

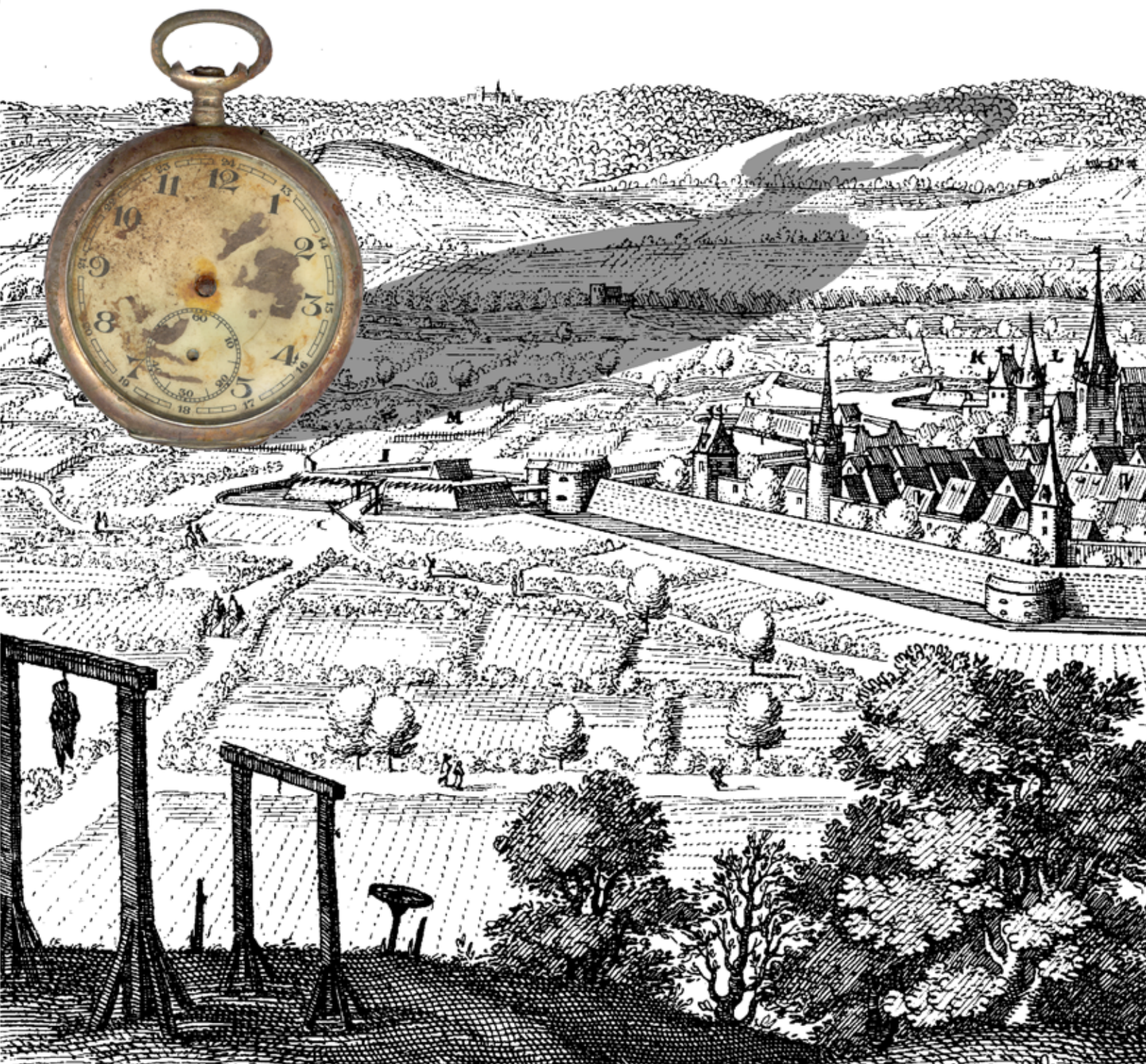
SPECIAL PUBLICATION NUMBER 10



# Historical Archaeology in Central Europe

**NATASCHA MEHLER**

*Editor*



# Historical Archaeology in Central Europe

(FULL COLOR EDITION)

**NATASCHA MEHLER**

*Editor*

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**BACK COVER IMAGE:** *The chimneys of Krupp Steel Works in Essen, Germany* (courtesy of Stadtbildstelle Essen, ca. 1890. Exact date unknown).

*Dedicated to Paul Courtney*



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# Breaking New Ground: Historical Archaeology in Central Europe

## ABSTRACT

*This article attempts to outline and conceptualize the origins, academic parameters, and practical fields of activity of historical archaeology in central Europe and its individual countries. It is obvious that such a complex variety of linguistic, geographical, historical, cultural, religious, and political features within central Europe would also have been reflected in the archaeological research traditions upon which the emerging field of historical archaeology is based. In my view, two kinds of historical archaeology exist in central Europe that hark back to these different traditions and influences. From a methodological point of view, I have provocatively chosen to differentiate between archaeology of the modern era and historical archaeology. Apart from this dichotomy, historical archaeology in central Europe is also characterized by a wealth of subjects and methods, which we should view as an opportunity rather than a burden.*

Archaeological research in central Europe is currently involved in an interesting process, a sense of a new era. Traditional pre – and protohistory, the mother subject from which the archaeologies of the more recent periods derived, will only experience this process peripherally. Some time ago, however, medieval archaeology, itself still only a relatively young discipline, began to open its upper time limit, resulting in archaeologists becoming more and more interested in finds and features from the period after 1500. In many central European cities, urban archaeology is now paying as much attention to recent features as it does to the earlier remains, and the number of publications dealing with subjects dating from the period after 1500 is increasing slowly but steadily. It is a problem, however, that most archaeologists who deal with the post-medieval period are either not yet in a position to influence the future development and consolidation of the discipline to any considerable degree, do not publish their thoughts, or tend to be practitioners employed by archaeological companies who allow them to publish only extracts from their practical work.

