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Introduction: Archaeological Children, Death and Burial

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Introduction

Burial is a ‘deeply significant act imbued with meaning’ (Parker Pearson 2003, 5). The treatment of human dead, past and present, invariably involves the agency of the living. Indeed it would seem that cultural intervention is required to reposition the dead within their society – death is not only a biological reality but also a complex cultural event (Hertz 1905, 48-9). The provision of a last resting place for the body is generally a carefully considered process that would have taken time to execute. Different societies around the world have treated the corpse in a myriad of different ways, which involve various manipulations of the body itself; the use of a variety of forms of burial repository for the remains; the arrangement of the body in a particular manner within its grave; the provision of a range of often carefully selected grave goods; in addition to the spatial differentiation of burial for certain members of society (see e.g. Parker Pearson 2003, 5-15).

The interpretation of archaeological burials has shifted over the years depending on the theoretical perspective of the researcher. Traditional archaeological approaches viewed burials as an expression of religious belief. The processual approaches of the 1970s considered burial to be a reliable reflection of social organisation across cultures, whereas subsequent post-processual approaches focused more on the cultural context and ideological premises of funerary remains which are viewed as particular occurrences that do not have directly comparable universal patterns (Lull 2000, 576-8). The latter approaches draw upon the sociological theory of structuration which considers social structure as active and constantly changing as a result of the actions and activities of people (McHugh 1999, 1). More recent researchers have advocated the use of a more present-past-orientated archaeology which uses present-day examples, and theoretical approaches from other social
sciences, as a way of understanding potential past responses and the meanings that may have lain behind aspects of mortuary practice (Taylor 2014, 178, 183).

Writing in her pioneering paper on the archaeology of childhood, Grete Lillehammer (1989, 89) observed that ‘the child’s world has been left out of archaeological research’. She recognised that research on children and childhood, particularly through the study of burial evidence and toys, had the potential to yield important insights in relation to the agency of children and their relationship with the adults of society (Lillehammer 1989, 102-3). Lucy (1994, 24-5) made the point that even though we may be dealing with the body of a child in a grave those who conducted the burial would most probably have been adults. The remains of dead children are manipulated within an adult world and the evidence for funerary processes derived from their burials therefore provides insights in relation to how adults came to terms with such premature deaths, although it should be remembered that other children may have had some agency in the funerary ceremonies associated with their dead siblings and friends (Murphy 2011, 68-9).

Children featured in many of the pioneering studies of funerary archaeology whose theoretical and methodological developments provided a foundation for later studies but the entire population was of interest in these studies and the emphasis was on the adult world (e.g. Saxe 1970; Binford 1971; Tainter 1975; O’Shea 1984; Hodder 1985). Throughout the 1980s increasing interest in the reconstruction of social, and predominantly gender, identity saw a degree of consideration of burial evidence in relation to children (e.g. Pader 1982). Interest in the funerary archaeology of children gained momentum throughout the 1990s with the child-centred research of scholars including Sally Crawford (1993; 1999) and Sam Lucy (1994), both of whom worked on the inhumation cemeteries of Anglo-Saxon England, leading the charge. Eleanor Scott’s (1999) volume, *The Archaeology of Infancy and Infant Death*, was the first study to focus specifically on children, namely infants, and funerary archaeology. Her research provided an overview of the presence of children in the archaeological record in addition to reviewing the evidence for infants in prehistoric and historic burial contexts.

Ten years ago Mary Lewis (2007, 1) stated that the ‘children who were once invisible in the archaeological record are slowly coming into view. The primary data for the archaeology of childhood are the children themselves’. Bioarchaeological studies of juveniles have
mushroomed over the past decade and this has seen a refinement in the methods used for assessing age-at-death, physiological stress, disease status and trauma, amongst others. Unfortunately, the reliable determination of the sex of juveniles on the basis of osteological methods continues to elude, although advances in aDNA technology will hopefully eventually result in this being an affordable and accessible method for sex determination (Mays 2013). Bioarchaeological advances go hand-in-hand with developments in funerary archaeology since they enable more nuanced interpretations to be made concerning the world of the living child and the attitudes that were shown by adults towards children in death.

