

# INTRODUCTION

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As aesthetic objects of value and skilled craft, ancient jewelry commands a certain fascination, yet has largely been overlooked in comparison to other components of material culture in archaeological study. The allure of jewelry is found not only in its aesthetic appeal but also relates to its various intrinsic properties that provide it with social, cultic and even economic significance.

The socio-cultural aspects of jewelry may involve its use as a method of self-expression, a factor in gender or status determination, a measure of wealth and social status, or even an ethnic marker. Personal ornaments were often employed as objects of cultic significance, while their materials and iconography probably held apotropaic powers as well. Jewelry may have also served an economic function, being occasionally used as an element in commerce and the materials of which it was made are a measure of changing technological abilities and socio-economic realities. In addition, jewelry as objects of the minor arts invariably functions as a medium for cultural exchange, so it is particularly relevant for the study of inter-cultural contacts and the assimilation of cultural traits and the changes affecting them over time. Clearly, the significance of jewelry is far beyond ornamentation. Its use in the past as well as in the present is obviously a means of conveying information. The importance of jewelry to the study of ancient art and technology, as well as to the understanding of the aesthetic, cultic and socio-economic factors that led to its creation and use should not be underestimated.

Jewelry is one of a broad range of material culture objects that may be recovered during excavation. It is thus surprising why jewelry has received only limited attention in the archaeological literature from the Mediterranean and associated regions. Such disregard is pointedly in contrast with the attitude toward personal adornments shown by scholars dealing with prehistoric archaeology in Europe, where the study of ancient jewelry has been of importance in defining cultural influences between regions and in chronological interpretation.

In contrast to more commonly found objects such as ceramics, which underwent continuous stylistic and technological changes over time, ancient jewelry was often more conservative in nature, retaining stylistic and technological characteristics for centuries or even millennia. It is thus understandable why Near Eastern research has concentrated more effort, for example, on ceramic classification than on jewelry typology as the latter does not provide an effective tool for chronological dating. Nevertheless, jewelry sheds light on a broad spectrum of subjects, ranging from changing socio-economic processes to sophisticated technologies and religious beliefs.

## INTRODUCTION

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All too often, research on ancient jewelry has been ‘object driven’, studied through the eyes of the art historian and generally detached from its archeological context. Most excavation reports still relegate jewelry to the category of ‘small finds’ with little or no discussion concerning their context, materials or technology. Interdisciplinary approaches in recent decades have seen a growing awareness of the many and varied perspectives (i.e., contexts) from which jewelry may be studied. These integrate numerous disciplines such as art history and iconography, the study of written sources, the scientific study of materials and technology, in addition to trade patterns, migration of technology, craft specialization and manufacturing processes and cultural contacts to name only a few.

### CONTEXT

The meaning of jewelry cannot be understood outside of its context. The archaeological context is no less important in this process than is the cultural context, making their integration a necessity. Jewelry items are small and mobile and may be found in a wide variety of archaeological contexts. An object of no context has a suspect authenticity. An object from a controlled context in archaeological excavations is important for relative chronological dating, by its association to other datable artifacts such as ceramics, or in later periods, coins. However, dating based on associated objects does have its pitfalls, as heirlooms such as jewelry may be passed down for generations. This implies some reverence regarding the symbolism, aesthetic beauty and antiquity of an item.

Controlled archaeological contexts include personal adornments discovered in foundation deposits, as well as the isolated finds within habitational levels. Jewelry may also be found in hidden amalgamations of wealth, such as hoards or in collections that were sacrificed such as foundation deposits that were never intended to be retrieved by their owners. Though, most jewelry originates from tombs where it might reflect what was worn in everyday life, a cautious study of context is still crucial for understanding the real significance of adornments. Far more jewelry was probably made for the day of burial itself rather than for everyday wear, as religious beliefs often dictated that certain offerings to the dead accompany them into the afterlife and the burial rites themselves served to publicize the status of the deceased.

In the archaeological record, jewelry, like most finds, will always be represented in an incomplete manner, as its survival is dependent on the materials from which it was made and the degree to which these materials deteriorate within their depositional environment. In addition, finding jewelry is often dependent on the excavation methods themselves, such as sieving. These are some of the reasons that contexts, such as tombs, hoards and foundation deposits, are one of the richest sources of ancient jewelry, while relevant items from settlements are generally more sporadic.

Cultural context determines how jewelry was used within a society and is an expression of the changing beliefs and fashions of the time. This may be understood through various ancient visual representations and textual references to jewelry as well as *in situ* finds of jewelry in burials, which illustrate what kinds of jewelry were worn, how they were worn and by whom.

