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# Exploitation of osseous materials during the Mesolithic in the Iron Gates

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## Abstract

The Mesolithic settlements on the left bank of the Danube in the Iron Gates have yielded numerous artefacts made of osseous materials. Products and sub-products of the *chaîne opératoire* are present, suggesting *in situ* manufacture of the finished items. Among a restricted range of typological categories, the most characteristic are antler bevelled tools, bone pointed tools and boar tusk scrapers. Our research has focused on identifying both the manufacturing processes applied to the various raw materials and the marks left by use, which are key indicators of the function of the artefacts. The results of this combined approach suggest wood processing and hunting were the main activities performed. Contrary to some previous interpretations, there is no evidence for the use of osseous artefacts in connection with plant cultivation. We were also interested to know if a unitary technological scheme could be identified throughout the Iron Gates, or if there are features that were specific to individual sites or phases. Our findings suggest that despite a general unitary pattern, it is nevertheless possible to identify elements that are specific to individual sites but whether these were the result of economic or cultural factors is more difficult to assess.

**Keywords:** Iron Gates, manufacturing, function, regional and temporal variation

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