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## Logbook

Justyna Baron, Ritual context of pottery deposits from the Late Bronze Age settlement in Wrocław Widawa, SW Poland

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## Joakim Goldhahn, Referee

2011-11-29

### **Referee comments on Justyna Baron's article The ritual context of pottery deposits from the Late Bronze Age settlement at Wrocław Widawa in south-western Poland**

#### **Introduction**

This is an article that I read with great interest. Both the source material and interpretations have high relevance for Bronze Age research in Northern Europe generally and the interpretation of deposition of pottery especially.

*I think it should be published after minor modifications.*

#### **Evaluation**

The interpretation that it is advocated and presented are well grounded in the material and seems reasonable. In addition, the interpretation that the deposition of animal parts, ceramics and liquids, read feasting, in connection with abandoning a settlement is thought-provoking.

However, I find it a bit problematic that the interpretation are, more or less, clearly formulated already in the beginning of the article and not discussed with any great depth after it is presented. When the interpretation finally is reached, the article ends in a haste, leaving the reader with more questions than answers. What does it mean to abandon a settlement? Why was it abandoned in the first place? Why was *so many* depositions made when it were abandoned? Was this a public event, a single feast, or is the different pits accumulated over some time? And if so, what consequences does this have for the presented interpretation?

To deepen the presented interpretation, and make it more thorough, I think that three clarifications are needed. All of them has to do with time and chronology.

1. There is a need to clarify the actually date of the cultural layer of the settlement. When did the culture layer start to accumulate and when did this process end? E.g. how long was the Bronze Age occupation at the site before it was abandoned?
2. There is a need to clarify how the pits relates to the abandoned settlement. Were the pits made when the settlement still was in use, or did it pass any time between these events?
3. In addition, I believe that the chronology *of* and *between* the pits are important to consider. Are they all "contemporary", made simultaneous, reflecting a single event – a grandiose feast, or does the pits reflect recurring events that, in the end, resulted in the pattern that was observed and documented? If the latter is the case, the interpretation must be altered (from feasting to ancestral cult?).

I think these three points are of paramount importance to clarify and state more explicit so that the reader can evaluate the proposed interpretation.

The points above are also important to discern to elucidate the nature of the discussed depositions. Some of the earlier research on similar finds shared a modernist distinction between secular and ritual depositions (e.g., Levy, Horst, etc.). With support of anthropologists like Catherine Bell (2009), Richard Bradley (2005) has proposed that the distinction between these categories are vaguely and poorly substantiated. Instead of talking about secular *or* ritual acts, Bell talks about the act of *ritualization*. The later arise when everyday actions is reformulated and transformed into meaningful structuring practices. According to Bell (2009), ritualized acts are based on some formal criteria: formalism, traditionalism,

invariance and rule-governance. Bell's theoretical perspective has resulted in a clear shift in the study of rituals within the field of archaeology, from *what kind of items that was deposited* to the very *act of deposition* itself (see Bradley 2005, also Berggren & Nilsson Stutz 2010).

The author makes a clear attempt to embrace this shift on a theoretical ground, but regardless of that, much focus is still made on the actual finds (read ceramics) and how the artefacts ought to be interpreted. The ritualized act itself, and how we as archaeologists can document and interpret this, is not discussed explicit in the article.

In connection to this discussion, I would have liked to see some sections of the pits. It would not only help to highlight its morphology and its relation to the underlying cultural layer, it could also be used for tracing the ritualized act itself. For instance: are each *pit* the result of a single event or several habitual events? Are they used once, twice, or many times?

From the presented material, I think it is obvious that the pits from Wrodlaw Widawa represent ritualized actions. The pits that has been dug through the documented cultural layer show great similarities and we can witness several reoccurring elements. The regular and repeated deposition of different ceramics, pots, cups, et cetera, and the presence of specific animal bones are two indications. Both are probably linked to feasting (judged by the animal bones that are found). The depositions of stones, to seal these ritualized actions, is another fascinating element that is worth stressing and highlight in the end of the article.

To make these traits more incorporated with the interpretation, I suggest a reference and explanation of Bell's thoughts on the act of ritualization, which I think could help strengthening the relationship between the presented data and interpretation.

