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Esikaas: rihmajagaja Harjumaalt Harmi kalmest
Cover: strap-divider from Harmi grave in Harjumaa

Tagakaas: kaelavõru fragment Harjumaalt Harmi kalmest
Back cover: fragment of neck-ring from Harmi grave in Harjumaa

Toimetuskolleegium:

Ants Kraut
Valter Lang
Anneli Randla
Jaan Tamm
Toomas Tamla
Ülle Tamla
Heiki Valk

Uus 18, Tallinn 10111, Eesti
e-mail: info@muinas.ee

Kujundus ja makett:

Jaana Kool

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WEAPONS FIND AND ANCIENT HARBOUR SITE AT VILTINA KÄO-MATSI

Marika MÄGI

Ajaloo Instituut (Institute of History), Rüütli 6, 10130 Tallinn, Eesti (Estonia)

marika.magi@mail.ee

In the summer of 1999, several inventory trips aimed at discovering harbour sites on Late Iron Age Saaremaa were resumed. This time, the southernmost part of the Põide parish, Kõiguste Peninsula, was investigated.

The study of ancient harbour sites on Gotland and elsewhere in Sweden has revealed that prehistoric harbours are often indicated by burial grounds located near the former coastline (Carlsson 1992; 1999). It is essential also to consider that the rate of elevation of the Saaremaa land mass – just as on Gotland – is about 2.5–3 m per 1000 years. The coastal zone of southern Saaremaa is low and flat, where changes in the coastline have been considerable.

During the inventory, special attention was paid to the surroundings of the Viltina village because of the Viltina Rutiränk grave there, which was completely excavated in 1940. The burials dated mostly to the 10th–12th centuries and were remarkable for the rich grave goods. In contrast to most of the other Late Iron Age cemeteries on the island, great amounts of foreign pottery sherds were collected from the area of the Rutiränk grave, most of them probably belonging to the ware that had been used and then broken during miscellaneous rites associated with the burial. Since the soil of the Kõiguste Peninsula is stony and most unproductive, such wealth could not have originated from farming (Mägi 1999, 207–208). Artur Vassar, one of the archaeologists who excavated the Rutiränk grave, noticed that the location of the grave on the contemporary coast, at the end of a little bay protected from sea winds by small islets, could link it with a possible harbour (Vassar 1940; Fig.1).

THE HARBOUR SITE

Three inventory trips were organised in the spring of 1999, aimed at finding a harbour site at Viltina. We moved along the Late Iron Age coastline, taking soil samples at intervals for phosphate analyses. The samples were later analysed in the laboratory for geoarchaeology and ancient technology at the Institute of History, Tallinn. The phosphate content became high at about 50 m NNE from the Rutiränk grave, and about 100 m further, along the slope turning eastwards, where

