

6 **Biology and Society**

With the exception of a few notable publications (e.g. Bolger 2008; Bahrani 2001; Croucher 2008; Helle 2018; Parpola and Whiting 2002; Steele 2009), archaeology in Western Asia and, in particular, studies of the ancient Near East have, until relatively recently, been reticent to engage with questions of gender and sexuality, as well as more recent theories on bioarchaeology, life histories, and intersectionality (e.g. Agarwal 2017; Boutin 2016). While gendered value judgements, based on the presence of certain types of grave goods, are not unusual, even within modern publications, the scholarly questions we ask and approaches we use are starting to shift. The same can also be said of research on age and identity, with scholars beginning to consider how ageing and the passage of time are culturally mediated and differentially experienced (e.g. Artin 2008; Faerman and Smith 2008; Garroway 2014, 2020; Harris 2000; Pearson and Meskell 2015; Wheeler, Williams, and Dupras 2018).

Drawing upon some of the recent scholarship discussed in Chapter 2, this chapter examines the existing burial data to consider the extent to which we are missing or inadvertently obscuring different categories of person in the archaeological record. Information on biological age and sex is clearly an important element of mortuary and funerary analyses and should not be entirely disregarded. As scholars have started to explore, however, the primacy and often binary or strictly categorised nature of assessments may hide other important patterns of social differentiation. As such, this chapter aims to complicate these assessments, exploring some of the intersections between age, gender, biological sex, as well as a variety of other identities, that can be seen within the mortuary sphere.

Age and Ageing: The Role of the Young and Old

In a recent seminar taught at Bryn Mawr College I asked students to carry out a basic search for articles from the past few decades on age, ageing, and children and childhood within some of the most popular journals for 'Classical' and 'Near Eastern' archaeology.¹ As we then discussed, many of the searches produced only a small handful of results. Those that were returned were often sensational, discussing topics such as the mistreatment of children in the

ancient world or child sacrifice. Similar patterns also feed into assumptions about the poor visibility of non-adults in the archaeological record. When such populations are recovered in large numbers, it is often claimed that non-adult bodies are representative of ‘unusual’ (and usually macabre) practices (e.g. Faerman et al. 1998; Faerman and Smith 2008, 213; Smith et al. 2013). These perspectives, to some extent, represent one end of the spectrum. We thus have to be careful not to go too far the other way, failing to consider or contemplate mistreatment, violence, or even simple ambivalence towards children and younger individuals in the ancient world. The sociocultural impact and response to the death of a child or infant likely shifted over time and space. It may, however, also have varied based on the age at death, the circumstances surrounding the death or even the perceived role of that person (or non-person if we consider some of Harris’ (2000) work on Mesopotamian age classifications).

Perhaps even less well studied or conceptualised is the role of older individuals within ancient societies (for notable exceptions see the work of Harris (1992, 2000), as well as Pearson and Meskell (2015)), with ageing not just playing a role within the transition between childhood and adulthood but also through other stages of life and death. With a globally ageing population, it could be argued that older individuals are not only the ‘forgotten population’ in terms of contemporary health care and well-being (e.g. van Boetelaer et al. 2023) but also within archaeological studies.

One of the challenges is the paucity and tensions between information on both biological and cultural age. As numerous works have discussed, the different terminologies used by scholarship to describe the stages through which a person reaches adulthood are often ill defined and have little bearing or relation to chronological age (e.g. Baxter 2004, 97; Garroway 2014, 16–17; Steinberg 2013, 11–25). In response, there has been, and continues to be, useful pushback against the use and lack of specificity in terms such as sub-adult and non-adult (e.g. Baxter 2004, 97; Garroway 2014, 17; Lewis 2007, 1–2). While some research has illustrated the levels of definition that can now be obtained via bioarchaeological assessments, scholars have also highlighted the need to consider not only biological but also social age (e.g. Garroway 2014; Harris 2000). By way of example, Garroway (2014, 18), in her study of children in the ancient Near East, identifies childhood as ending with the rite of passage of marriage and thus encompassing the period from birth to this event. While this heteronormative model may apply in some (or even many) of the cases under discussion here, we cannot necessarily assume that this is valid across the board. Were groups or persons who did not marry forever suspended in childhood, or did alternative social markers signpost the transition from childhood to adulthood?

Textual sources can offer us some insights into the ways in which different life stages were understood and categorised, however, these are often highly ambiguous. Terms that could signify young individuals, for example, are also used to designate lack of seniority and/or individuals acting as servants (e.g. in Mesopotamia (Harris 2000, 17; Schmidhuber 2019, 169–70; Wilcke 1985,

216)). Similarly, despite references to the role of children within households and their status as orphans, etc., in biblical sources, relating exact age categorisations to these individuals is very difficult (e.g. Garroway 2014). Analogous issues are also encountered as we look towards the treatment and study of older persons. While we occasionally have reference from Mesopotamian sources to individuals who reached remarkable ages (e.g. Livingstone, Crawford, and Shepherd 2007, 9), these are few and far between. There does, however, seem to be a recognition or division between individuals in 'prime' adulthood and those who had reached a very advanced age (Harris 2000, 6, 23–31). Beyond the textual record and issues of visibility, perhaps one of the greatest frustrations, however, is that we often simply lack detail in the archaeological record. Older individuals are often categorised as above 45 or 50 years of age. Thus, while the binary between non-adult and adult or young and old is entirely unsatisfactory, it is sometimes all that the data, at least at a broader scale, allow for.

Age from a 'Big Picture' Approach

For the purposes of this project biological age information was gathered for over 13,000 individuals. As the discussions above point towards, however, the quality and level of detail are very varied. Original publications sometimes provide detailed age assessments or brackets for individuals, while others simply indicate the likelihood of an individual being an adult vs. non-adult (see Table 6.1 for an overview of the age categories used in this study and their corresponding nomenclature). As might be expected given the shifts in the overall number of individuals (see Chapter 3), the number of aged individuals also fluctuates over time, with probability levels varying in terms of both period and age certainties.

Initially dividing these data into adult versus non-adult allows the capture of the maximum number of individuals, although some overlapping groups such as adolescent/young adult or adolescent/adult are missed, an observation I will return to shortly. By and large the relationship between non-adults and adults remains roughly similar over time, whether including all data or only individuals with the highest levels of certainty in terms of both age and period categorisation (Figure 6.1). Across the periods considered by this project, adults generally occur at a higher frequency than non-adults, although the differential between these groups varies from tens to hundreds of individuals across time. What is worth highlighting, however, especially given discussions at the beginning of this chapter, is that non-adults are never absent from the mortuary record and generally account for somewhere between c. 30% and 50% of the aged mortuary population. These larger-scale patterns can certainly hide or distort localised trends. By way of example, numerous case studies have revealed that non-adults may be absent from specific sites and burial contexts (e.g. Aubet 2010, 145–46; Nagar and Eshed 2000; Ortner and Frohlich 2008, 234).² Exploring trends at a larger scale and

Table 6.1 Age categories and brackets used within the study. When original reports lack detail, further combined categories have been used, e.g. child/adolescent/young adult.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Age range</i>
Foetus	Unborn
Neonate	Birth to 1 month
Infant	Birth to 1 year
Child	>1 year to 12 years
Adolescent	13 years to 17 years
Adult	18 to 45+ years
Young adult	18 years to 24 years
Middle adult	25 years to 45 years
Older adult	45+ years
Foetus/neonate	Unborn to 1 month
Foetus/neonate/infant	Unborn to 1 year
Neonate/infant	Birth to 1 year
Infant/child	Birth to 12 years
Child/adolescent	> 1 year to 17 years
Adolescent/young adult	13 years to 24 years
Adolescent/adult	13 years to 45+ years
Young adult/middle adult	18 years to 45 years
Middle adult/older adult	25 years to 45+ years
Non-adult	Under 18 years of age

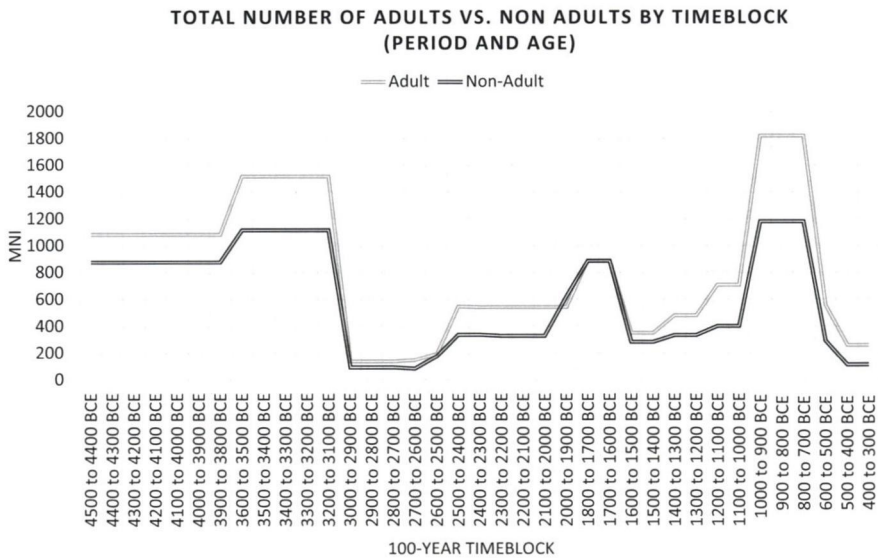


Figure 6.1 Maximum counts of adults vs. non-adults by time-block. Only the highest certainties have been included in this plot. False peaks and troughs have been removed due to overlapping period categories/gaps (see Chapter 1) for ease of interpretation.

beyond a single site, however, allows us to consider periods during which the numbers of adults and non-adults are roughly in balance, proportions are reversed, or periods during which adults appear to significantly outnumber non-adults in the mortuary record (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Tabulation of the total numbers of adults vs. non-adults. For this tabulation only individuals with the highest level of age and period certainty have been included.

<i>Timeblock</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Adult</i>	<i>Non-adult^a</i>	<i>Overlapping</i>	<i>Differential (adult to non-adult)</i>
4500 to 4400 BCE	2093	1086	878	129	208
4400 to 4300 BCE	2093	1086	878	129	208
4300 to 4200 BCE	2093	1086	878	129	208
4200 to 4100 BCE	2093	1086	878	129	208
4100 to 4000 BCE	2093	1086	878	129	208
4000 to 3900 BCE	2093	1086	878	129	208
3900 to 3800 BCE	2093	1086	878	129	208
3800 to 3700 BCE	1214	660	554	0	106
3700 to 3600 BCE	1214	660	554	0	106
3600 to 3500 BCE	2649	1516	1119	14	397
3500 to 3400 BCE	2649	1516	1119	14	397
3400 to 3300 BCE	2649	1516	1119	14	397
3300 to 3200 BCE	2648	1516	1118	14	398
3200 to 3100 BCE	2648	1516	1118	14	398
3100 to 3000 BCE	2793	1604	1172	17	432
3000 to 2900 BCE	234	138	92	4	46
2900 to 2800 BCE	234	138	92	4	46
2800 to 2700 BCE	234	138	92	4	46
2700 to 2600 BCE	239	146	84	9	62
2600 to 2500 BCE	389	196	177	16	19
2500 to 2400 BCE	974	549	339	86	210
2400 to 2300 BCE	966	544	336	86	208
2300 to 2200 BCE	959	543	330	86	213
2200 to 2100 BCE	958	542	330	86	212
2100 to 2000 BCE	958	542	330	86	212
2000 to 1900 BCE	1181	541	623	17	-82
1900 to 1800 BCE	893	405	481	7	-76
1800 to 1700 BCE	1808	892	888	28	4
1700 to 1600 BCE	1808	892	888	28	4
1600 to 1500 BCE	636	350	283	3	67
1500 to 1400 BCE	636	350	283	3	67
1400 to 1300 BCE	817	480	332	5	148
1300 to 1200 BCE	817	480	332	5	148
1200 to 1100 BCE	1188	708	400	80	308
1100 to 1000 BCE	1188	708	400	80	308
1000 to 900 BCE	3422	1820	1180	422	640
900 to 800 BCE	3422	1820	1180	422	640
800 to 700 BCE	3422	1820	1180	422	640
700 to 600 BCE	578	356	209	13	147
600 to 500 BCE	866	556	290	20	266
500 to 400 BCE	377	259	111	7	148
400 to 300 BCE	377	259	111	7	148

^a Adolescents are included in the non-adult figures in this table.

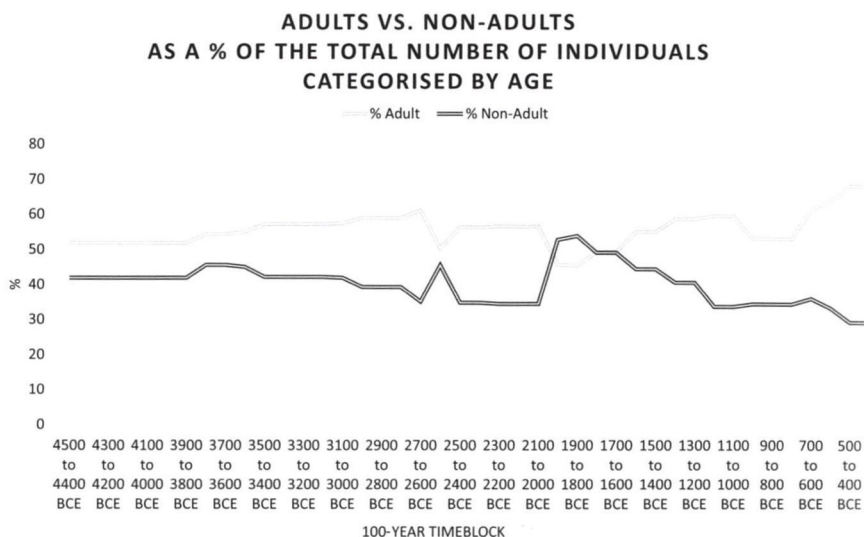


Figure 6.2 Adults vs. non-adults (including adolescents) as a percentage of the total number of individuals categorised by age plotted out by 100-year time-block. For this plot only individuals with the highest level of age and period certainty have been included. Several pronounced peaks and troughs are visible in the data here between 3800 and 3500 BCE and 2600 and 2500 BCE. These are partly the product of overlapping periods (see Table 1.1) and have thus been removed from later charts, so overall patterns are easier to detect.

