1

UNDERSTANDING

The deep past of childhood

Is the study of childhood and children in the past an irrelevant sideline? Is it marginal to the real human story? Is prehistory itself of little relevance to modern society or to those whose interests in childhood are limited to the very recent past?

The narrower our perspective on the past, the narrower will be our understanding of the world we live in, or the future we design or seek to design. Our senses show us the world in three dimensions; our study and understanding of the past gives us the fourth dimension of time and, with archaeology, that understanding is not limited by our own memories, the often faulty oral testimony of others, or even the selectivity, redaction and elite authorship of written documents.

The danger of 'presentism' is that we assume the world we know and see is how the world must be. Studies of past societies remind us that members of our species – with the same physical and mental powers as ourselves – could and did live very different lives in different social and cultural frameworks. As the rate of change in our social world seems to increase, and even the physical environment in which we operate is said to have entered the 'Anthropocene', we need awareness of the subjectivity of our assumptions of human and societal norms. In this, understanding the broadest sweep of human history is essential – across the preliterate societies we call prehistory, as well as the historic societies which we know primarily through the written records of their literate minority.[1]

Taking this further, if we want to gain awareness of the past to help our thinking about the present and future, we are ill served by being selective. If we concentrated only on the ruling groups as in a history textbook of 100 years ago, we would be severely limited. If we looked only at the male half of society we would miss so much of the picture. When we look at the past,

we need to see a total society of children and infants, adolescents, adults and the old, men and women, work and family, economic life, cultural life and more.

It is basic to say that children are half of humanity and to emphasise both the role of motherhood in the lives of women and the central part in men's personal, economic and social lives that lies in raising a family. But children are more than this. Without children, culture and knowledge die. Without the company of their elders (and peers), children cannot acquire knowledge and share in culture and be equipped to transmit these during their own older lives. A culture without children ceases to exist, as much as a shipwrecked community of males on a desert island.

Human culture is a learned suite of accumulated abilities and behavioural patterns, which complement the limits of biology and instinct. The human story is that of substantial continuity and gradual change. Continuity means that practical skills, forms of knowledge and ability to operate in a group are passed on from individual to individual, from generation to generation. During the many years of human childhood, an individual acquires the means to operate as part of a social group, within which he or she will continue to pass on the society's accumulated culture to children and grandchildren. Even when knowledge is not formally taught, most of that knowledge is learned during the childhood years.

Because so much of our lives as the most advanced species on earth depend on cultural rather than biological factors, our period of dependency, of 'childhood', is longer than that of other mammals. Many animals gain their skills of movement, safety and independent feeding well before they reach their own reproductive age. Human children appear the slowest of mammals when judged by the time they take to gain the abilities required for adult social life. They start more helpless than a whale or a rabbit or a monkey; it takes them longer to learn what they need to become an adult; then they end up able to dominate every other form of known life. The length of childhood may appear to disadvantage young infants, making them dependent on their mothers for an extended period, but the investment in a long period of childhood has its rewards.

So in understanding childhood in history, in the prehistory of our species and in the evolutionary history of Australopithecines and other early hominins, we emphasise the place of culture over the limits of biology and emphasise the value of a long childhood over a quick spurt to independent adulthood. Children are not just a part of society whom we might choose to study if the data were available; they could be described as central to social and cultural tradition because the transmission of culture is the core of humanity, distinguishing ours from other species. And it is culture which is studied and revealed by archaeology and (for prehistoric societies) only by archaeology: material culture, settlement patterns and

Museum artist's image of a European Upper Palaeolithic family
(© National Museums NI)

economic life, social structures, as well as the impact of non-material beliefs and patterns.

Within the discipline of archaeology, we need to be constantly pressing the boundaries of what we investigate, describe, interpret and think. Each generation creates new questions as well as new techniques for investigation, and recognises the limits as well as the achievements of earlier scholarship. There are many topics studied which are far less significant than the processes of giving birth, raising and weaning infants, training and integrating children into the practical skills, economic lives, beliefs and social roles of society. Examining the burials of children, the artistic representation (and output) of children, the trial works of apprenticeships and the demography of early societies contributes to the central theme of making sense of the human past and interrogating its complexities and variability.

Awareness of children and childhood can also help to avoid oversimplifications that occur in archaeological interpretation. A figurine may not be a religious cult object but a child's doll. Daubs on a wall may be a

child's addition to adult artwork. Items buried with a child could reflect a formal set of ritual beliefs, or just be the tender sentimental offering of a family member or age mate. An unfamiliar assemblage of stone artefacts may just be the work of an early learner. And the puzzling but apparently deliberate association of objects in a domestic setting might just be the result of a young child playing.[2]

In this book I consider what we can say, know and interpret about children in times and places before written records, what we conventionally call human prehistory: the deep past of childhood. Much of this information comes from the work of archaeologists, but is complemented by that of other scientists. Physical anthropologists and biologists reveal what we can tell from the skeletal remains (bioarchaeology), environmental scientists put the archaeological evidence in context and professionals in other human sciences extend the debate. In periods of written records, historians and archaeologists (and often art and architectural historians) work hand in hand, and historical studies can feed back into interpretations of prehistory. In studies of recent small-scale and sometimes non-literate societies, cultural and social anthropologists and (to use an older term) ethnographers have provided pictures that can be compared, with caution, to societies of similar scale from the prehistoric past. When we consider the emergence of our species, *Homo sapiens*, and its distant relatives we rely on the work of palaeoanthropologists, and in turn this stimulates questions raised by comparison with other great apes and the contributions of different branches of the biological sciences.

WHO ARE CHILDREN, WHAT IS CHILDHOOD?

Although we are a biological entity, we are one dominated by social patterns ('culture'), and so our definition of childhood and its stages can vary, depending on whether we use biological or social criteria. As the narrative in this book suggests, there are widely different concepts of childhood and its stages in human societies across time and place, and there is no direct and consistent correlation between social category and biological age or category.[3]

The ambiguity can be a challenging one in archaeological interpretations of the prehistoric past.[4] Inevitably, citations using terms such as 'perinatal', 'infant', 'child', 'adolescent' and 'young adult' are likely to encounter these difficulties. In this book I typically use the terms 'children' and 'childhood' to include all who have not reached full biological and socially recognised adulthood.

A biologically fully mature male may still be considered a child in society for some years and subject to the rules, limitations and expectations of that

role. A girl who has not yet reached menarche may have left the parental home and be married.

