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Two late neolithic to Early Iron Age settlement sites at Ilumäe, North Estonia

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In 1996, two Late Iron Age – Early Medieval sites were excavated at Ilumäe, Kadrina parish, North Estonia (Lang 1997; Peets 1997). At the same time, extensive landscape inventory was carried out in the surroundings of the Ilumäe village, and two new settlement sites (nos. II and IV) were discovered. Trial pits dug into the cultural layer of these new sites yielded some material indicating Late Neolithic (site IV) and Roman Iron Age (site II) dates. As the knowledge about settlement sites of those periods in Estonia has been rather limited to date, we decided to investigate these sites more precisely. The excavations at settlement site II led by Valter Lang, and Marge Konsa directed the field work at site IV.

Settlement site II of Ilumäe

Site II of Ilumäe is located some 500 m east of site I, close to the North Estonian Klint, 62 m above the sea level. There is a stone grave of the Late Roman Iron Age located at Kõvermägi, 125 m south of this settlement site, and a spring which emerges one hundred metres north of the site (Fig. 1). An area of 52 m^2 was excavated in 1997, while a trial trench of 4 m^2 had been investigated already in 1996.

The archaeological excavations yielded features and finds from at least four different periods of use of this site. *The oldest of these stages* was only represented by 12 potsherds and several pieces of quartz and flint bearing clear traces of working (Fig. 2). The potsherds belong to the middle stage of the Estonian Corded Ware, characterised by Lembit Jaanits (Янитс 1959, 154) as pottery with relatively thick walls, sparsely located cord impressions and traces of hair on the surfaces.

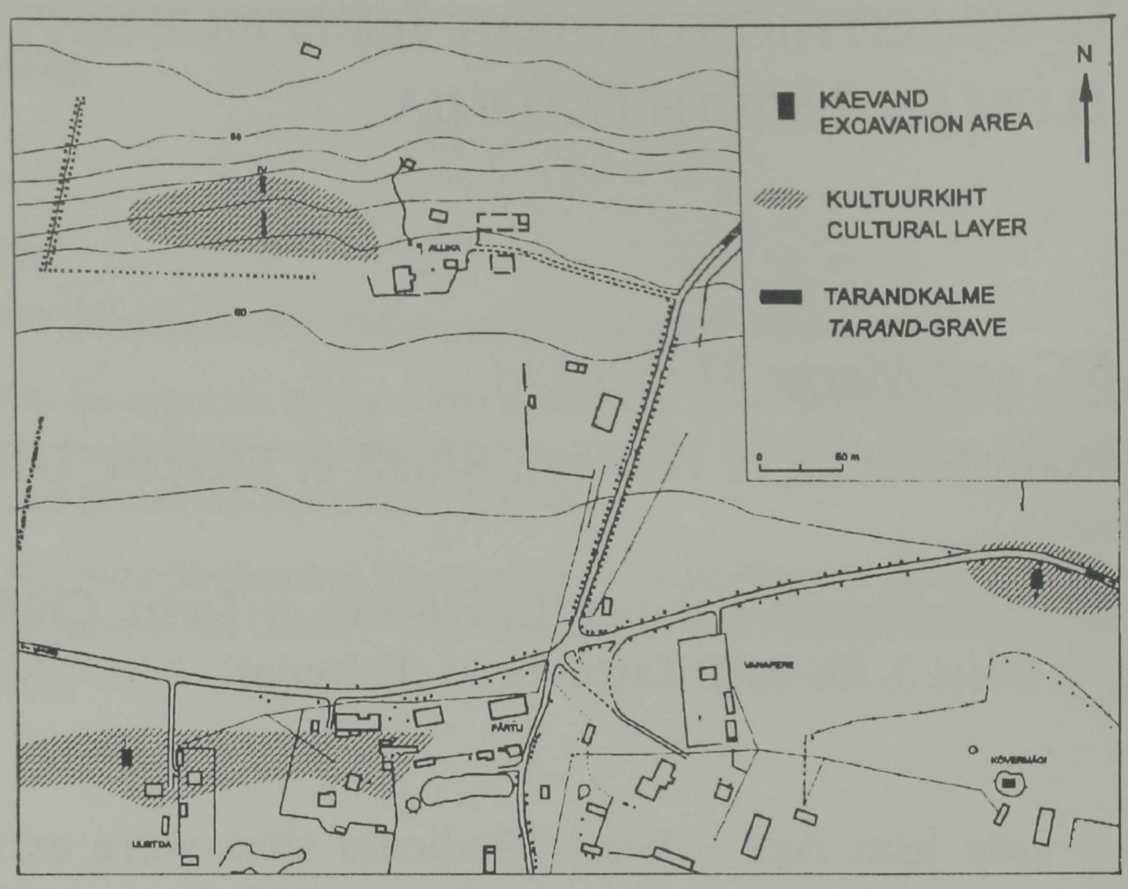

Fig. 1. Location of antiquities in Ilumäe.

Unfortunately, no radiocarbon dates are available for this type of pottery in Estonia so far, but one may suppose that it belongs approximately to the middle and the second half of the third millennium B.C. In Ilumäe, the finds from this period were totally mixed with other finds of later origin, and no certain horizon of the Corded Ware was visible in the cultural layer. Still, small pieces of charcoal gathered over a spot of cultural layer (210 x 75 cm) in the southern part of the excavation area were dated to 3506±58 BP (Tln-2215) (c. 1890—1750 BC cal.). This date seems to be some centuries too late for the Corded Ware, however. Since this spot of black earth also contained, in addition to a piece of quartz and one sherd of the Corded Ware pottery, several dozen potsherds from the Roman Iron Age, it could not be taken as a particular horizon of the Corded Ware culture.

