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MEDIEVAL STONE CASTING MOULDS FROM THE  
DAUGAVA VALLEY

Summary

The article analyses 34 stone casting moulds found at or near the River Daugava, dated to the 8th–16th century. Also utilised in the study are three moulds from Old Riga, out of the 27 Old Riga moulds previously analysed. As far as possible, lost moulds from Jersika, Indrica and the village of Doles Rauši are also described.

The moulds are analysed in chronological sequence.

Attention is focussed on the construction of the moulds, since this characterises the process of development of metal casting.

Two-part moulds, or half-moulds, predominate. Only in one case, at Ķente Hill-Fort, a mould has been found that might be assigned to so-called open moulds. One of the moulds from Dinaburga consisted of three parts. The only mould from Mārtiņšala represents one component of a four-part mould.

Apart from one mould from Daugmale, the other moulds in the series examined here have such small runner systems that they would be suitable only for the casting of tin and lead-tin alloys (pewter).

The depth of the cavities generally varies between 1 mm and 1.5 mm, less commonly reaching 2 mm or more.

The stone moulds in the analysed series display considerable diversity, in terms of chronology, construction and the kinds of objects to be cast. The standard of workmanship of the moulds is also varied: semi-manufactured moulds have been found as well as simple, medium-quality and high-quality moulds. This means that amateurs, crafts apprentices and accomplished specialists were engaged in casting tin and pewter. As in the case of similar moulds from Latvia, most of them were used for casting small objects: dress decorations, strap fittings and pendants. Circular pendants were intended to be cast in the greatest numbers: nine moulds were made for this purpose, five of them semi-manufactured pieces. In individual cases, finger-rings, belt buckles and brooches were also cast. Because tin castings tend to preserve very poorly, the cavities of the casting moulds, or negative forms, provide a significant historical source, offering unique evidence. In addition to evidence regarding the

distribution of tin in Latvia and the development of the craft of tin casting, the negative forms of the moulds supplement our knowledge of dress decoration, in particular in those cases when only impressions of metal decorations are preserved on the textiles uncovered in excavation.

The most interesting conclusion from the analysed material is that in individual cases there was trade not only in stones appropriate for making moulds, but also in finished moulds.