

# Bronze Age Research in Denmark 1970–1985

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The beginning of the 1970's was in many ways a turning-point in Danish archaeology. A new generation of archaeologists began to make its presence felt in Bronze Age studies, new archaeological methods and theoretical concepts were developed under the influence of English-language literature in particular, and at the same time archaeologists were faced with a rapidly growing number of excavation sites over the whole country, largely as a result of the growth of motorways, housing projects, pipe-lines and so on. The period as a whole has witnessed a veritable boom in Bronze Age studies which not even the economic cuts of recent years have been able to put significant limits to, and it is reasonable therefore to pick out certain major lines within the individual fields of the subject. In what follows will be found a survey of the last 15 years' Bronze Age research based upon the published literature, which is collected in appendix 1 at the end of this article.

The publication in 1975 of the book *Europæiske Forbindelser* (European Connections) (206) by Henrik Thrane clearly marked a watershed in Danish Bronze Age research. The book was the result of many years' study of foreign bronze objects from Bronze Age Denmark and in its way marked the end of an epoch in Danish archaeology. As a contemporary reviewer of the book remarked (68): "when Henrik Thrane began publishing, Danish Bronze Age research was just coming out of a period of isolation in which the international character of the Bronze Age had been almost totally overlooked. The dominant publication of the 1940's was H.C. Broholm's *Danmarks Bronzealder*, vol. I–IV, a work which almost entirely omitted the results of earlier diffusionist studies (by Sophus Müller amongst others). In the course of the 1950's, however, new tendencies were current in Danish archaeology. The dominant inspiration came from Gero von Merhart's school at Marburg, and one must understand Henrik Thrane's book in the light of the influence from this source. That it will be ac-

cepted nowadays in an academic environment which is again on the point of changing character and has turned itself to the economic and social aspects of prehistoric communities, ought not to obscure the contribution of the author and the influence his diffusionistic studies has exercised over Danish Bronze Age research".

The review reflected the departure from the diffusionist concept in European archaeology which set in at the beginning of the 1970's, finding expression, for instance, in Colin Renfrew's *Before Civilisation* of 1973, and which meant that attention was no longer directed to such a degree upon the diffusion of isolated culture elements rather than towards the multiplicity of processes which conditioned the changes in prehistoric social systems. Demographic, ecological, and sociological approaches became dominant, and the broad European perspective which, albeit with breaks, had dominated Bronze Age research since the 19th century was superseded by more local studies, as can be seen in the literature published in Danish since the beginning of the 1970's.

Quantitatively this literature clusters into three main areas: 1, systematic topographical publications of finds and excavations; 2, settlement studies, i.e. studies of Bronze Age settlements and their effect upon the surrounding landscape, subsuming the subsistence basis in its broadest sense; 3, studies of the organisation of Bronze Age society.

## SYSTEMATIC, TOPOGRAPHIC PUBLICATIONS

The most significant work amongst the systematic topographical publications is *Die Funde der älteren Bronzezeit* (7) by E. Aner and K. Kersten. This work comprises a complete publication of one of the major sources of Bronze Age material, the grave and hoard finds of the early Bronze Age, periods I–III, together with stray finds connectable to these two categories. This publica-

tion has a uniquely high level of documentation: all find-places are visited by the authors and all data about the finds are based on original documents. The drawings are of a very high quality and in conjunction with the catalogue they present the archaeological record in a manner which is unique in Europe. In a time when steadily fewer archaeologists have the opportunity to study basic material in person, and when this material is growing to unmanageable proportions, publications of this sort are invaluable. This work, which has been in the course of publication since 1975, comprises at present 8 volumes which cover the islands east of the Lillebælt and southern Jutland. The rest of Danmark will be covered in 7 further volumes.

The annual *Arkæologiske udgravninger i Danmark*, (Archaeological Excavations in Denmark) which has appeared since 1984 is of great value for an overview of the rapidly growing data base. The book gives a complete account of all the archaeological excavations which are undertaken by the more than forty Danish archaeological institutions. A short summary of the most important results is given for every excavation, interpretation, dating and so on, and finally references are given to *The Central Cultural-Historical Archive* at the National Museum in Copenhagen where information about finds is collected and computerized (119). The archive holds information about prehistoric sites from more than 100,000 locations in Denmark, systematically collected since 1873.

With such tools archaeological research is coming to grips with the enormous increase in information which is currently taking place. At the same time, however, the need to define the problems to be tackled is also growing. An attempt will therefore follow to pick out some of the major lines which have dominated in Danish Bronze Age research during the past 15 years.

#### SETTLEMENT STUDIES: THE TWO- AND THREE-AISLED LONGHOUSES

From slender beginnings at the end of the 1950's, the study of Bronze Age settlements gathered speed through the 1970's. Only a few sites, however, have been the subject of large scale systematic excavations, and only in certain respects is the material known today representative for the whole country (207, 219, 221, 229, 237). The average number of excavations of Bronze

Age settlement sites, from small rubbish pits up to large scale excavations with preserved building plots, at present lies between 30 and 50 a year.

Amongst the most important results within settlement-site studies is the excavation of a large number of buildings from the Bronze Age: see appendix 2. Quantitatively, the main thrust of excavations has been in Jutland although the volume is increasing on the islands of eastern Denmark, including Bornholm (130, 132). Although the dating of the sites often raises problems, one may discern the outlines of the development in Bronze Age building from one end of the period to the other, at least in Jutland.

The origins of the Bronze Age building clearly seem to lie in the Late Neolithic. Here excavations at Myrhøj (61), Stendis (184), Tastum (181), and Limensgård (140, 141), and at Fosie in Skåne (Sweden) (20), have gradually produced a picture of a building-form which, despite great variations, must provide the basis of the early Bronze Age building-type. This is a two-aisled longhouse with post-built walls. The length can vary considerably, from 15 metres to over 40, as observed at Limensgård on Bornholm. The houses normally lie in clusters but only a few of the buildings seem to have been standing at any one time.

In the earliest centuries of the Bronze Age, in period I, the late-Neolithic tradition was still alive, and the two-aisled longhouse was still in use. This is shown by excavations at Egehøj in Jutland (22, 23) where three partly overlapping buildings have been excavated (Fig. 1). At most two of the buildings seem to have stood at the same time.

The Egehøj houses were 21, 19 and 18 m long respectively, and all were 6 m wide. Each had 4 sets of roof-supporting posts and walls built of irregularly spaced posts. In two of the buildings there were signs of a partition wall in the middle and both had sunken floors, one in the east end and the other in the west.

