

THE FUNNEL BEAKER CULTURE IN NORTHWESTERN GERMANY - RECONSTRUCTIONS FROM POLLEN INVESTIGATIONS

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Northwestern Germany was settled by the Funnel Beaker (Trichterbecher) people (western group) and the succeeding Single Grave culture. Several megalithic tombs, grave mounds, earthworks and signs of former settlements show the presence of these cultures in the area between ~6000 and 4000 cal yr BP. Despite these prominent monuments, only little is known about the structural context between graves and settlements, temporal and spatial patterns of the Neolithic occupation period, and the level of influence these cultures had on the surrounding landscapes. In the present study, archaeological excavations and pollen as well as macroremain investigations shall shed light upon these issues. The selected study sites are located in the federal state of Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony) in the Weser/Ems and Elbe/Weser area and represent sandy *geest* islands that were formed due to the fragmentation of Pleistocene sands by enhanced bog growth during the Atlantic period. These bogs provide valuable information for the palynological investigation, but industrial and rural peat-cutting as well as intense agriculture limit the availability of adequate archives particularly in the Weser/Ems area. Detailed information from the Neolithic in the Elbe/Weser area was obtained by Behre and Kučan from the Siedlungskammer Flögeln. The investigation showed an early Neolithic phase of leaf fodder collection after ~5900 cal yr BP that was followed by a rapid transition to wood pasture and farming after ~5100 cal yr BP. Whether these findings could be related to the whole sphere of the Funnel Beaker Culture (Trichterbecherkultur) (western group) needs to be further investigated. For the present study, 15 sites were sampled, and two promising profiles were recovered close to archaeological finds. These samples will be analysed soon and shall help us to understand the Neolithic occupation period in Niedersachsen. Macroremain studies are planned for settlement excavations.

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