



EXCAVATIONS ON THE HILL FORTS OF SOUTH-EAST ESTONIA: KUREKÜLA, KÕÕRU and KUIGATSI

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In 2012 trial excavations on the hill forts of south-east Estonia were continued. The aim of the project which began in 2005 is to establish the general chronology, based on radiocarbon dates and/or reliably dated finds, for all of the 35 presently known hill forts of the area (ca. 80 × 90 km). In 2012 excavations were carried out on the hill forts of Kureküla, Kõõru and Kuigatsi (Fig. 1). A common fieldwork methodology was used in all excavations of the project. Excavations were carried out, as a rule, by 10 cm technical layers, and the soil was sieved using 4 mm and 5 mm eye meshes. Fieldwork was conducted under the general supervision of Heiki Valk, in Kureküla supervised by Tuuli Kurisoo (MA student), in Kõõru by Anti Lillak (PhD student) and in Kuigatsi by Allar Haav (MA student).

KUREKÜLA HILL FORT

The hill fort of Kureküla (Reg. No. 11544), known locally as *Liinamägi* (Eng. 'Fort hill') is located in Mägiotsa village, the local authority of Räpina, Põlva County; according to the historical administrative division in Kureküla village, Räpina parish, County of Võrumaa. The site lies 300 m east of Rasina–Radamaa road, 200–300 m north-east of Liinamäe farmstead, and immediately east of another household of the Pärnaste family. The fort was located in the northern third of a 4–5 m high north–south directional narrow ridge, originally ca. 300 m long but having its southern end destroyed by gravel digging in the Soviet time. The fort area is ca. 100 m long and the length of its upper

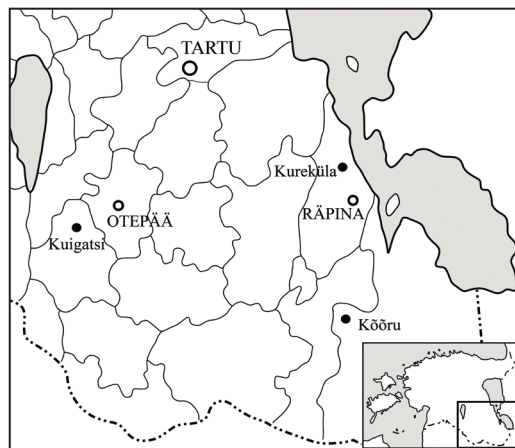


Fig. 1. Hill forts of south-east Estonia excavated in 2012.

Jn 1. 2012. aastal uuritud Kagu-Eesti linnamäed.

Drawing / Joonis: Maria Smirnova

plateau is *ca.* 60 m. In this part of the ridge where the hill fort was located its *ca.* 3 m wide top is bordered on both sides by a 3–4 m wide man-made plateau, located 1–1.5 m lower than the top of the ridge. In the south the fort area was separated from the rest of the ridge by a 2.5–3 m wide moat, presently almost invisible due to erosion. By coring up to the depth of 0.9 m its bottom could not be reached. According to the trial trench dug by Harri Moora in 1951, the depth of the moat was estimated as *ca.* 0.5 m (Moora 1951). The difference might be caused by the uneven depth of the moat.

The first record about the hill fort from the late 19th century¹ mentions that on the lower plateau, charcoal and burnt ground can be found everywhere and that in one place ‘a street with a cobblestone pavement’ was found. When digging on top of the ridge, interpreted as ‘cannon battery site’, however, no charcoal was discovered then. The archaeological surveys of Räpina parish from the 1920s (Urgart 1922; Ehrlich 1927) mention that from the gravel pit on the ridge charcoal and small burnt stones were found and that coins and artefacts, probably originating, judging by their description, from the Late Iron Age (*ca.* 800–1225/1250)², were found from pits for storing potatoes. Later inventories of the site have provided no finds.

In 2012 two trenches were made on the hill fort, in its southern part. Trench 1 (15 × 1 m) was made perpendicularly to the hill; it cross-cut the top of the ridge and also the lower plateau in the west (Figs 2, 3). Trench 2 (2 × 1 m) was made on the hill top, beginning 2 metres north of Trench 1.

