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24 years after Oberried: the 'Dutch Model' reconsidered

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## ABSTRACT

USING SETTLEMENT DATA FROM THE SINGLE GRAVE AND BELL BEAKER CULTURE IN THIS PAPER IT IS ARGUED THAT THE 'DUTCH MODEL' IS STILL VALID FOR DUTCH PREHISTORY. SIMILARITIES IN MATERIAL CULTURE PRESENT IN SETTLEMENTS PLEAD FOR A CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT. NEVERTHELESS THESE SIMILARITIES HAVE TO BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF A SOCIETY IN TRANSITION. BY TRYING TO DEVELOP MODELS FOR THE TRANSITIONS THAT TOOK PLACE DURING THE LATE NEOLITHIC NOT ONLY THE WIDESPREAD EXISTENCE OF THIS PHENOMENON SHOULD BE TAKEN IN CONSIDERATION, BUT ALSO HOW THIS PHENOMENON WAS INCORPORATED IN SOCIETIES IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS.

## KEYWORDS

THE NETHERLANDS, 'DUTCH MODEL', SETTLEMENT ARCHAEOLOGY, CONTINUITY, DISCONTINUITY, REGIONAL APPROACH.

## 1. Introduction

More than twenty years ago Lanting and Van der Waals presented in Oberried the Dutch beaker sequence and chronology (LANTING, VAN DER WAALS, 1976), which later became known as the 'Dutch Model' (fig. 1). This model represented a new point of view in the debate about the nature of the Bell Beaker Culture and had considerable impact on the research on bell beakers. The essence of the Dutch Model was that it was a regional model. Lanting and Van der Waals combined radiocarbon dating and beaker typology in order

to demonstrate that in the Netherlands there had been a continuous development from protruding foot beakers of the Late Neolithic Single Grave period to bell beakers of the Bell Beaker period. An important new element was the place of the All Over Ornamented beakers. Lanting and Van der Waals fitted the All Over Ornamented beakers between the earlier protruding foot beakers and the later bell beakers. They demonstrated that instead of separate and distinct cultural phenomena, the protruding foot, All Over Ornamented and bell beakers formed part of a continuous development. Moreover, Lanting (1973) had already suggested that with the beginning of the Early Bronze Age no sudden changes had taken place and that a continuous development from the Late Neolithic extended into this period as well. Calibrated, the Beaker period in the Netherlands thus lasts over a 1000 years, from 2900 until 1800 BC.

In the years after Oberried researchers from outside the Netherlands mainly used the model. Since the Low Countries appeared to be the only area where a continuous development from older cultures could be demonstrated, many people now considered the Netherlands as the heartland of the Bell Beaker phenomenon where the origins for

### The Dutch Late Neolithic Chronology 2900 - 2000 BC Late Neolithic

North and East-Netherlands	Mid- and South-Netherlands
2900-2500 BC Single Grave period	3400-2600 BC Vlaardingen group
2600-2500 BC All Over Ornamented phase	2600-2500 BC All Over Ornamented phase
2500-2000 BC Bell Beaker period	2500-2000 BC Bell Beaker period
2000 - 1800 BC Early Bronze Age	

Tab. 1. The Dutch chronological sequence in the North and the South of the country. The dates are given in calibrated calendar years.