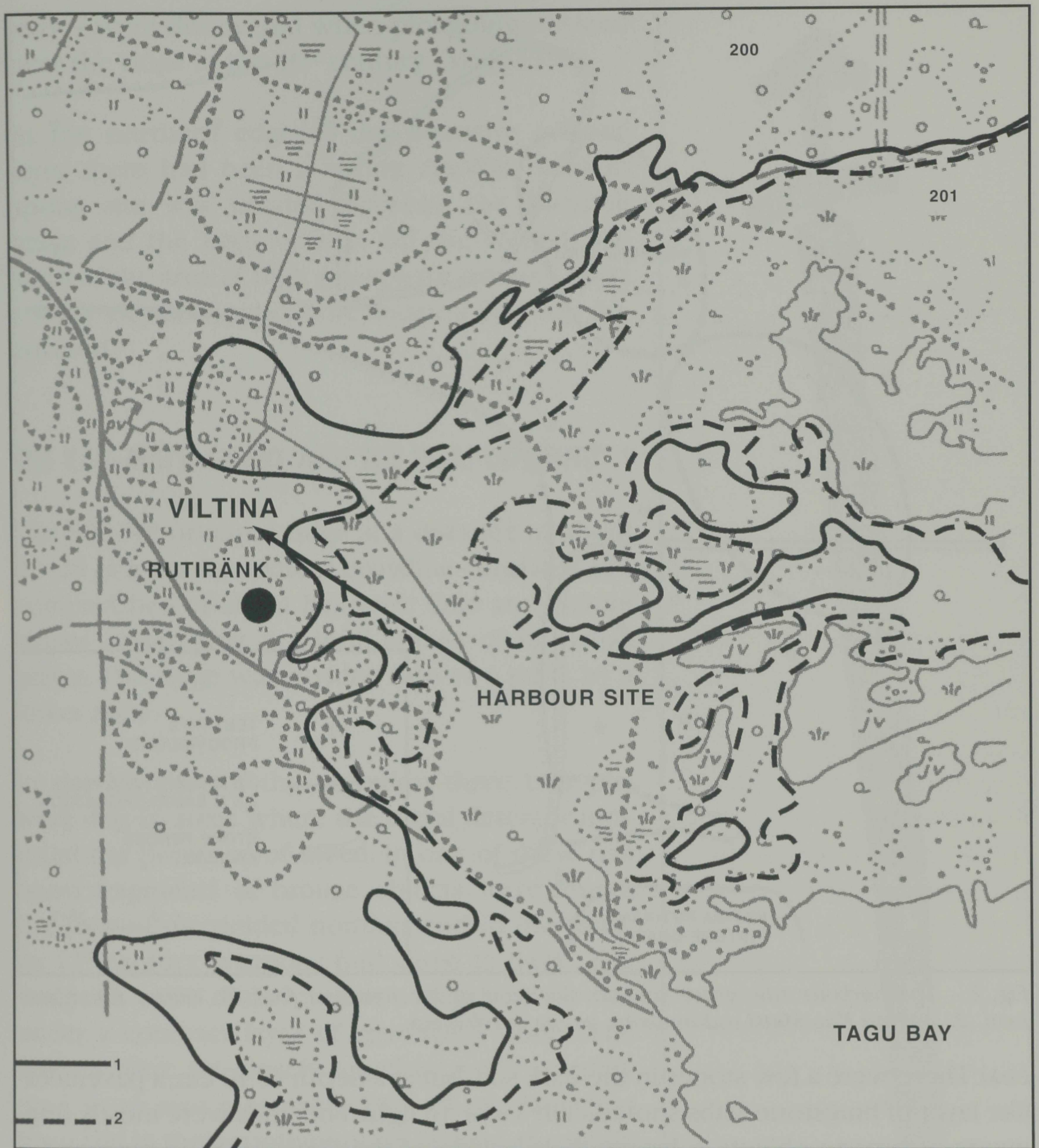


Fig. 1. The surroundings of the Viltina graves and the harbour site. 1 – 3-m-contour line, 2 – 2-m-contour line.

Joon. 1. Viltina kalmete ja sadamakoha ümbrus. 1 – 3 m samakõrgusjoon; 2 – 2 m samakõrgusjoon. M 1: 10 000

the coastline must have been 1000 years ago (Figs. 1 and 2). The ground at the foot of the slope is especially moist even nowadays. Trial pits dug in the upper part of the slope revealed a layer of black soil, about 40 cm thick, which contained some burnt stones, uncremated bone fragments, and a few pieces of char-

