

Schlösser mit vier kräftigen Ecktürmen der imperial-katholischen Seite zu und die Bauten mit Eckaufsätzen den protestantischen Herzögen von Württemberg und deren Anhängern. Im Gegensatz zu Ritzmann sieht Uhl hier eine Beziehung zwischen Baugestalt und Konfession, schränkt dann diese Aussage am Ende wieder mit dem Hinweis ein, dass sich direkte und kausale Zusammenhänge nur schwer nachweisen ließen. Der Beitrag von Dominik Gerd Sieber stellt die Frage: Räume der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung? Burgen, Schlösser und Herrschaftssitze im Glaubenswandel des 16. Jahrhunderts in Oberschwaben (S. 313–328). Der Autor möchte die Burgen vor allem als Handlungsräume der beteiligten Akteure in den Blick nehmen und verweist auf Inschriften sowie bildliche Ausstattungselemente (z. B. Kacheln oder Statuen). Den Abschluss des Bandes bildet der Aufsatz von Klaus Weschenfelder über die „Veste Coburg während der Reformation. Architektur als Reflexion der religiösen Konflikte“ (S. 345–360). Der Autor konzentriert sich dabei auf die Veränderungen der Befestigungsanlagen im Zusammenhang mit konfessionellen Konflikten zwischen den Hussitenstürmen und dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg. Diese Verknüpfung zwischen Baumaßnahmen und Konfessionalisierung erscheint allerdings etwas erzwungen, denn die Entwicklung des Fortifikationswesens in der genannten Epoche hatte nur indirekt etwas mit den Konfessionskonflikten zu tun.

Die Beiträge des Tagungsbandes bieten zahlreiche interessante Anregungen und Hinweise auf den Schloss- und Wehrbau des 16. Jahrhunderts, der in der Burgen- und Schlossforschung ein eher weniger populäres Thema ist. Zu dem dem Tagungsjahr 2017 geschuldeten Leitbegriff der Reformation lassen sich bei vielen der Texte allerdings keine wirklichen Bezüge herstellen. So war die Waffentechnologie, auf die die Bauten reagierten, konfessionsunabhängig. Dieser fehlende innere Zusammenhang zum Oberbegriff des Bandes macht die Beiträge aber nicht unbedingt weniger lesenswert.

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The present volume, the title of which may be translated as *Archaeology of the Contemporary Era: Overview and Perspectives*, is a collection of 22 papers presented at a conference held in Kiel in December 2018 which allows us to measure how large a space the contemporary era now occupies in archaeological research in Germany. Whereas in the Anglo-Saxon world the idea of an archaeology of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries took hold in the 1960's, no such study was performed in Germany until the end of the 1970's. But it was not until the beginning of the 1990's that this period began to be examined on a larger scale, most notably with the 1990-1 excavations at Witten-Annem, a satellite of the Buchenwald concentration camp. Clearly, given the number of publications and conferences recent years have seen, this kind of studies has made a place for itself. The *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) organised a conference on "Research Perspectives for the Archaeology of the Modern and Contemporary Eras" in 2019, and in 2020 the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ur- und Frühgeschichte* (DGUF) organised yet another, this one entitled "Do We Want, or Need, More Archaeological Research on the Contemporary Era?" and its proceedings were published in *Archäologische Informationen*, volume 43, 2020 (doi: <https://doi.org/10.11588/ai.2020.1>). The

same phenomenon is manifest elsewhere in Europe. In France, there have been three conferences on the subject in recent years. The first, “Clashes of Time: The Contemporary Past as a Challenge for Archaeology”, was held in Metz in 2015 and dealt with the theoretical aspects of the matter (J.-M. BLAISING et al. [eds], *Clashes of Time. The Contemporary Past as a Challenge for Archaeology* [Louvain 2017]; cf. R. BERNBECK, *Die Revolution archäologischer Zeitlichkeit. Der Beitrag der französischen Archäologie der Moderne. Germania* 97, 2019, 207–214. doi: <https://doi.org/10.11588/ger.2019.78629>). The other two dealt with the archaeology of the World Wars and took place in Verdun in 2018 and in Caen in 2019 (*De Verdun à Caen: L’archéologie des conflits contemporains*, forthcoming publication).