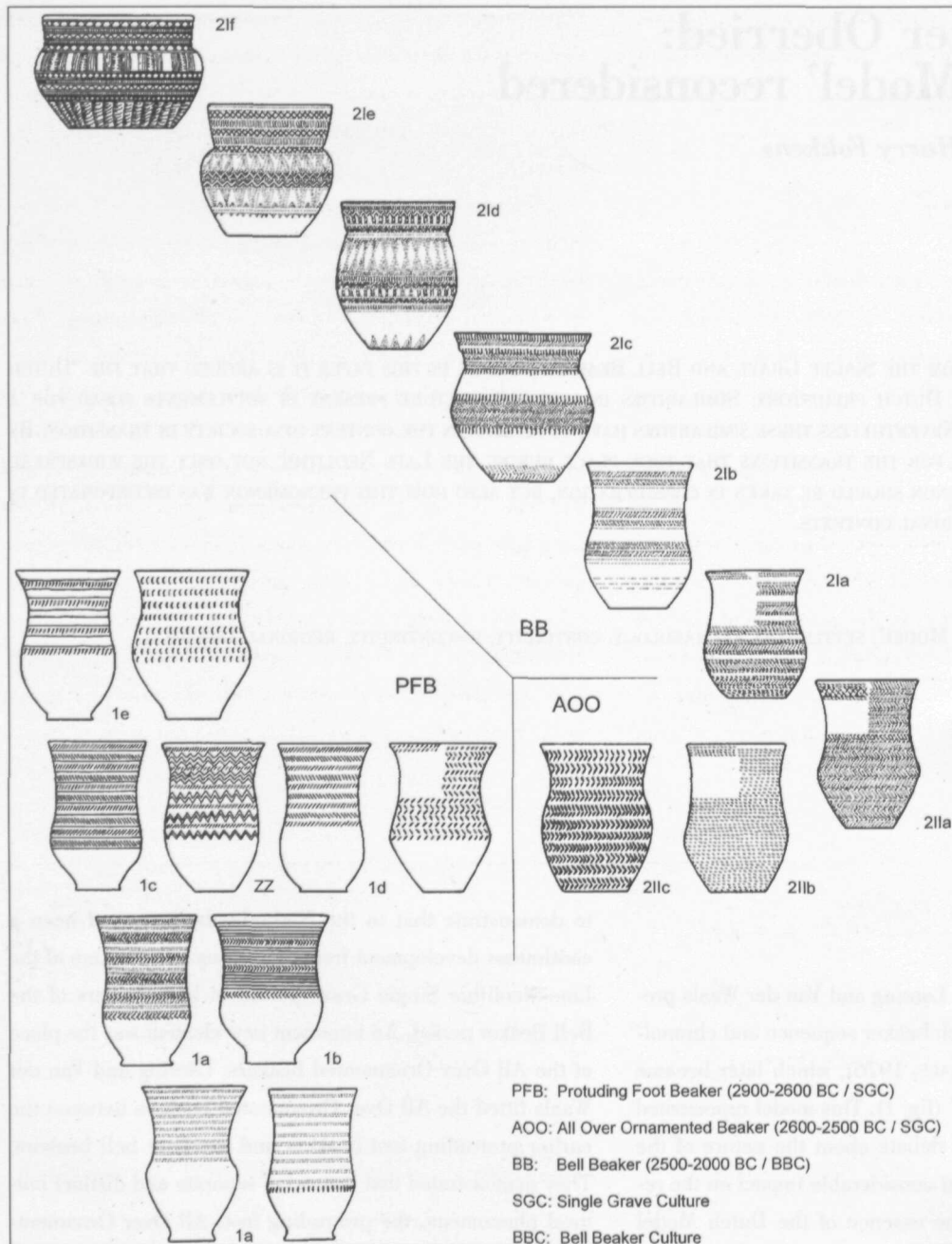


Fig. 1. The 'Dutch Model'.  
After LANTING, VAN DER  
WAALS, 1976, fig. 1.

this phenomenon were to be found. Others tried to prove that elsewhere in Europe bell beakers could be dated earlier than the Dutch ones. This might indicate a different origin of the Bell Beaker Culture. Finally, some tried to demonstrate a similar continuous development in other parts of Europe, as for example Lanting and Van der Waals did for the British Isles (1972).

Twenty-four years have passed since the symposium in Oberried took place, so one might be curious about the present status of the typological sequence proposed by Lan-

ting and Van der Waals. Is the 'Dutch Model' still accepted in the Netherlands and how has Dutch research on the Beaker period developed in the last twenty-four years?

Since its introduction in 1974 the 'Dutch Model' is firmly rooted in Dutch prehistory. The continuous development from the Single Grave phase via the All Over Ornamented phase into the Bell Beaker period has been and still is accepted by Dutch scholars. But the ideas about how this model should be approached have changed. In this article a short review will be presented of the research

that has been done on the Beaker period in the Netherlands in the last twenty years and some new ideas about the 'Dutch Model' that have resulted from it.

