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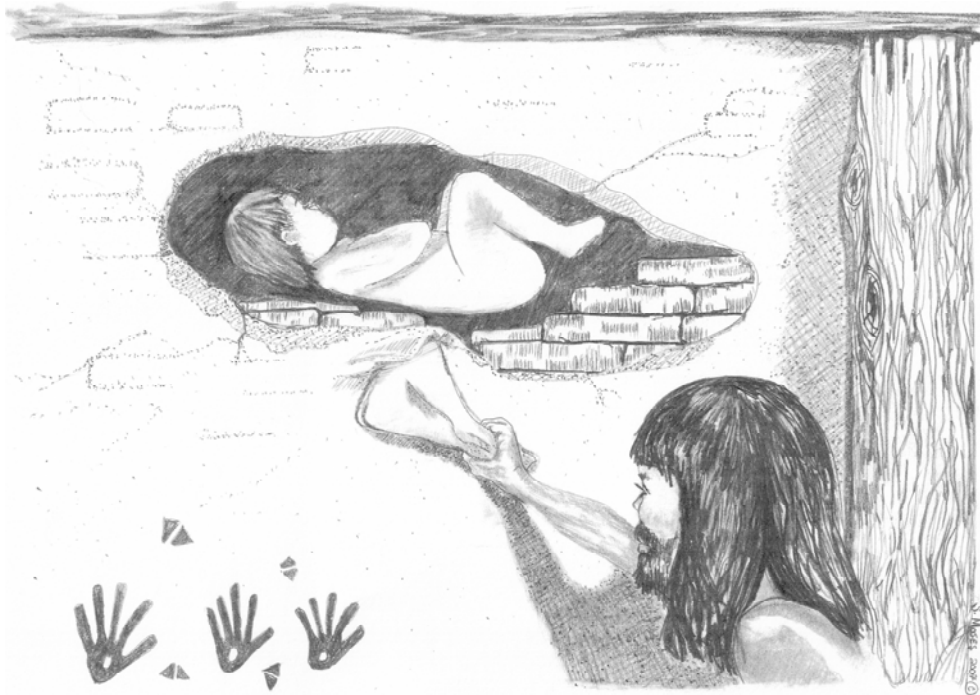


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# Babies Reborn: Infant/Child Burials in Pre- and Protohistory

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# INFANT/CHILD BURIALS AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN THE BRONZE AGE AND EARLY IRON AGE (C. 2100-800 BC) OF CENTRAL ITALY

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**Abstract:** *Special treatment of the remains of children is a well-known feature in Central Italy from the Neolithic onwards. Here I will focus on the evidence for the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in two adjacent Central Italian regions (Abruzzo and Lazio). It will be argued that mortuary practice involving neonates, infants and children was connected with domestic symbolism, showing the enhanced cultural significance of infant/child burials. Investing child burials with domestic symbolism, burying communities singled out fundamental values in the social reproduction of households and local communities in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age of Central Italy.*

**Key words:** *Central Italy, prehistory, child burials*

**Résumé:** *Le traitement spécial des ossements d'enfants est une caractéristique connue de la préhistoire en Italie Centrale. Cet article concerne des données de l'Age du Bronze et du premier Age du Fer dans deux régions limitrophes, notamment Abruzzo et Lazio (Italie Centrale). Les pratiques funéraires des enfants étaient liées au symbolisme domestique, montrant une signification culturelle élevée dans sépultures d'enfants. Avec ce symbolisme domestique dans les sépultures d'enfants, les gens de l'Age du Bronze et du premier Age du Fer en Italie Centrale mettaient l'accent sur des valeurs fondamentales de la reproduction sociale des communautés locales.*

**Mots clés:** *Italie Centrale, préhistoire, sépultures d'enfants*

## INTRODUCTION

Special treatment of the remains of children is a well-known feature of prehistoric society in Central Italy from the Neolithic onwards. The inclusion of children in funerary and other ritual practices has increased their archaeological visibility, but leaves us with a number of questions. First of all, there is the issue that in most prehistoric situations burial was selective, i.e. we can assume that selection of individuals for burial took place. In general, the treatment of the majority of prehistoric people escapes us archaeologically. Therefore we should be aware that not only infant/child burials, but also adult burials represented a select group in prehistoric funerary traditions. The issue of selection brings us to the second question: To what extent do prehistoric burials have to be regarded as acts of structured deposition in a wider social and cultural context? To answer this question, burials should be compared with contemporary acts of deposition at other places in the framework of a cultural landscape approach.

With these two main questions in mind, the aim of this paper is to give a contextualized overview of the evidence for infant/child burials in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age of Abruzzo and Lazio, two adjacent regions in Central Italy, stretching from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian side of the peninsula. The chronological scope covers transformations from collective to individual burial, and from selective to non-selective burial. The limited space available here does not provide the opportunity to go into as much detail in the overview of the situation of non-selective burial in the Early Iron Age, as will be the case in the overview of the situation of selective burial in the Bronze Age. The emphasis in the

former case will lie on qualitative observations that can be used in comparison with the latter case.

## INFANT/CHILD BURIALS IN THE BRONZE AGE OF ABRUZZO AND LAZIO

In this section an overview of infant/child burials in Abruzzo and Lazio will be presented for the four phases of the Italian Bronze Age. Given the circumstance of selective burial in this period, the approach adopted is a qualitative one – including wider contextual information – rather than a quantitative one. In general, archaeological visibility of mortuary practice is low for the earlier phases of the Bronze Age.

