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## EXCAVATIONS AT II HAMINA DISCONTINUED CEMETERY – PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

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### MEDIEVAL TRADING PLACE

Ii Hamina is a medieval trading place in the mouth of the Ii River, located approximately 30 km north from the city of Oulu (Fig. 1). The district is today an extremely tightly built residential area known as the old Hamina of Ii. Possibly as early as in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the area was an important center of trade, and in 1531 it gained the status of an official market place – one among the four in Northern Ostrobothnia (Virkkunen 1953: 31; Luukko 1954: 481; Elo et al. 1998: 25). The oldest reference to the settlement and parish in Ii dates to 1374, but the chapel church had been established a bit earlier in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Elo et al. 1998: 15, 22, 25).

The trading area is said to have been first located on an island opposite the present-day Ii Hamina. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century the trading place was transferred to the mainland (Elo et al. 1998: 28). The first church on the mainland had undoubtedly been built by the 1580s on the northern side of Hamina (Elo et al. 1998: 28–9), although the time of construction can be as early as the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Vahtola 1994: 208). It has also been suggested that the cemetery may have been located on the mainland before the actual church or chapel was built there (Ahmavaara 1910: 60–2).

### SKELETAL REMAINS FROM II HAMINA CHURCHYARD

In the summer of 2009 the municipality of Ii began to renew the sewage and water pipelines

in Ii Hamina street areas. Archaeological excavations, carried out by the National Board of Antiquities between May and June 2009 (Kallio-Seppä forthcoming), were required prior to the engineering project. As the former pipework had been installed in the 1960s, human remains from the old discontinued Ii Hamina cemetery had been found. Many inhabitants in Ii Hamina could still recall how “There were human skulls, arms and leg bones... Skulls had holes on the forehead and the wives thought that they had been shot.” (Karpinen 1990, our translation).

A six-week long archaeological excavation was carried out in the intersection of Yläkatu and Alakatu streets in the center of Ii Hamina. The excavations revealed a substantial amount of human remains consisting of *in situ* burials as well as disarticulated bones representing several comingled individuals from a “Bone pit”, the



Fig. 1. The location of Ii Hamina in the Bay of Bothnia.



Fig. 2. The Bone pit contained well preserved human bones (photograph: NBA/Dept. of Monuments and Sites, T. Kallio-Seppä).

diameter of which was 1.9 meters (Fig. 2). More than 70 individual burials were documented and about 65 were archaeologically excavated (Fig. 3).

## PRELIMINARY REPORT OF HUMAN REMAINS FROM II HAMINA

### **Age and sex determination**

Anthropological age and sex estimations were determined according to traditional osteological guidelines, as those presented for example in Bass 1986 [1971]. Sex determination was mostly based on the morphological features of the skull, because there were not many preserved pelvic bones. Skeletal traits used for sex determination in medieval population should be calibrated for the population for which they are used. It is possible that the guidelines for modern samples can introduce systematic bias to the classification of individuals as general robusticity may change between populations. In the case of medieval Hamina, females were more likely to display greater robusticity than modern day females whereby these females are likely to be classified as males.

Age was assessed crudely in 4 categories for the Bone pit material as preservation did not allow for more accurate age determination. For *in situ* burials we relied on just three age categories: juvenile, subadult and adult. This classification procedure was based on poorer preservation and smaller case number of *in situ* individuals.

### **In situ burials**

Sex and age was determined for all the *in situ* burials. This work was difficult, occasionally even impossible as the skeletal remains were poorly preserved. 38 burials and bones from 11 secondary placements contained bone remains that were preserved well enough for further analyzes (Table 1). The age estimation was done of bone remains and in some cases by the size of the burials.

The preservation of the total excavated skeletal population was so poor that sex could be determined for only less than half of the individuals. Of these sex determined individuals, two thirds were females (Table 2).

Table 1. Age distribution of individuals in in situ -burials.

Category	Juvenile	Subadult	Adult
Age	0-15	15-25	>25
N	15	14	27

Table 2. Sex distribution of individuals in in situ -burials and in the Bone Pit.

