

Men on their right sides and women on their left sides? Corpse position in barrows and flat graves of the Single Grave Culture from the Netherlands

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1. Introduction

More than forty five years ago A. E. Lanting (1969) published a paper on corpse position in barrows and flat graves of the Single Grave Culture from the Netherlands. This culture is the northwestern branch of the Battle Axe or Corded Ware Complex and dates to c. 2800-2400 BC (Lanting & van der Plicht, 1999/2000: 35)¹. In Dutch archaeology it is a representative of the first half of the Late Neolithic, for which the term ‘Late Neolithic A’ has been dubbed (van den Broeke et al., 2005: fig. 1.10).

In his paper from 1969 A. E. Lanting came to the tentative conclusion that men had been buried in a crouched position lying on their right sides and women in the same posture, however on their left sides. In other words, corpse position was regarded to have been in all likelihood gender-related. On its own the archaeological record for the Netherlands available at the time would not have allowed for this inference. As regards to human remains it consisted only of corpse silhouettes at best. What is more, for his analyses A. E. Lanting had only ten silhouettes at his disposal. He tried to overcome these hurdles by assessing the Dutch data in the larger context of the Corded Ware Complex. The Single Grave Culture from the Netherlands (hereafter abbreviated as SGC) was in particular compared with the Enkeltgravskultur in Jutland, Denmark (Glob, 1944), the Schnurkeramik in central Germany (Fischer, 1956) and the Schnurkeramik in Bohemia, Czech Republic (Buchvaldek, 1967). By doing so, A. E. Lanting discovered that the SGC had a connection between the way in which the corpse had been arranged and grave good types that was in keeping with the general pattern observed for the sister cultures above. An example is the positive correlation between stone battle-axes and ditto axes on the one hand and on the other skeletons/corpse silhouettes lying on their right sides. That correlation was one of the reasons for the afore-mentioned scholar to relate such a posture in the SGC to men. To underpin the claim, A. E. Lanting referred to physical anthropological evidence from the Corded Ware Complex outside the Netherlands.

The view held by A. E. Lanting has never been seriously questioned since, as exemplified by publications by Ten Anscher (2012: 363), Drenth (2005: 357), Drenth & Lohof (2005: 435) and [J. N.] Lanting & van der Plicht (1999/2000: 36). Likewise new discoveries and studies have reinforced a gender-related corpse position in the Corded Ware Complex abroad (see the references cited here). It came therefore as a surprise that very recently

1. This branch also includes (part of) northwestern Germany (van der Waals, 1964: 11 [173]), where the Single Grave Culture is called Einzelgrabkultur. This is indicated e.g. by the distribution of beakers decorated with zigzags regularly alternating with oblique impressions (Drenth, 2015: 192-193 and fig. 11). The author discusses only the Dutch finds in the present contribution, as he is far more familiar with the Netherlands. Accordingly, he has practically studied the entire original documentation with respect to Single Grave Culture burials from the Netherlands, whereas for the northwestern German Einzelgrabkultur he has not.

A. E. Lanting's hypothesis has been challenged by Fokkens and Meurkens on the occasion of an excavation at Twello, province of Gelderland (Fokkens, 2014: 103; Meurkens, 2014b: 98; cf. Meurkens *et al.*, 2015: 46). Here, a corpse silhouette was excavated lying in a crouched posture on the left side and furnished amongst other things by a non-flint stone axe (Tab. 2, site no. 32). The observation does obviously not accord with the situation sketched above. But does this mean that the general idea of a gender-related corpse position in the SGC should be rejected, as Fokkens and Meurkens want it? And does the SGC in this respect stand apart from other branches of the Corded Ware Complex, as they seriously consider? With his stance they really put the cat among the pigeons, though their assertion is not substantiated in figures. Nonetheless, the claim may hold an element of truth and that is why the author has decided to revisit the issue under consideration².

