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GRAVETTIAN AND EPIGRAVETTIAN PORTABLE ART IN ROMANIA

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In Romania, some Gravettian and Epigravettian sites have yielded large numbers of art objects. These objects, perhaps more than other artifacts, require meticulous technical-typological studies that can only be realized using high resolution optical observation systems. In this study, we contribute new interpretations of a few of these objects.

The Poiana Cireșului occupation site is located on the right bank of the Bistrița Valley, at the confluence with the Doamnei stream, south-west of the city of Piatra Neamț in the Neamț department (Romania). In 2004, a necklace of twelve perforated (probably by sawing) snail shells was discovered in the Gravettian II layer ($27\,321 \pm 234$ to $25\,760 \pm 160$ BP) (figure). This discovery is currently unique in Romania. *Lythoglyphus naticoides* snails are very small (5-8 mm) and fragile.

The assemblage of portable art objects recovered at the Epigravettian site of Poiana Cireșului (between $20\,020 \pm 110$ and $20\,076$ BP), was enriched during the archaeological excavations of 2002. Among these objects, the root of a lower left wolf canine (*Canis lupus*) was perforated for use as a pendant.

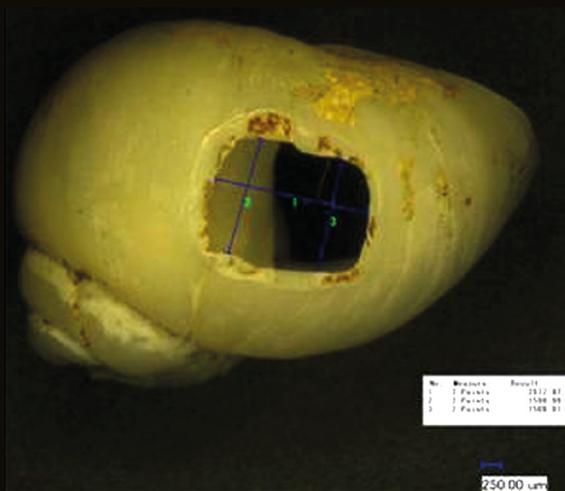
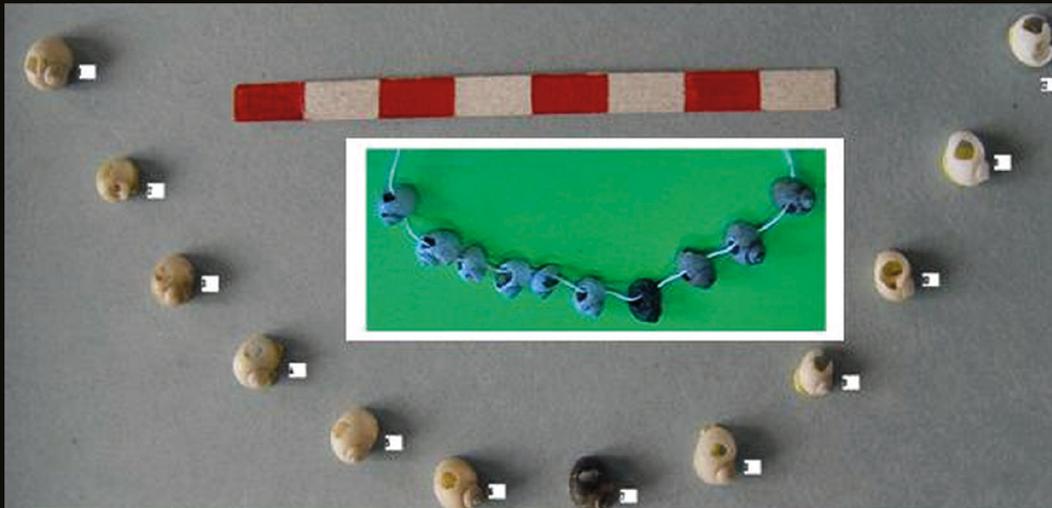
In 2001, a perforated red deer tooth was discovered in the Epigravettian layer. The 2003 excavation session yielded a bone fragment with a series of very small incisions that seem to become more numerous toward the fragmented part.

The external structure of a long bone (metapodial) diaphysis fragment belonging to a large mammal was slightly modified. It now has a straight profile, a very circular section and convergent edges. On one of its edges, 17 deep, diamond-shaped incisions are visible. They have a V-shaped profile and are organized longitudinally relative to the axis of the piece. There is another diaphysis with incisions, but with no preliminary preparation of the engraved surface.

Another art object is represented by a reindeer phalange perforated on only one face. We first thought that it was a pendant in the process of manufacturing, but a more detailed analysis led us to conclude that it is a whistle.

The Epigravettian layer at Poiana Cireșului-Piatra Neamț yielded four fossil bivalve shells of the *Congeria* sp. aff. *Congeria (Mytilopsis) subcarinata subcarinata* species. Their presence in the layer is probably due to a direct importation or exchange with the members of the Epigravettian community more than 100 km away.

Their shape is surprising as it suggests a vulva, an element that is frequently encountered in west-European rock art. Their meaning is deeply tied to sexual symbolism.



Necklace made of perforated *Lythoglyphus naticoides* shells in the Gravettian II of the open-air site of Poiana Cireşului-Piatra Neamţ, with details of the shaping and use observable with a VHX-600 numeric microscope (photo: M. Cărciumaru).

The Gravettian layer of Cioarei, dated to between $23\,950 \pm 120$ BP and $21\,620 \pm 230$ BP, yielded a few very interesting art objects. The most important piece is an engraved pendant on a silicified marlaceous sandstone. The second piece is an upper third incisor of a cave bear, perforated in its medial part, slightly towards the root. The third piece is a cave bear phalange. It is perforated at the diaphysis, towards the distal extremity. Of the three beads discovered, two were made from stalactites and the third on a fossil bone.

At the site of Mitoc-Malul Galben, a pendant amulet was found. It was made on a flake of cortex. A second pendant was made on a long bone diaphysis of a large adult herbivore. This is a straight, non-decorated pendant, with an elongated shape.

The Gravettian ornaments from Gura Cheii-Râşnov Cave, dated to 22 160 BP, consist of one fox canine and a deciduous reindeer tooth; both are perforated on their root.

In the Final Gravettian at Stracova, an elongated, oval-shaped, graphite piece was found. It is engraved with four slightly parallel grooves that seem to imitate a snail shell.

The discoveries at Țibrinu were made in an uncertain stratigraphic and chronologic context. The first object is a perforated red deer bone flake. Only the exterior surface of this piece is decorated, in a geometric style, with three rows of small, zigzag lines placed along the bone. The second piece is a highly fossilized, perforated bear canine.





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