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IS THIS IMITATION GOOD ENOUGH?

Belt Plates of Precious and Base Metals in 17th-Century Finland

ABSTRAKT

ÄR DENNA KOPIA TILLRÄCKLIGT BRA? –
BÄLTESPLATTOR AV ÄDLA OCH OÄDLA METALLER I 1600-TALETS FINLAND

Att göra imitationer av lyxprodukter i billigare material är ett utbrett fenomen i många olika kulturer och tidsperioder. Forskare har ofta begrundat frågor kring det här temat: Varför är imitationer så populära? Hur förenas materiell kultur och social hierarki i imitationer? Artikeln tar upp de här frågorna genom att granska en grupp av bälten från 1600-talet, alla med ett ursprung på landsbygden. Bältesplattor gjorda av förgyllt silver, förekom i den adliga kulturen och i sockenkyrkornas inventarier. De föremål som fanns i kyrkor var reserverade för att användas som en del av brudutstyrseln. Versioner av dessa dyrbara föremål gjordes i tenn och bly, och förekom i mellersta och sydvästra Finland. Utgående från dessa bältesplattor från 1600-talet och andra motsvarande exempel på tidigmoderna imitationer, argumenteras det att även om kopiorna inte kunde mäta sig med förlagorna, så formade de ändå det visuella intrycket av bärarens kropp och dess rörelser. Kopiorna var en del av sin bärares sociala synlighet, men inte så mycket i förhållande till en adlig kultur som till en lokal festlig och kyrklig kultur.

FROM SOCIAL IMITATION TO MATERIAL ENGAGEMENT

The phenomenon of copying luxurious artefacts of valuable raw materials into objects of low worth is well attested in different cultures and periods of the past. Scholars have posed a wide array of questions on the significance of such imitations: Why are imitations so popular? How do imitations link material culture with the social sphere?[1] The present article tackles these questions by analysing a group of Finnish belts and belt plates of both precious and base metals produced in the 17th century.

Belt is a device used to gird or encircle the person around the hip or torso to visually differentiate elements of the body, and to support articles of use or ornament. Moreover, when used with heavy iron shirts, or chain mails, the belt carries the weight of the heavy upper part of the armour, taking it off from the shoulders. The early modern metal belts thus form a group of artefacts related to functional dressing up, but also creating certain kinds of visual appearances, and having an impact. They could also be utilised as means to accumulate surplus in precious objects. The custom of using ostentatious belts were introduced by the higher estates, but adopted into lower classes, although their belts could be executed in less expensive raw materials like pewter and lead. Hence the 17th-century belts provide a good basis for approaching the relationships between material culture, imitation, and the social life.[2]

I will start by discussing the social context of belt consumption, and proceed to the issues surrounding imitation. After that I will describe and analyse the surviving 17th-century belts, and the traces of their use in Finland. While for the aristocracy the usage of belts was a way to connect with the international sphere of fashion and conspicuous consumption, for the consumers of the lower classes the object group served different functions. In both instances, however, the belts allowed creating material connections and affinities, and in fact, I will argue that the phenomenon of imitation should not be discussed merely in the abstract terms of social emulation. Rather it can be seen as embedded in cultural performances, which combined a variety of social, practical and material elements. From the perspective of materiality, the imitation of dress accessories made the bodily engagement with different fields of action and meaning possible.

SETTING THE SCENE FOR LUXURIES

In the portrait of the Field Marshal and Count Jacob De la Gardie (1583–1652) painted around 1606, he wears a gold chain wrapped around his torso (Fig. 1). He has also fastened a golden belt with an extension for carrying a sword around around the waist.[3] On the basis of his valuable and visually striking dress accessories, De la Gardie can be identified as a person of high social status. This kind of use of ostentatious belts is connected, on the one hand, with the availability of wealth, and on the other, with social standing. However, it is vital to keep in mind that the direct causal link between monetary wealth and social position belongs to the modern period with its developed market capitalism.

Fig. 1. Portrait of the Field Marshal and Count Jacob De la Gardie was painted by an anonymous artist in 1606. Photo: Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden.

The situation was quite different in such pre- and early modern societies as the 17th-century Kingdom of Sweden. There was no direct uniform relationship between social position and economic resources,[4] and patterns of consumption were based on the idea of decorum, or the adherence to one's social class.[5] Instead of creating profit, the wealth was used to comply with the decorum.[6] This set up a particular environment for imitation in material culture and requires further scrutiny. Due to these elementary affinities between the pre- and early modern conceptions of luxury, I will ground my analysis of the 17th-century belt plates on the earlier history going back to the Middle Ages.

