

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK AROUND TÕNIJA AND RÕOSA ON SOUTHERN SAAREMAA

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Archaeological excavations at Tõnija Tuulingumäe site complex, started in 1995, were finished in summer 2001. During the excavations in 2001, an earlier cult site beneath the pre-Roman Iron Age cult site platform with pits (see Mägi 2001) was unearthed. Excavations at Tõnija were carried out with a group of Swedish ama-



Fig. 1. The complex of monuments at Tõnija Tuulingumäe. 1 - depressions; 2 - granite stones of the earlier cult site; 3 - limestones of the earlier cult site; 4 - construction stones of the later cult site and tarand grave.

Joon. 1. Tõnija Tuulingumäe muististekompleks. 1 - lobud; 2 - varasema kultuskobaga seotud raudkiivid; 3 - varasema kultuskobaga seotud paekivid; 4 - hilisema kultuskoba ja tarandkalme konstruktiooniga seotud kivid.

teur archaeologists organised by Raine Nykänen and were financed, in addition to the group, by the Institute of History in Tallinn. The finds were stored in the Museum of Saaremaa (SM 1466).

The Tuulingumäe complex of two tarand graves and two cult sites was reconstructed after the excavations. Several surface survey trips were organised in the surroundings for better understanding of the local settlement history.

## EARLIER CULT SITE AT TUULINGUMÄE

The area of the excavations in 2001 was approximately 135 m<sup>2</sup> but in most places the digs embraced only one layer of small limestones on top of the natural ground. The natural ground consisted of rammed earthen moraine and shingle, with few limestone slabs in it (Fig. 1). Drawing parallels with gravel floors in historical buildings on Saaremaa and Muhu, recorded up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Rullingo 2001, 414–415), a ground similar to these may have been formed here intentionally. Several horizontal limestone slabs were uncovered under the later stone platform at the eastern side of the excavations, where they seemed to be remains of a pavement.

Next to pit No. 2 of the stone platform a probable hearth with a diameter of 50 cm was unearthed on the natural ground. The fireplace was semicircularly surrounded by stones of medium size. Only a few bone fragments and small potsherds were found here. Seven circular or slightly oval depressions, dug into the natural ground, can be connected with the earlier cult site (Fig. 2). The diameter of most of the depressions was 80–120 cm, the depth about 20 cm. Somewhat bigger than the others (measuring 145 x 110 cm) and much deeper (up to 1 m) was pit No. 10. One of the depressions (No. 12) in the corner between the tarands I and II of the Roman period grave had been found already in 1995. The bottoms of the depressions were covered with stones of medium size or with badly burnt fist-sized stones. On the very bottom of the depression No. 6 small bone fragments and a tooth of a child were found. These depressions differed from the pits uncovered in the stone platform during the excavations in 1999 and 2000 (Mägi 2001). The depressions of the earlier cult site were most likely dug for erecting big wooden pillars, and were, therefore, marked with tree stocks in the reconstruction (Fig. 3). The pillar in the depression No. 12 was obviously used as a corner post when the tarand II had been erected, as the tarand lacked the corner stone. The position of the depressions was quite irregular. Very big granite boulders between the later tarand grave and the present road also formed a part of



Fig. 2. The earlier cult site at Tuulingumäe, with the remains of the later cult site. The depressions Nos 7 and 8.

Joon. 2. Tuulingumäe varasem kultuskohat koos hilisema kultuskoha jäänustega. Lohud nr. 7 ja 8.



Fig. 3. The reconstruction of the complex of monuments at Tuulingumäe.

Joon. 3. Tuulingumäe muististekompleksi rekonstruktsioon.

the construction of the earlier cult site, as indicated by a layer of smaller limestones between them and the natural ground. On the same line with the boulders a big horizontal limestone, perhaps marking some kind of entrance, was unearthed.

There were only a small number of finds and animal bones in the layer of the earlier cult site. Some of the decorated potsherds found can be dated to the pre-Roman Iron Age, most likely to the first half of it. The earlier cult site probably belongs to the same period. Quite extensive efforts may have been involved in constructing it, as indicated by the huge granite boulders and thick wooden pillars.