At some point, as yet uncertainly dated, in the early Bronze Age, probably in period II, a major change takes place as the two-aisled longhouse develops into the three-aisled longhouse (Fig. 2). The new mode of construction makes a very wide building possible, sometimes exceeding 8 metres, as seen in the building at Trappendal, South Jutland (26, 27, 139). This building is dated to period III of the early Bronze Age, possibly earlier, as it is covered by a barrow the central grave of which belongs to period III. The Trappendal building is

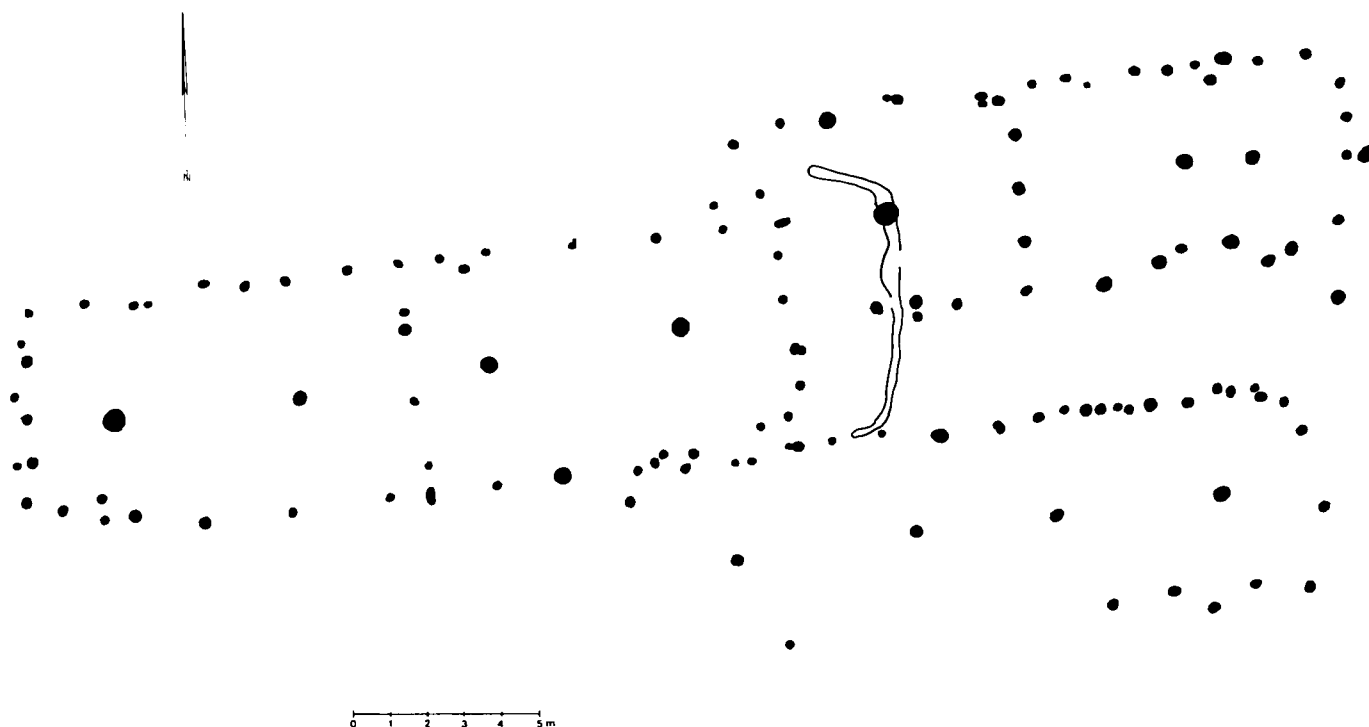


Fig. 1. Simplified plan of Early Bronze Age buildings at Egehøj, Jutland (23). The buildings were all of the same type: two-aisled longhouses with post-built walls.

a longhouse 23.5 m long, 8.7 m wide, with 5 pairs of roof-supporting posts at intervals of 3.4 to 4 m. Partition walls divide the building up into three rooms of different size. The ends are rounded and there are fireplaces in both ends of the building. Both long sides have entrances. The walls were constructed of closely spaced, slender posts.

The same building-type is known from immediately south of the Danish-German border at Handewitt near Flensburg (24) where, again beneath a barrow of period III, there was found a building 25.5 m long and 9.5 m wide, likewise divided into three rooms. Like Trappendal the walls were constructed of closely spaced posts although these were placed in a deep trench. The ends of the building were only slightly rounded.

Both of these buildings were covered by barrows after their first use. The same phenomenon has been observed at Hyllerup on Sjælland (appendix 2,9) and Horsager in North Jutland (appendix 2,17) but no immediate connection between house and barrow has yet been detectable. In some cases the building lies off-cen-

tre beneath the barrow (24) and in others a cultivation phase seems to separate the building and the construction of the barrow (appendix 2,9). The buildings may therefore be representative of the period's general building style: the available evidence does not support an interpretation as mortuary houses.

The three-aisled longhouse was thus developed as an established type in the Early Bronze Age: that is in the middle of the 2nd. millenium B.C. It is found at Vadgård by the Limfjord (126, 128, 132) and at other sites, and from the end of the period come a considerable number of buildings at Højgård, South Jutland (45, 46). The three-aisled longhouses excavated here are 20 to 22 m long and 6 m wide, although one is *circa* 30 m long and 8–9 m wide. The largest of the buildings has 7 pairs of roof-supporting posts and is internally divided by a partition wall between the second and third set of roof posts in the west end.

