

# L'ENFANT ET LA MORT DANS L'ANTIQUITÉ III

Le matériel associé  
aux tombes d'enfants





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L'ENFANT ET LA MORT  
DANS L'ANTIQUITÉ

III

LE MATÉRIEL ASSOCIÉ AUX TOMBES  
D'ENFANTS

Actes de la table ronde internationale organisée  
à la Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme  
(MMSH) d'Aix-en-Provence,  
20-22 janvier 2011

**Textes réunis et édités par Antoine Hermary et Céline Dubois**

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# Introduction

**Antoine Hermary**

Ce volume rassemble les communications présentées à la troisième réunion scientifique organisée dans le cadre du programme « L'Enfant et la mort dans l'Antiquité : des pratiques funéraires à l'identité sociale » (EMA), financé par l'Agence nationale de la Recherche (ANR) de novembre 2007 à novembre 2011. J'ai présenté dans la publication de la première table ronde<sup>1</sup> les objectifs et les méthodes de cette recherche, menée par trois partenaires scientifiques, le Centre Camille Jullian (CCJ) à Aix, le laboratoire Archéologies et Sciences de l'Antiquité (ArScAn) à l'Université de Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense et le Centre d'Études Alexandrines (CEAlex), avec l'appui d'un réseau international qui nous a permis de constituer une base de données sur les tombes d'enfants dans le monde méditerranéen antique, désormais accessible sur Internet. Je rappelle que le terme d'« enfant » s'applique pour nous à des individus dont l'âge s'étale entre la naissance et 14 ans environ, et que le champ chrono-culturel de la recherche couvre le monde grec et le monde romain, du début du I<sup>er</sup> millénaire av. J.-C. à la fin de l'Antiquité.

Il avait été convenu que chaque partenaire organiserait, entre 2008 et 2011, une réunion scientifique permettant à la fois de présenter des découvertes récentes dans le domaine concerné et de traiter un des principaux thèmes du programme. Ainsi, la première table ronde organisée par Anne-Marie Guimier-Sorbets et Yvette Morizot, qui s'est tenue à l'École française d'Athènes les 29 et 30 mai 2008, a permis de faire le bilan de recherches récentes en Grèce et en mer Noire, puis de présenter des études consacrées à la question du signalement des sépultures d'enfants. La seconde, organisée à Alexandrie par Marie-Dominique Nenna et Jean-Yves Empereur, du 12 au 14 novembre 2009, était centrée sur les questions d'anthropologie biologique, mais a permis de faire connaître des découvertes ou des recherches récentes concernant les tombes d'enfants de différents sites égyptiens, de l'époque pharaonique à la fin de l'Antiquité (*EMA II*, sous presse).

Il revenait à l'équipe aixoise d'inviter pour la troisième réunion des spécialistes de la question particulièrement complexe du « matériel » associé aux tombes d'enfants. Le choix d'un terme pour désigner les objets retrouvés dans les tombes des immatures, ou à l'extérieur mais en relation avec la sépulture, n'allait pas de soi et reflète certains débats en cours sur l'archéologie funéraire. Au premier abord, le mot « offrandes » pouvait paraître plus satisfaisant, mais il oriente vers des conceptions religieuses, des systèmes de croyances ou de relations affectives qui, précisément, attendent d'être mises en évidence dans un programme comme le nôtre. D'autre part, ce terme ne prend pas en compte les objets qui font partie de l'équipement vestimentaire et ornemental du défunt au moment de son inhumation – ou de sa mise en place sur le bûcher –, comme les fibules, les ceintures et, quand on peut montrer qu'ils étaient directement portés sur le corps, les bracelets, les boucles d'oreilles, etc. Le mot « mobilier » a été également écarté, bien qu'il soit souvent utilisé dans les publications d'archéologie funéraire – et ici même dans le titre de plusieurs articles ! –, dans un sens proche de celui d'« artefact », c'est-à-dire tout objet issu d'une fabrication artisanale : en effet, ce terme ne prend pas en compte des objets naturels (« écofacts ») déposés dans la sépulture, comme des galets, des éléments végétaux et, surtout, des restes osseux d'animaux ou des coquillages. Par défaut, le mot « matériel » a donc paru le plus approprié pour désigner ce qui était associé à la mise en terre du corps ou des restes incinérés d'un enfant, et pour tenter d'en déterminer les éventuelles spécificités face aux pratiques attestées pour des individus plus âgés. Les principales questions posées ne sont pas nouvelles : dépose-t-on autant d'objets auprès des tout-petits, des enfants de 6-7 ans et de 12-13 ans ? La nature de ce matériel varie-t-elle en fonction du sexe ? Dans quelle mesure certains objets – « biberons », vases miniatures, astragales, figurines en terre cuite, etc. – sont-ils caractéristiques des sépultures d'immatures ? Enfin, ces questions se posent-elles de la même façon dans les différentes régions du monde

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<sup>1</sup> *EMA I* : GUIMIER-SORBETS (A.-M.), MORIZOT (Y.) dir., *L'Enfant et la mort dans l'Antiquité I. Nouvelles recherches dans les nécropoles grecques. Le signalement des tombes d'enfants. Actes de la table ronde internationale organisée à Athènes. École Française d'Athènes, 29-30 mai 2008*. Paris, De Boccard, 2010.

méditerranéen et tout au long des douze siècles environ que couvre notre enquête ? Comme il est normal dans notre discipline, cette réunion scientifique et les Actes publiés ici ne prétendent pas apporter des réponses définitives à ces problèmes. Notre objectif était de faire connaître les résultats de fouilles plus ou moins récentes, de présenter des bilans sur des situations locales ou régionales et, de façon plus large, sur différents types de matériel. Pour situer ces réflexions dans un cadre plus large, il a paru intéressant de dépasser les exemples fournis par le monde méditerranéen classique – Grèce et Rome – et d'intégrer des contributions relatives à l'Égypte pré-hellénistique, à Carthage, au monde celtique du Midi et à la Gaule non méditerranéenne.

Comme lors de la table ronde d'Athènes, la publication s'ouvre sur un article de synthèse de Véronique Dasen, puis elle est divisée en deux chapitres principaux : les études locales et régionales concernent la Grèce (et l'Asie Mineure), la Grande Grèce et la Sicile, puis la Gaule et l'Afrique du Nord ; les études thématiques sont centrées sur les restes animaux, les objets associés aux sépultures des tout-petits, le dépôt de figurines en terre cuite et d'astragales, enfin, à propos d'un askos inscrit, sur la place des enfants les plus âgés dans l'éducation « pédérastique » en Grèce.

Comme lors des deux précédentes réunions, le volume est enrichi par des articles présentant des découvertes récentes.

La réunion d'Aix-en-Provence a été financée par les trois partenaires du programme sur les crédits accordés par l'ANR, avec des contributions de l'Université de Provence (Aix-Marseille I, aujourd'hui intégrée dans l'Université d'Aix-Marseille) et du Centre Camille Jullian (CNRS / Université de Provence) dont, depuis 2008, les infrastructures ont été mises au service de nos recherches. Je tiens à remercier pour leur aide Dominique Garcia, qui dirigeait alors le laboratoire, Cristel Lanata, sa gestionnaire financière, ainsi que mes principales collaboratrices scientifiques : Stéphanie Satre, responsable de la gestion du programme pendant trois ans, Solenn de Larminat, qui a revu les illustrations de ce volume, Anne-Sophie Koeller et, pour la publication des Actes, Céline Dubois, doctorante en co-tutelle à Aix et à Fribourg, qui a joué un rôle essentiel dans la révision des textes et qui, à ce titre, est co-éditeur de l'ouvrage.