Another thing that struck me reading this manuscript, is that the ritualized act seem to be so closely related to the actual abandonment of the settlement. This is in line with several seminal studies on rituals, such as Arnold van Gennep's legendary study *Rite de passage*, that clearly shows that rituals is connected with *changes*. It might be the life course of a living person but also the changing status off a place, a house, a boat or a settlement, or likewise. A rite the passage ritual are, *per se*, always connected to changes, it creates a before and after, but it is also linked to initiation, creation and abandonments, such as death rituals.

Similar finds as those from Wrodlaw Widawa are fairly well-known and documented on Bronze Age settlements from contemporary Sweden. In this context I will only point out two rather interesting studies that could be worth to highlight in connection to the current article.

One example is the settlement at Pryssgården from Norrköping with about 40 documented house structures from the Late Bronze Age (here, 1100-500 cal BC). At Pryssgården, Helene Borna-Ahlkvist (2002) have found an interesting pattern in connection to the creation and abandonments of houses: Different material culture, but also animal bones, were deposited in the post holes when the house was built, and later on similar depositions were made in the hearths of the house when it was abandoned (also Bradley 2005). The ritualized acts that left traces to us was thus connected with the creation of the house and the abandonment of the same, that is: when the place and house changed status.

It is obvious from the presented data that the discussed pits at Wrodlaw Widawa is related to the latter event, the abandonment of the settlement. The question then arise if is it possible to see some initial depositions from the time when this "place" was transformed into a settlement?

Another example is the settlement from Late Bronze Age at Staffsinge in Halland where depositions has been made in large pits when the site was abandoned in a similar manner that has been documented at Wrodlaw Widawa (see Nicklasson 2001, with an English summary).

Another thing I appreciated with this article, that also is in line with Bell's theory about ritualization, is the desire to see the similarities in deposits between objects made out of different raw materials, read bronze and pottery. It is for example obvious that the finds of complete drinking sets from so called "special

context", both can be made out of bronze but also in ceramics, and sometimes even in wood or gold (see Guldhøj, Mariemünde and Boeslunde in Denmark).<sup>1</sup>

From this, it is obvious that it is the drinking set that is of importance, not what kind of raw material that the objects was made of. Once again, Bell's theory accentuate the habitual praxis, not the item itself. In this connection it is also worth to mention that Thomas Erikson has found similar drinking sets in the Mälmar valley, which are discussed in his thesis from 2009 (see references below).

### Minor things to consider

I have made some minor reflections in the original manuscript (see appendix). Some other concerns to address are listed below.

#### Chronology

- The dating of the Bronze Age, Early Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, etc., differs a lot between different areas of Europe. Be explicit about the dating of the period you mention, and clarify the age of the period with cal BC in the text.
- The same also goes for the date of the Wroclaw Widawa settlement.

#### Figures

- Figure 1 should also mark out: 1) Northern Europe, and 2) SW Poland so it is obvious where the site is located in the world. Also mark out the site on the main map with an arrow.
- Figure 2 lack scale. Mark the site with an arrow.

#### Ceramics

It is stated in the text that the ceramic from the Bronze Age usually was produced locally, but there are great variations here, and example on the opposite are to be found, not least from a Scandinavian perspective, see the following references:

- Eriksson, Thomas (2009). *Kärl och social gestik: keramik i Mälardalen 1500 BC-400 AD*. Uppsala: Aun 41 (with a summary in English).
- Gustavsson, Kenneth (1997). *Otterböte: new light on a Bronze Age site in the Baltic*. Stockholm: Theses and papers in archaeology B4.
- Jaanusson, Hille (1981). *Hallunda: a study of pottery from a late Bronze Age settlement in central Sweden*. Stockholm: The Museum of National Antiquities 1.
- Larsson, Thomas B. & Hulthén, Birgitta (2004). *Vistad '88 revisited: ceramological analyses and Lusatian connections*. Umeå: Archaeology and environment 17.

### Conclusion

I think this is an interesting article with the potential to improve and I have suggested some way to accomplish that. I do not feel it compulsory to follow all the mentioned suggestions listed above, the article could very well be published as it is.

Having this said, I am looking forward to read the final version of the article in your journal within short.