At Højgård the buildings' walls were constructed of heavy posts at relatively large intervals. This might indicate log construction, whereas the Trappendal build-

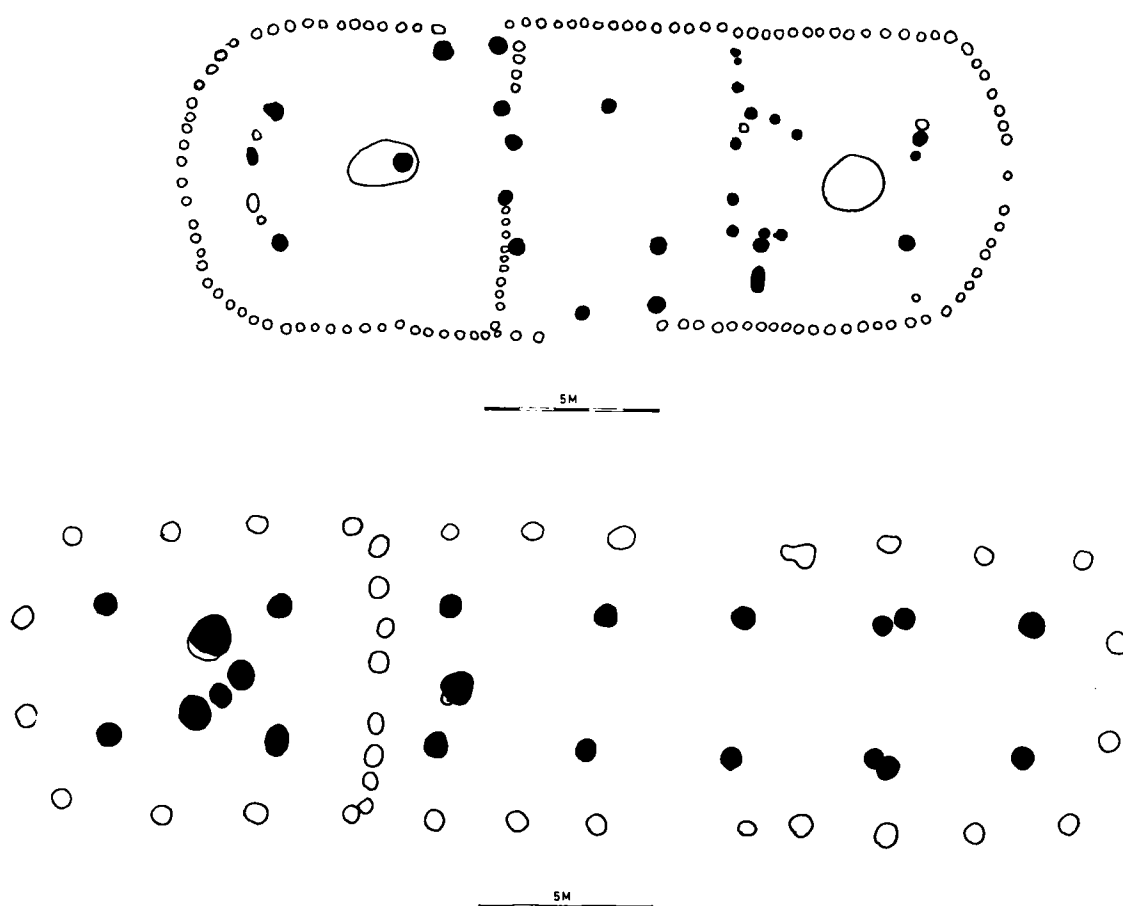


Fig. 2. Typical three-aisled longhouses from period II–III of the Early Bronze Age. Above: house site from Trappendal, Jutland (27). Below: house site from Højgård, Jutland (46).

ing seems to have had wattle walls. But there is no essential functional difference between the two building-forms.

In the late Bronze Age the development of three-aisled longhouses with rounded ends continues (Fig. 3). Buildings with widely spaced, sturdy wall posts apparently became less frequent. The walls are by preference built of more slender posts. This feature is found, for instance, at Jegstrup in North Jutland (34, 35), where three buildings were excavated, partly overlapping one another. At most two of the buildings could have stood at once. According to the pottery the dating must be to period V of the late Bronze Age.

The buildings were 24, 22.5 and 20.5 m long respectively, about 6 m wide. In two buildings entrances were found in both the north and south sides but the third

had apparently only an entrance in the north side. The wall posts were in all cases slender, with a diameter of 15 to 20 cm and placed at relatively large intervals. The ends of the house were rounded.

At Fragtrup in North Jutland (37) two building plots aligned NW-SE were likewise excavated, 18 and 20 m long respectively and 7 m wide. They too can be dated to period V of the late Bronze Age. One building had 4 sets of roof-supporting posts, the other 5. It was noticeable that the easterly sets of roof posts stood at lesser intervals than the westerly, a feature that is frequently found in late Bronze Age buildings. The wall posts were very slender, less than 10 cm in diameter and relatively closely spaced. In one house the interval was 60 to 65 cm, in the other 70 to 80. Finds of daub indicate the presence of wattling. Both buildings had 10 to 15 cm thick

