A continent-wide framework for local and regional stratigraphies

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Preface / Acknowledgements

Some ten years ago I was given the opportunity to participate (as a graduate student) in the Pionier research programme 'Changing Views of Ice Age Foragers'[1], dealing with the Middle and Late Pleistocene human occupation of Europe. The Palaeolithic archaeological record of northern Europe dates well back into the Middle Pleistocene and from southern Europe we know claims for hominid presence of Early Pleistocene age. Roebroeks and Van Kolfschoten however, on the basis of significant differences in the context and quality of artefactual evidence combined with biostratigraphical evidence, stated in 1995 that there is no unambiguous proof of hominid occupation of Northwest and Central Europe prior to about 500 ka.
In order to give feedback on the time control over the scattered Palaeolithic evidence in the study area, as part of the terrestrial record, and to provide (geoscientific) arguments for the so-called 'short chronology'-hypothesis, the subject of my study within the scope of the project focused on the (chrono) stratigraphy of the local and regional Middle Pleistocene terrestrial sequence. I had to go into the difficulties and uncertainties associated with the traditional means of classification and dating of the Middle Pleistocene terrestrial record into inferred palaeoclimatic stages. This arduous task was compensated by the challenge to integrate multidisciplinary data from different type regions into a stratigraphical framework using sequence – and event stratigraphical principles. From these optimal matching is sought with the marine isotope stages (MIS), which at present is widely used as a global time-based reference frame.

I am indebted to all persons who in different ways have supported, encouraged and stimulated me during the past years when this work was 'under construction'.

Firstly, I wish to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. J. W. M. (Wil) Roebroeks as much as to Prof. Dr. M. (Thijs) van Kolfschoten, who supervised the research project. They gave me, as a Quaternary geologist/- stratigrapher, the opportunity to contribute to the integration of (large-scale) geological and (site-oriented) archaeological perspectives. I had the privilege to share their enthusiasm and dedication in seeking a time frame for the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic sites and in finding objective proof for their 'short chronology' theory. Their great interest in all phases of the work, their many suggestions and critical remarks during the writing of the manuscript have been decisive for its realization.

Much support, response and fun was obtained from colleagues cooperating in the research project for which I thank: Jan Kolen, Dimitri De Loecker, Alexander Verpoorte, David van Reijbroeck, Hans Kamermans, Eelco Rensink, Barbara Speleers, Raymond Corbey and last but not least Olga Yates, our ever obliging secretary. Boudewijn Voormolen is thanked for his assistance in the field.

I am much obliged to Prof. Dr. W. H. Zagwijn for his invaluable advice and stimulating discussions during the course of the study and to Prof. Dr. G. S. (Geoffrey) Boulton who made me aware of spatial- and temporal-scale hierarchies in geological processes and in palaeogeographical reconstructions.

I am also obliged to former colleagues, and still friends, of the Laboratory of Physical Geography and Soil Science of the University of Amsterdam: Dr. F.M. (Dick) van der Wateren, Dr. M. (Martin) Rappol, Dr. S.J. (Sjoerd) Kluiving and Dr. J.J.M. (Jaap) van der Meer as well as to those from the National Geological Survey (NITG-TNO): Dr. E.F.M. (Ed) de Mulder, Dr. A.F.B. (Ton) Wildenborg, Drs. P.C. (Peter) Vos, Dr. M.W. (Meindert) van den Berg and T. (Ton) Meijer.

Colleagues and field workers from abroad are thanked for their information on local geological situations and interesting discussions during several excursions, field trips and congresses: Prof. Dr. P.L. Gibbard, Dr. C. Turner, Prof. Dr. W. Boenigk, Dr. H. Thieme, Prof. Dr. B. Urban, Prof. Dr. D. Mania, Dr. J. Ehlers, Dr. P. Antoine, Prof. Dr. P. Haesaerts, Dr. H. Mestdagh, Dr. B. van Vliet-Lanoë, and many others.

Special thanks are due to Mrs. Petra de Jong, Mr. Allard van Basten Batenburg and Mrs. Medy Oberendorff for their skilful drawing of the figures. Prof. Dr. Phil Gibbard is thanked for correcting and improving the English text. I also thank Drs. Edy Mulié of I/O-Graph for performing the final layout work.

My parents, brothers and sister are thanked for maintaining family ties, which gave me a basis and background on which I could always rely. Facilities and accommodation supplied by the families Hanewald, Huijzer and Hachmang are appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Maud for her patience and understanding. Finishing this thesis, home life and the raising of our children Onno and Noortje proved to be an uneasy combination in the last years. Nevertheless, I had to give time to this work. From now on I can spare more time for the three of them. My backpack will not be filled with thesis documents anymore during the holidays.

[1] *Subsidised by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).*