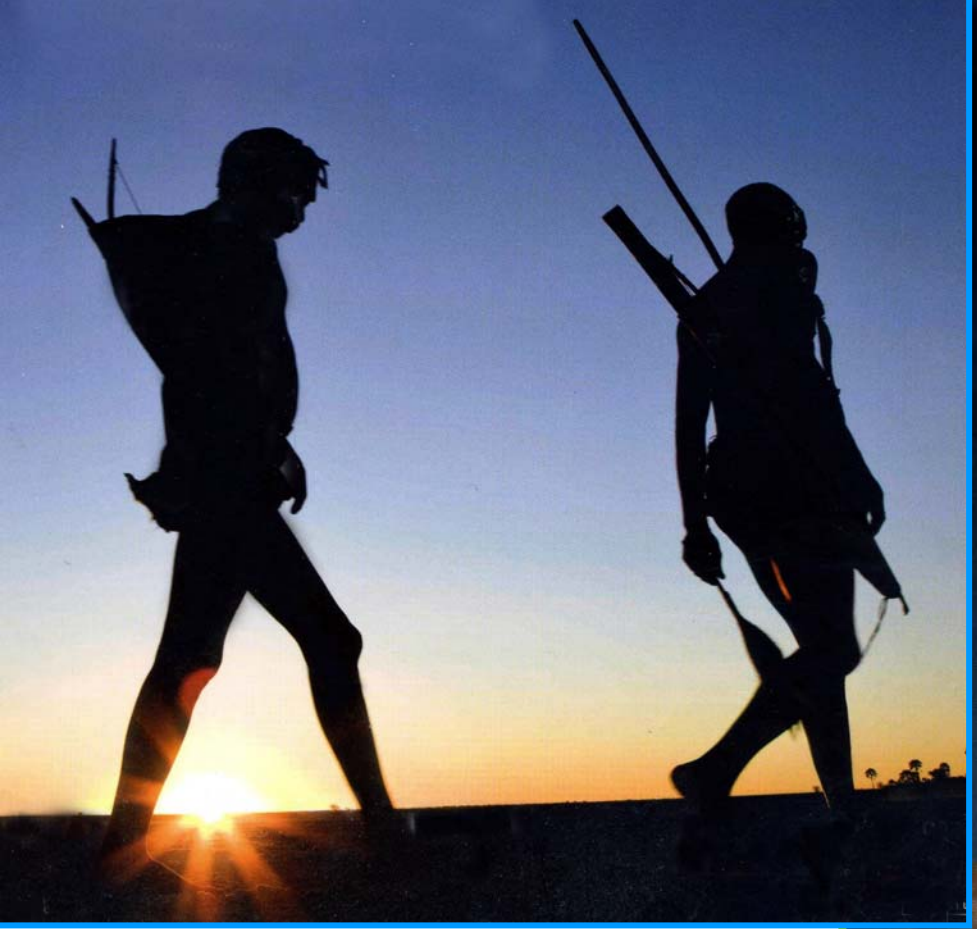
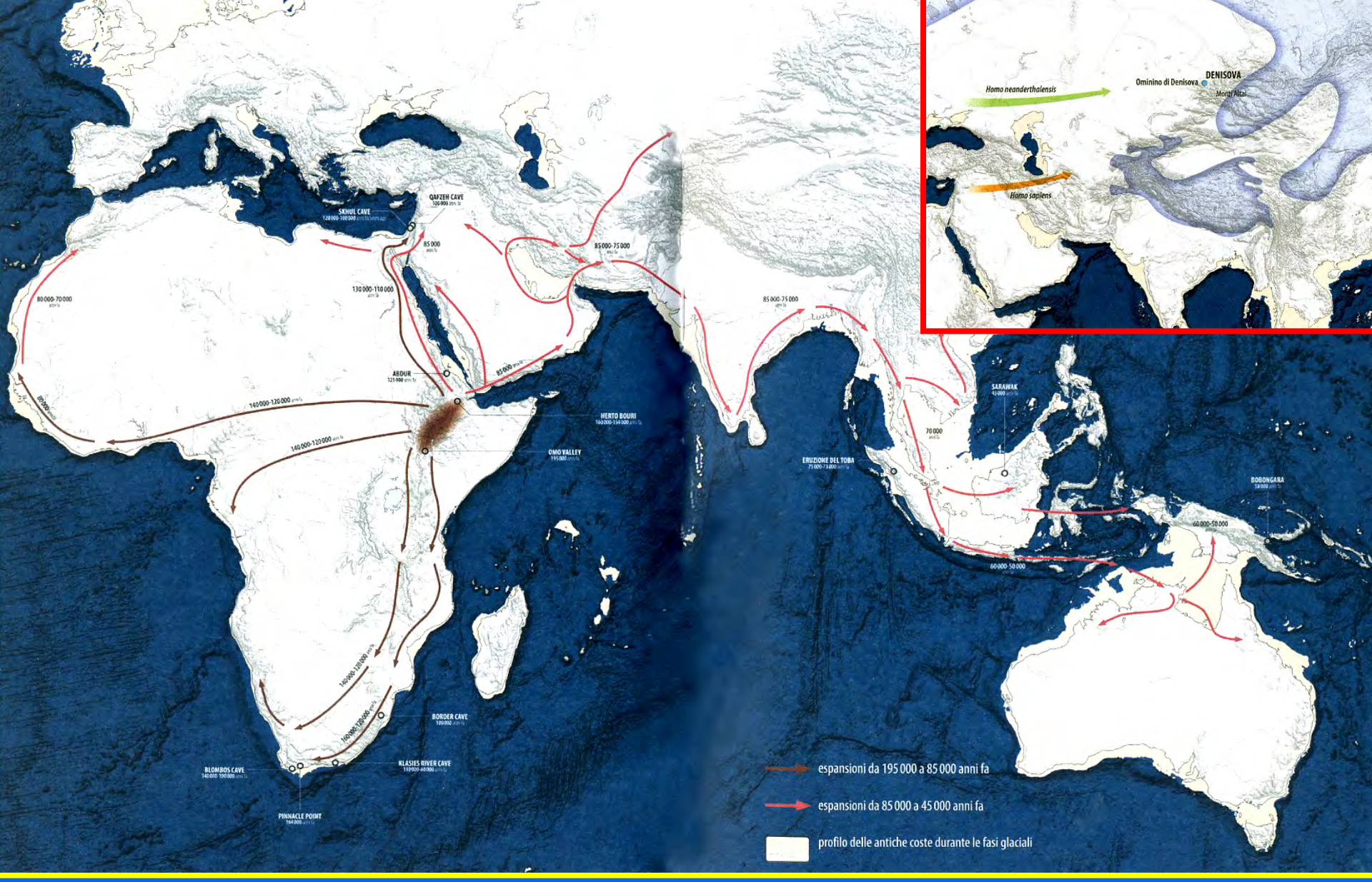
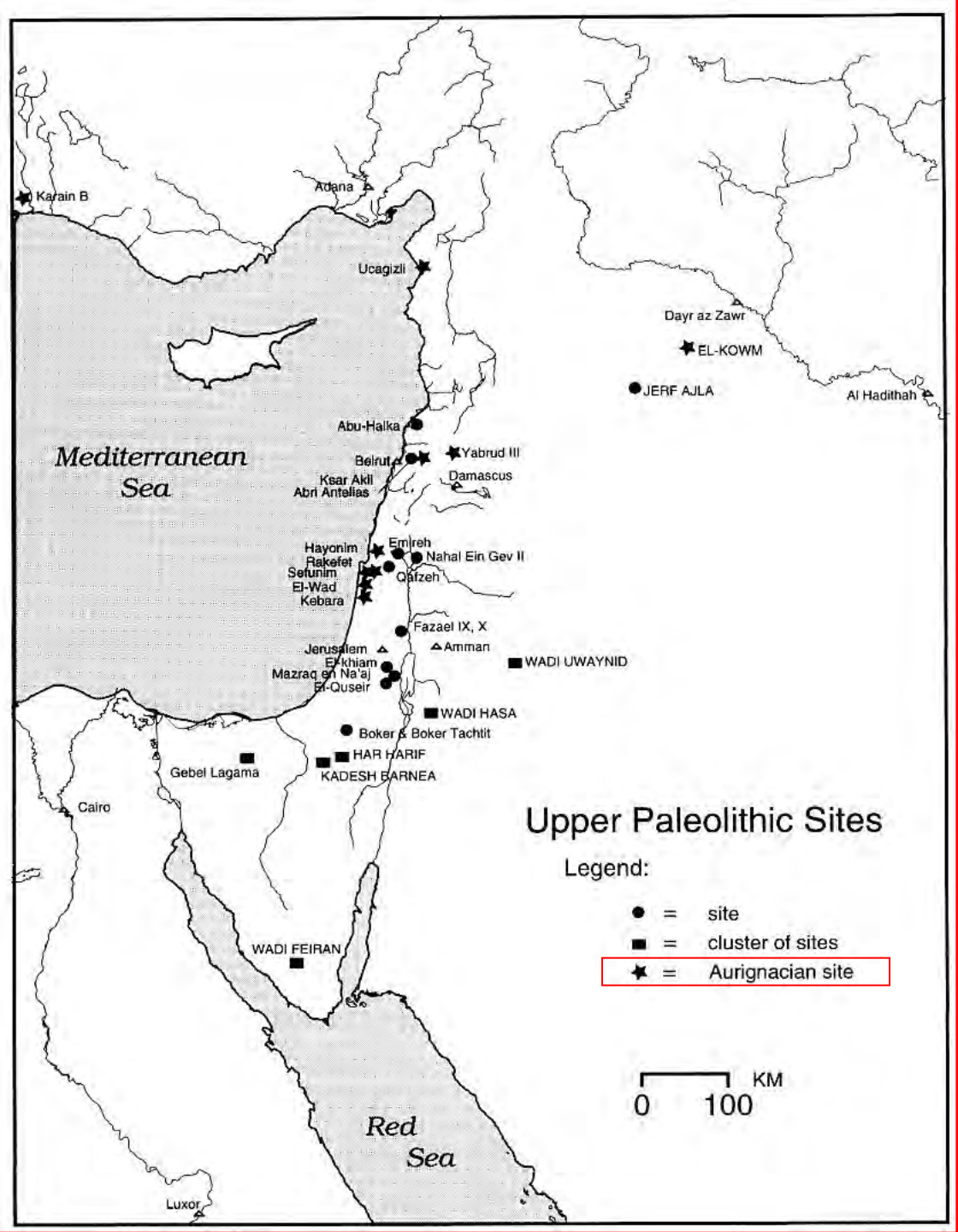
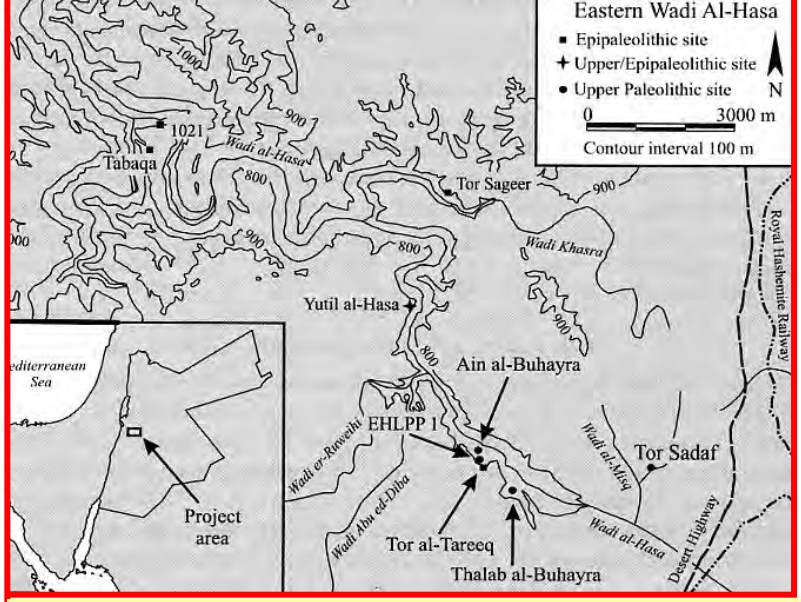


When did the first modern humans make their appearence in the Levant and in Europe? Where did they originate from? How rapidly did they spread?

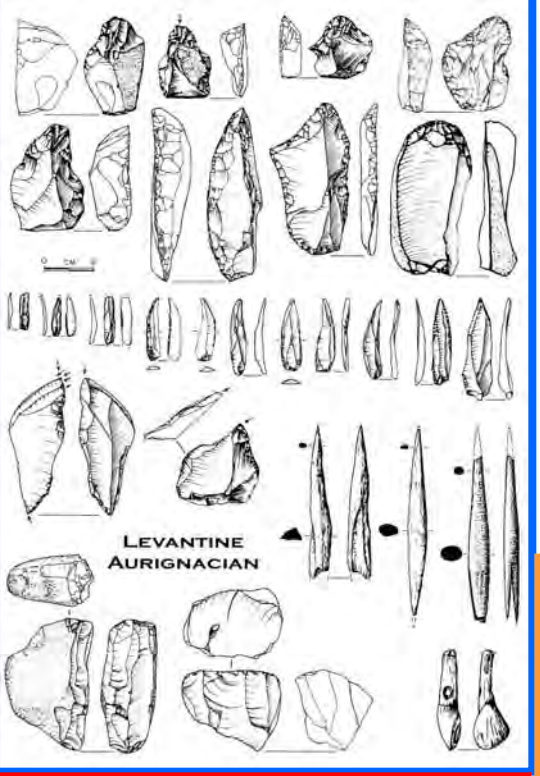


Modern humans developed in central eastern Africa at least 200,000 years ago, and from there started to spread toward other regions some 100,000 years from the present. We know that ca. 90,000 years from now they were already in the Levant



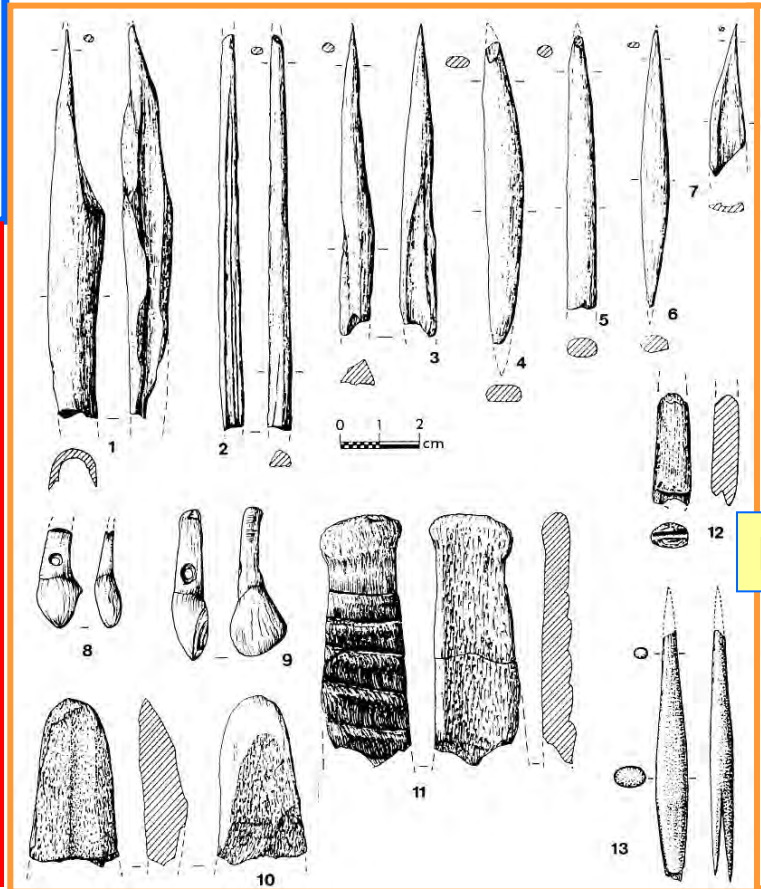


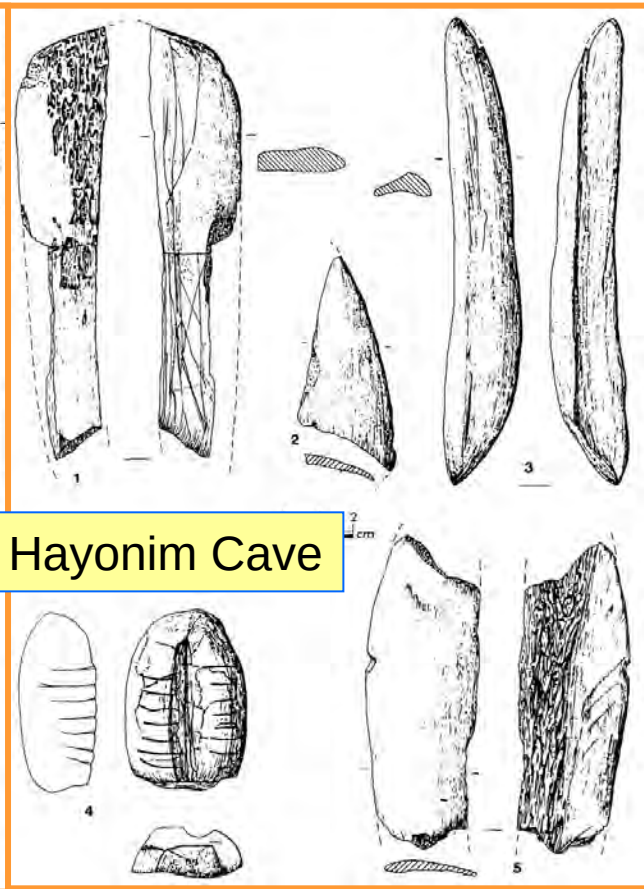
The Levant plays a key role in the study of the first modern humans. Thanks to many excavations and the discovery of many human bones, this is one of the region from where the complex interaction between Neanderthals and modern humans might be understood. According to the evidence of the chipped stone assemblages, three main periods are known to date: Middle Palaeolithic Mousterian, Early Upper Palaeolithic, and Uper Palaeolithic, Aurignacian