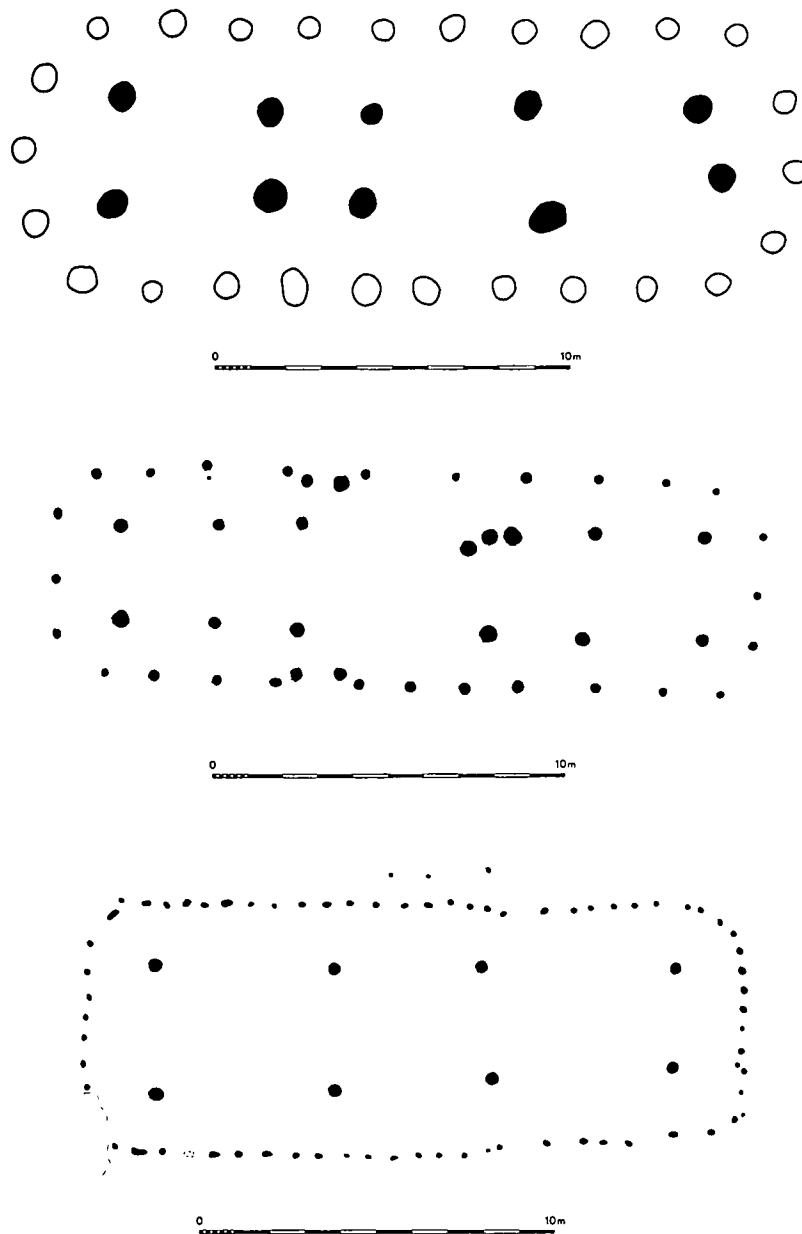


Fig. 3. House sites from the Late Bronze Age. Above: Bjerg, Western Jutland (13, 14, 15). Below: Ristoft, western Jutland (12). Bottom: Fragtrup, northern Jutland (37).

clay floor at the west end and one had traces of a partition wall, cutting off the eastern third of the house.

A further find, from Ristoft in West Jutland (12), dates to the end of the late Bronze Age, period VI. Three houses were excavated here, 17, 19.5 and 24 m long respectively and 6 m wide. In two cases there were

probably several consecutive buildings. The wall posts were very slender and widely spaced. There were entrances in both the northern and southern sides, and the ends were rounded.

A number of houses from Nybro by Varde have the same, late dating (147), three of which were well pre-

served at about 20 m long. Two had 6, one 7 sets of roof-supporting posts. The wall construction was unusual, consisting of relatively slender posts set at approximately 40 cm intervals in double rows not observed in other cases. Two of the houses had partitioned-off stalls at the east end, in the wall of which there were further traces of an entrance. Enclosures were also found by the buildings, something which is only seen on a few other sites (64 and appendix 2,2).

An unbroken development of the three-aisled Bronze Age longhouse can thus be traced from the middle of the 2nd. millenium B.C. until the end of the period. Although there are changes in constructional details, the building-type is rather uniform. Orientation is nearly always W-E, with a bias towards NW-SE. Entrances are found both in the southern and northern sides, but may be supplemented by an entrance in the eastern end. The length normally lies between 18 and 24 metres but may reach over 30 in some cases. The largest house so far known measures 38 m (13). The width varies from 6 to 7 metres, but in the early Bronze Age it may exceed 8 m. The walls, which bore a considerable amount of the weight of the roof, may be composed either of closely spaced or more widely spaced posts at intervals of more than a metre. In some cases the wall posts are very substantial. This form of wall construction seems largely to occur around the middle of the Bronze Age, but apparently disappears in the course of the late Bronze Age in face of the type with widely spaced but slenderer wall posts. The ends are normally rounded, but there was at the same time a tendency in buildings with more closely spaced wall posts for the corners to be less rounded. The roof was of a somewhat different form from what came later in the Pre-Roman Iron Age.

The typological sequence can be extended from these Bronze Age houses down into the Pre-Roman Iron Age (15). At the beginning of the Iron Age the buildings become narrower, usually 5.5 m, a feature which seems to be related to the regular presence of stalls at the eastern end. In general the houses also shrink in length: there are buildings 17 to 18 m long, but the mean is lower.

At the beginning of the Pre-Roman Iron Age houses with rounded ends are still to be found, but this feature too quickly gives way to symmetrically angular gables. Sturdy corner posts and a strictly rectangular form become the rule. Wattled outer walls are now placed in trenches, and beyond these stand regularly placed, relatively large posts to support the roof. Formerly a roof-

supporting element, the walls are moved in behind the outer frame of roof-supporting posts. A very well preserved example of this form of construction is known from Klegod, West Jutland (62). New developments follow: a more substantial outer wall is placed in a broad and deep trench, and the number of posts supporting the roof also increases.

A certain simplification of building practice is reached around the middle of the Pre-Roman Iron Age. The ground plan is still the same as earlier, two rows of roof-supporting posts, two entrances and symmetrically angled ends, but now the outer walls comprise just a single row of posts placed in a trench, without buttressing posts. At this point the building-type was created which would remain in use over most of the country through the following centuries into the period A.D.

#### THE FUNCTION OF THE BUILDINGS AND LAYOUT OF THE SETTLEMENT SITES

While the functional division of buildings from the Iron Age is nearly always reasonably clear there is frequent uncertainty concerning Bronze Age buildings, primarily because clay floors and culture layers are very rarely preserved. The presence of distinct byres in a small number of cases, however, at Hovergårde (64), Bjerg (13, 14, 15), Spjald (13, 14, 15) and Nybro (147) together with frequent wall-partitions, are indications that the three-aisled Bronze Age building was generally divided up functionally with a habitation area in the west and an east end which was used for maintaining animals.

Even more greatly differentiated division may also have existed. At Fragtrup (37), as yet the only excavation of a Bronze Age building plot with preserved clay floors, the distribution of the pottery showed, for example, that the finer wares belonged to the western end of the building while coarser pots were found in the central and eastern parts. This has been interpreted as evidence that the central part of the building was used as a workplace rather than for habitation. A similar tripartite functional division is indicated by the placing of partition walls in the buildings at Trappendal (26, 27, 139) and Handewitt (24). Traces of a tripartite division seem also to have existed at Kærholm, Sdr. Omme (12), where one of the buildings had two entrances in the southern wall.

The placement of the entrance in Bronze Age buildings otherwise indicates that the east and west ends were normally of equal size; the east end may be longer. The opposite was the case only at Fragtrup.

As yet an unanswered question is how many people the individual buildings housed. The placement of hearths, which sporadically occur at both the west and east ends, provides no clear picture, although interpretations on this basis have been made (151). Compared with the early Iron Age buildings, however, the complete Bronze Age household appears to have been larger. There is also little doubt that each building formed a complete production unit, whose material basis, however, could vary from area to area even within a single settlement.

