



Paleoindian Occupations in the Southeastern United States

David G. Anderson

The southeastern United States possesses a rich and varied Paleoindian archaeological record, including the highest density of fluted Clovis and Clovis-like points documented to date in the New World. Research into early occupations is expanding rapidly, and increasingly detailed syntheses summarizing this research have been appearing (e.g., Anderson 1990, 2003; Anderson and Sassaman 1996; Goodyear 1999; Mason 1962; Morse et al. 1996; Williams and Stoltman 1965). A wide range of Clovis and presumed post-Clovis fluted and unfluted point forms are present in the region, as well as a highly diversified stone tool and worked bone/ivory industry. A number of large single-component Clovis and post-Clovis Paleoindian assemblages have been found, and in several areas evidence exists of a transition from fluted to post-fluted forms. Exploitation of megafauna as well as a wide range of smaller animals is indicated at a number of sites. Most excitingly, evidence of earlier, presumed pre-Clovis occupations has recently been found in several parts of the region.

A Southeastern Paleoindian Chronology

Southeastern Paleoindian sites and assemblages can be conveniently placed into one of three temporal and broad cultural groupings, early, middle, or late, corresponding to the pre-Clovis, Clovis, and post-Clovis occupation of the region (Table 1). These subdivisions should replace the chronological/stage formulations currently in use in the Southeast, such as the early (11,500–10,750 RCYBP) and late (10,750–10,000 RCYBP) Paleoindian framework advanced by Morse et al. (1996), or the early (11,500–10,900 RCYBP), middle (10,900–10,500 RCYBP), and late (10,500–10,000 RCYBP) Paleoindian subperiods offered by Anderson (1990). That these formulations, only a few years old, are already in need of modification highlights the pace of modern research. Only in 1999, in fact, was the first call made for inclusion

of a formally defined pre-Clovis period in the Southeast (Goodyear 1999:435–441).

Early Paleoindian: > 11,500 RCYBP (13,500 CALYBP)

When the first human occupation of the region occurred is unknown, but is assumed to have been well before 13,500 CALYBP. Sites of this age are popularly called pre-Clovis, and appreciable debate revolves around just how far back in time such occupations may have occurred.

Table 1. A Southeastern Paleoindian chronology (calibrated dates derived from charts in Stuiver et al. 1998).

CALYBP	RCYBP	Stage	Culture complex	Climatic event
8800	8000	Bifurcate		
10,000	9000			
10,750	9500	Early Archaic	Corner-notched widespread	
11,100	9900			
11,200	10,000			Younger Dryas ends/Preboreal
11,450	10,100			
11,500	10,200	Late Paleoindian	Early Side-notched Dalton/Suwannee	
12,500	10,500			
12,750	10,800		Quadr/Beaver Lake Cumberland/Folsom	
12,850	10,900			Younger Dryas begins
13,150	11,100			Inter-Allerød cold period ends
13,250	11,200	Middle Paleoindian	Clovis widespread	
13,400	11,400			
13,500	11,500			Inter-Allerød cold period begins
13,750	11,750		Clovis beginnings??	
14,000	11,950			Allerød
14,000	12,000		Little Salt Springs/	Older Dryas ends
14,100	12,100	Early Paleoindian	Page-Ladson	
14,500	12,500		Monte Verde	Older Dryas begins
14,800	12,600			
19,200	16,000		Cactus Hill (?)	Boiling begins
21,400	18,000		Initial colonization (?)	Glacial Maximum

A number of sites have been found that appear to document initial human occupations in the Southeast. These include Cactus Hill in southern Virginia (McAvooy and McAvooy 1997), Big Eddy in Missouri (Lopinot et al. 1998), Little Salt Spring and Page-Ladson in Florida (Clausen et al. 1979:611; Dunbar et al. 1988), Salville in western Virginia (McDonald

1999), and Topper in South Carolina (Goodyear 1999). The most extensive and best documented assemblage is at the Cactus Hill site, where an industry characterized by small blades, polyhedral blade cores, retouched flakes, and abrading stones was found stratigraphically below a well-defined Clovis occupation (McAvooy and McAvooy 1997; McAvooy et al. 2000). Two unfluted lanceolate/triangular bifaces were found: called early Triangular (McAvooy and McAvooy 1997:136), they may well prove to be the region's first unequivocal pre-Clovis diagnostic. The Cactus Hill site has been carefully excavated by two different teams, and the initial work is superbly documented in a lengthy well-illustrated monograph.