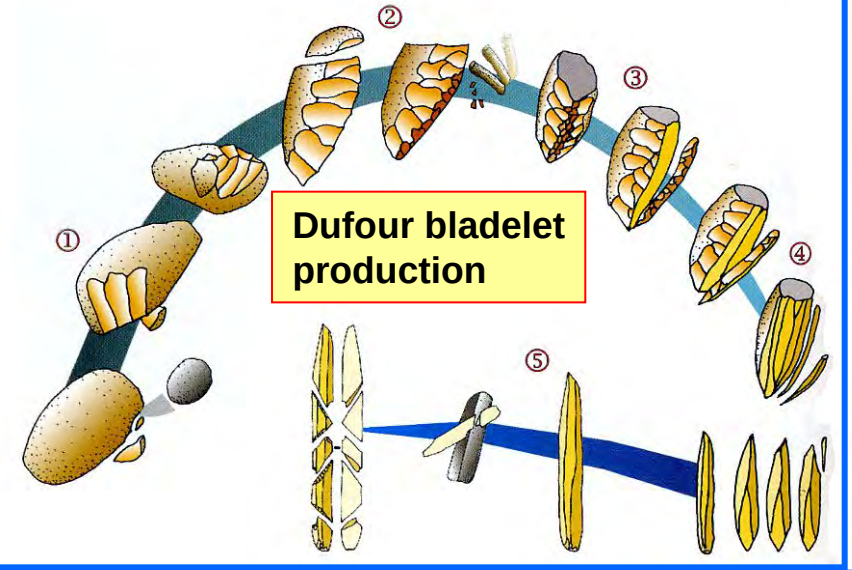
The Aurignacian has always been considered one of the characteristic markers of the beginning of the Late Palaeolithic period and a typical product of the modern humans.
Known from many sites both in Europe and part of Asia, the chipped stone assemblages of the Aurignacian culture show very characteristic traits. Among them is the production of very small bladelets retouched along only one side, called “Dufour bladelets”, and different types of end scrapers, among which carinated types

Other characteristics regard the production of bone, ivory and antler tools, represented by perforators, spearheads, spatulae, ornaments and other items. In particular spearheads play a very important role





Hayonim Cave



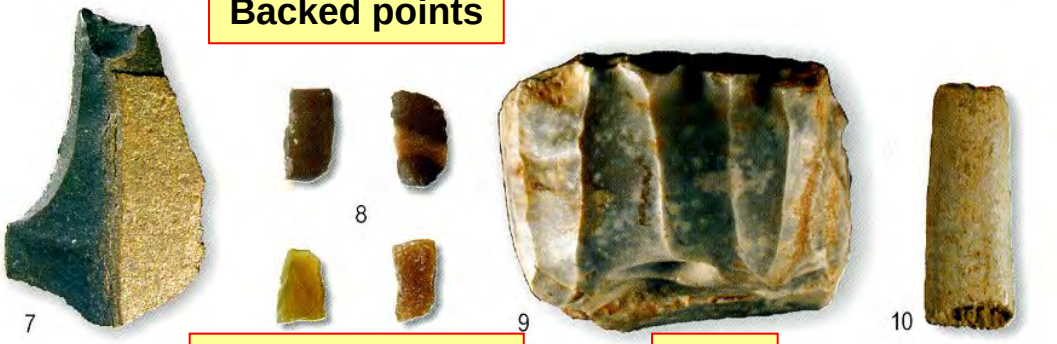
Dufour bladelet production

Polished bone implements

Burins

End scrapers

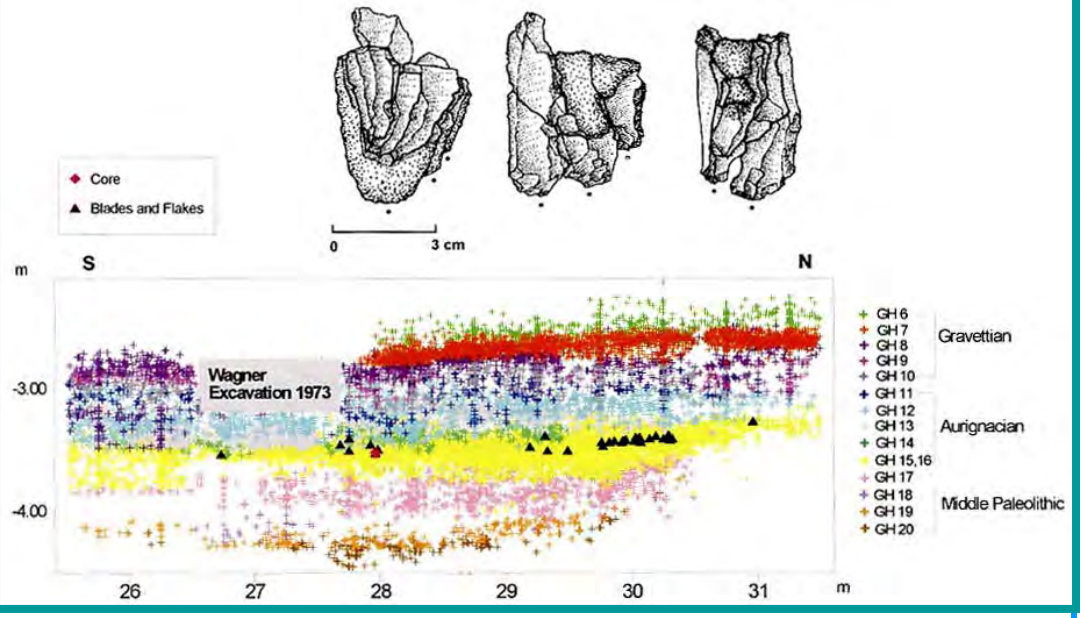
Backed points

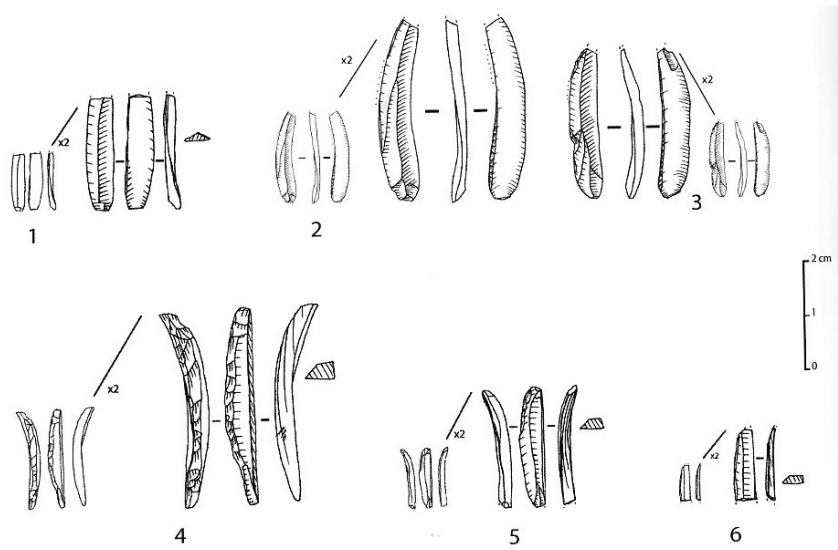


Dufour bladelets

Core

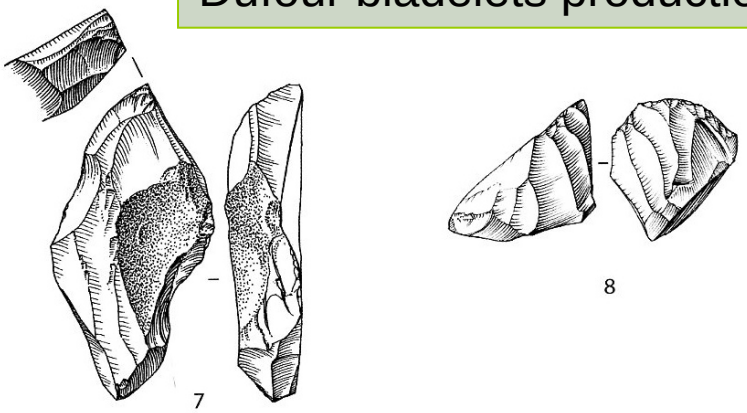
The new took kit of the Aurignacian hunters is represented by a greater variety of tools, mainly obtained from blades and bladelets, following new methods of manufacture that were previously unknown

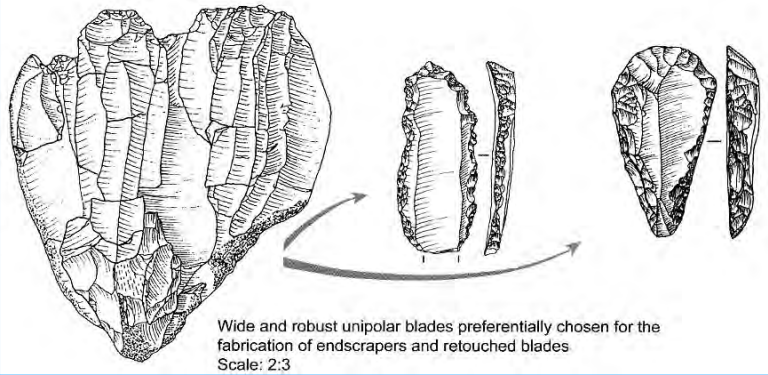




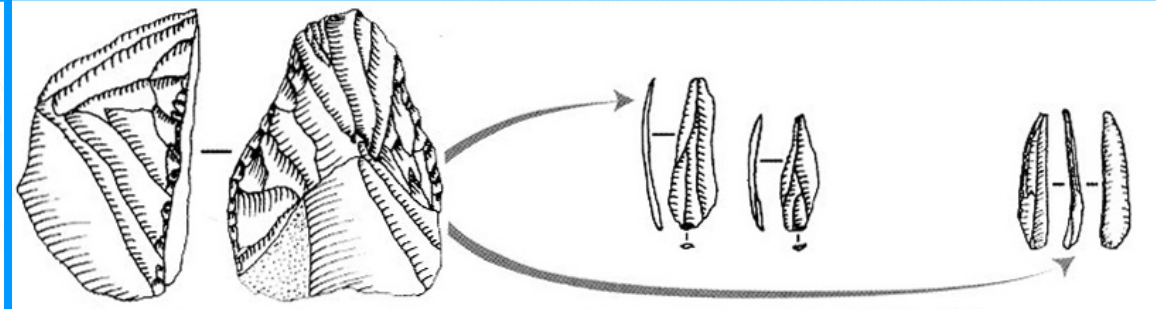
The new production technique, indicating the presence of modern humans, is well known from may sites of Eurasia. Classical sequences (above) show the occurrence of Aurignacian horizons between Mousterian and Gravettian layers, the assemblages from which are represented by new types of blade implements

Dufour bladelets production



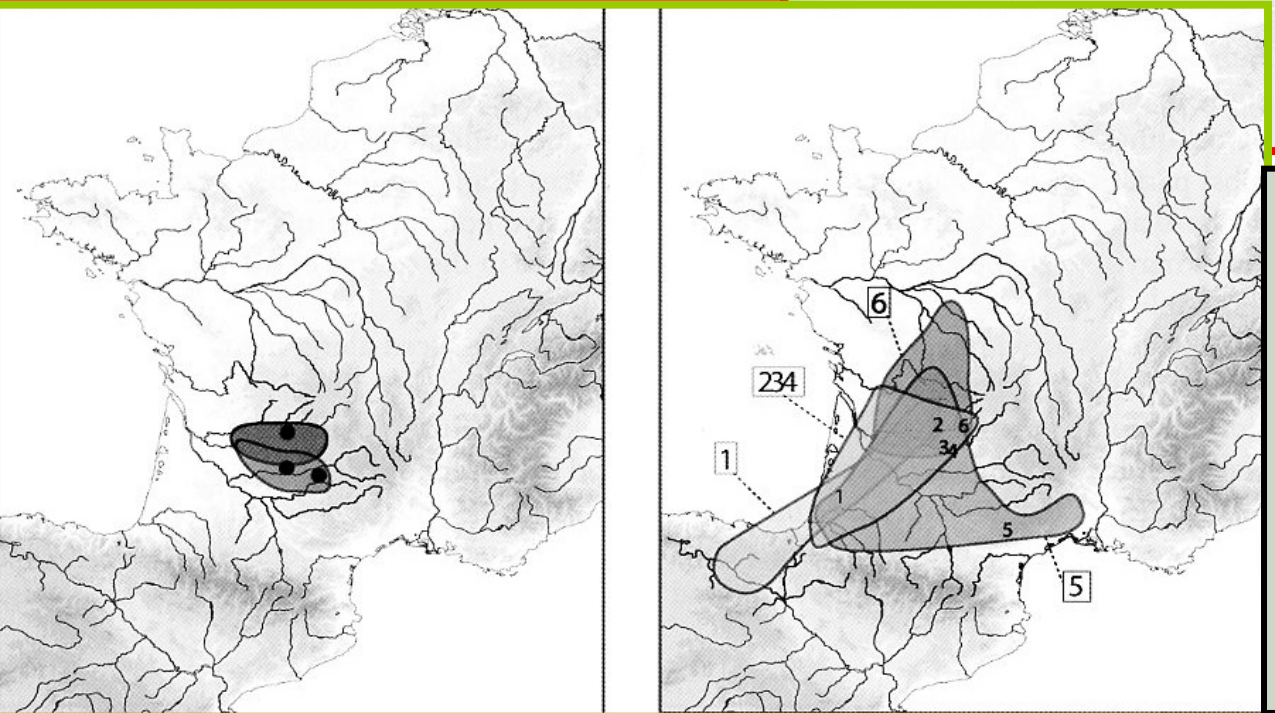


Wide and robust unipolar blades preferentially chosen for the fabrication of endscrapers and retouched blades
Scale: 2:3