Reaching reproductive age makes us a biological adult: able to bear children or to father them. When does full adulthood begin? The literature on childhoods past and present has no consistent usage. Infants can be anyone from the newborn to the fully weaned, or may be applied only to those under 1 year, or under 2. An 'adolescent' is someone whose puberty has begun but is not yet considered an adult: this is therefore a mixture of social and biological categories. Biologists use indicative criteria in relation to skeletal remains from archaeological sites to determine age and group age ranges for analysis.[5] They often use the term 'juveniles', while physical anthropologists sometimes apply the ungainly term 'sub-adult' (or 'pre-adult') to a broad range of ages.

In studying the bones retrieved from archaeological contexts, bio-archaeologists applying the techniques of osteoarchaeology typically classify a population by age group. Common categories are *Infans 1, Infans 2* and *Juvenilis*, together with *Adultus, Maturus* and *Senilis*. But different researchers may use slightly different age breaks between these categories, and in the present survey it is simpler to indicate specific ages and age ranges.[6]

The age of puberty has changed significantly with changes in health, diet and environmental factors. A European girl may typically experience her first period at the age of 12 or 13 today, notably earlier than her ancestors. A study applying new osteological techniques to 1000 skeletons showed that in much of medieval England menarche occurred around the age of 15, but in London (perhaps reflecting poor health and poor diet) it was estimated to be as late as 17.[7] Although puberty now starts earlier, the average age at first pregnancy has not moved with it. Similarly, reductions in the typical age of male puberty are seen over time, falling recently by up to an estimated year every 50 years according to one study, but do not correlate with changes in male status in society.[8] Medieval males from the same English study seemed to continue their physical adolescence until around 21 years, a surprising conclusion.

Stages of growth appear different too when we consider the brain of modern humans. The all-important neural connections in the cortex increase rapidly in the foetus and briefly in early infancy until about 6 months. The cortex volume increases until the age of 10 or 11 years in boys, 8 or 9 in girls, with a slow decrease thereafter.[9] Analysis of brain development also shows a neurochemical basis for the level of risk-taking seen in adolescence, which might alternatively be considered innovative explorative behaviour.[10]

Whatever the approach of bioarchaeologists and bioanthropologists in their analysis of skeletal remains, cultural perceptions of age groups will

differ widely. Children become adults when society says they do – not when biology does. Different societies have classified in very different ways the stages of childhood: infants, children and youths of the adolescent years.[11] Changes in the highly variable age of *social* adulthood of males and of females are certainly not in one direction in historical development. Adulthood is cultural, and may be indicated in archaeological evidence alongside what we know from history and the observation of recent and modern communities. Social patterns (time, place, class, belief, social practice and family situation) vary the definitions of infancy, childhood, adolescence and even the adult stages, certainly to the point before a person is expected to acquire a partner and raise a family.

Judging from current trends in my own city, my grandchildren will probably continue their education well into their 20s and not become parents themselves until well into their 30s. My English maternal grandmother (born in Lancashire in 1886) finished her schooling soon after reaching the age of 12, then the legally stipulated minimum to leave school, and was soon employed back at the same rural English elementary school as a school teacher, where she was working by the age of 15, until marriage at 21 and producing the first of five children at 22, before she died aged 37.

In every community, past and present, the key question is how society (and family) consider the stages of life. When does an infant begin to have a new status as a young child? Is an intermediate classification as adolescent/young adult recognised between childhood and adulthood? Must an adult male pass through further stages of social life before being eligible to take a partner? Is a daughter typically betrothed (even married) before puberty, or soon after, or does she remain as a dependent child for much longer? These are social and cultural, not biological, questions.

The English language terms 'toddler' and 'teenager' are relatively recent. The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the present meaning of 'toddler' only from 1876 (with an early possible use in 1837) and tracks 'teen-age' back to 1921 and 'teenager' from the 1950s, though to be 'in one's teens' is dated back to 1664. More recent still is the use of the phrase 'young adult' by publishers, bookshops and libraries to categorise books intended primarily for teenagers.

In pre-modern times, children often moved into the workforce well before they became marriageable adults, while European aristocrats might marry off their daughters at or before puberty. Most variable has been the period between being a child dependent on its parent for food, shelter, protection and learning skills, and a full adult, with an independent economic role and marriageable status. In Byzantium, legal responsibility for criminal actions began at the age of 7 years, when the strongest penalties were applicable, at least in theory. A child may become formally an adult at 10 or 12 (as in early Anglo-Saxon England),[12] at 13 (as in Jewish tradition), at 16,

Child and adult from the Mesolithic rock art of Cuevas del Engarbo, Spain

18, even at 21 (as in some very recent western contexts). In Britain, the legal age of adulthood was changed from 21 to 18 only on 1 January 1970. Before that date most university students would have been minors, the university having authority over their lives *in loco parentis*.

Culturally complex societies involve longer periods for the acquisition of the knowledge needed for participation as fully adult members of society, but they may also require their young to engage in economic activity or (for males) in war well before the age at which they are expected to marry and have children of their own. Within many hunter-gatherer societies no intermediate 'adolescent' stage is perceived between childhood and adulthood.[13] Among the Nayaka foragers of South India the concept of 'childhood' as an age stage between infancy and adulthood appears not to be recognised; adults have their own children, of course, as a family relationship, but society does not have 'children'.[14] In the Classical and post-Classical world of the Mediterranean, childhood (especially of the elites) ended much sooner for girls than for boys. Girls might be betrothed before puberty, married at or soon after puberty to older males, and already be mothers when boys of the same age were still in dependent roles and far from being considered of marriageable status. In some traditional Australian Aboriginal societies, girls could be promised at birth to older

males.[15] Such a model reflects the social role of girls as future mothers: a role in which the selection of the husband and therefore the father of their children are all-important. In different societies, young men have other roles: not least, in military service and defence, as well as in their contributions to the labour economy of the family before they have established economic status enough to support a family.

While modern western democracies may think of child marriages as something from distant times or places, over 160,000 under-age marriages were reported as allowed by courts in the USA between 2000 and 2010, including some of children aged 12 or 13.[16]

The importance of these distinctions shows up in the archaeological record of prehistoric societies, as we note in the chapters of this book on the life cycle of birth, growth and death. The distinction between infancy and childhood in archaeological narratives is complex. Newborn infants may not be recognised as established members of the family until they have shown they can survive the initial threats of illness – or indeed the frequent human pattern of infanticide, discussed in later chapters. Such infants may not be buried with the formality or structure of older children: this is a matter of the specific culture of their society. Neither biological analyses of juvenile burials nor more complex discussions of children in prehistory supply consistent views on where infancy ends.[17] It is social norms, very different between societies of the past, that determine whether the family member who dies during childhood (but after infancy) is given burial rituals and associated grave goods similar to those of adults, or is buried in a different style or location.

