

Introduction

The aim of the project, called *Keava – ‘The Hand of the Sun’*, was to investigate one of the largest Viking-Age centres in Estonia located in the surroundings of Keava, in prehistoric southern Harju district (now in its major part Rapla County), northern Estonia. One hill fort and two settlement sites were known of this centre prior to the fieldwork, none of which was excavated; some new sites were discovered and investigated later in the course of the project (Fig. 1).

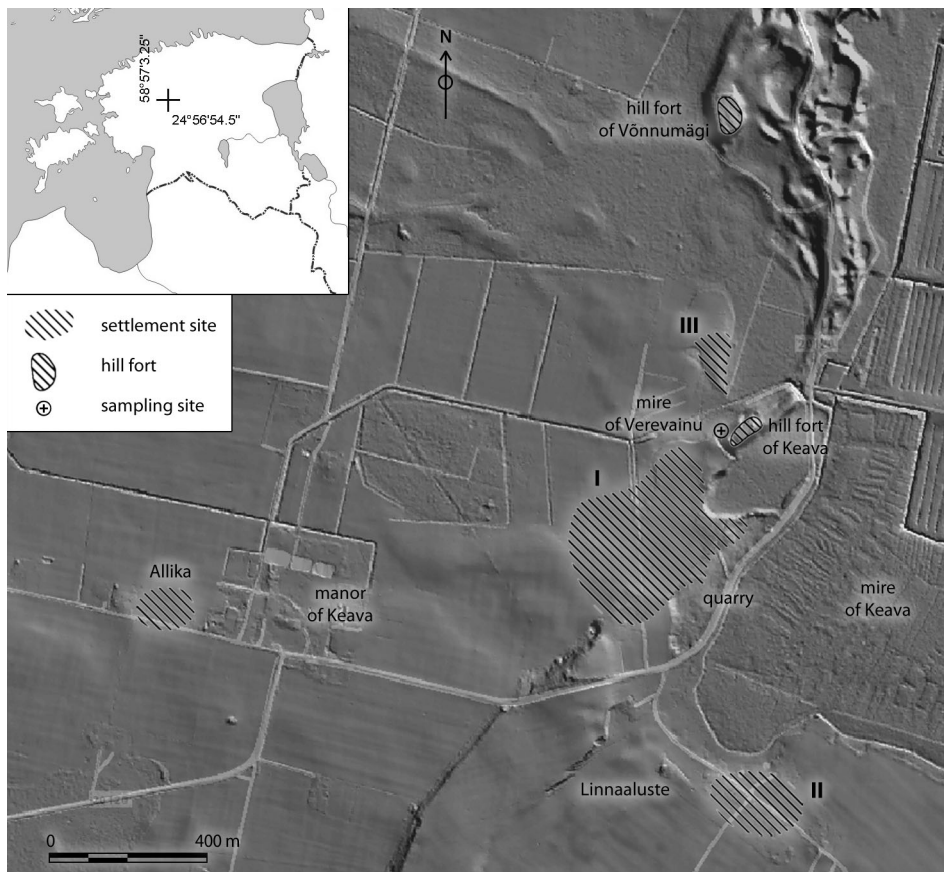


Fig. 1. Archaeological sites at Keava (map: Estonian Land Board).

The importance of Keava was evident from the early East Slavonic chronicles. After the capture of Tartu in 1030, the Rus' princes tried to enlarge their power over other districts of Estonia as well. For this purpose, Izjaslav, the Grand Prince of Kiev, captured a hill fort that was called *Kedipiv* in either 1054–1055 or 1057–1060 (about the problem of dating see more in chapter 10; Vahtre 1992; Tvauri 2012, 34 and references therein). This place name was also translated into Russian – *Solntsa Ruka* ('The Hand of the Sun'). As Keava was still in 1410 called *Kedenpe*, and there was a manor called *Kedenpäh* since the late 15th century, it seems very probable that both the old *Kedipiv/Kedenpe* and modern Keava mean the same place (see more in chapter 10). Thus, the checking of the connection between Keava and prehistoric *Kedipiv* – and, hence, the military campaign of Izjaslav – became one of the tasks of the archaeological excavations. But it was not the only or even the main task of our project.

Though the hill fort at Keava was already localized and known a long time ago, the two settlement sites mentioned above had been discovered recently. The preliminary investigation proved that site I of Linnaaluste, located adjacently at the foot of the hill fort, covers an area of at least 8 ha and has – at least in some places – a rather thick and intensively black occupation layer. Surface finds discovered during the field-walking dated the site to the Viking and (late) Middle Ages. Site II of Linnaaluste was situated in the area of the present-day village of Linnaaluste, half a kilometre from the fort. This site turned out to be smaller in size than site I (ca 4 ha) and later in sequence. Thus, we could conclude that we were dealing with a very significant complex of antiquities, perhaps one of the largest in Viking-Age (ca 800–1050) Estonia. The archaeological investigation of this complex with the purpose to obtain more information about prehistoric centres and social structure of society behind them was urgently needed.

At the same time, one had to keep in mind that a centre like this could not develop in isolation. It had obviously been a centre of a relatively large territory the dimensions and location of which were not known. Therefore it was also important to study the nearest vicinity of Keava – that is, to establish the history of the region under question by means of thorough landscape inventories and trial excavations. In addition to archaeological evidence there also exist good written sources concerning the southern part of the Harju district – the *Liber Census Daniae* (below: LCD) or *Kong Valdemars Jordebog* from the early 13th century, and a series of account books from the 16th century. The LCD contains, among other records, also the register of northern Estonian villages together with the number of their ploughlands, compiled most probably in 1241 (see Johansen 1933). These important sources offered an opportunity to study late prehistoric and early medieval settlement structures more thoroughly than is usually the case when facing only archaeological records.

