



## Dart and Arrow Point Typology<sup>1</sup>

Archeologists have grouped points into types, that is points that have **similar attributes**: e.g. shape, notching, flaking style, stem beveling, barbs, edge grinding, edge workmanship, serrations, etc.

Typology is defined as: **placing artifacts into specific types according to similar patterns of attributes**. When we collect artifacts from a site, we return with them to the lab and type them, that is, place them into groups based on their similar attributes. This does several things for us: first it gives us a way to sort and catalogue all the materials we collect in the field. Just as useful it **gives us a diagnostic tool that tells us the time period when a site was likely occupied/used by prehistoric peoples**. Types may also tell us about the culture that used this geographic area and the kinds of artifact assemblages that we can expect to find here. And finally types may allow us to describe to others the culture that lived here.

The shapes of stone arrow and dart points made by prehistoric peoples around the world are thought to be driven by function and culture, and vary by culture (i.e.

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<sup>1</sup> Written by John Benedict based on material from Turner, E. S., T. R. Hester, & R. L. McReynolds. 2011. *Stone Artifacts of Texas Indians*. Taylor Trade Publishing, N.Y. pp. ix-7; and Thomas, D. H. & R. L. Kelly. 2006. *Archaeology*. Thomson, CA. pp. 212-221. Special thanks to Dr. Chris Lintz for a very useful review used to revise this paper.

geographic place) and time. Points from a particular time and place have a distinct style that frequently reflects the specific culture that produced them. Most types have restricted distributions. However, some point styles were shared by several cultures, maybe adopted from nearby cultures, or were used across large areas and by many cultures like the Washita arrow point. (Cultures are groups of peoples/societies bound by similar language, art, beliefs/ideologies, and genetics.) So types have historical and cultural meaning, they are not just descriptive categories.

How can point types tell us the time period of occupation and culture? Because archeologists have previously determined which culture, geographic area, and time period each type was produced and use in. Archeologists have also determined what features and artifact assemblages are associated with each culture and time period. Typology is a powerful tool in archeology for understanding the past!

Texas point types were first organized and associated with their cultures and time periods by J. Charles Kelly and Alex Krieger beginning about 1944. The first handbook of Texas point types was published in 1954 and authored by Dee Ann Suhm, Alex Krieger and Edward Jelks<sup>2</sup>. It is the bible of Texas Archeology. The 2011 handbook of *Texas Indian Artifacts* by Turner et al. that we use today evolved from this 1954 handbook.

Typing is imperfect because there is much variation in the individual points that make up a type. This is due to: differences between knappers and geographic areas; knappers make mistakes; damaged points get reworked; and there are transitional point forms or variants within a culture and as a result of cultural change. Point types are artificial, made up categories, but they have been used and tested for more than 50 years, and found very useful. There have been additions and deletions of types over time due to, new data on old types, discoveries of new types, and disagreement among archeologists.

The names of types are usually based on places or people near where the type was discovered. For example the Pedernales dart point type was named and described by J.C. Kelley for the Pedernales River. The Edwards arrow point was described and named

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<sup>2</sup> Suhm, D. A., A. D. Krieger, & E. B. Jelks. 1954. *An Introductory Handbook of Texas Archeology*. Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society 25. Austin: Texas Archeological Society.

by J. B. Sollberger for the Edwards Plateau. (See Davis<sup>3</sup> for more sources of point names.)

Surprisingly prehistoric peoples used each point type for a long period of time before they transitioned to a new type. The average use-life for a dart point style (i.e. type) was about 900 years, but ranged from as short as maybe 200 to as long as 2,000 years, depending on the type. Whereas, arrow point use-life averaged about 400 years and ranged from maybe 150 to 500 years, before there was a shift to a new more favored type. Archeologists believe that point type change in a geographic area reflects changes in the culture. It may also reflect adoption from another culture with no accompanying cultural change; or be due to technological change, such as the way the point is hafted, requiring a change in point shape. Interestingly there were always several point types in vogue at the same time in a culture. You have to wonder why? We really need a time machine to answer many archeological questions!

Since a few hundred point types have been described for Texas and there is controversy among archeologists on the names of all these types, we have chosen to use a single reference guide to type points we find in the field. It is, ***A Field Guide to Stone Artifacts of Texas Indians*** by Turner et. al. (2011<sup>4</sup>). All of us using this same guide makes our work simpler and more consistent.

