

Lithic Studies

Recent Paleoindian Research in Georgia

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Although it is not widely known, the first Paleoindian fluted projectile point found in secure excavation context in the eastern United States, and recognized for what it was, came from Macon Plateau (Kelly 1938). Only one fluted point was found at Macon, however, in spite of a massive excavation effort. The Macon Plateau investigations were thus the first to indicate the apparent scarcity of fluted points on sites of this time level in many areas of the lower Southeast. This pattern, markedly different from that observed in the Plains and in the Northeast, where dense kill sites have been reported, has prompted some investigators to suggest Southeastern Paleoindian populations were highly mobile, generalized foragers. Although the excavations at Macon represented some of the first work undertaken on Eastern Paleoindian, very little follow-up research was done over the next 40 years (Waring 1968). Occasional reports of fluted points appeared, but since no systematic effort at recording this information occurred, much of the data was lost. Only within the past ten years has substantial interest in documenting Georgia's early occupants reemerged.

Recent evidence for Paleoindian occupation has come from both surface and excavation context. Like the original Macon excavations, some of these finds have come from extensive excavation efforts. At the Theriault chert quarry site along Brier Creek, for example, a single fluted point was found just above the sterile clay, in an excavation block encompassing 142 m² (Brockington 1971). The single fluted point found at Rucker's Bottom, on the upper Savannah River, came from an excavation block 160 m² in extent (Anderson and Schuldenrein 1985). Dense Paleoindian components have been found in test excavations at two locations, at the Taylor Hill site near Augusta, and at the Muckafoonee Creek site near Albany. At Taylor Hill the density of material was high—565 tools were found in the 12 test units, including 2 fluted points and 2 Daltons (Elliott and Doyon 1981). Given the high diversity of flake tool and variety of raw materials, the site has interpreted as a residential camp or a specialized logistical camp. The site is in an ideal location for settlement, on the Fall Line ecotone. The Muckafoonee site, a quarry/workshop, is a stratified Archaic to late

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Paleoindian deposit situated on a terrace of Muckafoonee Creek in Dougherty County (Elliott 1982). Chert outcrops occur both to the southeast on the Flint River, and nearby along Muckafoonee Creek. Six m² were examined, and the Paleoindian/early Archaic levels contained 59 tools and 6,407 flakes, including 1 fluted point.

Several Paleoindian components have also been found in testing operations in and near the Wallace Reservoir along the central Oconee River in recent years (O'Steen et al. 1986). Most recently O'Steen et al. (1986) have prepared an overview of Paleoindian settlement in the Georgia piedmont, based on data from a 60 km stretch of the Oconee River watershed. Paleoindian points were grouped into three subperiods, early, late, and transitional. The first subperiod, early Paleoindian, contains fluted points similar to the traditional Clovis form. The points are relatively large and thick with nearly parallel haft edges, slightly concave bases and single or multiple flutes. The second subperiod, late Paleoindian, is characterized by small fluted points and fluted or unfluted points with exaggerated constrictions of the haft. These points are presumed to be later, although absolute stratigraphic evidence is lacking locally. These two groups are assumed to date from ca. 11,500–11,000 yr B.P., and 11,000–10,500 yr B.P., respectively. Some temporal overlap of these forms is probable, and it is also possible that the late Paleoindian forms continued in use after 10,500 yr B.P., into Dalton times. Dalton points, varyingly referred to as Paleoindian, early Archaic, and transitional Paleoindian make up a 'transitional' Paleoindian grouping.

Ninety-one Paleoindian sites yielding 141 diagnostic hafted bifaces were identified in the study area, including 9 early Paleoindian (N = 11 points), 14 late Paleoindian (N = 24 points), 67 Dalton (N = 106 points), and 3 indeterminate Paleoindian components. Three site types were recognized, based on site location, size, and diversity of the tool assemblages. These types included small low density camps, quarries, and possible base camps. A fourth type of Paleoindian site, isolated point finds, may reflect individual kill sites or foraging camps. Most of the components in the sample are small limited activity sites. Sites were also examined by landform, and a gradual expansion into new areas over time is indicated. Early Paleoindian sites were located primarily in the floodplain. Later Paleoindian sites still appear frequently in the floodplain, but there is evidence for increased exploitation of the upland or inter-riverine areas. A majority of the Dalton sites, in contrast, were in the uplands. The use of local as opposed to extralocal raw material increases dramatically over time in the Wallace Reservoir sample. Early Paleoindian diagnostics are predominantly on extralocal materials, while only small numbers of late Paleoindian and Dalton diagnostics were made on extralocal cherts (O'Steen et al. 1986).

