

our knowledge on the Early Bronze Age, and little progress is made in our understanding of the beginnings of the Bronze Age in Central Europe.

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**SIEGFRIED GRIESA, *Der Burgwall von Lossow. Forschungen von 1909 bis 1984***. Mit einem Beitrag von Norbert Benecke. *Lossower Forschungen Band 2 – Materialien zur Archäologie in Brandenburg Band 6*. Verlag Marie Leidorf, Rahden / Westf. 2013. € 24.80. ISBN 978-3-86757-316-0; ISSN 1866-6744. 176 pages, 195 figures, 10 plates.

**INES BEILKE-VOIGT, *Das jungbronze- und früheisenzeitliche Burgzentrum von Lossow. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen 2008 und 2009***. Mit Beiträgen von Norbert Benecke, Anja Buhlke, Ulrich Cubasch, Roland Freibothe, Stefanie Graf, Klaus-Dieter Jäger, Georg Kaufmann, Janina Körper, Sandra Lehninger, Andreas Mehner, Ernst Pernicka, Hans-Peter Stika und Burkart Ulrich. *Lossower Forschungen Band 3 – Materialien zur Archäologie in Brandenburg Band 8*. Verlag Marie Leidorf, Rahden / Westf. 2014. € 34.80. ISBN 978-3-86757-318-4; ISSN 1866-6744. 436 pages, 38 figures, 179 plates and 1 fold-out.

The (semi-) circular earthwork at Lossow, located c. 7 km to the south of Frankfurt / Oder on a high plateau separated from the river Oder by several valley cuts, is one of the most discussed archaeological sites in Brandenburg, Germany. This is not so much due to the Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age and Slavic settlement activities at the site, but more to the fortuitous discovery of several up to 7.5 m deep ‘sacrificial pits’ during railroad construction work in 1919. These pits, dated to the Göritz Group of the late Lusatian Culture (6<sup>th</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> century BC), and containing large amounts of human and animal bones with cut marks or traces of perimortem trauma, respectively, have fuelled discussions on Early Iron Age ritual for decades. The site has a long and partly unfortunate history of research that has been in the focus of an earlier publication (I. BEILKE-VOIGT / F. SCHOPPER [eds], *Lossow I. Alte Forschungen und neue Projekte*. *Lossower Forsch.* 1 [= *Mat. Arch. Brandenburg* 4]. Rahden / Westf. 2010). Many of the older finds and documentations were lost during the Second World War. Work undertaken after the war brought new insights, but remained largely unpublished. Lossow thus was on the best way to be added to the long list of important archaeological sites that are cited over and over again in discussions without any possibility to check the quality of statements against the actual archaeological record.

The two volumes discussed here come to close that gap. The first volume, authored by S. Griesa, focuses on systematic excavation work undertaken by him in the years 1980–1984, but also systemises and presents the evidence from earlier work at the site, starting with the first scientifically documented excavations by R. Agahd and M. Ebert in 1909. The second volume is the final report on a new project conducted by I. Beilke-Voigt in 2008 and 2009 aiming to understand the development of a Late Bronze Age central (?) settlement, the shift in function to a ritual site in the Early Iron Age and the final abandonment of the site. Considering the supra-regional importance of the site, expectations toward these two volumes are naturally high.

Following a short introduction (pp. 8–10) to the location that also features some possible resonances in local folklore (and some curious interpretations in archaeology, as Carl Schuchhardt’s deliberations whether Lossow could be the sacred grove of the Semnones mentioned by Tacitus),

Griesa succinctly summarises the history of research at Lossow (pp. 11–21). Following stray finds during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the excavations by Agahd and Ebert (directed mainly at the ramparts and the area encompassed by them), the finds made during railroad construction in 1919 really sparked scientific and popular interest in Lossow. Unfortunately, the 17 ‘sacrificial pits’, cut by the railway line at the periphery of the plateau, said to have been densely packed with animal and human bones, were documented only in sketches and the material is largely lost today. The questions posed by these discoveries led to systematic excavations by W. Unverzagt in 1925–1929. He excavated, following the methods of the time, a 180 m x 1 m long trench in east-western direction through the middle of the fortified area, later supplemented by another, even longer, perpendicular north-south trench. Further research was conducted in the south-eastern area of the rampart. In addition to the discovery of Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age and Slavic settlement areas, to the insight that the rampart in caisson construction belonged to the Bronze Age and that a Slavic sectional embankment existed in the southeast, 38 ‘sacrificial pits’ were located in the north-eastern part of the site, but only five of them were excavated. With Unverzagt’s excavations, which never were completely published, work at Lossow ended for a longer period of time.

