In North and Middle Europe

BRONZE AGE COSTUMES

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The area of interest:
The chronology:

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<th>Bronze Age Period III</th>
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<td>Early Bronze Age Ia</td>
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<td>Early Bronze Age Ia</td>
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<td>Early Bronze Age Ia</td>
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<td>Early Bronze Age Ia</td>
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<td>Southskandinavia (after Vandkilde)</td>
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The diagram illustrates the chronological timeline of the Bronze Age, with specific periods and sub-periods indicated for various regions and sites.
clothing vs. costume

The pieces of clothing, in other words the dress that is made out of cloth is called clothing (Sørensen 1997; 1991)

But for communicating social differences the cloth alone is too simple in its fabrication. (Sørensen 1997)

The assemblage in which ornaments, clothing and dress fittings are combined is called a costume (Sørensen 1997; 1991)

First when the pieces of cloth are combined with ornaments and dress fittings a clearer reading of their difference emerges. (Sørensen 1995)

The different combinations and compositions of the objects (ornaments and dress fittings) can give information to sex or age or a social group (Sørensen 1997)

What is left in most cases is a part of the performed gender. In some cases it is hard for us to make out which category the deceased belonged to, but this would not have been the case for those attending the funeral as the clothing and accessories would have indicated this. (Bergerbrant 2007; 45)
Oak coffin burials:

Borum Eshøj; woman’s grave

Borum Eshøj; young man’s grave

Borum Eshøj; old man’s grave

Egtved girl’s grave

Figures: http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/udstillingen/bronzealderen/kvinder_og_maend_i_bronzealderen/
Clothing:

Borum Eshøj: woman’s grave

Egtved Girl’s dress

Trindhøj: man’s grave

Mulbjerg

Borum Eshøj: young man’s grave

Figures: http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/udstillingen/broncealderen/kvinder_og_maend_i_bronzealderen/
There are similarities: The Hat

Borum Eshøj: old man’s hat/helmet
Trindhøj: man’s hat/helmet
Muldbjer: man’s hat/helmet

Sign of an “old” man?
A social hierarchy?
A status symbol?

Figures: http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/udstillingen/bronzealderen/kvinder_og_maend_i_bronzealderen/
Short corded skirts:

A specific dress for young woman?
More than just clothing:

Figures: http://oldtiden.natmus.dk/udstillingen/bronzealderen/kvinder_og_maend_i_bronzealderen/
The information in the clothing:

• no special clothing for the burial because of wear traces and reuse of garment

• male clothes consist of a ”cloak“ (oval or kidney shaped); shoes (the remains of leather at the feet); caps with two different shapes (round and helmet like versus simple)

• There are two different types of clothings (to cover the legs): wrap-around (Muldbjer and Trindhoj)
dressed in kilts (the two Borum Eshoj burials)

• all female burials contain a blouse of similar kind
• two different kinds of skirts (the string skirts and long skirts)
• it can be assumed that two different kinds of female outfit exists in Scandinavia: one with blouse, long skirt and hair net of horse hair ore one set with blouse, corded skirt and ”shorter“ hair in a hair band.

...the difference between the clothing is one of age, where the long skirt was the clothing of older females, while younger females wore the corded skirt (Thomsen 1929)

...the caps in the oak-log coffins are symbols indicating that the deceased had been a chieftain... (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005)

the different clothing reflected the status of the woman, i.e. married or unmarried (Eskildsen and Lomborg 1976)

clothing for the priestess, i.e. the ritual clothing (Kristiansen 2005)
We are not always so lucky....

But
In situ...

Hesselager burial B, sb. Nr. 70, Hesselagergård (Madsen 1884: Tafel)

Øby, Højelse sogn (Boye 1896: Tafel XXIV)

Hesselager burial A, sb. Nr. 81, Hesselagergård (Madsen 1884: Tafel)

Grave V in mound 5, Hengstberg, Wardbohmen; 2= Plan of grave II mound 5 Hengstberg, Wardbohmen (from Piesker 1958: Tafel 65)
Object assemblages

Clothing is a part of the process of signalling social rules and relationships (Sørensen 2010)

Object assemblage from Deutsch-Evern (Lüneburg Group) in Germany (Sørensen 2010; Laux 1971)
Distinctive object assemblages

The strictly limited distribution of this fibula has been used to suggest that they were ethnic markers....

more likely they indicate some' kind of social category within the community as they were not used by all women...

Figure 5. Reconstruction of hat and hair ornaments from an Early Bronze Age grave at Bockmar, Lüneburg (after Piesker 1958).

Regional costume groups and their interaction:

Middle and South Germany
Regional costume groups and their interaction:

North Germany
Regional costume groups and their interaction:
South Scandinavia
Regional costume groups and their interaction:

North Germany and Scandinavia

Woman buried in southern Scandinavia in Luneburg costume:
- Flintbek (mound LA 1, Grave A), Kr. Rendsburg-Eckernförde, Schleswig-Holstein (Ke9593A)
- Smidstrup Hovgard, Skibinge, Barse, Prasto (Ke1264A)
- Abbekas, Skivarp, Scania (burial 7, mound IV)
- Vaale, Steinburg, Schleswig-Holstein (Ke9507B)
- Soviggarde, Ovtrup parish, Vester-Horne district, Ribe County (Ke4170)

Woman buried in North Europe in Luneburg costume:
- Lüssow, Güstrow in Mecklenburg
- Shelen on Rügen (Mecklenburg)
- Reckerode, Hersfeld-Rothenburg, Hessen

Woman buried in Danish costume outside from Denmark:
- Offerlunden, Torslunda, Tierp, Uppland, Sweden (O2839)

Foreign objects in regional costume assemblages:
- Few burials with typical Luneburg artefacts and a dagger in southern Holstein
- Luneburg wheel-headed pin in Scandinavian burials
Affects on functionalism

A new way of seeing the body’s movements (Sørensen 2010)

Ornaments from Upflamör, Germany (after Pirling 1980: table 53)
The information in the costumes:

• regional groupings are clearly recognisable in the costumes and they are congruent to other archaeological evidences

• movements and intermarriage among different geographical areas and cultural groups took place on many levels (Bergerbrandt 2007)

  • The ornament assemblages (body maps) were used to accentuate different parts of the body in order to create differentiation (Sørensen 2010)

• With the end of the 1st period the people tend to differentiate not only between gender and social position but also between age and social status
And this all can lead to ....

that changing emphasis in appearance can be broadly read, through studies of textile remains, ornaments and dress fittings using the principles discussed (Sørensen 1997).
Literature:


