

# Europe's Cultural Landscape: archaeologists and the management of change

Edited by Graham Fairclough and Stephen Rippon  
Assistant Editor David Bull



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EAC Secretariat  
Boulevard Brand Whitlocklaan, 152  
Box 3  
B-1200 Brussels  
Belgium

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*Cover illustration: An early medieval stronghold at Moraczewo, in the Wielkopolska region of Poland, one of c. 7,000 entries on the Polish official register of scheduled sites and monuments. The stronghold is dated to between the 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century AD, and is associated with the power base of the Polanie tribe, one of the foundations of the future feudal Christian State. It sits within an agricultural landscape of much later date. Current agriculture activities on or near the site are monitored by the Service for the Protection of Monuments. The modern farm near the stronghold was built before the site was designated in 1972. Photo: W. Stêpień.*

## 12: European Cultural Paths: a model of co-operation between archaeologists for the management and preservation of cultural landscapes

*Ants Kraut*

*Abstract: This paper addresses a management model of cultural landscapes that was formed and influenced by human activities in prehistoric times. With the support of the European Commission, co-operation between archaeological projects in five countries was initiated and as a result a well-functioning network of information, co-operation and exchange of experience has been established.*

### Introduction

Resources available for cultural heritage have always been, and always will be, significantly lower than perceived needs. For many years, archaeologists in Europe have used various mechanisms to establish priorities for their work (Olivier 2000a; 2000b). One of the possibilities is to attract extra resources through international co-operation and joint projects that not only foster exchange of knowledge and experience among experts, but which are also a good mechanism for securing both national and international funding and influencing local authorities. In the context of the cultural objectives of the European Union there are any number of suitable themes for collaborative international research within a European framework (Olivier 2000a). The *Europae Archaeologiae Consilium* has declared its primary mission to support the management of archaeological heritage throughout Europe and to serve the needs of national archaeological heritage management agencies. It will do this by providing a forum for organisations to establish closer and more structured co-operation and exchange of information, as well as by working together with other bodies which share the aims of the EAC (Lüth *et al.* 2000). This paper describes one of the possible models for international co-operation that has resulted in a well-functioning network of information and exchange of experience between several countries in the field of cultural landscape.

European Cultural Paths was a partnership between projects dealing with heritage in five countries (fig. 12.1):

- Sweden - the Bjäre peninsula, with a unique Bronze Age landscape and a reconstructed house from the same period (see Paulsson this volume).
- Denmark - the Lusehøj burial mound and Pipstorn prehistoric monuments.
- Norway - the Avaldsnes prehistoric centre of power on the island of Karmøy.

- Germany - the Spessart forest area with well-preserved archaeological monuments (see Ermischer this volume).
- Estonia - the Rebala Reserve and the Kaali meteorite crater field.

These projects dealt with outstanding examples of the European and Nordic Bronze Age that today show excellent preservation of archaeological sites, monuments and remains because the main focus of European Cultural Paths was the Bronze Age. The European Cultural Paths do not exclude heritage from all other periods however. The purpose was not only to communicate the significance of the 'first golden era of Europe', but also to create a general concept for explaining cultural landscapes and prehistoric monuments within chronological and geographical frames. The European Cultural Paths project thus intended to provide a model for co-operation between archaeologists and management in the preservation of cultural landscapes. It was funded by the RAPHAEL programme of the European Commission with financial support from states and local municipalities (European Cultural Paths 1998).

European Cultural Paths dealt with research and surveys in various disciplines. A variety of non-profit organisations, municipalities, museums and national heritage managers co-operating with universities and scientific institutions, were the leading figures in the projects. Practical works towards the preservation of monuments were of major importance. European Cultural Paths aimed at communicating the cultural landscape to the local public as well as to tourists. It guides visitors by signs and multilingual brochures to follow certain pathways through the landscape to the monuments. Young people can benefit from special programmes that include not only exhibitions, but also reconstructions of actual prehistoric monuments.

