

ARHEOLOOGILISED
VÄLITÖÖD
EESTIS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FIELDWORK
IN ESTONIA

2006

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Esikaas: 2006. a Palutaja külast avastatud aardes sisalduv
hõbedatud hoburaudsõlg.

Cover: Silver-plated penannular brooch from Palutaja hoard,
discovered in 2006.

Tagakaas: Krõllid Palutaja aardest.

Back cover: Silver beads from Palutaja hoard.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT VILTINA – A VIKING AGE HARBOUR SITE AND MEETING PLACE

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Archaeological excavations at Viltina in southern Saaremaa (Fig. 1) started in 2004 and were continued in 2006. Two earlier trenches (No. 1 and No. 4) were widened, and two additional excavation trenches opened in other parts of the area with a cultural layer (Fig. 2). The works were conducted in the frame of a research project “Coastal settlements on prehistoric and medieval Saaremaa” (Grant No. 5432 of the Estonian Science Foundation). The excavations were partly financed by Tallinn University, especially by the target-financed project of the Institute of History of Tallinn University – *Land, Sea and People: Estonia on its way from the Iron Age to the Medieval Period*. The fieldwork was conducted as seminar excavations for the students of history and archaeology of the Tallinn University. Two of the archaeology students – Triin Äärismäe and Katrin Treuman – worked as excavation assistants. The excavations at trench No 6 were supervised by Allan Bernard, MA student of archaeology at Tallinn University as part of his seminar

