

Preface

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Under the *The Open Academy* initiative the *Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters* opened its doors to an interdisciplinary and international symposium from September 22nd–24th 2014. This event was intended to take a broad look at the role that food has played in the development of societies and in particular in the health of human populations. The emphasis was to be on Denmark and the Nordic countries but the idea was also to trace links to countries outside our region. The purpose was to develop networks and exchange knowledge between different researchers who contribute to this huge subject matter but who have seldom had the chance to meet in a forum including the whole range of disciplines involved in the study. In this case, the disciplines comprised anthropology, archaeology, history, demography, economy, medicine, geography, biology and nutrition, and covered a time span of 10,000 years of human history. Participants were both well-established researchers and young postdocs, engaging in a lively debate across disciplinary borders. The symposium was opened by the Academy's president, Professor Kirsten Hastrup, and the subsequent contributions were organized in eight sessions:

The first session on *Agriculture, Technology, Economy and Demography* had presentations by H. Balslev (Aarhus), L. Palm (Gothenburg), R. von Bothmer (Lund), M. Fischer Mortensen (Copenhagen), and M. Kähler Holst (Aarhus).

A second short session about *Agriculture – the longitudinal development in crops and domestic animals* had a single presentation by K.M. Frei (Copenhagen).

The third session on *Mortality and Prevalence of Diseases from Food in Historic and Prehistoric Populations* offered insights from P. Atkins (Durham), H. Schutkowski (Bournemouth), M. Steyn (Pretoria), D. Larsson (Gothenburg), J. Krause (Tübingen), B. Revuelta-Eugercios (Paris), H. Castenbrandt (Gothenburg), and L. Simonsen (Copenhagen).

The fourth session on *Variations in human height. What does it mean?* was enlightened by talks from J.L. Boldsen (Odense), A.D. Cámara Hueso (Barcelona), and S. Öberg (Gothenburg).

The following session, number five, provided examples of *Infant nutrition, infant mortality and health later in life* by A. Løkke (Copenhagen), Ólöf Gardarsdóttir (Reykjavik), K. Fleischer Michaelsen (Copenhagen) and L. Lumey (New York).

Session six treated the theme *The dynamics between food, health, population size and economy* with lectures by L. Jørgensen (Copenhagen), N. Lynnerup (Copenhagen), C. Spencer Larsen (Ohio), B. Harris (Glasgow) and M. Jakobsson (Uppsala).

The seventh session on *Identification of diet and changes in food culture* offered new insights from M.L. Jørkov (Copenhagen), T. O'Connell (Cambridge), C. Nyvang (Copenhagen), L.O. Dragsted (Copenhagen), T. Kellberg Nielsen (Aarhus), M. Thomas (London) and E. Willerslev (Copenhagen).

Finally session eight treated *Patterns and Future Challenges in Nutrition and Health* in three presentations by A. Astrup (Copenhagen), O. Mouritzen (Odense) and K. Hastrup (Copenhagen).

From this program we selected 16 papers that are presented in these proceedings. They are supple-

mented by two contributions treating the rich collections of The National Museum of Denmark. The symposium organization was headed by Professor Lars Jørgensen from the National Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark, assisted by a team of colleagues who are co-editors of this volume. We would like to thank the *Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters* for taking

the initiative to arrange this symposium and for funding it.

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