In 1964 chance finds made it clear that settlement traces of the Lusatian Culture also existed outside of the rampart. It was again construction work on the railway line that led to archaeological work in 1968. Settlement layers and several ‘sacrificial pits’ were uncovered. For the first time, details of the pits were recorded. The filling of pit 54 contained several layers of settlement debris and bones, as recorded before, but at the bottom also a human skeleton lying on the belly, face down, with possibly bound arms. The person (anthropological determination is not clear) had *inter alia* suffered several bone fractures and a sharp perimortem trauma to the head. Pit 56 on the other hand contained the complete skeleton of a red deer, most likely killed in fall, as the archaeozoological analysis revealed.

Between 1980 and 1984, systematic excavations were conducted by Griesa in the north-eastern area of the site, where older excavations had revealed two pits. Two Slavic settlement layers were uncovered, and, below, a homogeneous package of Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age layers. Two more ‘sacrificial pits’ could be located, but most interesting is the detailed excavation of the 7 m deep feature 47. The last meter of this pit was filled with a compact mass of animal and human bones. At its bottom, a complete vessel was placed next to a large stone. Below that, the bones of three female individuals (7, 12–13, and around 30 years old) were found mixed with the remains of eight bulls, a complete horse skeleton, bones of a further horse and a female sheep as well as several more indeterminable bones and pottery sherds. Several bones, of human and animal origin, showed cutting marks, making it plausible that they were dissected before deposition.

The chapter on the history of research, summarised *in extenso* here, is really all that a hasty reader without too much time needs to get a good impression on the work at Lossow until 1984. Although excavations aimed to reveal the whole history of the site, there is a clear and understandable emphasis on the ‘sacrificial pits’. The third chapter (pp. 22–27) contains additional data on the ramparts; the fourth brings together the available information on the settlement activities (pp. 28–49). After these 28 pages, the reader is brought back to a detailed description of the ‘sacrificial pits’ in chapter 5 (pp. 50–69), and chapter 6 focuses on their interpretation (pp. 70–72), followed by a summary in English and German (pp. 73–78), as well as a very detailed catalogue of finds (pp. 79–100). A substantial chapter on the archaeozoological findings by N. Benecke and supplementary material on geological examinations, scientific analysis of pottery, archaeobotanical remains, and anthropological data conclude the volume (pp. 104–165).

The general image that emerges from the older work at Lossow is complex. There seems to have been a possibly unfortified Bronze Age settlement before the first rampart was erected. Settlement activities started as early as around 1000 BC and lasted until the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Then, the area was reused for ritual practices, i. e. the 62 ‘sacrificial pits’, up to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, when the area was abandoned, until Slavic settlers reclaimed it during the 7<sup>th</sup> / 8<sup>th</sup> century AD and constructed a new rampart during the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The site was finally left at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> or early 11<sup>th</sup> century AD.

The most important phase obviously is the relatively short period of ritual use. Comparable features are relatively rare (Griesa lists a ‘sacrificial pit’ from the ‘Burgberg’ at Lebus, several pits from the Early Iron Age earthwork at Gzin Dar in Poland, from Brno in the Czech Republic and the Kleebergsschacht in southern Germany). The comparatively cautious thoughts on the interpretation of the ‘sacrificial pits’ offered in the monograph do not go much beyond the simple assertion that we are really dealing with sacrifice, and not with a very specific burial ritual.

The scarcity of comparable finds makes publication of the available data on these very special features from Lossow so important. However, the monograph also highlights some of the problems with their interpretation. Most pits were not excavated completely, also due to issues with high ground water levels. But, as Griesa emphasises, it is exactly the bottom layers that reveal most about these pits. The examples given above hint at a wide variety of rituals and ritual performances involved, from the deposition of a person with bound hands and perimortem trauma, over complete animals to dissected bodies of animals and humans. We may assume a variety of reasons and addressees for these sacrifices, but the sample of completely excavated pits is just not high enough to go beyond that simple assertion.