### References

Bell, Catherine M. (2009). *Ritual: perspectives and dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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<sup>1</sup> See these links:

[http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/udstillingen/bronzealderen/en\\_klapstol\\_fra\\_bronzealderen/et\\_kar\\_med\\_tinstifter/language/uk/](http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/udstillingen/bronzealderen/en_klapstol_fra_bronzealderen/et_kar_med_tinstifter/language/uk/)

[http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/the\\_exhibition/the\\_bronze\\_age/bowls\\_of\\_gold/language/2/](http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/the_exhibition/the_bronze_age/bowls_of_gold/language/2/)

[http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/udstillingen/bronzealderen/armringe\\_af\\_guld/skatten\\_fra\\_borgbjerg\\_banke/language/uk/](http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/udstillingen/bronzealderen/armringe_af_guld/skatten_fra_borgbjerg_banke/language/uk/)



JUSTYNA BARON<sup>1</sup>

# The ritual context of pottery deposits from the Late Bronze Age settlement at Wrocław Widawa in south-western Poland

In this paper, I survey archaeological evidence for deliberate deposits containing mostly ceramic vessels but also stones and animal bones. They were discovered at a late Bronze Age settlement situated in the northern part of the contemporary city of Wrocław. Observation of their stratigraphical contexts allows us to state their deposition took place at the very end of the site use after thick occupational layers were accumulated. Owing to good preservation of vessels and their distribution, I argue they are remains of practices performed in a common settlement area resulting in deposition of once used ceramics. I also refer to a broad concept of notion of 'pottery deposits' and compare presented evidence with similar finds from other sites of similar chronology.

**Kommentar [JG1]:** dated to?

**Kommentar [JG2]:** Where in Poland?

## Introduction

Pottery fragments which frequently constitute the only basis in cultural and chronology studies both on a single pit and site level are doubtlessly the most common artefact type in everyday archaeological practice. Formal and stylistic analysis of Bronze Age pottery from North and Central Europe proved that ceramics were manufactured nearly exclusively for the local use, and thus reflected local and common standards both in production and decoration modes (e.g. Thrane 2008:246).

Sometimes however, archaeologists come across structures which are interpreted, in some cases even undoubtedly, as pottery deposits (Horst

**Kommentar [JG3]:** But see Jaanusson 1981, Gustavsson 1997, Larsson & Hulthén 2004, Eriksson 2009.

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1977:125). What are main assumptions in such interpretations and what does make them different from other ceramics? Among many, the most common are “special contexts” (Beilke-Voigt 2007:256), a high number of usually complete vessels of similar form, sometimes deposited in a deliberate way and covered with one bigger vessel (Horst 1977:129; Dohnal 1997:165). Uniqueness of deposited pots i.e. better quality of their production and unique decoration, compared to other shards from the same site, might be another criterion (e.g. Horst 1977:109). Deposits obviously constitute a significant evidence in research on various aspects of life in the past and thus are very important in the Bronze Age studies (Blajer 2001:14). Attempts of their interpretation usually focus on a degree of production development of particular types of artefacts, their spatial and chronological range, nature of exchange, spiritual culture or political situation, just to mention a few. These issues are however taken up mostly in the context of bronze finds, while pottery deposits have deserved much less attention. In Central European archaeology, most complete studies have been presented by F. Horst (1977) and in one chapter of *Das „Opfer“ im archäologischen Befund*, by I. Beilke-Voigt (2007). The latter author recalls older interpretations in presenting pottery deposits dated to the Bronze Age.

Abundant bibliography on definitions and differences between hoards and deposits again refers mostly to bronze items (see Blajer 2001:16 with further references), however for F. Horst these two are equal (1977:113). Deliberate ‘killing’ of artefacts, including pottery has been also a subject of Chapman’s study on fragmentation (2000).

In this paper I survey archaeological evidence for deliberate deposits of ceramic vessels, which I argue are remains of public ceremonial practices performed in a discussed settlement area at the very end of the site use. The pottery deposits were discovered at a late Bronze Age settlement in Wrocław Widawa situated in the northern part of the contemporary city of Wrocław (Fig. 1). The paper is also an attempt of interpretation of such deposits compared to similar finds from other sites of contemporary chronology.

### The site

The site had been discovered in 2005 in course of surface survey (Fig. 2) preceding planned road construction. The discussed site is situated on an edge of a terrace of a small, nameless stream which is a tributary of Widawa river (Fig. 3). The geomorphological research proved the contemporary stream is located in the old river-bed of Widawa (Badura in press).

