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Belts vs. Blades: the Binary Bind in Iron Age Mortuary Contexts in Southwest Germany

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Abstract The complex interplay between dress and identity has long been a subject of analysis in several fields of study, but until recently, the approach to gender in archaeological mortuary contexts has tended to default to a reductionist binary structure. The concept of intercategorical intersectionality (McCall *Signs, 30*(3), 1771–1800, 2005) as applied to dress and its material correlates both confounds and challenges this problematic and restricted view of gender in prehistoric societies. Data from an area of Europe in which Iron Age populations marked an interconnected set of social roles through the medium of personal adornment in mortuary contexts reveal significant ambiguities, including two related and apparently significant patterns: the relative under-representation of adult males as compared to females (with a correspondingly large "indeterminate" gender category) and what appears to be an exclusively (and improbably) "female" subadult elite group buried in tumuli. The complex interdigitization of gender with other social roles in mortuary contexts suggests that our interpretations of the early Iron Age burial program must be correspondingly flexible to do justice to this intersectional complexity.

Keywords Mortuary analysis · Gender · Intersectionality · Dress

Iron Age European mortuary contexts have historically been assumed to be primarily based on a dichotomous system of gender marking. More recent studies have however revealed important ambiguities in the burial record that argue against a strictly binary system based on contemporary definitions of biological sex as a proxy for gender. The traditional dichotomous gender framework is based mainly on the assumption that all individuals were defined at birth as either male or female based on primary sexual characteristics and that once assigned, this categorization was fixed throughout the

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lifespan of those individuals and is reflected in undistilled form in the mortuary context. In fact, however, the archaeological visibility of different categories of person varies through space and time, such that the full spectrum of social categories may not be represented in the burial record: high status individuals and people occupying certain social roles may be better represented than non-elites, adults may be better represented than children, and women may be more archaeologically visible than men or the reverse. For example, elite adult women occupying particular social roles at particular stages of life are the most likely to be archaeologically identified in the early Iron Age of southwest Germany, when large quantities of imperishable personal ornament were used to mark those imbricated identities in that society. Only a fraction of the population was buried in mounds in southwest Germany between 650 and 450 B.C., and only a subset of the mounds that once existed are preserved today; even fewer of these have been systematically investigated (Arnold 2010: 156, 169). What this means in practice is that in order to access gender ideology in this society, patterns that cut across social categories such as age and status based on grave good wealth (traditionally measured by object quantity and material) must be accounted for as well. The concept of intersectionality is applied to an early Iron Age mortuary data set in southwest Germany where a hierarchically organized, agro-pastoral society of several thousand people selectively disposed of their dead in cremation and inhumation burials under earthen mounds. The goal is to expose the limitations of traditional analyses of gender in mortuary contexts by developing an approach that acknowledges the transformative impact of age, social role, the life course, and other social relationships on what is conventionally represented as a fixed, dichotomous gender system. Moving beyond the conceptual strictures imposed by a reified binary gender system allows new perspectives on social configurations, and identity more generally, to be accessed, including mobility, residence patterns, and intragroup relationships.

Intersectionality and Iron Age Social Categorization

The intersectional approach developed in contemporary gender studies, specifically what has been referred to as intercategorical complexity (as distinct from anticategorical complexity, which rejects the creation or use of social categories, or intracategorical complexity, which uses them strategically), may be the most productive way out of this particular version of the binary bind for Iron Age scholars, as I hope to demonstrate. Intercategorical complexity is defined as the provisional adoption of existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions (McCall 2005:1773). Both the scale of analysis and the analytical categories utilized in Iron Age mortuary studies must be adapted to acknowledge that "a wider range of methodologies is needed to fully engage with the set of issues and topics falling broadly under the rubric of intersectionality" (ibid.: 1774). Also important is the fact that intersectionality leaves open the possibility of gender categories that may fall along a continuum within a binary gender system or may have been viewed as entirely outside it—*i.e.*, ungendered, pregendered, or para-gendered. These are issues that are not limited to Iron Age Europe but have been noted in other areas of the world as

well, and the hope is that the discussion that follows will perhaps stimulate the development of comparable approaches in those contexts (Sullivan and Mainfort 2009; Gillespie 2001, among others).

Iron Age Gender Interpretation and the One Percent

Interpreting Iron Age European gender configurations on the basis of mortuary data has been complicated by historical and contemporary attitudes toward gender as well as by the methodological and theoretical limitations associated with the available data. In particular, the focus on central burials within the largest mounds (tumuli), which are simultaneously the most richly outfitted and the most likely to be looted, has given us an extremely skewed and incomplete picture of gender as expressed in mortuary contexts. When skeletal elements are present and well preserved, the tendency has been to assume a direct equivalence between biological sex and gender, even though the sample of intact paramount elite chamber graves dating between 600 and 400 B.C. in west-central Europe is represented by only about half a dozen burials. The history of interpretation of the high-status individual buried in the Vix tumulus in the fifth century B.C. in Burgundy, France (Arnold 1991, 2012a), exemplifies the interpretive restrictions imposed by a binary gender categorization based primarily on biological sex when viewed through the lens of contemporary attitudes toward gender roles. The initial anthropological analysis identified the individual buried in the Vix mound at the base of the Mont Lassois hillfort as female. However, in the 1980s, the grave was reinterpreted as that of a "transvestite male priest" by prehistoric archaeologist Konrad Spindler (Spindler 1983: 330, Fig. 82), who was willing to consider the possible existence of a third gender category rather than concede ritual and/or political power to a woman. This rejection of female influence and autonomy in a prehistoric context could simply be dismissed as a product of the times, since the first attempts to synthesize and critique approaches to gender in archaeological interpretation were roughly contemporary with Spindler's interpretation of this grave (Arnold 2006; Conkey and Spector 1984; Damm 1991). However, Christopher Knüsel's more recent re-assessment of the Vix remains also argues that this impressively outfitted female burial can only be explained by invoking particular circumstances. While Knüsel concedes that the Vix grave is that of a woman, he suggests that her physical disabilities provided her with access to the influence and power associated with a "priestess" (Knüsel 2002). This at first appears to be an improvement over Spindler but is actually a variation on the same exceptionalist theme and moreover is based on the untested assumption that ritual specialists could claim the rights and privileges of socio-political power in this society. Exceptionalism in this case refers to the argument that women in Iron Age Europe could only achieve positions of power and influence in cases where male succession was interrupted or, as in the case of Vix, because of disabilities that could have been interpreted as conferring special powers on the afflicted individual. In this paradigm, any exceptionally rich or complex female burial requires an explanation whereas rich or complex male graves do not. Intersectionality, by contrast, by acknowledging that gender may not be the primary or superordinate way in which social roles are defined, opens up the possibility of viewing elite Iron Age female burials from a more holistic perspective.

