

VII. Conference reports

The Beginnings of Academic Pre- and Protohistoric Archaeology (1890-1930) in a European Perspective, 13-16/03/2003, Humboldt-University, Berlin

Four years after the Humboldt-University had staged the ground-breaking conference on middle and eastern European archaeology during the Third Reich (Leube/Hegewisch 2002), the chair of Pre- and Protohistory organized another conference dealing with the history of archaeology. As the title suggests, this time the focus was on the disciplinary beginnings of archaeology in different European countries. This seemed quite appropriate considering the fact that in the past important discoveries, biographies and the history of ideas have been of far more interest than the institutional pre-conditions that made the rise of archaeology possible. The official motivation for organizing the conference was the 100th anniversary of the first lecture held by Gustaf Kossinna in 1903 at the Humboldt-University in Berlin.

Probably because of its less controversial nature the conference did not generate as much interest as the one four years before, but it was still very well attended and organised. While the conference hall, the "Senatssaal" is splendid, it unfortunately hindered lively discussions due to its size. Still, the atmosphere of the conference was quite friendly, and many open questions were discussed afterwards during the social events. Because it is not possible to give even credit to all papers presented at the conference I will concentrate in the following on those aspects which seem to me most interesting and will further comment on common trends which shone through all papers.

A common observation was that for many years in nearly every European country archaeology played a more or less marginal role in universities. While in many countries something like prehistoric archaeology was taught as early as the beginnings of the 19th century, this teaching was always bound to lecturers with non-archaeological backgrounds and only very seldom achieved predominance in their teaching. Where data are available, it is remarkable that only a small percentage of the early students subsequently got important positions or played any role in archaeology. Many of the "Gründerväter" (practically all were males) in the respective countries made their living by other means than by lecturing, especially by being members of a local or national museum. Proper chairs of prehistoric archaeology were in the main only installed after 1900.

Central in this respect as well as to the conference in general was the *Festvortrag* held by Heinz Grünert, in which Grünert – drawing from his seminal work (Grünert 2002) - showed Gustaf Kossinna's development from being a librarian to finally becoming an *Extraordinarius* in 1902. This talk was illuminating in more than one aspect. It was fascinating to see how Kossinna managed to get a thorough knowledge of prehistoric archaeology – necessarily in an autodidactic way – beside two (!) full-time jobs (he worked as a librarian, but had to do editing and other commissioned work to feed his family). By constant nagging over many years and support from higher administrative circles, he finally was released from his job as librarian and got an *Extraordinat*. While this was more than he could ever have hoped for, he was still not satisfied and lamented his life long that he had not got an *Ordentliches Ordinariat* (the difference between *Extraordinariat* and *Ordentlichem Ordinariat* used to be a very important one in the German university system: only *Ordinarii* were proper members of the faculty and got far better payment).

It was interesting to see that in many countries would-be-lecturers had to fight in a similar way for their discipline to get recognition, but the bitterness Kossinna nurtured is probably exceptional and certainly did not help his case.

None of the other papers with their time limitation could present such a “thick description” of a single scholar. However, many speakers still concentrated on biographies and individuals. While this is a legitimate tool to exemplify the development of a discipline – after all, this development is by necessity bound to individuals - attempts to transgress the individual dimension were largely absent. In this regard, the paper given by L. S. Klejn and I. L. Tikhonov (given by the latter) “The beginnings of university archaeology in Russia” was noteworthy. They presented a highly structured talk, in which they showed in much detail the phases Russian archaeology went through and the institutions involved. Furthermore, they illustrated the relations between the different Russian schools and the respective individuals by way of a tree-like diagram, which made the importance of these schools for understanding the development of Russian archaeology quite clear. However, this idea could easily be expanded and is not far away from network analysis which has, at least to my knowledge, not yet been used for research in the history of archaeology. This mode of analysis and display seems to be a very viable tool to demonstrate and visualize the interconnectedness of European archaeology throughout its existence from its beginnings to the very present and the relationships and interdependencies between individual scholars. Research along these lines would also shift the focus from the single archaeologist to, as Marc-Antoine Kaeser has coined it (see below), the research field in which he is brought up, in which he learns and in which he later teaches.

It seems clear that far more research has to go into this direction of personal interrelationships if we want to gain a fuller understanding why some archaeological schools were successful and flourished while others did not.

To this end, it would certainly be helpful to develop a data base with pictures and dates of archaeologists, as was suggested during the final discussion. With such a tool, perhaps available via WWW, identification of individuals on old photographs would be much easier. Another shortcoming of many papers was their tendency to remain on a strictly descriptive basis. Even though it is undoubtedly important to get the facts right, more efforts to generalize would have made comparisons easier. It is certainly no coincidence that the most lively discussion was stimulated by the most generalizing paper. Marc-Antoine Kaeser talked about “Institutions and the first establishment of prehistoric science: Autonomy as a failure”. He noted that with the beginnings of the 1870s, prehistoric archaeology had grown from a *subject of research* to a *research field*. With the latter term he relates to the first phase of institutionalisation that took place around that time: journals and learned societies were founded, international conferences organised, antiquarians and natural sciences alike were attracted by the new discipline. However, according to Kaeser, within a decade the immediate evolutionist goals were all fulfilled, so many of the leading scholars turned to other areas of interest. Those who stuck with archaeology took refuge in positivist studies and had to wait for another 20 years for the second wave of institutionalisation around 1900, resulting from growing nationalistic sentiments.

While it is easy to show that the course of archaeology in this or that country was a little bit different – as was done in the discussion afterwards, it is still important to look for the similarities across Europe and beyond and to try to generalize as Kaeser did. Without such a thoroughly comparative approach, historical accounts of archaeology will not be more than butterfly-collecting. Furthermore, only by generalizing the peculiarities of regional

developments can be fully understood and appreciated.

Some further aspects missing from the papers presented were raised by the discussants Ulrich Veit and Johan Callmer in their final statements. They made a plea for contextualising the development of archaeology and pointed to the need of placing it within the development of society in general. Furthermore, according to them, more emphasis should be placed on the role the universities played, especially in relation to the declining and transforming role of museums. In their view, not enough stress was laid on the intellectual climate at universities and on the power relations within the faculties. The means and forms in which teaching at the universities took place is also an area where more research should go into.

Finally, Callmer reminded the participants that, after all, archaeologists can do historical investigations only in an amateurish way and need the help of professional historians. Together, it might be easier to fill some of gaps pointed out above.

Despite these critical comments, it was in many respects a most stimulating conference. It is to be hoped that the conference proceedings will soon be published so that discussion can go on. At the end, it was announced by Mircea Babeş that the UISPP has founded a commission for the history of archaeology, and that a further conference is already planned.

Bibliography

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VIII. Announcements

The Field Museum Announces Save America's Treasures Grant

The Department of Anthropology at The Field Museum has been awarded a \$400,000 grant from the prestigious Save America's Treasures program to help conserve the North American Ethnographic and Archaeological Collection. This collection, with its associated archives and documentary photographs, constitute one of the world's great resources for studying the intellectual and cultural heritage and diversity of the United States. Consisting of nearly 1,000,000 objects gathered since 1890, this outstanding collection preserves the artistic, ceremonial, and utilitarian legacies of dozens of prehistoric and historic Native American cultures. Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Park Service, this Save America's Treasures grant will be used to hire two collections managers, two conservators, and one half-time information analyst for the two-year duration of the project. The project team will work with existing Department of Anthropology staff and faculty to: 1)