Water and fire as transformation elements in ritual deposits of the Scandinavian Neolithic

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Abstract

Flint axes are the most common Neolithic (4000–1800 calBC) artefacts found in southern Scandinavia. The vast majority of the tens of thousands that we know of have been recovered from former wetlands. In fact, detailed work in southern Sweden suggests that flint or stone axes were deposited in almost every single bog. There is also evidence that many axe blades underwent forms of treatment that involved transformation by fire, deliberate destruction and purposive deposition. These details of context, form and treatment suggest that axe blades were often of great symbolic significance to Neolithic communities, and implicated in the reproduction of the social world.

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