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Abstract

Although the TRB culture is uniform with all its diversity, none of its aspects displays a distinct social differentiation, whether in the distribution of pottery forms and decoration, or in the contents of flat and megalithic graves.

I will discuss here the question "Is a social differentiation detectable in the TRB culture?". That this is probably the case, is suggested by the title of the current DFG Priority Program "Early Monumentality and social Differentiation". Most of my experience is based on the TRB West Group, which is found to the west of the Elbe, but I think that things are no different in the TRB North Group in Schleswig-Holstein, Denmark and southern Sweden, to which regions I will often refer (fig. 1).

I also give a brief tour d'horizon of different aspects of the material remains of the TRB culture and related subjects.

Zusammenfassung

Obwohl die Trichterbecherkultur (TRB) in all ihrer Diversität trotzdem uniform erscheint, spiegelt keiner ihrer Aspekte soziale Differenzierung wider, sei es die Verbreitung von Keramikformen oder Verzierungen, sei es der Inhalt von Flach- und Megalithgräbern.

Hier soll die Frage diskutiert werden, ob eine soziale Differenzierung in der TRB feststellbar ist. Dass dies wahrscheinlich der Fall sei, suggeriert der Titel des DFG-Schwerpunktprogramms "Frühe Monumentalität und soziale Differenzierung". Der Hauptteil meiner Erfahrung bezieht sich auf die TRB Westgruppe, die westlich der Elbe zu lokalisieren ist, aber ich denke, dass die Dinge in der TRB Nordgruppe in Schleswig-Holstein, Dänemark und Südschweden nicht anders liegen, Regionen, auf die ich mich im folgenden häufig beziehen werde (Abb. 1). Weiterhin werde ich einen knappen Überblick über verschiedene Aspekte der materiellen Kultur der TRB und verwandte Themen geben.

Forms, sizes and dates of megalithic graves in the TRB West Group

There is a large variety of megalithic tombs in the TRB West and North Groups, for which I will use here the term *hunebeds*, which is the Dutch term "*hun(n)ebedden*" as it was anglicised by the British archaeologists Augustus Franks (1872) and James Fergusson (1872). There were dolmens and passage graves. In the West Group, the passage graves had a short entrance and their plan was a short-stemmed letter T. The barrows and encircling kerbs were oval or kid-

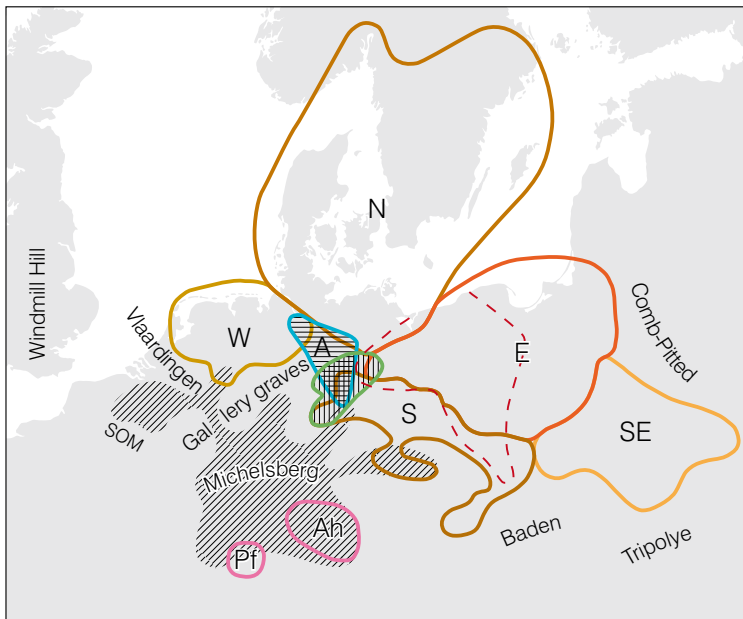


Fig.1. Regional groups of the TRB culture (Bakker 1979, fig. 1). W = West Group, N = North Group, E = East Group, S = South Group, SE = Southeast Group, Ah = Altheim Group or Culture, Pf = Pfyn Group, A and horizontally hatched = Altmark Group, vertically hatched = Walternienburg-Bernburg Group. The broken line indicates the occurrence of the Luboń decoration of three-strand cord impressions. Diagonal hatching indicates the related Michelsberg culture. SOM = the Seine-Oise-Marne Culture.

Abb. 1. Die Regionalgruppen der TRB (n. Bakker 1979, Abb. 1). W = Westgruppe; N = Nordgruppe; E = Ostgruppe; S = Südgruppe, SE = Südostgruppe; Ah = Altheim; Pf = Pfyn; A und horizontal schraffiert = Altmarkgruppe; vertikal schraffiert = Walternienburg-Bernburg. Die gestrichelte Linie deutet die Verbreitung der Luboń-artigen Verzierung dreifacher Schnureindrücke an. Diagonale Schraffur deutet die verwandte Michelsberg Kultur an; SOM = die Seine-Oise-Marne Kultur.

ney-shaped, this being a contrast to the North Group, which had round barrows and long entrance corridors.