To date, several overviews have been published on the theory, method, and practice behind pan-European or central European archaeology, which emerged before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain, including a number of works dealing with medieval archaeology (Sklenář 1983; Wienberg and Andersson 1993; Biehl et al. 2002a; Hardt et al. 2003; Schreg 2010b; Gramsch and Sommer 2011; Lozny 2011a). But hardly any research or debate has taken place on the theory and methodology of the archaeology of the period after 1500, and institutionalized

links with universities are actually quite rare. Many post-medieval archaeologists have therefore turned to American and British research on historical and post-medieval archaeology for guidance and inspiration. It is mainly the proximity of the former to anthropology and the social sciences that has a particularly strong appeal. The European archaeological disciplines have traditionally shown a great affinity to historical research (Courtney 1999:3-4, 2009:180; Schuyler 1999:13; Cyngot et al. 2006; Eggert 2006:197, 230) (see Rainer Schreg and Katarina Predovnik, this volume), so that the works of our colleagues across the water now prove a welcome source of inspiration in the search for new ideas.

While the current situation is exciting, the attention is somewhat ironic. In the 19th and early 20th centuries up to World War I, archaeological research in Europe was strongly influenced by anthropology (Fetten 2002; Parzinger 2002:36-37). The *Kulturkreislehre* (culture circle school), developed at the University of Vienna, was an influential approach adopted in the early 20th century. It aimed not only to define cultural spheres from a spatial point of view but to use the material culture of a given group to examine their history (Koppers 1959; Ziegert 1964:106-112). With the emergence of National Socialism the model evolved into racial theory (Wahle 1964:125-126).<sup>1</sup> This also brought another change in that archaeology began to align itself with historical research (Barford 2002:79). Currently, the pendulum in parts of central Europe is swinging back toward anthropology (Tabaczyński 1993:2; Cyngot et al. 2006).



**Figure 1.** Map of central Europe and its countries. (Map provided courtesy of the Department of Prehistory and Medieval Archaeology, University of Vienna).

There is also debate in central Europe—albeit to a more modest extent—as to what is meant by the terms “historical archaeology” and “post-medieval archaeology” and what the tasks and purview of such a discipline should be (Pajer 1990; Smetánka and Žegklitz 1990; Ericsson 1995; Kajzer 1996; Steuer 1997/1998; Scholkmann 2001; Laszlovszky and Rasson 2003; Frommer 2007; Krajč 2007; Schreg 2007; Predovnik 2008; Courtney 2009; Gaimster 2009; Theune 2009; Mehler 2010:13–14, 2012). There is, however, neither national nor international agreement with regard to the definition of historical archaeology or even the archaeology of the modern era. To simplify matters, I only use the term historical archaeology for the purposes of this paper, thereby

referring largely to archaeological research into the period after 1500, which also explicitly incorporates historical methodology. In this sense, historical archaeology in central Europe is currently located somewhere between a process of enthusiastic self-discovery and an already burgeoning identity crisis. Even the title of this paper contains two terms that merit further debate. What is central Europe and what does historical archaeology mean in the region?



## CENTRAL EUROPE, A REGION IN CONSTANT FLUX

Central Europe is a political term, which came into use in the mid 19th century and at the time included Germany, Poland, the Dual Monarchy of Austro-Hungary, as well as Belgium and the Netherlands (Partsch 1904:177-197). After World War II, when Europe was divided into western and eastern Europe, the concept of central Europe disappeared from general linguistic usage and European understanding, only to return in the past several decades. The regional expanse of central Europe has still not been clearly defined, however, either from a geographical or from a political standpoint. Only the northern and southern borders are clearly defined by the North and Baltic Seas, and by the Apennine and Balkan Peninsulas. While the River Rhine and the Carpathian Basin are often seen as the natural borders in the west and east, the political borders do not always correspond. The concept of which countries constitute central Europe is not only based on subjective perceptions, but also greatly depends on the current political situation. This has changed several times in the history of the region, the last time when Slovenia seceded from the Socialist Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia in 1991 and when Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. Today, central Europe usually includes the countries whose historical archaeology is dealt with in this volume: Germany, Switzerland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia (Figure 1). From a linguistic point of view, the region is largely divided into three areas, a German language group (Germany, Austria, eastern Switzerland, Liechtenstein), a Slavonic group (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland), and a Finno-Ugric language group (Hungary). There are also small enclaves of romance languages such as French, Italian, and Romansh in the western and southern parts of Switzerland. From a religious point of view central Europe is divided into a mainly Catholic region in the west, east, and south, and a Protestant area in the north (Katzenstein 1997; Ágh 1998; Wiesner-Hanks 2006). This cultural, linguistic, geographical, political, historical, and religious variety obviously manifests itself also in the development and practice of archaeological research within the individual states (Gaimster 2009:525-526).

