ARCHAEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTATION OF THE EERIKNEEME STONE LABYRINTH ON THE ISLAND AEGNA

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On January 10th 2009 Hugo Udusaar and Ilmar Võtti, inhabitants of the island Aegna in the Tallinn Bay near the northern coast of Estonia, rediscovered the stone labyrinth, which had been believed to be destroyed or lost (see Fig. 1). During the following days they cleared the main part of the discovered stone construction (Fig. 2), which was completely covered with sod and even some trees grew there. The island Aegna (German *Wulf*, Swedish *Ulffö*), which for a long time was state owned, now again belongs to its former owner, the Tallinn municipality. The complete clearing and documenting of the labyrinth, organized by the Cultural Heritage Department of Tallinn City Government, took place in September and October of the same year.

STONE LABYRINTHS ON THE BALTIC COASTS AND IN ESTONIA

The classical labyrinth image consists of a entrance (or mouth and a path/circuit, which, winding to and from reaches the centre of the labyrinth. A few classical labyrinths are known to have a split central cross; enabling to leave the labyrinth without walking the same path twice. Classical labyrinths are usually named according to the number of their passable circuits, counting from the outermost inwards, unregarding centre. Classical labyrinths with seven circuits are probably most numerous, but the alternative with eleven circuits is not very rare either, and some are even known to have 15 circuits. The number of walls separating the circuits is always larger by one (e.g. labyrinth with 11 circuits has 12 walls). The entrance, or mouth, of a labyrinth may be located to the left or to the right of the central axle; accordingly the first turn must be taken either to the left or to the right (left- or right-handed labyrinths). Although such labyrinth seems complicated, it is easy to remember the drawing of it on the basis of the basic figure in the middle of the construction. The basic figure consists of a cross, four dots and, depending on the intended number of circuits, a certain number of angles (e.g. the total of angles in the basic figure of a labyrinth with 11 circuits is 8). The double-spiral labyrinths have, instead of the central cross, a double spiral, which winds around the centre and forms circuits with separate entrances and exits.

Stone labyrinths on the Baltic shores probably had a general nautical and magic function (Kraft 1982, 97). Coastal labyrinths are located close to fishermen's villages or their remains, many also on small uninhabited islets and therefore researchers associate them with seasonal fishing of the coastal population and regard them as magical symbols for conjuring good luck at fishing or favourable weather (Kraft 1982). One of the theories relates the labyrinths with pilotage (Westerdahl 1991). Traditional