The shortest passage graves of the West Group had two pairs of sidestones and two capstones and often no entrance stones. They contain the earliest pottery, dating from Brindley 1 (Brindley 1986, see fig. 2), which is similar to my phase Drouwen A (Bakker 1979) and corresponds to the earliest Danish Middle Neolithic (MN Ia). Five Dutch passage graves with interior chamber lengths between ca. 2.7 and 5.9 m and 2–5 pairs of sidestones contained Brindley 1 pottery. Even the eastern chamber of tomb 830-Tannenhausen, in German Ostfriesland, with 6 pairs of sidestones and an interior chamber length of ca. 10.9 m, held Brindley 1 pottery (Bakker 1992, tabs. 3–4). Brindley 1 pottery is therefore not exclusively associated with the very shortest hunebed chambers. If the stylistic TRB horizons have had identical absolute ages in the North and the West Group, the Brindley 1 date (which would be contemporaneous to MN Ia), might suggest that the West Group passage graves were slightly earlier than those in the North Group, but this point needs further study.

As we will see, the fist rule “the longer a passage grave, the later it is” cannot easily be substantiated in detail, because this trend is actually very diffuse. Brindley 2 pottery is the earliest known from seven to eight other passage grave chambers in the Netherlands. They have 3–7 pairs of sidestones and interior chamber lengths of ca. 2.5 to 11.5 or 12.4 m. The earliest pottery from one or more of the three chambers of *Langbett* 958-Kleinenkneten, which have 6 pairs of sidestones and interior chamber lengths of 4.5–7.2 m, is datable to Brindley 1 or 2. And four to eight other West-German chambers contained Brindley 2 pottery; five have 4–7 pairs of sidestones and interior chamber lengths of ca. 6.0 to 11 or 12 m (817-Tannenhausen W). The two chambers of the TRB gallery graves at Wechte, which were at least 35 and 40 m long internally and had more than 18 and 20 pairs of sidestones probably also contained Brindley 2 pottery as the earliest type (Bakker *ibid.*).

Primeval dolmens (*Urdolmens*) seem to be absent from the West Group; the earliest pottery in the extended dolmen G5-Heveskesklooster (in the north-east of the province of Groningen, not far from the German town of Emden) dates from the Brindley 2 horizon.

Characteristically, the longest passage graves of the West Group surpass those of the North Group by far in length. The longest pas-

- 1 A layer with cord-impressed TRB pottery was found in the settlement site of Schokland-P14, province of Flevoland, about 70 km northeast of Amsterdam (Ten Anscher 2011). Together with cord-impressed TRB pottery from Osterwick, and Hüde I and Schoemaker along Lake Dümmer, this represents a ‘pre-Drouwen’ style, dating from the EN II (Bakker 1979, 92). It seems wiser, therefore, to synchronise the EN II / Brindley 1 boundary in the West Group with the EN II / MN Ia boundary in the North Group and the beginning of Düsedau / Laux B in the Altmark-Lüneburg region in Germany in tab. 2 in Bakker 1992 and in the present fig 2. Apparently this EN II pottery phase preceded megalith construction phase in the TRB West Group

