



A find of Bronze Age pottery at Soe inn in Võrumaa

Heiki Valk

Tartu Ülikool, Ajaloo ja arheoloogia instituut, arheoloogia osakond (University of Tartu, Institute of History and Archaeology), Jakobi 2, Tartu 51005, Estonia; heiki.valk@ut.ee

During the excavations of an Iron Age and medieval cemetery opposite Soe inn in the former Vagula, present-day Järvere village in Urveste parish, Võru County¹ fragments of a hand-made clay vessel, referring to a bigger assemblage, were accidentally found by Andres Vindi (University of Tartu) in the profile of a renewed road ditch. The find spot is located 50 m WNW of the western end of the Soe inn building, south of the road which links the Võru–Viljandi road via Osula, Kärgula and Kooraste with Otepää (see map on p. 85, this volume; Fig. 1). The sherds lay in the depth of 35–40 cm, being covered by a *ca.* 20 cm thick layer of disturbed soil, which contained some pottery and dish fragments from the 19th or 20th century. The soil was covered by an overlaying, *ca.* 15 cm thick fill of limestone gravel – remains from a late road construction or originating from a former parking site in front of the adjacent small shed – and by a thin layer of turf on top of it.

When uncovered from the top, the sherds (TÜ 2672) appeared to lay in the area measuring up to 85 × 30–40 cm in two layers (Fig. 2), inner side turned upwards. This fact enables to interpret the find as discarded waste – in case the vessel had broken on the spot the outer surfaces would have faced both upwards and downwards. Evidently, bigger



Fig. 1. Bronze Age pottery assemblage in the profile of a road ditch near Soe inn.

Jn 1. Pronksiaegse keraamika leid Soe kõrtsi juures maanteekraavi profiilis.

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Fig. 2. Bronze Age pottery assemblage after cleansing in situ.

Jn 2. Pronksiaegsed savinõukillud pärast välja puhastamist in situ.

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¹ For survey about these excavations see this volume, p. 85ff.



Fig. 3. Lifting the block by using a saw, a metal sheet and food film.

Jn 3. Monoliidi võtmine sae, plekitüki ja toidukile abil.

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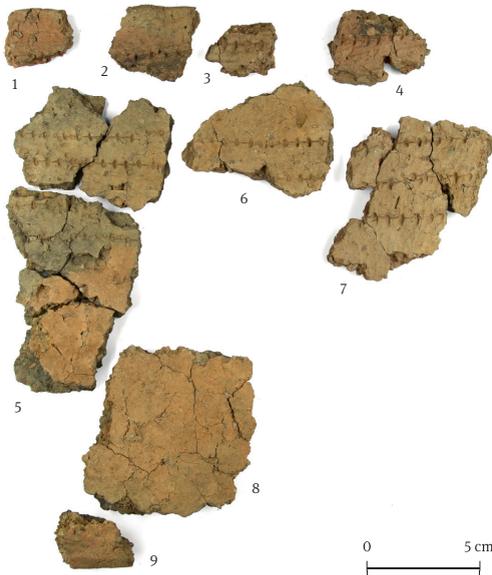


Fig. 4. Re-constructed side of a clay vessel.

Jn 4. Savinõu rekonstrueeritud külg.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

fragments of vessels had been buried in a shallow depression which had saved the assemblage from disintegration by ploughing. The ploughshare had, however, partly touched the sherds, removing some of them from their original location – this seems to have been the reason for the oblong shape of the assemblage. As only two edge fragments (Fig. 4: 1, 2) were found, both from the ditch profile, the upper part of the vessel(s) had been removed by the earth moving machine renewing the ditch. The number of bottom fragments was very low as well.

The sherds were picked up as blocks. Firstly, the whole assemblage was separated from the ground from its back side by a narrow trench. Then sherds together with ca. 15 cm of soil under them were separated from the underlying ground by horizontal sawing whereby a thin metal sheet of suitable size was pressed under the saw. During the sawing process (Fig. 3), smaller blocks gradually broke out from the whole assemblage. When a crack had appeared, the block was removed from the rest together with the metal sheet under it. The removed part was densely wrapped into food film – firstly from the sides, to avoid dropping, then also around it, upside down. These packages, supported by underlying metal sheets, were set into bigger boxes for further transportation to the laboratory. Before removal, a scheme about the spatial relations of the blocks regarding each other was drawn and connections between different blocks were marked on their packages.

