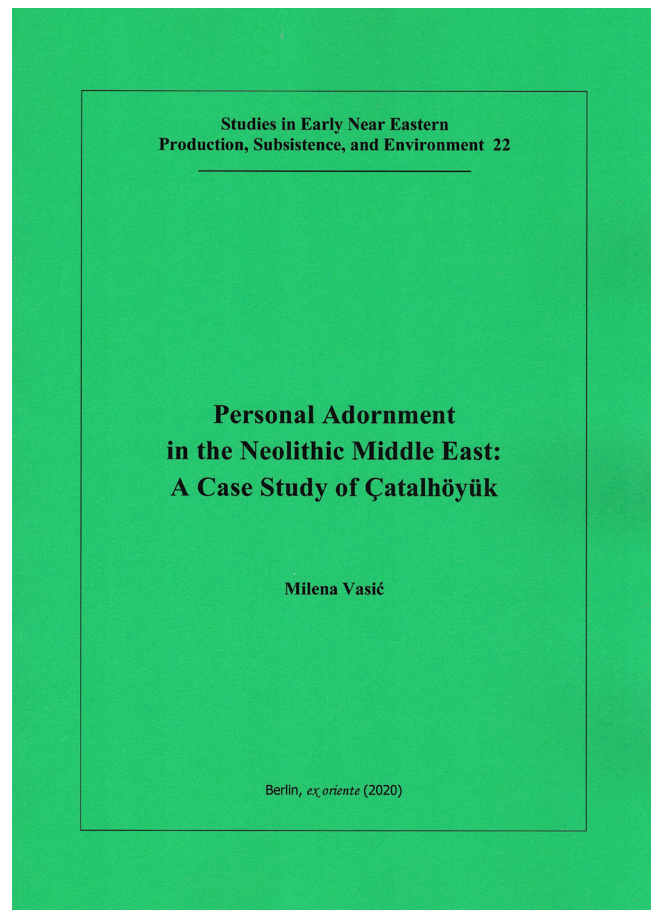


**Baysal, Emma L.**

Review of Milena Vasić, 2020. *Personal adornment in the Neolithic Middle East: a case study of Çatalhöyük*. Studies in Early Near Eastern Production, Subsistence, and Environment 22. Berlin: ex oriente. ISBN: 978-3-944178-17-2. € 54.

Personal ornaments, an element of archaeological material culture often overlooked, encapsulate some of the richest potential sources of information about many aspects of the prehistoric past, including trade, technology, know-how and skill, economy, belief and identity among others. Studies of the personal ornaments at Çatalhöyük have a history as long as the excavation itself, starting with Mellaart's initial observations in the 1960s and progressing through a series of variously themed and detailed specialist reports during the subsequent Hodder excavations. Until now the biggest drawback has been a lack of regional contextualization of the finds, which is a necessity given both the temporal and spatial similarities and continuities within personal ornaments at regional and interregional levels in the Neolithic of southwest Asia. As the author of this volume, Milena Vasić, points out, Çatalhöyük is an ideal example through which to look at personal ornamentation because of the extraordinary level of detail in the excavation methodology, the duration of the project and consequent abundance of material.

This book is derived from a PhD thesis and is a broad view of evidence for ornamentation recovered at Çatalhöyük using the author's own studies as well as existing data gathered by a range of specialists. The data set is large and challenging, encompassing many centuries of varied occupation deposits as well as the multiple materials used in personal ornamentation. The book does not have a typical introduction, but instead begins with a literature review taking in some debates around human appearance and its study in the archaeological record. A couple of paragraphs give a brief introduction to the book, indicating that burials will be a central source of evidence in the subsequent chapters. While the proliferation of personal adornment with the onset of settled life is highlighted (3), this apparent increase in ornament use probably has more to do with the available data, particularly in Turkey where excavations of Epipalaeolithic contexts are sparse, than with the reality of prehistoric life. The introduction to the meaning of ornamentation (4) would have been strengthened by reference to existing work on the subject (e.g. Kuhn and Stiner 2007; Stiner 2014), and while it is true that discussion relating to ornamentation (beyond typology and technology) was inadequate 20 years ago, this is certainly no longer the case. There is a lively and active research interest in ornamentation in the region that is rapidly helping to make up for the previous slowness of research and publication in terms of both basic data and debate about use and meaning of ornaments within Neolithic communities.



