



Report on the 66th Annual Meeting of the Society in Faro (Portugal) from 22nd to 26th of April 2025

<https://doi.org/10.26720/anthro.25.07.10.1>

In 2025, the 66th annual conference of the Hugo Obermaier Society took place at the invitation of the ICArEHB of the Universidade do Algarve (Interdisciplinary Center for Archaeology and the Evolution of Human Behaviour) in the tranquil university town of Faro (Portugal), located directly on the Atlantic Ocean. With 135 participants in presence and 33 people joining online, we retained the high number of colleagues and friends joining the annual conference during the last years. The conference organisers had prepared the event down to the last detail, making the conference an unforgettable event. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank João Cascalheira, Anna Rufà and Cláudia Costa and their team of student helpers once again for their hard work and commitment.

A small lecture theatre building on the Campus da Penha was chosen for the three lecture days and additionally offered space for the coffee breaks as well as for two poster sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday. The proximity to the campus cafeteria made for an easy, quick and pleasant lunch break, which was due not only to the dishes on offer but above all to the reliable and cordial service provided by the couple who ran it.

The conference

On Tuesday, 22nd of April, the conference was opened at 1.30 p.m. by the President of the Society after a warm welcome from the Vice-Rector of the University and longstanding Director of the ICArEHB, Prof. Dr. Nuno Bicho and Dr. Anna Rufà. In terms of an introduction to this first meeting of the Society in Portugal, João Luis Cardoso and Alfredo Mederos Martin described in their lecture Hugo Obermaier's interest in Portuguese archaeology based on the letters and postcards he exchanged with three colleagues from this country. The programme of the first day was

dedicated to contributions on the Lower Palaeolithic and Early Middle Palaeolithic. Olaf Jöris (et al.) introduced the first block of lectures with a summary of the chronostratigraphy of the Lower Palaeolithic of Central Europe and explained that the so-called 'short chronology', meaning a settlement of Central Europe not before 600,000 years ago, is still valid according to current knowledge. In the following lectures, technological studies on lithic production were presented. While Sol Sánchez-Dehesa Galán (et al.) dealt with learning processes in the Acheulean, Marco Carpentieri (et al.) provided insights into the technological behaviour of Lower Palaeolithic and Early Middle Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers in southern Italy. Nico Magliozzi presented his dissertation project on a Middle Palaeolithic complex in southern Lazio called 'Pontinian', which is characterised by the production of stone tools on pebbles.

After the coffee break, which offered an impressive buffet of sweet delicacies as well as coffee, Haoyue Hu (et al.) focussed on southern China and explained why the assessment of the Middle Pleistocene industries of East Asia as stagnant and not very innovative is inaccurate. Elisa Luzi (et al.) and then Àngel Blanco-Lapaz (et al.) presented the exciting results of their investigations into small mammal and fish remains from Schöningen (Germany) in entertaining contributions.

The first poster session that followed provided an opportunity for direct exchange. The posters covered a wide range of topics as well as time and space and impressively illustrated current fields of research. Afterwards, the conference participants were given an equally impressive welcome with wine and snacks in the cloister garden of the Museu Municipal, where the first day of the conference drew to a cheerful close.

The second day of the conference began with seven presentations on the Middle Palaeolithic. While the first presentation by Katarzyna Pyżewicz (et al.) dealt with the results of new fieldwork at the Zwoleń site in Poland and confirmed the attribution of its Micoquian industry to the Early Weichselian, Viola Fratta (et al.) explained how mechanical properties of stone raw

material can be determined in a standardised way and how differences in Middle Stone Age inventories from Sibhudu (South Africa) are revealed. In the following presentation, Alvise Barbieri compared data from Middle Palaeolithic sites in the Swabian and Franconian Jura and presented hypotheses on different site use in the two regions. The first block of lectures was concluded by Davide Delpiano's (et al.) contribution on the Ghiacciaia Cave (Italy), which reveals a technological shift in the Middle Palaeolithic production systems from Quina to Levallois. After the coffee break, Martyna Lech and Nicholas Conard presented new technological and functional investigations of a leaf point from Hohle Fels (Germany), whereas Marco Peresani (et al.) dealt with the role of (predatory) birds in Middle Palaeolithic societies in the next contribution and concluded the lecture with a short film sequence on experimental ornament production at Fumane (Italy). The last lecture of the morning session was given by last year's award winner Mourad Farkouch. In an extremely interesting lecture, he presented the developed predictive modelling approach to identify Palaeolithic sites and its first application to the Guefaït region (Morocco), which proved to be very rich in sites. He demonstrated that he was indeed a worthy award winner.

The lunch break was followed by seven contributions on the special topic "Converging Horizons: Cultural and Environmental Interactions in the Prehistory of the European Far West". The session was opened by Juan Manuel Jimenez-Arenas (et al.), who discussed habitat connectivity patterns on the Iberian Peninsula during the early Pleistocene. Àngel Blanco Lapaz (et al.) then presented a comparative study on fish remains from the Early Pleistocene sites Barranco León (Spain) and Dursunlu (Turkey). Nompumelelo Maringa (et al.) presented her PhD on micromammal remains from Lapa do Picareiro (Portugal), which is dedicated to the palaeoenvironmental reconstruction at the Middle to Upper Palaeolithic transition.