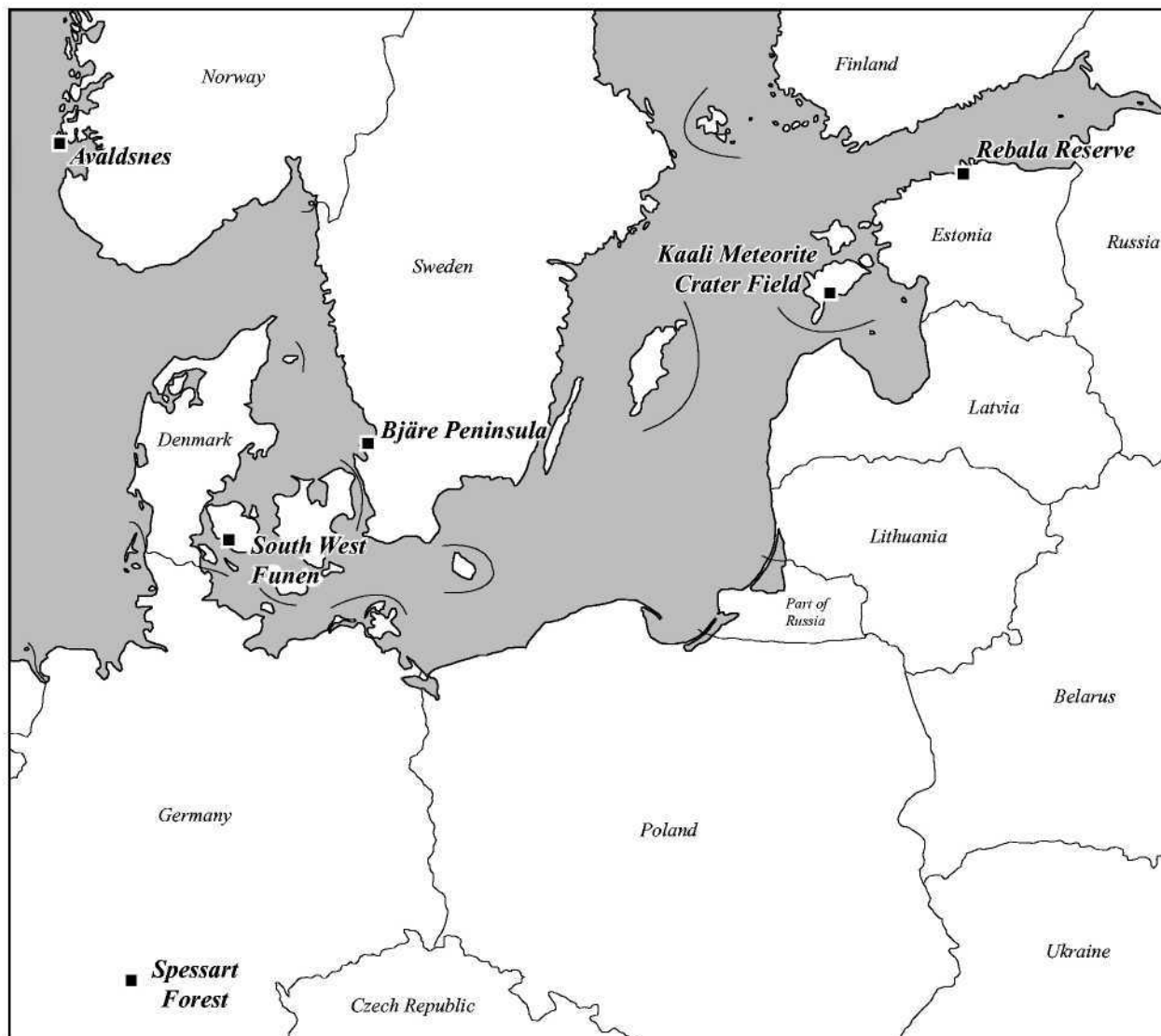


Fig. 12.1: Locations of five Cultural Pathway Projects.

