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*Detecting individual and collective identities during the Early Neolithic: gender, age, and the intersectionality of identities at Aşıklı Höyük.* 2022.

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Throughout the Neolithisation process in Southwest Asia, the early sedentary communities underwent significant transformations. These include changing patterns in demography and labour, as well as the emergence of new social roles and identities (Molleson 1994; Peterson 2002; Bolger 2010; Croucher 2012). On this premise, this thesis focuses on the relationships between daily activities and identities during the Early Neolithic period. Its methodology relies on the integration and cross-examination of multiple lines of evidence. The main questions of this study are: (1) did the daily activities of different sex and age groups substantially differ from one another, (2) did the identities of different social groups (based on sex, age, and social roles) intersect and/ or differ from one another, and (3) if and how were identities manifested through mortuary customs, bodily appearances, and material culture? To be able to tackle these questions, a unique Early Neolithic site, where the entire process of the transition to sedentism can be tracked continuously, was chosen as a case study: Aşıklı Höyük (8350-7350 cal BCE) in Central Anatolia. With the further aim of contributing to the contextual and data-driven methodologies in studying past identities, the intersections between different layers of identities at Aşıklı Höyük are discussed with a gender archaeology approach, inspired by feminist theories that understand identity as a plural and fluid concept constituted by the relations between bodies and material culture (e.g., Geller 2009; Sofaer 2012).

The first two chapters of the thesis outline its theoretical, conceptual, and methodological frameworks. The first chapter is dedicated to a discussion on the conceptualization of gender and identity in humanities. This is followed by a historiographic overview of gender studies in archaeology and how approaches and methodologies diversified through time as feminist theories, as well as praxis, moved beyond the gender binary and began focusing on the intersections between different layers of identities (e.g., Gilchrist 1999). The second chapter deals with methods and approaches of identifying identities in the archaeological record. The cross-cultural examples in this section bring us closer to human agency, however, this study intends to embrace identity as the “outcome of the relations that constitute bodies, things and people” (Harris 2016: 20). The second chapter, therefore, provides an overview of Neolithic personal ornamentation with its precursors, focusing on the changes and continuities in material preferences and technological innovations in bead-making practices (see also Alarashi 2014; Baysal 2019). Reiterating the role personal ornaments played in conveying multiple messages and creating

socio-cultural affinities within and between communities (e.g., Hodder 1982; Kuhn 2014), this chapter suggests that the entire bead *chaînes opératoires*, including the transmission of knowledge between different artisans (Costin 1998), as well as the different material preferences of bead-makers and wearers, constructed and signified distinct cultural and social identities. To provide a chronological and regional background for the case study of Aşıklı Höyük, the third chapter discusses the mutual relationship between social roles, identities, and material culture from the Epipalaeolithic to the Neolithic in Central Anatolia, Northern Mesopotamia, Southern Levant, and the Zagros (Fig. 1). This overview concludes that during the Early Neolithic, social identities were not forged by the biological differences between the sexes. Identities were rather related to age and life-course, and were constructed and conveyed through the embodiment, adornment, and altering of bodies. All reflected temporal, regional, and culture-specific variations.

Aşıklı Höyük is a key Early Neolithic site in Central Anatolia: a community transitioning from broad-spectrum hunting of wild prey and plant gathering, as well as the early management of caprines, to intensifying cultivation practices of cereals and the eventual domestication of caprines (Özbaşaran *et al.* 2018). However, defining identities at Aşıklı was a challenging task for the lack of symbolic production, a key aspect that differentiated the site from its contemporaries. The rare anthropomorphic figurines from the site are the stylised and ambiguous depictions that render aspects of male, female, human, and non-human bodies. Thus, questioning the dynamics that constituted identities in this community requires a study that compares different lines of evidence coming from human remains, burial customs, and material culture.

