

Review of: Madsen, T. (2024). Continuity and Change. The development of Neolithic societies in central East Jutland, Denmark. (Jutland Archaeological Society Publications, 129). Højbjerg: Jutland Archaeological Society and Museum Horsens. – 539 pages, 430 figures (b/w and colour), two appendices. ISBN 978-87-93423-54-1

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This book is the ambitious and impressive result of a lifelong dedication to the Neolithic of the area around Horsens' Fjord in central East Jutland, Denmark, initiated approximately 50 years ago in the mid-1970s. In his book, Torsten Madsen presents an in-depth study of the Neolithic settlement of the study area covering 640 km² and 43 parishes centred on environment, economy and social organisation. Based on the definition and description of primary data in the form of artefact types, settlements, burials and depositions as well as settlement density patterns, Madsen discusses and synthesizes on land use pattern, ritual practices and social organisation. The book covers the entire Neolithic within the research area spanning the period from c. 3900 to 1700 BC but with a certain focus on the Funnel Beaker culture, c. 3900-2600 BC.

After a one-page preface of acknowledgements, the book begins with a short introduction (chapter 1) describing the background and formation of The East Jutland Project that, with breaks in between, led to the published book. The reader is informed about the transformations the project underwent in terms of objectives, methodological and theoretical approaches, geographical demarcation and chronology. An online find catalogue was released in 2019 prior to the writing up of the manuscript and a link is provided in the table of contents. Chapter 2 describes the study area and its sources beginning with the physical environment and its geological and biological features including land and sea followed by data collecting and recording strategies supplemented by source critical reflections.

Before going through the primary data, chapter 3 takes the reader through the chronology of the Danish Neolithic in general and the study area specifically with interesting discussions on the application of local versus general chronologies, transitional phases and issues with the ¹⁴C calibration curve. Madsen has worked with several of these chronological aspects for many years, and he guides the reader through the complex Neolithic chronology and its pitfalls with great con-

viction including the issues of how to approach cross-cultural chronologies, which becomes of utmost importance when dealing with the Middle Neolithic. He establishes a much-needed updated absolute chronology of the South Scandinavian Funnel Beaker and Single Grave periods based on 533 collected ¹⁴C dates (listed in appendix 1) and compares it to the local phases defined for the study area.

The first chapter of the altogether five chapters (4-8) that focus on artefact categories is devoted to pottery. With its 63 pages, chapter 4 is the longest of the five. It begins with general definitions of the applied classification terminology regarding pottery forms and decoration supported by a rich selection of well-chosen illustrations. Then Madsen proceeds to analyses of the pottery assemblage from the study area, which enables him to establish a local chronological pottery sequence for the Funnel Beaker period based on correspondence analysis. Its local distributions and contexts are shown on a series of colour printed maps. The pottery assemblage is almost exclusively Funnel Beaker and only a small selection of pottery comes from the Single Grave culture and the Late Neolithic.

In chapter 5 Madsen goes through the axes, adzes, chisels and wedges made of flint and stone. The overall structure of the chapter roughly follows the previous one starting with a short section on classification, terminology and definitions. Then the reader is guided through the various types of flint axes and adzes, their general typology and chronology as well as their occurrence, distribution and context within the study area. This is followed by an equivalent review of the chisels, stone axes and finally the tanged stone wedges.

Chapter 6 deals with pressure-flaked and blade-based flint tools, including Late Neolithic flint daggers, sickles, spearheads etc. as well as the Early Neolithic halberds. Pressure-flaked and tanged arrowheads are also analysed, the latter being typical of the Pitted Ware and late Single Grave culture. Madsen follows the well-known structure where he first presents the general typology succeeded by occurrence, distribution and context of the individual types within the study area. Photos, drawings and maps nicely accompany the written text. The same structure applies to the next chapter (7), which considers stone battle axes and clubs from the Funnel Beaker, Single Grave and Late Neolithic periods. Chapter 8 is only four pages and deals with 'other materials' not covered by the previous four chapters including slate pendants, amber beads and Funnel Beaker copper objects. The book layout is gener-

ally very appealing, graphs and tables are easy to comprehend, and the figures nicely facilitate the reading. Unfortunately, some of the artefact photos presented in chapters 4-8 have a shiny 'metallic' glare, which does not represent the materials very well.

In chapter 9 Madsen follows up on the previous five chapters by discussing the contexts in detail starting with settlements followed by burials and finally depositions. The presentations of the main context categories are whenever possible subdivided according to the local chronology as defined in chapter 3 aided by maps showing e.g. the distribution of settlements in each phase. With chapter 10 Madsen digs deeper into the density patterns of the settled areas by focusing on the distribution of finds over time, i.e. the entire 2,200 years-long Neolithic period. We are presented to graphs showing the preference of soil types of each context in various phases and distance to the coast in addition to density maps of artefact distribution for the whole Neolithic as well as selected timespans generally showing a concentration around Horsens Fjord. Finally, the temporal development in the settlement patterns is discussed. The analyses show clear differences between the cultural groups well illustrated by a new series of density maps. Whereas the Funnel Beaker settlements cluster in the coastal zone, the Single Grave culture is clearly inland oriented and the Late Neolithic falls in between the two.

