

FOUNDATION OSILIANA

**Research and Information Centre for
the early history of Saaremaa**



Osiliana



TALLINN UNIVERSITY

Marika Mägi

SA Osiliana / Tallinn University

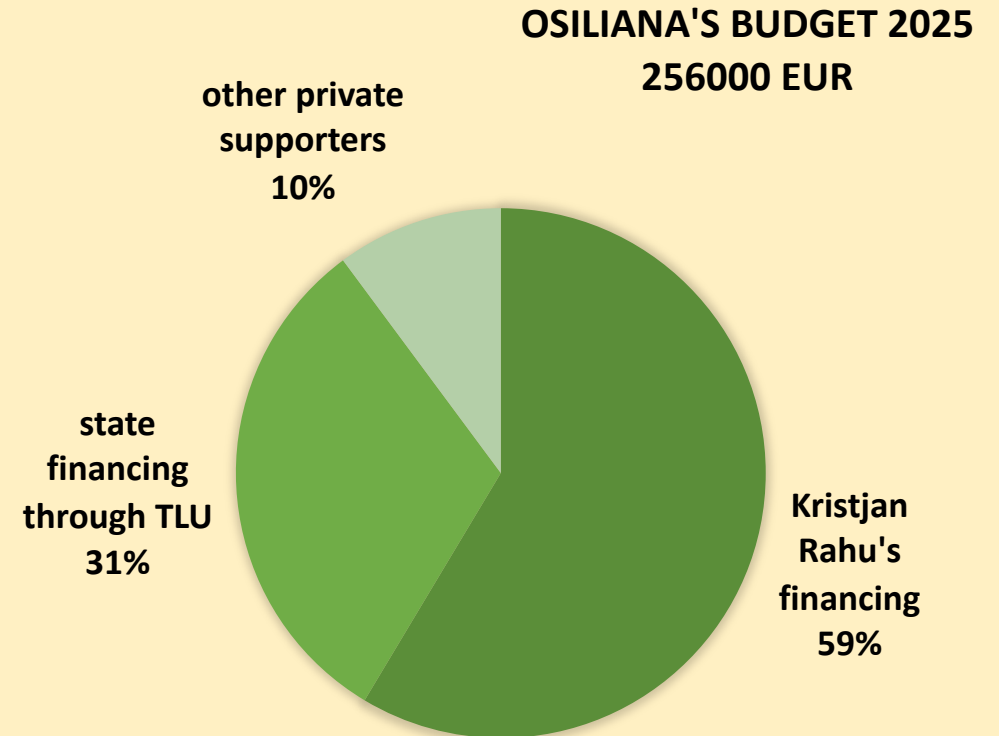


www.osiliana.eu

Founded by Kristjan Rahu in 2020

Objectives and Action Plan

- promotion of Saaremaa's early history
- study of new archaeological sites found in Saaremaa and Muhu
- website and information centre
- academic research



2025:

Head of the Foundation: Marika Mägi

altogether 5 employees, 4 of them half-time

during fieldworks 5-15 employees



Cooperating closely with:

- **Tallinn University**
- **Saaremaa Museum**
- **The National Heritage Board, Estonia**

Study of new archaeological sites found in Saaremaa and Muhu

- Ure, 3rd-4th-Century sacrificial place





Propeller-shaped belt mounts

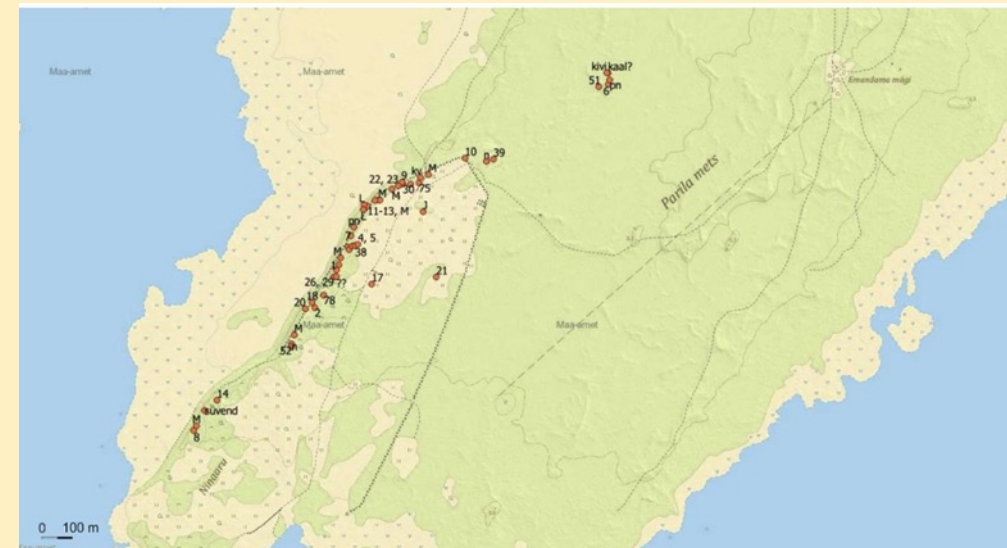
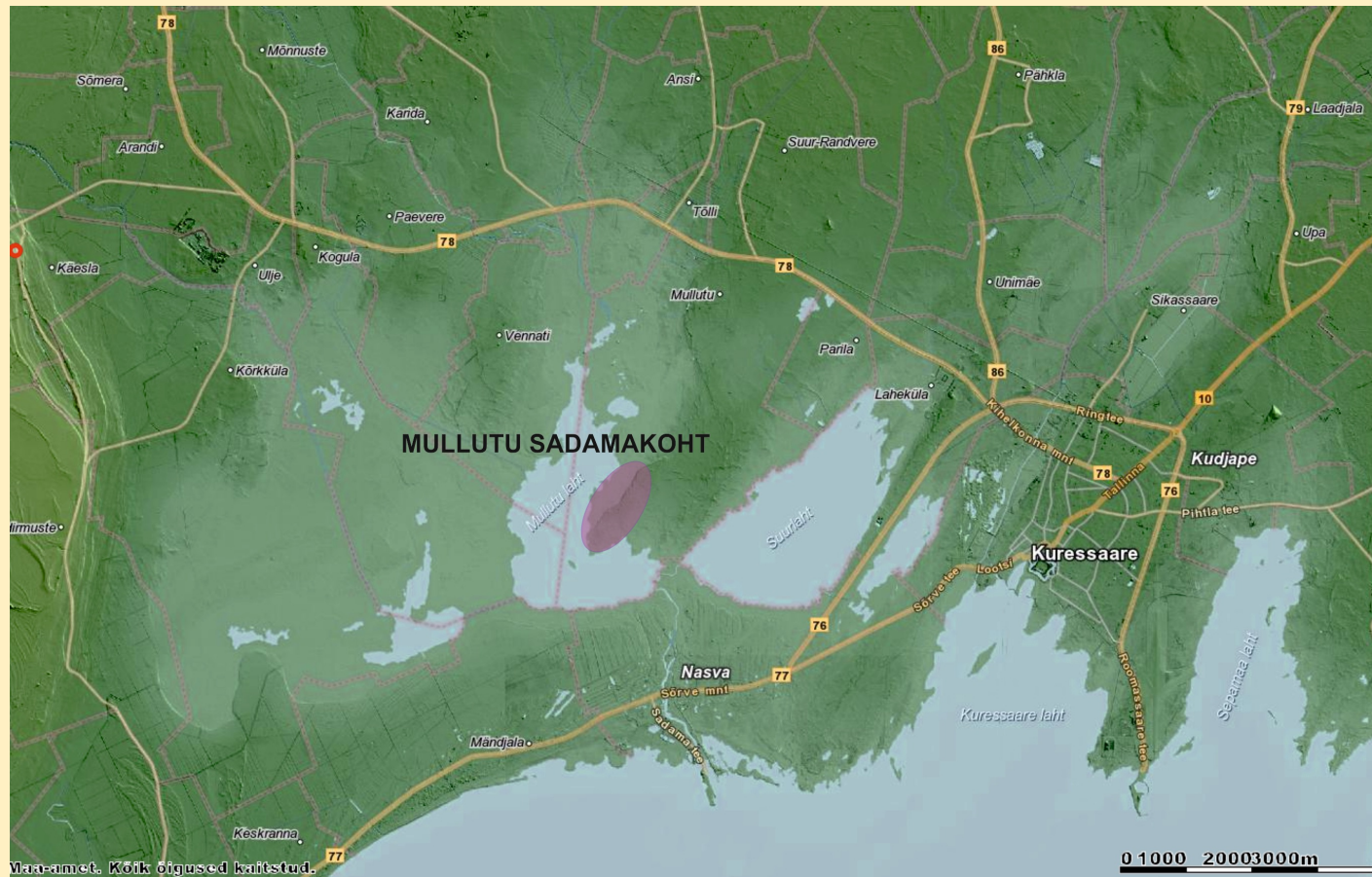


