
Provenance and technology of pottery from the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition period in Belgium

Dimitri Teetaert*^{†1}, Marieke Vannoorenberghe², Liesbeth Messiaen¹, Eric Goemaere³, Frank Vanhaecke², and Philippe Crombé¹

¹Research group Prehistory of Europe, Department of Archaeology, Ghent University – Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 35, 9000 Ghent, Belgium

²Research group Atomic and Mass Spectrometry, Department of Analytical Chemistry, Ghent University – Krijgslaan 281, 9000 Ghent, Belgium

³Geological Survey of Belgium, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences – Jennerstraat 13, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Abstract

The main objective of this research is to understand the mobility of objects/people and the possible contact/exchange between farmer and forager populations during the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition period and to contribute to our knowledge of how early agriculture spread along the North Sea basin.

In the sandy lowlands of northern Belgium, sites with final Mesolithic hunter-gatherer pottery occur on a few locations in the Scheldt valley. At Doel "Deurganckdok" three sites (B, J and M) yielded hunter-gatherer (Swifterbant) pottery, along with one site (C) with middle Neolithic (Michelsberg) pottery. At two other sites on the left bank of the Scheldt river, Bazel "Sluis" and Melsele "Hof ten Damme", possible hunter-gatherer pottery was found together with early and middle Neolithic pottery within a stratigraphically complex 'palimpsest' situation. These sites represent the most southern find locations of hunter-gatherer (Swifterbant) pottery and the most north(west)ern find locations of Limburg, LPC and (Epi)R'ossen/Bisschheim pottery in the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt area. Hence these sites are important for studying the possible relations between the northern forager and the southern farmer populations, in a period during which the knowledge of pottery production and agriculture became widespread.

The pottery from these sites is now being fully analysed to establish (1) which fabric or pottery groups are present, (2) which cultural groups this pottery belongs to and (3) which pottery is produced locally or originates from outside the Scheldt valley. This research combines the typological and technological (reconstruction of the operating chains) ceramic analyses with the petrographic (Polarizing Microscope and SEM+EDS), mineralogical (XRD) and geochemical (LA-ICP-MS) characterisation of the pottery clays and tempers and raw material sourcing.

Keywords: Mesolithic, Neolithic, neolithisation process, pottery, technological analysis, provenance analysis

*Speaker

[†]Corresponding author: dimitri.teetaert@ugent.be