

VASES FOR CHILDREN IN MYCENAEAN GREECE

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Several vase forms in the Mycenaean ceramic repertoire are generally considered to be related to children, either due to their small size (miniature vases); or because of their shape (bird shaped askoi and zoomorphic vases) or on account of a special morphological feature, as in the case of the side-spouted jars generally interpreted as feeding-bottles.

The aim of this paper is to analyse these vessel types from various angles in order to establish if they are indeed especially characteristic to children or not.

For this purpose first closed grave assemblages containing burials with known age and associated with these vessel types are examined. The picture emerging from the analysis is far more complex than was previously thought. Some of the vase types can be found with adult burials as well. Others however, show a gender-specific distribution, occurring in burials of girls and adult females. Even in case of those types which were found only in relation to child burials, the results of the analysis show a more elaborated distribution pattern within the age-group of children.

After the observations made on age- and gender-specific distribution patterns of these vases, other aspects, such as morphological characteristics, variations in size, regional distribution and results of previous organic residue analysis conducted on these vessel types are explored as well. The examination of these aspects reveals some further details concerning the burial association of these vases. For example in the age distribution patterns of some of the vase shapes, regional differences can be observed between the centre and periphery of the Mycenaean world.