The key word in this re-assessment was quantification. A comprehensive list with SGC corpse silhouettes and skeletons has therefore been compiled presenting per burial, as far as possible and present, physical anthropological data, grave gifts and corpse position. The list in question with references is included here as Table 2. As far as posture is concerned, a simple distinction has been made between interments in crouched position on the left or right sides. It should be stressed that the attribution to either group rests solely on the arrangement of the legs. The burials have furthermore been 'sexed'; the results of this evaluation can also be found in Table 2. The criteria used were physical anthropological evidence and grave-goods. In the latter instance the following assumptions have been made. Stone battle-axes, axes both in flint and other kinds of stone, grinding stones, flint arrowheads are all regarded typical male grave attributes (cf. Meurkens *et al.*, 2015: 46 with respect to non-flint stone axes). The Dose (a kind of vessel) is considered to represent women. These suppositions may be accepted as reasonable, because these gender-connections are indicated by graves in the sister cultures with sexed skeletons (e. g. Buchvaldek, 1967; Dresely, 2004; Dzybski & Wiermann, 2001; Hein, 1987; Wiermann, 2002). Basically the same assumptions has thus been made in this contribution as A. E. Lanting has done in his study. In addition, the author has argued that as grave-goods in SGC context Grand-Pressigny daggers – this group encompasses not only artefacts in Grand-Pressigny flint but also daggers made of silex tertiaire, also named Romigny-Lhéry flint; in both instances the raw material originates from France – are typical of men (Drenth, 2014). Though the present dataset does not comprise such daggers, it includes two examples of copies of Grand-Pressigny daggers. There is currently no conclusive evidence that these pseudo-Grand-Pressigny daggers should be related to a specific gender (Drenth, 1990: 107; 1992: 208).

Like in many other studies – this is often done tacitly – it is assumed the present paper that there was a very strong correlation between sex and gender in the SGC.

2. Sources and source criticism

The list of (possible) SGC skeletons and corpse silhouettes encompasses 36 cases. In two instances the dating is not beyond doubt; these uncertain cases are labelled with an asterisk in Table 2. One of these cases, barrow 38 at the Noordse Veld near Zeyen (Tab. 2, site no. 36), will be discussed in more detail below. Three times a question mark has been added, for the corpse position cannot be determined with certainty.

2. The present contribution does not discuss the orientation that SGC corpses had. The author hopes to address this topic elsewhere, including a comparison with other branches of the Corded Ware Complex. Nonetheless, Table 2 gives the orientation of the SGC skeletons and corpse silhouettes, from which it may be inferred that usually the deceased were interred in such a way that they were facing to the S with deviations up to 45° (cf. Lanting 1969, 7 [167]).

Of the discoveries that did not pass the test of scrutiny, two should be mentioned explicitly. The first one is a 'corpse silhouette' claimed by van Giffen *et al.* (1971: espec. 108) to have been found in a ground grave (equipped with amongst other things a stone battle-axe and a Grand-Pressigny dagger) of a barrow at Putten (province of Gelderland) is not taken into account here. Doubt arises if this discolouration does indeed represent the vestiges of a human body. The stain that is held to represent the deceased's head has been recorded over a vertical distance of (at least) 0.6 m (van Giffen *et al.*, 1971: fig. 3). Needless to say that this seriously sheds doubt on the interpretation by van Giffen *cum suis*.

Neither is included another barrow at Putten, labelled no. 6. Bursch (1933: 5 & fig. 4) has reported the discovery here of a corpse silhouette accompanied by a Grand-Pressigny dagger. The deceased is said to have been interred E-W oriented, with the head probably in the E. But since it is uncertain whether the person was facing to the N or the S, the posture can only be guessed at.

