Finnish Limousines. Fundamental Questions about the Organizing Process of the Early Church in Finland

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I. The artefact kept in the National Museum in Helsinki from which we start our remarks is a 7,5 centimeters tall human figure made of copper (Fig. 1). Its front is convex and its back concave. The head of the figure is massive but its features are indistinct except for the dark blue eyes of enamel pearls. There are grooves and shellshaped hollows in the relieflike body. The space between them has been embossed with metal ridges which have been mainly eroded away. The hollows have been filled with turquoise, blue and purple coloured enamel. Because there are some traces of gilt here and there on the body and head, the figure was apparently originally all over gilded. Both in the middle of the chest and at the feet there is a hole. Because of the holes the figure is evidently a metal appliqué decorated with enamel. The artefact was found in the parish of Uskela about 3-4 cms deep in a field belonging to the Pohjatalo farm in a village named Moisio close to the town of Salo. The site of the find was about 100 meters from the Salo bridge. At present the area belongs to the city of Salo.

II. The enamel work technique in the Uskela find represents champlevé (émail champlevé), which came to be the ruling technique at enamel workshops during the second half of the 12th century. As an invention it is older, and it is known to have been familiar already in Roman times beside cloisonné work (émail cloisonné) in the northern Celtic areas of the Roman Empire.

Limoges, the capital of Limousin country in the ancient Celtic area of Central France and famous for its champlevé works, became the most important enamel production centre in the 12th century. The enamel production in Limoges had two artistic booming periods. The first occurred in the 12th and 13th centuries and the second in the 15th and 16th centuries.²

¹ National Museum inv. 8205:2.

² See e.g. Gauthier 1950; Kovács 1968; Gauthier & Marcheix 1962.



Fig. 1: Enamel appliqué found at the Pohjatalo farm in the village of Moisio in Uskela (now Salo) representing an unknown saint.

National Museum inv. 8205:2. Height 7,5 cms. Photo: National Board of Antiquites.

The Limoges products were widely spread as far as to Jerusalem, Kiev, Ireland and the North of Europe.

A lot of research has been done on medieval enamels. At the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique (C.N.R.S.) a research program (programme no. 404) called "Corpus des émaux meridionaux" has been trying to gather information on all the preserved limousine enamels. 9500 artefacts from 26 countries are known until now.³

This exceptionally large number of surviving artefacts is an important proof of the volume of the trade with Limoges enamel products and of the wide popularity of these artefacts.

Scandinavian countries have also participated in the research. Britt-Marie Andersson, who studied Swedish material has already published part of her finds.⁴ A glance at Andersson's publication shows that the Uskela enamel appliqué is because of both its colours and its shape also a product from Limoges.

III. About 200 medieval limousine enamels are known to be from Scandinavia. Extrapolating from the preserved artefacts it has been suggested that between 1000 and 2000 specimens were originally imported to the North.⁵

In Sweden [Sweden means modern Sweden, also consisting of the territories of Skoone, during the Middle Ages part of Denmark, and Bohuslän, part of medieval Norway, but not the overseas parts of medieval Sweden, i. e. Finland], there are still 105 pieces left, the oldest from the end of the 12th century and the youngest from the early 14th century. Swedish Limoges material consists mainly (about 80 %) of altar and procession crosses or fragments of them. Among them are only a few incensories, parts of a liturgical book, a shrine, a pyxis and a ciborium. Of profane artefacts only one casket and a piece of a belt buckle are known.

One problem is to find out, whether the mentioned artefacts were in Sweden already in the Middle Ages or not. A lot of medieval valuables were carried to Sweden particularly during the Thirty Years' War. One of those is an enamel cross of Skokloster. Of the other limousine enamels a definite similar statement cannot be made. Andersson has been proposing that a total of 17 crosses are still in situ in the churches for which they were obtained in the Middle Ages. Archaeological finds, forming about 4/5 of the material and being mainly from Gotland and Skoone areas, give support to the 'medieval dating' of Swedish Limoges works. Andersson refers to Icelandic medieval church inventories, so-called maldagar, believing that the situation reflected by them is also relevant

³ B.-M. Andersson 1980, 3; Gauthier 1978.