The next chapter aims to contextualise the site of Çatalhöyük with a description of the Neolithic, leaning into some of the prolific theoretical debate about neolithization and focusing on Anatolia and a slightly wider region of southwest Asia. A description of research at Çatalhöyük is followed by an overview of previous work on the site's various ornament assemblages, including adjacent studies, faunal finds, wall paintings *etc.* The chapter finishes with a discussion of the methodology used in the book. Subsequent chapters move on to an exploration of Çatalhöyük's personal ornaments from various angles, starting with a laudably broad exposition of everything that might be considered part of ornamentation, including clothing and pigments, based on findings of previous research. References to key texts on several subjects including typology, fluorapatite (Bursali *et al.* 2017a, b), marble bracelets (Ünlüsoy 2002) and early copper technology, could have been used to strengthen the discussion. Fluorapatite, for example, is a material of very limited source, undoubtedly brought to Çatalhöyük as part of long-distance distribution networks, the typology and particularly technology of which is somewhat confused throughout the remainder of the book (e.g. 24, 28, 98), leading to the material's wider significance being missed. The knock-on effect is that conclusions, for example about material preferences in bead manufacture (98), that have already been discussed by others (see detailed data and discussions in Bursali *et al.* 2017a, b) are presented as new. There is some uncritical use of

terminology, particularly in the word “fake” to refer to imitation of red deer canine beads – a subject that has already been debated in terms of the intentions of bead makers (Choyke 2001).

The next two chapters (4 and 5) focus on the contexts of ornaments from non-burial and burial deposits at Çatalhöyük (Fig. 1). The non-burial deposition of ornaments, particularly deliberate deposition and identification of the end of use life (such as disposal in middens) is crucial to thinking about the types of value attributed to different items. This is a complex subject as a result of the many contexts, often with interpretational problems, such as house fills and secondary deposition in architectural materials, and the discussion presented is interesting and important. The short section on workshop areas (53) is tantalising – there is obviously much more still to be said on this subject, particularly relating to what they contain, and the scale of use of different materials. Given that object biography is of vital importance in interpretation, particularly when looking at value and identity, there are further references that would have provided more contextualization in terms of re-use, re-shaping and re-combination (such as examples in Chapman and Gaydarska 2015; Karul 2018).

The next chapter presents what is effectively the heart of the book, the ornaments found within burial contexts at Çatalhöyük (Fig. 2). Burial at the site was under floors in houses and often involved multiple individuals

buried in a single space during a sequence of separate burial events over time. As a result, the role of ornaments within the grave context is frequently difficult to define on an individual basis because of the disruption caused by multiple episodes of burial activity and post depositional processes. The author has succeeded in disentangling as much evidence as possible from these complex graves, taking care to emphasise quality over quantity in order to draw valid conclusions, and presents results by area of the body followed by a general discussion of funerary practice. As with other chapters, the reader needs a good knowledge of the site (or access to previous publications by the team) to get the most from this due to the complexity of the relationships between the many structures and levels. The overall impression is that there was little in the way of standardized behaviour in the association of personal ornaments with the dead, and often surprisingly sparse use of ornamentation which is an important finding, given elaborate ornamentation use in earlier Neolithic burial contexts, particularly in northern Mesopotamia. As with other chapters there are issues in the details – evidence of painted decoration associated with the human body from burials at Körtek Tepe and Hasankeyf Höyük (Miyake *et al.* 2012; Erdal 2015) could have helped with the question of pigment use. Likewise, there is much evidence for the use of “spacer” beads from other sites which adequately answers some of the questions about how they were used (Özdoğan 1994; Karul 2018).



Fig. 1 Artefacts found in the neck region of an infant (skeleton 17457) in the North Area. (Photo: J. Quinlan, Çatalhöyük Research Project)



Fig. 2 Beads found in association with a child (Skeleton 10529) in the South Area of Çatalhöyük. (Photo: J. Quinlan, Çatalhöyük Research Project)

Chapter six is a discussion of ornament chronology and temporality. The tables are useful here – making it obvious that the disc bead is predominant in every period of the site, while most other ornament types are comparatively very rare indeed. It is notable that beads are associated with both fill contexts and middens throughout time, implying a high level of abandonment of items of ornamentation. Many of the ornaments were made at other locations, and materials were procured from elsewhere, information which could, in future, be used to construct a more nuanced interpretation of chronological activity at Çatalhöyük. Evidence from Aşıklı (Yelözer 2018; Yelözer and Sönmez 2018) and Boncuklu Höyüğü would add significantly here to a diachronic perspective on changes in bead use, as both sites show much about what happened in the lead up to the settlement of Çatalhöyük, including existing technologies, material use, and formal preferences that likely influenced what took place at the latter site.

