

The Path to UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Status for the Caves and Ice Age Art in the Swabian Jura

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Introduction

On the morning of July 9, 2017 in Kraków, Poland, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee deliberated on Germany's nomination for World Cultural Heritage (WCH) status 'Caves and Ice Age Art in the Swabian Jura'. Anyone interested in the details of the procedure may watch the recording of the events at the UNESCO website: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qz3hmdMiMg&index=16&list=PLWuYED1WVJIN_IhPNh90NK6nxg6qeylDr.

The key segment begins at 3 hours and 1 minute into the session following the inscription of the French nomination of Taputapuātea in Polynesia. The chairman of the session asks the representative from ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) for this agency's assessment of the nomination. For several minutes the representative summarizes the importance of the Caves and Ice Age Art of the Swabian Jura with their long history of research and remarkable finds from the Aurignacian period. The speaker stresses the important early artworks, musical instruments and other finds, and praises the quality of the proposal and its stipulations for protection, research and management. The representative from ICOMOS concludes with an emphatic recommendation for inscription under Criterion (iii): *to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared*. Thus, this criterion forms the basis of the nomination's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), which is the most fundamental requirement for UNESCO world heritage sites.

Following the authoritative statement from ICOMOS, the chair of the committee requests assessments from the voting member states. The representatives from Zimbabwe, Jamaica, South Korea, Tanzania, the Philippines, the host country Poland, Kuwait and Kazakhstan provided concise and thoughtful evaluations of the German nomination. Like ICOMOS, the voting member states all praised the nomination in enthusiastic tones. Those of us in the audience who had followed the process of nomination for many years, knowing now that nothing could go wrong, experienced a well-deserved feeling of euphoria, happiness and relief. I do not know how others experienced these moments, but the many assessments from nations from around the world moved me the most. When eight countries from Zimbabwe to Jamaica, South Korea and Kazakhstan expressed

their support to our UNESCO World Cultural Heritage nomination, it hit home that WCH sites are for every person over the entire globe, and not just for a few archaeologists, or the residents of Baden-Württemberg. As a researcher, I was also delighted to hear the UNESCO representatives explicitly discuss the importance of research for the nomination and to argue that research must continue in the future. Some misguided commentators had at times claimed that World Cultural Heritage status would mean that research would take a back seat to protection and that excavations and fieldwork would become more difficult in the future. The deliberations underlined the point that research and WCH status go hand in hand.

Next the session chairman asked if there were questions about the nomination or amendments to the nomination. No remarks followed. Then after 12 minutes and 49 seconds of deliberation the chairman's gavel stuck, making the caves of the Ach and Lone valleys UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites.

Maria Böhmer, Minister of State in the Federal Foreign Office and head of the German delegation, and Claus Wolf, the President of the State Heritage Office of Baden-Württemberg, spoke and thanked the UNESCO Committee, ICOMOS, UNESCO's working group on Human Evolution, Adaptations, Dispersals and Social Developments (HEADS) and the many heritage officers, researchers and everyone who contributed to the success of the nomination.

The celebration of the French delegation from Polynesia a quarter hour earlier had included singing and ukulele music. For our celebration, I played a recording of the late Friedrich Seeberger's composition entitled "J. Hahn" on a reconstruction of the Geißenklosterle I flute carved from a swan's radius into the microphone. One can hear Seeberger's flute music in the UNESCO recording of the proceedings.

A few seconds later the proceedings continued with the Polish nomination of the Tarnowskie Góry Lead-Silver-Zinc Mine and its Underground Water Management System. I am not sure if data exist on these matters, but no one I spoke to including career diplomats had ever witnessed the approval of a nomination in less than 13 minutes. The deliberations over nominations can go for many hours and even days, and it is not the least bit unusual that nominations are repeatedly considered over a period of several years at successive meetings of the UNESCO Committee. Many nominations are also outright rejected.

The nomination and subsequent inscription of the Swabian Caves can only be considered a great success, and it is fitting to consider how this success came about.

The path to UNESCO World Cultural Heritage

The idea of pursuing UNESCO WCH status goes back to the late 1990s. At that time Hansjürgen Müller-Beck and I worked closely with the county commissioner of the Alb-Donau County, Wolfgang Schürle, to organize a traveling exhibit on Ice Age art. This exhibit had originally been planned by Joachim Hahn, but after his death in 1997, Prof. Müller Beck and I worked together in close collaboration with Claus-Stephan Holdermann and Ulrich Simon to see the project through. Harald Floss, Martin Porr and Jürgen Waiblinger also contributed to the catalog for the exhibit (Müller-Beck et al. 2001).