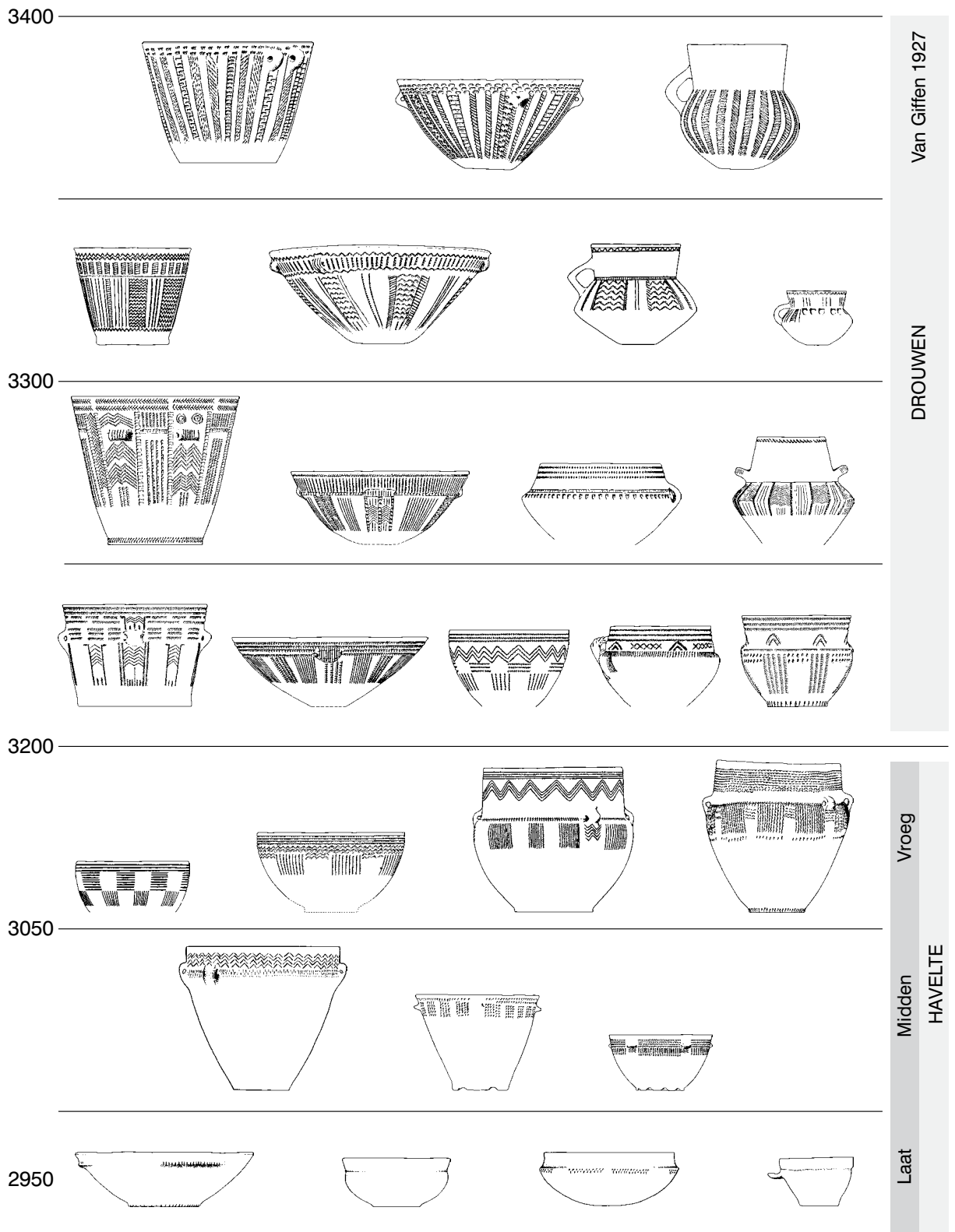


Fig.2. Brindley's (1986) seven stylistic horizons of the TRB West Group. The ranges of the Drouwen, and the Early, Middle and Late Havelte styles are indicated to the left (Van Ginkel et al. 1999, 40). Lanting and Van der Plicht (2000) have meanwhile shifted the approximate start of Horizon 1 to 3350 BC and the end of Horizon 7 to 2800-2700 BC.

Abb. 2. Brindleys sieben stilistische Horizonte der TRB Westgruppe (Brindley 1986). Die Dauer der Drouwen- sowie der frühen, mittleren und späten Havelte-Stile ist links angedeutet (Van Ginkel et al. 1999, 40). Lanting und Van der Plicht (2000) haben inzwischen den ungefähren Beginn des Horizonts I auf 3350 BC und das Ende von Horizont 7 auf 2800-2700 BC verschoben.

sage grave of the Netherlands, D27-Borger, has 10 pairs of side-stones, 9 capstones and an interior chamber length of 20 m. The absolute topplers of the West Group are, however, the now much damaged passage grave 980-Damme, which will originally have been 32–34 m long, and the Hooger Steener, 830-Werlte, with an interior chamber length of 27.5 m (Sprockhoff 1975, p. 145, atlas-pls. 178 and p. 94, atlas-pls. 98–99). None of these three tombs was systematically excavated, so that it is unknown during which Brindley phase they were constructed.

Langbett D43-Emmen

Several passage graves had an oval or kidney-shaped barrow and kerb in ground plan, but some were enclosed in a *Langbett*, i.e. a narrow longitudinal kerb of closely set uprights. Originally dry walling of smaller stones made a closed outer wall. We have one such composite tomb, D43-Emmen (fig. 3), but there are many such tombs in western Germany, such as the Visbecker Braut and Bräutigam near Wildeshausen. The two round ends of the Emmen kerb are unique.



Fig. 3. Langbett D43-Emmen-Schimmeres in 1968 (photograph Fred Gijbels, IPP). After staples of grass sods were soon trampled, Van Giffen filled the spaces between the kerbstones with cobbles and mortar, because flat stones similar to the original dry-walling as well as able masons were absent. After forty years this ugly walling is still in good condition.

Abb. 3. Langbett D43-Emmen-Schimmeres 1968 (Foto: Fred Gijbels, IPP). Nachdem Grassodenlagen schnell zertreten worden waren, füllte van Giffen die räume zwischen den Umfassungssteinen mit Geröllen und Mörtel, weil Steinplatten, die dem originalen Trockenmauerwerk ähnlich gesehen hätten, ebenso wenig verfügbar waren wie fähige Maurer. Nach 40 Jahren ist dieses wenig ansehnliche Mauerwerk immer noch in gutem Zustand.