Alongside the growth in juvenile bioarchaeological research has been a general increase in studies which focus on the archaeology of children from an increasingly diverse range of perspectives. Funerary archaeology has, however, remained a popular tool by which to explore children in the past and such studies have been well represented within the volumes of the journal Childhood in the Past, as well as in recent edited collection of essays on past childhood (e.g. Lally and Moore 2011; Hadley and Hemer 2014; Sánchez Romero et al. 2015). There has been a plethora of studies undertaken on topics such as atypical mortuary practices for children both within common burial grounds (e.g. Crawford 2007; Craig-Atkins 2014) and in separate burial spaces (Moore 2009; Donnelly and Murphy 2017). Scholars from around the world have undertaken investigations of different chronological and temporal scope in a quest to identify the different stages of the lifecycle and the social role of children (e.g. Lebegyev 2009; Fahlander 2012; Bickle and Fibiger 2014; Le Roy 2015), the emotional aspects of child death (Murphy 2011) and the identification of migration through the burial record of children (e.g. Hadley and Hemer 2011; Bengtson and O’Gorman 2016). Heidi Dawson’s (2014) volume, Unearthing Late Medieval Children: Health, Status and Burial Practices an Southern England, demonstrates the value of integrating detailed juvenile bioarchaeological analysis, with a study of mortuary practices, for the purposes of identifying potential differences in social status. The above ground evidence has not been ignored and studies have also focused on commemorative funerary practices invested in children (e.g. McKerr et al. 2009; Mander 2012; Baxter 2013).

The most recent edited volume to focus solely on mortuary archaeology and children, however, is Krum Bacvarov’s (2008), Babies Reborn: Infant/Child Burials in Pre- and Protohistory. As such, it seems timely for the production of a new collection of papers on this theme that includes research which draws upon theoretical and methodological advances that
have been made over the past decade. The volume originated in a day-long session entitled, ‘Archaeological Approaches to the Burial of Children’, held at the twenty-first annual conference of the European Association of Archaeologists in Glasgow in 2015 (Fig. 1). The sixteen papers included in the book cover a wide geographic area but there is a clear concentration dealing with Europe (Fig. 2). This is a not unexpected situation, however, given the nature of the conference for which they were initially gathered. They are also of broad temporal scope extending from the Neolithic through to the nineteenth century AD. We consider this breadth to be a strength of the book, however, since it provides snap shots of the different burial practices that occurred, thereby facilitating comparisons to be made on a large geographical and chronological scale.

**The Place of Juveniles in the Life Cycle**

A number of recurrent themes and issues are evident in the papers and we will provide a brief overview of these before providing an introduction to each paper. Phillippe Ariès (1962) is generally accredited as being the first scholar to give serious academic attention to the lives of the children who lived in the past. He proposed that ‘childhood’ was a culturally determined concept, an idea that has since been developed, with sociologists James and Prout (2015, 3) more recently stating that childhood is ‘to be understood as a social construction. That is, the institution of childhood provides an interpretive frame for understanding the early years of human life. In these terms it is biological immaturity rather than childhood which is a universal and natural feature of human groups, for ways of understanding this period of human life … vary cross-culturally although they do form a specific structural and cultural component of all known societies’. What then can be learned about past societies through their treatment of those who died when biologically immature?

**Is Everybody Included?**

The relative paucity of infants and young children in communal burial grounds is a common occurrence in funerary archaeology (see e.g. Scott 1999 for discussion) and a number of prehistoric papers in the current volume have identified a similar trend (Le Roy, Kostanti, Calliauw, Sîrbu and Dăvîncă). The authors of these papers demonstrate that the under-representation may be a genuine reflection of cultural choice, rather than a product of taphonomic processes. The youngest members of society appear to have been afforded a differential funeral treatment compared to the remainder of the population. Turning to anthropology, Le Roy suggests the funerary practices applied to infants may be invisible to
archaeology, citing the example of the Dayaks of the Indonesian peninsula and the Papuans of New Guinea, who deposit the infant corpse inside a dead tree trunk or hang it from the branches of a tree (Hertz 1905, 132-6). The implication is that the death of the very young held different significance to society. In other prehistoric populations juveniles in general are well represented within communal cemeteries (Maines et al., Berseneva), while at the Eneolithic cemetery of Sultana-Malu Roșu, Romania, particular locations within the burial ground appear to have been reserved for their burial (Lazar et al.). Juveniles are relatively well represented in the historic burial grounds included in the volume (Cave and Oxenham, Jark Jensen, Dawson, Murphy, Geber). The Anglo-Saxon, Great Chesterford burial ground is particularly interesting in this respect since the under-representation of children is a common occurrence in cemeteries of this period (Cave and Oxenham). It serves to remind us of the importance of considering local variation when dealing with a particular cultural group.

