

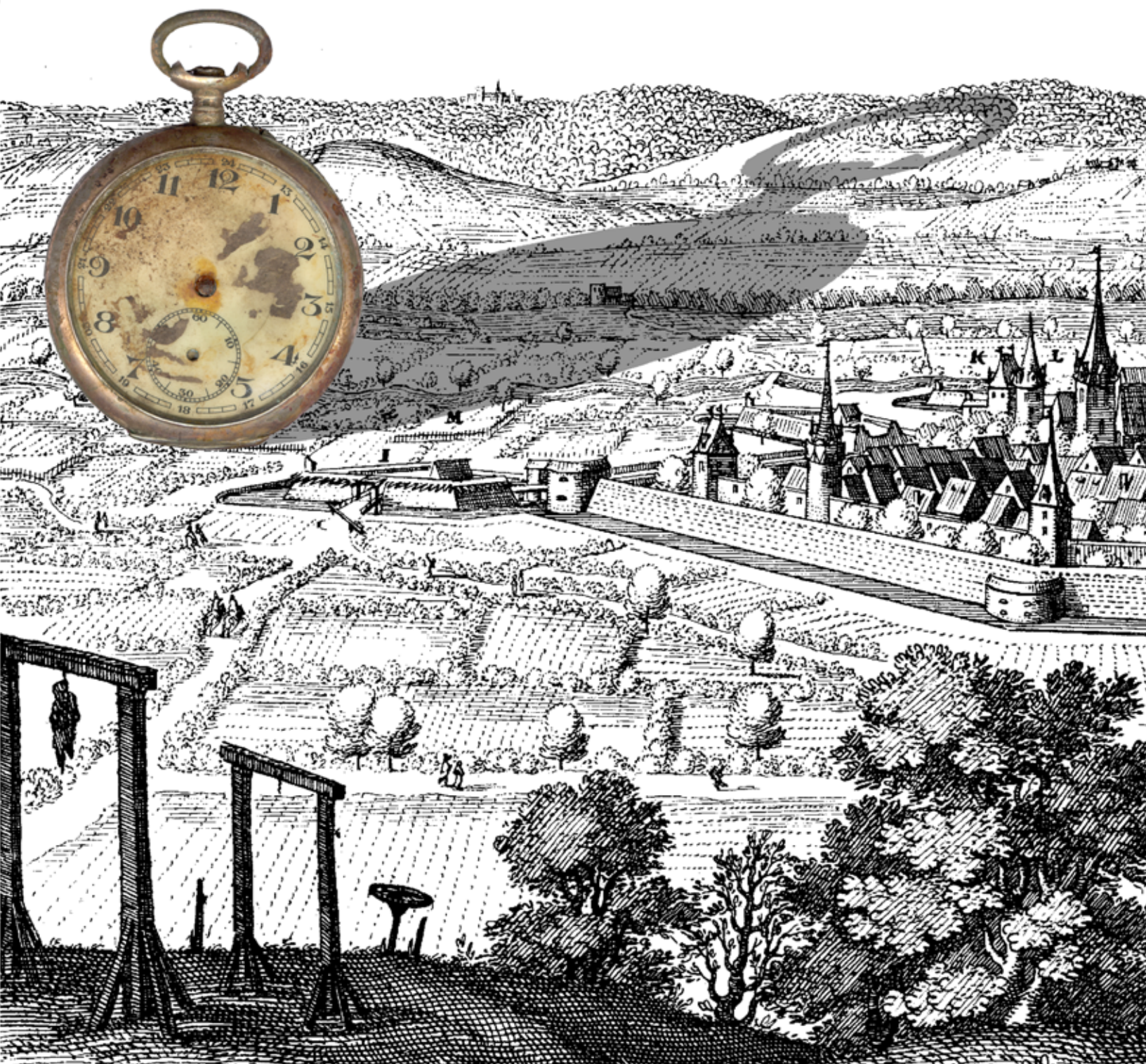
SPECIAL PUBLICATION NUMBER 10



Historical Archaeology in Central Europe

NATASCHA MEHLER

Editor



Historical Archaeology in Central Europe

(FULL COLOR EDITION)

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**SPECIAL PUBLICATION NUMBER 10,
THE SOCIETY FOR HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY**



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9707 Key West Avenue, Suite 100
Rockville, MD 20850

SHA Journal Editor: J.W. Joseph

ISBN:978-1-939531-02-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013936866

Published in the United States of America

COVER IMAGE: by Thomas Pertlwieser, Department of Prehistory and Medieval Archaeology, University of Vienna. It is a composite of elements from the following images: *Wooden gallows and breaking wheels in front of the town walls of Einbeck 1654*, by Martin Zeiller (from Zeiller 1654); and *Hoard of watches found with a metal detector at the Bad Jungbrunn site, Lavant* (Photo by H. Stadler, 2008; courtesy of the Department of Archaeology, University of Innsbruck, Austria).

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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Archaeology and Remembrance: The Contemporary Archaeology of Concentration Camps, Prisoner-of-War Camps, and Battlefields

ABSTRACT

Archaeological research at places of recent history is of important socio-political significance that can only be compared in a limited way to research of older (prehistoric) periods. The research relates to current issues of cultural memory of the 20th century and shows clearly the political dimension of our profession. The differently motivated archaeological works in former concentration camps, prisoner-of-war camps, or on battlefields in Europe are of great importance for the collective national or even European memory. Connected to this memory is also admonishment and commemoration of the victims of the terror of the world wars and the Holocaust. In the past, remembrance, commemoration, and admonishment were carried on by the survivors and witnesses. In the future, archaeological finds and findings will play an important role in this. By the haptic engagement with the objects (and thus also with the witnesses), which carry with them the history and the structure of these places and the objects' former owners, we archaeologists and the general population learn about these places and systems.

INTRODUCTION

The archaeology of sites from the recent past is indisputably part of historical archaeology, yet English-language synopses from the field in recent years have included few references to research from the 20th century (Hall and Silliman 2006; Hicks and Beaudry 2006; Majewski and Gaimster 2009). They have been mostly limited to the early modern and modern periods. Case studies from the National Socialist period or about the Holocaust are included only rarely and sometimes not at all, even in publications about contemporary archaeology (Russell and Flemming 1991; Buchli and Lucas 2001). Instead, these collections feature contributions about the battlefields of World War I (De Meyer 2010) and about sites in the British or French parts of the world (Schofield and Johnson 2006). Schofield (2005) offers an exhaustive analysis from an Anglophone standpoint, with a broad methodological and theoretical approach and many examples from the 20th century drawn from across Europe that stress the importance of remembrance.

