The Multiple Temporalities of a Burial Monument: The Tumulus at Hrib

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Abstract: Tumuli are often analyzed as a coherent whole in the hope of discerning patterns that indicate social processes inhered in the monument. However, in the search for patterning too often the mound is analytically flattened, and examined as if it was created all at once with a coherent plan. In the following, I will focus on the tumulus at Hrib, an Iron Age tumulus in the Bela krajina region of Slovenia, and undertake a multiscalar analysis that considers temporal distinctions, interment ritual, grave goods, and gender to draw more nuanced conclusions about the social activities that led to the formation of this tumulus. The first level of analysis is the scale of individual ritual, where choices about how to appropriately dispose of and adorn the body are negotiated. Second is the social context of death and burial, which takes place at an intra-generational scale – that is, how death may resonate with the living community, and how the social relations of the living are affected by death. The final scale is the consideration of the tumulus as a whole at a multi-generational scale, and how cemeteries are places with continuous social impact, even when distinct memories of those interred have faded. This shift in the scale of analysis of the tumulus at Hrib illuminates that social distinctions were marked according to an external/internal binary, where material culture and social practices, including grave goods and funerary ritual, expressed social differences internally, while the external appearance of the mound projected unity.

Key words: tumuli, Urnfield, Iron Age, Eastern Hallstatt, Slovenia, funerary ritual

Mortuary activity is one of the most variable human behaviors, and one of the most difficult to analyze from an archaeological perspective. Factors ranging from the disposition of the body, orientation, and grave goods may be significant (Larson 1995:247). In addition, with increasing social complexity comes increasing differentiation of roles and identities that may be ascribed to individuals and marked by mortuary activity (Binford 1971:23). This overwhelming variability has led archaeologists to look for patterning first and foremost, in an effort to tease nuanced information out of such opaque practices.

Tumuli are often analyzed as a coherent whole in the hope of discerning patterns that indicate social processes inhered in the monument. However, in the search for patterning too often the mound is analytically flattened, and examined as if it was created all at once with an overarching plan. This is misleading, as such two-dimensional analyses do not take into account that mounds are palimpsests, built up as a series of synchronic events (Schiffer 1976; Mizoguchi 2006:105). This has been the case with the tumulus at Hrib, an Iron Age tumulus in the Bela krajina region of Slovenia, where the pursuit of overall patterns has led to other sources of information being overlooked. But how does one reconstruct some of the social processes that created this tumulus over time? Rather than looking solely for patterns in the whole, it is necessary to examine multiple lines of evidence at different timescales to articulate some of the complex social activities that created this potent social space (Olivier 1999). Laurent Olivier (1999) engaged in one of the most thorough parsed analyses of a tumulus in his chapter on the
Hochdorf princely tumulus of the Western Hallstatt culture. In this piece he analyzed the tumulus at three chronological scales, that of long-term funerary dynamics (several centuries), the disposal of the corpse and arrangement of the burial assemblage (within a century), and the shortest scale, which was concerned with the introduction of new modes of funerary representation imported from the Mediterranean. However, his approach has not been reproduced in other analyses since the data resolution associated with the Hochdorf tumulus was unusually fine, and not representative of the preservation of most Hallstatt tumuli. Borrowing from his theories, but with an attention to the more common state of material remains and a shift to focus on the whole tumulus rather than single funerary events, a framework to adequately examine a tumulus must take into account three social and temporal scales. First is the scale of individual ritual, the synchronic event of deposition, where choices about how to appropriately dispose of and adorn the body are negotiated. Second is the social context of death and burial, which takes place at an intra-generational scale – that is, how death may resonate with the living community, and how the social relations of the living are affected by death. The final scale is the consideration of the tumulus as a whole at a multi-generational scale, and how cemeteries are places with continuous social impact, even when distinct memories of those interred have faded. Often these tumuli are studied as a unified whole, which belies their diachronic formation over several generations. In the following, I will focus on a single tumulus, Hrib, and undertake a multiscalar analysis that considers temporal distinctions, interment ritual, grave goods, and gender to draw more nuanced conclusions about the activities that led to the formation of this tumulus. This shift in the scale of analysis illuminates that social distinctions were marked according to an external/internal binary, where material culture and social practices, including grave goods and funerary ritual, expressed social differences internally, while the external appearance of the mound projected unity.