### Early Bronze Age (c. 2100-1700 BC)

In line with the overall scarcity of evidence for the Early Bronze Age, only a few burial contexts are known from Central Italy as a whole (Cocchi Genick 1998). This suggests that burial was very selective and/or took forms that are archaeologically invisible. In Lazio the Eneolithic tradition of collective burial in rock-cut chamber tombs (Dolfini 2006) may have continued into the first phase of the Early Bronze Age. Its use of man-made structures for repeated, collective burial including the deposition of ceramics, can also be found in a ritual structure at Fosso Conicchio that was used during the Final Eneolithic and the first phase of the Early Bronze Age. Among the disarticulated remains from this structure, two children have been identified (Table 17.1). In Abruzzo, on the other hand, predominantly natural places (i.e. caves) seem to have been used for repeated, collective burial and for the deposition of ceramics and foodstuffs (Cocchi Genick

Table 17.1. Infant/child burials in Abruzzo and Lazio: Early Bronze Age

site	context	children	adults	references
Fosso Conicchio (Viterbo, Lazio)	structure used for ritual practices (including disarticulated human remains)	child (7-8y) adolescent (14-15y)	3 adults	Fugazzola Delpino & Pellegrini 1999, 152-154
Grotta Sant'Angelo (Civitella del Tronto, Teramo, Abruzzo)	cave used for burial (disarticulated human remains) and domestic ritual practices	infant (3y) child (10y) adolescent (15y)	1 adult	Mallegni & Ronco 1996, 266-267

Table 17.2. Infant/child burials in Abruzzo and Lazio: Middle Bronze Age

site	context	children	adults	references
Torre dei Passeri (Pescara, Abruzzo)	structure used for domestic ritual practices (including disarticulated human remains)	foetus/neonate (femur)	adult (skull)	Recchia 2003
Prato di Frabulino (Farnese, Viterbo, Lazio)	rock-cut chamber tomb with disarticulated human remains	1 child (6-10y)	3 adults	Casi <i>et al.</i> 1995
Crostoletto di Lamone (Ischia di Castro, Viterbo, Lazio)	cairn of stones with inhumations in an area used for ritual practice	1 child (at the feet of the adults)	2 adults	Cocchi Genick 2002, 124-125
Felcetone (Ischia di Castro, Viterbo, Lazio)	rock fissure used for burial (disarticulated human remains) and domestic ritual practices	2 "very young" individuals	12 adults (and adolescents?)	Rittatore 1951b, 164
Grotta Di Carli (Ischia di Castro, Viterbo, Lazio)	cave used for burial (disarticulated human remains) and domestic ritual practices	1 child (10y)	3 adults	Allegrezza 2000
Grotta Misa (Ischia di Castro, Viterbo, Lazio)	cave used for burial (disarticulated human remains) and domestic ritual practices	4 children	6 adults	Rittatore 1951a, 18
Grotta dello Sventatoio (Sant'Angelo Romano, Roma, Lazio)	cave used for burial (disarticulated human remains) and domestic ritual practices	3 young children (secondarily burnt pieces of skull)		Angle <i>et al.</i> 1991/1992
Grotta Regina Margherita (Colleparado, Frosinone, Lazio)	cave used for burial (disarticulated human remains) and domestic ritual practices	1 neonate 1 child 1 adolescent	2 adults	Guidi 1981, 53-54
Grotta Vittorio Vecchi (Sezze, Latina, Lazio)	cave used for burial (disarticulated and articulated human remains) and domestic ritual practices	11 children (a.o. 0-1y and 6-7y)	29 adults	Guidi 1991/1992, 428-431

1998). In the assemblage from Grotta Sant'Angelo, disarticulated remains of three children have been identified (Table 17.1). In addition, a couple of man-made burial contexts have been found (Cocchi Genick 1998), which were exclusive to adults.

Despite the small size of this sample, we can make the following observations about child burial in the Early Bronze Age. In general, the majority of burial places were used repeatedly and incorporated practices of secondary burial, given the disarticulated state of human remains. These places were not only used for collective burial, but simultaneously for other depositional practices, arguably with a domestic connotation. Children have only been identified as disarticulated remains in such collective burial and/or ritual contexts. This shows that the remains

of children were primarily associated with secondary treatment in the context of domestic ritual practices that probably served a collective purpose.

#### Middle Bronze Age (c. 1700-1350 BC)

In line with the wider availability of evidence for the Middle Bronze Age in Central Italy (Cocchi Genick 2002), the number of burial contexts known from Abruzzo and Lazio has increased. As in the previous period, the majority of human remains have been found in a disarticulated state, in the context of collective burial places. Although there is some evidence for the continued use of caves for burial and domestic ritual practices in Abruzzo, no remains of children have been identified in these assemblages. The only instance of an infant/child

Table 17.3. Infant/child burials in Abruzzo and Lazio: Late Bronze Age

site	context	children	adults	references
Grotta Sant' Angelo (Civitella del Tronto, Teramo, Abruzzo)	cave used for burial (disarticulated human remains) and domestic ritual practices	infant (2-3y) child (6-8y) child (13y)	1 adult	Mallegni & Ronco 1996, 267
Cavallo Morto (Anzio, Roma, Lazio)	urnfield comprising of at least 40 individual cremation burials (17 of which could be analysed)	infant (1-2y) child (3-7y) child (4-5y) child adolescent (<17y) adolescent (<17y)	11 adults	Angle <i>et al.</i> 2004, 139-140

burial is represented by the femur of a foetus or neonate found in a man-made underground structure at Torre dei Passeri (Table 17.2). The ritual character of this structure is represented by a skull fragment of an adult male, and as wide a range of objects with a domestic connotation (e.g. miniature vessels and spindlewhorls) as in contemporary ritual cave assemblages (Van Rossenberg 2005a, 80f).

Burial evidence in Lazio is overwhelming for the Middle Bronze Age, and derives predominantly from caves that were used simultaneously for other depositional practices. The latter are mainly represented by offerings of foodstuffs, in combination with depositions of objects with a domestic connotation, such as ceramic vessels, spindlewhorls and quernstones and/or mullers (Cocchi Genick 2002, 125-148). The predominantly disarticulated state of human remains found in caves suggests that these bones represent instances of secondary burial or handling of human remains, in the context of domestic ritual practices. The disarticulated human remains amount to a minimum number of eighty individuals, among which approximately twenty-five children have been identified (Table 17.2). Children were also represented in other, less frequent types of burial, i.e. as disarticulated remains in a chamber tomb (Prato di Frabulino) and as a primary burial in the context of a cairn of stones (Crostoletto di Lamone) (Table 17.2).

