



# A magnate's farm in Rahu? A 12th-century silver hoard from Saaremaa

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## INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2024, as construction work was underway at Põdra farm in Rahu village near Valjala, Saaremaa, a silver hoard was unearthed beneath the floor of the farmhouse by the farm's owner, Roland Pärn. Some coins had also been found in the area previously, and several other finds had been discovered by a detector in the vicinity. Altogether, 80 coins and their fragments were unearthed, the latest ones belonging to the third quarter of the 12th century.

Further investigation of the hoard area and the trial excavation conducted at the site were undertaken to specify the circumstances under which the treasure had remained there. The site was studied by archaeologist Marika Mägi, and the coins were examined by numismatics expert Ivar Leimus. The coins and other finds from the Rahu site are deposited in the Saaremaa Museum (SM 10970).

## LOCATION ON THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Chronicler Henry of Livonia described Valjala as one of the most important centres in Saaremaa in the second quarter of the 13th century (HCL XXX: 4–5). The village of Rahu, where the hoard was found in 2024, is located just 2 km from the Valjala church (Fig. 1). This places it in a relatively central position in the context of the 12th and 13th centuries. The location is further emphasised by surrounding archaeological sites.

The most prominent archaeological site in Rahu village is a stone grave situated 1.1 km southeast of the hoard site. Extensive excavations have been carried out at the grave (see overview in Mägi 2002a, 53–56), and the site is dated primarily from the 11th century to the first half of the 13th century. The analysis of the artefacts unearthed in the burial ground suggests that it was used for burials of one of the most prominent elite families in the surrounding area during the pagan period. The location of arable lands indicates that this family may have resided in the vicinity of the present-day village of Rahu. Additionally, the northern boundary of

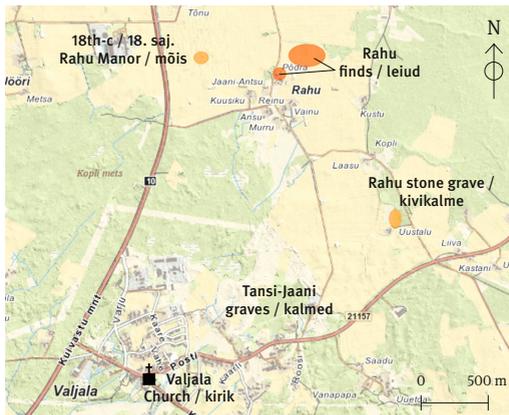


Fig. 1. Cultural landscape around the Rahu hoard.

Jn 1. Rahu aaret ümbritsev kultuurmaastik.

Base map: Land and Spatial Development Board / Maa- ja Ruumiamet, drawing / joonis: Marika Mägi

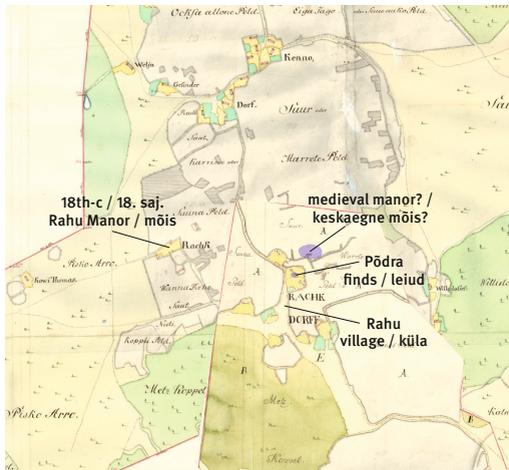


Fig. 2. Archaeological sites in Rahu on maps from 1790.

Jn 2. Rahu leiukohad 1790. aasta kaardil.

(RA, EAA.2072.3.426f, p. 41 folio 1; RA, EAA.2072.3.426f, p. 58 folio 2)

Drawing / Joonis: Marika Mägi

RA, EAA.2072.3.426f, p. 41 folio 1; RA, EAA.2072.3.426f, p. 58 folio 2). It can be assumed that the later Rahu manor was located there.<sup>1</sup>

The precise location of the medieval Rahu manor is not known. Assuming that the site was located in the centre of the later Rahu village with respect to surrounding arable lands, it may have been in the vicinity of the Põdra farm, which is in the centre of the arable lands and was, according to historical maps, also at the crossroads (e.g. RA, EAA.3724.5.2500, p. 11). Later, the centre of the village of Rahu has shifted 180 m southwards.

the village, in proximity to the hoard site, is marked on a 19th-century map with numerous stone cairns (RA, EAA.3724.5.2500, p. 11). Some of these cairns might have been graves, subsequently levelled by land improvement works. Cairns from earlier periods, which are likely associated with the same settlement unit, have been identified and partially excavated along the southern periphery of the Rahu village lands.

In 1509, Rahu (*Rachte*) manor that belonged to the Titfer family, was mentioned in written sources, and was said to have been pledged at the end of the 15th century (Saaremaa 1934, 784). The Titfers were one of Saaremaa's medieval petty noble families, and it is reasonable to assume that they were of local origin (Mägi 2002b). It is not known when the vassal estate in Rahu was established or whether it was a direct descendant of a prehistoric manor that existed already before the Christianisation, the owners of which may have been buried in the Rahu stone grave. In any case, the manor of *Rachte* was merged with the neighbouring manor as early as the beginning of the 16th century, and only the village remained in Rahu for some time.

