

EXPLORING GENDER IN PREHISTORIC ITALY

INTRODUCTION

Gender studies got off to a late start in archaeology, compared to other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The first articles were published in the 1980s, but it is only in the 1990s that a significant body of work has appeared (for example, influential edited volumes: Gero and Conkey, 1991; Walde and Willows, 1991; Claassen, 1992; Du Cros and Smith, 1993; Wright, 1996; Moore and Scott, 1997; Sweely, 1999; single-authored books: Gilchrist, 1994; 1999; Nelson, 1997; Sørensen, 2000; a collection of abstracts: Bacus *et al.*, 1993; and a reader: Hays-Gilpin and Whitley, 1998). None the less, it remains very much a minority interest within the discipline, and mainstream archaeology does little more than pay lip-service to it. A good example of this can be found in the chief archaeological textbook used in British universities, *Archaeology. Theories, Methods and Practice*, by Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn. The first edition, published in 1991, has no section devoted to gender and the word does not appear in the index. In the second edition (1996), ‘gender studies’ occurs in the index, with a brief discussion at the tail-end of chapter 1 (‘The history of archaeology’) and a small section of its own in chapter 5 (‘Social archaeology’); gender also figures significantly in a boxed feature on ‘The individual as an agent of change’ in chapter 12 (‘Explanation in archaeology’), although this is not cross-referenced in the index. The third edition (2000) claims explicitly on the back cover to offer ‘increased coverage of gender archaeology’, but actually delivers very little more: the index heading is now ‘gender’ and refers to almost exactly the same items as in the second edition, although the reference to ‘The individual as an agent of change’ is now included, as are a few other references to mentions of gender elsewhere in the book — an improvement in cross-referencing rather than coverage.¹ These changes between the three editions clearly represent an improvement, but they are far from dazzling: a maximum of eleven pages, in a book of more than 550 pages of main text, is hardly adequate for discussion of something that is probably a universal feature, in one form or another, of human societies.

If gender archaeology is still a somewhat marginalized ‘specialism’ in the English-speaking countries and in Scandinavia (especially Norway, where there was an early flourish), in the rest of Continental Europe and above all in the Mediterranean, it is found hardly at all. This is the case for Italy, at least in

¹ What *is* new to the third edition is a boxed feature in chapter 1 entitled ‘Women pioneers of archaeology’, which seems to me a classic example of what is sometimes called ‘pseudo-inclusion’ and decidedly patronizing in tone.

terms of prehistory.² Of course, Italian scholars have made studies that are relevant to the understanding of gender in prehistory, in that they refer to differential female and male roles, activities, equipment, clothes and so on. However, these analyses are of 'naive' type, untouched by influence from gender or feminist theory. By this I mean the following: they either make no distinction between biological sex and social gender or assume an uncomplicated one-to-one equivalence; they show no knowledge of the possibility of third or multiple genders; they make no distinctions between different aspects of gender, such as roles, relations, ideologies and identities; they assume gender to be fixed, rather than something to be negotiated, transacted or performed. These comments are not intended as critical of Italian prehistorians: the situation simply reflects the general history and orientation of Italian archaeology, which has twin roots in the natural sciences (for earlier prehistory) and classics (for later prehistory/ protohistory). There is no tradition of anthropological archaeology, which means that there has been rather little social archaeology of any kind and virtually no studies that focus on the individual in the archaeological past. As a result, such work as has been done on gender (in the modern sense) in Italian prehistory has been done by non-Italian scholars, mostly British and American. Their work is the subject of the next section.

STUDIES OF GENDER IN ITALIAN PREHISTORY

The work on gender in Italian archaeology consists of a number of specific studies (Vida Navarro, 1992; Whitehouse, 1992b; Skeates, 1994; papers in Whitehouse, 1998) and two major articles by John Robb (1994b; 1997), which present generalizing accounts of the development of gender systems in Italy from the Neolithic to the Iron Age, dealing both with gender relations and gender symbolism (ideology). Since Robb is the only scholar so far to have offered a broad overview of gender in Italian prehistory, his work makes a good starting-point for the present discussion. Both Robb's papers take a social evolutionary perspective and draw for interpretation of the archaeological evidence on ethnographic analogy alone for the earlier periods and on both ethnography and backward projections from classical and later textual sources for the Iron Age. In the later article he summarized his approach succinctly: 'At 6000 BCE, Italian Neolithic gender systems probably resembled those in many ethnographically known tribal societies. Classical gender systems shared many features known ethnographically from Mediterranean 'honor and shame'

²I am not competent to assess coverage of classical or medieval archaeology, but my impression is that, while gender studies are well-established in history and in textual and art criticism for these periods, they are yet to impinge much on straight, that is material culture, archaeology.

societies. How New Guinea evolved into Rome is a fascinating and important problem' (Robb, 1997: 44).

At the risk of oversimplifying his account, the evolution Robb has documented can be summarized as follows. In the Neolithic (*c.* 6500–3500 BC) gender relations and gender symbolism were based on a balanced complementarity between male and female. Female symbols focused on the body, while male symbols focused on hunting. In the succeeding Copper and Bronze Ages (*c.* 3500–1000 BC) there was a marked transformation into a gender hierarchy with a dominant male ideology based on warfare. Females were still symbolized by anatomical traits and sometimes also by necklaces, while males were symbolized by weapons, initially daggers and halberds, later also axes, swords and spears. Finally, in the Iron Age (beginning *c.* 1000 BC and continuing into the classical period), a class-based hierarchy emerged; within this, gender asymmetry became further entrenched, but this system was cross-cut by class divisions, which distinguished elite women from lower-class women, as well as from men of their own class. Gender ideology of this time saw women symbolized no longer by anatomy, but by ornamentation (dress and jewellery) on the one hand and spinning and weaving equipment on the other; male symbolism continued to be based on warfare, now often including defensive armour as well as weapons. Robb interpreted this as a basic dichotomous symbolic division between female beauty and male violence.

Robb's papers provide an excellent starting-point for discussion of gender in prehistoric Italy, but they can be criticized on a number of counts. Like all social evolutionary frameworks, Robb's account of the evolution of gender systems in prehistoric Italy is simplistic. While at one level it accurately represents a development for which there is clear evidence — the change from a situation of gender fluidity and perhaps complementarity in the Neolithic (see discussion below on the issue of complementarity), to emerging gender hierarchy in the Copper and Bronze Ages and subsequent institutionalization of such hierarchy within a class system in the Iron Age — at another level it misrepresents both the complexity of gender systems and their variability both between societies and within them. Robb certainly has recognized the simplistic nature of his scheme and has discussed this to some extent: his second paper has a section entitled 'Necessary ambiguities: the case for multivocal gender ideologies' (Robb, 1997: 56–7). This section discusses differences between formal institutions and coercive structures on the one hand and informal practices and consensual orders on the other, and the possibility that gender symbolism may be interpreted and experienced differently by different groups in society. However, no account has been taken of possible differences between contemporary societies in different parts of Italy, although strong cases can be argued for this in both the Neolithic and the Iron Age. For the Neolithic, Pluciennik (1998: 76) has suggested that activities may have been differently gendered in different geographical areas: for example, there may have been

diverging patterns in northwest Sicily, northeast Sicily, Calabria and Apulia. The case for the Iron Age is even stronger. Robb has written as though a gender system understood for early Rome can be unproblematically generalized to apply to Villanovans and Etruscans, Campanians, Palaeovenetians, Daunians and probably others. Yet, while there are undoubtedly aspects shared by all these groups, including a tendency to associate males with warfare and females with spinning and weaving, there are also many differences in the archaeological evidence that demand closer attention, which will be discussed below.

Robb's use of ethnographic analogies also can be regarded as simplistic, given that anthropologists have recorded a great variety of sex/gender systems within small-scale tribal societies. To suggest that the ethnographic examples drawn on as parallels for neolithic societies were universally characterized by gender complementarity (a view also expressed by Skeates (1994: 160)) not only represents considerable oversimplification, but also tends towards a 'noble savage' view of tribal life. In the ethnographic record, gender complementarity may exist in terms of symbolism/ideology, but be accompanied by marked gender asymmetry in the lived experiences of actual men and women. For instance, in many of the New Guinea societies that Robb has cited as particularly relevant parallels for the Italian Neolithic, there are asymmetrical power relations between men and women, with men dominating women by virtue of their gender and often through, *inter alia*, the use of physical violence (for example: Godelier, 1986; Strathern, 1988: chapter 11). I am not arguing here for male domination as a cultural universal, as many early discussions in feminist anthropology of the 1970s did (for example: Ortner, 1974; Rosaldo, 1974; Rubin, 1975), but nor am I prepared to accept a rose-tinted version of tribal societies in which women invariably enjoyed a life of mutual interdependence, cooperation and, by implication, equality with men.

It may seem churlish of me to criticize Robb's work in this way, not least because I have often taken the same kind of simplifying social evolutionary perspective in other contexts. Moreover, I am an advocate of the 'one has got to start somewhere, so one may as well plunge in' approach to any new focus of study. None the less, if gender studies are to move on in Italian archaeology, we must develop more multi-stranded and context-sensitive approaches to the subject and we must expect a much more varied and uneven picture to emerge. In the rest of this paper I shall outline the ways in which one can approach gender in the archaeological record and then move on to discuss what can be said in the context of Italian prehistory. This main section will necessarily be rather thin and uneven because of the shortage of work on the topic. Indeed, although I will describe such studies as exist, this section will also represent a 'wish list', pointing at possible avenues of future research, which I lack space and time to pursue here.

GENDER IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

A misunderstanding often expressed is that there are particular types of archaeological evidence necessary for the study of gender. Most commonly, it is suggested that one needs good quality burial evidence, where it is possible to compare anthropologically sexed skeletons with cultural features such as type of burial or grave-goods. Quite often it is said that if these circumstances are lacking, it is impossible to say anything about gender in the societies in question. This seems to me fundamentally misguided. If, for the present purpose, we adopt a very broad definition of the term gender, to refer simply to categories of femaleness and maleness, whatever form they may take, gender systems probably occur universally in human societies. If this is the case, then we should *always* be looking for gender and we should be looking *everywhere* for possible information about it. In other words, any kind of patterning in the archaeological record potentially may be interpreted in terms of gender. What is necessary is not to search out particular types of evidence, but rather to feed gender into our understandings of past societies, so that it forms part of our interpretative frameworks. Of course in any particular case we will have to consider other possible explanations of patterned differences in the archaeological record, including those that are well-established topics of archaeological research, such as status, rank and occupation. Of course also, such categories may cross-cut those of gender in varied and complex ways that may be difficult to disentangle. I am not trying to suggest that gender will 'emerge' in some clear and straightforward manner from the archaeological record once we start to look for it, but I *am* arguing that we should not regard gender as inherently more difficult to get at than other categories of social organization such as those just listed. Indeed it astonishes me that in standard archaeological accounts prehistoric people often have status but rarely have gender!

The next few paragraphs describe the main sources of evidence that have been used by archaeologists in discussions of gender so far, but it follows from what I have just said that this list cannot be regarded as in any way comprehensive. Positively it may be considered as indicating useful ways into the topic, while negatively it can be seen as reflecting the imaginative limits of work on this subject to date. I confidently expect future gender studies to draw much more widely on the full range of material culture evidence preserved in the archaeological record.

We may start with burial evidence. Where we have substantial samples, preferably buried individually, and where the skeletons are well-preserved and well-studied anthropologically, it is normally possible to achieve reasonably reliable sex attribution (see Krogman and Iscan (1986) for discussion of forensic material, Molleson and Cox (1993) for archaeological remains). From this starting-point, it is possible to learn about various aspects of the lives of women and men of the past, including life expectancy, diet, general health, specific

illnesses and traumas. By comparison of biological sex with associated cultural traits, we may begin to learn about some aspects of gender in the societies in question. For instance, we may identify a one-to-one correlation between specific sets of grave-goods and female and male skeletons respectively, suggesting a dichotomous gender system, whereas in other cases there may be examples of 'female' grave-goods with male bodies or vice versa, opening up the possibility of supernumerary genders, as recorded ethnographically (see Herdt (1993: 21–81) for some examples and an excellent general discussion) or other types of mismatch between biological sex and cultural gender. The nature of the grave-goods may throw light on both gender roles and gender symbolism, as in the case of the cloth-making/warfare dichotomy described by Robb for the Italian Iron Age, which may well refer both to the actual roles of women and men in society and to the ideologies associated with them. Another route to exploring gender through burial data employs the concept of *embodiment*, the idea that lived experience is embodied and that one major dimension of experienced bodies is gender. This aspect of enquiry is a recent development and draws heavily on feminist theorizing; a useful discussion of its application in archaeology has been presented by Meskell (1999). The concept of embodiment brings a new analytical tool to aspects of the burial record that have long been studied, such as dress and ornamentation. For prehistoric Italy, we have abundant burial evidence (though not always well-studied) for the Iron Age, much patchier remains for earlier periods.

Another major category of data useful for gender studies is iconography, which includes art produced for a whole range of purposes, from decoration through ritual to power and status display. Iconography may provide opportunities to study gender symbolism in prehistoric societies, but we need to be particularly careful about the contextualization of such manifestations, to avoid generalizing to society at large symbolism that was actually restricted to particular groups, stages of life or specific contexts. In particular we need to ask the kind of questions that are commonplace in art criticism in later periods: who created the art? for what viewers? for what purposes? in what contexts? In prehistoric Italy we find iconography in many forms — cave art, open-air rock art, decorated tombs, free-standing statue-stelae, figurines and decorated artefacts of many kinds — providing a potentially rich database for gender-oriented interpretations, which is still little explored from this perspective.

Other approaches to gender in prehistory involve the study of patterned distributions in space, at all scales from the domestic to the landscape. Space is often markedly gendered, both symbolically and experientially, with abundant examples from both the ethnographic record and our own society. Fundamental spatial oppositions — left/right, north/south, east/west, up/down, towards the sun/away from the sun, inside/outside, for example — are often gendered and it is reasonable to expect that such patterns will sometimes be manifested in the archaeological record. Archaeological analyses of space from

a gender perspective have been carried out in many parts of the world, but in Italian prehistory only tentative beginnings have been made.

The last approach I shall mention here is the study of gendered work. Gendered division of labour is ubiquitous in the ethnographic record and we would expect it to have been common in prehistory. It may be identified by the occurrence of specific types of equipment as gendered grave-goods, portrayal in iconography, association with identifiable gender symbols or, more tentatively, by use of ethnographic analogy.

GENDER IN ITALIAN PREHISTORY (Fig. 1)

In this section of the paper I shall for the sake of convenience adopt a chronological framework, divided into five broad periods that mark real changes in lifestyle and social organization: Upper Palaeolithic; late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic; Neolithic; Copper and Bronze Ages; and Iron Age. The latter part of this sequence is labelled protohistory in Italian terminology, but I prefer to retain British usage and call it all prehistory. The last three of my periods are the same as those characterized by Robb.

UPPER PALAEOOLITHIC

Robb has not considered anything earlier than the Neolithic in his papers although there is evidence from the Upper Palaeolithic that may cast some light on gender systems of the time. The evidence in question is of two types: burials and art, the latter subdivisible into figurines and parietal art. The manifestations fall into two main chronological groupings. The first is *c.* 25,000–20,000 BP and is associated with the phase normally labelled Gravettian; this will be described in this section. After *c.* 18,000 BP burials disappear and art becomes very rare, only to reappear in the Final Epigravettian (*c.* 14,000–10,000 BP); this phase will be discussed in the next section, together with the Mesolithic. For the Gravettian period we have both burials and female figurines to consider. The parietal art of this date is either zoomorphic or geometric, or consists of handprints, but there are no anthropomorphic figures and there is little to be said about gender from these data.

