



HAL
open science

Ancient World Values Survey: Attitudes toward children

Nicolas Baumard

► **To cite this version:**

| Nicolas Baumard. Ancient World Values Survey: Attitudes toward children. 2021. hal-03907591

HAL Id: hal-03907591

<https://hal.science/hal-03907591>

Submitted on 20 Dec 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Ancient World Values Survey: Attitudes toward children

This version: 28/09/2021

If you detect a mistake or want to complement this survey, please email
nbaumard@gmail.com

Introduction	2
DELIMITATION OF THE SAMPLE	2
TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS	2
PRESENTATION OF THE SURVEY	2
Results	3
1. Ancient Egypt (2000 BCE – 300 BCE).....	3
2. Mesopotamia (2000 BCE – 550 BCE).....	4
3. Greek world (800 BCE – 1800 CE)	4
From the Archaic period to the Classical period	4
From the Classical period to the Hellenistic period	5
4. Indian world (800 BC – 1800 CE).....	6
5. Persian world (500 BCE – 1800 CE)	6
6. Latin world (300 BCE – 500 CE)	6
From the Late Republic to the Early Empire.....	7
7. China (300 CE – 1800 CE).....	8
From the Tang dynasty to the Late Imperial dynasties.....	9
Early Modern China compared to Early Modern Europe.....	9
8. Arab World (400 – 1800)	10
9 - 14 Western Europe: England, France, Germany, Italy, Low Countries and Spain (500 – 1800)	10
From Early Medieval period to the Central Medieval period	10
From Late Medieval period to the Early Modern period	13
15. Wales (500 – 1800).....	14
16. Japan (700 – 1800).....	14
From Classical and Medieval periods to the Edo period.....	14
Edo japan compared to Modern Europe.....	15
17. Ireland (700 – 1800).....	15
18. Old Norse world (800 - 1800).....	15
19. East Slavic world (1100 - 1800)	15

Introduction

DELIMITATION OF THE SAMPLE

The sample was decided a priori based on the amount of data in literary history and economic history. 19 areas were included:

- 2000 BCE – 500 BCE: Egypt (from Ancient Egyptian) and Mesopotamia (from Sumerian and Akkadian).
- 500 BCE – 500 CE: Eastern Mediterranean (from Ancient Greek), Western Mediterranean (from Latin), India (from Sanskrit and Tamil), Central Asia (from Persian), China (from Chinese)
- 500 CE – 1800 CE: England (from English), France (from French), Germany (from German), Italy (from Italian), Spain (from Castilian), Low Countries (from Dutch), Ireland (from Irish), Wales (from Welsh), Iceland and Norway (from Old Norse), Russian (from East Slavic), Japan (from Japanese), Arabic world (from Arabic), India (from Sanskrit, Tamil and Urdu), Central Asia (from Persian), China (from Chinese)

In order to have comprehensive series, we then completed the series with additional literary traditions when needed (Persian in Early Modern India, Latin in Early Medieval France, etc.). This method is common practice in cultural history. For instance, the authors of the *Handbook of Spanish Literature* write: ‘As “Spain” did not exist as a political entity in the Middle Ages, we will have to understand the term “medieval Spanish literature” to be merely a useful shorthand for something like “the literature written in the medieval period in that geographical area corresponding, roughly, to the borders of the present-day Spanish state.’ (Gies, 2004). Such a definition means that a survey of Spanish literature will include ‘a number of languages and literary traditions we identify today with names like Latin, Occitan, Catalan, Galician-Portuguese, and Aragonese, in addition to the Arabic, Hebrew, and Castilian.’ (Gies, 2004).

TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

The temporal and spatial level of analysis were decided based on the availability of economic data. Before the 19th c., it is impossible to go below the national level for most countries. The only exception is the Roman Empire where some estimates allow for distinguishing between the Western part and the Eastern part of the Empire, which corresponds to our Latin and Greek areas.

To limit bias in data analysis, we use standard historical periods whenever possible, deferring to Wikipedia to label each period. In particular, we use the same temporal division for all European countries: Early Medieval period (500 – 1000), Central Medieval period (1000 - 1300), Late Medieval period (1300 – 1500) and Early Modern period (1500 – 1800). These temporal division do not always match the evolution of economic development. However, they allow for limiting the degrees of freedom in the analysis. In the end, the combination of the 19 geographical areas and their standard historical periods leads to 77 cases of observation.

PRESENTATION OF THE SURVEY

The survey is organized by geographic areas (e.g. Greece, England, etc.), and within one geographical area by historical periods, with the earlier periods first.

