

INVITED REVIEW

Reflections on Jørgen Jensen: *The Prehistory of Denmark; from the Stone Age to the Vikings* – Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2013

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ABSTRACT

In the Danish version, Jørgen Jensen's *Prehistory of Denmark* is presented as the continuation of an archaeological tradition going back to 1843. Jensen's work is the fourth, and what is common to these archaeological descriptions of our past is that they discuss our Danish origin and identity, related to the worldview of Romanticism, and reflect the most important issues at the time of their publication. The background is that Denmark was reduced to a very small state during this period, that Danes migrated to the area after the Ice Age, and that we have lived on the periphery of cultural evolution and civilisation. By presenting his predecessors' reflections on such issues, I analyse aspects of Jensen's work from this perspective.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 20 November 2014
Accepted 10 April 2016

KEYWORDS

History of archaeology;
evolution; history; national
identity; origin;
internationalism; culture;
cultural diffusion; migration;
Romanticism

In his introduction to the Danish edition of *The Prehistory of Denmark; from the Stone Age to the Vikings*, Jørgen Jensen (1936–2008) positions his book as a historical continuation of an old tradition in Danish archaeology, a tradition with three predecessors. The first is Jens Jacob Asmussen Worsaae (1821–85): *Danmarks Oldtid – oplyst ved Oldsager og Gravhøie*, of 1843, translated into English in 1849 as *Primeval Antiquities of Denmark*. According to Jensen, this book presents Danish prehistory as a Golden Age painting, and was written in a time when the old landscape as it was formed in the Iron Age was disappearing because of the relocation of the farmhouses from the villages to the fields. The second book in this tradition is Sophus Otto Müller's (1846–1934) *Vor Oldtid. Danmarks forhistoriske Archæologi – almenfattelig fremstillet* (*Our prehistory. Denmark's prehistoric archaeology – presented in a general understandable way*), of 1897, which Jensen characterises as showing the proud, national archaeological science, after the defeat by the Germans in 1864. This book reflects the national regeneration during this period. The third work within this tradition is Johannes Brøndsted's

(1890–1965) *Danmarks Oldtid (The Prehistory of Denmark)* in three volumes, published between 1938 and 1940, which, according to Jensen, reflects the time just before the Second World War. Finally, there is Jørgen Jensen's own *Danmarks oldtid – The Prehistory of Denmark* in four volumes, published between 2001 and 2004. As I will show, this work may be characterised as reflecting a globalised Denmark in a combination of a 1960s anthropological perspective and the ideology of postmodernism.

Comparing these four works shows an enormous development in the knowledge of Danish prehistory, from Worsaae's 123 pages to Jensen's 2560 pages. In addition, the duration of our prehistory, that is, the time between the first known human presence within what is today Danish territory, and the end of the Viking Age, with the arrival of Christianity, is extended during the four presentations of our prehistory by 12,000 years, from a beginning in 1000 BC in Worsaae's book, to a beginning in 13,000 BC in Jensen's. In spite of this extension of prehistory, it did not change Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788–1865) famous division into a Stone Age, a Bronze Age and an Iron

Age, a tripartition that more or less structures the two first works, and gives titles to the volumes of the two latest. It looks as though this tripartition of Danish prehistory has itself become a national monument.

Because Jørgen Jensen regards his books as a continuation of a tradition this paper presents some of those traditions, in order to situate Jensen's contributions in the perspective of his predecessors. The framework for this is the national romanticism that has been very significant in the construction of the Danish self-image, and in Danish prehistoric archaeology during the whole period. I want to show how Jørgen Jensen manages this tradition in his construction of a Danish twenty-first century prehistory, with consequences for his idea of a twenty-first century Danish identity.

All four works refer to archaeological artefacts exhibited in what was in Worsaae's time 'The Museum of Northern Antiquities', and in 1892 became the National Museum. Here in the country's main museum, located in the capital, chosen archaeologically-educated employees, often with our four authors in executive positions, have been authorised to choose those artefacts they decide are representative of the national history, no matter where in the country they are found, and no matter where in the world they were produced. The less spectacular artefacts are returned to the museums in the provinces, where they are exhibited as representing the local, and thus much less sophisticated or developed culture, compared with the national level, and the level in the capital. In connection with the prehistoric exhibitions in the National Museum, a history of Denmark from the earliest times is constructed, a history that, with all the finest artefacts, is meant to give Danes a historical identity as national (but not nationalistic) citizens, in accordance with central issues at the times of the publication of the prehistories, and openings of the exhibitions. These prehistories have always been confined to the geographical borders at the time of publication, and because during the whole period discussed here, Denmark was a small state with a past as a leading European state, our grandeur and pride lay in the past, and not in the losses of land. With selected artefacts, the National Museum constructs a common Danish historical and original identity, and the books discussed here – and many other

more specialised books – communicate the results to primarily the whole country but also to the World.

It was a given that the people living in what is today Denmark had migrated to this area from elsewhere. This was consistent with both the Christian worldview and the descent from Noah and the repopulation of the earth from Mount Ararat, and with the scientific worldview following the discovery of the existence and extent of the Ice Age, in 1837 and after. Because of this descent from immigrants, Danish prehistory had to construct a national culture in a global context, given that both the people and the culture or elements of culture came from outside. The challenge and task was to combine this with the construction of autonomous Danish activity and creativity, that is, to avoid making Danish culture the product of solely foreign – and especially German – impact. Danish culture had to be primarily a product of Danish natural or human creativity, to make it a common past to be proud of, and a contemporary tradition to unite the people.

