



Iron Age and medieval cemetery at the former Soe inn in Võrumaa, south-eastern Estonia

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INTRODUCTION

The cemetery near the former Soe inn at historical Vagula village, according to the present-day administrative division in Järvere village, Võrumaa County (Fig. 1), is first recorded in the archaeological description of Urvaste parish as a burial site with bone finds from the time of the ‘Swedish War’ (Laurson 1927, 13–14). It is located at the edge of an extensive *ca.* 5 m high plateau which begins *ca.* 50 m south of the inn, south of the road which connects the Võru–Viljandi road via Osula, Kärghula and Kooraste with Otepää (Fig. 2). The site lies at the edge of a pine forest area called Soepalo. The wood was clear-cut in around 2005, but the area is getting forested again.

The cemetery was broadly known among the locals and is also not forgotten nowadays. In the 1970s a board with the text *Muistne Eesti Toonela* (‘Ancient Estonian World Beyond’) was put up there. Local lore recorded in 1939 expresses fear of the site, and even somewhat demonic atmosphere.¹ Legends tell us about meeting devilish beings, flights in a coffin from the cemetery’s bone chamber to hell, a treasure ward who was counting money there for 700 years. A story describes human bones flying and zooming in the air whereby one of them hid

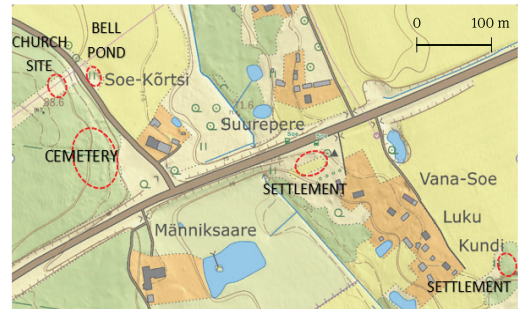


Fig. 1. Archaeological monuments in historical Vagula village: the cemetery, church site, ‘Bell pond’ and settlement sites.

Jn 1. Ajaloolise Vagula küla muistised: kalmistu, kirikuase, Kellalomp (Kellalump) ja asulakohad.

Base map / Alusplaan: Estonian Land Board / Maa-amet



Fig. 2. The cemetery at Soe inn on the edge of the hill side plateau.

Jn 2. Kalmistu Soe kõrtsi vastas mäeserval.

Photo / Foto: Kati Soon

¹ ERA II 245, 167/177 (6–8) < Urvaste khk, Alaküla, Mäe-Pardsi – I. Eisen < Aleksander Kala (77) et al. (1939).



Fig. 3. The church site and the 'Bell pond'.

Jn 3. Kirikuase ja Kellalomp.

Photo / Foto: Kati Soon

itself in a passer's-by pocket. Going home, the man fell asleep and was woken up by a noise made by a large crowd of bones flying around the house and claiming 'Give it back!' Thereafter the bone jumped out of the pocket, joined the others and the long row of flying bones returned to the cemetery.² The legend reflects the archaic animatistic world perception where also bones can act as living beings. The broader background is a popular concept, still vivid in southern Estonia, that old cemeteries are special and sacred places (Valk 1995).

Local lore also tells about a roadside church site on top of a high hill *ca.* 100 m north-west of the Soe inn, and a round pond called 'Bell pond' (Est. *Kellalomp*) near it on the north-eastern side of the road (Figs 1, 3) – overgrown from the edges, presently of some 5–8 m in diameter. The name comes from a legend, widespread in Võrumaa, that when the local church was destroyed, its bells were sunk or fell into a water body. Such legends, probably, relate to major rural chapels or assistant churches of the Catholic period. The barn and cattle house of Piho farm were told to have been built of the church stones whereby not all of them were used, according to the story.³ Stories about the pond vary but have a common core, bound with the tradition of drowning, i.e. execution. According to lore, 'all people' who misbehaved in relation to the church were drowned there, and sometimes even small children were cast into the pond.⁴ In 2017, it was told that local village women used to drown newborn children with evident physical disabilities there.

As the exact burial area in the large forest was unknown, the cemetery was not under state protection. Its northern edge was partly damaged by a gravel pit in the late 1970s and early 1980s, also human bones were found there. In 2015, the National Heritage Board was informed about illegal detector hunting in the area and there is information about finding a Viking Age axe and a crossbow brooch from the cemetery. During the archaeological field inventory of the area in 2015, small fire-cracked stones, tiny cremated and unburnt bone fragments and a sherd of a hand-made clay vessel (TÜ 2587) were found from the loose sand of the small forest road just opposite Soe inn, as well as from the road profile.

