



THE 59th ANNUAL MEETING OF THE HUGO OBERMAIER SOCIETY IN AURICH

The 59th Annual Meeting of the Hugo Obermaier Society (www.obermaier-gesellschaft.de/english/meetings.html) took place from the 18th to the 22nd of April 2017 in Aurich, which is situated in Eastern Frisia, app. 25 kilometres from the shore of the Northern Sea. Today, Aurich is the central administrative city of the district with the same name. The historical traditions of Aurich go back to the 13th century, and in the more recent past it was the residence of Eastern Frisian aristocrats as well as the regional centre of the empires of Prussia and Hannover. The society was invited by the city of Aurich and, more important from an archaeological point of view, the Ostfriesische Landschaft, which is the regional administrative unit responsible for public tasks including archaeology. The main driving force behind the invitation was Dr. J. Kegler, who wrote his PhD-thesis about Mas d'Azil and is now the head of the scientific section of the archaeological unit of the Ostfriesische Landschaft. The society was delighted by his offer, and is greatly thankful to him and his team for the organization of the successful conference.

Middle Palaeolithic

After the welcome notes by R. Mecklenburg, president of the Ostfriesische Landschaft, Dr. J. Kegler as the representative of the archaeological branch of the Ostfriesische Landschaft and the president of the Society, Th. Uthmeier from the University of Erlangen, the first of the all in all highly interesting sessions started. The lectures of the first day were – with one exception – dedicated to Neanderthals and their lithic equipment.

After an introduction into a novel method for the molecular analysis of faunal as well as hominin remains by F. Welker *et al.* termed "ZoomMS", which has the potential to revolutionize archaeozoology as well as palaeoanthropology, the first talk about Middle Palaeolithic artefacts was held by L. Schunk, who analysed the operational chain of backed bifacial knives

from the perspective of social learning and formal teaching, and J. A. Frick, who reported about new Micoquian sites in the Saône-et-Loire region near to Macon that include, among other features, typical backed bifacial knives (e.g. Keilmesser) and lateral sharpening flakes (sometimes referred to as "Pradnik" technique). The topic of the talk of M. Weiß *et al.* was equally related to bifacial tools, but this time the focus was on the late Middle Palaeolithic or – depending on the classification scheme used – the transition from the Middle to the Upper Palaeolithic. He described a project that has just started and is dedicated to a re-evaluation of the last sediments left at the famous site of Ranis-Ilsenhöhle with a stratigraphical succession of the Lincombian-Ranisian-Jerzmanovician and an early Upper Palaeolithic industry often classified as Aurignacian. Of major interest is the exact stratigraphical position of the archaeological horizons with leaf points. Preliminary geo-physical prospections and first soundings helped to identify the area with an intact stratigraphy that will be excavated in 2017.

After the coffee break, P. Neruda & Z. Nerudová stimulated a very vivid and fruitful discussion about so-called leafpoint knives, which were recently defined for assemblages assigned to the Szeletian or Altmühlian. Refittings from Moravský Krumlov IV show that here, the back observed on some of the leaf points is in fact a remnant of surface shaping that originally was intended to be removed, which failed. This important observation will certainly lead to an ongoing debate about leafpoint knives in the future. Assemblages of the Micoquian with typical bifacial knives now also occur in the Altai region, as K. Kolobova & V. P. Chabai reported. The recently discovered Chagyrskaya Cave has been systematically excavated by the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Science and expands the distribution of the Micoquian far to the East. This is very well proven by large assemblages (the total of lithics so far accounts for 90,000 pieces), absolute dates, environmental studies and numerous Neanderthal remains. It followed a comparison of Micoquian assemblages from Eastern Europe one the on hand, and Central Europe on the other by V. P.

Chabai & Th. Uthmeier. The analysis, which was conducted in the frames of a research grant financed by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, supports the hypothesis that general features are found in the Eastern and as well as in the Central European regions of the Micoquian. The similarities include plan-convex/plan-convex surface shaping, Quina cores and Quina scrapers as well as Levallois centripetal cores. Other items such as grozaks, large handaxes and Keilmesser made on large flakes with a retouched back and ventral thinning opposite to the bifacial working edge (Bocksteinmesser *sensu strictu* as observed in the type site), have a more restricted distribution and may indicate diversity within an overall striking uniformity. However, assemblages like Klausennische, Neumark-Nord 2/0, Lichtenberg and Königsause C show no differences to the Eastern Micoquian at all.

