

INVESTIGATION OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS AT PÖIDE 1991—1992

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Archaeological investigation at Pöide (Kahutsi) was started in 1991.¹ The next summers deeper layers of the same excavations were studied. The ditch of a dwelling site (4×8 m) at the foot of the Pöide stronghold was enlarged northwards for clearing up the contours of the stone pavement found in the first year of excavations. This occupation layer, which emerged at the depth of 35—40 cm, consisted of glacial pebbles and flats. It was a thin but dense pavement without clear contours continuing outside the excavated area. Upon the pavement and between the stones potsherds of the Early Iron Age and the 8th—9th centuries were found. At the very bottom of the ditch there was a piece of flint and a rim sherd of late corded ware.²

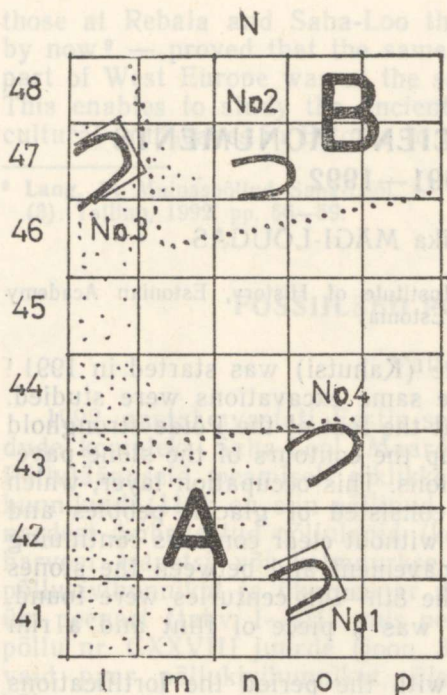
Two house foundations, connected with the period the fortifications were last used, had been unearthed in the stronghold already in 1991. One of them occupied the southern, the other the northern part of the ditch. Between them there was a 4 m wide area void of building remains; possibly there had been a corridor leading to the wall there.

The ruins of stove No. 1 (Fig. 1) emerged already in the first year of excavations on the foundation of the southern building (A) at the level of 25—30 cm below a fixed point. In 1992 it was discovered that another stove (No. 4) linked with this foundation had stood in its NE corner. It was at a distance of only 2 m from stove No. 1. The stove mouth opened to SWW. The northern wall of the stove leaned against the foundation of the northern wall of building A (Plate IV). Only the lower horse-shoe-shaped part of the stove was preserved. It was a typical *keris*-stove with the bottom of limestone slabs and flat granite. The walls were built of granite. Before its mouth there had been a hearth (*lee*) from which only some horizontal flats were preserved. In front of the hearth a lyrate iron for striking fire was found (Plate VII, 6). The inside measurements of the stove were 1.4×0.7 m. The stove floor was 55 cm below the fixed point, only 10 cm higher than the floor of stove No. 1. Though the stratigraphic differences were not considerable, they are of great importance in distinguishing houses of different times.

The ruins of stove No. 1, situated southwards from the upon-described one, lay deeper in the cultural layer. When the ruins were cleaned up a similar horse-shoe-shaped foundation and a bottom covered with a large limestone slab came out (Plate IV). The slab lay 65—68 cm below the fixed point. The mouth opened to the west, with a slight deviation to the south-west. In front of the mouth there was a well-preserved hearth (1.25×0.65 m) of slabs on the same level as the stove floor. The hearth was bordered from left and right by vertical limestone flats. The stove

¹ Lõugas, V. Investigation of Pöide (Kahutsi) ancient monuments. — Proc. Estonian Acad. Sci. Social Sci., 1991, No. 4, pp. 373—375.

² Cf. Jaanits, L., Laul, S., Lõugas, V., Tõnisson, E. Eesti esiajalugu. Tallinn, 1982, Fig. 80, 8.



itself, differently from stove No. 4, was also surrounded by flats, dug vertically into the ground and forming an original rectangular stove chest. The whole south-western part of the excavation area was densely covered with small flats and stones about 10 cm lower than the stove floor. This pavement continued in the south and west inside the unexcavated area. The majority of line-ornamented potsherds but also other artefacts were found upon or in this pavement. A potsherd with blackish smooth surface unearthed between the hearth flats helped date the stove to the earlier period of the stronghold's use.

