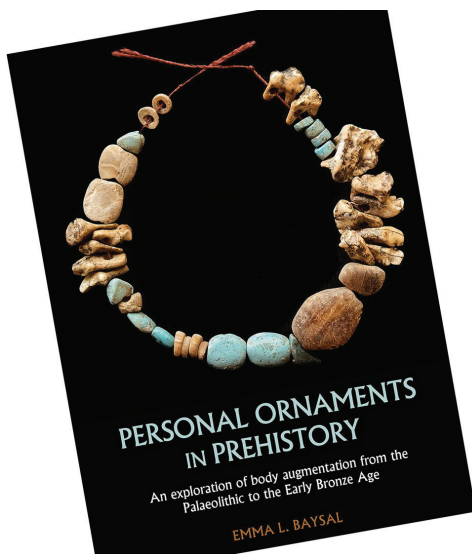


## BOOK REVIEWS

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

**Emma L. Baysal.** Oxbow Books, Oxford and Philadelphia. 2019. 272 pp., 19 color plates, 63 B&W figs. ISBN 978-1-78925-286-6. £38.00 (paper cover).

This brilliant book emphasizes how and why the human relationship with ornaments developed and continued over tens of thousands of years from the hunter-gatherer life to urban elites, from the use of natural resources to complex technologies. It is based on evidence from archaeological sites across Turkey, the Near East, Greece, the Balkans, and beyond.



Chapter 1, **Introduction**, presents the aims of the book which include tracing the diachronic role of ornaments during the periods of socio-economic transformation, questioning how personal ornaments are approached theoretically and practically by archaeologists, and providing a document of the state of knowledge and interpretation in the field. The author postulates that besides the aesthetic value, manufacturing technology, and economic worth of ornaments, the motivation for their use should also be allowed space within academic discourse.

Chapter 2, **Personal ornaments: why are they important in prehistory?**, underscores the usefulness of personal ornaments from archaeological excavations for not only studying the materials and technology, but also past identities and relationships, as well as socio-economic matters. These seemingly indisputable issues still require educating in current academic research. The author criticizes terminology that “pre-interprets” ornaments as well as imprecise typologies. She underlines that using bead typologies based on shape as the only or primary category, still common among researchers, is an outdated approach.

Chapter 3, **Geography, temporality and interpretation**, reviews the tendencies in tracing the use of ornaments and the materials they are made of from a geographical and chronological perspective, warning how they impact the construction of archaeological narratives. Modern concepts of geographical barriers and proximity, which do not apply to the identification of potential routes of the past, are an example. Furthermore, periodization, as a means to mark relevant and identifiable change in practices, can vary depending on the type of archaeological object. Two tables which provide terminology for various regions and chronological phases facilitate navigation through the prehistoric section of the book.

In general, the first three chapters provide observations on past and present approaches to ornament studies and describe the ideal research that every bead/ornament specialist wishes to conduct and publish, i.e., one that uses well-defined data from perfectly excavated and dated contexts, involves typological studies based on clear divisions (including the use-life of beads), and employs appropriate scientific methods. Such work avoids misleading interpretations and is carried out in an academic atmosphere that is free from ignorance about ornaments, gender stereotypes, feminism, sexism, orientalism, modern and Western perspectives, capitalist economy, all kinds of selectiveness and determinism, and hypothetical proposals that are accepted as factual.

The next five chapters are arranged chronologically, starting with the Paleolithic period and ending with the Early Bronze Age. The chapters are structured around themes of continuity, distance, and meaning. The bead technology of

each period is analyzed in relation to the economy and way of life: mobile (until the Epipaleolithic) and sedentary (from the Early Neolithic onwards). Each chapter closes with a box presenting a chosen artifact. These box “biographies” show how a single item was used and changed during its life, and how it can be (re)interpreted to fit in with the knowledge about a given period.

In chapter 4, **Starting at the beginning: the Palaeolithic and Epipalaeolithic**, interesting points are made on the procurement, use, and manufacture of beads as one of the earliest indicators of human self-expression. The author discusses the choice of the basket form in early bead production, the use of small marine gastropod shell beads and deer canines in clothing ornamentation, and the preference for animal parts and marine shells from species of little calorific value. Widespread practices of shell procurement and use continued into the Epipaleolithic when the use of stone beads may have caused the shift in bead use from clothing to body ornamentation.

Chapter 5, **Changing times? The Early Neolithic**, opens with a discussion of features which continued from the previous periods. The continued use of marine shell beads despite settled life may have resulted from the earlier procurement system set up by seasonal group movements, now turned into exchange networks. Moreover, stone butterfly beads from the Euphrates region and beyond and perforated animal teeth show extended use patterns during the Neolithic, with the teeth also being imitated in bone and stone. While stone beads made of very hard materials are rarely recorded in assemblages, tools for perforating stone were used during the Early Neolithic in both household workshops and separate open working areas. Interestingly, it appears that the link between green stones and fertility or agriculture argued before for the Neolithic Near East is not supported by a statistical significance of green in assemblages from Turkey and the northern Levant. Another fascinating argument concerns the value of ornaments as demonstrated by their recycling or mending. Colored wood and plaster beads, and the relationship between beads and cordage are also discussed.

