German archaeology and its relation to nationalism and racism

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CHAPTER NINE

German archaeology and its relation to nationalism and racism

Ingo Wiwjorra

Introduction

German archaeology has basically two roots that are related to the development of nationalistic and even racist ideology: on the one hand, national-romantic *Vaterländische Altertumskunde* (patriotic antiquarianism) had developed out of German philology by extending its focus from written sources to antiquities, whereas prehistoric anthropology on the other hand was influenced by race ideology. Before looking at individual aspects of these roots, I will make some remarks on the sources of this chapter.

For the present account of archaeology as it was then, carried by national pathos and with its background of continuing institutionalization, not only scientific, but also popular and pseudo-scientific publications were examined. The (mostly underestimated) public interest in the discipline is, after all, created not only by professional archaeologists, but mainly by amateurs and pseudo-scientists. The term pseudo-scientific is not clearly defined. It is applied here to publications that put greater emphasis on an ideological commitment than on hard facts. Often irrational ideas are promoted while keeping up a scientific appearance. All three groups of authors played a part in the definition and creation of a national understanding of archaeology. This does not mean, of course, that there were not many researchers who did acknowledge and respect the limits and possibilities of the evolving discipline and were against exploiting archaeology in the interest of politics.

Views of history and mankind that are likely to support national feelings are found in widely varied publications and are not homogeneous and unequivocal throughout the eras. Even though nationalistically influenced research was as a matter of fact fixed on the ancient Germans – Celtic or Slavonic influences hardly played a role in the German national self-image – there were competing concepts of prehistoric ancestry even during the

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National Socialist (NS) period. Views on history that magnify nation or race always depend on the author's education and intention and not least on the particular archaeological topic or era the research or report is based on.

It is the aim of this chapter to point out some fundamental aspects of archaeology in its relation to nationalism and racism and the scientific historical framework. It tries to achieve that mainly by portraying several personalities, their work and their reception by their contemporaries.

Vaterländische Altertumskunde

Interest in the Germanic past has been influenced by patriotism since the seventeenth century (Kirchner 1938: 112-31). This tendency became stronger in the early nineteenth century when the idea of the unification of the German nation (defined by language and culture) under one state was supported by idealized views of Germanic prehistory. Arminius (Germanized as Hermann; approximately 19 BC to AD 21) became a symbol of this idea of national unification, as he had saved Germania libera from Roman conquest in AD 9. It has remained a major subject for nationally motivated, popular-scientific prehistorians to determine the place where the destinymaking battle took place (Völker 1984). In order to glorify this battle, the Hermannsdenkmal (Hermann's monument) was inaugurated near Detmold on 16 August 1875, four years after the unification of Germany. On the sword the giant is pointing upwards, the words "German unity [is] my strength. My strength [is] Germany's power" are engraved. The sculptor Ernst von Bandel (1800-76) had been working towards the realization of his idea to erect this national monument since His life's work is an expression of national pride relating to the prehistoric Germans.

The interpretation of three early written sources that were considered an authoritative insight into Germanic prehistory was of crucial importance for the evolving German archaeology: they were the *Edda*, a compendium of proverbs and mythological traditions that had been written down in Iceland in the twelfth century; then the *Nibelungenlied* about the dragon–slayer Siegfried, also stemming from the twelfth century; and Tacitus's (approximately AD 55–113) *Germania* dating to around AD 100. Those sources, which had been rediscovered in the fifteenth, eighteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively, served to magnify the German national self–esteem and became leading motifs for research into national prehistory from the age of Romanticism (von See 1970). In the nineteenth century they were used as a background for almost every popular description of Germanic or German early

history, and it was based on them that excavated finds (which were gradually becoming more important) were interpreted. Complementary to that, archaeological finds were seen as a proof of the assumption that these sources gave a correct view of prehistoric life in Germany, even in details. Source criticisms of the *Germania*, to the effect that it had been written to criticize Roman decadency, were hardly ever acknowledged. As late as 1921 the prehistorian Georg Wilke (1859–1938) came to the same conclusion, saying material finds "were an addition to rather than a correction of the Germania" and thus could serve the purpose of magnifying national self–esteem (Wilke 1921: 82).

Gustaf Friedrich Klemm (1802–67), a librarian and collector of ethnographic and archaeological finds, gave similar reasons for his interest in prehistory. The preface of his *Handhuch der Germanischen Alterthumskunde* (*Handbook of Germanic antiquarianistri*) states that "it is necessary to spread the knowledge of prehistory among the people and to create respect for it as the safest way to patriotism" (Klemm 1836: xxv).

This prejudiced view of national history and prehistory was also influenced by a romantic attitude. In his paintings of megalithic burial monuments, the painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) gives a feeling for the originality of ancient prehistory. A thorough enthusiasm for "the remains of our pagan past" found its expression in countless historical societies that were founded from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards. The more stable among these often fairly short-lived formations were joined under the roof of the Gesamtverein der deutschen Geschichtsund Altertumsvereine (Association of German Historical and Antiquarian Societies) in 1852. From here a campaign was undertaken for the foundation of the Germanic National Museum in Nuremberg, where examples of German art from prehistory up to the present time were collected, with the aim of strengthening the feeling of national identity by demonstrating historical development and continuity. The concept of national heritage and conservation was a by-product of the societies' enthusiasm for the remote past, expressing their "monument consciousness". "Monument, heritage and conservation turned out to be central forms of collective identification, that are operating up to present times" (Lipp 1987: cover).

The North: home of barbarians or heroes?

