



Late Viking Age burial place and ritual deposits at Lööne, Saaremaa

Marika Mägi

Tallinna Ülikool, humanitaarteaduste instituut, ajaloo, arheoloogia ja kunstiajaloo keskus (Tallinn University, School of Humanities, Institute of History, Archaeology and Art History), Uus-Sadama 5, 10120 Tallinn, Estonia; marika.magi.01@tlu.ee

In spring 2018 the National Heritage Board of Estonia (MA) received information about detector finds from a field near Lööne village, former Valjala parish on Saaremaa. Small-scale archaeological investigations were thereafter conducted in spring and summer 2018, resulting in several metal finds, some of them forming *in situ* find complexes. Archaeologists participating in these surface surveys were Marika Mägi from Tallinn University, Nele Kangert and Anu Kivirüüt, both from MA. The object was defined as a Late Viking Age and Later Iron Age (ca. 950–1200 AD) burial place that was almost totally destroyed by agricultural activities. The finds are stored in Saaremaa Museum (SM 10847).

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AROUND THE FIND PLACE

The finds were scattered over an elevated part of the landscape next to a road between the present Lööne and Jõelega villages. Jõelega is the former Lööne (Germ. *Köln*) manor that was first mentioned in written sources in 1489, when the Bishop of Ösel-Wiek enfeoffed a small *Cölle* manor, the former estate of Clawes Stedinge, to Hans Scher (Saaremaa 1934, 784). The manor had a central position in the middle of arable lands, about 500 m south-east of the find place, and it seems to have had a predecessor in late prehistory, as is indicated by some finds. From the area of the historical manor household, a penannular brooch (SM 9257) has come to light, and there are rumours about a grinding stone and a 9th-century coin found in the nearest vicinity of it (Mägi 2018). In addition, a deposit find has been mentioned in Loona manor near Valjala in the 1920s (Karu 1924, 121), which is not preserved. Since no manor with the name Loona is known in the Valjala parish, the notice probably refers to the Lööne manor.

However, a central position in the agricultural landscape also characterises the present Lööne village 300–400 m west of the find place, where no prehistoric finds have been uncovered so far. Although the agricultural landscape around Lööne and Jõelega points to approximately equal importance of these two places, Jõelega's status is emphasized by the finds mentioned above, suggesting that the people who were buried in the stone grave most likely lived where the later manor was situated. The stone grave was nevertheless between the two units and may have been used by both.

The elevation where the finds were uncovered is actually a low ridge starting from the road between Lööne and Jõelega villages and stretching towards NNE. During the second half of the 20th century, stones from a broader area have been gathered to the highest ground, where they now form a stone heap. About 70 m north of the heap there is a low and wet

hollow (measurements app. 100×30 m), which can already be seen on historical maps. The wet hollow, possibly a former spring or springs, may have played a role in the formation of the sacral landscape at the Lööne burial ground.

THE BURIAL GROUND

The soil around the stone heap contained stones; the area of the stone grave has presumably been about twice as large as the stone heap now. The finds collected with metal detector in the stony part of the field were in pieces and burnt, thus characteristic to other Saaremaa stone graves where cremations prevailed from the 10th century onwards. Most finds were scattered over the area due to agricultural activities that were carried out in the place of the former grave during several centuries. There are no grounds to believe, due to intensive ploughing in the area, that any of these finds was collected in its original location.

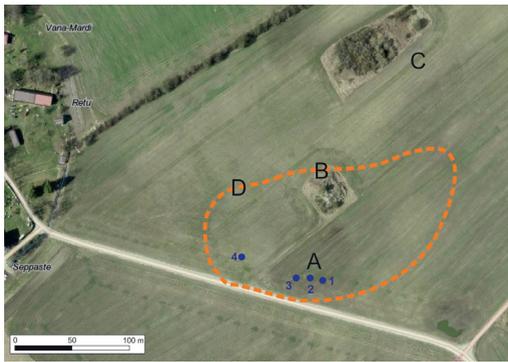


Fig. 1. The find place at Lööne. A – the area of dark soil, B – stone heap, C – low and wet area, D – the area where finds were uncovered. 1–4 – find complexes.

Jn 1. Lööne leiukoht. A – tumedama mullaga ala, B – kivi-hunnik, C – madal vesine ala, D – leidude levikuala. 1–4 – leiukompleksid.

