

FOSSIL FIELDS AT SAHA-LOO

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Information about ancient fields in Estonia was quite limited until recently. No more than some rounded clearance heaps were excavated in the northern and western part of the country. On the ground of single potsherds found from these heaps, they have usually been dated to the beginning of the 1st millennium A.D.¹ The shape, measures, and planning of the respective field plots, however, are not known. In 1982, the first six or seven field plots surrounded by long and low stone baulks were discovered and investigated at Rebala. By one radiocarbon sample, these fields can be dated to the 1st century B.C. (2020±60 B.P.).² More concrete results of the investigations at Rebala have not yet been published.

Within the framework of the interdisciplinary research project "Environment and Cultural Heritage in the Baltic Region", run by the Estonian Academy of Sciences, Stockholm University, and the Council of Europe PACT Network, a more detailed inventory was started in the surroundings of Lake Maardu in May 1992. In addition to some new settlement sites found east of the lake, quite a large area covered by fossil fields was discovered approximately 1 km west of this same lake, at Saha-Loo (Fig. 1). Today the area covered by fields is ca 22 ha, but some of the baulks discovered separately outside this area indicate that the area of fields was to some extent larger, maybe ca 40–50 ha, in the ancient times. The Saha-Loo complex of field remains consists of both the so-called "Celtic" fields surrounded by stone baulks and rounded clearance heaps, and what were probably cattle-paths (Fig. 2). The 1992 inventory recorded 243 stone baulks, 118 clearance heaps, and at least 180 field plots surrounded either by baulks or by both baulks and clearance heaps.

The excavation area of 1992 (237 sq. m) was located in the southern part of the field complex, where mainly clearance heaps occurred and only a few baulks were visible. All together three clearance heaps and one baulk were excavated totally and trenches were dug in one more heap and in a low stone baulk. All these fences (except heap p-85) surrounded field plot CXXVIII. The excavations at Saha-Loo were financed by Stockholm University.

Clearance heap p-85 had a diameter of 8–8.5 m and a height of 20–30 cm. It consisted mainly of limestone slabs and some granite; shingle was almost missing (Plate I, 1). The excavation showed that only a small rounded heap with a diameter of 4 m had been created at first. Later the small and low baulks were thrown by the side of the heap, one eastwards and another northwards from it. All the structures were covered by new stones still later. The limestone bedrock under the original heap was 8–9 cm higher than in the surroundings (Plate I, 2). Only some pieces of quartz and some bone fragments (belonging to

¹ Lõugas, V. Ausgrabungen der Steingräber und Flurrelikte in Iru. — ENSV TA Toim. Ühisk., 1976, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 48–52; Lõugas, V., Selirand, J. Arheoloogiga Eestimaa teedel. Teine, parandatud ja täiendatud trükk. Tallinn, 1989, pp. 88–89.

² Lõugas, V., Selirand, J. Arheoloogiga Eestimaa teedel, pp. 152.