## DIVISIVE PARADIGMS?

The term historical archaeology has only recently arrived in central Europe, and has not yet taken root or been fully accepted in the individual countries. The most important reasons for this are the uncertainty regarding the chronological scope of this field of research on the one hand, and on the other the lack of methodological and theoretical discussion and exchange, both nationally and internationally, which are indispensable in the evolution of the discipline. The existing tendencies can be divided into two groups of paradigms, one being methodological and the other chronological, which can be further separated geographically into a western and eastern branch.

German-speaking researchers mainly tend to follow the approach outlined by the Swedish archaeologist Anders Andrén, who defines historical archaeology as the archaeology of all literate societies. Therefore, it not only includes archaeological research into the Middle Ages and the modern era, but also encompasses classical archaeology, for instance, or the archaeology of the Roman provinces (Andrén 1998). When Andrén published his theories, his was not a new approach. Other central European researchers before him had

made similar statements, but had not elaborated further (Smetánka and Žegklitz 1990:8; Tabaczyński 1993:3). Already in 1953, Czech archaeologist Vladimír Denkstein had reflected on the contents and definition of a historical archaeology (Denkstein 1953) (see Jaromír Žegklitz, this volume). In the United States, James Deetz stated in 1977 that “Historical archaeology studies the cultural remains of literate societies that were capable of recording their own histories” and thus stands in contrast to prehistoric archaeology (Deetz 1996:5). European researchers, however, have paid more attention to Andrén’s work. While he distinguishes the two options of equating the beginning of historical archaeology either with the beginning of the modern era, starting with the European expansion that brought about fundamental global changes, or else with the beginning of writing roughly 5,000 years ago, he himself chooses the latter option. Being self-critical, he admits himself, however, to be not completely happy with this choice. He also criticizes the fact that the term historical archaeology implies that non-literate societies have no history, but he still decides to use the term, rather than creating a new linguistic monstrosity such as “grapho-archaeology” (Andrén 1998:6).

Country	Terms used	Period studied	Legal background
Austria	Historical Archaeology (Historische Archäologie), or Post-Medieval Archaeology (Neuzeitarchäologie)	the literate period (ca. 1st century to today) or the period from the later Middle Ages onward (ca. 1350 to today)	no upper time limit, modern antiquities included in legislation
Czech Republic	Archaeology of the Modern Period (archeologie novověku) or Post-Medieval Archaeology (postmedievální archeologie)	late 15th century to today (Historical Archaeology) or late 15th to late 18th centuries (Post-Medieval Archaeology)	no upper time limit, modern antiquities included in legislation
Germany	Historical Archaeology (Historische Archäologie), or Post-Medieval Archaeology (Neuzeitarchäologie)	the literate period (ca. 1st century to today), the period from the later Middle Ages onward (ca. 1350 to today), or the period from ca. 1500 onwards	not consistent; most federal states have no upper time limit, but Bavaria's antiquities "as a rule date from the prehistoric and early medieval periods"
Hungary	Early Modern Archaeology (Kora újkori régészeti)	1526-1711	the year 1711 is the upper time limit, older antiquities are protected by law
Poland	Historical Archaeology (archeologia historyczna), or Post-Medieval Archaeology (archeologia późnego średniowiecza i nowożytności)	10th century to today	no upper time limit, modern antiquities included in legislation
Slovakia	Historical Archaeology (archeológia stredoveku), or Post-Medieval Archaeology (archeológia novoveku)	6th century to today	no upper time limit, modern antiquities included in legislation
Slovenia	Archaeology of Later Periods (arheologija mlajših obdobij), or Post-Medieval Archaeology (arheologija novega veka)	11th century to today (Archaeology of Later Periods), ca. 1500-1900 (Post-Medieval Archaeology)	no upper time limit, modern antiquities included in legislation
Switzerland	Post-Medieval Archaeology (Neuzeitarchäologie)	ca. 1500 to today; term Historical Archaeology not used; practice of Post-Medieval Archaeology varies from canton to canton; younger archaeologists tend to regard archaeology as a discipline of methods rather than of periods	no upper time limit, modern antiquities included in legislation

Table 1. Overview of historical archaeology in Central European countries.

Proponents of the approach that defines historical archaeology as the archaeology of all literate societies feel vindicated by a perceived methodological purity and consistency (Müller 1997/1998:629; Schreg 2007:14; Theune 2009:762-763). While at first glance the approach is indeed methodological, it inevitably results in a periodization. With Andrén's approach, a unified concept of periodization of central Europe within historical archaeology is almost unobtainable, since writing began at different times in different countries. In large parts of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Hungary it began during the Roman period, for example in the form of votive inscriptions on buildings or altars in the years following the birth of Christ, or with the important work *Germania* written by the historian Tacitus around A.D. 98. This work, however, presents the view of an outsider (in this case a Roman citizen) and is thus not an emic, but an etic, source. In areas of former Slavic settlement, for instance in Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, written records of any kind were created much later, around the 9th and 10th centuries. Moreover, in both cases written records pertaining to the early phases are actually quite scarce.