Fig. 1. Pöide stronghold. Excavated area with the location of stoves (Nos. 1—4) and the main distribution area of pottery. A, B — house foundations from the last stage of the stronghold. (1 cm=2 m.)

Remains of two buildings from different times were clearly distinguishable in the southern part of the ditch. Their contours did not coincide as the slightly different orientation of the stoves (Plate IV) shows.

In the northern house foundation the lines of the southern and western walls were well observable (Fig. 1). Several of the wall foundation slabs had a straight outer edge. The remains of stove No. 2 were found here. This stove leaned against the southern wall and its mouth opened to the west. The stove floor lay 42 cm below the fixed point, though 13—14 cm higher than the floor of stove No. 4. The finds around this stove were rare. Some potsherds came to light from its mouth. They refer, like the stratigraphy, to the 12th—13th centuries. Under the stove remains there was a 15 cm layer consisting of grey light soil without any artefacts or bones. Under it, 60—65 cm below the fixed point, a fragmentary floor of limestone flats emerged, which obviously belonged to an earlier period of the stronghold. The same can be said about the remains of the floors in the other parts of the ditch. Much firebrand and charcoal was found at the northern and north-western sides of the stove. This sooty and burnt 3 cm thick layer was well observable in the northern section of the excavations. A coal sample was taken from the side of stove No. 2. The stove and house foundation B were both covered with thick soil, which had fallen down from the stronghold wall. The soil contained only a few bones and artefacts from the very end of the Late Iron Age.

Under foundation B an older cultural layer with remains of a house and stove No. 3 emerged. The mouth of the stove, which opened to SWW, remained in the unexcavated area. The outside measurements of the part of the stove excavated were 1.5×1.5 m. Stove No. 3 had, analogously with stove No. 1, a chest of limestone flats. Therefore, the floor was not cleaned out during these excavations. To the south of the stove, 90—92 cm below the fixed point, a long firebrand emerged whence

a coal sample was taken. Beside the firebrand a sherd of a small line-decorated bowl came out. It is obvious that the stove, the firebrand, and the sherd are interrelated.

On the north-eastern side of the stove, on an area of 1.5×1.5 m, remains of a floor made of limestone emerged. Its south-eastern border coincided with the lengthening of the south-eastern wall of the stove. A post supporting the roof of a later building, from which a post-hole had preserved, had stood on the floor. Under the weight of the post the floor flats had sunk into the ground so that their edges had risen up. The grey light soil covering the floor contained only bones and charcoal. In several places the floor flats had burnt reddish. Evidently this floor and the similar floor remains under stove No. 2 belonged together. Remains of a floor emerged also in the south-western corner of the ditch on the level of 80—85 cm. Some flats (possibly belonging to a floor) were found north from stove No. 1. We got the impression that limestones from an earlier occupation layer had been used in building the last stronghold and the floors had possibly been destroyed in the course of this work.

At the present state of research we can suppose that the oldest traces of occupation on the stronghold date from the Pre-Roman Iron Age. Pottery resembling that of the late stone-cist graves and early *tarand*-graves was found mainly from the western, especially south-western part of the excavation. This area (Fig. 1) was the richest in finds. It is possible that other remains of the earliest period of the stronghold will be found deeper in other parts of the ditch, under the fall of the wall. From the earlier finds, linked with the above-described pottery, a half of a quern for grinding grain should be mentioned (Plate V, 1).

It is not yet possible to present a detailed analysis of the finds. Our attention is focused on the finds that can help us date the stronghold. The main conclusions can be made from the pottery, which can be divided into three main chronological groups. About 600 potsherds, collected during the excavations of 1991—1992, were not equally spread over the whole excavated area. Most of the ditch should be described as "poor in finds". About 50% of all potsherds were found from squares 41—44/1 and 43/m (Fig. 1). The rest came mainly from the neighbouring squares.