### Project History

In spring 1997, a major campaign of the Council of Europe entitled 'The Bronze Age - the first golden age of Europe' was concluded. Even the first discussions during the campaign clearly showed that there never was such a thing as a single identity of Europe during the Bronze Age. There were several identities, among them a Nordic one (Thrane 2000). Nevertheless, dismissing scientific disputes for the moment, the campaign had other significant consequences. Concentrating first and foremost on a specific period in the prehistory of Europe, the campaign also extended contacts between specialists and organisations dealing with cultural landscapes, and with issues of their research, maintenance and promotion. While analysing the common Bronze Age history of Europe, it became evident that we today also share similar challenges for preserving and managing the heritage. International co-operation and exchange of experience would therefore significantly enhance the identification of solutions for practical on-site problems. It would also advance co-operation in issues

relating to common ideas and best practice, in the field of protecting and maintaining cultural landscapes throughout Europe (Wainwright 2000).

The initiator of European Cultural Paths was the Swedish non-profit making organisation Föreningen Bronstid (Bronze Age Society), which had been leading a local Bronze Age project on the Bjäre Peninsula, Scania in southern Sweden since 1995. During the European Bronze Age campaign, Föreningen Bronstid had actively been looking for partnerships for international co-operation from Denmark and Norway. Largely thanks to Mrs Annila Sterner, the Swedish project leader several partners had expressed their interest and during the final campaign event in Berlin in 1997 organisations from Germany and Estonia also joined the project. The five partners - Föreningen Bronstid and its project 'Treasures of the Bronze Age' in Sweden, Odense City Museums in Denmark, Aschaffenburg City Museums and the 'Archaeological Spessart Project' in Germany, the Municipality of Karmøy

and the 'Avaldsnes Project' in Norway and the Estonian National Heritage Board - thereafter agreed to work together to submit a project proposal to the DGX of the European Commission.

A first preparatory meeting of the future partners was held in Båstad, Sweden, in May 1997. The general outlines of the European Cultural Paths project were then drawn up to match one of the topics within the EU RAPHAEL programme, 'The History of Landscapes'. The deadline for submitting proposals was July 1997, but although time was running short, the partners had already done a lot of the preparatory work. In December the application made to the RAPHAEL Programme of the European Commission was approved and the project was assigned a grant of 140,000 ECU. The timetable extension was from December 1997 to September 1999, with the Swedish partner carrying responsibility for the leading role (Sterner 2000a).

The aims of European Cultural Paths were, in short:

- to promote research and provide knowledge;
- to define and carry out measures to protect and care for the cultural heritage in the landscape;
- to create cultural paths in the landscape.

A major objective was to emphasise multi-disciplinary and multi-national co-operation between partner projects (Sterner 2000a).

### Project Themes

Mrs Annila Sterner, the project co-ordinator, has described the European Cultural Paths project as resting on three pillars: knowledge, care and communication (Sterner 2000a; Sterner 2000b).

- *Knowledge* was seen as a keyword. European Cultural Paths approached it from two angles: deepening our knowledge through the promotion of research, and spreading it through various public relation actions. Knowledge about the history of a landscape is essential for the interest of its actual inhabitants, for their pride and wishes to care for and protect the historical monuments within the landscape. On the other hand, lack of knowledge, lack of interest and lack of respect can easily lead to destruction and loss of the heritage.
- *Care* and protection of the physical archaeological remains - scrub-clearance, fencing, regulated grazing and scything. There are problems of visual and protection conditions on sites. Landscapes rapidly change, and similarly the visual character of sites and monuments changes with overgrowing by bushes and trees, making archaeological sites less interesting for cultural education purposes and also for scientific reasons (Urtane 2001; Urtane this volume). This is especially true for the countries of the post-Soviet regime (Kraut 2000b). An important future aspect was

to find solutions for the permanent care of monuments. Risks for wear of monuments by visitors was taken into consideration in the planning of the cultural paths.

- *Communication*, which means bringing the public to the cultural heritage, and the monuments in the landscape through setting up cultural paths, marked trails leading to the sites and producing informative brochures guiding the visitors to the monuments. Additional measures such as reconstructions, exhibitions and schools programmes were also included. The aim was to cater for the needs of both people living in the areas involved and of cultural tourists from elsewhere (Sterner 2000b).

