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IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF CHILDHOOD IN BRONZE AND EARLY IRON AGE ITALY

Personhood between marginality and social inclusion

Elisa Perego

Introduction

This chapter discusses the social standing of children in Bronze and Early Iron Age Italy through the lenses of personhood theory (Perego 2012a; 2016). It also proposes some theoretical and methodological reflections on the study of childhood in past societies, a growing area of research in archaeology (e.g. Moore and Scott 1997; Finlay 2000; Sofaer Derevenski 2000; Kamp 2001; Baxter 2005; Carroll 2011; Carroll and Graham 2014; Zanoni 2016). The period under consideration covers the late third, second and early first millennia BC. In Italy, this time-span saw the spread of increasingly complex forms of socio-political organization (e.g. Cardarelli 2010), which culminated in the rise of urbanism and statehood in some areas of the peninsula (e.g. Capuis 2009; Riva 2010; Fulminante 2014; Scopacasa 2015). While these processes of development were far from linear, and enormous regional variability existed, socio-political and economic change had a significant impact on the negotiation of identity, social inclusion and social marginality in this period of tumultuous transformation (Perego 2014a; 2014b; Perego and Scopacasa 2016).

In this chapter, therefore, I use “personhood” as a theoretical framework through which to approach ideas of social integration and social exclusion involving children in this crucial period for human development in antiquity. As discussed below, the concept of personhood allows for great flexibility in exploring dynamics of social inclusion and marginalization, which help go beyond standard discussions of rank and status in the study area. While defining personhood is a controversial topic in archaeology, anthropology, philosophy, medicine and law (e.g. La Fontaine 1985; Fortes 1987; Lamb 1997; Fowler 2004; Morgan 2006; Perego 2015), a crucial aspect of this debate focuses on what “being human” means and on the culturally variable factors that may regulate the acquisition of full social integration in any given society (Conklin and Morgan
The analysis of the funerary evidence from late prehistoric Italy presented below will contribute to the ongoing personhood debate by providing further evidence that notions of personhood (including child personhood) are indeed socially constructed, culturally variable and in flux.

**Theoretical framework**

Ethnographic research suggests that “persons” are commonly defined as those individuals—generally but not necessarily humans—granted by the group full or partial membership in society (e.g. Conklin and Morgan 1996: 662). Criteria for membership are embedded in dynamics of power negotiation and reside in context-related beliefs about the body, the self and the individual’s correct location in socially accepted relationships. In any given society dominant discourses of social categorization and normalization promote viable ways of being meaningfully “human” and discriminate possible deviations (Greenhalgh 2003: 199). Personhood, therefore, is not automatically granted to all human beings. Humans are definable as biological entities that are not necessarily integrated into the social group and may be denied key rights and responsibilities in society, including the right to live. Persons are humans—and sometimes other inanimate or animate beings—who are socialized into their culture and granted normative social value (e.g. Ingstad and Whyte 1995; Lamb 1997; Morgan 1997; Desjarlais 1999; Greenhalgh 2003).

Personhood can be granted to various degrees, and augmented or revoked during the individual’s life course. Forms of attenuated personhood, perceived as such by the subject or socially sanctioned, often recur in case of disability, mental illness, senility, and other conditions of social marginality including, potentially, infancy and childhood (Ingstad and Whyte 1995; Lamb 1997; Morgan 1997; Desjarlais 1999; Greenhalgh 2003).

The concept of personhood among the contemporary African Tallensi as understood by Fortes (1987; Morris 1994: 123–130) provides an example of the complexity of such forms of social categorization. Among the Tallensi, the *bon vor* is the basic living entity composed of body (*neng bin*) and breath (*vohem*). Beyond being living entities, some animals such as antelopes and sacred crocodiles may possess human-like qualities and a soul (*sii*). Humans (*nisaal*) are living beings who possess both soul and self (*meng*). However, humans are not necessarily “persons” (*nit*). The acquisition of personhood is a gradual process deeply embedded in social dynamics of power and control. Full personhood can be achieved only by men who have fulfilled a range of social obligations including the acquisition of political influence, old age and ancestorhood. Women, the insane and—significantly—children are not conceived as complete persons and may remain minors for their entire lives.

Increasing scholarly attention has been paid to the construction of personhood at the extreme margins of human existence: when life comes into being at birth, and when it comes to an end at death (Kaufman and Morgan 2005; Morgan 2006). Both the beginning and the end of life are often conceived as liminal phases in which the boundaries between different states of existence are broken and renegotiated in terms of dominant discourses of power and control. Beginnings entail malleable processes of attribution of personhood to pre-social beings—foetuses, newborns and children—whose status as meaningful humans is often contested and at risk. Endings involve the transformation of living beings into other entities—nonpersons, ancestors and ghosts—whose new social role is subject to intense negotiation and reassessment (Kaufman and Morgan 2005: 319).