Critics of the approach of starting historical archaeology with the introduction of writing argue that it does not take into account the history, development, and dissemination of reading and writing or the extent of the available written records. It furthermore implies that archaeologists working on an early medieval cemetery, for example, are able to make equal epistemological use of written records and archives for their interpretations as archaeologists working on an 18th-century manor house, which in practice is simply not the case (Mehler 2012:14). Moreover, Andrén's book makes no methodological suggestions as to the practical organization of such an archaeology of all literate societies, which ultimately equates to a lack of justification and reasoning for such a concept of historical archaeology. The ostensible consistency can in actual fact be viewed as a methodological weakness. In reality, written records are really not available to archaeologists in any functional manner until much later, during the so-called phases of "dense tradition." In German-speaking areas, this term is used to denote the period when written records became more abundant around the 14th and 15th centuries (Frommer 2009; Igel 2009). As Andrén had feared, the term historical archaeology experiences further rejection because it appears to be stating that non-literate societies have no history (Stephan 2012:273).

In central Europe's eastern states the debate on the term historical archaeology is held from a chronological perspective, if at all (Krajč 2007:58-59; Smetánka and Žegklitz 1990:7) (Table 1). The beginnings of literacy only enter the discussion about the start date for historical archaeology to a limited extent. More attention is paid to important historical events, which had a lasting impact on the society concerned. In the case of Hungary and Bohemia, the battle of Mohács (1526) was such a decisive moment, when the Kingdom of Louis II (1506-1526), ruler of Hungary, Bohemia, and Croatia, was comprehensively defeated by Turkish forces. The Ottoman Empire subsequently conquered large parts of Hungary, and the territory of Bohemia also underwent changes in the wake of this event (Pálffy 2009:35-53). The upper chronological limit of historical archaeology, on the other hand, is less clearly defined. In England the onset of the Industrial Revolution was for a long time seen as the end of historical or post-medieval archaeology, but this line has since ceased to exist (Schuyler 1999:10; Gaimster 2009:528-529; Dixon 2011). Neither could this chronological boundary be applied to the situation in central Europe since—much like the arrival of literacy—the process of industrialization also took place at different times in different areas (in Germany for instance from ca. 1815 to 1870) (Ogilvie 1996:133; Gaimster 2009:529). In the eastern central European countries historical archaeology is mainly focused on the period from the late Middle Ages to roughly the 18th century. In the case of Hungary, the expulsion of the Turks in 1711 and the subsequent independence provide an absolute date for the end of historical archaeology. The 19th and 20th centuries are even less researched archaeologically in the eastern countries of central Europe than in the German-speaking areas.

This contradiction between methodology and chronology is currently the biggest source of friction and challenge in the formation of historical archaeology, for central Europe as a whole and for its individual countries. One must also add that archaeological research went through different processes of development in the individual countries, which led to different discussions on the scientific theory behind it and has resulted in central Europe not being unified with regard to its theoretical discourse either. The history of research and the external conditions have been outlined by others in a much more profound and eloquent manner than I could hope to achieve, as follows: Steuer (2001), Biehl et al. (2002a), Härke (2002), Parzinger (2002), Mante (2007), and Veit (2011) concerning pre- and protohistorical

research; and Courtney (2009:182, 2010), and Gaimster (2009:527) for the more recent periods.<sup>2</sup>

## ARCHAEOLOGY DURING THE COLD WAR

Traditional pre – and protohistorical research in central Europe, out of which historical archaeology evolved, was twice in danger of being abused by ideologies, first by the racial ideology of the Third Reich and then by Marxism up to the end of the Cold War (Arnold 1990; Fetten 2002:143; Neustupný 2002). At the time of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), historians in West Germany tried to distance themselves from their colleagues in East Germany and vice-versa. The Marxist-Leninist historical sciences had different foci. The aim of researchers of the modern era in the 1970s GDR was to portray revolutionary traditions. This was followed by a phase of concentrating on everyday history (*Alltagsgeschichte*) in the 1980s, the research of which was seen as an interdisciplinary task (Elkar 1990:273, 281, 301–302). Having said that, the Marxist viewpoints imposed by the state were not adopted as readily by pre – and protohistorical researchers as the authorities would have hoped. Hermann Behrens summarized the situation thus: “The value of Marxism in pre – and protohistorical research is its thought-provoking qualities and nothing more” (Behrens 1984:61). Most archaeologists attempted to avoid state influence in their research as much as possible or did just enough to fulfill political expectations. This applied both to the GDR and to other eastern bloc states (Biehl et al. 2002b:28; Novaković 2002:341; Parzinger 2002:44; Mante 2007:99–100). With regard to the development of historical archaeology it is important to note that archaeology of the modern era was practically non-existent in the GDR. An example of a rare exception is Ulrich Lappe’s excavation in a post-medieval castle in Thuringia (Lappe 1978).

It is, however, a widely held misconception that the methods and theories of all central European archaeologies were characterized by an east-west dichotomy that resulted in the development of different schools of archaeological thought. The black-and-white thinking that led to the notion that archaeological research in western Europe was dominated by theory while archaeology in eastern Europe was caught up in Marxist thought is nowadays considered to be exaggerated and erroneous (Barford 2002:93; Novaković 2002:341). Such a dichotomy, if it existed at all, was in reality felt far less strongly by many and sometimes even described

as a construct rooted in wishful thinking (Sklenář 1983; Bertemes 2002:103; Parzinger 2002:44). Moreover, some scholars outside of the central European borders believed and continue to believe that the European archaeologies could be categorized according to three paradigms: a largely traditional cultural-historical approach to archaeological research (continental archaeology) contrasting with processual archaeology and subsequently with post-processual archaeologies (in Britain, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands). It has been repeatedly stated that this view is too simplistic and does not reflect reality (Biehl et al. 2002b:26, 28).