Until far into the nineteenth century the theory was widely spread that the Germans' ancestors had come down the slopes of the Caucasus in ancient

times and migrated into their later home areas. There is a frieze of this migration scene in the national monument of Walhalla near Regensburg, built in imitation of a Greek temple and inaugurated in 1842. This theory is based on biblical chronology and it corresponds to early theories about the Indo-Germans that assumed an Indian or generally Asiatic origin. It also fits the anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach's (1752-1840) term "Caucasian race". Thus, the assumption of an ancient Asiatic origin was in those days an obvious part of views on national history. Internationally renowned archaeologists such as Oscar Montelius (1843–1921) were by their interpretations of finds forced to consider the immigration theory (Montelius 1888), before it was modernized into a thesis of a chronological cultural dependency of the North on the South (Montelius 1899). This theory went under the title of ex oriente lux and was advocated by classical archaeologists and historians such as Hugo Winckler (1863-1913), Victor Hehn (1813-90) or Eduard Meyer (1855–1930). The idea became a contradiction to national pride when cultural dependency was taken as a hint that the historical Germans had lived as barbarians before their conversion to Christianity. This was put into fairly drastic words by the architect Gottfried Semper (1803–79), who had a strong interest in archaeology. He called the Germans "a pack without national unity or a common language" (Semper 1860: 4).

Nationally motivated researchers and publishers took this statement as a sign of arrogance and ignorance, characteristic of conceited scholars who were alienated from the people (Wilser 1899a: 6; Pastor 1906: 1; Pastor 1922: V; Bieder 1925:116; Gummel 1938:182). They were calling for more publicity for new archaeological and palaeo-anthropological finds from the North, which were undermining traditional, Bible-orientated dates and evaluations.

Resistance to the thesis of the cultural backwardness of the North dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century at least. Friedrich August Wagner (1792–1859), who never saw the dream of his youth fulfilled to visit "the monuments of the old ages in Egypt, Greece and Italy and see them with [his] own eyes" (Wagner 1828: III), was looking for similar temples and pyramids closer to his Saxonian home area and at a later point even believed he had found something like "Egypt in Germany" (Wagner 1833). His interpretations were driven by patriotic enthusiasm and suggested that instead of the usually assumed cultural dependency of the North on the South there had been an independent cultural development. He thought it was correct to compare burial mounds to pyramids and that local monuments should be "more interesting for us than products of foreign art and labour", as they were not "boastful", but "hidden away, decent and modest". Wagner saw reasons to take "a different view from that of our ancestors up to now" and came to the conclusion that "even in the old times there had

been arts and cultivation and cattle-herding, and people had not just been nomads, living by robbery and hunting as Roman authors like Caesar have claimed" (Wagner 1828: iv-v). Although these clumsy interpretations, which do not deny his admiration for southern civilizations, were meant to strengthen national pride, they were still far from the aggressive undertones of nationalist authors from the 1880s onwards.

The research that went into the remains of the Roman conquest in the south and west of Germany followed the tradition of classical archaeology. The background of this historical interest was not so much the yearning for national identity, but admiration for the achievements of classical antiquity that had been reflected upon the North. The investigation of the Roman inheritance in Germany was manifest in institutions such as the Romisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum (Romano-Germanic Central Museum) in Mainz (founded in 1852) and the Reichslimeskomission (Imperial Commission on the Roman Frontier, 1892), which was renamed Römisch-Germanische Kommission (Romano-Germanic Commission) in 1907. "Programmatic concentration on antiquity" characterized the Verein von Altertumsfreunden im Rheinlande (Society of Friends of Antiquity in the Rhineland), and there were many institutions with similar aims (John 1991: VII). This so-called "West German research", which commemorated Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68), the founder of classical archaeology, in annual "Winckelmann celebrations", was influenced by the ideals of humanism, which could go with a conservative national attitude, but never with an ethnic one. The preference for Roman cultural achievements over pre-Roman ones was more and more opposed by the national demand for the glorification of the Germanic ancestors. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, voices were getting stronger that were expressing a general feeling of being fed up with research results that indicated the influence of "foreign" cultures. This protest became an almost natural part of introductions to publications on German prehistory. Those archaeologists who were researching the influence of Roman civilization were later discredited as Römlinge (Romelings) (Eggers 1986: 234). In this context, Emperor Wilhelm II (1859–1941) was asking for a "national base" for German (school) education in 1890, even though he personally was an admirer of the oriental and classical Greek civilizations: "We must take everything German for a foundation; we should educate national young Germans and not young Greeks or Romans" (Penzler 1897: 156).

^{1 .}The German term "völkisch" is in the following translated by the English "ethnic", which is somewhat inadequate. "Völkisch" not only refers to Volk (people), but also has the connotation of nation, defined by racial origin.

THE "NORDIC RACE": AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL IDEAL

Besides the discussions about the evaluation of the relationship between Romans and Germans, interest in the fundamental question of the origin of the Indo-Germans was growing, as the theory *ex oriente lux* was seen against an ideological background. Matthäus Much (1832–1909) had initially created the expression "oriental fata morgana" in order to bring the possibility of an autochthonous cultural development in the North into the discussion (Much 1906). The idea was taken up by ethnic authors, who then identified the Indo-Germans as a Nordic race and saw them as carriers of a Northern superiority over the South from the origins of time (Römer 1989).

The "Nordic race": an anthropological ideal

The other major direction in archaeology was prehistoric anthropology. Without an understanding of how it developed, one cannot evaluate those parts of the archaeological literature that are fixed on the Nordic or Germanic race.

