H. Meller/F. Bertemes (Hrsg.), Der Aufbruch zu neuen Horizonten. Neue Sichtweisen zur europäischen Frühbronzezeit. Abschlusstagung der Forschergruppe FOR 550 vom 26. bis 29. November 2010 in Halle (Saale). Tagungen des Landesmuseums für Vorgeschichte Halle 19. Halle a.d. Saale 2019. Deutsch und Englisch, 461 Seiten, ISSN 0863-7670, ISBN 978-3-948618-03-2.

The Early Bronze Age of Central and Northern Europe is associated with many changes. The introduction and establishment of bronze technology, as well as the associated increase in contacts between regions, stand at its beginning. The new metal probably led to the stratification of society, which becomes particularly evident with the emergence of the Unetice culture, e.g. with diversifications in burial customs such as those of the princely graves. With the transition to the Middle Bronze Age (around the 16th century BCE), settlements between the Elbe and Warta rivers abruptly collapsed (e.g. Bruszczewo: KNEISEL 2013) and a sharp decline in the number of finds is noted. At the peak of these developments, the well-known hoard with the Nebra Sky Disk stands out. Since its discovery at the end of the 1990s, it has kept the attention of Bronze Age researchers and a vast audience of interested parties. Repeatedly, there are new findings that make this important find even more significant and give recurrent rise to public discourse. Most recently, the location and dating of the sky disc were questioned (GEBHARD/ KRAUSE 2020a; 2020b). Halle responded promptly (PERNICKA et al. 2020). The publication to be reviewed here on the latest results of the FOR 550 research group sheds light on the hotly debated topic and brings the reader up to date with the latest research, so that everyone can form their own opinion on the subject. Nevertheless, this discussion should not cloud the extensive research that has been carried out within the framework of FOR 550, not only with regard to the sky disc and its associated finds, but also beyond that on the Early Bronze Age of Central Germany, thus vastly improving the state of research for this area with a huge amount of new data and findings. The DFG-Research Group consisted of 18 modules, comprising nine archaeological modules - which in turn can be subdivided into 14 subprojects -, as well as five natural science modules, one astronomy module (consisting of two subprojects) and one central project module. The individual projects were formed through cooperative relationships between the Landesmuseum Halle, the universities of Halle, Jena, Munich and Bochum, as well as the research centre CEZA Mainz.

The publication consists of an introductory section and four thematic areas: Transdisciplinary Studies on Hoard Finds (which also include the latest metal analyses), Burials of the Unetice Culture, Settlements of the Unetice Culture and Circular Ditch Complexes. The number of contributions per thematic area varies between four and twelve essays which are written either in German (26 articles) or in English (4 articles). In the introduction (F. Bertemes), the DFG research group FOR550 is presented (structure with modules; cooperation; project phases). A short summary of the research is presented with reference to the individual modules that shows the special role of Central Germany in the communication network of the Early Bronze Age.

The first thematic block, on Hoard Finds, begins with Early Bronze Age metalworking techniques, which include both metallurgical and colour-aesthetic investigations (D. Berger/ C.-H. Wunderlich). For example, the dependence of the colour behaviour, and the hardness and the malleability of different copper alloys or admixtures of nickel are amply illustrated with the help of experiments, which finally point to the relevance of colour-aesthetics in the bronze casting process. The chasing and damascene techniques are particularly examined against the background of the reconstruction of Early Bronze Age finds. In the process, the authors gain new insights, especially into the spatial and temporal distribution of the damascene technique. The patination technique is tested by the authors with the use of various methods (including human urine, sulphur, heat, potash, soda), while the arsenation of metal is tested with diffraction measurements. With the experiments on inducing artificial corrosion and arsenation, the authors provide insights into a still new research area that bears future research potential.