Sword-belt decorated with similar mounts from Nydam



Local jewellery from Ure

Mullutu harbour site 8th-14th century



Mullutu



Mullutu



- **Single finds:**



Gotlandic animal-head brooch



6th-7th-Century Finnish
Brooch from Vana-Lahetaguse

Destroyed stone graves:
Lõmala



A photograph of a large, circular, rusted metal object, possibly a brooch or a ring, with a central horizontal bar featuring four circular indentations. A ruler is placed below the object for scale, showing measurements in centimeters.



Muhu Laheküla



Upa

Länga finds and the Great Coastal road



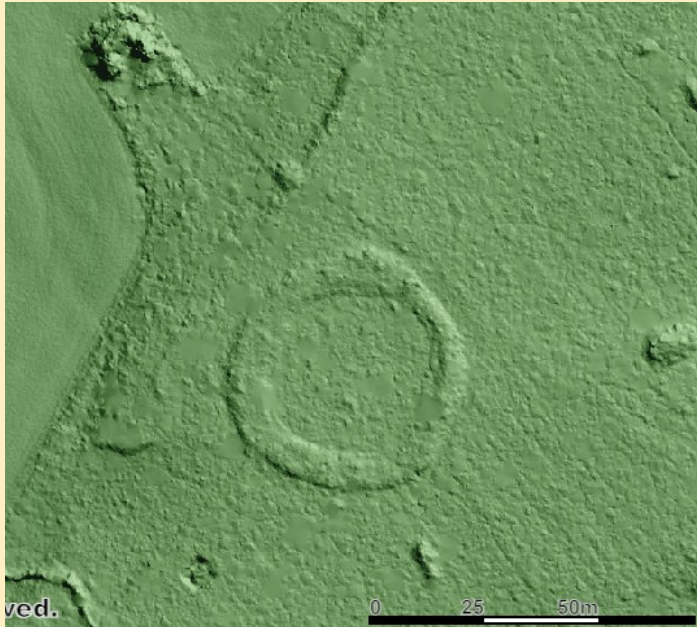
Gathering places? Ritual sites?

Väljaküla



Structures visible on relief map:

Valjala 8th-9th-Century ringfort



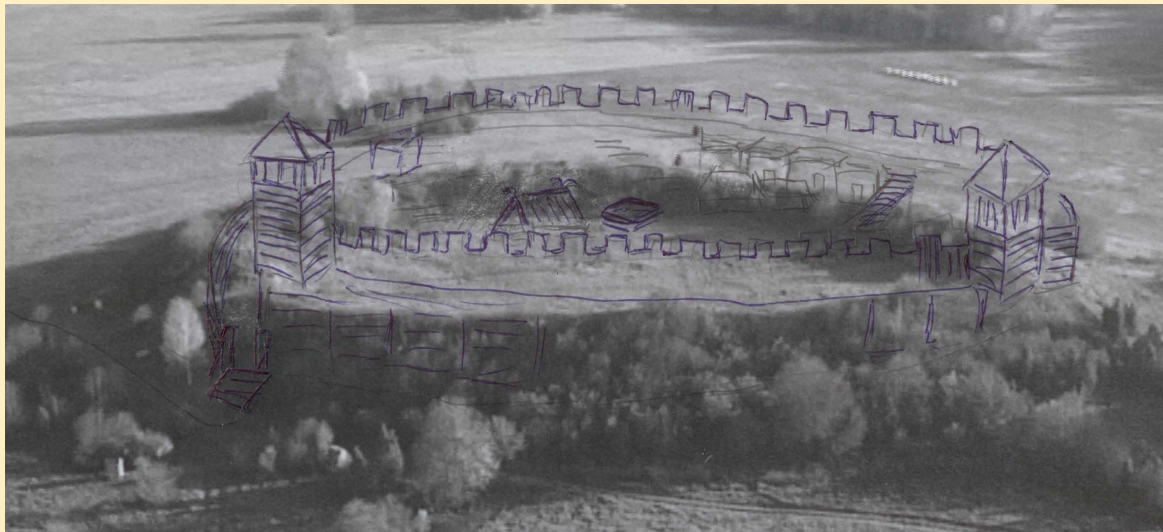
Academic research

- In close cooperation with Tallinn University
- 2021-2025 focus on the 13th century
 - early Christian burials
 - hillforts