### **NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE VICINITY OF THE TUULINGUMÄE COMPLEX**

The area around the present villages Tõnija, Põllu and Rõõsa is surrounded by wetlands in the east, north and west, and by seacoast in the south. Presently, a great part of the area is stony pasture with junipers, where a number of prehistoric stone graves and remains of fossil fields can be found. The River Maadevahe, earlier Tõnnijõgi, flows through the Tõnija-Rõõsa area. There was only small-scale development of the landscape during the Soviet times, which is obviously the main reason why more archaeological sites than in most regions with intensive agriculture can be recorded here.

Lepna Katkuauk ("Lepna Pest Hole") in deserted Lepna village is believed by the local people to have been a burial ground during the Great Plague. It is about a 40 cm high mound measuring 18 x 16 m. There is a depression with a diameter of about 5 m and a depth of about 50 cm in the centre of the mound. The site was considered to be a medieval village cemetery after the first inspection in 2000, when some unburnt human bones were recovered in a trial pit. During the re-study of the site in 2001, a small cache of weapons and a belt buckle 1.5 m away from it were found (Fig. 4), using a metal detector at the edge of the probable cemetery. Three spearheads and a long knife were unearthed together at a depth of 25 cm, under a dense layer of small limestone slabs. All finds can be dated to the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century (for comparison see e. g. Nerman 1969, Pls. 64, 141, 198; Tamla & Jaanits 1977, Figs. 1, 3, 5), and the grave obviously belongs to the same period.

Paemõis ("Limestone Manor") is known in local tradition as the site of a manor preceding the Rõõsa manor. The site is situated about 100 m away from the

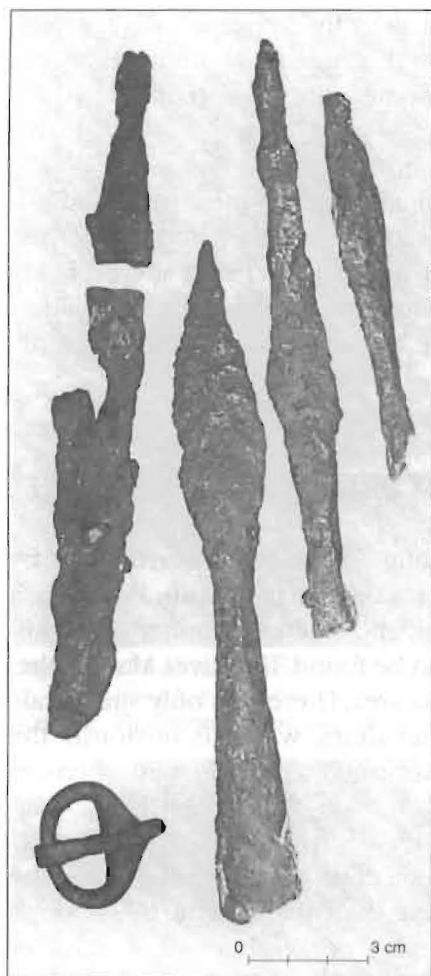


Fig. 4. The weapon find and the belt buckle from Lepna Katkuaug. (AI 6066. Bronze and iron.)

Joon. 4. Relvaleid ja vööpannal Lepna Katkuaugust. (AI 6066. Pronks ja raud.)

earlier data, a 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century scabbard end, a bronze ring, a bronze bell, an iron knife and bronze spirals have been found at the same site (SMM 1924, 119).

Kuru saat ("Kuru field") is situated 120 m southeast of the later Rõõsa manor, on a slope beside a bog. The bog, called Kurepsuu laht ("Kurepsuu Bay") by local people, lies about 4.5 m above the present sea level, and had formed a sea bay in prehistory. According to the local tradition, another manor had been situated

Maadevahe River, beside a wet area that perhaps had been part of the river some time in the past. It is about a 120-m-long and 30-m-wide ridge with steep western slope and a low wall on the eastern side. The wall is 2.5 m wide and about 40 cm high. A terrace of about 50 x 15 m was detected in the northern part of the ridge. In trial pits dug into the terrace, a crossbow brooch and a belt buckle, both belonging to the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century (for comparison see e. g. Tamla & Jaanits 1977, Pl. 10: 2), were found (Fig. 6: 2). The site can be defined as a Migration Period fortified manor or principal's farmstead. Similar fortified magnate farms are known from 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century Sweden (e. g. Olausson 1987).