# Grave Gifts in Child Burials in the Athenian Kerameikos: The Evidence of Sea Shells

Jutta Stroszeck

*Résumé.* Depuis l'Âge du Bronze jusqu'à la période romaine, des coquillages ont été déposés auprès d'enfants décédés. Dans la nécropole du Céramique à Athènes ils ne sont présents que dans 2% des sépultures d'enfants, mais concentrés à la fin du VI<sup>e</sup> et surtout au V<sup>e</sup> s. En comparant avec d'autres nécropoles de Grèce, il apparaît que les coquillages sont, au V<sup>e</sup> s., le plus souvent déposés dans des sépultures de très jeunes enfants. Cet article cherche ainsi à déterminer la signification de la présence des coquillages dans ces sépultures en les rattachant au monde de la naissance et de la petite enfance.

Funerary practices and burial customs are based on the religious ideas of specific social groups and constitute elements of local tradition. They are subject to change over time, generally as a reflexion of corresponding social changes. Grave goods are to be seen within this framework as keyed to gender, age and social status of the deceased, but further factors may come into play. For instance, the availability of certain objects can be related to economic or regional conditions.

If one follows a specific phenomenon over an extensive time span and in various regions of the ancient world, it becomes necessary to keep an eye on the possible structural, social and chronological developments, as these may lead to consequences for the interpretation of the phenomenon.

Against this background, the deposition of sea shells in child burials will be examined here.<sup>1</sup> Departing point for the analysis are the graves of children in the Kerameikos cemetery, but the practice itself was widely prevalent and may be followed over a long period. The present study begins with when, where and in what context sea shells appear, followed by the analysis of the sea shell species, and considerations regarding the use of sea shells in the Greek world during Antiquity.

<sup>1</sup> In a contribution to Classical child burials in the Kerameikos, S. Houby-Nielsen connects sea shells as gifts with the age groups 1 (newborn), 2 (older babies) and 4 ('adults'); Houby-Nielsen 1995, p. 182f. (Appendix 4).

Some 2000 graves from the Kerameikos cemetery have been published to date, 827 of which can be identified as child burials. The high number of child graves here is the result of full excavation and publication of two substantial areas, in which cemeteries for children were situated in the Late Archaic and Classical periods: first, Tumulus G to the south of the Eridanos<sup>2</sup> and second, the so-called South Tumulus to the south of the Street of the Tombs<sup>3</sup>. In the classical period, both tumuli constituted optical markers for the transitional zone between *polis* and *nekropolis* and vice versa. Both children's cemeteries were placed in this 'liminal zone' (Stroszeck 2010, esp. p. 57). Part of the children's cemetery covering the South Tumulus and continuing to the west towards the burial plots of the Messenians and the burial plot of Demetria and Pamphile were later covered over by the South Road (Brueckner 1909, p. 30-34; Eilmann 1932, esp. p. 197). This could mean that the area may already have been the property of the *polis*, that is, the children's cemetery was situated in an area of shared citizen use<sup>4</sup>.

In the rarest of cases the children are laid directly in the earth or cremated; they are almost always buried in a recipient. As a rule, this recipient is understood as a protection for the corpse, deposited first in the earth, and into which the child was then placed. It cannot be excluded, though, that the corpse was transported to the burial ground in the recipient. The choice of an amphora or a closed vase as funerary vessel for neonates has<sup>5</sup>, no doubt rightly, been associated with the conception of the uterus as a protecting recipient. Therefore, the choice of a container for the burial was connected to a meaning, even if it was a commonly available shape, which in secondary or after multiple uses finally ended up as a child coffin. Of the child burials in the Kerameikos, 328, that is, more

<sup>2</sup> *Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 5-9 and *passim*, as well as *beil.* 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Kerameikos* 9, p. 13, plan 1.3 and *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> The establishment of the ambassador graves, using public funds, at the foot of the South Tumulus supports this view: *Kerameikos*, Inv. I 18; I 241; I 242. *IG* II<sup>2</sup> no. 5220, 5224; *IG* I<sup>3</sup> no. 1178: Hoepfner 1973; Stroszeck 2002/2003.

<sup>5</sup> On the interpretation of pots used for child burials as uterus: Michalaki-Kollia 2010, p. 164.

than a third, are amphora burials, while the remaining employ other containers (*chytra*, *hydria*, *pithos*, or water pipe) and, in particular, clay tubs, probably produced exclusively for this purpose<sup>6</sup>. For the reception of the burial, an opening was created in the belly of an amphora, through which the corpse –with any gifts– was introduced, whereupon the hole was closed with the fragment cut or hewn out previously, or with a stone. In addition, in the course of the burial, the amphora mouth was usually blocked with a stone, with mud bricks, or with a pottery sherd<sup>7</sup>. The inside of the amphora can be painted red or black for the purpose of the burial (*Kerameikos* 7.1, no. 216). In most cases, the amphorae are deposited in a pit without further protection, either lying on the side or in upright position, but there are exceptions<sup>8</sup>.

The orientation of the child in the amphora coffin seems to follow predetermined rules, for example the geographic direction, or the line of vision of the deceased appears to have played a role: the head of the child is mostly positioned at the mouth of the amphora<sup>9</sup> and to the east, looking to the west, seldom at the bottom/foot of the amphora (*Kerameikos* 7.1, no. 119, 209, 566, 77, 44, 30). Karl Kübler assumed that the reason for the differing positioning of the skeletons with the head at the foot end, occurring sometimes, may be due to the east-west orientation of the amphora (*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 190). The head would then have been placed at the foot end so that it was orientated again to the east, looking west. In the case of north-south oriented graves along the Sacred Road, the head is placed to the south, looking towards the Sacred Street, and when in these cases the foot of the amphora was placed at the south end, the head of the child was placed in the foot.

The choice of a specific shape of burial recipient obviously didn't take place merely by chance, rather it was undertaken with regard to the size and thus the age of the child to be buried. It is clear that neonates and young babies were predominantly interred in amphorae

and other vessels, whereas for older babies and younger children clay tubs were employed.

Children are often buried without gifts, their graves contain, if anything, perishable organic goods, which have not been preserved (e.g. *Kerameikos* 7.1, no. 574, 607, 607a, 611). The gifts are generally found within the recipient next to the skeleton, but it does occur that they were placed in the pit itself<sup>10</sup>. These instances seem to reflect two different types of dedications.

It is conspicuous that in the child burials of the late 6th and the entire 5th century B.C., and mainly in enchytrismoi, a particular combination of vessels is re-occurring several times: so-called lidded bowls, that is, *pyxides*<sup>11</sup> or *lekanides*,<sup>12</sup> covered with a lid, are accompanied by small juglets (*olpai*) and small-sized *skyphoi*, sometimes also small plates. The lidded bowls constitute –together with miniature drinking cups (*kotylai*) and small juglets (*olpai*), more rarely with other shapes– a type of standard equipment for child graves, to which *lekythoi* or other vases may be added. Whereas the juglets and the drinking cups have an obvious use as recipients for libations, the use of the lidded bowls, almost always of 'normal' size and showing signs of wear, is not as readily understood.<sup>13</sup> A connection with the *pyxides* used in the Athenian wedding ritual appears likely.

### Child graves with sea shells in the Kerameikos

Over the entire time span covered by the burials in the Kerameikos cemetery, sea shells appear as gifts in 32 graves, 17 of which belong to children. Since the Hellenistic and Roman cemeteries remain hitherto unpublished, this total will very probably rise. Nevertheless, on the whole, the number of burials containing sea shells remains comparatively small.

The oldest child burial from the Kerameikos that contains a sea shell is a cremation of the late 10th c. B.C. (Cat. 1). It is interpreted as child burial because the grave gifts comprise a set of miniature vessels (*Kerameikos* 5,

<sup>6</sup> To date, no other use, for example in a settlement context, is documented. *Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 179 with n. 39; Ursula Knigge did consider a use as container for kneading dough: *Kerameikos* 9, p. 29f. n. 50.

<sup>7</sup> *Kerameikos* 7.1, no. 68 with clay; no. 526, 487, 165, 32 with a sherd; no. 76 with a bowl sherd painted reddish-black on the inside; no. 466 and 441 with a covering bowl; 67 with the base of a vase; no. 66 with the base of a bowl; no. 241 with a poros fragment; no. 181 with a piece of micaceous slate. *Kerameikos* 7.1, no. 240 had its opening closed by brick fragments.