HILLFORTS

- Scientific analyses
- GPR studies
- archaeological excavations



GPR studies on Saaremaa's hillforts

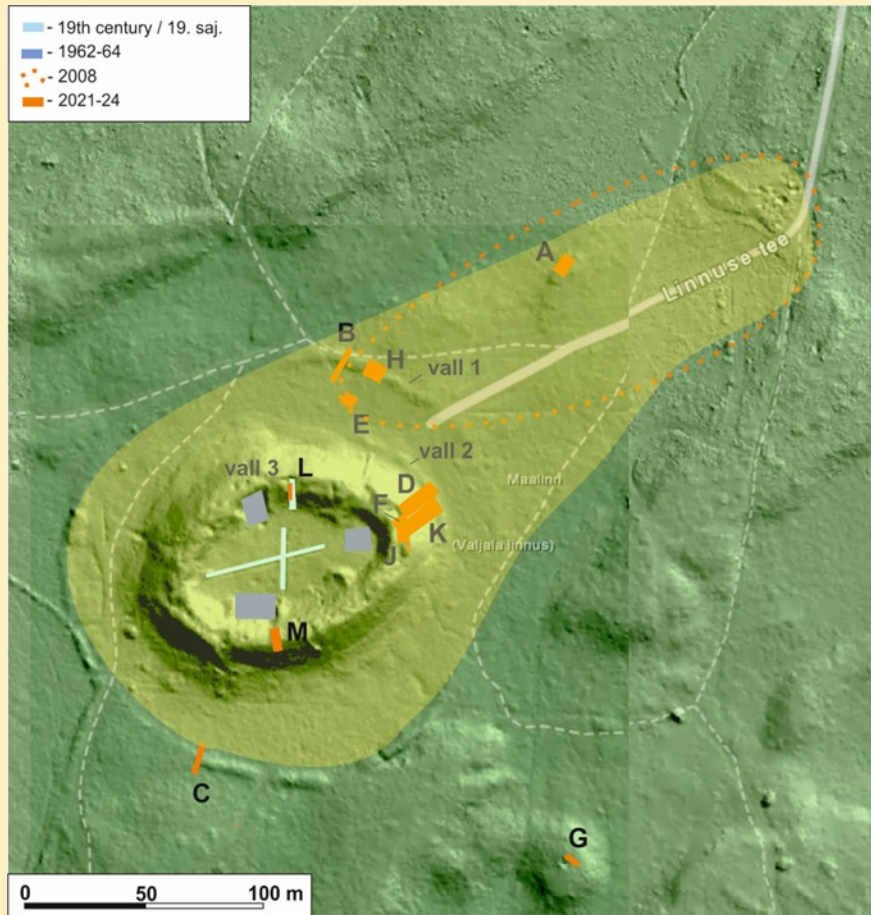


Kaarma hillfort



Valjala hillfort

Valjala hillfort

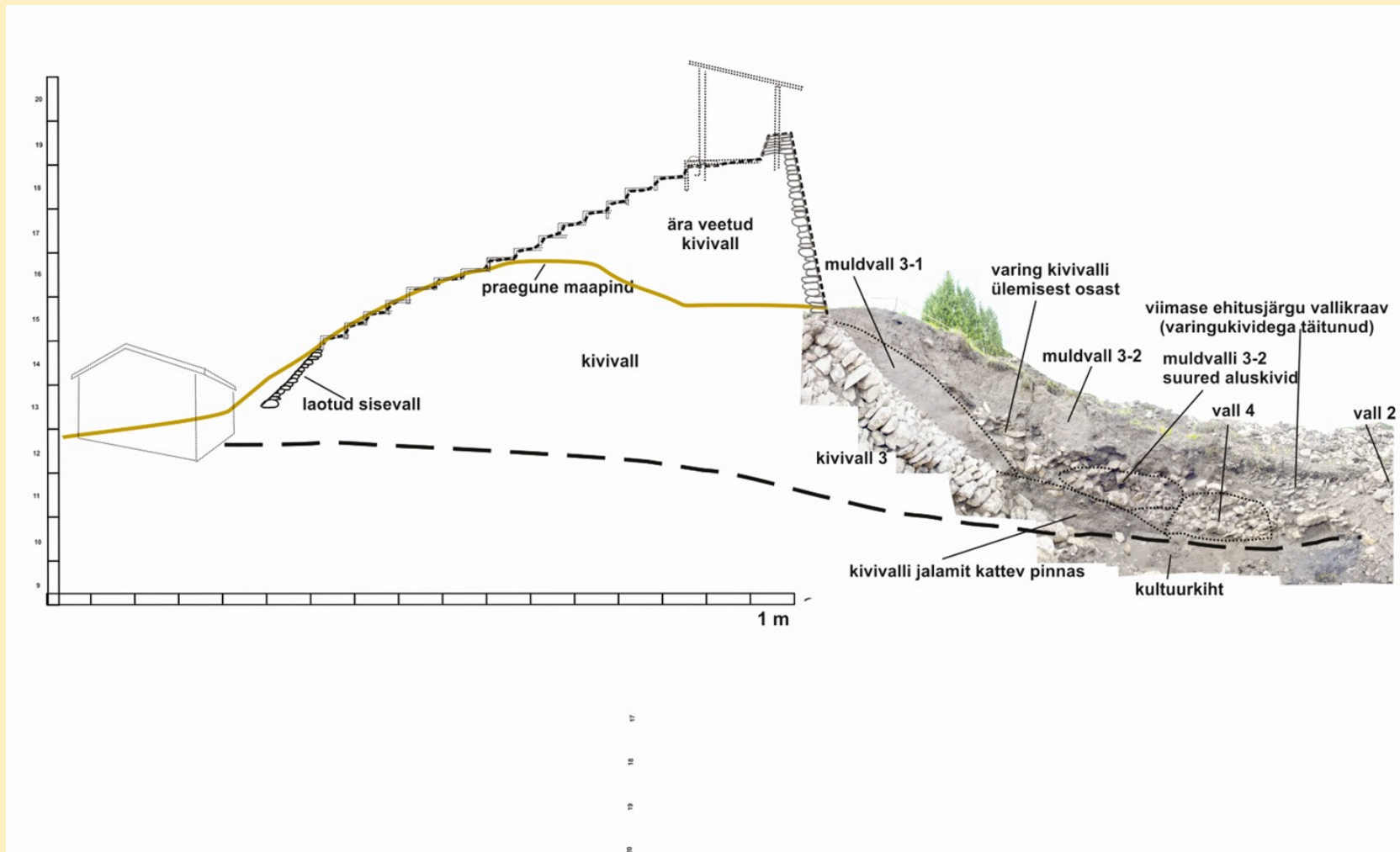


- Very similar to Ölandic hillforts
- Were built of stone
- Were used until late 13th-14th century

