



Book reviews - Buchbesprechungen

Ahrensburgien und Swiderien im mittleren Oderraum. Technologische und typologische Untersuchungen an Silexartefakten der Jüngerer Dryaszeit

Katja Winkler, *Untersuchungen und Materialien zur Steinzeit in Schleswig-Holstein und im Ostseeraum*, vol. 11, edited by Sönke Hartz, Harald Lübke, Franz Schopper, Kiel, Wachholtz Verlag GmbH, 2020, 496 pages, 59.00 €, ISBN 978-3-529-01862-6

reviewed by

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The publication of Katja Winkler's "Ahrensburgien und Swiderien im mittleren Oderraum" is of interest for several reasons. It provides the reader with an overview of the state of research on hunter-gatherer groups of the Younger Dryas in Northern Europe. Furthermore, it is a good example of questioning the validity of long-established notions of cultural groups of the period and their deconstruction when conducting a distinct spatio-temporal analysis of lithic technological and typological patterns. And despite its analytical depth, or actually because of it, some features remain unexplained and are possibly examples of cultural eccentricity, not easily explained by a functional or economic imperative.

The groups under consideration are the Ahrensburgian and Swidry cultures. Both cultural groups are characterised by the appearance of tanged projectile types and are found over an extensive area, ranging from the Ukraine to Belgium, with Ahrensburgian assemblages in the west and Swidry in the east. The overlapping area in the middle, between the Elbe and Warthe rivers, is the focus of this publication, which offers a comprehensive analysis of cultural differences and similarities.

The book has seven chapters and a large appendix. Chapters 1 and 2 provide a comprehensive introduction. Chapter 1 gives a synthesis of the research history of both groups and the relationship between the notional 'archaeological cultures' and the archaeological remains discovered so far, both strongly related to the tanged points. Right from the beginning, research has been heavily focused on these, resulting in a large spectrum of terms and definitions.

Chapter 2 broadens the view on both cultures by summarising the other archaeological remains such as domestic lithic tools or bone and antler artefacts.

Furthermore, it synthesises the current information regarding distribution area, mobility, demography and the environmental settings and subsistence strategies involved. Additionally, a chronological framework based on ^{14}C dates and some hypotheses regarding the genesis and disappearance of both groups are provided.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are the heart of the book, offering a comparative analysis of different data sets between and within Ahrensburgian and Swidry assemblages. Chapter 3 provides thereby a stringent overview about the methodology used to study aspects of typology and morphology, but also more general aspects such as the reduction chains (*chaînes opératoires*) or the raw material use and its procurement. With only a small percentage of sites in Germany and Poland excavated and extensively analysed in publications, a sample of four excavated sites was chosen for in-detail lithic technological analyses of cores and blanks (Burow 1, Cichmiana 2, Heinerbrück 45 and 75). This study is presented in chapter 4. All of the assemblages are analysed in detail by an attribute analysis for the first time and encompass site specifics such as the many refittings from Burow 1, the preserved features in Heinerbrück 45 and several artefact concentrations in Cichmiana 2.

The first part of chapter 5 involves a comparison of the technological features of the different data sets. Interestingly, all assemblages provide comparable patterns such as direct soft hammer percussion and a bidirectional blade reduction sequence for long blanks on prismatic and subconical cores. Furthermore, Winkler is able to show that the on-site reduction strategies were adapted to the available raw material quality, which resulted e.g. in smaller, unidirectional blanks in Burow 1.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the tanged points themselves. All the available tanged points, preforms and microburins from Brandenburg, Berlin and Saxony are studied and the ones from Poland mostly integrated from the literature, resulting in a database of over 800 specimens. In this way, it also becomes obvious that the tanged points themselves are comparable in size and morphology, while only the pieces of high quality 'chocolate flint' tend to be longer, possibly due to the bigger raw volumes of the nodules. Regarding the spatial distribution of both types (Ahrensburg and Swidry), a regional west-east focus becomes obvious, with a diffuse transitional area with the river Oder near the middle. Another similar observation in both groups is the appearance of double-microburin technology for shaping the tang.

The beginning of chapter 6 is a short recap of the results from chapter 5 and develops a hypothesis. Site function and the question of 'culture' within the archaeological context are the two main points here. The first issue remains hard to resolve today due to a lack of excavations and local palimpsests. The second goes back to chapter 2, in relation to research history and terminology. Based on her results, Winkler rejects the use of the terms Swidry and Ahrensburgian cultures, while promoting the more technical terms Ahrensburgian and Swiderian, while the Swidry-Ahrensburg complex should be used for the area between Elbe and Warthe, she argues.

To sum up, the book provides a rich source on the Northern-European human societies at the end of the

Pleistocene. It gives detailed insights into their lithic technologies beyond projectile typologies, while the line of reasoning concerning similarities and differences between Ahrensburgian and Swiderian is very convincing. It is becoming clear that the material culture of both groups is very similar, while the appearance of the mysterious ventral retouch on Swiderian tanged points remains a great topic for discussion. The only disappointment comes at the end of the book, when issues such as site function, mobility and 'culture' are only briefly discussed. However, this was not the main aim of the published PhD project, and the dataset was not suitable for that task. Nevertheless, the book at hand represents a comprehensive starting point for new research questions in the future.

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