

# The Current State of ‘Paleohistory’ in Germany

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**Abstract:** *Although the situation is not uniformly positive, the state of research and teaching in the area of early prehistory in Germany is stronger than it has been at any time in the past. Many decades of peace, economic prosperity and the effects of the reunification have strengthened early prehistory and its allied fields at universities, non-university research institutes and museums. Levels of government funding are high, and the fields of early prehistory and human evolution enjoy great popularity in print and electronic media. University training typically emphasizes practical skills and empirical knowledge of the archaeological, paleoanthropological, and paleoecological records, with somewhat too little formal training on how to use social theory to contextualize the great amounts of data students control. Publications from the German-speaking sphere, including those written in English, are gaining increasing recognition in the international scientific community. Societies including the Hugo Obermaier-Gesellschaft and the Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte have stable membership and contribute together with many publication series from the universities, research institutes, and state heritage offices to the local and international visibility of the early prehistory and human evolution. Paleolithic archaeology in the context of state heritage management shows mixed trends, with some German states like Saxony-Anhalt, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg investing heavily in research and salvage excavations, while some other states invest little in early prehistory. Museums have also experienced considerable support for exhibits and research in recent years and are contributing greatly to the visibility of paleohistory. The low price and high quality of university education in Germany is also increasingly recognized abroad, and graduates from German institutions are competing successfully on the international job market. The well-funded research structures in Germany are also attracting more and more young and established scholars to Germany, which also contributes to the dynamic research environment. Due to its central location in continental Europe, German researchers and students have the language skills and contacts to stay abreast of the scientific progress in many of the diverse international research traditions. In this regard the leading German institutes often represent a melting pot for ideas and innovations. Based on current trends, the future of early prehistory and its allied fields in German-speaking Europe looks promising.*

**Keywords:** *Germany, paleohistory, Paleolithic, research, teaching*

## Der gegenwärtige Stand der Urgeschichte in Deutschland

**Zusammenfassung:** Obwohl die Situation nicht einheitlich positiv ist, sind Forschung und Lehre im Bereich der Älteren Urgeschichte in Deutschland stärker als je zuvor. Viele Jahrzehnte des Friedens, die wirtschaftliche Konjunktur sowie die Folgen der Wiedervereinigung haben die Ältere Urgeschichte und verwandte Gebiete an den Universitäten, den nicht-universitären Forschungsinstituten und den Museen gestärkt. Die Summen staatlicher Förderung sind hoch, und die Bereiche Ältere Urgeschichte und Menschliche Evolution erfreuen sich großer Beliebtheit in den Druckmedien sowie den elektronischen Medien. Die Universitätsausbildung legt üblicherweise besonderen Wert auf die praktischen Fähigkeiten und das empirische Wissen über die archäologische, paläoanthropologische und paläoökologische Überlieferung. Dagegen kommt die formelle Anleitung zur Anwendung von Gesellschaftstheorien zur Einbettung der den Studierenden verfügbaren immensen Datenmengen in einen größeren Sinnzusammenhang etwas zu kurz. Publikationen aus dem deutschsprachigen Umkreis, einschließlich solcher in englischer Sprache, gewinnen zunehmende Anerkennung in der internationalen wissenschaftlichen Gemeinschaft. Gesellschaften einschließlich der Hugo Obermaier-Gesellschaft und der Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte haben solide Mitgliederzahlen und tragen zusammen mit vielen Publikationsreihen aus Universitäten und Forschungsinstituten zur hiesigen wie zur internationalen Sichtbarkeit von Älte-

rer Urgeschichte und Menschlicher Evolution bei. Paläolithische Archäologie im Verwaltungskontext staatlicher Denkmalpflege zeigt unterschiedliche Entwicklungstendenzen, wobei einige Bundesländer wie Sachsen-Anhalt, Niedersachsen, Nordrhein-Westfalen und Baden-Württemberg stark in Forschungs- und Rettungsgrabungen investieren, während einige andere Bundesländer wenig für Ältere Urgeschichte ausgeben. Auch die Museen haben in den letzten Jahren nennenswerte Unterstützung für Ausstellungen und Forschung erhalten und tragen viel zur Sichtbarkeit der Urgeschichte bei. Die geringen Kosten und die hohe Qualität der Universitätsausbildung in Deutschland werden ebenfalls mehr und mehr im Ausland wahrgenommen, und Absolventen deutscher Universitäten behaupten sich erfolgreich auf dem internationalen Stellenmarkt. Die wohlfinanzierten Forschungsstrukturen in Deutschland ziehen auch immer mehr junge und etablierte WissenschaftlerInnen nach Deutschland, wodurch die dynamische Forschungsumgebung ebenfalls gestärkt wird. Aufgrund der zentralen Lage Deutschlands in Mitteleuropa haben viele deutsche ForscherInnen und Studierende die Sprachkenntnisse und die Kontakte, um mit dem wissenschaftlichen Fortschritt in vielen der unterschiedlichen internationalen Forschungstraditionen auf gleicher Höhe zu stehen. In dieser Hinsicht stellen die führenden deutschen Institute oftmals einen Schmelztiegel für Ideen und Innovationen dar. Vor dem Hintergrund der momentanen Entwicklungen sieht die Zukunft der Älteren Urgeschichte und verwandter Gebiete im deutschsprachigen Europa viel versprechend aus.