The terms *hunebed* and *Langbett*

All types of megalithic graves throughout the world are called *hunebedden* in common Dutch. As stated above, I will use the anglicised term *hunebeds* here specifically as generic name for all megalithic graves of the West and North Group of the TRB culture, comprising passage graves as well as dolmens². Synonymous German terms are *Hünengrab*, *Großsteingrab*, *Riesensteingrab* or just *Steingrab*.

Etymologically the Dutch word *hunebed* and the German word *Hünenbett* are the same and they are pronounced identically, but the present meaning of both words is quite different in the archaeological literature. Originally, the word meant Giant's Bed or Giant's Grave and was applied to megalithic tombs or even earthen round barrows in the same way throughout the Dutch-German language area³. The ill-defined folk-name was later exclusively used for specific types of megalithic graves in the two different countries and languages. Thus, in the present German archaeological literature, the word *Hünenbett* is a technical term for the oblong barrows enclosed by a kerb of heavy upright boulders ('peristalith') with or without megalithic chambers (e.g. Sprockhoff 1954). They comprise peristalithic long barrows that are rectangular, trapezoidal, extended-triangular or oval in plan. West Group passage with oval kerbs are thus also called *Hünenbett* in Germany, a term which usually does not include dolmens and passage graves surrounded by a circular kerb (Sprockhoff 1966, 1967, 1975; Laux 1990, 1991). Therefore the German term *Hünenbett* should be avoided as too ambiguous.

The long, rectangular or trapezoidal *Hünenbetten* (with or without megalithic chambers) of the West Group are called henceforth *Langbett*, plural *Langbetten*⁴, of the West Group⁵. Kossian (2005, 68), who followed this usage of the term *Langbett* instead of *Hünenbett*, illustrated the plans of the excavated German *steinkammerlose Langbetten* (without megalithic chambers) and likewise Kuyavian Long Barrows from the TRB West, East and North Groups (Kossian 2005, Abb. 14–16).

Single passage graves (with or without an oval or kidney-shaped kerb of orthostats) should remain to be called *Ganggräber* (singular *Ganggrab*) in German.

Steps in the entrance

Hunebed D13-Eext (fig. 4), with three pairs of sidestones, originally three capstones and no entrance sidestones, is singular because its relatively narrow orthostats are so neatly fitting to each other that dry walling was scarcely needed to fill gaps between them. Moreover it had three stone steps in the entrance. The great expert in Dutch and German hunebeds, A.E. van Giffen, knew similar steps only from the German West Groups hunebeds 805-Lingen, 808-Sieben Steinhäuser C and 657-Deinste (Van Giffen 1969, 4; 1973, 64).

Number and distribution of hunebeds

The Dutch megalithic graves are concentrated to the Province of Drenthe, with a few in the provinces of Groningen and Overijssel, and there was one possible item in Lage Vuursche in the province of Utrecht. Altogether there are 53 extant hunebeds known, and the sites of 23 demolished hunebeds were excavated. And there are 4

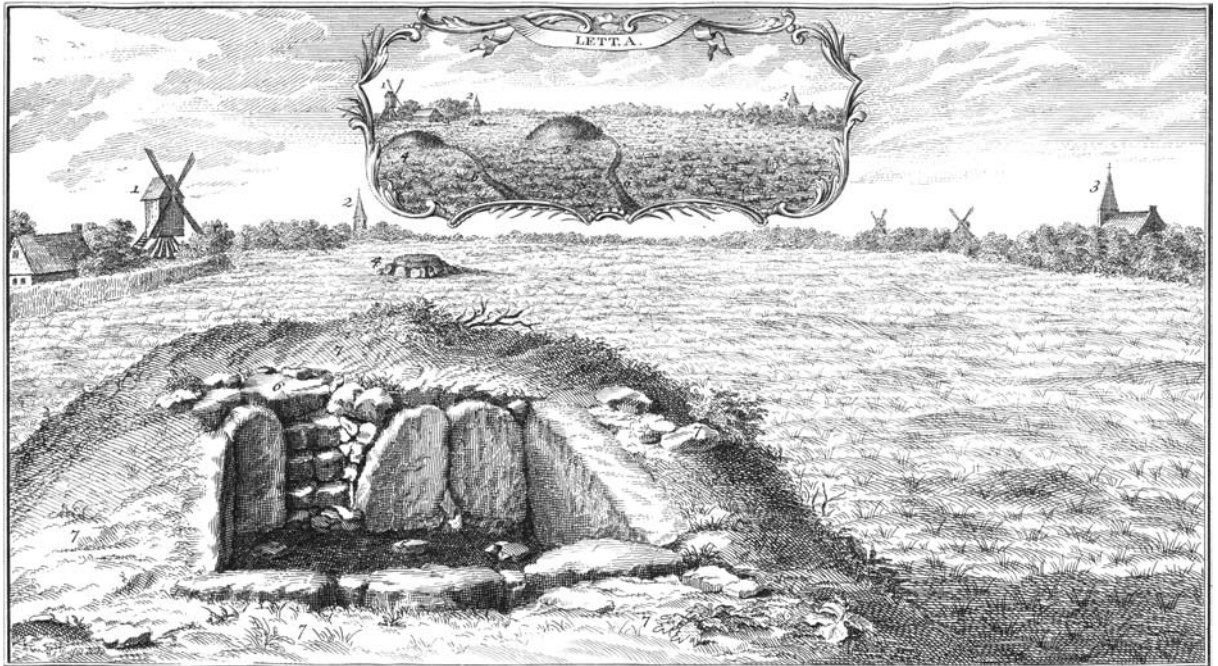
- 3 That the term *hunebed* was formerly also used for non-megalithic round barrows in the Netherlands, is left out of further consideration here.
- 4 The unambiguous term *Langbetten*, introduced by Johanna Mestorf in the 19th century, excludes the so-called '*ovale Hünenbetten*'. Jacob Friesen used the term '*ovales Hünenbett*' in his textbook *Einführung in Niedersachsens Urgeschichte* (1931, reprinted 1934, 1939, 1959). This confusing usage was followed by E. Schlicht (1954; 1979), F. Laux (1990; 1991) and by G. Körner/F. Laux as editors of Sprockhoff (1975), see Kossian (2005).
- 5 See Bakker 1992, 3; 107.3 and J. Hoi-ka's concurring discussion of this terminology (Helinium 33, 1993, 305–9, esp. 306).

