



Viking Age and Medieval harbour site at Mullutu in southern Saaremaa

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INTRODUCTION

Viking Age and medieval Ösel, western part of Estonia, was a whole archipelago with several smaller islands, many of which have grown together with the bigger islands (Saaremaa and Muhu) by now. It was an area with advanced maritime culture as indicated by, for instance, overseas impact on the local material culture, by several landing places that have been archaeologically discovered in the area since the 2000s, or in medieval written sources (Mägi 2004). The best studied Viking Age harbour sites are Viltina and Tornimäe, both with intensive cultural layers and with finds pointing predominantly to regional Eastern Baltic culture contacts (Mägi 2005; 2009). Viking Age material culture connected with *Osilian* warriors had, on the other hand, adopted so many influences from Scandinavia that by the 10th–11th century it had become inseparable from other coastal areas along the northern Baltic Sea.

The extensive landing place recently found by hobby detectorists Tiina Tohv and Karl Laane at Mullutu east of Kuressaare indicates broad international contacts, extending further than the Eastern Baltic. Items from Scandinavia, Finland and Couronia were found together with local artefacts, a great number of boat rivets and silver coins, most of the last ones Cufic coins from the 9th–10th century. The location at a distance from arable lands but in a well-protected place near the main sea route along the southern coast of Saaremaa, the Viking Age *Austrvegr*, additionally suggests both local and international use of the harbour (Mägi 2018, 92–96).

Most of the detector finds at Mullutu were made in 2016–2019, and archaeological investigations followed in 2020. The area, approximately 12 ha along the one-time coast was thoroughly studied with metal detector, and five trial excavations were opened in different spots of the area. The excavations were supervised by Marika Mägi. Finds are stored in Saaremaa Museum under the inventory no SM 10863. Photographs of finds from Mullutu are available in <https://osiliana.eu/en/#database>.

LOCATION

The area east of Kuressaare, now making up several lakes, used to be a big bay up to the modern times (RA, EAA.308.2.28). There seems to have been two entrances, one right west from Kuressaare, and another, probably the more suitable one, along the present Nasva River (Fig. 1). The landing site was situated off the Nasva entrance, in the nearest place where the coast had a slope and thus more suitable for vessels to come close enough to land.

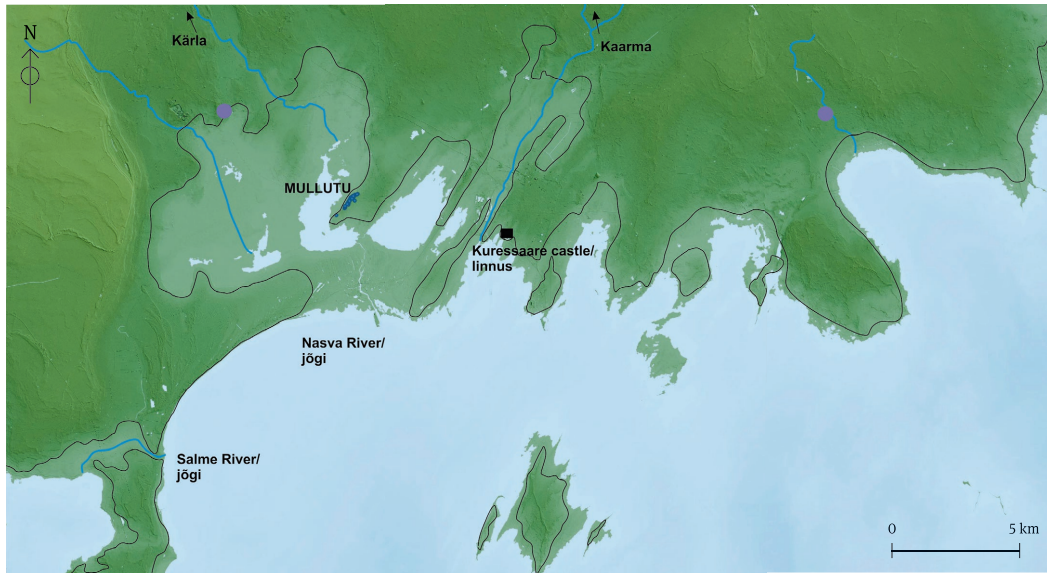


Fig. 1. The southern coast of Saaremaa with approximate coast line in the Viking Age. Small harbour sites, archaeologically investigated earlier, are marked with purple colour.

Jn 1. Saaremaa lõunarannik, joonega märgitud umbkaudne viikingiaegne rannajoon. Lilla värviga on tähistatud varem arheoloogiliselt kaevatud väikesed sadamakohad.

