



ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON THE CEMETERY OF THE LÄÄNISTE HILL FORT

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INTRODUCTION

In August 2009 University of Tartu carried out archaeological investigations on the Lääniste hill fort in Tartumaa (see Valk *et al.* this volume).¹ Although the plateau of the hill fort was used as a modern period graveyard, it was supposed that the area of the burials did not extend to the northern rampart of the hill fort. Nevertheless, altogether 21 inhumation burials or part of them, plus four remains of coffins where no human remains could be distinguished (altogether 25 burials; see Table 1), were revealed in the examination of the rampart (Fig. 1). In addition, several mixed human bones (belonging to at least 11 individuals, including eight subadults and three adults²) were found in the excavation plot (the area of which was 10 m²). The bones were examined osteologically and then re-buried in 2010 in the area of the excavation plot (Lillak & Malve 2011).

OSTEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

Totally or partially undisturbed burials (21 individuals) belonged to six males, six females and nine juveniles (the sex of the juvenils were not determined). Sex was determined according to skull bones (Recommendations 1980, 521, 523), pelvis morphology (Data Collection Codebook 2005, 20–21) and length of the long bones *femur*, *tibia* and *humerus* (adults – Garmus & Jankauskas 1993, 6; subadults – Allmäe 1998, 183). The age of the adults was determined according to tooth attrition, pubic symphysis (White & Folkens 2005, 369, 374–379), skull sutures (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994, 33–38) and changes in joints (Data Collection Codebook 2005, 31–33), the age of the subadults according to epiphyseal fusion of the post-cranial skeleton (Recommendations 1980, 531) and dental eruption and mineralization (Ubelaker 1989, 64). Pathologies were distinguished according to Steinbock (1976), Ortner and Putschar (1985) and Aufderheide and Rodriguez-Martin (2003). The juveniles were all up to about 5 years old, while the adults were quite old – there were six individuals at the age of about 35–50 years and six individuals at the age of 50 and older. Individuals at age 5–35 were absent in the osteological material found *in situ*, but some bones belonging to individuals at age 7–25 were distinguished in

¹ As the excavations at the hill fort continued in 2010 and then concentrated on studying the prehistoric hill fort, the current article provides a separate overview of the studies of historical cemetery, which was researched in 2009.

² According to *femur*ae.



Fig. 1. Burials 1 (in the front) and 2 (back) in the rampart of the Lääniste hill fort. View from the south.

Jn 1. Matused 1 (ees) ja 2 (taga) Lääniste linnamäe vallis. Vaade lõunast.

Photo / Foto: Anti Lillak

the stray material. It must be noted that the Lääniste osteological material is not representative enough to make convincing demographic analysis.

Osteological material indicates various pathologies, for example adult bones wear traces of *osteoarthritis* on joints of limbs, *spondyloarthritis*, *osteocondrosis*, *spondylosis*, Schmorl's nodes and vertebrae compress fractures especially on the lower part of spine, *periostitis* on *tibiae*, caries, tooth stone, tooth abscesses, *parodontosis*, *hypoplasia* and *ante mortem* tooth losses. Rickets were determined on the bones of subadults (see table). A single male *cranium* (burial no. 5) had interesting tooth attrition (Fig. 2), possibly due to longlasting habit of pipe smoking, but this can also be associated with some other kind of specific activity.



Fig. 2. Tooth attrition on the male cranium (burial no. 5).

Jn 2. Hammaste kulumine mehe koljul (matus nr 5).

Photo / Foto: Martin Malve

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION AND FINDS

The depth of the graves varied from 70 cm up to 165 cm, while the most common grave depth ranged from 90 to 120 cm from the surface. They are somewhat deeper than the average graves of the medieval rural cemeteries in South Estonia (Valk 2001, 67), but shallower than modern graves. It must be taken into account that the burials in the slope have been covered by eroded soil in the course of time. At the foot of the hill fort rampart an L-shaped row of 4 stones was unearthed in the depth of 20–35 cm from surface. Although no certain burial could be connected with the construction, it may be a remain of the grave mark on the ground. Another row of two stones were situated about 40 cm north of it and could assumably be a grave mark of the burial no. 9 (Fig. 3).