Tõnija Kuninga haud ("Grave of the King" at Tõnija) that is believed to have formed a part of a holy grove is now situated in the village gathering place around a large swing and a volleyball court. The rectangular construction of the holy grove can be seen on an old map (Fig. 5) but is partly demolished by now. The "Grave of the King" is about a 60-cm-high oval mound with diameters of 16 and 12 m. The grave is surrounded by very big granite boulders (with diameters of 1.5–2 m); more of these boulders stand northwards of the grave. In the trial pit in the centre of the grave, bronze edging and rod chain network fragments of a 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century knife sheath came to light (Fig. 6: 1). According to some



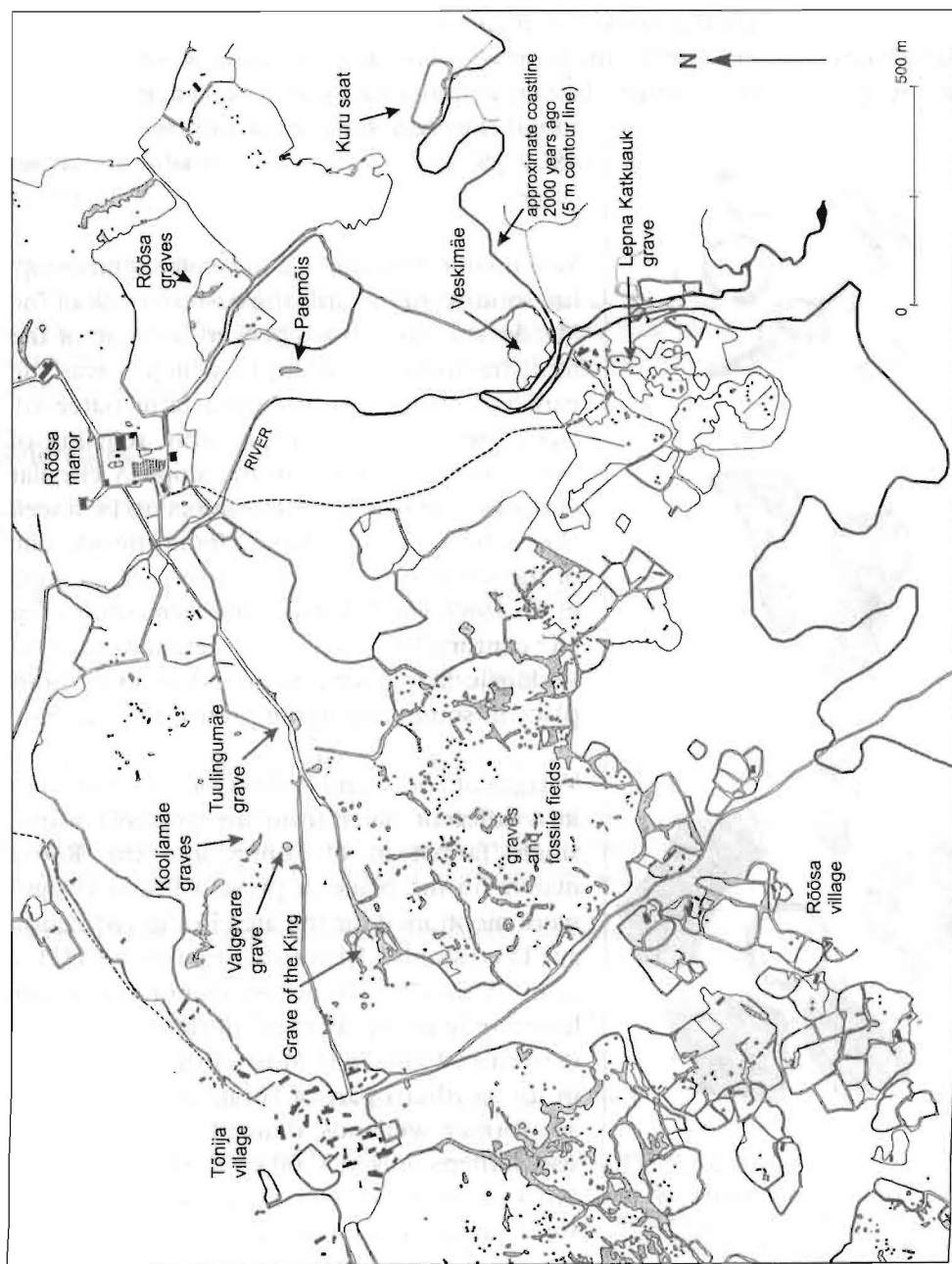


Fig 5. Tõnija-Rõõsa area. Re-drawn from the map of 1873. (*The Estonian Historical Archives F. 3724, I. 5, D. 2492.*)  
 Joon. 5. Tõnija-Rõõsa ümbruskond. Ümber joonistatud 1873. aasta kaardilt (*Eesti Ajaloosarhiiv F. 3724 N. 5 S. 2492.*)

there at some time. On the slope, on an area of about 100 x 40 m, about a 20 cm thick habitation layer of little intensity was detected in trial pits. Among other finds, the head of 11<sup>th</sup> century decorative pin of so called Saaremaa type was found (Fig. 6: 3, for comparison see e. g. Mägi 1997, 39–44). The site is presumably a harbour place.

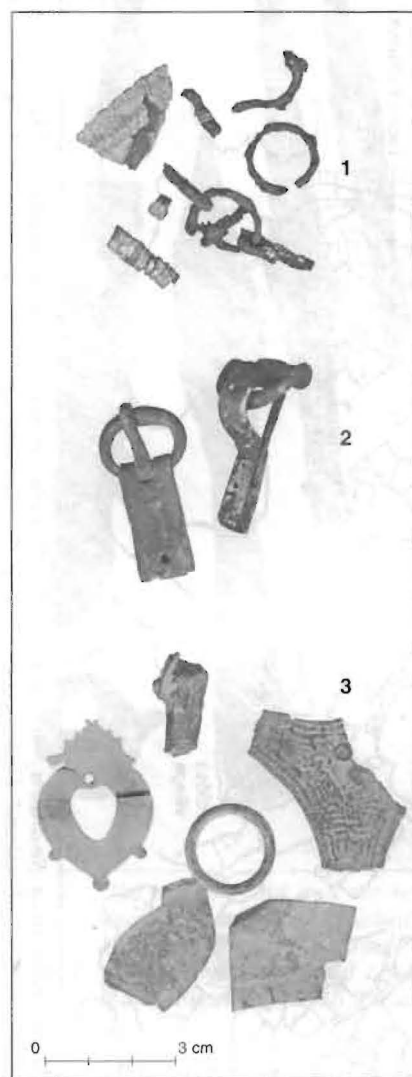


Fig. 6. Finds from "Grave of the King" at Tõnija (1), Paemõis (2) and Kuru (3). (AI 6493, 6492, 6494. Bronze and iron.)

Joon. 6. Leiud Tõnija "Kuninga hauast" (1), Paemõisast (2) ja Kuru saadust (3). (AI 6493, 6492, 6494. Pronks ja raud.)