This was about the time that my excavations at Hohle Fels began to yield important finds of Ice Age art. These discoveries initially included examples of painted pieces of limestone from the Magdalenian (Conard and Uerpmann 2000), and later a horse, a waterbird and a lionman from the Aurignacian (Conard 2003). Dr. Schürle played a key role in these years, because it was through his guidance, that I was able to understand the workings of decision making in Baden-Württemberg and also at the national level. For someone who was neither born nor raised in Germany, the patterns of decision making and the political power structures were not initially evident to me. I also needed some time to understand the different hierarchies of the governmental structures and the roles played by the different ministries. Dr. Schürle lent his support to the goal of having the Ice Age art of the Swabian Jura be the topic of a major state exhibition, which eventually opened with considerable fanfare in the autumn of 2009 (Conard et al. 2009a). Georg Hiller, who served as the mayor of Blaubeuren, and the later co-director of the Urgeschichtliches Museum (URMU), Stefanie Kölbl, also played a key role in the expansion and modernization of the URMU, which was founded in 1965 by Gustav Riek and directed by Riek and Müller-Beck until 1995, when I was appointed the head of the museum (Kölbl et al. 2014; Hiller 2015). The expansion and work of the URMU found the support of every governor of Baden-Württemberg starting with Erwin Teufel (Fig. 1). Eventually with support of the Archaeological State Museum of Baden-Württemberg, the URMU was formally recognized as the main state museum for prehistory and human evolution. Thus, while researchers in Tübingen were making progress with



Fig. 1: Urgeschichtliches Museum Blaubeuren. Inauguration of the Galerie 40tausend Jahre Kunst in April 2002. From left to right: Nicholas Conard, Wolfgang Schürle, Erwin Teufel, Georg Hiller. Photo: URMU.

excavations and scientific research, the URMU and the other museums with Aurignacian art in Tübingen, Stuttgart and Ulm continued to attract more interest and to update their exhibits in keeping with the wealth of new scientific results. All of these museums also hosted a range of special exhibits on Ice Age art and music. These activities were too varied and numerous to summarize here. In a paper in the *MGFU*, it is important to note that starting in the 1990s the members of the Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte also contributed in many ways to the activities of the URMU and the Department of Early Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology of the University of Tübingen (Hiller 2013).

From my point of view, which may be biased by my work and interests, the many arguments for the Swabian Caves being named WCH sites were entirely clear in the late 1990s. My early discussions of this question with Dieter Planck and colleagues at the State Heritage Office did not lead to any concrete progress for several reasons. First, it was clear that the Ministry of Finance and Economics and the Heritage Office had other priorities. These included serial nominations for the Roman Limes and later the Prehistoric Pile Dwellings around the Alps, as well as Architectural Work of Le Corbusier. Additionally, for many years the Schwetzingen Palace in Baden-Württemberg remained a high priority among the German nominations. Over the course of more than a decade these serial nominations were all inscribed, while Schwetzingen Palace was repeatedly delayed and rejected. At the same time several other projects such as the university city of Heidelberg and others received some attention, but ultimately did not gain the support needed for nomination.

More fundamentally, heritage officers in Baden-Württemberg and at the national level consistently argued that a nomination of the caves of the Ach and Lone valleys was impossible because the finds that qualified for Outstanding Universal Value were examples of mobile heritage, which by definition could not be granted WCH status. Thus in the early years of the new millennium the prospects for nominating and inscribing the Swabian Caves looked bleak indeed.

As the years passed several developments occurred that gradually opened the possibility for the caves being named WCH sites. These developments include at least three factors. 1) the dating of the Swabian Caves repeatedly showed that they really did count among the oldest examples of figurative art anywhere in the world; 2) each year new finds of Aurignacian artworks and musical instruments underlined the importance of the region's finds; 3) the State Exhibition on Ice Age Art in 2009-2010 under the leadership of the Archäologisches Landesmuseum Baden-Württemberg did much to draw attention to these sites as providing the earliest examples of figurative art and music.

At a more concrete level, the discoveries from the new phase of excavation at Vogelherd between 2005 and 2012 generated a groundswell of support for this project from the Lone Valley and the County of Heidenheim. The region undertook a major effort to market these finds and particularly the new carving of a mammoth discovered in 2006 and exhibited across Baden-Württemberg starting in 2007 (Conard and Seidl 2008). This movement ultimately led to the construction of the Archäopark Vogelherd, which opened on schedule in 2013. In the Ach Valley, discoveries in Hohle Fels and Geißenklösterle continued to generate momentum for discussion of potential WCH status for the Swabian Caves. The exceptional discoveries in 2008 of a female figurine (Conard 2009) and a well-preserved flute made from the radius of a griffon vulture (Conard et al. 2009b)

represent particular highlights in the process of the caves gaining wide international recognition. The annual grants from Heidelberg Cement and the generous support from the Museum Society of Schelklingen and its chairman, Reiner Blumentritt, should be noted here.

As all these developments were happening, changes were taking place with UNESCO itself. With each year it became clearer that the WCH list did not fairly represent the global contributions to human history and cultural developments. European countries were greatly overrepresented in the UNESCO list, and churches, palaces, monasteries, European cities, and monuments from classical antiquity were far too numerous relative to other kinds of sites. Thus the nomination of Schwetzingen Palace and other similar projects stalled, and UNESCO itself called for a more diverse and more comprehensive portfolio of WCH sites.