The institutionalization of anthropology had been quickened up all over Europe and Germany by the foundation of many anthropological societies from the middle of the nineteenth century. From the earliest beginnings, their research interest had been strongly influenced by ethnic concepts, although that was not recognized as a moral or scientific problem. With regard to the question of when and where humankind originated, scientists and theologians alike were forced to find a new point of view by spectacular finds of early human bones. Besides, different anthropological types were characterized and their prehistoric descent and cultural level speculated upon. In Germany particular interest was devoted to the blond and blueeyed type, according to the description in Tacitus's Germania. The Roman author shared the common belief that the Germans were a pure-blooded people and attributed "fierce blue eyes, red hair, tall frames" to them (Tacitus, Germania 4). Annotated German translations interpreted this description as a proof of the existence of a prehistoric Germanic type. This general identification was also undertaken by prehistorians and anthropologists and played a big role in replacing the concept of Germans as an historical people (which can be used from 200 BC to AD 600 at most) by a race-anthropological definition.

There was a public argument, which had been induced by politics, that exemplifies how strongly stereotypes were rooted in the anthropological

^{2.}German editions of Germania translate rutilae comae as reddish, red-blond or blond hair.

thinking of the nineteenth century. The German victory over France in 1870/71 seems to have hit the national pride of the French anthropologist Armand de Quatrefages (1810-92) so hard, that he assumed an ancient Finnish population to be part of the "Prussian race" that could still be singled out in present times and was of a bad character. François Bernier (1620-88) had been the first to characterize the Lapplanders as a race in a negative way, and his assessment remained popular (Conze & Sommer 1984: 142). Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902) accepted stereotype characterizations as such, as he himself had claimed that the Lapps (who are related to the Finns) were a "pathological race". When his own national feelings were hurt by the use of stereotypes, however, he rejected Quatrefages's national insinuations as politically motivated misuse of anthropology (Virchow 1872). The incident became one of Virchow's reasons for initiating a general examination of eye, hair and skin colours of German schoolchildren (Ackerknecht 1957: 172-7). The results were taken as a proof of the assumption that a major part of the German population fitted the Germanic stereotype. Besides a great body length, blond hair and blue eyes, long skulls were taken as an additional characteristic of the Germanic type. Alexander Ecker (1816–87) was among the first to take the latter as a Germanic characteristic when he found it among the skeletons of the so-called South German Reihengräbertypus (anthropological type represented in the post-Roman cemeteries of southern Germany) and thus extended the use of this characteristic to prehistory (Ecker 1865). Although Ecker himself did not undertake any generalizations, other authors did not hesitate to take "long skulls" in central European prehistoric skeletons as a sign of their Germanic identity. "Short skulls", on the other hand, were associated with a dark-haired, brown-eyed type.

The general identification of whole archaeological cultures with long or short skulls, as well as attempts by prehistoric anthropologists to solve the "race questions" of prehistory in that way, express an almost naive belief in the young discipline of anthropology (Schliz 1915/16). The ideological motivation is clear: the physician Ludwig Wilser (1850–1923), who was assisting the anthropologist Otto Amnion (1842–1916) with mass anthropological examinations, had apparently noted down higher values when measuring the height and length of recruits' skulls in order to confirm the Germanic stereotype (Schmidt 1899).

Initially, professional archaeologists did not presume a Germanic population continuity since prehistoric times, as they were dealing with archaeological cultures that were defined by a combination of characteristic pieces of material culture and find circumstances. Still, race—anthropological and archaeological arguments were mixed together in countless publications, especially from the 1880s onwards. The anthropological concept of Ger-

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mans finally became so strong that people would without second thoughts speak of Bronze Age or Stone Age Germans. Besides, such accounts of Germanic prehistory were rarely limited to the German area alone. Prehistoric cultural remains, preferably from northern and western Europe, served just as well to demonstrate the cultural achievements of Germans. The only condition was that the prehistoric cultures in question had to be associated with the Nordic or Germanic race, even if the link was rather doubtful.

The anthropological concept was even more generalized, when Germans were characterized as the original Indo-German type. Placing the Indo-German origin in the North (i.e. Scandinavia or even Germany) implied the global mission of the Nordic race and supported German nationalism in so far as it made modern Germans the core people not only of the Germanic but also of the Indo-German race. The ethnic prehistorian Karl Felix Wolff (1879–1966) wrote in 1918: "The next bimillennium will be the age of the Germans, for German history is just repeating Indo-German history and the world is about to become German in the way it once became Indo-German" (Wolff 1918: 425).

The politicization of prehistory

The institutionalization of professional archaeology was not and is not related to its popular understanding. The published view of Germanic prehistory was determined far more by the zealous enthusiasm of amateurs than by the often tiresome research results of institutionalized archaeologists. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was an unprecedented increase in popular and pseudo-scientific literature. The authors were amateurs with an interest in prehistory, who often had the educational background of teachers or physicians. Originally there were no animosities between the renowned professionals – of whom there were not too many, as prehistory as a science was just about to be established – and the dilettantes. First, this is indicated by membership lists of anthropological and archaeological societies. Secondly, even renowned archaeologists did not hesitate to quote the authors of highly disputable theses in their own publications. Among those are such writers as Ludwig Wilser, Karl Penka (1847–1912), Georg Biedenkapp (1868–1924), Carus Sterne [alias of Ernst Krause] (1839-1903), Heinrich Driesmans (1863-1927) and Willy Pastor (1867-1933). The work and ideas of two of these will be summarized in the following.

The physician Ludwig Wilser was a very active member of several

anthropological societies, and was the author of hundreds of articles and book reviews, and a handful of books. Quoting his mentor Alexander Ecker, he called "anthropology the most noble auxiliary science of history" (Wilser 1899b: 34). Besides his scientific ideas, Ecker had also expressed his social-Darwinist attitude in a lecture on *Der Kampf urn's Dasein in der Natur und im Volkerleben (The fight for survival in nature and in the life of peoples)* when claiming "decisive influence over Europe's destiny for the Germanic race" (Ecker 1871:29).

