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## Articolo

# Funerary deviancy and social inequality in protohistoric Italy: what the dead can tell

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## Key words

- "IN or OUT" project
- funerary archaeology
- north-eastern Italy
- protohistory

## Parole chiave

- progetto "IN or OUT"
- archeologia funeraria
- Italia nord-orientale
- protostoria

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## Summary

Recent approaches to the study of past funerary rites have usually rejected any simplistic equivalence between social structure and funerary representation, as well as between funerary complexity and social complexity. Despite theoretical advancements in funerary archaeology, until recently poor and marginal tombs were often disregarded in favor of richer tombs displaying more sophisticated burial practices, or were simply attributed to low-ranking individuals or socio-cultural outsiders, with little consideration paid to the different nuances of the funerary record.

In this article, we outline a research initiative which aims to provide a systematic investigation of social diversity and social marginality in protohistoric Italy, with particular attention to Veneto and Trentino South-Tyrol ("IN or OUT" project: Phases 1 and 2).

## Riassunto

Recenti approcci allo studio degli antichi riti funerari generalmente respingono ogni generica corrispondenza tra struttura sociale e rappresentazione funeraria, così come tra la complessità funeraria e quella sociale. Fino a poco tempo fa, le sepolture povere e/o marginali erano trascurate rispetto a quelle più ricche che mostravano sofisticate pratiche rituali di seppellimento, ed erano comunemente attribuite a personalità di basso rango o a soggetti socialmente e culturalmente estranei, talvolta con scarsa attenzione per le complesse sfumature del record archeologico e dei suoi significati.

In questo contributo proponiamo un'analisi sistematica della marginalità e della diversità sociale nell'Italia protostorica (progetto "IN or OUT").

L'elaborazione di dati funerari raccolti in Veneto ed in Trentino Alto Adige ha permesso di proporre alcune osservazioni sull'organizzazione sociale delle comunità che abitavano queste regioni nell'età del Bronzo e del Ferro ("IN or OUT" fasi 1 e 2).

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

As recently remarked by M. Cuozzo (2015; 2016, 3 and bibliography), the question of whether mortuary rituals can provide an “accurate” depiction of society, its stratification and its complexity, has long been one of the central themes in funerary archaeology. Over the past few decades, this issue has been a major source of debate between the New Archaeology and the Post-Processual Archaeology (Parker Pearson 1999; Trigger 2006). On the one hand, the New Archaeology has tried to correlate directly the structuring of a society to its burial customs by developing, for example, the concepts of “social persona” and “energy expenditure” (e.g. Binford 1971; Tainter 1978). On the other, post-processual research has emphasized the “multivocality” of funerary signs and the active role of both the mourners and material culture in creating the funerary record (e.g. Hodder 1982). Recent approaches to the study of past funerary rites have usually rejected any simplistic equivalence between social structure and funerary representation, as well as between funerary and social complexity (Cuozzo 2016, 3). More traditional studies of social hierarchy, wealth, rank and status are now complemented by the analysis of past identities (for a critical discussion: Cuozzo & Guidi 2013; Zamboni 2016), agency and personhood (Fowler 2004; Perego & Scopacasa 2016), disease, disability and social difference (Hubert 2000).

Within this framework, our research group has dealt with the topic of ancient inequality by proposing statistical and contextual analyses of thousands of cremation and inhumation burials from late prehistoric and protohistoric north-eastern Italy (e.g. Perego 2014a; 2014b; 2016; Perego *et al.* 2015; Saracino 2009; Saracino & Zanoni 2014; Saracino *et al.* 2014; Zamboni & Zanoni 2010; Zanoni 2011a; 2016; Zanoni *et al.* in press). A particular emphasis has been paid to a sample of potentially anomalous inhumation burials from the Veneto region dating between the Final Bronze Age (FBA) and the early Roman period (ERP) (second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> cent. – last quarter of the 1st cent. BC)<sup>2</sup>. Our data and theoretical considerations have been incorporated into the “*IN or OUT Project*”, an independent, interdisciplinary research project that investigates social exclusion and marginality in ancient Italy<sup>3</sup>. To date, our work has chiefly consisted in collecting and re-evaluating already published burial data from both cemetery and settlement sites in order to understand whether the adoption of rare or anomalous mortuary treatments might have been determined by the “abnormal” or “marginal” social standing of the dead. In this regard, our project’s title “*IN or OUT*” refers the complex practices of social inclusion (IN) or social exclusion (OUT) that developed in past societies.

A source of inspiration for our work has been the vast literature on the so-called “deviant” burials. Such burials – known as *Sonderbestattungen* in German scholarly studies (Lauermaun 1992) – have been frequently attributed to individuals of lower social status, or whose conditions of life and death were perceived to be “unnatural” and potentially dangerous by their burying communities. Recent research on deviant burial, however, has shed light on the cultural variability of such phenomenon and has cautioned against any simplistic use of terms such as “deviant” and “abnormal” (e.g. Murphy

2008; Perego 2014a, 163; Devlin & Graham 2015). In this regard, our work has been intended to pay close attention to the different nuances of the funerary record and build an overarching approach to past marginality that includes bio-archaeological<sup>4</sup>, statistical and contextual analyses.