Relief map by Estonian Land Board / Reljefkaart Eesti Maaamet, drawing / joonis: Marika Mägi

Viking Age ships sailing from the southwestern part of the Baltic Sea and bound for *Austrvegr* tended, according to some written sources, to sail over the open sea between Gotland and Saaremaa. The route continued most likely through a strait of Salme and along the southern coast of Saaremaa, and continued along the western coast of Estonia towards the Gulf of Finland (Mägi 2018, 97–110, 111). For seamen who were in need of shelter for the night or a refuge from stormy weather, the Mullutu harbour was definitely a very suitable choice. The site was easily accessible and situated at the meeting point of different Saaremaa districts (later Kaarma, Kärļa and Anseküla parishes), which also created good conditions for using it as a meeting arena for assemblances of the locals.

The area nowadays remains far from any major roads and is used for pasture. The closest arable lands can be found around the present-day Mullutu and Parila villages, at a distance of 2–2.5 km. The place name Mullutu means approximately ‘without soil’, and the area is really characterized by a very thin soil layer right on top of the limestone ground (Fig. 2).

METHODOLOGY AND EXCAVATIONS

116 metal artefacts, including 20 coins or coin fragments, were collected from Mullutu from 2016 to 2019. Most of them were found in a 900-m-long zone along the one-time shoreline, or from some spots deeper inland. Detector surveys in 2020 yielded 197 additional finds, including 23 coins (Fig. 3).

In 2020, a team of archaeologists studied the area systematically with metal detector, in order to record all metal artefacts and thus avoid illegal detecting in future. Artefacts found by archaeologists were, however, mainly small iron items (e.g. boat rivets) or tiny pieces (e.g. fragments of coins), suggesting that these were predominantly leftovers after many detecting raids to the area before the archaeological survey.



Fig. 2. Aerial photograph of the area with concentration of finds, seen from northwest.

Jn 2. Õhufoto leidude kontsentratsioonialast, vaade loode suunast.

Photo / Foto: Marika Mägi

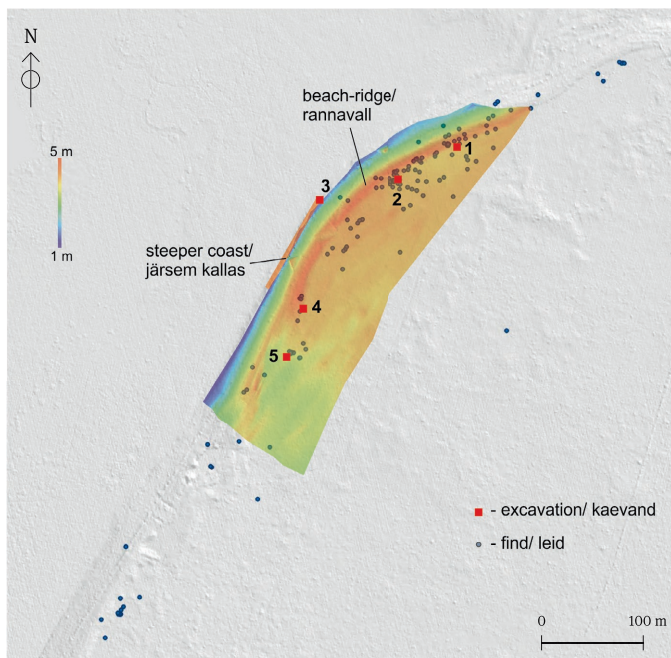


Fig. 3. Finds and excavations along the coast of Mullutu, with the digital elevation model.

Jn 3. Leiud ja kaevandid piki Mullutu randa, koos kõrgusmudeliga.

Relief map by Estonian Land Board / Reljefkaart Eesti Maaamet, drawing / joonis: Marika Mägi

Mapping the area with navigation instruments resulted in a digital elevation model indicating a steeper slope along the 100 m long stretch of the former shoreline. The steep slope ended on both sides with clear and abrupt cuts, suggesting that the natural landform had been further shaped by human activity in order to create better conditions for vessels to land. Along the steeper seashore and further towards northeast runs a low beach-ridge, the result of a storm event before the site was taken into use, which presumably offered protection from winds. The thin cultural layer with charcoal, animal bones and some ceramics behind the ridge, right northeast of the steepened part of the shore, indicated human activity, probably camping places or perhaps some light buildings. This area of approximately 0.6 ha was the concentration area of finds. A great number of finds were also recorded along the steeper part of the coast, as well as in some places further southwest.