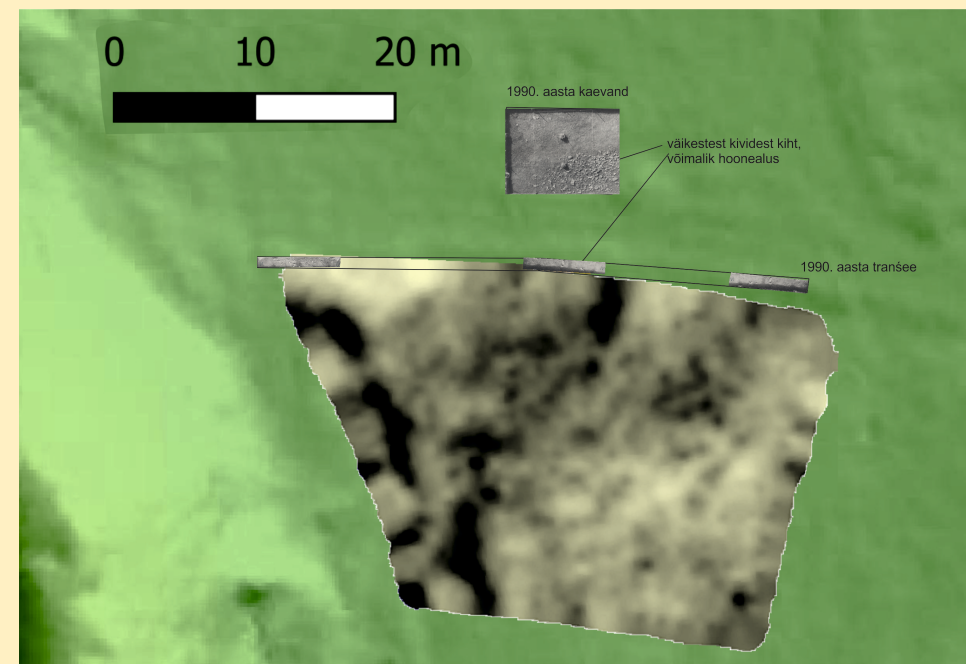
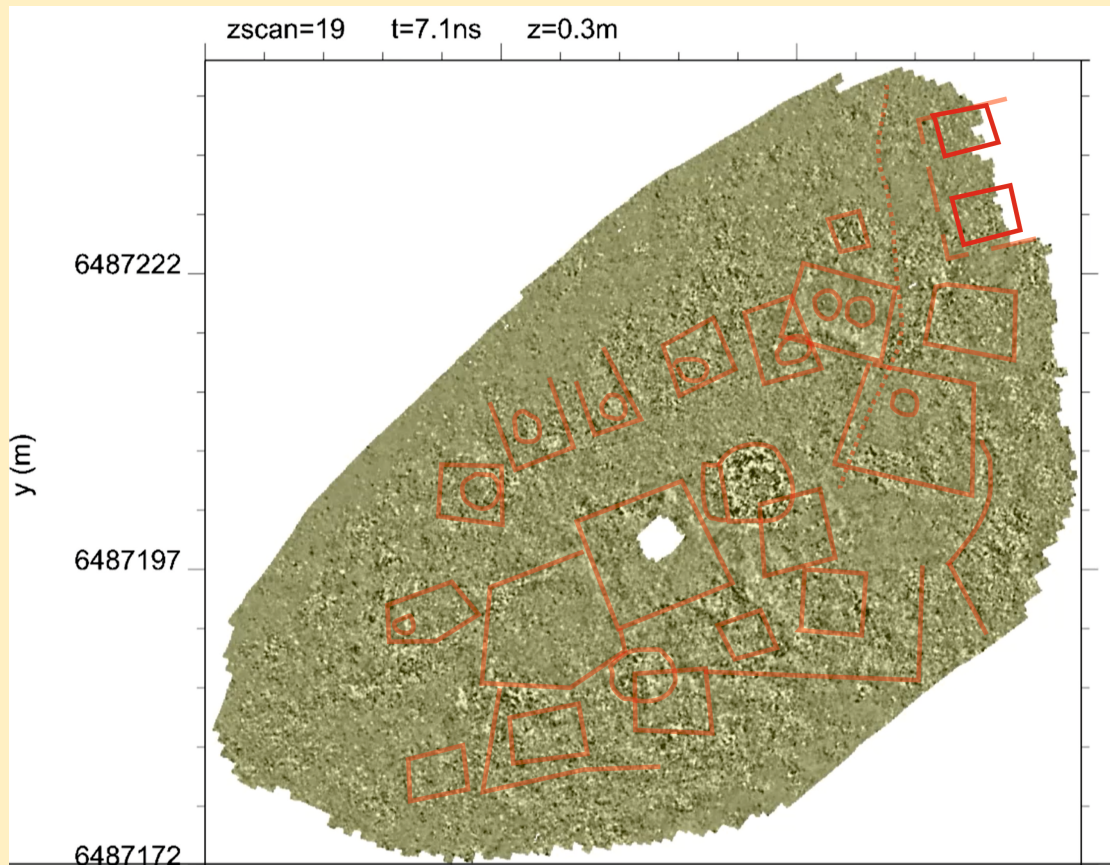
Valjala hillfort



Reconstructed fortifications of Saaremaa's 12th-13th-century big hillforts: Valjala