The group of the latest pottery consists of both hand-made and wheel-turned pottery. The latter is often decorated with wave motifs (Plate V, 11, 12). Similar hand-made pottery was common on Saaremaa Island in the 12th—13th centuries and it has been found from several graves from Pöide parish (Randvere, Viltina).

We have succeeded in distinguishing only the fine ware of the Vendel period and the Viking Age. It is characterized by a smooth dark surface and rim decoration. About a dozen potsherds were ornamented with line decoration. Most of them were found from squares 42/1—m. These were small dishes with parallel ornamental lines on the upper or lower part of the rim (Plate V, 6, 7). When the transition from rim to wall was marked with a step, also the upper edge of the wall was sometimes decorated. The diameter of the mouth of such dishes was only 12—16 cm. Only one fragment with double zigzag decoration below the inflection was found (Plate V, 8). The same motif was preserved on a potsherd from the dwelling site (Plate V, 9). Similar pottery has been found from the late stronghold of Asva, dated back to the third quarter of the 1st millennium A.D.³ and from the dwelling site of Tornimäe⁴, both in Pöide parish. About 20 findspots with such pottery are known in the

³ Lõugas, V. Asva linnuse dateerimisest. — Eesti NSV TA Toim. Ühisk., 1966, No. 1, pp. 81—94, Fig. 5.

⁴ AI 4338.

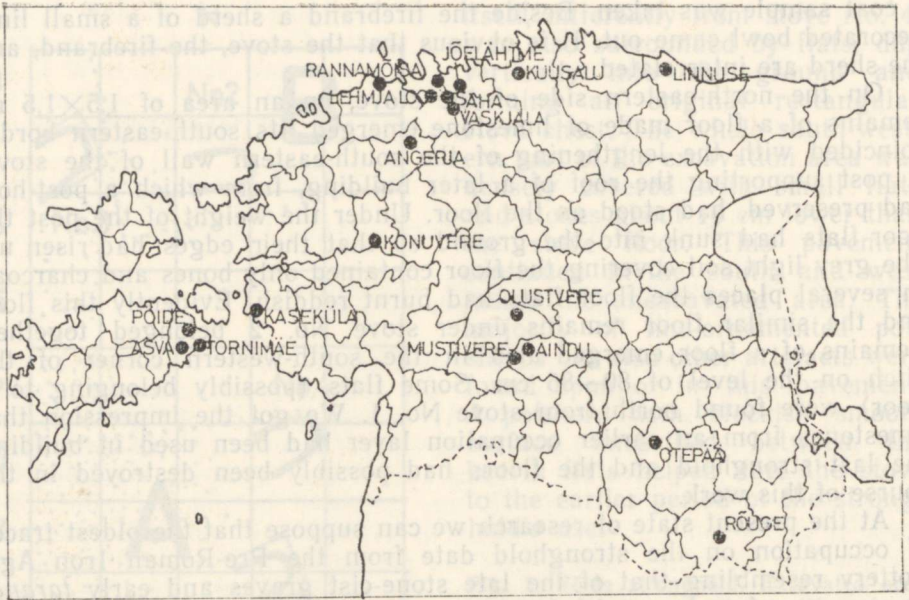


Fig. 2. Findspots of line-decorated pottery from the Vendel period in Estonia.

whole Estonia (Fig. 2). Analogous finds in Finland and Central Sweden⁵ (for example Birka⁶ graves Nos. 326, 348, 855, etc.) suggest that the pottery dates from the 8th—9th centuries.

Somewhat different pottery belonging to the same group has a decoration of triangles striped in opposite directions on the upper part of the wall (Plate V, 2—5). In addition quite a large number of undecorated potsherds with a similar surface and consistency can belong together with these ornamented sherds. All the ornamented sherds seem to have belonged to one dish characterized by thick walls and an inflection on the upper part. The decoration covered a zone below the inflection.