The third rejection concerns a SGC skeleton of a male from the site Mienakker near Opmeer, province of Noord-Holland. In a recent physical anthropological study Plomp (2013: espec. 183) states that the body had been placed in crouched position lying on the left side and facing southwards. This sharply contrasts with the posture given by Pasveer & Uytterschaut (1992: 2) in a previous physical anthropological report. The deceased is said to have been laid prone with the legs contracted. Both photographs and drawings show that it indeed concerns an interment on the belly, the skull, though slightly more inclined towards the left side, facing rather downwards than southwards. What is furthermore important to mention is that Plomp (2013: 177-178), after having examined possible displacements by postdepositional processes based on the principles of archaeoethnology, comes to the conclusion that the deceased must have been buried in basically the same position as hinted at by the skeletal elements. Currently, the Mienakker burial is the only 'belly interment' known for the SGC. As such it is of no relevance in the present discussion and therefore further left out.

In the 1980s teeth enamel from a corpse silhouette discovered at Eext-Eexterhalte has been determined by Dr H. T. Uytterschaut (at the time Laboratory of Anatomy and Embryology, State University of Groningen) as the remains of probably a 20-45 year old male (Drenth, 1992: 208, note 4). Also on the basis of dental remains a corpse silhouette associated with a Grand-Pressigny dagger in a barrow at Emmen-Emmerdennen (province of Drenthe) – not no. 9, as reported by Drenth (2014: 139) but barrow 3 (cf. Drenth, 1992: 208, note 4) – has been determined by the afore-mentioned scholar as belonging to an individual 20-35 years of age, probably a man. Since the posture is far from clear, the present paper does not include the Emmen corpse silhouette. The one found at Eext-Eexterhalte is, however, although the afore-mentioned sex determination has not been copied (Tab. 2, site no. 11). The reason for not doing so is that the result should be regarded with the utmost caution, since teeth are secondary criteria in sexing (Acsádi & Nemeskéri, 1970: 78; see Drenth, 1992: 208, note 4 & 2014: 139 for further references on this topic).

In the instance of grave D at Emmen-Angelslo (province of Drenthe) an incomplete corpse silhouette was discovered, stains indicating only the head and part of the legs. According to Arnoldussen & Scheele (2011, fig. 3) the discolourations hint at a burial on the left side. The author is, however, convinced that the posture is just the opposite. The distance between the 'head' and the 'legs' indicate that the latter must be the vestiges of the thighbones. The latter's orientation is indicative of a crouched interment on the right side.

To conclude this section, the site of P14, a lot on the former isle of Schokland (province of Flevoland), should be briefly addressed. In his dissertation about the excavations

carried out there, Ten Anscher (2012: chapter 15) has convincingly argued that the graves 10-14 belong to the SGC (Tab. 1, site no. 25-29). The burials were lying close to one another (12 m at most), apparently constituting a small cemetery of this culture. The ¹⁴C-dates with respect to them have to be considered as unreliable (Ibidem: 353-355 and fig. 15.45; cf. Lanting & van der Plicht, 1999/2000: 77). The ones for the graves 11 and 14 – according to Ten Anscher’s numeration –, 3640 ± 100 BP (UtC-1950) and 3740 ± 50 BP (UtC-1948) respectively, can thus not be accepted as indicative of the Bell Beaker Culture (c. 2400-1900 BC), the successor of the SGC. Therefore, there is no ground to exclude them.

3. Results

At present there are six to seven SGC skeletons known from barrow interments and flat graves. Of the five specimens lying on their right sides four have been determined as (probably) male, the ones lying on their left sides as female. So, in the far majority of instances the relation between sex and posture corresponds to the hypothesis postulated by A. E. Lanting.

But since the physical anthropological data is on its own a small a body of evidence, a gender-related corpse position cannot be proven statistically for the SGC. This changes if the physical anthropological evidence is combined with the archaeological indicators, in the form of grave-goods. It now appears that men are statistically significantly more often associated with a crouched position on the right side (Tab. 1)³. This accords well with the observations made for the Corded Ware Complex abroad. Therefore it may be surmised that the SGC interred women first and foremost on their left sides. The problem is, however, that they are difficult to identify (cf. Lanting, 1969: 10 [170]). Nonetheless, if the frequencies of interments on the left and right side are compared, a statistical significant difference between the category ‘man’ and the joint groups of ‘woman’ and ‘gender indet.’ transpires⁴. As mentioned before, the former category is significantly more often correlated with a right-sided posture. That difference may be taken as a hint that a substantial number of the left-sided interments among the category ‘gender indet.’ are women. All the more since there is, as we have seen, physical anthropological evidence pointing in this direction.

