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ARHEOLOOGILISED  
VÄLITÖÖD EESTIS  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD  
WORKS IN ESTONIA IN  
1996

*Koostanud ja toimetanud Ülle Tamla*

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Tartu Ülikooli Raamatukogu



# SETTLEMENT SITE I OF ILUMÄE, NORTH ESTONIA

Valter LANG

Ajaloo Instituut (Institute of History), Rüütli 6,  
EE-0001 Tallinn, Eesti (Estonia)

## Introduction

In the frame of the research programme "The establishment and history of farming settlement in the area of Vatku – Palmse (North Estonia)", archaeological excavations were carried out, on both a large stone grave and several field remains, during the first three years of the study (Lang, 1994; 1995; 1996a). The investigation of fossil fields was also continued in 1996 (small-scale excavations at Vatku and Ilumäe); yet, at this time, the main effort was turned to the examination of settlement sites. As known, the main sites of this area (Vatku, Tõugu, Võhma, Joandu, Uusküla and Palmse) were not mentioned in the list of villages of *Liber Census Daniae*, composed by Danish monks, at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century; therefore, the existence of these settlement units, in the Late Iron Age, has not been beyond dispute (Tarvel, 1983, 26—29). The main task of the field work in 1996 was, therefore, to achieve an archaeological record of the chronology of the settlement sites in the research area.

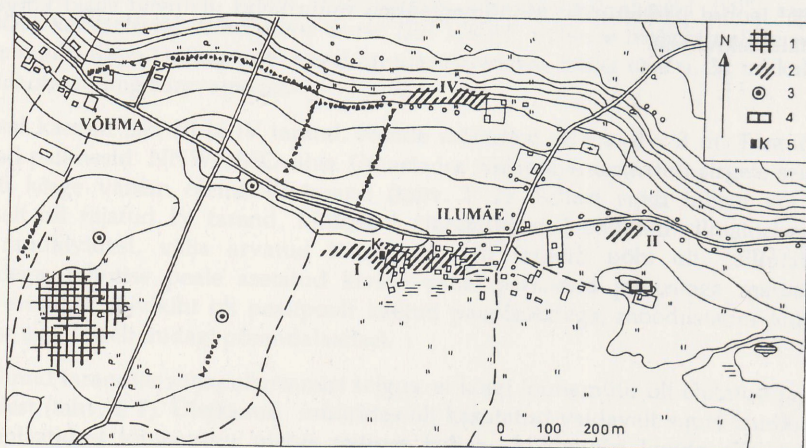


Fig. 1. Antiquities at Ilumäe. 1 Remains of fossil fields, 2 cultural layer of settlement site, 3 stone-cist grave, 4 tarand-grave, 5 excavation area.



Cultural layers of settlement sites were earlier known for Vátku, Tõugu and Ilumäe (Nos. I and III); yet, they seemed to belong only to the Medieval times, according to pottery found from the mixed surface layers. During inventories in 1996, new sites were recorded at Võhma (AI 6152; dated from the Middle Ages) and Ilumäe (Nos. II and IV; Fig. 1). Trial pits dug into the cultural layer of Ilumäe IV yielded some small pieces of pottery (AI 6151) which were characteristic of the late Boat-axe culture (Late Neolithic). The trial excavation (4 sq. m) at site II of Ilumäe indicated that there is a settlement site, originating from the Roman Iron Age (AI 6108). Since this site is located close to a *tarand*-grave, of the same time, and since we discovered probable plough-marks beneath the cultural layer, this complex seems to be unique in Estonia, and will certainly be studied in 1997.

## Results of the excavations

For more thorough excavations, site I of Ilumäe was chosen, mostly because its cultural layer was preserved better than at other (Medieval) sites of the research area. Black coloured soils containing potsherds, burned stones, animal bones, iron slag and pieces of iron smelting ovens were distributed over a rather large area, between the houses in the western part of the present-day village and immediately west of it (Fig. 1). However, the major portion of this area, with finds, is mixed by ploughing, buildings and other economic activities, whereas the untouched cultural layer beneath the ploughing layer is only preserved west of the current houses. This part of the settlement was investigated by an excavation area of 60 sq. m.

The uppermost layer (30–35 cm thick) in the excavation area was mixed by modern ploughing; therefore, no constructions were preserved there. Still, this mixed layer contained a number of potsherds from wheel-made pottery, pieces of both iron slag and tuyères for iron smelting ovens. The thickness of untouched cultural layer beneath the ploughing layer was 15–25 cm, yet in some places (in a ditch) it reached 50–60 cm. Four constructions with stones were discovered and excavated (Plate I, 1).

