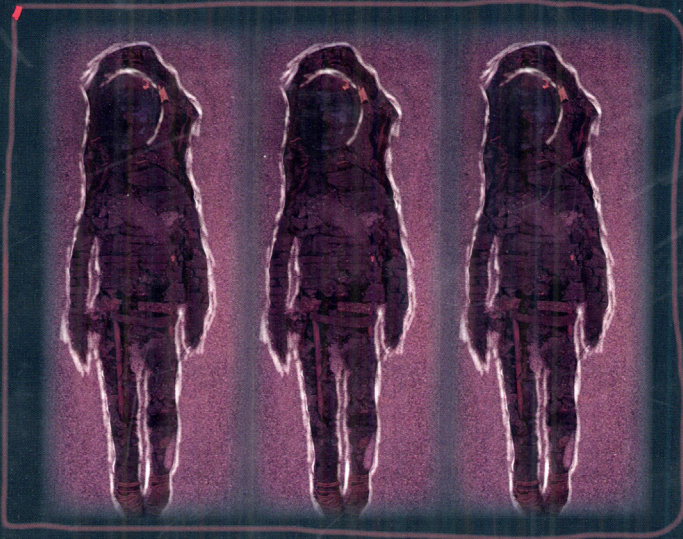


TRACING CHILDHOOD

Bioarchaeological Investigations
of Early Lives in Antiquity



Edited by Jennifer L. Thompson

Marta P. Alfonso-Durruty

and John J. Crandall

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"A richly integrative, masterful biocultural approach to childhood in the past, in which social science theory and historical, archaeological, and ethnographic details converse with quantitative paleopathology and demography. These studies are an excellent inauguration of a field of study concerned with humanizing the skeletons of a universally vulnerable, resilient, and transcendent class of people."—Michael Blakey, The College of William and Mary

"A refreshing and well-timed volume. Combines archaeological, historical, social, and paleopathological evidence and demonstrates the merits of this approach in defining the lives of children in the past."—Mary E. Lewis, author of *The Bioarchaeology of Children*

"Integrates cultural and biological information to interpret the lived experiences of children. The cross-cultural and temporal depth of the chapters in this volume contribute significantly to understanding children and their contribution to past societies."—Brenda Baker, coauthor of *The Osteology of Infants and Children*

Bioarchaeological studies of children have, until recently, centered on population data-driven topics like mortality rates and growth and morbidity patterns. This volume examines emerging issues in childhood studies, looking at historic and prehistoric contexts and framing questions about the nature and quality of children's lives. How did they develop their social identity? Were they economic actors in early civilizations? Does their health reflect that of the larger community?

Children's lives differ significantly from those of adults due to disparate social identities and variable growth needs. Comparing field research from a variety of sites across Europe and the Americas, the contributors to this volume demonstrate that children not only have unique experiences but also share, cross-culturally, in daily struggles. In some of the cases presented, this is the first time that child remains have been examined in any detail, making *Tracing Childhood* an essential resource for scholars and researchers in this growing field.

Jennifer L. Thompson is an independent scholar and the coeditor of *Patterns of Growth and Development in the Genus Homo*. **Marta P. Alfonso-Durruty** is assistant professor of biological anthropology at Kansas State University. **John J. Crandall** is a PhD student in anthropology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

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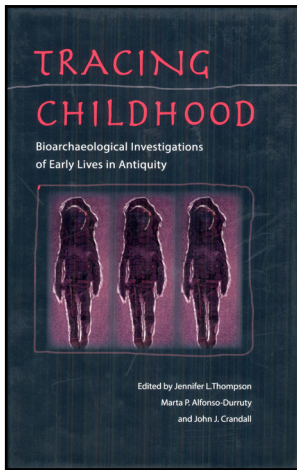
Front: Bandaged mummy, infant, undetermined sex (Morro-1 Site).

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Tracing Childhood: Bioarchaeological Investigations of Early Lives in Antiquity

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Reviewed by Aimée Carbaugh, Illinois State Archaeological Survey, Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

The recovery of subadult remains is highly variable within the archaeological record. Too often they are missing or poorly preserved due to either cultural practices or taphonomic conditions. When we are presented with the remains of subadults, what do we do? How can subadults add to our analysis, besides just rounding out our demographic table?

Originating from a panel at the American Anthropological Association meetings, this edited volume seeks to address these questions by focusing on current research being done on the bioarchaeology of children. A key goal of this volume by Thompson, Alfonso-Durruty, and Crandall is to reevaluate the traditional perspective of children as passive members of their society. Instead, children should be viewed as active participants with the ability to shape the world around them. The analysis of subadults will only enrich our understanding of societies in the past.

The book is divided into four parts, along with an introduction and conclusion. The introduction provides a brief discussion of children and childhood as a unique phase of life, before clearly stating the intentions of the volume: to “integrate social theory, as well as historic, ethnographic, bioarchaeological, and archaeological data to...address questions regarding the role of children in society, their identities, and their relationships and engagement within their communities and environment” (p. 3, 5).