After opening the blocks in the archaeological laboratory of the University of Tartu by Kristiina Paavel and Andres Vindi and further cleaning, material appeared to be in a worse condition than expected. Because of the poor heating, many of the sherds had got disintegrated and had lost their edges. It also appeared that the sherds were not enough to re-construct a whole pot. However, it could be established that the assemblage

contained remains of a vessel which had been at least 25 cm high, probably higher. Its maximal diameter was estimated to have been *ca.* 30 cm.

The fragments enable to present an approximate survey of one side of the vessel (Fig. 4: 1–3, 5–9). The pot-like vessel had an upright edge and a flat bottom. Because of uneven stage of firing, its colour varied strongly. The upper part was light brown on both sides, the inner side was mostly black. The lower surfaces of the outer part were partly dark grey, partly with pinkish hue. Differently from the well-burnt upper part, the outer surface of the lower part had partly disintegrated into soft clay rubble. The clay mass contained sand and fine stone rubble with the diameter of particles stretching up to 4–5 mm.

The pot was decorated with horizontal rows of notches – impressions of cord, twisted around a stick (Fig. 4). The uppermost two rows at least were just below the rim (Fig. 4: 2, 3, 4). On the side of the vessel at least three or four rows of similar notches (Fig. 4: 5–7). In addition, the pot was decorated with some triangular V-shaped notches, probably also in horizontal rows (Fig. 4: 5, 6). Such impressions could be observed both above and below the main group of rows of the notches. The lower part of the pot, probably a half or more (Fig. 4: 5, 8–9), was not decorated, but its rather even surfaces had weak traces of uneven smoothing. The thickness of its walls was 7–8 mm, both in the upper and lower part.

The fact that several fragments did not fit the pattern of the re-constructed side of the pot makes it possible to suggest that the remains did not originate from a single vessel. Some sherds were of a coarser consistence, became more easily fragmented and contained bigger stone rubble (e.g. Fig. 5: 1–3; Fig. 6: 1–3). A sherd was decorated with crossing rows of notches (Fig. 5: 5). There were unornamented sherds with somewhat stronger striation (Fig. 5: 4) and sherds with surface covered by different kind of impressions whereby the lower, unornamented part of that pot was at least 14 cm high, having 12–13 mm thick walls (Fig. 6: 4–5). A rim fragment was decorated with a semi-penetrating pit (Fig. 4: 4) – the way of ornamentation which could not be observed on the reconstructed side fragment (Fig. 4).

The big pots were evidently made by using clay band technology. The assemblage contained also several small pieces of burnt clay with a T-shaped cross section (Fig. 7: 1–5), which seemed to have been bedaubed between the clay bands to fill and cover grooves between them. The width of such pieces of fill stretched up to 25 mm.

The coarse character of Soe pottery indicates its origin from the Bronze Age and/or

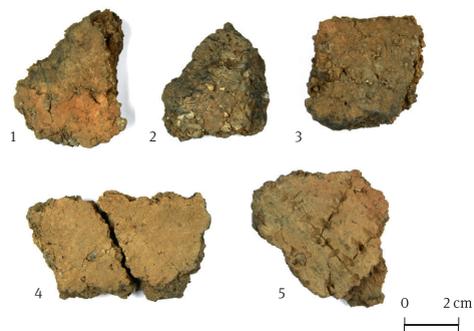


Fig. 5. Pottery fragments from the Soe assemblage.

Jn 5. Savinõukilde Soe leiukogumist.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

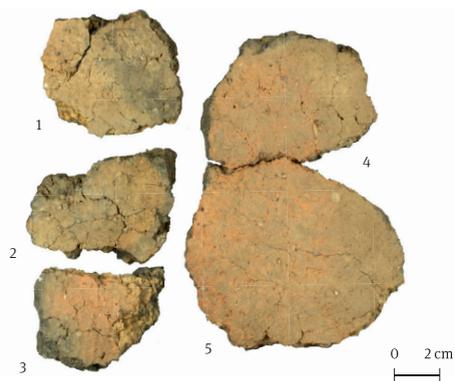


Fig. 6. Pottery fragments from the Soe assemblage.

