



**Universiteit
Leiden**
The Netherlands

**Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia 39 / Excavations at Geleen-Janskamperveld
1990/1991**

Kamermans, Hans; Velde, Pieter van de; et al., ; Velde, Pieter van de

Citation

Kamermans, H., Velde, P. van de, & Et al.,. (2007). Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia 39 / Excavations at Geleen-Janskamperveld 1990/1991, 278. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/33079>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/33079>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

ANALECTA
PRAEHISTORICA
LEIDENSIA 39

PUBLICATION OF THE FACULTY OF ARCHAEOLOGY
LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

EXCAVATIONS AT
GELEEN-JANSKAMPERVELD 1990/1991

EDITED BY
PIETER VAN DE VELDE



LEIDEN UNIVERSITY 2007

Series editors: Corrie Bakels / Hans Kamermans

Copy editors of this volume: Pieter van de Velde / Hans Kamermans / Medy Oberendorff /
Kelly Fennema

Copyright 2008 by the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden

ISSN 0169-7447
ISBN 978-90-73368-22-4

Subscriptions to the series *Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia*
and single volumes can be ordered exclusively at:

Faculty of Archaeology
P.O. Box 9515
NL-2300 RA Leiden
the Netherlands

In the summer of 1991, the Dutch media featured extensively the excavation of an early Bandkeramik (LBK) village in Geleen, Limburg. The headlines in the newspapers read: “7000 years old farmers village”, “Oldest village of the Netherlands discovered in Geleen”, “Old farm village excavated”, etc. The discovery was mentioned in the news programmes on all Dutch TV channels. The Dutch radio called the site the oldest “Brandkeramische” (instead of “Bandkeramische”; the Dutch word ‘brand’ means ‘fire’...) site of the Netherlands. Not only the Dutch press was interested, even German and Belgian newspapers wrote about “The Earliest Dutch Village”. What was the case? The University of Leiden was excavating an almost complete prehistoric village once inhabited by the very first farmers in this part of Europe. If it was not the first village of the Netherlands, then it was at least one of a series of early villages.

1.1 DISCOVERY

The site is now known as Geleen Janskamperveld (JKV) and was discovered by Harry Vromen from Geleen. Already in 1979 it became clear to Vromen – artist, amateur archaeologist and correspondent to the Monument Service – that an unknown Bandkeramik (‘LBK’, from German ‘Linearbandkeramik’) settlement was hidden in the south-western part of the Janskamperveld. While surveying the agricultural fields he found pottery, flint and sandstone artefacts. In the following years Vromen kept an eye on the area and discovered more evidence.

The site of JKV is one of many LBK sites discovered and excavated on the Graetheide plateau. This plateau was well-suited for the early farmers as it is covered with loess, a fertile and easy to till aeolian sediment. It lies about 20 km north of the present-day city of Maastricht (fig. 1-1 and 1-2). The names of some of the other LBK sites are well known among those who study the European Neolithic: Sittard, Elsloo, Stein and Beek (Modderman 1958, 1970, 1985, 1988). Most of these sites were excavated just after the Second World War as a result of the frantic post-war building activity.

From 1979 to 1989 Vromen collected many LBK finds north of the Geleenbeeklaan. He was able to trace the limits of what he thought was a LBK village of the earliest phase (5300-5100 BC) (fig. 1-3). In 1980 a sewer trench was dug

near hotel Riche in the extreme south-western part of the area (fig. 1-4 no. 1), and 60 cm below the surface a dark brown coloured feature became visible. From this trench Vromen rescued flint and pottery. Some of the pottery was decorated so he could date the finds tentatively to Modderman’s phases 1b and 2c (Vromen 1985).

Four years later, the Cokoma building was constructed along the Geleenbeeklaan (fig. 1-4 no. 2). In the building pit Vromen discovered 19 dark coloured features. After consulting the provincial archaeologist Dr Willems and Dr Bakels of the Institute of Prehistory, University of Leiden, a small-scale rescue excavation was carried out. The main goal of this



Fig. 1-1 The Netherlands, with the position of Geleen indicated.