The relative abundance of burial evidence, especially in Lazio, should not be interpreted in the sense that burial was less selective in the Middle Bronze Age than in the previous period. The peak in the use of caves for the (re)deposition of human remains – as part of a body of domestic ritual practices – may simply represent a case of increased archaeological visibility. Significantly, all Middle Bronze Age burial contexts in Abruzzo and Lazio can be regarded as collective places, and again the remains of children have been found exclusively at sites that were used simultaneously for burial and ritual practice (Table 17.2). The young individuals selected for burial included neonates (Torre dei Passeri, Grotta Regina Margherita, Grotta Vittorio Vecchi). In some cases there is evidence that the skulls of children were singled out for particular ritual practices, such as secondary burning (Grotta dello Sventatoio) and acts of structured deposition

in combination with ceramic vessels (Grotta Vittorio Vecchi). These instances highlight the secondary treatment of human remains – and children in particular – as part of a body of ritual practices that served a collective purpose.

#### Late Bronze Age (c. 1350-1200 BC)

For the Late Bronze Age only a limited number of burial places are known in Central Italy, which suggests that burial was selective, as in the previous phases of the Bronze Age. In Abruzzo, a number of caves remained in use as places for burial and other ritual practices in the Late Bronze Age, whereas in Lazio all caves had been abandoned at this stage (Guidi 1991/1992). The decrease in the use of caves has made mortuary practice of the Late Bronze Age archaeologically less visible than the previous phase. In Abruzzo, three children (2-3y, 6-8y and 13y) have been identified among the disarticulated remains of four individuals in the assemblage of Grotta Sant' Angelo (Table 17.3), buried before the cave was abandoned at the start of the Final Bronze Age. At the same time, a tradition of individual inhumation burials emerged in Abruzzo and continued in the Final Bronze Age. At Paludi di Celano a series of inhumations under barrows started with the burial of a young adult male (20-23y) in the Late Bronze Age (D'Ercole 2001).

After the abandonment of caves, the only burial evidence for the Late Bronze Age in Lazio is represented by an urnfield excavated at Cavallo Morto (Angle *et al.* 2004). Of the approximately forty cremation burials that were excavated at this site, seventeen could be analysed; four of these incorporated children and two incorporated adolescents (Table 17.3). Bronze objects were overrepresented in the burials of young individuals, with respect to the adult burials. Whereas only four out of eleven adult burials included a fibula and/or a razor, a fibula was included in the burials of three children and one adolescent (four out of six). Moreover, the fibulae in the three infant/child burials were complete, whereas those in the adolescent and adult burials were fragmented, possibly as a result of the actual cremation. The differentiation in the treatment of these grave goods coincides with the age gap between children and adolescents represented in this

cemetery (Table 17.3). This age-related phenomenon sets the infant/child burials apart as acts of structured deposition including complete valuable objects. As such, it might contradict the common notion in Italian prehistory that grave goods in individual burials have to be regarded indiscriminately as personal items and that wealth in child burials represents ascribed status, indicative of pronounced social stratification (cf. McHugh 1999, 24ff. on wealthy child burials).

Given the socially disruptive implications normally attributed to the transition from collective to individual burial, here I will develop the argument by highlighting similarities with the situation in the previous period. The relative scarcity of burial evidence in the Late Bronze Age – both in terms of the total number of buried individuals and the number of burial places – shows that burial, as far as we know it, was selective. It seems likely that the limited number of new open-air cemeteries with primary, individual burials (i.e. inhumation in Abruzzo and cremation in Lazio) would have served a collective purpose as central burial places for a number of settlements (*contra* Angle *et al.* 2004, 125-128 on Cavallo Morto), similar to that of caves. As in selective burial in caves (Grotta Sant'Angelo), children were included in the new traditions of individual burial (Cavallo Morto). In fact, the proportion of children identified at Cavallo Morto recalls the proportion in cave assemblages of the previous period (i.e. approximately one third). Finally, there is circumstantial evidence that – as acts of structured deposition including metalwork – the primary infant/child burials at Cavallo Morto had domestic connotations similar to secondary burial as part of domestic ritual practices in caves, if we extrapolate the domestic connotation of bronze ornaments in contemporary acts of structured deposition in the context of settlements (Van Rosenberg 2005a, 79-82).

### Final Bronze Age (c. 1200-1000 BC)

In the Final Bronze Age caves in Abruzzo were abandoned as places for burial and other ritual practices, and a new regionally specific tradition of inhumation under barrows emerged (Cosentino *et al.* 2003). This concerned selective burial, as only ten primary burials are known in the region, half of which make up a small cemetery excavated at Paludi di Celano (D'Ercole 2001). In this series of six inhumation burials in tree coffins under barrows, two children have been identified (Table 17.4). On the basis of the assumption that ornaments were gender specific grave goods, all individuals in Final Bronze Age burials have been identified as female, including the two children from the cemetery at Paludi di Celano, who are regarded as girls. Given the domestic connotation of the deposition of ornaments in settlements in the Final Bronze Age (Van Rosenberg 2005a, 82), like in the previous period, we can argue that burials were acts of structured deposition with a domestic connotation. Another element of the shift in location of burial and domestic ritual practices from caves to settlements in the

Final Bronze Age (Van Rosenberg 2005a, 82) can be found in the curation of disarticulated human skulls in settlements. One of two fragments from the settlement at Fondjò has been attributed to a child (Table 17.4).

