

Middle to Upper Palaeolithic Transitions: Asian Perspectives

Keywords: Palaeolithic transitions, Asia, Initial Upper Palaeolithic, Lithic Technology

Main Organizer:

Anil Devara

Archaeological Sciences Centre, Department of Earth Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar

Co-Organizers:

Stefano Benazzi

Laboratory of Osteoarchaeology and Palaeoanthropology (BONES Lab), Department of Cultural Heritage, University of Bologna

Francesco Berna

Department of Archaeology, Simon Fraser University

Mohd Zakir Khan

School of Studies in Ancient Indian History, Culture, and Archaeology, Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Omry Barzilai

School of Archaeology and Maritime Cultures, University of Haifa

Abstract:

The Middle to Upper Palaeolithic (MP–UP) transition represents a dynamic and regionally diverse process rather than a uniform technological or behavioural shift. This transition has been extensively studied in Southwest Asia, Central–Eastern Europe, and Northeast Asia. However, recent archaeological discoveries in South and East Asia challenge the established narratives regarding the timing, nature, and agents of this transition, highlighting the need to refine chronologies, as well as cultural and biomolecular data. This session focuses on how new evidence from Asia—specifically from under explored regions—are reshaping our understanding of this critical period in human evolution.

We invite contributions that foreground regional sequences and contextual analyses—integrating lithic technology, chronology, paleoenvironmental data, and genetic or fossil evidence—to explore how localized developments fit into broader continental narratives. Emphasis will be placed on how recent fieldwork and analytical advances are transforming regional chronologies, redefining cultural taxonomies, and challenging Eurocentric models of behavioural modernity. By juxtaposing these regional perspectives, the session seeks to move beyond linear or monolithic interpretations of the MP–UP transition. Instead, it aims to frame Asia as a landscape of innovation, interaction, and persistence—where new discoveries continue to expand and complicate our understanding of early modern human dispersals and cultural evolution.