

NOTES ON ARTIFACT ILLUSTRATION

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Drawings are an important means of presenting descriptive information about artifacts. Like other descriptive procedures, formal or informal, they enable the study and comparison of artifacts without direct reference to the original specimens. Hand drawings are generally preferable to photographs because they present detail more clearly (this is particularly true with lithic artifacts). These also, though not very analytical and of limited utility in formal systematic study, actually sidestep the methodological issues involved in a formal and analytical descriptive procedure while presenting implicitly all information relevant to it. Thus, drawings are especially useful to augment or even supplant informal or incomplete verbal descriptions.

Approaches to illustration may differ according to the type of artifact being considered. Lithic artifacts, for instance, since they are usually more irregular and their construction more fortuitous than pottery vessels, should not be illustrated in the same way as the latter, where the artifact design can be regularized or stylized, and comprehensive views of all parts are unnecessary because of an expectable symmetry. Besides, in the case of lithic artifacts, each specimen is studied not only as a finished and stable end product, but as representing one stage in the continuous process of manufacture, modification, and use; the draftsman must keep such considerations in mind when planning his drawings. Most importantly, illustrations should be done with sufficient care not to obscure or distort information preserved in the artifact itself.

Some specific instances may clarify the above. In the case of potsherds, a single view of the interior or exterior surface (where decorated) and a profile will disclose most important features of the artifact. These conventions change little enough with complete or nearly complete pottery vessels. More irregular and more complicated artifacts, however, most importantly lithic artifacts, require a more involved treatment. An example is shown in Figure 1. For a relatively complete presentation of this artifact, (a large hard-hammer percussion flake with a steeply retouched scraper edge), five separate views have been required. In the center panel is a dorsal view of the flake, showing the primary flake surface and secondary retouch. To the left, a view of the ventral flake surface presents features related to the manufacturing process, in particular the striking platform, bulb of percussion, and other marks of conchoidal fracture such as the bulbar scar and rippling. Above the central panel is a direct view of the proximal end of the flake (striking platform), shown more clearly than in the view of the ventral flake surface. For a similar reason a direct view of the distal end of the flake (the retouched scraper edge) is given below the central panel, showing features of retouch and use wear not visible from above. A longitudinal cross section illustrates additional aspects of form, manufacture and use, such as flake thickness, the orientation of the striking platform, and the angle of edge retouch.

Such drawings as these are executed in india ink with a fine tip steel pen. A pencilled outline of each view, with surface features also pencilled in, guides the final ink drawings. Some views of the artifact may be traced directly onto the surface of the drawing board, others (such as cross-sections and profiles) must be drawn by eye, or constructed by measurements. Wherever possible, the artifact should be drawn full size, and precise values of length, width, thickness, etc at all points checked against measurements taken from the artifact itself. With lithic artifacts, a number of techniques are used to indicate depth, shading, and the shape and direction of flake scars. Parallel hatching, used in Figure 1, is particularly well suited for flint, obsidian, and other glassy or smooth-grained stones, as it also mimics the ripples of conchoidal fracture. If the artifact is made of a more rough-textured stone such as quartz, quartzite, coarse basalt, etc., point stippling is more effective, being both more sensitive to surface irregularities and reproducing the coarse, grainy texture of the stone. The use of point stippling is shown in Figure 2. Stippling, parallel hatching, and cross-hatching are used to render pottery, although their use is generally limited to three dimensional decorative features, simple line drawings being otherwise sufficient.

Approaches to artifact illustration are determined not only according to the demands of a particular class of artifact (as discussed above), but according to the requirements of archaeological study and presentation. The drawings of the artifact in Figure 1 were arranged to show most comprehensively the features of its complex and irregular form, but they also emphasize its character as representing a formally devised artifact category, that of an end-scraper. To the extent that analysis of the artifact will be technological, as opposed to morphological or functional, features relating to manufacture and general stone technology have been highlighted. A whole series of similar artifacts might be handled differently according to whether the concern is with each as an individual piece, or as containing limited features of taxonomic interest. In the latter case, one or two might be comprehensively illustrated (such as in Figure 1), which would suffice to show the general structural tendencies of the remainder, illustrated only with respect to a taxonomically distinctive characteristic (such as a scraper edge). Just so, the illustration of a single artifact need not be arbitrarily comprehensive, distinguishing features of an artifact that have no great taxonomic or functional importance (such as the lateral edges of the artifact in Figure 1) The draftsman, in cooperation with the archaeologist, should strive for the greatest economy and clarity of presentation. What is to be presented, and how, is finally at the discretion of the archaeologist, who may be concerned with comparing several artifacts within a single illustration, demonstrating a classificatory scheme, or simply presenting a representative sample of artifacts from a particular cultural complex.

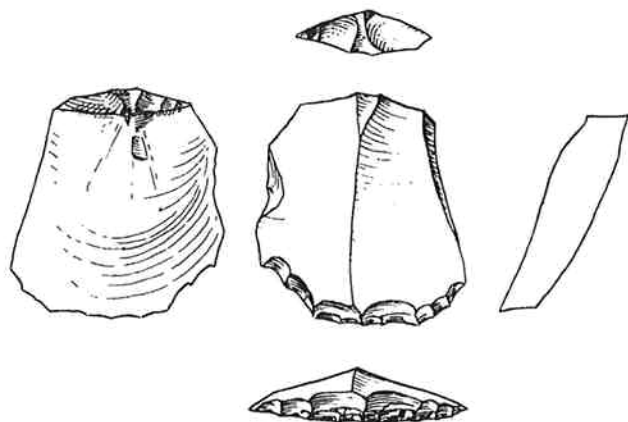


Fig. 1

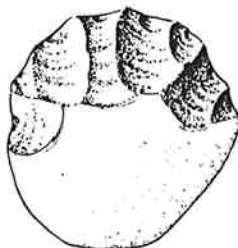


Fig. 2