Intersectionality is here defined as the complexity that arises when the subject of analysis expands to include multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analysis (McCall 2005: 1772), a phenomenon that is increasingly recognized by archaeologists in the academy (Sofaer Derevenski 2000) but still has not penetrated to media coverage of archaeological research. The complex interplay between the various facets of individual identity complicating the interpretation of the Vix burial has been addressed in a number of recent French-language publications that highlight the difficulty of engendering such a small and select group of burials (Chaume 2007; Milcent 2003; Verger 2009). It is precisely such cases that are the most problematic when viewed through the limiting binary lens of conventional sex and gender categories. A particularly good example is the recent discovery of an unlooted Iron Age elite grave at Lavau in Burgundy, France. Preliminary reports indicate that this is a burial as impressively outfitted as the Vix grave, with a two-wheeled chariot indicating an early La Tène date and a massive imported bronze cauldron containing additional feasting equipment, some of it also imported (Dubuis *et al*. 2015: 372–373). While the excavators were careful to stress that the poor preservation of the skeleton initially made the identification of sex problematic (it has since been sexed as male on the basis of skeletal morphology), most media reports referred to the individual buried in this grave as a "prince" in spite of the absence of weapons and the presence of symmetrically worn gold bracelets. Intriguing in this case is the presence of an upper arm ring, which is more typically found in morphologically male burials, although the material (apparently lignite or jet) is more typical of female ring ornament. The interpretive narrative of this burial initially appears to be following a trajectory different from that of the Vix grave, but the lack of engagement by conventional media reports with the ambiguous aspects of the burial (absence of weapons, "female" ring ornament), and the assumption that a burial this richly outfitted must be that of a male, indicates that contemporary gender biases continue to influence the interpretation of such finds. As more data become available, it is clear that gender configurations in Iron Age Europe cannot be discussed without reference to intersectional categories such as age, social role, status, and shifting identities linked to the life course (Arnold 2012b).

Gender, Time, and Space

The intersectionality of social categories marking identity in the early Iron Age of west-central Europe is further complicated by temporal and regional variability in the mortuary program, the possible inalienability of certain object categories, the multivocality of grave goods, their potential semiotic transformation in the mortuary context, and the skewing of the available data set due to preservation and selective excavation bias. Interpretations of Iron Age social organization, which have been based primarily on elites—the segment of society that was both the most visible and (based on ethnographic and historical evidence [Calvi 2008]) the most likely to be dichotomously gendered—are incomplete at best and at worst do not represent gender configurations in the majority population. Both the methods applied to the analysis of gender and the conclusions derived from them in this temporal and geographic context are therefore clearly due for a critical overhaul. Several studies of mortuary contexts in southwest Germany and contiguous areas during the early Iron Age (700–450 B.C.), mainly based

on statistical manipulation of large data sets, have demonstrated the existence of temporal as well as geographic shifts in patterns of gender marking (Burmeister 2000; Müller 1994; Müller-Scheeßel 2013). A good example is the number and position of fibulae on the body, which may for a time and in some regions be found exclusively with morphologically male or female individuals but after a generation may no longer be used to mark the same social category. Statistical analyses of this kind may, if applied uncritically, conflate chrono-spatial differences in ways that further obscure or skew a system of marking social roles that is multi-layered and labile, especially when quantitative analysis is applied at the interregional scale (Arnold 2012b). Any attempt to analyze personal ornament and weaponry in burials utilizing an intersectional approach must first control for temporal and geographic variability, especially when unsystematically excavated data sets, many derived from nineteenth century explorations of mound contexts, in some areas of southwest Germany make up more than 80 % of the information available (ibid.). Quantitative analyses carried out in regions where the reliability and specificity of the recorded excavation data are equivalent can produce extremely interesting results that make it possible to reveal intersectional complexity (Tori n.d.); however, such studies have tended to be most effective at the micro-regional scale.

Preservation, Inalienability, and Intersectionality

There are several additional complicating factors. Differential preservation has resulted in an analytical focus on imperishable materials, particularly metal, that has exacerbated the tendency to extrapolate elite gender marking to the rest of the population. Recent applications of CT-scan technology and better conservation techniques (Kreß and Wicha 2008) have demonstrated that in fact early Iron Age societies made extensive use of perishable materials such as textiles (Banck-Burgess 2012) and possibly body modification including tattooing and hair styling. In addition, it is possible that certain categories of objects may have been deposited in burials at different rates and quantities in particular contexts depending on their association with a specific gender/age/other social category (Arnold 2012b). It is also likely that not all objects buried with an individual were necessarily their personal possessions in life. This has been demonstrated convincingly by Laurent Olivier and others in contexts such as the Hochdorf burial, where distance from the body in the chamber was one of the variables used to categorize grave goods as more or less bound to the deceased individual (Olivier 1992). Our ignorance of inalienability and how this may have been differentially applied to different categories of objects and persons in the mortuary context is therefore a major obstacle to interpretation that is rarely acknowledged.

Gender, age, social status, social role, and life history were apparently linked in complex ways that we do not yet understand, manifesting itself in such things as highly variable numbers of head ornament in some burials (rings and pins ranging from a single example to up to 20, for instance) or different combinations of weapons in others (arrows, single spears, more than one spear, combinations of spears and daggers or swords, *etc.*). The most significant problem, however, is that mortuary analyses have tended to start from the assumption that gender was the primary organizing social variable in early Iron Age southwest Germany when in fact, as I hope to show, it appears to have been not only ancillary but was represented by a spectrum rather than a binary set of categories.

Case Study: the Landscape of Ancestors Project

In spite of this oppressive list of interpretive limitations, the existing evidence does indicate that Iron Age populations in west-central Europe marked social categories in a structured way (Jud 2006:91). The fact that this structure is still obscured by the incompleteness of the archaeological record and our methodological and theoretical insufficiencies does not mean that this social system was arbitrary. In this context, I take a critical realist stance (Barad 1996; McCall 2005: 1794), arguing that just because the social world of early Iron Age Europe was contingent, non-linear in its ideological foundations, organic/holistic in its expression, occasionally agential/chaotic in form, and complex in its intersectionality does not mean that there are no meaningful or revealing patterns to be identified in the mortuary record. It does mean, however, that the analytical lens must be re-focused to minimize temporal and geographic blurring, so the case study I present here is geographically restricted to a particular area of southwest Germany extending from the Magdalenenberg burial mound on the edge of the Black Forest eastward to the early Iron Age Heuneburg hillfort on the upper Danube River in the southwest state of Baden-Württemberg between 700 and 400 B.C. (Fig. 1).

