

MARIKA MÄGI

# AT THE CROSSROADS OF SPACE AND TIME

GRAVES, CHANGING SOCIETY AND IDEOLOGY ON SAAREMAA (ÖSEL),  
9TH-13TH CENTURIES AD



CCC papers: 6

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# INTRODUCTION

Saaremaa (known also as Ösel in Swedish and German)<sup>1</sup> is the second largest island in the Baltic Sea. In most cases the name Saaremaa embraces also the nearby island of Muhu and the surrounding small islands and islets (see section 3.1.). The total area of the islands is 2,969 sq km, thus about the same as that of Gotland. Except for the bluff northern bank, the coastline of Saaremaa is mostly shelving, low and very uneven. The rate of land mass elevation in this district is about 2.5–3 m per 1000 years, which has caused, over a period several hundred years, comparatively rapid changes of the coastline. During the period that is discussed in the present study many of the areas that are currently parts of Saaremaa were still separate islands. To make the reading less complicated, I have used the name Saaremaa for the whole archipelago, including the island of Muhu. Hiiumaa, the second largest island of Estonia, should be considered as a different district; in the period under discussion, Hiiumaa was very sparsely populated.

Saaremaa consists of low, level islands, the highest points of which barely reach 50 m above sea level. The soil of the islands is usually thin and infertile, only the central and eastern parts of Saaremaa are covered with a more productive soil. Swamps are common; also places of gravelly and sandy earth with stunted vegetation or soils on limestone with a thin layer of humus. There are also few lakes on Saaremaa, the rivers there contain little water and are, owing to 20<sup>th</sup> century melioration processes, almost dry nowadays.

The coastal soil on the island of Saaremaa is especially gravelly, dependent upon weather and sensitive to drought. A great part of the land is, therefore, used as pasture, but even this is low in quality. The pasture, except some areas near the coast, tends to be abundant in limestone or sandy, full of stones and juniper bushes.

It is known from medieval sources that the agriculture of Saaremaa produced mainly rye, barley and oats, and to a minor extent wheat. In addition to these, spring wheat, spring rye, buckwheat, lentils, beans, peas, cabbages, rape, flax and hemp were cultivated. Compared with tillage, stock raising was better developed. The farmers of Saaremaa possessed, according to the inventory of 1731, 4,481 horses and 12,632 cattle. In the inventory of 1750 there were 5,825 horses and 17,433 cattle, and in 1819 as many as 6,000 horses, 20,000 cattle and 40,000 sheep were counted on the islands of Saaremaa and Muhu.<sup>2</sup> Other important subsistence industries included fishing and seal hunting.

The most important export products from medieval Saaremaa were grain, horses and timber.<sup>3</sup> Archaeologist Jüri Peets has suggested that from the 12<sup>th</sup> century up to the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa produced so much iron that it was exported to other countries.<sup>4</sup> Saaremaa's main import was salt, and, in the prehistoric period, possibly also the so-called prestige goods: luxury weapons, furs, expensive fabrics, wine, spices, etc. By the end of the Iron Age, in addition to trade, plundering and the yields it gave were probably also of great importance.

\* \* \*

The Estonian islands are ethnographically somewhat different from the mainland, mostly in their resemblance to the Swedish ethnographic material. In Late Iron Age archaeological finds, Saaremaa is one of the richest regions of Estonia, though most of the finds have not been published and analysed with contemporary methods.

German crusaders conquered Saaremaa, as they did with the rest of Estonia, in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Although written records from that period are scarce, there is more material concerning Saaremaa from this period than for other parts of Estonia. In these writings it becomes obvious what a different role the islands were playing in events of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries – mainly the greater political independence the islanders enjoyed then.

The aim of the present study is to define in more detail the Osilian political organisation in the Viking and Late Iron Age and its transition into a feudal society in the post-conquest period. The sources for the study are mainly the ancient graves and burial traditions, the developmental changes of which will be discussed in the following chapters. The research is thus largely based on archaeological data, into which I have tried to integrate historical and human geographic information.

The Viking Age was a period when both the eastern and western coasts of the Baltic Sea could be described as having a certain degree of cultural uniformity. Compared to Catholic and feudal Western Europe, it constituted a

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<sup>1</sup> In the text I have preferred to use the Estonian name *Saaremaa* instead of *Ösel*, but according to the widespread tradition in archaeological and historical literature I have called the inhabitants of the island *Osilians* and used the adjective *Osilian*.

<sup>2</sup> Saaremaa 1934, pp 333–334.

<sup>3</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 294.

<sup>4</sup> Peets 1996 and verbal information.



separate cultural space, though changes were waiting on its threshold. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century there began processes that took various forms in different regions, creating an ideological divide for at least two centuries. 1200 to 1300 AD was the period when the territories of present Estonia and Latvia were drawn into the ideological sphere of the Catholic church, as well as the economic and social space of Western Europe. Only a hundred years before a similar incorporation process with Western Europe had occurred in Scandinavia. The processes, though similar in nature, took different courses in the East and West, and that was mainly due to political reasons. In Scandinavia Europeanisation mainly relied on the internal development of the society, whereas in Estonia and Latvia it was introduced mainly by German intermediaries. In most general terms it could be stated that on the western side of the Baltic Sea the Europeanisation process was characterised primarily by compromise, while on the eastern side conflict prevailed.

The international research project “Culture Clash or Compromise”, within the framework of which the present book has been completed, has had the aim of analysing the means and effects of the process of Europeanisation in certain regions surrounding the Baltic Sea.<sup>5</sup> Because of its geopolitical position, Saaremaa has always stood at the crossing point of different cultural influences, which has enabled the local inhabitants to benefit from both international trade and piracy. As is also characteristic of other large islands in the Baltic Sea, especially Gotland, society here must have been open to outward cultural influences, thus differing from the more conventional mainland communities. Therefore the author has considered it essential to offer comparisons not only with the rest of Estonia, but also the other overseas neighbours of Saaremaa.

In analysing the Late Iron Age and Early Middle Age cemeteries of Saaremaa and attempting to observe the social structure they might reflect, I have tried to find answers mainly to the questions concerning the social and ideological development there. How stratified was Osilian society in the Viking Era? How far had hierarchisation evolved by the end of the Iron Age, the island being surrounded by feudalised neighbours? How did the society there change in the revolutionary periods of Christianisation and feudalisation? Did the conquest involve only violence and conflict for the Osilians or did they look for compromise, for possibilities of adjustment with the transformed world?

Graves and burial customs have been chosen as the initial source of the study mainly because that is the archaeological find material which is represented best of all on Saaremaa. If and to what extent burial customs do

mirror the social structure of a society will be argued in section 1.5. For the reasons that are discussed in chapter 1, assessment of the social progress of Saaremaa has up till now been mainly based on the few existing historical sources, while the archaeological data has rather been used as illustrative material. The rise of new theories in archaeology enables a different interpretation of the archaeological data, which has also been attempted in the present study. It can be said that one of the aims has been to test if, in identifying the social organisation of a society, the analysis of the material that is based on different sources does result in different conclusions.

To find the answers, it was imperative to analyse the archaeological find material of Osilian graves. The determination of burial complexes in the stone graves was of primary importance; the methods that were used for this are discussed in section 4.1.1. Burial complexes were evaluated by the number of artefact types they contained (NAT, section 5.3), in order to analyse the changes in burial traditions and the social structure. As far as possible, other kinds of archaeological data and historical sources were included in the discussion.

To grasp the changes that took place in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it was necessary to establish an understanding of the preceding i.e. Viking Age and Late Iron Age find material. Most of this job had to be done throughout by the author, as very often the existing material lacked artefact typologies that would have been worth consideration, and a large part of the excavated finds had never been analysed. Also the material from previously analysed graves had to be re-examined to the last detail, as even at first glance there appeared serious contradictions caused by earlier theoretical ideas. Still I would like to stress here that the work of the former researchers of Osilian graves – mostly of Aita Kustin – has not been done in vain. If it had not been for her profound, though regrettably unpublished manuscript, I should have had to spend much more time and energy on analysing all the find material. It is to her that I should like to express – though, alas, posthumously – my sincerest gratitude and respect.

Unfortunately, the material from the Osilian graves cannot be considered representative enough to depict all the aspects of the local society. If we assume that the stray finds also came from burial sites, the number of Viking and Late Iron Age stone graves on Saaremaa and Muhu would be around sixty. Only seven of them have been excavated by archaeologists, and the material of only six of these has been used in the present research. As there is reason to

<sup>5</sup> Blomkvist 1998.

believe that the stone graves were only used by the elite groups of the society (see section 4.3.), even all sixty of these graves would still represent only a minority of the island's population. Only four inhumation cemeteries have been excavated so far (these are also discussed in the present study), which probably also encompass just a small share of the actual burial places. At all events, it can be stated that, although in comparison to the actual history of the period, the amount of available data is very limited, it does reflect the burial traditions characteristic of Saaremaa and, if combined with other data, it does allow one to propose a new understanding of the funerary customs and the development of social relations.

For a better understanding of the following study I should like to define the chronological system used in it, as the same terms are used in different ways in the regions dis-

cussed in the book. With the term Viking Age I indicate, as in most Nordic countries, the period between the years 800 and 1050 AD; on Saaremaa, where most of the changes in the archaeological material occur with the onset of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the whole 11<sup>th</sup> century is considered as a part of the Viking Era. As there are no significant written records on Estonia from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the century is usually considered to be a part of prehistory; thus the Viking Age together with the 12<sup>th</sup> century is termed the Late Iron Age. As the start of the Middle Ages is usually associated with the appearance of written records, the beginning of medieval times on Saaremaa would therefore be about the year 1200 AD; the term "early medieval period" that is used in places should be understood as the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A lot of people have helped me in preparing this study. First of all I would like to thank the drawers Margit Terasmees and Jana Ratas, who made all the drawings of the find material; Triinu Mets, who translated the majority of this work into English, the language editor Gordon Snow, and Toomas Mägi, who was responsible for digitising the text and for the lay-out. I am grateful also for the kind assistance of the drawer Kersti Siitan, the translator Lii Tõrro, the anthropologists Jonathan Kalman and Raili Allmäe and the osteologist Liina Maldre. I sincerely thank all of them for their help and the long-term co-operation they offered!

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The deepest gratitude of all goes to my parents who have been helping me to take care of my daughter Marilyn during the time I have been writing this book!



# Chapter 1

## RESEARCH HISTORY AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

It is difficult to overestimate the significance of graves and burial rites in the interpretation of ancient societies. Graves are, at the same time, the most find-abundant archaeological sites during most periods, and have therefore captured much attention especially in the earlier archaeological research. Firstly in societies that, throughout prehistory, have remained at the pre-literate or semi-literate stage, graves and burial rites have stayed an indispensable source in the interpretation of social, economic and ritual structure of communities.

Archaeological research is always dependent on social order, and thus directly connected with political circumstances. It is also valid for Estonia, which, together with the other Baltic states, belonged to the former Soviet Union for half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a time of crucial changes in archaeological thought in the west, including Scandinavia that was separated from the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea by the Iron Curtain. That is the reason why no direct parallels could be drawn between archaeology in the East and in the West.

One cannot deny that the archaeological research of modern times is influenced by the present political ideas, too, a fact which is also uncontestably valid for the present writing. How objective have I succeeded in being in my interpretations, remains for the readers to estimate.

### 1.1. Marxist Ideas in Soviet Archaeology

The development of archaeological thought progressed on similar lines in Scandinavia and in the Baltic states until 1940 when the latter were annexed by Soviet troops. After this, archaeology on eastern and western shores of the Baltic developed in ways that almost contradicted each other. Rapid theoretical changes in attitudes towards archaeological material culture that took place in Western Europe and the United States in recent decades hardly reached the Soviet Union and the Baltic states which were then part of it. The political and ideological estrangement of Soviet archaeology caused, in turn, a lack of information about the processes of Eastern Baltic archaeology in the West.

Archaeology in the Baltic states, as everywhere in the former Soviet Union, was supported as an important instrument of political education and was, like other human sciences, ruled by politicised Marxist paradigms up to the 1990s. According to Marxist historical materialism the

past was conceptualised in terms of an unilinear sequence of stages, called *social formations*: primitive society, slave society and feudal society. The first of them was classified as pre-class society and divided into successive pre-clan, matriarchal clan, patriarchal clan, and terminal clan stages. This scheme was derived from Friedrich Engels' book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, and was not allowed to be questioned.<sup>1</sup>

Marxist philosophy saw the base for the development of society in the increase of the *forces of production* – mostly all kinds of forms of technology – that led to increase in production, which in turn caused intensity in social relations that finally changed the *social formation*. These rules were considered universal, but many archaeological cultures were believed to have been in a transitional state of development. In some cultures certain *social formations* could be avoided, as, for instance, in the Baltic states, where the formation of the pre-class society was considered to have been followed directly by feudalism.

Approaches to the Marxist theoretical framework developed gradually in course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but on the territory of the former Soviet Union the basic structure of the paradigm was never changed. No theoretical thought outside its frames was allowed to be discussed or published.<sup>2</sup>

Marxist interpretation of the development of the society was considered to be so universal that the study of it formed a compulsory part in every field of education in the former Soviet Union. Regardless of the lack of availability of western literature about the theoretical aspects of archaeology, the over-stylised and overpoliticised Marxist paradigm was generally not supported by archaeologists in the Baltic states. As a result research focused on artefacts and single archaeological sites, especially cemeteries as the main source for artefacts. More general theoretical approaches were avoided. Study of artefacts, though, was superficial, and the few typologies that were worked out remained diffuse and inexact.

Throughout the Soviet period the archaeology of the Baltic states remained generally on the level of the cultural-historical schools of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> When in Soviet archaeology ideas about diffusionism

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<sup>1</sup> See Trigger 1989, pp 207 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Klejn 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Parallel processes in Latvia see Šnē 1999.

were replaced by the concept of migrations, strenuous efforts were made, especially in the late 40s and 50s, to render some archaeological sites in present Estonia and Latvia as proof of a Slavonic (in this context Russian) population there as early as the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>4</sup> In counterbalance to these tendencies came a nationalistic orientation characteristic of young states. This had been socially attractive to the archaeology of the Baltic states in the 20s and 30s, and it continued after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

## 1.2. Development in Concepts of Estonian Prehistoric Society

Interpretations of late prehistoric society in Estonia have been influenced by social order, politics and general trends in archaeological thought. In the 1920s and 30s, society in the Late Iron Age was considered to be patriarchal, heroic and harmonious, with little social stratification. Chieftains at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, usually described by chronicler Henry the Livonian as *meliores* and *seniores*, were believed to have possessed very limited power, most of them being just elective heads of villages. Strongholds were interpreted as purely military structures, erected with the co-operation of the villages of a district. Concepts like this were general in the archaeology of these decades, and so the best example and parallel for Estonia was seen in Scandinavian Viking Age society. Social stratification in ancient Russia and among the tribes of the present Latvia was believed to have been more developed.<sup>5</sup> The archaeologist Priit Ligi, who has discussed what he called “prehistoric pessimism” in his papers, stated that the interpretation of an egalitarian, democratic and “national solidarity” prehistoric Estonian society was created as a counterbalance to the efforts of Baltic-German scholars to depict ancient Estonians as primitive savages.<sup>6</sup>

When Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, the dogma of marxist historical materialism abruptly and violently changed the earlier conceptions. Subordinated to political pressure, Estonian archaeologists and historians were now forced to regard Late Iron Age society as feudal, with a “compulsory” class struggle.<sup>7</sup> New changes became possible during the “thawing” of the Soviet political system in the 1960s. In 1964 Harri Moora and Herbert Ligi classified Estonian Late Iron Age society as being in the stage of “forming feudal relations”, with moderate social and economic stratification. Nevertheless, they believed Estonian society to have been less developed than that of its eastern and southern neighbours, thus propagating the same earlier con-

cept of “prehistoric pessimism”.<sup>8</sup> Their ideas were more or less a reaction against the former constrained “feudalisation” of the period in the marxist frameworks of society, and especially against efforts to “prove” that a “feudal” Estonia had belonged to the Russian state.<sup>9</sup>

The new interpretation of a more egalitarian Late Iron Age society became dominant in Estonian archaeology for the next twenty-five years, and, in the study of the early Middle Ages, even up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> The ideas resembled those of the 20s and 30s. The great majority of Late Iron Age Estonians were believed to have been free peasants, and a small group of *meliores* and *seniores* were essentially defined as wealthy peasants. The “slaves” known from written sources were only foreign captives and their descendants. The economic base for the elite was seen in the ownership of land, but taxes were regarded mainly as “compulsory gifts for chieftains”. The society of West Estonia and the islands was seen as even less developed (i.e. more “democratic”) than in southern Estonia, because the chronicler Henry the Livonian never mentioned chieftains there by name.<sup>11</sup> The great strongholds of Saaremaa and West Estonia were used as evidence of a more egalitarian society in these districts, too, with the argument that the erection of such strong forts was possible only collectively.<sup>12</sup>

The main justifications for assessing Estonian Late Iron Age society as egalitarian, postulated already by Moora and H. Ligi and developed by other scholars, were the lack of very rich graves or remains of skilled workshops, and the small amount of luxury foreign artefacts in Estonian archaeological material.<sup>13</sup> Studies by Estonian archaeologists during the last decade have shown that these ideas were generated mostly by over-simplified interpretation of archaeological material, the specific character of the findings and the very limited variation between excavated sites. Most of the Late Iron Age finds, especially during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were uncovered in graves, and only a very few settlement sites of this period were excavated. Artefacts in the cemeteries studied, where in the 12<sup>th</sup> century cremation

<sup>4</sup> Ligi 1993a.

<sup>5</sup> EA I 1935, pp 197–200; Moora 1939, p 14.

<sup>6</sup> Ligi 1995a, pp 186–187.

<sup>7</sup> ENA 1955.

<sup>8</sup> Ligi & Moora 1964; Ligi 1968.

<sup>9</sup> See also Ligi 1995a, p 189.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Kustin 1962a; Ligi 1968; Selirand 1974b; EE 1982; ETRA 1992; Kahk & Tarvel 1997, pp 26–29.

<sup>11</sup> EE 1982, pp 412–413.

<sup>12</sup> EE 1982, p 413.

<sup>13</sup> Ligi & Moora 1964; ETRA 1992, pp 116–126.

graves were continuously dominant, were usually mixed and often badly burned. Individual burials as find complexes were normally considered to be impossible to distinguish, and all cemeteries were classified as belonging to the whole village community.<sup>14</sup>

Improved political circumstances at the end of the 1980s and especially in the 1990s enabled Estonian archaeologists to become acquainted with archaeological thought in Scandinavia and western Europe. As a result new approaches appeared in the study of archaeological material. Valter Lang and Priit Ligi proved, based on archaeological evidence, that a socially and economically stratified society was established in Estonia as early as the Late Bronze Age. Several cemeteries could be considered as belonging to one elite family, and this definitely changed the interpretation of the whole of the material.<sup>15</sup> Large Late Iron Age strongholds began to be considered as social and political, and not simply military objects.<sup>16</sup> Lang suggested that private property on arable land was established in Estonia in the Bronze Age. From the Roman Iron Age we could speak of the first large landed estates and dependence based on private ownership of land, and accordingly also about well-developed social stratification.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.3. Research History of Estonian Late Iron Age and Medieval Cemeteries

Excavations on Estonian Late Iron Age graveyards that before World War II were sporadically carried out in several areas of the country, remained small-scale, and were usually carried out as rescue operations. The results of the excavations prior to the 60s and 70s were summarised in two papers that have remained as the most profound – and the most used – works about the graves and the artefacts of this period up to our own day. The doctoral thesis of Aita Kustin about the island of Saaremaa from the 11<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century was finished in 1962 but never published.<sup>18</sup> Jüri Selirand succeeded in publishing his thesis about burial customs on the mainland of Estonia in the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries in 1974.<sup>19</sup> Both scholars called the time they were dealing with the “genesis period of feudalism”, and the parts of their works, presenting a general interpretation of the Late Iron Age society, were rather strongly influenced by the Marxist paradigms.

Prehistoric Estonian society was, even up to the 80s, believed to have developed in accordance with the processes in Kiev-Rus, and the start of the “genesis” of feudal relations in the country was dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This date was derived mostly from data in Russian

chronicles, first of all from the recitals of the looting raids of Russian princes into the territory of present Estonia that started mostly in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. As Estonia was alleged to have been a part of Kiev-Rus, the social system there would have been similar to that in Russia, i.e. feudalism. The *social organisation* existing before feudalism in the Eastern Baltic was, according to Marxist ideas, defined as a pre-class society, and was therefore characterised as having very little social differentiation. Graves, abundant in grave goods, as well as more luxurious artefacts in general, could accordingly appear only in the “genesis period of feudalism”, i.e. starting with the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The second half of the Viking Age and especially the later Iron Age in Estonia, the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, were characterised by an increasing quantity and variety of artefacts in graves, especially in comparison with the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries and the first half of the Viking Age. The phenomenon has been explained by an increase in the population and by “the enrichment of some members of society”<sup>20</sup>, which according to the Marxist ideas created a base for a new social system, in this case feudalism.

Various new artefact types, including weapons, were believed to have reached Estonia only towards the end of their period of use in their homelands and to have stayed in use much longer here. It was valid mainly for innovations which proceeded from Scandinavia. Influences from Baltic tribes and the newly formed state of Kiev-Rus were assumed to have reached Estonia much faster. The reasons behind this view can be seen in the Estonian situation behind the Iron Curtain during the Soviet years, when contact with the western world was minimal. The idea of Moscow (ca 1000 km from Tallinn) being very close, while Helsinki (ca 100 km) was seen as very remote, could be presented as one of the most remarkable examples of the attitudes of the people of these times.

As a result of these approaches, all Late Iron Age wealthy burials in Estonia were believed to originate from the 11<sup>th</sup> or later centuries, even if they contained artefacts which could be normally dated to before 1000 AD in Scandinavia or Finland. The material was artificially telescoped into the later period, leaving the 10<sup>th</sup> century almost empty of finds.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Kustin 1962a; Selirand 1974b; EE 1982.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Lang & Ligi 1991; Ligi 1995a; Lang 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Ligi 1995a, pp 238–239; Mägi 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Lang 1996, pp 480, 504–505.

<sup>18</sup> Kustin 1962a.

<sup>19</sup> Selirand 1974b.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Kustin 1962b, p 99; Selirand 1974b, pp 191 ff; Mandel 1993, p 50.

Several prejudiced ideas connected with excavating graves and interpreting the findings can be pointed out. Artefacts in cemeteries with cremation graves were usually mixed and often badly burned. Individual burials as find complexes were normally considered to be impossible to distinguish, and all cemeteries were classified as belonging to the whole village community.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of these prejudiced ideas about solidarity, all burials in a village community were believed to contain more or less an equal number of grave goods. Graves with an unusually great variety and number of artefacts were, accordingly, considered as burials of several individuals. Consequently, the material uncovered during excavations was used to prove an earlier interpretation, and not for creating a new one. It could be stressed here that these prejudices made it impossible from the start to determine any real differences in grave goods.

Reports and plans of earlier excavations at Estonian Late Iron Age cemeteries have been preserved in our archives, and study of these has allowed me to re-interpret at least the best documented material. A more detailed study of findings and their distribution plans, photographs and the drawings of stone layers has made it possible to determine different burial complexes in many cases. Estonian Late Iron Age graves are characterised by considerable differences in the amount and value of the grave goods. The burials extend from very wealthy to completely findless ones at the other end of the scale.

Another common mistake made when interpreting Late Iron Age grave finds was to associate artefact types too directly with one sex or the other, often clearly unjustifiably. So penannular brooches were usually considered as female jewellery; their occurrence among other goods that were treated as male was accordingly interpreted as a double grave of a wealthy man and a woman. Vice versa, the finds of horse harness, bronze belt buckles or weights in female graves were taken as the proof of double graves too, though this comparatively frequent combination should have posed a question about the social structure where the wealthy women and "poor" men who were represented by these particular artefacts, could be buried together. The occurrence of additional grave goods, as is recorded in Latgalian inhumation burials and in Curonian graves of the same period<sup>22</sup>, was never taken into consideration in Estonian cremation graves.

The osteological material of Estonian Late Iron Age cremation burials was never studied prior to the mid-1990s. The amount of cremated bones in one spot was treated in the same way as the artefacts: a great quantity of bones was believed to belong to many different burials.

A study of the osteological material of the Viking period graves in Piila proved that the majority of the cremated bones could belong to animals, especially dogs.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, the re-study of the osteological material of earlier digs is impossible in most cases, because the bones were not accurately recorded or even picked up.

The number of burials inside one cemetery was, with these methods, artificially increased. The cemeteries were automatically considered to have belonged to village communities, and all other possibilities were excluded. According to the latest research, several cemeteries could be considered as more likely to belong to one elite family.<sup>24</sup>

Though the village cemeteries of the Medieval and Post-Medieval Periods, which were widespread especially in continental Estonia, were up to the 1970s considered as subjects of history and ethnology only; the archaeological investigation of them has been intensified during the last decades. A number of excavations at this type of site were carried out, especially in the 1970s and 80s. The South Estonian rural cemeteries were thoroughly studied by Heiki Valk, and the results of his study have been published in a book and several articles.<sup>25</sup> The few medieval cemeteries on Saaremaa, in any case, have not been treated in these writings. Only the Karja cemetery is published by Kustin<sup>26</sup> but the article remains within the framework of the same prejudiced ideas that characterised the earlier study of stone graves.

#### 1.4. Research History of Late Iron Age and Early Medieval Graves on Saaremaa

The Late Iron Age stone graves of Saaremaa had already attracted the attention of archaeology enthusiasts in earlier centuries; some local landowners who were also amateur archaeologists initiated several excavations. The Paju cemetery was excavated in 1836 by Theodor von Buxhoevden, who found weapons, jewellery and coins there.<sup>27</sup> During a trip to Osilian antiquities in 1839, Friedrich Kruse, the history professor at the University of Tartu, excavated cemeteries at Kaarma and Piila, noting stone circles filled with smaller stones.<sup>28</sup> The best known researcher of antiquities on Saaremaa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Kustin 1962a; Selirand 1974b; EE 1982.

<sup>22</sup> Bruozai 1961, pp 382 ff; Rādiņš 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Mägi et al. 1997, pp 104 ff.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Lang & Ligi 1991; Ligi 1995a; Lang 1996.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Valk 1994; 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Kustin 1958.

<sup>27</sup> Kustin 1962a, p 4 and references.

<sup>28</sup> Kruse 1842, p 6.

was Jean Baptiste Holzmayer, a teacher of the Kuressaare Grammar School, who published three books on local antiquities and folklore, the last book being entirely dedicated to graves. Piila, Kantsiküla, Päälda, Paju, Lõhetuma, Kaarma Loona, Mäla and Kurevere should be mentioned among the stone cemeteries he excavated in the years 1868–1874. In addition he opened two inhumation graves at Viira.<sup>29</sup>

In 1877 Carl Georg Sievers organised a two-and-a-half-week expedition to Saaremaa during which he managed to excavate at least three stone barrows in Kurevere and two in Pidula, and also a few graves on the Tagamõisa peninsula. His expedition reports have been published, but these are highly inaccurate.<sup>30</sup> Richard Hausmann, the history professor at the University of Tartu, produced more satisfactory descriptions of his excavations at Oriküla graves in 1889.<sup>31</sup>

In 1895 S. K. Bogoyavlensky and P. Stackelberg studied the Rahu, Sauvere and Paju graves. Several local landlords, in particular B. von Toll, the owner of the manor of Pidula, gathered finds from prehistoric gravesites. Most of such excavations were not reported and their exact location is unknown.<sup>32</sup> The first professional account of excavations on Saaremaa was written by Aarne Michaël Tallgren, the first archaeology professor at Tartu, who himself excavated the cemeteries of Tõnija (1921) and Käku (1920, 1926).<sup>33</sup> In 1931 the archaeologist Marta Schmiedehelm investigated the Kogula cemetery at Kärla.<sup>34</sup>

The first large-scale excavations on Osilian stone cemeteries took place in 1940 and were connected with the building of Soviet army bases on the Kõiguste peninsula in the southernmost point of the Põide parish. As these were rescue excavations and time was scarce, one of the richest and biggest cemeteries – Viltina – and the nearby Randvere cemetery were excavated in one and a half months. Although the excavations were supervised by four archaeologists – Marta Schmiedehelm, Artur Vassar, Osvald Saadre and Richard Indreko – the haste resulted in insufficient attention to the structure of stone graves and thus the excavation reports of the aforementioned cemeteries are incomplete.<sup>35</sup>

The first researcher to start investigating the stone cemeteries of Saaremaa during the Soviet period was Leo Metsar, who in the years 1948 and 1949 excavated stone circle graves at Käku,<sup>36</sup> his example was soon followed by Aita Kustin, who has remained to this day the acknowledged expert on the antiquities of Saaremaa. Having herself excavated the Karja inhumation cemetery in 1955 and the Loona inhumation cemetery at Kihelkonna in 1956–1958, in 1962 she completed a study

of the Osilian antiquities from the end of the prehistoric era that was based both on her own and earlier investigations.<sup>37</sup> Although her work leaned heavily on the paradigms discussed above (see section 1. 2) that had been created by the contemporary political situation, the study itself still never fails to surprise the reader with its capaciousness and precision and it has remained the main source on the Late Iron Age of Saaremaa. After 1962 Kustin excavated the Rahu cemetery and the Viira inhumation cemetery on Muhu; besides that, she investigated several strongholds on Saaremaa. Kustin started to prepare her study for publication, planning to include also the latest discovered data, but the plan was interrupted by her unexpected death in 1970.

The next archaeological investigation to the Late Iron Age cemeteries of Saaremaa took place only in 1980, when Valter Lang carried out small-scale excavations on the Rahu cemetery.<sup>38</sup> The following year Lang completed his graduation thesis on the subject.<sup>39</sup> In 1989 excavations on the Piila cemetery were started under the supervision of Vello Lõugas. One of the participants was Priit Ligi who was planning to link his subsequent studies with Saaremaa and managed to publish three thematic articles<sup>40</sup> before all his projects were cut short by his premature death in the ferry “Estonia” catastrophe in 1994.

In the years 1998 and 1999 excavations under the guidance of the author of the present book took place on seven stone circle graves at Piila, two of which had been partly opened by Lõugas. These excavations should be considered the first modern excavations on that type of Osilian antiquity; all the osteological finds were filed and analysed with the highest possible precision. The new approach resulted in many innovative observations about the burial customs in these graves.<sup>41</sup> The experience inspired the re-investigation of these earlier excavated cemeteries of Late Iron Age and Early Medieval Period Saaremaa, about which reports and find distribution maps were preserved. The present study was born as the result of the analyses of this material.

<sup>29</sup> Holzmayer 1880.

<sup>30</sup> Sievers 1898.

<sup>31</sup> Hausmann 1890.

<sup>32</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 11–12.

<sup>33</sup> Tallgren 1925; Moora 1926.

<sup>34</sup> Schmiedehelm 1935.

<sup>35</sup> Indreko 1940; Vassar 1940; Schmiedehelm 1944.

<sup>36</sup> Metsar 1949; 1950.

<sup>37</sup> Kustin 1962a.

<sup>38</sup> Lang 1980.

<sup>39</sup> Lang V 1981.

<sup>40</sup> Ligi 1992; 1994b; 1995b.

<sup>41</sup> Mägi et al. 1997; Mägi & Rudi 1999.

## 1.5. Interpretation of Burial Rites

Almost up to the 1980s the prevailing idea in archaeological research has been that burial customs mirror social and economic circumstances comparatively directly, and that the degree of social differentiation could be determined by direct comparison of the size of graves and the quality and quantity of grave goods. According to contemporary theories, grave goods primarily reflect the ritual behaviour of a community, while still being indistinguishable from other social aspects, such as the political and social organisation. The so-called “wealth” or “poverty” of graves is not in direct association with the economic situation of the society, but rather with the prevailing ideology. Each deposited artefact carried ritual significance that was closely linked to the display of social status.<sup>42</sup>

Usually the graves with abundant furnishings and/or a prominent appearance have been associated with the elite. In certain cases the elite did not consider it necessary to demonstrate their power through burials. Such a situation could occur if the social and political position of the elite had become firm and/or if the ideology justifying the power of the elite did not emphasise material differences, but rather the elite’s similarity and unity with the rest of the community.<sup>43</sup> Several researches have shown that social manifestation in graves and furnishings could characterise a society in the legitimisation phase of ideology.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, post-mortem manifestation is just as characteristic of a large number of societies that embrace a well-consolidated social structure and a centralised power system. One can agree with the archaeologist Priit Ligi that the sudden expansion of Osilian graves and the rise in the quantity and quality of grave furnishings during the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries exhibits the power concentration that was taking place in society. The intensifying of social stratification is also indicated by the large size of the strongholds on Saaremaa and the well-organised warfare of the Osilians, which is known from written sources and was evidently more motivated by political interest rather than a mere urge for looting.<sup>45</sup>

A sudden increase in grave furnishings from the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century is detectable all over Estonia. The explanations offered by traditional archaeology are population growth and expansion, usually associated with the development of the factor of agricultural efficiency, and deepening social stratification.<sup>46</sup> Ligi attributes the rise in burial deposits firstly to changes in social strategies, mainly the consolidation of power and the deepening of social hierarchisation.<sup>47</sup> Timothy Earle has shown that population growth is above all induced by changes in the political system.<sup>48</sup>

The British archaeologist Ian Hodder has emphasized that the meaning of every phenomenon can be considered only inside its particular society, and it can dramatically differ from the modern understanding<sup>49</sup>. Since that kind of attitude makes it very complicated, in some cases even nearly impossible, to interpret burial rites, efforts have been made to unite the ideas of Hodder and his school with more traditional approaches. One of the best examples of uniting these two is the work of Danish archaeologist Lotte Hedeager. She has considered burial customs in close connection with the rest of archaeological evidence, and found it possible, with these methods, to draw far-reaching conclusions about social and economic development in Iron Age Denmark<sup>50</sup>.

Even though graves and burial rites have been treated as the primary subject in this book, my objective has been to treat them in close connection with other archaeological, as well as historical sources. Although the burial rites, according to my assumption, do not reflect social structure directly, these two phenomena are connected to some extent. Taking into consideration the conspicuous appearance of Osilian stone graves and the relatively small number of burial grounds, I have supposed that the Late Iron Age Osilian elite demonstrated their status predominantly through the stone graves. The amount of silver hoards on Saaremaa is, in contrast with the mainland of Estonia, quite modest, and power manifestation through ritual hoards or deposits therefore less likely. Even though the big strongholds of Saaremaa can be considered as demonstrations of political power, too, I have viewed the stone graves as the main surviving evidence of demonstrations of families’ wealth and power.

The relationship between social structure and grave goods is even more complicated to deal with. Since the Osilian stone graves, as will be demonstrated later in this book, were usually burial grounds of one, perhaps two families, it is possible to discuss only the family’s internal social differentiation. My stand is that the quality and quantity of grave goods inside one burial ground and during a particular period reflects the social position of the dead within the family. The actual commercial value of grave goods is further evidence – burials with several

<sup>42</sup> Hodder 1982, pp 119–122.

<sup>43</sup> Hodder 1982, p 121.

<sup>44</sup> Ligi 1995a and references.

<sup>45</sup> Ligi 1995a, pp 239–241.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Kustin 1962a, pp 500 ff; Selirand 1974b, pp 191 ff; EE 1982, pp. 387–388.

<sup>47</sup> Ligi 1995a.

<sup>48</sup> Earle 1997, pp 46–66.

<sup>49</sup> Hodder 1986, pp 22–24.

<sup>50</sup> Hedeager 1992.



weapons and/or jewellery were not available for most of the population at this time because of their high price, leaving aside possible ideological limitations.

The evidence of Osilian stone graves is unfortunately clearly under-representative for complete interpretation of the late prehistoric and early medieval society on Saaremaa. Still, some conclusions can be drawn when combining the evidence of graves with the rest of the archaeological material and with the historical sources. At the same time, since it is most logical to suppose that the majority of the population of Saaremaa is buried in a way that had not left archaeological traces, we cannot presume that finding further stone graves can provide a more representative picture of ancient society as a whole. More detailed interpretation of social and economic circumstances on late prehistoric and early medieval Saaremaa is more likely to be made from archaeological excavations on dwelling sites.

## 1.6. Summary

Studying reports of earlier excavations of Viking Age stone graves in Estonia, one can conclude that the way the archaeologists interpreted their findings was influenced by prejudiced ideas of how material culture should be interpreted. Excavation results were bent to suit the general interpretation of a society with little stratification – a concept that was not questioned until the 1990s. The material of the graves was not used to create an alternative view.

Revised documentation of earlier digs, presented in the subsequent chapters of this book, tries to present a picture of the burial customs on Saaremaa that in several ways differs from the earlier interpretations. Differences in graves and grave goods describe a society similar to Viking period society in Scandinavia. The re-study of the reports of earlier excavations can, hopefully, lead to a qualitatively new interpretation of prehistoric society, probably not only on the island of Saaremaa, but also in Estonia and other countries that were situated behind the Iron Curtain during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

# BURIAL CUSTOMS IN THE EASTERN BALTIC AND THE NEIGHBOURING AREAS

For a better understanding of the Viking Age and Late Iron Age burial customs on Saaremaa, one is bound to view these in the larger context of the burial customs in the rest of Estonia and also its neighbouring countries. Burial rites, representing one of the most significant aspects of human ritual behaviour – transition from life to death or from this world to another – are usually very traditional in their nature and slow in changing. Beliefs concerning the kind of ritual conduct by the mourners that would guarantee a blissful future for the departed one in the Great Beyond and an adequate manifestation of the deceased's – and the family's – social status have been particularly important for the more traditional communities, among which the Viking Age and 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century societies in Estonia undoubtedly belonged. Similar burial customs in different areas with individual material cultures should therefore indicate stronger cultural unity than the appearance of common artefact types ever could.

I should like here to draw attention to the fact that a complex analysis of the burial customs of the region under discussion has been and still is hindered by a variety of circumstances created by 20<sup>th</sup> century political history. The most difficult issues have been language barriers and the unavailability of professional literature, especially in the Baltic countries. In Scandinavian or Russian publications analysing trade routes or overseas contacts, references to literature concerning the Baltic countries are often missing or represented by a few generalising works with publishing dates that often go back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although "the Iron Curtain" did cut the archaeology of the entire USSR off from the rest of the world, publishing and presentation opportunities for Baltic archaeologists were far smaller than those of their Moscow or Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) colleagues.

For reasons that have been more closely analysed in the previous chapter, Estonian and Latvian archaeological data has for a long time been approached by the local archaeologists via the idea of "different influences received". Scandinavian parallels have mostly been drawn in a clearly exaggerated manner from the well-published grave find materials from Björkö (near the Viking town Birka), taking it as an example of not only the whole of Sweden, but also the rest of Scandinavia. The same goes for Finland, as Finnish burial customs have often been taken to be exemplified by the Luistari and Kõyliö inhumation burials.

The main difficulty in comparing the burial customs of the eastern and western coasts of the Baltic Sea is the remarkable differences between the amount, interpretation and publishing rate of conducted research. The number of archaeological inventories and excavated sites in Finland and Scandinavia is dozens of times higher than the respective amount in the Baltic and NW Russia. The backwardness in the development of archaeological thought that was the result of the information barrier has until recently prevented the interpretation of local finds and sites in the way these have been interpreted in Scandinavia. That is also why old models of thought from the 1930s still persist. Although the situation has significantly improved during the last decade, only very few reports on the material found have been published. Though there have been comparatively fewer excavations than in the western countries, the Baltic museums contain large collections of archaeological finds that have to be investigated on the spot to get at least some kind of an understanding about them.

The fact that they were subsumed under the former Soviet Union has created the general – and in the West widespread – misconception about the Baltic States as a historical unit. The supposed unity is believed to encompass even the times a thousand years ago and the different archaeological evidence in present Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania has often been summed up with the term "Eastern Baltic". In the archaeological publications of Russia, Finland and Scandinavia, "Eastern Baltic" culture is often mentioned – a term that Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian archaeologists, who are better acquainted with the region, consider to be absurd. In characterising the culture, examples are often drawn from completely different cultural units. It feels like an attempt to create some kind of average out of a region inhabited by various ethnic groups. It should be noted here that on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea in certain contexts the term "Baltic" is used when talking about the actual Baltic tribes and/or East-Prussians, definitely excluding Estonians and the Livs as Finno-Ugric peoples.

Taking into account the general conception of the Baltic states as one unit, this chapter will attempt to demonstrate the situation during the 9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries and present a brief survey of the burial customs not only in present Latvia and other nearer neighbours of Estonia but also in Lithuania. In any case, the graves, like the rest of archaeological evidence in Lithuania during the period under consideration are only remotely comparable to the Estonian ones.

## 2.1. Latvia and Lithuania

The present Latvia and Lithuania consisted of eight main regions during the later part of the Iron Age, some of them overlapping the present borders between those states (Fig 1). Most of this area, as well as the area around present Kaliningrad, former East Prussia, was inhabited by the Balts – a people that probably spoke different dialects of Baltic languages, a branch of the Indo-European language family. The north-western part of present Latvia and the northern end of the Kurzeme peninsula were populated by the Livs, a Finnish people who spoke a language similar to Estonian.

Much archaeological material of the Latvian and Lithuanian Late Iron Age cemeteries has been only very recently analysed with modern methods. The first attempts have been made in Latvia, where new approaches in the study of Latgallian and Livonian graveyards have been evident in some recent publications.<sup>1</sup> However, the findings from most of the cemeteries everywhere in the Eastern Baltic have been published sporadically; a large part of the excavated burial grounds has not been published at all. It has thus been a complicated task to complete a brief general overview about the Late Iron Age and early medieval period burial practices in Latvia and Lithuania, with all the different archaeological cultures in these areas.

Though some similarities between the different peoples inhabiting the territories of present Latvia and Lithuania can be observed, above all in the artefact types and archaeological sites from the 9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, most of these peoples, or at least groups of them, have certain distinct characteristics. Differences in burial customs especially stand out in this context. Taking in account all these differences it would be reasonable to describe the graves and burial practices of the different ethnicities in the present Baltic States in separate sub-divisions of this paper.

### 2.1.1. Eastern Lithuania

In East Lithuania and in the southern part of the country the dead were always cremated and entombed, as in earlier periods, under sand or moraine barrows during the 9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The barrows never lay singly, but formed large cemeteries. The barrows of the Viking Age and the end of Iron Age were mostly round, with a diameter between 6–12 m and a height between 0.3–1.2 m, but much bigger monuments could also occur. As in earlier times, some of the barrows contained stone structures; some were surrounded by ditches on two or four sides. The ditches were about 0.5 m deep and 1.5–2.5 m wide, and the soil that had been dug up from them had



Figure 1. Ethnic groupings and districts around the northern part of the Baltic Sea.

obviously been used for erecting the mounds. A thin layer of white sand, or on the contrary, a dark sooty layer indicating ritual burning, has often been found under the mound body, which gives proof of some funerary rituals having been enacted before the erection of the grave. Cremations consisting of burnt bones, artefacts and other pyre remains have usually been found from the body of the barrow, but in a few cases the remains had been deposited in a pit under the sand heap. The number of burials in each barrow usually remained between two and four, but sometimes there could be even more.<sup>2</sup> The pyre was usually situated in a separate place, but in some East Lithuanian cemeteries, as in Didžiuliai, thick layers of charcoal and even entire burnt logs under some mounds could be interpreted as the remains of a pyre under the grave monument itself.<sup>3</sup>

In some cemeteries there were mounds which were lacking in bones or other finds but which otherwise did not differ from the rest of the barrows in their construction and appearance. Some scholars explain these “empty” barrows as robbed monuments or the results of earlier excavations that were carried out in an unprofessional manner.<sup>4</sup> A rather peculiar explanation suggests that the mounds could represent symbolic horse burials.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Radinš 1994; 1996; 1999; Šnē 1997; 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Brožai 1961, pp 389–391; Bliujienė 1992; Butėnas 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Brožai 1961, p 393.

<sup>4</sup> Brožai 1961, pp 393–394.

<sup>5</sup> Bliujienė 1992.

Ornaments, particularly female ornaments, customarily formed a greater part of East-Lithuanian grave goods. Different neck-rings and bracelets with or without pendants and different types of penannular brooches could be mentioned here. Also tools – sickles, awls, knives and spinning whorls – were found mostly in female graves. Weapons in male graves occurred quite randomly and were represented mostly by spearheads, seldom by a sword. The most characteristic offerings in East-Lithuanian male graves were pieces of horse harness; bits, spurs or even horses themselves.<sup>6</sup> Though sometimes the horses were inhumed with their cremated master, cremations of horses were more common in these areas. Gifts associated with horse burials were clearly less luxurious in East-Lithuanian mounds than they used to be in central and western Lithuania.<sup>7</sup>

After the 12<sup>th</sup> century no more mounds were erected in eastern Lithuania but the custom of the cremation burial continued in flat burial grounds. The tradition of grave goods also continued unchanged.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.1.2. Central Lithuania (Aukshtaitia)

Cremations appeared in Aukshtaitia as early as in the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries, and had a dominating role during the whole of the Late Iron Age. Graves in the large Central-Lithuanian flat burial grounds like Sargenai and Veršvai in the territory of the present town of Kaunas were of very homogeneous character. The majority of them represented collections of cremated bones, burnt artefacts and pieces of charcoal, placed in small ground pits with a diameter of 0.4–0.8 m and depth of 0.5–1 m. These pits contained usually only one burial, and were often covered with a big stone or a small heap of stones.<sup>9</sup>

Artefacts in Central-Lithuanian cremation graves were usually badly burnt but resembled the grave furnishings found in West-Lithuanian inhumation graves that will be described in the next sub-division.

As in most of the territory of present Lithuania, many graves with accompanying horse sacrifices or individual horse burials have been excavated in Central Lithuania. A widespread tradition appears to have been the custom of inhuming the horse's head and front legs together with the man's cremation burial.<sup>10</sup> Though horses as well as pieces of horse gear occur in female graves in a few cases, they can mostly be associated with men.<sup>11</sup>

The horses were usually cremated like their masters, but they could also be buried unburned and even under special mounds that resembled the ones erected for the human deceased. Cremated horse bones were sometimes found together with human bones, especially in graves that generally contained only few artefacts.

The most significant examples of the custom of horse burials occurred in Central-Lithuanian cemeteries, where the horses were usually inhumed and thus better preserved. The cremation of a man was typically found above one or several horse skeletons; in graves No 82 and 166 in the Veršvai cemetery, for instance, as many as eight inhumed horses were found in association with the cremated burial of their dead master. In some cases spatial differentiation can be observed inside a cemetery, horse burials being concentrated in one corner, cremated male burials in another. The direction of horse skeletons was normally fixed within one cemetery, but could vary in different cemeteries. When a horse was inhumed together with a man, it was usually stretched out beside the body of its master.<sup>12</sup>

Lithuanian horse burials were richly provided with luxurious harnesses, bits, saddles and stirrups, but also spiral rings, beads, pendants and other ornaments. Both male and female jewellery has often been found in horse burials: neck-rings around its neck, bracelets around its tail, etc.

The custom of the co-burial of horse and man lasted in the region up till the 14<sup>th</sup> century; the ground pit cremation burials even longer.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1.3. Semigallia

The historical territory of Semigallia comprised the southern part of present Latvia and the northern part of present Lithuania. Flat burial grounds, consisting of several hundred inhumation graves that were laid out in fairly regular rows, were particularly common in these areas. Male and female graves occurred together without any spatial differences, but the direction of the graves of different sexes was always the opposite. The direction was fixed inside one cemetery, but could vary or even be the opposite in neighbouring graveyards. So men in Linksmučiai cemetery in present Lithuania were always buried with their heads towards the south-east and women with their heads towards the north-west, while in the Papilė burial ground the direction of males was towards the north-west and females towards the south-east.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Brožai 1961, p 392; Bliujienė 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Bruožai 1961, p 399.

<sup>8</sup> Zabiela 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Bruožai 1961, pp 387–388.

<sup>10</sup> Petrulienė 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Vaitkunsienė 1995, pp 54–55, 194.

<sup>12</sup> Bruožai 1961, pp 396 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Zabiela 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Bruožai 1961, p 383; Vaškevičiūtė 1992.

The deceased were usually buried in wooden coffins, hollowed out of a log, about 0.5–1 m deep. A thin burnt layer has sometimes been recorded in the bottom of the grave pits,<sup>15</sup> possibly indicating the ritual cleaning of the place by fire before the funeral.

The best example of Semigallian graveyards on the Latvian side, with the graves ordered in regular rows, is Čunkāni at Dreņģeri on the banks of the Mēmele River. 697 graves were uncovered in this cemetery, laid out in rows on the terraces of the riverbanks, and dated to the 8<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>16</sup>

Cremation graves from the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries have also been reported in Semigallian cemeteries. These changes in burial customs have been interpreted as the reflection of the expansion of the Lithuanians to Semigallia.<sup>17</sup>

Semigallian inhumation graves were often richly furnished and differed from the other areas of present Latvia and Lithuania by a number of special artefact types. Some of the grave goods, e.g. wide blade saxes, the so-called warrior bracelets and the head-adornments of women, resembled corresponding artefact types of their neighbours in Aukštaitia, Žemaitia and Latgallia. Some forms of neck-rings and massive, so-called warrior bracelets, later animal-headed bracelets, were typical male jewellery, while women were provided with spiral arm-rings, wide-ridged bracelets, wreaths of bronze spirals and plate-pendants and simple chain arrangements, usually fixed with cross- or ring-shape headed pins of local origin. Both men and women wore the same kind of neck-rings, but these have not been found often.

Spinning whorls and a specific knife type with a wide curved blade were common tools in female graves, while men had mostly scythes and axes with them. A typical Semigallian tool, common in the graves of both sexes, was an iron hoe. Ceramics almost never occur in these graves.

Semigallian noblemen were traditionally inhumed together with numerous weapons: several spears and javelins, an axe and a special type of single-edged sword with a short and wide blade formed the complete set. The most common weapons to be placed in the graves were spearheads, often 5–6 per burial. Unlike those of their neighbours, Semigallian male burials never include belt-fittings; even buckles were rare. The same is valid for horse burials or horse-gear.<sup>18</sup>

While some graves in Semigallia and Žemaitia were rich in grave goods, the amount and choice of the items laid in the graves could vary in different burials. A small percentage of the graves did not contain grave goods at all.

### 2.1.4. Žemaitia

The ethnic region of Žemaitia,<sup>19</sup> which is situated between Semigallia and Couronia, resembled Semigallia both in its burial customs and artefact types of the Late Iron Age. As in Semigallia, the inhumation burial and the opposite directions of male and female burials were the prevailing funerary customs in Žemaitia in the 8<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although the grave goods were similar to the Semigallian ones, there were a number of features that link the local burial customs to those of the Aukštaitians and Couronians. As an example some Žemaitian male burials included belts with bronze decorations.<sup>20</sup>

From the 12<sup>th</sup> century until Christianisation in 1413, the custom of the cremation burial became widespread in Žemaitia. The change has been attributed both to Couronian influences and the resistance against Christianity.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.1.5. Couronia

A large part of the Kurzeme peninsula, which together with the coastal area of West Lithuania formed the ancient district of Couronia, was inhabited mostly by the Cours, a Baltic language speaking people. In the northern part of the peninsula, however, the ethnic composition in the Late Iron Age was more complicated. The Livs of Kurzeme, who spoke a Finnish language, lived on the northern part of the area and can be distinguished in the archaeological record of the Viking period by some characteristic features in their material culture, but mainly by their burials. Evald Tõnisson, who has studied the Livs in the Gauja area, has pointed out that the Livs of Kurzeme and the Livs living on the banks of the rivers Gauja and Daugava could have actually been two different ethnic groups at the end of prehistory.<sup>22</sup> The ethnic composition of the Couronians has, however, remained under debate. Only a few Late Iron Age sites have been excavated in the northern part of the Kurzeme peninsula, the majority of them at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and only a small part of the finds has been published. The study of the Couronian area has mostly been concentrated on the southern and central parts of the peninsula, and the northern part of it has usually been

<sup>15</sup> Bruožai 1961, pp 383–384.

<sup>16</sup> Atgāzis 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Vasiliauskas 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Vaškevičiūtė 1992.

<sup>19</sup> In English also Samogitia.

<sup>20</sup> Tautavičius 1984; 1989; Vaitkunsienė 1984.

<sup>21</sup> Zabiela 1998.

<sup>22</sup> Tõnisson 1970.

touched upon only in connection with the distribution of the Baltic peoples towards the north.<sup>23</sup>

Finds that could be interpreted as Scandinavian influences have been found in many Couronian graves. The best-known sites of Scandinavian origin are the graveyards near the Grobiņa hillfort, where, however, the Scandinavian-type burials had stopped by the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup> Scandinavian connections in later centuries are demonstrated by numerous Scandinavian artefact types, especially weapons. Christina Creutz has reported that M- and K-type spearheads found on the Kurzeme peninsula, like presumably the majority of other weapons there, were produced locally.<sup>25</sup>

Couronian burial customs were characterised by great variability and changeability during the Late Iron Age. The dead were buried in flat burial grounds under small mounds or stone settings, in the Late Iron Age mostly cremated but occasionally also inhumed, in graves of varying construction. Some differences in geographical distribution, perhaps the result of different ethnic influences, can be observed. The southern half of the Kurzeme peninsula belonged to the same archaeological culture as the Lithuanian part of Couronia; the interpretation of the archaeological evidence in the northern part of the peninsula has been more complicated.

#### **a) West-Lithuania and the Southern Part of the Kurzeme Peninsula**

In the 9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century, the area inhabited by the Cours was rich in several grave types, the most common of these being flat burial grounds. The distribution of the cremation practice from south to north could be considered to have been a clear tendency during the 9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the percentage of inhumed skeletons in West-Lithuanian burial grounds was over 50%, but inhumation became more marginal in the course of the next hundred years. Hence, by the 11<sup>th</sup> century cremation had broken through and become the dominating burial practice.<sup>26</sup>

In the Couronian flat burial grounds the dead were inhumed in about 1 m deep pits, often in coffins hollowed out of a log, in extended position on their backs. Burials in opposite directions according to sexes, which were common in Semigallian and especially Latgallian cemeteries, occasionally occurred even in West Lithuania. In the Pryšmančiai cemetery, for instance, men were laid with their heads towards the south, women towards the north. It was, however, more usual in these areas to direct all graves in one cemetery similarly, but the direction could vary in different burial grounds.<sup>27</sup>

The internal structure of the earliest cremation graves of the Cours in West Lithuania that can be dated to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries imitated inhumation graves. A small heap of cremated bones was placed in the middle of a man-length wooden coffin, but the grave goods were laid in the position where they should have been in case of inhumation. Artefacts, even jewellery belonging to the dress were not put on the fire but laid directly into the coffin.

During the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries a much smaller wooden box that contained both the cremated bones and burnt artefacts replaced the coffin. Later on the cremation deposits were simply placed into ground pits, without any container, or at least without any lasting container.<sup>28</sup>

Another cremation grave form that appeared in Couronia in the 10<sup>th</sup> century was a large burial pit that was filled with probably several layers of cremations. The pits were normally 1–2 m deep and 2–4 m wide.<sup>29</sup> Eduards Šturms has reported on large grave pits with a thick layer of probably different cremations in the Strazde cemetery. Ten large pits that were uncovered there proved to be crater-shaped, up to 1.75 m deep and with an upper diameter of ca 4 m. Several sooty layers with charcoal, human and animal bones and burnt artefacts were separated with layers of brownish soil that Šturms interpreted as decayed remains of offerings.<sup>30</sup> The most generally supported idea in present Latvian archaeology is, however, that the site of Strazde should be interpreted as a cult place and not a cemetery.<sup>31</sup>

The majority of cremations in Couronia, dated from the 11<sup>th</sup> century upwards, have been found in small grave pits that resemble the ones in central Lithuania. The small pits usually contained only one burial each. In some cases burials were found in the top layers of large grave pits, indicating their later date.<sup>32</sup>

Couronian inhumation graves are strikingly rich in grave gifts, and luxurious ornaments and weapons have quite often been uncovered in large burial grounds, particularly on the Lithuanian side of the district. The artefacts in graves, especially the weapons, have often been intentionally broken.<sup>33</sup> The cemeteries of Laiviai, Lazdininkai,

<sup>23</sup> Asaris 1996.

<sup>24</sup> Nerman 1958.

<sup>25</sup> Creutz, verbal information.

<sup>26</sup> Žulkus 1991, p 9.

<sup>27</sup> Bruožai 1961, pp 380–381; Vaitkunskienė 1979.

<sup>28</sup> Bruožai 1961, p 385; Stankus 1995.

<sup>29</sup> Bruožai 1961, pp 386–387.

<sup>30</sup> Balodis 1940, pp 196, 198.

<sup>31</sup> Jānis Asaris, verbal information.

<sup>32</sup> Bruožai 1961, pp 387–388.

<sup>33</sup> Žulkus 1991, p 11.



Pryšmančiai and others should be mentioned as the most significant sites. Both men and women had much jewellery. About a dozen or more penannular brooches could be found from one grave; a good example would be a male grave in Gintališke with as many as 19 penannular brooches.<sup>34</sup> Men and women both wore many neck-rings, most of these plaited of three pieces of wire. Some so-called united neck-rings, made of segment-sectional bronze strips, have been found in female graves. The graves of both sexes contain bracelets: bracelets with animal-head-shaped ends in men's graves and ribbon-like (also known as "Couronian") in women's. Less often female burials have included triangle- or cross-shape headed pins with chain arrangements.

Several kinds of tools – axes and scythes for men, weaving tablets and other items for women – were present in every rich grave. Weapons, appearing only in male graves, were normally placed in the left hand of the dead along the edge of the grave pit, the spearheads beside the head. Tools have always been found near the head of the dead, in male graves together with spearheads. Wide-bladed axes were very characteristic.<sup>35</sup> Couronian men's weapons mostly belonged to widespread international types. A great deal of horse-gear was included among the goods, especially bridles.

Some artefact types and some burial practices were typical only of Couronia, and appeared almost nowhere else in present Latvia and Lithuania. The custom of laying miniature artefacts into graves – weapons, tools, horse gear, ceramics, etc., all produced specially for "the Other Side" – was practised mainly in the territory of the ancient Cours. Drinking horns or sometimes a miniature clay pot near the head of the dead often appeared among the Couronian grave inventories of both men and women.<sup>36</sup> It should be noted that Couronian material culture has a lot in common with that of Saaremaa, Gotland and other coastal areas in the Baltic region. In addition to international types of weaponry, belt buckles and dividers should be mentioned, though belt fittings were rare; also certain types of penannular brooches and women's jewellery.

In several graves, as well as immediately outside the graves in some cases, complementary collections of finds have been found that could be interpreted as donations or offerings to the dead. In female burials the donations consisted commonly of a small bronze-mounted birch bark box with jewellery and weaving tablets, usually found near the deceased's skull; the content of the little box complemented the jewellery and tools that she had with her as grave goods or accessories of her dress. In male graves a complementary belt has often been found rolled up near the pelvis.<sup>37</sup>

In Couronia, the tradition of the cremation burial continued in the 1200s. The majority of the area was officially Christianised by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century but the cremation burials continued there even longer.

## b) North Kurzeme

Inhumations and cremations under low sand mounds, in stone graves or in flat burial grounds have been registered in the area. Burials into water bodies are believed to be represented in case of the Lake Vilkumuiža near Talsi.<sup>38</sup> Possible differences between different areas of the northern part of the peninsula cannot be interpreted, though some archaeologists have tried to connect different grave forms with different ethnicities.<sup>39</sup> Inhumation burials have often been associated with the Livs, cremation burials with the Cours and the appearance of the mainly inhumation Livian burials at the mouth of the river Daugava in the 10<sup>th</sup> century as Livian migration from North Couronia.<sup>40</sup> Worth noting is the fact that the classification of the graves as Livian in Couronia relies heavily upon inhumation as the prevailing burial custom among the Livs in the territory of present Latvia and neglects the evidently close relations with the island of Saaremaa where cremations in stone graves predominated during the Late Iron Age.

The only archaeologically investigated graves in North Couronia are the sand mounds that constitute the 16 cemeteries presently known. They occur usually in bigger groups, forming mound cemeteries. Normally only one deceased was buried under one mound, but in some cases secondary burials of the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries could be found in the same barrow.

The mounds include both inhumation and cremation burials. The internal construction of the cremation mounds usually consisted of a cremation deposit under a sand heap. The deposit was sometimes placed in a low depression, but cremation pits under barrows have also been recorded. The grave goods in these burials mostly resemble those of the Daugava Livs, but there are also some burials with no goods at all.<sup>41</sup>

Some of the North Couronian stone graves that had been erected in the Early or Middle Iron Age were still in use in the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries. With the Viking Age, round stone

<sup>34</sup> Bruožai 1961, fig 271.

<sup>35</sup> LA 1974, pl 47–49; Vaitkunskienė 1979; Atgāzis 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Vaitkunskienė 1979; Simniškytė 1998.

<sup>37</sup> Bruožai 1961, pp 382–383.

<sup>38</sup> LA 1974, p 187.

<sup>39</sup> See closer Mugurēvičs 1970.

<sup>40</sup> Mugurēvičs 1970; Asaris 1996.

<sup>41</sup> Šturms 1936, pp 34–36.

barrows appeared in the region; only a few of these have been archaeologically investigated. The stone barrows also formed cemeteries and included both cremation and inhumation burials. In the latter, the deceased were mostly buried with their heads towards the north. Eduards Šturms has already pointed out the similarities between the North Couronian stone grave and the stone barrows of Saaremaa, though these never included inhumations.<sup>42</sup>

Starting with the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, flat burial grounds with inhumation burials began to spread in North Couronia. The type lasted with gradually lessening grave goods until the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>43</sup> The custom of cremation also persisted throughout the period.

Livian women in Couronia had chain arrangements, but these were mostly simpler and with fewer chains than those of the Daugava Livs or the Gauja Livs. A few so-called Livian bracelets have been found, but the spiral bracelets were more numerous. The tortoise brooches characteristic of other Livians were missing here. Both men and women wore various kinds of neck-rings. Clothes were often decorated with bronze spirals.<sup>44</sup>

Some characteristic North-Couronian artefact types, especially some triangular-headed decorative pins and certain types of neck-rings indicate close parallels with the island of Saaremaa only 30 km away from the northern coast of the Kurzeme peninsula. Random evidence of stone cairns, a form that was rather uncommon in the territory of present Latvia and Lithuania, does not necessarily reflect Scandinavian influences, but rather bears witness to close contacts across the strait between Couronia and Saaremaa, the two districts that evidently controlled the important water route from Gotland to the River Daugava. In this connection a parallel could be drawn also between the similarity of the Estonian toponyms for the Kurzeme peninsula – *Kuramaa* (Kura Land), – and the old (second?) name of the Saaremaa island, used even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century – *Kure Saar* (Kure=Kura Island).<sup>45</sup>

### 2.1.6. Latgallia

Latgallia, which comprises the central, eastern and north-eastern parts of present Latvia, was during the Late Iron Age inhabited by the Latgallians, a Baltic language speaking people. It should be stressed here that the national identity of present Latvians seems to be largely based on the ancient Latgallian culture and the archaeological sites that could be connected with this people have, respectively, attracted the keen attention of Latvian archaeologists. A number of Latgallian cemeteries, consisting of several hundred graves, have been excavated and their material published in post-war decades, and this makes

data about the burial customs of this Baltic people easily available. The large number of publications concerning Latgallian graveyards has, in its turn, sometimes caused the tendency to use them as an example of the burial practices in the whole of Latvia or even the whole of the East Baltic region, which is definitely not correct.

The Latgallians of the 9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries used to inhumate their dead, burying them mostly in flat burial grounds. The body was placed in a wooden coffin, sometimes hollowed out of a log, in extended position on its back. The most characteristic feature of Latgallian cemeteries is that the direction of graves has been firmly fixed: men were buried with their heads towards the east, women towards the west, and so in all the cemeteries.<sup>46</sup>

About 80 flat burial grounds of the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries with about 2000 graves and 15 cemeteries with over 200 mounds were excavated in Latgallia prior to 1999.<sup>47</sup> The best-known ones of these are the graves of Nukši and Kivti that have both been published as special books.<sup>48</sup> Another Latgallian cemetery was recently found and excavated in Ģūģeri near Cēsis.<sup>49</sup>

Latgallian burials were traditionally provided with numerous grave deposits; graves with few artefacts or without finds at all were very rare. Approximately 10–20% of all graves in Latgallian cemeteries contained children's skeletons, almost equally those of boys and girls. The amount of adult male graves, however, was usually bigger than that of the female ones – a phenomenon that several archaeologists have reported, but could not explain, especially because of the equal occurrence of boys' and girls' burials.<sup>50</sup> In addition it should be noted that richly furnished female graves were much less common than copiously furnished male burials.<sup>51</sup>

A new grave form – mounds of sand and moraine – appeared in the eastern end of Latgallia at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The burials under the mound completely resemble the ones in flat burial ground. The deceased were inhumed in a grave pit under the soil heap, usually alone, seldom two in one mound. The mounds were normally built of sand, sometimes surrounded by ditches. In a few cases internal wooden constructions have been

<sup>42</sup> Šturms 1936, pp 33–34.

<sup>43</sup> Šturms 1935; Asaris, verbal information.

<sup>44</sup> LA 1974, pl 50.

<sup>45</sup> Mellin 1798.

<sup>46</sup> Apals & Apala 1994, p 95; Radiņš 1999.

<sup>47</sup> Radiņš 1999.

<sup>48</sup> Šnore & Zeids 1957; Ēnore 1987.

<sup>49</sup> Apals & Apala 1994.

<sup>50</sup> Vilcāne 1996.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Šnore 1987; Apals & Apala 1994; Vilcāne 1996.

discovered. The mounds never occurred singly, but in big groups; a cemetery in Cibla, for example, consisted of 691 mounds. In Latvia, burying in the mounds ended around the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>52</sup>

The most typical Latgallian female ornaments were head-adornments – wreaths of bronze, sometimes with a “plait” of long spirals. Latgallian women did usually not wear chest arrangements fixed with pins, but different necklaces abundantly decorated with pendants and cowrie shells did occur. Beside these, personal adornments were complemented with spiral- and other types of bracelets and especially plenty of rings. Latgallian women did not customarily wear a knife.

Latgallian men also had a lot of ornaments, but the types normally differed from those of females. Massive so-called warrior bracelets and bracelets with segmentary sections were typical of the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century male burials; these were later replaced by various bracelets with animal heads. A typical weapon set consisted of a sax, a knife, an axe with a bronze ribbon wrapped around its handle, and two spears, or a spear and a javelin, near the skull. Double-edged swords were rare and occurred only in 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century burials. Some men’s graves contained bronze-decorated belts – frequent finds in some cemeteries, almost absent in others.<sup>53</sup>

In some cases donations of female ornaments and tools have been found in association with both male and female graves, but the habit appears to have been rather exceptional than customary.<sup>54</sup> In most of the Latgallian cemeteries tools as grave goods, except for knives, were only occasional.<sup>55</sup>

The abundant material of the Latgallian cemeteries has been analysed by Arnis Rādiņš during recent years. He has divided the graves into four or five groups according to the amount and variability of the grave goods. He finds it possible to define, as a result, the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Latgallia as a transition period from military democracy to state society. Changes in the political structure of the Latgallians had begun in the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when a new elite appeared that took up trade and warfare. Rādiņš has seen the economic base for prosperity of the Latgallian society in the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries in the slave trade along the river Daugava and used the absence of foreign ornaments in Latgallian female graves, together with the shortage of graves without grave goods, as a proof that the Latgallians did not keep slaves, but traded them on.<sup>56</sup>

### 2.1.7. Selonja

The small district of Selonja between Latgallia and Semigallia in general resembles Latgallia in its fixed direc-

tion of the bodies, its graves and grave goods. Though some flat burial grounds are known in this area, the most characteristic grave form in Selonja was the sand mound with several inhumation graves in pits under its heap.<sup>57</sup>

### 2.1.8. Līvija

In addition to the Līvian population in the northern part of the Kurzeme peninsula that was discussed in sub-division 2.1.5.b, the Līvi inhabited large areas in present north-western Latvia around River Gauja, and around the lower reaches of the River Daugava.<sup>58</sup> The geographical position of this people was favourable for trade, which is significantly demonstrated by rich and variable findings in their graves.

The Līvi could be divided into two groups, or even three, if we include the Līvi in northern Kurzeme. The two groups around the River Gauja and the mouth of the River Daugava had some distinct features and could thus be considered differently.

#### a) The Gauja Līvi

The Gauja Līvi around present Turaida, Krimulda and Sigulda used to inhume their dead under small mounds of sand. 16 cemeteries with ca 800 mounds are known from the Gauja-Līvian area, but most of these have been investigated in the 19<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The size of the mounds could vary greatly: their diameters remained between 3–15 m, heights between 0.4–2.5 m. No stone constructions have been recorded inside or around these barrows, where usually one deceased, seldom two or three were buried. Cremation graves were very rare, but not quite unknown, especially on the sea coast.

The graves of the Gauja Līvi have been studied by Evald Tõnisson, who has pointed out some specific features.<sup>59</sup> The artefacts, especially ornaments, were clearly different from these of the Latgallians in the east or of the Estonians north of the Līvi. The sand mounds also differed from the flat burial grounds of the Latgallians, let alone the stone graves of the Estonians.

<sup>52</sup> Rādiņš 1999, pp 35–52.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. Šnore & Zeids 1957; Šnore 1987; Rādiņš 1999 pp 53–124.

<sup>54</sup> Rādiņš 1996.

<sup>55</sup> Vilcāne 1996.

<sup>56</sup> Rādiņš 1996; 1999, pp 131–153.

<sup>57</sup> Šnore 1997.

<sup>58</sup> The terms “Līvija” and “Līvi” are used here for the ethnic group of the Līvi and the area they lived, for distinguishing them from the terms “Livonia” and “Livonians” that were used for present Latvia and South Estonia (later even for the whole Estonia) in the Middle Ages, and thus actually embraced different ethnic groups.

<sup>59</sup> Tõnisson 1974.

The direction of the body in Livian graves was in most cases fixed with the head towards the north. No direction differences between the sexes have been observed.

Livian male graves were provided with a spear and a javelin beside the skull, a sax, a sword, a belt decorated with bronze moulds, buckles, strap ends and other decorations like pendants and long spirals, bracelets and typically an earthenware vessel placed near the head. The skeleton of a dog was often found at the feet of a man.

The most characteristic ornament of a Livian woman was the chain arrangement that in the Gauja area was fixed on the shoulders with two oval brooches. Women also wore neck-rings, bracelets of the so-called Livian type, numerous pendants and usually a knife in a sheath with a widening upper part and bronze decorations. Similar knife sheaths were common on the island of Saaremaa.

In the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Gauja burial customs continued much unchanged, though the burials did include fewer grave goods, especially weapons.<sup>60</sup>

## b) The Daugava Livs

By 1974 nineteen Livian cemeteries were known along the lower reaches of the Daugava River, the earliest of them dated to the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Fifteen of them were flat burial grounds. Inhumations prevailed both in mounds and in flat burial grounds. Unfortunately only a small part of the material excavated in these graveyards has been published. The Daugava Livian cemetery probably known best – Laukskola – was excavated as early as the 1930s and later on in 1967–75, but the findings were published only partly in Anna Zariņa's book about Livian garments and in some of her articles.<sup>61</sup> The results of another excavation on the Daugava island of Dole, carried out by Elvīra Šnore in 1966–74, have been briefly published only recently.<sup>62</sup>

In Laukskola 610 graves, both inhumation and cremation burials, were found in an area of about 5–6 ha. The inhumed bodies were normally directed with their heads towards the northwest, a direction that could have easily been inspired by the course of the Daugava River, which flows towards the northwest. The most common grave form was the sand mound with a single burial under it. From the edges of the mounds collections of finds – ornaments, tools, etc – have sometimes been found and usually interpreted as donations. It is interesting to note that 6% of the Laukskola mounds contained weapons or other typical male items, but no traces of bones. These graves have been usually assessed as monuments erected for warriors who had been killed far away from their homes.

20% of the graves under the mounds in the Laukskola cemetery contained cremated bones together with burnt grave goods, corresponding to the ones in inhumation graves, which were placed in man-length wooden coffins.

In some cases traces of colour in the grave pits suggest that at least some of the wooden coffins had been painted white. Smaller pieces of painted wood above the pelvis in male graves are obviously the remains of shields. Typical male equipment, in addition to the shield, consisted of two or sometimes one spear, an axe, a belt with bronze decorations and a fire iron. Women had chain arrangements fixed with oval brooches or triangular-headed pins, beads and pendants, bronze-plated widening knife-sheaths, narrow-ended (so-called "Livian") bracelets, finger-rings and other items.<sup>63</sup> The triangular-headed pins, resembling similar ornaments in northern Kurzeme and Saaremaa, obviously reflected close contacts with these areas.

Three Livian cemeteries with altogether 483 graves were uncovered on a small island called Dole, 17 km from Riga. One of them was a flat burial ground, the others consisted of sand mounds. Inhumations prevailed in all these cemeteries. The dead were buried in wooden coffins that were sometimes fixed with iron nails. Most of the graves of adult Livs were orientated towards the northwest, but children, especially boys, were usually buried with their heads towards the north. Some female graves with typical Latgalian ornaments have been uncovered among the Livian burials, all of them buried with their heads towards the west according to the Latgalian tradition.

Cremation burials were placed in small, about 30-cm deep pits. A little wooden or birch bark box had been used as the container of bones and artefacts in several cases. In one case the inhumed head of a horse was found in one of these pits.<sup>64</sup>

The material of the Livian graves has been recently analysed by Andris Šnē, who has distinguished five different groups for women and four for men, according to the jewellery in their graves. As only a few Livian graves lacked grave goods, and the amount of rich graves was comparatively high, Šnē pointed out "the generally high average level of income in the Livian society".<sup>65</sup> He considers the Livian society of the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries to have

<sup>60</sup> Tõnisson 1974, pp 153 ff.

<sup>61</sup> Zariņa 1988; 1997.

<sup>62</sup> Šnore 1996.

<sup>63</sup> Zariņa 1988; 1997.

<sup>64</sup> Šnore 1996.

<sup>65</sup> Šnē 1997.

been strongly stratified, and he has distinguished, relying upon the archaeological material of the graves, three social categories: the rich, the middle stratum and the slaves together with other marginals.<sup>66</sup>

## 2.2. Estonia

As already indicated in the previous chapter, the number of excavated 9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century graves in Estonia is quite high, but only an insignificant part of the collected data has been published. In most cases different burial complexes have not been distinguished, thus only the more "beautiful" i.e. better preserved artefacts have been published. The general understanding about Estonian burial customs is based on the works of Aita Kustin and Jüri Selirand.<sup>67</sup>

### 2.2.1. Saaremaa and West Estonia

Saaremaa and West Estonia have constituted a separate cultural region since the Roman Iron Age at the latest. In the period under discussion, the unitedness was evident mainly in artefacts while the prevailing grave types were slightly different in West Estonia and Saaremaa. The Osilian influence in western Estonia, nevertheless, seems to increase during the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century graves both on Saaremaa and western Estonia vary a lot. A common feature in these is that almost all of the graves are stone graves with cremation burials that include more or less distinguishable separate burials. Among others stand out the so-called stone circle graves, some of them covered with cairn of stones, which mostly surround a burial of one person and are therefore of great importance in the analysis of burial customs. That burial type was characteristic of Saaremaa, and only once recorded in western Estonia.<sup>68</sup>

Excavations at Piila cemetery, on central Saaremaa, in 1989, 1997 and 1998, compiled with the reports of earlier digs on the island, show that various grave forms were used there during the 9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Up to now six stone grave forms have been distinguished: 1) stone circle graves with limestone walls, laid on the foundation of granite stones; 2) stone circle graves with granite stone kerbs, covered with a cairn of stones; 3) graves of large granite stones, laid directly on the place of a burned-out pyre; 4) graves consisting of cremation deposits and covered with different stones without any specific structure; 5) graves consisting of cremation deposits around or aside a very large granite stone; 6) graves hypothetically covered with stone heaps, but without kerbs.<sup>69</sup>

The list will probably grow as new sites are excavated. It is also obvious that in some cases cremation burials have

been scattered in between the stones in the grave in an irregular manner and no additional stone structures have been erected. Such burials usually overlap and are thus indistinguishable.

Both on Saaremaa and western Estonia there are only a few indications of probable inhumation burials during the Viking Age. A single 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century inhumation burial was found at Laadjala, the central part of the island, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>70</sup> In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, unburned human bones were found together with swords and other weapons near Tornimäe, one of the most important harbours of the island.<sup>71</sup> The site – which had probably been a cemetery – has remained underneath the present graveyard and could not therefore be investigated.

Three inhumation cemeteries dating to the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> or possibly even to the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Loona, Karja and Viira contain graves with few grave goods.<sup>72</sup> Especially the Viira cemetery, where all the dead had been buried with heads directed to the west, with few grave goods, had a Christian character. A few skeletons, three of them with grave goods, have been excavated beside the church at Valjala.<sup>73</sup>

As the 1970s and 80s excavations on western Estonian stone graves have indicated, the most widespread custom in the area was to bury the dead in stone graves with no special internal structure. The stone layer in these graves is sparse and inconsistent or sometimes missing altogether. Mati Mandel, at any rate, differentiates two grave types in them.<sup>74</sup> There also occur a Saaremaa-type stone circle grave and cremation burials put in ground pits.<sup>75</sup> The latter are rare among Late Iron Age burials. In most cases the remains from the pyre appear to have been scattered over the stones in the grave. Mandel believes that the pyre might have been situated right on top of the grave-to-be.<sup>76</sup> Though at times find assemblages with burned bones of one certain burial can be discerned, most of the burials still remain indistinguishable as they partly overlap.

The Late Iron Age western Estonian stone graves with cremation burials that were investigated in the 1980s are among the biggest and most copious ever found in

<sup>66</sup> Šnē 1997.

<sup>67</sup> Kustin 1962a; Selirand 1974b.

<sup>68</sup> Mandel 1982.

<sup>69</sup> Mägi & Rudi 1999.

<sup>70</sup> SMM 1924, p 24.

<sup>71</sup> SMM 1924, p 102; Mägi 1999a, pp 206 ff.

<sup>72</sup> Kustin 1958; 1959; 1964.

<sup>73</sup> Selirand 1973; 1974a; 1975.

<sup>74</sup> Mandel 1995, pp 114–115.

<sup>75</sup> Mandel 1979; 1982; 1995.

<sup>76</sup> Mandel 1990; 1995.

Estonia. Above all, the Maidla stone grave, which was used during the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, should be mentioned.<sup>77</sup> A large volume of find material originates from Ahli, Uugla, Ehmja, Kirbla and Kõmsi graves.<sup>78</sup>

Both cremation and inhumation cemeteries have in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century been excavated at Haimre, western Estonia.<sup>79</sup> The female cremation burial found in the local schoolyard could be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>80</sup> The eight skeletons discovered nearby were mainly from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, their heads were directed to north-west or north. Some of them were buried almost unfurnished, but there were also burials with plenty of deposits.

Eight 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century inhumation burials have been discovered in Enivere, all of them with very few grave goods or completely unfurnished. Previous data from the site describes skeletons accompanied by swords and spearheads, which may indicate earlier use of the cemetery. The deceased at Enivere were all buried with their heads directed north, in one case south-east.<sup>81</sup> Single inhumations have been found from other stone graves, but most of them are unfurnished and therefore difficult to date. Some inhumation burials contain stones; e.g. some inhumation burials in Maidla<sup>82</sup> and one in Haimre were found in limestone cists. Limestone slabs beside or on graves were also found at the Enivere cemetery.

### 2.2.2. The Rest of the Estonian Mainland

Nearly all of the Viking Age cemeteries in the rest of the Estonian mainland contain stone graves without any definite structure, where the cremation burials scattered between grave stones are usually not distinguishable. In most cases the layer of stones (especially in southern Estonia) was thicker and more compact than in the complementary ones in western Estonia and Saaremaa. At times it has been composed of thickly laid large granite stones. Most of such burial sites have been used from before the Viking Age, often from the Roman Iron Age, until the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In a number of cases these sites also contain inhumations, the earliest appearing in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone graves on the rest of the Estonian mainland differ from the ones on Saaremaa and western Estonia with the presence of almost or wholly faultless artefacts, sometimes completely undamaged by fire. Broken or deformed grave goods with slight marks of burning are characteristic of the Viking Age burials; in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the quantity of undamaged grave goods grows.

Of the South- and East-Estonian stone graves, we should single out the Kõola, Sammaste and Rohu graves, which were erected as early as the beginning of the first mil-

lennium but were used until the end of the prehistoric era.<sup>83</sup> Starting with the second half of the Viking Age several new stone graves were established. The most thoroughly investigated of such burial sites is the Madi grave near Viljandi,<sup>84</sup> but the majority of these burial sites are known only through stray find collections or small-scale archaeological excavations.

In the eastern part of Estonia burial customs became more varied in the 11<sup>th</sup>, and even partly in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when the first inhumations appeared.<sup>85</sup> The majority of the 11<sup>th</sup> century inhumation burials known in eastern Estonia are situated in the Kodavere parish near Lake Peipus. First and foremost, Raatvere cemetery should be noted. Raatvere was excavated in the 1980s,<sup>86</sup> but skeletons had already been found at nearby Lahepera at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Single 11<sup>th</sup> century burials have been discovered at Kobratu, Õvi, Mäetaguse and Tooste.<sup>87</sup> The majority of the 11<sup>th</sup> century burials were richly furnished and the artefact types were the same that have been found in cremation burial graves from the same period. Artefacts in inhumation burials were rarely broken or deformed; earthenware vessels were common finds in these 11<sup>th</sup> century graves. The deceased had their heads more often directed north (with digressions) than towards any other directions.

The inhumation burial custom spread more widely since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, being in parallel use with the cremation burial for some centuries. A few cremation burials in village cemeteries even date to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>88</sup>

The large, thoroughly excavated cemeteries at Kaberla, Mallavere, Küti, Tammiku<sup>89</sup> and Pada contained graves from the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries and later periods, in some cases even as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Compared to earlier burials these graves were more poorly furnished and there were many burials without any grave goods. Female burials tended to have more deposits than those of males or children, mostly including jewellery and bronze spiral decorations on the head-dress and garments. Only few arms were found in 12<sup>th</sup> century burials. Tools were rare. The most frequent – and in men's graves often the only grave goods – was the knife.

<sup>77</sup> Mandel 1986; 1990.

<sup>78</sup> Mandel 1980; 1982; 1983; 1984; 1987.

<sup>79</sup> Indreko 1930; Ariste 1948a; Selirand 1974b, pp 53–56.

<sup>80</sup> Mägi 1997, pp 38–39, Plate VII.

<sup>81</sup> Vassar 1947; Selirand 1974b, pp 56–58.

<sup>82</sup> Mandel 1993, pp 41–42.

<sup>83</sup> Pärss 1950; Selirand 1974b, pp 37–44.

<sup>84</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 44–47.

<sup>85</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1995a; Mägi 1999b.

<sup>86</sup> Lavi 1986a; 1986b; 1988.

<sup>87</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1995a; Mägi 1999b.

<sup>88</sup> Valk 1999, pp 64–66.

<sup>89</sup> Selirand 1962; 1974b, pp 67 ff; Tõnisson 1975.



In 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century inhumations Christian influences were already obvious, indicated by the gradual decline in or lack of deposits, but also the increasingly dominating trend to bury the dead with their heads directed west. In most cases the deceased had been buried in wooden plank coffins or limestone cists.<sup>90</sup> The custom of burying the dead with a few grave goods in village cemeteries away from churchyards persisted in mainland Estonia until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>91</sup>

In some areas of eastern Estonia the deceased were buried in stone graves and flat ground cemeteries, but also in sand barrows. These were relatively small round barrows that usually contained only one inhumation burial. A furnished inhumation burial from one of the Metste barrows can be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century; it is interesting that a cremation burial was found from the upper layer of this barrow.<sup>92</sup>

Several mound groups are known in North-East Estonia, where they have been associated with the Votic people. These graves contain mainly inhumation burials. The structure, burial type and artefacts of these barrows resemble the Votic antiquities to be described below. The earliest of the North-East-Estonian barrows belong to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>93</sup>

## 2.3. North-West Russia

The area that nowadays is called North-West Russia was in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries inhabited by an ethnic mix of Finno-Ugric, Baltic and Slavic peoples. Questions about the exact habitation areas of the different ethnic groups as well as changes in that situation have caused an ongoing debate in archaeology. Both ethnically specific material culture and burial customs have been used to determine the former areas of habitation. It should be noted here that by a widespread understanding in Russian archaeology, an archaeological culture, i.e. a territorial complex of similar artefact types and customs (e.g. burial customs) can be directly associated with linguistic and/or ethnic groups.<sup>94</sup>

In Soviet times, Russian archaeologists supported the view that the infiltration of Slavic tribes into North-West Russia had started in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and their expansion to the Finnish Gulf littorals in the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>95</sup> Theories on Slavic expansion have undergone much change during the last decades and seem to depend much on the ethnic background of the researcher.<sup>96</sup> As there is actually no concrete evidence proving the Slavic colonisation and as the archaeological find assemblages indicate consistency with preceding material, archaeologist Priit Ligi has proposed the theory of language replacement for the Finno-Ugric peoples and their consequent integration with the Old Kiev Rus.<sup>97</sup>

### 2.3.1. The Votes and the Izhorians

The Votes and the Izhorians (also known as Karelian Ingrians) are two small Finno-Ugric nations who during the 9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries and later inhabited the North-East and some regions in the eastern parts of present Estonia and the coastal areas of the Gulf of Finland east of Estonia. As the material culture of the Votes and the Izhorians is quite similar, they will here be discussed together.

Very little is known about the Votes, and almost nothing about the Izhorians of the end of the first millennium AD. Votic Viking Age flat ground burials have in most cases been discovered in the same area with mound cemeteries from a later time. Most of the bone and artefact fragments from pyres have been laid in shallow ground pits, some scattered around these. Another, but a less frequent grave form was the stone barrow with cremation burials; some of these barrows were surrounded by a circle or an oval of stones.<sup>98</sup>

In the period between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Votes buried the dead in sand and moraine mounds of varying height and size.<sup>99</sup> A number of the mounds were surrounded by one or two circles of stones.<sup>100</sup> In addition, some of the mounds contained a stone accumulation right under the centre of the heap that had probably been used as a fireplace.<sup>101</sup> Potsherds from one or more vessels are often found from around the mounds. Some overground timber frameworks, the so-called "houses of the dead" that were quite common among eastern Finno-Ugrians, were registered also in the Izhorian lands.<sup>102</sup>

In most cases the mounds contain inhumations, though also a few cremations have been recorded. Usually only one deceased, sometimes two have been buried in one grave. Quite often, especially in the Izhorian territory, the dead have been buried in a seated position, sometimes with their backs leaning against the afore-mentioned stone accumulation.<sup>103</sup> The west-east orientation, often with the head towards the east, prevailed among reextended inhumation

<sup>90</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 70 ff.

<sup>91</sup> Valk 1999, p 90.

<sup>92</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1995a, p 525.

<sup>93</sup> Ligi 1993b.

<sup>94</sup> See Jansson 1997, pp 20–21.

<sup>95</sup> E.g. Sedov 1987; 1995.

<sup>96</sup> The discussion of this extensive and in many cases politicised debate would go beyond the specifics of the current book; rather see Ligi 1993a; 1994a and the counter arguments.

<sup>97</sup> Ligi 1993a; 1993b, pp 95 ff.

<sup>98</sup> Sedov 1987, pp 39 ff.

<sup>99</sup> Ligi 1993b, pp 83 ff; Ryabinin 1997, pp 46 ff.

