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The Engraved Stone Pendant from Poiana Cireşului-Piatra Neamţ, Romania. New Contributions to the Understanding of Symbolic Behavior in Gravettian

The 2013 archaeological excavation campaign carried out at Poiana Cireşului-Piatra Neamţ Paleolithic site (Neamţ County, North-Eastern Romania) led to the discovery, in the Gravettian I layer, of the first engraved stone pendant found in this settlement, in an area where such discoveries are very rare. The pendant was engraved on its both sides and notched along its outline. The same layer provided the largest number of art objects and tools made of hard animal materials from the Romanian Upper Paleolithic. The article describes the archaeological context of the find. Data on the sequence of Gravettian deposits, absolute dates of the Gravettian I layer, and information about faunal materials, collections of tools and art objects are given. The stone pendant having an oval shape and notches on both sides is subject to comprehensive study. Notably, incisions on both the upper face and the reverse show traces of ochre; the best preserved pigment is observed along the outline of the pendant. A peculiar decorative element of the pendant is represented by the two incisions near the orifice. Stylistic features of each surface of the object and technical execution of engravings are described, as well as tools that were probably used for making incisions. Differences of the find under study from other suspended personal ornaments of the East European Gravettian, as well as certain similarities, are indentified. It has been established that the Poiana Cireşului pendant is close to Eastern Europe and Northeast Asia Upper Paleolithic adornments.

Keywords: *Gravettian, art objects, personal ornaments, engraved stone pendant.*

Introduction

Recent studies on suspended personal ornaments (beads, pendants) have brought to light their potential of highlighting various socio-cultural aspects relating to the Paleolithic, such as exchange and social networks, ethno-linguistic geography, individual and social identities (White, 1999; Taborin, 2004; Vanhaeren, d'Errico, 2005, 2006; Álvarez Fernández, Jöris, 2007). The justification for the use of personal

ornaments during the Paleolithic may have been their sustainability in relation to human experience, being often arguments for cultural and social continuity. In order to demonstrate the emergence of modern human behavior, most studies of personal ornaments have focused on the Early Upper Paleolithic finds, a fact determined by the symbolic function of the beads and pendants (Hahn, 1972; Kuhn et al., 2001; White, 1993, 1999, 2007; Vanhaeren, d'Errico, 2006; Álvarez Fernández, Jöris, 2007). However, on the Gravettian suspended personal ornaments, despite the numerous discoveries, only sparse information is available, this aspect being more obvious for the settlements in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe (Abramova, 1995; Taborin, 2004; Goutas, 2013). From this perspective, the new personal ornaments discovered in the Gravettian sites of South-Eastern Europe can provide important information on the ethno-cultural features of the Paleolithic communities of this region.

Organic raw materials were most often used in the Paleolithic to create suspended personal ornaments (shells, teeth, ivory, bones), while minerals were used rather rarely. For instance, in the Cantabrian region, in eleven Gravettian sites, 112 suspended personal ornaments were analyzed and, of these, only one was made of a mineral material: a schist pendant discovered at Cueva Morín in Spain (Álvarez Fernández, 2006: 219–220, 231–232). Few studies emphasize this aspect, yet the rarity of certain symbolic objects may have special implications for the understanding of the socio-cultural peculiarities of certain communities. At Sungir (Russia), in tomb 1, beside around 3000 ivory beads and pendants made of fox teeth, on the chest of the deceased, a single stone pendant has been found, preserving red pigment (Bader, 1978). According to some authors, this stone is primarily a witness of the symbolic production activities (manufacturing of pendants) which took place on the site (Trinkaus et al., 2014), considering that around 20 more similar pendants were discovered in the layer. But others give in it a special value, mainly because it was covered with red ochre (Bosinski, 2013: 508).

After the analysis made of the stone pendants discovered in various contexts, it may be observed that very few are engraved, the majority being perforated slabs. A few Aurignacian pendants, some decorated, are mentioned for Western Europe (Lorblanchet, 1999: 252). As regards the Early Upper Paleolithic, stone pendants were also discovered in Eastern Europe. For example, the Spitsynean (cultural layer II) of the Kostenki 17 settlement yielded 7 stone pendants, with no additional decoration (Sinitsyn, 2012: 1343–1344).

For the Gravettian, evidence is much scarcer. The Gravettian inhabitants of Isturitz cave (France), related to the "Noaillian" culture (Lacarrière et al., 2011), appreciated pebble pendants that generally had an oval and flat shape, as well as a convex side opposite to a concave one, above which a perforation for hanging was made, even if the hardness of the rock was sometimes an impediment. Y. Taborin (2004: 125) points out that the stone pendants from the French Gravettian (the so-called "Perigordian"), commonly round-shaped, with the perforation placed in one of the extremities, do not have any apparent decoration. The discovery of an engraved art object made of stone in Florestan Cave (Italy), in a Gravettian layer, cannot be integrated into the category of suspended personal ornaments because its recent analysis has proven that the so-called perforation attempt is actually a part of the object's ornamentation (Malerba et al., 2014).