A continental European viewpoint can contribute other facets, in particular through archaeological research from sites that have to do with National Socialism. At issue are forms of cultural memory and the changes they go through (Assmann 1999). Remembrance and cultural memory have changed at these places since

the end of World War II and in particular since the 1980s. Sites such as former concentration or extermination camps, but also, for example, the place in Berlin where a Gestapo prison, SS headquarters, and the Reich Security Department were found—known today under the title “The Topography of Terror”—are particularly important in this regard. These places were previously confined to the edges of cultural memory, but have now taken up a central position. These—for Germany at least—“traumatic places” or “reluctant” places of memory (Assmann 1999:328–330) play a role very different in the remembrance of survivors and their relatives than for young people or tourists today. They have distinct connotations for different groups, societies, and nations (Moshenska 2006). These places, which exist across Europe, now have an important function as memorials and places of admonition, remembrance, and learning at the scenes of past crimes. They are memorials and places of admonition for the victims, the survivors, and their descendants. Survivors and their immediate descendants remember there the victims of war or of National Socialism and hand on this tradition. They are also historical and political places of learning for young people (Engelhardt 2004). Those who did not experience the misery of war or the terror of the so-called Third Reich at first hand, and who have not learned of these things through the stories of the

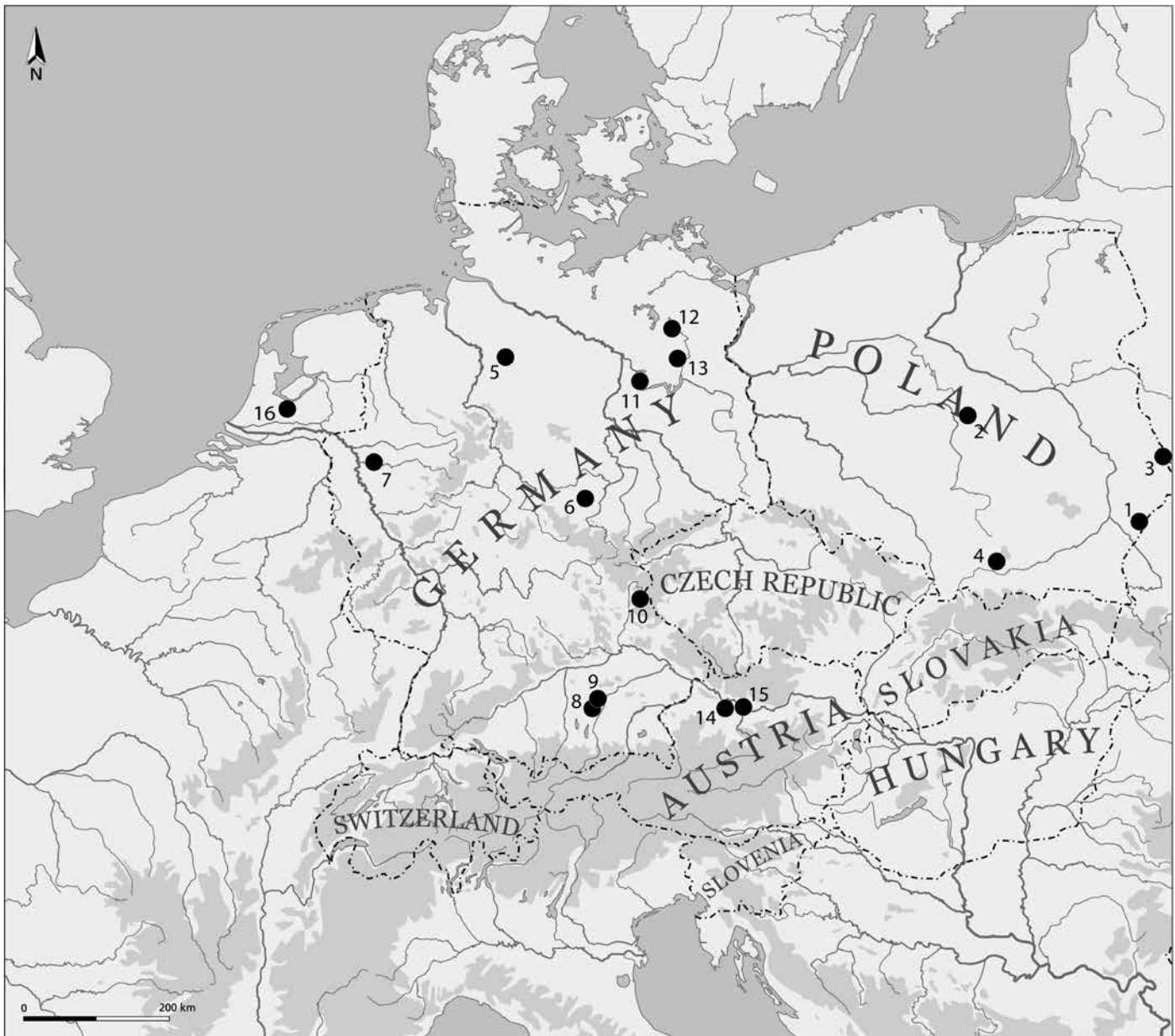


Figure 1. The underwater sites connected to the Great Northern War in northern Germany: (1) the Swedish ship barrier of 1715 at the entrance of the Bay of Greifswald; (2) the small Danish frigate *Mynden* lost in 1718 at Cape Arkona; (3) the lost Swedish support fleet of 1715 on the west coast of Rügen Island; and (4) the lost Swedish fleet of 1715 in the Kiel Bay (Map provided courtesy of the Department of Prehistory and Medieval Archaeology, University of Vienna, Austria).

first or second generations, are taught about National Socialism at these places with the help of eyewitness accounts, documents, and large and small objects. Such places can become places of remembrance (*lieu de mémoire* [Nora 1998]) and enter into collective memory. Archaeological research at such former crime scenes has helped to ensure that this remembrance can be preserved and continue to be passed on.

Places directly associated with the 20th-century world wars or with the National Socialist dictatorship have begun to be analyzed by archaeologists from Germany,

Poland, and Austria in the last 15-20 years. Excavations have taken place on battlefields and at prisoner-of-war camps, as well as at firing squad sites, concentration camps, and death camps. The publications of heritage organizations regularly contain a large number of smaller and larger excavations, some of which take place as a routine response to legal guidelines, others of which are part of designed research projects.

The study of the history of these places was traditionally the sole preserve of historians. The sources used were written records or oral history accounts. They were

official records from the period or private letters and other contemporary documents, but they also included later court records and eyewitness accounts, which reflected personal experiences and memories, but at differing intervals of time from the events. It was presumed that these sources offered comprehensive information about the events, the structures, and the historical processes involved. Pictures, above all photos, and objects played only a secondary role in this historical research and were mostly used to illustrate the written or spoken word.