In actual fact, there has always been close contact and interaction between eastern and western archaeologists (Kobyliński 2005), as can be seen particularly well in the eastern areas of Austria (to name but one example) where the two parts of central Europe meet. Research and teaching at the Institute of Prehistory and Historical Archaeology in Vienna has a tradition of closely monitoring the work carried out in neighboring eastern European countries. There was always a strong tradition of networking in prehistoric research in central Europe.

The theory and methodology discussion within archaeological, historical, and anthropological research circles in Germany would have had the biggest influence on archaeologists in other central European countries for a long time. During the period of the Cold War, in particular, the easiest way for eastern researchers to escape the political doctrine was to orient themselves toward the west (Smetánka and Žegklitz 1990:12; Härke 1991:187; Neustupný 2002; Novaković 2002:347; Parzinger 2002:44–45; Tabaczyński 2002:72; Courtney 2009:169; Lozny 2011b:212). Above that, there were (and still are) close contacts outside of central Europe. German archaeological research was linked with British archaeology from early on. From a methodological point of view, there were very close links between British and German archaeology during World War II. This was due to the highly influential work of the German prehistorian Gerhard Bersu (1889–1964), who was a close friend of the British archaeologist Vere Gordon Childe (1892–1957). Being of Jewish descent, he emigrated to England in 1937, where he spent 10 successful years. In 1947



he relocated to Ireland where he spent three years as professor at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin (Krämer 2001:64–81; Parzinger 2002:43–44). The interaction between the different countries continued after World War II. While the French Annales School had a strong impact on Polish historians and archaeologists (Duby 1965; Tabaczyński 2002:72; Cyngot et al. 2006), researchers in the Czech Republic are nowadays increasingly influenced by English literature (Neustupný 2002:286). A particularly strong orientation toward the British research approach is perceptible in the current formative process of historical archaeology, both in the east and in the west.

Because historical archaeology is a relatively new discipline in central Europe and largely only evolved after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, physical boundaries no longer exist. The preconditions for a close dialog among historical archaeologists in central Europe are therefore very good. Nowadays, the internet and freedom of mobility have made it easier for archaeologists to establish connections than would have been possible even during the period of the Cold War. Unlike America, the distances are relatively short and international conferences such as the *Forum Archaeologia Post-Medievalis*, which takes place every two years in Prague and publishes the series *Studies in Post-Medieval Archaeology*, provide great opportunities for exchange.

## THEORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Central European researchers who follow the traditional cultural-historical approach to archaeology are often belittled for not leading any, or at least not enough, theoretical and methodological debates. As for Germany, Ulrich Veit attributes this to the suppression of questions of cultural and scientific theory on the one hand, which started not, as many assume, during the National Socialist period but as early as the beginning of the 19th century, and a generally negative perception and conveyance of the term “theory” on the other (Veit 2002:413, 415). The opinions of the supporters and opponents of this viewpoint diverge widely and cannot be outlined in detail here (Klejn 1993b; Bertemes 2002; Biehl et al. 2002b:29; Veit 2002, 2011:57, 68). German archaeologists have repeatedly published their contributions to the German theoretical discourse in English (Arnold 1990, 2002; Härke 1991, 1995, 2002; Eggert 2002; Veit 2011). Nevertheless, these seem to have very little resonance outside central Europe. Without sugar-coating the state of the central European theoretical discourse, and without intending to offend Anglo-American archaeologists and their grasp of foreign languages, I dare say that the basis of the criticism is an obvious lack of familiarity with German language publications. There are only a few exceptions where scholars took pains to gain an accurate impression of the

actual theoretical debate in German-language archaeological research (Bloemers 2002; Bintliff 2001; Courtney 2009; Lucas 2012:53–61). Theoretical and methodological discussions have increased, particularly over the past 20 years. The exchange takes place, for instance, in the context of the *Theorie-AG* (working group on theory), which has been in existence since 1990; in the series *Tübinger Archäologische Taschenbücher*, which has regularly published discussions on specific topics; and in the *Forum Kritische Archäologie*, a new journal that publishes interdisciplinary critical archaeological debates.<sup>3</sup> Due to the institutionalized division between the various archaeologies, the theoretical and methodological discourse largely takes place within pre- and protohistorical research (Bernbeck 1997; Biehl et al. 2002a; Härke 2002; Ickerodt 2010), although it has also found its way into medieval and modern era archaeology in recent years (Steuer 1997/1998; Scholkmann 2003; Frommer 2007; Schreg 2007, 2010b; Müller 2009; Mehler 2010:77–81, 2012). Nevertheless, despite the fact that theory has had and continues to have its place in all types of central European archaeological research (including historical archaeology), theoretical archaeology is still not practiced nearly enough (Gramsch 2011:57).