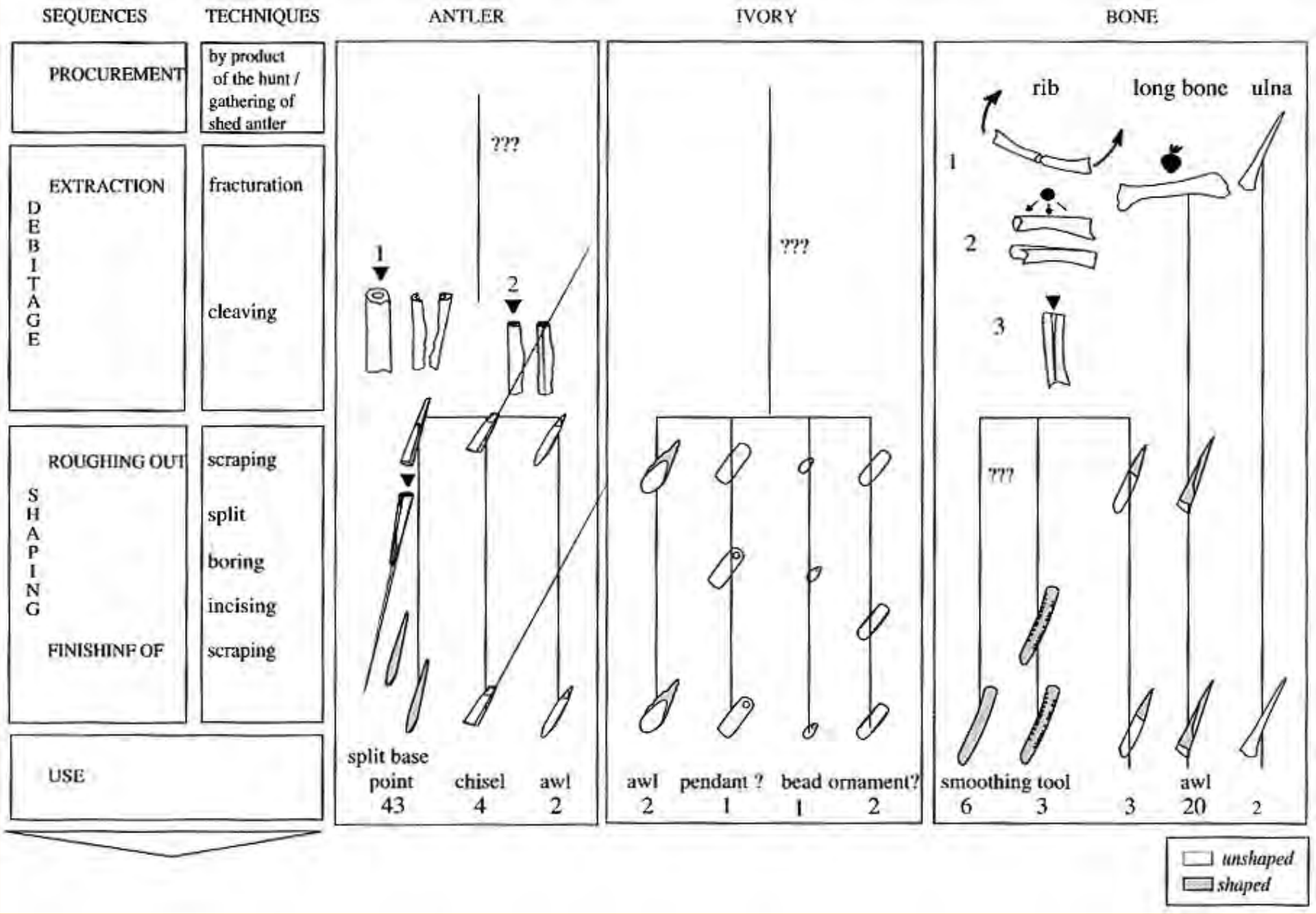


Small bladelets with curved profile more often unretouched or transformed into Dufour bladelets. They were obtained from the reduction of carinated pieces

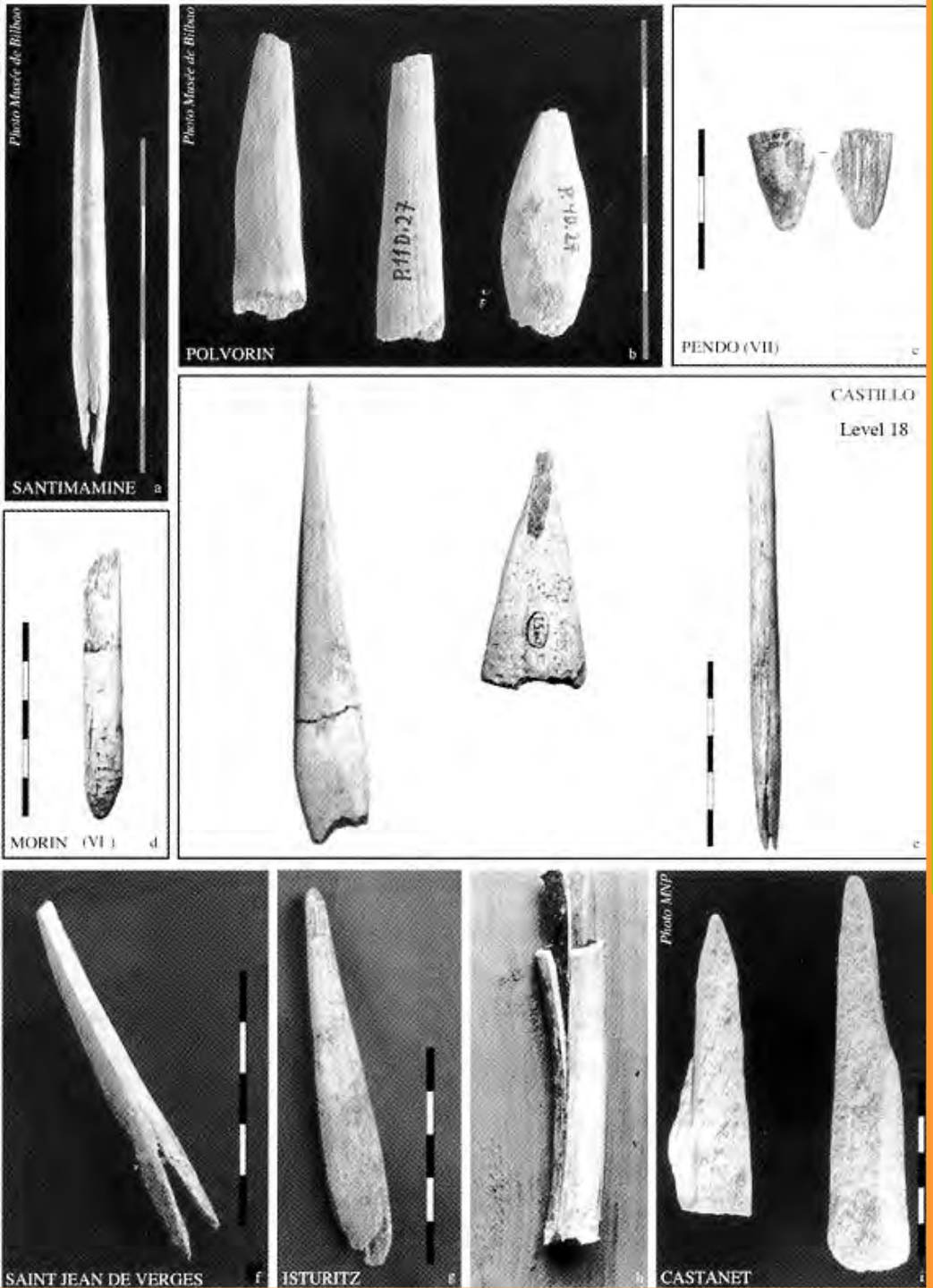
The study of the lithic raw material sources, exploitation and circulation has greatly improved during the last 20 years. The case below shows what was known of the Aurignacian lithics circulation in southern France before (left) and after (right). As clearly shown, the pattern has completely changed and has widened our knowledge of the movements of the early modern humans

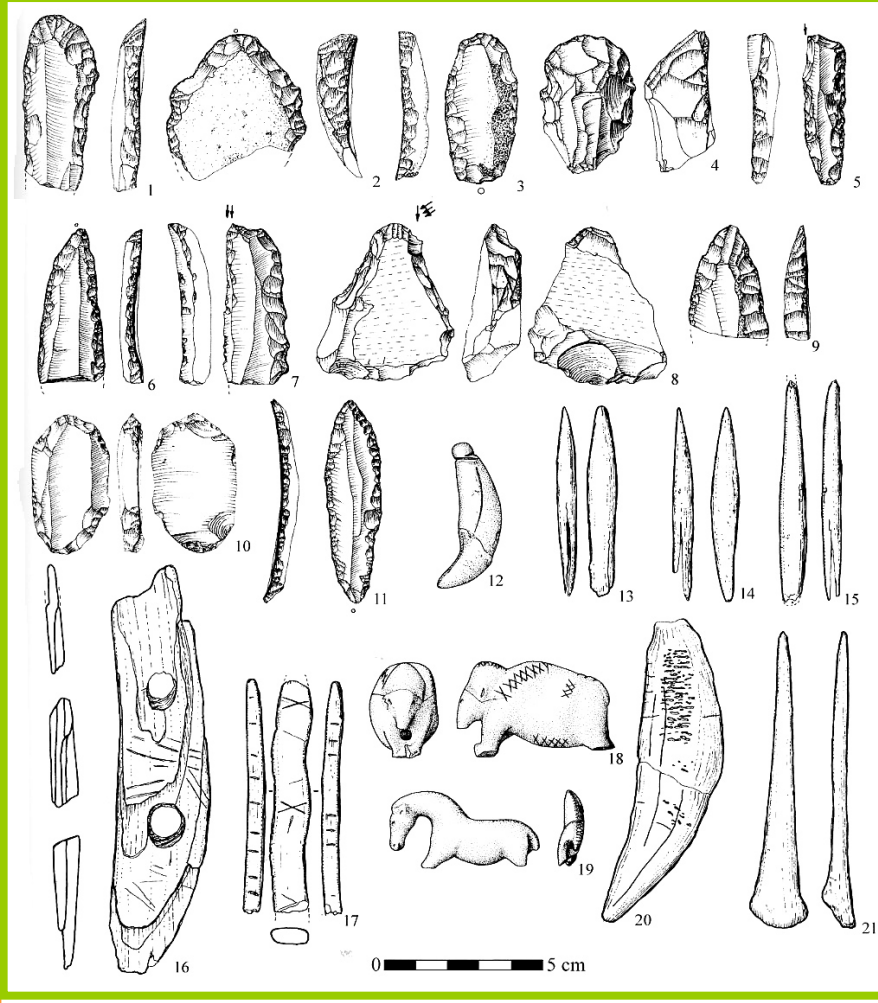


The figure above shows the lithic raw materials circulation in different regions of north, central and southern Italy from which good quality lithic raw material outcrops were exploited during the Aurignacian times

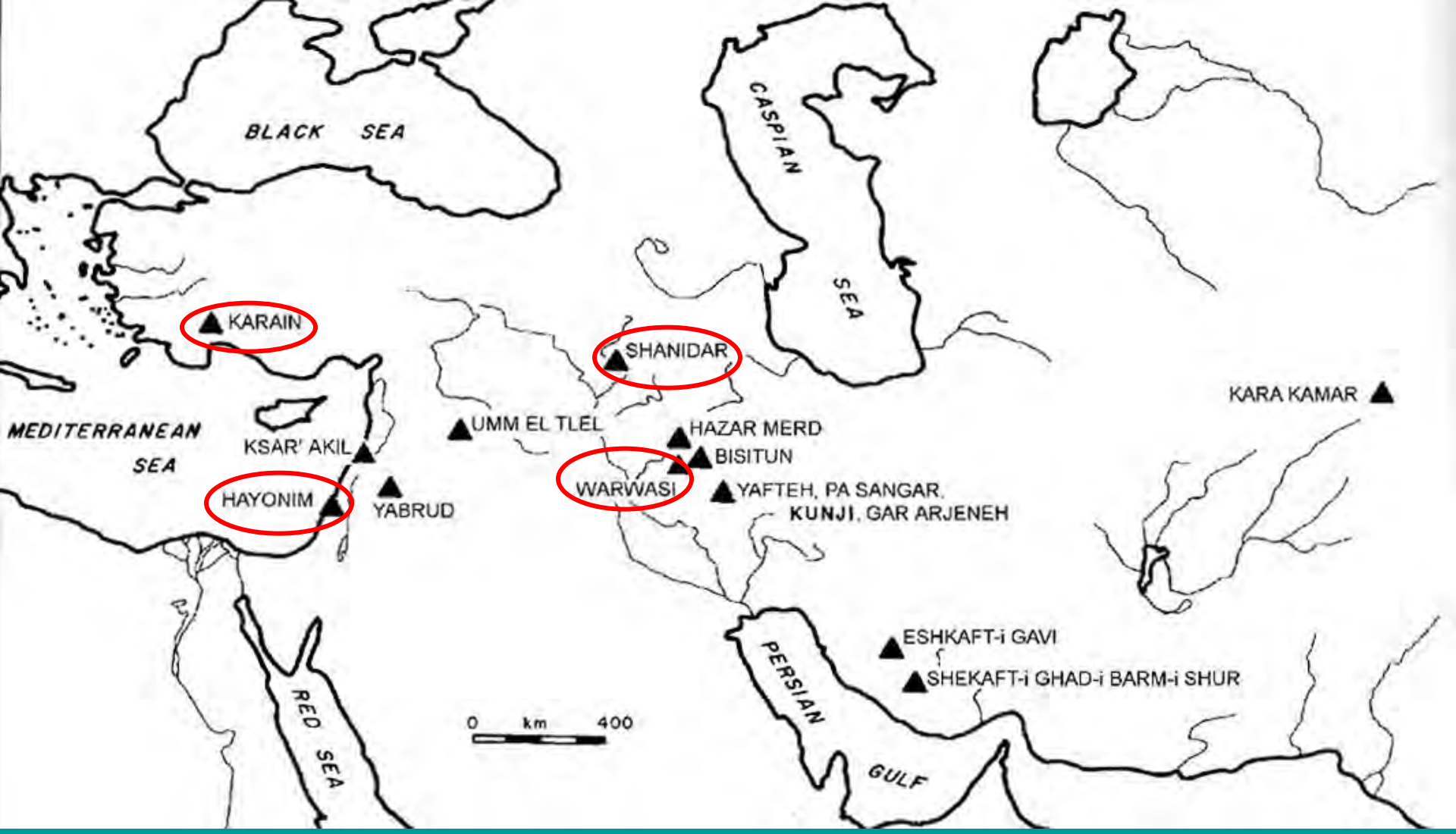


Bone, ivory and antler tools were also manufactured following the above technique

