New archaeological monuments on the upper reaches of the Loobu River, Lääne-Virumaa County

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INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of April 2017 Arne Kivistik, using a metal detector in the village of Vaiatu, Kadrina municipality, Lääne-Virumaa, discovered some silver and tin ornaments that seemed to refer to a ploughed-over hoard. On the same day he also collected finds, including pottery fragments, suggesting two different settlement sites, about 150 and 200 m further (Kiudsoo 2017, 1).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Preliminary archaeological investigation of the site, directed by Mauri Kiudsoo, took place on 4 April 2017 (Kiudsoo 2017). In addition to the monitoring of the plough layer with a metal detector, a trial pit (about 50 × 50 cm) was dug at the location of the discovered hoard remains, to examine the general stratigraphic situation. Both the visual inspection of the field surface and the information obtained from the trial pit indicated the presence of a cultural layer in the area. The soil was sporadically very dark and coaly. About 7 m south of the trial pit an assemblage of stones was observed on the ground (foundation stones, fragments of *keris*-stones, clay, etc.) (Fig. 1), which we interpreted as a smithy site.

Objects presumably originating from the hoard (Fig. 2) came to light in an area of about 15 × 10 m on the northern slope of

Fig. 1. *View of the smithy site from the west.*
Jn 1. *Vaade kunagise sepikoja asemele läänest.*
Photo / Foto: Mauri Kiudsoo

Fig. 2. *Ornaments known from the Vaiatu hoard.*
Jn 2. *Vaiatu aardest teadaolevad ehted.*
(AI 7950: 1–10.)
Photo / Foto: Mauri Kiudsoo

Fig. 3. *The axe may be produced in the same smithy.*
Jn 3. *Kirves võib olla valmistatud siinses sepikojas.*
(AI 7950: 11.)
Photo / Foto: Mauri Kiudsoo

Fig. 4. *Pottery fragment from the end of the 12th – first half of the 13th century.*
Jn 4. *12. sajandi lõpu – 13. sajandi esimese poole savinõukatke.*
(AI 7950: 12.)
Photo / Foto: Mauri Kiudsoo

Fig. 5. *Tin pendant unique among the Estonian finds.*
Jn 5. *Eesti leiumaterjalis unikaalne tinast ripats.*
(AI 7950: 13.)
Photo / Foto: Mauri Kiudsoo

the ridge (at the depth of 2–22 cm) and were heavily deformed as a result of ploughing or land improvement. In addition, surface inspection helped us collect smithy slags (including several forge bottoms), a medieval iron axe (Fig. 3), etc. Additional checking of the plough layer with metal detector brought to light two fragments of tin pendants from the Final Iron Age, one of which is an imitation of a coin, and one early post-medieval round brooch without a pin.

The trial pit dug in the area where the remains of the hoard were found indicated the presence of a cultural layer: beneath the 25 cm plough layer a limestone level came to light, cleaning of which revealed some potsherds typical to the end of the Late Iron Age and the beginning of the Middle Ages (Fig. 4), and between the stones a tin pendant (Fig. 5) was found, which is unique among the Estonian finds. Its ornamentation resembles the so-called Gotlandic-Baltic bronze buckles. This type of buckles, primarily meant for fastening sword belts, developed in the Baltic before the turn of the 1st and 2nd millennium AD, and this type was the most widely spread variation at the end of the Viking Age (Tvauri 2012, 168). Beneath the limestone level lay a 15 cm thick darker layer, containing animal bones, charcoal, pottery, burnt stones, clay, etc. Natural soil (clay) came to light at a depth of about 40 cm.

About 100 m northeast of the hoard and the related smithy site, we also discovered an iron-smelting site. Slags we recovered there resemble those from Tõdva, Sõmeru, Aruvalla, Rae, etc., referring to iron-smelting furnaces with slag pits. Smaller slag lumps (Fig. 6) discovered in the middle part of the knoll probably mark the location of a one-time anvil block or anvil stone, where the reheated porous and slag-rich iron was hammered into currency blooms (see Kiudsoo *et al.* 2009, 98; Kiudsoo 2016, 88).

COMPOSITION OF THE HOARD

At the present stage of investigation, three tin beads (Fig. 2) are known to have belonged to the Vaiatu hoard besides seven round silver sheet pendants. At least some of them have been in the composition of the same breast ornament: it is suggested by tiny glass beads found in the loop of one sheet pendant as well as in the tin beads. Sheet pendants were spread in Estonia already in the Late Iron Age, having probably evolved from coin pendants. The

tradition of silver sheet pendants was spread until the 17th century, however the form and ornament of those varied during the eras. Besides the use of embossing and punching techniques, production by local craftsmen is also suggested by the riveted loop (Tamla 1991, 156; Tamla *et al*. 2002, 17–18).