As the forest road was used by heavy vehicles, the University of Tartu undertook rescue excavations there in 2017 (finds: TÜ 2671: 1–182), to avoid further damage. The main trench (9 × 3 m) was made on the road, on the upper part of the slope with sand open for erosion (Fig. 4). The east–west oriented trench was located at the distance of 11–20 m from the deepest place in the depression at the foot of the slope. The aim of the rescue excavations was to dig until the depth of 30 cm, to prevent further impact of wheels and erosion. The upper, i.e. western, 5 m long part of the trench was investigated until that depth. As turf had preserved on the northern and southern side of its lower, eastern half and the ground was strongly compressed by the wheels, these parts of the trench were not excavated. Digging continued here only in the middle area with loose sand (4 × 1 m). As the sand was fully clean and intact

² ERA II 245, 174/5 (7) (1939).

³ ERA II 245, 167/73 (6) (1939).

⁴ See footnote no. 2.

in the depth of 20 cm, the work did not go further. The second trench (2 m²) was made in the eastern profile of the road, ca. 35 m from the edge of the plateau, to study the black cultural layer with cremains and fire-cracked stones. Archaeological excavations were assisted by metal detector investigations in the cemetery area. Those were performed by Aleksandr Kotkin from the history club 'Kamerad'.

AREAS WITH CREMATION BURIALS

The oldest, prehistoric burial sites on the plateau at Soe inn are three separate areas with cremains: in addition to the site with burnt stones and bone fragments noted above, two others were found in the vicinity by Andres Vindi (TÜ).

The first area with cremation burials, cut by the forest road, provided most information about prehistoric cremations. The stony area was of irregularly triangular shape, with maximal measures of ca. 45 × 20 metres. Small fire-cracked stones with the diameter of mostly up to 10–12 (15) cm could be observed in sparse assemblages (Fig. 5) in the northern profile of the road until the end of the second trench. Their concentration was uneven, sporadically of higher or smaller density. The cultural layer consisted of 3–5 cm thick dark soil with dispersed cremated bone fragments. Close to the road profile it was greatly disturbed by a recent looter who had used a metal detector.

The cultural layer from the south-eastern edge of the burial area was studied in the north-western part of trench 1, however, in secondary context – it had fallen down from the high profile of the road. The dark sand contained dispersed, burnt and fire-cracked stones, calcined bone fragments and pottery sherds. From that part of the trench the total of 261 predominantly tiny fragments of hand-made pottery, mostly of reddish colour (Fig. 6: 1–12), several of them from fine vessels with thin walls, was found. The finds included also some rim fragments with simple upright profile (Fig. 6: 1–4). About 15 sherds with textile impressions (Fig. 6: 5–8) (ca. 6%) and a 3th–4th century glass bead with gold foil (Fig. 7: 3) indicate the use of the cemetery in the Roman Iron Age – such pottery and beads were common in south-eastern Estonia in that time (Laul 2001,



Fig. 4. Trench 1 on the cemetery at Soe inn on the forest road dug into the slope.

Jn 4. Kaevand I Soe kõrtsi kalmistul, nõlva süvendatud metsateel.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk



Fig. 5. Looted cultural layer of Iron Age cremation cemetery at the road profile.

Jn 5. Muinasaegse põletuskalme rüüstatud kultuurkiht teepervel.

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

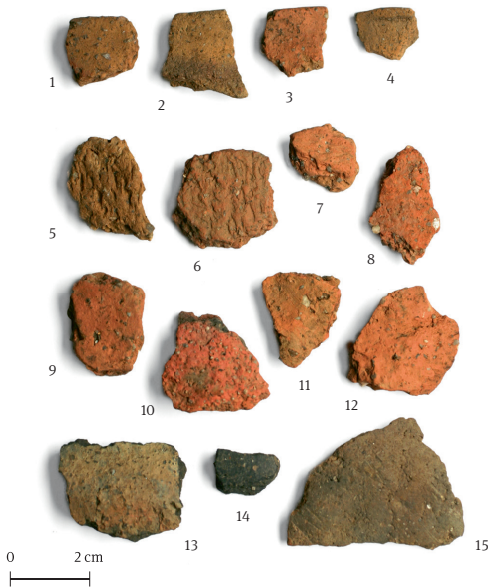


Fig. 6. Pottery from the cemetery at Soe inn. 1–4 – rim fragments, 5–8 – pottery with textile impressions, 9–12 – typical wall fragments, 13, 15 – pottery with grey surface, 14 – pottery with black polished surface.

Jn 6. Savinõukilde Soe kõrtsi kalmelt. 1–4 – servatükid, 5–8 – tekstiilkeraamika, 9–12 – tüüpilised küljetükid, 13, 15 – halli pinnaga keraamika, 14 – kiilapinnaline keraamika.

