



Archaeological investigations in the cemetery of Liu

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INTRODUCTION

During the period from 2021 to 2023, several archaeological investigations were carried out in the pit-grave cemetery and chapel site, located in the village of Liu (no. 11723 in the National Registry of Cultural Monuments; Pärnu County; Fig. 1). Some of these studies were small-scale necessitated by the installation of electric cables, while others aimed to determine the boundaries of the burial ground. The latter took place in the years 2021 and 2023, and the following text focuses on these (Vedru 2021; 2023).

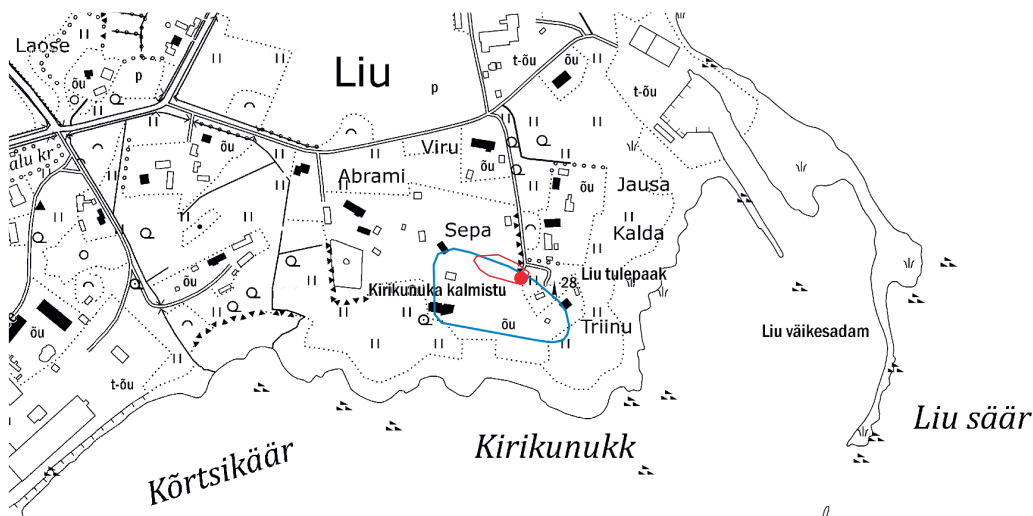


Fig. 1. Liu cemetery with its present (blue) and specified (red) borders. The red dot marks the location of a possible building site.

Jn 1. Liu kalmistu koos praeguste (sinine) ja tegelike (punane) piiridega. Punane täpik tähistab võimaliku hoone asukohta.

Base map / Aluskaart: Land Board of Estonia / Maa-amet; measuring / mõõdistus: OÜ Tippgeo; additions / täiendused: Gurly Vedru

LIU CEMETERY AND INFORMATION ABOUT IT PRIOR TO THE 2021 AND 2023 FIELDWORKS

Liu village and cemetery are located on the Liu Cape, bordered by the Pärnu Bay on its southern and eastern sides. Although there are also some lands suitable for agriculture, the settlement has been oriented more towards the sea and maritime activities. It is probable that both the cemetery and the chapel in Liu were once located not far from the seashore, and the chapel acted as a landmark for those coming from the sea.

In the Middle Ages, this area belonged to the parish of Alt-Pernau. The vicar of the church of Alt-Pernau used to hold masses both in the chapel of Liu and the chapel of St Martinus, located a little further to the north, in the village of Lindi (then Sarvi; Luhamets 2024). Both sanctuaries were probably destroyed in the Polish–Swedish war at the beginning of the 17th century.

Written sources about the chapel and cemetery of Liu are relatively scarce. Liu cemetery was first described by Jaan Jung in 1898. He described it as a stone grave which people called the site of a church. Jung considered it possible that the site might have been ‘a stone where corpses were cremated in the past, since such places are often called church sites’. He also knew local oral lore about money buried under those stones, but that money, despite searching, was never found (Jung 1898, 98).

