CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ILLUSTRATION OF LARGE LITHIC ASSEMBLAGES

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This article is the result of a recent look at the presentation of large lithic collections and their illustration for inclusion in excavation reports. With small assemblages it is common practice to illustrate most or all of the retouched pieces along with a selection of the principal waste components such as cores. In the past some of the larger collections were dealt with in the same way, but now that most publications are controlled from the beginning within set cost limits, it is unlikely that there will be either sufficient printing space available or sufficient finance for a large quantity of detailed, and time-consuming, artwork.

Selection of which pieces to illustrate is always a problem, and is inevitably something of a compromise, but the choice will relate typologically to the units and levels of analysis employed in the written report. Context is also important, and with recently excavated material it is possible to base the selection on well-stratified examples. Of course the governing factor of all illustrations will be the transmission of the maximum amount of information in the minimum amount of space, and with this in mind certain points do emerge.

1. Some pieces will require detailed, often multi-view, graphic description. Obviously the rarer tools such as discoidal knives and laurel-leaves deserve this kind of special attention, as do unusual and irregular pieces with complex technology to be conveyed (eg Fig. 1).

2. More common pieces, such as flake scrapers, can be dealt with in a simpler style, using an 'open' drawing, on which negative flake scars are shown only in outline. This type of drawing will normally only involve a dorsal view, together with a section or side profile (Fig. 2).

3. As a substitute for the information lost by the absence of detail, or by the non-depiction of the ventral view or the end-on view of the platform, it is possible to use a range of conventions and symbols, coupled with an explanatory key (Figs. 2 and 3).

The symbols used in Fig. 2 were chosen initially to describe a particular assemblage for which it was necessary to depict three aspects of the platform: width, type, and the position of the bulb of percussion. The symbols in Fig. 3 are among those in current use by lithic analysts (eg Bell 1977; Green and Healey 1980; Saville 1981) to demonstrate near-microscopic attributes such as edge gloss and serration, and to convey information such as platform presence and position. The individual analyst will choose in the case of each assemblage what information must be shown, and which symbols are to be used. It is essential, however, that a key like Fig. 3 is included with each report to explain.
BASIC SYMBOLS already in use.

- \( \Delta \) or \( + \) indicates position and presence of bulb of percussion on a struck flake.
- \( \Delta \) or \( O \) indicates proximal end of a struck flake when bulb is absent.
- \( I \) \( + \) indicates extent of platform.
- \( P \) or \( R \) indicates plain or retouched surfaces, unillustrated.
- \( \cdots \cdots \cdots \) indicates extent of edge retouch when not clear on illustration.
- \( \cdots \cdots \cdots \) indicates extent of edge retouch when not clear on illustration.

FIG 3

the conventions and symbols in use to avoid any possible confusion (eg the symbol 'R' has a different meaning in Figs. 2 and 3). In due course it may be possible to arrive at a set of standardized conventions which will obviate the need to include a key with each report.

The current constraints on the publication of archaeological reports have brought the question of the use of microfiche into the foreground, and the arguments for and against the inclusion of artefact illustrations on fiche are as yet unresolved. As a general principle in cases where fiche must be used, it is preferable, all things being equal, to have the illustration printed and the accompanying detailed description/analysis on fiche. However, if lithic illustrations are included on fiche, the analyst or illustrator must ensure that the original inked artwork, at 1:1 or 2:1 scale, is used. Photocopies and reductions do not reproduce as well as the original. It may well be in the illustrator's own interests to have xeroxed copies of the original artwork available for circulation to colleagues, rather than rely on enlargements from the fiche.

REFERENCES


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