The final chapter is a general discussion of what is currently known about the production and use of ornaments at Çatalhöyük and some tentative interpretation. The reader is left with the feeling that much of the author's work is being held back for forthcoming publications, which are referenced frequently. While there was potential here, if only briefly, to put the site in wider context, comparing materials and practices across a wider region, Çatalhöyük is left somewhat isolated. This causes apparent surprise about phenomena

that are already well documented for the Neolithic of southwest Asia such as the longevity of, and slow rate of change within, ornamentation practices (111).

Referring back to the theoretical framework with which the book started would have rounded off the discussion and avoided leaving the reader with unmanaged expectations. In a sense this also affected the contents – several recurring issues revolve around gaps in reading which, if remedied, would have saved the author much work as well as strengthening the results. Terminology causes two significant issues throughout the book. The first is tying the narrative to “the Middle Eastern Neolithic” which implies a geographical unity that is difficult to support with archaeological evidence. This book, quite understandably, makes reference to sites within a small portion of the huge region, therefore generalizations such as “across the Middle East” for most of which region no evidence is presented, needlessly weaken otherwise strong and useful conclusions (see below).

The second terminological obstacle is bead typology. While the author has constructed, in visual and tabular form, a new typology, justifiably aiming for neutrality and avoidance of the interpretational baggage of existing systems, no mention is made of existing literature on the subject (*e.g.* the classic Beck 1928 and Bar-Yosef Mayer 2013). Here again decontextualization of the site in the region rears its head – the formally and technologically distinctive “butterfly” form originating in the

Euphrates Basin, which plays a role in the Çatalhöyük assemblages, as well as details of well-investigated ornament technology, could have been explored through earlier research (e.g. Garfinkel 1987; Calley and Grace 1988; Grace 1990; Altınbilek *et al.* 2001; Caneva *et al.* 2001; Fabiano *et al.* 2004; Gurova *et al.* 2013; Groman-Yaroslavski and Bar-Yosef Mayer 2015).

While I have highlighted some weaknesses in interpretation, overall, the book makes an important further contribution to our knowledge of a significant assemblage of Neolithic ornaments from a large and long-lived site and in many respects is a useful resource, particularly in terms of the data presented. The collation of data from various studies, and their reconsideration in the light of further first-hand study has added new dimensions to existing knowledge of the site's ornamentation-related artefacts and provided a foundation for further interpretation in the light of regional data sets. The burial data is particularly valuable given the regional lack of both suitable contexts/ recording and detailed publication on the subject. Vasić rises well to the task of streamlining the largest and most complex of the region's datasets, highlighting key aspects of how inhabitants of the site interacted with ornaments and beginning to tease out the details of how they might have presented themselves to others.