Fig. 4. The natural ground in the excavation no 1.

Jn 4. Looduslik pinnas kaevandis nr 1.

Photo / Foto: Marika Mägi

Small excavations were made in five different spots. **Excavation no 1** (4 m²) was opened in the concentration area of the finds, right behind the beach-ridge. Several burnt fragments of animal bones together with some small pieces of ceramic were unearthed there next to a boulder. Most of the finds were right on top of a layer consisting of limestone shingle, others between the uppermost small slabs (Fig. 4). The stony ground was covered with 10–15 cm thick turf.

The humus layer was even thinner in **excavation no 2** (3.63 m²), 60 m southeast from no 1. This dig was opened next to the presumed remains of a stone fence that crossed the area behind the ridge. Some tiny bone fragments, three iron rivets or nails and two fragments of other iron items were found in the mixed layer of shingle and soil. The big-

ger stones laid on top of the cultural layer, indicating that the one-time stone fence had been built after the intensive human activity period of the site.

Excavation no 3 uncovered 1.6 m² of the steeper part of the coast. It indicated that the bigger limestone slabs forming the ground were higher in this area, which was probably the reason why waves had formed a steeper shore exactly in this part of the coast.

Excavation no 4 (1.8 m²) was opened 97 m south from no 3 in the area where, according to information from the detectorists, a number of attractive finds had been uncovered. The humus layer here was only 3–4 cm, covering a layer of small limestone slabs. A small bone fragment was found.

Excavation no 5 (1.25 m²) 53 m south from no 4 was opened near the place where a broken silver ingot (SM 10863: 237) was found with a metal detector. The soil on top of the limestone shingle was sandier than in the former digs, and 10–15 cm thick. No charcoal nor bones were uncovered, and the only find was a horseshoe nail.

The area up to approximately 200–300 m eastwards from the beach-ridge was carefully studied with metal detector, but only some very random finds were recorded more than 80 m eastwards from the ridge. However, another clearly defined area with metal finds was

registered approximately 500 m northeast from the concentration area of the finds, at a sandy elevation in the present-day forest. The finds – some bronze items, weapons and several boat rivets – were detected on an area of 0.3 ha.

FINDS

A great part of the finds from Mullutu were rivets, nails and unidentifiable iron items that cannot be exactly dated. Datable finds, mainly ornaments or their fragments, coins, weights, riding equipment, weapons and tools belonged to a long period between the 8th and the 15th century. Most finds can, however, be dated to the 9th–11th and to the 13th–14th centuries. Artefacts from various periods were recorded evenly over the entire area, without any chronological abstains in certain areas.

Most finds were right on top or between the uppermost small limestone slabs, suggesting that in the Viking Age and the Middle Ages the area was covered with limestone shingle, without any humus on top of the stone layer. The hobby detectorists reported that some finds, especially weapons or bigger ornaments were sometimes found under a bit bigger limestone slabs, suggesting that they had been intentionally hidden underneath these stones.

Pre-Viking and Viking Age finds

The study of the period 650–950 AD in Estonia is suffering under an almost lack of graves, or at least grave goods (Mägi 2013). Most of the finds originating from this time have been uncovered at hill forts, and only recently also at sacrificial places, harbour sites and settlements. Therefore, artefacts found by metal detectorists have definitely succeeded in influencing the study of this period in Estonia more than that of some other era, bringing into light the rich material culture of the Viking Age, and pointing to numerous international features that especially characterized the artefacts from Saaremaa and the coastal part of Estonia.

Approximately 70% of all finds at Mullutu that could be dated (including coins) belonged to the 8th–11th century, that is, to the pre-Viking and Viking Age. A number of finds, especially ornaments, were dated to the 8th–9th century. Two dress pins with triangular silver heads were decorated in Germanic Animal style of the 8th, perhaps early 9th century, and were found wrapped into a bronze chain under a limestone slab (Fig. 5: 2; see Jets & Mägi 2015). Although such pins are normally found as single finds, the Mullutu items were part of a chain arrangement. One pin missed a shaft. The finding circumstances suggest that the probably female jewellery had been intentionally hidden, or perhaps sacrificed.

Other 8th–9th-century ornaments were represented by ring-headed pins and fragments of flat crossbow brooches (Fig. 5: 1, 3, 4). Ring-headed pins of the types found at Mullutu were mainly characteristic to coastal Estonia and Finland (Mägi 1997). Big flat crossbow brooches were widespread ornaments of Estonian and other Eastern Baltic men, as indicated by numerous recent detector finds (e.g. Kiudsoo 2016, 54–57; Mägi 2020). The fragment of a chain holder and some penannular brooches probably belong to the 9th–10th century, if not the Viking Age as a whole (e.g. Fig. 5: 5–6, SM 10863: 12, 14, 69).

