

Dirk Krausse, Manuel Fernández-Götz, Leif Hansen and Inga Kretschmer. *The Heuneburg and the Early Iron Age Princely Seats: First Towns North of the Alps* (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 2016, 206pp., 169 b/w and colour illustr., pbk, ISBN: 978-963-9911-81-9)

The Heuneburg near the town of Sigmaringen at the edge of the Swabian Alb in Baden-Württemberg, southwest Germany is one of the most impressive and, indeed, the most intensively studied Early Iron Age sites north of the Alps. It was for a long time thought to be restricted to a defended hilltop settlement on a small, almost liver-shaped plateau rising above the upper Danube river. The first systematic excavations starting in 1950 revealed hitherto unexpected findings for a Central European Iron Age settlement with an unprecedented mud-brick fortification in two of its multiple occupation phases (phase IVa-b). The Heuneburg quickly became a byword within the archaeological community. For generations of future archaeologists from Europe and even the USA, participating in the summer camps excavating at the hillfort was a memorable experience during their studies. Currently, research on the Heuneburg and its surroundings is part of a long-term research project financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and led by Dirk Krausse, head of the Department for Archaeological Heritage Preservation (Archäologische Denkmalpflege) in Baden-Württemberg.

Although the book is not very large (206 pages, including 169 mostly coloured illustrations with several high-end digital reconstructions and visualisations of the excavation results) it is an excellent compilation of decades of research which has so far been published almost entirely in German. The volume offers a short synopsis of the previous and recent research, as well as an overview of the results of ongoing excavations on the Heuneburg, its

immediate surroundings, and other sites within its micro-region. This alone would make it an indispensable companion for every Iron Age archaeologist. The authors, Dirk Krausse, Manuel Fernández-Götz, Leif Hansen, and Inga Kretschmer, as well as thirteen additional contributors, take on the task of finally writing a comprehensive, but at the same time very concise and highly informative report of the research in and around the Heuneburg, which they refer to as the first town north of the Alps, and its significance within a broader context of elite settlements and urbanisation processes in Early Iron Age Europe north of the Alps.

The decade-long, intensive excavations and subsequent research on this multiperiod site produced an enormous amount of information about settlement structures, architectural features, finds, and the social organisation of complex Iron Age societies. The most important of the previously published, German-language reports are the eleven volumes of the monograph series *Heuneburgstudien* (Heuneburg Studies) that deal with the excavations carried out between 1950 and 1979, the first phase of systematic excavations on the hilltop. More recently, the monograph series *Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg* (Research and Reports on the Pre- and Protohistory in Baden-Württemberg), report the excavations of the last two decades on the plateau but also in the surrounding areas. Modern prospection methods, such as large-scale geomagnetic surveys in the 1990s, revealed the full extent of an open outer settlement of impressive dimensions which has subsequently been partially excavated.

The book is made up of seven chapters. The authors first take the reader on a ride through the long and interesting history of research on the Heuneburg. Chapter 1, 'Exploring the Heuneburg: From Antiquarianism to Digital Archaeology', gives an account of the unique geographical position of the Heuneburg at the point at which the Danube starts to be navigable by flat boats. What may come as a surprise to most readers is the fact that the occupation and massive fortification of the plateau begins in the Middle Bronze Age (Chapter 2, 'The Heuneburg before the Iron Age'). This makes the Heuneburg one of the most impressive sites of this period in the whole of southern Central Europe. It was already an important centre belonging to a Danube-oriented interregional exchange network.

The third chapter ('The Rise of the *Fürstensitz*') and Chapter 4 ('Destruction and Reconstruction: The Heuneburg after the Mudbrick Wall') deal with the Heuneburg during the Early Iron Age. Chapter 5, 'Monuments of the Ancestors', focusses on the burial mounds in the immediate vicinity of the Heuneburg, including the recently discovered partly waterlogged burial of an elite woman, the 'Princess' Grave from the Bettelbühl necropolis in the Danube valley-bottom below the hilltop. Chapter 6 introduces the first results of recent excavations in the environment of the Heuneburg, mainly adjacent hilltop settlements. The final Chapter 7 deals with the wider implications of urbanisation processes north of the Alps and the macro-regional context of the Heuneburg. A bibliography concludes this handy book. In addition, all chapters contain so-called info-boxes. These are small sections written by various authors, who were or are involved in the excavations and research on the Heuneburg and its surroundings. In some cases, they describe independent projects,

such as the excavation of two Hallstatt period burial mounds in the adjacent Hohmichele-Speckhau group by Bettina Arnold and Matthew L. Murray (Info Box 9, 121). In other cases, they deal with special topics such as 'Faunal Remains at the Heuneburg and its Rural Environs', by Elisabeth Stephan (Info Box 3, 68) or 'Environment, Land use and Nutrition at the Heuneburg According to Botanical Analysis', by Manfred Rösch and Elke Fischer (Info Box 4, 71) to name just three out of sixteen. The reader can assume that chapters, which are not otherwise signed were written by the four main authors.

