

Chapter 9

Culture, Tradition and the Settlement Burials of the *Linearbandkeramik* (LBK) Culture

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The Problem

“Culture” has had a rough time recently. It has been denounced by archaeologists and anthropologists alike, either because it has been simplistically opposed to nature (e.g. Thomas 1996, 13–15; Ingold 2000, 29–31), or, more importantly for this paper, because it creates false expectations of uniformity or cultural authenticity in a group’s social life. For instance, Clifford’s (1988, 10) definition of culture as “a deeply compromised idea I cannot yet do without” is followed by an eloquent challenge to the view that links culture to tradition, persistence and collectivity and opposes it to art, history and the particular. The normal state of culture, it is argued, is to be contested, to have permeable boundaries, and to never stand still. In the messiness of daily existence, where different interest groups with shifting memberships appropriate and strategically deploy symbols, it seems overly abstract to speak of a unity of meaning or purpose (e.g. Kuper 1999, 121; Barnard and Spencer 1996, 141; Ingold 1994, 330; Turner 1993).

However, in spite of these vitriolic attacks, culture has refused to go away. This is as true for archaeology as it is for anthropology. For the latter, Sahlins (1999, 2000) has repeatedly come to the defence of culture, characterising it as a set of shared understandings which make social action possible. Culture furnishes the conventional categories and concepts which are then made actual and referential in the course of the situated actions of people (Sahlins 2000, 283–91; see also Giddens 1984). This allows ample room for different perceptions, but “not everything in the contest is contested” (Sahlins 2000, 488) – there must be a minimal shared basis of mutual intelligibility for “contestation” to work. To paraphrase Ingold (1994, 330), people may not live in bounded cultures, but they still live culturally, they navigate their way through the world in a specific style. Culture lives in the actions of its participants, not in a set of abstract rules that can be challenged at will. It is because

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of this interpenetration between shared practice and novelty that change and a certain fuzziness of boundaries are part and parcel of a culture, without this implying a total lack of coherence (Sahlins 2000, 290; see also Rosaldo 1989).

This is a rather selective glimpse of a vast anthropological discussion, but it shows that the concept of culture there, at least, is not yet obsolete. It is not some universal and abstract standard of behaviour and more of a pool of resources that is fluid, but not limitless. It is the set of shared categories which enable meaningful action, and can be altered as it becomes implicated in specific projects. With its focus on instantiation in specific, materially grounded actions, this definition of culture could be made to work in archaeology. Yet in our experience at least, this is not the way the culture concept has been employed.

The following paper introduces the way culture has been discussed in our chosen case study, the Linearbandkeramik (LBK; c. 5600–4900 cal BC; Fig. 9.1), the first Neolithic culture over large areas of Central and Western Europe. Here, culture is often used as an abstract benchmark against which certain kinds of practices can be compared, generally unfavourably. In the long run, this has perpetuated the interpretation of the LBK as a somewhat static and unproblematic entity, internally coherent and with clearly defined beginnings and ends. Using settlement burials from two LBK regions, Lower Bavaria and the Paris Basin, we argue that to classify such practices as low status or marginal is to miss their impact in the communities in which they are carried out. However, burial practices like any other form of social action are not mechanically reproduced according to static codes and their salience to the investigation of culture lies in the way LBK settlement burials speak to both broader traditions and local practices. While drawing from a shared set of possible forms of expression, the burials are made to matter at an intimate social scale, which introduces variation and local trajectories. It is only once we come to terms with this fact that we can begin to rethink how culture can retain interpretative significance in the kinds of archaeologies we are trying to write.

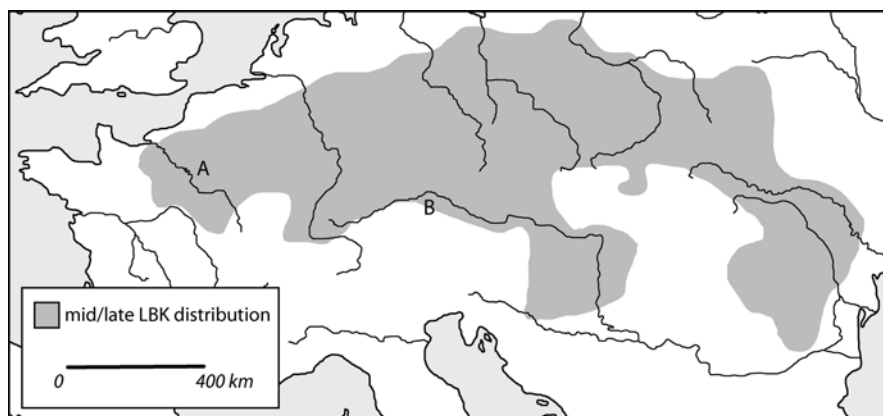


Fig. 9.1 Distribution of the LBK across Europe. Case study areas are (A) the Paris Basin; (B) Lower Bavaria (after Jeunesse 1997, 10)