(TÜ 2671: 33, 132, 84, 6, 7, 95, 45, 107, 65, 54, 81, 48, 160, 153, 34.)

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk



Fig. 7. Finds from cremation graves from the cemetery at Soe inn. 1 – fragment of flat bracelet or spiral ring with broad middle coil, 2 – fragment of spiral ring, 3 – glass bead with gold foil, 4 – fragment of ring with spiral ends, 5, 6 – burnt bracelet fragments.

Jn 7. Põletusmatustest pärit leide Soe kalmistult. 1 – käevõru või laieneva spiraalsõrmuse katke, 2 – spiraalsõrmuse katke, 3 – kuldfooliumiga klaashelmes, 4 – prillspiraalsõrmuse katke, 5, 6 – põlenud käevõrude katked.

(TÜ 2671: 18, 63, 86, 119, 173, 176.)

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

137, 168–173). Pottery fragments of dark grey or light brown surface (Fig. 6: 13, 15), probably of later origin, were rare. A fragment of a black polished vessel (Fig. 6: 14) refers to the Viking Age.

From trench 1 also 602 cremated bone fragments (313 g) were collected by sieving on 4–5 mm eye diameter meshes. 88.5% of them (measured in weight) came from the uppermost 10 cm, 6.2% from the second and 4.1% from the third technical layer. The colour of the cremains varied strongly: grey and brown pieces predominated, but also light grey, calcined white and black fragments occurred.

In addition, the eroded soil yielded some tiny remains of cremated, melt bronze items. A small fragment of a deliberately broken bracelet or a spiral ring with a broad middle coil (Fig. 7: 1) indicates burials in the final stage of the Iron Age – 12th or early 13th century. Two other fragments may also date from that time: a piece of a possible spiral finger-ring of round section (: 94) and part of a ring with four spiral endings (Fig. 7: 4) (Selirand 1974, 174, pl. XL: 4). The date of another fragment of a spiral ring (Fig. 7: 2) is not determined.

In the second trench (1 × 2 m) the soil, hand-sieved by using 1.5–2 mm eye meshes, contained 810 small fragments of calcined bones (199.3 g in total), and a tiny sherd of a handmade vessel. Most of the bones (81.8% of their weight) were unearthed from the upper 10 cm, predominantly from the dark 3–5 cm thick top soil. Their colour varied and did not differ from that of the bones in trench 1. The dark top soil was followed by intact fine yellow sand.

Also two tiny fragments of strongly melt bronze items may be connected with the first area of cremations (: 171–172) and a burnt, slightly melted bracelet fragment (Fig. 7: 5), which were found from the road and its profile not far from trench 2 by using a metal detector.

The second area with cremations (*ca.* 20 × 15 m) could be distinguished by stones similar to those in the first one, partly visible on the ground. From that area an assemblage of finds – two fully melt bronze fragments (: 177), a burnt bracelet fragment (Fig. 7: 6) and an ethnographic, probably 19th-century belt buckle (: 178), discarded by a looter, were found. Evidently, these artefacts had been considered to be of no market or collection value. In a place where the thin top soil had been removed either by the looter or a wild boar, rain had washed out an assemblage of 213 cremated bone fragments (Fig. 8; 56.1 grams in total). These bones were of homogeneous cremation and light grey colour.

The third area with cremations of an irregularly oval shape (*ca.* 20 × 10–15 m) was located in the area where forest plough had turned around soil for new trees to be planted. The sandy soil, turned upside down and not fully covered with vegetation yet, contained rare tiny calcined cremation remains. Here, differently from the two other areas, no stones were discovered. The facts that no traces of detector looting were found from the area, and new detector investigations gave negative results, enable to suggest the lack of metal artefacts in that burial area.



Fig. 8. Assemblage of cremains on the second cremation area.

Jn 8. Põlenud luude kogum II kalmel.
Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

AREA OF MEDIEVAL INHUMATIONS

In trench 1 the turf had greatly been removed by car wheels and the sand was open for erosion. Within the depth of 30 cm ten burials were revealed, and six of them were excavated (Figs 4, 9). Four graves, as not threatened by vehicles and erosion, were not opened: most of burial no. 7 (except for skull fragments) remained under well-preserved roots and a stump of a tree (see Fig. 4). Only parts of two skeletons (nos 8, 9) appeared in the profile; from no. 10 barely the top of the skull was unearthed in the bottom of the trench.

