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# Bone artefacts from transitional and Early Upper Palaeolithic techno-complexes in Italy

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## Résumé

Bone artefacts play a key role in the material culture of the Early Upper Palaeolithic techno-complexes of Europe. Even if bone smoothers and scrapers were also occasionally produced by Neandertals, bone instruments in general are commonly interpreted as distinctive markers of the cultures that replaced the Mousterian complexes between 45.000 and 35.000 years ago. In particular, the emergence of differently shaped tools, usually points and awls, also implies changes on a conceptual level. Moreover, the systematic production of bone implements entails specific manufacturing techniques that are interpreted as a feature of modern human behaviour. For these reasons, the study of bone artefacts is of pivotal interest within the debate concerning the identification of the makers of the so-called "transitional cultures".

Our presentation provides a synthesis on bone artefacts found in archaeological sites containing the Middle-to-Upper Palaeolithic transition (Mousterian, Uluzzian, Protoaurignacian), which are located in the Northern Mediterranean area: Grotta di Fumane, Riparo del Broion, Riparo Bombrini in Northern Italy; Grotta di Castelcivita, Grotta della Cala and Grotta del Cavallo in Southern Italy. Currently available data show that formal Mousterian bone tools are very scarce and are mostly made from bone shaft fragments. Conversely the production of "fine shaped" bone tools is systematic in the Uluzzian, where the complexity inherent in the manufacturing processes suggests that the bone artefacts are not to be considered as an

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\*Intervenant

expedient resource.

In order to assess the innovative features of transitional and of the Early Upper Palaeolithic bone assemblages, their mutual relationship and their implications for the onset of modern behaviour, we propose here an overview of the whole *corpus* of bone artefacts from the aforementioned sites, carried out by combining data from zooarchaeological, technological and functional studies

**Mots-Clés:** Uluzzian, Early Upper Palaeolithic, bone tools, Italy