

Abstract

Approximately 15 years ago I discussed in detail the beginnings of the Neolithic (Linear Band-ceramic Culture – LBK) in the federal State of Brandenburg using regional publications for the analysis, but without doing any additional work in archives and find-collections. As the result I saw clear differences to the neighboring regions, so that I had to give the indigenous population (Mesolithic) a significant influence in the creation of the cultural remains, that cast doubt on the existence of a complete classical bandceramic cultural package, inclusive sedentary in longhouses, ceramic and an economy based on agriculture and livestock breeding (Cziesla 2010). The criticism of my work expressed by colleagues was clear and unanimous: the Linear Bandceramic Culture in Brandenburg does not differ from the neighboring regions, in particular large longhouses as well as typical ceramic are proven and are comparable to the neighboring regions, especially to the Polish areas. Those that spoke up praised my diligences summarizing the literature, in creating maps and a site catalog, but in the end my investigation was considered a complete failure.

In the last 15 years or so, since the publication of my article in the scientific magazine “Germania” (Cziesla 2010), the company “Wurzel Archäologie und Umwelttechnik GmbH” has archaeologically accompanied the removal of about 1.5 million square meter topsoil in the Uckermark. During this time, between 2009 and 2022, at least 6 sites with Bandceramic finds and features have been documented (sites “Dauerthal”, “Wallmow”, “Klockow”, “Dreesch”, “Rosow”, and “Bietikow”). This gave me the opportunity to reexamine my results as well as the criticisms previously expressed. Unlike in my first study I have this time limited my observations to just the Uckermark-region while also examining the unpublished finds material and features from the detailed excavation reports, which otherwise would not have been possible in terms of time and finance. By also including an unpublished master-thesis (“Prenzlau 95”) and other sites in very preliminary reports (sites “Biesebrow 32”, “Prenzlau-Am Kap” and the Polish site “Karwowo”), the current state of research of the Bandceramic Culture in the Uckermark is presented here, with finds and features being discussed. As a result, I do not recognize from the remains the presence of a classic bandceramic culture,

ca. 5.200-4.950 cal.BC, which is comparable with the remains from older settlements areas such as from the Rhineland, Austria or Saxony. Instead, I see once more, and now even more clearly, significant differences, both qualitatively and quantitatively, than shown in my first study, that can be proven by the finds and features.

At first, there are doubts at least about the presences of large typical longhouses as well as – apart from the remains of crops in the inclusions from sherds - no evidence for agriculture. Instead, the two pit-house features (sunken dwellings) from “Dauerthal” (Fig. 280) and “Bietikow” (Fig. 281) provided an unexpected house Type with posthole positions and deepened into the topsoil. In addition, cooking ovens from “Wallmow”, “Rosow” and “Bietikow” show that the extensive erosion was much less than previously postulated, so much so that the extent of preservation at the examined sites was approximately 50cm. This in turn makes the previous existence of posthole positions from longhouses even more unlikely than I have previously expressed. For methodological reasons alone, a reconstruction of such longhouses based solely on elongated pits (“*Materialentnahme-Gruben*”) should be dispensed with, not to mention the reconstruction of extensive settlements. This may not only apply to the Uckermark-region but perhaps also to the entire Northern European Lowlands.

Thus, the pit-house features (“sunken dwellings”) could be characteristic of a bandceramic from the northern European lowlands, whereby they were functionally used for slaughtering, milk processing (various ceramic sieve funnels have been excavated or collected in the Uckermark) and food preparation in cooking ovens and probably also represent simple, covered work areas. In addition there are pit complexes, each with at least one pit rich in finds, lying close to each other. The finds material from these pits often includes an extraordinary high number of sherds and stone artefacts, which were certainly disposed of as part of the cleaning of storage areas in order to keep the surfaces free from sharp-edged objects.

It should be emphasized that the “Dauerthal” site also yielded 100% domesticated animals, so that hunting cannot be documented in a single bone. The “Dauerthal-site” is dominated by cattle, which were slaughtered on the site, cut up,

with the skin probably being processed into leather. The absence of certain body parts (the skulls without lower jaws and the bones associated with the best cuts of meat) is conspicuous and is interpreted accordingly, with even religious motivated actions being discussed. The transport of the durable food and products (for example: cheese) into greater settlements is postulated, although this does not necessarily have to be located in the Uckermark itself.

The economic basis is interpreted as “mobile stockherders”, as the presence of agriculture has yet to be proven in any pollen diagram. “Mobile stockherders” stipulates that the cattle herders were on the move with their animals all year round and took advantage of large areas. In the Prenzlau region – that so far encompasses around 119 sites in an area of approximately 50 km x 50 km – one to two dozen cattle herders could have been under way with their herds at the same time. This ultimately led to the forest cover degenerating to a large extent in just a few decades. Subsequently, game animals such as red deer, boar and aurochs avoided the area, so the Mesolithic hunter-gatherer-groups could not find a livelihood in this region. So far, not a single Late Mesolithic find has been documented in the distribution region of bandceramic finds and features. But there is, however, no doubt in my mind that there was contact between Mesolithic hunter-gatherer communities and the LBK-cattle herders, and that there was an exchange of lithic objects (trapezes, blades with truncation). And it is important to consider whether the Mesolithic peoples also occasionally worked as herders.

This means we have a specific Bandceramic-Culture in the Uckermark, between the towns of Prenzlau and Stettin, which does not correspond to the comparably settlement areas of the low mountain ranges. This is particularly noticeable with the lack of longhouses, which in other re-

gions are a the most characteristic feature of this culture. The difference, however, becomes even clearer with mobile cattle farming without arable farming as part of the economy. This is my result, even after revising the ideas from 2010 (Cziesla 2010), which probably will not please every reader.

What is important is that in my study the examination of ceramics played nearly no role, or at least played a very minor role. I feel the need to emphasize that ceramic analyses as seriations and correspondence analysis would probably have resulted from the Uckermark-area showing no differences at all to neighboring areas. That is, however, not the case because I consciously paid attention to features, bones, and lithic finds.

Finally, I would like to offer a very personal outlook, which is bleak, as I fear that the results presented here will not move anything in terms of research into the Bandceramic. I suspect that the models presented with implications for settlement, the economy and land use will be met with surprise by some colleagues. This then will lead to a collective silence, so that any reaction and serious discussion will be missing. The temptation is simply too great to continue working in the same way as we have been doing in this field for decades. The features and especially the stone artifacts will continue to receive little attention because, as far as I know, hardly any universities hold seminars on lithics and hardly any colleagues can draw or at least verbally describe stone artifacts. The impression that one gets by looking through the theses is that ceramics, in particular, will continue to be in the foreground of Bandceramic studies, because working on pottery sherds allows for unexpected statistical investigations, which, probably is the trendy, popular goal of our discipline. To my opinion we should change this, to reach a more holistic view of past cultures.

Translated by Jacob Hogarth