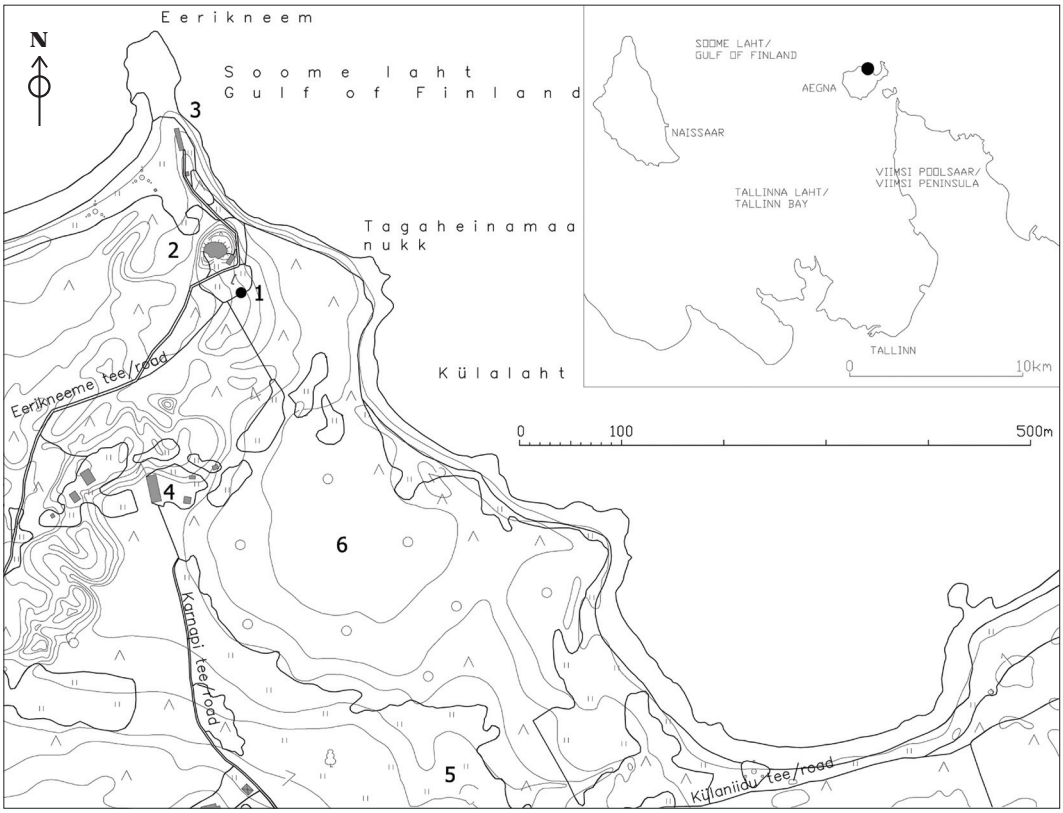

Fig. 1. Location plan of the stone labyrinth on Eerikneeme cape on the island Aegna. 1 – stone labyrinth; 2 – ruins of the Central Command Point; 3 – ruins of the searchlight station; 4 – ruins of the border guard station of the Soviet Union; 5 – the location of the former Aegna village; 6 – former communal meadow of the village (nowadays partly overgrown with forest).

Jn 1. Aegna saarel Eerikneemel paikneva kivilabürindi asendiplaan. 1 – kivilabürint; 2 – Keskkomandopunkti vare; 3 – helgiheitja positsiooni vare; 4 – Nõukogude Liidu piirivalve kordoni vare; 5 – endise Aegna küla asukoht; 6 – endine küla ühisheinamaa (praeguseks osaliselt metsastunud).

Drawing / Joonis: Ragnar Nurk

stories tell us that Swedish stone labyrinths were used for walking, dancing or running (Myrberg 2006, 46–47). In different regions a variety of names have been used for stone labyrinths: Troy City, Ruins of Jerusalem, Virgin's Dance, Giant's Garden, etc. (Matthews 1922, 150–151).

The well-known natural scientist Karl Ernst von Baer already mentioned stone labyrinths in Estonia in his article published in the proceedings of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1844 (Baer 1844, 12), which was also the first description of stone labyrinths in the Russian Empire. The first mention of a definite stone labyrinth in Estonia – located on the Tahkuna Peninsula on the island Hiiumaa – was made in a lecture of a Baltic German historian Karl Löwis of Menar in 1912 (Löwis of Menar 1913, 91). In the first review of Estonian archaeology the professor of archaeology at the University of Tartu, the Finnish archaeologist Aarne Michaël Tallgren mentioned

Fig. 2. Clearing of the first stone rows at the rediscovery of the labyrinth on the 10th of January 2009. Man on the photo is Ilmar Võtti.
Jn 2. Esimeste kiviridade väljapuhastamine labürindi taasavastamisel 10. jaanuaril 2009. Fotol Ilmar Võtti. Photo / Foto: Hugo Udusaar

another labyrinth besides the one in Tahkuna. This one was located on Viirlaid, and he probably meant the islet of Viirelaid near Saaremaa (Tallgren 1925, 171). Another labyrinth was discovered in 1930 on the island Aegna. On this occasion the discoverer Peeter Mey published the article 'Troojalinnad Eestis' (Eng. 'Troy Cities in Estonia'), where he also mentioned some more possible labyrinths on the islands of Aksi and Prangli near Aegna (Mey 1931).

Then a long pause followed, which ended only in 1978 with the review of Estonian stone labyrinths published in the journal 'Eesti Loodus' by Mart Rahi and Tõnu Viik (1978), where they stated, that they had discovered two double-spiral stone labyrinths on the island Aksi in the previous summer. The builders' initials and dates (1849 and 1912) beside the labyrinths indicated that the constructions belonged to a fairly recent period. Even the historic persons, the presumable builders of the labyrinths are known. The earlier labyrinth was known to have been built by a Swedish officer David Vekman, who had come to live on the island after the fortress of Sveaborg (present Suomenlinna) on the opposite shore of the Gulf of Finland had fallen into the Russians' hands in 1808. Local people called his labyrinth 'The Turkish City' (Rahi & Viik 1978).

In 1986 the largest of the three stone labyrinths, called 'Jerusalem', on the Kootsaare Point, Hiiumaa, was excavated under the leadership of the archaeologist Urmas Selirand. According to local tradition these labyrinths had been built by a Swedish seaman, who had come to the island after a shipwreck, to commemorate his native land. According to Selirand and the Swedish researcher of labyrinths John Kraft, who joined Selirand's later expeditions, the Kootsaare labyrinth was a classical seven circuit labyrinth. There both the simple angle type and the split central cross option are possible. Of the two smaller labyrinths only scattered stone heaps were preserved, with only a few fragments of hardly discernible stone rows. The articles where Selirand and Kraft published their investigation results (Kraft & Selirand 1990; Selirand & Kraft 1992) contain some new information about other formerly known stone labyrinths. The article suggested for the first that there might be a stone labyrinth near the village of Kotland on the western coast of Saaremaa, and described the image of a classical labyrinth with 11 circuits carved in a plank of a windmill from the island Vormsi.