For Central Europe, in Moravia, small, flat, perforated pebbles found among other decorative objects at Pavlov VI, Pavlov II and at Dolni Věstonice have been mentioned (Svoboda, 2012: 1467, 1468; Svoboda, Frouz, 2011: 204; Lázničková-Galetová, 2009; Valoch, Lázničková-Galetová, 2009); and Bárta (1988: 178, fig. 7) describes several perforated slabs found at Trencianske Bohuslavice (Czech Republic). One can notice, in the provided illustration, that two of the pendants from Pavlov I and II were decorated (Škrdla, 2000: Fig. 8; Svoboda, Frouz, 2011: Fig. 7). They are similar to the stone pendants discovered at Sungir (Russia) in a layer belonging to the latest phase of the Kostenki-Streletzkaja culture; they also present no apparent decoration (White, 1993, 2007; Abramova, 1995: 180). An oval calcareous marl pebble, with an asymmetrically placed orifice, was found in a layer attributed to the Kostenki-Avdeevo culture at the Kostenki 13 settlement. The famous Kostenki I settlement also yielded a few stone pendants made of calcareous marl, quite massive and not particularly spectacular (Abramova, 1995).

In view of the scarcity of engraved stone pendants during all the Eurasian Paleolithic, the discovery during the 2013 archaeological excavation campaign at Poiana Cireşului-Piatra Neamţ of a stone pendant geometrically engraved on its both sides and notched along its outline may provide new information on the individualization of certain communities by means of particular ornamental systems, or of the existence of large social networks. It was an important discovery because stone pendants engraved in such a manner are very rare in the Eurasian Gravettian, and the one found at Poiana Cireşului-Piatra Neamţ has several original elements.

Context of the find

The Gravettian settlement of Poiana Cireşului-Piatra Neamţ (hereinafter—Poiana Cireşului) in Neamţ County, North-Eastern Romania, is located on an

erosion level cut into flysch strata, on the right bank of the Bistriţa River, at the confluence with the Doamna Rivulet (46º55′919″ north latitude and 26º19′644″ east longitude), at an absolute elevation of 395 m (Fig. 1). In 1998, the settlement of Poiana Cireşului entered a new stage of systematic research, and excavations have since been performed with modern methods. The archaeological materials, recovered from an area of nearly 100 square meters and depths of up to 4 m, were tridimensionally provenienced relative to a unique point zero. The results of the research undertaken between 1998 and 2007 have been published in several studies (Cârciumaru et al., 2006, 2007–2008, 2010; Steguweit, 2009; Zeeden et al., 2009).

The systematic diggings concerned especially the upper part of the geological sequence (8 m loessic sequence) made up of the following stratigraphic units: 1 – Holocene pale brown soil (Cambisol); 2 – yellow Late Glacial carbonate free loess layer; 3 – compact, decalcified light reddish brown Gelistagnic Cambisol; 4 – heavily carbonated clay-loessic light olive layer; 5 – calcic olive sandy-loessic layer (Fig. 2, *1*).

Archaeologically, the Poiana Cireşului deposits yielded the following cultural sequence:

an Epigravettian layer found in the upper part of the deposit (geological unit 2), defined by more than 1500 lithic pieces;

a Gravettian (I) layer (initially marked as Epigravettian II), found at a depth of 170–210 cm in the fourth geological unit, and dated to between 19,459 ± 96 BP (ER 12162) (23.24 ka cal BP) and 20,154 ± 97 BP (ER 12163) (24,096 ka cal BP) (see *Table*). This is the richest cultural layer at Poiana Cireşului: it yielded over 15,000 lithic

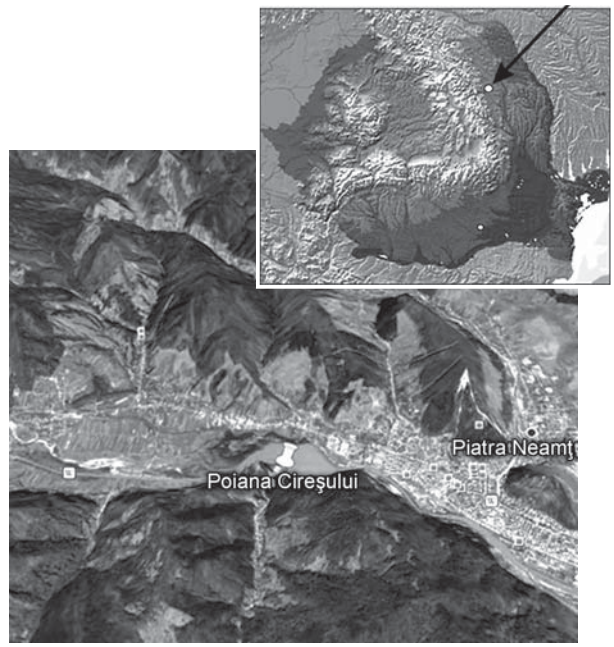

Fig. 1. The Upper Paleolithic settlement of Poiana Cireşului (Piatra Neamţ town). Site location.

