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Head Strong: Gendered Analysis of Human Representations in Western and Central Continental European Iron Age Iconography

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Head Strong: Gendered Analysis of Human Representations in Western and Central Continental European Iron Age Iconography

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Abstract: This preliminary study examines potential links between gender and sex representations in Iron Age Continental European iconography. Drawing from multiple examples such as the Glauberg statue, the statue of Bourey, and the Gundestrup Cauldron, this article reviews the different anthropomorphic images in Western European Iron Age contexts to create a method for understanding the role of gender and the human head in anthropomorphic representations. This article will form a foundation for future studies.

Keywords: Iron Age, Gender, Iconography, Europe, Celtic.

Introduction

Iconography is an important aspect of culture and can be used in nearly limitless ways to express the beliefs of the artist, the community, and the group as a whole. This is problematic for archaeological interpretation, as, without contemporary frames of reference or textual evidence, it is difficult to determine the meaning of the iconography associated with past peoples. The visual codes and cues represented in Iron Age (c. 1000-100 BCE) iconography in Europe would have been easily understood in their own time by the cultural groups that produced them, but without a codex or extensive study of their iconography, it is difficult to understand the meaning behind their symbols.

This is especially true for the people described as Celts, because there are so few textual accounts from that period across the multiple geographic regions that they occupied. Scholars are left with second-hand accounts by Greco-Roman authors, mortuary data, structural analysis, and iconography to understand the people of the Iron Age. The iconographic component is the focus of this article. The Celts are typically defined as sharing linguistic and some cultural and geographic features but are generally considered to have been loosely linked groups in central and western Europe during the Iron Age (Cunliffe 2018, 29-30, 53). Due to the debate over the use of the term Celt (Cunliffe 2018, 53-4), I will use the more encompassing term Iron Age Cultural Complex in this manuscript.

Iron Age iconography is not what would be considered “high art” in the Post-Renaissance Western definition of the term (Megaw 1989, 16-9). Archaeologically preserved examples of such iconography frequently adorned everyday objects such as weapons, jewelry, and vessels made from fired clay or metal (Megaw 1989, 16-9). While few stone and wooden sculptures have sur-

vived, what does remain can be used to discuss gender and its representation in iconography (Megaw 1989, 16).

This discussion will center on a brief overview of later Iron Age iconography (550 BCE- 100 BCE), which is known to emphasize the human head (Harding 2007, 57, 222-27). This focus on the head was most likely due to a belief in the power contained within the human head, even in death, and a desire to connect to certain beings or past individuals to gain their blessing or favor (Cowan 1993). One clear trait in Iron Age representations is that even when there are clearly defined post-cranial gender indicators, the head remains the most emphasized feature, regardless of gender.

This paper acts as a preliminary study engineered to generate a method for analyzing western and central Continental European anthropomorphic iconography to determine the role played by gender and the head in human representations. Future research will include larger sample sizes and additional methods of analysis.

Archaeology and Gender

When engaging in assessments of gender ideology in central and western continental Iron Age culture as reflected in anthropomorphic iconography, it is important to provide a background regarding the way that archaeologists identify gender in other archaeological contexts, particularly burials. In European burial contexts, grave goods are the primary method for determining gender because the acidic nature of central European soils destroy most physical remains that might allow for the identification of sex (Arnold 1995, 153-54). Inorganic grave goods are usually well preserved and can be compared with graves that contained physical remains to attempt a gendered analysis (Arnold 2016, 833, 836).

Archaeologists have attempted to identify patterned correlates between morphological (skeletal) sex and the material culture expression of gender within a range of mortuary contexts (Arnold 2014, 244). There are patterns in the mortuary record that allow archaeologists to make hypotheses about sex and gender. While it was traditionally assumed that sex and gender exist as a strict binary of male vs. female (Jordan 2016, 871; Pope 2018, 1-2), Arnold argues that both sex and gender exist on a spectrum and may occasionally intersect (Arnold 2014, 239).