The contemporary relevance of prehistory

According to Worsaae, an awakening of the Danish people happened around the beginning of the nineteenth century, and a part of this awakening was the inclusion of prehistoric monuments as part of the national tradition and identity. Worsaae notes that this reflects and is consistent with Romanticism's idea of the importance of a national history in the construction of a national identity. One result of this awakening was a fine collection of ancient artefacts from all over the country, made available to the people, free of charge. However, Worsaae also recognised that this served people from Copenhagen only, and this was the reason he wrote his book. In this way, people from the provinces who had patriotically collected and delivered many fine artefacts to the museum could see their beneficial use.

The 1840s were a time when the last elements of the earlier Danish status as a major Nordic power had disappeared, both at sea, with the British destruction of the Danish navy in 1807, and in land, with the loss of Norway in 1814. In addition, it was a period when ideas of regional separatism threatened to divide the country further (Frandsen 1996). That was the reason it was so important to

also address the burghers and farmers in the provinces, to remind them of their Danish nationality, or make them national-minded. This may also explain why the book was published at the request of the king, after Worsaae had lectured on prehistory. In accordance with this, Worsaae describes the roots of the Danish people and its relations to neighbouring peoples:

A people with self-esteem and esteem for its independence ... must necessarily look back on the past to inform itself of the tribe or nation it belongs to, and which kind of kinship relates it to other peoples, and whether, from the beginning of time, it lived in its present country, or migrated to this area later, and its fate over time; in short, to learn how it has become what it is today. The reason is that only when a people is aware of this will it achieve full awareness of its uniqueness, and only then will it be able to forcibly protect its independence, and eagerly work for greater future development, and thus promote the fortunes and esteem of the fatherland. ... It is obvious that it is very important for us Danes to obtain the most exact knowledge possible concerning our ancestors' immigration, origin, customs, traditions and achievements. (Worsaae 1843, p. 1–2)

According to Worsaae, the Danes are the descendants of a proud Gothic tribe that immigrated to the country with a Bronze-Age culture, and later incorporated iron into the culture without letting the weaker Goths, who came with the iron, take control of our country. The weaker Goths with iron became Norwegians and Swedes. This reduction of especially the Swedes might be a reaction to the traditional Swedish identity as the real and finest Goths (Jensen 2002). It is more interesting that here, Worsaae demonstrates that culture can diffuse from one people to another, something that was generally accepted by cultural historians only 50 years later. It was important to Worsaae to make Danes descendants of people we could admire and be proud of.

Sophus Müller wrote his book at a time when the territory of Denmark had been further reduced since Worsaae's book was published, with the loss of Schleswig and Holstein, following the war of 1864. This was also the period when, after a showdown between the bourgeoisie and the farmers on the one side, and the land-owning aristocracy on the other, a parliamentary democracy was on the agenda. The aristocracy had been in power since 1875, supported

by the king, and without constitutional legitimacy. Moreover, it was a time when the labouring classes began to be a force in the parliament. Thus, it is not a regional or national split that Müller confronts, but the struggle between classes, primarily the struggle and triumph of the bourgeoisie over the aristocracy. Müller expresses this by pointing out that archaeology will be the archaeology of the people:

Rather than aristocratically counting the ancestors back to the Middle Ages, the study of prehistory regards itself as a child of the new époque, born on the morning of the century of freedom. Proud to have grown from the bosom of the people, it maintains its free and peculiarly exceptional position. It will continually attract both commoners and scholars, and those words that were once written on the flag will not disappear: equally popularly and scientifically. (Müller 1897, p. 702)

By exposing the past, the people's science will tell the Danish people who it is.

It was up to Johannes Brøndsted to formulate the national heathen past of the interwar period. His *Danmarks Oldtid – Danish Prehistory* was published in three volumes, *The Stone Age* in 1938, *The Bronze Age* in 1939, and *The Iron Age* in late 1940, the last published after the German occupation of Denmark, in April 1940. His presentation of the Danish past was characterised by a new and, for the interwar period, typical self-image: that Denmark was just a small and rather insignificant country on the periphery of Europe, a Europe governed by superpowers such as Germany, France and Great Britain. This identity had its famous popular expression in a poem from the Danish workers' party poet, Jeppe Aakjær (1866–1930). With reference to the Great War, when Denmark was neutral, he in 1916 described Denmark as a tiny country, clandestinely enjoying its cosiness in a remote corner of the world while the whole world is burning around its cradle (Aakjær 2006, no. 468). This poem described Brøndsted's opinion very precisely. This already appears in his introduction to the *Old Stone Age* or Palaeolithic period, of which Brøndsted writes: '... against the background of World History, the 10–20,000 years of life on this spot on the earth is a late and limited part of an enormous totality' (Brøndsted 1938, p. 13). However, what we no longer are we once were; from our prehistory, we can feel

pride for our people's earlier importance in world history. Twice we have been a superpower. The first time was in the Early Bronze Age, and the second was the Viking Age, when the Nordic countries were very powerful, and operated far from their home countries. (Brøndsted 1940, p. 308).

