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Excavations of the destroyed grave at Harni

Kaevamised hävinud Harni kalmel

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Esi- ja tagakaas: 2001. aastal Haapsalust leitud ahjukahlid. 16. saj. esimene pool.
Cover and back cover: Stove-tiles found from Haapsalu in 2001. The first half of the 16th century.

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TARTU ÜLIKOOLI
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SUNDEKSEMPLAR

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THE NORTHERN FOREWALL OF THE KURISTA HILL-FORT

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The hill-fort of Kurista is located near the western limit of Vooremaa, 4 km west of Jõgeva, on the southern crest of the esker. While the eastern and especially the western side of the hill-fort are protected by the high and sporadically quite steep slopes of the esker, the northern and southern sides of the yard area are separated from the rest of the esker by semicircular end walls. On the northern side a low forewall is also discernible. The yard of the hill-fort lacks cultural layer, but the end walls contain several burnt layers. Salvage excavations have been carried out on the hill-fort (Fig. 1): in 1984 the damaged SE section of the wall was excavated (Lavi & Peets 1986, 370–373), in 1987 the area from the inside foot of the northern end wall to the forewall was investigated (Lavi 1989, 331–335). As a result it was established that the earliest traces of construction remains, belonging to the 9th–10th centuries, were preserved below the northern end wall. More intensively the hill-fort has been used in the 11th–12th centuries.



Fig. 1. The northern forewall of the Kurista hill-fort. View from east.
Joon. 1. Kurista linnamäe põhjapoolne eesvall. Pildistatud idast.

The northern forewall traverses the esker approximately in the east-west direction. While in the eastern part the low forewall is only 10–30 cm high (Fig. 1) and lies at a distance of 20 m from the northern end wall, the western part of the forewall is 50–60 cm high, 5–6 m wide and lies only 13 m north of the end wall. Also, the western end of the forewall is bent towards SW, i.e. towards the end wall (Fig. 2). Besides the forewall the end wall was also protected by oblong pits. The western side of the hill-fort was protected by the very steep slope of the esker, up to 15 m high, and the fen of Linnajärve, with a diameter of nearly 400 m, extending to the foot of the slope.

The investigations in 1987 revealed the remains of only one stage of construction in the forewall. In the excavation of the eastern part of the wall no brand remains were discovered, but they came to light in the trial pits in the central and western parts of the wall (Lavi 1988; Lavi 1989, 334). To obtain information about the construction remains of the forewall, small-scale trial excavations were carried out here within the framework of the research topic “Centre and periphery: town/hill-fort, land and power in Estonia from the Prehistoric period to the Middle Ages”.



Fig. 2. The hill-fort of Kurista. Profile of the excavation I. The higher western part of the forewall bend towards the endwall. View from southeast.
 Joon. 2. Kurista linnamägi. I kaevandi profiil. Eesvalli kõrgem lääneosa pöördub otsavalli suunas. Pildistatud kagust.

RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATIONS

Two trial pits were dug to investigate the northern forewall, I in the central part and II on the outer slope of the western part of the rampart (Fig. 3). **Pit I** was dug 4 m wide, through the wall, and its area was 29 sq. m. In the 50–60 cm thick cul-



Fig. 3. The hill-fort of Kurista. Plan of the hillfort and the excavation plots of 1984, 1987 and 2001.
Joon. 3. Kurista linnamäe plaan ja 1984., 1987. ning 2001. aasta kaevandid.

tural layer, two main deposits could be distinguished (Figs. 2; 4: A, B). In the central part and on the outer side of the wall, sand mixed with other soil prevailed from the sod layer down to the ancient ground level. It contained fragmentarily preserved pieces of decayed timber, which might belong to the timber frame-

