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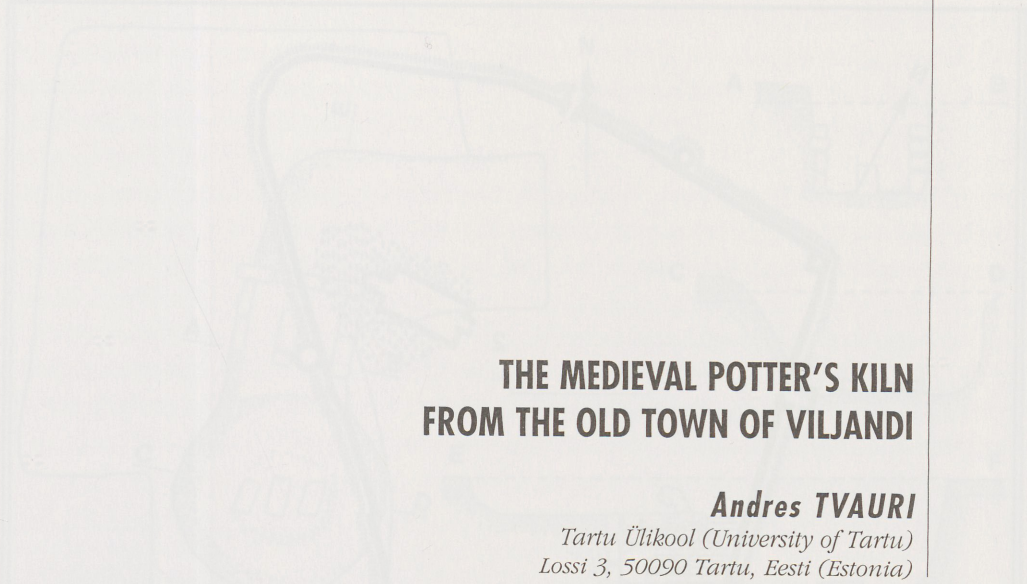
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THE MEDIEVAL POTTER'S KILN FROM THE OLD TOWN OF VILJANDI

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In 1998 a medieval potter's kiln was found from the western part of the Old Town of Viljandi (Fig. 1), between Pikk Street and the medieval moat, in the area around the house at 4 Pikk street. Rescue excavations were carried out by *Arheoloogia-teenistus Ltd.* and these were financed by the Ingrian-Finnish Cultural Society of Viljandi District and Viljandi Town Government (Tvauri 1998).

The potter's kiln consisted of a fire-box and a ware-chamber (Fig. 2). The kiln was erected partially below the surface of the earth. Only these underground parts had preserved, and these were filled with ashes, pieces of charcoal, fragments of the clay vault of the stove and fragments of pottery broken during firing.

The ash-chamber from the fire-box had preserved, and had been built in a hole dug into natural clay soil. The chamber was made of granite and baked bricks connected with clay; it measured 50 cm deep, 60 cm wide and 80 cm long. In the middle of the ware-chamber, two bricks were placed flatwise and one upright; their function seems to have been to support the metal ash-grate that had not preserved. There was a layer of ash and charcoal in the bottom of the chamber. A 15-cm-thick yellowish layer of soil and clay covered this ware-chamber, and this seems to have been the clay originally covering the vault for heat insulation. From this layer of clay, a fragment of a spinning-whorl made of sandstone was found (VM 10620: 1865). A small part of the vault covering the eastern wall of the ash-chamber had preserved unbroken.