During the Middle Ages, being a member of the aristocracy was not hereditary. It was as late as 1561 when the King Eric XIV founded the first titles of a count and freiherr and provided them with privileges. In 1625 King Gustavus II Adolphus founded the Swedish House of Nobility and gave its order in the following year. With the increasing emphasis on being a member of certain social stratum, expressions of one's status in material culture become more articulated at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. The aristocracy was distinguished from other estates not only by privileges but also by a particular assemblage of objects.[7]

Consumption among the highest aristocracy in the Kingdom of Sweden was based on premodern traditions. The elite viewed conspicuous expenditure and luxury as symbols that maintained the established social order. The high social position came with the responsibility of making it effective, enforcing social stability through the iteration of hierarchy in material culture. In other words, the gratification provided by the lifestyle, or access to sufficient means to consume lavishly were not the primary reason for conspicuous consumption. It was preferably motivated by such concepts as honour, morality, piety, and political loyalty.[8] From another perspective, consumption

of luxuries was elementary for it provided a way to expend surplus, and neutralise the potential instability that the excess brought.[9] Belts of precious metals were functional objects, which structured social, political and religious relations through their materials, imagery, and the contexts of their use.[10]

FROM CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION TO ITS IMITATIONS

Understanding of the social significance of imitation requires a dynamic, diachronic perspective founded upon an appreciation of differences in contexts of both production and consumption, and upon an examination of the link between objects and techniques in the contexts where they are generated, distributed, and consumed, as well as considerations of the materiality of the objects involved. This complexity can be conceptually organised with the help of sociological and anthropological insights on consumption and social emulation.

The classic thinker of social emulation is Thorstein Veblen with his *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), where he presents a model on consumption which mimics the material culture of the higher classes. Veblen argues that humans have a fundamental tendency toward imitation. Consequently, individuals consider the way of life of those socially directly above them as ideal, and thus something worthy of imitation. In this manner patterns of consumption are propagated downward, providing the elite with disproportioned dominance over the lifestyles of the lower classes.[11] Despite the influence that Veblen has had in the study of conspicuous consumption, in the 1930s Norbert Elias criticised Veblen of basing his model on the 19th-century bourgeois society and its economic realities, whereas the pre- and early modern aristocratic society was based on a different, non-capitalist logic.[12] More recently, Colin Campbell argued that Veblen accentuates too much the human propensity to imitate the consumption pattern of others. Veblen does not acknowledge other kinds of desires and economic possibilities.[13]

Pierre Bourdieu offers a more recent approach to imitation. It is a model that situates material culture and social actors responsible for its production and transformation within a framework that combines social structure with agency. Bourdieu's idea of agency focuses on two interdependent concepts, habitus and field. Field means a competitive system of social relations, which functions according to its own specific logic or rules. Any field generates its own specific set of habitus. Habitus is a system of dispositions attuned to the game of the field, or the totality of a general disposition acquired through practical experience in the field. Habitus is not merely an intellectual capaci-

ty, but it constructs our bodily behaviour, our everyday movements and gestures and our appearance.

Habitus is a system of sameness and difference, defining and enforcing social identities. The relations of different habitus constitute the basis for lifestyles, they allow human acts and material culture become active in identity production. Clothes, jewellery and bodily appearance in general differentiate individuals, groups and situations. In order to detect and understand these social boundaries, one must look first at the ways in which things are created and used in daily practices. Hence the focus should be on the practices that lie behind the formation of subjects and their objective existence.[14]

If the analysis of material culture is conceived in this manner, imitation is related to 1) the similarity in terms of characteristic material attributes in objects, and 2) the similarity in the style of action, or performing a series of actions in a fashion that follows or imitates another series of actions. Imitation, revealed by similar stylistic traits in objects, is therefore not merely an instantaneous act of production, but rather a temporally extended process, which includes the practices of production, distribution and consumption. To say that something has been made in order to imitate some other product is not a conclusion, but a starting point in the analysis of these complex series of actions. Preferences in consumption and the creation of imitations are embedded in the process of constructing social identities. These habitual ways of doing things can be then carried over from one sphere of practice, or field, to other spheres and fields. This transferability of organizing principles across fields affects human bodies, houses, landscapes, dress and social hierarchy, giving them some structural cohesion.

The dialectics of field and habitus has been adopted by numerous archaeological studies. It remains a vital conceptual tool even for the present article, but it has also been questioned. The thrust of the critique is aimed at the role in which material culture is cast, or rather how the dialectic scheme does not allow acknowledging the effects of materiality in full. All interactions between humans and their surroundings become more or less reduced to social logic. As a consequence, the importance of social competition is overplayed, and the efficacy of things is seen inalienable from social relations. Consequently, no importance is given to the materials and material characteristics of things and how they affect human behaviour. From the perspective of materiality, however, bodies and objects are not merely reflecting dominant cultural concerns and social patterns. Taking account these effects of materiality lays emphasis on different embodied and experiential encounters with the world: how specific configurations of existence are disclosed through corporeal engagements.[15]

In spite of the critique, I will continue to use the concepts of field and habitus to organize the study of belt plates and their use as imitations. They do offer a very dynamic theory, which can be shaped according to the needs of archaeological approach. However, instead of over-interpreting the social emulation of luxuries, it might be worthwhile to remember Colin Campbell's warning that imitations do not automatically imply the presence of emulative ethos. Visual similarity can be based on a range of other motives as well.

