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## REVIEW ARTICLE

### The Archaeology of Infancy and Childhood: Integrating and Expanding Research into the Past

MARSHALL JOSEPH BECKER

CHILDREN IN THE VISUAL ARTS OF IMPERIAL ROME, by *Jeannine Diddle Uzzi*. Pp. xiv + 252, figs. 74. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005. \$80. ISBN 0-521-82026-x (cloth).

COMING OF AGE IN ANCIENT GREECE. IMAGES OF CHILDHOOD FROM THE CLASSICAL PAST, by *Jennifer Neils* and *John H. Oakley*. Pp. xvii + 384, figs. 421, chart 1. Yale University Press, New Haven 2003. \$65 (cloth); \$45 (paper). ISBN 0-300-09959-2 (cloth); 0-300-09960-6 (paper).

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD: CHILDREN, GENDER, AND MATERIAL CULTURE, by *Jane Eva Baxter*. Pp. xi + 143, figs. 9. Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, Calif. 2005. \$26.95. ISBN 0-7591-0332-1 (paper).

THE OSTEOLOGY OF INFANTS AND CHILDREN, by *Brenda J. Baker*, *Tosha L. Dupras*, and *Matthew W. Tocheri*. Pp. xiii + 178, figs. 134, tables 2. Texas A&M University Press, College Station 2005. \$34.95. ISBN 1-58544-465-0 (paper).

Tools for conducting archaeological research and analysis have improved over recent decades in ways once hardly imaginable. The incorporation by archaeologists working in the Mediterranean of techniques and approaches pioneered by British and "Americanist" archaeologists has led to vastly improved understanding of the ancient peoples of that region. Connoisseurship, however, still underlies the processes used by some scholars, epitomized by what I call the "boneless cemetery." This archaeological approach is demonstrated by cemetery reports that include not a single reference to the presence of human bone. Today, no reputable scholar would trample, ignore, or throw away human remains found within tombs, which was an acceptable approach when I began work in Greece and Italy. The best contemporary scholars work in conjunction with skeletal specialists, and into their analyses of sites they include skeletal data from tombs and

from the vast numbers of human bone fragments that often litter archaeological sites.

Of particular interest to those of us who are concerned with closing the "Great Divide" between classical archaeology and anthropology<sup>1</sup> is the attention directed toward the study of childhood. Physical anthropologists have long recognized that demographic imbalances are common in recovered skeletal populations, but explanations for absent infants, as well as for "missing" women, emerged only recently. Many issues of age and gender are easily addressed through the study of the available skeletal evidence. A case in point is the systematic recovery and evaluation of the 207 human skeletons from Etruscan Tarquinia. A formal research program, begun in 1987, demonstrated that women are underrepresented in large tombs,<sup>2</sup> and that children under 5.4 years of age (ca. half the expected cemetery population [see Goodman and Armelagos 1989]) were not represented at all. Kamp's question, "Where have all the children gone?" now can be answered for the people of southern Etruria.<sup>3</sup> They were buried in specialized cemeteries.<sup>4</sup> The theory that separate infant cemeteries such as those found in Etruria and elsewhere, including Phoenician tophets, represent child sacrifice does not stand up to ethnographic and biological realities. Use of the entire armamentarium of science to augment traditional humanistic interpretations of mortuary findings now has become established among archaeologists working at classical sites, and these insights from Tarquinia are among the results.

While the examination of children and gender in the ancient world predates the landmark papers gathered by Rawson, her work highlighted the importance of these topics for Greece and Rome.<sup>5</sup> Uzzi's volume, reviewed here, complements years of research by many other scholars, including Rawson's *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy*.<sup>6</sup> New approaches in skeletal analysis enable us to determine not only the age and sex of skeletons but also the age at which weaning begins.<sup>7</sup> The implementation of these new analytical techniques can be refined even to the point of identifying the age at which breast-feeding is supplemented by other foods and when nursing comes to an end.<sup>8</sup>

Uzzi's copiously illustrated volume on children depicted in the visual arts of imperial Rome, derived from her 1998 doctoral dissertation, examines images on coins, sculpture,

<sup>1</sup> Renfrew 1980.

<sup>2</sup> Becker 2005a.

<sup>3</sup> Kamp 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Becker 2005b.

<sup>5</sup> Rawson 1986.

