

VANITY

THE EXHIBITION

CYCLADIC AREA

1

Late Bronze Age (1600-1100 BC)

Mycenaean Cyclades

The status quo in the developing Cycladic urban centers under Minoan cultural influence changed after the 15th century BC. The Mycenaeans gradually came to dominate the Cyclades, which were converted to a Mycenaean province, though due to their location they remained way-stations in the network of trading routes.

Following the course of events in mainland Greece, they went into decline at the end of the prehistoric period.

Mycenaean elements in the material culture and customs of the Cycladic islands are also reflected in their jewellery, which belongs to well-known types of Mycenaean jewellery-making. The middle and upper classes of local societies appear to have had both the desire and the means to acquire such pieces.

In a very popular and widely-disseminated category belong the standardized necklace beads in the form of a helix and papyrus flower from the tomb at Angelika on Mykonos (14th-13th c. BC), all hollow, made from thin sheets of gold beaten in stone moulds. Beads of glass –material which along with faience was employed more and more often as an inexpensive substitute for glass– were also manufactured in moulds.

Despite the general picture of deprivation at the end of this period, financial prosperity is reflected by the many, for the most part gold pieces of jewellery from the Mycenaean cemeteries at Kamini and Aplomata on Naxos (12th-11th c. BC), which include various types, suggesting a creative local jewellery workshop which applied techniques such as granulation. The bronze bow fibula, an accessory for holding clothing in place, is a typical example of a new type which gradually imposed itself, probably as the result of a change in wardrobe.

2

Geometric period (10th-8th c. BC)

The destruction of the Mycenaean world was followed by its gradual transformation in the Greek world of Early Iron Age. During the first two centuries of major economic depression, jewellery was rare. But the rekindling of contacts with the East in the 9th century BC and the new boost in demand and metal processing favored the jewellers' art.

In the Geometric period, above all in the 8th century BC, jewellery in the Cyclades, which was similar in terms of type and construction materials to that being produced in the rest of the Greek region, encompassed a wide range, from simple jewels of inexpensive materials which had never disappeared to ornate ones of precious raw materials imported from various ports in the Aegean and Mediterranean. It included jewellery made of gold, silver, faience, glass beads, and above all, bronze.

Among bronze jewellery, pins and fibulas played a leading role. Having first appeared in prehistoric times, they would henceforth be the main Greek jewellery types for many centuries to come. As garment ornaments—pins and safety pins, essentially—they served for securing garments at the shoulders and for closing the side openings of clothing, respectively. In parallel, fibulas were also used for fastening jewellery on the breast, while pins were used as coiffure ornaments,

securing the ends of diadem-bands or headdresses. With the peplos, the new style of dress which appeared at this time, pins which secured the garment on women's shoulders became very widespread. A similar proliferation is observed with fibulas, where the spectacle and bow type—the latter in a good many variants—became preeminent.

3

Archaic - Classical period (7th-4th c. BC)

The now-flourishing and prosperous Archaic age Cyclades present a sizable assemblage of jewellery which highlights the enormous variety of types and construction materials for jewellery in the Greek region, unparalleled in any other period in these islands.

Jewellery of precious metals and precious or semi-precious stones as well as a host of jewellery made from less-expensive materials, found in female burials and above all in sanctuaries, like those excavated in the wealthy deposits of the sanctuaries at Paros, Despotiko, Thera, Delos, and especially, Kythnos, reveal the aesthetic preferences of the Cyclades' inhabitants in personal adornment and magical and apotropaic properties for some jewellery. The survival and evolution of types from the preceding period went along with the creation of new types, while some Archaic types continued nearly unchanged in the succeeding Classical age.

pins – fibulas

Pins and fibulas of bronze, silver, gold or a combination of these, and of animal bones carried rich decoration which turned these utilitarian objects into exceptionally fine jewellery.

Small globules, discs, and biconical elements in various combinations as well as elements shaped like vases or fruits and even figures decorated pins in numerous ways. Fibulas in a great variety of types were adorned with comparable plastic decoration and with incision ranging from simple ornaments to figural representations.

6

Archaic – Classical period (7th-4th c. B.C.) *archaic necklaces*

Objects which could be worn hung around the neck, either alone or together with others as necklace elements were perhaps the earliest form of jewelry. As assemblages, sometimes of various similar elements and at others of dissimilar ones in different combinations, necklaces worn not only around the neck but on the breast as well, secured to clothing with fibulas or pins, were surely among the most impressive jewelry of this period.

Many necklace elements of various materials have been found in deposits at the archaic sanctuaries of the Cyclades, but only those elements found in confined, closed tomb groups permit the reconstruction of necklaces.

Archaic examples from tombs on Thera on display here are represented by the especially popular necklaces consisting of many small beads worn in multiple strands, as well as by necklaces with the head of an animal at their center, which appeared for the first time near the end of the archaic period.

Pendants and necklaces were probably the first and for some time the most widespread gold jewelry.

Gold necklace components of the 7th century B.C. from Thera and Melos, which include depictions of daemonic figures interpreted as bees, are exceptional examples of the parallel function of jewelry as a magical means to ward off evil and as ornaments highlighting beauty.

The bronze necklace comes from a female cremation with rich burial offerings including pottery vases, figurines, and female protomes. The tomb was covered by the most imposing burial monument in the cemetery of ancient Oia, a marble altar with the following epigram inscribed on its base:

This monument of Parthenika, daughter of Phrasisthenes, who died young, was set up by Damokleia, because she missed her sister.

It is not noted at what age Parthenika died, but she was not extremely young, since on Thera cremation is found only for adults. She was definitely unmarried, however. The necklace –the only jewel which accompanied her– may have been her favorite piece of jewelry, and perhaps it was for this reason that Damokleia chose it, as a reminder of her sister’s future role as bride had she lived.