Besides, Kraft and Selirand pointed out that the distribution of stone labyrinths on the southern coast of Finland and western and north-western coasts of Estonia coincides with the former habitat of Swedes, who probably arrived here already in the Middle Ages. Of the districts where labyrinths occur, at least the islands Hiiumaa, Vormsi and Aegna have had a large Swedish population.

Most recently Kristin Ilves (2003) has analysed the Estonian stone labyrinths in her MA dissertation, defended at the University of Tartu in 2003. Ilves regarded them as a type of the so-called communication monuments typical to maritime cultural landscapes (Ilves 2003, 86–97).

At the moment, five stone labyrinths are known on the western and northern coasts of Estonia, and some information has been obtained about four other. Three of the definite stone labyrinths are located in Kootsaare, Hiiumaa, two on the island Aksi and one on Aegna. Indirect information has been obtained of labyrinths on the Tahkuna peninsula, Hiiumaa, on Viirelaid, on the island Prangli and near the village of Kotlandi on the western coast of Saaremaa.

INITIAL DISCOVERING AND DOCUMENTING OF THE LABYRINTH

The stone labyrinth at Eerikneeme on the island Aegna was first discovered in 1930–1931 by Lieutenant Commander Peeter Friedrich Eustafi Mey (1893–1941), who was the commanding officer of one of the coastal batteries there. Mey came from Hiiumaa, from a well-known seamen's family. The labyrinth image was known to him already in his childhood, when his father had taught him to draw 'the old figure'. His uncle and mother had played 'Jerusalem' on school slates in their childhood. It is also noteworthy that already before the discovery of the labyrinth Mey had met the archaeologist Harri Moora from the University of Tartu. Two letters from Mey to Moora have preserved (AI 22:19:3), telling the story of the discovery of the Aegna labyrinth and giving detailed information about it. The letters also included the plan and photo of the labyrinth. So far our quite indistinct notion of the Aegna labyrinth was based only on the article Mey had published in a newspaper (Mey 1931).

Mey discovered the labyrinth in November 1930 and cleared it in August 1931. Collecting folklore from former inhabitants of Aegna, Mey heard from a fisherman