Thus, most of Wilser's many contributions on prehistory start from prehistoric anthropology and end with unequivocal political convictions. In his book *Die Herkunft derDeutschen (The origin of the Germans)* he placed in Scandinavia not only the German but also the Indo–German origin. Later, Wilser was even speaking of a "Nordic centre of creation" and he claimed that for millions of years higher and higher forms of life had emerged from an Arctic evolution centre (Wilser 1909). According to him, the *Homo europäus dolichocephalus flavus* had been subjected to the Nordic selection conditions for the longest time and consequendy was the highest race, destined to rule the world, and one look into history and present times should be enough to see that. He saw modern Germans as "the descendants of those Germans who have stayed pure and unmixed for the longest time" (Wilser 1904: 180).

Two of the lectures he gave at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Anthropologic, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte (German Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory) on the origin of the Germans and on stone-age races were strongly rejected by his audience. Virchow himself did assume the existence of anthropological types, but strongly rejected Wilser's simplifications, which declared the Germans "the people of all the peoples out of pure patriotism" (Virchow 1885). Hermann Klaatsch (1863–1916) protested as a spokesman for several colleagues against "a sort of anthropology that lessens the dignity of science" (Klaatsch 1903). That was also the reason why the *Zeitschriftfür Ethnologie (Journalfor Ethnology)* linked him to "Germanomanes, race fanatics and chauvinists" (Ehrenreich 1904: 706). Still, this criticism did not prevent Wilser from publishing his ideas with considerable success and gettingpraise not only from such right-wing extremistjournals as the *Politisch—Anthropologische Revue (Political-Anthropological Review)*. Ethnic researchers later declared him a "rightful fighter for our case" (Wolff 1916).

The amateur Willy Pastor's motto was "All historical research is without value if it does not arouse enthusiasm" (Pastor 1906: 81). Like Wilser, and also an active member of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologic, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte (Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory), Pastor believed in an everlasting move from the North. In order to bring the "truth of the Germanocentric idea" to the public, Pastor in 1905

suggested the building of a "Nordic park" as an open-air museum (Pastor 1906: 85). Here mainly megaliths were to be displayed, as he rated them as impressive witnesses of the expansion of the Germanic peoples all over Europe. His own enthusiasm for these monuments stemmed from his journey to England in 1902, when he visited Stonehenge together with the archaeologist Carl Schuchhardt (1859–1944) (Weber 1933). The prehistorian Leonhard Franz (1895–1974) called Pastor's ideas "mostly pseudoscientific", but he recognized his ability "to unveil the mysteries of prehistory in a popular way in a strange mixture of objective science and subjective mysticism". At the same time he regretted that "proper scientists do not have the necessary creativity" (Franz 1924). Pastor's death in 1933 was announced in several ethnic periodicals. He was appreciated as a "reliable and meritorious fighter for the Germanic-German revival" (Weber 1933).

GustafKossinna: continuing national prehistory

When, at a meeting of his Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Vorgeschichte (German society for prehistory) on 4 August 1911, GustafKossinna (1858–1931) proclaimed German prehistory as an "eminently national discipline" (Kossinna 1912), discussions about the leading role of Germans since prehistoric times had been going on in popular-scientific contributions for about 30 years. In the process both the historical and the linguistic concept of Germans had been absorbed into a race-anthropological one. In the scientific discussion of those three decades, however, the fusing of concepts and the stringent instrumentalization of stereotyped anthropological characteristics into a nationalistic view of history had often been criticized as unscientific. Initially Gustaf Kossinna, too, had been a strong critic of Ludwig Wilser, who was a committed advocate of those ideas. In his review of Wilser's collected papers on Die Germanen (The Germans) he expressed his disgust with the fact that Wilser, instead of being a dilettante, had been able to form a group of supporters with his countless propagandist articles and speeches (Kossinna 1904: 781). This protest, however, does not indicate a totally contrary point of view, but is partly based on scientific reasons, and is partly typical of the rude way in which Kossinna would often treat dissidents.

The linguist Kossinna initially stood in his teacher Karl Mullenhoff's (1818–84) tradition of Germanic antiquarianism, which used mainly written sources for research into German prehistory. However, Kossinna saw the future of the discipline in developing and establishing archaeological methods, while race–anthropological positions were not yet a feature. His motto

"Away from Rome and away from anthropology and ethnography" (Stampfuß 1935: 34) emphasizes not only his archaeological claim to prehistory but also a clearly national motivation. His call for a new chair for Germanic prehistory sprang (apart from scientific motives) from the idea of "stimulating, clarifying and consolidating national feelings" (Kossinna 1896: 605). As Kossinna considered only Germans as representatives of national prehistory, his first question in archaeological research in Germany was "where are we dealing with Germans, where with non-Germans?" (Kossinna 1895: 109). For exactly that purpose he had developed his settlementarchaeological method (siedlungsarchäologische Methode), according to which "sharply defined archaeological provinces coincide with certain peoples or tribes of peoples throughout the ages" (Kossinna 1911: 3). His endeavour to attribute archaeological finds to certain peoples according to their characteristics and geographical distribution corresponds to the research aim of other archaeologists of the time and is not unique in the tradition of patriotic antiquarianism. The only thing new was his emphasis on everything Germanic.

During a time of strong nationalism and chauvinism just before, during and after the First World War, Kossinna's view was radicalized as he supplemented his method of settlement archaeology with race-historical assessments. When he presented his thesis of "old Germanic cultural achievement" during a "wartime lecture" in 1917, archaeological argumentation took second place behind purely politically motivated, ethnic considerations. He was then speaking of "our racial, cultural superiority over other peoples" (Kossinna 1918).

