



Archaeology of Death

10 Age and Gender reconstruction

Jan Turek

turekjan@hotmail.com

<https://cuni.academia.edu/JanTurek>

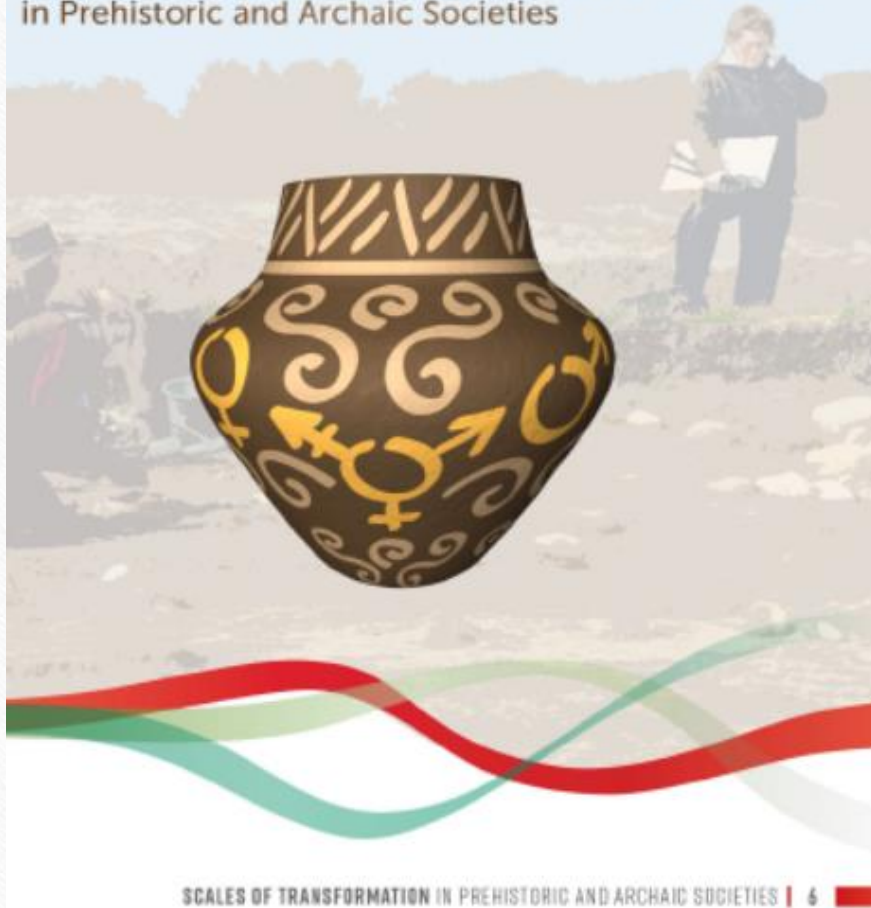
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Edited by:

JULIA KATHARINA KOCH, WIEBKE KIRLEIS

GENDER TRANSFORMATIONS

in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies



SCALES OF TRANSFORMATION IN PREHISTORIC AND ARCHAIC SOCIETIES | 6

Copper Age transformations in gender identities. An Essay

J. K. Koch & W. Kirleis (eds.): *Gender Transformations in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies*. Sidestone Press, Leiden, pp. 205-220. ISBN: 9789088908217

Jan Turek

The author dedicates this study to Ivana Pleinerová, doyenne of Czech archaeology, on the occasion of her important life jubilee.

Abstract

A reconsideration of some previous archaeological interpretations of gender may offer much more variability and freedom to our current understanding of gender identity. The perception of gender in archaeological interpretations commonly reflects our current social reality. In the Western Christian worldview, the traditional gender categories of men and women were based on biology and presume the primacy of reproduction in human societies. Alternative social roles were judged as deviations by the biased majority. The extremely difficult position of homosexuals in 20th-century Western society was caused mainly by the lack of an appropriate and commonly recognised gender category that could accommodate them. Not surprisingly, the concept of transsexualism developed in cultures that only recognised and valued two gender categories, based on biological sex. Tribes in North America and Siberia had gender categories ready for such cases. We should change our approach to the interpretation of past societies, because our current gender categories do not always correspond to those of a former reality.

Concept of Gender

The perception of gender in former societies is very closely tied with present-day socio-political circumstances (Bolger 2013; Crass 2001; Hofmann 2009). The current cultural and social norms shape not only the way we organise our present-day gender relations and identities, but also how we perceive the gender reality of ancient civilisations. However, because changes in archaeologists' understanding of gender identities in the past parallel changes within their own society, the social development of Western society naturally raises questions about gender identities in the past. With the growing respect towards human rights – including those of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community – and the overall liberalisation of the perception of gender identities, archaeologists are discussing questions that they never asked before, such as: Was the perception of gender categories in prehistoric society different to present-day mainstream social norms?

Gender is expressing the wide range of characteristics pertaining to femininity and masculinity, and differentiating between them. The psychologist and sexologist John Money introduced the terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a role in 1955 (Money 1955). Money's meaning of the word gender, however, did not become widespread until the 1970s, when mainly feminist theory comprised the concept of a distinction between biological sex and the social construct of gender. Since then, the distinction has been systematically followed in certain contexts of the social sciences. In the past three decades, gender issues have become an integral part of social archaeology.

Perception of Gender in archaeological paradigms

Cultural history and Processualism

The Cultural history paradigm traditionally focused on artefacts, variability of their qualities (typology, chronological sequence) and cultural norms, personhood and gender were not in the mainstream research interest.

The processual archaeology paradigm perceived the gender in an objective and conceptual context. The individuality of our ancestors was not in the main focus of the New Archaeology. The interpretation of culture and social norms was mainly focussing on social tradition and its change was mainly seen as a process of adaptation to the changing natural environment.

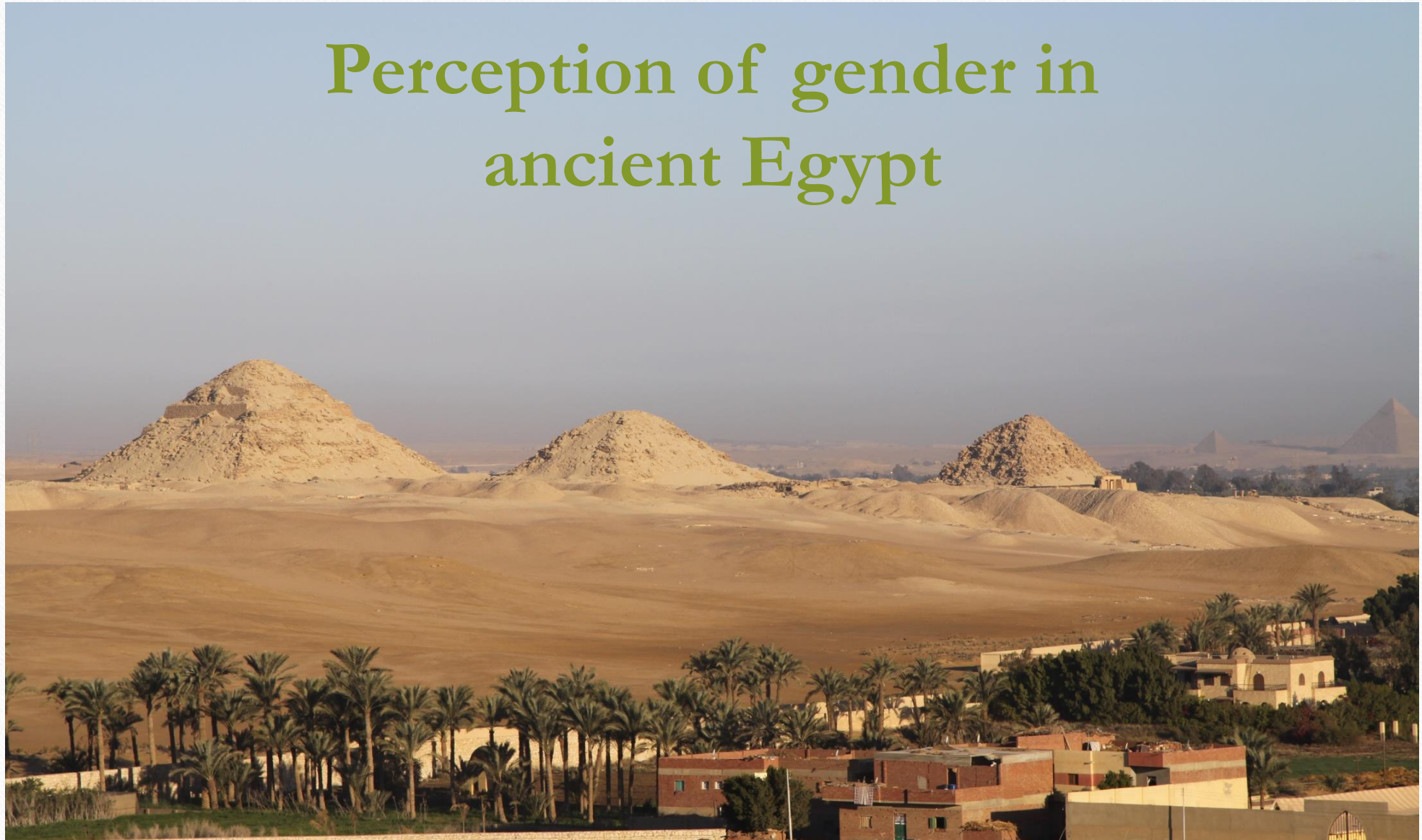
Perception of Gender in archaeological paradigms

Post-processualism

The post-processual archaeologists claim that, for the most part, since theories on cultural change cannot be independently verified experimentally, what is considered “true” is simply what seems the most reasonable to archaeologists as a whole. Since archaeologists are not perfectly objective, the conclusions they reach will always be influenced by personal biases (Trigger, 1989). Post-processual archaeologists state that personal biases inevitably affect the very questions archaeologists ask and direct them to the conclusions they are predisposed to believe. What is an important contribution towards the gender debate, is the emphasis on the role of individuals and personhood in the change of social norms.

(cf. Neustupný, E. 1997: Settlement sites of the Corded Ware groups, cultural norms and symbols, Archeologické rozhledy 49, 304-322.

Perception of gender in ancient Egypt



Social position of women in Ancient Egypt

Women had a status that seemingly contrasts the status of modern women in the region.

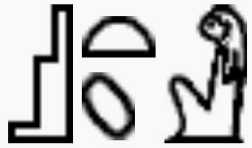
They participated on social power in ways that is unknown in most of historical contemporary societies. Although men and women of ancient Egypt had traditionally distinct powers in society, there was no rigid barrier preventing those who had to deviate from this pattern.

Egyptian society recognized women as equal to men, emphasizing an essential complementarity, especially in terms of motherhood.

This respect is expressed clearly in the ancient Egyptian theology and morality. In the social norms of ancient Egypt women had occasional opportunity to rule the country and have the same basic human rights as men. This was the case until the rise of Islamic monotheism.

What was the social position of women in everyday relations of ancient Egypt? Here we can observe some examples. Already since the Old Kingdom, on the death of her husband, the woman inherited two thirds of their communal property. The other one third was divided among their children, followed by the brothers and sisters of the deceased (Pehal 2011). Daughters were obliged to look after their parents, while for sons it was a voluntary choice. However, it was a matter of prestige for a son to build his mother's tomb, attached to the main family *mastaba* tomb. This was even more emphasised in the case of the royal family and the structure of their burial rites. Only once a prince had become king did he build a tomb for his mother, because her status increased as the mother of a king.

The principles of male–female relations are also reflected in ancient Egyptian mythology. Female deities used to play a role as companions helping the masculine gods (Pehal 2011). At the same time, we have to bear in mind that the female deities also include a fiercely destructive and devious aspect surpassing the power of male gods.



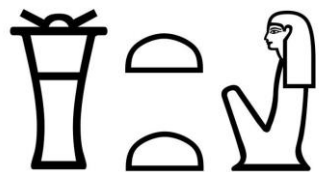
Isis - goddess of magic, marriage, healing



Nut - goddess of the sky



Hathor - goddess of beauty and Milky Way



Sekhmet - goddess of war



Women in ancient Egypt had a status that significantly contrasts with the status of most women in the region today (Pehal 2011). In many aspects of art, religion, and propaganda, the social dominance of men over women was explicitly demonstrated. When a woman was depicted in a funerary context, it was mostly in a position subordinate to that of the male. However, it seems that this emphasis on the male worldview does not necessarily represent the social position of women in everyday life in ancient Egypt. There were female pharaohs, but they were represented using the male imagery that is traditionally connected with the office. One of the earliest examples, whose status has long been debated, is Khentkaus I (Pehal 2011). She was the daughter of King Menkaure and the wife of King Shepseskaf (last king of the 4th Dynasty, who ruled 2510-2502 BCE), and she bore two future kings of the 5th Dynasty (Veserkaf and Sahure) – and there is new evidence supporting the possibility that she herself also ruled Egypt. One of her successors of the same name played a similar role: Queen Khentkaus II (Bárta *et al.* 2018, 50-52), with a cobra as symbol of her rule over Lower Egypt. Because she was the wife of a king (King Neferirkare, 2446-2426 BCE), after his death, she, as mother of the future kings Raneferef and Niuserre, became their regent and ruled Egypt.

