
From Early to Late Mesolithic in Sicily. New data from Grotta D'Oriente (Favignana Island)

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Abstract

Grotta d'Oriente, a coastal cave located in Favignana Island (Sicily), is one of the key-site for the study of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic of Sicily and, more generally, of the Central Mediterranean. Archaeological excavations, performed by University of Florence, have provided evidence of several short-term human occupations of the cave in a period spanning from latest Upper Palaeolithic to the Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic (~14.2 to ~7.8 cal. ky BP) (Martini et al. 2012; Lo Vetro et al. 2016; Colonese et al. 2018). The archaeological sequence consists of 3 main unit: Layer 7, Upper Palaeolithic - Late Epigravettian, Layer 6, Early Mesolithic, with Sauveterrian-like stone assemblage and Layer 5, Late Mesolithic or Early Neolithic, which presents a small stone assemblage marked by the occurrence of blades and trapezes and by the appearance of the pressure blade technique.

A multidisciplinary research project carried out in the last fifteen years, has resulted in a large amount of data which has significantly improved the knowledge on both the cultural-economic framework known for the Paleo-Mesolithic of Sicily and the local environmental evolution at the Pleistocene-Holocene transition.

This communication focuses on the post-Palaeolithic occupations of the cave by the last Hunter-gatherer groups presenting new data on chronology, material productions and resources exploitation (chert, terrestrial and marine fauna). Particular attention will be paid to the evidence from Layer 5 and to its chrono-cultural attribution also in relation to the current debate on the diffusion of the Blade and Trapeze assemblages in the Mediterranean. New achievements from the anthracological study provide also new insights on the evolution of the regional landscape during the Early Holocene in North-Western Sicily.

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