In Germany the discussion about the continuity of race as an historical principle was made popular by Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927). The idea itself is very much rooted in the traditions of prehistoric anthropology from which Kossinna originally intended to keep away. It is a fact that there had been thinkers before him and a public ready for a nationalistic and racist view of prehistory when Kossinna changed his guidelines from those of scientific research to those of ethnic ideology. There are many renowned scientists with an ambivalent attitude towards a national view of race history. One of them was Moritz Hörnes (1852–1917), the influential founder of Austrian prehistory, who on the one hand saw "the danger of forging the picture of old European culture and listening to subjective views rather than the objective truth of finds", and on the other hand felt "inclined to ascribe the greatest influence on culture to race" (Hörnes 1905: 71, 73).

It is certainly not correct to call Kossinna the initiator of a "new paradigm" in prehistoric research (Smolla 1991: 12). Nevertheless, he was of major importance for the development of the subject in Germany, as his

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extraordinary professorship of German archaeology in Berlin (1902) institutionalized prehistory as an archaeological discipline. His tide as professor gave considerable weight to national and ethnic tendencies, and he formed some of the following generation of archaeologists at a time when the assumption of "ancient Germanic cultural achievement" seemed the right thing to compensate for the lost war of 1918 (Kossinna 1918).

The justification of German borders

Justifying German borders with prehistoric arguments was hardly an issue in the north, south and west of Germany, as the ancestors of neighbouring peoples there were members of the Germanic language family, which was a point in favour of pan-Germanism rather than anything else. References to a Germanic- or Nordic-dominated Europe in prehistoric times were meant principally to put into question the structure of states and distribution of power in present-day Europe.

Border conflicts with Denmark were basically rooted in an historical language conflict that could hardly be traced back to prehistoric times if a close relationship between Germany and Scandinavia was postulated. German claims on French territory (particularly Alsace–Lorraine), too, were far more often based on historical or economic arguments than on prehistoric ones. The reference to Franconian and Norman influences in Gallic France and to Germanic advances across the Rhine was more often made to state a general German dominance than to make concrete regional claims. Besides, the location of a core Celtic area in southern Germany was never used to justify land claims. The historian Albrecht Wirth's (1866–1936) remark that France was inhabited by the descendants of a "grim-looking, strong-boned ancient race with a likeness to criminals, reminiscent of Cro-Magnon man" (Wirth 1918) was induced by wartime polemics and does not have a tradition in prehistory.

Contrary to that, the German/Polish border became a case of dispute between German and Polish archaeologists, especially after the First World War when the claim on Upper Silesian and Western Prussian areas had to be legitimated not only historically but also archaeologically. A similar situation evolved after the Second World War in respect of the East German areas beyond the Oder and the Neisse.

The discussion about a "fair" borderline between Germany and Poland had been dominated by stereotype opinions since the early nineteenth century (see also Razkowski in this volume). The ideologically motivated slogan

of the "German push towards the east" is opposed by the claim of a German cultural mission, which was justified by the assumption of a constant west—east cultural slope (Wippermann 1981). In archaeology the theory of a cultural mission found its expression in a tacit agreement, according to which excavated finds that were attributed to Germans were described as aesthetically attractive and progressive, whereas Slavic culture was disparaged. Thus, Kossinna characterized Slavic pottery as "dirty grey" and being of "shocking crudeness", whereas he assumed that the potter's wheel had reached the Wends with German help. He further underlined the cultural gap between the Germans and the Slavs semantically by describing the Slavs' area of origin, the "Eastern European ancient home", as "Slavic half-Asia" (Kossinna 1919: 7). The stigmatizing of Slavic culture as utterly foreign was also used by Carl Schuchhardt when stating that the Slavs "had crept into Eastern Germany with a completely foreign culture" (Schuchhardt 1926: 270).

Another argument for the German right to the land was the assumption of a more or less complete German settlement continuity, in comparison to which the "500 years of Slavic rule" had played only the "role of an interlude" (Vorzeit 1919). It is interesting to see that not only the German settlement of the areas between the Oder and the Vistula up to AD 400 was being referred to, but also an assumed Indo-German one, dating as far back as 9000 BC. Thus, the idea of the Slavs belonging to the Indo-Germans was indirectly denied. During the Third Reich this view of history was transferred to the whole "Eastern area". There was a series of lectures at the Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Vorgeschichtsforschung (German Society for Prehistoric Research) on the "German cultural mission in the east from the Indo-German, the East German and mediaeval German 'way east' up to the present front against Russian Bolshevism" (Gesellschaft 1937).

The legitimacy of the German/Polish border remained a topic for archaeological interpretation even after the Second World War. The Silesian-born prehistorian Bolko Freiherr von Richthofen (1899–1983), as a supporter of exiles' organizations, was one of those who defended the theory of cultural carriers and the thesis of only marginally interrupted Germanic-German settlement continuity. According to his description, the Slavs had "trickled" into Silesia at the end of the sixth century AD before the area was "germanized" in the twelfth century (Richthofen 1967: 34). As early as 1929, Richthofen had asked "Does eastern Germany form a part of the ancient Polish homeland?" in order to counter the respective "ancient Slav theories" of Polish archaeologists (Richthofen 1929). Walther Steller (1895–1971) went even further when, after the Second World War, he completely denied the Slavic settlement by re-interpreting the Wends between the Elbe and the Vistula as unchristianized East Germans (Steller 1959, Fritze 1961).

THE THIRD REICH - EXECUTING GERMANIC CONTINUITY?