Women in ancient Egypt participated in social power in ways that is unknown in most historical and contemporary societies (Mark 2016). Although at least since the beginning of dynastic period men and women in ancient Egypt had distinct powers in society, there was no rigid barrier preventing those who wanted to deviate from this pattern. In some respects, Egyptian society recognised women as equal to men, but emphasising an essential complementarity, especially in terms of motherhood. This respect is expressed clearly in ancient Egyptian theology and morality. In the social norms of ancient Egypt, women occasionally had the opportunity to rule the country and have the same basic human rights as men. This was the case until the rise of Islamic monotheism, which dramatically changed the position of women in society (Tyldesley 1995).

Jebel al Abu – Sir

Cemetery of Old Kingdom officials of lower and middle rank
at South Abusir



South Abusir

Old Kingdom cemetery

The cemetery of Old Kingdom officials of lower and middle rank at South Abusir, including most recently uncovered court of a princess Sheretnebtj (2500 BC) buried together with her husband and other courtiers while most members of the Fifth Dynasty royal family are buried ca 2 km north, in the central field of Abusir, or further south in Saqqara. The marriage of princess with royal official is a new unprecedented phenomenon, which started the weakening of the central royal power in the Old Kingdom Egypt, leading in Sixth Dynasty to collapse of the whole system and start of the First intermediate period.



SOUTH ABUSIR

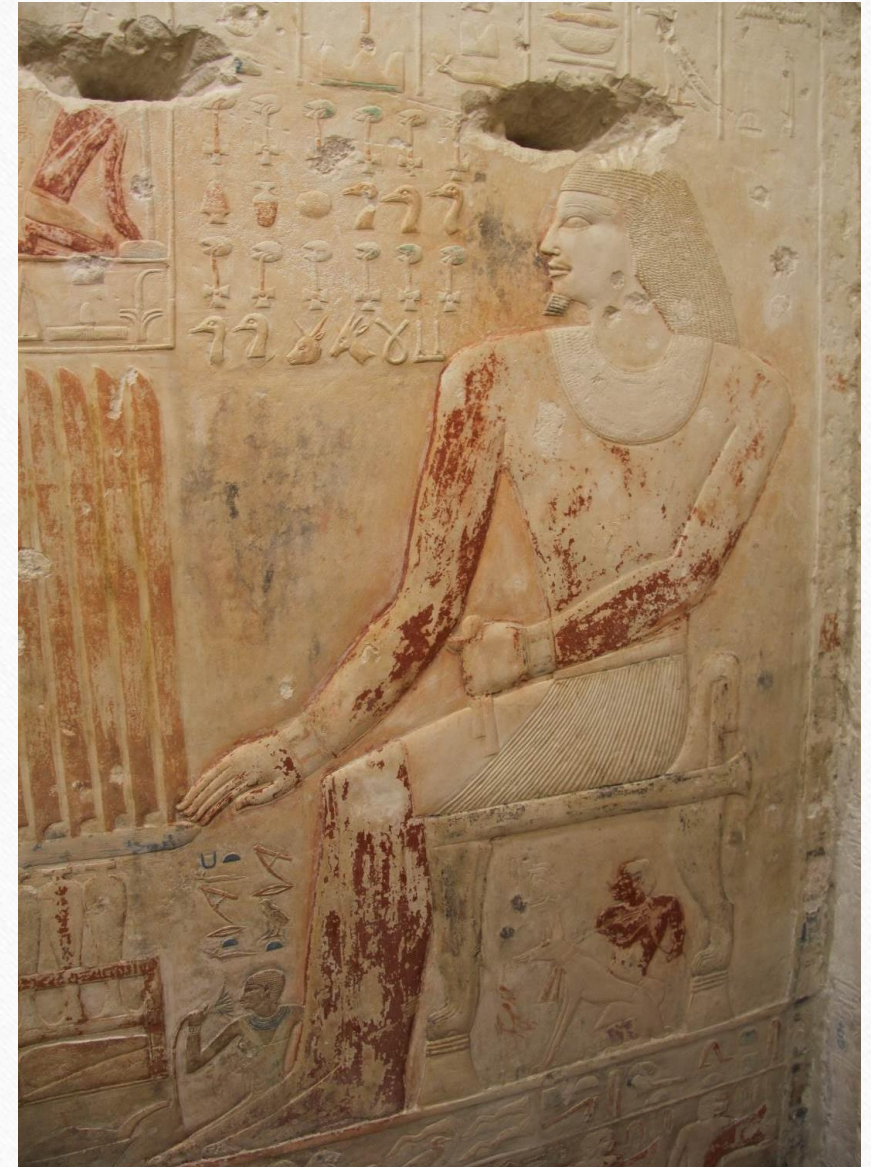
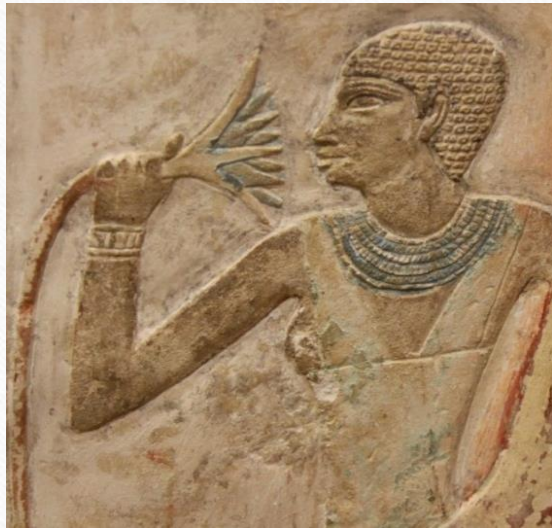
Tomb of Vezir Inti royal official of the 6 Dynasty





Androcentric Symbolism

Inti, his wife Meret, his dog Igem
and a pygmy servant



Position of mothers and widows in Ancient Egyptian society

On the death of a husband the woman inherited two-thirds of their community property, but the other one-third was divided among their children, followed up by the brothers and sisters of the deceased.

Only when a prince became king he built a tomb for his mother as her status grown, because she became king's mother.

Daughters were obliged to look after old parents, while for sons it was a voluntary choice. However, it was prestige matter to built mother's tomb attached to his main family mastaba.

Using male attributes of power
Queen Hatshepsut with false beard



Queen Khentkaus I

One woman whose status has long been debated is Khentkaus the I. She was the daughter of King Menkaure, and the wife of King Shepseskaf (last of the 4 Dynasty, ruled c 2510–2502 BC), and bore two further kings of the 5 Dynasty (Veserkaf & Sahure)— with new evidence supporting the possibility that she herself also ruled Egypt.



Queen Khentkaus II with Cobra as symbol of the rule over Lower Egypt

Wife of King Neferirkare (c 2446 – 2426 BC), mother and regent of King Raneferef and Niuserre.

Complex of Queen Khentkaus II and the pyramid of King Neferirkare



Queen Hatshepsut 1507–1458 BC

She was the fifth pharaoh of the Eighteen Dynasty of Egyptian New Kingdom. She was the second historically confirmed female pharaoh, after the first Queen Sobekneferu (1806–1802 BC 12th Dynasty).

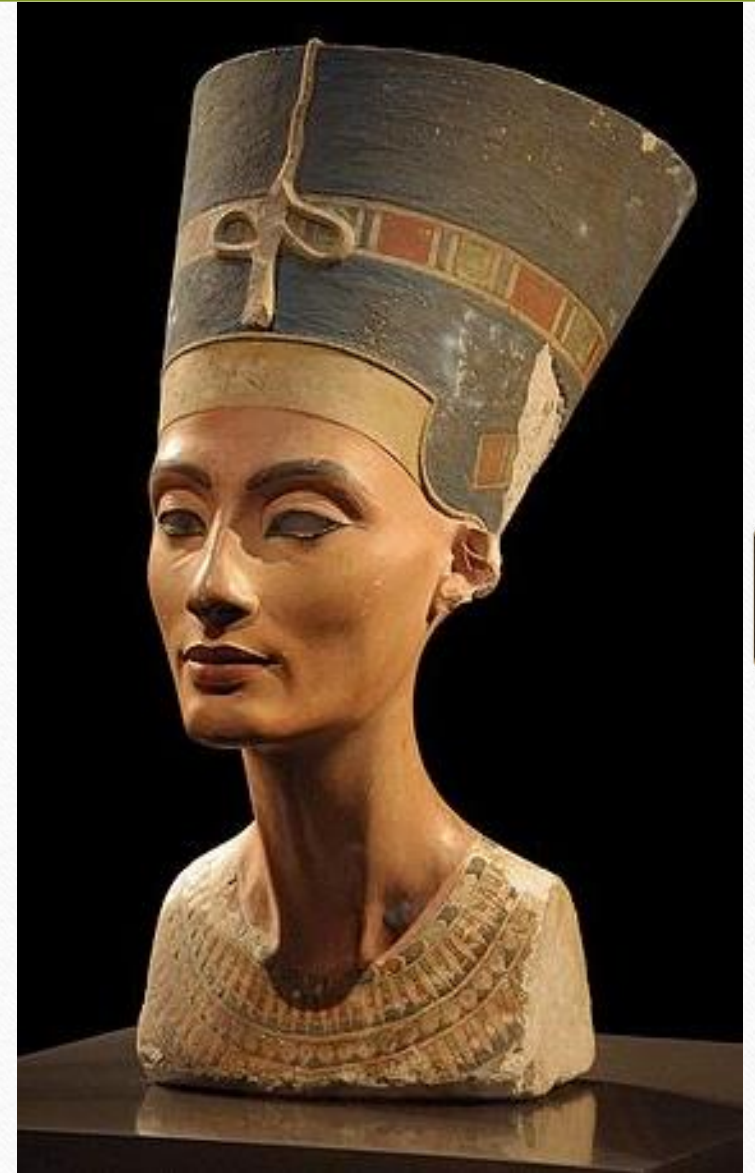
Hatshepsut came to the throne of Egypt in 1478 BC. Officially, she ruled jointly with Thutmose III, who had ascended to the throne the previous year as a child of about two years old. Hatshepsut was the chief wife of Thutmose II, Thutmose III's father.



Queen Nefertiti

(1370 – ca. 1330 BC)

She was an Egyptian queen and the Great Royal Wife of king Akhenaten. Nefertiti and her husband were known for a religious revolution, in which they worshiped one god only, Aten, or the sun disc. Some scholars believe that Nefertiti ruled briefly as Neferneferuaten as co-ruler after her husband's death and before the accession of Tutankhamun.



However, there are exceptions in the Middle East, such as the exclusive position of married women in historical Persian society (19th and 20th Century), who can share some of the family wealth and start their own business, independent on their husband's finances (Leila Papoli-Yazdi, personal communication 2016). In this context, it is interesting to note the extraordinary life story of Anousheh Ansari (Ansari and Hickam 2010). She was born in 1966 in the Iranian city of Mashhad and immigrated to America. After settling down in Texas, Anousheh built a computer technology firm from the ground up, which eventually realised a net worth of \$750 million and ultimately allowed her to achieve her childhood dream of spaceflight. In 2006, she became the fourth-ever commercial spaceflight participant, the first self-funded woman, and the first-ever Muslim woman to fly into space. After her return to Earth, Anousheh Ansari started The Ansari Foundation, a quickly growing non-profit organisation that supports social entrepreneurship, and that is especially committed to ensuring the freedom of women around the world and supporting female entrepreneurs (Ansari and Hickam 2010). I believe Ansari's story, despite of the American business opportunity, shows how deep the tradition of Iranian women's emancipation reaches. Especially after the Islamic revolution in 1979, the role of women was seemingly diminished. However, that is only a superficial expression of control over women's rights; deep inside, Iranian women are strong and powerful.

