

Anders Fischer 2002:

Abstract

**Food for feasting? An evaluation of explanations of the neolithisation in Denmark and southern Sweden**

In Fischer, A. & Kristiansen, K. (eds) *The Neolithisation of Denmark. 150 years of debate*. J.R. Collis Publications. Sheffield: 339-393.

Thanks to new archaeological, archaeometrical, botanical and zoological evidence some of the central questions in the classical debate on the neolithisation of Denmark and Scania can now be answered and others be reformulated into testable hypotheses. The first part of the paper provides a summary of factual matters of particular relevance to this debate. This includes the outline of a transitional stage between the Ertebølle and the Funnel Beaker Cultures. Consideration is also given to C14-dates of food residues on pottery, which are demonstrated to be highly unreliable.

The introduction of livestock took place no later than ca. 3950 BC. TRB pottery was present at the same time or a little later. Phenomena usually considered typically neolithic, such as polished flint axes and monumental graves, were absent in the initial stages of the Neolithic. For several centuries subsequent to the introduction of farming, part of the population continued to subsist primarily on marine resources.

Three explanatory models for the introduction of agriculture are evaluated: migration, food crisis, and socio-economic competition. The original arguments in support of the first explanation are demonstrated to be false, but the model may be re-formulated as a variant of the third. The second appears to be of little explanatory relevance but has potential for future substantiation. It is suggested that the main reason for the introduction of livestock and cereals was the social prestige and personal pleasure that could be gained by those who distributed and consumed products of farming – which may have included beverages such as beer.

The introduction of cattle husbandry and cultivation is described as just one aspect of a long-term process of socio-economic transformation — a process characterised by continuous innovation and inflation of social and ritual symbols.