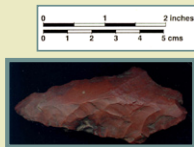


BONE, STONE AND SHELL TECHNOLOGY

SUBSISTENCE TECHNOLOGIES

The best evidence of the prehistoric food quest is the hundreds of thousands of projectile points (spear, dart, and arrow points) that occur in Louisiana. Other tools include so-called “bola stones” which could be attached to cords and thrown; they may also be used as net weights. These stone artifacts are what remains of a diverse hunting, gathering, and fishing toolkit that also contained fine-meshed nets for fish and birds, decoys, small and large snares, fish weirs, fish baskets, cane and bamboo arrows, wooden bows and atlatls, and digging sticks for root crops and shellfish.



Kent point. Used from the middle of the Archaic through the Marksville periods, these points are often found in plowed fields near water sources.



Man hurling a dart with an atlatl. Image courtesy of Dr. Jon Gibson, no affiliation.



Bone fishing hooks. These hooks were generally crafted from deer long bones. Considering the dependence of most cultures on fishing, fish hooks are uncommon. Bulk capture of fish with nets and weirs was probably more common than line fishing.



Bola stones or plummets, used either as weights for a hunting bola or as net weights. These are usually made of exotic, and very heavy stones like hematite or magnetite.

4.2

BONE, STONE AND SHELL TECHNOLOGY

4.1

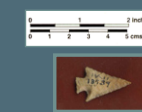
PROJECTILE POINTS

Projectile points changed through time as prey and hunting technologies changed. Paleoindian Clovis points were attached to long spears, and were used to hunt Pleistocene period megafauna like the mastodon. Spear points were often exquisitely crafted from non-native stone and were probably closely conserved. By 10,000 B.C., a more modern climate developed and modern fauna appeared. Long spears and spear points were replaced by smaller darts and dart points. The darts were propelled using

an atlatl or throwing stick, which greatly increased the power of the throw. (For more information on the atlatl, visit www.worldatlatl.org.) Because darts were not easily retrieved, dart points were expendable—they were quickly and roughly made from readily available native stone. This technology lasted over 6,000 years in Louisiana, and was still in use by some Mexican Indians at Contact. However, between A.D. 500 and 700, the bow, arrow, and arrowhead replaced the atlatl, dart, and dart point in Louisiana.



A Clovis point. The 'flute' or channel up the middle of the point was for hafting onto a spear; deep flutes occur only on Paleolithic points.



Scallorn arrow point. This is one of the earlier arrow points. It resembles a dart point in shape but is smaller.

4.3

BONE AND SHELL TOOLS

In many areas of Louisiana, particularly in the south where stone is not readily available, bone and shell were important resources for tools. Unlike projectile points, which can be assigned to a general time frame based on shape and size, bone and shell tools are difficult to date because their forms do not change dramatically through time. Bone was used to create points, fish-hooks, “fids” used in net and basket making, and fleshers and punches for leatherworking. On the coast, whelk shells were used as hoes, adzes, gouges, punches, and drinking cups. Gulf coast shells were traded inland as far north as St. Louis.



Turkey metatarsal (leg) atlatl. Atlatls were used for punching holes in skins or leather, and for sewing garments or other articles of clothing.



Alligator jaw bone pick. This tool, used for digging was created by removing the teeth from an alligator jaw, grinding the ends to useful points.



Bone fid. Fids are crafted from large mammal long-bones that have been splintered by cutting or smashing. The resultant pieces are ground to shape and used in net and basket making.



Heavy wear on the end of this whelk indicates that it was used as a gouge or adze.



A bone dart point. Considered to be a groove and snap type tool, it was created by scoring and snapping a large bone to size with further refinement—such as polishing and grinding towards the tapered end—thus creating a point. These were made throughout prehistory, but are more common in areas with little stone.

4.4

STONE, BONE AND SHELL ORNAMENTS

Stone, bone, and shell were also important materials used in jewelry and other items of personal adornment. At least as early as 5000 B.C., these materials were used to make gorgets, pendants, beads, and other items. Such items were traded widely, probably with other materials such as feathers and furs that have long since disappeared.



Shell beads with pendant. All are made from the central 'columnella' of a whelk shell.

4.5