A more detailed description comes from a manuscript ‘Ancient remains of Tõstama’, compiled in 1922. Its author Sinaida Seemann, described the chapel and the cemetery in Liu along with other archaeological sites in Tõstamaa parish. According to her, the chapel of Liu was destroyed by the military activity from the sea during the Swedish era. At the time of compiling the parish description, a strong foundation was still in place there, surrounded by clay and pieces of bricks, which were not found anywhere else in the surrounding area. The building was located on a small hillock by the sea. Further inland from the chapel was a cemetery. The length of the burial ground was approximately 35 metres in the north-south direction and about 25 metres in the east-west direction. A large number of bones had been found in the area, that had previously been surrounded by a fence made of granite stones. Coins from the 17th century and pieces of wooden planks, interpreted as remains of coffins, had previously been found in the cemetery. In addition, possible medieval coins and a brooch were also found there (Seemann 1922, 12). The same text is also given in the description of the archaeological objects of Tõstamaa parish, compiled ten years later (Reili 1932, 15, 16). Dictionary of Estonian Place Names also cites a reference from the year 1927 describing a ‘Swedish church in Liu, where human bones have recently been unearthed and money (coins) have been found’ (KNR, 330). Thus several mentions of Liu church are known from the beginning of the 20th century.

According to local historian Theodor Saare, Liu chapel resembled the wooden church of Ruhnu. He stated that the chapel did not have a stone foundation, only its corners rested on large granite stones (Roots 2020). That description differs significantly from the previous one, according to which the chapel’s strong foundation made of stones had still preserved in 1922. It is not known why these two descriptions are so different. It is possible, that the foundation of the chapel was destroyed during World War II, when several trenches were dug and firing pits were established in the lands of Liu village.

In 1995, Eduard Rajari, Head of the Pärnu County department of the National Heritage Board (MA), inspected the cemetery. He recorded local oral lore, carried out a landscape inventory and mapped the site. He did not carry out test excavations. As a result of his work, an area

measuring ca. 160 metres from the southeast to the northwest and with a maximum width of 85 metres was taken under protection. This area included both the cemetery and the possible chapel site, and these borders are currently valid for the protected archaeological site.

Unfortunately, no additional information concerning the Liu cemetery and/or the chapel can be found on any historical map. The oldest image of Liu village dates back to the second half of the 17th century (Fig. 2). That map shows a fairly large village with households located together in the southeastern part of the present village. There is no chapel or cemetery on that map. This can probably be explained by the fact that the chapel had been destroyed more than half a century earlier and its visible remains could no longer be traced in the landscape. At the same time, there is an empty area between the households – this may have been the cemetery, the location of which was still known at that time, and therefore no buildings were erected on it.

The chapel is not depicted in the atlas of Mellin, compiled in the late 18th–early 19th century. In addition to the village, it shows the location of an outpost of the Boarder Guard. On the same map, the ruins of a church or a chapel are shown on the lands of Pootsi village, further to the southwest. Was there an abandoned church also in the village of Pootsi, or did the compiler of the map make a mistake in its location, placing it in a different place near the sea? Historically the village of Liu belonged to the Pootsi manor, and this could also be the reason why the chapel might have ended up in the wrong place on the map. As this remains unclear, we should accept that no depiction of Liu cemetery or chapel exists.



Fig. 2. Liu village on the plan compiled in the second half of the 17th century. Liu village is surrounded by a black line, the location of Liu cemetery is surrounded by a blue line. There were no households in the location of the cemetery.

Jn 2. Liu küla 17. sajandi teisel poolel koostatud kaardil. Liu küla on ümbritsetud musta ringjoonega, Kirikunuka kalmistu asukoht aga sinise ringjoonega. Kalmistu asukohas majapidamisi ei paiknenud.

(RA, EAA.308.2.15, l. 1.)

THE AIM AND METHODOLOGY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES IN 2021 AND 2023

The main aim of the archaeological investigations at Liu cemetery was to determine its boundaries and age. In 2021, the north-east, east and south-east parts of the cemetery were studied, as well as the area to the north-east, east and south-east of it. Test pits were dug manually and the whole area was checked with a metal detector. These investigations helped determine the boundary of the cemetery in those quarters.

In 2023, the focus was on the main part of the monument located on the present Sepa property. A backhoe was used to remove thin layers of soil until the upper parts of the grave pits were exposed. Removed soil was checked manually and with a metal detector. The area was checked with a metal detector also after the uppermost layer of the grave pits was un-earthed, although possible finds/coffin nails were not dug up. After identifying the location of the core area of the cemetery, the extent of the burial area was determined. For this purpose and for localizing possible distant/separate burials, trenches and test pits were dug at the edges of the cemetery.

THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY OF LIU CEMETERY

The area with burials in Liu cemetery measures ca. 65 metres in the east-west and ca. 32 metres in the north-south direction. Most of the cemetery is located on the current Sepa property, presently covering an area with up to 50 burials (Fig. 3A). Presumably, the dead were laid here in one layer, and there were no loose bone fragments between the grave pits. Burials are located relatively irregularly with a distance of 0.6–1.2 metres between them.

Grave pits, slightly darker than the surrounding sandy soil, were visible at the depth of 15–50 cm beneath the present surface (Figs 3B, 4, 5). The grave pits located on the northern and eastern edge of the cemetery area were covered with a thicker layer of soil, while the earthworks have been carried out there, including both wartime trenches and the present landscaping.



Fig. 3. A. Liu cemetery and its closest vicinity. Gray marks graves, green trenches. 1 – areas of test pits and detector studies, 2 – areas of trenches, test pits and investigations that accompanied excavation work, including detector studies. B. View to the core area of the cemetery. In the upper part of the photo are two trenches, with grave pits in each.

Jn 3. A. Liu kalmistu koos lähima ümbrusega. Hall tähistab haudu, roheline tranšeesid. 1 – alad, kuhu kaevati proovišurfe ja kus teostati detektoriuuringuid, 2 – alad, kuhu kaevati proovišurfe ja tranšeesid ning kus viidi läbi erinevate kaevetöödega kaasnenud uuringuid koos detektoriuuringutega. B. Vaade kalmistu tuumikalale. Üleval on kaks tranšeed, mõlemas on haulohud.

Drawing / Joonis: Gurly Vedru; photo / foto: Reet Maldre

All the graves in Liu cemetery are oriented approximately in the east-west direction, with a slight inclination towards the east-north-east – west-south-west. Thus, the burials originate from the Christian era.

Grave pits were mostly two metres long and ca. 0.5 m wide. One grave pit was remarkably wider than the others, it is possible that two people were buried in it, the rest were single burials. In all, the actual size of the cemetery is smaller than determined by Eduard Rajari and larger than depicted in the parish description.

DISCUSSION: LIU CEMETERY AND ITS LOST CHAPEL

The ground plan of Liu cemetery overlaps reasonably well with the boundaries set by Eduard Rajari, but the burial area is somewhat smaller. In general, the coverage of the formerly and presently established boundaries is good. The location map compiled by Rajari also indicates the location of the chapel, which could not be located despite searches on that spot.

Why was the chapel not found when it most certainly existed? The main arguments supporting the existence of a chapel are the aforementioned written sources, according to which the vicar of Alt-Pernau church held masses in Liu chapel. Chapels located on the coast are known in several places, for example in the villages of Juminda, Ihasalu and Pihlaspea in North Estonia. The last two places also had small cemeteries surrounding the chapels (Vedru 2014). Based on the parallels in North Estonia, it can be assumed that the chapel of Liu must have been a small building – apparently there was neither need nor opportunity for the construction and maintenance of a larger chapel.

On the other hand, recent studies of the Saastna chapel – located ca. 64 km from Liu – have shown that it was a larger stone building. This chapel was located along a once important sea route and this may also explain its size and the amount of construction work there (Pärn *et al.* 2023).

The chapel of Liu has been described as a wooden structure that rested on stones only at its corners. However, considering the defensive trenches dug during the war, these stones may have been pushed aside from their original location, later they may have been used in



Fig. 4. Grave pit in the core area of the cemetery. View from SSE.

Jn 4. Haulohk kalmistu tuumikalal. Vaade lõunakagust. Photo / Foto: Gurly Vedru



Fig. 5. Grave pit with a distinctive shape in the central part of the cemetery. View from S.

Jn 5. Erilise kujuga haulohk kalmistu keskosas. Vaade lõuna poolt.

Photo / Foto: Gurly Vedru

stone fences. At the same time, in the 1920s a strong and well-observable foundation has been recorded, which may have belonged either to the chapel or to an earlier farm building.

At the spot which Eduard Rajari interpreted as the location of the chapel, there is a pile of sand in the vicinity of trenches and nothing testifies that the foundation of a former building may have been found.