Several finds point to international contacts and have parallels for instance in Birka, the Viking Age trade centre in Middle Sweden. An openwork box-shaped brooch and a (shield?) mount resemble similar finds in Birka and can be dated to the 9th or 10th century (Fig. 6: 6, 5; Arbman 1940, Taf. 19: 1–6; Taf. 85: 6, 7; 1943, 117–118, 467–468). It is interesting to note that grave no 418 that contained a box-shaped brooch similar to the one found in Mullutu, also contained a pot typical to Baltic Finnic pottery. A gilded bronze pendant decorated in Broa

style probably belongs to the second half of the 8th or to the 9th century (Fig. 6: 1).¹ A fragment of a Scandinavian silver finger-ring can be dated to the 9th–10th century (Fig. 6: 2; Arbman 1940, Taf. 111: 6, 8–11; Thynmark-Nylén 1998, Taf. 143: 27 a–b).

Some finds seem to originate from the other eastern coasts of the Baltic Sea. Almost certainly Finnish is an openwork round brooch from the 9th century (Fig. 6: 4; Kivikoski 1973, 92, Taf. 74). Parallels to some pendants (SM 10863: 22, 29) can be found from Semigallia and Couronia (e.g. Griciuvienė 2009, 135, 317, 339; Griciuvienė 2005, 100).



Fig. 5. Some local 8th – 10th-century ornaments from Mullutu.

Jn 5. 8.–10. sajandi kohalikke ehteid Mullutust.

(SM 10863: 19, 3, 1, 4, 198, 112.)

Photo / Foto: Jaana Ratas

¹ Identified by Indrek Jets.



Fig. 6. Foreign artefacts from Mullutu.
Jn 6. Võõrapärased esemed Mullutust.
 (SM 10863: 26, 79, 75, 15, 24, 16.)
 Photo / Foto: Jaana Ratas

Viking Age weapons and riding equipment, found in coastal Estonia so far, have normally belonged to the same types as in eastern Scandinavia. The same was true for Mullutu, where it is, therefore, difficult to decide whether some weapons indicated local or foreign visitors of the site. A 10th-century stirrup (Fig. 7: 7) belonged to a type that has been represented, among other places, in Saaremaa, Birka and Hedeby (Arbman 1940, esp. Taf. 35: 1–2; Schietzel 2014, 582; Pedersen 2014, 158–163; Tvauri 2014, 185). A spur (Fig. 7: 6) probably dates from the 9th–10th century as well (compare e.g. Tvauri 2014, 186). Three spearheads of E-type were widely used weapons dated to the 9th or 10th century (Fig. 7: 1–2 and SM 10863: 142; e.g. Pedersen 2014, 92–93 and references), and a javelin head (Fig. 7: 3) to the Viking Age. 8th–10th-century arrow-heads (e.g. Fig. 7: 4 and SM 10863: 81) can be compared with similar ones in Schleswig (Schietzel 2014, 569) or in Semigallia (The Semigallians, 122). 9th–11th-century bronze scabbard ends (Fig 7: 5) were, as all other weaponry types found at Mullutu, widespread in Saaremaa, but also in other areas, e.g. in Couronia (Kazakevičius 1998, 290–291; Tomsons 2018, 168–169).

A great number of Viking Age finds at Mullutu were connected with (international) trade (Fig. 8). Nearly all coins or coin fragments belonged to the period from the 9th to the 11th century, and more than half of them (23) were Cufic coins.² Approximately 2/3 of the latter were minted by the Samanid dynasty, the rest by the Abbasids. The coins, as well as other Viking Age finds, were widespread over the several hectares wide area, indicating that they had been lost during some activities and not been hidden as deposits.

About half of the 20 weights recorded at Mullutu so far were octagonal, the other half spherical. Some weights were made of lead (e.g. Fig. 8: 8, 9), others of bronze and iron, and most of them were covered with different signs marking their value. Two ingots, a silver and a bronze one (Fig. 8: 1, 6), can presumably also be dated to the Viking Age layer of the site. Small dog or horse figures (Fig. 8: 5) as at Mullutu have often been interpreted as weights as well, and normally dated to the 11th–12th century (Kiudsoo & Russow 2011, fig. 7; Tvauri 2014, 207).

² Identified by Ivar Leimus (AM).



Fig. 7. Some Viking Age weapons and equestrian equipment.

Jn 7. Viikingiaegseid relvi ja ratsaniku varustust.