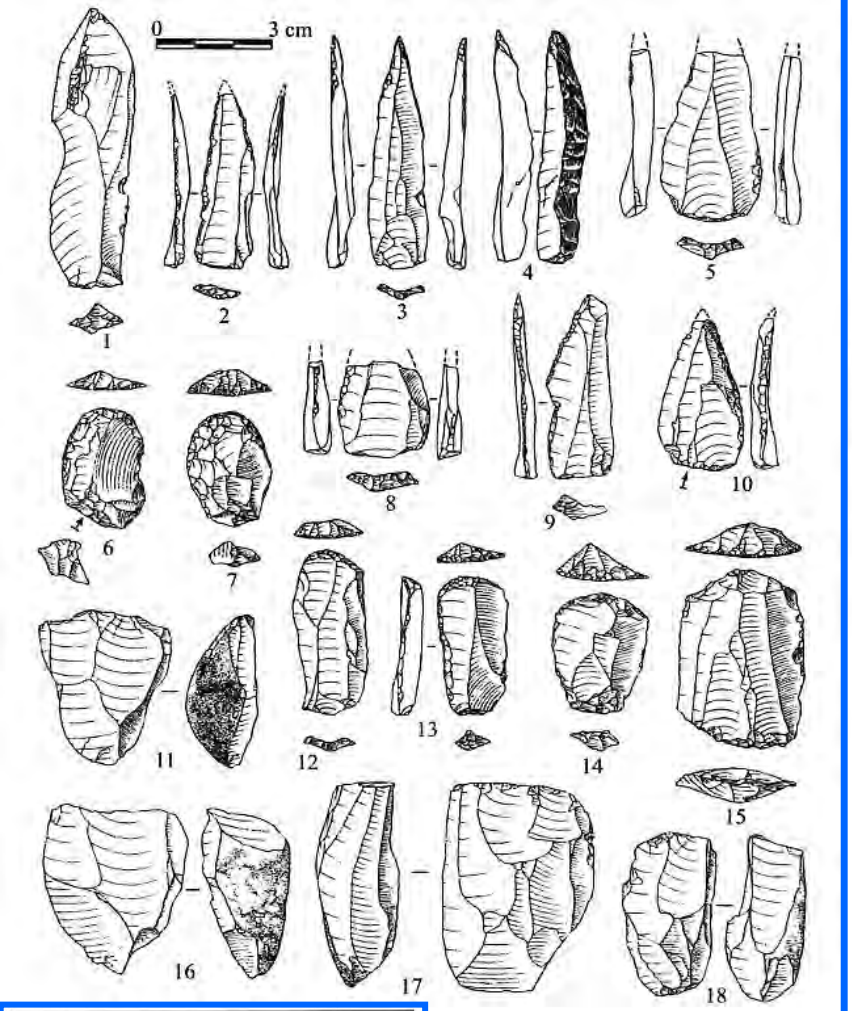




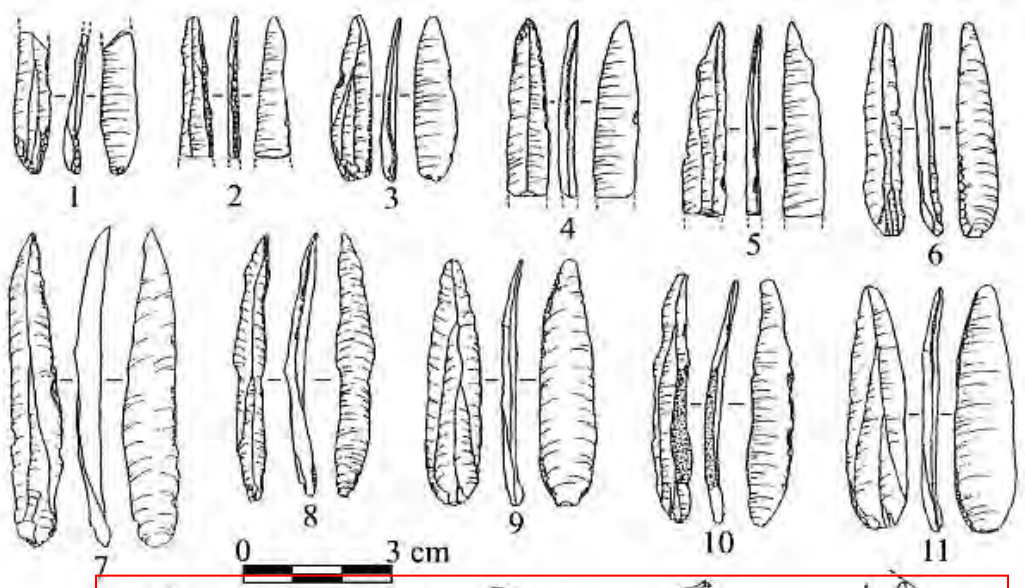
During the Aurignacian bone tools became so important to be used to define the chronology of the sites from which they have been recovered. In effect they show different typological characteristics according to the period during which they have been made

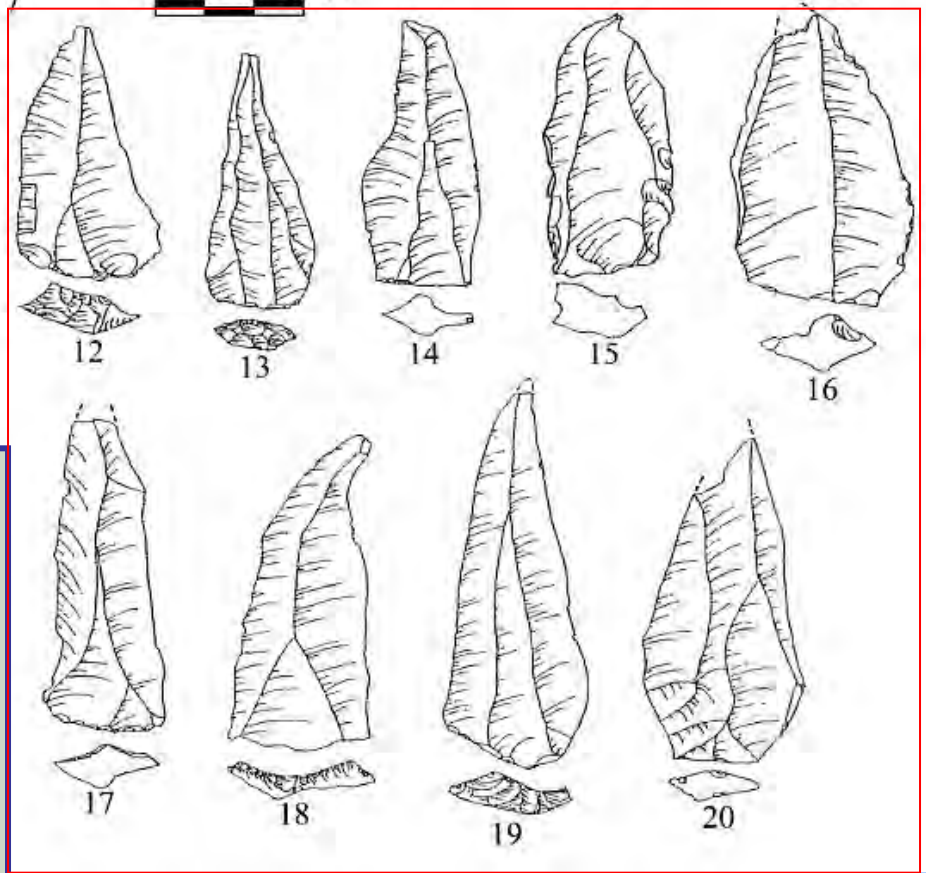


At present a few cave sequences are known in the Levant and the Near East from which we can follow the development of the events that took place in these regions between the end of the Middle Palaeolithic and the Upper Palaeolithic times. The sites mentioned in the text are marked in red, although others are important, among which is Ksar' Akil in Lebanon, for instance



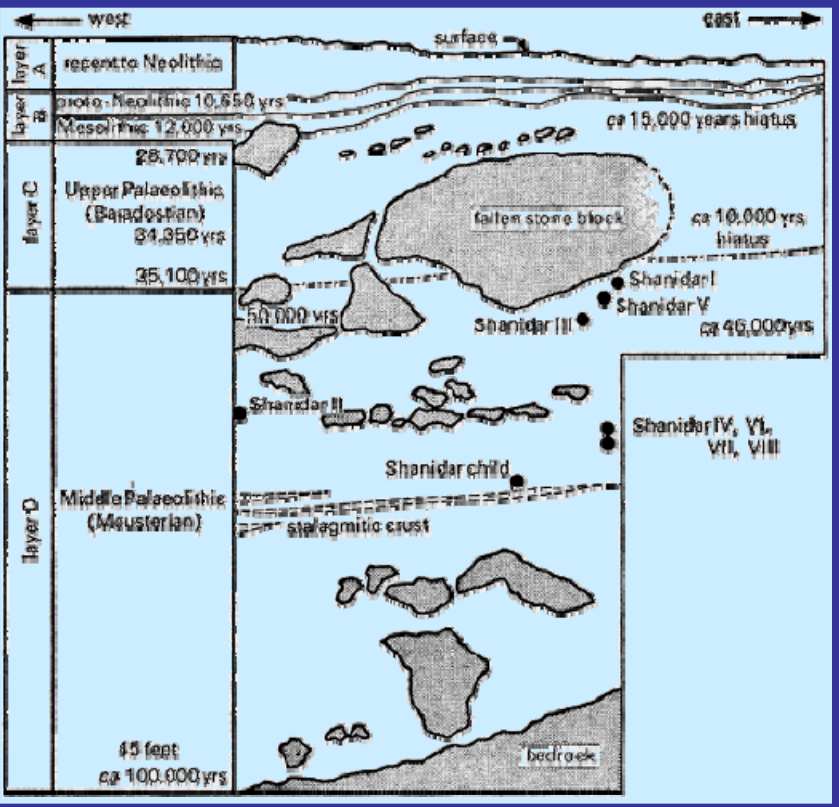
Early Late Palaeolithic assemblages from Uchagizii Cave in southeast Anatolia, with elongated points resembling the Levallois types (right)



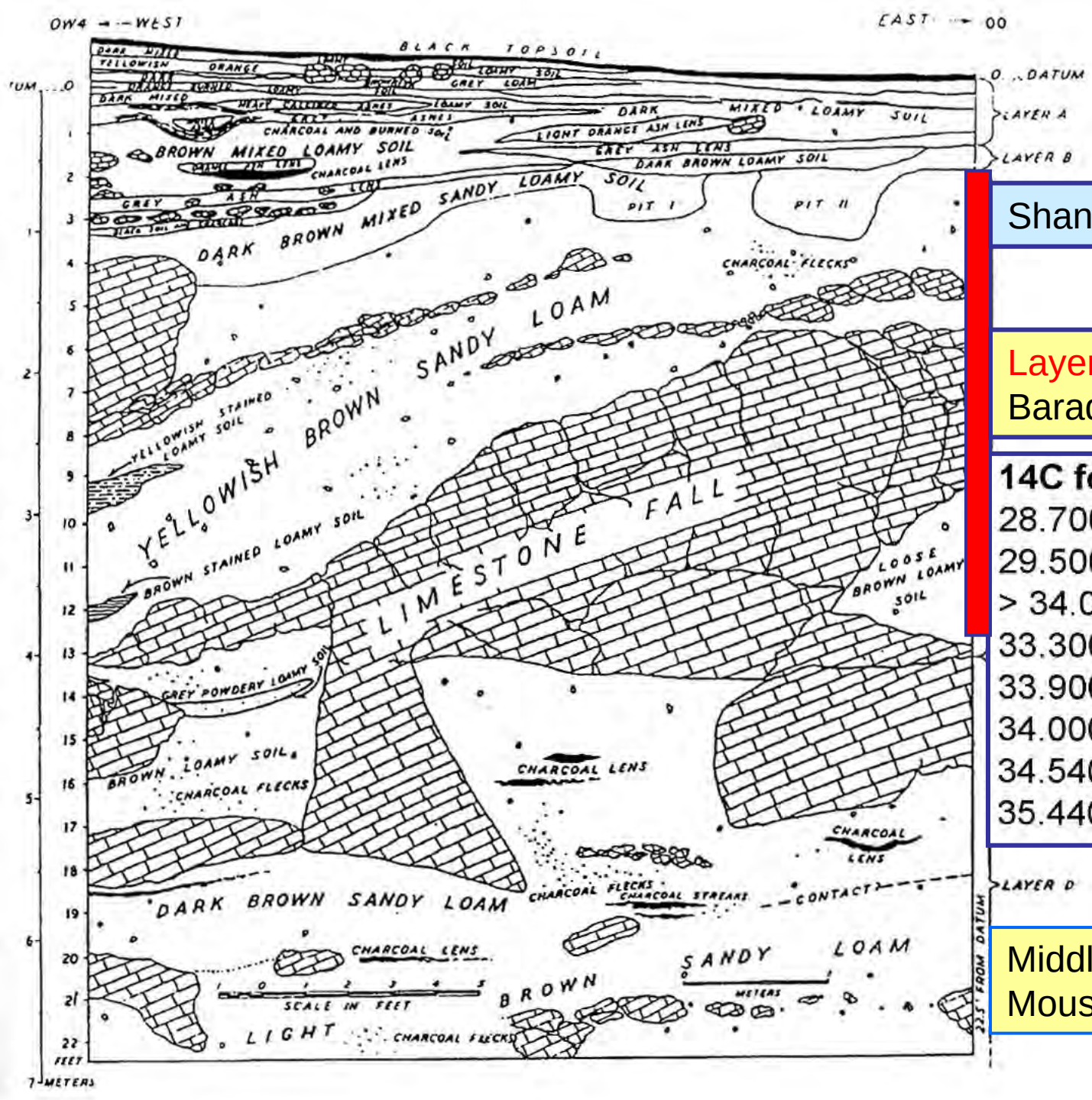


Shanidar Cave

The cave of Shanidar opens along the eastern bank of the Great Zap River, in the Iraqi Kurdistan.
The excavations carried out by R. Solecki in the 1950's brought to light an important stratigraphy with different phases of Middle and Late Palaeolithic occupation



Location of Cave Shanidar in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan (top left). Solecki's excavations were opened at the entrance of the large cave, down to the bedrock. Of great importance was the discovery of many Neanderthal burials and isolated bones inside the Mousterian sequence