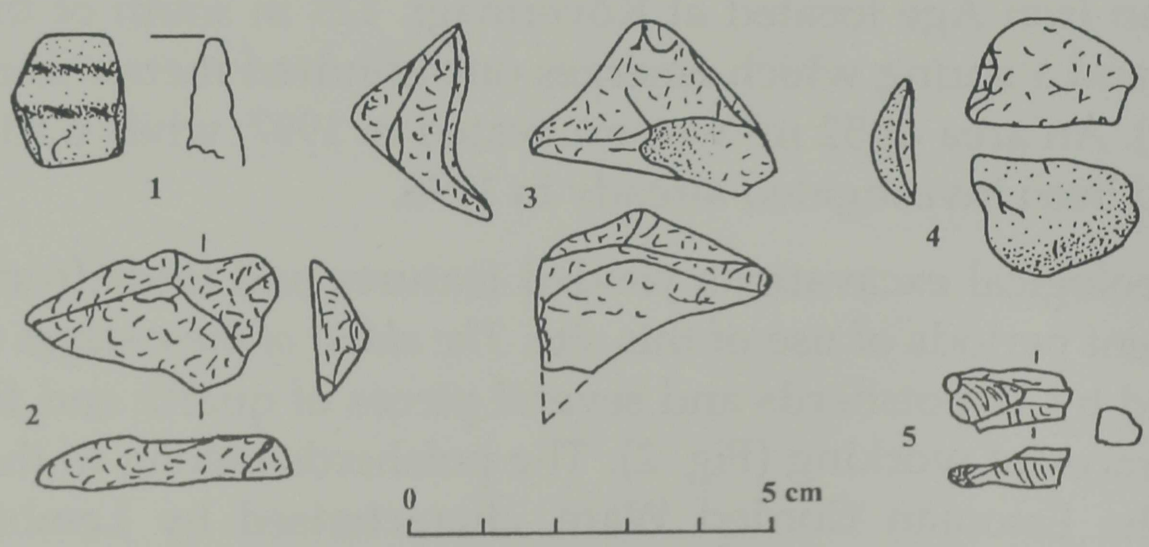

Fig. 2. A potsherd (1), and pieces of quartz (2—4) and flint (5) found from site II of Ilumäe (AI 6247: 111; 6108: 13; 6247: 90, 172 and 93.)

The next stage of the usage of this area was represented with narrow and badly preserved ard marks running in different directions. Still, two main directions of ard marks could be observed, those of NE—SW and NW—SE (Fig. 3). In this way, the ard marks indicate a primitive crosswise ploughing technique which in North Europe was characteristic of the Neolithic, Bronze and Early Iron Ages (Nielsen 1993; Vikkula *et al*. 1994). The width of these ard marks was not more than 7—9 cm, and in cross-section they usually had a slightly asymmetrical U-shape (Fig. 4). In the stratigraphy, the ard marks were only preserved beneath the cultural layer of the Late Roman Iron Age, as black traces in the yellow natural sand, so they were clearly older than the next stage of habitation. The ard marks of Ilumäe belong to the oldest ard marks in Estonia registered up to now. Their poor preservation was probably caused by the settlement activity in the Roman Iron Age.

Fig. 3. Narrow ard marks beneath the cultural layer of the Late Roman Iron Age in site II of Ilumäe.

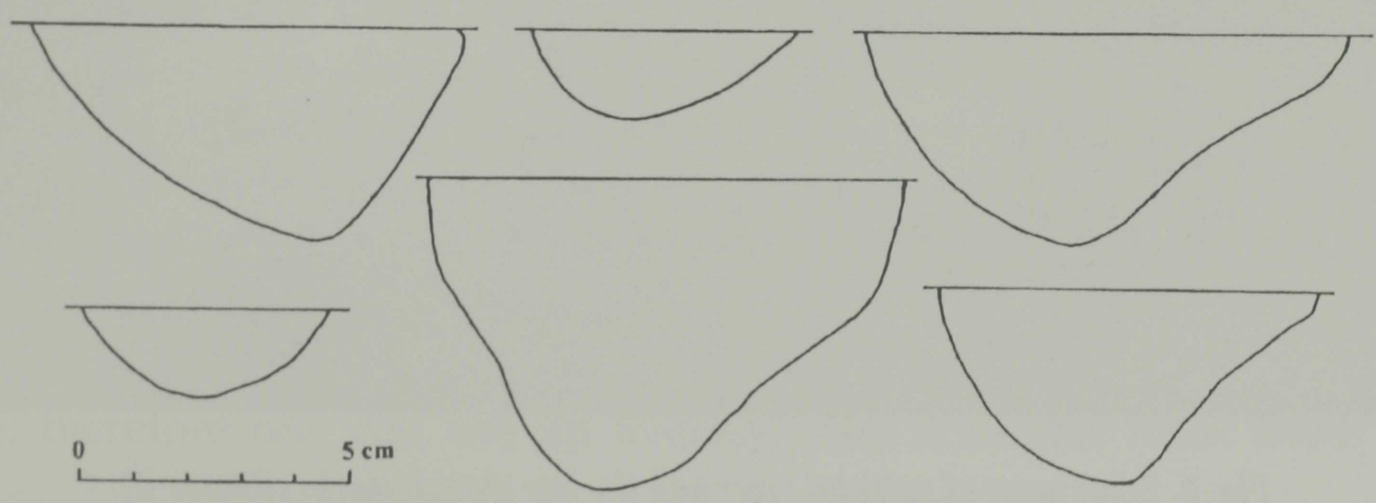

Fig. 4. Some cross-sections of ard marks from site II of Ilumäe.