Luxuries may be desired and appropriated for their own sake, for the material satisfaction they provide, as opposed to intentions to attain any prestige attached to them. Equally, a passion to dress fashionably may not be motivated by a drive for social equality, or the adoption of a certain lifestyle but merely rivalry in fashionableness.[16] Campbell points out the complexity of intentions, wishes and desires that may trigger social emulation. Importantly this does not lessen the fact that new luxuries, like any novel form of objects, reconfigure the behaviour and movements of their users, or in the case of dress accessories, their visual appearance. Materials, object forms and their tangible associations with different spheres of practice are crucial for the analysis of imitation.

Luxury is essentially a phenomenon with material and practical ramifications, and in the following, these will be examined through the case of 17th-century belts. I will try to accommodate the concepts of habitus and field within the material approach. This attempt unfolds as a two-fold analysis. The first part comprises the description of objects, materials and their movements with other entities. This sets up the basic structure for both material and social interactions. The second part reconstructs the fields and habitus in which the objects took part. I will argue that the belt plates were involved in two different but overlapping fields. The first one was the sphere of aristocratic consumption, while the second was the field constituted by agrarian communities and their festivities. Although engaged in both and conditioned by the historical concept of luxury, the belt plates nevertheless operated differently in the two fields, including the effect that their material characteristics had in the construction of habitus. Such a conclusion gives a basis to re-evaluate the division between proper luxuries and their inferior copies.

THE PREMODERN TRADITION OF USING BELTS

Belts as part of the garment appeared in Finland already in the prehistoric period. Several male graves from the 9th to 12th centuries have revealed leather belts adorned with rectangular mounts of metal. Buckles and rectangular

mounts from belts are known from several burial grounds.[17] The use of such objects continued to the Middle Ages. In Finland, the transition from the prehistoric to the medieval period is dated to the 13th century. Belts were worn on a long dress, placed tightly around the waist or wrapped loosely around the hip.[18] No items made entirely of precious metals are among the prehistoric belts, and not a single belt of such kind has survived from the Middle Ages.[19] Despite the lack of silver and gold belts, several medieval buckles of base metals have been discovered in archaeological investigations of parish churches and urban sites.[20]

In Finland, the first reference to belts of precious metals appear rather late in the mid-15th century. In his will dated in 1449, Henrik Klasson Dieken bequeaths his 'best gilded silver belt' to the altar of the Body of Christ in Turku Cathedral, and a large silver belt to his brother Arvid Klasson, and finally a small belt of silver to Knut of Vehmaa.[21] Henrik Klasson Dieken's wife Lucia Olofsdotter also lists belts in her three wills made in 1449, 1451 and 1455. Among other things she mentions a belt of silver of which a half was to be given to the altar of the Three Kings, and the other half to the altar of the Virgin Mary.[22]

As in the couple's wills, most of the written references to the belts of precious metals mention one to three silver objects, which sometimes are described as gilded. Between 1449 and 1600, there are altogether over 40 belts mentioned in written sources with overwhelming majority dating to the latter part of the 16th century. In several occasions belts are part of someone's property or inventory,[23] but the number of belts mentioned is manifold in the inventories of the high aristocracy in the latter part of the 16th century.

Fig. 2. Belt with gilded silver plates is part of the Kaitainen farm patrimony (NM Hist. inv. no. 5440:2). Photo: Visa Immonen.

In 1582, an inventory was drafted after Filippa Eriksdotter Fleming's (1532–1578) death. It lists seven belts, one made of gold and fitted with nine scent buttons and pearls, while another gilded belt had 55 mounts and red velvet.[24] Even more belts, altogether eighteen, are in the inventories of Duke John's and his wife Catherine Jagellon's possessions in Turku Castle in 1563.[25] The inventory of Karin Hansdotter (1539–1596), the royal mistress of King John III, includes a dozen belts. One large silver belt has plates with 'eight angel heads and small roses'.[26] Not surprisingly, according to Olaus Magnus writing in 1555, it was common for both men and women to wear belts chased of silver and gold,[27] and the 16th-century records reveal that such objects were also imported to the country.[28]

THE 17TH-CENTURY BELTS OF PRECIOUS METALS

In Finland, the surviving 17th-century metal belts are all of the same type. They comprise a strip of leather onto which rectangular metal plates are placed next to another so tightly that they cover the whole belt. The plates partly overlap each other forming a continuous but supple outer structure.[29] Despite their structural similarity the belts can be divided into three groups on the basis of their raw material.

