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 extant - “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.