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INTRODUCTION

A BRAZILIAN CHILD IS BORN: INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC ISSUE ON THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD

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Archaeologists have traditionally assumed children to be invisible agents in their research, often considering them to be unimportant, non-agentive, or impossible to address in archaeological studies. The invisibility of children in archaeological interpretations has been questioned for decades by the feminist critique however. Grete Lillehammer (1989) published the first article calling for the archaeological study of children almost 30 years ago, entitled *A child is born. The child's world in an archaeological perspective*. Given the importance of this seminal paper to the field of archaeology, I have translated it to Portuguese for this thematic issue in order to make it more accessible to Brazilian archaeologists and students. Permission to publish the translation was granted by Grete Lillehammer and by Francis & Taylor, the publishers of the original article.

Since the publication of Lillehammer's article in 1989, scholars have responded by incorporating childhood studies into their interpretations and research questions, emphasizing the importance of understanding children as social actors and agents capable of meaningful actions (e.g., BAXTER, 2005, 2008; BERÓN *et al.*, 2012; DE LUCIA, 2010; POLITIS, 1998). Since then, four complimentary avenues have emerged in the literature: 1) identifying children in the archaeological record, 2) understanding children through their relationships, 3) recognizing children as social actors, and 4) addressing childhood as a cultural construct (ARDREN, 2011a:133; BAXTER, 2005:15).

Children represent a major component of social groups, both in number and social influence. Therefore, it should be expected that they played a relevant role in the creation of the archaeological record, even though we as archaeologists struggle to identify and interpret their impact in the material record. Considering children as social and cultural actors allows us to understand that they are capable of making important decisions and to effectively contribute to their families, communities, and societies. Furthermore, we have to understand children in their own cultural context because the concepts of what constitutes a child and the experience of childhood are cultural constructs that vary greatly between and within societies. Recognizing that "children" and "childhood" are cultural constructs requires that we break down our western conceptions that define

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children as incomplete beings shaped by adults. The same western notion of the child led many researchers to use age-based categories to describe human developmental stages. Although relevant, this developmental trajectory likely varies significantly between societies (BAXTER, 2005).

Around the world, archaeological childhood studies have focused in a range of themes, including: burial contexts and mortality (BERÓN *et al.*, 2012; FINLAY, 2000; GOODMAN & ARMELAGOS, 1989; MCCAFFERTY & MCCAFFERTY, 2006; SCOTT, 1999; STOREY & MCANANY, 2006); cranial modification (TIESLER, 2012); ethnographic studies (BIRD & BIRD, 2000; GUEMPLE, 1988; MARLOWE, 2005; PARK, 1998, 2008; POLITIS, 1998, 1999); ritual practices, especially sacrificial victims (ANDRUSHKOA *et al.*, 2011; ARDREN, 2011b; ARNOLD, 1999; BERRELLEZA & BALDERAS, 2006; BERRELLEZA & BLANCO, 1998; BRODA, 1982, 2001; BROWN, 1991; CONTEL, 2008; DE LA CRUZ *et al.*, 2008; LUJÁN *et al.*, 2010; ORTÍZ & RODRÍGUEZ, 1999; PACHECO & VARGAS, 1991; WILSON *et al.*, 2007, 2013; WHITE *et al.*, 2002); human lifecycles (GILCHRIST, 2000; JOYCE, 2000); fingerprints and footprints (ROVELAND, 2000; SHARPE & GELDER, 2006); craft production and art (FOLLENSBEE, 2006; KAMP, 2001; LOPIPARO, 2006); skills and learning processes (BAMFORTH & FINLAY, 2008; CROWN, 2001; FERGUSON, 2008; GÄRDENFORS & HÖGBERG, 2017; KAMP, 2001; KNIGHT, 2017; MILNE, 2005; RODET & DUARTE-TALIM, 2013; ROUX *et al.*, 1995; SMITH, 2006; STAPERT, 2007; TEHRANI & RIEDE, 2008); toys, miniatures and figurines (DE LUCIA, 2010; KOHUT, 2011; PARK, 1998); and play (EMBER & CUNNAR, 2015; HAMMOND & HAMMOND, 1981; HÖGBERG, 2008; SHEA, 2006).

However, although the feminist critique has stimulated the systematic study of the archaeology of childhood worldwide, especially in the last few decades, such studies are still rare in the context of Brazilian archaeology (*e.g.*, NEUBAUER & SCHAEFER, 2017; RODET & DUARTE-TALIM, 2013; SENE, 2018; SOLARI *et al.*, 2016). To help overcome this hurdle, this thematic issue of the *Revista de Arqueologia*, entitled *Archaeology of Childhood*, aims at broadening discussions related to the archaeology of childhood through papers that address case studies related to the material culture created by or for children in different societies and time periods, as well as discussions of theoretical and methodological approaches to study children and childhood in archaeology.

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