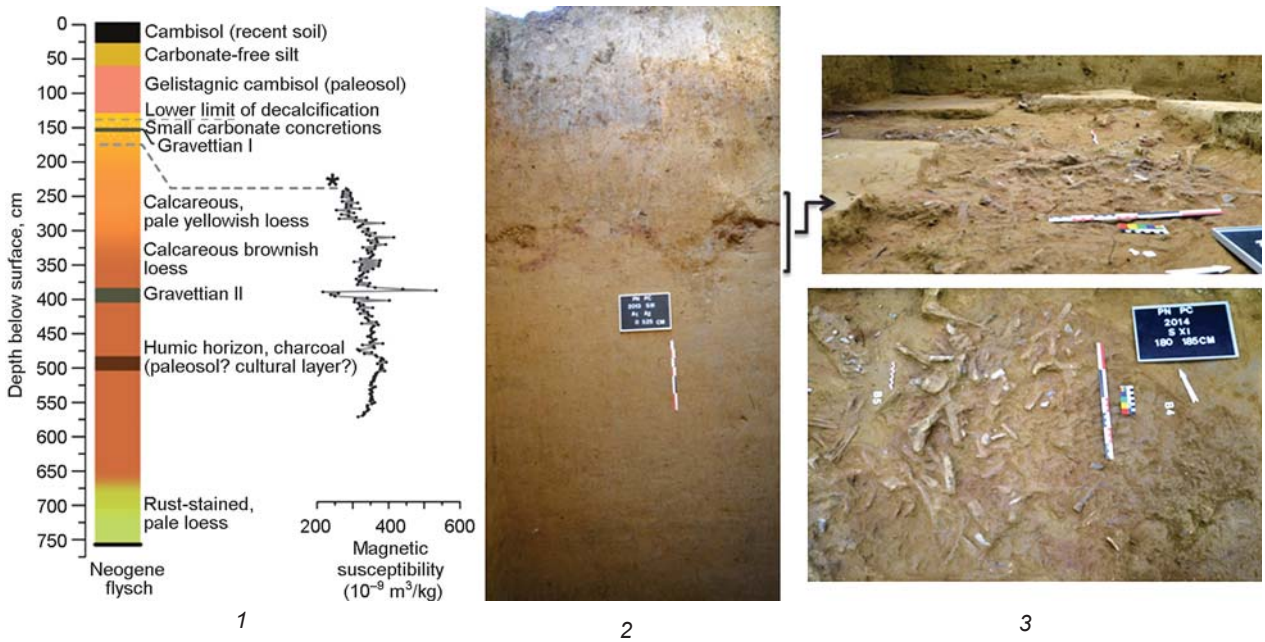

Fig. 2. The Gravettian I layer at Poiana Cireşului.
1 – profile of the western wall (top of the ridge), 2006 excavation (after (Zeeden et al., 2009)); *2* – profile of the southern wall, Gravettian I layer, section IX/2013, near the square in which the stone pendant was found; *3* – images of excavating the Gravettian I layer, section X/2014, marked in the profile of section IX/2013.

materials, numerous osteological remains, an organic material industry and mobiliary art objects (Fig. 2, *2*, *3*);

a second Gravettian (II) layer (initially marked as Gravettian I), found at a depth of 290–310 cm (the contact between geological units 4 and 5) and dated to 25,135 ± 150 BP (Beta Analytic 244072), which only provided around 200 lithic materials;

a third Gravettian (III) layer (initially marked as Gravettian II), located at a depth of 375–415 cm (fifth geological unit) and dated to between 25,760 ± 160 BP (Beta Analytic 244073) and 27,321 ± 234 BP (ER 11859) (31,969 ka cal BP). This level yielded approximately 2600 lithic materials.

The pendant was discovered in section X, square A-1, at a depth of 190 cm, in the richest cultural layer at Poiana Cireşului, the Gravettian I layer (Fig. 2). This layer benefited from absolute dating on several occasions (AMS, OSL), during different stages, all of them situating it around 20,000 uncal BP (see *Table*). The cultural layers at Poiana Cireşului are separated by very thick sterile deposits, representing veritable seals for the identified habitations. At the same time, in the Gravettian I layer, distinct activity areas were found (butchering, antler-processing, knapping, hearths and ochre areas).

Current archaeozoological research has focused on the Gravettian I layer because of the abundance of osteological material recovered from it (approximately 16,000 remains) (Fig. 2, *3*). Analyses led to the conclusion that Poiana Cireşului was a seasonal settlement, used for the hunting of *Rangifer tarandus*, which accounts for 97 % of the identified remains. Aside from reindeer, small quantities of *Bos/Bison*, *Cervus elaphus*, *Equus* sp., *Rupicapra rupicapra* and *Vulpes/Alopex* remains were found as well. The study of the inferior dentition and antlers of reindeer proves that the Poiana Cireşului Gravettians inhabited this settlement from early autumn to early winter, when they hunted mainly full-grown females and young of both sexes, especially for food (Cârciumaru et al., 2006, 2007–2008, 2010).

The hard animal material industry is quite rich and diverse, and includes ivory objects, among which two at least are processing-tools (“outils de transformation” in French), a few reindeer antler points, numerous antler tools with rounded and massive active part (wedges and/or smoothers), and rare bone awls (study by N. Goutas, in progress). The lithic material was partially published in several synthesis studies (Ibid.) and is now being analyzed. A few general features can be highlighted. The dominant tools are burins and, to a lesser extent, end-scrapers, while backed bladelets are not very numerous. Several tool-types are particular to this layer, such as denticulated bladelets, denticulated backed bladelets and finely retouched microbladelets.