Recently, however, it has become increasingly clear in the historical sciences that both written and oral sources throw light on only very specific and sometimes contradictory views of the past, thus only telling part of the story. Written records prepared by official sources, in particular, often reflect a solely bureaucratic view, while personal memoranda disclose only those recollections and experiences that are most present in memory. Photographs as pictorial sources are framed by the photographer, the motif is often stage-managed

and people and objects arranged. Closer examination reveals details of the motif's surroundings, a date can pin down the subject in time. If a photo is understood in its context, then new interpretations of its meanings are possible. Objects accompany us everywhere. We cannot function without them and they are part of everyday life. The objects may not speak for themselves, but they nevertheless reveal their own history and biography, their specific use in a particular context, and in this way their cultural meaning.

Moreover, there are only very few written or oral sources for some structures, places, and events of the recent past, for example the Nazi death camps in eastern Poland. A first study of part of the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria has shown that the explanatory potential of the sources can be raised through their combined analysis. The testimony of individual sources can be falsified, verified, modified, or supplemented (Dejneg and Theune in press). All sources have to be used if comprehensive research is to be carried out.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND MODERN/CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

Traditionally, archaeology limited itself to periods and epochs in which material sources were the only or at least the most important basis for cultural insights. The medieval period was increasingly taken on board during the second half of the 20th century, as it was realized that archaeological sources can tell us a great deal about everyday life. Written records or art, strongly influenced as they were by Christianity, do not have the same potential. Readiness to glance over the borders of a particular period led in further course to an extension of interest to post-medieval times, to the early modern period, the era of industrialization, and the modern period. The removal of temporal restrictions for archaeological research by the Convention of Valetta/Malta in 1992 (Council of Europe 1992) prompted the adaptation of the relevant laws in many countries. Article 1 of the convention also explicitly defined archaeological heritage as a source of common European memory. This means that archaeological research at places of recent history is among the responsibilities of arts and monuments organizations and is within the field of research of the archaeological sciences at European universities.

The use for political education at memorial sites of artifacts and material remains brought to light by

excavations has also increased. There are ever fewer eyewitnesses to talk in schools about their awful experiences or the conditions of survival in the camps. Archaeological finds will therefore play an important role in the instruction of young people in the future, ensuring that memorial sites and places of remembrance continue to be places of learning and historical-political education about National Socialism.

The following text deals with archaeological research projects at sites from the first half of the 20th century (Figure 1). Its focus is on historical research to do with the National Socialist dictatorship, but commemoration of the victims of World War I also plays an important role for contemporary remembrance culture.

An impressive amount of archaeological research now exists that deals with objects directly connected to World Wars I and II, the Holocaust, and to other sites of National Socialist crimes. Some of these are crime sites, which were knowingly or unknowingly forgotten in the postwar period and which are now scheduled to become memorial sites again. Archaeological finds and features have to be seen as an important source if we are to learn more about these sites.

The extensive archaeological and forensic archaeological excavations of mass graves and terror sites from the second half of the 20th century, for example in those

parts of former Yugoslavia affected by war (Russell and Flemming 1991), in Iraq, Darfur, or Sudan, should at least be mentioned at this point.

WORLD WAR I

World War I was one of the greatest catastrophes of recent history. Hegemonic aspirations, nationalism, imperialism, and political and economic ambitions/contradictions are among the reasons for its outbreak. World War I, or the Great War as it is known in France and Great Britain, was characterized by unprecedented industrialization and an immense utilization of materials. The war led to the deaths of around 17 million people, substantial numbers of these through poison gas. The particularly costly trench war on the Western Front and the battle at Verdun are symbols in today's remembrance culture for this early 20th-century disaster. After the war the monarchy collapsed in large parts of Europe, many borders were redrawn, republics were proclaimed in Germany and Austria, and the Soviet Union was founded in formerly Tsarist Russia. A new epoch began, which has been called the "short 20th century" (Hobsbawm 1998).

Archaeological projects initiated by central and western European archaeologists at sites associated with World War I take place across much of the world (Tarlow 1997; Saunders 2004, 2007). They are often concerned

with battlefields, however, and are therefore carried out at places of remembrance; that is, also tourist sites on the Western Front, above all in northern France (Brown 2005; Adam 2006) and in Belgium (De Meyer 2010). Their aim is to add to knowledge about the events (Association for World War Archaeology 2007; Great War Archaeology Group 2012). In the Flemish part of Belgium, archaeological activity in this subject area led in 2003 to the foundation of a special department for the archaeology of World War I in the former "Instituut voor het Archeologisch Patrimonium" (now Vlaams Instituut voor het Onroerend Erfgoed) (Dewilde et al. 2004). Extensive research has taken place on the battlefields around Ypres (1914, 1915, 1917) (Saunders 2001a, 2007). A motorway was planned through the middle of the battlefield area and the building work was accompanied by a great deal of archaeology. Various complexes of connected trenches, bunkers, and artillery emplacements were revealed, several dead soldiers recovered, and numerous objects, either military equipment or personal possessions, excavated (De Meyer and Pype 2004; Dewilde and Saunders 2007). Detailed prospection including the use of aerial photos,

