INTRODUCTION

Dress is one of the most important visual communications for illustrating group affiliation and individual differentiation in contemporary ethnology. Dress is of great importance among non-verbal communication forms because people dress in specific ways to confirm or deny social norms. Ethnological studies emphasise that dress and ornament are the primary ways of communicating identity as they are transmitters of individual and group identities such as age, sex, status, and ethnicity, albeit sex is traditionally considered the basic criterion in the choice of dress.

But what is the situation for Iron Age Italy? Our knowledge of how people were dressed in the Iron Age and earlier periods is not extensive due to the scarce examples of preserved textiles and iconographic depictions and the absence of literary sources. Among the few indications of dress are the fibulas. Particularly, the fibulas are among the most familiar and extensively studied artefacts from the Italian Iron Age, and, in addition, they are among the most common finds in the graves. For this reason, they are an obvious point of departure for a study of dress and identity.

This article treats the question of whether we can determine aspects of identity in the form of biological sex and age by the presence of fibulas. Individual fibula types are analysed in relation to examined skeletons in order to determine if respectively men, women or certain age groups can be identified through different fibula types. These analyses are used as a starting point towards an investigation of Iron Age dress through a survey of the evidence at hand. Thus iconographical and other archaeological evidence in the form of e.g. preserved textiles and ornaments are investigated in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relation between biological sex, age and dress.

Identification of biological sex and age through objects

The method of employing certain objects to identify biological sex in the graves is, in many ways, obvious for archaeology since this research branch focuses on artefacts and is dependent on them in the understanding of past societies. Theoretically, objects can thus be perceived as having a gender. This should be understood as an object acquiring a gender, either on the grounds on intrinsic characteristics or because of inferential associations. Artefacts (grave goods) are therefore traditionally perceived by archaeologists as gendered because of their repeated and (often) exclusive association with individuals of a certain biological sex. As a result, grave goods are designated as ‘female’, ‘male’ or ‘gender neutral’.

In the Italian mortuary archaeology stereotypes are traditionally employed to explain what cate-
can have an ample influence on how the deceased adult individuals.

Archaeologists are, to a certain extent, able to distinguish children from adults, but not on age.10 Thus, there are no previous hypotheses concerning which grave goods were given to children and elders compared to adult individuals.

The age of the individual is, however, interesting in relation to the study of necropolises, as age can have an ample influence on how the deceased was treated in the grave since age contributes to the definition and creation of individuality.11 Recent research has shown that archaeology has treated the adult age as an absolute supremacy, and earlier studies have tended to exclude children as a category.12 Furthermore, it has been argued that the few archaeological studies of children (but also elders) are a consequence of the same androcentric perceptions, which, especially earlier, marginalised or even disregarded women.13

Until recently, archaeological research with regard to children has mainly focused on the high mortality rate among children and the under-representation of children in the necropolises, or on more sensational studies of customs involving human sacrifice and infanticide.14 However, today, an increasing number of studies focus on childhood, while old age still seems to be neglected.15

Material

The point of departure for this article is two groups of material: anthropological determinations of the skeletal remains and fibulas. The analyses are based on a juxtaposition of these two sources of information. In regard of the fibulas only type and number are considered. Even though size and material might contribute further information, an examination hereof is beyond the scope of this article.

Anthropological determinations of the skeletons are employed despite such determinations not always being able to produce final conclusions with regard to age and biological sex, giving a considerable element of uncertainty.16 Anthropological determinations of biological sex with regard to child skeletons are very problematic, and hence they are not incorporated here.17 Finally, it should be noted that the accuracy of the determinations is highly dependent on the state of preservation of the skeleton, and it is, of course, preferable if the entire skeleton can be examined.18

The study is based on 437 graves with grave goods and preserved skeletal material analysed by physical anthropologists. According to their results, the graves consist of 155 males, 137 females, 46 individuals of unknown biological sex and 99 children. The geographical area comprises Central and Southern Italy (fig. 1). The Etruscan sites are Sesto Fiorentino19 and Veii Quattro Fontanili.20 In Latium: Ardea,21 Forum Romanum22 (Forum of Caesar area B and the area in front of the temple to Antoninus Pius and Faustina), Tivoli23 and Osteria dell’Osà.24 In Campania: Pontecagnano25 and Sala Consilina.26 In Abruzzo: Alfedena27 and Fossa.28 In Calabria: Torre Galli.29 In Basilicata: Incoronata.30
Fibula types

Almost every site and every necropolis have their own typology. These typologies are often very elaborate, which entails the risk of losing the comprehensive view. However, scholars seem to agree upon the general typology on which this study is based. Specific regional differences often exist. Such regional differences will be disregarded here, as the aim is not to carry out a detailed fibula study, but rather a more general outline of how and to what extent we can use fibulas as indicators of identity.

Fibulas belonging to the Italian Iron Age can be divided into four main categories based on the shape of the arch. The most common type is the

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Fig. 1. Map of Italy showing the studied necropolises.

1 Sesto Fiorentino 7 Pontecagnano
2 Veii 8 Sala Consilina
3 Tivoli 9 Fossa
4 Osteria dell’Osa 10 Alfedena
5 Rome 11 Incoronata
6 Ardea 12 Torre Galli
Fibula ad arco (fig. 2)
The basic form is very simple, yet many variations exist, depending on regional and local tendencies as well as chronology. In this study, several sub-types are discussed with the fibule ad arco, e.g., those found at Veii, Pontecagnano, Alfedena, and Incoronata. Fibula ad arco occur from the end of the late Bronze Age and in the Iron Age, and they have been recovered throughout the Italian peninsula. Another main type is the fibula serpeggiante, which is common in the Italian peninsula (fig. 3). The earliest types of fibule serpeggianti occur in Italy at the end of the late Bronze Age, and they continue to be used throughout the Iron Age. Finally, the fibula a sanguisuga and the fibula a navicella are included, despite the fact that these types constitute a formal development of the fibula ad arco (figs 4-5). The two types belong to the late phase of the Early Iron Age, with some types continuing into the Orientalising period.