An imaginative, but not entirely convincing, proposal by psychologist Mark Nielsen argues that childhood itself emerged relatively late in the sequence of development of our fossil hominin ancestors, well after the break from the line which led to the great apes. If human childhood is defined as characterised by pretend play (which allows for cultural innovation) alongside careful imitation of adult activities, then, he suggests, it was absent from the era of Australopithecines, and of *Homo erectus*, with their conservative stone tool industries (characterised in Africa and Europe by the tradition of Acheulean handaxes). Instead, by this definition, childhood itself emerged only with the Neanderthals and the early hominins of the Middle Palaeolithic, from about 300,000 years ago.[18] This sounds like a perception from a modern world where change and innovation appear primary forces. Anthropology reminds us of the importance of acquiring, maintaining and transmitting traditions in human society, processes central to childhood, and that innovations exist for an adaptive purpose.

In many societies of the past, higher than modern birth rates were balanced by variable and commonly high rates of juvenile mortality from disease, accident and infanticide, as well as violence between (and

within) communities. The rate of improvement in levels of infant and child mortality in recent years is remarkable, as is the fall in fertility to a global average of 2.5 live births per woman in 2014.[19] This is less than half the figure seen in modern hunter-gatherer groups (see Chapter 2). In western Europe and North America, a dramatic transition in fertility can be traced for the 150 years from 1820, though it is not uniform because events like the Great War had their impact and different social factors influenced the net figures.[20] In other regions, the decline in fertility rates was marked in the second half of the 20th century.

What proportion of prehistoric human societies fell into the category of children, juveniles, sub-adults? Both historical studies and information on different recent societies suggest that a figure not much less than 50% can be considered a reasonable pattern for the human species across different kinds of society, before the changes that mark our modern, western, urbanised and industrialised world.

For recent societies of food gatherers, hunters and fishers, formal statistical details are available to show the range in the proportion of children, although variation is affected by the use of slightly different cut-off points in the definition of childhood. In one compilation, children in sub-Arctic groups ranged from 31% to 48% of the community, children in Paiute and Shoshone in the US West from 21% to 39% and children in some San groups from Southern Africa from 30% to 46%, while among tropical forest groups in different regions the proportion of children was generally larger, with most in the range from 30% to 60%.[21] Such communities were measured at quite different times in the 20th century and at different levels of external influence and 'modernisation', so these figures need to be treated with caution.

In the communities of our agricultural past we can also assume children and adolescents represented something approaching 50%, depending on whether 14 or a slightly higher age is taken as defining the end of childhood. A sample of English communities from 1574 to 1821 gave an average of 43% as children, where these were defined as unmarried resident offspring, that is, excluding those already at work away from home in farms and domestic employment, but including older unmarried adults.[22]

Today's world of increased longevity, fast urbanisation, reducing family size and sometimes delayed parenthood has seen children become a smaller proportion of the total human population, but this varies, especially with poverty and wealth. The World Bank (using 2013 and 2014 figures) estimates that 26% of the world population is now 14 and under.[23] In sub-Saharan Africa the comparable figure is 43%, but up to 48% in some countries. But there is a wide differential to remind us of the position of children in more rural communities and developing economies: only 16% of people in the European Union are aged 14 and under, and 17% in China,

where the 'one-child policy' applicable to the Han majority operated from 1979 to 2015. And of course in many advanced economies while the proportion of children of 14 and under may be dropping, the proportion of adolescents (over 14) not in the workforce is large. Without the impact of modern medicine and economic change, the figures suggest that in our study of children, adolescents and childhood in prehistory, we are studying half of the human world, a half too often hidden.

THE MISSING CHILDREN

Children may have been nearly half of past human societies, but they have been much less than half of the human story as presented by archaeologists and historians – or even by social anthropologists.[24] Why is this?

This book looks at the deep past of childhood, especially as revealed by archaeology for the eras before the historical evidence of written records. Children are represented in the archaeological record, but have rarely and only sporadically been reflected in the narratives of archaeology over the century and a half of its development. This is gradually improving, and there has been awareness of the gap.[25] A leading British prehistorian, Clive Gamble, in a volume reporting a major interdisciplinary research project on the deep human past, admitted 'children are an almost invisible category in archaeology' while noting that many have considered them 'uninvestigable'.[26] A Polish archaeologist echoed this: 'Children have been notably absent from archaeological narratives'.[27] A useful survey of US archaeology articles mentioning children noted that children are 'sporadic, uneven and quite rare' in archaeological interpretations of prehistory.[28] It has further been suggested that the whole category of 'age' in the human lifespan has been largely ignored in archaeological discourse.[29] As US scholar Kathryn Kamp recently observed: 'Archaeologists remain to be completely convinced that the child is central to archaeological theory or that without examining this aspect of the human experience, explanations of past cultural dynamics are invariably flawed'.[30] Jane Eva Baxter echoed this: 'It was not long ago that archaeologists held no concern for the value of children in the past, and archaeological research was undertaken with the unquestioned assumption that children were fundamentally unimportant to archaeological interpretation'.[31] Reflecting on 25 years since she published a pioneering article on childhood in archaeology, Grete Lillehammer wrote in 2015, 'Even today, when children's issues in general are higher on the agenda, the "archaeological child" continues to be a minority issue and not placed at the heart of archaeology'.[32]

The editor of one recent volume of conference papers on children in archaeology suggests several reasons why they have played such a small part

in the discipline: the supposed intangible nature of evidence for children; the perceived socioeconomic unimportance of children; a universal stereotype of childhood; gender biases; cultural biases; and lack of interdisciplinary collaboration. The present book suggests that none of this is inevitable – or justifiable.[33]

Are children so under-represented in archaeological interpretation of the past because they are under-represented in the archaeological record? Or because they have often been unrecognised in that record? And how much does this reflect a bias in interpreting the prehistoric past, with a focus on cultural achievement, not on the stages of cultural learning?[34] Few research projects into a prehistoric site, complex or era have uppermost in mind the search for evidence of the younger half of those societies.

