

## Editorial

In the recent few decades archaeology has begun to pay special attention to children's lives and their impact on the past cultures. This topic became important after it had been discovered that there were some groups in the archaeological narratives which were almost invisible or treated as if they had no influence on history. Children were one of them.

Childhood is a time of rapid biological growth and cultural development. But it is not an easy thing to be a child. At the beginning of their lives children are completely dependent on their caregivers. They need strength to learn how to walk, speak, communicate, and live in society. They are also in danger of catching one of the millions of germs just waiting for a weakness of their immune system. We can see children as small creatures who fight their own small battles for their own small lives and are unable to take a serious part in the big history. Is this the reason why they seem to have been hardly visible in the past archaeological studies?

The increased interest in this period of human life and in children as a social group is new and is growing slowly. In fact, earlier on children were not entirely invisible since children's graves from many periods were found and analysed, yet at that time children were assigned passive roles in the stories told about the past societies and human lives. A child in archaeology was seen as an innocent, defenceless and dependent being. It was believed that the issue of children and childhood could not provide any interesting research questions. The aim of the first studies investigating the subject of children was to understand their visibility in the archaeological contexts and try to produce some general cross-cultural remarks about children's engagement in culture.

Since then, a new sub-discipline of archaeology has emerged. The archaeology of childhood is now enjoying unflagging popularity. The researchers are trying to make up for the wasted time in their search for the children's place and role in the past social structures. This has resulted in the continual growth the material database and development of the theoretical considerations giving the rhythm to these studies.

The idea to dedicate this volume of *Archaeologia Polona* to childhood archaeology was a result of the last few years' cooperation of archaeologists from the central-eastern European countries, interested in this topic. The increasing number of formal, conference, and workshop meetings, generated many new side-ideas about children and the archaeological investigations concerning them. This is why the range of the

submitted papers is so broad. We hope this issue of *Archaeologia Polona* will become another important contribution to the topic which still needs more attention if a broader view on the past societies is to be obtained.

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