Subsequently, in the latter half of the 18th century, a manor named *Rachk* was referenced once more in the visitation records of Valjala church (EKLA F 199, AAS. stip. ar. 3, part II: Valjala parish I). However, by the end of the 18th century, this manor had also vanished. A large detached farmstead named *Rachk* was still marked on a map from 1790, about 500 m west of the hoard find (Fig 2.;

<sup>1</sup> On the maps of the Land and Spatial Development Board, the former location of Rahu Manor is marked near Ansu Farm, but this is may be inaccurate.

## THE FIND CONTEXT AND TRIAL EXCAVATIONS

The 2024 finds, including coins, came from around and under the south-east corner of the Põdra residential house (Fig. 3). Given that the concentration point of the coins and other artefacts probably belonging to the hoard remained beneath the corner of the foundation, where excavation was not possible, it can be assumed that the hoard was initially of a greater size.

Upon uncovering the base of the house, it was ascertained that there were several foundations laid at different times. Below the mortar-bound foundation was a row of large limestones, and beneath them was an intense cultural layer – very heathery soil, with heavily burnt granite pebbles (Fig. 4). Beneath the cultural layer, natural ground consisting of limestone scree was exposed. The various components of the hoard were primarily recovered on top of the limestone scree or from the lower part of the cultural layer. They were situated 30–40 cm deeper than the mortar-bound stone foundation.

To determine the nature of the cultural layer, a small trench measuring approximately 130 × 100 cm was excavated in the inner corner of the house where the hoard was discovered. The excavation revealed an intense layer of burnt granite pebbles and charcoal, with few fragments of iron artefacts. It can be assumed that the burnt stones indicated a stove that had been dismantled and levelled for the construction of a new building. Later it was also possible to determine the approximate boundaries of the layer of burnt stones – ca. 4 × 2 m (Fig. 5). The rows of large limestone boulders were probably the foundations of an earlier wooden building.

A significant proportion of the coins discovered were found in a horizontal position on top of the limestone scree. During the excavations, components of the hoard were identified in an area measuring approximately 11 m in diameter. However, it is possible that more finds belonging to the hoard may yet be found in an area outside the house, where they would have to be located at a considerable depth. The soil surrounding the most densely situated hoard components exhibited a darker pigmentation compared to the surrounding ground, which may refer to a decomposed organic origin. It is possible that the hoard had once been inside, for example, a wooden chest.



Fig. 3. Finds were concentrated beneath the corner of the building, where the soil was darker than the surrounding soil.

Jn 3. Leidude kontsentratsiooniala hoone nurga all, kus muld oli ümbritsevast tumedam.

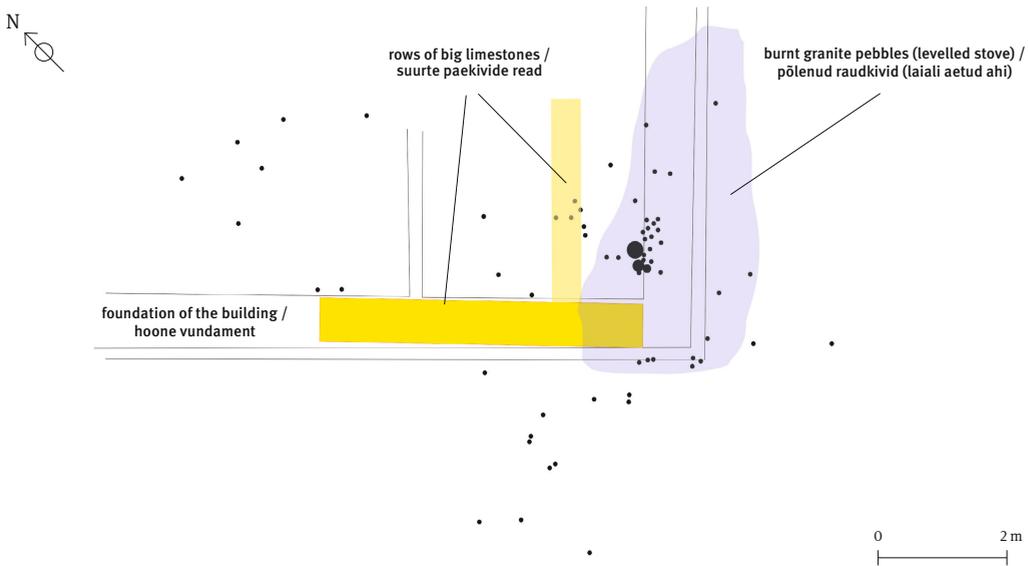
Photo / Foto: Marika Mägi



Fig. 4. Cultural layer under the south-west wall of the building.

Jn 4. Kultuurkiht hoone edelaseina all.

Photo / Foto: Marika Mägi



**Fig. 5.** The area of the hoard with finds and structures.

**Jn 5.** Aarde ala leidude ja struktuuridega.

*Drawing / Joonis: Marika Mägi*

The presence of clearly defined burn marks on most of the coins indicates that the hoard may have been left behind during a fire that destroyed the building, most likely in the last decades of the 12th century, as evidenced by the composition of the hoard. It is possible that the chest or other vessel containing the silver objects was already scattered on the floor during the building's collapse, and the hoard was ultimately dismantled when the ground and the remains of the stove were levelled after the fire. Also, the remains of the building may have been levelled years after the fire.