In the 1970s, Jørgen Jensen published a shorter Danish prehistory as the first volume of a Danish social history. The title of Jørgen Jensen's contribution was *Oldtidens samfund. Tiden indtil år 800 (The prehistoric societies. The period until AD 800)*. This book, published in 1979, reflected the contradictions in Danish society at the time of publication, only 6 years after we had joined the EEC (now EU), and with an economy in crisis. Here, Jensen very strongly rejected cultural changes as the result of the immigration of foreign peoples. Instead, he argued that Danish prehistory was the result of a dynamic between different crises and Danish self-sufficiency. Here, in the aftermath of our inclusion or integration into the EEC, there was a fear among leftists and nationalists that, economically, Denmark would become a remote German province. In this situation, it was important to Jensen to demonstrate that we were in no danger of being overpowered physically or culturally from the outside, and that we were in full control of the impact or import of cultural elements from the continent.

The 1970s were also a time when theories of social systems were central to sociocultural analysis in the understanding of societies, cultures and humans. This is reflected in Jensen's construction of a tight, systemic relation among population density, occupations, social patterns, and settlement, as mutually conditioning one another. The dynamic of the system was presented as a kind of a crisis cycle, where a renewal of technology, most often actively chosen and imported from the outside, made possible a greater population density, thus solving the crisis for the moment. Nevertheless, by and by, a new overpopulation develops, resulting once more in a shortage of food. Again, new technology is developed or imported, which again leads a growth of the population and to a food crisis, which again causes the import or development of new technology, and so forth. Within this dynamic, the population density determines the social system. The essence of this prehistoric experience is that we ourselves determined what was imported from outside, and that we have always been able to manage the crises we have been confronted with.

Jørgen Jensen published the Danish version of *The Prehistory of Denmark* at the turn of the millennium, when nationalism was eagerly debated in Denmark, and when a book with a national perspective was easily misunderstood as nationalistic. A rather right wing party, The Danish People's Party, promoted nationalism as its central political topic and was strongly critical of Muslim immigrants who did not integrate into Danish society. The supporters of this party were primarily less-educated people from the provinces, and their opponents were primarily those who considered themselves the intellectual, cultural and creative elite. This creative elite lived in the capital, and with their favourite newspaper, *Politiken*, they distanced themselves from, and were hostile to The Danish People's Party and its supporters. A Danish prehistory with a strong nationalistic perspective in the style of its predecessors would easily expose its author as a suspect supporter or sympathiser with The Danish People's Party, and the book might possibly be part of the political propaganda of this party. If this happened, it would politically and intellectually discredit any intellectual and humanistic author, in the eyes of the cultural elite. In addition, there were also other themes of great importance to this elite group, such as biodiversity, cultural relativism, globalisation, environmental and/or climatic awareness, and the idea of extreme individualism. As an example, the climate debate is commented on in Jensen's description of the rising sea during the Palaeolithic. Referring to the period of 7000–6000 BC, he continues:

The perspective is thought-provoking at a time when we discuss the future effects of the so-called greenhouse effect. It can create a new melting of the ice masses at the Poles. Climate scientists consider this to cause a rise of the oceans in the order of ½–1 metre. In 50–100 years, we contemporary humans may also have to move our settlements further into the country. (Jensen 2001, vol. 1, p. 136, not included in the English edition p. 74).

In comparison to the three earlier books on Danish prehistory, globalisation is evident in the very structure of Jensen's prehistory. He does not start with the first immigration into the area of our country after the Ice Age, nor with the first signs of humans in this area. His introductory chapter begins with human origins in Africa, and presents this in accordance with the so-called 'Out-of-Africa' hypothesis,

which had been the dominant theory since 1987, although contested by the so-called ‘multiregional’ theory (Høiris 2016 – forthcoming). After this, Jensen restricts his perspective to the earliest cultures in Europe, and finally, he further reduces his focus to what he calls the ‘North European’ or the ‘South Scandinavian’ area, denoting the area as ‘Danish’ only very seldom. He presents the culture of this area as partly the object of, or adapted to the northern nature, partly the result of various impacts from Central and South European imperial cultures. In this dialectic between cultural impacts from the South and contemporary existing culture, that is, cultural contact on the one side, and the adjustment of the new to the Nordic nature in securing existence and development on the other, Jensen constructs a space that allows him to present the Nordic people as active subjects in their own history. After his four volumes, Jensen finishes both the publications, the Danish as well as the English, with a national but not nationalistic morale:

Trying to recall the history of human existence in what we have called Denmark for the last thousand years means recalling the diversity of both nature and mankind. For as has been said at the beginning of this book, one of the greatest challenges of our time is the battle against the impoverishment of biological diversity that is expressed by the extinction of species. It is an equally great challenge to preserve – through the study of human history – an understanding of the diversity of culture. If we connect the two, we understand that the eternal Denmark is to be found precisely where one encounters the fine interaction between the culture of bygone times and the freshness of nature. A glorious land of sun, rain, of weather fair and rough, with fog and wind, and with windswept beaches where the waves eat up the shore, and the seabirds fly off in screaming flocks. (Jensen 2013, p. 1093)