**Schlagwörter:** Deutschland, Urgeschichte, Paläolithikum, Forschung, Lehre

## Introduction

The German term *Urgeschichte*, which is probably best translated as ‘paleohistory’, in no way implies that early periods of human evolution are ‘pre’ historic. Despite the erroneous connotations of the English term ‘prehistory’, the French term *préhistoire* and numerous similar terms, prehistory is certainly part of history. Perhaps we should consider coining a term like *Urgeschichte* or paleohistory to avoid this problem. Particularly in regions like Australia, the high Arctic or the Kalahari, where aboriginal populations survive to the present, we need to be sensitive to the disenfranchisement that the term ‘prehistory’ implies. Since most readers are not overly concerned about these issues, I will at times use the traditional term prehistory in this context as synonymous with the terms *Urgeschichte* and paleohistory.

The goal of this paper is to examine the strengths and weaknesses of current research and teaching in the German-speaking Europe in early prehistory, with particular emphasis on developments in Germany. With the term ‘early prehistory’, I mean the archaeology of hunters and gatherers and the earliest farmers and herders. The advent of fully developed agricultural societies can be seen as the start of later prehistory. This is at least the way these two areas are distinguished in Tübingen, with the departments of *Ältere* and *Jüngere Urgeschichte*. Here I will place a clear focus on Paleolithic societies and will also emphasize the connections with human biological and cultural evolution. Unlike some scholars working in the German tradition (Eggert 2008; Eggert and Samida 2009), I always emphasize the unity of all fields of archaeology within the broad context of human cultural evolution. The last thing I would like to imply in this paper is that ‘early prehistory’ is fundamentally different from ‘later prehistory’ or other forms of archaeology. Instead I prefer to place archaeology within the broader contexts of traditional anthropology, which at least in the past used to include all aspects of the study of humankind. The main difference between archaeology and cultural anthropology is the fact that our informants are typically dead or even extinct. This usually leads archaeologists to focus their research on all aspects of the material culture, and this all the more so in periods lacking written records.

As generations of scholars have pointed out since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is impossible to conduct serious research on Paleolithic archaeology without considering Paleolithic societies within the broader context of natural history, Quaternary ecology and human evolution. This work requires input from nearly the full spectrum of the natural sciences, as well as substantial knowledge of the theory, methods and data from the humanities and social sciences. Unlike later periods where one may, to a certain extent, consider developments exclusively in local or regional contexts, early prehistory is the most international field within archaeology. Paleolithic archaeologists profit from an international and often global approach to the field, and most of the researchers working in the Paleolithic are comfortable conducting their research in several countries and often on multiple continents. Perhaps because the rate of cultural change over the course of the Paleolithic was often slower than in later periods, researchers profit from casting a wider spatial-temporal net when collecting information about what in archaeological terms could be considered the 'deep past'.

When I originally presented this paper a decade ago at the meeting of the Hugo Obermaier-Gesellschaft in Tübingen, I argued that German Paleolithic and Mesolithic archaeology was in a stronger position than ever before. The impression I had then has been confirmed by the developments of recent years, which have made my points from the meeting in Tübingen clearer. This paper will consider the state of 'paleohistoric' research and teaching at universities, but will also include some comments on research at non-university research institutes, museums and heritage offices around Germany. While the picture is not uniformly positive, the current situation provides reason for optimism about the future of the field and the role German Paleolithic archaeology will play in the coming decades.

## Universities

In the 1990s and the first decade of the current millennium many colleagues speculated on the imminent decline of Paleolithic research in Germany. With every established researcher who retired, whether it was Hansjürgen Müller-Beck in Tübingen, Gerhard Bosinski in Cologne, Dietrich Mania in Jena, or Ludwig Reisch in Erlangen, worries and sometime profound concern arose, that one post after another would be eliminated for one reason or another. In fact this has not occurred, and these worries were in retrospect not well founded. The author, Jürgen Richter, Clemens Pasda, and Thorsten Uthmeier were awarded these posts. At the same time a new full professorship for Paleolithic archaeology has been established in Mainz, a post filled by Sabine Gaudzinski-Windheuser.

Beyond the level of full professors for early prehistory, numerous researchers have earned their habilitations and contribute significantly to teaching as *außerplanmäßige (apl.)* professors and *Privatdozenten* (PD). Just in Tübingen these include influential researchers like Michael Bolus, Harald Floss, Claus-Joachim Kind, Miriam Haidle, Linda Owen, Berit Eriksen, with others like Gerd-Christian Weniger in Cologne, Klaus Schmidt in Erlangen, Thomas Terberger in Greifswald, and Ralf Schmitz in Bonn also making significant contributions to teaching and research in the university environment. Other universities including Leipzig with Thomas Weber and Jörg Orschiedt, and Bochum with Michael Baales have researchers and *Privatdozenten* or *apl.* professors

on their staffs who teach and publish on the Paleolithic. As far as I am aware, it is only in Münster, Hamburg, and Marburg where the retirements of Karl Narr, Helmut Ziegert and Lutz Fiedler have led to a decline in the strength of Paleolithic archaeology at German universities. This being said, none of these universities had a major focus on early prehistory. While Narr and Ziegert both held senior university appointments, Fiedler worked primarily at the heritage office and secondarily as an honorary professor in Marburg.

I will not address developments in Switzerland and Austria in detail, but Paleolithic research in these countries is as strong or stronger than it has been in recent decades. Particularly important teams are based in Basel and Vienna with additional research being conducted in Neuchâtel and Innsbruck. These teams often reflect collaborations between universities, heritage offices, museums and the academies of science.

