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The Faussett collection at Liverpool

PLATE XXXII

The Faussett collection of Anglo-Saxon antiquities excavated in Kent between 1760 and 1773 is housed in the City of Liverpool Museums. Following a suggestion by Mrs Webster, of the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities at the British Museum, Miss Dorothy Slow and Mrs Margaret Warhurst, Keeper and Assistant Keeper of Archaeology respectively in the City of Liverpool Museums, have sent us this note.

In the spring of 1971, during a check on files of old correspondence, a letter was noticed from a descendant of the Reverend Bryan Faussett listing documents still retained by the family and mentioning portraits of Faussett and his wife by Thomas Hudson. The letter had been written fourteen years before and attempts to reach the address on it were unsuccessful, but with the help of the local police constable, we eventually traced the writer of the letter, who was most co-operative and promised to send us any documents he felt might be of interest, and to have the portraits cleaned and subsequently photographed for us. A suitcase of documents of varying importance as far as the Liverpool collection is concerned, but all of great interest, duly arrived together with excellent colour photographs of the portraits. The portraits of Bryan and Elizabeth

Faussett are the work of Thomas Hudson completed in 1758 at a cost of £30 15s 0d including frames and packing box. Black-and-white prints are reproduced (PL. XXXII).

The most important document is what may well be the earliest archaeological field notebook to survive. It records the excavations carried out in 1772 at Sibertswold, Barfriston, Kingston and Iffin Wood. The entries have been crossed out, presumably as Faussett entered each one in the six vellum-bound 'site-reports' which came with the finds, as part of the Faussett Collection, to the Museum in 1867. There are, however, a small number of sketches in the field notebook, which were not included in the bound volumes, and these may well prove to be important in re-attributing some of the ironwork which has survived without details of provenance and grave group.

On the inside back page of the field notebook Faussett noted the wages of some of the labourers he employed to excavate the cemeteries. These expenses are not entered in his daybooks which otherwise appear to contain meticulous records of all his income and expenditure. Unfortunately, no more field notebooks seem to have survived for the other years when Faussett was carrying out excavations in Kent.

Estimating the duration of cultures

The author of this note is Mrs Barbara Ottaway, a graduate in the Department of Archaeology, University of Edinburgh, now engaged in research. In a recent publication, the practice was recommended of grouping together all C14 dates published for a single culture, and

expressing their scatter in terms of the inter-quartile range (Ottaway, 1973). This avoids giving excessive weight to outlying dates, and a predicted advantage is that the median and the quartile dates should be little disturbed by the incorporation of new dates as they become

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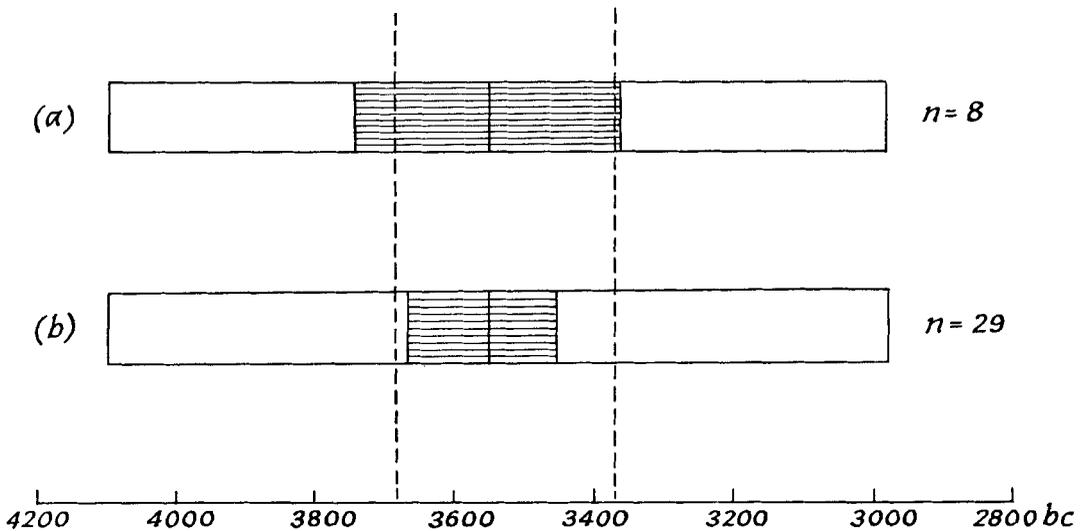


Fig. 1. Ertebølle dates; upper bar (a) constructed in 1972 with the 8 C_{14} dates then available, lower bar (b) after addition of 21 newly published dates. There is a 95 per cent probability (based on a sample of 29 dates) that half of all Ertebølle dates to be recorded will fall between the dotted lines

available. The publication, in the latest issue of *Radiocarbon*, of a large series of representative dates for Danish cultures (Tauber, 1973) makes it possible to test these assertions. The dates quoted here have not been given a dendro-chronological correction. The reasons for this are: first, the Suess calibration curve has recently been criticized by several writers; secondly, it was decided at the end of the 8th International Conference on Radiocarbon Dating that no particular calibration curve or table should be adopted at present (Burleigh, 1973). Absence of calibration does not affect the argument significantly; it is possible that a range of 40 years might be extended to 45 years on calibration.