It is not yet clear how these production units were internally organized, as only a very limited number of Bronze Age settlement sites are fully excavated. The usual experience so far is to see small group of buildings or production units without any clearly marked boundaries. The number of farmsteads on the individual settlement sites seem to have been very limited. It must, however, be borne in mind that most of the excavations have taken place within the poor sandy areas of Jutland which hardly formed a basis for intensive settlement. On the island of Fyn, at, for instance, Voldtofte (19), the extension and the thickness of the culture layers indicates that settlement must have been of quite significant dimensions.

In relatively few cases, such as Fragtrup (37), contemporaneity of more than one farmstead has been observed, so that in some cases it seems justifiable to talk of village communities composed of several farmsteads, although these do not have the same closed character as the later Pre-Roman villages. The possibility of explaining the grouping of houses within the Bronze Age settlements will probably be most enhanced after more comprehensive excavations at Fragtrup where the conditions of preservation are substantially better than at any other known Bronze Age settlement in Denmark.

Individual farm complexes often seem to have had a very long life, as traces of enlarging, rebuilding and repair can frequently be observed. On the other hand plough marks have indicated that some of the sites were ploughed over in the Bronze Age, or that they were constructed on previously ploughed land (37, 233). This shows a certain interchange between arable land and settlement, and it can also be observed how settlements

can shift, for instance from higher to lower lying terrain (14). But a clear pattern does not yet present itself: the studies so far carried out are not comprehensive enough for this.

At the end of the period the settlement pattern changes radically, at least in the areas of Jutland where a continuous development from the Bronze Age to the Pre-Roman Iron Age has been traceable (14, 151). The size of the household apparently decreases, and a greater number of farmsteads are joined together, sometimes in regularly delimited village communities which move around within the village territory at regular intervals (14, 15).

#### SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

The last 15 years' researches have not brought much that is new concerning the subsistence economy which was practised in the Bronze Age settlements. Knowledge of the use of the plough has however been extended by a couple of important C 14 dates: the simple crook ard of the Hvorslev type has been dated to the early Bronze Age while the more composite bow ard of the Døstrup type has been dated to the late Bronze Age (188). The two ard types need not of course represent chronologically differentiated developments but could have had different, specialized functions (172).

As for the appearance of the fields, a series of new observations of ard marks from the Late Neolithic and Bronze Ages are available. This body of evidence comprises more than 90 cases, including both ritual ploughing and traces of day-to-day agricultural activity (228, 234). Together with field surfaces preserved under barrows, ard-marks form an important source of evidence which as yet has been used to far too limited a degree (156). It is only as yet possible to affirm that ploughing in Bronze Age fields was carried out in the same manner as later in the Iron Age, and that the traces indicate a moving field system whose field divisions stood only for a small number of years. Ditches and banks do not normally seem to have been formed by ploughing as is otherwise found on nearly all soil types from pure diluvial sand to heavy clay.

Little is known about the cereal crops cultivated in Bronze Age fields. Finds of grain from the beginning of the Bronze Age show the continuation of a development which began in the Neolithic whereby the cultivation of

wheat was slowly being replaced by the cultivation of barley. In the early Bronze Age barley eventually became the dominant crop (175). This remained so for the coming millenium, although a tendency towards greater variation of plants can be seen in late Bronze Age agriculture (82, 176, 177, 225).

The balance between arable and pastoral farming is one of the unsolved problems of Bronze Age agriculture, which so far has only been discussed from a purely theoretical angle (161, 162). A large but mostly unexploited amount of bone material is available from early excavations of Bronze Age settlements. This includes, for example, Voldtofte (19), which gives, however, a very one-sided picture of cattle breeding in the late Bronze Age. More recent excavations of Bronze Age settlements have frequently been on sandy soils in Jutland where the conditions for the preservation of organic material are poor, and the literature of the last 15 years provides not a single example of osteological analysis of Bronze Age material. Material does however lie scattered in many Danish museums, which could illuminate, for example, the great importance of hunting and fishing on the coastal settlements and variations in the composition of herds of domesticated animals within particular parts of the land.

Amongst the other activities pursued on the settlement sites bronzecasting must be briefly mentioned, as traces of this are almost always found when only cultural layers are preserved (192, 193, 223). But apart from a series of minor studies of casting (90, 211) and decorative techniques (57, 179) this area of research has been little cultivated in Bronze Age studies of the last 15 years.

Rather more attention, by contrast, has been paid to textile working. This involves both the more technical aspects and the finished products of the craft (42, 43, 53, 135, 136, 178).

#### SETTLEMENT STUDIES: FURTHER PERSPECTIVES

Part of the picture of Bronze Age settlement sites is the system of trackways which joined the individual settlements together and ensured the exploitation of the surrounding landscape. Small plank roads over wetland have been found both from the early and late Bronze Age in recent years (86), and knowledge of Bronze Age fascine roads has also been substantially increased

(142, 143, 144). The discussion of trackways formerly played a decisive role in Bronze Age settlement studies. The view that lines of burial mounds essentially reflected ancient trackways has been used to support very persistent theories about both Bronze Age settlement and trade. The problem, however, has been that it only rarely has been possible to date ancient stretches of trackways. It is only possible to get at relatively precise dating by scientific means when wood is preserved, for example, in the contexts of bridges, crossing places and other wet localities, or if a trackway lies sealed by a well-dated settlement layer or a burial mound.

More recent critical researches (6) have therefore noted that the barrows, even when situated in long rows, cannot be used for establishing routeways in the Bronze Age landscape, and that earlier researchers' supposition of a large scale network of roads, such as the existence of a major road up through Jutland, must be abandoned.

A more fruitful view of Bronze Age settlements and their exploitation of the surrounding landscape has been published by Kristian Kristiansen (99, 100). Through a topographical analysis he concludes that the general subsistence strategy common to Danish Bronze Age societies included a preference for light soils with a particular type of vegetation: thin, open woodland which is kept down by grazing and used for leafage. The general theory is that in the course of the Bronze Age agricultural intensification resulted in a transformation of the landscape in the settled areas, from open woodland interspersed with swathes of pasture to an open common landscape with scattered forest growth. And further, that through a crisis agricultural production was reorganized about the middle of the first millenium B.C., that is, the beginning of the Iron Age.

When published, this view was still a hypothesis. Several more recent studies have however shown that it corresponds well with results obtained from pollen analysis. A couple of pollen diagrams from Jutland and Sjælland may illustrate this (5, 246).

