
Chert exploitation and circulation in the Lombard Prealps. A diachronic overview trough Prehistory

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Résumé

The Lombard Prealps stretch between the Garda lake (to the east) and the Maggiore lake (to the west) and constitute the central-southern sector of the Southalpine. Flaking raw materials are represented by several chert types which are quite common in the Jurassic-Cretaceous sedimentary series and represent the upper outcropping rocks of the area. These series comprehend from bottom to top: cherty limestones, radiolarites and pelagic cherty limestones becoming more and more terrigenous. Due to the regional geological setting these series are mainly situated along an east-west oriented stripe (5-25 km wide) forming the lowest hills, close to the Po plain. By contrast the main valleys, following the drainage systems, are north-south (NE-SSW) oriented. Human mobility in the region has been strongly influenced by these natural cuts which favoured displacements from the plain to the inner alpine area. In some cases, each valley constituted an almost closed system with respect to the nearby valleys. North-south mobility along the main valleys is indeed highlighted by the raw materials displacements from the outcrops, situated at the mouth of the valleys, to the north. Among the different available types humans selected those that were more fine crystalline but also fragile. Tectonics played an important role in the preservation of good chert outcrops. In the mid-high mountain Permian-Triassic sedimentary rocks devoid of suitable cherts or crystalline rocks crop out. The Palaeolithic record of the area is still very poor. Mousterian sites are generally located near the outcrops, while Epigravettian groups exploited also Prealpine cherts from far afield areas. A greater mobility of resources is documented in the Mesolithic and also extra-regional cherts from the Trento area are represented

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in some sites attesting that high passes were already deglaciated. In the Neolithic, Copper and Bronze ages we observe an increase in the import of very good chert types from the Baldo-Lessini area for some specific purposes together with the exploitation of the regional lithic resources for a domestic use.

Mots-Clés: Lithic raw materials, Lombard Prealps, Northern Italy