All members of society, including young infants, were buried within a settlement context at the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük, Central Anatolia (Tibbetts), but the domestic arena appears to have been largely reserved for the burial of infants and young children in a substantial number of studies included in the volume (Le Roy, Thomas, Kostanti, Sirbu and Dăvîncă). A number of previous authors have interpreted such burials as foundation deposits (e.g. Moses 2008); a representation of the fact that infants were not full members of society (Wells 1990, 139); related to sympathetic magic to attract fertility to a household (Morris 1987, 63-5; Golden 1990, 85); a reflection of the fact that infant death only had an impact at household rather than community level (Lebegyev 2009, 28), while Ian Hodder (1990, 29) suggested that these very young children were buried within domestic spaces that had been devoted to child-rearing activities. Kostanti (this volume) further observes that this coexistence of the living and the dead can be interpreted in two opposing manners – it may be an expression of absolute oblivion in which the burial is inaccessible and obliterated by the activities of daily life or, conversely, it may represent a profound form of commemoration in which the dead infant continues to share the living space and experiences of its family.

The Social Child

The archaeoanthropological approach developed in France during the 1980s (Duday 2009) enables the reconstruction of the behaviour of past populations through the detailed studies of burials. The approach focuses on the careful recording of the positioning of the skeleton and
its association with grave goods and furnishings to provide information about the management and treatment of the body. The identification of repeated patterns can provide information about funerary practices at a cultural level. This approach was followed in the majority of papers included in the volume, many of which identified differential body positions and/or grave goods that appear to have been related to age-at-death.

On the basis of the evidence derived from the spatial analysis (discussed above), and the evidence for funerary rituals, several stages in the life cycle of a child are observed. Very young children seem to have been viewed as a separate social group in the vast majority of studies. Kostanti (this volume) interprets the inclusion of children older than two years in communal burial grounds as an indication that they had formally entered the Mycenaean community through rites of integration and passage. Berseneva (this volume), however, observes that all children, including neonates were afforded very similar burial practices to adults across the three Bronze Age cultures of the Southern Trans-Urals included in her study. Nevertheless, on the basis of differences in the associated grave goods she was able to determine that childhood ended at around fourteen years of age in the Sintashta culture, when their burials began to include similar tools to those of adult burials. She was also able to identify that gendered grave goods were associated with children from the age of three years in the Sintashta population, while potential girls, as young as 9-12 months, were associated with female items in the Alakul’ group.

In many of the studies infants and young children were buried inside jars (Thomas, McSweeney and Bacvarov, Kostanti, Calliauw) or boxes (Calliauw). The use of such burial containers would have afforded the infant body an additional degree of protection which may have been considered appropriate for the most fragile members of a population. Some authors have suggested that the ceramic jar was considered to represent the female body and womb and was associated with a hope that the dead infant would be reborn (Goodison 1989, 40; McGeorge 2011, 12). While jars were not used at Neolithic Çatalhöyük, Tibbetts (this volume) notes that infants were inhumed quickly after death in graves that were not reopened. This is in contrast to the situation for older members of society whose remains were not buried immediately, and whose graves could be re-opened to facilitate the removal of parts of the skeleton. Perhaps the idea of the rebirth of the infant meant that its body should not be disturbed? Interestingly, the work of McSweeney and Bacvarov (this volume) has demonstrated that the bodies of perinatal infants buried in jars in Early Bronze Age
Bulgarian Thrace were sometimes buried in a partially decomposed state and were subject to a variety of post-mortem manipulations.