The German-Polish discussion of land claims that has been lead by historians and prehistorians is characterized by a mutual bias continuing on into present times. This is exemplified by publications on the excavations at Wolin, which has been identified as the legendary Vineta by both German and Polish archaeologists. The result of systematic German excavations that had been carried out since 1934 was – complying with the traditional theory of cultural carriers – that the settlement had been a "planned foundation by the North Germans" (Wilde 1939: 89). The eighth-century Slavic settlement had been turned into an important town only by the Germanic "founders of culture". However, Polish archaeologists have stressed the significance of Slavic settlement continuity before German times. One of the latest popular publications even states that the present-day inhabitants of Wolin are "once more" speaking a language resembling the one that had been used in Vineta a thousand years ago (Filipowiak & Gundlach 1992:15).

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Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) called the Aryans the truly original type of humankind (Hider 1937: 317). According to him they were, as "founders of culture", superior to the "carriers of culture", that is, all those peoples who were only handing down cultural achievements without being able to create anything themselves. Lowest in rank were the Jews, to whom he gave the attribute "destroyers of culture". Hider's attitudes were based on and further perverted the race-historical ideas of Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and those of anti-semitic race mystics such as Lanz von Liebenfels (1874–1954) and Guido von List (1848–1919. Although this sort of anti-semitism was hardly supported by national-thinking or even ethnic prehistorians, German archaeology, too, was "aryanized" after the Nuremberg race laws had been enacted. In 1938 Carl Schuchhardt as chairman of the Berliner Gesellschaft fur Anthropologic, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte signed a note indicating to "non-Aryan members" that they were not wanted any more (Andree 1969: 129-30). Gerhard Bersu (1889-1964) was one of the archaeologists who had to leave the country after the National Socialists had gained power. Herbert Kuhn (1898-1980) was dismissed from his office, because he had a Jewish wife. Even today there has still not been proper research into how many archaeologists became victims of the NS race policy (Mode 1992).

From 1933 onwards a process of popularizing "archaeology into all areas of life" (Haßmann, forthcoming) was started, together with a noticeable

increase in the number of prehistoric institutions. The first ordinary chair of prehistory ever at a German university had only been set up in 1927 in Marburg. The promotion of prehistoric research in NS times is attributable to its role as a Weltanschauungswissenschaft (ideological science). The populist use of supposedly ancient Germanic symbols such as the swastika and the SS runes alone expresses - besides their meaning as political symbols for the German political right wing – a Germanomane understanding of prehistory, which has been described by popular and pseudo-scientists (Hunger 1982, Weißmann 1991a). Germanic or Nordic" superiority since prehistoric times even in remote parts of the world was one of the basic assumptions of politically motivated archaeological research. Archaeological finds were degraded to witnesses of race-historical assumptions. Under the heading Die Nordrasse eroberte die Welt (The northern race was conquering the world), this view of prehistoric developments was explained in Das Schwarze Korps, a weekly periodical published by the SS (Herrmann 1935). This article referred to a study by Wilhelm Sieglin (1855-1935, professor of historical geography in Berlin), who had searched classical sources for references to blond hair in order to prove the great influence of the Nordic race (Sieglin 1935). The work of probably the best-known anthropologist of the NS period, Hans Friedrich Karl Günther (1891–1968), was going in the same direction. After measuring pictures of early man, he believed he had found the "Nordic race with the Indo-Germans of Asia" (Günther 1934). This race-historical aspect formed the core of the popularized view of prehistory, which could be extended to any era: "From the middle of the 5th millennium onwards, i.e. from the beginning of the late neolithic, the home of all Aryan peoples sent innumerable colonizing peoples out into the world, who had a vocation to spread their home culture all over the world". The interchangeability of eras was justified by the unchangingness of race: "We are amazed to see that a hundred generations could change the material of the daily tool, but not the spirit and the blood" (Schilling 1935). Of course, this sort of speculation does not have much to do with archaeology proper. Nevertheless, such views should be taken seriously, as they were not only widespread in the daily press but were also uttered by prehistorians. Gustav Schwantes (1881– 1960), who was certainly a respected representative of his discipline, went back to the "Nordic palaeolithic" in order to describe the "Nordic race, toughened by a merciless environment" as the distant ancestors of those who have been deciding "the world politics of Europe up to our day" (Schwantes 1939: 144).

These ideas were shared by leading National Socialists. This does not so much apply to Hitler, who was not as interested in the Germanic prehistory of Germany as is often assumed. He was more of an admirer of classical

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antiquity, which he saw as a creation of blond Aryans. It was more such ideologists as Heinrich Himmler (1900-45) and Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946) who got involved in fantasies of Nordic pre-worlds, and both did their best to make progress with the institutionalization of prehistory according to their own ideas, seizing existing institutions (universities, conservation offices, societies) and bringing them into line. The so-called Amt Rosenberg (Rosenberg office) (Bollmus 1970) and the SS-dominated foundation Ahnenerbe (Forefathers' Heritage) (Kater 1974) were two party institutions that organized German research into prehistory in competition with each other. Organizing and bringing into line German prehistorians in the planned Reichsinstitut für deutsche Vorgeschichte (Reich's Institute for German Prehistory) was one of the aims of the Amt Rosenberg. The institute was to be built up and managed by the prehistorian and dedicated National Socialist Hans Reinerth (1900-90), who was respected only by some of the German prehistorians and who was becoming increasingly unpopular because of his careerist behaviour and his professional incompetence. The main reason for the institute's failure was that it was often powerless when confronted with the activities of Himmler, who made the organization of German prehistoric research the main operational area of the SS Ahnenerbe and who had acknowledged scientists working under his protection. In the end, the course of the war prevented the decision over whether Amt Rosenberg or Ahnenerbe would make their ideas on the organization of science and research work. It is a fact, though, that because of this competitive situation the discipline was never completely brought into line. Thus, a fairly wide ideological range was preserved among archaeologists, from the politically unmotivated to nominal party members and the fanatically involved (Arnold 1990). Still, researchers such as Hans Reinerth, who kept strictly to the party line, and such pronounced pseudo-scientists as Herman Wirth (1885-1981), Wilhelm Teudt (1860-1942), Karl Theodor Weigel (1892–1953) and others were promoted in a way that seems unlikely under normal circumstances.