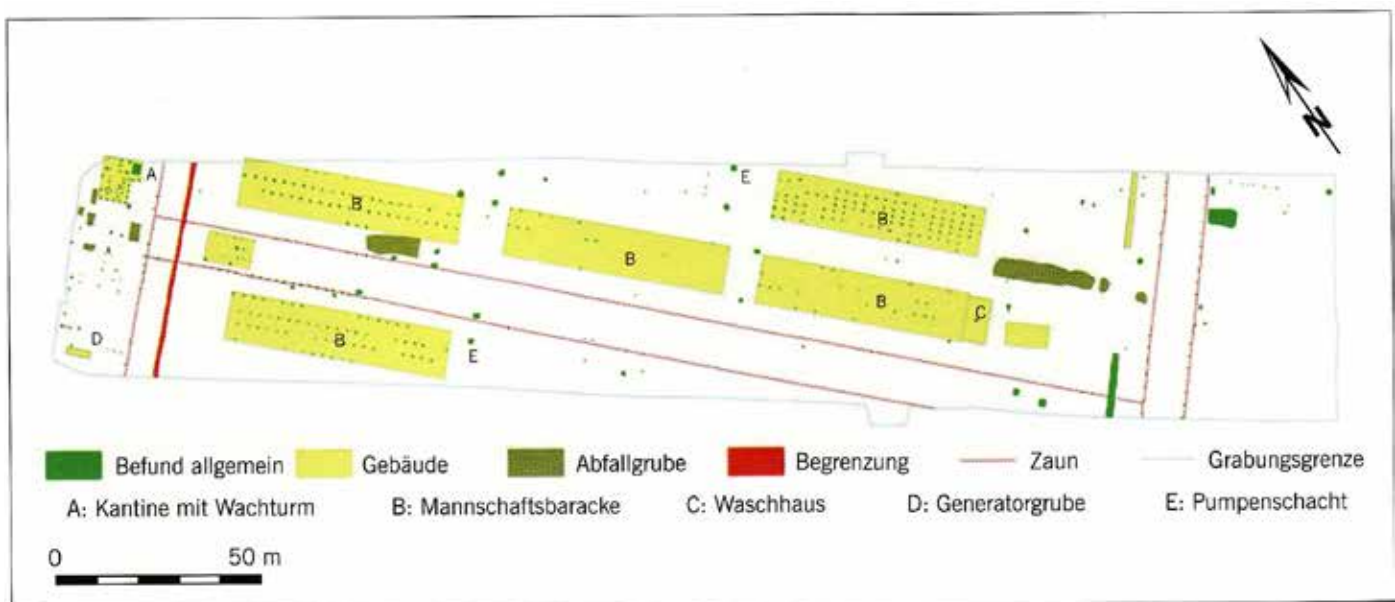


Figure 2. Excavation at the prisoner-of-war camp in Quedlinburg (Saxony-Anhalt, Germany) showing traces of the barracks (Befund allgemein/feature; Gebäude/building; Abfallgrube/garbage pit; Begrenzung/boundary; Zaun/fence; Grabungsgrenze/excavation boundary; Kantine mit Wachturm/canteen with watch tower; Mannschaftsbaracke/barracks for prisoners of war; Waschhaus/washhouse; Generatorgrube/generator pit; Pumpenschacht/pump shaft) (Demuth 2009a:261).

maps, eyewitness reports, and other documents, made large-scale research possible and created a solid basis for interpretation. The research was also understood as landscape archaeology connected to the culture of remembrance around World War I (Dendooven 2001; Saunders 2001b; Holtorf and Williams 2006).

Another highway construction project near Quedlinburg (Saxony-Anhalt, Germany) led to the excavation of a prisoner-of-war camp from World War I (Demuth 2009a, 2009b). The features excavated included 5 of the former 48 barrack buildings measuring ca. 50 × 15–20 m, as well as barbed wire fences and other boundaries dividing the camp into different zones (Figure 2). The numerous finds included beer bottles from French brewers and French porcelain, which indicate that French prisoners were sent packets of provisions from home (Figure 3). French prisoners-of-war were visible in the archaeological record in this way, but in a methodological note it has to be pointed out that many more nationalities were present among the prisoners, about whom we would know almost nothing if it were not for the written sources. There were also hints about the food situation and the menu—numerous animal bones were found from cattle and pigs, but also from saltwater fish and stingrays.

There are various other archaeological projects with a direct connection to World War I in Europe (Saunders 2007; Saunders and Cornish 2009), but there is also global commitment, for example investigations into the early 20th-century Arab rebellion against the Ottoman Empire (Saunders 2007).



Figure 3. Finds of French origin from the prisoner of war camp in Quedlinburg (after Demuth 2009a:264).

WORLD WAR II AND THE HOLOCAUST

The National Socialist assumption of power in Germany in March 1933 led to systematic terror and to the racist persecution and annihilation of several million Jews and members of numerous other groups. It further led in 1938 and 1939 to the *Anschluss*, or annexation of Austria, the Sudetenland, Memel, and later Bohemia and Moravia, as well as the other areas occupied during the war. It also meant World War II, which brought devastation, destruction, and death to Europe and many other parts of the world. From 1933 onwards concentration camps were built in which people were subjected to forced labor in inhumane conditions, stripped of their human rights, mistreated, tortured, and murdered. This is a dark chapter of German history that has left traces across the whole

of Europe, and today it is important to throw light on the period, to preserve the memory of it and to honor the victims. This can happen in a systematic way only if many sciences collaborate and among these is historical archaeology.

The concentration camps and the death camps are the main subject of archaeological research from the period of the National Socialist dictatorship. This has been the case in Poland and Germany for almost 20 years and in Austria for around 10 years (Stensager 2007; Theune 2010c). Only a few research projects have taken place in the neighboring western countries, although there were numerous concentration camps or sub-camps in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, on the occupied

Channel Islands (Alderney), in Denmark, and in Norway (Jasinski [2010]). Research is now starting slowly, for example with a trial excavation at Amersfoort in the Netherlands (Schute and Wijnen 2010). A fortification from 1938 has been excavated in the Czech Republic (Vařeka 2010). The reason for the delayed beginning of investigations in countries other than Poland and Germany might be seen in a different nexus of cultural memory regarding the Holocaust and National Socialist regime.

Parallel to such projects and due in no small part to changes in protection of monuments legislation (for example in Germany and Austria) research has also been taking place at other sites associated with the National Socialist dictatorship and World War II. These excavations often take place in advance of construction projects and are carried out by archaeological heritage departments. Architectural structures are recorded and considerable finds salvaged. Projects in Germany include excavations in prisoner-of-war camps at Luckenwalde, Brandenburg (Antkowiak 2001), Fürstenberg, Brandenburg (Drieschner et al. 2001; Drieschner and Schulz 2002, 2008), Mönchengladbach, North Rhine-Westphalia (Frank 2005), Retzow, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (Jantzen 2004), and in the Hassel Forest, North Rhine-Westphalia (Kamps et al. 2007); in forced labor camps at Groß Schönebeck, Brandenburg (Grothe 2006) and Jülich,

North Rhine-Westphalia (Perse 2005); at a firing squad site near Dachau, Bavaria (David 2003); on battlefields from April 1945 at Kausche und Horno, Brandenburg (Beran 2005) and Hürtgenwald/Nideggen, North Rhine-Westphalia (Schmid-Hecklau and Schönfelder 2007; Wegener 2007); on the Siegfried Line (Wegener 2006; Smani and Tutlies 2007) (Figure 4); in armaments' factories in Kleinmachnow, Brandenburg (Antkowiak 2002); at bunkers in Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia (Hopp and Przybilla 2007) and Berlin (Kerndl 1995); and the Gestapo prison in Berlin (Hesse et al. 2010). A bunker has also been recorded in Vienna, Austria (La Speranza 2000), and there is also work at the anti-aircraft towers in that city (Bauer 2010). Research into the Cossacks and their forced deportation to the Soviet Union in May 1945 should also be mentioned (Stadler 2005; Stadler and Stepanek, this volume).

