

10 April, 1969

Mr. Don Crabtree
Route 1 Box 39
Kimberly, Idaho 83341

Dear Mr. Crabtree:

Although I'm sure you will not remember me, we met several years ago in Dallas when I was working for the Salvage Project there. In the interim I have been completing work on my dissertation here at Columbia on work done during 1967 in Egypt with Fred Wendorf. As you may be aware, we have recovered a series of Late Palaeolithic industries in the Nile Valley which have strong resemblances to the North African Epipalaeolithic but which appear to be about three to four thousand years earlier. I have discussed these with our mutual friend Jacques Tixier and am, in fact, trying to convince him to stop off here for a day or two when he comes to visit you in May.

I have come upon a very interesting feature in these collections, and I should like to describe it at some length and would greatly appreciate your comments. I am intrigued by several points in your recent American Antiquity article which may have bearing on these materials too.

In the course of my analysis of the cores I noticed a distinct difference in the striking platform angle of bladelet cores verses flake cores. The platform angle on bladelet cores is consistently four to six degrees more acute. The range of mean platform angle for bladelet cores is 73.32° to 76.72° , while that for flake cores is 79.06° to 80.86° , although the majority of flake cores have an angle between 85° and 90° . All of these cores are made on small pebbles of dense chert derived either from Wadi Gravels or from gravels deposited by the Nile. Approximately three-quarters of all cores are 30mm or less in length, and the debitage is strongly microlithic, as are the retouched tools.

I see several explanations for this greater acuity of bladelet core platform angles but am at a loss to construct any sort of accurate processual explanation. The bladelets produced are marked by very small or more frequently shattered platforms (over 60% in all cases), quite flat, rather squat (the length width ratio is predominantly between 2:1 and 3:1) with blunt distal ends (generally about 60%). I tend towards the conclusion that these were produced by direct percussion and that the more acute platform angle is an attempt to establish greater control over the core, due perhaps to the extremely small size. There is a good deal of hinge fracturing, but this seems to be more prevalent on flake cores. One rather puzzling point is that there appears to be little edge battering or grinding on the bladelet cores, but a considerably greater amount on the flake cores. There are specimens, however, which appear to have been retouched to produce a more regularized striking edge. I have recovered neither hammerstones, billets or punches from the sites, but as these are all surface sites

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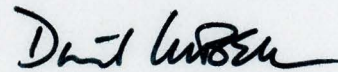
preservation of non-lithic materials is very limited. I have not had time to attempt any meaningful experimentation, but I suspect the use of a soft hammer or perhaps a technique analogous to your edge-ground cobble one. Unfortunately, as I said, we don't have any of the hammerstones or cobbles, and it is for this reason that I tend towards the billet theory.

I would very much like to know if you have ever experimented with different platform angles for blade production or if you have observed a similar pattern in other blade producing industries. This platform acuity is not an isolated instance by any means, as, since I first noticed it others at SMU have found exactly the same pattern in other industries. There seems to be little correlation with the type of platform (the vast majority of those in my collection are unfaçetted ones formed by a single flake removal) but the correlation with blade producing cores is extraordinarily consistent.

I should just like to add that I am about to become something of a neighbor of yours, as I have accepted a teaching position at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, starting in September. I hope this will give me a chance to visit with you at some point and allow us to go into some of these questions at greater length. I am planning, if time permits, to drive through Idaho in August, and if it would not be inconvenient perhaps I could stop at that time?

I will look forward to hearing from you at your convenience. With best regards and many thanks.

Yours sincerely,



David Lubell

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P.S. I'm enclosing two lousy reproductions of drawings of some of the cores. I hope they will add to my explanation.

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