

*Archaeology, Ideology and Society: The German Experience*, edited by Heinrich Härke. Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2000. ISBN 08204-4782-X. 432pp., index. \$52.95.

by

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German archaeologists are renowned for two things: their unswerving adherence to a culture-historical paradigm and their refusal to discuss their discipline's past. The overall understanding of the development of European archaeology has long been handicapped by the lack of comprehensive, analytical studies of the history of German archaeology. Papers focused on specific issues by archaeologists such as Leo Klejn, Bettina Arnold, and Ulrich Veit whetted, but did not fully satisfy, foreign interest in this subject.

In recent years this gap has been filled by two magisterial books. The first is Suzanne L. Marchand's *Down from Olympus* (1996), a history of German classical archaeology from 1750 to 1970. Marchand traces how, following the military defeat of Prussia by Napoleon, the Prussian government sought to produce better trained civil servants by reforming the educational system. To avoid exposing these young men to the revolutionary ideas of the French Enlightenment, the new educational system was based on classical studies, especially the study of ancient Greek civilization. German intellectuals admired the culture of ancient Greece and closely identified with this civilization, which like Germany before 1871 was politically fragmented. The need to train large numbers of secondary school teachers meant that classical studies flourished in German universities, where classical and Near Eastern archaeology developed in a subordinate relation to the study of classical literature, art, and philosophy. Nevertheless, with the enthusiastic support of a governing class largely trained in classical studies, classical and Near Eastern archaeology increasingly flourished in Germany throughout the 19th century. Its intellectual hegemony persisted into the era of the Weimar republic.

*Archaeology, Ideology and Society*, edited by Heinrich Härke, provides a much needed companion study of German pre-and protohistory. Unlike Marchand's book, Härke's is a collection of papers authored by 16 archaeologists. While most of the contributors are based in Germany, none belong to what Härke calls the West German "archaeological establishment." Härke himself is employed at the University of Reading in England and the two international commentators in the Netherlands (Tom Bloemers) and the United States (Bettina Arnold). The high quality of the papers, their great intrinsic interest, and careful editing make this book a model collection. *Archaeology, Ideology and Society* is a milestone in the study of the history of archaeology.

Throughout most of the 19th century, the study of German prehistory remained largely a local and amateur enterprise. Frank Fettes discusses how, between 1870 and 1902, the politically liberal physical anthropologist, Rudolf Virchow, sought to unite prehistoric archaeology, physical anthropology, linguistics, and the study of written records as branches of an all-embracing anthropological discipline that studied the early history of all humanity. He called this sort of archaeology *Urgeschichte* (primeval history). Already in the late 19th century, German archaeology was more empirical, and less synthetically oriented, than was British archaeology. Under the influence of the leading German historian, Leopold van Ranke, "facts" were valued more highly than their interpreta-

tions and inductive approaches were preferred to deductive ones.

Following Virchow's death, Gustaf Kossinna transformed the study of German prehistory into an autonomous science of prehistory (*Vorgeschichte*, what happens before recorded history), that was dedicated to elucidating the origins and early development of the German people (*Volk*). The term *Archäologie* was reserved for classical archaeology. The basis of Kossinna's work was his equating of archaeological cultures with prehistoric tribes or peoples and his use of the direct historical approach to try to trace historically-known peoples back in time using archaeological data. Until the 1930s, Kossinna's approach, shorn of its German nationalism and sometimes of its racist physical anthropology, was the dominant methodological approach utilized by European prehistoric archaeologists.

In either of its early forms, the institutionalization of German prehistoric archaeology proceeded very slowly. Beginning in 1863, a growing number of courses dealing with prehistory were offered in German universities. Yet it was impossible to take a degree in that discipline. Kossinna received an (unpaid) chair in German archaeology in 1902 and the first department of prehistory was established in 1927 at Marburg University.

Veit does not document the extent to which Kossinna's work was based on a well-established interest in defining archaeological cultures and equating them with specific peoples. This form of interpretation began in the early 1860s and became increasingly common in central, eastern, and northern Europe, where it was frequently associated with increasing nationalism. C.F. Meinander documented this process in his paper "The concept of culture in European archaeological literature" (*Towards a History of Archaeology*, edited by Glyn Daniel, 1981). Veit also attributes the slow establishment of prehistoric archaeology as an academic discipline to the prevailing linguistic orientation of historical studies relating to early times. This claim may partly be true, but Veit overlooks Marchand's observation that, while the Prussian landed aristocracy exploited German nationalism for their own purposes, they also mistrusted it and were therefore reluctant to encourage it. Hence the study of German prehistory did not enjoy the lavish government patronage that was accorded to classical archaeology.

