

The "Sky Disk of Nebra" – revision to daily life "marriage and fertility" in the final Hallstatt (Early Iron Age, HaC-D) times

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Abstract

European Bronze Age iconography is revised including the "sky" disk of Nebra, gold objects ("heats"/discs/cups, jewelry), clay figurines, pottery, and weapons. Female triangles, circles/dots and fertility spirals/arches such as male slash bundles or marriage x, + and hook/cross (= swastika) relate to the main life theme: marriage and reproduction. Six basic symbols appear as only decoration in uncountable artistic combinations of engravings, paintings, or reliefs in all Bronze Age cultures of Eurasia. According to a new symbol chart for the European Bronze Age, the Nebra "sky" bronze disk gold inlay signs are in a fertility calendar context. The "life" or better fertility spiral is the most important and dominant symbol especially Greek Mycenae, Minoan, Helladic, Cycladic. The spirals decorate Mycenae bathtubs, but are found at Nordic stone graves as afterlife symbols, and not as "sun spirals". "Planetary sun spirituality" did never exist in the Bronze Ages, which symbols originate already from Early Neolithic and Copper Age modified similar symbols. Bronze Age gold cups, small gold discs such as similar and solely female/male gender and fertility signs decorated European gold "heats", gold cups and gold bowls seem to have been used in marriage, rather than in any "cultic" ceremonies.

Keywords: Bronze Age, gender-fertility-marriage symbols, pottery-tools-weapons-jewelry-gold, and bronze disks, "sky disk" and "gold cup calendar" revisions, fertility cycle calendar, Nordic Bronze Age to SW European Greek cultures

1. Introduction

The Bronze Age grave, weapon, pottery or "cultic" object signs of N to SW-Europe were misinterpreted in the past hundred years of archaeological iconography research to create spectacular and mystic "spiritualism with pseudo-sun, -sky or -astronomic calendars", which "exploded" in the past decades [e.g. 1-3].

The German Nebra bronze disk with gold inlays [Internet 1] became even an archaeopolitically spiritual "sky" disk with "sun" and "ship" symbols [cf. 3] in a citation: "*sailing under the sun or moon and the pleyards*" main message misinterpretation. Without any wider comparison to the Eurasian Bronze Age iconography record, especially the Nordic influencing Greek Mycenae culture, and opposite influence [cf. 4-5] misidentification of nearly all symbols created a now questionable "UNESCO world heritage object" with incorrect fairy tale like "story" [cf. 3].

The recently "full sold pseudo-sky disk" in the Sky Disk Center Nebra is compared herein to Bronze Age gold and jewelry objects from Ireland, gold cups from Spain, Sweden, Germany, Austria, or Greece and gold disks from Syria [cf. 2, 6, 7, Internet 1-18]. Also, those are fully revised in their iconography and practical day use not as "calendars" according to

the new symbol decoding chart of the past 7.200 years. This chart includes the Bronze Age of Eurasia iconography of gold, bronze, pottery, and clay figurine décor, which was proven to be covered by similar "early letters or symbols" of solely gender/fertility/marriage

