

HIIS-SITES IN NORTHERN ESTONIA: DISTINCTIVE HILLS AND PLAIN FIELDS

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Abstract

In this article, I analyse places with toponyms connected with *hiis* (meaning 'holy place', usually associated with 'holy grove' in Estonian) in northern Estonia. Geographically, it is possible to distinguish between three main types of landscape for places of which the names include the word *hiis*: distinctive hills, plain fields, and isolated, hidden places. Research into holy places tends to focus on naturally prominent or spectacular places, which have shaped the view that holy places are usually situated on hills; but plain fields and other visually less attractive sites have been neglected. Here, I will give examples of different types of Estonian *hiis*-sites, and discuss the links between these places and other monuments, graves and cemeteries dating from different periods, and settlements and churches. Finally, the article points to the favouring of different landscapes selected for *hiis*-sites, and argues that the claim that only attractive sites are regarded as 'holy places' is not valid.

Key words: holy grove, *hiis*, dynamism of religion, Estonia, stone-grave, ancestors.

It is a rather common practice in religious research for a study to be based on selected source material. Works in the form of short studies do not usually allow the entire diverse body of sources to be presented, and a selection is therefore made depending on which of them is more relevant in the context of a specific study. Such sources are often impressive finds or relics, which, though they support traditional approaches, may result in a slightly distorted overview of the topic. A fine example of such a process is found in Nordic Bronze Age religion: the cosmological concept of a horse pulling the sun, which is manifested as the Trundholm Sun Chariot, a symbol of this religion, is known worldwide. At the same time, this is a single example (except for some examples of rock carvings) of this kind, and, regardless of the existence of rich archaeological material, no analogous artefact has been found in Scandinavia or elsewhere in Europe. Thus, a broader cosmological concept has emerged on the basis of a highly singular object.

Similar problems surround natural holy places. Among these, there are visually impressive sites which overshadow others. Historiographically, this approach can be observed from descriptions as early as the 17th century, which emphasise that holy places were situated on mountain tops or hill tops (Olearius 1996, p.122). It is characteristic of Early Medieval descriptions for a hill with a forest to be described as a holy place. The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia and the 13th-century Danish Census Book mention holy places in connection with forests (*lucus sanctus*), and leave out general descriptions of the landscape. Only in the most famous description of an Estonian holy place, by Henry of Livonia, is a hill named on which a picturesque forest

grew (HCL XXIV, 5). The first selection of different landscapes connected with holy places in Estonia was provided by August Wilhelm Hupel at the end of the 18th century. In this text, trees are again mentioned as an obligatory element: 'In some holy places there is one tree, in others there are many, mostly spruce trees; these can be found on hillocks, plains, near springs and elsewhere' (Hupel 1777, p.153). Still, the emphasis on holy places being located on hillocks remained prevalent (Merkel 1798; Jung 1879; Koski 1967), especially in school textbooks, and, in a more popular form, in calendar texts. The view of holy places being situated on an impressive landscape spread from calendar texts to oral lore, and the influences of literature are clearly traceable in many lore texts. Although the influences of literature are a somewhat overlooked aspect in the study of oral lore about holy places, the treatment of this specific lore is not possible without a national-romantic element in them. Matthias Johann Eisen (1920) was the first to add other types of holy landscapes to hillocks, thus revealing that the toponyms and lore connected with *hiis* (meaning 'holy place'; for more, see Jonuks 2009b) have been assigned to bog islands, wetlands and completely flat areas. The view of *hiis*-sites as places of a highly diverse landscape had formed in academic treatments by the end of the 20th century; however, an even more emphasised concept of a *hiis* was a sacred grove/forest on top of a picturesque hill.