Six of the Vaiatu sheet pendants are furnished with riveted silver sheet loops widening downwards; on one pendant only a hole for attaching the loop has preserved. The two largest ones have a tinkling ring attached to the loop by a hook. One of the most beautiful specimens is the pendant with openwork Maltese cross in the middle (Fig. 7); within the loop of this artefact, some beads had also preserved. Sheet pendants with such pattern are most numerous in the Puru I hoard (AI 7072) from the eastern part of Estonia, Ida-Virumaa County, which was deposited during the second half of the Livonian War (1558–1583) (Kiudsoo 2012, 3). Although at the moment no coins are known from the Vaiatu hoard to enable its dating, the material for comparison in the hoards discovered in northeast Estonia as well as in Järvamaa County suggests that most likely it belongs to the second half of the 16th century. It seems likely that the depositing of the Vaiatu hoard, as well as the hoards Viisu I, Palu I, II and III, Valgma, Otiku and Öötla, was connected with the extensive foray of Russian troops, started from Rakvere at the end of 1572, which resulted in the conquest of Paide on 1 January 1573 (see Kiudsoo & Russow 2011, 227–229).

OHEPALU SETTLEMENT UNIT

During the Final Iron Age the sites briefly presented above belonged to the Rebala parish of Virumaa County, most likely within the limits of the Ohepalu (*Othænpan*) settlement unit (Fig. 8), connected with the Vohnja brook running into the Loobu River. It was the southwestern periphery of Rebala parish in Virumaa County, separated from

Fig. 6. *Smaller slag lumps from the Vaiatu iron smelting site.*
Jn 6. *Pisemad šlakitükid Vaiatu rauasulatuskohast.*
(AI 7950: 21.)
Photo / Foto: Mauri Kiudsoo

Fig. 7. *Sheet pendant with the pattern of the Maltese cross.*
Jn 7. *Malta risti kujutisega rinnaleht.*
(AI 7950: 2.)
Photo / Foto: Mauri Kiudsoo

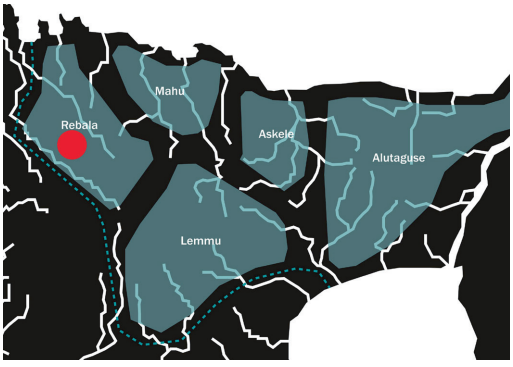

Fig. 8. *Plan of the Ohepalu settlement unit.*
Jn 8. *Ohepalu asustusüksuse asendiplaan.*
Map / Kaart: Kadri-Maria Mitt (Kiudsoo 2016, jn 96)

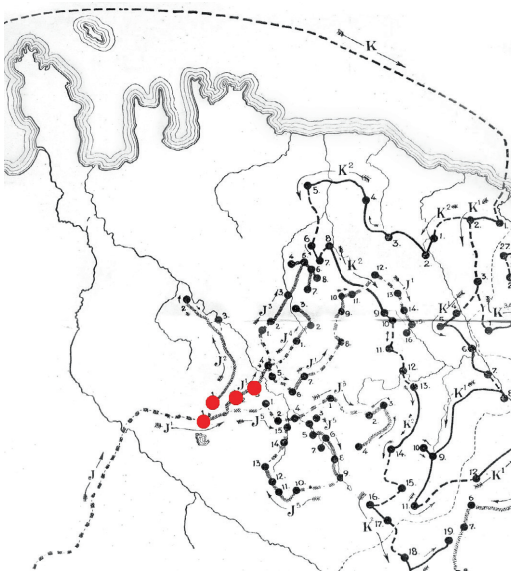

Fig. 9. *Distribution of the settlement in the western part of the ancient Virumaa County in 1219–1220 after Johansen 1933.*