The Middle East Women

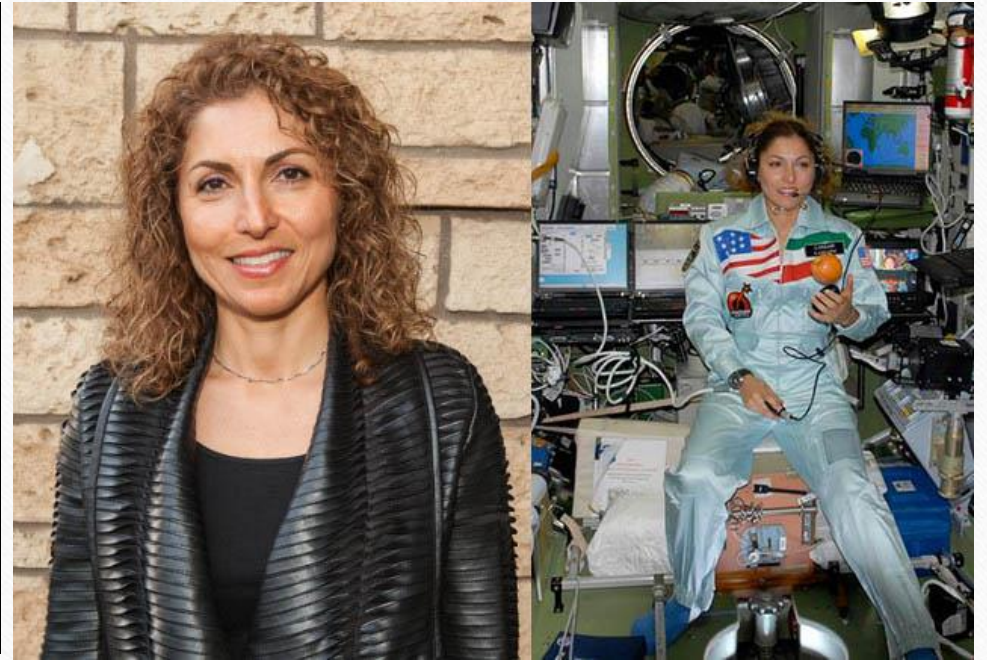
Queen Zenobia (240 – c. 275 AD) was a 3rd-century Queen of Palmyra who led a revolt against the Roman Empire.



Anousheh Ansari (born 1966 in Mashhad)

Successful business woman, US-Iranian astronaut

In line with the exclusive position of married women in the Persian society.



European Copper Age Gender Identities



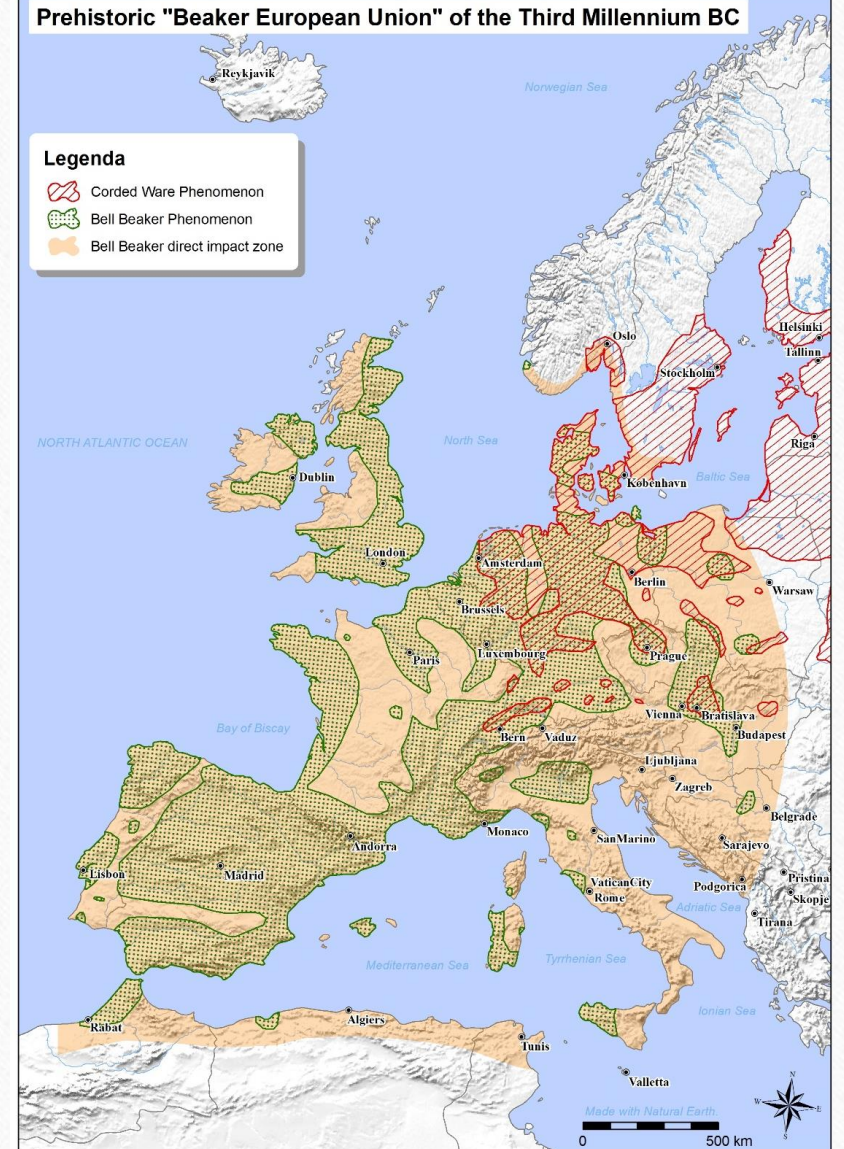
During the third millennium BCE, some regions of Europe shared elements of material culture and burial rites. Vast areas of central, northern, and Eastern Europe shared in the Corded Ware/Single Grave culture (2900-2500 cal BCE; for a definition, see Beckerman 2015). The Bell Beaker phenomenon (2500-2300/2200 cal BCE; for a definition and synthesis, see Turek 2006), which followed it, also extended into southern and Western Europe. Both of these archaeological cultures exhibit a degree of uniformity in their material culture, as demonstrated by a specific range of symbolic prestige goods found mainly in funerary contexts. The principles of the Corded Ware and Bell Beaker burial rites arise from the same symbolic system, probably reflecting a similar social and economic background for these Late Eneolithic communities.

Gender concepts of European Copper Age

Corded Ware Period
2800 – 2500 cal. BC



Bell Beaker Period
2500 – 2300/2200 cal. BC

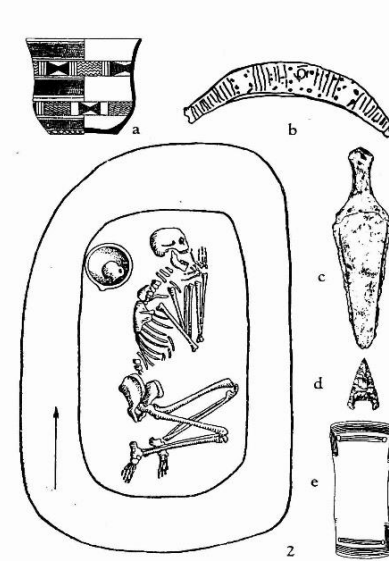


Gender structure of burial customs

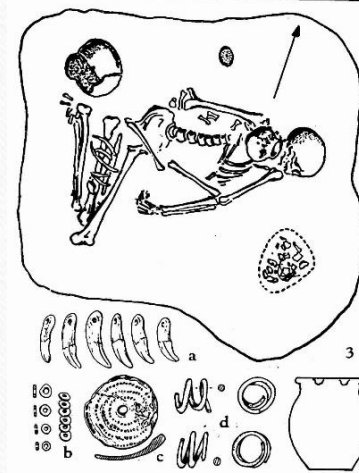
**Bell Beaker
female**



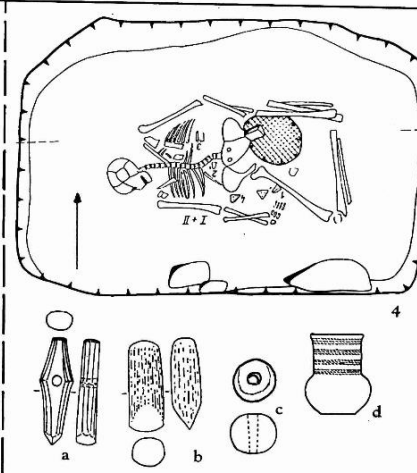
**Bell Beaker
male**



**Corded Ware
female**



**Corded Ware
male**



Corded Ware cemeteries in central Europe include primarily single flexed inhumations (Buchvaldek 1967). In the Corded Ware period, female burials were usually placed on the left side, with the head oriented to the east. For male burials, the typical orientation was to the west, with the body placed on the right side. As a result of this practice, the burials of both sexes face south. This orientation may have been symbolically related to the location of some cemeteries in the landscape. A common location of Corded Ware cemeteries is on the edge of terraces or slopes, most of which face south-east. Bell Beaker cemeteries occurred in similar locations, but with a preference for north-east slopes (Turek 1996). Although the locations of these cemeteries may reflect some ritual commitment to the direction of the sunrise, the sheltered location of nearby habitation sites may also have been important. Possible evidence for a solar cult may be inferred from the shell disc amulets with motifs of double crosses or concentric circles (known from several Corded Ware cemeteries in Bohemia, cf. Buchvaldek 1967), presumed symbols of the solar wheel. The same motif also appears on some of the bone/antler/amber V-perforated buttons of the subsequent Bell Beaker period (known from several Bell Beaker cemeteries in Bohemia, cf. Turek 2006). The Bell Beaker females were buried on their right side, head oriented to the south, and males on their left side, head oriented to the north (Havel 1978; Turek 2006). Therefore, people buried in the Beaker period were facing east.

The position of the arms appears to have been highly symbolic within the Corded Ware burial rite (Turek 1990), even though this placement was not specific to gender and age groups or the amount of grave goods. The positioning of the arms was also important in the Bell Beaker period, even though the number of varieties decreased (Havel 1978). As such, the positioning of the arms may well relate to an alternative social category/identity, but we have been unable, given our limited knowledge, to establish the meaning behind this placement of the upper limbs.

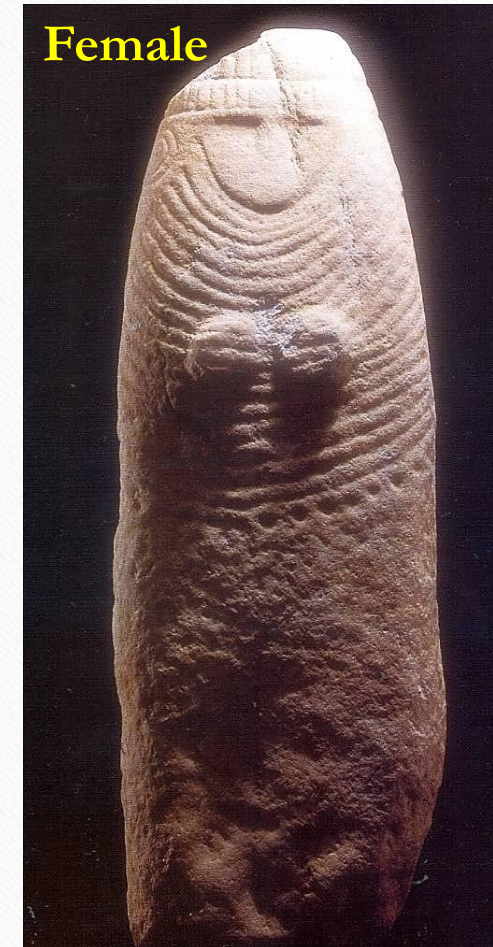
Male and female burials appear to be accompanied by different 'gendered' artefacts (Buchvaldek 1967; Turek 1990). Female burials include necklaces made of perforated animal teeth (such as wolf, dog, wild cat, and fox teeth in Corded Ware burials), as well as imitation teeth made from bone. Necklaces were also made from small, perforated, circular discs of freshwater shell. Another artefact appearing in female graves is the aforementioned shell 'solar' disc symbol. The pottery assemblage commonly found in female burials consists of ovoid pots and this is also the case of female burials in the subsequent Bell Beaker period. Male burial assemblages include weapons symbolic of social power, such as battle axes, maceheads, or axes. In later Bell Beaker burials, these weapons were replaced by copper daggers and archery equipment.

It is important to note that 'gendered' artefacts need not reflect the social status of the dead alone, because, in some cases, they may serve as symbolic representations of the relations between the deceased and other members of the community. That is, some artefacts may represent the mourners and their relationship with the dead. A beaker or copper dagger in a Bell Beaker female grave, for example, may be a symbolic gift from a father or husband, rather than an artefact used by the deceased in day-to-day practice. Brodie (1997, 300-301) observed: *'Upon the occasion of burial it might have been the domestic duty of female relatives to provide the deceased with a serving of food and drink, together sometimes with their ceramic container whereas male relatives would be expected to provide weapons, ornaments or tools'*.

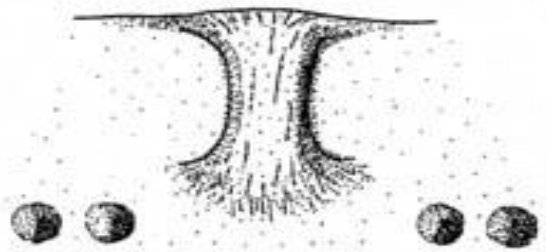
Corded Ware and Bell Beaker funerary practices seem to be a symbolic reflection of the division of labour within the family and a reflection of the different social status of men, women, and children. The individuality expressed within the context of a single burial is indicative of an individual's association with a particular social category, rather than a celebration of someone's special skills or the status achieved during their lifetime.

