Mod en ny arkæologi?

Trender og trauma i arkæologisk tænkning
The current situation

• The recent breakthrough in aDNA is fast producing new evidence on human origins and expansions
• Various forms of strontium isotope analyses has dramatically altered our perception of human mobility and diet in prehistory
• This new evidence is not accounted for in existing discourses
• Consequently the prevailing autonomous paradigms – whether processual or postprocessual have silently collapsed
• It leaves us in a theoretical vacuum of various theoretical reorientations, none of which accounts for the much more complex interpretative situation that is emerging, or only for a small part of it
New theoretical and methodological focus on travels and migrations
New results need new interpretations and theorizing

- During the Middle Neolithic different cultural/‘ethnic’ groups can now be demonstrated to have different diet/economies and DNA origins.
- Mobility analyses show that mobility increases dramatically with the advent of the Bronze Age, up to 50% of the populations in a cemetery were ‘foreign’
- Corresponds to an integration of previous separate groups into a single social and cultural framework, yet with new forms of specializations
Historical parallels 1

- The period 1850-1860 saw the parallel, and related, scientific breakthroughs of cultural, biological and geological evolution.
- It paved the way for a period of systematic data collection and methodological ordering of data headed by Oscar Montelius. New typological and chronological systems of knowledge emerged that established a new understanding of human origins in prehistory that replaced biblical accounts.
- Science and ideas of progress went hand in hand, and established archaeology as a scientific discipline.
- This paradigm was challenged around 1900 and replaced by a cultural-historical attempt at explanation, headed by Gustav Kossina, the first theoretical archaeological.
Historical parallels 2

• The period 1950-1960 saw the breakthrough of nuclear power and the related method of C14 dating in archaeology.

• It paved the way for a re-orientation of archaeological interpretations, and the assimilation of new scientific methods of analysis from biology (pollen analysis), geography (settlement models), chemistry (trace analyses) etc.

• During the 1960 it gave rise to the science based New Archaeology.

• This science based paradigm was challenged by a culture-historical revival during the 1980s, under the banner of post-processual archaeology.
Where are we now?

Theorizing material culture

Thinking Through Material Culture
An Interdisciplinary Perspective

Carl Knappett

And things

IN DEFENSE OF THINGS
Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects

Bjørnar Olsen
Where are we now 2

Theorizing cultural evolution

And human evolution
Shared trends?
Recognizing the potential of the archaeological record

- After 40 years of contract archaeology, real historical knowledge about settlement and landscapes possible
- After the 3rd science revolution, museum collections are becoming revitalized
- This invites a re-theorizing of the archaeological record and its history
Cultural heritage has expanded its scope from archaeology to society at large. How is archaeology meeting the challenge?
Where is the mainstream?
The big questions about science and the humanities are back on the agenda

PREHISTORY
The Making of the Human Mind
Colin Renfrew

APING MANKIND
NEUROMANIA, DARWINITIS AND THE MISREPRESENTATION OF HUMANITY
RAYMOND TALLIS
Such as: inequality, collapse, comparative studies, and global history. And the return of the grand narrative.
Globalization and comparative studies go hand in hand
But also micro-history: from the perception of senses to individual fates.
From materialities to comparative world history
The archaeology of micro- and macro history, based on an integration of science/adna and archaeology.

Two examples
Micro-archaeology: Corded Ware groups in-married sometimes with ‘foreign’ women, as in Eulau in central Germany, where several families had later been killed brutally by the ‘foreign’ women’s group.

Tensions between the new invaders and existing groups resulted in violence, here a family of parents and two children.

Strontium values for all buried victims in Eulau, showing non-local females as wives of local Corded Ware males.
Macro-history: transmission of people and genes. Genetic map of Bronze Age/early Iron Age steppe populations and their modern representation for female and male lines.
Historical background; the expansion of chariot warfare 2000-1800 BC. One possible explanation.
Where does these new trends in research and interpretation take us?
The death of archaeological theory or a return to theoretical/scientific optimism?
Discursive cycle of Rationalism and Romanticism applied to archaeology. Can we break the cycle? Is archaeology becoming post-discursive?
The future of archaeological theory: towards a new paradigm or a multiplicity of paradigms?

• The ongoing scientific revolution of archaeological knowledge has implications for theory and interpretation, as well as critical thinking
• When the contours of this new prehistory becomes clearer we will see new theoretical and interpretative models emerge
• Due to the nature of the new evidence, we will see more grand narratives, as well as micro-histories of kin groups/individuals (from genome histories to genetic relations in cemeteries, e.g. Eulau)
• Some ingredients: materialism/materiality and evolution/globalisation
• Prehistory will thus in some situations be subject to the same level of detail as modern material culture studies
• This opens up for a truly human history from the Palaeolithic till today, and a truly interdisciplinary understanding of human history
• It will demand the development of a critical archaeology that engages in a discussion of biology vs culture, genetic versus cultural evolution etc.
• This new paradigm will emerge during the next 10 years. It is already in the making.