Childhood in Mesopotamian texts and archaeology: finding a common ground?

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Abstract

Children in antiquity, having long been rather overlooked in modern scholarship, rightly received increased attention by archaeologists, historians and philologists in recent years. Despite few exceptions, however, most studies have not addressed how to deal with the divide between archaeological and textual data. This is also true for ancient Mesopotamia, where the separation of Assyriology and Near Eastern Archaeology has created reluctance in integrating both types of sources. While combined approaches have been successfully applied to specific topics in recent years (e.g. Neo-Assyrian expansion, climate change), childhood and other aspects of social history generally lack such treatments.

In this paper, I review different types of data available for studying children in the Old Babylonian period (2000-1600 BC) and I outline opportunities and challenges in integrating material culture and texts by discussing two thematic case studies, infant mortality and child socialisation.

Keywords: childhood studies, identity, material culture studies, Mesopotamia, Assyriology and Near Eastern Archaeology.

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Childhood in Mesopotamian texts and archaeology: finding a common ground?[1]

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Introduction

The material remains of ancient Mesopotamian societies offer archaeologists and philologists plenty of material to reconstruct various aspects of ancient social, legal and economic life. Myriads of tablets containing many types of information have been discovered, while excavations have unearthed past palaces, temples and residential areas. The combination of the different sources for study, i.e. of archaeology and texts, however, often presents methodological problems that are difficult to overcome. This is especially true for the study of social history, in my case the study of childhood in the Old Babylonian period.

In this paper, I will argue that an investigation deploying both kinds of data is possible, and beneficial, for certain research questions, although the variable nature and quality of the archaeological data restricts the number of questions that can be approached from both angles. Therefore, I will provide two case studies in which a joint investigation can prove fruitful and I will outline some of the challenges in combining archaeology and texts.

Old Babylonian history and society

The Old Babylonian period, usually defined as the period between 2000 and 1600 BC in southern Iraq, witnessed an unstable political climate, with the dynasties of Isin and Larsa competing for hegemony before the eventual ascendancy of the rulers of Babylon, the most famous of these being Hammurapi. Even the dynasty of Babylon, however, could not control the extensive territory it initially conquered, and quickly lost economic (Yoffee 1977) and eventually political control over the area, while in the final part of the period whole regions in the South, including Nippur, were under the control of the still poorly-documented Sealand Dynasty (Dalley 2009). Not only are these historical events and processes well documented (Charpin 2004), but we also have a fairly good idea of how society was organised, at least for the urban/upper class who left behind written documents, such as the textual sources which tell us about taxation, prices and social institutions, e.g. the *nadītu*-priestesses (Stone 1982, Harris 1964).

However, many themes still require clarification, such as the role of children in society (Garroway 2014) and if we can combine the observations from textual sources with archaeological discoveries in the extensive residential areas dating to the Old Babylonian period, e.g. Areas TA and TB at Nippur (McCown and Haines 1967) and Areas EM and AH at Ur (Woolley and Mallowan 1976). The prime example of combining archaeology and text is Elizabeth Stone's (Stone 1989) study on Areas TA and TB in Nippur, in which she matches architectural remains with the information on inhabitants recorded on cuneiform tablets found within the structures (but see also Charpin, 1986 on Ur). Although many issues and problems remain open for debate, e.g. the function of specific rooms and houses (see reviews by Postgate (1990) and Charpin (1989)), Stone most importantly highlighted how a social phenomenon, namely inheritance and division of property, can be illuminated from both sides, archaeology and texts. A promising study directly related to children is Garroway's (2014) treatment of children and their relationship to Ancient Near Eastern households, which draws on material from Mesopotamia in the 2nd millennium BC, the Bible and archaeological remains from the 1st millennium BC Levant. Garroway's study touches upon several methodological considerations, which could not be fully developed due to the scope of her study.

In the following, after outlining some challenges which arise in the study of childhood, I will present two case studies to highlight how a combination of archaeology and texts yields the opportunity to shed light on themes underrepresented in texts due to the biases (function, parties involved, etc.) that affect the latter.