<sup>100</sup> Ryabinin 1997, p 48.

<sup>101</sup> Ligi 1993b, pp 23 ff.

<sup>102</sup> Ryabinin 1997, p 72.

<sup>103</sup> Ligi 1993b, pp 31, 90; Ryabinin 1997, pp 46 ff.

burials; orientation with the head towards the north or the south also occurred.<sup>104</sup> Though the west-orientated burials have been sometimes considered as belonging to the Slavs, Priit Ligi connects the fact with the onset of Christianity.<sup>105</sup>

Starting from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the dead were also buried in the so-called *zhalniks*, i.e. graves with rectangular above-ground stone constructions, during the first century of use covered by a low heap.<sup>106</sup> Each *zhalnik* included several burials; there are a few single-burial *zhalniks* too, though. The burials were always inhumations, orientated either west or south-west.

*Zhalniks* contained fewer finds than mounds; tools and weapons were absent. This fact can be explained by the relatively late date of *zhalniks* – most of these originate from the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The volume of grave goods in all Votic and Izhorian burials decreased suddenly in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, probably owing to the impact of the Christian worldview. To some extent, the tradition of grave goods continued up till the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>107</sup>

There were a few differences between the archaeological evidence of the Votes and the Izhorians. The Izhorians often buried their dead in a seated position; burials in pit graves became common there only in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>108</sup> The material culture of the Izhorians also had more similarities with that of Karelia.<sup>109</sup>

Most of the Votic and Izhorian Late Iron Age burials were furnished. Scythes and sickles were common grave goods; weapons in graves became scarce by the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Horsegear was rare; tools were more usual, the knife being the most common of these. The most typical personal adornment of Votic and Izhorian women seems to have been temple-rings with small metal balls. That artefact type has been considered by some Russian archaeologists to have been the primary trait indicating the ethnic origin of a burial as Votic-Izhorian. It has also been quite common to identify west orientated reextended burials as Slavic and seated burials as Votic-Izhorian.<sup>110</sup>

Wide bracelets with a floral pattern and hollow horse-shaped pendants should also be listed as common jewellery types among the Votic and Izhorian women. Another uncommon ornament for western areas was ear-rings. Also characteristic of the female burials of the region were chain arrangements fixed with one or two iron or bronze pins and decorated with many pendants and/or bells. Remains of textiles decorated by bronze spiral ornament have been quite common finds. Many female burials included leather belts with bronze buckle(s) and plaques and a bronze-plated knife-sheath. Ceramics were a common find in most burials. Mens' weapons were mostly of international armament types.<sup>111</sup>

### 2.3.2. Karelia

The area between Lake Ladoga and the Gulf of Finland was until World War II inhabited by a Finno-Ugric people, the Karelians. In the Viking Age and partly also in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the deceased in this area were buried cremated in stone graves: either cairns or level-ground cemeteries with stone settings. In the latter type, the material of various burials has often become mixed. The pyre has usually been situated in the vicinity or right above the grave site. It is not uncommon to find cairns which resemble grave cairns but which contain no burials.<sup>112</sup> In some cases the constructions have included distinguishable stone circles.<sup>113</sup>

The composition of Karelian grave goods corresponds to its parallels in Estonia and Finland. Male burials often include weapons – spearheads, arrowheads, axes, even swords and remains of belts with bronze fittings. The most remarkable female adornments appear to have been the chain arrangements fastened on the shoulders with a round or crayfish brooch and the knife in a bronze-decorated sheath. The graves of both men and women have sometimes included big, richly decorated silver penannular brooches.<sup>114</sup>

Starting with the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the dead were inhumed, though some cremations still occurred. Earlier inhumations had all been north orientated and contained grave goods similar to the ones found with cremations. The number of male and female burials in one cemetery was approximately equal.<sup>115</sup>

The Karelian dead were sometimes buried in log frameworks or grave chambers. These were usually 160 to 122 cm long and 60 to 135 cm wide, thus smaller than the chamber graves known in Birka or Luistari. Some of them were covered with birchbark. In most cases the chamber graves included only one burial, usually inhumation.<sup>116</sup> The burials in these graves were usually well furnished; additional offerings often accompany the original deposits.<sup>117</sup> Finnish archaeologist Pirjo Uino has considered the cus-

<sup>104</sup> Ryabinin 1997, pp 54–55.

<sup>105</sup> Ligi 1993b, p 31.

<sup>106</sup> Ryabinin 1997, p 27.

<sup>107</sup> Ligi 1993b, p 91; Ryabinin 1997, p 55.

<sup>108</sup> Ligi 1993b, p 90.

<sup>109</sup> Ryabinin 1997, pp 60–81.

<sup>110</sup> Sedov 1987, pp 41 ff.

<sup>111</sup> Ryabinin 1997, pp 29–41.

<sup>112</sup> Uino 1997, pp 44–54.

<sup>113</sup> Kochkurkina 1981, pp 13 ff.

<sup>114</sup> Saksa 1998, pp 30–51.

<sup>115</sup> Uino 1997, p 66.

<sup>116</sup> Uino 1997, pp 62–69.

<sup>117</sup> Saksa 1998, p 29.

tom of burying in wooden chambers as characteristic to the elite of the Karelians<sup>118</sup> while Russian archaeologist Aleksandr Saksa treats it as an ordinary Karelian burial form<sup>119</sup>. Inhumations with no wooden frameworks were usually similarly to cremations covered with a layer of burned stones, and they also included much slag. There were large amounts of potsherds to be found, probably the remains of ritual feasts on the graves.<sup>120</sup>

Quite frequently the same cemeteries included Christian burials with westward orientation and practically no grave goods. The new orientation became prevalent in Karelia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the tradition of grave furnishing disappeared completely.<sup>121</sup>

## 2.4. Finland

In Finland, as in Estonia, cremation burials in stone graves were the dominating grave type throughout the whole Late Iron Age. Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander has divided these graves in two large groups: 1) cremation cemeteries on level ground were widespread in south-western Finland, and 2) cremation cemeteries of cairns have been found mainly in the region of Häme and in the Kokemäki River valley in Satakunta.<sup>122</sup>

The flat burial grounds resembled similar cemeteries in mainland Estonia. No constructions could be distinguished in most of these fields, covered with two or more layers of granite stone. Collections of cremated bones, usually badly burned artefacts and small pieces of charcoal, sometimes occurred in certain spots and could in some circumstances be defined as separate burials. Most of the bones and finds, however, occurred sporadically over the whole cemetery.

There is one exception to this rule: the surroundings of Lake Pyhäjärvi in Lower Satakunta, South-West Finland, where inhumation burials had become dominant as early as the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Three excavated cemeteries could be mentioned in this connection – Luistari, Köyliö, and Yläne,<sup>123</sup> in addition to which other single inhumation graves have been recorded in the area. As the material from inhumation burials was so much more informative than that of the cremation graves, the understanding of Finnish Late Iron Age has mostly been based on these three cemeteries, especially Luistari and Köyliö.

Altogether 1294 graves have been uncovered in the Luistari cemetery since 1969 when the site was first recorded. The cemetery has been in use during a very long period from the Early Iron Age up to historical times, but the majority of the burials date to the Merovingian Period and Viking Age.<sup>124</sup> It is a flat burial ground, where the

deceased have been buried in grave pits. Most of the dead were directed with their heads towards the south-west, some towards the north-west or some other direction. A number of the graves contained stone structures, even stone rows; some of the graves were covered with a layer of stones. Many furnished burials contained traces of wooden structures, either of a coffin or a burial chamber.<sup>125</sup> The latter were found in 38 burials. The chambers resembled in structure both the chamber graves of Birka and “the houses of dead” of the eastern Finno-Ugric nations.<sup>126</sup> There were post-holes in some of the graves. As a whole, the cemetery included both unfurnished and richly furnished graves, but the majority of the burials contained only a modest amount of grave goods.

There are three cemeteries in Köyliö (in Swedish Kjölo), also dated from the Merovingian Period till the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the Viking Age and the 12<sup>th</sup> century, only the burial ground C was used. 65 inhumations have been excavated, which is about one third of the estimated number of the burials. The deceased had been buried with their heads directed west or south-west; the same orientation had dominated in the Köyliö Merovingian burial ground B. The remains of wooden coffins were noted in only a few burials. Although some, especially female burials included copious deposits, most of the burials were furnished in a very limited manner.<sup>127</sup>

Outside Satakunta, inhumation burials started to spread at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century; by the end of the century the type was predominating. The earliest inhumations were placed among cremation burials in stone graves; later on new cemeteries were founded. Finland Proper was officially Christianised in 1155, Häme in 1238/39 and 1249. For a century after this point, there occurred otherwise Christian burials with a few grave goods, but even as early as 1200 people were buried in churchyards or other consecrated ground, i.e. the West-European example was followed. By and large, the same pattern was followed in eastern Finland, though a few village cemeteries are known from the area.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Uino 1997, p 64.

<sup>119</sup> Saksa 1998, p 29.

<sup>120</sup> Uino 1997, p 70.

<sup>121</sup> Uino 1997, p 68.

<sup>122</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1984, p 284.

<sup>123</sup> Hirviluoto 1958; Cleve 1978; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982a; 1982b; 1982c.

<sup>124</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982a; 2000.

<sup>125</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982a, pp 19 ff.

<sup>126</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982a, pp 33–35; 1982c, pp 24 ff; Uino 1997, pp 62–69.

<sup>127</sup> Cleve 1978.

<sup>128</sup> Purhonen 1998, pp 135–145; Valk 1994.

The clothing traditions of Finnish women in the Viking and Crusade Periods were slightly different depending on the region. Though chain arrangements were worn in Finland too, these were much more modest than the Estonian, let alone the Livian ones. Complete sets of chain arrangements were relatively rare. The chains were fixed on the shoulders with the aid of two round brooches and Livian-type-like openwork chain-holders.<sup>129</sup> In a few cases a single chain had been fastened with Estonian or Baltic type pins. After the Viking Age the chest arrangements became less pretentious and were fastened with penannular brooches. In Finland, a far more common type of adornment was a necklace of beads, spirals and coin pendants, to a lesser extent also neck-rings.

The most common type of Finnish women's bracelet was the spiral bracelet, but there were also several more massive bracelets with either widening or narrowing ends. Men rarely wore bracelets.<sup>130</sup> Knife sheaths adorned with bronze were frequent finds. As is characteristic of all Finno-Ugric peoples, the clothes of Finnish women and to a smaller extent also men were decorated with bronze spiral patterns and fastened with penannular brooches.

The weapons found in male graves were mostly of international types. The graves of men and boys often included belts with bronze decorations.<sup>131</sup>

## 2.5. Sweden

Scandinavian Viking period graves and burial rites have been the subject of numerous studies, especially in the last decades. Many of these studies have been published and are thus readily available.

The whole of Scandinavia will not be discussed in this book. Attention is concentrated on the districts that might possess common features with Osilian burial customs. Primarily Sweden, particularly the Mälars area and Uppland in the central part of the country, and the island of Gotland, should be considered in this connection.

### 2.5.1. Mälars Area, Uppland

Viking Age burial customs in eastern Sweden are characterised by their uniformity, though some small local differences can be observed. The custom of cremating the deceased appeared in this region as early as in the Bronze Age, and dominated continuously until the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century inhumations, often in rectangular stone settings, became dominant. Most of these burials contained items belonging to the dress of the deceased. The role of inhumation, clearly a reflection of the conversion to Christianity, grew rapidly, and hence

by the 11<sup>th</sup> century cremation traditions had been completely replaced by the custom of inhumation.

The earliest Christian west-orientated burials were mostly situated in old cremation burial cemeteries, although mainly in one corner. Soon there began the custom of burying Christians in a separate, probably consecrated Christian cemeteries, or actual churchyards.<sup>132</sup>

Cremation burials were marked with small earth mounds or with stone settings of different shapes. The stone settings usually consisted of a simple circle of stones, without stone- or any other kind of infill, and with a cremation burial inside. The diameter of these circles usually remained between 1.5 and 3 m. Rectangular, triangular and boat-shaped stone settings were also common in this region, in the same way not usually filled with smaller stones. The absence of human bones in several triangular-shaped stone settings suggests that these constructions might have had another or a parallel function to that of a grave. Some of them had, for instance, entrances, marked with two upright stones and a slab between them. Boat-shaped stone settings were, as can be expected, found mostly in coastal areas, and were usually oriented parallel to the shoreline.<sup>133</sup>

Most of the cremation burials were, however, covered with low mounds of moraine that usually formed mound cemeteries. The mound forms that have been recorded were usually circular, but also oval, rectangular or triangular. The diameter of circular mounds normally remained between 3–6 m, but in a few cases even reached 15 m. Some mounds contained stone constructions: surrounding kerbs, often incomplete or irregular, or just a large stone, erected on the top of the burial deposit.

The internal structure of the cremation graves usually consisted of cremation deposits – as Anne-Sofie Gräslund puts it “the remains of a pyre, with burned bones – and sometimes objects and fragments of the objects – usually scattered on the original ground surface either on the site of the pyre or in a separate burial place”.<sup>134</sup> The cremation deposits could include one or several urns, or if not, the bones and other remains of the pyre could have been contained in wooden boxes or been wrapped in a cloth or some other perishable material. In some graves urns with burial remains had no cremation deposits.<sup>135</sup> Cremations in

<sup>129</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 113 ff.

<sup>130</sup> Korkeakoski-Väisänen 1981; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 118 ff.

<sup>131</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 148 ff.

<sup>132</sup> Gräslund 1994.

<sup>133</sup> Petré 1984; Gräslund & Müller-Wille 1992.

<sup>134</sup> Gräslund 1980, p 51.

<sup>135</sup> Gräslund 1980.

pits were uncommon in central Sweden during the Viking Period, but not completely unfamiliar, as is demonstrated by some burials of this kind in Birka.

Cremation graves usually contained a small number of finds, mostly badly burnt fragments of artefacts. The most characteristic find has been the Mjöltnir pendant, occurring both in male and female graves. Frequent finds were also fragments of bone combs and glass beads.<sup>136</sup>

A great exception to the ordinary burial customs of central Sweden was discovered when at least seven cemeteries were uncovered on the island of Björkö in Lake Mälaren, near the Viking town of Birka. Both cremation and inhumation graves were found there, the latter being very rare in the surrounding areas.

The inhumation graves of Birka were of three different forms: the deceased were buried either in chamber graves, in wooden coffins or without a coffin. As many as 119 burials in timber chambers were recorded, belonging almost equally to men and women. These graves were normally richly furnished, and several of them had a special platform for an inhumed horse skeleton.

Most researchers believe that, owing to their unusual character, the Birka chamber graves should be seen as foreign influences; some connect it with a possible foreign population, especially traders. It is worth noting that the graves known from around the king's residence on the island of Adelsö, near Birka, all contained cremation burials typical of the region. Anne-Sofie Gräslund, like most other Swedish archaeologists, has connected the Birka chamber graves with examples from western Europe, especially in the regions of Lower Friesland and Saxony-Westphalia.<sup>137</sup>

Inhumations in coffins at Birka were indicated by traces of wood and/or iron nails and rivets. The number of female burials in coffins was clearly greater than that of male burials. The dead bodies in the burials classified as without a coffin had obviously been wrapped in some sort of a shroud, a piece of evidence that Gräslund has connected with Christianity. These graves usually contained only a few grave goods.

In inhumation graves with or without coffin the body had usually been stretched out on its back, in most cases with its head towards the west. In chamber graves also bodies in semiflexed or even seated positions occur.<sup>138</sup>

The most typical ornaments in the female graves of central Sweden were the oval brooches that were fastened on shoulders and connected to one or many rows of beads. Both bracelets and neck-rings were rarer on the western coasts of the Baltic Sea than on the eastern ones, penannular brooches were also used less often as means for fas-

tening clothes. Knives in bronze-edged sheaths, as well as belts decorated with fittings of Oriental origin have been found in several graves at Birka.<sup>139</sup>

The men's graves at Birka contained much weaponry, but cremation burials rarely included any weapons, usually only a few fragments. Belts with bronze fittings were quite common, but not as widespread as in the Eastern Baltic.

### 2.5.2. Gotland

Both cremation and inhumation graves are represented in the archaeological evidence of Viking Age Gotland. Typical were the huge grave fields that were in use from the Bronze Age till the beginning of the Christian period.

In the end of the Vendel period, Gotlanders started to bury their dead in round stone cairns that were often surrounded by a low circle of limestone slabs. The stone circles were usually filled with stones or rubble or a mixture of gravel and soil; there was also a heap of the infill material on top of the grave. A special grave stone on the apex of the heap is also characteristic of this grave type, as has been demonstrated in a remarkable way by reconstructions at Trullhalsar.<sup>140</sup> Stone cairns also occurred.<sup>141</sup> These stone circle graves and the cairns that resembled the graves on Saaremaa persisted on Gotland until the end of the Viking Age, when they were superseded by Christian burial customs.

During the Viking Age, the custom of inhumation spread on Gotland. The graves were often surrounded by stones or wooden planks, and there were also burials in stone slab cists. In the Vendel period, the dead were buried with their heads directed north (with some digressions); in the Viking Age the orientation became contrary – the deceased were oriented towards the south, the south-east or the south-west.<sup>142</sup> Postholes have been found from some graves, e.g. in the Barshalder cemetery in the southern part of the island. These can be interpreted as remains of above-ground wooden constructions.<sup>143</sup>

The Ire cemetery on northern Gotland has been in use from the Roman Iron Age till the Viking Age; altogether 333 graves have been excavated there. Both cremations and inhumations occurred. In the Viking Age part of the cemetery, the most common grave type was the lime-

<sup>136</sup> E.g. Petré 1984.

<sup>137</sup> Gräslund 1980.

<sup>138</sup> Gräslund 1980, pp 7 ff.

<sup>139</sup> Jansson 1986.

<sup>140</sup> Nylén 1958, pp 78–80, fig 14.

<sup>141</sup> Stenberger 1961, pp 9 ff; Trotzig 1983, p 374.

<sup>142</sup> Carlsson 1988, pp 90–92.

<sup>143</sup> Trotzig 1983, pp 374 ff; Carlsson 1988.

stone cairn, about 2.5–6 m in diameter, which was very similar to the stone circle graves on Saaremaa. The grave kerb was either a low limestone wall or a circle of bigger granite stones. In some cases there was another stone heap in the centre of the grave. The cremation seems to have been situated right in the position of the later cairn, in some cases the remains of the pyre have been put either in a limestone cist or a round construction of granite stones. One grave usually contained only one burial.<sup>144</sup>

Inhumations, some of them in limestone cists or wooden coffins, occurred both beneath the cairns and in flat graves. The burials were usually SE- or SW-orientated, some later ones west-orientated. A dog or dogs, and sometimes cats, had been often buried with humans.

In the northern and central parts of the island, weapons and food as grave goods disappeared around the year 1000 AD. In the southern parts the change came later, and the graves included ceramic, metal ware and tools even in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This has been interpreted as Eastern-Baltic influence.<sup>145</sup> In other parts of Gotland, the dead were buried with their personal adornments even as late as in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century, but weapons, tools or other deposits did not occur in these graves any more. Burials that included jewellery continued both in churchyards and in ordinary burial grounds until about the year 1200 AD.<sup>146</sup> No furnished burials have been found among later period graves.

The dress of Gotlandic women differed in several aspects from that of central Sweden. A chainlet consisting mainly of beads and specific pendants was fastened on shoulders with animal-head brooches, instead of the oval ones used on the mainland. Some female burials also included chain arrangements. Often a round box-brooch or some other Gotlandic brooch had been pinned on the front of the dress.

Several graves on Gotland can be characterised by numerous Baltic influences, proceeding especially from Couronia, Livia and Saaremaa. As an example, the local burials included a larger number of penannular brooches, belts with bronze fittings and knife-sheaths decorated with bronze than their counterparts in central Sweden.<sup>147</sup> The custom of inhumation burials, which was rare in other parts of Viking Age Sweden, could in a Gotlandic context be attributed to southern or Baltic influences. Burials with two spearheads, which were common on the eastern coasts of the Baltic Sea, also often occurred on Gotland,<sup>148</sup> as did bearded axes<sup>149</sup>.

## 2.6. Summary

The main features of the burial customs on Viking Age Saaremaa can be considered the cremation burial and burying in stone graves (Figs 2, 3). The most popular grave forms – stone circle graves and cairns – enable us to draw parallels with those of Gotland, central Sweden and South-West Finland, and also the northern parts of Couronia and western Estonia. Inhumations that are, with a few exceptions, typical of most of the Baltic peoples, were almost absent on Viking Age Saaremaa. The artefact material from the cemeteries resembles the finds from Livian graves, and especially in the case of weaponry, the Gotland finds. Therefore one must admit that the Viking Age graves of Saaremaa demonstrate primarily cultural connections with the above-mentioned regions, whereas common features with East Estonia, not to mention the rest of the Baltics, remained marginal. The exception here again is Couronia with its relatively international burial customs and artefact types.

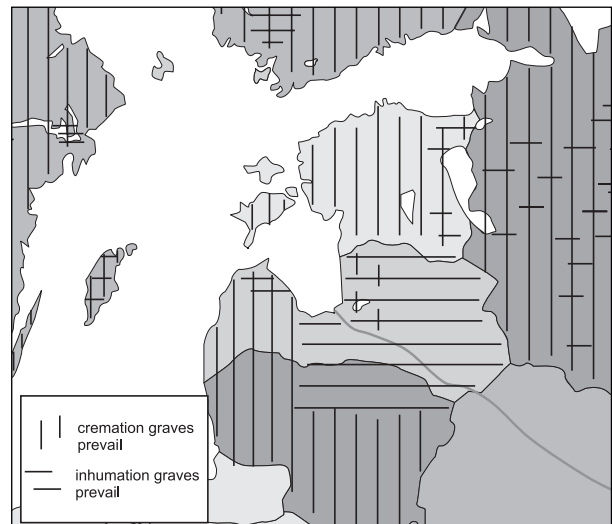


Figure 2. Burial customs in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

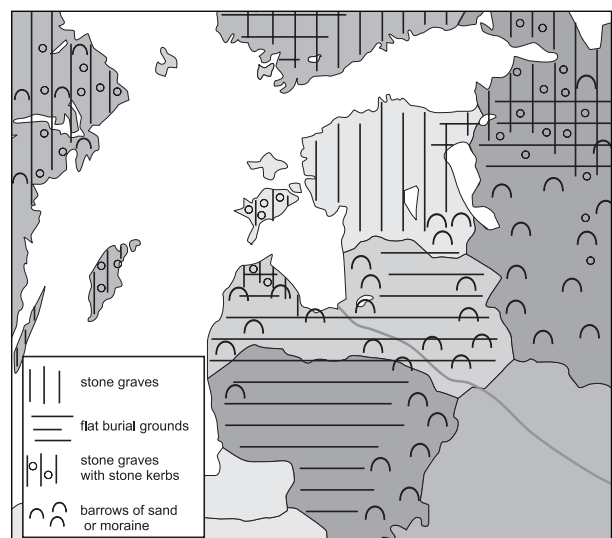


Figure 3. Grave forms in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>144</sup> Stenberger 1961, pp 13–16.

<sup>145</sup> Trotzig 1983, pp 375–376.

<sup>146</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1991.

<sup>147</sup> Carlsson 1988; Thunmark-Nylén 1995b.

<sup>148</sup> Stenberger 1961, pp 36–37.

<sup>149</sup> Paulsen 1956, p 25.



It is clear that the ideology behind cremation burials in many aspects contradicts that of inhumations, but without precluding the parallel existence of both types in one society. Almost the same can be said about stone graves and flat-ground burials, where in the first case the grave is made more obviously visible. Not only the stone circle graves and cairns but also the structureless stone graves that were widespread in Viking Age Finland and Estonia made a display of the burial. In both of these areas it had been common since the Bronze Age to bury the dead under or in between the stones; at the same time burying in a grave pit was comparatively unusual.

Another question is whether the spreading of stone cairns in one region, and sand and moraine barrows in another can be viewed as completely different phenomena. In some areas the spreading of sand barrows can be explained by the absence of stones. Such an explanation would apply to the barrow cemeteries on the coasts of the Gulf of Riga and in Couronia, where sandy landscapes with few stones dominate.

The unification of burial customs due to the spread of Christianity happened in western Finland and the areas of Scandinavia discussed in this chapter in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, whereas in the Baltic countries there were no apparent changes until the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Figs 4, 5).

The official Christianisation of Estonia and Latvia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century brought about gradual change in burial customs. Although in most of these regions the cremation burial persisted, inhumations with the head of the deceased orientated westward became more and more common. A sudden decrease in grave goods can be detected in North and West Estonia starting with the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In Couronia, the cremation custom remained for longer, except for its northern parts. The Cours were officially christianised almost a century after the rest of the Latvian region.

By the 14<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania had remained the only “heathen islet” in Christian Europe and thus changes in burial customs rarely occurred there. Even after Christianisation the cremation burial still persisted for a long while and, especially in eastern Lithuania, inhumations were richly furnished during several following centuries.

On Saaremaa, inhumations appeared late in comparison with mainland Estonia – chiefly in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the acceptance of Christian burial customs seems to have been quite rapid. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century cremation burials disappeared and starting with the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century the prevailing tradition became the westward-orientated inhumation. Until the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the graves were furnished, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century the finds disappear.

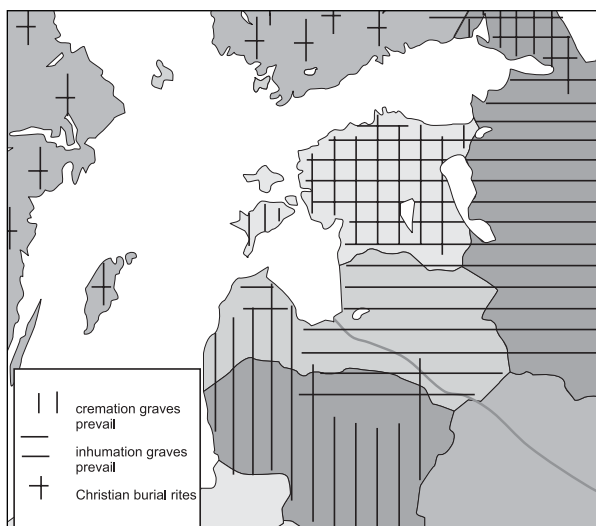


Figure 4. Burial customs in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

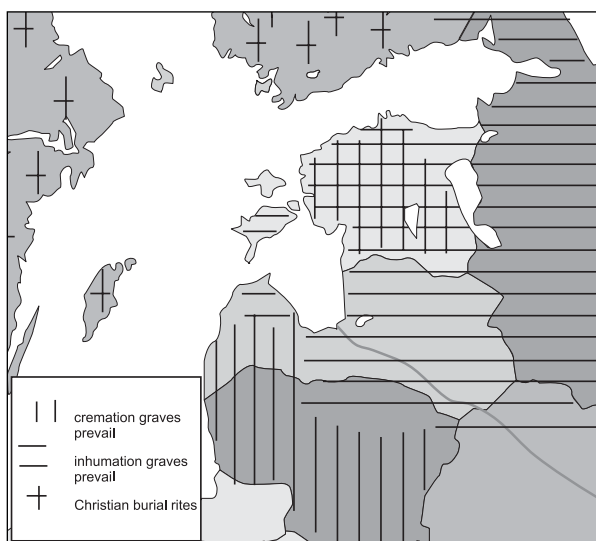


Figure 5. Burial customs in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Data of unfurnished skeletons found on Saaremaa give reason to believe that the custom of burial in village cemeteries, which was so common in the rest of Estonia, was also present on Saaremaa.

Saaremaa seems to have been the middle ground between the western areas that underwent rapid Christianisation and the regions of the Baltic and North-West Russia that can be characterised by a gradual process in the Christianisation of the burial types. Chapter 7 of this book will discuss in more detail the possible reasons for this phenomenon.

## Chapter 3

# SAAREMAA IN WRITTEN SOURCES

Only a few writings concerning prehistoric Estonia have survived up to our days. Estonian society itself was obviously still in a pre-literate stage during this period and the chroniclers, usually of southern origin, only seldom came to mention this “faraway end of the world”. The few brief descriptions that exist are often of doubtful value, written during or after military campaigns by hostile enemy chroniclers.

Even if Estonians did have a tradition of epic ballads comparable to Scandinavian sagas, none of them have been preserved. After the country was conquered by foreign powers, the local nobility was gradually assimilated to German culture during the following centuries. Historians believe that especially after the uprising of St. George’s night in 1343, language became the main signifier of social status here: peasants and other lower classes spoke Estonian, whereas the aristocracy spoke German. Linguistic segregation probably started even before the uprising, i.e. at about the time when Scandinavian sagas were written down. In Estonia, where the political situation did not favour the development of local culture, a similar interest in oral tradition would have been out of question.

### 3.1. Saaremaa in the Viking Age

On Scandinavian runic stones, Estonia has been mentioned several times, usually in the context of Scandinavian heroes who perished there. Often different regions of Estonia are mentioned (*uirlant* – Vironia, the northern part of present Estonia, *iflant* – Livonia, *isilu* – Saaremaa (Õsel), etc.) or the name “Estonia” in some form appears in surnames (*aistfari*, *aistulf*, *aistr*, *aist*, *estulfr*, *es(t)mon*, *estr*, *est*).<sup>1</sup> In one case, on the so-called Frugarden stone in Västergötland, the toponym has been given in the plural – *i estlatum* – which gives grounds for presuming that *estland* could have been used to signify different regions of Estonia.<sup>2</sup> *Eistland* might also have meant both a certain region in Estonia, or the whole territory.<sup>3</sup>

In most of the Scandinavian sagas, Saaremaa is called *Eysysla*, *ey* standing for an island and *sysla* for an administrative unit. The name *Saaremaa* in Estonian means approximately the same: *saar* is an island and *maa* is land, district. *Sysla* has been the name used for administrative districts especially in southern Scandinavia and thus the application of the term for an Estonian island is fairly unexpected.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, the name *Adalsysla* was used to signify the land opposite of *Eysysla*, Saaremaa, i.e. either western Estonia or possibly even the whole of mainland

Estonia.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Saaremaa, *Eysysla* should probably be translated as “district of islands”, indicating thus Saaremaa as the main island, but also for Muhumaa and the Sõrve peninsula, which at the time formed a separate island, and also the small islands and islets along the coastline of Saaremaa, most of which have become a part of Saaremaa as the land has risen. One can collate this with 13<sup>th</sup> century chronicle of Henry the Livonian, who uses the term *Osilia* to signify all the above-mentioned islands.<sup>6</sup> It can be presumed that the old name used for Saaremaa – *Kuresaar* – meant only the main island, whereas Saaremaa stood for the whole archipelago. The names have prompted the theory that in early medieval sources the terms Couronia and Couronians were used for the Osilians too.<sup>7</sup> It must be said that nowadays, including the present study, the name Saaremaa is also understood as standing for the whole district of islands.

In the early medieval written sources of Scandinavia, Saaremaa is mentioned in connection with Viking raids. In the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century there was a battle between the Norwegian jarl Erik, who was ravaging the coasts of Saaremaa, and a four-ship group of Danish Vikings sailing in the same waters.<sup>8</sup> In the Njall saga there is a description of a battle that took place in 972 AD between Icelandic and Estonian Vikings. The battle was fought somewhere near the northern coast of Saaremaa and was won by the Icelanders.<sup>9</sup>

About 1008 AD Olaf the Holy, who later became the king of Norway, landed on Saaremaa. The Osilians, taken by surprise, had at first agreed to pay the tax he demanded but then gathered an army at the time of the negotiations and attacked the Norwegians. Olaf nevertheless won the battle. Around the year 1030 a Swedish Viking chief called Fröger was killed in a battle on Saaremaa.<sup>10</sup>

The most detailed description of Viking Age Estonia can be found in the saga of the young Norwegian prince Olaf

<sup>1</sup> Jansson 1954; Salberger 1986; anyhow, these surnames can just refer to the east, not only the present Estonia.

<sup>2</sup> Salberger 1986.

<sup>3</sup> Jonuks 2000, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Nerman 1929, p. 12; Palmaru 1980, p. 268.

<sup>5</sup> Palmaru 1980, p. 268; Jonuks 2000, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> HCL; Saaremaa 1934, p. 266.

<sup>7</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p. 263; see also section 2.1.5.b.

<sup>8</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p. 264.

<sup>9</sup> Mäss 1996, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> Saaremaa 1934, pp. 264–265.

Trygvasson written by Snorre Sturlusson. In 967 when Olaf was three years old, he was travelling with his mother Estrid and many companions to Novgorod. On the way, Osilian pirates attacked the ship. Both Olaf and his mother were taken prisoners and sold into slavery. Olaf was resold to different owners many times before he was bought on a market by his uncle and thus regained freedom. Years later, Estrid was also freed.<sup>11</sup>

There are a few general descriptions of Estonia in other sagas, but these are often mythical in nature. In the east *jötuns*, *trolls* and dragons were believed to dwell. The chronicle *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* by Adam of Bremen describes among other topics a big island in the Baltic Sea called *Aestland*. The inhabitants of this faraway land do not believe in the Christian god but worship dragons and birds, to which they make human sacrifices.

Saxo Grammaticus tells that the home of the best-known *berserk*<sup>12</sup> of ancient Scandinavia – Starkadr – had been born in Estonia. In a later episode he mentions that Satarkadr took part in looting raids to Couronia and Estonia.<sup>13</sup>

The *sosso*ls mentioned in Old-Russian chronicles who were asked to pay a tribute of 2000 grivnas to the Novgorodian prince Izjaslav in 1060 are usually believed to have been Osilians. The *sosso*ls chased tax-gatherers away and launched a military campaign next spring that took them as far as Pskov. In the course of the campaign they conquered the stronghold of Jurjev (present Tartu) and burned down the nearby *horomō*, a supposed early town.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.2. Saaremaa 1100–1227

Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, chroniclers' descriptions of Estonian, Osilian and Couronian raids to the coasts of Sweden and Denmark have become more frequent. In the XIV book of *Gesta Danorum*, written from 1185 to 1222, Saxo Grammaticus describes a battle on Öland that took place in 1170, where the Danish king Valdemar fought with Couronian and Estonian pirates.<sup>15</sup>

The ravaging and burning of Sigtuna has also been connected with Osilians, but different sources do not agree on this point: Karelians, Couronians, Estonians, Novgorodians (or just generally "barbarians from the East") have all been considered responsible for the attack. It has been suggested that warriors of various ethnic origin took part in the raid; it is very unlikely that the raid can be attributed solely to Novgorodians as there is no mention of the raid in Novgorod chronicles.<sup>16</sup>

In the Chronicle of Henry the Livonian there are numerous references to Osilian piracy. This chronicle is the most detailed, comprehensive and quoted source on prehistoric

Estonia, including Saaremaa. It is a typical missionary chronicle, where the monk Henricus describes the events of the Crusade that was carried out by the Order of the Brethren of the Sword in present Latvia and Estonia.<sup>17</sup> The chronicle embraces events from 1184 to 1227, concluding with the so-called Fight for Freedom from 1208 to 1227 that marked the end of the prehistoric period in Estonia. The chronicle, written at the request of the Order from 1224 to 1227, was clearly biased and unconditionally supported the Catholic Church and its forces against heathens. The local peoples are described with much contempt whereas the military actions of the Germans are always praised as victorious; great losses in battles with Estonians are only attributed to the Swedes and Danes. However, the chronicle has been widely used by Estonian and Latvian archaeologists and historians as it is the main source for these events and especially because it is the only text describing the local society before the conquest of Estonia. Henry the Livonian, though, paid little attention to the social relations and political system of his enemies. As the majority of the events described in the chronicle took place in Latvia and southern Estonia, but perhaps also because of language problems or probable personal connections of the author – Henry the Livonian could speak Latvian and is sometimes even believed to have been Latgallian<sup>18</sup> – the description of the tribes who lived in what is today Latvia was much more detailed than that of the Estonians. The Osilians are mentioned in the chronicle mainly in connection with their leading position in military actions, some of which indicate more serious political motives than just looting. Saaremaa is directly mentioned usually in paragraphs dealing with Osilian piracy and some other military events. Information concerning the political and social organisation of the Osilians is very scarce, consisting of a few notes in the final chapter of the chronicle that speaks of the conquest of Saaremaa.<sup>19</sup> Therefore the majority of historians have automatically attributed the information that Henry the Livonian has written about the rest of Estonia also to Saaremaa. However, the differences that are apparent both in the chronicle and in archaeological material suggest that the grounds for such assumptions are weak.

In 1203 some inhabitants of Riga, who were sailing back from Germany, encountered a fleet of sixteen ships and five hundred Osilians that were ravaging the southern

<sup>11</sup> EA I 1935, p 180.

<sup>12</sup> A dedicated, wild warrior.

<sup>13</sup> Jonuks 2000, pp 17–18.

<sup>14</sup> Ligi 1968, pp 42–43 and references.

<sup>15</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, pp 163–167.

<sup>16</sup> Mäss 1996, pp 79–82.

<sup>17</sup> HCL.

<sup>18</sup> See HCL, the comments by Tarvel p 6.

<sup>19</sup> HCL, XXX.

coast of Sweden, which at the time belonged to Denmark. Later, in the harbour of Visby, the Germans attacked three Osilian ships that had arrived there.<sup>20</sup> Three years later the Danish king Valdemar II and Andreas, the Bishop of Lund, landed on Saaremaa and built a wooden fort there. As the majority of the army had to leave soon and there were no men who were willing to stay in the fort, the fort was burned down and the conquerors left without having accomplished anything.<sup>21</sup>

During the war in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Osilians, sometimes allied with other regions, often raided mainland Estonia and areas of present Latvia. Besides that, they initiated several counterattacks with joint forces from the mainland against the conquerors. In 1215 nine ships sailed from Riga to Germany and were forced to seek shelter from storm in the so-called New Harbour on Saaremaa where they were attacked by the Osilians. The Germans together with the Estonian bishop Theoderich escaped the siege only by a lucky chance.<sup>22</sup> In 1216 the Order and the bishop joined forces to go over the frozen sea to Saaremaa where they ravaged and besieged a fort with little success. Henry, who usually describes only the great victories of the Germans, surprises the reader with a scene where panic breaks out among the retreating troops of the Order, caused by a random cry "*Maleva*<sup>23</sup> is coming!". Some of the warriors collapsed and died of cold and fatigue as the army fled in haste.<sup>24</sup> In revenge, the Osilians raided areas under German rule in Latvia the following spring.

According to Henry, the Osilians were defeated in a battle that took place at Järvamaa in central Estonia in 1220. In the same year the Swedish king Johan, accompanied by jarl Karl and the bishop Karl of Linköping conquered Lihula in West-Estonia. As this action was clearly in conflict with the political interests of the Osilians, they attacked the stronghold in the same year, conquered it and killed the entire Swedish garrison.<sup>25</sup> In 1222 the Danish king Valdemar II organised the second conquest raid to Saaremaa, this time erecting a stone fortress, and manning it with a strong garrison. The Osilians also destroyed this fort in a few months.<sup>26</sup>

It is surprising that despite ongoing war in Estonia the Osilians continued their looting incursions to Scandinavia. The Papal legate Modena Wilhelm met Osilian ships returning from a raid to Sweden in 1226. In 1227 the Order, the town of Riga and the new Bishop of Riga organised a new attack against Saaremaa in the course which the Muhu stronghold was completely destroyed and the armies started to besiege Valjala, which has been described by Henry as the centre of all Saaremaa. The stronghold surrendered quite rapidly and the Osilians accepted Christianity.<sup>27</sup> With this event Henry ends his chronicle.

### 3.3. Saaremaa in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries

The post-conquest centuries offer a slightly richer variety of written records concerning Saaremaa. In spite of the acceptance of Christianity, it is not possible to speak of the final surrender of the Osilians in 1227. Military conflicts between the Germans and the Osilians continued throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with the consequence of new treaties that were more or less favourable to the Osilians. Saaremaa has also been mentioned in several other documents, e.g. in connection with the so called Osilian Civil War at the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> century or in association with the changes in the land tenure of the island.

The happenings on 13<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa are partly reflected in the Older Rhymed Chronicle of Livonia that was completed at the request of the Order in the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup> In the opening part of the chronicle it describes the wars that had taken place on the territories of present Latvia and Estonia at the beginning of the century. Several events that had occurred on Saaremaa, as for example the fall of the Kaarma stronghold in 1261, are known only from this source.

After the conquest in 1227 Saaremaa was divided between the victors. The division, or rather the tribute exacted from the island, was established according to the amount of ploughlands, without the presence of any representatives of the victors.<sup>29</sup> The amount of ploughlands in one or another district is only sporadically known; thus 200 ploughlands were mentioned on the island of Muhu and altogether 600 ploughlands in the Kilegund district.<sup>30</sup>

The next written sources mentioning the island were the Osilians' treaties, concluded with the Order of the Brethren of the Sword, later with the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order, after the Osilians' more or less successful military struggle with these two powers during the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup>

After the defeat of the Order of the Brethren of the Sword in the Battle of Saule in 1236, military action on Saaremaa broke out anew. In the course of the campaign all the clerics on the island were killed and the bishop Heinrich himself had a narrow escape.<sup>32</sup> The result of all that was a treaty that was concluded with the Master of the Order, Andreas Velven, in 1241.

<sup>20</sup> HCL, VII: 1, 2.

<sup>21</sup> HCL, X: 13.

<sup>22</sup> HCL, XIX: 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Maleva* is the term used for the ancient Estonian army.

<sup>24</sup> HCL, XIX: 9.

<sup>25</sup> HCL, XXIII: 9, XXIV: 3.

<sup>26</sup> HCL, XXVI: 2–4.

<sup>27</sup> HCL, XXX.

<sup>28</sup> LVR.

<sup>29</sup> LUB I: 139, reg 155; Mägi 1998, pp 150 ff.

<sup>30</sup> Johansen 1933, p 104; Mägi 1998, pp 150 ff.

<sup>31</sup> LUB I: 169, reg 190; 285, reg 321; Saaremaa 1934, pp 277–280; Uluots 1975, pp 62–69.

<sup>32</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 278.

According to the treaty the Osilians undertook to give the overlord  $\frac{1}{2}$  pund (about 84 kg) of rye per ploughland a year and provide a living for parish clergymen. The Osilians themselves, or more probably their leaders, were responsible for collecting tax revenues and delivering them to the harbours from which they were sent to Riga or West Estonia.<sup>33</sup> The arrangement of tax collecting was obviously based on a previously existing taxation system. If the overlord was short of sea vessels, the Osilians were supposed to rent from Saaremaa the boats and pilots needed for the transportation of taxes.

Once a year, at the time of collecting of taxes, the Osilians agreed to receive the bailiff, who at the time also had the right to act as judge in secular court proceedings. In addition to the aforementioned clauses in the part concerning court proceedings, the treaty determined the punishments for crimes like infanticide, murder, pagan offerings and eating meat during Lent.<sup>34</sup>

It is quite likely that, to an extent, warfare in Saaremaa continued also after the 1241 treaty but there are no written records that would confirm this. In the treaty that was signed by the Osilians and the Master of the Order, Anno Sangerhausen, in 1255 there are allusions to an uprising that had taken place in the meantime. The treaty includes several additional rights granted to the Osilians. A change in the balance of power is also implied by a document from 1254, where Kihelkonna was redivided equally between the Order and the bishop of Ösel–Wiek. Some changes in the border between these two powers in the eastern part of Saaremaa were also documented in this treaty.<sup>35</sup>

The treaty of 1255 included some interesting clauses concerning the ownership and inheritance of land, the social system and religious rules. Thus it was laid down that if a landowner was exiled from Saaremaa, his heir must seek from the (German) overlord permission to come into the inheritance. If a landowner had killed and was thus obliged to pay *wergeld* for it to the overlord, on the occasion of his death someone in his family (an inheritor) had to pay it, or the land would be vested in the overlord. The latter appropriated the land also in cases when somebody had killed a landowner in order to inherit his land. The treaty also fixed that suicides would be left unpunished.

It was constituted in the treaty that the overlord had no claims to the inheritance, i.e. lands, of the thralls (*haereditas servorum*), if these lands had been vacant on Saaremaa before that year.<sup>36</sup> Herbert Ligi, while indicating the possibility that the serves had been economically and socially dependent peasants of Saaremaa, believed that they were probably foreign captives or their descendants to whom the Osilians had given some land.<sup>37</sup> Priit Ligi, on the other hand, supported the first variant,<sup>38</sup> which seems more logical for several reasons<sup>39</sup>.

The representatives of the new overlords, the master of the Order and the bishop of Ösel–Wiek, could until 1261 remain on Saaremaa only during the tax-collecting period when supreme jurisdiction was also in their hands. The period was determined in the treaty of 1255, and ran every year from St. Michael's Day<sup>40</sup> until Easter. The rest of the year supreme jurisdiction was in the hands of the Osilians themselves. When asked, the Osilians had to support the overlord in military actions, on horseback in winter and with ships in summertime.

It is worth noting that the treaty of 1251 was sealed with the Osilian coat-of-arms and it included the names of eight Osilians: Ylle, Culle, Enu, Muntelene, Tappete, Yalde, Melete and Cake. Many other Osilians, probably their retainers, had accompanied them. It is probable that these men were the chiefs of Osilian administrative units (which in most cases equalled the parishes). As far as is known, Saaremaa with Muhu and Sörve consisted of 8 administrative units.<sup>41</sup>

Warfare continued in 1261 when the Osilians had again renounced Christianity and killed all the Germans in the county. That resulted in a raid of the united forces of the Order, the Bishop, Tallinn Danes, mainland Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. The battle took place at the Kaarma stronghold; the Osilians were defeated and the stronghold conquered. In a short while delegates from other parts of the island arrived at Kaarma and peace treaty was signed.

The treaty itself has not been preserved, but as, soon after, the Order built a stone fort at Pöide, in the centre of its lands on eastern Saaremaa, it is believed that the treaty gave permission to the Order and the Bishop to reside on the island throughout the year.<sup>42</sup>

In 1298 the so-called Osilian Civil War broke out between Konrad I, the Bishop of West Estonia and Saaremaa, who supported the Bishop of Riga, and the Teutonic Order. A large number of letters from both sides has been preserved, most of them complaints with contradictory contents. The letters mention Osilian vassals some of whom supported the Bishop, some the Order.<sup>43</sup> We can draw the conclusion that the Osilians participated on both sides, in line with their overlords' allegiances.<sup>44</sup> It was the first case

<sup>33</sup> LUB I: 285, reg 321.

<sup>34</sup> LUB I: 285, reg 321; Uluots 1975, pp 62–65.

<sup>35</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 283.

<sup>36</sup> LUB I: 285, reg 321.

<sup>37</sup> Ligi 1968, pp 28–32.

<sup>38</sup> Ligi 1995a, p 240.

<sup>39</sup> See also Widgren 1998, pp 284–287.

<sup>40</sup> September 29.

<sup>41</sup> See Mägi 1998.

<sup>42</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 279; the description of the events can be found in the Older Rhymed Chronicle of Livonia, LVR, 6105–6314.

<sup>43</sup> Busch 1934, p 49 ff.

mentioned in written sources when the Osilians did not act together in a war, but displayed loyalty to their overlords.

In the beginning of the war, probably after the lootings of the Order on the Bishop's lands, the Osilians and the Clerics of Saaremaa sent a joint delegation to the Bishop who was in Lihula, and threatened to choose a new overlord if he could not defend them against the Order. The bishop, short of military forces, advised the Osilians to undertake their own defence. When the Osilians took the advice, the Order accused the Bishop of trying to incite the Osilians to revolt. The 80 Osilians who had come probably to negotiate in the Order's stronghold at Pöide, were disarmed and imprisoned. Some of the Osilian vassals allied with the Danes from Tallinn in a battle against the Order that took place in western Estonia, but they were defeated. The forces of the Order then sacked the Bishop's lands on Saaremaa. In the year of 1300, all those who had sought refuge in the Kaarma church were killed and the church was desecrated. The majority of the campaign took place in mainland Estonia, though, and continued until the peace treaty in 1302.<sup>45</sup>

From the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century it is known that in the course of further conflicts between the Order and the bishop, pirates from Riga raided the lands of Kihelkonna that belonged to the Order.<sup>46</sup>

The following written sources about Saaremaa are connected with the uprising of St. George's Night in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Estonian historians have interpreted the uprising differently: as a struggle of peasants against feudal lords,<sup>47</sup> as the last fight for freedom of Estonians against Germans,<sup>48</sup> or as a rebellion of feudal vassals, among them those of Estonian origin, against the Order<sup>49</sup>. It seems to be especially plausible for Saaremaa that vassals of Estonian origin started and headed the revolt.

By the 24<sup>th</sup> of July in 1343 the Osilians had killed all the Germans on the island, drowned all the clerics and started to besiege the castle at Pöide. After the surrender the Osilians, despite their former promises, killed all the defenders and levelled the castle. In February 1344, Burchart Dreileben led a war campaign over the frozen sea to Saaremaa. The Osilians' stronghold (which one is not known) was conquered and Vesse, their leader, hanged from a siege engine. Without achieving anything further, the troops of the Order left the island.

The next campaign of the Order took place in the early spring of 1345. Written sources depicting the last campaign are contradictory, ranging from the description of a complete victory of the Order in the Later Rhymed Chronicle of Livonia,<sup>50</sup> to a recital of losses by the Order which resulted in what was, for the Osilians, a comparatively favourable treaty in the Chronicle of Wartberge<sup>51</sup>. The latter version is consistent with the brief record in the Chronicle of Novgorod that the Order had been defeated

on Saaremaa and withdrawn its troops from the island.<sup>52</sup> The conclusion of the treaty was obviously initiated by the leaders of the Osilians as the best solution in the political situation that had developed.

### 3.4. Summary

The early written records concerning Saaremaa are brief enough to enable diverse interpretations in the frameworks of different paradigms. In addition to the history of the Diocese of West Estonia and Saaremaa written by Nikolaus Busch<sup>53</sup> and the historic overview given by Evald Blumberg in the collective work *Saaremaa*,<sup>54</sup> there has never been offered a full description of the history of Saaremaa in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The only exception would be the work of Jüri Uluots, where the treaties of Estonians, Osilians and Germans are analysed from the juridical point of view.<sup>55</sup>

Investigating Osilian burial customs in the prehistoric period and in the early Middle Ages, it is impossible to ignore the written records and settlement history of the era. There seems to have existed a close association between earlier feudal manors and probable vassals of Estonian origin in the Pöide parish, the eastern part of Saaremaa that is more closely analysed in several articles.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, earlier manors of this district could be associated with the archaeological evidence, primarily the stone cemeteries of the late Iron Age but also the semi-Christian cemeteries of the later centuries. It allows us to state that the principal farmsteads of the 12<sup>th</sup> century that acted as centres on a local level were reformed into feudal manors, and the lands owned by these farms into feudal estates.<sup>57</sup>

Taking into consideration the specific character of the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century history of Saaremaa, it is logical to suggest that the local elite of the island kept their privileges, lands and power even after the conquest, and feudalised completely during the next centuries.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Saaremaa 1934, pp 279–280.

<sup>45</sup> Busch 1934, pp 49 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 280.

<sup>47</sup> EA I 1935; ENA 1955.

<sup>48</sup> Vahtre 1980; 1998.

<sup>49</sup> Masing 1956.

<sup>50</sup> LNR, pp 79–93.

<sup>51</sup> LNR, pp 107–109; see also Vahtre 1980, p 86.

<sup>52</sup> Vahtre 1980, p 86.

<sup>53</sup> Busch 1934.

<sup>54</sup> Saaremaa 1934.

<sup>55</sup> Uluots 1975.

<sup>56</sup> Mägi 1999a; 2001a.

<sup>57</sup> Mäll 1998; Markus 1999, pp 184–185; Mägi 2001a.

<sup>58</sup> Mägi 2001a.

## Chapter 4

# STUDY OF CEMETERIES ON SAAREMAA

### 4.1. Stone Graves (9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Century Cemeteries)

#### 4.1.1. Methods for Identifying Burial Complexes

Possible burial complexes could be assessed in previously excavated graves (Fig 6) only where there existed sufficient documentation of the earlier digs. Find- and excavation maps were of utmost importance. In the cemeteries that had been mapped in detail, the identifying of possible burial complexes proved to be relatively easy. The marking of highest find concentrations on the maps was followed by the analysis of the find material. Only when this work was completed was it possible to determine to which burials certain find groups had belonged.

The distinguishing of burials was complicated by the circumstance that as is indicated both by the case of Piila in Estonia, but also by similar cases in the neighbouring countries, the bones and finds of one burial could be distributed into two or three different find groups inside the cemetery; it is possible that such burials have been carried to the grave in several vessels. As bordering find groups often include fragments of one and the same item, it can be concluded that the practice seems to have been common in most of the stone cemeteries on Saaremaa. In addition, such neighbouring find clusters are often separated from

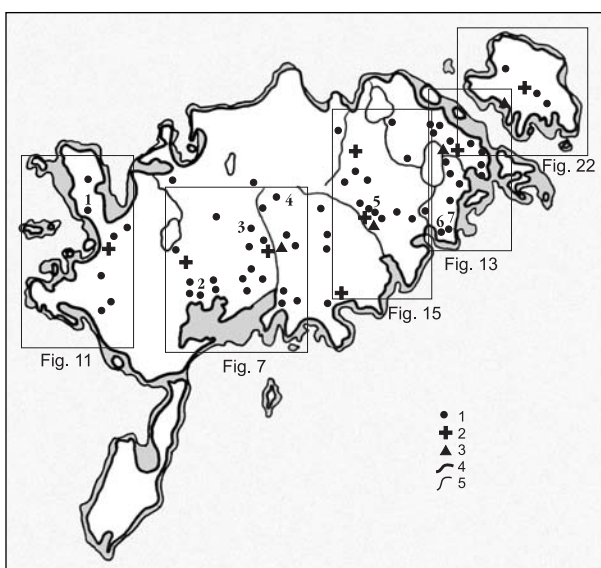
other parts of the grave with findless zones or parts containing only a few pottery sherds.

It would be difficult to estimate how large an area in the cemetery was taken up by one burial. The diameter of a stone circle grave could vary a great deal and the bigger graves usually contained more items. The find material of stone circle graves also suggests that there was a custom of marking the borders of graves with weapons or tools, especially knives and spears (see section 6.1.2.d); occasionally also scythes, bits and even swords have been found between the kerb stones.

The analysis of the find material from structureless stone graves relied on the proposition that the regularities described in the case of stone circle graves should be valid also in the structureless ones. The tactic soon justified itself. Earlier investigators had already noted that spearheads and occasionally other sharp items were often found separately, without any apparent connection with the burial.<sup>1</sup> A closer analysis proved that such spearheads usually marked the borders between different burials. Besides that, neighbouring find groups, especially if they were surrounded by a findless zone, almost always included pieces of things that had been broken during the ceremony, or otherwise connected items like similar belt mounts.

Burnt bones might have been discovered both in all of the find groups or in only some of them. As osteological finds were given minimal attention until quite recently, small pieces of bones could have easily been left unnoticed. The Swedish archaeologist Berit Sigvallius has drawn attention to the fact that the bone material in such graves could range from 3 to 1300–1400 g.<sup>2</sup> The analysis of the bone material from the Piila graves showed that a similar phenomenon is also characteristic of the graves of Saaremaa.<sup>3</sup> Thus the occurrence or absence of burned bones in previously excavated find groups should not play any decisive role in the assessment of different burials.

The distinguishing of burials was sometimes aided by the assessment of pottery sherds. The Piila excavations showed that earthen vessels with remnants from the pyre had been broken into the grave and the sherds were usually found in an area that was about 1.5 m in diameter. The majority of finds were usually concentrated in the



**Figure 6.** Late Iron Age stone graves on Saaremaa. 1 - stone cemeteries; 2 - churches (built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century); 3 - hillforts; 4 - approximate coast-line about 1000 years ago; 5 - present coast-line. Excavated cemeteries: 1 - Kurevere; 2 - Kogula; 3 - Käku; 4 - Piila; 5 - Rahu; 6 - Randvere; 7 - Viltina.

<sup>1</sup> E g Indreko 1940, p 7.

<sup>2</sup> Sigvallius 1994, p 28.

<sup>3</sup> Mägi et al 1997, pp 104–108.

same spot. At the same time, the whole burial area usually contained pieces of pottery that had probably been broken in the course of the burial or during a later ceremony.<sup>4</sup> A similar distribution of pottery sherds in structureless graves indicates similar burial customs.

It was thus possible to identify many burials in previously excavated stone cemeteries of Saaremaa where the quantity of deposits varied from a single pot to copious gear. It can be assumed that all these cemeteries must have contained additional burials that are now hard to distinguish. In addition, almost all of the cemeteries contained zones with such mixed material that it was impossible to identify different burials.

All the burials assessed have been marked on the find distribution maps, so that it is possible to check them. In accordance with the demarcation of the burial, three variants are differentiated:

- a) **complete burial complex** – contains items and bones that have been distributed in a clearly bordered area and been buried together;
- b) **partial burial complex** – contains items and bones that have been buried together, but could also have originally included other items found in the surrounding area;
- c) **supposed burial complex** – contains items and bones that are supposedly all part of one burial complex.

Burial complexes, the finds themselves, and burial customs will be more closely analysed in chapters 5 and 6. In the catalogue below, fragments of artefacts are taken as identification of complete artefacts, e.g. when a penannular brooch is mentioned among finds, it means that at least one fragment of the brooch was recorded.

#### 4.1.2. Käku Cemetery

The Käku stone circle grave cemetery is situated within the confines of the village of Käku, in the parish of Kaarma in central Saaremaa, about 2.5 km northwest of the Kaarma stronghold and the church (Fig 7). At the end of the 1940s, the cemetery, which is now completely covered by woodland, was still a pasture full of stones and junipers. The approximate measures had been ca 180 m (N–S) x 60–100 m (E–W). The whole area was said to have been covered with round stone cairns that were about 10–20 cm high and 5 to 7 m in diameter. Some of the stone heaps, especially in the eastern part of the cemetery, had been destroyed by that time.<sup>5</sup>

The Käku cemetery is situated in the 13<sup>th</sup> century *Carmele* district, mentioned in written sources in 1233. *Carmele*, which consisted of the later Kaarma and Kärla parishes, was obviously one of the wealthiest districts of Saaremaa. The southern part of it, with several big lakes

and wetlands nowadays, formed a bay with a number of suitable harbour sites in late prehistoric times. The Bishop of Ösel–Wieck founded his residence on a cape in the eastern part of the bay, on the site of the present Kuressaare castle, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The prehistoric centre of the *Carmele* district was the Kaarma stronghold 2.5 km south-east from the Käku cemetery. The centre remained important even after the conquest. One of the biggest stone churches of Saaremaa was erected close to the stronghold in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the stronghold was captured by the troops of the Order in 1261 as the centre of the whole of Saaremaa.<sup>6</sup> Some finds that were found “near the church” at some time, possibly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, indicate early Christian burials in the churchyard or are linked, at least in the case of one spearhead,<sup>7</sup> to a possible prehistoric manor near the later church. The area around the centre of Kaarma is rich in Late Iron Age stone graves; inhumation graves, in most cases probably Christian period burial grounds have also been recorded (Fig 7).

The Käku burials resemble in character and number other Osilian burials from the same period. As the cemetery was situated 2.5 km from the centre of Kaarma, it is not likely that the users of the cemetery had held leading positions in the whole area. The cemetery most probably belonged to the richest family (or families) at the local level, which probably occupied a nearby estate or village.

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The local villagers knew the place as a cemetery and several finds had been collected there over a period of time. In 1926 Aarne Michaël Tallgren had excavated two stone cairns there with Harri Moora. Only 1/3 of the first one was opened; a rivet and a nail were found there. In the second cairn a circle of granite stones was uncovered that had contained a patch of charcoal with burned stones and a few artefacts.

From 1948 to 1949 the Käku cemetery was excavated by Leo Metsar, who opened altogether 9 stone circle graves (Fig 8). There were also burials between the stone circles. The stone layer of the graves was thin, consisting mostly of one or two layers of stones. The circles had been built both of granite and limestone, the latter usually in two or three layers, which had often slid outwards. The granite infill that is so characteristic of such graves was missing at Käku. The stone circles had been filled with rubble and gravelly soil. The distance between graves was 2 to 4 m;

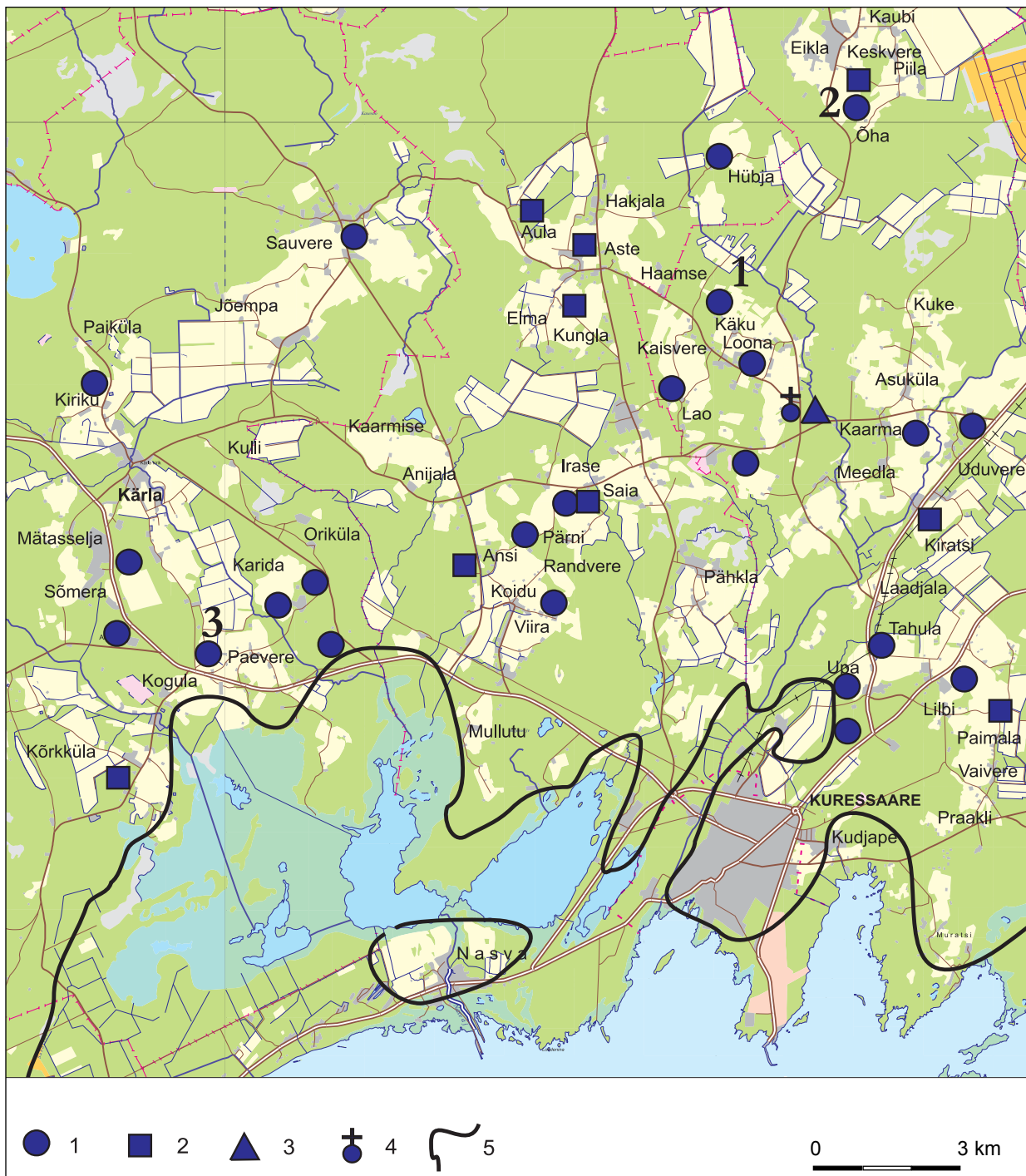
<sup>4</sup> Mägi et al 1997, pp 102–103.

<sup>5</sup> Metsar 1949, p 1.

<sup>6</sup> LVR, 6171–6314.

<sup>7</sup> SMM 1924, p 25.





**Figure 7.** Kaarma (*Carmele*) district. 1 - stone cemetery; 2 - (probable) inhumation cemetery; 3 - hillfort; 4 - parish church; 5 - probable coastline about 1000 years ago. Cemeteries: 1 - Käku; 2 - Piila; 3 - Kogula.

the area between the graves also contained smaller granite- or limestone slabs.<sup>8</sup> The numeration of the graves presented here does not match that of Metsar's.

As the archaeological excavations surveyed only 3% of the Käku cemetery, it is very hard to draw any conclusions from the material in relation to the cemetery as a whole. The excavated part had been in use mainly in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries; it contained the remains of men, women and probably at least one child.

There appeared to be no division of graves by spatial or temporal parameters. It is obvious that the 11<sup>th</sup> century burials were richer than those of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, which is in accordance with the material from other stone graves.

<sup>8</sup> Metsar 1949; 1950.

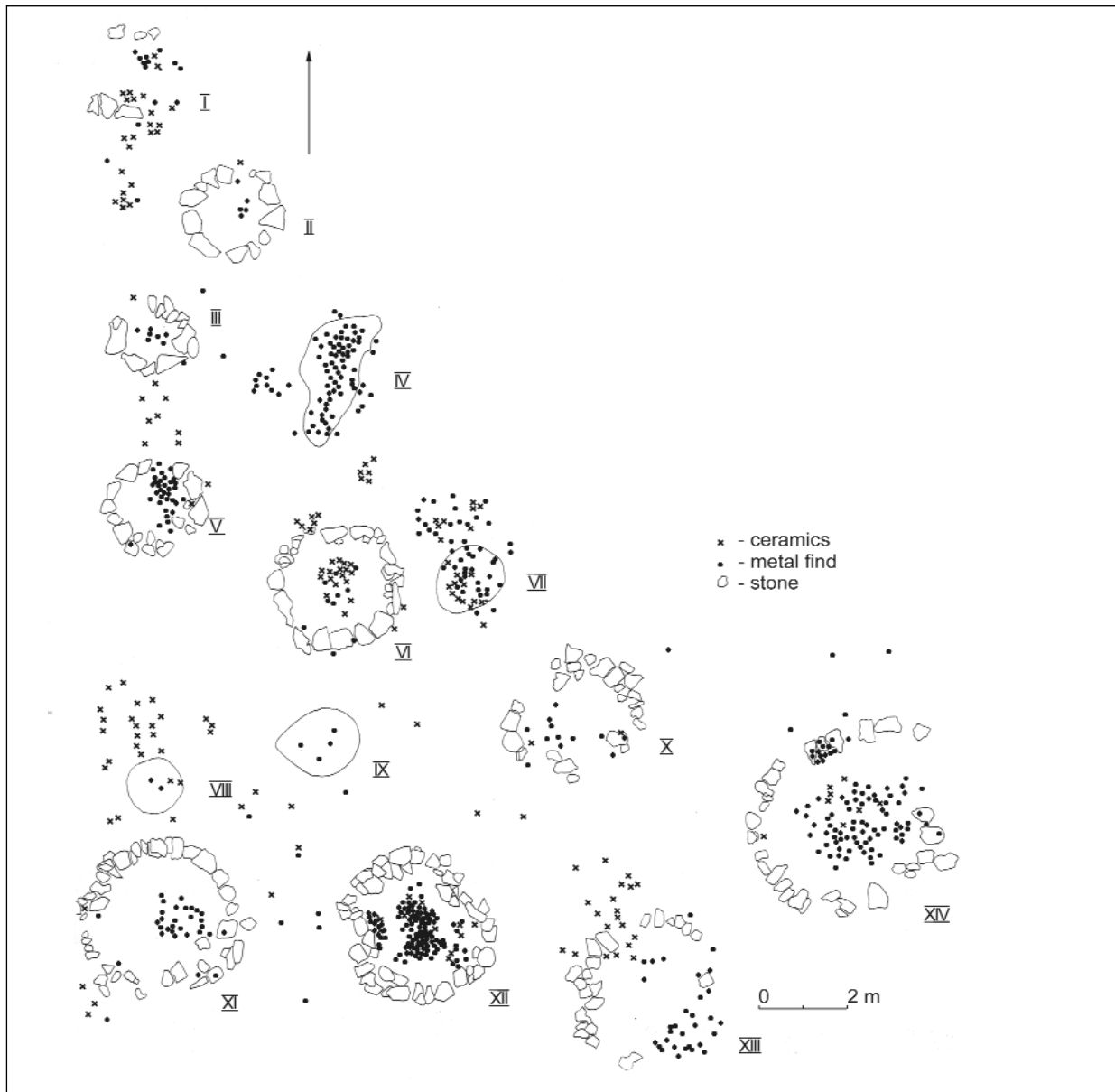


Figure 8. Kåku cemetery.

#### Kåku I (Pl 1)

Gender: undetermined.

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> century?

Partly destroyed stone circle grave in squares 143–145/o1–q1. The outer diameter of the stone kerb, built of limestone slabs, had been 2.75 m. A sooty patch with cremated bones and artefact fragments was found in the centre of the grave.

*Finds:* two penannular brooches, pieces of bronze plating, a bone comb, an iron rivet, potsherds of a fine ceramic carinated vessel with line decoration and of a rough ceramic pot.

#### Kåku II (Pl 2)

Gender: undetermined.

Date: 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave in squares 141–143/k1–m1, with an outer diameter of 2.5 m. The kerb was built of limestone slabs; in the northern part of the kerb one stone was missing. Four small clusters of cremated bones, together with sooty soil and artefact fragments, were found inside the stone circle.

*Finds:* a probable fragment of a finger-ring, pieces of bronze plating. An iron knife that was found right outside the kerb possibly belongs to the same complex.

#### Kåku III (Pl 3)

Gender: undetermined.

Date: 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave in squares 143–145/i1–j1, with an outer diameter of 2 m. The kerb had been built of large limestone slabs that were fixed with smaller granite stones. There was a gap in the NW-side of the kerb. One sooty patch with cremated bones was recorded on the east side of the grave, where it partly reached under the kerb stones. Another cluster of bones was situated under a kerb stone in the NE part of the circle. The third bone cluster in a small “box” formed of stones was uncovered 0.5 m outside the stone circle but probably belongs to the same burial.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, a bronze-decorated belt, pieces of bronze plating, potsherds of two rough ceramic pots.

#### Kåku IV (Pl 4)

Gender: female.

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> century?

Big sooty patch with measurements 3 x 1.3 m in squares 139–140/g1–j1. The sooty area with a few bigger pieces of charcoal and calcinated bone fragments was covered with a sparse stone layer and surrounded by a zone of somewhat bigger limestone and granite stones. The zone of stones, however, did not form a regular circle.

*Finds:* a ring brooch, a finger-ring, glass beads, a rod chain link, pieces of chain, bronze spirals, small iron rivets.

#### **Käku V** (Pl 5)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Well preserved stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 2.5 m in squares 143–145/d1–f1. The kerb consisted of bigger limestone and granite stones, and was surrounded by limestone slabs, perhaps slid outwards from the top of the kerb stones. There was a gap in the northern part of the kerb. A sooty patch was found inside the stone circle, covered with bigger limestone and granite stones. A cluster of cremated bones and fragments of bronze artefacts was found under a big limestone slab in the northern part of the grave. In addition to this, an unburned dog skeleton was found in the southern part of the grave. The dog had been laid with its back against the inner side of the kerb; its head had been stuck between two stones and covered with a limestone slab.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, bronze-decorated belt, pieces of bronze plating, an iron ring, an oblong bone artefact, potsherds of a rough ceramic vessel. 65 cm away from the dog's skull, under the kerb stones in the southern part of the circle a large spearhead was found.

#### **Käku VI** (Pl 6)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century?

Stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 3 m, in squares 138–141/b1–d1. The kerb consisted of mainly limestone slabs, and had a gap in its NW part. The circle was filled with a sparse layer of stones, which was sparser in the central part of the grave and thicker near the kerb. In the centre of the grave there was a sooty patch with cremated bones and fragments of artefacts. The bigger and better preserved finds were uncovered near the kerb.

*Finds:* a belt with bronze decoration and a knife sheath fixed to it, a knife, a spiral finger-ring, a few small rings, potsherds of a rough ceramic vessel.

#### **Käku VII** (Pl 7)

*Gender:* female?

*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with a few bigger pieces of charcoal in squares 136–137/c1–e1, with measurements 3 x 2 m. The patch was surrounded by several bigger stones that did not, however, form a circle. The sooty layer was covered with soil and rubble.

*Finds:* a finger-ring, two bronze beads, an oblong bronze artefact, pieces of bronze plating, bronze spirals and small rings, an iron nail, potsherds of a big rough ceramic pot.

#### **Käku VIII** (Pl 8)

*Gender:* undetermined.

*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch in squares 143–144/š–x, with diameter of 1 m. Metsar did not record it as a separate burial. As it was not described by him, the patch was obviously not connected with any stone construction. The sooty patch with cremated bones is, however, marked on excavation maps.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, an iron cramp, potsherds of a big rough ceramic vessel.

#### **Käku IX** (Pl 9)

*Gender:* undetermined.

*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with diameter of 1.5 m in the squares 139–140/x–y. Metsar has not distinguished it as a separate burial, but there is a cluster of cremated bones marked on excavation maps. There is no record of a possible stone structure.

*Finds:* a knife, pieces of bronze plating, probably from a knife sheath, few bronze spirals and small rings.

#### **Käku X** (Pl 10)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 3.5 m in squares 132–135/a1–x. Only the NE part of the kerb was regular; the rest of it was irregular or destroyed. The kerb was built of limestone slabs that were preserved in two layers. The circle was filled with a sparse layer of small limestone rocks and rubble. A hollow about 15 cm deep, filled with a sooty soil, was uncovered in the SW part of the grave.

*Finds:* iron rivets and plating of a 0.5-cm thick artefact, probably a shield, a penannular brooch, a bracelet, a knife. Outside the kerb, 0.5 m to the NE-direction, a spearhead was found.

#### **Käku XI** (Pl 11)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 3.5–4 m in squares 142–145/ö–v. The kerb was built of big limestone and granite stones, on which some limestone slabs had survived. There was a gap in the SW part of the circle. The grave was filled with a sparse layer of rubble, beneath which a sooty patch with several clusters of cremated bones and burned artefacts was uncovered. Another cluster of cremated bones was found under a kerb stone in the northern part of the grave.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, bronze-decorated belt, a knife sheath, potsherds of a decorated fine ceramic vessel and a rough ceramic pot. Bits and a scythe were found under kerb stones.

#### **Käku XII** (Pls 12–13)

*Gender:* female.

*Date:* second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave, shaped as a rectangle with rounded corners, in squares 135–139/u–v. The measurements were 3 x 3.75 m. The kerb consisted of limestone slabs, preserved in up to three layers on top of each other. Some of the slabs had slid outwards. The grave was filled with a layer of small limestone and rubble. The soil inside the kerb was sooty, with several clusters of cremated bones and burned artefacts.

*Finds:* two pins, one of them triangular-headed, fragments of a chain arrangement with chain-holders, two penannular brooches, a head adornment pin with a piece of chain, two bracelets, three finger-rings, bronze-decorated belt, an iron key, bronze spirals, pieces of bronze plating, iron rivets, potsherds of a decorated fine ceramic vessel. The key, a fragment of one of the bracelets, fragments of chain, few spirals and small rings were found, together with few textile remains, in one cluster under a limestone slab.

#### **Käku XIII** (Pl 14)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 3–3.5 m in squares 130–134/t–ä. The kerb, consisting of limestone and granite stones, was obviously partly destroyed. The grave was filled with a sparse layer of rubble and a sooty soil. As no bones were recorded, Metsar defined the complex as a cenotaph.<sup>9</sup> It seems possible, however, that the few calcinated bones were not mentioned, or they had got lost during the digging of a later trench.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, a belt buckle, a belt chain, fragments of the bronze plating of a knife sheath, a knife, a weight, a finger-ring, a small fragment of chain, a few bronze spirals and small rings, iron nails, potsherds of a decorated fine ceramic bowl. A spearhead, pointed towards the centre of the grave, was found next to the kerb. The potsherds were found both outside and inside the stone circle, the nails only inside the kerb.

#### **Käku XIV** (Pls 15–16)

*Gender:* female (+ male?).

*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 4.5 m in squares 125–129/ü–y. The kerb was preserved better in its western part; the rest of it was quite irregular. No stones were recorded inside the circle, but the infill soil was very sooty and contained lot of cremated bones and artefacts. One of the clusters of bones had been placed in a shallow depression. Metsar recorded the grave as a double burial of a man and a woman.<sup>10</sup> Still, only the spearheads indicate a man while the majority of the jewellery is female.

*Finds:* a neck-ring, a chain arrangement with a chain-holder, five beads, bronze-decorated belt, bronze-decorated knife sheath, a knife, a fragment of another knife, three finger-rings, bronze spirals, a weight, two spearheads.

#### **Käku XV** (Pl 17)

(Excavated by Tallgren in 1926; according to his numeration, grave II.)

*Gender:* undetermined, probably a child.

*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 3.5 m. The kerb consisted of granite stones. The grave was filled with limestone rubble, beneath which a sooty layer with cremated bones and artefacts was recorded.

*Finds:* three small finger-rings, bronze-decorated belt, a knife.

<sup>9</sup> Metsar 1950, p 7.

<sup>10</sup> Metsar 1949, p 4.

### 4.1.3. Piila Cemetery

This large but partly destroyed cemetery between the villages of Piila and Õha is situated in the northern end of the Kaarma parish in central Saaremaa (Fig 7). It has been known in the local tradition as a cemetery for a long time. The first excavations there were led by the amateur archaeologist Friedrich Kruse in 1840. Jean Baptiste Holzmayer unearthed three stone circle graves with diameters of about 2.5 m in 1868 and 1872. No plans or exact reports have survived from these digs but some of his finds have been preserved.<sup>11</sup> In 1922, during a great campaign to record archaeological sites, the Piila cemetery was described as mostly destroyed by treasure-hunters. Its presumed area at that time was assessed to be about 79,000 sq m.<sup>12</sup>

In 1989 two Viking Age graves at Piila were partly unearthed during archaeological excavations led by Vello Lõugas. After an eight years' break, the author of this book continued the excavations. From 1997 up to 1998 altogether seven graves were unearthed at the cemetery, all belonging to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries (Fig 9). The results of the digs, as well as the results of the osteological analyses of the 1997 digs, were published in two articles.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 9.** Piila cemetery. The photograph is taken from the south. Photograph by the author.

The Piila cemetery occupies a plot of arable land in the northern end of *Carmele*, separated from the core area of the district by a wide zone of wetlands. Just 1 km away from it an (early) medieval burial ground, Keskvere "Kabeli aed" ("Chapel yard") has been recorded. The yard is an enclosure with measurements 44 x 26 m, surrounded by a massive stone wall. Three skeletons with some jewellery have been uncovered inside the enclosure, and the site was described by the local people as a good place to pray until comparatively recently.<sup>14</sup>

Piila and Keskvere stand about 7 km from the Kaarma hillfort, the prehistoric centre of the *Carmele* district. It is quite probable that in the prehistoric era and also in the Middle Ages, this was a relatively independent peripheral local district whose elite families buried their deceased in the graves of the Piila and Keskvere cemeteries.

\*

Graves I–III of Piila (Fig 10) were stone circle graves with kerbs of granite stones and 50–65 cm high walls of limestone slabs on top of them. The area inside the circular wall had been partly filled with smaller rubble. Grave IV had no kerb but an area with the diameter of ca 2 m was simply covered with large granite stones.

Graves V–VII were stone cairns with kerbs of big granite stones, laid directly onto the surface. In upper layers, the central part of these graves was marked with granite stones about the size of a man's head, typical infill stones for Estonian Iron Age graves. The graves were surrounded by a 0.5–1.0-metre-wide thin layer of small limestone rubble, perhaps former slabs that had been broken into small pieces.

The 152 sq m excavated at Piila during a three year period amounts to only 0.2 per cent of the whole cemetery area; thus the material presented here hardly enables the author to make any generalising conclusions concerning the social structure and beliefs of the community that had buried their dead in the Piila cemetery. It is unknown for how long the burial ground could have been in use. Archaeological inventories have given reason to suspect that some of the graves are stone cists that originate from the Bronze Age or Pre-Roman Iron Age. According to some disputable data, a Roman coin has been found in the burial ground.<sup>15</sup> The cemetery could therefore have been in use for a very long period of time.

<sup>11</sup> AI 2635: 1412–1421.

<sup>12</sup> SMM 1924, pp 19–20.

<sup>13</sup> Mägi et al 1997; Mägi & Rudi 1999.

<sup>14</sup> SMM 1924, p 17.

<sup>15</sup> SMM 1924, p 16.

**Piila I (PI 18)***Gender:* undetermined.*Date:* first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 4 m. The wall foundation consisted of a double kerb of granite stones that had a wall of limestone slabs on top of it, so that the minimum height of the grave wall had been 50 cm. The grave-infill consisted of smaller stones.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, two finger-rings, pieces of chain, a strap end, pieces of bronze plating (probably from a belt), a knife, potsherds of a decorated fine ceramic bowl and a rough ceramic pot.

**Piila II (PI 19)***Gender:* male.*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 4.5 m. The construction of the grave was similar to grave I. The minimum height of the wall was 65 cm. A great number of canine bones, perhaps burnt separately, were unearthed from this grave.

*Finds:* a bracelet, bronze-decorated belt, two finger-rings, a weight, bronze and iron chains, pieces of bronze plating, potsherds of a fine ceramic pot and two rough ceramic vessels. Part of a scythe was found between the slabs of the circular wall.

**Piila III (PI 20)***Gender:* male.*Date:* second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The grave had a kerb of granite stones with an outer diameter of 2.2 m, and an additional kerb of limestone slabs, laid directly to the ground, with an outer diameter of 3 m. The other characteristics resembled those of graves I and II.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, a knife and the bronze plating of a sheath, bronze spirals, a whetstone, potsherds of a fine ceramic vessel.

**Piila IV (PI 21)***Gender:* female?*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup> century?

An area with a diameter of 2.5 m was covered with large granite stones. Under the stones was a ca 10-cm-thick sooty layer that contained finds, cremated bones and pieces of charcoal. Smaller stones, mainly pieces of limestone, surrounded the structure.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch with a spiral finger-ring, a bracelet (?), chains and spirals, an iron key, potsherds of three or four vessels, one of them a decorated fine ceramic pot.

**Piila V (PI 22)***Gender:* male?*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The kerb of the grave, with an outer diameter of 4–4.2 m, consisted of big granite stones. A 75-cm-wide gap in the western side of the kerb could be interpreted as an entrance. Most of the burned bones and artefacts were found in one spot with a diameter of ca 0.5 m, almost in the centre of the grave. Only few charcoal pieces were registered but both bones and artefacts were badly burnt. The great majority of the cremated bones found in grave V belonged to a dog.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, pieces of bronze plating, a strap distributor, pieces of an iron artefact, bronze spirals. Right outside the kerb, potsherds of a fine ceramic vessel with specific decoration were found. Two iron knives were stuck above the kerbstones.

**Piila VI (PI 23)***Gender:* male.*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century?

The grave had a kerb with an outer diameter of 3 m that was built of granite stones. About one third of the original SW section of the grave was destroyed, probably by tillage. A number of stones of the grave's inner structure were heaped on the top of the cairn. Outside the kerb was detected a zone of limestone with a width of ca 1 m. Most of the finds were clustered in the central section of the burial, a charcoal-rich area with a diameter of ca 1 m.

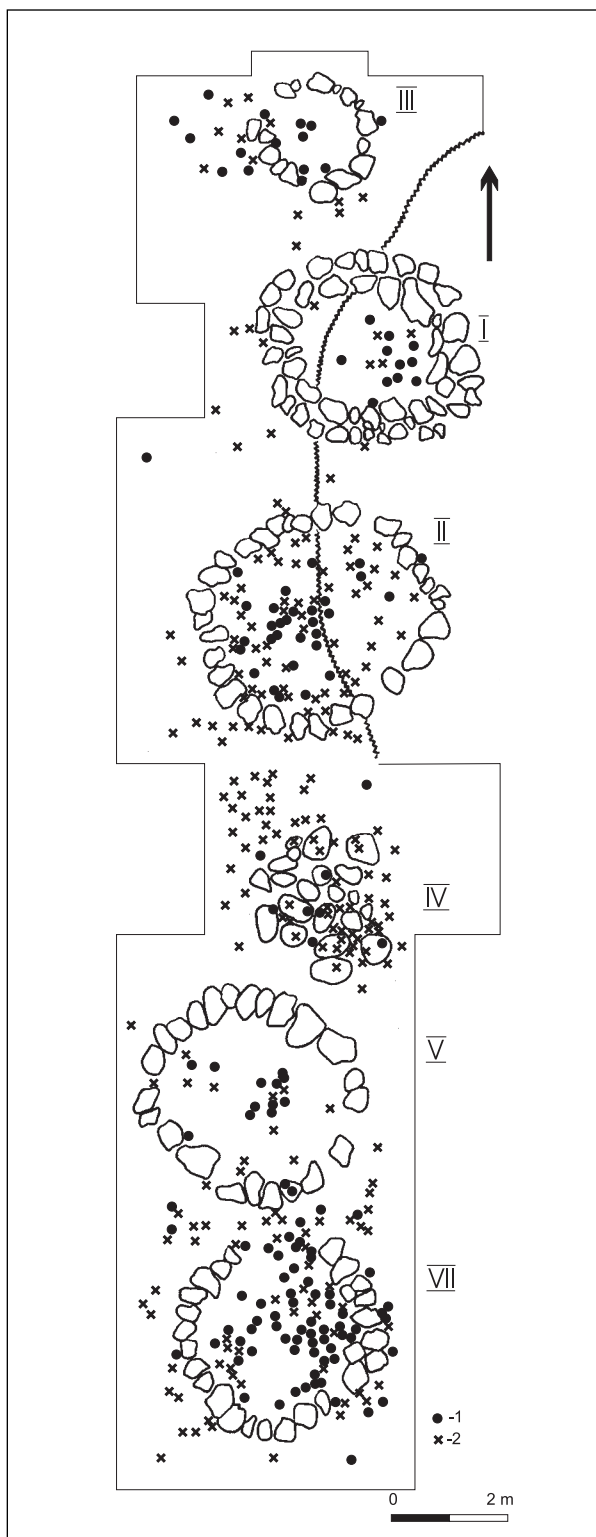
*Finds:* a cross-pendant, a penannular brooch, a finger-ring, a bronze bell, pieces of bronze plating, a knife, the blade point of a spearhead, an iron rivet and an iron nail, potsherds of two rough ceramic pots and a decorated fine ceramic bowl.

**Piila VII (PI 24)***Gender:* female.*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century.

The grave resembled grave V, consisting of a kerb with an outer diameter of 3.8 m, and a stone heap. The northern part of the kerb was absent, probably demol-

ished during the erection of grave V. The stone heap of the grave had probably been very low, and the large kerbstones started to be uncovered just under the turf. A zone of limestone rubble, probably a pavement, surrounded the structure. In the middle of the grave was an oval, intensively black and sooty spot that contained cremated bones, artefacts and great amount of small pieces of charcoal. It is possible that the sooty spot was the original site of the pyre.

*Finds:* pieces of chain arrangement with a chain holder, a bronze bracelet, a neck-ring, a bone spinning whorl, a knife with bone handle, spirals for textile decoration, an iron hook, an iron rivet, potsherds of rough ceramics. Just outside the grave, iron scissors were found under the limestone pavement.



**Figure 10.** Graves I-V and VII at Piila cemetery. 1- metal finds; 2- ceramics

#### 4.1.4. Kurevere Cemetery

The Kurevere cemetery is situated in the parish of Kihelkonna in West Saaremaa, the south-western part of the Tagamõisa peninsula. At the end of the Iron Age the cemetery stood only about 600–700 m from the seashore (Fig 11).

