

1. Record Nr.	TD20018421
Autore	CATELLI, ELIANA
Titolo	The Prehistory of colour: function and meaning of ochre in the Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic of south-western Europe [Tesi di dottorato]
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Tesi di dottorato
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note	diritti: info:eu-repo/semantics/openAccess In relazione con info:eu-repo/semantics/altIdentifier/hdl/11573/1202915
Sommario	The colouring minerals are widespread in the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic European contexts, although the information available on their use is still few. The interest in this category of materials is increasing as their study can provide new knowledge on technologies and symbolism of past human groups given their intense colouring power and the peculiarities of iron oxides as primary constituents. In a phase of transition such as that from Late Glacial to Holocene marked by climatic and environmental changes, of which human cultures are the reflection, the analysis of ochre vestiges can support the reconstruction of the life-styles of Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunter-gatherers. Archaeological fieldworks brought to light a series of ochre assemblages in two key areas for the prehistoric European population: the Cantabrian region and the Italian peninsula. The discovery of ochre pieces, ochre processing tools and ochre residues on ornaments and lithic artefacts supposes utilitarian and symbolic functions. To investigate these aspects, this thesis has been organized into nine chapters that can be summarized in three main parts. Specifically, the introduction exposes the problems still unresolved on the role of ochre in the evolution of prehistoric human culture, introducing the methods and

materials. In chapter I it is defined the main object of this work, ochre, in all its aspects with a focus on its use in Prehistory. The first part of chapter II refers a catalogue of ochre vestiges that can be found in the archaeological contexts with the aim to provide essential data to discriminate the anthropic origin of the assemblages. In the second part, the methodological protocol elaborated starting from the execution of a preliminary test is presented to verify the efficacy of the investigated techniques that are preliminary reviewed. The chapter III is dedicated to the exposition of the sites from which the studied materials were collected. Furthermore, ochre recovery strategies and sampling conditions are discussed. Chapter IV opens the part dedicated to the study of archaeological materials. In this chapter the data obtained from the evaluation of the materials are described according to specific criteria (colour, mass, dimensions, state of conservation) to estimate the representativeness of ochre remains in the site and the intensity of anthropic exploitation. Chapter V shows the data obtained from the physical-chemical characterization of raw materials. The results of a comparative analysis are presented to search indexes of peculiar transformations and intentional mixtures on continental scale. This is followed by chapter VI in which the results of the statistical data processing obtained from the geochemical characterization of archaeological and geological samples are reported. The main objective of this study is to recognize archaeological sources to reconstruct human mobility patterns and to investigate the geographical range explored by human groups, starting from the resources potentially available. The chapter VII focuses on what way ochre was processed investigating the mechanical transformations of raw materials. The chapter VIII closes the part dedicated to the study of archaeological materials. In this chapter it is assess the link between ochre remains of sites by analysing their distribution on the archaeological surface. The main purpose is to define the relationship between the materials and the context according to the anthropic organization of the space. Lastly, the chapter IX offers a general discussion of the results obtained defining the innovative contributions made by this work on procurement and treatment of colouring minerals, their management in the site and potential uses of ochre. The work ends with final considerations in which the key role played by ochre in human cultures of Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic is highlighted. Therefore, this research attempts to update the knowledge on the exploitation of ochre, red or yellow iron ores, during the Late Glacial and Early and Middle Holocene, in south-western Europe. Starting from the combination of data obtained through an integrated approach crossing the results of the archaeological study and the physical-chemical analyses and the contextualization of ochre vestiges in the site, it was possible to investigate the supply strategies and the selective criteria of the raw materials, as well as reconstruct the main stages of their processing to formulate hypothesis of use. This work highlights the intentional provision to the site of large quantities of ferruginous rocks selected for their intense red colour. The supply of these raw materials was continuous from the Upper Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic. The blocks or nodules were partially fragmented and powdering, while another part was used to realize objects to directly transfer the colour on the surfaces (crayons). These objects could be exploited both within domestic space as part of daily activities, and in spaces designed to host human burials, as part of funeral rituals. Moreover, the study of

ochre assemblages made it possible to detect the continuity of technological practices over time, attesting to a transfer of technical knowledge related to the exploitation of the same raw materials for their functionality during the Late Glacial and the Early and Middle Holocene. Its use in diversified contexts attests both the utilitarian and the symbolic value of ochre. Its meaning is not fixed, but it depends on the function for which it is used.

Localizzazioni e accesso

http://memoria.depositolegale.it/*http://hdl.handle.net/11573/1202915