Pottery from the end of the Pre-Roman Iron Age made up 10% (60 sherds) of the whole pottery. Most of it has coarse-grained temper; the surface is roughly treated and the sherds feel "fat" when touched. Some of them were found from the western border of the ditch at a depth of 35 cm; mostly they came from the bottom of the cultural layer. From the other finds a quern for grinding grain (Plate V, 1) belongs to the same period. This material is obviously cultural remains of a dwelling-site from the turn of our era situated on the same slope where later the stronghold was built.

Among ornaments a small triangle-headed pin is worth special attention (Plate VI, 2). It was found from the pavement of an earlier building in the southern part of the ditch. Thirteen specimens of such small triangle-headed pins have been found in Estonia. They refer in all cases to the 7th—9th centuries. The 8th century seems to have been their golden time. The best-dated findspots are the strongholds of Iru, Purtse, Rõuge, and Irboska, but also the Toila grave and a deposit at

⁵ Selling, D. Wikingerzeitliche und frühmittelalterliche Keramik in Schweden. Stockholm, 1955, pp. 147—150.

⁶ Arbmán, H. Birka I. Die Gräber. Stockholm, 1940.

Inju.⁷ From Iru and Toila also pottery very similar to that from Põide has been found. Therefore, the triangle-headed pin is of great importance in dating the earlier stronghold of Põide with great probability to the 8th century. A fragment of chain with large links (Plate VI, 3) seems to belong to the same time.

It is difficult to date a silver artefact, whose purpose is unknown (Plate VI, 1). It is evidently some kind of pendant or strap-tongue, maybe belonging to horse harness (cf. such pendants from Valsgårde and elsewhere). The artefact was found from the north-western part of the excavation (square 47/1), from the remains of stove No. 3. The socket of the artefact has perforated decoration; later an iron rivet had been struck through it. The rest of the artefact resembles an animal head. Such an ornament refers to the 7th—8th centuries. Still, this dating remains uncertain due to the lack of exact parallels.

More ornaments were found from the surface layer of the stronghold. Here two penannular brooches should be mentioned, one of them with a cross-shaped burl (Plate VI, 5). In addition to Põide, eight more such brooches are known on Saaremaa Island and about ten on the Estonian continent. According to A. Kustin such brooches with cross-shaped burls appeared on Saaremaa in the middle of the 11th century.⁸ Also finger rings with thickened and rifflid central part found from Põide (Plate VI, 6, 7) are typical of Saaremaa. These finger rings were spread everywhere in the East-Baltic and have prototypes in Byzantine gold finger rings from the 11th—12th centuries. Among the most favoured ornaments in the Late Iron Age Saaremaa were semicircular chain holders with disk-shaped expansions, two of which are known also from Põide stronghold (Plate VI, 11). More than 60 specimens of them are known from Saaremaa and some from the continent. The chain holders from Põide have remains of silver plating, typical of such ornaments. In addition a ring brooch (Plate VI, 8), pieces of spiral bracelets (Plate V, 5), spiral finger rings, and a bracelet with a widened central part (Plate VI, 10) are represented. All this material refers to the Late Iron Age, that is to the 12th century and the early 13th century. The only coin found from Põide stronghold dates from the same period: this half-bracteate from Visby was minted in ca 1140—1210/20 (defined by V. Sokolovski). A unique find is an iron finger ring with an oval shield. Similar bronze finger rings were used mainly in the 12th—13th centuries, but they could have appeared already in the 11th century.

Weapons were surprisingly few among the finds. The most interesting of them was a long arrow-head with a tang and an oval shank section and a rhombic blade section (Plate VII, 3). Arrow-heads of this type are of Scandinavian origin and they are dated back to the Vendel period or the beginning of the Viking Age. Several such arrow-heads have been found from Birka graves, but also from Iru stronghold and Iila grave in Estonia.⁹

Heavy German arrow-heads with tangs (Plate VII, 4) have been found from almost all strongholds used at the beginning of the 13th century when the ancient Estonians fought for their freedom, but usually

⁷ Iru — AI 4051:949; Purtse — AI 5038:8; Rõuge — AI 4040:231, 3162; Toila — AI 3952:299; Inju — AI 2794:25; Irboska — Седов В. В. Изборск в VIII—X веках. — In: Neues in der Archäologie des Ostbaltikums und der Nachbarterritorien. Sammelband. Tallinn, 1985, Figs. 1, 7, 8.