The "Landscape of Ancestors" research project has focused mainly on excavating and contextualizing 22 graves from two burial mounds within the micro-regional context of the Heuneburg mortuary landscape. Because skeletal preservation in this area is extremely poor and the data set is extremely small, however, the Magdalenenberg burial population has been utilized for purposes of comparison in the discussion that follows. Based on similarities in personal adornment, especially arm and head ornament in combination with elaborately decorated leather belts, it is

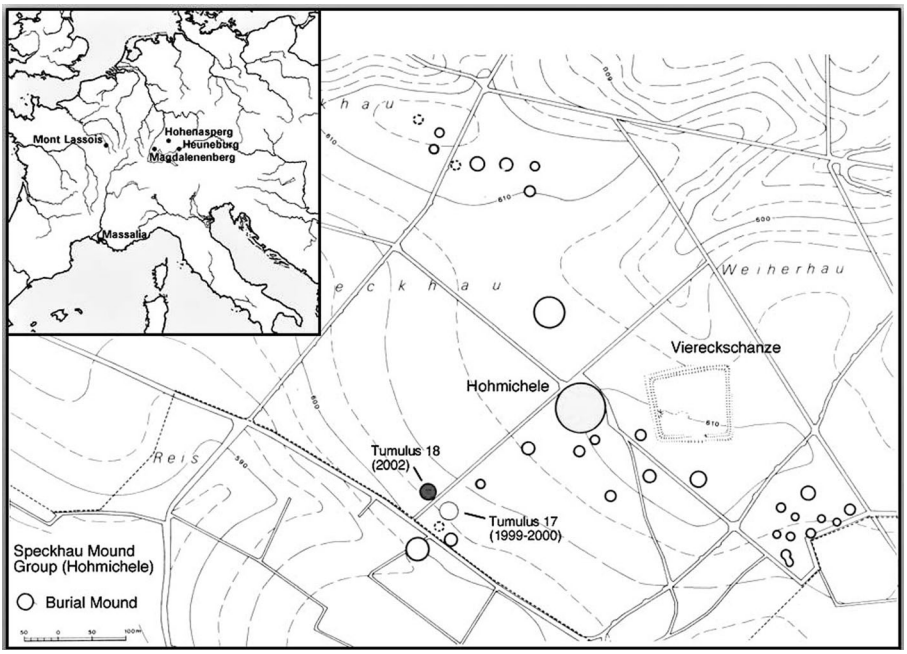

Fig. 1 Map showing sites mentioned in the text

proposed that there was contact between these communities, possibly in the form of intermarriage (Arnold 2005: 22). Recent isotope analyses of faunal remains from the Heuneburg, and its environs support this idea (Stephan 2012: 108). In addition, the Magdalenenberg burials were excavated after World War II, included sexable remains, and have been subjected to intensive mortuary analysis, allowing some of the hypotheses presented here for the Heuneburg population to be partially tested.

In order to provide some background for the discussion that follows, I will briefly describe the mortuary program associated with the early Iron Age in the study area. The burial ritual in southwest Germany involved the deposition of only a small percentage of the population in mounds ranging in size from 10 to 80 m in diameter with a central burial that could be surrounded by more than 100 secondary graves in the mound fill. The placement of secondary graves appears to have followed a structured pattern that varied through time (Garstki *et al.* 2015) and space (Arnold 2010). Cremation was more common in the period of the early Iron Age known as Hallstatt C (700–600 B.C.), followed by a phase in which burials could be either cremations or inhumations, sometimes in the same grave (bi-ritual), with inhumations becoming the dominant rite in the period between 600 and 400 B.C. (Hallstatt D1 through La Tène A). Early Iron Age central burials in this area of Europe were typically placed in large wood, mortise-and-tenon plank, or log-cabin style chambers (often of recycled oak), with a fairly standardized set of grave goods, including four-wheeled wagons that served as biers and may have been used to transport the body during predepositional funeral processions (Stegmeier 2008, 2009; Stegmeier and Amendt 2010, 2012).

The formal Heuneburg burial record includes one well-preserved inhumation of a morphologically female individual with head and belt ornament that was systematically recovered within the walls of the hillfort (Dämmer 1974) but otherwise consists of burials in or between mounds that range in size from 10 to 80 m in diameter (Kurz and Schiek 2002). Only six mound contexts have been systematically excavated to date: the Hohmichele, the second largest tumulus in west-central Europe, in the late 1930s; Gießübel-Talhau Tumulus 4 near the hillfort in the 1950s; Tumuli 17 and 18 in the Hohmichele group between 1999 and 2002; Satzet Tumulus 14 in 2004; and the two Bettelbühl burials in 2005 and 2010. With the exception of Tumulus 17 and 18, excavated by myself and my colleague Matthew Murray (Arnold and Murray 2015), and Satzet Tumulus 14, a rescue excavation conducted in 2004/2005 by the Tübingen branch of the Baden-Württemberg State Monuments Office (Klein 2015:120–121), all of these mounds had diameters of 20 m or more, so our picture of the mortuary landscape presumed to be associated with this intensively investigated site is obviously incomplete and skewed toward the more monumental *Großgrabhügel* (mega-mounds).

This mortuary landscape did not develop in isolation, however, and the associated settlement record has yielded additional important information about the society that buried their dead in these mounds. The Heuneburg on the upper Danube River in the modern German state of Baden-Württemberg is one of the most extensively excavated and intensively studied early Iron Age hillfort settlements in Europe (Arnold 2010; Fernández-Götz and Krausse 2012). At 3.3 ha (roughly eight acres), it is one of the smaller Fürstensitze. However, its white-washed wall of sun-dried mudbrick, a Mediterranean construction technique that to date is unique in this climate zone where rainfall is regular and copious, as well as the imported ceramics found during a quarter century of excavations on the plateau and its associated outer settlement, established the

site's importance in the literature on the early Iron Age beginning in the 1950s. The burial monuments at the site have received much less systematic attention but represent an important source of information about the social organization of the agro-pastoral people who inhabited this promontory above the Danube River and controlled its hinterland. The hillfort and its outer settlement, the focus of an ongoing investigation by the State Monuments Office of Baden-Württemberg (Fernández-Götz and Krausse 2012), is surrounded by burial mounds, only a fraction of which survive today. Their distribution suggests that each cluster represents a social group whose exact nature still eludes us, but the assumption is that close proximity to the hillfort implies the existence of a larger community identity with the hillfort at its core (Kurz 2007).

