The Funnel Beaker culture in northwestern Germany - reconstructions from palynological investigations

Annette Kramer, Daniel Nösler, Steffen Wolters

Niedersächsisches Institut für historische Küstenforschung, Viktoriastraße 26/28, 26382 Wilhelmshaven

DFG Priority Program “Early Monumentality and Social Differentiation”

Introduction

Northwestern Germany was settled by the Funnel Beaker people (western group) and the succeeding Single Grave culture. Several megalithic tombs, grave mounds, and signs of former settlements show the presence of these cultures in the area between ~4000 and 2500 yr BC. Despite these prominent monuments (Figure 1), only little is known about the temporal and spatial patterns of the Neolithic occupation period, and the level of influence these cultures had on the surrounding landscapes. In the present study, archaeological excavations and pollen and macroremain analyses at four exemplary sites shall shed light upon these issues.

The selected study sites (Figure 2) are located in the federal state of Lower Saxony and represent sandy islands that were formed due to the fragmentation of Pleistocene sands (Geest) by enhanced bog growth during the Atlantic and Subboreal period.

Detailed information from the Neolithic occupation in the Elbe-Weser area was obtained by Behre and Kulač from the Siedlungskammer Flögeln. (Figure 3). It needs to be investigated how these findings could be related to the whole sphere of the Funnel Beaker Culture (western group).

The first project phase is designed to find adequate archives for palynological investigations in the vicinity to archaeological finds. The numerous bogs and fens in the area serve as archives. Due to heavy peat-cutting and intense agriculture their suitability is limited and some effort has to be done in the reconnaissance of sample sites.

Preliminary results

Around 30 sites were sampled at the four localities so far. From the Hümmling (Figure 4) and the Wildeshauser Geest (Figure 5) one promising profile each was recovered to investigate the Neolithic environment and human impact on the landscape in the area.

Trial trenches nearby Flögeln (Figure 6) revealed a Funnel Beaker settlement. Just northwestern to the excavation site the Dorumer Moor (Figure 7) provides material for a detailed palynological investigation which was shown by Dörfler (1984).

Detailed analysis of the recovered profiles

High resolution AMS ¹⁴C-datings to establish the chronology of settlement patterns

Finding suitable archives for detailed pollen analyses at Wanna

Recovering a Neolithic profile from the Dorumer Moor nearby Flögeln

Macromain studies from settlement excavations

References:


Swienskuhle (cutout)

Outlook

Detailed analysis of the recovered profiles

High resolution AMS ¹⁴C-datings to establish the chronology of settlement patterns

Finding suitable archives for detailed pollen analyses at Wanna

Recovering a Neolithic profile from the Dorumer Moor nearby Flögeln

Macromain studies from settlement excavations

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to Walter Dörfler for sharing the data from his diploma project and to the LBEG Niedersachsen and Gerfrid Moores. Diploma University unpubl.