

PERSONAL ADORNMENTS IN THE PREHISTORY OF THE NORTHERN DANUBE TERRITORY. FROM AESTHETIC TO SOCIAL SYMBOL

ABSTRACT

The history of adornments coincides with the history of *Homo sapiens*, as they were produced and wore by the most ancient modern humans in Africa. They are considered a marker of modernity through which we may accede to information regarding the social and spiritual structure of the Prehistoric communities. Apart from the aesthetic function, the adornments represent the proof of the existence of a complex system of communications, transmitting messages regarding the affiliation to an ethnic group, to an age or gender category etc. They can be associated to certain rituals, like those of passage or marriage; they may be amulets and talismans or symbols of the ritualic changes. Moreover, the processing of adornments can be reported to a complex territorial and economic organization, aiding, in some cases, to the identification of specialized workshops, raw materials circulation patterns and trading systems.

Starting from these reasons, it becomes obvious that it is important to study the adornments in Prehistory, with the purpose of identifying the diagnosis elements which to allow us to foresee aspects of social life within the prehistoric communities and to outline certain cultural boundaries. The present paper proposes to detail several of these aspects, basing on the candidate's most important scientific accomplishments in the field of adornments study. The paper is structured into two parts: the first, which traces the evolution of the candidate's scientific activity, from the moment when the doctoral thesis was defended up until now, and the second, which outline the future research directions, which will be approached by the candidate, with the purpose of developing the archaeological research in Romania, at general level, and of the studies on prehistoric adornments, at punctual level. In the introductory part are concisely presented the candidate's scientific preoccupations, namely articles published in ISI and BDI indexed journals, book chapters, volume editing, participations to national and international congresses, the coordination of two research projects and the participation to other 7 projects. The candidate's publications reveal the constant preoccupation for the study of prehistoric adornments, both from the perspective of the means of gathering raw materials, and of the technological chain implied by their manufacturing and their clasping and wearing methods.

The following chapters, dedicated to the study of prehistoric adornments, were chronologically structured: the first part refers to the hunters-gatherers communities (Paleolithic and Mesolithic) from north Danube and the second to the agriculturalists communities, who inhabited this territory during Neolithic and Eneolithic. North of Danube, the first adornments of this type appear, in Upper Paleolithic, namely various pendants of bone and stone, perforated teeth or perforated shells of *Lithoglyphus* sp. In the Early Holocene, the Mesolithic communities

continued to use local aquatic resources: *Lithoglyphus* sp., *Theodoxus* sp., *Zebrina* sp., but also marine gastropods (*Tritia* sp.) and scaphopod shells are present. Teeth, especially *Cervus elaphus* canines were perforated. Another element that is characteristic for this area of Europe is the use of the pharyngeal teeth of cyprinidae, sewn onto clothes. In Neolithic, the most detailed data come from the Starčevo-Criș culture (c. 6300–5300 BC). Shells used were those of *Lithoglyphus* sp., *Ansius* sp., *Theodoxus* sp. or *Esperiana* sp. gastropods, and of the *Unio* bivalves. For the first time, in this territory, it is attested the existence of personal adornments made of *Spondylus*, *Glycymeris* and *Cardium* valves. In the Eneolithic period (c. 5000-3500 BC), *Lithoglyphus* and *Unio* sp. continued to be used. Also, there were identified beads made of *Cyprinus carpio* opercular bones. Malachite and marble beads are also used, along with various forms of *Spondylus* adornments, bracelets of *Glycymeris* valve or tubular beads of scaphopod shells. These mutations, with the abandoning of certain types of adornments and their reemergence in other chronological stages, under the impulse of a multitude of factors, are surprised by the candidate in different scientific publications and they are the result of the studies on materials from over 30 archaeological sites, from Paleolithic to Neolithic, correlated to our own experimental studies and a methodology of study based on the most important scientific productions in the field. Some of the materials derive from recent diggings and for these we have detailed archaeological contexts, which allowed the underlining of some processing workshops, of composite items/necklaces or of some sub-products of the operational chain, abandoned in waste areas etc.

Chapter 5 rests upon the notion of experiment in archaeology and on its importance for a realistic reconstruction of the manner in which the prehistoric adornments were processed and worn. Starting from the very fact that the experiments on prehistoric adornments were lacking in the Romanian space and, in the same time, understanding their great potential, we established an experimental protocol and a database regarding the wearing evolution pattern of the items manufactured of gastropods, valves, opercular bones and cyprinidae teeth. In the same time, this base doesn't represent a final objective, because it will have to be filled, in the future, with similar analysis, on multiple categories of raw materials. We are facing a true challenge because we do not have a reference model we may report to and we believe that this is one of the candidate's major contributions to the development of the studies in this field.

The new research directions that the candidate is heading, compulsory for the development of the scientific and academic career, are discussed in the last chapter. First, we propose to construct a new research project, in a national competition, whose main objective will be the evaluation of the adornments' composition and re-composition and their social and economic impact within the prehistoric societies north of Danube. Such a research theme has a profound interdisciplinary character, involving the correlation of a series of data, disparate at the moment, from the field of humanistic, biological, geological and physical sciences, which will consolidate the candidate's competences and experience. The evolution of the research activity will be based, like up until now, on the participation at national and international conferences; on publishing and disseminating the research results; on organizing international reunions which to represent one

step forward towards the uniformization of the research standards in the candidate's specialty fields; on identifying and approaching some new research themes, like the identification of collaborators that to allow, in the future, the access to a research project with European financing