This is followed by an essay on the provenance analyses of the gold used for the sky disc (G. Borg/E. Pernicka/A. Ehser/ N. Lockhoff/G.S. Camm/C.V. Smalde). The interdisciplinary sub-project offers an impressive database on gold finds and deposits in Europe and provides a large amount of new gold analyses that visibly expand previous data sets. An updated overview of the different primary and secondary gold occurrences is provided, including mean gold contents, and discussions on the common occurrences with other minerals. With the help of geochemical analyses, which always receive critical attention (such as the application of XRF analyses to the outer bark of gold nuggets, p. 73), different compositions could be determined for the gold applications of the hoard from Nebra. Its question of origin is analysed with the help of comparative data. The gold was found to be most similar to the gold assemblages identified for Cornwall and, more specifically, the Carnon River. Similarities between the southern English Wessex culture and the Unetice culture may have supported possible gold and tin trade. Overall, the paper offers updated maps of natural gold deposits in Europe, as well as of the distribution of analysed Bronze Age gold finds in terms of their compositions.

In the following article (J. Lutz/E. Pernicka), the focus is placed on copper deposits in the Eastern Alps that were used in the Bronze Age. The most important Austrian copper ore deposits and their geological classification as well as formation processes are summarised. The main focus is centred on a description of the Inntal-type fahlerz, which was mainly used for eye rings of the Early Bronze Age, and the Mitterberg-type copper from chalcopyrite, which was also used, for example, for the production of the sky disc. The analyses of origin are based on trace elements and lead isotope ratios. Both ore types are put into a comprehensible model that allows the temporal sequence of the use of ore mining to be reconstructed in terms of preferences during the Bronze Age.

An important contribution to the lively discourse mentioned in the introduction is presented by the following article on the forensic examinations of the soil samples from the Mitterberg site and of the earth adhesion still preserved on the Nebra finds (J. Adam). With the help of various physical, chemical and mineral methods, the samples were characterised by classification (grain sizes, soil type, colour, pH value, etc.) and fractionation (sand, silt, clay), so that it can first be established that the soil sample and the earth adhesion match. Furthermore, the soil type was determined, which corresponds to that of the Mittelberg, which - on the basis of geological map material and a detailed characterisation of the local bunter sandstone ("Buntsandstein") - is described in detail. In order to exclude other geologically similarly formed areas as sites of discovery, the author compares samples from other investigation processes also originating from bunter sandstone areas. In doing so, he is able to identify characteristic deviations that lead him to the conclusion that the finds very probably originate from the site.

This is followed by a discussion of cult sites in the Unetice area, which are dealt with on the basis of metal deposits, princely graves and the Nebra hoard (R. Maraszek). The author presents the findings with regard to their spatial-temporal embedding in the sacred landscape. In particular, the importance of the particular location of the sky disc in the landscape is emphasised. This then leads to considerations of the central sites of ritual practices of communities or 'cult societies'.

The next chapter is about the gold find from Dieskau, whose origin is reconsidered (H. Meller). The author draws on various evidence, gold analyses and comparisons with other finds to support his thesis of the actual origin of the find, namely that it belongs to the burial mound of Bornhöck near Dieskau. The rich gold finds would further underline the power of the buried prince. In addition, the author argues that such hoards could have had a representational function, for example, for 'warriors' or 'armed forces'. The deposit from Dieskau with 300 axes would then have been accordingly rich and strong.

The axes from the hoard from Dieskau III and from Hall-Kanena III are analysed in the following chapter with the help of a combination of archaeological and archaeometallurgical investigations (R. Schwarz). The archaeometallurgical investigations serve as a starting point for an analysis of the composition of the hoards. This is followed by a brief characterisation of the various axes, because the axes from Dieskau III and Kanena III have not yet been clearly defined. The author focuses on the body of the axes for such a differentiation, since the otherwise characteristic cutting edges have lost their original shape due to usage and reworking. The author succeeds in defining six types from the apparently quite homogeneous material, which in turn is subject to further subdivision (variants, sub-variants). His critical approach to existing axe typologies and his subsequent own approach are refreshing and comprehensible. Finally, the author notes an overlap between the axe types of Dieskau III and Kanena III, as was also apparent in the archaeometallurgical investigation, so that shape and material build a bridge between the two sites. These overlaps can be traced in many illustrations of the individual types (Fig. 7–25; Table 2). He links his type-classification with the dated finds from the princely graves, and together with the metallurgical results thus arrives at the subdivision of the Early Bronze Age phase A 2a.