Scholarship has come to distinguish between biological and social death, the latter occurring when individuals are stripped of personhood and cease to be functional members of society. Social death is not necessarily linked to biological death, but can occur either after or before.
Biologically dead individuals can retain or even acquire their full personhood as ancestors (La Fontaine 1985: 135; Fortes 1987: 193), while living people can be denied membership in society when their personhood is retrieved, for example through incarceration and social stigma.

Ethnographic surveys on the social status of infants have highlighted how the attribution of personhood to foetuses, neonates and children is a highly situational process (e.g. Conklin and Morgan 1996; Rigdon 1996: 546–7; Morgan 1997; 2002). Personhood can be granted at different stages of the infant’s development, either before birth, at birth or sometime after birth. Many societies with high infant mortality rates distinguish between biological and social birth, the former being the moment in which infants leave the maternal womb, the latter occurring when children are formally acknowledged as persons, given a name and entitled to formal burial rites if they die. The equation between biological and social birth is more common in societies with low infant mortality rates, where the delaying of personhood is not necessary to provide emotional security against the unavoidable loss of children (Scheper Hughes 1993; Morgan 2002). As seen in the following paragraphs, the notions of social birth and delayed personhood may be useful in contextualizing the archaeological evidence from Bronze and Early Iron Age Italy. By contrast, in contemporary Western societies, where infant death rates are low, public discourse over the attribution of personhood to immature individuals focus on the social status of foetuses and embryos, with ideologically driven debates over abortion, women’s rights and maternal personhood (Bordo 1993; Heriot 1996; Morgan 1996; Hennessy and Cliath 2004).

A review of archaeological and anthropological case studies, which I carried out for my doctoral thesis (Perego 2012a), has suggested that relations between mortuary rituals and practices of ascription of personhood often exist. In particular, the adoption of deviant funerary practices, mistreatment of the corpse, denial of formal burial and interment outside formal cemeteries may indicate that the deceased was deprived of personhood or granted only partial membership in society (on Final Bronze Age to Early Roman Veneto: Perego 2012a; 2014a; 2016, with bibliography). A fundamental assumption of the present work, therefore, is that the analysis of burial practices can shed some light on the degree of personhood granted to individuals, although this connection is neither linear nor easy to ascertain, and social practices relating to personhood may vary significantly in different cultural contexts.

Scholarship has variously discussed the burial practices associated with foetuses, stillborns and young children. As such individuals are often conceived as nonpersons or incomplete persons, the funerary rituals they receive are generally – but not universally – minimal or absent, or different from those granted to adults (Morgan 2002). For example, in her work on infancy and marginality in Brazil, anthropologist N. Scheper Hughes (1993) has described the lack of grief for children in the deprived shantytown of Alto do Cruzeiro c. 1960–1980. There, where infant mortality was high, and motherhood often coerced, the mother’s emotional response to her baby’s death was, according to Scheper Hughes, almost absent. Many deaths were never formally recorded, especially those of stillborns and late abortions. Until recently, unbaptised children of any age were stigmatized as “pagan” creatures and covertly buried outside formal cemeteries. Even when infants were baptised, their funerals were carried out by children, with minimal adult involvement. Poor children were buried in communal areas without special rites. This indifference towards infant death was justified by the widespread belief that neonates were “in transit” – they were human beings not yet rooted in their own household, which they left abruptly when too weak to survive. Moreover, dead children before proper burial were considered liminal entities needing no tears. They were neither human beings nor little angels: rather they were spirit-children struggling to abandon the world and negatively affected by their mother’s grief. By contrast, the increasing tendency to grant personhood to stillborns
and foetuses in many Western countries, has promoted the creation of new burial rites and sophisticated forms of remembrance for these subjects (Garattini 2007; Peelen 2009).

**Methodological issues**

As noted above, the investigation of personhood in past societies poses considerable challenges, especially for non-literate communities such as those of late prehistoric Italy. No simple equation can be drawn between burial practices and the personhood status of past human beings. While assessing age-specific mortality rates and funerary practices (such as, potentially, infants’ exclusion from formal burial: Morgan 2002; below) may help cast light on past practices relating to child personhood, some crucial methodological issues are worthy of further discussion.

**Personhood and archaeological theory**

1. Definitions of “personhood” in anthropology, philosophy and archaeology may vary. For example, the idea of “personhood theory” presented in this chapter mainly draws on work carried out in American and feminist-inspired anthropological, legal and medical research (see especially the work by L.M. Morgan); by contrast, archaeological research on personhood (e.g. Fowler 2004) has taken a slightly different path by focusing on the “modes” (types) of personhood that might have existed in past societies (discussion in Perego 2015).