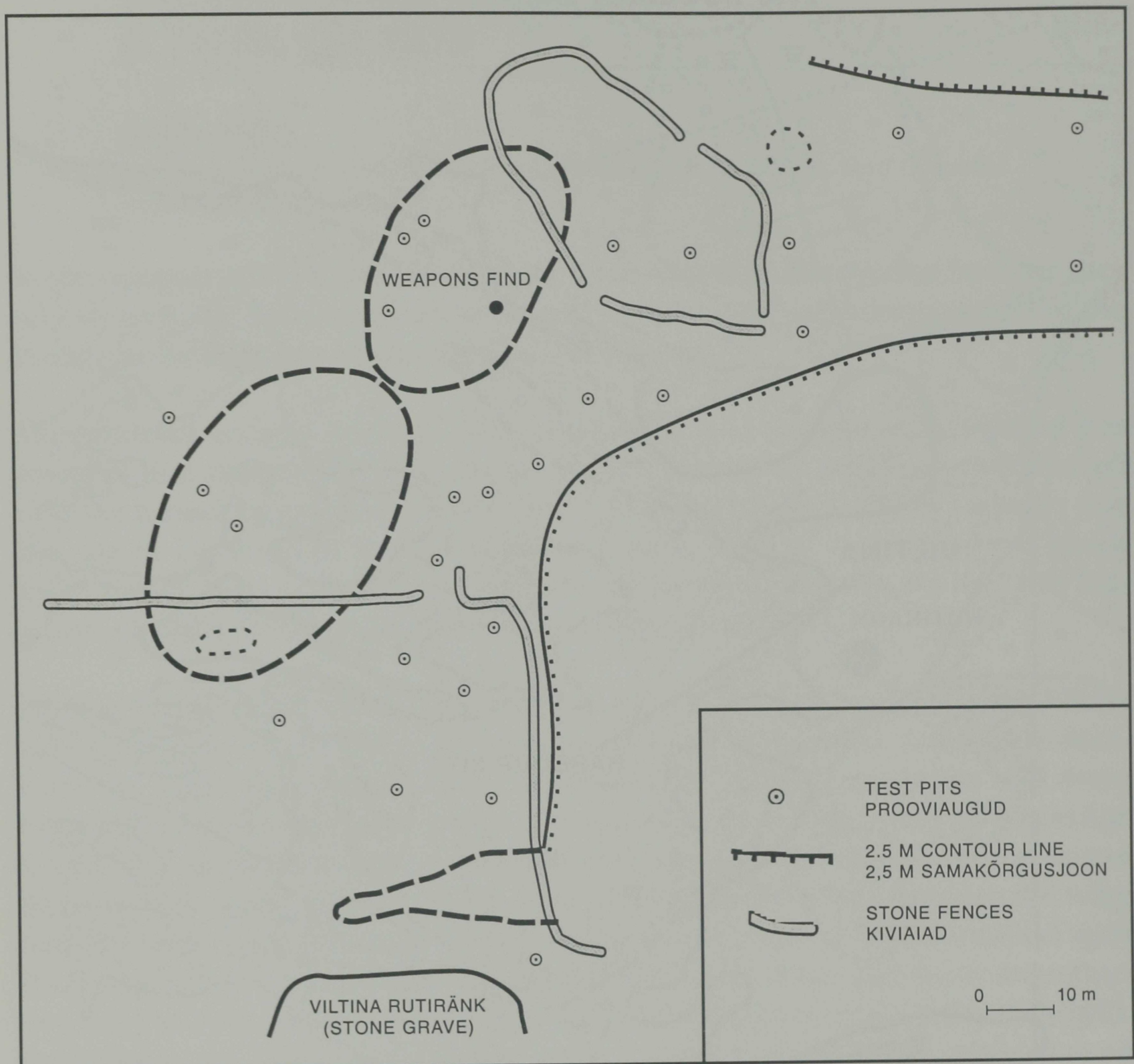


Fig. 2. The harbour site, grave and the location of the weapons find in Viltina Käo-Matsi.
Joon. 2. Viltina Käo-Matsi sadamakohht, kalme ja relvleid.

coal. There were a few stones in the dark soil, but at a depth of 40 cm, a pavement-like layer of limestone slabs sporadically came to light. The finds were mostly fragments of bronze objects, a bronze belt buckle of the Gotland-Baltic type, and a fragment of a boat rivet (Mägi 1999).

The cultural layer of the Viltina harbour site resembled that of the Tornimäe harbour site at the eastern end of the Saaremaa Island, but was less intensive and not as thick. According to a local farmer, old people have said that oak beams or planks have been found from the place where a ditch cuts through the E-W oriented ridge beginning at the harbour site. This is another parallel to the Tornimäe prehistoric harbour site, where the remains of an oak palisade – a presumable

jetty - were discovered when ploughing the land near the ridge in the 19th century (Mägi 1998).

At the northern edge of the intensive cultural layer there had been a spring. Another evident spring site was situated between the Rutiränk grave and the harbour site. On the W and NW sides of the area of high phosphate content skirts a stony elevation, where the weapon find was discovered.

THE KÄO-MATSI GRAVE AND THE WEAPONS FIND

The SW-NE oriented ridge at a distance of about 20-25 m from the ancient coastline consisted of a compact bed of about head-size lime and granite stones, resembling the infill stones of Saaremaa graves. The ridge was divided into two parts by a lower zone.