(SM 10863: 52, 51, 245, 5, 68, 33, 36.)

Photo / Foto: Jaana Ratas



Fig. 8. Some finds from Mullutu, indicating trade.

Jn 8. Kaubandusega seotud leide Mullutust.

(SM 10863: 237, 183, 108, 137, 27, 186, 10, 151, 150, 77, 74, 76, 70, 71, 72, 73.)

Photo / Foto: Jaana Ratas and Ivar Leimus

Octagonal weights (e.g. Fig. 8: 7–8, 13–16) were rare finds among Estonian find material before the time of metal detectorists (Tvauri 2014, 206–207). Spherical weights were, on the other hand, very common finds. This difference can easily be explained by the fact that the use of the spherical weights seems to be longer than that of the octagonal weights, which smaller variants were in use mainly in the second half of the 9th and in the 10th century (Gustin 2004, 100–107, 314). Before the very last decades when settlements and harbour sites have been started to be archaeologically studied in Estonia (see e.g. Mägi 2020), nearly all weights originated from burials. The latter, however, only seldom contained grave goods before the very end of the 10th century.

More than 70 iron rivets or nails, as well as a number of unidentifiable iron items were recorded at Mullutu, almost all of them by archaeologists. Rusted iron items seldom attract attention of hobby metal detectorists, suggesting that the real number of such finds may have been several times higher. The same is true for iron tools that are often difficult to date – for instance a number of knives, a hoe, a sickle, or a drawing knife found at Mullutu. A significant part of these artefacts were probably lost when the site was used in the Viking Age.

Final Iron Age and medieval finds (12th–15th centuries)

Numerous grave goods in 12th-century cremation graves in Saaremaa have enabled a good knowledge of this period material culture, compared with the previous centuries. The more surprising was the shortage of clearly 12th-century finds at Mullutu. Still, several artefacts could be dated to the 11th–12th, or to the 12th–13th century. An axe (Fig. 9: 1), a belt buckle (Fig. 9: 2), a penannular brooch with poppy-shape terminals (Fig. 9: 5), a key (SM 10863: 238), a penannular brooch (Fig. 9: 4) or a scabbard end (Fig. 9: 3) can all be late Viking Age artefacts, or perhaps 12th-century items. 11th–13th-century penannular brooch with thickening terminals (Fig. 6: 3) is probably an import from Couronia (Griciuvienė 2009, 317, 339).



Fig. 9. 11th–12th century finds from Mullutu.

Jn 9. 11.–12. saj leide Mullutust.

(SM 10863: 50, 28, 25, 13, 194.)

Photo / Foto: Jaana Ratas

The number of 13th-century artefacts, including items dated to the 12th–13th century, is again larger, forming nearly one third of the find material at Mullutu. Several of them are penannular brooches of the same types as found in mainly 13th-century Christian inhumation graves in Saaremaa. These are mostly items with irregularly faceted terminals (e.g. Fig. 10: 7–8), or rolled terminals. The penannular brooch with lily-shaped terminals (Fig. 10: 5) and some finger-rings (SM 10863: 17, 18; Fig. 10: 4) may have been lost even as late as in the 14th century (compare e.g. Valk *et al.* 2014, 64, 157, 188, 217). An openwork cross-shaped pendant of silver resembles similar finds in Kaberla and Varbola, and can probably be dated to the end of the 12th or to the 13th century (Fig. 10: 9; compare Kurisoo 2013, fig. 23: 59). The same is true for some belt buckles (e.g. SM 10863: 210).



Fig. 10. Some 13th–14th-century finds from Mullutu.

Jn 10. 13.–14. saj leide Mullutust.

(SM 10863: 36, 251, 80, 17, 20, 7, 11, 6, 247.)

Photo / Foto: Jaana Ratas

Late 12th–13th-century finds connected with warriors are an arrow-head from a crossbow (Fig. 10: 3), a round sword pommel (Fig. 10: 1) and a horse bit (SM 10863: 251), perhaps also two axes (SM 10863: 60, 291) (Mandel 1991, 122; Ellis 2004, 127–128; Russow & Allmäe 2013, fig. 7).

Three finds can be dated to as late as the 15th century. One of them is a richly decorated knife handle (SM 10863: 31), the other one horse bits from the early 15th century (SM 10863: 287; see Nowakowski 1994, fig. 20). The third one is a bronze item formed as a scallop shell. It resembles 15th-century pilgrimage badges (Van Beuningen & Koldeweij 1993, fig. 216), but was probably a dress accessory inspired by religious motives and widely used in late medieval – early modern Estonia³ as well as elsewhere (Read 2008, 174).