However, during the investigations, one place was localized as a possible site of a building. This area measuring ca. 3 × 7 metres is located in the southeastern corner of the cemetery within its new borders (Fig. 1). On the site of the possible building nails, mounts and their fragments as well as fragments of ornaments were found. In addition, two coins of Livonian Order (AI 8424: 1, 5) and three Swedish coins, minted in the second half of the 17th century (AI 8424: 2–4)¹ were unearthed. The older coins probably date from the time when the cemetery was used, while others are later in date. Although there is a chance that the coins from the Swedish era may have ended up here during the habitation, the possibility that they were donations to an earlier chapel site cannot be ruled out. Especially since outside of the cemetery area only a single coin from the 17th century and another from the 18th century (AI 8424: 20, 21) were found. Could there have been a Swedish era (i.e., 17th-century) building at that site? Maybe, but despite digging test pits, no pieces of ceramics or animal bones, charcoal or burned stones, characteristic to a settlement site, were found. The fact that coins were sacrificed at the aforementioned Saastna chapel site even in the 18th century – several centuries after the chapel itself was demolished, also confirms the suggestion that the location where coins were left, had mental importance for people. Thus, hypothetically, this place could be interpreted as a possible location of the chapel.

CONCLUSIONS

The boundaries of Liu cemetery were determined during the investigations of 2021 and 2023. The cemetery is somewhat smaller than the currently protected area, but its external shape is very similar – it is an elongated area in the southeast–northwest direction, where approximately 50 people are buried. It was not possible to find out the exact location of the chapel. However, it can be suggested that the chapel stood on the southeastern edge of the cemetery where a site of a former building was located.

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¹ The coins were determined by Mauri Kiudsoo (TLÜ AT).

ARHEOLOOGILISED UURINGUD LIU KALMISTUL

Gurly Vedru

Ajavahemikus 2021–2023 toimusid mitmed arheoloogilised uuringud Liu külas muinsuskaitse all oleval kalmistul (reg-nr 11723). Osa uuringutest olid väikesemahulised ning seotud elektriikaablite paigaldamisega, aiapostide kaevamisega ning muude väikesemate kaevetega, teine osa aga mälestise piiride täpsustamisega. Viimased leidsid aset 2021. ja 2023. aastal ning just nende tulemustele keskendubki käesolev artikkel.

Liu maaninal paiknev Liu küla piirneb lõuna ja ida poolt Pärnu lahega. Ajalooliselt oli sinne asustus suunatud merele ning merenduslikule tegevusele. Nii kalmistu kui ka selle juures olnud kabel paiknesid veepiiri lähistel ning ilmselt oli rannikul paiknev kabel merelt tulijatele maamärgiks.

Keskajal kuulus sinne piirkond Vana-Pärnu kihelkonda ning Vana-Pärnu kiriku vikaar käis teenistusi pidamas nii Liu kabelis kui ka sellest pisut kaugemale põhja poole jäänud Lindi (tolleaegses Sarvi) külas asunud Martinuse kabelis. Mõlemad pühakojad hävisid arvatavasti Poola–Rootsi sõjas 17. sajandi algul.

Kirjalikud allikad Liu kabelist ja kalmistust on suhteliselt napid. Liu kalmistut kirjeldas esmakordselt Jaan Jung 1898. aastal. Tema vaates seda kui kivikalmet, mida rahvas kirikuasemeks nimetas. Jung mainis ka kohalikku pärimust, mille kohaselt siin kivi(de) all olla rahasid, mida otsimisest hoolimata leitud pole. Ajas järgmine kirjeldus pärineb aastal 1922 koostatud käsikirjalisest ülevaatest „Tõstama muinasjäänused“. Selle kohaselt oli siin kalmistu ja kabel. Viimane asus mere ääres madalal künkal, kalmistu jäi sellest sise-maa poole. Matmispaiga mõõtmed olid põhja–lõuna suunas u 35 meetrit ning ida–lääne suunas u 25 m. Varem raudkividest aiaga ümbritsetud kalmistult olla leitud arvukalt inimluid, aga ka kirstulaudade katkeid ning keskaegseid ja rootsiaegseid münte. Kabelist oli sel ajal säilinud tugev vundament, mille ümber oli savi ja punaste telliste tükikesi.

Kodu-uurija Theodor Saare andmetel sarnanes Liu kabel Ruhnu puukirikule. Tema hinnangul ei olnud kabelil kividest vundamenti, üksnes selle nurgad toetusid suurtele kividele.

1995. aastal käis kalmistut inspekteerimas tolle-aegse Muinsuskaitseameti Pärnumaa osakonna juhataja Eduard Rajari. Ta küsitles kohalikke ja teostas maastikuvaatlust. Proovikaevamisi ta siiski ei teinud. Rajari uuringute põhjal võeti gi kalmistu ja kabeliase riikliku kaitse alla.