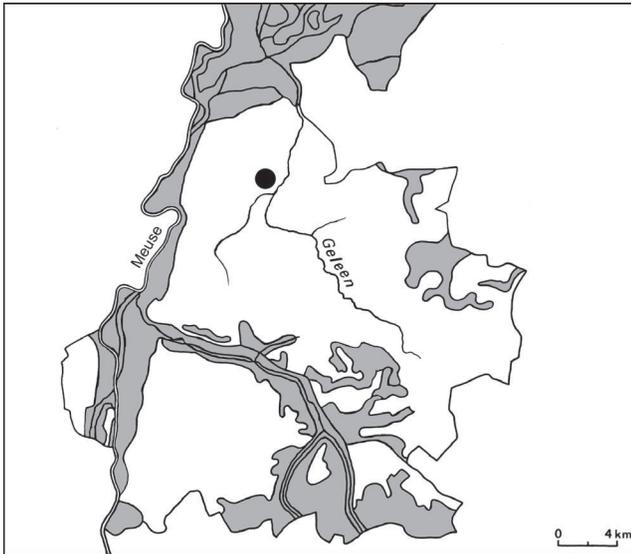


Fig. 1-2 Southern Dutch Limburg, with the position of Geleen-Janskampveld (shaded: alluvial deposits)

excavation was to date the finds. Enough decorated pottery was collected from the pits to place the site in the older LBK phase lb-c. Three of the features (fig. 1-5, features 18, 19 and 20) constituted a three-post row characteristic of a Bandkeramik house (Bakels 1985). During the same construction works Vromen discovered a Roman burial cremation with five pieces of pottery, an iron knife and some iron nails. The finds date the grave to the 2nd century AD. Later, during surveys of the area, Vromen discovered more Roman graves.

Another three years later, in 1987, Vromen recorded an almost complete LBK house in the pit for the Intercai building (unpublished letter to Stoepler 1989) (fig. 1-4 no. 3). One of the associated features contained a few fragments of Limburg pottery. In the following years more offices were constructed along the Geleenbeeklaan and more traces of the Bandkeramik village were discovered: in 1989 in the construction trench for the office of architect Wauben (fig. 1-4 no. 4) and in 1990 in the enlargement construction trench for the Cokoma building of 1984 (fig. 1-4 no. 2).

1.2 THE 1990 EXCAVATION

For a long time there was no reason to excavate the site, although since 1980 the expansion of the town of Geleen threatened the area. But all that changed in 1989 when the municipality finally decided to build villas on the farmland. They were planning to do this in two phases. Phase one would 'only' destroy the eastern part of the settlement. But the second phase, which would start in 1991, threatened the complete prehistoric village. Vromen sounded the alarm with a letter to the new provincial archaeologist Henk Stoepler.

In 1990 Stoepler conducted a test excavation to establish the scientific potential of Geleen JKV. The Institute of Prehistory of Leiden University used this opportunity to hold its field course for first year archaeology students on the site. Ivar Schute, a graduate student, acted as field supervisor. From the end of May until mid-September 0.2 hectare was excavated and 10 well-preserved LBK house plans, five disturbed Roman graves, and a wealth of pits were discovered (Schute 1991).

Phase one of the municipal building activities had already started and the eastern part of the settlement was almost completely lost to the archaeologists. Amateur archaeologist Harry Vromen who regularly visited the training invited some of the teachers to one of the building plots, where for all to see a Bandkeramik house was being flushed with concrete by the contractor. The only thing Vromen and a group of students could do was to record the features and rescue finds in the sewer trenches in the Hovenweide, the Parcivalstraat and the Halewijnstraat, and in a construction trench in 'plot 20' along the Halewijnstraat (fig. 1-4 no. 5). Among the finds in the Halewijnstraat was a Late Medieval jar. Along a newly built service road parallel to the Geleenbeeklaan Vromen discovered several cremation graves dating from the Iron Age.