Despite their minimal visibility in the archaeological literature, they are reintroduced to the narrative in popular presentations: in museum dioramas and painted backgrounds to displays (for which young museum visitors are a primary audience), in novels set in the prehistoric past and especially in books written for children (non-fiction and fiction, including illustrated story books) – the only place where the child can take centre stage in prehistory.[35]

Children are not as obvious as adults in the archaeological record. Where their play involves more than intangible elements, these items may not survive. Toys made by (or for) children may be constructed from impermanent materials, not designed to last the day, let alone remain to be recovered and recognised in archaeological investigation. Random assemblages and unskilled products created by the young may not be readily recognisable as such, or not located by researchers. Items associated with children may be misinterpreted. Small items might be toys but could be given many other readings.

This is not a conspiracy. In a complex discipline, subjects rise and fall in popularity; as the scale of studies grows so can the range of topics being examined. But researchers in a subject like archaeology only seek to answer those questions that are being asked, and those questions derive from the ideology of the time and place within which the research is undertaken.[36] Those questions have changed substantially as archaeology has grown as a subject area whose practitioners may consider themselves scientists or social scientists or humanities specialists.

As archaeology emerged as a discipline in 19th-century Europe and North America, certain themes took precedence.[37] One was of national origins: the distant ancestry of European societies, often linked to questions of supposed ethnic identity. But another, reflecting the era of colonial expansion and imperial visions, was a fascination with the elites of ancient civilisations. Exploration, excavation, objects in public museums and private collections: these focused especially on the world of the rich,

powerful and male. Well into the second half of the 20th century, standard histories of the ancient states of Mesopotamia, Egypt and elsewhere, even Greece and Rome, would examine these societies from the top down, or only as political history of the rulers. The social, economic, demographic and cultural histories, which helped reinterpret the broad range of medieval and modern societies, would take much longer to penetrate the world of the earliest history. Some historians took the lead in eroding the top-down paradigm. But archaeologists, who unearthed the physical evidence of settlement, economy and technology, played a major part in spreading the understanding that ancient civilisations were more than their rulers.

In descriptions and discussions of prehistoric society, even with the new approaches and methodologies of deep history and archaeology, 20th-century interpretations remained heavily influenced by biases of gender. It was *man the hunter* and rarely *woman the food gatherer*. Written texts as well as visual reconstructions of prehistoric and ancient societies appeared to reflect male perspectives developed by male archaeologists and historians. The growing numbers of female academic, professional and student archaeologists began to change this, often in a programmatic and polemical way, from the 1980s and early 1990s.[38] A sequence of conferences, articles, books and even organisations set out to modify what was seen as a heavily biased gendered perspective, and to give either a feminist or gender-neutral revision to studies, or focus specifically on the archaeology of women. It can be said that these perspectives have now been fully established in the discipline. Some have suggested the shift to a feminist archaeology stimulated the emergence of an interest in the archaeology of childhood; but the strong activist growth of a feminist archaeology paid proportionately little attention to this theme. Meanwhile, some early feminist interpretations of the deep past (though generally not from professional archaeologists) took a quite different line on the prehistoric roles of women and child-rearing, developing models of a matriarchal past undermined by male dominance when prehistoric agricultural societies were transformed into urban civilisations.[39]

The initial study of the earliest human ancestors by palaeoanthropologists was no less gender biased. As anthropologist Nancy Makepeace Tanner observed, 'A major gap exists in most reconstructions of the social life of our pongid and early hominid ancestors. Female and young are omitted.... Traditional Western beliefs are read back into the past'.[40]

Thus in the growth of archaeology, study of the elites was supplemented by attention to the ordinary people, and then the focus on males moved to interest in the whole adult society of men and women. What remained missing from much archaeology was a significant interest in children. Despite the vast number of new books in archaeology, there are remarkably few by a single author describing what we know of the archaeology

of childhood; a short but approachable book by Julie Wileman is a notable exception.[41] There have been pioneering articles on archaeological aspects of childhood, for example by Kathryn Kamp, John Shea, Jane Eva Baxter, Penny Spikins and others.[42] These followed a 1989 article by Grete Lillehammer which discussed what an archaeology of childhood could represent, as a theoretical contribution to the discipline.[43] A welcome increase in individual studies is referenced throughout the chapters of this book. A small number of sessions in archaeological conferences and publications of edited volumes have sought to move the theme forward, with papers including useful case studies of prehistoric or historic periods and some papers discussing the needs, issues and gaps in the overall topic.[44] But attempts at syntheses of childhood in the past as revealed by archaeology are still rare. At the time of writing (August 2017), an edited reference book on the subject is in preparation.[45] A 2016 exhibition on childhood and children in archaeology at the University of Cambridge's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology served to stimulate interest in the topic.[46]

Because so much of our evidence for prehistoric childhood comes from burials, the role of biological anthropology (bioanthropology, bioarchaeology) is of great importance to this field, using a range of scientific techniques to examine the skeletal remains that have been uncovered in archaeologically dated contexts, both prehistoric and historic. Bioanthropologists and bioarchaeologists can advise us on the age at death of an infant or child from the skeleton – itself not straightforward, given that the developmental age of an individual may not correlate exactly with chronological age, though dentition remains the most reliable indicator of age.[47] They remind us of the uncertainty in suggesting the sex of a juvenile skeleton. As there are even subjectivities and uncertainties in sexing archaeological remains of adults, the issue with those below adult age is substantial.[48]

DNA studies may fill the void here. Their use to determine the sex of juvenile human remains is a growing field; it can tell us about an individual, thus confirming or undermining assumptions based on grave goods.[49] On a larger sample, DNA studies can provide evidence of wider demographic issues such as age and sex distribution and kinship relationships.

Bioarchaeologists' contributions to the understanding of childhood death and studies of disease and trauma from children's bones is an expanding field and such evidence is discussed later in this book, especially in Chapters 9 and 10.[50] Understanding the health of children in life and the death of children in society gives us a more intimate feeling for the topic. The contribution of investigators from the biological sciences is providing stimuli that seem especially likely to drive forward interest in and interpretation of prehistoric childhoods.[51] But we can also compare and contrast using information from disciplines other than archaeology and bioanthropology.

THE USE OF ANALOGY

The study of childhood is a vigorous industry involving social scientists, behavioural scientists and medical scientists, with their own journals, conferences and numerous specialists. These studies are necessarily focused on the contemporary world. Our understanding of childhood in prehistory gains more from the cautious use of history, social anthropology and primate biology.