What also played a key role in this process was my being invited to play an advisory role in UNESCO's search for new WCH sites related to archaeology and human evolution. I first participated in the process in March 2009 in Burgos near the WCH sites of Atapuerca (Sanz 2011). The Spanish government under the leadership of its UNESCO ambassador María Jesús San Segundo funded a major initiative to create a more balanced representation of sites on the WCH list. Nuria Sanz from the UNESCO office in Paris and later from the UNESCO office in Mexico City headed this project from the start. After considerable deliberation we named the project 'Human Evolution: Adaptations, Dispersals and Social Developments', more commonly known as HEADS. I have had the good fortune to be a member of the HEADS team since 2009, and under Dr. Sanz' leadership the HEADS group has hosted two dozen meetings around the world to identify new sites that fulfill the expectations for Outstanding Universal Value and WCH status. Along with Margherita Mussi from Rome and François Sémah from Paris, I have served as one of the main advisors to the project together with Robin Dennell from Exeter and ICOMOS (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Meeting of the HEADS working group in UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Fall 2009. From left to right: Ofer Bar-Yosef, Nicholas Conard, Nuria Sanz, Margherita Mussi, François Sémah. Photo courtesy of N. Sanz, UNESCO.

In this context, the HEADS conference hosted at Schloss Hohentübingen from February 25 – March 1, 2013 played an important role in advancing the prospects for the caves of the Ach and Lone valleys achieving WCH status (Smith 2013). Representatives from 13 countries and 25 institutions came together to confirm the highest priorities for potential WCH status in Eurasia (Fig. 3). During the conference meetings of working groups to address key issues facing HEADS took place in the Department of Early Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology and later in the Heinrich-Fabri-Institut in Blaubeuren. Excursions took the many scientists and UNESCO representatives to the caves of the Ach and Lone valleys. Among many other meetings of the HEADS group, earlier meetings in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2011 (Sanz 2012) and in Jeongok, South Korea in 2012 (Sanz 2014) had been convened to identify the highest priorities for WCH sites in Africa and East Asia. The goal for the gathering in Tübingen was to do the same for western Eurasia. The participants of the HEADS conference in Tübingen confirmed that the Swabian Caves should be given the highest priority, a conclusion that had already been reached in Burgos in 2009. The papers from the Tübingen meeting were published in two volumes in 2015, with one volume dedicated entirely to the unique significance of the caves of the Ach and Lone valleys (Sanz 2015a, b).



Fig. 3: HEADS conference on Human Origin Sites and the World Heritage Convention in Eurasia in the Department of Early Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology, University of Tübingen, Schloss Hohentübingen, February 25 – March 1, 2013. First (Ground) Row (left to right): Nicholas Conard (Germany), François Sémah (France), Margherita Mussi (Italy), Gerd-Christian Weniger (Germany), Mina Weinstein-Evron (Israel), Claus-Joachim Kind (Germany), Robin Dennell (England), Roger Sala (Spain). Second Row (First Step – left to right): Robert Sala (Spain), Jeeyun Chang (Germany), Nuno Bicho (Portugal), Nuria Sanz (France, now Mexico), Fred Smith (United States), Larissa Kulakovska (Ukraine), Andrey Sinitsyn (Russia). Third Row (left to right): Geneviève Pinçon (France), Nadine Huber (Germany), Jill Cook (England), Michael Bolus (Germany), Jiří Svoboda (Czech Republic), Vyacheslav Kotov (Russia), Thorsten Uthmeier (Germany). Fourth Row (left to right): Georg Häußler (Germany), Sarah Ranlett (France, now Canada), Ewa Dutkiewicz (Germany), Ekaterina Devlet (Russia), Saman Heydari-Guran (Germany, now England), Paul Goldberg (United States). Photo: H. Jensen, University of Tübingen.

Since in Germany the importance of mobile heritage had been disputed and often rejected, the HEADS team focused on this point during the Tübingen conference and reiterated the assertion that mobile heritage may contribute to the arguments for OUV and WCH status. Internationally, this conclusion was nothing new, since WCH sites from the Cradle of Humankind in South Africa to Atapuerca and many others are based primarily on the mobile finds of fossil hominins and artifacts, not solely on the caves or open-air sites that housed the finds.

The support from HEADS and UNESCO played a critical role in removing obstacles blocking the inscription of the caves of the Ach and Lone valleys on the WCH. Now the claim that the Swabian caves' mobile heritage could not contribute to WCH no longer blocked the nomination. When the caves were inscribed in July 2017, it was the first time in Germany that mobile heritage played a central role in the nomination of a WCH site. The members of the HEADS team hope that this opens the opportunity for a serial nomination for Neanderthal sites under the leadership of the Neanderthal Museum in North Rhine-Westphalia and for the nomination of the site of Schöningen in Lower Saxony.

Next a number of key developments fell into place. Much like the role played by my excavations in recent years at Hohle Fels, Geißenklösterle and Vogelherd, Claus-Joachim Kind's excavations at Hohlenstein-Stadel made important contributions to the work relevant for preparing the nomination for the Swabian Caves. This work also led to a new reconstruction of the famous Lionman from the site and also highlighted the important finds from the Ulmer Museum, which originated from the excavations of Robert Wetzel in the middle of the 20th century (Wehrberger 2013; Kind et al. 2014).