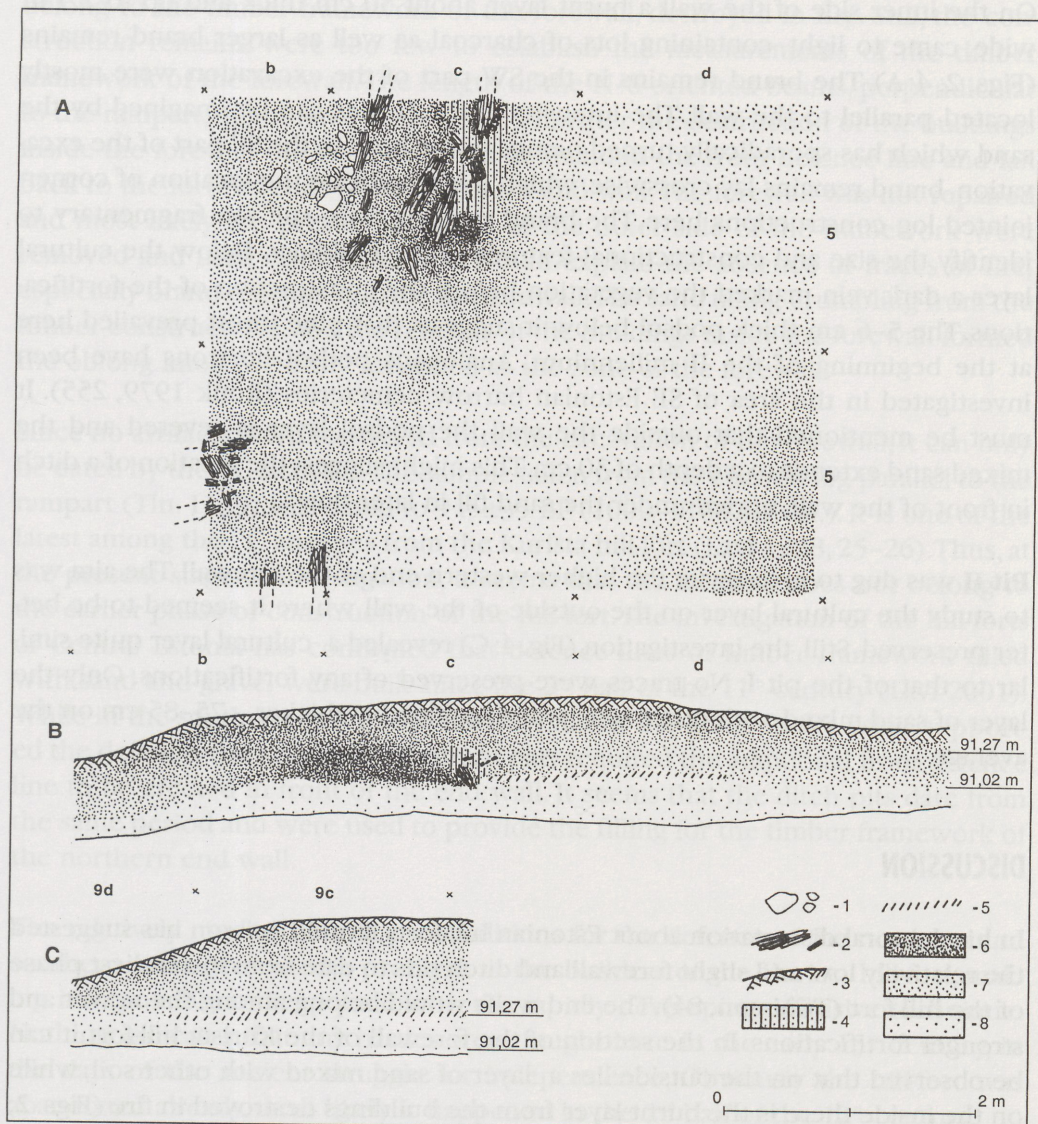


Fig. 4. The hill-fort of Kurista. A - plan of the excavation I; B - profile of the plot I; C - profile of the plot II. 1 - limestone, 2 - brand remains, 3 - sod, 4 - reddish sand, 5 - podsol, 6 - charcoal and brand fragments, 7 - sandy soil, 8 - sand.

Joon. 4. Kurista linnamägi. A - I kaevandi plaan; B - I kaevandi profiil; C - II kaevandi profiil. 1 - paekivi, 2 - tukid, 3 - kamar, 4 - põlenud liiv, 5 - leetekibt, 6 - süsi ja tukijäänused, 7 - mulla-liivasegune kiht, 8 - liiv.

work, erected to support the crumbly filling of the rampart. The traces of such timber construction have been discovered, for instance, in the excavations of the NW end wall of the hill-fort of Kassinurme (Lavi 1998, Fig. 2c; Lavi 2001, 17).

On the inner side of the wall a burnt layer, about 50 cm thick and up to 2.5 m wide, came to light, containing lots of charcoal as well as larger brand remains (Figs. 2; 4: A). The brand remains in the SW part of the excavation were mostly located parallel to the wall. The intensity of the flames can be imagined by the sand which has sporadically turned orange in the heat. In the SE part of the excavation, brand remains lay crosswise, which might indicate the location of corner-jointed log constructions here. The brand remains were still too fragmentary to identify the size and constructional features of the buildings. Below the cultural layer a dark vein marked the vegetation before the construction of the fortifications. The 5–6 cm thick podsol below it suggests that pine forest prevailed here at the beginning of the II millennium. Analogous podsol horizons have been investigated in the area of SE Estonian barrow cemeteries (Rõuk 1979, 255). It must be mentioned that outside the wall the podsol layer is severed and the mixed sand extends to a depth of 30 cm. This might suggest the location of a ditch in front of the wall, buried under the sand fill in later times.

