

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

LECTURE SERIES FB07

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**Identity Construction of
Late Bronze Age Elites.
Funeral Networks
of the Late Urnfield period**

The late Urnfield Culture – the last period of the Middle European Bronze Age before it turns into the Iron Age – presents itself to today's archaeologists as a time of turmoil and change. Settlements are deserted or fortified, hoards are deposited, the use of iron is starting to replace the ubiquitous bronze and new forms of material culture are arriving in the area north of the Alps, some of them from as far away as the North Pontic steppes or the Caucasus.

Without much doubt, these external changes were accompanied by social upheaval in Urnfield societies, which are nowhere as evident as in the rise of rich burials in an area reaching from the East of France to the entrance of the Carpathian Basin. New ways of presenting identities in funerals hint at new strategies the elites employed to expand and consolidate their bases of power. Yet, these identities were not uniform, and instead show a multitude of ways burials were used as tools in the competition between elites. The study examines these rich burials. First, a traditional archaeological approach is used focusing on typo-chronological aspects of grave goods contained in the individual burials; then, methods of network analysis are employed to identify the patterns underlying these various forms of elite identity presentation. The results not only help to better understand the socio-political landscape of Central Europe at the dawn of the Bronze Age, but also give hints as to the causes and catalysts of the transformation to the subsequent Iron Age.