That was as far as you could go with nationalism as a member of the Danish creative elite in Copenhagen. The interplay between culture and nature was the kind of patriotism to which Jensen, with his four-volume Danish, and posthumous 1093-page English *Danish Prehistory*, relates. This is a very different form of patriotism, compared to that of the three earlier authors, for Jensen also appeals to the European part of our nation and national identity. In the chapters on the Viking Age, he argues a couple of times that history is made in Europe, and, that it is from this part of the world we got

the inspiration to develop ourselves: ‘During the ninth century, and until after the year 1000, craftsmen made artistic works, and always as a result of impact from either the continent, in the South, or from the British Isles, in the West, but always modified to retain the special Nordic Tone ...’, and ‘Many of the Danish chieftains seem to have been of the opinion that it was time to seek inclusion in the European community’. This happened with King Harald Bluetooth accepting Christianity (Jensen 2006, vol. 4, p. 471, not included in the English edition before p. 1039; see also 2013 p. 1061). And, Jensen goes on to say that we ought not to isolate ourselves from globalisation: ‘Strong foreign movements were what, in a short period of time, transformed Denmark into a mediaeval European society’. (Jensen 2006, vol. 4, p. 558, not included in the English edition before p. 1089)

Related to the debates in Denmark at the time of publication, the message is clear. History has taught us to not isolate our country, but that it is better to join Europe, as we did when we became Christians in the Viking Age, the apex of Danish historical, ideological identity. The obvious interpretation of this is that it marks Denmark as a part of a common European culture, a part of the EU, and a society open to foreigners who might seek our country and inspire us.

The dynamics of history

Worsaae did not discuss the dynamics behind development, evolution or history. This was not an issue during the romantic period, given the particularistic conception of history. National histories were not determined by external forces, but by internal ones, perhaps innate in the people itself, and the present was seen as the product of history, which in turn was the result of many coincidences. Worsaae notes only that history has been formed as a succession of ‘ages’, and that the first or oldest, characterised by stone tools, was the product of universal human nature, and thus identical all over the world (Worsaae 1843, p. 20). This also meant that humans in Denmark had started from scratch, that is, a beginning at the level of the original primitive human. In a way, we were part of the world since the beginning, which for Denmark was c. 1000 years after the deluge, when ‘Denmark, because of a dramatic natural upheaval, emerged

from the sea' (Worsaae 1843, p. 8). Worsaae presented this beginning as a primitive Stone Age, something that was eagerly discussed and created major problems in Europe, because according to *Genesis*, iron was invented only seven generations after Adam. Maybe Worsaae knew geologist John Woodward's (1665–1728) 1728 publication, *Fossils of All Kinds, Digested into a Method, Suitable to Their Mutual Relation and Affinity*, where Woodward made it clear that metal was known to man up to and including the time of Noah. But for humans, the catastrophic conditions after the deluge made the struggle for existence so difficult that man could only just manage to scratch out a living, with the result that all knowledge of metallurgy totally disappeared. In addition, all metal tools from before the deluge had been destroyed by the deluge, and were thus unavailable. According to Woodward, that was the reason people began with stone tools immediately after the deluge, and only later developed the use of metal once again, something that must have happened after the spread from the Tower of Babel, since the American Indians had no knowledge of metallurgy.

Müller, too, formulated his prehistory in accordance with the ideas of the culture and history of Romanticism. Like many of the linguistic and cultural scholars of his time, and the period of Romanticism in general, he supported the idea of the Orient as the creative region of the world, the area in which most culture originated – 'ex oriente lux'. This narrative combined the 1786 discovery of Sanskrit as the root of all Indo-European languages with Romanticism's integration of Christianity in scholarly reflection supporting the idea of the origin of man in the East. Müller writes:

During the Stone Age, the impetus for new developments often seems to have come from Western Europe, and from here the new ideas may be traced in the areas further South, over the Mediterranean, ... and back to their place of origin, the cradle of culture in the East. (Müller 1897, p. 190)

One example of history of origin is presented in Müller's analysis of the dolmens. Because man originally lived in caves, the dolmens are most numerous in regions with no caves – for example in Southern Scandinavia. It is difficult for Müller to determine where the development of the dolmens

took place: '... but everything is in favour of this having taken place in the Orient, within those countries where the great ancient cultures developed, and man for the first time was led to a higher form of civilisation' (Müller 1897, p. 70). From here, civilisation spread to the neighbouring peoples in India, the Caucasus, Crimea, Northern Africa and so on, and from here came improvements and refinements in tomb building, something we can observe in the increasing artistry, the more we are near the Southern European classic countries. Thus, development was caused by man's attempts to maintain the same culture or life under changed conditions. That was the reason caves in mountains became dolmens. With this argumentation, Müller also showed his adherence to another of the dogmas of Romanticism, that cultural elements were discovered or invented only once, and often by chance. Afterwards, they spread throughout the world, and the uniqueness of each culture or people was a consequence of receiving cultural elements from without, and then adapting them to the national culture and nature. That was the reasoning behind adhering to the idea of culture as a cohesive unit, combined with the idea of cultural diffusion.

According to Müller, Danish prehistory was the result of cultural impact from without, but he also made room for our own initiative. It was characteristic of the Danes that they made independent developments or improvements on received cultural elements. As an example, the Roman and the Nordic melded, and formed the basis for independent Nordic styles in crafts. Among other things, our independent development of different cultural elements was made possible by the special situation of being located on the periphery of the world. We were far from the origin and centre of the different movements, and only later did what was created in other areas reach us. We were spared the use of time and work of the first trials and defects. When a cultural phenomenon arrived here, it had stood the tests of use and function, and shown its vitality and worth. Thus, we might well receive culture from others, but we ourselves developed it into our own culture. Müller regarded the dynamic interaction between cultures or cultural elements as the dynamic cause of development in Denmark.