Among 23 burials the remains of coffins were found. Among them, nine trunk coffins (Fig. 4) and nine board coffins could be distinguished. The rest of the wood remains were too fragmentary to define the type of the coffin. In one case (burial no. 24) the coffin was decorated with three tiny plaques, made of tin or lead. Iron nails were found from five burials but also as stray finds. In one case three nails were situated in the remains of a trunk coffin, possibly because the coffin plate was fixated with the nails – so the nails do not always indicate the burials in board coffins. Trunk coffins were common in eastern Estonia even in the 19th century (Tiirmaa 1997, 86–87, 95–96).

A westerly grave orientation prevailed; only a single male burial (no. 22) was positioned with the head east-southeast. It is possible that the coffin was placed in the grave this way by mistake because the plated board coffin could have looked like the same in every side (pers. comm. Heiki Valk (TÜ)). Where observed, the hands were usually laid on the belt region. In one occasion (burial no. 12) the right hand was placed on the chest, while the left one was on the belt region.



Fig. 3. Two rows of stones, probably the remains of the grave borders. The human bone visible in the L-shaped stone row is not connected to any certain burial. View from the east.

Jn 3. Kaks kivist rida, võimalikud hauapiirete jäänused. L-kujulise kivirea sees olev inimluu pole seotud ühegi kindla matusega. Vaade idast.
Photo / Foto: Anti Lillak



Fig. 4. Male burial no. 5 in the trunk coffin. View from the south.

Jn 4. Mehe matus nr 5 pakk-kirstus. Vaade lõunast.
Photo / Foto: Anti Lillak

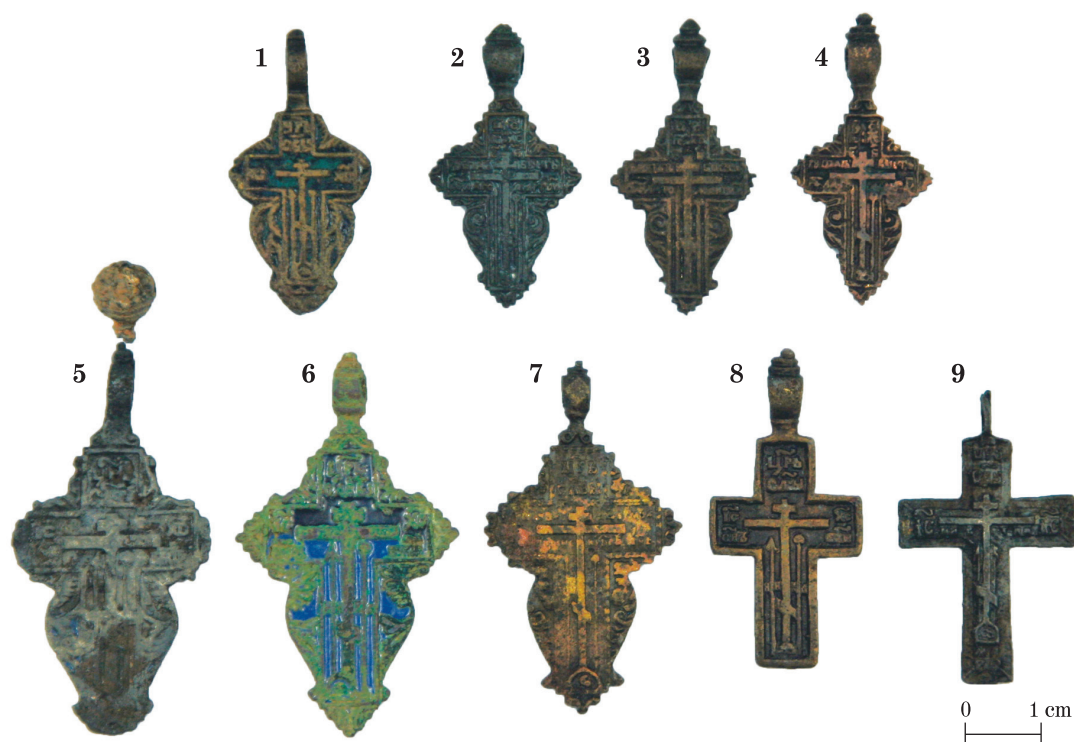


Fig. 5. Neck crosses. Crosses 1–5 were found from the burials (respectively burials 2, 3, 6, 16 and 12), 6–9 in the mixed soil.

