

Clovis Macro Blades from the Topper Site, 38AL23, Allendale County, South Carolina

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Because of annual excavations beginning in 1998, the Topper site has provided a wealth of both Clovis and pre-Clovis archaeological data (Goodyear 2005). As of the 2005 season, a total of 444 m² of Holocene-age sediments have been excavated. The Clovis occupation lies in the bottom of the deposit dated by two OSL ages of 13.6 ka taken from two different locations. Clovis artifacts have been found in every area of the Topper site including the terrace, hillside, hilltop, and even the Savannah River, where chert was also available (Goodyear et al. 2005). In the 2004 and 2005 seasons, excavations were concentrated on the hill overlooking the terrace, revealing an extraordinarily dense and extensive Clovis lithic assemblage. Several excavation units with Clovis artifacts still in place were viewed during a tour as part of the 2005 Clovis in the Southeast conference (www.clovisinthesoutheast.net). In a previous article (Goodyear and Steffy 2003), we reported on the typological evidence of Clovis points at Topper. Since Topper is a quarry-related site, few Clovis points have been found. However, numerous point preforms in various stages of reduction have been found throughout the site. The recent hilltop excavations have recovered over a dozen point preforms, along with overshot flakes and other artifacts such as prismatic blades, end- and sidescrapers, denticulates, and utilized flakes. These flake tools indicate that craft activities related to habitation were also taking place and not just lithic extraction.

Here we report on the presence of large prismatic blades which have come to be as diagnostic as Clovis points in Clovis lithic assemblages (Collins 1999). A few cores for the removal of these blades have also been found, which thus far indicate fairly informal reduction strategies. Formal polyhedral-type cores have not been found. Rather, the cores have three or four parallel scars taken from one or more faces resembling a horse's hoof. Large pieces of high-quality homogeneous chert (> 20 cm) may not have been common in the outcrops at Topper, thus restricting somewhat the size of large blade cores and their products.

The blades are typically straight and not curved, have wide striking platforms, and usually have heavy platform grinding. Blade removals are primarily unidirectional. Numerous blade proximals have been recovered with heavily ground platforms, probably indicating failures during detachment. Utilized blade segments are rare. Blade lengths range from 75 to 140 mm (Figure 1). Most of the macro blades appear to be rejects or starter blades for core preparation and are not retouched. Whole macro prismatic blades of Allendale chert have been found in surface collections in Allendale County that have fine unifacial retouch on their margins (Goodyear 2002/2003:Fig.8). The macro blades from Topper link this site to other prominent

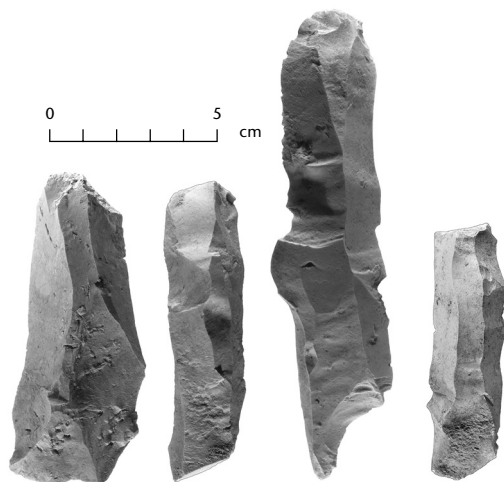


Figure 1. Examples of Clovis macro prismatic blades from the Topper site, 38AL23, Allendale County, South Carolina. Photo by Daryl P. Miller, SCIAA.

quarry-related Clovis sites such as Carson-Conn-Short in Tennessee (Broster and Norton (1996: Fig. 14.3), the Adams site in Kentucky (Sanders 1990), and Gault in Texas (Collins 1999). Excavations planned for the hilltop occupation at Topper in 2006 will no doubt produce many more examples of Clovis prismatic blades, adding to an already impressive and analytically important assemblage of Clovis in this part of the southeastern United States.

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