Burials

These have been discussed by, *inter alia*, Mussi (1986a; 1986b; 1987), Zampetti and Mussi (1991) and Borgognini Tarli (1992). Twenty definite burials of this period are known and there may be more, from caves in Liguria and Apulia (fourteen from Liguria). In their 1991 article Zampetti and Mussi discussed the burials known at that time, before some recent discoveries and reinterpretations. The burials are all rather elaborate. The individuals were buried extended on their backs or sides in graves situated close to the cave wall, with their faces

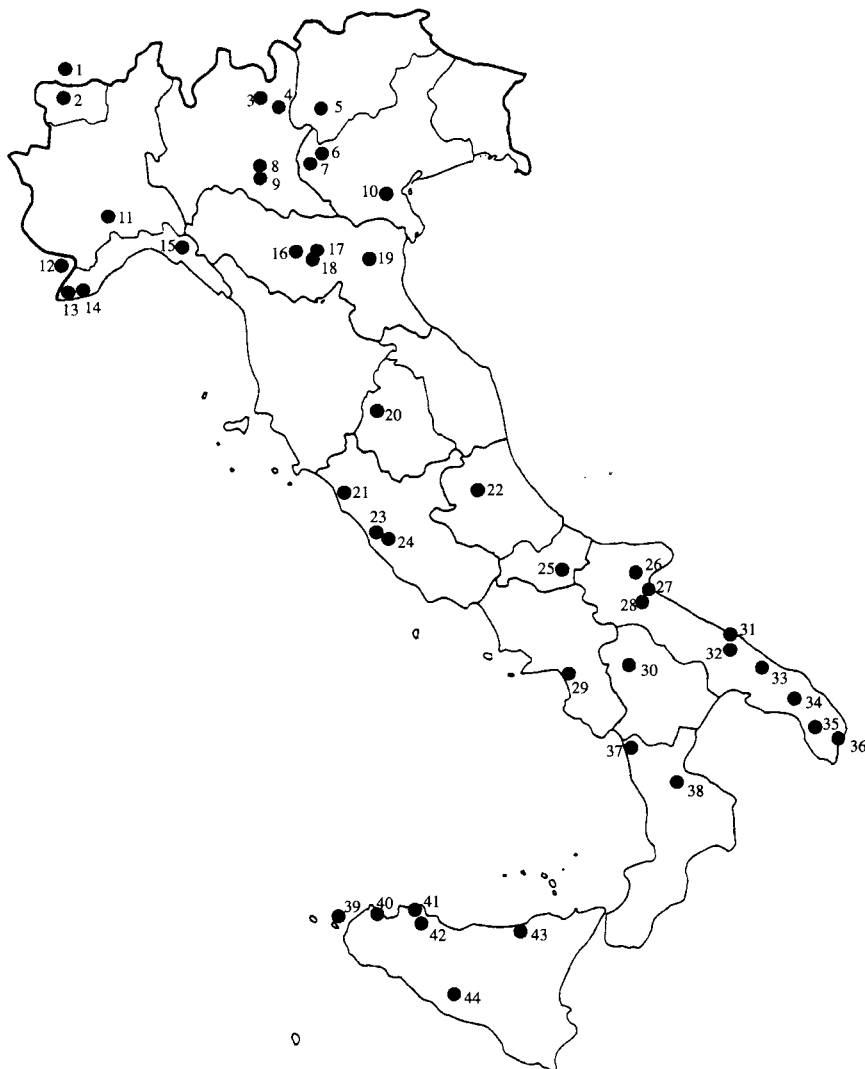


FIG. 1. Map of Italy showing sites mentioned in the text. 1 — Sion; 2 — Aosta; 3 — Valtellina; 4 — Val Camonica; 5 — Riparo Gaban; 6 — Cerno; 7 — Villafranca Veronese; 8 — Remedello; 9 — Vhò di Piadena; 10 — Este; 11 — Alba; 12 — Monte Bego; 13 — Balzi Rossi caves (Barma Grande; Barma del Caviglione; Grotta delle Arene Candide; Grotta del Principe; Grotta dei Fanciulli); 14 — Grotta Pollera; 15 — Grotta di Ponte di Vara; 16 — Chiozza di Scandiano; 17 — Spilamberto; 18 — Savignano; 19 — Bologna; 20 — Trasimeno; 21 — Tarquinia; 22 — Capestrano; 23 — Veio; 24 — Osteria dell'Osa; 25 — Mirabello Eclano; 26 — Grotta Paglicci; 27 — Masseria Candelaro; 28 — Passo di Corvo; 29 — Pontecagnano; 30 — Rendina; 31 — Grotta di Cala Scizzo; 32 — Grotta Pacelli; 33 — Grotta di Santa Maria di Agnano; 34 — Arnesano; 35 — Grotta delle Venere; 36 — Grotta di Porto Badisco; 37 — Grotta del Romito; 38 — Favella; 39 — Grotta del Genovese, Levanzo; 40 — Grotta dell'Uzzo; 41 — Grotta dell'Addaura; 42 — Grotta Molara; 43 — Grotta di San Teodoro; 44 — Cozzo Busonè.

resting on their left sides and turned more or less towards the east. They were buried with a series of ornaments, consisting of perforated shells and deer canine teeth, and other pendants; all the burials had ornaments around the head, perhaps decorating a head-dress; some also had them around the neck or elsewhere on the body. The grave-goods also included high quality flint and bone tools (Fig. 2). The burials studied were all of adolescents or adults and most were male; some of them were particularly tall individuals. They clearly do not make up a representative sample of the population of the time and the authors interpreted them in terms of the emergence of social inequality, specifically the development of high status available mainly to men, presumably on the basis of individual achievement of some kind.

This interpretation must now be challenged, in the light both of new discoveries and reinterpretation of old ones. Two new rich female burials of Gravettian date have been found in caves in Apulia. One, from Grotta Paglicci, was buried in the usual extended position, covered in red ochre, with particular concentrations around the cranium, pelvis and feet. She was wearing a sort of diadem made of seven perforated deer teeth and was equipped with two flint burins, a scraper, a blade, a flake and a fragment of a *Pecten* shell (Mezzena and Palma di Cesnola, 1988–90; Mallegni, 1992). The second new female burial is even more interesting. One of a pair of Gravettian period burials in the Grotta di Santa Maria di Agnano,³ she was in an advanced state of pregnancy when she died and almost all of the foetal bones were found (Coppola, 1994). She was buried in a flexed position, with her head leaning to the left and resting on her left hand; she had a large number of ornaments on and around her body, including a head-dress made of more than a hundred shells of *Cyclope neritea* set into a red ochre paste. Perforated deer canine teeth and shells of *Columbella rustica* were found near the parietal bone. A bracelet of mixed shells surrounded her right wrist and there may have been another around the left. Her body was surrounded by teeth of horse and aurochs and by flakes of flint and bone.

As well as new discoveries of female burials, some old finds are 'changing sex' from male to female (Leighton, 1998), as the systematic bias towards male attribution in archaeological sexing of skeletons is recognized and corrected (Weiss, 1972). In the current context skeletons that have changed sex in this way include one from Barma del Caviglione and one from Grotta delle Veneri (this in fact is a second change: a double burial was originally thought to contain one male and one female and this is indeed probably correct, but there was a stage when both were identified as male) (Fabbri, 1993: 229). Before these recent discoveries and reinterpretations, the identified burials of this period constituted ten or eleven adult males, one or two adult females⁴ and five unsexed adolescents; now we have nine adult males, five adult females, five unsexed

³ The second burial has not been published yet.

⁴ The sex identification of one of the skeletons was considered doubtful.

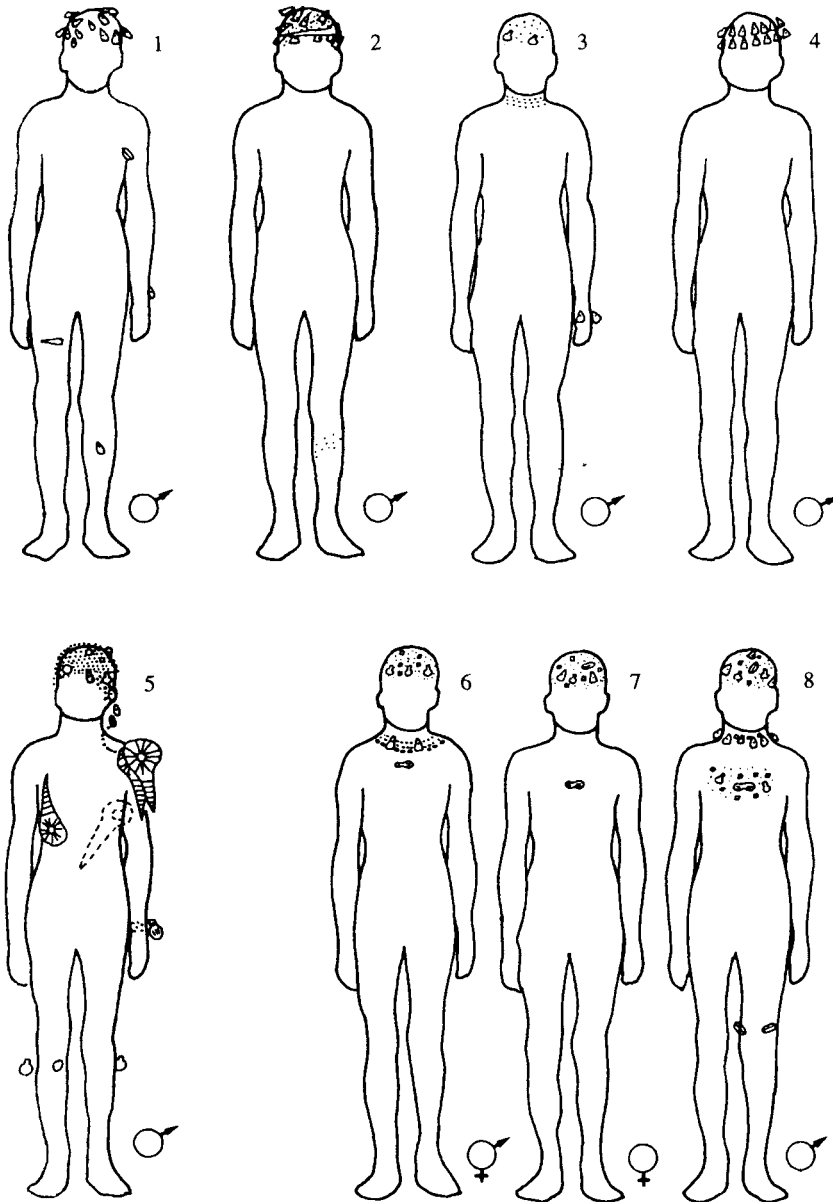


FIG. 2. Schematic representations of some earlier upper palaeolithic burials with ornaments and objects of polished bone (after Zampetti and Mussi, 1991). 1 — Grotta Paglicci; 2 — Barma del Caviglione; 3 — Barma Grande (burial found in 1894 at depth of 6.4 m); 4 — Grotta delle Veneri (from a double burial); 5 — Grotta delle Arene Candide; 6–8 — Barma Grande (triple burial). In 1991, the male dominance of rich burials seemed marked, but since then two new rich female burials have been discovered and two others have ‘changed sex’, creating a greater balance between the sexes in this respect.

adolescents and one not yet identified. In the light of these new data, the dominance of males among the skeletons awarded high status burial seems far less clear. On the contrary, it seems that high status was achievable by both men and women in the Gravettian period. We do not know the routes to status in these societies, but ethnographic analogies offer us some possibilities. For men, status may have been achieved through prowess as hunters, skills as shamans or wisdom as elders in political decision-making. Women too possibly may have been valued as shamans or ritual healers of other kinds, but they may also have achieved status through motherhood. This is discussed further below.

Female figurines

Italy has produced a few of the upper palaeolithic female figurines popularly known as 'venuses'. None of them come from good stratigraphic contexts and they are normally dated to the Gravettian period on the basis of comparisons with better-dated examples from elsewhere in Europe. There is not even agreement about the exact number of figurines from Italy. Zampetti and Mussi (1991: 153) have written of a minimum of eleven, while Guerreschi (1992: 220) has written of 'about fifteen' from the Balzi Rossi caves and five from elsewhere (the latter figure, however, includes the figurine from Chiozza di Scandiano, which Graziosi, correctly in my opinion, has reassigned to the Neolithic (Graziosi, 1975: 247–8)). Little research has been done on the Italian figurines per se, and they are normally described by Italian scholars as 'fertility figures', in line with one of the main strands of interpretation of these figurines in general.

In fact the treatment of 'venus' figurines can serve as a prime (and in some cases gross) example of androcentric bias in archaeological interpretation. I lack the space to go into details here, but, as Nelson has stated, most discussions provide 'examples of the male gaze on the female form' (Nelson, 1997: 159). All the traditional interpretations assume that the figurines were made by men for male purposes, concentrating either on fertility (women as mothers) or on sexuality (Pleistocene pornography), while Duhard (1991) has offered a more clinically gynaecological version of this approach. All these accounts emphasize exaggerated depictions of sexual characteristics, obesity and often pregnancy. Studies by women archaeologists, some adopting explicitly feminist approaches, have challenged these views (Rice, 1981; Nelson, 1990; Dobres, 1992; Conroy, 1993; McCoid and McDermott, 1996; McDermott, 1996; Nelson, 1997: 155–60). They have shown that the figurines are in fact very variable, not all are fat and few are obviously or even plausibly pregnant. Rice (1981) suggested that the variability in body shape indicates the depiction of women of different ages, while Nelson (1997: 160) has pointed out that rounded bellies may not indicate early or middle phases of pregnancy, but rather represent the true shapes of most adult females who have given birth (the ideal of the female flat stomach is an ethnocentric obsession of our own society).

Some (McCoid and McDermott, 1996; McDermott, 1996) have suggested that the artists were women and that the (to our eyes) distorted body shapes could be the result of women looking down on their own bodies as models. The flaw in this ingenious interpretation is that there would presumably have been other women around to look at.

There is clearly a danger in this debate that androcentric biases will be replaced by gynocentric ones, with no more basis in the archaeological evidence than those they replace. Several scholars have called for detailed contextualized studies of the figurines as the way forward. This is difficult to quarrel with, but it is of no help in understanding the Italian figurines, which are all decontextualized to varying degrees. Is there anything we *can* say about the Italian figures? Well first, we can reiterate that they do all represent females (which is not the case for all upper palaeolithic figurines elsewhere). We can also point out their variability in shape, ranging from one of the steatite figurines from the Balzi Rossi, which is markedly steatopygous and also has a very pronounced belly, to the two bone figurines from Grotta delle Venere at Parabita, which are quite slender with gently rounded bellies (Fig. 3). We simply cannot say whether they were produced by men or women or both, but we can say that all the figures represent adult females and that they vary greatly in shape. Some may represent pregnant women, more perhaps women who have had children. This may indicate a concern with fertility per se, but could equally reflect a cultural

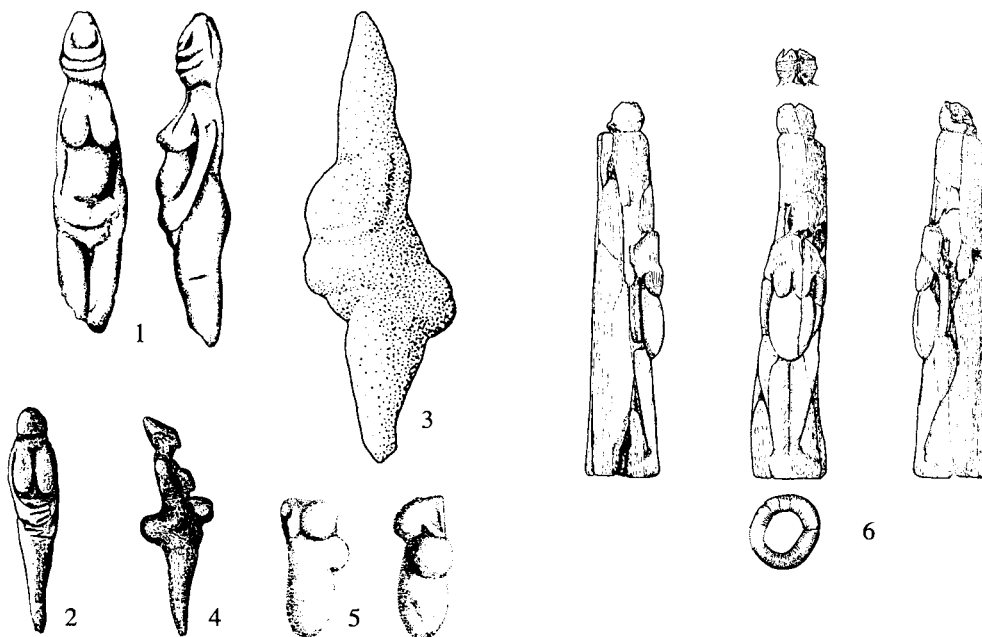


FIG. 3. 1–5 — Upper palaeolithic ‘venus’ figurines (after Zampetti and Mussi, 1991); 6 — Mesolithic figurine (after Graziosi, 1975). Not to scale. 1 and 2 — Grotta delle Venere; 3 — Savignano; 4 — Balzi Rossi (probably Grotta del Principe); 5 — Trasimeno; 6 — Riparo Gaban.

definition of adult status for women: there are many examples in the ethnographic record of societies where women achieve full adulthood after the birth of their first or second child. Could it be that one category of valued person in Italian upper palaeolithic society consisted of *women who had borne children*? By this I mean not that they would have been valued only as mothers, as reproducers of the species, in the sense that the women's movement has worked so hard to reject in patriarchal society. Rather it would mean, as often seen ethnographically, that the birth of their children would have contributed to the definition of women as adult humans, people of influence who could contribute to decision-making and the transmission of cultural tradition.⁵ The elaborate burial treatment of the heavily pregnant female at Grotta di Santa Maria di Agnano, discussed above, would fit this scenario. It would be interesting to know whether the other female burials of this time, all adults, were of women who had borne children, but this information is either unavailable or has not been published.

