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Reworked Clovis Biface Distal Fragments from the Topper Site, 38AL23: Implications for Clovis Technological Organization in the Central Savannah River Region

Ashley M. Smallwood and Albert C. Goodyear

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The Topper site, a Clovis quarry-related site in Allendale County, South Carolina, continues to reveal insights into Clovis lithic technology based on annual excavations in the area of the site known as the Hillside (Miller and Goodyear 2008). Excavations totaling 210 m² on the Hillside have produced an interesting pattern of reworked bifaces presumably originally intended as point preforms.

The analysis of Clovis bifaces from Topper is part of a comprehensive study intended to characterize biface production at this site and relate it to the broader regional Clovis systems operating in the Southeast (Smallwood and Miller 2009). During analysis of the Hillside units, we observed more failed biface bases than tips. Specifically, of 38 fragments, 13 are tips and 25 are bases. Based on a one-tailed binomial test, predicting the proportion of tips should be 0.5, a probability value of .036 suggests there is a significant difference or nonrandom pattern of salvaging and reworking preform tips.

Some distals show clear evidence of this reworking. In Figure 1A, the piece is thicker toward the base (13.1 mm) with several short flakes originating on the present basal margin. Figure 1B shows a preform tip that is thicker (8.5 mm) toward the base with bifacial retouch on the shoulders and base originating from the present margin, and what appears to be a surviving remnant of the break face. In Figure 1C, a distal fragment has been reworked with short bifacial flakes from the present margin. This piece is a thin late-stage preform with a maximum thickness of 7.6 mm; based on the clear overshoot scars, it appears to be the upper blade portion of the original preform.

Salvaged preform tips were likely reused to produce Clovis points. In examining collections from the central Savannah River region, we observed two examples of points made on recovered preform tips. Figure 1D represents a whole Clovis point with early-stage fluting on the obverse face (D) but no flutes on the reverse (D'). Instead, short pressure flakes were used to create a concavity for hafting. The maximum thickness of this point is 14 mm, much thicker than an average Clovis point found in the area (the average Clovis point made on the

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local Coastal Plain chert is 7.23 mm in thickness). A second point (Figure 1E) was found in the Georgia Southern University Museum, having been collected in Burke County, GA, immediately west of Allendale County, SC. This is a prime example of a preform distal fragment converted to a point. It thickens toward the base (10.5 mm), has overshot flaking scars on both faces, and short pressure flakes originating from the present basal margin. On the obverse face high up on the mid plane of the biface is one (Figure 1E1), and possibly a second (Figure 1E2), flute termination from a removal earlier in the production process (cf. Morrow 1995). This piece has been sharpened on the tip and margins and ground on the base consistent with projectile use.

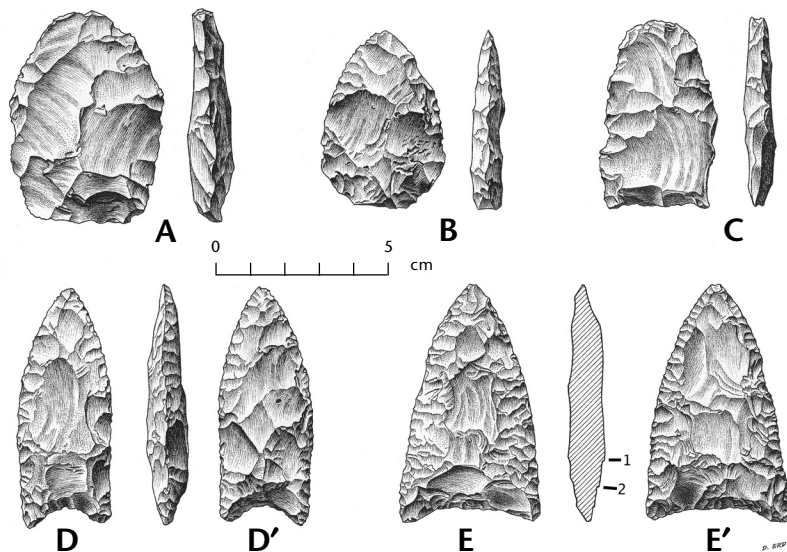


Figure 1. Reworked Clovis preform distals from the Topper site, South Carolina (A, B, and C) and the surrounding central Savannah River region (D, SC 487; E, SGA 1625).

Retipped and rebased Clovis points occur at kill sites, such as Colby and Murray Springs, where Clovis points were used in areas distant from quarries (Frison 1986; Haynes and Huckell 2007). The pattern at Topper suggests that modifying broken preforms into projectile points and other bifacial tools was planned at the quarry location and was not just an ad hoc strategy used in situations removed from raw-material sources. As such, it adds another clue to the organization of Clovis technology in the Southeast.

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