The sub-title of the book is programmatic. The authors convincingly argue for labelling the Heuneburg during its first Iron Age building phases IVa and IVb as the first town north of the Alps. The arguments revolve around the unprecedented Mediterranean style fortification with a bastioned mudbrick wall on a limestone foundation (the debate as to whether it is a building type with origins in Archaic Greece or Etruscan Italy is ongoing), the planned, grid-like inner structure of the buildings within the plateau, in parts characterized by specialized craft production, and the division of the whole site into the walled plateau, an equally fortified 'lower town', and finally a more loosely occupied outer settlement with large, single, prestigious farmsteads or rather *oikoi* (rural production units of elite status) within rectangular enclosures.

The foundation of the fortified plateau with a Mediterranean style mudbrick wall, which would have required the production of (the authors assume) around half a million mudbricks, and bastions has triggered the intensively pursued *Fürstensitze* / Princely Seats debate, about the social organisation of Hallstatt society. Thanks to the discovery of the outer settlement and the defended lower town, which was

only accessible through its two-storey Mediterranean gatehouse construction, the available information opened a new interpretation trajectory. Instead of the formerly proposed model of a princely seat, the mudbrick IVa-b-phase of the Heuneburg in the HaD1 period (late seventh to first half of the sixth century BC) rather suggests a concerted foundation act by a large group of people, alluding to the phenomenon of *synoikismos* (i.e. the 'gathering together' or amalgamation of villages), as known in eighth century Italy or the emerging *poleis* in contemporary Greece.

The authors and Manuel Fernández-Götz in several other publications convincingly stress the archaeological evidence supporting the model of the Heuneburg as the first town north of the Alps. This is of far-reaching consequence, since our previous notion of the concept of a town or city (in German, the word *Stadt* would be used for both terms) is still very much entangled with the Roman or later medieval town-concept, which among other aspects always incorporated the ability to write—with literacy as symbol of a complex judicial and economic infrastructure. The Heuneburg proves that this concept needs revision or adaptation.

What is striking though and may explain why the Heuneburg mudbrick phase remained an episode in the evolution of urbanism north of the Alps or even a singular political constellation, is indicated by the destruction of the mudbrick encircled town and the abandonment of the outer settlement (Ch. 4) after a catastrophic fire around 540/30 BC, also marking the transition from the HaD1 to HaD2 phase in archaeological terms. After this event, the Heuneburg plateau underwent a substantial reorganisation with a traditional Central European timber-earth stone faced rampart, a monumental hall in the south-eastern corner of the plateau, a looser organisation of buildings on the

plateau, and a significant increase in Mediterranean imports. From a structural point of view, the replacement of the grid-like planned outline of buildings on the plateau by large single edifices or 'chieftain's' houses among them one of monumental size, with outer buildings and encircled by ditches, and probably fences, mark the most significant change. This can be seen as complimentary to the erection of large princely tombs on top of the former elite buildings in the outer settlement. The best known is Talhau barrow 4 in the Gießübel-Talhau necropolis, in which the central burial chamber was erected on top of a burned down multi-roomed monumental building with a *porticus*, which Matthieu Poux and Stéphane Verger compared with public or aristocratic buildings of the archaic period in Etruria, Attica, or France (Poux, 2004, 484–85; Verger, 2007–2008). The new leaders of the Heuneburg located their burial ground—as the authors convincingly state—within a spatial ensemble of topographical relationships connecting the Heuneburg entrance, this elite necropolis, and the Alte Burg stronghold near Langenenslingen into a visual 'prestigious ensemble of monuments of power' (p. 102). Although it has been known as a fortified hilltop site for a long time, the Alte Burg near Langenenslingen (Ch. 6, p. 139) revealed probably the most unexpected results in a recent excavation conducted by Leif Hansen. The tongue-shaped limestone hill was, as pottery indicates, levelled in the Hallstatt period. It does not show any traces of regular settlement occupation. Instead, massive ditches and fortifications in dry-stonewall technique still preserved to a height of 4.2 m and the massive central stone wall 13 m in width and originally up to 10 m tall (today 7 m), which blocks the entrance to the plateau, suggest another, possibly ritual purpose.