Plotting these trends out as a percentage of the overall number of aged individuals for each time-block (Figure 6.2 and Table 6.3) starts to reveal some intriguing patterns, some of which are likely to be the product of the way in which data has been coded, as well as the overall numbers in the dataset. By way of example, as discussed in Chapter 1, some of the minor peaks and troughs corresponding to a single 100-year time-block are likely due to overlapping or lack of overlapping period coding. Looking at the broader trends, however, three general phases can be identified. The first corresponds to a period between c. 4500 and 2000 BCE (LCH-EBA), with the overall percentage of adults, with a few minor fluctuations, consistently staying above 50%. This pattern seems to shift around 2000 BCE, and throughout the MBA, the percentage distribution of adults versus non-adults would appear to either flip or broadly come into line with one another, with non-adults now being seen at a much higher frequency. From the beginning of the LBA onwards this pattern reverses, with the percentage of adults gradually increasing as we move into the first millennium BCE at the expense of non-adults. The slight reversal in this trend between c. 1000 and 700 BCE appears to represent a decline in the overall percentage of adults, rather than a relative increase in the percentage of non-adults.

Table 6.3 Tabulation of adults vs. non-adults as a percentage of the total number of individuals categorised by age. For this tabulation only individuals with the highest level of age and period certainty have been included.

<i>Timeblock</i>	<i>% Adult</i>	<i>% Non-adult^a</i>
4500 to 4400 BCE	52	42
4400 to 4300 BCE	52	42
4300 to 4200 BCE	52	42
4200 to 4100 BCE	52	42
4100 to 4000 BCE	52	42
4000 to 3900 BCE	52	42
3900 to 3800 BCE	52	42
3800 to 3700 BCE	54	46
3700 to 3600 BCE	54	46
3600 to 3500 BCE	57	42
3500 to 3400 BCE	57	42
3400 to 3300 BCE	57	42
3300 to 3200 BCE	57	42
3200 to 3100 BCE	57	42
3100 to 3000 BCE	57	42
3000 to 2900 BCE	59	39
2900 to 2800 BCE	59	39
2800 to 2700 BCE	59	39
2700 to 2600 BCE	61	35
2600 to 2500 BCE	50	46
2500 to 2400 BCE	56	35
2400 to 2300 BCE	56	35
2300 to 2200 BCE	57	34
2200 to 2100 BCE	57	34
2100 to 2000 BCE	57	34
2000 to 1900 BCE	46	53
1900 to 1800 BCE	45	54
1800 to 1700 BCE	49	49
1700 to 1600 BCE	49	49
1600 to 1500 BCE	55	44
1500 to 1400 BCE	55	44
1400 to 1300 BCE	59	41
1300 to 1200 BCE	59	41
1200 to 1100 BCE	60	34
1100 to 1000 BCE	60	34
1000 to 900 BCE	53	34
900 to 800 BCE	53	34
800 to 700 BCE	53	34
700 to 600 BCE	62	36
600 to 500 BCE	64	33
500 to 400 BCE	69	29
400 to 300 BCE	69	29

^a Adolescents are included in the non-adult figures in this table.

Published frequencies of prenatal to adult deaths often correlate to c. 50% adults, 35% children and adolescents, and 15% prenatal and infants (Ortner and Frohlich 2008, 234–35), and thus, the large-scale patterns recorded here would seem to broadly fit with these reconstructions. Smaller-scale studies, as already pointed out, can reveal slightly different patterns, highlighting the necessity of carrying out analyses at various scales. Furthermore, we need to bear two important factors in mind. Firstly, as with all the data discussed within this volume, we are dealing with partial records. In some cases, data on the age of individuals are recorded with a very low certainty and, in other cases, these data are simply not available. Of equal importance is the fact that we are not necessarily dealing with a true reflection of the overall deceased population. In addition to issues of demographic non-stationarity (i.e. age distributions within a cemetery are more reflective of fertility unless population size is constant) and selective mortality (i.e. we never see the full sample of non-adults that were at risk of death at given point but only those that actually died) (e.g. Wood et al. 1992; Wright and Yoder 2003), surviving patterns are also a product of human choice and selection of who, how, and where individuals could be buried. While some of these issues can be addressed by larger sample sizes, we have to continually consider whether patterns are simply a result of patchy data or true reflections of meaningful behaviours. This brings us back to some of the overlapping categories I mentioned briefly before.

Adolescents: A Meaningful Category?

For both the IA and MBA, an age group worth further consideration is the category of ‘adolescent’, specified for this project as falling between the ages of 13 and 18. The applicability of this term to ancient Western Asia, designating a clearly defined, yet somewhat liminal, phase between adult and non-adult may be misleading (e.g. Schmidhuber 2019, 171). Perhaps more accurately we should consider this group as another subdivision of adults (i.e. the very youngest of adults (e.g. Harris 2000, 6–7, 23)). There is an overall paucity of specific terms in Mesopotamian and Levantine textual records pertaining to this stage of life. In Middle Babylonian personnel rosters, for example, adolescents (*guruš.tur, batūlu*), despite being categorised slightly differently, still performed the same tasks as adults (*gurus, etlu*), even if at an apprentice level, and were given similarly large rations (e.g. Brinkman 1982; Harris 2000, 7; Tenney 2017, 740, Figure 3).

From an archaeological perspective, the incorporation of adolescent individuals into the broad category of adults would also better fit overall mortuary profiles at some archaeological sites (e.g. Tyre el-Bass). Here, in particular, we can consider the period between c. 1000 and 700 BCE. The total number of individuals falling between the categories of adult versus non-adult is far larger during this time slice than for any other period covered by the project (accounting for c. 12% of the total number of individuals and see Table 6.4), with over 400 individuals categorised as adolescent/adult. The majority of these come

Table 6.4 Tabulation of overlapping age groups as a percentage of the total number of individuals categorised by age.

<i>Timeblock</i>	<i>Overlapping age groups^a</i>	<i>Total number of aged individuals</i>	<i>Adult</i>	<i>Non-adult^b</i>	<i>% Overlapping</i>
4500 to 4400 BCE	129	2093	1086	878	6.163401816
4400 to 4300 BCE	129	2093	1086	878	6.163401816
4300 to 4200 BCE	129	2093	1086	878	6.163401816
4200 to 4100 BCE	129	2093	1086	878	6.163401816
4100 to 4000 BCE	129	2093	1086	878	6.163401816
4000 to 3900 BCE	129	2093	1086	878	6.163401816
3900 to 3800 BCE	129	2093	1086	878	6.163401816
3800 to 3700 BCE	0	1214	660	554	0
3700 to 3600 BCE	0	1214	660	554	0
3600 to 3500 BCE	14	2649	1516	1119	0.528501321
3500 to 3400 BCE	14	2649	1516	1119	0.528501321
3400 to 3300 BCE	14	2649	1516	1119	0.528501321
3300 to 3200 BCE	14	2648	1516	1118	0.528700906
3200 to 3100 BCE	14	2648	1516	1118	0.528700906
3100 to 3000 BCE	17	2793	1604	1172	0.608664518
3000 to 2900 BCE	4	234	138	92	1.709401709
2900 to 2800 BCE	4	234	138	92	1.709401709
2800 to 2700 BCE	4	234	138	92	1.709401709
2700 to 2600 BCE	9	239	146	84	3.765690377
2600 to 2500 BCE	16	389	196	177	4.11311054
2500 to 2400 BCE	86	974	549	339	8.829568789
2400 to 2300 BCE	86	966	544	336	8.902691511
2300 to 2200 BCE	86	959	543	330	8.967674661
2200 to 2100 BCE	86	958	542	330	8.977035491
2100 to 2000 BCE	86	958	542	330	8.977035491
2000 to 1900 BCE	17	1181	541	623	1.439458086
1900 to 1800 BCE	7	893	405	481	0.78387458
1800 to 1700 BCE	28	1808	892	888	1.548672566
1700 to 1600 BCE	28	1808	892	888	1.548672566
1600 to 1500 BCE	3	636	350	283	0.471698113
1500 to 1400 BCE	3	636	350	283	0.471698113
1400 to 1300 BCE	5	817	480	332	0.611995104
1300 to 1200 BCE	5	817	480	332	0.611995104
1200 to 1100 BCE	80	1188	708	400	6.734006734
1100 to 1000 BCE	80	1188	708	400	6.734006734
1000 to 900 BCE	422	3422	1820	1180	12.33196961
900 to 800 BCE	422	3422	1820	1180	12.33196961
800 to 700 BCE	422	3422	1820	1180	12.33196961
700 to 600 BCE	13	578	356	209	2.249134948
600 to 500 BCE	20	866	556	290	2.309468822
500 to 400 BCE	7	377	259	111	1.856763926
400 to 300 BCE	7	377	259	111	1.856763926

^a Four individuals from the time-blocks between 4500 and 3800 BCE were categorised as child/adolescent/adult. The rest of the overlapping aged individuals were all classified as either adolescents/young adults or adolescents/adults.

^b Adolescents are included in the non-adult figures in this table.

from a single site, Ashdod. Dated to the Iron II, these individuals fall between 16 and 19 years of age (Dothan 1971), hence being categorised as an overlapping Adolescent/Young Adult group (see Table 6.1). Given the age range assigned to these individuals they may better fit within the adult, rather than non-adult category. Indeed, adding the overlapping category of Adolescent/Young Adult to the former means that the trough between 1000 and 700 BCE disappears from the plots. It would therefore seem that this pattern is shaped by the lack of specificity in the data, rather than being indicative of any wider sociocultural significance.

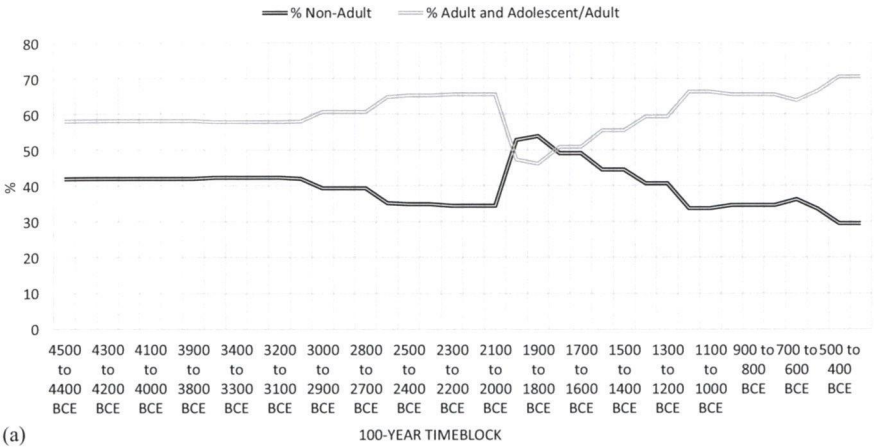
The same cannot be said, however, for the shifting visibility of adults and non-adults over the course of the MBA. Even if we do reassign adolescents from a non-adult to an adult category, the patterns (compare Figure 6.3(a) and (b)), at least for MB I, remain broadly the same: non-adults still slightly outweigh adults during this period. For MB II, with a reassignment of adolescents, we now have adults outnumbering non-adults; however, the difference is minimal. Fuelling this pattern is the increased visibility of children and infants as a percentage of the overall number of aged individuals from the beginning of the second millennium BCE (see Figure 6.4), a pattern I want to explore in a little more detail here.

Infants and Children: A Middle Bronze Age Case Study

Infant and child burials dating to the MBA are found distributed across the Levant (see Figure 6.5) and, at a broad scale, non-adults appear to be more visible during this period, in comparison to any prior or subsequent periods. Sites with large numbers of MBA children and/or infant burials include Rishon le-Zion, Megiddo, Jericho, and Sidon. Given the nature of these cemeteries, we might wonder whether it is simply sample size driving the increased visibility. The evidence, however, does not quite add up. As discussed in Chapter 3, both prior to and following the MBA we also have extensive cemeteries at sites such as Bab edh-Dhra, Jericho, and Ashkelon, to name but a few examples. Sample size, therefore, cannot be the only determining factor. Moreover, as EB IA Bab edh-Dhra illustrates, specific sites can also show high frequencies of non-adults prior to this period (Ortner and Frohlich 2008, 234). Intriguingly, although based on a much smaller dataset and not directly mentioned,³ a possibly similar MBA peak in the total number of non-adult burials can also be seen in the work of other scholars (e.g. Garroway 2014, 219, Table 1; 222, Table 4). The higher visibility of children and infants during the second millennium does not, therefore, seem to be solely an issue of overall burial numbers or a product of data collection.