Conclusions

I shall conclude this section by repeating that high status seems to have been available to both men and women in the Gravettian period in Italy and that motherhood may have been one route to such status for women. This does not go very far in elucidating gender systems of this time, but it makes a start.

LATE UPPER PALAEOOLITHIC AND MESOLITHIC

This is the period of the late Pleistocene and early Holocene, from *c.* 14,000 BP up to the local onset of the Neolithic (variably *c.* 8000–6500 BP). The period is normally subdivided into the Epipalaeolithic and the Mesolithic, with the dividing point *c.* 10,000 BP, but for the purposes of the present discussion, I shall consider them together. The equivalent dates in calibrated carbon-14 years (which I shall use hereafter) are *c.* 15,000–6500/5500 cal.BC. For this period we have of relevance to the current study, burials, parietal rock art (which now includes representations of humans) and, from one site alone, a figurine.

Burials

These have been discussed by, *inter alia*, Mussi (1986b), Zampetti and Mussi (1991), Borgognini Tarli (1992) and Pluciennik (1998). Again, all the burials come from caves or rock shelters, but there are many more than in the earlier phase (although still only a tiny proportion of any estimated original

⁵ In the spirit of post-modern reflexive scholarship, I confess that this idea appeals to me as a woman who has herself borne children. I think, however, that the view can be supported by the evidence at least as well as other interpretations.

population). They are also distributed more widely than in the earlier phase. If we add the epipalaeolithic and mesolithic burials together, there are remains of some 22 individuals from the Ligurian caves, at least 28 from Sicilian sites and a further 31 from sites in the peninsula or Sardinia.

As Zampetti and Mussi (1991: 154–5) have pointed out, it is difficult to make generalizations about these burials, because they differ considerably from site to site. None the less, there are several points about them that stand out, particularly in contrast to the earlier upper palaeolithic burials discussed above. In the first place we now have a full range of the prehistoric population represented, including adolescents, children and even foetuses. Borgognini Tarli's (1992) breakdown works out as 33 adult males, sixteen adult females, nine adults whose sex could not be determined, five adolescents, sixteen children and two foetuses. This, however, already needs correcting as three individuals from the Sicilian site of Grotta di San Teodoro recently have been reclassified as female rather than male (Fabbri, 1993; Leighton, 1998). Moreover, it is likely that we shall see further 'sex changes' of this kind as older material is re-examined, since, as discussed above, it is likely that too many males have been identified in the past. It may be that the burials of this phase are actually fairly representative of the living communities of the time.

A second difference between the burials of this phase and the previous one is that the later burials are, in general, less lavishly equipped than the earlier ones. The burials in the Grotta delle Arene Candide are exceptional here, since they were laid out on beds of red ochre and accompanied by stone and bone tools, grinders, colouring substances and abundant ornaments made of perforated shells and deer teeth. Elsewhere, however, grave-goods are sparse or non-existent.

One of the most interesting features of these burials is the frequency of double graves:⁶ three in the Balzi Rossi caves (Liguria), two in the Grotta del Romito (Calabria), two in the Grotta dell'Uzzo and probably one in the Grotta Molara (Sicily). Pluciennik has looked at the well-published double burials from Grotta del Romito and Grotta dell'Uzzo and has pointed out that, since the earlier skeletons were not disturbed by the later interments, both burials must have taken place within a short period, not more than a few months. He suggested that 'bonds between the living, temporarily disrupted by the death of one person, had to be restored in death: the dead called to the living' (Pluciennik, 1998: 63). This can be spelled out more starkly. Since there is no reported evidence that the two people died in a joint accident, and it is unlikely that they would die within months of each other by coincidence, it follows that the second individual might have been obliged to follow the first individual to the grave. The implications of this for gender relations depends crucially on the

⁶ Multiple burials (two double and one triple) also occurred in the earlier phase, but they are less well-documented in detail, so I have not discussed them here.

reliability of the sexing of the skeletons. In the two double burials from Uzzo (U1A/IB and U4A/4B) and in one of those from Grotta del Romito (R5/6), it seems clear that each consists of a male and a female, both adult, with in each case the male being buried first. The second double burial from Grotta del Romito (R1/2) is unusual. One, deposited first, was a young individual suffering from achondroplasia (dwarfism); this individual was originally identified as a male of about seventeen years of age (Frayer, Macchiarelli and Mussi, 1988), but has more recently been identified as probably female and aged about twenty (Mallegni and Fabbri, 1995). The other individual, buried second, was undoubtedly female, but was initially aged as 35–50, while the more recent analysis suggests she was only 25–30 at the time of her death. Pluciennik has suggested that, in the case of the Mesolithic of Uzzo cave, where both the sex identification and the order of burial are clear, certain men had claims over certain women, possibly through the practice of female exogamy (with wives imported from outside). Again Pluciennik did not spell it out, but, if he is right about the rest of the argument, the men did not simply have ‘claims over’ the women, but the power of life and death, since the wives may have had to follow their husbands to the grave. Whether we accept this interpretation or not in relation to Uzzo, we certainly cannot generalize it to other areas. We need to investigate what kinds of bonds other than marriage might have linked the living to the dead, especially in the light of the R1/2 double burial from Grotta del Romito just discussed and the double burial of two children from Grotta dei Fanciulli. We need also to await a re-examination of the Ligurian skeletal material, which is currently being undertaken, in order to interpret the Arene Candide graves.

Cave art

There are two decorated caves in northwest Sicily with designs including human figures that probably date to the later part of this period (*c.* 10,000–8000 cal.BC). They are the Grotta dell’Addaura II, near Palermo, and the Grotta del Genovese on Levanzo, one of the Egadi islands off the northwest coast of Sicily (which would have been connected to the Sicilian mainland at the time). They have been discussed recently, in terms relevant to the present discussion, by Pluciennik (1996; 1998).

The Addaura cave contains a remarkable central ‘scene’ that has provoked much discussion (Fig. 4). It appears to show a number of upright beaked figures surrounding a central pair of horizontal figures, one above the other, both shown with erect beak-like penises or possibly penis-sheaths and lines, perhaps representing cords, between their backs and buttocks. This has been interpreted as an act of homosexual copulation (Bovio Marconi, 1953a) or as acrobatic ritual, concerned with virility (Bovio Marconi, 1953b), or human sacrifice by ritual strangulation (in the context of fertility rituals) (Blanc, 1954; 1955; Chiapella, 1954). Pluciennik, while regarding these interpretations as ethno-

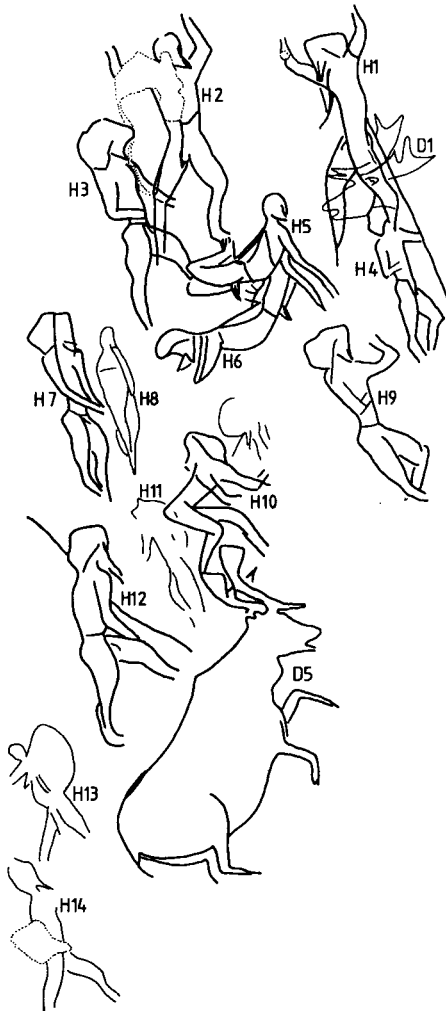


FIG. 4. Engraved scene in the Grotta dell'Addaura (after Pluciennik, 1998). Male symbolism dominates in this scene and it is possible that the cave was used for male rites, perhaps initiation rites, during the late Upper Palaeolithic.

graphically plausible, has preferred to treat the engravings as fragments of narrative or myth, partly because of the evidence of erasures and repeated incisions, suggesting many reworkings of the 'scene' being portrayed. The mythic elements discussed by Pluciennik include space, time and relations between the human-animal and human-bird worlds. It also includes ideas of maleness and femaleness, which he has discussed specifically in his later paper (1998: 70). He has shown that explicitly male symbols (penises, or penis-sheaths, and beaks — portrayed in the same way) preponderate; in fact an examination of the figures in the whole cave indicates only two out of seventeen shown with female characteristics or lacking male ones. Pluciennik has warned

against translating these symbolic representations in terms of men and women as biologically sexed bodies. However, the dominance of male symbols does suggest that we are concerned here with male rites, narratives and myths, in which women played no, or a subordinate, role.

The Grotta del Genovese has, as well as a series of painted designs of later (presumed neolithic) date, many incised figures of epipalaeolithic date. Most of these represent animals, but there is also a small group of human figures, which again can reasonably be interpreted in terms of a specific rite. There are two presumably human figures, one apparently bearded and so interpreted as male, and a figure with a beaked head, perhaps a bird–human combination. The animal figures depicted in this cave also seem to be predominantly male. So this site too can be interpreted in terms of predominantly male rites and myths.

Female figurine

The only example of a female figurine of this period comes from mesolithic levels in the rock shelter of Riparo Gaban (Trento) in northeast Italy (Graziosi, 1975). The figurine is carved on the end of a perforated red deer antler and is depicted as standing with her arms by her sides, her legs together and with breasts and belly prominent (Fig. 3). The find is unique not just to Italy but to Europe as a whole for this period, so it is impossible to deduce much from it. However, it is stylistically similar to the much earlier Gravettian figurines discussed above, rather than the female figurines found in later, neolithic, levels at Riparo Gaban itself.

Conclusions

There are marked contrasts between this period and the earlier Upper Palaeolithic. The most interesting indications come from southern Italy and Sicily, where three features in particular stand out. One is the occurrence of men, women and children of all ages in the burial record. The second is the prevalence of double burials, at least three of which involve a female being interred shortly after a male, perhaps indicating that husbands had power over their wives, who may have been brought in from outside. The third feature is the appearance of predominantly or exclusively male rituals, practised in caves, which may have been exclusively male locales. This characteristic continues into the succeeding Neolithic period.

NEOLITHIC

This period begins *c.* 6500/5500 cal.BC (dates vary depending on the area, with the earliest sites occurring in southeast Italy) and ends *c.* 3500 cal.BC. In the last decade several papers have been published, all by British or American scholars, discussing aspects of gender in Italian neolithic societies. I have discussed this work in some detail in a recent article (Whitehouse, in press), so shall content

myself here with a summary. The sources of evidence which have been used include burials (Robb, 1994a; Pluciennik, 1994; 1998), cult caves (Whitehouse, 1992a; 1992b; Skeates, 1994), anthropomorphic figurines (Holmes and Whitehouse, 1998), and architecture and space (Morter and Robb, 1998). Some of these scholars have discussed more than one of these types of evidence (see in particular: Robb, 1994b; 1997; Pluciennik, 1998).

Burials

Robb (1994a) has made a major study of neolithic burials from central and southern Italy and Sicily. This work gathers together a very disparate body of data and extracts from it some useful generalizations. He has discussed *c.* 75 burial sites and a minimum of 413 individuals buried. The burials occur in sites of various kinds: settlements, caves and, especially in the Late–Final Neolithic, in separate small cemeteries. There are many cases of disarticulated collective burials, but there are also many individual inhumations. No burials have very elaborate grave structures, although there are a few cists made of stone slabs or boulders and at least one artificial rock-cut tomb. Most burials lack grave-goods altogether, and where they do occur they are few in number and are usually simple pots, stone tools and ornaments.

Robb looked for patterning of various kinds in the data, including differences related to hierarchy, gender and age. Only *c.* 100 skeletons were sexed and, of these, grave-goods and other burial characteristics were known for only 62 (with an approximately equal sex ratio) and it is on this sample that his statistics were calculated. He found only one statistically significant correlation related to gender: males were more often buried on their right sides and females (and juveniles) on their left. However, as Pluciennik has pointed out (1998: 66), 31% of females and 26% of males were buried on the ‘wrong’ side. Robb has offered one possible explanation, suggesting that right-hand side burial might have marked male gender rather than biological sex, and thus would not have applied to all biological males until they were socially recognized as full adult males. The problem with this suggestion, again indicated by Pluciennik, is that it fails to explain the 31% of women buried on their right-hand side. Robb himself has indicated another possibility: ‘the formal distinction in rite may have corresponded not to gender as such, but rather to some culturally-ascribed attribute (for instance, social prominence) which was not identical with gender or sex, but which bore a statistical relationship to one or both of them’ (Robb, 1994a: 48). Pluciennik has argued that a male:female dichotomy was not a basic system of categorization in these societies. However, while it seems clear that we cannot put too much weight on a correlation that, statistically significant or not, has so many exceptions, it does not follow that because gender was not clearly marked in death, it did not play an important role in life.

Cult caves

I have made a study of some natural caves, crevices and rock-shelters, as well as some artificial rock-cut structures, which were used for cult purposes during the Neolithic and Copper Age (Whitehouse, 1992a). In particular, I have argued that some of the larger sites, and especially the Grotta di Porto Badisco (also known as the Grotta dei Cervi), Apulia, were utilized for male initiation rites in a system used to create and reinforce control of men over women and of older men over younger ones. I shall summarize the evidence briefly here. The Grotta di Porto Badisco is a cave with three long narrow corridors or galleries, accessed through low tunnels that have to be negotiated on all fours. Each corridor is divided by natural features of the cave, sometimes enhanced by human efforts, into a number of distinct zones, almost all of which have wall paintings, executed either in red (ochre) or in dark brown (bat guano). The designs include figurative motifs ('matchstick' figures), often organized in scenes, handprints and abstract designs (which may represent schematized versions of the figurative motifs). My detailed analysis of the distribution of the paintings (1992a: chapter 5) showed that the figurative motifs and the most complex scenes are concentrated in the zones nearest the cave entrance, while, as one moves deeper into the cave, the abstract motifs come to dominate and, in one of the corridors, the distinct separate motifs merge into large areas of overlapping pattern. My interpretation of this was that the most accessible and 'readable' versions of sacred themes occur in the parts of the cave reached first, while the deepest zones have the most secret and difficult versions. I related this to a system of secret ritual knowledge, achieved through a series of initiations, the stages of which were mapped on to the natural topography of the cave.