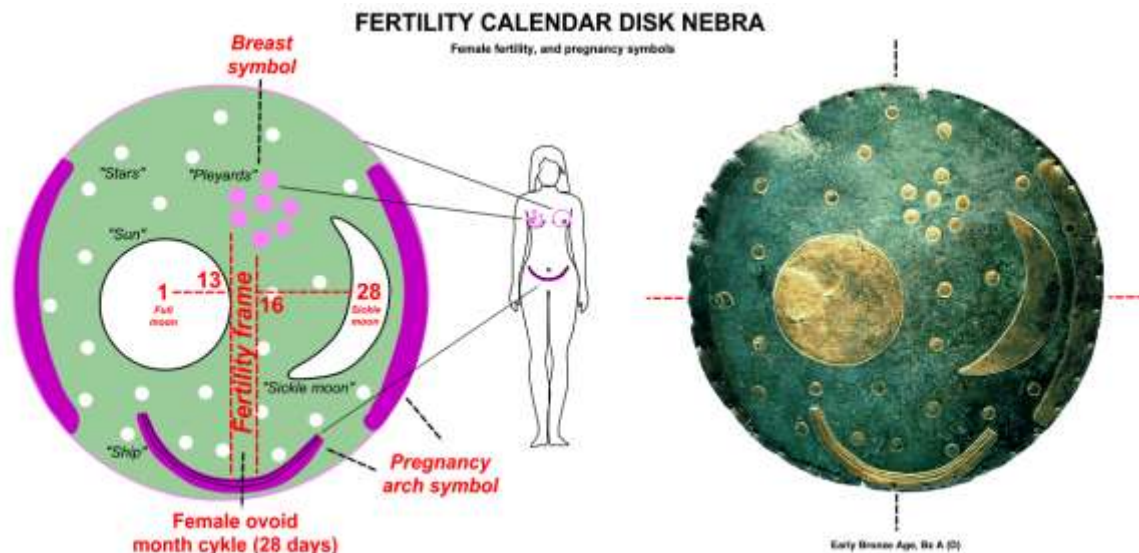


Fig. 1. The German "Sky Disk" of Nebra new interpreted representing an ovoid cycle calendar herein renamed as "Fertility Calendar Disk Nebra" (cf. Fig. 2; photo from [Internet 1]), which is indeed of Early Iron Age Late Hallstatt (Ha C-D) times.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Clay figurines ("pseudo-goddesses")

The key for decoding the symbols on pottery, weapons and the gold objects such as the disk of Nebra (Fig. 1) are Early Bronze Age Mycenae (Fig. 2) or Cypriote and Middle to Late Bronze Age Cypriote and Romanian gender/fertility symbolized clay figurines [cf. 9, 10, Internet 19-30], of which first were compiled, analyzed and compared [cf. 8]. In this review, most important figurines are used for the study in the special cases of the revision of Bronze Age gold object iconography.

2.2. Pottery and weapons

For the N- to SW-Europe Bronze Age gender and fertility iconography decoding, pottery and metal object symbols are compiled from several graveyard or settlement descriptions [cf. 4, 7, 10-28, Internet 30-73]. Also, those were recently published in much more detail and in a wider geographic and time ranging context, from which only the Bronze Age symbols (Fig. 2) are extracted for the gold object symbol and use interpretation.

2.3. Gold objects

Revision of herein selected "well known" European Bronze Age gold object decors from the "sky disk" of Germany [cf. 3], "calendar cup" of Sweden [cf. 7], gold cups or "heats" from Spain [cf. 29], and gold "heats as calendars" from Germany, gold disk from the Czech Republic such as Mycenae gold objects (Fig. 3; [Internet 1-18]) are based as mentioned above, on the iconographic study results of most Bronze Age artifacts, whereas herein larger

objects (Greek bathtub, Ireland grave-stone) are further included for the life-afterlife discussion (Fig. 4). To the gold object belongs the Nebra disk which bronze disk has only gold inlays (Fig. 1; [cf. 3]). All symbols on the Early Bronze Age German "sky disk" and one accompanied decorated dagger, are interpreted new using the new iconographic decoding chart for the Bronze Age symbols (Fig. 2).

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Male symbols

In the past, those were described as bundled slashes (German = "Strichbündel") which appeared already in the Early Neolithic East-LBK Vinča and West-LBK figurines such as their pottery ware. There is only different variation in the arrangement of vertical lines (= penis symbol) and besides diagonal short or dotted short lines (= pubic hair symbol, Fig. 2A). The final abstraction of those is the "fishbone, feather or branch" (mostly in late phases rotated 90°) male symbol, which was also already used since the Early Neolithic [cf. 8]. Any male symbols are not on the disk of Nebra, but decorate the gold cup from Sweden, gold cup of Austria or one cup of Greece, but in all cases in combination with female gender or marriage symbols (Fig. 4).

