Quo vadis?

Status and Future Perspectives of Long-Term Excavations in Europe

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Status and Future Perspectives of Long-Term Excavations in Europe

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Foreword

The *Archäologisches Landesmuseum* (Archaeological State Museum) in Schleswig – today a part of the *Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf* – has, since its founding as the oldest branch of the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen in 1836, belonged to the tradition-steeped institutions of this kind in central and northern Europe. Since its founding the institution has felt an obligation to the museal principles of collection and preservation, imparting of results and presentation as well as research. Over the last 175 years a museal infrastructure has developed and the research in Haithabu has belonged to its basic components and long-term projects since the early 20th century. Taking a look back over the history of our museum was not the only purpose of the numerous events celebrating its 175th anniversary in 2011; it was just as much our aim to seek an international and comprehensive discussion in order to determine the position of our institution for the future as well.

Outstanding archaeological finds or even monuments had long been known and excavated in the early 19th century. Childerich's grave in Tournai (exposed in 1653) as well as the Gallehus horns in southern Jutland (discovered in the years 1639 and 1734) can be quoted as examples of important early evidence. Excavations of well-known monuments began as early as the 18th century, if not earlier, and continue up to today, with interruptions. This applies to, amongst others, Stonehenge in Great Britain, Birka in Sweden and Jelling in Denmark. However, the beginnings of long-term excavations go back in even greater numbers to the academization of the subject pre- and early history in the early 20th century. Haithabu is an important example of this.

Long-term excavations, which were frequently started more than 100 years ago, have gone through fundamental transformations from their beginnings up to today. This affects excavation technology itself, which has increasingly improved, starting with the discovery of the post hole and progressing to the use of scientific disciplines at excavations as well as the evaluation of results and finds. Further innovations have followed in recent decades through the use of metal detectors and geophysical surveys.

Large-scale investigations have naturally developed their own dynamism, while a multitude of finds have been uncovered and extensive documentation of excavations has emerged. In parallel, complex questions have developed, which extend from the detailed analysis of the extremely extensive find material to the methodological-theoretical access to the significance of large-scale excavations and long-term projects.

The conference "Quo vadis? – Long-Term Research Projects in European Archaeology", which took place in Schleswig 26–28 October 2011, can claim to have placed European long-term excavations at the centre of intensive discussions for the first time. The conference achieved the objective of instigating an open discussion of further perspectives of long-term excavations, starting with the consideration of individual find sites. Within this framework questions of medium- and long-term funding strategies as well as those for the imparting of results and museal presentation were able to be broached.

The following key questions were made the subject of discussion:

- How should finds and documentation be lastingly secured, analysed and published?
- How are the respective research strategies to date shaping up, and what does the future for long-term projects look like?
- How do large projects maintain models for smaller project structures, and which ventures can be identified as examples of best practice?
- Which concepts secure the lasting imparting of results and museal presentation of large projects?
- How can the respective approaches to research be coordinated and common approaches for the lasting development of large-scale archaeological projects be formed?