Only three groups of mounds have been systematically investigated to date: the Gießübel-Talhau cluster immediately adjacent to the hillfort, the Hohmichele mound group about 2.5 km to the west of the site, and the Bettelbühl mound group in the Danube Plain. The mounds closest to the hillfort were first explored in the late nineteenth century and yielded numerous burials containing gold ornaments and metal drinking vessels, among other grave goods, but Tumulus 4 is the only mound in this group to be systematically investigated. Approximately 51 m in diameter, it contained 24 burials including the central interment. In the 1930s, the Hohmichele burial mound, the second-largest tumulus in Western Europe, was partially excavated, but the investigations were interrupted by WWII, and subsequently the mound was restored to its original height of 13.5 m. Only 11 formal burials were recorded; it is unknown how many remained when excavations ceased (Kurz and Schiek 2002).

The Landscape of Ancestors project that is the source of the micro-regional mortuary analysis presented here is a collaboration initiated in 1997 between two US universities (the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the University of Mississippi) and the State Monuments Office of Baden-Württemberg (Tübingen/Esslingen). Excavations conducted as part of this project focused on two mounds in the Speckhau group near the Hohmichele, Tumulus 17 and Tumulus 18, which were investigated between 1999 and 2002. Situated only a few meters apart, the two mounds were each around 20 m in diameter and originally about 3–4 m high. In spite of these superficial similarities, there are interesting differences. Tumulus 17 contained several burials with weapons, including the partially looted central burial chamber, which yielded the fragments of at least two iron spears and portions of an iron knife or sword, probably part of the disturbed central cremation. In addition, two much later burials containing weapons were uncovered higher in the mound. Grave 1 included a rare bronze cauldron with 14 l of honey mead as well as a large dagger-knife, two long spear points, a belt hook, and a helmet crest attachment, all of iron (Arnold and Murray 2015). Grave 3 contained a small ceramic drinking cup as well as a dagger, two spear points, three fibulae (one a miniature Sanguisuga type of an unusual alloy that may be an import), and a bronze upper arm ring. An apparently female inhumation was found in the disturbed central enclosure, which was 5 × 5 m in size, one of the largest known for this time period. The radiocarbon dates as well as the grave goods indicate a use life of at least 150 years for this mound, from about 600–450 B.C. (Arnold *et al.* 2001).

Tumulus 18 also seems to have been in use for at least 150 years, but whereas only four burials were recovered from Tumulus 17, this mound yielded 16 inhumations, more than half of which contained symmetrically distributed ring ornament and/or other personal ornament traditionally categorized as female. Two of these burials

contained bronze neckrings or torcs, an item not found in Tumulus 17. Several contained bronze decorated belts, arm or leg rings, head ornament, or ceramic vessels. An undisturbed burial with a large iron knife in a sheath and a disturbed grave with what may have been a similar iron knife were the only weapons recovered; no spear points were found, either intact or in fragmentary form. The inhumations were oriented concentrically around the remains of an in situ funeral pyre; the fragments of at least 12 ceramic vessels from that burial were recovered in a looter's trench.

The Heuneburg Mortuary Landscape

When unsystematically recovered burials are included, the number of documented mortuary contexts within a 3-km radius of the Heuneburg currently stands at about 110, which is clearly not representative of a population that is estimated to have peaked at roughly 5000 people during the early Iron Age (Krausse *et al*. 2015: 82). The acidic clay soils preferentially preserve plant-based textiles such as linen or bast but cause the disintegration of virtually all traces of bone or wool except where metal has been in close contact with the skeleton or in exceptional contexts such as the intramural woman's grave on the hillfort plateau (Dämmer 1974). However, contemporary mortuary contexts in southwest Germany with better bone preservation, including the Magdalenenberg, clearly demonstrate that metal head ornament in the form of rings or pins, ankle rings, bronze neckrings, natural objects (especially made of stone, sometimes perforated), large numbers of beads (up to several thousand), and leather belts decorated with bronze staples are found only in morphologically female burials (Kleibscheidel 1997:55). Objects so far found only with morphologically male individuals in the Heuneburg burial population include gold or iron neckrings, swords/large knives, daggers, spears, arrows, helmet fittings, razors, and whetstones. Object categories found in both male and female graves include belt plates, fibulae, arm rings, amulets of glass or amber (usually in the form of beads), metal and ceramic vessels, horse trappings, and wagon components. However, the number and placement on the body or in the grave of these gender-neutral object types appear to be patterned and probably were associated with particular social identities, including gender. For example, pairs of fibulae in morphologically female burials are typically distributed symmetrically in HaD1, one on each shoulder, while morphologically male graves contain either a single fibula or two fibulae on the right or left shoulder worn one above the other. Several generations later, in HaD2/3, however, morphologically male graves in the same mound group may contain more than three fibulae concentrated in the center of the chest.

Morphologically female burials typically include more objects, as well as more categories of objects, even if beads are not counted individually, than male graves in early Iron Age southwest Germany, which makes them more than twice as likely to be assigned to a gender category. However, there are between two and four times as many (apparently) exclusively male object types, depending on whether the material of which an object is made is considered as a variable or not (as for example in the case of iron neckrings, only found in morphologically male burials to date, but also relatively rare) (Arnold 2006). Edged weapons, whether arrows, spears, daggers, or swords, are typically found with the skeletal remains of males, but weapons were also rank and/

or status markers and most males were buried without them, leading to a phenomenon of differential visibility that has been referred to by Stefan Burmeister and others as the "amazing invisible man" in contexts where skeletal preservation is poor or no physical remains were recovered (Burmeister 2000). This suggests that male gender across social status and role categories was probably mainly marked by perishable material (hairstyle, clothing, tattoos, *etc.*), since males were certainly present and are probably represented in the burial context (presumably in the indeterminate gender category) even if they are not as visible (Kleibscheidel 1997: 55). Maleness may have been more proscriptively defined than femaleness and (based on the differential distribution of weapons) appears to have been closely tied to age and achieved status.

Blades Make the Man?