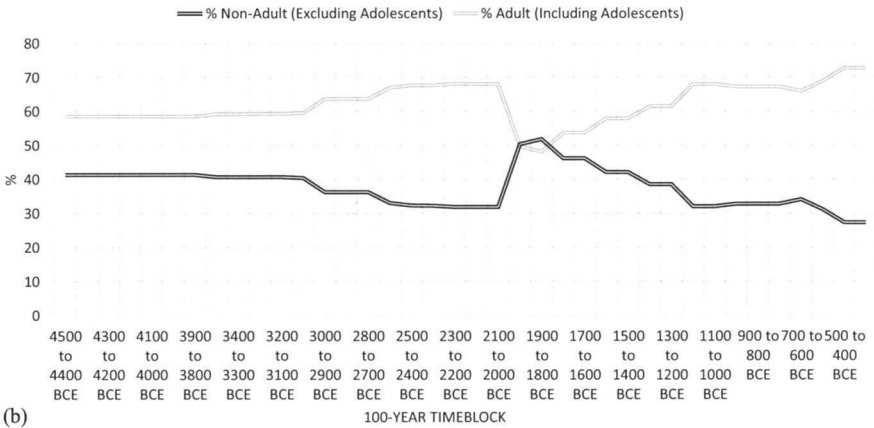
As discussed in previous chapters, throughout the MBA we can see an increasingly prominent role being played by the dead, particularly by MB II (also see Greenberg 2019, 255). Based on the data presented here, it would also seem that infants and children were playing an increasing role in the mortuary sphere, at least in terms of overall numbers. To move beyond these numerical

**ADULTS VS. NON-ADULTS
AS A % OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS CATEGORISED
BY AGE**



(a)

**ADULTS VS. NON-ADULTS
AS A % OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS CATEGORISED
BY AGE**



(b)

Figure 6.3 (a) Adults and adolescents/adults vs. non-adults (including adolescents) and (b) adults (including adolescent/adults and adolescents) vs. non-adults as a percentage of the total number of individuals categorised by age plotted out by 100-year time-block. For this plot only individuals with the highest level of age and period certainty have been included. Peaks and troughs resulting from overlapping period categories/gaps (see Chapter 1) have been removed for ease of interpretation.

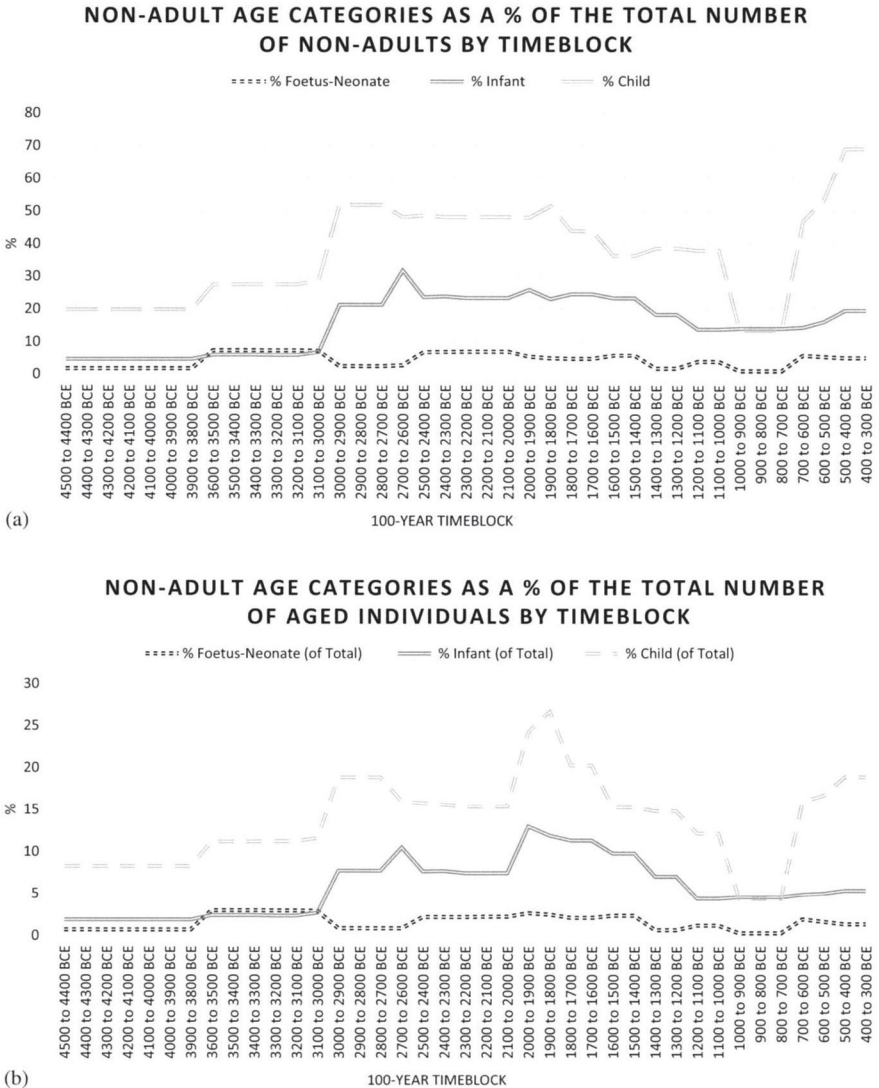


Figure 6.4 (a) Non-adult age categories as a percentage of the total number of non-adults and (b) total number of aged individuals by 100-year time-block. Several of the pronounced peaks visible only for a 100-year period are likely the result of overlapping period categories.

observations, however, we need to further consider the ways in which these individuals were being treated in death in terms of the provisioning of grave goods, as well as the types and forms of burial structure they were occupying.

While exceptions exist, published literature generally suggests that non-adult graves show differential provisioning in comparison to those of adults,

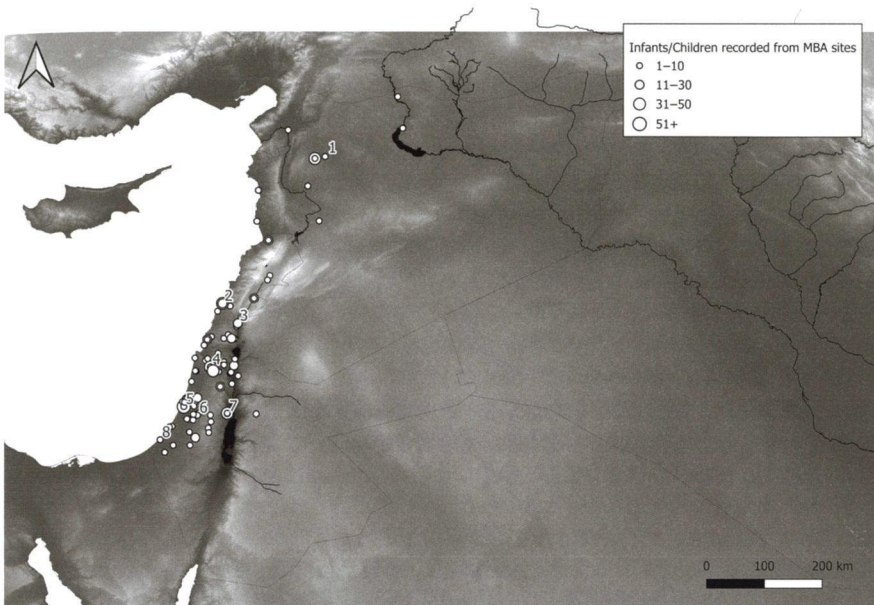


Figure 6.5 Sites dating to the MBA which provide evidence for the burial of non-adults (neonate to children). This map does not include sites where the MNI numbers are unclear. Locations with clustered dots represent sites where MNI information is available for multiple age classes, e.g. infants and children. Sites discussed in the text are labelled as follows: 1. Tell Tuqan; 2. Sidon; 3. Tell Dan; 4. Megiddo; 5. Rishon le-Zion; 6. Latrun (Northeast); 7. Jericho; 8. Tell el-Ajjul.

whether in terms of the number or types of materials being deposited. By way of example, the lack of disturbance of non-adult graves at MBA Tell Tuqan was suggested to be a result of looters deliberately choosing not to target less rich child burials (Ascalone 2014, 200). Rich child graves are thus seen as unusual, despite the presence of them at sites across the Levant. Garroway (2014, 233–34), in her survey of over 400 non-adult burials, documented 94 with associated materials, while 38 were found to have no associated material. For the large majority, over 300 burials, the relationships between buried individuals and associated materials could not be established. This issue is particularly pronounced when dealing with some of the multiple successive tombs discussed in Chapter 4, where individual links with associated materials may be difficult to determine and possibly of lesser significance. All the periods covered by this study provide evidence for the (at least minimal) provisioning of non-adult tombs (Figure 6.6(a) and (b)). The patterns are not, however, even over time, and the fourth and first millennia BCE, respectively, stand out as periods with minimal evidence for the provisioning of non-adult individuals (see Chapter 8 for a more general discussion of ‘empty’ tombs).

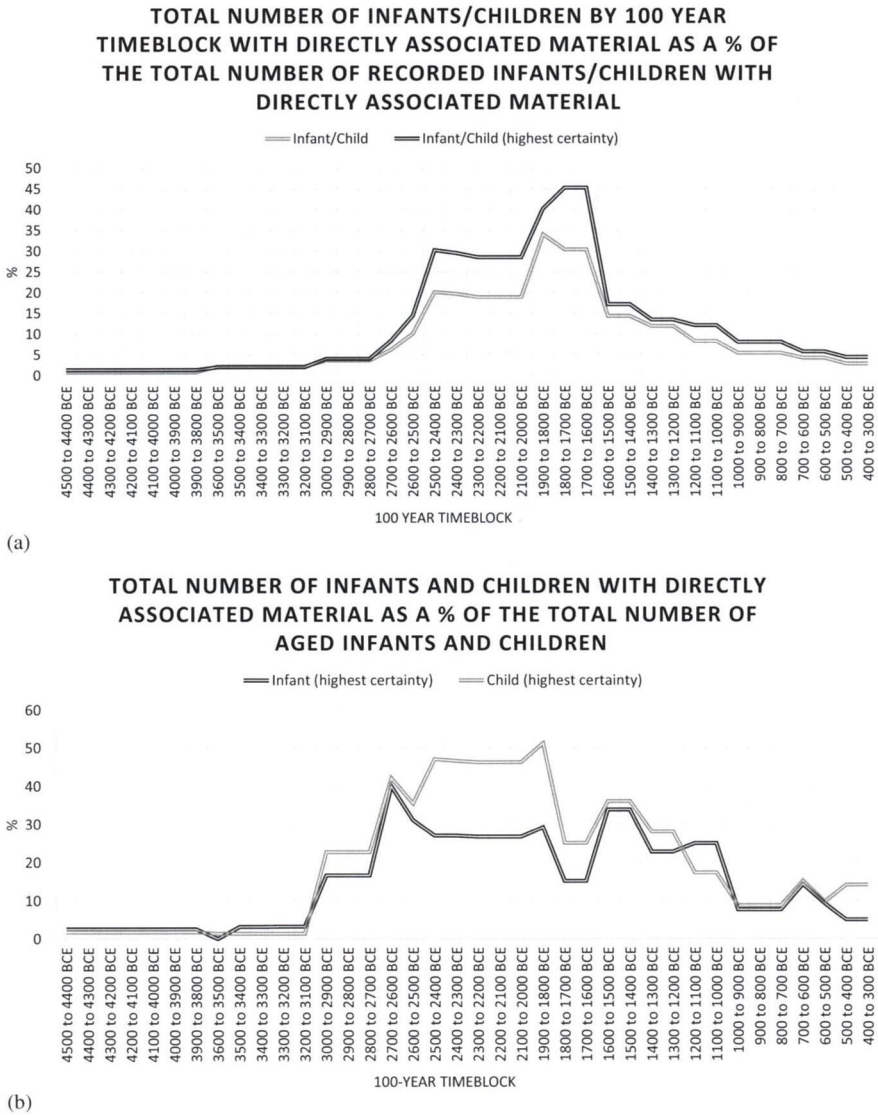


Figure 6.6 (a) The total number of infants, children, and infants/children with associated material, plotted out by 100-year time-block as a percentage of the total number of recorded infants, children, and infants/children (497 individuals or 458 individuals with the highest certainty) with associated material and (b) the total number of infants and children (excluding the category of infant/child) with directly associated material as a percentage of the total number of aged infants and children respectively per 100-year time-block. Several of the pronounced peaks visible only for a 100-year period are likely the result of overlapping period categories.

Before proceeding a couple of things should be noted about these plots. Although covering multiple certainty levels, the analyses exclude sites and burials where individual associations with material are unclear (e.g. some multiple successive tombs), cases where the minimum number of individuals is numerically unquantified (e.g. specified as present or several), as well as sites, such as Byblos, where more detailed age information is missing. I am thus excluding part of the dataset, although still covering just over 80 sites in the analyses. I will return to the patterns from the fourth and first millennia BCE shortly, but what I want to focus on initially is the evidence from the second millennium BCE.

Significantly, in addition to the increased visibility of non-adults during the MBA, the number of infants and, in particular, children, associated with grave goods would also appear to peak during this period. In other words, there are substantially more infants to children from contexts dating to this period associated with material goods than either prior to or after this point (Figure 6.6(a)).⁴ Non-adults are associated with a range of different materials, from pottery vessels to weapons (the latter albeit in very limited numbers), jewellery, and scarabs to animal remains. Here, however, I want to zoom in and, by way of example, focus on some specific patterns in terms of the popularity of the different types of materials that are found with MBA infants/children (Table 6.5).

Table 6.5 Materials found at MBA sites in association with infants and children.