The Kurevere cemetery had been in use from at least the Pre-Roman Iron Age – a stone-cist grave with early *tarands* of that period has been excavated there.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the burial ground was marking a long-time settlement in the area. It lay between Tagamõisa and Kihelkonna settlement units, which, according to the distribution of archaeological evidence, might have been wealthier than Kurevere. The surrounding fields were not very fertile, and so it can be assumed that there must have been an ancient harbour site in the vicinity of the Kurevere cemetery. Kihelkonna harbour, known from medieval written sources, lay about 5 km away from Kurevere.

Kihelkonna was the district largest in area on Late Iron Age Saaremaa, evidently covering both the later Kihelkonna and Mustjala ecclesiastical parishes. Nevertheless, most of this large area was uninhabited. In addition to Tagamõisa, Kurevere and Kihelkonna, Late Iron Age districts at local level can also be identified around Odalatsi, Loona and Lümända. In the early Middle Ages, a church was erected in Kihelkonna, near the harbour site. Several stone graves of unfortunately unknown date have also been recorded near Pidula and Riksu in the northern and southern ends of the ancient district, which suggest some kind of settlement units in these areas too. As the coastal line of Kihelkonna district has always been very rich in creeks and inlets and full of suitable harbour sites, it can be suggested that marine activities, including trade and piracy, played an important role in the economy of the local people. The importance of the Kihelkonna harbour is clearly demonstrated in 13<sup>th</sup> century treaties, according to which the Order and the Bishop both had equal rights to use it.

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The Kurevere burial ground consists of stone cairns that stand 10 to 20 m away from each other (Fig 12). Nowadays, only about 20 of them still survive. The place is known in the local folk tradition as a prehistoric cemetery and several stray finds of the Middle and Late Iron Age have been found there.<sup>17</sup>

The cemetery was excavated in 1874 by Holzmayer, who had opened many of the cairns and found ashes, charcoal, burned bones and potsherds there. The only detailed descriptions from these excavations deal with two stone cairns that had included a kerb and some metal artefacts.<sup>18</sup> Only a fraction of the finds has been preserved.<sup>19</sup>

Carl Georg von Sievers, another amateur archaeologist, opened three stone cairns in 1877, finding also charcoal, ash, burned bones and fragments of bronze artefacts. There exists no further report of these digs.<sup>20</sup> Some of the finds have survived, though, and can be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup>

In 1965 Kustin excavated the Kurevere cemetery and opened three cairns.<sup>22</sup> One of them contained a stone circle that was covered with a heap of infill stones the size of a man's head; the rest of the cairns lacked the kerb. The majority of the excavation results were published in Kustin's article in 1966, including a detailed description only of burial No 1.<sup>23</sup>

As is indicated by earlier stray finds from the Kurevere cemetery, burials had been made in the cairns from the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The latest burials can be dated to the 12<sup>th</sup>, perhaps to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In any case, only a small part of the Kurevere cemetery has been excavated and thus drawing any major conclusions from the excavated material would be precipitate. It is nevertheless clear that the excavated burials were richer than the average.

##### Kurevere I (Pls 25–26)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone cairn grave with measurements 8.5 x 8 m. The kerb with an outer diameter of 3.6 m was built of limestone and granite stones. The kerb was not complete – the SW part of it was absent. It is possible that a part of the grave was demolished. Sooty soil with cremated bones and burnt artefacts was recorded both inside and outside the kerb.

*Finds:* three penannular brooches, a padlock, a key, bronze plates of a knife sheath, a belt chain, a knife, iron bridle mounts, buckles and bells, a weight(?), a big bronze spiral, a bone comb, an iron nail, potsherds of a fine ceramic bowl and a rough ceramic pot. Under the biggest kerb stone on the west side of the circle a broken sword was found.

##### Kurevere II (Pls 27–28)

*Gender:* female.

*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone cairn grave with measurements 9 x 5.6 m, partly destroyed. No kerb was found but the cairn consisted mainly of limestone. In the middle of the north part of the cairn several semi-vertical big limestone slabs were recorded, which had perhaps originally formed a chest-like structure. There were two patches of sooty soil with bones and fragments of artefacts: near the aforementioned slabs and in the SW part of the cairn.

*Finds:* a chain arrangement fixed with chain-holders and triangular-headed pins of Saaremaa type, a penannular brooch, a knife sheath with a special broadening and with a rod chain netting for fixing it to the belt, a bronze-decorated belt, a whetstone, bronze spirals and small rings, iron nails and cramps, potsherds of a large ornamented pot.

<sup>16</sup> Lõugas 1977.

<sup>17</sup> AI 2805: 1–11; 3822: 452.

<sup>18</sup> Holzmayer 1880, pp 16–20.

<sup>19</sup> AI K 75.

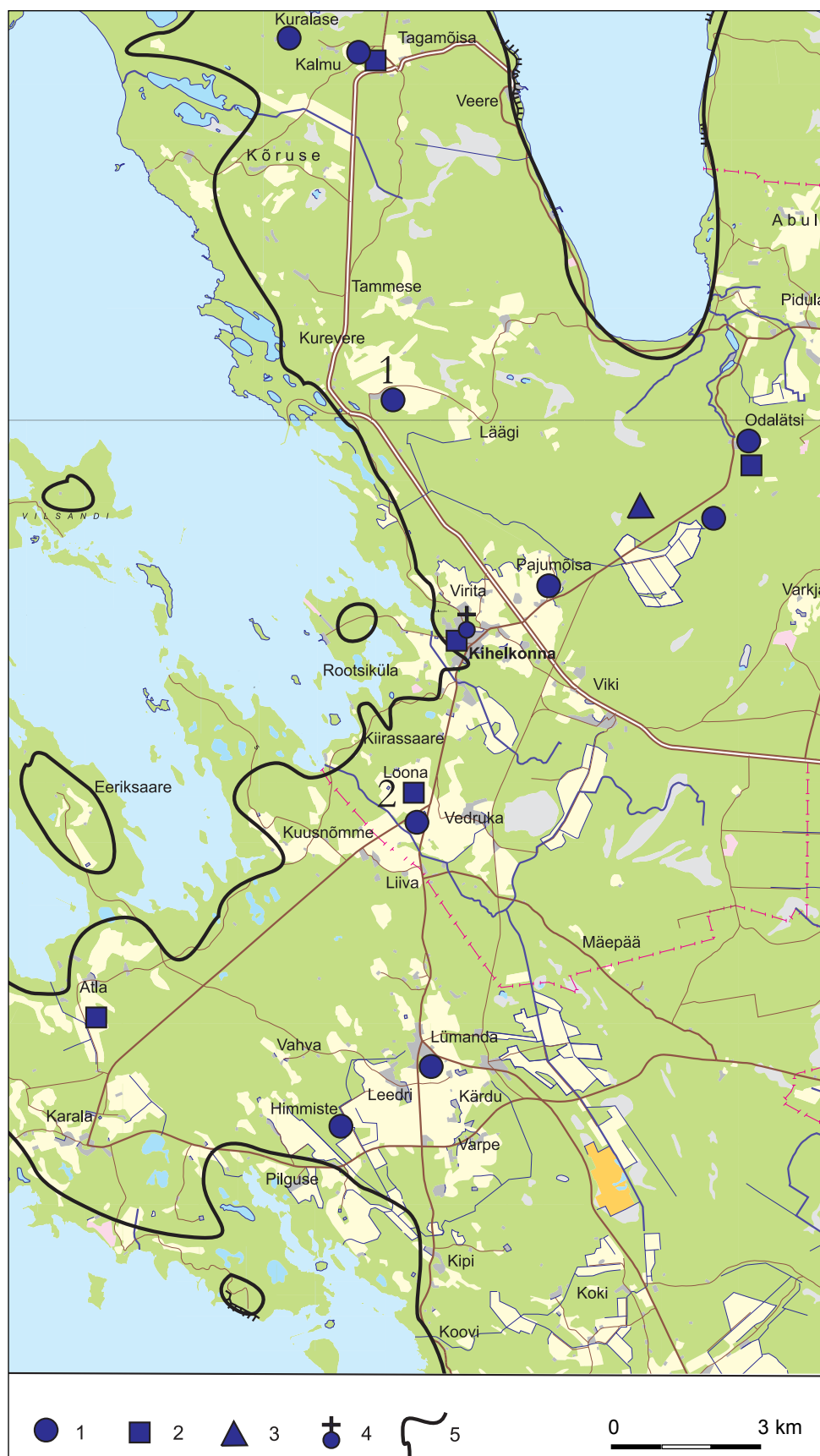
<sup>20</sup> Sievers 1898.

<sup>21</sup> AI 2000: 1–5.

<sup>22</sup> Kustin 1965.

<sup>23</sup> Kustin 1966b.





**Figure 11.** The central part of Kihelkonna (*Kilgunde*) district. 1 - stone cemetery; 2 - (probable) inhumation cemetery; 3 - hillfort; 4 - parish church; 5 - probable coast-line about 1000 years ago. Cemeteries: 1 - Kurevere; 2 - Loona.

**Kurevere III (Pl 29)**

Sex : female?

Date: second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone cairn grave with measurements 5.6x4.4 m, consisting of granite stones, partly destroyed. The lower level of the stones was sooty. No kerb was recorded. The cremated bones belong to a 25–40-year-old person, probably a woman.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, an iron *stilus*, two finger-rings, a padlock, a key, a fire-steel, an iron buckle of a bridle, bronze plating, potsherds of a large rough ceramic pot. At the edge of the cairn a spearhead with silver-plated socket was found. The latter had not been in the fire.

**Kurevere IV**

(Excavated by Holzmayer in 1874.)

Gender: female?

Date: end of the 12<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century; the openwork plaque originates from the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone cairn grave with a kerb, outer diameter 2.5 m. Most of the cremated bones and burnt artefacts were found in the southern part of the circle.

*Finds:* a cross-headed pin with united terminals, round openwork plaque, a ring brooch, a bronze-decorated belt, potsherds of two vessels. Near the kerb a spearhead was found.

**Kurevere V**

(Excavated by Holzmayer in 1874.)

Gender: female.

Date: end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Stone cairn grave with a kerb, diameter 2.8 m. Most of the cremated bones and burnt artefacts was found in the southern part of the circle.

*Finds:* a silver penannular brooch, a silver-plated cross-pendant, two bracelets, three finger-rings, a belt chain, a fragment of another chain, a knife, a weight.

**4.1.5. Randvere Cemetery**

The Randvere stone cemetery Kalmutemägi (approximately: "Grave Hill") is situated in the south of Saaremaa, in the centre of the Kõiguste peninsula, on the southern fields of the village of Randvere (Fig 13). Prior to the excavations, the site had been a higher, rocky area. In the southern end of the cemetery stood a single Roman Iron Age cairn; the rest of the graves originate from the Late Iron Age.

The site had already been known as a burial ground among the locals before archaeological investigations started there. The north-western part of the cemetery had been damaged by tillage, in the course of which many finds surfaced. Of these, a two-edged sword, three spearheads, an axe, a pin, some chains and pendants should be mentioned.<sup>24</sup> Most of the finds have been lost.

The Randvere as well as the Viltina stone cemeteries in the Kõiguste peninsula obviously belonged in the Late Iron Age Põide district (also called *Horele* in 1234). However, the location 12 km away from the centre of the district suggests that the area around Randvere and Viltina formed a more or less autonomous district at local level during the end of prehistory, perhaps even later. The ancient Põide district consisted of a narrow north-south oriented zone of arable land between the Late Iron Age seashore in the east and lakes and wetlands in the west. The core area of the district remained in the surroundings of the Põide stronghold and later church. Fertile soils and a coastline rich in

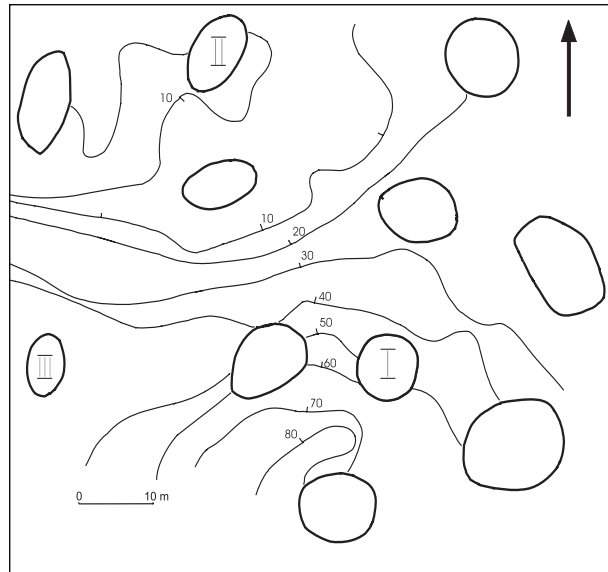


Figure 12. Part of the Kurevere cemetery.

creeks and inlets, with lots of islets near the coast, created good preconditions for the economic wealth of the district, which is reflected in abundant Late Iron Age archaeological sites. It has been suggested that late prehistoric Põide could have formed a common administrative unit with the island of Muhu and starting from the 11<sup>th</sup> century the real power centre of the district could, therefore, have been situated in Muhu stronghold.<sup>25</sup>

Several architectural features of the Põide church as well as some gravestones in it, dated possibly to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, have been used as arguments for presuming that the church had been built even before the conquest of Saaremaa.<sup>26</sup> After 1261 the Order founded its stone castle right next to the church building. The first castle, however, had already been destroyed by 1343, and the new one was erected in Maasi in the northern end of the district, near a harbour place deep enough for big sea vessels.

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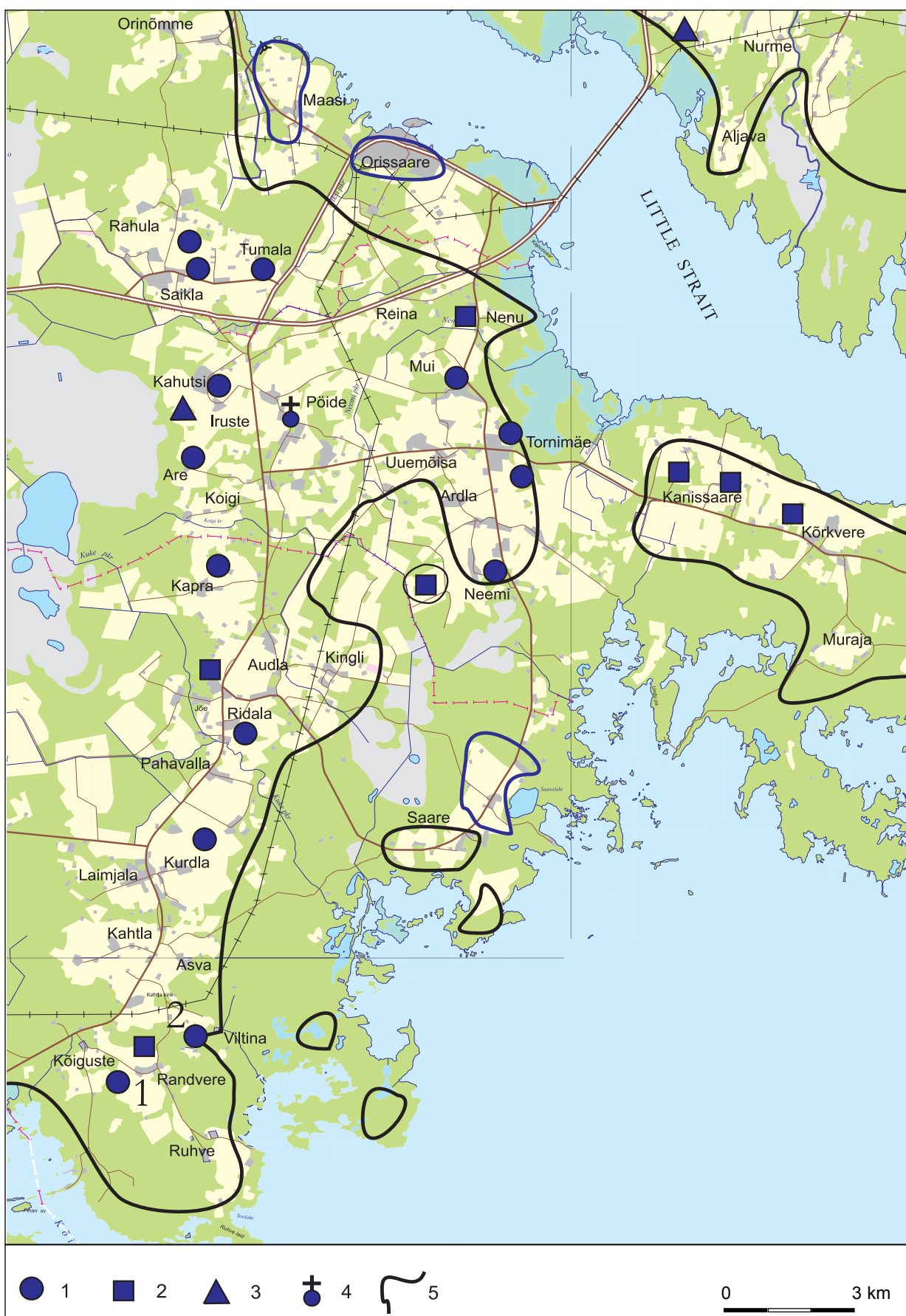
Although part of the Randvere cemetery had been damaged, most of it had been preserved intact. The whole of the preserved area – 606 sq m – was excavated in 1940 in connection with the building of a Soviet army base on the Kõiguste peninsula. Richard Indreko led the digs on the Late Iron Age part of the cemetery. It becomes apparent from Indreko's reports that the upper layer of the graveyard area consisted of limestone rubble and the lower layer of larger infill stones. No stone structures could be detected

<sup>24</sup> SMM 1924, p 102.

<sup>25</sup> Mägi 1998, pp 151–153.

<sup>26</sup> Kadakas & Mäil 1994; about gravestones see Pesti & Rikas 1991, pp 72–76; Sipelgas 2000.





**Figure 13.** Põide (*Horele*) district. 1 - stone cemetery; 2 - (probable) inhumation cemetery; 3 - hillfort; 4 - parish church; 5 - probable coast-line about 1000 years ago. Cemeteries: 1 - Randvere, 2 - Viltina.

in the majority of the cemetery; only the central and eastern part displayed some characteristics of probable cairns including quite irregular stone circles. The majority of finds lay in clusters, where cremated bones and pieces of charcoal also appeared, i.e. the burials were in most cases clearly distinguishable (Fig 14). All of the burials were cremations.<sup>27</sup> The excavations were organised in a hurry and although there exists a distribution map of the finds and a short report, the majority of the stones and bones have not been marked on the map. It may be assumed that some of the finds got lost in the hurry.

The finds in the Randvere cemetery have been analysed by Metsar in his graduation thesis and then by Kustin, who published the results in a separate article.<sup>28</sup> The article tries to assess different burials, but it is based on the prejudices that have been more closely described in chapter 1. It should be noted, anyhow, that most of the find groups identified by Kustin match the ones given in the present study. The difference arises rather from the fact that in spite of the frequent occurrence of the fragments of one and the same artefact in neighbouring find groups, all of these groups tend to be treated as separate burials; in addition, the finding of certain types of artefacts, the use of which is attributed to one sex, often leads too easily to the assumption that there were two different burials in one find group.

The Randvere cemetery had been in use from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century but most of the burials can be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It should be noted here that, judging from the amount of bones and artefacts, Kustin decided that the cemetery included about 60 burials,<sup>29</sup> thus getting a total that exceeds the calculations of the present study six times!

In the process of analysing the finds, it becomes clear that the cemetery included an unusually large number of children's burials, many of them richly furnished. Of the 11 burials, six can be more or less definitely identified as children's; judging from the deposits, three of these are girls' and three boys'. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, two women and two men have been buried in the cemetery; the second male burial appearing to be a cenotaph, as no bones were found among the artefacts. The richest male burial was situated in the very centre of the cemetery; the most copiously furnished female burial from the same period lies on the south-eastern side. Halfway between those two burials was the burial X that had also belonged to a male, who, to judge from the small spiral arm rings, was probably a little boy. The other 11<sup>th</sup> century female burial was poorer than average; the same could be said about the second male burial (the supposed cenotaph). It is quite possible that the cenotaph was not an independent find complex, but belonged to the boy's grave X as an additional deposit. The rest of the children's burials, the more accurately datable ones among them originating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century,

lay on the western side of the cemetery. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century only one grave had been added to the eastern side of the burial ground – a male burial that had seemingly been accompanied by a female one (Randvere IX).

According to the find list of the Randvere excavations, about 90% of finds (except ceramics) belonged to burial complexes assessed here. The percentage should actually be even higher because many find numbers include several items, especially in the area of find complexes where the concentration of finds was the highest. Essentially, only a few metal artefacts were uncovered outside the complexes.

The Randvere cemetery had survived more or less in its entirety; as far as is known, it was only slightly damaged in its northern and north-western ends. Kustin, who suspected a much larger number of burials at Randvere and believed it to have been in use for 200 years, had already concluded that a community smaller than a whole village must have used the cemetery.<sup>30</sup> The data presented here suggests that the grave was obviously used by a single farm that had probably been situated on the site of the later Randvere village, in the middle of arable land. The burial ground was in use mainly during the 11<sup>th</sup> century; burials had probably already ceased there by the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. While most of the graves on Saaremaa show an increase in grave goods in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the family at Randvere seems to have enjoyed its most prosperous times in the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Only 2.5 km ENE from the Randvere cemetery lies the excavated Viltina Rutiränk cemetery, which is about six times larger. The ample findings of that site will for several reasons not be discussed in the present study (see topic 4.1.8), but as a general estimate, these burials could be dated mostly to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Burying at Randvere practically stopped in the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the richest burials at Rutiränk originate from that very era. As the Rutiränk burial place was clearly connected with the harbour, would it not be logical to assume that the inhabitants of the Randvere household also started at some point during the 12<sup>th</sup> century to bury their dead at Rutiränk? Another change of burial grounds appears to have taken place in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when Christian burials started to occur – the new site was at the Annumäe village graveyard that was situated on the north-eastern side of the fields of Randvere, in between the two sites described above.

<sup>27</sup> Indreko 1940.

<sup>28</sup> Kustin 1962b.

<sup>29</sup> Kustin 1962b, p 98.

<sup>30</sup> Kustin 1962b, p 98.

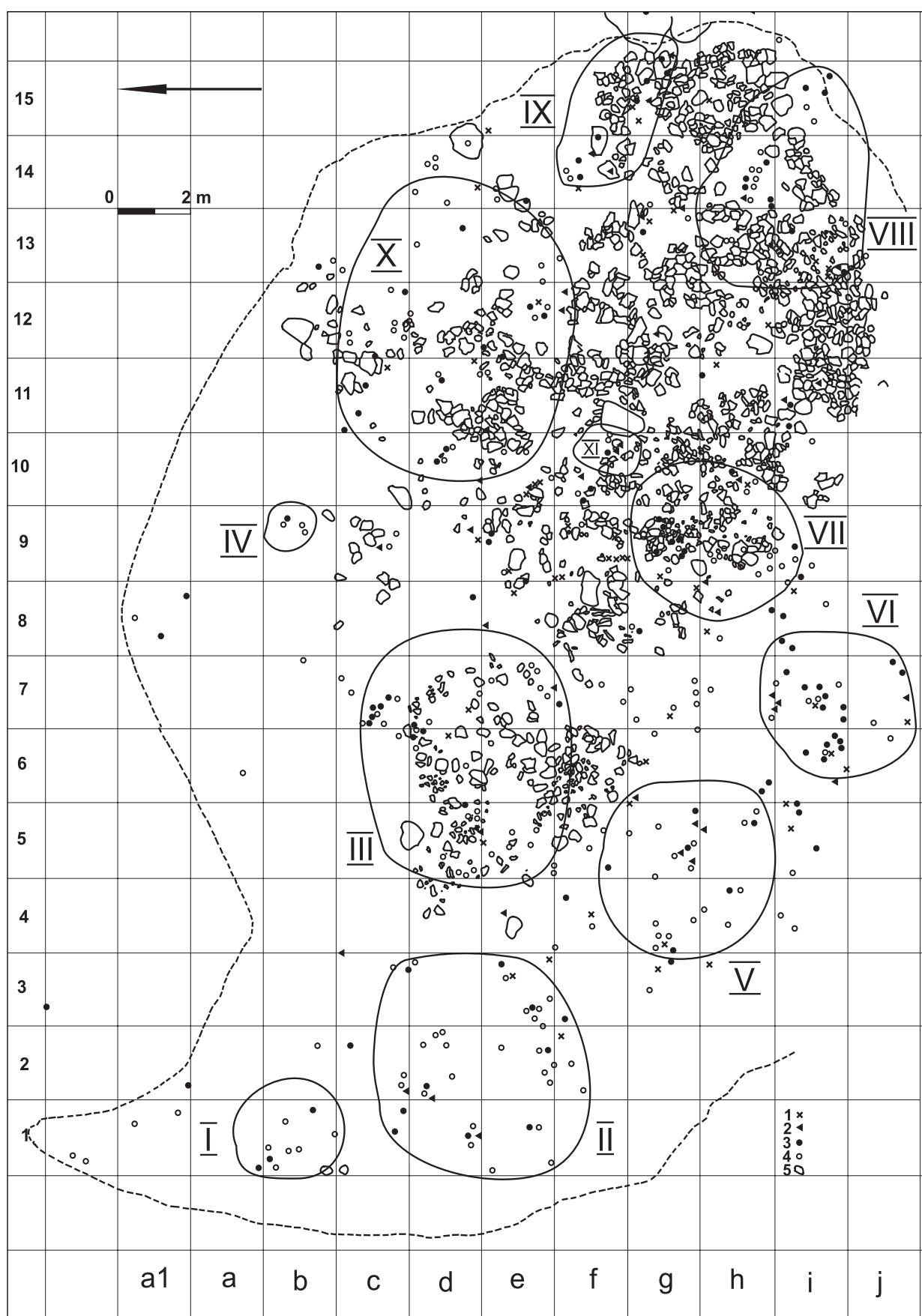


Figure 14. Randvere cemetery. 1 - ceramics; 2 - weapons, tools; 3 - jewellery; 4 - other metal finds; 5 - stones.

**Randvere I***Gender:* female or child.*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with artefacts and cremated bones in squares 1–2/a–c, with a diameter of 2.5–3 m. The patch was surrounded by a findless zone. No stone structures were recorded.

*Finds:* a spiral bracelet, a rod chain, a small spiral finger-ring or a big spiral, pieces of bronze plating, iron rivets and nails, a few potsherds of rough ceramic.

**Randvere II** (Pls 30–31)*Gender:* male (boy?).*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Three clusters of cremated bones, small pieces of charcoal and burnt artefacts were spread in an area of 6 x 5 m in squares 1–3/c–f. The find composition and the findless zone around these three clusters suggest that they represent one burial. No stone structures were recorded. A few artefacts belonging to a woman or a child at the edge of the grave may possibly indicate a donation or another burial.

*Finds:* a spearhead, a scabbard end, bronze-decorated belt, three finger-rings, a penannular brooch, the fragment of a silver bracelet or neck-ring, a rod chain, bronze spirals, iron rivets and nails. At the margins of the burial area the blade of a spearhead, a chain-holder and fragments of a spiral bracelet were found.

**Randvere III** (Pls 32–34)*Gender:* male.*Date:* second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Two clusters of artefacts, cremated bones and pieces of charcoal were found in an area with a diameter of 6 m in squares 5–8/c–f. Probable stone cairn grave. The find composition and the findless zone around the two clusters suggest that they represent one burial. It is possible that the complex IV actually belongs here too.

*Finds:* a spearhead, a cross-pendant, two knives, a knife sheath with its fixing netting, bronze-decorated belt, a belt chain, iron and bronze parts of bridle, a balance with six weights, a padlock, a drawing knife (?), two silver coins, bronze spirals, glass beads, big iron rivets, potsherds of one ornamented fine ceramic vessel and two rough ceramic pots. Among these finds, obviously belonging to a man, single pieces of female chain arrangement were found. At the borderline of the burial lay another spearhead, a javelin-head and a knife.

**Randvere IV** (Pl 35)*Gender:* female?*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century?

The finds were unearthed in an area with a diameter of 1.5 m in square 9/b. No bones or sooty patch was recorded. It is possible, therefore, that the complex IV is not a burial but a complex of finds originally belonging to some other burial, most probably to the burial III.

*Finds:* a finger-ring, a knife, bronze-decorated belt, an iron rivet. An iron key was unearthed at a distance and probably does not belong to the complex.

**Randvere V** (Pls 36–37)*Gender:* female (girl).*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Burnt artefacts, cremated bones and pieces of charcoal were found in an area with measurements 4.5 x 2.5 m in squares 3–6/f–h, at the margins of the cemetery. It is possible that some other finds nearby belong to the same complex. No stone structures were recorded.

*Finds:* two bracelets, six small finger-rings, a penannular brooch, a small key, bronze-decorated belt, three knives, a glass bead, bits (?), bronze spirals, iron rivets and nails, few potsherds of different vessels. A small axe and another knife were found at the borderline of the burial.

**Randvere VI** (Pls 38–39)*Gender:* male (boy?).*Date:* second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Burnt artefacts with cremated bones and pieces of charcoal were spread in an area with measurements 4.5 x 3.5 m in squares 6–8/h–j, at the margins of the cemetery. It is possible that some other finds nearby belonged to the burial.

*Finds:* bronze-decorated belt, a javelin head, a small spiral bracelet, six small spiral finger-rings, a penannular brooch, a glass bead, an iron nail, a few bronze spirals, potsherds of rough ceramic pot. Two knives, the bronze guard of a sword, bits and the half of a scythe were found at the edge of the burial.

**Randvere VII** (Pls 40–41)*Gender:* female (5–12-years-old girl).*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century.

Burnt artefacts with cremated bones and pieces of charcoal were found in three clusters in an area with measurements 4 x 3.5 m in squares 8–10/g–i. The clusters were surrounded by a findless zone. No stone structures were recorded.

*Finds:* at least two spiral bracelets, a penannular brooch, a knife sheath with broadening and rod chain netting, a belt chain, a belt with a bronze buckle, two glass beads, at least five finger-rings, pieces of chains, bronze spirals, bridle (?), two iron rivets, potsherds of one ornamented fine ceramic vessel and one rough ceramic pot. A knife, bits and a spearhead were found at the borderline of the burial. Most finds were untypically small.

**Randvere VIII** (Pls 42–43)*Gender:* female.*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Probable stone circle grave with an outer diameter of 3 m in squares 13–15/g–i, at the margins of the cemetery. Finds outside the circle, in an area with a diameter of 5 m, obviously belonged to the complex too. Calcinated bones and pieces of charcoal were found inside the circle.

*Finds:* a triangular-headed pin, pieces of a chain arrangement, a penannular brooch, bronze-decorated belt, a spiral bracelet, two finger-rings, a knife, a glass bead, a weight, bronze spirals, potsherds of two decorated fine ceramic and two rough ceramic vessels. Two knives, the end part of a scythe and a spearhead were found outside the grave kerb. The spearhead had not been in the fire.

**Randvere IX** (Pl 44)*Gender:* male (+female?).*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Burnt artefacts were found in two clusters in an area with measurements 5 x 2.5 m in squares 14–15/f–g, at the margins of the cemetery. Both clusters were marked with sooty soil but cremated bones and pieces of charcoal were unearthed in only one of them. No stone structures were recorded.

*Finds:* silver-plated chain-holder, a penannular brooch, a bracelet (?), a spiral finger-ring, two cross-pendants, a knife, plates of a knife sheath, bronze-decorated belt, bridle with iron mounts, bits, a small saw, a few bronze spirals, potsherds of three ornamented fine ceramic pots and one rough ceramic vessel. A small javelin-head was found at the edges of the burial. Bits at a distance of about 1 m from the other finds perhaps belong to the same complex.

**Randvere X** (Pls 45–46)*Gender:* male (boy?).*Date:* first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

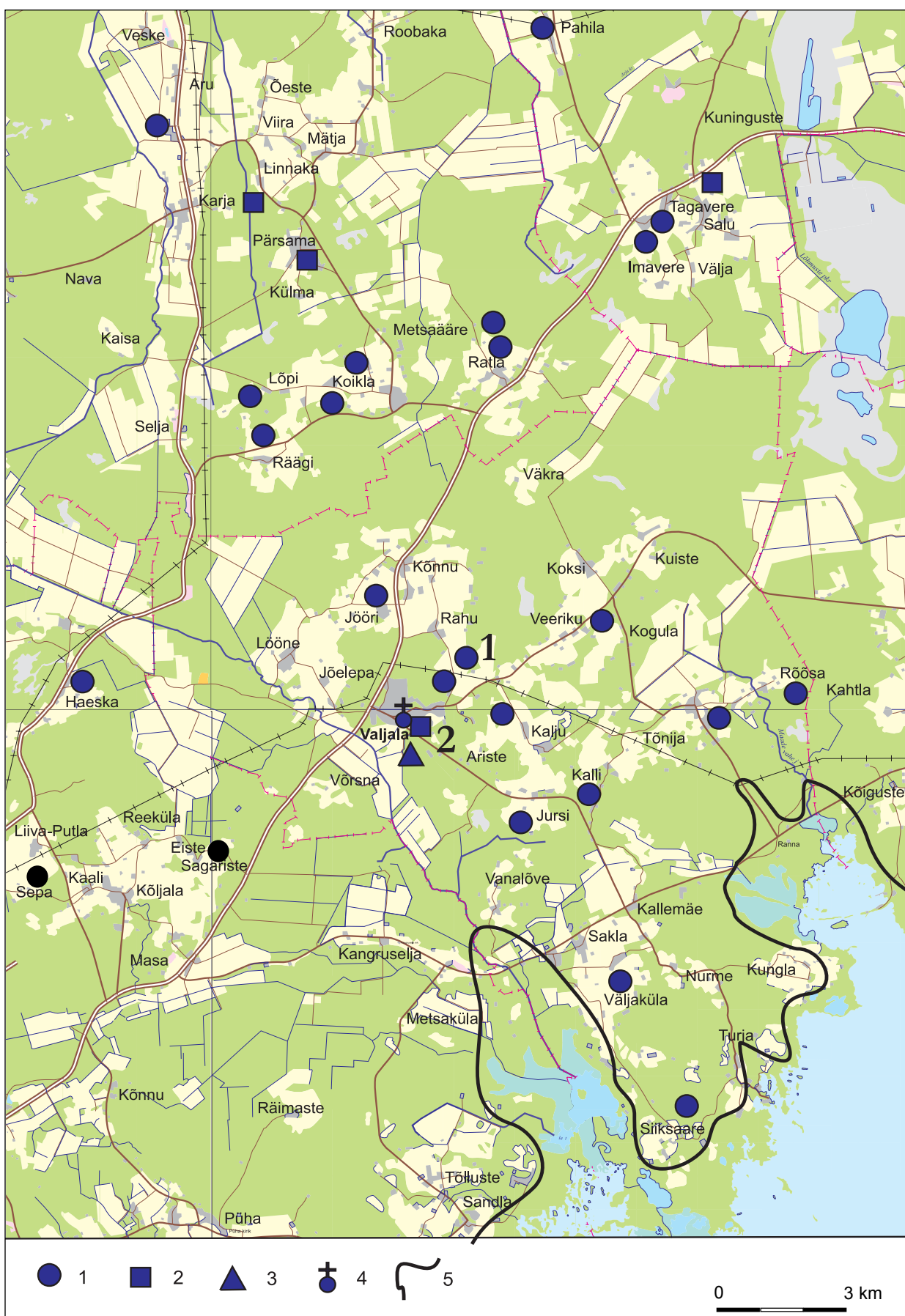
Stone circle grave with the outer diameter of 3 m in the squares 11–12/d–e, at the margins of the cemetery. Number of finds were unearthed outside the circle, especially NE and SE of the kerb, all together in an area with a diameter of about 8 m. The find composition as well as fragments of the same artefacts both inside and outside the circle suggest that all finds belong to one burial.

*Finds:* stirrups, bridle, a balance with weights, a knife sheath, bronze-decorated belt, a fire-steel, two penannular brooches, a silver finger-ring, two silver coins, a small spiral bracelet, bronze spirals, iron nails, potsherds of one fine ceramic vessel and one rough ceramic pot. A spearhead and a scythe were found at the edge of the burial. The lower part of a sword pommel and another penannular brooch were unearthed at a distance and probably do not belong to the complex.

**Randvere XI** (Pl 47)*Gender:* male (cenotaph?).*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century?

The artefacts were found in an area with a diameter of about 1 m beside a large granite stone in squares 10–11/f, between the burials VII and X. Neither bones nor charcoal were recorded. It can be assumed, therefore, that the complex is a donation for the burial X, or a cenotaph.

*Finds:* a spearhead, a javelin-head, bits, a small knife, a big bronze spiral, bronze plating, an iron nail.



**Figure 15.** Valjala (*Valdele*) district. 1 - stone cemetery; 2 - (probable) inhumation cemetery; 3 - hillfort; 4 - parish church; 5 - probable coastline about 1000 years ago. Cemeteries: 1 - Rahu; 2 - the Valjala churchyard.

#### 4.1.6. Rahu Cemetery

The Rahu cemetery stands on the margins of the fields of the village of Rahu at Kalmumäe ("Grave Hill"), 3 km to the NNE from Valjala church, on a more or less N–S oriented ridge (Fig 15). The eastern part of the cemetery has been damaged by old gravel pits. In the process of gravel-digging and ploughing a number of artefacts have been found there, some of which have reached museums.<sup>31</sup>

In trying to define the location of the Rahu cemetery on the cultural landscape, one must admit that it is primarily antiquities from the end of the prehistoric period which dominate in the areas around Valjala. The most remarkable of these is the Valjala stronghold, located 3.4 km SSW from the cemetery, which, according to the data currently available, was not founded until the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> It is one of the mightiest Osilian hillforts, the only one fortified with stone walls, and it is called the centre of the whole of Saaremaa in the chronicle depicting the military actions of the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup> The Valjala stronghold has evidently had some connection with what appears to have been a harbour site about 5 km southwards, in a Late Iron Age bay. One of the earliest stone churches of Saaremaa was erected on top of an earlier pagan cult site about 1 km away from the hillfort.<sup>34</sup>

The Late Iron Age district of Valjala (*Valdele*) embraced not only the area of the later ecclesiastical parish of Valjala but also the later parish of Karja, where another church was founded after the conquest (Fig 15). The archaeological evidence in the later Valjala parish indicates a sudden increase of its importance after the year 1100. Within a few miles' range of the surrounding area of the Rahu burial ground are situated other Late Iron Age cemeteries, but most of these have not been archaeologically investigated and are unfortunately represented only by stray finds. These cemeteries indicate sub-districts of Valjala, thus obviously marking the estates of local elite families. One of the most significant districts at local level was probably situated around the present villages of Veeriku and Koksi, in the latter of which a 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century silver hoard consisting of 20,000 mainly West and North European coins has been found.<sup>35</sup>

The copious material of the Rahu cemetery – silver artefacts occurring in several burials, the weapon complexes with swords found in male burials – all these qualities allow the assumption that the place has been used as the burial ground of one of the most powerful local elite families. The sudden increase in grave goods in 12<sup>th</sup> century burials indicates the growing importance of the family in that century, which could be related to the emergence of the Valjala area as an independent district and the centralisation of power to the vicinity of the Valjala stronghold and the church. The location of the Rahu

cemetery 2 km away from the later church of Valjala gives reason to assume that the family using the Rahu burial ground had inhabited an estate in the neighbourhood. It is interesting to note that according to the local tradition, the estate of the Valjala "chief" had been situated about 400–500 m away from the Valjala church towards Rahu. Therefore it is quite probable that the chief of the district or some of his most influential retainers had buried their dead in the Rahu cemetery.

\* \* \*

In 1895 the Russian archaeologist S. K. Bogoyavlensky and the local landlord P. Stackelberg excavated the Rahu cemetery. According to their information the graves there had included only cremations that lay in patches of sooty soil (1–2 m in diameter) about 2–3 m away from one another.<sup>36</sup>

From 1959 to 1963 Kustin excavated the Rahu cemetery. She managed to include only a preliminary review of the excavation results in her research on Late Iron Age Saaremaa, as at the time of writing the excavations were still in process.<sup>37</sup> Although it is known that Kustin studied the Rahu findings before her death in 1970, there are no records of that. One of the decorative plaques found there has been treated in a special article.<sup>38</sup> In 1980 Valter Lang organised small-scale post-excavations on the cemetery to determine the southern borderline of the burials. His digs avoided the main part of the graveyard and he did not unearth any burial complexes. Lang analysed the finds of the Rahu cemetery in his graduation thesis,<sup>39</sup> which has also not been published.

Excavation reports state that the stone layer of the grave was thin and uneven, or even in places missing altogether. Some of the bones and artefacts were found in clusters, some dispersed. At places sooty patches without bones and finds occurred, which Kustin associated with fires burned on the graves in the course of rituals.<sup>40</sup> The unburned animal bones recorded in the cemetery could also be explained by the occurrence of later rituals on the burial ground. No traces of pyres have been found. In general, the Rahu cemetery resembled those of Randvere and Viltina, but no stone circles have been detected there.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>31</sup> AI K 18: 1–19; K 53: 1–2, 2512: 37; 2696: 1–3; 4213; 4240; three axes are at the Moscow State Museum of History.

<sup>32</sup> Kustin 1963b; 1966a.

<sup>33</sup> HCL, XXX: 5.

<sup>34</sup> Mägi 1998, p 153.

<sup>35</sup> SMM 1924, p 121.

<sup>36</sup> Kustin 1962a, p 110 and references.

<sup>37</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 110–111.

<sup>38</sup> Kustin 1970.

<sup>39</sup> Lang V 1981.

<sup>40</sup> Kustin 1969b, pp 2–3.

<sup>41</sup> Kustin 1969a; 1969b; 1970a; 1970b; 1970c; Lang 1980.



The excavations have been well documented and, as it seems, the best working methods of the time were used there. As is characteristic of other 1950s–60s excavations, bones have not been picked up as their analysis was not considered possible. Apparently some of the finds were lost because of the failure to use the sieve and other contemporary methods – this is indicated by the finding of a sword guard with silver plating<sup>42</sup> that was unearthed in the heap of excavated soil.

900 sq m of the Rahu cemetery have been investigated, 817 sq m of that in the northern excavation site (Fig 16). In the latter the digs reached on the northern, western and southern sides the borders of the burial area, while in places some of the outer burials had obviously been ploughed through. The burial ground obviously continued north-west of the ditch, in the area between the excavated plot and the gravel pits. How big a part of the burial ground was lost in the gravel workings is unknown, but there are no reports of finds in connection with them. The majority of pre-excavation finds had been obtained in the course of ploughing, but not very many are known to have been found. There are no stray finds from the field east of the burial ground.<sup>43</sup> Thus it seems likely that the stone wall delimiting the Rahu grave from the east also marked the boundaries of the cemetery. It should be noted that in Lang's excavation, the border between the area with a few finds and the completely findless zone on the southern side of the burial ground was also marked with the foundation of a stone wall.<sup>44</sup> It can be presumed, accordingly, that about two thirds of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century part of the Rahu cemetery have been excavated.

In the present study it has been considered possible to distinguish 31 burials and 9 probable burials (either partly or completely unfurnished). Only one of the burial complexes was in the small southern excavation. As this one could be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, it can be assumed that in the middle and perhaps as early as the early Viking Age the deceased were buried some 20 m southward from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century burial area.

According to the find list of the Rahu excavations, about 70–75% of all finds (except ceramics), belong to burial complexes. From the finds outside the complexes, nearly 40% were uncovered in areas where the burials were mixed (hatched on the maps). Accordingly, about 80% of (metal) finds outside the mixed parts of the cemetery belonged to burial complexes.

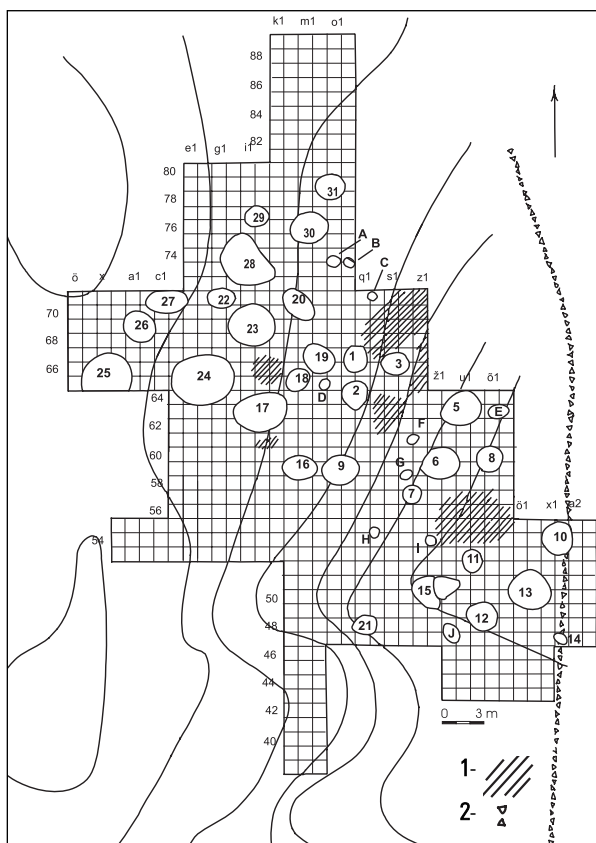


Figure 16. The northern (main) part of Rahu cemetery. 1 - areas with mixed burials; 2 - stone wall.

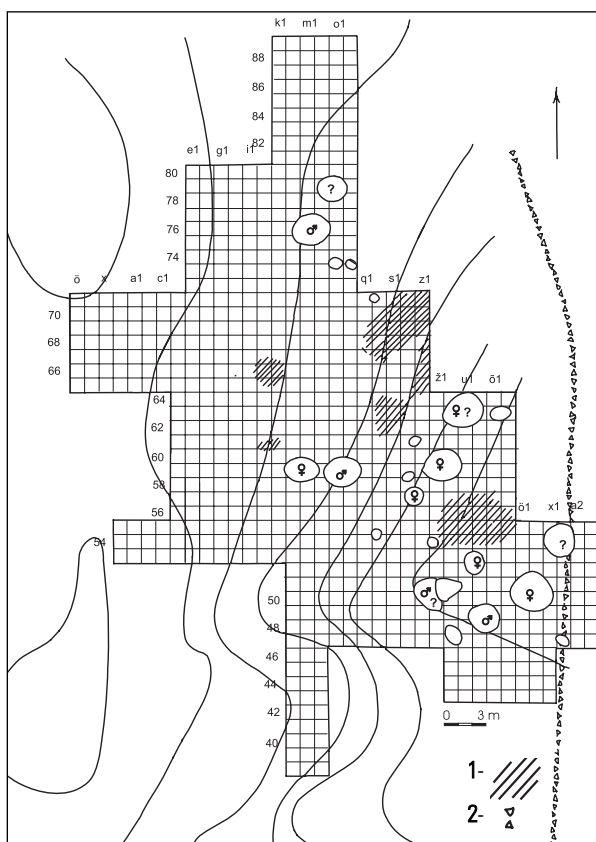


Figure 17. Rahu cemetery in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. 1 - areas with mixed burials; 2 - stone wall.

<sup>42</sup> AI 4239: 2724.

<sup>43</sup> SMM 1924, p 120.

<sup>44</sup> Lang 1980, p 2.

### a) 11<sup>th</sup> Century Cemetery

In the northern excavation area there was a clear spatial division between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century graves. The majority of 11<sup>th</sup> century burials lay in the south-eastern half of the excavation, on the higher part of the slope (Fig 17). Six female and four male burials can be counted among the burials in which the gender of the deceased could be determined. One of the male burials from the southern side of the ditch belonged to the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century, thus to an even earlier part of the cemetery. The gender of one burial could not be determined (burial X). One rich male burial and a supposed child burial (XXX and XXXI respectively) were in the northern end of the excavation, on the edge of the burial ground, to the other side from the 12<sup>th</sup> century burials.

At places the burials formed couples of both sexes: e.g. the burials XI, XII, XIII and XV, which formed find clusters; two of these belonged to men, two to women. From among many burials the female burial XVI and the male burial IX stood out clearly. Half way in between the two, a spearhead was found. Their location, copious deposits and the compact situation of their bones and grave goods – all this pointed to it as the possible grave of a married couple.

In the south-eastern side of the excavation area and in between the two parts of the 11<sup>th</sup> century burials were areas that included bones and artefacts too mixed to distinguish

different burial complexes (the hatched areas on the map). In nine cases in the eastern and south-eastern parts of the digs there were clusters of cremated bones with pottery sherds, usually also closely accompanied by some melted piece of bronze or iron, which made it possible to identify and mark them as poor burials (marked with letters).

Some 11<sup>th</sup> century items, mainly spearheads, were also found surrounding 12<sup>th</sup> century burials in the central area of the burial ground. As spearheads in the graves of Late Iron Age Saaremaa can often not be associated with particular burials (see chapter 5 for details) and the rest of the finds in the area mentioned could not be dated, it may be accepted that in the 12<sup>th</sup> century many burials were made on top of the earlier graves and that there could be more 11<sup>th</sup> century burials in the uninvestigated area north-east of the excavation.

### b) 12<sup>th</sup> Century Cemetery

12<sup>th</sup> century burials were concentrated in the central and northern parts of the excavation area (Fig 18). In comparison with earlier ones, these were richly furnished, especially male burials. In most cases the burials were single, except for burials II and XXIII, which included artefacts characteristic of rich male and female burials and can thus be identified as double burials.

The probable double burials and six male burials, four of them remarkably well furnished, lay in a cluster in the middle of the northern digs, on the side of a ridge. In between those were areas with no complex finds of bones or artefacts, probably including later burials on 11<sup>th</sup> century graves. Such zones contained many weapons, or at least parts of them (especially fragments of swords and spears) that could have marked the boundaries of different burial areas.

Northwest of the rich warrior graves lay four copiously furnished female burials. One of those, the burial XXIV, belonged actually to a girl and the burial XXII should be identified as a supposed complex. On the very north-western border of the burial area were two relatively modestly furnished male burials that originated either from the very end of the 12<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (the burials XXVI and XXIX). These were the latest burials known in the Rahu burial ground, apart from one inhumation in modern times.

\*

In comparing the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century cemeteries of Rahu, a number of differences strike the eye. It appears that in the 11<sup>th</sup> century men and women were often buried in couples, probably the husband and wife side by side. There seem to be no spatial variations either in the graves

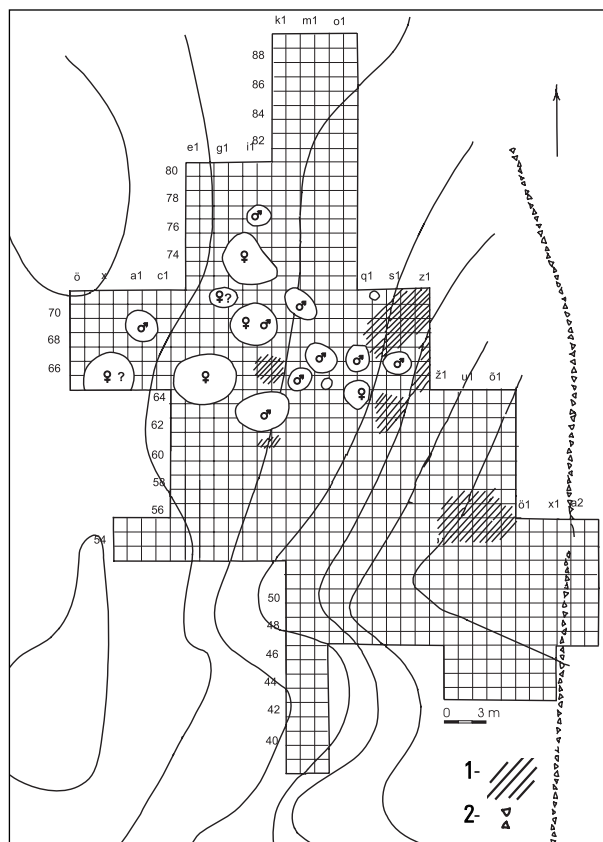


Figure 18. 12<sup>th</sup> century burials at Rahu cemetery. 1 - areas with mixed burials; 2 - stone wall.



of men and women or those with rich and poor grave furnishings. Among the opened 11<sup>th</sup> century graves there were three male and three female burials that could be considered richer than average (NAT 8–14, see chapter 5). There were generally slightly more female burials than male, but this may be because in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the deceased were buried in top of earlier graves, and also because some of the 11<sup>th</sup> century burials might be left in the unexcavated part of the cemetery. In many cases children's burials may remain unrecognised and thus a number of the supposed female burials could actually belong to minors. In any case, 11<sup>th</sup> century Rahu was the cemetery of one family wherein were buried the master and the mistress of the house, their prematurely deceased descendants and other less important family members.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the character of burials changed. From that period mainly single burials are known, most of them with abundant deposits. No poor 12<sup>th</sup> century single burials can be found; hence the presumption that the right to be buried in a stone grave was in the 12<sup>th</sup> century reserved to fewer people than earlier. There are clearly more male than female burials known from the era (10 and 6 respectively). Copiously furnished male burials with weapons lie in clusters, female burials can be found on the sideline of the cemetery below the ridge. Although two burials of couples are known, these complexes include more weapons and other artefacts used by men. It is possible that these are not the burials of estate-holding married couples, but the burials of noblemen accompanied by a complex of female adornments or a bondmaid. Two poorly furnished male burials from the end of the period indicate the change towards smaller deposits around the year 1200.

The 12<sup>th</sup> century cemetery at Rahu mirrors a social organisation in which warriors were held in high esteem. It is not unlikely that the richer burials belonged to the landlord and his wife and some other weaponed burials to their retainers.

#### **Rahu I** (Pls 48–49)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Burnt artefacts were spread in an area with measurements 2.7 x 1.5 m in squares 66–68/o1–p1, most of them in a 1.2 x 1 m sooty patch together with cremated bones. Most of the bones and finds were covered by a large granite stone. According to the excavation map, a circle formed by bigger limestone rocks remained N and NE of the burial.

*Finds:* bronze-decorated belt (+perhaps a sword belt), a sword pommel, a spearhead, two bits, two knives, a big iron nail, few potsherds of rough ceramic vessel. Other bits were found at a distance from the other finds. In between the burials I and XIX lay an axe but it probably belongs to the burial XIX.

#### **Rahu II** (Pls 50–51)

*Gender:* male + female.

*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones and burnt artefacts, measurements 2 x 1.3 m, in squares 63–65/p1–r1. No stone structures were recorded.

*Finds:* pieces of a chain arrangement with two chain-holders, two pins, two penannular brooches, a bracelet, bronze-decorated belt, bronze spirals, a spur,

bridle with iron mounts, some kind of iron tool, a few potsherds of two rough ceramic pots. A spearhead, a javelin-head and pieces of sword hilt were found at the edge of the burial.

#### **Rahu III** (PI 52)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Burnt artefacts together with cremated bones and pieces of charcoal were spread in an area with measurements 2 x 1.5 m in squares 65–66/r1–s1. The area was covered with granite stones of medium size.

*Finds:* a sword pommel, a whetstone, bronze-decorated belt, few bronze spirals and small rings, a few potsherds of rough ceramics.

#### **Rahu IV** (PI 53)

*Gender:* female.

*Date:* second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century?

Sooty patch with burnt artefacts, cremated bones and pieces of charcoal in squares 2–4/u–v. The measurements of the patch were about 2 x 1 m. The area was covered with a thick layer of granite stones.

*Finds:* pieces of a chain arrangement, two triangular-headed pins, two penannular brooches, a knife, the rod netting for attaching a knife sheath to a belt, two spiral finger-rings, bits, a few bronze spirals and a few potsherds of fine ceramics. The finds, except the smaller brooch and the potsherds, were found in one cluster.

#### **Rahu V** (PI 54)

*Gender:* female?

*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century.

Burnt artefacts with cremated bones were spread in an area with measurements 2 x 1.5 m in squares 63–64/t1–v1. The area was covered with thick layer of granite stones but no sooty soil was recorded. According to the excavation map, one may assume a stone circle around the burial.

*Finds:* a bracelet, three glass beads, a knife, a knife sheath with rod chain netting, small bits, bronze spirals and small rings, fragments of bronze plating, a few potsherds of ornamented fine ceramic vessel.

#### **Rahu VI** (PI 55)

*Gender:* female.

*Date:* first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones and artefacts, measurements about 3 x 2 m, in squares 58–60/£1–t1. Only a few stones were recorded in the burial area.

*Finds:* two triangular-headed pins, pieces of a chain arrangement, bronze-decorated belt, a knife sheath (?), an iron clamp, an iron nail, bronze spirals, few potsherds of a fine ceramic vessel. A coin pendant, marked on the find distribution map, is made of a 13<sup>th</sup> century coin and does probably not belong to the complex.

#### **Rahu VII** (PI 56)

*Gender:* female.

*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century?

Sooty patch with a diameter of about 1.2 m in squares 57/s1–£1, on the excavation map surrounded by a limestone kerb. No bones were recorded.

*Finds:* a bracelet, bronze-decorated belt, a spiral finger-ring (?), fragment of a chain, bronze spirals, a few melted bronze pieces.

#### **Rahu VIII** (PI 57)

*Gender:* undetermined (child).

*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with a diameter of about 1 m between a large stone and a stone circle with about the same diameter, in squares 59–60/v1–õ1. Few cremated bones were recorded.

*Finds:* a knife sheath with rod chain netting for attaching it to a belt, a small bracelet, three iron rivets, few bronze spirals, a fragment of chain.

#### **Rahu IX** (PI 58)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with burnt artefacts, cremated bones and pieces of charcoal in squares 57–59/n1–p1, with measurements 3 x 2 m. No stone structures were recorded. The burial was situated close to the female burial XVI; these two burials were surrounded by a findless zone.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch with a spiral on its loop, bronze-decorated belt, oval openwork plaque, iron mounts of bridle, a knife, silver finger-ring, a few bronze spirals, potsherds of two ornamented fine ceramic vessels. A small javelin-head was found at the edge of the burial. Between the burials IX and XVI lay a spearhead.

**Rahu X** (Pl 59)*Gender:* undetermined*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century?

Sooty patch with cremated bones and artefacts in squares 54–55/ü1–y1, with measurements 2 x 1 m. Some artefacts were found around the cremation deposit, all together in an area with measurements 5 x 3 m. Similar belt mounts and potsherds refer to one burial but the possibility of originally two burials can not be excluded.

*Finds:* bronze-decorated belt, a bronze loop, a bronze bell, two iron nails, big-ger bronze rings, a bracelet (?), potsherds of a rough ceramic vessel.

**Rahu XI** (Pl 60)*Gender:* female.*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century?

Sooty patch with cremated bones, artefacts and pieces of charcoal in squares 52–53/u1–v1, with a diameter of 1.2 m. Beside the complex a wind-mill had been situated; some artefacts may have got lost when it was erected. The burial was surrounded by 26 iron nails, obviously originating from the wind-mill.

*Finds:* pieces of a chain arrangement, a triangular-headed pin, bronze-decorated belt, iron parts of bridle, bronze spirals and small rings. A small knife and potsherds of a large ornamented pot were found at a distance of 1 m from the rest of the complex.

**Rahu XII** (Pl 61)*Gender:* male.*Date:* first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The finds were spread in an area with measurements 2 x 1.5 m in squares 48–49/u1–v1, beside a large granite stone. The area was covered with granite stones. Neither sooty patch nor cremated bones were mentioned in the report but the excavation maps suggest that the complex might have been covered with a stone cairn.

*Finds:* a small spearhead or a javelin-head, a knife sheath, bronze-decorated belt, two iron nails and a rivet, a few potsherds of a rough ceramic vessel.

**Rahu XIII** (Pl 62)*Gender:* female?*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones and artefacts in squares 49–51/ä1–ü1, with measurements about 3 x 2 m. The area was covered with thick layer of stones.

*Finds:* bronze-decorated belt, a penannular brooch, two big spirals, four glass beads, small chain fragments, a fire-steel, small bronze spirals and rings, pieces of bronze plating, four iron nails, potsherds of two rough ceramic pots. At the edge of the burial a small knife was found.

**Rahu XIV** (Pl 63)*Gender:* undetermined.*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The finds were unearthed in an area with a diameter of about 1 m in square 47/x1, beside a big granite stone. Neither bones nor sooty soil were mentioned in reports.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, a bronze wire, a bronze spiral, potsherds of a large ornamented vessel.

**Rahu XV** (Pl 64)*Gender:* male?*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with burnt artefacts, cremated bones and pieces of charcoal beside a large granite stone in squares 49–51/£1–£1, with measurements 3 x 1.5 m. The burial was covered with a thick layer of stones.

*Finds:* bronze-decorated belt, a knife sheath, a penannular brooch, bronze spirals and small rings. At the edge of the burial, bits were found. The burial was surrounded by 12 big iron nails. A javelin-head lay at a distance of about 75 cm from the other finds.

**Rahu XVI** (Pl 65)*Gender:* female.*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century?

Sooty patch with cremated bones and artefacts in squares 58–60/k1–m1, with measurements 2.5 x 1.75 m. The area was covered with a sparse layer of stones.

*Finds:* silver penannular brooch, a bracelet, a spiral bracelet, pieces of a chain arrangement, a neck-ring (?), rod netting for attaching a knife sheath to a belt, a coin, the edge mount of a drinking horn (?), bronze spirals and small rings. Potsherds of a decorated fine ceramic pot were found in a pile at a distance of about 0.5 m from the cremation deposit.

**Rahu XVII** (Pls 66–68)*Gender:* male.*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Burnt artefacts, cremated bones and pieces of charcoal were recorded in two clusters in squares 61–64/g1–k1. Potsherds of different vessels were spread in different clusters. The area, with total measurements 4 x 3.5 m, was covered with a thick layer of stones. Pieces of the same artefacts demonstrate that the complex represents only one burial; probably the remains were brought to the grave in two (or three) different clay pots.

*Finds:* bronze-decorated belt (+a sword belt?), a sword, a scabbard end, a spearhead, two penannular brooches, an iron pin, a silver finger-ring, a glass bead, two bits, iron mounts of a bridle, a silver-plated spur, a belt chain with a fire-steel, two knives, potsherds of two ornamented fine ceramic pots and one rough ceramic vessel. Two javelin-heads were found at the edge of the burial

**Rahu XVIII** (Pl 69)*Gender:* male.*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones, artefacts and pieces of charcoal in squares 65/k1–l1, with measurements 2 x 1.5 m. The area was covered with a sparse layer of stones.

*Finds:* a sword, a sword scabbard, an oval fire-steel, bronze-decorated belt, iron mounts of a bridle, a cross-pendant, few bronze spirals, potsherds of a large rough ceramic vessel. A javelin-head lay at the edge of the burial.

**Rahu XIX** (Pls 70–71)*Gender:* male.*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones, artefacts and pieces of charcoal in squares 66–67/m1–n1, with measurements 1.75 x 1 m. The area was covered with a sparse layer of stones. It is possible that a part of the complex had remained outside the ditch.

*Finds:* bronze-decorated belt (+a sword belt?), a sword, a neck-ring, two finger-rings, a penannular brooch, a coin pendant, two knives, iron parts of bridle, bits, a drawing knife, a rod chain, bronze spirals, potsherds of rough ceramic. At some distance of other finds, between the burials XIX and I, an axe was found.

**Rahu XX** (Pl 72)*Gender:* male.*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century?

The finds and cremated bones were spread in an area with the diameter of about 2 m in squares 71–72/k1–l1. The area was covered with a sparse layer of stones. No sooty soil was recorded. Probably one burial.

*Finds:* bronze-decorated belt (?), bronze mounts of a bridle, a javelin-head, bits, an iron cramp, a few potsherds of a rough ceramic vessel. At a distance of 0.5 m from these finds other bits, another javelin-head and the blade of a spearhead were found.

**Rahu XXI** (Pl 73)*Gender:* male.*Date:* 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones and artefacts, with a diameter of 1.5 m, in squares 47–48/o1–p1 at the margins of the cemetery. The burial is 200–300 years earlier than the others in this area of the cemetery and perhaps partly destroyed by ploughing.

*Finds:* a javelin-head, a fire-steel, a bracelet, bits, a small iron nail, potsherds of rough ceramics.

**Rahu XXII** (Pl 74)*Gender:* female?*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones and artefacts in squares 71/f1–h1, with measurements 2.5 x 1.3 m. The area was covered with a sparse layer of stones and lined with bigger granite stones in two sides.

*Finds:* a knife, a penannular brooch, a finger-ring, a cross-pendant, a coin pendant, a spiral bracelet, a small bronze bell, a glass bead, melted bronze fragments, iron rivets and nails, bronze spirals, potsherds of a rough ceramic vessel.

**Rahu XXIII** (Pls 75–76)*Gender:* male (+ female?).*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones and artefacts in squares 68–69/h1–j1, with measurements 3 x 3 m.

*Finds:* bits, iron parts of a bridle, a sword, a javelin-head, a rod chain, a rod netting for attaching a knife sheath to a belt, bronze-decorated belt, a spiral bracelet, round silver pendant, a fang pendant, a fragment of chain, a bracelet, a neck-ring, bronze spirals and small rings, potsherds of rough ceramics. A knife was found at the borderline of the burial.

#### **Rahu XXIV** (Pls 77–78)

*Gender:* female (girl?).

*Date:* beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones and artefacts in squares 64–67/d1–g1, with measurements 4 x 3.2 m. The artefacts were surrounded by a findless zone. The spread of finds in a wide area can be explained by the location of the complex at the margins of the cemetery, where it was scattered by ploughing.

*Finds:* a small bracelet, a neck-ring, two finger-rings, a cross-pendant, a glass bead, a small bronze bell, a round pendant (?), ornamented pieces of bronze plating, S-shaped pendant, a rod chain, two bits, a drawing knife, an iron tool, an axe, two iron nails, bronze spirals, potsherds of rough ceramics. Two knives were found at the edge of the burial area.

#### **Rahu XXV** (Pl 79)

*Gender:* female?

*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones in squares 65–66/ä–ü. Most artefacts were found beside it, all together in an area with measurements 4 x 2.5 m. Only a few stones were recorded in the spot. It is possible that some artefacts of the complex had remained outside the excavated area.

*Finds:* a chain arrangement with chain-holders, a penannular brooch, a finger-ring, two spiral bracelets, a coin pendant, a neck-ring (?), bronze spirals and small rings, a few potsherds of rough ceramics. The guard of a sword, a knife and belt fittings were found at the edge of the burial area, together with some pieces of the spiral bracelet and the chain-holder.

#### **Rahu XXVI** (Pl 80)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* end of the 12<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones, burnt artefacts and pieces of charcoal in squares 69–70/y–b1, in an area with a diameter of 2 m.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, bronze mounts of a bridle (?), a sword, a shield (?), a sword scabbard (?), iron nails, secondarily-fired potsherds of rough ceramics.

#### **Rahu XXVII** (Pl 81)

*Gender:* undetermined (child?).

*Date:* 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century.

Burnt artefacts, covered with a layer of stones, were spread in squares 70–71/b1–d1, in an area with a diameter of about 2 m. Neither bones nor sooty soil were marked on the excavation map.

*Finds:* a glass bead, a large spiral or a small spiral finger-ring, bronze-decorated belt, iron nails and rivets, few bronze spirals and small rings, potsherds of rough ceramics, some of them secondarily-fired. Bits and two small knives were found at the edge of the burial area.

#### **Rahu XXVIII** (Pls 82–83)

*Gender:* female.

*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones, burnt artefacts and pieces of charcoal in squares 72–75/g1–j1, with measurements 5 x 4 m. The area was covered with a sparse layer of stones. Pieces of the same artefacts and potsherds of the same vessels everywhere in the area indicate that all finds originated from one burial.

*Finds:* a pin, pieces of chain arrangement with chain-holders, a rod chain with a key, a spiral bracelet, a neck-ring, S-shaped pendant, bronze-decorated belt, a knife sheath, a bracelet (?), an axe, two javelin-heads, a small saw, an iron tool, bronze spirals, potsherds of two fine ceramic pots and three rough ceramic vessels.

#### **Rahu XXIX** (Pl 84)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* end of the 12<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones, artefacts and pieces of charcoal in squares 77/11–j1, with a diameter of 1.75 m. The area was covered with a sparse layer of stones.

*Finds:* a spearhead, an iron buckle, a knife, potsherds of a large rough ceramic pot. Two other knives were found at the edge of the burial.

#### **Rahu XXX** (Pls 85–86)

*Gender:* male.

*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup> century?

Sooty patch with cremated bones, artefacts and pieces of charcoal in squares 75–77/11–n1, with measurements 3.5 x 3 m. Few stones were recorded in the area.

*Finds:* a sword, a scabbard (?), a shield (?), a knife, a belt chain, a penannular brooch, bronze plating, a bronze bell, a chain-holder, an iron chain, an iron tool, potsherds of a decorated fine ceramic pot and two rough ceramic vessels. The fine ceramic pot had been on the pyre. Two spearheads, a javelin-head and a scythe were found at the edge of the burial.

#### **Rahu XXXI** (Pl 87)

*Gender:* undetermined (child?).

*Date:* 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones, artefacts and pieces of charcoal in squares 78–80/n1–o1, with a diameter of 2 m. The area was covered with stones.

*Finds:* a javelin-head, pieces of chain, a glass bead, a bronze bell, a knife, an iron nail, bronze spirals, potsherds of two rough ceramic vessels. Three other knives were found at the edge of the burial.

## Inhumation

An inhumation burial was found on the western margin of the cemetery, in squares 61–62/c1. Although only a part of the skeleton was excavated, it is obvious that the head of the buried man had been directed eastward. The circular brooch and fastening loops dated the burial to the 16<sup>th</sup>, perhaps even the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> Such a late furnished burial is highly unusual for Saaremaa; besides, the deceased has been buried in the opposite direction to the Christian tradition to the side of an old heathen burial ground. We can only speculate that the circumstances of the burial must have been uncommon, perhaps caused by the restless political climate at the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### 4.1.7. Kogula Cemetery

The Kogula stone cemetery is situated in the parish of Kärla on central Saaremaa, about 0.5 km to the north-west of the village of Kogula (Fig 7). It is about 1 km from an inlet sited on the coastline of the time. Prior to the excavations the site had been a low uneven ridge covered with lime-stone rubble. In places there had been pits or small stone heaps on the surface of the graves; it had also been covered with junipers. The higher stony area measured ca 85 m in a NW–SE direction and 40 m across.

The Kogula cemetery was situated in Kärla, the western part of the Late Iron Age district of Kaarma (*Carmele*), and was separated as another ecclesiastical parish in the early Middle Ages. The stone graves in this area were mostly erected near the seashore of the Late Iron Age, which indicates that marine activities were one of the main means of subsistence of local people. In addition to the stone graves

<sup>45</sup> Heiki Valk's evaluation.

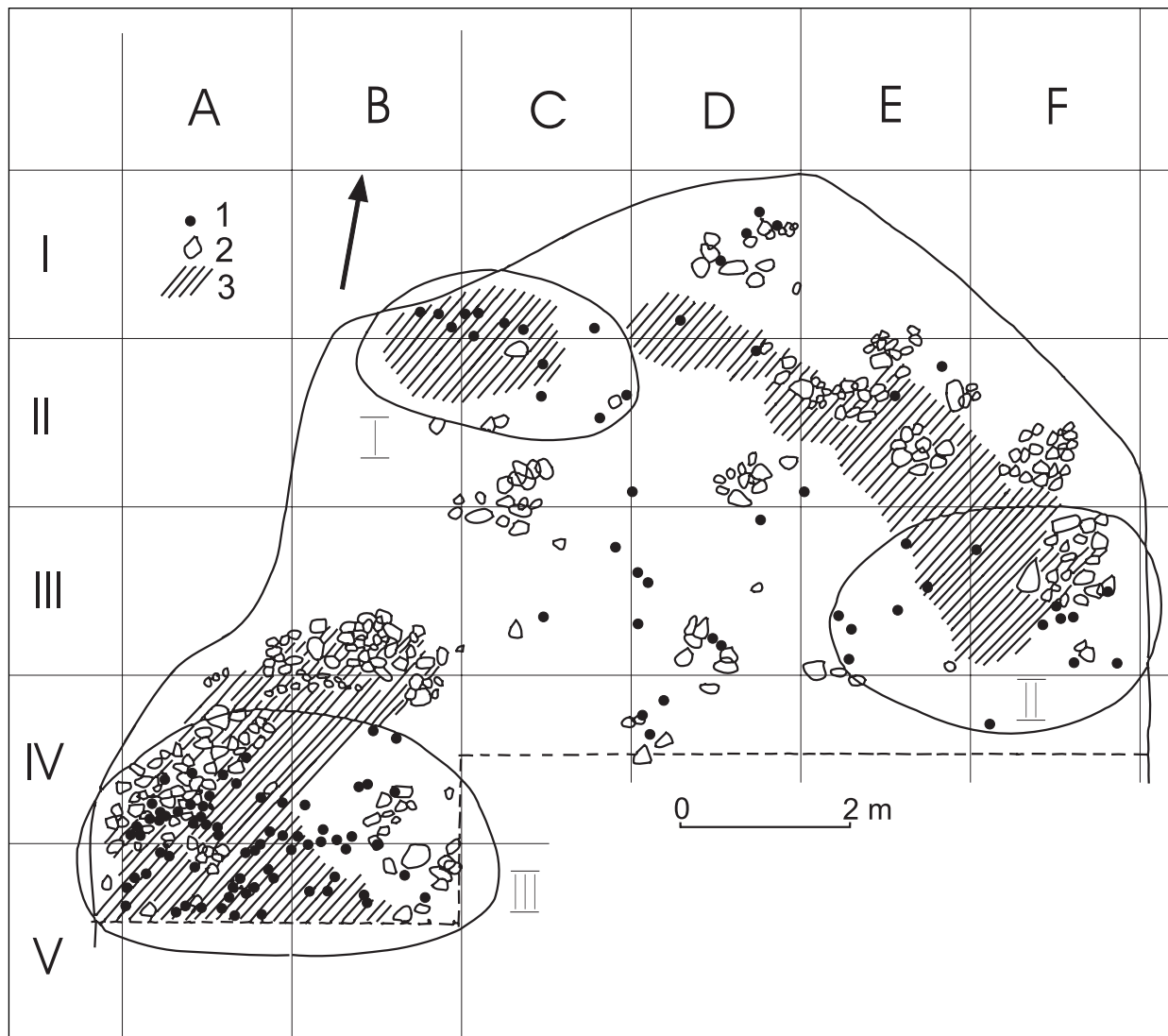


Figure 19. Kogula cemetery. 1 - find; 2 - stone; 3 - sooty area.

represented by abundant stray finds, a medieval chapel site in Kõrkvere near the one-time coast is also recorded in the Käräla sub-district. Near the chapel site, skeletons have been found.<sup>46</sup> The local oral tradition says that the chapel was built earlier than the Käräla church that stands 5.5 km north from Kõrkvere. It can be suggested that the chapel was connected with a possible harbour site nearby.

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Some stray finds had been picked up from the cemetery.<sup>47</sup> At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the parson of Käräla, J. Kerg, had excavated there and also found several artefacts.<sup>48</sup>

In 1931 Marta Schmiedehelm excavated the Kogula cemetery over a period of three days (Fig 19). According to her data, the cultural layer of the cemetery was very thin, only 15 to 25 cm, and in between this and the natural limestone bedrock a full sand layer had outcropped in places. In general the earth between the stones of the cemetery was mostly brownish, but at the burial places

it was intensely black and contained pieces of charcoal. The cemetery was covered with bigger limestone and granite stones and also rubble, but Schmiedehelm saw no structures there. A short report and a find distribution plan has been preserved from these excavations.<sup>49</sup>

The part of the cemetery that Schmiedehelm excavated is too small to enable the writer to draw any conclusions about the whole burial ground in general. As all the three discovered burials originated from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it can be assumed that the grave represents a burial place similar to that of Rahu.

<sup>46</sup> SMM 1924, p 89.

<sup>47</sup> AI 2657: 2–4.

<sup>48</sup> SMM 1924, p 82; finds AI K 29, perhaps also the spear-head K 80.

<sup>49</sup> Schmiedehelm 1935.

**Kogula I (Pl 88)***Gender:* undetermined.*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones and artefacts, with measurements 2 x 1 m, at the margins of the cemetery. The complex was surrounded by a findless zone.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, iron parts of a bridle, a neck-ring, melted bronze fragments, a few bronze spirals, potsherds of a rough ceramic vessel. At a distance of 1.5 m from the burial, potsherds of another vessel were found in a pile.

**Kogula II (Pl 89)***Gender:* undetermined.*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with bones, artefacts and pieces of charcoal. The artefacts were spread in an area with a diameter of 3 m but the sooty soil continued to the north-west. The area was covered with thick layer of stones. There is a later trench north-west of the finds, during the digging of which some artefacts may have got lost.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, iron parts of a bridle, a bronze bell, a knife sheath (?), an iron rivet, a few bronze spirals, potsherds of a fine ceramic vessel.

**Kogula III (Pl 90)***Gender:* male.*Date:* 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sooty patch with cremated bones, burnt artefacts and pieces of charcoal, with measurements 4 x 2 m. The area was covered with thick layer of stones. It is possible that some artefacts had remained outside the excavated area.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch, bronze-decorated belt, a knife sheath, a neck ring (?), a spearhead, an iron rivet, bronze spirals, potsherds of one fine ceramic pot and two rough ceramic vessels.

#### 4.1.8. Viltina Cemetery

The Viltina Rutiränk cemetery is situated on the south-eastern coast of Saaremaa, on the Kõiguste peninsula in the southern part of the Põide district (Fig 13). It is a higher hill covered with an abundance of stones, standing on the former seashore. The curved layout of the cemetery has probably been modified by tillage, which has also destroyed a part of it. The place was still known by the locals as an ancient burial ground and various finds had been obtained from there. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a local farmer had found from beside the surviving part of the grave a whole complex of weapons and horse-gear.<sup>50</sup>

In 1940 rescue excavations took place at Rutiränk in connection with the annexation of the area by Soviet army bases. Osvald Saadre, Schmiedehelm and Artur Vassar, who, over a period of two months, had to excavate 3236 sq m, supervised the excavations. The work was done in a hurry and thus the records on the cemetery have many gaps. In most cases the stones were not marked on the maps, the finds were registered in 5 x 5 m squares and at times with little accuracy; for example the same find number can be found in several places on the plan.

Owing to the haste, some parts of the cemetery – mostly the ones covered with a thicker layer of soil or stones, remained uninvestigated. The stone cairns on a field south-west of the cemetery, which could also have been graves, were not surveyed. Some such graves that stood only slightly apart from the main body of the cemetery were nevertheless excavated.

The surface of the burial ground had been quite bumpy before the excavations, mostly covered with loose stones. Vassar has remarked about the latter phenomenon that these could not have come just from cleaning the surrounding field or from the actions of fortune hunters, as the stones were present in all parts of the cemetery. A much more plausible explanation would be that the loose stones actually formed a part of the grave structure.<sup>51</sup> Taking into consideration the existence of many cairns covered with loose stones in Scandinavia, Vassar's assumption appears very convincing, all the more since the position of the cemetery on the earlier seashore enabled it to function also as a seamark.

Generally the stone layer covering the cemetery was quite thin, in most cases only 20 to 30 cm, and consisted largely of smaller limestone or granite stones. Under the stones were patches of sooty earth that included burned bones and the majority of all finds. At least eight partly damaged or half-made stone circles could be distinguished in the eastern part of the cemetery that Vassar was excavating.<sup>52</sup> Possible stone circles or zones of limestone rubble that normally encircled the graves can also be detected on the map also in the north-western corner of Schmiedehelm's excavation. As mentioned before, the majority of the stones had not even been marked on the map, and so many possible structures could not be identified later.

According to Vassar the eastern part of the Viltina cemetery consisted of single burials that contained fewer stones; in the northern and perhaps also the eastern part of the burial ground later burials occurred, partly overlapping the earlier ones. As new burials were likewise covered with stones, earlier stone constructions had become indistinct. New stones were taken from the eastern part of the grave, thus damaging the stone circles in that part. Vassar mentions that single burials had been dominant in the eastern part of the cemetery, but these did not contain remarkable amounts of grave goods; at the same time the part of the cemetery with the compact stone layer had large sooty patches that embraced very many artefacts and that Vassar believed to hold several burials.<sup>53</sup> In connection with this fact should be noted that a number of these sooty patches were analysed by the author of the present study and proved to belong to one burial. The pieces of one artefact could be found within a distance of 10 m from each other and all these items could be dated to the same period; none of the artefact types occurred

<sup>50</sup> SMM 1924, p 105; Vassar 1940, p 1.

<sup>51</sup> Vassar 1940, p 3.

<sup>52</sup> Vassar 1940.

<sup>53</sup> Vassar 1940.

twice and the borders of the sooty area had been marked with spearheads and/or knives. As a comparison it should be recalled that the burials at Käkü that were without any specific stone structures also contained more furnishings than stone circle graves.

In the eastern part of the Viltina cemetery there were two areas that contained considerable amounts of boat rivets spread in oval circles. At the same time the place comprised very few stones and seemed to lack any cultural layer. The boat rivets had not been in a fire and probably originated from boats that had been dragged to the borders of the grave and left there to decay. These areas never contained any bones, though some find complexes had occurred there. Vassar believed that these complexes were cenotaphs or that the bones had completely disappeared.<sup>54</sup> The last assumption is highly improbable. An alternative possibility is that the boats had been left to disintegrate on the margins of graves many centuries later. The shoreline has up till very recently been almost at the very verge of the cemetery. The present coastline lies 900 m away from the cemetery; there is a swampy area between the cemetery and the sea that is flooded in springtime. The custom of letting old boats decay on pagan-period stone cemeteries has been in use in Karelia until recently. The archaeologist Nils Cleve has explained the frequent occurrence of boat rivets in Finnish stone graves by this custom.<sup>55</sup>

Both Vassar and Schmiedehelm remarked in their reports that at places the find complexes at the Viltina cemetery were clearly distinguishable.<sup>56</sup> Kustin in her candidate thesis has tried to identify them as well.<sup>57</sup> In an attempt to follow Kustin's data on the burial complexes it appeared that these had been marked on the map with a degree of accuracy to 10x10 m, making it impossible to find the exact locations. It feels as if the burials had been distinguished on a very subjective basis, proceeding from the principle that "everybody gets an equal share".

In the process of analysing the Viltina cemetery findings it became evident that the map of the eastern part of the excavation was missing from the archives. The east side that had been excavated by Vassar was also the part of the Rutiränk cemetery that included the biggest amount of clearly distinguishable single burials and several stone circle graves. The analysis of the material from the rest of the cemetery made clear that it was possible to identify 30 to 40 burials. Because of the comparatively superficial way that the finds had been marked on the maps, especially in the parts where the stones had not been indicated, it was only possible to distinguish a number of ill-defined burial complexes, or simply parts of them. The separate small graves on the southern side of the cemetery constituted an exception, as burials in these were easily determinable, though poor in grave goods.

When the map for the eastern side of the Viltina cemetery was finally found in May, 2000, the available find material for the present study had already been gathered, analysed and drawn, thus making it impossible both financially and temporally to add another large division. It also turned out that much of the Viltina find material had been lost in August, 1944 when the evacuated archaeological finds had been standing at the Olustvere railway station in South Estonia. The more beautiful finds that were of precious metal or better preserved were the ones that disappeared; these were what could have given important information for the identification and dating of the burial complexes.

As the analysed material contained several poorly defined burial complexes, it was decided that any closer analysis of the Viltina Rutiränk cemetery would be left out of the book. I hope that the Rutiränk cemetery finds will be studied in the course of further research and consequently published. As the present book discusses mainly burial practices and their change on the island as a whole, the exclusion of a single cemetery should not greatly influence the general conclusions.

\* \* \*

Vassar estimated that over 50 individuals had been buried in the eastern part of the grave that he had excavated.<sup>58</sup> Adding the burials from the rest of the cemetery, the full number of the deceased from the preserved part of the Viltina cemetery could be about a hundred. To judge from the find material, the cemetery has been used from the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, but especially in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The last burials originate from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the three discovered inhumations should belong to the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, over a period of about 250 years, about 100 people have been buried there, which indicates that a larger unit than one family must have used the cemetery. Taking into account the frequently used formula  $K=M:(S \times A)$ , where K marks the population of the community, M the number of burials, S the coefficient of death and A the period of use of the cemetery<sup>59</sup> and estimating the dying coefficient to have been 40 ‰, the total number of individuals using the burial ground would have been about 10. Thus we can say that most probably two farms from the vicinity could have used the cemetery.

<sup>54</sup> Vassar 1940, pp 7–8.

<sup>55</sup> Cleve 1978, pp 86–89 and references.

<sup>56</sup> Vassar 1940, p 8; Schmiedehelm 1944, p 8.

<sup>57</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 70 ff.

<sup>58</sup> Vassar 1940, p 8; as he has counted the clusters of cremated bones, this hypothetical number should include both adults and children.

<sup>59</sup> Lang & Ligi 1991, pp 216–231 and references.

The Viltina cemetery is remarkable for the precious metal artefacts and luxury items it contains. A large part of the grave goods was made up of horse gear: stirrups, bridles, and bits. In general, the find material from the cemetery resembles closely that of the Rahu burial ground, only it is more abundant. Like the Rahu cemetery, a large increase in grave goods, especially in male graves, is detectable in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Special attention should be paid to the ceramics found at Rutiränk, as a part of it seems to have been imported to the island. Many of the potsherds can probably be associated with rituals (perhaps ritual feasts) that had taken place on the burial ground, rather than with the burials themselves.

Vassar has already linked the Viltina burial ground with a possible harbour site.<sup>60</sup> The rich burials excavated at the cemetery are in clear contrast with the infertile and stony fields surrounding them. Taking into account that the burial ground is situated on the actual coastline of the period, it can be assumed that the wealth of the Rutiränk people was largely based on a favourably positioned harbour. The harbour was indeed discovered in the spring of 1999 about 50 m away from the Rutiränk burial ground.<sup>61</sup>

\*

As has been shown in the section dealing with the Randvere cemetery, it had been used as a burial ground mainly in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, while a large part of the burials can be attributed to children. It can be supposed that the inhabitants of the farm on the location of the later Randvere village also buried their dead in the Rutiränk cemetery, starting at some point in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Another settlement unit was situated in the locale of the present village of Asva, in which a small stronghold from earlier periods had been built up again in the first part of the Viking Age. At the site of the later Viltina village, on the other hand, only a few scattered households had been recorded on the 17<sup>th</sup> century map.<sup>62</sup> It is possible that at the end of the prehistoric period some kind of settlement unit was situated there, possibly a farm that was directly associated with the harbour. Drawing a comparison from Viking Age Gotland harbours,<sup>63</sup> it can also be assumed that the Viltina harbour was administered by the families that inhabited the presumably large single households situated on the locations of the later Randvere and Asva villages and buried their dead in the monumental stone graves on the coast.

In the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century when burial practices became Christianised all over Saaremaa, the Rutiränk stone cemetery was for some time used for inhumation graves. The changed political climate of the 13<sup>th</sup> century probably also hindered the inflow of profit from the harbour, especially if it had been connected with piracy rather than trading.<sup>64</sup> Quite soon the heathen stone graves were completely abandoned and in the course of

the following centuries, the inhabitants of the surrounding area used to bury their dead in the Annumäe inhumation cemetery between Randvere and Viltina.

