

Cord-Impressed Vessel Decoration and Bodily Ornaments in Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Funerary Contexts in Poland

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Pottery decorated with cord impressions is a recurring feature of Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age funerary assemblages in Central and Eastern Europe, but its relationship to other forms of bodily ornamentation in graves has not been examined systematically. This paper explores the material and symbolic relationship between corded decoration on funerary vessels and ornaments deposited with the dead, particularly strings of beads made into pendants, belts, and similar items that once relied on cordage, thread, or other textile structures. A combined imaging, analytical and experimental approach to cord-impressed pottery fragments allowed us to reconstruct the fibre technologies and gestures involved in producing these impressions. The results are then related to the organisation of ornaments on the body and the indications of wrappings, bindings, and other textile elements in the grave.

Building on A.P. Kowalski's insights into the Indo-European symbolism of cords and knots - associated with binding, continuity, protection, and the life-thread - the study explores whether encircling cord motifs on vessels mirror the encircling ornaments placed on the body. By examining funerary contexts culture by culture, we evaluate whether there are any correlations between specific cord patterns and particular forms of bodily adornment, like e.g. multi-string bead necklaces. The results suggest that corded decoration may not be only stylistic, but part of a constellation of perishable technologies and symbolic actions that shaped identity, continuity, and the sensory experience of funerary rites.

Keywords

Cord-impressed pottery, Fibre technologies, Funerary ornamentation

Note/comment