For Johannes Brøndsted, the dynamic factor was the interaction with, or adaptation to natural

conditions, in addition to cultural loans coming to the North from the South. Brøndsted was inspired by German anthropogeography and cultural history. The natural conditions changed slowly from arctic tundra to woodland, and the humans slowly changed by adapting to this change.

The way of life ... and hence all the available tools were changed and reshaped by nature. The crucial, common stamp for all human life in the Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) was exactly the unconditional and total dependence on the natural surroundings. A small measure of independence, and thus the conditions for real cultural development, would arise only with the Younger Stone Age (Neolithic) and its peasant culture. (Brøndsted 1938, p. 13)

Here, Brøndsted concurs with the idea that in the earliest times, man and culture were totally determined by natural conditions. With development or evolution, and man's transformation of nature, man becomes more and more free. In this process, both Müller and Brøndsted regarded man as a conservative being, and maybe lazy, too. To them, only changes of climate and of the conditions of life, or being forced to accept a foreign culture, could do away with the power of habit and create change.

Brøndsted notes that in general, 'everything of importance that happened in the Palaeolithic was due to climate change' (Brøndsted 1938, p. 121) and he proceeds to state that it is most likely that several times, new groups of people immigrated into the country during the Palaeolithic. Combining cultures is now unproblematic, and so is blending peoples. This refers to the idea of migrations, which, since the second half of the nineteenth century, had been central to understanding the arrival in Europe of the Aryans from the East, and their subsequent dominance of the area. In a period with a massive and catastrophic focus on race and pure races, Brøndsted presents the Danish descent in the British way, as a mixture of many (of the best) creative forces.

With the end of the Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer existence, the direct dependence of cultural change on natural change and on immigration also ceased. Now, new laws of culture made their appearance. They were determined by human nature:

A form or a type grows from a primitive point of origin within the limits marked out by practical

demands, to a full unfolding or blooming, and afterwards it becomes callous, degenerates, and finally disappears. Here, we see a law that scholars, especially under the influence of the Darwinian theories, detected early, and used in schemes of development, showing the forms of tools in primitive cultures. This 'typology' is useable with care, and if possible, always controlled by other time determining factors. (Brøndsted 1938, p. 156)

Even if form and function have obtained their apogee, man cannot refrain from making changes, and thus the form is forced into degeneration and negative development. 'Thus, anything has only a limited lifetime' (Brøndsted 1938, p. 158). That is why types of material culture disappear, which Brøndsted later shows is also the case with clay pots. They are also subject to the law of constant change, resulting in a decline in quality and decay following the culmination of a style (Brøndsted 1938, p. 245).

Summarising the Neolithic, Brøndsted notes that during this period there were strong influences from the outside, and a substantial development of its own conditions:

This culture, which, with contributions and impulses from several sides, unfolds itself in Denmark during those centuries, is characterised by the blooming of a strong and vigorous race with favourable living conditions, and under the influence of considerable skills for agriculture as well as commerce. (Brøndsted 1938, p. 214).

So, immediately after nature released the Danes, the calibre of the Danish people appeared.

During the Bronze Age, classes formed, and development became related to those classes. The new upper class 'understood in an outstanding way how to maintain contact with Central Europe, and, by an excellent and active commercial system spanning centuries, to create the basis for a rich, extended cultural life' (Brøndsted 1939, p. 10). What really impresses Brøndsted is the ability of this upper class to secure so much metal in a country without metal of its own. Moreover, he – and his readers – are further impressed by the 'spiritual energy' that is demonstrated by the processing of bronze. Only very few findings originate directly from foreign areas. This impressive independent processing 'is the reason the Nordic culture has been able to assert itself gloriously in these material fields in the European context, not only in its initial

greatness, but throughout the Bronze Age' (Brøndsted 1939, p. 93).

The Bronze Age was the culmination of an independent Nordic cultural development, and the end was characterised by a strong foreign impact, which arose at the same time as a certain decrease in production at home sets in. This is not a real breach in history, 'but they are whirls in the cultural reproduction, which until now was a continuous course. They are ripples that warn of great changes to come. Iron will replace bronze ...' (Brøndsted 1939, p. 228). Decline is on its way, in accordance with the previously mentioned law. What is now received from the outside is no longer incorporated into the local culture as critically and independently as it was before. This is Brøndsted's rise and fall of an early Nordic empire, and in his text you feel the threat from the 3rd Empire in 1939, when Brøndsted writes: 'A great period was ending, new and difficult times were soon to come' (Brøndsted 1939, p. 253).