Archaeological Cultures: Performing the LBK

The LBK is perhaps the classic archaeological culture, as its material repertoire consists of a certain style of houses, economy, burial, pottery, stone tools and so on “constantly recurring together” (Childe 1929, v–vi). Although it is generally accepted that in its later phases, the LBK becomes increasingly regionalised (cf. Modderman 1988; Gronenborn 1999; Sommer 2001), this phenomenon has still effortlessly been subsumed in universalising narratives. The LBK begins as very homogenous in its earliest phase (e.g. Sommer 2001) and then progressively fragments, giving rise to the geographically more circumscribed cultures of the Middle Neolithic. As a general trajectory, this is valid everywhere in the LBK. There is little discussion of how, or even whether, this process would have been perceived and evaluated on the ground by the individuals and communities involved. For this reason, narratives derived from one area of the LBK, be they about the symbolic dimensions of the house (Bradley 2001), personhood and the body (Jones 2005) or the violent end of the LBK in the face of climatic instability (Golitko and Keeley 2006; Gronenborn 2007), are assumed to be valid throughout. Therefore, while it seems we can deal with differences in material culture as a classificatory tool, we are less good at coping with difference in historical trajectories of change.

As a result, “LBK culture” has increasingly become something almost meta-physical. Somewhere, there is an ideal LBK pot, or house, or burial against which regionalisation or chronological change can be defined as a deviation. This ideal material does not exist, yet it exerts considerable power. It is used to marginalise some areas or practices, to construe them as somehow out of line. Often, this is combined with a focus on “big questions”, such as the Mesolithic–Neolithic transition, where it becomes crucial to identify just how “real LBK” a given practice is (for a critique, see Robb and Miracle 2007).

This can, for instance, be seen in the ways in which two ceramic types contemporary to the LBK, La Hoguette and Limburg, are utilised in the discussion of the transition. These ceramic traditions are known almost exclusively from their presence on LBK sites (or entirely so in the case of Limburg) (Constantin 1985; Jeunesse 1987, 2000; Lüning et al. 1989; van Berg 1990; Constantin and Blanchet 1998; Manen and Mazurie de Keroualin 2003). Considered as representative of terminal Mesolithic groups by virtue of their difference from LBK ceramics, when these pots are found they remain resolutely separated from the rest of the LBK assemblage in the archaeological report (see also Thomas 1996, 114). Similarly, the presence of wild animals on LBK sites continues to be regarded as a transitional practice or a Mesolithic throwback. Thus, hunters are considered to have a different identity and a lower status compared to the more LBK herders (Hachem 2000). This is seen as part of a long-term tension, resolved only in later Neolithic contexts when hunting is finally seen to give way to herding and to retain only a symbolic significance (Sidéra 2000; Tresset 2005). In the case of recent isotopic studies, non-locals in burial assemblages have sometimes been identified as hunter-gatherers,

an interpretation then hypothetically confirmed through the accompanying grave goods (Price et al. 2001; Bentley et al. 2002, 2003; Price and Bentley 2005; see also Bickle and Hofmann 2007).

The difficulty with this approach is that variations in the archaeological assemblages become deviations from an imagined norm, which are reified as either regional or inauthentic cultural practices. Narratives of the Mesolithic–Neolithic transition are thus reduced to explaining what particular patterns of material represent, with some aspects of the material world being seen as more informative than others. It is as a reaction to these kinds of narratives that, in our research so far, we have chosen an alternative focus, writing mainly about the construction of identities and communities in daily practice and intimate settings (Hofmann 2006; Bickle 2008; Bickle and Hofmann 2009). It seemed easier in those instances to trace the specific histories of the “multi-tradition communities” (Gronenborn 2007, 84; see also Zvebil 2004; Whittle 1996, 2003) that are now increasingly seen to characterise the LBK. Writing about the small-scale meant paying attention to difference and valuing it.

In these kinds of narratives, archaeological traces should not be seen as a passive reflection in the material world of an idealised culture existing only in Neolithic people’s heads. Rather, as Barrett (2001, 156) argues, material remains take a far more active role in the constitution of past societies, providing “the material condition which necessarily and actively facilitated certain strategies of social practice”. This is to encounter the material remains of the past through how it is inhabited, or in our terminology, performed. The notion of performance as understood here is largely founded on Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) practice-based approaches to social life.

Practice and performance are an essential part of Bourdieu’s (1990, 96–7) conception of the *habitus*, in which physical action in the world is not a mere “execution” as if performing a character from a play, but rather it is “that active presence in the world ... which directly commands words and deeds without ever deploying [the performance] as a spectacle”. This means that, rather than *habitus* being the rules within which communities live, creating the boundaries of social possibilities, it is the framework which enables action in the world. Therefore, performance is at once both the producer and regulator of discourse in the world (Butler 1993; for archaeological discussions, see Meskell 1996; Pearson and Shanks 2001). While these discussions show a convergence with some of the anthropological arguments rehearsed above, their application to the LBK specifically remains limited.