FIBULAS AND BIOLOGICAL SEX

Fibula ad arco (fig. 6)
Analysis shows that, on most sites, it is not possible to use fibule ad arco as an indicator of biological sex, e.g., in Campania, Abruzzo, and Basilicata. In Latium, on the other hand, the fibule ad arco seem primarily to be deposited with women at Osteria dell’Osa, Ardea, and Tivoli, while, in Rome, the type does not appear to be restricted to a specific sex, even if there is a slight over-representation of male graves. In general, only at Veii does the type not appear with men. Yet, on this site, only few male graves have been identified, which creates a certain bias.

On many sites, the situation is complex since the fibulas belong to different sub-types: at Veii the sub-types are ad arco ingrossato, ad arco ribassato, and ad arco di verga. All these sub-types do not appear with men, and they might therefore be restricted to women. At Pontecagnano the sub-types are ad arco ingrossato, ad arco rivestito, and ad arco di occhielli doppi, but none are restricted to a certain sex. At Alfedena the sub-types are fibule ad arco di verga, arco a nastro, arco a lozanga, and arco a bozze of which neither are exclusive to a certain sex. At Incoronata there is only one fibula ad arco, but, instead, four other types: ad arco a doppia spirale, ad arco a quattro spirali, ad arco a ponte, and con staffa a disco. The fibule ad arco a ponte come from three male graves, and they might be an indicator of biological sex. In regard to the three other types at Incoronata, they occur only in female graves, but the number is too low to make it possible to draw any conclusions.

Fibula a sanguisuga (fig. 7)
Fibule a sanguisuga also have different distribution patterns on the individual sites, and, in several of the sites treated here, the type was not represented. At Veii, Ardea, and Fossa fibule a sanguisuga are found only in female graves and in graves of unknown sex, and, consequently, this fibula type can, with caution, be used as an indicator of biological sex on these sites. At Tivoli and Pontecagnano there is an over-representation of female graves with this fibula type in comparison to male graves. On the contrary, at Sesto Fiorentino the type is solely found in one male grave.

Fibula serpeggiante (fig. 8)
Fibule serpeggianti have mostly been recovered from
male graves. At Fossa and Veii the dispersion of fibulas between the sexes is equal, and they are found in both male and female graves. In general, there is only a slight overrepresentation of male graves with fibula serpeggianti, and where they are recorded, they also occur in female graves. The distribution appears to be around 60/40% (male/female ratio) at both Rome and Pontecagnano, at Sala Consilina closer to 80/20% (male/female ratio). Thus, there are no grounds for using fibula serpeggianti as an indicator of sex. At Osteria dell’Osa the overrepresentation of males with fibula serpeggianti is very large, and only two women are buried with this fibula type. Nevertheless, two graves are sufficient to reject fibula serpeggianti as a sex-determining artefact.

Several scholars still work with a clear-cut sex division of the fibula types, especially at Latial and Campanian sites, using them for sex determination of the graves.\textsuperscript{39} Pacciarelli proposes the same for southern Italy where he considers fibula serpeggianti as male\textsuperscript{40} and fibula ad arco as female, on the basis of the associated grave goods.\textsuperscript{41} However, there are also examples of publications in which fibula-based biological sex determination is dismissed.\textsuperscript{42}

The analysis of the selected data suggests that fibula ad arco and a sanguisuga are mainly female while serpeggianti are mainly male. This corresponds to Tom’s results based on fibulas from Veii and Tarquinia. She concludes: ‘The arch bow brooch is weakly preferentially female at both sites,’\textsuperscript{43} and that fibula serpeggianti are ‘strongly preferentially male.’\textsuperscript{44} Also Amann considers the fibula serpeggianti a male fibula type, but emphasises that exceptions exist.\textsuperscript{45} Furthermore, fibula ad arco have been recovered together with both textile tools (usually considered female indicators) and with razors and helmets (usually considered male indicators), which means that it is doubtful whether fibulas are, indeed, related to the sex of the deceased.\textsuperscript{46}

In conclusion, the general fibula types are not useful indicators of biological sex since all types are found with both men and women, although fibula a sanguisuga appear to be more often related with women. Consequently, sex determination of graves based on the presence of certain fibula types alone should be avoided. It is, however, important to take the regional differences into consideration seeing that the situation appears to differ from site to site.
Fig. 7. Distribution of fibula a sanguisuga in regard to biological sex (diagram Kees van der Veer).

Fig. 8. Distribution of fibule serpeggianti in regard to biological sex (diagram Kees van der Veer).
FIBULAS AND AGE

Age groups

When studying archaeological evidence from graves, it is necessary to employ age groupings since age determinations of the skeletons are often not sufficiently precise to determine the exact age. In some publications age is stated in years, but in several instances, the preference is for a classification of the skeletons based on five age categories often employed in anthropology: infans, juvenis, adultus, maturus and senilis. Previously, these categories were not applied in the same way by all scholars, and the individual groups therefore cover different age spans in older publications. In 1960 Vallois undertook a division of these categories, which he juxtaposed with fixed age groups in order to compare material from different contexts. However, these groupings have been criticised, especially with regard to children, since important social differences between children of different ages will be lost if treated as one single age category. For this reason, Cuozzo has introduced subdivisions for children and young individuals. In this study, Cuozzo’s divisions are employed, but one additional age group for children has been added to give the age groups more or less the same age span. In addition, categories without any exact age specifications for adults and children have been introduced (table).