2. Funerary rituals do not necessarily mirror the social status (e.g. Parker Pearson 1999) and/or the personhood status (Perego 2012a; 2016) of an individual in life, which might be intentionally altered, or disguised, by the adoption of specific burial practices. For example, as we shall see below, high status children might be buried in the formal cemetery and with the attire of adults only to underline family status, while potentially being treated as minors or nonpersons in life.

3. The ascription of personhood is a fluid process entailing the continuous renegotiation of an individual’s standing in society (Morgan 2006). Burial, therefore, may only represent a crystallization of a subject’s personhood status, which was in flux during the individual’s life. As noted above, death itself may bring about changes in people’s personhood (Kaufman and Morgan 2005), which may be reflected in burial. Secondary burial, for example, may bring about further changes both in the ideological construction of a dead individual’s identity, and their personhood status, as determined by the agency of the living and possibly in relation to forms of social death occurring later than biological death.

4. The attainment of personhood may be linked to various facets of an individual’s identity, physiological condition and social role (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, rank, health), which should prompt a consideration of the overall context of deposition (including location of burial, presence and typology of grave goods, body treatment, bioarchaeological evidence). While this has not been possible for the present chapter, such studies are strongly encouraged for future research in the Italian context.

**Funerary and field archaeology**

1. The loss of human remains in the field may potentially affect our interpretation of past rituals connected to personhood. While the issue of poor sub-adult preservation due to bone fragility is thorny (Lewis 2013: 23–6), poor excavation techniques, a lack of interest in childhood archaeology, the perceived absence of neonatal remains in past cemeteries (Lewis 2013: 20) and a focus on the most conspicuous grave assemblages (that in some contexts
were reserved for adults) may affect the study of neonates and children in the archaeological record or the publication of relevant evidence.

2. The lack of systematic excavations of settlement contexts in many Italian areas, where young children were sometimes/often buried (Modica 2007; Zanoni 2011; 2016), may further hamper the identification of such subjects in the burial records. Another issue to consider is the possibility that children were granted funerary rites that are archaeologically invisible, but were still perceived as meaningful by their burying group. The reliability of past excavation methods in the Italian context has also been called into question, especially for the handling of osteological material (e.g. Cuozzo 2016, 13). This impacts on the availability of the potential sample, especially since many major Italian cemetery sites were excavated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

3. The possibility, often discussed in Italian archaeology (for a recent review see Perego and Scopacasa 2016), that non-elite or subordinate groups may have been partially/largely excluded from formal burial may limit our exploration of childhood in the context under study to elite or “middle class” social groups. Among the sites sampled here, this might be especially the case of Verucchio (Di Lorenzo et al. 2016).

**Biology and bioarchaeology**

1. Notable issues exist in archaeology and bioarchaeology regarding the terminology used for defining “childhood” and the age classes it comprises. Halcrow and Tayles (2008) have noted the existence of “different ‘types’ of age” (e.g. physiological or biological age; chronological age; social age), whose definition is not always appropriately addressed or specified in archaeological and bioarchaeological research. This issue is relevant to some Italian studies on the period considered here, and make it difficult to compare the data from different burial sites (Di Lorenzo et al. 2016).

2. Childhood illness, malnutrition, neglect and abuse may slow down development, and are known to compromise biological, neurological and psychological processes (Martorell 1997; 1999; Cozolino 2002; with long-term implications in midlife: Slopen et al. 2016, 90). For example, traumatized children displaying common symptoms of abuse (e.g. anxiety, motor hyperactivity, behavioural impulsivity, sleep issues and hypertension: Perry et al. 1995) may be subject to social exclusion and re-victimization (for a general study on present-day survivors: Spatz Widom et al. 2008). Abnormalities in cognitive, behavioural, biological and social patterns may be key in deterring or delaying the attribution of personhood to survivors. This in turn may play a significant role in shaping burial patterns. Children believed to be different from others, for example, might be denied proper funerary rituals if they die, even when healthier children of the same age were not. In communities where poor nutrition, disease and/or violence might have been rampant, the socio–biological consequences of such phenomena for both children and parents may have had a bearing on large-scale conceptions of social integration and child personhood (for example, because of delayed/compromised maternal/paternal–infant bonding, or for the negative response of diseased/traumatized/abused parents to pregnancy or motherhood/fatherhood; see the case of Alto de Cruzeiro in Scheper Hughes 1993).

