



# ALONG THE ROAD

Aspects of Causewayed Enclosures  
in South Scandinavia and Beyond

*Lutz Klassen*



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East Jutland Museum  
Moesgaard Museum

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Aarhus University Press 

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By Lutz Klassen

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# Contents

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9 Preface

## 11 Part I

Along the Road. Aspects of Causewayed Enclosures in South Scandinavia and Beyond

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By Lutz Klassen

13 1 Introduction

17 2 The area of investigation

23 3 Causewayed enclosures and related sites in Djursland

31 4 Causewayed enclosures and related sites in the TRB North Group distribution area

35 5 Predicting the location of causewayed enclosures in South Scandinavia:  
Previous approaches

35 5.1 T. Madsen's work (1979-1988)

37 5.2 Klatt's study (2009)

5.2.1 The different criteria and calculations used by Klatt

5.2.2 Grid combination and calculation

5.2.3 Conclusion

45 6 Predicting the location of causewayed enclosures in South Scandinavia:  
A new approach

45 6.1 Classification of known enclosures

48 6.2 Evaluation of the parameters hitherto employed in predictive modelling

6.2.1 Relation to water

6.2.2 Distance to megalithic graves

	6.2.3	Soil type
	6.2.4	Neolithic finds
	6.2.5	Topography
	6.2.5.1	Promontory type enclosures
	6.2.5.2	Hilltop type enclosures
	6.2.5.3	Conclusion
55	6.3	New parameters for predictive modelling
	6.3.1.	Inter-enclosure spacing
	6.3.2	Enclosures in relation to communication infrastructure
	6.3.2.1	Danish enclosures and reconstructed prehistoric roads/paths
	6.3.2.2	Danish Neolithic enclosures and historic roads
	6.3.3	River crossings
	6.3.4	Enclosures and Viking Age/Medieval military installations
85	7	Predicting enclosures in Djursland
85	7.1	Preparing required datasets
	7.1.1	Reconstructing the coastline at 3500 BC
	7.1.2	Defining freshwater paths and river confluences
	7.1.3	Defining river mouths
	7.1.4	Reconstructing Neolithic roads/paths and river crossings
	7.1.5	Point datasets for Viking Age/Medieval fortifications and Neolithic finds
	7.1.6	Soil type map
	7.1.7	Historic roads
92	7.2	Pointing out potential enclosure locations
94	7.3	Testing potential enclosure locations
	7.3.1	Aerial survey
	7.3.2	Field survey
	7.3.2.1	Results of the survey
	7.3.2.2	The finds
	7.3.2.3	Discussion
	7.3.3	Geophysical survey
	7.3.3.1	Selection of locations
	7.3.3.2	Results
121	8	The predictive model: evaluation of predictive parameters, test methods and results
121	8.1	The predictive parameters
124	8.2	The test methods
	8.2.1	Aerial photographs
	8.2.2	Field surveying
	8.2.3	Geophysical survey
125	8.3	Archaeological results
	8.3.1	Specific research questions
	8.3.2	Causewayed enclosures and related sites in Djursland: State of research after predictive modelling

131	9	Aspects of causewayed enclosures in South Scandinavia in light of the results of this study
131	9.1	Causewayed enclosures and their relation to the contemporary coastline
133	9.2	Causewayed enclosures and inter-enclosure distances
134	9.3	Causewayed enclosures and TRB settlement in Djursland
	9.3.1	Late Mesolithic
	9.3.2	Early Neolithic (EN I)
	9.3.3	Late Early and early Middle Neolithic (EN II – MN A I)
	9.3.4	Summary and conclusions
	9.3.5	The east Jutland model: A critical review
	9.3.5.1	Summary of the east Jutland model
	9.3.5.2	Chronological aspects
	9.3.5.3	Economic aspects
	9.3.5.4	Pottery styles
	9.3.5.5	Settlement
	9.3.5.6	Enclosures and territories
	9.3.5.7	Conclusion
159	10	Scandinavian enclosures from a European perspective
159	10.1	Parallels between Scandinavian and other European enclosures: An overview
162	10.2	Aspects of enclosure architecture
	10.2.1	Enclosures with three or more (partial) ditch circuits
	10.2.2	Enclosures with clavicle-type ditch segments and rectangular palisade annexes
	10.2.3	Enclosures with wide ditch circuit spacing
	10.2.4	Enclosures with differing circuit widths
	10.2.5	Enclosures with egg-shaped site plans
	10.2.6	Enclosures with double post entrance structures
	10.2.7	Enclosures with post framed banks and ditches on both sides of the bank: The Vilsund site
	10.2.8	Additional observations
	10.2.9	Discussion
199	10.3	Aspects of enclosure chronology
	10.3.1	Scandinavian enclosure chronology
	10.3.1.1	<sup>14</sup> C-dated enclosures
	10.3.1.2	Archaeologically dated enclosures
	10.3.1.3	Enclosure-related sites
	10.3.1.4	Summary and discussion
	10.3.2	European enclosure chronology
	10.3.2.1	Enclosures from 4400 to 4000 BC
	10.3.2.2	Enclosures from 4000-3750 BC
	10.3.2.3	Enclosures from 3750-3500 BC
	10.3.2.4	Enclosures from 3500-3200 BC
214	10.4	Enclosure construction 3750-3500 BC and European corridors of (ritual) communication
	10.4.1	Southern central Europe and South Scandinavia
	10.4.1.1	Transverse pits on causeways

