

FINAL MESOLITHIC SETTLEMENTS AT WEELDE (NORTHERN BELGIUM)

In 1976 and 1977 excavations undertaken by the K.U.Leuven at the site of Weelde-Paardsdrank revealed three high artifact density areas located atop a Tardiglacial parabolic dune.

The vertical artifact dispersion, amounting to 25-30 ans, is limited to the partially reworked A-horizons and the B-horizons of a humic-iron podzol. Since most of the artifacts (60-70%) were recovered in a horizontal position, the original level of occupation may well be situated within this dispersion. This does however not lead to a stratigraphical dating of the industry, since its correlation with any particular holocene lithozone remains to be proven. Of the three major concentration areas, referred to as sectors 1, 4 and 5, sector 5, situated on top of the dune, is the least disturbed : about 70% of the industry could be recovered geologically in situ. The well-defined horizontal artifact concentration, evoking a single occupation unit, is clearly oval-shaped and measures 6 by 3 meters. The lower percentage of *in situ*-finds in the sectors 1 and 4, respectively 55 and 30%, is due to their situation in a ploughed fire-alley, somewhat lower on the northern slope of the dune. It is presently unclear if their rather diffuse, long-drawn dispersion configurations correspond to single occupation units or however resulted from the accumulation or juxtaposition of several, subsequent frequentations of the site.

Two C14-dates could be obtained. Both concern the sector 5. A date on a sample of dispersed charcoal from the A₂-horizon, indicating an age of 5710 ± 80 B.P. (Lv-934), refers to middle-Atlantic post-danubian times. Another sample, consisting of broken and burnt hazelnut shells, essentially recovered from the B₂-horizon of ferric accumulation, was dated to 6990 ± 135 B.P. (Lv-959), indicating an early Atlantic pre-danubian age. On one hand one should stress the considerable risk of recent contamination for the charcoal sample, on the other one should point at the position of the hazelnut sample at the very lower limit of the vertical artifact dispersion.

The raw materials consist mainly of flint and Wommersom-quartzite. Whereas the latter was obviously transported over a distance of approximately 65 kms, the former was probably collected locally as small rolled nodules

originating from the river Maas gravels. The "débitage" aims essentially at the production of blades on which, in fact, more than 70% of the toolkit was manufactured. The attempted "style de débitage" is of Montbani-type.

All three sectors are marked by close typological resemblances. The main differences concern only the microlithic component.

Scrapers, represented for about 10%, vary greatly in type and size. Borers and burins are nearly absent. Wetouched flakes, blades and bladelets as well as typical Montbani-blades and bladelets are numerous.

Microliths are present in each sector for about 30%. Points with unretouched base, mostly obliquely truncated, are well represented? Tardenois points and segments are extremely scarce. Backed bladelets appear only in sectors 1 and 5. Triangles, some of which have an inversely small truncation are represented only in small quantities. They are however significantly more numerous in sectors 1 and 4. The importance of points with flat retouch, mostly mistletoe points, is striking in sector 1. In sectors 4 and 5 they are less represented. The significance of these differences between the sectors, be they chronological, functional or even ethnic, remains unexplained.

Trapezes, mainly of rhombic and rectangular type, are by far the main microliths. An inverse retouche of the small truncation is present but not very frequent.

Microburin-technique is well represented. Most microburins have the notch oriented to the left, which is closely correlated with the lateralisation to the right of trapezes and points with unretouched base.

Special mention has to be made of some artifacts which are close to asymmetrical danubian armatures and to which I would like to refer to as "points of danubian type". A hypothetical filiation with points of true danubian origin should be taken into consideration.

For the problematic occurrence of potsherd concentrations in the mesolithic level of sector 4 no soil disturbances could be held responsible. There is no reason not to accept a contemporary burial of both sherds and lithics, which however does not necessitate their contemporary discard. From a typological and technological point of view it was moreover impossible to attribute these very worn sherds to any of the known regional ceramic traditions.

In conclusion, the Weelde-assemblages can be related to the trapeze-

industries of northern Belgium and southern Netherlands. On a purely typological basis they could be assigned an intermediate position between the sites of Maarheze and Tilburg, unreliably dated by C14 6500-6200 B.P., and the sites of Opglabbeek and Brecht.

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