A number of finds were detected in an area extending from 150 m northeast of the hoard find in 2019 (Juurik 2019; Russow 2021) and 2023. The artefacts were unearthed in an area measuring approximately 200 m in diameter in a present-day field. They are of a different date, not burnt and appear to mark a household that has been in the area for a longer period. The finds have probably been dispersed by ploughing. The composition of the artefacts, which included a silver pendant, a fragment of a sword hilt, 14th–15th century coins, and a late medieval or early modern cup of a nested cup weight, suggests that the household possessed an above average level of wealth. The earliest finds date mainly from the 11th to 12th centuries, and several items were lost during the 15th or 16th centuries (Russow 2021). Some of the younger objects – such as the weight – can be considered unusual for a typical farm household. It can be hypothesised that this was the location of the medieval Rahu manor, or a section of it, as referenced in written sources dating back to 1509.

## THE COINS

In 2023 and 2024, a total of 80 coins from the 10th to 12th centuries were discovered beneath and along the edge of the house structure. All the coins were covered in a thick brownish oxide layer at the time of discovery. This layer had likely formed due to the coins being exposed to fire, almost completely obscuring their images and rendering most of the coins

unidentifiable. Credit is due to conservator Aive Viljus from Tallinn University, who managed to clean the coins without loss (Viljus 2025). However, as a result of the fire, the coins are partially fragile and have lost some of their weight.

The discovered coins can be categorised by origin as follows: 4 Islamic, 32 from the Holy Roman Empire (hereafter referred to as German), 1 Hungarian, 9 English, 2 Danish, 28 Anglo-Scandinavian, and 4 from Gotland (Table).

**Table.** *Coins of the Rahu hoard*

**Tabel.** *Rahu aarde mündid*

*Compiled by / Koostanud: Ivar Leimus*

#### ISLAMIC COINS

No. / Nr	Dynasty / Dünastia	Ruler / Valitseja	Mint / Müntla	Year / Aasta	Weight / Kaal	Remarks / Märkused
1	Abbasids	al-Muqtadir	al-Basra	318		fragile
2	Samanids?	Nasr ibn Ahmad?	?	[3]10	0.54 (frg.)	double strike
3	Samanids	Nasr ibn Ahmad?	?	32x	2.21 (frg.)	
4	Samanids	Nuh II ibn Mansur?	ash-Shash?	?	1.02 (frg.)	pierced twice

#### GERMAN COINS

No. / Nr	Mint / Müntla	Ruler / Valitseja	Year / Aasta	References / Viide	Weight / Kaal	Remarks / Märkused
5	Remiremont	B. Dietrich II	1005–1046	Dbg. 33, 33a; MODR II, 153/1	1.08	cracked
6	Trier	Archb. Eberhard	1047–1066	Dbg. 473; Weiller 1988, 56	1.00	
7	Andernach	Emp. Konrad II and Archb. Pilgrim	1027/30–1050–60	Dbg. 447; CNG 22.16	1.14	
8	Andernach	Emp. Konrad II and Archb. Pilgrim	1027/30–1050–60	Dbg. 449, 451; CNG 22.17 with a 'mountain'	0.91	
9–11	Cologne	Otto III	983–1002	Häv. 34; Ilisch 1990	1.46, 1.33, 1.32	
12	Deventer	Emp. Heinrich II	1014–1024	Dbg. 563; Ilisch 2000, 1.8	0.64	
13	Region of Nijmegen-Tiel	Emp. Konrad II	1027–1039	Ilisch 2000, 8.19	0.99	
14	Jever	Duke Bernhard II	1011–1059	Dbg. 591–593	0.34 (broken half)	
15	Region of Duisburg-Dortmund			Dbg. 1616?	0.96 (very worn)	
16	Soest	'Otto III'	1st half 11th c.	Häv. 73, 849, 850	1.12 (worn)	
17–18	Anonymous (Lüneburg?)		c. 1045–1050	Cf. Kilger 2000, group Ne3A	0.88, 0.63	different dies
19	Goslar <i>et al.</i>	Otto III and Adelheid		Hatz 1961, IV6z?	1.14	
20	Goslar <i>et al.</i>	Otto III and Adelheid imitation		Hatz 1961, V2d5?	0.88	
21	Goslar <i>et al.</i>	Otto III and Adelheid imitation		Hatz 1961, VI2b	1.19	
22	Goslar <i>et al.</i>	Otto III and Adelheid imitation		Hatz 1961, VI2c8	0.55	
23	Würzburg	Emp. Otto III	996–1002	Dbg. 856	0.81	
24	Mainz	Otto II–III	973–1002	Dbg. 778/779; Stoess 1993	1.25	
25	Mainz	Heinrich III and Archb. Bardo	1039–1051	Dbg. 805	0.76	
26	Speyer	Anonymous	1002–1039	Dbg. 827 or 836, Berghaus 1954, S. 213	0.17 (frg.)	