- 10.4.1.2 Entrance screens
- 10.4.1.3 Other entrance structures
- 10.4.1.4 Fenced rectangular annexes
- 10.4.1.5 Further links
- 10.4.1.6 Summary and conclusion
- 10.4.2 Southern central Europe and northern central Germany
- 10.4.3 Southern central Europe and southern England
- 10.4.4 Southern central Europe and central western France
- 10.4.5 Other long-distance routes

239 11 Conclusion: Long-distance routes, enclosures and South Scandinavia

249 12 Summary

259 13 References

279 Appendix

## 285 Part II

Geophysical survey of potential Neolithic enclosure sites in Djursland

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*By Lutz Klassen & Christina Klein*

287 1 Introduction

291 2 Results of the geophysical survey

327 3 Evaluation

329 4 References

# Preface

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Randers, May 2014



# Part I

## **Along the Road**

**Aspects of Causewayed Enclosures  
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# 1 Introduction

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In 1968, the first causewayed enclosure was found in the northern TRB distribution area in Búdelsdorf in Schleswig-Holstein (Hingst 1971a; 1971b; 1973; 1974). This discovery was followed shortly thereafter by others in Sarup, Denmark (Andersen, N.H. 1974; 1975a; 1975b). Since that time, an average of one such site has been found in the region every year. To date, the total number of confirmed enclosures nears 40. Given that a considerable number of probable or possible enclosures have yet to be assessed, it is very likely that several hundred of these perplexing sites were in use during the Neolithic in Southern Scandinavia.

The discovery of this new type of site and the concomitant development of new theoretical approaches had a marked impact both on settlement studies and the development of new models for the understanding of social and economical change in TRB society. This is true both in a local and in a regional perspective. The local perspective is best exemplified by the efforts of N.H. Andersen both with the Sarup enclosures as well as their surroundings (see a selection of N.H. Andersen's numerous publications in the reference list). For the regional perspective, by contrast, one should look to T. Madsen's work in eastern Jutland (1982; 1988) as well as a number of national and supranational surveys (i.e. Nielsen, P.O. 1993; 2004; Andersen, N.H. 1997; Klatt 2009; Larsson, L. 2012).

In the early days of archaeological investigation into causewayed enclosures, the best-favoured

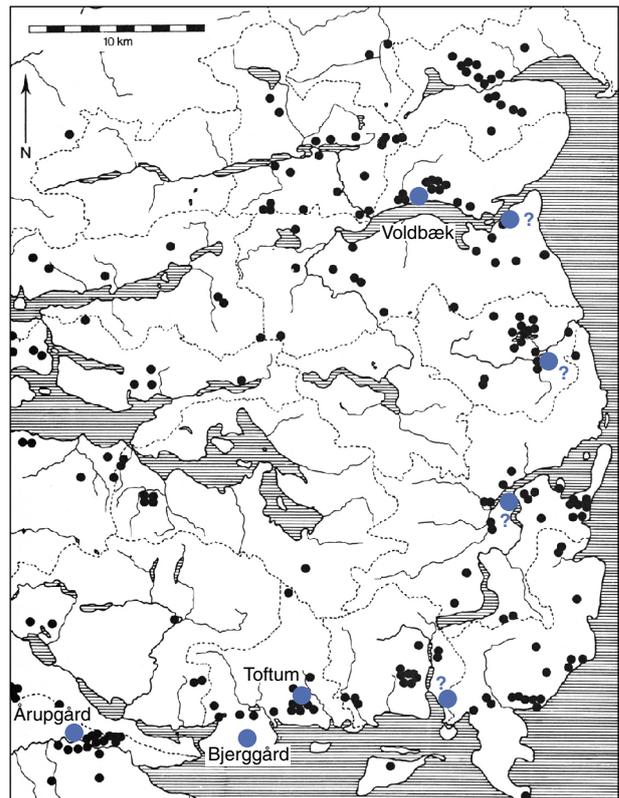
interpretation of their function revolved around the useage as fortifications (see the above-mentioned papers about Búdelsdorf and Sarup). However, doubts concerning this initial interpretation emerged rather quickly (Madsen, T. 1978b). Since the 1980s (Andersen, N.H. 1981; Madsen, T. 1982; 1988), causewayed enclosures in northern Germany, Denmark and southern Sweden have generally been viewed as sites for the assembly of larger groups of people in the broadest sense of the word. Just as in the first years of enclosure research, this interpretation is often reflected in the terminology used in site descriptions (Andersen, N.H. 1993).