The commemoration of (one's own) victims is the priority in Poland, a land that suffered particularly severely under National Socialism and in World War II. The creation of memorial sites for victims is a frequent reason for excavations there. This applies not only to crime sites of the National Socialist regime, but also to places associated with the Stalinist terror. In this way some of the earliest contemporary period archaeological excavations took place in Katyn and at other sites of mass graves where Polish elite were murdered by the NKVD of the Soviet home office (People's Commissariat for Internal

Affairs; precursor to the KGB) in early 1940 (Cienciala et al. 2007). The mass graves were discovered during World War II; an investigation by a commission consisting of forensic pathologists from different European countries, Polish exiles, and the Red Cross was able to clear up the question of guilt by finding objects such as Soviet munitions. Excavations by archaeologists from the University of Torun, Poland, in the late 1980s took place largely because of the importance of the sites as a memorial place for Polish victims (Koła 2005, 2009; Metz 2005). In Katyn and at other places the mass graves were localized in the wooded areas with the help of aerial



Figure 4. Part of the so-called Siegfried Line in Germany near the Dutch and Belgian border. These concrete structures known as "dragon's teeth" were designed to block the passage of tanks (Wegener 2006:282).

photographs. In the next, more precise stage bore holes were drilled at regular intervals across each site in order to calculate the size of the graves. On this basis an estimated total of 16,000 murdered people has been suggested in Katyn, Miednoje, and Charkiv. Around 8,000 bodies have been exhumed to date. Anthropological investigations of the human remains were carried out in order to gather information and evidence about the cause of death. The victims had been shot at close range in the back of the head, broken hands and ribs and fractured skulls were found in some cases. Three thousand

of the dead could be identified through personal possessions found with the bodies. The excavations at the massacre sites found evidence of the exhumations carried out by the National Socialists and the international commission in 1943 and also proved that the graves had been opened by the Soviet secret services, who had aimed to erase the killers' traces. In some cases original Soviet bullets in bodies from the upper layer had been replaced by German bullets, and German newspapers had been placed among the dead.

NATIONAL SOCIALIST DEATH CAMPS IN POLAND

There has also been great support from Polish quarters for contemporary archaeology at memorial sites in the National Socialist death camps. There are no (or very few) written or pictorial contemporary sources for the eastern Polish death camps such as Bełżec and Sobibór (Benz and Distel 2008), and the Nazis blurred and removed their traces after the camps were abandoned. There were very few survivors who were, or are, able to tell us about the camps. The death camp at Bełżec was built in the winter of 1941/1942 on a site of somewhat more than 7 ha and included a fitted gas chamber from the beginning. Significant renovation work took place during the life of the camp. Approximately 600,000 people were murdered there between March and December 1942. The extermination camp at Sobibór was built in early 1942 on a site of initially 12 ha and later 60 ha, and it included several distinct zones. The actual extermination center was situated on the Camp III site, where 250,000 people were murdered in an industrial fashion between May and October 1942. Only very few prisoners survived a revolt and mass flight in October 1943.

At Bełżec an authentic contemporary plan of the camp in which the various buildings are marked is absent. A local resident drew a plan from memory after the war, and a second plan was created—also from memory—by a survivor, but the plans contradict each other (Koła 2000:figure 2-4). The archaeologists' first task was to arrive at an overview of the camp's structures.

It was hoped therefore that archaeology could supply primary knowledge about the position and size of individual buildings and also locate the gas chamber. Excavations of different magnitude (Gileadi et al. 2009) took place in Bełżec (Koła 2000), Chełmno (Golden 2003; Pawlicka-Nowak 2004), and Sobibór (Koła 2001).

This research has continued at some places, for example at Bełżec (O'Neil and Tregenza 2006), while new investigations have begun in Auschwitz (A. Koła 2010, pers. comm.).



Figure 5. Map of the death camp of Bełżec, Poland, showing the locations of the core drillings (Koła 2000:70).

At Bełżec core drillings across the entire area of the camp helped make the structures still preserved below ground visible (Figure 5). In this way, it was possible to locate the remains of the buildings and the mass graves. The camp was modified during its lifetime when the gas chambers were installed in several phases. In the first phase the building with the gas chamber was situated in the center of the camp, while in a second phase it lay in the northern area. The camp did not have

a crematorium, and the people were at first laid uncremated in mass graves, cremation starting only later.

In these cases, archaeology helped make the sites of the Holocaust visible and made possible the setting up of memorial sites on the basis of archaeological evidence. A large, dignified memorial has existed at Bełżec since 2004.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN GERMANY

Remembrance at the sites of the crimes was given special emphasis in Germany by the successor state of the so-called Third Reich. Memorials and places of admonition at former concentration camps have existed for decades in that country. They are learning places for the younger generation, who have no knowledge of the National Socialist terror, either through their own experiences or through their parents' stories. A great deal of archaeological research is concentrated at these sites.

Many excavations have now taken place, for example in the former concentration camps at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. The collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) made it politically necessary to revise the exhibitions and the concepts behind the memorials. New ideas led to renovations and reorganization, prompting further excavations and the recovery of finds. On the other hand there were large numbers of sub-camps of the main concentration camps in Germany that have been forgotten or about which very little is known. Excavations at these sites help bring the scenes of the National Socialist crimes back into public memory.

The camp in Witten-Annen, a sub-camp of Buchenwald, was a forgotten place (Isenberg 1995). Back in 1988 the city of Witten asked the Office for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments to carry out excavations in the area of the camp. Before this, pupils from Witten visiting the Buchenwald memorial saw on a memorial plate that Witten-Annen, their home town, was listed as a sub-camp, a fact they had not known. So interest in this forgotten place and in making it visible began to increase. The aim was to determine the extent of the remains of the camp, study living conditions there, and place the remains under protection. At the same time, written sources were investigated in order to explore the history of the camp as comprehensively as possible.

Sachsenhausen

The most extensive excavations at former concentration camps in Germany have taken place at Sachsenhausen near Berlin and at Buchenwald near Weimar. The camp at Sachsenhausen, north of Berlin, was built in 1936 while the Olympic Games were being held in Berlin itself (Benz and Distel 2006a; Morsch 2008). The triangular shape of the camp was considered to be perfect for control purposes, representing the geometry of terror. The entire inner semicircle could be seen from Tower A on the southeastern edge of the camp. The headquarters and the SS area were situated south of the camp. There were numerous extensions of the complex beginning in 1938. The camp was liberated on 22–23 April 1945. Later, from August 1945 until 1950, it was a Soviet special (detention) camp. The Soviets used all the facilities except the killing area, the so-called “Station Z” of the Nazis. The Nazis used the two designations—“Tower A” as the beginning and the entrance of the camp and “Station Z” as the killing area and the absolute end—completely deliberately.

From 1950 to 1960 the camp was used by the Nationale Volksarmee (GDR army) and many buildings fell into disrepair. Station Z was blown up in 1952–1953, and the national memorial of the GDR was located on its site from 1961 onwards.

The varied history of the site means that many buildings have been altered and that many other buildings have been demolished. The (new) memorial and Sachsenhausen museum were established there in 1993. One of the conceptual aims for the site is to show all aspects of the National Socialist concentration camp, the Soviet special camp, and the GDR memorial.

The excavations covered the area around Station Z (Weishaupt 2005). It has to be stressed, however, that the killing area, which was built during the winter of

1941/1942, the gas chamber, built in 1943, the execution facilities, and the crematorium were not substantially affected by the excavations. The paving formerly leading to the gas chamber was uncovered, revealing teeth of the victims between the bricks. The ash container was situated behind the crematorium. The structure connecting the furnaces in the building with the ash container was found outside the complex. The ash from the furnaces was deposited in the ash container, and when the container was full the cremated remains were dumped in large pits (Figure 6).