In the NE part of the elevation three trial pits were dug in areas where the metal detector indicated the presence of metal. In one of these pits burnt fragments of bronze objects were found, the second pit yielded nothing, and in the third, an 11th-century weapons find came to light. The weapons were discovered at a depth of 30 cm, under a compact layer of head-sized stones. The objects were set closely together, partly overlapping, in an area measuring 70 x 25 cm. They had been laid in their contemporary ground, the sandy soil containing some smaller stones. Some of these had evidently been burnt. The stony elevation was evidently a stone grave with cremation burials, typical for Late Iron Age Saaremaa. Since the trial pits in the SW part of the ridge yielded nothing, it is not clear whether the grave had continued there or not.

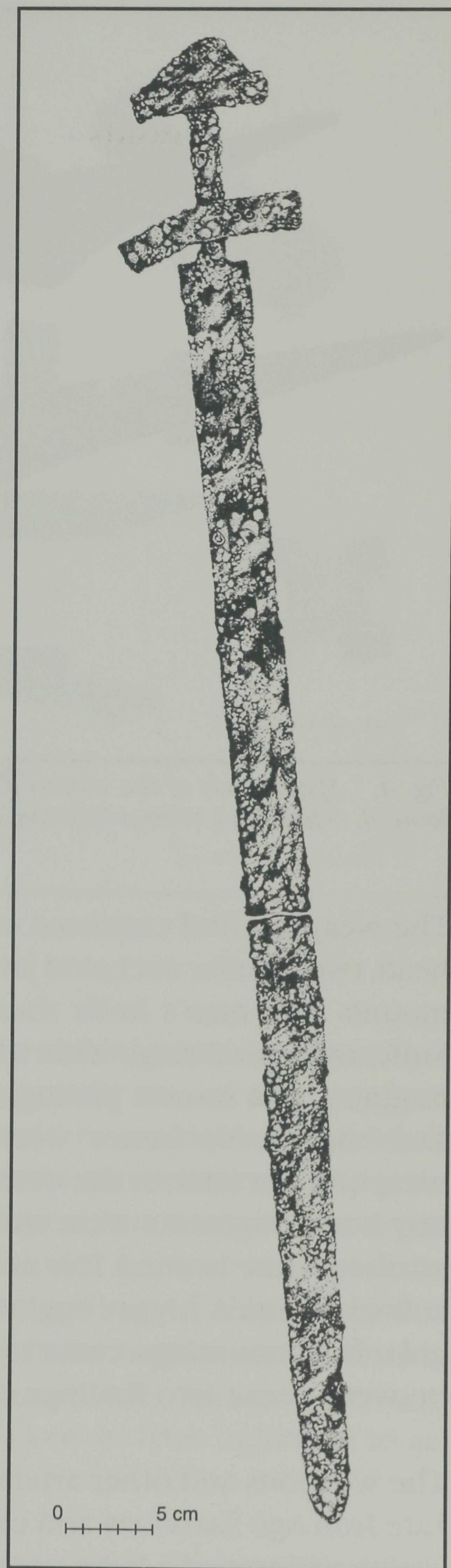


Fig. 3. The sword of the Viltina Käo-Matsi weapons find.
Joon. 3. Mõõk Viltina Käo-Matsi relvaleiust.