Ühelgi ajaloolisel kaardil Liu kalmistut ja kabelit kujutatud ei ole. Seega põhinesid kalmistu senised

piirid kohalike kogutud andmetel ning maastikuvaatlusel. 2021. ja 2023. aasta uuringutega taheti välja selgitada matmispaiga täpseid piire ning kabeli asukohta.

2021. aastal uuriti mälestise kirde-, ida- ja kagupoolset osa ning sellest omakorda kirde-, ida- ja kagu poole jäävat ala kuni mereni. Uuringute käigus kontrolliti seda ala metallidetektoriga ning kaevati proovisurfe. Tööde tulemusel määratigi kindlaks matmispaiga piir nendes ilmakaartes. 2023. aastal keskenduti mälestise põhiosale Sepa kinnistul. Ekskavaatoril lasti eemaldada õhukesi pinnasekihte kuni haulohkude ilmneniseni. Eemaldatav pinnas kontrolliti visuaalselt ning metallidetektoriga. Pärast kalmistu tuumikala asukoha välja selgitamist tehti kindlaks matustega ala ulatus. Selleks ning võimalike kauge-mate/omaette paiknevate matuste lokaliseerimiseks kaevati kalmistuala servadesse nii ekskavaatoriga kui ka käsitsi tranšeesisid ning šurfe.

Selgus, et Liu kalmistu matustega ala ulatus on ida–lääne suunas u 65 meetrit ja põhja–lõuna suunas u 32 meetrit. Selle väliskuju sarnaneb Rajari poolt antuga, kuid on sellest mõnevõrra väiksem. Suurem osa matmispaigast asub praegusel Sepa kinnistul, kus on kuni 50 matusega kalmistu. Arvatavasti on surnud siia sängitatud ühes kihis. Matused paiknevad suhteliselt ebakorrapäraselt, nende vahele jääb 0,6–1,2 meetrit.

Ümbritsevast liivapinnasest pisut tumedamat tooni haulohud tulid nähtavale praegusest maapinnast 15–50 cm sügavusel. Haulohkude peale jäi rohkem pinnast kalmistuala põhja- ja idapoolsel serval, kus on hiljem tehtud pinnasetöid, sealhulgas kaevatud kaevikuid ning hiljem ladestatud ka pinnast juurde. Kõik Liu kalmistu haulohud on ligilähedaselt ida–lääne suunalised, kaldudes õige pisut idakirde–lääneloode poole, seega on tegu kristlike matustega. Haulohud olid keskmiselt u kahe meetri pikkused ja 0,5 m laiused. Üks haulohk oli teistest laiem, mistõttu võib oletada, et sellesse on sängitatud kaks inimest, ülejäänud olid üksikmatused.

Välitöödega ei õnnestunud välja selgitada kabeli asukohta. Siiski lokaliseeriti kalmistu kagupoolsel piiril väikesemõõtmelise hoone asukoht. Sellelt leiti naelu, naaste ja nende katkeid, ehete fragmente ning 15. ja 17. sajandi münte. Vanemad mündid pärinevad eeldatavasti kalmistu kasutuse ajast, teised on aga hilisemad. Ning kuigi on võimalik, et rootsiaegsed mündid võivad siia olla sattunud külaelu käigus, ei saa lõplikult välistada ka võimalust, et need on

annetused varasemasse kabelikohta. Seda enam, et väljastpoolt kalmistut leiti kogu ülejäänud alalt vaid üks 17. sajandi ning üks 18. sajandi münt. Kohas võis olla rootsiaegne hoone, kuid hoolimata šurfimisest ei õnnestunud sealt leida elupaikadele iseloomulikke savinõude kilde ega ka loomaluid. Seega võiks hüpoteetiliselt pidada seda paika kabeli võimalikuks asukohaks.

Kokkuvõtvalt võib öelda, et Liu kalmistu uurin-gutega täpsustati matmispaiga piire. Kalmistu on

mõnevõrra väiksem praegu kaitstavast alast, kuid selle väliskuju on väga sarnane – tegu on idakagu-lääneloode suunalise pikliku alaga, kuhu on maetud hinnanguliselt u 50 inimest. Kabeli asukohta välja selgitada ei õnnestunud, kuid selleks võib olla matmispaiga idakagupoolses servas asunud koht, arvatav hoone asupaik. Viimaselt leiti ka eriaegseid münte, mis võiksid olla tõendiks kabelikohta tehtud ohverdustest.