In conclusion, contrary to what Fokkens and Meurkens have recently postulated, the current archaeological record suggests a gender-related corpse position for the SGC, like elsewhere in the Corded Ware Complex. Though it must be admitted that in particular

Tab.1 – SGC corpse silhouettes and skeletons from barrow interments and flat graves arranged according to posture and gender. In brackets are the figures including uncertain cases.

	Man	Woman	Gender indet.
Crouched on the left side	3	1 (3)	5 (7)
Crouched on the right side	14 (16)	1	6

3. A two-tailed binomial test shows that the hypothesis that the determinations with the outcome ‘man’ are distributed equally over the two postures (left side/right side) is rejected, as $p = 0.012$. If the doubtful cases are included in the test, $p = 0.004$. In both tests $\alpha = 0.05$.

4. A non-directional Chi-square test shows that the hypothesis that both categories (‘man’ and ‘woman’ + ‘gender indet.’, including uncertain instances) are distributed equally over the two postures is rejected, as $p = 0.0195$. If the chronologically doubtful cases are excluded from the analysis, a two-tailed Fisher Exact Probability Test results in $p = 0.03$. In both tests $\alpha = 0.05$.

No.	Site	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1	Anloo, barrow I (excavated in 1952), province of Drenthe	b	Right W-E	–	non-flint stone axe and flake	m	Jager, 1985: 209, Fig. 13-14; Lanting, 1969: Fig. 6
2	Borger-Drouwenerstraat, barrow I, province of Drenthe	b	Right WSW-ENE	–	B type battle-axe, 2x flint axes, 8x arrowheads and blade	m	Schoneveld, 1998: 42-45
3	Borger-Drouwenerstraat, barrow II, province of Drenthe	b	Right W-E	–	1b type beaker and two axes (1x diabase and 1x flint)	m	Schoneveld, 1998: 43
4	Borger-Drouwenerstraat barrow (no. IX in Schoneveld's numeration); excavated in 1987), province of Drenthe	b	Right WSW-ENE	–	flint axe and blade	m	Schoneveld, 1998: 43
5	Borger-Molenplaatsweg, province of Drenthe	b	Left NE-SW	–	2x blade, metal (most probably copper) ornament and ochre	?	Schoneveld, 1998: 43
6	Estate 'De Eese', near Steenwijkerwold, province of Drenthe	b?	Right (W)SW-(E)NE	–	1a type beaker, 2x flint axe and scraper	m	Waterbolk, 1964
7	Eext-Bergakkers, barrow II, province of Drenthe	f	Right NW-SE	–	1b type beaker, pseudo-Grand-Pressigny dagger	?	Jager, 1985: 234-235, Fig. 41 & 42
8	Eext-Galgwandeneven barrow I, province of Drenthe	b	Left ENE-WSW	–	1e type beaker and blade	?	Jager, 1985: 225 & Fig. 31-32
9	Eext-'de Ketenberg', province of Drenthe	b	Right SW-EN	–	1a type beaker, B type battle-axe, flint axe and blade	m	Cuijpers <i>et al.</i> , 1994; Lanting, 2007/2008: 136-137, 139-140 & Fig. 32, no. b & 33
10	Eext, barrow excavated in 1940, province of Drenthe	b	Right W-E	–	2x blade	?	Van Giffen, 1942b