Comparison within the same area (e.g. Archaic Greece and Hellenistic Greece) are thus naturally presented in the relevant section (e.g. Greece). The survey thus starts with the most ancient traditions (e.g. Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia) and ends with the most recent (e.g. Iceland and Norway, Russia).

In each case, the survey proceeds as follow:

- Economic Development across periods (when possible Living Standards and Human Development indicators were added)
- Evolution of attitudes toward children in cultural history

Results

Table 1: Relative importance of childhood by area and by period (

Periods		References	Evolution
Least developed	Most developed		
Archaic Greece	Classical Greece	Beaumont, 2003; Golden, 2015; Grubbs, 2013; Oakley, 2013	Increase
Classical Greece	Hellenistic Greece	Beaumont, 2003	Increase
Late Republic (Latin)	Early Empire (Latin)	Dixon, 1992; Golden, 2015; Lovén, 2013; Manson, 1983; McGinn, 2013; Rawson, 2003; Veyne, 1978	Increase
Early Medieval Europe	Central Medieval Europe	Doris, 1981; Forsyth, 1976; Gaffney, 2016; Lasareff, 1938; Martindale, 1994; McLaughlin, 2004; Orme, 2003; Swanson, 1990; Vadin, 1978	Increase
Central Medieval Europe	Early Modern Europe	Ariès, 1965; Cunningham, 1998; Fass, 2013; Heywood, 2017; Stone, 1977	Increase
Pre-Tang dynasties	Tang dynasty	DeWoskin, 1995; Hung, 1995; Kinney, 1995; Wu, 1995	Increase
Tang dynasty	Late Imperial China	Wu, 1995	Increase
Early Modern China	Early Modern Europe	Hsiung, 2007; Saari, 1990; Stearns, 2016; Wu, 2006	Increase
Medieval Japan	Edo period	Farris, 2009; Frühstück, & Walthall, 2017; Platt, 2005	Increase
Early Modern Japan	Early Modern Europe	Jones, 2010; Paget, 2011; Stearns, 2016	Increase

1. Ancient Egypt (2000 BCE – 300 BCE)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the diachronic evolution of the attitudes toward children in Ancient Egypt.

2. Mesopotamia (2000 BCE – 550 BCE)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the diachronic evolution of the attitudes toward children in Mesopotamia.

3. Greek world (800 BCE – 1800 CE)

Academic works regarding parental investment are available for 3 periods: Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic.

Table 1: Relative importance of childhood by period (predicted and observed)

Periods		Prediction	Observations
Least developed	Most developed		
Archaic period	Classical period	Increase	Increase
Classical period	Hellenistic period	Increase	Increase

FROM THE ARCHAIC PERIOD TO THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

In Ancient Greece, artistic representations from the 6th to the 3rd century BC show a clear increase in the importance of childhood, as well as a qualitative change from children as incomplete adults and marginal beings toward children as cute and funny creatures requiring caring (Beaumont, 2003; Oakley, 2013). In the 6th century, children are rare in artistic representations. They appear mostly in minor and inexpensive arts such as painted plaques and vases, and rarely in the costly medium of carved stone. They also are represented as miniaturized adults, in the same way that social inferiors like servants and slaves, and in contrast to adolescents, especially adolescent boys. By contrast, in the 5th and 4th c., children are much more often represented, and when represented they occupy a much more central position. For instance, the traditional departure-of-warrior scenes, present all across the Greek art history, accord much more space to the child with his mother in the classical period than in the archaic periods. Strikingly, in the classical period, schoolroom scenes are one of the most frequent representations of children, suggesting that this growing interest is associated with an increase in the investment in human capital.

The classical period also sees the emergence of new topics such as pictures of children in danger or suffering violence aiming to convey the absolute dependence of the infant on its mother and the willingness of the mother to fight to death to protect her offspring. The way children are depicted also insist more and more on their child-like features: large heads, short limbs, chubby torso, wrists and hands, suggesting a greater attention to children and in particular to the trait related to signals of caring (Grubbs, 2013). Finally, funerary art also testifies this evolution. While in the archaic period, children are depicted only to the extent that they enhance the prestige of the household, the classical period see the emergence of

funerary memorials dedicated to commemorate the dead children as a significant being in their own right. As Beaumont writes

“This suggests that by the late fifth or fourth centuries, the status of young child risen sufficiently in Athens to justify the considerable outlay of expenditure on a memorial that apparently did little to overtly enhance the profile of the oikos to which the deceased belonged but that rather commemorated an individual who had as yet fulfilled no practical function within society. Instead the children’s tombstones seem first and foremost to give expression to the very personal emotion of love and loss felt by those family members left behind.”