Talk of the awardee of the Research Grant of the Hugo Obermaier Society 2016

It followed the presentation of the results of research conducted by *O. Lyzun*, who was supported by the Research Grant 2016 of the Hugo Obermaier Society. He successfully searched for new sites and, parallel to this, investigated recently discovered sites that belong to the Ukrainian Epi-Gravettian. The focus of his ongoing PhD-dissertation project is on the raw material procurement strategies and the resulting typological variability of the lithic assemblages. The Research Grant of the Hugo Obermaier Society is a biannual funding of EUR 5,000 for young researchers who conduct projects that contribute to their MA- or PhD-thesis. Originally restricted to fieldwork, the call has been enlarged by laboratory analysis (e.g. raw



FIGURE 1. The lecture hall of the 59th annual meeting of the Hugo Obermaier Society in the building of the Ostfriesische Landschaft in Aurich 2017. Victor P. Chabai, Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine during his lecture about the Micoquian in Eastern and Central Europe (photo: Th. Uthmeier).

material analysis, geophysical datation etc.). Further information can be found at www.obermaier-gesellschaft.de/english/application.html. The first day of the annual meeting in Aurich ended with the opening of the poster session. Like in the past years, authors of the posters have the possibility to publish these with a doi-number on NEPSPOS Poster Space (see <https://www.nespos.org/display/PublicPosterSpace/Home>). In the evening, the participants met for an evening reception at the Energie-, Bildungs und Erlebniszentrum (EEZ) in Aurich-Sandhorst with an exhibition illustrating the ecological consequences of the use of conventional energies opposed to the positive effects of novel energy production. The background is the fact that Aurich hosts one of the world leading producers of wind power stations.

Transition from Middle to Upper Palaeolithic

The first session of the second day started with talks about the Transition from the Middle to the Early Upper Palaeolithic. The first synthetic results of a long-term project at the site of Grotte de la Verpillière were presented by *H. Floss & C. Hoyer*. In the small cave, the excavations unearthed a stratigraphy that encompasses archaeological horizons from the late Middle Palaeolithic (with backed bifacial knives), the Châtelperronian and the Aurignacian. In combination with an intensive regional survey, this key site enables important diachronic insights into this highly debated period of the European Palaeolithic.

It followed an overview about the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic in the Northern European plain by *D. Flas*. His lecture summarized many years of his successful research into the Lincombian-Ranisian-Jerzmanowician and Aurignacian. The latter industry was also the topic of *G. Bataille et al.*, who – like many authors before – criticized the universal value of the Western European chronology. In an innovative approach, they diachronically compared first-hand analysis of key sites from Eastern, Central, Southern and Southwestern Europa and concluded that any large-scale description of the Aurignacian must consider a strong regional variability, which can both be chronological and/or functional. Talks dedicated to the Aurignacian were completed by *T. Matthies* with a description of the first results of the analysis of faunal remains recovered in 1927 at the late Aurignacian site of Breitenbach. The fauna is dominated by mammoth and reindeer, but at the same time diverse.

Special session: "Across doggerland.

Man and environment during the Late- and Postglacial in the southern North Sea region"

The lecture of *S. Krüger* about pollen analysis from basal peat cores opened the special session of this year's annual meeting "Across doggerland. Man and environment during the Late- and Postglacial in the southern North Sea region". The next talk by *M. F. Mortensen*, who was (together with *P. Pettitt*, *F. Riede* and *P. Gibbard*) one of four invited key-note speakers, was also dedicated to environmental studies, this time giving an overview over the Late glacial and early Holocene vegetational history. The increase in archaeological investigations of submerged sites in the Northern wadden sea as well as other European marine waters in the last years is mirrored by interdisciplinary projects which are conducted by several institutions. *M. Karle & F. Bittmann* reported about two projects in the German wadden sea, whereas *M. Segschneider* presented the SPLASHCOS-viewer, which allows for an online-search of submerged sites. The talk of *L. W. S. W. Amreutz et al.* gave a fascinating insight into large-scale archaeological rescue projects in the context of sand extraction in the cause of the construction of an extension of the Rotterdam harbour and the protection of the beaches near to Den Haag. The range of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic finds stretches from stone implements and bones points to faunal remains and human fossils.

