

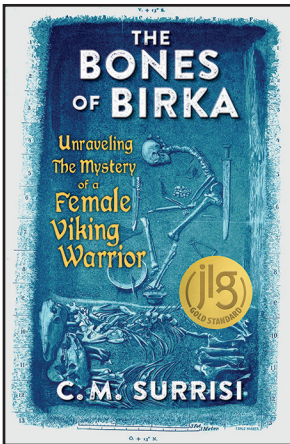


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Author Surrisi Digs into the Archeological Mystery that Generated a Current Controversy

February 2023 – In *The Bones of Birka* (Chicago Review Press; publication date: April 18, 2023; Ages 12 & up), author C.M. Surrisi explores a riveting real-life archeological puzzle that has sparked a contemporary controversy. Surrisi's narrative starts with the "remarkable" 1878 find of a grave filled with weapons in the location of the Viking town of Birka, Sweden. As Surrisi explains, it was well over a century before a key detail, not recognized at the time of discovery, emerged and generated furious public debate. That happened when a 2017 study announced that DNA testing of the human bones found in the grave – consistently identified since 1878 as those of a "warrior" because of the grave goods – proved that the individual was biologically female.

The idea of a female Viking warrior immediately generated an intense flurry of questions and challenges, and Surrisi's book is careful to explore the controversy from many sides. From history to mythology, from science to social media, from research bias to a shifting perception of gender identity, Surrisi's lively account examines a variety of the factors that have made up the evolving understanding of the person who occupied grave Bj 581.

Surrisi confirms that she sought out multiple viewpoints to craft her account, saying, "To the credit of the archaeologists who authored the paper, they encouraged me to interview all of their critics. The end result was that the shock of a DNA determination of a 'female Viking warrior' became so much more. Notwithstanding the biological sex determination of a person from over one thousand years ago, there is no firm, unequivocal way to know how that person presented themselves to their community."

In June 2023, Surrisi will be traveling from her home in Minnesota to Sweden; from there, she plans to deliver regular social media updates about the unfolding story of grave Bj 581 to *The Bones of Birka* readers. On June 26, curators have arranged for her to make a private visit to the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm, where Surrisi will have a chance to photograph the Bj 581 bones and view the exhibits of the grave goods. She'll be accompanied by the lead archaeologist on the Bj 581 project, Dr. Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, who will also take her to the island of Birka to show her the grave and other significant sights.

2023 will be a big year for Surrisi. Along with this trip and the publication of *The Bones of Birka*, she has a novel for ages 10 and up, *The Unofficial Lola Bay Fan Club* (G.P. Putnam's Sons), that is also being published on April 18, adding to the number of books she already has to her credit.