Jn 6. Savinõukilde Soe leiukogumist.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

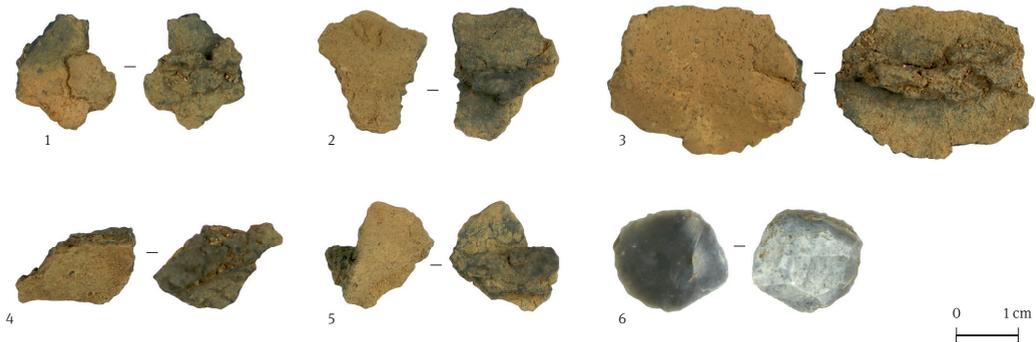


Fig. 7. Fragments of daubs between clay bands (1–5) and a flint scraper (6).

Jn 7. Savilintide vahetäite fragmendid (1–5) ja tulekiviköövits (6).

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

Early Iron Age. The closest parallels to it can be found from that time from Volkhov and Asva Ware.² Volkhov pottery was spread in north-western Russia in the surroundings of the Volkhov River and Lake Ilmen, as well as in Karelia in 900–500 BC, maybe also in the 4th and 3rd cc. BC (Jushkova 2011, 53–65, 116; figs. 50–88; Lang 2018, 140–141). Asva Ware dates from the 9th/8th to the 6th century BC and its finds are known from different parts of Estonia and eastern Latvia (Lang 2018, 131–132). Although Soe pottery stands close both to Asva and Volkhov Ware, it somewhat differs from both of them – the ornamented zone is wider than in the case of Asva pottery, but Volkhov type vessels are fully ornamented – and has no exact parallels among formerly known pottery traditions.

The Soe find has provided valuable contribution to the knowledge of Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age pottery traditions in Estonia, especially in the yet most poorly known south-eastern region of the country. While in the coastal areas they are represented by Lügānuse, Asva and Ilmandu³ (Lang 2018, 131–136) Ware styles, information from south-eastern Estonia, except for the find places at the Emajõgi River, has been most scanty. Only some finds of Asva Ware have reached the archaeological collections (Lang 2018, 132) and there are also finds of Lubāna Ware (Lang 2018, 129–130), the main concentration area of which lies in eastern Latvia, around Lake Lubāna.

The profile of the ditch makes it possible to connect the Soe find with a weak occupation layer, the upper part of which has fully been disturbed by ploughing: a 3–4 cm thick layer of somewhat darker soil under the sherds just above intact virgin clayish loam could be distinguished, especially on the photos. With this occupation layer also a scraper of grey imported Cretaceous flint⁴ (Fig. 7: 6) may relate, found in the ditch profile in disturbed soil *ca.* 3 metres west of the pottery assemblage. Evidently, most of the weak occupation layer has been destroyed/disturbed by ploughing, and maybe also with some bulldozer work during the road construction. However, during the age of agricultural machines the narrow, *ca.* 10–15 m wide land strip between the road and the slope with an Iron Age and medieval cemetery on top of its embank has not been cultivated which had saved the

² The author's attention was drawn to this, as well as to the differences of Soe pottery from Asva and Volkhov pottery by prof. Valter Lang (TÜ).

³ The southernmost finds of Ilmandu type pottery from Estonia are from Alatskivi (west of Lake Peipsi), but in Latvia it occurs on several sites, e.g. Brikulī, Kļāņģukalns, Mūkukalns, Madalāni.

⁴ Identified by Kristiina Johanson (TÜ).

pottery assemblage from disintegration. Occupation layers may formerly have existed also on the northern side of the road, but as that area has been used for land cultivation also in the Soviet time and later, the thin layer has fully been disturbed by long-term tractor ploughing, stretching until the depth of 25–28 cm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PRONKSIAEGNE KERAAMIKA SOE KÕRTSI LÄHEDALT

Heiki Valk

Ajaloolise Vagula küla läheduses asuva, praegu Järvere küla piirese arvatud Soe kõrtsi vastas oleva külakalmistu kaevamiste ajal paljandusid kõrtsi lääneotsast u 50 m lääne pool, Võru–Viljandi maanteelt Osula, Kärgula ja Kooraste kaudu Otepäälle viiva tee lõunaküljel värskest uuendatud maanteekraavi profiilis savinõukillud (jn 1), mis viitasid suuremale leiukogumile kraaviseinas. Pärast väljapuhastamist leidis maapinnast 35–40 cm sügavusel olevaid kilde 85 × 30–40 cm suurusel alal (jn 2). Kildude peal oli u 20 cm paksune kas kündmise või muude töödega segatud, 19.–20. sajandi leide sisaldav mullakiht, millele oli toodud u 15 cm paekillustikku. Kündmisel oli ader riivanud ka killukogumit ja seda maa sees laiali tõmmanud.