In the Iron Age, European cultures determined what happened in the North. The history of Celts, Germans and Romans formed the perspective in which the Danish or Nordic Iron Age is to be understood. The first part of this period was characterised by 'scarcity, decrease, and thrift' (Brøndsted 1940, p. 37), and the reason was that the Celts blocked the supply of iron from the South. Nevertheless, this also had a positive effect; we had to mine iron ourselves. In addition, the climate changed, and 'in all matters of human life, the climate has a decisive influence on the development of material culture' (Brøndsted 1940, p. 69). The climate change between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age resulted in a colder and more humid climate, but this also had its positive aspects, effecting a change in agriculture and livestock farming. The challenges of historical and climatic changes resulted in important cultural improvements, for example, the plough. Nevertheless, this transition was still difficult, with widespread poverty. Wealth gives rise to independent development, whereas poverty makes development dependent on nature and foreigners.

When Jørgen Jensen published his work, cultural studies theories had shifted from ideas of cultural processes controlled by laws, to ideas of man as an independent agent. Jensen introduces his chapter on the early prehistory with a statement in accordance with this theoretical change. This does not show how

man adapted to the environment, but how man overcame the limitations imposed by nature in its dynamic fluctuations. Now man is subject in his own story, an actor and not a product of natural or cultural conditions. The concept of society of late modernism, with its focus on the individual, is projected on the past, and Jensen structures each of the central chapters in the same way. First, he describes the climate changes, and then changes in the natural conditions, which are again presented as challenges that man has to overcome on his way forward and upwards. This forms the point of departure for his description of the culture and history. This understanding of development is especially important to Jensen in his descriptions of the earliest periods of prehistory. However, in his detailed descriptions of specific cultures, for example, the Maglemosian culture, he describes 3000 years of development as an adaptation to the development of the big forests. This is modified in the following period, when the dynamic processes include both adaptation and the inventive utilisation of the shifting possibilities offered by the ever-changing natural conditions. Only now, in Jørgen Jensen's view, man seems to move slowly from being an object, subject to natural conditions, to becoming an agent or subject in its own history, which matches Jensen's programmatic statement. And, if you relate this to neo-evolutionary theory, a kind of modern romanticist theory that is still stands behind Jensen's concept of development, it may be seen as a rephrasing and personification of what the neo-evolutionists termed 'evolutionary potential'.

In making man a creator of history, Jensen establishes possibilities for the involvement of new forms of forces in behind the further development. He now includes anthropology, and finds gift exchange one of the most common modes of human communication, which, together with kinship relations and entering alliances of many different kinds, plays an important role in the interaction between societies. Central to his argument is Marcel Mauss's (1872–1950) *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*, of 1923–24, with Mauss's identification of the laws of gift exchange, the obligation to give, receive and give again as the central factors creating and maintaining social relations, and thus, communities (Mauss, 1993/1925). Inspired by the French anthropological structuralist, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969, 1949), Jensen

adds the exchange of women as the most important form of gift exchange for establishing alliances. And inspired by the French Marxist anthropologist Claude Meillassoux the system of exchange of women is presented as a result of the contradiction between the old men and the young (Meillassoux 1975, 1978). In Jensen's prehistoric universe, alliances are created by the exchange of women, with bride prices in the shape of material artefacts, in a system controlled by the old men. Meillassoux needed this contradiction to establish class struggle in primitive society, which to him, inspired by Trotskyism, was the dynamic evolutionary force. Jensen is not so much of a Trotskyite. He just registers that this idea of exchange in the Palaeolithic era does not conflict with known findings, especially in graves, and this may explain the arrival of foreign artefacts in Denmark during this period (Jensen 2013, p. 125). After this, Jensen suggests his version of the introduction of agriculture after 4000 BC, which, according to Jensen, has something to do with social competition in the hunting-fishing society. Thus, the dynamic forces of development or evolution are adaptations to, and the triumph over nature in competition among groups, groups that in this context make use of the logic of gift exchange, especially the exchange of women, to form alliances.

The origin and global development of agriculture brought agriculture to Northern Europe, and in his discussion of the reason for introducing agriculture in the North, Jensen rejects population pressure and other similar theories. Instead, he seeks the cause in the socioeconomic sphere, in the competition for power and prestige, and categorises the products of agriculture as luxury and prestige goods in a sphere-economy, i.e. an economy where different values circulate within different spheres and where exchange between the spheres is impossible (in principle). Jensen imagines that in tribal societies, men competed in potlatch-like exchanges – that is, the one who offers the finest gifts would earn both power and prestige. From then on, competition characterised man, and this competition is used by Jensen to explain both the import and development of new phenomena. Cultural elements no longer just arrived in the country, but are expressly imported as items in the social game or competition. In the beginning, the competition unfolded as described by Claude Meillassoux within both the contradiction between the old men and the young, and within the

internal competition among the old men for power and prestige. These contradictions are related to the finds of artefacts, especially axes that do not seem to have any practical function, and thus were ceremonial artefacts only. The idea is that the old men controlled the exchange of valuables, resulting in the young men's dependence and obedience. Investments were in feasts where men fought for positions as Big Men. Jensen does add that we do not know whether this was the situation in Denmark, but we know that the number of big and very fine polished flint axes far exceeded the number needed in agricultural practice, therefore they must have played a role in 'the social competition that exists in all human societies' (Jensen 2013, p. 171). Here too, Jensen is inspired by anthropology, and although Meillassoux's inspiration came from his research in West African societies, Jensen refers especially to the conditions in New Guinea: 'But it is only by taking such an anthropological view that we can have any hope of understanding even a fraction of the way prehistoric man acted' (Jensen 2013, p. 216). In addition, New Guinea is an obvious example, because the people here still have extensive exchanges, and the Big Man system in segmented and egalitarian tribal societies you find in New Guinea seems to fit very well with the development in the older part of the Bronze Age.