The challenge is therefore to address the role of bodily remembered practices in carrying forward the performances which form LBK daily life, ultimately creating our archaeological entities. In this kind of framework, LBK materials are not a direct record of either a perfect or imperfect performance of LBK culture, but rather the contexts in which life occurred. We need to consider how the assembled evidence facilitated the continuation of social relationships and led to regionally diverging trajectories in how material culture was employed. The focus of this paper, therefore, is the tension between the existence of culture as similarity of action within a social grouping and the material remains which constitute our

archaeological knowledge base. We expect differences and similarities in the associations of practice and material objects but the challenging and interesting questions lie in the different social actions and mentalities which led to their creation. For this purpose, we focus on the interpretation of burial practices.

The Dead on Settlements

The classic LBK burial rite is inhumation in cemeteries with a specific range of grave goods, including stone tools, pots and shell beads (Jeunesse 1997). This remains the benchmark against which other kinds of burial, for instance, interment on settlements, cremation or fragmentation and secondary burial, can be compared. For cemeteries, the presence of grave goods and the normative tendencies to choose a specific position and orientation for the deceased (crouched on the left side with the head to the east) are generally interpreted as a sign of piety and care. Other kinds of burials are defined by the lack of one or more of these attributes and hence valued negatively (e.g. Veit 1992, 1996; Jeunesse 1997; Lüning 1997). Repetition, it seems, shows care while variation implies a lack of it. Again, the terms of this discussion encourage the definition of culture-wide norms.

Using examples from Lower Bavaria and the Paris Basin (Fig. 9.1), we wish to examine further the variations observable even within each region, let alone across the whole of the LBK distribution. We are explicitly focusing on settlement burials, partly to challenge the idea that they are the graves of the unimportant dead, but similar points could also be made in an investigation of cemeteries (see e.g. Hofmann 2009, 222–23). It is our aim to explore the specific meshing of the “LBK” as a widely shared perspective on the world with small-scale, face-to-face engagement of a specific set of people in the world.

Double Burials as a Local Tradition at Otzing

The largest number of settlement burials from a single site in Lower Bavaria comes from the mid to late LBK settlement at Otzing near Deggendorf. Rescue excavations uncovered 45 burials scattered between roughly 30 house plans (Schmotz 2000, 2002; Schmotz and Weber 2000). Few of the burials can be assigned to a particular building. Many are located at roughly equal distance between two houses, others are loosely scattered on free spaces between buildings. There is also a tighter cluster of seven badly preserved inhumations near the north end of the site. Schmotz (2002, 267) mentions two isolated skulls, but gives no further detail.

On one level, the interments at Otzing correspond to the general characteristics identified as typical for LBK settlement burials (cf. Veit 1996; Orschiedt 1998). Many of the pits containing burials are general refuse pits, and many of the deceased receive few or no grave goods. This is especially true for children and juveniles who,

in line with *archaeologists'* expectations, constitute the majority of burials (25). The bias towards female burials identified on other sites (Veit 1996) is, however, not repeated here (Schmotz and Weber 2000). The position and orientation of bodies is also less standardised than on cemetery sites. Moreover, there is a particularly high incidence of double burials, and these form the focus of discussion here.

Double inhumations can occur on cemeteries (cf. Peschel 1992), but are generally more common among settlement burials. At Otzing, their proportion is even higher than usual, and this can form the starting point for drawing out performative links and contrasts. This is all the more pertinent since double burials have in the past been interpreted as merely a labour-saving device to dispose of the least important members of a community, mostly children (Veit 1996, 204). This makes sense within the general and rather abstract LBK-wide models of status and prestige presented above, but it can be challenged when we focus down to the tableaux created in the course of the rites and on the performances occasioned by these deaths. This can reveal a much subtler interplay between wider norms and local traditions.

One striking contrast at Otzing is between burials whose occupants are facing away from each other and those which share the same orientation. The resulting picture is quite different in each case, and we may speculate that the relationships that existed between the deceased may be responsible for this. For example, the grave of a mature person and small child, probably both female, gives a cramped impression (Fig. 9.2). Although there would have been ample room for the girl to the right of the older woman, their bodies were not arranged side by side. Rather, the woman's head has been squeezed tightly against the edge of the cut and her legs have been folded back onto her thighs to create room for the girl. The girl is even more tightly crouched and is facing away from the woman, even avoiding touching her knees. Thus, while the bodies share the same grave pit, direct physical contact seems deliberately minimised.