Among the burial features that might distinguish an atypical deposition in the study area, we have considered<sup>5</sup>: every anomaly or evidence of differentiation in funerary rite (e.g., inhumation where cremation was normative or vice versa) and body treatment (e.g., post-mortem manipulation of the human remains in contexts where the corpse was usually buried intact and left to rest untouched); the lack or scarcity of grave-goods where their interment was the rule, and/or the adoption of any burial practice potentially indicative of lower energy expenditure (Tainter 1978) in respect to the rest of the buried community; the adoption of anomalous tomb structures and/or burial placement (e.g., settlement burial instead of formal cemetery burial); the adoption of unusual burial postures (e.g., prone burial where the supine position of the norm) and/or practices aimed at constraining or abusing the corpse (e.g., post-mortem mistreatment of the cadaver); and any evidence of peri-mortem violence potentially indicative of homicide, ritual killing and the like. Moreover, as noted above, we think that focusing on bio-archaeological data is crucial to uncover information on the dead individual’s biological sex, age at death, health status, diet, place of origin/provenance and cause of death, as well as on other burial features that might help explain the abnormal mortuary treatment of the deceased (Knipper *et al.* 2014, 2016; Pokutta 2014; Pokutta *et al.* 2015; Waldron 2009; Walker 2001). In addition, we note that the recurrence of several deviant attributes in one burial may point to a greater degree of perceived difference than deviation from the norm for a single parameter. The adoption of several deviant burial practices at once, therefore, is worthy of careful analysis; especially when coupled with relevant bio-archaeological data (e.g. evidence of pre-mortem abuse, malnutrition and disease), funerary deviancy may indeed refer to phenomena of marginality and extreme social exclusion, which are sometimes poorly addressed in archaeological research (Perego *et al.* 2015; Saracino & Zanoni 2014).

Originally focused on Iron Age (IA) Veneto, our research has later explored the funerary record of this region from the Early Bronze Age (EBA) (“*IN or OUT*” Phase 1) and then expanded to Trentino-South Tyrol (Phase 2) (Fig. 1). This article, therefore, critically reevaluates the results of Phase 1 and discusses some methodological issues and data resulting from Phase 2. As a whole, the project has investigated some underrated aspects of social organization in late prehistoric Italy, such as marginality, and considered any potential evidence of inequality and social exclusion in the funerary record of the study area. In addition, we aimed to create an appropriate methodological approach to shed light on the reasons that might have motivated the burial occurrences of diversity, abnormality and even “resistance” recognized in the archaeological record.

## 2. Background & results of Phase 1

Our work has primarily addressed the identification of past marginality (the condition of being socially excluded) and marginalization (the practices and conditions that lead to social exclusion), and their

1 Author contribution: the authors together conceived the research project, sharing the study’s aims and conclusions. M.S. and E.P. wrote and translated the text. V.Z. contributed to writing the Trentino South-Tyrol section. E.P. performed the Veneto region statistics. M.S. and L.Z. edited the figures. All authors discussed the results and commented on the manuscript.

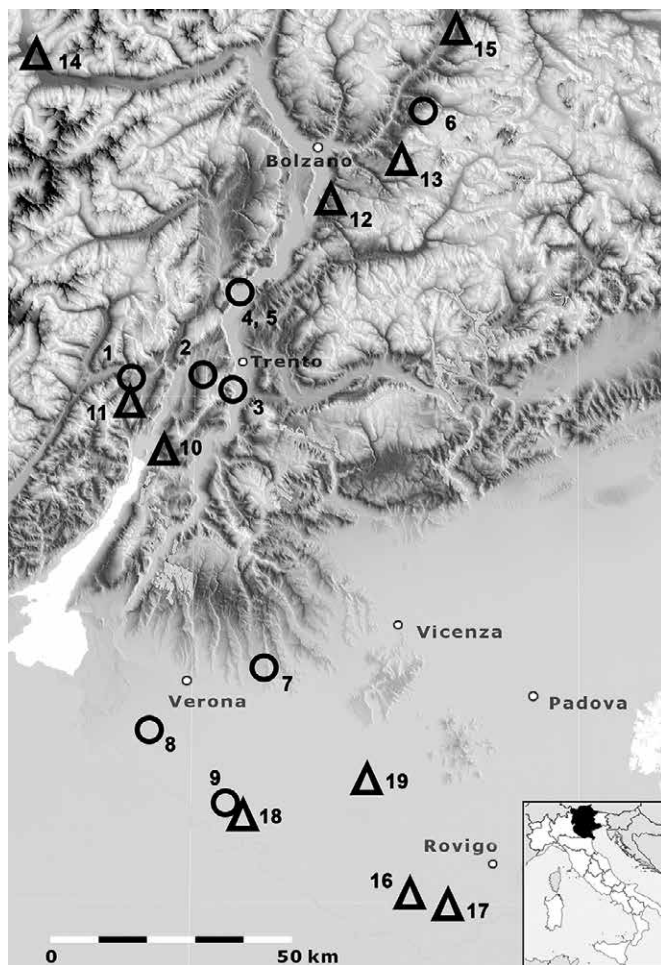
2 For an extensive dataset: Perego 2012; see also Zanoni 2011 for a wide-ranging sample of burials deposited outside the formal cemetery in 1st millennium BC northern Italy (both with bibliography).

3 The title and the logo chosen for the project have been taken from Frank Oz’s 1997 film (“In & Out”).

4 To date, we have availed ourselves of already existing bio-archaeological datasets; we did not carry out any osteological analysis directly. We are currently investigating potential future collaborations and funding opportunities for additional bio-archaeological research in the study area.