A fairly revealing insight into the ideological involvement of German prehistory can be obtained from the longstanding discussion around the scientific value of the research of Herman Wirth, who had been the spiritual father of the Ahnenerbe, founded in 1935 (Wiwjorra forthcoming).

The controversy surrounding Wirth's research

As a Germanist with a PhD and a titular professorship (without the *venia legendi*) the Dutch-German Herman Wirth had been working towards the establishment of an ethnic youth movement in the early 1920s. For him this meant the revitalization of supposedly ancient, doomed or perished culture.

As early as 1919 he had called himself in a letter to Gustaf Kossinna a "Germanic outpost" who could be "absolutely counted on" (Schwerin von Krosigk 1982: 162). This indicates that his interest in prehistory was based on clearly ideological premises.

The main sources of his research were prehistoric symbols in cave and rock paintings, as well as symbolic decorations on pottery and other materials throughout almost all ages and over nearly all the world. Since he interpreted prehistoric signs and symbols not as decorative, but as a sort of primeval writing, he hoped to understand the primordial history of the human mind by decoding them. The result of his several years of collecting and interpreting was the identification of a worldwide "Atlanto–Nordic" prehistoric primeval culture, which he published in 1928 in his first big work, *Der Aufgang der Menschheit (The dawn of mankind)* (Wirth 1928). In this book Wirth interpreted prehistoric symbols as an expression of the primeval religious thinking and feeling of an "Atlanto–Nordic race" with an arctic origin. After climatic changes this race had migrated south in several waves on both sides of the Atlantic and, due to their "metaphysical–transcendental" gift, had created mixed cultures all over the world, and thus fulfilled "their world-historical mission as spiritual leaven" (Wirth 1928: 20).

The cultural characteristic of this race was their matriarchal social structure. Only from the end of the Megalithic Culture onwards had "male power-political thinking" made its appearance and started the "descent of the Germans" (Wirth 1933: 270). Wirth saw the task of modern times to he in overcoming the present "cultureless, techno-materialistic civilization" that he, as a vegetarian, associated with the consumption of alcohol, nicotine and meat and generally with a bourgeois life-style. He was calling for a return to his "scientifically" deduced values of the former "Atlanto—Nordic" primeval culture, a retreat to the "freedom of poverty" (Wirth 1928: 23).

The complexity of his ideas on the verge of science can only be hinted at here. Wirth presented them in many apparently fascinating public lectures all over the country and thus reached a considerable degree of popularity with an audience interested in prehistory, which he expressly addressed in his books. Specialists in several areas of the humanities felt compelled to declare their opinions on his scientific language, on his use of insufficiently published material and not least on his sudden popularity. It is quite remark-

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able that hundreds of critical articles, book reviews and major contributions published by prehistorians, ethnographers, anthropologists and the like did not diminish the attraction of Wirth's comprehensive myth of prehistory. Additionally, Wirth was encouraged by some Germanophile but renowned scientists, such as Eugen Fehrle (1880–1957), Gustav Neckel (1878–1940) and Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941) (Bäumler 1932). Indeed, the whole discussion was not just about an outsider's fantasies, but about the ideological standpoint of the humanities in general. The art historian Josef Strzygowski saw all this as "the crisis of the humanities" and called for a stronger consideration of the "Northern point of view" (Strzygowski 1932: 81). Wirth received most of his approval (although not unanimous) from journals such as Die Sonne (The Sun), Nordische Welt (Nordic World), Nordische Stimmen (Nordic Voices) and Germanien (Germania). These periodicals were in the fashion of "Nordic thoughts" and often treated prehistoric topics under the aspect of their usefulness for the ideas of the ethnic—religious movement. This movement had started out from a expressively Germanomane understanding of prehistory in its attempts to define a specifically "German belief. Wirth himself was criticized by some agents of this school, as he related the primeval religion of the "Atlanto-Nordic race" to primeval monotheism and even to the beginnings of Christianity. That was contradictory to the decidedly anti-Christian tendencies of most ethnic ideologists.

In spite of all the favourable responses from scientists and the public, Wirth did not get any closer to his aim of establishing Urgeistesgeschichte (primeval history of the human mind) as a discipline of its own. His position was radically changed in 1935, when he was offered funding by Heinrich Himmler, who had a well known interest in speculative prehistoric research. Now Wirth felt close to realizing his longstanding plans for an open-air museum. Simultaneously, he was hoping for appreciation of his understanding of the Nordic primeval culture as the humane background of National Socialism (Wirth 1931).

Initially he received generous funding and managed to establish his Pflegestätte fur Schrift-und Sinnbildkunde (Institute for Writing and Symbols) and even went on journeys through Scandinavia, where he made casts from rock engravings for his planned open-air museum. After a while he was promoted to the meaningless position of honorary president (1937) and in 1938 finally asked to resign his membership. The reasons for his dismissal may partly be of a scientific nature: he had received mostly devastating criticism for his second main work, *Die heilige Urschrift der Menschheit (The primeval sacred writing of mankind)*, and for his committed support of the genuineness of the so-called *Ura Linda Chronicle*, a faked Frisian chronicle, which included reports of the destruction of Atlantis in 2193 BC. His dubi-

ous reputation as visionary and founder of religion was blocking Himmler's ambition of establishing the Ahnenerbe as a respected scientific institution.