The second volume presented here cannot offer fresh insights into this question, as the new excavations did only touch upon one more ‘sacrificial pit’ that was not excavated completely. This research project had completely different aims, the most important, as the introductory chapter (pp. 11–12) tells us, being to determine whether Lossow was a Bronze / Iron Age central place situated at and controlling an important passage through the river Oder. A reconstruction of the prehistoric environment and of possible indicators for a function of the site (made up of the fortified settlement, a settlement area outside of the ramparts, and a cemetery discovered in 2011) as a central place (evidence for a concentration of power, trade, specialised crafts, central role in cult etc.) were the aims of the project. References to this central question can be found throughout the text, finds and features are mainly ‘interrogated’ for their informative value in this regard.

In a short chapter on the ecological background (pp. 13–19) K.-D. Jäger proposes that prehistoric periods marked by the construction of fortifications (‘Burgenhorizonte’) are positively correlated with rain water shortages; a climate modelling study based on modern data by J. Körper and U. Cubasch presented in the same chapter at least did not find indicators for a wetter climate at Lossow during the site’s time of use. These two studies are followed by remarks on geophysical prospections, coring, topographical work and the excavation method (pp. 20–33). After prospection six trenches were laid out, two of which were situated next to areas already examined, the rest in expanses so far undisturbed. Topsoil removal was done manually, followed by the extraction of the archaeological layers in 10 cm deep artificial layers, as there were problems to distinguish the colours of subsequent depositions.

The fourth, and longest, chapter of the volume by Ines Beilke-Voigt is on the finds (pp. 34–145). The pottery (more than 39,300 sherds; around 6 % decorated; 45 % of determinable forms are bowls) is analysed primarily with an eye on chronological questions. An interesting subchapter is on pottery that archaeologists often describe as ‘secondarily burned’. Scientific analysis seems to

hint at fire disasters rather than of potter's mistakes as a cause for the high-temperature alterations visible on the relevant sherds. Regarding small finds made of clay, the relatively low number of only seven spindle whorls and one loom weight fragment seems remarkable. Two pottery fragments were identified as briquetage; bronze casting is verified by four moulds (four more are known from the old excavations) and a few fragments of technical pottery. Bronze and iron finds are very scarce, but one discovery is highlighted and plays an important role in the argumentation for supra-regional contacts: a small, 4.5 cm long bronze ram with a vertical perforation through the back. Metal analysis for this piece shows a trace element pattern characteristic for the Balkans, more exactly for Bulgaria. A search for analogies revealed, however, that animal figurines in that region are not perforated, but have loops to wear or attach them. This leads the author to the conclusion that a Balkan origin of the figurine is to be excluded. Such statements should be handled with care, as new finds may change the picture. In the case of the ram, I want to point out a small animal figurine, probably a horse, from the hoard of Țibrinu in southern Romania (M. IRIMIA, *Depozitul de piese de făurărie de la Țibrinu [com. Mircea Vodă, jud. Constanța] 1997–1998. Pontica 44, 2011, 23–68*). The animal is not perforated vertically, but horizontally. Nevertheless, the piece, dated to the second phase of the Babadag Culture (i. e. approximately the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC) shows that an enlargement of the find corpus cannot be excluded. The author on the other hand sees “impressive” parallels to Greek bronze votive offerings, although mainly horses and bulls are depicted in that region and perforations are rare. The reader must decide how well founded the assumption of a Greek origin and the attribution to the Argivian style is for the Lossow ram.

Ground stone tools, 38 are known from the new excavations, are dominated by grinding stones. The number of flint artefacts is rather high in contrast, with more than 900 pieces, mostly flakes and chips. Modified items are scarcer (around 50, while 100 artefacts bear traces of use), as are objects made of bone or antler (26 pieces). Archaeozoological analysis shows a dominance of cattle for the Bronze Age / Iron Age settlement layers, followed by pigs and sheep / goat. Botanical analysis hints at millet, barley and spelt as well as lentils and beans as the most important agricultural products.

Chapter 5 is on the excavated features (pp. 146–160). 19 postholes did not allow the reconstruction of complete houses, 27 features were identified as storage pits, while for a further 50 findings no function could be identified. Fireplaces and hearths were not discovered.