During 2007 and 2008 seasons, the site was excavated by the Institute of Archaeology, University of Wrocław and the results are to be published soon (Masojć in press), while a preliminary reports was prepared soon after completing the fieldwork (Masojć 2009). In total, 1153 pits on the area of over

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36,000 m<sup>2</sup> were excavated (Fig. 4, 5). Several clear settlement stages at the site were recorded, beginning from the Mesolithic over the Bronze Age up to a grave from the Second World War.

Most of the pits however produced artefacts dated to two main settlement phases dated to the late Bronze Age and the Roman Iron Age (Baron in press). They were remains of large open settlements and covered more less the same area (Fig. 5). For the sake of the study, attached plan of the central part of excavated area contain only Bronze Age pits (marked red) and undated pits (blank) while remaining pits were removed to make the picture more clear (Fig. 6). The whole site area was covered with a thick occupational layer containing abundant archeological evidence: pottery shards, animal bones, daub lumps etc. In some cases, functional analysis of the pits enabled to determine their original functions as pit houses, storage pits, postholes, fireplaces, wells, lime-kilns, pits connected with iron production. Several graves dated to early Bronze Age, late Bronze Age, the Roman Iron Age and modern times were identified as well.

**Kommentar [JG5]:** Clarify periods in cal BC

## Deposits

Despite some doubts on this notion recalled by W. Blajer (2001:16, note 4), the discussed finds shall be called 'pottery deposits'. In this study, I understand them as single or several vessels of various sizes deposited deliberately in the settlement area. This structured deposition act includes arrangement of the ceramics in pits and presence of stones in or/and on the vessels.

At least two deposits may be dated to the Bronze Age: one containing several ceramic vessels (pit 130) and a deposit of 134 bronze arrowheads placed in a pot (Lasak in press). However, another 20 contexts containing Bronze Age ceramics seem to be deliberately deposited in the settlement area. They will be briefly presented in following paragraphs. In the table, a number of identified vessels, stones if present and data on vessel arrangement and animal bones are listed.

**Kommentar [JG6]:** table 1, be specific!

All presented ceramics were dug both into existing thick (about 40-60 cm) occupational layer and a sterile soil which defines their stratigraphic position and indicates they were deposited after the cultural layers had been accumulated.

As it is presented in the table, the number of vessels varied from one to ten. The most frequent forms were cups (Fig. 7:c-f, h, o-q). Vases were a common form as well, however owing to their size, their reconstruction what was possible to a small degree (Fig. 7:i; 8:g, 9:f). Other forms are pots (Fig. 7:a, l; 8:a, j), bowls (Fig. 7:k; 9:a, e), and plates (Fig. 7:g; 9:b).

Some of the vessels were arranged in a very specific way: in pit 129, a bowl was put upside down (Fig. 10), the same situation was observed in pit 149.



Some contexts represent a situation when a small vessel (usually a cup) was put into a larger one (Fig. 11).

Another interesting phenomenon is a presence of stone(s) in the discussed contexts. In 14 of them, at least one stone was recorded but their number reaches five. Depending on their sizes they were put both into the vessels – like in pit 268 where 4 stones were found at the bottom of a vase (Fig. 12), pit 22 with a single stone (Fig. 13:a) or on vessels what probably was a reason of their high fragmentation (Fig. 13:b, c). Pits 564, 581, 591 and 1014 contained stones as well, but high degree of vessel destruction does not allow to identify if they were put into or onto the ceramics.

As it is presented in the table, in 9 pits animal bones were found – in two cases (pits 129 and 268) bearing traces of fire. In general, the bones represent specimens commonly occurring at the site (Ablamowicz in press).

Particular attention should be drawn to a pottery deposit which was recorded in a central part of the settlement (context no. 130). Some further pits containing ceramics (e.g. pit 129) and the hoard bronze arrowheads were found nearby (Fig. 6). The deposit consisted of a large pot dug into the occupational layer and partly into the yellow-brown sterile soil, as it is demonstrated in the picture (Fig. 14). In course of the excavation, no traces of pit containing this pot were observed and only the vessel was recorded.