Middle Paleoindian: ca. 11,500–10,800 RCYBP (13,500–12,750 CALYBP)

The first widespread evidence of human occupation in the Southeast is associated with Clovis and related fluted-point assemblages. Clovis points have long been assumed to be the markers of the first populations to enter, explore, and settle the region. Since it now appears likely at least some people were in the region prior to the widespread occurrence of Clovis technology, what may instead be represented is the radiation of a superior technological tradition. Few radiocarbon dates exist for Clovis and related assemblages in the Southeast, and at present fluted Clovis and Clovis-like points are the only artifact category that can be used to unambiguously document sites created by these peoples.

What was once thought to be a diagnostic middle-Paleoindian artifact category, prismatic blades and blade cores, is actually of doubtful utility as a chronological/cultural marker. Blades and blade cores have indeed been observed in some numbers at several Clovis sites in the Southeast, such as Adams, Carson-Conn-Short, and Wells Creek Crater, and possibly at the Pine Tree and Quad sites in Alabama and the LeCroy and Nuckolls sites in Tennessee (Ellebusch 2003; Sanders 1990:67). The presence of blade industries at Cactus Hill in presumed pre-Clovis context indicates this technology may have occurred very early in the Southeast, however, and unequivocal blade technology has also been demonstrated in late-Paleoindian contexts, such as at Dust Cave in Alabama (Meeks 1994).

Major Clovis-era occupation sites were once assumed to be rare in the Southeast away from quarry areas; it was thought this indicated early adoption of a generalized foraging adaptation to effectively exploit the widespread hardwood forests present across the lower part of the region at this time (Lepper and Melzer 1991:177; Melzer 1988; Melzer and Smith 1986). The large number of isolated finds of fluted points that occur in the region was thought to reflect high residential mobility, with habitation areas away from lithic sources occupied only briefly, leaving behind a minimal archaeological record. The inferred low visibility of Clovis residential sites in the region, however, is more apparent than real once the total record is examined (Anderson 1990, 2003). Presumed habitation sites characterized by appreciable numbers of Clovis points, bifacial and unifacial tools, and other artifacts have been documented in a number of parts of the region. McAvooy (1992:142–144), for example, delimits a number of kinds of non-quarry Clovis residential sites in southern Virginia and gives examples of sites in each category.

Late Paleoindian: ca. 10,800–10,000 RCYBP (12,750–11,200 CALYBP)

Late-Paleoindian occupations are closely associated with the Younger Dryas climate interval,

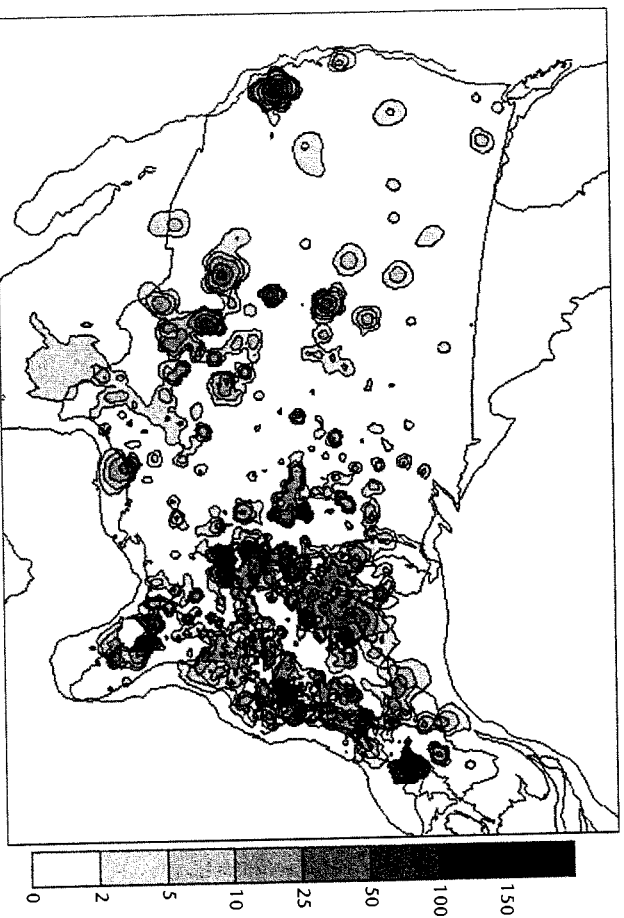


Figure 1. Fluted points in the lower 48 states of the United States (data from Anderson and Faught 1998, 2000).

whose ending roughly corresponds to the onset of the Holocene, and Archaic-stage occupations across the region (although, as we shall see, the boundary between these cultural stages is more arbitrary than real). A wide range of point forms appear in various parts of the region during the late-Paleoindian era, suggesting increasing group isolation as population levels rose and mobility decreased, at least isolation from peoples at great distances. Use of high-quality stone, a hallmark of assemblages from the preceding middle-Paleoindian period, continues, although artifacts are increasingly made of locally available, often lower-quality raw material.