No. / Nr	Mint / Mündla	Ruler / Valitseja	Year / Aasta	References / Viide	Weight / Kaal	Remarks / Märkused
27–29	Worms	'Heinrich II'	c. 1024–1046	Dbg. 845 var.; Leimus 1993; 2000	0.80, 0.51, 0.36 (cut halfpenny)	
30	Worms	Heinrich III	1039–1056	Dbg. 847	0.78 (2 frg.)	
31	Worms	Anonymous	c. 1100	Cf. Dbg. 2060–2061; Joseph 1906, 26b	0.79	
32	Lorsch	Abbot Anselm?	c. 1100	Dbg. 1916; Kluge 1991, 506	0.73 (2 frg.)	
33	Speyer	Heinrich III	1039–1056	Dbg. 829; Berghaus 1954, S. 213	0.37 (broken half)	
34	Speyer	Emp. Heinrich III	1046–1056	Dbg. 830c	0.67	
35	Augsburg	B. Eberhard I	1029–1047	Hahn 1976, 151	1.06 (broken rim)	
36	Regensburg	Kg Heinrich III, 2nd period	1037–1042	Hahn 1976, 43A	1.00	
37	Esztergom?	Stephan I	1000–1038	Huszár 1979, 5	broken rim	

**ANGLO-SAXON COINS**

No. / Nr	Ruler / Valitseja	Type / Tüüp	Year / Aasta	Mint / Mündla	Moneyer / Mündmeister	Weight / Kaal	Remarks / Märkused
38	Aethelred II	Long cross	997–1003	Canterbury	Eadwold	1.40	
39	Aethelred II	Long cross	997–1003	Rochester	Eadwerd	1.37	
41	Aethelred II	Helmet	1003–1009	Exeter	Edwine		3 frg.
42	Aethelred II	Last small cross	1009–1017/8	London	Grim		7 frg.
43	Cnut	Quatrefoil	1018–1024	Norwich	Rinculf	0.68	
44	Cnut	Short cross	1029–1035	Stamford	Leofedeg	0.89	
45	Harold I	Fleur-de-lys	1038–1040	London	Corff	0.92	cracked
46	Edward the Confessor	Sovereign/Eagles	1059–1059	Hereford?	?	0.73	2 frg., pierced

**DANISH COINS**

No. / Nr	Ruler / Valitseja	Type / Tüüp	Year / Aasta	Mint / Mündla	References / Viide	Weight / Kaal	Remarks / Märkused
47	Harthacnut		1035–1042	Roskilde	Hauberg 1900, 39	0.55	
48	Magnus		1042–1047	Lund	Becker 1981, M5/228		frg.

**ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN COINS**

No. / Nr	Ruler / Valitseja	Type / Tüüp	Mint / Mündla	Year / Aasta	References / Viide	Weight / Kaal	Remarks / Märkused
49	Aethelred II	Small cross	Sigtuna?	Early 11th c.	Malmer 1997, 605/1702	1.50	
50	Aethelred II	Small cross	Sigtuna?	Early 11th c.	Malmer 1989, 110/?	0.58 (broken quarter)	
51	Aethelred II	Long cross	Sigtuna?	Early 11th c.	Malmer?	poorly preserved	
52–75	Aethelred II	Long cross	Unknown	Early 11th c.	Malmer –	1.70, 1.60 (square flan), 1.48, 1.40 (square flan), 1.37, 1.37, 1.36, 1.34, 1.31, 1.28, 1.27, 1.27, 1.22, 1.18, 1.17, 1.17, 1.17, 1.11, 1.11, 1.11, 1.11, 1.03	Same dies
76	Aethelred II	Long cross rv./ Small cross?	Unknown	Early 11th c.		0.30 (broken quarter)	

## GOTLAND COINS

No. / Nr	Mint / Mündla	Year / Aasta	References / Viide	Remarks / Märksused
77	Visby?	1150–60s	Myrberg 2008, I:1	fragments
78	Visby?	1150–60s	Myrberg 2008, I:1	fragments
79	Visby?	1150–70s	Myrberg 2008, I:1–2	fragments
80	Visby?	1150–90s	Myrberg 2008, I:1–3	fragments, one-sided

The dirhams from the Islamic world all date from the 10th century and represent remnants of the period, lasting until around the turn of the first millennium, when dirhams were widely used in Estonia. Having been in use for a long time, they are worn and fragmentary.

The German denars were predominantly minted in the first half of the 11th century, with a few exceptions, such as coins from Cologne, Würzburg, and Mainz minted during the reign of Otto III (983–1002). The likely youngest coin in this group was minted in Trier during the times of the archbishopric of Eberhard (1047–1066) (Fig. 6).

However, there are two exceptions here. First, a denar likely minted at the Lorsch monastery in the name of an anonymous abbot (Fig. 7). Only one type of coin is known to have been minted in Lorsch (Dbg. 1916 and its variation Dbg. 1917), and these appear exclusively in later hoards: Otepää (*terminus post quem* 1092; Molvõgin 1994, no. 67B: 165), Fulda (*tpq* 1115; Menadier 1900a, no. 85; Menadier 1900b, no. 85), Burge I (*tpq* 1143; Hatz 2001, no. 91.1), and Vaida (*tpq* 1154 / c. 1180; Molvõgin 1994, no. 78: 196; for the hoard's dating, see Leimus 2001, 926). Accordingly, these coins have been dated either to the reign of Abbot Anselm (1088–1101) (<https://smb.museum-digital.de/object/161903>) or even to the first half of the 12th century (Hatz 2001, 112).