## INTRODUCTION

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### MATERIALS AND MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUES

The modes of producing and processing various materials is one of the parameters of a society's technological level and development. The study of jewelry materials and fabrication techniques is integral towards an understanding of the jeweler's craft. The source of materials used in jewelry manufacture may give an indication of trade contacts and may help to assess changing political or economic forces and trade patterns. The choice of materials reflects not only their availability, but also the ease with which they could be worked, their intended use and their meaning, as different materials had specific cultic significance and were believed to have protective powers. In some cases, the symbolic significance was primary and determined the type of material chosen. Awareness of the inherent physical qualities of materials was also enhanced by their mythological associations and supposed magical properties. Although the aesthetic appearance, rarity and durability of materials may have led them to be categorized as precious, it was also the fact that they were recognized as such that provided them with symbolic significance.

The materials and techniques used in jewelry manufacture are an expression of 'technological choice' that was made by the society and the craftsman producing the jewelry. Technological choices derive from a variety of options and are a reflection not only of specific functional needs, but also of social constructs and symbolism. These choices are also a means of non-verbal communication used by a society to convey messages, ascribe powers or offer protection to the individual.

### CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

Impact, adoption and assimilation of new cultural traits is reflected, among others, in the technological and stylistic qualities of jewelry. As one of the elements of a society's material culture, and because of its apotropaic nature, the jeweler's craft includes traditional symbols, forms, motifs and styles of decoration. These may be developed exclusively by one society, but are often adopted and adapted, wholly or partially, through interaction with other cultures. Mechanisms of interaction may include trade, political and economic influence, diplomatic gift exchange, conquest or tribute, cultural intermingling, shared beliefs or transmission by immigrant, itinerant or hired-out craftsmen.

All these subjects are but some of the topics that research of ancient jewelry may touch upon, so that the potential inherent in their study appears to virtually eclipse their small size. The present book includes twelve articles dealing with the study of jewelry items through their archaeological and cultural contexts. The discussed finds originate from different geographic regions of the ancient Near East, comprising Egypt, the Levant, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, the Gulf and the Caucasus, and from an extended time span, from the 6th to the 1st millennium BC. The various articles touch on many of the topics mentioned above and offer a glimpse as to what can be gleaned from research on ancient jewelry objects.

**Ilia Heit** presents the results of this study of a shell bead workshop from the Neolithic site of MPS 4 in the Mil Plain in Azerbaijan. The beads from the site were produced of shell that was not available locally, despite availability of other materials suitable for ornamentation. This fact raised intriguing questions regarding the significance of a specific

## INTRODUCTION

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imported shell for the local community, craft specialization and the logistics of material supply. Craft specialization in the Neolithic deserves particular attention as it marks important changes in economies and in social organization that also correlate to extensive human progress regarding technological sophistication. Only a few technological studies of Neolithic ornament manufacture have been carried out until now. Heit's article presents a detailed approach to the *chaîne opératoire* of shell bead manufacture at MP 4. Moreover, it touches on craft specialization in "non-utilitarian" branches such as manufacture of personal ornaments in the Circumcaspian region during the Neolithic.

The apotropaic transformation and appropriation of form is apparent in pendants that are often interpreted as amulets. With their specific shape, many bear an apotropaic value and are believed to provide those who wear them with supernatural powers and properties. **Maarten Horn** provides an in-depth analysis concerning a hippopotamus-shaped pendant, which is likely to be Egyptian Predynastic Badarian despite the disturbed context in which it was found. He argues that this specific pendant is a miniature replication of a vessel that might have been used in the production, storage and supply of malachite body paint that endowed its wearer with the positive qualities of life, growth, fertility, and healing. Since such pendants are understood to have had similar associations and values in the subsequent Naqadian period, this is taken as an indication of the transmission, continuation and prevalence of cognitive practices over time and between cultures that have been deemed until now to be distinct.

The symbolic and cultic meaning of form and material in jewelry is also taken up by **Amir Golani**, who discusses the significance and uses of cowries and their imitations as ornamental amulets in Egypt and the Near East. The shape of the cowries resembles both the female genitalia and a squinting eye and was held in great esteem by various and unrelated cultures from prehistoric to modern times in order to promote fertility and ward off the evil eye. By their resemblance to the female vulva, the cowries personified the female principle and the force of reproduction, functioning as protective amulets for adolescent girls to ensure conception, birth and to cure sterility. By their resemblance to a half-open squinting human eye, the cowries were also apparently regarded as potent protection against the malicious powers of the evil eye in this world and the next, often believed to be the cause of any form of malady or misfortune. As protective amulets, the symbolic potency of the cowry form was enhanced when it was duplicated in other materials that were often ascribed with symbolic meanings of their own.