## 2. Settlement archaeology

Until the 1960s Beaker research depended almost exclusively on the finds from barrows. In 1961, however, a new law on the protection of archaeological monuments became active. Visible monuments like the Late Neolithic barrows were proclaimed monuments and as a consequence hardly any barrow has been excavated since. From these years onwards Beaker research mainly focused on settlements. While barrows had chiefly been investigated in the Pleistocene eastern and northern areas of The Netherlands, the settlements were mainly excavated in the western and northern Holocene regions (fig. 2). An important aspect of these areas are the good conservation conditions. Finds and features have become embedded, in situ, in the sands, silts and

clays of marine and fluvial deposition environments. Settlements are characterised by layers of cultural deposits in which, apart from inorganic material like pottery and flint, organic material like bone and seeds have been well preserved.

Excavations of settlement sites of the Single Grave period are mainly concentrated in the province of Noord-Holland (fig. 2). Here, an extensive region has been investigated in connection with among others a re-allotment project. Boring campaigns have made it clear that this region has been intensively inhabited during the Late Neolithic (2900-2500 BC). During the last twenty years the Biological Archaeological Institute of the University of Groningen (BAI) and the State Service for Archaeological Investigations (ROB) have set-up research programmes in this region. They were able to excavate several of the sites (VAN GINKEL, HOGESTIJN, 1997; VAN ITERSCHOLTEN, DE VRIES-METZ, 1981; VAN RECTEREN-ALTENA, BAKKER, 1961; VAN DER WAALS, 1989). The structured research designs enabled the investigation of carefully selected sites within a limited area, so that a

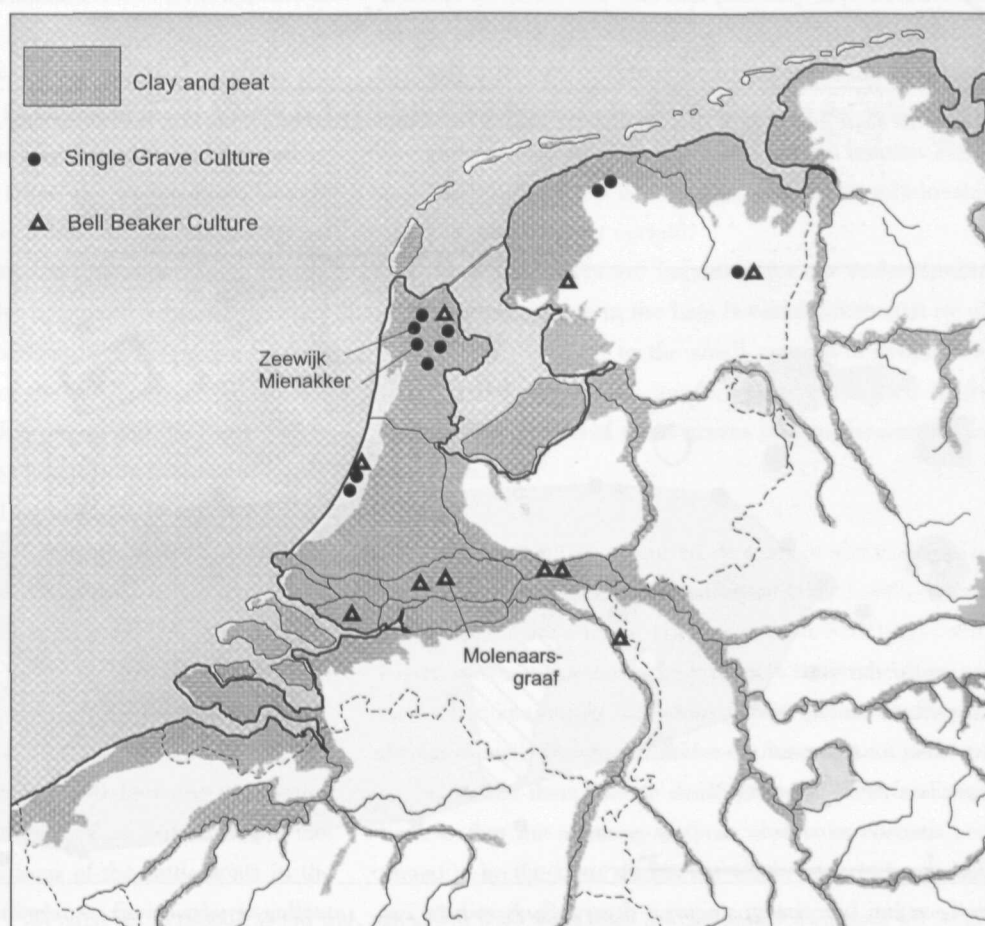


Fig. 2. Map of the Netherlands with excavated sites indicated.

start could be made in answering questions about settlement systems, interregional contacts, etc.

