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’, 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 hominin 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 hominin 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’.

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