At the end of the 20th century, the approach to *hiis*-sites as naturally prominent places changed slightly. Instead of the former location on a hill or a hillock, the focus has shifted to the site's boundaries, and the fact that natural boundaries are important for a natural holy

place, as these distinguish the site from the surrounding landscape (Anttonen 1992). Still, its prominence is used as one of the most important characteristics of a holy place (Moor 1998, p.49). An important aspect here is definitely the 20th and 21st-century scholars' cognitive perception of the sacred, which is often connected with a conspicuous or a prominent site. Proceeding from this notion, research has overlooked several sites known by the name of *hiis* which are not situated on conspicuous or prominent sites, and do not easily fit into the traditional concept of a *hiis*. In the following, I would like to emphasise the phenomenon of the boundaries of a natural holy place, though I agree that boundaries are not something that have to be particularly prominent. Instead, a boundary may be hardly noticeable, and many natural holy places may be located in a site which is distinct from its surroundings, although not particularly prominent. After all, although the boundaries of holy places have been important in folk religion, oral tradition does not usually fix borders precisely. Only the most important border is usually described, the one that marks the border between everyday life and the sacral space, while leaving the other sides of the holy place more vague.

In this article, I will take a look at the three types of landscapes that are assigned the toponym *hiis*, and point out their most characteristic features. I do not intend to suggest that it is possible to compile a typology that would accommodate all the sacred places. The different landscapes that the holy places are situated in and their association with different archaeological objects may be suggestive of the different purposes and dating of *hiis*-sites (Jonuks 2007). The defiance of typologisation proceeds from the nature of these objects: these are natural objects which were not made by humans but have been adapted for use by them. Thus, any typologisation can be done only on a cognitive level, and this depends on the perception of the natural monument and the landscape by a given researcher. For this reason, I will not attempt to suggest specific 'typological markers' which would apply to all objects, because even those markers would depend on the local context. I have chosen Viru County in northeast Estonia as the site for the study, an area that some authors view as the core of Estonian *hiis* culture (Plate II, Fig. 1). In studies like this, the result is greatly affected by the landscape, and the results achieved in one region, in this case Viru County, cannot be automatically applied to other areas.

An important question that has to be addressed at this point is the definition of the concept of '*hiis*', or the holy grove. Traditionally, holy groves have been studied in connection with other natural holy places (sac-

rificial stones, holy springs, and so on), and regarded as a sub-category of a sacrificial site. This approach is definitely valid, as these places are of the same essence and occupy the same sphere. I will focus here solely on holy groves, whereas the selection of sites is determined by the presence of the root '*hiis*' in the toponym and/or the availability of the oral tradition. With this, I presuppose that the concept '*hiis*' covers something broader than single sacrificial trees and stones. It has to be noted that holy groves should not be regarded as something independent and isolated: it is highly likely that in many places different traditions of holy groves, sacrificial sites and other places mentioned in oral lore have merged. I have considered it important here to analyse holy groves separately from others, because their function in the broader religious context was quite likely different compared to sacrificial stones or springs.

The places analysed are known from oral tradition. How to relate folkloristic places to archaeology is a well-known and disputed issue (e.g. Gazin-Schwartz, Holtorf 1999), and it will not be addressed in detail here. The main assumption is made that motifs from the oral tradition, recorded in the late 19th or the 20th century, should not be dated much earlier. But places which oral tradition indicates may be much older and can be dated according to associated archaeological sites (Jonuks 2009a, p.59ff). I suggest that sites in the landscape may have been important through different periods, and led people to ascribe a folkloristic meaning to them. This is especially true for important religious sites that retain their meaning throughout different historical periods and past religions.

Hiis-places related to hills

Well-known and used hills are the first kind of landscape for holy places with *hiis*-toponyms. These are prominent and stand out in the surrounding landscape, and often in the entire area. Next to their visual prominence, an important characteristic of a *hiis*-site is its anomaly, which distinguishes the site from the landscape around it. Such are places that have been used in research of holy groves since the 18th century. Two specific sites will be discussed in greater detail below, as their broader environment allows for reference to other associated phenomena.

