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Trove of Ancient Arrows Dating back 6000 Years Discovered on a Norwegian Mountain

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A treasure trove of ancient artefacts has been discovered in an ice patch in Norway after it started melting because of climate change.

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The research team discovered around 70 arrow shafts, as well as reindeer bones, textiles, and shoes near a mountainside in Jotunheimen, around 240 miles from Oslo.

The Research Team Was Amazed by what They Later Discovered

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With the help of radiocarbon dating, the researchers revealed that the oldest arrows are from around 4100 BC and the most recent one from 1300 AD.

The discovery confirmed that this was a popular reindeer hunting area a millennia ago but changed the conventional belief about how ice patches are used for the interpretation of historical records.

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Namely, previously, archaeologists assumed the ice-preserved items as they were deposited and sealed in place and provided a timeline; the older relics on the bottom and the recent ones on top.

However, the various amounts of weathering on the objects and the seemingly random order differs from the theory that ice patches are equal to photos and that they show a preserved image of the past.

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Some Arrows Were Intact, Others Were Damaged

Of the 68 total arrows found, some had their arrowheads still attached. These heads were made with various materials like slate, iron, bone, and mussel shell.

Some of the arrows still had their tar and twine. The biggest number of arrows was from the 700 through 750 AD and the oldest ones were around 6000 years old.

Lars Holger Pilo, archaeologist, explains that this is earlier than the findings made from other ice sites in the North of Europe.

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Other artefacts include a preserved shoe from 3000 years ago and a fabric which Pilo notes may have been used for meat packaging.

This ice patch in Langfonne was first found in 2006 when Reidar Marstein, a hiker, found a leather shoe from the early Bronze Age and reported it to Pilo.

At the time, the researchers assumed new snow layers added to a patch, like stratea in the earth, and the older layers are near the core and newer ones near the surface. The idea was that ice is like a time machine. Whatever lands on it remains there and it’s kept safe.

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However, upon closer examination, Pilo explains, it was discovered that the ice melted and re-froze several times during a millennia, relocating the arrows from their original place.

What's more, if the patch acted like a time machine, the older artefacts would've been as optimally preserved as the new ones.

However, the arrows from the Neolithic period were broken and weathered, noting that they've probably been exposed to the elements multiple times.

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On the other hand, the arrows from the 14th century looked as if they were shot yesterday.

The researchers suspected something happened to them while they were inside the ice. Pilo said that ice is a preserver of artefacts, but also a destroyer of history.

Sources:

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