1.3 THE 1991 EXCAVATION

The test excavation revealed that the site was well preserved. It looked extremely promising and in October 1990 Professor Louwe Kooijmans decided to excavate as completely as possible the still available three and a half hectares of the five hectares site. The municipality was not very enthusiastic, and feared a delay in the building activities. They were willing to postpone the work until September 1991 but had only a small budget available for the excavation. It was not easy for Louwe Kooijmans to raise the necessary 400,000 guilders. Leiden University, the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds and the Province of Limburg together provided the main part of the money.

Finally, on 2nd April 1991 the excavation did start and for 23 weeks Leendert Louwe Kooijmans, his co-worker Hans Kamermans, a field technician and almost 100 students worked very hard to finish the excavation before September. Ivar Schute again acted as field supervisor. As in the previous year the field training programme for the first year's students of the joint departments of archaeology of Leiden University (led by Pieter van de Velde) was held on the Janskampveld. During the summer more than 60 LBK house plans, an enclosing ditch system and many other features were excavated. Most of the house plans are from long houses, but all the familiar LBK house types (*Grossbauten*, *Bauten* and *Kleinbauten*) are represented. The features range from cylindrical silos and pits along

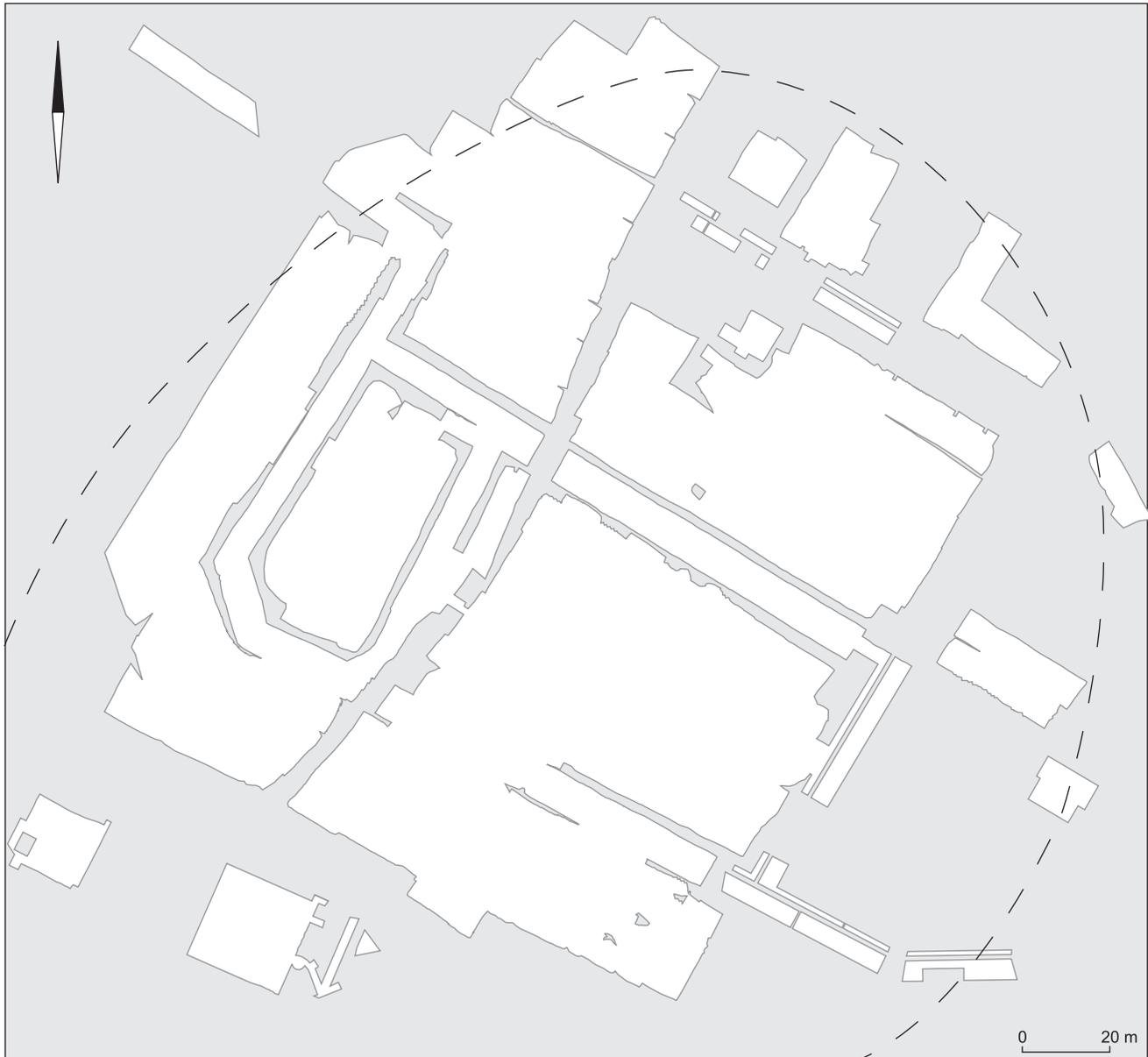


Fig. 1-3 Geleen-Janskamperveld: limits of surface finds and extent of the 1990-1991 excavations

houses to quarry loam, to detached pit complexes. The enclosing ditch system consisted of a multi-phased structure that most probably contained a palisade.

Most of the pottery belongs to the LBK culture and has the characteristic simple line decoration, although there are also some pottery fragments deriving from the contemporaneous Limburg culture. Most of the stone tools are made of eluvial nodules of Rijckholt flint. Remarkable is the scarcity