Settlements from the following phase, the Bell Beaker period and the Early Bronze Age, have been found in the western part of the Netherlands, but also in the central river area (fig. 2). Until recently only a few sites were investigated, the best known of which is Molenaarsgraaf, locat-

ed in the river area (LOUWE KOOIJMANS, 1974). This site can be dated in the Bell Beaker period as well as the Early Bronze Age. In 1997 and 1998 several excavations have been carried out in the river area and in the dunes in the most western part of Holland (TEN ANSCHER, VAN DER ROEST, 1997; BULTEN, SMITS, 1998; VAN HEERINGEN, VAN DER VELDE, 1998). These sites further supplement our pic-

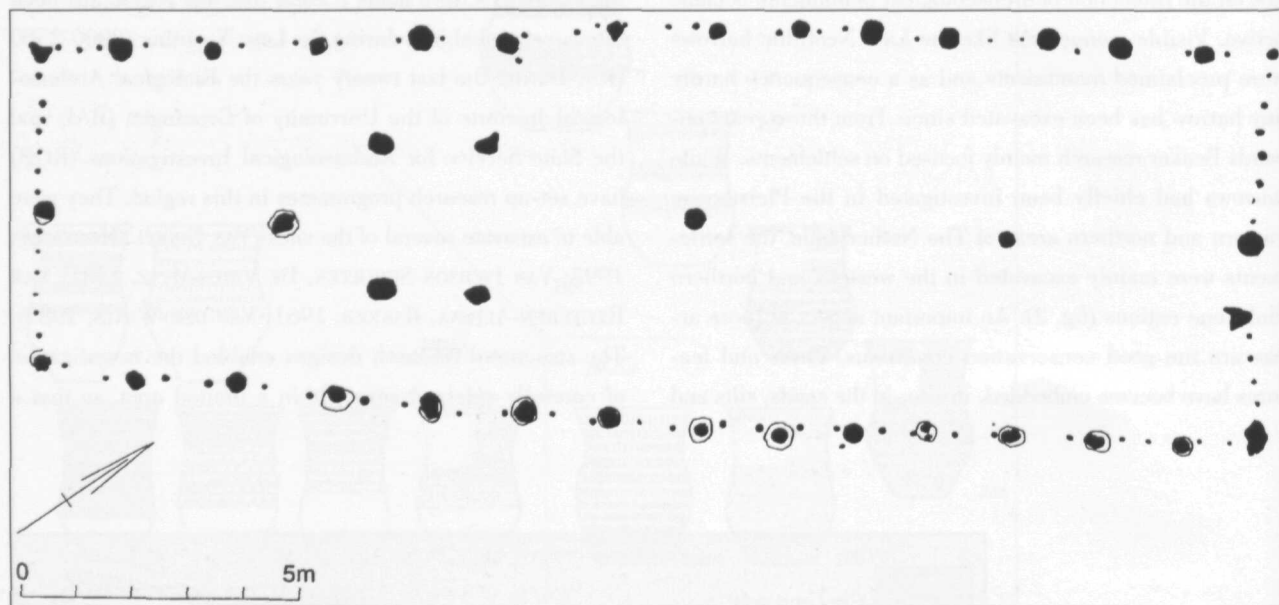


Fig. 3. The house from Zeewijk Oost, dated to the Single Grave Culture (2900 BC - 2500 BC). From HOGESTIJN, 1993, fig. 5.

