

3065 Bolligen  
Hühnerbühlstrasse 15  
Switzerland  
13 February, 1972

Mr. Don E. Crabtree  
Route 1, Box 39  
Kimberly, Idaho 83341  
U.S.A.

Dear Don,

A lot of water has gone over the dam since our last correspondence of December, 1968. In the meantime I have been busy with research on possible sources of silex used at the Magdalénien station of Moosbühl (Switzerland). The search has led to some side aspects that may be of interest to you in your field of study.

Upon my initial examination of the silex in the collection here I was, to say the least, slightly dubious of its authenticity. Part of it had been collected from the surface as early as 1860. The later excavations (1924-29) added to this collection. However, no horizontal or vertical control was maintained at that time. I found specimens clearly marked from other sites among this material. For this reason the suggestion was made to excavate the site using modern techniques. Finally, last summer we were able to accomplish this. As director I was permitted to follow my own methodology, (i.e. the palaeo-anthropological approach).

Several facts came to light that were new to me and may be of interest to you. First, I had always believed that the quality of material was to the greatest extent the deciding factor for the finished product, i.e. typology. Instead, it was found that these people were able to make the same tools from all of the many types of silex available. For instance, we have backed bladelets of less than 3 mm width from material that ranges from French chalk flint through all categories of chert to lydite (a local stone that resembles basalt). This holds true for all the tools recovered.

The second fact, and the real reason for my writing, is that we recovered broken reindeer mandibles from each area where silex was worked. In each case the lower portion of the mandible had been shattered as if by blows, and several of the teeth were splintered. The thought struck me that perhaps they had been used as intermediate implements in striking off blades. Normally they were associated with hammerstones. Most of our cores show signs of battering on the lower end but never on the side from which the last blade was removed. Have long wondered why other studies of cave sites in the regions of southern Germany, Switzerland

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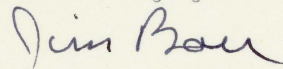
and France always mention the presence of anvils surrounded by waste flakes. We also have an anvil that was deliberately shaped into a pyramid form. This would have provided the small impact area needed for our small cores. No antler remains were recovered from the stone-working areas although we have plenty of antler from other parts of the site.

Next fall I hope to have time to experiment using reindeer mandibles (when our team returns from Alaska).

In addition to the above I have observed the same grouping of mandibles from other sites belonging to the same period. Two weeks ago I had the opportunity to discuss this with Prof. Bozinski who had just excavated a site in Germany and he remarked that he had found similar conditions. I suspect that it has frequently been the case but nobody here in Europe is interested in the association of a bunch of broken mandibles that cannot be placed on display in the museum.

Would appreciate your considered opinion on this problem.

Sincerely yours,



James H. Barr