

The Mummy Under the Bed

Essays on Gender
and Methodology
in the Ancient Near East

Edited by
Katrien De Graef,
Agnès Garcia-Ventura,
Anne Goddeeris and
Beth Alpert Nakhai



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Entangled at Death

Beads, Gender, and Life Cycles during the Central Anatolian Early Neolithic; Aşıklı Höyük as a Case Study

Sera Yelözer¹ and Mihriban Özbaşaran²

1. Introduction

The Neolithic period, which began during the tenth millennium BCE in south-west Asia, marks the transition from a mobile hunter-gatherer way of life to sedentism, as well as an increasing dependence on farming and herding. This process spanned the seventh to sixth millennia BCE, when the early village communities were fully established (Tab. 1 and Fig. 1). The initial steps towards the establishment of this new way of life were already in motion by the Late Epipalaeolithic, following the onset of warmer and wetter climatic conditions at the end of the Last Glacial Maximum. It was around 13,000 BCE that the Late Epipalaeolithic Natufian communities in the resource-rich Mediterranean belt began to live in open-air sites, caves, and rock shelters on an increasingly sedentary scale. The communities tended to build durable structures and bury their dead in specific locations, i.e., inside caves and rock shelters or inside structures that were used as dwellings,³ an ever-growing pattern that would have brought a sense of belonging. It was, as Hodder defined, “a generative spiral leading to sedentism and domestication,”⁴ and from the tenth millennium BCE onwards, communities began to occupy sites on a year-round basis, with the number of settlements and their sizes increasing.⁵ There was an increasing dependence on cultivation and management of certain animal species.⁶ Food-storage mechanisms changed, from less pronounced, small-scale storage activities to communal storage facilities, and eventually secluded storage units within houses.⁷ Certain commonalities were practiced in the symbolic sphere, especially in burial rituals, yet with a pronounced regional variety.⁸ These changes brought about eventual transformations both on a collective and an individual scale; social life

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³ See, e.g., Grosman and Munro 2016; Maher et al. 2021.

⁴ Hodder 2018: 155.

⁵ Byrd 2005; Duru 2016; Kuijt 1996, 2001; Watkins 2004, 2010.

⁶ Portillo et al. 2019, 2020; Stiner et al. 2014.

⁷ Kuijt 2015.

⁸ Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen 2014.

was reorganized, individuals gained new roles and tasks, and new identities began to emerge.

Period	~cal BCE*	Sites and regions mentioned in the text**		Materials and methods***		References
Late Epipalaeolithic (Natufian)	13,000–9800	Nahal Oren; Ain Mallaha; El Wad; Hayonim; Kebara	Southern Levant	Human remains	Osteology; spatial and statistical analyses	Benz 2009; Peterson 2002
		Abu Hureyra	Middle Euphrates	Human remains; material culture; architecture	Osteology; spatial analysis	Molleson 1994, 2000
		Pınarbaşı	Central Anatolia	Human remains	Osteology	Baird et al. 2013
Early Neolithic (Pre-Pottery Neolithic A/PPNA)	9800–8600	Hatoula	Southern Levant	Human remains	Osteology	Peterson 2002
		Körtik Tepe; Çayönü; Göbekli Tepe	Southeastern Anatolia	Human remains; mortuary customs and grave goods; figurative art; architecture	Osteology; isotopic analysis; spatial analysis	Benz et al. 2016; Croucher 2005, 2006; Delibaş 2016; Hodder and Meskell 2011
Early Neolithic (Pre-Pottery Neolithic B/PPNB)	8600–6900	Jericho; Ain Ghazal; Kfar HaHoresh; Nahal Hemar; Tell Ramad; Beisamoun; Tell Aswad; Abou Gosh; Basta; Yiftahel; Ba'ja	Southern Levant	Human remains (e.g., modified skull burials); mortuary customs and grave goods	Osteology; spatial and statistical analyses	Benz 2009; Benz et al. 2020; Bonogofsky 2001, 2006; Peterson 2002
		Abu Hureyra; Tell Halula	Middle Euphrates	Human remains; architecture; mortuary customs and grave goods; material culture	Osteology; spatial and statistical analyses	Alarashi 2014; Benz 2009; Benz et al. 2020; Molleson 1994, 2000
		Çayönü; Nevalı Çori	Southeastern Anatolia	Human remains; mortuary customs	Osteology; isotopic analysis; spatial and statistical analyses	Benz 2009; Croucher 2006; Pearson et al. 2013
		Boncuklu; Aşıklı (presented in this study);	Central Anatolia	Human remains; mortuary customs;	Osteology; fingerprint analysis;	Arslan 2014; Bennison-Chapman and

Period	~cal BCE*	Sites and regions mentioned in the text**		Materials and methods***		References
		Çatalhöyük		material culture and grave goods	spatial and statistical analyses	Hager 2018; Bonogofsky 2006
Late Neolithic (Pottery Neolithic)	6900–5700	Çatalhöyük; Köşk Höyük; Hacılar	Central Anatolia	Figurative art (e.g., figurines, wall paintings); human remains; mortuary; customs and grave goods	Osteology; isotopic analysis; spatial and statistical analysis	Agarwal et al. 2015; Arslan 2014, 2019a, 2019b; Bonogofsky 2006; Hamilton 2005; Meskell 2007; Molleson 2007; Nakamura and Meskell 2009; Pearson and Meskell 2015; Pearson et al. 2015; Voigt 2007

*Before Common Era. Date ranges are compiled from the Platform for Neolithic Radiocarbon Dates (PPND) Project of exoriente (https://www.exoriente.org/associated_projects/ppnd.php).

**Sites mentioned in the text or included in the studies summarized in the text are listed here with their regional and chronological affiliations (see also Fig. 1). Names of some sites are not mentioned in the text, but the overall results from relevant studies are summarized.

***Materials and methods applied to the interpretation of gender roles and identities in the studies discussed in the text.

Table 1. Archaeological chronology of the periods, sites, and regions discussed in this study and the material and methods applied for the interpretations of gender roles and identities.

To understand how social life was reorganized during this period of dynamic changes, and how identities of gender and age transformed, research questions can be summed up in three groups: (a) Did the daily tasks of different sex and age groups change and, if so, how? (b) Did these changes influence the identities of different sex and age groups? And (c) How and by which practices were identities manifested in the burial rituals? As rites of passage, death and mortuary rites bore witness to the alteration of identities. Often being communal affairs, mortuary rites brought together members of the community and became a venue for public performances in which identities are reconfigured.⁹ By tracing the available evidence on the burial patterns of past communities, archaeologists attempt to reconstruct the nature and content of the mortuary rituals that took

⁹ Fowler 2004: 79–81.

place within the community in question. For Neolithic southwest Asia, bioarchaeological and figurative data, and the social aspects of burials, can provide multiple lines of evidence that could be integrated to answer the abovementioned questions. These data groups include figurative art such as figurines, wall paintings, and other human depictions; grave goods; task-related markers on human remains; and various treatments of the human body, including the removal, painting, plastering, and circulation of crania, as well as secondary burials.¹⁰

