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**ARHEOLOOGILISED
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUPERVISION AROUND THE ST. JOHN'S CHURCH IN VALGA

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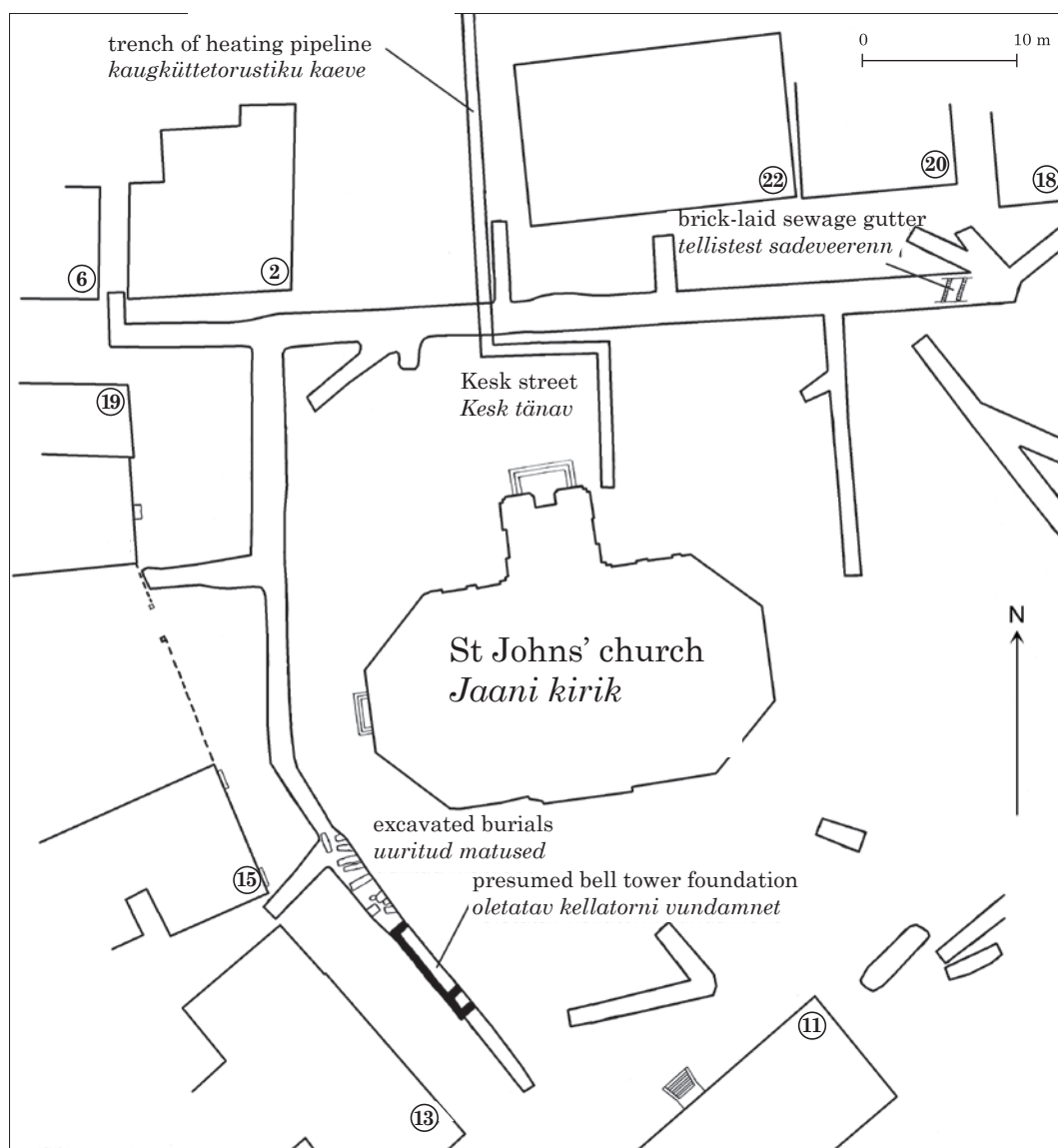
The town of Valga, situated on the border of Estonia and Latvia, has until recently been archaeologically very little investigated. In 2008, the town central square and the streets surrounding the St. John's church were reconstructed. New water, rainwater, sewage and heating pipelines were set up in the reconstructed area and the author of present article was carrying out archaeological supervision during the digging of trenches for the pipes (Tvauri 2009). Supervision work was commissioned by the City Council of Valga and provided by OÜ Arheograator.

