

Re: Mesolithic agriculture in and around central Europe?

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- *From:* "Peter Alaca" <p.alaca@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
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prd <X_header@xxxxxxxxxxxx > wrote:

"Peter Alaca" . . . :

Karl-Ernst Behre
"Evidence for Mesolithic agriculture in and around central Europe?"
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Abstract
"A critical assessment of the data recently put forward in favour of a 'Mesolithic agriculture' for Central and Northern Europe is presented. The archaeobotanical record is quite clear: hundreds of excavations of early Neolithic sites, whether from Linearbandkeramik or Trichterbecher (funnel beaker) settlements have produced remains of cultivated plants in large numbers. In contrast to this, all Mesolithic sites excavated so far have not revealed even one macroscopic find of crop plants.

The 'Mesolithic agriculture' as assumed by several authors, is based solely on single pre-Neolithic pollen grains of the Cerealia-type that occur in pollen diagrams. It is shown that absolute distinction of pollen from wild grasses and cereals is impossible. There is a certain overlapping of both types that must not be neglected.

Because of the large pollen sums in modern pollen diagrams, even very scarce grains of Cerealia-type pollen are encountered. Most of these single pre-Neolithic grains must derive from native wild grasses, while others come by long-distance transport etc.

Another important feature is the scattered occurrence of Cerealia-type pollen grains from the early Holocene

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(or even Pleistocene) to the start of the Neolithic. They do not occur in synchronous phases and even in neighbouring sites they do not agree in age. As long as there are no well-dated macro-remains of crop plants of pre-Neolithic age, there is no evidence of Mesolithic agriculture."

The bigger question is whether there was pastoralism in the Western European Mesolithic.

Yes, of course. The problem is to find evidence for it.

I was a bit surprised by that "Because of the large pollen sums in modern pollen diagrams" in the abstract. That implies that in the past much smaller samples were used. Afaik preparing, identifying and counting of pollen is not automated. This means that much more 'manpower' is used today.

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p.a.

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