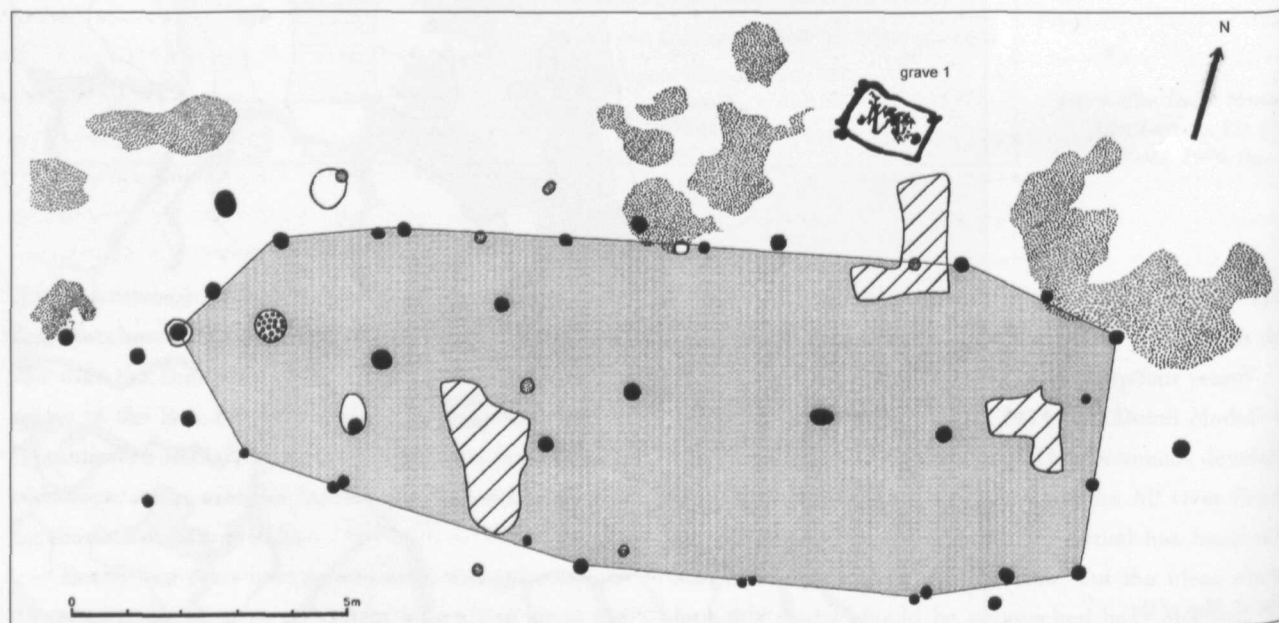


Fig. 4. The house from Molenaarsgraaf, dated to the Early Bronze Age. After LOUWE KOOIJMANS, 1974, fig. 72.

ture of this period. Unfortunately data of most from the older excavated sites and the recently discovered ones are still unpublished.

### 3. Continuity of material culture

From the settlement data it has become clear that the material culture of the settlements of the Single Grave and Bell Beaker period shows several striking similarities. These data confirm the continuous development that Lanting and Van Der Waals suggested. The first similarity concerns the houses, although, despite many postholes and pits, it is often difficult to reconstruct buildings. The overall picture is that we are dealing with more or less rectangular house plans, which are two-aisled and have a variable length and width. There are no indications that the livestock was stalled in the houses. Examples are the house plans from Zeewijk, dated to the Single Grave period (HOGESTIJN, 1993; VAN GINKEL, HOGESTIJN, 1997) (fig. 3) and Molenaarsgraaf, which are dated to the Early Bronze Age (LOUWE KOOIJMANS, 1974; 1993) (fig. 4). It is clear that during this period, apart from the two-aisled structure, a standard house form appears to be absent.

Other similarities between the Single Grave and the Bell Beaker period can be found in the use of pottery and flint. In both periods the pottery includes undecorated as well as decorated pottery. Often the undecorated pottery forms a large part of the total amount. Unfortunately not much research has been done on this undecorated pottery yet. An important part of the decorated settlement pottery consists of common large beakers, like the coarse beakers with short wave moulding of the Single Grave period and Pot Beakers of the Bell Beaker period and the Early Bronze Age. The 'real beakers', the ceramics that we know so well as grave goods: the protruding foot, All Over Ornamented and bell beakers, are often present in substantial numbers as well. Food remains in beakers of this last category make clear that they were probably used for food preparation and consumption. In the Netherlands there is no evidence of use for drinking purposes.