of regular blades. Some fragments of adzes and sandstone hand querns were found. Among the charred botanical remains found during an extensive sampling programme were lentil (*Lens culinaris*), pea (*Pisum sativum*) and poppy seed (*Papaver somniferum*), all three the earliest examples in the Netherlands.

Other finds, dating from later periods, were a house plan of an Iron Age farm and a cemetery dating from the Roman



Fig. 1-4 Archaeological finds on the Janskamperveld from 1979 until 1990.

1 = sewer trench near hotel Riche (1980), 2 = construction trench Cokoma building (1984), 3 = construction trench Intercai building (1987), 4 = construction trench office of architect Wauben (1989), 5 = construction trench 'plot 20' (1990).

period (70 - 200 AD). The almost a hundred graves, mostly cremations, were situated on both sides of the Janskamperveldweg, suggesting an ancient origin of this field road. However, the archaeologists were not allowed to excavate the old medieval or perhaps even Roman road, nor the planned pavements of the projected roads. A number of historical loess quarries had further disturbed the archaeological features. This explains the 'holes' on the map of the excavation (cp. figs. 15-1 to 15-6).

On 15th August, well before the deadline, the fieldwork ended.

1.4 THE POST-EXCAVATION ERA 1991-2007, ANALYSES AND PUBLICATIONS

Soon a number of preliminary reports were published (Louwe Kooijmans 1991; Louwe Kooijmans *et al.* 1992, 1993; Kamermans *et al.* 1992; Kamermans/Louwe Kooijmans 1994). The finds from the excavation provided datasets for student theses in the first years after the digs, especially for those who had taken part in the field work in Geleen¹. Also, off and on the results of the excavation were used in synthetical texts (cf. Louwe Kooijmans *et al.* 2005) or *Festschriften* (Louwe Kooijmans *et al.* 2003).