With the Corded Ware Culture of the beginning of the third millennium, a certain kind of individualism seems to arise, especially in Jutland, and this caused Jensen to reflect on the earlier collectivism:

When one lives in a modern society with its great emphasis on the individual, it is difficult to form a picture of a society where the group was the indivisible whole. Here, we must once more look at the accounts of the anthropologists, for example of social forms of the kind found on the North American Pacific coast until as late as the twentieth century. Among the North West Coast Indians society was organized in kinship groups who lived and worked together. Within the kinship groups there could be people of either high or low rank. But the community was permeated by ideas that kin and group were an indivisible unity, and that the group was the highest authority. (Jensen 2013, p. 261–262)

The anthropological accounts of the American North West Coast also seem to give a deeper understanding of what happened: 'One purpose of the

wealth was that it had to demonstrate lavish consumption. This was how one showed one's prosperity and power over others, and this gave the kinship group respect. The extreme expression of this was to give away or destroy quantities of valuables. This phenomenon is called *potlatch*; but 'There is no guarantee that this is how it happened in Neolithic Denmark' (Jensen 2013, p. 262). Thus, the use of the anthropological analogy seems only to show possible conditions that must not be factually negated by the material artefacts. At the same time, it forms a very fine skeleton for the construction of Danish history as a nice, neo-evolutionist history.

With the Bronze Age came the chieftom organisation, as this organisational form is described in neo-evolutionism. The metal became a form of accelerator, initiating this social development. Gold, bronze, amber and other valuables circulated among the societies, and the control over these resources was the basis for prestige and the exercise of power, which in turn created a totally new social system. Differences in wealth created individuals, something that is evident in the graves, given the significant differences in the grave goods. Based on this, and with reference to New Guinea (again) and anthropological observations, Jørgen Jensen establishes that artefacts, for example, axes, were assigned different forms of value, such as use value, prestige value and labour value. In addition, in his interpretation of petroglyphs illustrating processions with axes, Jensen notes that: 'Here too, you can refer to the anthropologists' observations in New Guinea, where axes belong to the male domain only. Only men did work requiring the use of axes' (Jensen 2006, bd. 2, p. 45; not included in the English edition p. 305). The result of the analysis of the axe suggests that the struggle for power and prestige was a struggle solely among men.

At the beginning of the second millennium BC, Denmark was locked in a European exchange network system, with the consequence that changes anywhere in the network resulted in changes in the whole system. What tied the exchange system together was bronze. Here, Jensen includes globalisation in his prehistory, and makes global exchange a more important historical factor than the subjugation of the challenges of nature. Danish society was dependent upon an outside supply of bronze, which presupposed alliances, which in turn were based on the exchange of

women. The challenges of nature diminished, because during the Bronze Age, the land had been cultivated to such a degree that, at the beginning of the Iron Age, the nature that man related to was itself a product of human activity. A third determining factor was the Celtic blockade of the Northern European lowlands, including Denmark, from the developments in the South. The militarisation that explains the major weapon sacrifices is a part of the adaptation to this situation in the North.

The next crucial event determining the history of Northwest Europe is the rise and expansion of the Roman Empire, which is thoroughly described by Jensen. The contrast between the civilisation with its big cities and highly developed handicrafts in the South, and the chieftoms with their incipient development of villages in the North, was huge. The raids on the South in the 2nd century BC by the Cimbri and the Teutons created connections with the South, and artefacts from the Mediterranean civilisations begin once again to emerge in the findings. At the same time, up to the birth of Christ, a chief and warlord aristocracy developed, after a period that seems to have been characterised by greater equality, at least in the graves.

The development towards the primitive kingdoms of the Viking Age is regarded as a result of the competition and games within the North, on the one side, and the impact from the South, on the other. Starting in the Iron Age, development is regarded solely as an effect of social forces, in the form of competition between leaders, and involving valuable artefacts from the high civilisations of the South as the dynamic force. Now, man is the subject in his history or social development, although it might be that only the upper classes had the opportunity for such agency.

In the period following the birth of Christ, Jensen finds the old kinship society replaced by other kinds of solidarity, something evidently experienced in the emergence of the hird, a military unit used by Nordic chiefs as a bodyguard and followers. Regarding some grave findings, he notes that they 'testify to the existence of local leaders who were connected through mutual alliances covering long distances, and who had contact with the international exchange system' (Jensen 2006, vol. 3 p. 289–290, not included in the English edition p. 686–687). From the grave goods, he notes that

women were exchanged over long distances, and that this in turn shows marriage alliances between leading families. Referring to the grave goods, Jensen finds that there were four classes or strata in the society, the highest being an elite with supra regional powers, these being princes and major chiefs. Under each of these were several chiefs, and under the chiefs were warriors and local leaders. At the bottom were the peasants. Within the military there was a hierarchy, with the riding chiefs at the top, the infantry at the bottom, and a group of riding warriors in the middle. This is confirmed by Tacitus's description of the Germans. However, this did not mean that Jensen included class struggle as a dynamic factor. Instead, he took these class conditions as the basis for identifying the dynamics as being the existence of channels for distribution of Roman prestige goods through alliances, the exchange of women, and redistribution of valuable goods from the leaders to the sworn vassals in the new hierarchical system. This formed the basis for the creation of the feudal system that lasted until 160 years ago.

