



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The Emotional Piece: Prehistoric Aegean Jewelry and Its Emotional Value

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Abstract

In contemporary societies, jewelry is often laden with emotional value. This is likely due to the physical connection of jewelry to the body, its performative potential in rituals, and/or the symbolic significance of its material or shape. As such, jewelry can evoke a powerful emotional response about a loved one and/or a life transition or other special event. It may also serve a protective role during or after such transitions. Yet, most scholarship on ancient jewelry has focused on the role of jewelry in constructing, or signaling, social identities, especially status, but also gender and age. Far fewer studies highlight its emotive role. This is surprising given that most examples of ancient jewelry are discovered in mortuary contexts, which are clearly emotionally charged. Indeed, some of the very earliest examples of artistic production are jewelry discovered in graves or tombs, signaling their importance.

Through an analysis of material remains and iconography, in this paper I explore the potential emotional value of jewelry in the prehistoric Aegean, specifically in funerary contexts. I then conclude by highlighting what's at stake when we ignore the emotional piece in our scholarship and teaching about jewelry in the ancient world.

Keywords

jewelry, dress, funerary, Aegean, Bronze Age

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