While artistic representation provide the least ambiguous signal, other elements such as literature (see for instance, Ingalls, 1998), medical documents, legal change all points toward an increasing interest to children from the Archaic to the Classical and then Hellenistic periods (Golden, 2015).

- Beaumont, L. A. (2003). *The changing face of childhood*. na.
Golden, M. (2015). *Children and childhood in classical Athens*. JHU Press. I
Grubbs, J. E. (2013). Infant exposure and infanticide. *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, 83.
Ingalls, W. B. (1998). Attitudes towards children in the Iliad. *Echos du monde classique: Classical views*, 42(1), 13-34.
Oakley, J. H. (2013). Children in Archaic and Classical Greek art : A Survey. *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, 147.

FROM THE CLASSICAL PERIOD TO THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

The same trend can be detected up to the Hellenistic period in the artistic representations. This observation goes back to Herter (1927):

“The Hellenistic poets were the first to put children at center stage as they actually are and for their own sakes . . . and the art of that period swims with true depictions of real children, from whose amusing conduct Greeks of that time must have taken special pleasure.” (Herter, 1927, p. 251, cited by Golden, 2015, p. 143)

This statement is in agreement with more recent studies on the representation of childhood in Hellenistic art. As Beaumont (2003) writes:

‘the image of children and childhood was now sentimentalized and idealized, both through the representation of cute childish behavior and physical attitudes and through the iconographic adoption of physically charming childish anatomy. (Beaumont, 2003, p. 75)

Indications of a change in mentalities are also visible outside art history. The hellenistic poetry “delighted in scenes of emotion which it found in odd episodes of myth, in the child and the old, the housewife as well as the heroine” (Lane Fox, 1986, 353). New concern to bury infants and small children in cemeteries is evident at Corinth and Olynthus as well as Athens (Morris, 1987; Houby- Nielsen, 1995). Moreover, this new interest in children is restricted to literature and the visual arts. Hellenistic medicine developed a distinctive

therapeutic regime for children—something absent from the Hippocratic Corpus (Bertier, 1990). At the same time, the exposure of newborns became morally troubling, as a belief grew up in the child's right to live (Deissmann-Merten, 1984, 276–281). As Mark Golden writes in his review, there seems to be 'a fundamental shift in mentalité' (143).

It is worth noting the limits of these conclusions. As Mark Golden notes:

There is no series of textual or iconographic data that permits any reasonably reliable conclusion about levels of exposure during the classical or Hellenistic periods. Arguments need to be based on the distribution of the evidence over time, on quantitative data from particular locales and times, which then need to be generalized, and on scattered statements of uncertain validity. (...) we have no Hellenistic tragedies, and small choes showing children were apparently a fashion that did not continue much past the end of the fifth century. On the other hand, the genres of literature that supply much of the evidence for the new Hellenistic outlook—the hymns of Callimachus, Theocritean idylls—are unknown, or nearly so, in the classical period. Consequently, what appears to be a shift in mentalité may be mostly or even entirely an effect of genre.

Despite these reservations, Golden (2015) concludes his review by unambiguously stating that there was an increase in the attention given to children during the Hellenistic period.

- Beaumont, L. A. (2003). *The changing face of childhood*.
- Bertier, J. (1990). "Enfants malades et maladies des enfants dans le *Corpus hippocratique*." In *La Maladie et les maladies dans la collection hippocratique*, edited by P. Potter, G. Maloney, and J. Desautels, 209–220 (Quebec).
- Deissmann-Merten, M. (1984). "Zur Sozialgeschichte des Kindes im antiken Griechenland." In *Zur Sozialgeschichte der Kindheit*, edited by J. Martin and A. Nitschke, 267–316 (Freiburg and Munich).
- Golden, M. (2015). *Children and childhood in classical Athens*. JHU Press
- Houby-Nielsen, S. (1995). "'Burial Language' in Archaic and Classical Kerameikos." *Proceedings of the Danish Institute at Athens* 1:129–191.
- Lane Fox, R. (1986). "Hellenistic Culture and Literature." In *The Oxford History of the Classical World: Greece and the Hellenistic World*, edited by J. Boardman, J. Griffin, and O. Murray, 338–364 (Oxford).
- Morris (1987) 57–69. Morris, I. (1987). *Burial and Ancient Society: The Rise of the Greek City-State* (Cambridge).

4. Indian world (800 BC – 1800 CE)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the diachronic evolution of the attitudes toward children in pre-modern India.

