



New hoards from Voorepera, Eastern Virumaa

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INTRODUCTION

Among the dozen prehistoric hoards handed over to the National Heritage Board in 2016 were three that had been found in Voorepera with the use of a metal detector. This is the district richest in hoards, located on the territory of the town of Kohtla-Järve and its closest vicinity in the present-day Eastern Virumaa and it was northeast part of Askala Parish in prehistoric Virumaa. At the present stage of research, about twenty Viking Age and Post-Viking Age silver hoards are known to have been found there, probably associated with the Purtse harbour site (Kiudsoo 2016, 106, fig. 58).

The surroundings of the Voorepera hoards are distinguished by former marshland (see Kiudsoo 2015, 103–104). The best-known archaeological site of the region is the Alulinna marsh stronghold, located about 2 km NE from the find site of these hoards. The stronghold had been erected on an elevation slightly higher than the surrounding marsh, and encircled by a mortarless limestone wall. No finds have been recovered that would allow the dating of the stronghold (Tõnisson 2008, 223). It is possible that this wetland was traversed by a north-south directional log trackway that connected the stronghold in the marsh with Kohtla (*Odris*). In 1549 a monk's path (*Germ. mönckenweg*) was mentioned, running across the marsh along the route between Aa and Kohtla (Tõnisson 2008, 234). This route can even be observed on some modern era maps (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. The site of the Voorepera I silver hoard on a 19th-century map.

Jn 1. Voorepera I hõbeaarde asukoht 19. sajandi kaardil.
Map / Kaart: Estonian Land Board / Maa-amet

VOOREPERA I HOARD

The Voorepera I hoard (AI 7657) was discovered about a kilometer south of the Tallinn–St. Petersburg highway, from a drained wetland (Fig. 1). In addition to 29 coins (including a coin blank) it includes a fragment of a silver temple ornament (2.65 g) and two small tin mounts. The connection of a single hand-moulded pottery fragment with the hoard is uncertain.

The majority (15 items) of the coins of the Voorepera I hoard are of Anglo-Saxon origin. In addition, the hoard also contains their imitations (3 Scandinavian and 1 Irish(?) coins). German mints are represented by 9 specimens. The most recent coins were minted in England by King Cnut after 1017/1018. Hence the *tpq* of the hoard is 1018. Noteworthy is the high percentage of English coins and their imitations (almost 2/3), which characterizes hoards of the 2nd decade of the 11th century in Estonia as well as in Sweden. The absence of Arabian coins is equally characteristic. These disappear from North- and West-Estonian finds of the same decade, but from South Estonian finds of a somewhat later date. Most likely these coins also reached Voorepera over the island of Gotland (Leimus *et al.* 2016, 1).



Fig. 2. Anglo-Saxon coin. Minted by Aethelred II. Long cross type (997–1003).

Jn 2. Anglo-Saksi valitseja Aethelred II aegne münt. Long cross tüüp (997–1003).

(AI 7657: 2.)

Photo / Foto: Mauri Kiudsoo

One of the most interesting coins in the Voorepera hoard is a rolled-up specimen (Fig. 2). Hitherto such disfigured coins (ornaments?) have been found in Estonia only among Russian wire kopeks of the 16th/17th cc., and West-European gold coins (Kiudsoo 2012, 1–2).

Judging by the cutting or chopping marks the temple ring hadn't broken accidentally, but had been deliberately fragmented to obtain a piece of silver to be used in trade. The attempted reconstruction of the find from Voorepera and calculations based on wholly preserved analogous ornaments (Levashova 1967, fig. 3: 1; Sedova 1981, fig. 1: 1; Sedov 2007, fig. 356: 9) show that it may have been a ring with a diameter of 6–8 cm and up to five thin rhombic extensions (Fig. 3), weighing about 13 g.

Temple rings, which were usually made from copper alloys, less frequently from silver, have been regarded as Slavic women's ornaments that were worn on the temple hanging from a ribbon, or attached to hair or a headdress. In some cases they were also worn as earrings (Levashova 1967, 7; Sedova 1981, 9; Zhilina 2001, figs 1, 2). Since clear regional distinctions have been observed in the distribution of different types of temple rings, they are considered indicator finds, which serve the identification of the ethnic affiliation of the buried persons. Circular temple rings with rhombic extensions have been mostly found in barrows on the territories of the Ilmen Slavs (Levashova 1967, 24, tab. 1; Sedova 1981, 10; Sedov 2007, 354), the centre of which was Veliki (Grand)