Bringing together studies concentrating on bioarchaeological, mortuary, and figurative data from the Late Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic sites, this study provides a brief overview of the current picture of gender research in early sedentary communities of southwest Asia (Tab. 1 and Fig. 1), followed by a site-specific analysis of Aşıklı Höyük. The site of Aşıklı Höyük, occupied between 8350 and 7350 cal BCE on the Cappadocian plateau in east-central Anatolia, provides an intriguing case study for attempting to understand the construction of new identities and their reflections in the mortuary rituals during the onset of the Neolithic period. Using background literature on temporal changes, brought together by the work of various specialists at the site, we concentrate on comparisons of multiple lines of evidence and aim to understand aspects of material culture and practices that were employed for the expression of identities during the funerary rituals at Aşıklı Höyük. The data groups include sex- and age-based patterns of certain mortuary variables, such as wrapping the body, placement of ochre, and personal items found with burials. Among the personal items found with burials, beads constitute the majority. Thus, at its core, this article discusses the role that beads played in manifesting identities at Aşıklı Höyük, namely the distribution of the raw materials, colours, and forms of the beads that belong to the ornaments found with burials. With an intersectional approach, the data groups are interpreted in correlation with the bioarchaeological data, including demographic profiles, task-related pathologies, and traumas, based on the results of the physical anthropologists working at the site.¹¹

2. Theoretical frameworks and a brief summary of the state of gender research in Neolithic southwest Asia

Gender archaeology, which, especially in the recent decade, began to emphasize the integration of multiple lines of evidence and shifted its focus from “issues of inequality to issues of difference”,¹² provides a multifaceted theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of gender and age in the distant past. It was more than thirty years ago when Conkey and Spector¹³ published the

¹⁰ For detailed discussions of the Late Epipalaeolithic and Early Neolithic mortuary rituals, see Kuijt 1996; Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen 2014.

¹¹ Özbek 1991, 1993, 2011; Erdal 2004, 2018.

¹² Gilchrist 2004: 145; see also Geller 2009.

¹³ Conkey and Spector 1984.

groundbreaking article that emphasized how the past was diversely peopled, dynamic, and complex beyond the duality of maleness and femaleness. In a relatively recent overview article, Geller states that these key points are still relevant in archaeology.¹⁴ In fact, the state of research on the dynamics of gender during the Neolithic in southwest Asia, especially in Anatolia, is still in its initial stages. Nevertheless, recent studies focus on exploring the connectedness of multiple identities.

The theoretical metamorphosis of gender archaeology brought about the development of new methods, aiming to reach an understanding of individuals in past societies (Tab. 1). Molleson's work in Abu Hureyra was especially pioneering in that sense, showing that both the Late Epipalaeolithic and Early Neolithic inhabitants of the site were engaged in activities that affected their shoulders, hips, toes, and knees; and during the Early Neolithic period, especially the adult and subadult females were engaged in grinding activities (e.g., of grain) on a daily basis.¹⁵ Spatial distribution of querns furthermore suggests that this domestic craft was organized at the household level, and Molleson concluded that the division of labour was a consequence of the newly established sedentary way of life.¹⁶ Peterson applied a similar bioarchaeological approach to a larger dataset from fourteen sites, including Late Epipalaeolithic (Natufian) and Neolithic sites in the southern Levant.¹⁷ Her results for the Natufian and Early Neolithic communities painted a different picture of daily life during the same period in a different setting, at Abu Hureyra. She noticed that the sexually dimorphic patterns were pronounced during the Late Epipalaeolithic, evidenced by the asymmetry in the musculoskeletal structures of Natufian males and females. Male musculature became increasingly bilateral and began to resemble the female pattern with the onset of the Neolithic. Through the analysis of the musculoskeletal stress markers, she suggested that daily tasks were shared between the sexes during the Neolithic, and compared to the previous period, male labour experienced more significant changes during this time. Contrary to the developments in Abu Hureyra suggested by Molleson's conclusions above, about the initial stages of sedentism and domestication of plants and animals in the southern Levant, there were no differences in workload or activity between males and females.¹⁸ Emphasizing that males and females were equally participating in physically demanding daily activities during this period, Peterson's later synthesis of the skeletal, mortuary, figurative, and architectural data on gender relations in the Neolithic Levant suggests that although some tasks were divided

¹⁴ Geller 2009.

¹⁵ Molleson 1994, 2000, 2007.

¹⁶ Molleson 2000: 314.

¹⁷ Peterson 2002.

¹⁸ Peterson 2002: 124.

based on biological sex in some contexts, there were no hierarchies, production control, or power relations based on gender.¹⁹

Körtik Tepe in southeastern Anatolia, a Late Epipalaeolithic and Early Neolithic (PPNA) site near the Tigris River, was inhabited by a hunter-fisher-gatherer community, which began practicing the initial steps of sedentism around 10,000 cal BCE. The site is well known for its high number of intramural human burials, the diversity of burial customs, and the variety of grave goods, which led some researchers to suggest differences of social status between individuals and emerging hierarchies.²⁰ However, the application of refined methodologies to tackle questions of hierarchy, status, power, and gender relations result in a contrasting picture. The study of musculoskeletal markers of habitual stress points to the lack of a strict division of labour based on biological sex at Körtik Tepe.²¹ In a study comparing the burial patterns with the bioarchaeological data for daily practices, mobility patterns, and diet, Benz and colleagues came to the conclusion that the correlation between more elaborate burial rituals and some individuals was not based on the individuals' age, class, sex, or affiliation to a spatially segregated group within the community, and that all members of the community had access to particular social roles.²²

Burying crania or plastered and modified skulls individually or in caches, as well as skeletons without cranial elements, became a common funerary practice in southwest Asia, especially in the southern Levant during the eighth and seventh millennia BCE (PPNB). Bonogofsky studied the age, sex, and contextual distribution and funerary associations of plastered and undecorated crania from several sites in the southern Levant and central Anatolia (Tab. 1), and discovered that all age and sex groups were selected for treatment; there was no differentiation between age and sex groups for this ritual.²³ Some were buried individually, while some were buried in groups (e.g., adult and infant crania buried in caches), and some were buried with grave goods (e.g., ornaments, bowls, and tools).²⁴ Focusing on the possible links between infant and child burials and isolated skulls, Benz noticed that the skulls belonging to adults of both sexes were buried with infants during this period.²⁵ Several Neolithic sites in the southern Levant and the middle Euphrates provide further evidence of how age played a prominent role in the construction of social relations and identities. Certain subadult burials at, e.g., Ba'ja, Basta, and Tell Halula, had the highest

¹⁹ Peterson 2010.

²⁰ Özkaya and San 2007: 24; see also Benz et al. 2016: 147, referencing Özdoğan 2014.

²¹ Delibaş 2016: 161.

²² Benz et al. 2016.

²³ Bonogofsky 2001, 2004, 2005, 2006.

²⁴ Bonogofsky 2006: 24–25.

²⁵ Benz 2012.

number of ornaments, or more unique forms of mortuary treatment, in comparison to the adult burials of both sexes.²⁶

Moving to the north, to southeastern Anatolia, Croucher approached the mortuary evidence—specifically the deposition of human remains in the so-called skull building—from the Early Neolithic site of Çayönü within the framework of queer theory and the theme of “performance”.²⁷ The skull building, with at least five building phases, housed secondary burials of over 450 individuals and also aurochs remains. The skulls were deposited into the building at different times, as a result of repeated activity. They belonged to adults and juveniles, males and females. Only children aged under about 2.5 years old were absent. By bringing together all lines of evidence available, she applied a multisensorial approach, discussing how the activities that took place in the building might have smelled, sounded, and been experienced. She suggested that “through such an approach to individual sites, as well as individual features therein, we can counter heteronormative practice in archaeology and extend the potential of queer critique in archaeology”.²⁸ Also at Çayönü, but in a different context, Pearson and colleagues revealed a distinction between the diets of males and females buried under the floors inside the houses.²⁹

However, it was with Hodder’s project at Catalhöyük in central Anatolia that specialists studied a vast corpus of evidence—including human remains, burial practices, figurines, grave goods, and wall paintings—through the prism of gender, in a spatial and temporal scale. Mellaart’s earlier research at the site instigated the debate over a “mother goddess” cult and a matriarchal society during the Neolithic period, based on the figurines depicting females with big breasts, bellies, and buttocks.³⁰ However, the bioarchaeological analysis conducted by Molleson³¹—and later the research of Agarwal and colleagues,³² Pearson and colleagues³³, and Pearson and Meskell³⁴—revealed that there was a minimal difference between males and females in terms of daily activities and diet. Pathological conditions suggest both sexes took part in similar daily activities, as well as consumed similar food types. Changes in food consumption were, however, prominent across the life course with differences during older childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood.³⁵ Burial customs also show a similar picture, where sex was not the determining factor in various treatments and

²⁶ Alarashi 2014; Benz et al. 2020, with references.

