

ing the probable function of this artifact; but I wish to correct the statement, admittedly suppositional, “. . . that the development of the birdstone, along with certain other ceremonial forms of polished slate, is a cultural manifestation of the Iroquoian tribes, introduced by them and accepted with certain modifications by various tribes with whom they came in contact.”

This is directly contrary to the known facts. Indeed, if any one point is established in northeastern archaeology, it is that the so-called “problematical” forms, chiefly of polished slate, are not of Iroquois provenience. Parker, sixteen years ago, pointed this out. Except for an occasional gorget, almost certainly intrusive, neither he, Skinner, Harrington, Wintemberg, nor any other worker, including the writer, has ever found such an object in the middens, pits, or graves of an Iroquois station.

In New York State our excavations have so far shown the birdstone to be a trait of but two horizons; namely, the Pt. Peninsula and Middlesex foci of the Vine Valley aspect, formerly called by us the Second Algonkin Period. It has been found associated, here and elsewhere in the northeast, with gorgets of several forms, the boatstone, bar amulet, two varieties of tubes, notched and triangular projectile points, marine-shell beads of several kinds, large prominently barbed harpoons, antler tool handles, a type of hafted beaver-tooth “engraver,” the platform and elbow pipes, native copper articles, rude pointed-based pottery, and several other artifact types, not alone in pits but as grave goods on such sites as that at Swanton, Vermont,¹⁷⁶ and that on the west shore of Chaumont Bay, Jefferson County, New York.¹⁷⁷

Since such sites unequivocally antedate the arrival of the Iroquois, and manifest, moreover, no trait linkage with that people, they could not have transmitted the birdstone to other Indians, particularly since there is every reason to believe that it was never used by them.

WILLIAM A. RITCHIE
Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences
Rochester, New York

REGARDING KNOTTED LOOPING

Miss Singer's contribution to “Correspondence” in the last issue of *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY* asked two questions and offered a criticism. In response to the first question, concerning the appearance of knotted looping, which Miss Singer correctly figures in her sketch, her attention is called to Fig. 3, 6a, in the article cited, which shows the same knot labeled “knotted looping.” As to the knot employed, my work with prehistoric fabrics of this sort and their impressions would not permit the dissection of the knots. I also would be interested to know their nature.

¹⁷⁶ Willoughby, C. C., *Antiquities of the New England Indians*, Peabody Museum at Harvard, p. 85, 1935.

¹⁷⁷ See an article by the writer in *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY*, this issue.

Miss Singer is slightly in error in her manner of describing the fisherman's knot. In making such nets, the running or free end of the cord is not slipped through the "finger" or overhand knot, but rather, the overhand knot is tied around the strand between two similar knots in the preceding row.

As to the criticism, which "hinges somewhat on the answer to the first question," I quote her own statement in answer, "If the fisherman's knot is to be placed elsewhere than under the knotted looping category, where would it fit?" The correspondent seems to feel some essential difference between her figures 6a and 6b. The published classification is not sufficiently detailed to distinguish between them, but its categories clearly show them to belong together, both as types of knotted looping. They are easily distinguishable from plain and twisted looping, in which there are no knots, and netting, which allows for no play or slipping between the knotted elements.

Mr. Webster's definition of netting, which Miss Singer quotes, obviously would include all the looping and netting techniques. The purpose of classification being to distinguish between techniques, it is necessary to use terms to designate these types. The use of existing terms is less confusing than an entirely new terminology. These general terms, therefore, must be given restricted connotations. This is the purpose of a technical classification.

HORACE MINER
Fellow of the Social Science
Research Council, 1936-37
St. Denis de Kamouraska
Quebec, Canada