5 For a detailed discussion of the project methodology, theoretical framework and background: Perego *et al.* 2015: 130-139 (on funerary deviancy: 132-135).

potential archaeological and bio-archaeological correlates. We have originally focused on Veneto for the rich sample of potential cases of funerary deviancy documented in this region. Until recently, such burials either were disregarded in favor of richer tombs displaying sophisticated burial practices, or were commonly attributed to low-ranking individuals or social outsiders (Saracino 2009). Generally, our examination of Bronze Age (BA) (c. 2300-900 BC) and IA (c. 900-200 BC) Veneto has focused on both evidence of social differentiation at death, and occurrences of abnormal mortuary behavior that might have been motivated by forms of ritual marginalization aimed at excluding the dead from society, to different degrees. The results of this research (Perego *et al.* 2015; Saracino *et al.* 2014; Zanoni *et al.* in press) are summarized and further developed below.



**Fig. 1** – Map of Veneto and Trentino South-Tyrol with main sampled sites: ○ Bronze age sites: 1) Stenico Calfieri (TN), 2) Lasino (TN), 3) Romagnano Loc (TN), 4) Mezzocorona – Borgonuovo (TN), 5) Mezzolombardo – Nogarole (TN), 6) Siusi allo Scillar (BZ), 7) Arano (VR), 8) Povegliano Veronese (VR), 9) Olmo di Nogara (VR); Final Bronze and Iron age sites: △ 10) Busa Brodeghera (TN), 11) Fivè – Carera (TN), 12) Laives – Reif (BZ), 13) Tires – Thalerbuhel (BZ), 14) Sluderno – Ganglegg (BZ), 15) Bressanone – Stufles (BZ), 16) Frattesina (RO), 17) Villamarzana (RO), 18) Gazzo Veronese (VR), 19) Montagnana (PD) (elaboration by L. Zamboni). / Elenco siti menzionati nel testo: ○ Siti dell'età del Bronzo: 1) Stenico Calfieri (TN), 2) Lasino (TN), 3) Romagnano Loc (TN), 4) Mezzocorona – Borgonuovo (TN), 5) Mezzolombardo – Nogarole (TN), 6) Siusi allo Scillar (BZ), 7) Arano (VR), 8) Povegliano Veronese (VR), 9) Olmo di Nogara (VR); Siti dell'età del Bronzo finale ed età del Ferro: △ 10) Busa Brodeghera (TN), 11) Fivè – Carera (TN), 12) Laives – Reif (BZ), 13) Tires – Thalerbuhel (BZ), 14) Sluderno – Ganglegg (BZ), 15) Bressanone – Stufles (BZ), 16) Frattesina (RO), 17) Villamarzana (RO), 18) Gazzo Veronese (VR), 19) Montagnana (PD) (elaborazione a cura di L. Zamboni).

In the EBA (c. 2300-1650 BC), only rare graveyards are known from the Po Valley, where inhumation appears to be the most common or at least the most archaeologically visible funerary rite. In the burial sites that are indeed attested (e.g. Sorbara, Arano di Cellore di Illasi, Verona), some variation in tomb structure, burial ritual and grave furnishing may point to the construction of different statuses or roles for the dead. In some communities, the existence of burial differentiation based on gender can be inferred from the custom of burying women on their left side and men on their right side, a burial ritual that has been linked to the Bell Beaker culture (de Marinis & Valzogher 2013). Unusual occurrences of settlement burial, such as child Tomb 1A/US 20 from Arano (Verona), may imply that some individuals were perceived to be “different”, or “special”, and may have been granted a burial location different from the rest of the funerary population. The relatively scanty funerary evidence from this period, however, prevents a systematic investigation of social diversity or social marginality on the basis of burial data alone. In particular, it has been impossible to determine to what extent the individuals not documented among the known mortuary population may have received funerary treatments that are archaeologically invisible, or were denied formal burial rites due to their marginal status or incomplete social integration.

The funerary record from the Middle (MBA) and Recent Bronze Age (RBA) (c. 1650-1200 BC) is more conspicuous. The bulk of the evidence from Veneto comes from large biritual cemeteries that were used for centuries and included hundreds of inhumation and cremation tombs. In the MBA, these graveyards mostly contained supine inhumations accompanied by grave assemblages that differed from each other in terms of their composition and complexity. The tombs were generally grouped in burial clusters that have been assumed to reflect a social organization based on close-knit kinship groups (Salzani 2005a). Some occurrences of prone burial and burial in isolation, or outside/on the edge of such clusters, might be indicative of the dead individual's anomalous or peculiar status in their community. The rare adoption of inhumation when cremation started to spread in the RBA, might also denote occurrences of ritual marginalization or discrimination justified by some perceived difference between the selected deceased and the rest (see for example sub-adult Tomb 135 from Bovolone, Verona: Salzani 2010).

Noteworthy for this phase are the cemeteries of Povegliano and Olmo di Nogara (Verona) (Salzani 2005a; Cupitò 2006; Canci *et al.* 2015). In particular, the so-called Area C from the Olmo cemetery dates from the late MBA and contained numerous male inhumations; a concentration of prominent male burials accompanied by a sword has been noted in the northern segment of Area C (C1), which also yielded some child and rich female inhumations. The southern segment of Area C (C2) has been dated to the RBA and contained more numerous cremations, often with no grave-goods. Coupled with the appearance of the cremation rite, the lack of weaponry in this burial segment has been taken to indicate a change in the ideological and socio-economic structuring of the Olmo community (Bietti Sestieri *et al.* 2013; Cupitò & Leonardi 2005; de Marinis & Salzani 2005). It is indeed from the MBA to the RBA that cremation started to spread in Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Veneto as the main – or in some communities the only – burial rite (Cardarelli *et al.* 2003; Cupitò & Leonardi 2015; de Marinis & Salzani 1997, with chronological variability in different areas). This “revolution” in burial practice has been related to the spread of the so-called *Urnenfelderkultur*, a phenomenon that invested several European areas in the BA (Capuzzo & Barcelò 2015; Rebay-Salisbury 2012). According to some scholars, the adoption of cremation would have been linked to crucial changes in the religious beliefs of these communities (e.g. Cavazzuti & Salvadei 2014 with bibliography). The dead, burnt on the pyre with their personal belongings, might have been consecrated to the deity through the action of fire (Peroni 1996). Subsequently, the bones were placed in simple pottery urns (or other perishable containers) and deposited