Age groups and social categories

The challenges facing the study of childhood in the Old Babylonian period start with ancient terminology. Scholars of different disciplines have argued that our modern concepts of "childhood" are social constructs and that pre-modern societies perceived young individuals in different ways[2] which could be reflected in the choice of terminology (Heywood 2001, 11-12). It is no secret that Mesopotamians rarely count, or record, an individual's age in years (e.g. Livingstone 2007, 9). Exceptions are Nabonidus' mother, Adad-guppi, who claimed to have been 104 years old and children who were only a few years old (ibid.). While in the Middle Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian periods, the "age" of children could be defined by their height (in cubits, see Brinkman 1982, Radner 1997), for the Old Babylonian period the only means of identifying children in letters and legal documents are terms that could mean "child", in that period derivatives from the verb *ṣeḫēru* "to be small", such as *ṣuḫāru*, *ṣeḫru*, and the female terms *ṣuḫārtu* and *ṣeḫertu*. Several scholars have noted, however, that these terms not only describe young individuals, but can also describe "servants" independent of age (Wilcke 1985, 216, Harris 2000, 17).

Based on my analysis of more than 250 attestations of *ṣuḫāru* that I collected from legal and epistolary sources, carried out as part of my PhD, I argue that these seemingly

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[2] Recent scholarship thus modifies Ariès' (1962) argument that "childhood" did not exist in pre-modern times by stating that it was different in nature and thus difficult to identify.

deviant meanings can be reconciled if we view *ṣuḫāru* as indicating lack of seniority, in a given economic or family household, rather than strictly signifying youth[3]. Although seniority and age are closely interlinked, one could be considered more junior than someone of lesser age, depending on factors independent of age, e.g. one's profession, marital status, experience and skill. This is comparable to terminology in other ancient and modern languages, such as the uses of *garçon* in French (Finet 1972), *pais* in ancient Greek (Golden 1985) or even modern uses of boy (e.g. the lift boy)[4]. This conclusion, however, also implies that *ṣuḫāru*, and probably other derivatives of *ṣeḫēru*, too, are not clear indicators that the individual described as such is a young individual and only the context can reveal that, e.g. when it is paired with DUMU.GABA "unweaned child" (see ARM 26/1 221 below), which is not given in all uses of the words.

The methodological problems relating to age groups and social categories are exacerbated when trying to match categories given in texts with the skeletal remains from child burials. When I reviewed a number of excavation reports and their documentation of graves (not just restricted to the OB period), comparison between the different categories used was extremely difficult.

Firstly, for most of the excavation history in Iraq, variation in human skeletal remains played a minor role for the research questions asked and accordingly was not necessarily been documented with much detail. This is especially true for early excavations at Ur, Nippur and Sippar.

The excavations at Isin (1973-1989) can serve as a more recent example of how an increasing interest in the close analysis of skeletal remains over time results in a better documentation thereof. The first three seasons at Isin had to operate without an "anthropologist" considering the graves (Ziegelmayer 1981, 103), whose skeletons were of poor preservation, resulting in minimal information about age, the only two instances being "Jüngling" and "Säugling", although neither category has been defined in a manner suitable for comparison with other sites. For seasons 4-6, skeletal remains were sent to an anthropologist in Germany who, despite deploring the increased deterioration of the material during transport, managed to provide more detailed information, including absolute age estimates (Ziegelmayer 1981). Only in seasons 7-8 (Ziegelmayer 1987) and 11 (Hrouda 1992) was the anthropologist present on site and the documentation and identification of the skeletal remains is visibly more detailed than in the previous two publications.

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[3] Evans (1958, 9) argued for the related term *ṣeḫru* that "the person described *ṣiḫrum* was not merely young, but incapable of protecting his own interests on the one hand, or of undertaking the rights and responsibilities of a full member of society upon the other. While this was the consequence of his tender years, it is important to note that it was not simple youth which was in question, but legal minority; in Babylonia a person remained young for many years after attaining his majority". I will argue that legal minority was a consequence of a lack of seniority rather than the core criterion for being a *ṣuḫāru* or *ṣeḫru*, as presented by Evans.

[4] A similar phenomenon has also been observed for medieval sources: "Medieval sources were often vague when it came to estimating ages, and caught by the ambiguities surrounding language in this area. In the same way as "boy" used to be applied to an adult slave in the United States, or garcon to a mature server in a French café, so words for "child", such as *puer*, *kneht*, *fante*, *vaslet* or *enfes*, often drifted to indicate dependence or servility. Hence they too might apply to adults as well as to young people" (Heywood 2001, 17)