The first group comprises the items of precious metals. In 1909, Mikael Österman, the farmer of the Kaitainen estate in tail, deposited a number of silver artefacts to museum collections, including a belt of gilded silver (Fig. 2). They had been in the Österman family as heirlooms since the 18th century. According to the family's oral history, Johan Österman, born in Taivassalo, bought the Kaitainen estate in 1763, and gained his fortune when fishing in Stockholm. His net got caught on a chest which Österman lifted up and opened to find it full of precious artefacts. During his lifetime, he owned several masonry houses in Stockholm. In Österman's wills of 1760 and 1761, he mentions the artefacts deposited into the museum collections.[30]

The belt of Kaitainen comprises 13 slightly curving plates of gilded silver, a belt buckle and its counterpart attached to a leather belt. Also a medal to commemorate the victory of the Swedes in 1708 has been connected to the buckle with a silver chain. The medal and perhaps also the present leather belt are later additions, but the rest of the metal parts are of earlier date. On the basis of early modern written sources, it was a common custom to carry purses, keys, knives, daggers, rosaries and spoons attached to the belt.[31]

Each of the plates in the Kaitainen belt has been cast in the same mould, and they present identical Renaissance motifs surrounded by Moresque ornaments. The face of a putto has been placed in the centre of the plate. The

Fig. 3. Piece of a gilded silver belt found as part of a hoard in the Hanni Forest, Kannus in 2003 (NM Hist. inv. nos. 2004025a–m; 2011040a–t). The belt is 2.5 cm in height. The width of the plates is c. 5 cm. In addition to the belt fragments, the treasure had 64 silver coins, of which the oldest was from 1666, and the youngest from 1713. Photo: National Museum of Finland / Conservation Laboratory.

face is surrounded by the arches of a cartouche. Another two putti sit outside the cartouche leaning on it. One end of the plate has the figure of the Virgin Mary holding the Infant Christ. The standing figure is higher than the rectangular plate. Raimo Fagerström points out that the ornamentation has strong influences from the model drawings of Virgilius Solis (1514–1562).[32] The plates also resemble the description of Karin Hansdotter's belt with angel heads and roses.[33]

The three plates from a belt in the Turku Museum Centre were added to the collections in the late 19th century without any further provenance information.[34] The pieces nevertheless are very likely of a Finnish origin. Although the plates do not have the same cartouche motif as the plates on the Kaitainen belt, they share the basic scheme of ornamentation. Again, there is the face of a putto in the middle. It is flanked by two putti, but this time the symmetrical pair is standing and playing flutes. The three putti figures are embedded into Moresque ornamentation. The tall figure on the other end of the plate belongs to a female, but this time she seems half-naked and without a child, thus representing a caryatid.

In 2003, a prospector discovered a dispersed hoard from Kannus in Central Ostrobothnia. It consisted of silver coins and a fragmented half of a gild-

ed silver belt (Fig. 3). In the centre of each plates, there is a place for a collet. Of the five plates, three have their collets intact, and only two of them retain a decorative piece of glass, or rather two pieces of glass with a layer of pigment in between. On both sides, the collet is surrounded by a standing naked boy who holds his one hand on the collet, and the other on a scallop-shell-like ornament. In addition to the larger plates, there survives also six square-shaped pieces. Each of them is decorated with symmetrically positioned volutes and other Renaissance ornaments. Between two rectangular plates, there are two small, vertical plates–1 cm in width–with a human face, and between them a square-shaped plate decorated with another face. The face is surrounded by symmetrically organised arches and volutes. Lastly there are two larger pieces forming the buckle. All the plates are linked together with pairs of small rings attached through small holes in the edges of the plates.[35]

The buckle piece of the belt has a hallmark depicting the initials HW. In the 17th-century written sources, there are three goldsmiths with the same initials. Hans Wichman is mentioned as a goldsmith in Porvoo only once in 1623,[36] while Hans Jönsson Wallman was a master in Vaasa in 1684–1689,[37] and Hartwig Knutsson Welligh worked in Turku in 1624–1640.[38] Identifying the owner of the initials is problematic, but Hans Wichman remains a rather unlikely candidate, because next to nothing of him is known. Moreover, Porvoo is a rather distant from the place of discovery compared with Vaasa where Hans Jönsson Wallman worked. His active period, however, appears too late considering the heavy Renaissance characteristics of the belt. Hence it seems feasible that the master who made the object was Hartwig Knutsson Welligh.

The coins of the hoard suggest that the treasure was deposited during the infamous Great Wrath (1713–1721) when Russia invaded Finland. In the minutes of the district court of Suur-Lohtaja, to which Kannus belonged, there is a reference to Matti Tuomaanpoika Hanni, the owner of the Hanni estate. He was seized and killed by the Russian soldiers in 1714. Matti had, however, hidden the family treasure before the arrival of the Russians. The soldiers also captured his son Matti Matinpoika and took him to Russia. When Matti Matinpoika was finally able to return, he had a quarrel with his uncle Iisakki Matinpoika. Matti Matinpoika accused him of stealing the son's share of the hoard, including silver coins and a belt.[39]

On the basis of Scandinavian and Baltic parallels, the Finnish belts of silver can be dated broadly to the late 16th century and the 17th century.[40] More precise dating is trickier, but the Kaitainen piece and the belt plates of the Turku Museum Centre with their more ordered Renaissance ornamentations appear stylistically older than the belt fragments from Kannus. The Kaitain-

en and Turku belts might date to around 1600. The decoration on the Kannus belt is visually more dynamic with a stronger Baroque flavour. Hartwig Knutsson Welligh as the likely producer also supports a dating to the earlier part of the 17th century.