Identifiable point forms include Beaver Lake, Clovis Variant, Cumberland, Quad, Suwannee, and Simpson, as well as Plains forms such as Folsom, Plainview, Midland, and Angostura in the western part of the Southeast. Around 10,500 RCYBP Dalton points become common over much of the region; distinct variants occur in different areas, such as Colbert, Greenbrier, Hardaway, Nuckolls, and San Patrice vars. Hope and St. Johns. Only in Florida are Dalton points rare, although some researchers believe the Suwannee point is a local equivalent. By ca. 10,200 RCYBP, side-notched point forms appear, as documented by dates at both the Dust Cave and Page-Ladson sites, and by 10,000 RCYBP or soon thereafter side-notched variants occur across the entire region.

The Distribution of Paleoindian Points in the Southeast

Using data compiled by researchers in every state, it is now possible to plot the distribution of some kinds of Paleoindian points over the lower 48 states, including across the Southeast.

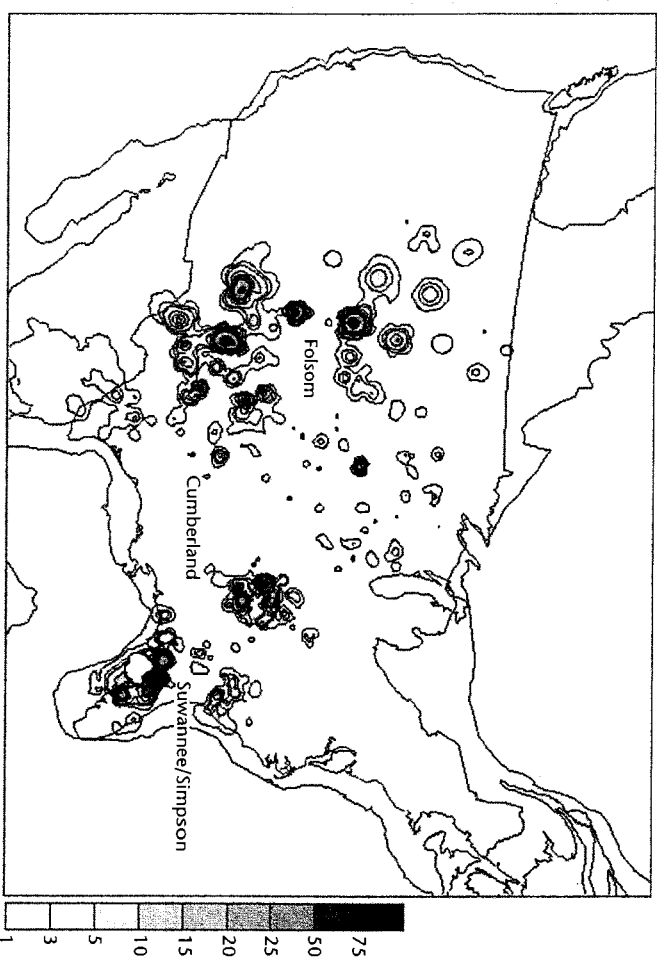


Figure 2. Folsom, Cumberland, and Suwannee/Simpson points in the lower 48 states of the United States (data from Anderson and Faught 1998, 2000).

This database and maps based on it, under development for a decade, have been published in a variety of locations (Anderson and Faught 1998:165, 2000; Anderson and Gillam 2000:59). The latest version of the maps and data are available online at Web site www.anthro.fsu.edu/special/paleo/paleoind.html

As of early 2000, information on 12,791 fluted points found in the 48 states of the continental United States exists in statewide surveys (Anderson and Faught 1998, 2000) (Figure 1). Of this total, the vast majority (ca. 68 percent) are located in states east of the Mississippi River; the remainder are located in states to the west (including for our purposes Minnesota). The density of fluted points in the East is over five times that in the West, measured in points per 1000 square miles (10.05 vs. 1.91). Within the East, almost 60 percent of the fluted points are located in the Southeast. Removing Folsom points from the total fluted-point sample (the vast majority occur in the West) further accentuates the difference in the number of fluted points found in the East versus the West (Figure 2). Clovis-like fluted points, quite simply, occur in vastly greater numbers in the East. Thus, while fluting is often considered a Western or even a Great Plains Paleoindian tradition, there are far more of these artifacts in the East than in the West, particularly in the Southeast.