The 1.5-kilometre-long ridge of Purtse Hiemägi hill ends with a cliff, and there is a group of eight graves at the western foot of the hill. The unexplored group of stone cist graves and *tarand*-graves probably dates from the period from the middle of the first millennium BC to the middle of the first millennium AD (Tamla

1996). Next to the graves there is a sacrificial spring called Uku allikas (Uku's¹ Spring), which has been mentioned in oral lore. Purtse hill is definitely the most prominent element in the local landscape: it is visible from a distance and meets nearly all criteria in the study of a stereotypical holy grove (Plate II, Fig. 2).

Purtse Hiemägi hill also offers a fine example of another characteristic feature of the landscape. Regardless of the widespread view that both oral lore about holy groves and many stone cist graves can be associated with conspicuous elements in the landscape, the association of these with dramatic relief forms, in this case an open cliff or escarpment, is much weaker. The latter type of landscape would provide a spectacular view, and an alleged landmark. Instead, on Purtse hill the graves are associated with the gentle slopes of the holy grove hill, rather than the visually striking cliff nearby. Elsewhere in Estonia, steep coastal escarpments are rarely associated with oral lore about *hiis* or archaeological finds. One of the few exceptions here is the Panga coastal cliff on Saaremaa Island, which is known in oral tradition as a place where offerings were made for good luck or for a good catch of fish (ERA II 225, 238/9 (7)).

While observing the location of graves or other archaeological monuments and holy places, it becomes evident that these are rarely associated with landscapes that could be described as 'dramatic', although it is likely that this type of landscape was used. Most locations of archaeological monuments tend to be associated with gentle slopes rather than steep cliffs, and are oriented towards former settlement sites (Lang 2000, p.218; Jonuks 2009a). This visual connection with settlements may explain why no graves have been constructed on coastal cliffs: these were open to the sea, and rule out the possibility of visual contact with the settlement. The magnificent views that open out from the edge of the cliffs were probably less important in this respect.

Kunda Hiemägi is the second example of a *hiis*-site which is situated on a spectacular and prominent hill (Plate II, Fig. 3). Kunda hill is a long and narrow ridge overlooking a prehistoric village, and folklore abounds about a holy grove on the hill. Four stone graves are situated in a row in the northern part of the hill top, and the burial site is oriented towards the former Kunda settlement. Kunda Hiemägi offers a fine opportunity to observe the entire complex. Kunda village is a settlement site dating from the Early Iron Age, which co-

¹ Uku is a mythological deity, mostly associated with thunder. In Estonia, oral folklore about Uku has been concentrated in the coastal regions, and this has led to speculation that it spread to Estonia from Finland (Loorits 1951; Salo 1990).

incides with the dating of the graves. A decorative pin dated to the 12th century AD has been found in a spring in the village's centre. Other examples of springs situated in village centres in which decorative objects have been discovered are also known in Estonia (such as Tõrma, Pajumaa and Sõrandu) (Tamla 1985; Jonuks forthcoming: b). Thus, it could be speculated that the ritual behaviour of the past was not limited to a single location in the neighbourhood, and the examples of Kunda and other similar complexes seem to suggest that the sacred space was considerably vaguer, consisting of the village and the spring at its centre, but which were further connected to the *hiis*-site, and possibly the burial ground in the vicinity.

Owing to the thorough geological research conducted in the area (Moor 1998), the Kunda example allows further speculation about the connection between the village and the holy grove hill. The settlement and the hill are separated by a narrow basin, which was once excessively humid, but has now dried up. On the one hand, this basin forms a natural boundary separating the 'sacred area' (the hill) and the 'profane area' (the settlement); but on the other hand, the one-time lake shore might have functioned as a pathway leading from the village to the *hiis*-site, ascending to the flat space and passing the row of stone graves. Perhaps it was the northeast part of the hill that was used as the main ritual space. People who went there and spent time there passed the graves of their ancestors, and rituals connected with ancestral worship had an important part in the religion of the first millennium BC (Jonuks 2009a). Quite another question is whether this speculation can be confirmed, and how to test it. The material available to us today remains insufficient, and any attempt to reconstruct events of such a distant past remains merely conjecture.