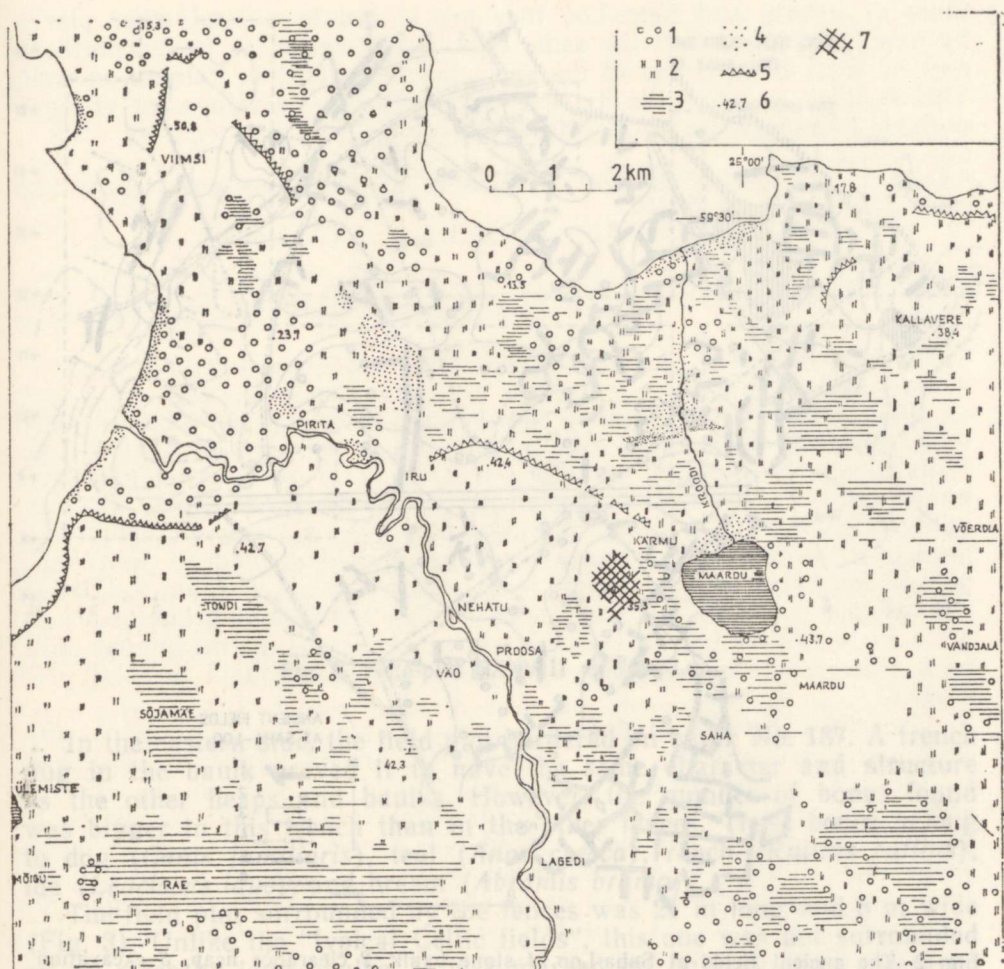


Fig. 1. Location of the Saha-Loo fields. 1 woodland, 2 pasture, alvar, 3 lowland, mire, 4 sandy area, 5 limestone klint, 6 altitude, 7 ancient fields.

a small animal and birds)³ were found in the heap. The soil layer between the limestone bedrock and the lowermost stones of the heap contained quite a big amount of charcoal. This charcoal originated evidently from the first burning of local vegetation before the beginning of cultivation. A sample for radiocarbon dating was taken there and it was dated to 2390 ± 50 B.P.⁴

Clearance heap p-86 located 6—7 m to the north-northeast of heap p-85 was similar to the latter. Its diameter reached 5.5 m. Actually this heap was thrown at the crossing place of two (or even three) very low baulks, one of which ran to the north (No. 186) and another to the east (Plate II, 1). Both these baulks were invisible before the excavations. Heap p-85 had been formed in several stages. A rounded clearance heap with a diameter of 3 m (Plate II, 2) was found to be the oldest structure there, whereas all the baulks had been built later. A big amount of charcoal

³ All bone fragments were analysed by Lembi Lõugas from the Institute of History, Estonian Academy of Sciences.

⁴ This sample was analysed in the Svedberg Laboratory of Uppsala University.



Fig. 2. The ancient fields at Saha-Loo. 1 stone baulk, 2 clearance heap, 3 excavation in 1992, 4 partly preserved stone, 5 stone wall, 6 field path.

was gathered under the lowermost stones of the heap and baulks. One sample for the radiocarbon analyses was taken from the clearance heap,⁵ and another from baulk No. 186.⁶ The latter was dated to 2530 ± 40 B.P.

Clearance heap p-87 was only 3 m in diameter and not connected with baulks. It consisted of both granite and limestone (Plate III, 1). Much charcoal was found between the lowermost stones of the heap and the limestone bedrock. The radiocarbon sample taken from this heap was dated to 2410 ± 50 B.P.⁶

Clearance heaps p-86 and p-87 and baulk No. 186 surrounded field plot CXXVIII on the western and northern sides (Fig. 3). In the south this field bordered on three rounded heaps located close to each other. A cross-section of a width of 1 m was dug in clearance heap p-89 (Plate III, 2). The inner structure of this heap was similar to the former ones. This heap was also erected on a higher place and charcoal was found between the heap stones and the limestone bedrock. The radiocarbon sample was dated to 2540 ± 65 B.P.⁷ In addition, some bones of small animals and birds (incl. *Gallus* sp.) were found there, too.