<sup>8</sup> The amphora fragment *Kerameikos* 7.1, no. 198 was covered with a clay tub fragment and a 10 cm thick stone slab; in the case of no. 47 the amphora was surrounded and covered with field stones.

<sup>9</sup> *Kerameikos* 7.1, no. 567, 468, 441, 417, 245, 241, 240, 216, 207, 164, 117, 116, 79, 68, 52, 47, 32 'in the mouth'.

<sup>10</sup> *Kerameikos* 7.1, no. 187; no. 181 small bowl; no. 112 two small bowls; in the case of no. 76 the gifts are placed outside on both sides of the Black-figure amphora. In no. 33 part of the gifts were placed inside and part outside, next to the amphora.

<sup>11</sup> Rutherford Roberts 1978, p. 2, 4f. and 177-187 (on the *pyxis* in the female sphere as a container for make-up and jewelry and with special connection to the wedding).

<sup>12</sup> Occasionally also termed 'lidded bowl' cf. Breitfeld-von Eickstedt 1997 and the announced dissertation p. 60 n. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Blegen *et al.* 1964, p. 70: 'The *pyxis*, which is usually considered to indicate a woman's grave, has a different significance at Korinthos; it occurs regularly in children's burials, and, furthermore, often in graves which also contain strigils, the conclusion is that the *pyxis* was dedicated primarily to children, both male and female'.

p. 24, 212f., no. 3, pl. 14). In the excavation report, the sea shell is mentioned, but neither described nor illustrated. Among the graves of this period, this appears to be the only case of a sea shell in the Kerameikos. The hitherto latest child burial containing a sea shell is the inhumation of a 3-6 year old child that can be dated to the Augustan period (Cat. 17).

Exception made of the oldest and the latest examples, all other child burials with sea shells are inhumations of very small infants, buried in the late 6th and during the 5th c. B.C. The infants in these cases were very young. This is indicated by the small size of the containers used in their burial. For example, the Cat. 12 amphora has a total height of 52 cm, while the available space in the belly, into which the child was introduced, amounts to no more than 40 cm. The table of child growth rates, quoted by Daniel Gräpler in a study of child burials at Taranto, indicates that an average one-year old already attains a height of 80 cm<sup>14</sup>. The babies in Cat. 2-16 are predominantly interred in amphorae; the few other cases comprise a *hydria* burial (Cat. 2), as well as two burials in "clay tubs", so-called *larnakes* (Cat. 11, 13). The distribution in the area of the children's cemeteries in the Kerameikos is relatively uniform: five graves are located in the sector of Tumulus G (Cat. 2, 3, 5, 6, 13), six to the south of the Sacred Road (Cat. 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16), and three in the cemetery on the west slope of the South Tumulus (Cat. 4, 7, 12).

Among the child burials in the Kerameikos containing the above-mentioned standard pottery set, a small group stands out through the additional deposition of the sea shell (Cat. 2 to Cat. 16). The funerary set consists here of the lidded bowl (*lekanis* or *pyxis*), a *skyphos* and/or a small *olpe*.

The sea shell is always of a bivalve type, of which one shell only is placed in one of the vessels, that is, in child burials the sea shell is always placed carefully inside a protecting vessel. Sometimes the sea shell is placed together with further gifts in a larger vessel: in Cat. 3 with a *kotyle* (fig. 1), in Cat. 5 with a miniature *skyphos* (fig. 3), in Cat. 9 with a juglet (fig. 7). In Cat. 7, the sea shell has been found inside a small bowl, placed within a lidded bowl (fig. 5). In Cat. 16 the sea shell, placed in a *pyxis*, was covered by a small plate.

The reoccurring combination of a dish containing a sea shell obviously reflects an established ritual. Further gifts could be added, for example astragals (Cat. 3),<sup>15</sup>

an *exaleiptron* (Cat. 5), or, as in Cat. 12, a make-up tablet (fig. 10, 13.4). The complete 'gift set' is most often placed in the funerary container itself, in some cases by the head of the corpse. Only in the case of Cat. 14, the shell was found together with a second set of grave gifts outside the tub, and not among the gifts within.

The vessels, in which the sea shells are deposited, are not miniatures but the common utilitarian sizes. Besides, they often exhibit traces of use. The *lekanis* in Cat. 15, for example, has scratches in the bottom, on the inside of the lid, and on the underside. The slip in these places is worn off down to the clay. It is notable that these wear patches are found on one side only of the vessel.

The grave contexts described above reflect a firmly established dedication ritual performed at the interment of infants, in which the sea shells had their definite place. The sea shells are, moreover, always found in graves containing further gifts, often several, and in some cases more than ten.

It is also notable what does not appear in association with sea shells: most obvious is that none of the amphora burials with sea shells among the gifts in the Kerameikos has produced a feeding bottle. Feeding bottles are attested in Athens since the Mycenaean period<sup>16</sup>, and in the child burials in the Kerameikos they constitute a quite common gift. It has already been noted that feeding bottles are repeatedly found in graves of taller, *i.e.* older, children. Could then the sea shells in infant contexts fulfill the function of the feeding bottle used for older children?

Sea shells in Athenian child burials are, of course, not restricted to the Kerameikos site. The child burial no. 1010, uncovered in the area of the Kerameikos metro station at a short distance outside the archaeological site, may be referred to as an example for the evidence elsewhere (Baziotopoulou-Valavani *et al.* 2000, p. 271, 304 with fig. 303). On the basis of the pottery, the richly furnished grave can be dated to the first quarter of the 5th c. B.C.

On the one hand, in relation to other child burials of the 5th c. B.C., the group of graves with sea shell gifts is numerically very small, constituting less than 2% of children's graves of the period. On the other hand, the graves of this group extend over more than three generations, that is, they appear in the late 6th c. and during the entire 5th c. The group comes to an end concurrently with the 5th c. B.C.; thereafter the custom appears to have changed. In the same period the child burials in the two cemeteries by the South Tumulus and above Tumulus G cease to continue.

<sup>14</sup> Graepler 1997, p. 53 n. 118: Table with sizes for children 1-14 years of age. 1 year: 80 cm; 6 years: 118 cm; 14 years: 163 cm.

<sup>15</sup> *E.g.* Korinthos, North Cemetery: child burial in sarcophagus Blegen *et al.* 1964, p. 225, no. 286; Olynthos, Grave 462 (450-400 B.C.) and Grave 327 (ca. 420 B.C.): Robinson 1942, p. 67, 94. This find combination is also to be observed among the dedications in the Korykian Cave at Delphi: Amandry 1984, p. 378.

<sup>16</sup> Immerwahr 1971, p. 138f. A feeding bottle was found in a Late Mycenaean child burial in the Agora (LH IIIA2 and IIIB). She notes that this gift was clearly intended for older children.



Fig. 1. Grave context Cat. 3.



Fig. 2. Grave context Cat. 4.



Fig. 3. Grave context Cat. 5.



Fig. 4. Grave context Cat. 6.



Fig. 5. Grave context Cat. 7.



Fig. 6. Grave context Cat. 8.



Fig. 7. Grave context Cat. 9.



Fig. 8. Grave context Cat.10.



Fig. 9. Grave context Cat. 11.



Fig. 10. Grave context Cat. 12.



Fig. 11. Grave context Cat. 13.



Fig. 12. Grave context Cat. 15.

The deposition of a sea shell in the grave of newborns and infants buried in a clay recipient seems to reflect a continuously performed burial rite, carried out with respect for certain rules, and endowed with a specific basic meaning. Since the graves of this group were established in a time when the burial of adults and the subsequent grave cult were also subject to a standard, referred to as ‘*Ta Nomizomena*’<sup>17</sup>, it does not appear incorrect to assume that also during the burial of infants and small children there existed a more or less established custom, and that the requirements of the standardized ritual changed according to the age group of the deceased.

