

From bones to battle – The Bronze Age site in Tollense Valley, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and its interpretation

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Since the 1980s amateur archaeologists collected a remarkable number of human bones along river Tollense in Northeast-Germany. In 1996 an arm bone with a flint arrow head embedded in the joint was found and during subsequent test excavations a find layer of scattered human remains and animal bones was documented. In 2008 an interdisciplinary research program started. The lecture will present first results of geoscientific and archaeological field work, underwater surveys as well as first results of metal detector surveys, anthropological, radiocarbon, and stable isotope studies. Until now a minimum number of 90 human individuals was identified from a stretch of the river c. 2 km long. A find layer was observed at several locations and this is in accordance with AMS-dates which assign the find layer to a very short period of the Bronze Age (period III). Some lesions on the human remains, two wooden weapons, some arrow points, and the context of the finds suggest that the situation probably represents the remains of Bronze Age warfare. However, we do not want to rule out that sacrifices were also involved in the accumulation of the finds.