8

Hellenistic period (late 4th-1st c. B.C.)

Jewellery from the Cyclades dating to the early Hellenistic period is confined to a few items. This changed drastically during the 2nd and 1st century B.C. due to the jewellery ensembles found on Delos, the most characteristic example of the cosmopolitan character of Hellenistic world. From 167 B.C., when Delos was granted by the Romans to Athens as a free trade zone, till 88/69 B.C., when it was raided by the King of Pontus Mithridates and the pirates of Athenodorus, respectively, it was inhabited by rich bankers and traders from all over the Mediterranean. When they were forced to flee, they left behind their household items and some hastily hidden jewels, tokens of the luxurious life of the Hellenistic city.

The Hellenistic jewels from Delos attest to the use of all the known techniques, such as filigree, repoussé technique, granulation, etc., while the types evolve in the tradition of the 4th century B.C. The jewels of this period are often adorned with inlaid semiprecious stones and colored glass beads, thus creating polychrome effects. The precious pendants and earrings loaded down with quantities of pearls and semiprecious stones recall the protests of later Roman writers, like Pliny and Seneca, at the amount of money wasted on jewellery

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Hellenistic period (late 4th-1st c. B.C.)

jewelry from Delos

Intact and fragmentary jewels have been found on Delos, both in the area of the Sanctuary –where the earliest items have been excavated– and in quarters of the Hellenistic city. Two treasures of coins and jewels (3, 5, 6, 7) have been excavated in an area appropriately called the “Insula of Jewellery”.

Thanks to the coins found there, these jewels may be securely dated. A third treasure was

found in the same quarter (2). Some of these jewels may have been made on Delos, where bronze, glass and possibly jewellery workshops have been found.

POMPEII AND CAMPANIA AREA

11

Longola, from Longola-Poggiomarino Parco Archeologico di Pompei.

These extraordinary finds come from the site at Longola-Poggiomarino, a protohistoric settlement laid out on artificial islets and frequented from the Bronze Age (15th century BC) until the 6th BC. They comprise pins and fibulae that served to secure garments at the shoulders and waist. The presence of amber and the zoomorphic forms of these ornaments testify to the belief that the magical efficacy of such "amulets" was capable of neutralizing harmful powers.

12

Polo Museale della Campania. Museo Archeologico Nazionale Valle del Sarno.

From the rich necropolises found in the territory of Sarno (NA) come these extraordinary grave goods from the Orientalizing era: in particular a diadem, armillae, necklaces and pendants made of various materials (gold, silver and bronze), bearing witness to a certain degree of social differentiation and the existence of a nobility capable of indulging in objects of refined workmanship, which we could define as "luxuries", as shown by jewels with amber, faïence and vitreous pastes.

13

Parco Archeologico di Paestum.

From the excavation of some tombs of the late classical age in the territory of Paestum come some precious objects that constituted the tomb furnishings that accompanied the deceased in the afterlife.

Outstanding among the splendid gold ornaments are rings with bezels bearing scarabs, the supreme Egyptian symbols, considered apotropaic emblems associated with transformation and rebirth, which were widespread throughout the ancient world.

14

Parco Archeologico di Pompeii.

In the context of the study of Roman parures, namely the jewelry most commonly owned, Pompeii, with its 270 years of excavations, constitutes a unique source of documentation; especially given that, apart from the sites destroyed by Vesuvius, most of the precious items found come from funerary contexts.

Significant in this respect is the fact that the inhabitants rarely owned several items of particularly valuable jewelry, such as necklaces, bracelets and of course diadems.

15

Parco Archeologico di Pompeii.

Pompeian inscriptions mentioning aurifices and caelatores enable us to conceive that in Pompeii there were craftsmen who worked in gold and gems and, consequently, that at least some of the specimens found were made in the city. We know from Pliny that pearls and emeralds, but also garnets and jaspers were highly prized for their beauty, while the spread of coral, crystal and amber were believed to possess a propitiatory value, ensuring good health and good luck.

16

Parco Archeologico di Pompeii.

The armilla or bracelet was an ornament particularly common among Roman women. It was worn not only on the wrists but also the ankles. The most common types in the first century AD were those made up of pairs of hemispheres in gold leaf or snake-armillary bodies, not only for the apotropaic value associated with serpents, but also because of their sinuous shapes which enhanced the form of the arm that wore it.

17

Parco Archeologico di Pompeii.

Earrings are probably the most typical female ornament, being worn from childhood, regardless of a person's social class. Their popular use explains the general circulation of models, although the type most worn was that of the "sphere segment", which reflected the light and shed a luster on the face, especially in association with complex hairstyles modeled by using hairpins, some of them highly ornamental.

18

Parco Archeologico di Pompeii.

In addition to jewels of various forms, Pompeii has produced numerous articles associated with the toilette for women, essential being used for beauty and bodily care. In particular, mirrors and pyxides, used to hold ointments, jewels and perfumes. Amulets carved or engraved in the form of deities, sometimes of eastern provenance, such as Diana and Isis, were also truly precious. The figure of Mercury adorned shows how the use of several materials in the ornamentation of a deity served to heighten its powers.

19

Parco Archeologico di Ercolano.

Herculaneum has restored to light numerous jewels, some of considerable value. Here we have a selection that gives an idea of the richness and variety of the parures found in the other great city buried by Vesuvius.

As in Pompeii, also in Herculaneum the jewels were often found next to the bodies of the victims, both worn by chance as they were fleeing in despair, and deliberately taken with them together with money and other precious objects before seeking in vain to save themselves.