The question arises, then, which indications are available for an elucidation of the sea shell-ritual: to approach an interpretation, first child burials in other regions were compared, then the species of sea shells found in the Kerameikos child burials were investigated. These are presented in the catalog (Cat. 1-17, **fig. 13**). To round the picture, the appearance of sea shells in adult burials was examined.

### Sea shells in child burials at other sites

As gifts of comestibles, sea shells appear in graves already in the Bronze Age, for example oysters have been found as delicacies (ὄστρεα, homeric τήθεα) among the gifts in Mycenaean shaft graves (Hünemörder 2000). Parallels for gifts of mollusks in infant burials are found over a wide time span outside the Kerameikos in Athens and Attica, as well as in many other Greek cemeteries. Sea shells as gifts are attested in Athens in the Mycenaean period in three child burials in chamber tombs in the Agora<sup>18</sup>.

A context in the children’s cemetery at Astypalaia has been dated to between 850 and 830 B.C. (Michalaki-Kollia 2010, p. 181). There, among the remains of a Geometric offering pit, which contained burnt bones and ‘white mass’, sea shells were also discovered. If the ‘white mass’ proves to be ‘soap’ or even *psimmithion*, that is, make-up, then this would be the earliest attested connection between marine sea shells, cleansing ceremonies and beauty utensils, and the burial of infants.

In Northern Greek Akanthos, sea shells have been found in many child burials, especially those of neonates and small children, often they were the only grave gift (Kaltsas 1998, p. 302). The same manner of deposition as

in the Classical Kerameikos graves is attested in all child burials with sea shells in the West Cemetery at Korinthos (Blegen *et al.* 1964, see below). In a child burial dating to around 400 B.C. at Olynthos (Robinson 1942, grave 514 p. 102), the sea shell lay in a lidded bowl together with a feeding bottle and an egg shell. The custom has also been observed on the islands of Astypalaia and Rhodos. The comparison with the North Cemetery at Korinthos is very instructive<sup>19</sup>: in a total of five graves sea shells were found, all five being child burials<sup>20</sup>. The graves stretch in time from the middle of the 6th c. into the 5th c. B.C.

In the 4th c. sea shells appear increasingly in the graves of young adults, sometimes in cases of the simultaneous burial of an adult and an infant<sup>21</sup>. Additional gifts may mirror regional particularities, for example, the eggs found in Korinthos<sup>22</sup>. Sea shells are also found in amphora burials of the Hellenistic period. One such burial from Tanagra, dating to the 2nd c. B.C., contained eight other gifts and six sea shells (Andreïomenou 2007, p. 55 Grave B / 1).

The deposition of marine sea shells in child burials is thus a custom practiced over a large geographic area and a wide time span. It is necessary to examine whether the custom changes over time, how it changes, where else it is also attested, and if it is possible to establish or at least suggest the reasons for this custom.

### Sea shells as gifts in child burials: the species

It is necessary to stress that to date it is without exception marine sea shells with two shells (*bivalvae*) that have been discovered in the child burials in the Kerameikos. As so often the case with organic gifts, they are rarely illustrated, not even in the customary context

<sup>19</sup> Blegen *et al.* 1964, p. 70, 84, 204, no. 225, pl. 33 (Blue edible mussel *ca.* 550 B.C.); 280 no. 448, pl. 72 (grave of a mother and child, as judged by the authors according to the gifts, to the child a large Scallop is assigned, 350-325 B.C.).

<sup>20</sup> Blegen *et al.* 1964, p. 188, no. 165 (sea shell and skyphos together in a pyxis, *ca.* 575 B.C.); 204f., no. 224 (Blue edible mussel in skyphos, *ca.* 550 B.C.); 208, no. 239 (sea shell in pyxis, 550-525 B.C.); 225, no. 286 (Blue edible mussel and skyphos in pyxis, 500-475 B.C.); 226, no. 291 (sea shell in a lekanis, *ca.* 475 B.C.).

<sup>21</sup> Blegen *et al.* 1964, p. 84 n. 108; Graves 279, no. 444 (Grave L: 1,78; sea shell and bowl in lekanis, 375-350 B.C.); 280, no. 448 (Grave of mother and child? 350-325 B.C.); 285, no. 464 (Grave of an adult, sea shell next to *oinochoe*, *ca.* 300 B.C.); 292f., no. 496 (richly furnished adult grave with child, with 6 sea shells, 300-350 B.C.); as well as the ‘deposits’ 304, no. D 14 (sea shell in lekanis, 450-425 B.C.); 308, no. D 36 g (sea shell in pyxis, 4th c. B.C.).

<sup>22</sup> Blegen *et al.* 1964, p. 70 ‘The eggs would seem to be symbols of growth and fertility’.

<sup>17</sup> Hame 1999. The non-observation of the *Nomizomena* at the burial of parents could lead to a charge of *kakosis goneon*: Aischines 1 (*contra* Timarchos) 13f.

<sup>18</sup> Immerwahr 1971, p. 208, burial number XVI, pl. 47.14. Immerwahr interprets them as toys.



photos which round off the Kerameikos volumes<sup>23</sup>, and in some cases they are no longer extant. Moreover, apart from the indication *that* a sea shell was found in this or that context, there is as a rule no information concerning the species or qualities of the sea shell, even though this is important for the interpretation of the gift.

In 11 instances the sea shells<sup>24</sup> from Kerameikos child burials are preserved, while in six cases they are lost but recorded in the publications (Cat. 1, 2, 8, 9, 11, and 14). The preserved sea shells are all of edible species. Only one shell of the mollusk was deposited while the other is missing. The following species have been identified (fig. 13): the majority are Blue edible mussels<sup>25</sup> (Cat. 3, 6, 10, 12, 16; fig. 13.1-5), while the Cockle is represented twice<sup>26</sup> (Cat. 13, 15; fig. 13.6, 7), and there is one example each of the Dog cockle<sup>27</sup> (Cat. 4; fig. 13.9), the Rayed through shell<sup>28</sup> (Cat. 5; fig. 13.10), the Scallop<sup>29</sup> (Cat. 7; fig. 13.8), and the Noah's ark shell (*Arca noae* Linné: Dance 2003, p. 211; Cat. 17; fig. 13.11).

The state of preservation of the sea shells varies: the thinner shells of the Blue edible mussel are partly broken, while the thicker shells of the other species are better preserved, although the surface may in some cases be worn, suggesting that the shells were collected on the sea shore and not taken from kitchen refuse (Cf. Rogalla, Amler 2003 and 2007). Only in the case of Cat. 13 (fig. 13.6) damage along the edge is observed, as if from a forced opening, but this piece also has a small hole in the middle, which could be due to an assault by an Assassin snail (*Anentome helena*), a natural predator of sea shells. In other words, this shell may also have been collected.

The work traces on Cat. 4 (fig. 13.9) indicate that this sea shell was once used as the bowl of a spoon, or as the container of a creamy or liquid substance<sup>30</sup>.

### Sea shells as gifts in adult burials

A glance at graves of adults, in which sea shells have been noted, will also contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon<sup>31</sup>. In the Kerameikos, the first sea shells in adult burials appear in the second half of the 5th c. B.C., they increase in numbers during the 4th c., and are still present in Hellenistic burials. In total, to date there are 15 graves containing a sea shell. Two of these burials are securely identified as female, the one through anthropological analysis<sup>32</sup>, the other through the name Mnesistrate on the extant grave marker (the unpublished Grave HL 39 of the early 1<sup>st</sup> c. B.C.). One further grave is linked to an actor, a profession which in terms of gender-grouping is evidently equated with the female sex<sup>33</sup>.

In the –frequently very richly endowed– adult graves, the sea shells are usually associated with a series of gifts belonging to the female world: there are almost always *pyxides*, moreover mirrors, *alabastra*, jewelry, combs, small boxes, and elsewhere also funerary wreaths (Andreïomenou 2007, p. 75, 252, 266, no. H/9 [275-250 B.C.]). The lidded vessels and sea shells in child burials seem to hint at an abbreviated version of this gift set. The make-up tablet in Cat. 12, as well as the *exaleiptron* in Cat. 5 seem to confirm this impression. There is however, a difference between the adult and the child graves containing sea shells and it is related to the species occurring: the species of sea shells in burials of adults are often Great scallops<sup>34</sup> and Cockles, whereas Blue mussels (fig. 13.1-5) do not seem to occur in adult burials. In Argos, *Murex* shells<sup>35</sup> are attested as burial gifts or dedications for adults.