## PRACTICING HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN CENTRAL EUROPE

How is historical archaeology actually practiced in central Europe? I have attempted to outline above the two paradigms that form the academic framework for the actual practice of such an archaeology. The attempt to conceptualize historical

archaeology in central Europe reveals two distinct ways in which it is practiced, and it is important to note that both exist in each country. They differ from each other only in methodology.

## Archaeology of the Modern Era

In the early days of the development of medieval archaeology as a discipline (historical archaeology would not arise as a topic for a long time to come) the German prehistorian Herbert Jankuhn (1905-1990) defined it as a direct continuation of pre – and protohistory (Jankuhn 1973:9). His influential paper “Umriss einer Archäologie des Mittelalters” (“Outline of a Medieval Archaeology”) had a significant impact on the subsequent development of medieval archaeology, even beyond the borders of Germany. Because Jankuhn had included methodology in his definition, he is said to this day by some to have completely omitted the use of written records from his definition of the practice of such a discipline (Schreg 2007:9). This does a disservice to Jankuhn, however, since his paper did, in fact, clearly demand “that medieval archaeologists must also be adept at dealing with historical sources and philological evidence, since they will not always have a settlement historian or philologist at hand” (Jankuhn 1973:12) (translation by author). It is due to this misconception, among other things, that historical archaeology is still often practiced “without written records,” although it is often stated that medieval and historical archaeology both work holistically, in other words with the inclusion of written and pictorial sources (Ericsson 1995; Steuer 1997/1998; Scholkmann 2003; Theune 2009). I have recently argued that this assessment is out of touch with reality (Mehler 2012:14). Most of the published work dealing with subjects dating from after 1500 in fact still manages to completely ignore written records, maps, and evidence from the oral tradition. This applies mainly to the publication of finds from the early modern period, where at best those texts are consulted that have already been interpreted and assessed by historians with regard to other research questions (Bröker 2008:158-169). There are still those who support the type of archaeological research that, in a period where written records are available, will only take into account the archaeological sources. They argue that archaeologists should not work with written records because, on the one hand, they feel it would be detrimental to both disciplines to mix archaeology and history (Klejn 1993a:347; Krause 2000:58) and, on the other, archaeologists do not have the time or training to methodologically and critically assess such sources (Igel 2009:41). Publications that omit written records, however, often degenerate into so-called *Materialschlachten*, a German term that denotes large-scale studies of vast amounts of finds, presented in thick volumes. Without the historical, cultural, and social context that written records would

undoubtedly offer, these publications are nothing more than uninterpreted catalogs presenting a succession of assorted finds. These are the very publications that are characteristic of central European archaeology and are often and justifiably criticized by researchers abroad (Gramsch 2011:52-57). With regard to its methods, such a practice of an archaeology of the modern era is indeed nothing more than a continuation of pre – and protohistory, which traditionally works with archaeological methods such as typology and chronology, but is now also using the natural sciences and technological methods such as dendrochronology or geophysics to study finds and features. In this case, the term “archaeology of the modern era” (*Neuzeitarchäologie*) literally refers to an archaeology that studies the period after the Middle Ages and is thus clearly oriented chronologically rather than methodologically. In an archaeology of the modern era that ignores the written records, it does not matter whether the society being studied had written records or not, because these sources would not, in any case, be actively dealt with. Neither would it therefore comply with Andrén’s notion of historical archaeology (see above).

## Historical Archaeology

In contrast to central Europe, archaeologists in the United States and Great Britain have quite a clear concept, both methodologically and chronologically, of what historical archaeology is (Deetz 1996:5; Orser 2002:xvi-xvii, 2004:1-28; Wilkie 2005:340-343; Hall and Silliman 2006:1). While the many definitions set different priorities, there is basically agreement that historical archaeology begins with the modern era, or with the European global expansion to put it simply. Besides this chronological approach, it is also clear from a methodological point of view that archaeologists in practice also deal with written records, pictorial sources, and oral history (Beaudry 1988; Little 1992; Funari 1999:49; Orser 2004:1-28; Wilkie 2006). This interdisciplinarity between archaeology, the study of written and pictorial sources, oral history, and anthropology, which historical archaeology in the United States is strongly aligned to, is often stressed:

*It is not the existence of documents that makes the field a separate discipline. The crucial factor is that a historical archaeologist, one person, must have the expertise to critically analyze and use the data from both documents and excavations, to establish the cultural context of a site.*



**Figure 2.** *The deserted mission station of the Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinde in Hebron, Labrador, in 1978. The main building was erected between 1833 and 1837 and abandoned in 1959. The left wing contained the chapel while the right wing of the building housed the offices and living quarters of the German-Moravian missionaries (Loring and Arendt 2009:figure 1) (Courtesy of Steven Cox, Torngat Archaeological Project).*

*And it is anthropological theory that provides the conceptual units and tools for establishing this context from data accumulated through application of the techniques of historical and archaeological analyses [Thurman 1996:87].*

Although the term “historical archaeology” is currently being adopted from the United States or at least contemplated by central European researchers (see Table 1), many do not wish to adopt all the definitions or the contents linked to the term. The main reason for this is probably the fact that the classic American content—European colonial expansion—at first glance has very little relevance in central Europe. I will deal with this point in more detail later. Another reason may lie in the fact that the discipline in central Europe is not yet as closely associated with anthropological research as is the case in the United States. As recently as 2006, Manfred K. H. Eggert still did not detect any engagement in the areas where German is spoken of the

theoretical and methodological discourse that takes place in Anglo-American historical archaeology (Eggert 2006:173). I would generally agree with this assessment. While archaeological research of remains from the period after 1500 had already been practiced for a number of years, it was actually done—bar a few exceptions (Fassbinder 2003)—without paying any heed to the theoretical and methodological discussions taking place in the United States and Great Britain.