Grave 19, containing two children, gives a very different impression (Fig. 9.3). The two bodies are not only buried in the same position and facing in the same direction, but the older child is also embracing the younger, suggesting a relationship of intimacy or even tenderness. This arrangement is also observed in the few double burials from Lower Bavarian cemeteries, such as Aiterhofen and Sengkofen (Nieszery 1995). Hence, only one of the possible variations on double burials evidenced at settlements was replicated in cemeteries. Rather than a complete contrast between the two contexts, we can perhaps suggest a focus on more stereotypical practices in cemeteries, perhaps linked to a different, wider audience present at the time of burial.

Otzing's grave 27 again drives home the point of variability on settlement sites. The two children buried here lie on the sherds of a smashed coarse ware pot. Their heads are in opposite directions, but their legs overlap, creating tension between the intimacy of touch and the antithetical positioning. The closest parallel comes not from another double burial, but from the sequential interment of two children in the same pit complex, in close proximity, but with their heads facing north and south, respectively.

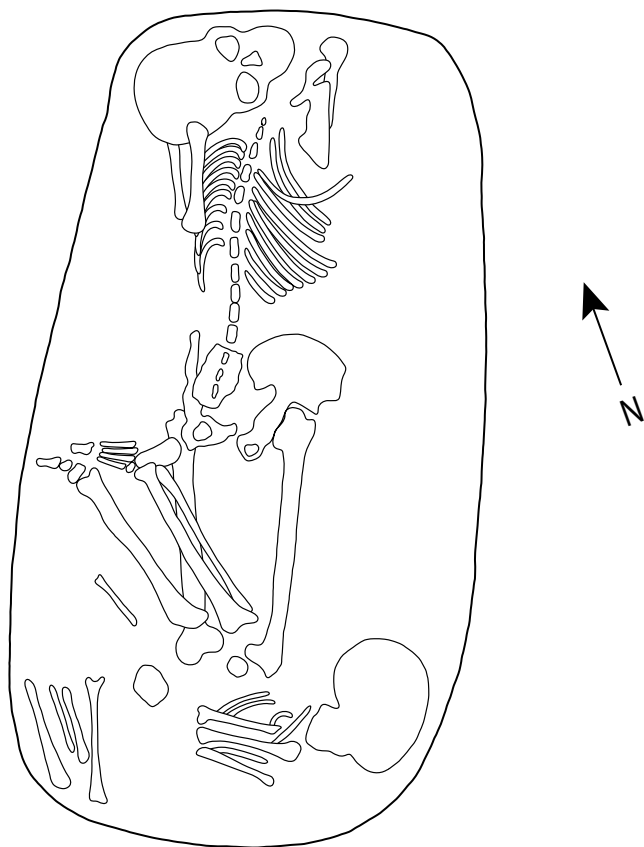


Fig. 9.2 Otzing, grave 10: double burial of an older adult woman and child (after Schmotz and Weber 2000, 29)

Graves 22 and 29 may show evidence of later manipulation, which is also implied by the isolated skulls reported from Otzing (see Schmotz and Weber 2000, 25). The two older children/juveniles in grave 29, for instance, were buried successively in irregular positions. It is not clear how much time elapsed between the two interments, but the first burial may have been disturbed by the second, resulting in the displacement of the head and the removal of the arms. It seems unlikely that this is solely due to the rescue conditions of the excavation. The meaning of juxtaposing the two bodies in this way, at almost right angles, is unclear, but may well dramatise the specific circumstances of the deaths or a particular relationship.

The differences observed between these burials militate against a single explanation, such as carelessness or labour-saving devices. What we are seeing is a set of practices – including the positioning and orientation of two bodies relative to each other, the selection of a specific spot on the site and the potential for further manipulation at a later date – being selectively deployed on different occasions. Idealised versions of relationships or more idiosyncratic dramatisations can both occur.