At the Heuneburg and neighboring areas of southwest Germany, two primary object categories appear to have signaled maleness intercategorically linked with age, status and/or social role. Daggers or dagger-knives and spear points are the most common "weapon" category found in morphologically male graves, but very few male graves contain such objects (Kurz and Schiek 2002: 58). The Heuneburg mounds investigated so far typically contain only one dagger grave per mound. Likewise, there were only five dagger burials in the Magdalenenberg, which contained a total of 130+ interments, suggesting that daggers marked a role that was probably serially held in the community and was not tied only or even primarily to maleness. Spear points are more common but are typically not found together with daggers (there are some exceptions, including Speckhau Tumulus 17 Graves 1 and 3), so we may conclude, as other early Iron Age scholars have suggested, that daggers symbolized a social role that included but was not limited to maleness or the "warrior" role, symbolic or actual (Nellissen 1975: 44; Sievers 1982: 59).

The weapons = warriors equation has been critically deconstructed by numerous scholars working in the Iron Age as well as other time periods and geographic areas of Europe (Härke 1990, 1997; Jud 2006:91, among others). Simply equating bladed objects (some of which, like swords and spears, can be defined primarily as weapons while others, such as arrows, sheathed knives, daggers, and razors, may have served multiple functions) with the threat of violence could be seen as denigrating the imaginative capacity of prehistoric peoples to engage in composite imbrications of meaning. Nevertheless, it would be equally remiss to dismiss the association between maleness and coercive force as one possible element in the symbolic playbook of the ancient world, as John Robb argued in an early essay on female beauty and male violence in prehistoric Italy (1997: 55). Weapons in this context, as he points out, are "a frequent and readily understood metaphor for the phallus" (ibid.: 54). The few iconographic representations we have from early Iron Age contexts in southwest Germany clearly represent a form of this association, as the ithyphallic male figures decorating the Hirschlanden stela and the back panel of the Hochdorf couch both suggest. However, as Jud points out, men were farmers, herders, crafts-workers, and heads of families (2006:91) as well as warriors; defining them solely in terms of their (occasional) martial function is not only reductive but also affects the categorization

of women, who are often negatively defined in terms of the absence of weapons in mortuary contexts (Kästner 1997:25). Moreover, not all weapons appear to have had the same meaning in the idiom of burial, as is indicated both by the highly variable frequency with which they are found (spears often, swords/daggers rarely, for example) and the differential rates of association between weapon types (swords and spears are rarely found together, for example).

As Robb also points out, however, there "are several reasons to question this tidy interpretation" (ibid.: 56) of the male as warrior, in prehistoric Italy as well as early Iron Age southwest Germany. Ambiguity appears to be at least as dominant a theme in the mortuary context as dichotomy, and the actual material evidence has so far defied overly simplistic parsing of its syntactical complexity. The appearance of certain categories of personal ornament in both male and female burials (neckrings, armrings, belt plates, fibulae) suggests that female beauty cannot be simply the opposite of male violence but that the construction of the ornamented male was as significant a part of the social system as the ornamented female, a subject explored in some detail by Paul Treherne in his 1995 essay on the warrior's beauty (Treherne 1995). Roberta Gilchrist has critiqued Treherne's approach for not considering the life course as a determinant in the expression of gender marking, especially at the prepubescent and senescent ends of the spectrum (1999: 66), and in the case of the Heuneburg mortuary landscape I am inclined to agree. The rarity of weapon graves in general and the large number of burials that fall into the indeterminate gender category suggest that conceptualizations of gender, age, and (by extension) the life course were inextricably linked to identity in this and possibly other early Iron Age societies. Any attempts to analyze one of these variables in isolation will produce seriously flawed conclusions. This in turn means that any quantitative approaches to social organization will need to be designed from an intersectional perspective.

Belts Make the Woman?

In Judith Butler's conceptualization, gender is a performance through which difference is both created and reified (1990), a performance that extends from the world of the living, our present, to the world of the dead in prehistoric societies. A pervasive problem for archaeologists, however, is that the bodies on which gender and other social identities are mapped in mortuary contexts are not actors but objects; the actual performers are the deceased's living contemporaries. This means that distinguishing between grave goods that may have been intimately linked to the deceased in life—potentially marking individual identity—and those that may have marked group identity—is of critical importance (Sofaer Derevenski 2000:397–398).

The application of CT-scan technology to some of the burials in Speckhau Tumuli 17 and 18 has opened up new avenues for reading these dead bodies for clues to their lived social identities (Kreß and Wicha 2008), including but not limited to gender and intersecting with other social categories, especially age and the life course, in important ways. For example, the elaborate staple decorated leather belts found in six of these graves were so fragile that in the past they could not have been recorded in any detail, let alone recovered intact. The fact that each belt is unique in terms of the shape and style of the staples, the number of staple

rows and their arrangement, the shape and style of the bronze belt plate, and the way in which it was attached to the belt can now be determined based on the CT-scan data. If they were merely placed on the body by the mourners (Banck-Burgess 2012), they may not have been part of the lived social persona of the deceased. The CT-scan evidence from the Landscape of Ancestors project has been able to determine that at least some of these belts were indeed worn (see also Spindler 1976: 35) and can be linked to the life course as inalienable objects that marked an integral aspect of the social persona of the deceased in life.

In the CT-scan images of the *en bloc* belt and head areas of Tumulus 18 Grave 6, the lumbar vertebrae can clearly be seen *between* the large, undecorated sheet bronze belt plate at the front of the body and the three decorated sheet bronze plaques at the back that were connected to one another with staple decorated leather segments. It is only because the waist area was literally sandwiched between two layers of metal that the vertebrae appear at all; only a textural difference in the soil would have been visible during excavation. The CT-scan data also allow the vertebral interstices to be measured, indicating that this was a mature female 30 years of age or older (Fig. 2). The CT data of the head area for Grave 5 from the same mound clearly shows the outline of tooth enamel for the fully erupted third molars in the otherwise no longer preserved mandible and maxilla and there is wear on the M1, suggesting an age at death of at least 30 years (my thanks to Joachim Wahl for these age assessments).

The hypothesis that these elaborately decorated belts constituted personal and inalienable property can be addressed using another type of evidence as well. The belt buried with the individual in Tumulus 18 Grave 17 was closed by means of a tremolo-decorated sheet bronze belt plate with a hook at one end and two bronze rings attached to the staple decorated leather several centimeters apart, presumably making the belt adjustable (Fig. 3). Significant weight gain could perhaps have occurred during an adult female's lifetime in this society, possibly including the early stages of pregnancy, an indication not only that these belt sets were worn in life but also that they may have been primarily worn by adult women of child-bearing age.