However, it should be kept in mind that exact age determinations of older individuals can be difficult, and finer distinctions can therefore be problematic. While the age at death of sub-adult individuals can be determined quite accurately, it is harder to determine in adults since the skeleton of a full-grown individual only changes little throughout the life span. Thus, some uncertainty exists, as to whether an older individual belong to e.g. age group A3 or A4.

Fibula ad arco (fig. 9)
The deposition of fibula ad arco does not appear to be related to age since they have been recovered for all age groups at all sites. The absence of child graves at Alfedena and the few examples from Sala Consilina explain why they do not seem to appear in child graves at these sites. Fibula ad arco alone are therefore a very poor indicator of age.

Fibula a sanguisuga (fig. 10)
In general, fibula a sanguisuga have a lower occurrence among the graves treated here, but they do not seem to be usable as an indicator of age as the type has been recovered by and large for all age groups with the exception of young individuals. However, in Rome, a single fibula a sanguisuga was found in a child grave, and none with adults.

Fibula serpeggiante (fig. 11)
The fibula serpeggiante is the only fibula type in this study that has been recovered in graves belonging to age group C1. This could, however, very well be related to the very scarce occurrence of graves in this age group on the necropolises in this period since the material studied here only includes one such grave.

The presence of fibule serpeggianti in the graves is not related to age. In Veii, Rome, Pontecagnano and Fossa, this type occurs with children, young individuals and adults. Osteria dell’Osa illustrates an interesting tendency as only one fibula serpeggiante has been recovered in one out of 35 children’s graves. Thus, this fibula type seems to be restricted primarily to adults on this site.

Fibula a navicella (fig. 12)
Among the graves studied, fibule a navicella have only been found at a few sites. In Veii three were recovered in a grave belonging to a child in age group C4, and, in Rome, they occur in two graves both of children of age group C1 and C3 respectively. In Fossa one such fibula belongs to a grave in age group C4. Accordingly, fibula a navicella can possibly be used as an indicator of a child, but not of a specific minor age group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Age in years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1 Child 1</td>
<td>0 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 Child 2</td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3 Child 3</td>
<td>3 - 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4 Child 4</td>
<td>6 - 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5 Child 5</td>
<td>9 - 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Child</td>
<td>0 - 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y1 Young 1</td>
<td>11 - 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y2 Young 2</td>
<td>15 - 18/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Young</td>
<td>11 - 18/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 Adult 1</td>
<td>18/20 - 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 Adult 2</td>
<td>30 - 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 Adult 3</td>
<td>40 - 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4 Adult 4</td>
<td>60 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Adult</td>
<td>18/20 +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table. The applied age groupings (by author).
Fig. 9. Distribution of fibule ad arco in regard to age (diagram Kees van der Veer).

Fig. 10. Distribution of fibule a sanguisuga in regard to age (diagram Kees van der Veer).
Fig. 11. Distribution of fibule serpeggianti in regard to age (diagram Kees van der Veer).

Fig. 12. Distribution of fibule a navicella in regard to age (diagram Kees van der Veer).
According to the analysis, fibula types do not appear to be related to age, with the possible exceptions of fibule serpeggianti, which, in Osteria dell'Osa, are almost exclusively found in graves containing adults, and the fibula a navicella, which is rare, but appears to be restricted to children. To conclude, sex seems to be a more important factor with regard to the deposition of fibulas in graves.

Considering the number of fibulas per burial, most necropolises appear to follow a certain norm, which varies from site to site (often 1-2 fibulas in each grave). In general, there does not seem to be any obvious correlation between number, age or sex. However, there are a few exceptions to this. In Etruria the fibule serpeggianti are usually deposited singularly, but, here, one grave for an adult of unknown sex contains two (LL12-13). In Osteria dell'Osa fibule ad arco usually appear in numbers of one or two, but one young adult (Y1), possibly a female, of 14-15 years is buried with four (grave 429). Thus, some individuals are buried with an unusual number of fibulas in comparison with other burials in the same necropolis.

It is of further interest that, at many sites, fibule serpeggianti are deposited singularly and without any other fibula types. On the contrary, fibule ad arco are deposited in numbers from one to ten and also with other fibula types such as a sanguisuga.

Furthermore, the mixture of fibula types in the individual grave differs from site to site. At some sites, e.g. Osteria dell'Osa, fibule ad arco and serpeggianti never occur in the same grave. But, at most other sites, occasional combinations of fibule ad arco and a sanguisuga and of ad arco and serpeggianti occur. Combinations of the latter types occur at Veii, Pontecagnano, Sala Consilina, Fossa, Incoronata and Torre Galli. In many cases, the graves with both types belong to adult females. In the children’s graves at Torre Galli, the occurrence of fibule ad arco and serpeggianti in the same grave is common. This is, however, not restricted to children’s graves, but also includes graves containing adult individuals of unknown sex.

**Fibulas and dress**

It is known that the different fibula types were used to fasten, or simply just adorn, the garments and were thus part of the attire. While there is still a debate among archaeologists about the specific way fibulas were worn, they tend to agree that fibulas belonged to the outer layer of clothing. As already mentioned, sex is often considered the most important trait in the choice of dress, and it has long been accepted, but never demonstrated, that e.g. fibule ad arco were part of female dress. This assumption is not supported by the deposition of fibulas in the graves since men and women were often buried with the same fibula types and with the same number of fibulas. The fibulas alone do therefore not allow us to deduce that men and women were necessarily dressed differently.

