

The locations and chronology of European artefact links

Professor Sabine Gerloff (Erlangen University, Germany)

This paper will first briefly discuss the indigenous Neolithic roots of the Wessex Culture and then concentrate on the foreign artefact links. These will be seen to be twofold, that is Continental contact finds in Wessex and vice versa ...: During the earlier phase of Wessex Culture artefact links are primarily with Continental regions which – in common with Wessex - are situated in areas close to rich tin deposits: Wessex I (Armorico-British A and B) daggers have their closest counterparts in and should be derived from related forms in Brittany and Central Europe, areas which have rich tin deposits and have also yielded princely burials under tumuli. In Central Europe these belong to the classical phase of the Unetice Culture of Reinecke's phase Bz A2 of the first quarter of the second millennium BC. During an advanced phase of Wessex (Wessex II), ie, the second quarter of the second millennium BC, during the transition from Early to Middle Bronze Age on the Continent (Reinecke's phase A3 or A2/B1) - the tables turned. There are now fewer prestigious Continental finds from Wessex graves, but we find Wessex derived prestigious artefacts in settlements or as single finds in South-West Central Europe as well as in the Mycenaean shaftgraves. The contact route to the Mediterranean led primarily along the Middle and Upper Rhine, Switzerland, the Alps to the Caput Adriae as well as down the Rhone.

The reason for these wide ranging contacts are most likely the rich tin deposits in Atlantic Europe, which in common with those from the Ore Mountains (Erz- and Fichtelgebirge) in Central Europe were the richest tin resources exploited world wide until the 19th century AD.