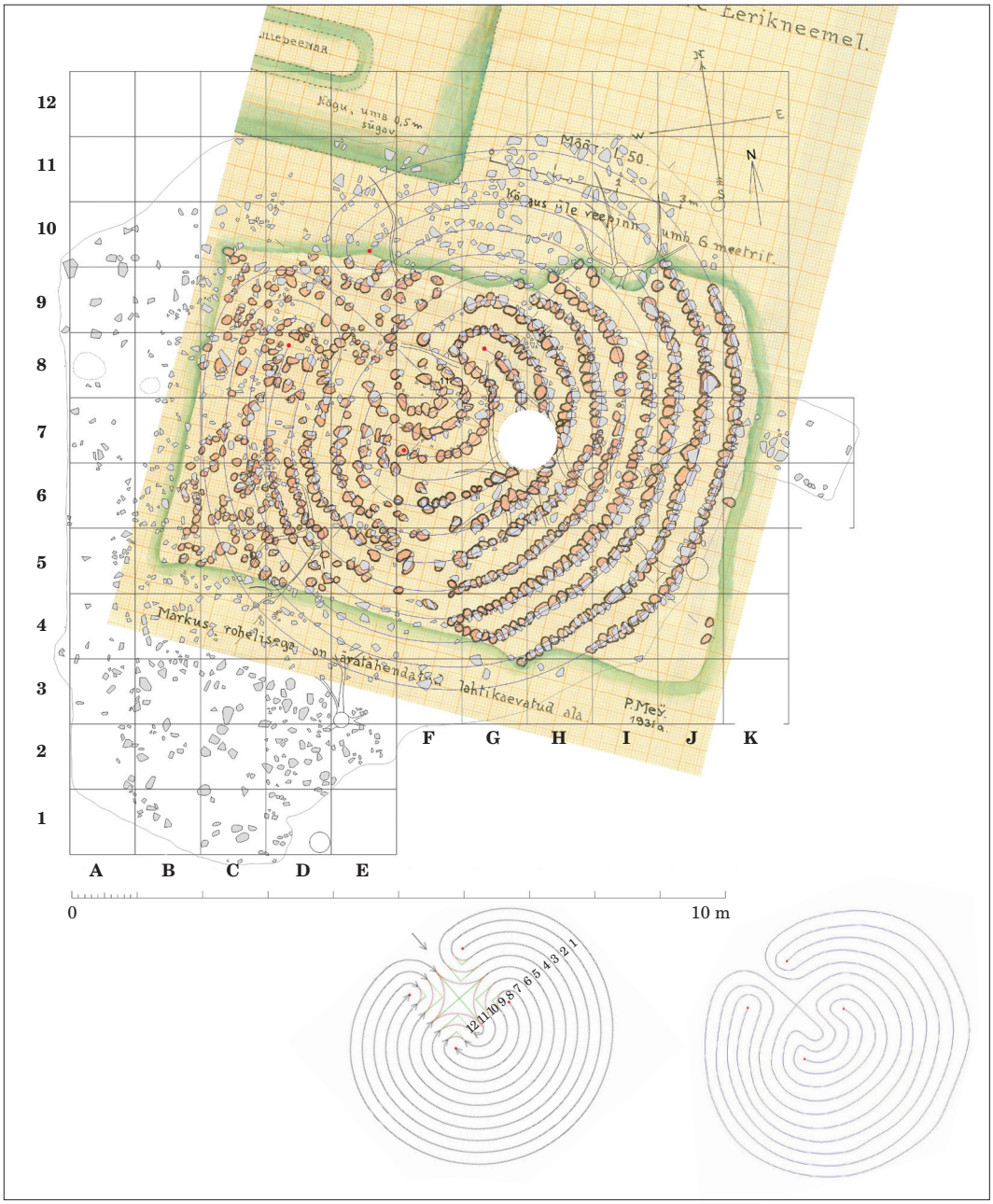

Fig. 3. Plans of the Aegna labyrinth from 1931 and 2009 (stones red and gray respectively) together with the attempt of reconstruction. Drawing of 1931 by Peeter Mey; drawing of 2009 by Ragnar Nurk and Garel Püüa; reconstruction: Ragnar Nurk and Hugo Udusaar.

Jn 3. Aegna labürindi plaanid 1931. ja 2009. a (kivid vastavalt punased ja hallid) koos rekonstruktsioonikatsega. 1931. a joonis: Peeter Mey; 2009. a joonis: Ragnar Nurk ja Garel Püüa; rekonstruktsioonikatse: Ragnar Nurk ja Hugo Udusaar.

Fig. 4. Peeter Mey's photo of the Aegna labyrinth from 1931. Stones have been painted with white oil paint before photographing, to get a better picture.
Jn 4. Peeter Mey foto Aegna labürindist 1931. aastast. Kivid on enne fotografeerimist parema pildi saamiseks õlivärviga üle värvitud.

I. Lambot. He lived on a small neighbouring island of Kräsuli and had in his childhood seen stone circles, which were called 'Jerusalem City', at Eerikneeme on Aegna. Another former fisherman from Aegna, V. Nõmberg, also knew about stone circles. He came to the island to point out the place, but could do it only approximately since the site was covered with thick sod and moss; moreover, the vicinity had changed a lot during the recent fortification work. Probing the higher places of the cape with a Finnish knife, Mey felt rows of stones in some places, and when he next removed sod and moss from the possible labyrinth area with the help of soldiers, parts of concentric stone circles came to light. Stone by stone Mey cleared the labyrinth by hand. Then he drew, with greatest precision as he wrote in his letter to Moora, the plan of the labyrinth (see Fig. 3) – all stones forming rows as well as the scattered ones in the excavated area. After completing the plan Mey took a photograph of the labyrinth (Fig. 4), which turned out excellent, since before photographing Mey had painted all cleared stones white with oil paint. Thus we have precise documentation of the state of the labyrinth at the beginning of 1930s.

By the time it was first discovered, only about a half of the labyrinth had been preserved. The greatest damage had apparently happened during the construction

of an electric power station immediately north of the labyrinth. According to Mey, a much-used footpath also ran across the labyrinth, brier grew in its central part and immediately to the south a couple of old spruces grew. Only the eastern part of the labyrinth was wholly preserved and there 12 stone circles could be counted. The fishermen who informed Mey did not know the former purpose of the labyrinth, supposing that it had been built by 'castaways or sea surveyors' just for fun. Since the roots of 70–80-year old spruces had in places grown over the stones of the labyrinth, Mey supposed that the labyrinth was at least 100 years old, but on the basis of the thick soil and sod layer he suggested that it was much older. As he wrote to Moora, he also looked for coins beneath the stones, but without success.

On August 12th, 1931 the Minstry of Education and Social Affairs, at the suggestion of the *Kabinet* of Archaeology of Tartu University, took the stone labyrinth of Aegna under heritage protection (ERA 1108 5 703, 30–32; ERA 1108 5 988; AI, Book of Prehistoric Antiquities of the *Kabinet* of Archaeology of Tartu University).