Demographic, palaeopathological, and stable isotope analyses provide a bioarchaeological background to discuss social roles and identities. Among the 103 individuals so far recovered at the site, Erdal’s (2018) study concentrated on 82 individuals. Apart from the 33 sub-adults in her dataset, adult females make up 65% (Erdal 2018: 413). In terms of daily activities, analyses of osteoarthritis, a pathological condition caused by mechanical stress often related to workload and activity, indicate that adults of both sexes routinely engaged in physically demanding activities (Erdal 2018). However, there were subtle differences in labour organisation; males mostly conducted activities that affected their elbows, shoulders, and hips, and females were routinely engaged in activities such as working in a crouching position that affected their ankles, shoulders, and hips (Erdal 2018: 420). An interesting pattern is the lack of degenerative joint diseases in young adult males (between 15-22 years of age; four individuals). Females, however, developed osteoarthritis from young adulthood onwards (Erdal 2018: 411). In terms of diet, carbon and nitrogen isotope analyses indicate that individuals buried inside the same house were consuming similar foods, differentiating them from other

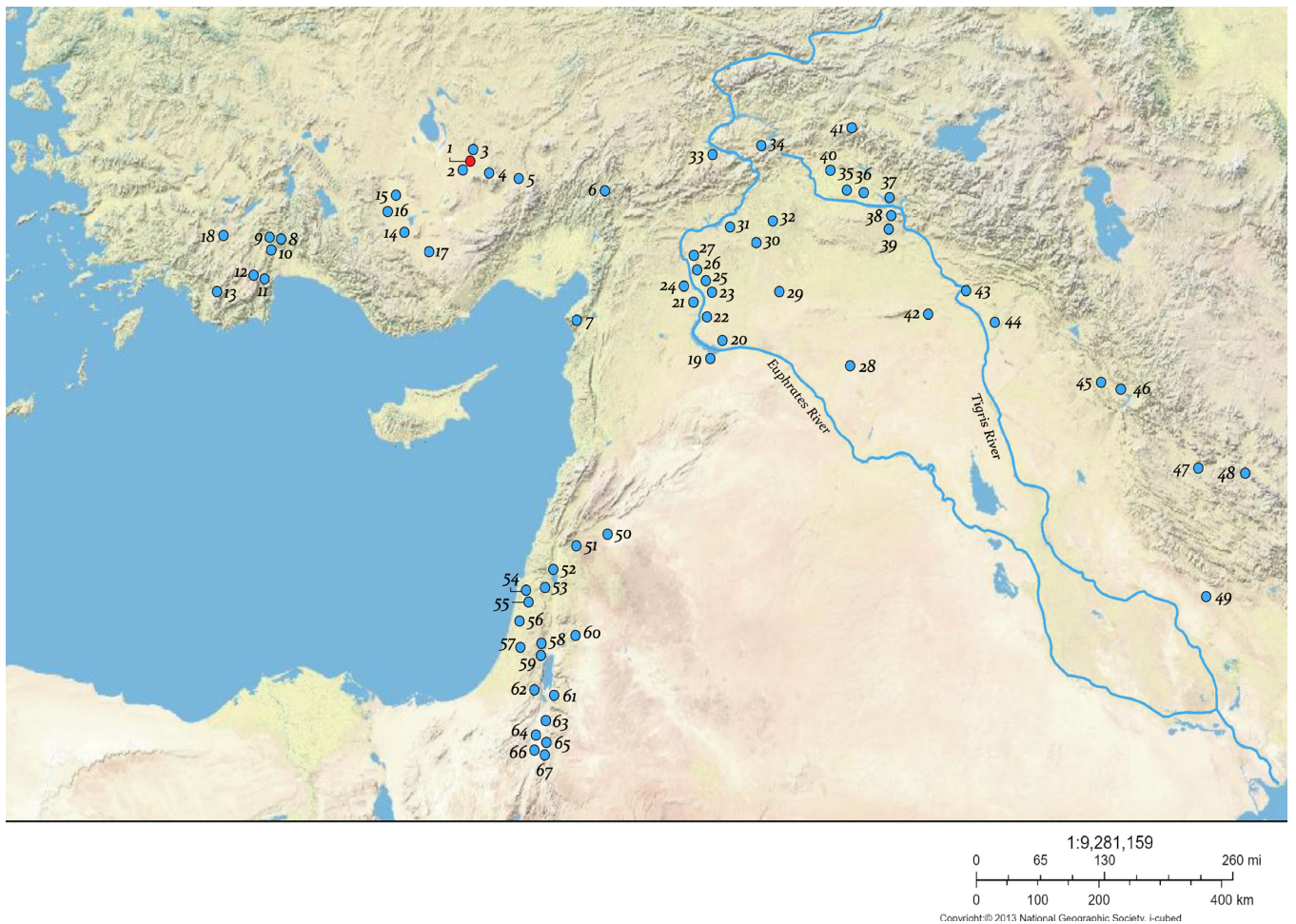


Fig. 1 Aşıklı Höyük and the major Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic sites in Southwest Asia. Sites shown in the map: 1. Aşıklı Höyük; 2. Mulsar; 3. Balıklı; 4. Kaletepe; 5. Köşk Höyük; 6. Direkli Mağarası; 7. Uçağızlı Mağarası; 8. Öküzini Mağarası; 9. Karain Mağarası; 10. Kızılin Mağarası; 11. Beldibi Mağarası; 12. Belbaşı Mağarası; 13. Girmeler Mağarası; 14. Pınarbaşı; 15. Boncuklu; 16. Çatalhöyük; 17. Can Hasan; 18. Hacilar; 19. Abu Hureyra; 20. Mureybet; 21. Tell Halula; 22. Jerf el-Ahmar; 23. Dja'de; 24. Tell Qaramel; 25. Tell 'Abr 3; 26. Akarçay Tepe; 27. Mezraa Teleilat; 28. Bouqras; 29. Tell Sabi Abyad; 30. Göbekli Tepe; 31. Nevalı Çori; 32. Yeni Mahalle; 33. Cafer Höyük; 34. Çayönü; 35. Körtik Tepe; 36. Hasankeyf Höyük; 37. Gusir Höyük; 38. Çemka Höyük; 39. Boncuklu Tarla; 40. Demirköy; 41. Hallan Çemi; 42. Qermez Dere; 43. Nemrik; 44. M'lefaat; 45. Jarmo; 46. Bestansur; 47. Sarab; 48. Ganj Dareh; 49. Ali Kosh; 50. Tell Aswad; 51. Tell Ramad; 52. Beisamoun; 53. Ain Mallaha; 54. Nahal Oren; 55. Kfar HaHoresh; 56. Yiftahel; 57. Hatoula; 58. Gilgal; 59. Jericho; 60. 'Ain Ghazal; 61. Dhra'; 62. Nahal Hemar; 63. Wadi Faynan 16; 64. Shkârat Msaied; 65. Ba'ja; 66. Beidha; 67. Basta. (Map prepared by: S. Yelözer, base map: National Geographic Society)