### Results

The European Cultural Paths partners gathered for general meetings five times between January 1998 and September 1999. An international seminar for archaeologists and others with a potential interest in the communication of a landscape-oriented cultural history was organized and hosted by the Danish partner Odense City Museums (Lorentzen & Michaelsen 2000b). The project co-ordinator Annila Sterner presented a summary of the European Cultural Paths project that was soon going to conclude, stressing the indispensable importance of the RAPHAEL grant: 'The EU perspective conveyed by the RAPHAEL grant has been of decisive importance. As a matter of fact, had it not been for the EU dimension, some of the partner projects would most probably not have survived at all, while the same projects have now instead undergone an important growth involving lots of people and institutions' (Sterner 2000b). It was possible to fulfil an extensive scientific programme in the frame of the European Cultural Paths project, and dozens of reports and scientific articles were compiled and a comprehensive book written on the basis of the Norwegian project (Myhre 1998).

All in all eight physical paths were created and signposted in the landscape, and information boards with clear data were erected. Eight multilingual full-colour brochures introducing the paths were printed, assisting visitors to learn about the archaeological sites and monuments that were all well cared for. All information concerning the European Cultural Paths project and the related heritage objects was made available on five new Web sites. The Swedish partner established a Bronze Age Centre with a reconstructed Bronze Age house. All partners were involved in compiling several exhibitions, making TV broadcasts, video films, conducting lectures and excursions to the sites, publishing various articles in the press and introducing the project over the radio and television channels. One of the most important results of European Cultural Paths was the interest on a European level for new projects on the basis of the experiences of European Cultural Paths. During the final meeting of European Cultural Paths, therefore, the partners decided

to create a permanent network, founding an umbrella organisation for the promotion of future projects and for a continued exchange of professional experience (Sterner 2000b).

### Regional projects

#### The Bjäre Peninsula, Sweden

On the Bjäre Peninsula in the south-western province of Scania, a considerable number of monuments from the Bronze Age have been preserved. In a territory of 9 x 5km there are more than 500 Bronze Age mounds and cairns, an exceptional number of sites with cup marked rocks and more than 100 areas with prehistoric terraced fields. The hilly Bjäre landscape must have offered ideal conditions for Bronze Age life with its direct access to waterways in three directions, light self-draining soil and good pasturelands. Even today the peninsula is most beautiful, characterised by a small-scale, agricultural countryside with lavish scenery and spacious protected areas formed by grazing since prehistoric times. The project created

two paths through the landscape, connecting the major archaeological monuments.

At *Barkåkra*, near the city of *Ängelholm*, the Bronze Age mounds lie like a string of pearls on the ridges. The path has seven stops at the most important sites, starting from the imposing mound of *Torhög*. In one of the stops, at *Valhallsbogen*, there is a walking track visiting monuments in the near by wood. The *Båstad-Bjäre* path leads through the central and western part of the peninsula (fig. 12.2). Nine stops are made at major sites, like the cup marked rocks of *Drottninghall*, the stone ship and enigmatic wall constructions of *Tofta Högar*, the large area of terraced fields in the wood of *Deiarp* and the majestic mound of *Dagshög* (fig. 12.3), the largest Bronze Age mound in Scania. Walking tracks are traced at *Bjäragården* (fig. 12.4) and through a unique seashore habitat to the cairns of *Gröthögarna*. At the *Boarp Centre* visitors may enter everyday Bronze Age life in a reconstructed house. (Bjärehalvön 1999; Bjärehalvön, S. 1999; Fact Sheets 1998;