With chapter 11 Madsen moves beyond the descriptions and spatial analyses of the primary data and develops syntheses on land use patterns, ritual practices and social organisation throughout the Neolithic even if focused on the Funnel Beaker period. Madsen includes and discusses relevant data and research from other areas to propose a thorough and reflexive interpretation of the Neolithic development in eastern Jutland. The chapter is structured chronologically and takes the reader through the three overarching themes: land use, ritual practice and social organisation for each of the local phases separated out in chapter 3. With its 164 pages, chapter 11 is by far the longest in the book and it presents the interpretations of the Neolithic development in a well-structured and easily readable way generously illustrated with relevant tables, graphs, maps and photos.

The book ends with the medium-sized chapter 12 counting 30 pages, which discusses the main results of the previous chapters in a local and wider international context with a certain focus on long-distance connections and interactions. The chapter is divided into three parts be-

ginning with the Neolithization, followed by a review of the social and economic aspects of the Funnel Beaker society and ending with the transition to the Single Grave culture and the further development into the Late Neolithic. The chapter carries the same title as the book 'Continuity and Change', which is not a very original one as Madsen also admits in the introduction to the chapter. However, it refers to two often implied and opposing concepts in archaeology: change being caused by migration and continuity indicating local development. Madsen underlines the needs for a balanced approach, which should consider the new aDNA evidence but not at the expense of the archaeological record or the insights provided by social anthropology.

Having read chapter 12, and the preceding chapters, you can certainly not accuse Madsen of favouring the aDNA-based narratives, rather the opposite. Madsen sees the formation of the earliest Funnel Beaker culture, the Wangels group known from Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, as a peaceful integration of Michelsberg immigrants and the local Ertebølle population, which seems to contradict the most recent DNA evidence showing that the Ertebølle population contributed very little to the Funnel Beaker population (ALLENTOF ET AL., 2024a, 333). There are still many unsolved aspects of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition, including the role of the shell middens, but it seems like Madsen cannot let go of the old notion that the Ertebølle people were crucial for the wide and fast distribution of agriculture throughout southern Scandinavia even if the genetic results seem to contradict it.

Moreover, interesting results have come out in recent years on social organization addressing family structure within megalithic using communities, including information on the existence of patrilineal kindred groups (e.g. CASSIDY ET AL., 2020; FOWLER ET AL., 2022; SÁNCHEZ-QUINTO ET AL., 2019). Such studies could have added to Madsen's social analyses on kinship systems and contact networks, or at least situated them in a larger European context, had they been included in the discussions.

However, it is refreshing to see that Madsen presents a balanced and positive interpretation of the cultural development within the final Funnel Beaker period that considers artefact distribution, settlement pattern and pollen evidence. Madsen confirms the picture of general change in land use, conglomeration of settlements, agricultural intensification and prosperity rather than the frequently stated claims on a marked 'Neolithic decline'

most recently invigorated by studies showing widespread outbreaks of plague (COLLEDGE ET AL., 2019; RASCOVAN ET AL., 2019; SEERSHOLM ET AL., 2024; SHENNAN ET AL., 2013). Whereas Madsen successfully argues against the use of radiocarbon dates to determine population size, the demonstration of plague in the South Scandinavian Middle Neolithic is an aspect, which Madsen, for some reason or other, does not address.

When it comes to the arrival of Singel Grave communities, Madsen once again highlights the need for an integration of the archaeological and genetic data, but the genetic evidence is pushed to the rear and grouped with old stereotypes of migration as advanced by e.g. P. V. Glob (1945). This is a shame as Madsen misses a good opportunity to show how new genetic evidence could add to a better understanding of the cultural developments if compared to detailed local data that Madsen so convincingly presents.

The absence of a well-integrated interpretation of archaeological and genetic data might be due to the basic approach that governs the book. In the first section of the preface, Madsen states the very premise for undertaking his study: 'In my view, it is essential for us to understand what happened in local communities, before we can draw far-reaching conclusions about the general cultural development'. I tend to disagree as I believe it should rather the other way round.

The overarching syntheses on prehistoric movements, population turnovers and cultural change based on population genomics that have been proposed over the last decade or so (e.g. ALLENTOLT ET AL., 2015; ALLENTOLT ET AL., 2024b; HAAK ET AL., 2015), I believe, works well as general models to be tested on local studies checking if the overarching patterns can be identified and explained at the local level. In that way studies of delimited local areas, such as Madsen's, can pressure test the general models and reveal flaws as well as needs for adjustments and potentially break down narratives. This task is of utmost importance as a dialectic relationship between large-scale modelling and local studies will help balancing our interpretations of past cultural developments and has the potential to reveal both the complexity of local Neolithic societies and the impact of interregional trends and changes. Hence, my only real objection is that the investigated area is not fully integrated in the large-scale developments of continental Europe as evidenced by archaeogenetic studies.

This does not change the overall impression of the book as a good and thorough local investigation. Madsen does not deliver any paradigm

changing interpretations of the social organisation in the Neolithic, but he presents solid, well-argued and to a large extent convincing interpretations with the emphasis on the communal aspects of the Funnel Beaker culture. Despite the natural focus on the case study area around Horsens Fjord, Madsen constantly parallels the situation to other landscapes within present day Denmark and beyond making the book highly relevant for readers interested in the wider South Scandinavian Neolithic.

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