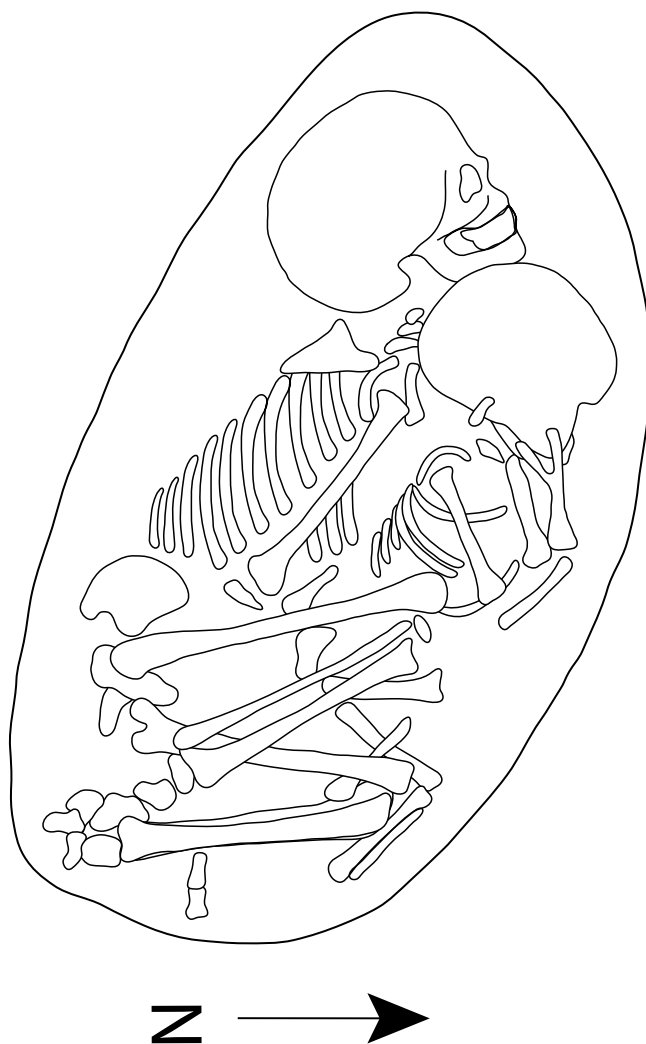


Fig. 9.3 Otzing, grave 19: double burial of two children (after Schmotz and Weber 2000, 29)

We can even begin to discuss the possibility of local traditions, although ideally this would require more detail on the relative sequence of the burials and the overall duration of the site. In contrast to nearby cemeteries, such as Aiterhofen (Nieszery 1995), the burials at Otzing form few distinct clusters or groupings, and none of a size comparable to burial grounds. We hence cannot really apply the idea of family groups returning to specific plots (cf. Nieszery 1995, 66). Yet, graves reference each other in subtler ways, through tableaux and practices. How individuals are positioned relative to each other, for instance, links graves from different parts of the site: children in antithetical orientations, bodies arranged at right angles or parallel to each other provide recurrent choices. The practice of manipulation is again relatively frequent.

It seems likely, then, that specific performances and dramatisations were remembered, perhaps keenly for a while, and these provided the template against which other rites were performed. In contrast to cemeteries, places set aside for the dead, the remembrance of settlement burials would rely on encountering grave sites in the course of everyday routines and on the repeated choice of certain elements of performance. This meshing of significant places and actions means that, while individual settlement burials may have been forgotten over time, the community at Otzing could develop a micro-tradition in which some practices were considered more effective and appropriate, and were hence repeated more often. It is these idiosyncratic and unquantifiable factors that result in the observed pattern of burials being at once similar to LBK-wide norms – for instance, in demographic composition or provision with grave goods – and at the same time different, for example, in the frequency of double inhumations (see also Sangmeister 1999). The burials at Otzing are a unique set of theatricalisations designed to cope with specific, emotionally charged events. They draw on a certain pool of practices, but to judge them by how well they conform to static norms is to miss the point of their embeddedness in a specific local sequence.

The Performance and Context of Child Burials in the Paris Basin

In the case of the Paris Basin, a number of significant differences in the context of burial and the associated rites can be identified (Jeunesse 1997; Constantin and Blanchet 1998; Constantin et al. 2003; Pariat 2007). Inhumation in cemeteries was not practised and the gendered division in grave goods was not as strongly marked; instead, burials are found in settlement contexts, and there is a strong sense of performance associated with the time of interment (Bickle 2008).

Furthermore, the placing of child burials close to longhouses, a highly varied aspect of inhumation rites across the LBK, is also found in the Paris Basin (Veit 1996). This practice has often been commented on (Veit 1996; Whittle 1996; Jeunesse 1997; Bradley 2001; Constantin et al. 2003; Jones 2005; Pariat 2007), though it is usually discussed away from the context of the longhouse. Bradley (2001, 53) has attempted a connection between burials and architecture. However, the lack of detailed consideration of the actual place of burial around the house, the demographic variability of the persons thus treated in different areas of the LBK and the different practices that constituted an inhumation has led to an overly broad connection between some of the dead and architecture, which in this form does not hold true for the whole of the LBK.

The problem with this approach to the archaeology is that such practices become homogenised as one particular category of evidence. Rather than comparing the child burials to an idealised form of burial, it is far more productive to think about their context in the settlement and the performances associated with the moment of interment. For instance, child burials in the Paris Basin are actually very varied. In two cases, at Berry-au-Bac, *Le Chemin de la Pêcherie* and Cuiry-lès-Chaudardes,