CULTURAL LAYER SURROUNDING THE CHURCH

An approximately 90 m long and 3 m wide trench in the east–west direction was dug along Kesk Street on the northern side of St. John's church for water, rainwater and sewage pipelines (Fig. 1). The trench was about 2 m deep, which enabled a good overview of the cultural stratum.

The cultural stratum was deepest in the eastern part of the observed area, in front of buildings at Kesk Street 18 and 20, where natural sand was revealed 1.8 m below ground. The cultural stratum became thinner towards the west being only 1.3 m thick in front of the building at Kesk Street 22 and only 60 cm in the western end of the trench. Everywhere in the northern and eastern direction of the church, a cobblestone pavement was well preserved under asphalt surfacing. Beneath the pavement, well-preserved filling and pavement layers extended until natural sand (Fig. 2). Single brick pieces, clay pipe fragments, shards of glazed redware and faience and pieces of glass from the 17th–18th century were found in those layers. A sediment layer rich in organic material formed in the area in front of buildings at Kesk Street 18 and 20, which had a thicker cultural stratum due to a natural depression. The only site which yielded a larger quantity of artefacts was in front of the building at Kesk Street 18, where numerous fragments of 17th–18th century stove pots, redware tripod pipkins and bowls and clay pipes with angobe paintings were found.

A flume running in south-west–north-east direction (Fig. 3) that was discovered in the east–west lying trench in front of the Kesk Street 20 building, was the only remain of a construction found during the excavation. The inner width of it was approximately 64 cm and it was laid of brick



(measuring $30 \times 15 \times 6.5$ cm). The flume was tilted in south-western direction, towards the Pedeli River. Based on its stratigraphic position we can deduce that it was constructed in the 19th century. Fragments of glass bottles and faience dishes dating from the beginning of the 20th century were found inside the flume. It is probable that it was a board-covered rainwater flume that started by the eastern wall of St. John's church. This flume can be seen on a photo of the Valga central square in 1883 (Juzar 2000, fig. 33).

Fig. 1. Archaeological investigations in Valga in 2008.
Jn 1. Arheoloogilised uuringud Valgas 2008. a.

Fig. 2. Cultural stratum in front of the building at Kesk Street 20. View from the south.

Jn 2. Kultuurkiht Kesk 20 hoone ees. Vaade lõunast.



Fig. 3. Brick-laid flume in the central square of Valga.

Jn 3. Tellistest veerenn Valga keskväljakul.



On the northern side of the church, a heating pipeline starting at the north-eastern corner of the church tower, and running across Kesk Street in the northern direction from the Kesk Street 22 building's western face (Fig. 1) was installed alongside water and sewage pipelines. The depth of the trench for the heating pipeline was 90 cm, which enabled a cross-section of the cultural stratum north of Kesk Street. The cultural stratum in the courtyard behind Kesk Street 22 building was only 40 cm and no artefacts of earlier than 19th – 20th century origin were found.

BURIALS AT THE OLD CHURCHYARD

One of the goals of this archaeological investigation was to examine burials in the old cemetery that used to surround the church and through which some of the pipelines were dug. Disintegrated human bones were found about 10 m from the church tower in the sand of a heating pipeline trench that ran from the north-east corner of the church tower in the northern direction. This section also revealed burial depressions in the east–west direction. Since it was not necessary to dig deeper for the installation of the heating pipeline the burials remained intact here.

An approximately 75 m long and 2 m wide trench (Fig. 1) was dug on the western face of the church for water, rainwater and sewage pipelines. In the northern part of the trench the early part of the cultural stratum was mostly disturbed in the 20th century. In the areas where early cultural stratum was preserved, it consisted of similar finds to those found in the trench section on the north of the church. The cultural stratum was even thinner here – natural sand was exposed at 50 cm below the ground.

Excavating from south to north, first burial depressions were revealed at the church's western door in the eastern profile of the trench. At least 7 burial depressions were distinguishable there. Burials were more closely clustered in the section of the trench in front of the building at Kesk Street 15. 12 burials that were in the way of the pipeline construction were either partially or completely excavated (Fig. 4). The bottoms of the graves were located as deep as 1.15 m below the pre-reconstruction street level. 6 burials belonged to adults, the rest were either child or infant burials.

Fig. 4. Excavated burial depressions on the western side of Valga's St. John's church.

*Jn 4. Välja puhastatud haua-
lohud Valga Jaani kiriku
lääne-küljel.*





Fig. 5. Small brooches and coins from graves at St. John's church cemetery.