**Evidence from Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Italy**

Given the permissible word limit for this chapter, I propose to undertake a preliminary discussion of selected funerary data from northern and central Italy. My work is not intended to offer
Bronze and Early Iron Age Italy

a full overview of the evidence available from the sampled sites. Rather, I aim to foster discussion among scholars on the issues of marginality and personhood studies in Italian archaeology (see Perego and Scopacasa 2016). My focus in this chapter is on practices of inclusion in, and exclusion from, the formal burial ground as a ritual means potentially adopted to negotiate/delineate child personhood in the funerary arena. Following seminal work by I. Morris (1987) on ancient Attica, analyses of the demographic and social representativeness of past cemeteries have gained increasing importance in funerary archaeology (Cuozzo 2016: 7–8). Such research highlights how funerary policies based on discrimination and marginalization reserve formal burial only for selected categories of people. This selection is usually grounded in criteria such as the gender, rank or, indeed, the age of the deceased (for recent research on Italy: Zanoni 2011; 2016; Perego 2014a; 2016; Cuozzo 2016; Scopacasa 2016). As children may represent around 50 per cent of the population in agricultural societies predating the developments of modern medicine (Morris 1987; Chamberlain 2006; Becker 2007; estimates of ancient child mortality may vary between 30 and 70 per cent: Lewis 2013: 22), the lack or scarcity of child burials in past funerary sites represents one of the clearest indicators of selectivity in formal burial (Cuozzo 2016, 8).

A preliminary overview of selected funerary sites from northern and central Italy has allowed some important inferences about children’s social standing in late prehistory and protohistory. Funerary evidence from the Early Bronze Age (c. 2300–1650 BC) is patchy and/or inconspicuous in many regions of Italy, including northern Italy. A crucial issue at stake is the possible adoption of funerary rites that did not necessarily result in the creation of large formal cemeteries like those attested in later periods. In contexts where formal cemeteries are attested, anomalous burials of sub-adults outside the cemetery area have been occasionally reported and discussed (Saracino et al. 2014, with bibliography). Nonetheless, the available evidence is too scanty to address the issue of child personhood in these communities. The Early Bronze Age, therefore, is not considered in this review (see, however, van Rossenberg, this volume).

A growing focus on the formalization of burial in large cemetery areas intentionally set up for disposing of the deceased is noted in northern and central Italy from the Middle and Recent Bronze Age period (c. 1650–1200/1150 BC; cf. especially the evidence from the Terramare settlement system in north-east Italy: Cardarelli 2010). Formal cemetery burial might, therefore, at this time have acquired a more significant role in delineating degrees of social inclusion and social marginalization, or in disguising the extent of existing social inequality. As I discuss below, notable variability in burial practice is attested at both the intra- and inter-site level, which may point to the existence of complex and variable forms of negotiation of personhood, identity and status in the study area.

In terms of funerary representativeness, scholarship has noted the absence or scarcity of perinatal and neonatal subjects (between birth and one year at death) in many burial contexts in Middle (c. 1650–1350/1300 BC), Recent Bronze (c. 1350/1300–1150 BC) and Final Bronze Age (c. 1200/1150–1000 BC) northern and central Italy (e.g. Vanzetti 2010: 201; Cavazzuti 2011; Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014; Trucco et al. 2014: 29; Vanzetti and Borgognini Tarli 2003 report similar trends in a number of cemeteries of southern Italy; for the approximate chronology in northern Italy: Cardarelli 2010). In view of the funerary data available, some scholars have also suggested that children about one to three years of age may have often (but not always) been excluded from formal cemetery burial, or granted burial rituals that were different from those reserved for adults and older children (e.g. Vanzetti 2010: 201; Cavazzuti 2011; Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014: 700–1). By contrast, formal burials of children older than about three years of age at death have been reported at many burial sites from the study area, such as Rocciosa di Farnese, Cavallo Morto di Anzio and Lucus Feroniae in Latium and southern Etruria (Angle et al. 2004; Aspesi and Pasquini 2014; Trucco et al. 2014); Pianello di Genga in the Marche
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(Vanzetti 2010); Montata di Reggio Emilia and Casinalbo in Emilia Romagna (Cavazzuti 2011; Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014); Olmo di Nogara, Bovolone, Scalvinetto di Legnago and Frattesina di Fratta Polesine in Veneto (e.g. Salzani and Colonna 2010; Cavazzuti 2011; Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014; Cardarelli et al. 2015; Tables 3.1, 3.2).