Between the 18th and 20th centuries, early archaeologists based their interpretations on antiquated Western gender norms (Arnold 1995, 155-56; Jordan 2016, 872). This perpetuated the stereotypes of the male warrior and the female domestic, but as additional sites were uncovered, the paradigm changed. Certain objects were no longer considered exclusively male or female, including the wheeled vehicles and drinking and feasting equipment found in elite burials (Arnold 2016: 841, 1995, 160; Arnold & Hagmann 2014, 1-2). In the mortuary record of the earlier Iron Age, some objects are strongly associated with males (spears and other weapons and a single arm ring worn on one side of the body) and objects associated with females (hairpins and other head ornament, belt plates with staple-decorated belts, and arm rings worn on both wrists) (Table 1) (Arnold & Hagmann 2010, 1). Yet, the mortuary record

of La Tène period cemeteries lacks clearly gender-associated objects; for example, female hairpins all but disappear in La Tène graves. However, elements of these gendered characteristics continue in the iconographic record, for example, the early La Tène Glauberg warrior statue in Hessen, Germany with a shield, armor and an arm ring on the right arm (Kruta 2015, 80).

There is also a third gender category in the Iron Age mortuary record although whether transgendered individuals were the norm is less clear (Arnold 2016, 848). Age appears to have impacted the assignment of gendered ornament. Often subadult (adolescent) burials contain “female” ornaments such as arm rings on each wrist, but that does not mean that only elite female children are buried in the archaeological contexts. Biologically male children are likely being buried as well, but in a manner that mimics female burials. Arnold (and others) interprets this as a third or pre-male gender category that demonstrates that gender is subordinate to age at some points of a person’s life (Arnold 2016, 848).

Methods

In this article, the identifiers for the sex and gender split are chosen based on a compilation of previous scholarship (see Table 1). The division comes from biological sex which is denoted by primary sex characteristics that can be seen in an iconographic image (penis or vulva) or secondary sex characteristics (facial hair or developed breasts). The gendered items that follow trends seen in burials and tumuli are typically symmetrical/asymmetrical jewelry or types of head ornaments. Discussed later in the article these objects may have served additional purposes regarding age or status, but that does not preclude them from also denoting gender. The sites used in this article come primarily from western and central Europe (Gaul and Germany) and a case study of the Gundestrup Cauldron from Denmark. The reasoning for these location choices is similarity in styles and cultural continuation from Hallstatt to La Tène. The chosen objects were also artifacts that focused on anthropomorphic images alone, not as adornments or stelae. This means that statues or figurines are the primary artifacts included in this study, the exception being the Gundestrup Cauldron which possesses a clear series of patterns that are discussed later in this article and is useful as a case study. The assumption is that when a creator is producing a statue or figure they will focus more on the representation of the anthropomorphic image rather than making sure the image fits the object they are adorning.

Overview of Iron Age Iconography in Western and Continental Europe

This paper centers on the La Tène period of the Iron Age, which roughly encompasses the fifth to the first century BCE (Laing 1992, 11). The primary geographic focus will be on Gaul (modern-day France) around the Roman conquest (58 BCE) with a few examples from Germany. Representations in the Iberian Peninsula and the East Alpine region will not be considered here.

Table 1: Sex and Gender Identifiers in Iron Age Iconography based on Mortuary Data (Compiled from Arnold & Hagmann 2010; Johnson 2016; and Jordan 2016).

Sex (Male)	Sex (Female)	Gender (Masculine/Man)	Gender (Feminine/Woman)
Primary Sex Characteristics: • Penis • Testes	Primary Sex Characteristics: • Vulva	Sword/Dagger/Spear/Razors	Head Ornament/ Earrings or Bead Necklaces (Torcs of bronze in EIA/ Gold in ELT)
Secondary Sex Characteristics: • Facial Hair • Lack of Developed Breasts	Secondary Sex Characteristics: • Developed Breasts • Lack of Facial Hair	Armor/Shield/Helmet	
		Asymmetrical Jewelry	Symmetrical Jewelry
		Short Hair/Facial Hair	Long Hair
		Conical Hats	Veils or Head-dresses

Table 2: Overview of Anthropomorphic Images Discussed in the Article

Region/ Country	Material		
	Wood	Stone	Metal
Germany	Fellbach-Schmidlen Figure, Baden-Württemberg	Glauberg Statue, Hessen	
France	Pilgrim Figures, Burgundy	Unnamed, St. Chaptes	Taranis statue, Le Chatelet
		Unnamed, Roquepertuse	Seated Figure, Bouray
		Unnamed, Eufigneix	La Grande Danseuse, Neuvy-en-Sullias
Luxembourg		Epona, Dalhiem	
Denmark			Gundestrup Cauldron

There are very few written primary sources on Iron Age religions, so discerning how individuals interacted with the supernatural world through representations of ancestor/heroic figures is difficult (Laing 1992, 17). The La Tène art style is thought to have been used for power, protection, or to seek favor from various deities (Cunliffe 2018, 293-96; Finlay 1973, 76; Green 1989, 4; Megaw 1989, 16).