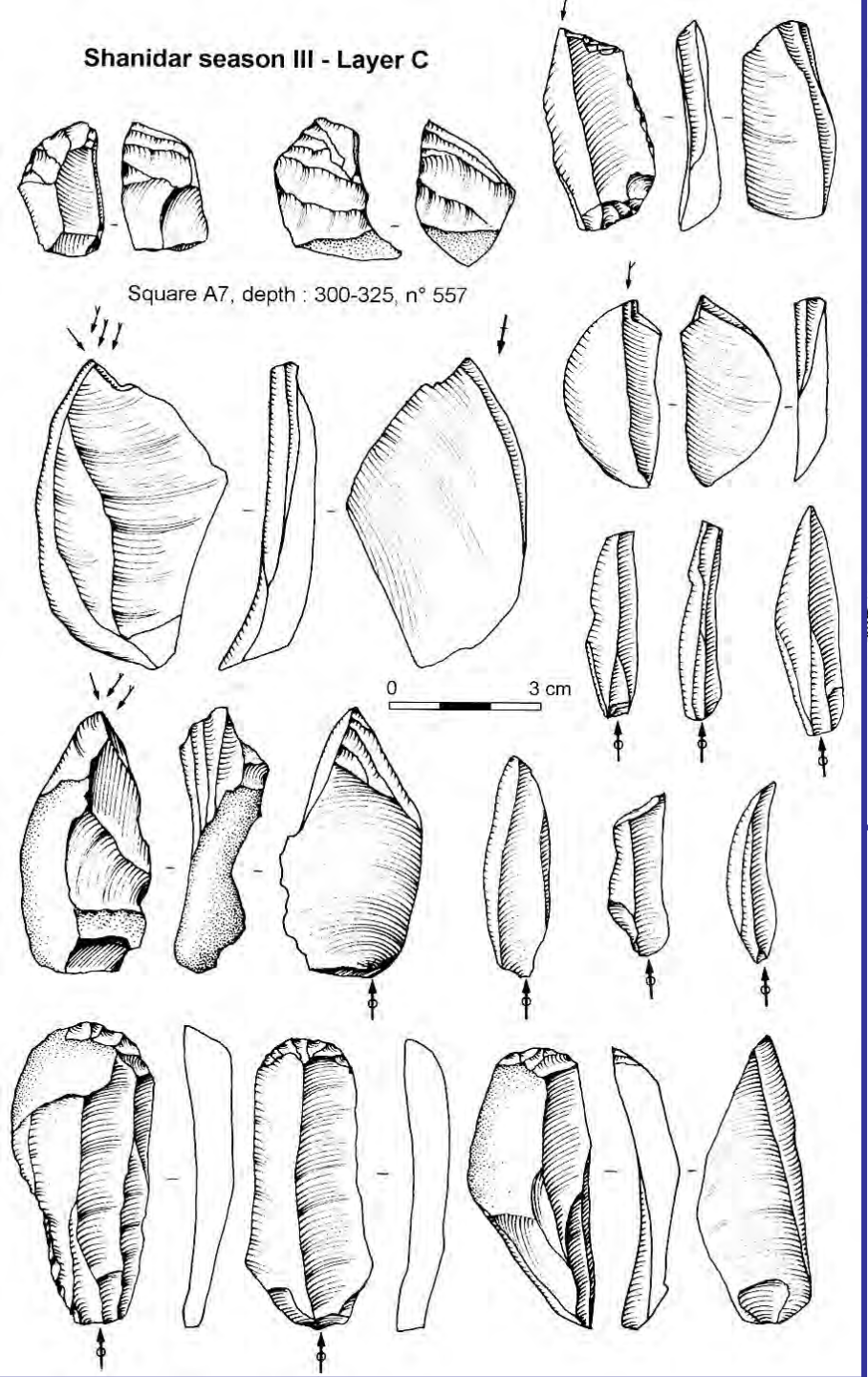
Shanidar Cave sequence

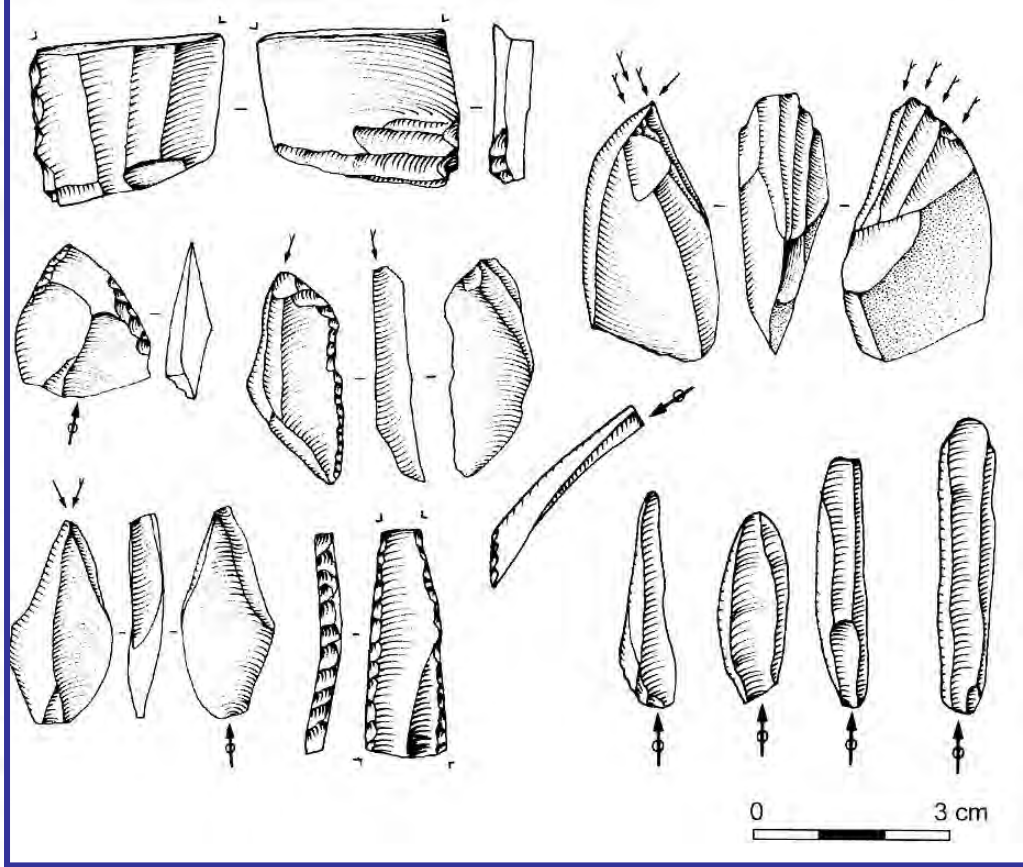
Layer C: Late Palaeolithic Baradostian Culture

14C for Layer C:

28.700 ± 700 BP (W-654)
29.500 ± 1.500 BP (W-178)
> 34.000 BP (W-180)
33.300 ± 1.000 BP (W-650)
33.900 ± 900 BP (GrN-1830)
34.000 ± 420 BP (GrN-1494)
34.540 ± 500 BP (GrN-2015)
35.440 ± 600 BP (GrN-2016)

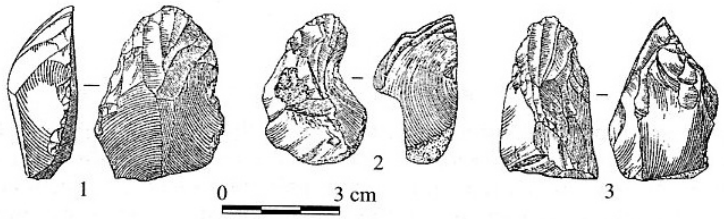
Middle Palaeolithic Mousterian Culture

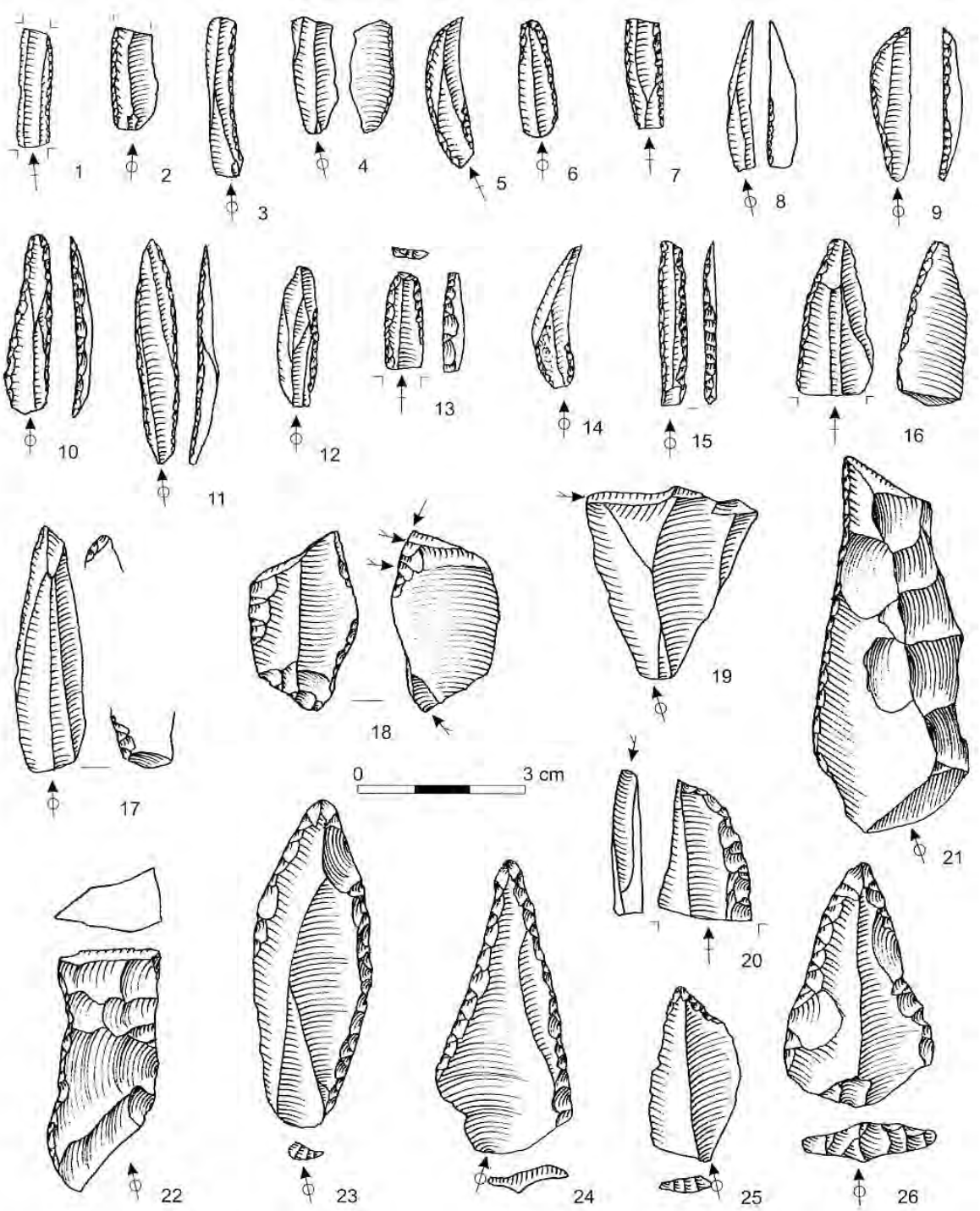




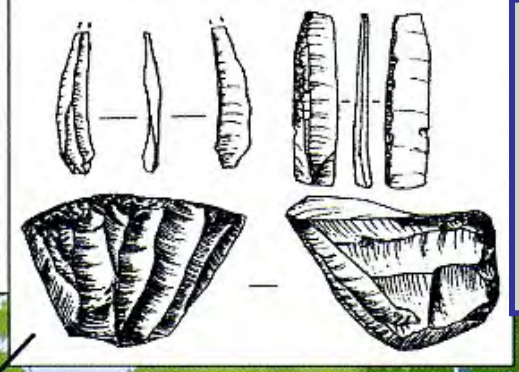
Layer C of Shanidar Cave yielded evidence of Early Late Palaeolithic occupations that the author of the excavations attributed to the Baradostian Culture. This aspect can be compared with the Aurignacian of other regions of Eurasia. Like the Aurignacian it is characterised by typical Late Palaeolithic tools among which are Burins, End scrapers and other tools made from blades/bladelets

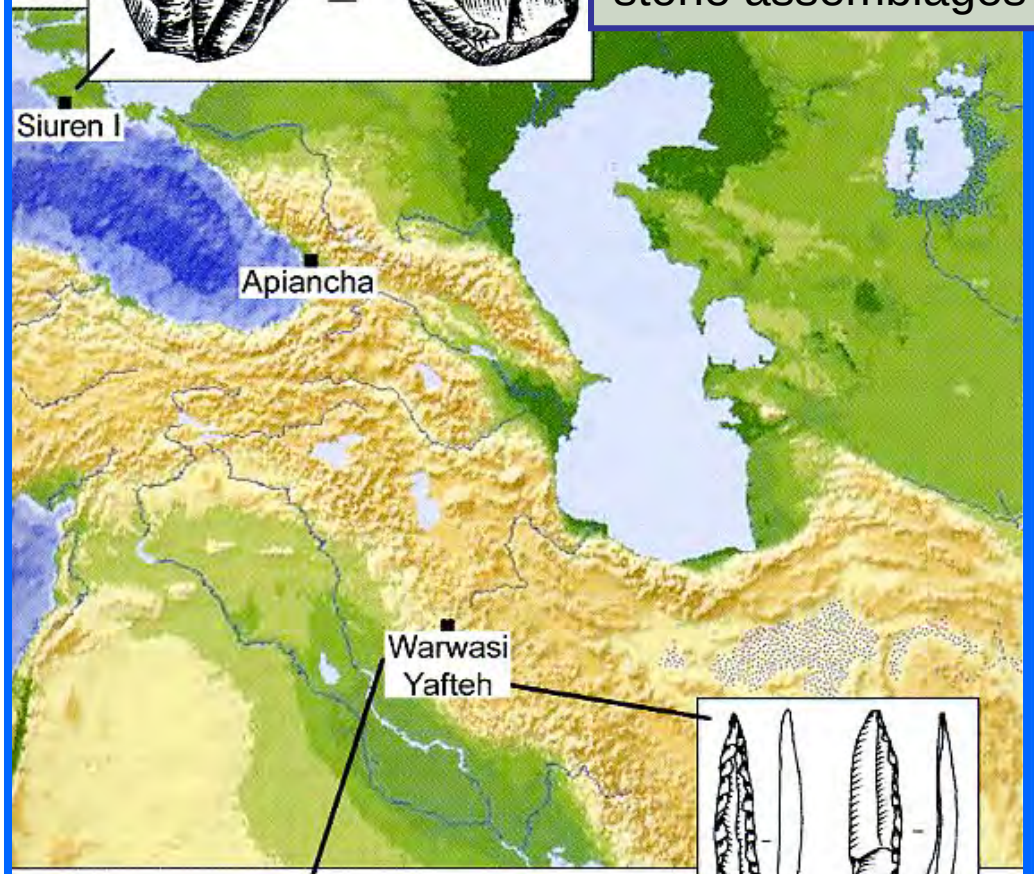
Aurignacian assemblages are known also from Iran (right) and Afghanistan (below) as well as from the Caucasus and part of Central Asia.
The typical blade assemblage on the right comes from Warwasi that is considered one of the key sites in the Zagros Mountains of western Iran

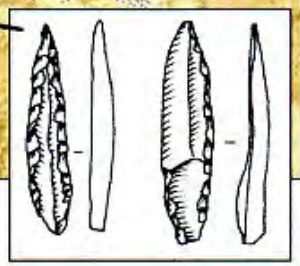




Important Aurignacian Sites in the Near East and Crimea with comparable chipped stone assemblages