3.2. Female symbols

First, there is the most common triangle which is often refilled with lines, dot rows, or an open V in abstracted form, similar to zigzag or wave lines (Figs. 2-4). Compared to human anatomy, the triangle imitates the female pubic hair triangle [8]. The Bronze Age triangle is refilled in most cases with diagonal lines. It is the most common symbol on pottery and bronze weapons of the Early Bronze Age Helladic or Mycenae such as the Nordic Bronze Age (Figs. 2-4; [cf. 8]). Late Bronze Age Urnfield triangles include sometimes a small vertical slash (= vagina symbol), diagonal or cross/line refilled triangles. The triangle with diagonal lines is found in rows and oppositely arranged mirrored rows (= "shark tooth decor") in the entire Bronze Age, reaching into the Iron Age. In other cases, such as on one small gold disk of the Mycenae, the triangles are arranged to mislead to a "sun or star" interpretation (cf. Fig. 3). Whereas the female gender symbol triangle is absent on the disk of Nebra (cf. Fig. 1), it is present as a zig-zag engraved line on one of its accompanying two daggers (cf. Fig. 2).

Those sun-like signs are indeed a variation of the typical Bronze Age female breast symbol, which comes from a central circle that is surrounded by small or large dots, which were misinterpreted on the Nebra disk as "Pleyard stars" [cf. 3]. Such pseudo-pleyards are found on several Mycenae clay figurines either on the breast (= breast) or on other places (cf. Fig. 2). Identical breast symbols of the Nebra disk appear even later in the early Iron Age Hallstatt Urnfield times, as presented for one sample of a plate (cf. Fig. 2). Those breast symbols of the Bronze Age are used all over Europe as décor on pottery or bronze weapons (cf. Fig. 2). The single, multiple circles or circles with surrounding dot circle or relief cone with surrounding or circle are even the main elements on nearly all gold heats, cups and discs (cf. Fig. 3). The breasts as the second female symbol (either gender or fertility) are found reduced in their amounts as knobs on Bronze Age pottery and are commonly engraved or

painted circle or dot variations (cf. Fig. 2). The disk itself is a circle, and single, multiple circles are found all over the Bronze Age (to Late Hallstatt) pottery and bronze weapons, whereas there are furthermore round gold disks. In swords, the nails seem to reflect trickily used the breast, as relief décor (cf. Fig. 2B). On the gold discs from the Mycenae (Fig. 3), which in some cases represent a single or many breasts (cf. Fig. 3), the breast nipple is made as conic relief, which again correlates to the pottery "knob" decoration. Horizontal or vertical small dot rows are few more complicated in their interpretation, because those seem, according to the Mycenae figurines, to symbolize "breast milk". Such vertical dot-row is below the breast of not only one figurine (cf. Fig. 2).

The common Bronze Age breast symbol of clustered dots and their position in the middle of the fertility month cycle supports the new interpretation of the Nebra disk as a fertility calendar (Fig. 1). Opposite below, but also in the middle vertical "fertility line", on the Nebra disk is another symbol that was called by Meller [3] "ship", which indeed belongs to the also common Bronze Age fertility, especially pregnancy (= round bally) symbols. This is also commonly found in the Bronze to early Iron Age all over European pottery and metal objects (Fig. 2), including the largest German gold heat (Fig. 3). It appears also as 90° rotated sickle-moon like symbol (cf. Fig. 2), on some of the gold objects, whereas the gold necklace with female gender triangle symbol and marriage x décor from Ireland itself is in the sickle-moon shape (cf. Fig. 3). The object form was used iconographically, such as the round disks (= breast symbol). Into the Bronze Age breast, iconography variation falls the "pleyard stars" of the Nebra disk (cf. Fig. 1A, [cf. 3]). Indeed, the small non-pseudo-pleyard dots seem to represent stars correlating to the full and half sickle moon "night sky" signs.

Other female fertility singles and double spiral symbols of the Bronze Age (Fig. 2) are already developed in the Early Neolithic East and West-Bandkeramik that are found on the clay figurines on their bellies.