Another crucial issue in this period of ritual innovation and variability was the choice of the burial rite, which directly affected the funerary treatment of children in the study area. This issue is especially relevant to the mid- to late second millennium BC, which saw the progressive spread of cremation in many European regions (Rebay-Salisbury 2012). In northern Italy, cremation is preferred in Emilia and the area west of the Mincio River from the Middle Bronze Age onwards; by contrast, inhumation still coexisted with cremation in the Recent Bronze Age cemeteries located between the Mincio and Adige Rivers (Cardarelli 2010: 450). The spread of cremation in this period has attracted significant scholarly attention and has been variously connected to critical changes in religious and social beliefs about the body, the person and the destiny of the soul (e.g. Rebay-Salisbury 2012; Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014 with bibliography). Notably, research on Middle and Recent Bronze Age northern and central Italy has suggested that perinatal individuals and children under the age of about one or two to three years were widely (but not entirely) excluded from cremation rites (Table 3.1). Even when subjects in this age range were buried in the formal cemetery, they were generally inhumed and not cremated (e.g. Vanzetti and Borgognini Tarli 2003: 359; Cavazzuti 2011; Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014; Trucco et al. 2014: 29; Tables 3.1 and 3.2). At Olmo di Nogare, for example, children under the age of around three appear to have been excluded from cremation rites. However, numerous child burials are attested among the 488 sampled inhumations, with perinatal and neonatal depositions representing 12 per cent of the inhumation sample, and the percentage of infantes 1 (i.e. individuals aged up to approximately 6 or 7 years at death) rising to 25 per cent of the inhumed individuals (Cavazzuti 2011: 170; Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014: 700; a revision of the osteological data is currently underway; Table 3.2). Even more interestingly, at the nearby site of Franzine Nuova di Villa Bartolomea, neonates may have represented 22 per cent of the inhumation sample (Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014).

As for the sporadic presence of infant cremations in the formal burial ground, some cases have been reported at Casinalbo (Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014: 700) and Cavallo Morto (Angle et al. 2004: 139). At Cavallo Morto, a one- to two- year-old child was cremated and deposited in a large urn with a violin-bow fibula: a ritual usually reserved for adults. The custom of granting sophisticated burial rites to infants became more common in the late second and first millennium BC (Nizzo 2011; Cardarelli et al. 2015 on Frattesina; Di Lorenzo et al. 2016), and has been suggested as reflecting more complex social structures, with increasing importance being granted to inherited rank and certain lineages in the local communities (e.g. Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014; Trucco et al. 2014).

If the scarcity of infant burials in the sampled sites is not dramatically influenced by the potential loss of these children’s bones, these trends might point to the existence of fairly well established (but perhaps not overtly rigid) thresholds for sub-adults to acquire various (and incremental) degrees of social significance. The foetal and neonatal stages appear to have been the ones in which the attainment of personhood was more precarious and at risk. A crucial step towards social integration might have occurred about one to three years of age, when children start to appear (or appear more consistently) in the burial record or to be granted cremation rites. Crucially, this age stage corresponds to a phase of major physiological and social development for sub-adults (e.g. rapid brain growth, development of language, potential cessation of breastfeeding), which might have increasingly prompted their recognition as valuable members of their group. The status of children as persons or, at least their representation as such in the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>MNI</th>
<th>C= cremation</th>
<th>I= inhumation</th>
<th>Age classes</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Bibliography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casinalbo</td>
<td>Emilia</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>C= 349</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inf1 Inf2</td>
<td>Few Inf1 might have been younger than 2 and even 1 years at death</td>
<td>Cavazzuti 2011; Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montata</td>
<td>Emilia</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>C= 123</td>
<td></td>
<td>17 14</td>
<td>Only 2 Inf1 might have been around or younger than 2 years at death</td>
<td>Cavazzuti 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalvinetto</td>
<td>Romagna</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>C= 28 I= 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 2 7</td>
<td>Inf1 and 2 represent 21% of cremation sample (TABLE 2). The youngest individual was c. 2 years at death. No child burial found in inhumation sample: the latter is not a random sample as only burials with grave goods were analysed.</td>
<td>Cavazzuti 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucus Feroniae</td>
<td>Lazio</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>C= 13</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 3 1</td>
<td>The only Inf1 was older than c. 2 years at death</td>
<td>Trucco et al. 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavallo Morto</td>
<td>Lazio</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>C= 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
<td>One Inf1 was around 1–2 years at death</td>
<td>Angle et al. 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late RBA</td>
<td>Marche</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>C= 104</td>
<td></td>
<td>39 65</td>
<td>According to Vanzetti, it is probable the absence of neonates (0–1 year at death) and the scarcity of children (1–3 years at death)</td>
<td>Preliminary data analysis in Vanzetti 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>MNI</th>
<th>Age classes</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Bibliography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frattesina</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Inf1  Inf2  Juv  Ad.</td>
<td>The youngest individual in cremation sample was c. 3 years at death; the youngest in inhumation sample was c. 1 at death. These data contributed to the larger sample analysed in Cardarelli et al. 2015 (TABLE 2)</td>
<td>Salzani and Colonna 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narde I and II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C= 19</td>
<td>I= 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBA – EIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frattesina</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>Inf1  Inf2  Juv  Ad.</td>
<td>No child under 2 at death is found in this sample. These data contributed to the larger sample analysed in Cardarelli et al. 2015 (TABLE 2)</td>
<td>Cavazzuti 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narde II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C= 174</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBA – EIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerveteri</td>
<td>Lazio</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inf1</td>
<td>Inf1 was between birth and 1 year at death and dated to the FBA</td>
<td>Trucco et al. 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monte Tosto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Alto 1997</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FBA – EIA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

