

Baysal, Emma L.

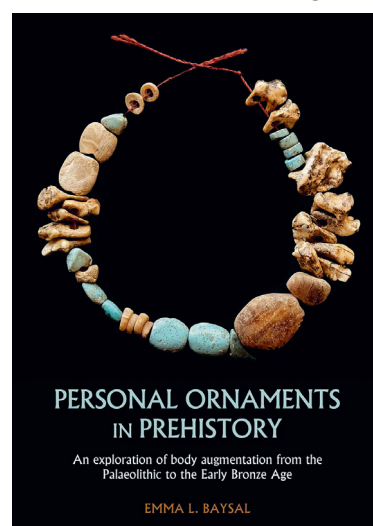
Personal Ornaments in Prehistory: An Exploration of Body Augmentation from the Palaeolithic to the Early Bronze Age.

Oxbow Books, 2019.

Review by: **Rana Özbal**

Baysal's *Personal Ornaments in Prehistory* provides an illustrative millennium-by-millennium introduction to beads and personal ornaments in Anatolia and beyond. The manuscript also provides a methodological background to the study of these objects and a comprehensive theoretical introduction to the topic. While I have always valued the study of beads and ornaments, reading this book gave me an appreciation for, in Baysal's words, "the human need to augment the body" (36). The success in the book lies in her resolve to convince the reader on just how intricately connected this need to adorn oneself is and how it transcends the essence of all prehistoric communities. The amount of information hidden within tiny personal artifacts makes it clear how the detailed study of beads and other such ornaments must accompany every excavation.

The manuscript emphasizes the importance of a holistic and contextual view when studying personal ornaments. Baysal claims that avoiding categorizations is essential to successful interpretations. Categorizations typically include pitfalls like assigning parts of multi-fashioned ornaments to different experts on account of their varied raw materials or using, now somewhat outdated, bead classification systems. Personal ornaments are so powerful that acquiring their raw materials must sometimes have forced inhabitants to go to great lengths. Digital methodologies such as least-cost GIS models become critical in such studies and in understanding trade networks. Aside from methodological tips, a perusal Baysal provides through the development of archaeological theories shows how beads have been part of theoretical debate trends for many decades and are excellent arenas to apply people-oriented concepts of agency, gender, and identity, as well as those influenced by materiality studies such as human-object entanglements and object biographies. The former concepts highlight the intra-community dynamics and perhaps, given that beads in burials can be associated with particular past personas, they can highlight even subtle differences in more nuanced ways than other materials. Likewise, Baysal shows that the latter concept of materiality and entanglement bring new dimensions to personal ornaments, and given that they are so intimately linked with people, personal ornaments are perhaps among the most entangled objects to speak of. Some objects with multiple drill holes and use-wear simply communicate that they functioned as heirlooms and were passed-on through



generations, thus emphasizing the important and complex role they carried within society.

Chapters 4 through 8 provide a chronological overview into personal ornaments through time and over a broad geography. Beginning with the Paleolithic and ending with the Early Bronze Age, the chapters highlight general trends and shifts through different periods. This enables the reader to assess the change in the raw materials and the emergence of differential access, the improvement in manufacturing techniques, and the diversity of forms and shapes, as well as the long-term changes these objects witnessed. In the Paleolithic and into the Epipaleolithic, we see evidence for the long-distance procurement of raw materials and an ingenuity with regards to using toolkits to drill beads, even in disc types. Accompanying each period and representative chapter, the manuscript has textboxes to give detailed information on sites and illustrative examples. Direkli Cave, a seasonal Epipaleolithic cave site in Maraş with marine shell beads from over one hundred kilometers away, is the perfect case in point.

The process of manufacture is better studied in the Neolithic, from which a plethora of beads are available. Baysal examines the drilling, shaping, abrading, and polishing stages of this process and compares the sophistication of the manufacturing processes, which show variability, even within a single site. Recycling and the effort with which beads are maintained in circulation is a concept known from across periods but is especially apparent in the Neolithic. Their reuse and re-fashioning highlight their value and allow them to be studied within the context of artifact life-histories, as illustrated by the recycled stone head from Boncuklu discussed in Box 2.

In the Late Neolithic, one finds a continuation of past traditions of bead manufacture and styles, on the one hand, and a trend towards the production of larger and more “visually striking” ornaments on the other. The latter brings with it a range of new materials like spondylus and marble and a range of technological innovations to make personal ornaments more conspicuous. The textbox information in this section is exemplified by Barcın Höyük, where analytical analyses have demonstrated the chemical transformation that fluorapatite underwent, as pre-drilled bead blanks acquired an artificial turquoise-like blue tint, and presumably a more prominent color.

With the transition to the Chalcolithic, a range of new concepts began, such as stone seals, which function as a way of identifying ownership and emphasizing claims. The well-worn, broken, and re-drilled Canhasan I shell bead in Box 4 demonstrates perfectly the concepts illustrated: citing Séfériadès, Baysal argues that large shells would have carried special apotropaic powers that remained potent even when the personal ornament was broken, as gathered from the gold strings used in their repair. She also explains that the Chalcolithic period witnessed the appearance of larger items of ornamentation as well as those made from composite materials. Although copper artifacts have been around since the Neolithic, it is in the Chalcolithic that there is an effort to alloy the ores in such ways as to achieve shiny and reflective metals, mimicking gold and silver.

In the final chapter of the diachronic journey, where the Early Bronze Age takes center stage, Baysal describes an increase in new materials and novel technologies in production. Frit and faience as part of early glass production and other artificially created, fired raw materials involving the addition of binders, as well as beads subjected to multiple episodes of heating and reheating until they achieved the desired colors, begin to appear. Başur Höyük offers evidence for mass production with rare materials, some showing tremendous distances traversed as part of trade networks, like the lapis lazuli bead in Box 5 found in a grave of an individual who was interred with more than seven thousand beads. The related issues of class differences are obvious and cannot be ignored. This concept is expertly tied in through Baysal’s discussion of beads

and their role in society. Even in situations where the individuals in question live within largely egalitarian societies, beads and personal ornaments must have acted as a way of distinguishing identity, group membership, or rank.

In the final chapter, Baysal returns to a number of themes that weave through the book and emphasizes the connectivity that personal ornaments show across space and time, respectively. Baysal, attempting to use this intimate angle from the perspective of personal ornamentation, shows how beads should not be ignored when trying to disentangle the changes resulting from the advent of the Neolithic. Personal ornaments have two distinct roles within these arenas. In some instances they are closely tied with individuals and carry meaning at a personal level. However, the same objects may function to satisfy a visible outward projecting role or identity. She concludes that the patterns of change, the technological improvements, and the relationships that people have had with such objects are far from simplistic. I applaud the book for how it uses the often neglected category of beads and pendants and other personal ornaments to extract their wider significance and to place them on a whole new platform.