<sup>23</sup> Exceptions are the sea shells in the adult burials in *Kerameikos* 14, p. 36-38, no. 24, pl. 34,7 and p. 59f., no. 59 (Eck 45), pl. 45.1.

<sup>24</sup> On sea shells in Antiquity: Steier 1933; on species identification: Delamotte, Bardala-Theodôrou 1994, *passim*; Dance 2003, *passim*.

<sup>25</sup> *Mytilus edulis* Linné, Greek: ὁ μύς. Cf. belonging to the same genus, the Choro sea shell, *choromytilus chorus molina*: Delamotte, Bardala-Theodôrou 1994, p. 148.

<sup>26</sup> *Acanthocardia tuberculata* Linné: Delamotte, Bardala-Theodôrou 1994, p. 176, 254, 294; Dance 2003, p. 228f.

<sup>27</sup> *Glycimeris glycimeris* Linné: Delamotte, Bardala-Theodôrou 1994, p. 146, 244; or a Venus cockle (*venus casina* Linné): Delamotte, Bardala-Theodôrou 1994, p. 188, 190, 262 (matching shape, transverse striation, teeth on inner edge, muscle attachment inside).

<sup>28</sup> *Maetra corallina* Linné: Delamotte, Bardala-Theodôrou 1994, p. 178, 255; Dance 2003, p. 232.

<sup>29</sup> Greek στρείς. Here *chlamys varia* Linné: Delamotte, Bardala-Theodôrou 1994, p. 161, no. 6; p. 156, no. 1a; Dance 2003, p. 219. Scallops served not only as a votive offering to Aphrodite, they also appear ca. 500 B.C. as symbol on the coinage of Tarento, as well as on the coins of Syracuse: Delamotte, Bardala-Theodôrou 1994, p. 35, fig. β. γ.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. a piece from the adult burial hS 34 on the Sacred Road: Vierneisel-Schlörb 1966, 98 no. 176 Beil. 60, 1.2.

<sup>31</sup> In some of the cases, they are characterized as ‘young adults’ by anthropologists, in others the identification is uncertain, because the skeleton has not been studied by anthropologists and the length (over 1, 40 m) suggests to the archaeologist that the deceased was fully grown.

<sup>32</sup> *Kerameikos* 14, p. 10f., fig. 9; p. 13f., no. 8, pl. 7.1; pl. 28.7-10; pl. 29.1.

<sup>33</sup> *Kerameikos* 14, p. 36-38, no. 24, pl. 9.2; pl. 34.1-9; pl. 35.1-7, esp. pl. 24.18 (Grave of the actor Makareus, ca. 370 B.C.).

<sup>34</sup> *Pecten maximus*: Keller 1913, p. 560; *Kerameikos* 14, p. 10f., fig. 9; p. 13f., no. 8, pl. 7.1; pl. 28.7-10; pl. 29.1; Blegen et al. 1964, p. 280, no. 448, pl. 72 (mother and child, 350-325 B.C.); Andreïomenou 2007, p. 75, 252, 266, no. H/9 (275-250 B.C.).

<sup>35</sup> *Murex murex*: Bruneau 1970, p. 467f., no. 59, fig. 83 (end 2nd c. B.C.) and p. 512, no. 188, fig. 207 (150-100 B.C.).



Fig. 13.1. Cat. 3 Grave HTR 63 Blue edible mussel.



Fig. 13.2. Cat. 6 Grave HTR 3 Blue edible mussel.



Fig. 13.3. Cat. 10 Grave 39 HTR 2 Blue edible mussel.

Fig. 13.1-13: Overview of sea shell species in child burials in the Kerameikos.



Fig. 13.4. Cat. 12 Grave SW 113 Blue edible mussel.



Fig. 13.5. Cat. 16 Grave NNO. 96 = P 52 Blue edible mussel.

Fig. 13.4-5: Overview of sea shell species in child burials in the Kerameikos.

Nor have Cowrie shells<sup>36</sup>, which occasionally are included in adult graves, to date been verified in child burials, at least in the Kerameikos. Into late- and post-antiquity they were regarded upon as a symbol of the female genitalia due to the curved and denticulate opening on the underside. In various cultures, over a large chronological period and in many topographical areas, they have been used as amulets for women, protecting fertility and childbirth. An exotic species in Greece, imported from afar, in classical Greece they are often drilled or mounted to serve as jewelry amulets.

Seashells as grave gifts are attested well into the Roman Imperial period, as far as the Northern provinces. For instance, they have been found in Roman burials in the Province Germania: Heike Kappes and Bernd Liesen have shown that the sea shells in this area are always placed in richly endowed graves (Kappes, Liesen 1996). Apart from imported sea shells, these graves also contain fresh water mollusks. In three out of 21 examined cases, the mollusks were placed in a recipient, by the head or next to the hand of the deceased. The fact that the Blue mussels and snails frequently discovered in contemporary settlements in the Northern provinces do not appear at all, underlines the symbolic value of the grave gift.

### Sea shells in everyday life in Classical times

Sea shells in Antiquity, as today, had both practical and symbolic meaning. The material value of the sea shell was next to nothing, for ‘κόγχης ἄξιον’ meant ‘worthless’ (*Suda*, s.v. κόγχη). In what follows, we will discuss first some of the practical uses of sea shells, then their symbolic meaning.

Many species of sea shells constituted a choice dish, served either boiled or fried<sup>37</sup>, but they also had other practical<sup>38</sup> and medical uses, for example, certain species were consumed for their diuretic or laxative effect (Compare Athenaios III 86 c; III 120 d and Steier 1933). Blue mussels were placed on ulcers to aid in the healing process (Plinius, *Nat. hist.* 32, 95-98).

In addition, sea shells and in particular Pearl oysters were farmed and the shells themselves or parts of them were employed in the creation of jewelry. For this purpose, the shells were worked by cutting, drilling or

polishing them. In pieces of jewelry, sea shells and imitations in other materials probably served a protective function as apotropaic amulets (Bratschkova 1939, p. 5), having thus partly practical and partly symbolic value. Since sea shell jewelry is rarely found in child burials, already David Robinson excluded a primary function as jewelry for these mollusks (Robinson 1942, p. 198).

The sea shells can also be reworked to serve as parts of utensils, for example as the bowl of a spoon<sup>39</sup>. Probably because spoon bowls were often made from mussel shells, in Greek the word μύστρον, derived from the Blue mussel (μύζ), also was used as a synonym for the word “spoon”<sup>40</sup>. As make-up, soap or cosmetics containers, as well as dedications, sea shells were imitated in other materials<sup>41</sup>.

A particular function of sea shells should be mentioned, previously unnoted in this context: some bivalve sea shells counted as a unit for small amounts of liquid. One of them is the χήμη, named after the venus cockle (venus casina) (*RE* III 2, 2232 s.v. Χήμη [Friedrich Hultsch]). The contents of this measure were a 1/24 of the Attic *kotyle*, being thus a 1/4 *kyathos*. Also, the Blue mussel was used as a unit of measure: the *mystron* (μύστρον). It too amounted to a 1/24 of an Attic *kotyle*. These measure units occur for example in the preparation of medicines and cosmetics quoted by Galenus in a collection of recipes for cosmetics called ‘ἐκ τῶν Κλεοπάτρας κοσμητικῶν’ (Lüring 1888, p. 123-139; Fabricius 2010, p. 201f). There we also find a further subdivision: the χήμη is distinguished from a small χήμη.

Certain species of sea shells had at specific times a concrete function in cult. A triton shell served, for example, in Minoan cult as a conch shell trumpet, with which the goddess was called to the altar (Bratschkova 1939, p. 6, fig. 1). Also, the masses of sea shells found in the so-called Shrine of the Snake Goddess (the Temple Repositories) in Knossos have been assigned a cultic function (Evans 1903, esp. p. 43 fig. 21; Bratschkova 1939, p. 6).

