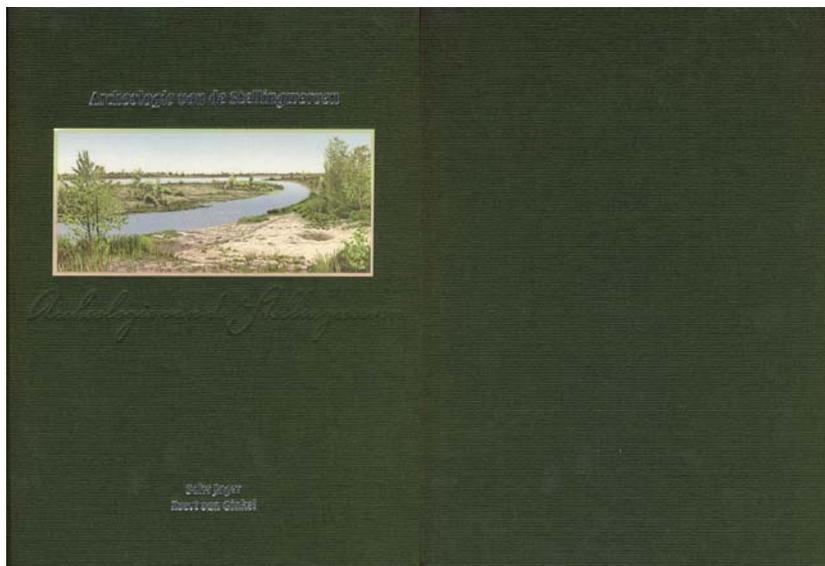


Jager, S. & E. van Ginkel. Eds. 2005. Archeologie van de Stellingwerven. Rendierjagers, boeren en ontginners in het stroomgebied van Tjonger en Linde. – Oldeberkoop, Stichting Stellingwarver Schrieversronte

Book review by E.N.A. Heirbaut



This book is the result of the project ‘Archeologie van de Stellingwerven’ and was presented at the conference organized by the Stellingwarver Schrieversronte in Noordwolde (province of Friesland, northern part of The Netherlands) in 2005. The authors, both experienced archaeologists, have worked on it for three years. They faced the difficult task of writing a book, not only of interest for archaeologists but also for a wider, non-scientific audience. The danger for such a project is always that the matter is presented in a too simple manner. In this case however, the authors were able to make a popular presentation in such a way that the scientific quality of the book was not lost. There are many illustrations together with the extensive texts and bibliography, and several appendices dealing with the genesis of the landscape, its vegetation and occupation.

In eight chapters, the authors describe and illustrate the archaeological history of this fascinating part of The Netherlands. Starting with a description of the past and present landscape, its creation and its use by its first inhabitants, they present us an overview of sites and finds of all periods. The famous Hamburgian site of Oldeholtwolde, where during the final phase of the last ice age a family camped for a few weeks around a hearth, is dealt with in quite some detail. Illustrated with many black and white pictures, but also with some reconstruction drawings, an overview of the results of the excavation at this site is given. Also the process of analysing the ca. 10 000 flint artefacts is explained thoroughly.¹ It is, however, not just because of this site that this area is so important. At the beginning of the 19th century, two very important archaeologists, Jan Hendrik Holwerda and Albert Egges van Giffen, initiated prehistoric research in this part of The Netherlands. The man who discovered the first evidence of Palaeolithic hunters in the northern part of The Netherlands and by doing so triggered a fascinating debate, was Hendrik Jan Popping. His discoveries can be placed against the background of the first exploitations of the peat, causing hundreds of well-preserved archaeological sites to disappear. It is only in 1933 that Popping discovers the first lithic, bone and antler Tjonger artefacts. In a well-elaborated chapter, the authors debate the problems, criticisms and finally the recognition Popping endured during his research of the Palaeolithic sites. In a following chapter, more is told about the climatic changes during this part of prehistory, and the effects these had on the Tjonger Culture. During the Allerød, which was characterized by a relatively mild climate, the Tjonger hunters lived in wide forests; with the deterioration of the climate during the Younger Dryas, they were forced to emigrate towards the south. From now on, they were called the Ahrensburg Culture. With the amelioration of the climate, the Ahrensburg hunters again colonized northern Europe. Mesolithic sites are found dispersed throughout The Stellingwerven area. Many of them were already located by Popping, but also later by Bohmers, Houtsma and many others. Compared to the first farmers in Limburg, the Neolithic presence in The Stellingwerven seems to be some 1000 years younger. For the earliest Neolithic phase only a few finds can be described. It is only around 3400 B.C. that farming is done on a large scale, that the first

¹ A extensive book review of ‘Oldeholtwolde. A Hamburgian family encampment around a hearth’ was published by Heirbaut (2005).

settlements are built and that the typical Neolithic pottery is produced. A lot of attention is given to the research of graves and burial mounds, of which many were found in The Stellingwerven. In the following chapter, Jager & Van Ginkel discuss the presence of Bronze age sites in The Stellingwerven area, the bronze finds of the Fries Museum and the results of the research of burial mounds by Van Giffen and place them in the broader context of the Bronze Age in The Netherlands. Another chapter is dedicated to the Iron Age. Again, as was done in previous chapters, the authors describe the cultural developments and changes against a climatic and environmental background. The last chapter of the book deals with the medieval and post-medieval period and is, in contrast with all other chapters, not primarily based on archaeological evidence, but on historical documents: toponymy, linguistic studies and even legends.

It is the first time that such an overview is given for this region. This book is easy to read, not only because of the interesting contents but also because of the many well-chosen illustrations (219 illustrations of which many in colour!). The book has 214 pages and has a very luxurious cover. The only disadvantage is that it is written in Dutch.

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Cited literature

Heirbaut, E.N.A. 2004. Book review of: **Johansen, L. & D. Stapert. 2004.** Oldeholtwolde. A Hamburgian family encampment around a hearth. (Lisse, Abington, Exton, Tokyo, A.A. Balkema). – PalArch, book reviews (http://www.palarch.nl/Non_scientific/bookreview.htm).