Male and female symbolism

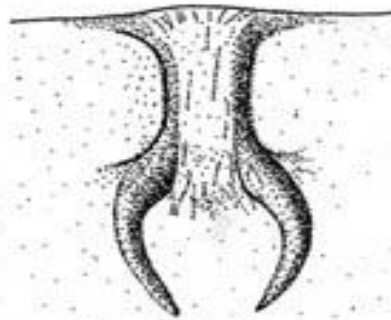
Arco – Alto Adige (Northern Italy)



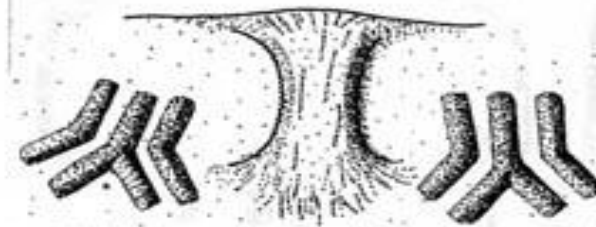
Gendered cups symbolism



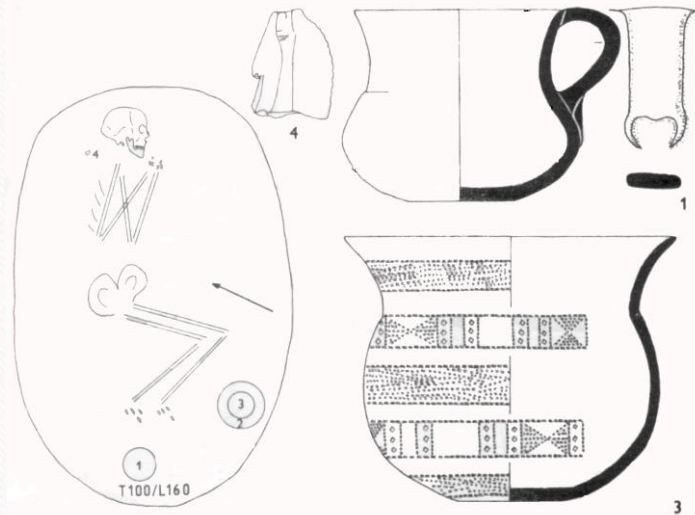
female



male



male&female (?)



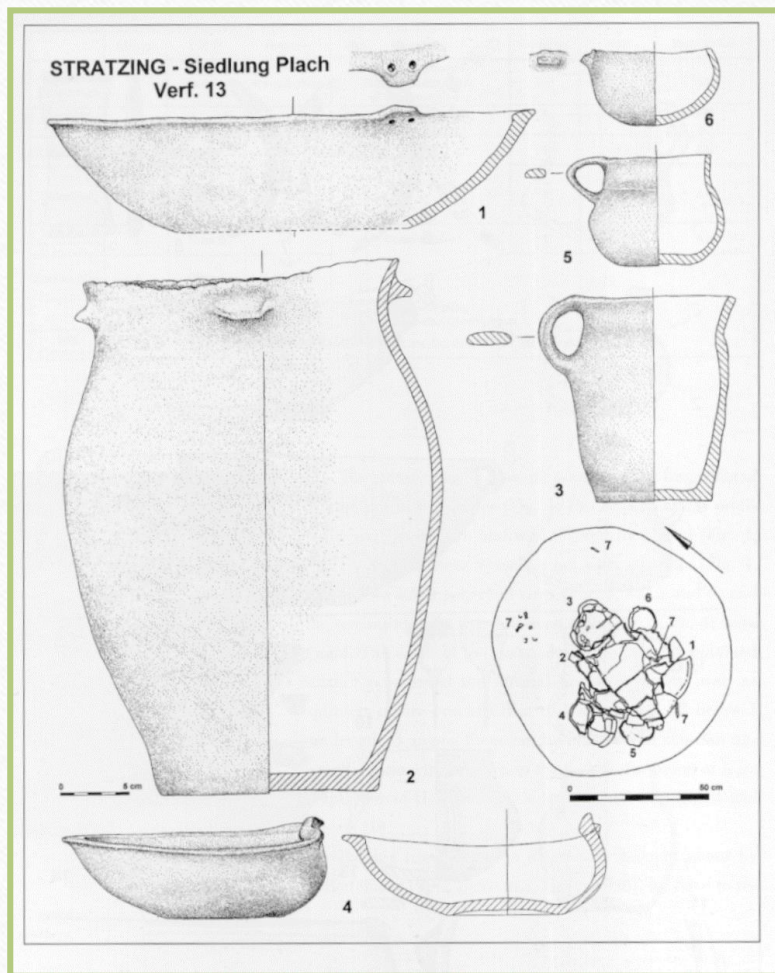
‘Moustache’ male symbols

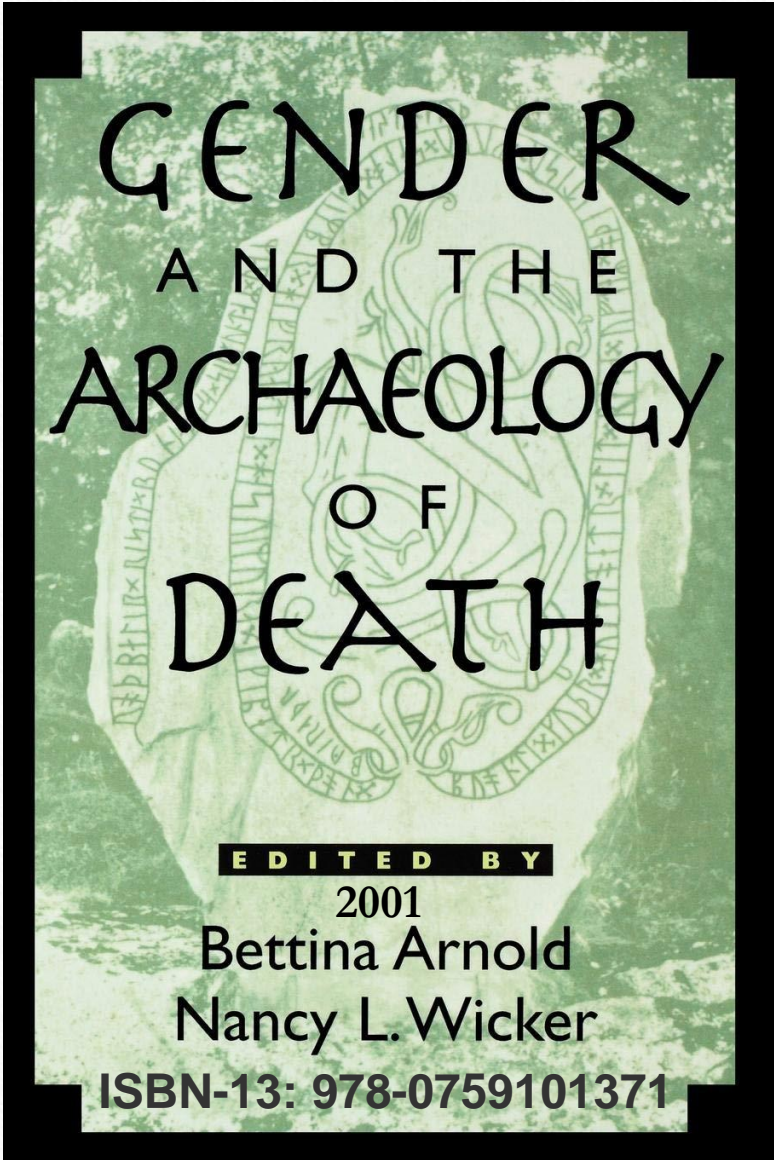




Female burial with
exclusively female
type of vessel

Only for women!





GENDER AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF DEATH

EDITED BY

2001

Bettina Arnold

Nancy L. Wicker

ISBN-13: 978-0759101371



Gender in Archaeology

Analyzing Power and Prestige

Second Edition

2004

SARAH MILLEDGE NELSON

ISBN13: 978-0759104969

EDITED BY
JENNY MOORE AND ELEANOR SCOTT

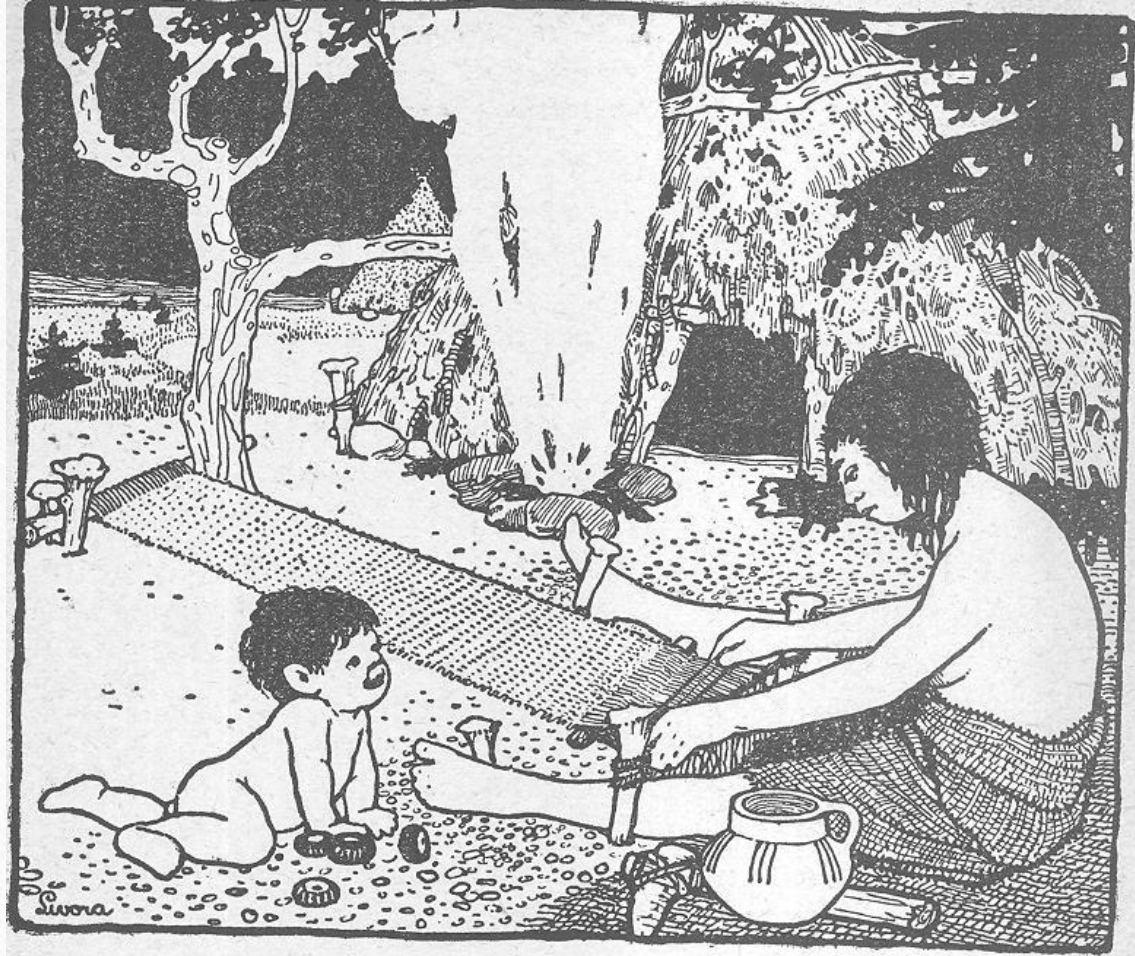


INVISIBLE PEOPLE AND PROCESSES

WRITING GENDER AND CHILDHOOD INTO EUROPEAN ARCHAEOLOGY

ISBN-13: 978-0718500245

How about children?!





Vyškov, Moravia – Early Bronze Age burial of mother and child

The symbolic expression of male and female status in burial rites probably reflects different the social roles for each sex within society. The evidence for the Corded Ware burial rite may also be considered to be a reflection of social diversification among members of a society, including children.

Despite the perceived invisibility of children in the archaeological record (cf. Sofaer-Derevenski 1996) analysis of Corded Ware and Bell Beaker burial rites in Bohemia and Moravia (Havel 1978; Neustupný 1973; Turek 1987; 1990) has provided evidence that may help to evaluate the position of children within Late Eneolithic society (Turek 2000). It seems very likely that the main feature of the Corded Ware and Bell Beaker burial rites, which is the symbolic differentiation of male and female, even applied to child burials. The sexual dimorphism of sub-adult skeletal remains is not sufficiently developed to enable us to determine their sex. However, the position of the body in the grave, the head orientation, and the 'gendered' grave goods seem to reflect the same system of sexual distinction observed among adult burials.