The second notable denar (Dbg. 2060–2061) likely originates from Worms and in both diameter and thickness of the flan closely resembles the coins minted there during the reign of Henry II (1002–1024) (Fig. 8). Therefore, these rare coins are sometimes classified under Henry II (Joseph 1906, 26) or left without a more precise date. However, in



Fig. 6. Trier, archbishop Eberhard (1047–1066).

Jn 6. Trier, peapiiskop Eberhard (1047–1066).

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus



Fig. 7. Lorsch, anonymous abbot, ca. 1100.

Jn 7. Lorsch, anonüümne abt, u. 1100.

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus



Fig. 8. Worms, unknown ruler, ca. 1100.

Jn 8. Worms, teadmata valitseja, u. 1100.

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus

11th-century hoards from the Baltic Sea region – where Worms coins are otherwise extremely abundant – this particular coin type has not been recorded. All known specimens of these coins come from late finds, such as Kohtla-Käva (*tpq* 1113; Molvõgin 1994, no. 75: 456–457), Fulda (*tpq* 1115; Menadier 1900a, nos 183, 184; Menadier 1900b, nos 78, 80), Johannishus (*tpq* 1120; CNS 4.1 no. 5: 2842), and Kose (*tpq* 1121; Molvõgin 1994, no. 76: 1244–1246). Therefore, we may date this coin type to the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries. This view is supported by the fact that a very similar coin (distinguished only by the presence of a bishop's crozier inside the church building) has been attributed by Hermann Dannenberg to the time of Bishop Eppo (1090–1105) (Dbg. IV, p. 922, no. 2183; photo in Joseph 1906, no. 57), although he remains uncertain about its mint (Worms? Lorsch?).

The nine Anglo-Saxon coins from the find cover the period from Aethelred II to Edward the Confessor, with no particular rarities among them.

The two Danish coins originate from King Harthacnut (Fig. 9) and King Magnus, and thus date from the 1030s–1040s.

A surprise came from the Anglo-Scandinavian pennies in the Rahu hoard – that is, coins believed to have been minted somewhere in Scandinavia, but which imitate the design of Anglo-Saxon coins. Also, their inscriptions, rarely legible at all, mostly imitate those found on Anglo-Saxon coins and therefore reveal nothing about the actual minting locations. Brita Malmer, who has studied these coins extensively (Malmer 1989; 1997; 2010), identifies two main areas of production: a southern region (Denmark, primarily Lund) and a northern region (Sigtuna). However, in the case of many coins, even this level of differentiation has so far proven unsuccessful (Malmer 1997, 21–33, 53–54).

What makes the Rahu hoard exceptional is the fact that 24 out of 29 such coins were struck using the same pair of dies (Fig. 10). Two of these specimens were minted on square flans, a characteristic feature of the Sigtuna mint. The prototype for these coins was the Long Cross type pennies of the English king Aethelred II, produced ca. from 997 to 1003, which were also widely imitated in Sigtuna up to around 1020.

Therefore, these 24 coins could not have been minted much later than the first decades of the 11th century. All of them are poorly struck, making the inscriptions mostly illegible. It appears that the dies used for minting were already of poor quality, especially on the reverse side, where the lower half of the coin is nearly smooth, and the obverse inscription is only visible at the beginning and end of the text. However, the visible portion of the obverse inscription suggests that the original was copied quite carefully – the start of the legend shows +Æ



**Fig. 9.** Denmark, king Harthacnut (1035–1042), Roskilde.  
**Jn 9.** Taani, kuningas Hardeknud (1035–1042), Roskilde.  
 Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus



**Fig. 10.** Imitation of Anglo-Saxon penny of Aethelred II, Long cross type, early 11th c. Unknown mint.  
**Jn 10.** Anglosaksi järelmünt, Aethelred II, tüüp Long cross, 11. saj algus. Teadmata müntla.  
 Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus

and the end Lo (+Æ[ÐELRED REX ANG]Lo). In contrast, the corrupted dashes on the reverse barely resemble letters at all.

The coins' weights vary significantly, ranging from 1.03 grams to 1.70 grams, with an average weight of 1.29 grams. However, it should be taken into account that the coins were exposed to fire and consequently lost some of their weight.

Surprisingly, no identical matches to these coins have been found in Sweden's extensive comparative material (Bo Gunnarson's email to Ivar Leimus, 25 May 2025). Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that these coins did not originate from Sigtuna, as might be expected, but were minted elsewhere. Exactly where, however, remains unknown. Of course, it is tempting to speculate whether they might have been made in Saaremaa, but in this article, we will limit ourselves to the presentation of the numismatic material. In any case, someone from Saaremaa must have made a quite significant business transaction in the early 11th century, the results of which remained, at least in part, preserved for a long time.