<i>Type of associated material</i>	<i>Number of sites^a</i>	<i>Type of associated material</i>	<i>Number of sites^a</i>
Animal remains	4	Grinding stone/ mortar/quern	1
Chipped stone	1	Hammerstone	1
Metal	1	Indeterminate	2
Pottery vessel	6	Jar	13
Shell	2	Jar, miniature	2
Textile/organic material	2	Jug	14
Amphora	1	Jug, miniature	1
Anklet	2	Jug/juglet	1
Awl/piercer	1	Juglet	24
Basalt	1	Lamp	2
Basketry	1	Lid	1
Bead	13	Linen	1
Blade	2	Matting	1
Bottle	5	Necklace	7
Bottle, miniature	1	Olive stone	2
Bowl	21	Ornament/art	2
Bowl, miniature	2	Ostrich egg	1
Bowl/cup	1	Ovicaprid	5
Bronze	8	Ovicaprid, articulated joint	1
Burnt	2	Ovicaprid, mandible	1

(Continued)

Table 6.5 (Continued)

<i>Type of associated material</i>	<i>Number of sites^a</i>	<i>Type of associated material</i>	<i>Number of sites^a</i>
Carnelian	1	Ovicaprid, teeth	1
Cattle	1	Pendant	2
Cattle, teeth	1	Personal grooming/ cosmetic	1
Charcoal	1	Personal ornamentation/ jewellery	2
Clothing	1	Pig, mandible	1
Clothing fastening/ accessory	1	Pin	7
Copper	1	Plate/bowl	2
Cup	4	Ring	1
Dagger	2	Scarab	11
Digit ring	3	Semi-precious stone	2
Disc/plaque/sheet	1	Silver	4
Dog	1	Spearhead	1
Donkey/ass	1	Steatite	1
Earring	5	Stone	2
Faience	1	Storage jar/large jar	9
Fish	1	Textile	1
Fish, mandible	1	Torque/collar	1
Flint	1	Turtle	1
Footwear, leather	1	Unclassified	2
Gaming/recreation	2	Unworked stone/ stone slab	1
Glass	2	Vase/cornet	1
Goat	1	Vessel	1
Gold	4	Worked stone/stone slab	1

^a 139 sites recorded in total. The numbers in this table reflect the number of sites rather than burials with material culture directly associated with non-adult remains.

Pottery vessels and, in particular, bowls and juglets are found at over half the MBA sites with infant and child burials. This fits wider chronological patterns suggesting that juglets, bowls, and jars are the most common items over time found in non-adult burials (Garroway 2014, 228), and the overall popularity of bowls within second-millennium-BCE burial assemblages (see Chapter 8). Similarly, jars, jugs, and beads are also found in association with infant/child burials at a significant number of sites, again fitting some of the patterns suggested by other scholars (e.g. Garroway 2014, 234, Figure 2). In addition to beads, which from this wider dataset were found in association with both children and infants,⁵ MBA jewellery includes necklaces, earrings, as well as anklets and digit rings, the latter two being found at a smaller number of sites. Both infants/children and children are associated with items of jewellery, although based on the data collected here, only one infant, a jar burial from Sidon (Burial 49), was definitively associated with a necklace, in addition to

two vessels, a scarab, and several very small beads (Doumet-Serhal 2004b, 61, Figure 30). Scarabs, similarly, are commonly found at sites (just under 30% of sites recorded here) in association with both infants (seven burials) and children (22 burials) and have often been interpreted as protective items (e.g. Ben-Tor 2018, 289–90; Ward 1978). In most cases a single scarab is present, although in several examples two or three are deposited alongside a non-adult individual. In addition to serving as apotropaic objects, therefore, we can consider whether these artefacts may have held further significance, or whether the individuals buried with more than one scarab required additional protection.

Two individuals are worth further mention here. The first, a child, c. 3–4 years from the site of Sidon (Burial 1 (Doumet-Serhal 2004a, 135, Table 26, 139)), was found within a burial jar. The fragmentary and mainly disarticulated remains of this individual were associated with two jugs, four complete juglets (and one fragmentary), a bowl and platter bowl, as well as a lump of faience, a fragment of basalt, one gaming piece, disarticulated animal remains and, in terms of my discussions here, three faience scarabs. This individual does, in some ways, stand out as being particularly well provisioned, although other examples of well-provisioned child burials also exist at Sidon and have fewer amulets (see below for further discussion). As such, there does not seem to be a simple relationship between the richest burials and the number of items such as scarabs. Instead, we can perhaps wonder whether the inclusion of more than one scarab alongside this individual was more of personal choice, aimed at providing additional protection for this young child.

The other example I wish to touch upon brings us to Jericho and, in this case, the MB I constructed tomb (Tomb D.641) from the mound of 'Ayn es-Sultan.⁶ This tomb contained two individuals, one child c. 9–10 years and an adult, possibly biologically female (Nigro 2009). The child in this burial, apparently also female, was associated with a bronze pin, a necklace, bronze earrings, a scarab ring, as well as a steatite scarab, which was found on the chest of the individual (Nigro 2009, 371). The scarab found on the ring has been identified as showing a common apotropaic design representing royal power or a blessing (*Neferzeichen*) (Ben-Tor 2018, 294; Nigro 2009, 372). The second scarab from the chest, in contrast, is more unusual and has been interpreted as possibly bearing the title of a local ruler (Nigro 2009, 373), making the burial's position underneath the MBA palace at Jericho and the child's role and significance even more intriguing.

In contrast to the ubiquity of scarabs, at the other end of the spectrum, pins (Table 6.6), despite their important role within burial assemblages in the earlier second millennium BCE (see Chapter 8), seem to play a much smaller role in the burial assemblages of infants and children and, at least in terms of the data collected here, never appear alongside infants. Similar patterns are again found within the studies carried out by Garroway (2014, 236–37, Table 13), and suggest that these objects were primarily reserved for adult dress and, thus, can perhaps be seen as an effective marker of the transition from childhood to adulthood. In the majority of cases these objects, when found alongside both

Table 6.6 Pins associated with child burials in the MBA Levant.

<i>Site name</i>	<i>Age range in years</i>	<i>Overall certainty</i>	<i>Number of pins found in association</i>
Jericho	Child	Definite	1
Jericho	Child	Definite	1
Jericho ('Ayn es-Sultan)	9 to 10	Definite	1
Tell el-'Ajjul	Child	Definite	3
Tell el-'Ajjul	Child	Definite	2
Ashkelon	c. 6	Definite	1
Ashkelon	c. 10	Probable	1
Ashkelon	c. 10	Probable	1
Tell Sukas	Child	Definite	1
Tell Dan	Child	Definite	1
Rishon le-Zion	9 to 10	Definite	1
Rishon le-Zion	c. 2	Definite	1
Rishon le-Zion	4.5 to 5.5	Definite	1
Rishon le-Zion	c. 7	Definite	1
Rishon le-Zion	4 to 5	Definite	1
Rishon le-Zion	c. 10	Definite	1
Rishon le-Zion	c. 12	Definite	1

children and adults (see Chapter 8 for a discussion of the latter), appear as single items; for example, in the case of the MB II, Tell Qadi/Tell Dan, the disarticulated remains of a child were found in a cist tomb (Tomb 3004) associated with a storage jar and metal pin (Ilan 1996, 212).⁷ The only exceptions to this come from the site of Tell el-'Ajjul, although here the dating is somewhat unclear. Tomb 1416, for example, contained the articulated skeleton of a child associated with a single gold toggle pin and two other metal pins, as well as a gold frontlet, a calcite vase, and a platter bowl (Tufnell 1962, 7, 9, 15). The other example from Tell el-'Ajjul, Tomb 1410A-C, apparently housing three individuals, highlights that toggle pins are not just associated with very rich burials with, in this case a child (1410B) being found alongside a scarab, beads, and two metal toggle pins (Tufnell 1962, 34).

The remarkable burials from sites such as Tell el-'Ajjul, Jericho and Sidon discussed above can, in many ways, be seen as unusual or unique, challenging the 'normative'. What I am more interested in here, however, is the role and significance of these burials. What can they tell us about the transition between childhood and adulthood, as well as the different roles non-adults could play in the world of the MBA? One potential explanation for the inclusion of pins and the presence of high-status objects in non-adult burials is that these individuals may have been at the cusp of adulthood. Garroway (2014, 230–33), in her analysis of four MBA tombs from Jericho, suggested that non-adult individuals associated with toiletry kits or personal grooming items (see Chapter 8 for examples) may have had a liminal status between childhood and adulthood. The example of the 9- to 10-year-old child from Jericho Tomb D.641 (Nigro 2009,

Table 6.7 Weapons associated with child burials in the MBA Levant.

<i>Site name</i>	<i>Age range in years</i>	<i>Overall certainty</i>	<i>Material type</i>
Megiddo	Infant	Definite	Chipped stone blade
Sidon	c. 5	Definite	Dagger
Sidon	9 to 10	Definite	Spearhead
Sidon	8 to 9	Definite	Chipped stone blade
Latrun (Northeast)	4 to 5	Possible	Dagger

371) would certainly fit such an interpretation, especially if we consider the transition to adulthood being around the age of 10–12 years (Garroway 2014, 18; McMahon and Stone 2013, 87). Several other non-adult burials associated with pins also fit this pattern, although there are also those that do not (e.g. Rishon le-Zion, where pins are associated with individuals ranging in age from two to around twelve years (see Table 6.6)). The same can also be said for burials of children/non-adults with weapons (Table 6.7), another artefact type primarily associated with older individuals, although again this characterisation is perhaps not as straightforward as it might seem.

By way of example, Burial 14 from Sidon, a jar burial, contained the remains of an individual aged c. 13 years old. Alongside pottery vessels, this individual was associated with a bronze arrowhead, interpreted as a possible javelin for a child (Doumet-Serhal 2003b, 48; Doumet-Serhal and Kopetzky 2011, 25–26).⁸ This example is intriguing, the age of individual would, as discussed above, likely put them on the cusp of adulthood. Their burial treatment, mode of deposition, and the presence of an arrowhead are, however, somewhat unusual. Although the use of jars for adults and older children is not undocumented at Sidon, they are more commonly associated with infants (Ogden and Schutkowski 2004, 164–65). Moreover, the original anthropological report on this individual mentions the remains as being “... fragmented, weathered and flaking...” (Ogden and Schutkowski 2004, 163). Although preservation is less than ideal at Sidon, ‘weathered’ is not a term used in relation to any of the other skeletal remains from this report. Combined with the disarticulated nature of these remains (Doumet-Serhal 2003b, 48), it may suggest that initial burial occurred elsewhere. Finally, arrowheads are relatively rare in tombs, with it being suggested that such artefacts were not ‘suitable’ (Philip 1989, 145) for such contexts. Given all these elements, it seems likely that the treatment of this individual in death was shaped not only by their age but also by a range of other intersecting identities.

An association between weapons and older children/adolescents at Sidon and other MBA sites is further complicated by two examples of daggers that have been found in association with children and, in this case, young children. Burial 13 at Sidon, for example, contained the remains of a child c. 5 years old found in association with a dagger, animal remains, a silver anklet, gold leaf found on the ribs, and a flask/goblet near the skull (Doumet-Serhal 2003b, 46, 2004a, 90). Here, given the richness of this tomb, we may be seeing

intersections between age and status (amongst other identities) dictating the style of burial and associated goods. The second example, from Latrun (Northeast), is slightly less clear as, in this case, we are dealing with a burial context containing four individuals, including three adults and one child aged 4–5 years. A dagger was found in association with Individual I, although based on the published description, it is unfortunately unclear whether Individual I was the aforementioned child, or a biological female aged 18–20 years buried beneath the child (Kogan-Zehavi and Nagar 2017). Despite these complications, the examples discussed above suggest several important things, especially when considered alongside the increased evidence for non-adults in the mortuary record of the MBA.

Firstly, these examples emphasise the difficulties in assigning a simple cut-off age between childhood and adulthood and, instead, suggest that this transition could be shaped by a range of intersecting factors, chronological age being just one of these. More importantly, it starts to shine a light on the potential significance of non-adults or at least the burials of non-adults in identity creation and expression during the MBA. Along with the growing importance of lengthy interactions with the dead and ancestral communities, particularly during the MB II (see Chapter 4), children's burials were perhaps an alternative or additional arena for the expression of power. Rather than simply communicating the idea of ascribed rather than attained wealth, rich or remarkable child burials could be used as active locations for the (re-)creation and negotiation of elite identities, as well as the 'hoarding' of generational capital.⁹ Via the visible adornment and provisioning of infants and children, especially with objects more often associated with adults, a new status and identity for both the deceased and living could be configured. Irrespective of chronological age, through such practices, adults could perhaps be created.

Notions of power and authority are also worth further contemplating. Greenberg (2019, 197), for example, argues that some of the earliest MB I weapon-associated burials (see below for further discussion) represent individuals who played a leadership role in the re-emerging fortified settlements of this period. During a period characterised by societal and settlement reconfiguration (see Chapter 3), I would suggest that non-adult burials were just as much of a powerful instrument for the negotiation of power and status. Such practices may well have continued into the later second millennium (i.e. LBA), with the burials (two non-adults and one adult) from the 'Schatzhaus' at Kamid el-Loz (see Chapter 3) perhaps also being linked to active expressions of familial authority and power. The increased number of non-adults in the MBA mortuary record suggests, however, that this was not simply enacted in unusual or hyper-elite situations. Instead, the visible burial of non-adults, even those without any associated material (see Chapter 8), was an important way of dealing with the sociocultural impact of death, serving as a mode through which personal and generational identities could be shaped and reshaped.