⁴ B.-M. Andersson 1976; B.-M. Andersson 1980.

⁵ Gauthier 1971.

in Sweden. According to these written documents limousines were common and numerous in the churches of Iceland.

Compared to the overall material having survived the Swedish one is exceptional. 80 % of it are crosses, whereas crosses form only 10 % of all preserved limousine enamels. Andersson suspects that the great number of crosses is explained by the private nature of the churches and chapels in the poor and newly converted country. Unlike priests, private owners were not obliged to collect other cult objects but could concentrate – for mere economic reasons – on the essential, the cross, the victorious symbol of the new faith. The bull of Pope Innocentius III concerning mass from about the year 1200 speaks of its necessity, according to which the presence of the cross at the altar is indispensable. Besides baptismal fonts, limousine enamels are the oldest Christian cult objects in Sweden.

IV. When pondering the question of how, by whom and on what routes Central and Western European artefacts were carried to the North, Andersson has thoroughly run through a number of alternatives.

The first possibility is trade which is not likely to be the only possible explanation of enamel import. Andersson mentions that there was a considerable amount of second class mass production enamels especially from the late 13th century in Visby and Gotland both of which were ruled by the Hansa. Secondly, pilgrims from the North heading for the tomb of St. James may have gone through Limoges. A pilgrimage route known by the name "via lemovicensis" ran through the city. In Limoges there was the tomb of the city's first bishop, St. Martialis. It made the city a popular and important place of pilgrimage. There was a monastery, which represented a centre of spiritual and intellectual life for whole Southern France. The monastery was particularly famous for its musical life, chronicles and manuscripts. Pilgrims carried along not only many influences but also various material memories – perhaps also limousine enamels of suitable size for the travellers.

With full reason Andersson admits, however, that students, priests and members of monastic orders, particularly the Cistercians, played the most important role. Gauthier, for his part, gives this honour to the mendicant friars. Monastic orders may well have been responsible for the "flood" of Limoges enamels to the North. Through them the contacts between France and Scandinavia were direct and intensive.⁶

V. Among the limousines carried to Sweden there are many analogues to the Uskela find. Single enamel appliqués form, however, a problematic group of artefacts. Because appliqué work was used in shrines, bindings and crosses,

⁶ Gauthier 1971.

one cannot say for sure what kind of artefact the separate enamels were originally from. Out of the reason that greater part of Sweden's unbroken Limoges enamels are crosses, Andersson supposes that the majority of appliqués also originally belonged to these altar or procession crosses. This is why she presents the tiny enamel figures together with crosses.

Analogues to the Uskela enamel belong to Andersson's group III, characteristic of which are, among others, the stiffened gestures. Stylized hands have come to replace the particularly delicately engraved hands. Copper peaks are broad and the enamel has been tarnished and turned impure. The group is dated to the third quarter of the 13th century.

In Finland another Limoges work has remained, the procession or altar crucifix from the church of Rusko (Fig. 2). It was published in the series "Finnish Churches", where it is described as follows: "Crucifix, now National Museum inv. 32088 of brass or enamel, made in Limoges, France, around the year 1200, originally altar or procession crucifix. Three leafpoints in the crown, shaped like a broad hoop; a long loin cloth with blue and green enamel. Blue eyes of pearl and blue footboard. Anatomy made more conspicuous with engraved lines. Height 17 cm. Cross of pinewood, square shaped plates at the ends of branches. Colours black, light brown and silver. Height 32 cm." It is not possible to say if the cross is original or not. It has no traces of other enamel parts like crosses similar to it do have.