The precise context of a find is key to understanding the meaning of simple-form diadems that are usually interpreted as crowns. **Zuzanna Wygńska** reviews their development and use from the 4th to the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC throughout the ancient Near East. Such simple head ornaments consisted either of an elongated band or a short plate and were most often made of precious metals. Their interpretation as high status markers is based mainly on iconographic studies, while the study of archaeological and cultural context of the real finds, originating mostly from graves, combined with ethnographic comparisons, shows that their use must have been differentiated. The simple-form diadems might have been used as symbols of elevated social position, but may have also been worn to indicate non-vertical features of individual social identity. As such they are evidence of

## INTRODUCTION

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different and largely unknown aspects of life of ancient communities, reflecting ceremonial or religious practices not necessarily associated with power. A gold leaf-form diadem from a 3rd millennium BC grave from Tell Arbid in Syria, interpreted as reflecting the personal status of a deceased young woman, is a starting point for the discussion on the various meanings of the diadems.

Ritual practices performed by a small rural community of the second half of the 3rd millennium BC can also be traced at a settlement in Tell Rad Shaqrah in Syria where a few child burials were accompanied by sets of zoomorphic shell pendants. **Dariusz Szeląg** presents and discusses this assemblage of very specific adornments that were most probably used in rituals expressing special care over children. According to Szelag, these adornments had an apotropaic value and were probably believed to have been effective both during lifetime and in the afterlife. They seem to be associated specifically with children who could not be protected in the same way as adults. The manner in which these pendants were used in child burials at other Mesopotamian sites suggests that various communities may have held different views concerning their apotropaic powers in particular, and that the pendants might have been perceived as amulets representing powers of nature in general. As in some of the conclusions reached by Amir Golani regarding use of cowry shells (see above), although the zoomorphic pendants were sometimes made of materials other than shell, it appears that the form and not necessarily the material was regarded as potent protection.

**Eleonora Carminati** analyzes the transition from the Kura-Araxes to the Bedeni culture of the Chalcolithic–Early Bronze Age in the southern Caucasus (mid-4th–3rd millennium BC) as reflected in their jewelry assemblages. While most studies have treated each of these cultural phenomena separately, Carminati's contribution merits note because of its focus on the transitional period between these two cultures. Like Horn's article, Carminati uses personal adornments to demonstrate cognitive links between the successive cultures, indicating analogies in the choice of forms and techniques. However, she also highlights clear differences in the choice of raw materials, the introduction of innovative techniques and new forms as well as the differentiated context of the finds. Carminati's research indicates that the transition to the Bedeni phase was characterized by a marked social stratification in which jewelry, its materials, forms and manufacturing techniques became significant status symbols.

Jewelry as a measure of cultural interaction is highlighted in the article by **Magda Pieniążek** and **Ekin Kozal**, who discuss different aspects related to jewelry function and origin, with a special focus on beads and pins from western and central Anatolia. During the 2nd millennium BC, western Anatolia was accessed by eastern Mediterranean trade and was influenced by two very strong cultural entities: the Hittites in the east and the Minoans and the Mycenaeans in the west. Jewelry is shown to have been a sensitive barometer to the changing intensity and importance of connections with these cultures through time. The distance from maritime trade routes and the political situation that impacted on access to raw materials, appear to have had a great influence on the differentiated repertoire of personal adornments of the coastal and inland Anatolian sites. The authors suggest that the popularity of metal ornaments from inland settlements as opposed to much more

## INTRODUCTION

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common faience or glass items from the coastal sites may also have mirrored the various cultural background and aesthetic preferences of their populations, inspired by the Aegean region from one side and by Mesopotamia from the other.

The topic of jewelry as a reflection of trade relations was undertaken by **Ann Andersson** in her article on an ornament assemblage from the 2nd millennium BC settlement at Failaka island in Kuwait. This preliminary study is actually the first to focus on personal adornments from an island that was an important mediator in trade and contacts between Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf during this period. The excavations have revealed remains of both a temple and a palace that differ from one another in the amount of ornaments retrieved, suggesting different types of use and significance for the beads in each of these contexts. The assemblage also includes a wide variety of forms, materials and manufacturing techniques that provide evidence of extensive trade connections.