Patterns beyond the Second Millennium BCE

To conclude this section, I want to briefly return to the dips that we see in the provisioning of non-adult burials during the fourth and first millennia BCE respectively. From the LCH through the EB I, children and infants are clearly visible in the archaeological record (see Figure 6.4(a) and (b)). As already discussed, however, they are not seen at every site or within every burial context. The EB I shaft tombs at Bab edh-Dhra, for example, contained non-adults ranging in age from unborn and less than 1 month to 12 years and older. Individuals under the age of one month (i.e. our foetus and neonate categories), in contrast, have only been recorded at a handful of other sites dating to this period. Indeed, it has been suggested that infants were perhaps not fully integrated into EB I society, lacking complete social personas (Greenberg 2019, 42). Could Bab edh-Dhra therefore be remarkable in this regard or, alternatively, might the lack of detailed osteological analysis and disarticulated nature of the remains have precluded the recognition of these age groups at other sites (e.g. Jericho)?

The only two other sites with possible neonates are Gezer (e.g. a jar burial within Tomb 2 (Macalister 1902, 352)¹⁰) and Yiftahel, where three jar burials, apparently containing neonates, were associated with EB I strata outside of the main settlement area (Khalaily, Milevski, and Getzov 2009). Given the early investigations at Gezer, this age assignment is tentative at best. Moreover, these practices are very different from those seen at Bab edh-Dhra. Indeed, even at the latter, patterns may shift over the course of EB I, with the youngest individuals (i.e. foetal and infant) appearing largely absent from Tomb G1, an EB IB charnel house, in comparison to the EB IA tombs (Ortner and Frohlich 2008, 129).

While discussions so far have focused on the youngest of individuals, if we broaden the age groups and consider the presence of both infants and children, the overall number of EB I sites increases, including jar burials at Tell Te'o (Eisenberg, Gopher, and Greenberg 2001), 'Ein Assawir (Yannai 2016), and Kabri (Kempinski et al. 2002). Isolated non-adult human remains have been found intermixed with animal remains from EB I occupation deposits at Kabri (Kempinski et al. 2002), while the disarticulated remains of an infant were found in association with fill deposits at Yiftahel (Smith and Horwitz 1997). Individuals classified as infants/children also appear in multiple successive burials beyond Bab edh-Dhra including at Gadot (Greenberg 2001), Megiddo (e.g. Tomb 1128 (Guy and Engberg 1938, 20), Arad (Amiran et al. 1986), Khirbat el-Khishash (Getzov, Nagar, and Cohen-Weinberger 2015), and Sha'ar Efrayim (Van den Brink 2011). Importantly, these individuals are not just older children, but also include persons under the age of five years old.

To give just one example, the EB I layers from Cave 1 at Sha'ar Efrayim revealed evidence for 36 individuals, including four individuals aged between 0 and 4 years, two individuals between 5 and 9 years, and six older children/adolescents, between the ages of 10 and 14 years old (Van den Brink 2011). Given this

evidence, and drawing upon discussions from Chapter 4, infants and young children may have assumed different roles in different contexts. While perhaps differentiated and maintaining bodily integrity when dying very young (i.e. before or shortly after birth) in other circumstances, individuals, even those falling into the category of young children/infants, could be integrated into wider social groupings and, in the same way as adults, could be disarticulated and broken down into their constituent parts. Were these groups therefore simply seen as adults or can we detect differentiation in terms of the materials (or lack of) found associated with them?

What is particularly notable about the materials dating to EB I is that very few individuals, either adult or non-adult, are found in clear association with artefactual material. This is not to suggest that EB I tombs are empty; artefactual material is abundant in these contexts (see Chapters 3 and 8 for examples). Rather, due to the deliberately commingled and disarticulated nature of the remains, clear associations or relationships between bodies and objects often cannot be determined. By and large then, based on both the inclusion in and lack of directly associated material remains, young children, at least at some sites, were being treated in the same way as adults. Age (biological) difference, thus, does not seem to have been a significant factor dictating or shaping burial treatments and practices. The same cannot, however, be said for the first millennium BCE.

Much has been written on the use of jars and other pottery vessels for the burial of young infants and children, with scholarship focusing on the links between jars and the womb, as well as intriguing associations between infant burials and production (e.g. Brereton 2013, 2016; Hallote 2001, 38; Ilan 1995, 135). Hallote (2001, 37), in her analysis of MBA burials in the southern Levant, argues that the burial of infants and young children in jars gains particular popularity during this period, with 17% of house sites having infant jar burials under their floors, while this figure falls to 14% by the IA. Similar arguments have also been made by other scholars, suggesting that the tradition of infant jar burials largely ceases with the LBA before re-emerging as a new form of practice (Be'eri et al. 2020; Birney and Doak 2020, 342–43). This paucity and shift, however, cannot only be seen within the context of jar burials.

Thinking back to the plots discussed towards the beginning of this chapter (Figures 6.4 and 6.6), during the IA we also see a drop in the number of children in the mortuary record, as well as a proportional drop in the number of infants and children being directly provisioned with associated materials. By way of example, children (18 out of 107 individuals) appear to be significantly under-represented at IA Ashkelon, while a clear differentiation can also be seen in the types and amounts of goods associated with adults versus non-adults. The latter, while often found with jewellery, and in contrast to the patterns discussed for the MBA, are rarely associated with juglets and/or combined assemblages of jars, juglets, and bowls (Master and Aja 2017, 138–39). For some of the youngest individuals buried intramurally at the site, it has even been questioned whether beads and shells found in close proximity were meant

as deliberate offerings or were simply part of the fill layers accumulating around burials (Birney and Doak 2020, 342). The placement of intramural burials at this site is also interesting, set in high-traffic areas, living spaces and transitional contexts, and possibly associated with the liminality of these individuals (Birney and Doak 2020, 342).

This pattern is not only seen at Ashkelon. Indeed, if we exclude the infant and child remains from the mass (re-)burials at Ashdod (Haas 1971, 213), we are dealing with a relatively small number of burial contexts. Exceptions to this include Iron II Tomb C2 from Akhziv, which contained the remains of 40 individuals, including 14 children (Mazar 2001), and cave burials dated to Iron Age II from Ketef Hinnom, Jerusalem (Nagar 2015). Here we can also recall patterns discussed in the previous chapter and the paucity of non-adult cremations. Rather than the decline in infant jar burials or lack of infant cremations simply reflecting shifts in burial type and form, however, the evidence points towards a broader reconfiguration of the ways in which infants and children were incorporated into the burial record. In direct contrast to the MBA, it may also reflect the devaluation of the role of non-adults in the construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of broader social identities.

This is not necessarily to suggest lack of familial concern for infants and children in daily life. As with the lack of textual sources concerning child mortality, such subjects and practices could have been confined to the immediate household (Schmidhuber 2019, 174). It does, however, suggest that their perceived role in society had shifted. As this overview has thus shown, the visibility and ways in which infants and children were treated in death shifted over time and space. Assuming a single role, significance, or burial 'norm' for non-adults, and even sub-groups within this category is thus problematic. The same can also be said for the ways in which biological sex and, by extension (or assumption), gender have been approached in the mortuary record, a topic to which I will now turn.

Gender and Sex: 'Warrior' Burials and Beyond

To bring this chapter to a close I want to shift to explore the relationships between biological sex, gender, and the mortuary record where, by necessity, we are largely focused on adult individuals. As touched upon in Chapter 2, while studies using evidence from aDNA to fingerprint data have attempted to elucidate biological sex in non-adult individuals, the merits of these techniques are still debated and, for a variety of reasons, have had limited uptake within the study region. Despite this, age still plays an important role in our considerations, with the relationship between biological sex and age representing just one intersection shaping identity in the ancient world.

I have already covered some of the limitations in data impacting an exploration of biological sex and burial treatment in the archaeological record of the Levant (Chapter 1). From over 43,000 individuals recorded by the project there is only biological sex information for just under 4000 individuals

(i.e. under 10% of the total MNI recorded by the project).¹¹ Certainty levels are also varied and, by way of reminder, when sex seems to have been solely assigned based on associated artefacts, these assessments have been recorded with a negligible certainty and, as outlined in Chapter 1, are generally excluded from plots/discussions. Discounting data with lower certainty levels can obviously distort or shift overall patterns and for certain periods/phases a sizeable proportion of sexed individuals may have less than definitive certainties associated with them (compare Figure 6.7(a) and (b)).

For the Late Chalcolithic (c. 4500–3800 BCE), for example, the differential between female versus male biologically sexed individuals is significantly shaped by the site of Ma'abarot. Here, the majority¹² of biologically sexed individuals appear to have been male (Agelarakis et al. 1998, 435, 439; Nativ 2014, 40–41; Porath 2006, 48). Given that less than 200 individuals contribute to the plots for this 700-year time-block, a single site (and thus male sexing of over 25% of the less than 200 sexed individuals) can significantly affect wider trends, whether or not both uncertain and certain data are included. These patterns can be further nuanced or complicated by also considering data where only qualitative numerical assessments are available.¹³ At Peqi'in, for example, the overall MNI is potentially somewhere between 453 and 600, while the ratio between biologically sexed males and females was roughly equal prior to the age of 15, with the number of males from the age of 20+ exceeding that of females. Finally, a higher percentage of female individuals in the 15–20 age group was linked to increased mortality rates due to childbirth (Nagar 2013, 385).

As these examples demonstrate, overall trends and patterns can often be distorted by a single site, uncertain data or data that are harder to statistically analyse. This being said, these variations also shine a light on localised trends and patterns. The predominance (or possibly even absence of biologically sexed females) of males at Ma'abarot does not represent a standard mortuary profile and has a variety of potential explanations, from biases/issues with biological sexing (see Chapter 1), cultural selection on the basis of biological sex, to mortality events impacting a specific portion of society (likely also culturally influenced). Leaving aside a further discussion of uncertain data for now, what is of interest here are patterns that appear to be seen through all plot variations and thus could potentially represent wider shifts and changes, rather than localised patterns or variations. In this respect, the end of the third to early second millennia would appear to stand out, with the differential between the frequency of females versus males being at its most pronounced during this nearly thousand-year period (from c. 2500–1600 BCE).

Data on biological sex for the period between the latter half of the third millennium BCE (i.e. EB IV or Late EBA) through the first half of the second millennium BCE (i.e. MBA) have been recorded from 76 sites included in the project. The majority of these have MNI data, albeit at different certainty levels; thus, the trends in the plots presented here (Figure 6.7(a) and (b)) do not significantly alter if qualitative assessments (e.g. numerous; major vs. minor) are included or not. Momentarily excluding examples where only one biological sex is apparently present (28 sites, 16 sites where females are absent and 12 sites

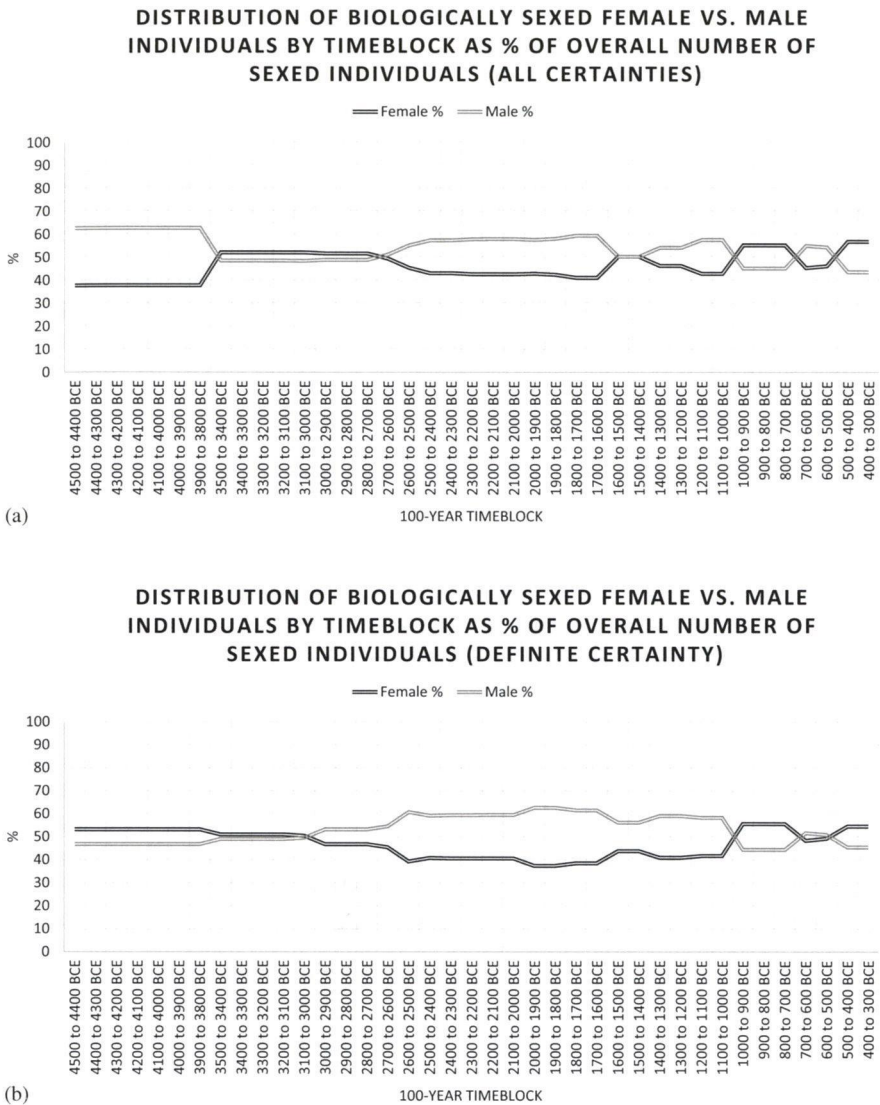


Figure 6.7 (a) Biologically sexed female vs. male individuals as a percentage of the overall number of sexed individuals (all certainties) by 100-year time-block compared with (b) those classified with definitive certainty for both biological sex and period.

where males are absent) or where the ratio between biological males and females is 1:1 (15 sites), biologically sexed males outnumber females at over 70% of sites (24 out of 33 sites) or, if we take into account all the sites with data on biological sex, c. 53% (40 out of 76 sites). At a handful of sites (eight in total) where both biological sexes are present, biological males make up over 70% of the mortuary population, a pattern that is worth slightly further consideration.