sites of possible hunebeds. Altogether there will have been about 100 megalithic tombs in the Netherlands, which is about double the present extant number. Sprockhoff (1975) counted 980 megalithic tombs in the North-Western German West Group and discussed many destroyed hunebeds. Application of the Dutch proportion, extant : *demolished tombs*, there would give an original number of at least 2000 megalithic tombs in the TRB West Group in Germany. But this estimate may be much too low, because the Dutch hunebeds were legally protected since 1734, those in the German duchy of Oldenburg in the early 19th century, but those in other German parts of the West Group much later, whereas there were legion reports that megalith smashing was in full blast.

One should also realise that Sprockhoff and I did not include a southern part of the Altmark Group of hunebeds in the West Group counts. Neither did we enumerate the Hessian-Westphalian Gallery Graves, which are now also assigned to the TRB culture, although they have a different architecture (Schierhold, this vol.)⁶. And also that Sprockhoff's inventory is due to an update – which we may expect as a result of the mentioned *Schwerpunktprogramm*.

Fig. 4. Hunebed D13-Eext after the capstones had been taken away in 1756 (Van Lier 1760).

Abb. 4. Hunebed D13-Eext nachdem die Decksteine 1756 entfernt worden sind (Van Lier 1760).



The pottery

The West Group TRB pottery is well known from the excavated hunebeds, flat graves and settlements. There was a large variation of pot forms, more than in any other prehistoric culture I know from north-western Europe. On the other hand these forms were standardized, so that we can discern funnel beakers, collared flasks, biberons, spoons, jugs, amphorae, tureens, pails, bowls, dishes, etc. Apart from the non-decorated pots and the decorated funnel beakers, all pottery shows great individuality in decoration. Almost no pot is the same, although of course the general lines of current fashions were followed. Pot forms and decorations changed in the course of time, which allowed Anna Brindley (1986) and myself (1979) to discern seven or more successive style horizons.

The Dutch hunebeds contained large collections of pottery, which was deposited in the course of up to six centuries (fig. 5). It usually assumed that they contained victuals for those interred.

⁶ The contents of these Gallery Graves are not discussed by me.



Human bones

Human bones are rarely preserved in our hunebeds, which were lying in poor sandy soils without calcium that were afterwards heavily podzolised (Kossian 2005, lists 105-106).

A great number of teeth and bone splinters were salvaged by sieving, however, from hunebed D26-Drouwenerveld. Elisabeth Smits (pers. comm.) identified a small number of bones from male and female adults and also of children. That women and children – and not only men – were interred in this hunebed agrees with the findings in Danish and Polish earthen Long Barrows. Cremated human remains are usually found in association with Brindley 7 pottery, but hunebed D26-Drouwenerveld contained only TRB pottery from late Brindley 2 to early 5.