	Male	Female	Total
in situ -burials	13	21	34
"Bone Pit"	62	67	129

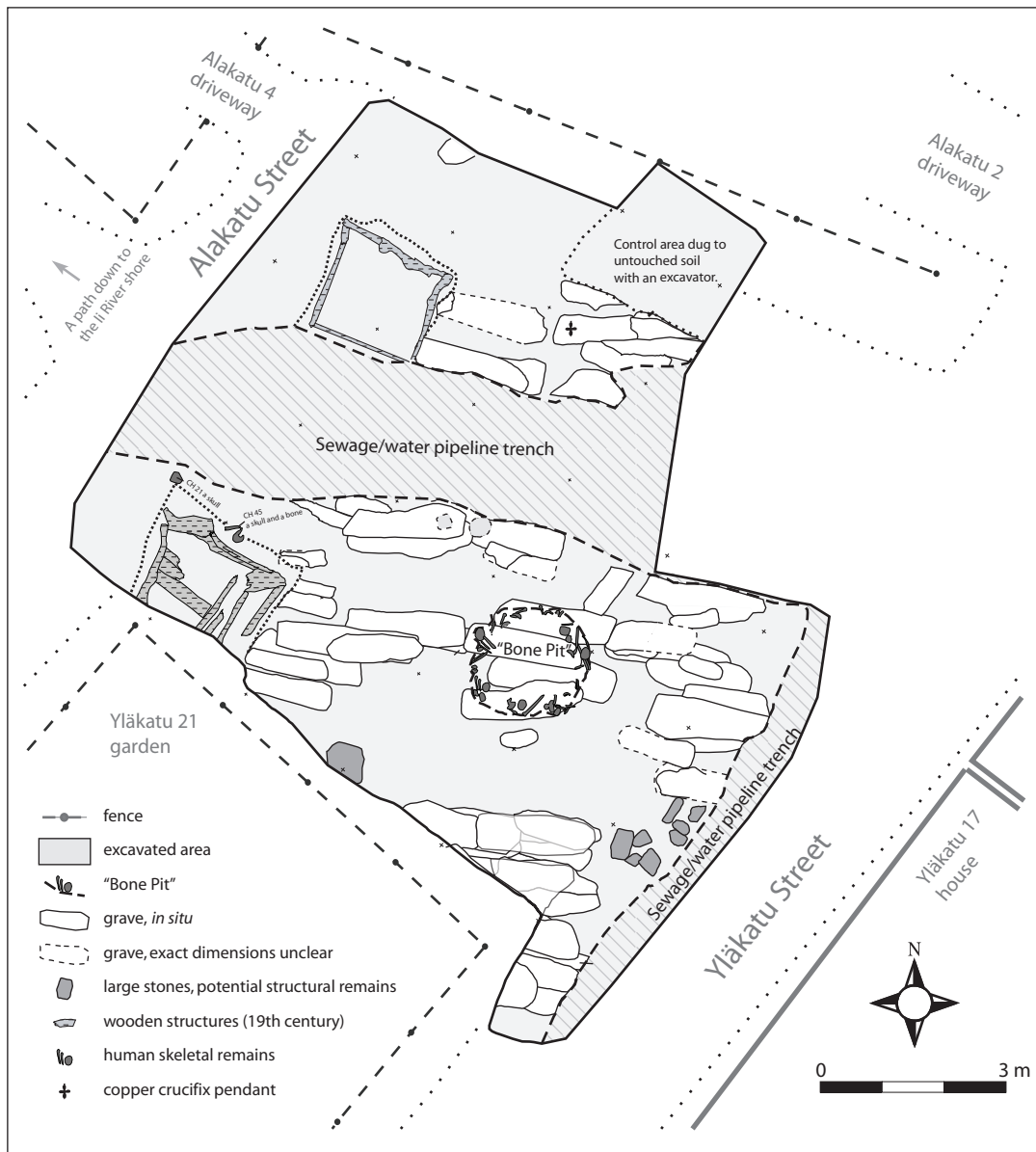


Fig. 3. Archaeologically excavated burials and the Bone pit at the intersection of Yläkatu and Alakatu in Ii Hamina.

## “The Bone pit”

The Bone pit was formed when human remains originally buried in a different place had been dug up and reburied in the same pit. The exact date of this reburial is not clear but one possibility is that the bone material was collected during the sewage and water pipeline installation in 1960s. However, nothing indicates that the formation of the Bone pit could not be dated to earlier times, even to the time of the active use of the cemetery.

The comingled bone material was analyzed to enlighten the demographical issues and pathological conditions of the people of Ii Hamina. This material was surprisingly well preserved compared to the *in situ* burials.

