

**DANIELA NORDHOLZ, Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis der Geschlechter in der Linienbandkeramik. Ausgewählte Befunde aus Gräberfeldern.** Internationale Archäologie volume 127. Marie Leidorf, Rahden / Westf. 2015. € 49.80. ISBN 978-3-89646-541-2. 209 pages, 2 illustrations, 127 diagrams, 1 CD-ROM.

This study of gender relations in the Linear Pottery Culture (Linearbandkeramik, LBK) is the publication of a PhD thesis at the Humboldt University in Berlin (2008–2011) and is based on the analysis of 14 selected cemetery sites. After two introductory chapters summarising basic information on the relevant archaeological and anthropological facts, the author gives an overview of gender studies and economic systems. A substantial chapter describing the previous investigations on the burial grounds is supplemented by a CD-ROM, containing all relevant data from the published monographs of the 14 cemeteries. Quantitative analyses concerning the percentage occurrence of types of grave goods, aspects of the burial rite and anthropological information are provided in diagrams in the descriptive text for each cemetery. Data for all sites are collated in diagrams presented in the summaries of the main chapters. Anthropological data, particularly with regard to palaeopathology, are only considered for three of the 14 cemeteries, which is justified by insufficient information for the others. While the study shows in-depth knowledge of the relevant literature, as documented in a chapter about the natural environment and the economy during the time of the LBK, it is a pity the anthropological studies on the cemeteries of Vedrovice, published in 2008, have not been taken into account (see the various papers on Vedrovice in *Anthropologie [Brno]*, Special Issue 46,2–3, 2008).

This work is highly ambitious and the author attempts to compare her evaluation of the grave goods and the burial rites with anthropological and particularly palaeopathological data in the concluding chapter. The results are carefully deduced and look rather convincing at first glance. I would be very happy if I could close here and praise the work as an important contribution to the knowledge of LBK society.

Being quite familiar with most of the publications of LBK burial grounds, I was, however, unpleasantly surprised by some major errors in the text, and even more astonished that these were tolerated by the supervisor and the reviewer of this PhD thesis. Most critically, I cannot agree with the chronological groups as proposed by the author; unfortunately, this is fundamental for all of Nordholz' results. Therefore, I shall discuss this in more detail. Nordholz distinguishes five chronological groups for the 14 sites: 1) "Älteste / Ältere LBK" (earliest / early LBK): Niedermerz; 2) "Ältere LBK" (early LBK): Vedrovice, Flomborn, Sondershausen, Bruchstedt and Nitra; 3) "Mittlere LBK" (middle LBK): Wittmar, Rixheim; 4) "Mittlere / Jüngere LBK" (middle / late LBK): Sengkofen, Aiterhofen, Stuttgart; 5) "Jüngere LBK" (late LBK): Ensisheim, Essenbach, Dillingen.

First of all, the cemetery of Niedermerz, west of the Rhine, is considered to be the oldest burial site, suggesting that it is older than Vedrovice, in southern Moravia, although it is commonly known that the German chronology in the Rhineland is quite difficult to correlate with the LBK chronology of eastern Central Europe, but the majority of the ceramics of Vedrovice belong to phase Ib1, which has no equivalent in the regions west of the Rhine. Furthermore, there are sufficient <sup>14</sup>C dates to show that Vedrovice was in use distinctly earlier than Niedermerz. While only one date from Niedermerz, taken from charcoal (!), reaches 6250 BP (grave 91), there are more than ten dates from Vedrovice (taken from bone) falling before this date (P. PETTITT / R. HEDGES, *The age of the Vedrovice cemetery. The AMS radiocarbon dating programme. Anthropologie [Brno]* 46,2–3, 2008, 127 tab. 1).

In the second group, “Ältere LBK” (early LBK), we find, most surprisingly, the famous cemetery of Nitra. Following the original publication by Juraj PAVÚK (Neolithisches Gräberfeld in Nitra. *Slovenska Arch.* XX1, 1972, 5–105), the ceramics of this site are dated to the end of the younger Slovakian LBK, at the cusp to the beginning of the Želiezovce phase. According to the chronological groups as proposed by Nordholz, Nitra should be ranged in the 4<sup>th</sup> group, approximately contemporaneous with Aiterhofen etc. As three of the most important cemeteries are not in their correct chronological positions, results showing changes through the duration of the LBK are unfortunately not valid.

Another important variable for the analysis of gender relations within the LBK is the evaluation of “unfurnished” burials and the amount and value of grave goods. I fully agree with the author that the ancient value of the objects cannot be estimated in our time and therefore it is better to simply quantify them. However, in my opinion, it was not a good idea to consider potsherds as grave goods, as they might come from the backfilling of the grave and were not necessarily connected to the deposition of the body.