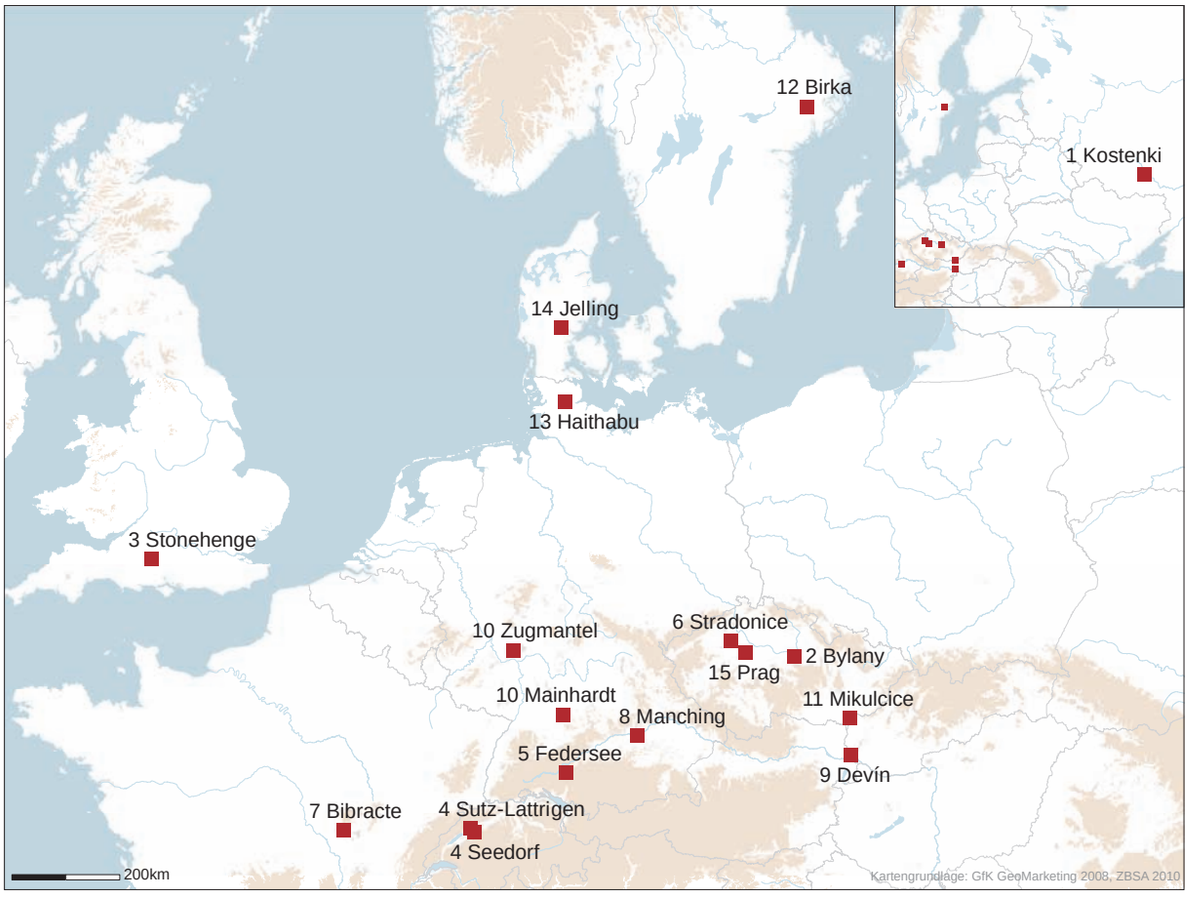
These complexes of themes were debated at the conference in several open discussion rounds, which also dealt with the possible comparability of find sites as well as the respective strategies.

My thanks go first of all to the authors of this volume, which brings together the main part of the talks at the conference. Dr Oliver Grimm (Schleswig) undertook the organization of the conference and the editorial management of the book. The editorial supervision lay in the hands of Isabel Sonnenschein M.A. (Schleswig) whereas Matthias Bolte (Schleswig) was responsible for the graphic arrangement. I cordially thank the aforementioned for their patient commitment. Sharon Shellock MA (London) and Wilson Huntley (Göttingen) were kind enough to take on the proof-reading and also some translation work in a highly reliable manner.

The conference was made possible through a generous financial contribution from the *Verein zur Förderung des Archäologischen Landesmuseums e.V.* My thanks go to Chairman Kuno Vöge and Chief Executive Ute Drews.

Mikhail Vasil'evich Anikovich, who significantly furthered the success of our conference with his contribution to Kostenki, died in August 2012 during field works in Kostenki itself. As a result eastern European archaeology has lost an experienced excavator and a successful scientist.

Schleswig, May 2014 Claus von Carnap-Bornheim



Location of the sites mentioned in the text (in the same chronological order as the book's chapters). 1 Kostenki in Russia (Upper Palaeolithic); 2 Bylany in the Czech Republic (Neolithic); 3 Stonehenge in England (Neolithic and Bronze Age); 4 Sutz-Lattrigen, Seedorf Lobigensee and the other pile-dwellings in Switzerland (Neolithic and Bronze Age); 5 Bad Buchau (Federsee) and the other pile dwellings in southern Germany (Neolithic to Iron Age); 6 Stradonice and the Celtic oppida *in Bohemia and Moravia in the Czech Republic (last centuries BC); 7 Bibracte in France (last century BC); 8 Manching in Germany (last centuries BC); 9 Devin in Slovakia (different settlement horizons); 10 Zugmantel, Mainhardt and the other forts of the Upper-German Raetian Limes (first centuries AD); 11 Mikulčice in the Czech Republic/Slovakia (late 1st millennium AD); 12 Birka in Sweden (late 1st millennium AD); 13 Haithabu, in present day northern Germany (late 1st millennium AD); 14 Jelling in Denmark (late 1st and early 2nd millennium AD); 15 Prague in the Czech Republic (flowering period since the 9th century AD).*

"Kostenki Project": The History of Palaeolithic Studies in the Kostenki-Borshchevo Region

By Mikhail Vasil'evich Anikovich and Nadezhda Igorevna Platonova, St. Petersburg

Keywords: Upper Palaeolithic, Kostenki, excavations, history of research

Abstract: The archaeological data from the Kostenki-Borshchevo region is essential for the discussion of the chronology, cultural history and environment of the East European Upper Palaeolithic. The first site was discovered in 1879 and systematic research began on it in the early 1920s and continues until now. The history of the long-term investigations of Kostenki and their results is now of great interest for archaeologists and historians[1].

