

Midden Points

A. J. HUDSON, Mortlach



Actual



Size



The makers of these points were late-comers; their artifacts are found close to the top sod throughout the Besant east of Mortlach, and at one site at the west end the distinctive points are the main ones found. Their lateness is also indicated by the presence of a small percentage of trade goods. The arrowheads are small with generally square bases and square notches and sometimes the bases are smooth. Occasionally there are straight triangular points without side notches.

Pottery is plentiful and well decorated; also bone artifacts, especially bone handles, and shell ornaments. The only grooved hammers or pounders found to date in the Besant valley have been associated with the midden site. No stone hammers or bone handles have been found at any earlier level. I should judge that, in their manufacture, grooved hammers require more and longer work than artifacts made by flaking. As surface finds on the prairie, grooved hammers are fairly plentiful while midden points are not. This latter may be due to the practice of concentrated mass slaughtering of bison inside valleys and ravines. At the resulting bone piles, the midden points are plentiful. It is worth noting that, whereas at earlier levels the bones are always much broken up, that is not true of the bones at the slaughtering midden. It would suggest a change

to pounding the bison and thus more plentiful supplies.

We need to know the distribution of these midden sites both inside and outside Saskatchewan. I have a report of midden points being found at Lake Lenore, north-east of Saskatoon.

Bone handles were made from rib bones. Some are decorated with side notches, sometimes in paired groups on opposite edges; occasionally there are diagonal scratch marks. There is some dispute as to their use. I have a considerable number and in every case the end notch is much too small to insert an ordinary scraper. They could have been made to insert a point and the base used as a scraper, but I have no proof of this as I have never found one with an insert of any description. Anybody who ever finds one with such an insert should take special care to preserve it as it is, and if the insert is broken, look for the broken piece. Camera and witnesses would be in order because that is the kind of evidence much in demand for such occasions.

Please send all contributions for
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