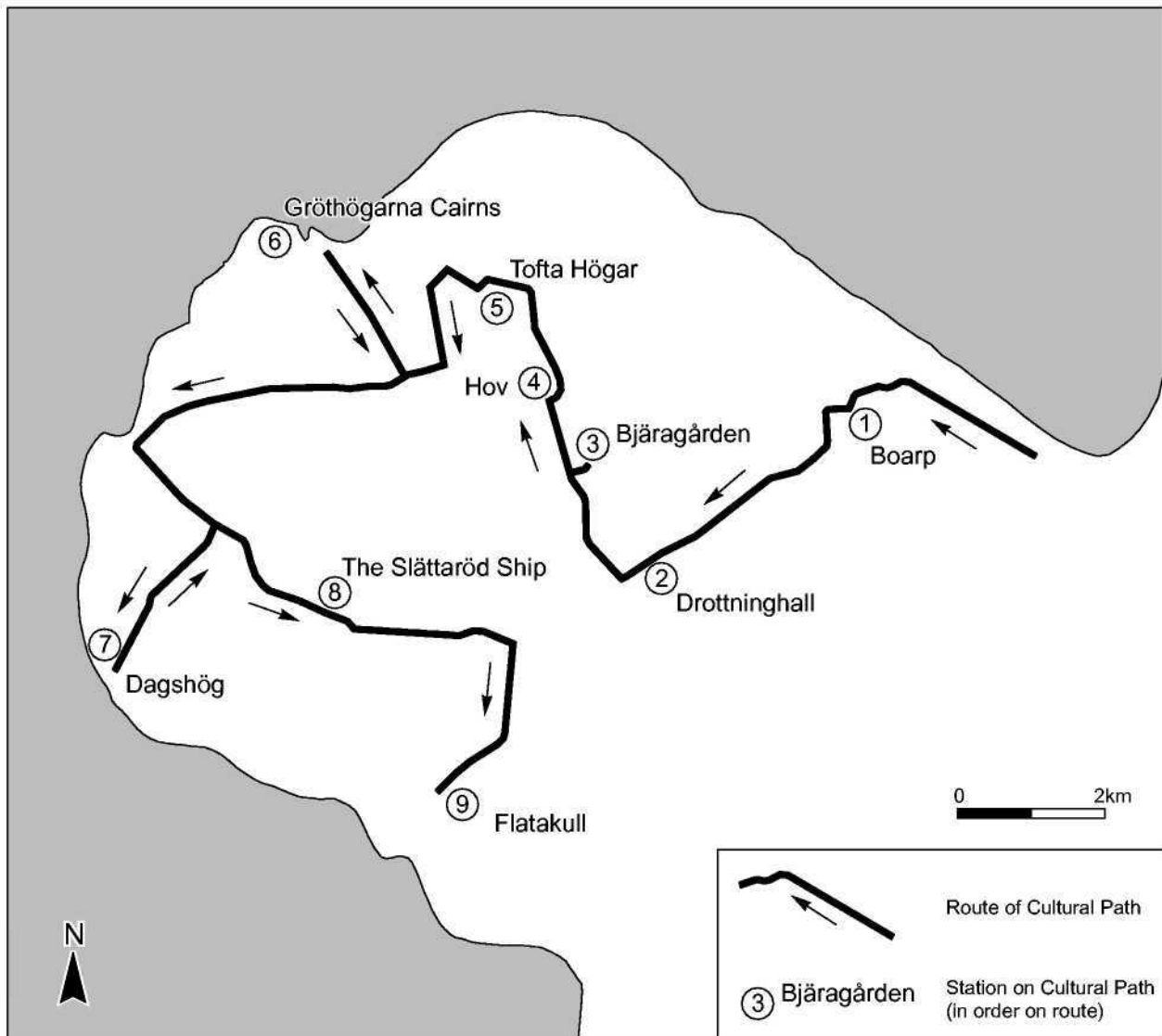


Fig. 12.2: An example of a European Cultural Path, the Båstad-Bjäre Path, Sweden.



Fig.12.3: Dagshög (Dag's Barrow), Bjäre during a visit by ECP members after the preliminary meeting in Sweden, May 1997.

Sterner 2000c). Jenny Nord Paulssen addresses the cultural landscape of the Bjäre peninsula in a separate paper in detail in this volume (Paulsson 2002).

### The island of Funen, Denmark

The island of Funen is one of the most important areas of the Nordic Bronze Age. The quantity of burial mounds indicates a densely populated area, and the size of some of the mounds tells us a story of wealthy chieftains and extensive trade connections with most parts of Europe. Two areas of Voldtofte and Pipstorn near Fåborg have been selected for the project, both of which are characterised by the presence of many prehistoric monuments. Both landscapes are situated in southwest Funen.