Introduction

The right bank of the Don River contains, over a stretch of 10 km, a famous group of Upper Palaeolithic sites (Fig. 1). The area is situated 700 km south of Moscow and 35 km south of Voronezh city (the villages Kostenki, Alexandrovka and Borshchevo). It contains more than 30 separate locations, of which 10 have more phases of habitation. The material from this region is essential in the discussion of the chronology, cultural history and environment of the East European Upper Palaeolithic. Indeed, it was actually responsible for the formation of the National Russian School of Prehistory. Many ideas about Palaeolithic culture have been developed and changed in Kostenki.

Some English authors locate Kostenki in Ukraine. This is wrong. In the 16th–17th

Fig. 1. Kostenki in Russia (map K. Göbel, ZBSA).

1 Supported by the Program of the Presidium of Russian Academy of Sciences "Traditions and Innovations in history and culture" and Russian Federal Fund of Humanities No, 12-01-00345a.

centuries, the contemporary Voronezh region formed a southern part of the young Kingdom of Moskovia. The major part of its population lived in the small wooden fortresses that defended the Russian borders from the raids of nomads. Kostensk (the later Kostenki) was one such fortress. In the 19th century this region became a province of Central Russia.
Compared to other concentrations of Upper Paleolithic sites in Eurasia, Kostenki remains outstanding due, not only to the high quantity of the sites aggregated in a small area or to the geological positions of their cultural layers, but also to the unique variety of modes of cultural adaptation represented there.
The first Palaeolithic site in Kostenki was discovered in 1879, but one can speak about the "Kostenki Project" only since the early 1920s, when the expedition led by Peter P. Efimenko and Sergey N. Zamyatnin began a systematic search for new locations for their exploratory excavations. The history of the project may be divided into several periods, each connected with its main investigators:

1922–1929 (P. P. Efimenko, S. N. Zamyatnin)
1931–1941 (P. P. Efimenko, A. N. Rogachev)
1948–1970 (A. N. Rogachev, P. I. Boriskovsky)
1971–1994 (N. D. Praslov, A. N. Rogachev)
Since 1998 (M. V. Anikovich, A. A. Sinitsyn, S. N. Lisitsyn, V. V. Popov)

Since the middle of the 1920s, all field works were executed in Kostenki exclusively by the Academy/Institute of the History of material culture (St. Petersburg). At present an increasingly important role is played by the local museum-reserve, working in close collaboration with the Institute. The earliest period of Kostenki investigations (19th–early 20th cent.), lacked any systematic field studies but is also full of interest and worthy of discussion.

From '*Inder*-the-Beast' to the first excavations and discussions

The root of the names 'Kostensk' and 'Kostenki' is the Russian word 'kost', which means 'bone'. The name likely refers to the impressive bones that the fortress builders found in the ground here. Possibly the legend of "Inder" also emerged at that time. According to this legend, the great beast *Inder* one day had to cross the river Don. Being afraid that its children might drown, it decided to drink all the water in the river. Finally, the great river was reduced to a small brook. At the same time, the size of the beast increased and increased. As it turned around to invite its children to cross the river, its body exploded and its bones were spread within a large area (Polyakov 1880, 19).
Peter the Great was the first to attempt a rational explanation of the gigantic bones. During a visit to Kostenki, he proposed that they derived from Alexander the Great's elephants, which had frozen to death (Bolkhovitinov 1800, 101–102). The elephant-hypothesis was accepted for a century.
In 1768–1769 Samuel G. Gmelin (1745–1774) visited Kostenski, mainly to verify the information about the elephant bones. He conducted excavations on the right-hand shore of the Don (the 1st terrace), and stated that the bones were not placed in any specific order and that the bones of other animal species were absent (Gmelin 1771, 34–35).
The Kostenki Palaeolithic was really discovered in 1879 by Ivan S. Polyakov (1844–1887; Fig. 2). He was the first to provide a correct explanation for the "elephant bones" there. Polyakov was a really outstanding person. Born in a deep, remote province of eastern Siberia, his parents were poor people of simple origin. Despite this, his talent and passionate desire for knowledge led him into higher education and, in 1871, he defended his magister thesis at the Naturalist Department of St. Petersburg University.