Photographs taken in May 1945 show that large deposits of cremated human remains were stored in Station Z. Jewish religious burial customs have to be respected when excavating human remains in former concentration camps. One of the most fundamental Jewish beliefs, the sanctity of the sleep of the dead, determines that graves last forever. It is forbidden to disturb a Jewish grave in the “house of eternity.” This principle is respected as much as possible during excavations in the former concentration camps and means that anthropological analysis of the cremated or skeletal remains is never carried out and that the remains are rapidly re-buried.

Large pits were discovered during the pre-planning phase of a museum for the victims of the Soviet special camp. In 2000 geophysical survey revealed a very large garbage pit of 30 × 5.6 m and 2–3 m depth. The contents of the pit could not be excavated properly, but an excavating machine brought the contents to the industrial area of the memorial, depositing them in 13 large heaps. The finds were recovered from these heaps in a four-week campaign. A sorting machine with different strengths processed the material through 10 cm and 5 cm screens. The remaining soil was sieved again through even smaller screens. Small finds such as coins or buttons were collected in this way (Theune 2006; Müller 2010).

All in all, there were finds with a total weight of 5,556.3 kg. As is often the case in archaeology, a first sorting criterion was the material of the artifacts. The weight of the iron objects was about 3,000 kg, bottles and other glass objects weighed 800 kg, and porcelain weighed nearly 300 kg. It soon became clear, however, that these material-based groups were not suitable for the evaluation of camp life or the general circumstances of either the perpetrators or the victims, and a functional classification was established instead. The following groups were formed: construction, clothing, toiletries, household, militaria, coins, and other. Each group was further divided into several sub-groups.

The clothing group contains belts, shoes, buttons, and gloves; included in the toiletries group are, among other things, medicinal objects such as phials, ampoules, tablets, prostheses, medical dishes and similar things, but also eyeglasses and hygiene articles such as combs, toothbrushes, and shaving equipment. The household articles group is particularly wide-ranging. It includes candlesticks, flower pots, eating and drinking vessels, cooking and storage vessels of various materials, and also toys and games, jewelry, smoking utensils, pocket knives, and many accessories. The objects can be assigned to perpetrators or victims with relative ease. Homemade combs and small vessels belonged



Figure 6. Excavation at Sachsenhausen in front of the crematorium with the ash container (Photo by Johannes Weishaupt, Löwenberger Land, 2005; courtesy of Johannes Weishaupt).



Figure 7. Part of a mess kit from Sachsenhausen, Germany, with the name Arnold (Photo by Anne-Kathrin Müller, Berlin, 2006; courtesy of Anne-Kathrin Müller).

without doubt to the victims/prisoners. The same is true of most of the large number of aluminum spoons. On the other hand, only a few forks or knives were found, and these were mostly of better material. Knives of high-grade steel or even precious metals with skillfully engraved initials can be assigned to the perpetrators.

Many objects are decorated and some of them can give a clue to the identity of the prisoner (Figure 7). Some also hint at whether they were used during the concentration camp period or during the period of the Soviet special camp. Finds from this latter period are often marked with the year.

The artifacts also have to be seen in terms of memory. It is clear that objects are also carriers of a history of the events and in this way of memory (Veit 2003; Hahn 2006; Woodward 2007). This memory is directly connected to the meaning that the objects had during their period of use. The history and the significance of the objects, but also their owner or owners, are stored through space and time, from their manufacture, through their use, possible repairs, and other changes, until they became garbage. Artifacts have great permanence and a distinct life of their own, by being handed down they can become part of other cultural environments. They are symbols of structures that we recognize, but also of structures that are initially invisible, that is, carriers of meaning for non-obvious information. This also applies to objects from the concentration camps. The objects—whether they be the buildings of the SS, the walls of the camp, or the barracks of the prisoners, or whether they are the eating and drinking vessels of the guards

or of the guarded—all carry history. They thus become for us today symbols of the structures and events of the terror. Some of the finds belonged to prisoners and record powerlessness, oppression, and humiliation, but also perhaps self-assertion and self-respect. There are also numerous objects connected to the perpetrators, however, and these have to be regarded as objects of power (Freund and Greifeneder 2004).

Buchenwald

The concentration camp in Buchenwald was built on the Ettersberg Heights above Weimar in 1937 (Benz and Distel 2006a). It was divided into three parts, the main camp, the so-called tent camp, and the “small camp,” which was built in 1938, became the quarantine area in 1942, and was known in the final phase as the dying area. The prisoners were forced to work in, among other places, a quarry or in armaments factories. Considerably more than 100 sub-camps and detached work groups were part of the Buchenwald complex. A Soviet special camp was set up on the site after liberation in April 1945 and lasted until 1950. In 1958 the national memorial of the GDR was established there. The concept behind the memorial was revised in Buchenwald from 1991 onwards, in a process similar to Sachsenhausen.

Archaeological excavations and the salvaging of finds took place within the framework of working camps as early as the first years of the 1990s at several sites in Buchenwald. These were in part to do with the re-design of the memorial after the collapse of the GDR (Hirte 2000). Particular attention was paid to a garbage heap in the small camp, which was excavated from 1996 onwards. Dealing with garbage had been a great problem in the camp, as was also clear in Sachsenhausen. This was particularly true for the last period, the liberators reporting that large garbage heaps could be found throughout the complex (Hirte 2000:25-28). Around 2,500 objects and almost 4,000 buttons were salvaged from an area of only 4 × 4 m. The successful work with young people at this place of remembrance led to the decision to record the finds in an object data base (Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation [2012]). This is accessible on the web and is used in Buchenwald for educational work. Functional criteria are used in this case as well, but the terms used are different from the classification employed for the Sachsenhausen finds (camp, international, location, work, health, hygiene, food, jewelry, religion, leisure,

prisoners' functionaries, women, children, numbers, name, transport, and death).

Excavations have been carried out in many other concentration camps in Germany. The motivation behind the projects varies, but usually the intention is to make symbolically important points visible again through excavation. This is the case with the so-called "death ramp" in Flossenbürg, Bavaria, for example (Figure 8). The excavations were also aimed at increasing knowledge about that site (Ibel 2002). At other places there has been intensive work with youth camps as was the case in Buchenwald. The boundaries of the camp at Bergen-Belsen, Lower Saxony, were archaeologically investigated with the help of such groups (Assendorp 2003). Sometimes a further aim is to establish the condition of the remains in the ground, as has been the case in Dachau, Bavaria, for example (David 2001).

The Firing Squad Complex at Hebertshausen near Dachau

The firing squad site at Hebertshausen is closely related to the nearby concentration camp at Dachau. Soviet prisoners-of-war were shot there in autumn 1941 and in the following winter. The excavations carried out at Hebertshausen in 2001 indicate violence and death in concentration camps in a very specific way. The site of the mass shootings is defined by two walls. The border is a wooden wall and a bullet trap. In front of the wooden wall, the ruins of which were detected, there were still traces of the posts to which the prisoners had been tied.