⁵ Analysed in the Svedberg Laboratory of Uppsala University.

⁶ This sample was analysed in the Laboratory of the Institute of Geology, Estonian Academy of Sciences, by Raivo Rajamäe.

⁷ Analysed in the Svedberg Laboratory of Uppsala University.

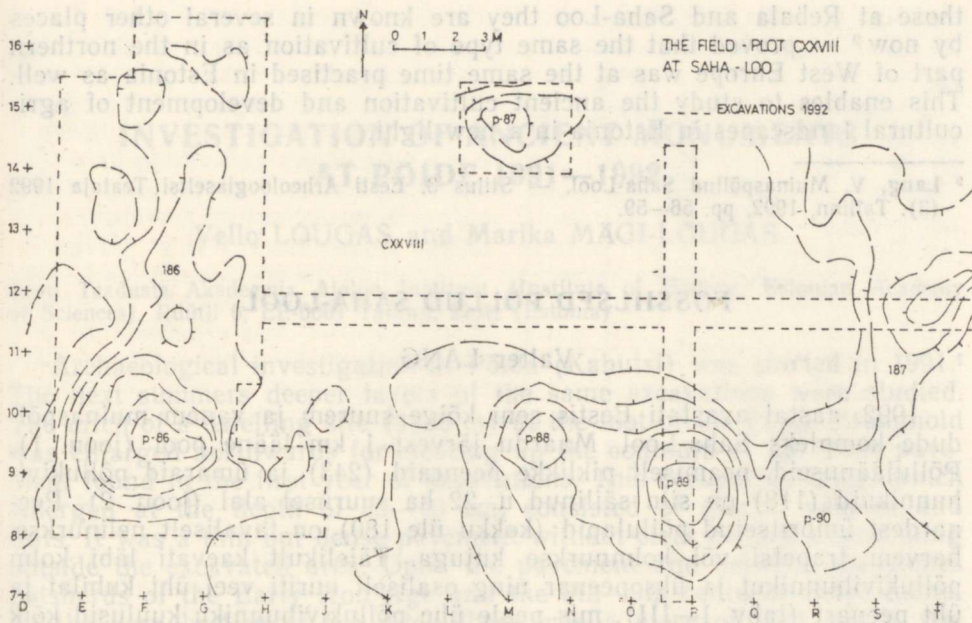


Fig. 3. Field-plot CXXVIII at Saha-Loo.

In the eastern side, the field plot bordered on baulk No. 187. A trench dug in the baulk proved it to have the same character and structure as the other heaps and baulks. However, the number of bones found was bigger in this trench than in the other fences. These bones belong to dog (*Canis familiaris*), teal (*Anas crecca*), roach (*Rutilus rutilus*), ide (*Leuciscus idus*), and bream (*Abramis brama*).

The field plot surrounded by the fences was 21 m long and 8 m wide (Fig. 3). Unlike the "typical Celtic fields", this one was not surrounded on all sides by long baulks. It was marked off only by some clearance heaps and two to three elongated baulks only one of which was visible before the excavation. Therefore it seems that the shape of the fields marked off only by clearance heaps did not differ very much from the Celtic fields surrounded by baulks.

Another result of the excavation is interesting, too. The structure of the clearance heaps indicates that they had not been built all at once but, on the contrary, gradually over a longer period of time. At first only small clearance heaps were created — they were sometimes erected in places which were less suitable for cultivation — and the low baulks were built only later.