Floral and animal motifs dominate early Iron Age iconography while in the later La Tène period there is an increase in human-like figures, some of which might be divine representations (Green 1989: 3; Harding 2007, 47, 54; Megaw 1989, 56). In Europe, anthropomorphic carvings or stelae date back to the late Neolithic, and in the late Bronze Age into the early Iron Age (known as the Hallstatt period) a concentration of examples comes from the south-west region of Germany called Baden-Württemberg (Bruno and Reinhard 2001, 304).

Three famous deities represented in Gaulic iconography are Cernunnos the Horned God of the Hunt (Figure 1), Epona the Horse Goddess or earth mother (Figure 2), and the Wheel God Taranis (Figure 3). Cernunnos is represented as an antlered male holding or wearing a torc (metal neck ring) and surrounded by or grasping animals such as snakes, stags, or rams, a motif referred to as the Master of Animals (Arnold 2010, 197).



Figure 1: Image of Cernunnos from the Gundestrup Cauldron. Image provided by Wikimedia Commons 2010.



Figure 2: Statue of the goddess Epona. Original statue from Dalheim, Luxembourg. Image provided by Wikimedia Commons 2016.

This motif is seen at several sites including Fellbach-Schmiden in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, and on artifacts such as the Gundestrup cauldron, found in a bog in Denmark but rich in La Tène iconography (Arnold 2010, 197; Finlay 1973, 68; Megaw 1989, 174). Another common deity depicted in statuary is the Wheel god Taranis, who is associated with storms, the sun, and fertility (Green 1984, 103; Green 1989, 117). The third deity, and only well-known female divine figure in Gaul, is Epona, who is considered an earth mother goddess as well as the goddess of horses (Green 1989, 16; Müller 2009, 148). Not all figures and human representations are full-bodied images; some only depict heads.



Figure 3: A statue of the god Taranis from Le Chatelet, France. Image provided by Wikimedia Commons 2018.

More common human images are of heads and skulls, which are found in sculptures, swords, jewelry, and other adornments (Megaw 1989, 69-74). Males are easier to identify because of facial hair, but most appear androgynous or indeterminate. This may be related to the ubiquity and importance of the head: some scholars believe that various Iron Age peoples were involved in a head cult or believed that heads were the seat of the soul and maintained wisdom and power after death (Armit 2005, 86-7; Cowan 1993; Finlay 1973, 64; Harding 2007, 57, 222-27).

Ever since the early Christian writers began discussing pre-Christian (Pagan) “Celts”, the head-hunting barbarian trope was useful for propaganda purposes to ease the conversion process and became the inspiration for the concept known as the “Cult of the Head” (Armit 2005, 86-7). This was described as a belief that heads were the seat of the soul and maintained wisdom and power after death, resulting in head-hunting that spanned all of the Iron Age regions (Armit 2012, 9-10 & 18-20; Finlay 1973, 64).

An Iron Age warrior might bring home a head or mount it somewhere to communicate with the deceased person, which may explain heads as com-

mon motifs (Finlay 1973, 64; see also Ghezal et al 2019). In addition, the Roman author Strabo's account of heads hanging from the bridles of Iron Age warriors returning from battle is supported by representations like this Iron Age fibula from the Iberian Peninsula which appears to provide some support for the trophy-taking aspect of this practice (Figure 4). The heads in iconography may have also represented heroic figures, deities, possibly ancestors. They may represent attempts to connect with their ancestral spirit, but the true meaning of the iconographic heads may never be known.



Figure 4. FÍBULA CELTIBÉRICA DE JINETE Digital Archaeology by Mario Huete, via Behance
- Celtiberian fibula (brooch) of Lancia.

The style of Iron Age iconography in Gaul before the Roman conquest was most likely developed autochthonously in Iron Age societies with some Etruscan influence but still incorporates what is believed to be ritual or deity-based motifs (Finlay 1973, 78; Megaw 1989, 20-1). After the Romans invaded (58-52 BC) and brought with them their own distinctive artistic styles, a sense of realism was introduced into Iron Age anthropomorphic iconography (Finlay 1973, 78; Harding 2007, 222-24; Megaw 1989, 21). Thus, Iron Age art becomes less abstract and more representational in a syncretistic style that is referred to as Gallo-Roman art. This style appears especially frequently in statuary (Finlay 1973, 78; Harding 2007, 222-24).