Burial evidence for the Final Bronze Age in Lazio represents a tradition of cremation burials in cemeteries or urnfields (Di Gennaro & Guidi 2000, 111-114; Pacciarelli 2000, 202-216). Osteological analysis of cremated remains has been adopted in archaeological research only relatively recently, which limits the availability of information on age and sex of buried individuals to modern excavations. Infant/child burials have been identified both in smaller cemeteries (Le Caprine) and in nuclei of burials in larger cemeteries or areas reserved for burial (Monte Tosto Alto, Poggio La Pozza) (Table 17.4). From this limited sample, the striking pattern emerges that almost all of the infant/child burials can be characterised as elaborate, in the context of both multiple and individual burials (Table 17.4). They were invested with domestic symbolism (Van Rosenberg 2005b, 86ff.), in the form of grave goods with a domestic connotation, such as pottery (e.g. storage vessels as containers of cremation burials; smaller accessory vessels), spinning and/or weaving equipment (e.g. spindlewhorl, bobbin, distaff) and, as argued above, bronze ornaments (e.g. fibulae, rings). Domestic symbolism was also highlighted in miniaturism (cf. Bailey 2005, chapter 2) of grave goods, such as accessory vessels and bronze objects (e.g. fibulae, knives), and the containers of the cremated remains (e.g. smaller urns), epitomized in the urns in the form of houses (so-called hut urns, e.g. Le Caprine). Finally, the majority of the children that were singled out for these burials seem to have belonged to a specific age group (<6y) (Table 17.4, cf. the age distribution of Cavallo Morto in the previous period, see Table 17.3). This age group may have had a domestic connotation in itself, if we assume that until the age of six to ten years children would have been confined to the settlement and thus linked metaphorically with the domestic sphere. Individuals belonging to this 'domestic' age group, i.e. those who had died before they had been vested with a social persona beyond the domestic sphere, became incorporated in the larger social group in the act of burial, invested with domestic symbolism, in the context of a communal cemetery.

Here I will develop the argument that the category of "wealthy child burials" (cf. McHugh 1999, 24ff.) should be regarded as acts of structured deposition with a domestic connotation. An important question that arises in the context of structured deposition is to what extent cremation burials should be regarded as primary depositions, or rather as final acts in a prolonged funerary sequence. Especially in the largest cemetery (Poggio La Pozza) there is ample evidence for secondary handling of cremated remains in the form of multiple burials (Table 17.4) and emptied burials (Van Rosenberg 2005b, 86). In this respect, it should be appreciated that this particular cemetery was situated in a large area that provided a focus

Table 17.4. Infant/child burials in Abruzzo and Lazio: Final Bronze Age

site	context	children	adults	references
Paludi di Celano (L'Aquila, Abruzzo) (cemetery with at least 6 barrows)	individual inhumation under barrow 5	infant (2-3y) with fibula		D'Ercole 2001
	individual inhumation under barrow 6	child (7-10y) with fibula and two fingerings		D'Ercole 2001
Fondjò (Collelongo, L'Aquila, Abruzzo)	disarticulated human remains in settlement context	child (skull fragment)	adult (skull fragment)	Grifoni Cremonesi 1973, 521
Luni-Tre Erici (Blera, Viterbo, Lazio)	inhumation under house floor	child (10-12)		Östenberg 1967, 42- 43
Poggio La Pozza (Allumiere, Roma, Lazio) (cemetery with at least 40 cremation burials)	multiple cremation burial (in two urns)	"young child" with fibula (in one urn)	adult (in other urn)	Bastianelli 1939, 45-47
	individual cremation burial F1	child (5-9y) with fibula, ring and 10 amber beads (in the urn)		Peroni 1960, 345- 346, 351; D'Ercole 1998, 182, n.1
	multiple cremation burial F2 (in one urn)	child (0-6y) with a.o. 2 bronze fibulae, 2 pendants, 2 spirals, wheel- shaped pin-head and 26 amber beads (in the urn)	2 adults	Peroni 1960, 346- 347, 351-352; D'Ercole 1998, 182, n. 1
	individual cremation burial F3	adolescent (13-21y) with accessory vessel		Peroni 1960, 347- 349, 353; D'Ercole 1998, 182, n.1
	multiple cremation burial 6 (in one urn)	infant/child (0-6y) with bone disk fragment decorated with circles	adult	D'Ercole 1995, 177- 178
	individual cremation burial 13	infant/child (0-6y) with fibula and zoomorphic miniature vessel (with bronze lid), and 2 rings on the lid of the urn		D'Ercole 1998, 183
	individual cremation burial 17	infant/child (0-6y)		D'Ercole 1998, 184
	individual cremation burial 19	infant/child (0-6y) with ring and accessory vessel		D'Ercole 1998, 185
	multiple cremation burial 20 (in one urn)	infant/child (0-6y) with fibula and ring	adult	D'Ercole 1998, 185- 186
Monte Tosto Alto (Cerveteri, Roma, Lazio) (nucleus of at least 3 cremation burials in a larger cemetery)	individual burial	infant (0-1y) with 2 small or miniature vessels		Trucco <i>et al.</i> 2000, 488
	individual burial	child/adolescent (12-15y) with fibula and chain of rings (in small urn), and set of 5 small or miniature vessels		Trucco <i>et al.</i> 2000, 487-488
Le Caprine (Guidonia, Roma, Lazio) (cemetery with 5 elaborate cremation burials)	multiple burial 2	infant (c. 1y) in hut urn (incorporated in cremation burial of adult), with set of 9 miniature vessels	adult	Damiani <i>et al.</i> 1998, 204-205
	individual burial 4	adolescent (female) with fibula, set of 5 miniature vessels and 7 bobbins		Damiani <i>et al.</i> 1998, 205-206
	individual burial 5	infant (6m-2y) with miniature knife, large number of ornaments, 10 glass- paste beads, spindlewhorl, 4 bobbins, bronze distaff, bone comb, ivory comb, bronze object decorated with two stylized birds (in miniature urn), and set of 8 miniature vessels		Damiani <i>et al.</i> 1998, 206-208