This is followed by a contribution on the metal-analytical investigations of Early Bronze Age hoards from Central Germany, dealing in particular with copper and tin isotopes (N. Lockhoff/J. Lutz/E. Pernicka). The descriptions of the research history enable the reader to understand the development of this method. Moreover, the basic requirements for the measurements are presented. The analysed copper types are identified with the help of bivariate double-logarithmic charts and boxplots of copper isotope compositions.

The following chapter builds on the hypotheses already mentioned above: the interpretation of the hoard finds as 'armed forces' (H. Meller). Accordingly, the 'military strength' of Dieskau is reckoned by the author to have been the most powerful in the area considering the many hoards. Building on previous research on graves and hoards, he drafts a picture of the social stratification in the Unetice culture. On the basis of the quantities per weapon category and the origin of the metal, the author posits a hierarchisation of the armed forces; he assumes the existence of a central power authority that distributed the weapons, and extrapolates the numbers of armed persons.

In the next chapter, the authors (C.-H. Wunderlich/ J.-H. Bunnefeld/H. Meller) address the colouring of non-ferrous metals. To do so, they first clarify the state of research, because often false views on the colourfulness of metals prevail in publications. In order to investigate how colours and glossy surfaces of different alloys behave, they cast various metal mixtures and alloys. The authors explain their procedure in great detail and describe the melting process, the measurement of the composition and the colour measurement. The latter was carried out using a spectrophotometer based on the CIELAB colour space, which allows hue and saturation to be determined. The results, such as the enhancement and reduction of colour effects by different metal compositions, are discussed in detail. The authors are able to work out three colour groups for Early Bronze Age alloys. The oxide layer that rapidly forms on the metals after a few days leads the authors to assume that the objects were cleaned on certain occasions. All in all, the authors' investigation of metal colouring opens up a new, important perspective on metal objects that are otherwise usually treated only in terms of their shapes, thus broadening, for example, the field of research to include colour codes.

In the following chapter, J.-H. Bunnefeld deals with the so-called 'ribbed double axes' (gerippte Doppeläxte) of the Unetice culture and discusses the terminology, since the finds are not actually 'double axes' and should therefore rather be called 'Dieskau-type axes'. This article presents the first comprehensive discussion dealing with this type of artefact. In his contribution, the author discusses the two prominent variants in detail in terms of their design and distribution before turning to the manufacturing technique and metal composition. The compositions are compared and tabulated in terms of their components (Table 1; p. 187). As a result of his multi-layered discussion of function and meaning, the author effectively rules out any practical use of the axes. In the catalogue that accompanies the article, the examined objects are described in detail, as well as presented in X-ray images and drawings.

The subsequent article compares the Middle Bronze Age hoard finds with Bronze Age finds from north-western France (H. Blitte). After a comparative presentation of both regions and a description of the data basis, the author uses a GIS-based spatial analysis with which she is able to establish different deposition sequences for the two regions of comparison, but geographical preferences for the depositions that are shared by the two regions.

This concludes the first part of the volume. The next part deals with the graves of the Unetice culture. The first chapter of this second part focuses on the burial system of the Unetice culture, for which such a comprehensive account has lacked thus far (C. Metzner-Nebelsick). The grave itself is characterised as a privilege, so that, for example, the status of graves without grave goods should be viewed differently since such graves acquire social importance. With the help of the scientific results, this chapter enables a revision of previous research, whereby low grave occurrences can no longer be exclusively explained by research gaps, but also by the 'privilege theory'. In the following article, metallurgist graves of the Copper and Early Bronze Age are the focus of the investigation (K. Martin). For this purpose, the author included an extensive number of features and finds in her database that provide evidence for metallurgists. With regard to the graves, she looks at the combination of grave goods and discusses the position of metallurgists or persons involved in the metallurgical process. In a further step, the author examines the other types of finds in order to reconstruct the metallurgical chaîne d'operatoire. Preservation and find conditions, as well as the multifunctionality of objects, have a strong effect on the argument. To clarify possible multifunctionalities, some tools were examined with a Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) to find metal residues in the tool surfaces. She finally reconstructs possible working procedures. Diagrams of the SEM analyses and photos of the tools inform the reader about how to recognise multifunctional metal tools.