11	Eext-Eexterhalte, province of Drenthe	g	Right SW-NE	–	blade	?	Harsema, 1977: 79-80, 82 (251-252, 254) & Fig. 2
12	Emmen-Angelslo, grave D, province of Drenthe	f	Right SW-NE	–	B type battle-axe, 2x arrowhead, 2x flake and blade	m	Arnoldussen & Scheele 2011, 159 & Fig. 3
13	Emmen-Angelslo, grave I (according to Arnoldussen & Scheele's labelling), province of Drenthe	f	Right SW-NE	–	non-flint stone axe and blade	m	Arnoldussen & Scheele 2011, 159 & Fig. 3; Lanting, 1969: Fig. 7
14	Emmen-Angelslo, barrow X, province of Drenthe	b	Right WSW-ENE	–	C type battle-axe, flint axe, whetstone and blade	m	Arnoldussen & Scheele 2011, 159 & Fig. 3; Lanting, 1969: Fig. 8
15	Ermelo-Ermelose Heide, barrow III, province of Gelderland	b	Right WSW-ENE	–	1d type beaker, beaker with cross-hatching and blade	?	Modderman, 1954: 24-25, Fig. 7, Pl. I-1 & XXXIV
16	Groningen-Helpermaar (Felix Timmermanslaan)	?	Right NW-SE	–	1e type beaker	?	Fens <i>et al.</i> , 2010
17	Hattermerbroek-Bedrijventerrein-Zuid, grave 1, province of Gelderland	f?	Left SW-NE	–	1b type beaker, flake and blade	?	Drenth & Meurkens, 2011: 224-229 & Fig. 5.14-5.18a & -b.
18	Heerde, barrow I, province of Gelderland	b	Left E-W	–	1b type beaker, containing two flint artefacts ('splinters') with wear traces	?	Remouchamps, 1928: 58-60 & Fig. 30-32
19	Hijkerveld, graf V, province of Drenthe	f	Right? SW-NE?	–	1b type beaker and flint axe	m	Furholt, 2003: 226 & Pl. 204
20	Langedijke, barrow III, province of Friesland	b	Right NW-SE	–	1f-beker, non-flint stone axe, arrowhead and 3x flake	m	van Giffen, 1930, volume 1: 34-135, volume 2: Fig. 94-95; Lanting, 1969: Fig. 5
21	Marum, grafheuvel 3, province of Groningen	b	Left ENE-WSW	–	flint axe and beaker fragments	m	Bursch, 1936: 56 & Fig. 38: no. 4
22*	Niersen, barrow G4, province of Gelderland	b	Left; ESE-WNW	female; adult individual (probably > 40 years of age)	part of a large mammal (a cow or horse)	f	Bourgeois <i>et al.</i> , 2009
23	Noordbarghe-Hoge Loo, grave III, province of Drenthe	f	Left NE-SW	–	battle of atypical B type and flint axe	m	Arnoldussen & Drenth, 2015: 163-164 & Fig. 5; Furholt, 2003: 226-227 & Pl. 206
24	Pesse, grave 2, province of Drenthe	f	Right W-E	–	flint axe, flint hammer-stone, flint blade chisel and blade	m	Reinders <i>et al.</i> , 2012: 161-162, 164 & Fig. 6-7
25	Schokland-P14, grave 10, province of Flevoland	f	Right SE-NW	25-30-year-old female	1d type beaker and possibly four flakes (according to Ten Anscher (2012, 333) intrusive)	w	Ten Anscher, 2012: 331, 333, 52-357, Fig. 15.21, 15.22, 15.45 & Tab. 15.1
26	Schokland-P14, grave 11	f	Right NW-SE	most probably a male, 25-35 years of age	–	m	Ten Anscher, 2012: 333-334, 352-357, Fig. 15.23, 15.45 & Tab. 15.1
27	Schokland-P14, grave 12	f	Right W-E	40-45-year-old male	club made of wood (<i>Taxus baccata</i>)	m	Ten Anscher, 2012: 334, 337-339, 352-357, Fig. 15.23-26, Fig. 15.45 & Tab. 15.1