The two papers on later medieval burial grounds in Denmark and Ireland (Jark Jensen, Murphy) demonstrate a number of notable parallels in which the burials of children were often associated with grave goods with potential amuletic significance and their bodies were laid out in a variety of positions that did not conform to Church regulations. Burial on the side was a particularly favoured position, particularly for the very young, and both authors considered it to be reminiscent of a sleeping position. They both concluded that the atypical characteristics of the juvenile burials in their respective cemeteries were most likely to be an indication of tenderness on the parts of the families of the dead children who must have played a major role in their interment. Care in the burial of children was also evident in the early modern Kilkenny Union Workhouse mass grave in Ireland which demonstrates that even in an extreme mortality situation, in this case brought on by famine, that efforts will be made to afford appropriate burial rites to all members of society (Geber).

All of these examples serve to demonstrate different societal responses in the face of the death of a child that are dependent on the time period and the geographical area. They provide insights as to how different societies viewed the immature members of their communities both during life and after death. There are undoubtedly difficulties in interpretation, however, and in some societies the burials of juveniles are associated with practically the same funerary rituals as for adults. It is clear that age is often not the only element of social organisation that can be identified in burials and other social roles or identities can be materialised in death, including kinship, gender and social status.

**Embodying Identity**

In this section we will offer some suggestions regarding the diversity of juvenile identities – ‘the domestic child’, ‘the vulnerable child’, ‘the high status child’, ‘the cherished child’, ‘the potential child’, ‘the ritual child’ and the ‘political child’ – that may be encountered throughout the papers of this volume. It needs to be appreciated, however, that these interpretations are neither definitive nor mutually exclusive; in some cases, contrasting or multiple messages may be read in the mortuary record.
The ‘domestic child’ can be seen through the association of child burials with places of domicile (Le Roy, Tibbetts, Thomas, Kostanti, Sîrbu and Dăvîncă). The potential association of children with apparently mundane everyday items in historic period cemeteries, in addition to their occasional association with pillow stones and their burial on the side may be seen as a further connection to the comfort and security of home (Cave and Oxenham, Jark Jensen, Murphy). The ‘vulnerable child’ is also evidenced in many of the studies in which infants were afforded further protection through their burial in containers (Thomas, McSweeney and Bacvarov, Kostanti, Calliauw). Certain children in later medieval cemeteries appear to have been deliberately given grave goods, with potentially apotropaic properties, presumably to help them in the afterlife (Cave and Oxenham, Jark Jensen, Murphy). The deliberate burial of children with other children, or indeed adults, may also feed into this notion of vulnerability (Lazar, Berseneva, Cave and Oxenham, Jark Jensen).

A number of studies also yielded burials of children who had been particularly well provisioned for the afterlife and who perhaps signify the ‘high status child’. These include the famous example of an infant buried in Grave III of Grave Circle A at Mycenae whose body appears to have been entirely covered with gold foil (Kostanti) and perhaps a child exceptionally buried with almost 500 beads made from marble, malachite, Spondylus shells and snail shells in the Eneolithic Sultana-Malu Roşu cemetery in Romania (Lazar et al.). In addition, an examination of burial location enabled Dawson (this volume) to identify children of higher status in later medieval English cemeteries. The ‘cherished child’ may be visible in cases where the quality and quantity of grave goods was similar to those of adults (Berseneva), or indeed at sites such as Neolithic Kadruka 23, Sudan, where the graves of younger children were better provisioned than those of adolescents and adults (Maines et al.). Even the simple investment of care in the burial of children during the Great Irish Famine, a time of mass death and extreme deprivation for thousands of people, is suggestive that these lives were respected and valued (Geber).