Chapter 6, **Settled life and identity: the established Neolithic**, reveals that despite some continuity from the Paleolithic, a major change in ornament materials and types, as well as their role in society, is observed for the first time in the Late Neolithic. Settled life in the established Neolithic increased the preference for larger ornaments and those white in color. The author also explores the technology of changing color and texture that was based on experimentation with materials and the beginnings of specialization, both likely the result of household production within a community. Other sections focus on

the interpretation of body ornaments according to patterns on human clay figurines and the study of manifestations of social differentiation through ornaments.

In chapter 7, **New technologies and interactions: the Chalcolithic**, the author discusses the interregional trade in raw materials and finished products as well as shared practices, including new technologies. Important observations are made on the already established use of blue fluorapatite beads as well as marine shell (*Spondylus*) and marble for the large-scale production of annulets and disc beads, and their life extension through recycling and intentional breakage. New ornament types include artificial enstatite disc and cylinder beads, ring idols, and stone beads used as seals.

Chapter 8, **Ornaments and the coming of civilization? The Early Bronze Age**, discusses metals, vitreous materials, hard stones and minerals, and the accompanying lapidary technologies, that began to be widely used during this period. Additionally, the value of ornaments, in terms of personal and community wealth, is stressed. Pins, diadems, and hair spirals – new types of ornaments that seem gender-neutral – accompanied beads and pendants, which were also found as bichrome composite clothing ornamentation. The apotropaic, semiotic, social, and economic values of raw materials and finished products are discussed, as are the many functions of the stamp and engraved cylinder seals and their links with ornamentation practices. Equally important is the debate on the nature of specialized production and the complex technologies that flourished during this period, as well as the conclusion on specialized craft activity that can exist in almost any context and does not have to be limited to stratified societies.

The structure of the last chapter, **Personal ornaments: dependencies, interactions and long-term change**, reflects the three points discussed throughout the book, i.e., economy, society, and identity. The summary presents an alternative approach to the traditional archaeological narrative, which should use the full potential of the evidence provided by personal ornaments.

This book is very welcome and holds a crucial position in the literature on prehistoric ornaments and prehistory in general. On a personal note, this is one of the most insightful narratives on beads I have read. For archaeologists and anthropologists, as well as those who struggle with studying and collecting beads, it can be an eye-opening volume on the very human meanings hidden behind bead specimens, behind the imperfect past and modern discourse, and behind the endless typological classifications, with the latter still equally important.

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*Journal: Borneo International Beads Conference 2019.*

**Heidi Munan and Anita MacGillivray (eds.)**.  
Crafthub, 1st Floor, 96 Main Bazaar, 93000 Kuching,  
Sarawak, Malaysia. 2019. 246 pp., 16 color plates,  
15 B&W figs. RM 95 (paper). To order, contact:  
sarawakmuseumshop.com.

This attractive compilation consists of papers from the 6th Borneo International Beads Conference (BIBCo) which was held in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, in October 2019. Heidi Munan has held the directorship of BIBCo since its inception and, with a talented team in Kuching, has brought together experts from around the world to share the results of their research, their experience, and their very real practical knowledge. This conference had as its theme “Beads of our Time.” As a result some timely papers are to be found in this volume.



Ritu Sethi and Moe Chiba write of “Protecting the Material Culture Based on/of Indigenous Knowledge” (pp. 149-180). Exploring how to protect Indigenous Intellectual Property is an issue that concerns Indigenous peoples around

the globe, from North America to the Pacific Islands and particular ethnic groups in India. Ritu Sethi’s international experience with UNESCO and as chairperson of a number of national craft-related bodies in India make her an ideal person to tease out the common pitfalls, whilst seeking resolution to the desire for legal protection. Cultural flow and the diffusion of cultural forms has always taken place, but with a plethora of current internet sites that display a vast array of visual forms, that global flow occurs minute by minute. The authors recognize that this flow cannot be stopped, but rather they suggest ways of mitigating it through Collective marks (p. 165) and/or Geographical Indicator (GI) tags (p. 166). These suggestions involve essentially branding a product whereby the collective, rather than an individual, assumes ownership of what they understand to be their Indigenous knowledge. This practice falls outside the realm of the legal system of any given country, which may make the reader ask where the IP aspect comes in. The suggestion is remarkably practical, however, given the ubiquitous flow of things and their design. The authors do describe nations that have gone the legal IP route, yet we are living at a time when the first two decades of the 21st century are almost complete. The rate of technological change is increasingly rapid. These changes affect every piece of craft, including beads, made on the planet. “Developments in new technologies of mass replication from 3D printing, AI and other regular new technological developments that besides multiplying the numbers, lowers the costs to a fraction of the handmade” (p. 154).

It is thus to another paper that I now turn. Technological change alerts us to new fields opening up in the realm of craft-related research. “Viking Beads – Evidence of Long Distance Trade and Local Glass Bead Production” by Torben Sode (pp. 181-202) examines the means of dating found objects – beads made in the 8th and 9th centuries. This project, involving a team of researchers, was begun in 2011 and involved 500 samples of specific glass beads found in the general geographic region of southern Scandinavia. The analyses of glass beads and glass objects was conducted by Dr. Bernard Gratuze at the University of Orléans in France using Laser Ablation-Inductively Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS). Who would ever have read of research such as this in a craft-related article or book twenty years ago? The method requires no sample preparation and is particularly well adapted to composite objects and small objects like beads. The article is detailed and scientific. The conclusion has implications that could go well beyond the origin and spread of these particular glass beads, for