Fig. 5. A spot of cultural layer, partly destroyed by later ploughing (Ilumäe II).

Fig. 6. Some spots of cultural layer and the late plough marks (Ilumäe II).

The cultural layer of the settlement site was partly destroyed and mixed with the ploughing of later times. Only some spots of black earth with irregular shape were observable under the later plough-marks (Fig. 5 and 6). No clear remains of buildings were preserved and only two features are worthy of mention. First, a round-shaped spot of clay (46—52 cm in diameter) which in the uppermost layer was mixed with stone crumbs but was rather clean and natural in its lower part (Fig. 7). This

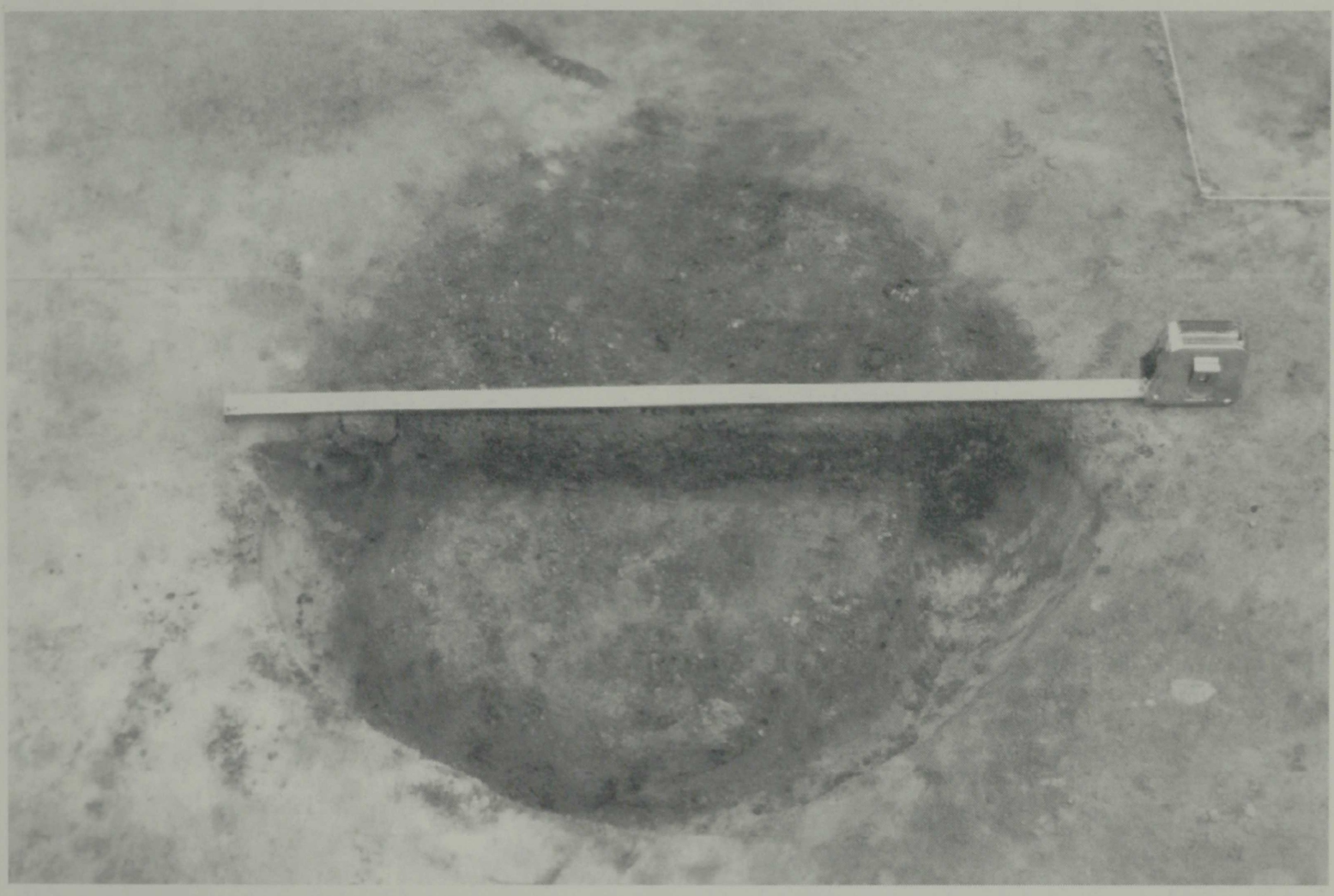

Fig. 7. A spot of clay from site II of Ilumäe.

clay was certainly transported to the settlement site by man, and was possibly used for the mixing of temper for pottery making. Concerning the dating of this feature, one can only say that it was older than the latest plough marks. The second feature was an oval spot of black earth rich in charcoal, located 30 cm north of the clay spot mentioned above (Fig. 6). This spot (50 x 65 cm) contained twenty potsherds from the lower part of one clay pot with striated surfaces and coarse-grained temper (AI 6247: 169, 192, 213). Pieces of charcoal gathered from the spot were radiocarbon dated to 1513±66 BP (Tln-2230; c. 450—630 AD cal.). One more spot (25 cm in diameter) rich in charcoal was situated 35 cm north-west of the latter, and was radiocarbon dated to 1752±60 BP (Tln-2231; c. 240—380 AD cal.). Both spots certainly belonged to one structure, therefore one can use an average date achieved from these two

dates, i.e. c. 340—430 AD cal. (at the 95 % confidence level: 260—540 AD).