Adults, including elders, were buried with the same type and number of fibulas, and no distinction among age groups is possible. Children, on the other hand, occasionally appear to have been treated differently. For example, fibule a navicella were only deposited with children on the sites treated here. Children received a mix of different fibula types and occasionally an unusually high number of fibulas. Furthermore, at Osteria dell'Osa children were rarely buried with fibule serpeggianti.

Perhaps this indicates a different garment for children or that their garments were worn in a different way. As for elders, there is nothing in the studied material to indicate that they were dressed any differently from younger adults.

But to what degree do these fibulas actually reflect the dress of the deceased? Fibulas are just a detail of the dress, and perhaps the type is not even of utmost importance. To gain greater knowledge of garments and dress in early societies in Italy, and to understand if they were related to sex or age, it is necessary to include further evidence such as preserved textiles and iconography.

**Other Archaeological Evidence**

**Preserved textiles**

Only in rare instances do we recover preserved textiles which can contribute to our knowledge of how people were dressed in the Iron Age. One of these instances is grave 89, the so-called Tomba del Trono, at Verucchio, where nearly complete garments belonging to the Villanovan period were found. In the grave, which belongs to an adult male, more than 160 textile fragments have been recovered. Moreover, two rounded mantles in fine wool, originally dyed red with blue borders, were used to cover the urn. Twenty-six well-preserved fibulas and eight fragments of the types serpeggianti, a drago or a sanguisuga were recovered from the grave, but it is not possible to tell whether certain fibulas were connected with certain textiles or garments. Yet, one of the mantles has holes that could possibly have come from a specific fibula serpeggianti found in the grave.
Another grave in Verucchio (B/1971), dated to end of the 8th century or the beginning of the 7th century BC, has revealed a woollen mantle in two parts. It is dyed blue and has a rectangular shape. From the grave were recovered amber beads and several fibulas, among these fibule serpeggianti. Furthermore, preserved textiles, mostly consisting of minor fragments, have been found in several graves e.g. at Verucchio, La Rocca Malatestiana.

In a grave in Central Italy in Chianciano, Poggio alla Sala (7th century BC), a purple woollen mantle was recovered wrapped around an urn. According to anthropological examinations, the grave belongs to a male of around 30 years of age. Unfortunately, no fibulas were recovered. Several more textile finds from Italy are known of which M. Gleba has compiled an extensive list. By far the majority are preserved with metal objects and often only as traces on the metal surfaces. Therefore, these remains might provide us with information about the kind of material used, but not necessarily about the type of garment to which they belonged. However, it could be interesting to investigate whether there is any correlation between certain types of textiles and fibula types.

There is thus little evidence for how people in the Iron Age were dressed, based on the textiles, since their fragmentary condition makes it difficult to identify certain garments. The evidence at hand primarily consists of mantles in coloured wool in red, purple, orange, yellow, brown and blue. However, it is not possible to relate these clothing articles to either men or women, nor to age groupings. In addition, these textile finds reflect a bias since the bulk has been recovered from the graves of usually very wealthy individuals belonging to the upper classes of society. Especially the purple mantles appear to have been connected with the elevated status of the wearer. The royal status of such garments is further indicated by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who mentions a purple-coloured mantle similar to the ones worn by Lydian and Phrygian kings given to Lucius Tarquinius (king of Rome 616-578). It is further possible that some of the garments from the wealthy graves were imported, and therefore do not necessarily reflect how people in local societies in Italy were dressed. As an example, some of the textiles from Verucchio tomb 89 were made with techniques primarily known from the Middle East and Egypt.

Placement of the fibulas and other personal ornaments

Despite the fact that few textiles have been preserved, the graves still contribute considerably to our knowledge and understanding of dress. Not just the mere presence of fibulas, but also their placement in the grave with regard to inhumations contributes information even though it is, of course, possible that they might have shifted after the burial. In many graves, fibulas are found in pairs, in inhumation graves often near the shoulders, which have led to the interpretation that they were fasteners for the garments at the shoulders or on the chest. As an example, the large fibulas found in graves e.g. at Monteprandone (9th century BC) have been interpreted as a sign of the deceased wearing a mantle. This is supported by iconographic depictions, as for example the stone torso from Capestrano, Picenum, on which two fibulas are depicted, one by each shoulder (fig. 13). However, fibulas are also recorded as being placed at many other positions on the body, such as the chest, the pelvis etc. At Osteria dell’Osa the fibulas are usually placed on the chest or stomach region in both male and female graves.

Different forms of adornment can also contribute to our knowledge of dress since several objects, e.g. bronze buttons, rings, beads and small metal plaques, were sewn on to garments of textiles or leather, which have disappeared today. For example in the Isis tomb in the Polledrara necropolis in Vulci (7th century BC), beads have been recovered with threads still attached. On the other hand, small bronze rings have, in some instances, formed chains attached to the garment or as pendants on fibulas.

