

Stone Artifacts of North American Indians

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There are scattered throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico many strange ornamental and problematical forms of artifacts in stone, made and used by our aborigines. Those who have studied North American Indian culture have been unable to understand all the uses to which these objects were put and therefore such objects have been the subject of considerable speculation. In many cases these ornaments, charms and problematical forms were made from more or less brightly colored or banded stones or from those capable of taking high polish. From this standpoint the contrast is quite marked, between the ornamental class and the utility or service tools of everyday life, the latter being much more somber and plain. Although there is a wide distribution of this class of stone artifacts and further recognizing that many brief articles have been written there is great opportunity for much research and study for classification and description of all forms of stone artifacts.

A study of stone artifacts not only reveals to us a little of the home culture of early tribes but is also important for the study of the wanderings and movements of tribes whose culture intermingled and modified each other. A careful study of the evolution of special artifacts will often help to decide how far the evolution was due to the improvement of a settled race, and how far due to outside influences. In the beginning, no doubt, many artifacts were made of wood or some other easily fashioned but perishable material; such tools have not survived, and it is only artifacts which were made of harder material that have lasted until the present. What we have found can only be a fractional portion of former manufacture.

When we learn that an invading race brings with them a more varied or a less varied series of tools, all that we can properly say is, that the new people had superior or inferior manufacture in the particular material used.

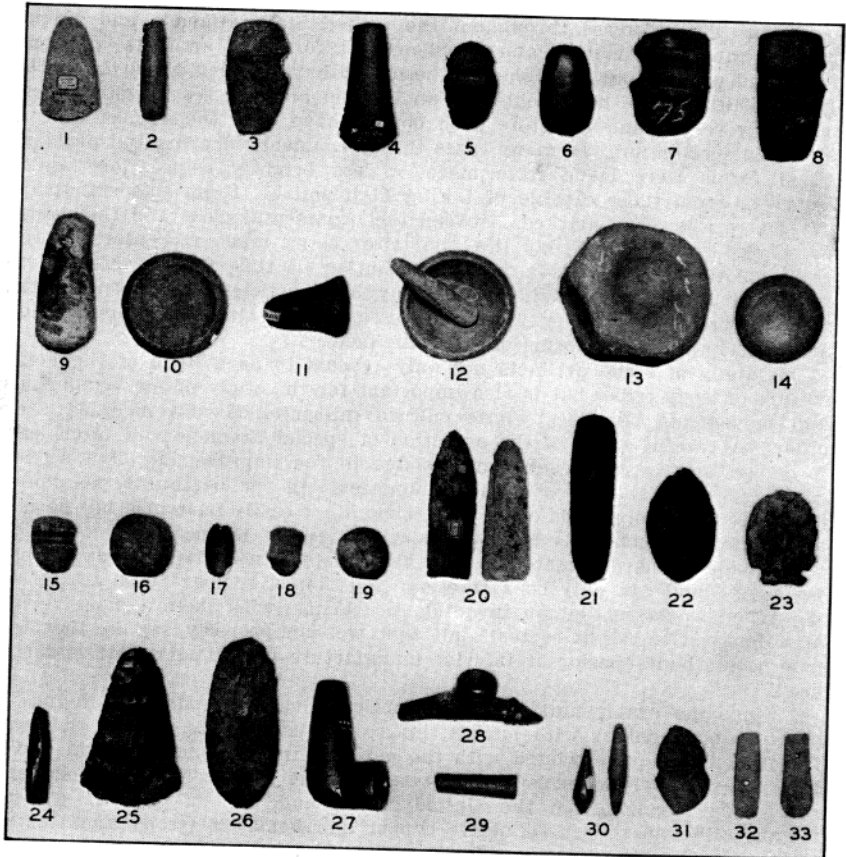
Since the ornamental and problematical class of artifacts is found in considerable numbers with burials, in graves and mounds, and as they are frequently found unassociated with the more ordinary forms of Indian tools, they are generally regarded as representing the higher level of stone age art. Stone age men in the United States and Canada did not possess metals, although they used native copper and hematite (iron) and treated them as malleable stones.