houses to some extent during the Level 2 occupation at the site (corresponding to the 8<sup>th</sup> millennium cal BCE) (Itahashi *et al.* 2021).

As the funerary and body adornment practices and the tempo of inter-regional communication exhibit chronological changes at Aşıklı, a discussion of their implications for the construction and display of social roles and identities requires a temporal overview of these practices. Starting from the end of Level 3 (corresponding roughly to the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> millennium cal BCE) and throughout Level 2 (8<sup>th</sup> millennium cal BCE) some individuals were buried with 'grave goods', mostly in the form of ornaments but also with few examples of baskets and stone tools. Among the overall number of burials ( $n=103$ ), only 36% had such items. These items could be divided into two groups as possible indicators of the social roles and identities of the individuals they were interred with: items relating to daily activities/ social roles (baskets and stone tools)

and items relating to bodily appearances (personal ornaments/ beads and pendants as single objects, pairs, or groups). The earliest 'grave good' belonged to a child (Level 3, late 9<sup>th</sup> millennium cal BCE): three stone beads found on the neck, displaying traces of use (Fig. 2). The first adult individuals with 'grave goods' were the three individuals buried with stone tools and baskets, all buried inside the same house during the earliest phases of Level 2/ early 8<sup>th</sup> millennium cal BCE. Around the same period, infants and children were buried with single greenstone beads. During the mid-8<sup>th</sup> millennium cal BCE, adults also began to be buried with ornaments. This period also reflects a diversification of burial practices: double burials, rare examples of the placement of ochre on different parts of the body, and also rare instances of body modification.