### a) Inhumations at the Rutiränk Cemetery

In addition to cremations, three inhumation graves were found in the Viltina Rutiränk burial ground. All of the deceased had been buried on their backs, in the extended position.<sup>65</sup> The bones have not been preserved – perhaps not even picked up – but judging by the deposits, at least one of the deceased had been a woman (Fig 20). As all of the burials lay with their heads in WNW or NW directions, they had most likely been buried during the transition period from pagan to Christian burial customs.

#### Viltina I

*Gender:* female.

*Direction:* head to WNW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 20 cm, arms on the chest.

*Finds:* head-dress with bronze spiral decoration, a shawl decorated with small tin stars and small glass beads. One rim of the shawl had been decorated with small bronze rings, which, together with pieces of textile, were preserved on the chest and on the bones of the left hand.

#### Viltina II

*Gender:* undetermined.

*Direction:* head to NW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 20 cm. It was partly destroyed and the orientation therefore obscure.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

#### Viltina III

*Gender:* undetermined.

*Direction:* head to NW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of only 5–10 cm, between stones. The middle and foot part of the grave were marked with semi-vertical limestone slabs. The bones of one leg and some other parts of the skeleton were absent.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

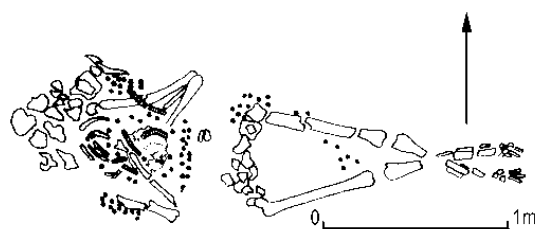


Figure 20. The skeleton I at Viltina cemetery.

<sup>60</sup> Vassar 1940, p 2.

<sup>61</sup> Mägi 2000.

<sup>62</sup> Riksarkivet, ut känd proven 487.

<sup>63</sup> Carlsson 1992.

<sup>64</sup> Mägi, in press.

<sup>65</sup> Schmiedehelm 1944, p 9.

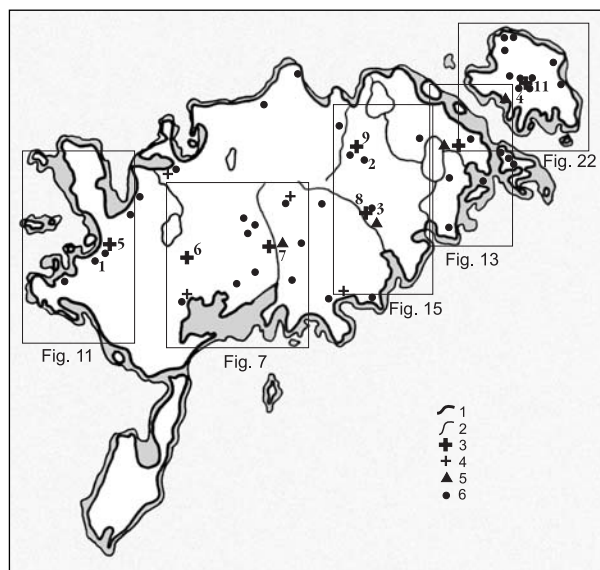
### b) Weapons Find at Viltina Kõo-Matsi

In the course of an inventory made in 1999, a small stone grave was discovered north of the Viltina harbour, about 100 m away from the Rutiränk cemetery. The grave was named the Kõo-Matsi grave.

During the digging of trial pits in the grave, an 11<sup>th</sup> century weapon find came to light. It consisted of a sword, a large spearhead, two smaller socketed javelin-heads, a knife together with the bronze mounts of a man's knife sheath, a belt buckle of Gotland-Baltic type, a smaller knife, two spiral finger rings with middle-plates, bits, iron bridle mountings, and a fragment of some bronze plating (PIs 91–92). The objects had deliberately been damaged and been in a fire. No bones were found in the immediate neighbourhood of the weapons, but a bigger agglomeration of cremated bones, together with rectangular belt mountings, came to light about 30 cm from the weapons. A connection between these two findings cannot be considered to be certain, and the weapons find can most probably be interpreted as a cenotaph.<sup>66</sup>

## 4.2. Inhumation Burials

In the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century a change occurred in Osilian burial practices: cremations in stone graves were replaced by inhumation burials in flat burial grounds (Fig 21). The transformation appears to have been quite sudden, as the inhumation graves seldom contain the jewellery types represented in stone grave complexes. The earliest inhumations on Saaremaa, leaving out of account



**Figure 21.** Saaremaa 1200-1300. 1 - presumed coastline of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, 2 - present-day coastline, 3 - medieval churches, 4 - medieval chapels known from written sources, 5 - Late Iron Age hill-forts, 6 - semi-Christian cemeteries. Excavated cemeteries: 1 - Loona, 2 - Pärsama, 3 - Valjala churchyard, 4 - Viira. Churches: 5 - Kihelkonna, 6 - Kärila, 7 - Kaarma, 8 - Valjala, 9 - Karja, 10 - Pöide, 11 - Muhu.

the exceptional grave at Laadjala, can be dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the beginning the dead were buried with their heads oriented northward, but in the majority of the known burials the deceased has been placed in the grave according to the Christian tradition – with the head oriented to the west. At the start, the dead were accompanied with some artefacts, but even this custom soon disappeared, giving way to the fully Christian, unfurnished burial. The mainland Estonian tradition of burying the deceased in the so-called village graveyards in the vicinity of villages was to a smaller extent also known on Saaremaa.

### 4.2.1. Loona Cemetery

The Loona cemetery is situated in the western part of Saaremaa near the former Loona manor, 3 km to the south-west from Kihelkonna church (Fig 11). It is a gravely-sandy low ridge, stretching in an east–west direction. Both the surroundings of the cemetery and the cemetery itself have been used as fields. On the top of the ridge, west of the inhumation cemetery, lay a Bronze Age stone cist grave and about 0.5 km to the south-east of it was the Loona stone cemetery, which originated probably from the end of the Iron Age.

The stone cist grave and the cremation cemetery as well as a Stone Age settlement site in the same spot as the Loona inhumation cemetery indicate that the region had been inhabited for a long time. It is possible that this was associated with the harbour near the later-period Kihelkonna church 3 km away, but it could also be that there was another harbour site of local importance near Loona that has not yet been found. The appearance of the inhumation tradition there as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century could be explained by the importance trading played in the lives of the people of Loona. The northward orientation of the burials and the frequent occurrence of grave goods point to the fact that the burial practices did not change because of the influence of Christianity. It can rather be assumed that the population of Loona started to inhumate their dead under the influence of Livians from northern Couronia or the estuary of River Daugava.

\*

In 1941 the local inhabitants exhumed a skeleton in the course of excavating sand from the ridge at Loona. The skeleton was accompanied with pieces of jewellery.<sup>67</sup> In addition other, damaged skeletons were found. In the

<sup>66</sup> Mägi 2000.

<sup>67</sup> SM A 152–155; AI 4008.



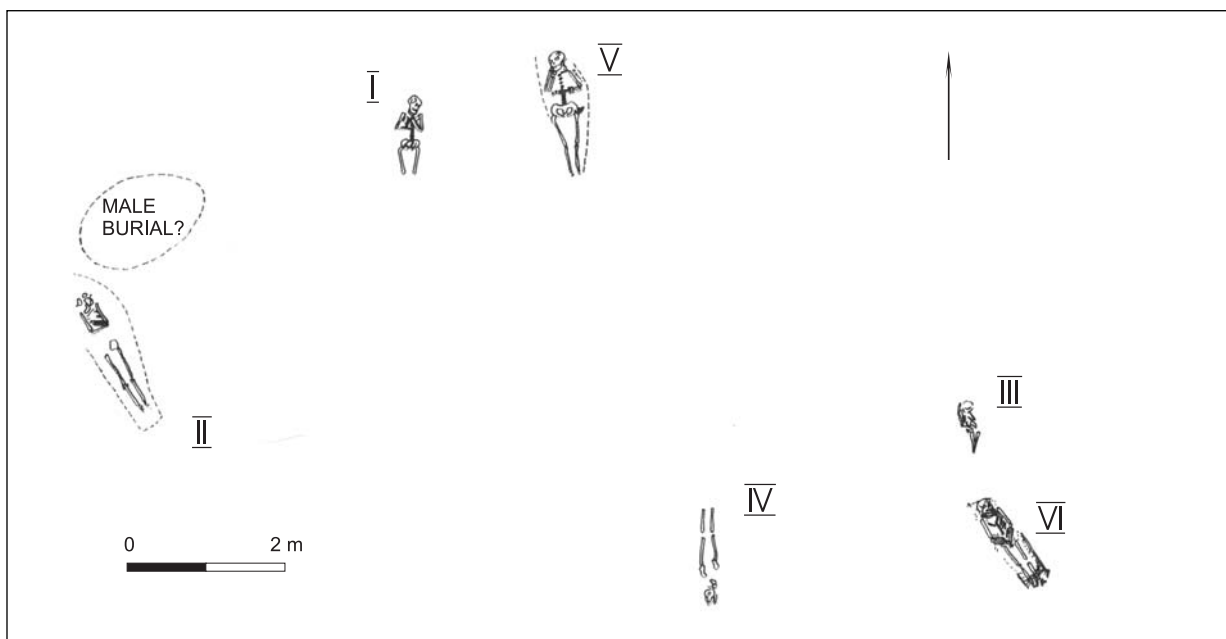


Figure 22. Loona cemetery.

years of 1956–1958, Kustin excavated the surviving section of the cemetery. Six skeletons were found, situated 1 to 5 m away from each other (Fig 22). Most of the deceased had been buried in coffins, on their backs and in the extended position, with their heads directed either north or north-north-west. Five of the burials were richly furnished. Only one deceased had been buried with its head towards the south and the grave unfurnished.<sup>68</sup>

In Kustin's opinion, the full area of the Loona cemetery must have initially been about 300 sq m and it could have included about a dozen burials. If these estimations are correct, it is very unusual that, of the seven preserved burials, six belong to women or girls. Of the stray finds from the destroyed part of the cemetery, a bracelet twisted together from three wires and a neck-ring with double front part also indicate a female burial, whereas other finds – nails, penannular brooches and some other items – can be attributed to either of the sexes. Separately from these, a knob-headed pin should be mentioned that is dated to the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries and thus should have no connection with the inhumation burials. The occurrence of earlier period artefacts in later graves is not unknown, though – a 7<sup>th</sup> century rivet has been found in a 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century Kurevere grave (burial IV).

It seems therefore that in the Loona inhumation cemetery the majority of burials were female, which in comparison with other cemeteries discussed here is a highly atypical phenomenon. The only preserved male burial was situated on the western border of the excavated area. Nearby, from an area with a diameter of 1.5 m, pieces of skeletons were found; also three 13<sup>th</sup> century coins, two iron nails, an iron buckle and parts of a rod chain with a knife and a fire-steel.

Fragments of wood, probably from a coffin, were unearthed in the same spot. Judging from the findings, there had been a male burial. Most of the other stray finds were also picked up from the area west of the burial II. It can thus be presumed that at Loona females were mostly buried on the eastern side of the cemetery and males on the western – supposing, of course, that the demolished part had contained even more male burials.

The Loona cemetery was in use for about a hundred years. Assuming that the majority of the damaged part of the cemetery had contained male burials, it can be inferred that a couple consisting of one man and one woman had been buried every 20 years – which indicates that the cemetery was used by one family.

#### Loona I (PI 93)

Sex: female.

Direction: head to N.

Date: end of the 12<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 30 cm. The right arm was on the waist, the left one on the chest. Shin-bones were absent. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

Finds: a neck-band with cowries and beads round the neck, a few bronze spirals in the same area.

#### Loona II (PI 94)

Sex: male.

Direction: head to NW.

Date: end of the 12<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 70 cm. The right arm was on the waist, the left one on the chest. The bones were poorly preserved.

Finds: a penannular brooch on the left shoulder, bronze spirals on the collar, near the knees and beside the shin-bones, probably from the rim-decoration of some garment. A belt had been laid next to the head, a finger-ring beside the feet.

<sup>68</sup> Kustin 1959.

**Loona III (Pl 95)**

Sex: female.

Direction: head to N.

Date: end of the 12<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 20 cm and the bones were mixed; it was impossible, therefore, to determine the exact position of the skeleton. Shin-bones and femurs were absent.

Finds: a penannular brooch and two bracelets.

**Loona IV**

Sex: female.

Direction: head to S.

Date: 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century?

The skeleton lay at a depth of 27 cm and was partly mixed. The arm-bones were missing.

Finds: no preserved grave goods.

**Loona V (Pls 96–97)**

Sex: female.

Direction: head to N.

Date: end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 20–30 cm. The dead had been buried in a coffin; the right arm was on the chest, the left one on the waist (Fig 23).

Finds: a head dress had been decorated with bronze spirals, small rings, one glass and one amber bead. On the chest lay a penannular brooch, on each arm were two bracelets. Around the waist of the woman had been a leather belt with bronze fittings. A knife sheath had been attached to the belt.

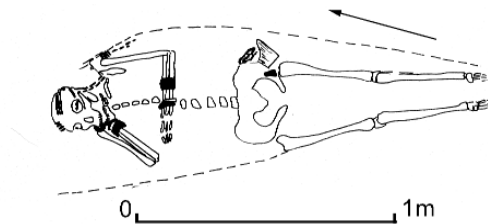


Figure 23. The skeleton V at Loona cemetery.

**Loona VI (Pls 98–99)**

Sex: female.

Direction: head to NW.

Date: end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The dead had been buried at a depth of 20–40 cm, in a coffin. Both arms were on the pelvis (Fig 24).

Finds: around the neck were two neck-rings and a neck-band of small beads and a coin pendant. On each arm was a spiral bracelet. A head-dress was decorated with bronze spirals. Beside the feet lay a finger-ring. The coffin had been covered with a bronze-decorated shawl.

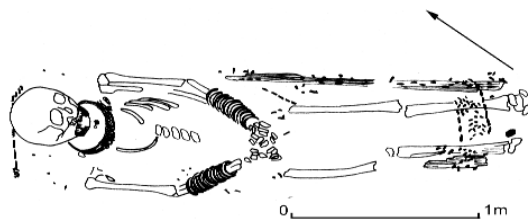


Figure 24. The skeleton VI at Loona cemetery.

**Loona VII**

(Found by local people in 1941.)

Gender: female.

Direction: unknown

Date: 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century.

Nothing is known about the position of the skeleton.

Finds: two penannular brooches, two bracelets, a finger-ring.

**4.2.2. The Graveyard Around the Church of Valjala**

Studies in the history of architecture have proved that the stone church of Valjala is one of the oldest on Saaremaa, built in the first half or in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>69</sup> The church was erected in the neighbourhood of many stone graves and the Valjala stronghold. The latter has been called the most important centre of Saaremaa in chronicles from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>70</sup>

In 1971, during the excavations for research in architectural history, two skeletons were uncovered: a richly furnished female burial beside the southern wall of the church<sup>71</sup> and a presumed male burial with a sword from the northern side<sup>72</sup> (Fig 25). The bones of the female burial, except for the skull, were not picked up and no bones were noticed near the sword.

In 1975 small-scale archaeological excavations in the churchyard were carried out under the supervision of Jüri Selirand. In the course of these, another female burial with a foetus or a new-born infant was discovered at the southern side of the church. This woman had also been inhumed together with her jewellery.<sup>73</sup> Near the sword find from the northern side of the church, pieces of a skeleton were found. A fourth skeleton was also unearthed, which proved impossible to date because of the absence of any grave goods.<sup>74</sup>

The excavations were continued in 1974, but no more furnished skeletons were unearthed. From the mixed part on the western side of the digs several 13<sup>th</sup> century artefacts were found – four knives, a penannular brooch, a small cross-headed pin with connected terminals and pieces of chain, a child's spiral bracelet, bronze spirals.<sup>75</sup> A few dozen metres north of the church 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century bracelets and a woman's bronze buckle were discovered in 1977.<sup>76</sup> Apparently all of these artefacts originated from graves that had been mixed up with later burials.

It is probable that the church was built on an earlier shrine, which could be deduced from the fact that the small lake that at one time existed nearby was considered holy. The position of some of the skeletons described above, in relation to the church foundation, indicates that a church or a chapel of stone or with stone foundations was already situated there at the time of the

<sup>69</sup> Markus 1999, pp 190–193.

<sup>70</sup> HCL, XXX: 5.

<sup>71</sup> AI 4647: 1–5.

<sup>72</sup> Raam 1972; finds AI 4648.

<sup>73</sup> AI 4674: 1–3.

<sup>74</sup> Selirand 1973; 1975.

<sup>75</sup> Selirand 1974a; 1976; finds AI 4674.

<sup>76</sup> SM A 691–693.

burials, perhaps as early as around the year 1200. The location of the female graves right beside the church wall indicates that the deceased probably belonged to the elite.<sup>77</sup> The spread of Christianity prior to and after the conquest is discussed in chapter 7.

#### Valjala I (PI 100)

Sex: female.

Direction: head to W.

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay on the southern side of the church, at a depth of about 1.1 m from the medieval ground level. The dead had been buried in a coffin, beside an already existing stone foundation. The arms were crossed on the waist.

*Finds:* on the chest lay a cross-headed pin and a penannular brooch, on the shoulders two chain-holders. Around the neck was a massive spiral neck-ring. On the pelvis a 31-cm long belt chain was found. The garment of the dead had been decorated with bronze.

#### Valjala II (PI 101)

Sex: female (pregnant woman).

Direction: head to W.

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton was found on the southern side of the church, about 1 m SE of burial I. It lay at a depth of about 1.3 m from the medieval ground level. The leg bones remained under the later pier of the church. No remains of a coffin were recorded but under the skull was a large limestone rock. The right arm was on the chest, the left one bent up to the left shoulder (Fig 26). Near the pelvis the bones of an foetus were found.

*Finds:* a head-dress had been decorated with bronze spirals and glass beads. On both shoulders a cross-headed pin was found. A 65-cm long chain was fixed to the pins.

#### Valjala III (PI 102)

Gender: male (165-cm tall man).

Direction: head to N.

Date: end of the 12<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The burial was recorded on the northern side of the church, between the foundations of a later chapel-building. The dead had been buried at a depth of about 90 cm from the medieval ground level. The bones were poorly preserved.

*Finds:* on the left beside the shin-bones the blade of a sword together with a scabbard end was found. A few bronze spirals were recorded in the same spot.

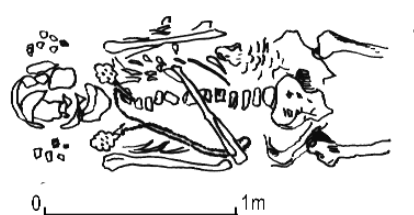


Figure 26. Female skeleton II in the Valjala churchyard.

### 4.2.3. Karja Cemetery

The Karja cemetery on North Saaremaa is situated in Pärsama village, about 2 km south–east of the Karja church, on the western edge of a wide ridge, positioned in a north–south direction on the bank of the Karjamõisa river (Fig 15). The soil is gravelly, with many stones. The place has not been known among the locals as a cemetery; there is data of another, supposedly a cremation cemetery, which seems to have been destroyed.<sup>78</sup>

The surroundings of the Karja church were not mentioned as a separate district in the written sources of the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and so it has been suggested that the area belonged to the prehistoric Valjala (*Valdele*) district. As the power centre of *Valdele* indisputably was the Valjala stronghold, one may assume that the northern part of the district was dependent on Valjala in some way. The expansion of *Valdele* can be connected with the sudden increase of archaeological evidence in the surroundings of Valjala in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and may thus have been happened during this century.

<sup>77</sup> Staecker 2001.

<sup>78</sup> SMM 1924, p 42.

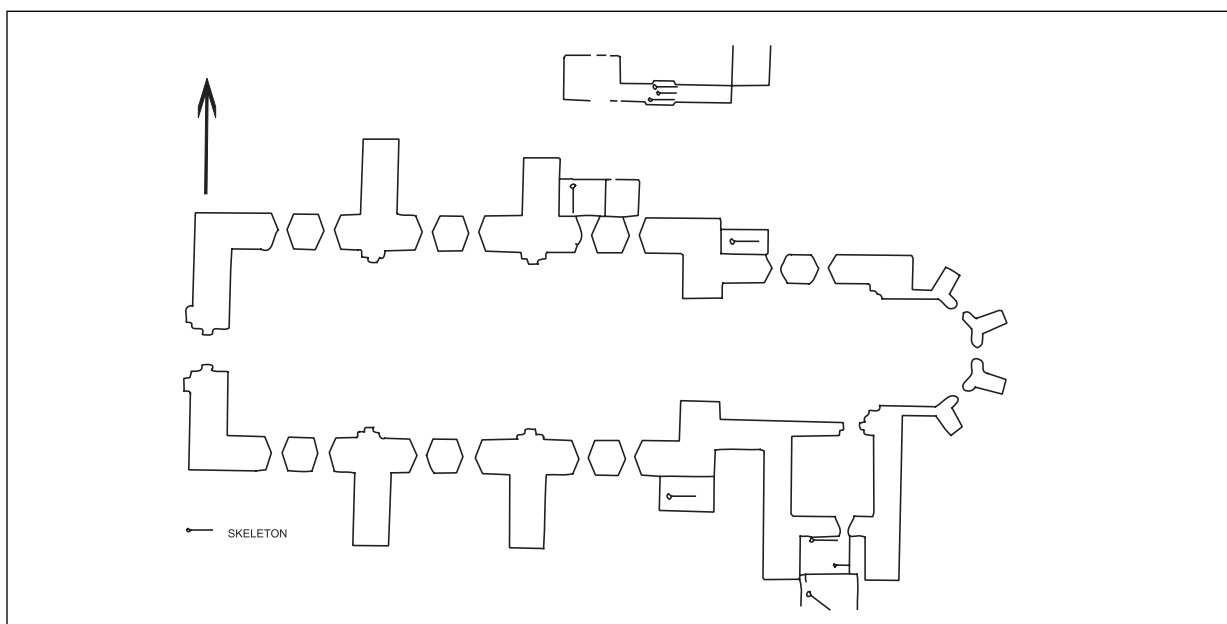


Figure 25. Valjala church and churchyard with burials.

Excluding the Karja inhumation cemetery, very little archaeological investigation has been carried out in the later Karja parish. The area was surrounded by a wide marshy zone in the east, at least part of which had been a bay. The local tradition even remembers a harbour site in Mätja.<sup>79</sup> Near the latter, a church was erected after Christianisation, which in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century was rebuilt in stone.<sup>80</sup>

Comparatively few stone graves are known in the surroundings of Karja but those that are recorded quite clearly mark local sub-districts. At some distance from the others a small settlement unit, possibly a single large household, was situated near the present village of Pamma. It was indicated by a small refuge hillfort and by some obscure data about stone graves.<sup>81</sup> East of the core area of Karja lay the Tagavere sub-district, which probably belonged to the Karja district in prehistoric time but later formed a part of Pöide and then Jaani ecclesiastical parishes.

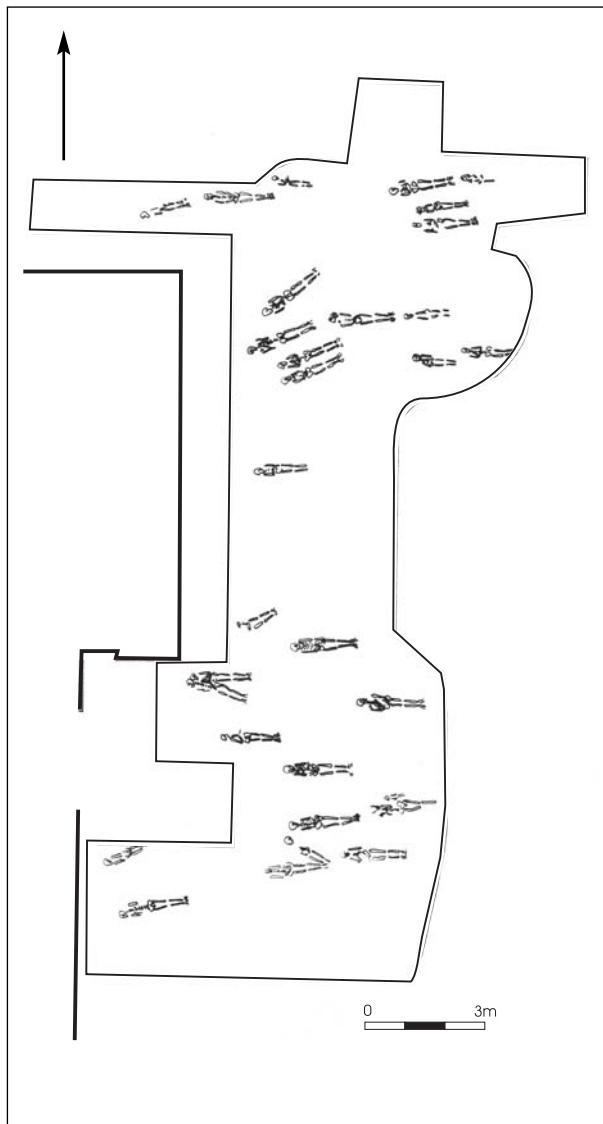


Figure 27. Karja cemetery.

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In 1949 18 skeletons with some artefacts were unearthed in the course of construction works in Pärsama. In 1955 the whole of the preserved part of the cemetery was excavated under the lead of Kustin. 32 skeletons were discovered, but as a later-erected building covered a part of the cemetery, Kustin believed that the total number of burials could have been around 70. All the dead had been buried with their heads oriented westward (with some deviations), mostly on their backs in the extended position (Fig 27). In many graves there were remains of coffins. Originally, this inhumation cemetery had taken up about 400 sq m.

The material from the excavated part has been published in a separate article.<sup>82</sup> There exist drawings of all the burials, but most of these are very schematic.<sup>83</sup> The bones were anthropologically analysed in the 1950s by Karin Mark; in 1999 the surviving parts of the skeletons were re-examined by Jonathan Kalman. The data presented here is based on the latter study; Karin Mark's results have been used only in cases where the bones were inaccessible for re-examination.

Of the 32 skeletons that were found in Kustin's excavation, 13 belonged to men, 10 to women, and 9 to children. Additionally, some more children's bones were acquired in two cases, but these can not be considered as separate burials in the light of available information. It is possible that the find boxes in the funds included bones from the demolished part of the cemetery.

Although men's burials were in the majority, these included far fewer grave goods than the female and children's burials. From this point of view, Karja resembles other transition-period burial places. This phenomenon is usually explained by the fact that the male burials in earlier periods had mainly consisted of weapons and tools, which were not customarily included in inhumations.

The osteological analyses of the cemetery proved that almost all the individuals inhumed there had suffered malnutrition and done hard physical labour during their lifetimes. At least three of the deceased, among them a 7-year-old child, had been killed violently. The cemetery had not been divided into male and female burial grounds, though the same sex burials were sometimes closer together. Children had been buried on both sides. Two couples that had obviously been buried at the same time both consisted of a male and a child.

<sup>79</sup> SMM 1924, p 36.

<sup>80</sup> Markus 1999, pp 170 ff.

<sup>81</sup> SMM 1924, pp 38 ff.

<sup>82</sup> Kustin 1958.

<sup>83</sup> Kustin 1956.

**Karja I** (PI 103)

*Gender:* male?

*Direction:* head to SW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 40 cm; only the leg-bones were preserved. Pieces of skull, ribs and some other bones nearby may perhaps have originated from the same burial.

*Finds:* between the leg bones lay a knife, the top of its blade towards the feet. In the mixed part of the grave, bronze plating of a knife sheath, another knife, a belt chain, a buckle, an iron nail, a coin and pieces of wood were found and may perhaps belong to the same burial.

**Karja II** (PI 104)

*Sex:* female (over-40-years-old).

*Direction:* head to WNW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 30–40 cm; arm-bones and shin-bones were absent. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* on the chest near the jawbone were a penannular brooch and a small cross-headed pin. The collar and the back side of the head-dress had been decorated with bronze spirals and small rings. An iron buckle was found beside the right knee; presumably a leather belt had been laid there.

**Karja III** (PI 105)

*Sex:* male (30–35-years-old, 168-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WSW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 40–50 cm, both arms raised to the shoulders. Pieces of wood indicate a coffin.

*Finds:* a knife on the right hip-bone.

**Karja IV** (PI 106)

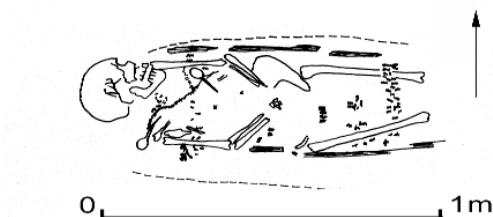
*Sex:* female (35–45-years-old).

*Direction:* head to WSW.

*Date:* the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 65–70 cm. Both arms were placed on the femur. Shin-bones were absent. There were pieces of wood, originating from a coffin, around and under the skeleton (Fig 28).

*Finds:* on the chest lay a chain arrangement, fixed on the shoulders with two pins. The collar had been decorated with bronze. A small knife was found under the right humerus of the skeleton. As indicated by pieces of wood under the bronze decoration and remains of textile, a bronze decorated garment, obviously a shawl, had covered the coffin.



**Figure 28.** Burial IV at Karja cemetery.

**Karja V** (PI 107)

*Sex:* male (25–35-years-old).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50 cm and was well preserved. The arms were crossed on the waist. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* a knife had obviously been attached to the belt and was found on the right hip-bone. Another knife lay under the right arm-bones, with the top of its blade towards the feet.

**Karja VI**

*Sex:* male? (17–20-years-old, 162-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50–60 cm. The right arm was on the pelvis, the

left one straight at the side. Wooden fragments of a coffin were preserved.

*Finds:* a pattern formed by bronze spirals was found beside the left femur.

**Karja VII** (PI 108)

*Sex:* female (40–50-years-old).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 55 cm, the arms crossed on the chest. Wooden fragments of a coffin were preserved.

*Finds:* one penannular brooch was unearthed on the chest, another on the right shoulder. Around the neck had been a band of beads and a coin pendant; on the finger of the right hand had been a ring. Bronze spiral patterns, found on the chest, along the leg-bones and near the knees together with wood fragments under them indicate that the coffin had obviously been covered with a bronze-decorated shawl.

**Karja VIII** (PI 109)

*Sex:* female? (more than 25-years-old, 154-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50–60 cm; part of the skull was absent. Both arms were on the pelvis.

*Finds:* on the chest two coins, some bronze spirals and small rings were found. On the left side of the chest lay a bronze buckle together with fragments of wood. A knife was found under the right shoulder.

**Karja IX** (PI 110)

*Sex:* undetermined (8.5–9.5-years-old child, 128-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50 cm, both arms straight at the sides. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* beside the left foot a leather belt with a small bronze buckle and a bronze mount had been placed.

**Karja X** (PI 111)

*Sex:* male (40–50-years-old, 173-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WSW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The male skeleton was found at a depth of 50 cm, together with a child skeleton (the burial Xa). Both arms were on the chest. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* on the right side of the skeleton, slightly above the waist, a knife was uncovered. Near the feet a part of a bronze ring was found.

**Karja Xa** (PI 112)

*Sex:* undetermined (child).

*Direction:* head to WSW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The child skeleton was found on the left side of the burial X and was poorly preserved.

*Finds:* near the skull a fang and a fragment of iron artefact were recorded.

**Karja XI** (PI 113)

*Sex:* undetermined (1.5–2-years-old child).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Only the skull was preserved at a depth of 40–50 cm, together with the skeleton XII. The child was obviously buried together with the latter.

*Finds:* three bronze bells were recorded beside the skull.

**Karja XII** (PI 114)

*Sex:* male (25–35-years-old).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The man had been buried together with the child XI at a depth of 50–60 cm. Both arms were on the waist. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* on the left hip-bone an iron buckle with fragments of leather was found.

**Karja XIII** (PI 115)

*Sex:* female (40–50-years-old, 152-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 60–70 cm, the arms crossed on the chest. Remains of a wooden chest were recorded (Fig 29).

*Finds:* on each shoulder a cross-headed pin was found; the chain with a round pendant was in a pile near the right arm. Fragments of two knives were uncovered on the right hip-bone, a finger-ring beside the left shin-bone. A bronze-decorated shawl had covered the head half of the coffin.

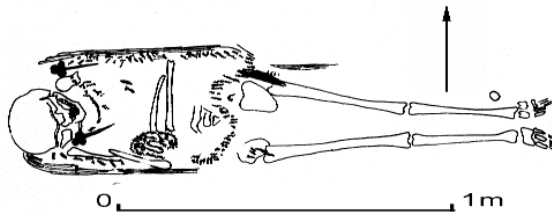


Figure 29. Burial XIII at Karja cemetery.

#### Karja XIV

*Sex:* male? (40–60-years-old, 165-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WSW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 60 cm, both arms on the waist. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* a knife was found between the leg-bones, the top of its blade towards the skull.

#### Karja XV (PI 116)

*Sex:* male (20–30-years-old, 162-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WSW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 55–60 cm. The right arm was on the chest, the left one on the waist. Few remains of a coffin were preserved.

*Finds:* near the left elbow a knife sheath with a knife, a belt mount and a fragment of an iron artefact were found. On the right side of the waist lay a fire-steel with a piece of flintstone. A few bronze spirals with textile fragments were uncovered near the right knee.

#### Karja XVI (PI 117)

*Sex:* male (more than 40-years-old, 173-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WSW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 60 cm, both arms raised near the jawbone. A few remains of a wooden coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* Under the right hip-bone a knife sheath with fragments of iron artefact and few bronze spirals was uncovered. Five iron nails and an iron hook were found around the skeleton.

#### Karja XVII

*Sex:* male (40–60-years-old, 160-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WSW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 55–60 cm. The right arm was on the pelvis, the left one was almost straight, the fingers on the left hip-bone. No remains of a wooden coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

#### Karja XVIII (PI 118)

*Sex:* male (30–40-years-old, 175-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to SW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50 cm. The right arm was on the waist, the left one on the pelvis. No remains of a wooden coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* on the left hip-bone a knife sheath with a knife and a belt chain was found.

#### Karja XIX (PI 120)

*Sex:* undetermined (7–8-years-old child).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50–55 cm, arms on the waist. Wooden fragments of a coffin were preserved (Fig 30).

*Finds:* one coin pendant was found on the chest, another on the left hip-bone. The latter was recorded together with a belt chain and some bronze spirals. Around the upper part of the knees a wide zone of bronze patterns, probably the bottom edge of a coat, was recorded.

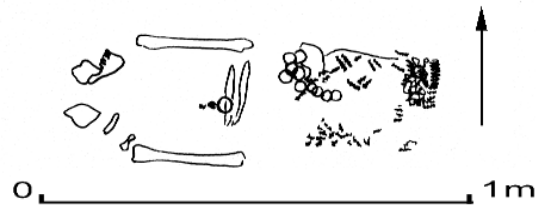


Figure 30. Child burial XIX at Karja cemetery.

#### Karja XX

*Sex:* undetermined (9–10-years-old child).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century?

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50 cm and was very poorly preserved. The arms were on the chest or on the waist. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* a small knife on the left hip-bone and a few bronze spirals beside the left shin-bone.

#### Karja XXI (PI 119)

*Sex:* male (more than 40-years-old, 170-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 65–70 cm, the right arm on the chest, the left one on the pelvis. No remains of a coffin were preserved.

*Finds:* between the femurs a knife with leather remains of a sheath, an iron buckle, a bronze joining mount and a fragment of a whetstone were unearthed.

#### Karja XXII (PI 121)

*Sex:* female (35–45-years-old, 160-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century?

The skeleton lay at a depth of 55–60 cm. The right arm had been raised under the jawbone, the left one was on the waist, with the fingers on the right elbow. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* the broken pin of a penannular brooch was found under the jawbone, a few small bronze rings on the waist.

#### Karja XXIII (PI 122)

*Sex:* female (more than 40-years-old, 158-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WNW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century?

The skeleton lay at a depth of 60–70 cm; the right arm and the right hip-bone were absent. The left arm was on the pelvis. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* on the chest lay a penannular brooch.

#### Karja XXIV

*Sex:* undetermined (about 7-years-old child).

*Direction:* head to WSW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 60–70 cm, the right arm on the pelvis, the left one straight at the side. The skull was broken by a sword or an axe. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

#### Karja XXV (PI 123)

*Sex:* female (40–50-years-old, 164-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 60–70 cm. The right arm was on the waist, the left one on the chest. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* on the collar were bronze spirals and small bronze rings.

**Karja XXVI**

Sex: male (25–35-years-old, 166-cm tall).

Direction: head to W.

Date: 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50–60 cm. The right arm was straight at the side, the left one on the pelvis. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

Finds: no preserved grave goods.

**Karja XXVII (Pl 124)**

Sex: female (35–45-years-old pregnant woman, 155-cm tall).

Direction: head to W.

Date: second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 60 cm, the right arm was raised on to the right shoulder, the left one on the waist. No remains of a coffin were recorded. A few small bones indicated a foetus.

Finds: silver bracelets were unearthed on both arms. A knife had been placed on the chest and a neck-band with beads and a coin pendant on the pelvis.

**Karja XXVIII**

Sex: undetermined (about 9-years-old child, 124-cm tall).

Direction: head to W.

Date: 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 55–60 cm, beside the burial XXVII. The arms were on the waist or on the pelvis. No remains of a coffin were preserved.

Finds: a knife on the left hip-bone.

**Karja XXIX (Pl 125)**

Sex: female (30–40-years-old, 157-cm tall).

Direction: head to WSW.

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50 cm. The right arm was on the waist, the left one on the chest. No remains of a coffin were recorded (Fig 31).

Finds: two penannular brooches were found, one on each shoulder; fragments of a chain were recorded on the same spot. A knife lay under the bones of the left arm. Bronze spirals, obviously originating from a shawl, were unearthed on the chest, near the knees and parallel to the left femur.

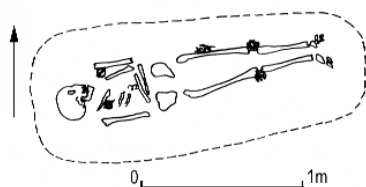


Figure 31. Burial XXIX at Karja cemetery.

**Karja XXX (Pl 126)**

Sex: undetermined (8–9-years-old child, probably a girl, 116-cm tall).

Direction: head to W.

Date: end of the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton was found at a depth of 55–60 cm. Both arms were on the waist. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

Finds: a spiral bracelet was on both arms, a neck-band of beads round the neck. A penannular brooch and a knife were found on the waist. On the chest and under the skull a bronze decoration was preserved.

**Karja XXXI (Pl 127)**

Sex: undetermined (4–5-years-old child).

Direction: head to W.

Date: second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 50 cm and was poorly preserved. The right arm was on the chest, the left arm was absent. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

Finds: a neck-band with spirals, a small bell and a coin pendant was round the neck, a bracelet on one arm. Beside the feet a knife and a small penannular brooch was found.

**4.2.4. Viira Cemetery**

The inhumation cemetery at the village of Viira on the island of Muhu is less than 1 km WNW of Muhu church (Fig 32). It is a low gravel ridge, stretching in an east–west direction and is known in the local tradition as Kõrtsimäe (“Inn Hill”). Nowadays, the Kuressaare–Kuivastu roadway cuts the ridge in two and it was because of maintenance work on the road that rescue excavations were launched in 1962 under the supervision of Kustin. The surviving part of the cemetery was fully excavated. The discoveries there included 31 skeletons that had been buried on their backs, with their heads directed west or north-west (Fig 33). There were no deposits found in most of the burials, though some of the burials did contain a few grave goods.<sup>84</sup> The results of these excavations have not been published and there exist only schematic drawings of the skeletons.

The Viira burial ground was situated in a settlement centre in the prehistoric district of Muhu (*Mone*), where other Late Iron Age antiquities are also known. The Muhu church is only 800 m away from the cemetery. At Liiva, less than 1.5-km north-east of the Viira cemetery, lies another, probably an inhumation cemetery, that has not been excavated.<sup>85</sup> This cemetery is also only about 800 m distant from the church. The two 10<sup>th</sup> century pins found in the surrounding area around the Liiva cemetery suggest that there could have been a cremation burial ground in the vicinity of the inhumation cemetery. Stone graves with cremation burials from the end of the Iron Age are known also from Päälda and Kantsi, and a 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century and Early Viking Age cemetery was situated in Mäla. Some artefacts obtained from the churchyard of Muhu indicate that it also could include some furnished burials from the transition period.

It is evident that far fewer Late Iron Age stone cemeteries than inhumation burial grounds are known on the island of Muhu. Both types of cemeteries were more widespread in the middle part of the island, where the church had also been erected. The Muhu stronghold, obviously the Late Iron Age political centre, was nevertheless founded in the south-western part of the island, on the coast of the Little Strait between Saaremaa and Muhu. A possible explanation for such a location may be the alliance of the Muhu (*Mone*) and Põide (*Horele*) districts, as a result of which the Muhu stronghold was erected as the centre of the two united areas.<sup>86</sup>

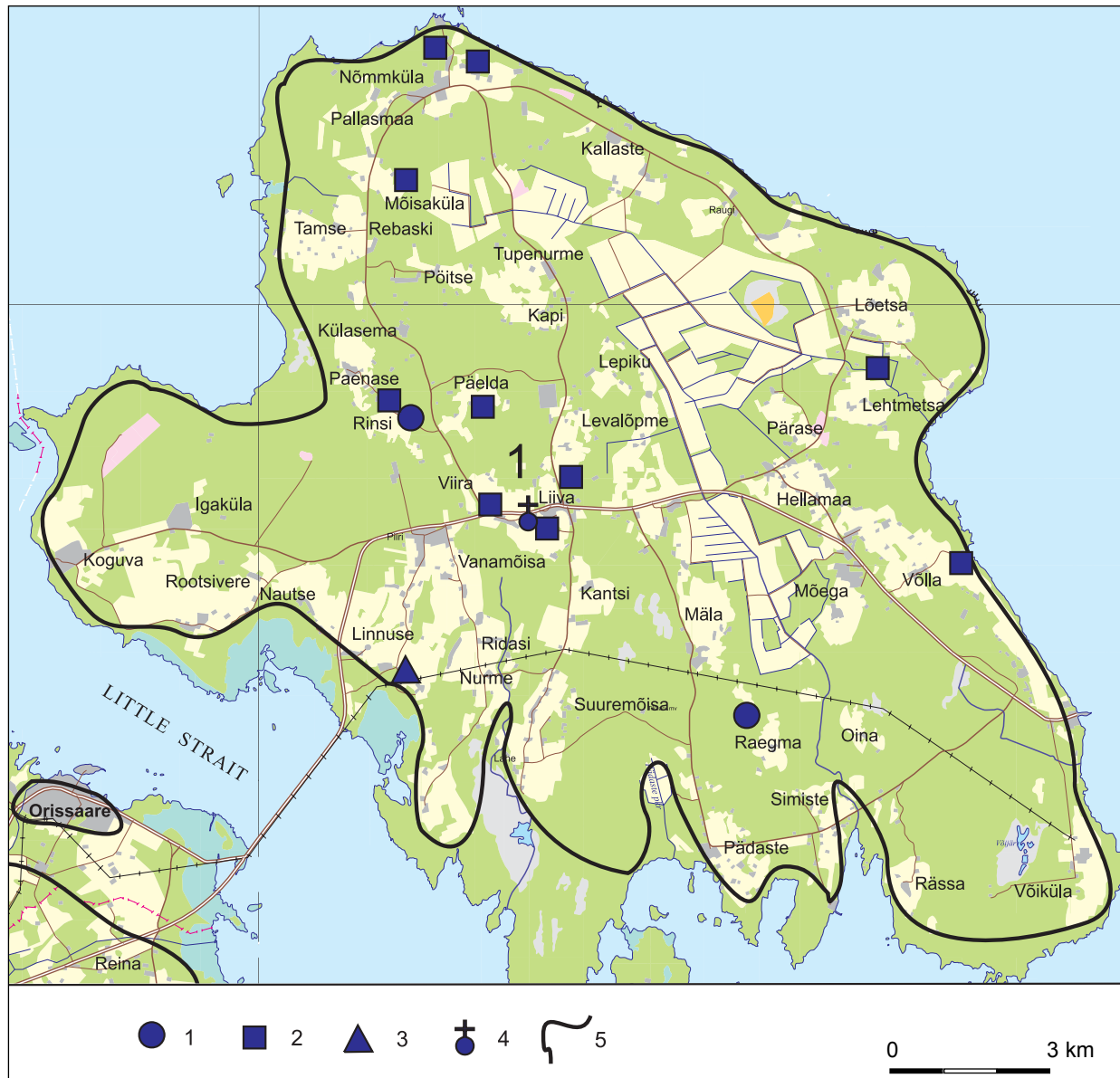
\*

<sup>84</sup> Kustin 1964; finds Al 4299.

<sup>85</sup> SMM 1924, p 133.

<sup>86</sup> Mägi 1998, pp 152–153.





**Figure 32..** Muhu (*Mõne*) district. 1 - stone cemetery; 2 - (probable) inhumation cemetery; 3 - hillfort; 4 - parish church; 5 - probable coastline about 1000 years ago. Cemeteries: 1 - Viira.

Prehistoric finds have also been recorded earlier from the site at the hill of Kõrtsimäe, and in 1872 Holzmayer excavated a furnished female burial there.<sup>87</sup> There is information also about another skeleton exhumed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The burials at Viira have clearly been made in the Christian tradition. As the majority of the burials were unfurnished, the dating is complicated. The few burials that include grave goods can be dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The small area of the cemetery, the number of burials and their location all suggest that the period of use of the burial place could not have been long; thus it can be assumed that the rest of the burials also originate from the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

Unfortunately the skeletons of Viira could not be anthropologically analysed as these bones could not be found in the

stores. According to Kustin, the bones had been badly preserved. In its nature, the Viira cemetery much resembles that of Karja, except that the Karja burials were more richly furnished. It is difficult to estimate the size of the community burying at Viira, as it is unknown how large the cemetery was before its destruction. The number of burials in the excavated part gives reason to believe that, like the Karja cemetery, the place was used by a community larger than one family. Most probably it was a part of the congregation of Muhu church that buried their dead there.

<sup>87</sup> Holzmayer 1880, pp 21–24; finds AI K 36: 1–5.



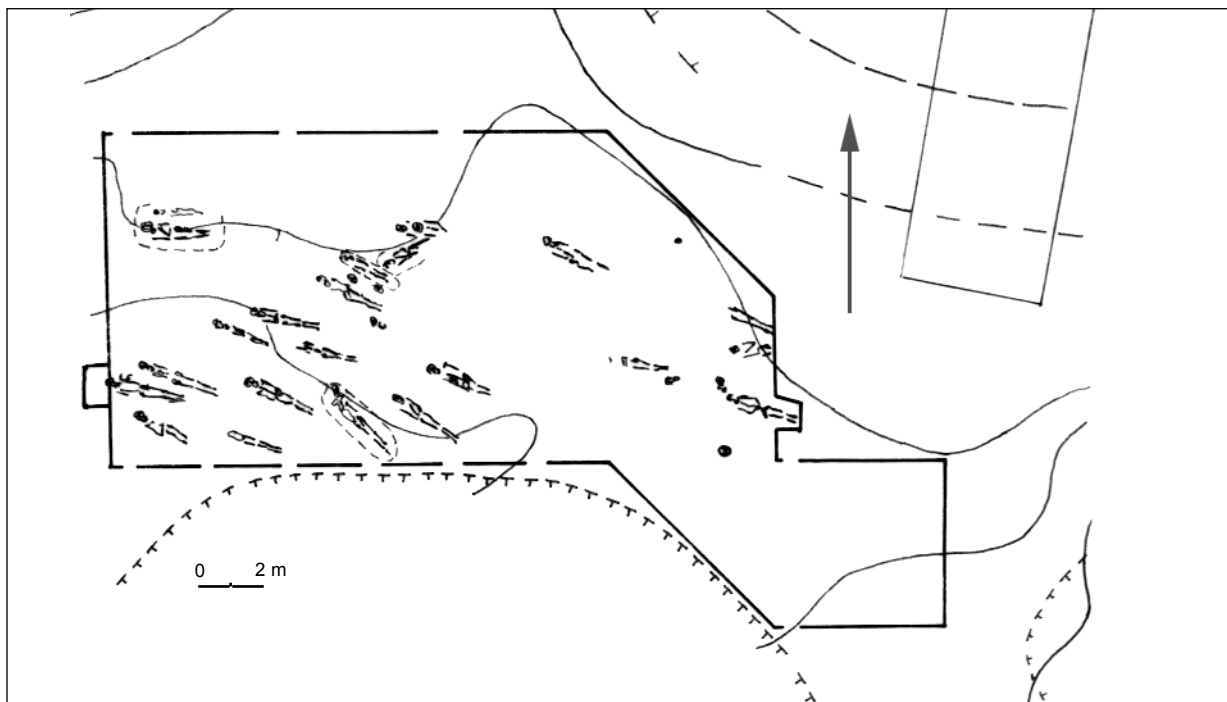


Figure 33. Viira cemetery.

**Viira I** (PI 128)

*Gender:* female.

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century?

The skeleton lay at a depth of 88 cm. Only pieces of skull and of pelvis were preserved. Wood fragments indicated a coffin.

*Finds:* a chain arrangement with two iron pins or chain-holders, a bronze bell and a bead was found on the chest. On the right side near the pelvis 22 small glass beads, probably a neck-band, were found in a pile. At a distance of about 40 cm from the skeleton lay a knife and a penannular brooch. Bronze decoration with textile and wooden remains on the chest and on the shin-bones indicate that the coffin had been obviously covered with a bronze-decorated shawl. Two iron nails were found near the feet.

**Viira II** (PI 129)

*Sex:* male.

*Direction:* head to W.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century?

The skeleton lay at a depth of 75 cm, right beside skeleton I. The right arm was on the chest, the left one on the waist. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* an iron buckle lay on the waist, a knife on the left hip-bone. Two bronze spirals were found under the right shin-bone near the knee.

**Viira III** (PI 130)

*Sex:* male (180-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WNW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century?

The skeleton lay at a depth of 94 cm; the bones of arms and feet were absent. No remains of a coffin were preserved.

*Finds:* three iron rings on the left hip-bone, a small bronze tube under the left hip-bone.

**Viira IV** (PI 131)

*Sex:* male (174-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WNW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 78 cm, arms on the pelvis. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* an iron buckle near the waist, a knife near the right shoulder.

**Viira V** (PI 132)

*Sex:* undetermined (juvenile).

*Direction:* head to NW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 98 cm. The right arm was on the waist, the left one was absent. No remains of a coffin were preserved.

*Finds:* small bronze rings on the right arm-bone.

**Viira VI**

*Sex:* undetermined (child, 140-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WNW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 75 cm, both arms straight at the sides. A few wooden fragments of a coffin were preserved.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira VII**

*Sex:* male (172-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to NW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 67 cm, arms on the pelvis. No wooden remains of a coffin were preserved but granite stone slabs were recorded under the skeleton and in the southern part of the grave.

*Finds:* a bronze spiral between the bones of the foot.

**Viira VIII**

*Sex:* undetermined (child).

*Direction:* head to WNW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The grave was 60 cm deep; only the skull of the skeleton was preserved. Wooden fragments indicated a coffin.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira IX**

*Sex:* male (165-cm tall).

*Direction:* head to WNW.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 85 cm, arms on the waist. No remains of a coffin were preserved.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira X**

*Sex:* undetermined.  
*Direction:* head to NW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 68 cm and was very poorly preserved. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira XI ja XII**

*Sex:* female and male (the man 160-cm tall).  
*Direction:* head to NW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

A man and a woman had been buried in one 60 cm deep grave, obviously in one coffin; wooden fragments of the latter were preserved. The bones of the woman were much less preserved than those of the man. The arms of the man had been placed on the chest.

*Finds:* a knife was found on the pelvis of the man; no preserved grave goods were recorded in the female burial.

**Viira XIII**

*Sex:* undetermined (165-cm tall).  
*Direction:* head to WNW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 87 cm. The left arm was on the waist; the bones of the right arm were not preserved. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira XIV–XVI**

*Sex:* undetermined.  
*Direction:* unknown.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century?

Only skulls had been preserved from these burials. The skulls lay at a depth of 62–68 cm, near the burial XIII.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira XVII**

*Sex:* undetermined.  
*Direction:* head to WNW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 94 cm and was very poorly preserved. The long bones were absent. Wooden remains indicated a coffin.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira XVIII (PI 133)**

*Sex:* female.  
*Direction:* head to WSW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 80 cm. The right arm was on the chest, the left one on the waist. Wooden fragments of a coffin were preserved under the skeleton.

*Finds:* A neck-band of beads was round the neck, a penannular brooch under the jawbone, a bronze decoration near the left arm and elbow. A pin lay to the right of the skull. On the left side under the skeleton an oblong iron artefact, perhaps a javelin-head, was unearthed.

**Viira XIX ja XX (PI 134)**

*Sex:* female and male.  
*Direction:* head to W.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Both the dead had been probably buried in one 95-cm deep grave. Both skeletons were only partly preserved. No remains of a coffin (coffins) were recorded.

*Finds:* on the chest of the female burial lay a chain arrangement that had been fixed by two pins on the shoulders. No preserved grave goods were recorded in the male burial.

**Viira XXI**

*Sex:* female (175-cm tall).  
*Direction:* head to NW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 95 cm. The right arm was on the waist, the left one on the chest. Wooden fragments indicated a coffin.

*Finds:* two iron nails near the skull.

**Viira XXII (PI 135)**

*Sex:* female?  
*Direction:* head to NW.  
*Date:* end of the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 72 cm. The right arm was raised to the jawbone, the left one was on the waist. Wooden fragments of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* a penannular brooch lay under the jawbone, bronze-decorated textile fragments between the left hip-bone and the left elbow. Two iron nails were found to the left of the skull.

**Viira XXIII**

*Sex:* male.  
*Direction:* head to WNW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century?

The skeleton lay at a depth of 88 cm and was only partly preserved. Wooden fragments indicated a coffin.

*Finds:* a few bronze spirals beside the left femur, iron nails around the skeleton.

**Viira XXIV (PI 136)**

Only a partly preserved skull indicated the burial; beside the skull a knife was found.

**Viira XXV**

*Sex:* female (160-cm tall).  
*Direction:* head to WNW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 1 m; the arm-bones and the pelvis were absent. Wooden fragments indicated a coffin.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira XXVI (PI 137)**

*Gender:* female.  
*Direction:* unknown.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century?

Only a skull was preserved from this burial. It lay at a depth of 99 cm, near the feet of burial XXV.

*Finds:* a bronze-decorated textile fragment was found under the skull.

**Viira XXVII**

*Sex:* undetermined (juvenile).  
*Direction:* head to WNW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

Only leg-bones at a depth of 93 cm were preserved from this burial. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira XXVIII**

*Sex:* undetermined (child).  
*Direction:* head to W.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 90 cm. The left arm was on the chest; the bones of the right arm were not preserved. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira XXIX (PI 138)**

*Sex:* female?  
*Direction:* unknown  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century?

Only a skull at a depth of 92 cm was preserved from this burial.

*Finds:* two bronze bells and three iron rivets were found near the skull.

**Viira XXX**

*Sex:* male (165-cm tall).  
*Direction:* head to WNW.  
*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton lay at a depth of 77 cm, arms crossed on the waist. No remains of a coffin were recorded.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira XXXI**

*Sex:* undetermined.

*Direction:* unknown.

*Date:* 13th–14th century?

Only an upside down skull at a depth of 80 cm was preserved from this burial.

*Finds:* no preserved grave goods.

**Viira XXXII (Pl 139)**

(Excavated by Holzmayer in 1872.)

*Gender:* female.

*Direction:* head to NO.

*Date:* end of the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century.

The skeleton was found at a depth of 120 cm. There is no exact description of the burial.

*Finds:* a spiral bracelet was unearthed on both arms, a neck-ring round the neck, a finger-ring on the finger, a bronze buckle on the waist. Bronze-decorated textile fragments were found on the collar and under one of the bracelets. A 38-cm long chain and an iron key have been mentioned among the finds but their exact findspots are unknown.

**Viira XXXIII**

(Excavated by Holzmayer at some time towards the end of the 19th century.)

*Sex:* female.

*Direction:* unknown.

*Date:* 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Nothing exact is known about the burial.

### 4.3. Summary

The 11 cemeteries described in this chapter make up only an insignificant part of all the earlier burial grounds of Saaremaa. Stray finds indicate the locations of many probable or destroyed cemeteries. This goes especially for the stone graves that included richly furnished burials. Most of such stone graves have been destroyed – either broken by the locals in the course of centuries or heaped together during 20<sup>th</sup> century development. As poorly furnished stone graves have also been excavated, it is quite probable that some of the stone heaps known from the northern and western part of the island could actually be Late Iron Age burial places.

Most of the stray finds from Saaremaa usually do originate from broken stone graves. The map of such destroyed cemeteries indicates that many of these are situated in the environs of churches founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, thus in supposed old settlement centres.<sup>88</sup> As centres in agricultural society usually were positioned on fertile land, the cemeteries in such areas have been much more damaged due to excessive agricultural activity and higher population density.

The analysis of the stone cemeteries that were nearly completely excavated demonstrated that they had been the burial grounds of one, perhaps two families. Taking into consideration both the known cemeteries and stray finds as probable indicators of demolished graves, about 60 Late Iron Age stone cemeteries can be counted on the islands of Saaremaa and Muhu up to the present time. In any case, they were surely not used during exactly the

same period. Even if it were assumed that the real number of cemeteries was twice as big (which is hardly possible, at least for the abundantly furnished graves), the number of families who buried in the stone graves should be 120–240. According to the treaty concluded between the conquerors of Saaremaa in 1234, 600 ploughlands of arable land were counted in the Kihelkonna district alone.<sup>89</sup> Though the number of ploughlands obviously did not correspond to that of farmsteads – some farms could have been smaller, some bigger<sup>90</sup> – it gives us an approximate picture of how many households there could have been. It is thus most obvious that only a part of the population – the elite families – had the right and the opportunity of burying in stone graves.

While stone graves are usually quite discernible in the landscape, the finding of flat-ground inhumation cemeteries often depends on mere chance. As the majority of these have been founded in the more sandy or gravelly earth where digging is easier, a number of them have become known to the locals in the course of excavating sand or gravel. On the other hand, there was no data concerning the cemeteries of Loona or Karja before 1941. It can thus be assumed that a number of the transition period burial places are still waiting to be discovered.

Several burial grounds with (semi-)Christian inhumation graves are called Kabelimägi (“Chapel Hill”), Kabeliaed (“Chapel Yard”) or similar names in local oral tradition, which indicates possible earlier chapels in these places. In some cases, for instance in Keskvere, Irase and Muhu Suuremõisa, these burial grounds have been surrounded by stone walls; in Kõrkküla even the ruins of a stone chapel have been mentioned.<sup>91</sup> It is possible that such places were used for burial even later than the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as they were considered to be consecrated Christian graveyards. However, more burial grounds with inhumations but without any data of chapels have been recorded. It strikes the eye that a great number of inhumation cemeteries are situated in the same areas where Late Iron Age stone cemeteries are also known. In several cases medieval manors, especially those that were smaller and situated further away from the parish churches, are marked by both cremation and inhumation cemeteries.

There is quite a lot of information about inhumation graves in areas where no Late Iron Age finds are known. These are often coastal areas and one-time smaller islands that were perhaps inhabited only in the Middle Ages.

<sup>88</sup> Mägi 1998.

<sup>89</sup> LUB I: 139, reg 155.

<sup>90</sup> Tarvel 1972, p 32; Lang 1996, pp. 449–455.

<sup>91</sup> SMM 1924, pp. 17, 33, 89.

## Chapter 5

# STUDY OF ARTEFACTS AND BURIAL COMPLEXES

In accordance with the division presented in the previous chapter 150 burial complexes will be analysed here, of which 73 are cremations and 77 inhumations. The actual number of cremations in those cemeteries so far investigated no doubt exceeds this, since not all the burials could be distinguished. Several burials probably occurred in locations with mixed furnishings; some of the burials included no grave goods and could have therefore remained unnoticed.

The material presented here covers the period between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but the number of burial complexes from the named centuries is not uniform. For example, only one burial could be dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the majority of cremations originate from the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries (Fig 34). One reason for this is that the burials of these centuries were clearly more richly furnished than those from the preceding or succeeding periods, which aids in their exact dating. In the period of the (semi)Christian inhumation burials the amount of grave goods suddenly decreased, ceasing completely in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. As unfurnished graves are usually impossible to date, it is probable that some of those could belong to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, too, maybe also to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century or to some altogether later period.

### 5.1. The Sex and/or Gender Distribution of Burials

The sex distribution of burials is one of the key issues of the present discussion. Owing to technical limitations, the calcinated bone fragments of cremation burials cannot usually be investigated in Estonia and therefore the sex of only a few burial complexes can be distinguished on the account of their anthropological features.<sup>1</sup> Hence it is often only the grave goods that determine the sex distribution of cremations, though it has repeatedly proved to be a very unreliable method.

In the discussion here, terms *sex* and *gender* should be differentiated. Sex is a biological category, being only male or female, while gender is a social category that exists independent of the biological sex. In particular circumstances the two categories can even be opposite. When identifying buried persons entirely according to grave goods, we can talk only about gender, and not sex.<sup>2</sup> Still, in most cases it is logical to believe that the gender is determined by the biological sex, i.e. a person who has been defined as a woman according to her grave goods most logically is female. It is also necessary to keep in

<sup>1</sup> The bones were assessed by the physical anthropologists Raili Allmäe and Jonathan Kalman, Institute of History, Tallinn.

<sup>2</sup> Kalman 2000, pp 430–431.

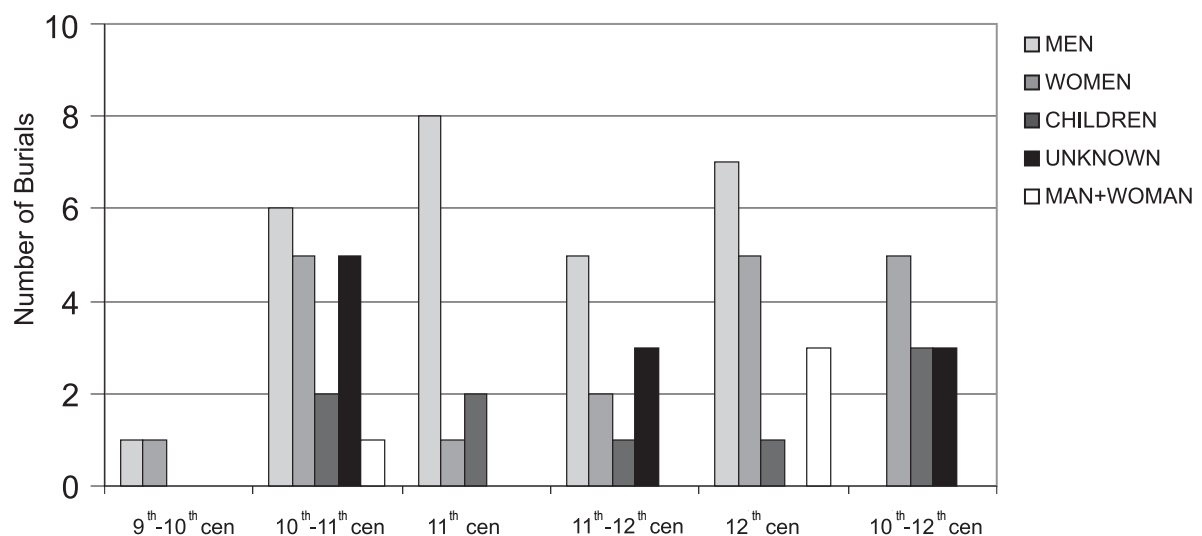


Figure 34. Date distribution in cremation graves.

mind that burial rites do not directly reflect real life, and the burials mean more for the living than for the dead. For instance the quite widespread custom of putting donations, sometimes items belonging to the opposite sex, in the graves offers a good explanation of the presence of opposite-gender gifts in graves. The possible social significance of different artefact types is also an important factor, and will be treated in more detail in chapter 7.

As already described in chapter 1, earlier research has ascribed certain artefact types to one or the other sex. In graves, the occurrence of even single artefact types characteristic of the opposite sex has been understood as the sign of a double burial. This method has made the number of burials in one cemetery surprisingly high. Although the burial complexes presented here also include four supposed burials of both a man and a woman, the finding of a few artefacts associated with the opposite sex is not, to my mind, sufficient evidence to interpret the burial as that of a couple.

The question of whether the burial is single or double only rises in the case of cremations, as inhumed bones on Saaremaa have been fairly well preserved. Double inhumation burials have been ascertained in four cases; in two of these, a man and a woman had been buried in one grave – probably even in one coffin (Viira XI and XII, XIX and XX), in two others there were co-burials of a man and a child (Karja X and Xa, XII). Two graves with the remains of pregnant women are also known (Valjala II, Karja XXVII).

In many publications that attempt to determine the sex of the deceased only with the help of the grave goods, the term “weapon grave” becomes a synonym of “man’s grave”. Still, several researchers have indicated that only males in the active warrior’s age could have been buried with weapons, whereas the burials of youngsters and elderly men could lack arms altogether.<sup>3</sup> This could not have been the rule, as is suggested by the presence of weapons in the burials of Livian boys.<sup>4</sup> On Saaremaa, too, at the Randvere cemetery, boys have been buried with small weapons; both small and normal-sized weapons have been reported in some Finnish boys’ burials.<sup>5</sup>

“Weapon graves” have usually been contrasted with female burials that are recognised by the included jewellery deposits.<sup>6</sup> Such a strict division becomes questionable in the light of the fact that several female graves on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea include weapons; besides, there has been a custom in the area to include some female decorations or even whole jewellery boxes in male burials.<sup>7</sup> Also the traditions of wearing certain ornaments have differed or even been contradictory: for example Couronian and Semigallian men used to wear both neck-rings and bracelets, whereas these jewellery types in Finland and

Sweden have solely belonged to women. Thus the identifying of the sex of a cremation burial on the basis of a few artefact types while no inhumations are known from the period becomes highly complicated if only parallels from neighbouring areas can be taken into account.

Among the cremation burials of Saaremaa discussed in this study, 73 different burial complexes could be distinguished. On the grounds of their deposits, 27 can be attributed to men, 22 to women and four of these I have, with some reservations, identified as double burials of a man and a woman. At least in 10 cases the deceased has been a child, three of them girls, three boys. The gender and age could not be determined in 10 cases (Fig 35).

It is important to note that the determining of the gender of a child burial is not very reliable. According to Elvira Šnore, several Livian boys’ graves included women’s jewellery, e.g. spiral bracelets.<sup>8</sup> Some so-called female ornaments in boys’ burials have also been found at the Luistari cemetery in Finland.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, attention must be turned to the fact that all of these attributions have been based on the composition of artefacts rather than anthropological analysis. Taking in account the prevailing conception that arms can only be found in men’s graves, it is quite likely that the above-mentioned Livian and Finnish skeletons were identified automatically rather as those of boys with female jewellery than of girls accompanied by weapons.

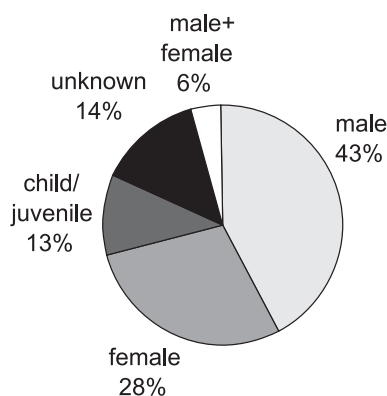


Figure 35. Gender distribution in cremation graves.

<sup>3</sup> Hedeager 1992, pp 87–90.

<sup>4</sup> Šnore 1996; Zariņa 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, pp 18–19; Söyrinki-Harmo 1992.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, pp 16 ff; Formisto 1996, pp 94–96; Hatleskog 1997; the issue is more thoroughly discussed by Werbart 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Bruozai 1961, pp 382–383; Radiņš 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Šnore 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, p 18.

The Randvere XI complex and the Viltina weapons find constitute probably either cenotaphs or some other complementary male burial furnishings, as no cremated bones were found around them. Also in many other burials the sex determination is only suppositional, especially in the cases of small deposits.

Child cremation burials were distinguishable mainly if they contained artefacts of small size. In two of the Randvere burials, too, some cremated bones that had survived were defined as having belonged to a child.<sup>10</sup> It is probable that some of the burials ascribed to adults were also actually those of minors'.

Grave goods that did definitely belong to men were stirrups, spurs, swords and the majority of other weapons. Specific female ornaments were chain arrangements, spiral bracelets and some other bracelet types. Yet many burials accommodated artefacts specific to the opposite sex. Most of the graves where the gender and age could not be defined contained either very few grave goods or the artefacts belonged to a type that could occur in any burial – men, women or children.

From the 77 inhumation burials excavated on Saaremaa, 24 belonged to men, 30 to women, 13 to children or youngsters and in 10 cases the burials could not be determined (Fig 36). The latter were mostly damaged burials that usually only included the skull of the deceased.

It is evident that there were slightly more male burials among cremations than there were women, whereas in the case of inhumations, the trend was the opposite. This phenomenon could be conditioned by different burial practices. In the time of the stone graves the custom was to furnish graves richly with weapons that make the male graves more easily distinguishable. Thus the cremations with unidentifiable sex could actually include more female remains. In the Christian or semi-Christian era burial customs did not demand the depositing of arms or tools; also starting with the 13<sup>th</sup> century men wore less jewellery than women or at least these were not among their grave furnishings. All this data makes the 13<sup>th</sup> century inhumations with female ornaments easier to assess.

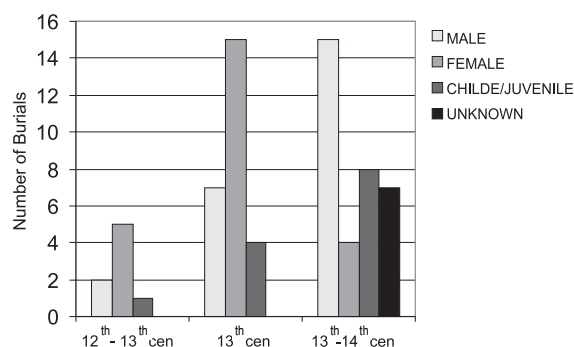


Figure 36. Date distribution in inhumation graves.

### 5.1.1. Weapons and Other "Male Attributes" in Female Burials

On the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea the occurrence of weapons in the female burials has only been mentioned in the cases of inhumations while cremations with one or a few weapons and rich female decorations have in most cases automatically been interpreted as double burials. These burials usually include axes, javelins or spears, but some 11<sup>th</sup> century female burials in Finland for example have contained swords as well.<sup>11</sup> Weapons occurred mainly in the so-called wealthier female burials, i.e. in cases where the deceased had also been furnished abundantly with specific female jewellery. Women's burials with weapons were a rare phenomenon, but common enough to prove that such complexes were not actually double burials where the male skeleton had completely perished in some way. Besides, these burials usually did not include other grave goods that would indicate the presence of a possible accompanying male burial.

The most frequently occurring weapon in women's graves was the axe, which in any case can also be interpreted as a tool; javelin heads were also common, and sometimes even spearheads have been found. In Estonia, a javelin head has been found beside the feet of a 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century female inhumation burial discovered at Haimre in 1948. The woman had been buried, together with a child, in a cist built of limestone slabs at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The woman's head-dress had been decorated with bronze spirals, on her chest lay a chain arrangement fastened with two pins; she was also wearing a bead-necklace around her neck. She had been girdled with a decorated leather belt that had two belt buckles with round front; a Saaremaa-type knife sheath had been fixed to the belt.<sup>12</sup> The burial can be definitely considered as "wealthy", and also as a grave with strong Saaremaa influences.

A small broad-bladed axe was found beside an 11<sup>th</sup> century inhumation burial at the Verevi Sandimardi grave in eastern Estonia, accompanied by a neck-ring, a penannular brooch, bracelets and chain fragments. As the burial was dug out by the owner of the farm, the exact amount and position of the artefacts have remained unknown.<sup>13</sup> Since no male burials with neck-rings are known in East Estonia,

<sup>10</sup> The bones were investigated by Jonathan Kalman, Institute of History, Tallinn.

<sup>11</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1984, pp 402–403.

<sup>12</sup> Ariste 1948a.

<sup>13</sup> Moora 1932.

the skeleton most probably belonged to a woman. An axe had also been placed in the CLXX female burial at the Kaberla cemetery, which was one of the wealthiest burials from the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century graves there<sup>14</sup> (Fig 37). In the 247A and 247B burials at Siksali, South-East Estonia, a male-female couple were buried in different coffins, with a spearhead found on the lid of the man's and a javelin-head on the lid of the woman's coffin.<sup>15</sup>

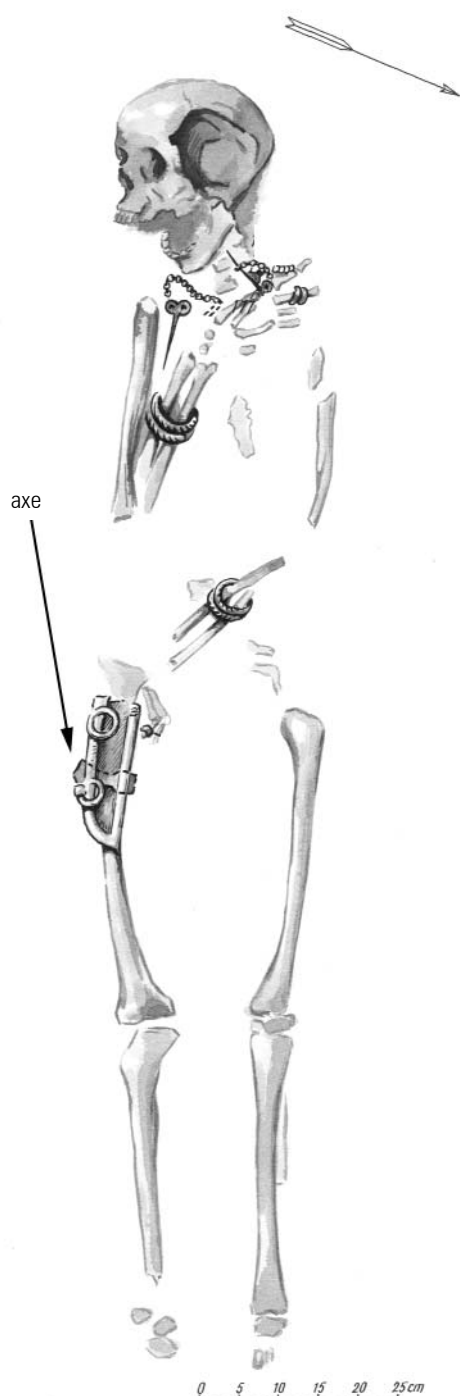


Figure 37. Female burial with an axe (skeleton CLXX) at Kaberla.

In the last case the spear or javelin had been used as a kind of a fastening or a sign that marks the borderline between this world and the Beyond. The custom of fastening coffins with spearheads has been recorded in Finnish archaeological material<sup>16</sup> (see also section 6.1.2.d of this book). In female burials on Saaremaa, spearheads have been noted entirely as markers of graves, being found on the edge of the cremation deposit or right outside it in the findless zone. Such were the spearheads at the Randvere VIII grave, in which, judging by the other grave goods, especially the pins and the spiral bracelet, a woman or a girl had been buried. Another spearhead was found on the edge of the Randvere VII burial, which, according to the osteological analysis and the small specifically female jewellery, contained the bones of a 5 to 10-year-old girl.

The most exceptional of female burials with weapons marking the border-line of the grave was the Kurevere III grave that contained an iron fire-steel, a padlock with a key, pieces of a bridle, a penannular brooch and two spiral rings. A G-type spearhead with a silver-ornamented socket was found at the margins of the grave. It showed no signs of having been in fire and had obviously been used as a marker of the grave. Although, judging by the furnishings, the burial should have been ascribed to a male, the cremated bones indicated more plausibly a woman in the age range 25–40.<sup>17</sup> The same was implied by the small size of the spiral rings: their average inner diameter was 1.4 and 1.8 cm. Another spearhead was said to have been found near a woman's grave in the same cemetery (Kurevere IV) but it was excavated earlier and no detailed reports have been preserved from these digs.<sup>18</sup>

The real number of spearheads occurring as the markers of women's graves on Saaremaa could be even bigger, but in the cases of the spearhead marking the border between a male and a female burial it has been ascribed to the male burial. The best example of such a case was a spearhead found from between the graves XVI (female) and IX (male) at Rahu, at the same distance from each of the graves. Even without similar cases, spearheads marking the border line of the grave have occurred altogether in about 16% of the women's or girls' burials investigated so far in the stone graves of Saaremaa.

<sup>14</sup> Selirand 1993, pp 8–9.

<sup>15</sup> Silvia Laul, verbal information.

<sup>16</sup> Cleve 1978, pp 86–89; Purhonen 1998, p 165.

<sup>17</sup> An observation of Jonathan Kalman, Institute of History, Tallinn.

Javelin-heads were sometimes found inside the graves of Osilian women. Two of them were even recorded in the Rahu XXVIII female cremation burial. In the inhumation grave XVIII at Viira cemetery a very rusted iron artefact, probably also a javelin head, had been placed under the back of the deceased woman. Furthermore, the guard of a sword has been found at the margins of the Rahu XXV grave, which, according to other grave goods, had presumably belonged to a woman, too.

Of the four axes found in the stone graves of Saaremaa, three occurred in the graves belonging to women or girls: in the Rahu XXVIII burial of a woman, in the Rahu XXIV burial of a child (probably a girl) and in the Randvere V burial that was apparently also a girl's. So considering all the data presented above one can sum up that one inhumation and about 30% of all the cremation burials of Osilian women and girls contained some type of weapons.

In Livia, where the custom of inhumation was more common at the end of the Late Iron Age, axes and spearheads were unearthed in even more female burials. Up to the present moment, the burials of the Gauja Livs have been more thoroughly investigated and an overview of this research can be found in the book by Evald Tõnisson.<sup>19</sup> The study tells us that the Priede inhumation No 14 at Krimulda belonged to a richly decorated woman who had been wearing a Livian type chain arrangement with many chains and tortoise brooches that fixed the ornament on the shoulders. The woman had been girdled with a leather belt that included bronze buckles and distributors, and an axe had been deposited in the grave.<sup>20</sup> In the Puteji barrow No 36 at Turaida a similarly equipped woman had been buried, accompanied by both an axe and a spearhead.<sup>21</sup> Axes have also occurred in the female burials of the Priede barrow No 8 and the Sigulda barrow No 12.<sup>22</sup>

The archaeological material of the Daugava Livs, which has much in common with the Saaremaa material, is unfortunately mostly unpublished. Of the material originating from the 19 cemeteries known from that culture group, only data concerning four cemeteries has been published. In addition, the author of the present study has had the opportunity to investigate some of the finds in the archaeological archives of the Latvian Institute of History. As the Daugava Livian cemeteries generally include very abundantly furnished burials and would thus require a special study, I have to limit myself here to only a few observations.

On the island of Dole, situated in the estuary of the river Daugava, a female burial No 38 at the Rauši cemetery contained, in addition to rich jewellery, a spearhead placed beside the head of the deceased, as was customary also in male graves. At the Vampenieši I cemetery

in the near vicinity, a spearhead was found in the girl's burial No 115. This burial had also been very well furnished.<sup>23</sup> Two spearheads were found in the female cremation burial No 106 at the Vampenieši I cemetery; Šnore has interpreted these as offerings.<sup>24</sup>

At Laukskola cemetery in the same district, only one of the female burials included weapons (the burial nr. 120) as has been reported by Anna Zariņa who has investigated these finds.<sup>25</sup> This was a 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century burial that could be considered one of the richest burials in all Laukskola. In addition to the axe that had been placed on the left hip of the deceased, as was customary also in Livian male graves, the burial included another rare deposit for a Livian woman – a pair of scissors.<sup>26</sup> Here should be noted that the scissors found at the Piila VII grave – the only ones known in the graves of Saaremaa – also belonged to a woman's burial; in Finland, for comparison, scissors have been found equally in male and female burials.<sup>27</sup> A remarkable fact is that the same Laukskola burial No 120 included a Saaremaa-type knife-sheath that in this case was fastened to one of the chains of the chain arrangement.

At Kalvola and Tyrvääntö in Finland, two swords with especially luxurious hilts have been found in graves that were otherwise richly furnished with typical 11<sup>th</sup> century Finnish woman's jewellery. There have been attempts to associate these deposits with reburials of artefacts from earlier graves or with completely vanished male burials, but both of these explanations seem unlikely, especially in the case of Tyrvääntö.<sup>28</sup> At Luistari cemetery an axe has been found in the woman's grave No 35; a fire-steel in the female grave No 359 of the same burial ground has been considered unusual as well because these artefacts have normally been associated with male graves in Finland. The most extraordinary grave found at the Luistari cemetery has been the richly furnished female burial No 404 where a skull and limb bones of a man,

<sup>18</sup> Holzmayer 1880, pp 16–18.

<sup>19</sup> Tõnisson 1974.

<sup>20</sup> Tõnisson 1974, Tab II.

<sup>21</sup> Tõnisson 1974, Tab VI.

<sup>22</sup> Tõnisson 1974, p 109.

<sup>23</sup> The information has been gathered at the archives of the Latvian Institute of History.

<sup>24</sup> Šnore 1996, p 123.

<sup>25</sup> LA 1974, Fig 118.

<sup>26</sup> LA 1974, Fig 118 and Zariņa, verbal information.

<sup>27</sup> Cleve 1978, p 83; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 57–60.

<sup>28</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1984, pp 402–403.



together with two axes under them, were lying at the feet of a female skeleton.<sup>29</sup> Weights also have occurred in a few woman's graves at Luistari, though these were more common in the graves of men.

Several descriptions report female burials with "male attributes" in Karelia. In grave No 1 at the Tontimäki cemetery a woman's burial with typical Karelian 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century jewellery was unearthed, with the skull directed to the north. Besides the jewellery the woman had been wearing a leather belt with a buckle. To the left side of the belt was attached a knife sheath containing a knife with a wooden handle, from the right side were hanging a fire-steel and another knife with a bronze-wrapped wooden handle. A deposit consisting of an axe, a hoe, a clay spindle-whorl, scissors and a sickle was found at the feet of the woman.<sup>30</sup> Similar findings were made in the Hovinsaari inhumation burial No 1 that contained a large volume of Karelian-type women's jewellery. Horse bits had been placed at her feet, a scythe and a spearhead to her right side. The burial was dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup>

The fact that the custom of burying women with weapons was not limited only to the areas inhabited by the Finno-Ugric peoples is illustrated by a few burials on the Pagrybiai cemetery in western Lithuania. The inhumation No 163, which, judging by the grave goods – a javelin head, an axe, a belt-buckle – found at the foot of the grave should have belonged to a man, proved in the course of anthropological analysis to have been a 30 to 35 year-old woman. The burial No 91 was also at first identified as a male burial because of the axe included there and so was the burial No 205, which contained a part of a sacrificed horse. The results of the anthropological analysis showed that both skeletons belonged to middle-aged women. The position of weapons and other male attributes in the women's grave corresponded with the layout of a typical male burial.<sup>32</sup> In one case a small axe has been found also in a Latgalian woman's grave.<sup>33</sup>

To judge from the published materials on Scandinavian graves, the occurrence of weapons in women's burials was rare there but not quite unknown. In the rich female burials at Kaupang in Norway a few axes and arrowheads have been found. As can be inferred from Lena Thålin-Bergman's article on the weapon graves at Birka, one sword, in one case a sax and a spearhead together and in two cases just a spearhead have been found in female burials, but all of these cases have been interpreted as secondary burials in which the weapons have emerged from a mixed layer.<sup>34</sup> However, one sax in female grave has been mentioned also in the case of the burial No 644.<sup>35</sup> Axes were found only in male burials, horse gear in

19 man's and one woman's grave and in four graves of couples.<sup>36</sup> In Denmark, a skeleton with a needle case and a spear at Gerdrup suggests that some women could have been buried with weapons there though the great majority of Viking Age Danish graves demonstrate a good correlation between sex and certain artefact types.<sup>37</sup>

Another artefact type that has been traditionally associated solely with male burials has been bits and the metal parts of the bridle, though some female cremation burials on Saaremaa do include them. The graves of women and children also contain weights that have in earlier literature often been classified as totally male attributes.<sup>38</sup> According to the Norwegian researcher Anne Stalsberg, in Scandinavia most of the weights and some of the balances have been found in the graves of either girls or women. She believes that this tendency reflects the active part women took in trading, especially at farms (manors) or with the local merchandise in towns.<sup>39</sup>

On Saaremaa horse bits and the pieces of harness have occurred in seven burials of either girls or women, which makes up 30% of the total number of investigated female cremation burials. Belts with bronze or silver decorations have been reported in 14 cases, i.e. in almost 57% of female cremation burials; belt-buckles have also been preserved in three female inhumation graves. No balances have been recorded in Osilian women's graves, but weights have been gathered from the Randvere VII girl's burial and the VIII woman's burial. In Livian female graves, neither weights nor balances are known, though both of them have been a common find in the burials of men and boys at the estuary of Daugava.<sup>40</sup> The Gauja Livs, as distinct from the Daugava Livs, did not have the custom of placing weights, balances or horse gear in their graves. Of the 132 Birka burials containing weighing equipment 32 per cent belonged to women; similarly, of

<sup>29</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982a, pp 36–37.

<sup>30</sup> Kochkurkina 1981, p 92, Pl 15.

<sup>31</sup> Kochkurkina 1981, p 93; 1982, p 46.

<sup>32</sup> Vaitkunskienė 1995, pp 30, 45, 54–55, 193–194; the author would hereby like to thank the Lithuanian archaeologist Ernestas Vasiliauskas who turned her attention to these cases.

<sup>33</sup> Radinš 1999, p 83 and Radinš, verbal information.

<sup>34</sup> Thålin-Bergman 1986.

<sup>35</sup> Arwidsson 1986a.

<sup>36</sup> Hallinder 1986; Forsaker 1986.

<sup>37</sup> Jesch 1991, pp 10–14, 21.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Kustin 1962a, p 205.

<sup>39</sup> Stalsberg 1991a; 1991b.

<sup>40</sup> Zariņa 1997 and Anna Zariņa, verbal information.

the 37 burials containing Scandinavian type artefacts and weighing equipment recorded in the area covered by modern Russia, 22 per cent belonged to women.<sup>41</sup>

In Estonian archaeology, the bronze decorations of belts and even belt buckles in cremation burials have normally been considered male attributes, despite the fact that such belts with knife sheaths till quite recently belonged to the women's national costume of some Estonian regions. In historical times, Estonian, Votic, Izhorian and Finnish women have all worn leather belts with tin, bronze or silver decorations.<sup>42</sup> At all events, published archaeological records in Finland, except Karelia, do not indicate the use of leather belts by women even in pre-history. Lehtosalo-Hilander mentions, though, that according to Anja Sarvas' research, 5 out of the 55 Finnish belt finds had come from female burials, but Lehtosalo-Hilander herself does not believe these to have been closed complexes.<sup>43</sup> In Birka in Middle-Sweden, belts with silver and bronze decorations have been recorded at both male and female burials.<sup>44</sup>

In the territory of present Latvia, it was mainly Livian women who had knife sheaths, but the published materials from Livian cemeteries tell of belt-buckles, joining mounts or decorative belt-mounts belonging to the women's belt originating only from the areas around the river Gauja. Bronze parts of leather belts, including belt-mounts, have been found in many Gauja Livian female graves, mostly in the ones that were also rich in other deposits, as for example in the Putelji barrow No 18 at Turaida, the Saknīte barrow No 12 at Allaži and the Tāleni barrows Nos 1 and 6 at Krimulda.<sup>45</sup>

An inspection in the Latvian History Institute of the find material from the Daugava Livian cemeteries of Dole indicated that in most cases the knife sheath had been attached to a belt, possibly a textile belt, though in some cases a bronze joining mount implying the leather belt had been preserved (e.g. the Rauši burial No 38). The inhumation No 179 of a girl or a woman in the Vampenieši I cemetery included a knife sheath with a bronze edging and a Gotlandic-Baltic belt buckle suggesting a leather belt.<sup>46</sup> Livian women sometimes also wore the knife-sheath hanging from one of the chains of the chain-arrangement.