²⁷ Croucher 2005, 2006.

²⁸ Croucher 2005: 618.

²⁹ Pearson et al. 2013.

³⁰ Mellaart 1964.

³¹ Molleson 2007.

³² Agarwal et al. 2015.

³³ Pearson et al. 2015.

³⁴ Pearson and Meskell 2015.

³⁵ Pearson et al. 2015: 75.

grave goods. Contrary to Mellaart's assumption that necklaces were found with women and children, while men could be buried with a few beads and pendants,³⁶ Hamilton's research on the social aspects of burials found no such patterns concerning sex.³⁷ In fact, children were buried with various items, the adolescents (individuals between the ages of twelve and nineteen) had the most variety in terms of different raw materials used per ornament,³⁸ and the old adults were buried with items that bear the most extensive use-wear traces.³⁹ Russell also notes that only the newborns were buried with items manufactured from bird bones,⁴⁰ probably related to a symbolism established between these animals and the newborns. Regarding figurines, sexual ambiguity and an emphasis on the life cycles of the individuals stand out. While the pillar-like figurines from Çatalhöyük create the impression of a blurring of sexual features, which suggests sexual ambiguity,⁴¹ anthropomorphic figurines indicate a symbolism constructed around age, in this case, maturity and the aging body of women.⁴² Integration of multiple lines of evidence suggests that gender differentiation was not strongly marked in the mortuary customs and figurative art at Çatalhöyük, nor in daily practices and diet, and age may have been the most prominent social mechanism.

Other forms of imagery at Çatalhöyük, such as the wall paintings, concentrate on the depiction of wild animals, in some cases with marked masculinity in the form of emphasized phallic features. This form of imagery led Hodder and Meskell to suggest a dominance of male sexuality in Neolithic symbolism.⁴³ However, by drawing attention to the fact that most animal images do not indicate sex, and to the presence of wall paintings depicting sheep and plant-gathering activities, Croucher aptly accentuates that with such generalizations we risk returning to binary oppositions in our interpretations.⁴⁴

At Boncuklu, the mid-ninth millennium BCE early sedentary settlement in the same region, a recent study was conducted on the fingerprints on clay artefacts, including small geometric clay objects, figurine fragments, clay beads/pendants, and pottery fragments, which revealed that these objects were produced mainly by adult females.⁴⁵ But this pattern waits to be coinvestigated with other lines of evidence from the site. Arslan did another study in the same region

³⁶ Hamilton 2005: 303, referencing Mellaart 1964: 95.

³⁷ Hamilton 2005.

³⁸ Bains 2012: 202.

³⁹ Agarwal et al. 2015.

⁴⁰ Russell 2018.

⁴¹ Meskell 2007.

⁴² Nakamura and Meskell 2009.

⁴³ Hodder and Meskell 2011.

⁴⁴ Croucher 2012.

⁴⁵ Bennison-Chapman and Hager 2018.

for her master's thesis and brought together the published data from several Neolithic sites in central Anatolia.⁴⁶ In Voigt's study of the figurines from the Late Neolithic Hacilar in the Lake District to the southwest of central Anatolia, she noticed a differentiation in the way females were represented based on their life cycles.⁴⁷ For example, representation of body types was different for young and mature women; young women were depicted as slim with small breasts and narrow hips, whereas mature women were portrayed with enlarged upper arms, larger breasts, stomachs, hips, and buttocks. Voigt's interpretation gives further clues into understanding how Neolithic communities identified and perceived the body based on identities of gender and age, and how they embodied different cycles of life through material culture.

The general picture we have so far is that during the Neolithic, there were no strongly defined sexual divisions of labour,⁴⁸ and labour organization possibly varied on a community basis. Identities were fluid, i.e., gender identities were not formally defined and reinforced ideologically, and they also varied contextually, as is especially evident in the variety of burial rituals. There was a marked emphasis on the embodiment of different cycles of life. Croucher's queer critique of the evidence from several Neolithic settlements, with a bottom-up approach, emphasizes the sexual ambiguity in figurative art and mortuary practices, and she concludes that the examination of individual sites brings forth the complex and ambiguous nature of gender identities.⁴⁹ The ambiguity and connectedness of identities during the Neolithic period in southwest Asia is also discussed in holistic studies that bring together data from various sites, under the themes of task allocation and symbolism, such as the work of Bolger.⁵⁰ Within this state of research, it is essential to emphasize the importance of site-specific analyses concentrating on comprehensive comparisons of multiple lines of evidence, to be able to understand the construction of new identities and their reflections in the mortuary rituals as the new Neolithic way of life took hold. Besides some exceptions, gendered readings of the archaeological evidence rely mainly on published data, instead of a specialist contextual evaluation of the archaeological material. Furthermore, there are still a number of sites across southwest Asia, especially in Anatolia, that have not been investigated in that sense (Fig. 1).

⁴⁶ Arslan 2014.

⁴⁷ Voigt 2007.

⁴⁸ Peterson 2002: 127; 2010: 260.

⁴⁹ Croucher 2008.

⁵⁰ Bolger 2008, 2010, 2013.

Leaving aside a microscale and contextual approach, some of these sites have not published relevant evidence for researchers to be able to put pieces together. One of the major obstacles for such an attempt is the inconsistency in excavation methodologies of different research projects across this geographic area. The small number of studies shows that the recognition of gender archaeology as a theoretical and methodological approach in Turkey's archaeological academia is in its infancy.⁵¹ For years, a gendered view of the past was hindered by the sociopolitical and historical paradigm of the mainstream archaeological academia in Turkey; it is only now being encouraged by the recently increasing number of lectures on archaeological theory at the undergraduate and graduate levels of university archaeology departments.⁵²

3. Case study: gendering Aşıklı Höyük

3.1. Regional background

The central Anatolian Neolithic differed from the southern Levant and southeastern Anatolia in terms of cultural choices, adaptations, and symbolic behaviours of the early sedentary communities. Although both the mobile hunter-gatherer and the early sedentary communities from all over southwest Asia were in contact as early as the Upper Palaeolithic, the dynamics that operated during the establishment of this new way of life differed between regions. This is true even for the different ecological and cultural niches in the region: the Konya Plain to the west and the Volcanic Cappadocia region to the east.

Until very recently, information on the Late Epipalaeolithic period in central Anatolia was based solely on the evidence from the Pınarbaşı rock shelter in the Konya Plain. A recent survey project, on the other hand, concentrating on the Epipalaeolithic of Volcanic Cappadocia, began to give further insights into the Late Pleistocene mobile hunter-gatherer groups and the differences between these two subregions, especially in terms of chipped-stone technologies.⁵³ The excavations at Pınarbaşı yielded evidence on the burial customs of the Late Epipalaeolithic community who inhabited the rock shelter. The results of the bioarchaeological analysis conducted on the human remains from the rock shelter indicated an asymmetry in the arm musculature of a male burial, which was

⁵¹ For recent studies on gender archaeology in Turkey, see Arslan 2014, 2016, 2019a, 2019b; Sezgin 2019; Yelözer 2017.