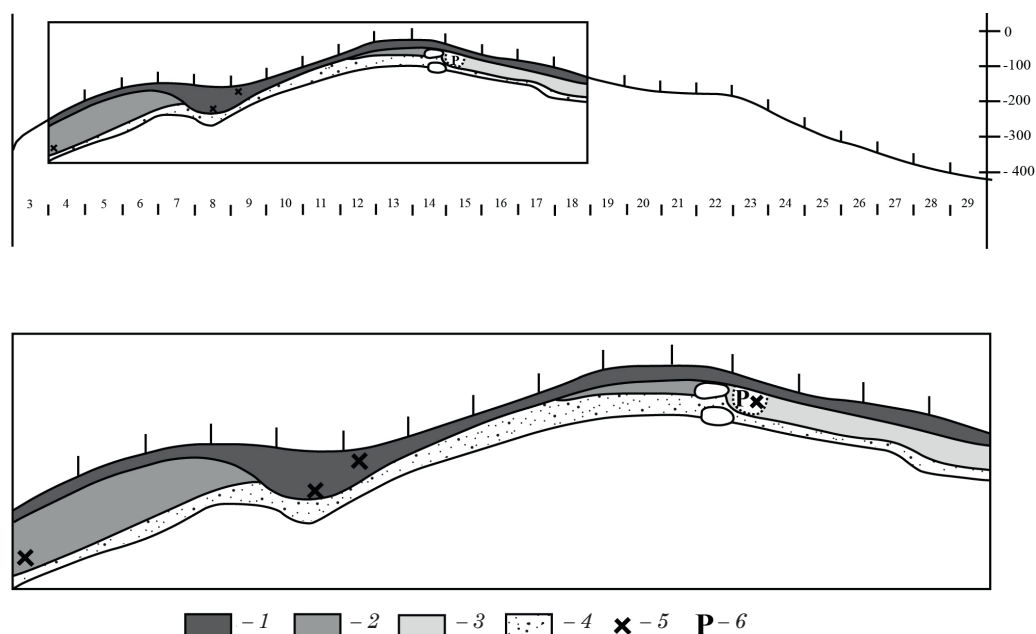


Fig. 2. Kureküla hill fort. Profile of Trench I and the hill. 1 – dark soil, 2 – disturbed sand, 3 – probably intact soil, 4 – intact sand, 5 – radiocarbon sampling sites, 6 – location of pit.

Jn 2. Kureküla linnamägi. I kaevandi ja mäe profiil. 1 – tume muld, 2 – segatud liiv, 3 – tõenäoliselt segamata pinnas, 4 – segamata liiv, 5 – süsinikuproovide võtmise kohad, 6 – sissekaeve.

Drawing / Joonis: Maria Smirnova

¹ Mss 107b, 114d – A. Punnisson, 1896.

² Estimation made by student M. Ehrlich, the author of the parish description, according to the description of finds.

Everywhere on top of the ridge the thin turf was followed by disturbed light yellow or brownish orange sand. From the depth of 10–20 cm from the ground surface seven hand-made pottery fragments were found from the ridge top and its western slope.³ Judging by their appearance, the finds might date from the second half of the first millennium AD (estimation by H. Valk and A. Lillak). In the depth of *ca.* 20 cm intact natural ground of heterogenic consistence (gravel, brownish or pinkish sand) began. Deeper it was replaced by intact yellow sand.

On the upper part of the eastern slope of the top of the ridge an oval pit appeared. It could be observed since the depth of *ca.* 25 cm (dimensions *ca.* 75 × 50 cm) and it ended in the depth *ca.* 55 cm (41 × 37 cm). The pit contained numerous pieces of charcoal at different depths and there was also a stone with the diameter of 20–30 cm in it. As charcoal fragments were located irregularly, some of them in horizontal position, they cannot originate from the charred remains of a post. A radiocarbon sample taken from dispersed charcoal pieces from the depth of 40–50 cm gave the result 1440–1636 cal. AD (Table 1: 1).⁴

Excavations in the western lower plateau revealed a pit with a triangular section, 3 m wide in the top and *ca.* 1 m deep in the middle (Figs 2, 3). Judging by the symmetrical profiles and results of coring in the adjacent areas, the trench cross-cut a ditch that has been filled as a result of erosion and that covers most of the area of the lower plateau. The ditch was filled with dark eroded soil up to the depth of 70 cm. A radiocarbon sample from a charcoal piece taken from the depth of 20–30 cm gave the result 1400–1631 cal. AD (Table 1: 2). This means that the ditch, gradually filled by eroded soil, was *ca.* 30 cm deep in the 15th and/or 16th centuries. The bottom of the ditch was filled with disturbed sand, probably fallen from its walls soon after digging it. Before digging the ditch, the slope of the hill had been raised with sand (Fig. 2: 2). Tiny charcoal particles from the bottom of the dark eroded fill of the moat (Table 1: 3) and from the fill sand (–75–80 cm from the surface) (Table 1: 4) have not provided AMS-dates yet.

