

## NOT QUITE AS FAR AS FROM THE ATLANTIC TO BEYOND THE BUG RIVER – AN EDITORIAL

*To Martin Street, our friend and teacher*

The history of this volume begins in September 2012 when three of the editors met at MONREPOS Archaeological Research Centre and Museum for Human Behavioural Evolution (part of the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Leibniz-Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie, a member of the Leibniz Association). While Sonja B. Grimm has been writing her PhD about the transition from Magdalenian to Federmesser-Gruppen in North-West Europe (Grimm 2019) there, Ludovic Mevel stayed for several months to analyse some of these assemblages technologically to compare them to French inventories within a Post-Doc project (Mevel/Grimm 2019). During this time, Iwona Sobkowiak-Tabaka came to examine some Federmesser-Gruppen material from Central Rhineland sites for comparative reasons within her habilitation project about the Federmesser-Gruppen on the North European Plain (Sobkowiak-Tabaka 2017). She was hosted by Martin Street who also functioned as Sonja's tutor. In this culture clash of English, French, German, and Polish traditions of thoughts on the Federmesser-Gruppen and Azilian, we realised that it could be very fruitful to bring together these different approaches of material culture and spatial studies. In a direct comparison we hoped to find answers to questions such as:

What do we actually know about the groups living in Western and Central Europe during the Weichselian Lateglacial Interstadial? How are they reflected in the archaeologically defined groups that we call Azilian and Federmesser-Gruppen? Do they represent related groups or even a single entity? Or were they formed by many rather different groups of hunter-gatherers with a similar way of life? Were they contemporaries or chronological successors? And how are these related to the Epigravettian industries in Southern and South-eastern Europe?

In order to gather different ways of approaching these questions, Martin Street suggested to organise a session on behalf of the UISPP commission »The Final Palaeolithic of Northern Eurasia« but left the details to us »younger ones«. Yet, Martin's influence as researcher, mentor, host, peer, and friend was always present during the process of organising and holding the session as well as in the production of this volume.

Considering the geographic extent of assemblages attributed to the Azilian and/or Federmesser-Gruppen and the differences therein, we quickly dropped the idea of also including the Epigravettian. Instead, to include directly the Northern European research tradition in the organising team, we turned to Mara-Julia Weber working in Schleswig and together prepared a session for the XVII<sup>th</sup> UISPP congress. So in September 2014, a session with the title »From the Atlantic to beyond the Bug River – Finding and defining the Federmesser-Gruppen/Azilian on the North European Plain and adjacent areas« was held in Burgos (Spain). It consisted of an introductory talk, nine presentations and a poster covering the area from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Poland. Hence, from the northern Carpathians to beyond the English Channel would have been the more appropriate title to describe the actual geography covered by our contributions. Three of these presentations were – by the time – on-going PhD projects (W. Mills, M. Monik, F. Sauer) which showed that the questions relate to a topical subject of study and the results will be picked up by a young generation of scientists.

However, the variety of nomenclature already displayed in these talks showed the necessity but also the difficulty of the prospective discussion. Federmesser-Gruppen and Azilian were used almost evenly but also Arch-Backed Point (ABP) groups, Lateglacial, Late Palaeolithic, and Late Upper Palaeolithic were used to describe the material from this period. This plurality might indicate a few different groups but often they rather referred to different scales or appeared rudiments of different scholarly traditions (cf. Sauer/Riede 2019). In general, terms such as Federmesser-Gruppen, Azilian, Penknife Point phase, Tjongerian, Curve-Backed Point groups, or ABP are general representatives for a period when foragers roamed in a boreal environment and, thus, were already different from the classic Upper Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers of the Late Pleistocene steppe landscapes but were not fully Mesolithic yet. The difference to perhaps more local groups such as the Tjonger group, Witowian, or Atzenhof group is often fuzzy. These variable levels reflect different spatial and chronological sections of the hardly distinguishable scale of human social units. It is generally difficult to identify these units based on archaeological material that is then compared over increasingly large areas and timespans. This taxonomic approach becomes particularly difficult if it is applied to periods when only low cost strategies are used (Vaquero/Romagnoli 2018) such as it appears during the here discussed period. The decrease of elaborate and standardised behaviours – compared to the previous Magdalenian technological behaviours – reflected in the material record give only very few possibilities to link differences in the material to group traditions. These few and/or small differences are then likely to be overestimated.

Besides the difficulty of identifying the material, processes during and after the Younger Dryas also affected the *in situ* preservation and visibility of the material. For instance, taphonomic disturbances of the material deposition occurred when deep frozen grounds melted and caused significant *in situ* sediment loss or the material became inaccessible due to cover by sometimes very thick coversands. Finally, the preservation conditions become less favourable for organic material in environments with richer biogenic interactions and reduced mineral coverage. The long bog development that occurred during the Holocene seemed to have no equivalent in the Lateglacial Interstadial. Hence, less diverse remains were preserved to base the studies on.

Furthermore, chronostratigraphic terms such as Meiendorf, Bølling, or Allerød were also used differently (cf. Terberger/Barton/Street 2009, tab. 1). So when trying to at least correlate the archaeological terms spatially and chronologically again quite some confusion can be caused. This also applies to the radiocarbon dates that are sometimes given as raw radiocarbon data (in this volume identified as  $^{14}\text{C}$ -BP) and sometimes calibrated data (in this volume given as cal. BC). The difference is occasionally not visible.

Hence, before being able to explore the inconsistent use of terminology as one of the main aims of the session, we had to find a way between the wide-spread wish to remain within the own frame of traditions and the establishment of a shared frame of references. Although we attempted to unify some general terminology within the different contributions, different concepts remained and the need for a common analysis to come up with a classification we can all work with is still a desideratum. However, single-minded attempts will not solve the problem but rather add yet another new taxonomy that has not grown from a reunification of traditions. Instead of this top-down approach, a bottom-up approach of unifying the recording systems is on its way, for example the work of L. Mevel using one technological approach to describe the assemblages from the Paris Basin and the Rhineland was taken to the north in cooperation with M.-J. Weber and will be continued in a PhD thesis about the Federmesser-Gruppen in northern Germany and Denmark by T. Burau. Anyway, to come to results that can be compared across wider geographic areas, we all have to leave the comfort zone of our national narratives and analytical traditions and see what in a greater framework is possible. In this volume, we assemble contributions from different parts of North-Western and Central Europe (France, UK, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic). Lithic industries still remain the main archaeological source (Sobkowiak-Tabaka; Pyżewicz et al.; Valde-Nowak and Kraszewska) but recent research has also been

exploring and combining further sources of information such as faunal and spatial data and geo- and environmental archives (Bignon-Lau; Mills; Crombé; Sauer; Monik and Pankowská). With regard to the research topics addressed, one can observe two main perspectives by which the relationship between archaeological entities in the mid-Lateglacial Interstadial is regarded: spatial behaviour on variable scales, from site to landscape, on the one hand and the cultural attribution of single lithic inventories on the other hand.

We may not have come closer in defining the Federmesser-Gruppen and/or Azilian but we hope that this book will keep the discussion about these Final Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer groups on-going, especially as they received some relevance in relation to the Epigravettian in the light of aDNA results (Posth et al. 2016; Fu et al. 2016).

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