MNI = minimum number of individuals
Reported age classes: Inf1 (infants) = individuals under six or seven years at death; Inf2 = individuals between seven or eight and twelve to fourteen at death; Juv (juveniles) = individuals between thirteen to fifteen and twenty-one at death; ad. (adults) = individuals older than twenty-two at death (the classification system may vary in different studies)
Chronology: MBA = Middle Bronze Age; RBA = Recent Bronze Age; FBA = Final Bronze Age; EIA = Early Iron Age
funerary sphere, seems more established (albeit not necessarily fully assured) for individuals older than about three years of age, who are often well represented in the sampled cemeteries and were sometimes granted relatively conspicuous grave assemblages (e.g. Cardarelli et al. 2015: 443–4 on Frattesina).

In the Final Bronze Age, cremation became the largely predominant, and in places the exclusive, burial rite in the study area. The exclusion from cremation rites of children under about two years of age seem to have continued at some burial sites such as Pianello di Genga (Vanzetti and Borgognini Tarli 2003: 359; Vanzetti 2010: 201). However, the deposition of infant cremations in formal cemeteries has been reported elsewhere, such as at Narde di Frattesina in Veneto (Cardarelli et al. 2015), Montetosto Alto di Cerveteri in Latium (Trucco et al. 2000: 488) and Pozzuolo di Veio in southern Etruria (Trucco et al. 2014: 29). While some neonatal burials emerged at Frattesina (Fig. 3.1), the analysis of a sample of around 470 graves from Narde have indicated that, overall, children remained underrepresented there (Cavazzuti 2011, 167; Cardarelli et al. 2015, with some differences noted between the burial sites of Narde I and II; Table 3.2). The presence of some rare inhumations at Frattesina has been linked to the potential marginality and incomplete social integration of those who were not granted cremation, including adults (cf. Salzani and Colonna 2010; Perego 2014b; Saracino et al. 2014), a trend that in Veneto would become more evident in the Iron Age (Perego 2014a; 2016; Perego et al. 2015). Overall, this evidence points again towards the possibility that in Bronze Age Italy humans became persons incrementally, with the successful passage through infancy and early childhood representing a crucial threshold for the attainment of personhood (or at least its symbolic enactment in the funerary arena). Age, however, might not have been the only criterion determining, or deferring, social integration, with people’s social rank, role and relations presumably being additional determinants.

### Table 3.2 Percentages of child burials in cemeteries of Middle Bronze Age to Early Iron Age northern Italy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Chronology</th>
<th>Rite</th>
<th>MNI</th>
<th>Infans1</th>
<th>Infans2</th>
<th>Inf. total</th>
<th>Juvenis</th>
<th>Adultus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casinalbo</td>
<td>Emilia R.</td>
<td>MBA-RBA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montata</td>
<td>Emilia R.</td>
<td>MBA-RBA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olmo</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>MBA-RBA</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowlione</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>MBA-RBA</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalineto</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>MBA-RBA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narde I</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>MBA-EIA</td>
<td>C*</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>16%**</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narde II</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>MBA-EIA</td>
<td>C*</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>20%***</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponte Nuovo</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>C*</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borgo Panigale</td>
<td>Emilia R.</td>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palazzo Emo</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>C+I</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via Tiepolo</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>C+I</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verucchio</td>
<td>Emilia R.</td>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 2.6% of individuals from Olmo are undetermined and excluded from the sampled age classes; C = cremation; I = inhumation

* some rare inhumations may be included (one from Ponte Nuovo); ** of which 7% were under 2 years at death; *** of which 8% were under 2 years at death