Secondly, even if well documented, different excavations use different age group categories and definitions for sub-adult individuals (McMahon and Stone 2013, 87). Many of the Old Babylonian skeletal remains are poorly described due to the date of the excavations. Woolley and Mallowan's report on OB Ur (1976) does not give any definition of their categories "infant", "child" and "adult". Furthermore, Frank (2008, 232) noted the complete absence of "adolescent" from their terminology, which can be found, however, in the documentation of the Nippur graves (McCown and Haines 1967, 117-144). Even if the Ur publication contained a category "adolescent", does this modern classification reflect any ancient social category? If we follow McMahon and Stone's (2013) definition, even the "older children" category, admittedly for a 4th millennium BC context, ends with at 10 years. At Khafajah, however, grave 2 is described as a "simple burial of a child", which is then further specified as a 12-14 year old individual (Delougaz, Hill, and Lloyd 1967, 60), whereas at Isin the skeleton in grave 113 is described as "juvenil, ca. 17-18 Jahre" (Ziegelmayer 1987, 124). Considering that many graves from the Old Babylonian period come from the excavations at Nippur and Ur with undefined age categories, it is very difficult to correlate distinctions between age groups in burials with potential sub-groups in texts.

Despite these terminological problems and the haphazard situation surrounding reconstructing ancient social categories, I nevertheless present two distinct cases where the combination of both data can still be fruitful: infant mortality on the one hand and how children are raised on the other hand.

Case Study 1: Child burials[5]

Even though a nuanced sub-division of age groups among the skeletal remains is rarely possible, we can make one general observation: child burials testify to a very high rate of child mortality in Mesopotamian society. While there is sometimes the option to compare the number of intramural child burials with estimates of a residential structure's population size (Frank 2008, 250), the absolute number of child burials indicates that infant and child death were common experiences in ancient Mesopotamia. Here the archaeology complements the textual record, which only rarely reports on children's deaths. Here are the most prominent examples, representing both unnatural and possibly natural death, which each have been discussed in various contexts by different scholars (e.g. Finet 1972, Ziegler 1997). All these instances are of exceptional nature, whether because of the status of the child involved (king's daughter, example 1) or the mode of death (examples 2 and 3):

(1)   *ana dāriš-lībūr qibīma umma ušarreš-ḫetil mārka-ma* [*aššum* MUNUS.TUR *š*]*a munusbēltim* [*immaḫê*]*m* [*mārat b*]*ēlīya* [*ul ibluṭ*] [*inanna i*]*mt*[*ūt*] [U₄.]x.KAM *waldat* [x] x x x [*ūmīšu-m*]*a* ᵈ*irra-gāmil* [*imma*]*ḫêm* [*umma š*]*ū-ma* [*ul iball*]*uṭ* [*lāma šar*]*rum ana mari*ᵏⁱ [*i*]*kaššadam kīma* MUNUS.TUR *šī mītat qibīšumma*

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[5] An article published after this manuscript has been submitted (Valk 2016) discusses material and textual evidence of infant loss in Ancient Mesopotamia as well and provides an extensive treatment of the topic.

lū īde [*a*]*ssurri ana mari*ki *ina erēbīšu mūt* MUNUS.TUR *šâti šarrum išemmêma iṣabb*[*at*] *ītaššuša*[*m*]

"Speak to Dāriš-lībūr, thus (says) Ušarreš-ḫetil: concerning the MUNUS.TUR of the lady, she became hysteric. The daughter of my lord did not get well. Now she is dead. She was born on the X day […]. On that day, Irra-gāmil became hysteric; thus he (said): "She will not live. Before the king reaches Mari, tell him that that MUNUS.TUR is dead, and may he know; perhaps if the king were not to hear about the death of that MUNUS.TUR until he entered Mari, he would be (too) distressed."

(ARM 26/1 221, after Archibab)

(2)   *ana bēlīya* [*q*]*ibīma* [*um*]*ma baḫdī-līm* [*wa*]*radkama* [1 DU]MU.GABA (DUMU.GABA) *ša šaddagdêm waldu* [*ina*] *meḫrêt sakkanim labīrim* [*ša*] *elēnu piātim šapiltim* [*ina ṭ*]*ēh* I₇.DA *nadīma* LU₂.TUR *šū* [*ina q*]*ablīšu nakisma* [*išt*]*u irtīšu ana qaqqadīšu šakin* [*bal*]*u qaqqadīšu adi šepīšu* [*laššu*] *lū zikar* [*lū si*]*nniš mannum* [*lū īd*]*e ištu qablītīš*[*u*] [*adi ša*]*pliš ul ibašši*

"Speak to my lord, thus (says) Baḫdī-Līm, your servant: one DUMU.GABA, that was born (in) the previous year, lay in front of the Old Palace, which (is located in) above the lower region, in proximity to the canal. This LU2.TUR has been cut in the middle. It was established from the breast to the head, (but) without its head. It did not exist to the feet. Was it male, was it a female? Who may know? (Because) from his middle downwards (lit. until downwards), he did not exist (anymore)"

