

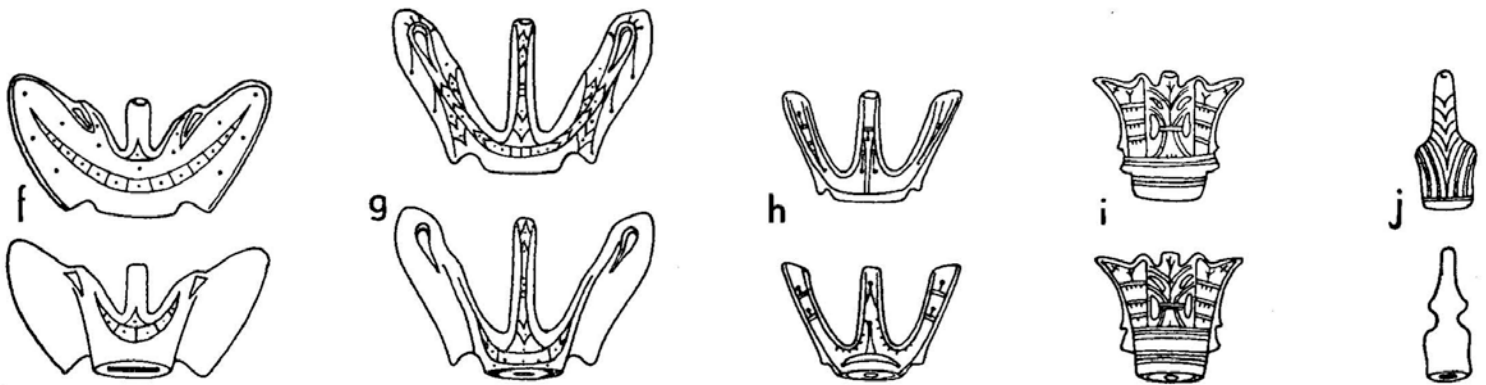
Punuk harpoon counterweights



Bruce White photos

“Turreted object”, 7.8 cm

The predominance in excavations of lighter and less massive ivory counterweights in the Punuk as compared to Old Bering Sea (OBS) culture suggests that Punuk hunters made more extensive use of smaller and lighter harpoons than was common among OBS hunters. It is also noteworthy that this style of counterweight does not appear to have been used in Chukotka but only in the St. Lawrence Island and Punuk Island region, perhaps representing another local art tradition similar to the absence of classic “Okvik figures” on the western shore of Bering Strait.



Punuk harpoon counterweights, front and back views (from Collins, 1961)

This figure shows the progression in Punuk harpoon counterweight design, from the relatively rare large counterweights that are very similar to OBS “winged objects”, to the more common “tridents”, and the most frequently encountered “turreted objects” (using Collins’ terminology). The type shown at the far right is apparently represented by only two known examples, one undecorated, from the Seklowaghyaget site on St. Lawrence Island (see Collins, 1937, Plate 68/69, #7/8, for front and reverse sides).



Punuk winged object, 15 cm

Large Punuk harpoon counterweights (“winged objects”) are uncommon in comparison to Old Bering Sea style examples, which have been found about 30- to 50-times as frequently. For example, no Punuk winged objects were found in the Uelen cemetery, and very few at Ekven. A 17.3 cm example from an early Punuk harpoon set found in Ekven burial 319 (Bronshstein et al., 2007, No. 59) is shown below.





Literature

Bronshtein, M.M, Dneprovsky, K.A., and Sukhorukova, E.S. (2007): *Mir arkticheskikh zverboev: shagi v nepoznannoe* (World of Arctic Maritime Hunters: Steps into the Unknown). State Museum of Oriental Art and Department of Culture of the Chukotka Autonomous Region, Moscow-Anadyr.

Collins, H.B. (1937): *Archaeology of St. Lawrence Island, Alaska* (Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. 96, No. 1), Washington, DC.

Collins, H.B. (1961): Eskimo Cultures, in *Encyclopedia of World Art*, Vol. 5, McGraw-Hill, New York, pp. 2-27.