5. Persian world (500 BCE – 1800 CE)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the diachronic evolution of the attitudes toward children in the Persian World.

6. Latin world (300 BCE – 500 CE)

Academic works regarding parental investment are available for 2 periods: the late Republic and the Early Empire.

Table 2: Relative importance of childhood by period (predicted and observed)

Periods		Prediction	Observations
Least developed	Most developed		
Late Republic	Early Empire	Increase	Increase

FROM THE LATE REPUBLIC TO THE EARLY EMPIRE

From the late Republic to the Empire, the Roman culture saw an evolution similar to the Greek one (Dixon, 1992; Golden, 2015; Rawson, 2003). The iconography is again a great source of evidence. While there are very few inscriptions, no funerary monuments and almost no art dedicated to children during the Republic, children start being represented during the Augustan period and the frequency of children representation culminate under the Antonines, in the 2nd c. CE (Lovén, 2013; Rawson, 2003; Rawson & Weaver, 1999). It is worth noting that this evolution of the attitude toward children cannot be ascribed to the Greek Influence. Indeed, while the Romans borrowed a lot from the Greeks during the Republican period, it is precisely during this period that the presence of children is the most limited (Manson, 1983; Rawson, 2003). This cannot be either a matter of the greater survival of more recent evidence as after the peak in the second century, the importance of children declines (Rawson, 2003). Finally, it cannot be attributed in a change of medium. For instance, the sarcophagus and inscriptions of the Cornelia Scipiones family, dating from the third and second centuries BCE, have no record of non-adult children. But when sarcophagi start to be popular (among the elite population) in the second century CE, the new medium gave an importance place to children. Later on, when affluence started to decrease, sarcophagi also see a decrease of the place attributed to the representation of children (Rawson, 2003). Literary evidences confirm this pattern. The depiction of the small child become more precise in the late Republic, filled with a new tenderness and love (just as in the Hellenistic art) that is absent in earlier writings (Dixon, 1992; Manson, 1983).

In the legal domain, the Augustan period is famous for its pro-familial laws rewarding marriage and childrearing and punishing celibacy and adultery. After this period, during the Golden Age of the early Empire, the Roman State kept trying to ameliorate the situation of children by protecting the rights of the children, in particular through a series of limitations placed on the exercise of *patria potestas* (McGinn, 2013). Two changes to the law are worth mentioning. Under certain circumstances, a *paterfamilias* might be denied custody of a child in favor of the mother following a divorce. The *paterfamilias* also saw limits upon his right to break up his daughter's happy marriage. The emperors also established a range of official and private sponsored projects for the support of children and family life (McGinn, 2013; Rawson, 2003).

Moral attitudes also changed during the Early Roman Empire. While exposure was accepted in the Republic, it becomes less and less tolerated, to the point that it was finally banished in the second century (Grubbs, 2013; Paul Veyne, 1978). Whereas there is almost no mention of exposure or infanticide in the Roman Republic, in the late first and early second century a number of Roman and Greek writers—Stoic philosophers, but also rhetorical writers, biographers, and jurists—mentioned infant exposure and its consequences, indicating a growing discomfort with the practice of getting rid of children. This shift also occurs in other domains. Abortion becomes less and less tolerated, while breastfeeding by the mother (and

not by a wet nurse) is seen as a moral duty (Paul Veyne, 1978). The State also accompanied this shift in moral attitudes toward children promoting a new kind of *patria potestas* based *pietas* rather than on violence (McGinn, 2013). This is clearly illustrated in the ubiquity of the official representations of family values through the ‘holy family’ of Anchises-Aeneas-Ascanius (Manson, 1983; Rawson, 2003).

- Dixon, S. (1992). *The Roman Family*. JHU Press.
 Golden, M. (2015). *Children and childhood in classical Athens*. JHU Press.
 Grubbs, J. E. (2013). Infant exposure and infanticide. *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, 83.
 Lovén, L. L. (2013). Children and Childhood in Roman Commemorative Art. *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, 302.
 Manson, M. (1983). The emergence of the small child in Rome (Third century BC-First century AD). *History of education*, 12(3), 149–159.
 McGinn, T. A. (2013). Roman Children and the Law. *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, 341.
 Rawson, B. (2003). *Children and childhood in Roman Italy*. OUP Oxford.
 Rawson, B., & Weaver, P. (1999). *The Roman family in Italy: Status, sentiment, space*. Oxford University Press.
 Veyne, P. (1978). La famille et l’amour sous le Haut-Empire romain. *Annales*, 35–63.

