

Die präsentierten Überarbeitungen lokaler Landschaftsrekonstruktionen an verschiedenen Fundplätzen profitieren inhaltlich von der Verschneidung geowissenschaftlicher, botanischer und archäologischer Daten. Sie führen zu einem besseren Verständnis des Siedlungsverhaltens einerseits und einer besseren Einschätzung des Lokalisierungspotentials von Siedlungsplätzen andererseits. Die gute Datenverfügbarkeit in den Niederlanden und die rechtliche Grundlage für derartige Voruntersuchungen erleichtern die Umsetzung dieses Forschungsansatzes. Die Entwicklung eines flexiblen GIS mit nach Wichtigkeit gestaffelten Potentialgebieten erscheint vor diesem Hintergrund als sinnvolles Konzept.

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FRIEDRICH LAUX, *Bronzezeitliche Hortfunde in Niedersachsen*. Materialhefte zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Niedersachsens volume 51. Verlag Marie Leidorf, Rahden / Westfalen 2017. € 59.80. ISBN 978-3-89646-843-7. 145 pages with five figures, one table and 112 plates.

The book under review is the 51st volume of the series “Materialhefte zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Niedersachsens” and deals with the depositions of the Bronze Age of the German federal state of Lower Saxony. The author Friedrich Laux dedicated his scientific career to the Bronze Age of Northern Germany and published widely in this matter. He authored the remarkable quantity of seven books in the corpus “Prähistorische Bronzefunde” and therefore made many archaeological finds accessible to the scientific community. By primarily collocating archaeological data, the new book by F. Laux continues to proceed in the same manner.

According to its preface (pp. 9–10), the book has evolved during extensive studies on bronze objects in Lower Saxony which F. Laux conducted in archives and museums since the 1960s. The general aim of “*Bronzezeitliche Hortfunde in Niedersachsen*” is the publication of all hoards which were found until 2005 with supplementary information on both the deposited objects and the find context of the bronze items. As such a compendium was hitherto not existent for Lower Saxony, this book is fortunately filling this gap now. Although both the collection and presentation of archaeological sources of different regions increasingly went out of fashion, these catalogues still are the groundwork and basis for further archaeological interpretations and narratives. Considering the contribution to the knowledge on the Bronze Age of the German Lowlands, dedicating this study to Ernst Sprockhoff and the character of the study at hand seems coherent, but because of his rather ambivalent role in the more recent history of German prehistory this may also be mistaken.

The book is subdivided into five chapters. Following an introduction (pp. 11–13), a synthesis of the history of research on hoards of the region (pp. 13–21) is given. The main chapter (pp. 22–68) is devoted to the hoards themselves with a focus on their composition and chronology. This chapter is succeeded by a discussion of depositions and the location in the prehistoric landscape and what we may deduct from this relationship (pp. 68–90). The study is completed by final remarks (pp. 91–96), a catalogue of the depositions (pp. 97–137), and 112 plates displaying the deposited objects.

In the short introduction, F. Laux explicates the scope of his book which is primarily a complete catalogue of Bronze Age depositions from Lower Saxony. Already on the first pages, he states that his classification of the hoards – governed especially by cultural relations – and therefore the organisation of the whole book will rather differ from traditional approaches. For instance,

morphological analogies and patterns in the composition of the hoards similar to the areas of the Aunjetitz Culture, the Nordic Bronze Age, or Southern Central Europe are the key arguments for classifying hoards of the Early Bronze Age.

F. Laux notes that a prominent number of the hoards are not from secure contexts, but he was able to bring together many assemblages according to the information he obtained from the archives. In some cases, this approach is certainly convincing, but if no further explanation or documentation is provided, a decision whether some objects labelled with the same find spot, year of discovery, or similar patina really derive from the exact same find context still remains debatable. Although Laux excludes any opportunity in this regard for Lower Saxony, there are indeed many find spots in Europe which yield a large range of objects which were deposited at one site during different occasions and periods. Nevertheless, critically evaluating the data from archives is a commendable task as it may correct the information on material assemblages, but one should rather accept uncertainties within the archaeological record than transforming more or less justified estimations into facts without any further reason.

The second chapter (“Zur Geschichte der Hortfunde der Bronze- und frühen Eisenzeit in Niedersachsen”, pp. 13–21) outlines the main straits of the history of research on Bronze Age depositions in Lower Saxony. This chapter illustrates the impact of research traditions as well as of recent land use on the archaeological sources. Laux focuses almost exclusively on the duration between discovery and publication of sources and unfortunately disregards any other topic in this context. In this chapter, he explicates that this book is based on a catalogue of hoards comprising 175 features which yield more than one object, and which were found during the years 1763 and 2003.