for communal practices by a number of settlements (Di Gennaro & Guidi 2000, 112). Apart from burial, Final Bronze Age depositional practices included hoards or

depositions of metalwork – often predominated by ornaments – contained in ceramic vessels (Fugazzola Delpino 1975). Such acts of structured deposition of objects in a

ceramic container show a conceptual link with the urn as a container in cremation burials. On a smaller scale, similar depositional practices can be discerned in the cemetery at Le Caprine (Table 17.4), including a multiple burial, incorporating the cremated remains of an infant in a curated or redeposited 'hut urn', and a wealthy child burial with grave goods that show many similarities with contemporary hoards of metalwork (Van Rosenberg 2005b, 88). These connections underscore that cremation burials as depositions were comparable with contemporary, non-funerary acts of structured deposition. The selection of individuals from a 'domestic' age group, i.e. infants/children, and grave goods with a domestic connotation, made that elaborate burials represented communal values in social reproduction rather than personal status *per se* (Van Rosenberg 2005b, 86). In this respect, the instance represented by the inhumation of an older child (10-12y) under a house floor (Luni-Tre Erci) (Table 17.4), deviating from the norm of cremation, highlights both the domestic connotation of burial and in contrast the elaborateness of cremation burials. In the context of communal cemeteries in the Final Bronze Age (Di Genaro & Guidi 2000, 112), elaborate infant/child burials were instrumental in community formation, articulating domestic with collective identities.

### INFANT/CHILD BURIALS IN THE EARLY IRON AGE (C. 1000-800 BC) OF ABRUZZO AND LAZIO

Traditionally, socially disruptive implications have also been attributed to the transformation of mortuary practice at the Bronze Age-Iron Age transition. In Abruzzo burial became less selective in the Early Iron Age than in any phase of the Bronze Age, whereas in Lazio burial seems to have become non-selective in the Early Iron Age. Consequently, larger cemeteries predominate the burial record for this period in Central Italy. Given the limited space available in this paper, the better known situation in Lazio will be presented in the form of established interpretations, whereas infant/child burials in Abruzzo will be discussed at more length. The emphasis in this section will lie on qualitative observations on infant/child burials in the Early Iron Age that can be used in comparison with the Bronze Age case. With this particular focus, it shows that there were many similarities between mortuary practice in the Early Iron Age and in the Bronze Age, mainly in the connections between infant/child burials and domestic symbolism.

#### Abruzzo

Burial evidence for the Early Iron Age in Abruzzo represents a continuation of the tradition of individual inhumation burials under barrows, in a less selective manner, thus giving rise to a number of smaller and larger cemeteries (Cosentino *et al.* 2003). So far the largest cemetery has been excavated at Fossa, which consists of approximately fifty barrows dating to the Early Iron Age and the first phase of the Late Iron Age (Cosentino *et al.*

2001b). Among these at least fifteen infant/child and adolescent burials have been recognised (Table 17.5). On the basis of grave goods, age groups of children (<10y), adolescents (<18y) and adults (>20y) have been distinguished. The distinction between the latter two categories seems to have been one of degree. Four adolescent burials have been attributed to young men (Cosentino *et al.* 2001b, 66f, 73f, 74-77 and 79ff), on the basis of weaponry (i.e. swords and spearheads) as a male gender indicator in adult burials. The treatment of swords in two child burials was different, i.e. one positioned with the point towards the face instead of the feet and the other (deliberately?) fragmented (Cosentino *et al.* 2001b, 92f and 115f). This distinction suggests that adolescents would have been familiar with handling weaponry, whereas younger boys were not. One adolescent burial has been attributed to a young woman, with a necklace of amber beads and an ivory ornament (Cosentino *et al.* 2001b, 120ff), on the basis of the absence of weaponry and the presence of elaborate ornaments as female gender indicators in adult burials. Apart from the two swords mentioned, no gender indicators have been singled out to tell boys and girls apart on the basis of their grave goods. The predominance of ornaments, such as fibulae, bracelets and rings, in infant/child burials however, does recall the later Bronze Age association between ornaments and this age group.

In the cemetery at Fossa the following chronological and spatial patterns can be discerned. Whereas in the first phase of the Early Iron Age only adults were buried (save one neonate), in the second phase child and adolescent burials comprised one third (Table 17.5). In the first phase of the Late Iron Age only children and adolescents (save one adult) were selected for an Early Iron Age type of burial under barrows (Table 17.5). In general, the smaller barrows of children and adolescent burials were situated in the spaces left open by the larger barrows of adult burials that had been built in the earlier phases of the cemetery. Given the occurrence of storage vessels in direct association with the earliest barrows, it has been argued that these spaces were used for ancestralising practices of communal and commemorative food consumption (Cosentino *et al.* 2001b, 197-203). Conceptualised as domestic and ancestral, these spaces were not inappropriate places for child burials, given their domestic connotation in the Bronze Age. The ancestral dimension is underscored by the fact that the majority of Late Iron Age interments – including child burials – took place in earlier barrows. One of the barrows that was selected as a focus for these later interments, had already provided a focus for the neonate burial in the first phase of the Early Iron Age (Cosentino *et al.* 2001b, 104 and 126).