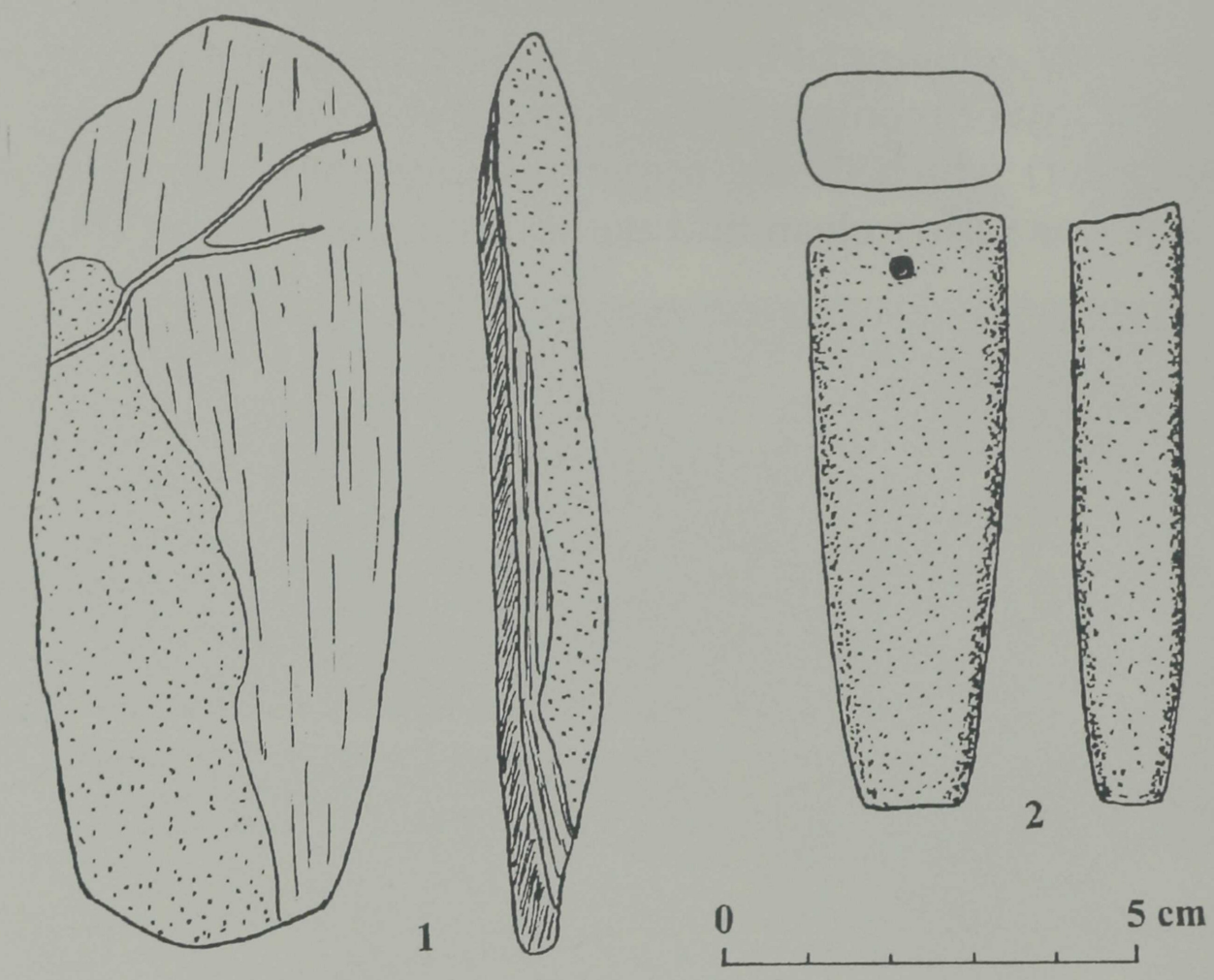

Fig. 8. Two Roman Iron Age whetstones from site II of Ilumäe (AI 6247: 219; 6108: 16).

Finds from the Roman period were mostly found from the spots of black earth, and predominantly consist of ceramics. Altogether 580 potsherds can be dated to the Roman Iron Age. These sherds belong to pots either with striated (19.8%) or with smoothed surfaces (80.2%); no finds with textile-impressed surfaces were discovered. The pottery was mostly made of coarse-grained temper, characteristic for those times; only seven sherds (1.2 %) represent a carinated type with fine-grained temper and polished surfaces which in North Estonia came into the use in the middle of the 5th century AD (Lang 1991, 54—56). Metal finds (16) were mostly small pieces of nails and knives, and at least some of them are of Medieval origin. A small fragment of a bronze spiral and a white glass bead (AI 6247: 147; 6108: 2), similar to corresponding finds from our *tarand*-graves, are certainly from the Roman period. There also are two whetstones of different shapes. One is a fragment of a long and narrow, nicely formed artefact (Fig. 8: 2), and it has good parallels from the Baltic and Finnish Roman Iron Age (Moora 1929, Plate XXXIX: 3; Kivikoski 1973, Fig. 184). The other is wider and thinner than the former and has no typical and datable features (Fig. 8: 1).