Outside the Heuneburg region but probably linked to it by trade and/or marriage alliances, we find additional examples of burials with adjustable staple decorated belt assemblages, indicating that this is not a phenomenon limited to one or two individuals in a particular micro-region. Seven burials with such belts in the Magdalenenberg tumulus, which contained numerous graves with female ornament similar to that found in Speckhau Tumulus 17 and 18, had more than one closing ring. In two cases, the three rings in question were found arranged in a line along the left hip and have three different cross sections and thicknesses, suggesting that they were produced and/or acquired at different times (Spindler 1973: Plate 47). The maximum number of rings documented was four (Spindler 1976: Plate 64). Although only 25 % of the staple decorated belt graves in the Magdalenenberg could be at least provisionally sexed based on the skeletal remains (Spindler 1977: 106), *all* the sexable burials with such belts were morphologically female. This was also true for the only well-preserved skeleton of a female individual with a staple decorated belt found in the Heuneburg mortuary complex, the intramural interment on the hillfort plateau (Dämmer 1974; Erhardt and Simon 1971: Nr. 30). In some cases, the belt plates also show signs of having

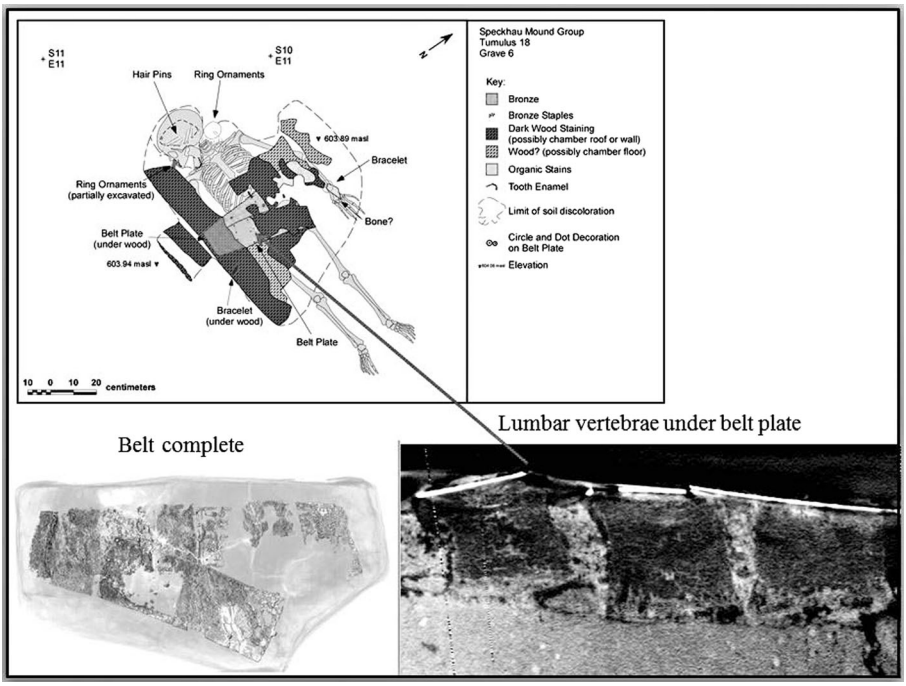

Fig. 2 Speckhau Tumulus 18 Grave 6 showing the lumbar vertebrae of a mature female 30 years of age or older

been lengthened or repaired, with clear evidence of rivets connecting the original plate with the extension (Spindler 1976: Plate 5); these too may reflect the bodily changes experienced by adult women in the course of their reproductive lives. The sheet bronze segments set between sections of the broad staple decorated leather belt in Tumulus 18 Grave 6 (Fig. 4) has a counterpart in the recently excavated wealthy female grave from the Bettelbühl mound group, which contained a similarly large belt plate with decorative segments at the back of the staple decorated leather belt (Krauße and Ebinger-Rist 2015). In at least two cases from the Magdalenenberg and two cases from the Speckhau tumuli, there also is evidence of belt plate repair (Spindler 1971: Plate 24 and Spindler 1976: Plate 8), another indication that these belt assemblages were not just associated with a particular event such as a rite of passage and then were never worn again until burial, but once acquired were worn and treasured over a long period of time.

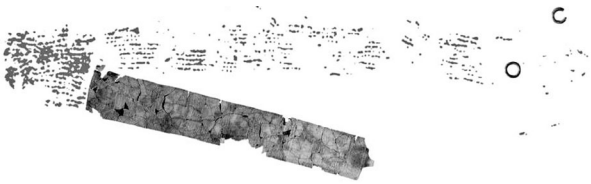

Fig. 3 Two closure rings in Speckhau Tumulus 18 Grave 17 indicate that the staple decorated belt was adjustable

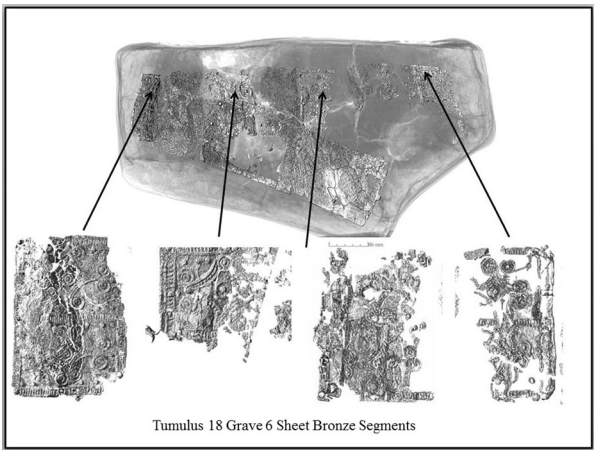

Fig. 4 Punch decorated sheet bronze segments at the back of the belt in Speckhau Tumulus 18 Grave 6

Body-Bound Material Identity

The head ornaments that often accompany the belts consist of solid or hollow ball headed pins most often of bronze, more rarely of amber, coral, or gold, with rings worn on the side of the head of flat bronze or gold straps in the shape of a hoop or hollow sheet bronze or wire rings. It has been suggested by several scholars that these decorative elements were attached to some sort of head covering, possibly a veil like the ones found in East Alpine sheet bronze iconography, or threaded through elaborate hairstyles, as seen in this possible reconstruction of the head ornament in Speckhau Tumulus 18 Grave 5 (Fig. 5). The close association between ring and pin ornament suggesting the presence of some type of head covering and staple decorated leather belts has been noted at the Magdalenenberg, at the Heuneburg, and in other systematically excavated mortuary contexts in southwest Germany (Arnold and Hagmann 2014). Based on the frequent appearance of these head ornaments with adjustable leather belts, some women appear to have acquired these assemblages when they married (Balzer 1997:109; Lenerz-de Wilde 1989:262) or possibly when they had their first child. The fact that the number of rings and pins ranges from one to as many as 15 suggests that these ornaments may have been acquired sequentially and strengthens the argument that they were closely tied to the person, *i.e.*, inalienable.