⁵² The anthropology departments in universities in Turkey have gender anthropology courses taught at undergraduate and graduate levels; however, the archaeology departments still lack courses devoted to gender and feminist archaeologies. In archaeology departments, gender archaeology and feminist approaches in archaeological studies are currently being taught at an introductory level within the scope of the archaeological theory courses at, e.g., Istanbul University, Koç University, and Ege University.

⁵³ Duru and Kayacan 2018.

interpreted as being similar to what was noted by Peterson⁵⁴ for the contemporaneous Natufian males in the southern Levant. This may be an indication of similarities in hunting techniques between different regions. Similarities with the southern Levantine Epipalaeolithic also include the symbolic practices, illustrated by the tortoise shell containing *Tritia gibbosula* and *Dentalium* sp. shell beads placed behind the head in another burial in the rock shelter.⁵⁵ Despite such similarities between these two regions, the early sedentary life in central Anatolia exhibits local characteristics, supported by the recent strontium isotope⁵⁶ and genetic analyses⁵⁷ that also indicate a local origin for the Late Epipalaeolithic and early Neolithic communities in the region.

Bearing in mind the different dynamics that operated in the establishment of this new way of life, one could question if aspects of gender and age were also different. One way to answer this question is to investigate a case study using a contextual and microscale approach, bringing together all lines of evidence possible. Below, we will use such an approach to investigate Aşıklı Höyük, an early Neolithic site dating to the mid-ninth and eighth millennia BCE.

3.2. Aşıklı Höyük

The inhabitants of Aşıklı Höyük were one of the earliest sedentary communities of the Volcanic Cappadocia region in east-central Anatolia. Habitation at the site began during the mid-ninth millennium BCE, by a hunter-gatherer community that decided to settle nearby the western bank of the Melendiz River. The river, flowing from the İhlara Valley, and the volcanic landscape provided a rich habitat for various animal and plant species. A warm climate and park-woodland vegetation were dominant in this region during the beginnings of the Holocene.⁵⁸

The Aşıklı community could be defined as a community in transition, providing evidence on the dynamics of the newly established Neolithic way of life. During the mid-ninth millennium BCE, the inhabitants were sedentary hunter-gatherers, who hunted a variety of game species and gathered various plants, alongside cultivating cereals.⁵⁹ Although they were hunters, they kept sheep/goat within the settlement, inside enclosures. This early practice of animal management was the initial step that would eventually lead to the domestication of caprine during the latest phases of the settlement.⁶⁰ They lived in oval, semi-subterranean *kerpiç* buildings, and daily activities were conducted collectively in

⁵⁴ Peterson 2002.

⁵⁵ Baird et al. 2013.

⁵⁶ Pearson 2019.

⁵⁷ Feldman et al. 2019.

⁵⁸ Woldring and Bottema 2003; Roberts 2014.

⁵⁹ Stiner et al. 2014, 2018; Ergun et al. 2018.

⁶⁰ Stiner et al. 2014, 2018; Buitenhuis et al. 2018; Peters et al. 2018.

the external activity areas. During the eighth millennium BCE, life continued with minor changes. Rectangular, planned aboveground buildings replaced the oval, semisubterranean ones. Through time, the settlement pattern became increasingly dense, which would eventually create building groups and neighbourhoods. A special-purpose buildings area, where collective ceremonies took place, was constructed to the south of the settlement.⁶¹

During the mid-ninth millennium BCE, the dead were buried under the floors of buildings in a tightly flexed (hocker) position. No exceptional burial practices are evident. Towards the earlier phases of the eighth millennium BCE, the same burial custom continued; however, some individuals began to be buried with personal items. This practice became more widespread during the latest phases of the millennium.⁶² Interaction with other regions and communities decreased through time, as evidenced particularly by the homogenous material culture, along with the increasing focus on the full establishment of sedentism and caprine management. However, during the last two hundred to three hundred years of the site's occupation, corresponding roughly to the second half of the eighth millennium BCE, there was increased interaction, evidenced by the presence of nonlocal materials, including carnelian beads, shell beads made from Mediterranean taxa, and other aspects of theretofore foreign material culture (for temporal changes in ornaments, burial customs, and insights into the social organization at Aşıklı Höyük, see Fig. 2).⁶³ This interaction should have brought either the inclusion of new individuals into the community, who were buried with different customs—including being buried with ornaments—or a new sense of identity to the inhabitants of Aşıklı Höyük that was manifested by the incorporation of new elements in bodily ornamentation and their presence in mortuary contexts. Figurative evidence, such as human figurines and wall paintings depicting humans, are almost nonexistent at Aşıklı Höyük. There are rare, stylized examples of anthropomorphic figurines with ambiguous sex features.⁶⁴

⁶¹ For a discussion of the architecture and settlement layout, see Esin and Harmankaya 2007; Duru 2013; Özbaşaran et al. 2018.

⁶² Yelözer 2018.

⁶³ Yelözer 2016, 2018; Sönmez 2018.

⁶⁴ Özbaşaran 2017.

Level/ Phase	~cal BCE	Ornaments	Burial customs	Social organization
Mid-8th millennium BCE	1 7300	Ornaments w/burials Beads made from hard stones, possibly non-local materials + new forms and technologies seen in contemporary sites in Southeastern Anatolia and the Levant (e.g., carnelian beads, "butterfly" beads).	Single beads, bead pairs and bead groups w/burials + ochre w/burials (rare) + double burials (rare) + body manipulation (rare). Burials w/ornaments and in rare cases w/ochre traces in certain body parts.	Emerging "individual identities" + intense interaction.
	2A-C	 Flat, oval beads w/lenticular sections ("butterfly" beads) made from very hard stones.		
Early 8th millennium BCE	2D	 Ornaments consisting of beads made from stones of different hardness scales, with various forms and colors, found w/burials.	Single beads and bead groups w/adults as well (both sexes).	
	2E		Beads w/burials (children): single beads.	
	2F-H			
Early 8th millennium BCE	2I 7850			Collective + minimum interaction w/ different regions, communities.
	2J			
Mid-9th millennium BCE	3 8100	No ornaments w/burials <i>Common: Natural forms</i> Beads made from Mediterranean shells. Cylindrical beads made from long bones of hare and fox. Pendants made from animal teeth.	Single sub-floor burials in tightly flexed (<i>hocker</i>) position.	Collective + interaction w/ different regions, communities, as evidenced by material culture (e.g., Mediterranean shells).
	4	 Red deer canine pendants and their imitations made from mammal bone.  Round disc beads made from soft stones (e.g., limestone).	 Pendants made from incisors of mammals (e.g., caprine and bos).	
	5 8350	 <i>Tritic gibbosula</i>  <i>Columbella rustica</i>  <i>Conus mediterraneus</i>		

Figure 2. Temporal changes in ornaments, burial customs, and social organization during the overall occupation sequence at Aşıklı Höyük.