Perhaps most importantly, the discussions about the criteria for achieving WCH led to a competition to establish a new tentative list. Each German state was eligible to nominate potential UNESCO World Heritage sites. The states prepared 31 sketches for new projects, which were evaluated by a commission with 11 members appointed by the Cultural Ministry Conference of the German states under the leadership of Marie-Theres Albert, professor of Intercultural Studies and UNESCO Chair in Heritage Studies at the University of Cottbus.

The State Heritage Office of Baden-Württemberg prepared the preliminary application with support from the University of Tübingen, the five museums that display the key finds and the many state and regional bodies, municipalities and groups affected by the planned WCH status. Claus Wolf and Claus-Joachim Kind from the Heritage Office headed the team and submitted the dossier via the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labour and Housing of Baden-Württemberg. Dr. Sanz' publication series and additional materials provided the evaluating commission with the current UNESCO guidelines and recommendations as well as a statement underlining the role of mobile heritage in defining OUV and WCH sites.

On February 22, 2014 the evaluation commission visited key sites, met with the main stakeholders and attended presentations by members of the Heritage Office and by the University of Tübingen at the Lindenau above the Lone Valley near Hohlenstein. This evaluation was the turning point on the path to WCH status. After reviewing all 31 potential projects, the evaluating commission gave the Caves of the Swabian Jura the

highest ranking followed by the Jewish Cemetery Altona Königstraße, Waterworks und Waterpower, Drinking Water and Artistic Fountains in Augsburg, and the Artist Colony Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt. With the highest possible ranking the path for the Swabian Caves becoming a WCH site was open and nearly guaranteed, since the opposition to the nomination had only ever been at the level of the State of Baden-Württemberg and at the German national level. From here on there was much work to do to prepare the application, but the path to WCH status was finally clear.

Some of the last problems related to gaining support from all the relevant municipalities and perhaps most sensitively, preserving the landscape from alteration by windmills. Under the leadership of Profs. Kind and Wolf with support from Conny Meister and Stephan Heidenreich and others, the Heritage Office of Baden-Württemberg and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labour and Housing of Baden-Württemberg prepared a prodigious three volume nomination file of 861 pages that formed the basis for the inscription in Kraków.

One of the last phases of the application procedure was ICOMOS' evaluation of the project. Marcel Otte from the University of Liège, one of the most senior and one of the most prolific Paleolithic archaeologists, was named to conduct the review. The visit to the sites and participating institutes took place between August 29 and September 2, 2016



Fig. 4: Prof. Marcel Otte during the review of the nomination by ICOMOS at the Department of Early Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology of the University of Tübingen, Schloss Hohentübingen, September 2, 2016. From left to right: Stephan Heidenreich, Harald Floss, Denise Beilharz, Conny Meister, Marcel Otte, Claus-Joachim Kind, Nicholas Conard. Photo: H. Jensen.

(Fig. 4). Later in the autumn of 2016 the Heritage Office of Baden-Württemberg, who organized the visit and the application under the leadership of Claus Wolf and Claus-Joachim Kind received word that ICOMOS supported the nomination of the Swabian Caves. This evaluation formed part of the basis for ICOMOS' strong support for the project at the meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Krakau on July 9, 2017.

Thanks to the careful work of the many people involved in the process, the UNESCO committee approved the Caves and Ice Age Art in the Swabian Jura in the record time of just under 13 minutes on July 9, 2017 (Fig. 5). This completed what was a long and complex process over the course of 20 years. Without the support of scores of people and dozens of stakeholders this achievement would not have been possible. Now the general public and all of the people involved in the project can finally enjoy the fact that the Caves and Ice Age Art in the Swabian Jura have been awarded the highest possible recognition and are officially acknowledged as being of Outstanding Universal Value to all people in all nations. The many people who contributed to this achievement should be proud of this accomplishment.



Fig. 5: Delegation of the State Heritage Office of Baden-Württemberg at the 41st meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Kraków, July 02 – 12, 2017. From left to right: Claus Wolf, Denise Beilharz, Claus-Joachim Kind, Conny Meister, Stephan Heidenreich. Photo: C. Ottersbach, courtesy of the State Heritage Office of Baden-Württemberg.

The key aspects of the WCH status of the Swabian Caves are summarized on the homepage of UNESCO for all people worldwide to read (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1527>):

Criterion (iii):

Caves and Ice Age Art in the Swabian Jura provides an exceptional testimony to the culture of the first modern humans to settle in Europe. Exceptional aspects of this culture

that have been preserved in these caves are examples of carved figurines, objects of personal adornment and musical instruments. The art objects are among the oldest yet to be found in the world and the musical instruments are the oldest that have been found to date worldwide.

Integrity

The property includes all six caves in the region that have had excavations of significant Aurignacian deposits, including the four caves containing figurative art objects and musical instruments and their landscape setting. All the elements necessary to express the values of the property are included in the property boundaries. The property includes sufficient consideration of the setting of the caves in relation to the topography and vegetation of the Lone and Ach valleys, including the limestone cliffs, valley floors and adjacent uplands.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the property is supported by the presence of stratified geological deposits in the caves that have served to protect the archaeological layers until their excavation and the surrounding landforms that contain the caves. Systematic archaeological research has been undertaken at these sites for more than a century and documentation is ongoing. The archaeological evidence gained from these excavations underpins the authenticity of the property. Several caves have unexcavated deposits, and there are other caves within the property that have not yet been investigated, providing the basis for future research.