The Slovenian case and the tumulus at Hrib

Slovenia is bracketed by the Adriatic Sea and the Alps and crosscut by lowland river valleys, which allowed distinct regional cultures to develop in the first millennium BC as they exploited varied geographical pockets. This was a key area at the confluence of several overland routes connecting the Adriatic Sea, northern Italy, the Balkan Peninsula and the end of the “Amber Route,” which began at the Baltic Sea (Mason 1988:211-2, 1996:1-9). The Slovenian Bronze-Iron Age transition is distinguished by the shift from the Urnfield to Hallstatt archaeological culture. The Urnfield Culture is a late Bronze Age tradition characterized in Slovenia by three regional cultures, the Ruške, Ljubljana and Dolenjska, and widespread cremation burials in urns in flat “urnfield” cemeteries (Teržan 1999:125), which display relatively egalitarian social organization (Mason 1996:12-14). The Iron Age, typified by the Eastern Hallstatt complex, was a period of rapid change with iron technology, population agglomeration at large hillforts, elaboration of social hierarchies, and the shift to burials under large tumuli (Mason 1988:212). This period has been considered one of relative prosperity and social equilibrium, with increasing hierarchization, though this was only manifested later in the burial record in the form of increasingly elaborate grave assemblages (Mason 1996:12-14; Teržan 1999:125). The coming of the Iron Age, typified by the Eastern Hallstatt cultural complex, was a period of rapid change with the acceptance of iron technology, continuing processes of consolidation at large defended hillforts, the increasing elaboration of social
hierarchies, and the shift to cremation and inhumation burials under large tumuli (Mason 1988:212). It was previously thought that such rapid and widespread material change indicated an influx of outside populations, however recent studies have highlighted the significant cultural continuity amidst this upheaval, and it is now recognized that these were continuous cultural groups caught in a period of rapid social change (Mason 1988:213). This archaeological disjunction of the Bronze to Iron Age transition was widespread across Central and Eastern Europe in this period, where nascent social hierarchies became much more conspicuous, demonstrating increasing social tension and contentious jockeying for power (Mason 1988:212). In other areas of Hallstatt Europe, these monumental tumuli have been considered the burial location of preeminent elite lineages, likely centered on chiefs. But the level of social distinction displayed by Slovenian tumuli is significantly less, and while some posit chiefly burials, the more widely accepted explanation is that these were family or clan tumuli (Gabrovec 1974; Wells 1981; Murray & Schoeninger 1988:158; Mason 1996:12).

Table 1. Bronze-Iron Age chronology in the South East Alpine region (Mason 1998:13, Figure 1, after Dular 1982).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Central Europe</th>
<th>Ljubljana</th>
<th>Dolenjska</th>
<th>Ruše</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>900 BC</td>
<td>Hallstatt [Ha] B1</td>
<td>Ia</td>
<td>Ljubljana [Lj] Ib</td>
<td>Ha B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 BC</td>
<td>Ha B2</td>
<td>Ib</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ha B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700 BC</td>
<td>Ha B3</td>
<td>IIa</td>
<td>Lj IIa</td>
<td>Ha B3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IIb</td>
<td>Lj IIb/ Podzemelj 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 BC</td>
<td>Ha C1</td>
<td>IIIa</td>
<td>Podzemelj 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ha C2</td>
<td>IIIb</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stična 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ha D1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stična 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 BC</td>
<td>Ha D2-D3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Serpentiform</td>
<td>Certosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 BC</td>
<td>La Tène [LT] A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Early Negova</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LT B</td>
<td></td>
<td>Late Negova</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tumulus at Hrib near Metlika in Bela krajina was excavated in 1987, when ninety burials were found, spanning the period from the Late Urnfield (Ljubljana I) to the early Hallstatt (Stična 2) (Table 1) (Teržan 1999:112; Grahek 2004:111, 180; for the full excavation report and analyses see Križ 1991 and Grahek 2004). This tumulus is unusual since it began as a flat urnfield cemetery, distinguished by four interments surrounded by stone circles, a unique phenomenon in Bronze Age Slovenia (Teržan 1999:112). Grave 15, one of those initial graves demarcated by a stone circle, was likely the one that the tumulus was subsequently oriented around, with the placement of later Iron Age graves referencing this early Bronze Age grave. The second phase spanned the Ljubljana II period, when a layer of loam was deposited to cover the initial urnfield, and many new cremation urns were placed on it (>25) and marked with stone slabs. After this depositional event, but within the same phase of use, more cremations graves (>35) were dug into the loam, all placed outside the stone circles that marked the four initial interments, even though the stone circles were no longer visible (Grahek 2004:176). It was during these depositional events that the shape of the tumulus began to appear, likely gradually, rather than in a single large depositional event (Grahek 2004:176). The final phase of the tumulus extended into the Iron Age, from the Podzemelj to the end of the Stična 2 period, when another deposit of earth was placed over the center of the tumulus. This phase was marked by the transition to extended inhumations, with only occasional cremations (Table 2) (Grahek 2004:111, 176, 179).