For how long exactly, is suggested by the four youngest coins in the hoard. These are thin and tiny pennies minted on Gotland from around the mid-12th century onward. Two of them crumbled into small fragments before reaching the conservator (Viljus 2025, photos 66, 69), while two remain identifiable to some extent. The photographs taken by Marika Mägi immediately after the coins were unearthed help determine their dating more closely (Fig. 11). Two of the nearly intact coins were minted in the earliest phase of Gotlandic coinage, i.e., in the 1150s–1160s. The third dates from approximately the same period or slightly later. The fourth Gotlandic coin is one-sided and thus more difficult to identify, but broadly belongs to the period between 1150 and 1190.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting that the denars from Westphalia and Cologne, which began reaching Estonia in the late 12th to early 13th century, are absent from the hoard. Additionally, the number of Gotlandic pennies in the hoard is remarkably low compared to hoards just a few decades younger, and is similar to, for example, the Padiküla hoard (*tpq* 1170; Molvögin 2001, 181) and the Haapsalu hoard (*tpq* ca. 1180; Leimus 1997; Williams 2001). The former contained 102 coins, nine of which were minted on Gotland; the latter had only one Gotlandic



**Fig. 11.** Gotland, third quarter of the 12th c.

**Jn 11.** Ojamaa, 12. saj kolmas veerand.

Photos / Fotod: Marika Mägi

<sup>2</sup> The authors thank Dr Nanouschka Myrberg Burström for reviewing the identifications of Gotlandic coins of the hoard.

coin out of 43. In contrast, the Tamse hoard (*tpq* 1193; Molvõgin 1970) included at least 341 Gotlandic coins out of 440, and the Kirimäe hoard (*tpq* 1200 or slightly later; Leimus 2023) had 88 examples out of 215 coins. Therefore, we are likely not far off in dating the final composition of the Rahu hoard to the third quarter of the 12th century.

In addition to coins, the hoard also contained three pieces of silver ingots and one small complete oval silver ‘casting cake’ (Germ. *Gusskuchen*) (Fig. 12). One of the ingot fragments (4.61 g) has a flat rectangular cross-section (10 mm wide), with clear hammering marks visible on its surface. Unfortunately, the fragment is too short to confidently determine the original shape of the ingot – whether it was a strip or a rod. The break edges are not smooth, as would be the case if it had been cut or chopped off, but rather irregular and ridged in the middle, suggesting that it was repeatedly bent back and forth until it snapped. The edges of the piece are densely covered with silver testing marks (*pecks, nicks*).



**Fig. 12.** Silver ingots of the Rahu hoard.

**Jn 12.** Rahu aarde hõbedakangid.

Photo / Foto: Ivar Leimus

The second piece (17.21 g) has a low-oval cross-section (maximum diameter 10 mm) and has been cut from the end of a longer rod-shaped ingot. The end of the bar has been smoothed both above and below with hammer blows. It has about ten pecks, in addition to one deep cut mark. The third piece (6.22 g) has a similar cross-section, but is slightly thicker (11.5 mm), with two pecks. These two pieces were cut using the same technique – first, the ingot was partly cut or struck through with a sharp tool and then broken off with physical force. The small complete ‘casting cake’ weighs 3.24 g and has three pecks.

Based on the frequency of pecking, the oldest of the ingots is likely the flat, rectangular cross-sectioned piece, followed by the similarly shaped low-oval cross-section pieces, which appear to be roughly contemporaneous. Ingots of both shapes were made in various places over long periods, so their exact origin and dating remain uncertain. Broadly speaking, they can be dated to a period between the 10th and 12th centuries.

As for the complete oval casting cake, no similar silver ingots have previously been found in Estonia. However, such items are numerous in Polish hoards and appear in a wide range of sizes. The Kalisz-Dobrzyca hoard (*tpq* ca. 1090/1100), for instance, contained no fewer than 579 casting cakes and their fragments (FMP V, no. 256). The example from Rahu is closest in weight to a few Polish hoards of unknown exact provenance (*tpq* 1100; FMP I, no. 249: 1196), the Oleśnica hoard (*tpq* 1039; FMP III, no. 99: 768), and the Silesia XIII hoard (10th century; FMP IV, pl. XLIII, find 108). Thus, this type of silver piece can be dated to the 10th–12th centuries, too.

### OTHER FINDS

The coins discovered by the house are not connected to those found nearby on the Adu cadastral unit in 2023 (Mägi 2024, nos 102, 105, 110). One of these was minted by the Samanid emir Isma'il ibn Ahmad in ash-Shash (modern-day Tashkent) sometime in the 280s AH (exact year fragment missing; Fig. 13: 4). The other two are medieval coins – a Visby örtug from the mid-14th century (type Haljak 2014, VI:17a) and a Tallinn artig, minted between approximately 1407/8 and 1415 (Fig. 13: 5–6).

The hoard probably contained some other silver objects in addition to coins and ingots. Furthermore, the hoard may have comprised some of the copper alloy objects found on the same site, e.g. a finger-ring and a fragment of an ornamented artefact (Fig. 14: 8, 3). However, the cultural layer at the site of the hoard exhibited notable intensity, suggesting that several artefacts detected in this area may have been lost in the course of subsistence activities.

The coins were accompanied by two silver cross-shaped pendants and two silver beads, all found at the same area as the coins. The first of the cross-shaped pendants (Fig. 14: 1) can in the Nordic countries be dated mainly to the 11th century. Near Saaremaa, a nearly identical



**Fig. 13.** Finds from the settlement north-east from the hoard.

**Jn 13.** Leide aardest kagu pool olevalt asulakohalt. (SM 10970: 106, 113, 114, 105, 102, 106.)

Photos / Fotod: Marika Mägi



**Fig. 14.** Finds from the Rahu hoard or from the same area.

**Jn 14.** Leide Rahu aardest või sellega samalt alalt. (SM 10970: 6, 44, 95, 86, 41, 82, 64, 62.)

Photos / Fotod: Marika Mägi

specimen has been unearthed in the Daugmale hill fort, while a somewhat divergent variant is present in a hoard from Tartu (Staecker 1999, 134–143; Kurisoo 2021, 56–57). Parallels to the other cross-shaped pendant (Fig. 14: 2), which has also been dated to the 11th or early 12th century, can be found in Gotland in Havor burial no. 197 and in Sigtuna (Staecker 1999, 114, 469). The fragment of a flat silver penannular brooch (Fig. 14: 6) can be dated from the second half of the 10th century to the beginning of the 12th century (Tamla 2024, 93 and literature cited there).