Pit II was dug to investigate the higher western end of the forewall. The aim was to study the cultural layer on the outside of the wall where it seemed to be better preserved. Still, the investigation (Fig. 4: C) revealed a cultural layer quite similar to that of the pit I. No traces were preserved of any fortifications. Only the layer of sand mixed with other soil was considerably thicker – 75–85 cm on the average.

DISCUSSION

In his doctoral dissertation about Estonian hill-forts, Evald Tõnisson has suggested the relatively low and slight forewall and ditch pits to date from the earliest phase of the hill-fort (Tõnisson, 84). The end walls would belong among the newer and stronger fortifications. In the section of the forewall of the Kurista hill-fort it can be observed that on the outside lies a layer of sand mixed with other soil, while on the inside there is the burnt layer from the buildings destroyed in fire (Figs. 2; 4: B). This is quite common on the sites of Estonian hill-forts of the 2nd millennium. Obviously the forewall was also the defence construction consisting of wooden framework of corner-jointed log construction, filled with sand, with adjacent wooden buildings of similar construction – probably shelters – on the inside.

Although one expects to discover traces of fire outside the destroyed hill-fort, in Kurista they came to light on the inner side of the forewall. It is possible that the assailants managed to set on fire the shelters inside the wall, possibly by burning arrows. It seems that the brand remains in the SW corner of the excavation might belong to the timber framework of the forewall, destroyed in fire. Still, the construction remains were too few to establish the measurements of the timber framework of the forewall. The length of the N-S oriented beams, perpendicular to the rampart, might have been 2.3–2.5 m. After the destruction of the buildings inside the forewall the defenders had to abandon the front defence line and fall back to the fortifications of the northern end wall. The forewall was not repaired and most likely the preserved beams of the outer side of the framework were removed and used elsewhere. That would explain the absence of traces of fire, especially brand remains, outside the forewall. The sand filling crumbling from the timber constructions, and the remains of the buildings inside the forewall formed the oblong knoll presently identified as the zone of the forewall.

Since no artifacts were recovered from the excavation of the forewall, it can only be dated by the ^{14}C analyses. The sample taken from the charred log parallel to the rampart (Tln. 1139) was dated to 945 ± 35 BP (1000–1160 AD cal.). It is one of the latest among the ^{14}C analyses from the Kurista hill-fort (Lavi 1988, 25–26). Thus, at the present stage of investigation, it seems that the forewall does not belong to the earlier phase of construction of the hill-fort. The investigation of the hill-forts of Central Estonia has confirmed that defence lines of timber framework filled with sand and gravel were built since the 2nd half of the 11th century (Lavi 2001). While in the southern part of the Kurista hill-fort the knoll on the esker supported the defence, the rather flat northern part required the additional front defence line to be erected in front of the end wall. It seems that the ditch pits date from the same period and were used to provide the filling for the timber framework of the northern end wall.

The relatively modest natural preconditions for the defence of the northern and southern sides presented a problem to the builders of the Kurista hill-fort, making it impossible to keep pace with the rapidly developing offensive technique. Nothing indicates that any battles were fought here in the early 13th century, in the days of the ancient struggle for independence. Obviously the hill-fort was abandoned already, most likely it happened in the 2nd half of the 12th century.

In the surroundings of Jõgeva some more hill-forts of the first centuries of the II millennium – Kassnurme, Ripuka and Reastvere – are located quite closely, at the distance of 7–10 km from each other. The hill-fort of Vilina, to date investigated by

some trial pits only (Kustin 1953), probably also belongs to the same period as judged by visual inspection. It seems plausible that these relatively small hill-forts were erected by the inhabitants of the villages of a certain district, the ancient counterpart of the medieval administrative district *vakus*. Such ancient *vakus* must have also been characterized by common obligations, including the building, repairing and defence of the hill-forts (Lang 2000, 283–285). In the vicinity of Jõgeva, the agricultural settlement district of Kurista-Jõgeva-Eristvere-Painküla, surrounded by marshes and forests, is discernible. Very likely the Kurista hill-fort was erected by the inhabitants of this presumable ancient *vakus* as a refuge hill-fort used in times of peril.