In some cases children were provided with seemingly inappropriate goods better suited to the adult world that might be interpreted as representing the ‘potential child’. Examples of these include two Middle Neolithic infants from France who were buried with objects that form the tool kit of experienced hunters (Le Roy). The Sintashta culture Halvay III burial of a 4-5 year old child is another potential example. The child was buried in an exceptionally large pit with a massive wooden ceiling supported by posts and had been provisioned with six ceramic
vessels, two sets of arrowheads, including some made from bronze, two bronze spearheads, a bronze battle-axe, a bronze knife and stone tools. The richness of the burial was considered to have been highly unusual, and it would have been rare for even adult warrior graves to contain this much wealth (Berseneva). Other examples can be found in Geto-Dacian Child Burials of the Second Iron Age in Romania. Grave 2, Tumulus 44, from the necropolis of Telița in Celic Dere contained the remains of an 8-9 year old child who had been buried with a curved iron knife, five bronze arrowheads, an amber bead and fragments of a pottery bowl, while a curved iron dagger with a scabbard, an iron arrowhead, a fragment from a silver earring, an iron belt buckle, a large iron clamp, a grinding stone and a fragment of bronze foil were recovered from Grave 32, the burial of a child less than seven years of age, from the Grădina Castelului necropolis in Hunedoara (Sîrbu and Dăvîncă). A particularly striking example derived from the Anglo-Saxon burial ground of Great Chesterford, England, where a 1-2 year old child (skeleton #99) was buried with a spear, knife, buckle and a bronze ring; the child, both physically and developmentally, would have been unable to wield the spear which was of normal size (Cave and Oxenham).

While burial by its very nature has ritual connotations in some cases we can find evidence of a specialised ‘ritual child’ through the nature of the burial context in cases where child burials are associated with religious sanctuaries (Kostanti, Sîrbu and Dăvîncă). In addition, evidence for the dismemberment and processing of infant bodies in Early Bronze Age Bulgarian Thrace (McSweeney and Bacvarov), has clear ritual connotations.

The ‘political child’ may be viewed in Tibbetts’ findings from Neolithic Çatalhöyük where it has been demonstrated that individuals buried within the same house, including the perinatal infants, were only minimally biologically linked. As such, it would seem that individuals were not grouped together in burial on the basis of biological relatedness but rather for practical kinship purposes that would help forge inter-group alliances and contribute to population stability. We know that living children were used as political actors in many past societies, such as the medieval Irish who practiced a system of fosterage for the purposes of creating alliances (Murphy 2015, 107-8), and it would seem that death was not perceived to be a barrier to such strategies in some past societies.

A Way Forward?
A major difficulty within bioarchaeological studies of juveniles is the variation of terminology and age categorisations that exist, making comparative studies of populations very difficult (Halcrow and Tayles 2008; Falys and Lewis 2011). This difficulty is also of relevance to the study of juvenile burial practices and in the current volume a myriad of age ranges were applied to different age categories; for example, some authors considered infants to be less than one year, others younger than two years and others three years and under. The upper end of the juvenile age could extend from fifteen up to twenty years. While all of these approaches have their merits it is clear that the creation of a standard system that applies clear terms to well defined age ranges would facilitate more effective comparative studies.

A further issue with archaeological mortuary studies as a whole, and not just in relation to juvenile burials, is the lack of clarity that can be applied to terms related to body position, such as ‘flexed’ or ‘hocker’, which can have a variety of meanings for different scholars. To facilitate comparative analysis, it is important to be specific as to what such terms mean by providing details of the degree of flexion and referring to established standards, such as those of Sprague (2005). Another potential term which can be associated with a lack of clarity is ‘intramural’ which is generally used when human burials are associated with domestic structures but, as Laneri (2011, 44) and Kostanti (this volume) have discussed, more precise terminology is needed to enable, for example, the precise relationship of the burial to the building to be determined and to facilitate an assessment of its level of visibility.