Base map / Aluskaart: Estonian Land Board / Maa-amet; drawing / joonis: Marika Mägi

What makes the Lööne grave somewhat different from most other destroyed stone graves of Saaremaa was an area (measurements app. 80×50 m) between the road and the present stone heap, identified on the present-day orthographic map as darker soil (Fig. 1). The area seems to be characterised by a concentration of finds (Mägi 2018). There were other, fewer finds in the areas NE and NW of the dark soil, but not on the other side of the road or on the other side of the stone heap.

This area, up to 40–50 m from the road and indicated by darker soil, contained only a few smaller stones. The humus layer was up to 40 cm thick, and a thin, burnt layer with tiny charcoal pieces was recorded in the lowest part of it, right on top of natural sand (Kangert & Kivirüüt 2018; Mägi 2018). The charcoal was clearly the cause of the darker

colour of the soil in this particular area, which is visible until nowadays. There are data about three *in situ* artefact complexes at the darker area (complexes nos 1–3), and one right outside it. Detector finds from this area can be divided into two groups: broken artefacts without or with few traces of fire, and strongly burnt artefacts typical to stone graves. The latter may originate from the stone grave and had ended in the somewhat lower part of the field due to ploughing. The first ones may be components of other, but destroyed find complexes.

FIND COMPLEXES

Complexes no 1–3 were excavated by metal detectorists before the arrival of archaeologists. There are, however, descriptions of these finds, and their exact locations are more or less precisely known. All find complexes can be dated to the end of the 10th century or around 1000 AD. Only a few artefacts in the complexes had fire marks. Complexes no 1–3 consisted of artefacts that can be connected with men, while complex no 4 consisted of presumably female attributes.

Complex no 1 (Fig. 2) was found in the depth of 30 cm, in the sooty lowest layer of dark soil. Neither bones nor stones were recorded, and there were no signs of a pit. Two knives had been laid directly on the sandy ground and covered with a shield that had its inner side upwards. Only an iron shield-boss had survived of the shield, while its wooden parts had burnt or decayed. The boss had been used as a vessel for several broken or only partly represented artefacts: iron bits, three penannular brooches, a belt with metal fittings, and an iron cylindrical padlock. Kangert and Kivirüüt have reported that they later found some burnt bones in the vicinity of the find place (Kangert & Kivirüüt 2018), but whether they belonged to humans or were at all connected with the find complex is unknown.



Fig. 2. Artefacts from complex no 1. Not all fragments are shown.
Jn 2. Kompleksi nr 1 esemed. Kõiki fragmente pole näidatud.
 (SM 10847: 15, 13, 10, 12, 16, 15, 14, 9, 17, 4, 3, 2, 11, 5, 1, 6, 7, 8.)
 Photo / Foto: Marika Mägi

Complex no 2 (Fig. 3) was ca. 7 m west of the complex no 1, in the depth of app. 30 cm, and consisted of a seax, a big penannular brooch with funnel-shaped terminals, iron bits and a belt with metal fittings. The partly preserved seax was found in vertical position, other finds along it, and the bits on top of the others. The brooch was broken into two parts, and at least one strap-divider had been in fire. It is unknown whether the fire marks were caused by the same fire that had created all the sooty area, or were results of some specific ritual. All artefacts had probably been placed in a cylindrical vessel of some perishable material (see also Complex no 4), which had stood on the ground. The sandy natural soil began right under the find. As for the Complex no 1, some cremated bones, as well as tiny metal pieces, perhaps originating from the same belt fittings, were reported near the find place during later investigation.



Fig. 3. *Artefacts from complex no 2.*

Jn 3. *Kompleksi nr 2 esemed.*

(SM 10847:19, 20, 22, 21, 18.)

Photo / Foto: Marika Mägi

Finds of complex no 3 have not reached the archaeologists, neither are photographs of them available. The find had consisted of a big penannular brooch, a smaller penannular brooch, a spiral bronze chain and iron bits. All finds were, as in the other complexes, found together in the sooty lowest layer above natural sand, close to complexes no 1 and 2.

Complex no 4 (Fig. 4) was uncovered by archaeologists 50–70 m WNW of the other complexes, outside the clearly observable sooty area. A layer with tiny pieces of charcoal started here in the depth of 20 cm, but was clearly less intensive than near the other complexes. The finds began to appear in the depth of 40 cm. They had been gathered in a cylindrical vessel with an oval cross-section (app. 23 × 15 cm, height 30 cm), perhaps made of bark, which stood vertically in a pit dug into the sandy natural ground.