The coastal plain and ridge valley provinces appear to have been more heavily utilized than the piedmont during the earlier Paleoindian period. Piedmont Paleoindian points tend to be small and extensively reworked, suggesting, possibly, that the area was on the fringes of settlement networks centered elsewhere. Areas where large numbers of Paleoindian points have been found closest to the Georgia piedmont are in northern Florida, the Atlantic Coastal plain, and in the ridge and valley province (Anderson et al. 1986a). The Georgia piedmont may thus represent a relatively unoccupied area between two or more population "concentrations." Raw material distributions (measured on diagnostic points), furthermore, suggest that interaction between these areas was fairly minimal.

Another locality characterized by dense late Pleistocene/early Holocene settlement is located in south central Georgia. The Feronia locality is a concentration of 16 sites

located near the Big Bend of the Ocmulgee River in northern Coffee County (Blanton and Snow 1986). An extensive late Pleistocene/early Holocene assemblage has been recovered in surface context from the locality, including Suwannee, Dalton, and side and corner notched points, and an array of formal unifacial tools. A wide range of lithic raw materials is present, suggesting a considerable range of movement and/or exchange was occurring. A noteworthy aspect of the Feronia locality setting is that it is not near lithic raw material outcrops. The nearest known lithic sources of any significance lie ca. 80 km away. The area is, however, very near the interface between the Atlantic and Gulf watersheds, a divide that may have had considerable territorial or social significance in the late Pleistocene/early Holocene.

Coupled with intensive research at specific sites and localities, Paleoindian research in Georgia has also recently focused on the compilation of projectile point data. In mid-1986, the authors began a fluted point survey, something that, surprisingly, had not been initiated previously (Anderson et al. 1986b). Prior to the start of this effort, fewer than a dozen fluted points were formally recorded in the state site files. In the massive compilation of fluted points from eastern North America conducted by the Eastern States Archaeological Federation (Brennan 1982), only 10 of 5,820 Paleoindian projectile points came from Georgia. The low count from Georgia was underscored by the high totals from adjoining states, and represented a conspicuous gap in the Paleoindian data base from the eastern United States. The Georgia Paleoindian Fluted and Lanceolate Projectile Point Recordation Project was initiated to correct this situation.

The goal of the project is documentation: compiling evidence, in the form of descriptions, of diagnostic Paleoindian artifacts and site locations across the state. To do this, information about diagnostic Paleoindian artifacts is being collected, using a standardized form modeled after those currently in use in a number of southeastern states. Both fluted and non-fluted Paleoindian points of all types are being recorded, including Clovis, Suwannee, Simpson, Cumberland, Quad, Dalton, and other forms; complete, broken, and reworked points are all being examined.

In the six months since the project was started, information on 74 fluted Clovis or Clovis variants, 18 unfluted Paleoindian lanceolates, and well over 100 Dalton points has been collected. Excluding Daltons, information on 92 probable pre-Dalton Paleoindian points has been submitted. Fluted points have been recorded from 28 counties so far, mostly from the northeastern and southern parts of the state. In addition to the fluted and non-fluted lanceolates, large numbers of Dalton points have been noted. Many of the Georgia Dalton points are fluted or, more properly, basally thinned, arguing for a direct, possibly local transition from earlier fluted point assemblages. Although just beginning, within a few years Georgia should have as solid a data base on the Paleoindian as exists anywhere in the eastern U.S.

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Paleoindian Occupation in Central-Eastern California: The Komodo Site

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Although Paleoindian occupation of central-eastern California has been posited on the basis of isolated projectile point finds (Campbell 1949; Davis and Shutler 1969; Glennan 1971), spatiotemporally discrete assemblages have gone unreported. Recent archaeological investigations at the Komodo site (CA-Mno-679) in Long Valley caldera, Mono County, California, have identified such a component. Characterized by basally-thinned, edge- and basally-ground concave-base projectile points, the assemblage is provisionally dated to the early Holocene.

The site is located in the center of the caldera, several kilometers west and southwest of the Owens River. At an elevation of 2,160 m, it sits on a slight rise that provides a wide view of the valley floor. The Komodo site covers an area of about 3,200 m², however, the core part of the deposit is no more than 1,000-2,000 m² in extent. Cultural material is confined to the upper 15 cm of soil, which is a homogeneous mixture of volcanic ash and sand. Eroded beds of hydrothermally altered sandstone underlie the soil zone.

The Komodo assemblage is composed entirely of flaked stone; despite excavation of 60 m³ of deposit, no faunal or floral remains, ground stone, or features were encountered. The artifact inventory is functionally restricted, containing broken pro-