

A-group: culture early farming (Neolithic into early Bronze Age) culture of Lower Nubia, 3900-2900 BC. Followed by [B-Group](#) and then [C-Group](#) (or Kushite)

aborigine:

a native human inhabitant of a country or geographic area. In North America, the Native North American Indian.

abrading stone:

a stone, typically sandstone or limestone that was used to smooth or sharpen antler, bone, wood and other stone.

absolute dating:

determination of age with reference to a specific time scale, chronometric dating

acute:

severe short angles coming to a sharp point.

A.D.:

the abbreviation of *anno domini*, which means "in the year of our lord"; in measuring time, this means years since the birth of Christ

adaptation:

The process of change to better conform with environmental conditions or other external stimuli.

Adena:

The major cultural group of the Woodland period. The Adena had cultural influences in Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The Adena are regarded in modern times as being accomplished craftsmen.

adze:

A tool, typically made from stone, that was presumed to be used like a modern woodworker's chisel to work wood.

agate:

A semi-precious chalcedony formed as quartz fossils of a previous geological age. The colors of agate can be clouded, clear or banded.

agriculture:

farming, or the cultivation of food plants such as corn and beans

alternate:

When used in reference to a flaked projectile or tool, alternate implies the opposite face of opposing edges was flaked.

Anasazi: "Anasazi" is a Navajo Indian word meaning "Ancient Ones," a term used to describe the people who dwelled in this land from approximately 1 to 1300 AD. These early inhabitants hunted game, gathered wild plants, and grew corn and squash to supplement their diet. As time passed, agriculture became the mainstay of the Anasazi economy. They developed architectural skills and produced fine baskets, pottery, ornaments, woven goods, and tools. Goods were exchanged with other communities in a trade network that extended into central Mexico. Climatic changes and relationships with neighboring groups caused occasional shifts in settlement. As the Anasazi culture spread, it developed distinct regional variations. The northern San Juan Anasazi occupied southwestern Colorado, including Mesa Verde, the lower Dolores River Valley, and portions of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The population grew and expanded throughout the region, clustering in small villages. Between 1000 and 1250 AD, the Anasazi population of modern day Montezuma County was equal to that of the present population.

anthropology:

The scientific and humanistic study of man's present and past biological, linguistic, social, and cultural variations. Its major subfields are archaeology, physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, and anthropological linguistics.

antiquity:

ancient times

anvil:

a rock that was used as a level base for chipping other stone into tools, blades or projectile points. Typically part of a flint knapper's toolkit.

archaeoastronomy: the study of the astronomical practices, celestial lore, mythologies, religions and world-views of all ancient cultures. It is, in essence, the "anthropology of astronomy," as distinguished from the "history of astronomy." Many of the great monuments and ceremonial constructions of early civilizations were astronomically aligned. The accurate cardinal orientation of the Great Pyramid at Giza in Egypt or the Venus alignment of the magnificent Maya Palace of the Governor at Uxmal in Yucatan are outstanding examples. Much can be learned about the development of science and cosmological thought from the study of both the ancient astronomies and surviving indigenous traditions around the world. (See [A Brief Introduction to Archaeoastronomy](#))

archaeology:

(also sometimes spelled archeology) The scientific study of the physical evidence of past human societies recovered through the excavation. Archaeology not only attempts to discover and describe past cultures, but also to formulate explanations for the development of cultures.

archaeological site:

a place that contains artifacts or other cultural remains left by people who once lived in or used that place

archaeologist:

Anyone with an interest in the aims and methods of archaeology. A professional archaeologist usually holds a degree in anthropology with a specialization in archaeology and is trained to collect archaeological information in a "proper" scientific way.

Archaic or Archaic Period:

A time frame in North American pre-history spanning 7,000 years between 10,000 B.P. to 3000 B.P. after Paleo and before Woodland times. The 7,000 years is further defined as Early, Middle and Late Archaic which are also defined elsewhere in this glossary. During the Archaic period, people lived mostly by hunting small game and gathering wild plant food.

arrowhead or arrowpoint:

A weapon point or tip made of stone, bone, metal or other material which in general is less than 2 1/2 inches in length (63 mm) and attributed no earlier than the Woodland phase of North American Aborigine prehistory. Larger points are regarded as spear points or knife blades and are associated with spear and dart [atlatl](#) or hand thrown delivery systems or hafted cutting. See

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/PP/bfp2.html> (retrieved March 20, 2000)

artifact:

An old, authentic object used, crafted or manufactured by the application of human workmanship or activity, especially one of prehistoric origin that may have archaeological significance especially if found in an undisturbed context. Common examples include projectile points, tools, utensils, art, food remains, and other products of human activity.

assemblage:

A group of artifacts which represent a culture. A group of artifacts related to each other based upon some recovery from a common archaeological context. Assemblage examples are artifacts from a site or feature.