The find consisted of iron scissors, bits, pieces of a chain arrangement, several broken compound neck-rings, a chain divider, an end plaque of a chain arrangement, pieces of four bracelets, and a broken penannular brooch (Fig. 5). The scissors and pieces of neck-rings were in vertical or diagonal position, most of other things along them. The bits were placed on top of the find complex,

similarly to complexes no 2 and 3. The lower part of the vessel had probably been filled with some artefacts of perishable material, e.g. textiles or leather, since most of the chains and tiny bronze rings were recorded in the upper part of the find.

The compound neck-rings with an oval cross-section were widespread in Saaremaa, the Livic area and Semigallia, and dated to the 10th century or around 1000 AD (Mägi 2002, 107; Spirģis 2008, 274–275). The bracelets belonged to the types II: 3 and II: 4 and can be dated to the same time (Mägi-Lõugas 1995, 84–94). Several artefacts were broken or deformed, and some of them represented by parts. None of the artefacts had been in fire, and no bones were found near the find. It was probably a ritual deposit dedicated to a female.

DISCUSSION

Find complexes without cremation deposits, sometimes placed in or near burial grounds, are known in different places in Saaremaa, coastal Estonia and the Livic area (e.g. Šnore 1996, 114–115), as well as in Couronia (Griciuvienė 2009). The custom also appeared in other districts, but less frequently. As some examples, similar find deposits are recorded in Viltina Kāo-Matsi in Saaremaa (Mägi 2000; 2006), Keskvare and Kurese in West Estonia (Mandel 2003, 104–105, pl. LIV; 2017), Kõue in Harjumaa and Öötla in the other side of the wetland zone separating coastal Estonia from the rest of the country (Kurisoo 2014). Such artefact deposits in Estonia seem to characterise predominantly the Viking Age up to the middle of the 11th century, but some complexes, especially in inland Estonia, can also be dated to the 11th–12th century.



Fig. 4. Complex no 4 in situ.

Jn 4. Kompleks nr 4 in situ.

Photo / Foto: Marika Mägi



Fig. 5. Artefacts from complex no 4. Not all fragments are shown.

Jn 5. Kompleksi nr 4 esemed. Kõiki fragmente pole näidatud.

(SM 10847: 23, 24, 47, 43, 44, 45, 50, 48, 46, 25, 53, 35, 39, 30, 31, 32, 28, 52, 54, 20.)

Photo / Foto: Marika Mägi

As mentioned above, some detector finds in the area of the dark soil at Lööne that have not been in fire, may originate from other, similar complexes. The composition of these finds refers to the later half of the Viking Age as well. Several finds at Lööne represent artefact types that otherwise are rare in Saaremaa stone graves. It is especially true for type II bracelets that very seldom have been found in the mainly 11th–12th-century stone graves on the Estonian islands and have been dated to the 10th century, although they can occur until the beginning of the 11th century (Mägi-Lõugas 1995, 284–294). In the Livic area, type II bracelets have been found in Laukskola grave 39 that probably is a burial of a Saaremaa woman and can be dated to the second half of the 10th century, too (Zariņa 2006, fig. 181: 4). Somewhat similar bracelets are known from the Öötla find; they have been classified to type IV: 3 and dated most likely to the beginning of the 11th century. Type IV: 3 is, however, unusual and rare, and seems to be morphologically connected with bracelet types in Saaremaa (Mägi-Lõugas 1995, 299).

It is not exactly known how the Öötla artefacts were found, but it seems to have been a collection of finds, perhaps in some container of perishable material (Tvauri 2012, fig. 108). The find also contained neck-rings with open overlapping terminals that belonged to the same types as in the Kõue find. Such neck-rings are dated to the first half of the 11th century (Tvauri 2012, 158–159). However, the type seems to have quite a local character; whether such neck-rings also were used in the 10th century, is unknown due to the shortage of find complexes in Estonian material before the 11th century. The faceted end knobs that were characteristic for these neck-rings resemble similar terminals of Viking Age penannular brooches (Mägi-Lõugas 1994), thus suggesting the same date for the neck-rings.