### 5.1.2. "Female Attributes" in Male Burials

Although many researchers think that grave deposits only represented the personal belongings of the deceased, there is reason to believe that the truth is far more complicated. Some Baltic peoples and also Livians used to furnish graves with additional donations; in Couronia, there was a

widespread practice of producing miniature copies of artefacts especially for burials. These did not only occur in children's graves, but in the burials of all age groups.<sup>47</sup> Miniature artefacts appear sporadically also in the burials of some neighbouring peoples, e.g. Livians or Semigallians, where it can be considered an outside influence. On Saaremaa, anyhow, the occurrence of miniature artefacts in the graves can be associated with child burials.

The additional donations in Latgalian graves have been discussed in detail by the Latvian archaeologist Arnis Rādiņš.<sup>48</sup> Cremation burials were very rarely practised in 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century Latgallia, which makes the investigation of burial customs much easier than it is on Saaremaa or mainland Estonia, where the cremation burial was prevalent. The most intriguing aspect here would be the examples Rādiņš adduces on the topic of the occurrence of female jewellery in male burials. In the Koknes cemetery, a bronze spiral bracelet was found near the left shin-bone of the male in the burial No 44; another, similar bracelet was lying at the left heel. According to Rādiņš, complexes of additional donations have been discovered in wooden boxes or containers of some other type in 11 Latgalian burials, while in 7 of these female jewellery has been deposited in a male grave. In the male burial III: 29 at the Odukalns cemetery at Ludza, a woman's head-decoration of bronze spirals and two neck-rings were found on the skeleton's left hip-bone. The male inhumation No 3 at the Olin cemetery at Martsena contained two spiral bracelets, a ring, some cowrie shells and two spindle whorls, which were found all together near the right leg of the skeleton. A necklace of glass beads, another with bronze bells and two rings that all had been wrapped in a woollen bag or some cloth were recovered beside the hip of the male inhumation No 2 at the Peiti cemetery. Two female bracelets and a neck-ring were uncovered in the male grave No 65 at the Liepeni burial ground; a wooden box with abundant female jewellery was lying at the knees of the male burial No 42 at the Jaunatieni cemetery. In the male inhumation No 22 at Čūģeri a similar ornament complex had been set on the chest of the deceased and had originally probably been wrapped in a

<sup>41</sup> Stalsberg 1991a, pp 78–79.

<sup>42</sup> Manninen 1927, pp 377–387; Öpik 1970, p 75, 92.

<sup>43</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, p 16 and the references.

<sup>44</sup> Jansson 1986; Mälarstedt 1986.

<sup>45</sup> Tõnisson 1974, Tab I, V, IX.

<sup>46</sup> The data is from the archives of the Latvian Institute of History.

<sup>47</sup> Bruozai 1961, pp 382–383.

<sup>48</sup> Rādiņš 1996.

female scarf. Female furnishings in a male burial have also occurred at least once in Selonja, in the burial No 1 of the 5<sup>th</sup> barrow at Lejasdopeli. All such cases can be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>49</sup> Rādiņš associates the occurrence of female ornaments in male burials with the donations of relatives, whereas the appearance of donations in female burials he connects with the dowry or some other kind of donated property.<sup>50</sup>

On the territory of the Gauja Livs, some fragments of female chain arrangements have been found in male burials, also some chain-holders and tortoise brooches, one at a time. Though most of the finds were single examples, a full chain arrangement was discovered from the 45<sup>th</sup> barrow at Puteļi, which was the only attribute in the grave that, according to Tōnisson, could have indicated a double burial.<sup>51</sup> The barrow No 33 at Puteļi contained a full set of man's weapons, a luxuriously decorated belt, a neck-ring, two bracelets and a nail container. At the same cemetery, a single chain-holder was found in a richly furnished male burial in the barrow No 34. The male burials in barrows Nos 47 and 48 each included one tortoise brooch.<sup>52</sup>

The tradition of putting some female ornaments into male graves was not alien to the Daugava Livs either. The male cremation burial No 83 in the first cemetery of Vampenieši on Dole Island included a triangle-headed pin. Šnore interpreted that find as an offering.<sup>53</sup>

The sporadic occurrence of women's jewellery in male graves has also been reported at the Luistari cemetery in Finland: oval female ornaments that do not usually appear among men's grave goods were acquired from male burials Nos 76 and 318.<sup>54</sup> A convex round brooch, which is a typical female ornament, had been discovered in a male burial of the Vilusharju cemetery in Tampere.<sup>55</sup>

In the cremation burials of the stone graves on Saaremaa, a single chain-holder was found in two apparently male burials: in the burial XXX at Rahu and the burial II at Randvere. In addition, the latter contained also fragments of what had probably been a spiral bracelet. A single chain-holder with a few chains and the attached pendants sometimes decorated the chests of Latgalian men.<sup>56</sup> The Osilians probably shared this practice. Spiral bracelets also occurred in the burials VI and X at Randvere, which otherwise held a large quantity of grave goods that are usually associated only with male burials. Anyhow, the size of the bracelets gives reason to suppose, in both cases, that the deceased had been a boy, not an adult male. In Gauja Livian cemeteries, spiral bracelets also occur in many boys' graves.<sup>57</sup>

Besides male attributes, the Randvere III burial contained a single chain distributor and two short fragments of a chain.

Bits of chains were discovered also in other male graves, namely those of Piila II and Rahu IX, but in both of these cases the bits were extremely short, only a few cm in length. Such lengths of chain, especially these of small-ringed chains, which were also common in men's burials, do not generally originate from ordinary chain arrangements but have served some other purpose. Sometimes, for instance, these chains have fastened scale pans to beams or some utensil to the belt. Randvere burial III offers an excellent example of the first case, containing not only bits of chain but also the beams of a scale that still had some of the rings of the chain hanging from them.

In the Rahu burial XVII, which included many weapons, parts of a belt and a silver-plated spur, there occurred an unusual find – the iron shank of a pin. Perhaps it had been used to fix the man's over-garment – a cloak or a cape.

Many male burials on Saaremaa contained glass beads, but this has been quite a common phenomenon in the neighbouring areas as well. Judging by the inhumation burials, the beads were usually worn in a leather bag on the man's belt together with scale weights, coins, etc. Boys, though, could also have worn them on a string around the neck.<sup>58</sup>

The fragments of supposed neck-rings have occurred in two male burials on Saaremaa: the Rahu XIX and the Kogula III complex. In Couronia and Semigallia both men and women wore neck-rings and some Livian men have also been buried with these.<sup>59</sup>

A single fragment of animal-headed bracelets was obtained from both the Kāku X and the Piila II male burials. Such bracelets have been widespread among the Baltic and Livian burials of men or boys.<sup>60</sup> A bracelet fragment of indefinite shape was acquired from the Rahu burial XXI, that, judging from the spearhead and the fire-steel found there, should belong to a male.

<sup>49</sup> Rādiņš 1996 and references.

<sup>50</sup> Rādiņš 1996.

<sup>51</sup> Tōnisson 1974, p 120.

<sup>52</sup> Tōnisson 1974, Tab VI.

<sup>53</sup> Šnore 1996, p 123.

<sup>54</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, p 18.

<sup>55</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, p 18 and the references.

<sup>56</sup> Apals & Apala 1994, p 101, Fig 7; Rādiņš 1999, Fig 59.

<sup>57</sup> Šnore 1996.

<sup>58</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, p 18.

<sup>59</sup> Tōnisson 1974, Tab VI; Vačkevičiūtė 1992; Atgāzis 1994;

Šnore, reports; the author's personal observations based on the material in the archives of the Latvian History Museum.

<sup>60</sup> Šnore 1996.

We can thus assert that the ornaments that can be considered “female attributes” in male burials are: spiral bracelets (for an adult male, that is), pins and certain parts of chains, whereas other types of jewellery have been as common to males as to females. Such deposits appeared in 15% of all the male graves of Osilian stone cemeteries. It should be noted that the “female attributes” were present only in the male burials that were richer than average.

The male inhumations on Saaremaa included practically no jewellery; just one penannular brooch has been found in the burial II at Loona. There had also been a ring placed beside the feet of the same skeleton.

### 5.1.3. Probable Burials of Male-Female Couples in Stone Cemeteries

I have classified four stone grave burial complexes as double burials, as these contain the attributes of both sexes. Of these, males have been certainly buried in the Rahu burials II and XXIII, as is indicated by the weapons they hold – there is a sword and in the burial II even a spur, a deposit never found in female graves. At the same time the burial II also included an almost complete chain arrangement with two Osilian-type triangle-headed pins, bits of chain and (apparently) the ends of two pin shanks. The 45<sup>th</sup> barrow at a Daugava Līvian cemetery at Putelji near Turaida comprises a very similar burial where a full chain arrangement was also found, accompanied by weapons. Tõnisson believes it to have been a double burial.<sup>61</sup>

The only artefacts in the Rahu XXIII burial indicating a female burial were the fragments of a spiral bracelet and a quarter of a round pendant. The fragments of a neck-ring could, as was shown above, also belong to a man. Although I have interpreted the burial as that of a couple, one cannot rule out the possibility that both of these Rahu burials actually belonged to one person only – with all likelihood to a male, whose grave had been furnished with female jewellery. Both burials also contained unusually many artefact types, which is, as demonstrated above, typical of burial complexes containing some attributes of the opposite sex.

In addition to having the attributes of both sexes, the Randvere IX burial was designated as a double burial by the presence of two cross-shaped pendants there, as these appear singly in all the other cases on Saaremaa. The third possible double burial, the Kāku XIV burial, comprised mainly artefacts generally connected with female complexes, but also two spearheads. The burial was made in a stone circle grave that rarely holds more than one deceased. In this case, too, there still remains the probability that the burial could be that of a wealthy woman who had been buried with weapons.

## 5.2. Artefacts in Burial Complexes

### 5.2.1. Armament

#### 5.2.1.1. Spearheads and Javelin-Heads

Spearheads and javelin-heads are the most frequent weapon finds in burial complexes. They do not occur in inhumation graves, except for that of the Viira XVIII grave where rusty fragments of a presumed javelin-head were found. Therefore the following discussion concerns only cremation graves.

Altogether, spearheads occurred in more than half the stone grave burials of men or boys (Fig 38). Spearheads or their parts could be found directly in cremation deposits only in the case of men's graves. At the same time, spearheads as well as javelin-heads have been recorded, in addition to men's graves, at the margins of female graves where they most likely marked the border-line of the burial (Fig 39). One javelin-head has been found at the edge of a 5–12-year-old girl's burial

<sup>61</sup> Tõnisson 1974, p 120.

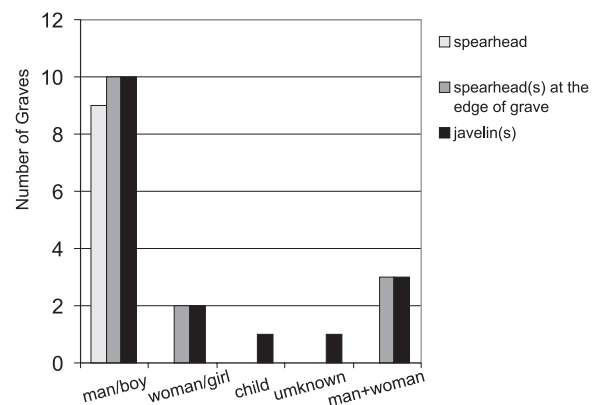


Figure 38. Spearheads and javelin-heads in cremation graves.

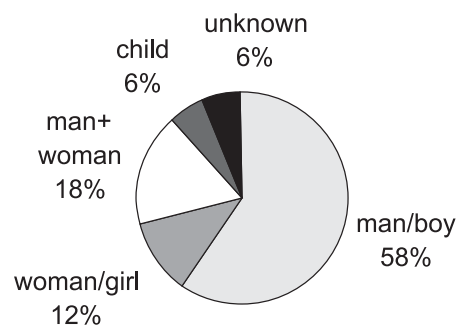


Figure 39. Spearheads at the border area of a grave.

(Randvere VII). In the cases where spearheads have occurred in between a male and female grave, as for example between the burials XVI and IX at the Rahu cemetery, I have ascribed them to the male grave. In reality, it can be presumed that those spearheads did not belong directly to any grave, but they rather testified of some ritual connected to marking the borderline of a burial ground. In support of this idea, it is worth noting that many such weapons had not been in the fire though they have marked cremation graves.

Spearheads have only been found in men's cremation deposits and always in singles. Of all the men and boys' burials spearheads occurred in cremation deposits in only 28% of the cases. One spearhead, in two cases two spearheads, were recorded at the margins of ten male graves, in two male and female double graves, in three female and in one girl's grave. Consequently, the spearhead was marking the borderline of the grave in 31% of all the male cremations. The borderline of women and girls' graves was marked by the spearhead in four cases (16%).

#### a) Spearheads Similar to the Petersen's type A

Two spearheads unearthed in the grave XIV at the Käku cemetery (PI 16: 1, 2) recall the types A and E in Jan Petersen's classification,<sup>62</sup> but because of their shorter blade they correspond more to Finnish A-type spearheads, distinguished by Lehtosalo-Hilander. At the Luistari cemetery they have been dated to the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>63</sup> The few East Swedish spearheads of type E have also been dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>64</sup> the Norwegian ones to a period up to the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>65</sup> The dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> century also suits the grave XIV at Käku in regard to other artefacts found in the complex. Such local subtype spearheads, as well as so-called "classic" E-type spearheads have only been unearthed from destroyed graves or by amateurs on Saaremaa; they do not occur in find complexes. Spearheads similar to or belonging to type E had been in use until the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea,<sup>66</sup> and their absence in stone grave find complexes on Saaremaa is in accordance with the appearance of the so-called wealthier or at least more clearly distinguishable burials at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

#### b) Socketed Spearheads with Convex Edges of the Blade (the Local Variant of Type G)

The spearheads with tapering blades found in the graves II, III, X and XI at Randvere (PI 31: 1; 33: 1; 46: 5; 47: 7), in the graves I, II and IX at Rahu (PI 49: 4; 51: 1; 58: 7),

in the grave XIII at Käku (PI 14: 6) and III at Kurevere (PI 29: 3) should belong to the local variant of type G spearheads, with convex edges to the blade. Two such spearheads found at the Luistari cemetery were dated to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>67</sup> Such spearheads were also widespread in the territory of the Gauja Livs, where they occurred in complexes along with belt fittings and penannular brooches similar to these on Saaremaa.<sup>68</sup> Single such specimens from Norway were dated to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of the Finnish and Estonian examples.<sup>69</sup> It seems that spearheads of this type were not particularly widespread in the rest of the territories of Latvia and in North West Russia; at least they are not mentioned in the weapon typologies there.<sup>70</sup> There have also been considerably fewer finds of this type of spearheads on the Estonian mainland than on Saaremaa.<sup>71</sup> The spearheads of the local variant of G-type have been dated to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century on the Estonian mainland<sup>72</sup> and to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, possibly also to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century on Saaremaa<sup>73</sup>.

The corresponding spearheads on Saaremaa demonstrate quite a variety in details. Several spearheads of this variant were, like the Livian and Finnish ones, pattern-welded and/or their socket was decorated with Runic style ornamentation engraved into the silver plating. Of all the spearheads found in the cremation find complexes on Saaremaa the specimens in the burials Kurevere III and Randvere III were ornamented. In addition to that, two more silver plated and ornamented specimens of the same variant are known from different places.<sup>74</sup> One of them probably originates from a destroyed stone cemetery in Mui; the other was found in the Rahu cemetery where it could not be linked to any of the complexes and was obviously marking a borderline between some burials.

<sup>62</sup> Petersen 1919, pp 22–28.

<sup>63</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 25–26.

<sup>64</sup> Andersson 1972, p 20.

<sup>65</sup> Solberg 1984, pp 62–63.

<sup>66</sup> Kirpichnikov 1966, p 9; Mägi-Lõugas 1995a, p 519.

<sup>67</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 35–36; 2000, pp 123–124, PI 47.

<sup>68</sup> Tönnisson 1974, pp 104 ff, PI IV, X, XVI, XVII, X.

<sup>69</sup> Solberg 1984, pp 125–126.

<sup>70</sup> Kirpichnikov 1966; Atgāzis 1997, Fig 4.

<sup>71</sup> Kustin 1962a, p 240; Selirand 1974b, pp 110–113.

<sup>72</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 113.

<sup>73</sup> Kustin 1962a, p 241.

<sup>74</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1994.

In addition to the spearheads found at stone grave find complexes, 25 more such spearheads are known on Saaremaa. These have been picked up from destroyed graves or have reached museums as stray finds without an exact find-spot. Some of them are also pattern-welded. It can be noted that while the spearheads with silver-plated sockets and some others possess quite elaborated damascening patterns, four unornamented such spearheads are decorated with a zigzag damascened pattern that resembles the pattern widespread on spearheads of type K. Type K spearheads were in use during the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>75</sup> A type K spearhead with similar zigzag pattern on its blade occurred in the burial complex II at Randvere together with a spearhead of the above mentioned local variant of type G. Belt fittings found in the same complex would also date it to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Similar belt mountings, relief buckles of the Gotland-Baltic type and stylized animal patterned open-work strap tags occur also in the Rahu IX and Käku XIII burials. In both of these burial complexes, as well as in the Randvere X burial, 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century penannular brooches with small faceted terminals were represented.

Hence, the damascened zigzag patterned spearheads should be dated to the whole of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and not only to the first half of it. The decoration on the sockets of the Kurevere and Randvere spearheads belongs to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century or to the beginning of 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>76</sup> while the spearheads from the Rahu I and II burials could, according to the other finds, rather belong to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the local variant of type G spearheads at Saaremaa burial complexes can be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Petersen's G type spearheads with sharp angles of the blade do not occur in the stone grave find complexes on Saaremaa, although about 20 of them are known from the islands. Many of them are pattern-welded and six specimens have an ornament engraved on the silver-plated socket.<sup>77</sup>

### c) Spearheads of K-type

A type K spearhead has been found in the Randvere VII burial (PI 41: 4) where a penannular brooch with a narrow based pin and with terminals of undefined shape also occurs. Jüri Selirand has dated similar penannular brooches to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>78</sup> According to Kustin, 47 type K spearheads have been found on Saaremaa as stray finds.<sup>79</sup> Nineteen of them, in addition to the Randvere spearhead, correspond directly to the Petersen's type K. On the Estonian mainland type K spearheads and spearheads resembling that type occur

less frequently, and are, with references to the always later occurrence in Estonian find material, dated to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>80</sup>

A K-type spearhead has been uncovered on the hillfort of Pöide, in a layer that belongs to the 10<sup>th</sup> century at the latest;<sup>81</sup> similar spearheads have been quite common in 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century burials of the Gauja Livs.<sup>82</sup> In Sweden K-type spearheads are also dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>83</sup> It can be concluded that the item in the Randvere VII burial belongs most probably to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Spearheads that resemble K-type have been uncovered in the complexes Rahu XXIX and XXX (PI 84: 6; 86: 2), but should be defined rather as local variants of these weapons. Similar spearheads in Latvia are dated to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>84</sup> The burial XXX in the Rahu cemetery can, however, be dated rather to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. A rectangular iron buckle in the burial XXIX of the same cemetery, which resembles those found in the inhumation graves on Saaremaa, enables us to date the complex to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> or to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### d) Spearheads of M-type

Four spearheads classified as belonging to the Petersen's M-type have been uncovered in the find complexes of Saaremaa stone graves: in the burials Käku V and X (PI 5: 12; 10: 9), Randvere VIII (PI 43: 9) and the Viltina weapons find (PI 92: 6). These weapons were used mainly in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, especially during the first half or even the first quarter of this period.<sup>85</sup> The specimens from Saaremaa can be dated to the same time.

Altogether 31 spearheads of the M-type, some of them belonging to the transformation types K/M or G/M, have been found on Saaremaa as stray finds, many of them probably originating from destroyed graves. Several of these weapons are pattern-welded. Silver plating and

<sup>75</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 32.

<sup>76</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1994.

<sup>77</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1994.

<sup>78</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 59.

<sup>79</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 247 ff.

<sup>80</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 113.

<sup>81</sup> Lõugas & Mägi-Lõugas 1994b, PI XV: 1; the type and date of the spearhead has been later reconsidered by the author.

<sup>82</sup> Tõniss 1974, pp 108–109, PI XXI, XXVII, XXVIII.

<sup>83</sup> Andersson 1972, pp 9 ff.

<sup>84</sup> Atgäzis 1997, Fig 4.

<sup>85</sup> Petersen 1919, p 35; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 34–35.

decoration in Ringerike style on the sockets of four of them date these items to a period between the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the last quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>86</sup> 69 spearheads of M-type, some of them pattern-welded and/or with silver-plated sockets, were found on the Estonian mainland up to the 1970s;<sup>87</sup> they were also widespread in the neighbouring countries of Estonia.

One long-socketed spearhead that indirectly resembles type M has been found in the Rahu XVII burial (PI 68: 1). According to Latvian analogues and other finds in the complex it can be dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>88</sup>

#### d) Javelin-Heads

The earliest javelin-head, with a tapering blade, faceted shank and tang, is probably the one in the Rahu XXI burial (PI 73: 5). Similar weapons in Latvia are dated to the turn of the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>89</sup>

Seven specimens of tanged javelin-heads with oval or slightly triangular blade are known in the cremation burial complexes of Saaremaa stone graves. The javelin-heads from the burials IX, XVIII, XX and XXXI at Rahu (PI 58: 22; 69: 5; 72: 15; 87: 1) and burial IX at Randvere (PI 44: 20) are simple specimens with a rounded tang or without a shank altogether. From the Rahu XXIII and XXVIII burials (PI 76: 1; 83: 4) similar javelin-heads with twisted tangs are known. The one in the Rahu XXVIII complex was unearthed together with a javelin-head that had a knife-like blade and also a twisted tang (PI 83: 5). Javelin-heads with rhomboid blade and tapering blade occurred together in the Rahu XX burial. All such weapons can be dated to a wide period starting from the Pre-Viking centuries until the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>90</sup> Similar specimens in lila and Metste inhumation graves in eastern Estonia belonged to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, respectively.<sup>91</sup> In the inhumation grave XVIII at Viira cemetery a long, badly corroded iron artefact, which has broken into fragments by now, was laid under the back of the deceased woman. It seems that this also had been a javelin-head whose type can unfortunately no longer be identified.

Javelin-heads with knife-like blades have been found in the graves XVII, XXVIII at Rahu (PI 68: 7–8; 83: 5) and the graves III and VI at Randvere (PI 33: 2; 39: 3). The javelin-heads with twisted tangs found at the Rahu cemetery occurred in both cases in pairs; the javelin-head in the grave XXVIII was found together with a spearhead with a twisted tang and oval blade. Selirand regards the javelin-heads with knife-like blade as typical of Estonia and dates them to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>92</sup> In fact, many of them have also been found in countries neighbouring Estonia. On Saaremaa Kustin has dated them to the 10<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>93</sup>

Javelin-heads with two barbs have been unearthed in the Rahu II and XXX burials (PI 51: 2; 86: 3). Such finds are relatively rare in Estonia. More of them have been found in Latvia where they are dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>94</sup>

Five socketed javelin-heads are also known in cremation find complexes. They have been classified as javelin-heads mainly because of their small size. Three of them are rhomboid-bladed and are similar to a small M-type. In the Viltina weapons find two such specimens (PI 92: 2–3) have been found together with a large M-type spearhead. This deposit can be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, most likely to the first half of it. Hence, the identical javelin-heads occurring in singles in the Rahu XII and XV burials (PI 61: 5; 64: 1) can also be dated to the same period. About ten other such javelin-heads from Saaremaa have reached museums as stray finds. Some of them were apparently re-made from bigger spearheads of M- or G-types (the last one with sharp angles of the blade), whose blade had been broken.

Selirand mentions 22 small spearheads resembling type M on the Estonian mainland, which he dates to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries on the basis of the Varbola and Lõhavere finds.<sup>95</sup> Some of them have also been re-made from originally bigger spearheads of M- or G-types, some are pattern-welded and some have silver plating on the socket.<sup>96</sup> Although some of the specimens could really belong to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, yet such a late date seems to be little justified, at least with regard to Saaremaa finds. Kustin dated such finds on Saaremaa to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries;<sup>97</sup> in any case, in 1962 none of them had yet been found in burial complexes.

A small socketed javelin-head with a tapering blade was recorded in the Randvere XI complex (PI 47: 4) along with a local variant of type G spearhead with a zigzag damascening, and can most likely be also dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, according to the latter.

<sup>86</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1994.

<sup>87</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 111–112.

<sup>88</sup> Atgāzis 1997, Fig 4.

<sup>89</sup> Atgāzis, 1997 Fig 4.

<sup>90</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 114.

<sup>91</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1995a.

<sup>92</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 114–115.

<sup>93</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 259–260.

<sup>94</sup> Atgāzis 1974.

<sup>95</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 114.

<sup>96</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1994.

<sup>97</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 253–254.

### 5.2.1.2. Swords and Sword Fragments

A sword or more often sword fragments were, as expected, found mainly in men's burials in the stone grave find complexes on Saaremaa. From four presumably double burials they occurred in two, namely, in the complexes II and XXIII in Rahu cemetery (PI 51: 4; 76: 6). The first of them also contained other weapons – a spearhead and a javelin-head –, and a spur. The complex was considered a double burial because of abundant fragments of a chain arrangement. The Rahu XXIII burial also contained, in addition to the underside of a pommel, a javelin-head. The rest of the artefacts in this complex are more likely to be linked to a woman (fragments of a spiral bracelet, fragments of a neck-ring and a round pendant), or are likewise represented in male as well as in female burials (belt mountings, knife sheath, rod chain, bridle parts). Considering the examples in Livian inhumations, it could have also been a boy's burial.

Surprisingly, a sword guard was found at the margins of the Rahu XXV burial (PI 79: 16). The burial complex itself contained only a chain arrangement and fragments of a spiral bracelet, a penannular brooch, a finger-ring, belt fittings and a knife, and could thereby be very likely ascribed to a woman. It is possible that the sword guard at the margins of the burial area symbolized the borderline of the grave.

If we ascribe the sword fragments found in the double burials to men, then a sword was represented in 42% of men or boys' cremations and in one male inhumation burial (Valjala III). The swords were intact or in a nearly complete state of preservation in only three cases. Besides, 21 more 9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century swords in a complete state of preservation and a great number of sword fragments have been found on Saaremaa, many of them obviously originating from damaged stone graves. Of the swords dealt with here the sword from the Kurevere I grave was found bent together under the biggest kerb stone in the western part of the grave. The sword blade of the Viltina weapons find was broken into halves. A blade of a sword was also preserved next to the inhumation grave III at Valjala (PI 102: 2), but a hilt was missing.

The swords of the Viltina weapons find (PI 92: 1) and of the grave I at Kurevere (PI 25: 1) are the earliest in the find complexes of the Osilian stone graves. The Kurevere sword, belonging to the Petersen's T-type,<sup>98</sup> is a luxury weapon with a silver and gold plated and ornamented hilt. Kustin, as well as the archeologist Mati Mandel who has classified Estonian swords, date the Kurevere specimen to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century or to the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>99</sup> Considering the other grave goods of this burial, it would be more accurate to date the complex to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

No exact parallels were found to the sword of the Viltina weapons find, but a similar specimen was uncovered in the burial No 208 at Luistari cemetery, along with a type M spearhead. The burial was coin-dated to a period later than 1038, thus to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lehtosalo-Hilander, this sword represented a variant of Petersens' Y-type, which, in addition to the Luistari find, have been recorded in the Finnish archaeological material twice more, together with spearheads of M-type.<sup>100</sup> As the spearheads and javelin-heads in the Viltina weapons find date to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, or more likely to the first half of it, the sword found there can also be dated to the same period.

A sword guard and the underside of a pommel in the complex XXVI at Rahu (PI 80: 6), both ornamented with silver, belong, according to Mandel, to the type that has common features with Petersens' types T and Z. The dating of such sword hilts is uncertain, Mandel suggests that they date to the 11<sup>th</sup> or even to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>101</sup>

Half of a small bronze sword-guard was found in the Randvere VI burial (PI 39: 1) that obviously belonged to a little boy. Relying on the Russian weapon researcher Anatoly Kirpichnikov, Mandel classifies it to the so-called type I and dates it to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>102</sup> According to his classification the sword-guard found at the margins of the Rahu XXV woman burial also dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century or to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>103</sup>

In five burials at the Rahu cemetery (II, III, XVIII, XIX and XXIII) fragments of swords with a long straight guard and disc-shaped pommel have been found (PI 51: 4; 52: 1; 69: 2; 71: 1; 76: 6). Swords of this type were widespread in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and also at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>104</sup> Kirpichnikov classified these as his type VI.<sup>105</sup> According to Mandel, the Kirpichnikov's type IV swords represented by the pommel found in the Rahu I burial belonged to the same period.<sup>106</sup>

In four burials, only a blade, fragment of a blade or scabbard end represented a sword. From the latter ones the scabbard ends in the Rahu XVII and Randvere II burial

<sup>98</sup> Petersen 1919, pp 150–153.

<sup>99</sup> Kustin 1966b, p 89; Mandel 1991, p 118.

<sup>100</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 14–15.

<sup>101</sup> Mandel 1991, p 118.

<sup>102</sup> Kirpichnikov 1966, p 53; Mandel 1991, p 120.

<sup>103</sup> Mandel 1991, p 123.

<sup>104</sup> Mandel 1991, pp 122–123.

<sup>105</sup> Kirpichnikov 1966, p 88.

<sup>106</sup> Kirpichnikov 1966, p 86; Mandel 1991, pp 121–122.



complexes (PI 68: 2–4; 31: 17) resembled that in the Rahu XVIII grave (PI 69: 3); the belt mountings in the burials XVII and XVIII at Rahu were also similar. Thus, the sword of the Rahu XVII burial can also be dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, which suits the date of the spearhead and two javelin-heads found in the same complex.

Belt mountings similar to those in the grave II at Randvere cemetery occurred, together with sword finds, in the complexes Rahu I and Randvere VI. In the latter, square belt mounts with relief and openwork strap tags were found together with flat, jagged and round-ended mounts typical of most of the Rahu weapon burials. A javelin-head with a knife-like blade in this grave dated, like the bronze sword-guard, to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. On the basis of the belt mountings the complex can presumably be dated to the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century or to the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The fragment of a sword blade and a mount, apparently from the scabbard end, found in the Rahu XXX burial (PI 86: 6–7), were impossible to date. As the two spearheads of this complex were dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries and the javelin-head to the 11<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it can be presumed that the whole complex originates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century or the very beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The scabbard ends found in the Rahu XVII and XVIII burials (PI 68: 4; 69: 3), as well as the scabbard end in the Valjala III grave (PI 102: 1) represent the types that were widespread in Couronia and Gotland. The first of these are dated mainly to the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century in northern Couronia, and to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries in West Lithuania; the type of the scabbard end in the Valjala III grave to the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>107</sup>

No saxes or one-edged swords have been found in the cremation find complexes on Saaremaa, although they were widespread in the weapon burials of the ethnic Baltic groups, and in those of the Livs as well. Altogether seven saxes have been unearthed on Saaremaa, one of which originates from the inhumation grave discovered at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at Laadjala.<sup>108</sup>

### 5.2.1.3. Shields

Shields belonged to the armour of the old times and their lack in graves is explained rather by different burial customs than by the lack of shields as such. In the cremations on Saaremaa the preservation possibilities of shields made from organic materials were close to zero, as they had to become totally destroyed on the pyre. A number of iron shield-bosses or other metal strengthening details are known from cremations in some neigh-

bouring countries. In the inhumation graves of areas neighbouring Saaremaa, even the wooden parts of shields are comparatively well preserved at places. When the inhumation burial custom reached Saaremaa, shields were no longer placed in graves.

No shield-bosses have been found in the find complexes of Saaremaa stone graves but some iron fragments of shield-bosses have been unearthed outside the complexes at the Rahu and Viltina stone cemeteries. The situation is similar on the Estonian mainland as well as in Finland. The Finnish archeologists have come to the conclusion that shield-bosses were not used in Finland later than the Merovingian Period. The only supposed shield fragments at Luistari cemetery are recorded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century burial of a man (No 17). Remains of a thin wooden board, covered with leather and riveted in between two oblong bronze mounts, were found there. The thickness of the wooden and leather part did not exceed 7 mm. As several such mounts were found in this grave, it was most likely that these were fragments of a shield.<sup>109</sup> The disappearance of shield-bosses among the finds from the start of the Viking period has also been noticed on Gotland.<sup>110</sup>

Shields with bosses have been found twice in 11<sup>th</sup> century inhumation graves of the Livs on the island of Dole at the estuary of the River Daugava. In both cases they had been placed on the lid of the coffin. The shields were presumably of a round shape and were made of pine and aspen. The shield that was better preserved was covered with thin leather and rimmed with a riveted bronze sheet. Preserved fragments of a wooden shield in grave No 72 at Vampenieši I cemetery had been painted in black and white.<sup>111</sup>

A shield with an iron boss was found in the Gauja Livian burial in the barrow No 31 at Putelji. Wooden fragments, obviously remains of shields, did occur in several inhumation graves in this area, but bosses or other metal fragments were not recorded.<sup>112</sup>

A better preserved shield from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, found in the Tira bog in northern Couronia, was round, with a diameter of 89–90 cm and 0.9-cm thick. Both sides of the shield were covered with leather. Shield fragments have also been found in the inhumation graves in the barrows at Lejasdopeli cemetery in Selonia, some of which

<sup>107</sup> Asaris 1994; Kazakevičius 1998.

<sup>108</sup> SMM 1924, p 24; Kustin 1962a, pp 155–157.

<sup>109</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pl 5; 1982b, pp 41–42.

<sup>110</sup> Stenberger 1961, p 38.

<sup>111</sup> Šnore 1996, pp 114, 126.

<sup>112</sup> Tönnisson 1974, p 113.

had obviously belonged to round shields, but one to an almond-shaped shield. The wood fragments were decorated with paintings, one of them even on both sides. All of these shields lacked the iron boss.<sup>113</sup>

68 shields have been found at the Birka cemetery, and numerous other Viking Age shield fragments are known in Scandinavia. The shields there were round and mainly with iron bosses. They were in principle similar to the finds in the Eastern Baltic. In Scandinavia shields had also been painted in many colours, sometimes on both sides, in addition to their metal decorations.<sup>114</sup>

It can be presumed that shields predominantly without metal parts were used on Saaremaa, as they were among its nearest neighbours. In addition to the above-mentioned fragments of shield-bosses, iron fragments, assumed to originate from shields, have been unearthed in three men's cremations: Kāku X, Rahu XXVI and XXX (PI 10: 2–8, 10–14; 80: 7–8; 86: 4–5). All of them contained oblong and rectangular, mainly double-sided, iron plaques riveted together. The thickness of the organic material between the plaques had been 0.4–0.6 cm, thus corresponding to the possible thickness of shields known from the neighbouring countries.<sup>115</sup>

## 5.2.2. Tools

### 5.2.2.1. Axes

Four axes have been found in the burial complexes of Saaremaa, all of them in cremation graves. Only two of them have been unearthed in male burials. Although the axe can be a weapon as well as a tool, their rare occurrence in the Osilian weapon burials indicates its use rather as a tool, at least among grave goods.

The only man's grave where an axe was found (Rahu XIX or between the complexes Rahu I and XIX) also contained several other weapons. The Randvere V burial where an axe was also found probably belonged to a girl, as can be decided on the basis of its small-sized jewellery. A woman or a girl was buried in the grave of Rahu XXIV, too. The burial XXVIII at the Rahu cemetery consisted mainly of fragments of a chain arrangement and was assessed as belonging to a woman, despite the axe and two spearheads found in the same complex.

#### a) Bearded Axes

The axe in the burial V at the Randvere cemetery (PI 36: 2) was small (probably because the deceased had been a child), bearded and with extensions on the shaft side. Peter Paulsen dates such axes in the Baltic to the period

later than the year 1000.<sup>116</sup> Kirpichnikov has called them the "Finnish-Russian axe" and dated them to the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>117</sup> A similar axe was unearthed in the grave No 158 at Ihre on Gotland where it was dated to the earlier Viking Period.<sup>118</sup> Three corresponding axes dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century are known from Luistari in Finland.<sup>119</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> century is also consistent with the date of the Randvere V burial.

The Rahu XIX burial contained bearded axe with lengthened head and small projections underneath (PI 71: 2). Other weapons in this find complex dated the burial to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, which also suits the date of the axe. Atgāzis dates such axes in the Latvian area also to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>120</sup> Kirpichnikov regards these axes as the "Russian axes", the type of which was also widespread in the Baltic region from the 10<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>121</sup> One such axe has been found at Birka where it was regarded as a battle-axe and is dated to the end of the Viking Period.<sup>122</sup> Paulsen dates these axes to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>123</sup> This type has been notably rare in Finland; the only specimen found at Luistari is dated possibly to the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>124</sup> On Gotland, too, it occurs only in exceptional cases.<sup>125</sup>

The same type of bearded axes as found at the Rahu cemetery were widespread in the area of the Gauja Livs. Such an axe together with two spearheads and a sword were found in the barrow No 12 at Puteļi. All the weapons belonged to the same 12<sup>th</sup> century types, which were also represented at the Rahu cemetery. From the barrow No 4 at Liepenes a belt decorated with flat mounts with rounded corners was found together with a similar axe.<sup>126</sup> Similar belt mounts were also found in the burial XIX and some other 12<sup>th</sup> century complexes at the Rahu cemetery.

<sup>113</sup> Šnore 1997, pp 79–80, Fig 7.

<sup>114</sup> Arwidsson 1986b.

<sup>115</sup> E g Arbman 1940, PI 276.

<sup>116</sup> Paulsen 1956, pp 23–24.

<sup>117</sup> Kirpichnikov 1966, p 38.

<sup>118</sup> Stenberger 1961, p 40, Fig 33.

<sup>119</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 51–52; 2000, p 65, PI 22.

<sup>120</sup> Atgāzis 1997.

<sup>121</sup> Kirpichnikov 1966, pp 36–37.

<sup>122</sup> Arbman 1940, PI 14:3; Hallinder 1986, p 47.

<sup>123</sup> Paulsen 1956, pp 29 ff.

<sup>124</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 53.

<sup>125</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1995b, Fig 261; 1998, PI 260: 4.

<sup>126</sup> Tönnisson 1974, pp 109–111, PI VI, XVI.

## b) Wide-Bladed Axes

The axes in the graves XXIV and XXVIII at the Rahu cemetery (PI 78: 4; 83: 3) were both wide-bladed; the first of them lacks a major part of the blade. Such axes belong to Petersen's type M.<sup>127</sup> Atgāzis regards them as battle-axes, which in Latvia have been found mainly in Couronia, but also in the areas of the Gauja Livs and at the nearby cemeteries of the Latgallians, and at the estuary of the River Daugava. Most often they occurred along with the spearheads of M-type. Atgāzis has dated the axes of M-type mainly to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, with the variants similar to the ones in Rahu dated also to the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>128</sup> Type M axes were widespread on Gotland and in the whole of Scandinavia, as well as in England.<sup>129</sup> On Saaremaa about 10 axes of M-type, including three small axes, have been found as stray finds. Kustin regards the small variants of this type as special woodwork axes.<sup>130</sup> However, if we can draw a parallel with the small axes found in the burial complexes, the small-sized axes outside the complexes could also originate from children's graves.

In some regions axes have been very typical grave goods, especially in male burials. Many of them have been unearthed in the graves of the Livs and Cours. On Gotland, according to Marten Stenberger, since the beginning of the Viking period axes replaced the swords that were earlier more often deposited in male burials.<sup>131</sup> The find complexes in the cremation graves on the Estonian mainland have usually not been distinguished, but in the inhumations at the end of the Viking Period and later the axe has been a common grave furnishing. The more perplexing is the scarcity of axes in Late Iron Age graves on Saaremaa. It should be mentioned here that, as regards the axe finds, Saaremaa resembles the Luistari cemetery in Finland. At Luistari the percentage of axes was even smaller – only six axes for the whole cemetery. One of them was unearthed in a woman's grave, one in a small boy's grave and three in men's graves. The sixth axe came from the grave No 404, belonging to a woman at whose feet a number of crammed, apparently male bones were found together with the above mentioned axe.<sup>132</sup> The scarcity of axe finds at Luistari and in the cemeteries of Saaremaa possibly implies that the axe was considered primarily a tool and not a weapon. Correspondingly, axes as grave goods did not have the symbolic significance of weapons. Other tools can be found relatively rarely among grave goods, too, and so it was not very customary to place tools in graves.

### 5.2.2.2. Knives

One of the most common artefacts in all cremation graves on Saaremaa is a knife, sometimes several knives. They occurred directly as grave goods in 44% of male and

36% of female burials. Usually only one knife was found in the grave, but in some cases two or three knives were recorded. Besides, in many burial complexes knives were unearthed which were not found inside the burial deposit but which marked the borderline of the grave. Fewer knives marking the borderline of the grave were found in men's than in women's burials (25 and 32% respectively), perhaps because in male graves weapons were more often used as borderline markers.

In inhumation graves on Saaremaa the knife was absolutely the most widespread among grave goods. It was found in 50% of men's, 24% of women's and 29% of children's graves. In inhumation graves knives that were found near the waist (and had obviously been attached to the belt) could also be distinguished from knives that had been positioned in other, different places in coffins or graves. In respect of the placement of knives in graves, a difference between male and female burials emerged. While 33% of men's burials contained a knife that had been attached to the belt, the figure was only 7% for women's burials. In 25% of male burials and 17% of female burials knife had been placed somewhere else in the coffin or in the grave filling. Thus the ratio was somewhat more equal in this case. If we presume that among the graves with undetermined sex there were more men because of the lack of jewellery, the picture will equalise even more. Two knives, one near the waist and the other at some other place in the grave, occurred only in the men's graves Karja III and V. Four knives in children's burials (29% of all the children's burials) had obviously all been attached to the belt.

Kustin has classified the knives found in Osilian graves into several types according to the shape of their back. She also uses the term "small knife" for a knife with a blade not longer than 6 cm. According to Kustin, the small knives were used for fine wood-, bone-, and leatherwork, as doctor's tools or as toilet implements.<sup>133</sup> In the stone grave find complexes small knives were found in one woman's grave and in three men's graves (including one in both of the supposed cenotaphs). They were also found in double burials and especially often in

<sup>127</sup> Petersen 1919, pp 46–47.

<sup>128</sup> Atgāzis 1997.

<sup>129</sup> Paulsen 1956, pp 19 ff; Thunmark-Nylén 1995b, Fig 12, 30, 121, 143 ff; 1998, PI 257–259.

<sup>130</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 177–181.

<sup>131</sup> Stenberger 1961, p 38.

<sup>132</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 51.

<sup>133</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 154–168.

children's burials. In the find complexes of cremation graves men's knives were on average a little bigger than those of the women. The blade of the knives in men's burials was up to 10.5-cm long while the average blade length for all knives was 7–8 cm. All the knives in children's graves had the blade with a maximum length of 6 cm; longer items occurred sometimes only as markers of burials. From the other hand, in adult burials the so-called small knives occurred primarily at the margins of the grave. It is possible that they belonged to the children of the deceased who stuck their knives in between the kerbstones of the stone circle grave or on the border of the burial during or after the funeral ritual.

The dependence of the length of the blade on the sex of the deceased can clearly be seen in inhumation graves. The knives in children's graves were all small, from 4.5 up to 5 cm in length. Women's knives were a little bigger, with a blade 5–7.5 cm long, but many of them would still belong to the variant of small knives distinguished by Kustin. Only the knife found in the woman's grave I at Viira, which lay to the left of the skeleton at the distance of about 40 cm, had a blade length of 11 cm. The blade length of men's knives was from 9 up to 11 cm. Smaller knives (with a blade length of 6–7 cm) were found only in two cases, both probably complementary contributions to other grave goods. In the Karja V grave a long knife was attached to the waist of the deceased man and a smaller one was found under the right shoulder. In the Viira IV grave only a small knife was found next to the femur of the deceased.

Knives as grave goods were a widespread phenomenon. They occurred quite numerous in inhumation graves, especially men's graves, on the Estonian mainland. Knives were also one of the most widespread finds in the cremation burials in the stone graves of mainland Estonia.<sup>134</sup> In village cemeteries they could be found until the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>135</sup>

At the Luistari cemetery in Finland knives have been unearthed in both male and female graves. The men's knives were clearly longer and larger, with an average blade length of 8.5 cm, while the average length of the women's knives was 7 cm. The smallest knives with a blade length of only 5.5 cm on the average were found in children's graves.<sup>136</sup> Thus, the Luistari knives corresponded in their size and distribution between sexes to the ones on Saaremaa. At the Köyliö cemetery, too, knives were found in the graves of both men and women, as a rule singly. Nils Cleve suggests that these were common grave furnishings, not examples of funeral rites.<sup>137</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander has nearly the same opinion regarding the knives in the Luistari cemetery, but she still marks out

the cases when knives were found in unexpected places in graves, for example next to the feet.<sup>138</sup>

In the barrows of North West Russia, knife finds were relatively rare and they were found near the waist or at any other place in the grave.<sup>139</sup> Knives were found both in male and female graves in the inhumation cemeteries around Novgorod,<sup>140</sup> in the Votic-Izhorian area<sup>141</sup> and in Karelia<sup>142</sup>. Among the Livs knives and bronze-rimmed knife sheaths were very widespread in the burials of both sexes.<sup>143</sup> Knives are often found also in Late Iron Age burials in Middle Sweden and Gotland, in the latter sometimes several of them together.<sup>144</sup> In the burials of ethnic Baltic groups the so-called common knives occur more rarely, but at some places men's wide saxes were very widespread.<sup>145</sup>

In the Osilian cemeteries knife handles have been preserved only in rare cases. An ornamented fragment of a bone handle originates from the Piila VII grave (PI 24: 3), and in the descriptions of some inhumation graves wooden knife-handles have been mentioned. Judging from other finds and parallels from neighbouring areas, the main material of knife handles was wood, sometimes also bone or antler. In cremation graves, larger bronze spirals that could originally have been around knife handles have been preserved.

### a) Knife Sheaths

About an equal number of knife sheaths with bronze edge-mounts were found in both men's and women's burials (39 and 35% respectively). Typical knife sheaths of Saaremaa women had a special broadening, and ornamented bronze plates all over. They were attached to the belt by a rod chain netting. Similar knife sheaths were also found in graves of Livonian women. As the parallels in the inhumation graves of the Livian area demonstrate, women could also wear knife sheaths without broadening, i.e. sheaths similar to those of men. At the same time

<sup>134</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 93–94.

<sup>135</sup> Valk 1999, pp 81–82 ff.

<sup>136</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 44–48.

<sup>137</sup> Cleve 1978, p 83.

<sup>138</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 50–51.

<sup>139</sup> Sedov 1982, p 169.

<sup>140</sup> Sedov 1982, pp 180 ff.

<sup>141</sup> Ligi 1993b, pp 40–41.

<sup>142</sup> Kochkurkina 1982, p 117 ff.

<sup>143</sup> Šnore 1996; Zariņa 1997.

<sup>144</sup> Stenberger 1961, p 52; Arrhenius 1989.

<sup>145</sup> E g Vaškevičiūtė 1992; Radiņš 1999.

men's knife sheaths could sometimes also have been attached by a rod chain netting, although in most cases their sheaths were attached with the help of the belt chain.<sup>146</sup> On Saaremaa the belt chain usually consisted of S-shaped iron links or sometimes of rod chains.

The custom of using bronze edge-mounts on knife sheaths has been quite widespread. The special features of Saaremaa and Livia were women's knife sheaths with broadening, and relatively frequent finds of bronze-plated knife sheaths in women's graves. Bronze-plated knife sheaths were also widespread on the Estonian mainland, where their shape was different – the mainland knife sheaths were of even width. Occasional knife sheaths of Saaremaa type have been found only in West Estonia. Knife sheaths similar to those on the Estonian mainland have been recorded in Finland,<sup>147</sup> single specimens also on the Votic-Izhorian area and around Novgorod<sup>148</sup>. No knife sheaths typical of the areas on the Estonian mainland (and/or Finland) have been found on Saaremaa.

Kustin has dated the Saaremaa type knife sheaths to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, but as regards the artefact complexes here they should be dated to a much longer period. The best preserved knife sheath of Saaremaa type in a cremation grave was found in a 5–12-year-old girl's burial VII at Randvere (PI 40: 1). The knife sheath was placed in the grave together with other remains taken from the pyre, but it had not been on the pyre itself and was thus comparatively well preserved. The knife sheath was specially made small as were also most of the other artefacts in this burial. According to other finds the knife sheath can be dated to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century or the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. A knife sheath with broadening is also known from the Kurevere II grave (PI 28: 1) dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but its shape is quite obscure. All the other pieces of knife sheaths found in women's cremation graves are so fragmentary that it is impossible to reconstruct their shape.

A well-preserved Saaremaa type women's knife sheath has been found in the Loona V inhumation grave (PI 97: 1) where it should date to the end or to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. One such knife sheath is known as a stray find from the Karja cemetery where it obviously indicates the presence of an inhumation cemetery on this site by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century or at the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries at the latest. An identical knife sheath in a female inhumation grave at Haimre in West Estonia dates also to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>149</sup> Thus, the knife sheaths of Saaremaa type had been in use at least during the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century inhumation graves on Saaremaa, remains of knife sheaths are known only from three male burials (PI 116: 1; 117: 1; 118: 2). These finds consisted of

simple bronze edge-mounts from rather long knife sheaths, which had been attached to the belt. Women's knife sheaths are not known from later than the 12<sup>th</sup> century but this needs not mean that they ceased to be used during the later centuries. It can rather be presumed that the burial rites did not prescribe attaching a knife to a woman's belt when buried. Ethnographic parallels indicate that the knife and knife sheath belonged to the festive attire of women on Estonian islands until comparatively lately.<sup>150</sup>

### 5.2.2.3. Scythes

Six scythes or their fragments have been found in the find complexes of Osilian stone graves. All of them were unearthed at the edge of the burial area. Three of them have been found in men's burials (Käku XI, Piila II, and Rahu XXX; PI 11: 9; 19: 8; 86: 8), two in obviously boys' burials (Randvere VI and X; PI 39: 6; 46: 6), and one in a woman's burial (Randvere VIII; PI 43: 12). In the last case only the end of the blade was found, so that the item could originally have been a sickle. In the Käku and Piila graves fragments of scythes were found directly under or between the kerb stones of stone circle graves. In addition to these, Kustin mentions 23 stray finds of scythes, which could have originated mainly from other but destroyed cemeteries on Saaremaa.<sup>151</sup>

It can be assumed that in the burial rites of Saaremaa the scythe belonged more to the men's burial than to that of the women. In the woman's stone circle grave VIII at Randvere the fragment of a scythe or sickle was found immediately outside the kerb. In addition, a large M-type spearhead and two knives marked the grave outside the kerb.

At the Luistari cemetery as well as elsewhere in Finland scythes occurred only in men's burials, whereas sickles were found in women's burials.<sup>152</sup> On the Estonian mainland scythes have also been unearthed in female inhumation graves at Enivere and Maidla but in all other cases they come from men's or boys' graves.<sup>153</sup> Both sickles and

<sup>146</sup> Šnore 1996; reports; observations in the collections of archeological finds at the Latvian Institute of History and Latvian History Museum.

<sup>147</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 48–50.

<sup>148</sup> Selirand 1970 and references.

<sup>149</sup> Ariste 1948a.

<sup>150</sup> Manninen 1927, pp 387–391.

<sup>151</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 194–195.

<sup>152</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 54–57.

<sup>153</sup> Metsar 1947; Selirand 1974b, p 95; Mandel 1993, p 42.

scythes occurred frequently in Izhorian burials,<sup>154</sup> and also in Karelia<sup>155</sup>. Scythes have not very often been found in the burials of the Livs, but in the burial rites of some ethnic Baltic groups, especially the Cours, they were widespread.

It is noticeable that of the six scythes (or sickles) found in the burial complexes on Saaremaa most originate from the burials dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, one to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries, and only one from a grave of the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century or the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, it seems that on Saaremaa, as in the Luistari cemetery in Filand, scythes were used as grave goods mainly during the Later Viking Period.<sup>156</sup>

#### 5.2.2.4. Shears and a Spinning Whorl

Only one pair of shears was found in all the cremation find complexes on Saaremaa: in the Piila VII grave (PI 24: 5). Judging by numerous fragments of a chain arrangement and by some other pieces of jewellery and artefacts it had been a woman's burial. The shears were broken into two halves and were unearthed 20–30 cm outside the kerb under the limestone pavement.<sup>157</sup> From the same stone circle grave, right in the middle of the cremation deposit, a bone spinning whorl (PI 24: 2) was found, which is also the only one of its own kind in the find complexes of Osilian stone graves.

Shears had been typical men's grave goods among the Livs, but in exceptional cases they also occurred in women's graves.<sup>158</sup> In Finland shears occur both in male and female graves.<sup>159</sup>

#### 5.2.2.5. Fire-Steels

Six fire-steels have been found in the find complexes of Osilian stone graves, five of them in male graves. A fire-steel in the Kurevere III grave (PI 29: 7) belonged to a woman, according to the bone analysis. All fire-steels are lyre-shaped, except the one found in the Rahu XVIII burial (PI 69: 4), which is oval.

At Luistari in Finland fire-steels used to be primarily male grave goods, although in exceptional cases they were also found in female graves. Lyre-shaped fire-steels were there dated mainly to the Viking Period, and the oval ones to the very end of that period or to the period right after that.<sup>160</sup> In Estonia the lyre-shaped specimens have been dated until as late as the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the oval ones mainly to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>161</sup>

#### 5.2.2.6. Combs

Only a few fragments of combs, usually made of bone or antler, have been preserved in Saaremaa stone graves. This could have been the result of fierce burning and the custom of crushing the bones following the cremation (see section 6.1.2.b). No combs have been found in inhumation graves. Two small comb fragments have been preserved among the bone objects in the cremation burials Käku I and Kurevere I (PI 1: 6; 25: 15). The latter was a male burial, but the Käku grave contained too few artefacts to determine the gender of the deceased. Both fragments belonged to one-sided combs and can be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries according to Heidi Luik.<sup>162</sup> Two fragments of identical combs have also been found in the Viltina cemetery.

Numbers of combs are known from the inhumation burials in the neighbouring areas of Saaremaa, whereas in regions with cremation as the dominating burial custom the comb finds are much rarer everywhere. Combs were almost obligatory in the burials of the Livs, among both men and women.<sup>163</sup> The combs there normally belonged to quite widespread types that were apparently made in specific workshops.<sup>164</sup>

#### 5.2.2.7. Padlocks and Keys

Three cylindrical padlocks and six padlock keys are known in the find complexes of the stone graves on Saaremaa. Two padlocks from the three had belonged to men (Kurevere I and Randvere III; 25: 6; 33: 12), the third one originates from the Kurevere III grave (PI 29: 13), which has been more probably ascribed to a woman according to the bones. In addition to the padlock, a key was found in both Kurevere graves (PI 25: 5; 29: 12). The rest of the keys in Osilian cremation graves have been unearthed in women's or, in one case, a girl's grave. Thus, the padlock as a grave furnishing is primarily connected to men and the key to women.

<sup>154</sup> Ligi 1993b, p 90.

<sup>155</sup> Kochkurkina 1981.

<sup>156</sup> See also Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 55.

<sup>157</sup> Mägi & Rudi 1999.

<sup>158</sup> Zariņa, verbal information.

<sup>159</sup> Cleve 1978, p 83; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 57–60.

<sup>160</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 72–73.

<sup>161</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 100.

<sup>162</sup> Luik 1998, pp 26 ff.

<sup>163</sup> Šnore 1996.

<sup>164</sup> Luik 1998, pp 139 ff.

Only one padlock has been found at the Luistari cemetery in Finland, in the grave No 348, while keys are known from four graves. All these items date to a period later than the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>165</sup> At Köyliö cemetery keys were found in two women's and one possibly a child's grave.<sup>166</sup>

Cylindrical padlocks and their keys have also been found on the Estonian mainland and at other places in the East Baltics and eastern Europe. In Estonia they can be dated to a period from the 10<sup>th</sup> up to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>167</sup> In the areas of the Daugava Livs such padlocks and keys have been found in the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century burials. There, too, padlocks were primarily found in men's graves and keys in women's graves.<sup>168</sup>

#### 5.2.2.8. Balances and Weights

Balances and weights were found almost everywhere in both male and female burials (see section 5.1.1.) but they were more frequently used as men's grave goods. Weights occurred in 16% of men's graves and in 13% of women's or girls' graves in the find complexes of Osilian stone cemeteries. Thus, there are relatively few of them in the burials of both sexes.

Parts of balances were preserved only in the burials Randvere III (male; PI 32: 14, 20, 23–24) and X (male, probably a boy; PI 45: 18–19). Both graves were rich in finds and the number of weights in them was 6 and 5 respectively. In all other cases weights were found singly. Thus, the two Randvere graves are probably the only ones where a whole silver-weighing set, consisting of small folding balances and several different weights, had been placed on the pyre. Several such sets have been found in graves in areas neighbouring Saaremaa, especially in the inhumation graves of the Livs.<sup>169</sup>

Considerably fewer balances and weights than on Saaremaa are known from stone graves on the Estonian mainland. The few finds originate mainly from West and North Estonia and from the vicinity of the crossings of trade routes in South Estonia, thus clearly indicating the importance of trade in the local economy. Folded balances have also been found in the jewellery box of a rich woman at the Lõhavere hillfort in South Estonia.<sup>170</sup>

Balances and weights have been frequently found in Finland. Two balances, one in a woman's grave and the other possibly in a man's grave, were found at Luistari cemetery. Weights were also unearthed in burials of both sexes there. In many graves they occurred singly or in pairs, which according to Lehtosalo-Hilander demonstrates their mainly symbolic meaning.<sup>171</sup> At Köyliö cemetery balances were found only in one man's grave, weights in six, possibly even in eight male graves.<sup>172</sup>

Weights in singles or in pairs, but seldom balances, occurred also at Birka cemeteries. No burial at Birka contained balances and a larger number of weights together. Weights in burials with identified sex/gender occurred even more frequently in female burials than in male burials.<sup>173</sup> Both balances and weights seem to be quite rare grave goods on Gotland.<sup>174</sup>

In the regions closest to Saaremaa, balances and weights were most widespread at Livian cemeteries,<sup>175</sup> which is well understandable considering the geographical location of the Livs at the crossroads of important trade routes. In Karelia and in Votic-Izhorian areas balances and weights seem to have been rare grave goods, according to the literature.<sup>176</sup> The same applies to the burials of the Latgalians and generally to the most of the ethnic Baltic groups.<sup>177</sup> The exception, again, is Couronia, where numbers of balances and weights were found in the burials of the Cours.<sup>178</sup>

#### 5.2.2.9. Other Tools and Implements

Some other tools, especially carpenter's tools, were found in some wealthier burials at the Randvere and Rahu cemeteries. Drawing knives were found in the men's burials Randvere III and Rahu XIX (PI 33: 10; 71: 3); 13–14 cm long iron rods with a square cross-section in the Rahu II and XXX burials (PI 51: 3; 85: 14). The last mentioned grave belonged to a man, but the Rahu II complex was probably a double burial. It is possible that such iron rods were used in smithcraft. A probable drawing knife and a fragment of another sharp-edged tool were found in the woman's or girl's burial XXIV at Rahu (PI 78: 1, 5). In the female burial XXVIII at the same cemetery an iron plate with jagged edges and a small iron saw encrusted with silver (PI 83: 7, 8) were unearthed. Another, larger saw had been placed in the Randvere IX burial.

<sup>165</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 65–66.

<sup>166</sup> Cleve 1978, p 83.

<sup>167</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 98–99.

<sup>168</sup> Šnore 1996.

<sup>169</sup> Zariņa 1997.

<sup>170</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 99.

<sup>171</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 66–72.

<sup>172</sup> Cleve 1978, p 83.

<sup>173</sup> Arwidsson 1986c; Kihlberg 1986.

<sup>174</sup> Stenberger 1961, Thunmark-Nylén 1995b; 1998, PI 272–275.

<sup>175</sup> Šnore 1996; Zariņa 1997.

<sup>176</sup> Kochkurkina 1981; 1982; Ligi 1993b.

<sup>177</sup> Radiņš 1999; Apals & Apala 1994, p 108.

<sup>178</sup> Volkaite-Kulikauskienė 1970, pp 110–112.

Of other uncommon artefacts a probable drinking horn, indicated by a bronze mouth-edge has been found in the woman's burial XVI at Rahu cemetery (PI 65: 5). In the grave III at Piila and the burial III at Rahu oval whetstones occurred.

### 5.2.3. Horse Harness

Primarily bits and the metal parts of bridle (iron bridle mounts, bells and buckles, obviously also a part of bronze mounts) have been defined as horse harness here. Stirrups and spurs could belong to the same category, too, but only few of them have been found in the find complexes of the cremation graves on Saaremaa. Spurs in graves, however, belong to the rider, i.e. the deceased, and not to a horse, while stirrups indicate a saddle among the grave gifts.<sup>179</sup> From Saaremaa numbers of horse harness items, stirrups and spurs included, are known as stray finds, the majority of them probably originating from destroyed stone graves.<sup>180</sup> In the inhumation graves the items connected with riding and/or horses do not any longer occur.

Bits were found in 36% of male and in 26% of female cremation burials. They occurred inside the cremation deposits as well as at the borderlines of graves. The occurrence of these last probably explains why in some burials two pairs of bits were found. The greatest number of bits in one complex, namely three pairs, were unearthed in the man's burial I at Rahu (PI 49: 2, 3, 5). Two pairs of bits were found in the middle of the burial there while one more pair was recorded at the borderline of the grave. In the Rahu XVII burial parts of iron bridle mounts (PI 67: 1–3, 6) and a silver-decorated spur (PI 67: 9) were found in addition to two pairs of bits (PI 67: 4–5). In the grave XXIV at Rahu, which obviously belonged to a girl, miniature bits and fragments of other bits came to light (PI 77: 20; 78: 6). In general, about two thirds of the bits found in the stone grave complexes were recorded inside cremation deposits and one third at the edge of the burials. The best example of the latter is the stone circle grave XI at Käku where the bits (PI 11: 8) had been placed under the kerb stones.

Iron bridle parts were distributed less evenly between male and female burials. They were present in about 36% of men's and boys' burials and in only 17% of women's and girls' burials. Only four male and two female burials contained both bits and bridle parts; in all other cases these artefact types were found separately. In the Randvere X burial of a man or a boy, bridle parts (PI 45: 24–25, 27–29) were unearthed together with stirrups (PI 46: 1–3), in the presumed double burial Rahu II with a spur (PI 50: 16; 51: 5). Most of the horse gear on Saaremaa represented inter-

nationally widespread types, but the bridle mounts in particular resembled those of the Cours.<sup>181</sup>

Bridle bells were of a double pyramidal shape and had cross-like slits (e.g. PI 44: 22–23). They were primarily found in men's burials, but also in two possible double burials and in one female burial (Rahu XI). In the find complexes of the 11<sup>th</sup> century both bronze and iron bells occurred, but starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> century only iron specimens have been found in burials.

As can be seen from the figures above, artefacts connected to horses were quite frequent grave goods, especially in Osilian male burials but also in female burials on Saaremaa. Adding together all kinds of horse gear, one can conclude that the horse was represented in one form or another in 55% of male and in 35% of female burials. Such a widespread occurrence of horse gear in the Osilian cremation graves is quite remarkable, especially considering that in many neighbouring areas these items used to be rare in male burials and almost absent in female grave furnishing.

Many fewer pieces of horse harness than on Saaremaa occurred in 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century stone graves on the Estonian mainland. Selirand suggests that these were only imported to the Estonian mainland from Scandinavia or Couronia.<sup>182</sup> Kustin has also expressed an opinion that horses as well as horse harness were imported to Saaremaa.<sup>183</sup> I regard this opinion as groundless, though imported harness or horses could exist to some extent. It is known from medieval sources that the Saaremaa horses were regarded as some of the best in medieval Livonia, and they were one of the most important export products from medieval Saaremaa.<sup>184</sup>

The horse harness was not very widespread as grave furnishing among the Livs, although they did occur in exceptional cases.<sup>185</sup> Finds connected with the horse were almost entirely absent from Votic and Izhorian burials.<sup>186</sup>

Horse burials are, in addition to the Lithuanian ones, known from Birka in central Sweden and from Gotland, but in other parts of Sweden even horse harness finds in burials are rare. In Birka harness was found in 44 graves,

<sup>179</sup> E.g. Pedersen 1997.

<sup>180</sup> See Kustin 1962a, pp 293–306.

<sup>181</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 297 ff.

<sup>182</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 123–125.

<sup>183</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 305–306.

<sup>184</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 294.

<sup>185</sup> Tönnisson 1974; Šnore 1996.

<sup>186</sup> Ligi 1993b, p 45.



most of which belonged to men and only one inhumation grave and two cremation burials to women.<sup>187</sup> At the Ihere cemetery on Gotland the whole horse had been placed to the graves of two youths and one woman. Iron bridle parts were found also in other graves, in those of both men and women.<sup>188</sup>

Horse gear has quite seldom been found at Finnish cemeteries, where Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen has therefore considered them as a sign of higher social rank.<sup>189</sup> In the Viking Age and Crusade Period sections of the Luistari cemetery, bits were found in four male and one female burials. Additionally, bridle parts were recorded in two male and two female burials. According to Lehtosalo-Hilander, the harness found there did not indicate aristocracy, as they came from relatively poor burials or from burials with agricultural implements.<sup>190</sup> At Köyliö cemetery bridle parts were found in two male and two female burials.<sup>191</sup>

In the burials of northern ethnic Baltic groups horse harness was not especially widespread, in the burials of the Latgalians they are almost completely absent<sup>192</sup>. They were found in abundance in Lithuania, where burials of horses or horse parts were also common (see point 3.1). Numerous harness finds are also known from the former East Prussia.<sup>193</sup> In the nearest vicinity of Saaremaa riding equipment as grave goods occurred most often in Couronia. In regard to the quantity of harness and the type of objects in harness, Saaremaa resembles first and foremost Couronia. It is possible that this phenomenon expresses similar social and military structure in areas that supported themselves greatly on marine trade and piracy.

Riding on horseback was a widespread way of moving among all Baltic people until a relatively recent time. In Estonia riding in carriages replaced horse riding in about the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Earlier, both men and women rode horses, and riding played an important role in several rites, e.g. in wedding customs. Although on Estonian islands sidesaddles were used at later times, at least in weddings and baptisms, in everyday conditions, and at earlier times obviously generally, both men and women rode astride.<sup>194</sup>

#### 5.2.4. Belts and Belt Fittings

Leather belt fittings were very widespread finds in the stone graves on Saaremaa; in inhumation graves they occurred less frequently. 68% of the male cremation burials contained metal belt fittings, whereas only in two cases a buckle was found without belt mounts. Thus, when a man was girdled with a leather belt, the belt was in most cases decorated with mounts. It cannot be assumed what kind of belts the other men could have

worn. It is possible that the belt fittings did not survive in cremations or they were not picked up from the pyre site to bring to the grave. 57% of the cremation burials of Osilian women and girls contained metal belt fittings, too, whereas belt mounts were represented in all of them.

In the inhumation graves of Saaremaa belt mounts almost never occurred; there was only one oblong mount in the child's grave Karja IX (PI 110: 2). Belts with metal buckles were represented in three female and five male burials. It is interesting to note that three men and one woman had had a bronze-edged knife sheath probably attached to the belt but a belt buckle was missing. It is possible that the buckles had been made of lead, which preserves very badly, or that the belt was fastened in some other way. Lehtosalo-Hilander has suggested that the end of the belt could have been passed twice through a loop or hole at the other end instead of through a buckle to secure the belt.<sup>195</sup>

##### 5.2.4.1. Belt Fittings in Cremation Graves

28 buckles are known from the find complexes of the cremation graves on Saaremaa, of which some iron buckles could have belonged to the bridles.<sup>196</sup> Except for one oval-shaped specimen, all other bronze buckles belong to different variants of the so-called Gotland-Baltic-type buckles.

Leather belts with buckles as such are certainly a very widespread phenomenon, but mounted belts occur with different frequency at different places. At Birka cemeteries in central Sweden mainly mounted belts of eastern origin were found, both in men's and women's graves.<sup>197</sup> Local bronze- or silver-mounted belts were rare and came mainly from male burials.<sup>198</sup> Bronze-mounted belts were widespread on Gotland, where they also occur only in male burials.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Forsaker 1986.

<sup>188</sup> Stenberger 1961.

<sup>189</sup> Taavitsainen 1976, p 54.

<sup>190</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 63–64; 2000, p 18, PI 1.

<sup>191</sup> Cleve 1978, p 83.

<sup>192</sup> Rādiņš 1999.

<sup>193</sup> Kulakov 1994, pp 56–60.

<sup>194</sup> Viies 1947.

<sup>195</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 155.

<sup>196</sup> Buckles did not occur in all the find complexes with mounts.

<sup>197</sup> Jansson 1986.

<sup>198</sup> Mälarstedt 1986.

<sup>199</sup> Stenberger 1961, p 46; Thunmark-Nylén 1995.

On the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea bronze-mounted belts were spread unevenly in areas of different ethnic groups. Most finds were made on Saaremaa, in Couronia and in the area of the Livs. In the last area they were preserved best because of the custom of inhumation there.<sup>200</sup> Bronze-mounted belts have been found more rarely among the rest of the ethnic Baltic groups, whereas in some areas, e.g. in Semigallia, they were altogether lacking.<sup>201</sup> Finds of Late Iron Age bronze-mounted belts have been distinctly fewer on the Estonian mainland than on Saaremaa, and even these originate mainly from West Estonia and the district of Sakala in the southern part of the country. Selirand defines bronze-mounted belts, without evidence, only as sword-belts and suggests that they were imported into Estonia together with weapons.<sup>202</sup>

Bronze-mounted belts were also quite rare in Finland,<sup>203</sup> in Karelia<sup>204</sup> and in the Votic–Izhorian areas,<sup>205</sup> but to some extent they occur everywhere. In North West Russia they are known to a greater extent at cemeteries around Novgorod.<sup>206</sup> According to the literature available, it seems that as in most areas east of the Baltic Sea bronze-mounted belts were only found in men's graves; their distribution might be explained by their relatively international use, as the same weapon types were also spread in different areas. At the same time, in some places belts with bronze mounts and other metal decoration have been used by both men and women (see section 5.1.1), which implies the possibility that it might be a preconceived idea to associate belt fittings solely with male burials.

Nobody has yet worked out a more detailed typology for either Gotland-Baltic type belt buckles, or for "local" belt mounts and other belt fittings in Estonia and Latvia. Birger Nerman suggested in his work, which deals with the connections between Scandinavia and the East Baltic, that the Gotland-Baltic type of belt buckles, as well as several other belt fittings could have been of Gotlandic origin.<sup>207</sup> Most of the authors have quoted him later. Nowadays the increased number of finds have shown that the objects connected with leather belts were much more widespread on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea than on Gotland. Thus, rather the opposite influence can be assumed. Relying to a great degree on the study by Nils Cleve, Lehtosalo-Hilander regards the Gotland-Baltic type of belt buckle as originating from the east and imported to Gotland, where later the local Gotlandic belt buckle types developed from it.<sup>208</sup> In the former East-Prussia the so-called Gotland-Baltic type of belt buckles are dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries, thus about a century earlier than on Gotland.<sup>209</sup> The same type of buckles found in some find complexes of the Livs can obviously, on the basis of other artefacts, also be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. the grave VI at Tukumsi and the

grave No 19 at the Vampenieši II cemetery).<sup>210</sup> The same date applies also to belt buckles in particular find complexes on the Estonian mainland.<sup>211</sup>

The most frequent variant of the Gotland-Baltic type belt buckles in the find complexes of Osilian stone graves is specimens with a relief ornament and with a longer extension in the front part, in the form of an animal head. Of the better dated find complexes such a buckle has been found in the Viltina weapons find (PI 91: 3), which should belong to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The burials Kāku VI, Piila II and Rahu XII with similar buckles (PI 6: 3; 19: 5; 61: 1) date more or less to the same period. In the first of these burials a belt distributor with a relief image of a face (PI 6: 4) was found. Analogous finds are known on Gotland.<sup>212</sup> The dating of the burial VI at Rahu, which contains a similar belt buckle (PI 55: 7), is more problematic. This grave also contained a triangular-headed pin which could be dated, according to both local and Gotlandic analogues, to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century at the latest.<sup>213</sup> Strangely, a German coin from the middle or the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>214</sup> made into a pendant, was found in the same spot. As such a late date is inconsistent with that find complex, or to the whole cemetery, it must be presumed that the coin was a stray find from a later period or a later offering to the grave.

It is possible that a fragment of the same type buckle has been found in the Kāku XIII grave where an animal-head-shaped joining mount had been attached to it (PI 14: 8). Judging by the other objects in this complex, it was dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, which suits the buckle. However, the joining mount should rather belong to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Together with the rest of

<sup>200</sup> Tönnisson 1974; Šnore 1996.

<sup>201</sup> Vaškevičiūtė 1992.

<sup>202</sup> Selirand 1974b, p. 132.

<sup>203</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp. 148–155.

<sup>204</sup> Kochkurkina 1981; 1982.

<sup>205</sup> Ligi 1993b.

<sup>206</sup> Sedov 1982, pp. 180 ff.

<sup>207</sup> Nerman 1929, p. 124.

<sup>208</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp. 149–151 and references.

<sup>209</sup> Kulakov 1994, p. 75.

<sup>210</sup> Observations made during the study of the find material in the Latvian History Museum and the collection of archaeological finds in the Latvian Institute of History.

<sup>211</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1995a.

<sup>212</sup> Stenberger 1961, Fig. 47; Thunmark-Nylén 1995b, Pl. 224, 434.

<sup>213</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1995a, p. 185, Fig. 13; Mägi 1997.

<sup>214</sup> Identified by Arkadi Molvõgin, the Institute of History, Tallinn.

such belt buckles, simple square mounts (at Rahu VI; PI 55: 6), or (probably) oblong mounts, widespread over a long period, occurred (in the Viltina weapons find).<sup>215</sup> Oblong mounts were also found in the graves XI and XII at Käku (PI 11: 5; 13: 2), the burials Rahu XIII (PI 62: 11) and Randvere X (PI 45: 16) that are all dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Stylized animal-head-shaped joining mounts were also represented in the burials Rahu I and IX (PI 48: 3, 5–8; 58: 14, 20), Randvere II and VI (PI 30: 28; 38: 12). Of those Randvere II and Rahu IX should be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century on the grounds of other artefacts there; the others obviously belong to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It must be mentioned that the 12<sup>th</sup> century animal-head-shaped joining mounts are much more stylized than the earlier versions.

Stylized animal-head-shaped joining mounts occurred in the 11<sup>th</sup> century together with square relief blossom-patterned mounts, heart-shaped mounts with relief pattern, Gotland-Baltic type of belt buckles with a long extension or triangular front part, and with fish- or drop-shaped strap tags. Strap tags were also found in the Piila I and Kurevere II graves (PI 18: 10; 28: 15), which date to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, too. A strap tag resembling the Kurevere specimen has been recorded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century find complex on Gotland.<sup>216</sup> The heart-shaped mounts also have Gotlandic analogues, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century burials at the Barshalder cemetery.<sup>217</sup> In one of the Barshalder complexes stylized animal-head-shaped joining mounts also occurred. A fish-shaped mount, as in one of the graves at Barshalder<sup>218</sup> has been unearthed in the burial VII at Rahu (PI 56: 5), which can probably be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, too. Two similar mounts (PI 42: 17–18) occurred together with square mounts with relief blossom-ornamentation (PI 42: 15) and with small blossom-shaped mounts (PI 42: 16) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century burial VIII at Randvere. Similar blossom-shaped mounts are also known from Semigallia and Latgallia.<sup>219</sup>

In some find complexes from the end of the Viking Period (Käku V, Randvere IV, Rahu X, XIII and XV) round mounts with embossed bulges on the edges have been found (PI 5: 13; 35: 1–5; 59: 1; 62: 10; 64: 3). The Käku V and Rahu XV complexes were dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of the weapons there. It can be assumed that the Rahu X and Randvere IV burials, in both of which there were very few artefacts, took place in the same century. In the burial Rahu XIII round-embossed mounts occurred together with the oblong mounts. The fragments of a penannular brooch in this complex allow it to be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It should be noted that similar round mounts occurred as early as in the probably 10<sup>th</sup> century find complexes on Gotland.<sup>220</sup>

Several types of belt mounts occurred together in the burial VI at Randvere. Both the square mounts with relief blossom-ornamentation and stylized animal-head-shaped joining mounts were represented here. Only a fragment was preserved of the buckle, which obviously belonged to the Gotland-Baltic type. The weapons in the complex dated it to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> or the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Flat mounts of different shapes were characteristic of the 12<sup>th</sup> century burials. In most cases, the mounts were square, jagged, with wavy edges or had round widenings at the ends, but mounts with more complicated shapes also occurred. The jagged mounts appeared on Saaremaa in the 11<sup>th</sup> century at the latest, as is proved by the burial V at Randvere, which is dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The flat 12<sup>th</sup> century mounts have been considered to be characteristic of the Cours, the Livs and for some reason also the Semigallians, for they are found in abundance in Couronia and Livia.<sup>221</sup> Their general distribution in the 12<sup>th</sup> century burials on Saaremaa, as well as the striking resemblance of their form to other artefacts peculiar to Saaremaa (especially to the pins and chain-holders of Saaremaa type) allows one to presume that these mounts represent another artefact type widespread in all these areas and thus reflecting their cultural uniformity.

Flat belt mounts have been found in the find complexes Rahu II, III, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXIII and XXV (PI 50: 8, 10–12; 52: 4–11; 66: 4–9, 13; 69: 7, 9–10, 13–14; 70: 6–7, 10–11; 75: 8–10; 79: 5–7) and Randvere IX (PI 44: 15). The Rahu XXV burial has been classified as a possible female grave, the Rahu XXIII and Randvere IX as double burials. The rest of graves containing flat belt mounts belonged to men. Some of them, especially the burials XVII and XIX at Rahu, were strikingly wealthy, i.e. they contained weapons and several other implements.

Some of the mounts have originated from horse gear, but it is impossible to determine that in cremation graves. Finds from the countries neighbouring Saaremaa indicate that bronze mounts have been mainly used for belt dec-

<sup>215</sup> As the mounts were found about 30 cm away, it is not certain that they belong to the complex. For that reason they are not displayed on the plate.

<sup>216</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1995b, Fig 433.

<sup>217</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1995b, Fig 55, 62, 75, 83.

<sup>218</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1995b, Fig 62: 4.

<sup>219</sup> LA 1974, PI 59: 24, 64: 4.

<sup>220</sup> Thunmark-Nylén, 1995b.

<sup>221</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 131–132.

oration. Stylized animal-head-shaped joining mounts, as well as flat bronze mounts, have been often found in the areas of the Gauja Livs.<sup>222</sup> In the areas of the Daugava Livs they seem to have occurred more rarely; the belts there had primarily been decorated with oblong or round mounts.<sup>223</sup> Although the Cours used to decorate their belts abundantly with mounts, too, their belt mounts usually differed from those of the Osilians or the Livs. The only common mount type was the oblong mounts, which have been quite widespread everywhere.<sup>224</sup>

To sum up, it can be said that the bronze-mounted belts on Saaremaa resembled first and foremost those of the Gauja Livs and the Gotlanders. As, after the 12<sup>th</sup> century, goods were only seldom placed in graves on Gotland, it is impossible to say, on grounds of the literature alone, whether their 12<sup>th</sup> century belt decoration still resembled that of the Osilians and the Livs or not.

#### 5.2.4.2. Medieval Belt Buckles

The belt buckles unearthed in the inhumation graves on Saaremaa are different from the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century ones. In most cases they are simple iron frames or bronze buckles; no belt mounts, strap dividers or strap tags occur in the inhumations. The only exception is the boy's burial Karja IX (see above). Most obviously the lack of the above-mentioned items is due to the simplicity of funeral rites, for women still used to decorate their belts centuries later. It is worth noting that a 16<sup>th</sup> century deposit find from a small estate at Neemi, East Saaremaa, contained, in addition to jewellery, coins and other objects, a woman's belt with two buckles and abundant lead mounts.<sup>225</sup>

Judging from the shape of the buckles, the 13<sup>th</sup> century leather belts were about twice as wide as those of the end of the prehistoric period. The majority of the early medieval buckles were made of iron and shaped as a simple oblong frame. In most cases such belt buckles were found in men's burials; however, an iron buckle, obviously fastening a leather belt, was recorded also in the female grave II at Karja (PI 104: 3). It had been placed next to the right knee of the deceased, and obviously represented a grave offering, possibly from the husband or some male relative. It is impossible to date such buckles more exactly than to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, although they could have been in use even in later times. The only similar oblong iron frame buckles that had belonged to wide leather belts were found in the burials XXVI and XXIX at Rahu (PI 80: 2; 84: 5), which can both be dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century according to the other objects found there. Few other iron buckles found in the cremation burials had fastened a narrow leather belt or bridle strap.

Some buckles found in the inhumation graves were of regular rectangular shape, while some others had a round first part. To one buckle, in the Karja XXI burial (PI 119: 1), a bronze joining mount, a simple bronze plate as wide as the buckle, had been affixed. It resembled an ornamented joining mount in the man's burial II at Loona (PI 94: 1), which had been affixed to a bronze buckle that had also belonged to a wide leather belt. The buckle in the man's grave at Loona is the only bronze one found in male inhumation graves on Saaremaa and even that was more likely to have been a donation; the belt had been placed next to the head of the deceased.

Mainly on the basis of this buckle, the male burial II at Loona is dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. As was demonstrated before, the buckles of wide belts seldom occurred in cremation graves. At the same time the thicker front part of the Loona buckle resembles the bronze buckles in the Karja VIII and IX graves (PI 109: 1; 110: 1), which have edges that become convex towards the outside. The first of them belonged probably to a woman and the other one to a child. A third buckle in a woman's burial was found in 1872 at Viira (the Viira XXXII burial in this book; PI 139: 1), and it was a typical female belt fastening that was widespread on the Estonian mainland in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This belt fastening had two buckles, one at each end of the belt strap, connected by an iron hook, bronze wire or string.<sup>226</sup>

The amount of the inhumation graves on Saaremaa is too small for making further-reaching conclusions about 13<sup>th</sup> century clothing. Still, it can be concluded that the iron buckles probably belonged primarily to men and bronze buckles to women and children.

#### 5.2.5. Jewellery

##### 5.2.5.1. Penannular brooches

Penannular brooches occur in Osilian cremation burials mainly in singles or in pairs; only in the Kurevere I grave were fragments of two more brooches found, in addition to a more or less intact penannular brooch. In Couronia it was common to find several penannular brooches in one

<sup>222</sup> Tõnisson 1974, pp 116–117, PI VI, XII, XXIV.

<sup>223</sup> Šnore 1996; reports; Zariņa 1997; observations made in the archaeological collections of the Latvian History Museum and the Latvian Institute of History.

<sup>224</sup> Volkaite-Kulikauskienė 1997, pp 55–66.

<sup>225</sup> SM 6083.

<sup>226</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 130.

burial; sometimes even as many as 10 items have been recorded in one complex.<sup>227</sup> They could have been used for fastening different clothing or they could function just as a decoration or have been donations to graves. In the area of the Gauja Livs, on the contrary, only one penannular brooch is normally found in a burial.<sup>228</sup> On Gotland the penannular brooches occur in graves in singles in about one third of the cases.<sup>229</sup>

The penannular brooches were represented more or less equally in male and female cremation burials on Saaremaa, in 65% and 61% respectively. They were also found in graves where it was not possible to determine the gender of the deceased, and also in children's burials. Penannular brooches of identical types occurred in burials of both gender, even if the size of the brooches does not allow us to make any distinction. Thus, it can be concluded that the penannular brooch was a piece of jewellery equally used by men and women on late prehistoric Saaremaa.

The distribution of penannular brooches among men and women was similar on the Estonian mainland where at least in 11<sup>th</sup> century East Estonian inhumation graves mainly large-sized penannular brooches of similar types were found in burials of both sexes.<sup>230</sup> Penannular brooches, especially the larger specimens, have been mainly men's decoration among the ethnic Baltic groups, as well as among the Livs.<sup>231</sup> This seems also to be true for Gotland<sup>232</sup> and Finland<sup>233</sup>.

The situation is quite different in Osilian inhumation graves. Brooches in men's burials were found only in one case here, in the burial II at Loona, where the brooch had obviously fastened the collar of some garment. It must be noted that the grave II at Loona, as well as the whole of the Loona cemetery, belongs to the earliest inhumations on Saaremaa. All other penannular brooches in Osilian inhumation graves originate from women's or children's graves. Here a difference with South Estonia can be seen, where in village cemeteries penannular brooches occurred in equal numbers with men and women until quite a recent time.<sup>234</sup> Penannular brooches were found in 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century North Estonian male inhumation graves, although less frequently than in women's and children's burials.<sup>235</sup>

#### a) Penannular Brooches with Rolled Terminals

The earliest types of penannular brooches in Osilian cremation graves have rolled and poppy-shaped terminals. The first ones occur in seven burials, which can all be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century. The ring of most of the brooches with rolled terminals has a round or oval section. A penannular brooch found in the grave IV at Piila (PI 21: 4) had a ring with triangular section and slightly

depressed terminals; the ring of the brooch in the burial Randvere VIII (PI 42: 3) was twisted. The latter belongs to a relatively rare brooch type in Estonia, one which is usually defined as Baltic because of its frequent occurrence in Latgallia.<sup>236</sup> Few specimens of that type have been recorded in the stone graves of West Estonia, where they are most likely imported.

Penannular brooches with rolled terminals have been in use for a long period during the whole Viking Age as well as the following centuries. For that reason their exact dating is complicated.<sup>237</sup> Depressed rolled terminals were normally characteristic of the first half of the Viking Age.

Penannular brooches with rolled terminals have also been found in two inhumation graves on Saaremaa. The child's burial of XXXI at Karja was coin-dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century (PI 127: 3). The woman in the Karja XXIII grave, under whose jawbone a penannular brooch with rolled terminals and a grooved ring (PI 122) was found, may belong to the same period.

#### b) Penannular Brooches with Poppy-Shaped Terminals

Penannular brooches with poppy-shaped terminals were found in eight cremation burials, most of which have been dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> or to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Mandel has dated the sword retrieved from the Kurevere I grave to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> or the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>238</sup> the two penannular brooches in the same complex, one of them having rolled terminals (PI 25: 8) and the other poppy-shaped terminals (PI 25: 11), as well as an one-sided bone comb, also preclude the dating of the grave any earlier than the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

All the penannular brooches with poppy-shaped terminals dealt with here (for most of which only one knob has been preserved), have bi-conical, often ornamented knobs. Thus they differ from the 11<sup>th</sup> century penannular brooches with

<sup>227</sup> Vaitkunskiene 1979.

<sup>228</sup> Tõnisson 1974, p 117.

<sup>229</sup> Carlsson 1988, p 83.

<sup>230</sup> Lavi 1986a; 1986b; 1988.

<sup>231</sup> E g Tõnisson 1974, pp 117 ff.; Radiņš 1999, pp 91 ff.

<sup>232</sup> Carlsson 1988, p 81–83.

