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SOCIOLOGY AND
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Mr. Donald Crabtree
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Dear Mr. Crabtree:

I hope I'm not behaving like a wart that keeps reoccurring, but here I am with another question. Now I'm trying to puzzle through when is a preform a preform and when is it a scraper/knife? I think I have found a contradiction in Hopewell in respect to the way in which they chipped stone. The differences are so subtle that I sometimes shake my head to see if they're really there. One is Woodland relying on direct percussion in the secondary flaking step. Marginal retouch depends upon type and idiosyncrasy, and is generally casually regarded. The Hopewell ceremonial technique (that is, it was directed on those tools designated for grave goods, etc.) used fine percussion secondary flaking with marginal retouch. (I think the angle at which this step was worked through is different, but that may be another research topic; besides I don't know how to get at this.) Preforms are clear for Hopewell ceremonial types--they're thinner and the workmanship more controlled; they're also consistent in respect to technical execution. They also "look" easy to notch because of their thinness. They almost have a static quality.

Woodland "preforms", which abound in any Hopewellian context, appear, invariably, to have been used as scrapers, perforators, knives, and sometimes cleavers. In gross morphology, they will differ little from the Hopewell preforms. I guess I'm trying to get at the matter of intent--were these Woodland implements preforms that simply found other utilization--or was the notion of preform irrelevant to their manufacture? Obviously, aspects of this question are silly--I'll never know what was in the mind of the worker--but it occurs to me that thickness might be a clue. Is there a point at which it could be assumed that the thickness of the "preform" would obviate notching, once the "preform" were truly put aside?

The dissertation goes on and on. I'm writing up the Esch material now--excavated by Greenman in the 30's and the field notes are the best I have ever had to work with. The two principal burials seem to be those of flint knappers, and I think fascinating, for ~~one/was~~ the work of one shows a principal reliance upon fine percussion and some experimentation with pressure. The other's work is in the Woodland tradition. Incidentally, the "preforms" found in the first instance show a wide range in size and thickness--and even include two "Mississippian triangles".

I'm a little disgusted with Carl Phagin because he didn't read his paper either at the CSAS meeting or the SAA meeting in Norman. He said he couldn't go because the department didn't have any money for his fare. Since he has relatives there, I suggested he hitch-hike, but he said that took too much time. I found that a most unsatisfactory answer. Maybe he was just scared.

Everyone working at the Museum now--thanks to you and Carl--is seeing heat treatment of the Flint Ridge material. I had anticipated running into some flak on that, but the issue is settled before it even came up. The only trouble is that they're seeing heat treatment in all flint now. Oh well!

Thanks so much for all the helpful analysis on the percussion/pressure question. I'm not sure I understand it any better--but I worry about it less.

All my very best,

Barbara Harkness

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P.S. May I send you some flint examples from Ohio in an effort to show my appreciation for the trouble you've taken in my behalf?