This Guide describes **96 types of dart points and 41 types of arrow points** that you might find in Texas today if we were lucky! Here in the Central Texas Hill Country we can expect to find 42 of these types of dart points and 7 of the arrow points (see Table 1). Additional Texas point types can occur in Central Texas sites, but are uncommon. The most common dart points you will find in excavations at Central Texas sites are (from most common to least common): Pedernales, Bulverde, Nolan, Travis, Marshall, Marcos, Castroville, Montell, Ensor, Frio, and Fairland<sup>5</sup>. If you are surface surveying then you would be more likely to encounter recent dart types, such as Frio, Fairland, and Ensor. And the most common arrow points types, Perdiz, Scallorn, and Edwards.

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<sup>3</sup> Davis Jr., Dan R. 1991. *Prehistoric Artifacts of the Texas Indians*. Pecos Publishing Co., San Antonio.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict, J. H. & J. Contreras. 2009. Artifacts from the Pecan Springs Site 41KR21 in Eastern Kerr County, Texas. *La Tierra* Vol. 36: 41-56.

Weir, F. A. 1976. *The Central Texas Archaic*. PhD. Dissertation. Washington State University. Department of Anthropology.

**Table 1. Central Texas Dart and Arrow Point Types, and Time Periods of Use<sup>6</sup>.**

Point Name	Archeological Period	Years Before Present
<b>Historic</b>		<b>400-300</b> (1600-1700 AD)
<b>Late Prehistoric</b>		<b>1,300-400</b> (700-1600 AD)
Perdiz (A <sup>7</sup> )	Late Prehistoric into Historic	800-300
Fresno (A)	Late Prehistoric into Historic	800-400
Toyah (A)	Late Prehistoric into Historic	800-400
Sabinal (A)	Late Prehistoric	880-750
Edwards (A)	Late Prehistoric	900-700
Scallorn (A)	Late Prehistoric	1,250-800
Cuney (A)	Late Prehistoric into Historic	1,300-400
<b>Transitional</b>		<b>2,300- 1,300</b> (300 BC- 700 AD)
Darl	Transitional Archaic	~1,800
Edgewood	Transitional Archaic	2,200-1,400
Ensor	Transitional Archaic	2,200-1,400
Fairland	Transitional Archaic	2,200-1,400
Frio	Transitional Archaic	2,200-1,400
<b>Late Archaic</b>		<b>3,000-2,300</b> (1,000-300 BC)
Marcos	Late into Transitional Archaic	2,800-1,800
Castroville	Late Archaic	2,800-2,400
Montell	Late Archaic	2,800-2,400
<b>Middle Archaic</b>		<b>5,500-3,000</b> (3,500-1,000 BC)
Tortugas	Middle into Late Archaic	3,200-2,000
Marshall	Middle Archaic	~3,500
Langtry	Middle Archaic	~4,000
Kinney	Middle into Late Archaic	4,000-2,500
Palmillas	Middle into Late Archaic	4,000-2,500
Bulverde	Middle Archaic	4,000-3,500
Pandora	Middle into Late Archaic	4,000-3,500
Pedernales	Middle into Late Archaic	4,100-2,500
Williams	Middle into Late Archaic	4,500-3,000
Travis	Middle Archaic	4,650-4,050
Pandale	Middle Archaic	4,700-4,000
La Jita	Middle Archaic	4,820-3,980

<sup>6</sup> This table is based on data from Turner et al. 2011. See footnote 1 for full reference. These data are rough estimates from the literature, especially for arrow points.

<sup>7</sup> (A) indicates arrow point types, all other point types are dart points.

**Table 1. Continued**

Point Name	Archeological Period	Years Before Present
<b>Early Archaic</b>		<b>8,000-5,500 (7,000-3,500 BC)</b>
Bell	Early Archaic	5,660-4,800
Early Triangular	Early into Middle Archaic	5,800-3,910
Nolan	Early into Middle Archaic	6,000-4,500
Evant	Early Archaic	6,000-5,000
Uvalde	Early Archaic	~6,000
Martindale	Early Archaic	6,400-5,000
Merrell	Early Archaic	6,400-5,000
Laguna	Early Archaic	7,000-6,000
Jetta	Early Archaic	~7,000
Baker	Early Archaic	8,000-6,000
Gower	Early Archaic	8,600-6,290
<b>Paleo-Indian</b>		<b>12,500-8,000 (10,500-6,000 BC)</b>
Midland	Paleo-Indian	~8,600
Angostura	Paleo-Indian into Early Archaic	8,800-7960
Barber	Paleo-Indian	~9,000
Golondrina	Paleo-Indian	9,080-8,830
Scottsbluff	Paleo-Indian	9,120-8,650
St. Mary's Hall	Paleo-Indian	9,900-8,700
Wilson	Paleo-Indian	~10,000
Plainview	Paleo-Indian	10,150-10,000
Dalton	Paleo-Indian	10,500-9,900
Folsom	Paleo-Indian	11,050-10,150
Clovis	Paleo-Indian	~11,200