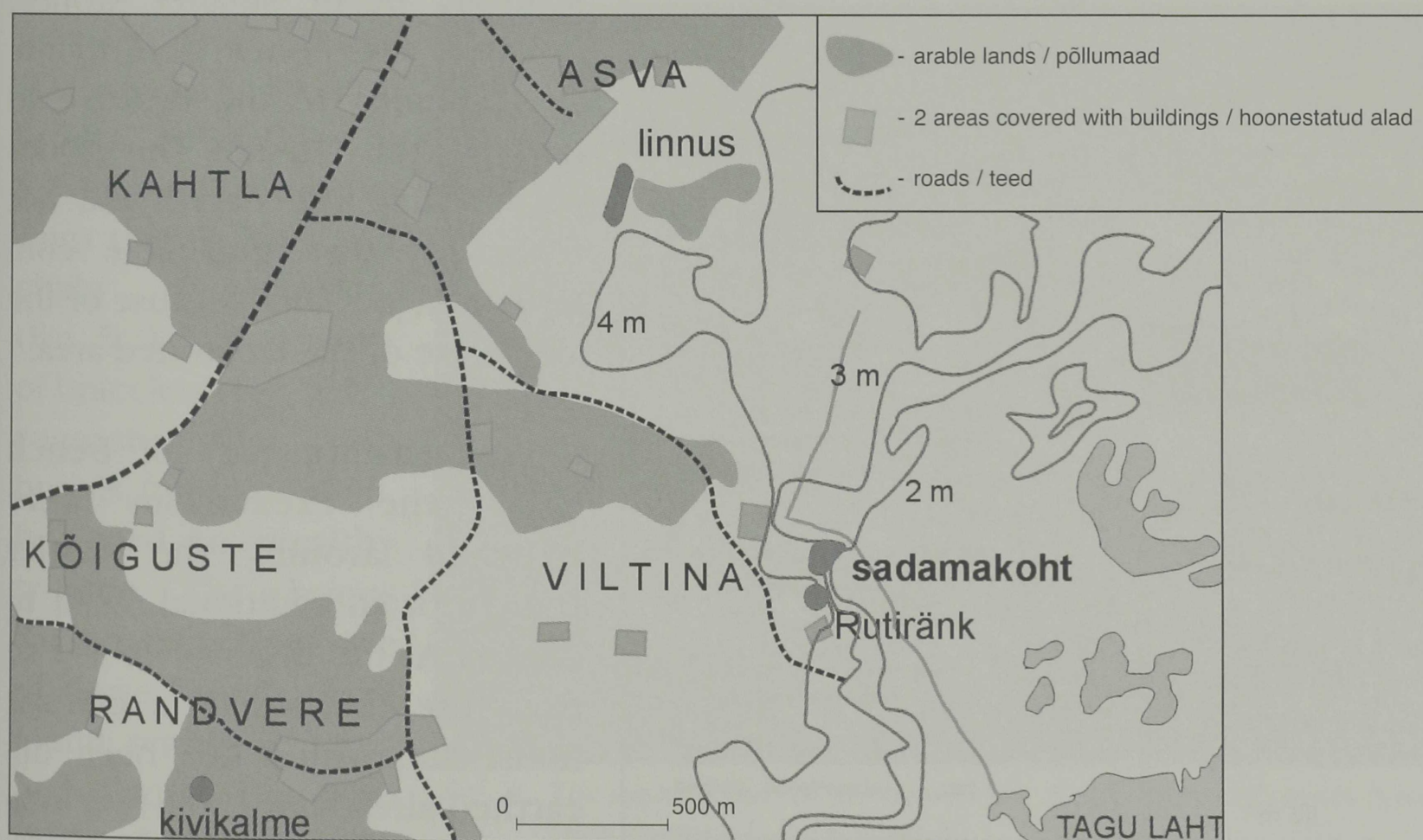


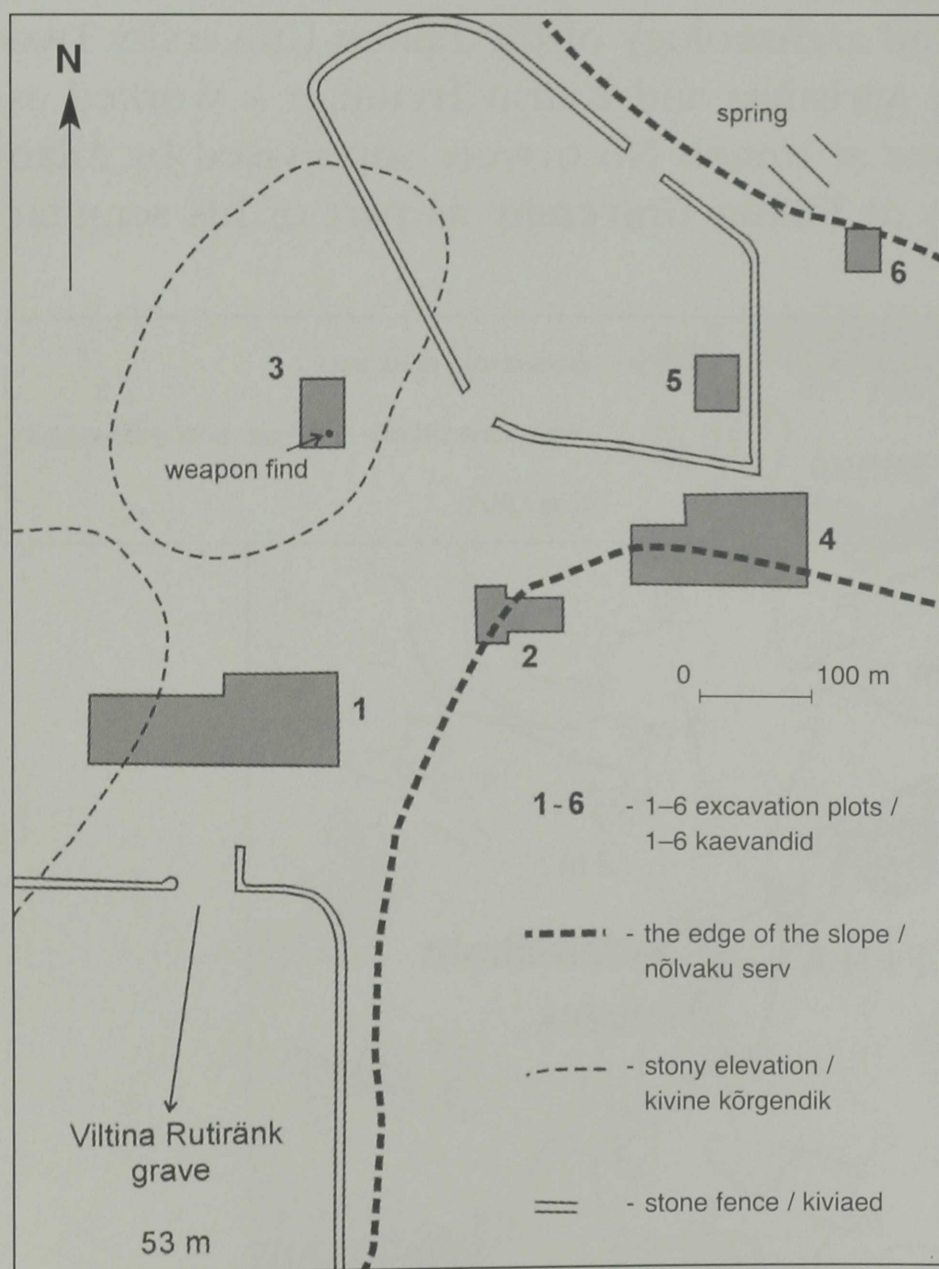
Fig. 1. Viltina and present cultural landscapes.
Jn 1. Viltina ja tänapäeva kultuurmaastik.

practice. The total area investigated at Viltina in 2006 was 153.25 sq.m. The finds are stored in the Museum of Saare-maa (SM 10464).

TRENCH NO. 1

Trench No. 1 in the southern part of the area, showing traces of habitation, is bigger than the others – measuring altogether 165.25 sq. m; 49.25 sq. m of it was unearthed in 2006. The area excavated earlier was widened both towards the east and the west. The widening of the trench in the western side was rather modest (10.25 sq. m), and was added in order to define the remains of a possible hearth that had partly been unearthed in the SW-corner of the 2005 excavations. The excavation area of 2006 was, however, limited due to big trees and a stone wall right behind them (Fig. 3).

The hearth measuring 1.20×80 cm was built of stones, but was probably used



only temporarily – the construction resembled the hearth that was built during the excavations for cooking on fire. Between the hearth's kerbs, a great amount of strongly burnt smaller stones, charcoal and bones were found. The opening of the hearth had been in the NE-side. The stones surrounding the hearth did not form any distinguishable construction, possibly because of the small size of the excavated area.

In the eastern part of trench No. 1, the excavations were widened around the earlier trench for an additional 39 sq. m (Fig. 4). At the distance of 1-2 m from the remains of a circular house-site, which had been unearthed already in 2005, two individual graves were found in the southern and eastern side. Both

Fig. 2. Map of the Viltina excavations.
Jn 2. Viltina kaevamiste plaan.

graves were marked with large granite boulders, between and on top of which several limestone slabs in semi-horizontal position were found. Cremated bones, together with burnt artefacts, lay among the boulders. The burials resembled a cremation grave, found in the western part of the trench already in 2005, which had been marked with boulders

and semi-horizontal limestone slabs in a similar fashion. The position of the slabs suggests that they may originally have been placed on top of a wooden construction, and had finally fallen to the ground as the construction decayed and collapsed. The burnt artefacts from the burials (penannular brooches (Fig. 5: 1), bronze fittings of a woman's knife sheath (Fig. 5: 2), several bronze bells (Fig. 5: 3-6), small bronze rings (Fig. 5: 7-9) and chain connectors, (Fig. 5: 11), fragments of bracelets (Fig. 5: 10) suggested that both burials, found in 2006, belonged to wealthy women. The bones and artefacts from one of these burials were found within an area of 2-3 sq. m. The character of these graves (position of the bones



Fig. 3. Hearth in the western part of the trench No. 1. View from NE.
Jn.3. Koldekoht 1. kaevandi lääneosas. Vaade kirdest.