Judging by the pottery, the hill fort of Kureküla can be preliminarily dated into the second half of the first millennium AD. Such date is indicated indirectly also by the weak fortifications – the man-made plateau with a ditch of a triangular section



Fig. 3. Kureküla hill fort. General view of Trench I.
Jn 3. Kureküla linnamägi. Kaevand I üldvaade.
Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

³ The finds: TÜ 2156: 1–6.

⁴ All dates in the text are calibrated (95.4% probability) into calendar years, using OxCal 4.2 program and IntCal09 calibration curve (Bronk Ramsey 2009). Samples were processed at Tallinn University of Technology radiocarbon laboratory.

Table 1. Radiocarbon dates from hill forts of south-east Estonia from 2012.

Tabel 1. Kagu-Eesti linnamägede 2012. a radiosüsinikudateeringud.

Composed by / Koostaja: Heiki Valk

No / Site / Nr Muistis	Radiocarbon years / Radio- süsinikuaas- tad (BP)	Sample no. / Proovi nr	Cal. AD / Kal (95,4%)	Calibration ranges / Kalibreerimisvahemikud (cal. AD)	Remarks / Märkused
1 Kureküla	380±50	Tln-3468	1440–1636	1440–1636	pit / sissekäve
2 Kureküla	447±50	Tln-3469	1400–1631	1400–1524 (82.7%), 1558–1564 (0.6%), 1570–1631 (12.1%)	eroded soil in the ditch / erosioo- nipinnas kraavis, -20–30 cm
3 Kureküla	in process				bottom of the ditch / kraavi põhi, -70–80 cm
4 Kureküla	in process				fill on the slope / täitepinnas nõlval, -75–80 cm
5 Kõõru	1622±60	Tln-3476	258–566	258–297 (5.1%), 320–566 (90.3%)	trench II, pit II / kaevand II, kaeve II
6 Kõõru	436±55	Tln-3487	1403–1634	1403–1529 (74.1%), 1544–1634 (21.3%)	trench II (upper part of pit I) / kaevand II (kaeve I ülaosa), -10–20 cm
7 Kuigatsi	modern (pmc 124.9)	Tln-3470		after 1950	trench I / kaevand I, -20–30 cm
8 Kuigatsi	229±55	Tln-3471	1492–1955	1492–1603 (16.1%), 1615–1700 (29.6%), 1721–1818 (33.8%), 1833–1880 (4.2%), 1915–1955 (11.8%)	trench II / kaevand II, -10–20 cm
9 Kuigatsi	379±70	Tln-3474	1445–1632	1445–1525 (61.0%), 1557–1632 (34.4%)	trench II, 'hearth' / kaevand II, "koldekoht"
10 Kuigatsi	416±55	Tln-3472	1415–1635	1415–1530 (65.1%), 1541–1635 (30.3%)	trench II, bottom of pit A / kaevand II, kaeve A põhi
11 Kuigatsi	in process				trench III, pit below the crucible / kaevand III, tiigli alt lohust

on it and the ditch separating the fort area from the ridge. The small width of the upper plateau makes the hill also unsuitable for permanent living and refers to its temporary use. Also the absence of a cultural layer indicates either short-time or episodic character of human activities. As no traces from timber fortifications were found, the fort may also have remained unfinished. The radiocarbon dates show that the hill has been involved in some human activities also in medieval times, e.g. as a place for making Midsummer Eve bonfires.

SUPPOSED HILL FORT AT KÕÕRU

The site is situated in Meremäe local authority, Võru County (historically the western part of Setomaa), north of Kõõru village in a pine forest called *Tedrepalo* (Eng. 'Black grouse forest'). The hill is *ca.* 18 m high, with steep slopes and of promontory character. The only place to easily reach the plateau is the narrow neck in the east, i.e. on the land side. The plateau is *ca.* 300 m² large, thus being remarkably smaller than characteristic for the hill forts in Estonia in general.

The hill was first regarded, judging by external features, as a place of a possible prehistoric fort in 1997 by local amateur historians Aare Hõrn and Ali Kikkas

(Aun 2003, 113). The place is not known as a hill fort in the local oral tradition, but both a hillock called *Kullamägi* (Eng. ‘Hill of gold’) and an old road in the neighbourhood are associated in local lore to the ancient Swedish War⁵, i.e. the Great Northern War (war activities in Estonia 1700–1710). A single trial pit of 1 m² was made on the hilltop in 1999 (Aun 1999). No cultural layer was detected, but the disturbed soil contained some small charcoal particles. Nevertheless, the hill was continuously regarded as a prehistoric hill fort (Kiristaja 2005, 47; Valk 2008b). It was previously covered with trees, but by 2012 they had been cut off (Fig. 4).