Jn 5. Kaelaristid. Ristid 1–5 leiti matuste juurest (vastavalt matused 2, 3, 6, 16 ja 12), 6–9 segatud pinnasest.

Photo / Foto: Anti Lillak

(TÜ 1750: 30, 31, 32, 34, 33, 16, 23, 27, 29.)

Nine Orthodox neck crosses were found – five from the burials and four in the mixed soil (Fig. 5). The crosses were casted of copper and at least four of them bear traces of blue or green enamel. Two crosses had simple cross-shape, while seven of them were kind of rhomboid reminding of an oak leaf and were represented in two sizes. The facades of the crosses are decorated with a Golgotha motif, the back sides are covered with text of a prayer. All these crosses have parallels mostly in the Russian archaeological material. In Russia, the simple narrow neck crosses (Fig. 5: 9) are thought to date from the 16th–17th century. Crosses with broader arms (e.g. Fig. 5: 8) were used in Pskovian land from the 16th–17th century to the second half of the 19th century. The bulk of Lääniste cross finds with an ‘oak-leaf’ shape (Fig. 5: 1–7) have parallels in the Russian material from the second half of the 17th century and 18th century (Kolpakova 2007, 117–120). It is likely that the neck crosses from Lääniste can therefore belong to the second half of the 17th century and to the 18th century. In addition, a single male burial (no. 22) contained a copper trouser button. A Russian copper coin from the year 1749 was found in the mixed soil of the rampart of the hill fort.

Archaeological data does not give answer how long the Lääniste cemetery was used as a burial place. The artefacts characteristic to the 19th–20th century were ab-

sent in the burials. The local people remember that the cemetery was in active use until the World War II and only in the Soviet time authorities prohibited burying in Lääniste and the cemetery in Võnnu was used instead.³ Nevertheless, the last burial took place about 35–40 years ago, that is, approximately in 1970–1975. The locals associate the cemetery with the Russian Old Orthodox (or Old Believers), although the Estonians also buried their dead in the cemetery. It must be noted that the Old Orthodox traditionally bury their deceased with wooden neck crosses (as it is contemporarily common among the Old Orthodox in Latvia and Lithuania) and metal crosses in the graves are not typical to their customs (pers. comm. Pavel Varunin (Society of Old Orthodox Culture and Development)). Therefore the Lääniste burials cannot be definitely associated with the Old Orthodox, but it also cannot be ruled out that some kind of changes have taken place in the traditions of the local community. The graves on the rampart were remembered and taken care of by some elder women even in the Soviet time. Nowadays, only few metal crosses, gravestones and flat grave barrows have remained in the cemetery, but the deceased buried there are still commemorated.

It is interesting to mention that according to older literature (Tilk 1929, 1, no. 1; Rootsmäe 1968, no. 81) several finds typical to the village cemeteries of South Estonia and alien to the graves found in Lääniste in 2009 – brooches and beads – have been found in the hill fort. Although the data concerning the finds is not very reliable, it cannot be excluded that there was a village cemetery on the plateau before the Old Orthodox started to bury their deceased on the hill. More trustworthy information is available about the finds, including human bones, brooches, rings, bracelets and even weapons, found from the yard of the former Lääniste school house that is situated *ca.* 200 m north-northeast from the hill fort (Karu 1921, 2). It is likely that the medieval village cemetery was situated on the area of the former Lääniste school house and maybe only in the 17th – beginning of the 18th century the local people started to bury their dead on the hill fort instead. Probably about at the same time the Old Orthodox, who, judged by the date of the neck crosses and the general historical background, migrated to Lääniste in the last third of the 17th century or in the beginning of the 18th century and started to use the hill fort as a cemetery. The main regions west to Lake Peipus where the Old Orthodox fled from the religious persecution in Russia in the end of the 17th century, were the vicinities of Mustvee, Kallaste and Räpina (Kurs 2006, 96), but they also settled in some villages farther from the western coast of Lake Peipus (see Moora 1964, 100–101).