The Gravettian I layer provided the largest number of art objects and tools made of hard animal materials. The Poiana Cireşului collection is characterized by significant diversity, and includes approximately 2/3 of all art objects of the Upper Paleolithic in Romania (Cârciumaru, Nițu, Ţuţuianu-Cârciumaru, 2012). The Gravettian I layer yielded four pendants made of wolf canine, deer tooth, residual deer tooth, fox canine, two beads made of stone and *Dentalium*, an engraved antler fragment (Cârciumaru, Ţuţuianu-Cârciumaru, 2009), two diaphysis with triangular incisions (notches), a whistle made of a reindeer phalange (Cârciumaru, Ţuţuianu-Cârciumaru, 2011), several variously engraved bone fragments, a quartzite pebble engraved and painted with red ochre, and four aragonite moulds (*Congeria subcarinata* bivalves) painted with red ochre (Cârciumaru et al., 2011). Another important find, this time from the Gravettian III

Absolute dating for the Poiana Cireşului Gravettian I layer*

No.	Depth, m	Layer	Material type	Lab. No	Age, uncal. ka BP	Age, ka	Age error, ka
1	1.20	Above the Gravettian I layer	Silt-sized quartz grains	BT 499	–	22.66 ± 1.81	–
2	1.90	Gravettian I	Charcoal	ER 12162	19,459 ± 96	23.24	0.31
3	1.92–1.93	Same	Same	Beta 224156	20,020 ± 110	–	–
4	2.10	"	"	Beta Analytic 244071	20,050 ± 110	–	–
5	2.07	"	"	ER 9964	20,053 ± 188	23.978	0.294
6	2.10	"	"	ER 9965	20,076 ± 185	24	0.358
7	2.10	"	"	ER 12163	20,154 ± 97	24.096	0.294

*^{14}C data were calibrated using CalPal 2007^{online} with the Weninger and Jöris (2008) calibration data; for details on the AMS dating and the OSL analyses, see (Zeeden et al. 2009).

layer (25,760 ± 160 to 27,321 ± 234 BP), is a necklace made of 12 very small snail shells (5–8 mm) of the *Lythogliphus naticoides* species (Cârciumaru, Ţuţuianu-Cârciumaru, 2012).

The manufacture of morphologically diversified adornments, the development of a decorative style with a high degree of schematization, and also engravings that are fairly similar in style and shape, etc., prove that the communities were able to produce personalized systems that defined the cultural features of this important settlement of Gravettian hunters from South-Eastern Europe.

Description of the engraved stone pendant

As mentioned above, the 2013 archaeological excavation campaign carried out at Poiana Cireşului-Piatra Neamţ led to the discovery, in section X, square A-1, at a depth of 190 cm, in the Gravettian I layer, of the first engraved stone pendant found in this settlement (Fig. 3). The pendant's dimensions are as follows: length 34 mm, width 19 mm, thickness 4.5 mm, weight 2.64 g. The pendant was made of a relatively soft rock, a polymictic siltite, with a slightly greenish tint. The intensity of the color is accentuated if the rock is wet. This property was probably noticed by the Gravettian(s) who wore this pendant.

The pendant is oval, with a convex to slightly concave profile. It has a unique perforation intended for hanging, which is located at one of its extremities (Fig. 3). The hole is biconical, and was probably created using a lithic tool with a sharpened end (e.g. a burin, bladelet, borer etc.). The current dimensions of the orifice (there is obvious wear that resulted from hanging) are 2274.16 µm (2.2 mm) in maximum length and 1429.69 µm (1.4 mm) in maximum width (Fig. 3). Suspension-marks are visible to the naked eye, in the sense that an elongation of the orifice, which probably had initially a more or less circular shape, occurred. Using a fiber-optic digital microscope (Keyence VHX 600, 20x–200x magnification), one can confirm the presence of use-wear (polishing and deformation of hole) of the upper part of the orifice (Fig. 4, *1*, *2*).

The use by suspension of this pendant is certain. Evidence for this is provided not only by the rather elongated orifice (because of the weight of the pendant which would have deformed the hole of suspension, doubtless further to long use), but also by the heavy polish on the distal part of the lower face (Fig. 3, *2*), which resulted from contact with the body of the person who wore it, or with his or her clothes. The preservation of the use-wear, particularly on the distal end, was favored by the slightly curved shape of the pendant reverse.

A peculiar decorative element highlighted on this pendant is represented by the two incisions near the orifice. The one on the upper face is placed slightly to the left, while that on the reverse is oriented towards the middle of the perforation. They do not seem to have a decorative role. These incisions are recovered by the hole and the functional polishing (Fig. 3, *1*, *2*), their realization is thus previous. Actually, we can interpret these incisions as a preparatory stage to making the hole of suspension. This stage is necessary all the more on hard materials, and when the hole is fitted out from both sides of the blank. These incisions are remnants of marks allowing the craftsman: 1) to prop up well the lithic tool, in order to realize then the hole by semi-rotary scraping; 2) to make sure that both orifices fitted out on each side correspond perfectly.