Construction No. I consisted of burned stones, had an oval shape (155 x 65–85 cm) and was badly destroyed. There was some mortar preserved between the lowermost stones and, therefore, one can suppose that it was originally an oven floor. The more exact character and dimensions of this oven remain unclear. There was also a lot of pottery (360 fragments), pieces of iron slag, charcoal and tuyères for iron smelting ovens (18 fragments) found in between the stones of this construction.



Pottery (Fig. 2, 3) represents wheel-made ceramics of different shapes, decorated sometimes with wavy or horizontal lines on the shoulder part. This construction could be dated, with the help of a radiocarbon sample, which was gathered from between the stones, to  $689 \pm 47$  BP (Tln-2117; Fig. 3, 1).

Construction No. II consisted of limestone slabs which stood in an upright position and surrounded a 15 cm diameter stone less area. It was a post-hole with a stone wedge put into a larger pit with a diameter of 70–80 m. There was some charcoal found between the stones of the post-hole, and it was dated to  $803 \pm 67$  BP (Tln-2119; Fig. 3, 2).

Construction No. III was located 3.5 m south of construction No. 1. This structure had an oval shape (127 x 94 cm) and consisted mostly of limestone slabs which had repeatedly been exposed to fire. Probably it was an oven floor with a *keris* (pile of cobblestones), since they are known from a number of sites in Estonia dated to the second part of the 1<sup>st</sup>, and the first part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia (Tõnisson, 1981).

Seventy-six potsherds, 13 fragments of tuyères for iron smelting ovens and several pieces of iron artefacts were found from this structure. Pottery is identical to the pottery found from constructions Nos. I and IV. Therefore, this structure, too, can be dated to the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, charcoal found between the uppermost stones was dated to not more than  $396 \pm 74$  years BP (Tln-2120; Fig. 3, 3), and one may suppose that there was some late charcoal in this sample.

Construction No. IV was the biggest in the excavation area, it was 2.65 m long and up to 1.15 m wide and orientated in the NNE–SSW direction, as was also the case with constructions I and III. The excavation of this structure indicated that it was originally a long ditch,

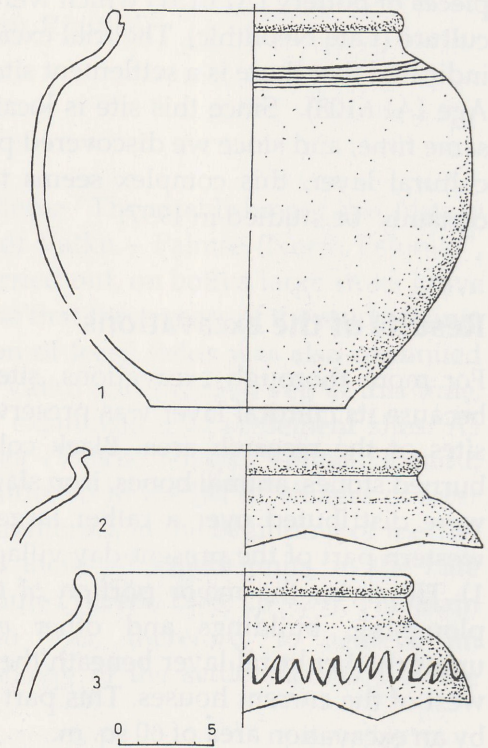


Fig. 2. Pottery from settlement site I of Ilumäe (AI 6105: 342a, 342b, 296).





Plate I, 1. Stone constructions I-IV at Ilumäe.

Plate I, 2. Broken pots on the bottom of the ditch in situ (construction IV).





Plate II. Fragments of tuyères from settlement site I of Ilumäe (AI 6105: 299, 360, 360, 307, 295).



40—50 cm deep, and paved with both limestone slabs and branches. These branches were burned and the whole ditch was filled in with stones, pieces of iron slag (ca 60 kg), bog ore and tuyères for iron smelting ovens. On the bottom of the ditch, more than 5 kg of pottery (360 fragments) were found; the potsherds belong to two or three different vessels (Plate I, 2; Fig. 2, 1—2). The radiocarbon sample gathered, from burned branches, was dated to  $653 \pm 43$  years BP (Tln-2121; Fig. 3, 4).