Several cities employed sea shells as symbols on their coinage, and occasionally they occur as auxiliary

<sup>36</sup> *Cypraea*: Keller 1913, p. 541-544; *Kerameikos* 9, p. 189, E 124, pl. 98.7. Cf. Lennartz 2004.

<sup>37</sup> For example in the Iron Age settlement at Kastanas: Becker 1986, p. 232f., fig. 77, 80. See Athenaios III 90b, 94b and III 120d.

<sup>38</sup> Thread (‘sea silk’) from the Giant Mediterranean Pen shell (*pina nobilis*), which is not present in graves, were used in the production of cloth: Alciphron 1.2; Tertullian, *de pallio* 3.

<sup>39</sup> Knigge suspected that the sea shell Inv. 7523, found in the so-called Bau Z in Room P 1 on Floor 13, was used as a spoon: *Kerameikos* 17, p. 136, no. 220, pl. 74. In comparison Jacopi 1929, p. 72 fig. 62: bronze bowl of a spoon in the form of a cockle.

<sup>40</sup> Liddell (H. G.), Scott (R.) – *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford, 1968, p. 1157, s.v. μύστρον.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson 1953, p. 165-167, pl. 7a; 1-3 (copies of a cockle in bronze and lead); Papapostolou 1977, p. 326f. silver sea shell as make-up container by the right shoulder of the skeleton; crystal sea shell in a female burial of the 1st c. B.C. in the Peiraios: Segall 1938, no. 94, pl. 26; on the copying of sea shells in other materials, cf. also Amandry 1984, p. 379.

device<sup>42</sup>. Given that there were well known local varieties of sea shells praised as the best of their kind, like the blue mussels from Ephesos or Ainos or the scallops from Mytilene (Athenaios III 87 c; III 90 d, 92 d), this may well have to do with a local product. In some cases, they were attributes of a local deity or nymph. The species of the sea shell plays an important role in these contexts: a Blue mussel is, for example, the symbol of Grynion in Aeolia<sup>43</sup>, and a Blue mussel also occurs as an auxiliary device on the coinage of Kyme-Cumae in Campania<sup>44</sup>. The Great scallop occurs as symbol or auxiliary device of several cities, among them Kroton (Attianese 2005, p. 110f., no. 3; p. 426f., no. 141) and Tarentum<sup>45</sup>. It is depicted also as auxiliary device on coins from Syracuse, where the obverse is decorated with the head of the local nymph Arethousa (*SNG Copenhagen* 697ff.).

A sea shell, usually a scallop or a cockle, served as an attribute for the goddess Aphrodite or Isis-Aphrodite in Mother Goddess. In particular, the sea shells symbolized the protector of pregnant women, birthing women and women in childbed (Isis *Lochia*: Coche de la Ferté 1974, p. 275, 280-282, 285, pl. 17) In this function, scallops or cockles were depicted on amulet jewelry made from precious materials, for example on a golden bracelet bearing the inscription EYTOKIA (Coche de la Ferté 1974, p. 266, 275f., 280, pl. 17).

As dedications, sea shells played a role in Greek classical antiquity both in the cult of Aphrodite<sup>46</sup> and in that of the Nymphs. A cockle is depicted among the dedications on the relief stele of the priestess Claudia Ageta from Amyklai, today in London<sup>47</sup>. From the 4th c. B.C. onwards, the connection of the cockle and the Great scallop shells with the cult of Aphrodite is demonstrated by terracotta statuettes, vase paintings and figurative vessels, later also jewelry, in which the goddess is represented in an open sea shell<sup>48</sup>. According to this version of the Aphrodite myth, the goddess was born from a sea

shell. This idea appears in literature in the 2nd c. B.C. in Plautus<sup>49</sup> and then in Roman times in Sextus Pompeius Faustus (Sextus Pompeius Faustus, *Paul. Diac.* 36).

The importance of sea shells as dedications in the cult of the Nymphs is easily proven by the massive appearance of sea shells in the Korykian Cave near Delphi<sup>50</sup>. The fact that here, they appear together with a large number of astragals, which occasionally also occur together with sea shells in child burials (Cat. 3, 17) could be significant.

### On the interpretation of sea shells in child burials

To date, sea shells in child burials have been interpreted as toys, or as payment for the ferryman Charon. Other interpretations have understood them as a symbol of the afterlife, as remedy, as symbol of fertility, rebirth or immortality, others emphasized the decorative character, or stressed an importance as food dedication (Kappes, Liesen 1996, p. 129 n. 3 and Bruneau 1970, p. 529). An apotropaic value has been attributed to the sea shells by several authors, merely based on the fact that they were deposited as grave gifts, but this view is hardly supported by other data.

The interpretation as toys is commonly assumed<sup>51</sup>, but an ancient example for this, independent of finds of sea shells in child burials, is lacking so far. An actual use as toys for babies appears possible at the most in symbolic terms, as even with older children, there is serious danger of injury or of choking on parts (for example with Blue mussel).

The combination together with make-up and objects connected to beauty care is attested in both adult and child burials. These finds indicate a gender-specific meaning for the sea shells in adult graves, that is, the deceased were either female, or men who were gendered as feminine, for example actors. In a child burial from the South Tumulus it was observed, that next to a blue mussel there lay the remains of a 'fatty substance' in the lidded bowl, which has been interpreted, no doubt correctly, as make-up tablet (*psimmithion*, Cat. 12).

<sup>42</sup> Imhoof-Blumer (F.), Keller (O.) – *Tier- und Pflanzenbilder auf Münzen und Gemmen des Klassischen Altertums*. Leipzig 1889, p. 147. 148 pl. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Others interpret the sea shell represented as *pinna nobilis*: Grynion: *SNG von Aulock* 1619, 1620; *SNG Copenhagen* 205-207.

<sup>44</sup> Kyme-Cumae: Rutter 2001, p. 66f. no. 514, 526 pl. 9 (in combination with head of the nymph Kyme).

<sup>45</sup> *SNG München* no. 798-800, pl. 29; Fischer-Bossert 1999, p. 219, 249; Rutter 2001, p. 840.

<sup>46</sup> *Anthologia Palatina*, VI, 224; Athenaios, VII, 318 B: in the 5th epigram of Kallimachos the daughter of Kleinias from Smyrna dedicates to Aphrodite-Arsinoe a sea shell that she had found on the beach on Keos.

<sup>47</sup> The relief is dated to the 1st c. A.D.: Zahlhaas 1975, p. 530, pl. 14.

<sup>48</sup> E.g. Keller 1913, p. 560; Delamotte, Bardala-Theodōrou 1994, p. 333f. with fig.; Coche de la Ferté 1974, pl. 19; St. Petersburg, Eremitage: Bratschkova 1939, p. 8f. fig. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Marx 1928, p. 26 line 704; 149f. (Plautus, *Rudens* III, 3, 42: 'Te ex concha natam esse autumant: caue tu harum conchas spernas').

<sup>50</sup> In the Korykian Cave ca. 400 sea shells were found. Pierre Amandry interpreted them as votive offerings. Some species also appear in graves, but not all. Amandry 1984, p. 347-380; on the sea shells esp. p. 378-380, fig. 43, 44.

<sup>51</sup> Blegen *et al.* 1964, p. 70 succinctly: 'The shells no doubt are toys'; also p. 84. Cf. also Houby-Nielsen 1995, p. 182 f. Appendix 4 places the sea shells in burial gift group 6, that is, the toys.



Fig. 13.6. Cat. 13 Grave HTR 20 Cockle.



Fig. 13.7. Cat. 15 Grave 32 XX 1 Cockle.



Fig. 13.8. Cat. 7 Grave HW 173 Scallop.

Fig. 13.6-8: Overview of sea shell species in child burials in the Kerameikos.



Fig. 13.9. Cat. 4 Grave HW 167 Dog cockle.