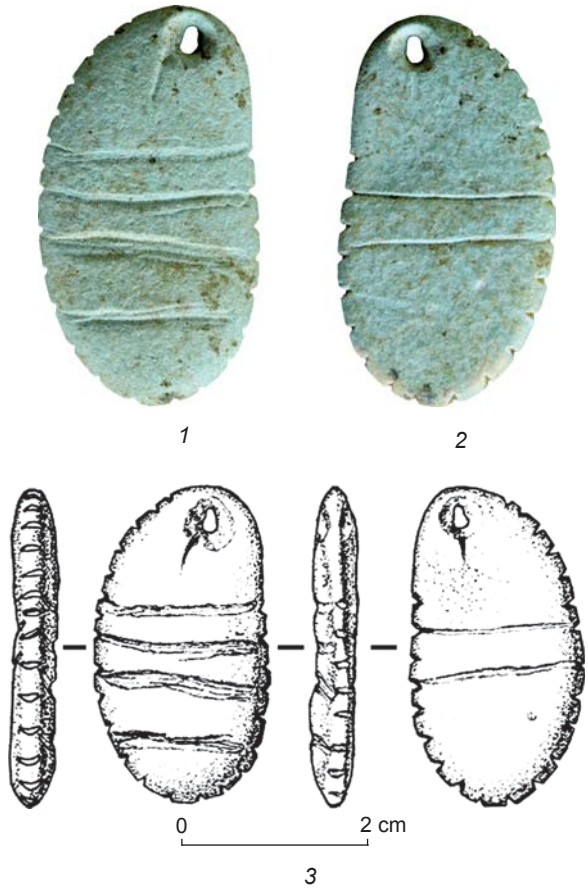

Fig. 3. The engraved stone pendant from the Gravettian I layer of Poiana Cireşului.
1 – upper face; *2* – reverse-lower face; *3* – pendant drawing and profile (drawing by F. Dumitru).

The pendant from Poiana Cireşului was decorated with schematic and abstract themes. It is possible that the use of geometrical motifs would have been suggested in this case precisely by the relatively regular and oval shape of the pendant, which encouraged the engraving of independent linear regular incisions, with a certain logic, in order to achieve a visual equilibrium (Taborin, 2004).

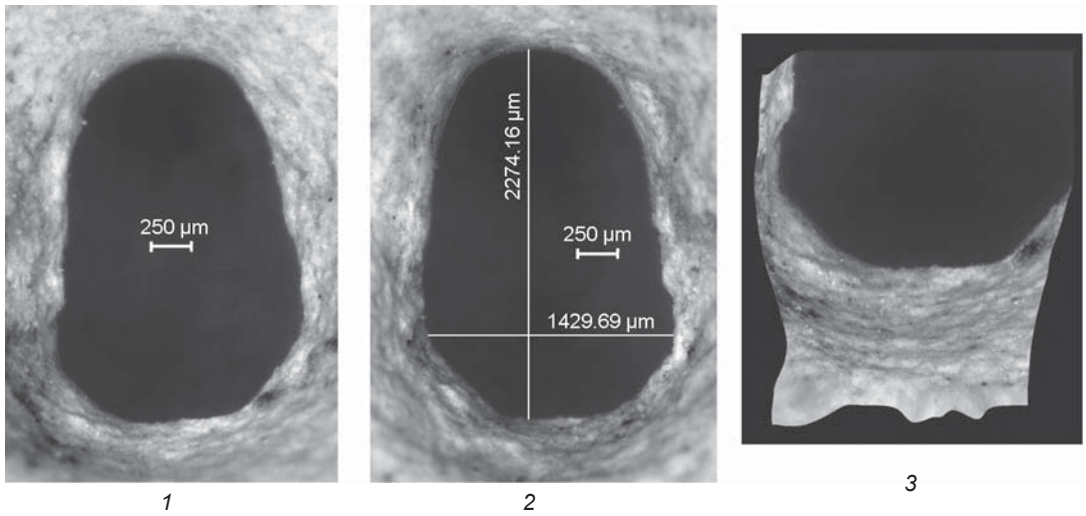

Fig. 4. Use-wear on the upper part of the orifice due to usage by suspension.
1 – upper face; *2* – reverse face (magnification 100x); *3* – marks resulting from the rotation of a lithic tool to make the penetration, preserved on the lower part (magnification 150x).

Most of the pendant's outline is marked with a total of 23 parallel and linear incisions (notches), arranged, by an overwhelming majority, roughly 3 mm apart. These were meant to give the pendant a unique aspect, particularly since the incisions were clearly painted with ochre, which is visible macroscopically, and much more so with a digital microscope (Fig. 5). In fact, some traces of pigments could also be observed on both sides of the pendant; but, because of the conditions in which the pendant had lain in the deposit, they were probably not preserved as well as on the incisions along the outline.

One of the unusual attributes of the pendant from Poiana Cireşului is that it is engraved on both sides, which is rather rare among Gravettian pendants in Europe, especially those decorated with geometrical motifs. The engravings on the upper face (Fig. 6, *1–4*) consist of four rows (numbered top-to-bottom according to the position of the pendant in Fig. 3) of incised, relatively parallel lines. From a technical point of view, these stigmata can be related to the grooving technique (Goutas, 2004). Grooves (each being composed by a "floor" and by two "walls") have a particular morphology. Indeed, they give the impression that several incisions have been drawn individually. But according to the observations on other objects from the site (study by N. Goutas in progress), these irregular incisions seem to ensue from the particular morphology of the lithic tool used, probably a burin. These features are more obvious with the first two rows, and fade out towards the fourth row.