In 2012 two excavation plots were made on the hill in order to prove or invalidate the presence of the cultural layer. The first plot (14.75 m²) was situated on the highest part of the plateau, reaching partly to the southern slope of the hill. No clear traces of human activity were detected here and the intact sandy soil was revealed already 20 cm below the surface. The two stone clusters – one at the hilltop (Fig. 5), another on the slope – were likely of natural origin, as the stones reached partially into the intact natural soil. Altogether 47 trial pits were dug on the plateau, but none of them showed signs of a cultural layer. Also no artefacts were found.

The second excavation plot (5 m²) was situated on the ‘neck’ of the hill where a shallow ditch-like depression could be observed. The excavation plot revealed three pits of supposedly man-made origin (Fig. 6), two of them (II and III) located in a line perpendicular to the ‘neck’ and resembling post holes for some narrow gate. One of those (III; measures 78 × 61 cm), excavated only partially, reached 25 cm deep into the intact natural soil. If the pit that had three stones in its fill was artificial, the stones may have supported some kind of a wooden post. 77 cm south of that pit there lay another, a smaller pit (no. II; measures 27 × 19 cm, reaching 20 cm into the intact soil). The amount of charcoal pieces in pit no. II was higher than anywhere in the excavation plot. The radiocarbon analysis gave a surprising result – calibrated date of 258–566 AD (Table 1: 5), i.e. the Late Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period. At the moment no antiquities of that time are known in the closest vicinity. The nearest site with a date close to



Fig. 4. The supposed hill fort of Kõõru. View from the NNW.

Jn 4. Oletatav linnamägi Kõõrus. Vaade põhjaloodest.

Photo / Foto: Anti Lillak



Fig. 5. Stone cluster of natural origin in the first excavation plot in Kõõru. View from the north.

Jn 5. Looduslik kivilade Kõõru esimeses kaevandis. Vaade põhjast.

Photo / Foto: Anti Lillak

⁵ Pers. comm. by Aare Hõrn to Arvis Kiristaja in May, 2009.



Fig. 6. Three pits in the second excavation plot on the 'neck' of the hill in Kõõru. View from the west, from the direction of the hilltop.

Jn 6. Kolm lohku Kõõru teises kaevandis, mäe "kaelal". Vaade läänest, künkala suunast.

Photo / Foto: Anti Lillak

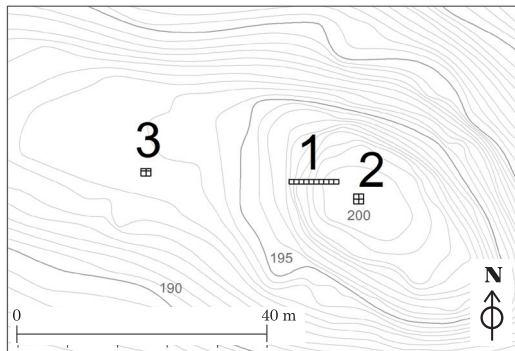


Fig. 7. Kuigatsi hill fort (after the plan by Uno Hermann) with excavation plots.

Jn 7. Kuigatsi linnamägi (Uno Hermann'i plaani järgi) ja kaevandite asukohad.

(MKA, A-2823.)

Drawing / Joonis: Allar Haav

it, although somewhat later, is Hinniala hill fort (ca. 7 km towards the south-west) (Valk 2007, 57–58, 62). The third pit (no. I; measures 40 × 40 cm, reaching 15 cm into the intact soil) was quite flat and wide, having uneven walls and bottom. It is likely not contemporary with pits no. II and III. A radiocarbon sample from pit no. I yielded the date 1403–1634 cal. AD (Table 1: 6), meaning that two separate phases of human activity can be distinguished on the hillock.

The exact original function of the hill close to Kõõru village remains unclear. Although there seem to be traces of human activity, the hill probably did not serve as a military defence site. Possible parallels can be drawn from the hill forts of Võuküla and Luhtõ (both situated in the eastern part of south-east Estonia) where despite the lack of artefact finds the charcoal analyses indicate human activity in the Late Pre-Roman and/or Roman Iron Age (Valk 2008a, 44; Valk *et al.* 2011, 61–63). Perhaps the Kõõru hill was regarded as a ritual or sacral site and a gate was built in order to separate it from the profane space. Of course, other possible interpretations (e.g., the economic use of the hilltop) cannot be ruled out either. The hill was likely also used in the Late Middle Ages or Early Modern Times when some kind of a construction may have been made on the 'neck' again.