The pottery and the few artefacts found from the cultural layer suit well with the radiocarbon dates mentioned above. On this basis one can date the settlement site mainly to the 4th and 5th centuries AD. This date is in good accordance with three cross-bow fibulae and two iron spearheads found as grave goods by the destruction of the *tarand*-grave located 125 m south of the site.[1] In this way, we have here a complex of contemporary antiquities consisting of a settlement site and a grave which certainly belonged to the same community.

The last stage of usage is represented by wide plough-marks, all running east–west (Fig. 9). The width of the plough-marks was usually 16—21 cm, i.e. the plough of this time was much wider than the ard prior to the Late Roman Iron Age. The ploughing technique had also changed – the crosswise ploughing was replaced by ploughing in one direction. This circumstance proves that the shape of the fields also changed, and the so-called strip fields were probably taken into use. One may suppose that few sherds of wheel-made pottery, pieces of iron slag and burned clay found from the mixed (ploughed) layer can be connected with this stage of ploughing – they came by chance into the soil together with manure from the settlement site. The finds under discussion belong to the Medieval period (13th—15th centuries) and indicate that this field was cultivated by people from the settlement site I of Ilumäe (Lang 1997).

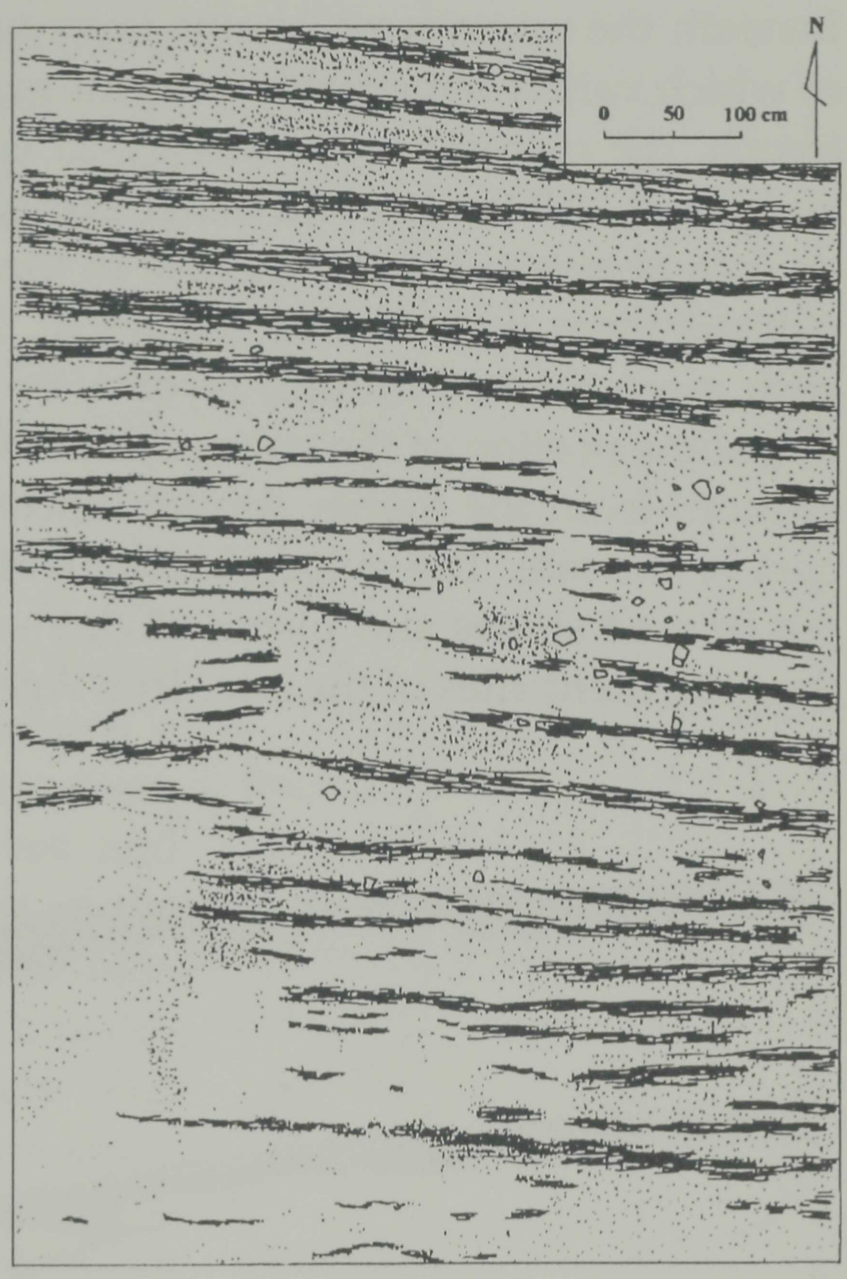

Fig. 9. Early Medieval plough marks from site II of Ilumäe.

[1] Two iron spearheads and a cross-bow fibula are located now in the Estonian History Museum (AM 439); one cross-bow and a large eye fibulae are in the Vanapere farm of Ilumäe.

Settlement site IV of Ilumäe

Settlement site IV is located c. 300 m north of site I, and 450 m north-west of site II of Ilumäe, on the sloping edge of the limestone klint (Fig. 1). Immediately east of the site is a well-known spring but no other antiquities have been registered in its nearest vicinity. The settlement site was investigated via two trenches, the first (15 x 1.5 m) was located in the southern and higher part of the site, while the second (10 x 1.5 m) was dug 13 m north of the former, directly on the edge of the klint.