LIFE CIRCLE OF A HARBOUR

The archaeological evidence at Mullutu resembles that from other archaeologically studied prehistoric harbour sites in Estonia as well as in its neighbouring countries. A number of personal items as ornaments and belt accessories, together with several tools, boat rivets, weights and some weapons have been reported in nearly all such sites (e.g. Lundström 1981, 117ff; Carlsson 1992; 1999; Edgren 1995; Mägi 2005; 2009). What is striking the eye at Mullutu, when compared with other excavated harbour sites in Saaremaa, is the shortage of pottery and (animal or fish) bones. It can, however, be explained by the very small area actually excavated at Mullutu (altogether 12.28 m²), while the rest of the area was studied with metal detectors. No graves, otherwise often recorded near prehistoric harbour sites (Lundström 1981, 117ff; Carlsson 1999; Mägi 2009), are known in the vicinity of Mullutu either.

The finds at Mullutu indicate that the site was most intensively exploited during the 9th–11th century, when it was used as a temporary landing place by sailors from different coasts of the Baltic Sea. The cultural layer at the concentration area of finds behind the beach-ridge indicates temporary camping places; whether there were also light buildings as, for instance, in the Viltina harbor site, is unknown (for Viltina, see Mägi 2009). Mullutu probably also functioned as an assemblage place for the locals, for instance for negotiations or gatherings for raids, or for governing assemblies *käraja*, the Estonian parallel to Scandinavian thing.

³ Pers. comm. Erki Russow (TLÜ AT).

The place was easily accessible in the region with numerous islands and well-developed maritime culture, and was located approximately at the border between three administrative districts, thus in a sort of No-Mans-Land. Most of the finds we know from Mullutu were presumably lost in the course of the activities taking place at the site, but some can also be small offerings.

The importance of the site ceased in the late 11th and the 12th century, even though it hardly fell totally out of use. Some late 11th or 12th-century artefact types that were very widespread in Saaremaa and normally found in most cultural layers of this time, e.g. some certain pins or belt fittings, were absent at Mullutu. No weapons from the 11th to 12th centuries have been recorded either. Considering that Viking Age Mullutu seems to have been strongly connected with the eastern trade, the cessation of it in the 11th century can be seen as another example of processes that influenced trading centres and harbours everywhere along the Baltic Sea. The end of the 10th century brought along crisis in the eastern trade, leading numerous places along the eastern routes to abandonment (Mägi 2018, 344–346). In Saaremaa, the same happened with, for instance, the Tornimäe harbour site and the Pöide hill fort, both located further east along the same sea route.

New life was brought to Mullutu in the late 12th and the 13th century. The finds from this period are, however, in many aspects different from the evidence of the Viking Age. The ornaments dated to the 13th, sometimes the 14th century, are entirely local and resemble those in early Christian burials in Saaremaa (see e.g. Mägi *et al.* 2019). These, as well as finds referring to warriors (a spur, a sword pommel) suggest that the site was now used by the local elite, who had kept their power regardless being Christianized by the Sword Brethren, the Riga Bishop and the town of Riga in 1227.

The present material at Mullutu does not indicate international trade in the 13th century or later. It could have been used, however, as a harbour for regional trade, or place for assemblages of the local elite families. The Osilians participated in several military actions of the 13th–14th centuries (Mägi 2004; 2011), and in these cases the navies may have gathered at Mullutu.

The final stage of the Mullutu site was closely connected with the development of Kuressaare, the present-day capital of Saaremaa, 6 km east of the Mullutu harbor (Fig. 1). Late 13th century remains of a plank road near the Kuressaare castle have been interpreted as the very first archaeological evidence of a harbour that emerged near the later castle (Püüa 2018). Intensive archaeological excavations have, however, proved that the Prince-bishop of Ösel-Wiek started to build a stone castle at Kuressaare only in the 1320s (Püüa *et al.* 2013; Püüa *et al.* 2016, 39–48; Püüa 2018). Some sort of settlement next to the castle has been first mentioned in written sources in 1427 (Pöltsum-Jürjo 2015), but the earliest finds from Kuressaare outside the castle date from the second half of the 16th century.⁴ It was also the century when Mullutu appeared in written sources. The area of the Mullutu landing place, or at least the arable lands in the present-day Mullutu village then belonged to an estate *Schulzenhof*, in 1560 centred in *Hakelwerk vor der Arensburgh*, that is, the settlement next to the castle of Kuressaare (Germ. *Arensburg*; Buxhövdén 1851, 73). Whether Mullutu belonged to the same estate with areas near Kuressaare already before, is unknown.