The Rusko crucifix also belongs to group III and more particularly to its rather homogenous subgroup formed by chubby Christ figures without chin, the head turned three quarters from the frontal posture and flopped towards the shoulder, and enlarged hands. The dating of this subgroup is the same as in the case of the Uskela appliqué: third quarter of the 13th century. ¹⁰

As a whole, group III is dated from the middle of the 13th century to the beginning of the 14th century and it is the youngest and greatest in number of the Swedish cross groups. It represents mediocre and artistically low quality serial production made for trade.

The channels through which enamels spread to Sweden were the same as those for the eastern part of the realm, provided there is no reason to suspect that Finnish limousines were artefacts brought to Finland after the Middle Ages. Such reasons have not been found yet; arguments for the artefacts' 'medieval dating' in Sweden hold true also in Finland.

⁷ B.-M. Andersson 1980, 28, Figs. 78-84, 87, 88.

⁸ Riska 1961, 186.

⁹ Cf. B.-M. Andersson 1980.

¹⁰ B.-M. Andersson 1980, 25.

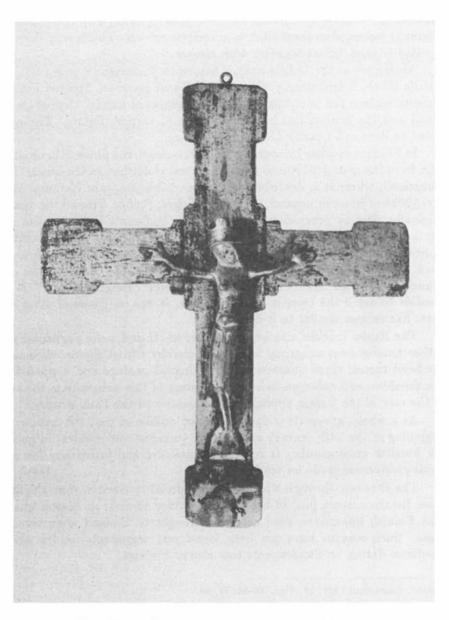


Fig. 2: Crucifix from the church of Rusko. Height 30,5 cms. National Museum inv. 32088. Photo: National Board of Antiquites.

Trade, particularly with Gotland, which for a long time had a notable significance in our economical history¹¹ may have played a role. Also other medieval religious artefacts, like baptismal fonts¹² and statues¹³, came from there. In addition, influences from Gotland can be recognized in Finnish religious architecture.¹⁴

Finns, too, participated in pilgrimages. One of the most popular destination was the already mentioned tomb of St. James in Santiago de Compostela. However, written documents concerning Finnish pilgrimages only have survived from the late medieval times.¹⁵

Monastic orders can also be taken into account, but hardly the Cistercians, for they didn't have a monastery in Finland. The Cistercians, however, had influence worth to be mentioned on the southern coast of Finland through Padis monastery's possessions in the province of Uusimaa. ¹⁶ Of mendicant orders, the Dominicans had important activities in Finland in the 13th century, and as early as 1249 their monastery in Turku was established. ¹⁷

VI. Swedish Limoges material is predominated by crosses and their fragments. In Finland, the situation is the same. There is, however, a considerable difference in quantity: only two specimens from Finland and 105 from Sweden have survived. Finland was at the periphery where less artefacts had spread from the very beginning. Small in number, they, nevertheless, give proof of early cultural contacts with France and show that Finland was part of the common Western European cultural field. The comparison of the number of enamels having survived reminds us also of the difference in the number of written documents. In Finland only 66 original medieval original documents and 223 medieval copies, extracts and statements still do exist. The collection of Swedish medieval sources contains more than 20.000 documents. The situation concerning both written and material sources in Finland, therefore, proves to be very similar: there is a depressingly small number of each. This is why every medieval Finnish artefact is an important historical source, too.

In Sweden limousine enamels are considered to be the oldest Christian

¹¹ See, e. g., Voionmaa 1919; Nordman 1935; Nordman 1944; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1983; Hiekkanen 1986.