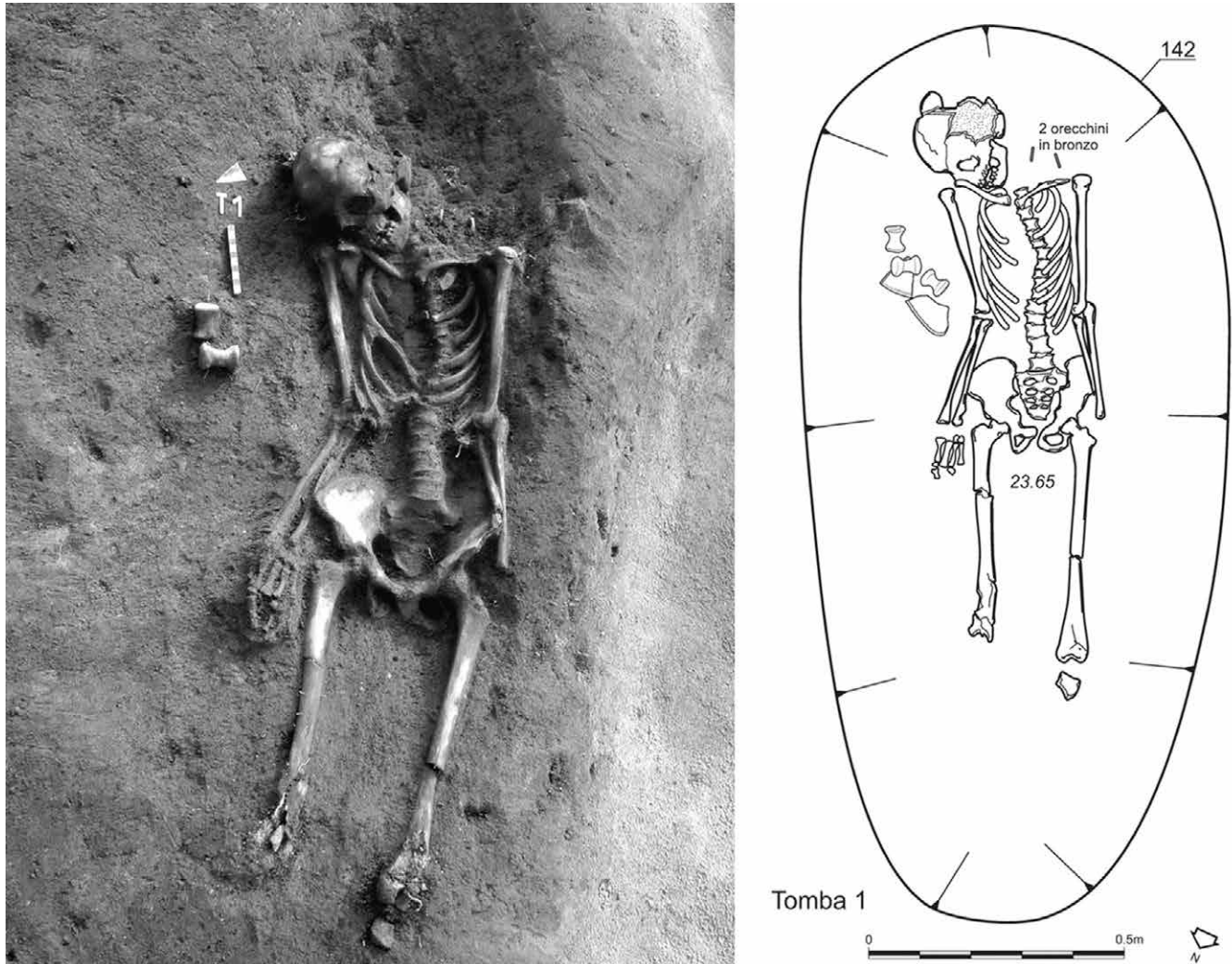


Fig. 2 – Tomb 1 from the settlement of Oppeano (ex Fornace area) (after Candelato et al. 2015 – pictures and reliefs Archivio SABAPVen). / Tomba 1 dall'abitato di Oppeano (area ex Fornace) (da Candelato et al. 2015 – foto e rilievi Archivio SABAPVen).

in pits, sometimes together with some ash and charcoal from the pyre. Sometimes, grave-goods and the remains of the items burnt on the pyre were buried with the deceased. In Veneto, these burial pits usually coalesced in clusters that might have been indicative of kinship plots (see also Cavazzuti & Salvadei 2014 on the nearby region of Emilia). This apparent homogeneity in burial practice has been interpreted as an ideological choice intended to deceive any evidence of social inequality, in communities that were however characterized by some social differentiation and internal tension (Cupitò & Leonardi 2005, 2015). Cremation was to remain the most visible funerary rite in the Veneto region also in the FBA and IA, with rituals that “became increasingly more complex and sophisticated over time”<sup>6</sup>.

In the FBA and at the beginning of the IA (c. 1200-900 BC), cremation is the only funerary rite identified to date at cemeteries such as Garda (Verona) and Angarano (Vicenza) (Salzani 2013, 2015). Notable, however, is the sporadic appearance of inhumations at funerary sites surrounding settlements such as Frattesina (Rovigo), Gazzo Veronese (Verona) and Montagnana (Padua) (Bianchin Citton et al. 1998; Cardarelli et al. 2015; Salzani 2005b, 2015; Salzani & Colonna 2010).