We can conclude that the harbour of Mullutu was quite intensively used in the 13th–early 14th century, when the castle of Kuressaare did not yet exist. Even if some activity took place in the probable harbour near the later castle of Kuressaare before the 1320s, there is

⁴ Found in 2021; information from Garel Püüa (SM), 13.06.2021.

no archaeological evidence of it. The site at Mullutu was controlled by the local elite, which may be one reason why the Prince-bishop built his castle in another place – he wanted to establish a centre entirely controlled by himself. However, there were other arguments why to prefer Kuressaare to Mullutu. The place chosen by the Prince-bishop was closer to the open sea, which was important in view of ships with deeper drafts. What is more, a river connected the chosen place for the castle with quarries in Kaarma, enabling easy transport of building material.

Mullutu was still used in the 14th–15th centuries, as indicated by the latest finds, but it may have lost a lot of its importance to the castle and the settlement that gradually started to take shape beside it. The harbour at Mullutu was finally abandoned in the 16th century, a process that was perhaps accelerated by trials to forbid trade through other harbours but Kuressaare (e.g. from 1541, Pöltsum-Jürjo 2015). After that, the coast at Mullutu was used only by local villagers to land with their boats.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research was supported by non-profit organisation Sokrates, Saaremaa Municipality, the foundation Osiliana and Tallinn University. The author thanks all detectorists and participants of the excavations for their kind assistance, and Tyge Andersen for proofing the language.

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VIIKINGI- JA KESKAEGNE SADAMAKOHT LÕUNA-SAAREMAAL MULLUTUS

Marika Mägi

Saaremaa raua- ja keskaegseid sadamakohti on uuritud viimased kakskümmend aastat ning mitmeid neist (Tornimäe, Viltina) on ka arheoloogiliselt kaevatud. Mullutu sadamakoht, kus 2020. aastal viidi läbi arheoloogilised detektoriuuringud ning avati viis väikest kaevandit, on seni uuritustest kindlasti kõige rahvusvahelisema iseloomuga.

Sadamakoht paikneb Kuressaarest lääne pool umbes 12 ha alal kunagise suure lahe kaldal, millest praeguseks on jäänud mitmed lahe-nimelised järved. Olulisim sissepääs lahte oli veel keskajal praeguse Nasva jõe kohal. Sadamakoha konkreetsema asukoha

tingis ilmselt ümbritsevast veidi järssem kaldalõik peaaegu lahe sissepääsu vastas, mis oli soodne väiksemate veesõidukite randumiseks.

Viikingiaegse Idatee ehk *Austrvegr*i üks haru kulges Ojamaalt üle avamere Saaremaale, läbi Salme väina piki saare lõunarannikut Lääne-Eesti rannikule ning sealt edasi Soome lahte. Viikingiaegne Mullutu sadamakoht oligi ilmselt mõeldud eeskätt laevade jaoks, mis soovisid ööseks randuda või otsisid tormivarju. Viljelusmaadest jääb koht 2–2,5 km kaugusele ning on praegugi väga perifeersel alal. Samas paikneb Mullutu sadamakoht Kaarma, Kärla ja Anseküla

kihelkondade kokkupuutepunktis ning oli varasemal ajal kergesti ligipääsetav. Tõenäoliselt oli see kogunemiskohaks Saaremaa eri piirkondadele, kuhu tuldi näiteks nõupidamisteks või koonduti sõjaretkedele minekuks. Intensiivset kohalikku kasutust näitavad muuhulgas rohked kohalikud ehted, mis on ilmselt sadamakohas tegutsemisel kaotatud.

Enamiku Mullutu sadamakoha atraktiivseid leide on kogunud hobidetektoristid ning nende leiukohad on kaardile märgitud mälu järgi. 2020. a arheoloogilised detektoriuuringud päädisid küll hulga leidudega, kuid suurem osa neist olid paadineedid, naelad, muud väiksemad rauatükid ning mündid või nende katked.

Mullutu sadamakoha ala märgistati tsoonideks, kus viidi läbi süstemaatiline detektoriuuring. Lisaks mõõdistati leidude kontsentratsiooniala kõrgused. U 100 m ulatuses oli looduslikult veidi järsem kallas arvatavasti inimkättega veelgi püstjaks kujundatud, nagu võib oletada ala selgete piiride järgi. Ilmselt paiknesid sellel joonel paadisillad ning nimetatud ala lähedusest leiti ka suur osa leidudest.