Henning Hassmann's treatment of German prehistoric archaeology during the Third Reich provides fascinating insights into the intellectual contradictions and opportunism, as well as the institutional chaos and infighting, that characterized the Nazi movement, even when it governed Germany. Its leaders did not agree about why they advocated racism. Hitler, who appears to have been strongly influenced by Ernst Haeckel's eugenics movement, privately felt only contempt for prehistoric German culture and Gothic romanticism. He preferred classical culture. The party ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg, and SS chief, Heinrich Himmler, shared an older and less "scientific" racism ultimately derived from the writings of Gustav Klemm and the Comte de Gobineau. Both Rosenberg and Himmler sought to use prehistoric archaeology to legitimize Nazi racist claims and to make the past the basis of a new Germanic religion that would replace Christianity. What the Nazi leaders agreed about was the utility of any and all claims that might promote their collective political agenda. Kossinna's ideas about prehistory were useful for replacing the divisive concept of class with the unifying concept of *Volk*, identified with the historic German people, and for encouraging Germans to believe that with proper leadership they could accomplish anything.

During the Nazi period, many chairs and personal professorships were established for prehistoric

archaeologists in German universities, while two Nazi research institutes, the *Amt Rosenberg* and Himmler's *Ahnenerbe* (Ancestral Heritage Foundation) competed for control of German archaeology. While much objective research was carried out and published, especially by archaeologists working for the *Ahnenerbe*, all too little is yet known about the roles individual archaeologists played in looting archaeological treasures in Nazi-occupied countries, intimidating foreign colleagues, and creating propaganda that supported the Nazi regime and its policies. Support for the Nazis was widespread among archaeologists. This is attributed to the unprecedented Nazi support for prehistoric German archaeology and to timidity, career opportunism, the unquestioning loyalty that many civil servants believed they owed to the state, and the ideological attractions that National Socialism had for many nationalistically-inclined archaeologists.

Sabine Wolfram points out that, after 1945, in West Germany only one prehistoric archaeologist (Hans Reinert, the highest-ranking archaeologist in the *Amt Rosenberg*) was barred from continuing to hold a publicly-funded post. The rest sought to break with the past by avoiding ethnic interpretations of archaeological data.

Some even argued that such interpretations were inherently unsound. West German archaeologists emphasized their positivist and "ideology-free" orientation and devoted increasing attention to developing formal typologies, elaborating chronological schemes, spatial analysis, and objectively defining archaeological cultures. Ethnic interpretations were replaced by attempts to elucidate prehistoric political and economic structures, religious beliefs, and exchange patterns using analogies derived from central European history. Thus German archaeologists created a de-ethnicized variant of culture-historical archaeology. On the older-is-better principle, it was argued that the theoretical basis of this approach had been established already in the 19th century and that developments since then had resulted mainly from the application of new techniques of scientific analysis. Little attention was paid to the history of archaeology or to developments occurring elsewhere. The reaction to processual and postprocessual archaeology was generally dismissive. Before the student unrest of 1988-89, even theories that West German archaeologists had formulated within the culture-historical tradition were rarely discussed.

The small size and differing specializations of many archaeology departments in German universities, the lack of effective communication resulting from archaeological funding being a state rather than a federal responsibility, and the limited importance accorded to teaching students and communicating with the public may in part explain the lack of theoretical debate (Ulrike Sommer, Martin Schmidt). Yet the lengthy period required to complete a *Habilitation* thesis (and qualify to be a university professor) after earning a doctoral degree and the crucial role played by German professors in shaping the careers and determining the job prospects of their students have to a still greater degree ensured that West German prehistoric archaeology has remained in a state of theoretical stasis since the 1940s. The lack of interest in theoretical concepts has meant that gender studies are less developed in archaeology than in history and ethnology. The minimal role played by women in archaeology also reflects the persisting androcentric and sexist nature of German society and academia (Eva-Maria Mertens, Sigrun Karlich *et al.*).

In East Germany, prehistoric archaeology, like the other social sciences, was officially subjected to the dictates of historical materialism. A Marxist orientation was a career advantage, but being a Marxist was not a prerequisite for being a professional archaeologist. The late Werner Coblentz argues that archaeology was less subject to political control than was history and that many East

German archaeologists took refuge in the same type of “factual” research as did West German ones. On the other hand, convinced Communists and archaeologists who had been wholly educated under the Communist regime carried out problem-oriented research that even their right-wing West German colleagues admitted asked interesting questions. For the most part, party activists, opportunists, fellow-travellers, and dissidents worked amicably together. Among the difficulties East German archaeologists encountered were lack of free contact with foreign archaeologists and gaining access to foreign publications.

Jörn Jacobs documents how, since the unification of Germany, East German archaeologists have been dismissed from their employment on charges of having collaborated with the East German secret police, for incompetence, and apparently also because of continuing Marxist theoretical orientations. Many positions have been filled by West German archaeologists. Instead of trying to combine the best of East and West German archaeology, West German style archaeology is being imposed on the East. West German archaeologists are also using their ability to fund archaeological research abroad to promote West German-style archaeology in other former East Bloc countries and in Namibia, which was a German colony from 1884 to 1915 (John Kinahan). The recent spread of culture-historical archaeology not only results from archaeologists in formerly Communist countries returning to pre-World War II archaeological practices; it is also a consequence of deliberate German policy. In eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the culture-historical approach is once again becoming closely aligned with nationalism.