Resemblance in the use of flint concerns in the first place a similar technique, namely a flake industry in which the use of scrapers predominates. By nature flint was not extant in the direct surroundings of the settlements in the Holocene regions of the Netherlands. So in order to collect

flint, people had to set up procurement expeditions or engage in exchange. Still, the evidence shows that flint was worked rather carelessly. There are remarkable exceptions, however. These include for example finely worked daggers of Grand-Pressigny flint and barbed and tanged arrowheads. Much attention was paid to both classes of tools.

A final similarity is the existence in the settlements of inhumation graves without the covering of a barrow ('flat' graves). An example from the Single Grave period is the Mienakker site, where a deceased was buried in the refuse layer next to a house (VAN GINKEL, HOGESTIJN, 1997). It was an almost complete skeleton of a man of about 20 years old. He was buried in the well-known crouched position in a SE-NW direction. No grave goods were recorded.

In the Bell Beaker settlement of Molenaarsgraaf five flat graves were found. These were situated on the highest point of the sand ridge on which the settlement was founded (LOUWE KOOIJMANS, 1974). One of the graves consisted of a rectangular pit with an E-W orientation (fig. 5). On the bottom a deceased was laid on a wooden construction. The body was found in a crouched position, laying on its left side, but turned somewhat on its back. It concerns a man of about 15 years old, who had probably died because the fin-ray of a pike got stuck in his throat. Near the pelvis of the body a few undecorated pottery sherds were found and close to his knees a small Bell Beaker of the Veluwe type. The grave was located directly north of two houses. These are dated to the Early Bronze Age, so a direct relationship with the graves is not certain.

These flat graves are important for our understanding of the burial customs in the Late Neolithic. Although we already knew that next to the small amount of people who were buried in barrows, another part was buried in flat graves, the location of these graves in a settlement area is new to us.

### 4. The Dutch Model: some remarks

In our opinion the various similarities in material culture and burial customs during the whole Beaker period confirm the 'Dutch Model'. These similarities do, however, not necessarily imply that there was no development of ideas and practices or that the meaning of these objects or customs continued to be the same during the whole period of use. Various studies dealing with meaning in material culture have

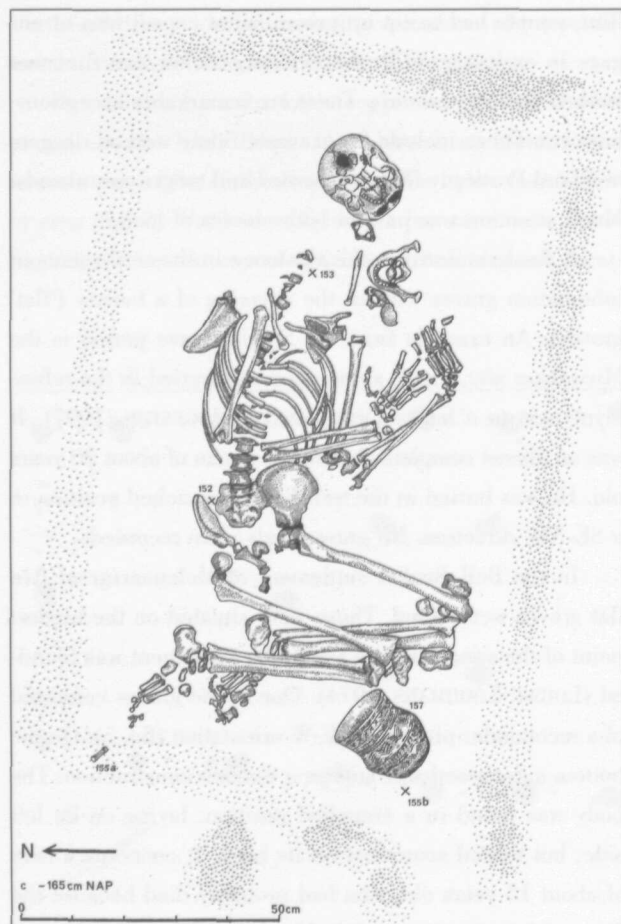


Fig. 5. Grave from a 15 years old at Molenaarsgraaf. From LOUWE KOOIJMANS, 1974, fig. 101. With numbers are indicated: 152 some small sherds; 153 fin-ray of a pike; 155a phalange of a right foot; 155b small piece of bone; 157 Veluvian Bell Beaker.

demonstrated that meaning is not so much an intrinsic characteristic, but rather a socially ascribed and therefore changeable property (APPADURAI, 1986). A certain form of material culture can remain the same for a long time, or show similarities over long distances, but still have different meanings and represent different ideas. Therefore the presence of beakers as grave goods and the presence of beakers in settlements of the Single Grave and Bell Beaker Culture does not necessarily imply that the meaning of these objects remained the same over a period of more than 900 years.