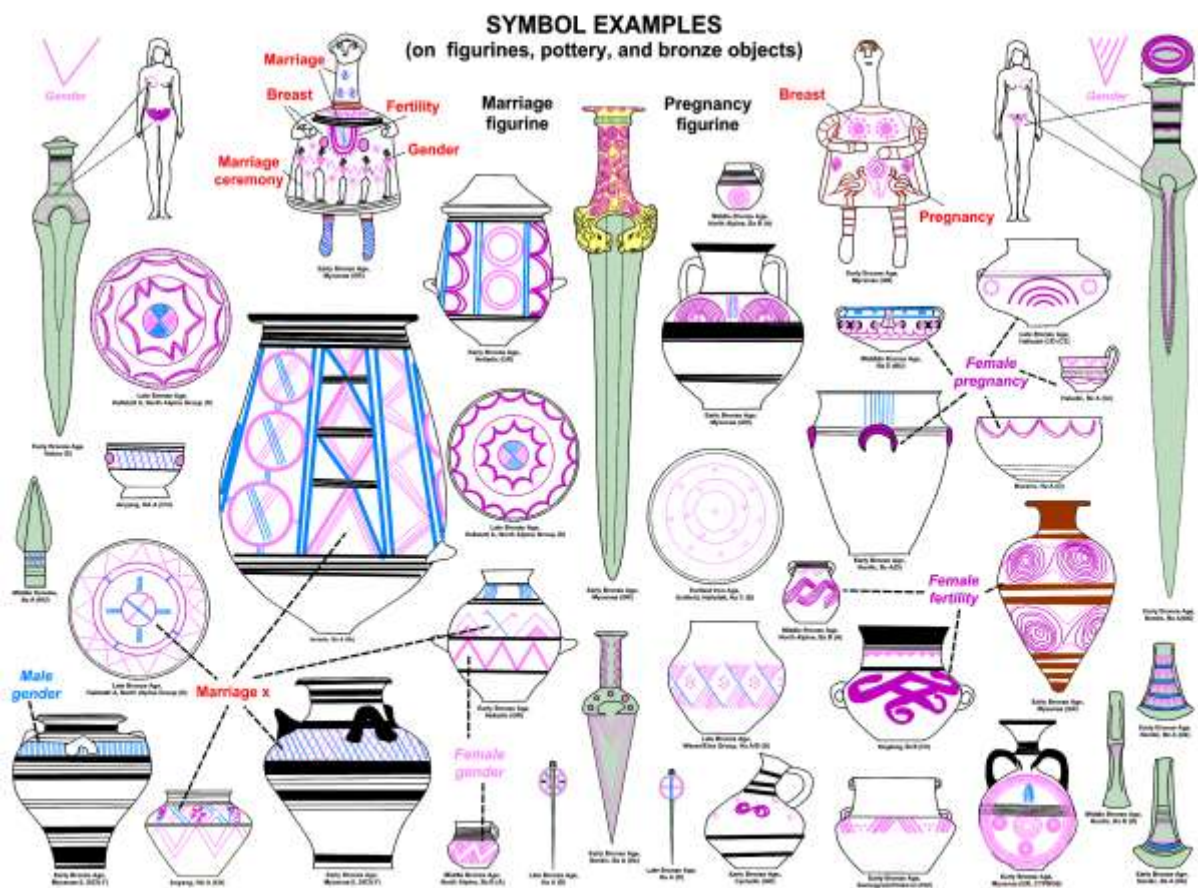
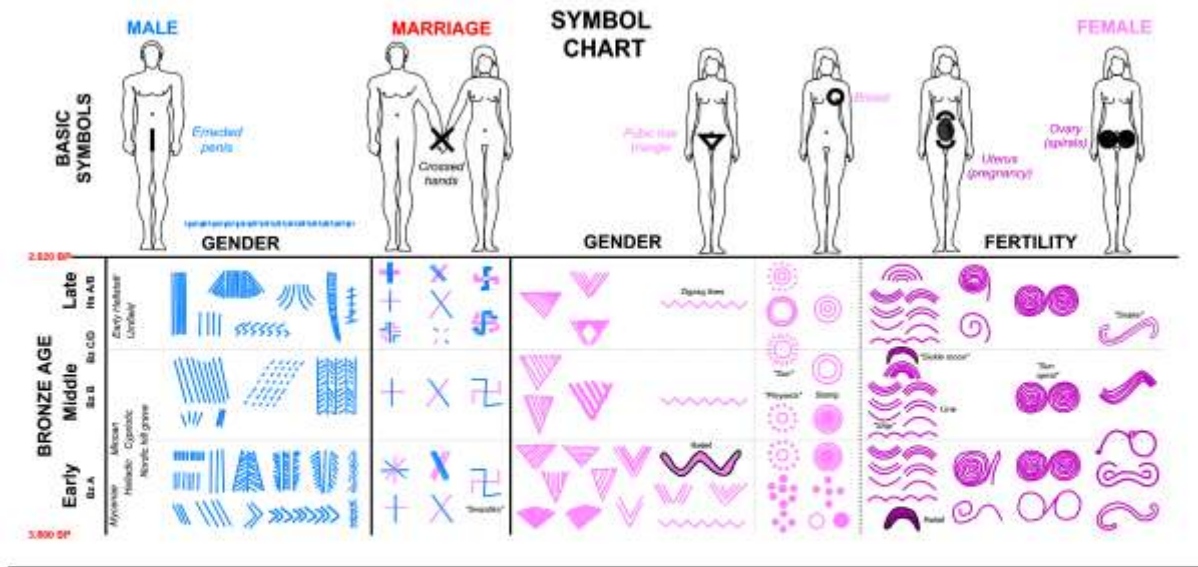