Fig. 4. The eastern part of the trench No. 1, after most of stones have been removed. View from N.
Jn 4. 1. kaevandi idaosa peale enamiku kivide eemaldamist. Vaade põhjasihist.

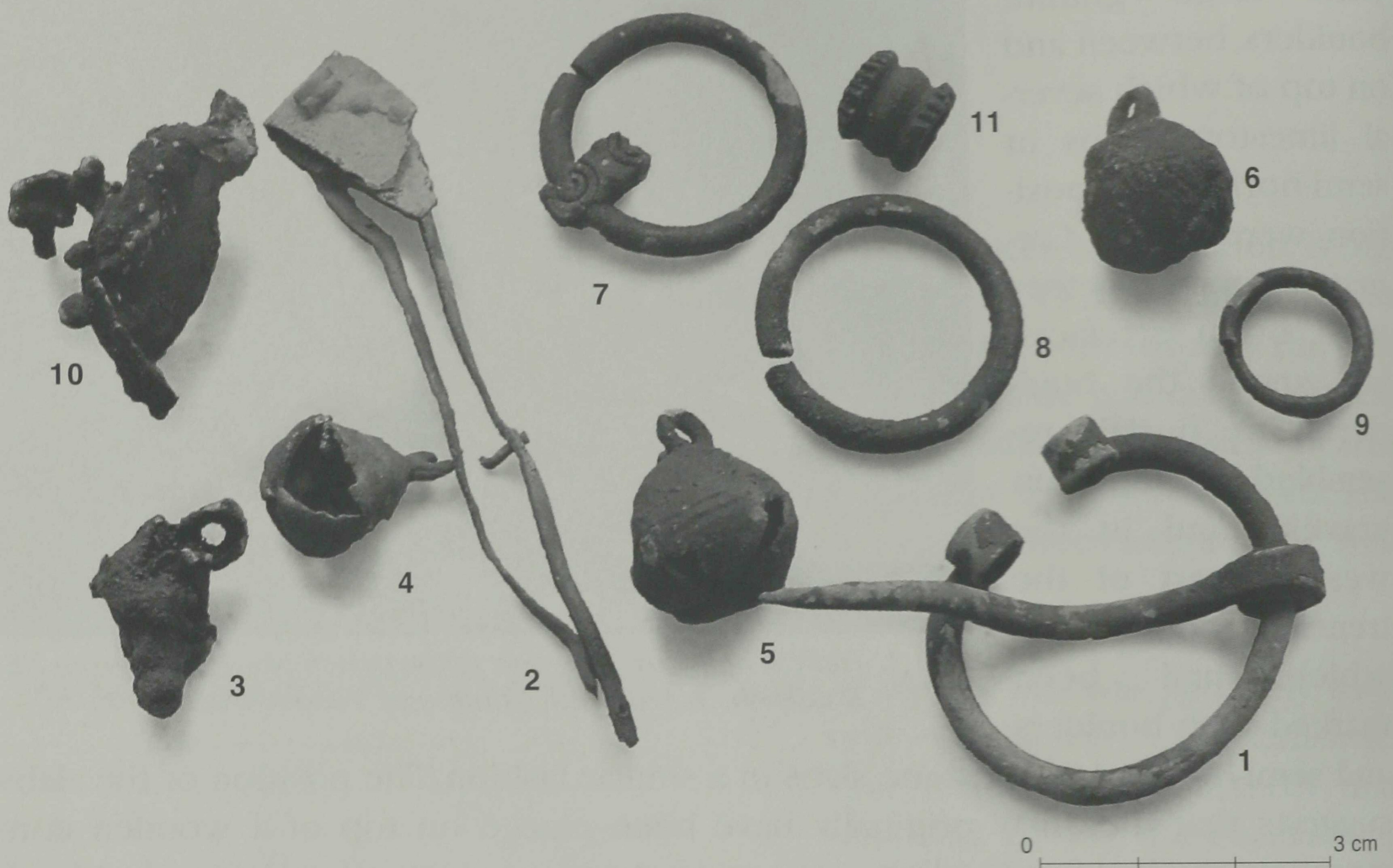


Fig. 5. Collection of finds from one of the cremation graves in the trench No. 1.
 Jn 5. Leide 1. kaevandi ühest põletusmatusest.

and artefacts, stone layer, artefact types) resembled typical 10th–11th-century cremations in Saaremaa, similar to the ones found for instance in the Viltina *Rutiränk* or Randvere cemeteries in the vicinity. In the area between the burials where the slope begins, the stone layer stopped at a clear line – the slope marked the coastline of the Viking Age.

The area north of the circular construction was completely different. No graves were unearthed here in the neighbourhood of the building remains; instead, the area of about 6 sq. m in front of the entrance to the circular house was characterised by a striking concentration of finds connected with shipbuilding and carpentry (Fig. 6). Dozens of boat rivets (Fig. 6: 1–6) were found together with iron nails (Fig. 6: 7, 9) and other iron pieces, including an awl (Fig. 6: 8), an auger (Fig. 6: 10). In addition, a number of both un-burnt and burnt bones were discovered. The actual number of finds was probably even bigger, since part of the area remained underneath a big tree. An axe, together with boat rivets, had been found from the area already during a surface survey trip in 1999. The area was partly