In Germany we can conclude that there are more universities offering advanced training in Paleolithic archaeology than ever before. Tübingen and Cologne probably have the strongest programs. Cologne's Center for African Archaeology, which Rudolph Kuper founded, together with the special research center 'Our way out of Africa' under Jürgen Richter's coordination have made the University of Cologne a leading international center for paleohistory. Over the years strong links to the geosciences have formed a cornerstone of many advances made at the University of Cologne.

The University of Tübingen also profits through its long-term project with the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and its cooperation with the Senckenberg Museum and Research Institute discussed below. In Tübingen the university has invested in a new Institute for Scientific Archaeology (INA), which includes the whole spectrum of natural sciences in archaeology. Many of the research teams focus directly on questions of paleohistory and human evolution, as is the case for the teams of professors Katerina Harvati in paleoanthropology, Hervé Bocherens in paleodiet and paleoecology, Johannes Krause in paleogenetics, and Christopher Miller in geoarchaeology. Additional colleagues are working in active research programs in zooarchaeology, archaeobotany, and archaeometry. Members of the INA include geographers working on GIS and physical geography and leading researchers in paleoclimatology, paleontology, and paleoenvironments based in the Institute of Geosciences. The roots of paleohistory in Tübingen, and indeed in all of German speaking Europe, go back to 1896 when the paleontologist Ernst von Koken offered his first lecture course in early prehistory and human evolution. To this day, paleohistory in Tübingen is unique for being housed in the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The University of Tübingen also awards an annual international research prize in Early Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology.

A third institute with a strong international reputation is formed by the combined resources of the University of Mainz and those of the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum (RGZM). If the University of Mainz were to invest more in paleohistory and related fields and do more to match the major long-term commitment of the RGZM, the combined team could make a still more important contribution to international research and teaching. At present the outstanding strengths of the team are largely determined by the impressive achievements of the RGZM.

Erlangen is the other traditional center for Paleolithic archaeology, with its roots going back to the period of Lothar Zotz. Erlangen during the years of Gisela Freund and Ludwig Reisch established a solid tradition in paleohistory that is reflected by its strong library, collections, and its housing of the Hugo Obermaier-Gesellschaft. The Obermaier Society has also been rejuvenated and made more international and more visible in recent years. With the new hire of Thorsten Uthmeier to head the Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte in Erlangen, this writer is optimistic that the importance of this traditional center for paleohistory will grow.

Other universities including Bochum, Bonn, Greifswald, Jena, and Leipzig have active programs in paleohistory, but in most cases have only small or exclusively adjunct teaching faculty. Great potential, however, is present in Jena, where Clemens Pasda has a dedicated professorship for early prehistory and can build on the existing research tradition there.

### **Non-university research institutes**

Until relatively recently, non-university research played only a minor role in early prehistory in Germany. The largest non-university research institute is the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), which is part of the Office of Foreign Affairs and has central headquarters in Berlin. The Römisch-Germanische Kommission (RGK) is also a part of the DAI and is based in Frankfurt/Main. The RGK is responsible for much of Europe, whereas the many international offices of the DAI are responsible for archaeological research in their respective areas of the world. The various wings of the DAI have occasionally worked in early prehistory, such as in recent years in the case of the important research of the Kommission für Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen (KAAK) in the Rif Oriental in Morocco. On the whole, however, the DAI has never viewed the Paleolithic as a central area for its research, and, as far as I am aware, has, with the notable exceptions of Klaus Schmidt and Johannes Moser, never had full-time experts in early prehistory on its staff. This being said, teams from the DAI often collaborate with other researchers in studying Paleolithic materials.

The first major and lasting collaboration with a non-university research institute began at the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum (RGZM) in the context of its cooperation with the University of Cologne and more recently with the University of Mainz. This collaboration, which was initiated by Gerhard Bosinski, led to the development of the Museum Monrepos for the Archaeology of the Ice Age in Neuwied as a major center for research on the Paleolithic and Mesolithic. The museum's research strengths include faunal, lithic, and taphonomic studies. While initially researchers at Museum Monrepos conducted important excavations in the Rhineland, in more recent years excavations have focused on other regions, particularly in Saxony-Anhalt at sites including Neumark-Nord and Breitenbach. From its beginnings in the 1980s, Museum Monrepos has always had a strong international research focus and has been involved in cooperative research in Europe, Asia, and Africa, at sites including Dmanisi, Gesher Benot Ya'aqov, Solutré, to name only a few projects.

One of the most remarkable indications of the status of Paleolithic research in Germany was the founding of the Max Planck Institute (MPI) for Evolutionary Anthropology

in the late 1990s in Leipzig. From the start, the MPI in Leipzig intended to cover many research fields including paleogenetics, evolutionary linguistics, evolutionary primatology, biological anthropology, and Paleolithic archaeology. Since the arrival of Jean-Jacques Hublin in 2004, the MPI has been a major international player in human evolution and Paleolithic archaeology. The remarkable successes of Svante Pääbo's team working in paleogenetics have been particularly influential in establishing the international reputation of the MPI in Leipzig. Now the MPI for Evolutionary Anthropology is viewed by many researchers working on human evolution as one of the leading institutes worldwide. One weakness, however, has been the unwillingness of the University of Leipzig to make a major commitment to evolutionary anthropology in general and Paleolithic archaeology in particular. From my point of view this represents a major strategic mistake made by the people responsible for defining the research foci of the university. Given the vast commitment of resources by the Max-Planck Society, it is remarkable that the University of Leipzig has so far been unwilling or unable to commit more resources to human evolution and Paleolithic archaeology.