7. China (300 CE – 1800 CE)

Table 3: Relative importance of childhood by area and by period (predicted and observed)

Periods		Prediction	Observations
Least developed	Most developed		
Pre-Tang dynasties	Tang dynasty	Increase	Increase
Tang dynasty	Late imperial dynasty	Increase	Increase
Early Modern China	Early Modern Europe	Increase	Increase

Parental investment from the pre-Tang dynasties to the Tang dynasty

Several work have demonstrated that the low importance of childhood during the early imperial period (DeWoskin, 1995; Hung, 1995; Kinney, 1995). For instance, Wu Hung studied Han pictorial carvings of children who can be identified by name and concludes and concluded there are no true portraits of children from the Han. The images of children that have been preserved (with one exception) serve instead to illustrate didactic tales that are largely concerned with the virtues of public duty and filial love. Genuine love, by opposition of socially or morally required love, is seldom represented (Hung, 1995). In the same way, Kenneth DeWoskin (DeWoskin, 1995) has showed that in the earliest biographies, the passage on the youth of eminent figures typically serve to foreshadow the nature of the adult personality rather than to inform the reader about an individual’s childhood per se (a similar observation has been made for the early European biographies, see above).

The importance of children seems to increase with the Tang. Pei-yi Wu shows that from about 800 CE onward, the corpus of writings commemorating a child’s death began to grow steadily, at the time where the first romantic stories start to be written (Wu, 1995). This upward trend goes on during the Ming and culminates during the Qing dynasties. Comparing 9th c. and 17th c. commemorative texts written by two fathers morning their deceased

daughters, Pei-yi Wu shows that parents' depictions greatly increase in precision and emotionality:

'the ninth-century girl was a shadowy figure passively enduring her fate. While her father could still "see her eyes and face" when he stood over her temporary grave, the reader cannot share the vision. There is nothing in the text to suggest a real person. Even the standard topoi are absent. But the seventeenth-century girl, perishing after only three short years in this world, is nevertheless the most fully realized child in all traditional Chinese literature. Self-assured and perhaps a bit spoiled, she was playful, agile, and totally engaged with all the people, young or old, who came her way. Her individuality and complexity are lovingly recalled by her father: her innocent wiles and revelries, her little games and amusing mimics, her quick though simple comprehension of the adult world, even her importunities.' (Wu, 1995).

This increase in emotionality and individuality in commemorative writings cannot result solely in an increase of literary materials, nor in the development of literary skills. Indeed, a similar trend can be observed in funerary rituals. There was indeed an initial reluctance, both in classical Europe and ancient China, to accord children more than a minimum recognition in death rituals.

DeWoskin, K. J. (1995). Famous Chinese Childhoods. *Chinese Views of Childhood*, 57–78.

Hung, W. (1995). Private love and public duty : Images of children in early Chinese art. *Chinese views of childhood*, 79–105.

Kinney, A. B. (1995). Dyed silk : Han notions of the moral development of children. *Chinese views of childhood*, 17–56.

Wu, P. (1995). Childhood remembered : Parents and children in China, 800 to 1700. *Chinese views of childhood*, 129–156.

FROM THE TANG DYNASTY TO THE LATE IMPERIAL DYNASTIES

The traditional Confucian tradition stipulated gradations in the elaborateness of the funeral and mourning ritual for each individual, depending on the age, station, gender. In particular, children who died before reaching the age of eight could be mourned by the parents, but not with outward ceremony. Yet, by the Song dynasty, the educated people (at least) started to depart from this tradition, giving formal burial to their young children (Wu, 1995).

Wu, P. (1995). Childhood remembered : Parents and children in China, 800 to 1700. *Chinese views of childhood*, 129–156.

EARLY MODERN CHINA COMPARED TO EARLY MODERN EUROPE

Although the importance of childhood increased during the Imperial era, it seems that children and childhood did not have the same importance and the same positive value as in Europe. For instance, in his review of *A Tender Voyage: Children and Childhood in Late Imperial China* (Hsiung, 2007), Pei-yi Wu wrote:

The changes in the lives of children of the Ming and Ch'ing periods as described above do not seem to amount to a fundamental break from the past. They are

certainly not the kind of discontinuities that, according to Ariès, occurred in seventeenth-century Europe. In China there was no "discovery", no new culture, of childhood. The changes from previous times were changes only in degree, not in kind (Wu, 2006)

Furthermore, the contact period (19th c.) and the reaction of Chinese intellectuals to European culture suggest that they perceived the Chinese culture as less concerned with children than Western Europe (Stearns, 2016).