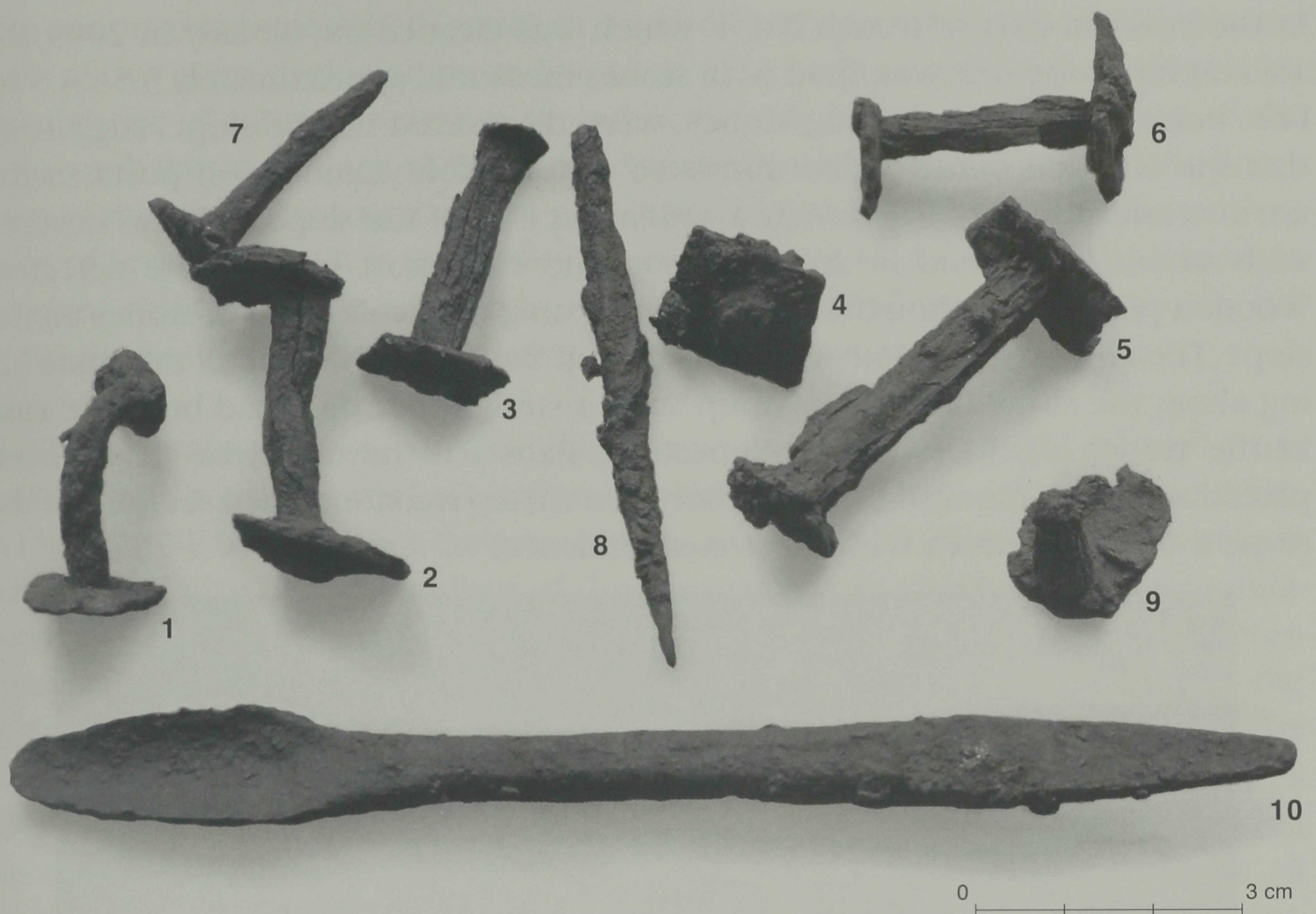


Fig. 6. Collection of finds from the trench No. 1, associated with the carpenter-workshop.
Jn 6. Puidutöökojaga seotud leide 1. kaevandist.

covered with a layer of fist-size granite stones, part of them burnt. Such concentration of finds connected with carpentry and shipbuilding may be interpreted as remains of a carpenter-workshop. The exact location of the workshop itself remains unclear; it may have remained outside the trench.

TRENCH NO. 4

The area excavated in 2006 in trench No. 4 was 72 sq. m (Fig. 7). In the upper part of the slope, the cultural layer started right under the thin turf, while the lower part of the trench contained dozens of centimetres of erosion sediments, covering a former sea-floor. No finds or bones were discovered in these sediments.

The section of the slope, which was dug steeper, and which was completely unearthed in 2006, was about 11 m long. Moving forward along the slope towards the east, another 6.5 m long section, which was dug steeper than the previous one, started at the distance of 16 m. External similarities with the excavated area suggest that another jetty may have been standing there.

In the western part of trench No. 4, which was cleaned out already in 2005, the area on the slope that was lined with stones measured approximately 3.5×3.5 m. Post holes, set in surrounding stones, were discovered on the slope, suggesting that the wooden construction consisted of a scaffold standing on posts. In the north-western part of the trench, a similar section of the slope that was covered with stones was found in 2006, although no clear post places were detected. Wooden posts might, however, have been resting on a collection of stones on the slope. The area covered with stones measured 2×2.6 m. The edge of the stone lining along the slope did not make up such a straight line as it had been the case in the trench of 2005, yet the limestone slabs had nevertheless clearly been placed against some wall here, too. Between these two stone-lined sections of the slope a 4.2-m long area without stones remained.



Fig. 7. Remains of piers in the trench No. 4. View from SE.

Jn 7. Paadisildade jäänused 4. kaevandis. Vaade kagust.

At the foot of the slope a section of gravel ridge was unearthed, which was about 1 m wide and 30-40 cm high, and ran parallel to the slope, i.e. in the SW-NE-direction. Such a ridge was probably formed in the course of a bigger storm during the time, when the everyday water-edge on the beach had already retreated a bit further from the location of the Viking Age seashore before the small bay had turned into the present wetland.¹ Sea sand continued to build up on the side of the ridge, facing the present wetland, also during the time when the harbour constructions were no longer in use.

¹ Information from ecologist Hannes Tõnisson, Tallinn University.