asymmetrical:

When used in reference to projectiles or tools, asymmetrical refers to opposing side of an object which have dissimilar contours, shape or form.

atlatl:

The Aztec word for a spear throwing stick device. This projectile propulsion device preceded the bow and arrow. In general, a wooden or bone stick or board with a hand grip at one end and a spur or hook at the other end. The atlatl is used as an extension of the arm in throwing a spear or dart. The spear shaft is socketed and fits into the spur or hook of the Atlatl. Essentially the Atlatl lengthens the length of the spear thrower's arm and with loaded, spring-like, motion can provide the benefit of greater force and distance over that of the hand thrown spear. It is hypothesized that sometimes a stone weight(s) (a.k.a.: Bannerstone, Birdstone, Boatstone) was attached to the Atlatl to provide better

balance or to load the device with a spring or bending effect or to diminish the "whoosh" noise created during the throwing process.

atlatl weight:

a drilled or grooved stone or shell that was used to weight the atlatl. See [atlatl](#).

auricle:

the corners of a stem of stemmed types or the corners of the base of triangular types which are ear-like.

auriculate:

A major projectile form which has rounded or pointed ears that project from the concave base or stem of points or blades.

authentic true or genuine. Artifacts made in prehistoric times.

axe a large chopping tool that may have a groove for hafting to a handle.

B-Group:

Early Bronze Age Nubian culture (2900-2000 BC), preceded by the [A-Group](#) and followed by [C-Group](#) (or Kushite). Many scholars believe that the B Group is really a transitional stage between A and C, because cultural differences among the three are not that pronounced.

Balcones Fault Zone:

change in elevation and topography

B.C.:

the abbreviation of "before Christ"; in measuring time, this means years before the birth of Christ

below surface:

a grid is established for an excavation with an arbitrary datum, indicated as *surface*. Distances below this datum are referred to as "below surface."

biface:

generic term for any stone tool that has been flaked on both faces of the stone

B.P.:

the abbreviation of "before the present"

bs:

abbreviation for [below surface](#)

C-Group:

the third segment of Nubian culture, from 2000-1700 BC; refers to the beginning of the Kushite culture. See also [A-Group](#), and [B-Group](#).

catalogue:

an artifact is catalogued when it has been given a number that tells exactly where in the site that artifact was found

central place theory:

developed by the geographer Christaller to explain the spacing and function of the settlement landscape. Under idealized conditions, he argued, central places of the same size and nature would be equidistant from each other, surrounded by secondary centers with their own smaller satellites. In spite of its limitations, central place theory has found useful applications in archaeology as a preliminary heuristic device.

chert:

a siliceous rock of chalcedonic or opaline silica occurring in limestone and used in making stone tools

Contact Period:

the time from the arrival of the first Europeans (about 1500) until the Spaniards began to build missions in the state of Texas (about 1700)

core:

a mass of material often preformed by the worker to the desired shape to allow the removal of a definite type of flake or blade

culture:

a group of people who speak the same language and have the same customs and way of life from generation to generation

cultural anthropology:

cultural resources:

archaeological heritage

curation:

to catalog, protect and manage recovered artifacts

curator:

one who oversees the processing of recovered artifacts

debitage:

residual lithic material resulting from tool manufacture

diagnostic artifact:

an item that is indicative of a particular time period and/or cultural group.

domesticate:

the act or process through which people cultivate or raise plants and animals for use by people

ecofacts:

non-artifactual organic and environmental remains which have cultural relevance

Early Ceramic Period:

it is generally accepted that the [Archaic period](#) ends with the introduction of clay pottery and the bow and arrow. Ceramics are estimated to first appear between A.D. 700 and A.D. 900. The Early Ceramic Period is 200 B.C.-A.D. 800.

ethnohistory:

the study of the development of past cultures

excavate:

in archaeology, to investigate a site through a careful, scientific digging process

face:

the broader area of a tool or projectile between the edges. This area could include the blade and hafting area.

flake:

a thin flat asymmetrical piece of flint or other stone which was intentionally removed from a tool or projectile core during the process of manufacture or sharpening/resharpening.

feature:

a type of material remain that cannot be removed from a site such as roasting pits, fire hearths, house floors or post molds.

flint:

hard fine-grained quartz that sparks when struck with steel

flute:

long, narrow flake removed from a spear point to aid in the binding of the point to the spear shaft.

grid:

in archaeology, a system of squares placed over a site so the exact locations in the site can be recorded during excavation

guerrero point:

With the advent of the Spanish mission system, the Indians who adopted mission life continued for a while to make stone tools, and a distinctive point type, Guerrero, is often found in missions, ranchos, and Indian campsites of that era.

hearth:

location where stones remain in place to show where people once built a fire

historic:

of or pertaining to the time period after the arrival of Europeans to the New World

incised:

decoration found on pottery consisting of lines drawn into wet clay. When fired, the arrangement of lines leaves a permanent design on the vessel surface.

interaction sphere:

prehistoric groups who shared social interaction and exchanged material goods, through a network made up of long distance trade contacts.