With respect to the morphology and some stylistic attributes of the vessel, it can be described as a simple pot with 4 flat holders at the rim. It was 53 cm tall, while the base diameter was 16 cm and rim diameter was 40 cm. The pot exterior surface was covered with a thin layer of clay tempered with crushed granite and then smoothed with fingers what resulted in long, uneven grooves – horizontal on the rim and vertical at the body (Fig. 8:a; 14). Fragments of similar vessels, however more fragmented, have been commonly recognized at the site. Such pots are common at other settlements of similar chronology. After the vessel had been fired and when the clay became hard, the base was perforated vertically in the centre and the hole diameter was 2 cm. That resulted in a coarse surface of the perforation which was made both from outside and inside the vessel as it is proved by the perforation of sandclock shape.

The pot contained 7 nearly complete cups, one cup or small bowl (part of the rim was destroyed, so it cannot be state if it was provided with a handle) and shards from other small bulbous pot 25 cm high with everted rim (Fig. 8:j). Its surface was treated in a similar way as the larger vessel with visible finger trails. All the cups had smooth and burnished, glossy surfaces and 5 of them had broken handles. Apart from the pottery, the large pot contained 5 stones and 5 fragments of animal bones (mostly from cattle – see table).

All the deposits were dug into already existing occupational layers resulting from long lasting use of the site. The stratigraphic situation suggests the discussed pots were deposited at the very end of the Bronze Age stage (about 700 BC) before the settlement was abandoned for about 500 years.

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hat are the relationship between this phenomena? See my comments...

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## Intra-site distribution of the deposits

Observations of deposit distribution in the site area allowed to argue most of them spread all over the central part of the settlement and no spatial connections with Bronze Age pits (marked red in the Fig. 6) were recorded. They were found far from post houses and mostly in the areas where Bronze Age pits were spaced widely. However, a possible concentration might be observed in the western part of the site and it comprises of 7 pits (129, 130, 149, 170, 177, 249, 268) containing similar sets of vessels i.e. a large vessel (vase or pot) and small cups or bowls.

Another interesting phenomenon is distribution of pits with higher number of vessels, stones and animal bones 'surrounded' the area where all the deposits occurred, while most of single large vessels with no stones and animal bones were found in the centre (Fig. 6).

## Discussion

Pits containing complete vessels have been found on various site types i.e. open and fortified settlements, cemeteries and have been interpreted as storage pits (Herrmann 1966:10; Smrž 1977:142), cenotaphs, potters' or pottery merchants' graves (v.d. Hagen 1930:647), remains of containers for sacrificed products (Czybbora 1997) or, more generally, on remains of activities connected with cult purposes (Dąbrowski 2001:40), including libations (Bouzek 2000:348).

Complete vessels at settlements are not frequent finds and there are usually large and massive storage jars, dug into deep pits and left in there after use. Despite the fact some small vessels from prehistoric settlements have been reported, most of complete ceramics have been recorded in sepulchral contexts (e.g. Mogielnicka-Urban 1992).

Obviously one cannot deny some of the discussed large vessels could have been used for storage as it has been demonstrated at many sites. That however does not help to interpret stones or smaller vessels found inside the larger ones or arranged upside down. In most pits, both set of forms i.e. vases, cups, bowls and plates, their arrangement and presence of stones resemble gravegoods discovered at the urnfields of the same chronology. Unlike the graves, they did not contained any bones. It should be noted that one Bronze Age urn grave contained infant burial was found at the site, about 10 meters north from pit 1040. Thus we must assume the bones would be present if discussed contexts were graves. It does not seem likely that they were symbolic graves which usually are rare at urnfield sites. Besides, the discussed site seem to be a regular open settlement with typical pits, occupational layers and artefacts and one grave seems to be unique in this context. Also animal bone evidence seems to represent selected body parts – mostly skulls and limbs. Despite its

**Kommentar [JG13]:** Clearly a ritualized act.

**Kommentar [JG14]:** animal bones from the pit? Be explicit!

fragmentation, no bone material exhibited traces of gnawing thus we may assume it was not exposed and inaccessible to scavengers before deposition.