Beneath the uppermost humus layer was a cultural layer, the thickness of which varied remarkably over the excavation area (Fig. 10). In the first trench, the cultural layer was 5—25 cm thick (15—20 cm on average), and it was still thicker and better preserved in some irregular spots with an area of one-to-two sq. metres. In the northernmost second trench, the cultural layer was slightly thicker (c. 25 cm on average), but no spots with more thicker cultural layer were visible there. One may suppose that some portion of the cultural layer was transported (by ploughing or erosion) from the higher southernmost part to the lower northernmost part of the site. The cultural layer was rich in small pieces of charcoal but burned stones and pieces of clay – which are very characteristic for the settlement sites of the later Iron Age – were almost absent.

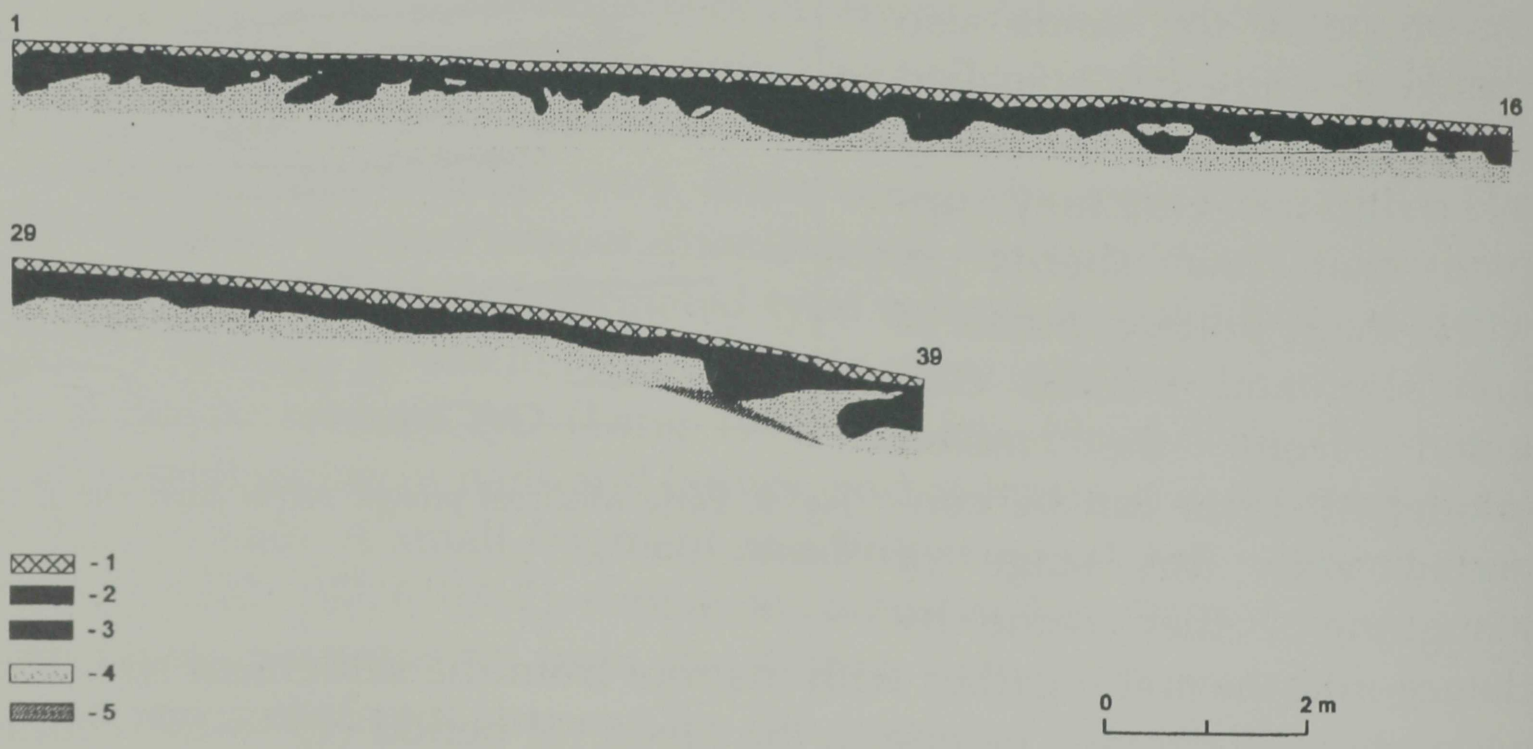

Fig. 10. Western profile of the excavation area in site IV of Ilumäe. 1—16 - the southernmost trench, 29—39 - the northernmost trench. 1 - turf, 2 - cultural layer, 3 - brown sandy soil, 4 - sand, 5 – clay.

No remains of buildings were observed in the excavation area. There were only two pits discovered in the northernmost end of the second

trench, which were dug up to the horizon of natural clay (Fig. 10). The pits were filled with black earth rich in charcoal and nutshell fragments (*Corylus avellana*); the charcoal samples were radiocarbon dated to 1960±112 BP (Tln-2228; c. 90 BC – 130 AD cal.) and 2694±69 BP (Tln-2227; c. 970—800 BC cal.). Under the cultural layer, in both trenches, there were several ard marks discovered in the uppermost layer of natural sand (Fig. 11). Their dimensions (5—7 cm wide) and cross-section were similar to those found in site II of Ilumäe.