Jn 9. *Asustuse levik Virumaa muinasmaakonna läänеosas 1219–1220 Johansen 1933 järgi.*

northwest Estonia by an extensive belt of forests and mires. Comparing the data in *Liber Census Daniæ* (LCD) (Johansen 1933, 28–30) with natural borders etc., we may assume that the villages of Ohepalu (50 ploughlands), Kõrveküla (20 ploughlands), Vaiatu (5 ploughlands) and Vohnja (20 ploughlands) formed a common settlement unit (Fig. 9). According to Paul Johansen's interpretation the lands of both Ohepalu and Kõrveküla villages in the 13th century stretched to the banks of the Valgejõgi River (see Johansen 1933, map: Grundbesitzverteilung 1241), which area today partly belongs to the territory of the central training area of Estonian Defence Forces. P. Johansen also believed that the main road connecting ancient Virumaa with Harjumaa went straight through the *Othænpan* (Ohepalu) village (Johansen 1933, 28). Later researchers, for example Tõnu Raid (2005, 187, fig. 107) and Valdo Praust (2011, 72–75), however have not supported that hypothesis.

Archaeologists have previously not paid much attention to the southwestern corner of Rebala parish in Virumaa. In 2000 still not a single archaeological site, neither a stray find, was known from there (Lang 2000, 279). It was only in 2002 that amateur archaeologist Arne Kivistik made the first survey trip in the region and identified several archaeological sites related to the Ohepalu settlement unit (Konsa & Ots 2003, 232). On 24 April 2009 additional recording of the borders of settlement sites took place in that region.[1] The aim of the survey trip, initiated by the National Heritage Board, and where the author of the present paper also participated, was to take under protection previously known archaeological sites (Kiudsoo 2017, 9–10). Unfortunately, until now those archaeological sites have not been listed as cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

The finding site of the ornaments, located on a bank that formerly has been surrounded on three sides by wetland, now drained – a regularly flooded plain – guided the archaeologists to the smithy site from the Final Iron Age together with the nearby iron-smelting site.

As for the peripheral location of the mentioned sites in regard of the villages of the Ohepalu settlement unit, there is nothing exceptional in it. Besides the deposits of iron ore and forest areas necessary for producing charcoal, fire hazard that accompanied iron-smelting also had to be regarded. Therefore, larger iron-smelting sites were always located in peripheral parts, away from the centres. Such location pattern can be observed at almost all larger iron-smelting sites of Virumaa and Harjumaa (Kiudsoo 2016, 94–95).

[1] See manuscripts in MA.

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UUSI MUISTISEID LÄÄNE-VIRUMAALT, LOOBU JÕE ÜLEMJOOKSULT

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2017. a. aprillis avastas Arne Kivistik Lääne-Virumaalt Kadrina vallast Vaiatu külast mõningaid hõbedast ja tinast ehteid, mis näisid osutavat laialiküntud aardele. Samal päeval korjas leidja sama küla maadelt kahele erinevale asulakohale osutavat leiumaterjali. Arheoloogilised eeluuringud ehete leiukohas toimusid 4. aprillil 2017. Juba põllupinna esmasel vaatlusel selgus, et sel kohal leidub kultuurkihti. Kohati oli pinnas hästi tume ja söene. Maapinnal oli jälgitav kivilade (jn 1), mida tõlgendasime hiljem sepikoja asemena. Künnikihi ülaosa uurimisel, milleks kasutati ka metallidetektorit, õnnestus lisaks aardesse kuulunud esemetele (jn 2) leida ka sepikojale osutavat šlakki (sh mitmed ääsipõhjad), üks keskaegne rauast kirves (jn 3), kaks muinasaja lõpu(?) tinaripatsi katket, varauusaegne vitssõlg jms. Üldise stratigraafilise situatsiooni selgitamiseks kaevati aardejääkide esinemispiirkonda ka proovišurf, mis osutas puutumata kultuurkihile nimetatud kohas. Nimelt järgnes u 25 cm paksusele künnikihile paekivitükkide lade, mille väljapuhastamisel avastasime mõned muinasaja lõpule ja keskaja algusele iseloomulikud savinõukatked (jn 4); kivide vahelt tuli päevavalgele Eesti leiumaterjalis unikaalne tinast ripats (jn 5), mille ornament sarnaneb nn ojamaa-balti tüüpi pronkspannalde omale. Kivilademe all asus 15 cm tüsedune tumedam kiht, mis sisaldas loomaluid, sütt, keraamikat, põlenud kive, savi jne. Looduslik aluspinnas (savi) paljandus šurfis u 40 cm sügavusel.

Aarde leiukohast ja sellega seotud sepikoja asemest u 100 m kirde suunas leidsime inspektsioonil ka rauasulatuskoha. Sealt korjatud šlakk sarnaneb oma välisilmelt Tõdva, Sõmeru, Aruvalla, Rae jne omale, osutades tõenäoliselt šlakikogumisaukudega šahtahjude olemasolule. Põndaku keskosast avastatud pisemad šlakitükid (jn 6) markeerivad aga arvatavasti omaaegse alasipaku või -kivi asupaika.