Fig. 6: *Celebration of the presentation of the certificate for World Cultural Heritage status for the Caves and Ice Age Art in the Swabian Jura. Ulm, November 29, 2017. From left to right: Claus Wolf, Wolfgang Schürle, Heiner Scheffold, Maria Böhmer, Nicholas Conard, Winfried Kretschmann, Nicole Hoffmeister-Kraut, Thomas Reinhardt, Jörg Seibold, Reiner Blumentritt. Photo: M. Vanhaeren.*

Protection and management requirements

The Cultural Heritage Protection Act of Baden-Württemberg (1972) is the main legal enforcement to ensure the protection of the property. The property is administrated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labour and Housing Baden-Württemberg.

On November 29, 2017 County Commissioner Heiner Scheffold hosted the celebration in Ulm in which the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage certificate was presented to the public by Minister Maria Böhmer, Minister Nicole Hoffmeister-Kraut and Ministerpräsident Winfried Kretschmann (Fig. 6). By any standards the nomination of the Swabian Caves can only be considered a great success, and it is fitting to reflect on how this success came about. A synthesis of this work can be found in a new book on the WCH sites (Conard and Kind 2017). With WCH status in place there is much reason to be optimistic that ongoing excavations and research will continue to strengthen the case for the caves' Outstanding Universal Value.

Acknowledgements

There is no space to properly acknowledge the countless people who have contributed to this project since the 1990s. I apologize to the many people I have overlooked here and especially the hundreds of students and excavators who did the fieldwork that provides the basis for the WCH status of the Caves and Ice Age Art in the Swabian Jura. I am grateful to all the organizations that have funded this work. I thank the following people: Alvis Barbieri, Martina Barth, Mima Batalovic, Laura Bauer, Julian Bega, Thomas Beutelspacher, Sabine Biedrowski, Jörg Biel, Reiner Blumentritt, Hervé Bocherens, Ulf Boger, Michael Bolus, Marcus Bremer, Wolfgang Burkert, Berrin Çep, Katleen Deckers, Robin Dennell, Gerlinde Dippon, Krista Dotzel, Ewa Dutkiewicz, Bernd Engler, Birgit Fischer, Harald Floss, Clive Gamble, Jeanne Marie Geiling, Hermann Glatzle, Paul Goldberg, Pieter Grootes, Joachim Hahn, Miriam Haidle, Marc Händel, Bruce Hardy, Stephan Heidenreich, Jörg Heiligmann, Wulf Hein, Thomas Hess, Thomas Higham, Bettina Hiller, Georg Hiller, Michael Hofreiter, Claus-Stephan Holdermann, Tina Hornauer-Jahnke, Alexander Janas, Andrew Kandel, Isabel Karle, Erwin Keefer, Gerhard Kieninger, Petra Kieselbach, Claus-Joachim Kind, Keiko Kitagawa, Christoph Klein-Brabender, Stefanie Kölbl, Katerina Koll, Johannes Krause, Hans-Georg Kraut, Petra Krönneck, Kurt Langguth, Bertrand Ligouis, Michael Lingnau, Hermann Mader, José Magalhães, Maria Malina, Conny Meister, Christopher Miller, Luc Moreau, Hansjürgen Müller-Beck, Monika Mundkowski-Vogt, Susanne Münzel, Margherita Mussi, Laura Niven, Linda Owen, Dieter Planck, Martin Porr, Cosimo Posth, Anna Friederike Potengowski, Thomas Reinhardt, Daniel Richter, Simone Riehl, Michael Rogowski, Wolfgang Rosenstiel, Dirk Röttinger, Veerle Rots, Sarah Rudolf, Cornelia Saier, Nohemi Sala, Daniel Salemi, Nuria Sanz, Meinrad Schad, Anne Scheer, Heiner Scheffold, Melanie Scheller, Solveig Schiegl, Thomas Schneidermeier, Markus Schumacher, Verena Schünemann, Wolfgang Schürle, Friedrich Seeberger, Jörg Seibold, Ernst Seidl, Heinz Seiffert, François Sémah, Jordi Serangeli, Ulrich Simon, Fred Smith, Edgar Sobkowiak, Barbara Spreer, Bernhard Stich, Andreas Taller, Barbara Theune-Großkopf, Hans-Peter Uerpmann, Jutta Ulmer-Straub, Thorsten Uthmeier, Marian Vanhaeren, Elizabeth Velliky, Theresa Verrept, Joachim Wahl, Ortwin Waibel, Jürgen Waiblinger, Rudolf Walter, Kurt Wehrberger, Gerd-Christian Weniger, Hannes Wiedmann, Claus Wolf, Sibylle Wolf, Michael Worbs, Mohsen Zeidi.