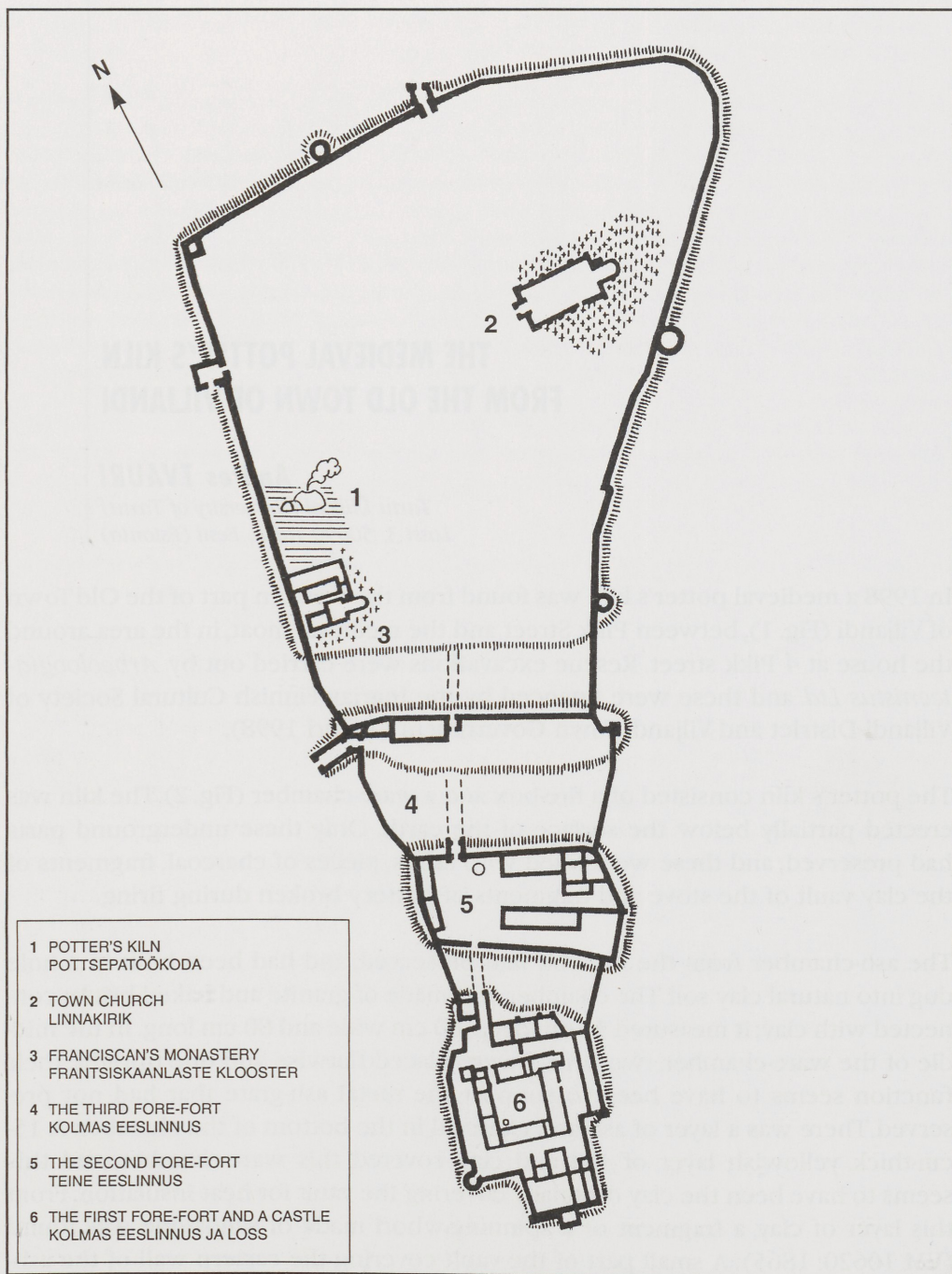


Fig. 1. Location of a medieval potter's kiln in Viljandi.
Joon. 1. Keskaegse pottsepatõõkoja asukoht Viljandis.