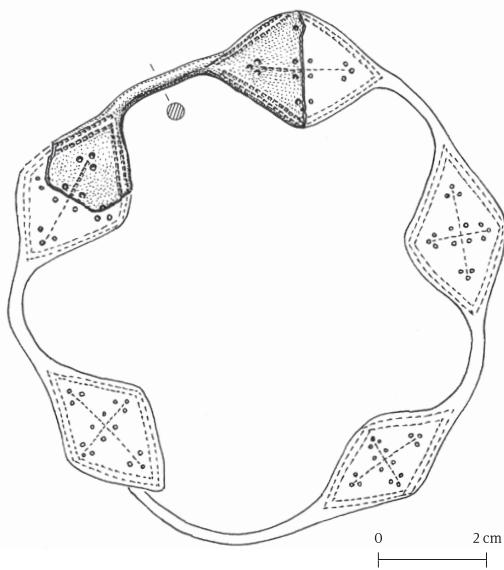


Fig. 3. Fragment of circular ring (AI 7657: 28) with rhombic extension and attempted reconstruction.

Jn 3. Rombiliste laienditega oimuehte fragment (AI 7657: 28) ja selle rekonstruktsoonikatse.

Drawing / Joonis: Kersti Sütan

Novgorod, located at the crossroads of important trade routes. The oldest ornaments of this type occur among the archaeological finds from the Novgorod layers of the 10th–1st quarter of the 11th century, and the latest in the layers of the early 14th century (Sedova 1981, 9–10). They have been all cast in open-topped stone moulds (Ryndina 1963, 248). The fragment containing in the Voorepera hoard belongs to the so-called classical variant of the temple rings with rhombic extensions, where thin rhombs with rounded angles have been decorated with a stamped cross motif, with three dots at the end of each hand. Such temple rings were introduced at the beginning of the 11th century (Levashova 1967, 23).

Two small cruciform mounts (Fig. 4) were cast from tin using a two-piece mould. The upper side of each plaque ($9 \times 9 \times 1.5$ mm) bears a motif of a looped square. The four small loops and two parallel thin grooves on the rear side suggest that the plaques were sewn on garments with thread and needle. Tin mounts of the same shape and size have been found from a female burial at Viltina Rutiränk cemetery (AI 3884: 5587), dated to the 13th century. Probably they were used together with small glass beads and copper alloy rings to decorate the edges of a shawl wrapped around the deceased (Mägi 2002, 62).

Since tin is usually poorly preserved in the soil, every prehistoric tin artefact is rare. Although in recent years some hoards of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th quarter of the 11th century have been found which have included tin ornaments (Ratas & Kiudsoo 2017, 13), they contain no plaques. Since the Voorepera I hoard is of an earlier date than these, it appears to be the oldest find from Estonia containing tin artefacts.

VOOREPERA II HOARD

The discovery site of the Voorepera II hoard (AI 7658) lies about 160 m north of the Voorepera I hoard (Fig. 1). This hoard dates from the period that was the richest in hoards in Estonia. Although the accumulation of coin hoards in Nordic countries slows down in the second half of the 11th century, Estonia has many large coin hoards from that very period. More than 80 hoards have been found here, dating from the last four decades of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century, which is several times more than in any other country in the Baltic Sea region. This was the period of the height of commercial activity for the Baltic Finns (Kiudsoo 2016, 151). The 16 coins of the Voorepera II hoard all come from Germany, or, more accurately, Friesland. The latest of them were minted during the reign of Count Ekbert II (1068–1077) (Fig. 5), and

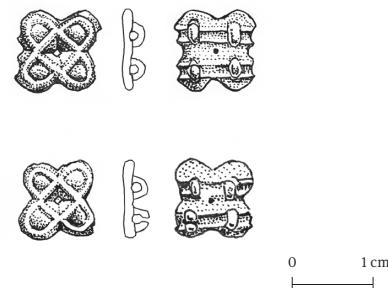


Fig. 4. Two tin mounts of Voorepera I hoard.

Jn 4. Kaks tinulist Voorepera I aardest.
(AI 7657: 26, 27.)

Drawing / Joonis: Kersti Siitan

Fig. 5. The latest coin of the Voorepera II hoard, minted in Stavoren by Earl Ekbert II (1068–1077).

Jn 5. Voorepera II aarde hiliseim münt. Vermitud Stavorenis, krahv Ekbert II (1068–1077) ajal.

(AI 7658: 3.)

Photo / Foto: Mauri Kiudsoo

on that basis the *tpq* of the hoard is 1068. The hoard's coin composition confirms the previously presented hypothesis that the mercantile invasion of the Frisians, which headed to Northwest Russia from the 1060s to the 1070s, mostly touched the coastal areas of North Estonia (Leimus & Molvõgin 2000, 42–43; Kiudsoo 2014, 223). Several hoards are known, from that very region, consisting mainly or only of Frisian coins. Preliminary investigations on the site of discovery of the Voorepera II hoard, conducted by Ulla Kadakas, suggested the presence of a prehistoric settlement site (U. Kadakas, pers. comm.).