Despite these difficulties, a number of recent works have clearly been inspired by this interdisciplinarity. Besides the theories and research questions posed by anthropologists and sociologists, economic history questions are also being increasingly studied, without, however, losing sight of the general historical questions. Moreover, not only are the topics slowly becoming more international but British and American publications are more and more absorbed. Examples that illustrate this are the studies on coarse handmade earthenware from



Panama, which was used to categorize ethnic and social identities (Schreg 2010a), the study of early European colonial expansion in the North Atlantic (Mehler and Gardiner, in press), architectural surveying as a means of studying economic, social, and cultural history in Switzerland (Boschetti-Maradi 2009), historical

archaeology in National Socialist concentration camps in central Europe (Theune 2010), or the works of Rainer Schreg and Michael Doneus and Thomas Kühtreiber in this volume. If such studies also actively deal with written records, they may serve to showcase an evolving central European historical archaeology.

## UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This new interdisciplinary approach is given an added dimension thanks to a series of scientific methods, which by now have become standard in pre – and protohistoric research and are being incorporated into the new discipline of historical archaeology by the next generation of researchers. From the domain of ceramics there are the provenience studies carried out on 15th-17th-century Saxon stoneware by means of written records and neutron activation analyses (Mommsen et al. 2000) or the proveniencing of Bavarian clay pipes by means of X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (Mehler 2010:62-74). Surveying methods such as ground-penetrating radar were used on a large scale in the concentration camp of Mauthausen in Austria (Theune 2010:figure 8). Both DNA and isotope analyses were used to identify a number of skeletons from the battlefield of Lützen in Germany, which dates from the Thirty Years' War (Brandt et al. 2010; Brock and Homann 2011:70-71), euthanasia victims at a psychiatric clinic in Hall, Tyrol (Zanesco 2012), and World War II victims of the Nazi regime in Warsaw, Poland (Ławrynowicz, in press). Dendrochronology is often applied in the field of architectural analysis, for instance with regard to the architecture of houses and castles in Switzerland (Boschetti-Maradi 2009:8-9) or modern period shepherds' huts in the High Tatras in Poland (Opala and Kaczka 2008). Archaeozoological studies, for instance, help to answer questions regarding modern era bone and ivory working (Schlenker and Wahl 1994), or the role of the camel in the Carpathian Basin during the Turkish period (Bartosiewicz 1996). In view of these and other methods, it is certainly an advantage that central European historical archaeology has its roots in pre – and protohistorical research, and perhaps it is precisely this diversity of methods that is both a strength and a general characteristic of central European historical archaeology. Moreover, other research-relevant resources are available that are still almost completely untapped. Two examples may serve to illustrate the research potential that exists in central Europe but is still largely unused.

Some central European countries have for a number of years been engaged in recording their entire territory by means of Airborne Laser Scanning. At this stage, whole tracts of land have been recorded, for instance the complete state of Lower Austria. Dedicated websites allow users to carry out targeted searches for places, areas, and landscape features. Already processed data and graphs can be purchased for a small fee from the state surveyors' offices for scientific purposes. The projects have gathered an immense pool of data that could be of great value particularly for questions relating to landscape research. The area of battlefield or conflict archaeology could, for instance, use these data to study modern era fortifications, dams, or the remains from 20th-century wars in a targeted manner without having to mount excavations. The survey data of field monuments such as forgotten roads, old mining galleries, or quarries would already be available for industrial archaeologists.

From an American perspective it must be surprising that the subject of colonialism or of emigration has to date hardly been dealt with by central European archaeologists (Courtney 2009:181-182). The history and politics of colonialism in central Europe clearly differ from those in Spain, Portugal, England, France, and the Netherlands. The process began very late, was clearly less wide-ranging, and may also have had different motivations. This very contrast would, however, lend added depth to the subject of global colonialism in archaeological research. Only the German-speaking countries, and mainly Germany itself, acquired overseas colonies. While the first small-scale expansion attempts into South America during the 16th century failed, the German colonial empire was eventually created during the German Empire (1871-1918). Compared to this the Swiss and Austrian overseas colonies in the United States and Africa were rather modest (Arlettaz 1979; Sauer 2002). German colonies were established in the South Pacific and in China, but mainly in Africa, for example in Cameroon and in German South-West Africa, present-day Namibia (Tamanini 1995; Gründer 2004;



Herold 2006). To date, this inexhaustible subject has only rarely been touched on from a German perspective (Gronenborn and Magnavita 2000; Vogt 2002).