(ARM 6 43, after Archibab)

(3)   *u* UR.MAḪ *akkilum ša ištu* ITI.4.KAM *ina ḫalṣim udappiru ištu* ITI.1.KAM *ana halṣim imqutma* 4 [T]UR.MEŠ *idūk*

"And a lion, (man-)eating, which has been chased away from the district 4 months ago (lit. from 4 months), he has return jumped (?) and he has killed 4 TUR"

(ARM 14 2, after Archibab)

Furthermore, the incantations and amulets against the demon Lamaštu, associated with (fatal) childhood illness, testify to a common fear of child death and the society's need to counteract this, seemingly supernatural, threat (Farber 2014, Wiggermann 2000). The following Old Babylonian incantation illustrates vividly the hatred projected onto Lamaštu for the death and suffering she brings among infants and their families[6]:

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[6] Normalisation and translation are taken from Farber's edition.

Anum ibnīši Ea urabbīši
panī kalbatim išīmši Enlil
īṣat rittīn ar(a)kat?
ubānātim ṣuprātim
arrakat amāša e"ēlā
bāb bīti irrub [...]ti
iḫallup ṣērāni iḫlup ṣerram ītamar LU₂.TUR
ina imšīšu adi sebî<šu> iṣbassu
usḫī ṣuprīki
rummī īdīki
lāma ikšudakki
apkallam šipir Ea qardu
rapaški ṣerrum puttâ dalātum
alkīma atallakī ina ṣēri
epram pīki
tarbu'am panīki
sahlê daqqātim
umallû īnīki
utammīki māmīt Ea
lū tattal(la)ki

"Anu begot her, Ea raised her,
Enlil fitted her with a dog's face.
She has hardly any palms
(but) long fingers,
(and) very long claws,
her elbows are "binders demons".
She enters the door of the house[7], [...]
slithers in like a snake.
After slithering in by the pivot, she saw the LU₂.TUR,
she grabbed him at his belly seven times.
Pull out your claws,
loosen (the grip of) your arms,
before a valiant wizard with regard to Ea's craft will overcome you!
The pivot is wide (enough) for you, the doors are wide open!
Go and roam about in the wilderness!
(I swear that) I will fill your mouth with dust,
your face with drifting sand, your eyes with tiny cress (seeds)!
I herewith conjure you by the curse of Ea:
Be gone!"

(OB2 in Farber 2014, 280-281)

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[7] Farber has "She enters the house through the door". Here, a more literal translation is favoured.

The usual silence of textual sources concerning child death could be explained if we assume that the death of one's infant was usually only thematised within one's own household and thus covered in oral communication, of which we have no record, and was only rarely dealt with in written form. In that case, it still remains unclear whether this was considered a private matter that need not, or must not, be thematised outside one's household. The archaeological remains, however, remind us that child mortality was high and that the death of infants and younger children must have been an unfortunately common experience and a constant fear[8].

Case Study 2: How to raise a child?

The most frequently discussed aspect of childhood in the Old Babylonian period is scribal education[9]. While studies of this topic yield valuable insights into the methods of socialisation and education in the Old Babylonian period, they only do so for a very small segment of society. Scribal schooling was a phenomenon reserved for the upper portion of society and the textual sources remain silent about the ways in which the largest proportion of society, non-members of the elite, raised and educated their children. If they were not prepared for the scribal profession, how were they prepared for their future economic role?

Although we occasionally find paid arrangements between different parties about *tarbītum* "raising" in letters and legal documents from less-elite sources[10], the exact nature of that "raising" and the methods involved are not specified:

> [1]*Aḫam-nirši itti iltani mārat* (DUMU.MUNUS) *Ilīšu-ibbīšu* [1]*Lamassi mārat ilīšu-ibbīšu ana mārūtim ilqe kasap tarbītīša*[11] [1]*Iltani mār<at>* (DUMU.<MUNUS>) *Ilīšu-ibbīšu maḫrat libbāšu ṭāb* […]
>
> "Lamassī, the daughter of Ilišu-ibbīšu adopted (lit. took for sonship) Aham-nirši from Iltani, the daughter of Ilišu-ibbīšu[12]. Iltani, the daughter of Ilišu-ibbīšu, has

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[8] Further variables that could be investigated with regards to burials are burial location (cf. McMahon and Stone 2013, Frank 2008, Garroway 2014), method (Garroway 2014, Frank 2008) and grave goods (Garroway 2014 for Canaanite burials).