Two vague body silhouettes of TRB people were found in the sandy chamber fill of passage graves 684-Oldendorf II (Körner/Laux 1980, 155–159, figs. 20,1; 36; 38) and 686-Oldendorf IV (Körner/Laux 1980, 161–174, figs. 17,1–2,4; 18,1–13; 20,2,5; 24,1; 25,1,4; 43; 44,6). The chamber of Oldendorf II was enclosed in a 20 m long, 2 m high, oval barrow, that of Oldendorf IV lay in a 80 m long, 6.5 m wide *Langbett*. In the chamber of Oldendorf II, the body lay on its back and the knees were flexed to its right side (Körner/Laux 1980, fig. 36), but also bones of a 50 years old man and a 30 years old woman had been found there, in 1950 (Sprockhoff 1952). In the chamber of Oldendorf IV, “remains of bones” were found in a approx. 1 m long, 25 cm wide oval patch in the western end of the chamber. In its proximity lay a Brindley 3 tureen, 2 drums, 3 transversal arrowheads and 2 flat axes of flint. In the eastern end, 2 intact calottes of human skulls, a horizon 2 tureen and a flint axe were found.

That uncremated bones were so well preserved at Oldendorf, shows that the sandy subsoil was here much more calciferous than in the Netherlands (and in Germany to the west of the Rivers Weser and Aller).

Fig. 5. Part of the artefacts excavated by Holwerda from the chamber of hunebed D19-Drouwen, in 1912 (photograph P.-J. Bomhof, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden). Shown are 93 pots, 12 axes and 10 amber beads, but the original number of pottery is much larger (Staal-Lugten 1976).

Abb. 5. Teil der Artefakte, die von Holwerda 1912 von der Kammer des Hunebeds D19 in Drouwen ergraben worden sind (Foto: P.-J. Bomhof, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden). Zu sehen sind 93 Gefäße, 12 Beile und 10 Bernsteinperlen, jedoch war die ursprüngliche Zahl von Gefäßen wesentlich höher (Staal-Lugten 1976).

Personal ornaments

Personal ornaments were also found in hunebeds: dozens of amber beads, fewer beads made of jet and quartz beads, which are extremely rare. Part of a fossil ammonite of black stone with patches of red ochre, perforated to serve as a pendant, was found in Langbett D43-Emmen (Holwerda 1914; Knöll 1959; Brongers 2006). Another fossil ammonite pendant was found in passage grave Emmeln 2 (Schlicht 1968), further, cocoon-shaped beads of rolled-up copper strips. Besides, there were copper strips, which may have decorated the dresses, but discs made of copper sheets, such as found in Denmark and Poland (Becker 1947), were not found in the West Group (Schlicht 1973). Several other ornaments, made of organic material, such as made from feathers, wood, seeds or leather, will have perished, as well as the dresses of the interred.

Fossil sea urchins

Flint fossils of a sea urchin were found in hunebeds D43-Emmen in Drenthe (Holwerda 1914; Knöll 1959) and Emmeln-2 along the Ems (Schlicht 1968), and twice in the TRB settlement at Laren near Hilversum (Bakker 1979, 191–193). They have no traces of use, but the TRB people, that so much loved decorated pottery, will have given the intricately decorated stones a special religious meaning.

Personal tools and weapons of men

Personal tools and weapons found in hunebeds, supposedly of the men, were flint flat axes, and, albeit fewer in number, flat axes made of other stones. Large numbers of flint transversal arrowheads of flint indicate that complete arrows in their quivers and wooden bows had been interred with some of the dead. Kossian (2005, 104–105) noted that all datable finds of this type of arrowheads belonged to Brindley 1–4. It strikes me that they are absent from Brindley 5–7, viz. from the Early, Middle and Late Havelte style phases, from which so many flat graves are known. Battle-axes were made of diabase, diorite, gneiss, and even sandstone; the West Group had up to five distinct types (Bakker 1979, chapter 5). Finally a number of flint strike-a-lights occur in hunebeds.

Concluding remarks about West Group hunebeds

West Group hunebeds contained thus large amounts of TRB artefacts. Elisabeth Schlicht (1968) recognised 960 pots among the remains of the demolished passage grave Emmeln 2. Moreover, the 88 pots without decoration in her collection (only 9 %) seem much underrepresented. Part of this pottery may derive from a former zone of offered pots around the southern entrance of the tomb.

No West Group hunebeds in Germany or Holland were constructed anymore after Brindley 4, about 3000 BC, but several remained in use for interments and offering till the end of Brindley 7, about 2200 BC, and after that, incidentally, until 1800 BC for interments, or at least deposition of pottery in the chambers, by the Single Grave, AOC, Bell Beaker and Barbed Wire cultures and stages (Bakker 1992).

Flat graves

Flat graves with or without stone packing display the same types of current artefacts. Again, human skeletons are not preserved to the west of the Weser. Three flexed body silhouettes are known from flat earth graves of the West Group in Germany⁷. One lay on its left side in "eating position" (*Esshaltung*) in a wood-lined pit of ca 2 x 1 m, with three Brindley 5 pots, at Heek-Averbeck (grave F4), excavated by Walter Finke (Bakker 1992, 93–94, fig. 32). Another flexed burial of an adult or mature person lay on the right side, with one Brindley 4 bowl at her or his feet in a wooden coffin of 1.10 x 0.82 m within a grave pit of 1.88 x 1.10 m x (more than) 0.64 m, at Geeste on the eastern bank of the Ems (Kaltofen 2008). Thirdly, a flexed inhumation of a child on its left side was preserved as a vague silhouette with no grave goods (Bakker 1983).