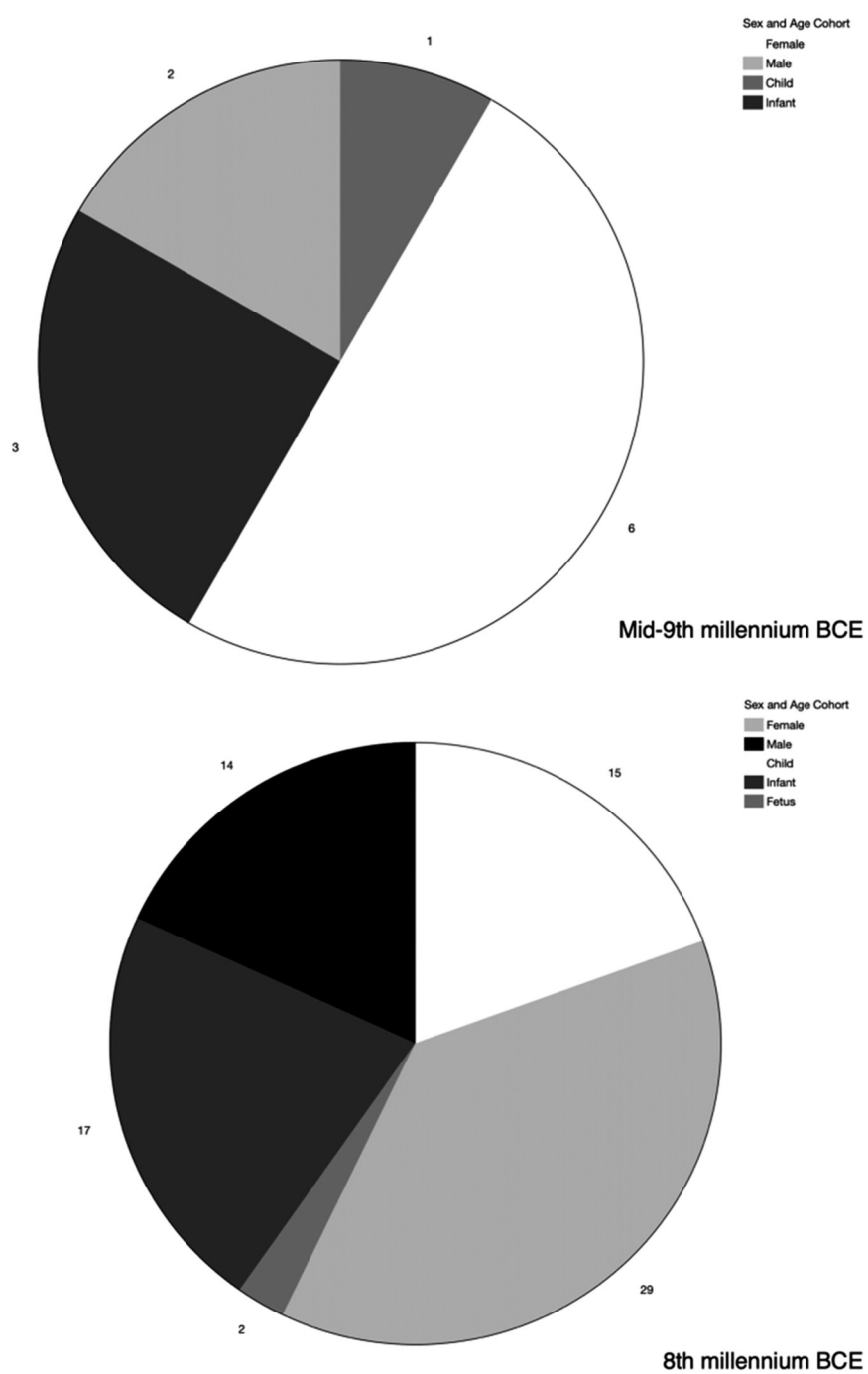


Figure 3. Age and sex distribution of burials from the mid-9th and 8th millennium BCE settlement phases at Aşıklı Höyük.

3.3. Bioarchaeological insights

A total of 96 burials have been excavated so far at Aşıklı Höyük; 82 of them have been subject to bioarchaeological analysis, with adults constituting 60 percent and children making up 40 percent of the burials (see Tab. 2 for age ranges of infants, children, and adult individuals). Of the forty-six adults for whom sex can be determined, females constitute 65 percent while males constitute 35 percent.⁶⁵ Considering the size of the settlement and the number of buildings excavated so far, the number of burials indicates that not every member of the community was buried within the settlement. However, although there is a slight tendency towards females, all sex and age groups are reflected within the dataset. This demographic pattern in burials does not change between settlement phases. The only difference is that while no newborns are found in contexts dating to the mid-ninth millennium BCE settlement phase, two newborns were buried in the settlement during the eighth millennium BCE (Fig. 3).

Age in yrs.	Age class
Birth–2 yrs.	Infant
2–15	Child
15–30	Young adult
30–45	Middle adult
45–65	Old adult

Table 2. Age ranges for infants, children, and adult individuals at Aşıklı Höyük (data after Erdal 2018).

In terms of task-related pathologies, the presence of joint diseases, and specifically osteoarthritis, has provided insights into the activities of the site's inhabitants. Both sexes were routinely engaged in tasks that required physical force.⁶⁶ Identification of degenerative joint diseases in adults has shown that the shoulders, hips, ankles, elbows, and knees were affected by osteoarthritis, possibly stemming from habitual stress. Males exhibit significant degrees of osteoarthritis in their shoulders, followed by their elbows and hips, indicating that they were engaged in activities such as carrying heavy loads, throwing, walking, and kneeling. Females were mostly affected by this disease in their ankles, followed by shoulders and hips, suggesting that they were probably engaged in activities that involved walking and squatting (Tab. 3). It is also indicated that young adult males buried in the settlement ($n=4$), aged between 15 and 22, show no signs of postcranial trauma and degenerative joint diseases, while females have osteoar-

⁶⁵ Erdal 2018.

⁶⁶ Erdal 2004.

thrititis related to daily tasks from young adulthood (between 15 and 30 years of age) onwards.⁶⁷

	Throwing, lifting, carrying		Crouching, walking	
	Shoulders	Elbows	Ankles	Hips
♂	***	**		*
Middle adulthood onwards Reaches 38.3 percent during mid-adulthood				
♀	**		***	*
Young adulthood onwards Reaches 32 percent during mid-adulthood, decreases in old adults				

***Principally affected areas.

**Second-most affected areas.

*Third-most affected areas.

Table 3. Joint areas with signs of osteoarthritis in male and female adult individuals at Aşıklı Höyük, and related daily activities (data after Erdal 2018).

3.4. Mortuary variables

The mortuary variables include ornaments, wrapping the body, placement of ochre, double burials, and body manipulation. To understand the nature of funerary rituals and how they changed, we will begin with the evidence from the mid-ninth millennium BCE settlement phase.

In terms of funerary rituals during the mid-ninth millennium BCE settlement phase, particularly significant evidence comes from two semisubterranean oval buildings: Building 3 and Building 1. Unfortunately, both buildings have been only partially excavated, since half of the buildings lie under the sections. Inside Building 3, two individuals were buried. One is a young adult female, who died at the age of 24–25, and the other is a 10-year-old girl. Both were wrapped in organic materials, as evidenced by the phytolith and dung remains on their bones. The second building, Building 1, dated slightly later than Building 3, yielded five individuals. Two of them, both infants, were buried in the same pit and covered with a reed mat. Another individual, a 30-year-old female, shows evidence of osteoarthritis on her shoulders and healed fractures in her fingers. Another adult female, who died at the age of 65, is the oldest member of the community. She also had heavy joint diseases, heavy tooth wear, and healed fractures in ribs and fingers. The last burial in the house was a 9-year-old girl, who exhibits a different burial location and position. She was lying on the hearth of the building and died probably during the collapse of the building, which was abandoned right afterwards.