Pöide hillfort



Pöide hillfort



Excavations 2024



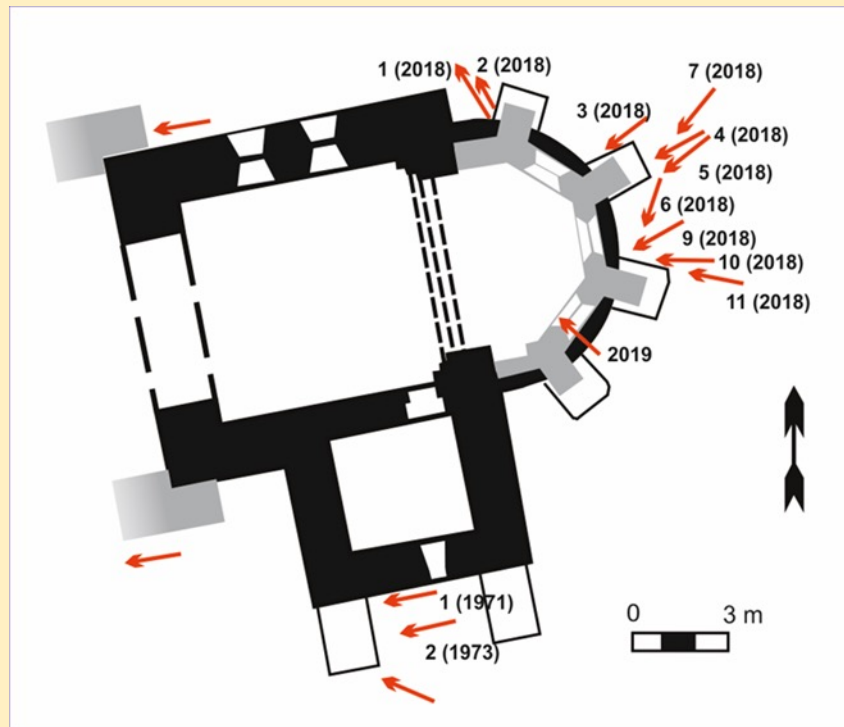
7th-9th-century finds



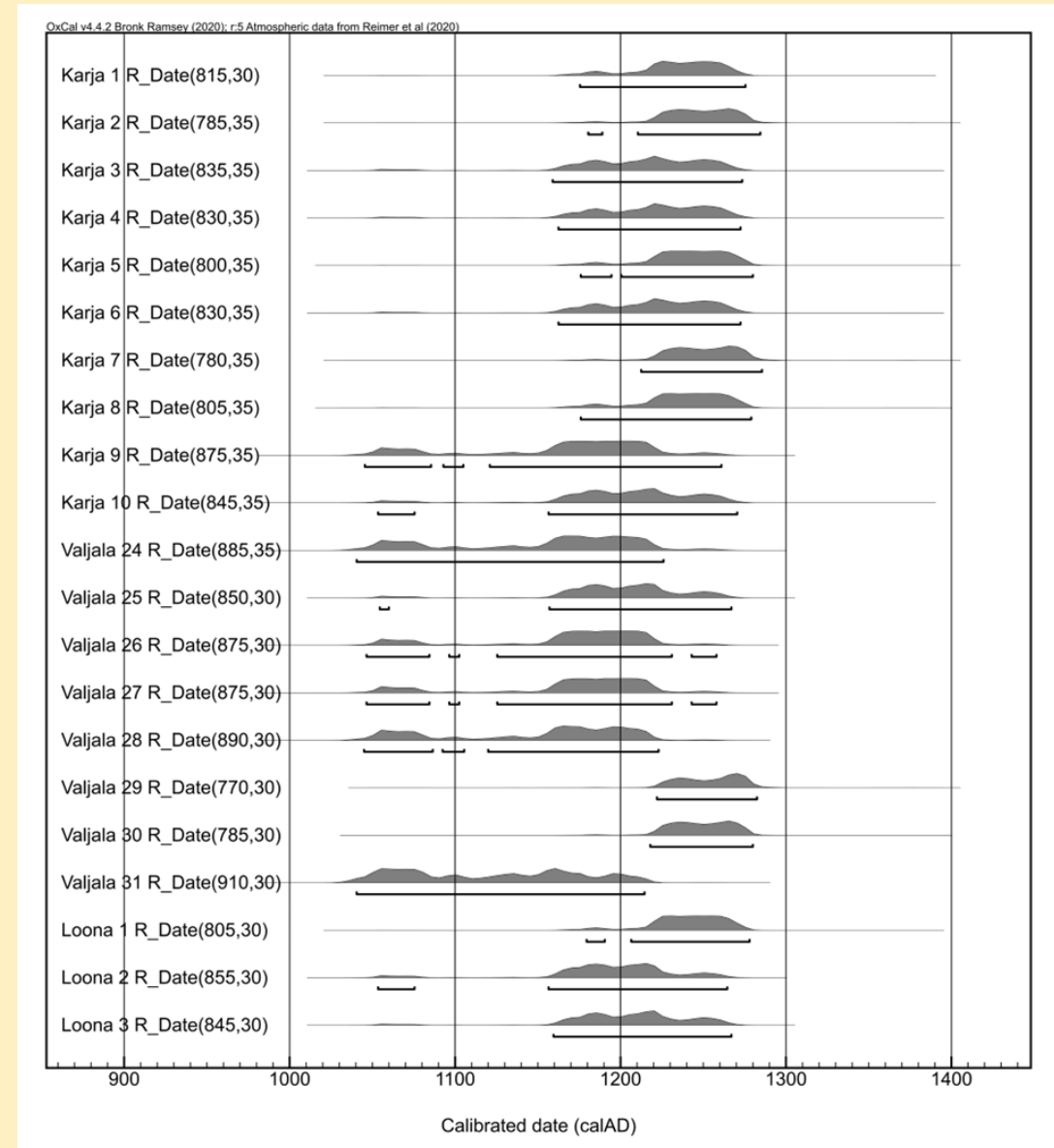
13th-14th-century finds

Inhumation burials of the 12th-13th century – around existing and disappeared churches

- dating
- Isotope analyses
- aDNA

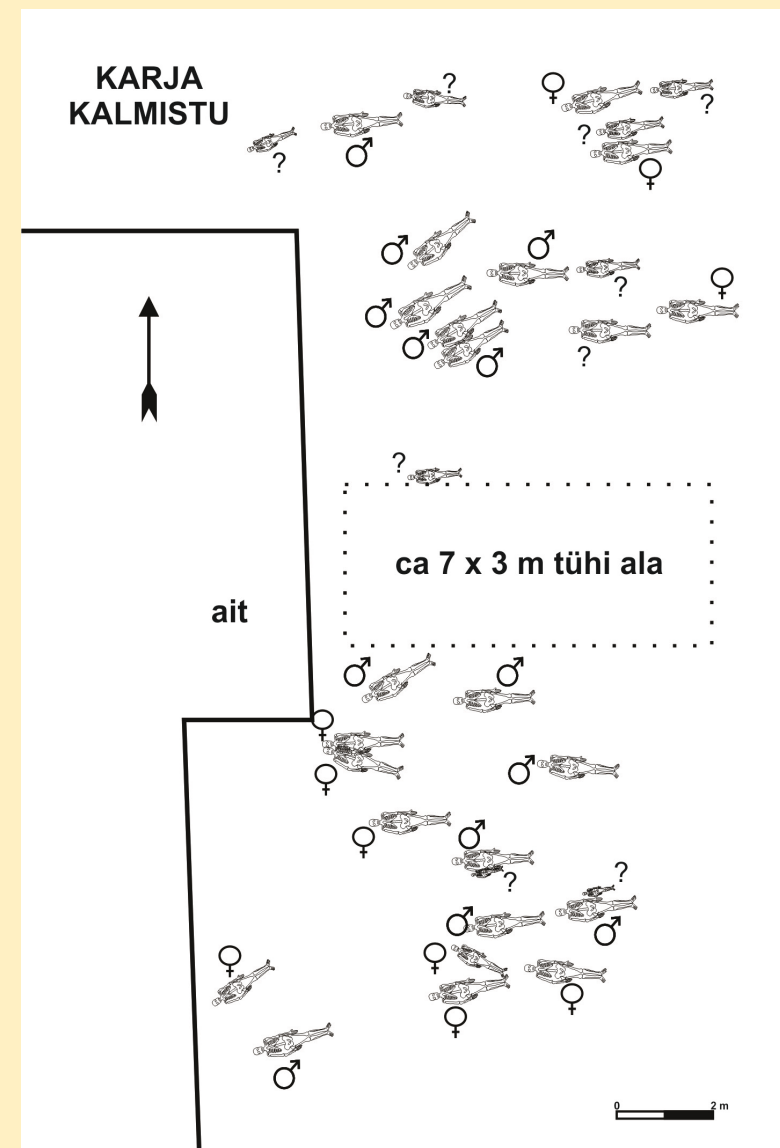


Early burials around Valjala Church





Burial near Valjala Church, with grave goods underneath the skeleton



Late 12th - 13th-century cemetery with an empty area, probable private church, at Karja Manor

Promotion of Saaremaa's early history

- Participating in documentaries

BETTANY HUGHES' TREASURES OF THE WORLD - ESTONIA
Channel 4 at 7pm, Saturday 13th April and online

The best-selling author and award-winning historian Bettany Hughes explores Estonia's Viking legacy and its time-honoured traditions.