Patterns similar to those discerned at Fossa (i.e. the long-term use of the same area for burial; the positioning of infant/child burials in particular plots; the reuse of earlier barrows for interments, or as a focus for infant/child burials) can be found in Iron Age cemeteries with a

Table 17.5. Infant/child burials in Abruzzo: Early Iron Age and Late Iron Age (first phase)

site	context	children	references
Fossa (Casale, L'Aquila) (cemetery with approximately 50 inhumations under barrows, Early Iron Age & first phase of the Late Iron Age)	Early Iron Age (first phase), with 12 adult burials	neonate (0-3m)	Cosentino <i>et al.</i> 2001b, 191, fig. 56
	Early Iron Age (second phase), with 10 adult burials	child (3-5y), child (5-9y), child (5-9y), child (6-10y), adolescent (14-17y), adolescent (15-18y)	Cosentino <i>et al.</i> 2001b, 191, fig. 56
	Late Iron Age (first phase), with 1 adult burial	2 infants, infant/child (2-4y), infant/child (2-8y), child (6-8y), adolescent (12-15y), adolescent (14-16y), adolescent (15-17y)	Cosentino <i>et al.</i> 2001b, 191, fig. 56
Piani Palentini (Scurcola Marsicana, L'Aquila) (cemetery with at least 13 barrows, Early Iron Age & first phase of the Late Iron Age)	group of four elaborate infant/child burials in simple graves, Early Iron Age-Late Iron Age (first phase)	neonate (0-6m), with fibula, necklace, pendants and spirals (Early Iron Age)	Cosentino <i>et al.</i> 2001a, 185-187, 190-191
		infant/child (0-6y), with 4 fibulae, bracelet, 2 rings and necklace (Early Iron Age)	
		neonate (0-6m), with small spearhead outside grave (Late Iron Age)	
	elaborate child burial under barrow, Early Iron Age (final stage)	child (4-8y) with decorative belt, fibulae, necklaces, pendants, bracelets	Cosentino <i>et al.</i> 2001a, 196-199
San Benedetto in Perillis (L'Aquila) (small Iron Age cemetery with 7 burials)	earliest burial, Early Iron Age	infant/child, with 2 fibulae and necklace	D'Ercole & Grassi 2000, 201
	2 elaborate infant/child burials, Late Iron Age (first phase)	infant/child, with dagger, 2 fibulae, rings, bracelet, torques and 3 vessels	D'Ercole & Grassi 2000, 201
infant/child, with bracelet, ring, fibula, and torques			
Bazzano (L'Aquila) (large Iron Age cemetery)	early (earliest?) elaborate burial under barrow (Early Iron Age-Late Iron Age transition), in area used for neonate and infant burials, Late Iron Age (first phase)	child (4-6y?), with bracelets, fibulae, dress-pin, sword and knife	Cosentino <i>et al.</i> 2001b, 215-217; Costentino <i>et al.</i> 2003, 435-438, D'Ercole <i>et al.</i> 2003
Campo di Monte (Caporciano, L'Aquila) (small Iron Age cemetery)	infant/child burials next to earlier barrows, Late Iron Age (first phase)	neonate 2 infants/children	D'Ercole & Grassi 2000, 199-201; Cosentino <i>et al.</i> 2001b, 220-222
Campovalano (Campli, Teramo) (large Iron Age cemetery)	earliest burial, Early Iron Age	infant/child or adolescent, with small fibula	Cosentino <i>et al.</i> 2001b, 225
	elaborate child burial in barrow (possibly as act of reuse), Late Iron Age (first phase)	child, with a vessel containing spindlewhorl and 8 bobbins	Cosentino <i>et al.</i> 2001b, 225
La Cona (Teramo) (large Iron Age cemetery with several clusters of burials)	elaborate child burial interred in earlier barrow, Late Iron Age (first phase)	child (2-4y) with torques, rings, pendants, fibulae, knife, spearhead and 6 vessels	D'Ercole & Grassi 2000, 194-195
	group of three infant/child burials next to earlier barrow, Late Iron Age (first phase)	neonate (0-3m), with necklace, fibula, pendants, rings and small vessel	D'Ercole & Grassi 2000, 195
		infant/child, with 2 vessels	
	child (4-6y), with pendant, fibula, knife and vessel		
area reserved for elaborate infant/child burials, in association with two interred storage vessels, Late Iron Age (first phase)	2 neonates, child (6-8y), child (6-10y)	Savini & Torrieri 2003	

smaller number of Early Iron Age burials (Table 17.5). Both in larger and smaller cemeteries infant/child burials were restricted to particular plots within the cemetery. They occurred under smaller barrows and in groups of graves situated in the spaces left open by earlier barrows (e.g. Fossa, Piani Palentini) in the Early Iron Age and the first phase of the Late Iron Age. In the latter phase they were situated either in connection with earlier barrows (e.g. Bazzano, Campo di Monte, La Cona) or in segregated spaces in a larger cemetery (e.g. La Cona). In the smaller cemeteries children (<10y) were singled out for elaborate acts of structured deposition that were mostly unparalleled in adult burials.

These elaborate burials probably coincided with the inception and lay-out of a cemetery (e.g. San Benedetto in Perillis, Bazzano) or a change in its use (e.g. Piani Palentini). At Piani Palentini the most elaborate child burial, dated to the end of the Early Iron Age, was situated in the part of the cemetery that became the focus for reuse, in the form of interments in earlier barrows, in the Late Iron Age. Given the reuse of the central graves under barrows in this period (Cosentino *et al.* 2001a, 184), this elaborate child burial could in itself represent the reuse of grave goods from an earlier burial. Its NE orientation marked the broadening of the range of orientations from ENE to ESE in the Early Iron Age to NE to SE in the Late Iron Age. At Bazzano the first child burial incorporated two orientations – the body to the SE and the sword to the S in line with a row of standing stones running from the edge of the barrow – that were followed in two rows of infant/child burials in the first phase of the Late Iron Age. A N/S orientation was rarely used and most likely had particular religious connotations, thus conceptually segregating this group of burials. This is not unlike the physically segregated group of infant/child burials at La Cona, which incorporated an equally infrequent orientation of NNE.