Though the only modes of burial were cremation and inhumation, there were six distinct types of urn cremation within the tumuli, and there was more variation than similarity in the eight inhumations (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Previous scholars have proposed that this was a family tumulus oriented around a premier male, distinguished by a few wealthy burials demonstrating increasing hierarchization of the community over time (Križ 1991; Teržan 1999:112; Grahek 2004). While this is certainly possible, further social processes surrounding the use of this tumulus may be revealed through an analysis of the multiple temporalities encompassed by this burial monument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Number of Cremations</th>
<th>Number of Inhumations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Lj I</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Lj II</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Podzemelj – Stična 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Burial type by phase (Grahek 2004).

Figure 1. Schematic review of the manner of burial (Grahek 2004:117, Figure 8).
A synchronic scale: the sociality of deposition

The first scale that should be attended to in any mortuary analysis is the event of the funeral, when the living make choices about how to dispose of the body according to a suite of culturally appropriate options. This scale should take into account the treatment of the body after death, the mode of interment, and the objects deposited with the deceased, all of which were choices made based on the social persona of the deceased by those with a stake in their death.

Death at its most fundamental leaves the living with a body that must be dealt with. Funerary activity solves the problem of a corpse, though the specific culture dictates the way this can be done (Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008:5). Since the repercussions of death are negotiated by the living, those aspects of the dead highlighted or obscured by mortuary ritual are anchored in a web of communal ties (Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008:10). Social persona may be displayed on the body as well as signaled in the full suite of activities surrounding disposal of the dead, which all serve to negotiate the relations among the living in the activities of the funeral (Olivier 1999:127). Previous archaeological research has demonstrated that certain characteristics of the social persona are privileged in mortuary expression: social position and affiliation, sex, age,
manner and place of death, as well as cosmological beliefs (Binford 1971:14, 22; Carr 1995). The social persona represented in death at Hrib will be analyzed through the depositional choices made by the living: the ritual of interment and the grave goods placed with the dead.

What is often underconsidered is what determined the patterns of deposition visible archaeologically: the actual activity of death and funeral, and the implications of this activity for society at large. Cremation rituals are especially potent for such analysis, and frequently overlooked, for they may leave the least archaeologically visible remains. However, cremations are not only incredibly labor-intensive performative rituals, but may necessitate more drawn out interaction of the living with the dead, and a longer period for the living to arbitrate the final disposition of the dead (Parker Pearson 1999:6-7; Williams 2004). Urn cremation rituals consist of at least three distinct social, spatial and temporal parts: the event of cremation where the body is burned, the space of time after the remains have cooled and they are recovered from the ashes, and the final process where they are placed in the urn and deposited in their final burial site. These multiple aspects of mortuary ritual, including the spatially and temporally separate events of cremation and inhumation, increased the potential for social expression (Oestigaard 1999:345; Buckley & Buckley 1999:25; Parker Pearson 1999:7; Beck 2005:151). This entire performance may be best understood as “scene-making,” for a prehistoric cremation was “clearly intended to be remembered by mourners, not through its endurance and permanence, but through its brief visibility and subsequent destruction” (Williams 2004:271; Halsall 1998:334). This was a series of events that would have allowed distinction of the individual in their mortuary treatment, though only those present at the cremation event and involved in the subsequent collection and deposition of the inurned remains would have the privileged knowledge of the mortuary treatment. After the final deposition of the deceased, any distinction would have been unmarked in most cases and would remain unknown to those outside the community without this privileged knowledge.