A real broadcasting gem: accessible, entertaining, always informative
The Telegraph

Gleefully exploring stunning archaeological artefacts
Pick of the Week, Radio Times

Every vista elicits genuine smiles of wonderment
The Times

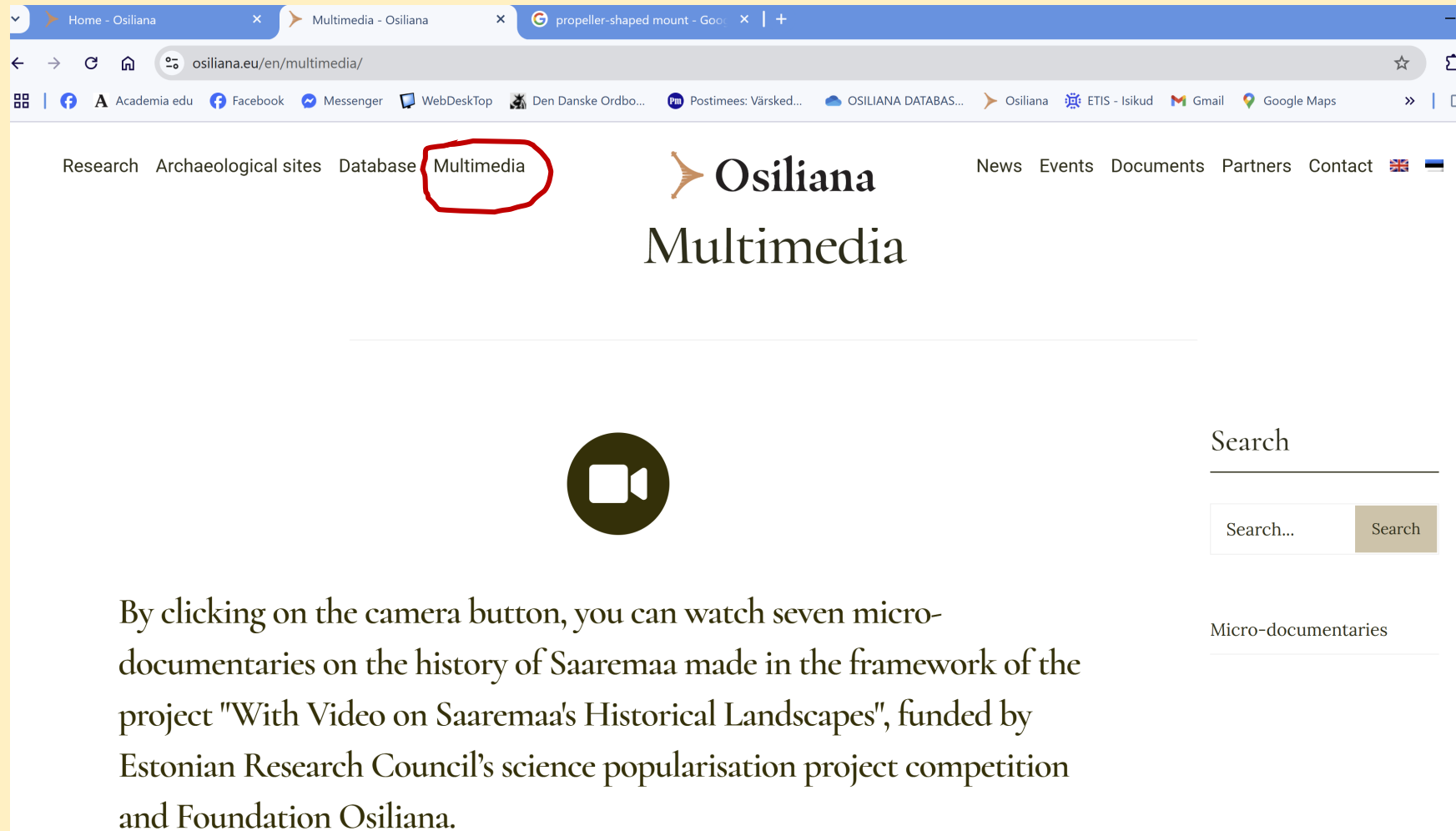
Introducing us to finds that redefine the past
Top TV Picks, Glamour

Prepare to be dazzled by historical gems
What's on TV

Written and Presented By BETTANY HUGHES / Original Music DAVID TOBIN & JEFF MEEGAN / Director of Photography TIM KNIGHT / Drone Operators VALMAR VOOLAI ALEKSEI KULIKOV / Sound Recordist TIM BOYLAN / Lead Fixer JANA KUTŠINSKAJA Additional Fixers INDREK PEENMAA, EVA-MARIA EGIPT-PEENMAA / Online Editor ADAM SAUNDERS / Post Production Facilities TVC SOHO / Graphics PRIZUM TIM VARLOW / Historical Consultant NEIL TAYLOR / Researchers MICHAEL HAYES, SID HAYNS / Senior Researcher OLYMPIA CHRISTOFINIS / Team Coordinator CARRI HECKS / Production Management Assistant LEYLA ALIZADA / Junior Production Manager LULU THOMPSON / Line Producers GABI CARPENTER, LOUISA REID / Director of Production RUTH SESSIONS / Editor ANNIE DUMMETT / Additional Editing DAVID BAKSH / Producer OLIVIA HANSEN / Producer Director JOHNNY CROCKETT / Series Producer ANNA THOMSON / Executive Producer DAVID UPSHAL

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2024: seven mini-docs of Saaremaa's early history