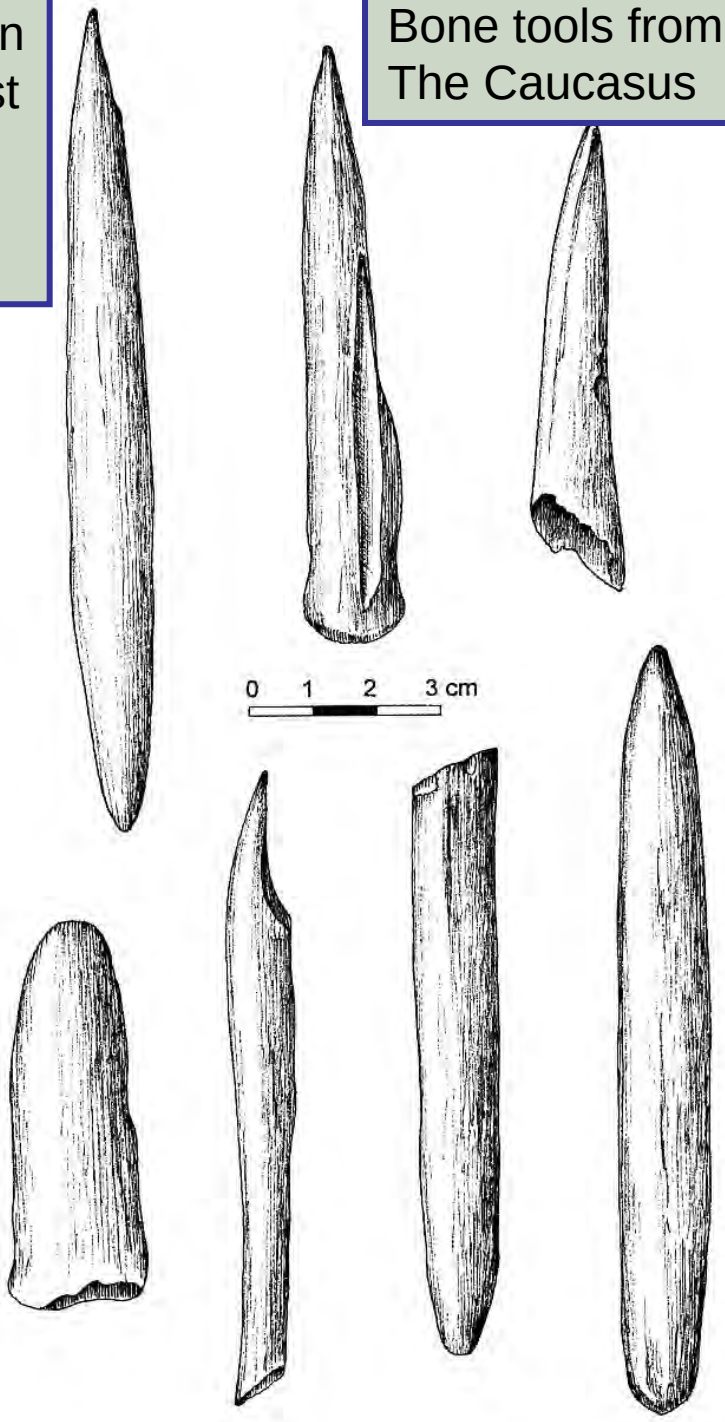


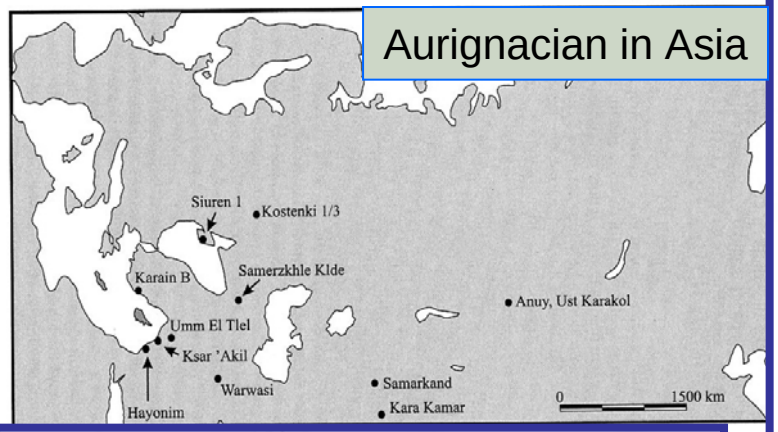


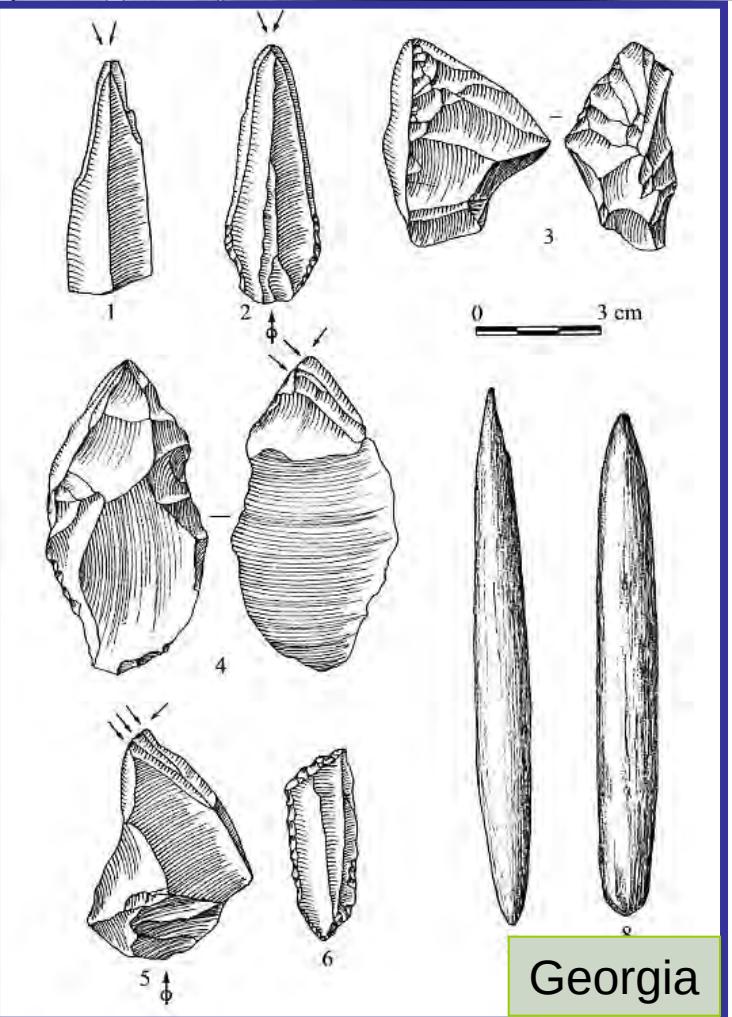


Aurignacian End Scrapers and bladelets

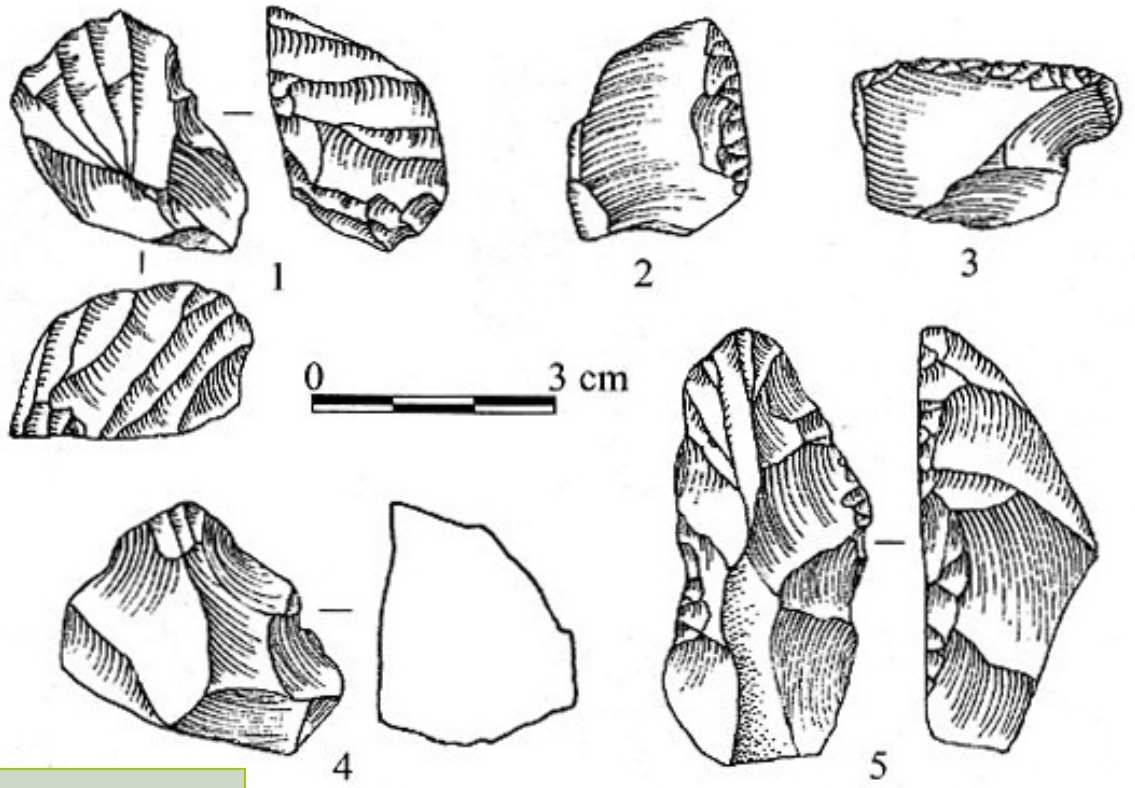
Bone tools from The Caucasus



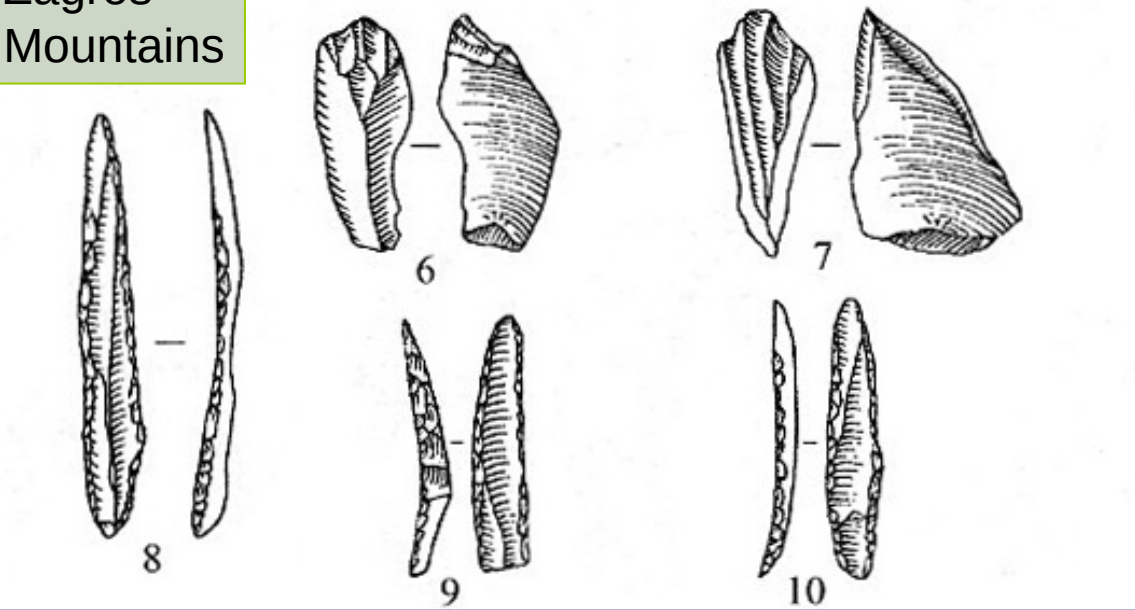




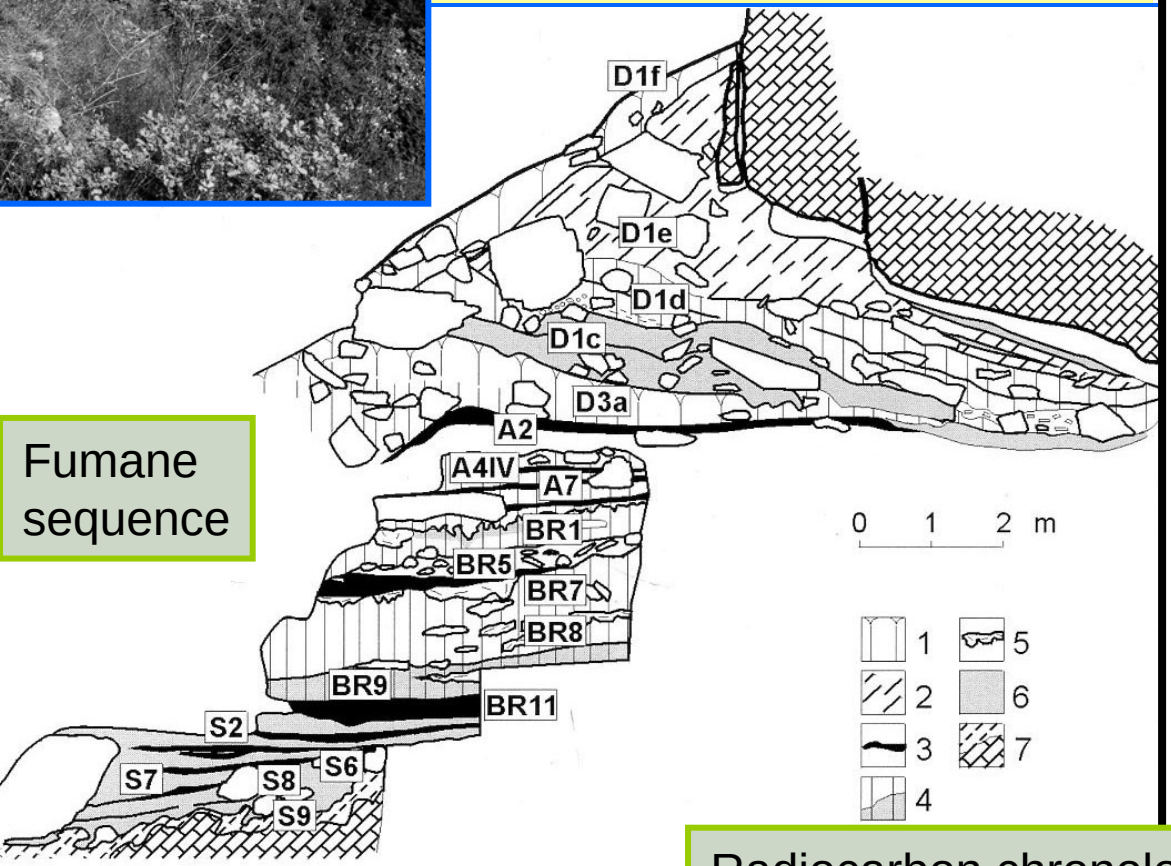
Georgia



Zagros Mountains



The Fumane rock-shelter is located in the Venetian Pre-Alps of notheastern Italy.
The excavations still underway revealed a long sequence during which the site was settled in Middle Palaeolithic Mousterian and Late Palaeolithic Aurignacian period

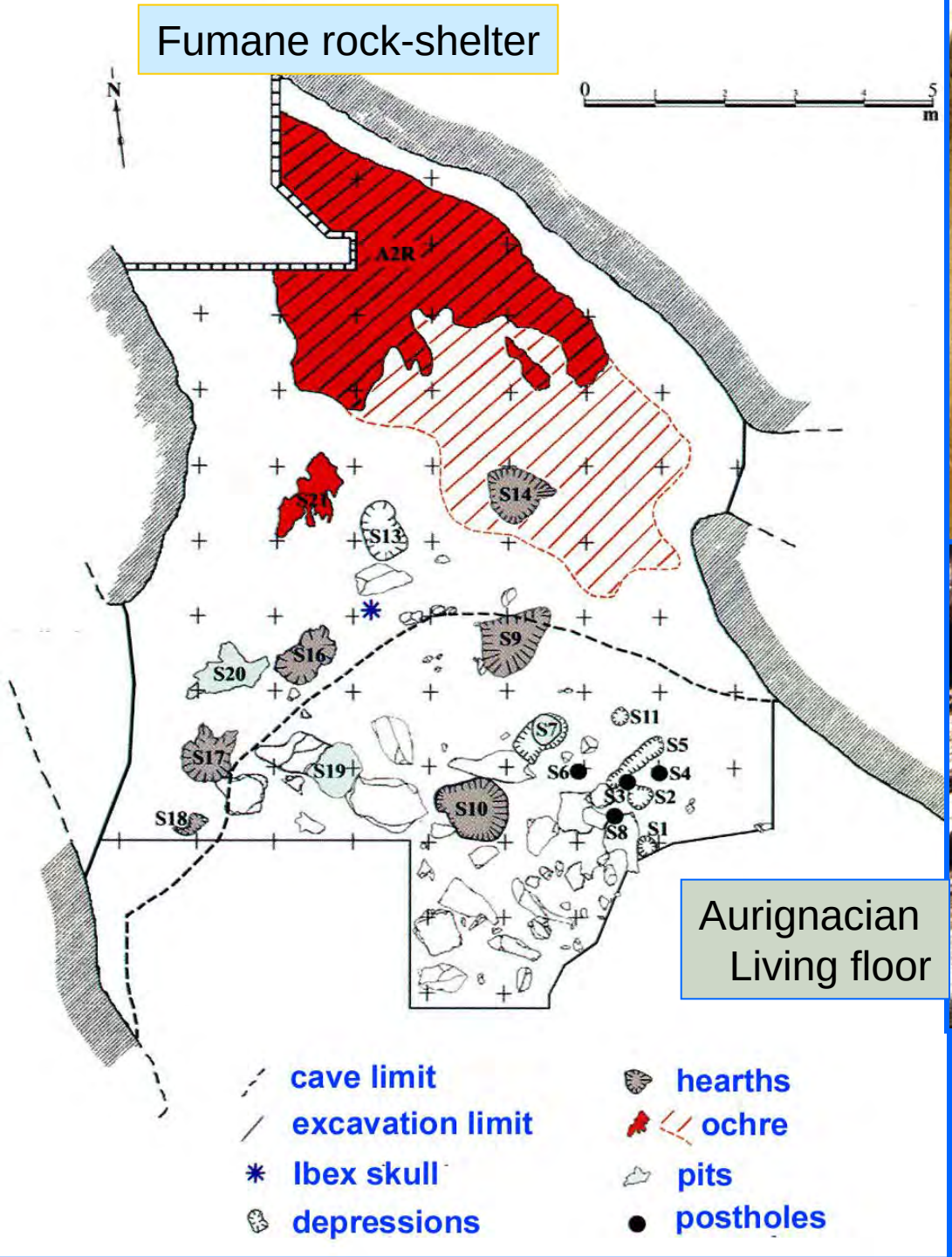


Fumane sequence

Unità	Rif.to lab.	^{14}C data BP
D1e	R-2784****	26890±530
D1d	OxA-11348	31490±250
D1d base	LTL374A	29828 ± 390
D1d base	UtC-2050	30700±400
D3b	UtC-1775	31700+1200/-1100
D3b	UtC-2045	32300±400
D3ba str. 15 – liv A	OxA-8050	30320±320
D3ba str. 15 – liv. A	OxA-8051	32020±340
D6	UtC-2046	32300±500
D6	OS-5872***	37100±240
A1	UtC-2049	31900±500
A2	UtC-2047	32100±500
A2	OxA-11347	30650±260
A2	OxA-11360	31830±260
A2	UtC-2048	36500±600
A2	OxA-8054	33160±400
A2	OS-5999***	32000±90
A2	OS-5871***	32700±140
A2R	LTL375A	34312 ± 347
A2 – str. 9	UtC-2044	31600±400
A2 – str. 10	UtC-2051	32800±400
A2 – str. 10	UtC-1774	40000+4000/-3000
A2 – str. 16	Ly-9920*	31300±395
A2 – str. 19	Ly-1286 OxA	32415±1045
A2 – str. 19	GrA-16231**	33140±460
A2 str. 14 – top	OxA-6566	31900±1100
A2 str. 14 – top	OxA-8052	34120±460
A2 str. 14 – liv. A	UtC-2688	36800+1200/-1400
A2 str. 14 – liv. B1	UtC-2689	35400+1100/-1300
A2 str. 14 – liv. B2	UtC-2690	34200+900/-1100
A2 str. 14 – base	OxA-6465	31620±500
A2 str. 14 – base	OxA-8053	33640±440
A4II	OxA-8021	33300±400
A4II	OxA-6462	33150±600
A5	OxA-6463	33700±600
A6	OxA-6464	34950±700
A6	OxA-11331	34400±800
A6	R-2758*	>29000
A6	R-2759*	>35000
A5+A6	OxA-8022	38800±750
A5+A6	OxA-8023	38250±700
A9	OxA-11346	39950±550
A9	LTL376A	42751±720
A9	R-2757*	>31400
A10	LTL377A	41327±730
A11	LTL378A	42004±760