The maximum number of pots in a flat grave is about 18–20; many flat graves without preserved grave goods will have escaped the researchers, but several were found among flat graves with pottery in the small cemeteries of this culture (Bakker 1970). About 130 flat graves, including presumed flat graves, are known from The Netherlands (Kossian 2005).

A massive, 3 mm thick, golden bracelet was found in flat grave I at Himmelpforten, Lkr. Stade together with an undecorated two-handled *Ösenflasche* dating from EN II or MN I, and a 15 cm long heavy flint axe (Kossian 2005, 109, 356–367, pl. 108, 171.1)⁸. A similar golden bracelet was found in Schwesing-LA6, Lkr. Nordfriesland in Schleswig-Holstein in an earth grave, together with an undecorated dish and a funnel beaker with a round belly with vertical grooves. This grave was found below the stone floor of a demolished megalithic grave. Kossian (2005, 420, pl. 159,1–3) dates this find in the EN II or MN Ia. In both cases other indications that the buried person may have had a special distinction were absent.

I further refer to the exemplary, really complete and flawless inventory of the Dutch and German non-megalithic TRB graves by Rainer Kossian (2005); it gives the definitive description of these phenomena and will only be outdated by new finds. Kossian found no combinations of artefacts that repeatedly recurred together (Kossian 2005, 110). It should be noted that he (Kossian 2005, 77–78, catalogue no. 329) discerned 'non-megalithic graves with round or oval covering barrows', among which he included the Zeijen TRB flat graves, which were covered by a later earthen barrow with a post circle (Bakker 1979, 199–200; Waterbolk 1977, 197–198). Kossian based himself on the vertical sections of the primary publication (Van Giffen 1930, 22, fig. 2–7), but J.N. Lanting, Waterbolk and I relied on the original field drawings.

I should like to add to Kossian's synopsis that I have meanwhile corrected my previous idea that the heavy flint axe of "Vlaardingen type" in the Denekamp TRB flat grave indicates possible relations with the Vlaardingen culture (see Kossian 2005, No. 349, p. 497–498; cf. his List 23, p. 291). This type of axe is now renamed "Buren type" (Bakker 2006). It was exported from the southern Benelux and northern France. In the Netherlands and western Germany, it was used by the TRB culture and the Vlaardingen culture. In the TRB culture, splendid axes of this type were often never used in daily life, because they had a ritual meaning. The Vlaardingen culture, on the other hand, used worn Buren axes to make small flint artefacts such as transversal arrowheads (Bakker 2006). The Denekamp grave, probably an inhumation flat grave, also contained three 3–4 cm long flint blades, two of which are retouched (incl. one endscraper).

- 7 Theo ten Anscher's publication of the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age finds of Schokland-P14, Gemeente Noordoostpolder, Province of Flevoland, will appear in 2011. I therefore leave out here references to TRB flat graves and settlement traces of this site (Kossian 2005, No. 331, p. 485–486). Nor will I discuss here the TRB flat graves, settlement traces and artefacts from Flögeln, Lkr. Cuxhaven (of which my manuscript is waiting for more than a decade for publication, in Wilhelmshaven).
- 8 The drawing of pot no. 2 should be turned upwards.

Settlements

TRB settlements occurred everywhere in the Netherlands on the Pleistocene sandy soils north of the river Rhine, also widely outside the hunebed region⁹. They are characterised by flint scrapers and clay discs, which are usually absent from hunebed chambers or flat graves. Settlement pottery is more robust, and perhaps less decorated, but it also comprises finer ware, which compares well to that in the graves; the Danish TRB typochronology is almost exclusively based on the richly decorated sherds from successive settlements on the isle of Langeland!

Two wetland settlements were discovered at Sloodorp, in the Wieringermeerpolder, 50 km north of Amsterdam. According to Willem Jan Hogestijn, the excavator, they were summer sites for fishing, hunting and cattle herding by TRB inhabitants of the sandy mantles of the Pleistocene cores of the Frisian islands of Wieringen and Texel (which are now washed away by the sea). Another well-known wetland site is 'Hunte 1' north of Lake Dümmer (Kossian 2007).

One cannot say that the pottery from settlement sites clearly differs from that of the graves; therefore I call Christopher Tilley's statement (1984) in question that there was a strict difference between funerary and settlement pottery in Scania (but perhaps we meant the same in other words and is it just a question of splitting and lumping).

