

Notes on Making Engraved Designs on Late Archaic Bone Pins

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-Use cooked bone, or cook old bone by boiling. (Most of the bone used prehistorically was doubtless from food animals. Go figure.)

-Keep pins in hot/simmering water as you work. This keeps the bone soft. (These people had pottery in spades. This wasn't a problem.)

-Work more than one pin at a time. As you work on the design on one pin, it will harden noticeably as starts to dry. Return it to the hot water, and select another. Repeat.

-Don't use a straight-edged flake unless you're sawing straight lines (as in cross-hatching). Instead, use a pointed stylus such as a pseudo-burin made from a thin, fragmented flake; or a microdrill, to grave the design in wet bone.

-Avoid the temptation to work out and away from a starting point. Your tool will tend to slide off in unwanted directions on the smooth bone. For a given line, create a small starting groove, and extend the design by working in short strokes back into the end of the finished line. This provides a safe landing spot for your engraving tool. Extend by repeating.

-For curved/curvilinear designs, use the stylus/burin to gouge a series of shallow divots (small holes) as a guide for the final engraved line. Next, working back as described above, connect the holes to create a smooth, solid line. (Carving a curved line with a flake is nearly impossible.)

-Rough in the main design element(s), then lightly grind/polish the pin to eradicate errant scratches and marks from the engraving.