No.	Site	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
28	Schokland-P14, grave 13	f	Right W-E	male?; 30-40 years of age	–	m?	Ten Anscher, 2012: 339-340, 352-357, Fig. 15.27, 15.45 & Tab. 15.1
29	Schokland-P14, grave 14	f	Right SW/NE or WSW-ENE	35-45-year-old male	six flint artefacts, two of them knives with marginal, flat retouch	m	Ten Anscher, 2012: 340-342, 352-357, Fig. 15.28, 15.29, 15.45 & Tab. 15.1
30	Sijbekarspel-de Veken, province of Noord-Holland	f	Left NE-SW	30-35-year-old female	–	w	Hogestijn & Woltering, 1990; Pasveer & Uytterschaut, 1992
31	Swalmen-Bosheide, barro 8, province of Limburg	f	Right SW-NE	–	2x 1d type beaker, 1b type-like beaker, marginally retouched blade fragment and piece of sandstone	?	Lanting & van der Waals, 1974: 30-31, 34-35, Fig. 14A-b, 15 & Pls VIII & XVI (top)
32	Twello-De Schaker, province of Gelderland	b	Left WSW-ENE	–	1d type beaker, non-flint stone axe and pseudo-Grand-Pressigny dagger	m	Meurkens, 2014a; Meurkens <i>et al.</i> , 2015
33	Vredenheim, province of Drenthe	f	Left NE-SW	–	1a type beaker and blade	?	van Giffen, 1942a: 106-108 & Fig. 18-20; Lanting, 1969: Fig. 3
34	Zeyen-'het Jodenbergje', first period, province of Drenthe	b	Left? ENE-WSW?	–	1b type beaker, amphora and flake	?	Lanting, 2007/2008: 214, 216-217 & Fig. 67b, 69; van Giffen, 1936; 1938; Van der Waals, 1964: 21-22 (183-184), Fig. 8 & 9
35	Zeyen-Noordse Veld, barrow III, province of Drenthe	b	Left? E-W?	–	1b type beaker, Dose and ochre(?). It is dubious whether the grave inventory includes three flint artefacts	w	van Giffen, 1930, volume 1: 130-134, volume 2, Fig. 88-93a; Waterbolk, 1977: 26-27 (198-199)
36*	Zeyen-Noordse Veld, barrow 38 (excavated in 1944), province of Drenthe	b	Left ENE-WSW	–	blade	?	Lanting, 1969: Fig. 2; Lanting, 2007/2008: 211, 213-214 & Fig. 68

Tab. 2 – Overview of (possible) SGC barrows and flat graves with a skeleton or a corpse silhouette. In the column 'site no.' chronologically uncertain cases are marked by an asterisk. Legend: Column I (type of burial): b = barrow interment; f = flat grave. Column II presents the posture and the orientation of the corpse (mentioning the position of the head first). Column III presents the physical anthropological data (sex and age at the time of death). Column IV lists the grave-goods, although it cannot be completely excluded that some of the smaller items like flakes are no grave gifts but objects that have landed accidentally in a burial context. The beakers (typology after van der Waals & Glasbergen, 1955), a Dose and an amphora are all representatives of pottery. Arrowheads, blades, flakes and pseudo Grand-Pressigny daggers are all in flint. The typological classification of the battle-axes (all in non-flint stone), is according to Hübner (2005). Column V gives the gender according to physical anthropological data and/or grave-goods: M = man; W = woman; ? = indet. Column VI presents the main references.

more evidence with regard to women would be welcome. Four clear exceptions to the burial rule are known for the SGC. Three men appear to have been interred on their left sides (Tab. 2, nos. 21, 23 and 32) and one woman on her right side (Tab. 2, no. 25). Also in that respect the SGC did probably not differ substantially from sister cultures. In the Schnurkeramik in Bohemia and central Germany deviations are especially men's interments (Hein, 1987: 149; Wiermann, 2002: 121). This resemblance links up the SGC once more perfectly with other branches of the Corded Ware Complex and endorses the claim of a gender-related corpse position in the former.

4. Final remarks

To conclude this contribution, some remarks are made with regard to the position of various body parts as observed for the SGC, namely shoulders, legs and arms.