From the German West Group settlement sites with (a few) known house plans (at Heek-Ammert, Lkr. Borken, Flögeln, Lkr. Cuxhaven, and Dohnsen, Lkr. Celle), no social stratification is visible in the few buildings or flat graves. These houses were quite substantial and probably used by extended families. A flat grave within House 2 at Flögeln shows how interwoven daily life, the hereafter, the profane and the sacred were. No TRB house plans are known from the Netherlands. See also Kossian's (2007) analysis of all known TRB house plans.

Female potters

The nail impressions that were visible in the attachment of the footing to the basin of a well-decorated ring-footed bowl in hunebed D26-Drouwenerveld are too narrow for a man and prove that the potter was a woman; the pot was too well made for children's work (Bakker/Luijten 1990, 181–182, pl. 3).

The products of one such female potter can sometimes be recognised by 'idiosyncratic' or other peculiarities in the decoration (*ibidem*). Products of one potter were widely distributed across the sandy Drenthe Plateau, up to 50 km apart (Bakker/Luijten 1990, 174–181, figs 1–3, pls 1–2, tables I–II). The old idea (Sprockhoff 1938) that each hunebed exclusively 'belonged to' one specific extended family and one settlement, does not hold water. One tomb may have contained more products of the same potter, but they occurred in many other different hunebeds.

Conclusion

Finally I come back to the question if social differentiation can be detected in the West Group of the TRB culture. "Social differentiation" can mean both "social stratification" and "geographical differentiation", for instance by pottery dialects.

9 Probably a few hunebeds have occurred on those Dutch sandy soils north of the Rhine where they are now absent, provided that sufficient large boulders were available, similar to western Westphalia (cf. Bakker 1979, figs. 2–3).

To start with the pottery dialects – they are not distinct at all. There were no sharp distinctions in pottery styles between regions that were demarcated by bogs and valleys from each other. There was a gradual shift with distance – pottery from the Elbe-Weser Triangle differs slightly, perhaps, from that of Drenthe, but the typochronology which was developed for Drenthe and the German Emsland is still well applicable. Not all of the thirteen ceramic type groups which Schlicht (1968) discerned in hunebed Emmeln 2 on the east bank of the river Ems are traceable in Drenthe, but all in all, the decorative differences are very gradual over large distances. For instance, the angularly profiled tureen with hatched triangles on the shoulder is found continuously from Drenthe till Scania – a distance of 550 km as a crow flies.

In fact the distribution pattern of “female” products is much more fluent than that of the battle-axes types. The exchange of women at hunebed building feasts, in which people from large regions will have participated (Bakker 1983), and the wide selling of their products may explain the diffuseness of ceramic traits and the ceramic products of one female potter. On the other hand, the more compact regions of certain “male” battle axes could point to a certain patrilocality in the TRB West Group. This conclusion is opposite to the one reached by Fredrik Hallgren (2008) for the EN TRB settlements in Mälardalen and Bergslagen in the Stockholm-Örebro region in Sweden. A “matrilocal rule of post-marital residence kept the group of (female) potters intact over time¹⁰ here, while their husbands usually came from other communities.

Are these contrasting conclusions a problem? Perhaps, but they still have to be tested in other regions of the wide TRB area. Both observations lie far apart in time (EN vs. MN) and space (some 1000 km). And the named Swedish settlements relied probably much more on trapping, fishing and hunting in the dense conifer forests and along rivers and lakes near the northern boundary of possible Neolithic agriculture, than those of the Dutch horticulturalists and cattle-breeders, where hunting was rather a matter of male prestige instead of an economic necessity in the lighter deciduous lime and oak forest.

Is “social stratification” demonstrable, then, by the finds? Of course there were highly prestigious specialists of great fame in TRB times. Architects and team leaders of stone hauling on sledges, and handling the heavy stones when the hunebeds were constructed, for instance, will have had an enormous prestige. The same will have been the case with certain housewives who made finer pottery and invented nicer variations of the decorations within the current Zeitstil. Traditionalism, professionalism and originality will have counted no less than in our societies, be it differently dosed and mixed.

But I cannot perceive any clear-cut social stratification that was systematically reflected in the funeral ritual. If, for instance, the perfectly made battle-axes were the personal products and paraphernalia of male leaders of some kind (cf. Bakker 1979, 108: “village chiefs?”), their presence in flat graves is not convincingly associated with a greater number or a higher quality of pots in these graves. And a large number of pots in one grave does not seem to indicate a higher social status. I leave here aside that splendour displayed in modern funerary customs may sometimes express what the relatives wish that the social status of the interred would have been, not what his real status was at the end of his life¹¹.

The intriguing thing about the TRB culture is that, with all its standardised formality of its widely diverse artefact and funerary forms, it escapes current criteria for detecting social stratification, which seem applicable to other prehistoric cultural groups.

10 Cited from the English summary ‘Identity and practice’ (2008), which Hallgren also published on the internet.

11 Around 1945–65 AD, a few higher class pro-nazi families in Dutch Limburg tried to compensate their loss of social status by burying their dead with extreme pomp. It seems too far fetched to suppose such mechanisms in TRB society.

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