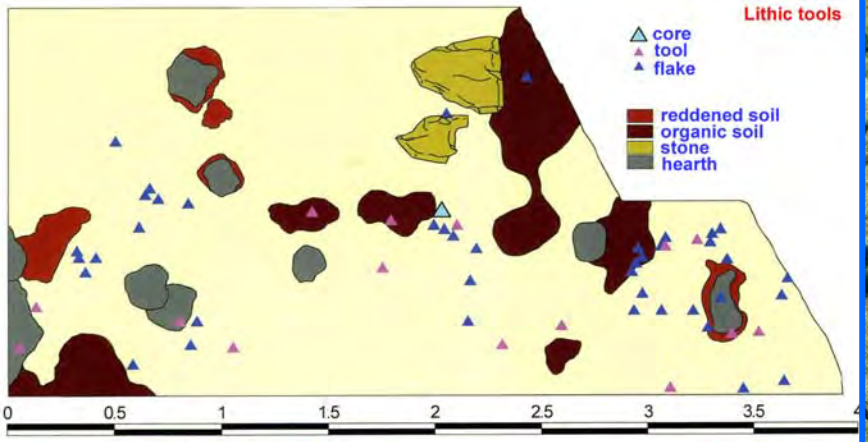
Radiocarbon chronology

Fumane rock-shelter

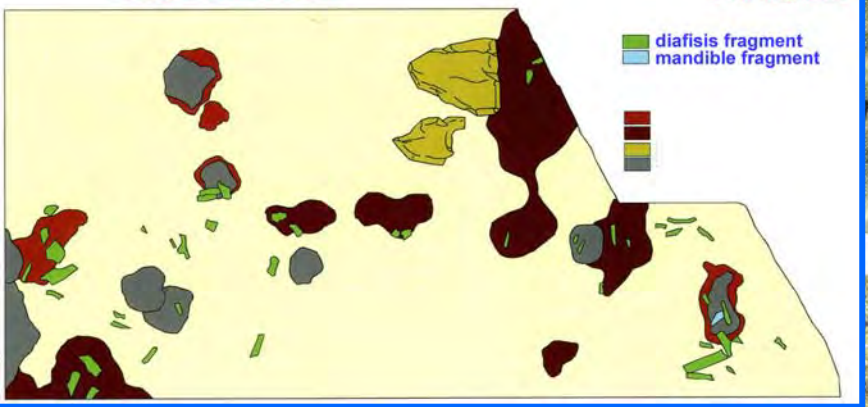


Aurignacian
Living floor

An Aurignacian surface with different types of structures and hearths was uncovered during the excavations at Fumane rock-shelter



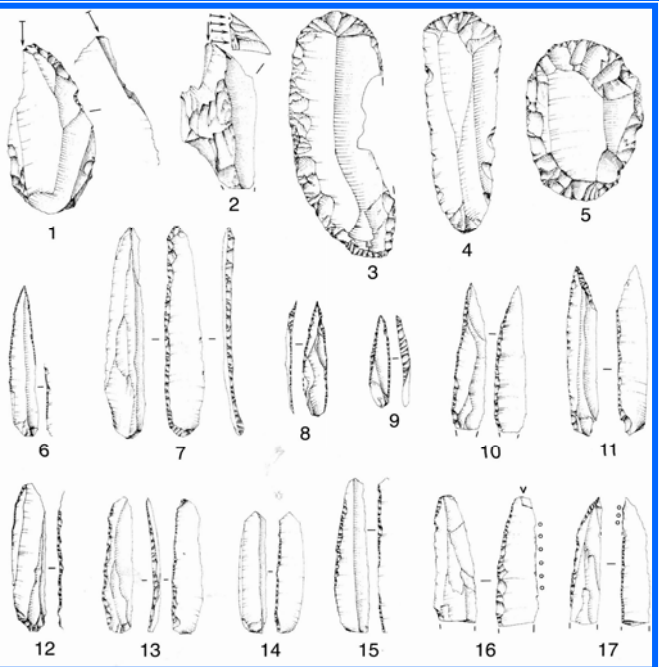
Aurignacian surface

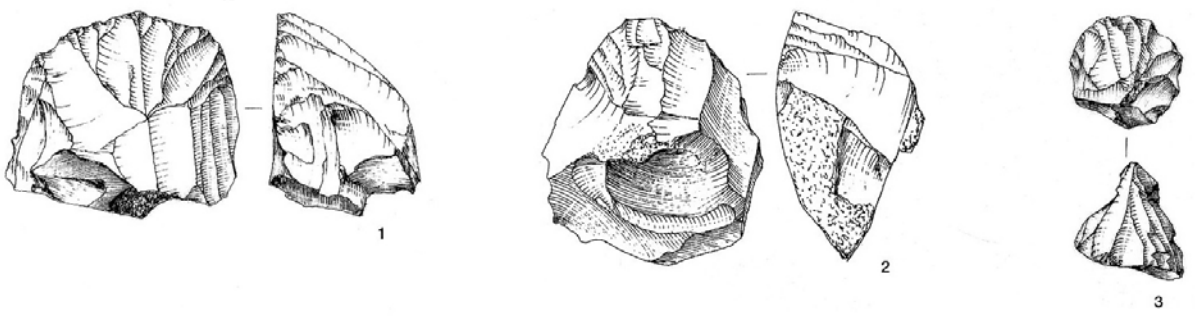


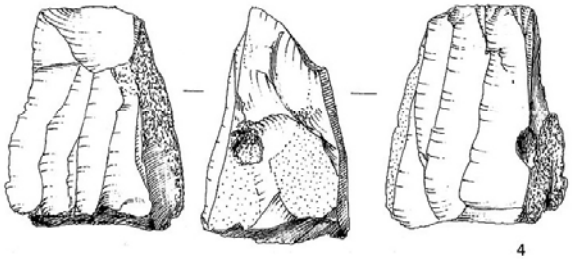
The Aurignacian surface *in situ* was found just above a long Middle Palaeolithic sequence. Although so far only a small part of it has been cleared, the finds show that Fumane rock-shelter had been settled several times by a community of modern humans who had decorated the walls of the shelter with red painted figures

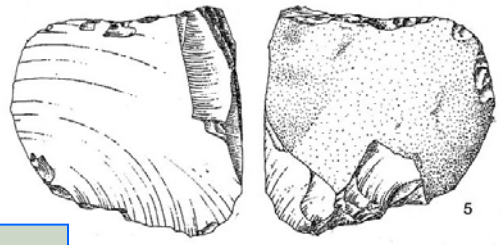
Fireplace on the Aurignacian surface

The lithic assemblage is typical for the Aurignacian. The presence of a few marine shells (top) indicates the wide activity radius of the first modern humans

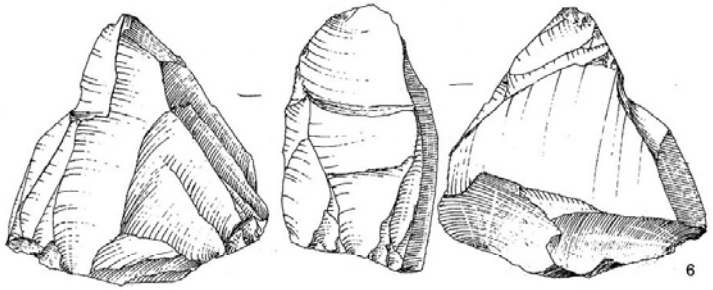


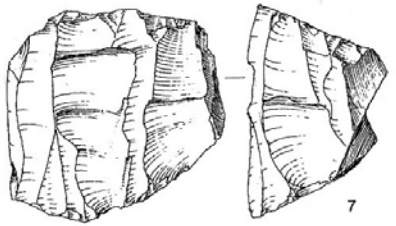




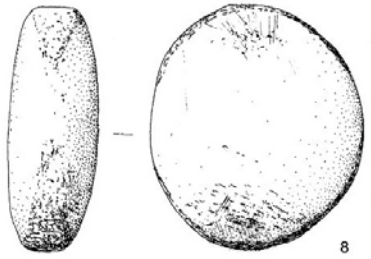


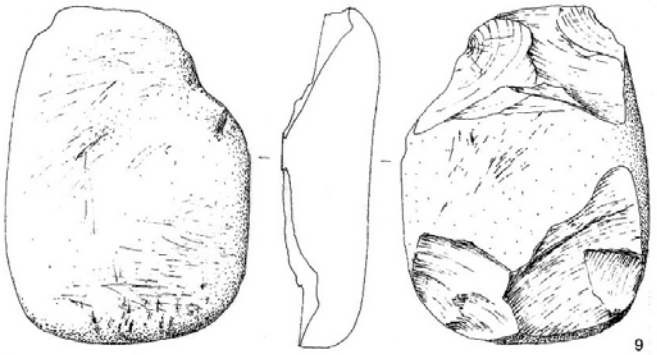
Cores





Fabricators



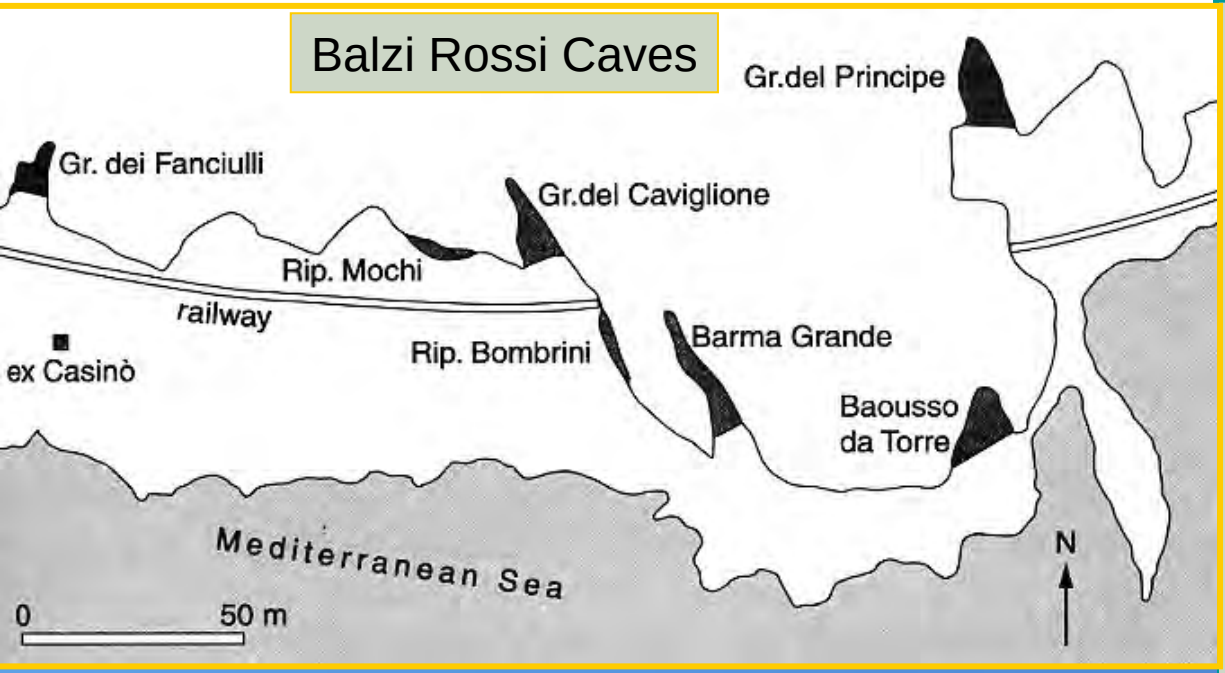


The bone tools inventory is represented by many types among which are points, spatulae and pendants

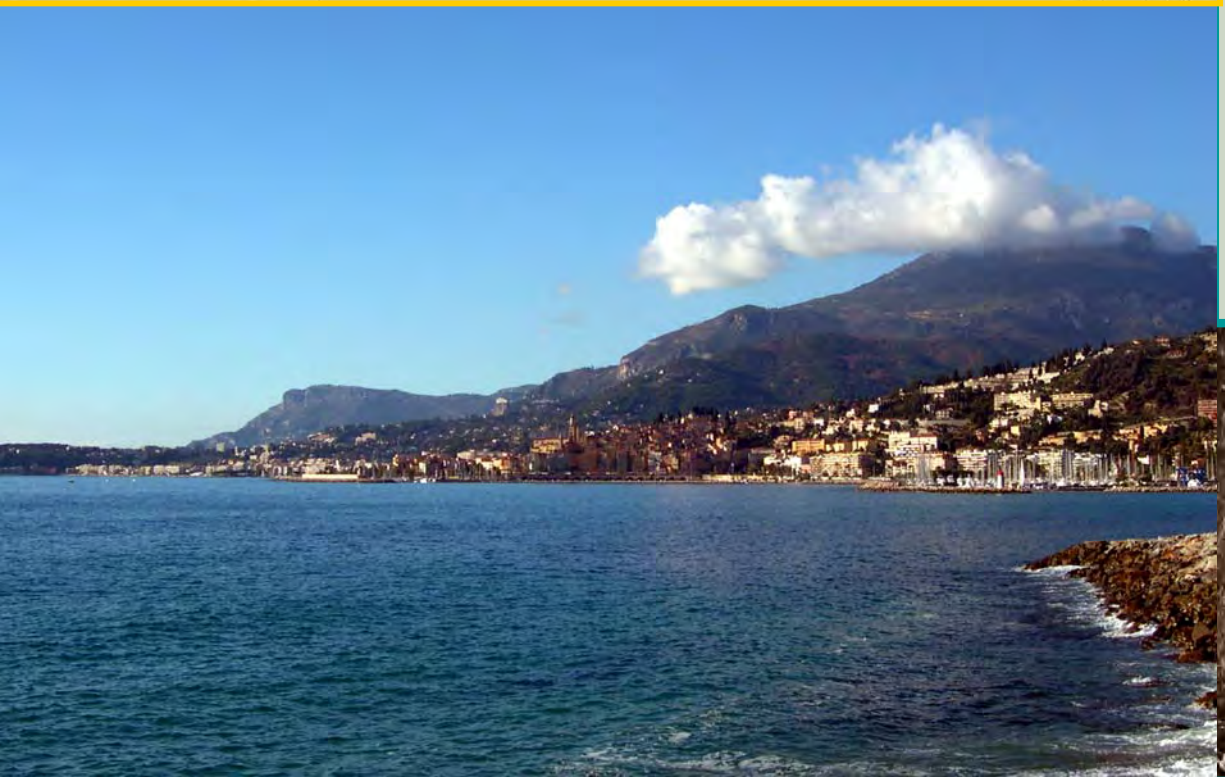
At Fumane the presence of red ochre levels had been noticed in the profile of a few sections (right). Ochre had been used to decorate the shelter walls and ceiling with different patterns

Fragments of ochre red painted walls

The most impressive limestone fragment collected from the Aurignacian surface is a human representation, dropped from the shelter vault, interpreted as a shaman. This discovery is particularly important because it provides us with a new idea of the Aurignacian art. Painted human figures of this period type were absolutely unknown before the Fumane discovery



The Aurignacian is known from many of caves and rock shelters that open at the Italian-French border, in the place called Balzi Rossi (Red slopes).
The excavations carried out since the 1850s by both Italian and French archaeologists have shown the importance of this coastal region for the study of the Middle and Late Palaeolithic periods



Typical Middle to Late Palaeolithic sequence from the Caviglione Cave (Balzi Rossi)

Caviglione Cave

Gravettian burial

Perforations de lithophages isolées

Niveau primitif du remplissage vers 32,40 m

Fouille Forel

Fouille Chantre

Fouille Costa de Beauregard

28,50 m - Sommet de la fouille Rivière

Cheval gravé

Fouille Rivière

Fouille Rivière - Couche supérieure

28 780 B.P.