Fig. 2. Bronze Age female gender and fertility, male gender and marriage symbols and examples from Eurasia (according to modified illustrations and photos from [1, 4-9, 10-28, 30, 34, 35], and [Internet 1-74]).

The fertility symbol used all over their pottery received a strong remake in the Copper Age of West-Europe (Cutuceni Culture). In the Bronze Age, the fertility spiral became from

an interfingering (Mycenae) a longer and simple spiral reaching over the Hallstatt Celts into the Early Iron Age. The Bronze Age spirals are represented furthermore as bronze jewelry, which was a typical gift in Bronze to Early Iron Age burials, not only for women [cf. 12, 14, 22, 23, 25, 26]. Other Bronze Age bronze jewelry, pots or bronze, and gold sword handles were similarly decorated with feminine spiral or triangle fertility symbols (Figs. 2, 3; [cf. 12, 14, 22, 23, 25, 26]). If those reflect deeper anatomic knowledge of the double-branched ovary, which the double spiral seems to represent iconographically, or stand symbolic for multiple fertility, remains speculation.

MARRIAGE CEREMONY GOLD OBJECTS - SWORDS, HEATS, DIADEMS, DISKS, BOWLS AND CUPS



Fig. 3. Bronze Age gold objects related to marriage ceremonies with female gender and fertility, male gender and marriage symbols from Europe (photos modified from [Internet 1-18]).

The spirals are not representing any "sun" or other "sky" related objects, as always suggested in the past [e.g. 3, 4, 14, 22, 23, 25]). The "giving birth sign" was used very much in the Mycenae and other Greek cultures as décor [4, 5] even in or on bathtubs (Fig. 4; [cf.

Internet 73, 74]), and was even commonly used on stones in front of the Nordic Bronze Age burial chambers of Great Britain (Fig. 4; [cf. Internet 72]), with new decoding interpretation in the meaning of: "reborn". This fits well with the Bronze Age religious context of burial gifts, which were gifted for the afterlife [e.g. 30] The spiral is absent on the Nebra disk but is with the breast symbols the dominant sign in many variations on the small European gold disks (Fig. 3). Also, three Mycenae gold cups are covered by open S spirals which are absent on all gold heats (Fig. 3). This supports the function of the heats not in birth ceremonies. Such fertility symbols on many objects are seen herein in the most important marriage ceremony context as most of the gold objects. They seem to have been used on pottery to separate man and woman ware, or the shared one (cf. Figs. 2-4).

3.3. Marriage x, + or the "swastika" (hook-cross) symbols

The x, +, or hook-cross (*swastika* in Hinduism marriage ceremonies; [e.g. 31, 32] is already present again since the beginning of the Early Neolithic West-/East-Bandkeramik in both, figurines and pottery, especially the Vinča Group. The most abstracted type of male/female combination is the overlapping multiple x décor band, or diagonal crossing lines refilled areas, which appears in different periods, such as common in the Bronze Age. Here are many good examples of the Early Bronze Age Mycenae figurines with hook crosses (Fig. 2) and Helladic Greek pottery (cf. Fig. 2). The x, + and swastika are on both, feminine/masculine figurines and all kinds of pottery, such as on bronze tools or weapons, and as demonstrated herein on gold disks and cups (Fig. 3). In some cases, the cross is more hidden, e.g. in the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age Hallstatt (Urnfield, North Alpine Group ware: [14]) where the x separates often a color or graphite painted refilled female gender triangle symbols from each other. The marriage symbol is absent on the Nebra disk but is found on the two Irish gold discs two of those are herein separated as male and female related or used discs. Each dominates with either male (slashes in and around the cross) or female (triangles in and around the cross) gender symbols (cf. Fig. 3).