Taking into account the high mortality rate expected in the age category *infans* I (0-6 months; cf. Neustupný 1983), which is well documented for pre-industrial societies, there is a relative lack of archaeological evidence for burials of these children. Within the Bohemian Corded Ware cemeteries, only four burials of this age category have been recorded (Vikletice, Chomutov District; Buchvaldek 1967). One was a new-born child probably buried together with its mother (Blšany, Louny District). The majority of the youngest children were thus probably disposed of in alternative ways, as documented by various ethnographic studies, such as those conducted among the Dajaga and Nandi tribes in Kenya (Häusler 1966; Holý 1956). It may also be that children under a certain age were not fully accepted as members of a community and therefore did not have the right to a proper funeral. The situation changes in the age category *infans* II (6 months to 5 years), where, from the age of two years, there is an increase in the number of child burials. Before the age of two, children are particularly vulnerable to dehydration due to infection, as indicated by the mortality pattern in developing countries today. At this age, vital life changes happen as the child begins to communicate verbally, to walk unaided, and to eat solid food as a supplement to breast milk. In some primitive societies, it is also believed that children below a certain age (usually 2 years) have no soul (cf. Häusler 1966). This perception justifies, for example, infanticide or the use of similar non-ritual methods for the disposal of children's remains. In some groups (*e.g.* the Dajaga people of Kenya; Holý 1966), children are named only after this critical period, when their chance of survival increases.

The pottery assemblages included in child burials during the Corded Ware period seem to reflect their age, as some of the pots are miniature versions of the real-size common vessels. Similar observations were made in the context of Bronze Age child burials in Ireland (so-called '*pygmy cups*'; Donnabháin & Brindley 1989). The examination of bell beaker cup volumes from north-western Bohemia provided evidence of a possible utilitarian division according to use (type of drink?) or user (Turek 1998, 108-109 Fig. 5). However, it is important to put these data into the context of the age and sex category of the persons buried with those cups, such as was done with the British and Irish beakers (Case 1995; Brodie 1998, Fig. 2). Unfortunately, the majority of the cups from north-western Bohemia lack contextual data due to the early date of their discovery. It appears that Corded Ware child burials in Bohemia and Moravia were more often accompanied by bowls (one in four child burials) than those of adults (1 in 13 burials). However, this may reflect the practical use of bowls for the consumption of food by individuals in the respective age categories.

Differential survival of one sex over another is caused by uneven parental investment given the socio-economic conditions of the parents or the entire community, as was documented, for example, among the Mukogodo, a pastoral tribe in Kenya with a lower socio-economic status relative to neighbouring groups (Cronk 1989). Because girls have a better chance of marrying out of the tribe, they have a greater reproductive potential for the Mukogodo community. Therefore, Mukogodo girls receive better medical care than boys.

In order to examine the possible preference of one sex (or gender?) over another in the context of Corded Ware and Bell Beaker burials, I have compared the number of children buried in male and female positions given the symbolism associated with burial orientation. The number of Corded Ware girls and boys buried in Bohemia and Moravia is almost equal, with 21 girls (42.9 per cent) and 19 boys (38.8 per cent), not counting the nine child burials in non-diagnostic positions ($n = 49$ burials in total). There is a similar record for Bell Beaker child burials in Bohemia, where 24 of the 27 children were buried in diagnostic positions, with 13 (54 per cent) identified as male and 11 (46 per cent) as female (Turek 1987; 1990). Similarly, there is an almost equal number of child burials in female and male positions in a Corded Ware cemetery in central Germany (Siemen 1992, 231). This record challenges any assumptions that sex-biased infanticide existed in the Late Eneolithic period in central Europe. A similar balance seems to exist in the number of grave goods found within male and female child burials in Bohemian and Moravian Corded Ware cemeteries (girls seems to be slightly richer). This raises the question: Is there any evidence of differential social status of certain children within Late Eneolithic burial rites?

Excavations have revealed that stone tools or weapons accompany some of the children's burials, especially those with a male orientation. In the context of children's graves, these artefacts clearly were of symbolic importance and may have well have been anticipating their social roles as adults. In Bohemian and Moravian Corded Ware burials, the bodies of very young boys (six months to six years old) are accompanied by hammer axes or mace heads (*e.g.* Líbeznice, Prague-East District; Turek 2011 [see slide below](#)). In Moravia, for example, there is the burial of a five-year-old child from Dětkovice (Okr. Prostějov, Czech Republic) with a hammer-axe. In Bohemia, grave 130/63 from Vikletice, the burial of a six-year-old child, included a mace head, whereas grave 47/64, containing the skeleton of a child in the *infans* II category, was accompanied by a battle axe (Buchvaldek and Koutecký 1970, 52-53). A similar pattern has been identified the Corded Ware period in central Germany (Siemen 1989). The pattern for the Moravian Bell Beaker burials appears to be very similar. For example, the grave of a 9- to 10-year-old boy (?) accompanied by a copper dagger, gold and copper spirals. and amber beads was present at Lechovice (Okr. Znojmo, Czech Republic; Turek 1990), whereas the cremated remains of a child (burial 53/80-II) from Radovesice (Okr. Teplice, Czech Republic; Turek 2006) were found with flint arrowheads, a stone wristguard, a bow-shaped amulet, and V-perforated buttons.

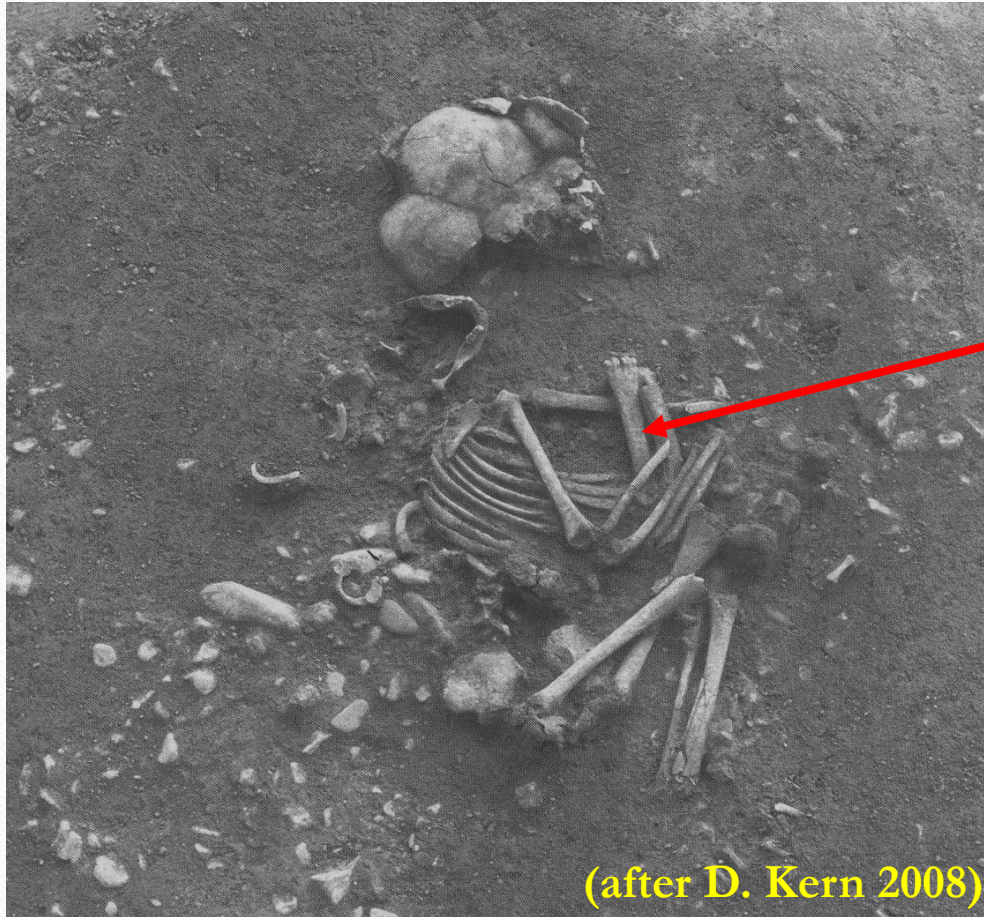




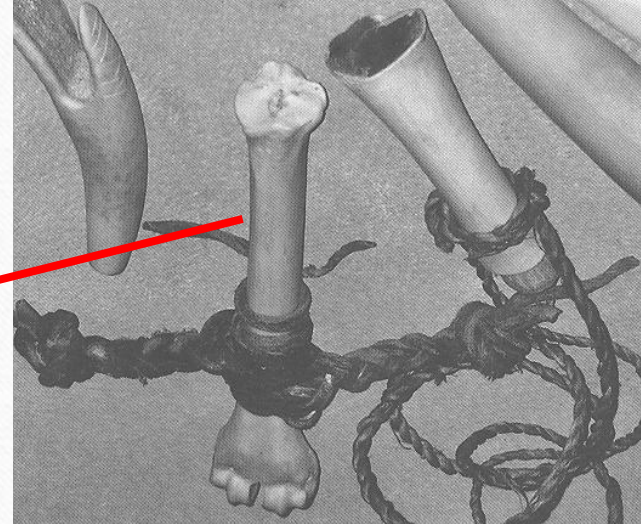
Child burials accompanied by objects that may be interpreted as symbols of wealth and social status do not necessarily reflect prehistoric social relations simply because these children died so young. Because other male child burials do not include such symbolic artefacts, it can be assumed that this group of sub-adult male burials may represent socially favoured individuals of some sort. They may have been firstborn sons and thus potential heirs of social status and wealth within a family or a community. Similar observations were made by Susan Shennan (1975) at the cemetery of the Nitra culture at Branč (Okr. Nitra, Slovakia), where a small group of sub-adult women was buried with rich copper necklaces and other jewellery. On the other hand, the majority of girls' burials on this site were accompanied by ordinary artefacts. On the basis of this evidence, Shennan inferred the existence of a system of ascribed hereditary wealth. In fact, this evidence may indicate the initial stages in the development of social differentiation that persisted in Bronze Age communities. Such social differentiation may have been a result of progressive changes in the system of agriculture and food production, namely, the introduction of ploughing implements and teams, and the secondary products revolution (Neustupný 1967; Sherratt 1981).

Franzhausen (Lower Austria)

Toys in grave of a Corded Ware Girl



(after D. Kern 2008)