Source: Modified and updated after Cavazzuti and Salvadei 2014, Tab. 17
Comparable dynamics of ritual exclusion, often involving individuals in the perinatal and neonatal stage, has been noted for the first millennium BC; in the Roman period, the available written sources confirm the incomplete social integration of infants and little children, which might determine their exclusion from formal cemetery burial (Bartoloni 2003: 103; Becker 2007; Carroll 2011; Zanoni 2011; Carroll and Graham 2014). In the early first millennium BC, a scarcity or lack of perinatal, neonatal and child burials has been reported from Tyrrenian and southern Villanovan cemeteries such as Villa Bruschi Falgari di Tarquinia (Vargiu et al. 2010), Osteria dell’Osa (Bietti Sestieri 1992; Nizzo 2011, 57), and possibly Quattro Fontanili di Veii (Nizzo 2011: 61). In particular, overviews of the evidence from Latium Vetus have suggested that children up to around four years of age were denied burial rites, or buried in the settlement (Modica 2007; Nizzo 2011; Fulminante and Stoddart, this volume). While further research would be desirable on this issue, Nizzo (2011) has suggested that it was only at the end of the eighth century BC that children, including some neonates, started to be included more regularly in the cemeteries of Tyrrenian Italy; there, they were sometimes granted sumptuous funerary rites, presumably intended to underline family rank. In some contexts, children were also buried in the tomb, or even in the same cremation urn, together with other children or adults. Among the most significant contexts are Verucchio in Emilia Romagna (Di Lorenzo et al. 2016; Fulminante and Stoddart, this volume) and many centres of Veneto (Perego 2012b; more recently: Onisto 2014). This ritual practice was probably intended to underline the increasing importance of certain lineages in the burying community (Di Lorenzo et al. 2016; also Nizzo 2011 on Tyrrenian Italy) and/or the social meaningfulness of these children as members of some privileged (or, at least, fully socially integrated) families (Perego 2014a).

Notably, however, a great variability in burial practice is attested in this period across the peninsula with some cemetery sites, especially from northern Italy, reporting a higher ratio of sub-adult burials and even the presence of neonates among those granted normative burial rites (e.g. Borgo Panigale and Verucchio in Emilia Romagna: Cavazzuti 2011; Di Lorenzo et al. 2016;
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On Veneto, see for example Onisto and Marsotti 2005: 115; Onisto 2014: 224; Tables 3.2 and 3.3). At the important Villanovan site of Verucchio, recent osteological analysis of around 250 cremation graves (many of which contain more than one individual) has allowed the identification of a minimum of 71 children (Di Lorenzo et al. 2016). This sample includes children under the age of three and neonates associated with lavish grave assemblages similar (or even richer) than those granted to adults:

In Verucchio … children are definitely not excluded from formal burial already in the Early Iron Age … When considering the ritual practice and grave assemblages, there is no clear difference between the tombs of adults and children. Childhood does not seem to have been considered as a distinct category in the context of burial. Children seem to have been recognized from an early age as members of the social group and treated as such … The funerary treatment given to children at Verucchio can be read as a projection of social expectations about the children’s future role and status in the community. High-standing families at Verucchio had very clear ideas about what their children should grow up to be and the funerary context afforded an ideal venue for these ideas and expectations to be expressed to an audience of onlookers.

Di Lorenzo et al. 2016, 134

This brief overview of the Early Iron Age evidence seems to confirm the incremental nature of personhood in late prehistoric and proto-historic Italy. Infancy and childhood prove again to be crucial and vulnerable times both biologically and culturally: even at sites where some young children and neonates were buried in the formal cemetery, these age classes may remain underrepresented in the funerary record (Tables 3.2 and 3.3). As for the Bronze Age, regional and chronological variability appears to have existed in the negotiation of young children’s personhood status, or at least its representation in the funerary sphere. In a period of increased socio-political complexity and more hierarchical social order, the spread of graves with an explicit elite character testifies to the further development of a funerary ideology openly discriminating between individuals. The attribution of an elite identity to young children, including some neonates, their deposition in the formal cemetery and their interment with family members, disclose a social context in which relationality and interconnectedness among high-standing groups might have represented crucial aspects of ideologies of personhood more overtly based on discrimination and inequality.

Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the idea of personhood as a major theoretical framework for investigating issues of social inclusion and social marginalization in the funerary record of late prehistoric and proto-historic northern and central Italy. While my review of the evidence has been largely preliminary, the concept of personhood has provided a useful research tool for exploring the issue of child burial, and the often-reported absence or scarcity of infant graves in the cemeteries of Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Italy.

As the ethnographic and anthropological studies mentioned above indicate, exclusion from formal burial rituals suggests that neonates and young children may have been conceived as nonpersons, or granted only minimal personhood. While some methodological issues may hamper our investigation of the funerary record, the large-scale funerary trends apparently at work in late prehistoric Italy seem to indicate that personhood there was acquired incrementally and not granted to all. It is therefore likely that these communities, probably marred by
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>MNI</th>
<th>Age classes</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Bibliography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MNI</strong></td>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
<td><strong>C= cremation</strong></td>
<td><strong>I= inhumation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Inf1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Inf2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponte Nuovo 10th – 9th cent BC</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borgo Panigale c. 9th cent BC</td>
<td>Emilia Romagna</td>
<td>165</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padua Palazzo Emo 9th – 8th cent BC</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Padua Via Tiepolo 9th – 8th cent BC</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verucchio 9th – 7th cent BC</td>
<td>Emilia Romagna</td>
<td>296</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For MNI and the reported age classes see Table 3.1
high infant mortality rates, came to distinguish between biological and social birth, with the latter possibly occurring some months or even some years after childbirth. The age threshold for accessing formal burial in a cemetery, or being granted normative burial rites, may offer some insights into the age threshold for achieving personhood — or some degrees of it — in the communities considered in this chapter.