Humans in Wood

There are few surviving wooden figures of humans, and for those that do survive, gender is a difficult trait to discern. The major issue is one of poor preservation; only a few examples are available due to decay; among the few surviving wooden objects, there is more emphasis on certain features, such as the hands and face.

There are two prime examples of surviving wooden human-like figures: The Pilgrim Figures from *Source-de-la-Seine*, France (Cunliffe 2018, 293; Müller 2009, 147) (Figure 4), and the Fellbach-Schmidlen figurine from Germany (Cunliffe 2018, 296; Kurta 2015, 164-65).

The Pilgrim figures, also referred to as wooden votive figures, are thousands of small oak statues found at the source of the river Seine in Burgundy, France (Müller 2009, 147). These figures were found in two deposits and contain varied representations of body parts and full human forms, with very few defining features. It has been suggested that the site was used for ritual purposes by people living near the Seine, but the lack of detail surviving in these figures makes it hard to determine their function (Laing 1992, 83). They may have been used in a healing ritual, in which pilgrims would create a representation of the body part that ailed them and offer it to the river or possibly the river deity (Megaw 1989, 172; Müller 2009, 147).

The figures cannot be precisely dated, but the outfits that the figures are wearing resemble pre-Roman occupation designs, so they may date to before the late first century BC (Laing 1992, 83). One of the figures is gender-indeterminate, with legs, a coat-covered torso, a large head, and a cone-shaped hat/hood (Laing 1992, 83; Müller 2009, 147). Evidence of arms is found on another figure that depicts an individual wearing what is interpreted to be a dress and clutching a cloak or long veil, possibly a depiction of a woman (Laing 1992, 83; Müller 2009, 147). Unfortunately, due to a lack of primary sources from that period, their true purpose is unknown. What is clear is that there is no straightforward evidence of gender in these human figures, and basing gender on potential garments is problematic because textiles rarely survive archaeologically for comparison. Thus, among these votive statues there is only one figure that is possibly female while the rest are unidentifiable.

Another well-known wooden image from the La Tène period is the Fellbach-Schmidlen figure which depicts stags and goats with human hands wrapped around their waists (Arnold 2010, 197; Kurta 2015, 164-65). Two interpretations have been offered for the person holding the animals, one a male Master of Animals, the other a female Mistress of Animals. The most likely link is with the god Cernunnos due to the goat and stag imagery (Arnold 2010, 196-97).

Humans in Stone

The medium of stone represents additional challenges when it comes to interpreting the Roman influences on Iron Age stonework representing human figures but early Gallo-Roman imagery still retains plenty of Iron Age artistic influences (Megaw 1989, 170-73). Over time gendered imagery shifts from indigenous Iron Age styles to a more syncretic Gallo-Roman style in Gaul and other areas of west-central Europe.

A fifth century BCE statue of a warrior found at the Glauberg in Hessen, Germany, (Figure 6) is an excellent example of early La Tène sculpture and exhibits some of the clearest gender-identifiable traits based on the information discussed in this text (Table 1). The Glauberg statue is one of four identical statues that depict a warrior (as named in the cited texts) with a shield, La Tène style sword, and a leaf crown/hat (Müller 2009, 190; Stöllner 2014, 119). The face depicts either a long and bulbous chin or a goatee-like beard. This male figure has been interpreted as an an-

cestor and/or a representation of the person buried in the mound at the base of which the statue was found (Stöllner 2014, 119-120). Though the statue has been referred to as a warrior image due to the shield and sword combo, it is not clear if the interred individual represented by the statue is a warrior or if those objects reflect a particular station in life.

Archaeologists have found several Iron Age burial mounds with associated stone sculptures that likely depict either the deceased or ancestral figures (Armit and Grant 2008, 415). The associated burials recovered contain grave goods resembling the objects depicted on the statues (Stöllner 2014, 121). It is uncertain where the statues were placed in relation to the burials because they were knocked over or broken (Stöllner 2014, 121). Unfortunately, the Glauberg statue is one of the few early works of La Tène sculptures that has any clear gender indicators that might be recognizable to modern scholars.