Accompanied by very simple grave assemblages, or no grave-goods at all, the inhumations attested in this period may display other abnormal burial features, such as the prone posture. In some occurrences, inhumations seems to have been deposited in (relative) isolation or on the edge of the mounds where the majority of the cremations tended to coalesce. Notable is also the presence of some inhumations in settlements<sup>7</sup> such as Montagnana (Padua) and Villamarzana (Rovigo) (Bianchin Citton 1998; Salzani & Consonni 2005). Often lacking any grave furnishing, these burials were sometimes marked by evidence of palaeopathology (see especially the two settlement burials from Villamarzana) and/or the adoption of anomalous treatments, such as burial in a prone position (see for example the male prone burial from Montagnana – Via Decima).

The presence of inhumations outside formal graveyards has been noted in Veneto also during the IA, with the most notable cases attested at Oppeano (Verona) (Fig. 2) and the sacrificial site of Padua Via S. Eufemia (e.g. Michelini 2005; Saracino 2009). In most cases involving adults, such as those from Oppeano and

6 “si consolidano, vengono via via formalizzati e codificati, acquistano spesso in complessità” (Peroni 1996: 581-582).

7 Or in areas located on the edge, or immediately outside, the settlement: see some recent considerations on Montagnana in Bianchin Citton et al. 2015. The inhumations from Montagnana were sometimes accompanied by very simple sets of objects.



**Fig. 3** – Mezzolombardo - Nogarole - Riparo 3. Tomb 2 at the moment of discovery with and without the cover plate (after Nicolis 2004). / Mezzolombardo - Nogarole - Riparo 3. La tomba 2 al momento della scoperta con e senza lastra di copertura ancora in posto (da Nicolis 2004).

Via S. Eufemia, these depositions often displayed other unusual burial features such as the prone posture and a lack of any grave furnishing, as well as evidence of paleopathology and physical abuse, including some features potentially indicative of the practice of human sacrifice (Michelini 2005; Ruta Serafini & Michelini 2013). The increasing numbers of child and neonatal inhumation burials found in settlement contexts have also drawn attention to the adoption of differentiated burials rites for this segment of the Venetic community (for a recent dataset: Zanoni 2011a). In Veneto, inhumation was still a marginal or less common burial rite in the IA, with cremation accounting for up to 85-100% of all the thousands of burials excavated at different Venetic sites to date; it must be underlined, however, that significant variability in the frequency and features of inhumation burials has been recognized in different cemeteries and chronological phases<sup>8</sup>. Most inhumations placed in formal cemeteries may not show remarkable deviant features possibly indicative of extreme social exclusion; however, many still yielded only very simple grave assemblages (or no visible grave-goods at all) and were located in marginal cemetery areas or on the edge of, or outside, the burial groups or *tumuli* where most cremations tended to cluster. It remains unclear whether inhumation in IA Veneto was an indicator of social

8 A particularly interesting case is the necropolis of Palazzo Emo - Capodilista (Padua): during the earliest phase of use of this cemetery (900-825 BC), at least seven inhumation burials do not display any evidence of ritual marginalization *vis-à-vis* the cremations (Gamba *et al.* 2015).

exclusion *per se*, or some groups or families may have occasionally adopted it to emphasize some cultural or social difference existing between them and those practicing cremation. Notably, cremations were likewise characterized by marked variability in their tomb structure, grave assemblage and the like; these differences were most likely connected with the dead individuals' role, gender, age, rank and their social or kinship relations.

### 3. Phase 2: Trentino - South Tyrol

Our research on Trentino-South Tyrol has focused on already published material dating to the IA. A preliminary analysis of the BA period, however, has also been carried out. For the latter, some of the most significant data seem to concentrate in the EBA, when notable is the regional peculiarity of some funerary rites, as well as their link to practices already attested in the earlier Copper Age (c. 3300-2300 BC) (Nicolis 2004, 125).

Many burials dating to the EBA have been found in the Adige Valley, where the dead were frequently deposited in places potentially difficult to reach like small caves, rock shelters or clefts (Nicolis 2001, 2004). Most depositions were single, isolated inhumations covered with small mounds of stones. Grave goods – usually ornaments – were scanty. No evident differentiation based on gender or rank seems to be marked in death. The only members of the buried community clearly displaying different treatments from the rest were children in the *infans I* age class (from birth to around six years)<sup>9</sup>; these were placed in ceramic pots deposited in pits covered with stone slabs. Examples of this burial practice are Tomb 4 from Mezzocorona-Borgonuovo (Trento) and Tombs 1 and 2 (Fig. 3) from Mezzolombardo-Nogarole-Riparo 3 (Trento) (Nicolis 2004). Ritual differentiation in burial for neonates and young children has been noted in the BA and IA across the Italian peninsula and might be related to the incomplete social integration and premature death of these subjects (e.g. Cavazzuti & Salvadei 2014; Nizzo 2011; Perego *in press*).<sup>10</sup>

The presence in the EBA and MBA of inhumation burials whose skulls<sup>11</sup> may have been intentionally removed has been linked by some scholars to practices of intentional skeletal manipulation and/or skull veneration, with potential relations to the presence of human skulls/crania or skull bones<sup>12</sup> in some Northern Italian settlements dating to the same period (Cavazzuti 2008-2010; de Marinis 2003; Tecchiati 2011).

9 In most cases, this ritual seems to have been reserved for fetuses and neonates (Nicolis 2004).

10 For different perspectives on the social status of infants in various human cultures: Carroll 2011; Morgan 2002; Vargas 2015; Zanoni 2011, 2016, with bibliography.