There are examples of both one or two shoulders resting on the ground. The former dominates the record (cf. Lanting, 1969: 7 [167]), as there are only three unequivocal examples of the upper body lying on their back, with both shoulders (Tab. 2, site nos. 26, 27 and 32).

At the time A. E. Lanting (1969: 7 [167]) has described the position of the legs as follows. The contracted upper legs make a straight or obtuse angle with the upper body, while the lower legs are sharply angled with respect to the upper legs. The former are crossing one each other, since one of the upper legs is pulled up more. Discoveries since are no reason to revise this general description. Worthy of note is further that hitherto no convincing evidence has come to light to assume that the SGC fastened up the legs of the deceased when they were buried. In that case extremely crouched skeletons or corpse silhouettes would have been found with very sharp angles between the trunk and the upper legs as well as between the upper and lower legs.

With regard to arms A. E. Lanting (1969: 7 [167]) wrote that nothing could be said, because any traces of these body parts had disappeared. Although he made mention of one exception: the corpse silhouette lying on its left side in the central grave of barrow 38 on the Noordse Veld near Zeyen (*Ibidem*: 7, 9 [167, 169]; Tab. 2, site no. 36). It shows that one or two hands were once resting close to the face. In a more recent study J. N. Lanting (2007/2008: 213) arrives at the conclusion that the burial in question does not belong to the SGC but to the Bell Beaker Culture (c. 2400-1900 BC). His argument is that this arm posture is well-known from burials of the latter in the Netherlands. The unretouched flint blade does in his eyes not contradict the assignment of the Zeyen burial to the Bell Beaker Culture. From several graves of this culture come flakes in flint. Besides, he does not exclude the possibility that the artefact in question is not a grave-good at all but a blade that ended up in the grave by accident. The view held by J. N. Lanting is contradicted by two SGC burials. One of them is grave 1 at Hattemberbroek-Bedrijventerrein-Zuid (Tab. 2, site no. 17). It contained the silhouette of a corpse in crouched position lying on the left side. As indicated by the discolourations at least one of the hands must have been placed close to the face. The second interment is grave 13 at lot P14 (Tab. 2, site no. 28). The skeleton, probably of a male, was lying on its right side, the hand bones resting close to and partially underneath the chin.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Dr T. J. ten Anscher for his comments on a first draft of the present paper.

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Abstract

The present paper discusses the corpse position in barrow interments and flat graves of the Single Grave Culture from the Netherlands (c. 2800-2400 BC). More than forty five years ago it had been proposed tentatively that the posture is gender-related, with as a rule men having been buried in a crouched position on their right sides and women in a similar position, however on their left sides. Very recently this view has been challenged, though this claim is not substantiated in figures. A statistical assessment of the physical anthropological evidence and archaeological hints (grave-goods) indicates, however, that there is no compelling reason to reject the hypothesis of a gender-related corpse position.

Keywords: Single Grave Culture, Late Neolithic, The Netherlands, barrows, flat graves, corpse position, gender.

Samenvatting

Deze bijdrage is gewijd aan de houding van doden in grafheuvels en vlakgraven van de Enkelgrafcultuur in Nederland (ca. 2800-2400 v.Chr.). Meer dan vijfenveertig jaar geleden is geopperd dat die waarschijnlijk geslachtsgebonden was. Het idee was dat mannen in de regel werden begraven met opgetrokken benen liggend op de rechterzijde en vrouwen doorgaans in eenzelfde positie werden bijgezet echter op de linkerzijde. Kortgeleden is deze opvatting ter discussie gesteld, echter zonder cijfermatige onderbouwing. Een statistische analyse van de fysisch-antropologische data en de archeologische indicatoren in de vorm van grafgiften laat evenwel zien dat er geen dwingende redenen zijn de hypothese van een geslachtsgebonden dodenhouding te verwerpen.

Trefwoorden: Enkelgrafcultuur, Laat-Neolithicum, Nederland, grafheuvels, vlak-graven, dodenhouding, 'gender'.

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