At least in some cases, we may simply be dealing with the vagaries of data availability, especially when very few individuals have been biologically sexed. By way of example, out of the 23 burial contexts recorded from MBA Gesher (Garfinkel and Cohen 2007) only seven individuals could be biologically sexed, with a ratio of 2:5 female to male individuals. Here, we are clearly dealing with very partial data. The same largely holds true for sites such as MBA Khirbet Minha/Munhata, with Tomb 641 (Hallote 1994, 189) containing the disarticulated remains of 49 individuals including 25 non-adults and 24 adults (nine males, two females, and 13 individuals of indeterminate biological sex). Even at sites with larger datasets, such as EB IV Tell Bi'a (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998) or MBA Ashkelon (Baker 2006, 2010, 2012), we are still dealing with a large proportion of individuals for whom biological sex remains unknown. Recalling discussions from Chapter 2 regarding biases in sexing methods, we can also wonder whether these patterns are the product of data collection and analysis and, thus, partly a reflection of contemporary rather than ancient sociocultural trends. In spite of this, it is worth delving into the datasets in slightly more detail, to determine whether beyond the shifting ratio of female to male individuals, broader patterns can be found between the ways in which biologically sexed females versus males are being treated in the archaeological record. Here we can turn to the thorny issue of so-called 'warrior burials', a term that has rightly been brought into question and further complicated in recent publications (e.g. Kharobi et al. 2021; Kletter and Levy 2016).

As a case study, I want to focus in on the MBA, largely by way of complement to my earlier discussions regarding children during this period. As a caveat, therefore, it should be emphasised that the patterns and ideas discussed below do not necessarily apply to any other time period—such analyses are a story for another day. At first glance, then, a simple pattern can be detected in the data. If we explore human remains associated with weaponry dated to the MBA (including MB I and MB II), no definitive evidence exists for any biologically sexed females included in this study being associated with weapons (Table 6.8).

Table 6.8 The relationship between biologically sexed males and weapon type (MBA).

<i>Weapon type</i>	<i>MNI (all male)</i>
Axe	9
Dagger	26
Spearhead	6
Total	41

This table includes data from the sites of Jericho, Gesher, Tell Rehov, Sidon, Dhahrat el Humriya, Lachish, Fassuta, Tell Qasile, Rishon le-Zion, Pella, and Bet Hilqiya.

Note the figures in this table represent the total numbers of each weapon type associated with males.

Exploring age against or alongside these data somewhat nuances these patterns, with, as already discussed, a handful of non-adults being associated with weapons (Table 6.9 and see Chapter 8 for examples). By and large, however, weaponry is associated with adult individuals and, in the case of the MBA, biologically male adults. As I will demonstrate, this has created a degree of circular argumentation in the wider literature. Burials with associated weapons who have been biologically sexed male are also gendered male, while un-biologically sexed burials with weapons are assumed, by proxy, to be both biologically and gendered male.

As Kletter and Levy (2016, 21) highlight in their article on ‘Warrior Burials’ in the Levant, one of the main issues with discussions surrounding this topic is that tombs are often considered in isolation, rather than as part of the whole. Their research proposes that warrior graves should, instead, be viewed as “... mostly male graves typical of their period...” (Kletter and Levy 2016, 23). This shift away from the elision of weapon and warrior is to be commended and is something that has also been taken up by others in Western Asia (e.g. Kharobi et al. 2021). As scholars such as Härke (e.g. 1990, 1997, 2014) and Williams (e.g. 2005, 2006) have elegantly demonstrated for early Anglo-Saxon weapon-associated burials, the presence of weapons may be less about the identity of the deceased and more about the living community, and their desire to compose a particular biography or narrative for the dead. Drawing inspiration from such work, here, I want to think a little more about three specific points: first, their identification as ‘typical’; second, the identification of weapons associated burials as ‘male’ (both biological and gendered); and finally, the grouping of these burials into a single category, whether we call them ‘warrior’, ‘weapon associated’, or otherwise.

To tackle the first point, if we consider the total number of weapons found in MBA burial contexts recorded by the project, we are dealing with somewhere around 480 artefacts, not including burial contexts where the numbers of weapons are unknown, but presence is noted (Table 6.10). If we are to only consider weaponry that can be directly associated with biologically sexed and/or aged individuals, we are dealing with a tiny proportion of the overall data (less than 20%). Reconstructing patterns based on such a small sample is clearly problematic and, given our currently very limited data on age and sex from even extensively excavated sites such as Jericho (e.g. Shafiq 2010; Shay 1983)¹⁴ and Rishon le-Zion (Nagar and Eshed 2018),¹⁵ potentially misleading. Further challenges also arise when trying to explore these patterns.

As I have already discussed, the ratio of female to male burials at sites dating to the EB IV and MBA is not equal, yet to argue for weaponry and, in particular, daggers being found in a large proportion of male graves, in Kletter and Levy’s research (2016), a 1:1 ratio between female and male is assumed. The imbalance between females and males may very well result from data biases; however, it is intriguing that these imbalances are more pronounced for the EB IV-MBA periods. Could this represent the preferential (archaeologically visible) burial of biologically male individuals or are these patterns simply

Table 6.9 The relationship between biologically aged individuals and weapon type (MBA).

<i>Weapon type</i>	<i>Infant</i>	<i>Child</i>	<i>Child/ adolescent</i>	<i>Adolescent</i>	<i>Non- adult</i>	<i>Adolescent/ Adult</i>	<i>Adolescent/ Young Adult</i>	<i>Young Adult</i>	<i>Young Adult/ Middle Adult</i>	<i>Middle Adult</i>	<i>Middle Adult/ Older Adult</i>	<i>Older Adult</i>	<i>Adult</i>	<i>Total</i>
Axe			1			1		3	3	9	2	1	4	24
Blade	1	1						1	1					4
Dagger		2	3	1		2	3	3	13	18	5	2	11	63
Spearhead		1	1	1	1			1		4		1	6	16
Sword								1						1
Weapon													1	1
Total	1	4	5	2	1	3	3	9	17	31	7	4	22	

This table includes data from the sites of Jericho, Gesher, Tell Rehov, Ras el-'Ain, Kamid el Loz, Tell Arqa, Ashkelon, Ashkelon (Ramat Eshkol), Migdal North, Sidon, Megiddo, Lachish, Fassuta, Tell Qishon/Tell Kishion, Tell Qasile, Rishon le-Zion, Tell Far'ah North, Amrith/Amrit, Pella, Jerusalem, Holyland Hotel, Latrun (Northeast), and Bet Hilqiya.

Note the figures in this table represent the total numbers of each weapon type associated with different age categories.

Table 6.10 Comparing the total number of weapons found in association with MBA burial contexts and those directly associated with biologically sexed and aged individuals.

<i>Weapon type</i>	<i>Total number of weapons found within MBA burial contexts (all certainties)</i>	<i>Total number of weapons found within MBA burial contexts directly associated with biological sexed males (all certainties)</i>	<i>% of weapons found with biological sexed males (all certainties)</i>	<i>Total number of weapons found within MBA burial contexts directly associated with biological aged individuals (all certainties)</i>	<i>% of weapons found with biological aged individuals (all certainties)</i>
Arrowhead	23	0	0	0	0
Axe	76	11	14	24	32
Blade	21	0	0	4	19
Dagger	231	30	13	63	27
Javelin	1	0	0	0	0
Macehead	5	0	0	0	0
Projectile point	1	0	0	0	0
Spearhead	105	7	7	0	0
Sword	6	0	0	1	17
Weapon	11	0	0	1	9
Grand total	480	48	10	93	19

a result of the scholarly environments in which these assessments have been carried out? Attempting to answer these questions is extremely challenging and would require a significant re-analysis of the skeletal sample, ideally via a blind study undertaken by different institutions and specialists. Such a study is obviously beyond the remit of the current project but may represent an interesting avenue for future investigation.

To take these arguments one step further, based on the data recorded for this project over 100 biologically male (MBA) individuals were associated with some form of material culture. While all the recorded weapon burials were assessed as male, just over 30% of males (32 out of 105 biologically sexed males associated with material culture) were found in association with weapons, which may suggest that something more than an average ‘male’ burial is at play here. If we just examine burials that have been assigned to MB I (c. 2000–1800 BCE),¹⁶ then the percentages are much higher, with over 50% of male burials being associated with weapons (22 out of 43 individuals), a figure that may well support some of Kletter and Levy’s (2016) interpretations. This, however, still

leaves us with c. 50% of the biologically sexed male population that are not associated with weaponry.

Here, I do not necessarily mean to suggest that the existing patterns are wrong; I simply seek to highlight some of the gaps and nuances in our data. If our datasets were to be expanded and restudied, we could very well see a replication and continued expansion of the current patterns. Equally, if weapons were to be found in association with biologically sexed females, those individuals' lived experiences may have fallen outside of binary categorisations or, alternatively, the communities burying them may have chosen to express and choreograph a masculine identity in death. Despite these gaps in data, and whether interpreting these burials as elite warriors or simply average 'male' burials, there may be more to say about individuals buried with weaponry during the MBA. After all, archaeological evidence is always fragmentary and partial. Rather than categorising these burials by the weaponry associated with them, can we explore these contexts more holistically in order to consider the individuals within them and the intersecting identities and life histories they embody in death?

In his seminal work on early Medieval 'warrior burials', Härke (2000, 2014), based on a slight difference in stature between males with and without weapons, suggested that such depositions were shaped by both social status and a Germanic ethnicity. To date, relatively few analyses of this kind have been carried out within Western Asia, although a recent study of weapon-associated burials from MBA Sidon stands as an excellent example of the types of data that such studies can generate. Based on pathological analysis, dental traits, and isotopic analysis, Kharobi et al. (2021, 1163–1164) suggested that no clear difference could be seen in terms of the ancestral origins or pathological conditions between weapon- and non-weapon-associated burials at the site. Leaving aside the question of ancestral origins, an association that has also been questioned in Anglo-Saxon studies (Williams and Alexander 2019, 64), the lack of distinctive pathological and activity-related conditions at Sidon calls into question the simple association between 'weapons' and 'warriors'. As Kharobi et al. (2021, 1160–1163) highlight, when compared to the wider MBA skeletal assemblage, no distinctive signs of interpersonal violence could be seen on any of skeletal remains deriving from so-called 'warrior graves'.

Isotopic analysis similarly illustrated a lack of discernible difference between weapon- and non-weapon-associated burials, with a general diet characterised by a reliance on C₃ crops with little C₄ or marine influence. There were also no differences in $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ or $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values between biological sexes (Kharobi et al. 2021, 1161). A low incidence of carious lesions in weapon-associated burials, when compared to the wider population, may be indicative of a differing life-style or diet. Thus, while the isotopic analysis suggests no discernible pattern, these oral indicators could be related to different food preparation methods and/or access to better oral hygiene (Kharobi et al. 2021, 1163–1164). Given that five out of the six weapon-associated individuals studied by Kharobi et al.'s project were c. 13 years or older¹⁷ these patterns may well be reflective of the life history of these individuals and, in part, possibly their status or

privilege in life. The only clear outlier within the isotopic patterns discussed here was Burial 12, whose diet was distinctly herbivorous and who was also placed in a different burial position (Doumet-Serhal and Kopetzky 2011, 12; Kharobi et al. 2021, 1158, Table 1, 1163). I will return to this example shortly; however, first, I want to briefly consider the wide range of materials that are also found in weapon-associated tombs and how these artefacts may (or may not) intersect with and serve to communicate different aspects of identity.

As might be expected, pottery vessels are a common feature of both burials associated with and lacking weapons (although see Chapter 8 for a broader discussion of patterns). Out of the 87 aged individuals associated with weaponry, 78% (68 in total) of these individuals were also associated with pottery vessels (see Table 6.11). These figures are directly in line with the total number of biologically sexed (and biologically sexed male) individuals associated with pottery (77% and 78% respectively). The overall number of sexed individuals associated with seals or items of personal grooming (e.g. combs or toiletry sets) is much smaller, and thus, any analyses are not statistically significant. As there is a visible increase in the number and variety of personal grooming items during the MBA (Chapter 8), it is at least worth mentioning that no sexed individuals associated with weaponry are also associated with such artefacts. Also, notable is the underrepresentation of items of personal ornamentation.¹⁸ Rather than focusing on burials with weapons where items of personal ornamentation are absent, however, here I want to explore those that do include these items. Examples recorded by the project come from four extensively excavated sites: Jericho, Rishon le-Zion, Sidon, and Tell Qasile. What is also of potential interest is that all of these burials (bar one dated to MB II based on a scarab ring, from Tell Qasile (Tomb 606 (Kletter 2006, 70–72)) are likely associated with items interpreted as clothing fastenings or accessories.

