

INTERNATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE IN KIEL IN MARCH 2019

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For a very long time, Kiel, one of the towns of the former Hanseatic League, now the capital of the province of Schleswig-Holstein in northern Germany, was known solely for its sprats, its port, the sailors' mutiny of 1918 and the production of submarines. Its university, founded in the seventeenth century and named after Prince Christian Albert, its founder, was at all times an important institution of higher education in the region, although it only assumed a genuine prominence following the transformation in the wake of World War 2 and the reforms precipitated by the student protests of the 1960s. The campus was relocated to the city's western quarter at this time and it has since grown dynamically, a growth that continues to this day. The Christian-Albrechts-Universität (CAU) is among the nineteen best universities of Germany and currently has 25,000 students.

Courses in archaeology were launched in the later nineteenth century and thus look back on a long tradition. One of the period's outstanding personalities, Johanna Mesdorf, was not only the first female director of the state museum and the archaeological institute, but also the first appointed female professor of Prussia. The Institut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte is part of two faculties, The Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, which has had a profound impact on the nature and the inter- and transdisciplinary approach of the courses offered at the university and on its research projects. The Institute has always shown a keen interest in the prehistory of the Carpathian Basin, in which Johannes Müller and Wiebke Kirleis played an important role.¹ Several research projects reflect the interest in the broader region: the excavations conducted at the Neolithic tell of Okolište in Bosnia-Herzegovina (HOFMANN 2013; MÜLLER ET AL. 2013) and the involvement in the Kakucs Archaeological Expedition (KEX) led by Gabriella Kulcsár, focusing on the Bronze Age settlement history of the Danube Valley in central Hungary (KULCSÁR ET AL. 2014; JAEGER ET AL. 2018). The collaboration between Kiel and Budapest is also evidenced by the research visits to Kiel of two students of the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of the Eötvös Loránd University, Kata Szilágyi (PhD) and Dániel Borza (BA), both winners of an Erasmus scholarship.²

The Graduate School "Human Development in Landscapes", a research and training unit, was launched in order to ensure an even closer collaboration between archaeology and the natural sciences.³ In March



Fig. 1. The conference's poster

¹ For additional information about the Institute, see <http://www.ufg.uni-kiel.de/en> (last accessed June 3, 2019).

² Carl von Carnap Bornheim, the Institute's professor specialising in Migration period studies, was elected honorary doctor of Eötvös Loránd University in May 2019: <https://www.elte.hu/content/kozpontok-periferiak-hatarok.t.18866> (last accessed June 3, 2019).

³ For further detail about the School, see <http://www.gshdl.uni-kiel.de/> (last accessed June 3, 2019).

2019, the Graduate School organised an international conference, “Socio-Environmental Dynamics over the last 15,000 Years: The Creation of Landscapes”⁴ in partnership with the ROOTS project,⁵ which is funded by the state project providing the financial basis of the most outstanding German universities, and the CRC 1266 “Scales of Transformation” project,⁶ funded by the German Research Fund (DFG). The sixth in the series of bi-annually held conferences since 2009 spanned an immense conceptual and chronological horizon and offered an excellent opportunity for exchanges between specialists arriving from all corners of the world (Figs 1–3).

Over 330 participants read their papers at one of the sixteen sessions of the conference held between March 11 and 16, 2019. The diversity of the conference’s themes and the problems addressed by the participants – among which landscape and environmental archaeology, climate change, contacts with the Mediterranean, archaeohydrology, determinism,⁷ resilience and bioarchaeology figured prominently – is reflected by the researchers requested to deliver the keynote lectures. Laure Salanova, research director of the National Research Centre of France (CNRS), explored how a better understanding of the social groups of the past can be gained through the study of economic activities. Tim A. Kohler, Professor of Anthropology at the State University of Washington demonstrated the immense diversity of the interactions between a society and its environment, citing the findings of his research project in south-western America (Mesa Verde), while Christine A. Hastorf, archaeologist and leading archaeobotanist at Berkeley University, spoke about the special and delicate relation and interdependence of plants and humans.



Fig. 2. The conference venue: Kiel, Leibnitzstraße 1.