The first groove consists, apparently, of a single incision (Fig. 6, *1*). The second groove is made of two parallel incisions with an additional third incision on the right half (Fig. 6, *2*). The third groove is the most complex, as it consists of four incisions which do not always span the entire width of the upper face; this sequence of incisions resulted in a width twice that of the previous row (Fig. 6, *3*). Finally, the fourth groove consists of two closely spaced incisions, and towards the right side, even a third incision can be observed (Fig. 6, *4*). We shall also note that the first two grooves (Fig. 6, *1*, *2*) seem to have been realized with the trihedron of the burin (V dissymmetric profile), while the third seems more realized with the dihedral of the tool (U dissymmetric cross-section) (Fig. 6, *3*).

Concerning the fourth groove, we can also wonder if the tool would not have revolved in the course of use: the groove would have been begun with the trihedron then the dihedral of the burin (Fig. 6, *4*). Experiments will be necessary to confirm this hypothesis and to better characterize techniques used.

The reverse (Fig. 3, *2*) is decorated with two relatively parallel incisions which are quite firmly traced, without hesitation. The first incision is slightly irregular in terms of its width relative to the other incision (Fig. 6, *5*), but it offers a classic "V profile", and may be related to the use of the trihedron of the burin. In any case, these two grooves were made with a different tool than the one used for the upper side. Here, a very narrow burin has been used, as an "angle burin"; or, because of the thinness of the grooves, maybe a "spall burin".

We believe that the difference in the technical execution of the decoration on the two sides of the pendant may not be accidental. The choice of a polyhedral burin to make the grooves on the upper side emphasizes the Gravettian artist's intention to give that particular surface greater aesthetic value.

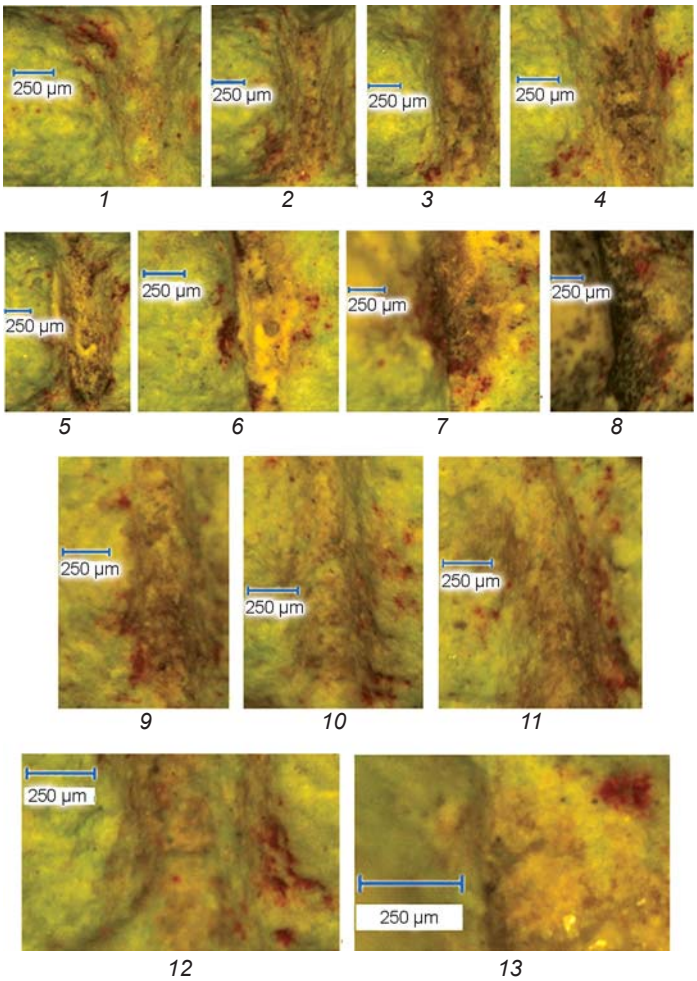

Fig. 5. Ochre preserved on the incisions on the pendant outline.
1–8 – first incisions on the concave side (see Fig. 3, *1*, numbered from top to bottom); *9–13* – incisions on the convex side: *9–11* – incisions 1–3; *12* – incision 5; *13* – incision 12 (images captured with the Keyence VHX 600 microscope).

As for the shaping of the stone by scraping or polishing, no traces of such processes could be observed, despite the use of a powerful digital microscope that allows a magnification up to 200x; this is likely due to the structural characteristics of the rock.

Discussion and conclusions

The pendant discovered at Poiana Cireşului is exceptional among the suspended personal ornaments of the East European Gravettian by three aspects: the raw material from which it was made, the schematic engraving style, and the unusual use of polyhedral burin to make some decoration. As we mentioned at the beginning of the article, decorated stone pendants are very rare during the Upper Paleolithic. If we take into account the first two aspects, some analogies that can be made refer to two more pendants discovered in Romania at Mitoc-Malu Galben (Botoşani County) (Fig. 7, *1*) (Chirica, 1982) and at the Cioarei Cave from Boroşteni (Gorj County) (Fig. 7, *2*) (Cârciumaru, Dobrescu, 1997).