Vaiatu aardest on praeguse uurimisseisu juures teada lisaks seitsmele ümmargusele hõbeplekist rinnalehele ka kolm tinast helmest (jn 2). Tõenäoliselt on vähemalt osa neist kuulunud algselt sama rinnakee koosseisu, millele näikse osutavat ühe rinnalehe kanna ja tinahelmeste seest avastatud pisikesed klaashelmed. Kuus Vaiatu rinnalehte on alt laienevate needitud hõbeplekist kandadega; ühel on säilinud üksnes auk kanna kinnitamiseks. Kahel suuremal eksemplaril on kanna küljes kõlahaak koos -rõngaga. Üks ilusamaid eksemplare on rinnaleht, mille keskel on ažuurselt väljalõigatud, laienevate otstega rist (jn 7). Taolise kujundusega rinnalehti kohtab kõige enam Ida-Virumaalt leitud Puru I aardes, mis jäi maapõue Liivi sõja (1558–1583) teisel poolel. Kuigi Vaiatu aardest puuduvad praeguse seisuga seda dateerida võimaldavad mündid, osutab Kirde-Eestist ja Järvamaalt päevavalgele tulnud aarete võrdlusmaterjal sellele, et nimetatud leid kuulub suure tõenäosusega just 16. sajandi teise poolde. Väga võimalik, et ka Vaiatu aarde maapõue jäämine on seotud 1572. aasta lõpul Rakverest lähtunud venelaste laiaulatusliku rüüsteretkega, mis päädis Paide vallutamisega 1. jaanuaril 1573.

Eelpool põgusalt tutvustatud muistised jäid muinasaja lõpuperioodil Virumaa Rebala kihelkonna edelaalale, kuuludes tõenäoliselt Loobu jõkke suunduva Vohnja ojaga seotud Ohepalu asustusüksuse piiridesse (jn 8). See oli Virumaa edalapoolne serva-

ala, mida Loode-Eestist lahutas ulatuslik metsade ja soode vöönd. Kõrvutades 13. sajandi Taani Hindamisraamatus sisalduvaid andmeid looduslike piiride ja teiste andmetega, moodustasid ühise asustusüksuse arvatavalt Ohepalu, Kõrveküla, Vaiatu ja Vohnja külad (jn 9). Paul Johanseni interpretatsiooni järgi ulatusid nii Ohepalu kui ka Kõrveküla maad 13. sajandil välja kuni Valgejõe kallasteni, ehk alale, mis tänapäeval jääb osaliselt Kaitseväe keskpolügooni territooriumile. Ühtlasi olevat läbi Ohepalu küla kulgenud muinasajal Harju- ja Virumaad ühendanud peamine maismaatee. Hilisemad teede-uurijad ei ole viimati mainitud hüpoteesi siiski toetanud.

Virumaa edelanurk on jäänud varasemal ajal arheoloogide tähelepanu alt pea täielikult välja. 2000. aasta seisuga ei teatud sealt veel ühtegi kinnismuistist ega ka irdleidu. Alles 2002. aastal tegi nimetatud piirkonnas maastikuseiret harrastusarheoloog A. Kivistik, kes tuvastas rea Ohepalu asustusüksusega seonduvaid muistiseid. 24. aprillil 2009 määrati Muinsuskaitseameti eestvõttel kõnealuses piirkonnas tolleks ajaks teadaolevate asulakohtade piire, eesmärgiga need muinsuskaitse alla võtta. Nimetatud välitöödel osales ka käesoleva artikli autor.

A. Kivistiku avastatud varauusaegse aarde leiukoht, mis paikneb seljandikul, mida on varemalt piiranud kolmest küljest nüüdseks kuivendatud märgala – regulaarsete üleujutuste all kannatanud jõe lamm – juhatas arheoloogidele kätte muinasaja lõpusajanditel kasutatud sepikoja aseme koos selle lähinaabruses asunud rauasulatuskohaga. Leitud rauatöötlemiskoha perifeerne asend Ohepalu asustusüksuse külatuumikute suhtes pole midagi erandlikku, pigem vastupidi. Peale rauamaagi leiukoha ja söe saamiseks vajalike metsaste alade olemasolu pidi asukoha valikul arvestama ka tootmisega kaasnevat tuleohtu. Seega paiknesidki suuremad rauasulatuskohad ääremaadel, keskustest eemal. Analoogset paiknemisskeemi võib täheldada pea kõigi suuremate Viru- ja Harjumaa rauasulatuskohtade puhul.