[9] The plentiful specimens of scribal exercises preserved to us invited scholars to reconstruct the ancient curriculum (Tinney 1999) or curricula (Robson and Ohgama 2010) and extract the methods by which the students were educated both by acquiring skills such as reading and writing, as well as by the content of compositions, which aimed to convey ideals and values of Old Babylonian society (Robson 2007) and/or preserve those of earlier times (George 2005).
In addition, Volk (1996) elucidated how the Edubba literature, which told fictional stories from everyday life of students, and other documents can yield information on various methods of preparing sub-adults for adult life. He acknowledges the fact that formal education has been favoured as subject of study over informal education (or, in emic terms, "raising"), but as his sources are mostly from literary sources (or from the court from Mari), they still describe the topic through the lenses of scribal education or only for the elite segment of society.

[10] Often *nadītu*-priestesses are involved who come from well-endowed families (Stone 1982).

[11] The copy has ŠA instead of TA.

[12] The identical patronym indicates these two are sisters, who are most likely *nadītu* priestesses. according to their names and the use of DUMU.MUNUS as patronym.

received the silver for her (i.e. Aham-nirši) raising.[13] Her heart is satisfied" (CT 33 40:1-11)

The term *tarbītum* alone could be interpreted in a variety of ways and a lack of further context makes it impossible to side with one option. The purpose of "being reared" could be a formal apprenticeship, as is most likely the case in CH 188 and 189, as Petschow (1980-1983, 569) and others before him argued, but that does not need to be the sole function of the word. It could also just refer to informal education and a general socialisation of an individual, i.e. teaching the individual appropriate behaviour in line with society's values and morals ("Erziehung", cf. Volk 2000, 29).[14] Alternatively, it might even have been a compensation payment for the time that a child was too young, too weak or too inexperienced to work.

The role of material culture in socialisation

How could archaeology help to shed light on the question of socialisation and education? It is well known from wider archaeological literature that material culture helps to experience and explore the world, society and our own identity, especially for children (Sillar 1994, Baxter 2006). The major difficulty lies in associating material culture with children. First and foremost, it is not unlikely, maybe even very likely, that children interacted with the same material culture as adults, as they most likely lived and grew up in an "adult world" household and perceived, and at some point participated, in household activities involving "adult world" material culture, such as food production and consumption and rituals. As in other cultures, they probably learned by imitating their parents' behaviour and interaction with material culture (Sillar 1994) or by oral instructions from adults or older siblings on how to use certain objects the "right" way. This aspect sounds trivial, but is important to consider when approaching the issue of socialisation. In their later childhood, they probably learned crafts on adult tools as well, or one could envisage simplified gadgets for the early stages, such as the miniature looms seen in the modern Andes for young children to practice on (Sillar 1994, Greenfield 2000). From texts it is well known that children often accompanied their parent to, for example, weaving workshops (Maekawa 1980, Waetzoldt 1988).

Rattles and games

The question remains whether there is any material culture exclusive to the use of children, i.e. produced purely for child consumption (most importantly, "toys"). Rattles

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[13] Here, the payment is a compensation payment for the previous mother by the adoptive mother for the "raising" of the adoptee.

[14] "Nach dieser (und parallelen Aussagen) ist *šūnuqum* […] als Terminus technicus für die rein körperliche Aufzucht von *tarbītum* differenziert, das, so es in einem expliziten Gegensatz zu den zuvor genannten Begriffen steht, das Erziehen zu einem altersgemäßen Verhalten bedeutet. Oftmals steht jedoch *tarbītum* in einer Art und Weise für sich, die nahelegt, dass der Terminus an diesen Stellen beide Aspekte, körperliche Aufzucht ebenso wie Erziehung, abdeckt" (Volk 2000, 29, fn. 142)

come to mind; Figure 1 shows one found recently at Tell Khaiber. Games have also been frequently associated with children. In my view, an association with children alone cannot be presumed a priori. Adults and children play games alike. Rattles may be used mostly by children today, but their contexts in Old Babylonian levels, i.e. residential areas and temples and palaces alike, makes a cultic function at least equally likely (Stone and Zimansky 2004, 97).[15]

Rattle from Tell Khaiber. ©Ur Region Archaeology Project.