<sup>233</sup> Salmo 1956, pp 47–57.

<sup>234</sup> Valk 1999, p 75.

<sup>235</sup> Selirand 1962; Tõnisson 1975.

<sup>236</sup> Radiņš 1999, pp 65–67.

<sup>237</sup> E g Selirand 1974b, p 155; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 100–101 and references; Bliujiene 1999, pp 124–128.

<sup>238</sup> Mandel 1991, p 118.

poppy-shaped terminals that are widespread in East Estonia, and resemble more the penannular brooches in Couronia<sup>239</sup>. In Finland, where about 30 penannular brooches with poppy-shaped terminals are known, Salmo has dated them mainly to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>240</sup> Nevertheless, such brooches were more widespread in the Eastern Baltic, especially in West Estonia, Couronia and Livia, and on Gotland.<sup>241</sup> In Couronia these penannular brooches, at least the specimens with bi-conical and ornamented terminals, have been dated to as early as the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>242</sup> Starting with the 11<sup>th</sup> century, large penannular brooches with poppy-shaped terminals appeared in male burials of the Latgallians.<sup>243</sup> These were brooches with round poppy-shaped end-knobs, identical to the ones in East Estonian burials. Anders Carlsson has dated such brooches on Gotland also predominantly to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, though with the reservation that they could already have appeared in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>244</sup>

Fragments of penannular brooches with poppy-shaped terminals together with triangular-headed pins that were decorated with a leaf pattern have been found in two burials in Osilian cremation cemeteries: in the grave XII at Kāku (PI 12: 1) and burial IV at Rahu (PI 53: 4). On the basis of the above mentioned pins, the belt fittings in the Kāku grave and the chain-holder in the Rahu complex, these burials should be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>245</sup> Both of the penannular brooches had bi-conical rather than round poppy-shaped terminals; on the Kāku specimen a lot of ornamentation was preserved. Penannular brooches with bi-conical knobs in the burials Kāku I and III (PI 1: 3; 3: 6) and Piila III (PI 20: 5) obviously also belong to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries; still, owing to the modest number of finds in these complexes, it is not possible to date them more precisely. However, the carinated bowl with line decoration in the Kāku I grave belongs rather to the 10<sup>th</sup> than to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The penannular brooches with poppy-shaped terminals found in the burials Kurevere I (PI 25: 11), Kāku X (PI 10: 15) and Randvere X (PI 45: 9) have, on the basis of other finds, been firmly dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Also in the areas of the Daugava Livs and in northern Couronia penannular brooches with bi-conical rather than poppy-shaped terminals occurred.<sup>246</sup> As the penannular brooches with bi-conical and often ornamented terminals differ remarkably from the 11<sup>th</sup> century penannular brooches with round poppy-shaped terminals, which as a rule lacked ornamentation altogether, it can be assumed that the latter ones could have developed typologically and/or locally from the former ones.

Judging from the burial complexes it can be said that the penannular brooches with bi-conical poppy-shaped terminals were the most widespread brooch type on 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa. Starting from the beginning

of the 12<sup>th</sup> century they were replaced by penannular brooches with faceted terminals, the use of which had already started in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

### c ) Penannular Brooches with Faceted Terminals

In my earlier article about the Viking Age penannular brooches in Estonia I have distinguished the penannular brooches with massive faceted terminals and with small faceted terminals, the former being clearly of the earlier type.<sup>247</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> century penannular brooches with massive faceted terminals did not occur in cremation graves on Saaremaa, while the brooches with small faceted terminals were practically the only brooches in the 12<sup>th</sup> century burials. However, the latter brooch type had its beginning as early as in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, more likely in the second half of it.<sup>248</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> century brooches of this type (e.g. PI 23: 5) are characterised by regularly shaped and somewhat bigger faceted terminals, which resemble the earlier massive end-knobs. The terminals of the penannular brooches of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and later tend to be flat, raised high, and faceted rather irregularly (e.g. PI 50: 7). The later specimens usually have rings of rhomboid section and pins with wide base, while in the earlier specimens also rings with oval and triangular sections and narrow-based pins occur.

The penannular brooches with small faceted terminals were a widespread type that lasted until at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>249</sup> In four cases late penannular brooches with small faceted terminals were found in the 13<sup>th</sup> century inhumation graves on Saaremaa.

### c) Other Brooches in Cremation Graves

Penannular brooches with terminals of undefined shape were found in two stone grave burial complexes: Randvere VII and IX (PI 41: 3; 44: 8). The terminals of the

<sup>239</sup> E.g. Volkaite-Kulikauskienė 1970, Fig 23: 1, 2.

<sup>240</sup> Salmo 1956, pp 53 ff.

<sup>241</sup> E.g. Tõnisson 1974, pp 117–118; Carlsson 1988, pp 66 ff; Šnore 1996, p 124; Bliujiene 1999, pp 130–131.

<sup>242</sup> Volkaite-Kulikauskienė 1970, p 164.

<sup>243</sup> Brvkalne 1974, p 129; Radiņš 1999, p 91.

<sup>244</sup> Carlsson 1988, pp 66 ff.

<sup>245</sup> Dating of pins: Mägi 1997.

<sup>246</sup> Observations made in the archaeological collections of the Latvian History Museum and the Latvian Institute of History.

<sup>247</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1994, pp 466–468.

<sup>248</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1994, p 470 and the references.

<sup>249</sup> Brvkalne 1974, p 127; Salmo 1956, pp 62–63; Selirand 1974b, p 157.

first one are slightly funnel-shaped but do not belong exactly to any type. The ring is of oval section and the base of the pin is narrow. I have dated Estonian brooches with funnel-shaped terminals mainly to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>250</sup> The Randvere brooch of indistinct type could possibly originate from the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A penannular brooch with small flower-shaped terminals in the burial IX at Randvere was quite unusual. No exact counterparts to it are known but similar penannular brooches with so-called rosette-shaped ends in Finland have been dated mainly to the 12<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>251</sup> which also corresponds to the dating of the Randvere complex.

A ring brooch, probably imported from Couronia, was found in the Kāku IV grave (PI 4: 8). In Couronia such brooches were used mainly in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but also in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>252</sup> According to some data, another ring brooch on Saaremaa has been found in the Kurevere IV grave in 1874.<sup>253</sup>

As can be seen from the description of the brooches on 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa, they mostly resembled the corresponding jewellery in Couronia. It should be noted here, however, that no 11<sup>th</sup> century penannular brooches with star-shaped terminals have been found in the excavated stone graves, although a number of them are known as stray finds on the islands.<sup>254</sup> This brooch type was also widely used in Couronia.

#### d) Other Brooches in Inhumation Graves

In addition to the above mentioned penannular brooches with rolled and small faceted terminals, penannular brooches with upwards broadening faceted terminals and funnel-shaped terminals occurred in the inhumation graves on Saaremaa. They often have a partly grooved ring and the base of the pin is wide. Such a brooch in the female grave V at Loona (PI 96: 4) can be dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, while the others belong to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

A penannular brooch with animal-head-shaped terminals was unearthed in the female burial I at the Valjala churchyard (PI 100: 3). Such brooches were widespread in Couronia, where the specimens with stylised end-knobs are dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>255</sup>

A penannular brooch with a ridge and an axe-shaped extension in the middle part, found in the burial VII at Karja (PI 108: 4), was made of bronze but its pin was of iron. Only a broken bronze brooch-pin with a wide base (PI 121: 1) was found at the collar of a deceased woman in the grave XXII at the same cemetery. It is possible that the brooch itself had been made of lead which does not survive well in the earth, or that the clothes of the deceased were fastened only by this brooch-pin.

### 5.2.5.2. Chain Arrangements

#### a) Ways of Wearing Chain Arrangement

Decorative pins have usually been considered together with chain arrangements in female burials, but the inhumation burials indicate that pins have not always fastened the chains. So, a single large flat double-cross-headed pin with connected terminals (PI 100: 1) was found on the chest of the deceased woman in the grave I at the Valjala churchyard. On both shoulders of the deceased a silver-plated chain-holder of Saaremaa type (PI 100: 2) had been placed, to which a chain in three rows had been affixed. Thus, the large decorative pin was not used for fastening the chains but for something else, most likely for fastening a garment. A penannular brooch also found on the chest had been used for the same purpose. It is possible that the brooch had fastened some garment together, while the pin had been used on a shawl. Two identical decorative pins were found also in another female burial at the Valjala churchyard (PI 101), where they were located above the shoulders and had been connected with a chain arrangement that had hung between them.

A chain found at the female burial I at Viira had also been fastened only by chain-holders (PI 128: 2–4, 10). The chain-holders had been of iron and were thereby very badly preserved. No traces of decorative pins were observed, and the chain had been placed in a pile on the chest of the deceased. In comparison, a chain arrangement with chain-holders of uncommon shape, but without fastening pins, was found on the chest of a deceased woman in the 12<sup>th</sup> century burial at Enivere, West Estonia.<sup>256</sup>

Fastening of chain arrangements only with the help of chain-holders has been observed also in Late Iron Age Semigallian inhumation burials.<sup>257</sup> It is impossible to say whether the chain arrangements were actually worn without fastening pins, although in principle the chain-holders could have been sewn to the garment or could

<sup>250</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1994, pp 468–469.

<sup>251</sup> Salmo 1956, pp 87–89.

<sup>252</sup> Volkaite-Kulikauskienė 1970, p 165.

<sup>253</sup> Holzmayer 1880, pp 16–18.

<sup>254</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1994.

<sup>255</sup> Brīvkalne 1974, p 127.

<sup>256</sup> Metsar 1947, pp 3–4.

<sup>257</sup> LA 1974, PI 56:1; Volkaite-Kulikauskienė 1997, Fig 42; Vasiliauskas 2001; the author would like to thank the Lithuanian archaeologist Ernestas Vasiliauskas, who has called her attention to the material referred to.

have been fastened with some band or string of organic material around the neck. The 10<sup>th</sup> century chain-holder retrieved from the grave Kāku XIV implies the last possibility: a bronze ring joined to the chain-holder was fixed by a bronze joining mount to some organic material, possibly to a leather band, not to a pin (PI 15: 6). Anyhow, the possibility that chains without fastening pins were only used in case of burials can not be excluded.

Single decorative pins in inhumation graves have also been retrieved from the burial II at Karja (PI 104: 2), where it had been placed under the jawbone of the deceased, and from the burial XVIII at Viira where a large flat-headed decorative pin (PI 133: 1) had been placed next to the head of the deceased woman. A single small cross-headed pin with connected terminals has been mentioned in connection with the female grave at Viira, excavated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Viira XXXIII in this book), but it has not been preserved. The coins found in the same grave dated it to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>258</sup>

In the cremation deposits decorative pins do not always occur together with fragments of chain arrangement, although this could also be by chance, as the fragments of the pins might not have been brought into the grave from the pyre site. Still, there are remains of one or even both pins in many burials. A single iron shaft of a decorative pin without any other fragments of a chain arrangement was found in the man's burial XVII at Rahu (PI 66: 24). It had possibly fastened some kind of garment, perhaps a cape. Single pieces of "female" jewellery have been found in men's burials on Saaremaa as well as in the neighbouring areas (see section 5.1.2).

In addition to the above mentioned ways of wearing the chain arrangements, they had also been fastened with penannular brooches on 13<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa, as was demonstrated in the inhumation grave XXIX at Karja (Fig 31; PI 125). The custom of fastening the chain arrangement by penannular brooches was widespread in late prehistoric Finland. Two penannular brooches, one on the chest and the other above the right shoulder, were found also in the female grave VII at Karja. However, as no fragments of chains were recorded in this burial, it is more plausible to assume that in this case the penannular brooches had fastened different garments and not a chain arrangement.

A small crook-headed pin has been found in the Kāku XII grave (PI 12: 9), which should belong to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Considering its small size and the fact that a chain arrangement fastened by triangular-headed pins also belonged to the same complex, the crook-headed pin was obviously used to fasten a veil chain that was decorating the head-dress. Although no other Viking Age veil chains have been found in Estonia, they were widely used on the Estonian mainland during the following centuries.<sup>259</sup>

## Triangular-Headed Pins

### b.1) Pins with Leaf Decorations

Of all the types of decorative pins, only triangular-headed pins have been recorded in Osilian stone grave find complexes. Two triangular-headed pins with a decoration of leaves and with end knobs have been found together in the female burial IV at Rahu (PI 53: 2, 5), and a fragment of a similar one together with two fragments of pin-shafts were unearthed in the Kāku XII grave (PI 12: 2–4). Pins with leaf decoration have been found predominantly on Saaremaa, where altogether 17 of them are known.<sup>260</sup> A few of them have also been recorded in West Estonia, primarily in the Maidla and Linnamaa cemeteries,<sup>261</sup> and in North Estonia.<sup>262</sup> Pins with leaf decoration, like the triangular-headed pins in general, are apparently related to the triangular-headed pins of Couronia and Semigallia, whose shape is quite often similar to the ones on Saaremaa but whose decoration is very different.<sup>263</sup> Some triangular-headed pins with leaf decoration are known from the burials of the Daugava Livs, as for example from the female graves Nos 60 and 99 at the Vampenieši I cemetery.<sup>264</sup> In the first of these graves a knife sheath with broadening, typical of Saaremaa, was also found. The grave thus contained several artefacts typical of Saaremaa, which gives reason to assume that the deceased could have been an Osilian woman.

At least one triangular-headed pin with a decoration of leaves has been found in Finland<sup>265</sup> and some on Gotland<sup>266</sup>. Fragments of such pins, made of silver, have been recorded in hoards in South Sweden.<sup>267</sup> On Saaremaa these pins were used mainly in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>268</sup>

A flat chain-holder of Saaremaa type (PI 12: 5) occurred together with the Kāku pin, but a chain-holder of a type uncommon on Saaremaa (PI 53: 3) was found in the same burial as the Rahu pin. It was obviously of Couronian origin.

<sup>258</sup> SMM 1924, p 134.

<sup>259</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 134.

<sup>260</sup> Mägi 1997, pp 70–71.

<sup>261</sup> Mandel 1982; the data of the Maidla cemetery are based on the find lists, find plans, and the observations of Mandel.

<sup>262</sup> Mägi 1997.

<sup>263</sup> Bliujienė 1999, pp 136–145.

<sup>264</sup> Šnore, reports; observations in the collection of archaeology at the Latvian Institute of History; see also LA 1974, PI 52: 3.

<sup>265</sup> Kivikoski 1973, pp 67, 99, Fig 721.

<sup>266</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1983, Fig 10; Jansson 1995, pp 88–89, Fig 8.

<sup>267</sup> Hårdh 1976, PI 20: 10, 11; Strömberg 1961, p 165, PI 73: 9.

<sup>268</sup> Mägi 1997, p 39.



## b.2) Triangular-Headed Pins of Saaremaa Type

The flat, usually plait-decorated triangular-headed pins of Saaremaa type occurred in four female cremation burials: Rahu VI and XI (PI 55: 1, 2; 60: 2), Randvere VIII (PI 42: 1–2) and Kurevere II (PI 27: 2–3). The Rahu VI grave can be regarded as the earliest of them; one of the pins in it was in an almost complete state of preservation, but only one end of the other one had been preserved. The preserved pin represented a transitional type between the knob-ended and the Saaremaa type triangular-headed pins. Its shape and heavily stylised ornamentation were similar to the pins with leaf decoration while the flat heart-shaped ends recalled the pins of Saaremaa type. Other pins of this transitional type are also known, and they can be dated to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>269</sup> The pin in the Rahu burial should obviously belong to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of other objects found there.

The rest of the triangular-headed pins of Saaremaa type were all found in burial complexes that can be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. There were two plait-decorated pins in the Kurevere II grave. The head of one of them was more or less complete and it was found together with chain-holders of Saaremaa type and fragments of chains. Not only the pins, but also the belt fragments date the burial to the 11<sup>th</sup> century (see point 5.2.4.1). A single fragment of a similar pin together with another Saaremaa type chain-holder and chain fragments was retrieved from the Rahu XI burial. No more items that could have allowed dating were found in this complex, but like the previous one it could be presumed that this woman was also buried in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Triangular-headed pins with plait-decoration were most characteristic of Saaremaa, though in general, such flat triangular-headed pins have also been decorated in some other ways. Most of the differently decorated pins on Saaremaa have counterparts in Latvia.<sup>270</sup> Of all the find complexes in cremation graves a single pin with a slightly different ornamentation occurred in the Randvere VIII burial, dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It should be noted that other artefacts slightly uncommon on Saaremaa were also found in this complex; especially some Baltic type belt mounts and a penannular brooch with a wholly twisted ring should be mentioned in this connection.

63 specimens of the Saaremaa type triangular-headed pins are known in Estonia to date. 49 of them have been found on Saaremaa, all the rest, except one, in West Estonia.<sup>271</sup> Like the knob-ended triangular-headed pins, flat-headed pins of completely or more or less similar shape are found in some numbers in Semigallia and Couronia. Nearly always they have a different decoration. Single pins with

plait decoration are known from the burials of the Daugava Livs (e.g. from the burial No 67 at RauĒ cemetery, together with a double-cross-headed pin of Estonian type),<sup>272</sup> and from northern Couronia.<sup>273</sup> Still, the majority of the Livian pins were of Semigallian or Couronian origin. Only very rare specimens of Saaremaa type pins with plait-decoration are found outside Estonia and Latvia.<sup>274</sup> Kustin has dated the pins of Saaremaa type to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>275</sup> but the later studies have shown that they were worn mainly during the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>276</sup>

## c) Decorative Pins in Inhumation Burials

Flat double-cross-headed pins with connected terminals were found in the female burials at the Valjala churchyard. Two of them attached the chain arrangement in the woman's grave II (PI 101), and an identical pin was lying on the chest of the deceased in the grave I (PI 100: 1). A similar pin occurred singly in the Viira XVIII burial (PI 133: 1) where it had been laid to the right of the skull. All these pins belonged to the late, strongly stylized variant of the earlier double-cross-headed pins, and can be dated to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>277</sup>

Small cross-headed pins with completely connected terminals had been used to fasten a chain in the Viira XIX (PI 134) and Karja XIII (PI 115: 1, 4) burials. A single pin of the same type was retrieved from the top of the chest of the deceased in the Karja II burial (PI 104: 2), and another specimen has been mentioned in connection with the Viira female burial, excavated by Holzmayer (Viira XXXIII). Small cross-headed pins with completely connected terminals were widespread on the Estonian mainland, where they are dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>278</sup>

Two pins with a flat oval head, of a type uncommon in Estonia, were fastening a chain in the woman's grave IV at Karja (PI 106: 2). Pins of this type had been worn in the Votic areas<sup>279</sup> and in Semigallia, where they were dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>280</sup>

<sup>269</sup> Mägi 1997, pp 41–44.

<sup>270</sup> Mägi 1997, pp 39–44.

<sup>271</sup> Mägi 1997, pp 39–44.

<sup>272</sup> Šnore, reports.

<sup>273</sup> LA 1974, PI 50: 15.

<sup>274</sup> Mägi 1997, p 42.

<sup>275</sup> Kustin 1962b, p 70.

<sup>276</sup> Mägi 1997, pp 43–44.

<sup>277</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 147.

<sup>278</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 149.

<sup>279</sup> Ryabinin 1990, Fig 2, 3.

<sup>280</sup> Kustin 1962a, p 416 and references; LA 1974, PI 57: 9, 10.

It is surprising to note that in the Osilian cremation burial complexes that are dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century decorative pins are lacking while other parts of chain-arrangements, including chain-holders of Saaremaa type, still occur there. Apparently this could be explained by the small number of cremation find complexes. Chain arrangements in some of the 13<sup>th</sup> century inhumation burials are already fastened by double-cross- or cross-headed pins with connected terminals, although Saaremaa type chain-holders still occur there. Only three specimens of the earlier variants of double-cross-headed pins with connected terminals, which were widespread in eastern Estonia during the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, have been found on Saaremaa, but they do not belong to any find complex.

#### d) Other Parts of Chain Arrangements

Together with the pins of Saaremaa-type, only flat semi-oval chain-holders of Saaremaa type have been recorded. Similar chain-holders or their fragments were found in seven more find complexes that dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Single chain-holders were also found in men's burials (see section 5.1.2). This type of jewellery seems to have been in use until the 13<sup>th</sup> century (see sections 5.2.5.2.a and c).

A different semi-oval chain-holder was found in the 10<sup>th</sup> century grave of Käku XIV (PI 15: 6). Its joining ring was not fixed to a decorative pin but to a bronze joining mount. Another chain-holder of a peculiar shape was found together with a leaf-decorated triangular-headed pin in the burial Rahu IV (PI 53: 3). Both the above chain-holders are uncommon to Saaremaa and most probably originate from Couronia.<sup>281</sup>

Connecting links between chains occurred in the burial complexes of Saaremaa only in rare occasions. Osilian women had obviously worn chain arrangements simpler than some of their neighbours. Even when the arrangements had several rows, they were most likely not very long. Thus, it can be suggested that the long multiple-rowed chain arrangements that were peculiar to the Livian women were not very widespread on Saaremaa.

### 5.2.5.3. Bracelets

#### a) Bracelets in Cremation Burials

In Osilian cremation graves bracelets appear mainly as female decoration, although men have used them too. The fragments of bracelets in the men's graves Käku X (PI 10: 16) and Piila II (PI 19: 10) have animal-head-shaped ends; similar bracelets have been found in Latvian male burials, in the areas of the ethnic Balts and of the Livs.

The Käku and Piila burials are both dated to the end of the Viking Age, i.e. to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In Latvia the bracelets with animal-head-shaped ends were worn during the 10<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>282</sup> In the find complexes on the Estonian mainland they are dated mainly to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, possibly also to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and they occur both in male and female graves.<sup>283</sup>

Other types than spiral bracelets were found in 36% of female burials at Saaremaa stone cemeteries. In most cases they belonged to either the Saaremaa type or the Livian type.

A small fragment of a bronze artefact in the Rahu XXI burial (PI 73: 4) could also be a fragment of a bracelet. The complex, however, is most likely the only partly preserved 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century burial in the area of later burials which could be ascribed to a man.

#### a.1) Spiral Bracelets

As is known, spiral bracelets have been only women's and children's decoration in Estonia as well as in the neighbouring countries. Livian inhumation burials demonstrate that boys have also worn them.<sup>284</sup> On Saaremaa fragments of spiral bracelets have been found in the burials Randvere II and X (PI 30: 10–13; 45: 6–7), which should belong to men on the basis of the other furnishings. The fragments represent small-sized bracelets and could be either donations in men's graves, or the deceased could themselves have been young boys.

Fragments of spiral bracelets occurred in 28% of women's and girls' cremation burials. They were found together with other bracelets as well as without other arm decorations. In most cases they were fragments of relatively narrow bracelets, which often had a rather simple ornamentation. Because of the fragmentary finds in cremation burials, it is not possible to say how many turns the spiral bracelets had.

#### a.2) Bracelets of Saaremaa Type

In the Estonian archaeological literature wide, richly decorated bracelets which have widening open ends are called Saaremaa type bracelets. About a hundred of such bracelets or their fragments have been found, most of

<sup>281</sup> LA 1974, PI 50: 15; Bliujienė 1999, p 138.

<sup>282</sup> LA 1974, pp 189–190, 202, 231.

<sup>283</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1995b, pp 312–313.

<sup>284</sup> Šnore 1996, p 122.

them on Saaremaa. They can be regarded as the local development of the Estonian 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century wide-ended bracelets as well as of the ribbon-like bracelets of Couronian women. The bracelets of Saaremaa type were earlier dated mainly to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries by different researchers; more exact dating has been complicated because of the lack of find complexes.<sup>285</sup>

In the burial complexes of cremation graves two quite well preserved Saaremaa type bracelets have been found in the Kāku XII grave (PI 12: 10–11), which could be dated to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The grave VII at Piila, where a similar bracelet was unearthed (PI 24: 13), cannot be dated more exactly than to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries. A badly burnt bracelet fragment in the Rahu VII burial (PI 56: 1) belongs most probably to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

A Saaremaa type bracelet and a Livian type bracelet were represented together in the 11<sup>th</sup> century Randvere V burial (PI 37: 1, 3), which apparently belonged to a small girl. The better preserved bracelet of Livian type was markedly small. It is obvious that at least during the 11<sup>th</sup> century these two types of bracelets existed in parallel. No bracelets of Saaremaa type are known in the 12<sup>th</sup> century find complexes. It is possible that they were out of use by that time.

### a.3) Bracelets of Livian Type

Relatively narrow concave bracelets with tapering ends and specific decoration are called Livian type bracelets in the archaeological literature. They have been found abundantly in the territory of the Livs in Latvia. The best example of them in the cremation burial complexes on Saaremaa was the one in the above mentioned girl's grave (Randvere V; PI 37: 1). Similar bracelet fragments have also been found in the burial Rahu V (PI 54: 1), which obviously belonged to a woman. The woman's grave XVI at the same cemetery contained fragments of a similar but clearly wider bracelet (PI 65: 4) that resembled bracelets retrieved from inhumation graves. The grave XVI is, predictably, dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries whereas the Livian type bracelets mentioned earlier belonged to complexes of the 11<sup>th</sup>, possibly even the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Mostly fragments of the Livian type bracelets have been preserved in the severely burnt cremation deposits on Saaremaa, whereas a number of complete specimens are known from Livian inhumation graves. It seems that such bracelets might also have been widespread on Saaremaa during the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries (possibly also in the 12<sup>th</sup> century), together with the bracelets of Saaremaa type and spiral bracelets. Apparently it is another artefact type that connects the material culture of the Osilians and the Livs who were their nearest neighbours on the territory of the present Latvia.

### a.4) Other Bracelets in Cremation Burials

Bracelets twisted together from three wires are known in the burials Rahu II and XXIII (PI 50: 6; 75: 6). Both are probable 12<sup>th</sup> century double burials of a man and a woman, where the bracelets obviously belonged to women. Such bracelets were very widespread on the Estonian mainland, especially in inhumation graves at Virumaa, where Selirand dates them to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>286</sup> Such bracelets have also been found abundantly in the areas of the Votes and Izhorians and in Novgorod.<sup>287</sup> As on Saaremaa, they occur more rarely on the territories of the Livs and the rest of the present Latvia.

Fragment of a bronze artefact in the burial IX at Randvere (PI 44: 18–19) could have originated from a Couronian grooved bracelet.<sup>288</sup> Bracelets or their fragments are known from four other cremation burials, but they are too small to determine their type, or they are just simple bronze rings probably used as bracelets.

### b) Bracelets in Inhumation Graves

Bracelets do not occur any more in Osilian male inhumation graves. In children's graves only spiral bracelets have been recorded (Karja XXX and XXXI; PI 126: 1–2; 127: 4). The grave XXX could be dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A small spiral bracelet with one and a half turns in the grave XXXI was found together with a coin that dates the grave to the middle or the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

21% of women's inhumation graves, usually those with a greater number of other furnishings as well, contained bracelets. One of these was the grave V at Loona, where two bracelets made of three twisted wires (PI 96: 2) were found together with two bracelets with a wide middle part (PI 96: 1, 3). The last ones resembled the Livian type bracelets, from which they were probably developed. The grave was dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A woman in the grave Loona VI of about the same time had spiral bracelets on both arms. In the Loona III inhumation grave a bracelet made of three twisted wires (PI 95: 2) as well as a ribbon-like rhomb-decorated bracelet (PI 95: 3), of a type found mainly in eastern Estonia, were unearthed. The latter ones are dated to the

<sup>285</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1995b, pp 311–312 and references.

<sup>286</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 169–170 and references.

<sup>287</sup> Sedova 1981, p 96; Ligi 1993b, pp 69–70.

<sup>288</sup> LA 1974, Fig 48: 22.

13<sup>th</sup> century in Novgorod.<sup>289</sup> According to some data, one bracelet made of three twisted wires and another one made of a thin bronze sheet were found in the Loona VII inhumation burial in 1941.<sup>290</sup>

The abundance of bracelets at the Loona cemetery can probably be explained by its earlier dating compared with the other inhumation cemeteries. In the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century inhumation cemeteries, bracelets have been found in only two female burials. Two very wide silver bracelets with tapering ends are known from the Karja XXVII burial (PI 124: 1–2). More such bracelets have been found in inhumation graves on the Estonian mainland, where about half of them had also been made of silver. Selirand has dated them to the 12<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>291</sup> Tõnisson to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>292</sup>. The Karja specimens most probably belong to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. According to Holzmayer, two spiral bracelets were found in a female grave at Viira, excavated by him in 1872 (Viira XXII).<sup>293</sup>

#### 5.2.5.4. Neck-Rings

Neck-rings were not a very widespread artefact type in the Osilian cremation graves. Fragments of them were retrieved from only eight cremation burials and four inhumation graves. In most cases they occurred in women's graves, but the fragments of neck-rings in two cremation burials (Rahu XIX and Kogula III; PI 70: 2; 90: 5) should belong to men according to other artefacts in the complexes. Still, both these burial complexes were partial. Men have worn neck-rings in several areas in the East Baltic region; this custom was especially widespread in Couronia.

##### a) Compound Neck-Rings

Fragments of compound neck-rings with specific decoration occurred in two female burials – Kaku XIV (PI 15: 1) and Piila VII (PI 24: 14). Such neck-rings usually consisted of three connected bronze ribbons of segmented section and with overlapping ends. The ribbons were ornamented with little crosses and sometimes rings. Such neck-rings were widespread in Semigallia. None of them is known on the Estonian mainland.

The great number of compound neck-ring fragments in cremation burials and as stray finds indicates that they were in fact widespread on Saaremaa. Kustin mentions 195 fragments in her study,<sup>294</sup> but a great part of them probably belonged together. She supposes that they were worn in the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>295</sup> Actually, the burial complexes where they were found should be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

##### b) Neck-Rings Twisted Together from Several Wires

Neck-rings twisted together from several wires were widespread especially in Couronia and Latgallia,<sup>296</sup> but also in other places of what is today Latvia as well as on the Estonian mainland. This type, especially the specimens twisted together from three wires, was, together with the compound rings, the most widespread neck-ring type in the cremation burials on Saaremaa. Fragments of these were found in five burials, one of which belonged to a man (Rahu XIX; PI 70: 2), two to women (Rahu XXIV and XXVIII; PI 77: 13; 82: 4), one was a double burial of a man and a woman (Rahu XXIII; PI 75: 7) and in one case it was not possible to determine the gender of the deceased (Kogula I; PI 88: 3). All these complexes were dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century; thus it can be presumed that the neck-rings made of wires were worn later than the compound rings.

Kustin mentions nine neck-rings twisted together from several wires, which had been preserved complete. Most of these had loops at the ends. According to Kustin, such rings on Saaremaa can be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>297</sup> In most cases it is impossible to determine the shape of the neck-ring on the basis of the neck-ring fragments in cremation deposits; only one neck-ring (Rahu XXIV; PI 77: 13) seems to have been loop-ended.

Spiral neck-rings and neck-rings with multiple front sections can be considered as separate types of neck-rings. Both types occur together in the Loona VI female burial (PI 98: 1–2), dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A spiral neck-ring had also decorated a woman buried to the grave I at Valjala churchyard (PI 100: 4). That ring was pseudo-twisted.

A plaited ring fragment was found in the (probably male) 12<sup>th</sup> century grave III at Kogula (PI 90: 5). It could have been originated from a neck-ring, or possibly from a bracelet. Small plaited fragments were also found in several other burial complexes.

<sup>289</sup> Sedova 1981, p 103 ff.

<sup>290</sup> Kustin 1959, p 1.

<sup>291</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 167–169.

<sup>292</sup> Tõnisson 1962, p 216.

<sup>293</sup> Holzmayer 1880, pp 21–24.

<sup>294</sup> Kustin 1962a, p 457.

<sup>295</sup> Kustin 1962a, p 458.

<sup>296</sup> Volkaite-Kulikauskiene 1970, p 150 ff.; Radiš 1999, pp 71–73.

<sup>297</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 450–451.

### 5.2.5.5. Finger-Rings

Finger-rings have been a very widespread find type, both among men and women, on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea while they occur relatively rarely on the western coast of the Baltic. Finger-rings were often represented in the stone grave burial complexes on Saaremaa, sometimes several of them together in one burial. They were found in 45% of male and in 60% of female burials. It seems that children, especially, had worn a lot of finger-rings. The girls' burials V and VII at Randvere contained six and seven finger-rings, respectively, and the boy's burial VI at the same cemetery six finger-rings.

Parallels in the inhumation graves of the regions around Saaremaa demonstrate that finger-rings were not always necessarily worn on fingers. Instead, they could have been strung on top of another decoration, such as a penannular brooch or a neck-ring, or could have been placed in graves as donations. It is not possible to say whether some rings in the Osilian cremation graves were worn on toes as was sometimes found in inhumation graves in Finland<sup>298</sup> and East Estonia<sup>299</sup>.

In Osilian inhumation graves finger-rings occur much more rarely. They are known in two male and five female burials, but none were retrieved from children's graves. Nor have rings on toes been observed in Osilian inhumations, but in the graves II and VI at Loona a finger-ring had been placed next to the feet, obviously as a donation.

Although the rings could occur as donations or for some other purpose, it seems that most of them were on the fingers of the deceased in cremations, too. The inner diameters of seven rings that obviously belonged to children remained between 1.3–1.8 cm. The average inner diameter of men's finger-rings in cremation graves was 1.9 cm, of women's 1.6 cm. Thus, the women's rings were normally a little smaller than those of men, although sometimes women had also bigger rings and men smaller ones. The smallest rings were those in children's graves.

#### a) The 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> Century Finger-Rings

The most widespread finger-ring type in cremation burials was a spiral finger-ring, which has been found in 15 burials.<sup>300</sup> In most cases they were simple rings made of wire of triangular, sometimes of flat-convex or round section. It has been especially difficult to differentiate the latter ones from large spirals used for other purposes. The majority of find complexes where spiral rings were represented can be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries on the basis of other artefacts. Only the burial XXIV at Rahu, with a probable spiral finger-ring made of round-section wire (PI 77: 2), belongs to the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Spiral finger-rings with broad central section and finger-rings with double-spiral ends were worn contemporarily with the simple spiral finger-rings. The rings with a broad central section were found in six find complexes, among them in the girl's burial VII at Randvere (PI 40: 9) where it occurred along with spiral rings and rings with double-spiral ends. Rings with double-spiral ends were recorded in six 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century find complexes; in the burials Randvere II (PI 30: 3), Käku XIV and XV (PI 15: 4; 17: 1) they were found together with spiral rings.

Spiral rings were worn in a wide area on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea and in the north-western area of the present Russia. Their dating depends largely on the section of wire of which the ring was made. The spiral rings of a flat band are generally later than the rest, but they do not occur in Osilian find complexes.

Spiral rings with broad central section have been very characteristic of the Estonian mainland, where Selirand has dated them to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>301</sup> However, as demonstrated before, they were not worn on Saaremaa at such a late time. In a better correlation with the Osilian finds is the dating given to the rings with broadened middle sections found in Finland. At least in the Luistari cemetery they were dated to the 9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>302</sup> Such finger-rings are rare finds in other areas in the East Baltic region, even in the burials of the Livs.

Finger-rings with double-spiral ends have been found to some extent in Livia and in Finland, but seldom.<sup>303</sup> According to the literature they were not widespread among the ethnic Baltic groups. One such ring is known from Mos on Gotland.<sup>304</sup> Although Selirand has dated the rings with double-spiral ends on Estonian mainland to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in Finland they have been used only in the middle of the Viking Age<sup>305</sup>. Dating to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century is consistent with the find material from Saaremaa.

A simple silver ring with slightly thickening central section and overlapping ends was found in the boy's or man's burial X at Randvere (PI 45: 8). According to the

<sup>298</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 123.

<sup>299</sup> Lavi 1986b; 1988.

<sup>300</sup> As large spirals were also used in other places, e.g. around knife handles, it is often not possible to say whether an object found is a finger-ring or just a spiral.

<sup>301</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 173–174.

<sup>302</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 122–127, 184–188.

<sup>303</sup> Tõnisson 1974, p 130; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 127; Šnore 1996.

<sup>304</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1995b, PI 285: 6.

<sup>305</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 127.

other artefacts, the burial is dated to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Such simple rings have also been found in other places, for example on Gotland.<sup>306</sup>

A fragment of a silver ring with broad central section and overlapping ends was found in the 11<sup>th</sup> century man's burial IX at Rahu (PI 58: 9). Similar Finnish rings, some of them also made of silver, are dated mainly to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries at Luistari.<sup>307</sup>

### b) The 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> Century Finger-Rings

Most of the finger-rings in 12<sup>th</sup> century find complexes on Saaremaa have had a thickened middle section. The central section is usually decorated with engraved diagonal grooves; only a silver ring in the burial Rahu XVII had a twisted central section (PI 66: 23). The thickened middle section of the finger-rings in the Karja VII and XIII (PI 108: 3; 115: 2) and Loona II (PI 94: 3) graves were also grooved, thereby resembling the ones found in 12<sup>th</sup> century cremation burials. Thus it can be assumed that such a ring type was in use during the whole of the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries on Saaremaa. Similar rings were widespread in Couronia and in the areas of the Livs.<sup>308</sup> They have been found also on the Estonian mainland, which they reached from Saaremaa only in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, according to Selirand,<sup>309</sup> and to a lesser degree in the Votic areas and in Novgorod<sup>310</sup>.

A finger-ring in the burial XIX at Rahu has a convex broadened middle section and overlapping ends (PI 70: 5). Similar silver specimens are known from the Luistari cemetery, where they are dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>311</sup> The burials Rahu XIX as well as Rahu III, which contains a possibly identical ring fragment (PI 52: 3), should be dated as late as the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

A finger-ring with an oval middle shield and overlapping ends was found in the Loona VI grave (PI 98: 3). Such rings were worn in 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century Couronia.<sup>312</sup> Selirand suggests that rings with middle shields were used on the mainland of Estonia during the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>313</sup>

#### 5.2.5.6. Pendants

The wearing of pendants was not very widespread on Saaremaa: there are only thirteen relevant finds, eight of them cross-shaped pendants. In two cases, in the burials Rahu XXIII (PI 75: 4) and Karja Xa (PI 112) a fang pendant was found. In addition, thirteen coin pendants and few small bells have been recorded in the burial complexes. It is not possible to say whether amber pendants, as among the Livs, were used on Saaremaa, because amber does not survive the fire. No amber pendants have been found in Osilian inhumation graves either, but the head decoration of a woman in the Loona V grave contained an amber bead.

### a) Cross-Shaped Pendants

Cross-shaped pendants were found in the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century cremation graves on Saaremaa but never in inhumations. In Osilian burial complexes the cross-shaped pendants occur singly, if it is accepted that the Randvere IX find complex was a double burial where both the man and the woman had each got one cross-shaped pendant with them to the grave (PI 44: 1–2). The cross-shaped pendants have been found in four male and four female graves, which were also all rich in other furnishings. Altogether, up to the present, 22 cross-shaped pendants are known on Saaremaa, most of which are of eastern origin.<sup>314</sup>

In Sweden cross-shaped pendants have been found mainly in women's graves, but in Finland mainly in rich men's burials.<sup>315</sup> In Latgallian, Selonian and Livian women's and children's graves, on the other hand, numerous small cross-shaped pendants occur attached to other jewellery, mainly to chain arrangements.<sup>316</sup> More than ten cross-shaped pendants may have been recorded in a single grave in Latgallia, where such pendants have been found in graves dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>317</sup> Cross-shaped pendants were also found in stone graves as well as in inhumation graves on the Estonian mainland, where they occurred predominantly in women's graves. In the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century burials, sometimes several of this type of pendant had been attached to the chain arrangement or the head decoration.<sup>318</sup> The connection of cross-shaped pendants to the spread of Christianity is discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

Most cross-shaped pendants in Osilian burial complexes have the shape of a Greek cross with thickened ends. Only a pendant fragment in the burial XXIV at Rahu (PI 77: 4) represents a flat cross with rhomboid broadening ends. A cross-shaped pendant from the Kurevere V grave excavated in 1874 is not preserved; it is only known that it was made of silver-plated bronze.

<sup>306</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1995b, PI 23: 2–4, 32: 2.

<sup>307</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 127, 185–188.

<sup>308</sup> LA 1974, PI 49: 11, 12, 50: 3.

<sup>309</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 174–175.

<sup>310</sup> Ligi 1993b, p 78 and references.

<sup>311</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 123, 187–188.

<sup>312</sup> LA 1974, PI 50: 4; Bliujienė 1999, p 179.

<sup>313</sup> Selirand 1974b, p 174.

<sup>314</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 432–433; Mägi & Rudi, 1999.

<sup>315</sup> Gräslund 1980, p 83–85; 1989; Purhonen 1998, p 150–152; Staecker 1999, p 391–392.

<sup>316</sup> Mugurēvičs 1974, p 231; Tönnisson 1974, PI XIII; Šnore 1997.

<sup>317</sup> Berga 1997.

<sup>318</sup> Selirand 1974b, pp 151–152; 1993.

### b) Round Pendants

Similar round pendants have been found in the cremation burial Rahu XXIII (PI 75: 2) and inhumation grave Karja XIII (PI 115: 3). Both had embossed ornamentation; the first was made of silver, the other of bronze. The Karja pendant had been attached to the chain arrangement and dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Rahu pendant was found in the (probably double) 12<sup>th</sup> century burial of a man and a woman. In Finland similar pendants were worn during the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries; some researchers believe that they had spread there from Scandinavia.<sup>319</sup> They were also worn in 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century Karelia,<sup>320</sup> in Late Iron Age Livia<sup>321</sup> and Couronia<sup>322</sup>. Among the other ethnic Baltic groups they occur more rarely during the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, but are represented in Latgalian medieval inhumation graves.<sup>323</sup> In Estonia the round sheet pendants have been dated to the 13<sup>th</sup>, with some even dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the smaller specimens being regarded as the earlier ones.<sup>324</sup>

### c) S-Shaped Pendants

S-shaped pendants were found in two female burials (Rahu XXIV and XXVIII; PI 77: 8; 82: 11) that can be dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that they are related to the S-shaped brooches widespread in Couronia in the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>325</sup> or to some belt decorations on Gotland<sup>326</sup>. S-shaped pendants have predominantly been found on Estonian islands, in West Estonia and the areas of the Gauja Livs.<sup>327</sup>

### d) Coin Pendants

In cremation burial complexes silver coins were found in four female and three male burials. It can be assumed that the coins made of thin silver sheet survived the pyre only in exceptional cases. All the coins, except the two found in the burial Randvere X, had been worn as pendants, i.e. a tag had been preserved on the coins.

The man's or boy's burial Randvere X was dated to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century according to other artefacts. The German denarius minted at the time of Kaiser Heinrich II (1014–1024)<sup>328</sup> does not contradict this dating. The other coin in the same find complex could not be identified.

The coins made into pendants were as a rule earlier than the find complex itself. Only a 13<sup>th</sup> century German coin pendant that had been marked on the find distribution map together with other artefacts identified as belonging to the Rahu VI find complex was in complete contradiction with other grave goods. The artefacts cannot date the find complex later than the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century; thus it must be presumed that a mistake had been

made while marking the finds on the map, or that the coin was found in higher layers than the other objects. In the middle or second part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the coin was minted the Randvere cemetery was not used for burials any more.

Coin pendants have been found also in five inhumation graves at Karja, which all belonged to women or children. Most of them were minted in Germany in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In most cases the coin pendant had been attached to the neck-band; only in the child's burial XIX had two coin pendants been placed: one on the chest and the other on the pelvis of the deceased.

### e) Small Bells

Iron, as well as bronze bells, occurred in cremation burials on Saaremaa. The iron bells were all bridle bells of specific shape; they have been considered together with other parts of bridles in section 5.2.3. It can be assumed that a proportion of the bronze bells could also have been bridle bells, especially the large specimens that are of the same shape as the iron bells. As finds in inhumation graves on Saaremaa and the Estonian mainland, as well as in the neighbouring areas, have demonstrated, women and children were wearing bronze bells also as decoration.

Only relatively small round specimens of the bells worn as decoration have been preserved in women's and children's cremation burials on Saaremaa. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century find complexes, the bronze bells were so fragmentary that their shape could not be determined. The 12<sup>th</sup> century saw the use of round bells, which could have had cross-like or straight slits. Finds in two women's and two children's inhumation graves indicate that the bells became larger in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, although they remained round and had always a straight slit now. They were worn as head-dress decoration or attached to neck-rings, neck-bands or chain arrangements.

<sup>319</sup> Kivikoski 1973, PI 124; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 143–145 and references; Thunmark-Nylén 1998, PI 170.

<sup>320</sup> Kochkurkina 1982, pp 86–87.

<sup>321</sup> Tönnis 1974, Fig 21, 26.

<sup>322</sup> Bliujienė 1999, pp 181–183.

<sup>323</sup> Berga 1997.

<sup>324</sup> Tönnis 1962, pp 221–222.

<sup>325</sup> Bliujienė 1999, pp 118–119.

<sup>326</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1995b, Fig 59, 294a.

<sup>327</sup> Luik 1999.

<sup>328</sup> If not stated otherwise, the identification of coins originates from the coin collection of the Department of Archaeology at the Institute of History, Tallinn.

### 5.2.5.7. Beads

Glass beads have been found mainly in singles or in twos in Osilian cremation burial complexes. Beads were recorded in about half the graves assumed to be children's burials and in about 40% of women's burials. It can be assumed that the neck-bands of Late Iron Age Osilian women were not very rich in beads. A single glass bead was found in two male burial complexes, and in the Randvere III male burial there were as many as ten of them (PI 32: 19). As is known from the male inhumation graves of the Livs, men often had a pouch with weights, beads, coins and possible other small items affixed to their belt.<sup>329</sup> Single beads in men's burials have been observed in several areas.

In Osilian inhumation graves, beads occurred mainly affixed to simple neck-bands in five women's and one girl's burials. Glass beads could also have been used for decorating clothes. For example, a great number of small lead stars and small beads that had obviously decorated a shawl were found around and under the skeleton in the Viltina I inhumation grave (Fig 20). A shawl had been decorated with beads also in a Livian woman's grave on Dole Island.<sup>330</sup> Single glass and amber beads had been affixed to a head dress in the Loona V and Valjala II female burials, and in the Viira I grave a glass bead together with a bell had hung from a chain of the chain arrangement.

The 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century beads were mostly of blue glass, although other colours also occurred. A multi-coloured bead ornamented with crossed wavy lines and eye figures was found in the burial V at Rahu (PI 54: 2). The beads of the second half of the Viking Age were of different shapes, mainly round, cylindrical or bi-conical. The 12<sup>th</sup> century beads in Osilian burial complexes were mostly all rounded and of blue, white or green glass.

The beads in inhumation graves were mainly small, of cylindrical or nondescript shape and of a whitish hue. It should be mentioned that it is not possible to identify the shape, colour or even material of a great number of beads originally registered in find lists as they have apparently got lost in the course of time.

### 5.2.6. Bronze Decoration on Garments

The custom of decorating clothing and head-dresses with ornaments of bronze spirals was widespread among all Baltic-Finnish ethnic groups. Some northern ethnic Baltic groups, especially the Latgallians, also decorated their clothing with bronze but normally they did not use spirals for forming the patterns. In Osilian find complexes, pieces of textiles with the bronze ornamentation are preserved only in cases of inhumations, thus from a period starting

with the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Frequent bronze spiral finds in cremation graves indicate, in any case, that this kind of textile decoration was widespread also in the earlier centuries. Good parallels can be drawn here with the Livs, whose spiral decorations were well preserved in inhumation graves from as early as the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries, and have been analysed fairly thoroughly.<sup>331</sup> Regarding the great similarity of the material culture of the Livs to Saaremaa, it can be assumed that the Livs and the Osilians could also have had much in common in the style of their clothing. On the other hand, the finds of south-western Finnish inhumation graves and the somewhat later inhumation graves on Saaremaa and the Estonian mainland can also be used in comparison with the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century Osilian material.

In Osilian stone grave complexes, bronze spirals were found in all of the definite or putative children's burials, in 64% of women's and 36% of men's burials. As a rule, in those male burials where the spirals were represented many fewer spirals were recorded than in women's graves. Although in the case of cremation burials it is impossible to say which part of the clothing the spirals originated from, it can be assumed, from analogous Livian finds, that the greater number of them in women's graves was mainly due to the abundant decoration of women's shawls with bronze. On men's clothes, at the same time, only single bronze motifs occurred, for example in the corners of a cape, or the collars and other seams of a coat could have been decorated with bronze. Especially the children's clothes of the Livs were richly decorated; in respect of this, no difference between boys and girls can be determined.<sup>332</sup> A great number of small loose bronze rings found, in addition to the spirals, in Osilian cremation burials indicates that, as in some neighbouring areas, they were obviously used to border the hemlines of garments. It is not possible to say, because of the cremation burial custom, whether on Saaremaa it was also customary to decorate the leg bindings of men and women with bronze spirals and bronze rings, as the Livs did.

It is somewhat complicated to deal with bronze decorated textile and clothing in general in Osilian inhumation graves because in most cases the skeletons with finds have been recorded only schematically. The analysis of the technology of textile remains and bronze decorations

<sup>329</sup> Šnore 1996.

<sup>330</sup> Šnore 1996, p 120.

<sup>331</sup> Zariņa 1988; 1999.

<sup>332</sup> Zariņa 1988.



demands separate research and will therefore remain outside the framework of this study. For this reason only some general observations are presented here.

In Osilian inhumation burials spiral decorations have been found only in three children's or youth's burials, in two of which they were single spirals. A garment hemline decorated with an ornate pattern of bronze spirals and bronze rings was unearthed above the knees in the Karja XIX child's burial (Fig 30; PI 120). It can be assumed that it had been a short smocklike coat as the Livian children used to wear.<sup>333</sup> Unfortunately only a photograph and a drawing have been preserved from the decoration.<sup>334</sup> Bronze decorations, which had obviously ornamented a head-dress, were preserved on the chest and under the skull of the deceased in the Karja XXX burial. According to the ethnographic as well as parallel archaeological material, normally only grown-up women wore head-dresses, but here an 8–9 year old girl was buried. Nevertheless, as there are no exact drawings or photos of the burial, it cannot be established for certain that the spirals were from a head-dress and not from some other garment that perhaps had been folded up under the head of the deceased.

Spirals were found in six men's inhumations. The greatest number of them came from the Loona II grave, where they had obviously bordered the collar and the hem of some garment next to the shinbones. The Loona male burial dates to a somewhat earlier period than the others, apparently as early as the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, thus possibly indicating to the greater use of bronze decorations in men's clothing at the end of prehistory. In Finland relatively rich decoration of men's clothing with bronze spirals and bronze rings in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the remarkable decrease of it in the 11<sup>th</sup> century has been observed.<sup>335</sup> Abundant bronze decorations of garments were found in the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century Livian male inhumations; more of them occurred in female burials, mainly owing to the richly decorated women's shawls.

Only simple spirals laid next to the left or right knee were found in five other Osilian male inhumation graves. In the grave VI at Karja the spirals were preserved in a pattern motif, which had possibly decorated the corner of a man's mantle or cape.

According to the data from the inhumation graves, Osilian women used spiral ornaments mainly to decorate shawls and head-dresses, sometimes also collars and other garment hems. The most magnificent head-dress with bronze decorations was unearthed in the Loona V grave (Fig 23; PI 97: 2), which obviously originated from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It had been something like a veil, fastened at the back of the head. The bronze spiral ornamentation of it

went round the head and the long spirals bordered the hems of the veil, which fell on the back. Some textile, a wide woven ribbon and a large bronze ring with overlapping ends had been preserved at the back of the head under the bronze ornaments. At least one glass bead had additionally decorated the head-dress.<sup>336</sup> A less decorated, but also veil-like head-dress was found in the Loona VI grave (Fig 24). This was of a woman who had also been buried at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

All burials at Loona were somewhat earlier than most of the Saaremaa inhumations; for that reason their find material was richer. A veil-like head-dress, similar to that of the woman in Loona VI grave, had decorated also an over-40-year-old woman in the Karja II burial (PI 104: 4). Spirals and glass beads were found under and around the skull in the burial II at Valjala churchyard and in the Viira XXVI grave, but there is no closer description of them. Obviously these ornaments were not very rich.

A veil-like head-dress of Osilian women, which was tied into a knot at the back of the head, was being described as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century literature.<sup>337</sup> Bronze decorations from similar veils have been found in inhumations from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the 13<sup>th</sup> century in southwestern Finland, but they were usually very modest there.<sup>338</sup> Some spiral ornamented veils of Livian women are more similar to the ones on Saaremaa.<sup>339</sup>

Decorative spirals near the neck and on the chest of the deceased were recorded in the Karja II, IV, XXV and Viira XXXII female burials. Obviously they had bordered the hemline of some outer garment. Spirals were also mentioned in the reports of finds in the Valjala I and Viira XXXI-II burials, but their exact location was not determined. For that reason it is not possible to say whether they were bordering a shawl or any other garment.

As was shown above, most of the bronze ornaments originate from women's shawls. Obviously there were shawls wrapped around the corpse in the Viira XVIII, XXII and XXXII burials, in all of which the number of preserved spirals, in any case, is quite small. It is clearer that the object in question was a shawl in the Viltina I burial, where in addition to the border made of bronze rings it had also been ornamented with small lead stars and small beads.

<sup>333</sup> Zariņa 1988, pp 55–63.

<sup>334</sup> Kustin 1956, pp 17–18; 1958, PI 7.

<sup>335</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 170.

<sup>336</sup> Kustin 1959, pp 8–11.

<sup>337</sup> Blumfeldt & Ränk 1937.

<sup>338</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 161–163; Purhonen 1998, p 133.

<sup>339</sup> Zariņa 1988, pp 37–40, Fig 18.

A shawl or another piece of cloth bordered with bronze spirals had been laid over the coffin in five cases. Four such cases are known from the Karja cemetery (burials IV, VII, XIII and XXIX; Pl 106: 3; 108: 5; 115: 7), one from Loona (burial VI; Fig 24; Pl 99) and one, most likely a similar case, from the Viira cemetery (burial I; Pl 128: 8). In the Karja VII and XXIX burials the ornamentation was rather small, but on the drawings of the Karja IV and XIII burials (Figs 28, 29) a partly folded rectangular piece of cloth was clearly seen. In the first burial it had covered the central part of the coffin, in the latter case the head part. It is difficult to say, according to the schematic drawings, how big the cloth actually was, but its ornamented hems make it possible that it could have been a shawl. A shawl had also been laid over the coffin in the Viira I grave, where the bronze ornaments of its two ends had survived. It is most difficult to determine the function of the cloth that had covered the Loona VI burial (Fig 24). There is no surviving photograph of this burial; according to the drawing it could be assumed that it was the decorated lower hem of the apron. Also the middle part of one of the shinbones had become a little greenish as if as the result of bronze dioxide. However, the ornamentation and cloth remains have been preserved in pieces which were all attached to a wooden foundation, possibly the lid of the coffin. Another bronze-ornamented hem of the same textile object was also preserved, according to the drawing, and it reached almost to the left elbow of the deceased along the side of the coffin.

Some of the spiral ornaments of the above mentioned burials have been earlier interpreted as ornamented aprons, thus drawing parallels with the corresponding finds in Finland.<sup>340</sup> Examination of all the finds in question indicated that a lot of wood had been preserved under the spirals and textile. As was mentioned before, the drawings and photographs of the Osilian inhumations are very incomplete and indistinct. That is the reason why some of them give the impression that the textile objects could have been aprons. Nevertheless, the cloth in question had always covered a wooden coffin and not the deceased directly.

Wooden boards had covered some of the 12<sup>th</sup> century graves at Võhu in North East Estonia; at least in one case textile remains with spiral ornamentation were found on top of them.<sup>341</sup> Remains of aprons are by now recorded in some 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century inhumation burials in North Estonia; Šnore has mentioned one apron find also among the Daugava Livs.<sup>342</sup> Some deceased women at the Laukumuiža cemetery in northern Couronia could also, according to the drawings in the reports, have had aprons with spiral ornaments; at the same time it is possible that there, too, these clothes were actually shawls placed over coffins.<sup>343</sup> Ethnographic aprons are known from the 18<sup>th</sup> century Votes.<sup>344</sup> Aprons with spiral ornaments have been

found at Luistari and in other Finnish inhumation cemeteries from the Viking Age as well as the Crusade period. The shawls of the Finnish women had, at the same time, relatively few spiral decorations.<sup>345</sup> Ethnographically there are reports of rear aprons worn at earlier times in Estonia while front aprons seem to have become a part of clothing in Estonia only at a comparatively recent time.<sup>346</sup>

Descriptions of Votic clothing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>347</sup> and also many Estonian ethnographic reports sustain the idea that women's clothing had a very symbolic meaning until quite recently, and denoted different phases of life. Unfortunately there are too few inhumation graves on Saaremaa, and even the unearthed osteological material has been only partly analysed. So it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the occurrence of one or another spiral ornamented textile object among women of particular age groups.

### 5.2.7. Pottery

Pottery is to be found only in the stone graves on Saaremaa but never in inhumations. In the stone graves, however, fragments of very many different pots are found, and, as a rule, they are not together in one place, but are dispersed over an area of 1.5–2 m. It can be assumed that the clay pots were smashed into pieces between stones; most likely they have been thrown there. As there are so many of them and often also in the higher layers than the cremation deposit, it can be maintained that they were also smashed on the graves during some rites after the funeral. Thus the pottery fragments located close to one another cannot always be regarded as of the same period, especially when we are dealing with old excavation reports where the depth of the finds is often not marked.

The majority of clay vessels had been brought directly to the grave, but the secondary firing of some fragments indicates that in some cases a clay vessel or vessels had been in the fire, most likely on the pyre together with the deceased. The cremated bones and fragments of artefacts that remained on the pyre were usually also brought to the burial site in one or several clay pots. Judging from

<sup>340</sup> Laul 1996.

<sup>341</sup> Ariste 1948b.

<sup>342</sup> Zariņa 1988; Laul 1996.

<sup>343</sup> Archaeological reports in the Latvian History Museum, AA 268, 269.

<sup>344</sup> Öpik 1970.

<sup>345</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, pp 155 ff.

<sup>346</sup> Laul 1996; Värvi 1998.

<sup>347</sup> Öpik 1970.

the spread of the potsherds and other artefacts, they were thrown to the ground or got broken while the burial site was being covered with stones. It should be added that such a custom was common on Saaremaa as early as in the Pre-Roman Iron Age at the latest.

The aim of the present study is not to classify the Late Iron Age ceramics of Saaremaa, for this topic is wide and very little studied before, and as the pottery might not belong altogether to the immediate find complex for the above mentioned reasons. Therefore, only some general observations about the clay vessels in find complexes are presented here. All the ceramics concerned are divided into two large groups: fine pottery and rough pottery. The borderline between them is sometimes uncertain. All ornamented pottery, especially the pots with a smooth surface, was regarded as fine pottery while the mostly jar-shaped weakly profiled vessels without ornamentation and with relatively coarse consistency were classified as rough pottery.

As expected, no pottery was found in the two supposed cenotaphs (Randvere XI and the Viltina weapons find). 87% of all other cremation burial complexes contained potsherds, whereas the number of finds in women's as well as men's burials was more or less equal.<sup>348</sup> If one looks at the distribution of pottery into fine and rough ceramic in the burials of different genders (Fig 40), one can see some differences. So, in women's graves more fine pottery can be found, while in men's graves the rough pottery prevails. No fine ceramic potsherds are known from children's graves.

### 5.2.8. Iron Rivets and Nails

Iron rivets and nails are widespread finds in both cremation and inhumation burials on Saaremaa. They, especially the former, have been considered as ship rivets, and

the occurrence of only some single specimens in burials is often been regarded as symbolic donations of ships or boat parts to the dead.<sup>349</sup> In the neighbouring countries such phenomena are explained rather by the occurrence of a box or a chest in the burial.<sup>350</sup>

Iron nails have often been found in the inhumation graves in Estonia as well as in the neighbouring areas, where they have obviously belonged to the coffin. At least on Saaremaa, in Finland and in the areas of the Daugava Livs only a few nails are normally found in a grave,<sup>351</sup> which gives rise to the assumption that the coffin, otherwise fastened by wooden pegs, was only symbolically fixed by iron. Most of the coffins in inhumation graves at Birka in Middle Sweden were fastened by 10–20 nails, but coffins with fewer or altogether without nails were also found. One of the coffins at Birka was fixed by iron rivets, to which counterparts can be found among Danish and South Swedish Viking Age burials. In case of rivets it can be suggested that the deceased had been buried in storage-chest-like coffins, cart bodies or sledges.<sup>352</sup>

It is also possible that in the case of cremation burials the deceased was placed on the pyre on a plank bed or in a box, which was fixed by some rivets or nails. Another possibility is that some donations were burnt on the pyre

<sup>348</sup> The persistency of ceramics depends on many factors and is rather diverse. In cases where too few potsherds of one vessel were preserved, they are not shown on the find plates.

<sup>349</sup> Kustin 1962a, pp 208–209.

<sup>350</sup> Cleve 1978, pp 86–89; Gräslund 1980, pp 15 ff.

<sup>351</sup> Cleve 1978, pp 86–89; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982a, p 30; Šnore 1996, p 124.

<sup>352</sup> Gräslund 1980, p 15 ff and references.

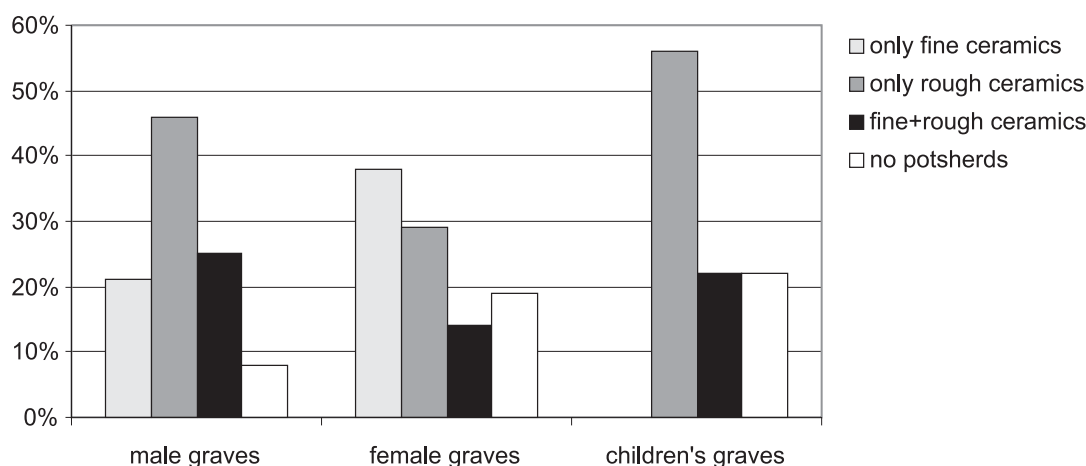


Figure 40. Ceramics in cremation graves.

in a wooden coffin that was fastened with iron, or that as with clay pots, a chest with iron mounts was smashed during the funeral rites. This last opinion concerning the nails and rivets found in burials of Late Iron Age Finland has been expressed also by Cleve.<sup>353</sup>

The frequency of occurrence of nails and rivets in the Osilian cremation burials is about equal. As both nails and rivets were found in six complexes, it indicates their similar function in burials. The rivets from cremation burials have fastened wood of very different thickness, but in most cases it has been 2.0–3.5 cm thick. Nails and rivets occur with and without marks of being in the fire. In the inhumation graves on Saaremaa only nails have been found so far.

In some cases iron nails and rivets could have ended up in stone graves at a later time. For example, the 26 nails retrieved from the Rahu XI find complex most likely originated from a windmill, which had stood in that place in modern times. In most cases the number of nails and rivets in one burial was small. Only 1–3 nails and/or rivets were found in 21 cremation find complexes, from 4–6 of them in 8 burials, and more than 6 specimens were found in only four burials. Two to three nails were usually found around inhumation graves.

Nails or rivets occurred in 54% of men's, in 62% of women's and in all possible or definite children's burials in Osilian cremation find complexes. It was hardly more suitable to symbolise a ship in women's and children's graves than in men's burials. In the Osilian inhumations nails were found in two male and four female graves. Observing the occurrence of nails and rivets, it is evident that their occurrence decreases over time (Fig 41). They were recorded most often in the 11<sup>th</sup> century burials. A great number of rivets had been found in the eastern part of the Viltina cemetery, sometimes considered as evidence of boat burials in this burial ground. However, more likely it was a decomposing site for old boats from a later period (see section 4.1.8.).

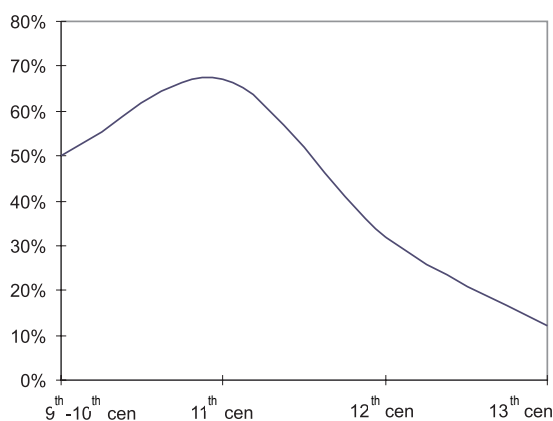


Figure 41. Percentage of graves with iron rivets and/or nails.

### 5.3. Analysis of the Grave Goods

Above, I have repeatedly indicated several problems in connection with the compositional analysis of burial deposits that have occurred in the earlier archaeological publications in Estonia. Various methods have been created for the purpose of analysing grave goods. The Finnish archaeologist Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander, for example, tried to attribute credits of value to different artefacts acquired from the Luistari burial ground.<sup>354</sup> She used written sources – mainly Arabian, but also West-European, Byzantine and Slavic – as comparative material, though the scales of value for this period in these parts might have actually differed from those of Finland. On the other hand, a silver brooch is probably more highly appreciated than a bronze one and a pattern-welded, silver-plated spearhead was certainly more expensive than its simple, locally produced counterpart.

During the last decade, archaeologists in northern countries have largely used the method of analysis introduced by the Danish archaeologist Lotte Hedeager, who suggested taking into account only the number of different artefact types found from one grave, not all the items themselves.<sup>355</sup> According to the NAT (Number of Artefact Types) for example all the spearheads found in one grave would be considered as one unit and the material and the quality of an artefact are not important. Hedeager succeeded in proving that the larger number of artefacts is in direct association with a higher social status.<sup>356</sup> The main drawback of the method is that a burial with two silver brooches and ten knives, for example, gets to be considered equal with a burial that contains one bronze brooch and one knife.

Taking in account the higher value of silver as a material and the probable connection of knives – especially knives surrounding a burial site – with the homage paid to the dead in the course of burial rites, such an equation would be wrong. Hedeager herself also stresses the necessity of using only known or definitely closed find complexes for this kind of analysis. In the case of Osilian cremation burials, where all artefacts were not always even brought from the pyre site to the grave, the unconditional usage of the NAT-system would be inappropriate.

Proceeding from the specific nature of Estonian burial practices, Valter Lang has used a combined method in analysing the material of North Estonian graves. In the graves where it was impossible to identify separate buri-

<sup>353</sup> Cleve 1978, pp 86–89 and references.

<sup>354</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, pp 37–40.

<sup>355</sup> Hedeager 1992, pp 99 ff.

<sup>356</sup> Hedeager 1992, pp 103–153.

als, Lang made the number of artefacts in the whole burial ground the basis of analysis. The results made it possible to compare the social position of one settlement unit with the neighbouring ones. Additionally, he included some exceptions, for instance counting brooches of different types as separate points.<sup>357</sup>

### 5.3.1. NAT in Osilian Graves

In the case of the Osilian burials discussed here, especially cremations, one cannot be certain that there had been the same amount of artefacts on the pyre as later in the grave; thus I have also used the combination analysis method in processing the existing data on the grave deposits, taking into consideration the experiences of the aforementioned researchers.

The method of distinguishing separate burials that is offered here is alas relatively subjective, mostly because of the possible absence of some furnishings from burials, the occurrence of certain artefacts in fragments only, the deficient methods of excavation and the complete disintegration of organic matter deposits (especially in cremation burials). Additional difficulties surface in the comparison of inhumations and cremations, caused by the better preservation of artefacts in inhumation burials. For example, in inhumations it is possible to distinguish a head-dress with bronze spirals, the garments and the shawl, whereas the bronze spirals occurring in cremations do not give any clue of their former function.

In calculating the score of one burial, I have considered the probable complete artefacts, distinguishing these by their function, material and design. Though many artefacts are more easily identifiable in inhumation burials, these are counted after the NAT example as one point, thus enabling a comparison with the deposits from cremation graves. In cases where the burial contains silver items, a point is added to the score; a single point is also added for the occurrence of pattern-welded and/or silver plated weapons.

The more frequent grave goods are thus assessed in the following way:

#### Jewellery:

- the different parts of a chain arrangement (pins, chains, chain-dividers, chain-holders) are considered as one point, regardless of whether the chains have been fastened with or without pins (see further section 5.2.5.2). In cases where the burial included only a few fragments of small-ringed chains, the pieces are not counted as evidence of a chain arrangement, as chains were used also for other purposes, e.g. for fastening balances;

- neck-rings are counted as one point;
- bracelets, including spiral ones, are counted as one point;
- penannular or other type of brooches are counted as one point;
- all the finger-rings are counted as one point;
- all the bronze spirals in a burial are counted as one point, although their function in inhumation graves is usually clearly distinguishable;
- beads are always counted as one point regardless of their actual amount;
- bronze bells and pendants (including coin- and cross-shaped pendants) occurring together with chain arrangements or neck-rings are considered as one point, because they were usually fastened to these ornaments. If they occur separately from the artefacts mentioned, they are given one point each.

#### Weapons:

- the sword and fragments of its scabbard are counted as one point;
- the spearheads occurring in one burial are counted as one point regardless of their actual number. The spearheads that mark the borders of the grave are counted as one point as well, also regardless of their number;
- the same goes for javelin-heads;
- axes are counted as one point;
- probable shield fragments are considered as one point.

#### Horse harness:

- bits, regardless of the number, are counted as one point;
- the iron parts of bridles (mounts, bells, buckles) are considered as one point;
- the stirrups and spurs are counted as one point each, regardless of their actual number, mainly because the first ones belong to a saddle while spurs can be considered together with the rider. In the neighbouring countries the occurrence of both of these artefacts among grave goods have been treated as an indication of higher social status.

#### Other accessories:

- a belt with bronze buckle and/or belt distributors is counted as one point. Two or three bronze buckles are still counted as one point because belts often have a complicated construction, also because the possible presence of a sword belt is very difficult to determine in a cremation burial;

<sup>357</sup> Lang 1996, pp 459 ff.

- the belts that meet the above criteria and that in addition are decorated with bronze or silver mounts, give one extra point to the burial;
- the plating or mounts of a knife sheath are counted as one point;
- if a belt chain occurs in a burial without the other aforementioned details, it is counted as one point;
- the knives included in one burial are counted as one point; the knives demarcating the burial are also counted as one point regardless of their number;

#### Other artefacts:

- scythes or their parts are counted as one point;
- combs or their parts are counted as one point;
- parts of balances are counted as one point;
- weights are, regardless of their amount, counted as one point;
- locks and keys are counted separately, as they could have a different symbolic meaning;
- fire-steels and whet-stones are both counted one point each;
- tools of unknown or limited function occurring in one burial (like drawing knives for example) are counted as one point;
- all the fine ceramic ware in one grave counts as one point and all the rough ware counts as one;
- all the nails, rivets and brackets or such like in one burial are counted as one point.

### 5.3.2. The Changing of Cemeteries in the Course of Time

As not all of the cemeteries discussed in the present book have been completely excavated, the possibilities for drawing extensive conclusions about Osilian society on the basis of the existing material are minimal. That is especially the case in the cemeteries of which only an insignificant part has been excavated (Käku, Piila, Kurevere, Kogula), consequently making a more thorough analysis of the acquired data impracticable.

In observing the analysed cemeteries, it is evident that the average NAT in those was very different. This has mainly been conditioned by factors that all reflect the socio-political organisation of the time the burials took place:

- a) the date of the cemetery. Burial customs and the social factors determining them have varied in time;
- b) the sex/gender of the deceased;
- c) the socio-political position of the cemetery, i.e. the social position of the family (community) that had been using the burial ground.

Besides, contemporary factors must be taken into account, which are primarily excavation methods and the quality of reports. Discussing several burials at the same time, especially these from different locations and excavated by different researchers, the main characteristics should nevertheless emerge, despite all the aforementioned "casualties".

#### a) NAT in Graves of Different Periods

Early Viking Age burials are almost absent on Saaremaa, and stray finds from that period are also scarce. A few 8<sup>th</sup> century cemeteries are known, but the earliest burials of the cemeteries discussed here originate mainly from the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

The 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century cemetery of Mäla in the middle of the island of Muhu has been archaeologically investigated. It was mainly made up of stone circle graves like the Viking Age cemeteries of Käku and Piila. As there are stone circle and stone heap graves known since the excavations from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it appears that this grave type was very characteristic of 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century and Viking Age Saaremaa. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the dead were buried predominantly in structureless stone graves; the first inhumations emerged in the end of that century (Fig 42).

It strikes the eye that the NAT score of Osilian cemeteries rises with the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, reaching its highest point in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and decreasing again suddenly in inhumation burials (Fig 43). The latter phenomenon is also common in all the neighbouring areas of Saaremaa and is obviously associated with the transition to Christian burial practices. Also some cremation burials that can be dated to the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century include very few finds.

Drawing parallels between different grave types, we can state that the average NAT score is lower in stone circle graves than in structureless cairns (Fig 44). It appears that by the 12<sup>th</sup> century there was no need to demonstrate the status of the deceased with the imposing form of his/her grave, but rather with the abundance of deposits put on the pyre. There seems to be a direct correlation between the size of the stone circle and the volume of furnishings. The number of male and female burials in stone circle graves is more or less equal.

In analysing the correlation between the richness of a burial and its type at the Luistari cemetery in Finland, it turned out that the wooden chamber graves that had on the strength of the example of Birka been interpreted as tombs of higher class held in fact more or less the same deposits as average or rich burials in chamberless graves. The percentage of people being buried in chamber graves grew in

the middle of the Viking Age and decreased again in its end. More men than women had been buried in chamber graves and this tendency grew in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>358</sup> Burying in chamber graves can be seen as the accentuating of an individual's status; in this sense, Osilian stone circle graves are a complementary phenomenon to the Luistari chamber graves. An interesting aspect here is that just like the chamber graves, the stone circle graves become more widespread in the middle of the Viking period and wane in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when no more chamber graves were erected at Luistari, burying in Osilian stone circle graves ceased as well.

The majority of 10<sup>th</sup> century Osilian burials have a relatively low NAT score; the mean is high only due to a few high-score graves. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but especially during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the number of burials with above-average NAT scores grows (Fig 45). It can be seen that the percentage of burials with an average NAT score remains essentially constant in the course of centuries. This apparent increase

of richer burials could be because it is hard to distinguish "poor burials" in the structureless graves of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and thus many such burials could go unnoticed.

The above mentioned tendencies can be properly illustrated with the example of the Rahu cemetery where it was possible to determine at least eight "poor" burials in the 11<sup>th</sup> century part of the cemetery, whereas the 12<sup>th</sup> century part contained two obviously "poor" burials that had either very few deposits or none at all (Fig 46). The volume of "medium wealthy" burials had grown from 35% in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to 45% in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, while the rise in the number of the evidently aristocratic burials is much more vigorous. In fact it can be suggested that during the 12<sup>th</sup> century it was mostly persons of high social standing who were buried in this cemetery, and this is reflected in the higher than average NAT score of these graves (Fig 47). As the total number of 12<sup>th</sup> century burials is lower than that of earlier periods, it can be assumed that the social hierarchy had become more steeply graded. Persons of inferior position were not buried in stone graves any more – even when they were family members.

NAT scores shrank suddenly in the 13<sup>th</sup> century inhumations, which must have been a side effect of the spreading of Christianity (Figs 48, 49). We can guess that the elite of the Christian Era buried its dead in churches or churchyards and the distance from the altar became a new form of demonstrating social status (see further chapter 6).

In observing the changing of the NAT score average among the Osilian cemeteries discussed here, it can be stated that it unmistakably mirrors the date of most burials. Nevertheless, it is partly conditioned also by the location of the cemetery – an aspect that will be considered more closely below.

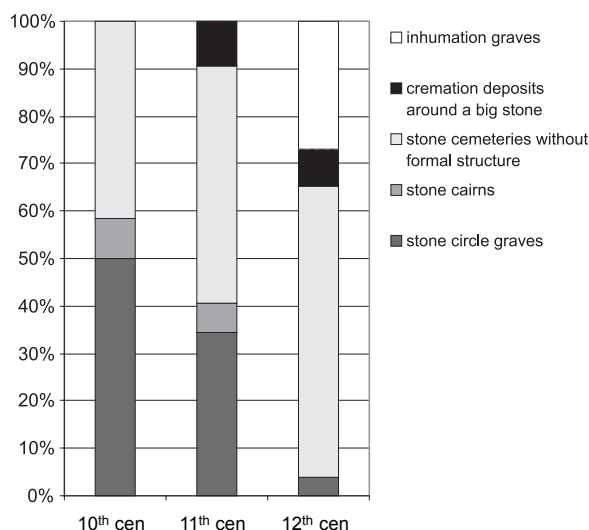


Figure 42. Distribution of different grave forms during the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>358</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, pp 24–36, 44.

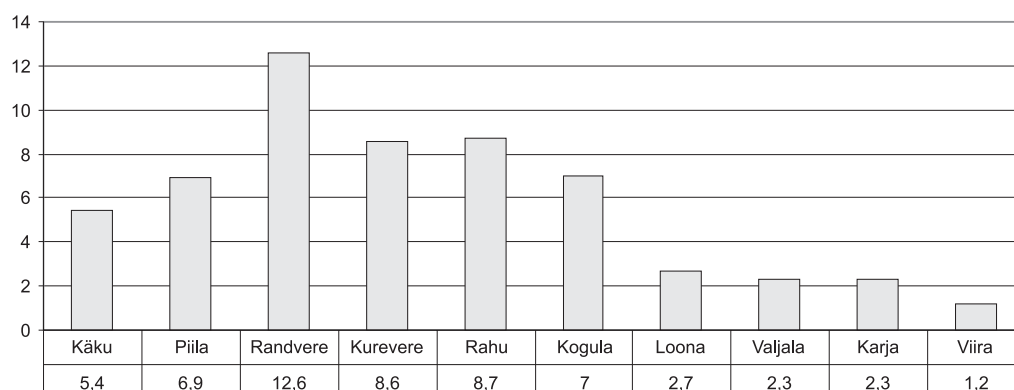


Figure 43. Average NAT in Osilian cemeteries.

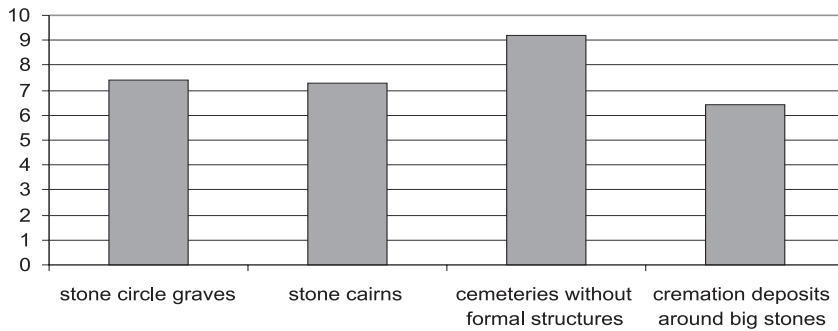


Figure 44. Average NAT in different stone grave types.

### b) NAT in the Burials of Men, Women and Children

It is possible to distinguish fewer female than male burials in Osilian stone graves, probably because weapons and their parts survive better than the jewellery which usually enables the identification of women's graves (Fig 50). Only 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century stone graves contained a larger number of female burials, which may be linked to the very modest quantity of finds from that period altogether. A clear predominance of women exists in 13<sup>th</sup> century burials, when the depositing of jewellery was still tolerated, while arms and tools were not used as grave

furnishings any longer. A large majority of unfurnished male burials could thus also belong to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

In spite of the somewhat sporadic occurrence of female burials, the general NAT scores (taking all burials into account) of women's graves is roughly equal to the scores for male graves (Fig 51). Minor differences may be incidental, conditioned by the limited amount of analysed material. So for example the NAT score of female burials at Piila is higher than that of the male burials, whereas at the Rahu cemetery, it is lower (Fig 52). In the latter case it has been possible to distinguish a few child burials with a

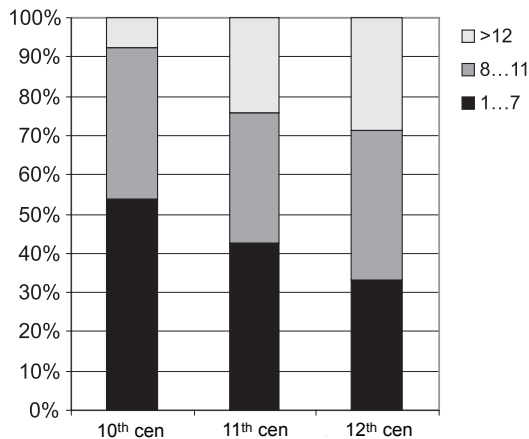


Figure 45. Average NAT in cremation graves.

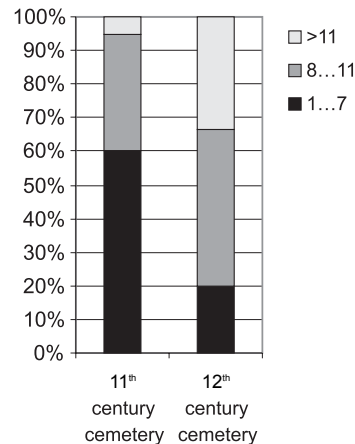


Figure 46. Average NAT at Rahu cemetery.

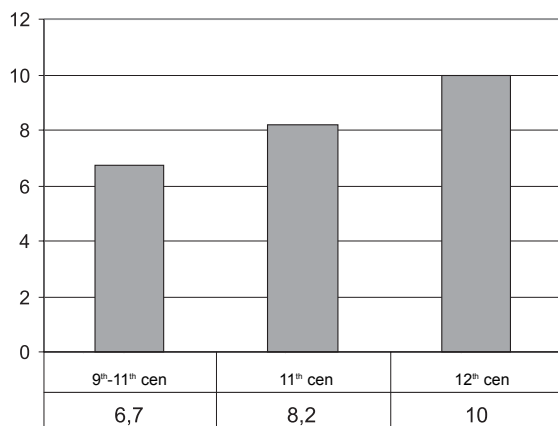


Figure 47. Average NAT at Rahu cemetery: by date.

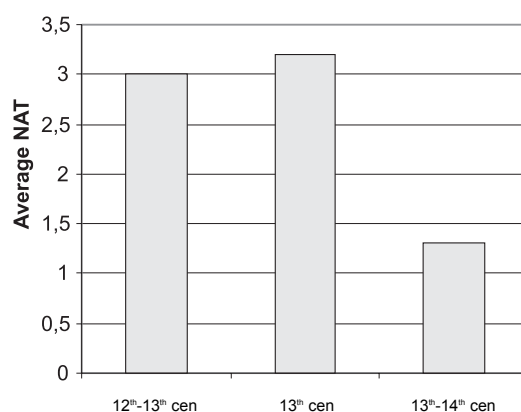


Figure 48. NAT at Karja cemetery: date distribution.



slightly lower NAT score from that of the adults. The overall tendency seems to be that, starting with the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the NAT score in female burials exceeds slightly that of males and by the 13<sup>th</sup> century inhumation burials, the NAT score of female burials clearly outbalances male burials. At the latest by the 14<sup>th</sup> century, male and female burials had both become unfurnished. The identifying of child burials has been possible only in the rare cases where they contained miniature artefacts. In that sense the Randvere cemetery was very interesting, as there it was possible to distinguish the burials of boys and girls besides those of men and women (Fig 53; in addition to the identified burials of boys and girls, the supposed child burials have also been considered in this diagram). Surprisingly, the boys' burials contained more different artefact types than others, surpassing even the NAT of adult males. The NAT scores of women's and girls' burials were lower than that of the males'. The child burials at Luistari were also approximately at the same level with adults,<sup>359</sup> and the same could be assumed of Livian graves. Although there has not been any special investigation of Livian child burials, the wealth of their grave goods has been noted by archaeologists.<sup>360</sup>

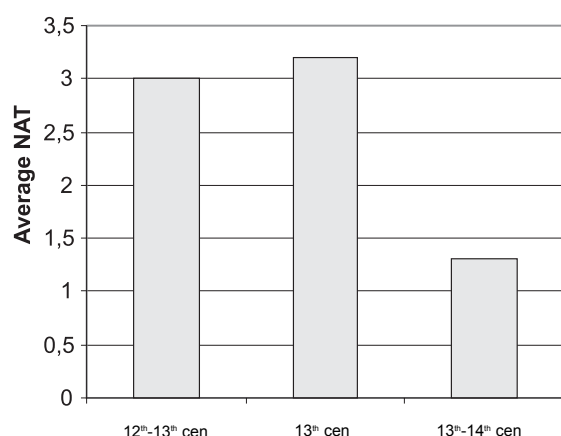


Figure 49. Average NAT at Viira cemetery: date distribution.

In the areas neighbouring Saaremaa, gender balance in burials has been analysed in Finland and to some extent also in Latvia. The volume of wealthy female burials at Luistari increases suddenly in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, which probably indicates the high social status of women in society.<sup>361</sup> According to Andris Šnē, the number of female burials in Livian cemeteries exceeds the amount of male burials by more than a quarter.<sup>362</sup> The situation is different in the more easily analysable Latgalian inhumation cemeteries. Several archaeologists have noted that more male burials have been uncovered there than female ones; the female burials also less often include rich deposits. Paradoxically, the burials of boys and girls appear to be in balance.<sup>363</sup>

There are a few more female burials among the burials at Birka in Sweden. Anne-Sofie Gräslund attributes this phenomenon to the fact that female jewellery has made the identification of female graves easier.<sup>364</sup> In Norway, the situation seems to be exactly the opposite e.g. more male burials originate from the Viking Age there. At the same time, the discovered female burials have all been abundantly furnished.<sup>365</sup> Mikael Jakobson has expressed the opinion that the occurrence of weapons in graves should be seen as indication of higher social position rather than gender and that some of the graves with weapons could perhaps have belonged to women of high social standing.<sup>366</sup>

<sup>359</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, pp 44–46.

<sup>360</sup> Zariņa 1988; Šnore 1996; personal observations at the Latvian Institute of History.

<sup>361</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, pp 46–47.

<sup>362</sup> Šnē 1997, pp 196–204.

<sup>363</sup> E.g. Šnore 1987; Apals & Apala 1994; Vilcāne 1996.

<sup>364</sup> Gräslund 1980, p 82.

<sup>365</sup> Blindheim & Heyerdahl-Larsen 1995; Hatleskog 1997.

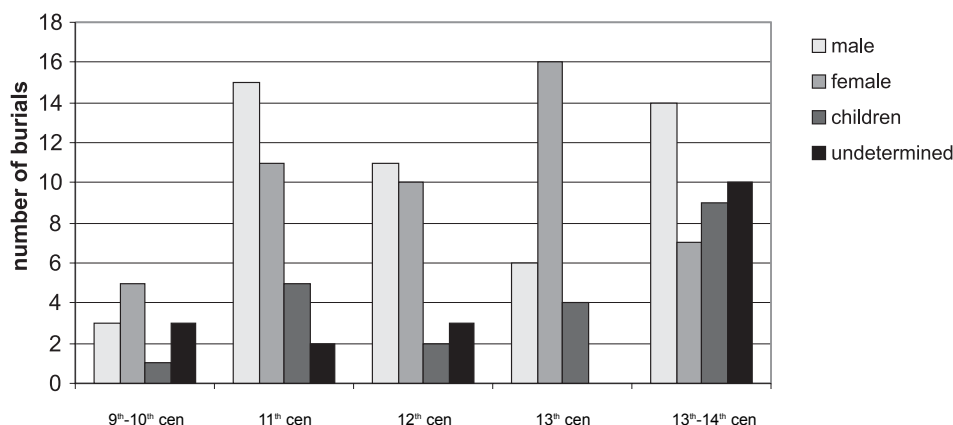


Figure 50. Sex/gender distribution in Osilian graves.