11 It is important to note that in English the term “cranium” indicates the structure that contains the brain (neurocranium) and accommodates the face's sense organs (viscerocranium or facial skeleton), while “skull” indicates both the cranium and the mandible (Knüsel and Robb 2016, 3 with bibliography). Unfortunately, a clear distinction is not always available in the published literature and in excavation reports, where the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably; further problems may arise with the translation of such terms into foreign languages (e.g. Italian “cranio” *vis-à-vis* “teschio”, the latter rarely used in archaeological research: “skull veneration” is generally translated into Italian as “culto dei crani”). In addition, we note that burial taphonomy and the effects of decay should always be taken into consideration when addressing ritual practices involving possible forms of “skull manipulation” (and potential occurrences of funerary deviancy more in general) (more recently: Knüsel and Robb 2016, 3; Tamorri 2017; Watson and Phelps 2016, 592-3).

12 We use the term “skull bones” as a catch phrase to indicate any skeletal remain from the skull (for example, the mandible or a cranial bone). Detailed information on the single case studies can be found in the literature provided.





**Fig. 4** – Location of Busa Brodeghera site (elaboration by M. Saracino): in the upper right, photo taken outside the “cave”; lower right, museum reconstruction of the context ([www.archeotrentino.it](http://www.archeotrentino.it)). / Localizzazione della Busa Brodeghera (elaborazione a cura di M. Saracino): in alto a destra, foto esterna del sito; in basso a destra, ricostruzione museale del contesto ([www.archeotrentino.it](http://www.archeotrentino.it)).

For BA Trentino-South Tyrol, notable are:

(a) the juvenile cranium with evidence of porotic hyperostosis placed under a stone mound and a fortification at Siusi (Bolzano) (Tecchiati 2011);

(b) the skull found under a stone mound at Lasino (Trento); the context of discovery might have been a settlement or a seasonal shelter (Corrain & De Marchi 1980; Tecchiati 1997);

(c) the skull accompanied by grave-goods found in the Romagnano Loc cemetery (Trento) (according to Nicolis 2004, no additional human remains were found with the skull);

(d) the female skeleton deprived of the skull found in relation to the Stenico-Calfieri *tumulus* (Trento);

(e) the female skeleton from La Vela (Trento), placed on a furnace and displaying possible evidence of skull dislocation (Tecchiati 2011).

This evidence finds some similarities in comparable practices of skeletal manipulation, involving the removal or manipulation of the skull or selected skull bones, from Piedmont (Alba), Emilia Romagna (Poviglio, Montata, Montecchio, Marendole, Castione dei Marchesi, presumably S. Eurosia) and Veneto (Bovolone, Padua, Lozzo Atesino, Este-Morlungo, Este-Canevedo), dating between the EBA and the EIA (Cavazzuti 2008-2010; Cremaschi *et al.* 2012; de Marinis 2003; Tecchiati 2011). Cavazzuti (2008-2010) has proposed that the presence of several MBA-IA Northern Italian cremations deprived of

the skull might indicate the persistence of such practices after the spread of cremation. In examining the ritual deposition of skull bones in the MBA settlements of Padua and S. Rosa di Poviglio (Reggio Emilia), Cremaschi *et al.* (2012) have suggested that the removal of the skull from a burial might have involved individuals who held peculiar statuses or roles in their group of belonging. The subsequent displacement of the bones in a settlement context, might have taken place in relation to rituals aimed at defining the community space. A different interpretation of the phenomenon has been proposed for some RBA lake-dwellings of the western Circum-Alpine area, where skulls of children were found at the site edge, next to the surrounding palisade. According to the bio-archaeological evidence, some of these children appear to have suffered violent deaths. Even though there is no clear evidence to suggest the practice of human sacrifice, the skulls may have been offerings to the gods by communities facing the threat of environmental change (Menotti *et al.* 2014).

In view of the evidence available, it is impossible to clarify whether the sampled individuals, while being granted different funerary rites *vis-à-vis* the rest of their community, were the victims of ritual marginalization.

In the IA, Trentino-South Tyrol is characterized by the so-called Luco-Meluno and Fritzens-Sanzeno cultural complexes. These cultural phenomena spread in Trentino, Southern and Eastern Tyrol as well as in the Engadin between the LBA and

the 6th century BC (Luco-Meluno) and in the mid- to the late 1st millennium BC (Fritzens-Sanzeno); they present important inter-site variability, with evidence of external cultural influences (e.g. Marzatico 1992). The related funerary evidence cannot be compared with the Venetic one, as rarer are the cemeteries from Trentino-South Tyrol to have been the focus of in-depth archaeological and bio-archaeological analysis. In view of this, we have first tackled the question of social exclusion and funerary deviancy from this region by reconsidering occurrences of settlement burial and burial in geographical contexts that may be recognized as *natural places of significance* (according to the definition in Knapp-Ashmore 1999: 2). In this regard, notable in Trentino-South Tyrol is the presence of human remains in locations such as hilltops, ravines and bogs. In some cases, we can note that the placing of human remains in liminal, secluded sites may have reflected the liminal or abnormal social status of the dead (Mazzucchi *et al.* in press; see especially the occurrences from Nago-Torbole and Fiaavè-Carera below). Our sample includes:

(a) the presence of scattered human bones in some of the so-called Brandopferplätze (from German “places of fire sacrifice”), namely ritual sites attested in Northern Italy and the circum-Alpine area from the BA to the ERP (for recent research on the topic see for example Marzatico 2014 and Zanoni 2016 with bibliography; also Tecchiati 2000). While we cannot address the issue of burial in the Brandopferplätze in detail, we note that the precise significance of these depositions remains uncertain;

(b) the presence of seven human skulls radiocarbon-dated to the 4th-2nd century BC from the peat-bog context of Fiaavè-Carera (Trento); evidence of trauma compatible with scalping, and the presence of weaponry in the bog, has suggested that the skulls belonged to the victims of acts of violence, possibly as enemies or war prisoners (Mazzucchi *et al.* in press)<sup>13</sup>;

(c) the presence of a child skull dating to the 1st century BC in the ritual site of Tires-Thalerbühel (Bolzano). The site, located around 1100 m above sea level, had been the focus of long-term occupation before the child deposition (Tecchiati *et al.* 2013).

