

Title:

Amber Collection

Word Count:

339

Summary:

As a symbol of longevity, amber may have been the first gemlike material used for personal adornment. Beads and pendants of this intriguing substance, the production of fossilized tree sap, have been found in prehistoric burials from as early as 15,000 years before Christ. Amber comes in different colors and is often opaque due to impurities that maxed naturally with the ancient sap. By the Bronze Age, amber was in such demand that it was traded with tin and copper along the ...

Keywords:

amber, beads and pendants, ancient, Bronze Age, collection, fossilized, Greeks and Romans,

Article Body:

As a symbol of longevity, amber may have been the first gemlike material used for personal adornment. Beads and pendants of this intriguing substance, the production of fossilized tree sap, have been found in prehistoric burials from as early as 15,000 years before Christ. Amber comes in different colors and is often opaque due to impurities that maxed naturally with the ancient sap. By the Bronze Age, amber was in such demand that it was traded with tin and copper along the major trade routes in the Middle East. The earliest written references to amber are in Homer's Odyssey, from about 700 BC. The Greek word for amber was lektron, from which we get our word electricity, where amber was said to be the "solidified tears of the Helipads mourning the death of their brother".

The tree species that produced amber are now extinct. They included cedars and other conifers and broadleaved trees. The most famous source of the world's amber is the Baltic coast of Russia. In the western hemisphere, there are rich deposits in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and the state of New Jersey.

Amber is of interest both for its decorative value and for the ancient, once living inclusions that it preserves. Capable of being highly polished, it is the oldest decorative substance known. It was familiar to Paleolithic peoples and to the Greeks and Romans, who used it extensively in jewelry. Pliny recounts several instances of its artistic uses. Baltic amber also contains succinct acid

and is often called succinct. An essential oil, amber oil, is obtained from amber.

Leaves, flowers, insects, and small animals are frequently found in amber. Older fossils trapped in this way often represent the sole specimen of an extinct species. An especially rich bed of amber in New Jersey has yielded over 100 previously unknown extinct cretaceous species dating back as much as 94 million years. Because of ambers preservative qualities, the DNA of the specimens trapped inside is intact, affording scientists a unique opportunity to study the DNA of extinct species.