We need to be aware of our ethnocentric and modern biases in approaching the concept of children and childhood. Our moral precepts against infanticide, for example, are culturally bound. The practices and protective role of parents towards their children may have reached extremes in some modern western communities; the *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the phrase 'helicopter parent' back to 1989. Different styles of childcare need not imply different levels of emotional and practical commitment to a child.[52]

Historians have contributed a substantial literature of analysis and description of childhood in different eras where written texts, as well as artistic representations and material culture, have given us images of the younger half of society. There are now many studies and accounts of the changing patterns of childhood in medieval and modern European history. The study of childhood in the ancient Classical civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean is becoming a very active field, involving archaeologists, although a heavy reliance on literary texts and the iconography of tombs and art makes much of this lean towards a discussion of the literate elites of society.[53]

We can use these studies to help us ask questions about the preliterate, prehistoric past as recorded by archaeology. But we need to avoid too confident an assumption that a phenomenon of the deep past was similar to (or on its way to becoming) a phenomenon of the better-known and more recent past. While there are commonalities shared across the human species and the human mind, history is not a one-way story of progress or change directed towards some future, more complex and supposedly improved world. It is safer *not* to be too influenced by what we know of childhood in historic urban civilisations, cities dominated by religious and political elites and occupied by citizens with specialist economic roles, when we seek to interpret evidence from prehistory. Civilisation is an anomaly in the human record: five millennia in a few parts of the Old World (less in the New World) within our own species' timescale of 200,000 or even 300,000 years, and the timescale of hominins making stone tools stretches 10 times longer. From our knowledge of history we may hold assumptions about infant care, childhood and adolescence, toys and play, clothing, learning, social roles, even children's roles in war and conflict, and transitions into adulthood. We should apply these to prehistory only with the greatest of care.

We can, though, generate useful questions to help us understand the prehistoric past by using, with appropriate care and reservations, what we know of small-scale and non-literate societies as observed and recorded in recent and modern times. Ideas can be raised and interpretations considered for prehistory which are inspired by studies and accounts when people from urban literate (and, often, colonising) societies encountered small-scale (sometimes described as 'indigenous') communities of farmers, herders, fishers or hunter-gatherer foragers. The work of social anthropologists and the 'ethnographic record' of recent communities can stimulate and assist us in understanding ancient groups with some apparent similarities in economy and environment. While this can be helpful in stimulating questions, it requires care in interpretation.

Many small-scale farming communities are and were, of course, part of a much wider economy dominated by town dwellers with whom they traded their surplus crops and livestock in exchange for specialised products. The more isolated a community and the more subsistence its traditional economy, then the more useful it may seem for comparison with sites of prehistoric communities of similar status.

An exceptional study of children from the perspective of a social/cultural anthropologist is *The Anthropology of Childhood* by David F. Lancy. This broad-ranging, thoughtful, informative and witty (if sometimes disturbing) survey considers traditional small-scale societies and historically documented communities alongside modern patterns of developed industrialised and post-industrial nations, and provides a sometimes dramatic reminder of the distance between our 'modern' perceptions and the very different social norms across the wider expanse of time and place. The range of experiences of children and childhood includes the sense of children as commodities, and the role of often quite young children as economic contributors, whether as participants in a foraging or peasant agricultural economy, or (more troubling to us) as wage labourers.[54]

Descriptive accounts of small-scale agricultural societies, whether from professional anthropologists or early accounts by travellers and colonial administrators, still deal mainly with societies in a relationship with the wider world. This relationship may have affected not only their food crops and economic patterns but also social norms, even religion and ideology.[55] But the range of experiences and dimensions of childhood we see in small-scale agricultural groups – even if their traditions were in process of change – can help us consider some aspects of prehistoric farmers, including childhood in those societies.

Agriculture itself (incorporating both animals and crops) – what was long described as a Neolithic revolution – has existed only over the last 10 millennia or so, a stretch of time over which agricultural societies have seen substantial development in economic and social change. The diversity

emphasised by David Lancy and other anthropologists reminds us of the diversity that we might expect in the prehistoric record. But for the longest stretch of prehistory, when human society had only a foraging economy, information on living foragers (hunter-gatherers) can provide us with food for thought.

RECENT HUNTER-GATHERERS

Studies of recent hunter-gatherer societies can be used with caution to inform different areas of archaeological interpretation of the prehistoric past.[56] They can show the range of activities that involve children in non-agricultural communities: motherhood, infant weaning and transport, acquisition of skills, play and social interaction, and the transition stages to adulthood. We can also consider how physical evidence of these activities may show up in (or be missing from) the archaeological record of prehistory. They may also remind us of the importance of the non-material – the ritual and spiritual – that run through the lives of hunter-gatherer peoples and which are rarely visible from prehistoric sites.

The economic lives of past and recent forager societies vary substantially. Traditional groups in this category may have derived widely differing proportions of their diet from hunting, from fishing and from gathering plants, honey and small animals, including insects and shellfish. The commonly used term 'hunter-gatherers' appears to privilege a hunted meat (and by implication male) contribution to a diet, which was in fact often the minority of food.[57] Since there is major diversity between traditional non-agricultural groups encountered in the modern world, great care is needed in how we use analogies between prehistoric hunter-gatherers and those more recent societies in 'the ethnographic record'.

Such communities are not an anomalous remnant of some prehistoric peoples; they are a significant part of the world of modernity. 'As recently as AD 1500 hunters occupied fully one third of the globe, including all of Australia and most of North America, as well as large tracts of South America, Africa, and Northeast Asia.'[58] People have maintained a forager lifestyle well into recent times. I recently met a British woman whose late husband was born into a 'traditional' Aboriginal hunter-gatherer group in Australia's Great Sandy Desert; he had first encountered the modern world of European-dominated rural Australia only in his early teens, during the 1950s.[59]

Analogies between children in forager prehistory and in the ethnography of recent societies is limited by the relative lack of attention to them in studies of modern hunter-gatherers.[60] An exception was a 2002 interdisciplinary conference on forager childhoods with a valuable

Kalahari San woman with her child in a sling

subsequent publication, taking the subject as the period between weaning and becoming eligible to become a parent.[61] The editors, Barry Hewlett and Michael Lamb, observed:

> Children represent more than 40 percent of most hunter-gatherer populations but anthropologists working with these groups seldom describe their daily life, knowledge, and views, thereby ensuring, in essence, that about half the population is omitted from most hunter-gatherer ethnographies.[62]

And in a recent major reference survey of the field it is noted:

> A compelling, comprehensive treatment of hunter-gatherer child-rearing and childhood has yet to be written. Yet, the formative experiences of children are crucial in constructing the gender roles informing adult behaviour in later years. More systematic attention to the corpus of play activities, lore and games, miniatures and toys, and adult supervision and mentoring of girls and boys in the early phases of work will reveal cultural expectations about gender in adulthood.[63]

One background factor that initially held back accounts of forager children may be the 19th-century prejudice (including from pioneers in anthropology) that 'primitive hunter-gatherers' were themselves analogous to children, so it would be almost tautologous to study their own young.[64] This reflected the colonial view that human society (and often human biological races) represented a hierarchy, from the untamed savage to the 'higher and greater' civilised educated Christian of metropolitan Europe or North America. Such a view fitted well the era of European empires, when the civilising mission was to help bring trade, administration, law and Christian religion to the heathen of occupied lands, with none so in need as the wild hunter reliant on natural resources to survive.