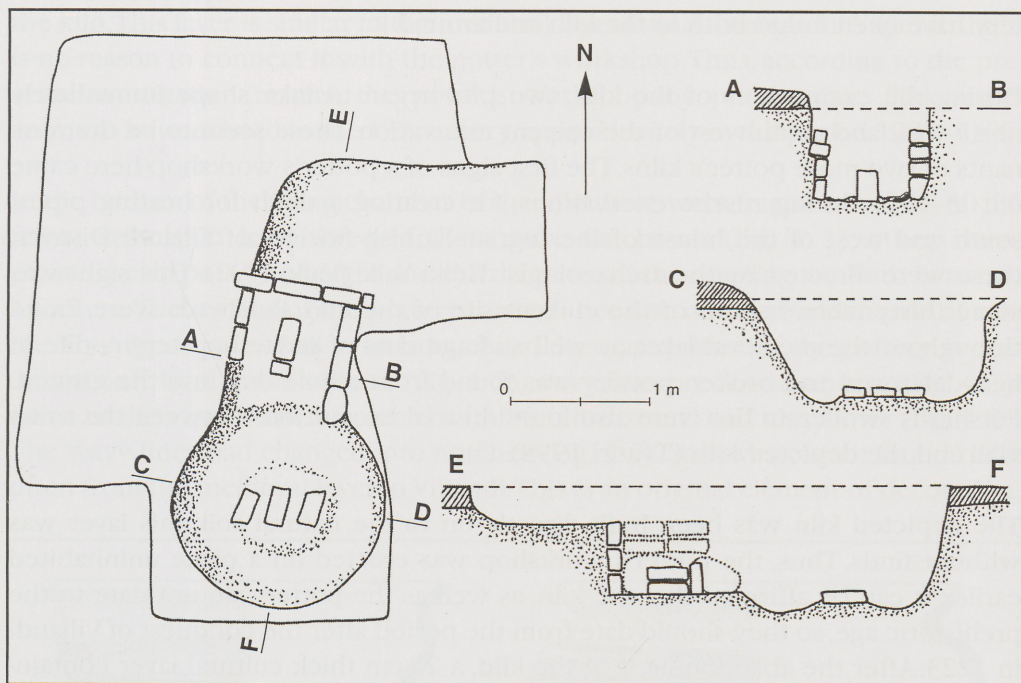


Fig. 2. Medieval potter's kiln in Viljandi.

Joon. 2. Keskaegne pottsepatöökoda Viljandis.

From the round-shaped firing-chamber a socket with a diameter of about 1.6 m had preserved and it was up to 90 cm deep from the original earth level. From the bottom of the socket, many potsherds, as well as fragments of the clay-made parts of the kiln were found. In the centre of the socket, three bricks were located side by side. Perhaps they had supported a clay floor or a metal grate for pottery. In the clay vault, covering the ware-chamber, there were holes for controlling the process of firing. In front of the kiln, on the other side of the fire-box, at the same level as the edge of the ash-chamber, there was a pit, the bottom and sides of which were filled with black soil mixed with charcoal. In this layer many potsherds, animal bones, burnt clay and fragments of bricks could be traced. The upper part of the pit was filled with a yellowish layer of clay and sand, similar to the layer covering the fire-box.

Unfortunately the parts of the kiln that have survived are too few to make a reliable reconstruction of its appearance. The position of the flues inside the kiln is unclear, as well as the place where pots were laid for firing. Since the kiln seems to have been quite primitive, some pottery broke during firing. Some of them were heated too much, as a result the pottery began to bubble and melted, losing its shape. This seems to be the reason why so many fragments of damaged pot-

tery have been found both in the kiln and around it.

During the excavations of the kiln, two pits began to take shape immediately north-west and south-west of the current excavation. These seem to be the remnants of two more potter's kilns. The first signs of a potter's workshop here came out in 1991 during rescue excavations, for creating a ditch for heating pipes, south and west of the house of the Ingrian-Finnish Society of Viljandi District; these were directed by the archaeologist Heiki Valk (Valk 1992). This sight was some thirty metres south of the current site of the kiln. Potsherds were found throughout the medieval layer, as well as fragments of melted pottery. A pile of heat-destroyed and broken pottery was found from a hole dug into the ground. Potsherds swollen in fire were also found in trial excavations between the town wall and the depicted kiln (Tvauri 1998).