REDISCOVERING AND SECOND DOCUMENTATION OF THE LABYRINTH

In the decades following the World War II access to the island Aegna was restricted, since it was located in the closed border zone of the Soviet Union. When the historian Heino Gustavson went to look for the meanwhile almost forgotten stone labyrinth in 1977 he could not find it and it was believed to be lost (Rahi & Viik 1978, 317). Selirand and Kraft claimed that after the Gustavson's unsuccessful search trip Rahi and Viik, had still found the sand-covered (*sic!*) labyrinth and excavated it (Kraft & Selirand 1990; Selirand & Kraft 1992, 244). This notion must have been a misunderstanding. The fate of the labyrinth was unknown until recently. The desire to find at least the exact site of the stone labyrinth inspired the only permanent residents on the island at the moment Hugo Udusaar and Ilmar Võtti to search. After the approximate mapping of the possible location of the labyrinth they started to probe the ground in more likely areas with sharpened sticks. Thanks to profound preparatory work the labyrinth was rediscovered already in the first day of the search (Fig. 2). In the following days the labyrinth, covered with a layer of soil up to 30 cm thick, was cleared further and it became certain that the labyrinth was partly preserved (Aug 2009). The men contacted the National Heritage Board.

Archaeologists together with the re-discoverers of the labyrinth cleared the construction again and extended the excavation to enfold the whole area of the structure (Fig. 5). In addition, the possible presence of stone circles outside of this area was checked. All stones were accurately drawn on a grid, and relative altitudes were sporadically taken. The excavation site was extended to the remains of military constructions at the edge of the same glade/clearing. The labyrinth, consisting overwhelmingly of smallish granite stones, had been built on a level gravel surface, but it was not cleared everywhere down to the gravel because the stones were already loose and might shift. None of the finds from the area of the labyrinth were earlier than the 20th century.

The preserved part of the labyrinth was slightly smaller than in the days of the first documentation (compare Fig. 3). Unfortunately the area most damaged during the intermediate years was the centre of the labyrinth, which had been in a poor

Fig. 5. View of the labyrinth from north, during the archaeological documentation in autumn 2009.
Jn 5. Labürindi vaade põhjast arheoloogilise dokumenteerimise ajal 2009. a sügisel.
Photo / Foto: Hugo Udusaar

state of preservation even before. In the shifting of stones people, animals, trees and weather conditions probably all played their part. Seven pines, about 60 years old, and a rowan-tree, about 40 years old grew on the labyrinth. Mey had counted 12 stone circles, now only 10 could be detected, because the two innermost circles had been nearly completely destroyed (circles nos. 1 and 12). The third circle from the middle (no. 10) had been additionally damaged. Of the fourth circle from the middle (no. 9) only the left part had preserved, like before. The outer circles (nos. 1–8) were also preserved in the former extent. The western and northern parts of the labyrinth had been greatly scattered already in Mey's times, except a few fragments of stone circles, which now again came to light beneath the roots of a young pine tree.

The diameter of the stones in the well-preserved outer circles of the eastern part of the labyrinth was 10–30 cm. Paths/circuits were on the average 25–30 cm wide. According to Mey's plan the paths/circuits between the innermost circles, where space ran short, were sporadically only 10–15 cm wide. Hence the labyrinth could be passed through only carefully placing one foot in front of the other.

In the damaged parts of the labyrinth areas of higher concentration of stones could be distinguished among loose scattered stones, where even possible circles and curves, which did not fit into the general system, seemed discernible. On the south-western side the excavation was also enlarged into an area where the labyrinth could

not have extended, even if the precise location of the outer circles in this part was not known. The whole area was covered with a dense layer of granite stones, where, among others, a row of four large granite stones standing side by side came to light. It is possible that the labyrinth was mended during the period of its use, or supplemented later, when the original meaning was forgotten.

LOCATION OF THE LABYRINTH ON THE TERRAIN AND ITS DATING

The Eerikneem cape, where the labyrinth is located, is one of the northernmost places of Aegna (see Fig. 1). The labyrinth is located on the higher elevation of the cape about 270 m south of the tip of the cape, at the south-eastern edge of a small clearing, where the Eerikneeme road running from the west meets the Karnapi road running from the south. Sea is closest to the labyrinth (*ca.* 70 m) in the section of the coastline between the tip of Eerikneeme cape and the Tagaheinamaa Point, which is still subjected to the active abrasion by the sea. The crest of an oblong shingle beach ridge, more or less north – south oriented, had been selected for the location of the labyrinth. Formerly, when there was no forest, the place probably offered a good view at the Gulf of Finland. As the labyrinth was built of smallish stones it was probably not visible to any great distance, unless it was marked in a distinctive way. At the northern edge of the same clearing the ruins of the former Central Command Post stand, and immediately north of the labyrinth the granite foundation of the above-mentioned power station is preserved under thin turf.

As far as we know, no archaeological investigations have been carried out on Aegna in search of a prehistoric or medieval cultural layer. Only one cup-marked stone in the eastern part of the island, quite far from the labyrinth, refers to a probable prehistoric settlement. Written sources mention the island Aegna and its inhabitants in the Middle Ages, when the island belonged to Tallinn. The earliest reliable information about permanent inhabitants dates from the 15th century. In the Middle Ages a fishermen's village and a stud farm were located on the island.