Savinõukillud võeti üles monoliitidena, koos ümbritseva pinnasega, et need laboris välja puhastada. Killud lõigati koos u 15 cm paksuse mullapadjaga alt lahti, surudes saagimise ajal nende alla sobiva suurusega plekitükid (jn 3). Monoliitide suurus kujunes lahtimurdumise tulemusena. Eraldatud monoliidid pakiti pudenemise vältimiseks tihedasti ümber nende mässitud toidukillesse ja võeti lahti Tartu Ülikooli arheoloogialaboris.

Väljapuhastamisel osutus tulemus loodetust fragmentaarsemaks ning terviklikku savinõud rekonstrueerida ei õnnestunud. Esiteks olid paljude kildude servad lagunenuid, teiseks jäi palju kilde puudu. Kilde leidis üksteise peal kahe kihina, mõlemal väliskumerused allapoole. Ilmselt olid suured küljetükid pan-

dud üksteise sisse, kunagisse maapinda süvendatud lohku.

Kildude põhjal õnnestus ligikaudu rekonstrueerida ühe nõu kuju ja kaunistusviisi (jn 4). Üsna sirgete püstjate seintega anum oli olnud vähemalt 25 cm kõrgune ning umbes 30 cm läbimõõduga, selle seinad olid 7–8 mm paksused. Poti ülaservast oli säilinud vaid kaks kildu – enamik nõuäärt oli kaotsi läinud maanteekraavi kaevamisel; tagasihoidlikku kaelaosa kaunistas kaks rida pulga ümber keeratud nõõri vajutistest lohkusid (jn 4: 1, 2). Anuma kohati kergelt riibitud pinnaga ülaosas on olnud veel vähemalt kolm või neli horisontaalset samalaadsete vajutuste rida (jn 4: 5–7); neist kõrgemal ja madalamal, nähtavasti samuti horisontaalsete ridadena, leidis üksikuid kolmnurkse pulgaotsaga vajutatud täkkeid (jn 4: 5, 6). Nõu ebatasaselt silutud pinnaga, kohati nõrkade riipetaoliste jälgedega alaosa (jn 4: 5, 8, 9) on olnud ilustamata; kildude värvus ja nõu eri osade põletusaste varieerusid.

Väga tõenäoliselt pärinevad leiukogumis olnud killud mitmest eri nõust. Sellele viitavad ühe poti vähemalt 14 cm kõrguse alaosa ilustamata killud, mille pinnatöötlus erineb ülalkirjeldatud anuma omast ning mille paksus on ligi 12–13 mm (jn 6: 4, 5). Et tegemist pole ühe nõuga, sellele osundavad ka mitmete kildude veelgi suurem paksus ja jämedam koostis ning tumepruun või mustjas värv (jn 5: 1–3); leidis ka nõrkade riipejälgedega, kuid ornamendita kilde (jn 5: 4; 6: 1–3). Ühel killul oli üksteisega rist-

vate nõõrivajutuste jälgi (jn 5: 5), teisel oli nõuseina poolenisti läbiv lohuke (jn 4: 4). Leiti ka linttehnika valmistatud nõude savilintide vahekohtadesse jäänud pragude täitmiseks määritud savitäidise tükke, mis olid kuni 2,5 cm laiused (jn 7: 1–5).

Teostus- ja kaunistusviisi poolest on Soe keraamikakogum lähedane umbkaudu aastatel 900–600 eKr, aga võimalik, et veel ka 4.–3. sajandil eKr kasutatud Volhovi tüüpi keraamikale, mille leide on kõige enam Loode-Venemaalt Volhovi jõe ja Ilmeni järve ümbrusest ning Karjalast, samuti Eestis nooremal pronksiajal levinud Asva tüüpi keraamikale. Võrreldes Asva keraamikaga on Soe keraamikal kaunistuste võõnd

nõu ülaosas aga laiem, Volhovi keraamika erineb Soe omast samas kogu ulatuses ornamendiga kaetud pinna poolest.

Leiud võiksid seostuda asulakoha kultuurkihiga, mis on hobusekänniga küll peaaegu täielikult segatud, kuid mis traktorikünni ajastul on jäänud välja poole põllumaad. Sellest muistisest võiks pärineda ka potist mõned meetrid eemalt kraaviprofiilist leitud hallist importtulekivist kõõvits (jn 7: 6). Asulakiht võis jätkuda ka maantee põhjaküljel, kuid seal on see suurmajandite aegse traktorikänniga täielikult segamini pööratud.