The adorned burials constitute 29% of the overall number of individuals, while the individuals buried with baskets and stone tools are much fewer ( $n=6$ ).

Statistically, being buried with ornaments does not seem to be a sex-specific practice. However, some individuals stand out in terms of the number of beads they had and the variety of materials, forms, and colours of the beads composing the ornaments they were buried with. These include two children (around the age of three) who had ornaments similar to those of the adult individuals. One other aspect connecting the children's world to the adults' is the presence of use-wear on their beads, suggesting the prior circulation and use of these items before the burial event, as well as their transmission, possibly between individuals of different age groups. Based on the fact that both adult males and females had access to a high quantity and variety of beads, the suggestion that there was no differentiation based on biological sex in the display of identities through these elements of material culture is plausible. Furthermore, among these are the individuals with the highest amount of non-local materials (carnelian butterfly beads and marine shells) as well as individuals who were buried with reused beads with prolonged use-lives, possibly as transmitted items. Two other instances too suggest that access to non-local materials and transmission, this time on a temporal scale, was central to identity construction and display: these are the two adult females, one buried with a bead group composed of ten carnelian butterfly beads, making her the individual who had the highest number of this imported material at the site and the other buried with red deer canine pendants bearing traces of repair and reuse (elements that were in use at the site since the earliest phases as opposed to the stone beads that became numerous in Level 2) combined with copper beads.

A subtle difference between males and females concerns bead colours and ochre use: adult females and children had similar amounts of red and green beads, while the ornaments of adult males are mostly green.

The use of single green beads was exclusively for children under the age of 3 and females above the age of 40. The rare example of ochre use is also exclusive to an infant, a child, and a female above the age of 40. Such material ties can be seen among different age classes: no newborns were buried with ornaments. Infants who had died after 1-month were buried with single beads, and this practice was shared only between infants, children under the age of 3, and females above the age of 40. After 1.5 and until 2.5 years of age, some children had bead pairs too. No children below the age of 3 had bead groups. Weaning, a strong indicator of the beginning of childhood and personhood and identity attribution in ethnographic contexts (*e.g.*, Fisher 2001) began around the age of 1 and was completed around the age of 2 at Aşıklı (Pearson *et al.* 2010). It was after the complete ending of breastfeeding, around the age of 3, that some children were buried with bead groups similar to the ornaments of adults. Thus, 'social age' was an axis of identity construction at Aşıklı. Different practices in body adornment, as well as burial rituals, indicate that beads signified socio-material ties between individuals (*e.g.*, infants and females above the age of 40) while also marking the transition to different stages of life.

The funerary bead groups were made of assembled elements that were a product of distinct *chaînes opératoires*, made by different artisans who had varying degrees of skill and experience. The carnelian butterfly beads (Fig. 3), as well as the butterfly beads made from softer stones, hint at interaction with communities from the Middle Euphrates, Southern Levant, and the Zagros. Through the technological analysis of the butterfly beads from funerary contexts, this study reveals that these items were brought to the site in finished state after an almost identical technological process to the ones from the abovementioned regions, and thus suggests that participation in inter-regional interaction