I introduced gender into the discussion through analysis of the human figures (Whitehouse, 1992a; 1992b). In the first zone of the cave to be entered (Zone III of the excavators' designation), which has only figurative designs, arranged in a number of scenes, it is possible to distinguish clearly between some definitely male figures (shown with penis) and some definitely female ones (executed in red with a blob of brown paint in the pubic area). From these figures I was able to extend the analysis, by identifying gendered arm positions: a female position with one arm in the air, the other curved downwards, as though with hand on hip, and a male position with arms extended in front of the body, either actually holding a bow or as though holding one; another possible male position has both arms in the air (Fig. 5). With this additional information, I was able to assign gender to all the clearest human figures and to make comparisons using these identifications. What emerged is that male and female images occur in almost equal numbers in the entrance zone, but further into the cave only male figures occur. I suggested that this might indicate that women participated in only the initial, more public, stages of ritual at the site and that initiation into the more difficult and secret aspects of the cult would have been restricted to males. I used ethnographic analogy, particularly the rich

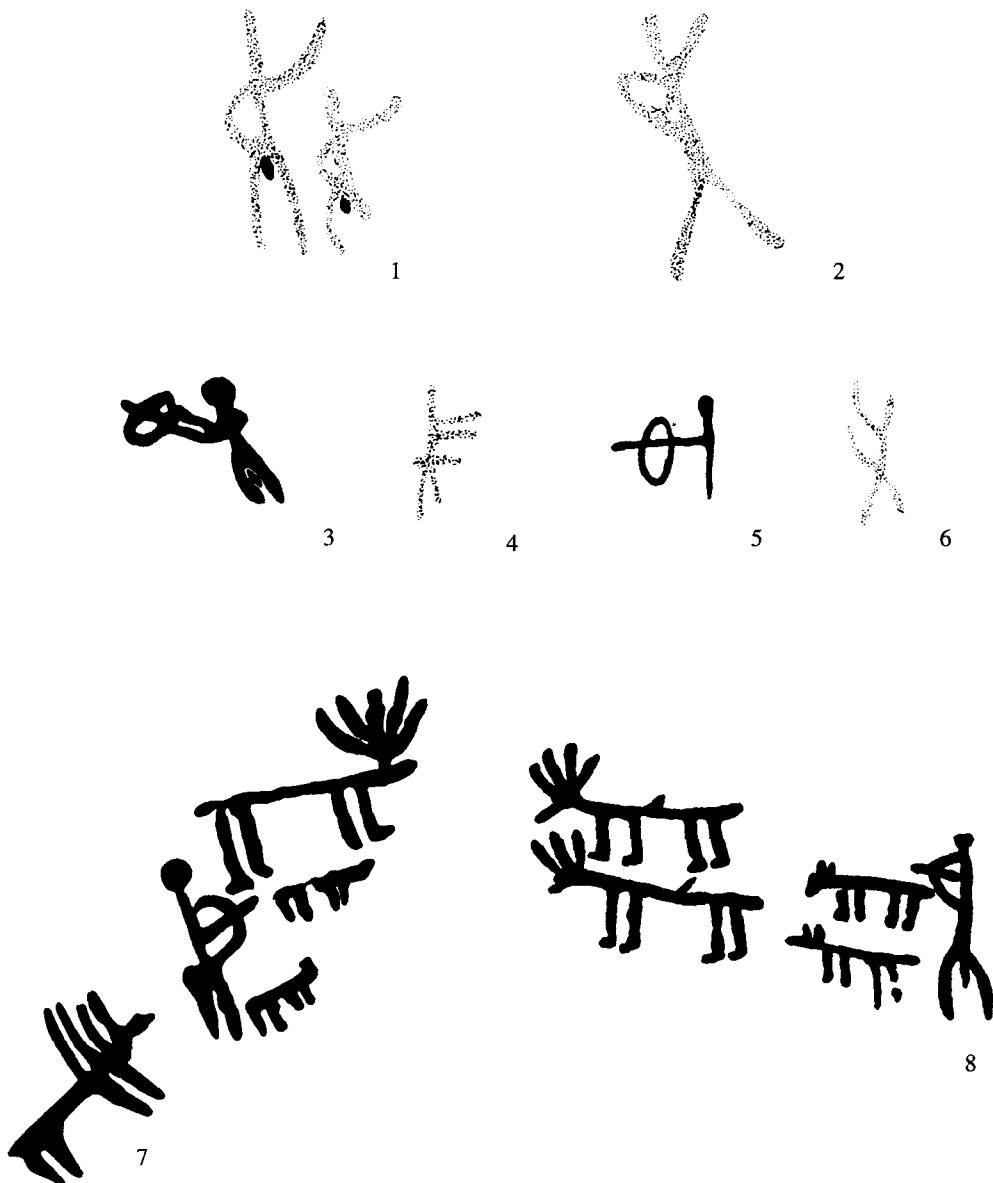


FIG. 5. Grotta di Porto Badisco paintings. Stippled — executed in ochre (red); solid — executed in bat guano (dark brown). 1 — definite females, shown by pubic area; 2 — probable female, shown by arm position; 3 and 4 — definite males, shown by phallus; 5 — probable male, shown by bow and arrow; 6 — probable male, shown by arm position; 7 and 8 — hunting scenes, both part of group 8.

record from New Guinea, to suggest that the rites in question were initiation rites into a secret male cult, used by the ritual elders as a power system to control both women (by exclusion from the cult, or at least from all but the early stages of initiation) and younger men (through control of the rituals themselves and of the sacred knowledge which was slowly and in piecemeal fashion imparted to them during initiation). The nature of the ritual knowledge cannot be reconstructed in any detail, but we do have some clues as to its general nature. Almost all the scenes in the Grotta di Porto Badisco paintings are concerned with hunting, and hunting is exclusively associated with male figures (Fig. 5). Since the food remains from settlement sites indicate that hunting played only a minor role in the subsistence economy at this time, I suggested that the importance of hunting had been transferred to the ritual sphere and was being exploited as a source of esoteric male knowledge and power. I argued furthermore, on the basis of the ethnographic analogy, that this was a society in which there might have been a high degree of gender conflict and opposition. The occurrence of predominantly or exclusively male rituals, practised in caves, represents continuity from the preceding late Upper Palaeolithic/Mesolithic, discussed above (Whitehouse, 1996; Pluciennik, 1998).

My interpretation has been criticized by several scholars, especially by Skeates (1994). He has argued that my analysis is insufficiently contextualized and too general, and that I thereby miss differences in ritual use between different sites, as well as changes through time. Skeates also has claimed that ethnographic studies suggest that small-scale agrarian societies usually have gender ideologies characterized by complementarity, mutuality and cooperation and not by hierarchy and conflict. Other scholars have produced critiques that parallel those of Skeates in some respects. Robb (1994b) has agreed in general with my interpretation of Grotta di Porto Badisco, but has argued that the gender system indicated there should be dated to the Late or Final Neolithic, or even the Copper Age, and thus heralds a later phase when gender complementarity, which in Robb's view characterized most of the Neolithic, was transformed into a gender hierarchy with a dominant male ideology based on hunting and warfare. This chronology for Grotta di Porto Badisco is certainly possible, since the archaeological deposits show that the cave was used throughout the Neolithic and Copper Age and the paintings cannot be assigned firmly to any particular phase. Pluciennik (1998) has argued as much for regional differences as for chronological ones and has suggested that even if a particular activity was strongly gendered in one area, and used as a source of prestige and power (for example hunting in Apulia), the same may not have been true in other areas. Finally Morter and Robb have suggested that, while my interpretation of Grotta di Porto Badisco might well be correct, it may not have been very relevant to society as a whole (Morter and Robb, 1998: 91). They went on to suggest that there may have existed complementary female and male world views, with complementary ritual systems and symbolism.

My own assessment of these data, some ten years after I formulated my original views and in the light of the critiques just outlined, is mixed. On the one hand, I accept that my analysis was too general and not adequately contextualized. I still think that I identified some general themes that may have been widely shared in neolithic Italy, but the conclusions derived from the detailed analysis of the Badisco cave should not be regarded as necessarily relevant beyond southeast Italy. On the other hand, I take issue with the view expressed by both Robb and Skeates that small-scale tribal societies generally have complementary gender systems. I have already mentioned this above and shall discuss it further in the conclusions to this section on the Neolithic.

Anthropomorphic figurines

Italy has produced a rather small number of anthropomorphic figurines from neolithic sites, which are usually described in the Italian literature as 'fertility figurines' or 'mother goddesses'. A recently compiled catalogue (Holmes and Whitehouse, 1998) documents 60 figurines for the combined Neolithic and Copper Age and, although our list is certainly incomplete and in need of supplementation, we believe that it includes a high proportion of the known material and provides a reasonable basis for discussion. The figurines represent a very heterogeneous body of material and are consequently difficult to discuss as a group. They are made of a variety of materials (baked clay, stone and bone) and come from different site contexts (village settlements, occupied caves, cult caves and burials). For the main part of the Neolithic (6000–4000 cal.BC), most figurines are of clay and are found on settlement sites. In terms of gender, the majority of these figurines is explicitly female (shown by breasts or vulva, or both) (Fig. 6). No neolithic figurines are explicitly male, but there are several categories which are ambiguous in regard to gender, in various different ways. One such type is the so-called 'mushroom-headed' figurine, of which five examples are known from the north Italian settlement sites of Vhò and Alba (Fig. 7); these seem to represent females, since breasts are shown, but the figurines themselves are explicitly phallic in shape; the least fragmentary example is a unique piece with two heads. Another ambiguous type is the stone figurine made on an elongated pebble, which could also be considered phallic in shape; one example comes from the probable cult rock-shelter of Riparo Gaban (definitely representing a female), while there are also two copper age examples from funerary contexts on the Sicilian copper age site of Cozzo Busonè. The two large late neolithic stone figurines from tombs at Cerno in northern Italy and Arnesano (Fig. 7) in the southeast are explicitly phallic in shape, but do not clearly depict females (however, the Arnesano example has a V-shaped 'necklace' which may indicate female gender, since similar necklaces are shown on neolithic figurines in northern Italy, some of which have breasts and therefore seem to portray females and the feature also occurs on copper age statue-menhirs depicting females). A third type of ambiguously gendered figurine

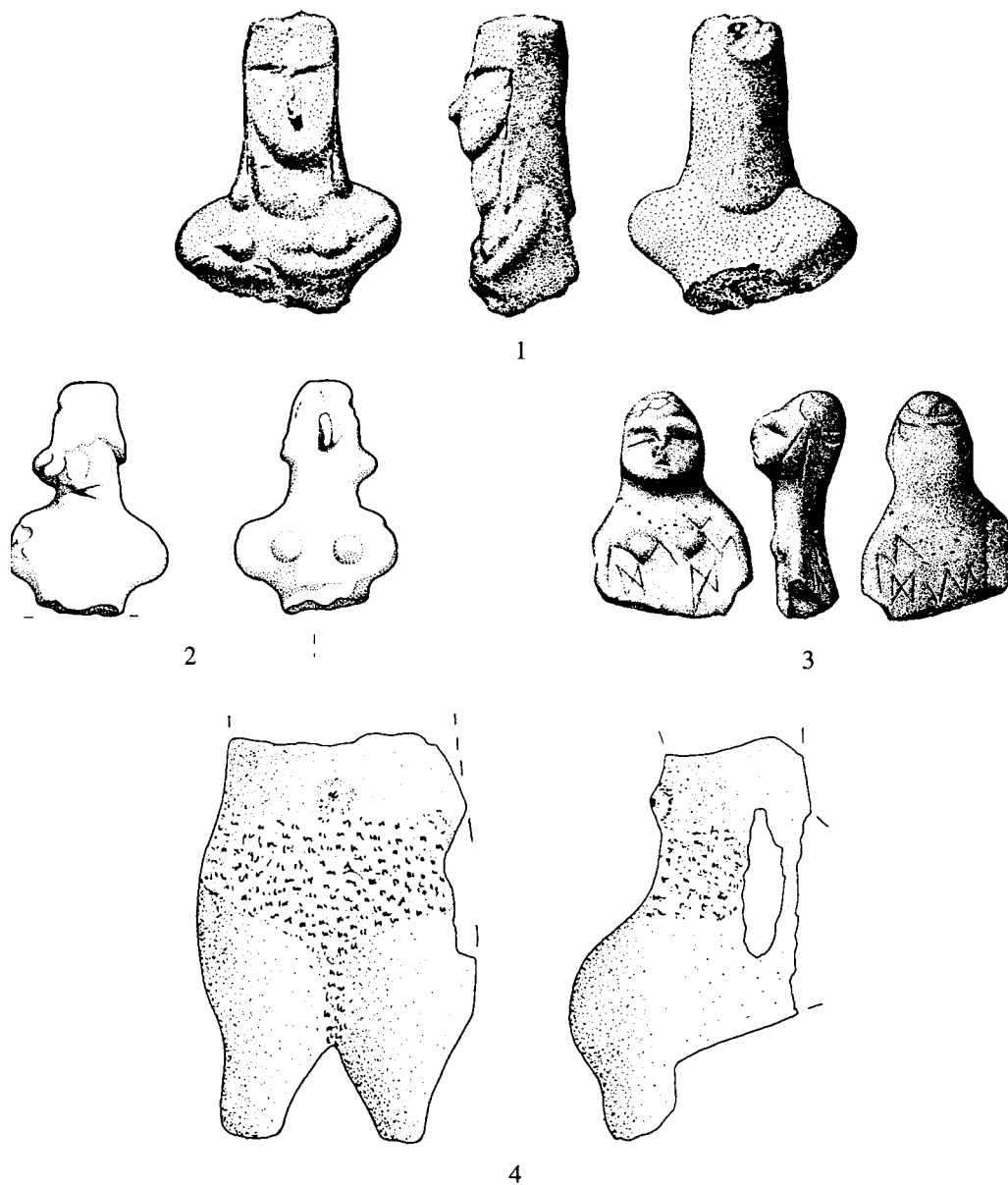


FIG. 6. Neolithic figurines, unambiguously female. Scale 1:2 (1-3); 1:4 (4) (after Holmes and Whitehouse, 1998). 1 — Grotta Pollera; 2 — Grotta di Ponte di Vara; 3 — Passo di Corvo; 4 — Rendina.

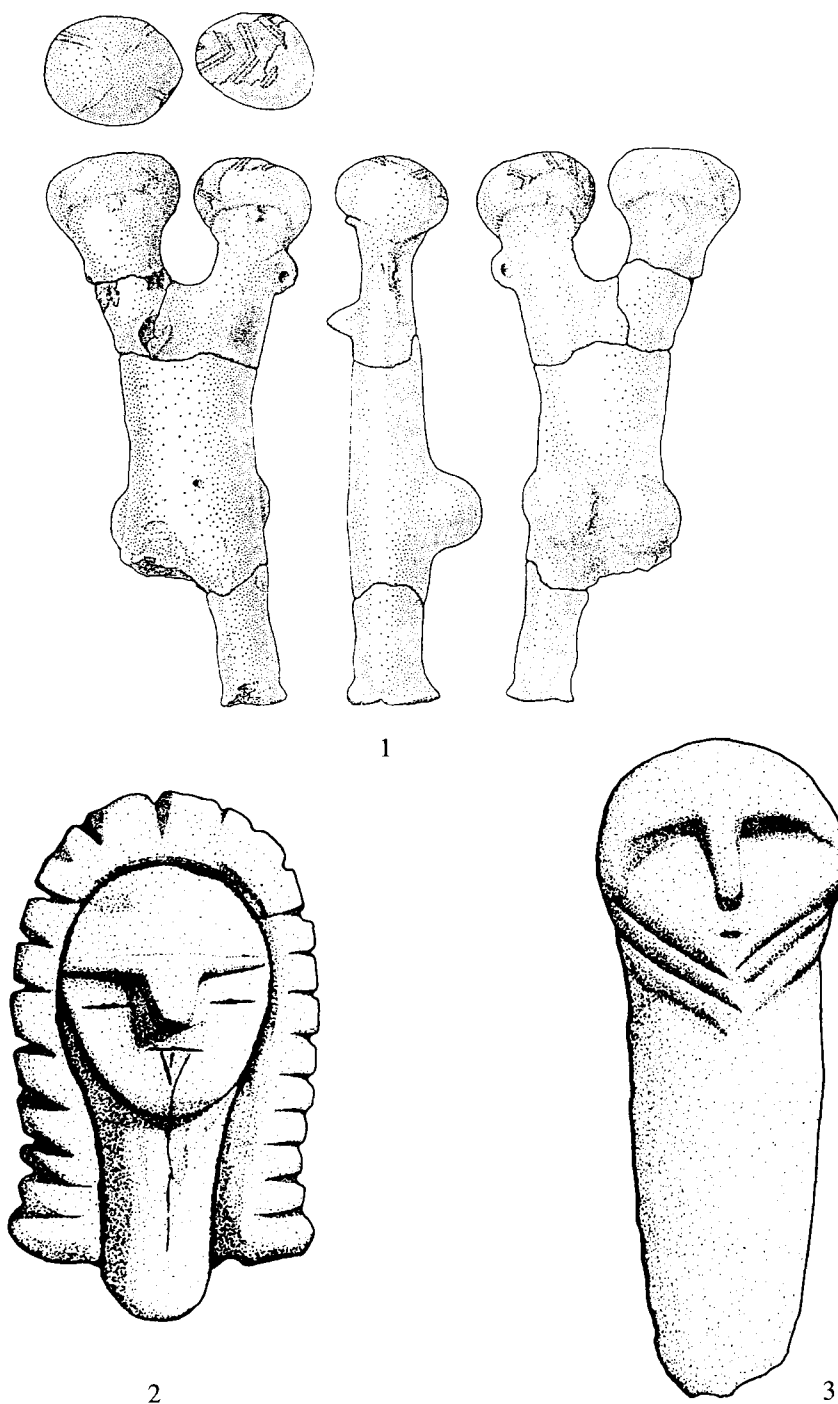


FIG. 7. Neolithic figurines, ambiguously gendered. Scale 1:2 (1); 1:1 (2); 1:4 (3) (after Holmes and Whitehouse, 1998). 1 — Vhò; 2 — Grotta di Cala Scizzo; 3 — Arnesano.

consists of only two examples, both from cult caves in southeast Italy: Grotta di Cala Scizzo and Grotta Pacelli (Fig. 7). These are made of clay but are quite different from those from the settlement sites, in that they consist only of heads, one complete in itself, one apparently broken off at the neck, but deliberately deposited in a significant location in the cave as a head on its own. They display no clear sexual features, although one, from Grotta di Cala Scizzo, is interpreted by the excavators as combining both female and male symbolism. The female symbolism is found in the mouth (which mimics the vulva and the division between the legs), while male symbolism occurs in the nose and eyebrows, executed as a single feature (which takes the form of a stylized bull's head, often thought to represent masculinity) (Geniola and Tunzi, 1980). The other head, from Grotta Pacelli, provides no indications of sex or gender, either in terms of portrayal of sexual characteristics or in terms of symbolism; it was carefully executed and shows hair topped by what appears to be an elaborate head-dress.