The neolithic culture belongs to an age of human culture following the paleolithic and is characterized by an advance in civilization denoted by more and better implements of stone, by beginnings in agriculture, the use of pottery and the presence of domesticated animals. The most typical stone artifacts of this period are ground and polished rather than chipped, and for this reason it is sometimes called the polished-stone age. The neolithic era includes the latter half of the stone age. The kitchen middens (dwelling house refuse) of Denmark, the Lake dwellings of Switzerland, and the stockaded island, or "crannogs," (huts built upon pile) of the

British Isles, belong to this era. The stone age can be divided into two periods, the newer stone age, called Neolithic, and the Older Stone Age, called Paleolithic.

Even though a number of archaeologists refer to the Neolithic age as the polished stone age, Quennell states that "Neolithic implements are not necessarily of polished stone, as some people seem to think." Flint was still chipped and ground or polished in parts; sometimes completely so. Neolithic implements are found on the surface of the ground or just under it, and are not dug out of gravel as those of the Old Stone Age are.

I have obtained a few photographs of the more representative stone artifacts which show something of their nature and form.



STONE ARTIFACTS OF NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

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| 1. Celt | 13. Mortar | 22. Gouge |
| 2. Chisel | 14. Discoidal | 23. Notched Hoe |
| 3. Axe | 15. Grooved Hammer | 24. Chisel |
| 4. Spud | 16. Sinker | 25. Spade |
| 5. Hematite Axe | 17. Boat Stone | 26. Celt |
| 6. Hematite Celt | 18. Grooved Hammer | 27. Plain Pipe |
| 7. Grooved Maul | 19. Spherical Hammer | 28. Effigy Pipe |
| 8. Grooved Axe | 20. Stone | 29. Tube Pipe |
| 9. Pestle | 21. Celts | 30. Plummetts |
| 10. Discoidal | 21. Chisel | 31. Banner Stone |
| 11. Pestle | | 32. Garget |
| 12. Mortar and Pestle | | 33. Pendant |

The *Maul* with rounded head and blunt point was probably used for pounding and driving stakes, chisels, etc. A badly worn axe may have served for the same purposes.

Celts were used to dress skins of animals and as chopping implements. They ranged in length from one to eighteen inches. Many were not designed for handles but were held in the hand while others were hafted or mounted on handles.

Chisels may have been used to gouge out wood of logs in making canoes, etc. This implement is narrower than most celts and highly polished and sharpened at the point.

Axes were a most useful implement. They are classed as grooveless (also called celt) and grooved. The grooved axes were hafted and occasionally one had a longitudinal groove in the back for insertion of a wedge in order to tighten the handle. They were a trusted weapon in warfare and were used to cut trees and for some pounding. They range in weight from one ounce to thirty pounds, but the average weight is from three to five pounds.

Hematite implements are rare and not so well shaped and polished as are those of stone.

Mortars and *pestles* played an important part in domestic service especially grinding corn, nuts and meat. Small pestles were probably used by tribal doctors to compound herbs. Some larger mortars were used for cooking purposes. The pestles range from about four to eighteen inches in length. It was a slow and tedious process to make mortars.

*Discoidal*s are problematical as to use but it has been suggested that they were used for mixing war paints and medicines also possibly in playing a game in which the stone was rolled along on its edge.

Sinkers may have been used as a weight or anchor in holding down fishing tackle.

Hammer stones were used either in the hand or were hafted and served as a hammer in pounding, breaking and chipping off pieces of flint in making various kinds of flint tools.

The *boat stone* is problematical but is thought to have been used as an ornament and probably was a tribal totem. It resembles a boat.

The *Notched hoe* was hafted at right angles to the handle and used in cultivation. The *spades* were hafted in the split end of a handle and parallel to it. They also were used in cultivation. The long *flint celts* were used in a similar manner to that of the stone celts made of glacial stones. Extremely long sharp celts were used as knives.

The most artistic aboriginal work in stone was lavished on tobacco *pipes* which, like all hand-work, were never twice alike and offer among them a great range of effort from a simple bowl with a stem continuing in the same direction, to an elaborate effigy attached to a stem placed at right angles to the main axis of the figure. The *tube pipe* served about the same purpose as the cigaret or cigar holder used today.

The *banner stone* was used as an ornament and probably worn on a staff in ceremonial or dress parade activities.

Plummets were used as ornaments, no doubt, but belong to the problematical group. They may also have been used as sinkers in connection with fishing.

Pendants were used as ornaments or charms and have a single hole near the end for suspension. It is not thought that they were of practical use.

The *gargets* are classed as one kind of a pierced tablet and are made of thin oblong pieces of slate usually, having two tapering holes near the center in line of the longer axis. They were also used as a charm or ornament.