Colonialism *within* Europe would also offer an interesting field of research for historical archaeologists, since large migrations of people also took place within central Europe. Due to cataclysmic changes in the modern era—caused by events such as war and industrialization—many colonies, enclaves, and waves of migration occurred, which in turn brought about new cultural currents, transfers of beliefs and knowledge, and zones of conflict. After the ousting of the Turks from Hungary, the Habsburgs began a program of resettlement of German immigrants, the so-called Danube Swabians in Banat, a region that comprised parts of present-day southeast Hungary, Romania, and Serbia. One of the aims was to consolidate the Roman-Catholic church in the region in the 18th and 19th centuries (Paikert 1967). In terms of archaeological research this topic remains completely unexplored. The *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinde* (Moravian-German Mission), a community of faith that had its origins in Kunvald in the Czech Republic and in Herrnhut in Germany, would be another very interesting subject. From the 18th century onward, the community grew into the first large-scale European Protestant missionary movement, which spread across the whole world and eventually led to the rise of the Methodist church. A small number of Herrnhuter missions have been investigated by

archaeological means in Labrador, Greenland, and Australia (Loring and Arendt 2009; Lydon 2009; Gulløv et al. 2011) (Figure 2).

In order for archaeologists to dare approach such subjects, structural problems within the academic and scientific world must first be overcome. Contacts must be made with leading historians of the modern era and the relevant institutions, in order to have access to the appropriate networks. Moreover, the external conditions in terms of the lack of funding necessary to pursue such research topics are rather frustrating. There is a complete absence of foundations or support institutions for such projects in central Europe. While there are large organizations at national and international levels that support archaeological research, such as the German Research Foundation (DFG) or the European Science Foundation (ESF), their decision-making bodies consist exclusively of prehistorians, classical archaeologists, and archaeologists of the Roman provinces who still remain oblivious to the pleasures and significance of historical archaeology. Under these circumstances, there is no realistic chance of accessing the relevant funding. As long as these and other international subjects are or can not be dealt with, it will not be possible for central European historical archaeologists to follow Charles Orser's call to "think globally, dig locally" and to discuss such topics at a global level (Orser 1996:22; Gilchrist 2005).

## CONCLUSION

Central European historical archaeology offers a wide range of topics, as well as being characterized by a diverse interdisciplinarity. In some areas it has even carried out pioneering work and has laid the foundations for further research. Battlefield archaeology, the beginnings of which date back to the 19th century (see Arne Homann, this volume), or the works of Austrian prehistorian Richard Pittioni (1906–1985) and Czech archaeologist Jiří Merta, who made considerable contributions to the formation of a European industrial archaeology, may serve as examples (Pittioni 1968; Merta 1980). Although historical archaeology is still struggling in some central European countries, we are undoubtedly faced with an ambitious young discipline that is growing in confidence. The deep rootedness in traditional pre- and protohistory, from where it originated, may act as a disadvantage for some in terms of the overriding research questions and interpretations.

Others, however, will see it as an advantage because it has made available a diverse range of methods that can be used eclectically depending on the topic studied.

With regard to central Europe specifically, it is also important to note that here, as in other parts of the world, "historical archaeology means different things to different people" (Hall and Silliman 2006:1). I have tried to show that—as far as I can see—there are two approaches in central Europe. One, which I have termed historical archaeology, in my opinion has an historical orientation, i.e., it not only uses archaeological and natural scientific methods, but mainly employs the tools of historical research. The other approach, which despite the existence of written records does not use historical methods, I have deliberately separated and have provocatively applied to it the German term *Neuzeitarchäologie* (archaeology of the modern era),

thereby referring to a methodologically simple continuation of prehistory. I would generally prefer to dispose of this pair of opposites, of a methodological definition (written records) versus a chronological definition (post 1500) for the archaeological study of the post-medieval periods. After all, if the discipline is defined methodologically via the existence of written records, this concept as a logical consequence will be linked with a more or less absolute date and therefore a periodization. In this respect, the allegedly methodological approach will always be mixed with the chronological approach.

In fact, we should view this complex variety, this “multiplicity of European-style archaeologies,” where ideas and methods can flow freely (Courtney 2009:169, 182, 2010:326), as an opportunity, rather than letting the burden of the archaeological, historical, and anthropological research traditions in our countries weigh us down. Naturally, American historical archaeology with

its different approaches is a great source of inspiration, but we may also look with confidence upon the young discipline on this side of the pond, despite the fact that many aspects of the potential are yet to be awakened. Although central Europe is now entering the international stage of historical archaeology, a global approach is still not possible (Funari 1999:57; Hicks 2005:374-375). Nevertheless, we can still work toward giving the content a more global appeal. It is up to the archaeologists on both sides of the Atlantic to lend a more international approach to their work, both with regard to content and practical aspects, and to receive each other's publications more attentively rather than constantly attempting to reinvent the wheel. As an incorrigible optimist, I am confident that the current generation, which is working in this exciting formative phase of central European historical archaeology, will be able to recognize and seize this opportunity.

## NOTES

1. The German prehistorian Ernst Wahle (1889-1981) was made Professor at the University of Heidelberg in 1933. A short while later he became co-editor of the *Zeitschrift für Rassenkunde* (*Journal of Race Studies*) and in 1934 joined the *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur* (Militant League for German Culture). For an overview of the archaeological research in Germany during National Socialist rule see Arnold (1990).
2. Parzinger (2002) probably gives the most analytical overview of the development and research history of prehistoric archaeology in Europe, while I would consider Courtney (2010) to be the best summary of the influences of social theory on the archaeology of the modern era.
3. The journal is bilingual (German-English) and freely accessible at <http://www.kritischearchaeologie.de/fka> (accessed July 2012).

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