With such small numbers of figurines, it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions. However, what is clear is that the traditional 'mother goddess' or 'fertility figurine' interpretative framework is inadequate to describe these data. With one possible exception, from Favella, which is described by the excavator as in the birthing position (Tinè, 1996), the figurines do not seem to emphasize fertility in particular and we are reminded of Collier and Rosaldo's (1981) discussion, which showed that in small-scale societies women are often valued as much for their sexuality as for their fertility and/or their roles as mothers. In our article (Holmes and Whitehouse, 1998) we offered some tentative interpretations, which I shall summarize here. For the figurines from settlement sites, we offered no specific interpretations, but suggested that, because of the small numbers known, they were for special rather than quotidian purposes. The incised motifs found on a few of the figurines might also indicate special status. For the two cult cave heads, we suggested that — because of their careful manufacture and deliberate deposition in special locations — they were *sacra*: actual objects of worship, containing within themselves supernatural powers. The two stone tomb figurines we interpreted as possibly belonging to ritual specialists of some sort (a shaman or a sorcerer) and representing an agent or familiar. Interestingly, although the Arnesano skeleton was not available for study and so could not be sexed, the reconstruction (based on eyewitness accounts of its discovery) indicated that it was lying on its left side. On one of Robb's possible interpretations, this would make the individual either a female or a juvenile male. While the evidence does not allow us to take this any further, we do here have at least a hint of a possible female ritual specialist.

In our article we noted another interesting pattern relating to gender. Although there is a danger of confusing spatial and chronological patterns here, we noted that settlement sites produced mostly unequivocally female images (the Vhò mushroom-headed type being the exception here), while cult caves and

tombs produced ambiguously gendered figures, lacking clear sexual characteristics but sometimes with combined female and male symbolism. We suggested one possible interpretation of this pattern for southeast Italy specifically: a distinction between domains appropriate for same-sex manifestations (domestic) and for cross-sex or combined-sex manifestations (burial and other cult contexts). This is rather different from the gender spatial pattern described by Morter and Robb (1998), which is described in the next section.

Architecture and space

The only spatial analysis related to gender is Morter and Robb's (1998) analysis of the south Italian data. Because of the shortage of well-excavated domestic structures and the virtual absence of examples which preserve floor level features, their analysis focused on the use of space at a macro-level, rather than on individual buildings or settlements. They started from the assumption that the bounded village was the modal point in the neolithic cultural landscape and that the world beyond the village would have been understood in terms of concentric zones at increasing distances from the settlement. They have recognized at least five kinds of space which may have corresponded to nested social identities (Fig. 8). Zone 1 was the innermost zone, formed by the domestic house and its immediate space, presumably occupied by small kin units. Zone 2 was constituted by the village and included areas for communal activities including burial and other ritual. This space was often bounded, especially in southeast Italy, with one function of the boundary being the separation of the co-resident community from outsiders. Zone 3 was the 1–3 km 'catchment zone' around the village, exploited for subsistence activities and probably recognized as belonging to the village, in the sense of rights of access or usage. Zone 4 was the inter-village zone, usually ecologically different from zone 3, often unsuitable for agriculture. It would be exploited for raw materials, such as flint and salt, and also used for hunting and gathering; it might be thought of as belonging loosely to a number of related villages. Zone 5 was at the margins of societies, sometimes topographically difficult terrain, occupied by strange and possibly hostile peoples; where they coincided with ecological boundaries they may have offered exotic resources such as obsidian and possibly foodstuffs derived from different altitudinal systems.

Morter and Robb have discussed both gendered behaviour and gender symbolism in relation to this spatial pattern, while recognizing the difficulties involved in separating the two, since symbolic evidence must be invoked to link an activity to either females or males before the behavioural data can be assessed. The best documented link of this sort is that between men and hunting, based on the Grotta di Porto Badisco paintings described above. As we have seen, hunting was not of major economic significance in these societies, and it may have been culturally important because it was part of male gender ideology. Spatially it would have taken place in zones where game could be

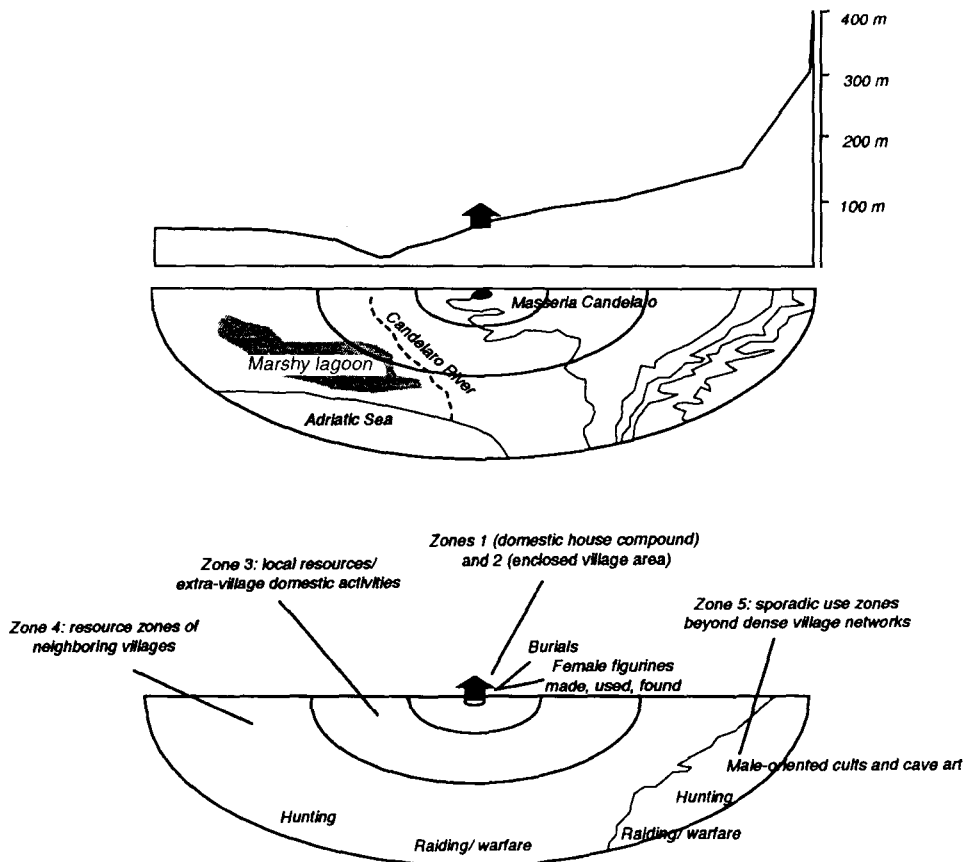


FIG. 8. Gendered space in the south Italian Neolithic (after Morter and Robb, 1998). The spatial zones illustrated are based on the site of Masseria Candelaro, while the location of gender symbols is generalized from various sites.

found — zones 4 and 5 — and it is in these zones that many of the ‘secret’ cult caves, which I have argued were the loci of male initiation cults, are located. As Morter and Robb have said, ‘both ideologically important male activities and the cults celebrating them took place far from villages’ (Morter and Robb, 1998: 88). If warfare was also a male activity — undocumented but plausible — this too would have been carried out in peripheral zones (at least in attack mode). Whether women used these outer zones too is unclear: as described above, the Grotta di Porto Badisco paintings include female figures in the front part of the cave and I have suggested that women took part in the initial stages of ritual. If this is correct, then some women must have entered these peripheral zones on some occasions. Alternatively, as Morter and Robb have pointed out, the marginal positioning of the female images may have served to signal to the male participants the theoretical exclusion of women from the rituals, and not reflect their actual presence there.

Morter and Robb also have discussed the anthropomorphic figurines and noted the association of female imagery with settlement sites (although they have not made the specific comparison with the figurines from cult and burial sites discussed above). Their overall conclusion was that, both in terms of gendered behaviour and in terms of gender symbolism, there might have been a gradient from a female-associated domestic centre to a male-associated periphery. This gendered pattern is rather different from the same-sex (domestic)/cross-sex (cult) contrast identified above in the figurine data, but it does not necessarily contradict it. The same-sex/cross-sex contrast relates exclusively to symbolism and may refer to the context of myth and ritual, rather than to everyday life. The association of female imagery with domestic contexts is clear and it is perhaps likely that female rituals took place in the settlements.

The virtue of Morter and Robb's paper is that it discusses gender in terms of space, which no other study has done yet for prehistoric Italy. However, in my recent article (Whitehouse, in press) I have criticized their approach from the perspectives of both feminism and phenomenology, specifically for neglecting the *experience* aspect of space. I suggest that Morter and Robb's concentric circles represent too formal and geometric a model, which fails to represent even schematically the 'intimate and affective' relationships between peoples and landscapes recorded in the ethnographic record and postulated for prehistoric peoples (Tilley, 1994: 71). Moreover, the experience of space and place, for instance the cult caves, may have differed markedly on the basis of gender. For both men and women, the caves might have been dangerous and visits to them accompanied by apprehension and fear. However, for the men the locales would have been sources of initiation into ritual knowledge and therefore places from which they derived power, creating mixed negative and positive feelings. For the women, by contrast, the experience might have been entirely negative: if these were forbidden spaces, they might have been genuinely dangerous to visit. Ethnographers have recorded cases of women being punished in various ways, even killed, for entering forbidden male spaces. While it may never be possible to reconstruct these kinds of 'affective landscape' from archaeological evidence, awareness of the possibilities should alert us to the inadequacies of geometric models drawn on simple distribution maps.

Conclusions

There is not a high level of agreement about interpretation among the scholars who have written on gender for this period. There seems to be a clear association of maleness with hunting in the Grotta di Porto Badisco, which is generalized to other areas to different degrees by different scholars. In terms of symbolism, Robb and I would agree on an opposition that associates females with the body and men with hunting, which I have interpreted within a structuralist oppositional framework of female:nature/male:culture (Whitehouse, 1992b). In terms of activities, Pluciennik, Robb and Skeates have all

accepted to some degree my idea of this cave as the locale for initiation rites, though there is disagreement as to both the extent that these rites were exclusively male and the degree to which this situation can be taken to apply to other areas.

The largest area of disagreement concerns gender relations. As we have seen, I suggested that Italian neolithic gender systems may have been characterized by male dominance, while Robb and Skeates have interpreted them as primarily complementary. Their view is based partly on the evidence, but partly also on an appeal to generic anthropological parallels. However, as I have already indicated, this ignores the well-recorded differences in gender ideologies and arrangements actually documented ethnographically for different small-scale societies. It is particularly inappropriate for Robb, who, like myself, has referred to New Guinea tribal societies as relevant parallels for Italian neolithic communities, to ignore the fact that these societies are all to various degrees characterized by male dominance, which has been documented by anthropologists (for example: Godelier, 1986; chapters in Strathern, 1987; Strathern, 1988: chapter 11). That this male dominance is different in kind from that found in patriarchal societies of recent times does not mean that it does not occur in the ethnographic present and might not have occurred in the prehistoric past. There *is* a view, expressed especially by Marxist feminist scholars, that all such societies studied ethnographically have been contaminated by colonial contact and that in 'pure' tribal societies (whatever they might be!) gender complementarity would have been a reality. If this is the argument espoused by Robb and Skeates, then it needs to be spelled out and justified; it cannot be assumed. I suspect that these scholars have adopted the stance of many anthropologists who indiscriminately employ the term 'egalitarian' for societies that lack institutionalized hierarchies among men, and have failed to recognize inequalities that come in less stratified form.

COPPER AND BRONZE AGES

This period, which can be dated approximately 3500–1000 cal.BC, shows a less ambiguous gender differentiation than in the Neolithic, with a clear distinction becoming apparent in several parts of Italy between females and males in both burials and iconography.

Burials

In the Copper Age we get the first appearance of a clear association of weapons as symbols of maleness in burial data. This is seen at its most distinct in the area of the north Italian Remedello culture, which practised single burial in earth graves. Barfield, in a re-examination of the large cemetery at the type site of Remedello itself, recognized a primary distinction between adult males, usually buried in the flexed position, equipped with weapons (copper dagger or halberd

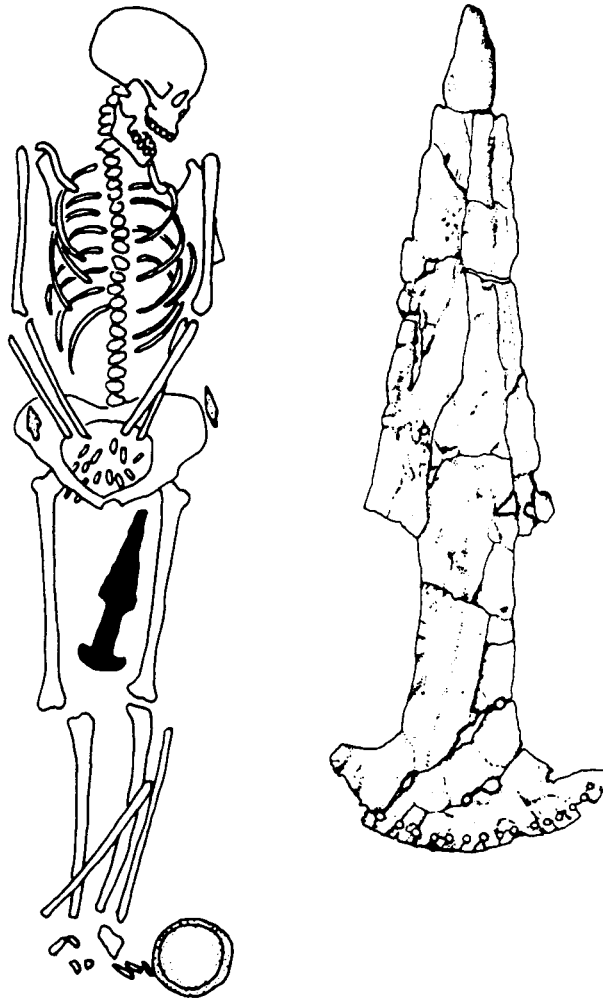


FIG. 9. Copper age male dagger burial from Spilamberto (after Barfield, 1986). In this case the dagger is made of bone and is non-functional, supporting Barfield's argument that the dagger was a symbol of adult male status in this society.

blades, or, more commonly, flint dagger blades) and children, youths and women, who were normally buried in the extended position with few or no grave-goods (Barfield, 1986). A similar situation has been recorded in other Remedello culture cemeteries, including ones excavated more recently, like Spilamberto (Bagolini, 1981) (Fig. 9). It has been noted that, in terms of sexed skeletons, there is not a one-to-one correlation between biological sex and cultural gender in these cemeteries. Both at Remedello (Corrain, 1962–3) and Spilamberto (Corrain and Capitanio, 1981), a small number of burials equipped with weapons seems to have belonged to female skeletons. In the case of Remedello, Barfield (1986) has argued that the identification of sex in these

cases was wrong. This is, of course, possible, given the known difficulties of attributing sex to archaeological skeletons (Molleson and Cox, 1993), but it is not a necessary conclusion. The predominant association of male skeletons with weapons is enough to establish weaponry as male symbolism, which probably also reflects the actual roles of men as warriors in life. The occurrence of weapons with female skeletons in a few cases does not undermine this conclusion, but it does open up the possibility of the existence of a third gender in these societies or, more probably, that in some cases, women were entitled to adopt (some aspects of) male roles and/or male symbolism. This topic is explored further below, in the section on the Iron Age.