Fig. 3. One of the conference halls during a session

(source: https://www.uni-kiel.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pressemitteilungen/2019/087-workshop-2.jpg)

One major priority of the conference’s organisers was to involve as many PhD students from Kiel as possible, not only through presentations, but also as session organisers and session chairpersons. This was the case for Session 5, whose organisers were two PhD students, Mihaela Savu from Romania and Robert Staniu from Poland in collaboration with Robert Hofmann and Johannes Müller. This session focused on

⁴ The official conference homepage can be found at <http://www.workshop-gshdl.uni-kiel.de/> (last accessed June 3, 2019).

⁵ For a detailed description of the project, see <https://www.jma.uni-kiel.de/en/roots> (last accessed June 3, 2019). Together with another research project, the Institute will receive EUR 100 million.

⁶ For a detailed description of the project, see <https://www.sfb1266.uni-kiel.de/en> (last accessed June 3, 2019).

⁷ Regrettably, the archaeology courses offered in Hungary lack any discussions of the discipline’s theoretical and philosophical aspects (BÁNFFY 2013: 278–281; SZEVEÉNYI 2014).

the landscape use and networks of contacts of the Neolithic and Bronze Age tells of the Danube and Tisza region: seventeen papers were read and two posters were presented during the one and a half days devoted to this session. Research on settlement mounds has always enjoyed immense scholarly attention in Hungarian prehistoric studies, from the first “tell excavation” in 1876 to the present (ANDERS ET AL. 2013), and it is therefore hardly surprising that about one-half of the papers discussed the sites on the Hungarian Plain and in Transdanubia, which is also a reflection of how archaeological research in Hungary has been integrated into international mainstream archaeology. The session began with two longer expositions: Dušan Borić (New York) discussed the changing settlement history of the Lower Danube region during the long millennia from the Mesolithic to the Copper Age, set into an intriguing narrative. In his presentation, William A. Parkinson (Chicago) highlighted the importance of long-term research projects based on wide-ranging collaboration, one good example of which is the KRAP project in County Békés, Hungary, directed by him.⁸

The papers read as part of this session followed a more-or-less chronological and regional sequence. Alexandra Ion (Bucharest) and Alexandra Anders (Budapest) discussed the potential range of interpretations of the human remains uncovered on the tell settlements of south-eastern Romania and the Hungarian Plain, respectively, though case studies. Both highlighted the importance of the study of the human bones that did not come to light from “regular” burials. Kata Szilágyi (Szeged) covered the lithic tool manufacture of the Late Neolithic Lengyel community of Alsónyék-Bátaszék. András Füzesi (Budapest) presented his reconstruction of the mosaic-like settlement network of the Upper Tisza region during the Middle and Late Neolithic. In another presentation held with Pál Raczky, they explored the role of the different vessel types with diverse functions in the social life of the Late Neolithic tell-like settlement of Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Paul R. Duffy (Toronto University), William A. Parkinson, Attila Gyucha and Richard W. Yerkes (Field Museum, Chicago) reported on their many years’ long investigations in County Békés, mentioned in the above, and compared a Neolithic and Bronze Age site from the perspective of household archaeology. Several papers cited examples of international collaborative projects that promote a better understanding of settlement mounds: Lannart Brandstätter (PhD student, Tübingen), Raiko Krauß (Tübingen University) and Dan Ciobotaru (Temesvár museum) are engaged in the study of the Neolithic sites along the lower course of the Maros to gain an insight into the river’s role in the choice of settlement locations and the period’s diet. Kiel University began the investigation of the broader area of the tell settlement of Bordjoš on the outskirts of Törökbecse (Novi Bečej) in the Voivodine (Serbia) in 2014.⁹ Robert Hoffmann (Kiel) and his colleagues (Fynn Wilkes, Stefan Dreibrodt, Aleksandar Medović, Tijana Stanković-Pešterac, Ildiko Medović, Sarah Martini and Martin Furholt) described the micro-regional fieldwork and their findings on the study area’s long-term settlement history from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. Aleksandar Medović discussed the archaeobotanical finds of this research project. Two papers were devoted to the findings of the German-Hungarian-Polish collaborative project directed by Gabriella Kulcsár (Institute of Archaeology, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences) mentioned in the above. The first offered an overview of the micro-regional research with a focus on the Bronze Age conducted in the Danube Valley during the past ten years, while the second (held together with Mateusz Jaeger, Robert Staniuk, Sofia Filatova and Jakub Niebieszczański) reported on the excavations at Kakucs-Turján, one of the region’s major sites, and the site’s role in the region’s settlement network. Yet another paper also covered the findings of an international collaborative project focusing on the Bronze Age: Marie-Louise Stig Sørensen (Cambridge) and her colleagues (Magdolna Vicze, Százhalombatta, and Johanna Sofaer, Southampton) based their studies on the use and organisation of space on the Bronze Age tell settlement at Százhalombatta on the micro-traces preserved on house floors. Frankl Schlütz (Wilhelmshafen) reconstructed the different types and proportions of cereals cultivated by the occupants of the Bronze Age tell settlement at Vrable-Fidvár from the isotope analysis of the archaeobotanical remains brought to light within the framework of the

