
“Beer Before Bread”

To begin, in my humble opinion I am going to have to agree with the “beer before bread” hypothesis. From both a scientific and agricultural standpoint it would make the most logical sense that the beer came first. Beer was seen as the highest of commodities when it was first invented, it was seen as a way to suppress the angst within us. From the very first Human Being we have identified ourselves as a species that has to find a way to live a little and have fun whether it be through communication, games, writing, and so on, but one of the first things to really bring us together and give us the sense of joy we strive for in our lives was beer. Beer literally changed the entire course of human civilization when it was invented. It is what sent us into the agricultural revolution and if beer had not been invented then I believe things would not be as they are today. For these ancient civilizations beer was seen as everything, you just had to have it.

In continuance, it has been discovered by Brian Hayden ,(of Simon Fraser University in Canada), that the pottery from ancient civilizations is older than that of anything else except for some of the tablets used for writing. This means that the beer within these containers was the first item they ever produced adding to the hypothesis of “beer before bread”. This was found in Uruk, a settlement within Mesopotamia, which is now modern day Iraq. Beer was seen as a form of their daily diet alongside some form of meat. This was around the time that beer eventually became so popular it was used as an early form of currency typically between different tribes and such. This early beer also had a low alcohol content as well and was drank not only by the adults, but by the children as well. The alcohol content within this beer was between 2 and 5 percent, while modern day beer on average contains anywhere from 10 to 15 percent of alcohol. Jeffrey P. Kahn of, “The New York Times”, stated that another strong theory behind the “beer before bread” hypothesis is that the bread actually came from spilled fermented beer. After sitting on a hot stone under the sun this concoction rose from the yeast within it therefore making a form of bread. While this is just a theory it is one with alot of fact behind it.

To continue, with these ancient civilizations finally perfecting the art of making beer and eventually learning how to farm these grains and turn them into bread, they began to hunt less. With these grains giving them all the food and beverages they needed to survive, it was no longer seen as necessary to hunt anymore. They did however need to begin focusing on farming to produce the required amount of grain for their communities to live off of. This is where the pursuit of greater access to alcohol led to hunter gatherers transforming into farmers during the agricultural revolution. Beer drinking was more than just a beverage to the people of these ancient civilizations, it was a social gathering. The Sumerians and Egyptians ,especially had beer brewed into one big vat or jug with a long straw where everyone would drink from. It was a social event that brought everyone together, and closer than ever. It was a ritual to drink in these manner upon which also played a role in their religion as well. It was also used during funeral ceremonies and blessings of their agricultural land.

Next, April Holloway ,(a writer for Ancient Origins), noted that archaeologist Brian Hayden found another early civilization to adopt beer brewing into their society was the people of the Natufian culture. This was a people founded in a place called Levant around 13,000 years ago. The area

of which is now Syria. Archeologists who investigated the ancient remains found many of tools required for brewing beer including grinding stones, boiling vats, and other cooking equipment that suggests they were brewing beer, however no tools were found indicating that bread was ever made their once again adding fact to the “beer before bread” hypothesis. Beer eventually became so important to these civilizations in that it became a agricultural goldmine. Beer became such a staple in these people's lives that it became their currency upon which they would sell and buy. Their currency was not based on gold or paper, it was based on the alcoholic beverage of beer. All of these facts pile up to give the impression that not only is the “beer before bread” hypothesis not even a hypothesis at all, but it is indeed the truth.

In conclusion, I without a doubt believe that the “beer before bread” hypothesis is in fact true. It also led to the pursuit of greater access to alcohol therefore in which hunter gatherers transitioned into farmers during the agricultural revolution in order to keep up with the demand for bread and beer. Also since these crops provided all they needed in order to survive, they was no point in them having to hunt for a means of survival any longer. All of these archeological finds and scientific discoveries all point towards this fact. Granted all of this is purely based off theory as we will truly never know the answer as many things in the world, but the points to very strongly point toward the fact that the “beer before bread” hypothesis is true. It truly is amazing to think that beer was once such a major event in civilization that it was used in religion, seen as a form of currency, and even used as a basis for an entire society to gather and communicate on a personal level. In my opinion as I have stated before, I do indeed believe these points to be not merely hypotheses, but indeed the truth of the matter.