4. The Nebra and gold disks, gold cups and gold heats revised

According to the symbolism, especially the breast symbol with central and surrounding dots, that are found on pottery, weapons and the sky disk, the disk must come from Early Iron Age times, the Late Hallstatt Ha C. The Nebra disk has to be oriented at 90° to read it in fertility or pregnancy calendar context (Fig. 1). On the left and the right are the gold arches, which represent as presented in the iconographic chart pregnancy symbols (Fig. 2). The only non-gender symbols on the disk are the full- and the sickle moon, and to a night sky indeed fitting non-clustered stars. The sickle moon is indeed to interpret as such in this case, because if 90° rotated (up or down), it is found in the Bronze Age pottery as pregnancy arch relief (positive or negative) (cf. Fig. 1), or as presented herein was used in its shape for the Irish gold necklace (Fig. 3). The disk is not in any relation to marriage ceremonies because of lack of marriage cross, plus or hook-cross (*swastika*) symbols. Such are found instead on the small gold disks of the Mycenae, their clay figurines and there again within the entire Bronze to Early Iron Age pottery frequently (cf. Fig. 2). Furthermore, any male gender symbols ("branches, vertical lines and "fish skeleton", Fig. 2), are absent on the Nebra disk. The moon is not a "sun" as suggested [cf. 3]. The disk present indeed a calendar moon cycle of a month,

from full to sickle moon (Fig. 1). Exactly between those, in the vertical middle line, the breast symbol is placed above, and below, the pregnancy multiple arch symbol (Fig. 1). Compared to the 28 days woman fertility cycle, the middle (14-16 days) is the day of "possible pregnancy" [cf. 33]. The disk can be read therefore in the context as fertility calendar disk best (Figs. 1). A Bronze Age sky was no "disk" nor represents the disk the "planetary and ship sailing under a moon" fairy tale situation of a mystified Bronze Age Culture of Europe, as presented by Meller [3]. No, it was a daily practical thing of female life, as it is similar important until today's woman question: when do I become pregnant after marriage to give birth to a child? Before, there was a marriage that was documented in the marriage symbols on different objects. In this context seems to be all, or most, of the gold objects (Fig. 3). Compared to the fertility Nebra disk calendar, all other gold heat and cup "calendars" (cf. [cf. 1-2].), cannot present such. All symbols on the cups and heats are no sun, planetary or time-related. They only represent male-female gender and fertility such as marriage iconography, according to the chart (cf. Fig. 1). It is therefore suggested, that those gold objects were simply used for wedding ceremonies. If so, we have to rethink even some cultic place functions, such as e.g. Stonehenge or others, where weddings might have taken place, especially for the "lords" or "kings" of the Bronze Age.

Conclusions

The European Bronze Age pottery clay figurines have male and female gender or fertility such as marriage symbols as solely or main decoration. Only in the Greek Bronze Age cultures, gender, fertility and marriage symbols are combined with animal, or human scenes including probably marriage ceremonies (Early Bronze Age, Greek Mycenae). Similar symbols are found all over the pottery, bronze weapons or tools and jewelry between the Nordic and SW Greek even up to Chinese West Asian cultures. Using Early Bronze Age Nordic, Greek (Mycenae/Minoan/Helladic) culture and the now decoded Bronze Age symbols, all relate to day life themes: gender, fertility, marriage and neither to any mystic planetary nor calendar interpretation. Female triangles (pubic hair) and circles or circles with dot circles (breast), and small dot rows (probably breast milk) gender, fertility spirals (ovaries) and pregnancy arch iconography (round belly), such as male gender branch-line-fish skeleton symbols (penis and pubic hair) are found often combined, or combined with the x, + and cross-hook (swastika) marriage symbols. Those are on all pottery and bronze weapons the main or only decors, including all gold objects of that time. In about 90%, female symbols are dominant (e.g. Helladic, Mycenae, Nordic Bronze Age), which are sometimes tricky, and artistic variables combined. Additional use of the x, + or hook-cross marriage symbols is found commonly on pottery, especially those, that have been shared (e.g. larger pottery). The presence of female gender and fertility symbols on the disk of Nebra and positions of the breast and pregnancy symbols are placed in the middle between a moon cycle (full to sickle moon and stars during the night). The "sky" disk is revised as "Fertility Calendar Disk Nebra". Other smaller gold disks or gold cups instead cannot represent any planetary calendars and were used as only gender and marriage symbolized objects in marriage ceremonies. Grave gifted decorated symbolized objects allow new interpretations of the marriage status of the buried: 1. Married, or 2. Single. The inhumation or burn graves in the Bronze Age has only in some cases strict gender-separated ornamented gifts, whereas commonly man is accompanied by their woman - reflected in female gender or fertility décor