In other parts of Italy the burial record for this period is less clear, since collective burial, often in rock-cut tombs, was the normal rite during the Copper Age: we do not often find specific associations between individual skeletons and particular grave-goods, but where these do occur, they seem to show the same association between males and weaponry. One example is the so-called 'Chieftain's Tomb' at Mirabello Eclano in central southern Italy, which contained a single male skeleton with that of a dog at his feet, accompanied by a range of grave-goods including three copper daggers and two flint ones. In this case, as with one or two of the richer burials in northern Italy, such as that at Villafranca Veronese, which contained a silver pectoral as well as a copper halberd blade, it seems likely that high social status of some kind, beyond that available to all adult males, was involved. However, in general hierarchy seems weakly developed in these societies.

During the succeeding Bronze Age, the burial record is patchy and varies from area to area. Collective burial with few grave-goods attachable to individuals continues to occur in some areas, while elsewhere burials are almost entirely lacking for the Early, and in some cases also the Middle, Bronze Age. From the Middle Bronze Age in the Po plain we find cemeteries of individual burials, first practising inhumation, but with a change to cremation in the course of the period. Late and final bronze age burials throughout much of mainland Italy are cremations, although inhumation in rock-cut tombs remained the normal rite in Sicily and parts of southern Italy. These data have been barely discussed by Robb, who has subsumed them under his discussion of the Copper Age. However, the situation is more complex than this would imply. While the occurrence of male burials with weaponry remains a consistent part of funerary practice in many areas, the weapons themselves develop, with rapiers and then swords replacing daggers. Moreover, the variety of other grave-goods increases, with razors, pins and, later, fibulae being added to the repertoire, as well as a series of other ornaments. These data have the potential to provide important information on gender, particularly if studied from the perspective of embodiment, but little modern analysis has taken place and many unquestioned assumptions are repeated throughout the literature. For instance, it is often assumed that razors are invariably male grave-goods,

while ornaments are female, but this remains to be tested. What does seem likely is that a pattern that Robb has characterized as basically iron age, in which female gender is symbolized by clothing and ornaments (as opposed to biology), in fact develops well back in the Bronze Age.

Iconography

For the Copper Age we have two main sources of iconography relevant to the study of gender: anthropomorphic statues known as statue-menhirs (carved in the round) or statue-stelae (incised), and Alpine rock-carvings. The statue-menhirs and statue-stelae are found in various parts of mainland Italy, as well as southern France, Sardinia and Corsica. Barfield has argued plausibly that examples made of wood may well have been made in the intervening 'empty' areas and that originally there may have been a continuous distribution over a large area. Many are of copper age date, but some are thought to be of bronze or even iron age date. I have discussed the statue-menhirs, especially those of the Lunigiana in northwest Italy, as have Barfield and Robb (Whitehouse, 1992b; Robb, 1994b; 1997; Barfield, 1995; 1998). These monuments clearly represent humans; both female and male examples occur and are depicted in clearly differentiated, and mutually exclusive, ways: the females are shown with breasts and occasionally with necklaces, while the males are shown with weapons (daggers in the copper age examples on the mainland, daggers and 'tridents' in Sardinia, swords on the bronze age Corsican examples, swords, axes and 'darts' or spears on the iron age examples in the Lunigiana group) (Fig. 10). These weapons match closely those found in male graves of the same periods. Some Alpine statue-stelae at Aosta in northwest Italy and at Sion over the border in Switzerland, are rather elaborately decorated and seem to be shown clothed; in these cases the males are still shown with weapons, but females are not identified specifically (or at least not in ways obvious to us), unless absence of weapons is itself diagnostic of gender. The Sion statue-stelae are regarded as all representing males (Gallay, 1995). Both Robb and I have argued that the statues represent in one way a continuation of the neolithic symbol system, with males symbolized by weapons and females by biology. However, there is one major difference: the weapons now associated with males are no longer bows and arrows, used for hunting, but daggers, used for fighting other people. Barfield has challenged my (1992b) interpretation of these data in terms of a structuralist nature: women/culture:men divide, suggesting that the statues represent clothed individuals and breasts are shown simply because they would have protruded through clothing; he also has argued that the dagger symbolizes the phallus and indeed that some of the Lunigiana monuments are themselves phallic in form (Barfield, 1998: 144). While I accept these points, I still think that there is a fundamental difference between representation by biological features (whether naked or covered) and representation by symbols (even if the symbol stands for a biological organ).

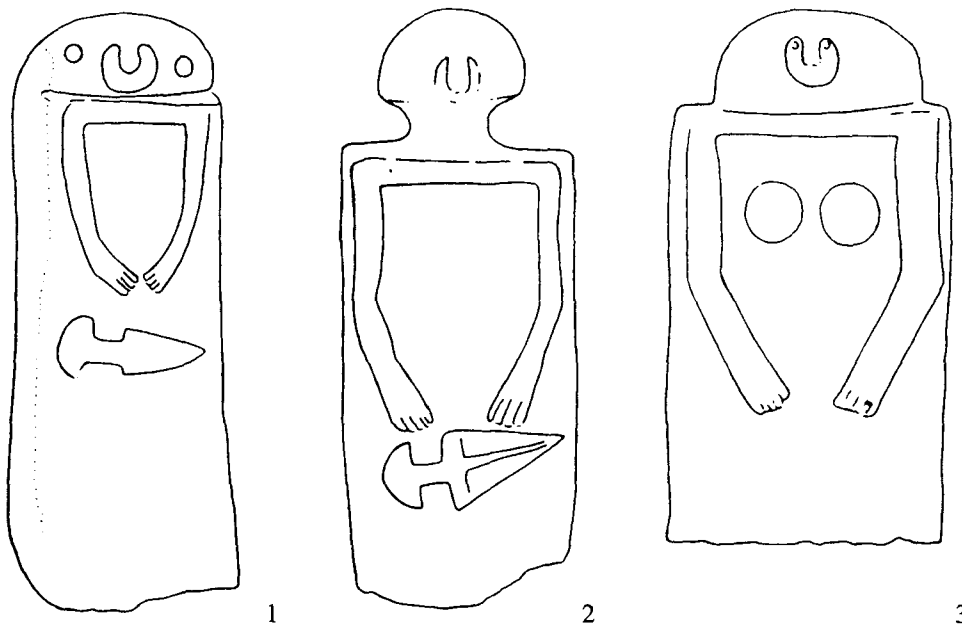


FIG. 10. Lunigiana statue-menhirs (after Barfield, 1998). 1 and 2 — males, shown by daggers; 3 — female, shown by breasts. Barfield has pointed out that further gender symbolism is also present, since the daggers are phallic in form, as are the statue-menhirs themselves (both male and female examples).

The Alpine rock art both supports the interpretation of the statue-menhirs and supplements it. In the art of Mont Béggo, which is probably copper and early bronze age in date, and in representations in Valcamonica and Valtellina, probably of the Copper, Bronze and Iron Ages, we find male figures, shown with a penis, associated with weapons, both daggers and halberds (Barfield and Chippindale, 1997). In one splendid example — on the stele of Caven 2 in the Valtellina — a male figure is shown waving a halberd, the handle of which appears as the continuation of the erect penis, emphasizing the connection between weapons and masculinity. Male figures are also found in ploughing scenes (Fig. 11). Female figures (identified by a blob in the pubic area) are rare in the Alpine rock carvings; where they appear, they occur in groups separate from male figures, and are shown in what is described as a ‘praying’ position (perhaps representing dancing); they are thought to be early in date, perhaps neolithic. The symbolism found in the rock art clearly overlaps with that found on the statue-menhirs and statue-stelae, but there are also important differences. In the statues, males and females are represented together on an apparently equal basis (although not in absolutely equal numbers, since there are more male figures), while the rock art seems to show mainly males. In the statues, males are shown by weapons alone, while in the rock art males are shown by either the penis or weapons or both. On the statues daggers usually occur singly, placed in a realistic position on the body, while in the rock art

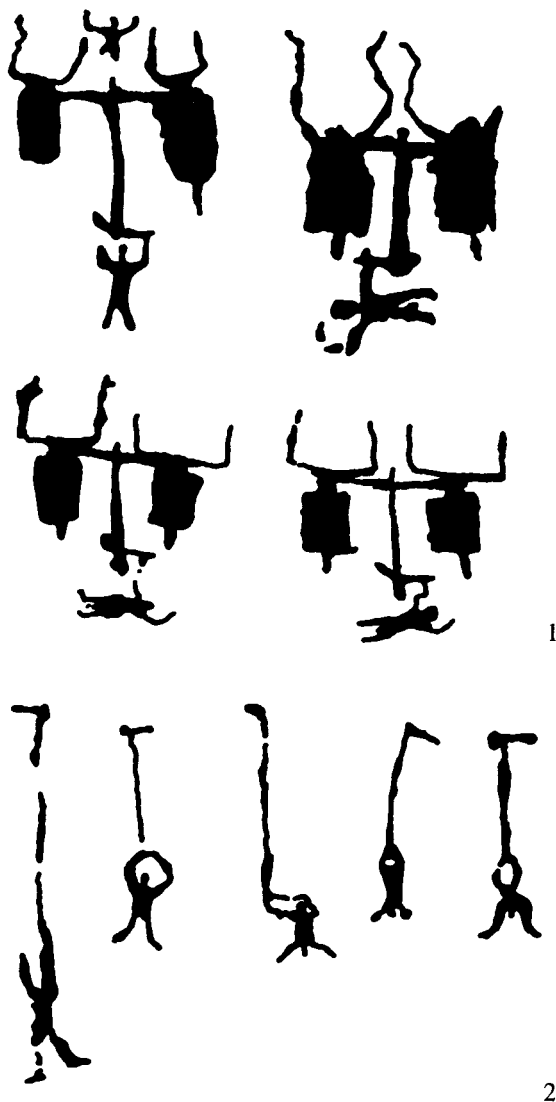


FIG. 11. Alpine rock art: engravings on Mont Bègo (after Barfield and Chippindale, 1997).
 1 — phallic and non-phallic human figures with plough teams; 2 — phallic and non-phallic
 human figures waving halberds.

multiple daggers are common and are often shown away from human figures; this distinction is blurred in the stelae found in the Valcamonica and Valtellina themselves, which often have surfaces treated like other rock surfaces in the area, covered with engravings. A further distinction is the appearance of ploughing scenes in the rock art. Barfield plausibly has explained the differences between the statues and the rock art in terms of different social contexts. He has suggested that the statues are associated with burials and represent an ancestor

cult, in which both male and female ancestors were venerated (Barfield, 1995). By contrast, the rock art sites represent exclusively male arenas, perhaps associated with male initiation rites, paralleling the use of caves for this purpose in the peninsula during the Neolithic and Copper Age (Barfield and Chippindale, 1997).

Conclusions

The evidence for the Copper Age seems clearer than that for the Neolithic and there is a good level of agreement between different scholars in interpretation. This period sees the continuation of the earlier pattern of females symbolized by biology, males by weapons, though these are no longer hunting equipment but weapons of war. This change may be taken to mark the beginnings of a male warrior ideology that characterizes much of the Bronze Age of Europe and later (for example: Treherne, 1995) and specifically to reinforce violence as fundamentally associated with men. The association of males with weaponry continues throughout the Bronze Age, but in the course of the period females cease to be represented by biology alone and are marked, in burial at least, by distinctive dress and ornaments. While this period sees the development of a clearly demarcated gender ideology, hierarchical social organization among men is only weakly developed, with few markedly rich burials. It is difficult to say much about gender relations in this period. The existence of locales for exclusively male initiation rites, including both caves in the peninsula and rock-art sites in the Alps, suggests a continuation of the neolithic situation and in my opinion would be associated with some level of male domination. On the other hand, the presence of both male and female statues in ancestral images might suggest greater complementarity. However, as I commented in connection with the Neolithic, complementarity in gender ideology is not necessarily accompanied by gender equality in daily life.

IRON AGE

The Italian Iron Age offers a database that is potentially very rich for the analysis of gender, in terms of both an abundant funerary record and developed and varied iconography. Unfortunately very little analysis has been undertaken that has been concerned specifically with gender. Robb has proposed a generalized gender ideology for this period, with an opposition between men symbolized as warriors (Fig. 12) and women symbolized by spinning and weaving equipment (Fig. 13) and by ornamentation. He also has argued that the development of a class society saw the adaptation of the gender ideology of earlier periods to mark distinctions between classes during the Iron Age. While these points seem valid at a general level, much more detailed analysis is possible and much more regional and chronological variation can be recognized than Robb has given credit for. In this section I shall content myself with

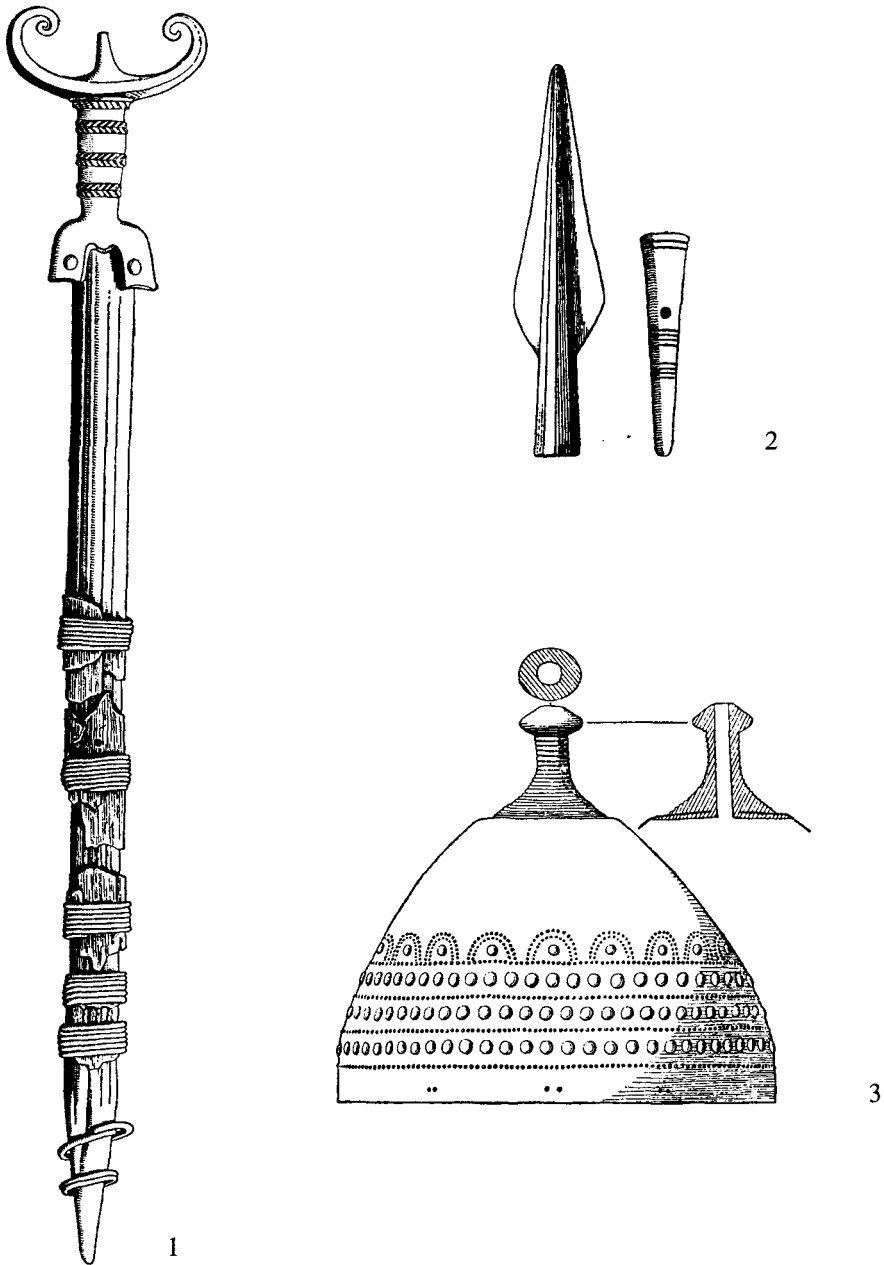


FIG. 12. Iron age weapons and armour from Etruria, made of bronze (after Hencken, 1968). Scale 1:4. 1 — sword; 2 — spear and spear-butt; 3 — helmet.