There is good evidence that some types of ring jewelry were body-bound in a more literal sense and at a much earlier age. A recent study by Lehnert *et al.* (2014) demonstrated that five of eight burials excavated in a mound in Wyhl near Emmendingen, Baden-Württemberg, contained pairs of barrel-shaped annular lignite and bronze bracelets with such a narrow diameter that they must have been put on for the first time when the individuals' hands and wrists were significantly smaller than those of the average adult. The study attempted to determine at what age the lignite bracelets found in the five adult female graves could no longer have been removed in order to test the idea that they may have represented an inalienable ornament category closely tied to ascribed gender. The

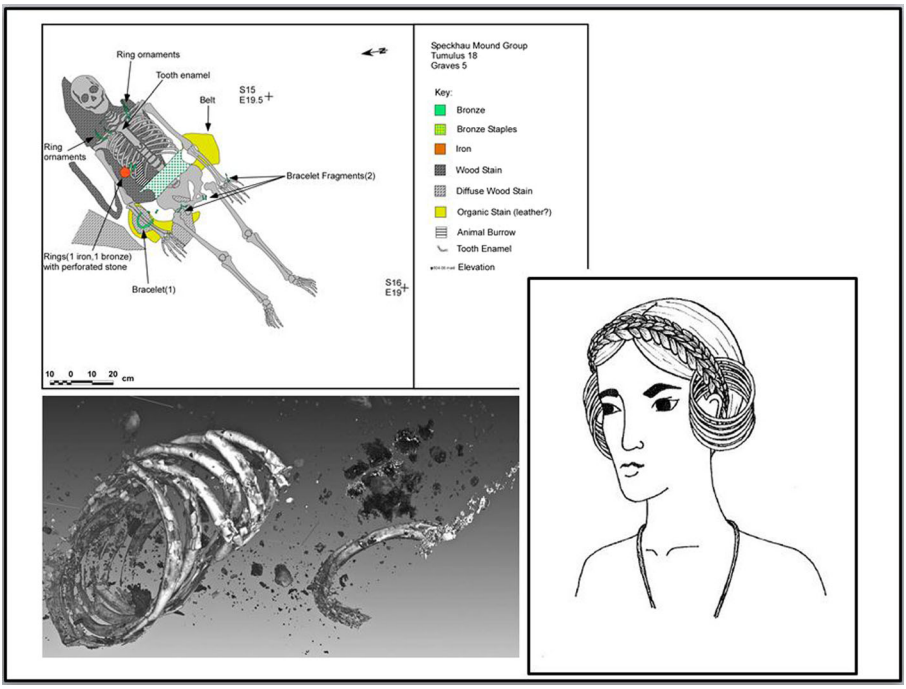

Fig. 5 Decorative ring ornaments attached to some sort of head covering or threaded through elaborate hairstyles are suggested by several graves, including Speckhau Tumulus 18 Grave 5

authors conducted a study of 151 children (75 girls and 76 boys) ranging in age from 2 to 18 to determine the minimum diameter by age at which an annular bracelet could still be forced over both hand and wrist and compared these results with the diameter of the bracelet sets found in the early Iron Age cemetery at Wyhl. An additional 35 burials from a nearby cemetery were included in the archaeological analysis, one a grave with bronze "barrel bracelets" plus nine with lignite annular barrel bracelets like those found at Wyhl (all in morphologically female burials). The authors determined that, based on their diameters, the majority of the bracelets in these cemeteries must have been worn continually beginning in very early childhood (between the ages of 2 and 10), suggesting a close "personal connection between the bracelet and its wearer" (my translation) (2014: 194). The authors highlight the burial of an approximately 50-year-old woman with paired annular lignite bracelets in Wyhl Grave 7 who was 1.6 m tall, had given birth to at least one child, and had been wearing the same bracelets since she was between the ages of 6 and 10 (ibid.). The authors conclude that the paired annular bracelets of jet and bronze were reserved for female children belonging to an ascribed social category different from those who were not buried with such bracelets (ibid.: 195). Bracelets of this type clearly were not produced solely for use in the funerary context, although whether the same inalienability can be assumed for pairs of penannular bronze arm rings, which are much more common in female burials in southwest Germany, including the Heuneburg, and clearly could have been removed, must remain an open question.

Universally Pink before Puberty?

Subadult burials in the Heuneburg mortuary record all either contain bronze neckrings or gold personal ornament; none contain weapons, and when ring jewelry or fibulae are present, they are symmetrically worn, in sexable adult burials a female designator. Rather than concluding that only high-status female children are represented in the Heuneburg burial record, which is the least parsimonious explanation, I suggest that subadults buried before puberty may have been assigned a default social identity that parses as female today because of the limitations of the traditional binary gender categorization system. What appears to be represented is an intersectional identity that simultaneously communicates age (prepubescent), status (elite), and either the absence of a gender identity or a not-male/premale identity. The correlated hypothesis that morphologically male elite individuals may, at a certain point in the life cycle, have removed these "premale" ornaments must be tested against a larger systematically excavated sample in which age data can be compared to morphological data for sex. This "premale/default female" dress code for elite children is a phenomenon well attested in historically documented periods, as can be seen in the clothing worn by high-status male toddlers in seventeenth century portraiture. An even more egregious example is a well-known portrait of the American president Franklin D. Roosevelt at the age of 2 in 1884 (Fig. 6). Until boys in such societies were "breeched," their clothes, personal ornament, and hair styles were indistinguishable from those of female children of the same social class.

Most important from the methodological perspective, because early Iron Age Heuneburg children's graves contain no weapons, staple decorated leather belts, or ring/pin hair/head ornament, their social classification apparently was not equivalent to that of adult females of reproductive age or weapon-bearing males; they should

Fig. 6 Portrait of the American president Franklin D. Roosevelt at the age of 2 in 1884

therefore not be lumped together with those burials in statistical analyses based solely on the presence/absence of "female" ornament or the presence/absence of weapons. It would be interesting to compare patterns of personal ornament in graves between contemporary cemeteries within the same region based on age at death; applying an intercategorical approach whereby gender is subordinate to age could reveal meaningful patterns along other axes of identity.