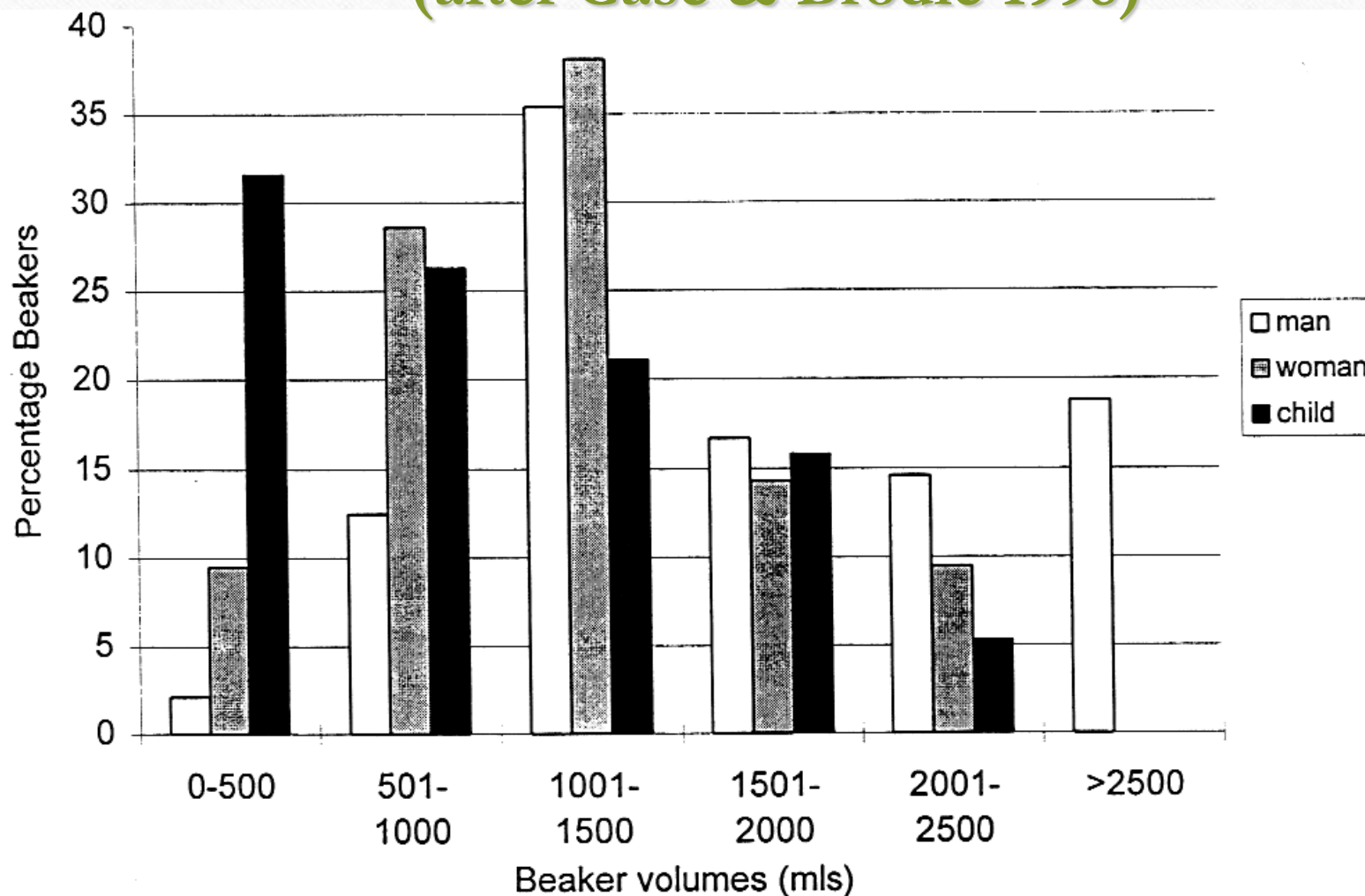


Bone doll from Cameron

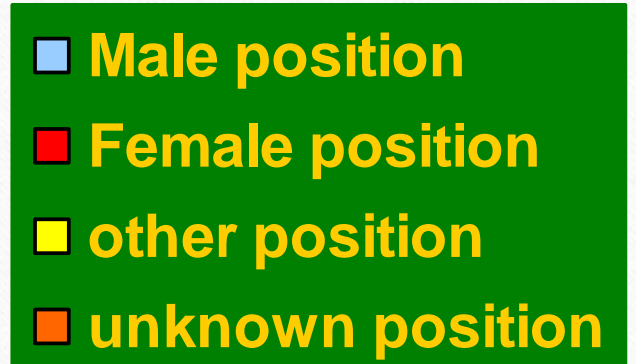
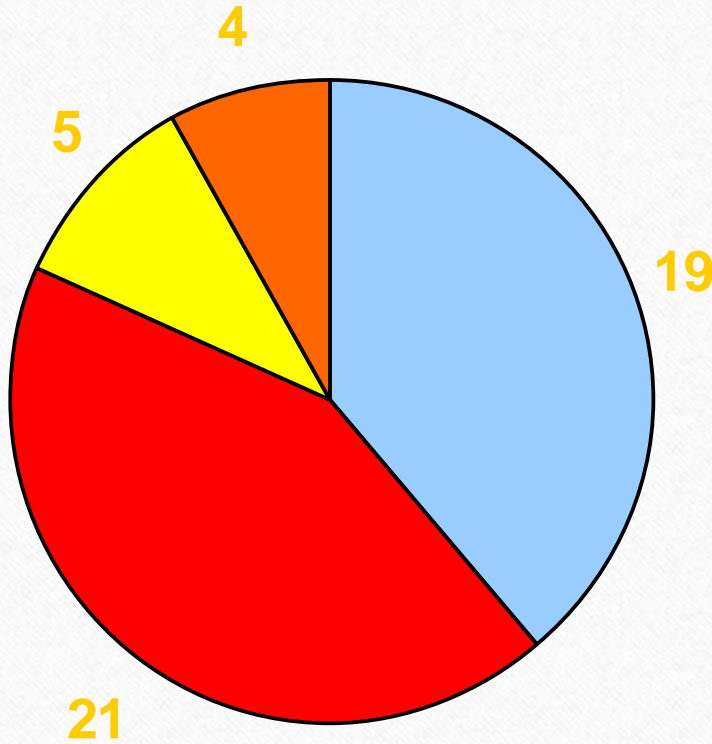


(After A. Porteus Sidewalk Tribal Gallery)

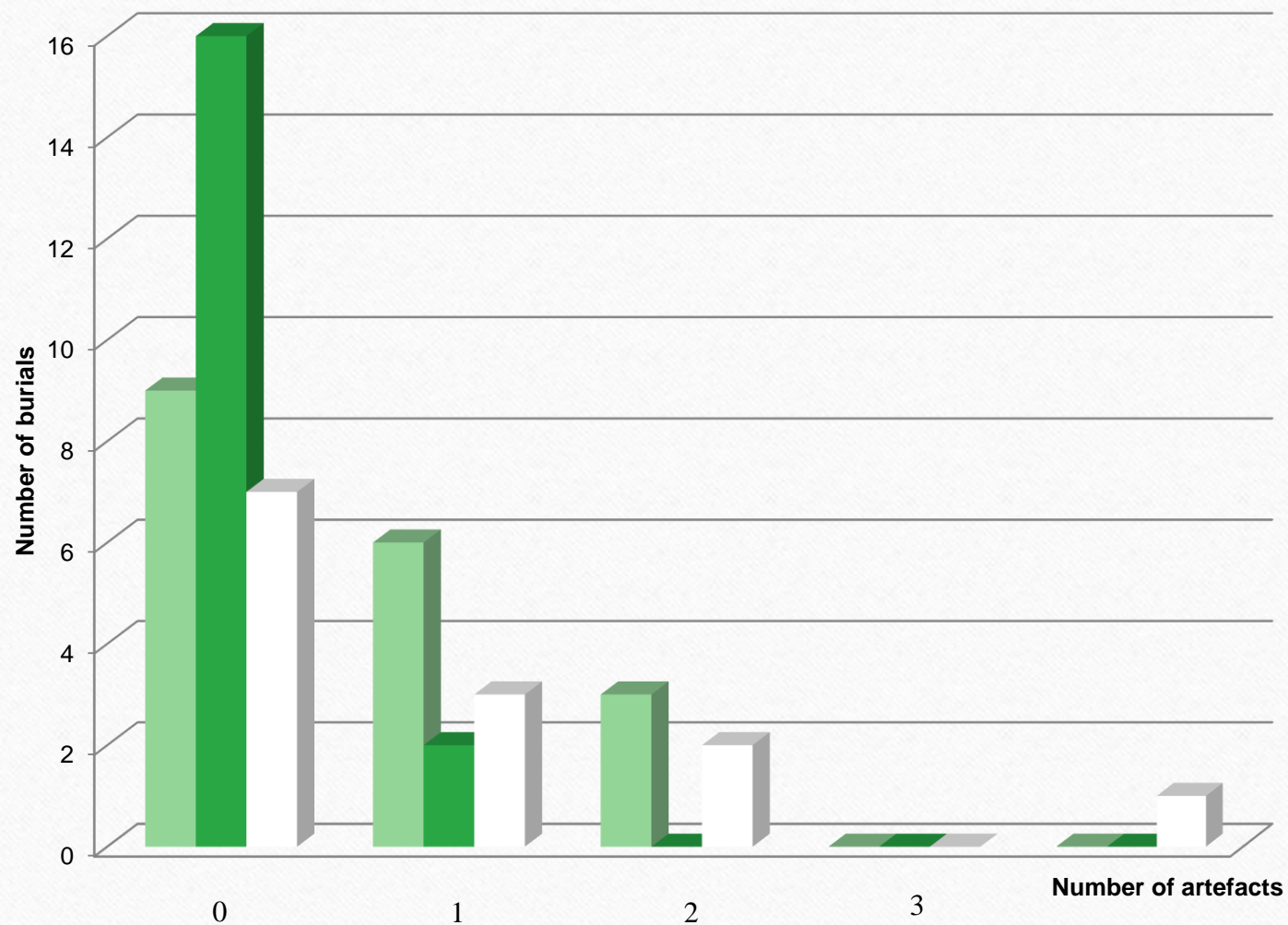
Volumetrics of British & Irish Bell Beakers (after Case & Brodie 1998)



Gender differentiation applied also to Corded Ware child burials



The Corded Ware child burials: Number of weapons in child graves



Little Boys With Warrior Status System Of Ascribed Hereditary Wealth



Gender roles



(After Petrequin – Petrequin 2000)

The order of gender identities was perhaps even more complex. The DNA analysis of 53 child burials from the largest Bell Beaker cemetery in Moravia – Hoštice-I (Okr. Prostějov,) – produced some amazing data (Vaňharová 2011, 104-120; 195-196). Containing 155 graves, the cemetery is exceptionally large in the context of Moravia and Bohemia (Matějčková *et al.* 2012) and can be compared only with even larger Bell Beaker–Csepel Group cemeteries at Budakalász and Szigetszentmiklós (both Kom. Pest, Hungary), in the area of present-day Budapest (Turek 2006). DNA sexing was successful in 21 individuals. Out of 14 burials with male gender position and/or grave goods, 12 were biologically male and two were biological female (Vaňharová 2011, 116 Table 17). This may be evidence of two girls who were supposed to be brought up as boys. This is already a known pattern in third millennium BC burial customs (Turek 2006), but the DNA analysis results for the burials with female gender attributes are very surprising. Out of seven children buried in the female position, only one was actually biological female (a juvenile, aged 15-20) and six were in fact male (two of whom were also juvenile, aged 15-19/20 years). So, that means that four boys (aged 3-4, 7, 8-12, and 15 years) had been buried in the female position. It is important to note that there are gender clues not only in the positioning and orientation of bodies in those graves, but also in the presence of gendered artefacts, such as V-perforated bone buttons.

These results, though surprising, are perhaps in line with some earlier observations on the demographic unbalance caused by missing female burials in the Bohemian and central German Bell Beaker group (Turek 2002). This would mean that most of the young girls were not buried in the communal cemetery (at Hoštice I there is not a single DNA-sexed case of a sub-juvenile female) and that a considerable number of boys (one third of the total amount of successfully DNA-sexed individuals) were buried in the female fashion. The masculine attributes seem to be downplayed in the burial customs. It is currently hard to establish whether these individuals were supposed to be brought up as women or whether, instead, they had not yet acquired the right to act as men, unlike some other male sub-adult boys, perhaps members of families with ascribed hereditary warrior status. It almost seems that some young boys were socially considered to be girls, perhaps until they had undergone a ceremonial rite of passage or social initiation of some kind.

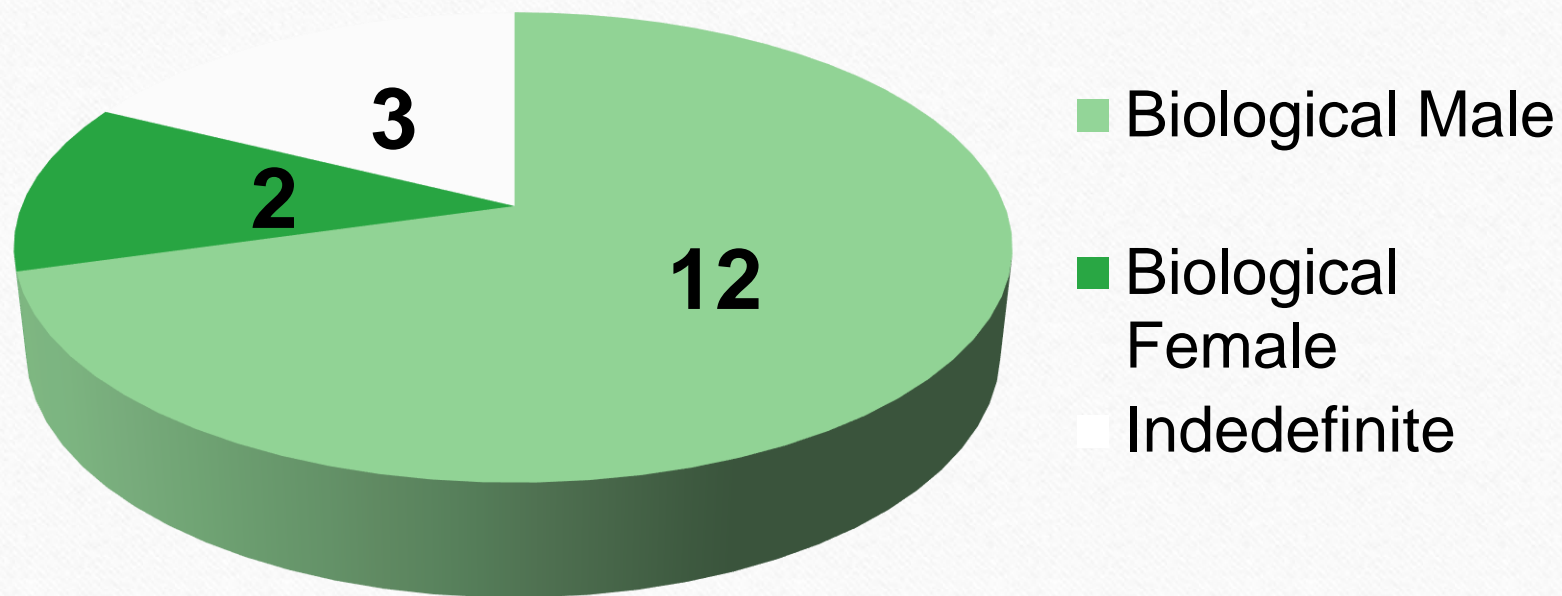
This observation should not be that surprising to us if we think of the position of very young boys in some traditional societies. Before rite of passage rituals (that were perhaps organized in certain boy's age) boys were treated as no-gender child individuals or as girls. It is interesting to look at some early 20th-century family photos albums where boy toddlers are dressed in girls' dresses, which was in fact unisex clothing for children of that age (such as the future British King Edward VIII as a toddler (see below) after Turek 2016). Only later on did boys start to wear male-gendered clothes and were treated accordingly by their family.

