Red: The symbol in history

ABSTRACT
This article presents historical information and curiosities on the red. As a symbol, color present in human nature and its representation. Color is an integral part of the perception of space and objects in which the person relies. From the etymological point of view, the word red comes from rubrum corradical rubeum. In Latin it is indicated by the terms rutilus and ruber which conceptually represent the meaning of: blood and life. Red is the symbol of body and matter. Red is also the color of fire, heat, energy. Fire is the basis of light that is dimensioned in that part of the day when human action takes place and for this reason represents action in general. Red and shell were the first symbols used by the individual as personification of blood and water, representing how the symbol precedes the sign. Red ocher has a primary importance in burial rites. Red is linked to the inoculation of the dead and to rites of rebirth.

KEYWORDS
Red, Power, Life, Symbol, Sign, Death

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1. RED: THE SYMBOL IN HISTORY

Color is an integral part of the perception of space and objects in which the person relies. From the etymological point of view, the word red comes from rubeum corradical ruber which conceptually represent the meaning of: blood and life. The word Red in Greek is ἐρυθρός, -α, -όν erythros φοινικος, -η, -όν fonikus; Adjective red; While φοινικος, -α, -όν fonikus, is purple red, locust. Red is the symbol of body and matter. It opposes white and black, considered in their sense of light and darkness, and with which in the Middle Ages it formed a symbolic triad. A symbolism, that linked to the red that vertically and horizontally crosses the history of humanity from life to death. Probably this substance represented the blood and the beginning and end of life, in fact, Neanderthal [1] and Cro-Magnon peoples used red ocher [2] for funeral rites or fertility whose basic component is both a mineral and a color. Fe2O3 hematite owes its name to the Greek word hema which means just blood. Red ocher has a primary importance in burial rites. The places where the bodies were buried, were carved with red ocher, which was used to color the skeletons. Red is linked to the inoculation of the dead and to rites of rebirth. The meaning of colors in various places on earth has not always represented the same symbologies, in ancient Egypt, for example, called Kemet black earth, black color has no negative value as the color of the silt and the lender of life. While this happened, the red had it and was interpreted in its negative qualities by being tied to Seth Osiris’s killer with red eyes and hair. The representation of its red coloring could then assume the meaning of evil or victory depending on the context in which it is interpreted. The ancients used it to protect themselves from the fire and it was the color of Isis, the goddess in fact depicted as a woman dressed in a long red tunic which is the symbol of the bride, and the protector of the sailors.

2. SYMBOLOGY OF RED AND RELIGION

Red and shell were the first symbols used by the individual as personification of blood and water, representing how the symbol precedes the sign. Its universality lives in the representation of reality, not translated from the sign into its mere representation. In early Christian art the archangels and the seraphim were painted red, which was considered the color of earthly and spiritual love and also the color in the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus where we finds the rays symbols to suggest the light, and the light
Flame suggests heat where red is the color of the heart. St. John will say:

This is he who came with water and blood, Jesus Christ; Not with water alone, but with water, and with blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. Because three are the ones that bear witness: the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three are in agreement (1 Jn 5:6-8).

The symbol in the manifestation made by St. John is that of celestial love but represents its opposite within a symbolic vision of the dialectical unity of the parts. In fact often the Devil is represented in red and black colors within the symbols of Western culture. In the liturgical colors used by the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite, red has various meanings, highlighted by liturgical dresses worn by ministers presiding over the functions and some furnishings present in the church. Within the liturgical context they are represented by red: the passion of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the blood spilled by Christ and the martyrs, making them manifest their true royalty that are called Princes of the Church. Tied to carnal love, red in the Revelation with purple and scarlet are the colors of the woman representing Babylon the Great.

...There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, covered with blasphemous names, with seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, (…). On the forehead he wrote a mysterious name: Babylon the great, the mother of the prostitutes and the abominations of the earth. Then I realized that the woman was drunk with the blood of the people of God and the blood of those who died for faith in Jesus (Revelation 17: 1-6, CEI version). Red is also the color of fire, heat, energy, and light as it is in the writings of the Apocalypse associated with redemption, in the same passage it will be later read: (…) The monster and the ten horns You saw will hate the prostitute, they will divide its flesh and destroy its remains with the fire, (Revelation 17: 15-16, CEI version).

History attributes to red symbols of power, religion and war. For his ability to refer to the two primary elements that are the fire and the blood, called to be in Christendom for example the symbol of the sacrifice of Christ and of sins and of deep love and the fire of punishment. In the 13th and 14th centuries the Pope, dressed in white, went dressed in red as well as the cardinals who through this color meant to be ready to sacrifice for Christ. The paintings will dipingevoano di rosso gli arcangeli e i serafini, con quello che era considerato il colore dell’amore terreno e spirituale e altresì il colore nell’immagine del Sacro Cuore di Gesù dove ritroviamo i simboli dei raggi per suggerire la luce e della fiamma a suggerire il calore dove il rosso è il colore del cuore. S. Giovanni dirà:

Questi è colui che è venuto con acqua e sangue, Gesù Cristo; non con acqua soltanto, ma con l’acqua, e con il sangue. Ed è lo Spirito che rende testimonianza, perché lo Spirito è la verità. Poiché tre sono quelli che rendono testimonianza: lo Spirito, l’acqua e il sangue, e questi tre sono concordi (1 Gv 5, 6-8).