Meaning in the Mortuary Context

The multi-vocal nature of artifact categories whose meaning may be partially or completely transformed by association with the burial context is complicated by the intersectional identities linked to the life course of the deceased individual. Just as the individual body is transformed by death, so too are the objects that accompany the deceased in death (Ekengren 2013:176–177), making the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence in meaning between an object as used in life and as signifier in a burial highly problematic. Organizing artifacts in burials into dichotomous gendered categories on the basis of a presumed division of labor by sex in life exposes the contingent nature of such meanings. An excellent example of this problem can be found in the early Iron Age Iberian Peninsula, where swords and spindle whorls in burial contexts are clearly not reliable gender markers if they are assumed to represent sex-specific activities. The well-known anthropologically sexed female Dama de Baza burial contained several swords (Chapa and Izquierdo 2010) while male graves may contain multiple spindle whorls (Prados Torreira 2010: Fig. 1). This does not mean that no women spun thread in Iron Age Spain, since they probably did (ibid.) or even that some men spun thread any more than it means that the woman buried in the grave at Baza was a warrior. What is notable here is that one can no more use more than one spindle whorl at a time effectively than one can wield more than one sword; apparently in this context, the presence of multiples in the mortuary context signaled a shift in meaning from what may have been a gendered association in life to a metaphorical association, at least in this area of Spain at this particular time. This example also serves as an object lesson (in both senses of the word) for why using presence/absence data as a primary variable in quantitative mortuary analyses without giving equal weight to the number of each type of grave good in the burial can yield results that are meaningless at best and misleading at worst.

The absence of weaving equipment in burials may not mean that the production of textiles was not a gendered activity in a particular region, however. There is ample evidence for sophisticated textile production in the form of actual remains of cloth and clothing in Iron Age southwest Germany (Banck-Burgess 2012), but spindle whorls and loom weights, both of which may be found in graves in other areas of Europe at this time, are rarely found in burials in the Heuneburg region. None of the seven graves with female head and belt ornament in Tumulus 18 contained spindle whorls, and only one spindle whorl was found in Speckhau Tumulus 17 in a secondary deposit that could not be associated with a particular burial. The recent discovery of a spindle whorl in the high status double burial of two female individuals in the Bettelbühl mound group in the Danube Plain below the Heuneburg brings the total number of these objects in the Heuneburg burial mounds to three. None of the graves recorded in the Hohmichele contained a spindle whorl, and Siegfried Kurz has cast doubt on the integrity of the

only burial in the four large mounds near the hillfort to have yielded a spindle whorl (Kurz and Schiek 2002: 101, Plate 17). Also significant is the fact that in the Magdalenenberg, with 130+ burials, the only grave with a spindle whorl also contained a miniature ceramic vessel, an iron pin, and an iron razor (Spindler 1976: Plate 46), an ambiguous combination of artifacts at best. Although the bones were poorly preserved, the excavator classified this grave as male based on the presence of the razor and the sexable skeletal fragments (Spindler 1976: 59). Natalia Berseneva has identified a similarly ambiguous use of spindle whorls in burial contexts in the Sargat culture of the Western Siberian Iron Age (2008: 142–143) and suggests that their use in burials should probably be considered metaphorical and connected to life course symbolism. Much the same point is made by Fredrik Ekengren in his discussion of spindle whorls in Roman Iron Age women's graves in Denmark (2013:187) and by Nick Stoodley in his analysis of Anglo-Saxon burial ritual (1999). However, such a hypothesis would need to be tested in the Heuneburg context and, if anything, simply demonstrates the complex nature of object multi-vocality and the fact that we should be focusing as much on the number of objects as on the object categories themselves.

To conclude, the way forward will require archaeologists to develop an intercategorical approach to the analysis of age, social role, status, and gender in early Iron Age mortuary contexts. More recent studies, like the one carried out by Emilie Millet on burial evidence in the central and upper Rhine Valley between the fifth and third centuries B.C., are beginning to develop such approaches by breaking down the mortuary program into its constituent elements rather than treating it as a unitary system (Millet 2012). As I have demonstrated in this discussion, none of these variables can be analyzed in isolation from the others. The earliest intraregional and interregional quantitative analyses of gender carried out in southwest Germany were based largely on presence/absence data for weapons and personal ornament in burial contexts. These

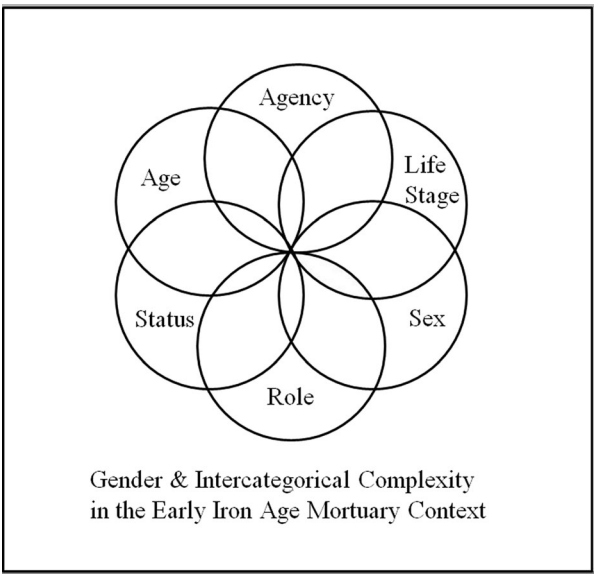

Fig. 7 A diagrammatic representation of intercategorical social complexity in early Iron Age mortuary contexts

studies were useful primarily in the sense that they revealed that gender cannot be analyzed as an independent variable in these societies. If age was the primary organizing social category in early Iron Age society in the Heuneburg micro-region, as the evidence is beginning to indicate, then gender should be treated as a dependent variable whose expression in the mortuary context was affected by status and social role in addition to age at death. Also essential is the recognition that the inalienability of certain material culture categories associated with identity may have been linked to the life course through ascribed or a combination of achieved and ascribed status and that this may have varied based on more than gender. Rather than a binary gender system based on biological sex serving as the primary organizing principle of early Iron Age society, a spectrum of gender identities dependent on other social categories and mitigating factors appears to have existed that can only be accessed using an intersectional approach. Preservation has favored not only the differential visibility of women vs. men in early Iron Age southwest German mortuary contexts but also the persistence of a simple binary opposition of female vs. male in mortuary analysis. Additional excavation and intercategorical analyses carried out on the scale of the micro-region (Millet 2012; Tori n.d.) may eventually reveal at least some of the nuanced social and symbolic metaphors underlying the complementarity between men and women that is beginning to emerge as a hallmark of these societies (Fig. 7).

Compliance with Ethical Standards

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Conflict of Interest The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

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