By way of example, Burial 176 from Rishon Le Zion, an adult male c. 35–45 years of age, was found with a bronze dagger on their hip and bronze axe near their right shoulder. Their head appears to have been decorated with silver pieces, interpreted by the investigators as a possible decorated cap or diadem (Levy and Kletter 2018, 78). They were, in other words, clearly dressed for the grave. The positioning of weaponry allows us to reconstruct potentially absent organic materials, and, in the case of daggers, it is likely that many of these were originally harnessed and attached to belts, likely of leather (Prell 2019, 323). Shaft tomb J3 from Jericho provides an excellent example of this, albeit in this case, a metal version. In this tomb, a *possible* young adult male was found in association with three bronze daggers and three axe heads, numerous pottery vessels, including a bowl with a carved ram's head, stone vessels, the disarticulated remains of a sheep, a scarab, and cylinder seal (the only example from the dataset being discussed here), as well as metal and bone pins. An equid was found buried in the shaft of this tomb, and a fragmentary bronze belt was also found on this individual's left side (Kenyon 1960, 306–8). Worth emphasising here is the fact that this individual was equipped with three

Table 6.11 Biologically aged and sexed individuals dated to the MBA associated with weaponry and other forms of material culture recorded by the project.

Total number of MBA aged individuals associated with weapons ¹	87	100%
Weapons and pottery vessels ²	68	78
Weapons and animal remains ³	34	39
Weapons and personal ornamentation ⁴	19	22
Weapons and personal grooming ⁵	0	0
Weapons and seals ⁶	2	2
Weapons and scarabs ⁷	6	7

^{1.} Compared to 600 aged individuals directly associated with material culture.

^{2.} Compared to 479 sexed individuals directly associated with pottery vessels.

^{3.} Compared to 133 aged individuals directly associated with animal remains.

^{4.} Compared to 169 aged individuals directly associated with items of personal ornamentation.

^{5.} Compared to 15 aged individuals directly associated with items of personal grooming.

^{6.} Only three aged MBA individuals are associated with seals, all adults.

^{7.} Compared to 94 aged individuals directly associated with scarabs.

Total number of MBA sexed individuals associated with weapons ¹	32	100%
Weapons and pottery vessels ²	25	78
Weapons and animal remains ³	15	47
Weapons and personal ornamentation ⁴	5	16
Weapons and personal grooming ⁵	0	0
Weapons and seals ⁶	1	3
Weapons and scarabs ⁷	3	9

^{1.} Compared to 160 sexed individuals directly associated with material culture. 105 were biologically sexed male.

^{2.} Compared to 124 sexed individuals directly associated with pottery. 82 were biologically sexed male.

^{3.} Compared to 46 sexed individuals directly associated with animal remains. 32 were biologically sexed male.

^{4.} Compared to 59 sexed individuals directly associated with items of personal ornamentation. 30 were biologically sexed male.

^{5.} Only three sexed MBA individuals are associated with items of personal grooming and two were biologically sexed male.

^{6.} Only three sexed MBA individuals are associated with seals, one was biologically sexed male.

^{7.} Compared to 40 sexed individuals directly associated with scarabs. 22 were biologically sexed male.

daggers, only one of which could presumably have been displayed on the belt at a time. An adult male from Tomb B133 at Rishon le-Zion was also associated with a bronze belt, one of only four examples documented from the site, and in this case a bronze dagger appears to have been attached to the belt on the hip of the deceased (Levy and Kletter 2018, 63).

It is likely that we are significantly underestimating the number of (non-metal) belts originally associated with weaponry (e.g. Ziffer 2018, 544). Metal

belts, however, are far less common and only documented from a handful of MBA sites in the Levant, Egypt, Cyprus, and Anatolia¹⁹ (e.g. Doumet-Serhal and Kopetzky 2011, 31–33; Prell 2019). All the documented examples of MBA metal belts found with sexed individuals are associated with biologically sexed males, although this is interestingly not the case for the documented EBA examples from Iraq and the northern Levant (Prell 2019, 321), perhaps suggesting a different type of identity or embodied relationship. Based on the positioning of the surviving MBA examples, textual records, including grave inventories, and depictions on seals and *via* statuettes, the prime function of (metal) belts appears to have been to facilitate the harnessing and display of weapons (Prell 2019; Ziffer 2018).

This idea of display is worth considering a little further. Metal weaponry, as has been suggested in relation to the early medieval warrior burials discussed earlier, can have a cultural biography, creating not only links across time but also between different individuals (e.g. Härke 1997, 2014; Williams 2005). In addition, as should now be apparent from the discussions, the simple presence of a weapon does not necessarily a warrior make. Instead, the inclusion of such objects within a grave can also represent selections made by the living (on behalf of the dead), aimed at creating particular narratives, relationships, and identities at the point of burial (Sayer, Sebo, and Hughes 2019; Williams 2005; Williams and Alexander 2019, 64).

In the context of Western Asia, metal belts and weapons (usually a dagger) are a powerful combination, linked by Prell (2019, 323–24) to the high status of deceased, as well as possible ideas of virility. Such belts, however, were not necessarily worn in life and could instead have been gifted or even specifically manufactured for a funerary context (Philip 2006, 154; Prell 2019, 323). The same idea could also apply to weaponry (see Archi (2012, 11) for a discussion of this in association with the EB IV Ebla texts), and such a possibility becomes particularly apparent in cases such as Shaft tomb J3 at Jericho, where three daggers were found in association with a single individual. Such instances also emphasise the choreographed identities that could be produced by the living for the dead. In order to bring these discussions to a close, therefore, I want to examine two case studies in more detail, both from the site of Sidon (Burial 27 and Burial 12). Both burials are of biologically adult males and contain weapons; however, different intersecting identities, life histories, and narratives can be seen to be at play through these two examples.

Burial 27 at Sidon (see Figure 6.8), a constructed tomb, contained the remains of a flexed articulated adult male c. 40 years of age.²⁰ In addition to traces of a potential metal belt (in the form of silver studs and pins), this individual was also associated with a bronze fenestrated ‘duckbill’ axe head, a dagger, pottery vessels, a silver headband, silver anklet, silver bracelet, carnelian and gold bracelet, and one bronze earring (Doumet-Serhal 2004c; Doumet-Serhal and Kopetzky 2011, 13, 31; Ogden 2004). Unlike the items of jewellery which appear to have been displayed on the body, the axe and dagger were placed on top of a stone near the skull (Doumet-Serhal and Kopetzky 2011, 13, 17; Ogden 2004).

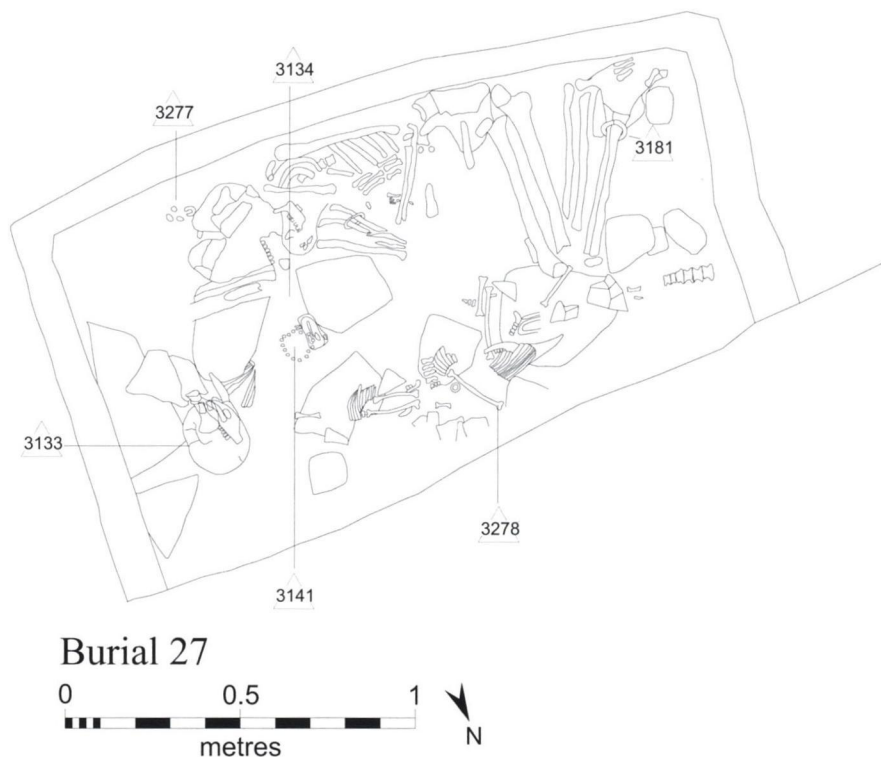


Figure 6.8 Burial 27 from Sidon. Image courtesy of Claude Doumet-Serhal.

Traces of the silver belt, meanwhile, were visible near the lumbar, abdomen, and elbow regions, and perhaps suggest that a belt was worn and displayed on the body in death (Doumet-Serhal and Kopetzky 2011, 31; Ogden 2004).

Such differential placement of objects may also attest to the creation of a complex and multilayered tableau. Could the display of the metal belt, separate from that of the dagger (and axe), have aimed to convey something about the different life histories or relationships embodied by these objects or was this simply dictated by individual preference? If metal belts were specifically produced or gifted for the mortuary context, they could have had very different biographies to the metal weaponry deposited within tombs which, as argued in relation to the early medieval warrior burials (e.g. Williams 2005, 265), could have been passed down between individuals and generations. The deposition of these objects and their differential placement on and around Burial 27's body, therefore, could have served to create and display the different relationships present in life (and death) between the deceased, individuals in the community, as well as wider institutions.

The burial also contained the remains of at least six slaughtered mammals and therefore represents one of the most richly provisioned tombs in terms of

animal remains (Chahoud 2016, 20; Vila 2004a, 33). The documented species include goat, sheep, pig, and domestic cattle, with over 300 mammal bones found within the tomb, as well as five fishbones and a shell. The mammal remains are of various ages and have predominantly been interpreted as food offerings (Vila 2004a), although whether for the deceased and/or as part of funerary feasting activities is unclear. Moreover, the mandible of a piglet and the maxilla of a sub-adult pig, elements without substantial edible flesh, were deposited within the tomb and have been identified as a symbolic deposit (Vila 2004a, 33). These represent the only pig bones included in this study in association with sexed weapon burials and one of a handful of MBA burials from Sidon associated with pig remains (Vila 2004a, 33).

While likely communicating aspects of status and the ability in life and/or in death to control, access, and amass a wide range of resources, the body of Burial 27 tells a more complex story. Although showing no evidence for involvement in interpersonal violence, his skeletal remains did display a well-healed fracture on the right foot (first distal phalanx), as well as evidence for musculoskeletal stress markers on both hands, as well as the clavicle and shoulders (Kharobi et al. 2021, 1160). He was also only one of two burials, along with Burial 12 (see below), studied by Kharobi et al. (2021, 1160), providing evidence for dental caries. If the limited levels of dental caries in Kharobi's study are a marker of different food preparation methods or good dental hygiene, the individual from Burial 27 (and also Burial 12) would appear to be slightly distinct from the rest of the weapon-associated burials studied by them. Moreover, the musculoskeletal stress markers and fracture (albeit well healed) suggest bodily movements and intensive activities putting stress on the hands and upper body (shoulders and collarbone) (Kharobi et al. 2021, Table S2).

Some of the interconnecting relationships (within and beyond Sidon) embodied within the grave are also worth considering. Based on the examination of non-metric dental traits, little overall difference could be detected among the individuals buried in the cemetery (both weapon- and non-weapon-associated). Moreover, during the course of the MBA, and despite Sidon's important role as a hub within MBA trade networks, there seems to have been no marked introduction of newcomers into the site (Kharobi et al. 2021, 1163; Maaranen et al. 2023). Wider interconnections, however, can be seen via the deposited materials. The silver associated with Burial 27, for example, was likely sourced from the Central Taurus (Véron and Le Roux 2004), while the biochrome jug from the tomb also showed wider interconnections. Decorations on this vessel, which possibly include a stylised quadruped, have been compared to decorations on a jug from Tell Tweini in Syria, just south of modern Latakia, as well as similar fragments from Tell el-Dab'a (Bagh 2004, 46–48). Taken all together, while the weapons and the biological sex of this individual may have played a key role in the creation of the deceased's identity, it is the combined assemblage, including his bodies' biography, the wide variety of

animal remains, and other associated goods that makes this grave remarkable and potentially communicate a broader story about this individual.

A very different narrative appears to be crafted by the burial (Burial 12 (see Figure 6.9)) of a (young) adult male aged c. 18–35 years of age (Kharobi et al. 2021, 1158, Table 1). This individual was found extended on their back, their skull placed on a supporting stone, arms crossed, with hands on their pelvis. Within the same stone-lined grave were found the disarticulated bones (fragments of a pelvis and head of a femur) of a child. I will return to the topic of burial positioning in the next chapter and the use of stone supports in Chapter 8; however, it is worth noting that out of 69 individuals from Sidon for whom burial positioning was recorded by this project, only six burials, including Burial 12, were extended (c. 9%).²¹ The disarticulated remains of the child also found in the tomb may derive from another burial (Ogden and Schutkowski 2004, 162–63), although four out of the six²² extended burials were associated with other human remains, both disarticulated and articulated. Given my discussion on the role of multiple or simultaneous burials during the MBA in Chapter 4, this may also be a significant, albeit limited, practice at Sidon. If correct, we can consider the potential relationships that were being represented or possibly created via the deposition of these two individuals together, within the same burial context.

