
The Italian Peninsula between 45 and 39 ky ago: the sunset of the "old" and the dawn of the "new"? Let the lithic industries tell!

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Résumé

Understanding timing and ways of the technical tradition shifts between final Mousterian and Early Upper Palaeolithic (EUP) in Europe (45-39 ky BP) is one of the most important questions in lithic studies. Beside the technical diversity generally attributed to the end of Mousterian, new traditions such as Châtelperronian, Szeletian, Lincombian, Uluzzian, Protoaurignacian, Early Aurignacian emerge in this timeframe.

How can we explain such technical changes over time? Can it be imputed to the arrival of

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new populations - and what would the geographical source of such migratory process be? Is it rather the result of convergent evolution, or the output of a long-term process of exchange of cultural and biological information? Can these new tool-makers be identified as Neanderthals or Modern Humans (or both)?

In this debate, the Italian Peninsula plays a pivotal role both for its geographic position between eastern and western Mediterranean Europe, and for the occurrence of refuge areas during cold periods. The presence of several sites with evidence attributed to final Mousterian, Uluzzian and Protoaurignacian techno-complexes provides a reflexion laboratory for understanding continuity/discontinuity processes in the mosaic of new technical trends and elements of local evolution.

Our study is aimed at providing a summary picture of the available data in this key geographic area. Through the evidence collected at a number of reference sites (Riparo del Broion, Grotta di Fumane and Riparo Bombrini in Northern Italy; Grotta di Castelcivita, Grotta della Cala, Uluzzo C and Grotta del Cavallo in Southern Italy), we are going to present the main technical features of the Mousterian, Uluzzian and Protoaurignacian traditions in a diachronic and spatial perspective.

This preliminary synthesis is part of a broader 5 years' research program (ERC n. 724046 – SUCCESS), which involves a detailed study and a comparison of all the lithic industries collected from the above-mentioned sites. Thanks to the joint effort of several lithic technology experts, we hope to contribute to better define the Uluzzian phenomenon, and to participate in the most extensive debate related to the disappearance of Neanderthals and the arrival of early Anatomically Modern Humans in Europe.

Mots-Clés: Final Mousterian, Uluzzian, Protoaurignacian, Lithic technology, Italy