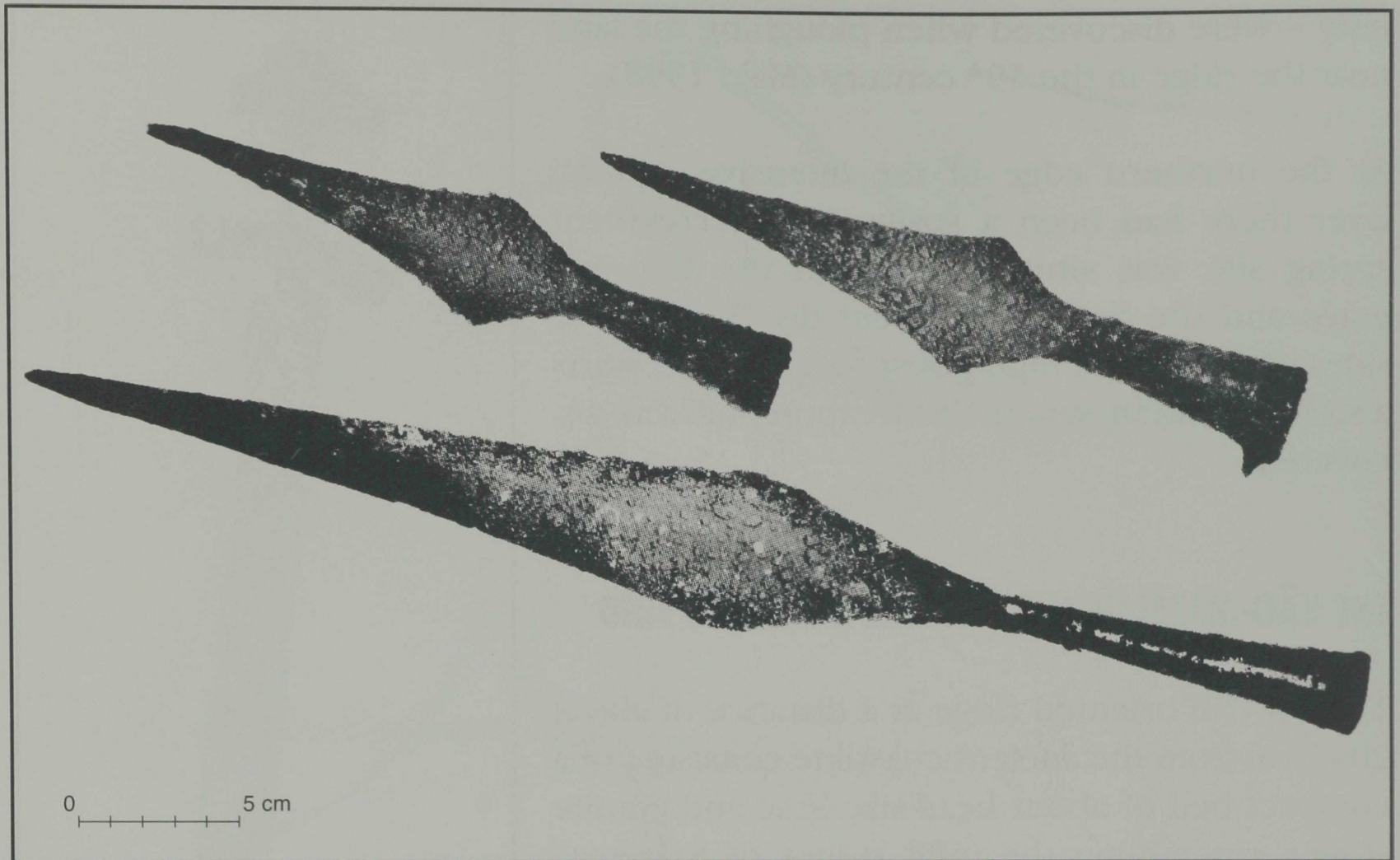


Fig. 4. *Spearheads of the Viltina Käo-Matsi weapons find.*
 Joon. 4. *Odaotsad Viltina Käo-Matsi relvleiust.*

The weapons find consisted of a sword with a broken blade (Fig. 3), a large spearhead, two smaller socketed javelin-heads (Fig. 4), a knife together with the bronze mounts of a man's knife sheath, a belt buckle of Gotland-Baltic type, a smaller knife, two spiral rings with wide middle-plates, bits, iron bridle mountings, and a fragment of a bronze plating (Fig. 5). The objects had deliberately been damaged and burned. No bones were found in the immediate neighbourhood of the weapons, but later, in the conservation process in the laboratory, it appeared that tiny bone fragments were stuck to the sword, perhaps from the pyre where the artefacts were burned. It is not clear, however, if those are fragments of human or animal bones. A bigger agglomeration of cremated bones, together with rectangular belt mountings, came to light about 30 cm from the weapons. A connection between these two findings could not be proven though.