Large numbers of fluted points have been recorded in the Tennessee River Valley of northern Alabama, in portions of the Ohio and Cumberland drainages, and in parts of Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Some of these clusters reflect single, extremely rich sites or localities; others, such as those in the major river valleys of the mid-South, reflect

large numbers of points from both sites and isolated finds. Over 1,000 fluted points in northern Alabama alone, for example, come from numerous locations in four counties both along and away from the Tennessee River. A series of major clusters along the Eastern seaboard and in northwestern Florida may identify settlements on the then exposed continental shelf.

Comparatively few points occur in portions of the Gulf Coastal Plain, lower peninsular Florida, and in the lower Mississippi River Valley. Sampling considerations aside, these areas may have been less attractive to populations using fluted points. Consequently, it is unlikely that population levels or intensity of use of these areas was even remotely comparable to that in areas of dense artifact concentration. The Appalachian Mountains stand out as a particularly noticeable void in the otherwise densely covered East, indicating use of this area by fluted-point-using peoples was comparatively minimal (Lane and Anderson n.d.).

Cumberland points are found within and near the Cumberland and Tennessee River drainages of northern Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky, while Suwannee points occur primarily in central and northern Florida, south Georgia, and western South Carolina (Figure 2). Save for isolated outliers, these concentrations are similar in size, roughly 300 km in maximum extent, a figure that may provide clues about the range of the people making these artifact categories. That is, these distributions may represent the regular use area of distinctive later Paleindian cultural traditions.

The distributional evidence suggests a number of things about Clovis and post-Clovis Paleindian occupations in the Southeast (Anderson and Faught 1998:176–177). First and foremost, large numbers of people using fluted-point technology were present in the region; given the evidence of a gradual evolution from fluted to unfluted forms in a number of areas, these occupations were highly successful. Given the impressive density, numbers, and diversity of fluted points, in fact, it is possible that fluting technology originated in this region. Second, since fluted points are common in some areas and absent in others, this suggests groups making these artifacts were themselves unevenly distributed over the landscape. Group ranges, while extensive, appear to have existed only in certain areas. Third, whether Clovis reflects the movement of an initial colonizing population, as now seems unlikely, or the radiation of a technology, movement appears to have proceeded in a leapfrog manner (e.g., Anthony 1990; Fiedel 2000). Fourth, concentrations of fluted points appear to represent staging areas, where initial populations settled and grew and where subsequent Paleindian subregional cultural traditions emerged, characterized by distinctive and spatially restricted point types (see also Anderson 1990; Dincauze 1993); the occurrence of Cumberland and Suwannee/Simpson points in areas where concentrations of fluted points also occurred certainly suggests such a possibility. Finally, given that large areas of the continental shelf along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts were exposed and habitable during the Paleindian era, artifact concentrations near the modern coastline probably represent settlement systems that extended into areas now submerged.

Explaining Change in the Southeastern Paleindian Archaeological Record

The interval from 10,800 to 10,000 RCYBP is a time of tremendous cultural and climatic change in the Southeast. A wide range of point forms occur during the late-Paleindian period in the Southeast, and the population appears to have been growing rapidly. How so

much change could have occurred in this short time span was a major mystery to Paleindian researchers until just a few years ago. The discovery of a major plateau in the radiocarbon calibration curve between ca. 10,600 and 10,100 RCYBP, however, has dramatic implications for our eventual understanding of these changes (Fiedel 1999). These 500 “radiocarbon years” actually correspond to close to 1200 calendar years. The late-Paleindian era as defined here may be from 10,800 to 10,000 RCYBP, but it is actually almost twice that long in real time, roughly 1500 calendar years. The appreciable diversification in sites, assemblages, and artifact morphology observed during this period thus took place over a far longer interval than we once thought (see also Ellis et al. 1998:159).

There appears to be a strong relationship between the demise of the Clovis way of life, the emergence of subregional cultural traditions, the extinction of megafauna, and the sudden onset of the Younger Dryas cold period. All these events occurred more or less simultaneously, about 10,800 RCYBP. These changes probably created appreciable subsistence stress among local Paleindian populations, forcing them to intensify food procurement directed to smaller prey package sizes (i.e., deer instead of megafauna). This likely reduced the need for long-distance movement and led to increasing differentiation in assemblages observed at this time.