In the case of Fossa it was argued that infant/child burials were connected with domestic concerns in the Early Iron Age, in the sense that commemorative practices of food consumption took place in the same spaces used for child burial in the cemetery. This commemorative ancestral dimension of these spaces may explain the absence of vessels as grave goods in infant/child burials in the Early Iron Age, as opposed to adult burials. Infant/child burials also included a range of ornaments as grave goods, arguably with a domestic connotation in the later Bronze Age. Commemorative practices of food consumption were also recognized in two storage vessels in the infant/child burial plot at La Cona, in the first phase of the Late Iron Age. Starting with this phase, vessels became normal accessories in infant/burials, as they had been earlier in adult burials. They can be regarded as a domestic dimension and should be seen in the light of the contemporary elaborate child burial at Campovalano with a vessel that contained spinning equipment (i.e. spindle-whorls, bobbins) as an act of structured deposition.

The majority of child burials in the Early Iron Age and the first phase of the Late Iron Age belonged to a specific age group (<6y). Only the largest cemetery excavated so far (Fossa) has provided a considerable number of burials of older children (<12y) and adolescents (<18y). These age groups are underrepresented in smaller cemeteries for which information is available on the age of buried individuals. One explanation is that burial was simply less selective at Fossa than in the other cemeteries. Another possibility is that the size of cemeteries was related to scales of social interaction and that we have to distinguish between smaller cemeteries with a local character and large cemeteries with a regional character. In that case, the fact that infants and young children (<6y) were selected for elaborate acts of burial in smaller cemeteries could have been connected with a threshold age of initiation into social life beyond the local, domestic sphere, as argued for the previous period. The elaborateness of child burials, as acts of structured deposition unparalleled in adult burials in local cemeteries, suggests that it was this young age group that was singled out to articulate domestic with collective identities in the Early Iron Age and the first phase of the Late Iron Age.

#### Lazio

In Lazio burial became more or less non-selective in the Early Iron Age, which gave rise to larger cemeteries, in some cases consisting of hundreds of burials. Given the wealth of burial evidence, the focus in this section will lie on established interpretations and, more in particular, previous studies on child burials in the region. Although this suggests that Early Iron Age burial in Lazio is well known, child burials remain underrepresented, with respect to adult burials, in the archaeological record. The debate on child burials focuses on the transition from the Early Iron Age to the Late Iron Age, when a tradition of infant burials emerged that was associated with houses in a number of settlement contexts (among other places, Rome) in the southern part of the region, and coincided with the disappearance of this age group from cemeteries (Bietti Sestieri & De Santis 1985, 39ff; Modica 1993). Before we turn to this later tradition of special treatment of infants with its obvious domestic connotations, I will illustrate the situation in the Early Iron Age and make comparisons with the situation in the Final Bronze Age, by taking one of the largest and best-published Iron Age cemeteries, Osteria dell'Osa (Bietti Sestieri 1992a & 1992b), as an example. In an attempt to explore the domestic aspects of burials in this cemetery on an earlier occasion (Van Rossenberg 2005c), I have given the wrong impression by presenting a number of elements that are specific to distinct phases of the cemetery, as if they occurred simultaneously. Here I will be more precise and elaborate on the Early Iron Age phases of the cemetery.

In terms of burial traditions in the Early Iron Age the Lazio region can be divided roughly into two parts, one to the north of the Tiber river, i.e. Southern Etruria, where

cremation predominated, and the other to the south, i.e. *Latium Vetus*, where inhumation and cremation co-existed, albeit the latter as a minority. For instance, at the Iron Age cemetery of Osteria dell'Osa approximately twenty cremation burials are outnumbered by some five hundred inhumation burials. The majority of the cremations can be dated to the first phase of the cemetery, in the first phase of the Early Iron Age. They were invested with domestic symbolism (Van Rossenberg 2005c, 130), epitomised by the house shape of more than half of the urns. Unlike the situation in the Final Bronze Age, in the Early Iron Age infants/children were excluded from cremation burials, save two adolescents or young adults (17-20y) (Bietti Sestieri 1992b, 563 and 616). In comparison with the Final Bronze Age situation that showed an overrepresentation of infants (<6y) followed by an underrepresentation (or age gap) including adolescence (6-18y), the age distribution of young individuals buried in the cemetery of Osteria in the first phase of the Early Iron Age seems normal. The age distribution of child burials dated to this phase is as follows: seventeen infants (0-5y), eleven children (6-10y), eleven older children/adolescents (11-15y) and six adolescents/young adults (16-20y).

If we take a look at the spatial distribution of cremations and child burials in this first phase of the cemetery, both categories stand out. Half of the cremation burials can be found dispersed at the centre of the cemetery and seem to have served as a focus, surrounded as they are by inhumation burials. The other half make up a cluster in a relatively open space at the margin of the cemetery that was reserved for cremation burials and structured (re)depositions of cremation assemblages, consisting of the urn and miniature objects (metalwork and accessory vessels), placed in graves normally used for inhumation. Given the apparent significance of the handling of cremation assemblages, this area of the cemetery can be regarded as a focus for ritual practices with a domestic connotation. Some child burials (<10y) were situated at the margin of this particular area, but the majority were spatially clustered with the dispersed cremation burials at the heart of the cemetery. The paradox of the exclusion of children from cremation burials, on the one hand, and the spatial connection between cremations and child burials, on the other, highlights that they were equally conceptualised as acts of structured deposition with a domestic connotation in the context of the cemetery. This is reinforced by the fact that elaborate child burials at Osteria included ornaments, for which a domestic connotation has been argued both in the Final Bronze Age and in the Early Iron Age in Abruzzo. Such a long-term and interregional perspective might argue against the interpretation proposed by the excavators (Bietti Sestieri 1992b, 504) that ornaments were gender specific (female) grave goods in infant/child burials, rather than of a generic domestic connotation.

