

## TEC 154 2014S, Class 04: Stone Tools (1)

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### *Overview*

- Preliminaries.
  - Admin.
- Whittaker takes over.

## Preliminaries

### Admin

- Apologies for being behind in grading. We had a family emergency this past weekend. I'm working on catching up.
- For Wednesday, two other anthropological readings. (Distributed Friday.)
- Note takers:
  - Monday: TD and DP
  - Wednesday: AF and DS (okay?)
  - Please make a summary of the main points of the day's class.
  - I may also take notes this week, since I'm not leading the class.
- Extra credit:
  - Convocation next Wednesday (February 5)

## Notes from SR

[Sam introduces. A good way to think about technology differently.]

Introductory stuff: Making the tools

- This may be the only technology you see in which the technology is manufactured before your eyes.
- Model of anthropologists looking at stone tools can be useful for many ways of technology.
- All technologies have meaning. Not just the ostensible reason that the technology was created.
- Activity: Grab a stick and flake and have fun whittling.
- He's going to make some flakes and talk while doing so.
- Observe what he does.
  - Look at the tools for making tools
  - Look at the processes
- What happens when you shoot a BB at glass?
  - You get a little hole and then a cone punched outside.
  - [Sadly, it appears that few of these students played with bb guns as kids. Or perhaps not so sadly.]

- Look at the flake
  - You can probably see the impact point and evidence of the core (the main stone)
  - You can see the ripples going through the flake from the impact
- How/where you strike the main stone has a big impact on the flake
  - It follows the shape of the original stone
- So, with thought, you can control what you're getting.
  - It's a mental exercise/challenge.
  - Finding/choosing the right original core is important (as we saw with mediocre stones today)
- Very sharp - We can cut leather
  - But wears down quickly
- Compare to metal tools
  - Metal is more durable
  - But more complex/expensive to make
- All stones that flake well have a lot of silica
  - Chert
  - Flint
  - Obsidian - volcanic glass

#### Evolution and such

- Starting a few million years ago ...
- First stone tools were very simple - Just a piece of stone with a sharp edge (and it's really easy to make)
- Where does the stone come from? Whatever is on the ground nearby?
- A good craftsman notices what's around them and knows where to get their resources.
- What can I do with these simple tools? Not a lot, but much more than we can
  - Scrape dirt of a root or stick
  - Cut up an animal
  - Fashion a stick into a tool
- Over time, we get more dexterous and our brains grow
- Move from simple sharpened thing to a more carefully formed shape
  - Two kinds of hand axes go around the room
- Need a different kind of percussion to form those careful things.
  - Soft-hammer percussion, using an antler or something similar
  - Spreads out bulb of percussion, gives a flatter edge
- Note: As an anthropologist, you can identify the tools that have been used to make these things - The stone used to make flakes from the core, and the
- Things we see evidenced
  - Symmetry - Intentional shaping
  - Note: You can *predict* what you are doing - an ability to imagine something that does not exist.
- We don't know if they had speech based communication, but we see these signs of intellect.
- [We've moved from homo erectus to neanderthals ...]
  - Neanderthals don't do things that we associate with modern human intelligence.
  - They may not bury dead.

- They don't seem to have personal ornamentation.
- They don't make art.
- But boy, they make a lot of stone tools. They take flakes and shape them in many ways (e.g., going from a thin edge to a thicker edge that will last longer)
- Increasingly able to predict the form of the flake they take off.
- We see shaping of the cores to make the flakes more useful.
- It's a kind of improvisation: You start with a plan, but then you have to respond to the things around you (or at least what happens).
- Once we get fully modern humans, we see symbolic thinking
  - Cave art
  - Things made of other materials, such as bone
  - Things formed into symbolic shapes
  - More blades - At least twice as long as wide, relatively straight.
    - Set up a core to make them.
    - Lots and lots of cutting edge
    - We see them in composite tools - bone + stone + something to hold it into place.
  - New technique: Press instead of strike

#### Other approaches to making these tools

- Not all stone tools work by fracture.
- Some things don't fracture conchoidally (sp?) - E.g., granite
- But they make a different kind of stone tool
- You can still work them by crumbling stuff away and then grinding on another gritty rock. Sharp and durable edge. Much more rugged.
- Ground stone tools develop pretty late in prehistory
- In the "new stone age"

#### Naming ages

- Paleolithic - Old stone age (upper, middle, and lower)
  - Lower - Original
  - Middle - Neanderthal
  - Upper - Fully modern - the blades
- Neolithic - New stone age - ground tools

#### Archaeology

- What do you learn from looking at this mess? (Particularly the things that are on the floor.)
- We can recognize the evidence of stone tool manufacture.
  - We'll certainly see the hard hammer stuff
  - We might see the soft hammer stuff
  - We might see the pressure flaking
- We'll also see that different materials have been used.
- Note that the tools that have been made are likely to leave the site. When they are used up, they are

discarded.

