



DAILY NEWS



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Grave of Egil Skalla-Grímsson found?

Icelandic State Radio reports that the possible grave site of Egil Skalla-Grímsson, one of Iceland's most famous vikings, has been found under the altar of a church from the settlement period. No bones were found at the burial site.

Jesse Byock, archeology professor at the University of California in Los Angeles who is in charge of the excavation, emphasizes that the work being done in Mosfellsdal is not directed at finding the grave site of Egil Skalla-Grímsson. The excavation has taken many years and the church at Hrisbrú is the seventh dig site.

The purpose of the dig is to map the settlement in Mosfellsdal as it was in the time of the Vikings and understand how people lived. Professor Byock told television station Stod 2 that if they also find the burial site for Egil Skalla-Grímsson he will be very happy; it is known that Egill was buried in the area.



Iceland Review is an English language magazine on Iceland.

In the Icelandic Saga, Egil's Saga, Egil is said to have been buried underneath a church that his foster daughter Thórdís had built, but his bones were subsequently moved to a site near Mosafellsdal. The grave under the church is over two meters long, and Egil is described as having been a tall and powerfully built man.

Professor Byock says the excavation team has gained insight into the Viking Age settlement in Mosfellsdal. The excavation has unveiled information on the health conditions of the people - cancer and tuberculosis were prevalent - as well as other aspects of the cultural make up.

Born around 910 A.D., Egil early showed considerable promise; he got drunk at three and killed at six. But he also revealed a

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more cerebral and softer side by commemorating his first slaying with a poem, paying tribute to his mother and presciently predicting his own glorious career as a viking.

During his long life, Egil not only killed but also gouged eyes out of some of his enemies and vomited over others. When his brother Thorolf died as they were fighting for King Athelstan at the battle of Vin Moor (also known as the battle of Brunnanburh) during the Scots invasion of England in 937, Egil went berserk and chased the enemy until there was no one left to kill. Only the English King's gift of two chests full of silver soothed his murderous mood. A long running feud with Erik Bloodaxe, King of Norway, reached a climax when Egil became Erik's captive at York. Overnight he paid tribute to Erik in a poem, "Head-Ransom", and the King could only release him the next day.

Later in life, Egil fell in to a deep suicidal depression after losing two sons. At the instigation of his daughter, instead of taking his life he eulogized them in a poem, "Lament of my sons", recovering his spirits along the way.

In old age Egil lost his sight and lived with his foster daughter and her husband at Mosfell. Shortly before his death, he asked if he could join them for the annual session of parliament at Thingvellir. When they inquired why, he replied that he intended to scatter the English silver around when parliament was in full session, hoping to instigate a fight. "It will be a big surprise to me if people agree to divide the silver evenly," he said. But his hosts were less keen on the plan, and Egil had to stay home. While everyone was away at parliament, he took his two chests of silver, a horse and two slaves and "for a short trip" he claimed. The next day, Egil and the horse were found wandering in the fields, but neither the chests of silver nor the slaves have been seen since.

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