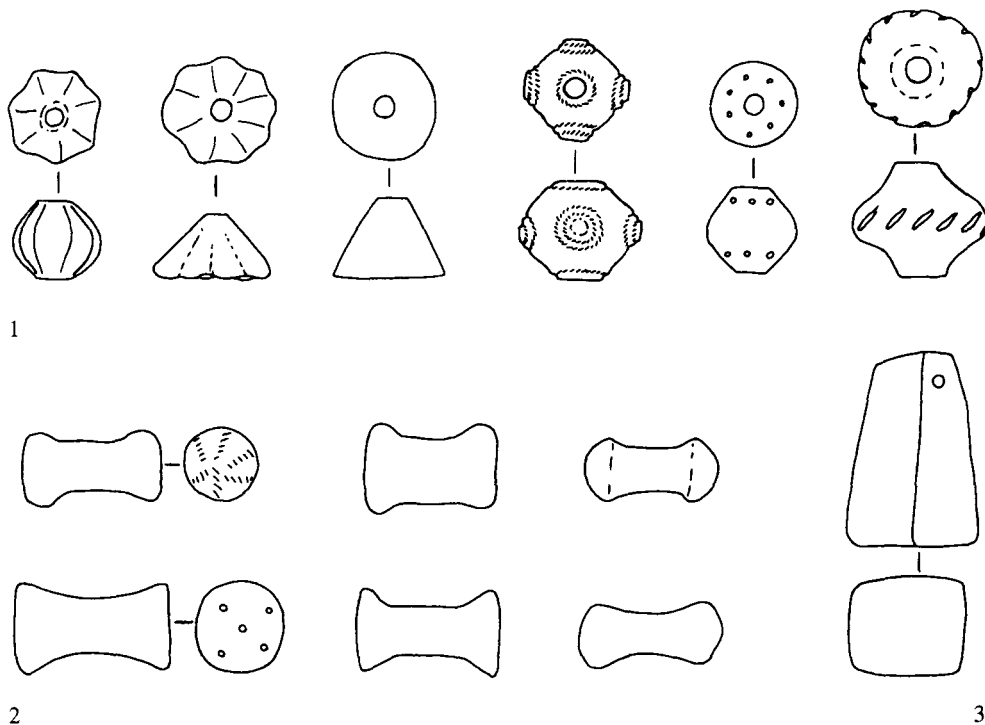


FIG. 13. Iron age spinning and weaving equipment from Etruria, made of clay (after Toms, 1998). Various scales. 1 — spindle-whorls; 2 — thread spools; 3 — loom-weight

describing the few studies which have been made in which gender has been a central concern.

Burials

Two recent studies have looked specifically at gender in early iron age burials: one (Vida Navarro, 1992) examined 99 tombs from the Picentino cemetery at Pontecagnano in Campania; the other (Toms, 1998) analysed two large Villanovan cemeteries in Etruria, Quattro Fontanili at Veio (490 tombs examined) and several cemeteries at Tarquinia (425 tombs examined). In both cases the authors started not from the physical anthropological identification of sexed skeletons (sometimes considered to be the only possible starting-point for this kind of analysis) but by identifying mutually exclusive assemblages of grave-goods, which were then interpreted as gender-specific. Comparison with the anthropological sex assignments was made subsequently and incorporated into the final interpretations. Both authors considered artefacts gender-specific if there were no more than two exceptions to the mutual exclusivity rule. Toms introduced a further subtlety by identifying a class of preferential gender markers, recognized by a minimum 40% association with exclusively male or

female indicators and a maximum 20% association with markers of the opposite gender.

The results of these analyses showed both similarities and differences between the two areas. At Pontecagnano male goods were weapons (swords, sheaths, javelin heads and spearheads), serpentine fibulae, razors, knives and possibly pottery plates, while female goods were spinning equipment (spindle-whorls, spindles and spools), arch fibulae, interlocking rings, finely coiled springs, pins, beads, pendants and bronze studs. In the Etrurian Villanovan cemeteries the same pattern occurs of mutually exclusive grave-good groups containing weapons on the one hand and spinning/weaving equipment on the other. At Veio an additional male item was serpentine fibulae, and an additional female item bronze belts. At Tarquinia serpentine fibulae were only preferentially male (twelve out of 85 tombs with serpentine fibulae have spinning/weaving equipment), while arch fibulae were preferentially female. At both sites knives and axes were preferentially male and many ornaments were preferentially female.

Comparisons between gender, as defined by grave-goods, and sex, defined skeletally, posed problems in both studies because of the poor quality of the skeletal material, due to the high proportion of cremation burials and poor survival of inhumed skeletons in acidic soils. In both areas there was a less than perfect fit between skeletally identified sex and gender as defined by grave-goods. In Pontecagnano the mismatch was severe, with only twelve coincidences, as against fourteen mismatches. Vida Navarro regarded most of the mismatches as most probably representing wrong identifications of biological sex, where the quality of the bone was poor (where sex assignments were given as 'probable' or 'possible'). However, in two cases the identifications were based on surviving pelvic bone and regarded as secure; these cases are taken to indicate that there was no one-to-one correspondence between biological sex and social gender. In Etruria, Toms looked at the sex identifications of 115 skeletons from Quattro Fontanili, Veio. Only thirteen of these had grave-goods representing gender-specific associations. Of these, eleven (seven female, four male) coincided and two were mismatches (possibly female skeletons with male grave-goods). Toms rightly has refused to draw conclusions from this very small sample, but we do have a hint that here too there was a less than perfect correspondence between biological sex and social gender. There are also in both areas a small number of graves which contained both female and male goods.

Of greater significance than the small number of mismatches of these kinds is the fact that in both areas many individuals were buried without any clear gender markers at all. About 30% of the Pontecagnano tombs were without gender assignment, more than 40% in the Etrurian cemeteries. Toms has explored the possibility that this pattern might have been age-related, but has come to the conclusion that it was not: an analysis of 65 tombs at Quattro Fontanili with skeletons assigned to age groups (Infant I, Infant II, Youth,

Adult, Mature) showed that, while there was some variation in gendering according to age, male-gendered, female-gendered and ungendered grave-goods occurred in all age groups. Other correlations — with chronology, possible kin groups or wealth — also seem to be absent. It seems that we have a system here that, when it marks gender, marks it strongly, but 30–40% of the time does not mark it at all (or marks it in ways that do not leave archaeological traces).

This kind of analysis brings out nuances in the evidence and goes beyond the simple contrast between male warriors and female weavers that has usually been identified (and does indeed form a staple element of gender identification in many iron age groups in Italy and elsewhere). The great cemetery of Osteria dell’Osa in Lazio (Bietti Sestieri, 1992; 1993) also has made some interesting contributions to our understanding of gender in iron age Italy, but has the potential for further illuminating analysis.

Iconography

There is a large amount of potentially relevant iconographic material from the Iron Age. For instance, there are funerary stelae in several different areas, representing both men and women; small bronze anthropomorphic figurines also occur widely and there is a great variety of decorated artefacts. However, while Robb has discussed this material in general terms, very little work has been undertaken which explicitly discusses the representation of gender in any detail. Here I shall discuss a few studies that have made a beginning in this direction.

Barfield has discussed the ‘situla art’ of the northeast Italian and east alpine area from a gender perspective (Barfield, 1998: 145–54). This art appears mainly on sheet bronze objects and is embossed or engraved; it is dated to the seventh-fifth centuries BC. While the art shows Orientalizing and Etruscan influences, the fashions and activities portrayed have been argued to represent local societies, particularly those in the areas described by classical writers as occupied by the Veneti and Raeti. Much of the art portrays scenes that show both men and women and would seem to belong to the world of the élite. According to Barfield, on the situlae themselves, which were containers for wine used in the context of exclusively male feasting, men are shown as civilians, soldiers, servants, ploughmen and hunters, while women are shown only in subservient roles as servants or sexual entertainers. On some other objects, however, women appear in non-servile roles; for instance, on a rattle from the Tomba degli Ori, in the Arsenale Militare cemetery at Bologna, women are shown producing cloth, both spinning and weaving on a large two-storey loom. Barfield has interpreted this evidence in terms of traditional, and stereotypical, roles of men and women in north Italian iron age society, similar to those known from the Roman world. However, some of the situla art, together with other evidence from the same area, suggests that female symbolism and women’s roles may have been rather different. For instance, on objects other

than the *situlae* themselves goddesses figure rather prominently in the iconography, particularly an unnamed 'key goddess' (Barfield, 1998: fig. 7; Bonomi and Ruta Serafini, 1994) and Reitia, who appears on several dedicatory inscriptions. Moreover, inscriptions on many of the bronze styluses (votive versions of those used for writing) dedicated in a shrine to Reitia in the Baratella deposit in Este suggest that they were dedicated by women (Wilkins, in preparation), indicating a close association between women and writing that is not recorded elsewhere. The rather contradictory picture that emerges from these data emphasizes the need for analyses that are both more detailed and more aware of current issues in gender research.

One such study is Izzet's (1998) analysis of the way in which both men and women represented themselves on Etruscan bronze mirrors of the later sixth and early fifth centuries BC. Women in Etruscan society are often considered to have enjoyed greater freedom than Greek women of the same period, to have been equal partners in marriage and to have had more visible public roles (for example: Bonfante, 1973; 1981; 1986). Izzet's analysis of the scenes on the mirrors paints a rather different picture (Fig. 14). Women on the mirrors are shown being dressed, ornamented and painted, in some cases being prepared for marriage, sometimes explicitly watched by male figures, particularly by Castur and Pultuke (the Etruscan Castor and Pollux). Izzet has argued that women are being prepared as highly decorative luxury objects for the purposes of male erotic enjoyment and wealth display; they are also being located in the domestic arena. Men are represented very differently: male bodies, shown naked in contrast to the elaborately dressed and ornamented female bodies, are worked on from within, through exercise and the associated processes of the scraping, oiling and depilating of the body; they are associated with public roles, particularly warfare and athletics. Izzet also has suggested that the famous Etruscan images of couples, often cited as evidence of the 'equal partnership' view, just as easily can be seen as placing women as part of men's wealth display and as erotic images for the male gaze. This objectification of women has a chronological dimension, developing further through the fifth and fourth centuries BC, with representations of women increasingly marginalized in major art forms. In the previous Orientalizing period of the seventh century BC there seems to have been much more gender ambiguity, with burials containing mixed male and female objects (for instance, many rich female burials include war chariots, while poorer burials sometimes show similar ambiguity, with spearheads or razors combined with spools (Spivey, 1991: 57)). The increasing codification of gender difference through time goes along with other major social changes that cannot be described here. Izzet's interpretation in some ways brings Etruscans into line with other iron age societies in Italy in terms of gender ideologies and roles. From a feminist perspective this might be regarded as disappointing, in that we may have to abandon one of the best apparent candidates for empowering role models for women in the past. However, in my



1



2

FIG. 14. Scenes on Etruscan mirrors (after Izzet, 1998). 1 — adornment scene showing seated female figure being adorned by other females, with winged Lase around the edges, and male diners at the top; 2 — male figure and the Dioskouroi.

opinion Izzet's study is a powerful and convincing analysis, which provides a model for future work elsewhere.

The last example I shall mention challenges the universal association of warfare with masculinity that so far has appeared to characterize all areas of the Italian Iron Age. This is the ambiguously sexed sixth-century BC statue known as the 'Warrior of Capestrano' from east central Italy (Whitehouse and Herring, in preparation) (Fig. 15). This figure undoubtedly represents a warrior, since it is equipped with two spears, a sword, a dagger and an axe, as well as defensive armour (heart-protectors and perhaps greaves). However, the sex/gender of the figure is far from clear, since it presents an apparent combination of physiologically male and female characteristics. The face is presented in a very schematic way, with no clear suggestion of gender; it is often suggested that it represents a mask. The upper part of the body looks physically male: no breasts are shown and the shoulders, arms and torso, while not depicted entirely realistically, suggest a male type of body fat distribution. However, the figure has a narrow waist, broad hips and buttocks that look more female than male. Genitals are not explicitly shown and the figure seems to be wearing a closely-fitting garment resembling a loincloth: however, there is a complete absence of any sign of male genitalia (not even a hint of a bulge), while an incised vertical line rising upward from the division between the legs suggests female genitalia. Most scholars regard the statue as male, probably because for many people it is inconceivable that a warrior should not be male: however, it has also been suggested that the statue represents a female deity (Berggren, 1990). In our view, however, the sexual ambiguity is deliberate and suggests that the figure should be located in the world of myth (where sex combinations, sex changes and sexual ambiguity are common features) rather than being the portrait of a specific dead individual, as is assumed usually. Whatever the explanation and however exceptional it is, the statue of the Warrior of Capestrano represents a challenge of sorts to the tight association of warfare and masculinity found in the Italian Iron Age and many other areas of prehistoric Europe.

Conclusions

The evidence available at present for this period on the one hand supports Robb's generalizing view of a widespread basic dichotomous symbolic division between female beauty and male violence, with social roles involving women located in the domestic and men in the public sphere (especially warfare). On the other hand, there are indications of different versions of this system in different regions, as well as hints of more complex and subtle ideologies recognizable within the system. Of all the periods discussed above, the Iron Age has the greatest potential for further work on gender, with rich burial and iconographic data as yet barely discussed from this perspective.

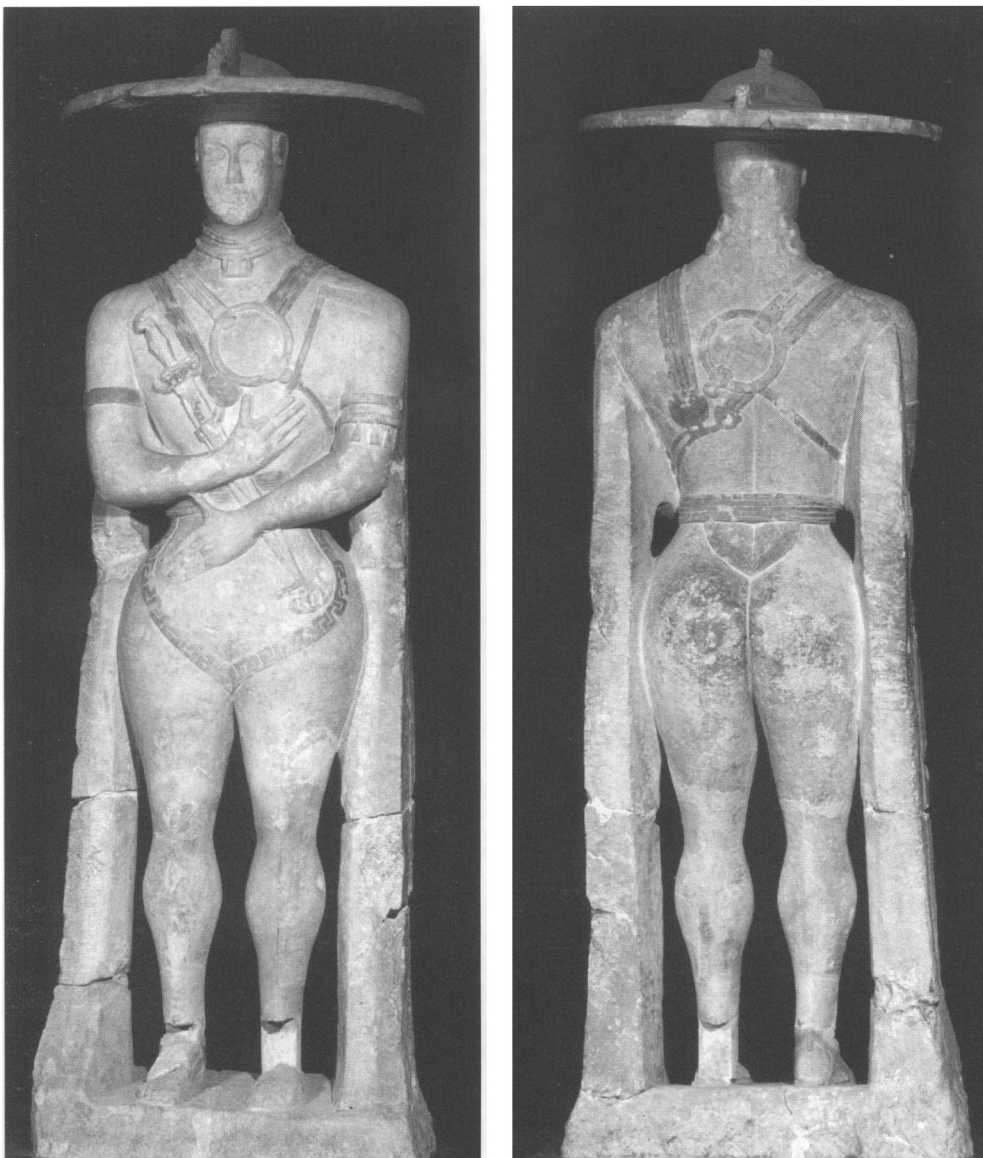


FIG. 15. The 'Warrior of Capestrano': ambiguously gendered stone statue of the sixth century BC from east central Italy. (Photographs courtesy of the Soprintendenza Archeologia dell'Abruzzo, Chieti)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this brief survey of work on gender in prehistoric Italy, I have made no attempt to 'tell a story', to explain any of the manifestations of gender roles or ideology discussed or the changes in these manifestations over time. In this respect my aim has been entirely different from that of Robb (1994b; 1997), who

has set out to write gender into our understanding of social evolution in prehistoric Italy. My own aim has been to offer an overview of the kinds of approaches and understandings that recent work has brought to the study of gender and to give a flavour of the variety and complexity of gender arrangements that may have existed in prehistoric Italy. Above all I hope that I have indicated the potential of a field of study that, in the context of Italy, is only just beginning to attract attention.

