
Real or fake? Red deer canine beads and their imitations from the 5th millennium BC at Polgár-Cs'oszhalom (NE Hungary)

Alexandra Anders*¹ and Zsuzsanna Tóth¹

¹Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Institute of Archaeological Sciences – Múzeum krt. 4/B (B épület), H-1088 Budapest, Hongrie

Résumé

Polgár-Cs'oszhalom is one of the most significant Late Neolithic sites in Northeastern Hungary. The settlement complex is made up of a tell, a multiple enclosure system ringing the mound, a single-layer settlement and another double enclosure system. During the almost 100 years of archaeological investigations among the settlement features a total of 145 burials could be verified. Different artefacts, grave goods and personal ornaments were found in large number in these features. The necklaces, representing high prestige value raw materials, were strung out of Spondylus, limestone and red deer canine beads belongs to this latter category, found in the graves both of women, men and children.

In our presentation we focus on the manufacturing techniques, use and role of the red deer canine beads and their imitations in the mortuary practices. Our study covered the raw materials (animal species and skeletal elements) used for the production of the beads and the reconstruction of the exact manufacturing chain. The archaeological finds were studied with optical microscopy to observe and identify the taphonomic defects, manufacturing marks and use-wear traces found on the artefacts. Our aim was the full reconstruction of the life history of the beads, from their birth until to their burying and the understanding of their role in the mortuary practices of the Late Neolithic period. Who could have wear them? Was it regularized based on biological and/or social gender? Who had the 'right' to wear real or imitated canine beads regarding sex and age? Was there a deeper meaning in the composition of the necklaces (mixing Spondylus, limestone, real canine and imitated bone beads) beneath personalizing different high prestige materials? How was personhood constructed with the help of these beads in the Late Neolithic community of Polgár Cs'oszhalom?

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Mots-Clés: neolithic, body adornment, red deer canine beads, constructing personhood

*Intervenant