The construction unearthed in trench No. 4 may be interpreted as the land-based parts of two piers, resting on posts. The piers were built parallel to each other, with the distance of 4.2 m in between. Stones surrounded the first posts on top of the slope, probably in order to diminish the erosion caused by waves around the lower parts of the posts. The length of the piers remains unknown, at least at the present stage of investigation. It is probable that the light wooden constructions were in constant need of repair. Some iron nails and potsherds were found among the stones at the edge of the slope, dating the construction to the Viking Age.

The horizontal area on top of the slope seems to be intentionally cleaned from stones, since no stones at all were found in this area, neither in 2005, nor in 2006. In the very NE-corner of the trench of 2006, an about 110 cm wide area of stones was unearthed, which the author of the present article interprets as the foundation of a wooden fence, by now putrefied and vanished a long time ago. This interpretation is supported by the fact that a post may have been standing in the beginning of a zone, enforced by stones and situated next to the remains of the pier, meant for a post with an approximate diameter of 20 cm. The zone of stones resembled a similar one that was found in the trench No. 2 in 2005, also marking the edge of the slope. Zones or lines of stones along the slope, recorded in all trenches, cutting the slope, so far suggest that a wooden fence might have surrounded the harbour site.

TRENCH NO. 5

A stone fence surrounds a small area at the Viltina harbour site, next to the remains of the piers. The fence can be no more than 300 years old – it has been marked on the 19th century maps, but not on maps from the late 17th century. The stone fence suggests that the area inside it was used for cultivation, and accordingly, the soil in this area must have been less stony than the soil around it. Trial pits in the area resulted in a few Viking Age metal finds, but no stones.

Trench No. 5, measuring 5 × 4 m, was made at a distance of about 10 m from trench No. 4, in the ESE-direction (Fig. 8). Already the first layer supported our preliminary notion: it consisted of soil typical for cultivated land and completely lacking any finds from the 20th century, otherwise characteristic for areas cultivated during this century. In this case, the enclosure was by that time probably out of use already. The soil underneath the tilled layer was very hard, containing a small amount of potsherds, burnt and un-burnt bones, a few pieces of charcoal, and some fragments of 10th–12th century artefacts.

An about 80 cm wide zone of small stones running diagonally through the excavated area may suggest traces of building activities. Next to this, an elevation of clay and gravel was unearthed, measuring 120 × 50 cm. The function of it remained unclear. Apart from a couple of middle-sized rocks near the elevation no bigger stones were detected from the excavated area.

Trench No. 5 demonstrated that the area without stones, as it had already been recorded in trench No. 4, reached further for dozens of meters, and very likely it comprised all the area that was later enclosed by the stone fence. Stones from this area must have been removed intentionally, considering how stony the soil in these surroundings is as a rule. The area may be interpreted as a meeting place without any major or stable building constructions. The hard, probably tramped soil with only scarce finds fits to such a usage. The stony zone and clayish elevation suggest, on the other hand, that traces of light constructions may have been standing in the area, at least at some point of usage.

TRENCH NO. 6

Trench No. 6, with the measurements 3 × 4 m, was opened on the northern slope of the ridge with a culture layer, north of trench No. 4, in the hope to discover traces of human activity on the slope towards the north as well. The area northwards from the ridge is wet even nowadays, and it formed a small bay during the Viking Age.

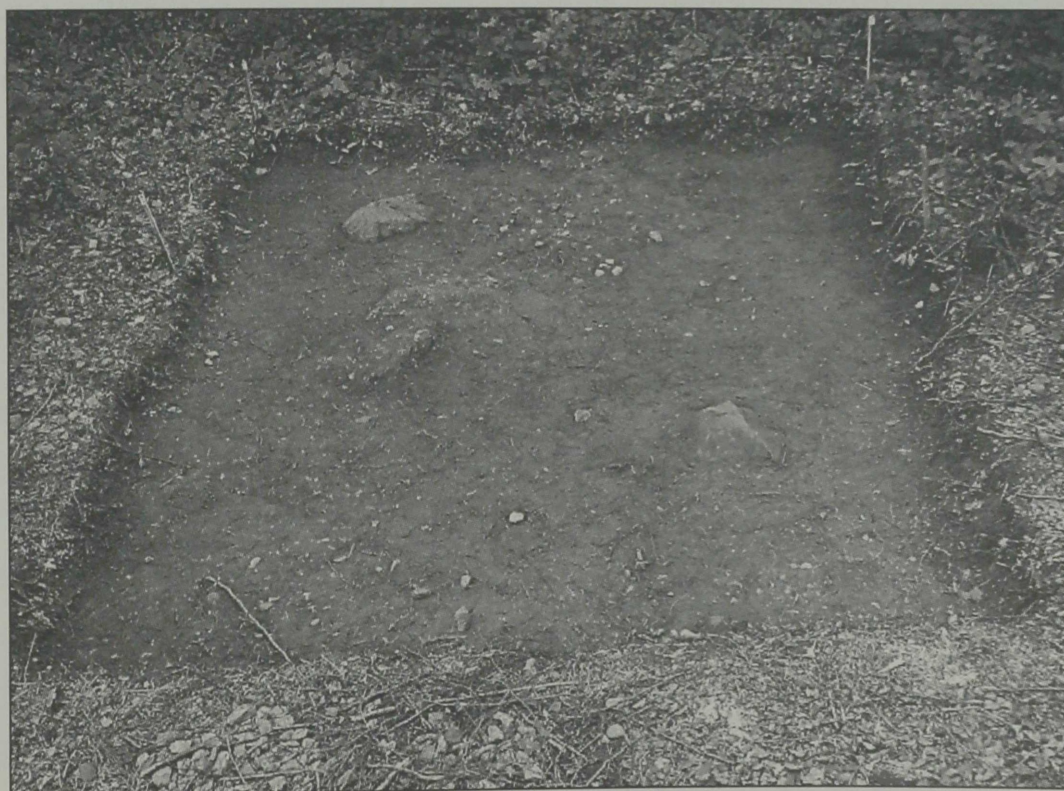


Fig. 8. Trench No. 5, view from S.
Jn 8. 5. kaevand. Pildistatud lõunast.

