

## **FIVE GOLD TORQUES FROM VITTENE IN THE SOUTHWESTERN PART OF SWEDEN**

### *CINCO TORQUES DE ORO PROCEDENTES DE VITTENE, EN EL SUROESTE DE SUECIA*

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In 1995, five heavy gold rings were found in what the following excavation showed to be a settlement from the Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age. Four of these rings are complete. Not only the number of rings and the total weight, 2 kg, makes the hoard, or more correctly hoards, unusual for Scandinavian conditions, but also that the rings are of different and rare types. The first ring came into light in the early nineties when a couple was gardening, but it took some years before they understood that it was a prehistoric neck-ring of gold and reported the find to the local museum.

This neck-ring is a torque with conical gorgets decorated in filigree and granulation. Including this ring so far only six of this type are known, three of which are found in Ukraine (two at Smjela near Kiev and one in Olbia) and three in Scandinavia (one at Dronninglund in Denmark, one at Havor on Gotland and now one in Vittene in Västergötland both Sweden). Beside these gold-rings some reproductions are known of similar rings, e.g. on the famous silver cauldron from Gundestrup in Denmark. Except for the Olbian specimen the type is dated from the last century B. C. to the middle of the first century A. D., Andersson 1995 p. 88 and 102.

Two rings, of which one lacks at least one half, are of an exceptionally rare type. The only parallel is found at Hellested in Denmark. Characteristic is that these rings end in two large triangular plates and that the section between is made of a twisted rod. Even if the two rings from Vittene are of the same type, the complete ring is made of thin sheet metal with a low percentage of gold, 16 carat, just like the Danish ring, while the half one is very solid and made of 20 carat gold. Both are decorated in filigree and granulation technique, the solid one also with punched circles. Although the Danish ring is a stray find it is dated to the Migration Period, Brøndsted 1966 p. 292f..

The fourth ring is an arm-ring with formalized animal-like heads at the ends, mostly associated with snake-heads. This ring belongs to a heterogeneous group of rings with more or less conventionalized animal heads at their ends, and known from almost all parts of Europe. However this particular type, SvF 350, is only known in three more copies all from south Scandinavia. Though none of them are found in a close context they have been dated to the second half of the Early Roman Iron Age, Period B2, c.f. Werner 1980 p. 32; Andersson 1995 p. 82.

The fifth ring is a pre-fabricated object. The rod tends to be broader at the ends which indicates that the species was tended to be a neck-ring with triangular ends, but perhaps with smaller plates like the more common

neck- and arm-rings of type ÄEG 373, 374 or 375, c.f. Almgren Nerman 1923 p. 74ff., Taf. 25.

The find causes lots of questions. First of all, were the rings manufactured at the settlement? Probably not, but since all the complete rings have their closest counterparts in Scandinavia it seems likely that they were produced in this region. If they were not made at the settlement did they arrive as gifts, war-booty or spoils from looting raids? The question is impossible to answer correctly but the condition of the objects in itself evokes questions. It is notable that all rings are more or less destroyed, and that this has been done in prehistoric time. This could speak in favour for war-booty or spoils from looting raids, but knowing that sacred objects from the time in question often are ritually destroyed, the rings could originally have been gifts and at a later time have been used for ritual purposes or as raw material. Another impossible but important question is if the rings were deposited at the same time. The time span between the oldest and the youngest ring is according to the dating above c. 400 years.

In my lecture I will discuss some of these questions in more detail, particular with focus on the origin and dating of the rings.

#### Literature

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