

FINDS OF CHARRED GRAINS FROM ESTONIAN HILLFORTS

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Key words: Cereals, Hillfort

There are no systematically collected archaeobotanical samples from Estonian hillforts, but some of these have still provided very impressive finds of burnt cereals discovered during archaeological excavations.

In 1936 – 1938 archaeological excavations took place on Iru hillfort. Under the wall ruins dated to the 9th century AD, numerous charred *Hordeum vulgare* (barley) grains were found with a small amount of *Triticum aestivum* (bread wheat) and *Secale cereale* (rye). *Pisum sativum* (pea) together with barley were also found. The same composition of grains was observed in the material from the excavations in 1952 and 1955.

From the 11th century AD hillfort Kuusalu Pajulinn, a 10 – 20 cm thick layer of carbonized cereals was discovered near the wall during the excavations in 1938. This layer consisted mostly of grains of *Hordeum vulgare* and *Pisum sativum*, as well as small amounts of *Triticum aestivum* and *Secale cereale*.

From the Rõuge hillfort site, charred grains of *Hordeum vulgare* were found on a house floor dated to the 9th – 10th centuries AD.

The most impressive archaeological find of cereals was discovered in the 11th century AD Soontagana hillfort, a charred layer of grains consisting of 95% *Secale cereale* (rye) and the rest *Hordeum vulgare* and *Triticum aestivum*. Some grains of *T. turgidum* were also determined. Finds of *Bromus secalinus* indicate the cultivation of winter rye.

The dominant cereal in Otepää hillfort from the 11th – 12th centuries was *Triticum aestivum*, accompanied by small quantities of *Secale cereale*, *Hordeum vulgare* and *Avena sativa*. In the 12th – 13th centuries *Secale cereale* dominated with a few grains of *Triticum aestivum* and *Avena sativa*.

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