[15] Further parallels are kwn from other cultures. Maya gods, for example, are depicted as shaking rattles (Taube 2013, 109, Fig. 5.6 b). For a direct association with children see Gruber (1995, 641), who thinks that most "clay baby rattles" and miniature clay models from ancient Israel "may have been children's toys".

Miniature objects

Another intriguing category are miniature objects, of which a considerable number have been unearthed from Old Babylonian levels, in the form of numerous terracotta plaques, human and animal figurines, model beds, model chariots, model chairs (see Figure 2) and model boats, etc. These miniatures have often been assigned a symbolic function a priori, which scholars have then tried to reconstruct (see e.g. Cholidis 1992, 44, 120-121, McCown and Haines 1967, 95). Occasionally, the idea of them being used as toys is considered, just to be immediately refuted. For model tables, for example, Cholidis' (1992, 44) main argument against a "toy" interpretation is that they were glued together with bitumen when broken instead of producing a new one. She argues that the effort producing a new one would have been equal to that of fixing the old one and thus assigns a more important function to the model table, in her opinion a symbolic one.[16] In my opinion, this practice of repairing is no counter-argument to the use of model tables as toys, as Cholidis herself says that both alternatives take approximately the same time and effort. Furthermore humans often build a strong relationship to toys that requires authenticity, i.e. the object being the same, rather than being replaced. Whether this character trait can be assumed for the Old Babylonian period is unclear and requires further systematic studies on ancient attitudes towards material culture in both archaeology and texts.

Clay model of a chair from Diqdiqqah, South Iraq. ©Trustees of the British Museum.

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[16] "Da man mit fast dem gleichen Aufwand problemlos einen neuen Tisch hätte anfertigen können, muß er für den Besitzer doch wohl von größerer Bedeutung gewesen sein" (Cholidis 1992, 44)

Even if not fitting exactly our modern notions of toy[17], a primarily symbolic purpose does not mean that children did not interact with miniatures. For the modern Andes, Bill Sillar (1994) argues that the idea of toys and the symbolic idea of ritual are not necessarily dichotomous. He describes his ethnographic observations that miniature houses in the Andes were built in front of shrines on pilgrimage, which were then equipped with miniature "trees" and animals, either as a gift to the god and/or in the hope that the builder would receive a life-size house similar to the miniature in return. The action of building the house was described as "playing" (*pukllay* in Quechua) by the pilgrims. Quoting Tschopik (1950), Sillar gives further evidence of miniature clay animals being used both as toys, as well as being placed in miniature houses during the Santa Barbara fiesta to ensure prosperity for the subsequent year.

Following Sillar's observations, we can suggest for Mesopotamia that an object like a model table or a model bed, with symbolic importance in ritual, did not necessarily have this attribute all year round and might thus not have been inaccessible for child's play on other days of the year. This would only be the case if the models were found in a secluded part with restricted access for the inhabitants of the residential structure they were found in, but as none of these objects were found in situ, this is impossible to prove. Central to most recent studies of miniatures seems to be their "ability to function as a powerful tool for personal identity negotiation"[18] (Langin-Hooper 2015, 63) by creating intimate interaction with their user and offering the user to experience aspects of the world (and one's position therein) in some sort of microcosm. This property can be utilised both by children when playing with these objects, as well as by any age group during ritual and miniatures those can function as a means of socialisation and identity building for all age groups, including children, and thus could provide as a form of education.

While this is just a theoretical point of departure, I hope to develop it further in my future research, as this is the only way of accounting for informal education and socialisation covering children from the whole spectrum of society.

Conclusion

The study of childhood is complex even when considering just one type of source, archaeology or text. The terms associated with "children" in texts are ambiguous and require close contextual analysis, while the archaeological identification of children and material culture they interacted with is only possible within a solid interpretive framework. While the combination of both types of data brings new caveats and cannot be

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[17] Cambridge Dictionaries Online defines toy as "an object for children to play with" and "an object that is used by an adult for pleasure rather than for serious use". (http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/toy). The Oxford English Dictionary lists "A material object for children or others to play with (often an imitation of some familiar object); a plaything; also, something contrived for amusement rather than for practical use (...) Now the leading sense, to which the others are referred". Sometimes "toy" is associated with miniatures, but again described as non-practical and restricted for child's play.

[18] In the context of her study on Hellenistic Babylonia, this "identity negotiation" involves balancing Hellenistic and Mesopotamian influences on everyday life and one's identity, independent of the individual's age.

apt for all research questions per se, the case studies above have shown that it can be very productive and opens new paths of enquiry or at least new points of departures that a separation of archaeology and texts could not yield.

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