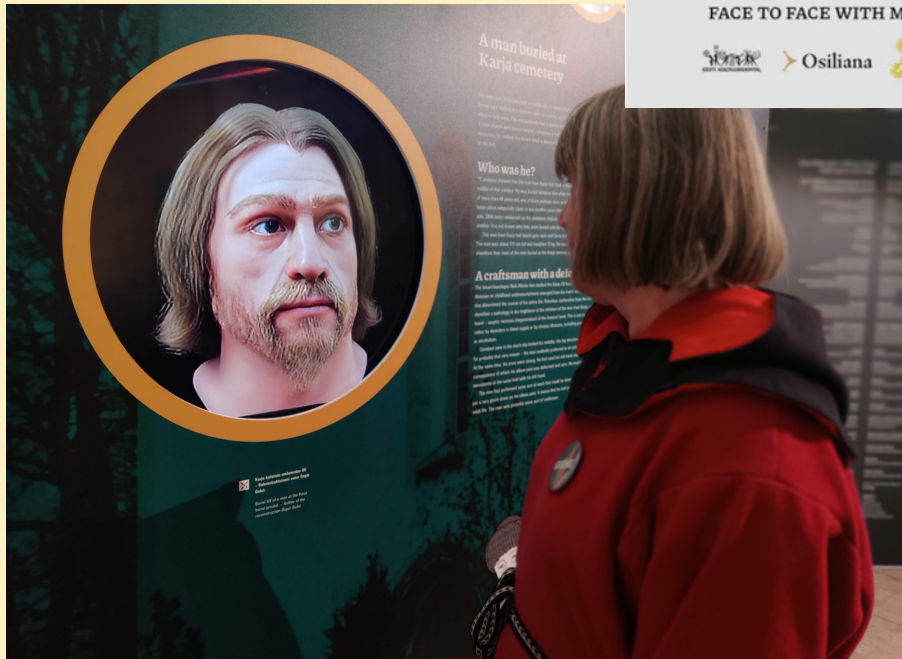
The screenshot shows the Osiliana Multimedia website. The browser tabs include 'Home - Osiliana', 'Multimedia - Osiliana', and 'propeller-shaped mount - Google'. The address bar shows 'osiliana.eu/en/multimedia/'. The website has a navigation bar with links: Research, Archaeological sites, Database, Multimedia (highlighted with a red circle), News, Events, Documents, Partners, Contact. The main heading is 'Osiliana Multimedia'. Below it is a large circular button with a camera icon. To the right is a search bar with the text 'Search' and a search button. Below the search bar is a section titled 'Micro-documentaries'.

By clicking on the camera button, you can watch seven micro-documentaries on the history of Saaremaa made in the framework of the project "With Video on Saaremaa's Historical Landscapes", funded by Estonian Research Council's science popularisation project competition and Foundation Osiliana.

<https://osiliana.eu/en/multimedia/>



2023-24: exhibition in Saaremaa Museum: Face to Face with Medieval Saaremaa Islanders



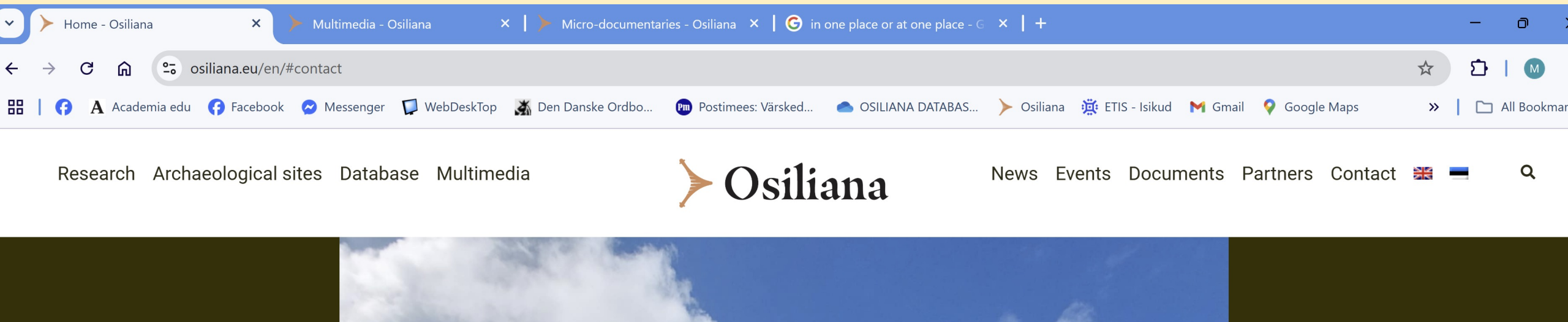
Promotion of Saaremaa's early history

- Lectures
- Events for general audience (open days of excavations etc)
- Information boards to sites
- Audio guides – Valjala hillfort
- 3D models of the big hillforts
- Small exhibition of Osiliana's works in Asva Viking Center
- Cooperation with the Salme Viking Center project

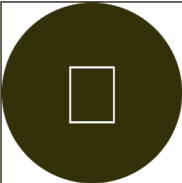


Homepage and Information Centre www.osiliana.eu

- Both in Estonian and English
- Information of Saaremaa's early history available at one place
- Designed for different levels: links to more information when needed
- Targeted for locals interested in history as well as for tourists visiting Saaremaa



Archaeological sites of Saaremaa



On this page, you can find the research papers, reports, and maps regarding the archaeological sites of Saaremaa. These sites are represented here in alphabetical order.

Search

Search...