Most recently, in 2009 the Senckenberg Society and Museum of Natural History, based in Frankfurt/Main, has funded three research teams in Early Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology and Paleontology in Tübingen to form the Tübingen Senckenberg Center for Human Evolution and Paleoecology (HEP). This cooperation represents a new example of linking elite research institutes from the German federal government's Leibniz Program with leading research universities to strengthen ties between research based inside and outside university settings. The structure of research at HEP embodies the many advantages of studying Paleolithic archaeology within the broader context of human evolution and Quaternary ecology. Workers from HEP are currently conducting excavations in Germany, Iran, South Africa, and Syria.

The academies of science and humanities have begun to see Paleolithic archaeology and human evolution as promising fields for research. The Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, which is the state academy of science for Baden-Württemberg, began funding of a 20 year project entitled 'The Role of Culture in the Early Expansions of Humans' (ROCEEH) in 2007. This project is based at the Senckenberg Society and Museum of Natural History in Frankfurt/Main and at the University of Tübingen and includes Paleolithic archaeologists, paleozoologists, paleoanthropologists, paleobotanists and experts for Geographic Information Systems in a long-term project to study the population dynamics and paleogeography of hominins in the Old World over the last three million years. The members of ROCEEH are currently working in South and East Africa, Armenia, Iran, Syria, the UAE, Spain, and Indonesia.

Finally, in the context of an initiative to create a new Leibniz Center for Baltic and Scandinavian archaeology as part of the Museum of Schloss Gottorf in Schleswig, new projects are underway to strengthen Paleolithic archaeology in the Baltic and neighboring regions. This is a highly welcome development that promises to revitalize the important work on the later phases of the Paleolithic begun by Alfred Rust and other scholars in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



## Denkmalpflege and Cultural Resource Management

I am less familiar with the developments in Paleolithic archaeology in the context of state heritage offices, which in Germany are usually referred to as *Landesdenkmalämter*, but this area seems to show mixed trends. This is by no means surprising since each of the 16 states of Germany has autonomy over its *Denkmalamt*. Each state has different priorities and resources available to it. Also the structure of the *Denkmalämter* varies greatly from region to region. The most active *Denkmalämter* in recent years have probably been those in Saxony-Anhalt, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Baden-Württemberg, although others including Rhineland-Palatinate and Schleswig-Holstein have also conducted excavations and research in paleohistory. Some notable projects are the excavations in Neumark-Nord, Breitenbach, and Hundisburg in Saxony-Anhalt; Schöningen in Lower Saxony; the coal mining pits in North Rhine-Westphalia; Rottenburg-Siebenlinden and cave sites in the Lone and Ach Valleys in Baden-Württemberg. All of these projects have produced important new results that make clear that every state heritage office needs competent researchers with experience in the Paleolithic. The most glaring negative example is probably in Bavaria, where despite the state's large size and economic strength, salvage excavations and research on the Paleolithic do not appear to be a priority. Paleohistory has also lost ground in Hessen, where the post left vacant after the retirement of Lutz Fiedler was not filled with a Paleolithic archaeologist.

## Museums

Museums in Germany come in many sizes and with many organizational forms. Some like the RGZM and the Senckenberg Museum are members of the Leibniz Society of elite research institutes and have large scientific staffs, while others have only limited scientific staff and define their goals mainly in the areas of exhibits and public outreach. Some Museums like those in Halle, Bonn, Cologne, and Mannheim are directly linked to the *Denkmalämter* and serve as repositories for finds, while others like the Urgeschichtliches Museum in Blaubeuren are directly affiliated with universities. Others like the Neanderthal Museum are funded mainly by foundations. The many museums have varying degrees of research activities. As always, motivated individuals strongly shape the activities of Museums and are responsible for establishing strong links between research, exhibits and public outreach. Given all of the restructuring of heritage offices and museums in states including Baden-Württemberg, Lower Saxony and Berlin-Brandenburg, the status of some major museums is not entirely clear at the time of writing this paper. This being said, there can be little doubt that recent years have seen many high quality exhibitions on Paleolithic archaeology and human evolution. Also, museums, including but not limited to the Neanderthal Museum, the Rheinisches Landesmuseum, and the Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum conduct active research in Paleolithic archaeology and make significant contributions to research in paleohistory.

In this paper I cannot be comprehensive, but a few examples of important exhibits and activities at museums related to the Paleolithic include the following high-profile exhibits. Among the permanent exhibits the Neanderthal Museum certainly has a prominent place as do the impressive exhibits at the Landesmuseum in Halle and Museum Monrepos. The new museum for archaeology in Berlin and many other museums including

Weimar, Hannover, Schleswig, Herne, Bonn, Stuttgart, and Munich present significant displays on Paleolithic archaeology, which are often associated with exhibits on human evolution and a range of research activities.

Recent years have also seen major special exhibits like the 'Roots' exhibit in Bonn to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the original Neanderthal in 1856, *Leben in Extremen* in Herne, which opened on the same anniversary. Other important exhibits include this year's major state exhibit in Stuttgart, *Eiszeit - Kunst und Kultur*, organized by the Archäologisches Landesmuseum Baden-Württemberg. In addition to these major events, smaller museums such as the Urgeschichtliches Museum in Blaubeuren have presented influential exhibits on a regular basis and have helped to present Paleolithic archaeology in the countryside near where the key sites are located.