Moreover the continuity in material culture during the Beaker period does not necessarily mean that we can assume that the origin of the Bell Beaker phenomenon can be found in The Netherlands. The continuity demonstrated by the 'Dutch Model' and the similarities found in the nature of the settlements are in fact only a chronological sequence. It does in our opinion not say very much about the origins

of the Bell Beaker phenomenon. Ideas and customs associated with this phenomenon may just as well have been taken over from other areas and have become incorporated in the communities that at that time inhabited the present-day Netherlands. The same probably happened in other areas as well, but every society acted differently with respect to those ideas. That accounts for the differences in beaker decoration and form, in context of deposition and in the different relations to the so-called Begleitkeramik. From this point of view, Begleitkeramik is a wrong concept. Actually it represents the local communities, their material culture, their ideas and traditions. The real Begleitkeramik are the beakers.

Paradoxically, within the Netherlands the acceptance of the 'Dutch Model' has led to a striking deficiency of the research on Bell Beakers during the last 20 years. In contrast to other regions, remarkably little attention has been paid to explain the rise of the Bell Beaker phenomenon. There seems to be no need for this since the Single Grave and the Bell Beaker Culture are regarded as part of one continuous development. We always refer to them as the Beaker Cultures, thereby implying that they form one cultural whole. Hence the models that have been presented mainly focused on the transition from the Middle to the Late Neolithic, more in particular the change from the Funnel Beaker to the Single Grave period. Nevertheless recent studies have indicated that also during the Single Grave and Bell Beaker period changes took place, which have to be explained.

### 5. A changing society

Recently two articles have been published that started to show which type of changes took place within the Beaker societies in the Netherlands. The first is concerned with burial ritual (LOHOE, 1994). Lohof recognises the continuity in burial customs during the Beaker Period and the Early and Middle Bronze Age, for example in the use of barrows, but also acknowledges the changes that took place and their social implications. The changes concern the average mound diameter, the position of the body, the orientation of the grave, the treatment of the body, the grave goods, and the peripheral constructions.

The overall picture is that during the whole Beaker period only a few people were buried underneath a barrow,

presumably only one person in each generation. This means that this ritual was only intended for a select group or category of people. During the Single Grave period both men and women were entitled to this ritual. No children have been found, so age was an important criterion. From the size of the barrows and the grave goods Lohof concludes that men held a formal dominant position within society. It would have been plausible to explain this in context of a prestige ideology, but some Dutch scholars appear to be critical of this approach (e.g. VAN DER BEEK, in preparation; FOKKENS, 1997; FONTIJN, in preparation; LOHOF, 1994). Lohof therefore stresses that this burial ritual '*...did not represent the individual status of the deceased but that of a corporate group that included several households. This barrow ritual did not emphasize direct relationships between kin, but a group interest through its representatives*' (LOHOF, 1994, p. 115).

Lohof assumes that during the following phase, the Bell Beaker period, a shift takes place to a greater emphasis on a 'male ethos'. Due to the absence of characteristic grave gifts no female burials are recognised from this period. He states that the social organisation is still dominated by corporate groups and that the emphasis on a male ethos possibly represents a greater competition between these groups.

Another shift that takes place during the Beaker period is a change in the nature of the settlements and food provision as described by Louwe Kooijmans (1993). The general idea is that agriculture and husbandry started to play an increasingly larger role during the Late Neolithic. The people of the Single Grave Culture were organised in still rather mobile communities. Their food procurement activities were seasonally different and they were organised in base and special activity camps that regularly shifted place. Although agriculture and husbandry were practised, the role of hunting and gathering was still extensive in this period.

