© Naturhistorische Gesellschaft Nürnberg e.V.download www.zobodat.at

Abhandlung Band 45/2005 ISSN 0077-6149	Neue Forschungen zum Höhlenbären in Europa	Seite 113-114	Naturhistorische Gesellschaft Nürnberg e.V. Marientorgraben 8, 90402 Nürnberg

Mietje Germonpré & Riku Hämäläinen

Red coloured cave bear bones: an indication of symbolic behaviour in the Upper Palaeolithic of Belgium

Several bear bones with ochre traces from Belgian caves were discovered. We propose here a possible explanation for the colouring of these bear remains. For this we rely on the use of ethnographic analogy. In the ethnographic literature we searched for indications of the application of colours in the bear ceremonies of circumpolar societies. The colours used most frequently are red and black. The striking resemblance in colour utilisation over wide geographical areas imply the great time depths of the bear ceremonies.
Taphonomic analysis of the ochred cave bear bones from the Goyet cave revealed that they have a different frequency distribution from the skeletal elements without ochre. One bear bone has both cut marks and ochre stains. The red ochre colouring of these bear remains was intentional and in our opinion had a symbolic meaning. Two AMS dates on the coloured bones suggest that ritual activities happened at two different periods: at about 23,600 BP and 18,800 BP. Three brown bear elements (lower jaw, canine, third phalanx) from the Magdalenian site of Chaleux also have ochre stains. The red coloured bear remains from the Belgian sites demonstrate the symbolic value the bears had for Upper Palaeolithic people and have parallels with the colouring of bear remains in the ethnographical bear rituals. We postulate that these bear ceremonies have a very ancient origin, dating from at least the Gravettian.

Addresses of authors:

Mietje Germonpré, Department of Palaeontology, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences; mietje.germonpre@naturalsciences.be
Riku Hämäläinen, Department of Comparative Religion, University of Helsinki, Finland; riku.t.hamalainen@helsinki.fi

© Naturhistorische Gesellschaft Nürnberg e.V.download www.zobodat.at

ZOBODAT - www.zobodat.at

Zoologisch-Botanische Datenbank/Zoological-Botanical Database

Digitale Literatur/Digital Literature

Zeitschrift/Journal: Abhandlungen der Naturhistorischen Gesellschaft Nürnberg

Jahr/Year: 2005

Band/Volume: 45

Autor(en)/Author(s): Germonpre Mietje, Hämäläinen Riku

Artikel/Article: Red coloured cave bear bones: an indication of symbolic behaviour in the Upper Palaeolithic of Belgium 113-114