

Wait, Weight Don't Tell Me: A Synthesis of Atlatl Weights in Colorado

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Purpose

•Atlatl weights, also known as boatstones, are curious artifacts with a debated function. The occurrence of this rare artifact form in Colorado demonstrates connections to other locations in North America.

•Weights still attached to the atlatl are found in dry caves of the Great Basin, Southwest and Great Plains. A chipped stone atlatl weight attached to the atlatl was uncovered in northeastern Arizona.

•A compilation of data from private collections, a museum repository, and OAHp files provides clues to answer questions which surround this rare artifact type.

•Do atlatl weights represent a connection to the Eastern Woodlands? Typologies in Colorado strongly resemble those of Eastern Woodlands, suggesting the exchange of goods and/or ideas to the Plains.

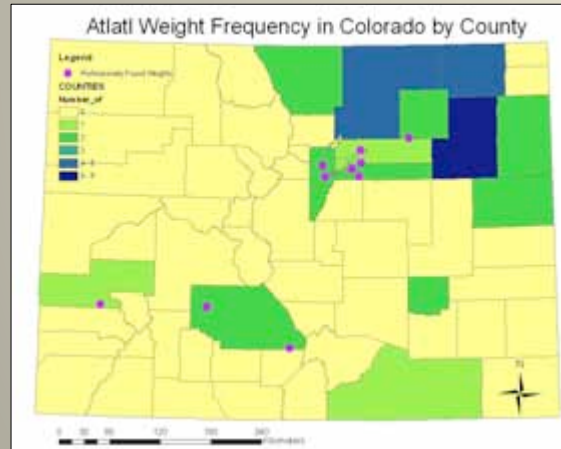
•Do the presence of atlatl weights represent the functional use of atlatls in Colorado through time?

•Is there a difference in the types of atlatl weights found in Archaic versus Early Ceramic contexts?



Guernsey 1931

Distribution of Atlatl Weights in Colorado

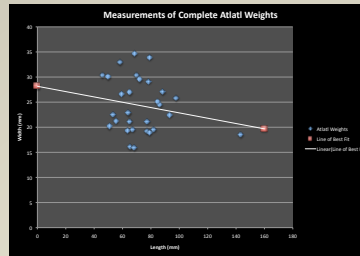


•The three weights recorded in the western counties have no available measurements or photographs and the coding of these artifacts as atlatl weights could be debatable.

•The general distribution of atlatl weights is concentrated in northeastern Colorado; however, it is important to note that the majority of professionally recorded weights are along the South Platte river basin and the foothills of the Front Range.

•It is concerning that the majority of the weights available for this study are from collectors (n=37), rather than professionally recorded (n=11); bringing attention to the amount of data archaeologists could be overlooking.

Metric Analysis (n=36)



	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
N=36			
Length (mm)	72.94	18.9	46.2-143.5
Max Width	24.28	5.36	15.9-33.9
Max Thickness	19.28	5.39	7.5-29.7
Weight (g)	50.82	20.07	9.4-96.5

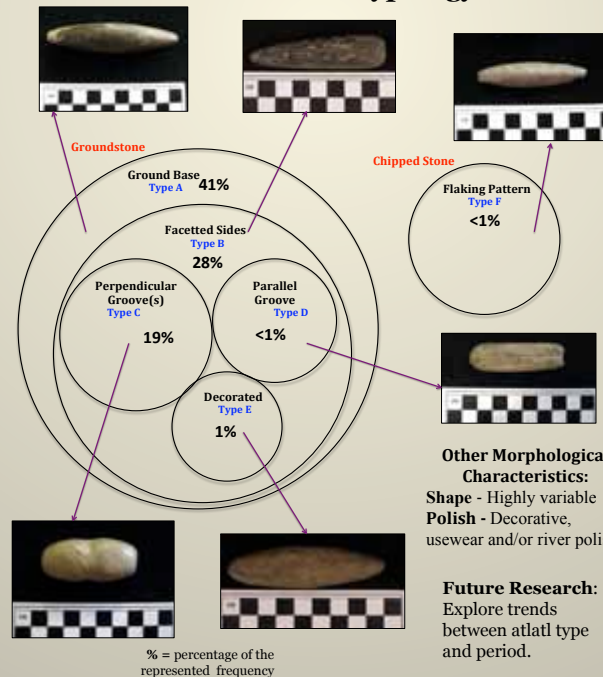
• A weak negative correlation between maximum length and width - as weights get longer they seem to get thinner.

•The standard deviation for weight is lower when the chipped stone atlatl weight is omitted.

•Only atlatl weights with complete measurements were used for analysis.

•Due to variability in the shape of boatstones, we plan to perform a more detailed metric analysis.

Colorado Boatstone Typology (n=33)



Other Morphological Characteristics:

Shape - Highly variable
Polish - Decorative, usewear and/or river polish

Future Research:

Explore trends between atlatl type and period.

Period and Context

OAHp Archaeological Sites

Site No.	Period	Context
5AH244	Early Ceramic	Burial
5AH411	Archaic & Early Ceramic	Open Lithic
5AM735	Unknown Prehistoric	Open Lithic
5DV3153	Unknown Prehistoric	Unknown
5JF223	Archaic & Early Ceramic	Burial
5JF52	Archaic & Early Ceramic	Burial
5LA1047	Early Ceramic	Burial
5MN3944	Unknown Prehistoric	Open Lithic
5MR378	Early Ceramic	Burial
5SH2356	Archaic & Late Prehistoric	Open Lithic
5SH49	Archaic	Open Lithic

Atlatl Weights from Collectors

Through conversation with the collectors, it can be assumed that the majority of the sites from which atlatl weights were obtained were generally Archaic and/or Early Ceramic sites.



Aurora Burial Atlatl Weight

Patterns and Trends

• Early Ceramic burials seem to be a possible Woodland expression in Colorado, because atlatl weights with perpendicular grooves are identical to some Eastern Woodland forms.

•Conventional wisdom of the Early Ceramic period is that the bow and arrow replaced the atlatl; but atlatl weights found in these burials challenges this idea suggesting that both technologies were still in use.

•Only one atlatl weight per site speaks to the rarity of this artifact type in Colorado. This frequency could be attributed to the use life of atlatls and weights in comparison to dart points.

•There are only boatstones in Colorado, even though there is an isolated bannerstone in Wyoming - a possible connection to the Ohio Valley obsidian exchange.



Wyoming bannerstone Malloy, 1954

Conclusions

Atlatl weights in Colorado are not a common find. Those weights that have been recovered are considered to be boatstones; and are often found on sites with either Early Ceramic or Woodland components. This may provide evidence for a connection to the Eastern Woodlands in prehistoric Colorado. Most weights in the area fit into designated typologies and display trends that need to be explored further.

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