KUIGATSI HILL FORT

The hill fort of Kuigatsi (Puka; Reg. No. 13116) is situated in the Kibena village, Puka local authority in the Valga County, according to the historical administrative division, in the Linnamäe village, former Sangaste parish in the County of Tartumaa. The hill that lies 400–700 m south of the Linnamäe farmstead has two plateaus (Fig. 7).⁶ The measures of the lower

⁶ The highest top of the upper plateau is marked to be on the absolute height of 196.9 m above sea level on the maps of the Estonian Land Board but on the height of 200.05 m on the

66 hand-made map composed by Uno Hermann – a geodesist who made plans for many Estonian hill forts in the 1970s and 1980s.

plateau are ca. 20 × 50 m; the upper plateau (ca. 10 × 15 m), located south-east of it, rises ca. 5 m higher. The site has been recorded in the late 19th century (Mss 81 (11); Mss 156c (3)) and described in the archaeological parish descriptions in the 1920s (Kirschbaum 1921, 40; Karu 1928, 18–21). The upper plateau's north-western slope has been steepened and this edge of the plateau seems also to have been filled and raised. According to the oral tradition, there was once a well somewhere on the slope, in the south-eastern part of the hill (Karu 1928, 18). On the lower plateau or on the way to it there has been a medieval village cemetery and oral tradition speaks also about a church site.⁷

The hill top was first studied in 1952 by Harri Moora with a small-scale trial pit (Moora 1952) where a thick and dark occupation layer with bones and hand-made Rõuge type pottery (pre-Viking and Viking Age) fragments⁸ in it was found. During a field trip in 2005, some additional pottery pieces⁹, including a sherd of wheel-thrown vessel from the 12th or 13th century, were collected. These finds dated the hill fort to the second half of the first millennium AD, and enabled to suggest even later use. The rather uncertain date of the fort, based on these finds, was sought to be specified during the fieldwork of 2012 when trial trenches were opened on both plateaus.¹⁰

Trench 1 (10 × 1 m; Figs 7: 1; 8) was made on the north-western slope and edge of the upper plateau of the hill fort in hope to get information about its expected timber fortifications. Although the trench indicated some earthworks – the plateau had been broadened by adding sand on the slope – no remains of defence structures were found from the place most suitable for their location. In the upper end of the trench, located on the



Fig. 8. Kuigatsi hill fort, Trench 1.
Jn 8. Kuigatsi linnamägi. I kaevand.
Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

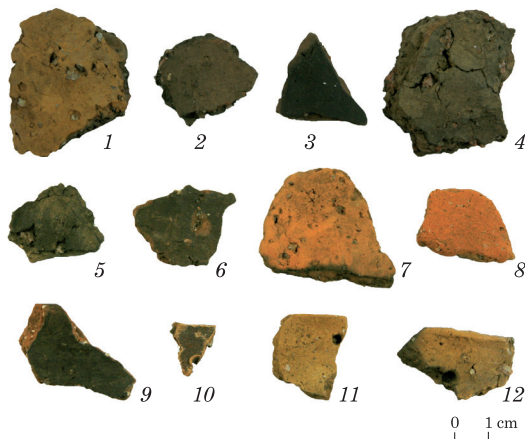


Fig. 9. Kuigatsi hill fort. Pottery fragments from Trench 2 (1–4) and Trench 3 (5–12).
Jn 9. Kuigatsi linnamägi. Savinõukilde II (1–4) ja III (5–12) kaevandist.
(TÜ 2167: 113, 103, 51, 148, 131, 224, 314, 334, 332, 304, 182, 340.)
Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

⁷ Oral data by local inhabitant Laine Raudsepp (Linnamäe farmstead).

⁸ AI 4059.

⁹ TÜ 1417.

¹⁰ The finds: TÜ 2167: 1–382.

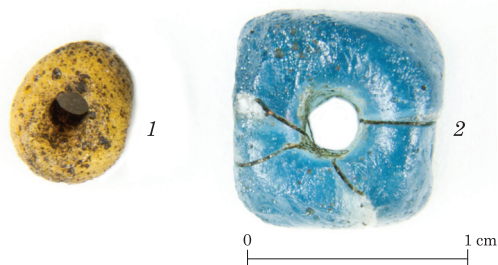


Fig. 10. Kuigatsi hill fort. Beads from Trench 2.

Jn 10. Kuigatsi linnamägi. Helmed II kaevandist.
(TÜ 2167: 151, 150.)

Photo / Foto: Kristel Külljastinen

plateau, the soil was slightly darker and contained more stones and charcoal until the depth of 50 cm. A radiocarbon sample from charcoal pieces from that soil (-20–30 cm from the surface) (Table 1: 7) proved, however, to be recent, i.e. later than 1950 AD. The disturbed sand of the trench contained dispersed fragments of hand-made pottery, but also a few animal bone fragments, some of them burnt.