Piki järsemat kallast jooksis looduslik rannavall. Leiud kontsentreerusid sellest maa poole, arvatavast paadisildade alast vahetult kirdesse, umbes 0,6 ha alale. Siia tehti ka kaevandid nr 1 ja 2. Mõlemas neist paljandus nõrk kultuurkiht otse loodusliku paeklibukihhi peal, milles oli põlenud loomaluud ning üksikuid savinõukilde. Ilmselt olid siin, tuulte eest varjava rannavalli taga, paiknenud laagripitsid. Kas kusa-gil võis olla tegu ka kergete ehitistega, nagu näiteks Viltina sadamakohas, Mullutu uuringutel ei selgunud. Kaevand nr 3 tehti järsu kalda peale, nr 4 ja 5 aga sellest lõuna poole, kust oli samuti saadud märkimisvääärne kogus leide. Kaevandites 3–5 mingit kultuurkihti ei paljandunud, võib vaid märkida, et kaevandis nr 5 oli kiviklibu peal olev kiht liivakas ja eelnevatest veidi paksem.

Kõik leiud saadi õhukese mättakihi alt (paksus kohati vaid 3–5 cm, enamasti siiski u 10 cm), vahetult paeklibuse kihhi pealt või ülemiste kivide vahelt. Võib arvata, et kasutusajal oligi Mullutus sel kohal kivi-klibune rand ilma mulla või taimestikuta.

Umbes 70% dateeritavatest leidudest pärinesid 8.–11. sajandist. Suur osa neist olid ehted, sealhulgas mitmed Skandinaavia, Soome või Kuramaa päritolu ehted. Kolm E-tüüpi odaotsa, kannus ja jalus, samuti

mõned nooleotsad on kõik dateeritavad 9.–10. sajandisse. 20 kaaluvihhist olid pooled kaheksatahulised, pooled ümarad. Kaheksatahulised või fassetitud kaaluvihhid olid seni Eestis haruldased – ilmselt seetõttu, et nende leviku kõrgajast (9.–10. saj) on Eestis matusepanuste nappusest tingitult üldse vähe leide. Viimaste aastate detektoriuuringud osutavad, et ka fassetitud kaaluvihhid olid siiski siinmail tavalised ning neid võib Saaremaal leida pea kõigist tolaeagsest sadamakohtadest.

Mullutust saadud 43 münti või mündikatket dateeriti peaaegu kõik 9.–11. sajandisse. 23 münti olid kuufa mündid või nende katked ning osutasid seega veelkord koha olulisusele just viikingiaegse idakaubanduse seisukohalt. Mündid olid laiali kogu leiualal ning olid ilmselt Mullutus tegutsemisel kaotatud, mitte aardena maha maetud. Osa umbes seitsmekümnest seni teadaolevat paadineedist või naelast, samuti identifitseerimatutest raudesemetest või tööriistadest kuulus arvatavasti samuti viikingiaega.

Mõnevõrra üllatav oli kindlalt 12. sajandisse kuuluvate esemetüüpide puudumine Mullutus, kuigi osad esemed võis dateerida 11.–12 või 12.–13. sajandisse. Tundub, et 11. sajandi teisel poolel ja 12. sajandil on koha kasutamine soikunud, intensiivistudes taas 13. sajandil. Peaaegu kolmandik leidudest kuuluski 13. või vahel ka 14. sajandisse. 13. sajandi leiuaines oli siiski varasemast erinev – puudusid nii mündid kui ka muu rahvusvaheliste kontaktidele viitav. Leiti terve rida 13.–14. sajandi hoburaudsõlgi, mõõganupp, kannus, ristripats, mida kõike võib seostada 13.–14. sajandi Saaremaa kohaliku eliidiga. Kolm leidu kuulusid 15. sajandisse, mille järel Mullutu sadamakoht on ilmselt aktiivsest kasutusest kõrvale jäänud.

Mullutu sadamakoha kasutuse hilisem järk ja hääbumine näib olevat tihedalt seotud Kuressaare arenguga. Võimalik sadamakoht hilisema linnuse kohal sai alguse 13. saj lõpus, kuid kivilinnust hakati Kuressaarde ehitama alles 1320. aastatel. 1427. aastal on mainitud ka asulat linnuse kõrvale. Keskaegne Mullutu hakkas niisiis hääbuma samal ajal kui piiskop ehitas sellest 6 km kaugusele oma linnuse. Kui 15. sajandiks oli linnuse ning sellega seotud sadamakoha kõrvale tekkinud ka asula, jäi Mullutu kasutusse üksnes kohalike talumajapidamiste merelemineku kohana.