As the road had been deeply cut into the slope of the plateau, the first two burials (nos 1, 2) came to light in the depth of 5 cm already. In the depth of 20 cm the bones of five skeletons appeared in the upper part of the trench (3 × 5 m). As the trench was located in the road area, the original depth of the graves could not be determined, but, judging by the profile, it had been *ca.* 70–90 cm. However, graves continued also deeper.

All the skeletons, with skulls crashed by truck wheels, were poorly preserved (Fig. 9). The position of both hands could be determined in four cases and it was always asymmetrical. Hands were located in the chest and pelvic region, in one case (no. 2) the right hand was straight alongside the body.



Fig. 9. Burials no. 1 and 5 with opposed orientation.

Jn 9. Vastandoriatsiooniuga matused nr 1 ja 5.
Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk



Fig. 10. Finds from inhumation burials. 1, 3 – penannular brooches, 2 – spiral ring, 4, 5 – knives. 1, 4 – burial no. 3; 3, 5 – burial no. 5.

Jn 10. Leide laibamatuste juurest. 1, 3 – hoburaudsõled, 2 – spiraalsõrmus, 4, 5 – noad. 1, 4 – matus 3; 3, 5 – matus 5.

(TÜ 2671: 165, 110, 168, 166, 169.)

Photo / Foto: Heiki Valk

Burial no. 1 (woman, orientation 90°) had remains of a bronze artefact, probably, of a very thin flat round brooch (: 26) on the left side of the chest and fragments of an iron needle (: 26) left of the neck. Probably, a *scherf* of Bartholomaeus Sawijerwe (1441–1459)⁵ which was found in disturbed sand *ca.* 5 cm higher than the left shoulder of the burial belongs also to this grave.

Burial no. 2 (woman, orientation 80°) had remains of a knife beside the left upper arm.

Burial no. 3 (man, orientation 300°) was only partly preserved, the bones of the left part of the body were missing, destroyed by a later grave. On the right side of the upper part of the chest, there was a big penannular brooch (Fig. 10: 1) with some white linen textile remains on its arch. Supporting on the backbone, higher than the pelvic bones there was an iron knife (Fig. 10: 4), with its

tip towards the toes of the left foot. From the left scapula poorly preserved remains of a small, almost decomposed iron artefact (: 167) were found. In disturbed soil above the bones, probably in the grave pit, there was a penny of Tartu bishop Hermann II Wesel (1552–1558) (: 148).

Burial no. 4 (juvenile, orientation 70°) was represented by leg bones only. Possibly, some of its remains may have preserved under the large tree stump.

Burial no. 5 (male, 40+ years; orientation 250°) had a small 16th–17th cc. penannular brooch (Fig. 10: 3) with rolled ends on the left part of the chest. Close to it was a knife with a flat shaft (Fig. 10: 5) parallel to the right arm which was bent to the upper part of the chest.

From burial no. 6 (juvenile, 12 years ± 30 months; orientation 240°) only a fragmented skull and some upper ribs had preserved; the rest was destroyed by a later grave pit.

The disturbed sand of the trench contained a spiral ring, probably from the 16th or 17th century (Fig. 10: 2), a knife fragment (: 156), an iron needle (: 157) and five coins: a penny of Livonian Order, minted in Tallinn in *ca.* 1430–1465 (?) (: 29), two pennies of the Livonian Order minted in Riga by Wolter von Plettenberg in 1495–1535 (: 140, 150), a penny of Tartu bishop Hermann II Wesel (1552–1558) from 1555 (: 148), and a Rzeczpospolita Schilling of Sigismund II August, minted in Dole in 1572 (: 150). A schilling of Erik XIV (: 174), found at the distance of *ca.* 10 m from the trench by using a metal detector, might also be from the cemetery context. Soil from trench 1 contained also some uncremated animal bones, including three teeth of sheep/goat, all from different contexts.

HUMAN REMAINS

The bones of the ten discovered skeletons, either completely or partly unearthed, were of poor preservation, disintegrated due to the acidic sandy soil, and represented in most cases

⁵ Coins identified by Mauri Kiudsoo (TLÜ AT).

only by larger long bones and fragmented skulls. Similar situations have been documented in other burials from South-Estonian rural cemeteries, e.g. Siksälä (Malve 2014), and Rautina Niklusmägi village cemeteries (Valk *et al.* 2013), as well as Hargla old parish cemetery (Malve *et al.* 2012). Some of the skeletons were damaged by later burials.

Among the ten skeletons there were eight adults and two subadults (Table 1).⁶ In the case of three adults, it was possible to determine the stature. Of all the pathologies, dental pathologies such as dental calculus, dental caries, and periapical lesions were most common. Joints of the upper and lower extremities presented osteoarthritis and vertebral column showed signs of spondylosis and spondyloarthritis. The left parietal bone of burial no. 5 (adult male) had traces of a healed depressed trauma (Fig. 11).