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Due to many reasons, pot deposits seem to be much less attractive category for archaeologist, when compared to metal deposits. Comparing some terminological and methodological remarks included in W. Blajer's work on depositional patterns in the Bronze Age and early Iron Age in Poland (2001), one may easily note that a notion 'deposit' is usually connected only with metal artefacts while pottery deposits are not included in discussions on what deposits or hoards are or are not. An exception may be a paper by F. Horst (1977) who refers to these notions while analysing vessels probably containing food offerings. Issues of probable value of deposited artefacts have not arisen in the literature. That most likely results from the assumption that all the pottery has been manufactured of commonly accessible raw materials with the use of relatively simple techniques. It has been also questioned if the pottery, settlement pottery in particular, can be useful in studies on chronology, due to its low "chronological sensitivity", especially when compared to contexts dated by bronze artefacts. Questions on trade and exchange have been rarely arisen in pottery studies, after it had been argued most of it demonstrates properties confirming a local manufacturing (comp. Thrane 2008, 246).

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The contexts defined as pottery deposits have been recognized at many Bronze Age and early Iron Age sites. Many of them are mentioned in already cited F. Horst's paper who presents such finds from open and fortified settlements of so called Lusatian culture. He points some properties common for these deposits e.g. selected forms and decorations, lack of traces of use of deposited items, remains of some organic substances like cereals, animal bones, blood, honey etc. Spatial distribution of the deposits including their locations near sites considered as centers of cult and offering activities was noticed as well. He focuses mostly on wetland locations and pottery deposits in wells for example at settlements in Berlin-Lichterfelde and Senftenberg (1977:125) or at borders of settlements (1977:136). Summing up, he interprets the vessels as remains of food offerings, deposited in course of fertility rituals. A similar interpretation presented I. Czybbona, who argues that pots found at a bottom and at a coast of lake Gross Glienicke near Potsdam in Germany are remains of complex ritual offerings probably including pouring some liquids into the lake and throwing empty containers into the water afterwards (1997:87). At least 5 pottery deposits and described as 'votive offerings' i.e. thanksgiving offerings were discovered at a fenced settlement at Milejowice in SW Poland dated to the early Iron Age (Bugaj & Kopiasz 2008:107-109). The pots were deposited both in the center and the borders of the fence and included several vessels of various sizes and animal bones. Again, in 4 cases, the deposits consisted of similar set of pottery forms i.e. a large vase and small cups inside. In one pit a iron knife was found together with vessels and animal bones (Bugaj & Kopiasz 2008:110). Although the authors do not refer to possible interpretations of the deposits, their context within the site suggest their connection with

construction activities, in this case connected with making the fence which was partly re-built (Bugaj & Kopiasz 2008:Fig. 3). Presence of typical 'after-feast' artefacts and possible connection between feasts and construction activities make the phenomenon even more interesting.

**Kommentar [JG17]:** Ritualized acts are often connected with changing status of things, before and after, initiation. See referee comments

Comparing Central European pottery deposits with those known from classical Greek culture, V. Dohnal advocates their connection with libations and initiations rituals which required to abandon the containers after completing the rite (1997:165). P. Schauer gives a similar opinion interpreting pottery deposits as sets of forms used mostly for ceremonial drinking (1996:408).

Getting back to the discussed contexts from Wrocław Widawa it is noticeable that they do not meet all the criteria of 'cultic pits' proposed by F. Horst. In pit 130, it is difficult to state if the large pot was manufactured deliberately to be deposited but it seems it was not. The form itself – a simple undecorated pot belongs to the commonest type of settlement thick-walled pottery. Apparently, a typical vessel, used or not, was selected and removed from common use by perforating the base. The same seem probable for the cups, again known from other contexts at the settlement but in pit 130, their handles were chipped off the bodies. A phenomenon of breaking off some parts of deposited items have been noticed for bronze hoards and in some cases became a tool to distinguish their votive or economic nature (e.g. Levy 1982). Recent studies proved however they do not need to be considered discrete categories (e.g. Fontijn 2001/2002:5). Deliberate breakage of bronze items have been recently analysed by R. Bradley who criticised previous opinions, including his own (2005:148). Bradley analysed selected items from bronze hoards and interpreted some use-wear analyses proving intensive use of bronze axes (woodwork, fight ect.) which were then deposited as gravegoods or hoards (Roberts & Ottaway 2003:132). He argues that most of artefacts from these particular contexts were commonly used in situations we can define as mundane. Both axes and sickles were used, sharpened and repaired thus the opinion they were produced exclusively for deposition is difficult to support (Bradley 2005:149).