Fig. 13.10. Cat. 5 Grave HTR 96 Venus cockle.



Fig. 13.11. Cat. 17 Grave ZD 2 Noah's ark shell

Fig. 13.9-11: Overview of sea shell species in child burials in the Kerameikos.

In my opinion, an interpretation, taking into account the find circumstances, must be based on the following premises, which ensue from the reviewed contexts:

1. The deposition of sea shells is –given the hundreds of published child burials– a rare, but spatially and temporally widely spread phenomenon, which is attested in Greece especially from the late 6th to the late 5th c. B.C.
2. The sea shells are found primarily in graves of newborns and very young children. In Athens, they appear mainly in the recipient burials employed for these age groups (*enchytrismo*).
3. Sea shells in child burials are usually found together with other gifts<sup>52</sup>; sometimes there are more than 10 and, more rarely, more than 20 objects in one such grave.
4. In Athenian child burials, sea shells are very rarely found together with feeding bottles, which obviously constitute a gift for older children.
5. The species of the sea shells are easily available, edible and bivalve mollusks.
6. Only one shell of these bivalves is deposited.
7. During the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the shell is always placed in a vessel. The vessel has ‘normal’ size, not miniature format. In most cases it is a lidded bowl or *pyxis*. In the same vessel, another pot may be placed; usually it is a miniature dish. In one case (Cat. 12) a make-up tablet was placed in the same *pyxis*.
8. A comparison with adult burials in which sea shells were found is instructive: Sea shells appear in adult graves since the Classical period together with make-up, mirrors, and jewelry, and are thus generally interpreted as a characteristic grave gift for female deceased<sup>53</sup>. Apart from that, in exceptional cases, the sea shell lay in the mouth of the deceased, obviously replacing the Charon’s *obol*. In these cases, the shell has completely different function; it is the slightest value available for this purpose (compare above, note 57).
9. The deposition of sea shells in child burials is attested into Imperial times, in Rome and the Roman provinces. The one Roman burial in the Kerameikos, however, belongs to an older child (Cat. 17). Child burials of that period, containing sea shells or imitations of sea shells in other materials (silver, lead, amber, etc), are usually equipped with overall richer gifts. For example, the burial of a girl uncovered in Vetralla (Lazio, Italy)

contained costly gold jewelry and among many other grave gifts, a sea shell imitation in amber<sup>54</sup>.

Given the above, it is possible to distinguish three fields of use:

### Food for the deceased

Sea shells can only be interpreted as gifts of comestibles where the complete mollusk with both shells intact, was found<sup>55</sup>. This reading can be eliminated, in my opinion, because in the child burials in the Kerameikos, as a rule only one shell is deposited.

### Object of use and jewellery

Worked, pierced or mounted sea shells or Cowrie shells can be used as parts of jewelry or amulets. The use as tools, for example as the bowl of a spoon, or as a make-up or jewelry container, can sometimes be determined from the work traces on the sea shell. In the child burials, the majority of the sea shell shows no traces of working, but they may have been used as spoons without being worked over.

### Symbol

The deposition of sea shells in the Kerameikos child burials of the classical period follows a certain pattern: a single sea shell is placed in a vessel, usually covered by a lid. Where such observations are available, the shells were placed with the opening pointing upwards. This makes it possible, and even probable, that they contained a substance.

A connection, on the other hand, to the realm of beauty–wedding–Aphrodite is established by the *pyxides* and the lidded bowls found with the shells, and even hinted at by the finds of a make-up tablet in one child burial and of an *exaleiptron* in another<sup>56</sup>. The massive dedication of mollusks in the cave of the Korykian nymphs (connected to childbirth and fertility) at Delphi argues for a symbolic use of the sea shells<sup>57</sup>. As a gender symbol, the mollusks can stand for the feminine sphere. As, for example, Graepler has noted in Taranto, gender

<sup>52</sup> In the northern Greek necropolis of Akanthos, sea shells obviously do occur as the only grave gift: Kaltsas 1998, p. 302.

<sup>53</sup> Blegen *et al.* 1964, p. 70 on eggs and marine sea shells: ‘Most of these occur in children’s graves, the rest probably indicate women’s burials’.

<sup>54</sup> Bordenache-Battaglia 1995, p. 49-78 grave context no. VI, 62 fig. 14 (sea shell imitation made in amber).

<sup>55</sup> Sea shells as edible offerings were found in graves in Troy and Mycenae: Bratschkova 1939, p. 5 n. 3; Keller 1913, p. 563.

<sup>56</sup> *Exaleiptra* belong to the feminine sphere: Schiering 1983, p. 142f.

<sup>57</sup> Amandry 1984, p. 378 on the find combination of astragali and sea shells; p. 379 on the copying of sea shells in other materials.



specific gifts appear well before the sexual maturity of the children (Graepler 1997, p. 173). A connection with make-up paraphernalia or medicinal utensils may indicate a relationship with marriage, pregnancy and birth.

Within these possibilities, the sea shells may have been used as a spoon, that is a feeding tool for the neonates and young babies, as indicated by the lack of feeding bottles in most graves with sea shells. Equally probable is their use as measure and container for a very small amount of liquid, perhaps a small serving of wine or milk (a small libation), honey or a dose of medicine or cosmetics.

Sea shells are found either in graves of neonates or of very young infants, or in graves of women, or persons who are gendered female (actors)<sup>58</sup>. Sea shells are thus – based on their presence in child and adult burials – both an age- as well as a gender-specific gift. The sea shells are connected to the female sphere, to the cult of Aphrodite and the Nymphs, and in particular to the paraphernalia of the bride. Aphrodite and the Nymphs had a protective function in the wedding of a girl and they played an important role at birth: EYTOKIA is the wish of every pregnant woman.

### Catalog of child burials with sea shell in the Kerameikos

The graves are arranged chronologically in the catalog. The position in the grave, the number and the types of other gifts are indicated. Where possible, the species of the sea shell is given. The measurements of the mollusks were taken in the following manner: the length was measured from hinge to edge, the width across to the edge at the widest point.

**Cat. 1** Cremation burial of a child on the southern bank of the Eridanos

Total of 23 grave gifts lay on the west and east sides of the grave pit: 18 miniature vessels and 5 clay balls, as well as a sea shell. On the basis of the nature of the gifts determined to be a child burial. The sea shell is now lost. 950-900 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 5, p. 24, 212f., no. 3, pl. 14.

**Cat. 2** Child burial in amphora by Tumulus G south of Sacred Road (HTR 111)

Two further gifts: two Black-figure *kylikes*.

The sea shell is now lost.

525-500 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 26, no. 21a, Beil. 3 (sea shell not mentioned); *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 15f., no. 21a, pl. 10.9; 11.7.

**Cat. 3** Child burial in hydria by Tumulus G south of Sacred Road (HTR 63). **Fig. 1; 13.1**

Ten further gifts: a Black-figure lekythos, a *chytra*, a one-handed cup, a small bowl, a miniature kotyle as well as five astragali. The sea shell lay in the unpainted *chytra*, together with the kotyle.

Fragment of Blue edible mussel. L. 3.3 cm; W. 2.2 cm. 500-490 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 37, no. 81, pl. 14.2, 3, Beil. 3; *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 33, no. 81, pl. 21.4.

**Cat. 4** Child burial in amphora in South Tumulus (HW 167). **Fig. 2; 13.9**

Amphora placed upright.

Three further gifts: a lidded pyxis, a small olpe, and a small bowl. The sea shell lay in the lidded pyxis.

Dog cockle, white, the back with yellowish coloration. Heavy, porcelain-like shell with signs of working (spoon?): hinge rounded for reception of wooden handle.

Edge of shell worn. L. 5 cm; B. 4.8 cm.

500-490 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 9, p. 88, no. 16, pl. 44.3-6.

**Cat. 5** Child burial in amphora by Tumulus G south of Sacred Road (HTR 96). **Fig. 3; 13.10**

Ten further gifts: two Black-figure lekythoi, a lidded bowl, a skyphos, an *exaleiptron*, five miniature skyphoi. The sea shell lay together with the skyphos in one of the lidded bowls.