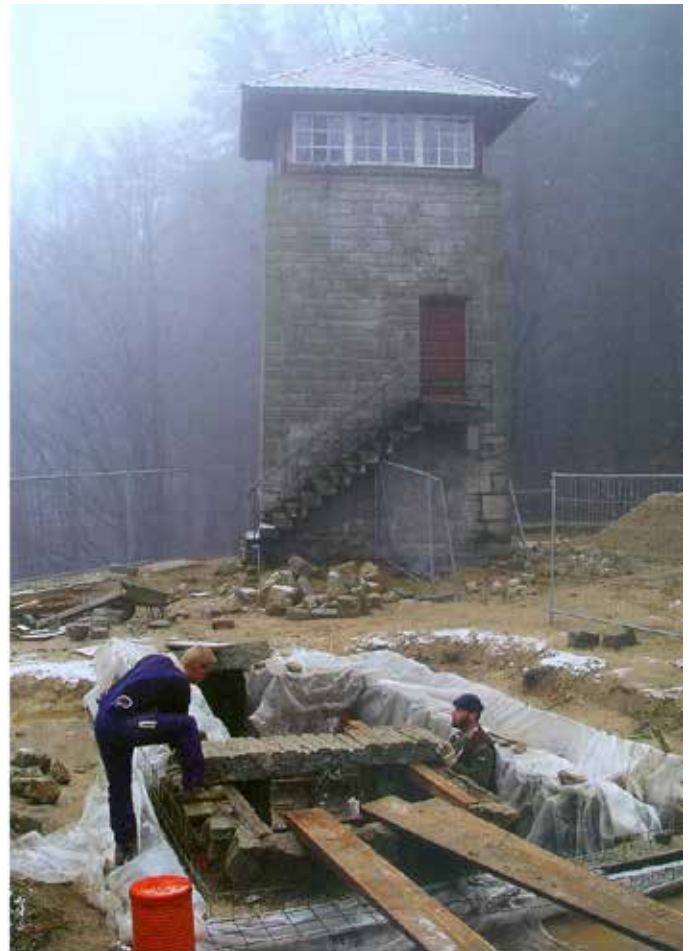


Figure 8. Excavation of the so-called death ramp at Flossenbürg, Germany (after Ibel 2002:149).

Small pieces of human bone lay around these objects, traces of the firing squads' victims (David 2003).

ARCHAEOLOGY IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN AUSTRIA

In the concentration camp at Mauthausen historical and archaeological research became necessary in context of the renewal of the memorial and of the exhibitions, as had been the case at the German memorial sites. The construction of the camp began in summer 1938; it was initially intended to be a camp for Austrian prisoners (Benz and Distel 2006b). The prisoners were forced to do heavy labor in the nearby quarry. Many of them died due to the exhausting conditions, of malnutrition, and through the arbitrary despotism of the SS; many others died in the gas chamber. The Soviet occupiers returned the camp at Mauthausen to Austria as early as 1947 with the proviso that a memorial was to be installed (Perz 2006). The aim at that time was to show the central parade ground with the SS utility buildings (laundry building, kitchen building, prison,

hospital) on one side and the first row of prisoners' barracks on the other. In the view at that time these areas were of high symbolic meaning for the suffering of the prisoners. A stone sarcophagus was set up between these buildings as a central monument. The other barrack buildings and the outer reaches of the camp were explicitly seen as not being of sufficient historical value to be preserved. The barracks had been used after the war, before being dismantled and re-assembled in other contexts elsewhere. Over the course of time above-ground traces of the outer areas became invisible to all but the practiced eye of an archaeologist. The visitors' time at the camp was thus limited to the central buildings around the parade ground and the exhibition. The recently announced new plan for the camp intends to make the entire area of the complex visible. The day of

liberation, 5 May 1945, is the reference point for the careful changes to the buildings that are necessary in some places (Mauthausen Memorial neu gestalten 2009).

In its final phase the concentration camp at Mauthausen consisted not only of the main camp (Lager I) with 20 prisoners' barracks, but also of additional areas within the camp walls (the Special Camp, Lager II); the so-called Russian hospital camp (to the southwest of the main camp) with 10 barrack huts, a kitchen building, and hospital building; Lager III (to the southeast); and a tent camp with five large tents on the northern perimeter. There were also various SS buildings that served as accommodation or workshops. A new visitor center was built in the SS workshop area in the early years of the last decade, and the construction was accompanied by archaeological studies (Artner et al. 2003).

The first step in the present research project took the form of large-scale geophysical survey work in the entire hospital and tent camps and in an SS workshop area. The aim was to find out which parts of the outer areas were still preserved below ground (Neubauer and Löcker 2010). It was thus possible to establish the exact position of the barracks and other buildings in the hospital camp (Figure 9), as well as of the tents in the tent camp and of many workshops in the northern area. The northern area of the camp included the camp's execution area, which was only little known from other sources. Until now excavations were carried out at several sites. They give a deep insight into the conditions of being a prisoner in Mauthausen. Renovation work for the new museum is accompanied by archeological activity on a regular basis.

The aim of the first excavation in summer 2009 was to investigate the condition of the remains and objects preserved below ground (Theune 2010a, 2010b). The head of a barracks building in the hospital camp was uncovered. The barracks there were around 55 m long and 9.5 m wide, and in this case the base of the walls and their stone rubble foundations survived in good condition. The carefully cobbled entrance area was found in the middle of the side end. The interior was divided by posts into three aisles, and the foundations of a stove were also found. A complete stove was salvaged from a pit in the vicinity of another barracks. Construction debris from the barracks buildings formed a large part of the finds, but there were also personal objects that can be attributed to prisoners, for example eating

vessels, cutlery, prisoners' identification tags, buttons, and many other things.

A small excavation has also taken place on the path that leads from the main camp to the quarry. Today this is an uneven and irregularly cobbled route, the sides of which are overgrown with grass. The investigation aimed to find out if this surface was from the Nazi or the postwar period. In fact two phases were found, both of which date to the 1930s and 1940s. The second phase was founded on large pieces of stone rubble, so that the path could support heavy loads, while the first phase employed only simple slabs and was without further foundations. The uncovering of the path's edges revealed the entire breadth of the route in the Nazi period, which was substantially wider than its visible extent in the recent past. An open concrete drain was found on both sides of the road.

Core drilling has taken place in the so-called "ash heap." Today this is a semicircular surface on which a stone monument stands, within an area of ca. 12 m² surrounded by a hedge. Behind this memorial is a steep slope. The aim of the drilling was to establish the extent and volume of the ash deposits. Fourteen boreholes were sunk inside the hedge and two outside with a drill of 10-cm diameter, stopping only after the natural layers had been reached. The drill cores were scrutinized, the finds retrieved, and afterwards the material from the core (earth, burnt human bone, and ash) was redeposited on the spot. It became apparent that the Nazis had prepared and leveled the site in preparation for the deposition of ash. Later leveling layers were also recorded. Not only the burnt human bone of the murdered prisoners was found, but also various objects, including prisoners' personal possessions and ash from sources other than the crematorium. The ash layers became deeper further down the slope.