Fig. 2. Ivan S. Polyakov (1845–1887) (©Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, St. Petersburg).

Some Palaeolithic sites had already been discovered in Western Europe by the middle 19th century, especially in France. In the 1870s, Palaeolithic sites were found in the Russian Empire: Irkutsk Hospital in Eastern Siberia (1871), Gontsy in the Ukraine (1873), Karacharovo in Central Russia (1877). I. S. Polyakov took part in the investigations at Karacharovo (1878) and observed many mammoth bones in the excavation trench. He was convinced of a link between the Palaeolithic sites and the mammoth bones so he began searching for information about such findings. His excavations in Kostenki were started in 1879, and the first day of excavation revealed flint implements and ashes of bone deposited together with mammoth bones. On June 28th of the same year, one of the richest and most famous Upper Palaeolithic sites in Eastern Europe, Kostenki-1, upper layer (now: Kostenki 1/I) was discovered. In his classic report published in 1880, Polyakov claimed that the Kostenki region was a very rich field for future Palaeolithic investigations.

I. S. Polyakov especially noted that the percentage of mammoth skeletal remains was absolutely predominant over that of all other species, which suggested that mammoth meat had been the main diet of the inhabitants of Kostenki-1 (Polyakov 1880, 31–32). Polyakov was right: the investigations of the middle 20th century proved that Kostenki-1/I formed part of a unique series of sites with abundant mammoth bones (the middle phase of Upper Palaeolithic, Eastern/Central Europe). Mammoth was here the basis of the entire subsistence system of the human population (Anikovich et al. 2010, 119–122). Polyakov interpreted the accumulations of mammoth bones in cultural deposits as being the result of successful hunting. He treated the Palaeolithic inhabitants of Kostenki-1 as a quite highly developed community and suggested they had built some tent-type dwellings (Polyakov 1880, 33–34).

Alexander I. Kel'siev from Moscow became the second investigator at Kostenki-1. He had excavated a small area there in 1881 and set forth a different concept of the data. Kel'siev was the first to propose the idea that the sites with abundant mammoth bones (Kostenki-1 or Karacharovo) were actually "mammoth cemeteries", where Palaeolithic people extracted meat from permafrost deposits and ate it (Kel'siev 1883, 24–25). According to Kel'siev, the Upper Palaeolithic people acted and thought very primitively. Allegedly, they did not even store their tools but left them on the site after having satisfied their momentary need of these objects. For the 1880s, the idea of a "mammoth cemetery" was fairly original, and certainly needed further development and confirmation. In the late 1880s, a similar idea was offered independently by J. Japetus Steenstrup (1813–1897), based on the data of the Predmosti site in Moravia (Steenstrup 1890).

Both concepts (mammoth hunting and the utilization of mammoth cemeteries) are still current in contemporary studies of the Upper Palaeolithic. No doubt, along with the "extreme" viewpoints there are also "intermediate" ones that aim to collate all of the facts and to explain the current contradictions (Anikovich et al. 2010). As for Kostenki-1 and other Upper Palaeolithic sites with abundant mammoth bones, the open area excavations have shown that the "aggregations of bones" that had been revealed before were actually complex, regularly arranged dwellings constructed with the use of mammoth bones. Therefore, their treatment as "mammoth cemeteries" must be rejected. We want to

emphasize that the very beginning of this actual discussion was connected with the first excavations and publications of Palaeolithic Kostenki.
Polyakov and Kel'siev had no chance to continue their works in Kostenki since both died prematurely in the middle 1880s. No systematic archaeological investigations were carried out at Kostenki for a long time. During 1905, the well-known archaeologist Alexander A. Spitsyn had occasionally discovered a new Palaeolithic site in this region (Borshschevo-1), but the excavations at Kostenki-1, provided by N. I. Krishtafovich (1904) and S. A. Krukowski (1915), appeared to be of small scientific value. In the first case, the field documentation was lost during the First World War. In the second case, the archaeologist, unfortunately, did not provide any field documentation (Anikovich et al. 2008, 18–19).