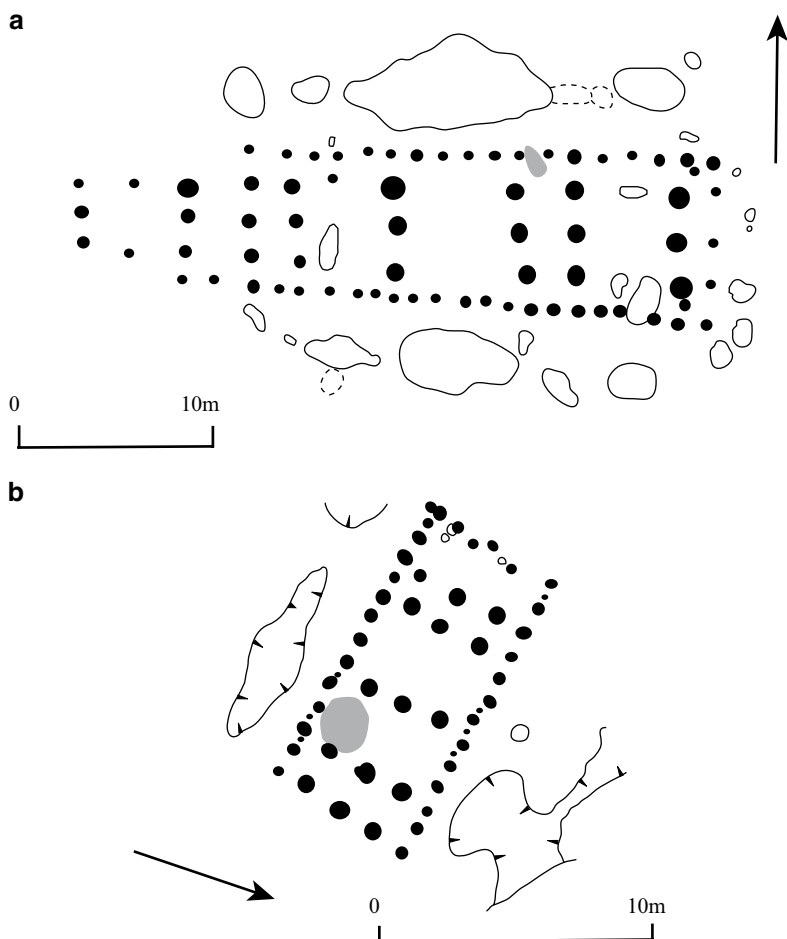


Fig. 9.4 The child burials (in grey) found inside longhouses in the Paris Basin. (a) Burial 308 in house 300 from Berry-au-Bac *Le Chemin de la Pêcherie*, Aisne (after Dubouloz et al. 1995, 29). (b) Burial 315 in house 330 from Cuiry-lès-Chaudardes, Aisne (after Ilett et al. 1980, 32)

Les Fontinettes, the burials were placed in pits inside the houses (Fig. 9.4; Farruggia and Guichard 1995; Ilett et al. 1980). There have been suggestions that child burials may have been placed in the loam pits next to houses, which also received waste from daily life at the settlement, because they were of little value or were given little attention in burial (Jeunesse 1997, 98). This assumption has been made partly because they have received far fewer grave goods than adult burials, but this lack of grave goods conceals the significant effort that goes into child burials. Frequently, burials have their own grave cut and even when placed in the loam pit, they are in an area apparently set aside. For example, the child interred in the northern loam pit of house 245 at Cuiry-lès-Chaudardes *Les Fontinettes* is provided

with its own area, which is prepared for the burial by the sprinkling of ochre on the bowl of the cut (see Fig. 9.5; Coudart and Plateaux 1978). Each burial, therefore, had its own particular location around the house, whether inside, by the walls or in the loam pits.