The Younger Dryas appears to have had a profound effect on biota and culture, since 10,800 RCYBP, shortly after its onset, is the accepted ending date of both megafaunal extinctions and the Clovis culture (Fiedel 1999; Mead and Meltzer 1984:447; Taylor et al. 1996). The demise of key prey species, assuming megafaunal exploitation was an integral part of the Clovis adaptation, likely created appreciable subsistence uncertainty for human groups and may have forced peoples to intensify procurement of subsistence resources in smaller package sizes. This in turn almost certainly would have lessened the need for long-distance movement and led to the increasing differentiation in assemblages observed at this time. That is, patterns of group movement would have changed, from travel over great distances to exploit presumably widely dispersed large-size prey packages, to more localized movements after ca. 10,800 RCYBP directed toward a wider range of smaller prey packages.

Increased use of plant foods may have also been brought about by these inferred changes in hunting strategies. Availability of smaller prey packages may have been more unpredictable; if first-line resources were unavailable for whatever reason, early populations likely ate whatever was available, necessitating experimentation and the gradual expansion of knowledge about subsistence opportunities. These developments are traditionally assumed to have occurred over the course of the subsequent Archaic stage, but it now appears certain that a highly diversified subsistence economy was in place during the late-Paleindian era (cf., Caldwell 1958; Meltzer 1988; Meltzer and Smith 1986).

A fundamental reorganization in culture and technological organization that characterizes the late-Paleindian period in the Southeast is reflected in the appearance of notched and reshaped points, greater use of local lithic raw materials, and a marked increase in the number of sites scattered widely over the landscape, including rockshelters (Anderson 1990; Dunbar and Webb 1996:352; Walthall 1998). These changes are thought to reflect increasing populations, decreasing group ranges, and a change in subsistence from the exploitation of late Pleistocene to essentially modern floral and faunal communities. That is, with the passing of megafauna, human populations would have had no choice but to target smaller game animals, a practice that would have led to a more diversified subsistence economy,

although there can be little doubt that human populations have always made opportunistic use of a wide range of species when favored resources were not available. In particular, the change in point forms from lanceolate to serrated and notched types is thought to reflect a change from the occasional procurement of very large animals, such as elephant, to the need to process large numbers of much smaller and more dispersed game animals, such as deer. It is an exciting time for Paleoindian research in the Southeast. Increasing numbers of researchers are looking for sites of this era, and older data are being continually reexamined and reevaluated. Our discovery methods are improving, as are our explanatory models. We are increasingly considering the geological context of our sites (e.g., Goodyear 1999), exploring underwater as well as on land (e.g., Faught 1996; Hemmings 1999), and increasingly offering new models and syntheses of what it all means.

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Kennewick Man: A Paleoamerican Skeleton from the Northwestern U. S.

James C. Chatters

In July 1996 the nearly complete, well-preserved skeleton of what later proved to be an early-Holocene Paleoamerican was discovered in the town of Kennewick, Washington. The corner of Benton County, Washington, in whose jurisdiction the bones were found, called on me to conduct a forensic investigation. The remains appeared upon initial inspection to resemble modern western Eurasians more than recent Native Americans and were associated with debris from a late-19th- to early-20th-century homestead. This observation led to the initial inference that the remains were those of an early Euro-American settler. However, a stone projectile point was found healed inside the pelvis, putting the individual's affiliation in doubt. A radiocarbon date, ordered on bone from the skeleton to solve the conundrum, established the early-Holocene age (Chatters 2000). Soon thereafter, all studies were terminated by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), which owned the land. Within two weeks the COE announced its intent to repatriate the remains to local tribes, but the action was halted when eight anthropologists filed suit (Chatters 2001). At this writing, the case remains unresolved. This paper briefly describes my findings on the remains now known as Kennewick Man, focusing on paleopathology.

Context

The site is located on the Columbia River 531 km upstream from the Pacific Ocean (46° 15' 30" N, 119° 10' 00" W) at an elevation of 104 m. Disarticulated, scattered human bones were discovered at the base of a 2-m-high cutbank on the shore of a 4-mile-long public area known as Columbia Park (Chatters 2000). Clearly having eroded from a collapsed portion of the cut bank, bones lay in the soft, secondary mud of the reservoir, at the water-mud

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE FIRST AMERICANS

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