When using the above criteria, that is, a naturally spectacular landscape where stone graves have been constructed, we can speculate about several places which may have functioned as similar holy *hiis*-sites; but the root *hiis* in their names and the folklore about them has been lost. Such sites can be found in complexes with burial fields which were founded on the slopes or on the top of a cliff promontory, and in some cases (such as the burial field in Tõugu, see Lang 2000) a connection with a settlement, similar to the Kunda site, can be observed. Thus, it may be assumed that during the Late Bronze Age and the early stage of the Iron Age, such naturally spectacular holy places were more widespread, they were marked by stone graves on the ground, and rituals performed at these sites were closely connected with the dead and with ancestors. In the course of the later development of religion, the rituals and their meaning were transformed: the crite-

ria for holy places and the settlement pattern changed. The latter two aspects may explain why there is no oral lore about some *hiis*-looking sites. Instead, holy places occupying a completely new type of landscape came into use: this applies, for example, to the plain Hiieväli (*hiis*-field) a few kilometres from the Tõugu burial group on a coastal cliff. A similar complex can be seen in Karula. This *hiis*-site is situated on flat and stony terrain below a cliff, and a few kilometres from this site there is a group of probably stone cist graves from the Early Iron Age on a cliff promontory. The Karula site, where according to oral lore there was a *hiis*-site, stands out from the surrounding landscape, although the ridge can hardly be described as a visually impressive one.

In terms of landscape, the latter two examples express quite a different attitude. It may be speculated that the Tõugu and Karula sites were holy places, which were probably used in the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age, they were located on elevated protruding cliffs, and they were marked with burials, which were oriented towards settlements below. Very likely, the function of these holy places was connected with ancestors (Jonuks 2007; 2009a). A dramatic change in the use of the holy landscape took place in the Late Iron Age, and prominent landscapes were replaced by rather modest ones (Lang 2000, p.287).

There are many reasons why the use of landscape changed and the holy places were relocated, but perhaps the most important one was the change in the settlement pattern, according to which earlier settlement units were abandoned and new ones were put to use (Vedru 2011). Quite as important in this respect are the more general changes in religion, which led to emphasising new elements in the landscape. It becomes evident that the holy places that were probably put to use in the Late Iron Age are not necessarily situated on naturally prominent or anomalous landscapes; but, more importantly, there are no graves or burials from the period associated with them. At the same time, these places are closely connected with original settlements, and we may assume that this tradition of holy places

is no longer so closely associated with the dead and ancestors, and focuses more on rituals connected with gods and deities. This construction should not be interpreted as a sign of 'conversion', during which former holy places were deliberately abandoned, especially since many *hiis*-sites about which there is more recent lore (Kunda, Tõrma) meet the criteria of former holy places. In these cases, the main reason for choosing a new landscape was the disruption of the settlement, which is why new sites were chosen depending on the new criteria and sacred requirements.

Hiis-places in plain fields

A fine example of a new kind of holy place is the *hiis*-site of Aburi, which is situated one to 1.5 kilometres from the former village centre, on completely flat ground, and no graves have been found in its immediate vicinity (Fig. 4). The settlement site is dated to the Late Iron Age and the Middle Ages, and the only remnant of the past is the connection between the settlement and the *hiis*-site. There are other examples of *hiis*-places that are situated in such ordinary landscapes, and the surrounding villages have considered the *hiis*-site their own (for example, the holy place shared by the villages of Vaeküla, Raudlepa and Raudvere). A clearly characteristic feature of such places is the lack of a connection with Late Iron Age graves on the one hand, and the location of these places in landscapes that cannot necessarily be described as highly prominent or spectacular on the other. These are gently sloping areas, and characteristic as sites which are somewhat distinct from the rest of the surroundings. Such places are in no way comparable with the previously described holy places located on prominent hills and marked with graves. These differences in relief forms indicate that there has been 'something' that has made these sites distinct from the surrounding ordinary scenery. Similarly to what Veikko Anttonen (1992) has argued, the most important characteristic of such places is the boundary, which gives a sense of separation. This boundary is not clearly observable from outside, and the *hiis*-site is only perceived as an extraordinary



Fig. 4. The *hiis* (holy grove) and village in Aburi.

place. Certainly, many of the phenomena that created the boundary may be lost to us now.