Aegna has been also mentioned in connection with defending the important shipping route running between the mainland and Aegna against pirate attacks. 1561, when Tallinn took the oath of allegiance to the King of Sweden Erik XIV, marks the beginning of the Swedish period, which lasted for almost 150 years.

In the first registers of male inhabitants of the island, dating from the 17th century both Swedish and Estonian names can be found, which suggests mixed population on the island. The main subsistence of the inhabitants in that period was fishing, but one report tells us that people could hardly make a living and in summertime the fishermen made long trips as far as to the waters of Finland. At the end of the 17th century Aegna went into the possession of the Swedish state and at about the same time the king dispensed some of the fishermen from other obligations, charging them with a commission of mail conveyance over the Gulf of Finland. The postmaster of Tallinn of that time has informed his superior in Stockholm of the hard work of the post peasants of Aegna and mentioned perishing of the fishermen and their boats (Nerman 2008, 15–21).

Since the inhabitants of the island had to go on long voyages, it is quite likely that they practised magic to seek favourable weather and/or good luck at fishing –

Fig. 6. The map of the island Aegna compiled by Johan Holmberg from 1689.
Jn 6. Johan Holmbergi koostatud Aegna saare kaart 1689. aastast.
(EAA 1-2.C-II-34.)

labyrinths are often considered to be connected with such magic. On the Baltic shores labyrinths are most numerous on the South-Finnish coast and in the regions of Stockholm and Åland, with which, according to the above-mentioned facts, the inhabitants of Aegna must have had contacts. Around Helsinki labyrinths have been called, alongside with other names, 'ruins of Jerusalem' (Matthews 1922, 150). In the years of the Great Northern War (1700–1721), before Russian troops seized Tallinn in 1710, most of the inhabitants left the island, and the population began to increase only in the middle of the 19th century (Nerman 2008, 26–28). Relying upon Mey's justified estimation of the age of the labyrinth, this is also the latest possible construction time of the labyrinth. The theory, introduced to Mey by former fishermen of the island, that the labyrinth was built by bored seamen who had landed on the island, does not seem very likely.

The first known map of Aegna and its surroundings (Fig. 6) was compiled by the surveyor Johan Holmberg in 1689. According to this map the greater part of the island was covered with forest, larger clearings were located in the eastern part of the island, on the western shore of the Külalaht Bay (Village Bay). There a village of 10 households and a large communal meadow stood, smaller meadows were located on the western and southern shores of the island, fields were absent. An anchor sign marks

a storm harbour for ships near the southern coast. The stone labyrinth of Aegna, if it existed at that time, would be located on the map at the northernmost edge of the meadow, furthest from the village. Nowadays all the village buildings have perished and the meadow has mostly grown over, but in the former times it may have extended to the foot of the ridge on the top of which the labyrinth stands.

The speed of land rise has been used to date stone labyrinths, but it is a very rough method. The calculations for the Aegna labyrinth, located on a small elevation, considering the present absolute altitude (6–6.5 m a.s.l.) and the average speed of land rise in the Tallinn region (2.4 mm per year, see Saarse *et al.* 2003; Saarse *et al.* 2009), will clearly result in too early dates. In recent decades attempts have been made to date stone labyrinths by lichenometry, using lichens growing on the stones. Lichenometric dating of coastal labyrinths in Norrland, Sweden, indicated that those labyrinths overwhelmingly dated from the late Middle Ages and early post-medieval times (16th–17th centuries), although a few earlier and later examples were also noted. It appeared that unlike the provisional hypothesis of the researchers, the double-spiral labyrinths were contemporaneous with the classic ones, and not their simplified form (Sjöberg 1996). As the Aegna labyrinth has repeatedly been buried beneath a humus layer and cleared, and its stones have been once even painted with oil paint, lichens necessary for dating are obviously not preserved there.

THE TYPE OF THE LABYRINTH AND RECONSTRUCTION

As far as we know, Mey did not have a definite opinion about the type of the labyrinth. Since the previous documentation of the labyrinth its central part – the key feature to determine the type – has been damaged further, we had to base our reconstruction of the original shape of the labyrinth on the plan and photo made by Mey in 1931. Compared with the new drawing, his plan, in the part of the construction elements that have still survived, appeared to be very accurate, which is really not surprising, since the drawing methods were fundamentally the same. This means that we can quite safely rely on Mey's plan when studying the parts of the labyrinth, which have been damaged in the meantime. As for possible carelessness at the clearing of the labyrinth, we have no reason to suspect Mey, although incidental mistakes cannot be completely excluded.