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Der Weg zum UNESCO Weltkulturerbestatus für die Höhlen und die Eiszeitkunst der Schwäbischen Alb¹

Am 09. Juli 2017 beriet das UNESCO Weltkulturerbe-Komitee in Krakau über die deutsche Nominierung für den Weltkulturerbestatus der Höhlen und Eiszeitkunst der Schwäbischen Alb. Ein Vertreter von ICOMOS (*International Council on Monuments and Sites*) fasste die Bedeutung der Höhlen und Eiszeitkunst der Schwäbischen Alb zusammen und lobte die Qualität des Vorschlages. Der Redner schloss mit einer

¹ Gekürzte deutschsprachige Version des englischen Originaltextes. Übersetzung: Michael Bolus.

nachdrücklichen Empfehlung zur Eintragung unter Kriterium (iii): ein einzigartiges oder zumindest außergewöhnliches Zeugnis für eine kulturelle Überlieferung oder für eine Zivilisation, die existiert oder die verschwunden ist, abzulegen. Von daher bildete dieses Kriterium die Grundlage für den *Outstanding Universal Value* (außerordentliche universelle Bedeutung) der Nominierung, welcher die grundlegende Voraussetzung für UNESCO Weltkulturerbestätten ist. Im Anschluss an die Stellungnahme von ICOMOS bat der Vorsitzende des UNESCO-Komitees um Einschätzungen der stimmberechtigten Mitgliedsstaaten, woraufhin die Vertreter aus Simbabwe, Jamaika, Südkorea, Tansania, den Philippinen, aus dem Gastgeberland Polen, aus Kuwait und Kasachstan lobende und begeisterte Bewertungen der deutschen Nominierung vorbrachten. Da keine weiteren Fragen oder Kritiken geäußert wurden, erklärte der Vorsitzende nach nur 12 Minuten und 49 Sekunden die Höhlen des Achtals und des Lonetals zu UNESCO Weltkulturerbestätten. An dieser Stelle sei der Weg zu diesem Erfolg kurz skizziert.

Der Gedanke an den UNESCO Weltkulturerbestatus reicht bis in die späten 1990er Jahre zurück, als Hansjürgen Müller-Beck und ich mit dem Landrat des Alb-Donau-Kreises, Wolfgang Schürle, zusammenarbeiteten, um eine Wanderausstellung über Eiszeitkunst zu organisieren. Diese Ausstellung war ursprünglich von Joachim Hahn geplant worden, aber nach dessen Tod 1997 übernahmen es Prof. Müller-Beck und ich in enger Zusammenarbeit mit Claus-Stephan Holdermann und Ulrich Simon, das Projekt durchzusetzen, das von einem Ausstellungskatalog begleitet wurde (Müller-Beck et al. 2001).

Seit etwa derselben Zeit lieferten meine Ausgrabungen im Hohle Fels wichtige Belege für Eiszeitkunst. Anfangs handelte es sich um Stücke bemalter Steine aus dem Magdalénien (Conard und Uerpman 2000), später um ein Pferd, einen Wasservogel und einen Löwenmenschen aus dem Aurignacien, alle aus Mammutelfenbein geschnitzt (Conard 2003). Dr. Schürle spielte in diesen Jahren mit seinen Kenntnissen über die unterschiedlichen Hierarchieebenen der behördlichen Strukturen und die Funktionen, die die verschiedenen Ministerien haben, eine Schlüsselrolle. Er unterstützte das Ziel, die Eiszeitkunst der Schwäbischen Alb zum Gegenstand einer Großen Landesausstellung zu machen, die schließlich unter beachtlichem Interesse im Herbst des Jahres 2009 ihre Pforten öffnete (Conard et al. 2009a). Georg Hiller, der damalige Bürgermeister von Blaubeuren und Stefanie Kölbl, die spätere Ko-Direktorin des Urgeschichtlichen Museums (URMU), spielten ebenfalls eine Schlüsselrolle bei der Erweiterung und Modernisierung des URMU, 1965 durch Gustav Riek gegründet und von ihm sowie Müller-Beck bis 1995 geleitet, als ich zum Leiter des Museums ernannt wurde (Kölbl et al. 2014; Hiller 2015). Die Erweiterung und die Arbeit des URMU fanden die Unterstützung jedes Ministerpräsidenten von Baden-Württemberg, angefangen bei Erwin Teufel (Abb. 1). Schließlich wurde das URMU mit Unterstützung des Archäologischen Landesmuseums Baden-Württemberg formell als Schwerpunktmuseum für Urgeschichte und menschliche Evolution in Baden-Württemberg anerkannt. Seit den 1990er Jahren haben die Mitglieder der Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte in vielerlei Hinsicht zu den Aktivitäten des URMU und der Abteilung Ältere Urgeschichte und Quartärökologie der Universität beigetragen (Hiller 2013).

Meine anfänglichen Diskussionen mit Dieter Planck und Kollegen beim Landesamt für Denkmalpflege zur Frage einer Anerkennung der schwäbischen Höhlen als

Weltkulturerbestätten führten aus verschiedenen Gründen zu keinerlei konkretem Fortschritt. Es war klar, dass das Ministerium für Finanzen und Wirtschaft und das Landesamt für Denkmalpflege andere Prioritäten hatten. Gravierender war jedoch das immer wieder von den Verantwortlichen der Denkmalpflege in Baden-Württemberg und auch auf nationaler Ebene geäußerte Argument, eine Nominierung der Höhlen sei unmöglich, weil diejenigen Funde, die den *Outstanding Universal Value* verkörperten, bewegliches Kulturerbe seien, dem gemäß Definition kein Weltkulturerbestatus zugesprochen werden könne.