Fig. 12.4: Details of the Bjäragården section of the Båstad-Bjäre Path.

*Kirkebjerg* near Voldtofte is one of Denmark's largest Bronze Age settlements and one of the richest in finds. Evidence of structures with painted walls and a large amount of bronze casting emphasises the fact that the settlement assumed quite an exceptional position.

*Lusehøj* is one of the country's biggest Bronze Age barrows, with an original diameter of about 35m and a height of about 7m. There have been excavations at Lusehøj in 1861 and again in the 1970s. The most recent excavations have to a great extent documented the complex history and method of construction of the barrow. In the immediate vicinity of Lusehøj another four great barrows from the Bronze Age can be found.

*Alleskoven* and *Pipstorn* are a good example of prehistory preserved in woodland. The Pipstorn forest just outside Fåborg contains a considerable number of ancient monuments. There is a grave complex from the Late Bronze Age, as well as Bronze Age burial mounds and land boundaries from the Iron Age and medieval periods. The area contains Funen's largest collection of Bronze Age barrows (Bronzeaderen på Sydvestfyn 1999; Fact Sheets 1998; Lorenzen & Michaelsen 2000a).

### Avaldsnes, the island of Karmøy, Norway

During the early part of the Bronze Age, Avaldsnes on the island of Karmøy in south-western Norway strategically situated along the straits of the Karmsund, became the centre of a mighty principality, with strong connections to Denmark and mainland Europe. At Avaldsnes there are numerous ancient monuments, which, in combination with rich finds from the area, show us that powerful chieftains, and later kings, had their bases there. The princes of Avaldsnes were to become the major force in uniting Norway during the Viking period. After the unification of Norway Avaldsnes was a royal manor for approximately

500 years and thus also a site of historic events told in the sagas. It is best known as the royal residence of Harald Finehair and the other kings that we hear about in the Norse sagas. The sagas also tell us about the legendary king Augvald who has given his name to this ancient site. Today the medieval church is the main reminder of more glorious times.

At *Rehaugene*, six imposing earthen burial mounds, which dominate the landscape, were built during the Bronze Age. The use of earth instead of stones in the construction of the mounds shows clear connections to Denmark and Northern Europe. Rehaugene is the largest concentration of earthen burial mounds from the Early Bronze Age in Norway. Close to the Rehaugene there is a copper mine where mining started in 1865. Copper ore might have been the basis for the start of Avaldsnes as a central place in the prehistory.

*Flagghaugen* is a burial mound from the third century AD, 43m in diameter and 5m high. In it the richest gold finds from any grave in Scandinavia from the Later Roman Iron Age has been found.

*Storhaug* is a burial mound dating from about 750 AD, which originally had a diameter of 50m and was 5-6m high. In this mound a very rich ship burial similar to the ones in Gokstad and Oseberg was found, but Storhaug is about 50-100 years older.

Potentially hidden in the ground and waters of this ancient royal residences are secrets that can provide new information on both Norwegian and European history. The Municipality of Karmøy ran the project in close cooperation with the Rogaland County Council and the Museum of Archaeology, Stavanger (Bronsealderen på Reheia-Karmøy 1999; Fact Sheets 1998; Solnørdaal & Vea 2000; Sør-Reime 1999).

### **The Archaeological Spessart Project, Germany**

Spessart is a forested area with many preserved archaeological monuments, now divided by administrative borders. The rich resources of this area have been exploited since the stone age, and it is therefore a rich cultural landscape, formed and changed by people since the Neolithic. Erosion, climate and ecological changes caused by human processes have left traces in the landscape, with evidence of vast deforestation in the prehistoric and medieval periods. The forest has preserved monuments and traces of human activities so well, that today we can draw a vivid picture of past landscapes. Many of the inner Spessart forest villages became depopulated in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century which followed a period of agricultural decline and 18<sup>th</sup> century with systematic reforestation returning the 20<sup>th</sup> century Spessart landscape to closed forest again. Today the area's main cultural associations are with forest poverty and robbers.