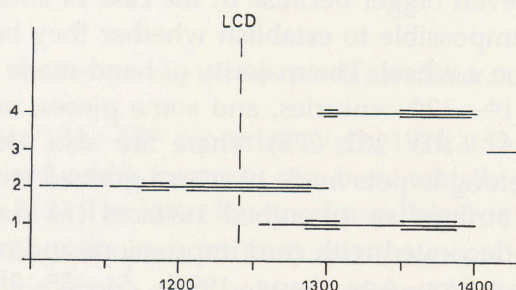


Fig. 3. Radiocarbon dates from settlement site I of Ilumäe.

As mentioned, constructions I, III and IV contained a number of pieces of both iron slag and tuyères for iron smelting ovens; yet, no complete ovens for iron smelting were observed. Since such fragments were once used in the building of the constructions, one may suppose that there was an iron smelting site here, before the village houses were erected. The tuyères in question had a round-oval section with a diameter of 70—80 mm, and an inside hole for air pressure with a diameter of 23—27 mm (Plate II). In Estonia, such tuyères can be dated to the (end of the 11<sup>th</sup>?) 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Peets, this volume), and they have parallels in Russia, for instance (Колчин, 1953, Fig. 8—10). The number of tuyères' fragments totals 625, but they are mostly rather small pieces. The weight of the iron slag from the whole excavation area totals 261.225 kg, i.e. there were 4.354 kg of iron slag found from each square metre on average.

The most numerous group of finds was pottery. Altogether, 4200 potsherds were found from the excavation area, i.e. 70 potsherds from each square metre on average, which indicates a very intensive and rich cultural layer. The majority of potsherds (4150) belong to wheel-made undecorated pottery; only 119 sherds (2.87 %) have a decoration consisting either of horizontal (80) or wavy lines (36), or of something else. Only three sherds represent imported stoneware; 14 pieces have been covered with lead-glaze. Both the typology and surface finish of



the main portion of the local pottery are familiar from a number of Medieval sites in Estonia. According to the chronology of Tartu, such pottery can be dated to the 13<sup>th</sup>—14<sup>th</sup> (15<sup>th</sup>) centuries (Mäesalu, 1990, Fig. 2; Metsallik, 1991, Fig. 3, 4—6), and the same holds true for Tallinn (Aus, 1992, group A2b) and other sites, such as Uderna in South Estonia (Ланг & Лиги, 1988, fig. 2; 1990, fig. p. 434) and Kuusalu in North (AI 5043: 533, 524, 550, 509, 349 and many others).

At least 37 sherds (0.88 %) originate from hand-made pottery, but this number might be even bigger because in the case of small single wall-pieces, it is often impossible to establish whether they belong to a pot made by hand or on a wheel. The majority of hand-made pottery seems to belong to the 11<sup>th</sup>—12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and some pieces, maybe, even to the Viking Age (AI 6105: 202, 275). There are also some potsherds, however, which belong to pots made of coarse-grained temper and have textile-impressed, striated or smoothed surfaces (14 fragments). One sherd (Fig. 4, 3) is decorated with cord impressions and can be dated to the late Pre-Roman Iron Age (Lang, 1996b, 54—55, 288—290). Two potsherds with striated surfaces have a decoration of pseudo-cord impressions characteristic of the Late Neolithic or Bronze Age (Fig. 4, 1—2). Hand-made pottery was found from different parts of the excavation area in conditions which did not have any connection with stone constructions.

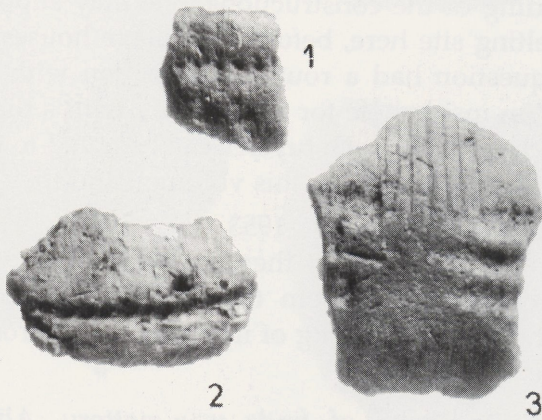


Fig. 4. Some hand-made pottery from Ilumäe (AI 6105: 251b, 262, 333b).