Because of the comingled contents of the Bone pit material, the minimum number of individuals (MNI) was calculated from the long bones and crania (Table 3). Our classification to determine “individual” was that more than 50% of a bone had been preserved. Greatest estimate of MNI based on crania was 160. Postcranial elements provided smaller MNI. We could estimate the sex for 129 individuals (Table 2) while age could be determined for 149 individuals, most of whom were adults (Table 4).

### Conclusions drawn from human remains

According to our analyses the Bone pit included mainly adults and sub adults. This is probably explained by the inferior preservation of the juvenile skeletal remains. Also, as these bones

Table 3. MNI based on the number of long bones in the Bone pit.

		left	right
Upper body	<i>humerus</i>	90	91
	<i>ulna</i>	47	57
	<i>radius</i>	34	44
Lower body	<i>femur</i>	83 (+15)	102 (+14)
	<i>tibia</i>	58	62

Table 4. Age distribution of individuals in the Bone pit.

Category	Age	N
Juveniles	1–10	7
Young individuals	10–20	24
Adults	20–50	87
Old adults	>50	31
	Total	149

have been relocated, it is likely that the procedure has favored the well preserved and large skeletons. It is also likely that while collecting the bone material special attention has been paid to skulls – according to our analyses the minimum number of individuals varied greatly if counted from different skeletal elements.

The highest estimate for the minimum number of individuals in the Bone pit was based on cranial count. This is likely to reflect the fact that the crania have been considered more “valuable” and representative of an individual than other bones of the body. There are also more long bones and larger bones present in the Bone pit, where smaller bones have been either missed when the Bone pit was formed, or these bones were not considered to be important in representing the deceased individual.

The large proportion of female skeletons in *in situ* burials could be perhaps explained by selective location of burials according to sex. *In situ* burials reflect the normal attritional mortality more accurately than the Bone pit material. From the *in situ* burials it could be seen that in the juvenile burials the preservation of bone was poorer than that of adult skeletons.

### THE FINDS WERE FEW

The finds from the burials of Ii Hamina cemetery consist mainly of numerous nails. Otherwise the scarce find material comprises a few coins, a couple of garment hooks and two pendants.

#### Coffin nails

The total amount of nails is 225 and they were found from 35 burials archaeologically excavated *in situ* burials. The substantial amount of nails suggests that the deceased were buried in coffins. This assumption is further supported by the fact that some of the nails still contained remains of wood and wood was also preserved below and round the skeletal remains.

#### Pendants

Two pendants were found from the burials. One is a simple pendant made from a seal’s canine (Herva & Puputti manuscript). The other is a complex and decorative copper cross pendant (KM2009038:517) found from the deceased’s

chest area. During the conservation process Christian images – a crucified figure in the center and presumably figures of saints on the edges – were revealed on one side of the object. A similar cross pendant was found in 1920s in Kuusamo municipality from a burial that has been interpreted as a grave of a Sami witch (Sirelius 1924: 103–8; Sarvas 1986: 162–3). Today, the Kuusamo pendant belongs to the Finno-Ugric collection of the Finnish National Museum (SU5031: 23).

### Coins

Altogether 13 coins were found during the excavations, 11 of which were found from 9 burials. Most of the coins are bracteates – thin, one-sided silver coins used in the Middle Ages – of which the majority is ornated with a crown-headed figure. Some ordinary coins minted on both sides were also recovered from Ii Hamina. Two of them can be indentified as a *fyrk*: a small value silver coin, namely ¼ of öre. The two coins in question were produced during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The assemblage of two-sided coins also include a 4 penning coin minted by Erik of Pomerania (1396–1439) and a ½ örtug minted by Sten Sture. The former had been minted in the city of Turku and the latter in Västerås, the rest of the two-sided coins are also Swedish. In all, the minting of the coins found from the Ii Hamina cemetery dates approximately from the later half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to 1560 (Lagerqvist 1970; Malmer 1980).

### DATING OF THE DISCONTINUED CEMETERY

According to coin finds and the known church history of the Ii parish, it is possible that the burials in Ii Hamina churchyard may have taken place from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The latest burials were possibly made when the church was moved to a new place in 1620s. In a mapping carried out by Claes Claesson in 1648 the churchyard is marked as the old churchyard (Sw. “gamla kyrckogården”).

Radiocarbon dates from the human bone remains may give us a more definite time frame. At the moment, however, we have to accept a date for the cemetery ranging from the late medieval to the beginning of the early modern period.

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