Another somewhat unusual artefact type at Lööne is the end plaque of a chain arrangement. Four such plaques, some of them fragmentary, have been found at Lööne so far, one of them in Complex no 4. Similar end plaques were widespread in coastal Estonia, Livic area and northern Couronia, but some specimens are also known from eastern Estonia (Kiudsoo 2016, 182–188). These plaques have been reconstructed as balances of the chain arrangement on the back of the body (Selirand 1974, 151; Kurisoo 2014; Kiudsoo 2016, 184–186). However, in all cases when arrangements with end plaques have been found in inhumation graves, they have decorated the front part of the bearer (Zariņa 2006, fig. 196: 1, 189: 2); actually, no chain arrangements of any sort (e.g. in Livic graves) have been recorded reaching as far as below the back of the deceased so far. No real arguments have been presented for the position of the aforementioned plaque in the back side, which is also unlikely for practical reasons (problems to fix the chains on shoulders). The Baltic Finnic women also tended to wear richly decorated headsets hanging down along the back, at least in the 12th–13th century and later (see e.g. Mägi *et al.*, this volume), which had then hidden the end plaque, if it really had decorated the back side of the body.

The end plaques of chain arrangements were also found in the above described find complexes of Öötla and Kõue. Some similar plaques in Livic inhumation burials are dated to the period 950–1050, but some others as late as the second half of the 11th and the first half of the 12th century (Zariņa 2006, 363; Spirģis 2008, 427). However, it is difficult, considering other finds in these particular burials, to date them to a later period than the mid-11th century. The Öötla find can be dated to the beginning of the 11th century or, if the neck-rings belong to earlier times, to the 10th century. Complex no 4 at Lööne belongs to the same time (see above). Some archaeologists believe that the Kõue complex was hidden in the second half of the 11th or the first half of the 12th century (Kurisoo 2014), although all its datable artefacts (neck-rings, chain holders) refer to the time around 1000 AD, and the dates of the other finds

are unknown or very broad. Such a late date to the otherwise similar find as the others mentioned in this text probably needs further justification.

Tuuli Kurisoo has described other deposit finds that she compared with the Kõue find (Kurisoo 2014). Most of them were buried in settlements, while Käo-Matsi, Keskvere and Kurese deposits had been hidden in a burial ground. Lööne find complexes were recorded in a sooty area right next to a stone grave as well. All described complexes probably had a ritual character and, as indicated by the detector finds, there may have been other, similar complexes. The sooty layer refers to a fire of wooden buildings or constructions that had burnt down, while the lack of stones excludes the interpretation of the site as a stone grave similar to other, mainly 11th–12th-century graves in Saaremaa.

Detailed interpretation of the site remains for the future, since planned trial excavations at the sooty layer were hindered by the extraordinary dry summer in 2018 and discontinued later. The find complexes from the second half of the Viking Age, which are rare in Estonian archaeological evidence, are however extraordinarily valuable for artefact studies, as well as for better understanding of ritual behaviour in the 10th – early 11th centuries.

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HILISVIIKINGIAEGNE KALMEKOHT JA RITUAALSED ESEMEKOGUMID SAAREMAAL LÖÖNES

Marika Mägi

2018. aasta kevadel jõudis Muinsuskaitseametis teave leidude kohta Lööne küla lähistel (endine Valjala vald) Saaremaal. Kohta kontrolliti kolmel korral sama aasta kevadel ja suvel. Saadi hulgaliselt esemeid, mis pärinevad põlluks tehtud 10.–12. sajandi kivikalme, kuid hangiti ka teavet kolme *in situ* säilinud leiukompleksi kohta 10. sajandi teisest poolest või aasta 1000. ümbrusest. Neljas taoline kompleks õnnestus arheoloogidel ise välja kaevata. Leide säilitatakse Saaremaa Muuseumis (SM 10847).

Leiuukoht paikneb endise Lööne mõisa (praegu Jõelega küla) ja Lööne küla vahelisel alal kõrgemal seljandikul. Kivikalme on maaparanduse käigus lükatud kokku kivihunnikuks, mille ümbruses praeguses põllus leidub veel väiksemaid kive. Umbes 70 m eemale jääb niiske lohk, tõenäoliselt kunagine allika või allikate koht. Tee ja kivihunniku vahelisel alal on põllus jälgitav tumedam laik mõõtmatega 80 × 50 m (jn 1), kust saadi hulgaliselt leide. Selle tumedama ala teepoolses osas puuduvad põllus kivid ning u 30 cm sügavusel künnikihi alumises osas on kõikjal jälgitav

tahmane, väikeste sõetükikestega kiht. Selle all on omakorda looduslik liiv.