Fouille Rivière - Couche moyenne *(Niveau de la sépulture)*

Gravettien

Corniche littorale d'une mer du Pléistocène moyen *Stade isotopique 7 (?)*

24,00 m

23,50 m

Fouille Rivière - Couche inférieure

Fouille Rivière

Foyer inférieur de Rivière *Moustérien récent*

Fouille L. de Villeneuve

Moustérien ancien

16 m

16,20 m

Ballast du chemin de fer

✲ Sépulture de la Dame du Cavillon

Dépôt de coquilles et de vertèbres de poissons perforées

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 mètres

Epigravettian

Pléistocène supérieur récent
Paléolithique supérieur

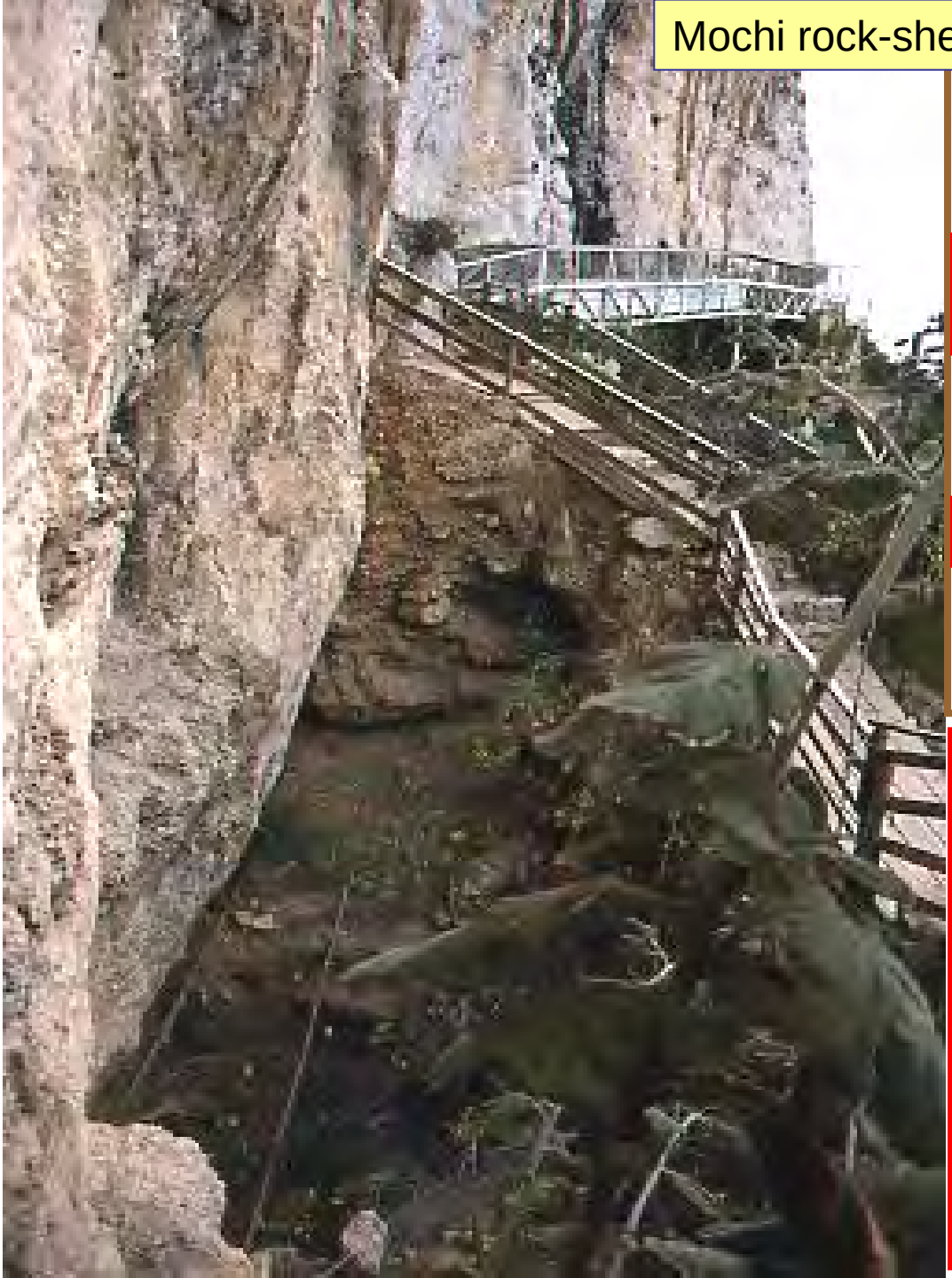
Gravettian

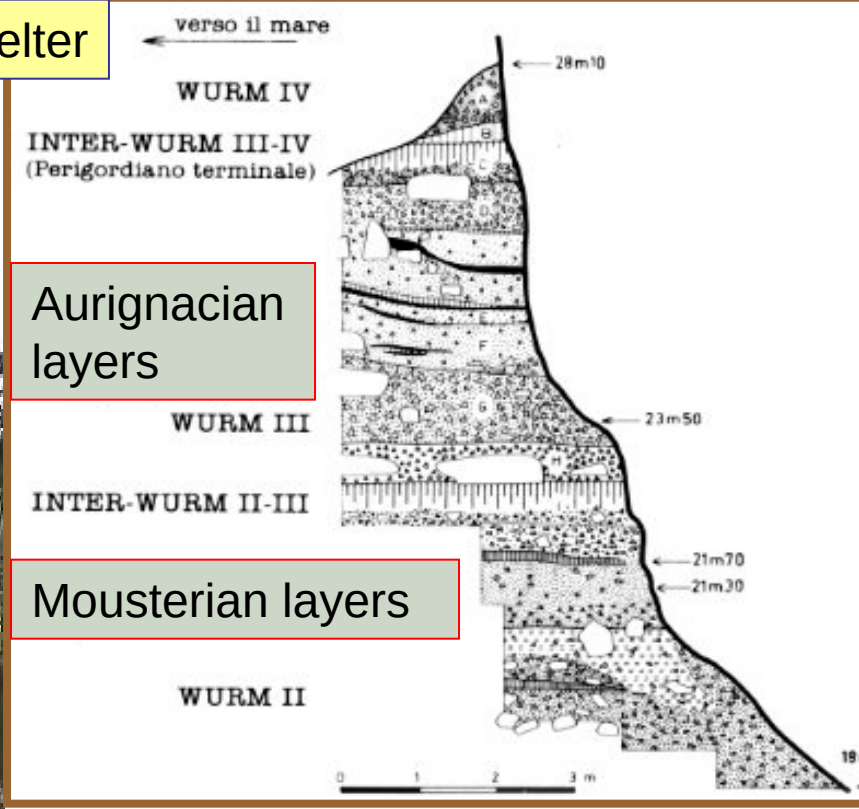
Aurignacian

Pléistocène supérieur ancien

Mousterian

Mochi rock-shelter

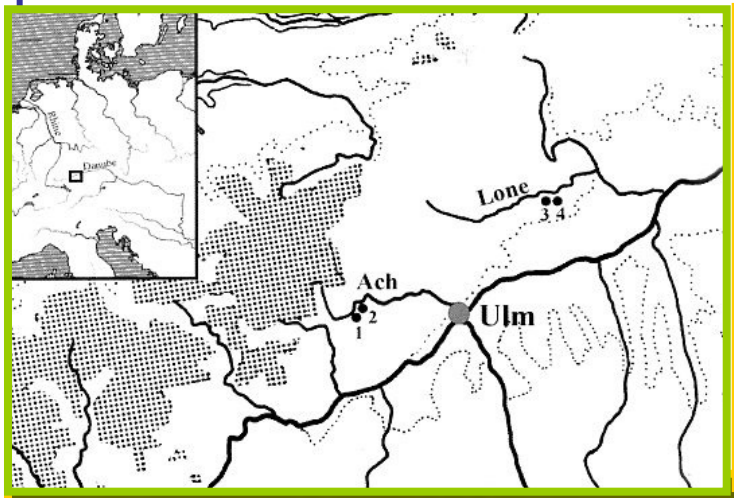




Aurignacian layers

Mousterian layers

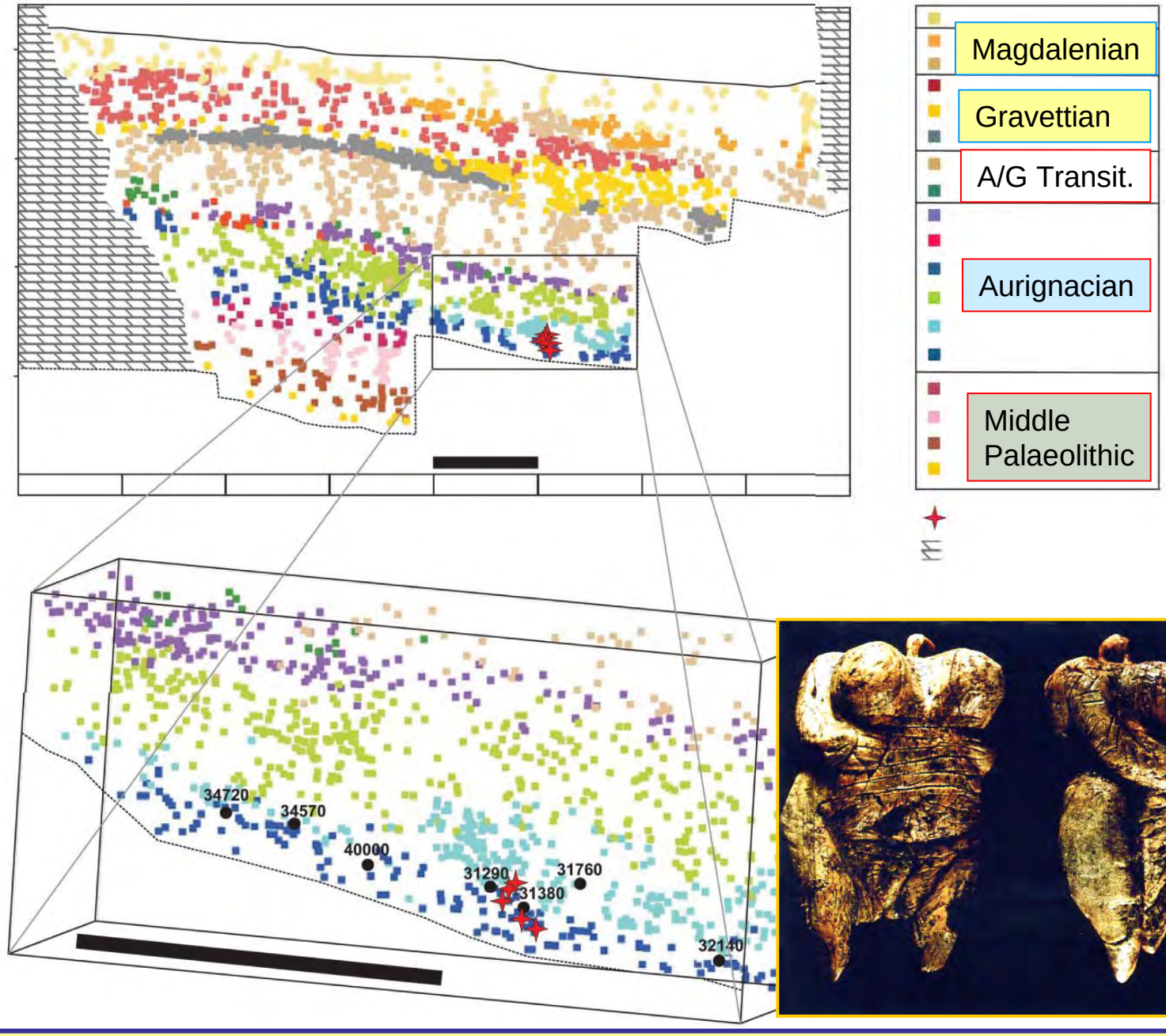
The Mochi rock-shelte is another important site of the Balzi Rossi. The sequence brought to light during the excavations, still underway, has shown evidence of both Middle and Late Palaeolithic occupations. The site, as the others of the Balzi Rossi, at present is located close to the sea shore, while during the Palaeolithic it was a few kilometres away



Ivory and bone figurines

Art began to develop during the Aurignacian period. The most impressive human and animal mobile art representations come from caves that open along the rivers of south-western Germany

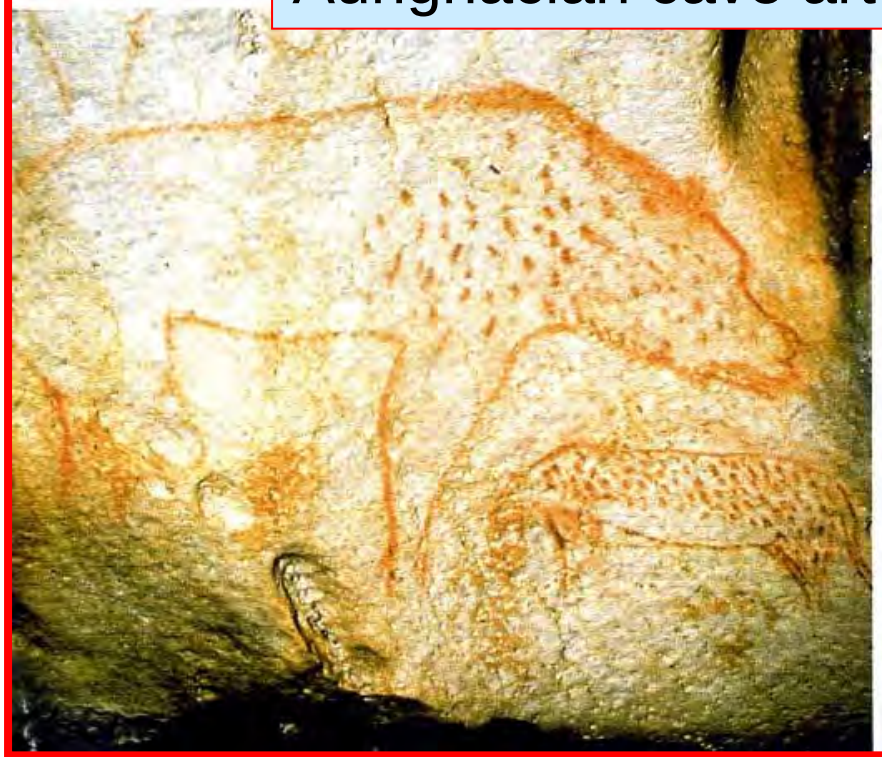
Hohle Fels Venus, Southwest Germany



Stratigraphic sequence of Hohle Fels with the radiocarbon dates reagarding the Venus

Aurignacian cave art

2



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