- If you reassemble the broken pieces you can get some sense as to what tool was taken away.
- Upper paleolithic, we're seeing things moving 100s of kilometers, so either people are moving around or they are trading.
- Most stone is geologically traceable, particularly obsidian - You can often tell the specific volcanic source
  - A Grinnell alum has shown that Mesopotamia (about 6K years ago) had been getting obsidian from further away than previously expected, sometimes bypassing nearer sources - implications of different political alliances and such.
- We see people transporting stone over the Sierra Nevada mountains

### Identifying tools

- How do we know that something is, say, an arrowhead.
- Often by analogy to current things.
  - Particularly from cultures that are using similar things.
  - "Ethnographic analogy."
- What other information might you have?
  - You find it in context, such as in the body of an animal.
  - Multiple functions, such as in a burial.
  - Once it's out of its context, it loses a lot of its meaning.
- What you find on it - A blade might have blood or fur or .... There are residues that remain on stone tools.
  - New microscopic and chemical techniques help a lot (bison, rabbit, human, ....)
  - Vegetable residues, too.
  - You also get different kinds of wear. Polishes and scratches. Scraping vs. cutting give different kinds of patterns on a tool.
- And you can compare what happens when *you* use similar tools to the marks on the tools.
  - So we need people like Whittaker to make the tools.

### Some important points

- Stone tools are one of the few technologies we study that we can watch being made.
- Stone tools show *imagination* at work. (That is, we see that the people who created the tools could look at something and envision it in a new form.)
- Anthropologists seem to classify art making as a key characteristic of humanity. (It was why they are unsure about neandertals)
- In exploring a technology, one can ask not just about the technology itself, but the technologies needed to make the technology.
- Sometimes we have to study technologies indirectly.

# Notes from DP

Professor John Whittaker â anthropology

- Production of stone tools
- How do archaeologists look at stone tools?
  - A model for looking at other technologies
- All technologies are embedded in a society that uses them for various purposes
- Live demonstration â chert (silica) from Missouri
  - Note the byproducts
  - Fracture process
- Conchoidal fracture â key feature
  - Property of glasslike materials
  - Any material with this property can be made into stone tools
- Ripples on a stone flake represent the fracture through the rock
- Need angle <90 degrees between the striking surface and the flake
- Strike at an angle <90 degrees to produce a sharp flake
- Like all technologies, there is a mental component to stone tool production
  - Ancestors didn't measure but they understood the principle allowing them to control the shape of the flake they take off
- What can we do with stone tools?
  - Cutting
  - Scraping dirt/bark
  - Digging
  - Shape a stick
  - Butcher an animal
- Run through of human evolution
  - Models vs. evidence of evolution
- Explanatory story vs. evidence upon which its based
  - 2-3 million years ago
- Creatures that we would today call apes prevailed
- Larger brains, teeth, stand upright, use hands (unlike modern apes)
  - First stone tools very simple
- Made things accessible to humans that were inaccessible before
- Hand axe â more complicated, need different technique: soft hammer percussion (vs. hard hammer percussion)
  - Human intelligence
- Increased intelligence allows prediction of what shape the stone tool will take
- Neanderthals â not very intelligent, but produce consistent stone tools
  - One technique is to shape a core by flaking, then take off one flake that will be a particular, predetermined shape
- Minds are getting more complicated
  - Blade tools â represent control
  - Composite tools â putting different materials together (bone and stone)

- Carved bone tools carved with the stone
- Pressure flaking
  - Instead of striking against the edge, press against the edge with a bone tool
- Paleolithic (Old Stone Age)
  - Early
  - Middle → Neandertals (flake tools)
  - Upper → fully modern humans (blade tools)
- New Stone Age: 10-12,000 years ago ground stone tools arise with agriculture
- What would an archaeologist make of the stone tools made by Prof. Whitaker?
  - They would note the stone debris and byproducts (Jaya)
  - Would know it was a teaching lesson (Chi)
  - They would know something had to happen to result in flakes of stone (Dana)
  - Can guess what type of tool was made by putting together debris to rebuild the rock
- Archaeological context
  - Interpretive meaning
- Wear on the tool itself
  - Microscopic and macroscopic wear indicated what it was used for
  - Pattern of motion is visible in pattern of damage on the tool
  - Stone tool develops polish over time

Key points:

- We can look at stone tool production as an indicator of evolving early human intelligence
- There are several methods of producing stone tools
- Stone tools are one of the first example of humans creating technology to meet their needs

## Notes from TD

The Basics of Stone Tools:

- What do you do to create these tools?
  - What tools do you use to make tools
  - Hard-percussion hammers (other rocks)
  - Soft-percussion hammers (antlers, bones)
  - Pressure flaking with
- What do you make (detritus)
- What are the principles behind knapping?
  - Conchoidal fractures (like in windows, bb gun)
  - Control conchoidal fractures to make tools
  - How do you know?
    - ripples in the stone
    - bulb of percussion
    - piece of fractured core
  - Fundamental Principles:

- You have to hold the piece at an angle
- You have to strike it at an angle
- Pieces cut from the core have similar shape to whatever platform of the core you strike -- "Flakes like to follow the ridges"
- How is this applied knowledge?
  - The way you strike it affects the quality of the tools
  - Where you strike it (which platform)
  - "A mental exercise"
- In comparison with metal tools:
  - Less durable
  - Cheaper in several ways (time, technique, tools to make the tools)

#### Human Evolution & Stone Tools:

- Basics of Human evolution:
  - Oldest ancestors looked like apes, but weren't quite apes. Better with their hands, stood upright, etc.
  - Neanderthals: Close to modern humans, but not quite there. No art, no concrete evidence of burying their dead, no ornamentation. Great at stone tools. Better at predicting the shape flakes will take
  - Humans get the symbolic stuff: carving, art, that stuff. Into making blades. definition below
- Stone tools expand access (to more tools, more foods)

#### Advanced Stone Tool Techniques:

- Stone tools evolve just like modern technology.
  - More work and better techniques
  - (passes around two stone tools)
- Soft hammers
  - Soft hammers break off flakes that are longer and thinner, and make it easier to shape flakes
  - Flatter bulb of percussion creates the flatter edge
- Pressure flaking (more advanced)
  - Make notches, more advanced control, still has little bulbs of percussion
- All good knapping stones have a large amount of silicate
- Different rocks get their silicate in different ways

#### Archaeological Information!

- How do we know about any of this?
  - We can look for characteristic unintentional wear and tear on tools to make tools
  - Shaped characteristics
- How intelligent were early humans and their ancestors? How do we know?
  - Symmetric shape: Ability to imagine the shape of the axe out of the rock -- abstraction.
  - Must predict the form of the flakes will take -- abstract thought
  - "Stone making is like musical improvisation" You have a plan, but you must respond to your

tools, to the stone

#### Advanced Techniques Revisited:

- Humans (*Homo sapiens*) make BLADES
  - More than twice as long than they are wide
  - Best way to get a lot of cutting edge
  - They make nice stones to shape into other tools
    - make projectile points
    - retouch edge to make a scraper (maybe attach it to something else)
  - What are other special human tools?
    - Blades
    - Composite tools (bone and stone)
    - Bone tools
- Ground stone tools eventually replace flaked tools [Sam notes that they *supplement* flaked tools. We have both.]
  - Happens fairly late in prehistory
  - Neolithic tools

#### Archaeology part II:

- We divide prehistory into periods:
  - Paleolithic
    - Lower -- really old
    - Middle -- Neanderthals
    - Upper -- Modern Humans, blades [Sam doesn't think these are modern]
  - Neolithic -- Ground stone tools
- How do Archaeologists understand sites like the one we just created? What does it show?
  - Look at the debris, different chunks of the same stone so it's been broken intentionally
  - Look at the flakes, you can see the different techniques
  - Usually the tools end up somewhere else (they get used), but you can reconstruct what happened from the debris
- How do archaeologists know what you do/did with a stone tool?
  - Whittaker holds up little thing, we say arrowhead. We are using ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALOGY, comparing something we don't know to something we do know. Basic form is similar to modern technology, stuff we've been exposed too.
  - You can examine its CONTEXT (where its found). If it's found in the side of an animal. Function is determined by its context (is it a tool being manufactured? Is it a symbolic offering? Is it the cause of death?)
  - You can look at RESIDUE, see what it touched. (permitted by modern tech)
  - You can examine USE WEAR, type of damage speaks to how it was used.
    - flakes from impacts
    - scratches and polishes from scraping & cutting.
      - Pattern of motion is visible in pattern of wear
      - Polished by use



- \* **Knapping is a form of experimental observation, and provides another form of analogy** \*
- What about trade? and movement?
  - For a while, human ancestors moved rocks (Whitaker doubts it was intentional trade)
  - Humans traded, it seems. Even in prehistory
  - Whitaker gets his stuff from knapping conferences
  - ASIDE ON SOURCING: Stones can be sourced! Obsidian is volcanically formed, and has characteristic trace values.
  - Mesopotamian civilizations imported obsidian from farther sources than previously thought. Had to bypass sources close by, possibly for political reasons

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