VERSIONS IN BASE METALS, AND THEIR CASTING MOULDS

The popularity of the plate belt is revealed by the existence of vernacular imitations, and stone moulds carved for their casting. In visual terms, the versions made in pressed copper plate bare the closest similarity with the belts of precious metals. One such belt plate was unearthed in the excavations of the parsonage of Kökar Island. It has also a thematic association with the silver ones.[41] The fragment is a counterpart for a buckle. The pressed ornament depicts a plum putto holding two oak-leaves in his hands. The putto is accompanied by an oval geometrical motif surrounded by curling volutes. These Renaissance and Baroque motifs are not identical with the other contemporary belts in Finland, but clearly the item belongs to the same assemblage. Another similar belt plate of copper was discovered by a metal detectorist in the Turku region in South-Western Finland, but the piece has not been deposited into museum collections.[42]

In contrast to copper plate belts, the plates cast in pewter are stylistically rather distant from their paragons. Until a few years ago, only one pewter plate was known, discovered during the archaeological excavations of Tyrvää Church in present-day Sastamala, Central Finland, in 1964–1965 (Fig. 4). In the centre, the plate has a depiction of a human face flanked by a small standing human figure. One edge of the plate is furnished with a standing human figure which resembles a skeleton. The figurative motifs are set on a net-like background, while friezes with diagonal lines are placed on the lower and upper edge of the plate.[43]

Fig. 4. Plate of base metals used in a belt was found in the excavations of Tyrvää Church in 1964–1965 (NM Hist. inv. no. 65078:25). Photo: Visa Immonen.

In recent years amateur metal detectorists have significantly increased the number of pewter and copper objects. Not far away from Tyrvää, a fragment of a belt plate was found in Janakkala in 2008 (Fig. 5). It appears to have the depictions of two standing human figures.[44] Another similar fragment was found at the Nuor-

italo farm in Janakkala in 2012. The ornamentation is difficult to decipher, but it seems to have two human figures surrounded by geometrical motifs.[45] In 2014, the remains of a belt plate of pewter were discovered in Laukko Manor in Vesilahti, more or less between Janakkala and Sastamala. The fragment is ornamented with a frieze of triangles following the edges, and in the middle, there are letters, numbers or simply geometric shapes around an oval bulge. The piece is shorter and younger than the other fragments, dating perhaps to the late 17th century or the 18th century.[46]

Fig. 5. Fragment of a belt plate of pewter found in Janakkala in 2008 (NM inv. no. 39452). Photo: Visa Immonen.

Fig. 6. Fragment of a belt plate of pewter found in Salo in 2013. Photo: Visa Immonen.

Although the locations of discovery in Tyrvää, Janakkala, and Vesilahti are in Central Finland, similar belt plates are also known from South-Western Finland. One of them was found in Salo in 2013 (Fig. 6). The fragment has the depiction of a standing human figure with her or his hands forming curving arches. The figure is possibly flanked by another smaller human figure.[47]

In addition to the belt plates of pewter, several stone moulds for casting such objects have survived. The patterns on the moulds are highly stylized and transformed versions of the Renaissance and Baroque motifs used on the belt plates of precious metals. Three such moulds have been attested in Hattula, Hausjärvi and Janakkala in Central Finland (Fig. 7),[48] but there is also one from South-Western Finland. The latter one is a mould of steatite found in the village of Vappari, Parainen, in the South-Western archipelago (Fig. 8). The mould has several patterns for rectangular belt plates.[49] Although it is conceivable that the stone has been part of a ship's ballast and has just been dumped on the shore, the

discovery of similar belt plates in the region supports the idea that the mould was actually used in Parainen.

The stone moulds with patterns for belt plates constitute only a small fraction of all early modern moulds. With some exceptions found in towns, the distribution of such moulds is concentrated in the rural landscape. They seem to reflect local domestic handicrafts, not organized or specialized production. However, as such it is impossible to distinguish the equipment used by rural craftsmen from the tools of domestic metalworking. The rural stone moulds were used in local and casual production of pewter and lead objects. Soldiers, farmers, women and children could have cast such artefacts as part of their daily or weekly routines.[50]

The patterns appearing on moulds and finished pieces are not identical between themselves, or with the plates of precious metals. Nonetheless, there are marked similarities in the decorations. Firstly, there are standing human figures depicted with simple lines which make the figures look like skeletons. Some of these figures are so tall that they continue over the plate's upper edge, reminding of the standing female figures at the end of silver plates. Secondly, some pewter versions have depictions of a large human face in the middle, a feature also appearing in their more valuable models. Thirdly, the remaining space is filled with ambiguous lines, curves and crosses distantly echoing the Renaissance and Baroque motifs, and fourthly, a frieze of triangles, or a series of lines decorate the upper and lower edges of the plate. Although the gilded silver plates do not have such friezes, their edges are nonetheless profiled. Hence it is highly probable that the belts of valuable materials have indeed provided visual models for the ones cast in inexpensive metals.