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- KURISTA LINNAMÄE PÕHJAPOLNE EESVALL**
Ain LAVI
- Kurista linnamägi asub Siimusti-Kurista vallseljaku kõrgemal lõunapoolisel otsal. Ida ja lääne poolt kaitsevad linnamäe seljaku kõrged ja järsud nõlvad, põhjast ning lõunast eraldavad hooviala poolkaares otsavallid, kusjuures 13–18 m põhja suunas võib eristada veel madalat eesvalli. Kui põh-

japoolse eesvalli idaosa on õige madal (joon. 1), siis lääneosas tõuseb selle kõrgus 50–60 cm ning vall pöörduv mõnevõrra tagasi otsavalli poole (joon. 2). Linnamäe hoovialal kultuurkiht puudub, kuid vallides on avastatud mitmeid sõerohkeid põlengukihte. 1984. ja 1987. aastal tehtud päästekaevamistega selgitati välja, et linnamäe varasemad jäljed pärinevad 9.–10. sajandist, intensiivsem kasutamisperiood langeb aga 11.–12. sajandisse.

Eesvalli uurimiseks rajati 2001. aastal kaks proovikaevandit, neist I (29 m²) valli keskossa ja II (5 m²) valli lääneosa välisnõlvale (vt. joon. 3). I kaevand läbis valli 4 m laiuselt, kus keskeltläbi 50–60 cm paksuses vallikihis võis eristada kahte ladestust. Valli kesk- ja välisküljel domineeris mullasegune liivakiht; siseküljel tuli nähtavale kuni 50 cm paksune ja 2,5 m laiune põlengukiht, mis sisaldas rohkesti sõetükke ning tukijäänuseid (vt. joon. 2; 4: A ja B). Kui kaevandi edelaosas avastati sõestunud palgijäänused paiknesid piki valli kulgemissuunda, siis kaguosas esines ristisuunalisi tukke. (joon. 4: B). Eesvalli kultuurkihi all tuli nähtavale 5–6 cm paksune halli värvi leetekiht, mis näitab, et enne kindlustuse rajamist domineeris siin männimetsale omane kasvukohatüüp. Teise kaevandi alal ulatus mõnevõrra kõrgema, kuid põhiosas samalaadse vallikihi paksus 75–85 cm (joon. 4: C). Väärrib tähelepanu, et mõlemas kaevandis ei tulnud valli välisküljel nähtavale ehitiste jäänuseid

Uurimismaterjali põhjal näib, et eesvalli ala kindlustusvöönd koosnes algselt ristnurkühendusega seotud nelinurksetest ja liivaga täidetud palktaranditest, mille sisekülje vastu toetusid varjualused. I kaevandi edelaosas välja puhastatud tukid, mis asetsesid valli kulgemissuunas, võiksid pärineda kaitseehitise mahavarisenud siseseinast. Seevastu sama kaevandi kagunurgas avastatud valliga ristisuunas asetsenud sõestunud palgijäänused näivad pärinevat vallitagustest ristnurkühendusega palkhoonetest. Nähtavasti õnnestus linnuse ründajatel valli siseküljel paiknenud ehitised süüdata. Peale nende hävimist eesvalli ala kindlustusi enam ei taastatud ning kaitsetaranditest säilinud kasutamiskõlblikud palgid võeti lahti ja kasutati ära mujal. See seletaks tukijäänuste ja muude kahjutule jälgede puudumist valli väliskülje alal. Kaitsetarandite alale laiali valgunud liivast sisetäidis ja siseküljel asunud varjualuste rusud moodustasid pikliku kuhjatise, mis on tänapäeval nähtav eesvallina.

Kuna Kurista linnuse eesvalli uurimisel esemeleiud puudusid, saab selle dateering põhineda ¹⁴C analüüsi tulemustel ja ehitusajaloolistel tähelepanekutel. Sõestunud palgijäänusest võetud proovi (Tln. 1139) analüüsi tulemus osutas vanusele 945±35 radiosüsiniku aastat ja kalibreerituna ajavahemikule 1000–1160 aastat pKr. Kuna liivast ja kruusast sisetäidisega kaitsetarandid ilmusid Kesk-Eesti idaosa kaitseehitistesse alates 11. sajandi teisest poolest, võivad Kurista linnuse eesvalli ehitised pärineda muistise hilisemast, võib olla isegi viimasest ehitusjärgust, seega tõenäoliselt 12. sajandi teisest poolest. Peale viimast hävingut linnamäe kindlustusi enam ei taastatud. Ilmselt ei võimaldanud paiga suhteliselt tagasihoidlikud looduslikud kaitse-eeldused rajada sellist kantsi, mis suutnuks vastu seista vahepeal arenenud linnuste ründekunstile.