

# A landscape of ancestors in southwest Germany

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The 'Landscape of Ancestors' project is a long-term, collaborative study of mortuary structures and social organization associated with the early Iron Age Heuneburg hillfort (600–450 BC) in southwest Germany (Kimmig 1983). One of the largest cemeteries in the Heuneburg landscape is the 'Speckhau' mound group of 36 tumuli 2000 m west of the hillfort, including the Hohmichele (Hallstatt D1 600–550 BC), the second largest early Iron Age mound in western Europe (Riek 1962). Recent excavation of Tumulus 17 (<http://www.uwm.edu/~barnold/arch/>), a mound 200 m south of the Hohmichele about 20 m in diameter and 3 m high, revealed a complex, multi-phase mound construction sequence (FIGURE 1) as well as the remains of five or six interments (Arnold *et al.* 2001).

The mound began with the distribution on the ancient surface of pyre remains and artefacts from at least one cremation burial radiocarbon dated to around 600 BC, contemporary with the start of the late Hallstatt settlement on the Heuneburg and the establishment of the Hohmichele. As with most mounds of this date, the central burial (Grave 5) had been looted. The 5x5-m rectangular plank-and-post central chamber was visible as post-holes connected by a narrow ditch and was oriented to the cardinal directions. A small earthen mound was subsequently erected to a height of about 1 m and burned pottery, fragments of iron and bronze with charcoal and calcined bone from Grave 5 were deposited on its surface. A thick 'cap' of dense, homogenous and sterile grey clay was followed by a final layer of lighter, loamier soil.

Three secondary inhumations (Graves 1, 3 and 4) were recovered. A probable female inhumation (Grave 4) found along one wall of the central enclosed area was adorned with a bronze-studded belt, bronze bracelets, ear or hair ornaments and at least two poorly preserved bronze clothing fasteners. The ornamentation is consistent with the Hallstatt D1 date of the disturbed cremation grave(s) that it accompanied. Grave 3 was an inhumation in a narrow wooden coffin sunk into the clay cap of the outer mound fill (FIGURE 2). This probable male individual was buried with a full complement of weapons (dag-

ger and two spear points) and personal adornment (single bronze armring and pins known as *fibulae*). A ceramic cup was placed beside his head. Two of the fibulae are of a type dated to the late Hallstatt D3 horizon (500/450 BC). Grave 1 (FIGURE 3) was a probable male inhumation in a wooden chamber with a bronze cauldron, iron short sword, two iron spear points, iron belt hook and an unidentified iron object. As with Graves 3 and 4, bone preservation was extremely poor, but the original position of the body could be interpreted based on soil staining and the placement of grave goods. Grave 1 is stratigraphically later than the initial interment, and the belt hook, spear types, and cauldron indicate that it may be as late or later in date than Grave 3 (c. 450 BC). Organic remains preserved in close proximity to bronze or iron objects in the graves and within the looter's shaft include small pieces of fabric and basketry. A preliminary microscopic inspection suggests that the pieces represent a range of materials and technologies, from finely woven wool and linen to patterned reed or grass mats (FIGURE 4).

Sherd refits between several contexts within the mound link them to the disturbed primary cremation grave (Grave 5), suggesting that portions of the funeral pyre were reserved/curated and deposited during later mortuary ceremonies, possibly even after the last inhumation grave was placed in the mound. Only Tumulus 17 and the Hohmichele have been systematically investigated in this mound group, so it is unclear to what extent Tumulus 17 is representative of the Speckhau cemetery and the Heuneburg mortuary landscape. The project team therefore plans to investigate a second large tumulus during the summer of 2002 about 25 m west of Tumulus 17.

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FIGURE 1. View of Tumulus 17 during excavation in 1999 showing its preserved height and stratigraphic sequence.

FIGURE 2. Plan view of Grave 1 showing the short sword lying at the right side, the two long iron spear points over the left shoulder region with the enigmatic iron object to the left of the hip area and the bronze cauldron at the feet of the male inhumation. The dark stains near the cauldron are the remains of an oak plank chamber.



FIGURE 3. Plan view of Grave 3 showing the dagger angled across the right hip area of the body, the bronze ring around the upper left arm area, the two iron spear points lying over the left shoulder, the dark stain indicating the position of the fibulae in the chest area and the small ceramic drinking cup beside the head region of the male inhumation.

FIGURE 4. Textile fragment from the disturbed central chamber.

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