

LESLEY A. BEAUMONT: *Childhood in Ancient Athens: Iconography and Social History*. Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies. Routledge, London – New York 2012. ISBN 978-0-415-24874-7. 303 pp. GBP 110.

Lesley A. Beaumont's book contributes to the study of children and childhood in Athens during the archaic and classical periods. The book aims at examining the perceptions that Athenian society had of children and childhood but also studies the experience of the child itself. These topics are covered by discussing birth, nurture, play, work and education, cult and ritual as well as death. The focus of the study is on visual and material evidence. The iconography of Athenian childhood is studied based mainly on figure-decorated pottery and votive and funerary sculpture. Accordingly, the book is richly illustrated. Beaumont's book essentially pairs with Mark Golden's seminal study *Children and Childhood in Classical Athens* (1990), which focuses on literary material. Beaumont's profound and careful study well justifies its position among the studies of ancient Greek childhood.

The book consists of two parts. The first provides an introduction and methodological discussion. As with all studies on ancient children and childhood, it is essential to define these concepts and view them as culturally constructed. Beaumont's analysis on the central concepts of the study is perceptive and the book is well grounded in previous scholarship. Likewise, Beaumont's discussion on the iconographical indicators of age is thorough and the author acknowledges the difficulties that there may be in recognizing child characters in artistic evidence.

The second part of the book discusses the life course of the child. It has been divided into two chapters: "Birth and Infancy" discusses children from birth up to the age of three and "The Developing Child" covers ages from four to pre-puberty. The first chapter concentrates on the child's birth, nurture, cult and ritual and the death of infant children. The third year marks a new stage in the child's life, separated by physiological and ritual changes. Beaumont discusses the first wine ritual and the Choes festival as well as their problematics at length. Unlike the first chapter, the latter chapter covers several years and stages of later childhood. The choice is dictated by the nature of the visual and material evidence, which rarely specifies an older child's age. The second chapter discusses many areas of the child's life, such as work, play, education, cult, ritual and death, and also focuses on gendered and socio-economical perspectives.

The conclusion chapter of the book is short. Beaumont briefly touches upon the subject of changes and developments over the three centuries of Athenian history that create the time frame of the study. Change and continuity, as well as a broader contextualization with regard to Athenian society, are topics that could have been developed further in the concluding chapter to give the book further depth. As it is, however, the book is a fine example of a multidisciplinary approach to ancient childhood.

Sanna Joska