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AN EARLY BANDKERAMIC SETTLEMENT AND A ROMAN CREMATION CEMETERY AT GELEEN-JANSKAMPERVELD (Netherlands)

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Although there are also dispersed findspots in other locations, most of the Bandkeramic settlement sites in Limburg are concentrated in the distinct cluster of the so-called Graetheide Plateau (Modderman, 1985). Several of these sites have been partly excavated before they were built over in town extensions (Geleen-De Kluis, Sittard, Stein, Elsloo), that caused destruction or severe damage and loss of evidence of the non-excavated parts. Other major settlements are only known by observations during construction works (e.g. Geleen-Haesselder Veld, Vromen, 1985). This situation of the severe erosion of an important Neolithic micro-region of vital importance means the loss of irreplaceable cultural heritage.

In the course of the years 1989-1990 a hitherto unknown settlement of this cluster was discovered during the inspection of construction works by Mr. Harry Vromen of Geleen. It was located in the well-known row along the upper edge of the northern valley slope of the Geleen brook, half way between the early LBK settlements of Geleen-De Kluis (Waterbolk, 1958) and Sittard (Modderman, 1958), close to the site Geleen-Kermisplein (cf. Bakels, 1978: p.50, 131). The extent of the settlement could be mapped by surface finds and observations during road construction and a 4000 m² test excavation in 1990 revealed a wealth of house plans and pit fills. It appeared that the settlement covered about 5 ha and that only the southern edge had already been destroyed over more than 1 ha. It also appeared that the building schedule of the town extension planned on the site still allowed scientific excavation during the 1991 season. The Leiden Institute of Prehistory decided that this opportunity should not be missed. Thanks to additional finances, provided by the Prins Bernard Foundation, the province of Limburg, Leiden University, the municipality of Geleen and several other institutions and thanks to the efforts of most of the Leiden students in Prehistory a 3 ha salvage excavation of the settlement was realized between April 1 and August 15 1991.

Although the test excavation and the prospection made us predict a great feature density and a occupation covering the full Bandkeramic period, it appeared that feature density was rather low and the period of occupation restricted to the earlier Bandkeramic phases (1^b and 1^c). Most of the houses have the characteristic Y-configuration of central posts and the similarly characteristic simple line decoration (type AI) on the pottery in the associated pit fills. So the major value of the excavation is, that it gives us a rather complete picture of an early LBK settlement, not blurred by later activities, except for one

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corner, and in spite of disturbance by a field road, some historical loess quarries and the loess of the southern edge, mentioned above. Several observations on features and finds are to be mentioned in this preliminary note.

Most important are the often very shallow and in stretches even missing traces of narrow trenches, surrounding the larger part of the settlement. They must be conceived as a multi-phased surrounding structure, most plausible a palisade. Some entrances could be made out and the way in which some houses are connected with these trenches, or surrounded by these, give no doubt to their age, synchronous with buildings of the "pure Geleen type" of Modderman, that is the earliest Dutch Bandkeramic, phase 1^b. The system of trenches is comparable in many respects with the phase 1^c trenches of the LBK settlement at Sittard (Modderman, 1958). These are similarly multi-phased with entrances and interconnected to at least one house, but their lay out is more regular.

Of similar importance seems to be the observation that the archaeological map is dominated by plans of well-known long houses, that appeared to be of the traditional heavy construction, but that there are many less prominent post configurations as well. These consist of more modest and often very shallow post traces and seem to represent light structures of a greater diversity than represented by the well-known scheme of *Grosbauten*, *Bauten* and *Kleinbauten*. Their quantitative importance will have been underestimated on locations where surface erosion has been more severe and/or the excavation plane was constructed at a lower level in the natural soil profile. There are four long houses with wall trench (type 1A), at least ten ordinary *Grosbauten* (type 1B) and c 36 other houses or house locations, ranging from possible longhouse fragments, full small house plans to disputable post clusters.

Thirdly, there is an impressive diversity in pitfills, ranging from cylindrical ("silo's"), multifold cylindrical, longitudinal along house walls, to extensive loam quarries of over 2 m in depth and several metres in cross-section.

An extensive sampling programme for charred macro-remains has been executed, since this type of information was missed in the older excavations. Its value is raised by the fact that all evidence refers to this specific early stage. The identifications up till now included Lentil (*Lens culinaris*), Pea (*Pisum sativum*) and Poppy seed (*Papaver somniferum*).

As compared with the later Bandkeramic complexes, the material remains appear relatively modest. The flint industry is mainly based on eluvial nodules of Rijckholt type flint, with a remarkable scarcity of regular blades. There are adze fragments, fragments of sandstone hand querns, lumps of haematite -some of rather large dimensions- and a mass of pottery. It is remarkable that line decoration is not restricted to the fine ware only, but also applied on some relatively coarse and large vessels. Some sherds catch the eye by a special fabric (temper) and there are a few distinct sherds of Limburg pottery. A rare find is the fragment of a spouted pot. In total the pottery gives the appearance of a wider diversity than on other locations, but this observation might appear to be too personal and subjective.

In the months to come a group of students will work on the analysis of features and finds. Apart of the macro botanical programme there will be charcoal identification, a series of ¹⁴C-dates and a micro-wear study of the flint.

It seems that the Bandkeramic settlement shifted to the south to the Haesselder Veld in or after phase 1^c but either shifted or extended back again to the southern part of the excavated area, where a few late LBK houses and pit fills (phase 2^c or 2^d) were recorded.

The same valley edge was chosen for settlement again in the Iron Age. Two two-aisled house plans, 13 and 8 m long, a separate group of three small granaries and a small group of cremation burials date from this period.

A third phase is represented by a Roman cremation cemetery of slightly under 100 graves. Some of these have several pieces of pottery and in two cases glass (a small bottle and small bowl) as grave gifts. Some graves have a coin, an iron knife or a fibula as grave gift or a number of iron nails as the last remains of a wooden box. Most graves, however, are simple cremations without grave goods. One is an inhumation and another grave-like pit -but fully devoid of cremation or finds- was surrounded by a V-shaped ditch, 2 m deep, 2 m wide and 23 m in cross section. The cemetery might belong to the Roman villa, recently discovered at the opposite side of the valley (Lammers, 1991) or a similar, as yet undiscovered settlement.

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