The princely grave of Leubingen is newly considered in the following article, in which the author pinpoints the grave at the joining point of members of the Bell Beaker and Corded Ware cultures, since elements of both cultures are reflected in the tomb (H. Meller). The author assumes that this unification process was deliberately brought about and vividly contrasts the elements of both cultures merging in the princely tomb (p. 248; fig. 2). On the basis of Weber's definition of power, the author assumes that the prince of Leubingen was the head of a complex political system and that the Circumharz-group of the Unetice culture was an early state. By using Weber's approach, the author limits himself to a rather one-dimensional perspective, because Weber's definition of rulership represents an inherently outdated view of power, supported as it is by a patriarchal view and the threat of violence. Therefore, its application in the analysis of prehistoric societies seems to constitute a limiting factor. Several new multidimensional definitions of power and rulership are available nowadays (e.g. ARENDT 1970; FOUCAULT 1994), which could open the author's assumptions to further horizons.

The following contribution deals with the Early Bronze Age deviant burials in Central Germany (V. Hubensack). The author begins by presenting her extensive database and then describes varied findings of the so-called 'burials in settlement pits'. The author's findings show that this Early Bronze Age phenomenon is more widespread than previously assumed. The description of the different burial methods is followed by insights into the anthropological results, which define those buried in settlement pits as a hard-working group, while strontium and oxygen isotopes did not reveal any conspicuous features with regard to their origin or dietary habits. The author presents different interpretation models for the burials in settlement pits and concludes by discussing the aDNA analyses that might allow us to consider family groups among those buried in settlement pits.

The next contribution introduces the third part of the volume on the settlements of the Unetice Culture. The author of the first article deals with the open settlements and house features of the Early Bronze Age in Central Germany (C. Schmidt). Because this topic has been better researched in recent decades, the contribution can describe not only the house structures but also settlement structures and sizes for the Early Bronze Age of Central Germany. The settlement structures include not only dwellings and storage facilities, but also, for example, wells, fences and workshops. The author describes the house findings in great detail. In addition to the two-aisled Březno type, for example, three-aisled houses were also found, as well as hybrid forms and extraordinary buildings. Finally, the author describes the differences and similarities of the various house types on a supra-regional level and does not limit herself to the number of aisles, but also deals with various construction features.

The next chapter deals with the Early Bronze Age hilltop settlements of Central Germany (P. Ettel). He reconstructs contacts from Greece to Scandinavia on the basis of finds and features that seem to be connected with the increasing construction of fortifications. For the inventory of hilltop settlements in Central Germany, he provides extensive mapping, which offers a new basis for further research (Figs. 2.1; 3.1–2). Due to the incomplete database (stray finds and few earlier excavations), he comes to the conclusion that very little can be said about constructions, settlement features and interior buildings, and that no inferences can be drawn about central sites. With the help of the project's own investigations, the author can provide qualitative results on the fortifications. At the same time, he cancels out intensive Early Bronze Age use for some sites and thus fundamentally corrects older opinions.

A settlement structure analysis is carried out in the following contribution for the macroregion around Nebra, with the help of GIS-based geofactor analyses (M. Evers/M. Witt). For this purpose, the authors use a broad spectrum of archaeological data (especially settlement structures) that they evaluate with regard to location, relief, proximity to water and soil. On the basis of the settlement preferences thus determined and known site locations, the authors model the distribution of Early Bronze Age settlements in a predictive map (predictive modelling) and reconstruct the settlement development diachronically from the Bell Beaker Culture to the Unetice Culture. In the appendix of the article, the reader finds data on the relationships between sites and geofactors.