Search

Archaeological Sites of Saaremaa

Kaali crater

Karja early medieval
cemetery

Käku burial site

Lepna mortuary house

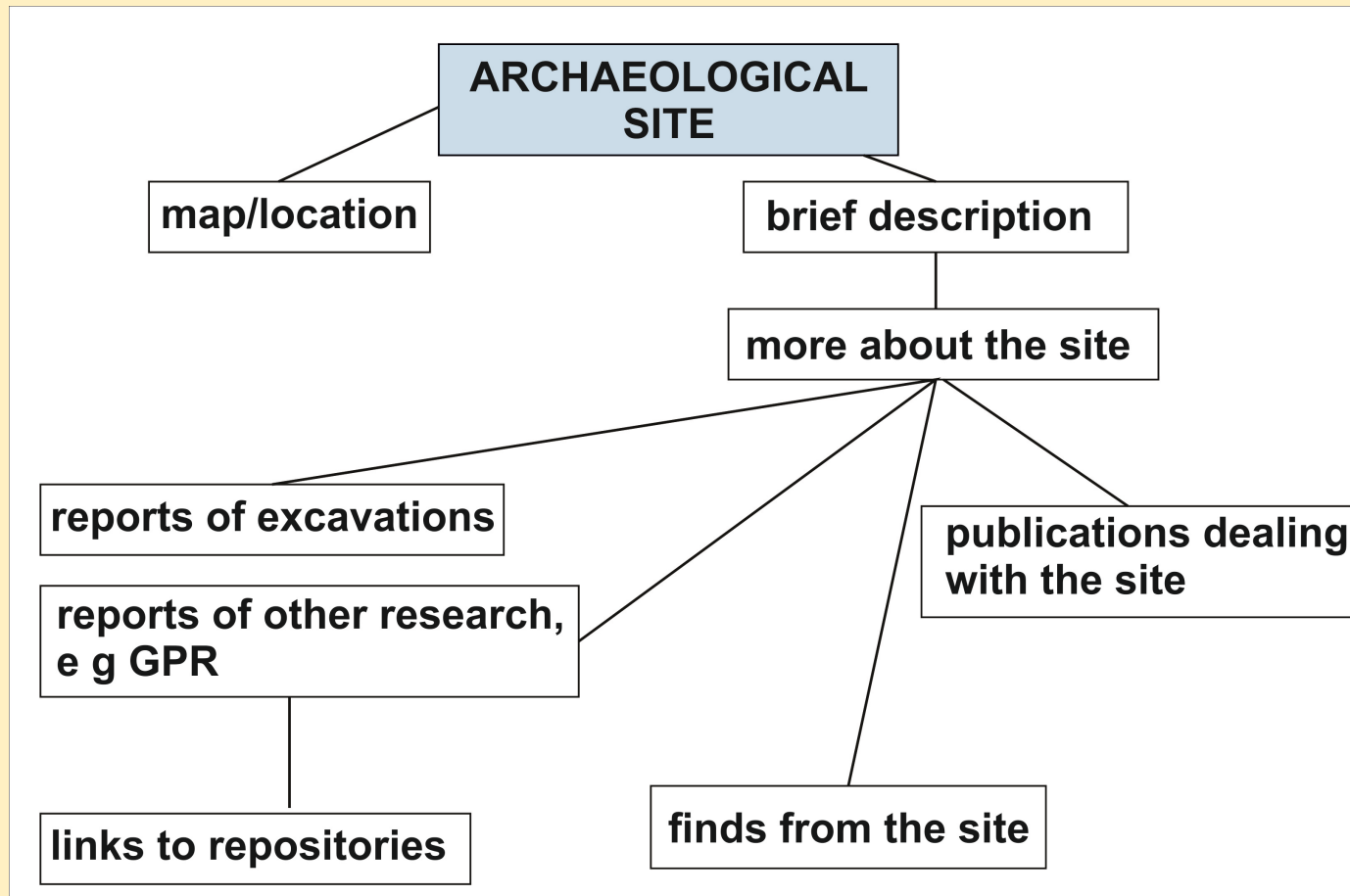
Piila viking age grave site

Pöide church

Pöide hillfort

Salme ship burials

Saunamäe grave and cult



Research



On this page, you can find the research papers, reports, and maps about Saaremaa. These materials are represented here chronologically. By clicking on the year, you can find more research material.



To search by author, click on the icon.

Search

Research

Archaeological Fieldwork in Estonia 2022, 73–90

Archaeological Fieldwork in Estonia 2022, 73–90

Archaeological and ground penetrating radar investigations around Valjala, Põide and Kaarma hill forts in Saaremaa

Marika Mägi
24 Osiliana www.osiliana.eu
Tallinna Ülikool, Humanitaarteaduste instituut, ajaloolis- arheoloogilise ja kunstiloolise teaduse (Tallinn University, School of Humanities, Institute of History, Archaeology and Art History), Narva mnt 25, 10120 Tallinn, Estonia; marika.magi@osiliana.eu

Hannes Tõnisson
Tallinna Ülikool, looduse- ja terviseteaduste instituut, ökoloogilise teaduse (Tallinn University, School of Natural Sciences and Health, Institute of Ecology), Uus-Sadam 5, 10120 Tallinn, Estonia

Olav Harjo
00 Elmo Anilane tee 14, 74010 Viimsi, Estonia

Foundation Osiliana and Tallinn University started archaeological excavations around Valjala hill fort in Saaremaa in summer 2021, focusing on the areas outside the presently visible walls of the hill fort. By 2022, eight trenches were opened in various structures, including a sector of the outer main wall in the south-eastern part of the hill fort.

The new investigation of Valjala hill fort combined modern methods including GIS-systems, LiDAR data and high-quality aerial imagery provided by the Estonian Land Board, and ground penetrating radar, the latter in cooperation with OÜ Elmo. The program for investigating the mighty late prehistoric (the 11th–12th centuries) and early medieval (in Estonia the 13th–14th centuries) hill forts of Saaremaa was launched in May 2022 at three selected fortifications – Valjala, Kaarma and Põide. Only part of the collected material has been analyzed by now, and combined with the results from earlier and ongoing archaeological excavations at Valjala hill fort. The first overview presented here focuses on defensive structures outside the presently visible hill forts.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Although the big hill forts in Saaremaa have raised attention among amateur archaeologists as early as in the 19th century, it has mostly been the central fortification that has been described and studied. Less attention was paid to the area around the hill forts. Still, drawings of Saaremaa hill forts published in *Necrologica* by Friedrich Kruse (1842, Tab. 62) depict the main hill forts with their nearest vicinity (Fig. 1). A clearly marked stone fence or low stone wall around the hill forts of Mähu and Põide strikes the eye on these pictures.

No such wall around Valjala hill fort was described by Kruse, neither was it mentioned by Jean Baptiste Holzmayer, who studied the hill fort in the 1860s. On the other hand, Holzmayer

Archaeological Fieldwork in Estonia 2022, 99–104

2023

Mägi, M.; Tõnisson, H.; Harjo, O. (2023).
Archaeological and ground penetrating radar investigations around three Saaremaa hill-forts – Valjala, Põide and Kaarma. Arheoloogilised välitööd Eestis = Archeological fieldwork in Estonia, 2022, 73–90.

Read the article: **here**.

2022

Unt, A.; Saage, R.; Oks, K.; Peets, J. (2023). **Excavations at the**

2019

2015

2014

2013

2012

2011

2010

2009

2008

2007

2006

2005

Research Archaeological sites **Database** Multimedia



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Database

Our database is free to use for all history and archaeology enthusiasts. If you use our database, please do not forget to cite correctly:

Mägi, Marika; Palm, Piia Sandra. Archaeological Artefacts of Saaremaa. Foundation Osiliana / Tallinn University. Accessed: *date*.

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Mullutu

Penannular brooch with rolled terminals, bronze.

Century:
9-11

Discovery code:
SM 10863:112

[READ MORE](#)



Valjala hillfort

Penannular brooch with rolled terminals. Such penannular brooches were used during a longer period 800-1400. Here probably 1100-1400, according to other finds.

Century:
12-13

Discovery code:
AI 4300:55

[READ MORE](#)



Valjala hillfort

Penannular brooch, silver (?). Faceted terminals. The loop has grooved thicker middle parts transversely grooved. Similar brooches are often found in 13th-14th-century inhumation graves and only seldom in stone graves with cremations.

Century:
13-14

Discovery code:
AI 4300:342

[READ MORE](#)

Thank you!