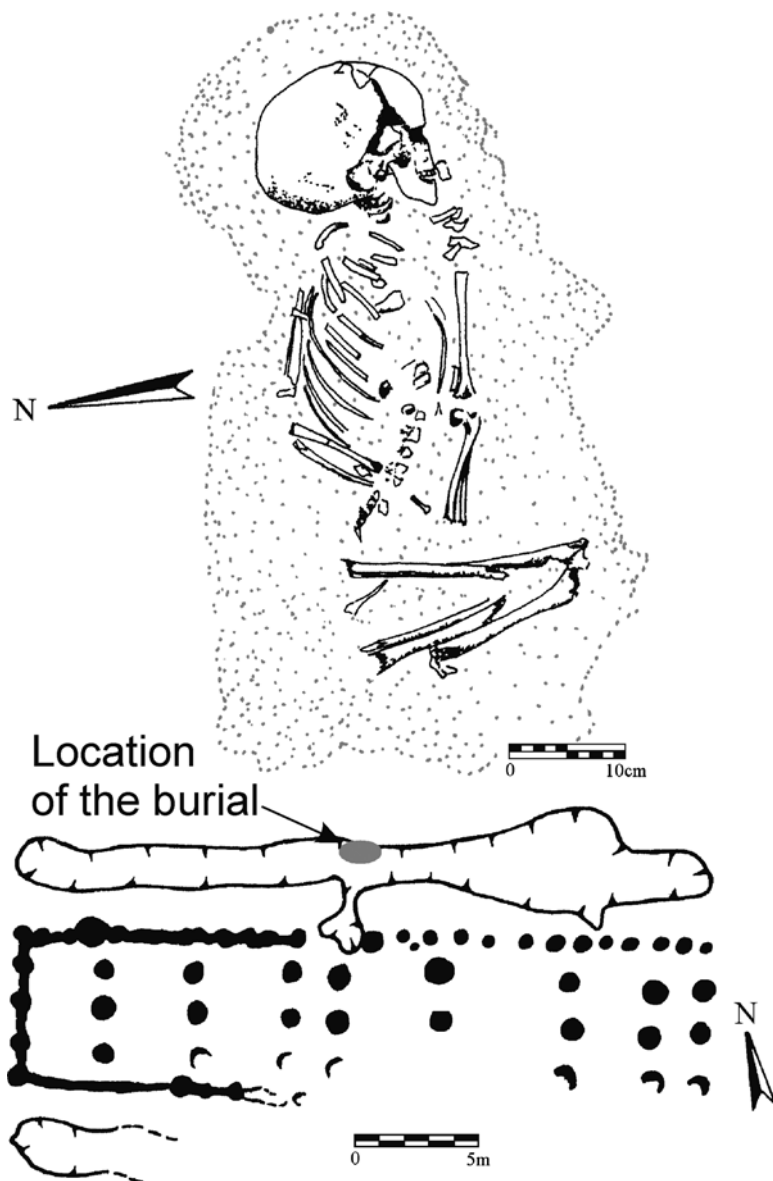


Fig. 9.5 Burial 271 from the northern loam pit of house 245. The grey shading around the skeleton indicates the presence of ochre (after Soudský et al. 1982, 75)

Not only were the burials given a particular space in the settlement, but the rite of burial may have been fairly dramatic. The natural soil into which the burials were placed is alluvial silt and frequently creamy white or yellow in colour (Ilett et al. 1982; Chartier 1991). Therefore, the presence of reddish orange ochre would have stood out particularly well, distinguishing the space of the burial from the rest of the soil. Burials are also occasionally furnished with beads, which were frequently white (or grey) in colour, as they were made from limestone, shell (including *Spondylus*) and bone (Jeunesse 1997; Constantin et al. 2003; Bonnardin 2003). These colours may have metaphorically stood for bodily fluids (such as blood or semen) or, through the associations of particular colours, drawn on complex relations between material substances and the body of the deceased (Borić 2002, 39; Jones and MacGregor 2002, 11), thus playing a significant part in the range of possible performances at the grave side.

The particular efficacy of this event is local, immediate and within the knowledge of those who threw ochre, placed the body in the grave cut or stood and watched. However, these rites were not repeated every time, but rather were part of the possibilities present when each burial was made. Therefore, the household or the community chose the appropriate place for the deceased, made time and space in the daily round and chose to follow or ignore tradition. The implication is that each burial is not an impartial representation of social order or culture, but a place in time and space in which emotion, memory and intention meshed together with the expectations of childhood in the Paris Basin.

The onus on the archaeologist is not to explain this particular practice as a means of identifying the extent to which communities in the Paris Basin conformed to general LBK rules, but rather to explore how these practices were inhabited (Barrett 2001). With this approach, the connections between child burials and architecture become more interesting. Bradley (2001, 53) has previously suggested that the presence of child burials by houses may imply a link between houses and the dead. However, rather than simply arguing that houses represent the ancestors, Bradley (2001) implies that they are part of a connected world-view in which the orientation of burials and houses forms an orientation for LBK life on its origins, built around the direction along which the first farmers migrated out of central Europe. The discussion of the child burials above can now elaborate on this point, illustrating that childhood may have been in some way tied into the architectural space of the house and the practices of building and using longhouses. The longhouse would have provided a particular forum for daily life and the formation of social relationships; the mediation of death in this setting may have evoked the solidarity of community in the space of the settlement. However, even within the Paris Basin this is subject to manipulation and creative responses, in which it would be difficult to define an essential practice that could be identified as meaning one thing or representing one identity.

These creative responses to the interplay of social relationships and architecture will have had a considerable temporal dimension at the settlement. LBK longhouses are generally considered to have lasted for just 20–30 years or one generation, with abandoned houses left to decay *in situ* (Coudart 1998; Last 1996; Whittle 1996; but

see Rück 2009, 179–80). Settlements were thus composed of tangible material reminders of past generations that could be engaged with on a daily basis. In this sense, time was “thick” (Borić 2003, 48) at all LBK sites, but the responses to such an engagement would have been tempered by the shared memories held by the community. These have the potential to have been both oral and material (Bloch 1998, 109).