BELTS AND PRACTICES

The position of belts in the 17th-century system of consumption can be approached in two ways. The first is the choice of raw material, and the distinction between precious and base metals. Jonas N. Nordin argues that silver had an emblematic status as power, wealth and prosperity in the 17th century. At the same time as the colonial system brought vast amounts of the metal into Europe, silver had also a prominent place in the apparel and appearance of the royalty. The precious material was the obsession of the mercantilist theory of economy. Furthermore, since providence and prosperity were conjoined in the era of Lutheran dogmatism, showing a splendid, silver-garnished but still proper appearance of one-self was vital, even in ecclesiastical spaces.[51]

Because Nordin speaks only of silver, he does not note the spectrum of metals, and how that was interlinked with the social hierarchy. If silver had a strong association with the aristocracy, copper and pewter were the metals of the lower estates, copper linked with burghers and pewter with farmers. Despite of this hierarchy of metals, where gold and silver had a close affinity with the elite, it is important to remember that other social classes had access to precious metals as well. In fact, both Finnish belts of precious metals with sufficient provenance information are from agrarian surroundings, not from the circle of elite consumers. Therefore it seems that farmers, their hirelings, and other low-status people living on the countryside were the consumers of the 17th-century belts and belt fragments known from Finland.

Fig. 7. Stone mould found as a stray find in Hausjärvi in the province of Kanta-Häme. The mould is 6.4 cm in length, 4.1 cm in width and 1.3 cm in thickness. The size of the pattern is 6.4 x 4.1 cm (NM Ethn. inv. no. 8064). Photo: Visa Immonen.

Fig. 8. Stone mould of steatite found in the village of Vappari, Parainen, in the South-Western archipelago. The mould is of a rather irregular shape, but approximately 6.3 x 4.8 cm in size. It has several patterns for rectangular belt plates (NM Hist. inv. no. 67011). Photo: Visa Immonen.

The Kaitainen and Kannus belts were part of farmer inheritances into which family surplus were accumulated. The object group had a similar function among the Sámi. In her study on Sámi silver, Phebe Fjellström divides belts into types of which the third is based on curving plate belts with Renaissance ornamentation. Unlike the other types, however, it did not live very long among the object types used by the Sámi. She traces the models of these belts to the 16th- and 17th-century Nordic upper-class dress accessories, and points out that some of the surviving belts are from Sámi family hoards.[52]

Another cue for the use of gilded silver plate belts is bridal jewellery known from Sweden. Swedish parish churches commonly had such belts in

their inventories, some of them surviving to the present day. These pieces were reserved for the use of brides during wedding celebrations. In some places, the tradition of wearing heavy bridal jewellery lived on till the 20th century.[53] This particular use of valuable belts did not overlap with the realm of the high elite, but was related to religious ceremonies and agrarian life in the countryside. Nonetheless, the stylistic models for the object group were adopted from the aristocratic lifestyles, and the acknowledged sphere of luxuries.

The belts and their vernacular copies were not the only novelty related to luxury consumption at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. Another was the introduction of sumptuary laws. Such legislation is often seen as typically medieval, but that was not the case in Sweden.[54] In 1546 Gustavus Vasa warned the inhabitants of Stockholm against excessive clothing, but the first actual sumptuary laws were not ratified until the 1580s during the reign of John III. In 1583, 1585 and 1589 the lavish dressing of burgher women was forbidden because it was considered harmful for the state's economy. John III's orders mainly dealt with the types of textiles used in clothes.[55] The same focus on clothing remained in sumptuary legislation throughout the 17th century, although the range of regulated phenomena expanded gradually. In the 1664 law, burghers and churchmen were divided according to the social classes, and their dress was regulated. It was not, however, until the 18th century that the legislation begun to control all social classes, including the farmers.[56] The legislation concentrated on strengthening the division between the aristocracy and the urban burghers.

There is a connection between the imitations of luxury objects, and the establishment of sumptuary legislation. They both correlate with the increasing sensitivity to social rank and its material expressions in the 17th century. The imposition of sumptuary legislation in the Swedish realm was partly a state-machinated attempt to control the social hierarchy, or rather to solidify and clarify the material articulation of ranks as well as to maintain tangible differences between individuals. In addition to the belts, also signet rings of the Sarvas type were pieces of jewellery copied by the lower-class consumers from an aristocratic field.[57] A similar symptom is the beginning of the local production of stove-tiles, another form of luxury consumption, in the latter part of the 16th century.[58] Comparable changes seem to have happened in the local pottery production as well,[59] although German stoneware still continued to be used after the mid-16th century, and faïence was introduced into Finland in the earlier part of the 17th century.[60]

These more or less parallel developments–the establishment of sumptuary legislation, and the increasing manufacturing of imitations–are part of the

transition to the modern system of production and consumption, or the so-called Age of Transition which lasted from around 1400/1450 to 1600/1650.[61] The transformations had a pivotal role in the emergence of the modern forms of capitalism and worldview.[62] In effect, although the use of belts had a history going back to the prehistoric period, and their functioning as items of luxury consumption was also well-established before the 17th century, the use of belts of gilded silver and their imitations became increasingly socially conditioned phenomenon during the early modern period. Yet they did not operate solely in the realm of social status, and the evolving patterns of modern consumption.