The fossil fields at Saha-Loo belong to the group of Celtic fields widely distributed in Scandinavia (particularly on Gotland in Sweden and in Denmark), North Germany, Netherlands, England, etc. during the 1st millennium B.C. and the first two centuries of the 1st millennium A.D.⁸ Discovery of such fields in northern Estonia — in addition to

⁸ See e.g.: Carlsson, D. Kulturlandskapets utveckling på Gotland. En studie av jordbruks- och bebyggelseförändringar under järnåldern. Visby, 1979; Müller-Wille, M. Eisenzeitliche Fluren in den festländischen Nordseegebieten. — Landeskundliche Karten und Hefte der Geographischen Kommission für Westfalen, Heft 5. Münster, 1965; Zimmermann, H. Die eisenzeitlichen Ackerfluren — Typ "Celtic field" — von Flögeln-Haselhorn, Kr. Wesermünde. — Probleme der Küstenforschung, 11. Hildesheim, 1976, pp. 79—90.

those at Rebala and Saha-Loo they are known in several other places by now⁹ — proved that the same type of cultivation as in the northern part of West Europe was at the same time practised in Estonia as well. This enables to study the ancient cultivation and development of agricultural landscapes in Estonia in a new light.

⁹ Lang, V. Muinaspõllud Saha-Lool. — Stilus 3. Eesti Arheoloogiaseltsi Teataja 1992 (3). Tallinn, 1992, pp. 56—59.

FOSSIILSED PÕLLUD SAHA-LOOL

Valter LANG

1992. aastal avastati Eestis seni kõige suurem ja vanem muinaspõldude kompleks Saha-Lool, Maardu järvest 1 km lääne pool (joon. 1). Põllujäänuseid, peamiselt piklikke peenraid (243) ja ümaraid põllukivihunnikuid (118) on siin säilinud u. 22 ha suurusel alal (joon. 2). Peenardest ümbritsetud põllulapid (kokku üle 180) on tavaliselt nelinurkse, harvem trapetsi või kolmnurkse kujuga. Täielikult kaevati läbi kolm põllukivihunnikut ja üks peenar ning osaliselt uuriti veel üht kuhilat ja üht peenart (tahv. I—III), mis peale ühe põllukivihunniku kuulusid kõik põllu nr. CXXVIII juurde (joon. 3). Enne kaevamisi oli maapinnal näha vaid paar põllukivihunnikut, ülejäänud konstruktsioonid avastati töö käigus.

Kaevamistega tehti kindlaks, et Saha-Loo põllud on rajatud juba hiljemalt eelrooma rauaaja algul (¹⁴C-proovid andsid tulemuseks 2530±40 ja 2410±50 aastat tagasi). Põllukivihunnikud ja -peenrad on tekkinud järk-järgult, pikema aja jooksul. Esmapilgul vaid ümarate põllukivihunnikutega tähistatud põllulapid võivad olla samuti ümbritsetud vähemalt osaliseltki pikkadest madalatest peenardest.

Saha-Loo põllud kuuluvad samasse rühma nn. keldi põldudega, mis I aastatuhandel e. Kr. ja I aastatuhande algul p. Kr. olid levinud laialdastel aladel põhjapoolses Lääne-Euroopas.

ДРЕВНИЕ ПОЛЯ В САХА-ЛОО

Вальтер ЛАНГ

В 1992 г. обнаружен древнейший и до сих пор наибольший по размерам в Эстонии комплекс древних полей в Саха-Лоо, в 1 км западнее оз. Маарду (рис. 1). Остатки полей, преимущественно продолговатые межи (243) и круглые кучи камней (118), сохранились здесь на территории примерно 22 га (рис. 2). Окруженные межами поля (более 180) имели, как правило, четырехугольную, реже трехугольную или трапециевидную форму. Полностью были раскопаны три кучи камней и одна межа (табл. I—III), окружавшие (кроме одной) поле № CXXVIII (рис. 3). До раскопок были зафиксированы только две кучи, остальные обнаружены в ходе раскопок.

Установлено, что саха-лооские поля восходят к началу доримского железного века (две радиоуглеродные датировки дали цифры 2530±40 и 2410±50 лет тому назад). Как межи, так и кучи камней возникали постепенно, в течение длительного промежутка времени. Они принадлежат к группе т. н. кельтских полей, распространенных в I тыс. до н. э. и в начале н. э. на обширных северных территориях Западной Европы.