Bioarchaeologists are in unanimous agreement that individuals with expertise in the study of human skeletal remains should always be involved in the excavation of burial contexts to enable the maximum amount of information to be gained about both the deceased individual and their associated burial environment (Duday 2009, 6; Roberts 2009, 74). The work of McSweeney and Bacvarov (this volume) is a prime example of why this should be the case. Their involvement in the micro-excavation of an intact jar burial (Tell Kran 9) from Early Bronze Age Bulgarian Thrace enabled them to verify that bodies could be partially decomposed when they were placed within a jar. Furthermore, they ascertained that dismemberment and the deliberate removal of bones from infant bodies was a genuine component of the repertoire of body processing activities and not simply an artefact of taphonomy and/or curation practices.
The research of both Le Roy and Lazar et al. (this volume) utilise geospatial technologies in their analyses and they have demonstrated that GIS is a powerful platform upon which to undertake the spatial analyses of past burials. Analytical techniques are advancing all the time and future analyses of burial practices could incorporate new research that has demonstrated the ability to differentiate between live and stillborn infants (Booth et al. 2016). Dawson’s paper (this volume) clearly demonstrates the potential value of using mortuary practice as an important contextual aid to help inform the interpretation of physiological stressor markers, a process that can be complicated due to the Osteological Paradox (see Wood et al. 1992). By contextualising and integrating the data collected, both in the field and in the laboratory, it is possible to gain a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of the young in the past.

We can move beyond generating purely scientific data to gaining an understanding of key facets of past life, including the emotional attitudes that were shown towards children during life and in death, as well as their place in the social strata and the ritual activities of their societies. This volume assembles a panorama of studies about juvenile burials that enable a greater understanding to be gained about the identity of the younger members of society in the past.

**Structure of the Volume**

The volume commences with Mélie Le Roy’s paper which explores the social status of infants in Neolithic France. Using a combination of osteoarchaeological and archaeological data she reviews the nature of the burial practices afforded to infants throughout the Early, Middle and Late Neolithic. Her approach involves an investigation of mortality profiles to determine how well represented infants were in the sites of each period. The position of the body and the nature of grave goods in infant burials, as well as their location, are also considered in relation to the practices afforded to older members of society. She found that infants were generally not well represented and differences in burial practice, most notably in relation to location, were also observed across the different periods. It was concluded that infants had a particular social status within these societies. Remaining with the Neolithic, in the second paper Belinda Tibbetts presents an interpretation of the burials of neonates within the context of community, and the cultural response to infant death that is reflected in the archaeological record at Çatalhöyük in Central Anatolia. Her research demonstrates how infant burials can provide significant insights into their cultural identity in past populations. Based on bioarchaeological analysis of the skeletal remains, the burial environment and burial inclusions, it demonstrates that the youngest individuals at Çatalhöyük were recognised
as having a social identity and were provided with culturally sanctioned burial, regardless of their viability at birth.

In their paper, Emma Maines, Pascal Sellier, Philippe Chambon and Olivier Langlois provide an overview of the preliminary results of their study of the Nubian Middle Neolithic necropolis of Kadruka 23, Sudan. Excavation of this relatively undisturbed funerary mound revealed a concentration, and seemingly codified treatment, of very young individuals. The inclusion of a large proportion of juveniles is considered suggestive that the mound represented a normal demographic profile and was not reserved for burial of the elite as has been suggested by other scholars. They consider three major elements – the relative placement of the burials within the strata of the mound; the position of the body of the deceased and the nature of the associated mortuary goods – in an attempt to identify differences in the burial practices afforded to younger children and those from approximately ten to nineteen years of age.

The paper of Catalin Lazar, Ionela Craciunescu, Gabriel Vasile and Mihai Florea focuses on Eneolithic child burials in the Sultana-Malu Roșu cemetery of southeastern Romania, a burial ground they consider to be quite typical for this period in the Balkans. Their study involves an analysis of children’s burials in relation to funerary rituals, palaeodemographic data and the spatial location of the burials in the cemetery. They note that differences in the treatment of adults and children have the potential to provide insights in relation to the symbolic significance of children as well as the collective identity of the family or community. They also explore how the nature of the funerary processes afforded to children might provide an indication of the impact that death at a young age had on a community.