In addition, 727 uncremated bones or bone fragments belonging to burials damaged by later graves or earthworks were collected during the fieldwork. On the commingled bones the prevalent pathology was also dental calculus.



Fig. 11. Healed depressed fracture on the left parietal bone of an adult male (burial no. 5).

Jn 11. Paranenud lohukujuline trauma täiskasvanud mehe (matus 5) vasakul kiiruluul.

Photo / Foto: Martin Malve

Table 1. Osteological age, sex and pathologies of the recorded skeletons from Soe rural cemetery.

Tabel 1. Soe külakalmistult leitud luustike osteoloogiline vanus, sugu ja patoloogiad.

Compiled by / Koostanud: Martin Malve

Burial no. / Matus nr	Sex / Sugu	Age / Vanus	Pathologies / Patoloogiad	Stature / Kehakasv
1	♀	20–25 y / a	-	158.6 ± 3.72 cm
2	♀	40–45 y / a	Osteoarthritis on hip and knee joints. Teeth: slight dental calculus; remarkable alveolar reduction; periapical lesions; <i>ante mortem</i> lost teeth; caries; enamel hypoplasia.	149.6 ± 3.72 cm
3	♂	25–35 y / a	Teeth: caries; enamel hypoplasia.	162.8 ± 3.27 cm
4	?	> 14 y / a	-	-
5	♂	40+ y / a	Healed depressed fracture on the left parietal bone (15.83 × 40.26 mm); spondylosis; spondyloarthritis; osteoarthritis on hip joints. Teeth: periapical lesions; <i>ante mortem</i> lost teeth; caries.	-
6	?	12 y / a ± 30 m / k	Teeth: slight dental calculus; enamel hypoplasia.	-
7	♂	Adult / Täiskasvanu	-	-
8	?	Adult / Täiskasvanu	-	-
9	?	Adult / Täiskasvanu	-	-
10	♀	Adult / Täiskasvanu	-	-

⁶ The sex of the burials was determined according to the morphological traits on the pelvis and cranium (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994, 16–20), the maximum length of the long bones (Garmus & Jankauskas 1993, 6–8) and tarsal bones (Garmus 1996, 2). The age at death was determined according to wearing of teeth (Brothwell 1981, 72) and age caused changes on the limb joints (Ubelaker 1989, 84–87). The age of subadults was determined by examining the development and eruption of teeth (Ubelaker 1989, 63) and the epiphyseal fusion (Schaefer *et al.* 2009). Pathological conditions were identified with the aid of Ortner & Putschar (1985) and Roberts & Manchester (2012). On teeth the degree of dental calculus and alveolar reduction was estimated (Brothwell 1981, 155 and fig. 6.14 a, b). Stature was calculated according to the formula of Trotter and Gleser (Trotter 1970) using measurements of the femuræ.

DISCUSSION

The cemetery at Soe inn relates to the historical Vagula village where two settlement sites have been archaeologically located (Fig. 1). The earlier of them, where sherds of hand-made pottery (TÜ 1588) have been collected, lies *ca.* 450 m south-east of the cemetery. The second, a later settlement site 200 m east of the cemetery contained wheel-thrown pottery from the 11th/12th–13th until the 17th century (TÜ 796). From the edge of the cemetery plateau, if deforested, a broad view opens to both settlement sites. In 1638, there were only two farms in Vagula village (Liivimaa 1638, 133) which indirectly indicates large-scale population losses during the Livonian War (1558–1583) and the Swedish-Polish wars (1600–1625).

Data about the cremation cemetery remained scanty, as the site had been thoroughly looted by illegal metal detecting. The latest looting, evinced by fresh detector pits, had taken place not more than some weeks prior to the excavation, boosted possibly by information about the forthcoming summer excavations published in the daily newspaper *Postimees* (Mihelson 2017).

Archaeological record gives evidence of cremains scattered on the ground, and sparse and irregular stone settings of rather small stones. Probably, reflections of the same situation can also be found in the folklore archives. It is noted that sometimes local people came across a road (or street) paved with quite small stones, found at the depth of 2–3 inches or two feet (Laurson 1927, 13/14) while digging; the depth was estimated differently in different cases.⁷ A note that the ‘street’ was covered with a few inches of soil⁸ fully corresponds with archaeological reality. Judging by the folklore notes, the stone setting may have been denser and more compact in some parts of the cemetery.