In the second phase of the cemetery a new type of burial for infants/children was introduced, in the form of

inhumations in large storage vessels, i.e. objects with an obvious domestic connotation. These vessels were placed horizontally in a grave and contained infants/children in a supine position, which restricted this burial practice to children with a particular height and age (<6y). The excavators argue that this practice was gender specific (boys) (Bietti Sestieri 1992b, 503f), probably given the absence of ornaments, rather than of a generic domestic connotation (cf. above). In this second phase, the cemetery at Osteria expanded and new burial plots were laid out, while the old plots remained in use. Significantly, in the first phase, the first pair of burials in this new area had been an elaborate child burial (7-8y) and a structured (re)deposition of a cremation assemblage in a grave (Bietti Sestieri 1992b, 634 and 698f), in this case associated with the laying-out of a new part of the cemetery (cf. child burials in Iron Age cemeteries in Abruzzo). This element of foundation underscores the domestic connotation and central position of cremations and child burials as acts of structured deposition in the cemetery at Osteria. With the expansion of the cemetery in the second phase and the rarity of new cremation burials, child burials became a focus in themselves and started to cluster in their own right. In the overall distribution of the first and second phases of the cemetery (i.e. the first phase of the Early Iron Age) child burials were situated on the reconstructed boundaries between groups of burials that are regarded by the excavators as family plots. Rather than at the margins of one group (i.e. a household or extended family), this would have situated child burials – as acts of structured deposition with a domestic connotation – between groups, and thus at the centre of community formation in the context of the communal cemetery.

In the third phase of the cemetery (i.e. the second phase of the Early Iron Age), the emphasis in elaborate burials shifted from infants/children to adolescents, in the form of so-called weaver (or spinner) burials with large numbers of ornaments, spindlewhorls and bobbins. On an earlier occasion, I have argued for the conceptual complementarity between “weaver burials” and cremations as acts of structured deposition with a domestic connotation (Van Rossenberg 2005c, 130), but presented these practices as if they were contemporaneous phenomena at Osteria (following the ‘synchronic’ approach of the first three phases in Bietti Sestieri 1992b, 491-513). One reason for this mistake is the persuasiveness of stereotypical gender identities, i.e. male cremations (or “warrior burials”) and female “weaver burials”, which are often generalised to such an extent that the limits of contemporaneity are stretched (Whitehouse 2001, 83-87). Here it should be stressed that both practices, one following the other, can be regarded as elaborate burials or acts of structured deposition with a domestic connotation (Van Rossenberg 2005c). In this respect, we also have to consider to what extent the expression of idealised gender identities may have been confined to the context of burial and was connected with particular age groups. In the cemetery of Osteria “weaver burials” predominantly represented older

children (>12y) and young adults (<25y) (Bietti Sestieri 1992b, 504ff). This shows a shift in focus at Osteria in terms of the elaboration of child burials from younger age groups (<12y) in the first phase of the Early Iron Age to older age groups (>12y) in the second phase of the Early Iron Age, probably in connection with the expression of age groups eligible for marriage. Significantly, the decrease in emphasis on infants/children (<12y) coincided with the emergence of the practice of infant/child burials in the context of settlements at the transition from the Early Iron Age to the Late Iron Age (Bietti Sestieri & De Santis 1985; Modica 1993).

As mentioned in the introduction of this section, the discussion of this category of burials focuses on the evidence from a number of settlements (i.e. Rome, Ficana, Lavinium and Ardea) in the southern part of Lazio (Bietti Sestieri & De Santis 1985; Modica 1993; Teegen 1997; Roncoroni 2000). In the north, in Southern Etruria, only one child burial has been reported from Tarquinia as a putative example of the settlement burial tradition (Teegen 1997, 238). However, this child (8y) was not buried in a settlement context in the second phase of the Early Iron Age, but in an area that had been in use as a communal cult place since the end of the Final Bronze Age (Bonghi Jovino 2005). In the context of ritual practices, four neonates were buried in the same plot in the Late Iron Age (Chiaromonte Treré 1995). This shows an interesting parallel with the situation in the south of the region, where the age groups buried in settlement plots changed from children (7-12y) at the end of the Early Iron Age, to neonates and infants (0-5y) in the Late Iron Age (Modica 1993, fig. 8). As at Tarquinia, the plots that were reserved for infant burials in the context of settlements in the south, were connected with domestic ritual practice, given the spatial association with houses. These plots provided a communal focus for additional burials and other domestic ritual practices, and were in some cases institutionalised at a later stage. For instance, the foundation of the sanctuary with domestic connotations at Satricum at the end of the Late Iron Age was spatially and conceptually associated with an earlier settlement burial plot (Teegen 1997, 240f), possibly similar to the stratigraphically more complicated situation of early settlements in Rome itself (Modica 1993; Roncoroni 2000). This shows that we should not underestimate the degree of conceptual continuity in the historical trajectory of particular ritual practices and places. It may also explain why there is an opportunity to prolong the tradition of early historic Roman attitudes to child burial (Norman 2002) into the Late, if not Early Iron Age (Modica 1993; Roncoroni 2000).

### INFANT/CHILD BURIALS AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

In adopting a long-term approach to child burial in Abruzzo and Lazio, the aim of this article has not been to retroject early historic sources back into the Bronze Age.

What has been shown, is that the treatment of the youngest age groups in a distinctive manner at death had a long history and can be recognised throughout the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, although the position of child burials in the cultural landscape changed continuously. Whereas in the earlier phases of the Bronze Age infant/child burial was connected with collective places of burial and ritual practice, with the emergence of individual burial traditions in the later phases of the Bronze Age special treatment of infants/children in the context of cemeteries can be recognised more easily. The latter practices show continuity in the selection of younger age groups (<6y or <10y) for elaborate burials in the context of communal cemeteries in the earlier phases of the Iron Age. As such, we should regard child burials as an opportunity to express central values in an act of structured deposition. Contrary to the simple notion of “wealthy child burials” as a reflection of personal status *per se*, I have argued that child burials were used to articulate domestic with collective identities. In this respect, child burials can be regarded as one of the significant locales where social and cultural reproduction took place, and where we can locate social and cultural change.

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