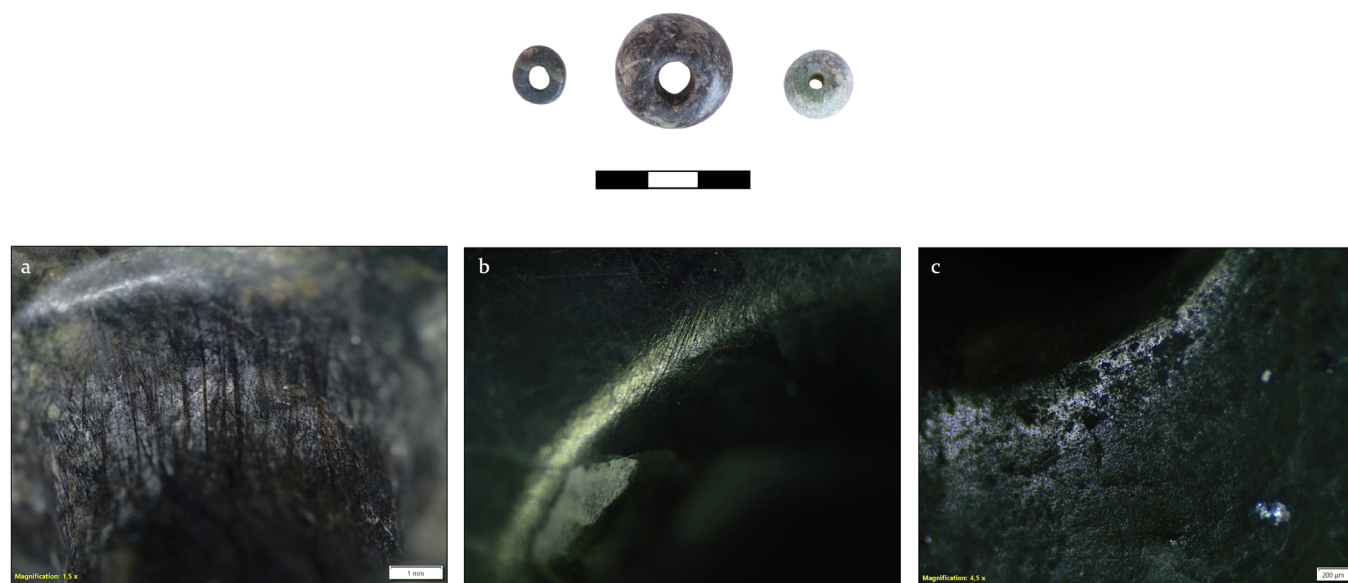


Fig. 2 Stone beads found on the neck of a child at Aşıklı Höyük. Use-wear traces on the beads: vertical striations on the perforation tube (a), polish and striations on the perforation edges (b-c). (Micro-photos: S. Yelözer; photo of the beads: E. Gökcan, Aşıklı Höyük Research Project Archive)



Fig. 3 Carnelian butterfly beads from Aşıklı Höyük. (Photo: E. Gökcan; Aşıklı Höyük Research Project Archive)

networks and access to these materials attributed these individuals with certain identities. The presence of these beads in the graves of sub-adults, on the other hand, postulates the idea that through these beads, the social and/ or biological ties (*i.e.*, kinship) between certain adults and sub-adults were manifested.

Individuals with baskets and stone tools include one young adult male, as well as adult males and females above the age of 30. The most prominent differentiation between the adorned burials and the burials with stone tools and baskets is the exclusion of infants and children from the latter practice. Half of the individuals with baskets and stone tools were buried inside the same house. The isotopic evidence suggests a shared diet among these individuals (Itahashi *et al.* 2021). For this instance, then, it can be suggested that individuals who shared tasks and food tended to be buried closely and with similar items related to their respective social roles and identities. The spatial distribution of different types of ‘grave goods’ and burial practices also indicates that such practices tended to concentrate in certain houses. Some houses were invested in with more numbers of graves, and more varied practices of burial rituals. However, while this may indicate that individuals buried inside the same houses shared social ties that were manifested through certain practices, the socio-material ties manifested mostly through technologies, materials, colours, and uses of personal ornaments cross-cut possible household affiliations as they can be found between individuals buried in different houses. Thus, places and materials together created ties between individuals and constructed identities at the site.

Based on the bioarchaeological data, one can argue in favour of a subtle, yet existent, sexual division of labour in some tasks, and thus, suggest distinct social roles for adult males and females. However, this study proposes a reconsideration through a cross-comparison of bioarchaeological and material culture data. Based on

statistical and descriptive comparisons between datasets supplemented with the technological and use-wear analyses of the funerary beads, this study explores the role that material culture, inter-regional interactions, and spatial relations played in the construction of multi-layered and intersecting identities at Aşıklı Höyük. It can be concluded that there were no distinct gendered identities at play. Body adornment was rather a way of marking the different stages of life-course as well as social roles, identities, and social ties. It appears that emerging household affiliations, bodily appearances, and socio-material ties, as far as it was reflected in the funerary sphere, were relevant to the construction and display of identities during the Early Neolithic period.

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