Hoštice – Central Moravia

DNA analysis / gender interpretation

(after Vaňharová 2011)

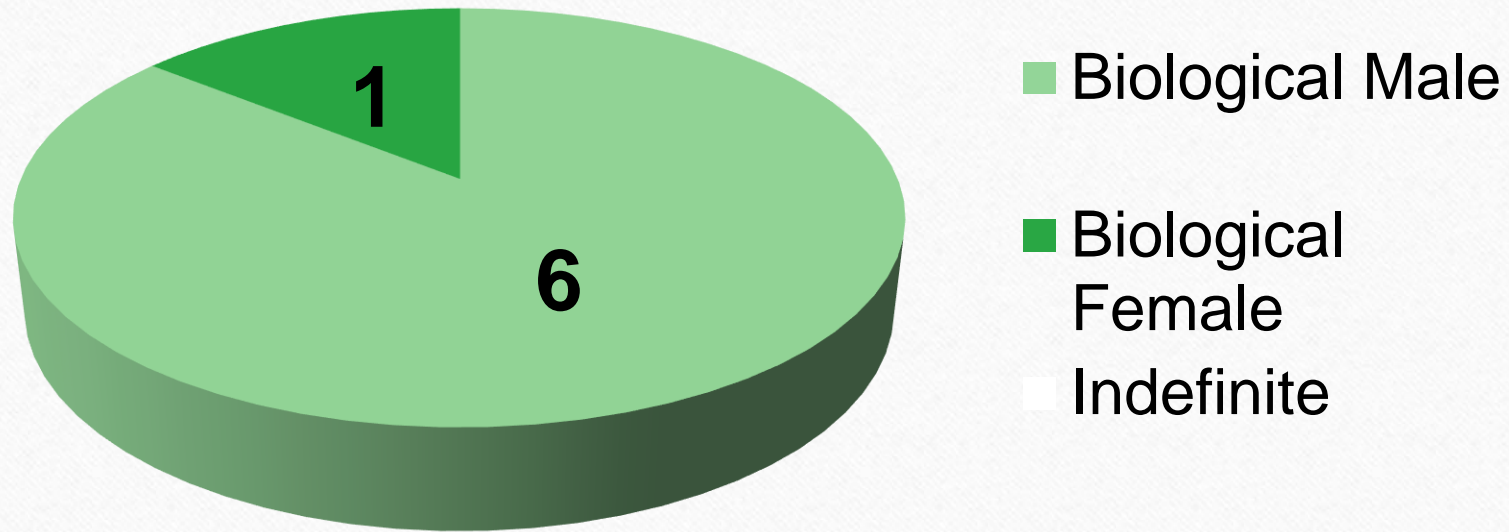
MALE GENDER child burials



Hoštice – Central Moravia

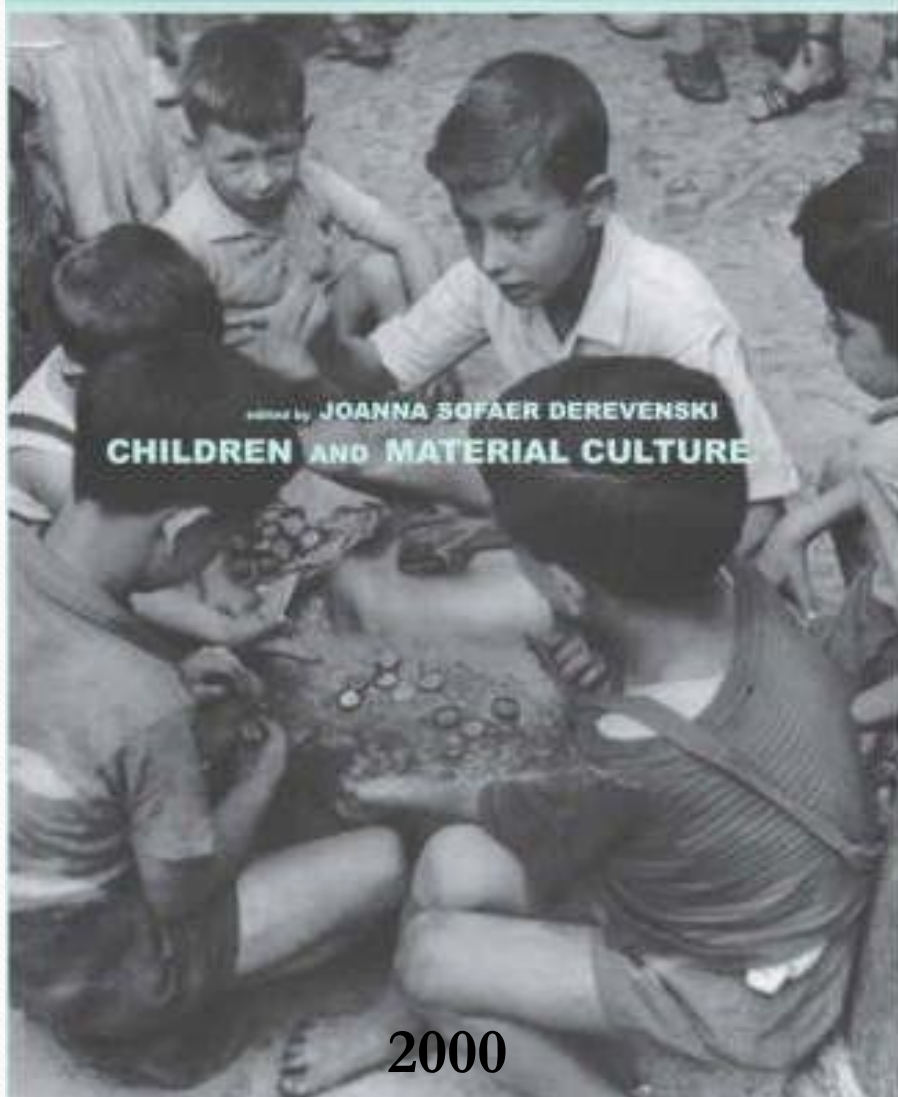
DNA analysis / gender interpretation (after Vaňharová 2011)

FEMALE GENDER child burials



Little Prince - future King Edward the VIII



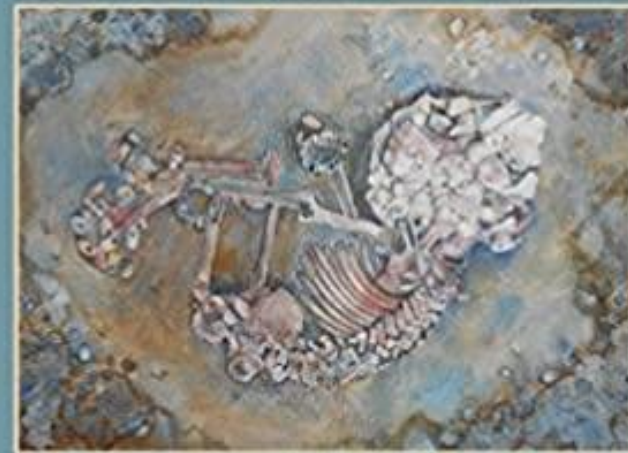


2000

ISBN13 9780415188982

CHILDREN, DEATH AND BURIAL

Archaeological Discourses



2017

Edited by

Eileen Murphy and Melle Le Roy

Eileen Murphy & Mélie Le Roy (Eds.)

ISBN-13: 978-1785707124

The Beaker 'Amazons'

I would like to emphasise the small collection of Bell Beaker female burials accompanied by artefacts normally connected with men, namely, three female burials equipped with an archer's stone wristguards, artefacts usually present in men's graves. One such female 'archer' comes from the Moravian grave 12/34 at Šlapanice II (Brno-venkov, District; Dvořák and Hájek 1990, 10 pl. 16), which includes a rich burial assemblage of seven vessels, including two decorated bell beakers, four V-perforated buttons, and a copper awl. Another female archer was discovered in grave III at Prague-Vršovice, Bohemia, while the third case comes from an isolated burial chamber (no. 77/99) at Tišice (Mělník District; Turek 2002). The latter burial was accompanied by two stone wristguards, an amber bead, a copper awl and dagger, and six vessels, including four decorated bell beakers. Significantly, most of the daggers found in female graves are miniature versions (37-94 mm) of those associated with male burials. These miniature daggers may have been used in other ways than the full-size artefacts or their function may have been purely symbolic. I believe that these exceptional cases of 'rich' female burials belong to a socially preferred elite group within these populations.

The mixed-gender assemblages seem to be characteristic of the 'rich' female burials with decorated beakers and burial chambers surrounded by a circular ditch. I presume that the relationship between decorated beakers, the internal construction of the grave, and the package of prestigious goods is more likely to be a reflection of a social distinction than a chronological difference. In addition, the blending of male- and female-gendered assemblages in the 'rich' graves seems to reflect this social differentiation. We should bear in mind that not every item in the burial assemblage must indicate the social status of the deceased. Instead, such 'gendered' artefacts could be a symbolic demonstration of the relations between the deceased and other members of the community. In this context, it is important to note that the wristguards in grave 77/99 at Tišice were detached from the body, one being located near the western wall of the burial chamber and the other being laid on the left forearm with the inside facing up (post-depositional movement?). Such placement could reflect the actions of other community members during the funerary ritual in order to emphasise the social status of the deceased and to reinforce community identity. Under these circumstances, the male-gendered artefacts may have been 'delegated' to women (or, rarely, the other way around) to reinforce social norms, social relations, and rules of differentiation. As such, the female burials with archery equipment represent members of a social elite, possibly female warriors or the 'Bell Beaker Amazons'.

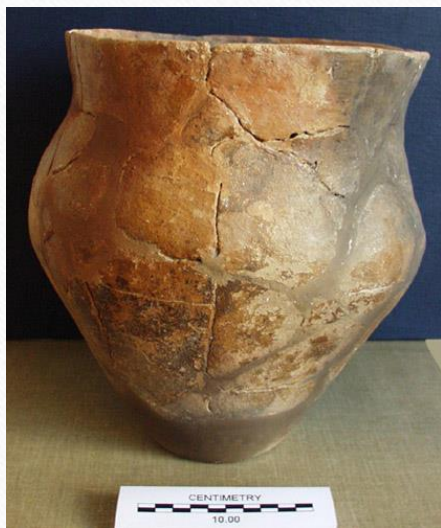
Switching gender roles



The Bell Beaker “Amazones”



Mixed gender assemblage



Beaker *berdache*?

In some cases, such as grave 60/1964 at Vikletice, which contains the body of a man aged 55-60 years, there are elderly men buried with body orientation and grave goods typical of female burials, suggesting that some elderly men switched their gender to female. Roland Wiermann (1998) compared this evidence to the norms of some Siberian and North American tribes. Based on the presence of such a gender category among the Chukchee, Koryak, and Yakut in Siberia and the Mohave and Navaho in North America, Wiermann assigns the term *berdache* to such women–men. Some aged men may have decided to ‘retire’ as women for symbolic and practical reasons. Such old men would symbolically give up their masculine attributes and social power while at the same time abandoning the practical need to compete with other male members of their community. In this way, his new gender status set them free of certain social obligations and competition. One finds evidence of similar role changes in the spatial clustering of graves by age and gender within some Copper Age funerary areas (cf. also Matic 2012; Sprenger 1995).

Gender identities

Reconsidering gender perspectives on past societies

Most of the archaeological discussions on gender traditionally deal with the concept based on biological sex. This is, however, in many respects a misleading approach. Among some native communities in Siberia and North America, there are more than just two gender categories, with most groups recognising three or four genders, such as man, woman–man, woman, man–woman (Lang 1996, 183-196). The Chukchi in Siberia recognise as many as seven gender categories apart from man and woman (Lang 1996). Such categories are not evidence of institutionalised homosexuality – that is, the gender ‘switch’ is usually not a result of sexual orientation but, rather, of occupational preferences and personality traits. Among the Ojibwa in north-eastern America, for example, one daughter may be raised as boy, a practice also common among the Kaska in Alaska and the Inuit in Canada (Lang 1996).