<sup>6</sup> Rawson 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Fuller et al. 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Clayton et al. 2006.

silver cups, wall paintings, and mosaics. In a cautious but lucid narrative, Uzzi reviews a selected body of art depicting children of all ages and concludes that status differences are strikingly employed in the official art of that period. She finds that Roman children most commonly appear in scenes where the emperor witnesses a public and peaceful gathering. Non-Roman children appear only in official art depicting the violence of war or in scenes representing Roman triumphs over foreigners or conquered populations. Uzzi concludes that this reflects violent aspects of the Roman imperial process not clearly evident in the literary tradition.

Uzzi's introduction provides readers with the history of relevant studies and the specific context into which her work is placed. Her second chapter reviews the primary sources relating to Roman identity and the history of representations of children in various media. Uzzi compares different Greek modes of presenting children with the styles used in Rome throughout history. Traditional interpretations of gesture and inferences regarding rank are subsumed within her overview, which recognizes the two distinct contexts for children in these art forms. Uzzi also wrestles with the basic question, "What is a child?" (23–32). Fortunately, chronological age of these children, the essence of biological studies, is not an issue here.

Uzzi's third chapter deals with "images of more than thirty children who appear in scenes of imperial largesse," taken from among the "representations of approximately sixty-five Roman children in scenes of public gathering" (33). Children also are depicted on coins and monumental sculptures showing public gatherings of all types. These chapters set the stage for exploring the date and significance of the two marble reliefs identified as the "Anaglypha," where Uzzi's insights are extremely interesting. Sections on children as represented in the artistic contexts of submission, triumph, and battlegrounds lead to Uzzi's extensive commentary on the Ara Pacis, "the earliest imperial monument on which children appear" (142). Uzzi then places her general study within the category of research dealing with homoeroticism and the sexualization of both male and female figures.

Uzzi's concluding section, "A Narrative of Identity," considers the message conveyed by these Imperial period child images, and how they changed through time. An appendix extends coverage to the appearance of "Children in Private and Funerary Art" (171). This appendix includes summaries of the many types of art in which children are depicted, including funerary sculpture and various domestic images. Notes regarding the most important available studies of these several genres are particularly useful. Not clear is how selective she was in extracting these images from the entire corpus. Ratios of children to adults among the Roman, as distinct from non-Roman, individuals also might be revealing, but these are minor quibbles that hardly detract from the solid work.

*Coming of Age in Ancient Greece* is considerably more than a lavishly illustrated exhibition catalogue. Organized at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth University, and shown at three other fortunate venues, the exhibition brought to-

gether 128 objects from 55 collections throughout the world. The objects that are the focus of this impressive volume are presented in a catalogue that follows unexcelled studies by eight of the foremost scholars in the field. The volume sets the standard for what an exhibition catalogue should be. The opening of the exhibition also served as the occasion for a conference of scholars whose presentations enhanced the rich materials assembled for display.<sup>9</sup>

This laudable volume opens with an impressive introduction by Neils and Oakley, followed by Korbin's "Perspective from Contemporary Childhood Studies." Korbin was among the scholars who began detailed studies of the lives of children and what they reveal. Here she reflects on the progress made in this field since 1981, the date of her edited volume exploring the ways in which studies of infancy and childhood can help us to understand a culture. Golden's contribution, "Childhood in Ancient Greece," extracts the essence of what is known from the surviving literature. Archaeological evidence provides the basis for Rutter's brilliantly crafted "Children in Aegean Prehistory," which also serves as the foundation for the study and interpretation of the exhibited and catalogued objects. Beaumont's "The Changing Face of Childhood" examines ancient representations of children as depicted in media ranging from pottery to sculpture. This masterful summary parallels Uzzi's study of imperial Roman views of children. Shapiro explores "Fathers and Sons, Men and Boys," while Foley focuses on "Mothers and Daughters." Neils examines "Children and Greek Religion." Oakley's section, "Death and the Child," was of particular interest to me because the skeletons of children in antiquity are the focus of much of my research. While the extensive mortuary evidence resonates most with me, all of the contributors offer lucid descriptions of the many aspects of ancient Greek life that are essential to the interpretation of the artifacts as well as the skeletal record.

The actual catalogue entries for *Coming of Age*, by Neils and Oakley, fill the final third of this important volume. The catalogue, with its own introduction, offers a profusion of images (more than 350), with several of the richly painted vessels and other objects presented in as many as four different views. Several large, color illustrations were placed within the relevant essays, providing enormous texture to these exquisitely written texts. Smaller views of the exhibited objects appear within the catalogue for reference, with notes directing readers to the larger versions. All future exhibitions and their catalogues should be measured against this tour de force.