Jn 5. Vitssõled ja mündid Jaani kiriku kalmistu haudadest.
(TÜ 1682: 84, 85, 75, 87, 88.)

The skeletons were preserved very poorly. However, the organic material around the burials was relatively well preserved – remains of wooden coffins were clearly distinguishable in the sand and several buried persons had preserved hair. Fragments of clothing and leather items (heelless peasant-shoes, belt and a belt purse) were also recovered. Small silver brooches (Fig. 5: 3–5), buckles and needles belonging to the clothing were

also found. Three Russian bronze *polushka* coins from 1731, 1734 and 1736 (Fig. 5: 1–2) can be regarded as burial goods. With one of the skeletons, a knife was placed by the person's left shoulder (Fig. 6).

Church burials occurred in Estonia until 1773, when this practice was banned in the whole of the Russian empire (Hausmann 1903, 150). Hence, it is highly likely that the excavated burials date from the 18th century, most probably from the time period between the 1730s and 1773.

Previous archaeological investigations in Valga St. John's churchyard were conducted in 1961, when a 66 m² area was excavated in the green belt area north-west of the church (Fig. 1) and where 47 skeletons were discovered by a team led by an anthropologist Karin Mark. The persons were buried in wooden coffins and the burials were located 55–120 cm deep. Most buried persons' heads were situated in the western direction. Head garments, clothing and footwear were relatively well preserved (Mark 1962). Artefacts found during the excavation were destroyed in a fire of the Valga Museum in 1988, but fortunately descriptions and photos of the finds are preserved in the museum's principal book. Apart from brooches, buckles and buttons, coins were also found in the coffins. These were mainly Russian copper coins from the years 1732–1755. Virtually all of the finds from the 1961 excavation can be dated to the 18th century. The only artefact belonging to an earlier period is a Swedish $\frac{1}{6}$ öre copper coin from 1666. These coins were, however, in use in Estonia until the beginning of the 18th century. The earliest find was a 4.5 cm wide small bronze brooch that was the only find from a mixed burial. The inscription 'AVE MARIA' decorated the arch of the brooch.¹ This type of brooch was in use in territory of Estonia between the 13th and the 15th centuries (Valk 1999).

The size of the cemetery can be gauged through additional information from burials discovered during previous pipeline installations.

¹ VaM A 19: 35.



Fig. 6. Burial no. 11 on the western side of St. John's church in Valga. A knife placed as a burial good can be seen above the left shoulder.

Jn 6. Matus nr 11 Valga Jaani kiriku lääneküljel. Vasaku õla kohal on hauapanuseks asetatud nuga.

In 1960 numerous skeletons were destroyed when a pipeline running in the east–west direction was installed in the northern side of the church (Mark 1962). According to the foundation plan of Valga, the pipeline that was installed then and is no longer in use, is located 9–10 m north of the northern face of the church. Human bones were also discovered in 2007, during the construction of a rainwater drain in the eastern side of the church.

STONE FOUNDATION ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE CHURCH

To the south-west of the church, in front of the building Kesk Street 13 and in line with the façade of the building, a 85 cm thick wall was revealed 80 cm high in the trench's western profile. The wall was laid from large rubble stones and bricks with 30 × 15 × 7.5 cm dimensions. It was only possible to determine the dimensions of the building in the direction of the trench (NNW–SSE), from the outside wall it measured 10.85 cm. Fragments of roof tiles with an S-shape profile and an iron handle from a coffin were found among the debris that filled the building.



Fig. 7. Valga town plan from 1683.
Jn 7. Valga plaan aastast 1683.
(EAA 308-2-123.)

The street line was already situated to the south of the church as shown on the Valga town plan from 1789 (Kenkman 1932, 559). Current St. John's church was built between 1787 and 1816. Before that, a 14 m long and 11 m wide wooden church established between 1726 and 1729 (Kenkman 1932, 580–581) stood there. This wooden church is depicted on a 1772 Valga town panorama held at the J. Chr. Brotze's archive (Brotze 2006, 289). The drawing also shows a wooden bell tower to the west of the church. The discovered wall remains were probably the foundation of the bell tower.

VALGA IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND EARLY MODERN PERIODS

The earliest evidence for the existence of Valga as a settlement comes from notes mentioning *Johannes clericus de Walko* and *Johannes Stednic de Walko* in Riga's bond book in 1286 (Kenkman 1932, 3). Although Valga was situated on the intersection of important roads, it remained a settlement without town rights during the Middle Ages. Since it lacked a bishop or an order castle, it was destroyed on several occasions during military action. The Lithuanians probably burnt Valga in 1298, 1329 and 1345. In 1481 and 1501 the Russians burnt and looted the town. It is thought that in 1558 the army of the Livonian Order set fire to Valga during its retreat (Kenkman 1932, 4–5).

Geographically, Valga was located in the centre of Old Livonia, which is why it was often the site for political meetings. Valga was one of the two meeting places for provincial assemblies (Germ. *Landtag*) uniting all

Livonian estates. These were grandiose meetings, for example, all five Livonian bishops and the representatives of their chapters were present at the 1435 assembly. The Order was represented by the master and several commanders. Furthermore, representatives of vassals and towns of Riga, Tallinn and Tartu were present (AR 1, no. 415). Valga was also often the location for Livonian town days (Germ. *Ständetage*). According to one estimation, 36 town days were held in Valga before 1500 – more than in any other location (Hollander 1888, 10).

During the Middle Ages, the border between Tartu diocese and the Livonian Order probably ran through the town centre of modern Valga. During the Middle Ages, the towns of Riga, Tallinn, Tartu and Tartu Dome Chapter had their buildings on the border of diocese. Furthermore, several noblemen owned land in the settlement. Since estate representatives attended a church service at the Luke parish church on the Order land, then there was probably not a larger church on the diocese side (Kenkmann 1932, 5).

After the Livonian War (1558–1583), Valga was transferred to the Polish rule in the 1582 with Jam Zapolski truce. The aim of the Polish government officials was to repopulate areas deprived of people during the war. In order to attract more inhabitants, the king of Poland, Stephen Báthory, awarded Valga town rights in 1584. The newly populated town was located in the current Estonian territory with the town's western border running along Konnaoja – the current Estonia-Latvia state border. However, the newly established town had no time to expand, because it was burnt down again during the Polish-Swedish war that started in 1600. When Valga was annexed to the Swedish kingdom in 1627 the town was left with only '3 citizens, a vicar and 1 widow' (Kenkman 1932, 9). The recuperating town was probably destroyed again between 1656 and 1658 in the Russian-Swedish war (Kenkman 1932, 11). In the beginning of the 18th century, Valga was again destroyed and most of its citizens died of hunger and diseases during the Northern War (1700–1721). Valga was only able to develop as a town from the end of the 18th century.

WHERE WAS VALGA LOCATED IN THE MIDDLE AGES?

Although few archaeological investigations have been conducted in Valga to this day, supervision work has given us an overview of the spread and age of the cultural stratum from a rather broad area. The 2008 archaeological supervision work was conducted right in the centre of Valga in an area 150 m long in the east–west direction and 110 m wide in the north–south direction around the town church.

In 1997, the author of this article excavated a test pit on the grounds of Kesk Street 19 (Fig. 1), in the north-eastern part of the block between Riia, Raja and Sepa Streets. The cultural stratum was 1.4 m deep here.

A 55 cm thick brownish sandy soil layer with fragments of 18th century clay pipes, stove tiles and redware² was deposited on top of natural yellowish sand. No artefacts from the Middle Ages were found (Tvauri 1997a).

I also conducted archaeological investigation that year during the construction of sewage pipeline on Sepa, Haru and Uus Street, where no artefacts from pre-19th century period were found (Tvauri 1997b). The trenches were situated in an area, which is not included in the built-in area on a town plan from 1870 (EAA 308-6-35).

No location in Valga has yielded evidence of settlement from the Middle Ages. The only find dating from the Middle Ages is the previously mentioned brooch with 'AVE MARIA' inscription from St. John's church cemetery. Based on a single piece of jewellery we cannot even claim that St. John's cemetery was used for burials in the Middle Ages.

Written records also fail to answer the question of where Valga was located in the Middle Ages. The oldest Valga town plan dates from 1683 (Fig. 7). Although buildings are only schematically represented, we can recognise the modern street pattern. For example, streets or paths existed then on the site of the current Riia, Sepa, Kesk, Vabaduse and Kuperjanovi streets.