Metallidetektoriga saadud leiud võib jagada kahte kategooriasse. Suurem osa esindab tüüpilisi 11.–12. sajandi kivikalme sulanud ja katkisi esemekatkeid. Neid leidis eeskätt kivihunniku ümbruses. Sellised leiud polnud oma esialgsel kohal, vaid küntud mööda põldu laiali, sattudes seeläbi ilmselt ka tahmasele alale, mille suunas maapind kergelt laskus. Osa leitud esemetest, peamiselt eespool mainitud tahmasel alalt saadud, oli aga põletamata, kuigi sageli katkised. Võib oletada, et need pärinesid leiukompleksidest, mis sarnanesid neljale teadaolevale kogumile.

Leiu kogumid 1–3 koosnesid 10. sajandi lõpuossa või 1000. aasta paiku dateeritavatest esemetest, mida võiks seostada eelkõige mehega. Kogum nr 4 kuulus samasse aega, kuid sisaldas naisega seotud asju.

Kogum nr 1 (jn 2) leiti 30 cm sügavusel, vaheult loodusliku liivakihi peal olnud sõesest kihist. Kunagisest sissekaevest väidetavalt jälgiti polnud ning leidjad ei täheldanud leiu juures ka luid. Leiu koha

hilisemal ülevalt registreeriti leiu läheduses mõnevõrra siiski ka põlenud luid, kuid pole teada, kas need kuulusid inimesele või kas need olid esemekogumiga seotud. Kunagise maapinna peale oli asetatud kaks nuga, nende kohale aga kilp, sisekülj ülespoole. Kilbikupla sees olid suitsed, kolme hoburaudsõle, metallkaunistustega vöö ning rauast suruluku katked.

Kogum nr 2 (jn 3) leiti eelmisest u 7 m kauguselt, samuti 30 cm sügavuselt sõese kihi seest vahetult liiva pealt. See koosnes vertikaalses asendis olevast võitlusnoast ning esemekatketest (suur hoburaudsõlg, vöö metallosad) selle kõrval. Kõige peal olid hunnikus suitsed. Asjad olid ilmselt olnud mingi silinderja kõdunevast materjalist anuma sees. Vähemalt üks ese oli põlemisjälgedega. Kogumi nr 3 leiud arheoloogideni ei jõudnud, kuid see leid olevat koosnenud ühest suuremast ja ühest väiksemast hoburaudsõlest, spiraalidest ja suitsetest, mis olevat paiknenud pinnases sarnaselt eelnevalt kirjeldatud kogumitele.

Kogum nr 4 paiknes ülejäänutest 50–70 m eemal, tahmasest laigust väljapool. Kuigi ka selle ümbruses tuvastati väikesi sõetükikesi, oli nimetatud kiht siin eelnevast hoopis vähem intensiivne. Leiud olid pandud mingi ovaalse põhjaga silinderja torbiku sisse ning asetatud looduslikku liivakihti kaevatud auku (jn 4). Kõige peal olid kobaras suitsed, seejärel verti-

kaalses asendis käärid, otsad allapoole. Käärde kõrvalt leiti hulgaliselt kettide katkeid ja muid rinnakee osi, kaasa arvatud üks otsaplaat. Lisaks tulid välja mitme ovaalse ristlõikega liitkaelavõru osad, neli katkist käevõru ja hoburaudsõlg (jn 5).

Ilma luudeta leiukogumeid on saadud mitmetest kohtadest Saaremaalt, Ranniku-Eestist, liivlaste alalt ja Kuramaalt. Osa sellistest on teada kalmetest (nt Käo-Matsi, Keskvere), teine osa aga arvatavatest asulakohtadest (nt Kõue). Enamiku nimetatud leiukogumitest Eestis võiks dateerida viikingiaega, kuigi on teada ka hilisemaid taolisi leide. Lööne leiukogumite veidi varasemale dateeringule võrreldes enamiku Saaremaa kivivarekalmetega viitavad mõned neis leidunud esemetüübid, näiteks II tüübi käevõrud või rinnakee otsaplaat, mis tavaliselt on 11.–12. sajandisse kuuluvates kivikalmetes haruldased. Eesti leiuaineses veelgi haruldasemad on viikingiaegsed suletud leiukompleksid, mis on eriti olulised, sest aitavad kaasa kohalike esemetüüpide dateerimisele. Tahmane, ilma kivideta laik ning omaaegsele maapinnale või väikesesse auku asetatud katkiste esemete kogumid Saaremaale tavapärase põletusmatustega kivivarekalme vahetus läheduses heidavad valgust viikingiaegsele rituaalsele käitumisele, millest on Eestis võrdlemisi vähe teada.