Il simbolo presente nella manifestazione fatta da S. Giovanni è quello dell’amore celeste ma rappresenta il suo opposto all’interno di una visiona simbolica dell’unità dioteticale delle parti. Infatti spesso il Diavolo è rappresentato con i colori rosso e nero all’interno delle simbologie della cultura occidentale. Nei colori liturgici utilizzati dalla Chiesa Cattolica di rito latino, il rosso possiede infatti vari significati, evidenziati dai paramenti liturgici indossati dai ministri che presiedono le funzioni e in alcune suppellettili presenti nella chiesa. All’interno del contesto liturgico sono rappresentati dal rosso: la passione di Cristo, lo Spirito Santo e il sangue versato da Cristo e dai martiri, fatto che palesa la loro regalità tant’è vero che vengono chiamati Principi della chiesa. Legato all’amore carnale, il rosso nell’Apocalisse con la porpora e lo scarlatto sono i colori della donna che rappresenta Babilonia La Grande.

...Là vidi una donna seduta sopra una bestia scarlatta, coperta di nomi blasfemi, con sette teste e dieci corna. La donna era ammantata di porpora e di scarlatto, (…). Sulla fronte aveva scritto un nome misterioso: Babilonia la grande, la madre delle prostitute e degli abomini della terra. Allora mi accorsi che la donna era ubriaca del sangue del popolo di Dio e del sangue di quelli che sono morti per la fede in Gesù. (Apocalisse, 17: 1-6, versione CEI). Il rosso è anche il colore del fuoco, del calore, dell’energia e della luce è come tale negli scritti dell’Apocalisse gli si associa la redenzione, nello stesso passo diffatti successivamente si leggerà: (…) Il mostro e le dieci corna che ha visto odiarono la prostituta, (…) divoreranno la sua carne e distriggeranno i suoi resti con il fuoco. (Apocalisse, 17: 15-16, versione CEI).

La storia attribuisce al rosso i simboli del potere, della religione e della guerra. Per la sua facoltà
feature the red devils as well as other heroes and knights wearing red clothes or accessories, often symbols of animated negative vales, overturning that positive symbolism that in the past represented the red painted angels. A precious color that in the sixteenth century was reserved for the power just as much so that ordinary men no longer sat in red, favoring that the color was reserved to symbolize the power of the Popes, Cardinals, Kings and Queens. Men would begin to dress blue dresses that until then was a color reserved to women because they called the mantle of the Mother of Our Lady. In the *theory of the four elements* there are as many correspondences between color and element: fire is red, water is blue and air is white and earth is black. Fire is the basis of light that is dimensioned in that part of the day when human action takes place and for this reason represents action in general and as such or as a symbol of the attack and conquest is complementary to the green that represents the color of conservation and defense and symbolizes the god Mars, the god of war Mars represents the red color in its negative aspect linked to force, violence and bloodshed. Like in the Christian rite to drink the blood of Christ during the Eucharistic ritual represented by red wine, along with his body, represented by the consecrated place. In some texts the Tibetan magical precepts are mentioned with all kinds of human blood used for the various rites related to it. Red is revealed to be in the light of what has so far been exposed in relation to blood as the primary symbol of life and often linked to other symbols such as shells, oysters or pearls, a sign of aquatic cosmology and sexual symbolism. The scholar Elijah Mircea writes that sexual symbolism indicated the second rebirth created by the initiatory or sepulchral ritual [7]. From anthropologist Leroy Gourhan also come countless examples of ritual burial made of red ocher and shells. By associating the symbolism of colors and red in particular with such an enormous mythological and social heritage that has come from the representation of the genetic and biological one, we come to understand some other aspects that connect the perceptions of colors to the resulting emotional reactions in the person. The results of these associations can be found in everyday life and are fundamental if they are included in some fields of study related to design, marketing and the economy in general. That is to say that material sphere in which human life is reflected in contemporary anthropological contexts, utilizing the negative and positive values of the colors to induce precise emotional states, for example, for commercial purposes. (A.I.Tallarita-M.Cautela)
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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
I do not have conflicts of interest at this time.

NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] 400,000 years ago began the history of color, at a time that the first cultural use of color was made for the decoration of the body.

[2] The use of ochre used as dye in wall paintings, movable works, body decorations in the Paleolithic in Europe, during the middle, gets remarkably intensified in the Musterian burial rituals. During the Upper Paleolithic its use is linked to the color Red, blood, life, death.

[3] Human beings that lived in the Middle Stone Age have employed ritual pigments at least 400,000 years ago: this is the result of the excavations of Prof. L. Barham of the University of Liverpool, who during the course of campaigns carried out at the end of the 90s by the Twin Rivers caves in Zambia (Central Africa), has found fragments.

[4] Daughter of Nut and Geb, Sister of Nephite, Seth and Osiris, who she was also married with and father of her son Horus. According to The myth, told in the texts of the Pyramids and Plutarch, tells that Isis and Osiris with the help of his sister Nefti, assembled Osiris’s body parts, bringing him back to life. For this reason it was considered a divinity associated with Magic and extinction.

[5] His name means Asset, throne in his hieroglyphic, associated with royalty, heavenly goddess of motherhood and Fertility in Egyptian mythology.


NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] 400,000 di anni fa ha avuto inizio la storia del colore, a quel periodo si deve il primo uso culturale del colore avvenne per la decorazione del corpo.

[2] L'uso dell'ocra utilizzata come colorante nelle pitture parietali, nelle opere mobiliari, nelle decorazioni corporali nel Paleolitico in Europa, durante il medio, si intensifica notevolmente in nei rituali sepolcrali del Musteriano recente nel Paleolitico superiore il suo uso è legato al colore rosso sangue vita, morte

[3] Esseri umani appartenenti all'Età della Pietra media hanno impiegato pigmenti a scopo rituale almeno 400.000 anni fa: è quanto risulta dagli scavi del Prof. L. Barham dell'Università di Liverpool, che nel corso di campagne effettuate alla fine degli anni ’90 presso le caverne di Twin Rivers, nello Zambia (Africa centrale) , ha rinvenuto i frammenti.