Veskimäe ("Mill Hill"), a low hill slightly sloping southward towards the eastern bank of the Maadevahe River, was checked because of the local tradition, according to which it was the earliest location of the Lepna farm (later village). Two stone piles, probably remains of ovens, were recorded on the slope. A circular depression nearby was determined to be a well site. A fragment of scissors, found beside one of the ovens (for comparison see e. g. Cowgill et al. 1987, Fig 75), dated the farm site to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The 5-m contour line indicate that Veskimäe may have functioned as an harbour place in some time in the prehistory (Fig. 5).

Villages of Tõnija and Rõõsa (the latter situated in a different place from the present), a free single farmstead of Lepna, and the Rõõsa manor (in the place of present Rõõsa village) were mentioned for the area in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (The Estonian Historical Archives F.311, I. 1 D. 89, 375–476). The Rõõsa manor was established only in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Saaremaa 1934, 785). Most of the arable lands in the northern part of Tõnija and Rõõsa area are former wetlands, drained and taken into use perhaps only in 1700's. On a map drawn in 1873, stony elevations, many of them prehistoric graves and remains of fossil fields, are accurately marked (Fig. 5). Some of the prehistoric sites have been destroyed by now. As assessed from the map, the prehistoric fields can be found mainly between the Paemõis/Rõõsa manor and the earlier Rõõsa village.