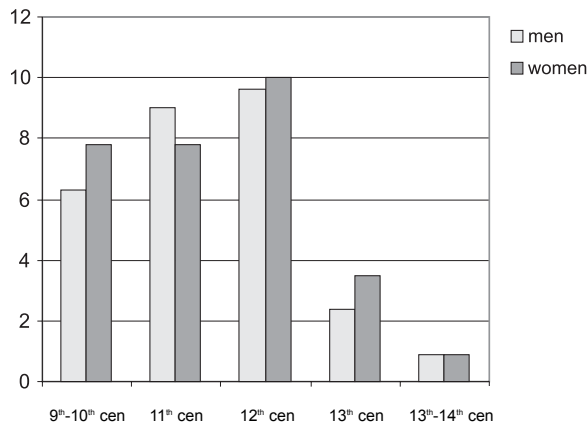


Figure 51. Average NAT in Osilian graves: by date and sex/gender.

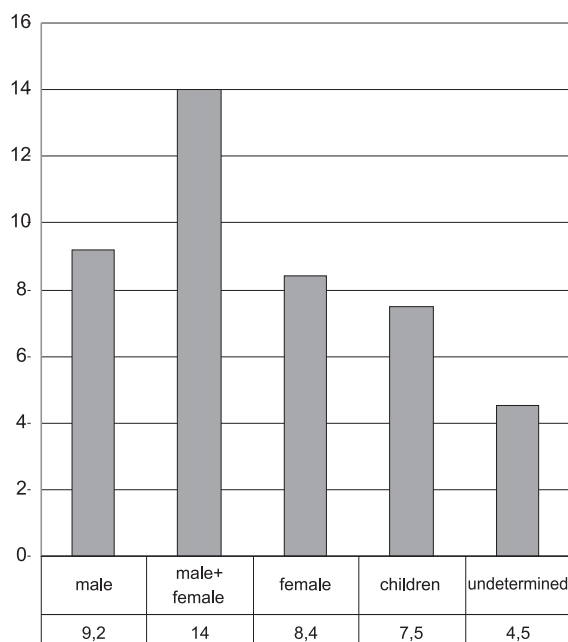


Figure 52. NAT at Rahu cemetery: by gender.

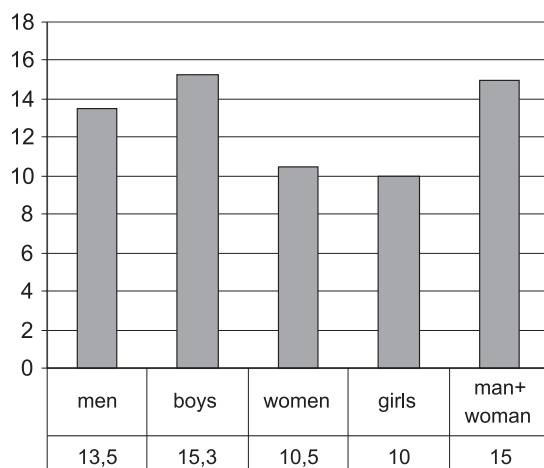


Figure 53. Average NAT at Randvere cemetery: by gender.

### c) NAT in Cemeteries of Various Socio-Political Locations

The remarkable differences between the average NAT scores of Osilian cemeteries (Fig 43) could have been influenced by the social position of the family/families that had been burying in them, or the location of the cemetery – a factor that also reflects the socio-political structure of society. Proceeding from the principle that the social elite tends to reside in centres, richer burials should be expected from the surroundings of former centres.

At the end of the Iron Age on Saaremaa, there were two types of district centre that were all marked by parish churches by the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the end of prehistory, strongholds were probably the political centres of districts, in which the regional chief also resided. Since in the early medieval period the districts of Saaremaa were generally divided into two ecclesiastic parishes, there is reason to speak of “double parishes”, and of “administrative centres” that were in some way subject to the neighbouring “power centres”. Both variants of centres are indicated by a high concentration of stone grave cemeteries in the vicinity.<sup>367</sup>

As arable lands of better quality surrounded all prehistoric centres and intensive land-tillage has continued in these parts until the present time, the majority of the stone grave cemeteries that were situated in the vicinity of centres have been demolished. Many destroyed cemeteries in these areas have been identified only by some stray finds that have reached the museums. In comparing such collections with the material of excavated graves, one is struck by the abundance of 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century luxury and imported goods, which is in accordance with the hypothesis that the wealthier graves were located in the immediate surroundings of centres.

The most centrally located of the archaeologically investigated stone grave cemeteries on Saaremaa is the Rahu cemetery, which is situated 3.5 km away from the Valjala stronghold. In the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Valjala has been named as the main centre of Saaremaa in the written sources.<sup>368</sup> It can be presumed that the Rahu cemetery was used either by the chief of the district or some of his retainers. Another cemetery from the same period – Kogula – probably marks a harbour site of medium importance. The excavations at Kogula embraced only a very limited territory, thus the NAT calculated for the present research may not be statistically significant. The same goes for the Kurevere cemetery, where only three graves have been investigated by scientific methods.

<sup>366</sup> Jakobsson 1992, pp 143–147.

<sup>367</sup> Mägi 1998.

<sup>368</sup> HCL XXX.

Quite unexpected is the highest NAT score in the Randvere cemetery, which mostly contains child burials. The Randvere cemetery should probably be analysed in connection with the Viltina cemetery, the material of which will not be dealt with in the present study. The abundance of luxury and imported goods at Viltina indicates that the NAT score of its burials is probably high, though the margins of the burial ground contained also poorly furnished graves. The analysis of nine Viltina find complexes in the course of this study gave 9 as the average NAT score. The place had probably been functioning as a rather independent area of the district, with its economy founded to a large extent on the use of the harbour site or perhaps even piracy.

The NAT score of the cemeteries that could be dated mainly to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries – Käku and Piila – was lower than that of other stone grave cemeteries. In addition to time period differences, the reasons for this could also lie in the marginal geographic position of the cemeteries – the middle of the island. It is clearly visible that the NAT score of coastal cemeteries is much higher, which must have been due to the significance of maritime activities in the Osilian economy. As only a few per cent of the whole cemetery areas has been excavated at Käku and Piila, the drawing of any far-reaching conclusions from the modest material would be premature.

All inhumation cemeteries except for Loona were located in the vicinity of churches, thus in regional centres. It can be presumed on the basis of the material from Karja and Viira that a larger community than a single family had been burying in these cemeteries. As these cemeteries already represent (semi) Christian burial traditions with a few pagan traits, the material could not be compared with those of the stone grave cemeteries. It is possible that the distance of the grave from the church had evolved into a sign of prestige – an aspect that could be indirectly implied by the furnished burials found at the Valjala churchyard.

### 5.3.3. Social Manifestation

It has been inferred by several sources that the social position of the deceased was not necessarily emphasised by the richness of deposits – the inclusion of certain status symbols could have been a sufficient indication. Archaeologists from different regions have named swords and other weapons in male burials, but also horse and/or horse gear, balances/weights and various imported goods as possible status symbols.<sup>369</sup> Ethnoarchaeological investigations have shown that social status can be symbolised by an object that could remain insignificant to an outsider while containing a specific meaning for the members of the population in question.<sup>370</sup>

What could have been the objects that demonstrated social status in Osilian stone graves? In observing the NAT score of the graves in which certain artefacts have occurred, all the above mentioned factors should be taken into consideration, especially comparison with the average NAT score of one or another cemetery. The character of the find complex and the condition of the find (full, incomplete or supposed complex) should also be taken into account, as well as the date. First of all, weapons as one of the most easily analysable artefact types should be investigated. A disturbing circumstance here is the practice of marking grave boundaries with weapons that was widespread on Saaremaa.

Swords, or rather fragments of swords, occurred predictably in burials with a high NAT score; among others, also as markers of one female burial (Rahu XXV) and in two supposed boys' burials (Randvere II and VI). The NAT score in the two male burials with sword fragments (Rahu III and XXVI) was 7, which is relatively mediocre. The latter of these graves was one of the late cremations that can be dated to the turn of 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century. The end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century is characterised by the decrease of finds in both cremation and inhumation burials. The Rahu III burial could not be dated with more accuracy than to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but quite possibly this burial also originates from the end of the century. A sword also accompanied the male burial at the Valjala churchyard, which could be dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Spearheads in burials could not be associated to a similar extent with a high NAT score as they were also found in graves with few artefact types. Nevertheless, the NAT score of some graves could be explained by other factors: e.g. a spearhead fragment was found in the Piila VI burial with a NAT score (8) above the average for the cemetery. The Rahu XXIX burial that contained a spearhead again dates to the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century; the find complex XI at Randvere was probably a cenotaph or an additional find assemblage of another burial.

In four cases there was a spearhead marking female graves. Three of these had a high NAT score (9–16), the fourth of these was a burial that had been uncovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the data concerning it cannot be verified (Kurevere IV). It can be suggested thus that the marking of a female grave with a spear occurred in cases where the woman had been of higher social standing. The same applies to 70% of the men's or boys' burials.

<sup>369</sup> E.g. Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, pp 48–52; Hedeager 1992, pp 88–90; Jakobsson 1992; Pedersen 1997.

<sup>370</sup> E.g. Hodder 1982; Earle 1997.

Javelin-heads generally also marked the margins of the burial site: 25% of male burials had been demarcated in this way, with only one of these burials having an average NAT score – all the rest gave an above average score.

The shields on Saaremaa, like those of the neighbouring areas, did not contain metal parts. Iron shield rivets have been obtained only in three male burials, all of which included weapons, even swords. The NAT score of the Rahu XXX burial was high, but the XXVI grave of the same cemetery originated from the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century and accordingly contained fewer artefacts. The third burial that contained shield fragments was, surprisingly, the Kāku X grave that had otherwise a low NAT score. The metal components of shields did probably not signify social prestige to any remarkable extent.

Four axes have been found from among the find complexes analysed in the present study and as only one of these was from male burials, three from the burials of women or girls, axes have been categorised as tools in the present study, though they could have been used as weapons too. The NAT score of the burials with axes is high (11–14). The male burial (Rahu XIX) also contained fragments of sword handles. It is apparent that swords (and axes – if axes are categorised as weapons) were mainly the weapons that occurred in graves with high NAT scores. Spearheads and metal components of shields have been found in burials of both higher and lower NAT scores, so that these artefact types could not be considered signifiers of social prestige. In weapon burials it is helpful to observe also the combinations of different arms (see below, Figs 57, 58); thus the combination of sword-spearhead(s)-javelin-head(s) was undoubtedly a token of high social status, whereas the occurrence of a sword as the sole weapon in a grave could indicate a somewhat lower position. Four Osilian cremation burials included two weapon types in addition to the sword (in one, there were also the metal parts of a shield) and all of these burials had a high NAT score. The NAT score was high also in the female burials that contained arms. Weapon graves and their implications in relation with the Osilian society will be further discussed in chapter 7.

The artefacts from among horse harness that clearly implied high social status were spurs and stirrups, which were found in three graves, all with a high NAT score. Of other horse gear artefacts, metal mounts and bells of bridles could be associated with social prestige. They occurred in lower NAT burials only in cases when the complexes were either incomplete or supposed; also in the Rahu XXVI burial from the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century. The same applies in general also to bits, though two of these have been discovered from complete complexes with low NAT scores. Horse gear occurred both in male and female burials, though less frequently in the latter.

Important indicators of social position in Osilian graves were probably balances and weights. Both of the men's (or boys') burials that contained folding silver balances and a complex of weights had extremely high NAT scores (20 and 21), but the score was high also in the burials of both sexes that contained even one weight.

Aside from weapons and horse gear in female graves, the occurrence of chain arrangements should be considered as an indication of higher social status (regardless of whether the burial also contained pins). A lower than average NAT score was found only in incomplete burial complexes containing the pieces of chain arrangement. As female jewellery allows us to draw parallels with inhumations from later periods, one could say that in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the chain arrangement was still stood as a token of high social position. Except for the case of inhumation graves, no clear connection between the NAT score and the occurrence of neck-rings or bracelets in burials can be detected.

It should be noted here that, because among most Finno-Ugric peoples, the ethnographic female attire has been dependent on points in the life-cycle (reaching the age of fertility, marital status, the existence or absence of children, reaching menopause), the differences in jewellery complexes should be approached with caution. The general rule in later periods has been that women at the height of their fertility wore the most jewellery; after a certain age, the use of adornment was almost entirely abdicated.<sup>371</sup> On the other hand, as only the elite were being buried in stone graves, the abundance of jewellery could be seen as a sign of social position.

One could assume that belts decorated with bronze or silver would occur only in burials with a higher NAT score, but according to the data received from cremation burials, decorated belts were widespread on Saaremaa, at least among the persons that had the right to be buried in stone graves. It is possible that belts with metal decorations indicated membership of a higher social class in general, being thus the attribute that distinguished the members of the elite from commoners.

There were knives inside burials with both low and high NAT scores; social position was more likely implied by the knives that were marking the borders of a burial – though some of such burials also had a low NAT score. As protective properties are also attributed to knives,<sup>372</sup> it can be assumed that the marking of grave margins with knives could have had completely different motives than the mere signification of a social position. Knives as grave markers occurred in almost all the children's burials, often in twos or threes. The burials that were poorly furnished and thus had unidentifiable gender were never marked with knives.

As for other artefact types in stone graves, the more richly furnished burials comprised also cross-, coin- and other pendants. Male burial complexes show the tendency that spirals, even singly, can only be found from wealthier graves i.e. those with a higher NAT score. Lehtosalo-Hilander has noted the same inclination in Luistari graves.<sup>373</sup> In the case of female and children's graves, also burials with a very low NAT score contained single spirals. The burials in which the gender of the deceased could not be determined and that altogether contained fewer deposits, there were spirals found only in a quarter of them, mostly including only one or two spirals.

Supported by later parallels or Livian finds from the same period, the abundance of spirals in female burials should mainly be connected with the rich ornamentation of shawls and/or head-dresses. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century inhumation burials on Saaremaa, a shawl or some other item of clothing decorated with bronze spirals had been spread over the coffin. As such graves as a rule also contained other artefacts, some of them a great deal of jewellery, the bronze-decorated shawl on the coffin can be regarded as a display of a higher social status. A similar custom could have been in use in cremation burials, but for obvious reasons there are no perceptible traces of these or any other status symbols of organic matter.

Of tools, scythes and their fragments were uncovered from burials with a higher NAT score, all of them demarcating the margins of burials. Four of the burials that had been marked with a scythe contained weapons, two included swords and spearheads.

Indications of higher social status seem to have been padlocks and keys. The former are more common in male, the latter in female graves.

In conclusion it should be mentioned that at wealthier burials, more ceramic ware was broken. In analysing the connection of rich ceramic ware finds in relation to the

general richness of furnishings (Fig 54), there emerges no difference between the occurrence of fine or rough ceramics at burial sites; it can be noticed, though, that the NAT score at graves with more ceramic ware is higher than average. In wealthier graves, the remains have been brought to the cemetery probably in several vessels; these burials have also been honoured with grander rites or feasts, in the course of which more ceramic bowls were broken.

## 5.4. Summary

As has been shown above, high social status in Osilian graves was mainly indicated by the depositing of swords and horse harness with the deceased for his way to the Great Beyond. Other types of weapons, as well as horse gear, have been found also in female graves, where they could be interpreted as symbols of power. It is difficult to determine the status of a woman only by her adornments; the only jewellery type that is in direct correspondence with the NAT score is the chain arrangement. It is quite likely that only socially high-positioned married women or mothers wore chain arrangements.

The material in Osilian stone graves testifies to the increase of grave goods in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the even more sudden explosion of rich burials from the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, the number of buried people has remained the same in the course of centuries. Another change in burial practices occurred at the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when Christian burials replaced entirely the cremations in stone graves. As burial customs not only reflect the religious background, but also the socio-political structure of a society, these changes should be interpreted as indications of a society that was in state of transformation. The socio-political development of Saaremaa from the Viking Age to the feudalised world of the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries will be discussed in chapter 7.

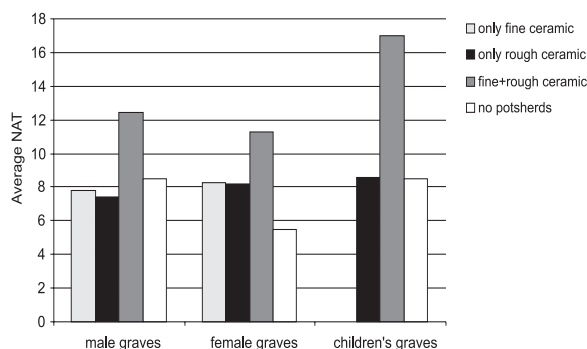


Figure 54. Average NAT in cremation graves with ceramic finds.

<sup>371</sup> Öpik 1970; see also Ligi 1993b, pp 91–92.

<sup>372</sup> E.g. Valk 1999 p 82; Viluoja 2000.

<sup>373</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982b, p 170.

## Chapter 6

# CHANGES IN BURIAL RITES

Although there are many different grave types known from Late Iron Age Saaremaa (see section 2.2.1) and though the burial practices have been quite similar all over the island, the development of grave forms does reflect to some extent the alterations in the islanders' ideology. The main transformation of the Osilians' outlook took place at the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century when the practice of cremating the dead before burying was superseded by the inhumation burial. Since the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century AD the sole burial type on Saaremaa had been the cremation burial; before that, it was customary to bring only a part of the cremated or uncremated skeleton into the stone grave.<sup>1</sup> Inhuming the dead body inside a hole dug in the ground must have thus been a completely untraditional burial practice to the Osilians, though they were surely familiar with it because of their neighbours.

### 6.1. Burial Rites in the Late Iron Age

#### 6.1.1. Grave Forms

##### a) Early Viking Age Graves

Early Viking Age burial places are almost absent on Saaremaa, though a few 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century and Early Viking Age burials have been identified in much earlier stone graves – both in *tarand*-graves and cairns.<sup>2</sup> It can be assumed therefore that the demonstration of the deceased's social status with new grand monuments in the landscape was not considered necessary in the first half of the Viking Age on Saaremaa; rather, the dead were buried either in earlier stone graves or in some other, archaeologically undetectable way. The few burials in earlier stone graves indicate that it was important to stress continuity and ancestral ties; rich grave furnishings were of minor importance.

All the late burials in earlier stone graves have been cremations. The cremated bones along with a few burned artefact fragments have been brought to the grave from a pyre that has been located elsewhere. Very often such burials can be dated only owing to a specific type of ornamented ceramics.<sup>3</sup> But such examples are rare, even in case many later burials have remained undetermined because of the lack of grave goods. It is likely that in most cases the dead in Early Viking Age Saaremaa were cremated and the remains were afterwards strewn in the wind or to some water-body. As there are stone cairns

resembling later ones known already from the Pre-Roman Iron Age, as well as from the Vendel Period, it can be guessed that at least some of them were also in use in the early Viking Age. Numerous stone cairns have been reported on Saaremaa, but only a few have been excavated; besides, the find material in such cairns usually consists of only a few pieces of ceramic ware and is thus difficult to date.

In some measure the burial customs altered in the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century when many new stone graves were constructed. The later-dated finds obtained from the cult site beside the Tõnija Tuulingumäe *tarand*-grave, which was probably somehow connected with the burial traditions, also originate from the Viking Age.<sup>4</sup> An interesting point in this connection is that a similar ideological break seems to have taken place in northern Estonia. According to Valter Lang, the old *tarand* graves there were cared for until the middle of the Viking Period; only then were the graves neglected and their walls left to crumble.<sup>5</sup>

Some artefacts found in and around the *tarand*-graves of Saaremaa allow one to conjecture that the graves could have been in use even up till the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, though the custom may not have been very common in such a late period. One cannot rule out the possibility that such finds actually represent offerings on earlier graves, as is for example known from the graves of Rahu and Viltina.

##### b) Cemeteries with Stone Circle Graves and Stone Cairns

The earliest cairns on Saaremaa, some of them containing a stone circle under the stone heap, date back to the Pre-Roman or Roman Iron Age. Among these should be counted the four excavated cairns at Tansi-Jaani near Valjala.<sup>6</sup> At Mäla, on the island of Muhu, there have been found cairns with stone circles; these date to the 8<sup>th</sup> or

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<sup>1</sup> Mägi-Lõugas 1996, p 430; 1997, p 36.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Schmiedehelm 1941b; Kustin 1963a; Mägi 1997, p 35.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. late burial in Tõnija *tarand* grave, see Mägi-Lõugas 1997, p 35.

<sup>4</sup> Mägi, 2001b.

<sup>5</sup> Lang 2000, pp 218 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Ariste 1941a; 1941b; Schmiedehelm 1941a; 1941b.

the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> The next oldest have been excavated at Käku, Piila and Kurevere and could be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Perhaps the burial form lasted even longer, as is indicated by the Kurevere and Päälda cairns that could originate from the 12<sup>th</sup>, maybe even the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> Anyhow, as such late cairns have not been reported later than in 19<sup>th</sup> century excavations, such information should be treated with some caution.

More stone graves were erected and taken into use in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, though the form had already been known before. The pyre had normally been put up in some other place and the bones and the remains of artefacts were brought to the grave in earthen vessels. The thick layer of soot in the burial places that are situated in between stone circle graves and just covered with stones indicates that at times the dead could have been cremated inside the cemetery. The remains of the pyre have in these cases simply been coated with stones.

Bones and smaller artefact fragments were gathered into earthen vessels at the pyre site; bigger items – weapons, bits, scythes – were brought separately to the burial place. The earthen vessel or vessels were broken at the grave, most probably thrown to the ground. Bones, charcoal and artefact fragments have therefore been spread in an area about 1.5 m of diameter. As mentioned earlier, at more illustrious burials several such vessels were broken, sometimes at the same spot, sometimes 0.5 to 1 m apart. The thin layer with small pieces of charcoal that was recorded under the graves of Piila and many other cemeteries implied that fires had been lit at the cemetery areas; most probably the idea had been to purify the place with ritual fire. The stone grave was erected usually only after the breaking of the earthen vessels, as is indicated by the frequent findings of earthenware fragments, artefacts and charcoal under the kerb stones. Especially the bigger artefacts like weapons and tools have often been deposited under the kerb stones.<sup>9</sup> In some cases, though, the process could have happened in reverse. In the Piila V cairn, the contents of a fine ceramic bowl had been emptied into an already existing stone circle that had been laid on the ground, while the bowl had been broken immediately outside the opening of the stone circle.<sup>10</sup>

In some cases a coffin-like formation has been noted around some of the bones and finds, for example in the graves of Piila V and Kurevere II. The formations were quite indefinite and at least at Piila, there had been stones laid in the shape of a rectangle around a dog's bones.<sup>11</sup> The main collection of bones and some of the artefacts have sometimes been covered with a bigger stone. At the Käku XII grave a key, a bracelet fragment,

fragments of chains and some rings and spirals along with textile fibres were found in one heap from under a limestone slab,<sup>12</sup> probably representing additional artefact fragments that had been picked up from the pyre site and brought to the burial place inside a textile bag.

When the ceramic bowls had been thrown to the ground and thus broken, a circle of bigger stones was constructed. Although in most cases it was intended that bones and artefacts should remain inside the stone circle, there are cases known of the pyre remains being left immediately outside the stone kerb and the kerb actually crossing over them. It is possible that the location of the stone circle was somehow fixed and the contents of the once broken bowl were not to be disturbed later.

The outer diameter of the stone circle has usually been 2.5 to 4.5 m on Saaremaa; the only two on record that were visibly smaller were those at the Rahu cemetery (1.2 m for the burial VII and 1 m for the burial VIII). These were burials with a low NAT score in a stone cemetery without formal structures; both of these burials could be dated to the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, which is the end of the period when stone circle graves were in use. In the case of stone circle graves and cairns there is a correlation between the diameter and the NAT score of a grave, though sometimes poorly furnished burials have occurred in graves of large diameter (Fig 55).

In stone circle graves a wall of limestone slabs was laid on top of the foundation kerb or, occasionally, directly onto the ground. The heights of the circular walls of Piila graves I and II must have been at least ca 65 and 50 cm, respectively. Some graves had even a double kerb, of granite stones or of limestone slabs. The space inside the kerbs was partly filled with smaller rubble, i.e. the upper part of the inside of the stone circles had been empty. At Piila this circumstance was remarkably demonstrated by the limestone slabs of the circular wall that had in some places fallen inwards. One can presume that the infill stones inside the graves had also been covered with slabs of limestone.<sup>13</sup>

The stone cairns often contained a kerb of bigger granite stones, as in the stone circle graves. The kerbs had been

<sup>7</sup> Holzmayer 1880, pp 25–31.

<sup>8</sup> Holzmayer 1880, pp 16–20, 31–37.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Metsar 1949; Kustin 1966b, p 89.

<sup>10</sup> Mägi & Rudi 1999, p 41.

<sup>11</sup> Mägi & Rudi 1999, pp 41–43.

<sup>12</sup> Metsar 1950, p 5.

<sup>13</sup> Mägi et al 1997, pp 100–102.

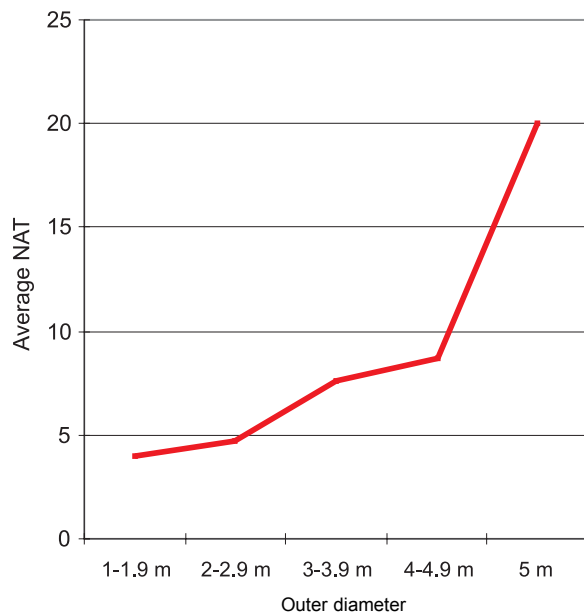


Figure 55. Average NAT in stone circle graves and cairns: by measures.

completely filled with granite stones about the size of a man's head, and had a heap of infill stones on top of the grave.<sup>14</sup> Other cairns did not have kerbs, and in these cases the cremation deposits were simply covered with heaps of stones.

Both the stone circle graves and cairns were typically surrounded by a thin layer, about 0.5–1.0 m wide, of small lumps of limestone. Additionally, small horizontal limestone slabs in an area outside the graves of Piila, usually situated in two or more layers, could be classified as remnants of a limestone pavement between the burial monuments.<sup>15</sup>

In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries there existed a parallel burial form to that of the stone circle graves and cairns: a ca 10-cm-thick sooty layer containing finds, cremated bones and sometimes quite large pieces of charcoal was simply covered with stones. In cases where the pyre had been erected on the later burial site, the remnants of the pyre had been heaped together and covered with stones. A structure like that at the Piila grave IV was surrounded by smaller stones, mainly pieces of limestone, as was characteristic of the graves with stone kerbs.<sup>16</sup> Artefacts in such burial places were often less damaged than those in stone circle graves; now and then they are even found intact. It is also evident that the NAT score of such burials is higher than in structured stone graves. Thus it could be stated that richer furnishings might serve to compensate for lack of structure in a grave.

As could be concluded from the excavated parts of the Piila and Käku cemeteries, in the period of their use the

stone circle graves and cairns formed cemeteries, in which the space between different graves was at least partly paved with limestone slabs. Taking into account the fact that the excavated part makes up only a few per cent of such burial places it is impossible to tell if there had been some kind of a temporal or spatial distribution of burials in the cemetery and if it had been encircled with a stone wall or some other barrier. All of such cemeteries have contained both male and female burials quite indiscriminately; there is little reason to suspect any grouping of burials on the basis of gender. Also the overall dating of stone circle grave cemeteries has remained open, though in the case of Piila for example it looks as if the cemetery could already have been in use in the Bronze Age.

Outside of Saaremaa one stone circle grave is known from Uugla in Western Estonia,<sup>17</sup> but in most cases the stone graves there do not contain any stone circles (Fig 3). In Northern Couronia can be found cairns that in appearance resemble Osilian cairns, but only a few of these have been archaeologically investigated. According to Eduards Šturms, the Livian cairns in Couronia could contain both inhumations and cremations, like the sand barrows that were common in the region. As on Saaremaa, some of the cairns in northern Couronia originate from the Early Iron Age or the Vendel period, but were in use up till the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup>

Gotlandic stone circle graves and cairns have been much better researched than North Couronian ones. Graves of a similar type to those on Saaremaa came into use there in the end of the Vendel period and in places they remained in use until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, when Gotlandic burial customs became Christianised. There occurred both stone heaps and stone circle graves with limestone kerbs, but, in contrast to the graves of Saaremaa, the Gotlandic counterparts contained both inhumed and cremated remains.<sup>19</sup> At the Ihre cemetery on northern Gotland there were sometimes additional stone heaps in the centres of the stone circles,<sup>20</sup> which seems very much reminiscent of Holzmayer's description of the Päälda grave<sup>21</sup>. Several characteristics of the Ihre graves

<sup>14</sup> Mägi & Rudi 1999, p 40.

<sup>15</sup> Mägi & Rudi 1999, p 40.

<sup>16</sup> Mägi et al 1997, p 102.

<sup>17</sup> Mandel 1982.

<sup>18</sup> Šturms 1936, pp 33–36.

<sup>19</sup> Nylén 1958, pp 78–79; Trotzig 1983, p 374.

<sup>20</sup> Stenberger 1961, pp 13–16.

<sup>21</sup> Holzmayer 1880, pp 31–37.



resembled those of Saaremaa; there were also many parallels in the find material.<sup>22</sup> The Viking Age graves of Finland were mostly cemeteries without formal structures; a few stone circles have been recorded at the Merovingian Period cemeteries in South-East Finland.<sup>23</sup> Stone circles, though uneven and low, have been found also in the Viking Period stone graves of central Sweden; stone kerbs have sometimes surrounded the moraine barrows there as well.<sup>24</sup> Further east, Osilian- and Gotlandic-like cairns were to some extent known among the Votic and the Izhorians and also in Karelia.<sup>25</sup> Outside these regions, stone graves were unknown in the Viking Age, even among the Gauja and Daugava Livs, whose material culture offers a variety of parallels with the Saaremaa finds.

Although stone circle graves had already appeared on Saaremaa at the beginning of our era, the period of their most intensive use tends to fall into the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries the stone circle graves, stone cairns and the cremation deposits simply covered with stones occurred together in common burial grounds, obviously indicating that they were erected by the same communities. Starting with the 11<sup>th</sup> century some of the inhabitants of Saaremaa began to bury the dead in other types of graves that were characterised by the lack of any definite structures (Fig 42).

### c) Stone Cemeteries without Formal Structures

The best examples of stone cemeteries without formal structures on Saaremaa can be observed at the Rahu cemetery, which has been dated mainly to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Undeniably, the excavated part of the Kogula cemetery belongs to the same category. Quite similar are the cemeteries at Randvere and Viltina, though both of these also contained stone circles. Two stone circles have actually been recorded also at the Rahu cemetery, but these were very small and encircled poor burials.

The Viltina cemetery, which unfortunately is not analysed in detail in the present study, would be an excellent example of how a cemetery consisting mainly of stone circle graves and other single burials evolved into a stone cemetery without formal structures. The eastern half of the Viltina cemetery is the older part, in which, according to the excavating archaeologist Artur Vassar, single burials could usually be distinguished. One burial was situated in a regular circle, about 7 or 8 were placed inside incomplete circles, in addition there were many small cairns standing separately. Vassar assumed that in later periods the dead were either buried between the earlier stone cairns or stones were taken out of the old cairns to create new burial places, hence destroying most of the old stone struc-

tures.<sup>26</sup> As the find material in the Viltina cemetery mostly originates from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, it can be imagined that the single burials belonged mostly in the 11<sup>th</sup>, sometimes even the 10<sup>th</sup> century. A more accurate account of the cemetery's development process would require a profound analysis of the whole material.

Some indefinite stone circles can be distinguished at the Randvere cemetery, but there – in contrast to Viltina – single burials were easily identifiable also in the parts without any definite stone structures. This circumstance could probably be explained by temporal difference, as the material of the Randvere cemetery mainly dates to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries single burials were quite rarely marked in some special way at the cemeteries without formal structures. The cemeteries themselves, however, were quite conspicuous-looking in the landscape. In most cases they had been founded on higher places at which there already were many huge stones. Adding stones to these natural heaps, uneven high stone piles were completed that must have been visible from afar. If and how the individual graves were marked with some indicators made of organic matter is unknown. At the Rahu cemetery, which was excavated later and with more accurate methods than most of the other cemeteries on Saaremaa, the 12<sup>th</sup> century burials were clearly distinguishable because the area with cremated bones and artefacts was surrounded by a findless zone. The area with mixed burials was mainly in the 11<sup>th</sup> century part of the cemetery, which could also have been in use in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. As the later burials were normally not mixed it can be presumed that the burials had been marked in some way. It is likely that the stone heap was simply higher over the actual cremation deposit. Very often in such graves the remains had been deposited beside a large stone that was standing in its natural location and had in this way become the marker of the burial.

The funerary customs of the stone graves without formal structures must have been similar to those of the stone circle graves and cairns, despite the fact that there were more grave goods in the former. According to the archaeologists that had excavated the site, the pyre had usually been located somewhere else and the bringing of bones and artefact fragments to the cemetery had taken place

<sup>22</sup> Stenberger 1961, pp 13–16.

<sup>23</sup> Söyinki-Harmo 1996, pp 110–111.

<sup>24</sup> Gräslund & Müller-Wille 1992.

<sup>25</sup> Kochkurkina 1981, pp 13 ff; Sedov 1987, pp 39 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Vassar 1940.

more or less in the same manner as for the stone circle graves. The only difference detectable by archaeologists was that the remains of the pyre were not encircled with stones but simply covered with one to two stone layers.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, stone cemeteries without formal structures were the dominant grave type on Saaremaa. On the Estonian mainland the grave form was also widespread in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, though there the inhumation burial was becoming common as well. The 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century stone graves in West Estonia contain many Osilian artefact types – a factor that may be taken as evidence of the growing cultural and political impact of Saaremaa on that region.

In northern Couronia the dead in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries were still buried in stone graves and sand barrows, but in addition – especially after the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century – in flat burial grounds.<sup>27</sup> There were no significant changes in the Livian burial customs either. In South-West Finland, Central Sweden and Gotland, on the other hand, the 11<sup>th</sup> century was a transition period to Christian burial customs and at the end of this century burying in pagan stone graves ceased in most of these territories. In the Votic and Izhorian lands the dead were also now mostly inhumed in barrows of sand or moraine.

The 11<sup>th</sup> century was a time when, in those areas that had shared common traits with Saaremaa in their burial traditions, sudden changes took place. Consequently the customs, and with them the ideology behind them, changed on Saaremaa too. It was not considered essential any more to stress the individuality of every dead person with a separate burial monument; on the other hand, the analysis of the grave goods has shown that the social circle of those having the right to be buried in stone graves had shrunk. During the time that several neighbours of Saaremaa were integrating into the Christian culture of Medieval Europe, the social organisation of the islanders did not remain at the Viking Age level either. The changes that could have taken place on Saaremaa at the time will be discussed in the following chapter.

### 6.1.2. Burial Rites in Stone Graves

The custom of cremation is usually associated with the belief that only the complete elimination of the body enables the soul to travel to the Other Side to become united with the ancestors. This goes back to an old widespread belief that a person has several souls, one of which can become one with the Afterworld via the destruction of the body.<sup>28</sup> There have been suggested ideas concerning the possibility of sun worship, in which the burning pyre would have conveyed the image of the Sun as a life-giving force; there must also have been an

ideological reason for the destruction of the dead body to prevent the deceased from returning. The idea of liberating the soul in the cremation process is connected with the concept of “double death” – the deceased is not considered fully dead before the final elimination of the body. Anders Kaliff has expressed the opinion that such notions continued their existence in the Middle Ages as the church would burn heretics on the pyre, thus killing them “for good” and taking away their chance of achieving Eternal Life.<sup>29</sup>

Especially to those of higher social standing, the liminal period that coincided with the double funerary ritual was of much importance. The time when the chief was not yet “really” dead was the time when he was succeeded in political office by his heir, who gained full power only after the second ritual.<sup>30</sup> On Saaremaa, the ritual must have comprised the bringing of the remains from the pyre site to the grave. Although the stone graves of Saaremaa were used only by the richest and most powerful families, all of the family members were buried in them, at least until the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Most probably the status of the deceased was distinguished not only by the deposits and/or the size of the grave monument but also by the length and character of the funeral rites, which are not reflected in the archaeological record.

Associating the cremation burial with sun worship could hardly be valid in the case of Saaremaa. Although the ethnographic material from the Eastern Baltic originates from much later periods and has been largely contaminated by the Christian influence, sun worship has been more of a feature in the mythology of the Balts. In Estonian and Finnish folklore the Sun is not so frequently mentioned and very often the tone is far from worship. Nevertheless, in the end of the Iron Age, the custom of inhumation was more widely spread among the Balts, especially in the territory of present Latvia, and the cremation tradition was more common among the Estonians.

#### a) The Pyre

The climax of a cremation funeral has always been the cremation itself, the bringing of the burned remains to the grave could have been rendered ideologically much less significant.<sup>31</sup> It is possible that the depositing of remains,

<sup>27</sup> Šturms 1935; Asaris, personal communication.

<sup>28</sup> Pentikäinen 1990, pp 21–24; Purhonen 1998, p 40.

<sup>29</sup> Kaliff 1992, pp 61 ff.

<sup>30</sup> Metcalf & Huntington 1999, pp 135 ff.

<sup>31</sup> Kaliff 1992, pp 68 ff.

the erecting or using of the stone grave demonstrated the social prestige of the dead, whereas in the cremation process the religious aspect must have been of primary importance.

Special cremation places have not been recorded on Saaremaa, though some 19<sup>th</sup> century descriptions might be accounts of them. As is apparent from the parallels of the neighbouring countries, cremation could have taken place on the later burial site, at the side of the cemetery or on the highest spot of the burial ground, but in some cases somewhere away from the cemetery.<sup>32</sup>

The deceased was placed on the pyre with the grave goods that have been analysed in the previous chapter, which makes it unnecessary to devote more time to the subject of their size and choice. The deposits were to guarantee the deceased's well-being on his/her trip to the Afterlife or "out there". The latter was valid only for one soul of the deceased while, according to the general notion in the Finno-Ugric worldview, the dead at the same time continued their existence somewhere in the close vicinity of the living, most probably in the grave. The custom of placing deposits in graves has survived mainly in the south-eastern part of Estonia up till the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the furnishings that were to guarantee the overall well-being of the deceased, functional items like the tools the dead person had used in his/her lifetime have been included in graves, so that he/she could continue using them in the Afterlife. The function of some of the deposits must have been to protect the dead from evil forces or to guarantee the thriving of the animals and other property that had belonged to and been left behind by the dead.<sup>34</sup>

A great majority of the cremation burial finds in the stone graves of Saaremaa have been wilfully damaged, presumably before being laid onto the pyre. The same custom has been recorded in Finland and Sweden.<sup>35</sup> Similarly damaged artefacts are often found in West Estonian stone graves, whereas in the rest of the Estonian mainland (especially since the 11<sup>th</sup> century) minimally damaged or completely intact items have been recorded as grave goods. The artefacts from Livian cremation burials have also been much less harmed than their Osilian counterparts.

The intentional damaging of deposits has usually been explained as setting the "soul" of the things free to travel to the Other Side, but also by the fear of revenants or by the belief that the Afterlife is "a reverse, a kind of mirror image of this world".<sup>36</sup> Possible and practical, though less credible explanations, would be that the living wanted to make the weapons unattractive to tomb-raiders or that the items were broken in order to fit them into smaller containers.

In cremation burials iron nails and rivets occur and may imply that the dead might have been burned on the pyre

inside a box or on a plank bed that fixed with some nails and rivets. The small number of the latter items indicates their symbolic function, the coffins being mostly fixed with wooden pegs (see section 5.2.8.). The appropriate parallel here would be the Finnish custom mentioned by Cleve of nailing the lid of the coffin during the funeral rites – or at least nailing one nail into the head of the coffin. He interprets this custom as a precaution against the dead and finds it to be similar to the tradition of "fixing" the coffin with some sharp instrument.<sup>37</sup> The nailing of the coffin is also known from the ethnographic material of Estonia; it is also known that sometimes a nail was driven into the threshold after the deceased had been carried out of the house.<sup>38</sup>

The few (boat)rivets found in the burials could have originated from some box or chest that was placed on the pyre with the dead body or destroyed during the funeral in the same way as earthenware.<sup>39</sup> Gräslund believes that the boat rivets in a Birka inhumation burial indicate the possibility that the deceased could have been buried in a storage chest, cart body or sledge.<sup>40</sup> Such possibilities should not be excluded in the case of cremations either, though such gear could also have been just deposits on the pyre.

## b) The Ritual Treatment of Bones

After the pyre had burned and cooled, the bones and artefact pieces were gathered inside an earthen vessel, or, at a rich burial, in several vessels. In Osilian cremation burials the bones found have been very calcinated and preserved only in small pieces. At the Piila cemetery (the only one of the cemeteries of Saaremaa with analysed bone material), the weight of human bones in one burial ranged from 3.2 to 185.5 g.<sup>41</sup> Similar variability is characteristic of Swedish graves. Berit Sigvallius has suggested that the loss of bone material can be due to various kinds of ritual events. The bones or possibly only a few of them were picked out from the ash layer of the pyre and then intentionally crushed, with the result that some of the bones were reduced to

<sup>32</sup> Gräslund 1978; Kaliff 1992, pp 129–130.

<sup>33</sup> Lang, M 1981, pp 43–45; Viluoja 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Valk 1999, pp 80–82; Viluoja 2000.

<sup>35</sup> Kaliff 1992; Karvonen 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Karvonen 1998, p 5 and references.

<sup>37</sup> Cleve 1978, pp 86–89 and references.

<sup>38</sup> Lang, M 1981, pp 52–53, 67; Viluoja 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Cleve 1978, pp 86–89 and references.

<sup>40</sup> Gräslund 1980, pp 15 ff and references.

<sup>41</sup> Mägi et al 1997, table 1.

powder and it was thus not possible to recover them at the archaeological excavation.<sup>42</sup> Kaliff connects the scarcity of bones in stone graves with the belief that a few bones were sufficient for representing the dead in the grave or with the habit of dividing the remains of the dead between several places.<sup>43</sup> In Sweden and in Estonia, it was an old custom to take only some of the bones to the burials site: in both of these places, the burying of only a part of the bone material was common as early as the Bronze Age. On Saaremaa, the tradition of burying only some of the bones in the stone grave is especially obvious, as in the Bronze Age and in the first half of the Iron Age, the buried bones were not cremated.

While getting acquainted with the material of the Daugava Livian cremation burials it became obvious that the bones there had been preserved much better and in larger pieces than those on Saaremaa; also the artefacts were in better condition and with fewer cremation marks. On the other hand, the material from the Livian Sabile *Krievu kapi* cemetery in Couronia with its fragmentary bone material and burned pieces of artefacts closely resembles the Saaremaa finds.<sup>44</sup>

The smashing of bones after the cremation can be seen as an analogue of the intentional destruction of artefacts before placing them on the pyre. In both cases a multiple "killing" occurred in order to ensure the complete liberation of the souls of the deceased and his possessions. One explanation of why only some of the bones were collected from the pyre site could be that the burning of the pyre was considered the ritual climax of the funeral. It is quite possible that as a consequence, the deposits were sometimes only placed on the pyre and they may not have been brought to the grave at all.<sup>45</sup> The case could have been similar on Saaremaa. It seems that often only some parts of every artefact were brought from the pyre site to the grave, and that this applied only to the more symbolically significant grave goods.

### c) Animal Bones in Cremation Graves

As the only analysed bone material on Saaremaa originates from the Piila cemetery, the occurrence of animal bones in human graves can only be assessed from that material. The dog bones were found in graves II, III, V and VI, which were all male graves. In one case the dog had probably been burned together with its master, perhaps on the same pyre. Intriguing were the bones of rather large dogs (shoulder height 50–60 cm), unearthed in graves II, V and VI, which were clearly less burned than the human bones in the same graves. Unlike the humans, all parts of the dogs' skeletons were represented. It may

be suggested that the dogs were burned separately. The separate handling of canine bones is indicated also by the coffin-like formation of limestone slabs at the Piila V grave that contained dog bones, while human bones had been buried outside of that structure. An even more separate dog burial has been found in the Kāku V grave in which the dog had been inhumed with its back against the inside of the grave kerb.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the dogs, only a few remains of a sheep or goat, a horse, a cow and a small bird were found in the Piila graves.<sup>47</sup>

On the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, dogs seem to have belonged mainly in male burials, while in Sweden there have been recorded burials of dogs equally in male and female graves.<sup>48</sup> Since, on Saaremaa, the bone material has been analysed only at Piila, an assumption that in the seven graves of Piila dogs were co-buried only with men would be premature. It is obvious, though, that the dog had a more important role to fulfill in burial rites than other animals. The other animal (dealt with separately) has been the horse, whose tiny bone fragments have been recorded only in two Piila graves but whose importance in Osilian graves has been manifested mainly by the presence of horse gear.

As the bone material of cemeteries without formal structures has not been analysed it is very difficult to assume anything about the cremated animal bones there. To some extent, unburned animal bones have been recorded in them. An interesting find has been the whole uncremated skeleton of a pig at Rahu that has probably been buried there while the cemetery was still in use.<sup>49</sup>

### d) Deposits with Demarcating and/or Protective Functions

The stone cemeteries without formal structures especially tend to contain spearheads, javelin heads, knives and other sharp instruments that have been found in the area between burials, apart from other finds and cremated bones. Of all the spearheads and javelin heads found

<sup>42</sup> Sigvallius 1994, pp 28–32.

<sup>43</sup> Kaliff 1992, pp 121–122.

<sup>44</sup> The finds and reports from the archaeological funds in the Latvian Institute of History and the Latvian History Museum; Šnore, reports; LVM AA 109, 198.

<sup>45</sup> Kaliff 1992, pp 68 ff, 103–107, 121.

<sup>46</sup> Metsar 1950, p 5.

<sup>47</sup> Mägi et al 1997, pp 106–108; Maldre 2001.

<sup>48</sup> Sigvallius 1994, 67–69.

<sup>49</sup> Kustin 1970a, p 6.

at the Rahu cemetery, 23% were discovered outside of the burial complexes; the proportion is likely to be the same in other cemeteries. This phenomenon enables one to draw parallels with the stone circle graves, as weapons, scythes, bits and knives have often been found under or between their kerb stones. Though some could have been placed in these positions during the erection of the grave, the two knives for example that were found lying side by side in the stone layer above the kerb of the Piila V grave had clearly been thrust there after the construction of the grave had been completed.<sup>50</sup> Knives, like spearheads, javelin heads, bits, scythes, or other larger items, clearly demarcated the borders of the burial site in many cemeteries without formal structures.

The function of the sharp instruments found in the margins of a grave could have been to prevent the dead from returning to the living or to keep him/her from the dark forces.<sup>51</sup> In the Orthodox Seto district in South-East Estonia there has been a custom of burying an unbaptised infant with a knife, with the intention of protecting the baby from the Evil One.<sup>52</sup> It is just as possible that the knives, spears, axes and other sharp instruments were protective measures against the dead. In the burial No 95 at Luistari, a knife had been placed on the throat of an inhumad female.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, although Estonian ethnographic records also speak of fear of the dead and magic precautions against the revenants, it is quite possible that this is a later notion that has been influenced by the Christian worldview.<sup>54</sup>

As the demarcating weapons correlated with the overall high NAT score of the burials, the occurrence of demarcating items could be linked with the demonstration of the social prestige of the dead. Thus the spearheads in a completely findless zone could actually mark the borders of separate burial places. Often such spearheads have not been in the fire and are found between the grave stones in a slightly slanting position, which indicates that they had originally been thrust into the grave by their shaft.<sup>55</sup>

There is also information concerning the spearheads and other iron items demarcating graves from the neighbouring countries. In Finland, the pagan-era inhumation coffins have sometimes been “fixed” with spearheads; in one case – at Kernaala – the spearheads were about 500 years older than the burial and originated probably from a nearby cremation burial cemetery. Cleve believes such spearheads to have been a protective measure against the dead. The custom of “fixing” a coffin with spearheads could to his mind be compared with the nailing of wooden coffins.<sup>56</sup>

In the chamber graves at Birka, spearheads were sometimes embedded inside the walls or the platform of the graves. A similar phenomenon occurred in the cremation

burials there – a spear, an axe and in one case a part of a sword has been found standing on edge in the cremation deposit; the same has been reported in some of the cremation burials of Åland and in one case – at the Järvafältet cemetery in Uppland – an axe has been uncovered, standing on its edge beside an burial urn.<sup>57</sup>

### e) Rituals and Sacrifices at Graves After the Funeral

The uncremated or very slightly burned animal bones that occur in all the Osilian stone graves as well as the many potsherds, mostly in the upper layers of the grave, imply that post-funerary rites or feasts have taken place on the grave. The custom of commemorating the dead with a meal on the graves is common in some Estonian regions up to this day.<sup>58</sup>

Another post-funerary ritual is the custom of depositing coins or pieces of jewellery in the grave. Finds that originate from a later period than the grave itself are known from many Estonian stone graves and the tradition continued in Christian village graveyards. Of the cemeteries that are discussed in the present study, the best example would be the 13<sup>th</sup> century coin pendant found in the Rahu IV grave. The burial itself dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century and by the time the coin was minted, the whole cemetery was not in use any longer. Unfortunately it is not possible to understand from the find distribution maps whether the coin was found in the upper layers of the grave or under the stones.

In South-East Estonia the later offerings are often explained with the assertion that the deceased had demanded something in the dream of a living relative. In any case, both the custom of secondary deposits and that of the ritual meals on graves reflect the belief that the cemetery is the home of the dead, a place where it is possible to communicate with them.<sup>59</sup> The grave as the dwelling-place of the dead is a widespread notion that has also been recorded in Celtic and Germanic mythologies.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Mägi & Rudi 1999, pp 42–43.

<sup>51</sup> Viluoja 2000.

<sup>52</sup> Valk 1999, p 82.

<sup>53</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, p 21.

<sup>54</sup> Lang, M 1981.

<sup>55</sup> See e.g. Indreko 1940, p 7.

<sup>56</sup> Cleve 1978, pp 86–89 and references; see also Purhonen 1998, p 165.

<sup>57</sup> Gräslund 1980, p 76 and references.

<sup>58</sup> Valk 1999, pp 82–84.

<sup>59</sup> Valk 1999, pp 82–84.

<sup>60</sup> Kaliff 1992, p 65.

## 6.2. Burial Rites in the Early Medieval Period

Although some records indicate earlier dates, the inhumation burial came into use on Saaremaa in the very end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In South-West Finland and Central Sweden, burial customs changed through Christianisation during the 11<sup>th</sup> century and by the year 1200, the pagan burial tradition must have become alien to these populations. In other territories that had shared the common culture sphere with Saaremaa during the Viking Age, even the 13<sup>th</sup> century did not bring about noticeable changes in burial customs. In West Estonia, inhumation burials with the head of the deceased directed northward were already common in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in northern Couronia even earlier; the Livs had practised inhumation burials since the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Comparing the slow development from the burial tradition of those areas to unfurnished Christian burials with the relatively rapid transformation that took place on Saaremaa, it can be stated that the Osilian model of the alteration of burial rites rather resembles that of South-West Finland and Sweden a few centuries before.

### 6.2.1. Ideological Changes

As has been demonstrated above, the idea of setting the soul free by eliminating the body had been established in the Osilian system of beliefs for at least 500 years, but was transformed into a diametrically opposite concept in the course of a single generation. An even more important change took place in the religious worldview, but also in the ideology legitimating the Osilians' social and political organisation as it passed from a two- or multi-level funeral (cremation, smashing of the bones, burying in the stone grave) to a one-level event (the burying of a dead body in a hole dug in the ground). The traditional set of burial customs, which included several transitional phases, the notion of "killing" the artefacts before depositing them, representing the deceased with only a few bones in the grave – and the artefacts with some fragments – all this was substituted with a completely different view of the Afterlife. In the Christian tradition, the burial was to be followed by waiting for the Day of Judgement, for resurrection and only then for eternity in heaven or hell. In the people's minds the rite of passage now was to continue after the dead had been buried.

The number of excavated inhumation burials on Saaremaa is quite small and the main signs of the transition period from the pagan time to Christian are the deposits, and to some extent also the orientation of the burial. More conspicuous examples of the assimilation of the two worldviews can be found from the surrounding

areas. These examples are mainly associated with fire, as fire still seems to have played an important role in the first inhumation burials.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century inhumations on the Estonian mainland, there have been found traces of fires lit in the grave that has been dug for the deceased. In the child burial No 47 at Kaberla two flat limestone slabs found under the skeleton that were covered with very sooty soil, which indicated burning. At the Küti cemetery, coffins in two female graves had been seriously burned – the fires had most probably been made on the lids of the coffins after they were lowered into the graves.<sup>61</sup> In Karelia at the Hovinsaari cemetery, one female skeleton originating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century had been half-cremated in the upper part of her body, with the lower part remaining undamaged by fire. The deposits in the grave had been placed as if in a regular inhumation burial. Ritual fire making was also indicated by the layers containing charcoal pieces and burned stones under and over another female skeleton at the same cemetery.<sup>62</sup>

It is possible that most of the pagan relicts in Christian burial customs did not leave archaeologically traceable signs. On the other hand, such relicts have successfully survived in the local folk traditions, mostly in areas east of Saaremaa where the transition to Christian customs developed more slowly. The traditions of making grave deposits and eating at the cemeteries have already been mentioned above. There are also a few reports on the use of fire during funerals. Among Estonians and the Balto-Finnic nations living in the territory of present North-West Russia there has been the custom of carrying the coffin over a fire even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In most cases the fire was lit from the straw the deceased had died on.<sup>63</sup>

The most widely spread criteria for determining a burial as Christian are the following – the earth must be consecrated, the head directed westward, and the grave must be unfurnished. The head of the deceased was directed west, the face turned eastward, from where on the Day of Judgement Christ was to appear. In Christian burial traditions this had already become a convention by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>64</sup> There have been reported incidents of digression from the convention, especially in the newly Christianised lands; for example there have been many non-westward burials uncovered in otherwise Christian

<sup>61</sup> Selirand 1962, p 139.

<sup>62</sup> Kochkurkina 1982, pp 42, 46.

<sup>63</sup> Öpik 1970, pp 113, 115, 160.

<sup>64</sup> Gräslund 1994; Purhonen 1998, p 119.

Finnish Crusader Period cemeteries;<sup>65</sup> the same could be said about Saaremaa.

As for deposits it can be asserted that as Christian ideology banned larger grave furnishings like weapons, food, animals, tools, etc; jewellery and other dress accessories were the only type of grave goods that persisted for some time after Christianisation almost everywhere. In Sweden and Finland artefacts normally disappeared from burials over a period of about 50 to 100 years. The absence of grave furnishings conveys an understanding of the Afterlife that was contrary to the pagan one. Some exceptional furnished burials still occurred in West and Central Europe until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, mostly among members of the upper class.<sup>66</sup> In the Eastern Baltic and in what is today North-West Russia the peasants were buried with grave deposits till very late.

In many areas that were still heathen in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (including Saaremaa), there was a tendency towards decreasing deposits after the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The decrease was most noticeable in weapons and tools, i.e. the same artefacts that were missing from furnished early Christian burials. Although there are no grounds for assuming that the funeral rites were also changed, some kind of alteration in the view of the Afterlife must have taken place. On Saaremaa, this was accompanied by the arrival of the inhumation custom.

In most countries the earliest Christian burials were made in the old pagan burial grounds or right outside the old cemetery. Such burials should be interpreted as influenced by Christianity rather than fully Christian, because one of the main conditions of a Christian burial – the consecrated ground – was not fulfilled. On Saaremaa the best examples of such burials are the three skeletons found in the Viltina stone cemetery.

The period of inhumation graves in stone cemeteries remained relatively short and quite soon inhumation graveyards were founded. Paula Purhonen has pointed out that there must have been practical reasons behind that choice: it was very difficult to dig graves into the stony surface of the higher places where most of the stone grave cemeteries were situated.<sup>67</sup> Though this observation is undoubtedly right, it could not have been the only reason. Rather, the move to new burial places must have been inspired by novel religious views that ruled out using the old cemeteries. At least on Saaremaa the shift in burial locations also reflects socio-political motives. Stone cemeteries had been established in higher places to demonstrate the social prestige of the family or families that were using them. Christian cemeteries had no such function and were most probably used by the whole Christian community living in the neighbour-

hood. As a result, the new graveyards were in much more modest places, but usually the location was near some church, chapel or simply some unit of settlement.

## 6.2.2. (Semi-) Christian Burials

### a) Inhumation Burials Before Official Christianisation

The earliest and also most “pagan” of the inhumation cemeteries on Saaremaa has been Loona in the western part of the island. Five out of the seven inhumations there could be dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> or the very beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century – thus to the time when Saaremaa was not yet officially Christianised. Apart from one unfurnished burial, all the other deceased had been buried with their heads directed northward, which had been a typical grave orientation for the Finno-Ugrians before Christianisation. Most of the skeletons belonged to women and had been adorned with much jewellery.

The Loona cemetery was situated about 0.5 km away from a Late Iron Age stone grave cemetery, but just beside a Bronze- or Pre-Roman Iron Age stone-cist grave. Thus consistency had been considered while choosing the burial place, rather than the need to differentiate oneself from earlier beliefs. There is no reason to believe that the ground there was consecrated; the skeletons lay in a direction that was alien to the Christian tradition, and the burials were furnished.

Therefore it can be stated that the burial practices at the Loona cemetery were still essentially pagan. Though the jewellery and other dress accessories found at Loona are known also in the other Osilian archaeological records, similar furnishings could occur in North Couronian or Livian territories. Two twined bracelets of three wires, which had been worn by two of the deceased women, were rare on Saaremaa, occurring only in two find complexes at Rahu. Such bracelets have been more common in the Votic and the Izhorian, but also North-East Estonian finds. Loona I burial is also the only inhumation burial known on Saaremaa that contained cowrie shells.

Although some other inhumation burials that have been discussed in the present study have been dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century or to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, their attribution to the pre-conquest period has not been firmly established. The only confirmed pre-conquest graves are

<sup>65</sup> Purhonen 1998, pp 121 ff.

<sup>66</sup> Staecker 1999, pp 318–333.

<sup>67</sup> Purhonen 1998, p 115.

accordingly those of Loona, which resemble burials from North Couronian, Livian or Votic cemeteries. These are regions that shared many common traits with the Viking Age burial traditions of Saaremaa. There is reason to believe that these areas, all being dependent on seafaring and trading, also shared a certain cultural unity in the centuries following the Viking Era; an expression of this may be the arrival of the inhumation burial custom to Saaremaa, the tradition having been common in the rest of these areas. This particular change indicates the integration of the inhumation custom among Osilians due to its frequency in all the neighbouring areas, rather than a Christian influence. The scarcity of find material prevents any conclusions regarding the changes in burial rites and views on the Afterlife.

### b) Other Cemeteries Outside Churchyards

Two of the inhumation graveyards on Saaremaa – Karja and Viira – were situated near churches and hence more Christian-like. All of the burials in these cemeteries were directed either west, south-west or north-west, thus following the Christian convention. The deposits, especially at Viira, were very modest, consisting mainly of jewellery, knives and belts. 16 per cent of the Karja and up to 56 per cent of the Viira burials did not contain any preserved finds.<sup>68</sup>

The 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century burial customs in the Northern countries provided that the hands of the deceased were to be crossed on the waistline or the pelvis area and the tradition of crossing the hands on the chest did not begin until the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Finnish find material proves that those rules were not always followed.<sup>69</sup> On Saaremaa, the position of the hands varied so much in the inhumation burials that there is reason to believe that the position of hands was not considered important in their burial customs. In both of the cemeteries there was only one deceased that has been buried with her hands crossed on the chest; one of them, a furnished female burial from the Karja cemetery, dates certainly to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

From the point of grave goods the Karja cemetery was much more pagan than that of Viira. In the Karja cemetery the dead not only enjoyed the privilege of having metal dress adornments, but several pieces of jewellery, belts and knives had been placed in the graves as offerings. Thus a pennanular brooch and a knife were found at the foot of a child's skeleton, and one ring was discovered beside the leg of a female skeleton. A large pin was found beside the skull of the woman that had been buried in the Viira XVIII grave; the pin was too big to have been used in fixing the head-dress. Knives that had not been attached to the belts were also noted in several Karja burials, usually occurring between the knees, with the

blade turned either towards the head of the dead; or placed under the back. The rusted oblong metal artefact found under the back of the Viira XVIII female burial could have even been a javelin head. The pregnant woman in the Karja XXVII burial had a knife on her chest. It is possible that the knife there was intended for the protection of an unborn and thus unbaptised infant.<sup>70</sup> The bead necklace that was found on the pelvis bone of the woman may have been the baby's deposit. A bead necklace was found in a similar position in the Viira I female burial, but these bones have not been analysed.

In several Karja burials belt buckles have been uncovered from unusual positions – in most cases from somewhere near the legs of the dead. It is conceivable that a coiled belt had been placed at the foot of the grave, but it could also be that the legs of the dead had for some reason been tied with a leather belt. In the Karja XXI male burial a leather belt with a knife sheath, a knife, a belt buckle and a whetstone had been placed between the legs of the deceased.

Only in the case of women's burials was the coffin sometimes covered with a shawl that had been adorned with bronze spirals. There are four such burials known from Karja and one from Viira. It is possible that the men's coffins were also covered with cloaks or some other garment, but as these included no bronze decorations, no traces of them have been preserved. The abundance of bronze spirals in cremation burials, as well as the decorations of shawls that were covering the coffin lids in the inhumation graves at Loona, and the complete absence of spiral-decorated textiles at Viira seem to suggest that this style of adornment was fading out in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, the reasons could also have been social – e.g. the community that was burying at Viira may not have been rich enough to afford such clothes.

Paula Purhonen has believed that in the case of some Finnish cemeteries dating from the Crusader Period these could have been founded in the vicinity of chapels. In any case the land there was consecrated.<sup>71</sup> The same can with high probability be assumed about Osilian graveyards, because there are also complaints in 17<sup>th</sup> century church visitation papers that the local peasants had the habit of burying their dead around old chapel ruins.<sup>72</sup> Excavations at Viira and Karja have proved that a larger community than a single family had been burying in these

<sup>68</sup> Those that had only a few bronze spirals on them were also considered unfurnished skeletons.

<sup>69</sup> Purhonen 1998, pp 114–115, 122.

<sup>70</sup> See e.g. Viluoja 2000.

<sup>71</sup> Purhonen 1998, pp 123–129.



cemeteries, which suggests that these had been the burial places of part of a congregation. Taking into account the full number of the skeletons and the fact that all of the skeletons with datable deposits seemed to originate from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, neither of these cemeteries seems to have been in use during a very long period. Most probably the cemeteries fell out of use in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

With the papal letters of Innocent III from the years 1214/1215 AD, when the Eastern Baltic was being Christianised, all the newly baptised were given the choice of burial place.<sup>73</sup> Heiki Valk believes that this fact could account for the existence of village cemeteries in present Estonia and Latvia as legitimate burial sites and their long-term use.<sup>74</sup> The same applies to Saaremaa, though no village cemeteries like those in southern and eastern Estonia are known on the islands. In addition to the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century cemeteries of Viira and Karja, there are several mentions of other burial grounds with (most probably) inhumation burials, but in most cases such observations come from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and are quite vague. Most probably some of the findings of bones and artefacts together should rather be associated with prehistoric burial places. It is also impossible to ascertain whether these burial grounds have been separately located post-Christianisation-period Christian graveyards or belong to some other era. It is evident that in places the inhumation cemeteries are located in the vicinity of the earliest known estates, just like Late Iron Age stone graves, indicating the consistency of both the settlement and apparently also the political power. The so-called village cemeteries have been known also from local settlement centres that remain quite far away from the parish churches. In some cases there can be assumed the presence of a one-time chapel and a Christian cemetery surrounding it (e.g. Kõrkküla, Iraste and Keskvere, see section 4.3).

### c) Burials in Churchyards

Around churches and chapels the ground was consecrated and burying in these places was in accordance with the Christian conventions. A baptised person had the right to be buried in consecrated earth, while it was forbidden to the non-baptised. The burying of heathens, suicides, and breachers of the ecclesiastical peace and violators of other canon laws would have desecrated the ground and thus it was avoided.<sup>75</sup> In the newly Christianised lands several kinds of exceptions were still possible, as is demonstrated on Saaremaa by the treaty from 1255 which stated that suicides on the island would be left unpunished.<sup>76</sup> Apparently the old common law was then preferred to the Christian one. It is quite possible that “being left unpunished” really meant the right still to be buried in consecrated ground.

In the churchyards of Gotland and also in some places on the Swedish mainland there have been found skeletons with some grave furnishings, usually jewellery. Most of these have been female burials. The latter circumstance could have been caused by the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century custom, widespread in the Northern countries, of burying women on the northern and men on the southern side of the churches. But as in the 13<sup>th</sup> century there came the belief that on Judgement Day all the churches would collapse northward, burying outside the northern wall of churches was terminated and thus the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century female burials in Gotlandic churchyards have been preserved better than others. For quite a long time only the social outcasts like the afore-mentioned suicides or criminals were buried in the northern parts of churchyards.<sup>77</sup>

Three furnished burials have been uncovered near Valjala church, whereas jewellery and other parts of costumes that could indicate grave deposits have been found from around the churches of Valjala, Muhu, Kaarma, Kihelkonna, and also from the churchyard of Mustjala in which a chapel probably stood in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are similar finds also from other churchyards in Estonia, including some furnished burials in the northern part of the country, beside the church of Viru-Nigula.<sup>78</sup>

It can be assumed that on 13<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa, burials with deposits occurred around churches and perhaps even inside the churches. The presence or abundance of jewellery could have demonstrated the social prestige of the deceased, but also implied the deceased's and/or his family's religious beliefs. From the Christian viewpoint, the social prestige was demonstrated rather by the location of the grave, its distance from the altar or the church.<sup>79</sup> In the case of the Valjala female burials the high social standing was conveyed both by the deposits and the location of the graves right beside the church wall.

The furnished female burials at the Valjala churchyard lay near the southern side of the church along the foundations, so that the graves must have been later than the stone foundation of the church. As the stone church of Valjala

<sup>72</sup> Köpp 1959, pp. 258, 282–284.

<sup>73</sup> “*eligant sepulturam ad eorum voluntatem*”. The word *sepulturam*, however, may mean both the cemetery and the manner of burial (Valk 1999, p. 94).

<sup>74</sup> Valk 1999, p. 94–97.

<sup>75</sup> Purhonen 1998, pp. 119–120.

<sup>76</sup> LUB I: 285, reg. 321.

<sup>77</sup> Thunmark-Nylén 1991; Purhonen 1998, p. 128; Staecker 1999, p. 312.

<sup>78</sup> Tamla 1991; 1992.

<sup>79</sup> Staecker 2001; Valk 1999, pp. 17–18.

has been considered one of the earliest on Saaremaa, the finding of 13<sup>th</sup> century skeletons in its vicinity could hardly be considered surprising. A much more problematic find is the male skeleton that was uncovered from near the northern wall of the church; his head was directed northward and a sword had been deposited in his grave. The skeleton was in a very poor condition and was found by construction workers; the supposed orientation of the burial was established later in the course of excavations. An eastward directed female burial from the Viru-Nigula churchyard indicates, however, that even after Christianisation there could be digressions from the conventional burial orientations in churchyards.<sup>80</sup>

The scabbard end of the man from the Valjala churchyard could be dated to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> or the 13<sup>th</sup> century (see section 5.2.1.2). It has been suggested that the skeleton originated from a 12<sup>th</sup> century inhumation cemetery that had been situated on the site of the present Valjala church,<sup>81</sup> – an assumption which, taking into consideration the vicinity of a sacred lake, is quite possible. On the other hand, the burial is the only one indicating a pre-Christian period burial ground there, as the stray finds from the Valjala churchyard originate from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Taking in account the bad condition of the skeleton and thus its hypothetical nature, the burial could still be considered a 13<sup>th</sup> century churchyard grave. In Europe, furnished burials have been found from Christian-period graves, for example in Poland, Hungary, Carolingian Western Europe, etc; the latest are known from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The furnished burials mainly belonged to the clergy or the nobility; in the latter graves swords have also been encountered.<sup>82</sup>

Consequently it can be stated that in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries some Osilians were buried in churchyards or churches, some in chapels or the surrounding graveyards. Sometimes the dead were buried in other cemeteries that were located away from the churchyards but still constituted in themselves consecrated burial grounds. Therefore it can be assumed that by this time the Osilians had accepted the social implications of Christian burial customs, i.e. the conveying of social prestige with the location of the burial.

Although no 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century artefacts have been discovered in Osilian churches, it is quite logical to conclude that the elite of the island, who had been burying their dead during the 12<sup>th</sup> century in large and well-furnished stone graves, then switched to burying in the churches or around them. This is indicated by the grave slabs dating to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> or even the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century that have been found in the oldest churches on Saaremaa and Muhu,<sup>83</sup> but also by other circumstances that are further discussed in the next chapter.

### 6.3. Summary

In the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century burial customs on Saaremaa, four levels can be distinguished that also reflect the alterations in socio-political organisation and the ideology legitimising it.

**a) The 9<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.** In this period, which had already really started as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century, substantive grave monuments were rarely erected. It was more important to the elite to demonstrate ancestral consistency by re-using old burial- and cult-places. Most probably the burial customs were closely connected with the old belief that required the bringing of only a part of the bones to the family burial site;

**b) The second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century until the 11<sup>th</sup> century.** Although the types were already familiar, it was then that the construction of stone circle graves and cairns intensified. The individuality of the dead was demonstrated by separate graves or at least clearly distinguishable burial places. Both the graves and the deposits remained more or less uniform; social inequality was not sharply stressed. At the same time all the burial places belonged to certain families, i.e. not all the members of society were buried in these;

**c) The 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.** Starting with the 11<sup>th</sup> century a new burial form appeared, in which individual burials were not very clearly demarcated on the outside, but as a whole these new constructions constituted monumental stone heaps in the cultural landscape. The social status was differentiated by both the quality and quantity of the burial deposits, but also by the limited access to the right to be buried in stone graves. The cremating of the dead, the damaging of artefacts and the smashing of the cremated bones testify to continuity in the religious aspects of the funerary rituals;

**d) The 13<sup>th</sup> century.** The period is characterised by the sudden disappearance of cremation burials at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the continuous decrease in burial deposits till the final ceasing of the grave furnishing tradition in the course of the next 100 years. These changes were obviously brought about by the acceptance of Christianity, with its attitudes and value systems. The process resulted in the transformation of the social and political structure of the society, which in its profoundness surpassed all earlier changes.

<sup>80</sup> Tamla 1993, p 22.

<sup>81</sup> Selirand 1975.

<sup>82</sup> Staecker 1999, pp 318–333.

<sup>83</sup> Pesti & Rikas 1991, pp 72–76; Sipelgas 2000.

## Chapter 7

# CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING SOCIETY

### 7.1. Political Circumstances

By the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the area of the present Baltic States constituted a pagan resort in Europe, a kind of an "empty" zone between the ascendancy of the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church. The same can be said of its social organisation: Scandinavian states had been feudalised<sup>1</sup> in the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries after the West European example; in the east, Kiev-Russ comprised a slightly different, but in its general lines still feudal political structure. Estonia and Latvia were influenced mainly by the principalities of Pskov and Novgorod, which were politically independent state-like formations.

It is possible that the most important factor in the perseverance of the Eastern Baltic as pagan and politically non-centralised was its geographical position between the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox realms and the two more or less equal political powers. Transit trade was an important branch of the economy especially for the territories of present Latvia and Estonia; thus the local politics could be characterised as manoeuvring between two powers and worldviews. In principle, the same trend also continued later. The reason for the prosperity of medieval Old Livonia must have been its favourable geopolitical position though throughout the Middle Ages the land remained highly divided between different overlords.

Since the 11<sup>th</sup> century many military campaigns are known to have been launched from the east against the Eastern Baltic, the main goal of which must have been the attempt to include the area in the eastern ascendancy. The same tendency can be noted coming from the Scandinavian states and Germany starting with the 12<sup>th</sup> century. By the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the attempts culminated in a Crusade into the Baltic countries that was mainly initiated by Germans, but caused Danish and Swedish kings and Russian princes to take action in order to defend their interests in this strategically important locus. As expected, the conquest attempts targeted the most important places for transit trade: the Germans occupied the estuary of Daugava, the Danish the areas around Tallinn.

Both powers tried to conquer Saaremaa, which had probably been controlling trade routes – the one up the river Daugava and those going through Viljandi and Tartu. Having taken over the important trade routes leading east from the territories of present Latvia and Estonia, the West European fever to overrun Lithuania cooled remarkably. The role of Lithuania as a trade route between east and west was also

much smaller. Its socio-political progress went the "normal" way and the Lithuanian state evolved as a result of internal development, enabling it to stay as a heathen island in Christian Europe for almost two more centuries.

In Scandinavia Europeanisation evolved in a natural way, triggered by the internal needs of the society. The local elite, the stratum that was most interested in the changes, carried it out. The process was quite different on the eastern shores of the Baltic. The mission proceeding from Sweden converted Finland step by step. It was supported by a noteworthy part of the local Finnish elite, and cannot, therefore, be considered an entirely violent process.

Both Estonia and Latvia were integrated into West European society rapidly and violently, as a result of outward aggression. That process can be mainly characterised by Christianisation and political and economic feudalisation after the West European model – a phenomenon that has been called Europeanisation.<sup>2</sup> The action took various forms in different parts of the Eastern Baltic, depending on the internal socio-political organisation prior to the conquest, but also on specific political events. In the process of Europeanising Estonia and Latvia the culture conflict was deepened, in addition to political and ritual confrontation, by an ethnic clash – the invaders came mainly from Germany. Culture conflict was obviously not so sharp in some districts, mainly in Couronia and on the island of Saaremaa, where a greater part of the local elite was involved in these changes.

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<sup>1</sup>The character of feudalisation is the subject of wide-ranging discussion. Here the term feudalisation is taken approximately in the same sense as it is used by Thomas Lindkvist (Lindkvist 1988). In Estonia it stands for the change of social system, concurrent with the transformation from pre-state to state society. In pre-feudal society, economic as well as social and political status was based not only on landed property but also, and to a high degree, on external appropriation (the "plundering economy"). Feudal society is characterised by internal exploitation and a hierarchical landed aristocracy, i.e. the economy and social system is based primarily on the control of both land and people. Feudal society is more highly regulated than the social system preceding it. It means, among other things, the deepening and consolidation of social stratification, the international regulation of politics and trade, and the emergence of towns.

Changes in the social system are accompanied by an alteration of the ideology legitimising it; in northern Europe this is indicated by the conversion to Christianity. Christianisation linked Estonia with the cultural sphere of catholic Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Blomkvist 1998.

As has been demonstrated in earlier chapters, an understanding of the social organisation of Osilian society can be constructed only by relying mainly on archaeological sources, owing to the limited nature of written records both from the end of the Iron Age and from the Early Middle Ages. Of special importance here is the artefact material from burials and funeral customs. Even that database is not very rich, but it does enable the representation of the general shift in the Osilians' worldview and the social and economic organisation reflected in its background.

## 7.2. Social Structure

### 7.2.1. Saaremaa in the First Half of the Viking Age

The 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries and the first half of the Viking Age are poorly represented in finds throughout the whole of the Estonian archaeological record. Since several of the period's settlements and strongholds have been excavated, the scarcity of finds could be explained only by the specific burial traditions of the time. On Saaremaa, burials of the era constitute mostly secondary burials in old stone graves, and at times also individual stone circle graves (see section 6.1.1.a). A 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century grave from Rahu indicates that some of such burial sites could also have been used in earlier times. On the other hand, at least two strongholds can be dated to this period (the later layer of Asva and the earlier layer of Pöide; see Fig 56); the rich cultural layer of the Tornimäe harbour site in the eastern part of the island also belongs to that time<sup>3</sup>.

Priit Ligi has attempted to explain the scarcity of finds in the first part of the Viking Age in Estonia with a theory about the consolidation of the local elite – a process that resulted in the absence of the need to manifest social

prestige with monumental grave structures and/or deposits.<sup>4</sup> Taking into account the above-mentioned Osilian strongholds in which some people had been living continuously, it can be asserted that the local society had already been highly stratified. It is possible that burial in old stone graves was sufficient indication of social distinction, i.e. power was legitimised primarily through ancestral consistency.

Parallels with neighbouring areas show that Livian burials at the estuary of Daugava also appeared only from the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, while in Finland, Couronia and the rest of Latvia and Lithuania a large number of Merovingian and Early Viking Age burials have been uncovered; the cemeteries of Birka also belong to the first half of the Viking Age.

### 7.2.2. Saaremaa in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century

During the 10<sup>th</sup> century, especially its second half, more burial places start to occur; many of the stray finds of supposedly demolished graves can also be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In this era, cemeteries of stone circle graves were widespread, in which some of the deceased were also buried between the stone circles, in an area covered with a thinner stone layer. Over half of the burials included few artefacts, ca 7% of the burials accommodated above-average quantities of furnishings. Single burials are easily distinguishable. Weapons as the main indicators of high social status were scarce; according to present data, only three

<sup>3</sup> Kustin 1967; 1968b; Lõugas & Mägi-Lõugas 1994a; Mägi 1999a, pp 206 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Ligi 1995a, p 235.



Figure 56. Pöide hillfort. The photograph is taken from the south-west. Photograph by the author.

such burials are known (23%). In two of these a spearhead was found; in the third, which was probably a double burial of a couple, were two spearheads. No swords have been uncovered from 10<sup>th</sup> century Osilian stone graves, but in 1866 a male skeleton was excavated at Laadjala in between whose knees a single-bladed sword in a scabbard with a bronze-plated edge was found<sup>5</sup>.

The Swedish archaeologist Mikael Jakobsson has discussed Scandinavian Viking Age weapon burials and the warrior ideology reflected in these. Considering the percentage of weapon graves among other burials, he has been able to distinguish the so-called western Scandinavian model that is characterised by the high percentage of weapon graves (in western Norway, also the six to seven times smaller number of female graves than that of the males') and the East and South Scandinavian model that included weapons only in a few graves. The latter was especially characteristic of the Mälär region in Central Sweden. There were digressions from both of these models, conditioned by the relations between the centre and periphery or other circumstances.<sup>6</sup> Although the find material on Saaremaa is scarce, the weapon composition there resembled above all Gotlandic burials or maybe also the stone graves in central Sweden. Connections with Gotland were implied also by the similarity of grave type, i.e. single burials in stone circle graves. Stone circles sometimes occurred also in the graves of central Sweden.

In societies where weapons appear in few graves, they tend to work as symbols of social prestige, differentiating the elite from lower social strata. A person that was buried with weapons could never have participated in any battle; the occurrence of a weapon in a burial could only reflect the prestige the deceased had enjoyed during his lifetime. On the other hand, warriors with a lower social standing were buried without weapons.<sup>7</sup> An interesting point here is that one 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century spearhead was found as a marker of a small girl's burial at the Randvere cemetery on Saaremaa; the cemetery's high NAT score suggests that the cemetery was used by a family with a high social position (see also section 5.3.2.c). In this case, the weapon implied the power of the family rather than the actual "profession" of the deceased.

### 7.2.3. Saaremaa in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century

The 11<sup>th</sup> century cemeteries on Saaremaa can be characterised by the sudden increase in weapon burials – up to 61% of all burials.<sup>8</sup> Again the situation is similar to that of Gotland, where the proportion of weapon burials also reaches 58% in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> The data presented by Tõnisson about Livia implies that weapon burials also

increased among the Livs in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the decrease of arms in burials started only in the last quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> According to Andris ĒnĒ, weapon burials should make up about 25% of the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century Daugava Livian burials,<sup>11</sup> which, taking in account the reduction of weapons that started at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, would indicate a noteworthy percentage of weapon burials in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Judging by the published data, the proportion of weapon burials should also be very high among Couronian burials, both in the Viking Era and in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> On the Estonian mainland, the number of weapons and other deposits did not show a remarkable increase until the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> Luistari finds from Finland, on the other hand, show a decrease in weapon graves starting with the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup>

Jakobsson believes that in the case of the high percentage of weapon graves, weapons should be interpreted as socially uniting symbols. The occurrence of one or several weapons in a burial indicated that the deceased belonged to a certain social class; the inner, usually highly evolved social hierarchy could be expressed in the combination of different types of arms. In cases where women were able to achieve a similar status, they were also buried with weapons.<sup>15</sup> Considering the small number of Osilian stone graves, the right to be buried in these must have been reserved to a minor part of the population, with the district chiefs and their (male) retainers with families being the few that were accompanied by weapons.

Compared to 10<sup>th</sup> century burials, 11<sup>th</sup> century stone grave cemeteries contained more high scoring NAT burials (Fig 45); 25% of burials included the sword as the primary token of high status. In this sense the 11<sup>th</sup> century burials on Saaremaa resembled the 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century burials at Luistari in Finland, at places also the Viking Age cemeteries in the Mälär region of central Sweden.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>5</sup> SMM 1924, p 24.

<sup>6</sup> Jakobsson 1992, pp 133–177.

<sup>7</sup> Jakobsson 1992, pp 111–114.

<sup>8</sup> These include also the burials that can be less accurately dated to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> or the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>9</sup> Carlsson 1988, p 93; Jakobsson 1992, p 139.

<sup>10</sup> Tõnisson 1974, pp 150–154.

<sup>11</sup> Šnē 1997, pp 196–205.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Volkaite-Kulikauskienē 1970, pp 185 ff.; Vaitkunsienē 1979.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Selirand 1974b; EE 1982, pp 339 ff.; Mandel 1993, pp 37 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, pp 48–49.

<sup>15</sup> Jakobsson 1992, pp 143–147.

<sup>16</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, pp 48–49; Jakobsson 1992, fig 14.

Not only swords, but also spearheads, javelin heads and metal components of shields could occur in 11<sup>th</sup> century Osilian graves. Axes were rare, though belonging in the warrior weaponry of many neighbouring areas (Fig 57); the only axe that could be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century was accompanying a girl's burial at Randvere V. The most complete weapon assemblages were in the XXX burial of Rahu and the Viltina weapon find; a sword and a spearhead or javelin head had been placed in the graves of two men (or boys) buried at the Randvere cemetery. Of the excavated 11<sup>th</sup> century graves, the above-mentioned burials apparently should be attributed to the most highly placed persons, which is in accordance with the central position and a generally high NAT score of the Rahu and Randvere cemeteries. A notable aspect here is that both of the Randvere burials probably belonged to boys and thus it can be assumed that the high status implied by the weapons signified their family rather than themselves. The male burial of Rahu XXX indicates the emergence of Valjala as an important centre as early as the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The vast majority of 12<sup>th</sup> century sword burials have been uncovered already at the Rahu cemetery.

As for other 11<sup>th</sup> century antiquities on Saaremaa, it can be said that it was about this time that the strongholds of Muhu and Kaarma were erected, though the latter could have been in existence even earlier.<sup>17</sup> The founding of the Muhu stronghold was probably conditioned by the uniting of the later districts of Muhu and Pöide.<sup>18</sup> It is possible that in the 11<sup>th</sup> century there began the develop-

ment process of other double parishes on Saaremaa; thus the centralisation of power. The emergence of the richly furnished graves at Randvere and Viltina can be associated with the nearby harbour and probably also piracy, which implies the growing importance of the so-called plundering economy in society.<sup>19</sup> The warrior ideology that is conveyed by the burials is in correlation with all of these changes.

The 11<sup>th</sup> century is the only one of the centuries discussed in the present study that comprises more male than female burials (Fig 50). Another peculiarity is the lower NAT score of the 11<sup>th</sup> century female burials (Fig 51). Still, the small total number of burials influences both of these indicators and in neither case was the difference between the two sexes very big. The phenomenon itself is still noteworthy, proving again the strengthening of "warrior ideology" in the 11<sup>th</sup> century society of Saaremaa.

The gender- and material distribution of the 11<sup>th</sup> century Osilian graves, which at first glance appears similar to the "western Scandinavian model" suggested by Jacobson, mainly differs from it in the higher number of female graves, and their higher NAT scores. As was mentioned above, female graves in Western Norway were six to seven times less frequent than male ones, but the few existing women's graves were all well furnished. Thus only women of high social position were buried in the same cemeteries with men – an aspect that the local researchers have interpreted as proof of the high status of women in society.<sup>20</sup> I am rather more inclined to see the similar burial customs for both sexes and/or the practice of placing weapons in female graves as status symbols (which was spread on Iron Age Saaremaa) as evidence of the high position of women in society. Similar phenomena were characteristic also of some other areas on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea (see section 5.1.1).

There are two remarkably wealthy child burials at the Randvere cemetery that can be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. One of these holds the remains of a boy, another a girl. As was expressed above, the possibilities of determining the gender in children's cremation burials are very few. On the basis of the material from the Luistari cemetery in Finland, Lehtosalo-Hilander believes that unfurnished graves could be attributed to children.<sup>21</sup> Applying the

GRAVE	GENDER	S W O R D	S P E A R S	J A V E L I N S	A X E	S H I E L D	NUMBER OF WEAPON TYPES
Rahu XXX	male	1	2	1	-	x	4
Viltina IV	male/cenotaph	1	1	2	-	-	3
Randvere II	male (boy?)	1	2	-	-	-	2
Randvere VI	boy?	1	-	1	-	-	2
Kurevere I	male	1	-	-	-	-	1
Randvere III	male	-	2	1	-	-	2
Randvere XI	male/cenotaph	-	1	1	-	-	2
Rahu IX	male	-	1	1	-	-	2
Käku X	male	-	1	-	-	x	2
Kurevere IV	female?	-	1	-	-	-	1
Randvere X	male (boy?)	-	1	-	-	-	1
Käku V	male	-	1	-	-	-	1
Käku XIII	male	-	1	-	-	-	1
Randvere VIII	female	-	1	-	-	-	1
Piila VI	male	-	1	-	-	-	1
Kurevere III	female?	-	1	-	-	-	1
Rahu XII	male	-	-	1	-	-	1
Rahu XV	male?	-	-	1	-	-	1
Rahu XXXI	child?	-	-	1	-	-	1
Randvere V	girl	-	-	-	1	-	1

Figure 57. Burials with weapons on 11<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa.

<sup>17</sup> Mägi 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Mägi 1998, pp 152–153; Mägi in press.

