

Lectures 21: Notes on the changes across the Middle / Upper Palaeolithic boundary

Major changes across the boundary

- 1) Shift to blade production - associated with increased use of hafting or mounting techniques. Typology of artifact types differentiates - new tool types with new blank forms.
- 2) First widespread use of bone, antler, ivory for formal tool manufacture. Use of grinding and polishing as a shaping technique.
- 3) First ornaments
 - pierced teeth
 - intentionally shaped or formed beads and pendants
 - perforated shells
- 4) First representational images - in fixed and mobile forms. Materials include stone, bone, antler, ivory and clay.
- 5) Changes in dietary patterns. Superficially seemingly contradictory
 - Greater reliance on single species of mammals, specialized hunting techniques (W. Europe, esp. reindeer)
 - General broadening of the dietary base with new foods. Initial stages of the “broad spectrum revolution”
- 6) In some regions a shift from uniformly small settlements to pattern of very large settlements associated with smaller outlying settlements. (A few enormous sites - several acres in extent - “seasonal aggregation sites”.)
- 7) Higher frequencies of exotic materials in Upper Palaeolithic sites. Some used for tools, but most for manufacture of personal ornaments (sea shells - for beads)
- 8) Higher site densities per unit area. Inferred higher population densities. Expansion of human populations into Australia and Americas.
- 9) More rapid and continuous technological change becomes the norm. The technological “snowball” effect becomes obvious.
- 10) First record of significant stone artifact variation from geographic region to region.