*in situ*:

natural undisturbed position of an object or material

Jornada Mogollon:

a people descended from nomadic peoples who inhabited south-central New Mexico from approximately 5000 B.C. By A.D. 900. The Jornada Mogollon had established villages around Three Rivers, New Mexico.

knapping:

the act of molding siliceous rocks into tools

Late Archaic:

A cultural period of the North American Aborigine Indians dating from 4,000 to 3,000 B.P.

Late Prehistoric:

the last period of prehistory in Texas; the [Late Prehistoric period](#) began when people began to use the bow and arrow, make pottery and practice agriculture; this period ended when the Europeans came to Texas and the Historic Period began

Leon Plain:

The beginning of the Late Prehistoric Period in the South and Central Texas archaeological areas, is noted by the introduction of the bow and arrow and a stone technology manufacturing change from large projectile points to small thin, light weight points designed for arrow shafts. Leon Plain, a plain, cream colored pottery, also appears during this time. The Indians in these regions continued hunting and gathering, moving

frequently within a foraging range in search of food and resources. New technologies appeared to have been introduced into the area in waves from north to south.

level:

an excavation layer, which may correspond to natural strata. Levels are numbered from the top to bottom of the excavation unit, with the uppermost level being Level 1.

lithic:

stone, or made of stone.

Lower Cretaceous Period:

term used to describe a period of geologic time during the Mesozoic era between the Jurassic and the Upper Cretaceous; 98,000,000 to 135,000,000 millions years before the present

material legacy or material remains:

buildings, tools and other artifacts that constitute the material remains of a former society

mano:

a stone artifact used in conjunction with a [metate](#) to grind corn and beans into a powder or flour. A mano looks like a common river rock on one side, but the grinding side is unusually flat. The mano would fit into the carved trough of the metate and would be pushed back and forth over the corn, beans or other plant material until it had been ground to the desired consistency.

metate:

a stone tool for grinding corn and other foods. In its simplest form the metate was a flat rock against which another stone, held in the hands, used to grind foods. The metate was a slab of rock which was typically about 18 inches long and about a foot wide. A smooth trough was carved out of the slab by chipping away at the rock at the center. The traditional Mexican metate is made of volcanic stone in the form of a slanted flat slab of stone supported by three feet. The stone used with the hands is shaped in the form of a long stone bar and is called "*la mano*" – Spanish for "hand." Thus the [mano](#) and metate work together to accomplish their purpose.

midden:

any place where past people heaped trash, food remains or other discarded items; shell middens are common along the coast and burned-rock middens are common in central Texas

neck:

that part of the projectile or blade that is narrowest and is in between the notches. The topmost part of the hafting area of a notched artifact.

nodule:

a large, usually roughly spherical piece of stone such as flint which was selected as a material from which to remove flakes or blades for the manufacture of stone tools and projectile points.

notch:

a flaked U- or V-shaped indentation.

notch width:

the measurement of the space between the notches across the narrowest point of the stem or base.

notch, basal:

a flaking technique applied to accommodate hafting which involved the flaking of notches into the basal edge of a preform.

notched, corner:

a flaking technique applied to accommodate hafting which involved the flaking of notches into the corners of a preform.

notched, low side:

a flaking technique applied to accommodate hafting which involved the flaking of notches into the side of a preform near its base.

notched, side:

a major projectile form where notches to accommodate hafting were struck into the sides of a preform near the base.

notches, expanded:

notches which are broader near the stem than between the auricle and barb tips. These notches are bigger at their end than at the blade edge.

outline:

a key and obvious diagnostic feature is the outline or silhouette of an implement. The outline is the two dimensional image perceived when viewing the outer perimeter of an artifact with a blade face towards the viewer. Some projectile point types have distinctive outlines and can be accurately identified by this singular feature.

Paleoindian:

the earliest known prehistoric inhabitants of North America

paleontologist:

a scientist who studies the history of animals through fossilized remains of animal bones

Palo Duro Complex:

a specific culture in the Texas Panhandle-Plains in the [Prehistoric Period](#).