Pollan analysis from Abkær bog in southern Jutland, for example, was able to show how the face of the landscape was quite stable from the beginning of the Single Grave Period to the middle of the early Bronze Age. Beech invades about 1500 B.C., considerably earlier than previously thought, but does not, in this part of Jutland, achieve the extensive spread which is obtained in, for example, southern Sjælland (5). The reason is



thought to be the intense human activity which marks the settled areas of South Jutland from the middle of the early Bronze Age. Up to this point hazel was widespread, but then becomes less common, which is taken to represent greater land use, i.e. a greater pressure of grazing. These changes precede increasing agricultural activity which is seriously effective at the beginning of the late Bronze Age when the landscape becomes much more open than before and is marked by open pasture and other unwooded agricultural areas interspersed with minor forests.

The pollen diagram thus demonstrates how in the second half of the early Bronze Age a gradual change of the landscape takes place. The result in the late Bronze Age is a landscape with extensive agricultural areas, a picture corresponding well with the postulated expansion of production which was delineated in the more hypothetical model of the development of Bronze Age agriculture.

Of course the sketch given here has many local nuances and raises many new questions. For example, was there a connection between the introduction of the three-aisled longhouse and the changes of the subsistence strategy in the middle of the second millennium B.C.? Furthermore, what was the background of the concentration of settlement during the late Bronze Age which apparently led to the rise of political centres manifesting themselves by the accumulation of wealth and at the same time indicating that the settlement pattern was hierarchically organized?

Settlement studies have also led to more detailed analyses of the representativity of archaeological remains from the Bronze Age (110, 111, 237). For example, E. Baudou (9, 10), by mapping the nearly 18,000 known Danish Bronze Age barrows, has shown how the destruction of large Bronze Age barrows is correlated with intensive cultivation, and how the connection between damage and increasing cultivation is particularly noticeable on the islands of eastern Denmark and in East Jutland during the 17th to the 19th centuries. His conclusion is that all interpretations which start from factors concerning spatial distribution will be precarious unless source-critical research has taken the influence of recent cultivation into consideration.

Interest in regional studies has also increased considerably during the last 15 years. One of the most important surveys is Henrik Thrane's pioneering investigation of a 500 sq.km area of south-west Fyn (219, 221,

230, 232, 233). Bronze Age settlement here in general displays the same features as in the rest of Denmark. The sites are normally located on higher land, by preference in association with good pasture lands with a high water table, and also frequently in association with rich biotopes which permitted supplementary hunting and fishing. Of particular importance is that in the late Bronze Age the settlement pattern reflects a hierarchical structure. The centre of the settlements appears to have been the central village Kirkebjerg by Voldtofte (19, 220, 225). Around this were smaller settlements, which probably each formed independent production units or settlement cells (221).

This picture is drawn not only from the settlements but also from the graves of the region, amongst which the burial mound Lusehøj may be characterized as an emphatic monument, a grave of conspicuous construction with special furnishing and an unusual treatment of the body (200, 209, 215, 217, 233, 243). Besides this, the concentration of gold objects, imported goods and cult items also shows that there must have been a centre of wealth with a focus at Lusehøj-Kirkebjerg, primarily within period V of the late Bronze Age.

Comparable centres are known from other places in Denmark. In periods IV and V another concentration of wealth is observable in the district around Boeslunde in south-west Sjælland (73, 76, 240). The locality, by the placid waters of Skelskør Nor, and the land topography are very similar to the centre in south-west Fyn. The Boeslunde centre also manifests itself through a great accumulation of imported goods, cult items and gold. Almost 4 kg out of the total sum of 7 kg of Bronze Age gold from Sjælland comes from the Boeslunde area. As yet archaeological investigations of any great scope have not been undertaken in south-west Sjælland, and trial excavations in Boeslunde Banke, which was formerly considered a central religious site, proved negative (146, 147).

#### HOARDS AND GRAVES

Whilst up to the beginning of the 1970's Danish Bronze Age research was dominated by diffusionist studies, much of the last 15 years' literature shows different approaches which have increased the need for new studies of long-familiar find groups like hoards and graves.

On the subject of the hoards this has expressed itself

in a systematic approach to source criticism. This, however, involves more than merely considering the closed nature of the finds, because a series of other factors influence the information-value of the data. Two important factors are the influence of the physical factors on the survival of the evidence and the influence of contemporary activities on the discovery and the distribution of finds. These factors have been examined in a valuable work from 1974 (93).

Analysis shows a close correlation between the volume of hoards and economic activities, especially peat digging (a majority of the hoards are found in bogs). Peat digging had, on the whole, the same effect all over Denmark, although the effects appear at different times. Generally speaking, Bronze Age layers in Danish bogs must be assumed to have been dug away by 1900. This, and other circumstances, are clearly reflected in the distribution of hoards. However, in contrast to the Bronze Age barrows the distribution of the hoard finds known to-day seems to be representative of the situation in the Bronze Age.

In another work from 1972 (66) it was argued that the very large amount of single finds from the Bronze Age which cannot be supposed to come from destroyed graves should be treated as one with the hoards. This involves individual swords, spears, axes, ornaments, etc. which, like the hoards, have often been deposited in wet areas: bogs, watercourses, lakes and so on – what is more, in the same regions of the country which have produced the bronze hoards. A large number of cult items belong to the group: lurs, helmets, hammered bronze vessels, statuettes (239) and processional axes, the latter a find-class which has increased dramatically in the past few years (70, 134) with some of the heaviest bronze objects from the whole period.

These numerous depositions are seen as an expression of ritual behaviour, with roots far back in the Neolithic, which continued throughout the Bronze Age. All of the early Bronze Age hoards will eventually be published in E. Aner and K. Kersten's *Die Funde der älteren Bronzezeit* (7), while for the late Bronze Age one must be referred to published catalogues without illustrations (66, 124). A selection of late Bronze Age hoards are, however, published in *Inventaria Archaeologica* (238), and in scattered special articles (49, 94, 101, 173, 174, 196, 198, 199).

The discussion of the interpretation of this large corpus of hoards, mostly of bronzes – male weapons and

tools and female ornaments – has traditionally taken up a large part of the literature. There has in recent years been an increasing tendency to treat the hoards as an expression of ritual behaviour and at the same time a demonstration of social status (109). An important contribution to the discussion has come from Janet Levy (121, 122, 123, 124) who in a survey of the Danish Bronze Age hoards pointed out some striking tendencies: male depositions reveal a maximum diversity in periode II, then a decline, and again an optimum in periode V (but lower than period II), followed by a steep decline in period VI. Female depositions, however, which are more numerous, steadily increase from period II to V, and then also decline. These observations have been used in more widening interpretations of socio-economic development in the Bronze Age of which an account is given below.