The cremations at Hrib must be considered in their entirety as performative, labor-intensive rituals – eighty-two socially potent tripartite events, though the only archaeologically visible part is the final deposition of the urns. But even that may speak eloquently to the expressions of social distinction in Slovenian mortuary ritual. There were six forms that cremation burials took, identified based on interment and associated coarse pottery (Figure 1) (Grahek 2004:175), each of which may have signified aspects of social persona, including age, gender, social role or membership in corporate groups (Binford 1971). Post-deposition the visible remains at the urnfield were undifferentiated, burials were simply marked with a large stone slab (Grahek 2004:175). Only the four earliest burials were distinguished by stone circles surrounding the inhumed urn (graves 15, 39, 41 and 44) (Grahek 2004:176). Grave 15 appears to be the one that was primarily referenced in the building of the tumulus. Even initially this stone circle was more conspicuous than the other circles since it was distinguished by two carefully constructed rows of stones rather than the single row that marked the other three burials with stone circles (Grahek 2004:176).

The shift from solely cremation to primarily inhumation occurred in the Podzemelj phase. Simple emulation or cultural diffusion should not be assumed to account for new mortuary forms, rather there was likely some change in the appropriate mortuary ritual to signal socially relevant categories of people (Binford 1971:23). It is important to remember that these two mortuary treatments indicate distinct funerary rituals – one involving the destruction of the body
through burning and subsequent burial of the remains, the other maintaining the integrity of the body prior to deposition. The presence of two distinct mortuary rituals within the same period may indicate that new forms of social signaling had come into favor for some, or that it was now necessary to ritually distinguish certain individuals, though cremation remained appropriate for others (Grahek 2004:177).

Figure 3. Creation of the tumulus – Phase I (Grahek 2004:121, Figure 13).

In the Urnfield period differences were expressed in the form of the urn for deposition, though after deposition there was the appearance of homogeneity: any distinctions in urns and grave goods were hidden under uniform stone slabs. Only the four graves with stone circles would have stood out, and only in the initial flat Urnfield cemetery (Figure 3). Internal signaling via urn form and grave goods, markers that would not have been externally visible, were the mode of distinguishing social persona. Later it was increasing grave goods and inhumation that differentiated people, practices that would also have been invisible after deposition. It is clear from other burial evidence throughout the region that such activities were not the result of personal choice or convenience, as the mode of burial was limited to a few highly-formalized forms, with only minor variation in grave goods through time (Teržan 1999:114-9). Hrib is the only burial site of such longevity that these changing forms of expression from cremation to inhumation are visible in the same location, and changing ideas were clearly negotiated in the context of preexisting traditions. This distinction between internal and external signaling is
missed if the analysis begins and ends with patterning of the tumulus as a whole, but examining the scale of individual ritual illuminates the social processes of the creation and representation of the tumulus through time.

Grave goods are a small subset of the materials that the deceased would have possessed and interacted with in life, and were chosen by the living as the final representation of what was a likely fluid social persona in life (Olivier 1999:127; Parker Pearson 1999:4, 9; Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008:7). Why materials were chosen to highlight certain aspects of social persona is still not well understood in these contexts, since the current conception of Iron Age social personas is derived almost entirely from the mortuary record (Dular and Tecco Hvala 2007:237). However, there were certainly gendered constraints on material for mortuary deposition (Terzan 1985, 1999:115-9). These patterns of gendered activity remain tenuous due to the poor preservation of skeletal material within many tumuli, however, when skeletal material is available it supports these gendered material assemblages. Unfortunately, since gender ascription is circumstantial at Hrib and made in reference to larger regional patterning, we can only discuss probable modes of gendered distinction, and cannot distinguish aberrant behavior at all.

Males were associated with straight pins in Urnfield times, and females were distinguished by annular jewelry: hair rings, earrings, bracelets and beaded necklaces (Grahek 2004:176). It was not until Phase II of the tumulus that the possibilities for mortuary expression for males and females became more diverse (Grahek 2004:177). Grave 15, the central grave of the tumulus, had only a straight pin (Grahek 2004:176). In contrast to this modest early male grave, grave 31 had a prominent assemblage of diagnostically male goods that demonstrates how materially-oriented social signaling had become by the final phase of the tumulus. Grave 31 contained a socketed and a trunnion axe, a shield, a bronze pin guard, an iron knife, a bronze bead, bronze circlets, and an iron scepter. There was also a small bag placed on the deceased’s chest containing female goods (five fibulae, a bronze bracelet, and glass, ivory and bone bead necklaces) (Figure 4) (Grahek 2004:178). The vast divide between diagnostically male goods in the initial and final phase of this tumulus illustrates exactly how difficult inferring social persona may be. Were those the temporally distinct ways of differentiating a male of a certain status? Did the cremation of one with few goods and the inhumation of the other mean the second was wealthier or more powerful within the society? The temporally distinct ways of indicating male status illustrates the necessity of event-scale analysis; comparing these graves at a broader scale diminishes the temporally distinct choices that created them.
Variation in female grave goods is more pronounced, and patterning is difficult to associate with age or other biological markers since there is no preservation of diagnostic skeletal elements. Grave 18 is probably the grave of a juvenile based on the size of the jewelry and a possible milk tooth. It had more material than most other female graves, including a necklace of amber, glass, bronze and bone beads, a complete set of ribbed jewelry (a torc, three pairs of bracelets, a fibula), and a bronze cowry shell pendant (Figure 5) (Grahek 2004:177-8). It is unclear whether this indicates the new presence of ascribed status, since it is unknown if wealthy juvenile burials are unusual due to the prevalence of cremation. What is certain is that social distinctions, especially gender, were expressed through differential distribution of goods.