**Emma L. Baysal**  
Department of Archaeology,  
Ankara University, Ankara  
elbaysal@ankara.edu.tr

## References

- Altınbilek Ç., Coşkunsoy G., Dede Y., Iovino M., Lemorini C. and Özdoğan A.  
2001 Drills from Çayönü. A combination of ethnographic, experimental and use-wear analysis. In: I. Caneva, C. Lemorini, D. Zampetti and P. Biagi (eds.), *Beyond tools. Redefining the PPN lithic assemblages of the Levant*: 137-144. Berlin: ex oriente.
- Bar-Yosef Mayer D.E.  
2013 Towards a typology of stone beads in the Neolithic Levant. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 38(2): 129-142.
- Beck H.  
1928 Classification and nomenclature of beads and pendants. *Archaeologia* 77: 1-76.
- Bursali A., Özbal H., Özbal R., Şimşek G., Yağci B., Yılmaz Akkaya C. and Baysal E.  
2017a Investigating the source of blue color in Neolithic beads from Barcin Höyük, NW Turkey. In: T. Pereira, X. Terradas and N. Bicho (eds.), *The exploitation of raw materials in Prehistory*: 492-505. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Bursali A., Özbal R., Baysal E., Özbal H. and Yağci B.  
2017b Neolithic blue beads in northwest Turkey: the social significance of skeuomorphism. In: M. Cifarelli and L. Gawlinski (eds.), *What shall I say of clothes? Theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of dress in Antiquity*. Selected Papers on Ancient Art and Architecture 3: 123-142. Boston: Archaeological Institute of America.
- Calley S. and Grace R.  
1988 Technology and function of micro-borers from Kumartepe (Turkey). In: S. Beyries (ed.), *Industries lithiques: tracéologie et technologie 1: Aspects Archéologiques*. British Archaeological Reports – International Series 411: 69-81. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Caneva I., Iovino M., Lemorini C., Özdoğan A. and Zampetti D.  
2001 A combined analysis of the lithic assemblages from Çayönü. In: I. Caneva, C. Lemorini, D. Zampetti and P. Biagi (eds.), *Beyond tools, redefining the PPN lithic assemblages of the Levant*: 165-182. Berlin: ex oriente.
- Chapman J. and Gaydarska B.  
2015 *Spondylus gaederopus/ Glycymeris* exchange networks in the European Neolithic and Chalcolithic. In: C. Fowler, J. Harding and D. Hofmann (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Neolithic Europe*: 639-655. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Choyke A.M.  
2001 Late Neolithic red deer canine beads and their imitations. In: A.M. Choyke and L. Bartosiewicz (eds.), *Crafting bone: skeletal technologies through time and space. Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the (ICAZ) Worked Bone Research Group, Budapest, 31<sup>st</sup> August - 5<sup>th</sup> September 1999*. British Archaeological Reports - International Series 937: 251-266. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Erdal Y.S.  
2015 Bone or flesh: defleshing and post-depositional treatments at Körtik Tepe (southeastern Anatolia, PPNA period). *European Journal of Archaeology* 18(1): 4-32.
- Fabiano M., Berna F. and Borzatti von Löwenstern E.  
2004 Pre-Pottery Neolithic amazonite bead workshops in southern Jordan. In: I. Jadin and A. Hauzeur (eds.), *The Neolithic in the Near East and Europe. Acts of the XIV<sup>th</sup> UISPP Congress, University of Liège, Belgium, 2-8<sup>th</sup> September 2001*. British Archaeological Reports – International Series 1303: 265-273. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Garfinkel Y.  
1987 Bead manufacture on the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B site of Yiftahel. *Mitekufat Haeven: Journal of the Israel Prehistoric Society* 20: 79-90.
- Grace R.  
1990 The use-wear analysis of drill bits from Kumartepe. *Anatolica* 16: 154-155.
- Groman-Yaroslavski I. and Bar-Yosef Mayer D.E.  
2015 Lapidary technology revealed by functional analysis of carnelian beads from the early Neolithic site of Nahal Hemar Cave, southern Levant. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 58: 77-88.
- Gurova M., Bonsall C., Bradley B. and Anastassova E.  
2013 Approaching prehistoric skills: experimental drilling in the context of bead manufacturing. *Bulgarian e-journal of Archaeology* 3(2).
- Karul N.  
2018 Gusir Höyük Çanak Çömleksiz Neolitik Dönem “dügme-kemer tokaları”. In: M. Arslan and F. Baz (eds.), *Arkeoloji, Tarih ve Epigrafi'nin Arasında: Prof. Dr. Vedat Çelgin'in 68. Doğum Günü Onuruna Makaleler*: 479-485. Istanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları.
- Kuhn S.L. and Stiner M.C.  
2007 Body ornamentation as information technology: towards an understanding of the significance of early beads. In: P. Mellars, K. Boyle, O. Bar-Yosef and C. Stringer (eds.), *Rethinking the human revolution, new behavioural and biological perspectives on the origin and dispersal of modern humans*: 45-54. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

- Miyake Y., Maeda O., Tanno K., Hongo H. and Gündem C.-Y.  
2012 New excavations at Hasankeyf Höyük: a 10<sup>th</sup> millennium cal. BC site on the Upper Tigris, southeast Anatolia. *Neo-Lithics* 1/12: 3-7.
- Özdoğan A.  
1994 *Çayönü yerleşmesinin çanak çömleksiz Neolitikteki yeri*. Istanbul: Istanbul University. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis.
- Stiner M.C.  
2014 Finding a common bandwidth: causes of convergence and diversity in Paleolithic beads. *Biological Theory* 9.1: 51-64.
- Ünlüsoy S.  
2002 Neolithische und chalkolithische Steinarmringe: Untersuchungen zur Chronologie und Verbreitung von Steinarmringen im Nahen Osten und in der Ägäis. In: R. Aslan, S. Blum, G. Kastl, F. Schweizer and D. Thumm (eds.), *Mauerschau: Festschrift für Manfred Korfmann*: 543-565. Remshalden-Grunbach: Greiner.
- Yelözer S.  
2018 The beads from Aşıklı Höyük. In: M. Özbaşaran, G. Duru and M. Stiner (eds.), *The early settlement at Aşıklı Höyük: essays in Honor of Ufuk Esin*: 383-404. Istanbul: Ege Yayınları.
- Yelözer S. and Sönmez D.  
2018 Continuity and change through personal ornaments: Aşıklı Höyük, Central Anatolia, Turkey. In: C. Douché and F. Pichon (eds.), *From the Caucasus to the Arabian Peninsula: domestic spaces in the Neolithic*: 169-206. Paris: Routes de l'Orient.