¹² Reutersvärd 1978, 187.

¹³ Nordman 1965.

¹⁴ Gardberg 1983.

¹⁵ Nikula 1968.

¹⁶ Gallén 1957.

¹⁷ Gallén 1958, 179.

¹⁸ Paloposki 1972, 42.

cult objects besides baptismal fonts. 19 The two Finnish Limoges products are slightly younger than the oldest Swedish enamels but appear none the less as exceptionally old religious artefacts in our circumstances.

Some Christian artefacts have come to us from the end of the prehistoric period, e. g. crosses, some even emalled, 20 and Hansa vessels. These bronze vessels decorated by engravings and used from the 11th to the 13th century have been considered as liturgical vessels. Their pictorial motives are connected with Christian iconography. Leena Ruonavaara, who studied the Hansa vessels, has shown that the winged figures in the vessel from Kuhmoinen are personifications of vice and that the fan-shaped motives between the side figures may be recollections of descriptions of the tree of vice. 21 Although the Hansa vessels may be related to missionary activities, neither the sites of Finnish or Scandinavian vessel finds nor the disrespectful way of using pieces of them for example as knife handle's ferrules 22 give support to their use in cultic connections.

The oldest real Christian cult artefact is probably the Korppoo Madonna dating back to the year 1200. Not many religious works of art have survived from the 13th century. A distinct influence of French style is perceivable in many of them. ²³ The number of religious artefacts is not increasing until the year 1300. ²⁴ In addition, some baptismal fonts are known from the 13th century. ²⁵ One can, therefore, claim that the Limoges enamels are among the oldest religious artefacts in Finland.

Artefacts from churches have rendered assistance for architectural researchers. The oldest construction stage of the church of Rusko could be dated with the help of the mentioned crucifix.²⁶ If the Rusko crucifix was of help in unravelling the history of the church where it had been kept, the Uskela appliqué will also be interesting for unravelling historical phases of its finding site, the village of Moisio.

A. M. Tallgren stated that every river valley parish in 'Finland Proper'

¹⁹ B.-M. Andersson 1979, 110.

²⁰ See, e. g., Hirviluoto 1971.

²¹ Ruonavaara 1983 et op. cit.

²² Drescher 1975, 61.

²³ A. Andersson 1959, 590-591; Nordman 1965.

²⁴ Nordman 1965.

²⁵ Reutersvärd 1978.

²⁶ Kronqvist 1934, 69; Riska 1961, 182. The crucifix has been dated to the beginning of the 13th century and the dating of the sacristy of the same church is supported by the portrait of St. Olof from the 1280-90's. The portrait painting is attributed to a master called Vāte of Gotland (Riska 1961, 182, 187). One has to note, however, that there is no really remarkable difference between the datings of both artefacts.

(Varsinais-Suomi) had a heathen sacrificial grove, "Hiisi", and close to it "Moisio", the dwelling manor of a chief. According to Tallgren, also Uskelanjoki river valley had this kind of former parish. The problem with the Uskela case is the decrease in the number of finds and the change in their nature in the beginning of the historical period, that is the Middle Ages. The youngest finds are so-called 11th century artefact types, which occur both in the end of the Viking Period and in the Crusade Period. Only the finds from the 11th century near the old church which collapsed into the Uskelanjoki River may lead to suggesting the existence of a burial ground. However, we are lacking proper burial finds from the Crusade Period in Uskela. Because of the evidence of the 11th century finds and medieval fiscal records, a continuity of settlement from prehistoric times to historic times has been suggested. 8

The appropriate exactitude of the elevation where the artefact was situated, over 5 metres, means that the area had risen above sealevel during the Viking Period. Per

Researchers today agree that the first Christian influences had come together with commercial contacts. The connection between trade and Christianity is clearly shown by cross pendants dating from the 11th century. In Finland they were found explicitly in male graves containing artefacts. There is a distinct difference compared with Birka in Sweden. There, cross pendants and crucifixes were found in female burials. 33

In connection with graves containing crosses, a phenomen called "primum

²⁷ Tallgren 1933.