The next three speakers were also invited to give key note talks. *P. Pettitt* focused on the Upper Palaeolithic of Great Britain by presenting new results of excavations at Mother Grundy's Parlour, Creswell Crags, the analysis of faunal remains from High Furlong, Poulton-le-Flyd (the "Poulton Elk") and LA-ICP MS trace element analysis of artefacts from the "Long Blade" assemblage from the Seamer Site C. Afterwards, *P. Gibbard*, who contributed important research to the dating of the earliest human presence in Central Europe around the Matyama-Brunhes boundary, gave a detailed overview over the Quaternary Evolution of the North Sea region and the English channel. Finally, *F. Riede*, the last invited key note speaker, informed the audience about the influence of environmental factors in the Late Palaeolithic of Denmark. Comparing environmental and ethnographic data, it is well conceivable that population densities were very low until the Alleröd. This largely influenced cultural continuity and discontinuity, for example between the Hamburgian culture and the Federmessergruppen.

Related topics will be investigated by a sub-project of a new, long-term Collaborative Research Centre "Scales of Transformation – Human-Environmental Interaction in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies" financed by the German Science Foundation at the University of Kiel, as *S. B. Grimm & B. Eriksen* reported. Their project will deal with the Final Palaeolithic colonization of the Baltic region and focus on strategies observed in familiar and unfamiliar, e.g. newly settled, landscapes. *D. Groß et al.* are also researches from the Collaborative Research Centre mentioned above. They will investigate social-environmental transformations of Foragers from the early to mid-Holocene by using local case studies in well investigated key regions such as Duvensee, Hohen Viecheln and Friesack.

One of the most instructive talks about environmental studies came from *A. Hüser*, who reported about Pingo remains in East Frisia. For a long time these features were not recognized or accepted as such. Geoarchaeological fieldwork proved the existences of regional pingos, which develop in permafrost due to growing bodies of frozen underground water bodies. Thus, hills with heights up to 14 metres and more may develop in otherwise flat steppe environments. For glacial hunter-gatherer, such features are attractive peaks for hunting stands etc. However, pingos were certainly more important for site catchment during phases of warming when they started to collapse. The crater-shaped remnants of collapsed pingos offer in the inner part protection from wind chill, a sweet water lake with a more diverse (avian) fauna and vegetation for resource acquisition, and waterlogged sediments that allow for the preparation of bone and fur for further processing. The observation that Mesolithic sites cluster along the crater-like remnants of former pingos confirms this.

In the following, *S. Mahlstedt* more intensively referred to the archaeological sites from the regional Mesolithic. On a broader topographical scale, she investigated the distribution of Mesolithic sites in Eastern Frisia and conducted a site catchment analysis by using GIS. It turns out that the land use patterns of the Eastern Frisian Mesolithic are characterised as being the hinterland of large river systems running to Doggerland, which contrasts with site distributions further to the South where sites cluster along larger rivers. *H. Peeters* went back to the topic of rescue archaeology in the context of large scale extraction of sandy sediments from the Northern sea bottom. He reported in greater detail about the results of the

Maasvlakte 2 – Yangtze Harbour project. Seismic mapping and core sampling revealed archaeological sites on Aeolian river dunes. In a second step, a controlled grab sampling of from a depth of 15 m below sea level was conducted and resulted in archaeological remains from a drowning landscape between 8,500 and 6,500 calBC. Surprisingly, despite the comparably short distances to the then sea shore, the faunal remains indicate the use of a broad range of inland environments, but gave only few indications for the use of marine resources. The attested burning of the reed zone at the end of the time frame, when the area was actually a coastal one, is seen as the result of the intention to better connect the camp sites with the sea shore. However, the inhabitants still made use of food plants rather than marine food. The lake Agassiz drainage and the Storegga tsunami event led to a final flooding of the Doggerland at app. 6,200 calBC.

The evening lecture of *J. Kegler* gave an interesting and detailed survey of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic settlement of the southern part of the Northern Sea Coast, including the results of his own excavations at Late Upper Palaeolithic sites in the region.

Mixed Topics

U. Böhner et al. summarized the results of past investigations of unworked wood and wooden artefacts, including the famous wooden spears from the late Lower Palaeolithic bog site of Schöningen. New investigations show that most items bear anthropogenic traces. A methodological topic was investigated by *I. Schmidt et al.*, who improved the analysis of demographic changes in the central European Upper and Final Palaeolithic. More practical aspects were touched by *K. Kindermann & A. Pastoors*. They reported about their search for possible original entrances into the the Volp cave system that existed during the Pleistocene, but are not accessible today. The starting points were late Middle Palaeolithic settlements far from daylight without traces of fire deep inside the cave of Tuc d'Audoubert, and the Gravettian art in the "Galerie des Chouettes" at the very end of Les Trois Frères. In the talk, different methods of geophysics were compared with the results of excavations and digital elevation models showing depressions as possible collapsed entrances.