Trench 2 (2 × 2 m) (Fig. 7: 2), was made in the centre of the hill fort plateau, 3.5–6 m south-east of the upper end of

Trench 1, in the area where coring indicated a thick and very dark cultural layer. The soil was sooty, of intensively black colour and contained numerous potsherds and pieces of charcoal. From the plot several, to some extent overlapping irregular pits with the depth of up to 60–75 cm were discovered. The top soil stretched in the areas not cut by pits up to the depth of 18–20 cm, being replaced by white gravel. In the south-eastern corner of the trench an assemblage of burnt stones, interpreted as a hearth, was revealed. From that area sherds of hand-made vessel(s) with coarse surface and containing coarse stone rubble were found (Fig. 9: 1). Two radiocarbon dates from the depth of -10–20 cm indicated, however, a date of 15th – 17th centuries, in one case maybe also modern times (Table 1: 8, 9).

The pits also contained dark soil with high contents of charcoal and hand-made pottery. The largest of them, pit A, was cut by two smaller pits, one from them indicating, judging by finds, to the 20th century disturbances. From the bottom of this pit two beads – a tiny yellow *biser* type bead from the 10th or 11th century (Fig. 10: 1) and a blue glass bead dating from the 9th or 10th century (Fig. 10: 2) were found.¹¹ The charcoal sample from the bottom of the pit was dated to 1415–1530 or 1541–1635 AD (Table 1: 9), indicating to its secondary origin in relation to the hill fort and the disturbed character of the finds from it.

With the exception of two wheel-thrown items¹², the pottery sherds from the upper plateau were all hand-made. Most of them were undecorated brownish ware (Fig. 9: 2), but also some fragments of reddish colour and containing coarse stone rubble (Fig. 9: 1) were found. Pottery with smoothed surface was represented only with a few finds from one vessel (Fig. 9: 3). A few sherds came from a vessel that contained extremely coarse stone rubble (in the bottom part the diameter of stone particles stretched up to 5–8 mm) (Fig. 9: 4).

Trench 3 (3 m²) was located on the lower plateau, 22–24 m to the west of the beginning of the slope of the upper part of the hill (Fig. 7: 3). The upper 20 cm of the cultural layer were totally disturbed, probably formed as a result of erosion, caused by ploughing on a slightly sloping area. The soil contained fragments of mostly dark or brown hand-made vessels (Fig. 9: 5, 6), similar to those found from the upper plateau. The light brown soil continued until *ca.* 30–40 cm from the ground, being gradually replaced by sand. From the bottom of the cultural layer, from a shallow pit dug into

¹¹ Identified by Yakov Frenkel, State Hermitage (Russia).

¹² TÜ 2167: 20, 49.

the sand, fragments of a crucible, broken on the spot (height 7.5 cm, outer diameter 5.8–6 cm) (Fig. 11) were found. Immediately beside the crucible there was a strongly burnt granite stone with the diameter of 15–18 cm, the biggest stone from the trench. From the surroundings also fragments of another crucible were discovered. These finds indicate to a bronze melting site and enable to suggest similar finds in the vicinity.

The pottery from the lower part of Trench 3, below the soil added by erosion, was of somewhat different character. The sherds of hand-made vessels had often reddish or pinkish surface, and contained coarse stone rubble (Fig. 9: 7, 8), being similar to pottery from the Roman Iron Age *tarand*-graves. From the bottom layer also sherds of a large vessel with dark surfaces (Fig. 9: 9) and three sherds with penetrating holes at the edge (Fig. 9: 10–12) were found. From below the crucible charcoal particles were collected for an AMS radiocarbon date.

Also several pieces of flint, mostly of white colour, poor quality and local origin, but also one of black colour and imported, were uncovered from the trenches. Some of the flint fragments are split – either as a result of natural processes or human activities. The flint material is, however, not sufficient to regard the place as a Stone Age settlement.¹³

The 2012 artefact finds from Kuigatsi hill fort indicate occupation both in the first and second half of the first millennium AD. The earlier phase of intensive occupation, traces of which were found on both plateaus, can be dated, judging by the pottery, probably to the Roman Iron Age. The second phase of intensive use, separated from the first one by a hiatus, belongs, judging by the bead finds, to the Viking Age, including the 10th and probably also the early 11th century. In the Final Iron Age (*ca.* 1050–1225/50 AD) the site was not in active use any more, being, however, somewhat influenced by human activities.