CONCLUSION

It seems that in the course of time certain assimilation between the local Estonians and the Russian Old Orthodox took place in the village of Lääniste. Nowadays there is no definite community of the Old Orthodox in Lääniste anymore. Nevertheless, the local tradition, in spite of the fact that the Estonians were also buried on the cemetery, still associates the cemetery with the Old Orthodox. The cemetery was in use until the World War II and in rare cases also later.

³ Conversations with the local people of Lääniste took place on the 8th of February, 2011. The written synopsis of the conversations is in the Archaeological Archive of Tartu University (TÜAK).

Table 1. Burials found in 2009.

Tabel 1. 2009. aastal leitud matused.

Burial number/ Matuse number	Sex/ Sugu	Age/ Vanus	Approximate depth of burial/ Matuse umbkaudne sügavus	Remains of a coffin and coffin nails/ Kirstu jäänused ja kirstunaelad	Grave goods and remains of a costume/ Panused ja rõivastuse jäänused	Pathologies/ Patoloogiad
1	Female	50 +	75 cm	Trunk coffin	–	<i>Osteoarthritis, spondyloarthritis</i> , abscess, <i>ante mortem</i> tooth losses; heavy attrition
2	?	1 year ± 4 months	75 cm	Coffin type not determined	Neck cross (TÜ 1750: 30)	Rickets
3	Female	50 +	100 cm	Coffin type not determined	Neck cross (TÜ 1730: 31)	<i>Osteoarthritis, spondyloarthritis</i>
4	?	1 year ± 4 months	85 cm	Trunk coffin	–	Rickets
5	Male	50 +	90 cm	Trunk coffin, 3 nails	–	<i>Spondylitis</i> , Schmorl's nodes, <i>hypoplasia</i> , slight tooth stone; attrition (probably due to habit of pipe smoking)
6	?	5 years ± 16 months	105 cm	Board coffin, 4 nails	Neck cross (TÜ 1750: 32)	–
7	– (no human remains discovered)	–	90 cm	Coffin type not determined, 2 nails near the burial	–	–
8	Female	40 +	90 cm	–	–	–
9	?	up to 1 year	100 cm	Trunk coffin	–	–
10	Male	40 +	110 cm	Board coffin, 3 nails	–	<i>Osteoarthritis, periostitis, osteochondritis dissecans</i>
11	Male	35–40	105 cm	–	–	<i>Hypoplasia</i> , medium tooth stone
12	Male	50 +	120 cm	Board coffin	Neck cross (TÜ 1750: 33)	<i>Osteoarthritis, spondyloarthritis, spondylolysis</i> , Schmorl's nodes, abscess, <i>ante mortem</i> tooth losses, <i>parodontitis</i> , caries
13	?	18 months ± 6 months	115 cm	Trunk coffin	–	Rickets
14	– (no human remains discovered)	–	115 cm	Board coffin (?)	–	–
15	Male	40 +	105 cm	Coffin type not determined	–	<i>Osteoarthritis, periostitis</i>
16	?	2 years ± 8 months	120 cm	Board coffin	Neck cross (TÜ 1750: 34)	–
17	?	up to 1 year	105 cm	Coffin type not determined	–	–
18	Female	50 +	110 cm	Board coffin	–	Slight <i>spondyloarthritis</i>