IMITATION AS ENGAGEMENT

Maxine Berg stresses that definitions of luxury goods are always historical and moulded by the consuming community and individuals,[63] and the same argument can be extended to the imitations of luxuries. The appropriations of luxuries, such as belts, signet rings and ceramics of lower value, can be interpreted as expressions of the emergence of a class society and its sensitivity to social differences.

Although the belt plates of pewter and lead were produced under the influence of the luxury products, it remains questionable how much of the effectiveness of the originals they could have appropriated, because the difference between the imitated pieces and the imitations is so clear. However, if mere visual appearance is abandoned in the favour of the material practices in which objects were involved, perhaps the ocular difference of the artefacts was, in fact, less significant than the use which they implied. The belts, chains and other dress accessories visually structured the body and affected the movements and conduct of the wearer even if their workmanship was crude. Despite the unrefined outcome, these imitations must to some extent have been successful in utilizing technologies of forming social recognition in terms of luxury. The invention of new luxuries and imitating them was not only a creation of new artefacts but essentially required reshaping and redefining the conduct and habitual practices of their users.

The relationship between conspicuous consumption and copying is further complicated by the use of precious and base metals in the same social field, i.e. among the agrarian populations. Could the same consumer own both valuable and inexpensive belts, or did the distinction between metals emphasise differences between well-off landowners and others? Whatever the case was with the belts of precious metals, the producers of their clumsy im-

itations were members of the user's own household, or the local community. This forged a circumscribed relationship between the producer and consumer, unlike the luxurious pieces commissioned from professional goldsmiths.

Silver was in close proximity with the aristocracy and power, but this association was not necessarily the primary reason for farmers to own or copy valuable belts. One of the Finnish belt plates of pewter is from Tyrvää Church, but more importantly, in the Kingdom of Sweden, the 17th-century belts of gilded silver appear frequently among the bridal jewellery deposited into churches. They were lent in appropriate occasions to brides. Such a practice suggests that the precious metals shared a quality with ecclesiastical festivities and piety. Gold and silver were in the highest position in the hierarchy of metals, thus being the metals worthy of the Lord and his house. Moreover, they were most suitable materials to store wealth accumulated to farmer families, as suggested by the Kaitainen and Kannus belts as well as the Sámi examples. In sum, the belt plates of precious metals and their imitations in base metals operated differently in the lives of the agrarian communities in comparison with the aristocracy and their internationally attuned field of life.

In the present article, I have analysed the material in two phases. Firstly, I have described the objects, and the differences in their raw materials. This has helped to understand the differences between belts of precious and base metals in terms of their production, producers and appearance. There are apparent stylistic and material similarities that unite luxurious belts with their imitations in copper and pewter. The connection was based on ostentatious consumption. This secured or increased social visibility and certain facets of identity through material culture. Imitating the structure and ornamentation of silver belts on pewter was an expression of material engagement with the practices of luxurious life, affecting the construction of the users' habitus.

Although the imitations shaped the appearance and conduct of the wearer in the same way as their paragons, the makers of imitations were rather unconcerned with following the Renaissance and Baroque style characteristics in detail. The belts were not manifestations of the refined and cosmopolitan taste of the owner like the jewellery worn by the aristocracy. The importance of copying lay elsewhere, and the circumstances can be interpreted in terms of field and habitus.

Despite the material similarities, the belts, even of the same raw material, operated in two different social and material fields, depending on whether they were owned by an aristocrat, or a farmer. The situation was emphasised by the sumptuary legislation which focused on distinguishing the consumption of the urban burghers from the aristocracy. It left farmers outside the equation until the 18th century. This oversight was probably due to the fact

that the aristocracy and the farmer community did not compete in the same field. Unlike the aristocratic counterparts, the agrarian belts allowed amassing surplus, and formed part of the performance in wedding festivities and other church events. In this manner, the belts participated in constructing a certain kind of farmer habitus. This habitus was structured by the need to engage with the local community in general, and the sphere of ecclesiastical celebration in particular.

From the perspective of belts, there existed two partly divided, partly overlapping fields: the field of aristocratic consumption provided the material definition of luxury, which was then transferred to and adapted by the agrarian communities. The use and significance of the belts was, however, different in the latter field. Such a conclusion combines the analysis of similarities in objects with the idea that the study of material culture requires the analysis of differences in the styles of action. They are conditioned by the materiality of objects, the field of action, and the habitus they compose. Instead of arguing for the superficial imitation of high-status luxury items in the versions of base metals, I argue that this was a process thoroughly embedded in the agrarian social field and the construction of its habitus.