As three radiocarbon dates from the hill-top trenches all indicate to the same, post-medieval period, the result cannot be erroneous or occasional. Most likely, the late radiocarbon dates have their origin in large, probably Midsummer Eve bonfires. Making fire on hill tops is deeply rooted in the Estonian popular calendar traditions and the upper plateau of Kuigatsi hill fort, as the highest point in the surroundings, is naturally most suitable for assemblies of that kind. Later disturbances, probably, caused by popular legends about treasures or gold hidden on the hill fort, have mixed



Fig. 11. Kuigatsi hill fort. Crucible from Trench 3.
Jn 11. Kuigatsi linnamägi. Tügel III kaevandist.
(TÜ 2167: 347.)

Photo / Foto: Kristel Külljastinen, Heiki Valk

¹³ Flint estimation by Aivar Kriiska (TÜ).

the later charcoal with the Iron Age finds. To get a complete understanding of the site, further investigations are needed.

CONCLUSIONS

Excavations on the hill forts of Kuigatsi and Kureküla gave results that partly correspond to the earlier expectations of their origin from the second half of the first millennium AD, whereby the hypothetical use of Kuigatsi fort in the Final Iron Age, based on some fragments of wheel-thrown pottery, was disproved. The most remarkable find was a bronze-smelting site from Kuigatsi fort, presumably from the Roman Iron Age. Although radiocarbon dates from the hill investigated in Kõõru indicate that traces of human activity at the site originate from the Roman Iron Age, the function of the site that probably had an access through a small gate at that time, remains unclear. The project on the chronology of the hill forts of south-east Estonia will be continued in 2013.

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KAEVAMISED KAGU-EESTI LINNAMÄGEDEL: KUREKÜLA, KÕÕRU JA KUIGATSI

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2012. aastal jätkusid Kagu-Eesti linnamägedel proovikaevamised, et saada ülevaade piirkonna linnuste kronoloogiast. Tööd toimusid Kureküla, Kõõru ja Kuigatsi linnamäel (jn 1).

Kureküla linnamägi (Räpina khk) paikneb pika kitsa, algselt ligi 300 m pikkuse ja 4–5 m kõrguse mäeseljaku põhjapoolisel kolmandikul. Linnuse u 60 × 3 m mõõtmetega harjaplatoo 1–1,5 m madalamal on künka mõlemal küljel 3–4 m laiune küljplatoo (jn 2). Lõunas on mägi olnud ülejäänud seljakust eraldatud erosioonimullaga täitunud, 2,5–3 m laiuse ja vähemalt 0,9 m sügavuse vallikraaviga.

I proovikaevand (15 × 1 m) kulges risti üle kitsa ja pikliku mäeselja lõunaosa, hõlmates mäelaet ning ka läänepoolse alumise platoo (jn 2, 3); II kaevand (2 m²) paiknes mäelaet esimese lähedal. Kultuurkihi linnuselt saadi pealmisest segatud pruunikasoranžist liivast seitse käsitsikeraamika kildu I aastatuhande teisest poolest. Mäeharja idanõlvalt leiti rohkelt sötükke sisaldav 55 cm sügavune sissekaev, kust võetud süsinikuproov on ajavahemikust 1440–1636 pKr (Tabel 1: 1). Kuna sötükid paiknesid erisuunaliselt, ei ole tegemist postijäänustega. Alumiselt, künkanõlva ülaossa tehtud platoolt avastati varingu- ja erosioonipinnasega täitunud ligi 1 m sügavune ja pealt ligi 3 m laiune kolmnurkselt kitseneva põhjaga kraav (jn 2, 3). Et 20–30 cm sügavuselt võetud süsinikuproov (Tabel 1:2; jn 2) andis kalibreeritud tulemuseks 1400–1631 pKr, polnud kraav 15.–16. sajandil veel lõplikult täitunud. Mäe välisnõlva on enne kraavi kaevamist liivapinnasega tõstetud (jn 2: 2). Tules hävinud kaitsetara jäänuseid ei leitud.

Savinõukillud ja väikesemahulised kaitseehitised lubavad arvata, et Kureküla linnus kuulub I aastatuhande teise poolde; loodetavasti täpsustavad linnuse vanust AMS-dateeringud kraavi põhjast (Tabel 1: 3; jn 2) ja mäenõlva liivapinnasest, maapinnast 75–80 cm sügavuselt (Tabel 1: 4; jn 2). Tõenäoliselt on tegemist vaid ajutiselt kasutatud või lõpetamata jäänud linnusega.