At the time of writing this paper major expansions are underway in Blaubeuren, and the Urgeschichtliches Museum is planning to open a new museum and activity center near Vogelherd to present some of the important finds from the Lone Valley. Perhaps the most important development in the area of museums for Paleolithic archaeology is currently taking place in Lower Saxony, where the state is investing heavily in a new museum and discovery center in Schöningen, only a few hundred meters away from the site where the famous wooden implements and other remarkable discoveries were made. The investments in Schöningen and in other towns and cities show that Paleolithic archaeology is considered a worthy topic for major public investment and that this field is enjoying a renaissance of unprecedented scope.

## Societies and Publications

In Germany Paleolithic archaeology has long existed on the fringe of the other sub-fields of archaeology, which are organized in a number of associations which are usually referred to as *Verbände*, based on region and the period in question. For historical reasons that I will not go into here, early prehistory has not been strongly organized in the *Verbände*, where it is only marginally included at most meetings and congresses.

Instead, since 1951, the Hugo Obermaier-Gesellschaft (HOG) has served as the main association for Paleolithic archaeology for the German-speaking community and also as a forum to present research on Quaternary ecology, paleoanthropology and related topics. The same applies for DEUQUA, which is the German section of the international organization for Quaternary research (INQUA). Over the years DEUQUA has usually not had a strong focus on Paleolithic archaeology, and many more prehistorians regularly attend the annual meetings of the Obermaier Society than DEUQUA. During the last decade the Obermaier Society has increasingly emphasized its international orientation with alternate annual meetings abroad in Mikulov, Innsbruck, Santander, Neuchâtel, Trento, and Ljubljana. At the same time lectures in English have become more and more common. The Obermaier Society has also improved the format and availability of its annual journal *Quartär*, which now includes as many papers in English as in German and numerous important articles on international prehistory. These developments are increasingly establishing stronger ties inside and outside German-speaking prehistory and Quaternary research and help to make research in central Europe more visible to the international scientific community. The head office of the HOG is located in Erlangen and contributes to the prestige of Erlangen's program in prehistory.



As far as I am aware the Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte (GfU), with its 350 members and subscribers to its journal, is the largest society based in German-speaking Europe. Its annual publication *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte (MGU)* with its print run of 600 copies and free availability of all papers as pdfs via the internet probably has the largest circulation of the few journals dedicated exclusively to paleohistory and related topics. The GfU was founded in 1988, and the journal has appeared annually since 1993. The *MGU* is intended for an audience of professional scientists, students, and the interested general public. The journal is produced by the Urgeschichtliches Museum and the Department of Early Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology in Tübingen. Each year the *MGU* publishes an article by the winner of the annual Tübingen Prize for Early Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology. Both the *MGU* and *Quartär* are peer-reviewed journals that have a relatively large international readership; they publish papers in English and German.

There are many other journals including most notably: the *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt*, which is produced by the RGZM; *Germania*, which is produced by the RGK that regularly publish scholarly articles on early prehistory and related fields. Many other journals, like those of the *Denkmalämter* and more popular journals, like *Archäologie in Deutschland* often include reports on Paleolithic research.

Institutions, including the RGZM, the MPI in Leipzig, and the University of Tübingen regularly publish monographs and edited volumes on a wide variety of topics in early prehistory and human evolution. These publication series often contain papers in English and French as well as German, under the assumption that most students and professionals are proficient in these three languages. Some of the leading German publishing houses for Paleolithic archaeology and related fields are Springer (Heidelberg), Habelt (Bonn), RGZM (Mainz), Kerns (Tübingen), Theiss (Stuttgart), Thorbecke (Ostfildern), Marie Leidorf (Rahden/Westf.), and Franz Steiner (Stuttgart). Many monographs and edited volumes are also published by the Obermaier Society, the state heritage offices in Germany and outside Germany by BAR (Oxford), ERAUL (Liège), as well as other international publishers.

Since all doctoral candidates are required to publish their dissertations before they can officially use their title as doctor, the output of monographs is high and most institutes either run their own series or form partnerships with other universities to facilitate the publication of research.

## Paleohistory in the media

One reason why the importance of Paleolithic archaeology has increased relates to the visibility and popularity of archaeology as a whole and paleohistory and human evolution in particular. This popularity is the result of many developments. Most of the physical sciences and natural sciences are now so advanced that only specialists can comprehend the research being done. Only rarely can the lay public understand what research chemists, physicists and biologist actually do or the methods they actually use. At the same time many areas of the social sciences and humanities have trouble capturing the imagination of a broad audience. The exotic 'other' of cultural anthropology has increasingly vanished due to the homogenizing processes of globalization. Many topics in

history and even the traditional arts are often viewed as old fashioned and less relevant for people today. The aftermath of the various scientific fads and the seemingly arbitrary directions of post-modern research have often left people less sure of the subject matter and value of many fields of study.

Archaeology is one of very few fields that has profited from these developments. It often maintains the aura of adventure associated with everything from Indiana Jones films to international scientific expeditions to remote places. Many archaeologists are also able to explain their research questions in a way that regular citizens can easily understand. Finally, whether it is the newest discoveries of hominin fossils, examples of Ice Age art or, in more recent periods, discovery of the Sky Disk from Nebra or the excavations of the Royal Tombs of Qatna, the fabulous discoveries of impressive material remains and artifacts speak to people's imaginations and their curiosity about the past. This must be the case, for how else could one explain why nearly every day archaeological documentaries are broadcast on television and that newspapers are filled with reports on archaeology. Rightly or wrongly, archaeology enjoys a high degree of visibility and the interest of the general public. As far as I can tell, this interest is greater than that of any other scientific field today.