A silver artefact (Fig. 14: 3) decorated with an Urnes ornament, perhaps the flange of a drinking horn, was likely part of the hoard. Based on the ornamentation, it can be dated to 1010–1130 (Jets 2013, 91–97). A silver bead decorated with granules (Fig. 14: 5) can be dated to the 11th–12th century and thus might have formed part of the hoard as well. A similar bead was found in the Kose hoard (*tpq* 1121; Leimus 1986, pl. 16 (unnumbered): 3). Another silver bead (Fig. 14: 4) seem to belong to the medieval period according to current data (Tõnisson 1962; Reidla 2012, 62). At the same time, other 13th–14th-century artefacts, including a copper-alloy penannular brooch with faceted terminals (Fig. 14: 7), were also recovered from the same area as the coins (for comparison, see Mägi 2002a, pl. 104, 108). A finger-ring (Fig. 14: 8) belongs to a type that is generally dated from the 11th to early 13th century, but in Saaremaa is common in early 13th-century inhumation graves (Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982, 124–126; Vasks 2008, 157–158; Thunmark-Nylen 1998, pl. 143; 2006, 158).

A few hundred metres northeast of the hoard, several finds from the same period have been documented. In addition to a dirham, a round silver pendant depicting a bird with an upright crooked beak (Fig. 13: 1) appears to belong to the Viking Age. The artefact was at least partially gilded. The age of the pendant is confirmed by the presence of silver testing pecks on its edge, which are no longer found on medieval objects. The pendant's design suggests a potential eastern provenance. Two identical pendants of similar form and shape have been found in the Gnezdovo hoard in 1867 (*tpq* 951?) and in Sedlov's group kurgan near Chernihiv (Gushchin 1936, 34, fig. 34; 5; 53–57; pl. III: 13; for more information on the find and composition of the Gnezdovo hoard: Pushkina 1998). The pattern on these pendants differs from that on the Rahu pendant, but birds with crooked beaks can also be seen on them.

A heart-shaped belt mount (Fig. 13: 2) belongs to the same period, i.e., the 11th century, as evidenced by its presence in Saaremaa stone graves (e.g., Mägi 2002a, pl. 30). The fragment of a copper alloy sword hilt of Couronian type (Fig. 13: 3) belongs to a type that in Estonia is dated to the 12th century or the beginning of the 13th century (Mandel 2017, 71, pl. XX: AM 1123: 55; 580: 4024).

## CONCLUSIONS

The finds from the village of Rahu provided a glimpse into the history of a small but centrally located settlement that had previously been almost unexplored until the 2020s. As one of the closest settlements to the Valjala church, this site was probably home to one of the most prominent families in Saaremaa during the 12th and 13th centuries. The exact location of their residence remains uncertain; it is not known whether it was the same building where the Põdra hoard was left behind or another prosperous farm in the same village. A small manor probably stood on the same site in the Middle Ages, and another manor existed at a distance of 500 metres from the site of the hoard discovery as recently as the 18th century.

The analysis of the coin hoard allows us to distinguish at least four groups within its composition. At the beginning of the 11th century, 24 imitations of unknown origin were minted

using an identical pair of dies. Most of the German coins in the hoard, along with some English, Danish, and Anglo-Scandinavian pennies, were minted primarily during the first half of the 11th century. A coin from Lorsch and one from Worms belong to the very end of the 11th century or the beginning of the 12th century, while the coins from Gotland date from the third quarter of the 12th century. It is, obviously, uncertain whether all the coins reached the hoard's owner in the same order they were minted. However, based on the composition of the coins, we can state with reasonable certainty that the hoard was completed before the final decades of the 12th century.

When exactly the pieces of silver ingots of the hoard were cast cannot be determined with current knowledge. More broadly, the timeframe can be placed between the 10th and 12th centuries. During the 11th–12th centuries, two silver cross pendants, a fragment of a horse-shoe-shaped brooch, and pieces of other silver items were also added to the hoard. Based on the dating of the coins, silver ingots, and jewellery fragments, it can be concluded that the Rahu hoard was accumulated over a long period – at least a century and a half.

In the 11th and 12th centuries, the hoard site and its surroundings were home to a wealthier-than-average household, as evidenced by silver jewellery, weapon parts and belt ornaments. It is possible that throughout this entire period, the hoard belonged to the same family that resided in this household. The silver was not buried or concealed; rather, it had been stored within one of the buildings. The silver from the hoard was used for daily bartering. The components of the hoard that have been unearthed thus far may have been the result of various transactions at different times, or the spoils of successful raids. The building was destroyed by fire, probably in the late 12th century. It is plausible that the owners of the building and the hoard died in this incident, as the valuables appear to have been overlooked or the debris not thoroughly searched through.