symbolism on their pottery, or their weapons (bronze swords, axes or spear points). Children were gifted by non-gender decorated objects. This correlates to the new interpretation, because the Nordic Bronze Age chambered graves have in front stones, which can be read after the new iconographic interpretations: life and birth (ornaments are therefore also there the theme in the sense of to be "reborn" (spiral = ovary symbol, giving life, pregnancy and marriage symbols).

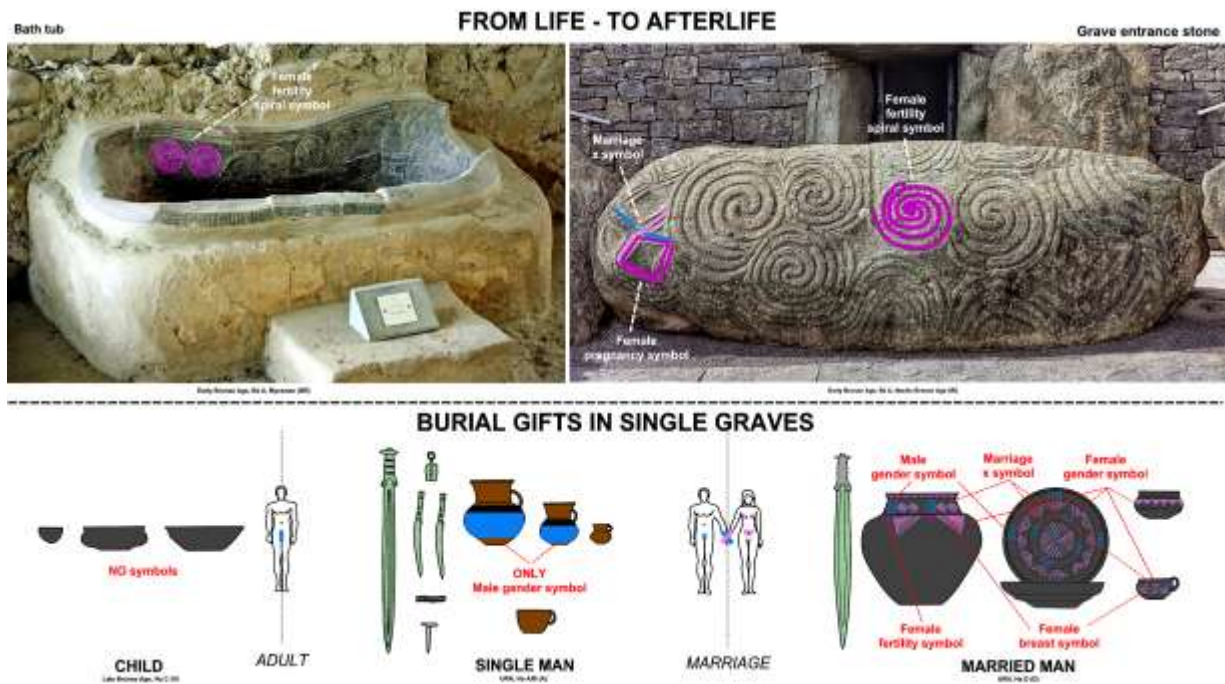


Fig. 4. Early Bronze Age female gender and fertility, male gender and marriage symbols in bathtub or at grave stones, such as Late Bronze Age burial gifts (photos modified from [Internet 72, 73]).

Acknowledgements

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