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# Projectile shafts of recent hunter-gatherer's Subarctic and Sub-Antartic societies in America

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## Résumé

In archaeological contexts, hunting weapons are generally best known through the only part that may be preserved: points and foreshafts of lithic or bone materials. Shafts, because they are made of wood, a perishable material, are only found in exceptional contexts. Thus, most analyses of hunting weapons are based on theoretical knowledge of the shaft and its efficiency for the projectile. To address this lack of data on the importance of the shaft in projectile technology, we are analyzing complete ethnographical hunting weapons collected among the Alutiiq and Aleut people of southern Alaska (Subarctic) and the Kaweskar and Yahgan of southern Patagonia (Sub-Antarctic) in late 18th to early 20th century. These four hunter-gatherers societies had to adapt their hunting equipment and strategies to similar cold and coastal fauna and environments. They hunted almost identical types of prey and conceived similar projectile types (harpoons and lances). We compared the projectile shafts from these different contexts in order to get at similarities and differences and identify the essential technical characteristics as well as what underlies variability. To explore selection choices in these four cultural groups, the analysis of the shafts is three-fold: form and metric recording, raw material identification and manufacturing techniques. Our results show that criteria such as weight, balance point and length are essential to specify the differential functioning of the harpoon and lance shafts. However, some differences in manufacturing and wood selection stress the importance of cultural choices.

**Mots-Clés:** Projectile, shaft, wood, maritime hunter, gatherer, technology, hunting

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