⁶⁷ Erdal 2018.

The mid-ninth millennium BCE burials have no grave goods; however, phytolith analysis, combined with the data from physical anthropologists, reveals the presence of some treatments. Children and infants were covered with reed mats, sometimes lined with dung. Females were also wrapped, and their heads were possibly covered additionally with plants and dung, as suggested by the microscopic identification of phytoliths and faecal spherulites.⁶⁸

During the eighth millennium BCE, some new mortuary treatments began to be practiced. Among them, burials with ornaments are in the majority. Rare cases include burials with ochre traces, double burials, and manipulation of the body. Below, the focus will be on the burials with ornaments, since they represent the majority of the grave goods.

3.4.1. Burials with ornaments: some patterns

The first adorned burials were two children, each buried with a single, disc-shaped green bead (Levels 2F–H). Later, adults also began to be buried with ornaments (Level 2D). Towards the end of the settlement, the adornment of the deceased became more complex in terms of the quantity of the beads, raw materials, and combinations (Levels 2A–C).

Burials with ornaments constitute 31 percent of the overall number of burials. This prompts further questions regarding the identities of these individuals—for example, did ornamentation vary according to the social roles and identities of the deceased? Age and sex distribution of the burials with ornaments reveal that no young adult individuals—individuals between the ages of 15 and 30—from either sex, and no newborns, were buried with ornaments. Apart from that, adults of both sexes, from the age of 30 onwards, as well as children and infants, were buried with ornaments (Fig. 4).

Statistical analysis on the distribution of the number of different raw materials, forms, and colours of the beads that the ornaments were made of reveals further patterning. As concerns the question of whether these variables differed according to sex and age, the individuals who exhibit variety with a mean value of ≥ 5 percent were considered to be statistically significant. Accordingly, the individuals with the most variety in terms of raw materials were an adult female (SK104) and two adult males (SK11 and SK109) (Fig. 5a). Bead form variety is found primarily on one individual, an adult male, who also exhibits raw material variety (SK11) (Fig. 5b). In terms of bead colour variety, another adult male (SK109), who also exhibits raw material diversity, stands out as significant (Fig. 5c). The number of beads in a single ornament also appears to be higher (≥ 100 beads) in certain individuals: the abovementioned adult male (SK11), the adult female (SK104) with the high diversity of raw materials, and two children (SK124 and SK148) who were around the age of 3 at the time of their death (Fig. 5d).

⁶⁸ Tsartsidou 2018.

The two adult males (SK11 and SK109) who statistically stand out in terms of raw material, colour, and form diversity, as well as quantity of the beads, were buried in the same building with five other individuals. This building also has the highest number of burials, with seven burials in total. One of the adult males (SK109) was buried in the same pit with an infant. First, the infant was buried, and then the adult male was buried inside the same pit. The bead group that belongs to the adult male (SK109) includes a bead made from a soft stone (possibly meerschaum) with traces of use (Fig. 6a). The other adult male (SK11) had an ornament consisting of beads made from nonlocal materials, including 5 carnelian beads and 86 beads made from two different species of Mediterranean shells (Fig. 6b). It should also be noted that, when this bead group is excluded, the total number of beads made from Mediterranean shells, found in various contexts dating to all phases, is 29. This bead group consists of three times the number of shell beads of the entire shell bead corpus of the site.

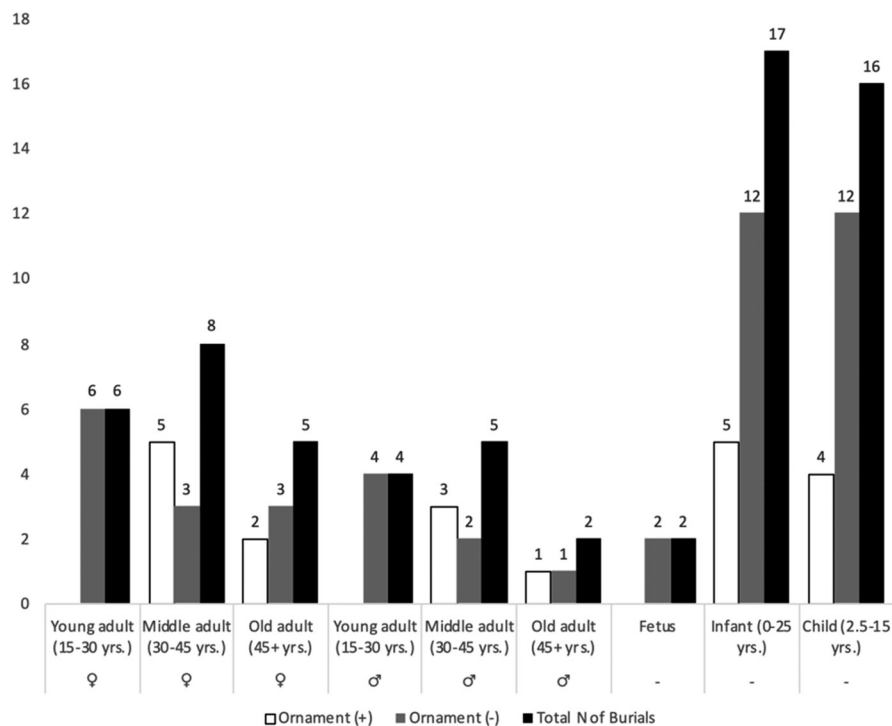


Figure 4. Distribution of the burials with and without ornaments to the total number of 8th millennium BCE burials at Aşıklı Höyük. (+) indicates individuals with and (-) indicates individuals without ornaments.

In addition to the variety of bead colours statistically associated with a single adult male, single beads of a green colour reveal a different patterning. Only females, infants, and children were buried with single beads, and these beads share one common element; they are all green (Tab. 4). One example of such beads, a barrel-shaped bead made from steatite that was found with an adult female (SK8), has a polished surface and partially erased technical traces that possibly stemmed from use (Fig. 6c). This could suggest the use and circulation of ornaments prior to being buried with the dead, as opposed to being produced for burial rituals as “gifts”, a practice observed also as concerns beads and pendants made from animal bone and tooth.