Väike, vaid 300 m² pindalaga **Kõõru linnamägi** asub Võru maakonnas ajaloolisel Setomaal, Meremäe vallas Obinita küla lähedal (jn 1), orgu ulatuval, platoo kitsa „kaelaga“ eraldatud neemiku otsas (jn 4). Koha avastasid 1997. a kodu-uurijad Aare Hörn ja Ali Kikkas. Ei 1999. a proovikaevamistel (M. Aun) ega ka 2012. aastal kultuurkihti ei leitud. Mäe lael ja nõlval paljastunud kivilademed (jn 5) olid tõenäoliselt looduslikku päritolu. Siiski leiti „kaelalt“, mida lõikas madal kraavi taoline süvend, kolm nähtavasti inimekkelist lohku (jn 6). Neist kaks (II ja III) asusid üksteisest vaid 77 cm kaugusel, „kaelaga“ risti, ja võivad olla kunagise värava postiaugud. Lohus III oli kolm oletatavat posti kiilukivi. Lohust II leiti rohkelt sötükke, mille ¹⁴C-analüüs andis kalibreeritud vanuseks 258–566 pKr (tabel 1: 5). Sama ajastu söodateeringuid on saadud ka Hinniala, Luhtõ ja Võuküla linnamäelt, mis võisid olla kasutuses rituaalse või sakraalse tähendusega paigana. Andmete vähesuse tõttu jääb Kõõru mäe selline funktsioon vaid oletuseks. Kolmanda lohu (I) ülaosast võetud süsinikuproov andis tulemuseks 1403–1634 kal. pKr (tabel 1: 6).

Kuigatsi ehk Puka linnamägi Valgamaal Puka vallas (Sangaste khk) Kibena külas (jn 7) on kaheosaline: alumine platoo on suurem (u 50 × 20 m); ülemine platoo (u 10 × 15 m) asub mäe u 4 m kõrgemas kaguosas. Varasematel prooviuuringutel oli sealsest tumedast ja paksust kultuurkihist leitud Rõuge tüüpi keraamikat ja üks kedranõukild.

I kaevand (10 × 1 m) (jn 8) rajati mäe ülaplatoo siseservale, et leida kaitseehitiste jäänuseid. Ehkki neid ei avastatud, viitab tranšee segatud, üksikuid savinõukilde sisaldav liivapinnas ülemise platoo laiendamisele. Tranšee ülaotsas leidunud tumedamast söesegusest mullast võetud sõeproov (tabel 1: 7) osundab kaasajale (pärast 1950. aastat).

Mäelaet keskele tehtud II kaevandis (2 × 2 m) asendus tume söene kultuurkiht sissekaevetest puutumata alal maapinnast 18–20 cm sügavusel heleda peene kruusaga. Kaevandis oli mitu eriaegset, osalt lõikuvat sissekaevet, mis ulatusid kuni 60–75 cm sügavuseni. Tume pinnas sisaldas rohkesti käsitsikeraamika kilde (jn 9: 1–4). Ühest sissekaevest leitud kahe klaashelme (jn 10) dateeringute ühisosa viitab 10. sajandile. Kõik radiosüsinikuanalüüsid – nii kamaraalusest kultuurkihist (tabel 1: 8, 9) kui ka helmestega sissekaeve põhjast (tabel 1: 10) – on 15.–17. sajandist, üks neist ehk veelgi hilisem.

III kaevand (3 m²) tehti alumisele platooale. Kultuurkihi ülaosa koosnes segatud, ilmselt erodeerunud pinnasest, mis sisaldas peamiselt tumedaid savinõukilde (jn 9: 5–6). Kihi alaosast (25–40 cm maapinnast) leiti punakaid, rooma rauaaja tarandkalmetest leitud sarnanevaid savinõukilde (jn 9: 7–8) ning kohapeal purunenud pronksisulatustiigel (jn 11), mille all süvendis oli purruks lagunev 15–18 cm läbimõõduga raudkivi. Ümbruses oli teisegi tiigil tükke. Segatud liivaga täidetud lohust tiigil all koguti söekübemeid AMS-dateeringuks. Ilmselt võiks mujaltki lähikonnast leida pronksivalu jälgi.

Keraamika põhjal võib Kuigatsi linnamäel eristada kaht kasutusetappi: 1) rooma rauaaeg ja 2) viikingiaeg. Üksikud hilisrauaaja killud ei viita püriasustusele. Hilised söeproovid võiksid tuleneda kõrgel mäetipul tehtud jaanituledest ning sissekaaved mäelt varanduse otsimisest.

2012. a kaevamistulemused Kuigatsis ja Kurekülas andsid üldjoones ootuspäraseid, s.t I aastatuhande teisele poolele viitavaid tulemusi. Eriliseks leiuks oli arvatavasti rooma rauaaegne pronksisulatuskoht Kuigatsi linnamäelt. Kõõrus jäi, vaatamata selleaegsetele kasutusjälgedele, linnuse olemasolu tuvastamata ja paiga kasutusotstarve ebaselgeks.