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## ÜLIKUMÕIS RAHUS? 12. SAJANDI LÕPU AARE SAAREMAALT

Marika Mägi ja Ivar Leimus

Kohalik elanik Roland Pärn leidis 2024. aasta suvel Saaremaalt Rahu külast Põdra talu ehitustööde käigus maja põranda alt aarde. Rahu küla jääb Valjala kirikust vaid u 2 km kaugusele ja oli 12.–13. sajandi Saaremaal üsna keskse asukohaga. Läheduses on kaevatud suurt ja rikkaliku leiuainesega Rahu kivi-kalmet, millesse maetud inimesed elasid tõenäoliselt kusagil tänapäeva Rahu küla maadel. Kirjalikest allikatest on teada, et keskajal oli Rahus väike mõis, mis kadus 16. sajandiks. Rahu mõisa mainitakse taas 18. sajandil, kuid ajalooliste kaartide järgi otsustades paiknes mõis nüüd külast veidi eraldi, aarde leiu-kohast umbes pool kilomeetrit lääne pool.

2024. aastal leitud aarde mündid ja muud esemed koondusid maja vundamendi nurga alla, kust neid pole rohkem võimalik välja kaevata. Seega oli aare algselt suurem. Maja eriaegsete vundamentide all paljandusid mõrdiga sidumata suured paekivid, ilmselt mingi varasema puithoone alusmüürid. Paekivide all oli intensiivne kultuurkiht, milles eristus umbes 4 × 2 m suurune tugevalt põlenud väiksematest raudkividest laik – ilmselt laiali aetud kerisahi. Kultuurkihi all asub paeklibune looduslik pinnas.

Aarde erinevad osad tulid välja peamiselt kiviklibu pealt või kultuurkihi alumisest osast, kuni 11 m läbimõõduga alalt. Kõige rohkemate leidudega kogumi ümber vundamendi all oli ümbritsevast tumedam muld, mis tundus pärinevat kõdunenud orgaanikast. Võimalik, et aare oli algselt näiteks puidust laeka sees. Kuna suur osa münte oli selgete põlemisjälgedega, võib arvata, et aare jäi maha hoone põlengu käigus.

Samalt alalt tuli üsna rohkesti leide, mis tõenäoliselt ei kuulunud aardesse ja annavad tunnistust intensiivsest elutegevusest. Lisaks on aarde leiu kohast 150 m kirde pool asuval praegusel põllul teada u 200 m läbimõõduga paljude leidudega ala. Kuna seal-sed leiud on eriaegsed ja pole põlenud, markeerivad need ilmselt hooneid, mis eksisteerisid seal pikema aja jooksul. Leidude koostis (11. sajandi hõberipats ja samast materjalist võõnaast, 12. sajandi mõõga käe-

pideme osa, 14.–15. sajandi mündid, hõbedakang, hiliskeskagegne või varauusaegne kaaluviht) näib osuvat keskmisest jõukamale majapidamisele.

Aarde 80 münti jagunevad oma päritolult järgmiselt: 4 araabia, 32 Saksa-Rooma keisririigi, 1 Ungari, 9 Inglise, 2 Taani, 28 angloskandinaavia ja 4 Ojamaa vermingut. Müntide ajalise koosseisu analüüs lubab selles eristada vähemalt nelja gruppi. 11. sajandi algusest pärineb kogum (24 eks.) Aethelred II Long cross tüüpi pennide imitatsioone, mis kõik on vermitud ühe ja sama münditemplite paariga. Arvatavasti on need tehtud kusagil Skandinaavias, kus niisuguste järelmüntide valmistamine oli eriti ulatuslik 10. sajandi lõpust kuni u 1020. aastani. Väärrib tähelepanu, et Rahu müntidega identseid eksemplare pole ei Rootsi, Taani ega teiste maade massilises numismaatilises aineses seni avastatud. 11. sajandi esimesest poolest pärineb suurem osa Saksa müntidest ja mõned Inglise, Taani ning angloskandinaavia pennid. 11. sajandi lõppu – 12. sajandi algusesse on dateeritavad üks Wormsi ja üks Lorschi münt ning 12. sajandi eelviimasesse veerandisse Ojamaa pennid. Kas kõik mündid jõudsid aarde omanike kätte valmistamise järjekorras, pole mõistagi kindel.

Rahu küla leiud on võimaldanud heita pilku ühe väikese, kuid keskse asukohaga asustusüksuse ajalukku, millest enne 2020. aastate leide polnud palju teada. 11.–12. sajandil paiknes aarde leiu kohas ja selle ümbruses keskmisest jõukam majapidamine, millest annavad tunnistust osalt väärismetallist ehted, relvade osad ja vöökaunistused. Leitud aare oli ilmselt siin elanud perekonna varalaegas, mis polnud mitte peidetud, vaid asetses hoones sees. Aardes olnud hõbedaga majandati igapäevaselt ning aarde seni leitud koostisosad võisid olla eriaegsete tehingute tulemused või saak edukatelt rüüsterkedelt. Tõenäoliselt hävis hoone 12. sajandi lõpul tulekahjus. Võib arvata, et sündmuse käigus said hoone ja aarde omanikud surma, sest väärisasju rusudest ei leitud või ei otsitudki.