The encounters between the Germans and the Romans meant that Roman goods became much easier to acquire, and Roman goods and systems rolled into the North. The cultural impact was massive, and became the most important dynamic factor. During the third and fourth centuries, prehistoric society collapsed, and a new militarised society replaced it: 'We can now begin to vaguely see the contours of a military aristocracy and a peasantry, both of which were to have important roles in the formation of what, in the final period of the Iron Age, became the Danish Kingdom' (Jensen 2006, vol. 3 p. 555; not included in the English edition between p. 806 and 807). According to Jensen, this kind of society was 'a societal type that social anthropology describes as consisting of two social classes: a military aristocracy and a peasant population. And, it is a societal type that constitutes the beginning of a state' (Jensen 2013, p. 823). This development was to take place in the time that followed the fall of the Roman Empire, which shook all Europe. Frankish sources mention kings in what was to become the Danish region during this period, and in the eighth century there followed the beginning of the establishment of cities, with Ribe and Hedeby as the first. These cities were constructed after Frankish designs, so once

again, according to Jensen, the imitation of civilised elements from the South directed developments in the North. This development, together with some major constructions, such as Dannevirke, shows that royal power had become strong, because it demanded extensive resources, and power over many people.

Jensen's view of the development in the North-Western Europe relates closely to the developments in Asia, and Southern and South-Eastern Europe. In light of globalisation, the North European or South Scandinavian area developed because of the impact of sociocultural elements arriving in random order, and often, long after their origins in the South and East. However, in spite of this, Jensen presents the development in the North as progressing in a strict order, thus following the idea of a general evolution described by the neo-evolutionists, and developed in American cultural anthropology as in the 1960s. In this connection, it is worth noting that these anthropologists regarded their idea as an abstract scheme, and that they denied that any society would develop strictly in accordance with this abstraction. This general evolution was only an abstraction of the many and varied cultural histories of individual societies, and not itself a history. Nevertheless, according to Jensen, Northern Europe followed this scheme, with the hunters first, then agricultural and tribal societies that developed into a Big-Man system, which developed into chiefdoms, the basis for the development of the primitive kingdoms or states. Within the classical Danish three-phase system, our history is now constructed within a new, universal American-construct of social evolution, without relinquishing Thomsen's system, which is observed and respected in the titles of the volumes of the Danish version, and in the major chapters in the English one. And, this is in spite of Thomsen's system being based on the materiality of tools, which does not give any meaning in relation to the development of the social system, unless you are an old-fashioned technological determinist, which Jørgen Jensen certainly is not. So here, at least, nationalism has crept into his history of South Scandinavia or Northern Europe.

At first, the dynamics moving evolution forward were human subjugation to and the triumph over nature. By and by, central aspects of nature became the products of human activity, and the dynamics moved to the social sphere, in terms of competition

and alliances. These caused the individual to emerge, and what look like classes to crystallise. Now, as agents in their own lives and in the history of the North, these men imitated what they saw in the much more advanced South. The history of the area within the present Danish borders may be understood only as a part of, and a product of global events. Even though our ancestors were actors or agents in their own lives and history, they lived in a peripheral part of the world, where the major powers and far more advanced societies to the South and East were the real agents and determinants of history and development. All the Danish grandeur of the past had vanished. Now, it was the diversity of culture and nature we should appreciate, for as quoted before:

If we connect the two, we understand that the eternal Denmark is to be found precisely where one encounters the fine interaction between the culture of bygone times and the freshness of nature. A glorious land of sun, rain, of weather fair and rough, with fog and wind, and with windswept beaches where the waves eat up the shore, and the seabirds fly off in screaming flocks. (Jensen 2013, p. 1093)

Since the publication of Worsaae's book, prehistory has formed an important part of the Danish historical identity. For the entire time since Worsaae, this has been the epos that, with Thomsen's three periods as a fixed framework, has described our history as a genealogical or cultural investigation into our origins, and understood it as our common roots, after the fashion of Romanticism. This history has been remarkably unaggressive, separating our ancestors from all other peoples, and presenting them as having always lived within the present borders. In times when archaeology in other nations, especially to the South, underlined and legitimated the political demands of areas outside the nation referring to distant ancestors having lived here, Danish prehistory never expressed any wish or legitimate reason to demand the return of lost areas of Norway, Sweden, Germany or England. We have had our Golden Age(s), but in none of our prehistories did Danes really live in those areas now lost. And, when Jensen argues for a much broader origin of the Danes as a North-Western European people, the framework is one of peaceful coexistence and mutual exchange in a globalised world. Even though he thus includes

areas outside our present borders, it is not nationalism to which he refers, but the love of one's country that he makes the central image, where forces are turned inwards, and not outwards. Jensen's Danes have their roots in a multicultural world, with competition and with humans who, through their creativity, overcome climatic challenges, recognising that, from a historical perspective, the exchange of culture and interaction with foreigners is progressive. This means that the identity expressed in his prehistory is a multicultural life in a cooperative Europe, wherein we can probably keep our national identity, but only as an element of a global interaction. Now we have had confirmed that our real identity is as creative humans, and as a small part of the cultural diversity of North-West Europe, the Continent and the world.

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