The sloping part of the excavation proved to be purely natural soil, with a few stones, having slid down the slope, and completely void of any archaeological finds. Again, this part of the unearthed area resembled trench No. 2 from the year 2005. On the edge of the slope, a clear fence or wall foundation was unearthed in trench No. 6 (Fig. 9). The stones had survived in two layers, with the

northern side, i.e. the side towards the small bay, forming a straight front. No finds were recorded.

Trench No. 6 demonstrated that the harbour site had been surrounded by a fence not only in the southern and western part, where the remains of piers were detected, but also in the southern shore of the small northern bay. It is possible, however, that the 9th–10th century or earlier predecessor of the Viltina harbour site was located at the smaller bay – for instance in the western side of it, where the slope is suitable for landing, and where nowadays the Käo-Matsi farm is located.



Fig. 9. Construction in the trench No. 6, view from N.
Jn 9. Konstruktsioon 6. kaevandis, vaade põhjasihist.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Excavations at Viltina during the years 2004–2006, covering the total area of 327.25 sq. m, offer preliminary interpretation of the function and the constructions of the site. Comparing the cultural layer at Viltina with that of other coastal sites excavated in Saaremaa, special peculiarities must be pointed out. Although the cultural layer in the major part of the excavations ought to be considered a dwelling layer, it is clearly less intensive than the culture layer that was recorded for instance at Tornimäe harbour site in eastern Saaremaa (Mägi 2005). The latter was characterised by traces of intensive human activity, including a great amount of animal and fish bones, as well as ceramics. The number of bones and potsherds at Viltina remained quite modest compared with it. The modest intensity of the cultural layer suggested only provisional occupation at the site. It is possible that light buildings, i.e. the remains of which were detected in the southern part of the Viltina site, were only used during certain occasions.

The number of metal finds recorded at the dwelling areas of Viltina, on the other

hand, exceeded the amount typical to agricultural Viking Age settlement sites, in as much as such sites have been excavated in Estonia. Among the metal finds outside burials, several fittings for belts and bridles were discovered. Surface survey trips with a metal detector resulted in several weights (Fig. 10: 1–3), a small deposit of broken silver pin (Fig. 10: 4) and a few Arab coins (Fig. 10: 5, 6), which had not been exposed to fire and must therefore have belonged to the dwelling layer. Such artefacts do not necessarily indicate trade, but may refer to different kinds of activities, which required payments in precious metal. Such activities might have been, in addition to trade, for instance negotiations about marriage, fines, tributes etc. (see also e.g. Ulriksen 2004).

Particularly striking was the great number of iron nails, boat rivets, and fragments of them discovered at Viltina. The occurrence of boat rivets in conspicuously big amounts have been reported in several excavations at Scandinavian coastal sites (e.g. Thomsen 1991), but also for instance in the excavations at Tornimäe site in the 1960s (Kustin 1967; Mägi 2005). Iron nails at Viltina were clearly appearing in areas, where stone constructions suggested wooden buildings, like in the southern part of the site or at the pier constructions.