Baxter's extended essay, derived from her doctoral dissertation, covers fewer than 100 pages of text. The eight brief chapters summarize the role of studies of children and gender, beginning with how interest developed in these important aspects of society. Her observations regarding the processes of socialization and the maintenance of cultural tradition essential to every society may seem obvious, but they are worth noting. The core of this work is a concern with the many child-oriented aspects of material culture and how these items were used. As is evident in *Coming of Age*, the archaeo-

<sup>9</sup>In the interest of full disclosure, I was a participant at that conference, from which selected papers will appear in a 2007 fascicle of *Hesperia*, edited by Jeremy Rutter and Ada Cohen.

logical record is valuable for providing material evidence indicating how children were integrated into society in ways that are important to their becoming adults. Their physical presence is documented by their skeletons. Baxter's chapter 5, focusing on the artifacts of childhood and their distribution, reflects the serious difficulties involved in extrapolating information from a limited database. The 10 scant pages of chapter 6 make note of representations of children in the "record," but reliance on modern photographs and recent stories rather than excavated materials limits the value of this section. The brief text relating to mortuary remains is well suited as an introduction for students. The closing chapter addresses themes and lessons concerning the archaeology of childhood, revealing just how quickly this subject can be exhausted. Baxter's excellent bibliography is a useful tool. As with special studies of the archaeology of gender, our attention may focus on children for a brief period before we return to an archaeology within which these matters assume their rightful but appropriately limited place.

Perhaps the explosion of interest in children in the archaeological record motivated Baker and her colleagues to issue their generally well-illustrated study of the skeletal biology of subadults. This work is particularly useful to specialists, especially the five tables that list the age of appearance and of fusion for the individual bones. The source of these data is not indicated, but the tables appear to improve on Flecker's landmark work, which is not cited.<sup>10</sup> Less than a page of text is devoted to the category "Placing Subadult Skeletons in Age and Sex Categories" (10). Definitions for "fetus" and "infant" (birth–one year of age) are included, but other categories are not defined. No commentary is offered on some of the arbitrary categories used in the past that still attract inexperienced skeletal evaluators. The authors ignore important life transitions as cultural factors influencing morbidity. For example, I have suggested that the age 16.5 years defines the transition to adulthood in southern Etruria, based on the average age for women of bearing their first child at ca. 17.5 years. This age is suggested by a statistical rise in the numbers of female deaths, reflecting primipara mortality. Etruscan parents may have equated marriage with the death of a female child for reasons beyond her loss to her parents' household.

Baker et al. had the advantage of working with Egyptian skeletal populations, among the best preserved in the world. The luxury of examining many intact skeletons may have generated some failings in their approach to this topic. Several terms ("sex," "gender," "dimorphism") do not appear in the index. The weakest part of this volume, both in data and illustration, relates to dentition. No note is made of the important data on sexual dimorphism in dentition.<sup>11</sup> The illustration of a cutaway face revealing mixed deciduous and developing permanent dentition of a four year old (57, fig. 5.4), repeated at smaller scale (63, fig. 10.3), is unclear, as is the cutaway (fig. 10.3) showing dentition at ca. 10 years of age. Resorption of the deciduous root tips, stimulated by or correlated with the development of the permanent dentition,

is not well depicted. The sequence of tooth development is not clear. Ubelaker's simple charts depicting dental development are far more useful for the estimation of subadult age.<sup>12</sup> Baker et al. note that fusion of the mandible is typical during the first year (50), but specific fusion has been shown to take place at seven to eight months (range of six–nine months; see Becker 1986). While generally useful for a specialist, I fear that naive excavators will be tempted to hand a copy of this volume to an undergraduate on an excavation and encourage them to use it as a guide to recovery and analysis of subadults, as I have seen Ubelaker's excellent volume misused. Serious excavators engage reputable specialists who control all of this literature. For studies of subadult skeletons, I prefer the works of Scheuer and Black.<sup>13</sup>

The four volumes reviewed here approach the archaeology of infancy and childhood from very different perspectives. While the two written by anthropologists do not greatly enhance the considerable literature now available, all the authors recognize the importance of childhood studies in understanding past cultures. We have moved beyond Korbin's basic observation that how "we define children and childhood is a core issue in childhood studies."<sup>14</sup> These volumes represent a distinct shift in the evolution of archaeological studies, and demonstrate that incorporating the extensive record relating to children is a part of doing excellent archaeology. Just as boneless cemeteries now reflect outdated approaches to archaeological publications, the once childless ancient societies now are being populated with a rich array of children of all ages.

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<sup>10</sup> Flecker 1942.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Becker 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Ubelaker 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Scheuer and Black 2000, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Korbin 1981, 9.

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