The depicted kiln was been built directly on to the natural soil; this layer was without finds. Thus, the potter's workshop was erected on a place uninhabited earlier. It can be affirmed that the kiln, as well as the pottery, do not date to the prehistoric age, so they should date from the period after the conquest of Viljandi in 1223. After the abandonment of the kiln, a 20-cm thick cultural layer containing much charcoal accumulated on its remnants. This layer also contained fragments of potters' kilns and of pottery broken during firing. This layer seems to have accumulated after the abandonment of the depicted kiln, while the neighbouring kilns were still in use. From this layer a small penannular brooch was found (Fig. 3). According to its appearance it dates to the 13th century (Heiki Valk,

pers. comm.). A small iron key (VM 10620: 1552) was also found, as well as a stone weight for a spinning-loom or a fishing-net (VM 10620: 1369), and a fragment of the rim of a clay vessel with a hole drilled into it. The finds from the next, less charcoal containing layer, are also medieval, although slightly younger: unglazed pottery, stoneware pottery and nails with a flat head. Only one potsherd, with glazing on its inner side, was found (VM 10620: 1538). Some fragments of burnt clay were also discovered and these are details of

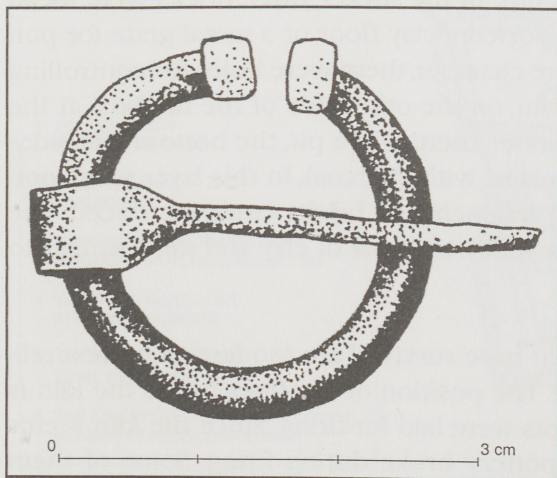


Fig. 3. Penannular brooch. (VM 10620: 1551.)
Joon. 3. Hoburaudsõlg.

the kiln. This layer is similar to the medieval layer found throughout Viljandi; there is no reason to connect it with the potter's workshop. Thus, according to the present investigation results, the potter's workshop by present-time Pikk street seems to have existed in the 13th century, approximately in the period 1223–1300.

In the bottom of the firing-chamber of the kiln there were fragments of 20–30 different vessels. At least three of them were flat bowls (Fig. 4: 1); others were paunchy clay pots. The height and the diameter of the opening are both between 15–25 cm. The surface of the pottery is rough because of the abundant use of rubble. The upper part of all vessels has been decorated. Most of the pottery is decorated only by horizontal lines (Fig. 4: 2); wavy lines are less abundant (Fig. 4: 3). Some of the vessels are decorated with both horizontal and wavy lines (Fig. 4: 4). The wavy lines had changed into notches (Fig. 4: 5). Such vessels are found quite often from the medieval layer in Viljandi. This is an original element of decoration,

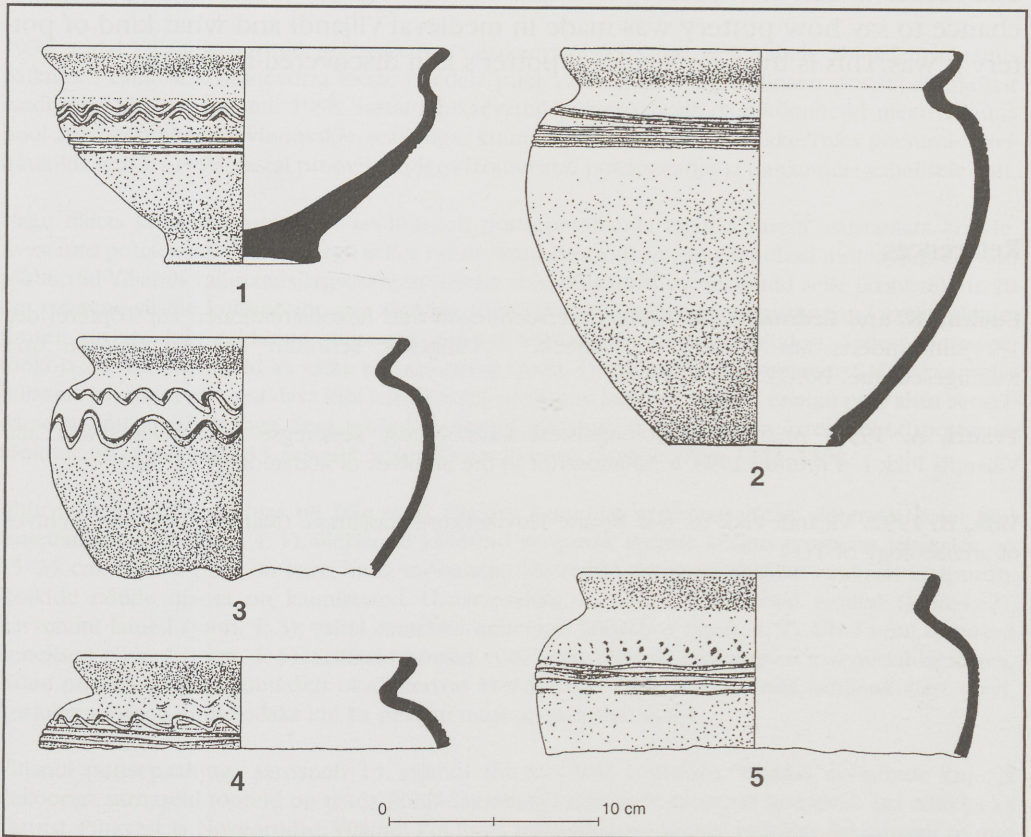


Fig. 4. Decorated pottery from Viljandi. (VM 10620: 935/3; 935/1; 935/2; 935/5; 935/4.)
Joon. 4. Ornamenditud pottseps Viljandist.

although sometimes such ornamentation could have formed accidentally. In the case of a vessel found from the bottom of the ware-chamber, a wavy decorating line has changed into notches. The vessels have been fired in conditions favourable to oxidation and they are mostly a greyish yellow colour. The firing was unequal – there are both black and light areas on the surface of one vessel.

The course of investigations does not yet let us say where the potter had come from. A kiln very similar to that of Viljandi has been found in Lübeck (Buchin & Erdmann 1986). Pottery with similar decoration and edge shape was found from the northern German areas, the coastal Baltic cities, but also from medieval layers of Tartu, Pihkva and Novgorod. The origin of the town of Viljandi is connected foremost with the arrival of merchants and artisans from Germany. So perhaps the potter came from the northern part of Germany.

The medieval kiln of Viljandi is an important finding. For the first time there is a chance to say how pottery was made in medieval Viljandi and what kind of pottery it was. This is the first medieval potter's kiln discovered in Estonia.

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KESKAEGNE POTTSEPAHI VILJANDI VANALINNAST

Andres Tvaari

1998. aastal uuriti Viljandi vanalinnas, Pika tänava ja keskaegse vallikraavi vahelisel alal, Pikk t. 4 krundil, keskaegset pottsepaahju (joon. 1). Pooleldi maa sisse rajatud ahi koosnes põletuskambri ning koldest (joon. 2). Ahjust olid säilinud vaid maa sees olnud osad, mida täitis tuhk, söetükid, katkendid ahju savikummist ning põletamisel purunenud savinõudest. Koldest oli säilinud maakividest ja tellistest laotud ning saviga seotud tuhakast. Kasti keskele oli asetatud telliseid, millele võis arvatavalt toetuda rauast tuharest. Sütt ja tuhka sisaldava tuhakasti peal oli kuni 15 cm paksune kollase saviliiva lade, mis pärines koldekummi katnud savist soojusisolatsiooni kihist. Samast kihist saadi liivakivist valmistatud purunenud värtnakeder. Tuhakasti peale langenud koldekummist oli tervena säilinud vaid väike osa. Ümara kujuga põletuskambrit fikseeriti 1,6 m läbimõõduga lohk, mis algselt võis olla kuni 90 cm sügav. Lohu põhjas oli kolm üksteise kõrvale asetatud telliskivi, millele võis toetuda ahju savipõrand või metallrest, kuhu laoti savinõud. Põletuskambrit katnud savikummi olid tehtud piilumisaugud põletusprotsessi jälgimiseks. Ahjust ja selle lähiümbrusest leitud arvukad savinõukillud, mille hulgas oli palju fragmente ka põletamisel deformeerunud anumatest, näitab, et avastatud pottsepaahi oli küllaltki algeline.