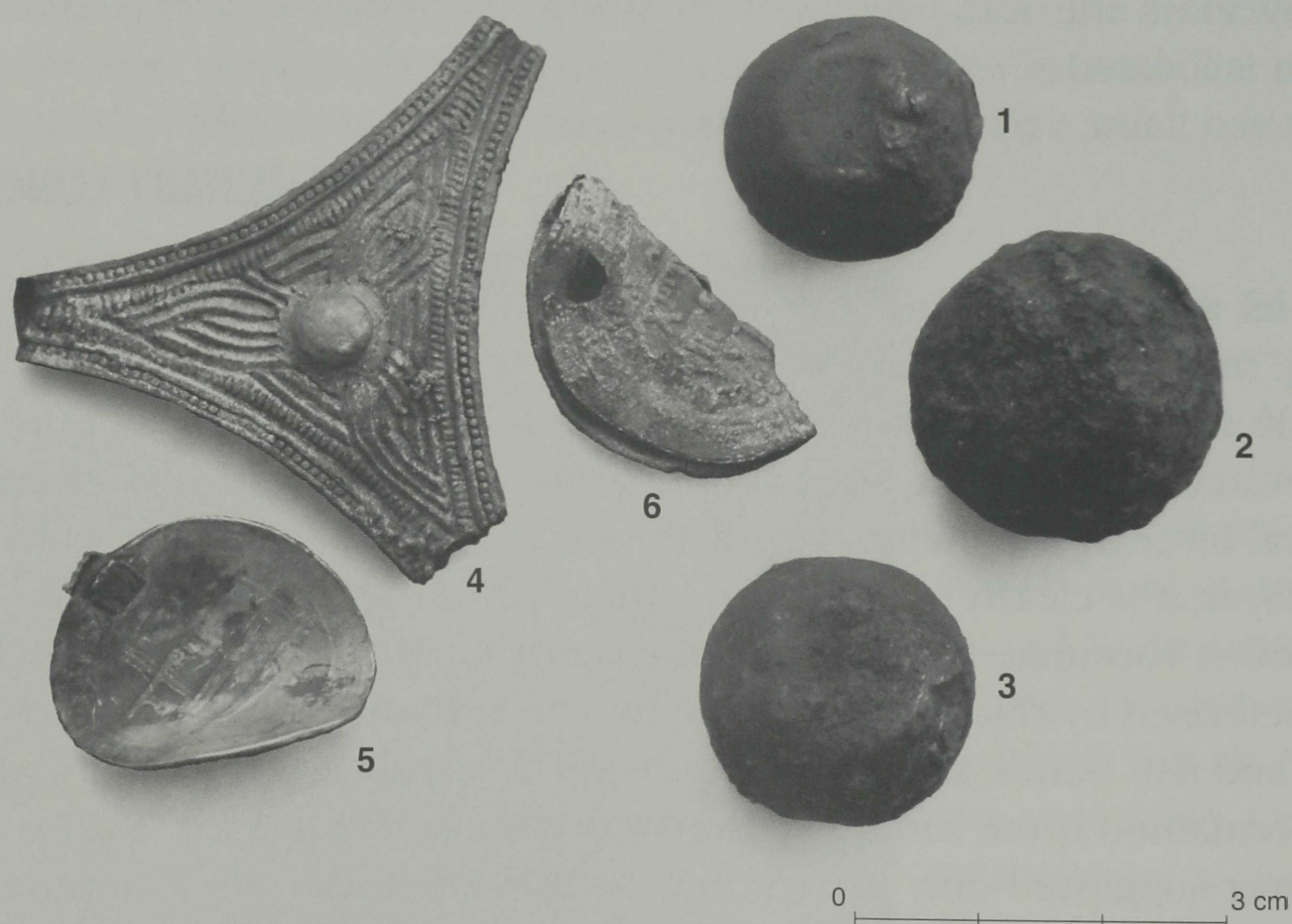


Fig. 10. Finds collected at the Viltina harbour site by metal detector during surface survey trip in 2000.

Jn 10. 2000. a maastikuinspeksiooni ajal metalliotsijaga kogutud leiud Viltina sadamakohast.

The special relationship between the harbour site at Viltina and the burials and offerings in the same area was pointed out already in the preliminary interpretations of the excavations in 2004–2005 (Mägi 2006). The same connection has been recorded in coastal settlements of other areas, especially Gotland (e. g. Lundström 1981, 117–120; Carlsson 1999). The fieldwork of 2006 supported the preliminary interpretations. By the year 2006, four individual cremation graves were found right next to or even among the building remains. In addition to these, the trench No 3 revealed a collective burial ground where individual graves were, at least in the small area of these excavations, undistinguishable.

The complex of archaeological sites, excavated at Viltina in 2004–2006, is the only one of its kind in Estonian archaeology. On the island Saaremaa very few studies have been carried out at dwelling sites so far – proper excavations have been conducted only at two sites – Tornimäe and Viltina. Neither of the sites represented ordinary dwelling areas. Prehistoric and medieval traces of human activity right on the coast have been connected with maritime activities everywhere in the Nordic countries (e.g. Näsman 1991; Crumlin-Pedersen 1991a; Christoffersen & Porsmose 1996; Ulriksen 1998). Danish archaeologist Jens Ulriksen has stated that every site that was located not farther than 500 m from the seashore could in all probability be linked to seafaring in the broadest possible sense (Ulriksen 2004). Permanent habitation on the seashore would have been far too complicated because of storms, changing water level, and pack ice, as well as due to the danger of piracy. Questions like where the permanent dwelling sites of the people using the Viltina harbour might be, and whether the harbour site was jointly used by various communities or perhaps controlled by a single major farm, remain unanswered at the present stage of the research.

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ARHEOLOOGILISED KAEVAMISED VILTINA VIIKINGIAEGSEL SADAMA- JA KOGUNEMISKOHAL

Marika MÄGI

2006 jätkusid kaevamised Viltina viikingiaegsel sadamakohal (jn 1), millega oli alustatud juba 2004. aastal. Seekord laiendati juba varem avatud 1. ja 4. kaevandit ning rajati kaks uut kaevandit; kokku kaevati läbi 153 m² (jn 2). Leiud anti üle Saaremaa Muuseumile (SM 10464).

1. kaevandi läänepoolses laiendis paljandus kividest laotud ajutise iseloomuga koldekoht (jn 3). Ida poole laiendati kaevandit 2005. aastal paljandunud ümmarguse põhiplaaniga arvatava hoonealuse ja selle lähiümbruse uurimiseks (jn 4). Hoonest 1–2 m kaugusel lõuna ja edela pool avastati kaks suuremate raudkividega markeeritud põletusmatust, mille vahel ning peal leidus poolviltuses asendis paeplaate. Leidude järgi otsustades olid mõlemad 10.–11. sajandi Saaremaale tüüpilised naisematused (jn 5).

Silmatorkav oli paadiehituse ja puutööga seonduvate leidude kontsentratsioon ringikujulisest hoonealusest põhja pool: u 6 m² suuruselt alalt saadi mitukümmend paadineeti, naela ja muid raudeseme katkeid, lisaks naaskel ja lusikpuur (jn 6). Juba varem oli siit leitud kirves. Samas leidus rohkesti veel põletamata ja põlenud luid. Seda kohta tõlgendati puidutöökoja jäätmehunnikuna.

Kui 4. kaevandisse (jn 7) jäänud nõlvaku lael paljandus kultuurkiht otse kamara all, siis nõlva kaldset ja tasast allosa kattis kuni mõnekümne sentimeetri paksune leidudeta erosioonikiht. Nõlvaku läänosas moodustasid 2005. aastal välja puhastatud kivid peaaegu nelinurkse (u 3,5 × 3,5 m) konstruktsiooni, kuhu jäid ka kaks kividega ümbritsetud postikohta. Kaevandi kirdeosas paljandunud riskülikukujulise põhiplaaniga (2 × 2,6 m) kivilade sarnanes üldilmelt läänepoolsega, kuid selgeid postikohti seal ei tuvastatud. Kahe kividega kindlustatud osa vahele jäi 4,2 cm laiune kindlustamata ala. Nõlva all ilmus erosioonikihi alt nähtavale u 1 m laiune ja mõnekümne sentimeetri kõrgune kruusaseljandik, mille hari kulges paralleelselt nõlvakuga edelast kirdesse. Selline kuhjatis võis tekkida oma praegusele kohale mõne suurema tormiga ajal, kui meri oli juba mõnevõrra taganenud ja nüüdne soo oli veel merelaht.