F. Sauer reported about his research into the adequate walking speed used for the modelling movements of hunter gatherers in GIS. In general, it is agreed upon the fact that walking distances depend on

the given landscape. Nevertheless, a number of different walking speeds are used, including those coming from military sources; the best choice seems to be a speed measured in experiments and showing the least energetic costs independent from the load. Different speeds result in large differences in the distances that can be walked within 1 to 4 hours. This is illustrated at the sites of Gönnersdorf and Andernach by calculating the biomass available for hunting in various radii modelled.

H. Parow-Souchon described part of the results of her PhD about the Upper Palaeolithic in the Wadi Sabra in Jordan. The data is coming from four sites with assemblages that chronologically spread from the Early Ahmarian to the Epi-Palaeolithic. Chronological analysis with a wide range of methods show a stable residential mobility adapted to patchy resources. The lecture of *O. Touzé* dealt with the Gravettian in North-Western Europe and the discussion about its genesis, which may be explained either as an innovation in a centre, followed by diffusion, or as an origin in several regions. The sites of Maisières Canal, Ormesson-les Bossats and Station de l'Hermitage allow the reconstruction of an *in-situ* development of a regional technological tradition different from the early Gravettian, pointing to a genesis in different regions. *H. Floss et al.* also referred to the Gravettian when they reported about their new discoveries at the open-air site of Saint-Martin-sous-Montaigu with a topographical setting comparable to that of the famous nearby Solutré site. First test trenches show that the site can best be interpreted as a large kill- and butchering-site. The lecture of *M. Händel* was also dedicated to the Gravettian. He described and discussed the formation processes at different sites in the Krems-Wachtberg area. The sequences at the ancient excavations of Krems-Hundssteig (HU 1893-1904) and Beyer's excavations of Krems-Wachtberg (WA 1930), the novel excavations at the Hundssteig (HU 2000-2002 and HU 2014) and the extensive excavations at Krems-Wachtberg (WA 2005-2015) with the infant burials all show *in-situ* layers from the Early Gravettian. The older archaeological horizons show a pedogenesis, whereas the younger ones are embedded in pure loess. Other horizons are clear palimpsests evoked by periglacial and slope processes. Two thin layers of organic ash dating to app. 31,000 calBP mark the end of both the Palaeolithic settlement activities and post-depositional processes. According to recent radiocarbon dates, the archaeological horizon with the famous burials from Sungir, which were the topic of the talk of *T. Soldatova*,

date to the same period, e.g. the onset of the Gravettian. The site was excavated during 24 field seasons from 1957-2004. As far as ivory working is concerned, these make up 26 % of all items made from hard organic materials. Truncated ivory flakes have linear outlines and are supposed to be preforms for ivory beads. They were struck opportunistically from tusk fragments, exhausted cores or appropriate chunks with a striking platform.

P. Škrdl et al. described the results of salvage excavations at Mohelno. The excavated area is situated on the shore of an artificial lake and is accessible only during several days each year when the sea level is lowered. The field campaigns documented two occupation phases. The one dating to the LGM yielded



FIGURE 2. Participants of the 1st day of excursions in the lecture hall of the Noordelijk Archeologisch Depot (NAD) in Nuis, where the archaeological finds from the provinces of Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen are hosted (photo: Th. Uthmeier).



FIGURE 3. Marcel Niekus (in green jacket and rucksack on the left) at the site rich in hand axes of the Mousterian of Acheulian tradition near to Assen. Surface collections and first excavations resulted in a large assemblage with numerous refittings (see M. Niekus *et al.* 2011 in *Quartär* 58, 67–92; photo: Th. Uthmeier).

a flake based industry and small microliths from carinated cores. Two paved structures are interpreted as tents due to a barrier effect of the artefact distributions.