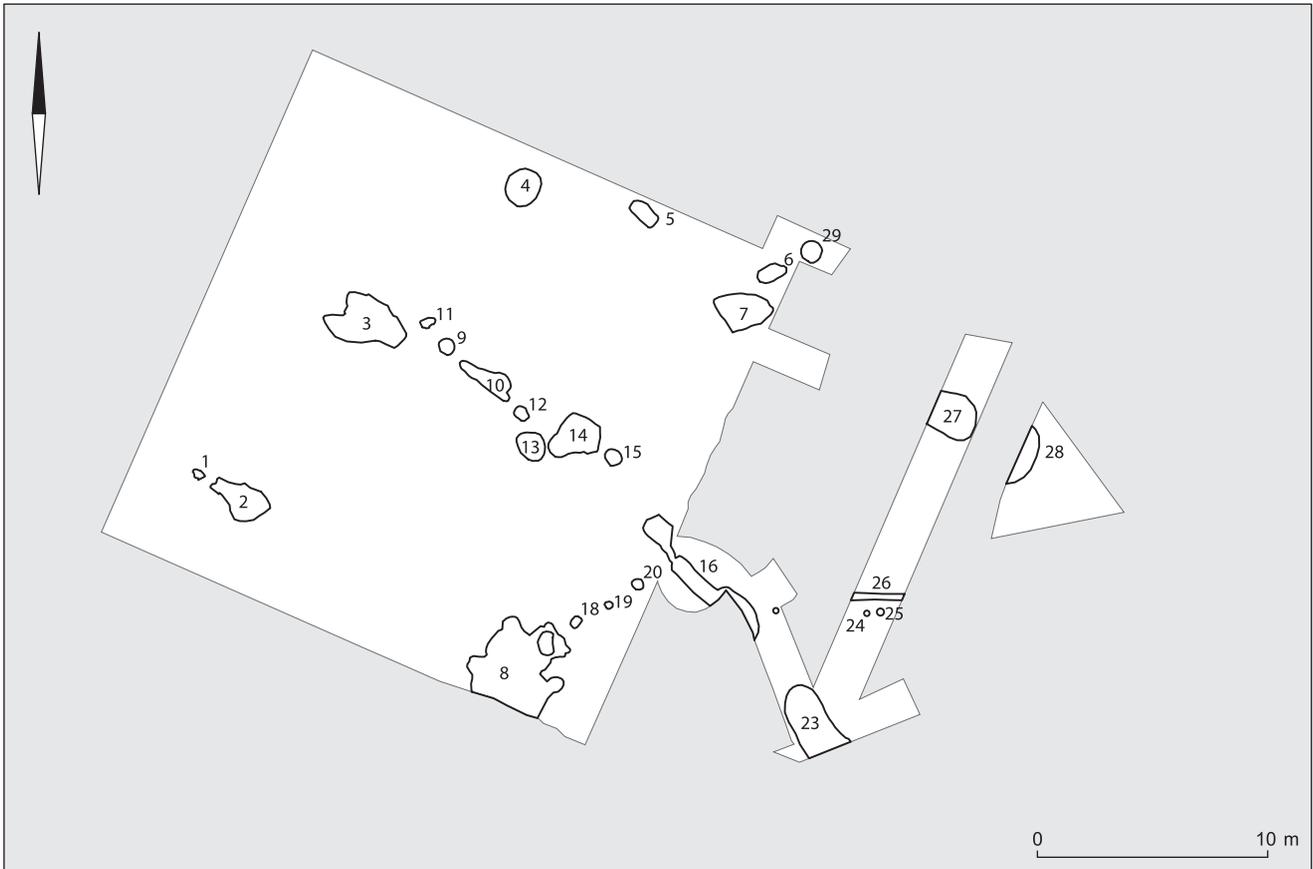


Fig. 1-5 LBK features in the Cokoma construction trench.

Unavoidably however, the finds, the field notes and the drawings gradually disappeared from sight and mind, as other, to some more interesting, excavations came along in subsequent years. Moreover, already a few years before the JKV excavations, when Modderman had left the chair of Prehistoric Archaeology, understandably the focus of the Faculty's research slowly shifted away from the Bandkeramik to other pursuits, only to return temporarily on the occasion of these (what were essentially) rescue excavations.

In 2002 Louwe Kooijmans and Kamermans, and Van de Velde were invited to contribute to the *Festschrift* for Jens Lüning's 65th birthday, and they decided to write collectively one essay on a topic that would please the celebrator, on the very excavations at JKV (Louwe Kooijmans *et al.* 2003). Of course, there were differences in emphases and view points between the three; yet, the resulting text which did not hide the differences, was much appreciated by the addressee and the wider audience. This, too, became the occasion to initiate a full analysis of the JKV data. The work load

associated with the Deanery of the recently founded Faculty of Archaeology, plus the editorship of the large scale *Prehistory of the Netherlands*, and a number of large rescue excavations in the Dutch peat area, prevented Louwe Kooijmans to partake in the analyses – although he kindly contributed an essay on the geology and geomorphology of the region around JKV (Chapter 3, below).

