

Finnestorp – New Excavations at an Important War-Booty Site

The Finnestorp site in Västergötland was discovered in the year 1902, when a road was constructed across the wetlands of Finnestorp. The construction work revealed bone remains and metal objects such as weapons and horse equipment. After that, there were minor excavations in 1904, 1980 and 1992. From these it was concluded that Finnestorp is a war-booty site dated to the Migration period (in Swedish terms). New investigations in 2000–2004 and 2008–2009 have now produced interesting results.

First, a survey with metal detector offered an extensive view of the 400 x 100 m wetland area. The results showed that there were objects more or less throughout the entire area. This suggests that large-scale war-booty offerings have been made repeatedly during the Migration period. Second, excavations in four areas (approx. 240 m²) gave insights into ritual activities not previously observed on an offering site. Fire pits contained burned animal bones and small drops of silver. The pits were dated by ¹⁴C to the same time period as the metal artefacts (c. AD 350–550).

More than 700 artefacts were found. Among the metal objects were exclusive swords and horse equipment. Many have elegant ornaments and represent the equipment of high-ranking warriors. These warriors seem to have belonged to the elite level of society during the Migration period. Other finds of similar type have been made on war-booty sites in Denmark and northern Germany. There are also parallels to other artefact finds from all over Europe.

In the research field of war-booty sites, Finnestorp is exclusive in the sense that all finds are integrated in a GIS database. Finnestorp is also the only war-booty site where radiocarbon analyses have been done on skeletal remains, wooden artefacts and structures. For further information, go to: <http://www.finnestorp.se/>

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