Traditionally, excavations of Bronze Age graves are a major part of the rescue digs carried out in Denmark (11, 17, 21, 47, 48, 78, 88, 152, 182, 183, 195). Unfortunately no clear formulated research strategy has been maintained and consequently relatively little new evidence about burial practices has been gleaned in the last 15 years. It is typical that the major publication on this topic is an unchanged reprint of Vilh. Boye's book about the oak-coffin graves of 1896 (25). One important study is however to be noted, Evert Baudou's already mentioned analysis of the representativity of the Early Bronze Age barrows (9, 10).

Significantly new material has, however, emerged concerning the later Bronze Age barrows, primarily in connection with the regional survey of south-west Fyn. The excavation of the great burial mound Lusehøj is particularly important (233). It came as something of a surprise that emphatic monuments of such dimensions were constructed in late Bronze Age Denmark, and the excavations have generally increased the attention paid to late Bronze Age burial practice, not just to the appearance of richly furnished graves but also to other grave-types. Secondary burials in earlier barrows are far from the only grave-form. Major barrows like Lusehøj form one extreme, while at the other end of the spectrum small barrows, as Lusehøj covered (233, 235), are found. At this site the conditions for preservation were especially fortunate. But despite the fact that small barrows are easily ploughed down it has been possible to show that this grave-type had a very wide distribution in southern Denmark (205, 233).

BORUM-ESHØJ	1290	1105
GULDHØJ I	1320	1370
GULDHØJ II	1320	1390
NØRAGERHØJ	1240	1210-1310
LILLE DRAGSHØJ	1310	1280-1345
TRINDHØJ I	1280	1285-1365
TRINDHØJ II	1300	1249-1305
STOREHØJ	1350	1340-1415

Fig. 4. Dendrochronological datings of some Danish oak-coffin graves (left) compared to calibrated C 14 dates (right). From A. Ljungberg (125).

#### CHRONOLOGY AND PROVENANCE STUDIES

The great number of objects from Bronze Age hoards and graves, mostly weapons, tools and ornaments, which have come to light in the last 200 years or so have long formed the primary basis for the modelling of Bronze Age cultural history. In no other period of Danish prehistory have diffusionist studies played so large a part. The foundation for this was laid in Denmark by Sophus Müller's pioneering works from the end of the 19th. century and there was a renaissance under the influence of central European archaeology after World War II. Beyond being an explanatory cultural framework, the diffusionist studies aimed to connect the major European regions together in a network within which the provenance and date of every individual type could be established.

This purpose may be said to have been substantially fulfilled by the end of the 1960's and the early 1970's. In the case of the early Bronze Age this came through Ebbe Lomborg's studies of the late Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age in Denmark (127). For periods II to V of the Bronze Age it came through the works of Henrik Thrane (197, 204, 206, 208, 212, 213, 218) and Klaus Randsborg (164), which particularly aimed at clarifying the relationship with Central Europe. For the end of the Bronze Age, period VI, it came through Jørgen Jensen's assessment of the importation of bronze objects from the earliest Iron Age cultures in Central Europe (66).

The result of these studies was that by about 1975 one could largely determine the relationship between Scandinavian Bronze Age chronology and the chronological scheme for Central Europe. However, simple comparison between the two systems has not proved possible because the period limits are not synchronized in Central Europe and Scandinavia (206). The only exception is the beginning of Ha C, which is contemporary with the beginning of period VI in Scandinavia (66). A series of observations further indicate that even within Scandinavia itself there may be more complicated lines of development, so that in certain regions one must reckon with "sub-periods" II and III which are contemporary with periods III and IV respectively in other regions (112, 164).

In the chronological studies ceramic chronology has not yet been subjected to analysis, although occasional approaches in this direction have been undertaken (37). Also of importance is the large number of C 14 dates of Danish Bronze Age finds. An account of these will not be given here because they will be presented in a future article in this journal. Likewise no additional account is given of the German dendrochronological project which includes the Danish oak-coffin graves. The results are not yet published, partly due to certain interpretative problems arising from the comparison of the West German and Irish series. However a small number of dates are now accessible in the literature (125). Out of eight Danish oak-coffins, seven show a good agreement between the dendrochronological and C 14 datings (Fig. 4).

Up to the early 1970's much research effort was concentrated on Southern Scandinavia's participation in the larger European network of bronze exchange. At the heart of these studies stood the works of Ebbe Lomborg (127), Henrik Thrane (206), Klaus Randsborg (164) and Jørgen Jensen (66) which emphasized the Danube region's decisive importance for the Scandinavian bronze industry. At the same time it could be shown how there were shifting centres for exchange in the broad contact zone in northern Germany and Poland. The general character of the exchange was also discussed (69, 72, 74, 75, 206), and during the later years there has been a tendency to see the diffusion of the metal objects as a combined result of regular contact between local settlement units in combination with more organized trading expeditions extending over long distances (115).

## TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

All the way up to the 1960's Danish archaeology was profoundly marked by the positivist mode of thought which to a large extent regarded archaeological facts as self-explanatory. Diffusionism, with its vaguely formulated concepts concerning, for example, "cultural influence", was the dominant theoretical framework, which meant, for Bronze Age research, that the study of the chronology and provenance of the bronze objects was eventually treated as an end in itself.

New approaches were introduced in the 1970's, when an attempt was made, through the use of neo-evolutionary concepts, to correlate the stages of prehistoric development with certain levels of social organisation on an evolutionary scale involving bands, tribes, chiefdoms and states. An example of this was Jørgen Jensen's comprehensive synthesis in vol. 1 of *Dansk socialhistorie* (72) and *The Prehistory of Denmark* (74). Neo-evolutionary terms were above all considered of heuristic value, in that they functioned, in Max Weber's sense, as "Idealtypen", which should indicate the direction for further research. They thus had some renovatory influence on archaeological research and contributed to the development of new modes of analysis.