**Kommentar [JG18]:** Be explicit and state this criteria above, or here.

Having these remarks in mind, one may attempt to interpret vessels from the discussed site in a similar mode. The pots were commonly used cooking pottery sets and then given a ritual character by partly breakage (broken off handles, perforated base) and dug (i.e. deposited) in the settlement area. We cannot say what they contained, however animal bones proved it could be small portions of meat.

Another property of the pottery deposits according to F. Horst is their location in the vicinity of other structures probably of 'ritual' nature as some fireplaces or wells are interpreted or at borders of settlements. This is unlike the discussed site, where the vessels were scattered all over the central part of the settlement (Fig. 6, 7).

How can we interpret such vessels? The interpretation belongs to a broad discourse on any deposits made of various materials whose biographies end with throwing them into water or digging into ground. Can we call them offerings, or, perhaps more neutrally, deposits (comp. Kaul 2004:73)? The pits themselves do not allow to recognize any particular type of rituals, moreover if they are found at settlements, dug into occupational layers, among fireplaces, lime-kilns or storage pits. Deposits of easy to produce and partly broken vessels do not allow to interpret them as stored in a pit and ready to use for the settlement inhabitants. Occurrence of cups suggests Greek influences into urnfield areas and using them in libations, as it was suggested by J. Bouzek (2000:48). In Greek world, liquid offerings involved use of perforated vessels to be then used as *rhyta* (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001:217) and from this perspective, the large vases, together with smaller cups seem to confirm their use in libation-like performances.

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What we may assume is that the vessels are remains of activities performed in 'the public space' of the village and thus accessible to most its inhabitants. That is demonstrated in deposit distribution all over the settled area and lack of connection with any particular type of pits, houses etc.

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t probably is connected with the ritualized act of abandoning the settlement.

Obviously feasts were such activities and I am arguing the discussed remains might be interpreted as deliberately deposited, once used, feasting equipment.

According to J. Wright:

"Feasting, by its virtue of bringing people together in the biological act of eating, is a social activity that binds a group through sharing" (2004:134)

while D. Hayden gives a detailed list of practical benefits of feasting. According to him, feasting can create a special bond between groups (desired in various situation – from marriages to wars), display a success and maintain political power just to mention a few (2001:29-30). On the other hand, feasting, owing to its public character, could have been used as a tool of social exclusion. The same author brings archaeological signatures of feasts including size and number of preparation and serving vessels (mostly of everyday use pottery) deposited in central community spaces (Hayden 2001:Table 2.1). M. Dabney, P. Halstead and P. Thomas offered a detailed methods to identify post-feasting deposits basing on synchronic analyses of pottery, animal bones and contexts (2004:202).

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as in Brian

Comparing archaeological evidence from the discussed site, the large vessels containing small cups, sometimes arranged in pits in a very specific way and a presence of selected parts of animal bodies seem to be feast remains. The area of deposition was also deliberately designed with 'rich' deposits on the borders and single vessels in the central part (Fig. 7). Obviously they do not have to confirm Greek connections as traditions of feasting and depositing previously used items go far beyond, both in geographical and chronological

**Kommentar [J]**  
hich are? Be explicit!

**Kommentar [J]**  
he stone in the vessel also shows that this was a ritualized act!  
Add this...

sense (Dietler & Hayden 2001:1-3). According to J. Wright, material remains of feasting

“have to be understood as the material displays of other kinds of social activity, many of which relate to the expression and re-affirmation of individual identity and membership in groups” (2004:135).

Since the archaeological evidence proved the deposits are dated to the final stage of Bronze Age settlement at the site, another question arises. Why were the feasts performed so intensively or performed in this particular way only at the end of this village existence? If we assume feasts are of ritual nature, their high occurrence may reflect increase of certain rites. Many scholars argue ritual plays a particular essential role in the situation of uncertainty and suspense in social relations while the level of intensity of the collectively expressed and enacted ritual depends on the level of uncertainty experienced by individual members of a population (e.g. Wuthnow 1987:140). Intensified ritual actions are response to increasing uncertainty experienced by the population. Having in mind that the settlement was abandoned shortly after the pots were deposited, we may assume the action of deposition was on one hand of ‘closing’ nature and reflected intensification of ritual activities.