The weapons and other artefacts in the find were common in the stone graves of Late Iron Age Saaremaa and can be dated to the 11th century. The weapon set consisting of a sword, a large spearhead and two javelins occurs only in wealthy male burials. Though sword hilts or sometimes blade fragments were quite typical grave goods for 11th-12th century Saaremaa, whole buried swords have rarely been found. The occurrence of several knives in one burial was obviously associated



Fig. 5. Other artefacts of the Viltina Käo-Matsi find.
 Joon. 5. Teised esemed Viltina Käo-Matsi leiust.

with burial rites and was common both in cremation and inhumation graves. It is noteworthy that the rings in the Käo-Matsi find, especially one of them, appear too small for an adult man. At the same time, it should be mentioned that small rings have been found in other stone graves of Saaremaa, too, with evidently male burials. Moreover, rings were not always worn on fingers, but also in other ways. In the 12th-13th century inhumation burials, additional ornaments, especially brooches and rings, were sometimes deposited in the coffin, probably as an offering to the deceased. Although, for instance in the Livonian territory, boys' burials with weapons have been frequently uncovered (Šnore 1996; Zariņa 1997 etc), the rich composition of the Käo-Matsi find is more likely to have belonged to an adult man.

It is uncommon to find so many objects piled together even in the wealthiest Late Iron Age burials on Saaremaa, though in several cases two or three weapons have been recorded at the same spot in the peripheral area of the burial. The weapons and knives, as well as bits, often plausibly marked the border of the burial, and

were found on different sides of the cremation deposit situated in the middle. It is possible, therefore, that the objects of the Kāo-Matsi find were burned either to commemorate somebody who had been killed elsewhere, or as an addition to the actual burial, as has been normal in the burials of the same period in Couronia and Latgallia (Kulikauskas *et al.* 1961, 382–383; Radiņš 1996). A similar set of weapons and other finds were uncovered in a wooden cist at a Daugava Livonian cemetery Vampenieši I, where it was, because of the absence of bones, considered to have been a cenotaph (Šnore 1996, 114–115). The location of the Kāo-Matsi grave at the harbour site indicates the possibility of a more than average international impact on the burial customs here.

Acknowledgements

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Viltina Käo-Matsi relvaid ja muistne sadamakoht

Marika Mägi

1999. aasta suvel jätkati arheoloogilisi inspeksioone Saaremaa muinasaegsete sadamakohtade väljaselgitamiseks. Sel korral uuriti 1940. a. läbikaevatud Viltina Rutiränga kalme kõrvale jäävat kunagist mereranda saare lõunarannikul Kõiguste poolsaarel. Rohkete importesemete ning võõrapärase keraamikaga Rutiränga kalme seotust muinassadamaga oli oletanud juba Artur Vassar; sellele viitas ka sadamaks sobiv asukoht omaaegse merelahe sopis (joon. 1).

Inspeksioonidel liiguti piki u. 1000 aasta tagust rannajoont ning võeti mullaproove fosfaadisisalduse määramiseks. Rutiränga kalmest u. 50 m põhjakirde suunas algas tumeda kultuurkihi ja kõrge fosfaadisisaldusega vöönd piki kunagist randa (joon. 2). Prooviaukudest saadi mõned leiud: pronksesemete katkeid, ojamaa-balti tüüpi pronkspannal ning paadineet.

Sadamakoht piirnes loodeküljelt suurematest kividest kõrgendikuga, kuhu tehtud prooviaugud ei andnud edelapoolses osas tulemusi. Kirdepoolsesse ossa tehtud prooviaukudest tuli välja aga üksikuid esemeid ning 11. sajandisse dateeritud relvaid. Seega on kõrgendiku kirdeosas tegemist noorema rauaaja kivitalmega, mis nimetati lähima talu järgi Viltina Käo-Matsi kalmeks.

Relvaid koosnes pooleks murtud mõõgast (joon. 3), suurest odaotsast, kahest putkega viskeodaot-sast (joon. 4), kahest noast, millest üks oli koos noatupe pronksäärise, ojamaa-balti tüüpi pandlast, kahest laia keskkeermega spiraalsõrmusest, suitsetest, valjanaastudest ning pronkspealistuse tükist (joon. 5). Esemed asetsesid kobaras u. 30 cm sügavuses liivasel pinnal, suuremate raudkivide all. Kõik esemed olid põlenud. Leiu läheduses luid ei olnud, väike põlenud luupesa tuli välja leiukobarast u. 30 cm kauguselt. Taoline relvakogumi esinemine üheskoos hunnikus on Saaremaa kivitalmes ebatavaline. Ilmselt on tegemist kas kenotaafi või matusele täiendavalt kaasa pandud panustekomplektiga.