Harrison’s (2004) study on the relationship between former Aboriginal inhabitants of the settlement of Dennawan and its archaeological remains focuses on the relationships between shared memories and the interactions between people and objects. Specifically, Harrison (2004, 199–200) emphasises the importance of making physical contact with the site during visits through touch, which inspires particular emotions and physical responses. Thus, Harrison (2004, 214) states that “such memories materialise only with re-enactment” as individuals tell stories in reaction to their bodily engagement with the site. Burial near houses would have drawn upon such acts of collective remembering, building local narratives around the house. These, as much as any perceived rule, may have encouraged the repetition of particular ways of doing things. The striking association between children and pits very near or in the house, which is not repeated in all areas of the LBK (see Hofmann 2009, 222), is the product of recurrent practices that had come to make sense locally, built up through the micro-chronology of individual episodes of grief, burial and commemoration. Small-scale and intimate, each child burial would have blended living memory and tradition together. Therefore, the social interactions around longhouses were not passive representations of a single LBK identity, but rather a mediation of the complex interplay of daily life, memory and identity, together building up the time depth of settlements and their specific biographies.

Conclusion: Anchoring Culture in the Local

Looking at different aspects of funerary rites in different regions blurs the associations between different identities and burial practices. It shows overlapping, but also diverging trends within LBK communities, both among groups at the different ends of its distribution and those living in the same place (Hofmann 2006, 2009; Bickle 2008). The study of burials is, therefore, at its most interesting and productive when it is considered as part of the formation of various scales of identity, community and temporality at the settlement. Social life is a complex interaction between people, materials and environment, and we only do justice to these patterns when the boundaries between different categories of evidence are viewed as permeable and variety in practice is allowed visibility in the archaeological dialogue. The apparent orthodoxy of the LBK is, therefore, undermined by close and detailed attention to its archaeological remains. If a united LBK is assumed, then the variations become problematic and require considerable explanation by us before we have even begun to ask questions of LBK life itself. However, this is a problem of our own making: we have mistakenly assumed that unity in human behaviour is produced as a result of fixed cultural rules (Bourdieu 2002).

Modderman's (1988) conclusion that the LBK was characterised by "diversity in uniformity" manages to capture some of the qualities of LBK traditions. Both at Otzing and in the Paris Basin, burial practices were guided by an interplay of variation and more widely held ideas. Working within and upon the traditions provided by shared living, communities in the LBK were not passively repeating static identities or senses of belonging. The act of sprinkling ochre before the burial in the Paris Basin or smashing pots at Otzing were events caught up in the mediation of appropriate ways of acting and feeling. In this sense, the creation of tradition comes about through collective memory work by a group of people.

Remembering is not a solitary activity (Middleton and Edwards 1990). A relation to the past is given in the participation in recurrent practices, as well as in more formal instances of recollection. Both are rooted in a wider field of interaction, which influences the content, context and occasion of remembering, drawing out some aspects as central to the identity and integrity of a community (Middleton and Edwards 1990, 10–17). Linked to daily practice and to dialogue with others, remembering is partial and subject to change. It is here that tradition is transformed, whether accidentally (Mizoguchi 1993) or through selectively emphasising some aspects at the expense of others. This link with practice also accords objects and places a crucial part in grounding memory work in daily experience and investing it with emotional salience (e.g. Radley 1990; Küchler 1987, 1993; Battaglia 1990, 186). Therefore, traditions are not just a repetitive representation, but an open-ended "practice of remembering" (Ingold 2000, 148), significant at various levels of social interaction. These practices selectively draw upon shared items of material culture or ideas of appropriateness to play out specific instances of situated actions.

For us, the interest in studying culture hence lies in the way in which certain kinds of materials and their deployment in practice create something akin to a pool of resources, which are in turn drawn upon and transformed in specific instances. The significance and emotional salience of these materials and practices is of necessity local, but as a medium of expression they are more widely shared. In contrast, the material definition so often adopted for culture leads to a system of strict rules, which then limits the archaeologist to focus on the explanation of difference. This approach has diverted attention away from the significant questions of how the LBK way of life found coherence within both the local scale and the widely shared network and how different scales of social action can best be meshed in our accounts of the past.

Admittedly, and partly as a consequence of these limiting research priorities, the ways in which "shared pools of resources" could have been created are so far rather vague. For the LBK, we have shown that it is at the local level of this network that the *habitus* or "LBK world-view" must first be addressed. The insights provided by localised case studies, however, go beyond the local, as broadly shared practices find their meaning at this scale. It is here that we feel research and theoretical effort in LBK studies should concentrate. We must get beyond using culture as a divisive entity for the classification and evaluation of practices, a tool to measure conformity, and come to terms with its messy involvement at various social scales.

Culture should become an enabling concept in our narratives, a way to discuss networks, connections and similarities between specific projects and practices carried out at different times and places. In this guise, the concept of culture can become once more a challenging and fruitful starting point in the more nuanced archaeologies we seek to write.

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