Jayne-Leigh Thomas explores juvenile skeletal remains and mortuary practices at the Late Chalcolithic site of Çamlıbel Tarlası in Central Anatolia. She identifies that a notable majority of the individuals interred at the site were juveniles, and age-differentiated burial practice was apparent. Infants and young children were buried in pots, while the remains of older children were interred in simple pit burials. The paucity of adult remains is interpreted as an indication that they were buried extramurally or in unexcavated areas of the region. The burial practices identified at Çamlıbel Tarlası correlate well with evidence derived from contemporary sites in the region. The paper also includes palaeopathological data that provides insight in relation to the health status of the children buried at the site.
In their paper, Kathleen Mc Sweeney and Krum Bacvarov present data derived from the analysis of over fifty infants derived from Early Bronze Age jar and pit burials from various sites in Bulgarian Thrace. Their research reveals previously unidentified mortuary practices which involved the deliberate manipulation of the infant body and it clearly demonstrates the importance of having an osteoarchaeologist involved in the excavation of such burials. They conclude that most of the babies had been in a state of partial decomposition prior to their placement in containers and that some of the bodies had been deliberately dismembered. They also consider reasons as to why it may have been necessary to process the infant dead in this manner prior to their burial.

The paper of Katerina Kostanti focuses on infants in Late Helladic burial grounds in Mycenaean Greece. Her work demonstrates how infants are under-represented in these populations and how those individuals aged less than twenty-four months of age, who have been identified, were frequently buried within domestic contexts. This finding is in contrast to the situation for older children who tended to be buried in communal burial grounds and she argues that this may be an indication that children aged over two years of age had formally entered the Mycenaean community through rites of integration and passage. Propositions are also advanced to explain why the under twos may have been included within the domestic sphere.

The Bronze Age Sintashta, Petrovka and Alakul’ cultural groups of the steppe lands of the southern Trans-Urals form the focus of the paper by Natalia Berseneva who has observed that juveniles comprise 50-80% of all burials identified to date from these cultures. She provides an overview of the burial practices afforded to children in each culture. Although variations between the groups were apparent she concludes that the place of children within the three social structures was of importance and she observes that the juvenile burial practices in each culture largely mirrored those of the adults. On the basis of the grave goods provided to the juveniles she identified that the initial age of labour and gender socialisation was approximately 3-5 years in all three cultures but differences in the age at which gender-distinctive clothing became apparent were evident across the three groups.

Nathalja Calliauw observes that juvenile burials in Bronze Age Crete have been largely ignored due to focus on socio-political organisation and a lack of appreciation of the
information that can be derived from the analysis of human remains. Bearing these limitations in mind she reviews the characteristics of juvenile burials in Pre- and Protopalatial Crete in relation to those of adult burials. She discusses the substantial variation apparent in the Bronze Age Cretan funerary landscape and observes how age-based spatial segregation is apparent in some sites but not present in others. She considers that the deposition of infant bodies within containers in recognised communal burial contexts during the Early Minoan II is suggestive they were an active part of the group and burial community. She notes how the situation changes during the Early Minoan III period, however, when the emphasis appears to shift from the differentiation of infants to one which saw the exclusion of juveniles from burial spaces. She suggests the earlier pattern may be reflective of kinship, whereas the latter situation is suggestive of an age-based social organisation.

Valeriu Sîrbu and Diana-Crina Dăvîncă undertake a review of Geto-Dacian child burials from the fifth century BC to the first century AD. They compare and contrast the nature of the remains recovered from formal burial grounds with those derived from non-funerary contexts, including fortresses, settlements, cult sites and isolated pits. In an attempt to ascertain the nature of the mortuary rituals that may have taken place after death they examine the position and condition of the skeleton as well as the nature of associated grave goods. Their research is hindered, however, as a result of the paucity of osteoarchaeological analyses to have been undertaken on the skeletal remains to date. Juvenile remains appear to be generally under-represented compared to those of adults and the remains derived from both funerary and non-funerary contexts comprise a mixture of complete and partial skeletons as well as isolated bones, thereby suggesting that a variety of mortuary rituals were applied to the bodies of children.

In their paper Christine Cave and Mark Oxenham aim to provide insights concerning the lived experience of Anglo-Saxon children and, in particular, the infants. They focus on the cemetery of Great Chesterford in England which appears to have been the final resting place of the entire community. They observe that the examination of a child’s grave enables inferences to be made about the attitudes shown by adults to the dead child; community concepts of children and childhood, as well as providing a glimpse, albeit through the distorted lens of the grave, of the life of that child. They found that, although some children were buried with exceptional grave accoutrements, they were generally supplied with fewer, and less valuable items than adults. They make the important point that young children,
especially infants, have little personal material culture since they are fed by their mothers, and have no need of showy adornments, and warn that the relative absence of grave goods is not necessary a sign that their deaths were without meaning or that the child was not missed.