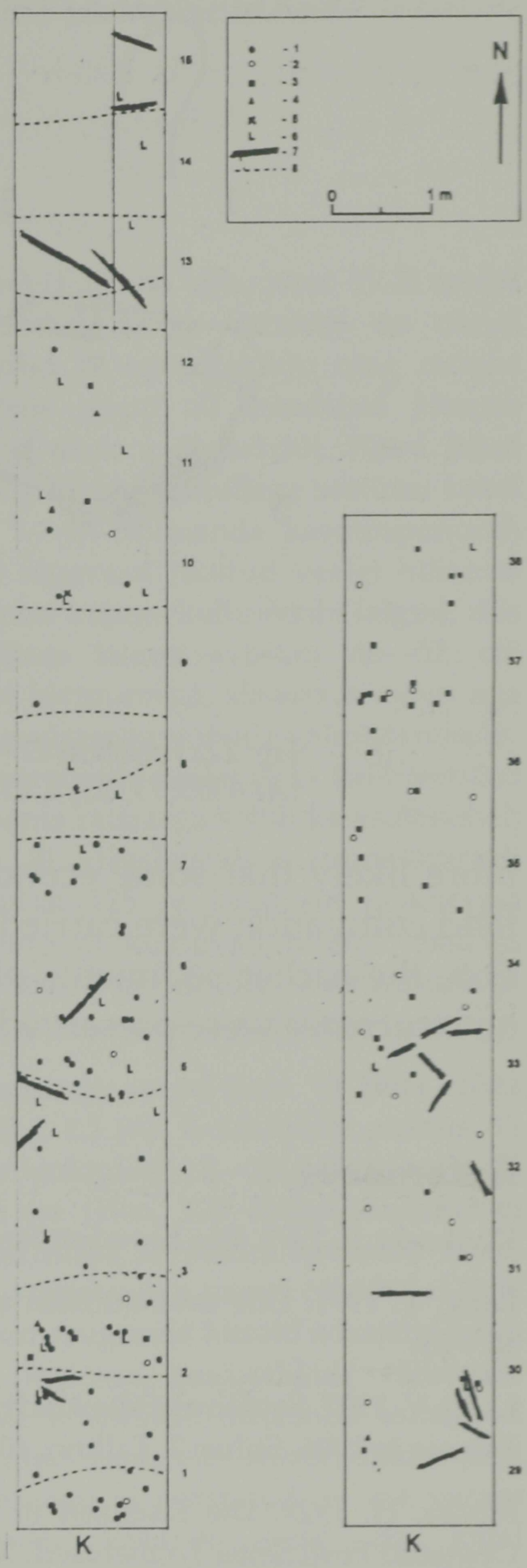

Fig. 11. Excavation plan of site IV of Ilumäe. 1 - potsherd of the Metal Age, 2 - potsherd of the Corded Ware, 3 - nutshell, 4 - piece of quartz, 5 - clay bead, 6 - bone, 7 - ard mark, outline of the spots of cultural layer.

Finds were few in number and the majority of them are potsherds (AI 6303). Twenty-seven of the 148 total sherds (18.2 %) belong to the latest stage of the Corded Ware pottery (Fig. 12: 1, 4). The temper of pots – similar to the Corded Ware pottery from site II – contains a small amount of fine sand, but the decoration consists of narrow grooves and not of cord-impressions. The rest of the pottery belongs to the Early Metal Age, yet as the pieces are very small, it is difficult to date them more precisely (Fig. 12: 2—3, 5—6). Two potsherds are decorated with small pits, and three with notches – these decoration elements were characteristic for the Late Bronze Age. Five very small quartz pieces and a clay bead (Fig. 12: 7) do not help the dating of the site.

One may conclude that the first traces of human settlement in this area belong to the Late Corded Ware time, i.e. the second half of the third millennium BC. Some time later, in the first millennium BC, the same area was used again but evidently not for living. Extremely small potsherds alone (without burned stones, pieces of clay, animal bones, etc.) do not prove the existence of a settlement site. It is