**Rebecca Ingram** presents and discusses the immense collection of vitreous beads found among the wreckage of the famous Late Bronze Age (late 14th century BC) Uluburun shipwreck excavated off the southwest Turkish coast. The Uluburun cargo consisted of nearly 17 tons of raw materials, as well as exotic luxury goods, possibly representing merchandise involved in Late Bronze Age palatial or elite gift exchange. This assemblage comprises not only the largest collection of silicate (faience and glass) beads from the Late Bronze Age found to date in the eastern Mediterranean, but as it originates from a merchant shipwreck, it composes a veritable 'snapshot' of the types of vitreous beads produced in the 14th century BC and their manufacturing techniques. An exacting analysis of the amounts and types of beads recovered in the wreck and their spatial distribution enables a clear division between those carried as trade items and those that were apparently personal adornments of the passengers and crew. While the former are a measure of the types of beads traded in the eastern Mediterranean, the latter offer a glimpse into the possible use of specific beads as cultural or ethnic 'badges'. In addition to Pieniążek's and Kozal's observation on jewelry distribution in the later 2nd millennium BC in the Aegean, Ingram highlights the association of beads with the palatial elites, reflecting their attempt to control resources and monopolize external trade.

Jewelry as an element in the construction of cultural or group identity is taken up by **Josephine Verduci**, who examines the interplay between personal display in the southern Levant and the question of cultural origins. The transmission of jewelry forms and ideas from other cultures, such as those of the Aegean, Cyprus and Anatolia, may possibly be identified in some of the jewelry forms found in the southern Levant. This transmission was probably multicultural, taking place over a wide region throughout time. As a result of cultural interactions, the appropriation and transformation of jewelry forms and ideas could have also been used in forging new social identities, creating new objects that combine the familiar with what was previously foreign. As a case in point, the appearance of the Philistines in the southern Levant is correlated with the first occurrence of non-Levantine forms that are suggested to have been appropriated and further transformed by the Philistines in definition of their own social identity.

The topic of jewelry as a cultural or ethnic marker of identity is further explored by **Amir Golani**, who addresses the question of whether some jewelry objects could be

## INTRODUCTION

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linked not only to a specific historical period and region, but also to an archaeological and historical culture. Assuming that jewelry is worn not only for adornment and is of a very personal nature, conveying information about the cultural, religious or ethnic affiliation of its wearer, jewelry thus publicizes an association or identification with a cultural group or a set of beliefs. In an archaeological culture, when a specific jewelry type recurs time and again at sites clearly affiliated by their material culture, their geographical location and by their historical and temporal context with a certain cultural or ethnic group, it may be considered a possible ethnic marker of that culture or group. An archaeological and historical approach seeks to pinpoint certain types of jewelry that may possibly be seen as characteristic of the biblical Israelites whose choice of what to wear was not necessarily a function of the prevailing fashions, but was rather an expression of their own austere ideology that identified their own cultural group.

The unique circumstances and implications of a large jewelry assemblage from Hasanlu in Iran are discussed by Megan Cifarelli, who presents a reevaluation and augmentation of research concerning a collection of over 2000 personal ornaments recovered from excavations at the citadel and in an area of an outer town dated from the Middle Bronze Age to the Iron Age. A portion of this assemblage is well-known due to M. Marcus's initial work on the lion pins from 800 BC, discovered in collapsed buildings on the citadel at Hasanlu. A violent destruction, often termed 'the Pompeii of the Iron Age ancient Near East', sealed numerous doomed individuals in the debris of the citadel along with their personal adornments. The chaotic nature of the archaeological finds provoked criticism of Marcus's conclusions, yet implementation of a broader research framework that also includes numerous graves from Hasanlu upholds her conclusions and shows that the adorned bodies of men and women played significant roles in the construction and communication of a militarized group identity that emerged at Hasanlu during the Iron Age. Moreover, through her analysis of the adornments since the Middle Bronze until the Iron Age, Cifarelli points out the continuity in the way in which they were used by the Hasanlu society through the ages. Thus, she challenges previous opinions on the apparent growth of social complexity as being limited to only the Iron Age, showing that it was continuously present since the 2nd millennium BC. Occurrence of new, 'militarized' types of elite adornments should rather be perceived as a new form of expression for the already existing elites.

In demonstrating how the study of ancient jewelry goes far beyond ornamentation, the twelve articles presented in this volume all draw clearly on the context of the archaeological finds themselves. Any significance for the study of ancient jewelry can only be attained through the prism of its context, thus highlighting its role as one of the components of material culture, the study of which is of great interest and potential. It is our hope that this volume will help to draw more attention to the study of jewelry and its accurate publication, providing an incentive for more exacting recovery and documentation of finds from current excavations and further impulse to open safes and dust-clogged drawers in forgotten storerooms from excavations past.