I suspect that a positive feedback loop is created by the intense reporting on archaeological research, that fosters new research and helps generate funding for archaeology in many settings. I do not mean to suggest that all areas of archaeology are always prospering, but I argue that compared to many fields, archaeology has little difficulty conveying the importance of its work and results to the general public and to the tax payers, who directly or indirectly pay for it. Thus, the increasing investment in Paleolithic archaeology is in keeping with the general interest and fascination with the field.

I would even go as far as to say that the decline in strength of traditional Judeo-Christian religions leaves many people looking for meaning in their lives and for ways to address the traditional metaphysical questions that form the stock and trade of religion. To a certain extent archaeology, for better or worse, probably profits from many people's longing for new and different worlds and for different ways of looking at the eternal questions that define the human condition. This interest that at times is on the fringe of 'New Age' religion and the occult, is generally harmless, but one only needs to monitor the annual events at Stonehenge and many other sites to see how archaeological results are used by people in ways that often go beyond the context of interpreting the past. Paleohistorians should insist on rigorously separating the wealth of knowledge they have gained about the past from the way this knowledge is sometimes received by the public.

## University training

Training in prehistory in Germany, like everywhere else, has its strengths and weaknesses. From my point of view, one of the strengths is that all universities emphasize that students need a well-grounded knowledge of the material culture of early societies. University programs also invest considerable effort teaching students the essentials about paleoenvironments, chronostratigraphy, Quaternary geology, and other related matters. Some programs emphasize the importance of zooarchaeology, archaeobotany, geoarchaeology, and paleoanthropology. One way or another, most motivated students

can learn what they need about these fields in the context of their studies of paleohistory. Additionally, these kinds of knowledge are usually integrated into a fairly coherent whole that makes graduates of German teaching programs proficient in areas related to the essential practical skills needed in the field. As far as I am aware most programs require students to participate on excavations and to analyze materials. Assuming that my experience at Tübingen is typical, since 1995 I have supervised or co-supervised over 40 master's degrees and more than 30 doctoral dissertations, and nearly every one of these theses has included a significant component of primary data that the candidates produced themselves. Even for bachelor's degrees, we try to give candidates assemblages to analyze and strongly encourage to produce and work with primary data.

While there exists a degree of variation between different institutes, most graduates from German training programs have practical knowledge about how to conduct excavations and analyze archaeological assemblages. Unlike countries like England, where strict time limits force doctoral studies to be completed in a short time, in Germany the goal is to produce high-quality research, even if it typically takes more than three years. Doctoral students are usually about 30 when they finish their dissertations, but most have a great deal of experience and many useful skills by the time they graduate.

An additional strength of the German academic tradition relates to the history of research and ideas. Most graduates from German programs know the history of the field fairly well. With its geographic position in central Europe, German scholars have always maintained strong connections to the eastern, western, Scandinavian and Mediterranean Europe. Given the nearly hegemonic role of English in archaeology and science in general, it goes without saying that instructors and students at German universities are highly aware of scientific developments in the Anglophone community. At an absolute minimum, one can be sure that graduates from German institutes of paleohistory will have a high level of familiarity with international publications on cultural taxonomy, taphonomy, cultural history, processual archaeology, post-processual archaeology, and the French traditions of typological and technological analyses.

Another advantage of the German research tradition is the insistence by instructors that students use primary sources in research. As far as I can tell this characteristic, which one also sees to some extent in the Netherlands and Flanders, is nearly unique to German research. Given Germany's geographic position and its strong socio-economic ties to its neighbors, many institutes have people who are able to read and speak most of the major and many of the minor European languages. While no individual knows all the relevant languages, enough people have strong and diverse language skills to make virtually all publications accessible to members of the major institutes. Although increasingly English is recognized as the leading language, seminar work profits from using publications in all languages that have produced useful research. Whether by use of the figures and abstracts or through actually reading the texts, students and instructors are expected to deal with the international nature of the sources.

Based on extrapolation from my experience teaching in the United States and South Africa, students in the Anglophone world often refuse to use sources that are not in English and the language skills of most students is insufficient to access most scientific languages other than English. German students often know multiple languages, which puts them in a stronger position than scholars from many other countries. From my point of

view, this background places motivated students trained in the German tradition at an advantage on the international job market.

Fortunately, for people working within the German tradition the healthy attitude persists that it is the job of the scholar to find the key sources, regardless of whether they are written in French, English, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, or any number of other languages that produce important research. In contrast, in the United States I have actually heard well-known researchers say that if a publication is not in English "it does not exist." Also, the study of the history of ideas is typically not limited to a single language tradition but is seen to reflect the history of an idea or body of knowledge in general. Of course, non-native English speakers remain at a significant disadvantage when it comes to publishing in the leading English language journals.