During the later Bell Beaker period we see permanent sites, which are fully agrarian. Hunting is still practised, but marginal and probably in an opportunistic manner only. During this period small extraction camps also exist, but these are now exploited using the permanent sites as a base. During the Bell Beaker period the foundations are laid for the development of the mixed-farming system of the Middle Bronze Age.

It is important to note that the shift in food provision during the Late Neolithic, as just described, is still based on scarce settlement data. But even though this picture may be revised in the future it becomes clear from both these

articles that the similarities and continuity in material culture and burial customs of the Beaker Cultures, as described earlier, have to be seen against a background of a changing society. The Beaker 'complex' was given meaning within the economic, social and ideological changes that took place during this period.

## 6. Conclusion

Although the 'Dutch Model' is still firmly rooted in Dutch prehistory, it is important to interpret the continuity that it emphasises in the context of a changing society. It is equally important to recognise that the cultural sequences in the Netherlands are not the same everywhere (cf. table 1). The Rhine-Meuse Delta has constituted a diffuse border area between the Nordic regions and the Atlantic South. In the regions above the river Rhine the Single Grave (including the All Over Ornamented phase) and the Bell Beaker Culture are present. Until now most Beaker research has focused on this northern region. But the situation below the Rhine is different. Here the so-called Vlaardingen Group continued until c. 2600 and was directly followed by the All Over Ornamented phase and the Bell Beaker period. Possibly the differential development of material culture in both regions can help us to understand the nature of the changes that took place (VAN DER BEEK, in preparation).

That brings us at the question how we should try to explain the changes during the Late Neolithic. Generally speaking two approaches have been put forward. First of all models have been presented by which people have tried to cover the beaker problem for the whole of Europe. In these models the regional differences are acknowledged, but these are, as Barrett observes, subordinated to general external models (BARRETT, 1994). Other models deny that a general explanation for the Bell Beaker phenomenon can in fact be found. Instead they emphasise the importance of regional studies. We have already indicated that we agree with that approach. However, this does not mean that we should no longer try to explain the widespread existence of the Bell Beaker phenomenon. It is impossible to deny the fact that a similar phenomenon occurs over large parts of Europe. But what does this extensive presence in fact mean? In our opinion parallels can be drawn with the dispersion of a phenomenon such as 'modernity' (MILLER, 1995). Maybe there has indeed been a widespread disper-



sion of something like a Bell Beaker phenomenon. But whether people took over elements from such a phenomenon, how they incorporated them into their society and gave shape to them was largely defined in a local and regional context. A general Bell Beaker phenomenon would no doubt have had to engage in a dialectic relationship with cultural traditions already present in the regions concerned. Because the outcome of such dialectic encounters would have been different in each separate region, their results can only be understood when studied on a regional level. It has been almost 25 years ago that an impulse for a focus on regional research was given by the introduction of the 'Dutch Model'.

## SUMMARY

### 24 YEARS AFTER OBERRIED: THE 'DUTCH MODEL' RECONSIDERED

In 1974 Lanting and Van der Waals introduced the so-called 'Dutch Model'. With this regional model they showed that in the Netherlands a continuous development from protruding foot beakers to All Over Ornamented beakers and finally bell beakers has taken place. Since its introduction the influence of this model on Bell Beaker research has been extensive.

After the 1960 excavations in the Netherlands concerning the Beaker period are mainly focussed on settlements. The 'Dutch Model' is confirmed by new settlement data. Similarities in material culture, concerning houses, pottery and flint, and in burial customs during the whole Beaker period do emphasise the continuous development indicated by the 'Dutch Model'. Two remarks should be made, however. First of all the meaning of this material culture may have varied over the course of time. Secondly the continuous development does not implicitly mean that the origin of the Bell Beaker phenomenon is to be found in the Netherlands. Ideas that are part of the Bell Beaker phenomenon may have been adopted from somewhere else.

Despite the continuity of material culture, it is important to recognise that the Beaker societies were changing. Recent research demonstrates that during the Beaker period changes took place in burial customs and food provision. When trying to explain these developments, we should not only take the widespread existence of the Bell Beaker phenomenon into consideration, but especially the way in which it was incorporated in local and regional ideology and traditions.

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