SUSTAINANCE TECHNOLOGIES

The best evidence of the prehistoric food quest is the 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 hunting technology that also contained fine-meshed nets for fish and birds, decoys, small and large snares, fish weirs, and digging sticks for root crops and shellfish.

Bone fishing hooks. These hooks were generally crafted from deer long bones. Considering the dependence of most cultures on fishing, fish hooks are common. Both capture of fish with nets and snares has probably been more common than fine fishing.

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

Subsistence Technology

PROJECTILE POINTS

Projectile points changed through time as prey and hunting technologies changed. Paleolithic Clovis points were transformed into spear, arrow, and dart points as hunting strategies changed. Paleoindian projectile points were more frequently crafted from non-native stones and were probably closely correlated with retreat from B.C., a more modern climate developed and river systems impeded. Long points and spear points were replaced by smaller darts and dart points. The darts were probably using an atlatl or throwing stick, which greatly increased the power of the throw. For more information on the atlatl, visit www.strutskull.org. Because darts were not easily retrieved, dart points were expendable—they were flaked and roughly made from readily available native stone. This technology lasted over 6,000 years in Louisiana, and was still in use by some Miccosukee Indians at Contact. However, between A.D. 650 and 1000, the bow, arrow, and atlatl had replaced the dart, dart, and dart point in Louisiana.

Bone and Shell Tool

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, and hunting technologies that are more common in areas with little stone. Bone fid. Fids are crafted from large mammal long-bones that have been splintered by cutting or smashing. Small stone points are produced from the bone fid. The resultant pieces are ground to shape and used in net and basket making.

Stone, Bone and Shell Ornament

Shape, bone, and shell were also important materials used in jewelry by the styles of personal adornment. At least as early as 5000 B.C., these materials were used to make gorgets, pendants, beads, and other items. Stone tools 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 spiral whorls of a whelk shell.

Bone and Shell Technology

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Bone and Shell Tool

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Bone point. The point is shown in the middle of the bow and for throwing with a purse and form with only one small point.