1998. aastal Viljandis uuritud pottsepaahju väljakaevamistel satuti veel kahele ahjujäänusele, mis paiknesid esimesest mõnevõrra loode ja edela pool. Varasemad märgid siinsest pottsepatöökojast saadi juba 1991. aastal, mil 1998. aastal läbikaevatud pottsepaahjust mõnikümmend meetrit lõuna pool avastati rohkesti savinõukilde, sealhulgas kuumuses sulanud nõude tükke. Tules porsunud savinõukilde leiti ka 1998. aastal prooviurfidega läbiuuritud pottsepaahju ja linnamüüri vaheliselt alalt.

Nagu näitas koha stratigraafiline analüüs, oli pottsepatöökoda rajatud varem asustamata kohale. Avastatud pottsepaahi, samuti nagu selles valmistatud keraamikagi, pole kindlasti muinasaegsed, vaid pärinevad Viljandi vallutamisjärgsest ajast. Pärast ahju hülgamist on tekkinud selle jäänustele u. 20 cm paksune süsine kultuurkiht, mis sisaldab ahjutükke ning põletamisel purunenud savinõukilde. Ilmselt on see kiht tekkinud siinsamas asunud hilisematest pottsepaahjudest. Sellest, pottsepatöökoja-aegsest kihist leiti ka väike hoburaudsõlg (joon. 3), mis pärineb 13. sajandist. Järgneva, veidi hilisema ja vähem sütt sisaldava kihi leiumaterjal on samuti keskaegne, kuid esialgu pole alust seostada seda pottsepatöökojaga. Seni tehtud uuringud näitavad, et Pika tänava äärest leitud pottsepatöökoda on tegutsenud 13. sajandil, kõige tõenäolisemalt ajavahemikus 1223–1300.

Ahju põletuskambri põhjas oli jäänuseid 20–30st erinevast savinõust. Neist vähemalt kolm olid lamedad vaagnad (joon. 4: 1), ülejäänud kõhukad savipotid. Pottide kõrgus ja suuava läbimõõt on 15–25 cm. Nõude pind on kare, kuna toorainena kasutatud savimass sisaldab rohkesti kivipurdu. Kõikide nõude ülaosa on kaunistatud. Ornamendiks on olnud sisseveetud jooned (joon. 4: 2), harvemini lained (joon. 4: 3); vahel esinevad mõlemad üheskoos (joon. 4: 4). Ühel nõul esinevad lainelised täkked (joon. 4: 5). Selliseid nõusid võib leida Viljandi keskaegsest kultuurkihist sageli. Nõud on põletatud ebaühtlaselt oksüdeerivas keskkonnas – enamasti on nad hallikaskollast värvi, kusjuures esineb nii heledaks kui ka peagu mustaks põlenud kohti.

Viljandi pottsepaahjuga sarnaneb 13. sajandi ahi, mis leiti Lüübekist. Viljandi savinõude kuju ja dekooriga sarnaseid tooteid on teada Põhja-Saksamaa Läänemere-äärsetest linnadest, aga näiteks ka Tartust, Pihkvast ja Novgorodist. Viljandi kui linna tekkimine on seotud eelkõige Saksamaalt tulnud kaupmeeste ja käsitöölistega. Võib oletada, et ka see pottseppmeister, kes ehitas esimese pottsepaahju Pika tänava äärde jäävale alale, oli pärit Põhja-Saksamaalt.