4. kaevandis paljandunud konstruktsiooni võib rekonstrueerida kui kahe paadisilla alguskohta: kaks postidele toetunud paadisilda olid ehitatud pea paralleelselt teineteisest 4,2 m kaugusele; vähendamaks lainetega tekkivat erosiooni, toestati nõlvale jäänud postid kividega. Kui pikalt paadisillad kunagisse merelahte ulatusid, pole teada, küll võib aga arvata, et neid ehitisi uuendati korduvalt. Nõlvakut ääristavate kivide vahelt saadi üksikuid viikingiaegseid savinõukilde ja raudnaelu.

Nõlvaku tasane lagi võis olla kividest tahtlikult puhastatud. 2006. aasta kaevandi kirdenurgas u 2 m ulatuses paljandunud kuni 110 cm laiune kivivöönd postikohaga paadisilla-poolses otsas markeeris ilmselt kunagist puittara. Kividest vööndid või read piki seljandiku äärt, mis avastati kõikides seljandikku lõikavates kaevandites, viitavad sellele, et sadamakoht oli kasutusajal taraga piiratud.

5. kaevand (5 × 4 m) rajati 4. kaevandist u 10 m ida-kagu poole (jn 8). Pealmise kihi moodustas siin põllumuld – arvatavalt oli tegemist Saaremaale iseloomuliku väikese põllu e saaduga, millele osutab ka kohta ümbritsenud hiline kiviaed. Põllumulla alune kiht koosnes kõvaks trambitud pinnasest, kust leiti üksikuid savinõukilde, põlenud ja põletamata luid, veidi sütt ja mõni 10.–12. sajandi metalleseme katke. Diagonaalselt läbi kaevandi jooksis u 80 cm laiune väikestest kividest vöönd, mille kõrval paljandus savi- ja kruusasegune 120 × 50 cm kõrgendik, mille tähendus jäi ebaselgeks. Samas läheduses tuli välja kaks keskmise suurusega raudkivi, kuid üldiselt kivikiht kaevandialal puudus.

Seega osutas 4. ja 5. kaevand, et juba 4. kaevandis täheldatud ilma kivideta pinnas jätkub kaugemale, hõlmates tõenäoliselt kiviaiaga ümbritsetud platsi suuruse ala. Pidades silmas pinnase üldist kivisust võib arvata, et kivid olid sellelt alalt tahtlikult eemaldatud. Kohta võib interpreteerida kui kogunemisplatsi, kus vähemalt enamiku ajast puudusid püsivamad ehitused. Kõvakstrambitud pinnas ning vähesed leiud viitavad samale funktsioonile.

6. kaevandiks (3 × 4 m) valiti kultuurkihiga seljandiku põhjapoolne nõlv, mis jäi 4. kaevandist põhja suunas. Siin taheti välja selgitada, kas ka seljandiku põhjanõlval leidub inimtegevuse jälgi. Nõlvakust põhja poole jääv ala on tänini liigniiske ning moodustas viikingiajal lahesopi. Kaevandi nõlvaosa osutus looduslikuks kihiks, kus puudusid arheoloogilised leiud; nõlva kõrgemas servas paljandus müüri või kiviaia taldmik (jn 9) ning siingi leiud puudusid. 6. kaevand osutas, et lisaks seljandiku lõuna- ja lääneosale, kus paiknesid kõikohad, oli ka põhjapoolse lahesopi lõunaserv kindlustatud.

2004–2006 on Viltinas kaevatud läbi 327.25 m² ning selle põhjal on saadud esmane ettekujutus koha olemusest ja ehitusest. Võrreldes siinset kultuurkihti teiste Saaremaa rannikul kaevatud kohtadega, tuleb nentida mitmeid iseärasusi. Kuigi suuremas osas kaevandites paljandunud kiht on vaieldamatult asulakiht, jääb see oma intensiivsusest oluliselt alla näit Tornimäe kultuurkihile. Kultuurkihi vähene intensiivsus jätab mulje, et kohta on kasutatud vaid hooajati. Viltina asulakihiga aladel leidis samas tavapärasest asulakihist märksa rohkem metall-leide, sh mitmeid vöö- ja ratsmete osi. Inspeksioonide käigus metalliotsijaga kogutud esemete seas oli kaaluvihite, samuti kobaras koos leitud hõbedast ehtenõela katke ja araabia hõberahad (jn 10), mis polnud tules olnud ning pärinesid seega tõenäoliselt asulakihist, mitte kalmest. Sellised esemed ei tõesta küll tingimata kohapeal toimunud kaubandust, kuid osutavad tegevusele, millega kaasnes hõbedaga maksmine.

Eriti torkas Viltinas silma raudnaelte, paadineetide ning nende fragmentide suur arv. Paadineetide tavalisest asulakohast sagedasemat esinemist sadamakohtadel on täheldatud Skandinaavias, aga ka näiteks Tornimäe sadamakoha kaevamistel 1960. aastatel. Naelu leidis rohkem neil aladel, kus ilmselt on olnud tegu kergete puitehitistega: 1. kaevandis hoonejäänuste ja ka sadamasildade juures nõlvakul (4. kaevandis).

Asulakohti on Saaremaal kaevatud vähe, õigupoolest ongi arheoloogiliselt uuritud vaid Viltina ja Tornimäe viikingiaegseid asulakohti. Mõlemal juhul pole olnud tegemist inimeste tavapärase elukohaga. Muinasaegseid ja ka hilisemaid inimtegevuse jälgi rannikul, kuni 500 m ulatuses sisemaa poole, seostatakse kõikjal Põhjamaades merendusliku tegevusega. Elamine otse veepiiril oluks keeruline tormide, veetaseme tõusu ja rüüsi jää tõttu, millele muinasajal liitus ilmselt ka sõjaline oht. Kus elasid Viltina sadamakohta kasutanud inimesed igapäevaselt ning kas sadamakoht toimis mitme asutuse ühisrajasena või oli see läheduses paikneva muinasmõisa kontrolli all, jääb edaspidise uurimistöö põhiküsimuseks.