²⁸ Schauman-Lönnqvist 1983.

²⁹ Suutarinen 1983.

³⁰ Oja 1974.

³¹ Oja 1974; Kallio 1940.

³² Sarvas 1972, 93, 100-102; Itkonen 1964.

³³ Gräslund 1984, 111.

signum" or "prima signatio" has to be mentioned. It is an act by which pagans became "catechumens". Catechumenage, Christian teaching and educational work organized for the Christian converts-to-be prior to their baptism, was started. The catechumens were no proper members of the congregation but they could visit Christian sanctuaries and attend cult ceremonies.³⁴

The reason for accepting the sign of cross was by all means not always religious but rather practical and economical. It appears from the historical sources that one could accept the sign in order to be able to deal with Christian merchants. The church considered it desirable to create this kind of class of catechumens and people holding God in reverence, because it created preconditions for promoting missionary work.³⁵

Finnish burials containing crucifixes are rich in general and there exist imported artefacts, too. There is even a scale in burial no. 14 in Taskula cemetery, Maaria, 36 which is usually connected with a merchant. Without any further searching, the idea occurs to mind that crosses from the burials belonged to merchants and wanderers who had accepted the sign of the cross and had been travelling abroad. In Birka, on the other hand, where the practice of converting is known to have included the whole population, crosses are explicitly in female burials.

The foundation of first churches at market places has been considered probable.³⁷ It may well be that they were not erected by local people but by foreign tradesmen for their own need. This may lead us also to another possibility: Because the trade was often in the hands of chiefs it doesn't seem impossible that they had built the churches or chapels for the need of their own and/or their trading partners close by their dwelling places. In Sweden, chiefs who had converted to Christianity and built curches of their own played a considerable part in spreading the new faith. Proofs of private churches disappear at the end of the 13th century, when a canonical principle, according to which ownership of a church had to belong to the church itself, had taken effect.³⁸

The combination of the village named Moisio, meaning a chief's manor, which is situated by an old market place, and the appliqué from an altar or procession cross dating back to the third quarter of the 13th century found in

³⁴ Sandholm 1965; Molland 1978.

³⁵ Sandholm 1965; Molland 1978.

³⁶ Sarvas 1972, 101.

³⁷ Pirinen 1955, 13; Drake 1973.

³⁸ Lárusson 1968, 463-464; Pirinen 1955, 58.

the same village implies that there had been some kind of a church building. Furthermore, knowing that bishops of Turku owned most pieces of land by the Salo bridge we can, with the help of the Uskela find, try to actualize the old crucial problem concerning the early organizing process of church.

We can quote Pirinen and remark that research generally argues that most churches were built by local peasant communities or former civil parishes.³⁹ Juhani Rinne, however, disagrees. According to him, parishes originally had been small but were united to form bigger units when canonic law came into force.⁴⁰ Still, Pirinen has criticized Rinne for lack of evidence. Without weighty arguments Rinne merely assumes that all the old churches are medieval parish churches. According to Pirinen, only in the case of Sastamala and Rusko the evidence does exist that they had been independent church parishes. He points out, however, that there is an unusually great number of village churches in the northern parts of Varsinais-Suomi. The reason may be that they had been built by private persons just like small churches in Götäland, Sweden. That way, they might give proof of the gradually progressing missionary work. Elsewhere, private small churches had existed here and there, but the actual church organization took place within the old regional division of heathen times.⁴¹

Veikko Litzen asked the question, whether a church parish was only a christianized former civil parish of heathen times. He paid attention to the fact that the earliest information about the date of origin of church parishes known from the 16th century seldom goes further back than to the 14th century. With Perniö and Uskela as his particular examples, Litzen draws the conclusion that the position of Christian parishes had only gradually become stronger. According to him, it is difficult to imagine that parish churches with their large parishes could – except for the Kalanti-Satakunta region – have been founded immediately after christianisation. 42

The oldest Christian artefacts, like the Uskela find, placenames beginning with the words 'church', 'chapel' and 'cross', finds from many of these places dating to the late heathen times and prehistoric artefacts found beneath medieval church floors⁴³ and in cemeteries, they all prove the advanced age of old church sites. In conclusion, it can be assumed that there was a real great number of early medieval churches. Hiekkanen has noted that during various

³⁹ Pirinen 1955, 59.