For the cultural reformers of the early 20th c., the traditional child-rearing in family and school made children "more dead than alive". As Saari writes, the reformers felt that "Instead of emancipating their children into independence, parents required that children 'learn from the sages and sacrifice themselves.' Instead of guidance, there were orders; instead of understanding, only commands to obey." (Saari, 1990, p. 41)

Hsiung, P. (2007). *A tender voyage : Children and childhood in late imperial China*. Stanford University Press.
 Saari, J. L. (1990). *Legacies of childhood : Growing up Chinese in a time of crisis, 1890-1920*. Harvard Univ Asia Center.
 Stearns, P. N. (2016). *Childhood in world history*. Routledge.
 Wu, P. (2006). *A Tender Voyage : Children and Childhood in Late Imperial China*. JSTOR.

8. Arab World (400 – 1800)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the diachronic evolution of the attitudes toward children in the Arabic World.

9 - 14 Western Europe: England, France, Germany, Italy, Low Countries and Spain (500 – 1800)

Table 4: Relative importance of childhood by area and by period (predicted and observed)

Periods		Prediction	Observations
Least developed	Most developed		
Early Medieval period	Central Medieval period	Increase	Increase
Central Medieval period	Early modern period	Increase	Increase

FROM EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD TO THE CENTRAL MEDIEVAL PERIOD

In line with our main hypothesis, recent works have shown that there is an increase in parental feeling during the very same period (11th -13th c.) during which we have observed an increase in romantic feelings (for a review, see Orme, 2003). According to Georges Duby, this is one of the major changes of the period:

'the slow conversion of Christian sensibility that, in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, through the progressive spread of certain Gospel themes, the development of the Christmas liturgy and the proliferation of legends concerning the child Jesus, moves towards childhood values, would indeed appear to be one of those profound changes, one of those major turning- points in the history of attitudes that calls for detailed study.' (Duby, 1961)

Examining famous autobiographies of these periods, Mary M. McLaughlin notes that while the idea of the child as the possession and property of its parents continued to dominate parental attitudes and actions in the 11th and 12th c.:

"the proprietary notion had also been joined by more favorable conceptions, by a sense of the child as a being in its own right, as a nature of "potential greatness," and by a sense of childhood as a distinctive and formative stage of life." (McLaughlin, 2004)

She adds:

'Among the many great changes that emerged during the century and more spanned by the lifetimes none was more profound than the slow transformation in modes of consciousness and expression with which the relationships and experiences of childhood were inextricably bound up.' (McLaughlin, 2004)

Among these changes, she cites an increase in tenderness, compassion and the capacity to comprehend the needs and emotions of others. Historical chronicles, medical writings, Marian legends, hagiography, and popular theological texts, all display an increasing concern for children during the 11th – 13th c. period (MacLehose, 2008; Swanson, 1990).

One problem is that such observation could result from the simple increase in literary materials available for the later periods. To really compare different periods to each other, a more systematic method consists in comparing similar materials. In a very systematic study, Phyllis Gaffney studied the evolution of literary depictions of children in old French narratives (Doris, 1981; see also Vadin, 1978). She demonstrates that from the 12th to the 13th, the very period during which the topic of romantic love explodes in French literature, children become more important in narratives. They are more active and better characterized. But more importantly, their depiction emphasized the importance of development, and thus of investment during childhood. In the earlier narratives, writers are not interested in childhood for its own sake. Childhood is important not in itself but for what it might tell the reader about the adult to be: childhood, in particular, would reveal the future qualities of the hero or the saint. By contrast, in the later narratives, the heroes can become better and they change over time. In Gaffney's words, the medieval narratives shifted from the 'child as a prodigy in adults battles' towards 'the child as a youthful apprentice in search of experience', from 'the immutable nature of the young' toward 'the influences of nurture' (Gaffney, 2016). This interest in development reflect a view of childhood as time where things can change and thus where care, education and parenting might be important. In the end, concludes Gaffney:

‘cumulative indications tend to support Duby’s proposition that the twelfth century was propitious for a slow conversion of sensibility towards the young. the precocious little warrior of the *chanson de geste* is gradually superseded by the vulnerable apprentice of *romance*, and the popularity of *enfances* poems indicates an increased interest in childhood as a state in itself worthy of narrative interest.’ (Gaffney, 2016)

Further works suggest that this increase in the importance of children goes on during the 14th and 15th c. (Vadin, 1978).