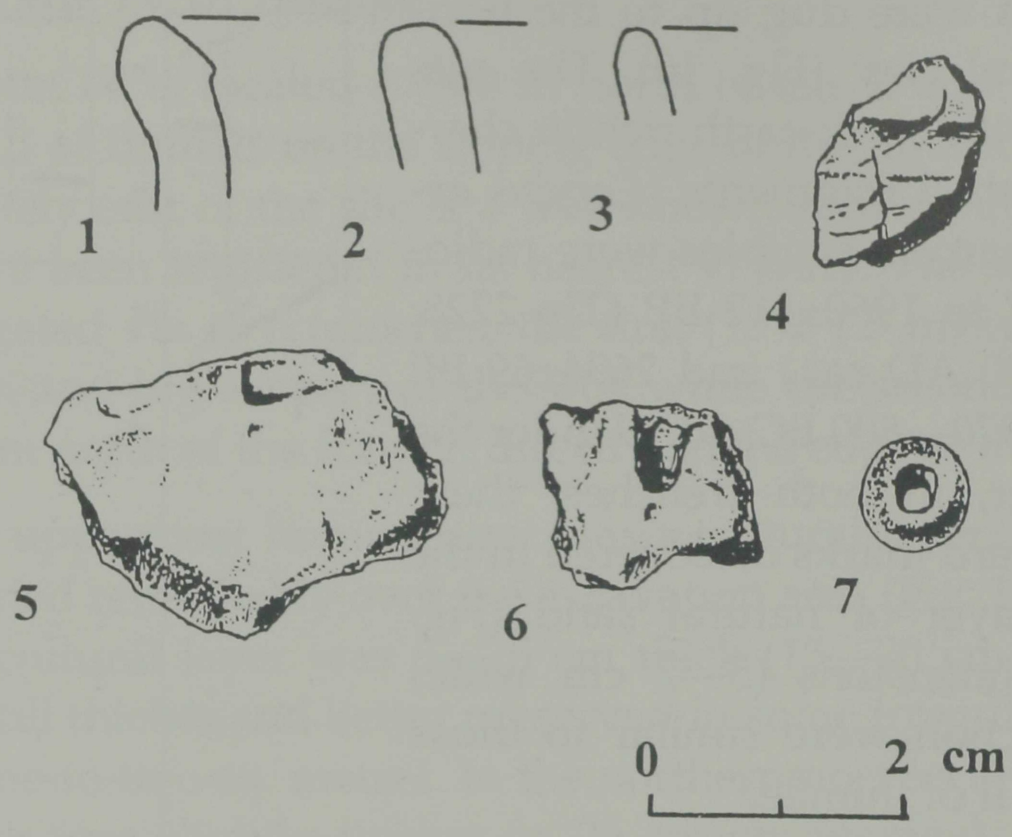

Fig. 12. Potsherds (1—6) and a clay bead from site IV of Ilumäe (AI 6303: 77, 93, 3, 41, 10, 93, 108.)

more likely that some economic activities like the digging of clay and field cultivation were carried out in this area at this time. By the cultivation, the earlier sediments of cultural layer were mixed and, therefore, no structures were preserved.

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KAKS ASULAKOHTA HILISNEOLIITIKUMIST JA VANEMAST RAUAAJAST ILUMÄEL

Valter LANG ja Marge KONSA

Uuriti kahte 1996. aastal avastatud asulakohta Ilumäel (Kadrina khk.; joon. 1). II asulas avastati inimtegevuse jälgi neljast erinevast perioodist. Kõige varasem on olnud nöörkeraamika kultuuri asulakoht, millest oli säilinud 12 savinõukildu ning mõned kvartsikillud ja -laastud (joon. 2). Ajaliselt järgmine etapp oli esindatud kitsaste adrajälgedega aluspõhja liival, allpool rooma rauaaja asula kultuurkihti. Need jäljed kuulusid primitiivsele adrale, mis ei pööranud mulda ümber ja millega seetõttu künti erinevates, üksteisega ristuvates suundades (joon. 3—4). Kolmanda kasutusperioodi moodustaski mainitud asulakiht, mis omakorda oli tugevasti rikutud veelgi hilisema põlluharimisega. Säilinud olid vaid üksikud ebamäärase kujuga kultuurkihi laigud, mis ulatusid aluspõhja liiva, (joon. 5—6). Ühes sellises laigus avastati 46—52 cm läbimõõduga savipäts, mis ülaosas oli segatud peene kivipurruga, alaosas koosnes aga puhtast savist (joon. 7). Võib-olla oli see savi toodud asulasse savinõude valmistamiseks. Paarist tumeda ja söerikka mulla laigust kogutud söeproovide keskmiseks kalibreeritud vanuseks kujunes 4. ja 5. sajand pKr. Nooremasse rooma rauaaega sobib ka asulakohalt leitud keraamika (580 potikildu), kaks luisku (joon. 8), klaashelmes ja pronksspiraali tükike, samuti vähesed säilinud hauapanused asulast 125 m kaugusel paiknevast kivikalmest. Kõnealuse koha viimasesse kasutusperioodi kuuluvad hilised laiad ja ühesuunalised adrajäljed (joon. 9), mis künnikihist leitud keraamika, savitihendite ja šlakitükkide põhjal võib dateerida 13.—15. sajandisse, s.t. samasse aega Ilumäe I asulaga.

Ilumäe IV asula paikneb II asulast 450 m loodes, paeastangu serval (joon. 1). Seda kohta uuriti kahe N—S-suunalise tranšeega (15 x 1,5 ja 10 x 1,5 m). Kultuurkihi paksus oli kaevandite eri osades erinev, lõunapoolses kaevandis keskmiselt 15—20, põhjapoolses ja madalamal paiknevas kaevandis aga keskmiselt 25 cm (joon. 10). Ehitusjäänuseid ei avastatud. Kaevandi N-poolses nurgas leiti kaks loodusliku savikihini kaevatud auku, mis olid täis musta söesegust mulda. Sealt kogutud söeproovide vanus oli 1960±112 ja 2694±69 aastat. Mitmel pool kultuurkihi all avastati samasuguseid kitsaid adrajälgi nagu II asulaski (joon. 11). Leiumaterjal oli napp ja koosnes peaasjalikult väikestest savinõukildudest. 27 potikildu esindavad hilist nöörkeraamikat, ülejäänud kuuluvad varasesse metalliaega (joon. 12). Et kultuurkihis muid asulatele iseloomulikke jälgi (põlenud kivid, savitihendite tükid, loomaluud) peaaegu ei avastatud, ei saa varase metalliaja leide seostada asulakihiga. Nähtavasti kasutati seda ala tollal majandustegevuseks (põlluharimine ja savi kaevamine), millega hävitati ka võimalikud varasemad ehitusjäänused.