Some more finds are important for the dating of this site. First, there is a fragment of a bronze spiral finger-ring the middle whorl of which has a round section; the forepart of the ring is decorated with short cross-lines (Fig. 5, 1). In South and East Estonia, finger-rings like this were worn



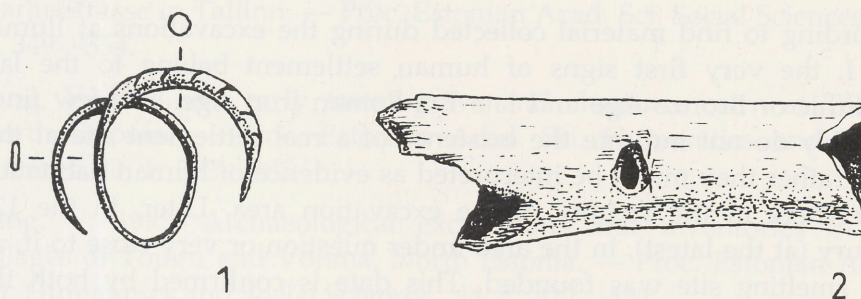


Fig. 5. Bronze finger-ring and bone whistle from Ilumäe (AI 121, 396).

during the late 13<sup>th</sup>—15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Valk, 1991, 185—186, plate XXVI: 7—8). An iron awl and a fragment of a bone whistle probably have the same date (Fig. 5, 2). The latter has good parallels from Medieval Tallinn (Aus & Dubovik, 1989, plate XVII: 8) and Uderna (Ланг & Лиги, 1990, plate XXII: 3). One of two silver coins was found from the mixed layer; it is a shilling coined in Tallinn during 1572—1585 (Fig. 6, 1). The other (Fig. 6, 2) is a fragment of a bracteate which probably was coined in the second quarter or in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in North (?) Germany (both coins were determined by Ivar Leimus). The latter was found from the untouched cultural layer and dates the period of habitation. Two flint chips and some chips of quartz may originate from the same time as potsherds with pseudo-cord decoration.



Fig. 6. Silver coins from Ilumäe (AI 6105: 62, 238).



## Conclusions

According to find material collected during the excavations at Ilumäe site I, the very first signs of human settlement belong to the late Neolithic or Bronze Age and late Pre-Roman Iron Age. The few finds probably do not indicate the existence of a real settlement site at this spot, rather they might be interpreted as evidence of human habitation somewhere in the vicinity of the excavation area. Later, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (at the latest), in the area under question or very close to it, an iron smelting site was founded. This date is confirmed by both the typology of tuyères and hand-made pottery found during the excavations. The cultural layer of the village at this place was formed during the 13<sup>th</sup>—14<sup>th</sup> (15<sup>th</sup>?) centuries, as revealed by wheel-made pottery, artefacts and radiocarbon dates (Fig. 3). Later, the location of farms was shifted a little eastward, to the area of the present village. A few finds (a coin, some artefacts and single potsherds) from the 15<sup>th</sup>—17<sup>th</sup> centuries, prove the existence of this village nearby to the excavation area.

One may conclude that in the 1240's, when Danish monks were moving around and accounting the settlement units in North Estonia, Ilumäe certainly existed and was inhabited, either as an iron smelting site or as a village, or both. Why this and the other villages in this area were not registered, remains unclear, however.

## Acknowledgements

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## ILUMÄE I ASULA PÕHJA-EESTIS

VALTER LANG

Uurimisprogrammi "Maaviljelusliku asustuse kujunemine ja areng Vatu—Palmse piirkonnas" raames oli varasematel aastatel uuritud vaid maakasutussüsteeme ja ühte suurt kivikalmet. 1996. aastal jätkati tööd maakasutussüsteemidega Vatul ja Ilumäel, kuid peatähelepanu pöörati nüüd asulakohtade tundmaõppimisele. 13. sajandi algul koostatud Taani hindamisraamatus ei ole uuritava piirkonna küli mainitud, mistõttu nende olemasolu muinasaja lõpul vajas eraldi tõestamist. Varem teada olnud asulakohtadele Vatul, Tõugul ja Ilumäel (I ja III) lisandus inspektsiooni tulemusena veel kolm: Võhma, Ilumäe II ja IV. Kui Ilumäe IV asulakoht näib esimeste leidude põhjal kuuluvat hilise nöörikeramika kultuuri aegadesse ja Ilumäe II hiljemalt rooma rauaajaga, siis kõikidelt teistelt nimetatud asulakohtadelt oli saadud vaid keskaegset leiumaterjali.