Structural archaeological research is also taking place (Mitchell and Buchinger 2009). All standing buildings are being investigated in their construction phases and their historical role during the time of the camp and the postwar period. Detailed analyses have been submitted for the "killing area," which includes execution sites 2 and 3, the gas chamber, the cremation ovens, the camp brothel, the kitchen and other buildings.. Changes that occurred when the memorial was set up after the war, for example in the interior decoration and in the room plan, are very clear. The partially uncovered colored trimmings and the wall and ceiling colors of the brothel are

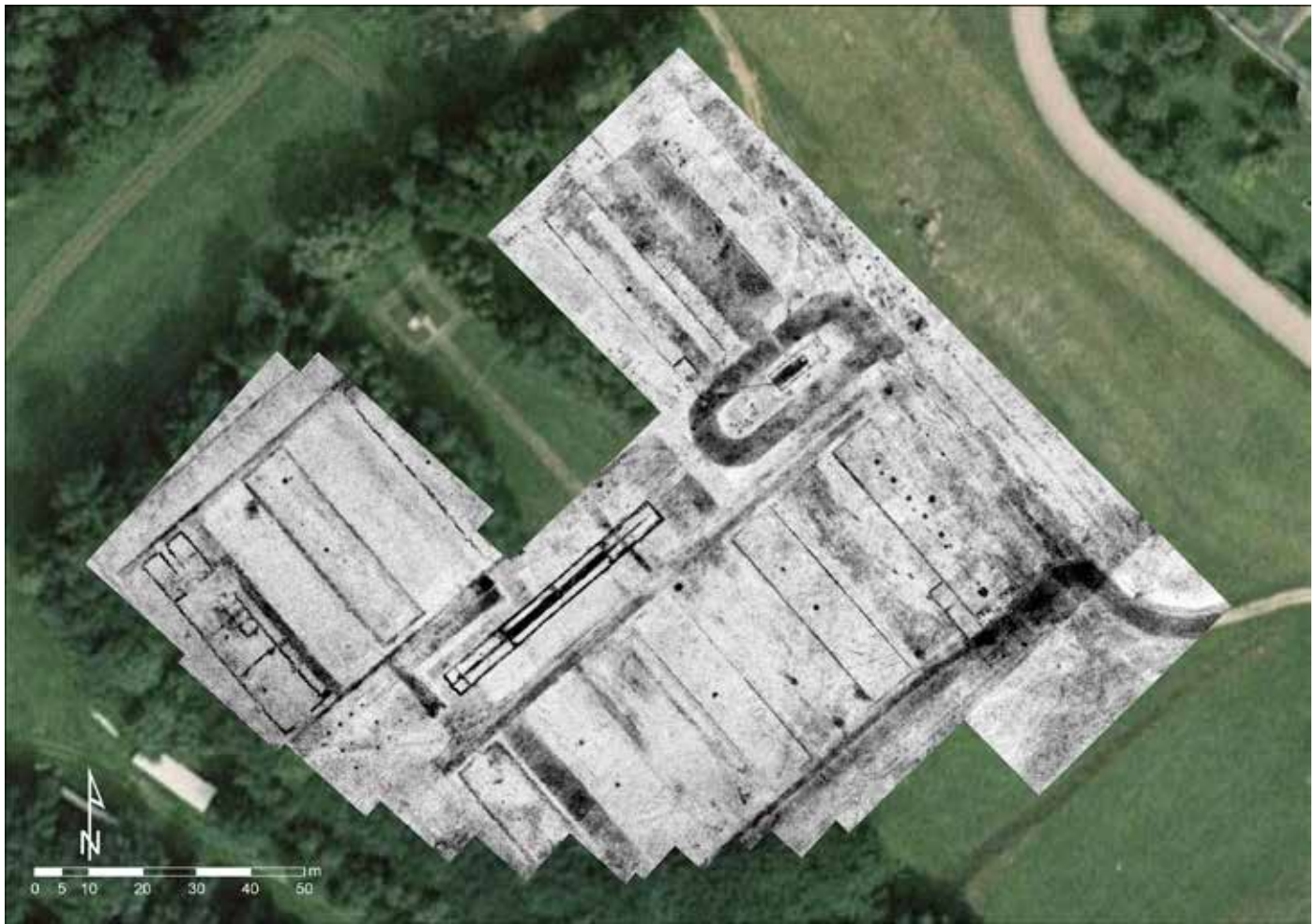


Figure 9. Georadar map from the hospital camp at Mauthausen showing the foundations of the barracks (Graphic by Archaeo Prospections, 2008; courtesy of Archaeo Prospections).

remarkable. This color scheme, which was painted over after the war, seems to have been intended to make the rooms a little friendlier (Mitchell and Buchinger 2009).

Other excavations took place at the tent camp or in some sub-camps of Mauthausen such as in Loibl, a mountain pass in Carinthia, or Gunskirchen in Upper Austria.

Hartheim

A very successful excavation was carried out in Hartheim in Upper Austria. This was a Nazi euthanasia center in

1940-1944 (Klimesch 2002; Klimesch and Rachbauer 2008). Here, the question was again what remains were still in situ after the war, because it was known that there had been many changes. First, a buildings archaeological analysis noted massive interference with the structures. Significant finds of the victims and many cremated remains were later found in a trench during an archaeological investigation. The personal belongings of the murdered were found in a pit. The contents of the pit were dug *en bloc* and placed in the present memorial.

CONCLUSION

In part at least, new perspectives in the understanding of the war and extermination sites are being opened thanks to the numerous archaeological investigations that have been, and are, taking place. Archaeology's strength—research into everyday life—can reveal many new facets of the crime sites. The archaeological

research of recent sites with its comprehensive and plentiful record is immensely important for wide-ranging analyses.

The interplay of archaeological heritage and memory is an interesting aspect. Places of remembrance are

traditionally points at which national inheritance, one's own united tradition, a splendid history, and identity are made manifest (Assmann 1999). These places are usually positive reference points in collective national memory. Battle sites, at which victories were won or defeats suffered, can achieve such a status. Cultural assets and sites become collective places of remembrance when they are attributed symbolic meaning for past events. Then monuments are erected, which pass on the memory of persons or events (Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; Pollak 2010).

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- Former concentration camps or other places in Germany associated with the National Socialist terror do not fulfill these positive connotations. Instead, they are "evil places" (Porombka and Schmundt 2005) or "reluctant" places of memory (Assmann 1999:328-330). Nevertheless, in Germany these sites are often preserved as monuments and places of remembrance. There, the victims will continue to be remembered and young people, tourists, and others will be educated about National Socialism. Archaeology will play its part.

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