⁴⁰ Rinne 1932, 115-130, 136-148; Pirinen 1955, 60.

⁴¹ Pirinen 1955, 60.

⁴² Litzen 1977.

⁴³ Sarvas 1971, 62; Hiekkanen 1986.

building phases of churches earth fillings had been transported and laid under floors. Together with those fillings many artefacts were added which not originally belonged to the cemetery.⁴⁴

It is useful to look at the history of the organizing process of the early church considering the diffusion of church doctrine and power. To attain power it was expedient to acquire as many and as varied strongholds as possible; adequate to this purpose, churches were erected by merchants, private chapels were owned by chiefs etc. and villages had their own churches. Once there had been enough strongholds, a consolidation of power was required so that small churches with their confused ownership and potential problems could be entrusted to the church. Maintenance and improvement of activities of the church would now have a dominating position. A private church was the best possible solution for tax collection. Time had come for founding parishes. Some churches and chapels might have been changed into parish churches, others totally abandoned. Later population growth and new settlement caused by it and also promoted by church expanded the populated area. This, for its part, made it necessary to establish new chapels and divide parishes in order to maintain the church power. Thus, the development of church organization is a function not only of pursuit of power but also of demographic development.

(Translated by Mrs. Heli Lahdentausta, M. A.)

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⁴⁴ Hiekkanen 1986.

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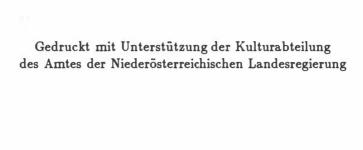
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CHRISTIAN KRÖTZL AND JAAKKO MASONEN

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MITTEILUNGEN AN DIE MITGLIEDER VON "MEDIUM AEVUM QUOTIDIANUM"

Das vorliegende Heft von Medium Aevum Quotidianum widmet sich der Auseinandersetzung mit Alltag und materieller Kultur des Mittelalters in der finnischen Forschung. Es setzt damit die in Heft 15 begonnene "Länderserie" fort. Unser Dank gilt den beiden Herausgebern des Heftes, Christian Krötzl und Jaakko Masonen, sowie den Autoren der Beiträge. Die angesprochene "Länderserie" soll in zwangloser Folge fortgesetzt werden. Diesbezügliche vorbereitende Kontakte wurden vor allem mit ungarischen, schwedischen und jugoslawischen Kollegen geknüpft.

Neben den bereits in Medium Aevum Quotidianum 18 angekündigten, für 1990 geplanten Heften wird im Februar/März 1990 Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Ergänzungsband 1 erscheinen. Dieser Band leitet eine Reihe ein, die in unregelmäßigen Abständen umfangreichere Abhandlungen zu Alltag und materieller Kultur des Mittelalters aufnehmen soll. Wir freuen uns, die Leistungen der Gesellschaft für ihre Mitglieder damit neuerlich erweitern zu können. Der genannte Ergänzungsband 1 wird sich mit der "Bedeutung von Schlaf und Traum im Mittelalter" auseinandersetzen. Dabei handelt es sich um eine überarbeitete und erweiterte Dissertation von Maria E. Wittmer-Butsch (Zürich), die bei Ludwig Schmugge am Historischen Seminar der Universität Zürich verfaßt wurde und in ihrer Methode in starkem Maße von alltagsgeschichtlichen Ansätzen ausgeht.

Gerhard Jaritz, Herausgeber