Mit fortschreitenden Jahren eröffneten jedoch verschiedene Entwicklungen nach und nach die Möglichkeit, die Höhlen zum Weltkulturerbe zu ernennen. So zogen die Entdeckungen der neuen Ausgrabungen am Vogelherd zwischen 2005 und 2012 einen massiven Zuwachs an Unterstützung für dieses Projekt aus dem Landkreis Heidenheim nach sich. Große Bedeutung kommt hierbei der aurignacienzeitlichen Elfenbeinschnitzerei eines Mammuts zu, das 2006 entdeckt worden war und ab 2007 an verschiedenen Orten öffentlich ausgestellt wurde (Conard und Seidl 2008). Die außerordentlichen Entdeckungen einer Frauenfigurine (Conard 2009) und einer gut erhaltenen Flöte aus der Speiche eines Gänsegeiers (Conard et al. 2009b) im Hohle Fels im Jahre 2008 stellen besondere Höhepunkte auf dem Weg zur Erlangung breiter internationaler Anerkennung für die Höhlen dar. Die jährlichen Zuschüsse von Heidelberg Cement und die großzügige Unterstützung durch die Museumsgesellschaft Schelklingen und ihren Vorsitzenden, Reiner Blumentritt, sollen an dieser Stelle erwähnt werden.

Innerhalb der UNESCO selbst wurde mit jedem Jahr deutlicher, dass die Weltkulturerbeliste die weltweiten Beiträge zur Menschheitsgeschichte und zu den kulturellen Entwicklungen nicht angemessen wiedergab. Europäische Länder waren in der UNESCO-Liste stark überrepräsentiert, und Kirchen, Schlösser, Klöster und europäische Städte sowie Monumente der klassischen Antike waren im Verhältnis zu anderen Arten von Stätten bei weitem zu zahlreich, so dass die UNESCO einen mannigfaltigeren und umfassenderen Bestand an Weltkulturerbestätten forderte.

Schlüsselcharakter besitzt die Einladung an mich, eine Beraterrolle bei der Suche der UNESCO nach neuen Weltkulturerbestätten mit Bezug zu Archäologie und menschlicher Evolution zu übernehmen. Erstmals beteiligte ich mich an diesem Suchprozess im März 2009 in Burgos in der Nähe der Weltkulturerbestätten von Atapuerca (Sanz 2011). Die spanische Regierung förderte eine bedeutende Initiative zur Schaffung einer ausgewogeneren Repräsentation der Stätten auf der Weltkulturerbeliste, und Nuria Sanz von der UNESCO-Geschäftsstelle in Paris, später von der UNESCO-Geschäftsstelle in Mexiko Stadt leitete dieses Projekt von Anfang an. Das Projekt erhielt den Namen *'Human Evolution: Adaptations, Dispersals and Social Developments'*, besser bekannt unter der Bezeichnung HEADS. Neben Margherita Mussi aus Rom und François Sémah aus Paris diente ich seit 2009 als einer der Hauptberater des Projekts, neue Stätten zu identifizieren, gemeinsam mit Robin Dennell aus Exeter und ICOMOS (Abb. 2).

Eine vom 25. Februar bis 01. März 2013 auf Schloss Hohentübingen veranstaltete HEADS-Konferenz spielte eine wichtige Rolle dabei, die Aussichten auf Weltkulturerbestatus für die Höhlen im Achtal und im Lonetal zu erhöhen (Smith 2013). Vertreterinnen und Vertreter aus 13 Ländern und 25 Institutionen kamen zusammen, um die höchsten Prioritäten für potentiellen Weltkulturerbestatus in Eurasien festzulegen (Abb. 3).

Exkursionen führten die zahlreichen Wissenschaftler und UNESCO-Repräsentanten zu den Höhlen des Achtals und des Lonetals. Nach früheren Treffen der HEADS-Gruppe in Addis Ababa, Äthiopien, im Jahre 2011 (Sanz 2012) und in Jeongok, Südkorea, im Jahre 2012 (Sanz 2014), die einberufen worden waren, um die höchsten Prioritäten für Weltkulturerbestätten in Afrika und Ostasien zu ermitteln, war es das Ziel des Tübinger Treffens, dasselbe für das westliche Eurasien zu leisten. Die Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer dieser HEADS-Konferenz bekräftigten die bereits in Burgos 2009 erzielte Vereinbarung, dass den schwäbischen Höhlen die höchste Priorität zukommen sollte. Die Beiträge des Tübinger Treffens wurden 2015 in zwei Bänden publiziert, wobei ein Band ausschließlich den Höhlen im Achtal und im Lonetal gewidmet war (Sanz 2015a, b). Während der Konferenz in Tübingen wiederholte das HEADS-Team erneut auch die Erklärung, bewegliches Kulturerbe könne zu den Argumenten für *Outstanding Universal Value* und Weltkulturerbestatus beitragen. Mit der Unterstützung durch HEADS und die UNESCO konnte die Behauptung, das bewegliche Kulturerbe aus den Höhlen könne keinen Weltkulturerbestatus erlangen, die Nominierung nicht mehr behindern.