As Claudia Theune points out in the first article in this collection (pp. 19–30), the question that served as the title of the DGUF’s conference received its answer long ago. From its very beginnings, the archaeology of the contemporary era has demonstrated its ability to shed light on “those grey areas of reality that other sources leave in the dark”, as the French historian Anne Duménil once put it (A. DUMÉNIL, *La Grande Guerre a-t-elle besoin de l’archéologie? Vingtième Siècle. Rev. Hist.* 59, 1998, 153–155). The 22 papers that Fritz Jürgens and Ulrich Müller have assembled for this volume constitute further proof still. One is struck by the variety of topics, as is clear from the different chapter headings. The Nazi period (chapter 4, pp. 221–372) and World War II (chapter 3, pp. 161–220), which drew the greatest interest in the 1990’s, hold a significant place here, too, but industrial archaeology (chapter 2, pp. 101–160) and studies on daily life (chapter 5, 373–499) are equally well represented.

Each of the 22 articles in this volume offers interesting insights and perspectives; our comments will be restricted to just a representative few. In their work on the *Alte Eisenbahn*, a railroad line begun in 1846 and abandoned in 1848, F. Jürgens and Nils Wolpert engage in the archaeology of industrial works (pp. 125–136). Combined with archival research, their study of the vestiges of the project (an unfinished tunnel, for example) affords us documented insight into a crucial period in the history of technology, that of the appearance of railroads. On the subject of World War II, Harald Stadler and Philipp Lehar’s “Cossacks in Eastern Tyrol” relates the search for material remains left by soldiers and civilians fleeing the Red Army’s advance through Austria in 1945, not just Cossacks but also Russians, Ukrainians, Slovenians, and Croatians (pp. 195–217). Among other things, their findings allowed to verify the validity of oral accounts and documents collected by ethnologists and historians. Regina and Andreas Ströbl take an unusual tack in their archaeological study of daily life by examining the impact evolving industrial methods of production had on coffin-building in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (pp. 373–386). They surprisingly find that in spite of new materials and technical advances the shapes coffins were given were very conservative and continued to replicate those of the Renaissance and the Baroque period. As suggested above, the reader will find a great variety of other subjects as well, from a World War I submarine (Florian Huber, pp. 161–178) to a 1930 building in Dessau designed by the director of the Bauhaus Dessau, Hannes Meyer (Felix Rösch et al., pp. 387–450), to a discussion of the remains of the *Unternehmen Wüste*, the massive Nazi industrial project for the production of shale oil (Barbara Hausmair, pp. 333–369).

But the value of the articles collected here is not limited to case studies. Theory occupies an equally important place. It is the primary focus of the first five articles (chapter 1), and it is present in others as well. For example, Helmut Albrecht raises the issue of the role and place of industrial archaeology (pp. 81–97) while Reinhard Bernbeck deals with the varied meanings a given artefact can have (pp. 251–269). To be sure, many of these theoretical questions have already been raised elsewhere, in particular in British and American publications. It is nonetheless essential for archaeologists from other countries to deal with them, if only because the vestiges of each nation’s history

bear witness to the past in specific ways, and resonate in the present in specific ways as well. In Germany, obviously, Nazism and World War II, and the Cold War period also, with the German Democratic Republic (GDR), give archaeological research on the contemporary past a unique character. And as C. Theune notes in the conclusion of her article, “We should never lose sight of the fact that archaeology is always infused with politics, and that we are part of that” (p. 29; my translation). As far as Nazism is concerned, politics is never far away – especially if one considers the recent far-right electoral successes in Germany. For example, archaeologists working on concentration camps manifestly need to prevent their work from being exploited and distorted by revisionists, but they must also prevent historical truth from falling into oblivion, which is another kind of revisionism. The Peenemünde Army Research Centre studied by Constanze Röhl and Peter I. Schneider is an excellent case in point (pp. 289–331). These secret proving grounds where the V-2 rocket was developed absolutely fascinate today’s visitors, which makes it all the more imperative for people to know that while Peenemünde was effectively the stage upon which one of the first episodes in the conquest of space played out, it was also a site where prisoners from the Karshagen concentration camp were subjected to the inhuman demands of forced labour. To take this further, it is perhaps, as Thomas Kersting suggests (p. 230), impossible to separate the recent past from the present. Vestiges of tragedies from the contemporary past resonate with today’s events, seemingly on a daily basis: war crimes, genocide, deportation, internment camps, and so on. This makes it difficult for archaeologists to remain comfortably detached in their ivory towers, which is generally the case when they work on more distant periods of the past. Preserving the material memory of the tragic events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is in this sense a political act for it is, albeit indirectly, a way of condemning the massacres and humanitarian catastrophes to which we are currently witness.