The earliest, Roman Iron Age stage of the cemetery at Soe inn is atypical for south-eastern Estonia of that time: then *tarand*-graves, made of big rocks were common in the region (Laul 2001, 27–86), the closest being at the distance of 6.4 km in Raiste. The exceptional character of Soe cemetery, i.e. the lack of large rocks enables us to interpret it also as a cremation place, where also a part of cremains may have remained on the ground, but in that case the question remains: where was the cemetery? It is possible that bigger stones were removed for the construction of Soe inn in the 19th century, but at least in the area of road profile the thin dark cultural layer with cremains seems to have been undisturbed until the latest detector lootings.

The cemetery at Soe inn is exceptional also for its long-term use. Hints of a crossbow brooch and a Viking Age axe (although they may also relate, respectively, to the late Roman period and to the 11th–12th centuries), as well as the Viking Age sherd with polished surface (Fig. 6: 14) refer to continuity from the Roman Iron Age to the Late Iron Age and the following medieval period.

As for continuity, also unverified data about big oblong barrows (Laurson 1927, 14) in Mustja palo forest – there is no definite border with Soepalo forest – cannot be neglected. Folklore about round Swedish and oblong Russian graves, not far from each other (Laurson 1927, 13/14), refers to barrows from the second half of the 1st millennium AD, most typical for the eastern part of south-eastern Estonia at that time (Aun 1992, 85–137). Another text describes barrows ‘deep in the forest’ in a triangle between three roads: 1) from Osula to Soe

⁷ Information from the same person was recorded also in 1939 (ERA II 259, 290 (1) < Urvaste khk, Alaküla, Mäe-Pardsi farm < Tati farm – E. Kirss < Aleksander Kala, born in 1864 (1939). The lore also notes a staircase made of big stones leading up to the hill (or plateau) (ERA II 245, 167/73 (6) (1939)).

⁸ See footnote no. 1.

inn, 2) from Soe to Järvere manor and 3) from Piho farm to Järvere manor (Laurson 1927, 14). As Soe cemetery lies at the edge of the forest, the text must refer, however, to a different burial site not far away. The remotest points within this triangle or roads, which could be described as 'deep in the forest', lie at the distance of *ca.* 1 km from trench 1. If these barrows really exist(ed), they might be part of the same large-scale cemetery or sacral area.

Especially noteworthy is the third area of cremation burials – seemingly dispersed unfurnished cremations below plough level. Although flat pit graves may have preceded barrows in the barrow cemeteries noted above (Aun 1992, 115–116; Lillak 2008, 30–31), and there are data about flat cremations in the surroundings of that type of barrows from Plyussa region east of Lake Peipsi,⁹ separate flat cremation cemeteries of that type have not been found from Estonia. The only parallels in archaeologically investigated sites can be found from the cemetery of Siksälä where burial areas deepened into the ground for unfurnished cremations, possibly ranging from the mid-7th to the 12th century can be suggested (Valk & Allmäe 2010; Valk & Laul 2014, 65, 133–134). Although local lore tells about barrows in Mustja palo forest, the attachment of cremation area 3 to them seems unlikely: firstly, because of its location close to the forest edge, and, secondly, because of no traces of barrows in the flat area around the cemetery. Since the area has been permanently forested (because of very poor sandy land) and is unsuitable for cultivation, the full destruction of barrows seems unlikely.

Scanty data about Final Iron Age burial practices give evidence of furnished flat cremations which fits with the formerly existing, although most fragmentary data (Lillak 2008, 31–33). As a proxy of such burial practices, also here Siksälä cemetery can be mentioned (Valk & Laul 2014, 62–73). In parallel to cremations, flat inhumation graves may sporadically have occurred only in the final stage of the period.

The medieval phase of the cemetery, which began, evidently, in connection with the acceptance of Christianity in the early 13th century, probably in 1215, revealed a situation typical for Võrumaa where brooches, coins, knives and needles are common finds (Valk 2001, 42–58). In grave orientation the opposed orientation of the deceased around the E–W/ENE–WSW axis could clearly be observed (Figs 4, 9). The osteological determination of the bones showed that skeletons oriented with head westwards belonged to men, those of eastern orientation – to women. This correlates well with the general situation in present-day Võrumaa region where such opposed orientation was practiced since the 13th until the 17th century (Valk 2001, 70–72; Valk & Laul 2014, 82–83).

Judging by parallels, it can be suggested that also the Soe cemetery was in use until the first quarter of the 18th century. Among the medieval cemeteries of Võrumaa the burial site near Soe inn, however, outstands for its extraordinary location: it is not situated on a small hill, as usual, but because of local topography, on the edge of an extensive plateau. Evidently, this exceptional location was chosen for the medieval burial ground also due to the former cemetery and continuity of traditions.

