

INFANT HEALTH AND DEATH IN ROMAN ITALY AND BEYOND

edited by

Maureen Carroll and Emma-Jayne Graham

with contributions by

M. Carroll, A. Chamberlain, T. Derks, R. Gowland,
E.-J. Graham, D. R. Gröcke, C. Laes, A. R. Millard, L. A. Powell,
R. C. Redfern, W. Southwell-Wright and A. Sparreboom

PORTSMOUTH, RHODE ISLAND
2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Preface | 7 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| <i>E.-J. Graham and M. Carroll</i> | |
| 1. Infant votives and swaddling in Hellenistic Italy | 23 |
| <i>E.-J. Graham</i> | |
| 2. Seeking divine protection against untimely death: infant votives from Roman Gaul and Germany | 47 |
| <i>T. Derks</i> | |
| 3. On the brink of being: re-evaluating infanticide and infant burial in Roman Britain | 69 |
| <i>R. Gowland, A. Chamberlain and R. C. Redfern</i> | |
| 4. Infant feeding practices in Roman London: evidence from isotopic analyses | 89 |
| <i>L. A. Powell, R. C. Redfern, A. R. Millard, and D. R. Gröcke</i> | |
| 5. Perceptions of infant disability in Roman Britain | 111 |
| <i>W. Southwell-Wright</i> | |
| 6. The youngest children in Latin epigraphy | 131 |
| <i>C. Laes</i> | |
| 7. Wet-nursing in the Roman empire | 145 |
| <i>A. Sparreboom</i> | |
| 8. Mother and infant in Roman funerary commemoration | 159 |
| <i>M. Carroll</i> | |
| Index | 179 |

Preface

The papers in this volume stem from a session organised by the editors at the Roman Archaeology Conference held in April 2012 in Frankfurt; in addition, two papers, on wet-nursing and on disability, were commissioned. The session pursued a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the relationship between adults and infants in the Roman world, using archaeological, epigraphic, historical and skeletal material to examine issues pertaining to the health and death of the youngest members of society from a number of different perspectives.

How might people in the Roman world have felt when a baby was born? Were they joyous, relieved or fearful? Were they concerned about the prospects for their new child? With perhaps as many as 8% of babies dying within the first month of life, it is tempting to assume that close bonds were rarely formed with the newest members of a family. In some respects this is supported by Roman textual sources which refer to infants in dismissive terms, or suggest that grief for the young is inappropriate and irrelevant, or point towards culturally ascribed notions of infants as 'non-persons' until they achieved a particular age. Children may have been amongst the most frequently commemorated groups of Roman society, but the epigraphic corpus contains comparatively few references to those who lived only for a short while.

Studies have now moved away from élite-centered literary sources to examine the material evidence for attitudes and representations of the very young in both life and death. Recent cemetery excavations are documenting densities of newborns and infants across Italy and the Roman West. It is becoming clear that ancient parents and carers shared complex emotional bonds with the youngest members of their *familia*. Skeletal analysis suggests that a concerted effort was made to attend to the health of infants, while evidence for votive offerings connected with infants, childbirth and fertility indicates that the health of these babies and the capacity to have children was often at the forefront of parents' minds. Of course, even with the assistance of the divine, not all parents succeeded in preventing an early death for their infants, but the evidence for the attention they received during their short lives, for the manner in which their small bodies were treated and remembered in death, and the very fact that divine assistance was sought for their welfare should make us reconsider traditional ideas about the absence of any real emotional attachment to infants. The papers in this volume examine these issues in a coherent and connected way, drawing upon case-studies from a range of contexts.

We are grateful to the organisers of the Roman Archaeology Conference for accepting the session, and to John Humphrey who agreed to publish it along with the commissioned papers. We should particularly like to thank the authors who have produced critical treatises on a variety of topics that advance the debate on adult–infant relationships.

Thanks are due to Jerneja Willmott and Irene Deluis for their accomplished drawings of artefacts and monuments. We are also grateful to all museums and institutions that have provided illustrations or allowed us to publish material in their collections.

Maureen Carroll

Emma-Jayne Graham

JOURNAL OF ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY®

JRA® SUPPLEMENTARY SERIES NUMBER 96

General Editor: J. H. Humphrey; Layout: C. Corey

This volume also belongs to the

**International
Roman Archaeology
Conference Series**

based upon the biennial conferences organized by

THE SOCIETY FOR THE
PROMOTION OF ROMAN STUDIES

ISBN-13: 978-0-9913730-0-0

ISSN 1063-4304 (for the supplementary series)

Copyright © 2014 Journal of Roman Archaeology, L.L.C.

Printed by Thomson-Shore, Dexter, Michigan

JRA® and Journal of Roman Archaeology® are registered trademarks of Journal of Roman Archaeology, L.L.C.

This and other supplements to the *Journal of Roman Archaeology* may be ordered from:

JRA, 95 Peleg Road, Portsmouth, RI 02871, U.S.A.

Telephone (+USA) 401 683 1955

telefax (+USA) 401 683 1975

e-mail: jra@JournalofRomanArch.com

Web site: JournalofRomanArch.com

Permission to copy may be obtained only direct from *JRA*, by e-mail, letter, fax or phone.

Kindly note that the Copyright Clearance Center (USA), the Copyright Licensing Agency (UK), and other national Reproduction Rights Organizations are not permitted to authorize copying or to collect fees for doing so.