Jane Jark Jensen’s paper presents an overview of the information derived from juvenile burials in the later medieval churchyard of St Clemens in Copenhagen, Denmark, which was used for burial by the lower classes of society. She observed a number of differences in relation to the burial practices afforded to children when compared to adults. Children were more likely to be interred in atypical positions, some of which are suggestive of tenderness, as well as be buried together with the remains of other children in multiple graves. Some of their burials include stones, or other deliberately placed items, that may have had apotropaic purposes. These features, in addition to the inclusion of the remains of unbaptised infants within the burial ground, led her to suggest that particular affection was being shown towards the young. She concludes that the medieval Copenhageners practiced a degree of individuality in relation to the funerary practices afforded to children.

The presence of childhood stress markers (dental enamel hypoplasia, cribra orbitalia and periostitis) in relation to social status is explored in Heidi Dawson’s paper. She considers the evidence from three medieval (AD 1086-1540) English priory burial grounds – St Peter and Paul, Taunton; St Oswald, Gloucester and St Gregory, Canterbury. She ascribes levels of social status to different geographical areas of each burial ground, with burials within church buildings and associated with coffins, for example, representing individuals of higher status. She suggests that it may be necessary to interpret the prevalence of stress indicators evident in adults and children separately. Her study suggests that adults without stress lesions may have avoided such insults in childhood, possibly due to their higher status. Conversely, children with stress indicators present may have survived the initial physiological stress even though they still died young. The children whose remains displayed no evidence for physiological stress may be the non-survivors of any initial stress insult. Contrary to previous research, she concludes that the remains of advantaged medieval children may be more likely to display stress indicators.

In her paper Eileen Murphy examines the characteristics of the juvenile burials excavated at the later medieval burial ground of Ballyhanna, Co. Donegal, Ireland. She observes that while the majority of juvenile burials conform to typical Christian burial practices subtle variations
in relation to orientation, position of the body and inclusion of grave goods were evident. Each of these aspects was examined in a systematic manner in relation to age-at-death to see if children of different ages were more likely to be afforded atypical burial practices. The implications of the findings in relation to the agency of the families of the dead children, as well as to the nature of the management of the burial ground by Church authorities, were considered. She observes that positioning of the body in a natural sleeping position seems to have been considered particularly appropriate for babies and young children, while the inclusion of various objects and furnishings with links to the domestic sphere, and a potentially protective function, was considered to be a further sign of tenderness. She concludes that the occurrence of such atypical features is a reflection of individuality in relation to the funerary practices of these later medieval people.

The final paper of the volume moves into the nineteenth century when Jonny Geber explores the particularly devastating impact that The Great Famine had on the children living in Ireland at that time. Hundreds of thousands of children became institutionalised in the union workhouses, such as the Kilkenny Union Workhouse, where excavation of an intramural Famine-period burial ground has provided major insights in relation to the plight of children. He discusses how over half of the individuals buried here were aged less than fifteen years when they died. He presents an overview of the archaeological evidence which reveals that burials were undertaken in an organised and structured manner, and that children were treated equally to adults in death. Despite the crisis with its severe economic difficulties, workhouse officials did their best to ensure the dead were treated with respect and buried with care. Geber considers that the Kilkenny workhouse mass burial ground, with its high proportion of children, typifies the reality of how complete families were destroyed and social bonds severed during the Famine. He poignantly notes that many of the children would have been orphans who had to endure the Famine and enter the workhouse on their own. Some fifteen years after the Famine had ended the workhouse Guardians covered the burial ground with a thick layer of soil and he suggests this may be indicative of a deliberate intention to obliterate the painful Famine years. Eventually the burial ground became lost to local memory.

The papers included within the pages of this volume have employed a range of methodological approaches but all have a similar objective in mind, namely to understand how children were treated in death by different cultures in the past; to gain insights concerning the roles of children of different ages in their respective societies and to find
evidence of the nature of past adult-child relationships and interactions. We hope this volume will provide a positive contribution to this fascinating field of research as it continues to advance.

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