IRON BLOOMS

Not far from the Voorepera I hoard, two rectangular iron blooms were also found. While relatively small lumps of unwrought iron are quite common finds in the archaeological excavations of iron-smelting sites, larger pieces of marketable semi-finished production – currency blooms – are considerably rarer. Unlike the furnace bloom direct from the furnace, they were preliminarily partially wrought, the material was compressed to some extent and given a more or less standard shape. Until 2016 only two iron blooms had been found in Estonia. One of them, a round iron loaf, was discovered as a stray find in a cable ditch traversing the ancient settlement(s) site of Kuusalu, North-Estonia. Since a part of the settlement site has been archaeologically investigated, the iron lump can be dated to the 12th–13th centuries (Peets 2003, 154). One iron-production site lies not far from Kuusalu, on the southern coast of lake Kahala. Some years ago a rectangular currency bloom was found there (Kiudsoo 2016, fig. 67).



Fig. 6. Typical(?) form of currency bloom of northeastern corner of Estonia. Stray find from Aa village.

Jn 6. Kirde-Eesti rauast kaubatooriku tüüpiline(?) vorm. Juhuleid Aa külast.

(AI 7674: 1.)

Photo / Foto: Jaana Ratas

Before the completion of material analysis we cannot make any definite statements concerning the composition of the iron blooms that came to light in Voorpera. Since rectangular currency blooms of similar shape have been found from three different sites in the same region (see Kiudsoo 2017, fig. 2) it may be assumed that these finds most likely represent the typical form of currency bloom (Fig. 6) produced in the northeastern corner of Estonia. Since the iron-smelting complexes include, besides iron-smelting furnaces, also reheating forges, it is most likely that the product of these furnaces was worked into currency blooms on the spot, immediately after the end of the smelting process. Technologically it meant that shapeless, porous iron bloom rich in

slag from a furnace was reheated in a neighbouring forge and hammered on an anvil stone into a regular currency bloom (Kiudsoo & Kallis 2008, 179). Whether the findspot of the iron blooms and the Voorepera I hoard indicates, like the Mäetaguse hoard, the site of an one-time smithy (see Kiudsoo 2016, 90), or is it just related to the track through the previously mentioned marshy area (Fig. 1), we hope to discover during archaeological investigations in the nearest future.

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UUED PEITVARAD IDA-VIRUMAALT VOOREPERAST

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2016. aastal anti Muinsuskaitseametile üle tosin-kond muinasaegset aarde- ja peitleidi, neist koguni kolm Ida-Virumaalt Voorepera küla territooriumilt. Tegemist on Eesti kõige aareterikkama piirkonnaga, mis jääb tänapäeva Kohtla-Järve linna ja selle lähi-ümbrusesse. Praeguse uurimisseisu juures on teada ligi kakskümmend sealt leitud ja töenäoliselt Purtse sadamakohaga seotud viikingi- ja järelviikingiaegset hõbeaaret. Voorepera aarete ümbrust ilmestavaks maaistikuelemendiks on soo, mis on nüüdseks suuresti kuivendatud. Piirkonna tuntuim arheoloogiamälestis on Alulinna soolinnus, mis jääb aarete peitmiskohast u 2 km kirdesse. Ei saa välistada, et läbi märgala viis põhja-lõunasuunaline palktee, mis ühendas Alulinna Kohtlagaga. 1549. aastal on nimetatud samal marsruudil kulgenud üle soo viivat mungated, mis on veel jälgitav ka mõnel piirkonnast teadaoleval uusaegsel kaardil (jn 1).

Voorepera I aarde leiukoht jääb tänapäeva Tallinn-Narva maanteest u kilomeeter lõunasse (jn 1). Voorepera I aarde müntidest (kokku 29, sh münditoorik) moodustavad enamuse anglosaksi vermin-

gud (15 tk), millele lisanduvad nende imitatsioonid (3 Skandinaavia ja 1 liri? münt). Saksamaal tegutse-nud rahapajade toodang on esindatud 9 eksemplariga. Leiu noorimad mündid on löödud Inglismaal kuningas Cnuti ajal pärast 1017/18. aastat. Inglise müntide ja nende imitatsioonide kõrge osakaal (ligi 2/3) on iseloomulik ka teistele 11. sajandi teise aastakümne aaretele ja seda nii Eestis kui ka Rootsis. Töenäoliselt jõudsidki nimetatud vermingud Vooreperale Ojamaa kaudu.

Voorepera I aarde müntide hulgas on üheks huvi-pakkuvamaks eksemplariks nn rullikeeratud variant (jn 2). Siiani oli Eestis samasuguse deformatsiooniga rahasid (ehteid?) teada vaid 16./17. sajandi Venemaa traatkopikate ja Lääne-Euroopa kuldmüntide hulgas.