It is possible that *hiis*-sites were surrounded by a stone wall or a pole fence, which was supposed to be a sign for outsiders that this was a sacred place (Kütt 2007, p.207). The few archaeological studies that have been carried out in holy groves in Estonia have not confirmed the presence of fences in these places (Jonuks forthcoming: a). This does not mean that there were none, but that it is not currently known how to study them. A possible border, marked with bigger stones, is known from Zebrene in Latvia (Urtāns 2008, p.72ff). However, we should not take as dogmatic the view that fences were used to create boundaries. Although many lore texts refer to fences that surrounded *hiis*-sites, they were not necessarily allusions to the practice of enclosing holy groves, but the expression of *aspiration*, which is very common in folklore, to show what a *hiis*-site should have looked like, rather than what it looked like in reality. Also, since reinterpretation is very characteristic of folk religion, it is impossible that a uniform idea about the appearance of a *hiis*-site could have been established.

Regardless of the fact that holy places which are located in prominent landscapes allow for more speculation in the interpretation of grove sites, we should not neglect those situated in 'ordinary' landscapes, or mention them only in passing. *Hiis*-sites have an important place in terms of their rich diversity and general context, even more so because holy places in different types of landscape also point to changed religious concepts. Considering also the possible chronological aspect, the (over)emphasis of visually impressive *hiis*-sites seems to focus on a single aspect of the holy place rather than on the entire concept in general.

Hidden *hiis*-sites

In addition to these two kinds of holy places of which the names contain the toponym '*hiis*', there is a group which is not connected with settlements or graves, or spectacular natural landscapes. These places are holy sites which are situated on bog islands, deep in woods and elsewhere off the beaten track, and which are separated from the everyday world because they are more difficult to access. In Estonia, such holy sites can be found in primeval river valleys (Kongla), on bog islands (such as the Great Holy Grove and the Small Holy Grove in Varudi) and elsewhere outside populated areas. An important motive for selecting such places was evidently their isolated location. Another significant aspect was probably also the passage to the holy place through the unique bog landscape, or by descending to

a deep river valley. An isolated and hardly accessible place was possibly also connected with a religious experience which was quite different from the one gained from other types of landscape. We may speculate that going to a bog island through a thickety bog or descending into a deep valley along a river bank studded with springs was connected with the rituals carried out in the holy place, and the pathway prepared the participants spiritually for the ritual. A good example here is the description of Iissaar (Holy Grove Island) in the village of Roostoja in East Viru County (RKM II 61, 27/8 (12). According to this text, there was a holy island in the bog, and as a sign of veneration, people left their hats on the previous bog island, Kübarsaar (Hat Island). Taking off one's hat and entering the holy place with the head uncovered can definitely be viewed as part of the holy ritual, and the purpose of it was the spiritual preparation of the participants to enter the holy place. It is true that such accounts are rather rare in Estonian lore about holy places, but it must be remembered that this type of lore rarely contains specific, detailed descriptions, and most mentions of holy groves refer to the concept of *hiis*-sites in general terms. An aspect similar to the above example has been discussed further in connection with pilgrimages (Turner, Turner 1978). This discussion emphasises that the pilgrimage, which is highly ritualised and follows several established rules, is as important as the destination of the pilgrimage. Pilgrimages prepared the people spiritually on their way to the holy place, and it is possible that cognitive preparatory processes also took place in natural holy places.

While holy places of this kind are not associated with graves or settlement sites that can be dated, their chronology, as well as presenting further speculation about their function, is problematic. In overall Estonian folklore about *hiis*-sites, the oral heritage about these hidden and hard-to-access holy places focuses on personal rituals such as offering and curing. Such hidden holy places might have had a different function: in addition to the obvious isolation, they provide a more personal relationship with the place, and this, in turn, clearly makes people regard these places as different to holy places near villages, where the focus is on the gatherings and festivities that are held there.