CONCLUSIONS

The cemetery at Soe inn clearly outstands among burial sites of south-eastern Estonia, having no exact known parallels. Firstly, the site is of exceptionally long-term use – since the Roman Iron Age up to at least the time of the Livonian War, probably also longer –, although continuity of its use could not be firmly established. Secondly, it gives evidence of formerly

⁹ Discovered from Gorka V barrow group during the Est-Lat-Rus Programme Project 'Archaeology, Authority and Community' field inventory, guided by Sergei Popov (Institute of History of Material Culture; St. Petersburg) in 2013.

almost unknown burial practices – dispersed cremations with a sparse stone setting of fire-cracked stones, as well as stoneless flat cremation burials. Either way, whether the cemetery functioned permanently or it was re-used after burials were re-allocated in another area in the vicinity, the use of the Roman Iron Age site with no visible grave markers since the end of the Iron Age gives evidence about the awareness of the burial site, i.e. about the continuity of local population.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our gratitude to Aleksandr Kotkin from the history club ‘Kamerad’ for metal detector studies and to Mauri Kiudsoo (TLÜ AT) for identifying the coins. This research was supported by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Science (institutional research theme IUT 20-7), State Forest Management Centre and the National Heritage Board.

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RAUAAEGNE JA KESKAEGNE KALMISTU SOE KÕRTSI JUURES VÕRUMAA

Heiki Valk, Freydis Ehrlich ja Martin Malve

Urvaste kihelkonna idapiiril endise Soe kõrtsi vastas Võru–Viljandi maantee ning sellelt üle Osula, Kärgula ja Kooraste Otepäale viiva maantee vahelise nurga sees olevat kalmet (jn 1, 2) mainitakse esmakordselt Urvaste kihelkonna 1927. aasta arheoloogilises kirjelduses. Muistis, mida 1970. aastatel olevat tähistanud silt tekstiga “Muistne Eesti toonela” kajastub 1939. aastal kogutud kohamuistendite kogumise võistluse materjalides rohke pärimusega seotud paigana. Rahvajuttude järgi kalmet kardeti, seal võidi kokku puutuda üleloomuliku ja teispoolsusse kuuluvaga. Läheduses asuvad pärimuslik kirikukoht ja Kellalomp (jn 1, 3), kuhu olevat uputatud inimesi, sealhulgas väärarenguga („väärakaid“) lapsi. Kalme on seotud sellest 200 m idas ja 450 m idakagusse jäävate Vagula küla asulakohtadega, mis leidude põhjal pärinevad vastavalt 11.–17. sajandist ja I aastatuhandest.

Teated ajaloolise Vagula (praegu Järvere) küлага seotud matusepaigast said kinnitust 2015. aastal, kui Muinsuskaitseametit teavitati toimunud detektorirüüstest. Paiga ülevaatamisel leiti Soe kõrtsi vastas mäenõlva süvendatud metsatee lahtisest liivast põlenud ja põlemata luutükke ning käsitsi tehtud savinõu kild.

Selleks, et vältida kalme edasist lõhkumist autoratatsiooniga ning täpsustada muistise iseloomu ja dateeringut, korraldas Tartu Ülikool 2017. aastal seal väike- ja suu- ja prooviuuringud. Kuna tööde eesmärgiks oli tee kasutamist ja nõlvaerosioonist vahetult ohustatud pinnase läbiuurimine, piirduti siin kaevamisega 30 cm sügavusele. Esimene kaevand (3 × 9 m; uurimissügavuseni kaevati siin läbi 19 m²) tehti metsateele mäenõlvale (jn 4), kus lahtises liivas leidis nii põlemata kui ka põlenud luukilde, teine (2 m²) platoo servast u 35 m kaugusele. Et selgitada, kas ja kuivõrd võib kalmealal olla rüüstest ohustatud esemeid, kontrollis Aleksandr Kotkin ajalooklubist Kamerad kalmet metallidetektoriga, sest detektoristide foorumist pärit teabe kohaselt olevat kalmelt saadud mitmesuguseid leide, sealhulgas viikingiaegne kirves ja ambsõlg.

Kalmistu varasem järk seostub kolme erineva põletuskalmega. Esimesest kalmest (u 45 × 20 m) andsid tunnistust väikesed, enamasti 8–12 cm läbimõõduga põlenud raudkivid ja põlenud inimluukildud metsatee ääres eri kohtades (jn 5). Sellest kalmest oli kaevandisse varisenud tumedat pinnast ja käsitsi tehtud, valdavalt punakaid savinõukilde (jn 6: 1–12), sh tekstiilkeramik (jn 6: 5–8). Need ja kuldfooliumiga klaashelmes (jn 7: 3) viitavad rooma rauaaajale. Hallika või pruunika pinnaga keramik (jn 6: 13, 15)

leidis vähe; märgiks kalme viikingiaegsest kasutusest on musta kiilapinnalise savinõu kild (jn 6: 14). Kaevandist leiti sõelumisel ka ehete katkeid (jn 7: 1, 2, 4).

