

# The Heuneburg and the Early Iron Age Princely Seats:

## First Towns North of the Alps

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Cover: The southeast corner of the hilltop plateau with reconstructed mudbrick wall and house in the open air Museum (Photo above: M. Friemelt); amber finds from the Bettelbühl grave (Photo below: Y. Mühleis). Design: Y. Stahl

Back-cover: Early La Tène fibula from the Danube below the Heuneburg (Photo: Y. Mühleis)

## **IMPRESSUM**

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# Preface

To Jörg Biel (1943–2015)

The Heuneburg on the Upper Danube is one of the best-studied sites of the European Iron Age. Research has been carried out on the rich Hallstatt period burials from its environs since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, while modern excavations in the settlement have been conducted almost continually since 1950 – apart from short breaks. In spite of this long tradition of research, the excavations and surveys continue to produce new surprises; the fieldwork of the last two decades in particular, with its sensational results, has radically changed the traditional picture of this Early Iron Age centre of power. Modern research methods such as dendrochronology, isotope analysis, geomagnetic surveys, LIDAR images, digital documentation, 3D laser scanning or the employment of drones for photography lead more and more to new results and insights.

Between the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC the Heuneburg was one of the most important centres of settlement, economy and power in the entire European Iron Age, one that had far-reaching connections to places as distant as Etruria and the Greek colonies. As we argue in this book, the settlement can be classified as the ‘first city north of the Alps’. The volume has two main, interconnected aims: to provide the first synthesis in English on the archaeology of the Heuneburg and its surroundings; and to set the development of this important Early Iron Age central place into the broader context of the centralisation and urbanisation processes of the Late Hallstatt period. The subtitle of the volume was deliberately chosen as a direct reference to John Collis’s fundamental book *Oppida: Earliest Towns North of*

*the Alps* (1984). In this way we want to challenge the traditional assumption that the first urban centres of Temperate Europe were the *oppida* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC. If this idea could still be maintained at the time of the publication of Collis’s volume, the new research of the last two decades has shown that the first wave of urbanisation already took place 400 years earlier, represented by the *Fürstensitze* (‘princely seats’) of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. In what follows we will combine the detailed analysis of the Heuneburg with a general overview of other contemporary sites and broader reflections on the political, social and economic characteristics of Late Hallstatt and Early La Tène communities. Cities are an integral feature of our modern, early 21<sup>st</sup> century societies, and by exploring the origins of the urban phenomenon we hope to contribute to a better understanding of one of the key developments of human civilisation.

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Dirk Krausse