



ATLATL

An atlatl (from Nahuatl: ahtlatl,) or spear-thrower is a tool that uses leverage to achieve greater velocity in dart-throwing, and includes a bearing surface which allows the user to temporarily store energy during the throw. It consists of a shaft with a cup or a spur, which may be integrated into the weapon or made separately and attached, in which the butt of the projectile, properly called a dart, rests. It is held near the end farthest from the cup, and the dart is thrown by the action of the upper arm and wrist. An atlatl can readily achieve ranges of greater than 100 meters and speeds of over 100 km/h.

HISTORY

Wooden darts were known at least since the Middle Paleolithic (Schöningen, Torralba, Clacton-on-Sea and Kalambo Falls). While the atlatl is capable of casting a dart well over 100 meters, it is most accurately used at distances of 20 meters or less. The atlatl is believed to have been in use by Homo sapiens since the Upper Paleolithic (c. 15,500 BC). Most stratified European finds come from the Magdalenian (late upper Palaeolithic). In this period, elaborate pieces, often in the form of animals, are common. The earliest known example is a 27,000 year-old atlatl made of reindeer antler and found in France.

In Europe, the atlatl was supplemented by the bow and arrow, in the Epi-Paleolithic.

The atlatl has been used by early Native Americans as well. It seems to have been introduced during the immigration across the Bering Land Bridge, and despite the later introduction of the bow, atlatl use was widespread at the time of first European contact. Complete wooden spear throwers have been found on dry sites in the western USA, and in waterlogged environments in Florida and Washington.

Atlatl: An ancient technology

Written by Administrator

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The people of New Guinea and Australian Aborigines also used spear throwers. Australian Aboriginal spear throwers are known as woomeeras.

Source: Wikipedia



ATLATL ARCHEOLOGY

Precision Atlatl and Dart Systems

Over 12,000 years ago, hunters tracking herds of the last ice age across the frozen tundra of what is now the state of Alaska became the first immigrants to enter the North American continent. These hunter-gatherers brought with them a weapon that reigned supreme among them and their descendents for thousands of years to come, the Atlatl. It was the first true weapon system developed by humans, originating in Europe around 30,000 years ago and spreading to every corner of the globe that humans occupied. In fact the Atlatl and Dart were used and improved upon for so long by our ancient ancestors that, comparatively speaking, the Bow and Arrow can be considered a recent development in projectile technology. So powerful and effective was the Atlatl that scientist and scholars speculate that it, along with the overkill tactics so common to the human race, caused the extinction of the woolly mammoth in North America before the end of the ice age.

Largely replaced by the Bow and Arrow around the birth of Christ, it was still being used by

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some Native Americans during the age of discovery, 500 years ago. When Columbus encountered natives using the Atlatl during his voyages to the New World - Europeans who had long forgotten the weapon - soon became familiar with it again. These encounters were most certainly with the business end of the weapon, the European wondering, "what was that?", just before dying.

The Aztecs preferred the Atlatl as a weapon of war. We get the word "Atlatl" (pronounced at-la-tal) from their language. In fact, the Atlatl and Dart were the only weapon Cortez and his Conquistadors feared because it easily pierced the Spanish armour, often sending the hapless soldier to meet his Maker. If Montezuma had not mistaken Cortez for the Feathered Serpent God Quetzalcoatl, history may have been very different, with the 200 or so Spanish conquistadors being only a footnote in the history of that Nation, foolish invaders who were overwhelmed by superior firepower.



[Watch a video of how to use an atlatl.](#)

The Atlatl and Dart have enjoyed widespread use throughout the world. At one time or another people everywhere have used it as their main weapon for food, procurement, and war. Even today it is used by the natives of Australia, Papua New Guinea, and some tribes in South America and Northwest Mexico. But it was in North America - more specifically in what is now the continental United States - that the weapon was developed to its fullest potential. Typically for our species, Native Americans tinkered and toyed with this weapon system, developing and improving the technology to such a high level of sophistication that it is impressive even by today's standards. Just as firearms have developed from muzzle-loaders to breach loaders to lever actions and automatics the Atlatl has undergone a similar evolution.

Source: Atlatl.com

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MODERN TIMES

In modern times, some people have resurrected the spear thrower for sports, throwing either for distance and/or for accuracy. Throws of almost 260 m (850 ft.) have been recorded. Colleges reported to field teams in this event include Franklin Pierce University in New Hampshire and the University of Vermont. There are numerous tournaments, with spears and spear throwers built with both ancient and with modern materials. Similar devices are available in the sport of jai alai.

Atlatl are sometimes used in modern times for hunting. There are meetings and events where people can throw darts. A few examples of the locations of such competitions are in Oregon, Rhode Island and in Lexington held yearly. In the U.S., the Pennsylvania Game Commission has given preliminary approval for the legalization of the atlatl for hunting certain animals. The animals that would be allowed to atlatl hunters have yet to be determined, but attention is focused on deer. Currently, only Alabama allows the atlatl for deer hunting, while a handful of other states list the device as legal for rough fish (those not sought for sport or food), some game birds and non-game mammals. Missouri allows use of the Atlatl for hunting wildlife, including this year, deer but not turkey.

The woomera is still used today by some Australian Aborigines for hunting in remote parts of Australia. Yup'ik Eskimo hunters still use the Atlatl, known locally as "nuqaq" (nook-ak), in villages near the mouth of the Yukon River for seal hunting.

Source: Wikipedia