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**Kommentar [JG24]:** I agree with this conclusion, but I think the article ends rather abrupt without any summary, analysis or conclusion.

Maybe worth adding?

What is the main conclusion that you reached, what is the main contribution that this article has accomplish?



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### Figure captions

Fig. 1. Wrocław Widawa. The site location within the contemporary city of Wrocław

Fig. 2. Wrocław Widawa. Site area based on the surface survey (after Baron, Domański 2005)

Fig. 3. Wrocław Widawa. Widawa river valley seen from west. Red line marks the archaeological site (after Badura in press)

Fig. 4. Wrocław Widawa. Aerial photo of the site in course of excavations. View from north. Photo M. Masojć

Fig. 5. Wrocław Widawa. General view of the excavated area with Bronze Age pits filled black and the area with deposits marked grey

Fig. 6. Wrocław Widawa. Distribution of the pottery deposits in the central part of the settlement. Bronze Age pits are marked red and pits of undetermined chronology are blank

Fig. 7. Wrocław Widawa. Vessel deposits: a – pit 22, b – pit 49, c-f – pit 99, g, h – pit 149, i – pit 213, j – pit 170, k – pit 227, l-q – pit 249. Drawing N. Lenkow

Fig. 8. Wrocław Widawa. Vessel deposit from pit 130. Drawing N. Lenkow

Fig. 9. Wrocław Widawa. Vessel deposits: a-c, e – pit 546, d – pit 1014, f, g – pit 1040. Drawing by N. Lenkow

Fig. 10. Wrocław Widawa. Vessel deposit in pit 129. Photo A. Mostek

Fig. 11. Wrocław Widawa. Vessel deposit in pit 34. Photo A. Mostek

Fig. 12. Wrocław Widawa. Vessel deposit in pit 268 with stones inside the vase. Photo A. Mostek

Fig. 13. Wrocław Widawa. Vessel deposits in pit 22, 49 and 192 with stones inside. Photo A. Mostek

Fig. 14. Wrocław Widawa. Vessel deposit in pit 130. Photo A. Mostek, J. Baron

Table 1. Selected properties of vessel deposits

## Anders Kaliff, Referee

2012-01-10

### **Justyna Baron: The ritual context of pottery deposits from the Late Bronze Age settlement at Wrocław Widawa in south-western Poland**

Briefly, I review this article as follows:

The subject is indeed very interesting for the purpose of publication. The material presented is exciting and well worth disseminating in this manner.

As it stands, the article works without any real problems. Although limited regarding comparisons and references (while the existing ones are rather old, they are not aged). A somewhat broader choice of updated reference material would be advantageous, regarding both the treatment of Bronze Age deposits and e.g. theories of rituals and the problems of the relationship between archaeological terminology and interpretation.

The editorial committee could advice the author to add to the article more comparisons – not least the numerous existent Scandinavian ones that are lacking in the present version with the exception of Kaul. However, this is a matter of balance. I see no reason for not endorsing the publication of the article as it stands. It is completely acceptable, and can be seen as a problematizing presentation of material – a preliminary interpretation. For obvious reasons, a deeper enmeshment into current research literature in the subject matter would be a time consuming process for the author. Perhaps it would instead be an advantage to publish the article in its current version (and soon), encouraging the author to continue with a further and more problematizing work.

## Justina Baron, author: comments to the referees

I would like to thank both referees for their constructive and helpful comments and suggestions on the manuscript. I improved the text according to most of them, however I realise the paper raises more questions than answers and the subject I focused on, i.e. pottery deposits in the settlement area should be considered as a starting point for further studies on settlements as arenas for ritualized actions. I also realise I recalled few examples of such deposits from Northern Europe and while writing about those known from Central Europe I refer mostly to rather old literature. In case of Central Europe, this reflects rather limited research interests in such deposits, especially when found not at 'cultic sites' but at settlements which are usually regarded as opposite to sacral (i.e. ritual) areas. Some questions (why the site was abandoned? are there chronological sequence between particular deposits? where the pots remains of a single or many feasts?) remains so far unanswered. Once again, thank you for the review.