<i>Burial number / Matuse number</i>	<i>Sex/ Sugu</i>	<i>Age/ Vanus</i>	<i>Approximate depth of burial/ Matuse umb- kaudne sügavus</i>	<i>Remains of a coffin and coffin nails / Kirstu jäänused ja kirstunaelad</i>	<i>Grave goods and remains of a costume / Panused ja rõivastuse jäänused</i>	<i>Pathologies / Patoloogiad</i>
19	Female	50 +	120 cm	Coffin type not determined	–	<i>Osteoarthritis, spondyloarthritis, osteochondrosis, vertebrae compress fractures, ante mortem tooth losses</i>
20	?	3 years ± 12 months	130 cm	Trunk coffin	–	–
21	?	1 year ± 4 months	155 cm	Trunk coffin	–	Rickets
22	Male	45–50	145 cm	Board coffin	Copper trouser button (TÜ 1750: 35)	<i>Osteoarthritis, slight spondyloarthritis, Schmorl's nodes, healed fracture of second right metacarpal</i>
23	Female	40 +	165 cm	Board coffin (?), 3 nails	–	<i>Osteoarthritis</i>
24	– (no human remains discovered)	–	70 cm	Board coffin (with two tiny plaques)	–	–
25	– (no human remains discovered)	–	100 cm	Trunk coffin	–	–

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ARHEOLOOGILISED UURINGUD LÄÄNISTE LINNAMÄEL ASUVAL KALMISTUL

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2009. a augustis toimusid Lääniste linnamäel (Tartumaa, Võnnu vald) TÜ arheoloogia kabineti teaduskaevamised. Kuigi oli teada, et linnamäe õuel asub uusaegne kalmistu, oletati, et linnuse põhjavalli alal matuseid pole. Siiski leiti valli õuepoolsele küljele tehtud 10 m² suurusest kaevandist kokku 25 tervet või osaliselt säilinud matust. Neist 21 sisaldas inimsäilmed, täpsemalt kuus meest, kuus naist ja üheksa last (jn 1). Neljast matusest olid säilinud vaid kirstujäänused. Lisaks sisaldas matustega segatud pinnas veel vähemalt 11 indiviidi luid, neist kaheksa last ja noorukit ning kolm täiskasvanut. Luud analüüsiti osteoloogiliselt ning maeti 2010. aastal kaevandi alale tagasi.

Üheksa lapsematust kuulusid kuni 5-aastastele väikelastele, samas kui täiskasvanud olid surnud võrdlemisi kõrges vanuses – kuus indiviidi vanuses ligikaudu 35–50 ning kuus indiviidi üle 50-aastaselt. Segatud materjali seas leidis ka 7–25 aasta vanuselt surnute luid. Patoloogiatest (vt tabel 1) täheldati täiskasvanutel näiteks osteoartroosi ehk liigesekulumust jäsemeliigestel, spondüloartroosi ehk lülisamba liigete kulumust, osteokondroosi ehk luukõhre põletikku, spondüloosi ehk lülisamba artroosi, Schmorli sõlmi ehk selgroolüli vaheketaste songa ning kompressioonmurde selgrool (eriti alaosas), periostiiti ehk luuümbrise põletikku sääreluudel, kaariest, hambakivi, lõualuu abstsessesse ehk juuretipiirkonna mädapõletikku, parodontiiti ehk hambajuureümbrise põletikku, hüpoplaasiat ehk stressijooni ning elu ajal kaotatud hambaid. Laste luud kandsid sageli rahhiidi tunnuseid. Ühe mehe (matus nr 5) kolju hammastel oli omapärane hammaste kulumine (jn 2), mis võis olla põhjustatud pikaajalisest piibusuitetamisest, ent kõne alla võivad tulla ka teistsugused põhjused.

Haudade sügavus varieerus 70–165 cm, jäädes enamasti 90–120 cm vahele. Seega on Lääniste haud sügavuselt Lõuna-Eesti keskaegsete küla-kalmistute haudade ja tänapäevaste haudade vahepealsed. Tuleb arvestada, et linnusevalli nõlvale sängitatud matused on aja jooksul kattunud ka erodeerunud pinnasega. Valli jalamil paljastus umbes 20–35 cm sügavusel L-kujuline kivirida, mis võib pärineda maapealsest hauapiirdest, ehkki sellega ei olnud võimalik otseselt seostada ühtegi matust. Teine, kahest kivist moodustis paiknes eelmisest

umbes 40 cm põhja pool ning võis oletamisi tähistada matust nr 9 (jn 3).