Steuer, Steuer and Tempel (1968) collected 8 dates for the Ertebølle culture, whose extreme range and (in square brackets) interquartiles and median were 4095-[3740-3550-3360]-2980 bc (FIG. 1a). (It should be noted that in this method of grouping, standard deviations are not required.) A further 21 dates are now available, and the delimiting dates for the combined series of 29 are 4095-[3665-3550-3455]-2980 bc (FIG. 1b). It is very satisfactory that the median date of the culture, 3550 bc,

has not changed at all, while the interquartile dates have moved closer together, as might be expected. The earliest and latest dates, both of which happen to have rather large standard deviations, are unchanged, and it is clear that to use them as indices of the *floruit* of the culture would give an unnecessarily wide spread.

This point comes up again in considering the dates for the Middle Neolithic period of the TRB culture in Denmark, for which 5 dates were hitherto available (Tauber, 1964; 1966); the dates quoted by Tauber (1972) are composite ones. The delimiting dates for this series were 2550-[2545-2490-2460]-2440 bc (FIG. 2a). The sites have been assigned to Phase I of the Middle Neolithic TRB, so that it seems most reasonable to combine them only with Phase I dates from the newly published series. The new delimiting dates for the series of 15 are 2700-[2580-2560-2500]-2440 bc (FIG. 2b). The fact that the interquartile range has shifted by only 40 years is very gratifying, considering the small size of the original sample. It is also instructive to consider what happens when the Phase IV-V dates are brought into the enlarged series. For 21 values, the delimiting dates are

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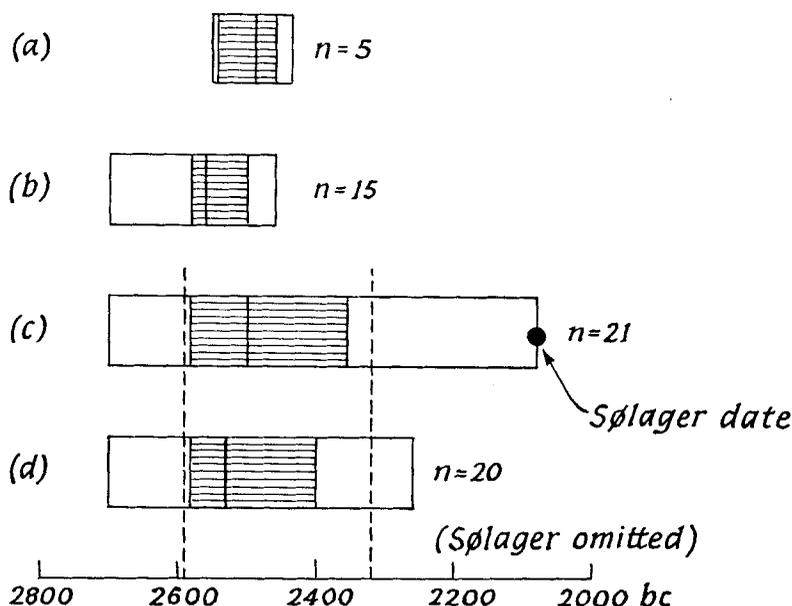


Fig. 2. Northern Middle Neolithic dates from Denmark; bar (a) constructed in 1972 with the 5 C14 dates then available, bar (b) after addition of 10 new dates, bars (c) and (d): addition of Middle Neolithic dates belonging to other phases (Tauber, 1973). There is a 95 per cent probability (based on a sample of 20 dates) that half of all Danish Middle Neolithic dates to be recorded will fall between the dotted lines

2700–[2580–2500–2355]–2080 bc (FIG. 2c). The latest date, 2080 bc, was tentatively rejected by the compilers of the latest list of dates because it is out of line with the rest. If it is omitted the interquartile range becomes [2580–2530–2400] – bc (FIG. 2d), the minimal change showing that it is unnecessary to reject single values solely because of their lack of concordance in C14 dating.

Tables of distribution-free tolerance limits (Diem, 1962, 128) allow one to predict, with a 95 per cent probability, that 50 per cent of all Ertebølle dates that will ever be recorded will lie between 3680 and 3370 bc, and that 50 per cent of all Middle Neolithic TRB dates of Denmark will lie between 2590 and 2320 bc (cf. FIGS. 1 and 2). These predictions depend upon the assumption that the dates that have so far been published represent a true sample from the total of all possible dates that could be recorded for these cultures. It will be interesting to see whether new dates published in the future upset these predictions, but until this

happens, it appears that the effective time-span of fairly homogeneous cultures, at least, can be predicted with some confidence to within 40 years (say one generation) from surprisingly small samples. This is conclusion a good deal more optimistic than Dr Tauber allowed himself.

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