This collection of articles thus contributes to the research into (late) prehistoric hill forts, settlement sites, and fort-and-settlement centres in Estonia. That research started with systematic archaeological excavations at hill forts already in the late 1930s and its first results concerning the chronology and typology of fortifications

were synthesized by Harri Moora (1939a; 1955; 1967). Settlement sites located at the foot of many hill forts – although randomly also excavated since the 1930s and 1950s (e.g. Iru and Rõuge) – did not become the subject of more thorough investigation much before the 1970s and 1980s. According to Moora (1967), such fort-and-settlement centres of the late first millennium AD belonged to emerging chiefs whereas the chiefs lived in the forts and their tribes (the commoners) in the villages located next to the hill forts. Principally the same opinion of tribal organization behind the fort-and-settlement centres was pointed out by our later prominent hill fort researcher Evald Tõnisson (Tynisson 1987; 1988, 18 f.): smaller forts (e.g. Rõuge) were supposed to have been occupied by chiefs and their families; larger forts (e.g. Pada II) were fortifications of whole communities (tribes) living in open settlement sites nearby. At least in some cases the fort-and-settlement centres were believed to have served as administrative centres of larger territorial units, emerging prehistoric parishes (Est. *kihelkond*) or even districts (*maakond*) with several parishes (e.g. Jaanits et al. 1982, 302; Tamla 1987; 1996; Lang 1996).

The hill forts of the Final Iron Age (late 11th – early 13th century), considering their social background, have been divided into two main groups already since the first generalizations made by Moora (1939a; 1955). On the one hand, there have been relatively smaller but well fortified forts (e.g. Lõhavere) that are interpreted as strongholds of families of chiefs and their retainers. The other group consists of much larger fortifications (e.g. Varbola), regarded as strongholds of bigger territorial units, such as prehistoric parishes and districts (see Tynisson 1987; 1988), or even early urban centres (Laid 1939; Lang 2004). As a rule, the hill forts of either group were no longer directly connected with open settlement sites, as it had been the case by fort-and-settlement centres in the Viking Age. The reasons of this disconnection have not been thoroughly discussed in Estonian archaeological literature so far but some new ideas can be found in this volume (chapters 3 and 11).

Despite a large number of archaeological excavations on our hill forts and adjacent settlement sites, only few of them are properly published. Therefore the current volume offers a possibility to get acquainted with one of Estonian Middle- and Late-Iron Age hill forts together with other contemporary sites in its surroundings. As some earlier traces of human occupation were also discovered during the fieldwork, the aim of this volume is the analysis of settlement history in the entire Keava area from a long-time perspective.

The archaeological excavations and inventories at Keava and in its surroundings took six years, from 2001 to 2006; they were organized by the Chair of Archaeology at the University of Tartu. The fieldwork was mainly concentrated on the study of the two hill forts – at Keava and the one located on the hill of Võnnumägi 750 m north of the latter, discovered during the project in 2002. The three settlement sites of Linnaaluste – the third one was discovered during the project – were investigated with minor excavations and surface survey. In addition, there were also some excavations carried out on a birch bark formation that was discovered at the foot of the hill fort of Keava and on a holy grove hill Hiimägi at Paluküla, which is situated a few kilometres away from the settlement centre at Keava.

Palaeo-ecological research into the environmental history and human impact was carried out with the help of the researchers from the Institute of Geology of the Tallinn University of Technology.

As the first preliminary results of the fieldwork have already been published in the yearbook of archaeological fieldwork in Estonia and elsewhere (Konsa et al. 2002; 2003; Lang et al. 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; see also Lang & Konsa 2004; Heinsalu & Veski 2010), the aim of the current publication was, therefore, to provide a more detailed analysis of the sites archaeologically excavated within the Keava project. The first chapter of the volume (written by Valter Lang) analyses the building and fortification remains found at the hill fort of Keava, which was the central focus of the project, while chapter 3 by Marge Konsa and Kristel Kivi handles the discovered features in settlement sites I–III at Linnaaluste. The artefactual finds recovered during the excavations at both the hill fort and settlement sites are discussed in chapters 2 (Andres Tvauri) and 4 (Heidi Luik); the osteological evidence is presented in chapter 5 (Liina Maldre). The sixth chapter written by Kristiina Johanson is dedicated to the study and changing interpretations of the birch-bark pavement at the foot of the hill fort. The results of excavations at newly discovered hill fort at Võnnumägi are analysed by Lang and Margot Laneman in chapter 7. The eighth chapter by Tõnno Jonuks gives an overview on late prehistoric and historical holy sites in Rapla and Juuru parishes that in geographical terms form a wider background for the settlement centre at Keava; this study proceeded from the excavations at Paluküla *hiis*-hill, carried out within the project. The pollen-analytical evidence and its comparison with archaeological data of the surroundings of Keava are presented in chapter 9 by Lang, Siim Veski and Atko Heinsalu. In chapter 10, Ain Mäesalu discusses the written evidence on Keava and the campaign of Prince Izjaslav in early East Slavonic chronicles. The last, eleventh chapter written by Lang summarizes the results of the whole project putting the Keava centre into a wider archaeological, geographical, and socio-political framework. The chapters were mostly written during 2008–2010, a few even in 2011; the translation and editing took place in 2010 and 2011.

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