<sup>19</sup> See Lindkvist 1988.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Blindheim & Heyerdahl-Larsen 1995; Hatleskog 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, p 20.

assumption in the case of Osilian graves, eight "poor" burials from the Rahu cemetery should be ascribed to children. A more plausible explanation would be, though, that in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the poorer members of a family were also buried in stone grave cemeteries, and the circle of those entitled to such burial had not shrunk until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Randvere child burials with high NAT scores indicate the acquisition of social status at birth. The immediate members of a chief's family were buried with status symbols even if they had personally not yet achieved any special level. Rich burials of girls show that the position of women also depended firstly on that of her own family and only then on her husband and the number of children she had borne. As could be expected, the occurrence of rich child burials (both of girls and boys) among the more easily analysable inhumation burials was also common amid the Livs who were the Osilians' closest neighbours.

Jakobsson has shown with the example of Gästriklands (a district north of the Mälars region in Sweden) that the occurrence of weapons in graves could also have been induced by local factors – in that particular case by the aspiration of the periphery to identify itself with the centre, i.e. the Mälars region.<sup>22</sup> The increasing number of weapon burials in the 11<sup>th</sup> century that was characteristic also of the neighbouring areas of Saaremaa – Livia, Estonian mainland, Gotland – could be better explained by the consolidation of power here. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, weapons were becoming rare in graves of the greater part of the Scandinavian territory because of the expansion of Christianity. Since, on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, a social hierarchy was evolving in conditions of paganism, we might posit an "Eastern Baltic model" in burial customs here.<sup>23</sup>

#### 7.2.4. Saaremaa in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century

The 12<sup>th</sup> century burials on Ösel could be characterised by the persistent prevalence of weapon burials (60%), while sword burials in them grew to 63% (Fig 58). That is a period when both in Finland and in Scandinavia there prevailed the Christian burial tradition that did not necessitate grave furnishings. Burying with abundant jewellery and weapons continued in the Eastern Baltics and in the area of contemporary north-western Russia. In most cases, deposits started to diminish towards the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century; this could be associated with the Christian influences of the neighbouring countries, both Catholic Scandinavia and Orthodox Kiev-Russ.

The material on Osilian 12<sup>th</sup> century graves will be discussed here with the Rahu cemetery as the main example, which might slightly distort the general picture of the whole period. The majority of sword burials originate from the Rahu cemetery, too.

The burial with the highest number of included weapons was the male burial Rahu XVII, followed by two supposed burials of couples from the same cemetery. The larger number of male rather than female burials was characteristic of the 12<sup>th</sup> century part of the Rahu cemetery; on the other hand, the NAT scores of the female graves there were even slightly higher than those of males. Comparing male burials with swords with female burials that had a high NAT score and/or weapons, we find that there were eight of the former and six of the latter type. One possible explanation is that the 12<sup>th</sup> century part of

GRAVE	GENDER	S W O R D	S P E E R S	J A W E L I N S	A X E	S H I E L D	NUMBER OF WEAPON TYPES
Rahu XVII	male	1	1	2	-	-	3
Rahu II	male+female	1	1	1	-	-	3
Rahu XXIII	male+female?	1	-	1	-	-	2
Rahu XVIII	male	1	-	1	-	-	2
Rahu I	male	1	1	-	-	-	2
Rahu XIX	male	1	-	-	1	-	2
Rahu XXVI	male	1	-	-	-	x	2
Rahu III	male	1	-	-	-	-	1
Rahu XXV	female?	1	-	-	-	-	1
Valjala III	male	1	-	-	-	-	1
Rahu XX	male	-	1	1	-	-	2
Rahu XXVIII	female	-	-	2	1	-	2
Kogula III	male	-	1	-	-	-	1
Rahu XXIX	male	-	1	-	-	-	1
Randvere IX	male (+female?)	-	-	1	-	-	1
Rahu XXIV	female (girl?)	-	-	-	1	-	1

Figure 58. Burials with weapons on 12<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa.

<sup>22</sup> Jakobsson 1992, pp 152–161.

<sup>23</sup> Some results of ethno-archaeological research concerning the legitimising of power through the erection of burial monuments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century among the Beravan on Borneo appear to be appropriate for comparison with the Osilian material. The chiefs of Beravan did not enjoy very much power, though most peasants were dependent on them in one way or another. There was a tradition of multiple burials, the climax of these being the final cremation burial. The so-called complete set of rites was reserved only to the chief and his family, whereas commoners were buried in a more modest way that did not include all the stages of a multiple burial. At the same time, the social differentiation of burial rites did not express any disparity in ideology.

After the death of an old chief, a new chief emerged, usually a relative of the previous one, and founded a new long-house – the primary settlement unit of the Berawans. In order to consummate the power legitimisation process fully, the chief needed to erect a burial monument. This was done under his guidance at the first occurrence of death in his family, the monument symbolising the power of the chief rather than that of the first buried. After the chief's death, his remains were buried in the same monument. That kind of shift in settlement units and, correspondingly, burial monuments, took place every 20 or 30 years (Metcalfe & Huntington 1999 pp 144–151).

the Rahu cemetery actually extends into the unexcavated area. Still, the more probable guess is that in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, not only chiefs with their wives but also their retainers/male relatives were buried at the Rahu cemetery. It has been suggested that the Viking Age society of the North was based firstly on alliances between different persons, and only secondly on families. For individuals it was most important to be tied to a magnate, who could guarantee support and protection.<sup>24</sup>

Considerable growth in the volume of high-scoring NAT graves is characteristic all over Saaremaa in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Fig 45), which gives reason to presume that this change was brought about by changes in social structure. As the percentage of high-scoring burials, presumably available only for people of the highest economic (and social) rank, grew at the expense of low-scoring burials, it can be concluded that in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the right to be buried in stone graves was reserved to fewer people than before. It is possible that even the less important family members were now buried in somewhere else while the stone graves remained the burial grounds of only the head of the family, his wife and their children. This inference is in accordance with the statement that social stratification was developing in the society of 12<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa.

#### a) Trade and Plundering Economy

Another phenomenon that exemplifies 12<sup>th</sup> century Osilian burials is the large stock of weapon, especially sword burials in the excavated cemeteries. It can be supposed that in this society, social prestige tended to be stressed with "warrior attributes", i.e. weapons, and that was sometimes the case even with women. An important role in a society with such burial traditions could have been played by the so-called "plundering economy", meaning that the foundations of social prestige were not solely in land tenure, but – and perhaps even to a larger extent – rather in the property and fame acquired with raids.<sup>25</sup> Taking into account the information from written records on the plundering "habits" of the Osilians, as well as other people of the eastern coast of the Baltic, such an interpretation of burial traditions appears justified.

The descriptions of Osilian raids have mostly been taken down by enemy chroniclers and could thus be exaggerated. At the same time, Henry the Livonian has implied in his chronicle both a peace treaty between the Osilians and the town of Riga during the first years of the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>26</sup> and the peace between the Gotlanders and the Osilians<sup>27</sup>. Such peace treaties indicate the existence of trading relations and the possible importance of trade in the Osilian economy. It is known from later writings that

medieval Saaremaa exported grain, horses and timber.<sup>28</sup> The presence of harbours on Saaremaa has been proved both by archaeological and 13<sup>th</sup> century written sources, though the only harbour named in the annals from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century is the so-called New Harbour and even that is mentioned in a military rather than commercial context.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, as Henry the Livonian is anyway very laconic in his notes on Saaremaa (probably because there seldom was any real military activity on the island), the omission of harbours from the chronicle is not sufficient proof of their non-existence. An important harbour site in Kihelkonna is known from the 13<sup>th</sup> century written sources and was probably already in existence in the 12th century at the latest. Most of the Late Iron Age settlement centres ascertained on Saaremaa were connected with harbour places; in addition, there is an obvious consistency between Late Iron Age centres/harbours and medieval taxation centres/harbours.<sup>30</sup>

#### b) Administrative Division and Taxation

Osilian landlords had already been mentioned in 13<sup>th</sup> century treaties, in which the taxation system presented allows us to assume that an earlier, probably Late Iron Age tax-gathering system had been taken as an example for designing the new one. The treaty from 1255 stated explicitly that "Osilians themselves" were responsible for collecting tax revenues and delivering them to the harbours from which they were sent to Riga or West-Estonia. The supreme jurisdiction during the period when the representatives of the bishop and the Order were not on the island was also in the hands of the Osilians.<sup>31</sup> The expression "the Osilians themselves" undoubtedly implied the leaders of their ruling social group. This is a case of the *seniores*, who, like the Gotland *seniores*, held both judicial and tax-gathering commitments, and this even before the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The treaty of 1234 mentions six districts of Saaremaa, two of which – *Mone* and *Sworve* – were separate islands in these times. According to widespread opinion,

<sup>24</sup> Hansson 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Lindkvist 1988, pp 31–35; Blomkvist 1998, p 31.

<sup>26</sup> The chronicler states, however, that the Osilians had lied about it.

<sup>27</sup> HCL, VII: 1, XXX: 1.

<sup>28</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 294.

<sup>29</sup> HCL, XIX: 5; see also section 3.2.

<sup>30</sup> Mägi 1998; 1999a; in press.

<sup>31</sup> Mägi 2001a.



there have existed so-called double-parishes in prehistoric Saaremaa. This statement is especially valid for the districts of *Carmele* and *Valdele* where after Christianisation two churches were erected in both. The Late Iron Age archaeological evidence in these districts also indicates the existence of two centres. Only one of these, however, appears to have had a stronghold, and has therefore been defined as the centre of power. A similar “double-parish” may also have existed in the *Mone-Horele* district.<sup>32</sup>

As far as the settlement pattern of 12<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa can be decided at the present stage of research, it probably contained both villages and large single farmsteads. The latter, belonging to chieftains, could sometimes own arable lands that were used by other, smaller farmsteads. A manor-in-the-village pattern as in southern Scandinavia was also probable, and a village or a part of it could have belonged to a major landowner's farm, as was recorded on the Estonian mainland.<sup>33</sup>

From the treaty of 1234 we can assume that the division of land into taxation units called ploughlands (Est. *adramaa*, Germ. *Haken*) already existed before that date, reflecting social relations in the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century society of Saaremaa.<sup>34</sup> The same can be said of the institution of *vakus*, in which tax collection was combined with the administration of justice, meetings, parties and probably ritual events.<sup>35</sup>



**Figure 59.** Kaarma hillfort. The photograph is taken from the tower of Kaarma church to the west of the hillfort. Photograph by the author.

A widely discussed problem has been the meaning of the *villas* that were in some cases mentioned in the chronicle of Henry the Livonian as belonging to some Estonian or Livonian chieftains.<sup>36</sup> Some historians have argued that these were just the villages where the chieftains lived.<sup>37</sup> Others have expressed an opinion that such *villas* could be explained as manors, centres of large landed estates, or villages with farmsteads that belonged to the chief in question.<sup>38</sup>

The taxes paid to the *seniores* of late Iron Age Estonia have been characterised as contributing to the building of strongholds, paying tribute to enemies, making presents to neighbouring chieftains with a view to guaranteeing peace, and as semi-compulsory gifts to the *seniores* themselves. Payment in kind to support the *vakus*-parties could also be considered a form of taxation.<sup>39</sup> Lang suggested that taxes in large landed estates were paid for the right to use a piece of land, or were in some other way connected with economic dependence.<sup>40</sup>

The taxation units of the Viking Period and 12<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa were possibly obliged to form and supply some military unit, as in Viking Age Scandinavia; a certain group of villages had, for instance, to equip and man a warship.<sup>41</sup> Taxes for building and maintaining a stronghold could be easily viewed in the same way. A proportion of arable lands in Scandinavia, though used by different farmsteads, virtually belonged to one major landowner. One such landowner could own even entire villages.<sup>42</sup> Such farmsteads paid their taxes, naturally, for the use of arable lands. Lang has suggested that big landed estates in North Estonia at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century could own the arable land of other households in the same village, especially in cases when some village was described in written sources as actually belonging to somebody.<sup>43</sup> Considering the strongholds that existed on Saaremaa it can be assumed that the free farmsteads of 12<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa paid tribute to a chief, who resided in a stronghold or in some other kind of centre, primarily to guarantee peace and to protect them in war.

<sup>32</sup> Mägi 1998.

<sup>33</sup> Mägi 2001a and references.

<sup>34</sup> See also Tarvel 1972, pp 28–33.

<sup>35</sup> Ligi 1968, pp 47–49; Lang 1996, p 481.

<sup>36</sup> HCL, XIX: 3 ff.

<sup>37</sup> ETRA 1992, p 117.

<sup>38</sup> Ligi 1968, pp 24–25; about manors and villages see Lang 1996, pp 504–505.

<sup>39</sup> E g Ligi 1968, pp 46 ff; Tarvel 1972, p 33; EE 1982, pp 412–413.

<sup>40</sup> Lang 1996, pp 504 ff.

<sup>41</sup> E g Lindkvist 1988, pp 17 ff; Varenius 1998, pp 36–92.

<sup>42</sup> E g Becker 1981; Lindkvist 1988, pp 40–50; Callmer 1992, p 451; Brink 1994; Widgren 1998, pp 287 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Lang 1996; see also Johansen 1933, pp 734–749.

### c) Social Stratification on 12<sup>th</sup> Century Saaremaa

Research results in landscape archaeology indicate the centralisation of power and the emergence of important centres on Saaremaa in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Osilian cultural landscape differs from that of Gotland in one important detail: the hillforts that mark regional centres. The phenomenon of hillforts is typical of the whole East-European region; such hillforts were common also on mainland Estonia and to a much larger extent in Latvia and Lithuania. Compared to most of the strongholds from mainland Estonia, Osilian hillforts were large and well-fortified, which is especially striking in the otherwise flat landscape.

Of the four strongholds that functioned as regional centres and residences of chiefs, at least two were founded as late as the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century. The only stronghold on Saaremaa that was fortified with a stone wall was Valjala. Wooden and earth fortifications were built at the Muhu stronghold, at the regional centre of Horele-Muhu, and the stronghold of Kaarma (Fig 59). At the very end of the century the Pöide stronghold was erected anew, but now it obviously remained a local centre (Fig 56).

By the 12<sup>th</sup> century the system of the so-called "double parishes", i.e. the later Osilian administrative system consisting of two (later) parishes had developed. The larger regions also included some dependent outlying areas such as the arable Eikla–Piila region in the district of Kaarma, which was surrounded by swamps, or the Randvere–Viltina area between the centres of Pöide and Valjala. Viltina lived mainly by piracy and probably, as can be shown by the rich graves there, was an essentially independent centre.<sup>44</sup> At times some small-scale fortifications of local importance were also in use: for example in the beginning of the Viking Age the Asva stronghold, which was situated near the cemeteries of Viltina and Randvere; or Paatsa, which was probably meant as a supporting fort for the iron-manufacturing region in north-western Saaremaa in the period between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> Osilian strongholds therefore also mark the Late Iron Age centres that have been detected through the material of other antiquities, their size corresponding to the size of the region.<sup>46</sup>

Keeping in mind the decentralisation of power on Saaremaa, one could presume a social organisation similar to Gotland. Some similar features in the administrative divisions on both islands could be suggested.<sup>47</sup> Osilian centres, just like Gotlandic, were of varying importance; in addition, it is possible to distinguish sub-districts that were governed by the *seniores*, i.e. landholders who were hierarchically inferior to the chiefs of the districts. Most of the researchers of the past two decades have expressed the opinion that the "peasant

state" of Gotland also actually consisted of farmers of different rank and authority.<sup>48</sup> There are also some who doubt this theory, however.<sup>49</sup>

The occurrence of hillforts supports the idea that the social structure on Saaremaa in the end of the Viking Age and in the 12<sup>th</sup> century could have been more hierarchical than that of Gotland. Data on social classes, even in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is very scarce. The chronicler Henry the Livonian has mentioned the chieftains of the Osilians as *seniores* and *meliores*; once, describing the surrender of Valjala hillfort, he also called the local elite *nobiles*, a term that was normally used by him only for West European feudals.<sup>50</sup> It is possible that with the term *nobiles* Henry wanted to indicate a higher social stratum than the more common *seniores*.

The code of laws – Guta Law (*Gutalagh*) that was written down on Gotland in the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century mentions Guthnic and non-Guthnic farmers, priests with their families (the law was made before celibacy became common in the 13<sup>th</sup> century), non-owners of land, tenants and slaves.<sup>51</sup>

The members of the Gotlandic nobility, who had both legislative and fiscal duties, are up till the 15<sup>th</sup> century called *seniores* in written records, as were their Osilian counterparts.<sup>52</sup> As expressed before, the social hierarchy on Saaremaa might have been more complex and allows us to suspect the existence of aristocracy. Some researchers have assumed the latter also about Gotland.<sup>53</sup>

In a treaty from the year 1255 thralls were also mentioned (see section 3.3). On Gotland, the majority of the slaves (though not all of them) were persons in time-limited slavery, probably as a result of running into debt.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Lindkvist has suggested that slavery played an important role in pre-medieval Sweden, where it was replaced gradually by the medieval estate system with a dependent peasantry during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>55</sup> The thralls mentioned in the 1255 treaty have been interpreted either as dependent peasants or foreign cap-

<sup>44</sup> Mägi in press.

<sup>45</sup> Kustin 1968a.

<sup>46</sup> Mägi 1998.

<sup>47</sup> About Gotland see e.g. Hyenstrand 1989.

<sup>48</sup> Yrwing 1978, pp 80–99; Hyenstrand 1989; Carlsson 1990.

<sup>49</sup> E.g. Siltberg 1998.

<sup>50</sup> HCL, XXX: 5 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Guta Lagh, 5, 15, 16 ff; Siltberg 1998.

<sup>52</sup> Yrwing 1978, p 89.

<sup>53</sup> Hyenstrand 1989, pp 134–135; Carlsson 1990.

<sup>54</sup> Hyenstrand 1989, pp 134; Siltberg 1998 p 70.

<sup>55</sup> Lindkvist 1998.

tives.<sup>56</sup> Taking into account the likeness in social structure, a reasonable assumption would be that slavery on Saaremaa occurred in a similar form to that of Gotland and Sweden in general.

#### d) The Position of Women in 12<sup>th</sup> Century Osilian Society

Several researchers have suggested that the occurrence of rich female burials could indicate either a bi- or matrilinear descent system, while the absence of wealthy female burials is attributed to societies with the patrilinear descent systems.<sup>57</sup> On Saaremaa, as also in most of its neighbouring areas, the bilinear descent system prevailed in the Middle Ages. The recent studies of the Swedish historian Nils Blomkvist are of interest here. In acquainting himself with the peasant legislation of medieval Livonia, Blomkvist came to the conclusion that at least in part of the Eastern Baltic, land was before the Europeanisation process inherited chiefly through the female line, which is indicated by a corresponding clause in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Livian-Latgallian legislature. What is more, the law stated that "the property of the man is to be given to his wife, and stay with her if he disappears".

In the Couronian peasant legislation from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the wife got only the movable property of her husband who now could keep his arable land, meadows and bee-hives. The Osilian–West-Estonian legislation, which is the next oldest in the region stating the inheritance rules, originates from as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century and it reflects the bilinear succession system working mainly through patrilinear descent. Blomkvist believes that these laws indicate an Eastern Baltic family form that differed from the Scandinavian type and disappeared with the political and cultural integration of the East Baltic region into Europe.<sup>58</sup>

13<sup>th</sup> century chronicles do not offer much information that would help in determining the position of women in the society of the time. Besides the fixed expression used in association with military campaigns, Osilian women are not mentioned. Both in the writings of Henry the Livonian and in the Older Rhyme Chronicle an Estonian woman is mentioned who at the request of her husband – and with his help – killed with an axe a visiting German needle-salesman. She later delivered a child who had wounds at the same places where the pedlar had been hit.<sup>59</sup> She is contrasted with the compassionate heathen woman Emme, who gave food to the captured Crusaders.<sup>60</sup>

The note of Henry the Livonian that in their revolt against the invaders in 1223 Estonians had taken back their divorced wives, after having washed off the baptismal water, has been interpreted by the local historians as

proof of polygamy.<sup>61</sup> The research of Blomkvist offers an alternative explanation: according to written sources one of the most serious issues in the newly baptised Eastern Baltic were the marriages that were considered incestuous by the church. In special contempt was sororate, i.e. the peasant custom of marrying "the widows of their brothers". Although starting from 1215 AD the canonic rule allowed marriage only from the 4<sup>th</sup> degree and beyond, as a special concession to the newly baptised, papal permission was given to retain the marriages that had been solemnized before baptism between relatives of the second and third degree (at the time of this concession the church actually allowed only marriages from the 7<sup>th</sup> degree and beyond). As many later complaints suggest, these rules were not adhered to.<sup>62</sup>

The forms of matrimony in prehistoric times could have been more complex than just the simple monogamous conjugality. In Scandinavia, the custom of keeping concubines – *frilloväs* – was already common in the Viking Age and it continued until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. *Frillor* were women who lived out of wedlock with some man; noblemen could have several concubines. Children that were born from such unions had considerable rights and some of the earlier kings of Nordic countries were sons of *frillor*. The wives often encouraged the taking of concubines into a household, especially if the legal marriage was childless. Although the Catholic Church took pains to prohibit *frilloväs* or at least to limit the rights of children born from such relationships, the tradition remained unchanged till the end of the Catholic era in the Nordic countries. Only after the Reformation did the Lutheran church succeed in putting an end to the custom.<sup>63</sup>

It is quite probable that a similar institution was common also on Saaremaa, which resembles Scandinavia in many other ethnographic details. Henry the Livonian mentions the habit of the Osilians of marrying the captured Christian women – two or three at a time – and also selling these women to Couronians and other pagans.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Ligi 1968, pp 28–32; Ligi 1995a, p 240.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Jørgensen 1988; Hedeager 1992, pp 154–155.

<sup>58</sup> Blomkvist in press; the author wishes to thank Dr Blomkvist for his inspiring observations on the subject of medieval legislation; the texts of the legislation see Nazarova 1980, pp 171 ff.

<sup>59</sup> HCL, XXVI: 10; LVR, 1269–1332.

<sup>60</sup> LVR, 777–802.

<sup>61</sup> HCL, XXVI: 8 and Enn Tarvel's comments.

<sup>62</sup> Blomkvist in press.

<sup>63</sup> Gaunt 1996, pp 60–66.

<sup>64</sup> HCL, XXX: 1.

Anyhow, such women were obviously slaves, not real wives. Possibly, a form of *frilloväs* could be seen in the custom of abducting wives – a custom that was heavily condemned by the church in medieval and also in later times. By the decision of the Valga *Landtag* in 1422 the act of abduction would be punished with the death penalty.<sup>65</sup> Most obviously this indicates an old tradition that was completely unacceptable to the clerical authorities.<sup>66</sup> To what extent the rules given by the church were conformed to in actual life is unknown; in Scandinavia, most of such laws remained only on paper.

17<sup>th</sup> century church visitations in Estonia stress the instability of peasant marriages and the frequent occurrence of unsanctioned wedlock.<sup>67</sup> This aspect enables again the drawing of parallels with Scandinavia – there in the Viking Age marriage could be easily dissolved at the request of either of the spouses and in medieval times, divorce at certain conditions was recognised even by the Catholic Church.<sup>68</sup>

Another indication that earlier Osilian marital traditions could have resembled Scandinavian ones can be found in the fact that up till the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a custom on the island that in the six months preceding the wedding, the bride lived some of the time in the house of her future husband.<sup>69</sup> Such trial periods (*festarmål*) were common in the North in earlier periods and the church did not start to control them and substitute the Christian engagement tradition until modern times.<sup>70</sup> An interesting feature in this context is the implication in 17<sup>th</sup> century church visitation documents on Saaremaa that the local nobility, unlike the peasantry, refused to comply with the regulation of engagements.<sup>71</sup>

In the end of prehistory and the beginning of the Middle Ages, the most widespread family unit in Scandinavia is believed to have been the nuclear family that could temporarily hold a large number of individuals: the farmer's sisters and brothers or children who stayed at home, servants, in earlier times slaves. The Swedish historian Tryggve Siltberg, who has dealt with the history of Gotlandic households, suggests that the term "extended household", not "extended family" should be used in discussing this kind of households.<sup>72</sup> Judging by the farm buildings, the family type on Saaremaa was undoubtedly either the nuclear family or the extended household.<sup>73</sup> Considering the analogous political and economic conditions on Saaremaa and Gotland at the end of the Iron Age, the kinship system in these societies could also have been similar.

On the neighbouring island of Hiiumaa, on the other hand, large extended families that consisted of several nuclear families occurred till very lately. Such a household organ-

isation is believed to have been highly beneficial from one point of view: that as the housework and babysitting of one farm could be accomplished by one or 2–3 women, the rest of the female household members were able to participate in other activities, including fishing.<sup>74</sup> Hiiumaa was inhabited later and the extended families there acted in a very different socio-political situation. Of all the Nordic countries, extended families in the "classical" sense of the term were spread only in Northern and Eastern Finland, comprising up to 40 members per household.<sup>75</sup> This was probably a phenomenon that was more widely known in the territories with slash-and-burn agriculture in the eastern parts of Europe.

In Scandinavia, where the percentage of rich female burials varies a lot depending on the area, the position of women prior to Christianisation is believed to have been relatively high. This is often substantiated by the independence of women in the time of their husbands' seafaring.<sup>76</sup> During the past few years especially, it has been suggested that the position of women used to be high especially in the private sphere of life, which would account for the rare occurrence of female names on runic stones.<sup>77</sup> The latter argument has on the other hand also been used to prove the low position of women in the Viking Age, a situation that had improved with the acceptance of Christianity.<sup>78</sup> The only unanimity of researches on the subject is that single high-class women, especially widows, played a remarkable role in the male realm of power.<sup>79</sup>

The archaeological material from Saaremaa designates the relatively high position of women in this society, as can be presumed by the number and high NAT-scores of female burials that are more or less equal with those of men. Adding here the known written sources and especially relying on Blomkvist's theories, the position of

<sup>65</sup> Köpp 1959, p 9.

<sup>66</sup> Köpp 1959, p 126.

<sup>67</sup> Köpp 1959.

<sup>68</sup> Jesch 1991, pp 91 ff; Gaunt 1996, pp 41 ff.

<sup>69</sup> Tedre 1998.

<sup>70</sup> Gaunt 1996, pp 66–71.

<sup>71</sup> Köpp 1959, p 281.

<sup>72</sup> Siltberg 1998.

<sup>73</sup> Tiik 1976; see also Palli 1998.

<sup>74</sup> Puss 1977.

<sup>75</sup> Gaunt 1996, pp 102–108.

<sup>76</sup> Jesch 1991, pp 28–35.

<sup>77</sup> E g Varenius 1998, pp 19–21.

<sup>78</sup> Gräslund 1989.

<sup>79</sup> E g Jesch 1991; Gaunt 1996, pp 120–123; Varenius 1998, p 20.

Osilian and Estonian women in pre-conquest society should be considered at least on the same level as that of the contemporary Scandinavian women. An especially notable disparity seems to have been between the position of women in Estonia and those in Western Europe.

### 7.2.5. Saaremaa in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Due to the conquest and Christianisation of Saaremaa in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, rapid alterations took place in the local social structure and political organisation. Notwithstanding the differences in Osilian political history in comparison with the rest of Estonia, society on Saaremaa must have also been in a state of feudalisation, thus also evolving social stratification.

State making and the consolidation of power are often accompanied by the change of religion, which in the European case was Christianisation. In Scandinavia, which was Christianised in the period between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the time from 1000 to 1300 AD has been called the period of the early state. An early state embraces a stratified society, in which the tribute that is paid to the chief tends to be quite unregular. According to Thomas Lindkvist, feudalism did not gain a firm footing in most of Sweden, including the Mälär area, until the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The 13<sup>th</sup> century is accordingly the period of rapid feudalisation. The Viking Age economy that was based on the combination of plundering economy and land tenure was completely replaced by the feudal system that was dependent on land ownership. Collective taxes – the tribute collected mainly from the military-fiscal organisation of *ledung* in the Mälär area – persisted for some time alongside the individual feudal tribute.<sup>80</sup>

Gotland had already become a tax-bearing subject of Svea in the Viking Age, with an obligation to pay 60 marks in silver. Of this sum, the king received 40 marks and the *jarl* 20. In return, the king was obliged to offer "protection and aid" to the Gotlanders; in addition, there was free trade and a guaranteed trading truce in the king's possessions. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century was added the liability to support the king in his campaigns against the heathens with seven ships. It was, however, possible to buy one's way out of this last requirement.<sup>81</sup>

In drawing parallels with the 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century history of Saaremaa, one could say that the feudalisation process there was much more rapid, passing over most of the transition periods that are distinctive of the Swedish example. Judging by the treaty that was made in 1241, an individual feudal tribute that was dependent on the amount of the ploughlands owned was assigned to the Osilians in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout that century, the

tribute was collected by the Osilian nobles themselves. As was customary in the feudalised system, the treaty enacts also the Osilians' liability to participate in any forthcoming military action (see section 3.3)

As the old Estonian elite of Saaremaa kept its position at least during the 13<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the tax rate they got from their dependants evidently remained unchanged, too, but the tribute for the new overlords increased the real taxes considerably. The "rebellions of the Osilians" during the 13<sup>th</sup> century could, among other reasons, be seen as a reaction to this.

#### a) Continuity Between Late Iron Age Centres and Feudal Manors

Herbert Ligi has already suggested that a certain continuity could have existed between pre-conquest landed estates and later feudal estates. In his explanation, the large households and the lands of Estonian chieftains who had perhaps been killed were taken over by German vassals.<sup>82</sup> This scenario seems to be logical, but some special features on Saaremaa, deriving from its different history during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, must be taken into consideration.

The residences of the 12<sup>th</sup> century local chieftains of Saaremaa, probably large single farms, could be established by archaeological evidence as local centres.<sup>83</sup> The most important chiefs also resided, at least temporarily, in strongholds that could be considered as power centres of districts on the island.<sup>84</sup> If the landed estates of the local elite of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries were reformed into feudal enfeoffments, we may suppose that there was continuity between the central sites of the Late Iron Age and the first manors known to be centres of feudal fiefs.

Feudalisation and Europeanisation in general brought about the end of plunder and predatory activities in Scandinavia; the new social elite based its position upon a systematic appropriation of the agrarian production, the control over men and land. Slavery, which had played an important role in the large landed estates of the pre-medieval elite, was replaced by the classical manorial

<sup>80</sup> Lindkvist 1988, pp 16–25.

<sup>81</sup> Yrwing 1978, pp 19, 21.

<sup>82</sup> Ligi 1968, pp 14 ff.

<sup>83</sup> Ligi 1995a, pp 238 ff; Mägi 1999a.

<sup>84</sup> E g Ligi 1995a, pp 231–232, 238–239; Mägi 1999a, pp 205–206.

and feudal system with a dependent peasantry.<sup>85</sup> There are good reasons to suggest that development also proceeded in a similar way on Saaremaa.

The establishment of feudal manors has been more closely considered in Põide district, East Saaremaa, and published in several articles.<sup>86</sup> The percentage of enfeoffed land on Saaremaa was low – in 1645 only 1/3 of all land – and fiefs tended to be small.<sup>87</sup> The first enfeoffments in the Põide parish, as well as everywhere on Saaremaa, have been mentioned in written sources since the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but the majority of them appear in historical documents only at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These records sometimes contained data about the earlier location of the manor or references to the formation of the fief during the lifetimes of the vassal's father and/or grandfather. Some enfeoffments were enlarged by the purchase of new landed estates.<sup>88</sup> A right to buy and sell fiefs as fully private property was, together with the right to inherit the land through both male and female lines of descent, one of the most important privileges of the vassalage of Saaremaa, confirmed by Bishop Johann Kievel in 1524.<sup>89</sup>

Earlier manors were normally located in the middle of good arable land, as one might expect from their agricultural nature. Their position was in many cases directly consistent with both Late Iron Age and early Medieval Period archaeological sites or stray finds in the vicinity.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, several manors were clearly established in late Iron Age centres on a local level, as far as it was possible to determine the latter by archaeological material.

One may draw the conclusion that the small early estates on Saaremaa were obviously originally enfeoffed to high-ranking Osilians, or their former landed estates were fixed and perhaps enlarged through vassalage. If the vassal's name was mentioned as early as the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, or sometimes even later, it might be of Estonian origin. It is, however, difficult to derive the ethnic background directly from the written forms of personal names. According to a widely accepted viewpoint, nationality and language in medieval Old Livonia were connected mostly with social position and not with real national origin. Paul Johansen supposed that this differentiation started to develop after the uprising of St. George's Night.<sup>91</sup> The elite of 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa was presumably characterised by rapid Germanisation, and personal names may have been changed as well. All the names occur in later writings that were written down in German, possible by native Germans, which could have created name forms that were different from those used in real life.

## b) Continuity Between Chieftains and Feudal Vassals

As shown above, the local elite of Saaremaa acted as tax-collectors from the primary units to local central places during the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The old system of collecting taxes, probably with some features of feudalism, became completely feudalised during the following centuries.

The centralisation of power on 13<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa could not have been too developed and social hierarchy was evidently closely connected with family kinships, if we accept the validity of the rules about land inheritance in the treaty of 1255. The chronicler Henry the Livonian at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century never mentioned one principal chief of Saaremaa, but always chiefs in the plural. In this respect, Saaremaa resembles the island of Gotland. On the other hand, as it clearly appears in the same chronicle, the military actions of the Osilians in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century were often triggered by their common political and commercial interests in the Estonian mainland and Livland. Organised campaigns with wider objectives than the welfare of the warriors' family or clan, or the collection of personal prestige in looting raids, presuppose a certain stage in the centralisation of power.<sup>92</sup> Henry the Livonian's only clear reference to political centralisation on 13<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa is a statement that Valjala stronghold was called the most important centre of the island, and that its surrender led to the submission of the whole of Saaremaa.<sup>93</sup> As was evident in the later history of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the surrender of Valjala resulted in a treaty in which the Osilians, although at the price of some tribute, kept their power, property and social system.

A small number of Germans – clerics, brethren of the Order and some other people – were obviously already present on Saaremaa before 1261, as could be assessed from the texts of the treaties of 1241 and 1255.<sup>94</sup> The position of German overlords clearly improved after 1261, when the Osilian elite, after an unsuccessful revolt, was forced to allow the Order, and probably also the bishop, to erect their castles on the island, and to reside there the whole year round.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Lindkvist 1998.

<sup>86</sup> Mägi 1999a; 2001a; in press.

<sup>87</sup> Seresse 1996, pp 72, 81 ff.

<sup>88</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 707.

<sup>89</sup> Seresse 1996, pp 82–83.

<sup>90</sup> Mägi 1999a; 2001a.

<sup>91</sup> Johansen 1933, p 747.

<sup>92</sup> Hedeager 1992, pp 91 ff.

<sup>93</sup> HCL, XXX: 5.

<sup>94</sup> LUB I: 169 reg 190; 285 reg 321.

<sup>95</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 279.

As proved by numerous foreign artefacts of Late Iron Age archaeological material from Saaremaa and by several of the sea raids of the Osilians described in written sources, the pre-conquest society of Saaremaa was quite open in its nature. There is no reason to suppose that the society of the island remained on the 12<sup>th</sup> century level, whatever level it was, throughout 150 years, especially among the neighbours who by that time were entirely feudalised.

In the so-called "civil war of Saaremaa" between the Order and the bishopric of Ösel–Wiek during the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Osilians participated on both sides, in line with their overlords' allegiances.<sup>96</sup> The organisation of the troops was likely to have been managed through the chieftains of the Osilians themselves, according to their old system. The chieftains were most likely related to the higher overlords through feudal vassalage. A reference to this kind of relationship could be seen in a statement that a delegation of the Osilians who lived on the lands of the bishop threatened to choose a new overlord if he could not defend them against the Order.

According to a widely accepted opinion in Estonian and Baltic-German historical literature, the vassalage of Saaremaa started to form only after the uprising of St. George's Night 1343–45.<sup>97</sup> This standpoint is based on the above interpretation of pre-conquest society of Saaremaa as little stratified and more or less egalitarian, and on the presumption that this society, judging by the specific history of the island during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, remained stable until the great revolt in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This interpretation, however, is at variance with the results of archaeological investigations during the last decade, especially with those that concern the stage of stratification of the Late Iron Age society.

Though all historians have admitted the presence of native Estonians among the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century vassals, they argue that their existence could not change the interpretation of military conflicts in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the uprising of St. George's Night, because in their new social status the Estonian vassals were isolated from their nationality.<sup>98</sup> The concept of an egalitarian pre-conquest society in Estonia is clearly discernible behind this interpretation. Sulev Vahtre, though, has pointed out that several events of the great 14<sup>th</sup> century revolt could be explained only by some kind of political organisation of the Estonians that had been already in existence prior to the St. George's Night uprising, and that this organisation could have followed a "feudal pattern".<sup>99</sup>

Inevitably a number of the former Estonian vassals were killed during the revolt, and were replaced after its repression, probably by natural Germans, but some of them obviously kept their position and became Germanised in

the course of the next few centuries. The position of Saaremaa, again, was somewhat different from that of mainland Estonia, firstly because the uprising could not be as abrupt a changing point on Saaremaa as it was in northern Estonia. As it ended with yet another treaty, the replacement of the earlier Estonians by new vassals of German origin, as was obviously widely done in North Estonia, probably did not happen to such a large extent on the island. Still, the Germanisation of originally Estonian vassals probably became more rapid after this event.

One may conclude that the society of Saaremaa, already deeply stratified at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, continuously joined the processes of social-political changes in its geographical region, and that these changes were especially rapid during the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when it adapted itself to the West European feudal system. The chieftains of the Osilians, mentioned by chronicler Henry the Livonian as *seniores*, *meliores* and *nobiles*, were transformed in the course of the next century into feudal vassals, who were now subordinated to new, foreign overlords.

In spite of comparatively rapid Europeanisation, Saaremaa lost most of its earlier political importance in course of this process. It is possible that the change was caused primarily by the disappearance of possibilities for plundering activities in the new socio-political circumstances. The bad quality of the arable lands on the islands did not permit a total re-orientation to agriculture, and the geographical position of Saaremaa in the near vicinity of the mainland was not favourable for the establishment of commercial centres here. It is also the main reason why no towns were founded on medieval Saaremaa. The West Estonian coastal area, which had been more or less dependent on Saaremaa during the Late Iron Age, now possessed a much more favourable position for the internationally regulated trade. The first towns were founded in West Estonia almost immediately after the conquest, and the district became politically more important than Saaremaa.

### 7.3. From Paganism to Christianity

Despite differences in grave forms, more or less uniform burial customs, with cremations in stone graves, characterised Saaremaa until the very end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The 12<sup>th</sup> century Osilian elite still manifested itself in big

<sup>96</sup> Busch 1934, pp 49 ff; Saaremaa 1934, pp 279–280.

<sup>97</sup> Seresse 1996, p 81.

<sup>98</sup> Ligi 1968, p 19; Vahtre 1980, pp 33–35.

<sup>99</sup> Vahtre 1980, pp 58; 1998 p 248.

hillforts and in stone graves, and this during a period when half of the neighbours of the Osilians were Christianised and possessed quite different attitudes.

As demonstrated in chapter 6, the transformation of burial rites from heathen to Christian ones on Saaremaa was more rapid than in eastern and southern inland Estonia. This special position is obviously hidden behind the 13<sup>th</sup> century political history of the island. As emphasised before, Saaremaa was not really subdued in 1227 like the rest of Estonia. It remained more or less independent and preserved its old power and social structures. Rapid feudalisation during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries was based mainly on the old local elite, which makes it possible to suggest that the development was more internal and more natural than on the mainland of Estonia. It can also mean that the Christianisation process on the island resembled that of Scandinavia two centuries before, where the new religion broke through when the elite, for political and economic reasons, decided to convert to it.<sup>100</sup>

The chronicler Henry the Livonian leaves no doubt that the Osilians of the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century were pagans. Even more, he clearly treats them as one of the most blood-thirsty sort of pagans, but was it not mainly because they were one of the most powerful enemies? It is known in Swedish history that even as late as in the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Norwegian king Sigurd Jorsalfar justified his military expedition to the South-East of present Sweden with a crusade in order to spread Christianity!<sup>101</sup> According to other data, the area was converted into the new faith long before this action.

Though the Osilians of Henry's time were not actual Christians, the new religion might have been familiar in their society. Christianisation together with a total change of social attitudes proceeded on Saaremaa during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and was ruled by the local feudalizing elite. Still, in descriptions of the military conflicts between the Osilians and the Order during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the uprising of St. George's Night in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Osilians were always accused of apostasy. This kind of attitude could, however, easily have been generated by the stereotypes believed by the German invaders.<sup>102</sup>

### 7.3.1. Cross-Shaped Pendants and the Phenomenon of *Primisignatio*

The first signs of the new religion, reflected in burial customs, were cross-shaped pendants that on Saaremaa began to occur in graves in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Those that were uncovered in find complexes prove that this kind of pendant was more or less equally spread in both male

and female graves. In all cases the cross-shaped pendants belonged to comparatively rich grave complexes, obviously indicating the tendency of conversion to be more widespread among the elite families.

Comparing the distribution of cross-shaped pendants on the western and eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, the differences are considerable. In Sweden they occur predominantly in female graves, and some scholars have suggested that women played a special role in the Christianisation process.<sup>103</sup> This standpoint is queried by Jörn Staecker who argued that cross-shaped pendants also had a function as jewellery and it had perhaps been more fashionable among women to wear these pendants.<sup>104</sup> The situation was reversed in Finland where cross-shaped pendants have been found almost entirely in wealthier male graves.<sup>105</sup>

Among some of the Baltic tribes cross-shaped pendants occurred mainly in female graves and normally several items together.<sup>106</sup> Especially in Latgalian and Selonian female graves, as well as children's graves, the cross-shaped pendants were usually attached to a necklace, together with several other pendants, cowries, coins and other decoration. It is quite clear that in these cases their function was purely decorative. The cross-shaped pendants in Latvia were almost entirely imported from the territory of present Russia or produced locally after the eastern pattern.<sup>107</sup>

Single cross-shaped pendants in graves that according to other characteristics could be classified as pagan are usually explained by the phenomenon of *primisignatio* (deferred baptism, catechumenage). The catechumens, though not proper members of the congregation, were allowed to visit Christian sanctuaries and attend cult ceremonies. First of all merchants could have chosen to take the cross that allowed them to trade with Christians while they still belonged to their own pagan community.<sup>108</sup> This would correlate well with Finnish cross-shaped pendants being found mainly in the vicinity of the town of Turku and on the shores of Lake Ladoga in Karelia. Paula

<sup>100</sup> Gräslund 1991.

<sup>101</sup> Lindkvist 1998, p 293.

<sup>102</sup> See also Kala 2001.

<sup>103</sup> Gräslund 1980, p 83–85; 1988–89.

<sup>104</sup> Staecker 1999, pp 391–392.

<sup>105</sup> Purhonen 1998, pp 150–152.

<sup>106</sup> Mugurēvičs 1974, p 231.

<sup>107</sup> Mugurēvičs 1974.

<sup>108</sup> Gräslund 1980, p 85; Taavitsainen 1989; Purhonen 1998, p 150–152; Staecker 1999, pp 341 ff.



Purhonen explains it with the spread of *primisignatio* in areas that were important for international trade.<sup>109</sup>

The economic benefit of *primisignatio* is manifested clearly in the efforts of the church to end all commercial relations with non-Christians. For example, in a letter of 1221 AD Pope Honorius banned all trading between the Catholicised Finns and the "neighbouring barbaric nations" as these had been harassing Christians. Eight years later Pope Gregorius IX condemned the Gotlanders as "pagans or even worse", as they had been providing the heathens with the equipment needed for attacking Christians. In the same letter there was also an interdict on trading with "heathen" Russians, who in fact were really Orthodox Christians.<sup>110</sup>

Another possible reason why men, especially, could have been taken the cross was to enter the service of a Christian war chief. A good example is the viking Egil, who, according to Egil's Saga, let himself, his brother and three hundred sixty men receive *primisignatio* in order to take military service with the English king Athelstan.<sup>111</sup>

The cross-shaped pendants occur in singles in the cremation graves of Saaremaa, if it is accepted that complex Randvere IX was a double burial of a man and a woman. It can be stated, therefore, that on Saaremaa, as in Finland and Sweden, the cross-shaped pendants obviously indicated that their wearers had been, in some way, connected with Christianity. Most probably they were semi-Christian persons, indicated by their grave goods as being high-ranking people, who had confessed Christian principles but were not baptised. They were still buried in their family burial grounds in the traditional way, possibly motivated by their own desire not to break completely out of the old beliefs.

It should also be mentioned here that cross-shaped pendants on Saaremaa have been found entirely in cremation graves, and they never occur in inhumation graves whose nature is much more Christian. In Sweden, on the contrary, only two cross-shaped pendants have been unearthed in cremation graves while the great majority of them (19) have been recorded in inhumation burials, both in pre-Christian burial grounds and in churchyards.<sup>112</sup>

### 7.3.2. The Role of Women in the Christianisation Process

Some Scandinavian archaeologists have stressed the special role that women, according to their opinion, played in the Christianisation process. Firstly Anne-Sofie Gräslund should be mentioned in this connection. She believes that the main reasons why women were more apt to change faith were the equality of all humans in the eyes of God, which is characteristic of Christianity, and

the banning of infanticide by the church. An additional reason for the rapid integration of Christianity by women could have been the widespread worship of the Virgin Mary as a central figure in the Catholic church.<sup>113</sup>

Gräslund's arguments are based on her conviction that the position of women in pre-Christianised Sweden was not very high. In fact, several other researchers have stated exactly the opposite.<sup>114</sup> It has also been suggested that Christianity weakened the position of women, imposing on them more taboos and prohibitions than on men. The chronicler Henry the Livonian has pointed to the attention that was paid to the opinion of women in Livland when Livian women forbade the baptism of a dying Livian man though he himself had been requesting it.<sup>115</sup> The resistance of women to Christianisation in Finland is implied also by Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander, who mentions a tale in which three Finnish old maids who refused to embrace Christianity fled to the wilderness instead, where they were found dead the following spring.<sup>116</sup> A more approving approach by Finnish women to Christianity has been assumed by Unto Salo and by Purhonen, especially because of the banning of infanticide.<sup>117</sup> Purhonen, however, points out that this assumption is most probably induced by the unjustifiable tendency to attribute a modern mentality to medieval actions.<sup>118</sup>

Saló believes that the accrual of antiquities in South-West Finland after the Christianisation is connected with population growth, which had been caused by the banning of infanticide by the Catholic church.<sup>119</sup> On the other hand, infanticide in Nordic countries could have had a predominantly economic background: the infant was abandoned as it was impossible to feed too many children. The abandoning of infants was permitted also in pre-Christian times only to the poor, and the act was bound to take place before the naming of the infant – naming being the rite of passage that declared the child as a new member of the society.<sup>120</sup> Though the church prohibited infanticide, the custom was allowed in case where the child was dis-

<sup>109</sup> Purhonen 1998, pp 150–152.

<sup>110</sup> Purhonen 1998, p 141.

<sup>111</sup> Egil's Saga, 50; see also Staecker 1999, pp 341–342.

<sup>112</sup> Staecker 1999, pp 31 ff.

<sup>113</sup> Gräslund 1989; 2001, pp 65–89.

<sup>114</sup> E.g. Jesch 1991; see topic 7.2.4.d.

<sup>115</sup> CHL, I:10.

<sup>116</sup> Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982c, p 78.

<sup>117</sup> Salo 1997, pp 29–30; Purhonen 1998, pp 152–155.

<sup>118</sup> Purhonen 1998, p 155.

<sup>119</sup> Salo 1997, pp 29–30.

<sup>120</sup> Pentikäinen 1990, pp 135 ff.

abled.<sup>121</sup> In *Gutalagh*, the medieval legislation code of Gotland, a woman who had committed infanticide was fined; the fine was multiplied if the woman appealed and was found guilty by higher judicial authorities; in the case of female thralls the fine was much lower.<sup>122</sup> In the treaty that was made in 1241, a fine for infanticide was established also for the women of Saaremaa.<sup>123</sup>

As the position of women and the social structure in general could have differed in different areas of the Nordic countries and in the Eastern Baltic, variations in the women's approach to the acceptance of Christianity can also be assumed. Taking in account the economic background of infanticide and the overall high death-rate of children, the banning of infanticide hardly commended the new faith to the hearts of the local women. The scarce material concerning the attitude of Finnish and Livian women to Christianity indicates their opposition rather than acceptance. The most probable presumption would be that the attitude of men and women was more or less the same.

### 7.3.3. Christianisation of the Burial Customs

As it was demonstrated in chapter 6 of this book, the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries on Saaremaa was characterised by changes in burial customs. Cremation graves were replaced by inhumation graves in flat burial grounds. Sometimes, especially in female graves, jewellery and a few tools have been recorded, but these artefacts differed typologically from the finds in stone graves.<sup>124</sup> The different types of grave goods lead us to suggest that the changes had been quite rapid on Saaremaa, and the two burial customs were not used contemporaneously over quite a long period as they were on the mainland of Estonia.<sup>125</sup>

There are only two cemeteries on Saaremaa where inhumation burials have been found among cremation graves. A man from the mainland of Estonia, to judge from his brooch, had died in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century and been buried in the old pagan Rahu cemetery with his head towards the east.<sup>126</sup> It seems to represent an exceptional occasion, probably caused by the wars and instability of the period. In 1647 the Bishop of Estonia, Joachim Jhering had written that the peasants had the custom of burying some of their dead clandestinely in old cemeteries, which sometimes enabled the concealment of murders.<sup>127</sup> Three skeletons had been unearthed in Viltina cemetery near the southern coast of Saaremaa.<sup>128</sup> Textile ornamentation of bronze spirals and tin decoration date one of the inhumation graves to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The skeletons of Viltina can be considered as the perfect example of continuity – it was probably the same family that, after they were converted to the new religion, started to bury the dead according to a new, Christian practice.

In all the other cases such (semi-)Christian burials have been uncovered some distance from the pagan burial places (Fig 21), which indicates the different ideological background of the burial tradition. As has been shown in the previous chapter, a great part of the so-called village cemeteries on Saaremaa can be associated with the presence of a Catholic chapel in these locations; the 17<sup>th</sup> century written sources also refer to the peasants' custom of burying their dead in the vicinity of chapel ruins. In comparison with southern Estonia there is less evidence of burying outside of the churchyards and 17<sup>th</sup> century sources state that on Saaremaa the peasantry were already being buried in churchyards, while the nobility had their graves inside the churches.<sup>129</sup>

The cemeteries of Karja and Viira were located quite close to the churches and the burials there were quite in the Christian tradition. Although in some burials, especially at Karja, much jewellery has been found, all of the deceased were buried with their heads directed either west, south-west or north-west. In principle, the burials with jewellery and other dress accessories did not contradict the Christian burial customs.<sup>130</sup> It is not impossible that for a period of time there had been Catholic chapels near the cemeteries of Viira and Karja.

Christian cemeteries, whether located in the vicinity of chapels or not, were the burial places of all the families in the area. The fact that all the inhabitants were buried in these cemeteries explains the abundance of information concerning inhumation cemeteries. There must have been more of these than there had been stone grave cemeteries belonging to the elite, even if those graveyards were in use only for a few centuries after Christianisation.

The 12<sup>th</sup> century stone cemeteries were burial grounds of Osilian elite families, a perfect opportunity to manifest their power through grave goods and the attractive stone graves themselves. It stopped in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the stone graves were replaced by half or entirely Christian inhumation graves in flat burial grounds. The conversion to the new religion meant that the local Osilian elite who had lost the opportunity to manifest itself through burial customs obvi-

<sup>121</sup> Purhonen 1998, p 154 and references.

<sup>122</sup> Guta Lagh, 2.

<sup>123</sup> LUB I:285 reg. 321; Uluots 1975, pp 62–65.

<sup>124</sup> Kustin 1958, p 56; 1962b, p 134.

<sup>125</sup> Selirand 1974, p 178 ff.

<sup>126</sup> Kustin 1970; grave dated by Heiki Valk, verbal information.

<sup>127</sup> Köpp 1959, p 258.

<sup>128</sup> Schmiedehelm 1944, p 9.

<sup>129</sup> Köpp 1959, pp 258, 282 ff; see also Lamp 1991.

<sup>130</sup> Staecker 1999, pp 318–333.

ously tried to find other ways to express their wealth and power. One may suggest that it was done within the framework of the newly adopted Christian attitudes.

The main way in Christian burial customs to demonstrate the importance of a person or a family posthumously is the distance of the grave from the church wall or from the altar.<sup>131</sup> It can be suggested, therefore, that the elite of Saaremaa who buried their dead in the stone graves of the 12<sup>th</sup> century now inhumed them near the church-wall in churchyards, or perhaps inside the churches.

### 7.3.4. The Churches

It has been a widespread opinion in the literature of Estonian history that the majority of the Estonian pre-conquest period elite were killed or completely displaced by the new power. Only an insignificant percentage of the old elite was believed to have collaborated with the new overlords.<sup>132</sup> Still, the percentage of the vassals of Estonian origin on Saaremaa has usually been rated higher than on the mainland of the country.<sup>133</sup> At all events, we can deduce from the chronicle of Henry the Livonian that the island of Saaremaa clearly suffered fewer losses in the war at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century than the mainland of Estonia. Actual battles and plundering on the island were described only in two cases: in 1216 and 1227 (see section 3. 2). In the first case, Henry the Livonian also describes how the warriors panicked and collapsed on their way home, leaving us to doubt whether the campaign was as victorious as described by the chronicler.<sup>134</sup> In the course of the attack in 1227, Muhu stronghold was completely destroyed and the villages of Muhu and Valjala districts plundered. The campaign ended with the surrender of the Valjala stronghold and the acceptance of Christianity by the Osilians, soon after which the German

troops left the island.<sup>135</sup> It can be stated, therefore, that the majority of the territory of Saaremaa remained untouched by direct hostilities. Though quite a few Osilians were undoubtedly killed in the military actions on the mainland, there is no evidence to suggest that the elite of the island was exterminated during the war.

The earliest stone churches of Saaremaa were erected in centres at district level, some of them very soon after the conquest and official Christianisation in 1227. Some scholars have presumed even earlier, pre-conquest churches or chapels.<sup>136</sup> The stone churches of the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century on Saaremaa were originally Romanesque buildings, and no traces of earlier wooden churches or chapels have been preserved.

As we know from Scandinavia, the first churches were usually built by wealthy local landowners, and in these cases situated close to the principal's farm or manor, or by several landowners on areas where the settlement pattern consisted of more or less equal freehold farms or estates. In southern Scandinavia and Götaland, at least, the first variant was dominant. The status of a church could also change in the course of time, so for instance churches that were originally erected as manor churches could later be turned into parish churches.<sup>137</sup> In the coastal area and on islands, as on Gotland, the churches often indicated important harbour places and were sometimes preceded by chapels.<sup>138</sup> The idea that at least some of the churches and chapels could have been originally founded by local chiefs for the needs of their own and/or their trading partners has been stressed also in Finnish archaeology.<sup>139</sup> The erection of a church, especially a stone church, demanded a great amount of resources, which normally were available only for the aristocracy. Timber churches in Scandinavia were more widespread in wooded areas where free farmsteads and not large estates dominated. The size and material of church buildings were in themselves demonstrations of status.<sup>140</sup>

The erecting of the church was obviously a more complicated procedure than the constructing of a secular build-



Figure 60. Valjala church. From: Markus 1999 fig. 199. Photograph by Peeter Säre.

<sup>131</sup> Purhonen 1998, pp 167 ff; Staecker 2001.

<sup>132</sup> E g Ligi 1968, p 19; Vahre 1980, pp 33–35; ETRA 1992, pp 131–132; Kala 2001.

<sup>133</sup> Ligi 1968, pp 17–19.

<sup>134</sup> HCL, XIX: 9.

<sup>135</sup> HCL, XXX: 3–5.

<sup>136</sup> E g Mäll 1998.

<sup>137</sup> E g Lindkvist 1988, p 27; Wienberg 1993; Anglert 1995.

<sup>138</sup> See e g Carlsson 1999.

<sup>139</sup> Taavitsainen 1989.

ing. For that, a permit had to be obtained; on Saaremaa, the permits were given (also for the lands held by the Order) by the Bishop of Ösel–Wiek. When the building of the church had been decided, the Bishop or his representative appointed the time, during which the future church yard had to be fenced off. If this had not taken place within twelve months, a fine had to be paid. The fence demarcated the borders of the sacred area from the profane and that was a precondition for the later inauguration of the church.<sup>141</sup>

As mentioned before, the local elite of the Osilians kept their supremacy on the island even after the year 1227, especially during the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the representatives of the new overlords could be present on the island only during a limited period of the year.<sup>142</sup> The first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, indeed, was the period when the first Romanesque church buildings of stone were erected on the island, while only wooden churches or chapels were built in most parts of the mainland of Estonia. The building material of a church is, from the point of view of the bishop, not important unless it is a cathedral subordinated directly to the bishop himself. The widespread opinion among Estonian historians that the churches were erected entirely on the initiative of the foreign invaders is in contradiction with the phenomenon that the first stone churches of Estonia were erected in the district of the country where the secular power of the Order and the bishop was most limited.

It is most natural to suppose, in view of this, that the building of stone churches on Saaremaa was co-ordinated and funded by the Osilian elite, more or less reformed into feudal vassals by this time.<sup>143</sup> The stone building, a technology unfamiliar to the 13<sup>th</sup> century Osilians, was organised with the help of foreign specialists who were, most naturally, arranged via the local bishop. The architecture of the churches supported their complementary function as refuge in case of emergency, a widespread characteristic of the churches in northern Europe.<sup>144</sup> Judging from the evidence of Christian influences in burial customs that had already appeared in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Osilian churches could have had predecessors, of wood or even of stone.

The archaeological investigation of the Kaarma parsonage, carried out in the first half of the 1990s, and the interpretation of the findings there, are of striking interest in this connection. Remains of a stone building were found near the church and dated to the middle and the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was interpreted as a fortified residence for the members as well as the builders of the church.<sup>145</sup> This interpretation is clearly derived from a concept that Christianisation was pushed through by force, and so the builders of the church needed protection from the local (pagan) people.

The Kaarma church is situated about 200 m from Kaarma stronghold, which was not conquered by the Germans until 1261.<sup>146</sup> The stronghold could be defined as a centre at district level and the residence of the head of the district. Archaeological research in southern Scandinavia has demonstrated a clear correlation between the buildings of churches and manor houses. When the church was originally erected by the local aristocrat, the place for it was normally chosen right beside the manor itself. These large principal's farms or manors acted as the centres at local level even before the Christianisation. The parts of both church and the main building of manor were re-built of stone simultaneously. It was often a gradual process that resulted in both the church and the manor house being built entirely of stone.<sup>147</sup> It is also more plausible, according to the same pattern of development, to interpret the stone building near the Kaarma church as a manor house of a local aristocrat. It should be mentioned here that art-historian Kersti Markus has presented an idea that the Gothic style Kaarma church could have been originally built as one of the central churches in the bishopric of Ösel–Wiek, during the reign of bishop Heinrich in the third quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>148</sup> Archaeologist Jaak Mäll, however, pointed to the Romanesque sacristy of the Kaarma church as a possible earlier small church or a chapel at the place.<sup>149</sup>

It is known from the written sources about the Civil war of Saaremaa at the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries that people near Kaarma escaped the enemy by fleeing to the church and not to the forests or bogs in the surroundings, which would probably often have been done before the church was built. It is obvious that people had accepted the idea of a church as a holy and safe place, and not as a stronghold of the hostile new power as has usually been suggested by Estonian historians. Unfortunately, we must admit now that the people of Kaarma made the wrong choice, because the troops of the Teutonic Order still killed everyone in the church.<sup>150</sup>

The other example of the earliest stone buildings of Saaremaa, the church of Valjala, was obviously built at a pagan cult place, a low hill beside a little sacred lake (Fig

<sup>140</sup> Anglert 1995, pp 152 ff; Wienberg 1999.

<sup>141</sup> Purhonen 1998, p 128.

<sup>142</sup> Mäll 1998; Mägi in press.

<sup>143</sup> See also Mäll 1998.

<sup>144</sup> Wienberg 2000.

<sup>145</sup> Sepp 1995.

<sup>146</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 279.

<sup>147</sup> Callmer 1992.

<sup>148</sup> Markus 1999, pp 185–186.

<sup>149</sup> Mäll 1998, p 163.

60). The vicinity of Valjala hillfort, assessed as the very centre of Saaremaa by the chronicler Henry the Livonian, and several stone graves with a great number of luxury grave goods, suggest that the place had a very central position. It is interesting to note that, according to the local oral tradition, the house of the chieftain of the Valjala hillfort had been situated almost next to the church. Three skeletons with 13<sup>th</sup> century artefacts were uncovered along the foundation of the church, obviously belonging to Christianised high-ranked Osilians. Some grave-stones with a decoration from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the churches of Saaremaa and Muhu lead to the inference that some members of the upper stratum were buried also inside the churches, perhaps even before the official Christianisation.<sup>151</sup>

A good illustration of a somewhat different but still close connection between the earliest churches and the local elite of Saaremaa are the figurines of a man and a woman on a console in Pöide church, whose Estonian origin was emphasised by penannular brooches on their chests. Most probably a local landowner who had financed the building of the church was depicted there together with his wife. There are several more or less equal landed estates known in the medieval Pöide district, most of them marked by Late Iron Age stone graves. One can suggest, therefore, that the church was built not by a particular aristocrat but in co-operation between the landowners of the district.<sup>152</sup> It seems likely that the higher place where the church was erected had been an old cult place of the pagan period. Taking into consideration also the data from unburnt skeletons found in the later Pöide parish, it is remarkable that they were not recorded only in the vicinity of the three largest early estates – Iruste (probably moved away in the 16<sup>th</sup> century), Tumala and Uuemõisa – while the other estates known from early written sources are all indicated by probable Christian cemeteries, perhaps around local chapels (Fig 13). All three are, though, marked with rich Late Iron Age stone graves and/or a stronghold (Iruste). The church was erected in the middle of these three manors, approximately the same distance from each.

The landowner of Iruste estate, probably the successor of the chief who possessed the Pöide stronghold in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, had a special relationship with the church. It is known from written sources of the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century that Johannes von Elmete from Iruste manor founded a vicarage by Pöide church, to which he bequeathed four farmsteads with three ploughlands.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, even if the Iruste family was the most powerful of the district, they were obviously not the only leaders of the area. The position of the church may, therefore, reflect the less consolidated political power of pre-conquest Pöide district.

According to the investigation of historical architecture in the churches of Saaremaa and Muhu, combined with the data of written sources, there have also existed wooden church buildings on the islands until the last quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. First of all the churches of Karja and Muhu should be mentioned in this connection, both re-built in stone in full Gothic style in the 1270s and 1280s.<sup>154</sup> Both of these churches were erected in the centre of less important districts of the island, which in the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries were obviously dependent on neighbouring areas.<sup>155</sup> It can be stated, accordingly, that though churches were built in all centres of Saaremaa immediately after the conversion, the materials used in them acted as a manifestation of wealth and power. In Late Iron Age districts like Pöide (Horele), Valjala and Kaarma, where the more developed social hierarchy and political significance was demonstrated by hillforts and richly supplied stone graves, the churches were built in stone from the beginning. The same is valid for the Kihelkonna church,<sup>156</sup> which marked an important harbour site and the centre of Kihelkonna (Kilegunde) district, a fact which was indicated by several rich Late Iron Age stone graves in the vicinity. In the satellite-areas like Muhu and Karja that were dependent on the main centres, the first church buildings were erected of wood and only later re-built in stone. The Püha church, which obviously indicated another Late Iron Age harbour site, less important than that of Kihelkonna, probably acted as a chapel during the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was only later rebuilt as a church.

Church building on 13<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa, where the political power of the bishop and the Order was limited compared with the mainland of Estonia, could not proceed without the direct support and interest of the local elite. As can be deduced from the sudden transformation of burial rites on the island, the Osilians accepted the new Christian ideology quite quickly. The concept of church buildings expressing social prestige certainly belonged to the new way of thinking. These attitudes might have been familiar to the Osilians long before the 13<sup>th</sup> century, taking into consideration their activity at sea and in international trade. The Osilians who, by the year 1227, had come out of the war with comparatively insignificant losses, had enough power and resources to express their status in stone churches. The availability of

<sup>150</sup> Saaremaa 1934, pp 279–280.

<sup>151</sup> Sipelgas 2000.

<sup>152</sup> Mägi in press.

<sup>153</sup> Saaremaa 1934, p 708.

<sup>154</sup> Markus 1999, pp 170 ff.

<sup>155</sup> Mägi 1998.

<sup>156</sup> See Markus 1999, pp 190 ff.

stone material and a long-lasting tradition of expressing prestige in stone constructions, first of all in monumental stone graves, could have played an important role in the building of stone churches as well.

#### 7.4. Summary

Osilian society, which had already been socially differentiated in earlier periods, became even more socially stratified at the end of the Late Iron Age and in the early feudal period. Starting with the 10<sup>th</sup> century, there is a rapid accrual of the archaeological material both on Saaremaa and its neighbouring areas. This probably indicates a change mainly in burial customs – graves became more richly furnished. Especially from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the burial deposits point to the reinforcement of warrior ideology in the society.

Stratification evolved even more during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the time of the richest stone graves on Saaremaa. The volume of burials did not grow to any remarkable extent, but more artefacts were placed beside the deceased. The right to be buried in stone graves was now obviously reserved to an even smaller portion of the population.

Some conclusions about the social conditions on 12<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa can be made on the basis of 13<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury written sources and also by drawing parallels with the neighbouring countries. There is reason to believe that the local socio-political organisation resembled that of Gotland, though maybe the hierarchisation on Saaremaa was even deeper. International trade and plundering economy, with agriculture, made up the economic background of the society.

Comparative study of archaeological, historical and human-geographical sources revealed a strong continuity in political power, i.e. the feudalisation of the local elite during the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The contradiction between paganism and Christianity on 13<sup>th</sup> century Saaremaa, as it has traditionally been treated in the literature of Estonian history, was obviously exaggerated. Earlier widespread concepts of an egalitarian pre-conquest society that contrasted in all ways with the new, feudal world, are clearly obvious behind these ideas.

It is most clear that the conversion to Christianity did not proceed without any resistance by the Osilians – this can be inferred from the military character of the process. Nevertheless, the new religion must have been familiar to the Osilians even before the conquest, and was accepted, together with the new, feudal system of society during the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Conclusions

Hopefully, the present study has demonstrated that even the modest archaeological material which is presently at the command of archaeologists does enable a glimpse at the social structure of the ancient society if combined with historic, ethnographic and cultural-geographic data. The usage of comparative material from the better-documented histories of the neighbouring countries – and the analysis of Saaremaa in an international context altogether – has proved to be a productive method in this process. In the years 800 to 1300 AD there was naturally no inkling of the nation states that would develop on the coasts of the Baltic Sea at the end of the second millennium, and so the areas of common socio-economic backgrounds failed to follow the present frontiers in their development.

As many earlier researchers have suggested, the stone graves of Saaremaa do include distinguishable single burials. The present analysis implies that although the identification is possible in most cases, the assessment of concrete find complexes depends very much on the current theoretical paradigm in archaeology. It would be naïve to expect complete objectivity from the author of this study, though I have striven for it as much as possible. I truly doubt if anyone could ever establish for certain what really happened in these times, as the surviving material is too scarce and the researchers too deeply bound by their habit.

The results of grave deposit analyses gave grounds for postulating a higher degree of hierarchisation in prehistoric Osilian society than has generally been associated with it. By drawing parallels with archaeologically similar districts like Gotland that have been better analysed with modern archaeological methods, a similar economy, ideology and socio-political structure could be attributed to Saaremaa.

As has been stressed above in many cases, the views that have been conditioned by the political history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century should be taken into account while comparing the societies on the eastern and western coasts of the Baltic Sea. These views have the tendency to distort the general picture. One of the main aims of the present study has been to point to the synchronic development of the Osilian society with other Baltic islands and coastal areas.

As regards the material culture, especially female ornaments of late prehistory, the Osilians resembled mostly the Livs and the Cours on the territory of present Latvia

and the Gotlanders over the sea. The contacts with the people on most of the mainland of Estonia, especially in the eastern and southern part of the country, seem to have been much more marginal. The specific political history of the islands, especially during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, could only reinforce these tendencies.

Assuming that pre-conquest society was indeed much more stratified than traditional historians have believed, we should approach the first post-conquest years from the same viewpoint. As the feudalisation process and the uniting of Estonia with western Europe in the larger sense of the term was rapid and violent, these processes have up till now mainly been treated as conflicts. Such an approach reflects the stock images of a relatively egalitarian ancient society and an ethnic conflict that resemble those of later periods. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, alas, the issues of ethnicity and language might have been of minor significance, while social background could have carried more weight.

The concept that violent Christianisation during the conquest of Saaremaa was a change too abrupt for the ideology of the Osilians, and therefore not accepted for a long period, is mostly based on similar biases and on the interpretation of written sources of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Estonia, because of the rarity of 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century written data, has been usually considered as one unit in these interpretations, and so the few facts about Saaremaa were often conflated with data about South or North Estonia. As was demonstrated before, such an attitude is not justified. The re-examination of the material presented in this book indicates that the processes of Europeanisation – firstly feudalisation and Christianisation – on Saaremaa can be characterised not only by conflicts, but also, and perhaps even to a considerable extent, by compromises.

Considering the fact that due to its geographical position, Saaremaa has been in the midst of several cultural influences and keeping in mind the political agenda of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, it could be stated that the Osilian society evolved differently from the Estonian mainland. When and why the originality of the area started to fade and the assimilation with other parts of Estonia and Latvia started to take place, remains to be examined and discussed after further research, which should mainly be based on historical sources.

Käesolevas raamatus on võetud vaatluse alla muinasaja lõpu ja keskaja alguse sajandid Saaremaal ja Muhus. Lähtealuseks on kalmed koos neis leiduvate panustega, mida on analüüsitud koos ülejäänud arheoloogilise ainese ning kirjalike allikatega. Uurimisalust piirkonda on üritatud vaadelda laiemas rahvusvahelises kontekstis.

**Esimeses peatükis** on antud ülevaade muinasaja ühiskondliku korralduse käsitlustest Eesti arheoloogias, varasematest teoreetilistest töökspidamistest ning metodoloogilisest lähenemisest. Historiograafiline ülevaade käsitleb Eesti ja lähemalt Saaremaa hilisrauaaegsete ning varakeskaegsete kalmete uurimislugu. Peatutud on ka käesolevas uurimuses aluseks võetud matmiskommete tõlgendusviisidel. Enamiku kaasaegsete uurijate arvates pole panuste hulk ja koostis kalmes otseselt seostatav maetu majandusliku seisuga, vaid pigem ühiskonnas valitseva ideoloogiaga. Panuste järsku lisandumist Eesti kivikalmeis 11. ja eriti 12. sajandil võib siiski seostada võimu kindlustumise ja sotsiaalse hierarhia süvenemisega. Samas olen pidanud vajalikuks arvestada matusepanuste ideoloogilise ja kultuurilise tähenduse kõrval ka nende materiaalse väärtusega: enamikku ühiskonna liikmeist polnud võimalik matta koos rohkete relvade ning ehetega juba nende esemete kõrge hinna tõttu. Matuste vähene hulk ning panuste suhteline rohkus Saaremaa hilisrauaaegsetes kalmetes osutab kivikalmetele kui eliidi sotsiaalse manifestatsiooni vahendeile.

**Teises peatükis** on antud ülevaade Saaremaa, Eesti ja naabermaade hilisrauaaegsetest ning varakeskaegsetest matmiskommetest. Tänapäeva Baltimaade näol oli käsitletaval perioodil tegemist etnilises mõttes ilmselt kõige kirevama alaga põhjapoolses Euroopas, millest johtuvalt on kohati olnud väga erinevad ka siinsed matmiskombed.

**Kolmandas peatükis** on võetud vaatluse alla Saaremaad käsitlevad kirjalikud allikad, millest perioodil 800–1300 pärineb enamik 13. sajandist. Kuigi ükski kroonika või dokument ei maini otseselt saartel valitsenud ühiskondlikku korraldust, võimaldavad need siiski teha mõningaid järeldusi sealsete sotsiaalsete olude kohta.

**Neljandas peatükis** on antud ülevaade Saaremaal ja Muhus arheoloogiliselt kaevatud kivikalmete ning laibamatuste materjalist. On toodud ära matusekomplekside eristamise alused ning eraldi kataloogis kõik töös analüüsitud matusekompleksid, mille panustest enamik on kujutatud leiutahvlitel. Iga kalme kohta on püütud anda lühiülevaade paiknemisest kultuurimaastikul. Kivikalmeid on Saaremaal kaevatud seitse, kuid üks neist, nimelt Viltina kivikalme, on teatud põhjustel jäetud käesolevas töös lähemalt käsitlemata. Muinasaja lõpu ning varakeskaegseid laibakalmistuid on Eesti saartel kaevatud neli.

**Viies peatükk** koosneb kolmest alajaotusest. Neist esimene on pühendatud eri sugupooltele omistatavate matusepanuste analüüsile. Hoolimata mitmetest üldlevinud seisukohtadest võib paljude näidete puhul osutada, et nõ vastassugupoolte panuseid leidub mitmetes matustes, sealhulgas ka Saaremaa põletusmatustes. Sellest johtuvalt on kritiseeritud varasemas kirjanduses sageli liialt kergetähtsusele tehtud järeldusi mehe ja naise paarismatuste kohta.

Peamine osa viiendast peatükist kujutab enesest Saaremaa ja Muhu matustes leiduvate panuste tüpoloogilist analüüsi. Käsitletud on vaid kompleksides leiduvaid esemeid, juhuleidudele on viidatud vaid erandjuhtudel. Põhitähelepanu on pööratud matusekomplekside koostisele, esemetüüpide esinemissagedusele erinevate perioodide, sugupoolte ning väliskujuga kalmetes. Mitmete esemetüüpide puhul võimaldasid leiukompleksid ka senisest täpsemat dateeringut. Esemeeanalüüs osutab Eesti saarte leiumaterjali sarnasusele liivlaste ja kuralaste kalmetest leitud, samuti Lääne-Eesti kivikalmete materjaliga. Saaremaa esemeline materjal on kooskõlas saarte geograafilise asukohaga mitmete kultuuriareaalide ristumiskohal.

Vienda peatüki lõpuosa on matusekomplekside ning neis sisalduvate panuste analüüs. Igale esemeliigile matuses omistati üks väärtuspunkt, millele lisandus punkt juhul, kui tegemist oli luksusesemega. Esemekatket põletusmatuses arvestati sealjuures kui tervet eset. Sel viisil omistati matustele neis sisalduvate panuseliikide põhjal ETA (esemetüüpide arv) väärtus, võimaldamaks matuseid omavahel võrrelda.



Järgnev analüüs osutas, et matuste ETA sõltub eelkõige matmisajast, maetu (oletatavast) soost ning kalme sotsiaal-poliitilisest asukohast, s o kaugusest keskustest. Matuste ETA tervikuna suurenes Saaremaa kalmetes alates 11. sajandist, jõudis oma haripunkti 12. sajandil ning langes seejärel, arvatavasti kristluse mõjul, järsult.

**Kuues peatükk** sisaldab matmiskombestiku ning selles toimunud muutuste analüüsi. Kõigepealt on võetud vaatluse alla kalmed väliskuju põhjal, samuti tuuakse ära kunagisele matuseriitusele viitavad jäljed arheoloogilises aineses. Lähemalt on peatutud üksikmatuste tähistamisel, surnu põletamisrituaalil, luude ja panuste purustamisel, arvatavalt kaitsva funktsiooniga panustel ning kivikalmetes leiduvatel loomaluudel. Erilist tähelepanu on pööratud paganliku matmiskombestiku järk-järgulisele asendumisele kristlikuga, kristliku matmiskombestiku olemusele, sotsiaalsete manifestatsiooniviiside muutusele. Käsitletava perioodi matmiskombestikus on olnud võimalik eristada neli järku, millest kolm esimest hõlmavad eritüübilisi kivikalmeid, neljas aga kujutab enesest varakristlikke laibamatuseid. On jõutud järeldusele, et paganlikud matmiskombed asendusid Saaremaal ja Muhus kristlikega suhteliselt lühikese ajavahemiku jooksul, erinevalt mitmetest piirkondadest tänapäeva Baltimaade sisemaal.

**Seitsmes peatükk** analüüsib kokkuvõtvalt saarlaste ideoloogias ja ühiskondlikus korralduses 9. sajandist kuni 13. sajandi lõpuni toimunud muutusi. Selleks on püütud hõlmata arheoloogilise ainese kõrval võimaluse piires ajaloolist allikmaterjali. Rohkesti paralleele on tõmmatud Saaremaa naaberlade kohati paremini ja pikemaajaliselt uuritud ühiskondlike suhetega, eriti Ojamaaga. Saarlaste ühiskondlik areng on esitatud sajandite lõikes, kuid paratamatult on materjali tundu-

valt rohkem käsitletava perioodi lõpuosast, mida seetõttu on ka pikemalt analüüsitud. On jõutud järeldusele, et sotsiaalne hierarhia Saaremaal kindlustus ja süvenes 12. sajandil ning 13. sajandi arengus on, hoolimata vallutusest, jälgitav selge järjepidevus. Saaremaa eliit säilitas ilmselt suurema osa oma sotsiaalsest positsioonist, integreerudes järkjärgult uude, feodaalsesse maailmakorraldusse.

Peatüki lõpuosa arutleb ristiusu leviku ning vastuvõtu üle Saare- ja Muhumaal. Eelneva põhjal on jõutud järeldusele, et usuvahetus toimus Eesti saartel enam-vähem sama skeemi kohaselt, nagu kaks sajandit varem Skandinaavias. Sotsiaalset prestiipi manifesteeriti alates 13. sajandi teisest veerandist kristliku maailmavaate kohaselt ning võib arvata, et samad eliitperekonnad, kes varem matsid oma surnuid monumentaalsesse kivikalmetesse, matsid nüüd kirikuisse või kirikute ümbrusesse. Kuna kirikehitised ise on kristlikus maailmas üheks olulisemaks sotsiaalse prestiipi osutamise vahendiks, võib Saaremaa ja Muhu varaste kivikirikute taga näha kohaliku eliidi otsest osavõttu nende püstitamisest.

Kuigi muinasaja lõpul üks Eesti jõukamaid maakondi, vähenes Saaremaa osatähtsus peale ristiusu vastuvõttu ning kristlikku maailma integreerumist järsult. Üheks olulisemaks põhjuseks selles on arvatavasti majanduslike ja poliitiliste olude muutus, mererööviga seotud majanduse lakkamine ning Eesti lülitumine rahvusvahelisse kaubandusse. Saareline asend mandri vahetus läheduses ei soodustanud linnade teket, täielikku ümberorienteerumist üksnes põllumajandusele takistas aga saarte vilets põllumaa. Hoopis olulisemat kaalu omas nüüd Mandri-Eesti koos sinna vallutuse järel kiirelt tekkinud linnadega, Eesti saared muutusid aga järk-järgult perifeeriaks.

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# Abbreviations

AI – Ajaloo Instituut (Institute of History, Department of Archaeology), Tallinn.

Acta Visbyensia XI – Culture Clash or Compromise? The europeanisation of the Baltic Sea Area 1100–1400 AD. (*Acta Visbyensia XI.*) Visby.

AEW – Archaeology East and West of the Baltic. Papers from the Second Estonian–Swedish Archaeological Symposium, Sigtuna, May 1991. (*Theses and Papers in Archaeology N.S. A 7.*)

AuE – Arheoloģija un Etnogrāfija.

CCC 1 – Europeans or Not? Local level Strategies on the Baltic Rim 1100–1400 AD. (*CCC papers 1.*)

CCC 5 – Lübeck Style? Novgorod Style? Baltic Rim Central Places as Arenas for Cultural Encounters and Urbanisation 1100–1400 AD. Transactions of the central level symposium of the Culture Clash or Compromise (CCC) project held in Talsi September 18–21 1998. (*CCC papers: 5.*)

LA – Lietuvos Archeologija.

LVI – Latvijas Vēstures Instituts (Latvian Institute of History), Riga.

LVM – Latvijas Vēstures Muzejs (the History Museum of Latvia), Riga.

MT – Muinasaja teadus.

Sb. GEG – Sitzungsberichte der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft.

SM – Saaremaa Muuseum (Saaremaa Museum), Kuressaare.

SMYA – Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistyksen Aikakauskirja.

TATÜ – ENSV Teaduste Akadeemia Toimetised, Ühiskonnateaduste seeria (Proceedings of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. Humanities and Social Sciences).

TÜ – Tartu Ülikool (University of Tartu).

# APPENDIX

**Table 1. Find complexes in stone graves with cremations**

<i>Burial</i>	<i>Sex/Gender</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>NAT</i>	<i>Type of burial complex</i>
Käku I	undetermined	10 <sup>th</sup> century?	5	complete
Käku II	undetermined	10 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Käku III	undetermined	10 <sup>th</sup> –11 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Käku IV	female	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	5	complete
Käku V	male	1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> century	6	complete
Käku VI	male	11 <sup>th</sup> century	4	complete
Käku VII	female?	10 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> century	4	complete
Käku VIII	undetermined	10 <sup>th</sup> –11 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Käku IX	undetermined	10 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Käku X	male	1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Käku XI	male	10 <sup>th</sup> –11 <sup>th</sup> century	8	complete
Käku XII	female	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 10 <sup>th</sup> century	10	complete
Käku XIII	male	11 <sup>th</sup> century	10	complete
Käku XIV	female(+ male?)	10 <sup>th</sup> century	11	complete
Käku XV	child?	10 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> century	3	partial
Piila I	undetermined	1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> century	6	complete
Piila II	male	11 <sup>th</sup> century	9	complete
Piila III	male	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 10 <sup>th</sup> – 1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Piila IV	female?	10 <sup>th</sup> century?	6	complete
Piila V	male?	11 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Piila VI	male	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	8	complete
Piila VII	female	10 <sup>th</sup> –11 <sup>th</sup> century	9	complete
Kurevere I	male	11 <sup>th</sup> century	13	complete
Kurevere II	female	11 <sup>th</sup> century	8	complete
Kurevere III	female ?	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> – 1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century	9	partial
Kurevere IV	female?	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	6?	supposable
Kurevere V	female	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century	8?	supposable
Randvere I	female or child	10 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Randvere II	male (boy?)	11 <sup>th</sup> century	12	complete
Randvere III	male	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> century	21	complete
Randvere IV	female ?	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	5	complete
Randvere V	female (girl)	11 <sup>th</sup> century	13	partial
Randvere VI	male (boy?)	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> – 1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century	14	partial
Randvere VII	female (girl)	10 <sup>th</sup> –11 <sup>th</sup> century	14	complete
Randvere VIII	female	11 <sup>th</sup> century	16	complete
Randvere IX	male (+ female ?)	12 <sup>th</sup> century	15	complete

Randvere X	male (boy?)	1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> century	20	complete
Randvere XI	male (cenotaph)	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	6	complete
Viltina weapons' find	male (cenotaph)	1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> century	10	complete
Rahu I	male	12 <sup>th</sup> century	10	complete
Rahu II	male+female	12 <sup>th</sup> century	14	complete
Rahu III	male	12 <sup>th</sup> century	7	complete
Rahu IV	female	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 10 <sup>th</sup> century?	8	partial
Rahu V	female ?	10 <sup>th</sup> –11 <sup>th</sup> century	6	complete
Rahu VI	female	1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> century	8	complete
Rahu VII	female	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	4	complete
Rahu VIII	child	10 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> century	4	complete
Rahu IX	male	11 <sup>th</sup> century	11	complete
Rahu X	undetermined	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	6	complete
Rahu XI	female	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	7	partial
Rahu XII	male	1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 11 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Rahu XIII	female?	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	11	complete
Rahu XIV	undetermined	12 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Rahu XV	male?	11 <sup>th</sup> century	8	complete
Rahu XVI	female	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	8	complete
Rahu XVII	male	12 <sup>th</sup> century	16	complete
Rahu XVIII	male	12 <sup>th</sup> century	11	complete
Rahu XIX	male	12 <sup>th</sup> century	14	partial
Rahu XX	male	12 <sup>th</sup> century?	6	supposable
Rahu XXI	male	9 <sup>th</sup> –10 <sup>th</sup> century	6	partial
Rahu XXII	female?	12 <sup>th</sup> century	9	complete
Rahu XXIII	male (+ female?)	12 <sup>th</sup> century	14	complete
Rahu XXIV	female (girl?)	the beginning of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century	11	complete
Rahu XXV	female?	12 <sup>th</sup> century	11	supposable
Rahu XXVI	male	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century – the beginning of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	7	complete
Rahu XXVII	child?	10 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> century	8	complete
Rahu XXVIII	female	12 <sup>th</sup> century	12	supposable
Rahu XXIX	male	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century – the beginning of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Rahu XXX	male	11 <sup>th</sup> century?	14	complete
Rahu XXXI	child?	11 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> century	7	complete
Kogula I	undetermined	12 <sup>th</sup> century	5	partial
Kogula II	undetermined	12 <sup>th</sup> century	6	partial
Kogula III	male	12 <sup>th</sup> century	10	partial

**Table 2. Burial complexes in inhumation graves**

<i>Burial</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>NAT</i>	<i>Type of burial complex</i>
Loona I	female	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	1	partial
Loona II	male	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	4	complete
Loona III	female	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	2	partial
Loona IV	female	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century?	0	partial
Loona V	female	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century	4	complete
Loona VI	female	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Loona VII	female	12 <sup>th</sup> –13 <sup>th</sup> century	3	supposable
Valjala I	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Valjala II	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	2	complete
Valjala III	male	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	2	supposable
Karja I	male?	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	2	partial
Karja II	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	4	partial
Karja III	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Karja IV	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	3	partial
Karja V	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	2	complete
Karja VI	male?	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Karja VII	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Karja VIII	female?	the end of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	4	partial
Karja IX	child	13 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Karja X	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Karja Xa	child	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	2	complete
Karja XI	child	13 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Karja XII	male	13 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Karja XIII	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Karja XIV	male?	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Karja XV	male	13 <sup>th</sup> century	4	complete
Karja XVI	male	13 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Karja XVII	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Karja XVIII	male	13 <sup>th</sup> century	2	complete
Karja XIX	child	13 <sup>th</sup> century	4	complete
Karja XX	child	13 <sup>th</sup> century?	2	complete
Karja XXI	male	13 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Karja XXII	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century?	1	complete
Karja XXIII	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century?	1	partial

Karja XXIV	child	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Karja XXV	female	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Karja XXVI	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Karja XXVII	female	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Karja XXVIII	child	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Karja XXIX	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	4	complete
Karja XXX	child (girl?)	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> – the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Karja XXXI	child	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	4	complete
Viltina I	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Viltina II	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century?	0	partial
Viltina III	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century?	0	partial
Viira I	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	6	complete
Viira II	male	13 <sup>th</sup> century?	3	complete
Viira III	male	13 <sup>th</sup> century?	2	complete
Viira IV	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	2	complete
Viira V	juvenile	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Viira VI	child	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira VII	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira VIII	child	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira IX	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira X	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira XI	female	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira XII	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Viira XIII	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira XIV	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century?	0	partial
Viira XV	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century?	0	partial
Viira XVI	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century?	1	partial
Viira XVII	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira XVIII	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	5	complete
Viira XIX	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Viira XX	male	13 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira XXI	female	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	complete
Viira XXII	female	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> – the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	3	complete
Viira XXIII	male	13 <sup>th</sup> century?	2	complete
Viira XXIV	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	1	partial
Viira XXV	female	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira XXVI	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century?	1	partial
Viira XXVII	juvenile	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	partial
Viira XXVIII	child	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira XXIX	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century?	3	partial
Viira XXX	male	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century	0	complete
Viira XXXI	undetermined	13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century?	0	partial
Viira XXXII	female	the end of the 12 <sup>th</sup> – the 13 <sup>th</sup> century	7	complete
Viira XXXIII	female	13 <sup>th</sup> century	6	Supposable