Hiis and the Church

A special topic in the discussion of *hiis*-sites is their relation with sacred Christian places. This relation is based on the premise that Christian sanctuaries were built upon former non-Christian religious sites. Building churches on these sites has often been justified by the view of Pope Gregory I, according to whom

Christianisation was believed to be more effective if people were allowed to continue to visit their former holy sites, but that these sites had to be converted to Christianity and the former idols destroyed (Sanmark 2004). Perhaps the most famous examples of this kind are the Old Uppsala church and the Frösö church in Sweden (Fabech 1989). It is rather difficult to point out specific examples in Estonia, because little research has been done on churches from this angle, and, if at all, the studies tend to focus on the cemeteries surrounding the churches. It has been suggested that Valjala and Pöide churches on Saaremaa Island were built on former non-Christian holy grove sites (Mägi 2002, p.156). Also, Heiki Valk (2007) has emphasised the link between former holy places and churches, and has pointed out the same energetic criteria for selecting both pagan and Christian sacred places. A link between churches and the earliest religious places, especially cemeteries, has also been suggested by Armin Rudi (2003, p.93). According to Rudi, control was taken over the former cultural landscape by constructing Christian sacred places close to former cemeteries or in close proximity to them, and in this way former generations were integrated into the new religion and cultural context.

A number of parish churches in Estonia were built in the middle or the second half of the 13th century, that is, soon after Christianisation. It is highly unlikely that the churches of what were then future parish centres were erected on desolate sites. The former function of these sites is not known, but it was probably not supposed to be only religious. Research history has shown that in the 13th century, churches in Estonia were built in the centres of villages, in cemeteries dating back to Late Prehistory, a former place of veneration and elsewhere (Moora 1956; Tamla 1993; Mägi 2002, p.155). Of course, there are other reasons determining the choice of location of parish churches, and not many of them can be investigated archaeologically. It seems more likely that the choice of church locations depended on the local situation, and building churches only on former sacred or burial sites was not important. An analysis of churches and early burial grounds in Öland has given quite similar results: while churches may be associated with burial sites of the Late Iron Age or the period prior to that, there are plenty of churches that have no visible relation with earlier archaeological sites (Andrén 2002, p.223). Even in the crosscut of a parish, the church may not have been located in the central place. Medieval churches, regardless of their important social role and social rituals, still represented different beliefs and ideologies, and thus different ritual practices, so that not all former sites of religious importance were suitable for building a church, and the choice of a

new site depended on local factors. The most important consideration in all the examples where a Christian church was built in the village centre, a former holy grove or cemetery, or the place of which the function is difficult to determine, was that the choice of location further reflected the importance of the church in addition to its religious and social significance. Therefore, it is quite possible that a Christian church was built in a former holy place, but this relation does not have to be as categorical as the general assumption in popular treatments has often been.

The landscape provides a possibility to speculate about the relationship between Prehistoric holy places and the Medieval parish church. Parish churches were often built in the most prominent place in the surrounding landscape, and there is often a spring or a river nearby. This choice of landscape leaves open the possibility that the place was also considered holy before Christianisation. This was not necessarily always so, of course, because the presence of a nearby body of water was also vital for churches in Medieval times, especially in the early period of Christianisation. An example of this can be found in the Chronicles of Henry of Livonia, which describe a baptism ritual following the fall of the Valjala stronghold, during which priests were summoned to the church to praise the Lord: 'By consecrating the spring in the centre of the stronghold and filling the cask, they first baptised the older and better people who were taught in the Christian faith, and then other men and women and children' (HCL XXX, 5).

Spring water therefore had an important role in Medieval Christian liturgy, and it may have been a factor determining the choice of the location before building a church. For a baptism ceremony, churches may have fetched baptismal water simply from a consecrated spring nearby, so these places did not necessarily have to be former holy places.

