

GEMS THROUGH HISTORY

Contributed by Administrator
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It is difficult to say accurately how far back in history men first began to take an interest in gems, but it is likely to have been at the very dawn of man's development, for color is bound up with life at all stages, and the desire for and use of bright and colorful decorations are not, in fact, only the prerogative of man.

In the animal world, nature has produced some remarkable color combinations and designs, which are particularly conspicuous among some birds. Two of many examples are the colorful tail feathers of the peacock and the exquisite plumage of the birds of paradise. Such bright animal colors and designs have a number of straightforward biological functions, among which courtship, display, and defense are of major importance. Primitive man tried to simulate, with a variety of materials, what he saw in the jungle world around him and consequently adopted many of nature's decorations to fit his own behavior patterns. The ritual headdress of a tribal chief made from the feathers of jungle birds, bracelets and necklaces

made from the teeth of animals, and the decorative use of beads and colored stones, all have significance and ritual meaning in the lives of many tribal societies.

Archaeologists and anthropologists who have studied the society and culture of early tribal communities have found ancient ornaments and jewelry of great assistance in determining whether the peoples who owned them were hunters, fishermen, or agriculturalists, and, by examination of the execution of the work, knowledge can be gained of how the technical skills of cutting and drilling stone and metal were developed.