There were probably two settlement units in prehistoric Tõnija-Rõõsa area. In the present stage of investigation, though, it can be supposed that the Paemõis/Rõõsa manor unit was more important, since it was surrounded by better arable lands and since many more archaeological sites are recorded around it. The Lepna village that up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a single large farmstead probably marked the prehistoric harbour place.

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## ARHEOLOOGILISED VÄLITÖÖD TÕNIJA JA RÕÖSA ÜMBRUSES LÕUNA-SAAREMAAL

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2001. aastal viidi lõpule 1995. aastal alanud arheoloogilised kaevamised Tõnija Tuulingumäe muististekompleksil ning rekonstrueeriti sealsed muistised vaatamisväärsuseks (joon. 3). Lisaks tehti mitmeid inspeksioone lähiümbruskonda.

Kaevamised Tuulingumäel hõlmasid peamiselt eelrooma rauaaegse kultuskoha kiviplatvormile eelnenud konstruktsioone, mida võib tõlgendada samuti kultuskohana. Tuvastati seitse lohku, mis olid kaevatud looduslikku pinnasesse (joon. 1; 2). Enamik lohkudest oli ümmarguse kujuga, läbimõõduga 80–120 cm ja sügavusega u. 20 cm. Teistest oluliselt suurem (145 x 110 cm) ja kuni meetri sügavune oli lohk nr. 10. Lohk nr. 12 avastati juba 1995. aasta kaevamiste ajal I ja II tarandi nurgas, kus puudus nurgakivi. Seal paiknenud puuposti oli ilmselt kasutatud nurgapostina II tarandi rajamisel. Varasemasse konstruktsiooni kuuluvad ka tulease hilisema kiviplatvormi all ning väga suured raudkivid rooma rauaaegse tarandkalme ja praeguse tee vahel. Varasema kultuskohaga seotud vähestest leidudest on osa keraamikakilde dateeritavad eelrooma rauaaega, tõenäoliselt selle varasemasse poolde. Samasse aega võiks kuuluda ka Tuulingumäe esimene kultuskoht.

Tõnija-Rõõsa ümbruskonnas läbi viidud inspeksioonidel leiti mitmeid uusi muistiseid. Praeguseks maha jäetud Lepna küla lähedal olev Katkuauk osutus 6.–7. sajandi matmiskohaks (joon. 4). Paemõis, rahvapärimate järgi Rõõsa mõisa eellane, asub Maadevahe jõe kõrval paikneval seljandikul ning see on ilmselt keskmise rauaaja kindlustatud mõisa- või taluase. Kunagises Tõnija hiekkohas, praeguse kiigeplatsi kõrval, avastati 10.–12. sajandisse kuuluv kivist kalme, nn Kuninga haud, mis on ümbritsetud ebatavaliselt suurte, 1,5–2 m läbimõõduga raudkividega. Kurepsuu lahe nimelise soo veerel paiknev Kuru saat, kust leiti 11. sajandi saaremaa-pärase kolmnurkse ehtenõela katke (joon. 6: 3), võiks olla kunagi-ne sadamakoht. Lepna külaasemel, Veskimäel, tehti kindlaks 14. sajandi talu jäänused.

Tõnija-Rõõsa ümbruskond on läänest, põhjast ja idast ümbritsetud praeguseks enamasti kuivendatud soodega, lõuna pool on looduslikuks piiriks mererand. Läbi nimetatud ala voolab Maadevahe jõgi, varasem Tõnnijõgi. 1873. aasta kaardil on täpselt märgitud kivised kõrgendikud, millest osa on tänapäevaks juba hävitatud kivist kalmed ja muistsete põldude jäänused (joon. 5). Põllujäänuste asukoht osutab, et Tõnija-Rõõsa ümbruskonnas oli muinasajal tegemist kahe asustusüksusega, millest üks asus 19. sajandi Rõõsa küla, teine Paemõisa-Rõõsa mõisa ümbruses. Viimane oli, nii seda ümbritsevate paremate põllumaade kui ka kivist kalmete järgi otsustades, olulisema tähtsusega. Keskaegne Lepna vabatalu Maadevahe jõe kunagises suudmes markeerib ilmselt omaaegset sadamakohta.

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