23 matuse puhul täheldati kirstujäänuseid. Eristati üheksa pakk-kirstu (jn 4) ja üheksa laudkirstu; ülejäänud juhtudel olid kirstud väga halvasti säilinud. Üks kirst (matus nr 24) oli kaunistatud kolme väikese tinast või pliist neediga. Viie matuse juures leidis ka rauast kirstunaelu, sealhulgas ühel juhul ka pakk-kirstu juures. Raudnaelu esines samuti segatud pinnases. Matused olid hauda sängitatud valdavalt peaga lääne poole; vaid ühel juhul (matus nr 22) asus maetu pea idakagus. Võimalik, et mõlemast otsast ühesugune kirst oli matmise käigus kogemata vales suunas hauda sängitatud. Maetute käed olid asetatud enamasti vöö piirkonda, ühel juhul (matus nr 12) oli parem käsi rinnal, vasak vöö piirkonnas.

Kaevamistel leiti üheksa õigeusu kaelaristi, neist viis matustest ja neli juhuleidudena segatud pinnasest (jn 5). Vähemalt neli risti olid kaunistatud sinise või rohelise emailiga, kaks lihtsa ristikujuvise põhiplaaniga ning seitse rombikujuvise, sarnanedes tammelehele. Ristide esiküljed on kaunistatud Kolgata motiiviga, tagaküljel on tekst palvega. Venemaa analoogiliste ristide dateeringute põhjal võiks Lääniste kaelaristid dateerida 17. saj teise poolde – 18. saj. Lisaks ristidele saadi matusest nr 22 vasest püksinööp ning segatud pinnasest 1749. a Vene münt.

Mõnede vanemate teadete järgi on Lääniste linnamäelt leitud Lõuna-Eesti keskaegsetele küla-kalmetele iseloomulikke leide – sõlgi ja helmeid –, kuid tõenäoliselt asus keskaegne kohalik küla-kalme hoopis paarsada meetrit põhja pool, endise Lääniste koolimaja õue alal, kust samuti olevat leitud inimluud, sõlgi, sõrmuseid, käevõrusid ja isegi relvi. Võimalik, et kohalik rahvas hakkas linnamäele matma alles 17. saj – 18. saj alguses, st umbkaudu samal perioodil, mil Läänistesse võisid sisse rännata vanausulised. Kaelaristide dateeringuid ja üldist ajaloolist konteksti arvestades toimus see vahemikus 17. saj viimane kolmandik – 18. saj algus. Sise-Venemaalt usulise tagakiusamise eest põgenenud vanausulised rändasid 17. saj lõpul Peipsi läänekaldal peamiselt Mustvee, Kallaste ja Räpina piirkonda, kuid mõnel juhul ka sisemaa küladesse. Sealjuures väärib märkimist,

et hoolimata sellest, et kohalik pärimus seostab kalmistut vanausulistega, matavad vanausulised surnuid üldiselt mitte metallist, vaid puust kaelaristidega (see on nende puhul tavaline veel praegugi Lätis ja Leedus). Seega ei pruugi Lääniste matused kuuluda vanausulistele või on nende matusekommetes toimunud muutus.

Arvatavasti toimus aja jooksul Läänistes eestlaste ja vanausuliste venelaste vahel teatud ühte-

sulandumine. Tänapäeval pole vanausulised kogukonnana Läänistes säilinud, kuid kohalike inimeste mälestuste järgi matsid linnamäe surnuaiale ka eestlased. Matmine linnamäele lõppes üldiselt pärast Teist maailmasõda, viimast korda maeti sinna umbes 35–40 aastat tagasi, seega 1970.–1975. a paiku, mil surnuaia kasutamine oli võimude poolt üldiselt juba keelatud. Linnuse põhjavallil olevaid matuseplatse käidi hooldamas veel 20. saj keskpaigas.