The engravings on the Gravettian I (old Gravettian) pendant from Mitoc-Malu Galben (Fig. 7, *1*), discovered by V. Chirica (1982), were described by C. Beldiman (2004). The decorations consist of straight and curved, radially set lines with a V or U asymmetric profile. The pendant's outline is decorated with 23 parallel notches, the same number as on the Poiana Cireşului pendant, with 7 of them set on the two convex sides and 9 on the concave. After some hesitation regarding the stratigraphic position of this pendant, it is now generally agreed that it dates to between 28,910 ± 480 uncal BP (GrN-12636) and 26,700 ± 1040 uncal BP (GX-9418). From a stylistic perspective, the ornament of the pendant of Mitoc is hard to interpret. It is far from the realism of the

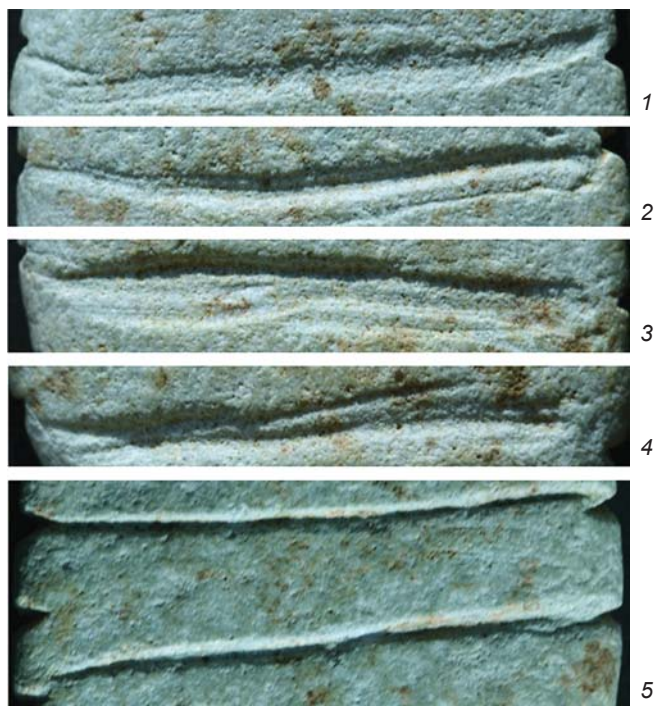

Fig. 6. Method of making incisions on the upper face (*1–4*) and reverse (*5*).

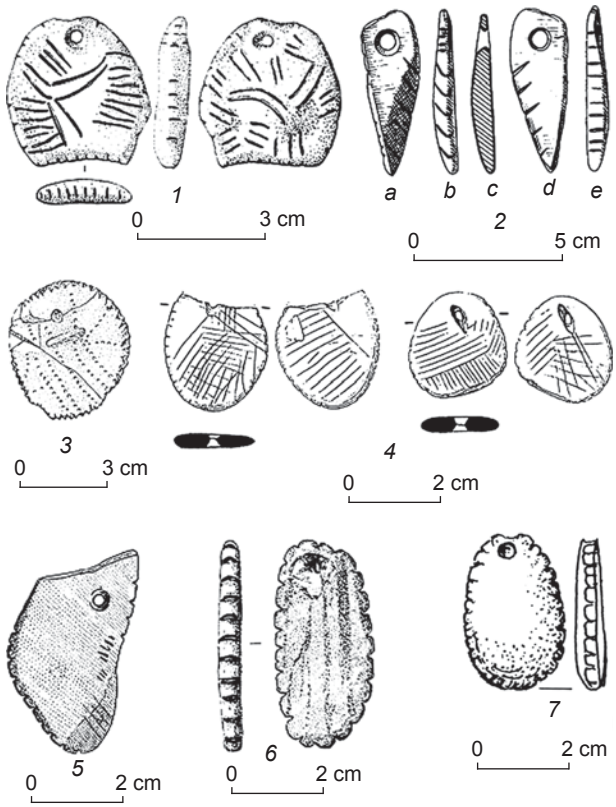

Fig. 7. Engraved stone pendants.
1 – Mitoc-Malul Galben (after (Chirica, 1982)); *2* – Cioarei cave from Boroşteni (after (Cârciumaru, Dobrescu, 1997)); *3* – Cosăuţi (after (Borziac, Otte, Noiret, 1998); *4* – Pavlov I and II (after (Škrdla, 2000)); *5*, *6* – Isturitz (after (Lorblanchet, 1999; Sacchi, 1987)); *7* – Dzudzuana (after (Bar-Yosef, 2011)).

engravings made out of various objects of the West European portable art, and does not belong to the East European schematism either.

The highly silicified marly sandstone pendant from the Cioarei Cave of Boroşteni (Fig. 7, *2*) distinguishes itself by the regularity of the incisions (Cârciumaru, 2000). On the right edge of the pendant, on both the upper face and the reverse, oblique incisions were made; these come together on the edge in a V-shape. The left edge is wider, and adorned with ten transversal, parallel incisions, which are set at different distances and reach diverse depths. The smaller edge, located above the orifice, has only two incisions. Overall, the pendant has 21 incisions along its outline. The symbolic value of the pendant found at Cioarei Cave is highlighted by the fact that its entire surface was painted with red ochre. The Gravettian layer in which the marly sandstone pendant was discovered was dated to between 25,900 ± 120 uncal BP (GrN-15051) and 23,570 ± 230 uncal BP (GrN-15050).