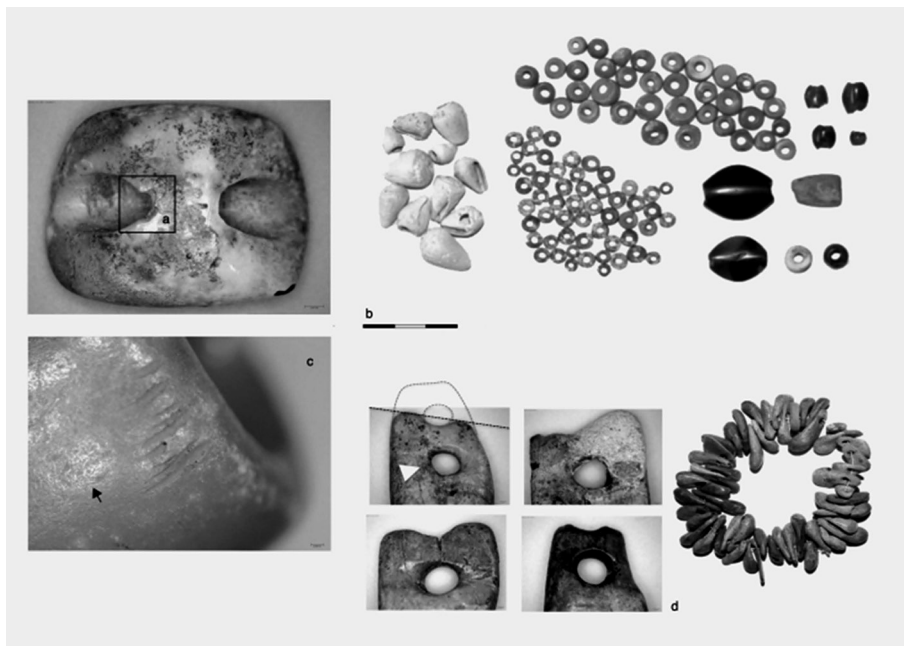


Figure 6. Examples of beads with use-wear traces and a bead group consisting of non-local materials. a) Sepiolite/meerschaum bead (AH 95-116a) found with an adult male burial (SK109). Notch on the perforation indicates use-wear, possibly result of continuous contact with a string, b) Bead group of Mediterranean shells, steatite disc beads, carnelian and chrysoprase “butterfly” beads, a limestone barrel bead, a limestone disc bead and a disc bead made from red stone (AH 89-281) found with an adult male burial (SK11), c) Steatite barrel bead (AH 89-93) found with an adult male burial (SK8). Polished look and erasure of technical traces relates to use-wear, d) Bead group of reused/reperforated red deer canine pendants (AH 92-105) found with an adult female burial (SK35).

SK				Bead			
SK#	Age class	Age in yrs.	Sex	Colour	Form	Raw material	Level/phase
SK125	Adult	Indet.	♀	Green	Oval/flat	Quartz	2A–C
SK40	Old adult	58	♀	Green	Pendant	Steatite	2A–C
SK8	Mid-adult	42–44	♀	Green	Barrel	Steatite	2A–C
SK9	Mid-adult	42	♀	Green	Disc/flat	Steatite	2A–C
SK27	Adult	Indet.	♀	Green	Oval/round	Copper	2A–C
SK39	Infant	0 (1 month)	Indet.	Green	Oval/round	Steatite	2A–C
SK12	Infant	2–3	Indet.	Green	Disc/flat	Steatite	2F–H
SK135	Infant	0 (0–1 month)	Indet.	Green	Disc/flat	Steatite	2F–H

Table 4. Single green beads found with infants and adult females at Aşıklı Höyük (age and sex data after Erdal 2018).

3.4.1.1. Exceptional cases

There are also some exceptional cases. The bead corpus of the site, regardless of context and phase, was produced from a variety of raw materials, including animal bone and tooth. However, a vast majority of the beads found with burials were made from stones and minerals. A bead group consisting of 7 native copper/malachite beads and 52 pendants made from deer canines that were found with an adult female burial is the only example of deer canine pendants with a burial, throughout the settlement sequence. Some of these pendants were broken at some point in their use-life, then re-perforated and reused (Fig. 6d).

Another exceptional case is the two children buried with bead assemblages, possibly necklaces, found around their necks. These two children (SK124 and SK148) are the only ones among the children and infant burials with bead groups. The rest of the adorned children and infants were buried with single beads or a pair of beads. Furthermore, they are the oldest amongst the adorned children and infant burials (≥ 3 years old), and one of them was also buried with red ochre in the mouth. The distribution of single beads, bead pairs, and bead groups among children and infant burials reveal that the ones buried with single beads and a pair of beads range from 1 month to 2–3 years of age (Tab. 5). The two children buried with a bead group were around the age of 3 when they died. Similarities are also evident concerning the composition of the ornaments they were buried with; both had more than 100 small, disc-shaped red limestone and green steatite beads accompanied by larger beads, again red and green, made of carnelian, steatite, limestone, and possibly native copper/malachite (Fig. 7a–b).

SK#	Age class	Age in yrs.	Level/phase	Single bead	Bead pair	Bead group
SK39	Infant	1 month	2A–C	+		
SK28	Infant	1.5	2A–C	+		
SK31	Infant	1.5–2	2A–C		+	
SK52	Child	2.5	2A–C		+	
SK124	Child	3.5	2A–C			+
SK148	Child	~3	2A–C			+
SK135	Infant	0 (0–1 month)	2F–H	+		
SK12	Child	2–3	2F–H	+		

Table 5. Infants and children buried with single beads, bead pairs, and bead groups at Aşıklı Höyük (age data after Erdal 2018).

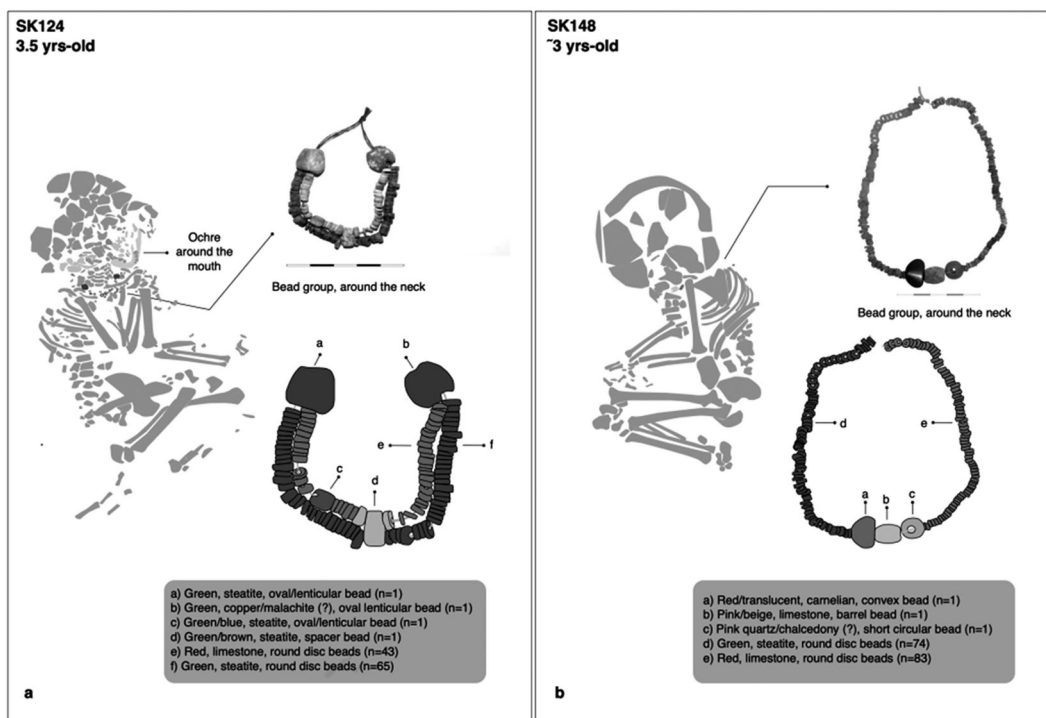


Figure 7. Schematic illustration of the adorned child burials and the bead groups they were interred with.

3.4.2. Comparison with other mortuary variables at Aşıklı Höyük

Other mortuary variables include rare instances of ochre use, double burials, and body manipulation. Considering the relationship between these mortuary variables and the adorned burials, the patterns could be summarized as follows:

Ochre use: Only three individuals were buried with ochre placed close to certain parts of their bodies: an infant (SK39), a child (SK124), and an adult female (SK22). All had ornaments. Although the sample number is small, it is important to underscore here that children and female adults, but not males, were chosen for burial with ochre.

