

## Foreword

This volume entitled “Prehistoric Conflict Research – Bronze Age Hillforts between Taunus and Carpathian Mountains” presents the papers given at the First International conference within the LOEWE focal point on “Prehistoric Conflict Research” held in Frankfurt/Main on 7–9 December 2016 (<https://www.uni-frankfurt.de/61564916/LOEWE-Schwerpunkt>). Within the framework of the ‘Landesoffensive des Landes Hessen zur Entwicklung wissenschaftlich-ökonomischer Exzellenz’ (LOEWE), the Goethe University in Frankfurt together with the Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts in Frankfurt, new investigations on Bronze Age fortresses as well as research on conflicts have been carried out by an interdisciplinary team of archaeologists, medievalists and sociologists in the years 2016 to 2018. In addition, early medieval castles as well as fortification and defensive structures, known from ethnographic case studies, have been examined in a comparative perspective. The structural basis of Bronze Age fortifications as compared to medieval castles stands in the foreground, and new approaches are being developed on the theme “War and Castles – the Architecture of Power”.

Some 80 participants from nine countries (Ireland, Denmark, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Germany) answered our invitation to attend the first international conference of the LOEWE focal point in Frankfurt/Main. An overview of European research on fortifications in the large area between Ireland and Moldova was offered in 27 papers and numerous posters. It is the aim of these yearly conferences with speakers and topics from Europe to create a close network between the LOEWE focal point and international research. Through international conferences in 2016 in Frankfurt/Main, 2017 in Alba Iulia, Romania, and a sociology conference on violence in 2017 in Frankfurt/Main this network has been expanded from Ireland and to Israel and the Levantine coast. The third international conference of the LOEWE

focal point is planned in Fulda, Hessen, on September 24–27, 2018.

With the new evaluations and knowledge gained about Bronze Age fortifications between the Taunus and Carpathian mountains, the central castle-landscape in Central Europe stands in the centre of attention. It is the aim of transdisciplinary studies to create new foundations for the continuing advancement of knowledge about Bronze Age fortresses, which should ultimately result in a long-term research project. Namely, research on conflicts in prehistory can make an important archaeological contribution to the assessment of forms of violent and martial conflicts among prehistoric cultures of Europe. With the emergence of new weapons such as the lance and cutting/slashing sword, as well as the erection of fortified complexes and castles during the Bronze Age in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, the expansion of violence and war becomes recognisable. Technical innovations in bronze casting enabled the casting and production of longer swords in far greater number than before. They changed from a prestigious object to mass ware and an instrument of war. Ultimately, it was fortified hill settlements and hillforts that offered the populace protection from attack by armed groups. And these structures represent a new phenomenon, which must be seen in association with social upheavals and developments. Settlements fortified by massive walls are a manifestation of an eminent need for protection, while at the same time they were a basis of power, from which natural resources and trade routes could be controlled.

We are very grateful to the publishing house Dr. Rudolf Habelt and to Dr. Susanne Biegert for the acceptance and publishing the sub-series founded for the LOEWE focal point “Prehistoric Conflict research” in the series “Universitätsforschungen zur prähistorischen Archäologie” (UPA).

Frankfurt/Main and Berlin, May 2018

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