This first part ended with a presentation by Yvi Tafelmaier (et al.), who presented latest results with regard to climate impact on settlement patterns of Pleistocene hunter-gatherers on the Iberian Peninsula. After the coffee break Alejandro Prieto (et al.) introduced a study within the ERC project SPEGEOCHERT on Chalusse chert as a tracer for long-distance mobility. Javier Sánchez-Martínez et al.'s presentation was also dedicated to the reconstruction of mobility patterns in the Upper

Palaeolithic of the southern Pyrenees, centring on the site of Cova Gran. The special session was closed with a contribution by Carlos Simões (et al.) and their taphonomic study on the impressive shell middens in Asturias.

The following poster session again yielded a broad variety of studies and offered the opportunity to get in direct scientific exchange. A highlight was the evening lecture by João Cascalheira. In an entertaining and instructive talk, he discussed hunter-gatherer settlement dynamics in southwesternmost Iberia and discussed potential gaps in human presence during different phases of the late Pleistocene. The conference dinner at the Portuguese restaurant Tertúlia Algarvia was no less a highlight. Both vegetarians and omnivorous participants could decide between different delicious dishes, with the so-called Cataplana (stew served in a copper vessel) being the star on each table.

The last day of lectures started with presentations on the Upper Palaeolithic. Guido Bataille (et al.) offered insights in latest excavations at Sirgenstein Cave (Swabian Jura). Benjamin Schürch and Nicholas Conard presented techno-functional studies on lithic assemblages from the Aurignacian of Vogelherd Cave (Swabian Jura) and, hence, contributed to the question of distinguishing tools from cores in the Early Upper Palaeolithic. In the next contribution, Tilman Böckenförde provided new insights into the Aurignacian open-air site Friedrichsdorf-Seulberg (Germany), while Svenja Schray and Nicholas Conard offered results of an ongoing study of Aurignacian lithic remains from Geißenklösterle Cave (Germany). Gloria Cattabriga (et al.) then gave a talk on studying individual technical performance within the Gravettian assemblage of Piovesello (Italy).

After the coffee break, Elena T. Moos (et al.) shared the results of their techno-functional study on fléchettes from the Ach valley (Swabian Jura), while the following talk by Vojtěch Zábajník and Sandra Sázelová led the audience into the process of facial reconstruction of the Dolní Věstonice 16 individual (Czech Republic). Afterwards Cristian Micó (et al.) discussed the problem of identifying retouchers on animal teeth and pointed out the importance of this artefact category, which remained mainly unrecorded for a long time. Two special presentations were then dedicated to the life and work of Hugo Obermaier: Harald Floss and Juan Ruiz-López first showed stages of Obermaier's life with special respect to his work on Levantine art. Then Juan Ruiz-López and Camila Muñoz-Soto presented Obermaier's work and

hypotheses on Levantine art, which he especially published in his book on the La Valltorta rock art, and gave insights into their ongoing comprehensive revision of the Cueva de la Vieja rock art site.

After the lunch break presentations on the Upper Palaeolithic continued. Firstly, Firas Jabbour (et al.) presented his study on raw material units and their implications for settlement history at the Armenian site of Aghitu-3 Cave. Next, Joshua London (et al.) discussed the potential of tracking cultural identity and networks through the study of red deer maxillary canine ornaments. Norbert Buchinger (et al.) then contributed a re-evaluation of assemblages from Saladorf and Langmannersdorf (Austria), dating to the Last Glacial Maximum. With the presentation by William Murphree (et al.) the audience was led along the Danube to the Ukrainian site Korman' 9 and informed about combustion features and pyrotechnological behaviour at this Epigravettian site. Marius Achtelik embarked on a forensic search for clues with his presentation on analysing prehistoric fingerprints and handprints. He explained his methodological approach, which utilises criminal investigation approaches. This was followed by a contribution from Dennis Th. Batz and Andreas Maier, who presented a critical evaluation of potential Upper Palaeolithic dwelling structures.

After the last coffee break, again with a sumptuous cake buffet, the last block of lectures followed with contributions on the Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic. First, Andreas Pastoors (et al.) informed the audience about digitizing and uniting archaeological and historical data on the spectacular Volp Caves (France) in a large database. Flavia Venditti (et al.) then presented a study on bivalve shells from Petersfels (Germany) showing that they were modified into ornaments. In the next talk, Tor Arne Waraas discussed lithic objects and their artefact character from Western Norway. The only presentation on the Mesolithic by Katarina Kapustka (et al.) was dedicated to a site called Sphinx in central Sudan and the use of quartz in lithic production. The last session ended with a geoarchaeological contribution by Jonna Bügenburg (et al.). She presented a study that aims at reconstructing the Neolithic palaeoenvironment and geomorphology of the floodplains around the site of Movila lui Deciov (Romania).

Finally, the conference was closed by the president, and the members of the Society met for the general assembly. All in all, the conference was considered a complete success by all participants, especially with respect to the diverse contributions (posters and talks),

that were prepared by the authors with great commitment, and the organising team including numerous student helpers.

The abstract booklet of the conference (ISBN 978-3-946287-62-6) is available as PDF on the societies' website: <https://obermaier-gesellschaft.de>.

Yvonne Tafelmaier*
Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Baden-
Württemberg
Alexanderstr. 48
72072 Tübingen

Mara Weber*
Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische
Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf
Schlossinsel 1
24837 Schleswig

Amira Adaileh
Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege
Augsburger Str. 22
86672 Thierhaupten

Harald Floss
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen
Burgsteige 11
72070 Tübingen

Florent Rivals
Institut Català de Paleoecologia Humana
i Evolució Social
Campus Sescelades URV
43007 Tarragona

Marcel Weiss
Landesamt für Denkmalpflege
und Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt
Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte
Richard-Wagner-Straße 9
06114 Halle

*Corresponding author.