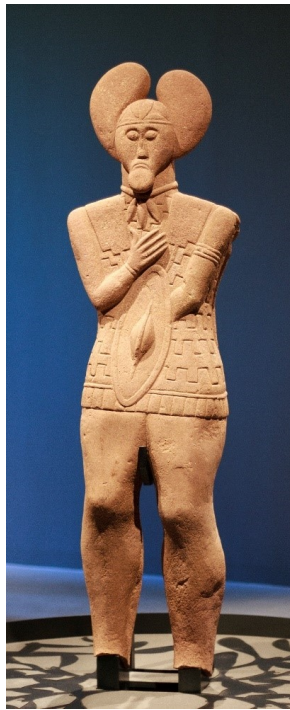


Figure 6: The Glauberg Statue from Glauberg, Hessen, Germany. Image provided by Wikimedia Commons 2011.

Around the same time, a statue from St. Chaptes, France, was constructed depicting a head with a large arch over it, possibly a helmet, hat, or veil, though some scholars focus more on the helmet interpretation (Finlay 1973, 65). The image does not depict anything associated with a particular gender, but it does emphasize the headgear, possibly to denote the importance of this feature. While it could be a veil and possibly represent a woman of a certain age or status, it remains unidentifiable as a gendered artwork due to its

ambiguous art style. Heads found at the oppidum of Entremont in France have more identifiable features such as mustaches, one of the distinguishing characteristics of Iron Age warriors (Megaw 1989, 168).

A 5th – 4th century BC statue of a figure in what looks like armor and seated in a cross-legged position similar to what some classical authors have described as the traditional feasting stance for Iron Age warriors (Finlay 1973, 64; Kruta 2015, 78), was found in *Roquepertuse*, France (Figure 6) in the early 20th century. The image is headless, handless, and much of the other detail is destroyed or weathered, though some scholars have commented that the design of the armor has a classical, possibly Roman or Greek look to it (Finlay 1973, 64). Other scholars have compared the armor to that depicted on the most complete of the Glauberg statues, noting the similar design (Kruta 2015, 78). This could be another example of a male figure, due to the seated position, armor, and exposed legs. The seated position is similar to the images of Cernunnos from the Gundestrup cauldron or the seated figure at *Bouray*, which are both interpreted as male and masculine (Arnold 1995, 157-159; Kruta 2015, 78).



Figure 7: Statue from Roquepertuse, France. Image provided by Wikimedia Commons 2015.

Additionally, two statues from the first century BCE possessing Iron Age elements and most likely Iron Age references also show more influence from Roman art styles. The first is the statue of Epona atop her horse, which has many Gallo-Roman features and influences but is clearly an Iron Age fig-

ure (Müller 2009, 144). The statue of Epona is one of the best examples of a female individual depicted in Iron Age art; through the influence of Roman realism, there are defining features such as a veil (gendered characteristic) and breasts (sex characteristic). There are also symbols including a basket of food and a horse, which denote the domains of the goddess, while still referencing the realism of the Roman style (Müller 2009, 144).

Another stone sculpture from the later La Tène period is a pillar statue from *Euffigneix*, France (Figure 7) which depicts a human figure wearing a torc and bearing the image of an boar (Green 1989, 104-6; Harding 2007, 222; Laing 1992, 81). This image is much more clearly Iron Age than Roman in style and is probably an early piece from before the rise of the Gallo-Roman figural representations (Megaw 1989, 174). Many might view this as a representation of a man, mostly because of the torc and the boar, which is mainly associated with warriors and elites. Torcs, however, have been found in elite female graves (Arnold 1991, 368; Green 1989, 140-41). It could be male because of the absence of breasts, but as seen in several other sculptures, there is usually less emphasis on the secondary sex characteristics and more emphasis on ornament or symbols, which strongly suggests that this statue is of a warrior, regardless of its gender or sex.



Figure 8: Euffigneix statue from France. Image provided by Wikimedia Commons 2020.

Humans in Metalwork.

There are hundreds of examples of human depictions in metalwork found in coins, statues, jewelry, swords, and cauldrons. The focus here is on statues and the Gundestrup cauldron, but there will be a brief overview of La

Tène style seen in other artifacts because they have several overlapping traits.

When it comes to jewelry and swords, each piece is unique. However, when it comes to human representations, there are three major similarities: heads dominate, they are mostly gender-ambiguous, and the few gendered examples depict primarily male features such as the presence of beards (Megaw 1989, 69-74). Some wear torcs, which in the past might have indicated masculine gender but which have been shown not to be a reliable indicator of gender (Arnold 1991, 372).