Part I provides examples of four studies that focus on the relationship between age, physical or mental attributes, and mortuary practices. **Chapter 1** presents the analysis of three subadults between 6 and 18 years old who show evidence of trauma paired with early suture closure, suggestive of a genetic condition. These individuals are from the Middle to Late Woodland Pete Klunk mound group and the Late Woodland Koster mound group in west-central Illinois. Cook, Thompson, and Rollins point out that the age at death for these individuals falls within the lowest mortality age category, suggesting that their deaths could have arisen, in part at least, to a difficulty in performing tasks necessary for survival, such as obtaining food, or as a result of trauma, whether accidental or from interpersonal violence. In **Chapter 2**, Crandall and Thompson discuss the lives of ritually sacrificed infants interred in La Cueva de Los Muertos in Durango, Mexico during the Loma San Gabriel phase (A.D. 660–1430). The authors interpreted this age bias as a community preference for choosing the youngest and sickest subadults for sacrifice since they were viewed as being closer to the ancestors. The mortuary treatment of infants from Chinchorro communities,

an early Andean society, is discussed in **Chapter 3**. Their complex artificial mummification process, includes defleshing the remains and then reassembling the individual using items such as mud, fur, and twigs. Standen, Arriaza, and Santoro propose that this time-consuming mortuary practice reflects these individuals' important social status and symbolic role within society. **Chapter 4** explains the application of the term "other" to medieval infant burials recovered from tombs beneath the floor of the church at Torre de Palma. Holt and colleagues conclude that these young individuals were interred away from the rest of the cemetery population because they died before all the rites of the church could be bestowed and therefore were not considered by the church to be complete members of the community.

Part II is comprised of three chapters focused on the oppression of children in the past and how their lives were impacted. Mays begins this section by talking about infanticide, homicide, and sacrifice in **Chapter 5**. He gives an overview of each, discussing when these three acts of violence may take place, for what reasons, and how this is evident in the bioarchaeological record. In **Chapter 6**, Gilmore and Halcrow warn against sensationalism on the subject of infanticide, sometimes at odds with Mays' results from the previous chapter. They ask that researchers consider the depositional and site context, the culture, and any alternative explanations before concluding a cluster of infant remains represent infanticide. **Chapter 7** confronts the difficulties faced by children living in urban and industrialized areas through the identification of rickets. Skeletal remains from the Spring Street Presbyterian Church display a prevalence of rickets, particularly among subadults, indicating poor health. Ellis cites both the environment and a poor diet as culprits, along with the influence of structural institutions, such as the church.

Part III contains three chapters addressing the impact of economic systems on the lives of children. In **Chapter 8**, Barrett studies early-19th-century indenture documents from Virginia and late-17th to late-18th-century skeletal remains from the New York African Burial Ground in New York to illustrate how the concept of childhood, as a period of innocence and nurturing, was not universal, but rather was class, race, and gender dependent. Enslaved children in Virginia and New York were considered a necessary part of the labor force to ensure the survival of the colonies and therefore did not experience childhood. In **Chapter 9**, Alfonso-Durruty and Thompson explain how children from the prehistoric Punta Teatinos site in Chile were forced to take on the responsibilities of adults at an early age due to the demands of a foraging-based subsistence strategy. This hardship appears in the skeletal remains in the form of a discontinuity between the dental and skeletal age indicators, stunted long bone growth, trauma, and pathologies. **Chapter 10** explores the lives of children from subsistence-farming societies in the Black Mesa area of the Southwest. Using porotic hyperostosis and lower long bone periosteal reactions, Martin, Thompson, and Crandall found biological stress to be common while evidence of more severe infections was minimal. Infants were the most affected age group, which the authors suggest could be due to the poor health of their mothers.

The volume concludes (Part IV) with two chapters on the bioarchaeological evidence for the cultural or social shift from child to adult. Palkovich explores this transition in **Chapter 11** through the concept of “personhood” in Ancestral Puebloan societies in the Southwest. Puebloan children are considered to be non-persons because although they have an earthly form, their spirit still exists within the underworld. For this reason they are vulnerable to the only other non-persons in society: witches. Palkovich cites this cultural belief as a possible reason for the killing and unceremonious disposal of three young children at Arroyo Hondo Pueblo. **Chapter 12** moves to the south-central Andes where Middle Horizon Tiwanaku (c. AD 500–1150) cultural practices included cranial modification. Blom and Knudson consider the significance of the presence (and in particular the absence) of this form of cultural modification, offering several possible interpretations of the practice.

Finally, in the volume’s conclusion, the editors reemphasize their thesis that the lives and deaths of subadults are shaped by both biological processes and cultural beliefs; that subadults need to be studied; and that multiple lines of evidence should be used. Thompson, Alfonso-Durruty, and Crandall have compiled a wealth of current research on what childhood meant and looked like across a range of cultures and time periods. They have proven the value of approaching bioarchaeological research from archaeological, ethnographic, historical, and theoretical directions. This volume provides examples of how to better interpret the lives of adults and subadults alike. *Tracing Childhood* will foster a dialogue among scholars on research strategies that combine archaeological, anthropological, and historical information to better interpret the lives of children in the past.