Art is another domain where systematic comparison are possible. Victor Lasareff’s pioneering study of portrayals of the virgin and Child revealed a steady humanizing of the infant Jesus:

‘no longer the austere Judge of the universe, and free of all shadow of grief, he is (by the thirteenth century) a joyous Babe, who plays with his mother. The stereotyped attitude of blessing is gone; he now gesticulates freely, reaches up to the virgin’s face, or towards her veil or an apple, moves his small feet, and throws back His head.’ (Lasareff, 1938, p. 63)

Surveying the evolution of the paintings of the Madonna and the Christ during the 13th c., Martindale notes that:

‘By the end of the century, one finds the Christ-child walking around on the Virgin’s knee and reaching up to touch her face. The theme of lactation gradually becomes more common. The child acquires a degree of expression unknown at an earlier date.’ (Martindale, 1994)

Martindale also notes that the representations of maternal feelings are not confined to Italy:

‘In the north, one of its earliest manifestations is likely to be the famous statue of the Madonna and Child on the trumeau of the south portal of Amiens Cathedral (c. 1230-40) where the mother smiles at the child. (...) on a boss in the nave vault of the abbey church at Tewkesbury (c. 1340), there is a charming scene in which the Virgin appears to be teaching Christ to walk.’ (Martindale, 1994)

More generally, Ilene Forsyth garnered a variety of illustrations of childhood from the Carolingian period onwards and showed that, in the 13th c., child-types appear that can be regarded as precursors of later iconography: the figure of the adolescent angel; the ‘realistic’ child Jesus playing in His mother’s arms; the naked infant symbolizing the soul of a dead man. In the 14th c. century, the childhood of Christ, the virgin and saints becomes a popular motif in art; and by the end of the 14th c. the putto, or little cherub, so well-loved by the renaissance and baroque periods starts appearing (Forsyth, 1976).

Again, one problem with these observations could be that there are simply more paintings for the later periods and thus a greater variety of materials. However, Martindale note that not only are children more ‘childish’ and more often represented, but:

‘Thoughtfulness concerning the nature of childhood and the role of the child spilled over into other scenes and episodes in the biblical and sacred stories. In a fresco in the Baptistery at Parma (c. 1270), the boy Baptist sets out for the wilderness, escorted by an angel, and armed with his ABC on a scroll. Children take part in the scenes of the Road to Golgotha and the Crucifixion (c. 1340). At Assisi, children form part of the crowd to witness St Francis renouncing his father (c. 1290); and in a further version deriving from the first, they actually throw stones at St Francis (c. 1340).’

Thus, children simply seem more salient in people’s minds.

One final evolution are religious changes regarding children. During the 12th and 13th c., the Church, too, came to insist on baptizing infants within a few days of birth, instead of waiting until the traditional baptismal seasons of easter or Pentecost. An opposite trend is noted in the two sacraments traditionally administered with baptism: 12th and 13th c. theologians gradually argued the separation of communion and confirmation from the sacrament of baptism because seven years old children were deemed too young for such initiations. Thus, on the one hand, a higher regard for the fate of infants, and on the other hand, a willingness to give more time to children before reaching social maturity. In a nutshell, a desire to grant childhood a bigger importance.

- Doris, D.-B. (1981). *Enfance et maternité dans la littérature française des XII e et XIII e siècles*. Paris, H. Champion.
- Forsyth, I. H. (1976). Children in early medieval art : Ninth through twelfth centuries. *The Journal of psychohistory*, 4(1), 31.
- Gaffney, P. (2016). *Constructions of Childhood and Youth in Old French Narrative*. Routledge.
- Lasareff, V. (1938). Studies in the Iconography of the Virgin. *The Art Bulletin*, 20(1), 26–65.
- MacLehose, W. F. (2008). « A tender age » : *Cultural anxieties over the child in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*. Columbia university press.
- Martindale, A. (1994). The child in the picture : A medieval perspective. *Studies in Church History*, 31, 198–200.
- McLaughlin, M. M. (2004). Survivors and surrogates : Children and parents from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries. *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household & Children*, 20–124.
- Orme, N. (2003). *Medieval children*. Yale University Press.
- Swanson, J. (1990). Childhood and childrearing in ad status sermons by later thirteenth century friars. *Journal of Medieval History*, 16(4), 309-331. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-4181\(90\)90031-U](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-4181(90)90031-U)
- Vadin, B. (1978). L’absence de représentation de l’enfant et/ou du sentiment de l’enfance dans la littérature médiévale. *Exclus et systèmes d’exclusion dans la littérature et la civilisation médiévale*, 365–84.