Deciding by the shape of the better preserved stone circles of the labyrinth, its axle of symmetry lay in the north-west – south-east direction, with the entrance in the north-west. Two facts helped to determine the original type of the stone labyrinth of Aegna. First, it is known that the labyrinth originally had 12 stone circles, and no more were found from the formerly excavated area beyond the labyrinth. Second, an extremely important key feature was preserved in the central part of the labyrinth: in the left half, the end of the fourth circle from the centre was open, and it was surrounded from below by a stone curve, which connected the third and fifth circles from the centre. This is exactly what should be found in a classical labyrinth with 11 paths/circuits, in which the first turn at the entrance must be taken to the left. The other double-spiral labyrinth type spread in the Baltic region can be almost surely ruled out on the basis of the known construction fragments of the centre of the Aegna labyrinth. Besides, labyrinths of that type (also called kidney-shaped labyrinths) are usually

more oval-shaped than can be presumed on the basis of the well-preserved parts of the main circles in the eastern part of the Aegna labyrinth.

Knowing the possible type of the labyrinth, the re-discoverers of the labyrinth and the archaeologists made a trial reconstruction (Fig. 3). According to the reconstruction the labyrinth was slightly elliptical in shape, with the diameters of about 8 (NW–SE) and 8.7 m. The total length of stone circles was about 147 m and the length of pathway from entrance to goal about 133 m. The location of the main circles of the upper part of the labyrinth was the least problematic, since these were preserved in the eastern part, and smaller fragments of them could be observed also in the western part.

Drawing the centre and the lower part of the labyrinth was more problematic. Here we proceeded from the principle that in a labyrinth the exact location of each circle was not as important as their functionality. Seeking possible fragments of stone circles in the scattered part of the labyrinth and basing our reconstruction on these would have evidently been dubious. Besides, the shape of classical labyrinths varied to a great extent, regardless of a certain basic figure. For example, by changing the shape of the angles of the basic figure it is possible to build quite different labyrinths. In our case the only preserved angle of the basic figure was made half angular and half rounded. Since the centre of the labyrinth had been mostly destroyed already before the first documenting, it is not possible to establish whether the labyrinth had a split or closed central cross. From the aspect of the reconstruction of the labyrinth it was just a question of a few stones, present or absent. Regarding the reconstruction, it must be mentioned that it was not in accordance with the shape of the right-hand parts of the two innermost circles exposed on Mey's plan and photo. Still, no scheme could be suggested where they would fit in better.

SUMMARY

The most damaged part of the Aegna labyrinth was the centre of the labyrinth – two innermost circles of the original 12 were almost completely destroyed and a little less than a half of the construction was preserved. Aegna classical labyrinth had 11 paths/circuits, and the first turn after entering was to the left. The only similar one among the formerly documented labyrinths in Estonia is in Kootsaare, Hiiumaa, excavated under the guidance of Urmas Selirand in 1986. That was also of the classical type, although the number of circles was different, and it was right-handed. Two stone labyrinths known from the island Aksi near Aegna represent a different labyrinth type with two spirals, they probably originate from a considerably later time than the Aegna labyrinth.

Researchers have usually associated the building of stone labyrinths to seeking good luck at fishing and favourable weather. It is interesting to note that to the first documenter Mey, who came from a seafarers' family from Hiiumaa, the notion of a labyrinth was familiar already from his native island, where it was known, similarly to Aegna, under the name of 'Jerusalem'. The accurate dating of the Aegna labyrinth by scientific methods, finds or construction principles is unfortunately impossible. Deciding from the location of the labyrinth on the cultural landscape, the general facts of history and taking into consideration the population of the island we may presume that it was built during the Swedish period (17th century) at the latest.

Nowadays the authentic labyrinth has been destroyed, unfortunately, and has been restored in its presumable original shape.

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AEGNA SAARE EERIKNEEME KIVILABÜRINDI ARHEOLOOGILINE DOKUMENTEERIMINE

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10. jaanuaril 2009 taasavastasid Aegna saare elanikud Hugo Udusaar ja Ilmar Võtti oma otsinguretkel vahepeal kadunuks või hävinuks peetud kivilabürindi (vt asend jn 1 ja vrd jn 6). Järgnevatel päevadel puhastasid nad välja põhiosa leitud kivikonstruktsioonist (jn 2), mis oli täielikult kattunud mättakihiga ja millel kasvasid mõned puud. Tallinna Kultuuriväärtuste Ameti poolt tellitud labürindi täielik väljapuhastamine ja dokumenteerimine toimus sama aasta septembris ja oktoobris.

