

## 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

The most impressive archaeological find of cereals was discovered in the 11<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries was *Triticum aestivum*, accompanied by small quantities of *Secale cereale*, *Hordeum vulgare* and *Avena sativa*. In the 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> centuries *Secale cereale* dominated with a few grains of *Triticum aestivum* and *Avena sativa*.

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