Considering the importance of Valga as the location for provincial assemblies and town days during the Middle Ages, records about its housing and the repeated destruction of the settlement, it is unlikely that no cultural strata or artefacts from the Middle Ages have preserved. We may suggest that in the Middle Ages housing in Valga was located to the west of the later central square and the town church, in the region of Raja Street and on the eastern bank of Konnaoja. Since there have been no archaeological investigations in that region, these suggestions remain currently untested. It is possible that the territory of the town of Valga established in 1584 did not at all coincide with that of the Middle Ages' settlement. In this case, the cultural stratum from the Middle Ages should be looked for on the northern bank of the Pedeli River running through both the current Latvian and Estonian territories.

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² TÕ 630.

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ARHEOLOOGILINE JÄRELEVALVE VALGA JAANI KIRIKU ÜMBRUSES

2008. a rekonstrueeriti Valga ajaloolises tuumikus Jaani kirikut ümbritsevad tänavad. Rajati uued vee-, sadevee-, kanalisatsiooni- ja küttetorustikud, mille süvendite kaevamise juures toimus arheoloogiline järelevalve (jn 1).

Kirikust põhja ja ida pool oli asfaldi all säilinud munakivisillutis. Selle all kuni loodusliku liivani paiknesid liivast ja munakividest koosnevad 17.–18. sajandi sillutise- ja täitekihid (jn 2). Ainus ehitusjäänus selles piirkonnas oli tellistest sadeveerenn 19. sajandist (jn 3).

Kirikutorni kirdenurgast põhja poole suundunud soojatrassi kaevises leidis liiva sees lahtisi inimluid kirikutornist kuni 10 m kauguseni. Selles lõigus võis kaevandi põhjas jälgida ka haulohke. Kuna küttetoru paigaldamiseks polnud tarvis sügavamale kaevata, jäid matused puutumatuks. Kiriku lääneukse kohal olid kaevise idaprofiilis jälgitavad vähemalt seitsme haua lohud. Tihedamalt paiknesid matused Kesk 15 hoone ees asetsenud trassilõigus. Siin puhastati täielikult või osaliselt välja ja võeti üles 12 matust (jn 4 ja 6). Leiumaterjali (jn 5) ja ajalooliste andmete põhjal otsustades kuulusid uuritud matused ajavahemikku 1730.–1773. Samast ajast pärinesid ka Jaani kiriku kalmistul 1961. a uuritud 47 luustikku. Erandlikuks leiuks oli 1961. a kaevamistel üks 13.–15. sajandi pronksist vitssõlg.

Kirikust edelas, Kesk 13 hoone ees paljandus kaevises 80 cm kõrguselt säilinud, 85 cm paksune müür, mis tõenäoliselt oli 18. sajandil siin seisnud puidust kellatorni vundament.

Valga alevik oli keskajal tihti Liivimaa linnade-päevade ja seisusi ühendavate maapäevade kogunemiskohaks. Liivi sõja tulemusel kehtestus Valgas Poola võim ning 1584. a sai Valga linnaõigused. Vastasutatud linna territoorium paiknes tänapäeva Eesti piires, kusjuures linna läänepiir kulges mööda Konnaoja, kus praegu asub riigipiir.

Valgas on varemgi tehtud väiksemahulisi arheoloogilisi uuringuid. 1997. a kaevasin proovisurfi Kesk 19 krundile (jn 1). Samal aastal tegin arheoloogilist järelevalvet kanalisatsioonitrasside rajamisel Sepa, Haru ja Uue tänava alal. Mitte kusa­gil Valgas pole seni õnnestunud leida märke kesk­aegsest asustusest. Ka kirjalikud allikad ei anna vastust küsimusele, kus täpselt paiknes keskaegne Valga. Vanim Valga kaart pärineb aastast 1638, mil­lel hooned on kujutatud skemaatiliselt (jn 7). Arves­ta­des Valga tähtsust maa- ja linnade­päevade pida­mise kohana keskajal, teateid siin paiknenud hoone­test ja asula korduvalt hävitamisest, ei ole usutav, et keskaegset kultuurkihti siin säilinud ei ole. Ole­ta­ta­vasti paiknesid keskaegse Valga hooned hilise­mast kesk­väljakust ja linnakirikust lääne pool, Raja tänava piirkonnas Konnaoja idakaldal. Kuna selles piirkonnas seni arheoloogilisi uuringuid tehtud ei ole, jääb see seisukoht esialgu oletuseks. Võimalik, et 1584. aastal asutatud Valga linna territoorium ei kattu üldse keskaegse Valga aleviga. Sel juhul tu­leks keskaegset kultuurkihti otsida hoopis Pedeli jõe põhjakaldalt, nii tänapäeva Eesti kui Läti Valga alalt.