Perdiz Point:

a point type, characteristic of the second phase of the Late Prehistoric Period in Central Texas. This period is called the Toyah phase. It began around A. D. 1300 and ended about A. D. 1750 and immediately precedes the historic period. Stone tools associated with this period include Perdiz, also identified at Redland Oaks, and Clifton points as well as end scrapers and bevel bifaces. Pottery is also associated with this phase and has been found at many archaeological sites. During the Toyah phase hunting seemed to increase and bison herds returned to the area. See [LATE PREHISTORIC PERIOD - 750 A.D. to 1650 A.D.](#) for further information about this and related points. For a good report on late prehistoric Toyah culture see LeRoy Johnson, *The Life and Times of Toyah-Culture Folk*, by LeRoy Johnson (1994).



perishable artifact:

an artifact made of wood, plant fiber or some other material that will not last long after the item is discarded

pictograph:

painting on a rock surface that expresses artistic or religious meaning.

plano-convex:

description of a cross-section of a blade that is semi-circular. One face is flat while the other face is excurved or rounded. See [uniface](#).

post mold / post hole:

a type of feature; a circular stain left in the ground after a wooden post has decayed; usually indicates the former existence of a house or fence.

oot sherd:

a piece of broken pottery.

projectile points:

the term used to include arrow, dart and spear points. For a description of a variety of points see [Glossary of Arrowhead Point Types](#)

prehistoric:

that which occurred before written records

preserve:



to keep in perfect or unaltered condition; maintain in an unchanged form

preservation:

the protection of archaeological and historic sites

quarry blank:

see [preform](#)

quartz:

a material frequently used in projectile points and other artifacts. When quartz is clear and colorless it is called rock crystal; milky quartz is milky white; smoky quartz is clouded a brown color; rose quartz is a pale red color; sugar quartz is the color of brown sugar.

quartz, sugar:

also known as quartzite, a granular low grade form of light brownish quartz used in the production of some point types, especially in areas where flint or [chert](#) were not available.

quartzite:

a granular form of quartz stone which was formed in water deposited sediments and consists of sand grains which have been cemented together. It can be chipped, but is difficult to work.

radiocarbon dating:

method of Absolute dating, based on the rate of radioactive decay of the isotope Carbon 14 contained in organic material

relative dating:

determining the age of a specimen relative to its position in a stratigraphical or archaeological sequence; determination of chronological sequence without recourse to a fixed time scale

rock art:

a general term for pecked, incised, or painted figures on rock.

salvage archaeology:

the location and recording of archaeological sites in advance of highway construction, drainage projects, etc.

scraper:

stone tool designed for used in scraping hides, bones and other similar materials in the preparation of food, clothing and shelter. a small stone blade with uniface flaking.

screen:

the sifting of matrix material removed from an excavation to recover artifactual material not removed by the excavator

sedentary:

human groups leading a settled, non-migratory lifestyle.

serrations:

consecutive small teeth or barbs on the edge of a blade formed by removing pressure flakes. Biface serrations have flakes removed from both sides of the blade edge while uniface serrations have flakes removed from only one face of an edge.

shape:

the three dimensional image perceived when one considers the entire [artifact](#).

sherds:

the individual pieces of broken pottery vessels.

shoulder:

the area of an [artifact](#) that divides the blade from the stem or hafting area.

site:

a location where human activities once took place and left some form of material evidence. A location which has yielded [artifacts](#) and either is, has, or will undergo excavation or is being conserved for the future. Known sites should *not* be [disturbed by amateurs or surface hunted](#). Sites can be registered and can have a site number or code associated with them.

site steward:

a volunteer who visits a site and helps protect it from vandalism and looting.

strata:

many layers of earth or levels in an archaeological site (singular stratum).

stratigraphy:

the layering of deposits in archaeological sites. Cultural remains and natural sediments become buried over time, forming strata.

survey:

the systematic examination of the ground surface in search of archaeological sites.

test excavation:

subsurface excavations in areas which are either defined as [sites](#) based on surface [artifacts](#) or thought to contain buried deposits based on the landform.

test pit:

a small excavation unit dug to learn what the depth and character of the stratum might be, and to determine more precisely which strata contain artifacts and other material remains.

Thiessen polygons:

a formal method of describing settlement patterns based on territorial divisions centered on a single site. The polygons are created by drawing straight lines between pairs of neighboring sites, then at the mid-point along each of these lines, a second series of lines

are drawn at right angles to the first. Linking the second series of lines creates the Thiessen polygons.

uniface:

a generic term for any stone tool that has been flaked on only one side of the stone. Also known as [plano-convex](#)

variant:

term used in projectile typology to describe a variation of a type.

vein quartz:

a relatively pure type of quartz which is found in veins in areas of igneous rocks.

Woodland:

a cultural period of the Eastern North American Aborigine Indians dating from 3,000 - 1,300 B.P. Usually, the presence of pottery differentiates the Woodland culture from the Archaic culture which preceded it.

worked:

term used in projectile point descriptions which describes an area of an artifact that has been shaped or altered by man, such as the removal of flakes along a blade edge.

XTENT;

a method of generating settlement hierarchy, that overcomes the limitations of both [central place theory and Thiessen polygons](#). It assigns territories to centers based on their scale, assuming that the size of each center is directly proportional to its area of influence. Hypothetical political maps may thus be constructed from survey data.