Englishman Edward Tylor, often named as a founder of social/cultural anthropology, wrote in his 1871 book *Primitive Culture* of the 'savage as a representative of the childhood of the human race … savage races, as the nearest modern representatives of primæval culture', before evolution through time from the primitive to the 'higher and greater grades of civilization'.[65] In an earlier work he had commented:

> The trite comparison of savages to 'grown-up children' is in the main a sound one, though not to be carried out too strictly. In the uncivilized [Native] American or Polynesian, the strength of body and force of character of a grown man are combined with a mental development not beyond that of a young child of a civilized race.[66]

Tylor's contemporary Sir John Lubbock focused his interests on the human past rather than the contemporary 'primitive'. He titled his 1865 book *Pre-historic Times, as illustrated by ancient remains, and the manners and customs of modern savages.*[67]

> Savages may be likened to children; and the comparison is not only correct, but also highly instructive. Many naturalists consider that the early condition of the individual indicates that of the race,—that the best test of the affinities of a species are the stages through which it passes. So also it is in the case of man: the life of each individual is an epitome of the history of the race, and the gradual development of the child illustrates that of the species. Hence the importance of the similarity between savages and children. Savages, like children, have no steadiness of purpose.[68]

This is an interesting contrast to countercultural ideas of recent decades that hunter-gatherers from 'traditional' societies and cultures have special spiritual insights and enviable social and personal strengths denied to western society ('the noble savage in New Age garb'): or at the very least represent a human harmony with nature lost to the rest of humankind.[69]

We rely on what narrative descriptions and discussions exist, despite the often limited information about children and childhood. The accounts we have for modern small-scale societies may have come from professionally trained social/cultural anthropologists, or ethnographers (to use an older term), or from other social, behavioural and medical scientists, or from colonial officials or missionaries or from travellers' descriptions. But by definition, such accounts by outsiders reflect a period when there was *already* contact between the indigenous and the outsider. These contacts may have changed lifeways, beliefs, economy and material culture. They may have been preceded by significant, even critical, shifts. For example, Aboriginal Australian nomadic groups, once commonly described as modern examples of Stone Age hunter-gatherers, have been most often studied in the arid marginal areas in which their separate identity and communities had survived following European expansion, rather than in the rich well-watered coastal environments which had supported denser populations.[70] Even the early 'classic' studies were possible only when indigenous groups were in contact with outsiders; as Australian anthropologist Les Hiatt observed, 'anthropologists have regularly worked on the frontiers, never beyond them'.[71]

There is a further problem with using recent communities of hunter-gatherers as an analogy for our pre-agricultural past. Most such groups – the majority of pre-modern Australian Aborigines are an exception – long lived in regular contact with settled agriculturalists, trading with them, sometimes playing other client roles (the San of Southern Africa or the Pygmies of the equatorial forests, for example), so were far different from the isolated economies of early human hunter-gatherers.[72] And some groups have shifted their economy from a partial reliance on farming to a greater reliance on hunting and foraging.

Nevertheless, with these cautions, this book presents some of the knowledge of the lives of children in such modern societies, as a tool in considering what the archaeological record of our modern human species in previous millennia might mean. Recent hunter-gatherers have tended to be mobile communities associated with a territory which provides them with shelter and food, often in a nomadic migratory cycle. Such a group may comprise as few as 15 people but typically number around 25 or 30, though the range may go as high as 70.[73] Since such groups are commonly linked by kinship, marriage may be favoured and often required outside of that band, and a mobile band will interact or even cohabit seasonally with other bands. It has been suggested that an inter-breeding group up to 200,

and a larger classificatory unit of up to 500, gives a pattern that can be seen in different regions.[74]

Groups who are or were traditionally foragers in the modern world are widely spread, and the population identified as members of such groups may range from a few hundred people to many hundreds of thousands, with estimates differing according to the criteria used.[75]

Aboriginal peoples of Australia have been a major subject of anthropology for over a century, though, as noted above, with the expansion of European settlement in the early to mid-19th century much of this professional study and description was centred on communities living in remote areas. An intensive study of child rearing among Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land in the late 1960s showed substantial differences from European patterns, yet this study necessarily took place in a township of 1000 residents, Maningrida, created by the Australian government a decade before.[76]

Some of most widely cited studies of hunting and food-gathering communities are those of San ('Bushmen') such as the !Kung, who with the Khoe people (traditionally herders) number up to 100,000 within eight countries in Southern Africa.[77] There are also about 125,000 people in the different forager 'Pygmy' groups around the Congo basin, many of whom have long lived in patron–client relations with settled farmers. The Hadza people of Tanzania are a small forager group who have been the subject of study.

Numerous indigenous communities in Southeast and South Asia were considered to have been traditional foraging societies, even though some may have shifted between different economic roles. In Japan the indigenous Ainu, descendants of a hunter-gatherer group, are primarily on the northern island Hokkaido, with around 60,000 people of Ainu identity said to be in the traditional areas of their occupation.

The northern-most regions of both Europe and North America hold communities for which fishing and hunting were traditionally dominant modes: Inuit, Sami and different Siberian groups, as well as Siberian communities further south. And while isolated northern Eurasian groups may be classified as foragers, some also herd domesticated reindeer.

In North America the ethnographic studies of the Native Americans of California and the smaller numbers in the Great Plains (Paiute, Shoshone, Ute and others) have a classic status. The peoples of the Pacific north-west, though not agriculturalists, were not nomadic but settled in permanent communities. By contrast, many Plains peoples were farmers who turned to a hunting economy after the introduction of the horse to North America by the Spanish.

South American hunters and gatherers range from the communities of the upper Amazon basin, still subjects of study today, to the former forager groups whom Europeans encountered in Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of the continent. Between these are other hunter-gatherer communities

spread primarily through the eastern lowlands, including tropical groups who shifted from farming to a foraging life, and may still supplement foraging with seasonally planted gardens.