Period of research nr. 1: the foundation of Kostenki Palaeolithic Expeditions (the 1920s)

Sergey N. Zamiatnin (1899–1958) became one of the founders of Palaeolithic studies in Russia, but in the early 1920s he was a young collaborator at the Local Historical Museum of Voronezh and had to systemize Krukowski's collection from Kostenki. Unexpectedly, he found among the collection a fragment of female figurine made of marl (Fig. 3). It was the first such find in Eastern Europe. In 1922, Zamyatnin started his own investigations in Kostenki (a small trench at Kostenki-1 and some surveys at Borshchevo-1). In 1923, he organized a special expedition under the direction of Peter P. Efimenko (1884–1969) and, since then, field investigations in the Kostenki-Borshchevo region were conducted almost every year, except for the period 1942–1946. The works at Kostenki-1 and Borshchevo-1 were accompanied by surveys, and many new sites were discovered. In the 1920s, the excavations were carried out trench by trench, from top to bottom. Nobody tried to interpret the objects as parts of structures or to register their position within the whole. The main characteristics of these works in Kostenki were: a) small excavation units; b) the search for beautiful artifacts and "main types" of industry. These old methods were replaced in 1931, in connection with the general change of paradigm in Soviet studies of prehistory in the early 1930s.

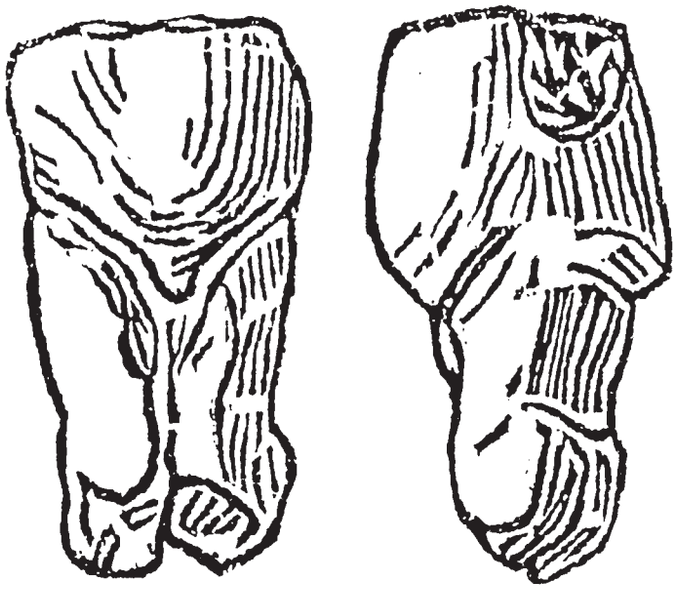


Fig. 3. Female figurine of marl (after Zamiatnin 1922). The find collection it belonged to was destroyed during the Second World War. The drawing is the only record of the figurine. The object was c. 3 cm long.

The main purpose of Soviet Palaeolithic archaeology of the early 1930s was defined as the study of the socio-economic relations of prehistoric communities as a reflection of basic regularities of historical process in the Early Stone Age. The new paradigm of prehistory put forward by Efimenko ("stadialism") became an attempt to introduce Marxist sociological methods in prehistorical archaeology. Certainly, Efimenko understood that any sociological reconstruction had to be based on concrete archaeological data. So, he tried to provide such a foundation. The materials from Kostenki appeared to be the main basis of his ideas. Thus they played a central role in Soviet prehistory.
The most important innovation was the attempt to investigate the planigraphy of the sites. The existence of Upper Palaeolithic dwellings was suggested many years ago by I. S. Polyakov, but it was only in 1927–1929 that S. N. Zamyatnin really investigated the indisputable remains of such dwellings (Gagarino) (Efimenko 1931, 49–51; Zamiatnin 1934). This led to the adoption of a radical change in field methods. From 1931 P. P. Efimenko made open area excavations at Kostenki-1/I which were a great success. Over several years the remains of a large settlement complex (No. 1) were excavated, which consisted of various types of constructions, including the pit-dwellings with the roof frames made of mammoth tusks (Fig. 4). This gave the archaeologists the opportunity to compare dwellings, hearths, pits, concentrations of debris etc. during the investigation. The identification and excavation of the dwellings and long-term sites as a whole had become a main purpose of the Kostenki expedition in the 1930s.

Fig. 4. Kostenki-1, layer I, 1934. Excavations of the first settlement complex (by P. P. Efimenko) (©Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, St. Petersburg).

The new excavation method was applied not only to layer I at Kostenki-1, but to the layers I and II at Kostenki-4 and layer I at Kostenki-8. The results of these excavations were taken to prove the existence of dwellings used for long-term habitation in the Upper Palaeolithic and to ascertain their