Läänemere rannikul paiknevaid kivilabürinte on uurijate poolt enamasti seostatud kalaõnne ja soodsa ilma palumisega, millele viitab sageli nii nendega seonduv rahvapärimus kui ka asumine kalurikülade läheduses. Teisalt on tähelepanuväärne Soome ja Eesti kivilabürintide levikuareaali kokkulangemine rannarootslaste alaga. Aegnal oli kirjalikele allikatele tuginedes tegu arvatavasti eesti-rootsi segarahvastikuga. Saare elanike põhiliseks tegevusalaks oli kalapüük, kuid Rootsi võimu ajal ka postivedu üle Soome lahe. Maamõõtja Johan Holmbergi poolt 1689. a koostatud esimesel teadaoleval Aegna kaardil (jn 6) on saare idaosas näidatud 10 majapidamisega küla. Põhjasõja ajal vähenenud saare elanike arv hakkas taas kasvama alles 19. saj keskpaiku.

Aegna kivilabürindi kohta täpsemaid andmeid otsides selgus, et esmaavastaja Peeter Mey oli selle 1930.–1931. aastal juba suuremas osas välja puhastanud ja väga heal tasemel dokumenteerinud ning vastavad materjalid Tartu Ülikooli Arheoloogia Kabinetile saatnud (jn 3, 4). 12. augustil 1931 võttis Hariduse ja Sotsiaalministeerium Aegna kivilabürindi "Jeruusalemm" muinasvarana kaitse alla. Huvitav on täheldada, et Hiiumaa meresõitjate perekonnast pärinevale Mey'le oli labürindi idee tuttav juba kodusaarelt, kus seda ühe variandina tunti isegi sama nime all. Labürindist Meyle rääkinud kalurid V. Nõmberg ja I. Lambot selle kunagisest otstarbest ei teadnud, arvates, et selle olid ajaviiteks ehitanud "merehädalised või meremõõtjad". Mey hindas kivide peale ulatuvatele puujuurtele ja mullakihi paksusele viidates labürindi vanuseks mitte vähem kui 100 aastat.

Aegna kivilabürint paikneb saare põhjarannikul Eerikneeme kõrgemal kohal u 6–6,5 m üle merepinna. Praegu katab neeme okaspuumets, aga varem avanes siit ilmselt suurepärane vaade nii Soome lahele kui külale, millest labürinti lahutas vaid heinamaa. Mey poolt fikseeritud olukorraga võrreldes oli vahepeal kõige rohkem kahjustada saanud labürindi keskosa, nii et algsest 12 kiviringist kaks seesmist olid peaaegu täielikult hävinud (jn 3, 5). Üldse oli labürindi konstruktsioonist säilinud veidi alla poole. Arheoloogiliste tööde käigus, milles osalesid ka labürindi taasavastajad, puhastati labürint vahepeal kogunenud prahist ja laiendati kaevandit, nii et oleks hõlmatud kogu kunagise konstruktsiooniga maa-ala. Peale selle kontrolliti võimalike kiviringide olemasolu väljaspool vastavat piirkonda. Labürindi idaosa paremini säilinud kiviringide kuju põhjal otsustades paiknes selle sümmeetriatelg loode – kagusuunaliselt ja sissepääs jäi loodesse. Valdavalt väikestest raudkividest koosnenud labürint oli laotud üsna ühetasasele kruusasele aluspinnale. Kivide läbimõõt välimistes kiviringides oli 10–30 cm ja käiguteed olid keskmiselt 25–30 cm laiused. Käiguteed kõige sisemiste ringide vahel, kus ruumi nappis, olid Mey plaanile tuginedes mõnes kohas ainult 10–15 cm laiused. Seega sai labürintkujundit läbida vaid jalg jala ette astudes.

Tuginedes mõlemale fikseerimisele tehti koostöös labürindi taasavastajatega katse seda rekonstrueerida (jn 3). Erinevate variantide läbikaalumisel jõuti järeldusele, et kõige usutavamalt on tegu klassikalise 11 käiguringiga labürindiga, millesse sisenedes esimene pööre toimus vasakule. Eestis varem dokumenteeritud labürintidest sarnaneb Aegna oma vaid 1986. aastal Urmas Seliranna juhtimisel Hiiumaal Kootsaarel välja kaevatud labürindiga, mis oli samuti klassikalist tüüpi, ehkki väiksema ringide arvuga ja "paremakäeline". Kaks Aegnale lähedal Aksi saarel teadaolevat kivilabürinti esindavad hoopis teist, kahe spiraaliga tüüpi ja on nendega kaasnevale pärimusele tuginedes ilmselt võrreldes Aegna omaga ka üsna hilised. Aegna kivilabürindi vanuse täpne kindlaksmääramine loodusteaduslike meetodite, leiumaterjali või ehitusprintsiibi põhjal pole kahjuks võimalik. Tuginedes labürindi asendile kultuurmaastikul, üldistele ajalooandmetele ja elanikest teadaolevatele faktidele võiks siiski oletada, et see on ehitatud hiljemalt Rootsi ajal.