Unfortunately, the social signals indicated by grave goods are difficult to determine archaeologically without a thorough grasp of the various social personas represented in life. However, analyzing the tumulus as a sequence of synchronic ritual events involving socially contextualized choices has led to new insights. The choices made in interment and grave goods demonstrate an internal/external binary. Individual distinctions were made through funeral ritual, interment and grave goods, which may have been privileged knowledge of funeral participants. Externally the tumulus displayed unity, except in the initial flat urnfield cemetery, and internal distinctions were masked by the communal mound and undifferentiated limestone slabs marking interments. These distinctions may give insight into the representation of the community. The negotiation of social relations took place at the scale of individual burial, when those closest to the deceased chose how to represent them through the mode of interment as well as the materials interred with the deceased. These negotiations did not bleed out into the external representation of the deceased in terms of distinctive or elaborate marking of the grave to outsiders, or those who had not taken part in the original ceremony.

**Negotiating death**

The second scale of analysis, and one of the most difficult to analyze archaeologically, is how the community adapted to the absence of the newly deceased individual, and how social relations were affected by death (Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008:10). This scale of analysis requires situating the funerary event within a network of community ties, as well as previous and future funerary events.

Figure 5. Grave 18, Metlika Hrib Tumulus 1 (Grahek 2004: 183, Pl. 3)
Individuals within the community had their own connections with and perceptions of the dead, which would certainly have come to the fore in funerary ritual, as well as in the subsequent renegotiation of the social system with one less member. In addition, every death was contextualized with reference to previous deaths (Mizoguchi 1993:225). There were only six distinct types of cremation burial, which likely aligned with the social persona of the deceased, and had distinct social implications. At Hrib the choice of urn and mode of deposition was made with reference to those who had been buried before, and patterns of similarity or distinction reflect specific choices by the living. One of the obvious distinctions was a young girl’s burial (grave 88), which was the first inhumation in the Ljubljana II period (Grahek 2004:177). This was a radical departure from previous practice, though not a full-scale shift since cremations following the previous pattern continued. The choice to bury this juvenile rather than cremate her was made within the context of past and continuing cremation burials. This was not simply a new fad in mortuary activity (Cannon 1989), rather this may be interpreted as the manifestation of internal social changes in the community that necessitated a new form of burial to mark this young girl as distinct from those who had been buried before (Binford 1971:23). The mode of her burial matches larger regional trends at this time, so this cannot simply be construed as an aberrant burial or product of convenience. Though at this point it is unclear what it was about her social persona, connections within the community, or those who buried her and the statements they were trying to make that led to her distinction. Whether this was because of emerging ascribed status for juveniles or other changing social categories cannot be determined with the current evidence.

The changing mortuary patterns exhibited at the intra-generational scale may be reflective of negotiations of changing status and roles in this period in the Bronze to Iron Age transition which was characterized by increasingly complex social hierarchies (Mason 1988:212). This was a period when the choice between continuity with earlier practice or distinction may have been especially potent to both reflect and enact changes in the internal organization of the community (Chapman 2000:162). This second scale of analysis, focusing on the interrelation of the living and the dead, the web of community interrelations, links mortuary ritual back to the context of the living, those who were orchestrating the disposition of the dead. Again, while there were distinctions in mortuary treatment, this distinction was confined to the funerary ritual and internal deposition of the body in the tumulus, and following the funerary ritual graves were not distinguished from others in the external features of the tumulus, retaining the appearance of unity at this communal monument.

Connections and continuity

The final scale of analysis is the consideration of the tumulus at a multi-generational scale, as a communal monument with continuous social impact. This is the scale most often considered, where the monument is analyzed as a coherent whole.