In the majority of cases, the placement of the ornaments in the graves is consistent. Many schol-
ars are therefore of the opinion that, as a rule, they were placed in accordance with their function. This is used as an argument for the possibility of tracing the garments through the placement of the ornaments when they are found in situ in the graves allowing the ornaments to contribute to a partial reconstruction of the original garments. As an example, rows of rings or buttons have been found in graves, which may be an indication of their attachment to the borders of the garment. Scholars have thus tried to reconstruct garments from the objects located on and around the skeleton. For example, T. Cinquantaquattro has reconstructed a female costume, based on the decorative ornaments present in an Iron Age burial at Pontecagnano (fig. 14). According to her reconstructions, the individual in grave 4891 wore a dress fastened at the shoulders by two fibulas, and a mantle closed by several fibulas, which were recovered on the chest and pelvis of the deceased. Furthermore, the dress was adorned with small bronze rings and buttons sewn onto the fabric. These ornaments were recovered in the entire area between the shoulders and legs. Finally, she reconstructs a belt composed of amber beads and pendants.

L. Bentini and A. Boiardi have reconstructed female costumes based on evidence from burials at Verucchio. These reconstructions show that costumes of adults, young individuals and children are quite similar, especially with regard to the type and placement of the fibulas (figs 15-18). Other ornaments appear to be reserved for certain age groups, e.g. bracelets are buried with children and young individuals.

Ornaments in bronze have, in general, been interpreted as belonging to female garments, and it has been proposed that dresses covered with very high numbers of amber and glass beads may have been female wedding dresses, which the women wore after death. The common opinion is that men did not wear such embellished garments. By a collocation of the material in the graves treated in this study, it is apparent that pearls and buttons occur in female graves far more often than in male graves. Yet, it is not possible to conclude that the ornaments are strictly female since they also occur with males. It has thus been suggested that men wore a simpler and less ornamented attire compared to women. But this is not an undisputed theory as men’s clothes might have been embellished with perishable materials. Presence and placement of these ornaments are thus a useful method to gain greater knowledge of the garments that people may have worn in the Iron Age, but they should not be used to distinguish between men and women.

Factors of uncertainty connected with the grave ritual

Caution must be exercised when assessing evidence from mortuary contexts as it is complicated to determine whether the garments and the personal ornaments in the grave reproduce how the deceased was dressed when alive, or whether they reflect specific burial rituals. As an example, according to Peroni, fibulas with attached rings found in graves e.g. at Allumiere were not worn in this way by the living, but were a special form of ornament for burial use. When alive, the indi-

Fig. 14. Graphic reconstruction of the costume of the deceased from grave 4891 at Pontecagnano, località Casella (Cinquantaquattro 2001, 70, fig. 28).
individual would have carried the rings on his/her fingers.84

Certain reservations with regard to interpretations based on the placement of fibulas in the graves should also be maintained since the garments may have been special shrouds and may not necessarily reflect types of dress used when the person was alive. The assumption that the fibulas may have been used for the wrapping of shrouds is supported by the finds in cremation graves, where the fibulas were occasionally used to ‘dress’ the urn (fig. 19). These dressings often incorporate a high number of ornaments and fibulas which belong to different rituals: the dressing of the deceased for the cremation, the dressing of the urn, and, possibly, of the dolium.85 The fibulas belonging to the dress of the deceased are probably the ones positioned in the urn, since they also often show traces of fire, albeit nothing can be said of

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In cremation graves, a high number of fibulas, especially outside the urn, can thus be indications of one or more dressings. This could also be the case for inhumation graves, where an unusual high number of fibulas might indicate an extra dressing of the deceased, e.g., a shroud.

Consequently, it is difficult or even impossible to know if the dress of the deceased was worn as represented in the grave, or if it was created solely for the purpose of burial. However, Negroni Catacchio has proposed that special luxurious garments used for weddings or other important ceremonies were kept and used for burial. Accordingly, funeral garments were not very different from dress worn in real life on special occasions. It is also possible that the garments were given as an offering to the deceased. This is, of course, also possible with regard to the fibulas. Fibulas that carry inscriptions may be used in support of this argument. As an example, a gold fibula a drago from Castelluccio di Pienza (Siena), dated to the second half of the 7th century BC, carries the inscription: *mi arathia velavesnas zamathi mamurke mulvenike tursikina* (I (am) the golden fibula (?) of Arath Valavesna. Mamurke Tursikina has donated (me)). Cerements are therefore potentially a greater source for the structural ideals in society than for the actual lives and customs of dressing of the deceased. Textile research can, however, shed light on this area. This is e.g., the case in tomb 89 at Verucchio, where the recovered textiles (mantles) show signs of wear - they were thus not made exclusively for use in the burial ritual. Furthermore, fibulas from Osteria dell’Osa show signs of wear and repair, which is an indication of their use over a period of time. There are thus aspects that speak in favour of the cerements sharing elements with garments actually worn in life. Yet, it is generally unclear to what extent grave goods and rites represent the personal and individual identity of the deceased, and whether they are determined by family or kinship groups. The selection of grave goods was possibly determined by important objects, owned by the deceased, but it was also largely determined by conventions and by what was necessary in connection with the burial rituals.

**ICONOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE OF DRESS AND BIOLOGICAL SEX**

We do not have much knowledge of how people were dressed in early Iron Age Italy based on the preserved monuments from the period, as only very few depictions of garments from the 8th–7th centuries BC exist. Based on these, it is difficult to identify exactly how the clothes looked, and especially to distinguish differences in detail between the respective garments, since many traits are rendered only very summarily. Often depictions from later periods are therefore used to define or describe clothes in the Early Iron Age and Orientalising periods, which is, of course, prob-
lematic in itself as dress worn by certain populations varies through time and space. Thus, what is true in one context might not be so in another. Already from the late 7th century BC, a vast corpus of informative visual material exists, e.g., in the form of painted tombs, pottery, figurines, and statuary. The terracotta statues from Tomba delle cinque sedie at Cerveteri are among the material often used as the basis for reconstructions and interpretations of dress and garments (fig. 20). The figures wear short-sleeved tunics and diagonally draped mantles of chequered material with remains of red paint. On the right shoulders the mantles are fastened by affibbiaglio a pettine (comb fibulas), a type found in burials from the second quarter of the 7th century BC. The five statues are interpreted as three men and two women, the latter identified by their earrings. Many scholars today believe that the female heads do not belong to the bodies, which are instead believed to be male based on the comb fibulas, which are interpreted as restricted to men. Similar long tunics and diagonally draped mantles are depicted on the two enthroned figures in the antechamber of Tomba delle statue at Ceri.