In the following article (I. Heske), the Nebra Sky Disk is embedded in the cultural developments of the transition from the Younger Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age and centres of the Unetice Culture. The focus is on the disc's regional astronomical use and its phases of use within the Unetice area. The author first discusses the use of the sky disc against the background of celestial observation in the regional area. To this end, he describes the region with its settlement micro-regions as well as significant sites with outstanding finds. Thus, he shows that despite its location at the northern border of the Unetice culture, the region of the sky disc was an intensively used area of the Unetice culture.

The next chapter is dedicated to the Early Bronze Age house features of Eulau (A. Nette). First, the author discusses the very well-known features of Eulau (oldest evidence of a nuclear family in grave finds), as well as the long use of the site, and then moves on to the features (post pits, pits, graves) of the site, dealing mainly with the house features. The building structures are described in detail. The author critically examines the features and the resulting possibilities for house reconstruction. Some of the postholes are of astonishing depth (p. 336).

Further traces of Early Bronze Age settlements are presented in the following article on the Zwenkau-West site (D. Hansen). Between 1993 and 2000, extensive excavations at the opencast mine uncovered an open settlement. Overlaps of settlement phases and different documentation methods make the exact reconstruction of the settlement difficult. Still, the number of house features is immense. The author discusses various twoand three-aisled house layouts, as well as interior post rows, sizes and alignments, as well as their distribution and use at the site. One particularly large house stands out with its 497 square metres of floor space and an encircling ditch. This is compared by the author with examples from southern Scandinavia.

Another contribution on the settlements of the Unetice Culture deals with the excavation results from the fortification on the Schlossberg of Mutzschen (D. Hansen/L. Kleinsteuber). The authors describe the procedure for the excavation of the hilltop settlement, as well as the cultural embedding of the site, which is also reflected in the inventory of finds. They describe the predominant typical Early Bronze Age settlement pottery, which cannot be classified into any typology so far, while some recognisable types, although forming the minority, show all the more the cultural exchange between the Early Bronze Age cultural groups of Central and East-Central Europe. Surprisingly, the cultural influences are not limited to the Věteřov culture, but also show connections to Bohemia and Moravia, Austria, Silesia, Central Germany, and beyond. The animal bone inventory is unexpected as wild animals form 89% of the inventory. Among the artefacts, a so-called 'slit bone' ("Schlittknochen") stands out (p. 367; fig. 15c). On the basis of objects from a waste layer, the authors assume the end of settlement at around 1775-1625 BCE. This dating fits well with the phase of settlement break-offs at this time in Central and East-Central Europe (KNEISEL 2013).

The settlement section is supplemented by a contribution on the salt settlement near Erdeborn (P. Ettel/K. Grömer/S. Ipach/ F. Schneider). The importance of salt in prehistory is established initially and the state of research on the finds of salt extraction in Central Germany is presented in detail with regard to their diachronic development with the help of various examples. In the project, old excavations were processed and supplemented by many new research investigations and excavations in order to reconstruct the salt production processes. The authors point out that the use of scientific investigations in these contexts is highly important (identification of clay tools for saltern processes, effects on the environment such as settlement displacement, drying up of springs or soil erosion). The chapter focuses on the site of Erdeborn, whose features, stratigraphy and backfilling process as well finds are described in detail, showing a focus on the Neolithic and the Early Iron Age. Instead of saltern kilns, remains of several kilns were found, which had been disposed of in material extraction pits. The occurrence and distribution of finds in the features as well as their associations are described in detail. On the basis of the backfilling processes, the authors establish two find association patterns of briquetage, which show different salt production qualities and enable salt quantity calculations on the basis of their occurrences. Briquetage columns, which indicate a qualitatively higher production, also show textile imprints, which are subjected to a thorough description and analysis (in addition to textile-technical characteristics, functionality is also discussed). The research on saltern processes has been greatly enriched by this chapter with many new insights into salt extraction, production and distribution processes.