Sama kalme lääneserva tehtud II kaevandi sõelumine andis vaid põlenud luukilde, mida leidis peamiselt pealmises tumedas pinnasekihhis, enamasti kuni 5 cm sügavusel, samuti ühe killu käsitsi tehtud savinõust. Ilmselt seostuvad I kalmega ka mõned II kaevandi lähedusest metsateelt leitud põlenud pronksesemete, sh käevõru (jn 7: 5) katked.

Teine põletuskalme (u 20 × 10–15 m) sisaldas samuti kive. Kännu kõrvale olid maha pandud mõned varasema detektoristi korjatud põlenud pronksesemete katked, sealhulgas käevõru tükk (jn 7: 5), ja etnograafiline vööpannal. Kooritud pinnasega kohas paljandus kompaktno põlenud luude pesa (jn 8). Kolmandal põletusmatustega alal (u 20 × 15 m) puudusid kalmekivid: üksikuid põlenud luud oli raiesmikule metsaadraga küntud vagude ümberpööratud pinnases.

Keskaegsete laibamatuste luustikud tulid nähtavale I kaevandist (jn 4, 9). Kahe maetu luud paljandusid juba teepinnast 5 cm madalamal. Väljapuhastatud kuuest luustikust olid mehed maetud peaga lääne ja naised ida poole – selline sooline vastandorientatsioon on Võrumaa keskaegsetele külakalmistutele iseloomulik. Lisaks jäi üks matuse kaevandis oleva vana kännu juurte alla, kahe olemasolu ilmselt kaevandi profiilis ning ühe kolju tuli nähtavale 30 cm sügavusel. Luustikud on paiknenud algse maapinna suhtes 70–90 cm sügavusel, kuid kuna segatud pinnas jätkus ja osa neist olid pealematmisega lõhutud, leidub neid ka sügavamal.

Kahe mehematuse (nr 3 ja 5) juures olid sõlg ja nuga, ühele naisele (nr 2) oli kaasa pandud nuga, teisele (nr 1) rauast õmblusnõel ja oletatavasti sõlg; luudest veidi kõrgemalt leiti 1441.–1459. aasta münt. Ka matuse nr 3 luude kohal oli münt – aastatest 1552–1558. Veel saadi kaevandi segatud liivast juhu leidudena viis 15.–16. sajandi münti, neist varaseim aastatest 1430–1465 (?) ja hiliseim aastast 1572, hilis-keskaegne või varauusaegne spiraalsõrmus (jn 10: 2), nõela ja noa katked ning veidi põlemata loomaluid. Üks 1565. aasta killing leiti detektoriga kaevandist u 10 m kirde poolt.

Maetute luud (Tabel 1) olid happelises liivapinnases väga halvasti säilinud (jn 9), väiksemad luud olid sageli täiesti ära kõdunenud. Hammastel oli kaariest ja periapikaalseid tühimikke, liigestel osteoartroosi,

selgrootlidel spondüloosi ja spondüloartroosi jälgi. Meheluustiku nr 5 koljul tuvastati paranenud traumamurd (jn 11).

Kuigi tee alal uuritud luustikud pärinevad leidude, sealhulgas müntide järgi otsustades 15.–16. sajandist, ulatub keskaegse külakalmistu kasutusaeg tõenäoliselt 13. sajandi algupoolest kuni 18. sajandi algusveerandini. Tavalistest Võrumaa külakalmistutest eristab Soe kõrtsi kalmet pikk, rooma rauaaega ulatuv ja nähtavasti järjepidev kasutus. Samas esineb pärimusandmeid, mis viitavad ka I aastatuhande II poole kääbastele kusagil läheduses. Piirkonnale omastest künkal

paiknevatest külakalmistutest eristab matusepaika ka asukoht platoo serval ja teiste selgete välispiiride puudumine.

Detektorikontroll näitas, et muistis on leidudest põhjalikult puhtaks rüüstatud: tõenäoliselt on kurjategijad Soe kalmelt saanud aastate vältel rikkaliku saagi. Viimane rüüste toimus vaid mõni nädal enne kaevamisi, millest andsid tunnistust värsked detektoriaugud. Võimalik, et selleks andis põhjust ajalehes Postimees ilmunud, suviste välitööde kavasad tutvustav ülevaateartikkel.