Conclusions

To sum up, three major groups of holy sites, with probably partly different dates and functions, can be distinguished in the north Estonian landscape. This article has left out the discussion of smaller places connected with the offering tradition, like springs and offering stones and trees, or offering yards located near farmsteads (Loorits 1935). The incorporation of these into a more complete and systematic context would provide us with a highly diverse and multifaceted overview of holy sites, at least in the context of the 19th century. While analysing *hiis*-sites, however, there are differences in places where the supposedly earliest

hiis-tradition is associated with a prominent natural monument, and where the rituals performed were probably connected with the veneration of the dead and ancestors. Later, a new layer was added to this stratification. Here, the connection with the dead was no longer important, and the choice of the location was not determined solely by the prominence of a natural monument. The introduction of a temporal perspective does not mean that former holy places were abandoned at a specific point in time and new ones were put to use. It rather suggests a change in religious needs: on the one hand, the aspect of nature was no longer emphasised as much, and on the other hand it points to the relocation of former settlement centres, during which some sacred places may have been abandoned, and new ones on a completely different landscape may have been put to use. Several former *hiis*-sites were still used in the newer religious phase. Besides Tõugu and Karula, there are holy sites that are isolated from the ordinary landscape and are difficult to access, which seems to emphasise their distinctiveness and 'difference' from the ordinary landscape.

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Abbreviations

ERA – Estonian Folklore Archive (Eesti rahvaluule arhiiv) at the Estonian State Literary Museum.

HCL – *Heinrichi Chronicon Livoniae*.

RKM – Folklore Collection of the Estonian State Literary Museum (1945–1996).

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ŠIAURĒS ESTIJOS HIIS ŠVENTVIETĒS: IŠKILŪS KALNAI IR LYGŪS LAUKAI

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Santrauka

Jau nuo XVII a. tyrinėtojai akcentuoja senąsias šventvietes, kurios kraštovaizdyje išsiskiria kaip vaizdingos ir įsimintinos vietos. Viduramžiais šventvietės paprastai būdavo tapatinamos su miškais (*lucus sanctus*), tačiau minimi ir kalnai.

Matas Joanas Eisenas (1920) buvo pirmasis, papildęs senųjų šventviečių tipų sąrašą, parodydamas, kad pavadinimas *hiis* („šventa vieta“) ir jį lydinti tautosaka taip pat yra susiję su kalvelėmis pelkėse, raistais ir laukais – visiškai lygiomis vietovėmis.

Šiame straipsnyje analizuojami su pavadinimo *hiis* vartojimu susiję trys kraštovaizdžio tipai ir išryškinti svarbiausi jų požymiai. Autorius nemano, kad galima sukurti visapusišką šventviečių tipologiją. Tačiau svarbu tai, kad skirtingų tipų kraštovaizdžiai, kuriuose aptinkama šventviečių, ir pastarųjų ryšiai su archeologijos paminklais gali suteikti duomenų apie skirtingas *hiis* šventviečių funkcijas bei jų chronologiją.

Netipologinis požiūris į šventvietes yra glaudžiai susijęs su tuo, kad šventvietės yra gamtiniai objektai, kuriuos žmogus įtraukė į savo kultūros lauką. Taigi tipologija galima tik tam tikrame lygmenyje, ir ji vi-

suomet atspindės tai, kaip konkretus tyrėjas suvokia gamtinės kilmės paminklą bei jo aplinką. Atsižvelgdamas į tai, šio straipsnio autorius nemėgins ieškoti tam tikrų „tipologinių žymenų“, būdingų visiems objektams, nes ir šie žymenys didele dalimi priklauso nuo lokalinio konteksto.

Garsūs ir plačiai naudoti kalnai yra pirmasis kraštovaizdžio tipas, būdingas šventvietėms, vadinamoms *hiis* vardu. Tai iškilios, plačiose apylinkėse dominuojančios kalvos. Būdinga, kad ant šių kalvų randama naujojo bronzos amžiaus – ankstyvojo geležies amžiaus kapų iš akmenų, įrengtų virš žemės paviršiaus, ir tai suteikia galimybę minėtas šventvietes datuoti. Vėlesni, vėlyvojo geležies amžiaus arba viduramžių, pavieniai kapai ir kapinynai ne taip dažnai susiję su išskirtinėmis kraštovaizdžio vietomis, kurios, matyt, buvo laikomos šventomis tuo metu, kai minėtuose kapinyuose buvo laidojama. Kadangi tokius atvejus nesunku interpretuoti, tai šventi kalnai paprastai užima dominuojančią padėtį ir tyrinėtojų darbuose.