The Spessart archaeological project was started in 1994 to try to identify the traces of centuries and millennia of human activity in the area. Several paths guide the visitor on this fascinating voyage through time. Knowledge of the area and its past has been dominated by the classic German archaeologists' research approaches of prospecting, dating and cataloguing archaeological monuments and objects. The European Cultural Paths project, however, involved scientists of other disciplines including geographers, geologists, economical and technical historians as well as biologists, thus leading the European Cultural Paths project to a broader view. Cultural history and the development of the cultural landscape came more and more into focus. This trend was enhanced by new international contacts and the discussion about the different projects in the five participating countries (Frammersbach 2000a & b; Ermischer 2000a; Fact Sheets 1998).

### **Rebala Reserve and Kaali Meteorite Craters, Estonia Rebala - the easternmost outpost of the Nordic Bronze Culture**

Rebala is a landscape that was formed as a result of human activity during the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age on the north coast of Estonia. The Reserve was founded in 1979 on the eastern border of Tallinn with the aim of stopping the rapacious excavation of phosphorite (Kraut 1995). Fifteen villages and more than 300 archaeological monuments, mainly stone cist barrows and cup marked cult stones are exhibited in the area of approximately 25km<sup>2</sup> (pl. 12.1). The first remains of ancient fields in Estonia were discovered there, dating from the beginning of the Christian era. This area is the easternmost outpost in Europe of concentrations of stone cist barrows and cup marked cult-stones (Kraut 2000a).

In the centre of the reserve in Jõelähtme on the bank of a river emerging from under the earth there is a reconstructed burial site with 36 graves and a small museum and information centre. The group of 36 stone-cist graves (originally it was even larger) was excavated in the beginning of the 1980s (Kraut 1985). In comparison with other stone-cist graves in Estonia this group is rather exceptional. The number of graves is extraordinarily large (the average number of graves in one group is 5-6). The graves are densely located side by side, and in an Estonian context the grave goods were extraordinarily rich. Usually our stone-cist graves are very poor in grave goods, yet the Jõelähtme burials contained a number of bone decorative pins, bronze temple ornaments, amber beads and a group of bronze artefacts imported from Scandinavia including razors, buttons and pincers (Kraut 1985). The graves are dated to the Estonian Bronze Age periods four and five. Although no more graves of this period have been investigated in the area, we are dealing here with such an exceptional group of graves that, without doubt, the community who are buried there must have had much



Fig.12.5: Kaali Lake, Estonia, formed in a meteorite crater.

better contacts for obtaining or importing goods than the other communities in northern Estonia (Lang 1999).

A variety of monuments are protected within the nature reserve, along with many different types of heritage suitable for research work by archaeologists, historians and natural scientists. The Rebala Reserve provides an ideal opportunity for everyone to learn more about the ancient landscape and its location close to the capital and good roads, secure easy access and great possibilities for raising public interest (Rebala Muinsuskaitseala 1999; Kraut 2000a).

### **Kaali Meteorite Crater Field**

The Kaali Meteorite Crater Field is on Saaremaa, the largest island in Estonia. It is the site of the most recent giant meteorite to fall in a densely populated area. The meteorite, with a mass of 20-80t fell from the east at an angle of 45 degrees at a speed of 15-45km/sec. Passing through the atmosphere the meteorite broke into pieces at an altitude of 5-10km, falling to the Earth as a meteorite shower. As a result a 22m deep main crater with a diameter of 110m and at least eight smaller craters were formed. Its fall is dated by geologists to c.7600 Radio Carbon years B.P. c.6400-6200 cal. BC (Raukas *et al.* 1999).

In the Iron Age the crater was surrounded by a strong stonewall and was probably used as a place for water sacrifices. The bottom sediments of the Kaali Lake are

about 6m thick and are yet waiting for discoverers to unearth their secrets (fig. 12.5). Its fall has left clear traces not only on the landscape, but also in folklore (Edda, Kalevala) and written sources (Pytheas, Scandinavian sagas). It is known from written sources that local people regarded this lake as 'holy'. On the north-eastern part of the swell surrounding the main crater a fortified site was erected at the end of the Late Bronze Age (Lõugas 1992; 1996). This site was located at the distance of 7-10km from the Bronze Age seacoast where no water route was leading - so, the 'strategic position' of the Kaali differed remarkably from the other fortified sites. The surface area of Kaali fortified site is tens of times smaller than that of the other fortified sites, hence, the population who lived there had to be very small.