In a traditional vein it was decided that previous to the analyses of the different categories of finds, a (relative) chronological framework was to be constructed to which the other studies were to be appended. That frame was to be derived from the changes in the decoration on the pottery; in fact, a remake of the chronological scheme published in the 2003 text, and Van de Velde set out to do that job. When that part-project was near to its end, collaborators were sought and found to analyse and describe the other find categories. By that time the digitalization of the field drawings had got under way: for in the field virtually all trenches had been drawn by hand in a traditional way (later to be digitized in

the office as part of students' training programs); features had also been recorded by Total Station and SDR, again as part of a field training program. A full check and completion of the digitized plans by Kamermans resulted in the final digital record of the excavation which was later enhanced with MAPinfo tables²; in the next chapter he will deal with this subject. As far as analysis and description of the JKV Bandkeramik data are concerned, flint procurement was assumed by M.E.Th. de Grooth, use wear and tool analyses both on flint and other stones by A.L. van Gijn (later joined by her assistant A. Verbaas), and adzes as well as macro remains of seeds by C.C. Bakels; pottery (all of it), the houses, the settlement and the chronology were to be elaborated by Van de Velde.

Apart from the Bandkeramik village on the Janskampveld, there were also remains of an Early Iron Age farmstead situated almost in the centre of the excavation, remarkable because of the extensive area that had been uncovered around it (albeit for other, LBK purposes), as yet exceptional on loessic soils where only houses and not their yards had been excavated; L. van Hoof was willing to take this part of the data to an end. The Late Iron Age/Roman graveyard which had been analysed by Wesseling in her MA thesis (1992) did not fare so well afterward. Wesseling herself had moved to an administrative job which did not leave sufficient time to write a new and shorter text on the topic. Several other colleagues in the Provincial Roman Archaeology field were approached, but they all were too busy to conduct an analysis and write down the results. Which is a pity, as the nearly one hundred graves seem to span the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age and the early decades of the Roman conquest of the country.

Eric van Driel and Medy Oberendorff, draftspeople at the Faculty of Archaeology did much to render the illustrations in this *Analecta* clear and pleasing to the eye as well.

Field drawings and databases will be made available through the *e-depot*.

Notes

1 Van Amen 1993, Boulonois 1996, Van den Burgt 1992, Gumbert 1996, Houkes 1996, Kneepkens 1993, Lawende 1992, Mietes 1991, Molenaar 1991, Prangma 1993, Schute 1992, Van der Veen 1991, Wesselingh 1992.

2 These plans will be made available on the web:
<http://edna.itor.org.nl>

References

Amen, I. van, 1993. *43 Bandkeramische dissels en disselsfragmenten uit Geleen-Janskampveld, Limburg*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (MA thesis).

Bakels, C.C., 1985. Geleen. *Publications de la Société Historique et Archéologique dans le Limbourg* 121, 149.

Boulonois, M., 1996. *Opgraving Geleen-Janskampveld 1990-1991. Datering van een aantal kuilen met behulp van het versierde Bandkeramische aardewerk*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (MA thesis).

Burgt, P. van den, 1992. *Het greppelsysteem van de Bandkeramische nederzetting te Geleen, Limburg*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (MA thesis).

Gumbert, B., 1996. *Geleen-Janskampveld. beschrijving en datering van een gedeelte van het versierde aardewerk*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (MA thesis).

Houkes, R., 1996. *Een onderzoek naar de herkomst van de vuursteenindustrie van de Bandkeramische vindplaats Geleen-Janskampveld*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (MA thesis).

Kamermans, H./L.P. Louwe Kooijmans, 1994. The Earliest Dutch Village? *Archaeology Ireland* 29 (Volume 8 Number 3), 10-12.

Kamermans, H./L.P. Louwe Kooijmans/I. Schute, 1992. Bandkeramische nederzetting, IJzertijdsporen en een Romeins crematiegrafveld op het Janskampveld te Geleen. *Archeologie in Limburg* 54, 124-126.