The greatest deficit in training paleohistory at German universities lies in lack of strong links between social theory and the archaeological record. This weakness almost certainly is the result of the strong emphasis on learning empirical data. As we will see below in the section about research, compared to most Anglophone traditions, reflexive assessment of the state of the field is unusual in the German research tradition (Kind 2002). Many people attribute this to the well documented interaction between archaeology and National Socialist ideology. To avoid politicizing prehistory, in the decades following the Second World War, researchers generally focused their work on empirical aspects of the archaeological record at the expense of explicit theoretical research. In recent decades the situation has changed, but in comparison to most Anglophone traditions explicit theoretical training tends to be less emphasized (Richter, this volume). This brings both advantages and disadvantages, but from my perspective students of paleohistory in the German system would profit from examining classic approaches to social theory like those of Marx, Darwin, Durkheim and Weber as well as the many sources from more recent generations of social-cultural anthropology. Many students trained in the German tradition, like in most traditions in continental Europe, are poorly equipped to draw on social theory for interpreting the vast amounts of data they often control. This leads to a situation in which students tend to use established methods and research procedures and are hesitant to try to examine data sets from experimental points of view.

Another ramification of the emphasis on empirical data is the tendency to conduct research using an inductive approach. Over the years I have had to encourage and even force students to develop explicitly formulated, testable hypotheses prior to collecting data on the assemblages in question. Students trained in the German tradition are usually uncomfortable doing this. They typically are more comfortable first collecting their data and then developing innovative ideas after the data have already been collected. German training programs would profit from a more balanced mixture of both inductive and deductive research methods.

This being said, the German tradition in paleohistory is usually non-dogmatic, and instructors and students tend to be open to different points of view. Instructors are often picky about the quality of the data students collect, which often leads to the accumulation of large, high-quality datasets. Within the German university system, *Quellenkritik* (source criticism) is usually taken very seriously. In the future students should be encouraged to spend more time thinking about what their datasets could be used for,

rather than the current over-emphasis on using existing approaches to research problems. From my point of view, instructors need to improve the balance between theory, data and practical training in German academia.

Motivated students can be optimistic when they begin training in archaeology and particularly in paleohistory. Given the range of possible work in archaeology, students today have good prospects for employment in the field.

Regardless of what is driving the popularity of archaeology, in places like Germany where the level of public discourse, museum exhibits and reporting in print and electronic media are at a high level, the field profits from this interest. Graduates in paleohistory and human evolution often find employment in one form or another in academia, museum and media, and heritage archaeology. In recent years I have often heard prospective employers complain that there are not enough top prehistorians on the market to fill the available posts. I have also observed several cases of jobs intended for researchers with Ph.D.s initially filled with young researchers, who have yet to earn their doctoral degrees. Similarly, academics often complain that there are not enough top candidates for dissertation fellowships to meet the need generated by the many new research projects.

While I am well aware of the arguments to the contrary, I think that it is essential that German universities train relatively large numbers of paleohistorians at all levels from bachelor's degrees to habilitations. Only if the field produces many talented and well trained young researchers, will it be able to continue to expand and continue to make important contributions to international science. Over the years I have seen how other relatively small fields and some subfields of archaeology train extremely few people. In some cases it is impossible for professorships to be filled because there are no or too few qualified people to fill the vacant posts. The traditional worries in Germany that people with advanced training will be over-qualified has usually turned out to be erroneous. While it is true that not every person who earns a habilitation will be hired to a professorship, the great majority of scholars I know who have earned their habilitations have either been hired to professorships or have high-ranking archaeological posts outside academia. In connection with their *venia legendi* and *Privatdozenturen*, which require them to teach, these senior scholars make major contributions to teaching and research at universities.

Analogous arguments exist for lower degrees. Although not every person to earn a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in paleohistory will immediately find work in the field, most of the talented people can stay in the field. I am also convinced that having relatively large numbers of graduates at all levels invigorates a field and ensures a degree of constructive competition. Circumstances may change in the future, but for now Paleolithic archaeology, human evolution and related fields can be seen as a growth industry in which more graduates rather than fewer are needed to fill the available posts at all levels. If occasionally our graduates do not find jobs in the field and work as teachers, reporters, computer programmers, bankers, or business people, these fields and society as a whole profit from having people with knowledge about archaeology and human evolution working outside the relatively narrow confines of prehistory. For now, however, one can observe that many paleohistorians trained in Germany do find positions in the field in Germany and in many countries abroad.

Based on my impressions, the quality of training at the leading German universities is on par or better than that found at most of the prominent universities abroad. As talented students increasingly become aware of the low cost of study at German universities and the excellent facilities and infrastructure at the top programs, these programs will be able to compete favorably with leading programs abroad. International students are also increasingly profiting from the expanding number of courses in English and the possibility in all of the major programs to write bachelor's, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations in English. As these trends develop, teaching and research in Germany will continue to improve and become more international. Already today, several of the best training programs for Paleolithic archaeology and related fields are located in Germany.

## Research

Just as is the case with teaching, it is impossible here to touch upon the strengths and weaknesses of all of the individual institutes, so I will need to make many generalizations about research in paleohistory in Germany.

One point that is certain is that it is relatively easy to get funding for research in Germany. The main source of funding in early prehistory is the German Research Council (DFG), but there are many other funding agencies related to the scientific structures of the European Union, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), and funding bodies and foundations including the Volkswagen, Gerda Henkel, Alexander von Humboldt and others. While it is not at all unusual for individual researchers to have outside funding on the order of several hundreds of thousands of Euros annually, such levels of funding are rare in other parts of the world. At special research institutes like the Max Planck Gesellschaft even higher levels of funding are available in the annual research budgets.

