

Themes in Contemporary Archaeology

Sanna Lipkin
Taryn Bell
Tiina Väre *Editors*

Archaeologies of Attachment

Emotional Attachments in the Archaeological Record



European Association
of Archaeologists



Springer

Themes in Contemporary Archaeology

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Preface

This volume brings together new approaches to studying emotional attachments and social bonds in the past. Attachment to other people, animals, objects, places, and ideologies is fundamental to human existence, and archaeological thought can offer new tools and approaches to better understand attachment. With this realisation, we, the editors, organised an online session in the 27th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in 2021, hosted by Kiel University. We want to thank all the participants of this session for both their papers and the fruitful discussions which resulted. Some of the presented papers became the core of this book, supplemented by contributions from other authors.

We express our gratitude to the EAA Themes editors, Christi Jongepier-Lue, for inspiring us to develop this book, and Peter Attema, Agathe Reinburger, and Robin Skeates for their valuable comments throughout the process. Additionally, we appreciate the constructive and encouraging insights provided by Jane E. Baxter. SL and TV also are grateful to our many colleagues for inspiring working environments at the Universities of Oulu and Helsinki, and TB is thankful to her colleagues at the University of York, in particular Penny Spikins and Barry Wright, as well as colleagues at the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, USA. We are also grateful to our funders: The Academy of Finland, for enabling research on emotions, infants, and children (decision numbers, 309607, 314140, 322783, 323428, 335779); Eino Jutikkala foundation, for providing funding for an early period of the breastfeeding studies; and Kone foundation, for aiding with the back end of the work. TB's doctoral research was funded by the White Rose College of Arts and Humanities (grant number AH/L503848/1) and an AHRC International Placement Fellowship.

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29 April 2024

Contents

Part I Introduction

- 1 Introduction: Archaeologies of Emotion, Attachment, and Social Bonds 3**
Taryn Bell, Sanna Lipkin, and Tiina Väre
- 2 Archaeologies of Attachment: Understanding Social Relationships, Material Culture, Religion and Place. 11**
Taryn Bell

Part II Social Bonds

- 3 Early Modern Breastfeeding Problem in Sweden: Failures to Securely Attach? 27**
Tiina Väre
- 4 Fragile and Resilient: Impact of Childhood Emotional Bonds and Attachment on Coping Mechanisms in Eighteenth to Nineteenth-Century Finland 37**
Sanna Lipkin
- 5 Caring, Compassion, and Clemency Within the Nineteenth-Century Foster Family of Clementeoffs; A Case of Fictive Kinship 53**
Saara Tuovinen
- 6 Phenomenological Approaches to Prehistoric Attachments: The Evidence from Prehistoric, Complete, Animal Burials of the Eastern Carpathian Basin 63**
Tibor-Tamás Daróczi

Part III Emotionally Important Objects and Places

- 7 Letting Go of Attachment Objects: Insights from the ‘Problematic Stuff’ of Later Prehistoric Britain and Beyond 73**
Lindsey Büster
- 8 Objects of Memory, Attachment, and Childhood: A Case from Roman Piedmont (Northwestern Italy) 83**
Alessandro Quercia
- 9 Photography’s Post-Mortem: Examining Emotion and Attachment Through Family Pictures 95**
Tuuli Matila

Part IV Interdisciplinary Insights to Attachment-Based Archaeology

10 Conclusion: Towards Mentalising Archaeology: Attachment Bonds and Loneliness	107
Sanna Lipkin, Tiina Väre, and Taryn Bell	
11 Commentary: The Application of Attachment Theory for a More Emotionally and Socially Informed Archaeology	115
Siân Halcrow	
Index	119

About the Editors

Dr. Sanna Lipkin is University Research Fellow at the University of Oulu and Adjunct Professor in textile archaeology at the University of Turku. In her recent Academy of Finland funded projects (2016–2023) she has specialised in the archaeology of emotional attachment, childhood, funerary archaeology, and the study of mummified remains.

Dr. Taryn Bell is a researcher at the University of Leeds. Her doctoral research, conducted at the University of York and funded by the White Rose College of Arts and Humanities, focused on emotional attachments to objects, with a focus on the Upper Palaeolithic. She is interested in how attachment theory can help archaeologists to understand both social and emotional life in the past.

Dr. Tiina Väre is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Helsinki. Her main fields of specialty are related to osteology, paleopathology, mummy studies, historical burial culture, and stable isotopes. Her research on past breastfeeding practices in Finland utilising archaeological skeletal remains and stable isotope analyses was funded by the Academy of Finland (2020–2023) and conducted at the University of Oulu.

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Part I

Introduction



Introduction: Archaeologies of Emotion, Attachment, and Social Bonds

1

Taryn Bell , Sanna Lipkin , and Tiina Väre 

Abstract

From cradle to grave, human behaviour is greatly influenced by our emotional attachments to other people, animals, objects, places, and ideologies. In this volume, “Archaeologies of Attachment”, we seek to explore new approaches in archaeological thought to study these bonds from the Palaeolithic to the recent past. This introduction provides a basic overview of attachment, considers attachment as a more general explanatory concept for social bonds, and offers a short introduction into the rest of the chapters contained within.

1.1 Introduction

Our social lives are vital for our ability not just to thrive, but to survive, a fact that archaeologists and psychologists have recognised for many years. Studies show that the key to longevity and good health is the presence of high-quality relationships; our bonds with others shape our very minds and bodies for the better.

However, less well acknowledged is the inherently emotional nature of human sociality. As we aim to demonstrate in this volume, *Archaeologies of Attachment*, our emotions and

our social bonds are tightly interwoven, and this combination has a major impact on many aspects of our thought and behaviour, from the way we see ourselves to the way we treat others to the ways in which we interact with the world around us.

Thus, archaeologists clearly have a reason to be interested in ‘socio-emotional’ relationships and the nature of bonds between people through time. Approaches which allow us to ‘get at’ socio-emotional experiences in the past allow us to access a more realistic, and altogether more human, view of the past.

In this edited volume, we offer a new approach to the study of social and emotional life in the past, focusing on the emotional attachment bonds we develop from cradle to grave. Inspired by, and in many cases drawing directly from, the psychological theory of attachment, we consider the myriad of ways in which attachment informs our understanding of socio-emotional life from the recent past all the way back to humanity’s beginnings.

Psychological research has demonstrated that humans are born with an innate ability to form a variety of close social and emotional attachments throughout life. Archaeology has not, however, considered the significance of these attachments in any detail to date. *Archaeologies of Attachment* seeks to shed light on what attachment is, how it functions, and how it has influenced human life and material culture, with a view to demonstrating the benefits of an attachment perspective for archaeology. It brings together contributions from authors focusing on a variety of subjects, from our relationships with people and animals, our connection to place and space, and our connection to material culture. In doing so, we aim to improve understanding of where and how archaeologists can look for evidence of these attachments, in order to better understand human behaviour, cognition, and life more broadly.

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