The third and main chapter of the book “Zur zeitlichen Abfolge der Hortfunde, ihrem Inhalt und Quellenkritik” (pp. 22–68) presents the depositions of Lower Saxony in more detail. The explicit analyses show that Laux has a comprehensive knowledge of the regional data and the morphological development of the bronze objects. Nevertheless, it remains unclear which arguments really were underlying his chronological sequencing. Due to the growing number of archaeological features and finds, chronological schemes are in a permanent process of reevaluation, thus referring to divergent opinions would be indeed helpful. Consequently, several of the appraisals by Laux concerning the dating have to be reconsidered by the current level of knowledge – one example would be the hoard from Dalum with its distinct Eschollbrücken type axe (J. MARAN, *Zur Zeitstellung und Deutung der Kupferäxte vom Typ Eschollbrücken*. In: F. Falkenstein et al. [Hrsg.], *Kumpf, Kalotte und Pfeilschaftglätter. Zwei Leben für die Archäologie. Gedenkschrift für Annemarie Häußer und Helmut Spatz*. Internat. Arch. Stud. honoraria 27 [Rahden / Westf. 2008] 173–187).

One third of the 175 hoards of Lower Saxony date back to the Early Bronze Age, whilst almost one half derive from Periods IV and V of the Nordic Bronze Age. This development reflects the European trend of oscillating conjunctures in the hoarding practice. But the study is lacking diachronic comparisons as well as complementary tables or diagrams. This is astonishing because especially during the Early Bronze Age, the types of objects confined to hoards mirror the diverse landscapes of Lower Saxony and their integration into distinct modes of depositing objects.

As already stated, Laux uses the similarities between different regional traditions as the foundation for his general classification of the hoards. Although any attempt in this regard will be challenged by reality, this system is gradually transforming into a classification of hoards based on the composition of objects. In doing so, Laux tends to integrate every particular case, and as a consequence his classification is branching out enormously for the hoards of the Late Bronze Age. This culminates in the presence of categories like “Hortfunde mit Beilen und / oder Lanzenspitzen,

die mit für Frauen untypischen Schmuckformen kombiniert sind” (hoards with axes and / or spearheads combined with jewellery untypical for women).

While the well written examinations and presentations of the hoards give a good overview of the archaeological sources of each period of the Bronze Age, the volume as a whole would have benefited tremendously by providing maps which could illustrate arguments that are raised and the general development of the archaeological record in Lower Saxony, but at least general maps for the different periods are indispensable. This would for example show instantly that the Aunjetitz type hoards derive primarily from the Elbe river region of eastern Lower Saxony, near to the core area of the Aunjetitz culture and directly linked to it by the Elbe River. For sure, this information may also be found in the catalogue, but maps would make the book a lot more useful for comparisons. The catalogue integrates much information on the hoards and its objects but is lacking the results from metallurgical analyses or weights of the objects. This is for sure a consequence of the elapsed time which passed since Laux has started his research in the museums as only in the recent books of the series “Prähistorische Bronzefunde” weights are included by default. More detailed information on the specific location of the hoards would be a great asset as well.

The chapter on “Fundumstände” (pp. 68–90) reassembles the discussions on hoarding practices of the 1980s without consulting further approaches to that topic. Especially the work of D. FONTIJN (e.g. *Sacrificial Landscapes. Cultural Biographies of Persons, Objects and ‘Natural’ Places in the Bronze Age of the Southern Netherlands, c. 2300–600 BC. Analecta Praehist. Leidensia 33/34 [Leiden 2002]*) and many more of the recent approaches would have been important addenda in this context. But especially Fontijn’s book would enable a comparison between the landscapes of deposition between Lower Saxony and parts of the Netherlands. However, Laux is initially focusing on the find context of the objects to distinguish between ritual and profane reasons – an interpretation based upon the diverging accessibility of deposition sites, mainly wet vs. dry sites. Further on, different categories of objects become important triggers for the decision which assemblages of metal objects become classified as booty, metal workshops or scrap. There are for sure many perspectives in approaching relinquishing bronze objects, but this chapter pretty much neglects more recent discussions on depositions of the Bronze Age.

Finally, the catalogue and the plates are of good quality, and they are probably the hidden core of the book as they gather a large amount of information. Photographs of some of the objects would have been a welcomed addition.

“Bronzezeitliche Hortfunde in Niedersachsen” is definitely successful in giving access to the landscapes of deposition of Lower Saxony and the transformations over time. The asset of the volume is not presenting new evidence but gathering such a large amount of information on the hoards which have already been published – sometimes only in regional journals. From now on Laux’ book will be the first address when further studying Bronze Age hoards of Northwest Germany. Especially the figures and catalogue will be of enormous value and will enable further research on a regionally diverse cultural practice and further economic topics. But by merely adding basic maps, diagrams, and tables, this collocation would increase its value and impact on the research on Bronze Age Northern Germany even more.

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