These strong funding agencies create a situation where prehistorians usually are able to direct their attention to conducting research rather than having to invest vast amounts of time in applying for relatively modest grants that are often difficult to obtain. The high levels of funding have created a situation in which German teams are gaining increasing visibility for their international research in paleohistory. Teams are currently working in international projects in many regions across nearly all parts of the Old World. Equally important, while many systems of funding in other countries emphasize quick turnover times, the DFG and other agencies often fund long-term projects that make major contributions to research. The stable research structures create a situation where leading teams can invest significant funds to set up excellent infrastructure for research and make investments for future research. The high level of funding allows institutes to hire scientist and technical staff members, who are often difficult to fund within other systems. In the long run the strengths of this kind of well funded research will become apparent. These strengths are also creating a situation in which leading researchers from abroad are starting to view Germany as an open system that is attractive to scholars from around the world. Here both the more active universities and the non-university research institutes like the Max Planck Society, the RGZM, and the Senckenberg Research Institute are helping to draw top scholars from around the world to Germany. In recent years many leading scholars in paleohistory have used funding



from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to finance long periods of research at German institutes.

While funding from the private sector is underdeveloped in Germany compared to many other affluent countries, the Federal and most of the state governments are committed to continued investment in science including early prehistory and human evolution. Research teams in paleoanthropology, due in large measure to the commitment of the Max Planck Society and several universities have in recent years become internationally competitive at the highest level. Now some of the leading teams working in areas including morphometrics and paleogenetics are found in Germany.

In the traditional areas of paleohistory including faunal, lithic, and taphonomic analyses, Germany has several strong institutes. As discussed above, this research tends to take place in an open and non-dogmatic environment. Work profits from the strong tradition of German scholarship, as well as through major advances from the French, Anglophone, and other research traditions (Conard 2001). To paraphrase the statement of former chancellor Helmut Schmidt<sup>1</sup>, Germany has always profited from its central geographic position in Europe since it takes advantage of the innovations of its many neighbors and integrates them in a new setting. In prehistory, as in the European Union, it is often strong relationships between France and Germany that create a dynamic environment and strengthen continental Europe as a whole. Germany also profits from its close ties to its eastern European neighbors. Especially during the period of the German Democratic Republic, many researchers had close ties to the former Soviet Union and Eastern Block. This historical link to the east is still advantageous and underlines Germany's place as a melting pot of people and ideas. Analogous relationships with Turkey, Israel, Syria, Iran, Morocco, Japan, and many other countries outside the EU also help to create an international research environment. Inside the EU dynamic research teams in France, Spain, and other countries help to foster an exchange of ideas within Europe. In contrast to countries with strong research traditions like the United States, Canada, Australia and South Africa, where one often must travel great distances to reach other institutes or to attend meetings, in Germany, like in much of continental Europe, researchers can communicate with each other and visit each other with comparative ease. Several senior researchers in recent years have stressed these arguments, that Germany provides a 'critical mass' for research and scholarly interaction, in explaining why they wish to spend their sabbaticals in Germany.

I cannot go into the details of the various research approaches in this short paper, but it strikes me as noteworthy that the German research community has usually not been characterized by the political infighting that is common in many other countries. This generally collegial atmosphere makes it possible for students and graduates to move freely between the primary and secondary centers of research. While the research

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1 „Der größte Vorteil, den Deutschland aus seiner zentralen Lage in Europa gezogen hat, ist die kulturelle Befruchtung. Große Teile unserer Musik stammen aus Italien, große Teile unserer Literatur und Philosophie stammen aus Frankreich, Holland und England. Die Demokratie stammt aus Holland, England und Frankreich. Alles zu unserem Vorteil. Aber die geopolitische Lage Deutschlands hat auch Nachteile. Sie ist gefährlich. Sie zwingt niemanden mehr als die Deutschen, zu begreifen, dass eine Einbindung in Europa lebensnotwendig ist (...) eine enge Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem Élysée-Palast und dem Kanzleramt ist eine unvermeidliche Notwendigkeit.“ (Mobil. Das Magazin der Deutschen Bahn, September 2010, 12).

profiles in places like Cologne, Leipzig, Mainz/Monrepos, and Tübingen differ, they remain complementary and open for constructive input of ideas and data from inside and outside Germany. Research in paleohistory also profits from highly productive collaboration between universities, non-university research institutes, Museums and the *Denkmalpflege*.

## Conclusions

In this paper I have touched upon some, but by no means all, of the important trends in paleohistory and related fields. Insiders to the field will see many omissions, shortcomings, and even contradictions that inevitably characterize a paper of this kind. I hope to have demonstrated that paleohistory in Germany is stronger today than it has ever been in the past. Today the difficult decades and the devastating effects of the Nazi era and World War II have finally run their course in the field of prehistory, and the reunification of Germany is today an asset rather than a problem. This situation has created an environment in which German research in early prehistory and related fields has begun to be recognized for its many strengths rather than for erroneous and often stereotypical views of its supposed weaknesses. Today, research and teaching in paleohistory in Germany is vibrant and successful, as well as being attractive to students and researchers from around the world.

If the trends I discuss above continue, there is every reason to be optimistic that Germany will increasingly play a leading role in research and teaching in paleohistory. Given the country's strong economy and strong traditions of education and research, these developments will probably continue for many years to come.

## Acknowledgements

A short review of current activities in a field is always a risky undertaking. It seems safe to say that the author of such a statement will almost certainly make more enemies than friends. Omissions are inevitable and people and institutions will always feel misrepresented. Others will be still more outraged by being ignored altogether. Thanks to the critical reading of this paper by Michael Bolus and Christopher Miller, I have been able to avoid some of these shortcomings. For the shortcomings that no doubt remain, I must take the blame.

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