Somewhat later are the sites that were the topic of the talk of *T. Therberger et al.* They reviewed known Magdalenian and Hamburgian sites from the northern fringe of the German middle mountain range and gave new perspectives for a re-analysis of the already published sites. Parallel to this, they mentioned a potential new Magdalenian surface site. *M. Wild* gave an overview over the first results of his ongoing PhD thesis about the Hamburgian bone and antler industry. He analysed original material from Poggenwisch and Slotseng. The results were compared to the Havelte phase of the Hamburgian culture and the final Magdalenian. Lithic objects of the Final Palaeolithic were investigated by *D. Stefański* in the frames of his

talk about the arch-backed and tanged point settlement in the Karów region. Due to surrounding mountainous regions, settlements and migrations are concentrated in the Vistula valley. With data available from literature, he analysed the periods under question for their chronology, settlement pattern, raw material procurement and lithic production, enriched by environmental proxy data from core drillings and pollen analysis. It becomes clear that sites with arch-backed points occur in small numbers only and represent the sporadic presence of hunter-gatherer groups. To the contrary, sites with tanged points are numerous and belong to the Swiderian. Recent absolute dates underline the possibility of a persistency of the Swiderian until the Boreal.

S. Harz et al. re-evaluated the famous wooden arrow remains from the Ahrensburgian layer of A. Rust's excavations at Stellmoor. The objects consist of a shaft



FIGURE 4. Still visible remnant of a collapsed pingo at Wrokmoor. The higher vegetation in the middle part of the photo consists among others, of reed, indicating active bog conditions. The still preserved crater-like wall is visible in the background (especially to the left) and indicates the typical topographical position of Mesolithic sites in the region. The active pingo would have covered the entire area of the picture (photo: Th. Uthmeier).

and a foreshaft from pine, which were connected by a typical construction termed "dovetail". It are the oldest direct evidence for bow and arrow; however, the finds published so far were destroyed during World War II. In 2013, eleven pieces from Rust's personal collection became accessible for analysis. Absolute dating by AMS were made difficult by preservatives used during the original conservation process, as infrared spectrometry and biomolecular analysis showed. Finally, the extraction of alpha-cellulose led to dates in the range of dates from faunal remains from the same layer and confirmed the authenticity of the artefacts.

The lecture of *M. Baales et al.* was about residue analysis of a Final Palaeolithic barbed point from Bergkamen-Oberaden in Westphalia. Radiocarbon dates gave an age of 11 kyr calBC within the time scale

of the Alleröd. At the base, the point was fixed with an adhesive material to a shaft. The adhesive material was identified as bee wax mixed with charcoal, which has only rarely been found at archaeological sites so far, but has proven its reliability in numerous experiments. At the moment, it is the earliest prove for the presence of honeybee in Central Europe.

J. Orschiedt et al. summarized 10 years of research in the Blätterhöhle near to Hagen, where he and his team have unearthed early Mesolithic and late Neolithic burials. The dead were transported into the narrow shaft of the cave. Intensive research of the skeletons gave interesting insights into the nutrition as well as the genetic context of the buried as revealed by DNA analysis. In front of the cave, extensive excavations were dedicated to a long stratigraphical sequence that covers the entire Mesolithic. The latter

includes – for the first time – a succession of several horizons of the Rhine-Meuse-Schelde group. It is well possible that the stratigraphy also covers the Final Palaeolithic, after some typical lithics were excavated at the base of the trench; the total depth until bedrock is unknown.

Finally, *M. Nadler* discussed the many factors that contributed to the Holocene paleo-relief observed in excavations in Middle Franconia, and *D. Groß et al.* reported first results of their re-valuation of the dating of the Mesolithic site of Hohen Viecheln 1. The consideration of the excavator that the site dates to the early Mesolithic were criticised soon after the initial publication. The authors confirmed that the setting of the site at a lakeshore complicated the reconstruction of the site formation processes.

The scientific program of the annual meeting ended with two days of excursion, which led the participants to the northern Netherlands, where they visited the Drents museum, the Archaeological depot at Nuis as well as a Middle Palaeolithic MtA-site near Assen. One of the highlights of the second day was the visit at the pingo remnants still visible at Wrokmooer.

In sum, the 59th annual meeting in Aurich was successful in many ways. First, it brought together colleagues from entire Europe for several days of intense scientific exchange and discussions in the lecture hall as well as during the times spent together after the official program. Second, the society wanted to bring the North-western part of Central Europe into focus and, at the same time, attract scientists from that region, including Scandinavia, Great Britain and the Netherlands. That this became reality is certainly a major success. The forthcoming 60th annual meeting will take place in Tarragona (further information as well as a call for papers will be published in autumn on www.obermaier-gesellschaft.de/english).

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