

Play Time or Work Time: Identifying Child Crafters in the Bronze Age Aegean

Childhood is a foundational stage in life where an individual learns what it means to be a member of a community and how they are expected to act. However, this life stage has, until very recently, been ignored by those studying ancient cultures, especially in archaeology. In the past few decades, more work has been dedicated to searching for children and childhood in the archaeological record (e.g., Derricourt 2018, Langdon 2013, Moore and Scott 1997, and Smith 2008). However, the archaeology of the Bronze Age Aegean is especially lagging behind when it comes to investigating children, childhood, and the possibilities of children as craft producers and as participants in the *chaîne opératoire* for a craft.

In this paper, I build on recent analyses of apprenticeship and craft production to consider if and how it is possible to reckon with children as craft producers in the Bronze Age. To do so, I explore the idea of children as learners and the different environments in which learning takes place, consider the differences between children and novices when crafting, present common methods of investigating crafting children in archaeology and anthropology, and I explore the Bronze Age textual and artistic evidence of children crafters. Lastly, I discuss how a few Bronze Age scholars and recent publications have, and have not, addressed child crafters and suggest possible avenues for how Aegean Bronze Age archaeologists should proceed from here.

This analysis is especially relevant for scholars who work on topics such as the economy, crafting, craftspeople, and specialization in the Bronze Age, because searching for the activities of children can propel these studies forward and allow for more nuanced understandings of Bronze Age crafting. Further, revealing the actions of children and their participation in craft production can help scholars better understand ancient economic and social systems,

including the division of labor, the relationship between household and society, systems of learning, and the social and practical transfer of knowledge between generations.

Bibliography

Derricourt, R. 2018. *Unearthing Childhood: Young Lives in Prehistory*. Manchester University Press.

Langdon, S. 2013. "Children as Learners and Producers in Early Greece." In Grubbs, J. E. and Parkin, T. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*. Oxford University Press.

Moore, J. and Scott, E. (eds.) 1997. *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology*. London: Leicester University Press.

Smith, P. E. 2008. "Children and Ceramic Innovation: A Study in the Archaeology of Children." *Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association*, 15:1. Pp. 65-76.