Chapter 6 presents a synthesis of finds, features and interdisciplinary work (pp. 161–173). The earliest settlement activities seem to date to the Early Bronze Age Únětice culture. The Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age phase consisted of the semi-circular enclosure and a settlement outside of it. In a first phase, the enclosure was formed by a palisade (dating to the transition from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age according to tentative interpretation of radiocarbon evidence), the caisson construction with inner and outer ditches came thereafter, at the beginning of the Iron Age (9<sup>th</sup> century or later). The massiveness of Bronze Age layers indicates a permanent settlement instead of a refuge fort. Radiocarbon data points to the establishment of the first ‘sacrificial pits’ during the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, when the new rampart was constructed and settlement activities slowly came to an end; the site went out of use around 500 BC. As a reason for this climatic change is favoured, namely a transition to a damper climate starting from 2300 BP that hindered the exploitation of natural resources in the area. This assumption is touched upon only briefly and would surely benefit from a broader discussion. As chapters 4 and 5 already demonstrated, insights into daily activities at the settlement derive mainly from the finds, as the features were rather uninformative. Ritual activities are indicated by two pottery sherd pavements and two pottery depositions; activity zones of craftsmen are absent. Subsistence was based on the agricultural use of the surrounding landscapes.

Based on these facts, the final chapter (pp. 174–185) attempts to determine whether Lossow was a central place. The answer of the author is a definite yes. After a short discussion of the models used to determine centrality in archaeology up to now, a set of criteria such as fortification and a clearly visible differentiation from surrounding settlements, a central role in craft production, intra- as well as interregional trade, a role as a residence of elites and a concentration of ritual activity is defined. The detailed description of the excavation findings given above shows that some of these criteria are clearly fulfilled, others are open to discussion. What this study misses is the answer to a simple question: central to what? There is no study of the surrounding cultural landscape, no indication on where other potential centres may lie. This would clearly be a monograph of its own, however, and could not be expected to be integrated into the volume at hand.

The book concludes with an extensive catalogue of finds and features (pp. 210–256), 17 plates showing excavation profiles and plans and 97 plates with finds. The calibrated radiocarbon dates fill 55 plates, followed by eight more with coring profiles and results of scientific analyses. Whether the graphic reproduction of one calibrated radiocarbon date per plate makes sense or if the pages could have been used better to show some more excavation plans / profiles is arguable, but the contrast to the low amount of published (and publishable) material from the older excavations could not be bigger. In this sense, the two volumes complement each other. While the first monograph holds all data available on the ‘sacrificial pits’ and the Slavic settlement, the second brings forward a rich material from Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age settlement layers. Both volumes reviewed here finally put discussions regarding Lossow on a secure basis. Although, as always, many questions remain unanswered, finds and features discovered over the time span of more than a century are now presented in a way that allows an in-depth analysis of the site and its functions. The authors undoubtedly have made an important and valuable contribution to research on the late Lusatian Culture and added important material for an archaeology of religious beliefs.

Finally, in times of continuously rising costs for scientific literature the very reasonable pricing of the two volumes discussed here should be highlighted. Fortunately, this comes not at the expense of quality. There are very few typing errors to be spotted in the text, and the illustrations, colour as well as black and white, are of adequate quality as well.

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**ROBERT SCHUMANN, Status und Prestige in der Hallstattkultur.** Münchner Archäologische Forschungen Volume 3. Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH, Rahden / Westf. 2015. € 64.80. ISBN 978-3-86757-153-1. 397 pages, 104 illustrations and 7 tables.

‘Status’ and ‘prestige’ are two all-pervasive buzzwords in social archaeology. A great deal has been written in recent decades about status and prestige, social stratification and societal hierarchies in the Hallstatt period. It is an area in which no consensus has been reached; opinions are too divided, the approaches to studying the topic too heterogenous and regional differences too obvious. The question of social structure cannot be avoided, however; it is essential for an understanding of the Early Iron Age, as of many other epochs. The sources, however, appear to be ambiguous and every relevant argument seems already to have been brought to bear on the discussion. Can we really make any further progress in this subject area? Is there any research which can produce results that do not give the impression of being old content in new packaging? This is the subject area chosen