Several contributors to this volume deserve recognition for addressing some of the troubling issues that plague this new area of archaeological research. One of them, of a material order, has engendered heated debate, namely the matter of what should be preserved. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has yielded heretofore unprecedented quantities of artefacts. Choices have to be made, for it is simply not possible to keep everything. Ulf Ickerodt, for example, notes that five tons of artefacts were extracted from a single garbage dump on the site of the Oranienburg concentration camp (p. 49). These unusual quantities also underscore the need to revisit the way archaeologists have been working. As C. Theune points out (p. 23), it is truly a shame that the databases from various digs on concentration camp sites have never been synthesised, because it clearly hinders the research. And numbers are not the only problem. Some artefacts are huge, and their removal and transport can be a logistical nightmare: big pieces of industrial equipment, for example, may need to be transported on a truck trailer (Detlef Hopp, p. 115). We would also be remiss if we underestimated the importance of the way vestiges are displayed in museums. As Matthias Wemhoff notes (pp. 71–80), it is occasionally some inconsequential remain – a twisted spoon, a rusted nameplate – that inscribes the past in the visitor’s present-day reality. The artefacts from World War II, in particular those from concentration camps, have especial importance, for the material presence of the horrors of the past is a bulwark against both revisionism and the way in which events can disappear into oblivion.

Lastly, we need to mention some of the themes that are broached only briefly in the present volume but which will merit further study in future publications. First among them is the way in which sensationalist media can utilise vestiges of the Nazi era and World War II. The unhealthy fascination with these subjects is well known, as are the ways in which that fascination can be exploited to sell books, magazines, and movies. C. Röhl and P. I. Schneider characterise this voyeuristic perversion as “ruin porn” (p. 314) – Peenemünde being a good example. And it is far from certain that it is just the media that are capable of such misuses. In the increasingly competitive world of archaeological research, there is always the risk that unscrupulous archaeologists will fall into temptation, in order to attract attention and boost their career. This is an ethical matter that concerns

the community of archaeologists as a whole. We have to ensure that the vestiges we study are those that best allow us to understand the past rather than those that are most spectacular and thus most likely to appeal to a general audience. To be sure, this problem already exists for ancient periods, but the Nazi past is of another order. As Th. Kersting put it, “People have always been attracted to gold, and to Nazi gold even more so” (p. 228; my translation).

There is another theme dealt with briefly here that deserves to be pursued further, namely that of the archaeological study of the very recent past and even the present. In the 1970’s, the Tucson Garbage Project demonstrated the value of studying the material remains of today (W. L. RATHJE / C. MURPHY, *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage* [Tucson 2001]). Why should we stop at 1945? Why do we need to wait until aging has deteriorated or partially destroyed vestiges before examining them? Wouldn’t it be better to take samples of them “while they’re hot” and perfectly preserved? Jürgens and U. Müller note the need to deal with vestiges that postdate World War II in their introduction (p. 14), and in chapter 5 Müller studies a series of student graffiti made between the late 1990’s and 2018. As Müller points out (p. 486), this kind of approach can be used as a methodological tool by archaeologists working on the ancient past. But what is not stated here is that this approach is double-edged, which is precisely what makes the archaeology of the present particularly compelling. The student-made graffiti studied by Jürgens and Müller include “Bo breathes fire” and “Bo stinks”. But is this pure slander or was Bo actually like that? And who is this “Bo”? Archaeologists would be hard pressed to tell us. Even a search of the University archives would have little chance of succeeding, for it is unlikely that whoever this person is appears there as “Bo”. Which brings us to the limits of our discipline that Robson Bonnichsen brought to light in 1973 with his work on “Millie’s Camp” (R. BONNICHSEN, *Millie’s Camp: an experiment on archaeology*. *World Arch.* 4,3, 1971, 277–291. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.1973.9979539>). One occasionally finds examples of those limits in the articles collected here, although the authors are not always aware of it. For example, there is the discovery of the remains of an Italian Carcano carbine at the site of the Dessau building (Felix Rösch et al., p. 432). Anyone unaware of the precise historical context, which is often the situation archaeologists find themselves in, would be erroneously led to see it as possible proof that Italian troops had been stationed here. But archival research tells us that it is far more likely that it was part of the motley collection of weapons supplied to the men enlisted in the *Volkssturm*, the last-chance militia established by the Third Reich at the end of 1944. In this way, the archaeology of the contemporary past (and of the present) could furnish an excellent critical tool, one our profession is in dire need of. But this approach, which could be characterised as post-processual or post-modern and which met with some success in the 1960’s and in the 1970’s, doesn’t seem to be fashionable anymore. Could it be that today’s archaeologists are afraid to open a veritable Pandora’s Box and see many of their unshakable certainties come crumbling down?

While the present volume does not answer all of these questions, by the mass of information that it provides and by the questions that it raises, both directly and indirectly, it greatly contributes to the development of this new branch of our discipline: the archaeology of the contemporary past.

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