Relatively close to Poiana Cireşului, at the site of Cosăuţi in the Republic of Moldova, an amulet-pendant was found in the Gravettian II level, dated to between 19,020 ± 925 uncal BP (SOAN 2462) and 15,520 ± 800 uncal BP (LE 3305). It was made of a disk-shaped stone, with an oval cross-section, and measures 5.0 × 4.0 × 0.9 cm (Fig. 7, *3*). The decoration consists of about 60 incisions along the entire outline, nine alignments of deep punctuation on one surface and traces of ochre (Borziac, 1991; Chirica, Borziac, Chetraru, 1996; Borziac, Otte, Noiret, 1998; Noiret, 2009).

Among the stone pendants found in the Moravian sites Pavlov VI, I, II, Dolni Věstonice I and Předmosti (Lázničková-Galetová, 2009; Škrdla, 2000; Svoboda, 2012; Svoboda, Frouz, 2011) at Pavlov I and II, in each of these sites, a pendant engraved on both sides has been found (Fig. 7, *4*). According to the illustration provided in some studies (Škrdla, 2000: Fig. 8; Svoboda, Frouz, 2011: Fig. 7), they are incised with parallel lines on both sides and notches on the outline, stylistically being quite similar to the one from Poiana Cireşului.

The pendant from Poiana Cireşului is stylistically similar to that of Boroşteni by the ornament made up of parallel lines and by the painting with red ochre, to those from Pavlov by the notches and incisions on both sides and to the ones from Mitoc and Cosăuţi only by the notches on its outline. These are the only Gravettian stone pendants stylistically close to the complexity of the pendant from Poiana Cireşului.

The decoration of the outline with incisions (notches) is a more general characteristic style, also seen in other art objects. Actually, this type of incision is a constant of the decoration of some art objects from Poiana Cireşului, such as the incised quartz pebble and the two engraved diaphysis. In this context, we believe that the marking of the outline of the pendant indicates the invoking of possible analogies. From a certain perspective, this method of decoration would indicate the mental universe of certain Paleolithic groups, and a legacy probably from the Aurignacian. Indeed, there are several interesting examples of Aurignacian pendants on which the outline is marked by incisions, such as a schist pendant whose shape suggests a horse's head, from the typical Aurignacian found at Isturitz Cave (Fig. 7, *5*) (Lorblanchet, 1999: 252); and a perforated micaschist pebble with genuine notches on the contour, from the Aurignacian II layer of the southern chamber of the Isturitz Cave (Fig. 7, *6*) (Sacchi, 1987: 14–15).

When dealing with schematic decorations, analogies can obviously be extended on ample chronological levels. Pendants of almost the same type seem to be found more towards Eastern Europe, and even the Asian part of Russia. Some similarities in terms of the already defined criteria, namely raw material, method of decoration and chronology, come from sites located in Eastern Europe. Geographically, the closest example is one of the two stone pendants discovered at Dzudzuana cave in the Caucasus (Georgia), in the upper part of the stratigraphic

unit C, dated to between 27 and 24 ka cal BP (Bar-Yosef et al., 2011: 339, 340). The dimensions and shape of the pebble are very similar to those of the Poiana Cireşului pendant; and the same type of incisions, placed along the pendant's outline, can be observed (Fig. 7, *7*). The stratigraphic and cultural sequence, which is fairly similar at the two sites, adds to the similarities in terms of context, although the two sites seem quite distant geographically.

If one considers only the style of decoration, regular peripheral incisions seem to be a particular and common feature of decorated objects discovered in the Siberian sites of the Irkutsk region (Bednarik, 2013: 51), namely: Oshurkovo, Malta, Buret, Afontova Gora II, Afontova Gora III, Itkutskii gospital, etc. As a matter of fact, the bone pendant from Oshurkovo is stylistically comparable to the one from Poiana Cireşului. Still in Siberia, level II of the Khotyc site revealed ornamented stone pendants made of soft rocks and the Pereselencheskyi-punkt 1 site yielded a pendant with peripheral incisions and a biconical perforation. This type of schematic decoration was discovered in the two sites only in levels dated to between 30,000 and 25,000 years BP (Lbova, 2010, 2012: 1126). What we find interesting is the intensification of color in contact with water with the Khotyc pendants, a phenomenon that can be noticed with the Poiana Cireşului pendant.

In conclusion, there are several characteristics which bring the Poiana Cireşului pendant close to Eastern Europe and Northeast Asia Upper Paleolithic adornments, such as the relatively soft rocks that served as blanks, which can change color depending on the intensity of wetting, the use of geometrical motifs engraved on both sides, the incisions along the outline, the painting with red ochre, the similar chronological level of the discoveries, etc. These elements may indicate a peculiarity of some Upper Paleolithic groups and possibly large social networks.

While similarities regarding the engraving of the outline may be noticed in Eastern Eurasia, engravings on both sides of the stone pendants are extremely rare in the Gravettian from Central and Eastern Europe. For this reason, the discovery of four engraved stone pendants in the Carpathian region (the pendants of Poiana Cireşului, Mitoc, Cioarei Cave and Cosăuţi) may represent a feature of the Gravettian from this area, bringing new information on the individual and social identities of some Gravettian communities of South-Eastern Europe.

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