In his recent study of the enclosures, Klatt (2009, 75ff.) gives a detailed summary of the various interpretations discussed over the course of the last four decades. His final conclusion epitomizes the current state of research on the subject, namely that causewayed enclosures were likely to have been assembly places where larger groups of people met to engage in ritual activities (such as those relating to death and burial) as well as secular social engagements and various other activities related to barter and exchange. Among the more recent debate contributions, it is only Haßmann (2000, 111, 119 and 175) who diverges from this widely held view of enclosures as assembly places. Due to the finds of large numbers of arrowheads at Búdelsdorf, he leans towards a more traditional interpretation of fortified settlements, at least as regards the site at Búdelsdorf.

The important role played by causewayed enclosures in settlement studies is due in no small part to their functional interpretation, as mentioned above. If one follows an interpretation of the sites as assembly places for people from a larger region, this allows for theoretical inferences in terms of group and territory sizes. This last is especially true when all certain or suspected enclosure sites are mapped within a region, as was done for eastern Jutland by T. Madsen (1988) (Fig. 1). Furthermore, as described by the same author (1982; 1988), many enclosure sites developed into huge settlements over the course of Middle Neolithic A, and therefore naturally flow into the course of settlement research. In fact, a considerable proportion of what we now know as enclosures were known as settlement sites long before they were recognized as causewayed enclosures. A classic example of this phenomenon is from the site of Trelleborg on Zealand. Trelleborg was first excavated in the 1930s (Mathiasen 1944), but was not recognized as an enclosure until 1982 (Andersen, N.H. 1982). It should be noted, however, that there appear to be regional differences in the post-constructional use of the enclosures. Increasingly larger settlement sites in the later parts of the TRB are absent from northern Germany (see Hinz et al. 2012), southern Sweden (Larsson, L. 2012) and northern Jutland.

Until recently, the accepted chronology of enclosure construction in South Scandinavia involved a short period of intense building activity in the late Early and early Middle Neolithic (EN II and MN A I, ca. 3500-3200/3100 BC). Recently, however, a certain amount of evidence has emerged to support the start of enclosure construction in the 37<sup>th</sup> or possibly even the 38<sup>th</sup> century BC. On the opposite end of the time scale, the evidence from the site of Kainsbakke possibly leads to a further blurring of an erstwhile clear picture of a short causewayed enclosure construction horizon in South Scandinavia (see the detailed discussion in chapters 3 and 10.3.1).

Settlement archaeological studies have yet to be adapted to these new insights into enclosure construction chronology. They emphasize the role of these sites during a phase of intensive change generally associated with the late Early and initial Middle



**Fig. 1** | The results of T. Madsen's east Jutland study in the 1980s had a profound influence not only on the interpretation of the origins of causewayed enclosures in the TRB Culture of South Scandinavia, but also on the interpretation of the regional organisation of TRB settlements around those enclosures. Indeed, his fingerprints are still felt within this area of research. On this map, large dots with site names refer to certain causewayed enclosures, large dots with question marks depict suspected causewayed enclosures and small dots mark the locations of megalithic graves (from Madsen 1988).

Neolithic during which social organisation, material culture, burial customs and economy were in flux. However, it can be argued that the changes that have thus far exclusively been associated with the late Early Neolithic (EN II) started in the later phases of EN I (see Furholt 2011b). Therefore, it is possible that the models which deal with the interrelation of enclosures and ordinary settlements, graves etc. possibly only need minor modifications.

The study conducted here takes a new look at causewayed enclosures in South Scandinavia based on a research area restricted to the Djursland Peninsula in eastern Jutland. Given that the awareness of as many enclosures as possible is necessary in any attempt to evaluate their significance for Neolithic societies within a given area, a major part of this work is devoted to the development of predictive modelling for the detection of enclosures in the landscape. It is only in relation to this step that it is possible to engage with such questions as the reasons for which certain locations were chosen as enclosure sites and how these relate to the history of Neolithic settlement within the wider region. The results can then be compared to T. Madsen's work in eastern Jutland. The latter is at the heart of practically all settlement archaeological studies of the period under consideration in South Scandinavia.

However, (at least with regard to causewayed enclosures), it has never been critically reviewed nor tested by comparisons with the results from other regions.

An important but never discussed part of Madsen's study is devoted to the role that enclosure building groups in neighbouring parts of Europe played in the process of introducing causewayed enclosures in the northern TRB Group. As will become apparent over the course of the arguments presented within this study, this European background is of much greater importance for the understanding of local processes related to causewayed enclosures than has hitherto been assumed. This is also true for the focal area of this study: the Djursland Peninsula. Therefore, a separate section is devoted to examining the European dimension of the Scandinavian enclosures in closer detail.