Kneepkens, R., 1993. *Lineaire Bandkeramiek uit twee kuilen van de nederzetting op het Janskampveld bij Geleen*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (MA thesis).

Lawende, M., 1992. *IJzertijd of Inheems-Romeinse tijd? Een onderzoek naar sporen uit de IJzertijd of Inheems-Romeinse tijd op het Geleense Janskampveld*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (BA thesis).

Louwe Kooijmans, L.P., 1991. An Early Bandkeramic Settlement and a Roman Cemetery at Geleen-Janskampveld (Netherlands), *Notae Praehistoricae* 11, 63-65.

Louwe Kooijmans, L.P./P.W van den Broeke/H. Fokkens/A.L. van Gijn, 2005. *The Prehistory of the Netherlands*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.

Louwe Kooijmans, L.P./H. Kamermans/I. Schute, 1992. Bandkeramische nederzetting, IJzertijdsporen en een Romeins crematiegrafveld op het Janskampveld te Geleen. *Publications de la Société Historique et Archéologique dans le Limbourg* 128, 250-255.

Louwe Kooijmans, L.P./H. Kamermans/I. Schute, 1993. Bandkeramische nederzetting, IJzertijdsporen en een Romeins crematiegrafveld op het Janskampveld te Geleen. *Tijdschrift van de Heemkundevereniging Geleen* 1993(1), 3-6.

- Louwe Kooijmans, L.P./P. van de Velde/H. Kamermans, 2003. "The early Bandkeramik settlement of Geleen-Janskamperveld – its intrasite structure and dynamics." In J. Eckert/U. Eisenhauer/A. Zimmermann (Hrg), *Archäologische Perspektiven – Analysen und Interpretationen im Wandel (Lüning Festschrift)*. Rahden, Marie Leidorf; SS. 373-397.
- Mietes, E., 1991. *Versierde scherven van Geleen-Janskamperveld*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (BA thesis).
- Modderman, P.J.R., 1958. Die Bandkeramische Siedlung von Sittard. *Palaeohistoria* 6-7, 33-120.
- Modderman, P.J.R., 1970. Linearbandkeramik aus Elsloo und Stein. *Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia* 3 (3 vols.)
- Modderman, P.J.R., 1985. Die Bandkeramik im Graetheide-gebiet, Niederländisch Limburg. *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 66, 26-121.
- Modderman, P.J.R., 1988. The Linear Pottery Culture. Diversity in Uniformity. *Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek* 38, 63-139.
- Molenaar, S., 1991. *Analyse van het versierde Bandkeramische aardewerk uit het noorddeel van Geleen-Janskamperveld*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (BA thesis).
- Prangma, N., 1993. *Microregio Geleen-Janskamperveld. Het Bandkeramisch nederzettingsspatroon in het Geleenbeekdal in vergelijking met het Merzbachtal*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (BA thesis).
- Schute, I.A., 1991. Bandkeramische nederzetting. *Publications de la Société Historique et Archéologique dans le Limbourg* 127, 227-228.
- Schute, I.A., 1992. *Geleen-Janskamperveld 1991-1992 – een beschrijving en analyse van de Lineair Bandkeramische huisplattegronden*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (MA thesis).
- Veen, B. van der, 1991. *Versierd aardewerk van Geleen-Janskamperveld*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (BA thesis).
- Vromen, H., 1985. Een nederzetting van de Lineairbandkeramische cultuur in het Janskamperveld Gemeente Geleen. *Archeologie in Limburg* 23, 45-50.
- Wesselingh, D., 1992. *Heren of Boeren? Een Romeins grafveld op het Janskamperveld te Geleen, prov. Limburg*. Leiden, Instituut voor Pre- en Protohistorie (MA thesis).

H. Kamermans
Faculty of Archaeology
P.O. Box 9515
NL 2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands
h.kamermans@arch.leidenuniv.nl

P. van de Velde
Faculty of Archaeology
P.O. Box 9515
NL 2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands
p.van.de.velde@arch.leidenuniv.nl