⁸ Kustin, A. Saaremaa ja Muhu muistised feodalismi tärkamise perioodist (11. sajandist kuni 13. sajandi alguseni). Tallinn, 1962, p. 391. (Manuscript in the Library of the Estonian Academy of Sciences.)

⁹ Vassar, A. Iru Linnapära. — In: Muistse Eesti linnused. 1936.—1938. a. uurimiste tulemused. Tartu, 1939, Fig. 53, 1; Selirand, J. Eestlaste matmiskombed varafeodaalsete suhete tärkamise perioodil (11.—13. sajand). Tallinn, 1974, Plate XIV, 10.

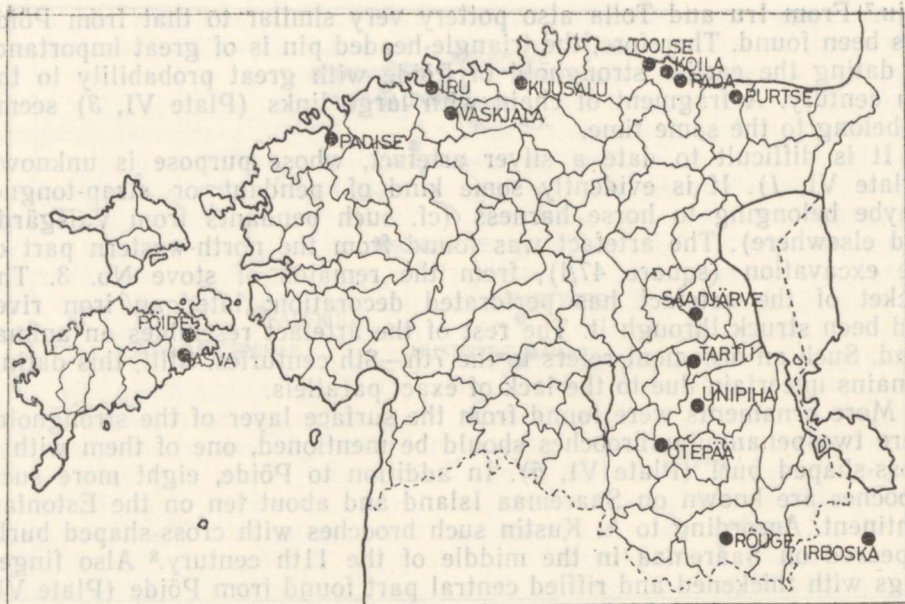


Fig. 3. Strongholds from the 8th—9th centuries in Estonia.

in much greater amounts. Finds of these arrow-heads at Põide suggest that the stronghold was used also in the beginning of the 13th century, though this has not been mentioned in written sources.

We can also mention two tanged javelin-points (Plate VII, 1, 2). Such javelins occur on our strongholds usually in the 12th century or at the beginning of the 13th century.

The most interesting bone artefact was a knife with a convex blade (Plate V, 13), which, according to ethnological parallels, could have been used in treating skin. Two bone combs (Plate VI, 12, 13) were found, one of them in pieces. Both of them are composite double combs and represent versions used in the 12th—13th centuries.¹⁰ The rest of the bone artefacts are mainly tusk pendants and awls, but also a knife handle and a humming-top were found. Such a bone toy is quite common from strongholds of the end of the Iron Age (Lõhavere, Otepää, etc.).

As to iron implements, mostly knives were represented, but also a piece of scythe, nails, rivets, and some other smaller artefacts were found.

The implements of needlework were represented by bronze spirals, sewing needles, and a spindle whorl of amber, which could also be a bigger bead (diameter 3.15 cm) (Plate VI, 14).