RUTH D. WHITEHOUSE

References

- Bacus, E.A., Barker, A.W., Bonevich, J.D., Dunavan, S.L., Fitzhugh, J.B., Gold, D.L., Goldman-Finn, N.S., Griffin, W. and Mudar, K.M. (1993) (eds) *A Gendered Past. A Critical Bibliography of Gender in Archaeology (Museum of Anthropology. Technical Paper 25)*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan.
- Bagolini, B. (1981) *Il neolitico e l'età del rame — ricerca a Spilamberto e S. Cesario, 1977–1980*. Bologna, Cassa di Risparmio di Vignola.
- Barfield, L. (1986) Chalcolithic burial ritual in northern Italy: problems of interpretation. *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 2: 241–8.
- Barfield, L. (1995) The context of statue-menhirs. *Notizie Archeologiche Bergomensi* 3: 11–20.
- Barfield, L. (1998) Gender issues in north Italian prehistory. In R.D. Whitehouse (ed.), *Gender and Italian Archaeology. Challenging the Stereotypes*: 143–56. London, Accordia Research Institute and Institute of Archaeology.
- Barfield, L. and Chippindale, C. (1997) Meaning in the later prehistoric rock-engravings of Mont Bègo, Alpes Maritimes, France. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 63: 103–28.
- Berggren, K. (1990) The Capestrano Warrior and the Numana head: a structuralist semiotic interpretation. *Opuscula Romana* 18: 23–36.
- Bietti Sestieri, A.M. (1992) *The Iron Age Community of Osteria dell'Osa*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Bietti Sestieri, A.M. (1993) *La necropoli laziale di Osteria dell'Osa*. Rome, Quasar.
- Blanc, A. (1954) Il sacrificio umano dell'Addaura ed il nesso ideologico tra morte e generazione nella mentalità primitiva. *Quaternaria* 1: 184–6.
- Blanc, A. (1955) Il sacrificio umano dell'Addaura e la messa a morte rituale mediante strangolamento nell'etnologia e nella paleontologia. *Quaternaria* 2: 213–25.
- Bonfante, L. (1973) The women of Etruria. *Arethusa* 6 (1): 91–101.
- Bonfante, L. (1981) Etruscan couples and their aristocratic society. *Women's Studies* 8: 157–87.
- Bonfante, L. (1986) Daily life and afterlife. In L. Bonfante (ed.), *Etruscan Life and Afterlife. A Handbook of Etruscan Studies*: 232–78. Warminster, Aris and Phillips.
- Bonomi, S. and Ruta Serafini, A. (1994) Una 'chiave di Penelope' dal territorio bellunese. *Quaderni di Archeologia del Veneto* 10: 11–13.
- Borgognini Tarli, M. (1992) Aspetti antropologici e paleodemografici dal paleolitico superiore alla prima età del ferro. In A. Guidi and M. Piperno (eds), *Italia preistorica*: 238–73. Rome/Bari, Laterza.
- Bovio Marconi, J. (1953a) Incisioni rupestri all'Addaura. *Bullettino di Paleontologia Italiana* n.s. 8: 5–22.
- Bovio Marconi, J. (1953b) Interpretazione dell'arte parietale dell'Addaura. *Bollettino d'Arte* 38: 61.
- Chiappella, V. (1954) Altre considerazioni sugli 'acrobati' dell'Addaura. *Quaternaria* 1: 181–3.
- Claassen, C. (1992) (ed.) *Exploring Gender through Archaeology. Selected Papers from the 1991 Boone Conference*. Madison (Wisconsin), Prehistory Press.

- Collier, J. and Rosaldo, R. (1981) Politics and gender in simple societies. In S. Ortner and H. Whitehead (eds), *Sexual Meanings: the Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*: 275–329. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Conroy, L.P. (1993) Female figurines of the Upper Palaeolithic and the emergence of gender. In H. Du Cros and L.J. Smith (eds), *Women in Archaeology: a Feminist Critique*: 153–60. Canberra, Australian National University.
- Coppola, D. (1994) Nota preliminare sui rinvenimenti nella grotta di S. Maria di Agnano (Ostuni, Brindisi): i seppellimenti paleolitici ed il luogo di culto. *Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche* 44 (1992): 211–27.
- Corrain, C. (1962–3) I resti scheletrici umani della stazione eneolitica di Remedello (Brescia). *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* 121: 165–208.
- Corrain, C. and Capitano, M. (1981) *I resti scheletrici umani della necropoli eneolitica di Spilamberto-S. Cesario. Notizie preliminari*. Bologna.
- Dobres, M.-A. (1992) Re-considering Venus figurines: a feminist inspired re-analysis. In A.S. Goldsmith, S. Garvie, D. Selin and J. Smith (eds), *Ancient Images, Ancient Thought: the Archaeology of Ideology*: 245–62. Calgary, Archaeological Association (University of Calgary).
- Du Cros, H. and Smith, L.J. (1993) (eds) *Women in Archaeology: a Feminist Critique*. Canberra, Australian National University.
- Duhard, J.-P. (1991) The shape of Pleistocene women. *Antiquity* 65: 552–61.
- Fabbri, P.F. (1993) Nuovi determinazioni del sesso e della statura degli individui 1 e 4 del paleolitico superiore della Grotta di San Teodoro. *Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche* 45: 219–32.
- Frayer, D.W., Macchiarelli, R. and Mussi, M. (1988) A case of chondrodystrophic dwarfism in the Italian Late Upper Palaeolithic. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 75: 549–65.
- Gallay, A. (1995) Les stèles anthropomorphes du site mégalithique du Petit-Chasseur à Sion. *Notizie Archeologiche Bergomensi* 3: 167–94.
- Geniola, A. and Tunzi, A.M. (1980) Espressioni culturali e d'arte nella Grotta di Cala Scizzo presso Torre a Mare (Bari). *Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche* 35: 125–436.
- Gero, J. and Conkey, M. (1991) (eds) *Engendering Archaeology. Women and Prehistory*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Gilchrist, R. (1994) *Gender and Material Culture. The Archaeology of Religious Women*. London, Routledge.
- Gilchrist, R. (1999) *Gender and Archaeology*. London, Routledge.
- Godelier, M. (1986) *The Making of Great Men. Male Domination and Power among the New Guinea Baruya*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Graziosi, P. (1975) Nuove manifestazioni d'arte mesolitica e neolitica nel Riparo Gaban presso Trento. *Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche* 30: 237–78.
- Guerreschi, A. (1992) La fine del Pleistocene e gli inizi dell'Olocene. In A. Guidi and M. Piperno (eds), *Italia preistorica*: 198–237. Rome/Bari, Laterza.
- Hays-Gilpin, K. and Whitley, D.S. (1998) (eds) *Reader in Gender Archaeology*. London, Routledge.
- Hencken, H. (1968) *Tarquinia and Etruscan Origins*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Herdt, G. (1993) (ed.) *Third Sex, Third Gender. Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*. New York, Zone Books.
- Holmes, K. and Whitehouse, R. (1998) Anthropomorphic figurines and the construction of gender in neolithic and copper age Italy. In R.D. Whitehouse (ed.), *Gender and Italian Archaeology. Challenging the Stereotypes*: 95–126. London, Accordia Research Institute and Institute of Archaeology.
- Izzet, V. (1998) Holding a mirror to Etruscan gender. In R.D. Whitehouse (ed.), *Gender and Italian Archaeology. Challenging the Stereotypes*: 209–27. London, Accordia Research Institute and Institute of Archaeology.

- Krogman, W.M. and Iscan, M.Y. (1986) (eds) *The Human Skeleton in Forensic Medicine* (second edition). Springfield (Illinois), Charles Thomas.
- Leighton, R. (1998) Reflections on San Teodoro 1–7 and recent sex changes in the Upper Palaeolithic. In R.D. Whitehouse (ed.), *Gender and Italian Archaeology. Challenging the Stereotypes*: 45–55. London, Accordia Research Institute and Institute of Archaeology.
- Mallegni, F. (1992) Squelette de femme d'une sépulture des couches gravettiennes de la grotte Paglicci près de Rignano Garganico (Pouilles, Italie). *Rivista d'Antropologia* 70: 209–16.
- Mallegni, F. and Fabbri, P.F. (1995) The human skeletal remains from the upper paleolithic burials found in Romito Cave (Papasidero, Cosenza, Italy). *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris* 7: 99–137.
- McCoid, C.H. and McDermott, L.D. (1996) Toward decolonizing gender: female vision in the European Upper Palaeolithic. *American Anthropologist* 98: 54–61.
- McDermott, L.D. (1996) Self-representation in upper paleolithic figurines. *Current Anthropology* 37: 227–75.
- Meskel, L. (1999) *Archaeologies of Social Life. Age, Sex, Class et cetera in Ancient Egypt*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Mezzena, F. and Palma di Cesnola, A. (1988–90) Nuova sepoltura gravettiana nella Grotta Paglicci (Promontorio del Gargano). *Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche* 42: 3–29.
- Molleson, T. and Cox, M. (1993) *The Spitalfields Project. 2: the Anthropology* (Council for British Archaeology Research Report 86). London, Council for British Archaeology.
- Moore, J. and Scott, E. (1997) (eds) *Invisible People and Processes. Writing Gender and Childhood into European Prehistory*. London, Leicester University Press.
- Morter, J. and Robb, J. (1998) Space, gender and architecture in the southern Italian Neolithic. In R.D. Whitehouse (ed.), *Gender and Italian Archaeology. Challenging the Stereotypes*: 83–94. London, Accordia Research Institute and Institute of Archaeology.
- Mussi, M. (1986a) On the chronology of the burials found in the Grimaldi Caves. *Antropologia Contemporanea* 9: 95–104.
- Mussi, M. (1986b) Italian palaeolithic and mesolithic burials. *Human Evolution* 1: 545–56.
- Mussi, M. (1987) Società di vivi e società dei morti: le sepolture del paleolitico in Italia e la loro interpretazione. *Scienze dell'Antichità* 1: 37–53.
- Nelson, S.M. (1990) Diversity of the upper palaeolithic 'venus' figurines and archaeological reality. In S.M. Nelson and A.B. Kehoe (eds), *Powers of Observation: Alternative Views in Archeology* (*Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 2): 11–22. Washington D.C., American Anthropological Association.
- Nelson, S.M. (1997) *Gender in Archaeology. Analyzing Power and Prestige*. Walnut Creek/London/New Delhi, AltaMira Press.
- Ortner, S. (1974) Is female to male as nature is to culture? In M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Women, Culture and Society*: 67–87. Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Pluciennik, M. (1994) *The Mesolithic–Neolithic Transition in Southern Italy*. University of Sheffield, Ph.D. thesis.
- Pluciennik, M. (1996) Space, time and caves: art in the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic of southern Italy. *Accordia Research Papers* 5 (1994): 39–71.
- Pluciennik, M. (1998) Representations of gender in prehistoric southern Italy. In R.D. Whitehouse (ed.), *Gender and Italian Archaeology. Challenging the Stereotypes*: 57–82. London, Accordia Research Institute and Institute of Archaeology.
- Renfrew, C. and Bahn, P. (1991) (2nd edition 1996; 3rd edition 2000) *Archaeology. Theories, Methods and Practice*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Rice, P. (1981) Prehistoric Venuses: symbols of motherhood or womanhood. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 37 (4): 5,402–14.
- Robb, J. (1994a) Burial and social reproduction in the peninsular Italian Neolithic. *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 7: 27–71.

- Robb, J. (1994b) Gender contradictions, moral coalitions, and inequality in prehistoric Italy. *Journal of European Archaeology* 2 (1): 2–49.
- Robb, J. (1997) Female beauty and male violence in early Italian society. In A.O. Koloski-Ostrow and C.L. Lyons (eds), *Naked Truths. Women, Sexuality and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*: 43–65. London/New York, Routledge.
- Rosaldo, M. (1974) Woman, culture and society: a theoretical overview. In M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Women, Culture and Society*: 17–42. Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Rubin, G. (1975) The traffic in women: notes towards a political economy of sex. In R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women*: 157–210. New York, Monthly Review Press.
- Skeates, R. (1994) Ritual, context and gender in neolithic south-eastern Italy. *Journal of European Archaeology* 2(2): 153–67.
- Sørensen, M.L.S. (2000) *Gender Archaeology*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Spivey, N.J. (1991) The power of women in Etruscan society. *Accordia Research Papers* 2: 55–67.
- Strathern, M. (1987) (ed.) *Dealing with Inequality*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Strathern, M. (1988) *The Gender of the Gift*. Berkeley/Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Sweely, T.L. (1999) (ed.) *Manifesting Power. Gender and the Interpretation of Power in Archaeology*. London/New York, Routledge.
- Tilley, C. (1994) *A Phenomenology of Landscape*. Oxford, Berg.
- Tinë, V. (1996) Favella. In V. Tinè (ed.), *Forme e tempi della neolitizzazione in Italia meridionale e in Sicilia. Atti del seminario internazionale, Rossano 29 aprile — 2 maggio 1994*: 423–5. Rossano, IRACEB/IIAS.
- Toms, J. (1998) The construction of gender in early iron age Etruria. In R.D. Whitehouse (ed.), *Gender and Italian Archaeology. Challenging the Stereotypes*: 157–79. London, Accordia Research Institute and Institute of Archaeology.
- Treherne, P. (1995) The warrior's beauty: the masculine body and self-identity in bronze age Europe. *Journal of European Archaeology* 3 (1): 105–44.
- Vida Navarro, M.C. (1992) Warriors and weavers: sex and gender in early iron age graves from Pontecagnano. *Accordia Research Papers* 3: 67–99.
- Walde, D. and Willows, N.D. (1991) *The Archaeology of Gender. Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Annual Chacmool Conference of the Archaeological Association of the University of Calgary*. Calgary, University Press.
- Weiss, K.M. (1972) On the systematic bias in skeletal sexing. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 37: 239–49.
- Whitehouse, R.D. (1992a) *Underground Religion. Cult and Culture in Prehistoric Italy*. London, Accordia Research Centre.
- Whitehouse, R. (1992b) Tools the manmaker: the cultural construction of gender in Italian prehistory. *Accordia Research Papers* 3: 41–53.
- Whitehouse, R. (1996) Continuity in ritual practice from Upper Paleolithic to Neolithic and Copper Age in southern Italy and Sicily. In V. Tinè (ed.), *Forme e tempi della neolitizzazione in Italia meridionale e in Sicilia. Atti del seminario internazionale, Rossano 29 aprile — 2 maggio 1994*: 385–410. Rossano, IRACEB/IIAS.
- Whitehouse, R.D. (1998) (ed.) *Gender and Italian Archaeology. Challenging the Stereotypes*. London, Accordia Research Institute and Institute of Archaeology.
- Whitehouse, R. (in press) Gender in the South Italian Neolithic: a combinatory approach. In S.M. Nelson and M. Rosen-Ayalon (eds), *In Pursuit of Gender. Worldwide Archaeological Approaches*. Walnut Creek/London/New Delhi, AltaMira Press.
- Whitehouse, R. and Herring, E. (in preparation) The ambiguous Warrior of Capestrano. Paper presented at the Fifth Annual Conference of the European Association of Archaeologists in Bournemouth, 14–19 September 1999.

- Wilkins, J.B. (in preparation) *Image and reality: the language of some early élites in ancient Italy*. Paper given at the British School at Rome, December 1998.
- Wright, R.P. (1996) (ed.) *Gender and Archaeology*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Zampetti, D. and Mussi, M. (1991) *Segni del potere, simboli del potere: la problematica del Paleolitico Superiore italiano*. In E. Herring, R. Whitehouse and J. Wilkins (eds), *Papers of the Fourth Conference of Italian Archaeology 2*: 149–60. London, Accordia Research Centre.