Such practices usually occur in regions where subsistence activities focussed on hunting, a typical male activity in the normal division of labour. Among the Mohave, a woman–man is called *Alyha* (see below) and a man–woman is referred to as *hwame* (see below). The men who changed their identity usually dressed as women and changed their hairstyle and tattooing pattern (Lang 1996). They also act as women, adopting their manners and gestures, even adjusting their voices accordingly. Further, they take on women's jobs, such as spinning and weaving blankets and raising children in extended families. Some even pretend to have menstrual cycles together with other women. Men–women, on the other hand, deny female physiological functions. They never menstruate, they hide their breasts, and they may marry a woman or remain single. They also use weapons and take up men's tasks, including fighting. In certain cultures, people can even mix the culturally defined roles.

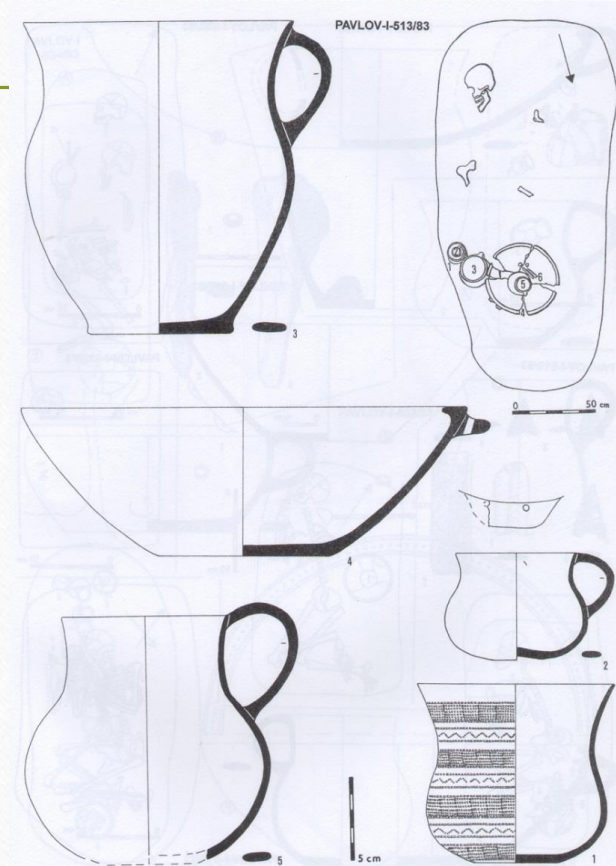
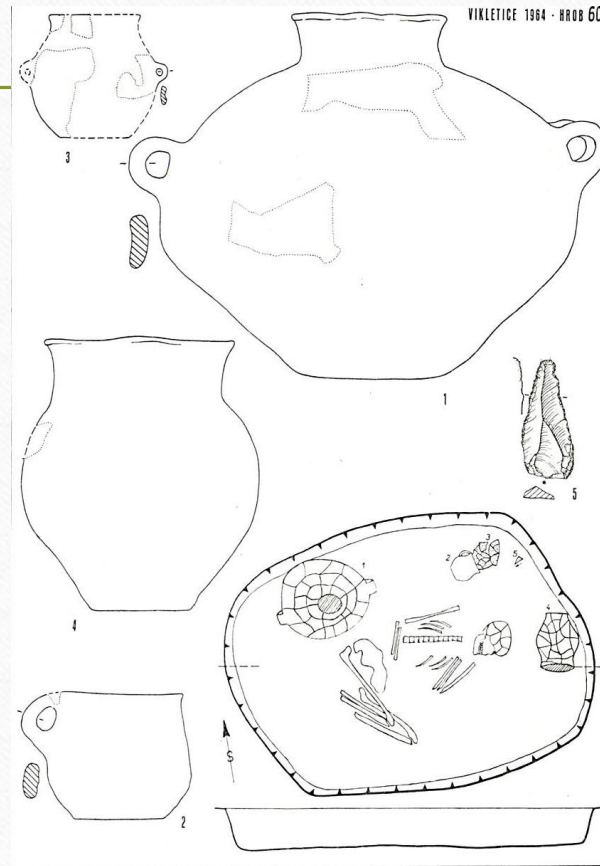
Understanding gender concepts of prehistoric societies

The perception of gender in archaeological interpretations commonly reflects our current social reality. In our Western Christian worldview, the traditional gender categories of men and women are based on biology and presume the primacy of reproduction in human societies. Alternative social roles were judged as deviations by the biased majority. The extremely difficult position of homosexuals in 20th-century Western society was caused mainly by the lack of an appropriate and commonly recognised gender category. Not surprisingly, the concept of transsexualism developed in cultures that only recognised and valued two gender categories based on biological sex. The tribes in North America and Siberia had gender categories ready for such cases. In Western Christian society, religious norms instigated a social neglect of homosexuals mainly due to the absence of appropriate gender categories. As archaeologists, we should change our approach to the interpretation of past societies, because our gender categories do not always correspond to those of a former reality.

Elderly women-men ?

Vikletice (North Bohemia) CW male 55-60 years old

Pavlov (South Moravia) BB male 50-60 years old



CONCLUSION

Reconsideration of gender perspective on the past societies

Amongst traditional communities in Siberia and North America there are more than just two gender categories, most of them recognize three or four genders:

Man, woman-man, woman, man-woman

The *gender 'switch'* is usually not a result of sexual orientation but of occupational preferences and personality traits.

It is not institutionalized homosexuality!

Ojibwa People

One daughter may be raised as boy, usually in regions where subsistence largely relied on hunting, which is men's domain within the primary gendered division of labour



Mohave People

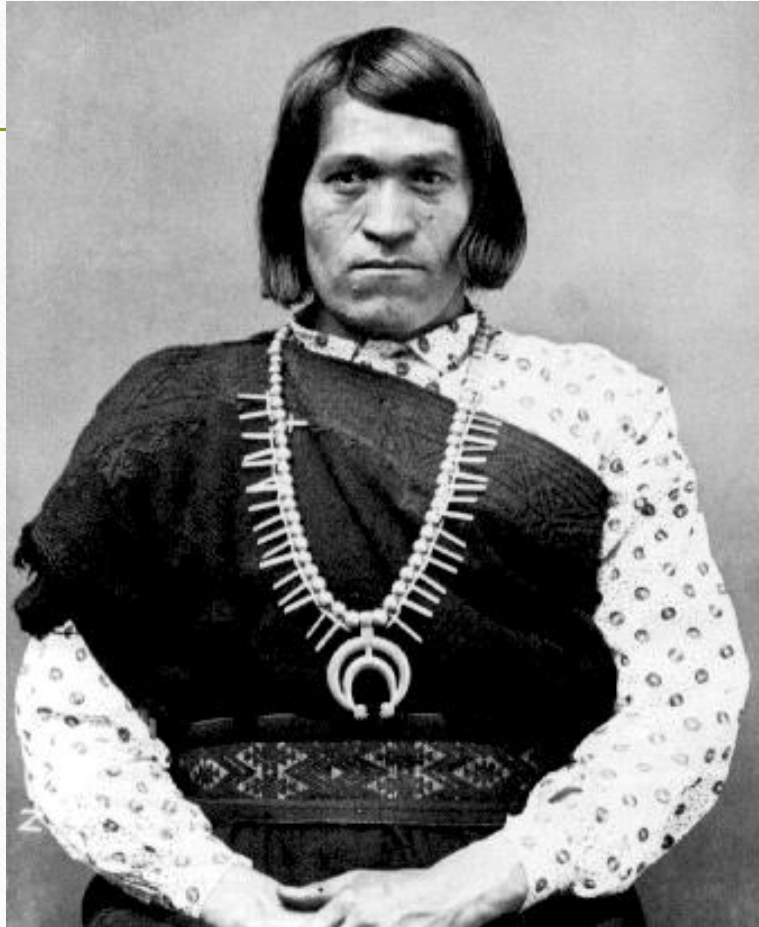
It is possible to:

- A – take up the gender role of opposite sex completely
 - B – mix the culturally defined roles
-



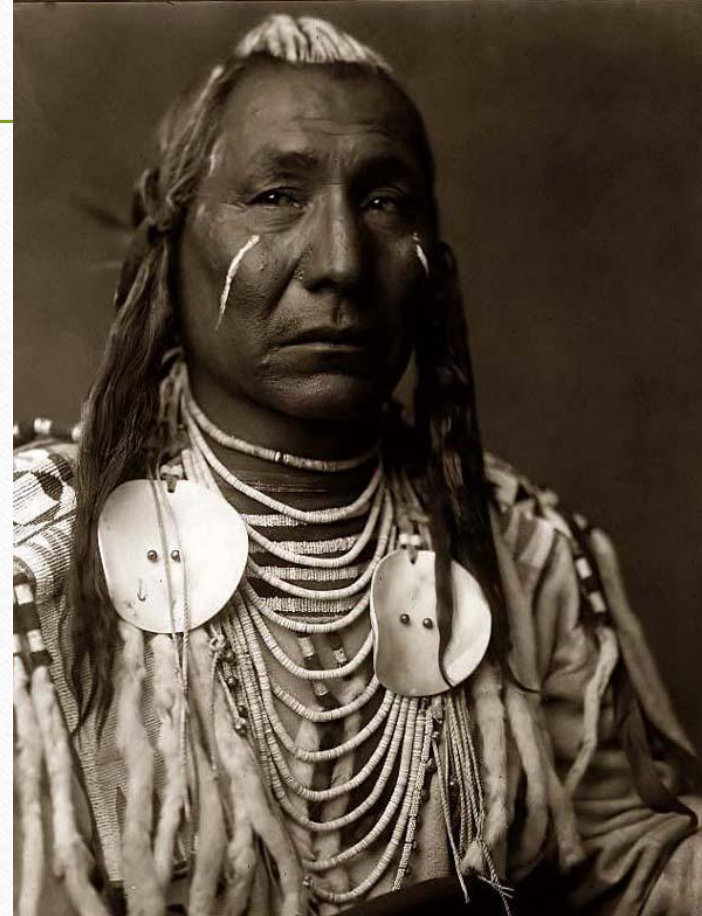
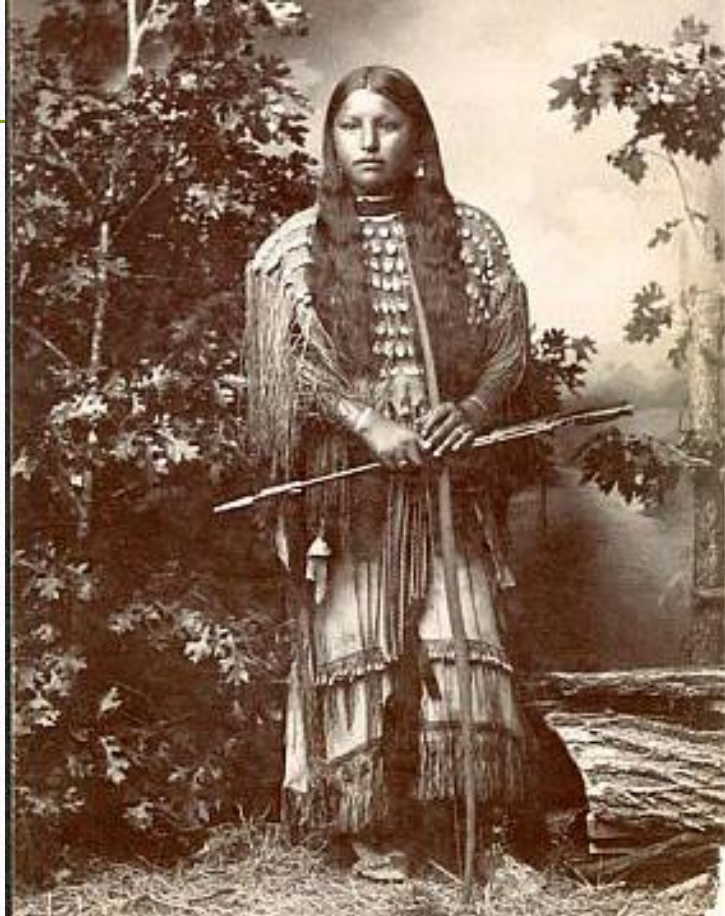
Mohave People

Woman-man = *ALYHA*



Mohave People

Man-woman = *HWAME*



South East Asia



Understanding gender concepts of prehistoric societies

Monotheism creates social norms that only recognizes and values two gender categories based on biological sex.

In Western society, Christian norms instigated a social neglect of homosexuals and transsexuals mainly due to the absence of appropriate gender categories.

Archaeologists should change their approach to the reading and interpretation of past societies because our current gender concepts do not always correspond to those of former reality.

Paradoxically, the reconstruction of prehistoric social norms offers the opportunity for a new and perhaps more liberal perspective on gender identity.

Thank you for your attention!

turekjan@hotmail.com

<https://cuni.academia.edu/JanTurek>