Lisaks müntidele sisaldab Voorepera I aare ka hõbedast oimuehte fragmenti (jn 3) ja kaks pisikest tinanaastu (jn 4). Lõike- või raiumisjälgede põhjal otsustades pole oimurõngas purunenud juhuslikult, vaid on kauplemiseks vajaliku hõbedatüki saamiseks tahtlikult fragmendidut. Tervena säilinud analoogsete ehetega alusel tehtud rekonstruktsioonikatse (jn 3) ja

arvutused näitavad, et see võis olla kuni viie rombikujulise õhukese laiendiga 6–8 cm läbimõõduga röngas, mis kaalus u 13 g. Oimuröngaid peetakse slaavi naiste eheteks. Kuna oimuröngaste tüüpide levikus on täheldatud selgeid piirkondlikke eripärasid, siis peetakse neid indikaatorleidudeks, mille abil saab kaudsest määratada ka maetute etnilist kuuluvust. Rombiliste laienditega sõörjaid oimuröngaid on kõige rohkem leitud Ilmeni järve ümbruskonna kääbastest, mille keskus oli tähtsate kaubateede ristumiskohas paiknenud Suur e Veliki Novgorod. Seda tüüpi vanimad ehted esinevad Novgorodi arheoloogilises leiumaterjalis 10.–11. sajandi esimese veerandi ja kõige hilisemad 14. sajandi alguse kihtides. Voorepera aardes sisalduv ehe esindab rombiliste laienditega oimuröngaste nn klassikalist varianti, kus ümarate nurkadega rombid on suured ja õhukesed ning kaunistatud ristimotiiviga, mille haara otstes on kolm täppi või sõõri. Selliseid ehteid hakati valmistama juba 11. sajandi alguses.

Kaks väikest naastu (jn 4) on valatud tinast ja seljeks on kasutatud kahepoolset vormi. Mõlema naastukese pealmisel küljel on reljeefne silmusnelinurga motiiv ja tagaküljel nende kinnitamiseks vajalikud aasakesed. Kuna tina säilib pinnases üldjuhul halvasti, on iga muinasaggne tinaest toode haruldane. Kuigi viimastel aastatel on avastatud mõningaid 11. sajandi teise, kolmanda ja neljanda veerandiga dateeritud tinaeheteid sisaldaavaid aardeid, puuduvad seal naastud. Kuna Voorepera I aare on neist varasem, siis on selle näol omakorda tegemist Eesti kõige vanema tinaesemeid sisaldaava leiuga.

Voorepera II aardeleiukoht, mille arheoloogilised eeluuringud osutasid muinasasula olemasolule, jäääb esimesest aardest u 160 m põhja pool. Voorepera II

aardest teadaolevad mündid (16 tk) pärinevad kõik Friisimalta. Noorimad neist on vermitud krahy Ekbert II (1068–77) valitsemisajal (jn 5). Leiu koostis lisab tuge juba varemalt esitatud hüpoteesile, mille järgi puudutas 1060.–1070. aastatel Loode-Venemaale suundunud friiside kaubanduslik invasioon eelkõige Eesti põhjaranniku alasid. Just sealt on saadud mitteid valdavalt või lausa täielikult Friisi müntidest koosnevaid aardeid. Ühtlasi pärieb Voorepera II aare Eesti noorema rauaja kõige aareterikkamast ajajärgust.

Voorepera I aarde lähinaabrusest avastati ka kaks rauast nelinurkset kaubatoorikut, mida saab käsitleda hinnalise peitvarana. Kui suhteliselt väikesi töötlemata toorrautükke leitakse rauasulatuskohtade arheoloogilistel kaevamistel suhteliselt palju, siis suureid müügikõlblikuid pooltooted on märksa haruldasemad. Erinevalt otse sulatusahjust saadud ahjutoorikust on kaubatoorikuid mõnevõrra töödeldud, st materjali tihendatud ja antud enam-vähem standardne kuju. Seni oli Eestist teada kaks leidu, mida võis kaubatoorikuna interpreteerida ja need mõlemad on avastatud Harjumaalt Kuusalu lähiümburuvest. Enne materjalianalüüse pole võimalik midagi lähemat konstateerida Voorepera kaubatoorikute koostise kohta. Kuna samast piirkonnast on sarnaseid toorikuid (jn 6) avastatud praeguseks juba kolmest erinevast kohast, võiks nende kuju ja suurus osutada Kirde-Eesti rauasulatusega seotud kaubatoorikute ühesugusele välisilmele. Seda, kas Voorepera kaubatoorikute ja I hõbeaardeleiukoht juhatavad meile kätte omaaeegse sepikoja aseme või on see üksnes seotud eelpool mainitud soocala läbiva ühhendustega (jn 1), näitavad ehk juba lähiajal toimuvad arheoloogilised uuringud.