



The Salme Ship Burials: Two Eighth-Century Mass Graves on Saaremaa Island, Estonia

Fieldwork and Catalogue

Editors:

Lembi Lõugas

lembi.lougas@tlu.ee

and

Heidi Luik

heidi.luik@tlu.ee

Published by:

Archaeological Research
Collection, Tallinn University,
Estonia



In 2008 and 2010, two ship burials were discovered in the borough of Salme on Saaremaa island, Estonia, together with artefacts dating them to the (Pre-)Viking Age. The discovery was astounding, as no Viking ship has ever been found with so many burials: the remains of seven warriors were uncovered in the Salme I ship and as many as 34 in the Salme II ship. A rich assortment of items had been placed in their graves, including elaborate armaments, such as swords and shields, everyday utensils, such as knives, whetstones, and combs, as well as playing pieces and dice, mostly of whale bone, for the Scandinavian game called *Hnefatafl*, and much more. The grave contributions also included dogs and hunting hawks, not to mention the animal parts brought along as provisions. Ship burials as such and likewise most of the finds recovered at Salme are not characteristic of Saaremaa at the time, nor of the wider Estonian area. Rather, they indicate the origin of the warriors buried here – from Scandinavia, probably Central Sweden.

The Salme burial complex has provided invaluable research data on the physical condition, genetic origin, and causes of death of these people, as well as material for the study of Viking burial customs, social background, and shipbuilding. This book, authored by a team of nine specialists, gives an overview of the fieldwork conducted at Salme, the find material, and dating issues. The catalogue contains detailed lists of finds and plates of drawings and photos. Together, the striking finds and excavated structures constitute an excellent source of information for reconstructing a dramatic event that occurred in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea in the eighth century AD.

Look at the [Preface and Contents](#) of the book.

The book has arrived on sale in the bookstores in Estonia ([Rahva Raamat](#), [Krisostomus](#)) and the Tallinn University Information Center store (incl. [e-store](#)).

E-store page is in Estonian. If you need any assistance or want to order books on the basis of an invoice, write to: lembilgs@tlu.ee