⁸ For a detailed description of the Körös Regional Archaeological project, see <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/science/projects/koros-regional-archaeological-project> (last accessed June 3, 2019).

⁹ The Serbian archaeologists participating in the project have recently published an overview of the region’s Late Neolithic sites (MIRKOVIĆ-MARIĆ–MARIĆ 2017).

German-Slovakian research project.¹⁰

The presentations closing the session covered regions beyond the Danube and Tisza region, and the Carpathian Basin in general. Slawomir Kadrow (Rzeszow) reviewed the settlement history of Little Poland from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. Aleksandr Diachenko (Kiel) based his presentation on the enigmatic mega-sites of the Tripolye culture and his interpretation of the changes in the Bug-Dniester region on the radiocarbon dates from these settlements. Sarah Martini (Kiel) compared the findings of the geoarchaeological studies at Neolithic and Iron Ages sites in Anatolia and Central Europe with a focus on the changes reflected by the chemical and archaeological traces of sediments within these broad spatial and temporal boundaries.

Two posters were also presented during the session. Cătălin Lazar (Bucharest) looked at the complex interaction between the eponymous tell settlement of the Gumelnița culture and its environment using a complex interdisciplinary approach. Mihaela Savu (Kiel) examined the different fishing and fish consumption strategies of the Late Neolithic communities living on different settlement types of the Lower Danube region.

Most of the presentations highlighted the importance of regional studies, of the bottom-up approach and of interdisciplinary data gathering and research as well as of coherent short or long narratives based on the findings. The presentations provided convincing cases for the complex interactions between the Neolithic and Bronze Age tell settlements and their environment on the one hand, and persuasive arguments that a better understanding of these settlements can only be achieved through broader collaborations and international networks. This is one of the reasons that research on tells received a new impetus following the relative standstill of the past decade. The colourful diversity of the speakers and their presentations offered a sweeping overview of the many new initiatives in this field.

With its excellent infrastructure, the building of Kiel University provided a perfect venue for the conference. The conference's organisers, Wiebke Kirleis, Johannes Müller, Mara Weinelt and their colleagues were wonderful, ever-helpful and friendly hosts. Although we were exposed to the



Fig. 4. The Dosenmoor marshland, a nature reserve, preserves a wealth of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental information about the history of the past 12,000 years



Fig. 5. The megalithic grave near Tarbek is a cultural heritage monument

¹⁰ For a detailed description of the project, see <http://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/203267416> (last accessed June 3, 2019).

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stormy winds marking the end of the North Sea winter and the almost constantly pouring rains, these could not dampen our spirits and become an overwhelming experience. In addition to the work in the conference sessions, the informal conversations and exchanges during the coffee breaks,¹¹ the opening reception (Ice-breaker), the traditional conference dinner and the excursion to the marshland at the end of the conference (Figs 4–5) undoubtedly contributed to the conference’s overall pleasant and inspiring milieu. After Budapest, Kiel will host the 27th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in 2021: the university will no doubt rise to the challenge with the very same perfection.

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¹¹ Eco-consciousness played a prominent role at the conference: notepads were made of recycled paper, participants received returnable name tags, glass and ceramic cups were used in the coffee breaks, and mineral water and fruit juices from refundable bottles were offered as refreshments, reflecting the university’s commitment to sustainable development.

RECOMMENDED READING:

International open workshop. Socio-Environmental Dynamics over the Last 15,000 Years: The Creation of Landscapes VI. Kiel University, March 11–16, 2019. Programme and Abstracts. <http://www.workshop-gshdl.uni-kiel.de/wp-content/uploads/International-Workshop-Programm-2019-Part-1.pdf> (accessed June 3, 2019), <http://www.workshop-gshdl.uni-kiel.de/wp-content/uploads/International-Workshop-Programm-2019-Part-2.pdf> (accessed June 3, 2019)