Venus Cockle. Light, thin shell with transversal ribbing. L. 4.5 cm; W. 4.9 cm.

Around 490 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 33, no. 62, Beil. 3; *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 25, no. 62, pl. 16.1.

**Cat. 6** Child burial in amphora by Tumulus G south of Sacred Road (HTR 3). **Fig. 4; 13.2**

Three further gifts: a black-glaze lidded pyxis, an olpe, and a small bowl. The sea shell lay in the lidded bowl.

Blue edible mussel. L. 8 cm; W. max. 3.7 cm.

480-470 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 32, no. 52, Beil. 3; *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 23, no. 52, pl. 14.8.

<sup>58</sup> Houby-Nielsen 1995, on the so-called Makareus grave; in addition, the grave of the 40 year old actor Hieronymos, likewise on the Eckterrasse: *Kerameikos* 14, p. 56. 62-63 burial no. 69 pl. 26.

**Cat. 7** Child burial in amphora by South Tumulus (HW 173). **Fig. 5; 13.8**

Nine further gifts: six Black-figure lekythoi, an olpe, a pyxis, and a small bowl. The sea shell lay in small bowl inside the lidded pyxis.

Scallop. L. 3.7 cm; W. 3.3 cm.

480-470 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 9, p. 110f., no. 92, pl. 51.1, 2, 4.

**Cat. 8** Child burial in amphora south of Sacred Road (35 HTR 30 I). **Fig. 6**

Five further gifts: a lekythos, a juglet, the lower half of a one-handed lidded bowl, a one-handed small bowl, and a bowl. The sea shell lay in the lidded bowl.

The sea shell is now lost.

475-450 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 54, no. 184a, pl. 17.1, Beil. 3;

*Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 54, no. 184, pl. 31.7.

**Cat. 9** Child burial in amphora south of Sacred Road (HTR 108). **Fig. 7**

Three further gifts: a skyphos, a lidded lekanis, a jug. The sea shell lay together with the jug in the lekanis.

The sea shell is now lost.

470-460 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 36, no. 79, Beil. 3; *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 32, no. 79, pl. 21.6.

**Cat. 10** Child burial in amphora south of Sacred Road (39 HTR 2). **Fig. 8; 13.3**

Three further gifts: a lekythos, a skyphos, a bowl. The sea shell lay in the bowl.

Large Blue edible mussel. L. 5 cm; W. 2.5 cm.

470-450 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 58, no. 209, Beil. 3; *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 57, no. 209, pl. 32.1.

**Cat. 11** Child burial in square clay tub south of Sacred Road (HTR 67). **Fig. 9**

At least six further gifts: a lidded bowl, four Black-figure lekythoi, fragments of terracottas. The sea shell lay in the one-handed pyxis ('lidded bowl').

The sea shell is now lost.

450-430 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 59, no. 213, Beil. 3; *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 58, no. 213, pl. 32.8.

**Cat. 12** Child burial in amphora by South Tumulus (SW 113). **Fig. 10; 13.4**

Five further gifts in the amphora: a lekythos, a lidded bowl, two skyphoi, probable make-up tablet.

The sea shell lay in the lidded bowl together with the remains of a make-up tablet.

Blue edible mussel. Conserved L. 4.5; W. 4.8 cm.

450-425 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 9, p. 153, no. 297, pl. 66.5, 6.

**Cat. 13** Child burial in clay tub in Tumulus G south of Sacred Road (HTR 20). **Fig. 11; 13.6**

Three further gifts: a Black-figured lekythos, a skyphos, a bowl.

The sea shell lay in the bowl at the northern end of the grave.

White cockle. L. 4.5 cm; W. 4.8 cm.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 38, no. 86, pl. 3.2, 15.1, 3, Beil. 3;

*Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 35f., no. 86, pl. 22.2.

**Cat. 14** Child burial in square clay tub north of Street of the Tombs (NNO. 37 = WP 15 außen). **Unpublished**

Sixteen further gifts: nine Black-figure lekythoi (two outside tub), a lekanis, four juglets, a tumbler, a bolsal. The sea shell lay with the gifts outside the tub, in the lekanis, at the head end (to the east).

450-425 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 150 no. 489, pl. 62.1, Beil. 51, 52,

54.2 (sea shell not mentioned); *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 129f.

no. 48, pl. 88.1, 2, 6.

**Cat. 15** Child burial in amphora north of Street of the Tombs (NNO. 149 = 32 XX 1). **Fig. 12; 13.7**

One further gift: a lidded lekanis. Slip inside black to medium brown. The edge band of the lid inside covered with red Miltos. Wear on lid: at inside center and along edge on one side, with matching wear on outside. Traces of use on the bowl: inside on one side and inside in foot rounded surfaces, as if ground by pestle.

The sea shell lay in the lidded lekanis.

Cockle, edges slightly damaged. L. 4.8 cm; W. 5 cm.

End of 5th c. B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 163f., no. 567, pl. 67.2, 71.1, Beil. 51, 53; *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 142f., no. 567, pl. 94.2, 7, Beil. 4.

**Cat. 16** Child burial in amphora north of Street of the Tombs (NNO. 96 = P 52). **Fig. 13.5**

Amphora mouth and head to east. Belly of amphora broken. 1935 together with finds from Cremation burial 50 conserved.

Two further gifts: at head a black-glazed pyxis, a small plate.

The sea shell lay in the pyxis, covered by inverted small plate.

Blue edible mussel. L. 4.8 cm; W. 2.5 cm. Interior edge flattened, from use as spoon?

Around 400 B.C.

*Kerameikos* 7.1, p. 125, no. 417, Beil. 51, 52; *Kerameikos* 7.2, p. 106, no. 417.

**Cat. 17** Child burial, covered by a drain tile, in front of the Dipylon (ZD 2). **Fig. 13.11**

Twenty-three further gifts: a round shield, a *balsamarium*, four iron *stili*, a small ship model, and 16 astragali. The sea shell lay inside up next to the left shinbone of the three to six year old child, underneath a terracotta round shield, together with the *balsamarium*, an astragalus, and

the four iron *stili*. By the right shinbone a small terracotta ship model, by the feet a small bag with 15 astragali.

One shell of a Noah's ark shell. L. 7.2 cm; W. 2.7 cm.

Collected. The edge of the shell is rounded by grinding.

Inside in one spot red discoloration (pigment?).

1st quarter 1st c. A.D. (Augustan).

Stroszeck 2000, esp. p. 464-470, no. 6, fig. 15.

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# L'ENFANT ET LA MORT DANS L'ANTIQUITÉ III

## Le matériel associé aux tombes d'enfants

Ce volume rassemble les communications présentées à la troisième et dernière réunion scientifique organisée dans le cadre du programme « L'enfant et la mort dans l'Antiquité : des pratiques funéraires à l'identité sociale » (EMA), financé par l'Agence nationale de la recherche (ANR) de novembre 2007 à novembre 2011. Les 26 contributions – rédigées en français, en italien ou en anglais – envisagent la question du matériel associé aux tombes d'enfants. Dépose-t-on autant d'objets auprès des tout-petits, des enfants de 6-7 ans et de 12-13 ans ? La nature de ces offrandes varie-t-elle en fonction du sexe ? Dans quelle mesure certaines d'entre elles – « biberons », vases miniatures, astragales, figurines en terre cuite – sont-elles caractéristiques des sépultures d'immaturs ? Ces questions se posent-elles de la même façon dans les différentes régions du monde méditerranéen et tout au long des douze siècles environ que couvre notre enquête ? Les articles réunis ici envisagent ces problèmes dans un cadre plus large que celui du monde méditerranéen classique – Grèce et Rome –, en intégrant des études relatives à l'Égypte préhellénistique, à Carthage, au monde celtique du Midi et à la Gaule non méditerranéenne. Certaines de ces contributions présentent des découvertes récentes, partiellement ou entièrement inédites.



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