Around 1974 Klavs Randsborg had already published a series of works (165, 166, 167, 168) pointing new directions. Through a series of simple, quantitative analyses based upon the weighing of metal artefacts in early Bronze Age graves it was shown that great differences in both wealth and social status must have existed in the Bronze Age population. These major, but graduated differences in status expressed themselves in the grave goods, which for men were rich weapons, badges, folding stools and other objects of symbolic value. The number of women with high social status only seemed to have been half that of men, to judge by the number of identifiable women's graves with metal grave goods. Furthermore a clear correlation could be shown between the degree of social stratification and the supposed density of population in the early Bronze Age settlement areas. This was demonstrated by a comparison of the distribution of graves and an evaluation of the agricultural potential of the different regions of Denmark. The conclusion was that Bronze Age society was stratified by rank and that the graves known from the thousands of Bronze Age barrows only derived from a limited segment of the prehistoric population.

A related analysis dealing with the late Bronze Age was published by Henrik Thrane in 1981 (227). In this the number of bronze artefacts or amber in more than a thousand graves from periods IV to VI was used to show a strong prevalence of graves without metal objects, followed by graves with 1, 2, etc. metal objects. The distribution has a clearly pyramidal shape sharply pointed at the top where exceptional graves of the Lusehøj type lie.

Thus both from the early and late Bronze Age a picture emerges of a society which is interpreted as reflecting a hierarchical chiefdom structure, with unequal access to prestige goods, characterized by the intensive consumption of personal wealth in burials and hoards (108, 113, 114). The rank of the Bronze Age chiefs was expressed in sumptuous goods including both personal ornament and political symbols, such as horse gear, helmets and vessels. These objects were apparently used not only in daily life, but served important ritual functions as grave goods and offerings (124).

Through studies of traces of wear on the bronzes, especially on swords, it has also been suggested that there existed a more complex system of rank comprising chieftains with ritual functions at the top and below these a group of warriors without special ritual functions (56, 106, 107).

As yet it has proved possible only to a limited extent to give these observations a geographical dimension. The size of the postulated chiefdoms, for instance, which must have manifested themselves in a hierarchical settlement pattern, is still an unsolved problem. In some places however it has been possible to integrate the above viewpoints with topographical studies, for example through locating the centres of wealth which existed in the late Bronze Age on the Danish islands (72, 75, 230, 232, 233).

These centres of wealth have been interpreted as nodal points in the network of exchange connections which linked the individual chiefdoms together. In terms borrowed from social anthropology, it has been suggested that they represent a theocratic prestige goods system with religious/political dualism, status rivalry and competition between chiefs over trade, with powers of chieftainship based on the political monopolization of production, on alliances and on long-distance exchange (108, 115).

The use of a neo-evolutionary framework has served, as noted, important heuristic functions. But it is also

clear that it has often resulted in rather static, generalizing models, which are not adequate for explaining variability or change in the archaeological record. This has become evident as the ideological manifestations of wealth and status do not only have a geographical dimension but also a chronological one, and a series of significant fluctuations appear through the Bronze Age. This has already been noted in connection with Janet Levy's studies of the Bronze Age hoards (121, 122, 123, 124).

An analysis of this variability is also found in a series of Kristian Kristiansen's works (98, 102, 104, 108) which deal with the development of ritual norms through Bronze Age periods I to VI as they are expressed in burial rites and the habit of depositing hoards. At the beginning of the early Bronze Age, period I, bronze objects are rarely deposited in graves. The major portion of the imported bronze is invested in deposits which generally belong to the male sphere. The picture is different in period II: wealth and social status are now shown through extensive barrow building, and both men and women are buried with rich grave goods. Hoards, mainly of men's weapons and tools, are also deposited although the share of women's ornaments is strongly on the increase.

In the succeeding period III the building of barrows wanes and cremation is introduced, but the deposition of sumptuous goods in both male and female graves continues. Metal, be it men's weapons and tools or women's ornaments, is relatively seldom deposited in hoards.

At the beginning of the late Bronze Age, period IV, the display of wealth and social status through burial rites dwindles. In general both male and female graves include only a few bronze objects, which are often of symbolic character such as miniature swords. The number of hoards by contrast increases and the volume of objects belonging to the female sphere is clearly increased. This development culminates in period V in which only few richly furnished graves are constructed. A majority of bronze objects are however still invested in hoards. The volume of women's goods is greater than ever previously. But besides these there appears a large group of objects, lurs, shields, helmets, hammered bronze vessels, horse gear and so on, which must be seen as attributes of a male, priestly role.

After the final flourishing of Scandinavian Bronze Age culture there is a break in the traditions of a thou-

sand years. Both men's and women's effects disappear from the hoards, and eventually the deposits cease. The volume of bronze objects in the graves also diminishes further.

The pattern of variation sketched here is important for an understanding of the internal dynamic of Bronze Age culture and to overcome some of the explanatory limitations of the neo-evolutionary approach. Attempts have therefore been made to isolate some of the factors which influenced the variations. Kristian Kristiansen, for example, has pointed to fluctuations in bronze supply as they appear through the analyses of wear on prestige bronzes which indicates how long the bronze objects circulated before deposition (96, 98). Fluctuations may also be understood through independent evidence, for instance of the quantity of bronze invested in casting prestige objects. Bronze supplies seem to have increased up to period II and the beginning of period III, which represents a peak, before supplies begin to fall back. A second peak, not as high as in period II, comes in period V, but after that the importation of bronze declines drastically to virtually cease in period VI (98, 102).

Attempts have also been made to investigate the relationship with the subsistence economy. The picture here is as yet unclear, although increasing exploitation of the landscape is visible from period II, apparently culminating in the reorganization of the settlement pattern in period VI, at the same time as the southern imports end. It is as yet too early to draw extensive conclusions about the coincidence of these factors, but they may, eventually, lead to the understanding of some of the general conditions and developmental processes that govern the relationship between material function and cultural form in ranked and stratified societies (108).

Thus Bronze Age research in Denmark in the last 15 years has followed a pattern characteristic of a great deal of European archaeology. A diffusionist research tradition was replaced at the end of the 1960's and the beginning of the 1970's by a new trend closely associated with various forms of neo-evolutionism in social anthropology. In order to overcome some of the limitations in this explanatory framework, evolutionism has been further developed with theories which can explain the structure and internal dynamics of specific social systems. In Danish archaeology several Bronze Age researchers have aimed a showing how the interplay be-

tween the internal structural situation and adaption to external factors are the driving forces behind the development of prehistoric society. It has to some degree been possible to show that development at times goes in jumps which can bring either cultural flourishing or decline, crises or collapses. General evolutionism has thereby partly been abandoned for more concrete models of historical development.

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## Appendix 1

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## Appendix 2

### Excavations of Bronze Age house sites

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