Thus the sample of peoples who have exercised non-agricultural lifestyles in recent times is substantial, and provides some basis for a cautious reference when we consider hunter-gatherer communities of the past. Note that discussions of modern people are often in the tense of an 'ethnographic present', as if these were unchanging societies, which is far from the case. As noted in the Preface, references to modern groups in this volume may refer to recent times, or to a study period very many decades back.

HIGHER PRIMATE RELATIVES

The deepest prehistory is that which precedes our identity as a species. We can consider human infants and the young, the stages to adulthood, by examining their skeletal remains, material culture and environment. But we can also raise questions relevant to earlier prehistory and consider parallels and differences by observing the other great apes of the modern world, and how the young in those groups live, learn and move to adulthood.[78] The big difference between humans and other great apes is, of course, the role of culture and the dominance of culturally learned patterns over those attributable to 'nature'. Chimpanzees may learn new ways to acquire foodstuffs and their offspring may observe and imitate these, but the social, economic and mental lives of humans – and we assume our recent hominin ancestors – see learned and socially imposed structures balancing instinct in a unique way.

We humans share with chimpanzees some 98–99% of our DNA and we share a similar percentage with bonobos (pygmy chimpanzees). The date when the ancestry of humans and chimpanzees diverged was long considered to be over 4 million years ago, though specialist opinions vary and recent fossil finds could push the date earlier than 6 million years.[79] We have to go back around 14 million years to find the common ancestor we share with the other living great apes – the gorillas of Africa and the orangutans of Southeast Asia – and even longer since the line split off which led to the gibbons, known today only in Southeast Asia. But in examining the evolution of human society, looking at great ape life has interest and value. It should be noted, however, that it appears likely that some of the specialised behaviour of chimpanzees and bonobos – including their adeptness in tree climbing – has developed since the split from their common ancestor with humans.[80]

Several of chapters in this volume consider aspects of infancy and the young among these biological relatives. In Southeast Asia, orangutans (as

well as gibbons, the closest relatives to the great apes) have been carefully observed and their life cycles analysed. Orangutans today live only on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra, and these populations are considered to be two separate species.

Gorillas have been studied in detail in their natural African habitats. There are separate western and eastern species; the eastern species – living in Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo – has been intensively recorded at Karisoke in Rwanda, where Dian Fossey in the 1960s initiated a programme of research on mountain gorillas which has been continued by many others since.[81]

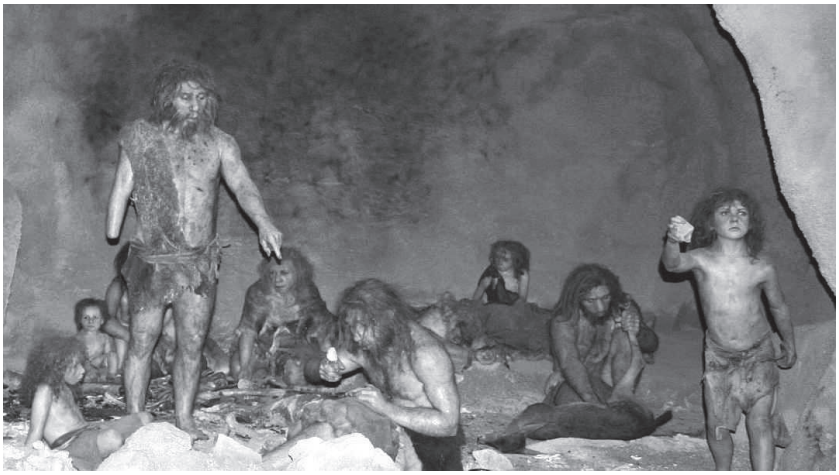
Chimpanzees have been widely recorded in their African habitats of Equatorial Africa (Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon as well as westernmost Tanzania) and in parts of coastal West Africa. The lengthy field studies led by Jane Goodall in the Gombe area of Tanzania are complemented by the extended researches of Japanese scientists such as those at Mahale, also in Tanzania, and in Bossou in Guinea. Important, though of less relevance here, are the many studies of chimpanzees in captivity, including those who have been raised from infancy with human families for purposes of experiment with their potential abilities.[82] Bonobos, whose habitat is now restricted to tropical forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo, have been subject to far less research.

Scientists have closely observed primate infancy and have compared patterns of early child rearing in modern human societies with that of different primate species in the wild. Where there are similarities, we can confidently attribute these also to our early hominin ancestors; where there are differences, we must consider whether the earliest ancestral hominins may have had social, biological or environmental characteristics more like our species, or comparable to aspects of the great apes, or neither. Reconstructions of Australopithecine family life, in movies, museum dioramas and painted scenes, or text descriptions, frequently reflect influences from observations of chimpanzee or other great ape groups.

In considering the nature of childhood in human prehistory, the young of our great ape relatives may help to raise questions, if not parallels, and show us a range of behaviour which can help us think about our earliest hominin ancestors.

THE FRAMEWORK OF HOMININ PREHISTORY

For early prehistory, most of our knowledge of childhood is from the physical remains of those who did not survive into adulthood, complemented by reconstruction of the environment in which they lived. The further back we go in time, the less information we can present about social life, including



Neanderthal family scene: reconstruction at Krapina Neanderthal Museum, Croatia

children, except by cautious comparison with later species and with our closest primate relatives.

Our knowledge of the earliest hominins comes from their fossilised skeletal remains, the majority of which are of adults, but an important minority of fossil hominin remains are of juveniles. There is bias in the preserved record: bones from an infant are small and brittle, and we are far less likely to find them than the preserved and fossilised bones of an adult or older juvenile.

The term 'hominins' rather than the broader 'hominids' is now commonly used for primate genera, including Australopithecines and *Homo*, after the split from the line which led to chimpanzees. In fact, the majority of hominin finds are classified as different Australopithecine or *Homo* species. Here the term 'Australopithecines' is used to include species described as *Australopithecus*, *Paranthropus* and *Ardipithecus ramidus*, dating from 4 million years ago until possibly as late as 1.4 million years ago, all in Africa. The growing sample of fossil materials is subject to diverse classifications by different scientists, who may tend to be 'splitters' (seeing differences as representing a range of different species) or 'lumpers' (who argue for fewer species with greater variation within a species). The different classificatory systems may also reflect national or personal prejudices.[83]

When we consider the material culture of prehistory, we begin by relying on stone tools and the waste products from their manufacture, which are known from finds in Africa dated around 2.6 million years ago (with a recent find in Lomekwi, in Kenya, dated to perhaps 3.3 million years ago).[84] With

the early pebble tool technology (sometimes called Oldowan, or Mode 1) it is somewhat more difficult than with later technologies to distinguish the product of young apprentices from the artefacts produced by experienced adults. We see our first glimpse of our early ancestors themselves in footprints, some of which may include those of children in a family group.

