

The book consists of 15 chapters (excluding the introduction) chronologically ranged from Early Prehistory to Antiquity. Despite this wide coverage, most of the contributions focus on Later Prehistory, from Bronze to Iron Age (chapters 5-12), although there are also two chapters dedicated to Neolithic and Copper Age (chapters 3-4) and four to Antiquity (chapters 13-16). Finally, chapter 2, which is based on ethnoarchaeological research can be applied to any period of Prehistory. The extensive geographical frame, which, as indicated by the title, covers not only Europe but also the Near East, is one of the strengths of this volume. Even though the works are not homogeneously distributed and there is a clear preference for Central and Eastern Europe, it is enriching to get to know different areas other than Great Britain and Scandinavia, where the research on the Archaeology of childhood arose and developed. Notwithstanding the substantial variability between themes, most of the chapters follow the same methodology, the bioarchaeological (osteological and archaeological) analysis of child graves, with also similar objectives, detecting patterns related to developmental stages. This is extremely useful as it enables the comparison between the results obtained in different geographical areas and chronological periods. Furthermore, another strong point of this book is the impressive number of individuals sampled that reaches almost 1000 non-adults.

About a third of the contributors to this volume are established researchers in the field, but almost two thirds have only occasionally participated in research about childhood in the past. Although at first this may appear to be a disadvantage, these writers from outside the field bring fresh perspectives and points of view to the discussed theme. A clear example is chapter 7 by Eszter Melis et al., one of the most complete contributions of the book. The authors manage to distinguish up to three quite differentiable stages of childhood through the analysis of almost 200 child graves from Early and Middle Bronze age Hungary. The scarcity of pictures is perhaps one of the weaknesses of this and the rest of the chapters. It is unfortunate that despite the great number of impressive child graves described throughout the volume, they are only illustrated in black and white photographs (an average of four figures/chapter). Especially striking is the absence of pictures in chapter 3, where child tombs from

the famous cemeteries of Varna and Durankulac (Bulgaria) are analysed.

Several other chapters deserve mention. Chapters 5, 15 and 16 are particularly relevant because they focus on children under 1 year old. This age group, which is extremely underrepresented in most prehistoric and late antiquity cemeteries, deserves special attention. Chapter 5 focuses on foetuses and new-borns from the Únětice Culture (Czech Republic and Slovakia) and apart from verifying their general underrepresentation, their authors promote reviewing osteological collections from old excavations since they have shown that this low representation may be due to methodological biases. In chapter 15, Alexandra Syrogianni investigates social consideration of mothers and new-borns and care practices in Ancient Greece through the study of classical texts and artistic representations.

Although the four chapters covering Antiquity may seem deviated from the rest of the book, there is a clear sense of strong editorial direction, which makes those chapters extremely valuable. Undoubtedly, methodologies used for historical times are quite different to those of Prehistory, but in this monograph the access to written sources and artistic representations enables the support of some of the results obtained through the analyses of prehistoric graves. For example, chapter 16 explores the first days of a new-born in Ancient Rome through descriptions that appear in classical texts. This research provides interesting clues to determine when children would begin to be considered as people by their communities.

Even though the main themes of this volume are age and abilities, these categories cannot be understood without taking into account the gender. In this sense, several chapters include this variable in their studies, for example chapter 6, where Katharina Rebay-Salisbury investigates at what age gender differentiations would begin in a Middle Bronze Age site of Lower Austria. In chapter 4, Daniela Kern criticizes gender assignments based on grave goods typologies or the body position, very common in studies of central European sites. This chapter is particularly attractive since it questions the concept of status inheritance, repeatedly used by most of the researchers when important grave goods appear in child graves. Daniela Kern states the key role that boys and girls would have within their communities,

which would make them worthy of being buried with valuable objects.

Since there are so many stimulating results that appear throughout the book, and considering that some social age categories have been noticed in several chapters, the book would have benefited from a concluding chapter that recapitulates the common points achieved as well as future directions. In particular, since one of the objectives of the original session was to reach a general agreement on the terminologies and conventions used to refer to age groups, some summary tables would have been very useful. Indeed, the introduction of the two editors could also work as a closing chapter as, among other things, it compiles the main age classes used by researchers from different disciplines on which archaeology relies.

In conclusion, the volume represents a blunt first step in the direction of a multidis-

ciplinary approach to age categories that takes into account the diversity between different human groups. At the same time this book makes it clear that this line of research is a long way from being closed and raises several new and challenging horizons. For example, future works that incorporate archaeometric data, such as Sr analysis to track adolescent's mobility or diet isotopes to detect eventual nutrition differences in each age group could shed some new light. Meanwhile, this book is the most up-to-date and complete work that will certainly satisfy the interest, not only of specialists on childhood in the past, but also researchers involved in the study of early societies.

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