This section is concluded with a presentation of the preliminary results of research at the site of Vlíněves, which was used during the Aeneolithic and Early Bronze Age and is located at the confluence of the Vltava and Elbe rivers (M. Dobeš/P. Limburský). The authors discovered remains of various cultural groups at the site; however, the chronological relationship of the respective settlement phases could not be clearly determined thus far. In addition to storage pits and typical pit houses of the Řivnáč culture (e.g. quadrangular layout, dense rows of small posts), numerous graves of the Corded Ware Culture and some of the Bell Beaker Culture were found. The largest part of this contribution is taken up by the presentation of settlements and cemeteries of the Unetice culture.

This is followed by the fourth and last part of the volume, which deals with the circular ditches. The section begins with the circular ditch complex of Pömmelte-Zackmünde (A. Spatzier). According to the author, many circular ditch complexes do not only show a use in the Middle Neolithic, but some were also or exclusively used in the Bronze Age – such as the site of Pömmelte-Zackmünde, which dates to the transition from the Late Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age. With the help of Bayesian statistics, the author shows the multiphase use of the circular ditch complex. The arrangement and orientation of the site could be related to the rising and setting of the sun. In the analysis of the distribution and fragmentation of finds, the author states that some large sherds were deliberately destroyed and ritually disposed in the ditch. For this purpose, he distinguishes between different categories of deposits distributed over the site and within different layers of the ditch. Furthermore, some single graves, different types of partial burials and deviant burials in simple flat graves and shaft pits were found during the excavations. On the basis of anthropological investigations, the author correlates different social groups with the different (respectful vs. careless) positioning of the dead.

Not far from Pömmelte is the Schönebeck circular ditch complex, which probably existed concurrently and is the subject of the next chapter (A. Spatzier). First, the author describes the archaeological results from the site, which includes not only the Final Neolithic and Early Bronze Age circular ditch complex, but also a Late Bronze Age cemetery. Subsequently, the author explains the construction of the enclosure, which consisted of a multi-stage construction process. In comparison, no deposits could be found as in the Pömmelte complex. A few graves that had been laid out according to Unetice customs are discussed in detail by the author against the background of their positioning in the circular ditch complex. The central aspect of the chapter is the dualism between the enclosures of Pömmelte and Schönebeck, which share the same landscape. The author contrasts the differences and similarities of the two complexes and discusses their relationship on the basis of different scenarios (formation process in Schönebeck vs. destruction process in Pömmelte) in detail.

A contribution on the archaeoastronomical investigations that accompanied some of the FOR550 projects and other related research is presented in an overview (W. Schlosser). In addition to the astronomical examination of the sky disc, which is not further discussed, circular ditch complexes (including Pömmelte), the Gothic cathedral of Magdeburg, the calendar calculation in Papua New Guinea, the Codex Dresden (Maya manuscript) and the mathematical calculation of distances in n-dimensional spaces ("Nearest Neighbour") are also examined archaeoastronomically.

Last but not least, the famous Stonehenge site is discussed (J. Pollard/M. Parker Pearson/P. Garwood/C. Richards/ J. Thomas/K. Welham). The authors first provide a brief summary of the research at the site. Initial ¹⁴C dating indicated that the monumental structure is of Late Neolithic origin and was reused in later periods (Copper Age and Bronze Age). The authors describe the individual phases of Stonehenge's use, which also involved burial phases. But Stonehenge should not only be considered as a burial monument, but also include the sphere of the living, as it is surrounded by many settlement features. Among other things, the authors suspect a function of Stonehenge as a gathering place, which could have served seasonal ceremonies, for example. From the Early Bronze Age onwards, however, the settlement area became a grassland, which the authors justify in ritual terms. The palisade and ditch located around the circular enclosure seem to demarcate the everyday area from a ritual one.

All the contributions in this volume present an impressive amount of data and thus provide an excellent foundation for future research. Furthermore, the essays open up many new research perspectives. Finally, this publication is recommended to everybody with an interest in the Early Bronze Age to get closely involved with this most recent research.

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