

Book reviews

ALBERT C. GOODYEAR & CHRISTOPHER R. MOORE (ed.). 2018. *Early human life on the Southeastern coastal plain*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press; 978-1-683-40034-9 \$125.



This edited volume resulted from a day-long session at the 2014 Southeastern Archaeological Conference. More than half of the original 22 session papers were revised to appear in this volume, which provides 15 chapters on the archaeology, geoarchaeology and palaeoen-

vironments of the coastal plain of the Southeastern USA from the earliest arrival of people in the area until approximately 9000 years ago. As is common with conference proceedings, there is some unevenness in the geographic and temporal coverage, but the chapters represent an admirable range of scholars from all career stages, and many of the most recent technical and theoretical approaches in early Southeastern archaeology are represented. This text will be most relevant for Southeastern specialists, but some chapters provide methodological or theoretical approaches likely to be of interest to specialists in landscape reconstruction, lithic analyses or forager studies.

There are no formal sections to the volume, but the text is roughly chronological in treatment after the Introduction by the editors. Chapters 2–4 focus upon early components that are, or have been, considered controversial because of stratigraphic or technological ambiguities. Goodyear and Sain summarise extensive geoarchaeological and technological analyses of the components below the Clovis materials at the Topper site, arguing for settlement of South Carolina well before the Last Glacial Maximum. Ensor provides a summary of an anomalous assemblage of quarry debris from surface contexts in south-eastern Alabama, and, perhaps, across the USA, which appears to be manufactured similarly to Levallois technology. Hemmings and colleagues submit a thorough preliminary

report upon their ongoing archaeological and geoarchaeological research at the Vero site, reported in 1915 as a site of ‘early man’, associating people with extinct Pleistocene fauna. This claim was discounted soon thereafter, but ambiguities remained that the current research hopes to resolve.

In Chapter 5, Harris provides an excellent discussion of modelling sea levels on the Southeastern coastal plain from the Last Glacial Maximum onwards with application to early archaeological site preservation and visibility. The methodologies summarised in this chapter are germane to researchers working on any continental shelves. This is followed by a summary of the ‘quarry-cluster’ approach to chert provenance studies by Austin and colleagues, long used in Florida to assign artefacts to approximate source areas. This method may have value to those working where chert outcrops in many locations on the landscape, but where interquarry variation seems small. Chapter 7 demonstrates the strength of big-data approaches in Palaeoindian research. Smallwood and colleagues utilise the county-level diagnostic artefact distributions found in the open-access Paleoindian Database of the Americas to model the changing use of major physiographic zones in South Carolina across the Pleistocene–Holocene transition.

Chapters 8 and 9 are likely to be of the broadest general interest. LeCompte *et al.* provide a succinct summary of the worldwide data supporting the controversial Younger Dryas Cosmic Impact hypothesis, which states that the sudden abrupt cooling of the world’s climate at 12.8 kya, known as the Younger Dryas, was caused by one or more extra terrestrial impacts. This summary includes specific stratigraphic indicators including various microfossil and environmental proxies. Kennet and many of the same authors immediately follow with a discussion of the major effects that would have occurred because of this impact: the Younger Dryas climate change itself, cultural reorganisations and the North American megafauna extinctions, providing examples from the Southeastern USA in support of each of these consequences. Moore *et al.* conclude the discussion of palaeoenvironments in Chapter 10 by providing an example of how geoarchaeology should be done. A

nuanced approach to archaeological and sedimentological analyses in combination with OSL and radiocarbon dating and modelling have allowed them to distinguish meaningful Terminal Pleistocene and Early Holocene archaeological components in shallow sandy contexts that were further linked to major climatic events in the area.

The following three chapters return to a focus on archaeology, providing regional-scale discussion of human activities during the Early Holocene based upon the analysis of diagnostic artefacts, many of which were recovered from surface contexts by avocational archaeologists. Bridgeman Sweeney applies social network analysis to the distribution of Early Holocene side-notched projectile points across the coastal plain, providing compelling evidence for intergroup interactions across drainage basins. Thulman utilises a nuanced discussion of how individuals learn to make and replicate artefacts to provide convincing justification for his use of geometric morphometrics to analyse Bolen points, an Early Holocene projectile point style in Florida. This analysis demonstrates that there are four main styles of Bolen point in Florida, and the distribution of these styles seems likely to correlate to meaningful social groups. Wilkinson examines distributions and raw material types for the full range of diagnostic Early Holocene material culture (projectile points, scrapers, adzes and the like) along and between two major river drainages in South Carolina to discuss lithic provisioning and land use. He reconfirms that some toolstones are preferentially utilised, but discovers that land use is more nuanced than previously thought.

The final two chapters by session discussants Anderson and Schuldenrein, prolific scholars with decades of experience in Southeastern archaeology, provide useful critiques and guidance for future research into early Southeastern cultures. Schuldenrein ties his discussion to worldwide scholarship, especially in the field of geoarchaeology. Anderson provides nuance by filling in some temporal and regional gaps found in preceding chapters.

The overall production value of this volume is good, but there are a few typographical errors in some chapters, and some of the photographs and GIS maps did not reproduce well in greyscale, especially as they were so small that topographic features were virtually invisible. This generally did not obscure the authors' intentions, but it did not do them any favours either. For Palaeoindian researchers and Southeastern specialists,

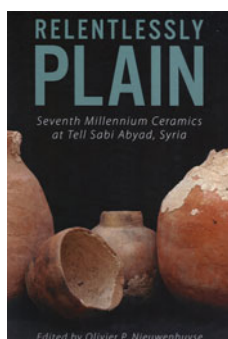
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this volume will serve as a useful reference for ongoing scholarship into the earliest cultural periods in South-eastern USA. Some of this volume may prove too regionally specific to be of broad interest, but the approaches to palaeoenvironments, geoarchaeology and interpreting social interactions based upon artefact distributions are likely to be valuable to any archaeologist focused upon foraging societies.

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OLIVER P. NIEUWENHUYSE (ed.). 2018. *Relentlessly plain. Seventh millennium ceramics at Tell Sabi Abyad, Syria*. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-084-8 £60.



Archaeologists studying the Neolithic period in the Middle East during the 1980s and 1990s highlighted the importance and innovation of research focused on the first stages of the Neolithisation process. The so-called 'Pre-Pottery Neolithic' was the focus of both fieldwork

and theoretical research frameworks. This dynamism helped to fill the gaps in our knowledge in various areas. Nevertheless, more recently, scholars have lamented the resulting dearth of information about the subsequent Pottery Neolithic.

The publication of the Tell Sabi Abyad ceramics must be placed in the context of current research on the first pottery in the Middle East. This field of study has seen a renewed dynamism, particularly by a group of international scholars who have set up an active system of sharing and discussion of new research. The last decade has seen three international workshops on Late Neolithic Ceramics, held in Brno, Czech Republic (2012), Barcelona, Spain (2015) and Antalya, Turkey (2019), with an initial meeting in Japan in 2009. These meetings have generated an exceptionally up-to-date research agenda for this problematic area of study (Cruells *et al.* 2017; Tsuneki *et al.* 2017; Gómez-Bach *et al.* 2018).