Another garment known from iconography is the so-called ‘back mantle’, which is represented on many figures from the 7th century BC, for example crowning cinerary urns from Chiusi (fig. 21), but also on e.g. bucchero statuettes. It consisted of a long, rectangular piece of heavy wool, fastened at the shoulders so that it hung straight along the back. This type of mantle is considered female due to its combination with long tunic, earrings and the back braid (see below). A second type of mantle, also from the 7th century BC, is a cape, by L. Bonfante termed a ‘raincoat’, with holes for the arms in front and often pulled over the head. The act of draping the mantle over the head appears, in general, to be considered a female trait. The female torso from Capestrano, Picenum depicts a different type of garment (fig. 13). The figure wears a waistcoat with short sleeves, which covers the chest/bosom and stops above the waist. The upper and lower borders and the sleeves are decorated with a red band. The waistcoat is held up by two large fibule serpeggianti (!), one at each shoulder, with attached pendants. Finally, loincloths are depicted on several figures as, for example, the Capestrano warrior (fig. 22). The loincloth is typically considered a male costume, but it is also worn by female figures. In terms of material, chequered garments are depicted on both male and female figures.

Iconography thus provides evidence for different ways of dressing, and, according to Bonfante, the long tunics, the mantles and the loincloth were worn in real life. Especially the long tunic and the mantle are among the most common garments depicted in early representations. The tunic appeared in different lengths, but the earliest depictions render it long, until the ankles for both men and women.

Iconographic representations have often been put forward as evidence that the biological sexes dressed differently (for example the long tunic and mantles covering the head as female, the short tunic, the diagonally draped mantle and the loincloth as male). This is problematic since the use of these depictions involves a high degree of both conscious and subconscious interpretation. As an example, we cannot necessarily conclude that a person is a woman just because the person in question wears a long garment as such an interpretation is based on a traditional western differentiation between the sexes, which may not necessarily be applicable in the study of prehistoric periods.

As shown above, it appears that male figures could
also wear long garments. We can therefore not take it for granted that present ‘gender icons’ existed in the Iron Age, an act which J. Robb terms ‘the trousers and skirt phenomenon’.115 This does not only apply to the length of garments. It should also be questioned if the presence or absence of, for example, earrings or certain fibulas is sufficient to identify a figure (or the deceased in the grave) as either male or female. Thus, we are again in danger of being trapped in circular arguments of what makes e.g. a garment male or female. As a result, we occasionally encounter examples of misinterpretations and confusion when it comes to identification of sex. One such example is the sculptures in the pediment of the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi. The heavily clad figure in the midst has earlier been interpreted as Athena. The head is missing, but the figure has long hair and wears a long chiton down to the ankles. It has now been proven that the figure in question is not Athena, it is not even a woman, but, on the contrary, Zeus.116 Also the Capestrano warrior has been ambiguously sexed due to the figure’s quite peculiar proportions with very wide heavy hips (fig. 22).117

Hairstyles are also often perceived as part of dress and visual identity, and certain coiffures have been associated with certain sexes, e.g. the long braid is considered female.118 Therefore, fer-matreccе, which have been interpreted as a sort of hairclip for the braids, are regarded as female grave goods.119 Yet, hairstyle is rarely a reliable indicator of sex, and there are examples of male figures with braids, e.g. the Sardinian bronze figurine from the Cavalupo necropolis at Vulci with long braids hanging over chest and back (fig. 23).120 The figurine wears a belted skirt and a tall pointed hat and holds a large shield. It has been interpreted as a male either a chieftain-priest or a warrior121 even though skirt and braids are usually considered female. It is therefore important to be aware of the premises on which we base our attributions of archaeological representations. As Bonfante writes: ‘(…) time constantly transforms the meaning of a human image, and how our own acceptance of their significance depends on assumptions rooted in our own experiences, expectations, and emotional reactions, and those of the world in which we live.’122 The goal is, however, not necessarily to argue against interpreting whether a figure represents a man or a woman, but just to emphasise that an approach which employs a simple binary pattern of interpretation will disguise potential divergences. A male wearing ‘female’ attire will thus be identified as a woman and vice versa. If multiple gen-

Fig. 22. The Capestrano warrior, 6th century BC (© Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Chieti).
der roles or transvestism occurred in e.g. the Iron Age, it will not be visible in our research. The possibility of transvestism is maybe not unlikely since ethnographic contexts show that transvestism can be a culturally accepted praxis. Some garments might also have been worn by both sexes, as it was the case for e.g. the toga which was not per se a manly garment. Furthermore, we risk using circular arguments since dress is often based on iconographical representations which again are based on identification via doubtful methods. The visual representations might therefore offer a picture of the manners in which people dressed, but the social reality was probably more nuanced than these representations suggest. Depictions are not necessarily ‘windows to the past’, and they may tell us more about the constructs of gender roles and relations between the sexes than about the way in which men and women dressed.

