

Wetland-Archaeology in Lake Starnberg, Bavaria



Southern Bavaria, embedded in a prealpine hilly landscape, possesses a lot of rivers, lakes, and swamps in the hinterland of the lakes. In similar situations of neighbour-regions, especially in Switzerland, Baden-Württemberg and in Austria in the Salzkammergut, has been detected a great number of prehistoric wetland sites. In Bavaria only a few sites are known until now. Nevertheless hundreds of hints are recorded. So it is an additional task of our team, to discover wetland sites and to examine them. We organize our work in projects.

A good example happened in 1997 and 1998, when the famous summerhouse of the bavarian kings on the small island, called Roseninsel, in the Lake Starnberg has been restored. A trench for electrics, phone and water was dug from the shore to the 500 m distant island. We decided to control earth-work on and nearby the island, which is well known for prehistoric finds and for a large number of wooden posts, some of them dated in Urnenfelderkultur and to try reconnaissance of further sites on the shore of lake Starnberg.

Documentation of the trench revealed the existence of a LBA-settlement, which was built on the shore of that time on pebbles and sand. On the island itself we discovered a small medieval castle. But the main purpose, to find out exact positions and dates of prehistoric settlements on the island, until then only known from sherds, could not be fulfilled successfully. The glacial dump has formed the island as a cone with steep sides running quickly under the sea-level. Prehistoric strata on the upper side of the cone were dried out and have been destroyed during earth work for summerhouse and park. However, preserved strata could not be reached in the trench. Drilling under the water-level revealed prehistoric strata until 3.80 m under the sea-bottom. With these data we have got for the first time ideas about postglacial sea-level changes in the lake Starnberg. As a result we could now define prehistoric water-levels, which depend from the level of known prehistoric sites, i. e. between 484 m ü. NN. (recent level) and ca. 379,50 (level of late neolithic)

As a next step we surveyed the recent shore until the water-level of 379 m with a side-scan-sonar. We recorded a lot of posts. Most of them are of recent age. Others seem to be older. They may be identified by GPS-position. In a few weeks we shall send divers to cut the posts. Then they will be dated in our dendrolab or, if not possible, by C-14-analysis.

In my eyes, we have found an attractive not expensive way, to survey lake-settlements.

Fig. 1. The Roseninsel in Lake Starnberg; aerial view from the east (Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, Luftbildarchäologie, Photograph Klaus Leidorf, Aufn. Datum 26.10.1989, Archivnr. 8132/001)

Fig. 2. "The Fish", a side-scan-sonar ready for survey in Lake Starnberg