In conclusion we can say that the excavations of the last two years revealed new aspects of the history of Põide stronghold. We have no detailed chronology by centuries of Estonian strongholds from the middle of the 1st millennium up to the beginning of the 2nd millennium, when our monumental and strong hillforts were built. The pottery from the strongholds on Saaremaa Island (Asva, Põide) and North-West Estonia (Padise, Iru) has now made it possible to distinguish a cultural layer preceding immediately and introducing the Viking Age, that is the 8th century and evidently to some extent also the 9th century. The predominant pottery is dishes with a smooth surface or line decoration.

¹⁰ Кольчин В. А. Хронология новгородских древностей. Новгородский сборник. Москва, 1982, p. 166.

At the present state of investigation over a dozen strongholds used in the 8th century are known in Estonia (Fig. 3). Such fortifications are an evidence of troubled times directly before the Viking Age. Several of these strongholds were destroyed and abandoned soon. Finds of Scandinavian origin on these strongholds (mainly arrow-heads) prove that Scandinavians were pushing actively towards the East at that time.

POIDE MUISTISTE ARHEOLOOGILISTEST KAEVAMISTEST 1991.—1992. AASTAL

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Pöides jätkusid uurimistööd asulakaevandi laiendamisega põhja suunas. 35—40 cm sügavusel asuva sillutise kontuurid osutusid laialivalguvaks. Kivistiku pealt ja vahelt leiti üksikuid ornamenteeritud 8.—9. sajandi savinõukilde ja ajaarvamise vahetuse keraamikat. Saadi ka üks tulekivitükk ja hilise nõorkeraamika katke.

Linnusekaevandis puhastati välja kaks kerisahjudega hoonealust (joon. 1), mis kõrgussuhete ja leidude järgi (tahv. VI, 4—8, 10—13) on seostatavad linnuse viimase ehitusjärguga 12.—13. sajandil. Sügavamal avastati 8.—9. sajandi keraamikaga (tahv. V, 2—8, 10) lade ning ahjud nr. 1 ja 3 (joon. 1), mis olid ca 1,5×1,5 m suurused ja ehitatud vertikaalsetest paeplaatidest salvedesse (tahv. IV). Ahjude lähedalt leiti joonornamendiga ja viirutatud kolmnurkadega kaunistatud nõude kilde (tahv. V, 2—8), väike kolmnurkpeaga ehtenõel (tahv. VI, 2) ning peenike pikk nooleots (tahv. VII, 3). Pöide muinaslinnust kasutati viikingiaja eelõhtul ja alguses. Eestist on seesuguseid kindlustusi teada enam kui tosin (joon. 3). Pöide linnuse vanimateks leidudeks on ajaarvamise vahetuse asulast pärinev keraamika ja üks poolik jahvekivi (tahv. V, 1).

О РАСКОПКАХ АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ПАМЯТНИКОВ В ПЕЙДЕ В 1991—1992 ГОДЫ

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Продолжались исследования археологического комплекса в Пейде. На территории поселения раскоп был расширен к северу. Контуры обнаруженной на глубине 35—40 см мостовой четко не прослеживались. На мостовой и между камнями собраны черепки рубежа н. э. и некоторые орнаментированные фрагменты сосудов 8—9 вв., а также один фрагмент поздненеолитического сосуда и кусок кремня.

На городище расчистили остатки двух построек. В обеих обнаружены печи-каменки одинаковой конструкции и одинаковых размеров (рис. 1; табл. IV). Им сопутствовали находки 12—13 вв. (табл. VI, 4—8, 10—13). Глубже был открыт более древний горизонт с находками 8—9 вв. (табл. V, 2—8, 10). Открытые здесь печи-каменки размерами 1,5×1,5 м (№ 1 и 3) были огорожены вертикальными плитами (рис. 1). Вокруг печей собраны керамика, орнаментированная линиями или заштрихованными треугольниками (табл. V, 2—8), а также бронзовая булава с треугольным навершием и наконечник стрелы (табл. VI, 2; VII, 3). Древнейшими находками, как и на поселении, оказались грубая керамика рубежа н. э. и фрагмент терочника (табл. V, 1).

На рис. 3 показана схема городищ Эстонии, содержащих горизонт 8—9 вв.