With regard to the relation between iconography and fibulas, the diagonally draped mantle seems to have been fastened by one fibula on the right shoulder, while the back mantle was fastened by two fibulas, one on each shoulder. In collocation with the grave material studied here, i.e. the fibulas, it seems possible that the diagonally draped mantle was worn with a certain type of fibula. This is supported by the evidence from the graves where the fibule serpeggianti are mostly deposited singularly and in the inhumation burials, often by one shoulder. Since it has been shown that this type was not necessarily reserved for a certain sex, it seems likely that, on some sites, it was connected to the diagonally draped mantle. As fibule ad arco were often deposited in multiples, and/or with other fibula types such as a sanguisuga, it is possible that, on some sites, these were related to the back mantle, which was fastened by two fibulas.

**ICONOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE OF DRESS AND AGE**

Regarding the representation of age groups, iconography appears to depict adults while no examples of children or elderly are known from the prehistoric periods. Especially elderly seem invisible. The earliest Italian example of a representation of old individuals is a Campana plaque from the Banditaccia necropolis at Cerveteri dated to ca 550-525 BC (fig. 24). The plaque depicts two seated old men with bald pates, white hair and beards. They both wear long chitons, mantles and pointy boots. It has been questioned whether these men represent humans or possibly gods or mythological figures. In addition, the plaque belongs to a period which, like the rich corpus of wall paintings from the Archaic period, was heavily inspired by Greek style and tradition, and thus it cannot be used as a reliable source as to how elderly persons were dressed in the Iron Age.

Children are equally rare in early iconography, and they do not appear in Iron Age depictions although it has been proposed that the diminutive human figures on the Verucchio throne could be children. A much later example of a possible representation of a child is in the wall paintings...
in the François tomb at Vulci dated to the transition between the late classical and the Hellenistic periods. Next to the owner of the tomb, Vel Saties, a kneeling person is depicted, by some interpreted as a child at play with a pet (fig. 25). The kneeling person is dressed in a white tunic with short sleeves and coloured borders similar to garments worn by adults in other tomb paintings. A wall painting from tomb 5636 at Tarquinia dated to the second half of the 3rd century BC shows a depiction of three men and a child discernable due to the small size of the figure (fig. 26). The child wears a white toga equal to the ones worn by the adults. A similar depiction of a child, also dressed like an adult, is seen in the procession wall painting in Tomba Bruschi in Tarquinia. However, this evidence should be treated carefully since hierarchical scale might be employed.

In Roman iconography, children are usually dressed as small adults, e.g. on monuments such as Ara Pacis, but also on sarcophagi, statues, mosaics etc. It is possible that this was also the situation in Iron Age Italy, but since early iconographical evidence is non-existent, our knowledge of dress and garments is, to a higher degree, dependent on the archaeological material. If, indeed, fibulas can indicate certain types of garments, it appears that the situation in Iron Age Italy might differ from the later periods seeing that children (on some sites) were deposited with a different number, combination and type of fibulas, and thus not dressed as small adults.

**CONCLUSION**

Different fibula types have traditionally been used as indicators of biological sex, but as shown by the above analysis fibulas are poor indicators of specific aspects of identity since the analysed fibula types occurred with both sexes and in most age groups. In general, fibulas therefore cannot provide any information about the age of the deceased although, at some sites, they may correlate with biological sex. Thus, it cannot be assumed a priori that a certain fibula type corresponds to a certain sex.
Interestingly, there are several examples of graves containing both *fibule ad arco* and *serpeggiante*, which should not be possible according to the traditional perception of fibulas as indicators of biological sex.\(^{136}\) It is of further interest that four out of the five adult graves with both fibula types are female (the remaining being of unknown sex). This could indicate that it was more common for women to wear a ‘male’ fibula than vice versa. It is therefore wrong simply to assume that men were dressed differently from women based on these items as the analysis shows distinct variations in the deposition of fibulas in the graves. It is further possible that, on some sites, these fibula types were ‘gender-less’ and not exclusively worn by either men or women. Or perhaps fibula types were not related to biological sex but to gender role or possibly to a particular status of the deceased\(^{137}\) since the absence of fibulas in some burials might suggest that access to them was also dependent on status.\(^{138}\)

With regard to their usability as indicators of dress in the Iron Age, some information might be extracted from their placement on the body, which has been perceived as a sign of their use as fasteners for mantles. In addition, the applied ornaments on the garments testify to the type of garment and its decoration. Despite the few preserved textiles, they show us that woollen, coloured mantles were worn, probably by both sexes. Thus, the grave material indicates that both sexes and adults in all age groups seem to have worn a sort of garment often fastened by the same types of fibulas. These garments were probably woollen mantles in different colours, and a sort of tunic with a variable length sometimes adorned with bronze ornaments. Despite the problematic character of the iconographical evidence, it seems to support the conclusions drawn from the grave goods. The different representations show especially long tunics and mantles either draped diagonally or in the form of back mantles. As shown, it is possible that the fibulas were related to a certain garment such as the fibula serpeggiante and the diagonally draped mantle.\(^{139}\) This is further supported by the mantle fastened with one *fibula serpeggiante* from tomb 89 at Verucchio.

We thus have some knowledge about Iron Age dress, but we are still far from a full understanding of how men, women, children and elders were dressed. However, we are one step closer since this study has shown that aspects such as sex and age were not necessarily the primary identities to be represented in dress/garments. Fibulas may, instead, be infused with multiple meanings. It still remains open whether this reflects that men and women, children and elders were not dressed differently and whether dress

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**Fig. 26.** Wall painting from Tomba 5636 at Tarquinia. Second half of the 3rd century BC (Steingräber, 2006, 262).
was, instead, dependent on other aspects of identities such as gender roles, tasks (e.g. warrior, textile worker etc.), status, ethnicity or other. This underlines the importance of combining different types of evidence such as fibulas, dress ornaments, textiles and iconography, and the continuation of interdisciplinary studies where especially anthropological examinations and textile research can be of decisive importance.