Kossinna, as the leading icon of Nazi ethnic and racial prehistory, casts a long shadow over modern German archaeology. Most contributors are realistic, and even generous, in their efforts to understand human frailties. They accept cowardice, opportunism, and subconscious habituation as factors leading to collaboration with any political regime, whether democratic or totalitarian. Kossinna was a conservative German nationalist, who in the course of his career embraced ugly racial myths that had been spreading since the 1850s among European intellectuals who were opposed to social change. Most German archaeologists who were already adults between 1933 and 1945 became complicitous to varying degrees in their everyday life with a regime that committed criminal acts on an unprecedented scale, was responsible for the deaths of tens of millions of human beings, and finally brought utter ruin to Germany itself. Because the Nazis had used archaeological findings to empower their movement, archaeologists had still more reason not to discuss their involvement with Nazism.

Yet Arnold is correct that the racism and ethnocentrism that inspired Kossinna also contaminated the work of American archaeologists and their interpretations of Amerindian prehistory. Beginning in the 1860s, British and French archaeologists offered racist interpretations of prehistory that helped to justify colonial oppression in Africa, Asia, Australia, and other parts of the world. Kossinna and his German followers were part of a much wider pattern of attempted racist justifications of the nationalism and colonialism that infected Western civilization between the 1850s and 1960s. With rare and honourable exceptions, interpretations of archaeological data incorporated racist views to varying degrees. Because of this, German archaeology and German intellectual life prior to 1945 cannot be properly understood except in the broader context of nationalism, colonialism, and racist thought as it was manifested throughout Western civilization. The ultimate academic challenge is to comprehend the economic and political factors that shaped these intellectual movements.

Finally, these papers raise an interesting question relating to the history of science. Many English-

speaking archaeologists have regarded Thomas Kuhn's concept of scientific revolutions as applicable to their discipline. The ability of young radicals, such as Lewis Binford or Ian Hodder and their disciples, to transform archaeology by successfully challenging the beliefs and practices of an older generation of archaeologists appears to conform with Kuhn's concept of a scientific revolution, even if archaeology has always possessed competing paradigms rather than a single dominant one, as has been the case with the physical and natural sciences. Stephen L. Dyson, in his paper "The role of ideology and institutions in shaping classical archaeology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (in *Tracing Archaeology's Past*, edited by A.L. Christenson, 1989), has pointed out that Kuhn's concept does not apply to classical archaeology, where gerontocratic control of resources and mega-research projects has stifled youthful innovation and tended to produce mature scholars who are clones of their teachers. It appears that in Germany a similar situation prevails in prehistoric archaeology.

Yet, in recent years, classical archaeologists in Britain and the United States have shown increasing willingness to transcend their traditional, exclusively art-historical and text-based approach to archaeology and are embracing methods derived from prehistoric archaeology that reveal more about environmental settings, economies, social organization, and everyday life in ancient societies. This suggests that Tom Bloemers is right to hope that German prehistoric archaeology can change and develop. When it does, the efforts of the triumphalist forces that control archaeology in a united Germany to eradicate rather than exploit the intellectual diversity that was inherited from East Germany may finally be recognized as a short-sighted and retrograde policy.

*Grasshopper Pueblo. A Story of Archaeology and Ancient Life*, by Jefferson Reid and Stephanie Whittlesey. University of Arizona Press, Tucson. 204 pages, 32 photographs, 8 illustrations, references, index. 1999. ISBN: 0-8165-1914-5. Hardback \$29.95, Paperback \$15.95.

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Grasshopper Pueblo field school closed after the 1992 summer season. Its closing marked the end of a 30-year period of survey, excavation and analysis of archaeological sites and materials as well as student education. From 1963-1992, hundreds of students were trained in the field methods and analytical models and techniques of the New Archaeology as practiced at the University of Arizona under the direction of Raymond Thompson (1963-1965), William Longacre (1966-1978), and J. Jefferson Reid (1979-1992). By the end of the 1992 summer season, Grasshopper Pueblo was, perhaps, the most thoroughly studied archaeological site in the American Southwest. As the authors note, "Although large pueblos of the American Southwest have attracted archaeologists for more than a century ... Ancient life at these special places will never be understood with as much detail as we have for Grasshopper Pueblo" (x). Much of the detail is reported in the many published papers, nine doctoral dissertations, and two masters' theses cited by the authors, and more reports are likely to follow. As a training ground for archaeologists, Grasshopper is probably comparable in importance to the Chaco Canyon field schools and excavations of the 1920s-1940s.