Only spondylus ornaments and adzes are interpreted as special goods indicating the status of the person or as being a prestige symbol. However, the definition of prestige goods or symbols remains largely open. While there is no doubt that spondylus had symbolic value, the significance of the adzes is still a matter of discussion. They are usually considered as the personal working tools, but in some places Nordholz seems to understand them as prestigious goods. In the tables on the CD-ROM accompanying the book, adzes and axes are distinguished, but in the quantitative analyses within the text of the book, they are combined. As the differing functions of these tools are commonly known, I do not consider this a good idea. Anyway, the question whether or not women had been furnished with adzes is discussed by the author with many and sometimes surprising details. As one final result Nordholz states that women “did at least have access to these objects in the earliest and early LBK and up to the transition of the middle and later LBK.” Beside the problematic chronology as discussed above, it is interesting to look where these women with adzes were supposedly found. For her earliest group of the LBK, she mentions three graves from Niedermerz (grave 39; 48; 60) as “probably female” referring to the original publication by Margarete DOHRN-IHMIG (*Das bandkeramische Gräberfeld von Aldenhoven-Niedermerz, Kreis Düren. Rhein. Ausgr.* 24, 1983, 47–190), where these graves are listed as “presumably male” (p. 112 Liste 1). Moreover, the skeletons from Niedermerz are very badly preserved and the identification of sex is uncertain.

For the cemetery at Flomborn, Nordholz lists four graves with adzes, two of which are supposed graves of females. However, while for grave G 13 the skeleton has been determined as a possible female, the other grave (G 11) contained two individuals: a disturbed burial of a woman and the burial of a child with an adze and an arrowhead in front of the body, as shown by an old photograph. All this can be found in the original publication by Isa RICHTER (*Die bandkeramischen Gräber von Flomborn, Kreis Alzey, und vom Adlerberg bei Worms. Mainzer Zeitschr.* 63/64, 1969, 158–179) on p. 162, cited by the author of course. It is interesting to note that in this publication Richter presented 17 graves with adzes, five of which contain male inhumations and another two possible males.

I was not able to check all the 14 burial grounds at this level of detail. As a final point, the female graves “with adzes” in Aiterhofen need to be mentioned again. There are six possible (!) female burials furnished with adzes, but in at least one of them (Ai 112), this artefact was only a fragment, and was secondarily used as a grinding stone for colorants (N. NIESZERY, *Linearbandkeramische Gräberfelder in Bayern. Internat. Arch.* 16 [Rahden / Westf. 1995] 110). This fact reminds us that we should be very cautious when discussing the value and the meaning of grave

goods. It seems to be dangerous to conduct quantitative analyses with data that have been oversimplified. This can only lead to inaccurate results. This also is one of the problems of this most ambitious PhD thesis, unfortunately not sufficiently supervised.

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**DOMENICA GULLÌ (ed.), *From Cave to Dolmen. Ritual and Symbolic Aspects in the Prehistory between Sciacca, Sicily and the Central Mediterranean.*** Archaeopress Archaeology, Oxford 2014. £ 45.00. ISBN 978-1-78491-038-9. 308 pages, numerous grey-scale illustrations.

This volume derives from papers presented at a conference organised by the Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali e Ambientali of Agrigento and by the municipal council of Sciacca in November 2011. It aims to review the archaeology of prehistoric caves and megalithic architecture in the Sciacca area, with its intriguing Monte Kronio cave complex and nearby dolmens, and to set it in the wider context of related research in Sicily and the Central Mediterranean. It is dedicated to modern-day cave enthusiasts and to also Santo Tiné, who first excavated in the Grottadel Kronio. The chronological coverage of the volume is wide, extending from the Upper Palaeolithic to the post-Medieval period, although the focus is on the flourishing Sicilian Copper Age. The volume is published by Archaeopress Archaeology, as part of a growing set of volumes similar in format to, but separate from, their well-known BAR series. (It also shares some familiar inconsistencies and errors in typography and formatting, stemming from weak copy-editing.) There are 30 chapters. All are authored by Italians, especially archaeologists working for various Superintendencies (including the editor, Domenica Gulli), national parks and universities, and for the Italian National Research Council (CNR). This represents an impressively broad alliance of researchers. However, a significant omission is the internationally significant research on the long-term and seasonal human uses of Sicilian caves and their environs undertaken by Marcello Mannino and colleagues, especially in the Conca d'Oro area but also at well-known sites such as Grotta dell'Uzzo (e. g. M. A. MANNINO, Marine resources in the Mesolithic and Neolithic at the Grotta dell'Uzzo (Sicily): evidence from isotope analysis of marine shells. *Archaeometry* 49, 2007, 117–133; M. A. MANNINO / K. D. THOMAS / M. J. LENG / R. DI SALVO / M. P. RICHARDS, Stuck to the shore? Investigating prehistoric hunter-gatherer subsistence, mobility and territoriality in a Mediterranean coastal landscape through isotope analyses on marine mollusc shell carbonates and human bone collagen. *Quat. Internat.* 244, 2011, 88–104). Nearly two-thirds of the chapters are written in English, and all the chapters are usefully accompanied by abstracts written both in English and Italian. The volume is, then, clearly targeted not only at a domestic audience but also at a wider international readership.

The chapters begin with the editor's introduction to the volume. This diplomatically praises the archaeology of the host-community of Sciacca, clarifies the origins, aims and structure of the volume, and summarises its chapters. But no attempt is made to provide an overview of the key themes – for example, on the human uses of caves – which the mass of data presented in the chapters cry out for. There follow two chapters on the archaeology of Sciacca, six chapters on natural and cultural dimensions of the Monte Kronio caves, 14 chapters providing a valuable overview of caves in the context of Sicily's diverse regions, a rather weak set of five chapters on megaliths (especially dolmens) and Bell Beakers, and finally two papers on caves beyond Sicily – in central and northern Italy and in Malta. There is no index. Overlaps of information between chapters are frequent, which sometimes leads one to read variants on the same story (particularly of the Monte