Kaip kitos rūšies šventviečių pavyzdys straipsnyje nagrinėjama Aburi vietovėje, šalia vėlyvojo geležies amžiaus – viduramžių kaimavietės centro, visiškoje lygumoje esanti *hiis* šventvietė. Artimiausioje jos aplinkoje kapų neaptikta.

Tai ne vienintelis toks atvejis; *hiis* šventviečių, kurios lokalizuotos niekuo neišsiskiriančiame kraštovaizdyje ir neturi jokio ryšio su vėlyvojo geležies amžiaus laidojimo vietomis, yra ir daugiau. Šių vietų jokiū būdu negalima lyginti su aukščiau minėtomis šventvietėmis ant dominuojančių kalvų ir paženklintų kapais.

Visos *hiis* šventvietės yra reikšmingos, įdomų kontekstą turinčios ir didele įvairove pasižyminčios vietos. Skirtingi jų kraštovaizdžio tipai gali būti susiję su skirtingomis religinėmis koncepcijomis. Minėtų išskirtinių *hiis* šventviečių akcentavimas (ir netgi jų pervertinimas), atrodo, nepagrįstai sutelkia dėmesį į vieną šių šventviečių aspektą, bet ignoroja visumą.

Be aptartų dviejų šventviečių tipų, yra dar viena objektų grupė, kuri nesusijusi su gyvenvietėmis, laidojimo paminklais ir įsimintiniais kraštovaizdžiais. Tai šventvietės kalvelėse tarp pelkių, miškų tankmėje, toli nuo pramintų takų, kitaip tariant, sunkiai pasiekiamos ir nutolusios nuo žmonių pasaulio. Izoliacija, atrodo, buvo svarbiausias motyvas renkantis šventvietes tokiose nuošaliuose vietose. Kadangi šios rūšies šventvietės nesusijusios nei su laidojimo, nei su gyvenamosiomis vietomis, jų chronologija ir naudojimo pobūdis tebėra nenustatyta. Apskritai žodinė tradicija apie tokias paslėptas ir sunkiai pasiekiamas *hiis* šventvietes pabrėžia individualią ritualinę praktiką – aukojimus ir gydymo apeigas. Čia žmogui atsiranda galimybė sukurti glau-

desnį nei bet kur kitur ryšį su vieta. Tuo šios nuošalios šventvietės skiriasi nuo tų, kurios lokalizuojamos prie gyvenviečių ir kuriose vykdavo bendruomenės sueigos bei šventės.

Speciali diskusijos apie *hiis* šventvietes tema yra jų ryšys su krikščioniškais šventomis vietomis, mat įprasta manyti, kad bažnyčios buvo statomos senose šventvietėse. Popiežiaus Grigorijaus I bulėje kalbama apie tai, kad krikščionybė lengviau plis, jeigu žmonėms bus sukurta galimybė melstis senose vietose. Tačiau joms turi būti suteiktas krikščioniškas charakteris, o stabai sunaikinti.

Sunku pateikti tokios rūšies pavyzdžių iš Estijos, nes minėtu požiūriu bažnyčios, išskyrus Valjala ir Pöide Saremos saloje, iki šiol faktiškai nėra tyrinėtos. Pagrįstai manoma, kad XIII a. bažnyčios Estijoje buvo statomos gyvenviečių centrinėse dalyse, priešistorinių kapinynų teritorijoje, vietose, kurioms rodoma pagarba, ir kitur. Atrodo, kad viduramžių bažnyčios padėtis pirmiausia priklausė nuo vietos ypatumų, ir nesiekta ją būtinai pastatyti šventos ar laidojimo vietos teritorijoje.

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