Regarding statues, there are a few examples where gender is much clearer, though still with some ambiguity. The few major statues of full-bodied humans are mostly from around the end of the La Tène period during the transition to a more syncretic Gallo-Roman art style. These pieces still retain elements of the La Tène style but with Roman realism overtones.

The first example is referred to as a bronze dancer because of the pose of the figure, which depicts a female with long hair, exposed breasts, and a design that might indicate primary female sex characteristics (Megaw 1989, 172). The figure retains the abstract style of early Iron Age artwork but has more proportioned limbs; it is also one of the few fully defined female metalwork figures recovered in Gaul (Megaw 1989, 172).

The bronze figure of the "squatting god" found in Bouray, France (Finlay 1973, 77; Harding 2007, 222; Laing 1992, 83) was influenced by Roman art, as the face is reminiscent of Augustus, but the legs are those of a deer, consistent with the idea that this might represent an Iron Age god (Harding 2007, 222; Laing 1992, 83).

The last metalwork example to be discussed here is the Gundestrup cauldron, made of sheets of silver and deposited in a bog in Denmark. Considered to have been crafted by Thracian smiths, the piece is widely regarded as depicting Iron Age imagery due to the Gallic style artwork on the outer panels (Laing 1992, 85; Olmsted 2002, 9-10; Taylor 1992, 86-7). The human figures depicted on the cauldron are often interpreted as deities and due to the extensive study of the cauldron, there are several speculations as to which deities are present. Another important feature is that there are 44 anthropomorphic figures, an unusually large number. There are scenes of battles, a figure interpreted as a representation of Cernunnos and several other gods and goddesses (Laing 1992, 83-5). The seven outer plates depicting human figures are more clearly gendered than most Iron Age iconography, with long hair consistently combined with breasts and short hair with beards, enabling a determination of probable sex (Olmsted 2002, 119-28). As in other examples of Iron Age artistic representations, heads dominate the imagery in several panels and have been provided with a lot of artistic detail even when the whole human figure is being shown. Table 3 illustrates the sex distribution of the figures on the Gundestrup Cauldron. Though the Gundestrup Cauldron follows a pattern that will be discussed further in the next section, this table shows that there are still multiple aspects that either do not follow this pattern or are depicted in a way that is difficult to determine if the pattern is followed.



Figure 9: Statue of seated figure from Bouray, France. Image provided by Wikimedia Commons 2019.

Table 3: Sex Distribution on the Gundestrup Cauldron

Sex	Count
Male	7
Female	10
Indeterminant	27

Discussion

In the hunt for gender in La Tène Iron Age iconography, one finds that little anthropomorphic imagery can be clearly gendered. Several pieces do incorporate elements that can help determine gender, but those tend to be masculine and are mainly based on the presence of facial hair. Unlike classical art (Greco-Roman), which emphasizes realistic artistic expression and typically has written sources related to the culture of the time, making it easier to identify the sex or gender being portrayed, the abstract nature of Iron Age art presents problems in gender determination. There are likely many more female figures that are not recognized mostly because there is not enough information for an accurate identification. There are few representations with any easily identifiable sex characteristics or female gendered elements such as



Figure 10: The Gundestrup Cauldron from Denmark. Image provided by Wikimedia Commons 2019.

(breasts, hairstyles or head coverings (gendered), or symmetrical ornaments respectively (gendered). This is not to suggest an inherent androcentric bias in the interpretations, though such a history exists in the field (Arnold 2016, 834-35; Pope 2018, 1-2). The issue is lack of data and an understanding of Iron Age gender ideology, which may have been expressed through visual cues that are unfamiliar to the modern interpretive lens.

This idea is present throughout the various examples but is especially clear in stone and wood representations, which are from earlier parts of the La Tène period than metalwork. Much of the focus is on symbols, displaying a connection to a particular idea, deity, or image for strength, protection, blessing, or to gain favor. Evidence for such interpretation is that many of the stone and wood figures have very disproportionate attributes, often relating to the part that they are trying to emphasize or identifying possibly as a symbol of a deity. This is seen in the Euffigneix statue where a boar image takes up the entire torso of the human figure, possibly to invoke strength, convey the image of a warrior, or the idea that the figure represents an elite individual. Whatever the reason, its import is evident (Green 1989, 140-41).