The results of this study indicate that we cannot equate the archaeological evidence of dress with sex or age. This contradicts the majority of mortuary analyses in which it is assumed that a person’s outer appearance indicates not just sex, but also gender role, since this assumption is disturbed in case of transvestism or multivestism, irrespective of male to female, female to male or inter sex to male or female. Identity via the preserved remains of appearance alone is therefore not useful for identifying either biological sex or age. Dress can instead inform us of a possible pattern of gender roles. Even though dress is not the only way gender roles are expressed, it is among the most visible ways for gender identity to be manifested in relation to biological sex. In addition, archaeologists have tended to envision identity as a single variable, when, in fact, an individual negotiates a multiplicity of identities, which might be in conflict with each other, which, in turn, might explain the occurrence of a ‘wrong’ fibula in a burial. The human life course thus moves the body through many identities, but the common perception of identity among scholars is often very static. Regarding the study of grave material and dress, it is therefore necessary to employ a more comprehensive approach which takes these multiple identities into account. 

Notes

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1 Iaia 2007a, 25.
3 The separation of biological sex and gender is generally agreed upon, and societies react differently to the two (Stig Sorensen 2000, 59). Therefore, I employ a distinction between the two. I use the terms (biological) sex and gender roles, as introduced by Money et al. 1955, to clarify that the anthropological determinations illustrate sex, not gender. I am aware that the use of a two-sex model is not without pitfalls since it will leave out e.g. intersexed individuals, i.e. individuals with chromosomal combinations distinct from XX and XY, as well as with a disjunction between their chromosomal (or genotypic) sex and phenotypic sex (Geller 2005, 601). Since the investigation is based on examinations already carried out by anthropologists, who only employed a binary categorization of male and female biological sex, the study will be focused on the two.
4 There are different ‘kinds’ of age: Physiological/biological age, chronological age (the time elapsed from birth) and social age (socially constructed norms of appropriate behaviour for a certain age group) Gowland 2006, 143. In this study, the focus is on physiological/biological age, which is detectable in the skeletons.
5 Stig Sorensen 2000, 89.
8 Cianferoni 2007, 97. For further examples of gender divisions of artefacts at Italian necropolises, see also e.g. Gastaldi 1993, 344; Bartoloni 2007, 14; 2000, 273. The gendering of fibulas is also emphasised by Cygielman (2003, 68, 70), who considers fibule a drago as male artefacts.
9 Toms 1998, 159.
12 Gowland 2006, 145.
13 Gowland 2001, 152.
14 For infanticide see e.g. Mays 2000.
15 For studies of children in archaeology, see e.g. Sofia Derevenski 2000; Baxter 2005.
16 For the method of sex and age determinations of skeletons, see Mays 1998; Lynnerup et al. 2008.
19 Salvini 2007.
22 Gjerstad 1956; De Santis/Medi 2008.
23 Facenna/Fugazzola Delpino 1976.
26 Trucco 1987. I am very grateful to Flavia Trucco, who was so kind as to let me access her impressive work on Sala Consilina.
28 Cosentino et al. 2001.
29 Pacciarelli 1999.
31 Toms 2000, 92.
32 Five, if the composite fibula is considered as a separate category.
33 Toms 2000, 91.
34 Bietti Sestieri/Macnamara 2007, 16.
These are specified in the tables.

Betti Sestieri/Macnamara 2007, 18.

Betti Sestieri/Macnamara 2007, 17.

Osteria dell'Osa, Rome, Sala Consilina, Alfedita and Incorona.

E.g. Vida Navarro 1992, albeit the author is aware that some graves exist, which do not fit this pattern, e.g. the tunic.

Vida Navarro 1992, 83-84.

Pacciarelli 2007, 117.

Pacciarelli 2007, 120.


Amanu 2000, 33.

It has been suggested that the precious examples of textiles.


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D’Agostino 1970, 578.


Amanu 2000, 33.

Vida Navarro 1992, 83-84.

Pacciarelli 2007, 117.

Pacciarelli 2007, 120.


Amanu 2000, 33.

Vida Navarro 1992, 83-84.

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118 Esposito 2003, 55; Haynes 2000, 41.
119 Esposito 2003, 55.
120 Falconi Amorelli 1966, 1.
122 Bonfante 2009, 115.
123 Cougle 2009, 7.
124 According to Roman tradition the toga was originally worn by both men and women, and by girls before puberty. What made the toga manly (virilis) was not so much the garment itself, as how it was worn; Davies (2005, 121).
125 For an analysis and discussion of the usability of archaeological artefacts as indicators of biological sex and gender, see BRESN (forthcoming).
127 Torelli 2000, 597. INV. NO CP 6628.
128 The figures have been interpreted as Kalchas and King Agamemnon, Brendel 1978, 175.
129 The Greek influence in Etruscan dress is evident from the 6th century BC. Bonfante 1975, 3-4.
130 Thanks to Nora Petersen for this interpretation.
131 Holliday 1993, 175.
132 Holliday 1993, 183.
133 Haynes 2000, 281.
134 Steingräber 2006, 262.
136 Yet, some scholars express reluctance in regard to the use of fibulas as determinants of sex, e.g. HORSNAES 1997, 458.
137 Ammann 2000, 33.
138 See also CURTA 2005, 127.
139 Ammann 2000, 33.
140 Arnold 2002, 245.

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