Double burials: During the mid-ninth millennium BCE, two infants were buried together. During the eighth millennium BCE, there is a single example of two adults buried together, a 28-year-old female (SK2) and an adult male who was 40–44 years old (SK3). In other cases, infants were buried with adult males or females. This is illustrated in three instances: an infant (SK5) buried with a female who died between the ages of 20 and 22 (SK4), an infant (SK107) buried with an old adult male (SK106), and another infant (SK28) buried with an adult female (SK27). Except for the infant buried with the female who died at the age of 20 to 22, the two infants and the male and female adults they were buried with all had ornaments.

Body manipulation: Three individuals showed signs of pre- or postmortem manipulation. One of them (SK4), the same young adult female who was buried with an infant, had gone through trepanation, which was not the cause of death.⁶⁹ Another female's (SK29) head was scraped after death;⁷⁰ she was about 47–48 years old when she died and was buried with a bead group. However, these treatments have been interpreted as surgical rather than related to mortuary rituals. The third example is the 3.5-year-old child (SK124) buried with a bead group and with red ochre placed in his/her mouth; the child's head had been—possibly intentionally—deformed, evidenced by his/her dolichocephalic skull.⁷¹

4. Entangled at death at Aşıklı Höyük: manifesting life cycles and identities in mortuary rituals

During the eighth millennium BCE, ornaments served as devices to signify the identities of some of the individuals at Aşıklı Höyük. The selection of who was going to be buried with ornaments was possibly related to the life cycle of the individuals, as indicated by the age-related patterning of the burials with ornaments. Individuals between the ages of 15 and 30, regardless of their sex, were not buried with ornaments. Also, no newborns were buried with ornaments. Some adults, from age 30 onwards, regardless of their sex, were buried with ornaments that consisted of a variety of raw materials, types and colours, and

⁶⁹ Özbek 1991.

⁷⁰ Özbek 1993.

⁷¹ Özbek 2011: 4–5.

quantity of beads. Only adult females above the age of 40, infants, and children up to 2–3 years of age were buried with single beads made from green-coloured minerals. Some individuals stand out in terms of quantity of the beads, raw material, type and colour diversity, the use of deer canine pendants in the ornament, or placement of ochre in addition to ornaments. As suggested by the presence of use-wear on some of the beads composing these ornaments, these items were used and circulated in daily life, either by the individuals they were interred with or by other members of the community, as opposed to being produced solely for burial rituals.

Another pattern concerns some of the adult females, infants, and children up to 2–3 years old who were buried with single, green beads. The choice of green beads as single items in some of the adult female, infant, and child burials could suggest a correlation between these “social groups”. Considering the beginning of the weaning process, the age of 1 was a crucial period for both the mothers and infants at Aşıklı.⁷² The two children with bead groups were around the age of 3 when they died and had commenced the weaning process, which is also supported by the evidence of malnutrition detected by anthropologists.⁷³ Although based on a small sample number, the patterning between some adult females and children up to 2–3 years old being buried with single green beads, and children above the age of 3 being buried with bead groups, is interesting enough to further investigate in terms of “social age” and childhood at Aşıklı Höyük and its relation to ornamentation.

The individuals who statistically stand out in terms of the number of beads, raw material, colour, and bead form diversity do not belong to a certain sex group. Males and females both stand out in terms of the number of beads, and diversity of materials, colours, and types of beads. What they share in common is that they are adults above the age of 30. However, the use of deer canines is associated only with an adult female, while only a female and two children were chosen to be buried with ochre placed in their body parts in addition to having been buried with ornaments. This correlation may relate to adult females and children having certain social identities within the community, based on gender and age, which were in some cases manifested in the funerary rites.

5. Concluding remarks

The burial customs of the mid-ninth millennium BCE hunter-gatherers at Aşıklı Höyük, one of the earliest sedentary communities in the region, exhibit a collective way of life with no segregation between the sexes or age groups. Although there was a tendency towards females of all ages in regard to the selection of who was going to be buried within the settlement, the lack of any kind of personal items with burials—despite the presence of beads and pendants made

⁷² Pearson et al. 2010.

⁷³ Özbek 2011.

mainly from animal bone and tooth, and Mediterranean shells in other contexts—suggests the dominance of a “hunter-gatherer communal identity”, which the community preferred not to manifest in the mortuary sphere. This preference changed through time, especially towards the end of the settlement during the mid-eighth millennium BCE, when some individuals began to be buried with ornaments consisting of beads made from raw materials that came from sources at various distances from the settlement. The adorned individuals, as discussed above, were from both sexes but only certain age groups: infants and children up to ~3 years old, and males and females above the age of 30.

As previously suggested by various researchers,⁷⁴ tasks such as the acquisition of raw materials for the production of beads and/or the importation of certain forms of beads in a finished state may have been embedded within expeditions for hunting, gathering, shepherding, or trading during the Neolithic. At Aşıklı Höyük, the differentiation between beads made from different raw materials and the techniques required for their production provides further clues into the organization of production and the component tasks embedded within. Ethnographic evidence⁷⁵ indicates certain processes for such productions: selecting the source, travelling to the source, initial flaking, returning from the source with preforms, final flaking, and polishing. Each task requires different degrees of knowledge, skill, and experience, some of which were conducted with the participation of more than one individual. Such examples further urge one to see prehistoric material culture and its entangled ties with the producers, users, and—in mortuary contexts—the mourners as well, as a multidimensional process that most probably included the reflections of roles and identities of the individuals from different gender and age groups. The Aşıklı males, from the age of 30 onwards, and females from the age of 15 onwards engaged in various tasks and were active members of the community.⁷⁶ It can be hypothesized that for adults of both sexes—or at least for some of them—ornamentation was related to active participation in daily tasks, some of which included the production and/or acquisition of the beads. The ornaments they were buried with consisted of a variety and number of beads, which could be items that they had “gained” during their life cycles.

At first glance, the data from Aşıklı and other Neolithic sites presented in this study may seem to reflect yet another dichotomy produced: the young versus the old, the child versus the adult, and so on. However, as Gilchrist states, the overall picture we have affirms “a more holistic approach to gender archaeology ... to understand the experience of human life as a continuum”.⁷⁷ Indeed, societies witnessed profound changes in social relations during the transition to

⁷⁴ Bains 2012: 211; Bains et al. 2013: 333; Hamilton 2001: 332.

⁷⁵ Hurcombe 2000: 95.

⁷⁶ Erdal 2018.

⁷⁷ Gilchrist 2004: 114.

sedentism in southwest Asia. These changes can be tracked through the integration of multiple lines of archaeological evidence, including osteological, mortuary, and figurative data. As discussed above, males and females in Neolithic communities took equal parts in labour, and there were no reinforced hierarchies based on gender relations. Gender identities were embodied in figurative art with an emphasis on different courses of human life. It seems age played a prominent role in assuming and attributing identities to individuals. By focusing on the snapshots from the lives of the Aşıklı individuals—and in fact, from the end of life—it could be suggested that ornaments signified the identities of at least some of the adults above the age of 30 and of some children and infants. However, the presence of only certain individuals with ornaments suggests that social identities—and how they were reconstructed during the funerary rituals—were diverse, and within that diversity, age, rather than sex, was more prominent. The marking of identities of certain age groups during burial rituals was not uncommon during this period, especially around the eighth millennium BCE. The abovementioned special burial of infants and children with removed crania and plastered skulls hint at social ties between age groups. Similar to Aşıklı in central Anatolia, certain subadults in the eighth millennium BCE sites of the southern Levant and the middle Euphrates were differentiated from the rest of the community members with the elaborate adornment they were interred with. Within this framework, Aşıklı Höyük provides substantial evidence on the changing attitudes towards the display of identities during times of change, and how the construction of gender identities in funerary rituals was intertwined with the life course.

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