Homo habilis, associated with a pebble tool technology, lived in Africa from around 2.3 to 1.4 million years ago. The subsequent evolution and then the expansion out of Africa into Asia of our ancestral species, *Homo erectus*, and its relatives present a long period of continuity, with dates from about 1.8 million years, and possibly surviving up to as late as 143,000 years ago in parts of Asia.[85] They were the creators of the stone tool culture dominated by the familiar 'handaxe' of the Lower Palaeolithic (Acheulean, also called Mode 2) found throughout Africa, Europe and the Middle East but we can reconstruct relatively little of their society. Within East Asia, a different technology is found, rather than handaxes, and there appears to be continuity across the periods elsewhere called Lower Palaeolithic and Middle Palaeolithic, with gradual evolution of material culture.[86]

Homo erectus developed into new archaic human species called *Homo antecessor* (from around 850,000 years) and *Homo heidelbergensis*, seen until about 250,000 years ago, and they maintained the handaxe tool tradition in Europe. Fossilised skeletal remains are still our main source of information on the children of the period, though footprints from the English coast represent a family of *Homo antecessor*.

From this group developed the Neanderthals (*Homo neanderthalensis*) of the Middle East and Europe (from around 250,000 to maybe 40,000 years ago), whose tool technology marked another step forward (the 'Middle Palaeolithic' of archaeological terminology, sometimes called Mode 3). With the emergence of Neanderthals, our record becomes a little fuller. Many burials of children, even of the very young, have been found from the Neanderthal world, and it seems that some of these were associated with simple grave goods, such as animal bones. We start to see examples where the care of the youngest members of society was marked by the deliberate disposal of their bodies.[87]

We know much more about the early members of our own species, *Homo sapiens*. Anatomically modern humans may have originated in Africa by around 300,000 years ago, and were subsequently responsible for the more sophisticated and specialised artefact technologies classified as Middle Stone Age.[88] The expansion from the African continent by around 60,000 years ago (and from a recent Australian date, perhaps earlier) brought anatomically modern humans by water and land crossings to colonise the Middle East, Asia, Australia then Europe (and eventually, of course, the Americas and the Pacific).[89] The spread through mainland Asia had its impact on settlement patterns and technology, though the survival of other

Homo species has been shown in the Indonesian island of Flores and in probably also in south-west China.

Newer technologies again, with sophisticated specialised toolkits, went alongside complex social organisation and language as well as what we may distinguish among modern human behaviours: symbolic and belief systems. Scattered evidence has contributed to fierce debates on just when forms of modern human behaviour emerged: the use of personal decoration and of non-functional markings on artefacts, the development of sophisticated language which allowed forward planning in human groups, and, later, art and non-subsistence items such as musical instruments. Some emphasise the adaptation to maritime and freshwater foods, especially shellfish, as a major economic transition, one which may also have stimulated the development of the brain by the contribution of omega-3 fatty acid.[90] An alternative view sees population pressures as the major driver for social progress.[91]

African cultural development transformed into further new technologies and social patterns of the Later Stone Age: a term which continues to be applied to the very latest pre-modern hunter-gatherer communities. Occupied rock shelters in Africa provide a chronological sequence showing changes in material culture and economy (although many coastal sites of today were a distance from the sea during some parts of the Pleistocene).

Anatomically modern humans came to replace the Neanderthals in Europe from about 45,000–40,000 years ago; these were the users of the advanced blade stone tool technology of the Upper Palaeolithic (in some terminologies, Mode 4). This era has provided us with a rich source of archaeological evidence for their lifeways, including those of children. Burials of children with sometimes lavish clothing and grave goods, footprints of children in caves, finger daubs and handprints of children in rock art, all give us images of the early children of our own species, while small sculptures include women apparently at different stages of pregnancy.

Major excavations in Europe and Asia have revealed details of sites of occupation and other areas of activity to give us more of a human 'feel' of the Upper Palaeolithic, such as a complex campsite with hearths and shelters, human burials, engravings and personal ornaments. The archaeological record of children is variable in the subsequent cultural and social developments typically described as Mesolithic in Europe, Epipalaeolithic in the Middle East and North Africa, or Later Stone Age in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the post-glacial climate of the Holocene, which followed the end of the Pleistocene around 11,700 years ago, we see human settlement in all continents except Antarctica. Within the latter part of the Pleistocene, it was possible for humans to cross the Bering Strait to begin populating the Americas at a date long thought to be around 15,000 years ago, but with emerging evidence for a somewhat earlier date, and a dramatic and

controversial claim for a human presence as far back as 130,000 years ago.[92] Excluding that latter date, humans appear to have spread rapidly across the Americas. Development of agriculture and the cultures of agricultural societies were more localised, as was the appearance of state-based urban civilisations.

The emergence of agriculture early in the Holocene marks very different societies, in which the economic roles of children had also begun to change. We know that there was not one single invention of agriculture, spreading out from a single region, but diverse and gradual local adaptations in different Old World and New World localities, as well as the spread of domesticated plants and animals from their original regions. Nevertheless, the emergence of agriculture remains one of the most significant changes in human history: the importance of the 'Neolithic revolution' has not diminished with our growing knowledge of the transition.[93]

There was significant diversity in early farming communities, reflected in settlement patterns, social patterns, burial patterns and of course the different patterns of childhood. Acquisition of further new technologies was accompanied by further political, social and economic changes and variability, in periods with archaeological labels such as (for Europe and the Middle East) 'Chalcolithic period' or 'Copper Age', 'Bronze Age' and 'Iron Age'.

As subsequent chapters of this book indicate, the kinds of evidence we can retrieve from these agricultural and metal-working societies may be fuller than for hunter-gatherer groups, but the vast majority of prehistoric human time is that of hunter-gatherers.

THE DEEP PAST

This chapter has argued the importance of studies of the young in the human (and hominin) past, with optimism about the scope available for research and interpretation. While there are limitations in the data, there have also been limitations created by past assumptions: that investigating children in prehistory was irrelevant, or too difficult. Subsequent chapters of this book look at the kinds of information which can start to illuminate prehistoric childhoods. New approaches, new questions are reinforced by the kind of questions that arise when we look at childhood in history, or at the lives of recent small-scale societies or even (for the earliest hominins) at our higher primate relatives. What we now know may be modest; what we could know with new research and thought could be much less modest. We can begin this survey by considering the stages of growth, from pregnancy and infancy onwards.