The book representing the impressive latest outcomes of research at and around the Heuneburg ends with a short overview of urbanization processes in Early Iron Age Europe and the aforementioned *Fürstensitze* / Princely Seats debate, concerning comparable sites labelled as such between Bourges in France and Závist near Prague in Bohemia (Ch. 7, p. 157). The term 'Princely Seat' was originally coined by Wolfgang Kimmig (1983). It has subsequently triggered an intensive, decades-long debate about the social organisation of the Central European Hallstatt period (Krause, 2008; Krause & Beilharz, 2009). The headline of the chapter clearly indicates that the authors adhere to the Princely Seat model but have, together with a larger group of Iron Age scholars and the extensive research on other central places of the Early Iron Age Hallstatt period, further developed this model and shifted it towards a discussion about urbanization processes and the emergence of hierarchically organized societies.

In comparison with the rest of the book, only brief glimpses are given to the Mont Lassois in Vix and its residential, monumental apsidal buildings, the Iron Age agglomeration of Bourges, Roman Avaricum. This is followed by an overview of the late Hallstatt/early La Tène period fortified sites between Bohemia, Franconia, and Hesse, which represent a shift of architectural features but also possibly political constellations (Hansen and Pare, 2008). The chapter is interspersed with several Info Boxes that, in some cases, could have been placed more convincingly elsewhere, like Bettina Arnold's Info Box 14 on 'Paramount Elites and Gender Studies in Iron Age Europe' (better in Ch. 5 about the burial mounds of the Heuneburg). Nonetheless, the amount of additional information about important sites of the Early Iron Age in southwest Germany provides a particularly

useful textbook-like introduction to the original publications, not only for an English-speaking audience.

Why the authors chose the subtitle *First Towns North of the Alps* setting 'town' into plural is not explained in the final chapter. On the contrary, where one follows the authors in their argument that the Heuneburg is, indeed, the first town north of the Alps, the evidence at the other mentioned sites does not support such a term in my view. Even the Heuneburg itself after the HaD1/phase IVa-b period rather suggests that, although highly complex and hierarchically organized, societies of the late Hallstatt period north of the Alps did not adopt the Mediterranean concept of a town/city, despite the fact that close contacts to the city-states south of the Alps are evident. This makes the mudbrick fortification phase IV of the Heuneburg even more special. This unique fortification system and additional building structures were planned and erected in the last quarter of the seventh century to around 600 BC. To me, this seems to have been an act of colonization or at least a foundational act with the involvement of people from south of the Alps, possibly the area of the Golasecca culture. The princess of the Bettelbühl grave (Info Box 11, by Dirk Krause and Nicole Ebinger-Rist), who belonged, as the dendro-date of 583 BC of the grave chamber indicates, to the founding generations of the Heuneburg, seems to have worn a Golaseccan costume, that is of northwest Italian origin. Another ostentatious burial chamber containing a wagon, gold beads, and a Golasecca-type fibula among other items has been excavated since 2019 in the Bettelbühl cemetery ([www.denkmalpflege-bw.de](http://www.denkmalpflege-bw.de), <https://keltenblock.de/>). We still only poorly understand whether the destruction that terminated the Heuneburg IVb phase, and the simultaneous abandonment of the

outer settlement—ending what one might call the Heuneburg's town-phase—not only represents the re-occurrence of a traditional spatial structure of an elite hilltop site but also the change of the socio-political organization of society in general. At least, the hypothetical scenario of an internal conflict, in which this destruction represents an uprising of local elites against the possibly unwelcome political concept of a town perpetuated by south Alpine newcomers some generations earlier, appears to be an attractive proposition—the authors remain vague about this point (p. 91), which will need future research.

As I have already stated at the beginning of this review, the book represents an excellent overview of most impressive interdisciplinary research, but also heritage management in Central Europe of the last decades. The book telling the story of the Heuneburg and its wider context should be read or bought—since it is not available online—by every Iron Age scholar or student.

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Zanette T. Glørstad and Kjetil Loftsgarden, eds. *Viking Age Transformations: Trade, Craft and Resources in Western Scandinavia* (Culture, Environment and Adaptations in the North. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017, xii and 289pp., 71 b/w illustr., hbk, ISBN 9781472470775)

With Scandinavia's first towns (Ribe c. 710, Birka c. 750) and the influx of

Islamic silver coinage from c. 790 onward, the region's archaeological record changes