The great variability in burial rites from late prehistoric Italy also sheds light on the complexity of practices relating to child personhood in this period and their variability over time. In particular, the presence of perinatal and infant burials in some cemeteries may suggest that these burying communities were more willing to grant their offspring full or partial social inclusion. Overall, the funerary evidence from late prehistoric and proto-historic Italy points to social practices that resonate well with L.M. Morgan’s observations on foetal and child personhood in modern rural Ecuador:

Nascent persons are brought into being slowly, through processes rife with uncertainty and moral ambiguity. Adults are slow to assign individual identity and personhood to the not-yet-born and the newly born. These criaturas, as they are often called, bear little resemblance to disembodied, technologized, visualized, personified, and revered U.S. fetuses. These unknown, unknowable criaturas may teeter on the cusp of personhood for months before being fully welcomed into a human community. Morgan 1997: 329

Variability in mortuary practice, documented in both the Bronze and the Early Iron Age, even in the same cemetery, may in part relate to the mourners’ individual choices in disposing of their dead and conceptualizing the social standing of their children. The individual agency of parents and small-scale kinship groups may be linked to the existence of conflicting beliefs about life and death, and different degrees of emotional attachment to the little dead. Parent–child bonding, and the attainment of partial/full personhood at certain specific stages of development, might have also been influenced by socio-cultural or biological factors that have been impossible to fully address in this contribution and which might indeed be problematic to ascertain in the burial record: for example, a child’s biological sex, birthright, health status or delayed physical or psychological development. As Morgan notes about Ecuadorian personhood:

The trajectory of personhood need not necessarily be linear, because people cannot predict the many influences that bring each person into being … Incipient personhood is understood as openly ambiguous and variable, its character perennially liminal, amorphous, and irresolvable … A criatura said to be formed (and thus una persona) by six months’ gestation may be said at birth to be “little more than an animal” until it is baptized. Morgan 1997: 346–347

The study of mortuary rites may also open crucial windows into power dynamics that go well beyond people’s individual agency and emotional response to death. As shown by many ethnographic and anthropological studies, social practices relating to personhood — and the attribution of social meaningfulness to children — are political acts of the utmost importance in many societies worldwide. In present-day Western societies, for example, conflicting social beliefs about the social standing of foetal subjects have resulted in intense struggles about women’s rights, abortion and the role of politics and religion in society (Bordo 1993; Heriot 1996; Morgan 1996; 2006; Hennessy and Cliath 2004).
Elisa Perego

While our knowledge of Early Bronze Age Italy’s society and funerary rites is hampered by a relative lack of burial evidence, more interesting observations are possible for the later periods. Between the late second and the early first millennia BC, for example, nascent urbanism and increased socio-political complexity were related to the spread of new funerary practices – and forms of social control – in many areas of the peninsula (Perego and Scopacasa 2016). In some cases, such as in Veneto, burial rites seem to have been used to delineate forms of extreme ritual marginalization and violent erasure of personhood (e.g. Perego 2014a; 2016; Perego et al. 2015), which were potentially displayed to the arguably extreme degree of human sacrifice (Ruta Serafini and Michelini 2013). Exclusion from formal cemetery burial and/or normative burial rites, therefore, might have represented an important means to delineate/negotiate the personhood status of an individual in the ritually charged arena of the funeral. While scholarship has variously commented upon the underrepresentation of children in many Early Iron Age Italian cemeteries (e.g. Nizzo 2011), exclusion from formal burial was not necessarily the norm in this period. Significantly, the inclusion of some elite children (including neonates) in the formal burial ground, and their association with extremely lavish grave assemblages, was possibly intended to underline the high social status of these children’s families – as well as these children’s significance and integration as the beneficiaries of powerful social connections and relations. Ideas of personhood, age and social inclusion were therefore manipulated by these powerful social groups to suit their needs and display their authority, in the funerary arena. In these contexts, the idea of childhood – or the rejection of such a notion – was an ideological construction that may not directly relate to how children were actually treated or “conceptualized” in their daily lives.

Overall, this review of a late prehistoric funerary sample supports claims by scholars that notions of personhood, including child personhood, are not universal and vary cross-culturally. While we must be careful in linking directly personhood and funerary practice, the study presented here has shown that archaeology is well equipped to contribute to the wider personhood debate in the humanities and social sciences. In particular, archaeological analysis may be useful to investigate the development of practices relating to personhood in the longue durée and in a cross-cultural perspective. It is hoped, therefore, that further research on this topic will be done in both Italian archaeology and archaeology more in general.

References


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