
Placing North Africa as a key point in Mediterranean exchange routes in Later Prehistory. A view from the Iberian Peninsula

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Résumé

During the 4th and especially the 3rd millennia BC, the frequency of exotic objects is significantly increased in the archaeological record, particularly in the South of Iberia. Among them, ivory, amber and ostrich eggshell stands out. Traditionally, ivory and ostrich eggshell were assumed to have a north African origin, although the latest archaeometric studies have shown that provenancing materials is not as straightforward, opening a range of possibilities. Regarding amber, provenance analyses by FTIR have been conducted showing that the amber found in Iberian contexts from at least the 4th millennium BC is *simetite*, whose origin is in Sicily. However, no other evidence of direct contact between Sicily and Iberia are known. Considering that: 1) The distribution pattern of amber objects in Iberia is similar to that of ivory and ostrich eggshell, and 2) Contacts between Sicily, Pantelleria, and Tunisia and North Africa have been proposed on the basis of obsidian trade; we raise the following question: Is North Africa acting as a ‘distribution hub’ for amber, allowing Sicilian amber to reach Iberia? Is Sicilian amber actually reaching Iberia through contacts with North Africa? In order to answer these questions we aim to share ideas, insights and information with specialists working on the Later Prehistory of North Africa.

Mots-Clés: Later Prehistory, North Africa, Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, amber, exchange networks

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