Another significant occurrence is the so-called “Hunter from Busa Brodeghera”, a skeleton recovered in 1976 from a niche in a ravine in the Nago-Torbole municipality (Trento) (Corrain & Capitanio 1980; Corrain 1983; Zanoni 2011b) (Fig. 4). The place of discovery is an impressive 70 to 80 m deep vertical chasm located around 1950 m above sea level near the summit of Monte Altissimo (2078 m above sea level), in the Monte Baldo range. The deceased was found with some objects approximately datable to the 5th century BC, namely an iron knife with a scabbard, three bronze rings, an iron belt plate with a hook, and a Certosa-type fibula. According to the available osteological data (Corrain & Capitanio 1980; Corrain 1983; discussion in Zanoni 2011a), the individual may have been a male aged around 20 at death; suffered from a deformity of the hips (coxa vara); and displayed an ante-mortem/peri-mortem cranial lesion on the occipital that might have been the cause of death. The burial was at first interpreted as the accidental fall of a “hunter” that carried with him his hunting equipment (the knife); however, the possibility of an atypical burial or human sacrifice has been recently discussed (e.g. Zanoni 2011a). While we are presently unable to offer an unequivocal explanation for this find, we can note that: (a) access to the site of discovery (the bottom of the chasm) is extremely difficult: the skeleton was indeed discovered by a group of speleologists; (b) the skeleton would display an apparent lack of bone fractures compatible with a high fall (especially on the rocks); at present, we are unable to determine whether the individual might have fallen (or be thrown, or lowered with ropes) into the chasm when

the latter was filled or half-filled with snow (as it is often the case today); (c) the physical malformation noted on the skeleton was possibly linked to the perceived anomalous status of the dead; this, in turn, might have motivated his deposition (or sacrifice) in a peculiar feature of the landscape, and near a mountaintop<sup>14</sup>; (d) at the same time such disability might have prevented the “hunter” to move easily on the harsh mountain terrain: in this case, his presence in a secluded mountain area would require some explanation; (e) if the ravine was intentionally selected to remove the deceased from formal cemetery burial, deposit him in a natural place of significance, or perform a human sacrifice, the transport of the individual (or his corpse) to the site might have required significant investment and “energy expenditure”.

Settlement burial in IA Trentino-South Tyrol often involved the deposition of infants in houses or ruined structures. Some notable occurrences are:

(a) the fetus discovered at Bressanone-Stufles (Bolzano), in the settlement context found in Via Elvas, and datable from the 5th century BC onwards (House 1, Room A). The same site yielded an “infant” femur, found in House 2, Room B (Feltrin *et al.* 2009);

(b) the supine neonate found in a corner of House 1 from Laives-Reif (Bolzano, 3rd century BC), where the burial pit was probably marked by a stone on the floor (Zanoni 2011a, p. 32);

(c) the neonatal remains found in a corner of House D1 from Sluderno-Ganglegg (Bolzano, 1st century BC). The bones emerged from the layers pertaining to a “floor” covered with clay, and were close to some bronze fragments and a pit containing a “worked stone” (Steiner 2007);

An exceptional occurrence of settlement burial is the deposition from Via Elvas, House 2, Room B, at Bressanone-Stufles. The two dead individuals – buried in the same pit – were adult males who seem to have been around 40 at death. Both were prone and the second individual partially covered the first deposited in the pit. One individual or both might have been tied up before burial. The presence of a cranial injury on one skeleton is also notable. This evidence, coupled with the abnormal burial posture, funerary treatment and place of burial, has suggested that the deceased may have been prisoners or outcasts who were killed and buried outside the formal cemetery as a form of capital punishment<sup>15</sup> (Feltrin *et al.* 2009; Tecchiati 2011). The practice of human sacrifice cannot be excluded as well.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

We have reviewed the methodology and preliminary results of the “IN or OUT” Project, an independent, interdisciplinary research project exploring funerary deviancy, marginality and inequality in late prehistoric and protohistoric Italy. While our initial research had focused on EBA to ER Veneto, we have recently started a re-examination of the funerary evidence from Trentino-South Tyrol, with the aim to cover the same chronological period.

Our analysis of the data from Veneto has allowed us to put forward some observations on crucial ritual phenomena in the period considered. The results of our analysis can be summarized as follows:

(1) a remarkable variability in burial practice is testified in the *longue durée*; this variability is probably linked to changes in the economic, socio-ritual and socio-political structuring of this region, and

14 On the possible “liminal” nature of geographical features such as mountain summits etc. in late prehistoric Italy see, more recently, Zanoni 2016 and Zanoni *et al.* in press (with bibliography).

15 A similar case, involving a single individual, has been discovered in the settlement of Oppeano (ex-Fornace site) (Verona) and dated to the late 6th century BC (Saracino 2009).

