, matrices also suggest connections between the individuals they articulate and the contexts in which they were discovered. This assumed connection may be misleading, because we do not know enough on why and how matrices ended up in the places they are found. Nevertheless, as objects of identity performance, medieval matrices, archival sources permitting, can open large vistas on the genealogical networks of medieval society as well as individuality in medieval culture.

Visa Immonen is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Bergen, Norway. Much of his work focuses on medieval material culture in the Nordic countries, but he is also interested in heritage studies. Immonen met Haggren in the late 1990s in a meeting or seminar organised by the Society for Medieval Archaeology in Finland (SKAS) and has followed his work attentively ever since.

Tapio Salminen is a Research Fellow at TRIVIUM – Tampere Centre for Classical, Medieval and Early Modern Studies at Tampere University, Finland, and holds a title of docent on the History of transport and communication in the Faculty of Humanities at Turku University, Finland. His PhD-thesis *Obscure Hands – Trusted Men. Textualization, the Office of the City Scribe and the Written Management of Information and Communication of the Council of Reval (Tallinn) before 1460* (Tampere, TUP 2016) focused on the role of city scribes in the organisation of record keeping in late medieval cities and towns of Baltic Sea area. Salminen has since the 1990s enjoyed innumerable discussions with Haggren about medieval Finland.

NOTES

- 1 Deetz (1978) 1996.
- 2 Bedos-Rezak 2015.
- 3 Haggren 1998; Huyssteen & Wiebe 2011; Knapp & van Dommelen 2008.
- 4 Bedos-Rezak 2011; 2022.
- 5 See, e.g., Harjula 2015; Harjula et al. 2021.
- 6 E.g. Anderson 2008; 2018; Cherry 2002.
- 7 Annulations in Tallinn Denkelbuch of 1380–1455: 1382 (1), 1383 (1), 1384 (2), 1389 (2), 1394 (1), 1416 (1), 1419 (1), 1420 (1), 1424 (1); see Salminen 2016: 142–3.
- 8 Bedos-Rezak 2022: 334–6.
- 9 Immonen 2009b: Cat. 26:1–2, 26:10.
- 10 See Immonen 2009a: 300–4; 2009b: 160–3; 2011; 2018.
- 11 Immonen 2023.
- 12 On the metal detecting boom in Finland, see, e.g. Immonen & Kinnunen 2020; Raninen 2024; Wessman et al. 2016.
- 13 Immonen 2013; 2017; Immonen & Salminen 2021; Immonen 2023.
- 14 DF 487, 1060, 1488; Anthoni 1955.
- 15 KM inv. no. 41830:1.
- 16 Crull 1887: 56, 109; von Nottbeck 1880: 37; Sachssendahl 1887: 199; Rhezelius 1915–1917: 6:567. See also Hildebrand 1879–1903: II:594.
- 17 KM inv. no. 41830:1; DF 2479; SST 1498–1499:55; DF 4817; Favorin 1986: 26; Immonen & Salminen 2021: 120–132.
- 18 LECUB I:1 422, 423, 522, I:2 651, 667, 630, I:4 2777; Gillingstam 1952–1953: 127–9; Johansen 1933: 906–7. A Godeke Scherembeke is mentioned in Riga in 1405; Feyerabend 1985: 78.
- 19 TLA.230.1.1-I, 243; LECUB I:6 2866; KNR Iru:1; Arbusow 1901.
- 20 Johansen 1933: 906–7; von Nottbeck 1880: 245–6.
- 21 DF 1719; Gillingstam 1952–1953: 176–81.
- 22 Gillingstam 1952–1953: 117–26, 141–59.
- 23 Ahlström et al. 1976, nr. 53–54: 77–9.
- 24 SDHK 6839; Gillingstam 1952–1953: 117–26, 158–69; Larsson 2002: 24–5, 68, 129; Salminen 2023: 35–38.
- 25 SDHK 2288, 2292, 2386; Gillingstam 1952–1953: 128, 132–45.
- 26 Erikskrönikan: 3912–3933; Gillingstam 1952–1953: 134–8.
- 27 Rein 1944: 36–7.
- 28 DF 1494, 3638; Brenner 1953: 53, 56, 58–9; Favorin 1986: 31–4; Hiekkänen 2020: 567; Neovius 1907: 87; Palola 1996: 91–2; Ylikangas 1973: 53–82, 104, 110. DF 905; Rein 1944: 36–7 (ASV, Reg. Av. 201, f. 390f-v ‘quod parochialem ecclesiam loye Aboensis diocesis nosceris obtinere’). DF 934–935, 980, 1979, 2085.
- 29 At the time of writing the article, the matrix had been received at the Finnish Heritage Agency but not processed and catalogued yet.
- 30 Nikula 1983: 29.
- 31 Haggren et al. 2007: 108.
- 32 KM inv. no. 45929:2.
- 33 Anthoni 1968: 1970, 111, 248.
- 34 DF 3457; FMS 35, 36, 21, 22, 212; Anthoni 1968; 1970: 111, 248; Rundt 1991.
- 35 DF 3603, 3611; Harjula & Salonen 2014.
- 36 DF 3457, 1611, 4100; REA 300–303; DF 3378, 4575, 4680.
- 37 KM inv. no. 43702:1.
- 38 DF 5221.
- 39 Immonen 2009b, Cat. 26:4.

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Abbreviations

DF = Diplomatarium Fennicum

FMS = Finlands medeltidssigill

KM = (National Museum of Finland), Finnish Heritage Agency, archaeological collections

KNR = Eesti kohanimeraamat

LECUB = Liv-, Esth- und Curländisches Urkundenbuch

REA = Registrum Ecclesiae Aboensis

SDHK = Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek

SST = Stockholms stads tänkeböcker

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