Tumuli are places with continuous social impact: they may contain and maintain the ancestors, mark territory, be points of ostentatious display, represent community, and have any number of other social repercussions over time (Saxe and Gall 1977; Buikstra & Charles 1999:204; Arnold 2002:131-2, 2011). In the case of tumuli, the burials themselves are hidden
from view and may not even be visibly marked, but the tumulus itself becomes a highly visible, lasting communal monument, used and reinterpreted through time (Van Dyke 2011:239). The establishment of the mound structure in the Ljubljana II period at Hrib was a momentous event, though the motivations are not visible archaeologically (Parker Pearson 1999:17). The reuse of previous cemetery space and maintenance of cremation rituals in the new context of the tumulus highlights distinct continuity, though the transformation from two to three dimensions, and the new practice of inhumation indicates a desire for elaboration. The construction of tumuli was a continuous and time-consuming process, whether it was done piecemeal or as a single depositional event. While the project of building the tumulus at Hrib was likely several depositional events spread out over time, this does not lessen the communal energy expended in the construction of this monument (Olivier 1999:128; Grahek 2004:176; Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008:6-7).

The placement of the tumulus over the four cremations surrounded by stone circles implies a desire to incorporate (or co-opt) important past personages within the foundation of the mound, and those graves retained their centrality within the memories of those who continued to use the mound. Though the stone circles were rendered invisible by the first layer of the mound, burials within the tumulus did not infringe upon the area of the stone circles until the third phase of use, several generations later (Figure 6b) (Grahek 2004:176, 179). This does not suggest that initial burials were forgotten, since later burials only infringe on the edge of the stone circle around the original central interment. The exception is grave 60, which is placed very close to the location of the initial interment of grave 15, which has been interpreted as a purposeful mark of continuity, and the association of grave 60 with the central male of the original Urnfield cemetery (Grahek 2004:176). At this scale of analysis, the use of the mound through time, the complex web of communal connections is apparent. Past rituals were consistently referenced with new burials, and the foundational burials retained their organizational importance throughout the use of the monument.
Any patterns where later burials referenced earlier ones would have remained privileged knowledge restricted to the community, and the interments referencing earlier burials would not have been externally visible to those who were not intimately familiar with the history of the monument. In fact, the ability to reference earlier burials through time, despite the temporal separation of several generations, indicates that this privileged knowledge of the location, and perhaps ideological significance, of earlier burials was maintained in the cultural memory of the community, though it was not marked externally on the mound itself. Not enough is known about the community that constructed this tumulus to extrapolate their possible motivations for maintaining this monument over this long period of time. However, the continuous elaboration of internal distinctions and the façade of external homogeneity is compelling, and deserves further research.

Conclusion

The goal of this article was not to deny the initial interpretations that Hrib was the tumulus of a clan or lineage, anchored to a central male, which was continuously elaborated through time (Križ 1991; Grahek 2004). However, through a multiscalar analysis focusing on distinct temporalities and social interactions, a more thorough anthropological analysis is possible. The persistence of an internal/external binary is prevalent throughout the use of the tumulus. At the smallest scale of analysis, individual funerary ritual, the choices of grave goods as well as manner of interment likely signified different aspects of the deceased’s social persona. However, these distinctions would only have been known to and understood by the members of the community participating in the funerary ritual. These internal distinctions were ultimately masked by interment within the urnfield or subsequent tumulus and the placement of nondescript stone slabs. This external homogeneity highlighted the unity of this communal monument, where no burials were distinguished, at least to those without the privileged knowledge of what lay beneath. The second scale of analysis continues to highlight the communal nature of this monument. The living made choices about the manner of inhumation within a network of communal ties that ultimately structured the mound. This is most apparent in breaks with tradition, as in the case of the juvenile in grave 88, whose inhumation in the context of past and continuing cremation burials sets her apart, likely because something about her life or death necessitated a new type of burial. The change in mortuary activity marked by her burial was likely the physical manifestation of changes within the community as a whole. Finally, the broadest scale of analysis indicates how often past rituals were referenced with new burials, even when those early distinguished burials had been invisible for several generations. The tumulus at Hrib was a cohesive monument through time, where over hundreds of years a community with privileged information about the internal distinctions of the mound continued to utilize it, maintaining the pattern of internal distinction under a façade of external unity.

Errata: Grave 60 was mistakenly referred to as grave 31 on page 139. This was corrected on January 12, 2013.
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