13 We thank Paolo Bellintani (Ufficio Beni Archeologici della Soprintendenza della Provincia Autonoma di Trento) for the information.



may have expressed culturally variable notions of social inclusion and exclusion which probably changed over time.

(2) the adoption of funerary practices that might be defined as “deviant” or “anomalous” is attested for the entire period considered. Such evidence, however, becomes more archaeologically visible between c. 1150-500 BC; overall, some occurrences of extreme ritual marginalization seem indeed indicative of the abnormal social standing of the dead, or their social exclusion. This is especially the case when several parameters of deviation from the norm are attested in a single burial and evidence of paleopathology and inflicted violence is also noted. More difficult to understand in terms of “deviancy” and “normalcy” remain other cases of potential anomaly, such as the supine inhumations with grave-goods from the formal cemeteries of IA Veneto.

(3) inequality and/or differentiation can be recognized in the funerary record of Veneto for the entire period under consideration, with different degrees of visibility. For example, the relative uniformity in burial practice at the onset of the *Urnfelderkultur* might point to the conscious adoption of rites intended to mask the extent of the existent inequality. By contrast, inequality becomes more archaeologically visible in some phases of the IA, when striking differences can be noted between some extremely rich Venetic cremations, and the abnormal inhumations deposited outside formal cemeteries with no grave-goods.

(4) gender was certainly an important factor in determining differentiation in the burial context and, presumably, in the living community as well. The evidence available, which also reveals significant variability in different sites and chronological phases, points to the existence of different statuses and roles for the various gender-groups that are delineated in the funerary record. However, there is no substantial evidence suggesting that gender might have determined extreme social exclusion or marginality *per se*: both women and men of different ages were granted either normative or abnormal mortuary treatments.<sup>16</sup>

(5) further research is needed on the issue of the demographic representativeness of the sampled funerary sites (on this issue in protohistoric Italy, see also Cuzzo 2016). The absence of certain age- or gender-groups from the funerary population has been noted in some contexts (e.g. Cavazzuti & Salvadei 2014). While this evidence might be linked to the adoption of different and non-archaeologically visible burial rituals for some individuals, it cannot be excluded that others were intentionally denied formal burial in a cemetery to symbolically remove them from society. The presence of abnormal burials in settlement contexts (especially dating to the IA) proves that exclusion from formal cemetery burial was indeed a ritual option adopted by the communities considered in this article. As noted above, the abnormal features and evidence of ritual violence noted in relation to some of these settlement burials further indicates that removal from the formal cemetery might have represented a form of ritual discrimination.

(6) another important issue in this regard is the often-reported rarity or absence of infant burials in the study area, which might be indicative of the incomplete social integration of these subjects (e.g., Cavazzuti & Salvadei 2014; Perego in press).

Our preliminary analysis of the funerary data from Trentino-South Tyrol has shown that:

(1) with the exception of burial sites such as the Vadena necropolis, relatively scanty are the cemetery data from this region. Significant are the burial findings from settlements and natural locations that might have been frequented for ritual/cultic reasons. The smaller sample size hampers any direct comparison with Veneto. However,

inter- and intra-site variability and change in burial practice over time have been noted in both regions.

(2) the Trentino-South Tyrol sample size also prevents the identification of clear patterns in funerary deviancy and ritual marginalization in the funerary context; one of the clearest examples of funerary marginalization might be the double settlement burial from Bressanone-Stufles, which represents the possible outcome of capital punishment or sacrifice.

(3) as noted above, neonates and young children seem to have received peculiar burial rites in both regions (albeit with inter-site, intra-site and chronological variability). Funerary differentiation and/or the exclusion from formal burial rites were possibly motivated by their premature death and incomplete social integration. As mentioned above, similar trends have been noted in the same period in many other Italian regions.

(4) settlement burial might have represented an abnormal practice underlying the incomplete social integration of the dead, or their symbolic exclusion from society. This is suggested by the infant burials from late 1st millennium BC South Tyrol discussed above and by the double deposition from Bressanone-Stufles. The relative lack of cemetery data from Trentino-South Tyrol, however, hampers any in-depth comparison with the Venetic case study, where settlement burial can be indeed considered an anomalous burial practice in view of its relative rarity (especially for adults) and the abnormal features associated with some burials deposited outside the formal cemetery.

(5) the socio-ritual meaning of burial in *places of natural significance* such as the *Brandopferplätze* sacrificial sites remains uncertain, with some scholars emphasizing a possible correlation with forms of ancestor worship (Marzatico 2014). Similarly, we cannot clarify whether the practices of bone manipulation, described above and often involving skull removal, represented forms of skull veneration, ritual exploitation/re-use of human remains, or ritual violence.

Overall, the funerary evidence from late prehistoric and protohistoric north-eastern Italy has allowed us to address some crucial issues involving the organization of these ancient communities. On the one hand, the data available seem to reflect a social organization based on an unequal access to the resources and/or a hierarchical structuring of social roles and statuses. On the other, we have noted the existence of different forms and degrees of social integration based, for example, on the age, physical development or, potentially, the health status of the buried individual. While these patterns are clearer for Veneto, our preliminary analysis of the evidence from Trentino-South Tyrol has been made more difficult by the latter's regional peculiarity and smaller sample size, which may also be linked to the harsh terrain characterizing this (largely) mountainous area.

Finally, we consider the use of isotopic and bio-archaeological analyses appropriate for the purposes of the subsequent phases of the “*IN or OUT*” project, as these methods would be key to better support the preliminary results of our research.

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<sup>16</sup> Obviously, this does not exclude the possibility that extensive marginalization based on gender, or even gender-based violence, existed in these societies, while being difficult to identify from the burial record alone.



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