In addition to that, his personal understanding of National Socialism was contrary to that of leading party ideologists. There was no way his ideas of prehistoric North-Atlantic Man could be brought to any political use in the NS State. The research results of Hans Reinerth had a better chance of being used in cultural political propaganda: he interpreted actual or supposed Germanic cultural remains as the expression of a "Nordic–Germanic mission" (Reinerth 1936: 207). For him, prehistory was a political weapon to justify the German policy of conquest (Reinerth 1937).

The repression of "national" prehistory after 1945

The year of 1945 marks a major hiatus in German prehistoric research. While the existing institutions have been expanding and new ones have been established, research has been mainly centred around problems of typology and fine chronology, leaving aside national or local patriotic interpretations and the design of a new view of history. Professional archaeologists hardly ever present their results in a popular way and, if they do, it is only the spectacular finds. For that reason, the public view of prehistory is in a way traditionally formed by popular scientists.

For many years most German prehistorians have preferred to assume that the ideological incrimination of the subject under the NS regime had existed only in the form of a few negative cases, while the general development of the discipline had not been affected. Thus, a critical discussion has not started until fairly recently, although Ernst Wahle (1889–1981) had stated as early as 1932 that prehistoric research itself had for the previous few decades given rise to the wishful image of a northern origin of culture (Wahle 1932: 24–5). Those rare critical analyses by East and West German prehistorians that do exist mostly concentrate on Gustaf Kossinna's fatal influence on German research. Even the statement that Kossinna was "quite a normal scholar" of his time did not lead to any deeper discussion of nationally motivated prehistoric research before, contemporary with and after Kossinna (Smolla 1979/80). By characterizing Kossinna as a singular symptom, as a "syndrome", the influence of equally national- or ethnic-thinking scholars has hardly ever been looked into, so that Kossinna's role as "bogy and demon" was confirmed.

The impact of prehistoric anthropology on the discipline as a whole has mostly been ignored. Even the joint responsibility of the subject for popular images has been neglected until today. Nevertheless, it will have to be acknowledged, if this complex mixture of ideology and science is not to run out of control. It has been remarked quite rightly "that the general reader, presented with these dotty books in bookstores, has no obvious way of distinguishing between fact and fantasy, fair assessment of the available evidence and folly" (Daniel 1981: 193).

Traditional views on Germans still live on in parts of the popular and pseudo-scientific archaeological literature, although this sort of publication is systematically ignored by scientific archaeologists. This is apparently for two reasons: first, they do not expect to find anything of scientific value in it. Secondly, and bearing the experience of NS times in mind, they want to prevent a public discussion of ideological concepts that would only increase the popularity of right-wing authors and publishers. However, this attitude could not stop the vicar and amateur archaeologist Jürgen Spanuth (born in 1907), who has located a Germanic Atlantis in Northern Frisia, from reaching a considerable degree of popularity among those with an interest in prehistory in the 1950s. Spanuth was aiming at a remake of the ethnic view of history based on the assumption of a Germanic mission as carriers of culture. The reprint of Hans Friedrich Karl Günther's publication on The Nordic race and the Indo-Germans of Asia is prefaced by Spanuth's article on Indo- Germans in the Middle East (Spanuth 1982). Here the Philistines as descendants of the Sea Peoples are declared North Sea Peoples, who in turn are identified as Bronze Age Germans.

The instrumentalization and mystification of German prehistory after the Second World War happened and is still going on mainly in politically rightwing circles. Many authors, publishing houses and societies are continuing the tradition of the nationalist and ethnic spectrum of Weimar and NS times, and they form a subculture in present-day Germany. One facet of this widely varied, yet interconnected spectrum is the Gesellschaft fur Vor- und Frühgeschichte (Society for Pre- and Protohistory), which considers itself a direct follower of the organization founded by Gustaf Kossinna in 1909. Bolko Freiherr von Richthofen held the presidency for some years. In the name of the acting president Dieter Korell (born in 1927) a confession to their spiritual father Gustaf Kossinna was published (Korell 1984). The definition of such central terms as race, people and Germans that is given there makes clear that this confession mainly refers to the unaltered conviction of a racially determined cultural superiority of the North in prehistoric times. While the research conducted by this society is more or less tendentious and on the verge of science, a more distinctly nationalist or ethnic view of prehistory is found in publications by neo-pagan groups (Weißmann 1991b).

Reasons for the development of national prehistory in Germany

There are two main reasons for the nationalist and racist tendencies described above, which both supported the idea of a German national state. In the first place, views on history and mankind that had previously been dominated by theological beliefs and traditional ideas were revolutionized in the second half of the nineteenth century by some important prehistoric discoveries that promoted the establishment of scientific thinking. This thinking was characterized by the idea of Darwinism (Baumunk & Rieß 1994). Although the terms "people" and "race" remained nebulous, they became seemingly scientific criteria in an age of growing belief in science.

Secondly, as the process of German industrialization and mechanization developed in a particularly abrupt fashion and in dimensions undreamt of before, it caused fears of modernity that could not be easily handled. These fears ended in a cultural pessimism that threatened to become a political danger (Stern 1986). A simplified understanding of the young disciplines of anthropology and archaeology opened up an intellectual escape from modernity for the educated classes who were particularly interested in prehistory. The escape route led into an imaginary, supposedly intact, prehistoric world. The idea of belonging to a superior race made it easier for individuals to live with their own insecure social status. After nationalistic and racist concepts had become immensely popular after the turn of the century, a romantic view of national prehistory soothed the human desire for identity, community and nature that was threatened by modern developments (Gugenberger & Schweidlenka 1993: 40–7).

The myth of prehistory is still alive in present-day ideologies and will probably always be. Because of its partly speculative character, archaeology offers the opportunity to project visionary ideas onto prehistory: those who create social Utopias often fall back on supposedly real images of the past.

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