The few sex-identifiable human representations from the Iron Age that are available for study share similar traits. Facial hair is the main indicator for a male, though some examples of phallic imagery do exist, such as the statue of Taranis (Le Chatelet, France; La Tène period) or the Hirschlanden figure (Stuttgart, Germany; around 550 BCE). In iconography, females are often identified by the presence of sex characteristics like breasts or vulvas, whereas the presence of a veil or long hair might be gendered to indicate a woman. In the few examples when facial hair is present, it is usually paired with short hair (if hair is depicted at all); when breasts are present, there is often long hair,

likely indicating male and female, respectively. In examples such as the Gundestrup cauldron, we find the repeated pattern of short hair/facial hair or long hair/no facial hair and possible breasts. However, the figures engaged in a sword dance or duel on the sheet bronze back of the couch recovered from the Hochdorf burial combine erect phalluses with long hair and weapons, so this association is by no means universal (Scarre 1998, 174). This is something that I intend to explore further in future research.

While gender may be indicated, importance is primarily placed on the symbols associated with the human figure and the presence of the head. The importance of the head in Iron Age Europe is apparent; even without written material, the head motif is present in all media, especially in the La Tène period (see also Egri 2014). This reference to head-taking and the Iron Age belief that heads contain the soul and even after death can linked to magic, protection, divination, or other purposes that are not entirely clear (Armit 2012, 10; Egri 2014, 80; Finlay 1992, 64). Possibly the heads represented in so much of Iron Age art including statues, weapons, and jewelry were used to invoke deities or ancestral heroes who might have been able to aid in various circumstances.

It is worth noting that clearly identifiable female representations begin to appear when Roman influence first manifests itself and more anatomically distinguishable traits such as breasts are easier to identify. This could be due to the influence of Roman realism, which allows scholars to identify sexed features such as the secondary sex characteristic of breasts or facial hair more effectively. However, though artisans in Iron Age Gaul seem to have represented women by a lack of facial hair, this trait may also be used to signify youth, as in the case of the Bouray bronze statue (Figure 9). These overlapping signifiers may relate to the possibility of multiple gender categories in Iron Age mortuary practice, one of which emphasizes age instead of gender and underscores the need for an intersectional approach to iconographic analysis (Arnold 2016, 847-48).

Conclusion

Members of the Iron Age Cultural Complex are a difficult people to understand from a modern perspective. A lack of written sources and the abstract way they depicted the world through art as well as how they might have viewed gender markers in their time culminate in a challenging perspective, an accurate grasp of which has eluded many. Furthermore, there is the archaeological issue of preservation; textiles and other organic material such as wood and bone usually do not survive. However, archaeologists learn much from the metalwork produced by the highly skilled smiths, stoneworkers, and other artisans. The surviving iconographic pieces, while only representing a snapshot of the cultural and social norms of the time, still provide valuable insights into the gender ideology of the culture that created them.

Mortuary data aids our understanding of sex and gender ideology in preliterate societies because it allows archaeologists to understand how a living community saw a deceased member of the community--a life condensed into a funerary rite that was performed to meet the needs of the community

and its cultural standards (Haselgrove 2018, 1-2; Diepeveen-Jansen 2007, 376; Rebay-Salisbury 2013, 15). However, iconography provides an understanding of the social norms of the living *by* the living which can be seen in the various examples presented in this paper.

Warranting further research is the issue of ambiguity in Iron Age iconographic style and the modern need to place representations into a gendered binary. While there is significant debate today on the matter of gender and sex, there is still a tendency to see sex and gender either as the same concept or in binaries as opposed to spectrums. This is no different in archaeology, though there has been significant progress. However, past interpretations on a binary spectrum may have blinded researchers to the idea of intentional ambiguity in designing an image. By not denoting clear sex characteristics such as facial hair, breasts, or respective primary sex characteristics, the creator is allowing the viewer to interact in a more personal way and place their own interpretations of whichever divine or ancestral figure is being depicted, if one is at all.

Recognizing the importance of the head, explicitly gendered or not, allows archaeologists to get closer to the minds of the Iron Age people of central Europe. Encoded into the iconography are aspects of their cultural and social norms, including how they viewed gender and sex and possibly how this conceptual framework shaped other aspects of the world around them. While archaeologists in the past may not have interpreted these images as effectively, no matter the form or material, the prominence and power of the head is still clearly a defining feature. What remains to be determined is the extent to which gender was as important as the part of the body being depicted, and the preliminary results of the analysis carried out here suggests that it may have been secondary.

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