

REVIEWS

In the Eastern Fluted Point Tradition

Joseph A. M. Gingerich (ed.)
Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2013,
438 pp., 107 illustrations, 58 tables, 33 maps,
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The Paleoindian period is definitely on the move, growing constantly in popularity among a large public, including undergraduate and graduate students, and of course professional archaeologists. North America is a huge laboratory and it is very difficult to encompass this vast territory in a single book. Edited volumes on specific regions are a common way to circulate data in a timely fashion. This book is a good example, although the regions considered still cover thousands of square miles. Eastern North America is tackled from Massachusetts in the north to South Carolina in the south and from the mid-Atlantic states toward Illinois and Michigan to the west. The coverage of this huge area is obviously variable but the merits of this book overcome this caveat. In this eclectic coverage, there is information for most scholars dealing with one region under this large umbrella.

The editor, Joseph Gingerich, has done an impressive job in assembling this large body of data. Unfortunately, he was not aware during his book's production that a companion volume was being produced under my editorship several months before (Chapdelaine 2012). Dealing with the far Northeast, the other book assembles 11 chapters dealing with the vast peninsula that incorporates six New England states, the Canadian Maritime Provinces, and Quebec. It brings together the last decade or so of research in this area, with an emphasis on stylistic variations in fluted points, settlement-subsistence patterns, regional syntheses, and the impact of the Champlain Sea on human occupation. The geographic scope of Gingerich's book is far more impressive, and since most of these regions were not glaciated during the last Ice Age, the pre-Clovis and Clovis occupations are front and center in several chapters. While recognition

of Clovis sites in the southern portion of eastern North America is definitely convincing, the subject is still being debated in the far Northeast.

The book is well-organized into four sections: (1) Paleoindian Chronology and Paleoenvironmental Considerations, (2) Reinvestigations of Classic Sites, (3) New Sites and Perspectives, and (4) Observations on the Early Paleoindian Settlement. It is impossible to discuss the sixteen chapters individually. I will rather comment on each section.

Although the initial discoveries of the early twentieth century showed a contextual association between Plains hunters and the mega-fauna era, independent radiocarbon dating of Paleoindian remains has come to be seen as a vital concern for all North American practitioners. A direct association between dated samples and human occupation is at the heart of much criticism, which has become so intense that most archaeologists will not even seek to date poorly contextualized organic samples. At this time, there is no answer to this problem, and the total absence of radiocarbon dates for Paleoindian sites in southwestern Ontario and other areas of eastern North America still amazes me. A heavy reliance on fluted point styles is a necessity, and as is emphasized in several chapters, stratified sites are all too scarce and need to be sought out and studied with state of the art methods of exploration and excavation. In the first section on chronology and environment, these problems are addressed rigorously. The seven-page appendix listing selected radiocarbon dates from eastern North America will be very helpful to anybody interested in the issue of chronology. The two chapters on late Pleistocene ecology cover distinct geographic areas, and most archaeologists will agree that these syntheses are badly needed in order to understand the long-term relationship between prehistoric peoples and their environment.

The second section on reinvestigations of classic sites is the longest with six chapters, but it is a worthwhile emphasis. Most of these revisited sites are indeed key regional references, such as Shoop in central Pennsylvania, Bull Brook in Massachusetts, Plenge in New Jersey, the Flint Run Complex in northern Virginia, and Shawnee-Minisink in eastern Pennsylvania. The

Wells Creek Site in Tennessee is the exception due to its lesser importance. Jesse Tune argues that this is not, in fact, a major Clovis habitation site. Regarding the other key sites, old data are discussed within new paradigms and questions are added to new data in a productive and efficient manner. These sites are better understood now and they will continue to fuel discussion on several important matters, such as social organization, mobility and territoriality, lithic networks, domestic activities, chronology, and so on.

The third section is surprisingly short, with only four chapters: two deal with specific sites, Higgins in Maryland and Topper in southern Carolina, one is a regional synthesis of Tennessee, and the last is dedicated to use wear on endscrapers from various sites, including Gainey (Mich.), Hawk's Nest (Ill.), Noble Pond (N.Y.) and Shawnee-Minisink (Pa.). There are certainly new sites in these huge areas that could provide data in the near future for a new book dealing with Paleoindian studies.

The fourth section on synthesis and conclusions is crunchy at best, with a critical assessment of pre-Clovis by Stuart Fiedel with no sense of diplomacy in its title: "Is That All There Is?" Known as the most outspoken critic of Monte Verde in Chili, Fiedel argues for a higher-quality recording of archaeological data and publication in a more meticulous fashion. As Anderson mentions in his comment on Fiedel's criticism in the final chapter summarizing and commenting on the book: "Regardless of whether the reader agrees with anything else Fiedel says, an unassailable truth in his chapter is that the thorough reporting of fieldwork and analyses is essential to the evaluation of archaeological arguments based on them" (p.389). Gary Haynes offers a refreshing comparison between western and eastern perceptions on various topics, and looks for a more precise use of Clovis and pan-continental issues. The last chapter by David Anderson goes far beyond the usual concluding chapter that characteristically includes automatic applause for each contributor. It is a well-thought addition written by an experienced archaeologist with an in-depth knowledge of eastern North America.

Regarding the book as a whole, I must say that reading its 403 dense pages was a fascinating experience, as the authors have put together impressive sets of data. This new book is a most welcome addition to the myriad of recent books on the Paleoindian period (Bradley et al. 2010; Deller and Ellis 2011; Haynes and Huckell 2007; Knell and Muñiz 2013; Kohntopp 2010; Waters et al. 2011). I highly recommend this book to all scholars interested in the peopling of North America, especially the East, and urge them to buy what will become a basic reference for several decades to come. It is simply a must.

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