Eine ähnliche Rolle für die Vorbereitung der Nominierung wie meine Ausgrabungen der vergangenen Jahre im Hohle Fels, Geißenklösterle und Vogelherd spielten Claus-Joachim Kinds Ausgrabungen am Hohlenstein-Stadel, die nicht zuletzt auch zu einer neuen Rekonstruktion des berühmten Löwenmenschen aus dieser Fundstelle führten (Wehrberger 2013; Kind et al. 2014).

Vielleicht am wichtigsten ist die Tatsache, dass die Diskussionen über die Kriterien für die Erlangung des Weltkulturerbestatus zur Erstellung einer neuen Tentativliste führten. Jedes deutsche Bundesland war berechtigt, potentielle Weltkulturerbestätten zu nominieren. Die Bundesländer erstellten 31 Entwürfe für neue Projekte, die von einer durch die Kultusministerkonferenz der Länder ernannten Kommission aus 11 Mitgliedern unter Leitung von Marie-Theres Albert, Professorin für Interkulturalität und *UNESCO Chair in Heritage Studies* an der Universität Cottbus, evaluiert wurden. Das Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Baden-Württemberg bereitete mit Unterstützung durch die Universität Tübingen, die fünf Museen, welche die Schlüsselfunde beherbergen und die zahlreichen Landes- und Regionalgremien, Gemeinden und Gruppen, die durch den geplanten Weltkulturerbestatus betroffen waren, die vorläufige Bewerbung vor. Claus Wolf und Claus-Joachim Kind leiteten das Team und reichten das Dossier über das Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Wohnungsbau Baden-Württemberg ein.

Am 22. Februar 2014 nahm die Evaluationskommission die Schlüsselfundstellen in Augenschein, traf sich mit den Hauptakteuren und besuchte Präsentationen der Mitglieder des Denkmalamtes und der Universität. Diese Evaluation war der Wendepunkt auf dem Weg zum Weltkulturerbestatus. Nach der Begutachtung aller 31 potentiellen Projekte verließ die Evaluationskommission den Höhlen der Schwäbischen Alb den ersten Platz in der Rangliste, und mit dieser bestmöglichen Platzierung war der Weg zum Weltkulturerbestatus für die schwäbischen Höhlen offen sowie der Erfolg nahezu garantiert, da die Widerstände gegen die Nominierung immer nur auf der Ebene des Landes Baden-Württemberg gelegen hatten und nicht auf staatlicher deutscher Ebene.

Einige der letzten Probleme auf dem Weg zum Weltkulturerbestatus bestanden darin, die Unterstützung aller relevanten Gemeinden zu erlangen und, letztlich wahrscheinlich am empfindlichsten, die Landschaft vor der Veränderung durch Windkraftanlagen

zu bewahren. Unter der Leitung durch die Professoren Kind und Wolf sowie mit Unterstützung durch Conny Meister und Stephan Heidenreich und andere erstellten das Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Baden-Württemberg und das Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Wohnungsbau Baden-Württemberg eine umfangreiche dreibändige Nominierungsakte mit 861 Seiten, welche die Grundlage für die Eintragung in Krakau bildete.

Zu den abschließenden Phasen des Bewerbungsvorgangs gehörte die Evaluation des Projekts durch ICOMOS. Marcel Otte von der Universität Lüttich wurde mit der Durchführung der Begutachtung beauftragt. Der Besuch der Fundstellen und der teilnehmenden Institutionen fand zwischen dem 29. August und dem 02. September 2016 statt (Abb. 4). Später im Herbst 2016 erhielt das Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Baden-Württemberg das Versprechen, dass ICOMOS die Nominierung der schwäbischen Höhlen unterstützte.

Dank der sorgfältigen Arbeit der zahlreichen beteiligten Personen gab das UNESCO-Komitee dem Antrag auf Eintragung der Höhlen und Eiszeitkunst der Schwäbischen Alb am 09. Juli 2017 in der Rekordzeit von weniger als 13 Minuten statt (Abb. 5). Damit sind die Höhlen im Achtal und im Lonetal von außerordentlicher universeller Bedeutung für alle Menschen in allen Nationen. Die wesentlichen Argumente für die Zuerkennung des Weltkulturerbestatus sind auf der Homepage der UNESCO für alle Menschen weltweit nachzulesen: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1527>.

Am 29. November 2017 war Landrat Heiner Scheffold Gastgeber für den Festakt in Ulm, auf dem das UNESCO Weltkulturerbe-Zertifikat durch Ministerin Maria Böhmer, Ministerin Nicole Hoffmeister-Kraut und Ministerpräsident Winfried Kretschmann der Öffentlichkeit präsentiert wurde (Abb. 6). Einen aktuellen Überblick über die Höhlen im Achtal und im Lonetal sowie die darin entdeckten einzigartigen Funde, die den außerordentlichen universellen Wert begründen, bietet ein neues Buch über die Weltkulturerbestätten (Conard und Kind 2017).