NOTES

1 The terminology used on imitations in material culture varies. It can be referred to with such terms as 'trickle down', 'emulation', 'copy', 'mimicry', etc. All these concepts come with their own implications and theoretical contexts. See e.g. Miller 1987; Conkey & Hastorf 1990; Tilley 1999; Apel 2001; Jones 2008; Daloz 2010; Hodder 2012.

2 Immonen 2009a.

3 Fagerström 1989, 26.

4 Rosén 2004, 92–95; Nurmi 2005, 28–29; 2011, 74–77.

5 Revera 1984; Englund 1989; Stadin 2006; Ilmakunnas 2009, 15.

6 Revera 1984.

7 Ilmakunnas 2009, 337–339.

8 Smith 2002, 8–9; Lagerstam 2007; 2012; Ilmakunnas 2009, 23.

9 Braudel 1967, 134–136; Revera 1984, 120–121.

10 Belozerskaya 2005, 2, 3, 87.

11 Veblen 1899.

12 Elias 2006.

13 Campbell 1995.

14 Bourdieu 1977; 1984.

15 Fowler 2010; Olsen 2010.

16 Campbell 1993, 40–41; see also Berry 1994, 31.

17 Kivikoski 1961, 241–242; 1973, 145–146 Figs. 1195–1201; Riikonen 1999, *passim*.

18 Fagerström 1989, 24; see e.g. NM Hist. inv. no. 34127:11; Sjölund 2000, 95–96; Jäkärä 2003, 31.

19 Fingerlin 1971 is the fundamental work on medieval belts.

20 E.g. Dreijer 1983, 358, 360; Hiekkanen 1988, 47–48; Gustavsson 1997, 21.

21 FMU 2817; see also FMU 2908; 2918.

22 FMU 2818; 2886; 2970.

23 FMU 3967; 4139; 4264; 4358; 5812; 6557; 6559; BFH 3:436; 3:595; 4:206; 4:337; 5:443; STb N2:2, 239; N2:4, 597; N2:5, 322–324; N2:6, 305, 317, 465, 488, 501; Hausen 1934, 58 note 2.

24 BFH 5:308.

25 Lösegendom 9, 18, 32.

26 Pylkkänen 1956, 300–301.

27 Olaus Magnus 2:23, 3:94.

28 Grotenfelt 1887, 159.

29 BFH 5:308; 5:348; 5:443; Lösegendom 9, 18, 32; Pylkkänen 1956, 302; Fagerström 1989, 25–26.

30 Immonen 2009b, Cat. 17:1.

31 Fingerlin 1971; Fagerström 1989, 24–25.

32 Fagerström 1989, 25.

33 Pylkkänen 1956, 301.

34 Immonen 2009b, Cat. 17:2.

35 NM Hist. inv. nos. 2004025a–m; 2011040a–t.

36 Borg 1935, 132.

37 Borg 1935, 414–415.

38 Borg 1935, 43.

39 Luukko 1957, 639; Sydänmetsä 2006.

40 Nordiska Museet inv. nos. 119186–119187; 219200; Wistrand 1907, 91 Fig. 111; Olrik 1909, 129; Lagercranz 1952, 92 Figs. 126–127; Bengtsson 1995, 7, 135 nos. 232–233; Graudonis 2003, Table 3 no. 18, Table 45 no. 4.

41 Immonen 2009b, Cat. 17:3.

42 <http://www.aarremaanalla.com/foorumi/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=12386>

43 Immonen 2009b, Cat. 17:4.

44 <http://www.aarremaanalla.com/foorumi/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=16036>

45 NM inv. no. 39452.

46 E-mail from Liisa Lagerstam to the author, 14 April 2014; e-mail from Mika Sarkkinen to the author, 15 April 2014.

47 <http://www.aarremaanalla.com/foorumi/viewtopic.php?t=9575>; see also <http://www.aarremaanalla.com/foorumi/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=12079>

48 Meinander 1948.

49 NM Hist. inv. no. 67011; Immonen 2009a, 81, 83.

50 Rydbeck 1947, Figs. 1–2; Oldeberg 1963, Figs. 206–211; Sarkkinen 1998, 143.

51 Nordin 2010; 2012.

52 Fjellström 1962a, 107, 109, 125–127; 1962b, 25.

53 Hazelius-Berg 1952, 117; Lagercranz 1952, 92 Fig. 126; Nylén 1952, 127–130, 134–141.

54 Nielsen 1966.

55 Pylkkänen 1956, 369–373.

56 Halila 1985; Vainio-Korhonen 1998, 14; Lehtinen & Sihvo 2005, 7–10.

57 Immonen 2009a, 307.

58 Majantie 2003, 188–191.

59 Pihlman 1995, 207–209; Tulkki 2003, 208–209.

60 Hyvönen 1983, 30–36; Pihlman 1995, 227–228; Hartikka 2015.

61 Gaimster & Stamper 1997; Haggrén 2009.

62 Sombart 1967.

63 Berg 2005, 31.

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