The oldest traces of human settlement date from the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, before the meteorite's fall, but it may be assumed that the island was already populated at the moment of this great impact. It is not known when people started to regard this crater and lake as holy, but most likely it happened rather soon after this event. At the time of the fortification, the level of groundwater was extremely low, the lake had dried up and peat, bushes and trees covered the bottom of the crater. It was not before the Roman Iron Age that the lake formed again (Lang 1999).

The fortified site of Kaali might have served as a centre of a relatively small settlement area: on the one hand, it

had some socio-political and economic importance (bronze casting and circulation); on the other hand, it definitely had some religious and cult function. The religious meaning of this sacred place extended remarkably farther than its political or economic impact (Lang 1999).

The aim of the Estonian project is to introduce and raise public awareness of the Kaali Crater Field and its surrounding cultural landscape. The formation of such a rare natural monument, its effect on the surrounding landscape and settlements, as well as the effect of human activities on the crater have created a unique cultural landscape, a micro region. Its preservation, research, maintenance and introduction to the public are of essential importance in the contexts of cultural history of the island of Saaremaa, of Estonia and of Europe more widely. Earlier archaeological and natural science surveys and the completed European Cultural Paths project all serve as the initial basis for the project (Kaali Meteoriidikraatrid Saaremaal 1999).

## Conclusion

Anation's cultural identity is based on its cultural heritage. Therefore it is essential to promote the public's understanding of cultural landscapes, their care and preservation. The European Cultural Paths project has proceeded successfully and according to the set aims it has:

- promoted presentation of the chosen areas' archaeology;
- confirmed the importance of the Bronze Age landscapes;
- made the Nordic Bronze Age culture more public in partner countries;
- brought along extra means for promoting archaeology, both from national resources and the EU RAPHAEL Project;
- established international contacts between archaeologists and cultural heritage managers from different countries and has given them the experience of international co-operation;
- enlivened scientific research work directly connected with the areas included in the project and more extensively on the subject of the Bronze Age;

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- raised local authorities' interest in heritage monuments and cultural landscapes and, simultaneously, in the European Union and its cultural co-operation;
- assisted in media coverage of the subject of cultural landscapes and archaeology;
- presented an opportunity for archaeologists and scientists to acquaint themselves with chosen areas, which for example was impossible for scientists from Eastern Europe during the Soviet period.

By the time the European Cultural Paths project finished in 1999 the aims set by the partners' contributions to the European Cultural Paths project, to communicate monuments of the Bronze Age and manmade landscapes to the public, as well as to create necessary conditions and funds for it, had been achieved. The project has advertised the historic link between different European countries, especially relations between Scandinavian countries, Germany and the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea from the Bronze Age up to the present day (Kraut 2000a).

European Cultural Paths focused mainly on monuments within the cultural landscape, and a larger new extension project has subsequently been established, with twelve partners in ten countries, spread far more widely across Europe. This, a Culture 2000 funded project called 'European Pathways to Cultural Landscapes', concentrates on the landscape itself, accepting the *European Landscape Convention* adopted in the year 2000 as its framework and follows the definition of landscape as stated in the convention (Ermischer 2000b; Whitmore 2001). The common philosophy and methodology of the new project (Fairclough & Darlington 2001) are based on the English method of Historic Landscape Characterisation (Fairclough 1999; Fairclough *et al.* 1999). Its products are defined by the Culture 2000 application: web-sites, leaflets, a book, exhibitions, pathways (physical or virtual), seminars between project members, staff exchanges, other conferences, lectures and academic papers.

Hopefully the experience of European Cultural Paths will help to create a general concept for future communication of cultural landscapes and prehistoric monuments within chronological and geographical frames, thus providing a model for corresponding European cultural co-operations.

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