Kaevamiseks valiti välja Ilumäe I asulakoht, seda peamiselt seetõttu, et kultuurkiht oli siin intensiivsem ja paremini säilinud kui mujal (joon. 1). Kaevand suurusega 60 m<sup>2</sup> rajati külamajadest vahetult lääne poole, kus künnikihi all täheldati 15—25 cm paksust puutumatusa säilinud kultuurkihti. Avastati nelja kivikonstruktsiooni jäänused (tahv. I, 1). Neist esimene kujutas endast ovaalse põhiplaaniga põlenud kivide varet, kus kivide vahel esines pisut mörti, rohkesti keraamikat (joon. 2, 3), rauašlakki, düüsitükke jms. Ilmselt oli tegu ahjuvarega, mis kivide alt kogutud sõeproovi põhjal kuulus aega 689±47 a. tagasi. Teine konstruktsioon oli püstjatest paeplaatidest koosnev postikiilustik, mis dateeriti aega 803±67 a. tagasi. Kolmas oli põlenud kividest koosnev ovaalse kujuga vare, tõenäoliselt kerisahju jäänus, millelt koguti taas rohkesti savinõukilde, šlakki ja düüsitükke. Kuigi siit saadud sõeproovi vanuseks osutus kõigest 396±74 a., on selle ahjuvare vanus keraamika põhjal otsustades sama, nagu konstruktsioonidel I ja IV. Neljas konstruktsioon kujutas endast paeplaatide ja okstega vooderdatud kraavi (tahv. I, 2), mis oli visatud täis kive, šlakki, soorauamaaki, düüsitükke ja muud prahti; kõige alt leiti üle 5 kg keraamikat (joon. 2: 1—2). Kraav dateeriti 653±43 a. vanuseks.

Rauašlakki, soomaagi ja düüsitükkide esinemine ülalmainitud konstruktsioonides ja mujal kaevandi alal tähendab, et enne asula kultuurkihi tekkimist oli sellel kohal (või kusagil läheduses) olnud rauasulatuskoht. Düüsitükid (625) pärinevad enamasti ümmarguse ristlõikega düüsidest läbimõõduga 70—80 mm ning avausega 23—27 mm, mis Eestis on seni dateeritud perioodi (11. saj. lõpp?) 12.—14. sajand (tahv. II). Rauašlakki koguti kokku 261,225 kg (4,354 kg 1m<sup>2</sup> kohta). Savinõukilde leiti kaevandist 4200 ja enamik neist kuulub 13.—14. sajandile iseloomuliku kedrakeraamika hulka (joon. 2). Imporditud reinikeraamikat oli vaid 3 ning emailiga kaetud keraamikat 14 katket; 119 killul võis näha ornamentide, tavaliselt kas horisontaal- või lainejooni. 13.—14. (15.?) sajandisse võib dateerida ka esemelised leiud, nagu spiraalsõrmuse, naaskli, luust vilepilli jt. (joon. 5) Leiti kaks hõbemünti, millest üks pärineb 16. sajandi lõpust (see saadi pealmisest segatud kihist), teine aga 13. sajandi 2. veerandist või keskpaigast (joon. 6).

Asula kultuurkihist leiti tõendeid ka märksa varasemast asustusest. Paar tulekivi- ja kvartsikildu ning ümbermässitud nööri vajutustega kaunistatud savinõukatket (joon. 4, 1—2) võivad pärineda hilisneoliitikumist või vanemast pronksiajast, üks nööriornamendiga ilustatud katke (joon. 4, 3) aga eelrooma rauaaja lõpust. Rühm käsitsi valmistatud keraamikat kuulub 11.—12. sajandisse ja võib seotud olla siin tollal eksisteerinud rauasulatuskohaga. Käsitsi valmistatud keraamikat leiti kaevandi erinevatest kohtadest, kuid mitte kivikonstruktsioonide juurest.



Arvestades leiumaterjali ja söeproovide (joon. 3) dateeringuid, võib oletada, et rauasulatuskoht rajati Ilumäel hiljemalt 12. sajandil. 13.—14. (15.?) sajandil asus sellel kohal küla, mis hiljem nihkus mõnevõrra ida poole, sinna, kus on küla ka tänapäeval. Kõik varasemad leiud tõendavad asustuse olemasolu kusagil kaevamiskoha läheduses. Seega on alust väita, et kui 13. sajandi algul loendati Põhja-Eesti küli, oli Ilumäe (kas rauasulatuskoha või küla näol) juba kindlasti olemas.