It is not only the presence of a second individual and burial positioning of the adult male from Burial 12, however, that mark this individual as unusual. The spearhead in the tomb was one of the larger examples found at Sidon, c. 12 cm in length, while the axe head, found underneath Burial 12's head, was not designed be used, having a socket which was sealed with a knob on either side (Doumet-Serhal and Kopetzky 2011, 12, 20).²³ Similar to the metal belt discussed above then, this weapon could have been specifically manufactured for a mortuary context, potentially creating a relationship between the deceased and anyone gifting or depositing the item and/or serving to convey something about the biography of this adult male in life and death. Like Burial 27, Burial 12 also showed evidence for dental caries, as well as trauma in the form of a healed fracture on the foot (fifth proximal phalanx) and a compression fracture on the fifth lumbar vertebrae. The latter could have potentially caused compression of the spinal cord (Kharobi et al. 2021, 1160, Table S2), an ailment which, according to the third millennium BCE Ancient Egyptian Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus, could not be treated (Breasted 1930; Ko 2023, 1–3). If compression did occur, this could have caused everything from numbness, to an inability to walk and loss of bladder and bowel control (Ko 2023, 16, Table 1.2). As such, if living for any length of time with these conditions, Burial 12 would likely have experienced considerable pain and would have required care and assistance.

Given the potentially herbivorous diet of this individual (Kharobi et al. 2021, 1163), his association with the disarticulated remains of a sheep and one bovine, as well as the fully articulated remains of a goat (Chahoud 2016, 18; Doumet-Serhal 2004a, 90), is also intriguing. The goat remains showed no

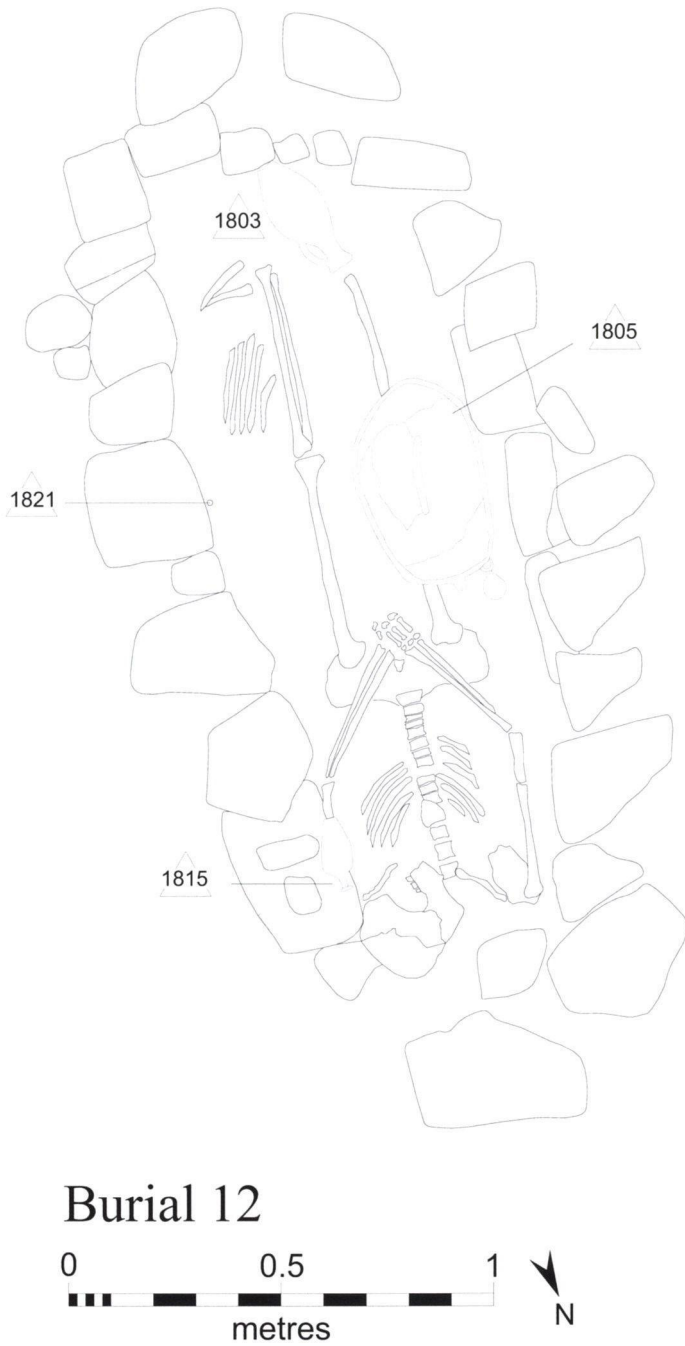


Figure 6.9 Burial 12 from Sidon. Image courtesy of Claude Doumet-Serhal.

evidence of butchery and were found within a large jar, positioned on top of Burial 12's right leg (Doumet-Serhal 2004a, 90). In addition to an axe and spearhead, three scarabs were also found associated with this individual, as well as five other pottery vessels (Doumet-Serhal 2003a, 10–11, Figure 12, 2003b, 38–40, 2004a, 90). The three scarabs from Burial 12 all include plant motifs and, in two cases, are combined with *nefer*-signs (Taylor 2004, 157), designs and signs well represented within the wider Sidon scarab assemblage (Loffet 2011; Taylor 2004). While not unusual, I wonder whether the selection and inclusion of three scarabs bearing plant motifs, likely as rings on the hands of this individual, is of significance, especially given this individual's possible herbivorous diet. Although in a Levantine context the symbolism of the *nefer*-sign, as well as the species of the represented plants, is unclear (Loffet 2011, 120), when combined with the rest of the tomb assemblage, these motifs perhaps played an important role in the communication and expression of the deceased's identity.

As an alternative to a herbivorous diet, Kharobi et al. (2021, 1163) suggest that another possible explanation for the lower $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ values of Burial 12 is that he spent the majority of his life beyond Sidon. Whichever explanation we adopt, while the disarticulated remains of sheep and cattle could be interpreted as provisions for the dead or remains from funerary feasting, the fully articulated goat would seem to represent something different. Vila (2004b, 170) interprets the goat from Grave 12 as a simple animal sacrifice, and, indeed, this animal species appears in a significant proportion of MB I graves at Sidon but usually in a particular, structured form, with the deposition of three quarters of the animal (Chahoud 2016, 125–16, Figure 124). The goat in Burial 12, estimated to have been less than three months old²⁴ (Chahoud 2016, 18), in contrast, appears to have been treated in much the same way as a human infant or child, protected within a large jar. When considered alongside the identified skeletal trauma, potential herbivorous diet of the human adult, male and vegetal motifs on the scarabs, the deposition of the young goat could be linked to concepts of (re-)production and creation. Were those burying this adult male attempting to ensure that the trauma he experienced in life was not also present in death or the afterlife?

Alternatively (or perhaps even in addition to the above), we also need to consider the different relationships that were potentially being represented or shaped in death. I have already mentioned the remains of the disarticulated child, possibly found in association with Burial 12. If deliberately deposited, the disarticulated and fragmentary nature of the child's remains would potentially suggest that they had been buried elsewhere, prior to being associated with Burial 12. If correct, this would represent a clear attempt to create or replicate some type of spatial or personal bond between the two individuals. How then would the goat fit into this scenario? Could the goat in Burial 12, despite its young age, have held special significance for this individual? If spending the majority of his life beyond Sidon, could Burial 12 have been involved in some type of herding or animal management activities or were the

relationships displayed here simply a narrative choreographed in death? While much of the above is only supposition, it illustrates that rather than simply viewing this burial as representing an adult male associated with weaponry, possible child and sacrificed animal, we should perhaps be interpreting these deposits as three individuals, each with rich, historied, and intertwined biographies, whether lived or created in death.

Concluding Remarks

Through the examples discussed here, I have demonstrated that beyond patterns associated with biological age and sex, different intersectional identities can be identified, even within an apparently discrete group of burials. Whether these differences can be more broadly linked to distinct gender or identity groups needs further exploration. It is not necessarily surprising, however, that it is at the intersections between age, gender, biological sex, animal, environment, local, and non-local that identities are shaped and moulded. Moreover, while this chapter has merely scraped the surface of what is possible, it has also highlighted that categories are mutable and changeable, shaped by sociocultural norms, as well as lived experiences.

In many ways the types of analyses and databases employed in this chapter (and volume) favour a narrow and circumscribed definition of biological sex, age, and gender, as well as the use of categories such as 'warrior' or even 'weapon-associated'. By working with a multi-scalar approach and allowing the uncertainties and inaccuracies to creep in, however, we can unmask a huge range of complexity and diversity. It is with these complexities in mind that I move forward to the next few chapters, to further explore the patterns that we can see in terms of burial positioning (Chapter 7) and provisioning (Chapter 8), before I move to the conclusion of this volume and attempt to tackle the thorny question of what a 'normative' burial in ancient Western Asia may look like.

Notes

- 1 The searches pulled from journals such as the *American Journal of Archaeology*, the *Bulletin of American Overseas Research*, *Current Archaeology*, *Levant*, and *Near Eastern Archaeology*.
- 2 Bioarchaeological studies at the site of Tyre el-Bass have suggested that no one under the age of 12 years was present within the cemetery (Aubet 2010, 145–46), while at Chalcolithic Peqi'in, non-adults under the age of 3–4 years were absent (Nagar and Eshed 2000, 28). In contrast, ageing of individuals from the EB IA tombs at Bâb edh-Dhrâ' suggest that c. 59% of individuals can be classified as non-adults (Ortner and Frohlich 2008, 234). Five per cent of these individuals are classified as adolescents.
- 3 Garroway specifically focuses on non-adults in the archaeological record, and thus, comparable data on adults are not available in her study. Based on the mortuary data collected, the MBA clearly stands as a period with the highest number of non-adult burials in comparison to earlier and later periods. It should be noted, however, that these figures may be distorted by the fact that the majority of sites surveyed by Garroway (2014, 218, footnote 3) also date to this period.

- 4 When we explore this figure as a proportion of the total number of aged infants and children by time-block, several other peaks also appear (Figure 6.6(b)).
- 5 Although see Garroway (2014, 233) for the discussion of differential distribution between infants and children from a selection of tombs at Jericho.
- 6 An artificial mound 'Spring Hill' adjacent to Tell es-Sultan.
- 7 T3004 was only partially excavated as it lay in the trench baulk. It is thus possible that additional associated materials remained unexcavated (Ilan 1996, 212).
- 8 This individual is not included in Table 6.7 as they are categorised by this project as an adolescent, rather than a child.
- 9 For similar ideas in relation to different periods and regions see Brereton (2013); Wygnańska (2018).
- 10 As a case in point for some of the discussions earlier, this jar burial was interpreted as evidence for infant sacrifice (Macalister 1902, 352).
- 11 Excluding information whereby the total number of sexed individuals is unclear but the presence of biologically sexed males vs. females is noted. Adding these examples increases this total by a minimum of over two hundred individuals if we count records that refer to multiple individuals as representing three or more individuals, those that refer to several as at least two, and those that indicate a presence as a least one.
- 12 Agelarakis et al. (1998, 439) suggest that 90% of the mortuary population were male (with the remaining 10% also probably being male); hence, it has been possible to calculate a figure, rather than simply include a qualitative numerical assessment as in the case of Peqi'in.
- 13 These qualitative numerical assessments are not included in Figure 6.6(a) and (b).
- 14 Shay's analysis included 46 individuals (c. 13%) out of a total mortuary population of 356 who could be biologically aged or sexed from the Jericho cemetery. While Shafiq's more recent (and robust) analysis included 105 individuals (c. 30%).
- 15 Biological sex could only be determined for c. 23% of excavated adult individuals (54 out of a total of 239 individuals), with nearly 6% of these individuals (14 in total) having an uncertain biological sex estimation (Nagar and Eshed 2018, 640, Table 13.2).
- 16 This may represent an under estimation of the total number of MB I burials as it excluded burials simply categorised in the original reports as MBA as well as those burials classified as MB I or MB II, where MB II is the more likely period.
- 17 The six individuals studied by Kharobi et al. (2021, 1158, Table 1) ranged in age from 1 and 6 years (Burial 13) to 36–49/36+ years (Burials 5 and 23).
- 18 This can be seen within both the category of aged individuals (although to a lesser extent) associated with weapons (22% compared to 28% of total aged individuals associated with items of personal ornamentation) and sexed individuals (16% compared to 37% of total sexed individuals with items of personal ornamentation). Personal ornamentation items as classified by this project include the following categories: Anklet, Armlet, Bead, Bracelet, Brooch, Button, Clothing, Clothing Fastening/Accessory, Digit Ring, Earring, Footwear, Footwear (Leather), Jewellery, Necklace, Pendant, Personal Ornamentation/Jewellery, Pin, Ring, Torque/Collar.
- 19 Prell's (2019) article provides an excellent overview of the distribution of MBA (and EBA) metal belts, from Tell el-Daba'a in Egypt to Kültepe in Anatolia.
- 20 In Kharobi et al. (2021, 1158, Table 1) the age of this individual is instead specified as between 18 and 49 years.
- 21 Burial 15 (Neonate), Burial 67 (older adult female), Burial 111 (unclassified and disturbed), Burial 66 (unclassified), Burial 102 (non-adult).
- 22 Burial 15 and Burial 111 were not associated with additional human remains.
- 23 Due to the presence of a knob on either side, a wooden shaft would not have been able to have been inserted into the socket. Hence, this weapon wouldn't have been hafted (Doumet-Serhal and Kopetzky 2011, 12).

- 24 Vila's (2004b, 169) original age estimation was between 1 and 2 years old which would fall into the category of older juvenile or younger sub-adult (Greenfield and Arnold 2008, 838, Table 1). Chahoud's (2016, 18) revised ageing would place in this individual in the category of neonate/infant (Greenfield and Arnold 2008, 838, Table 1).

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