FROM LATE MEDIEVAL PERIOD TO THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

The question about the evolution of childhood during the early modern period hardly needs discussion. The early observations of Ariès (1965) and Stone (1977) have been replicated in a number of works (Cunningham, 1998; Fass, 2013; Heywood, 2017). During the early modern period, a shift in philosophical and social attitudes toward children. Adults increasingly saw children as different from adults, blameless and in need of protection and education by the adults around them. In families, parents became aware of the pleasure they felt in observing children. The writings of the time mention dialogues between children and parents, which the conventions would not have allowed a few decades earlier. Outside the family, moralists like Erasmus began to develop the idea that children were fragile creatures of God whom adults had to protect and change (educate). In the 18th c., the works of philosophers like

Locke or Rousseau, who defended a very positive view of childhood, are very well received in all Europe.

The painting of Reynolds and Gainsborough in England or Greuze and Aubry in France clearly demonstrate the new enlightened attitudes toward young children. Reynold’s painting *The Age of Innocence* emphasizes the innocence and natural grace of the child and quickly became famous. In literature, the ‘poor child’, his life and suffering, are beginning to be described in literary works. Charles Dickens' autobiographical novel (*David Copperfield*) and his novel *Oliver Twist* describe orphaned, destitute children who have to work hard to survive. In France, the characters of Cosette and Gavroche, in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, become symbols of this poor childhood, often orphaned, sometimes protected but too often abused by the adult world. Thus, there is no doubt the early modern period is characterized by an important change in the importance of childhood.

Ariès, P. (1965). *Centuries of childhood : A social history of family life*.
 Cunningham, H. (1998). Histories of childhood. *The American Historical Review*, 103(4), 1195–1208.
 Fass, P. S. (2013). *The Routledge history of childhood in the western world*. Routledge.
 Heywood, C. (2017). *A History of Childhood*. John Wiley & Sons.
 Stone, L. (1977). *The family sex and marriage : In England 1500-1800*.

15. Wales (500 – 1800)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the diachronic evolution of the attitudes toward children in Wales.

16. Japan (700 – 1800)

Table 5: Relative importance of childhood by area and by period (predicted and observed)

Periods		Prediction	Observations
Least developed	Most developed		
Classical and Medieval periods	Edo period	Increase	Increase
Early Modern Japan	Early Modern Europe	Increase	Increase

FROM CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL PERIODS TO THE EDO PERIOD

The literature on the cultural evolution of childhood and parental investment is less developed for Japan than for Europe (Frühstück & Walthall, 2017; but see Herausgeber & Kinski, 2015). Farris notes that in the Heian period, emotional relations between children and their fathers seem distant or even non-existent. For instance, fathers almost never express their feelings about their children in classical poetry, despite the fact that all sorts of emotions are portrayed in classical poetry (Farris, 2009). Later on, in the medieval period, attitudes toward deceased children also seems to reveal relatively low level of investment (Farris, 2009).

By contrast, a few works suggest that the importance of children grew during the Edo period notably through a sharp increase of private schools in the biggest cities, the launch of local campaigns against abortion and infanticide beginning in the late 18th and the emergence of new pictorial representations of children (Platt, 2005).

- Farris, W. W. (2009). *Japan to 1600 : A social and economic history*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Frühstück, S., & Walthall, A. (Éds.). (2017). *Child's Play : Multi-Sensory Histories of Children and Childhood in Japan* (First edition). University of California Press.
- Herausgeber, D., & Kinski, M. (2015). *Childhood in Japanese History. Concepts and Experiences/Kindheit in der japanischen Geschichte. Vorstellungen und Erfahrungen*. Harrassowitz.
- Platt, B. (2005). Japanese childhood, modern childhood : The nation-state, the school, and 19th-century globalization. *journal of social history*, 965–985.

EDO JAPAN COMPARED TO MODERN EUROPE

Again, the literature of childhood is limited (Jones, 2010; Paget, 2011; Stearns, 2016). However, the political debates about children and schooling during the early Meiji period suggest that Japanese thinkers regarded their investment in children as less important than in the West (Jones, 2010; Paget, 2011; Stearns, 2016).

- Jones, M. (2010). *Children as Treasures : Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan*. Harvard University Asia Center.
- Paget, R. (2011). Raising subjects : The representation of children and childhood in Meiji Japan. *New Voices*, 4, 1–31.
- Stearns, P. N. (2016). *Childhood in world history*. Routledge.

17. Ireland (700 – 1800)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the diachronic evolution of the attitudes toward children in Ireland.

18. Old Norse world (800 - 1800)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the diachronic evolution of the attitudes toward children in the Old Norse World.

19. East Slavic world (1100 - 1800)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the diachronic evolution of the attitudes toward children in the East Slavic World.