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Dart Point Chronologies of Southeast Texas

Leland W. Patterson

Introduction

Ensor (1990: Figure 1) and Patterson (1990: Table 2) have published separate proposed chronologies for projectile point types in Southeast Texas. This article discusses the bases and differences of these two proposed chronologies, in regard to dart points. Comments on arrow point chronologies are given in a separate article (Patterson 1991).

It should be realized that projectile point chronologies are continuously refined, as new data become available. It would be ideal to have sufficient radiocarbon dates to establish a definitive time range for each projectile point type (Patterson 1989a), but this is generally not possible. Instead, the time range for each projectile point type is usually estimated, with varying degrees of accuracy, by use of some radiocarbon dates, data from excavations, data from surface collections, and published chronologies for adjacent regions.

There are generic problems in establishing estimates for projectile point chronologies. These include: (1) chronologies from adjacent regions do not always apply, (2) some investigators attempt to force individual projectile points into artificially narrow time ranges, (3) data on chronological sequences from single stratified sites are seldom conclusive on total time ranges of point types in a region, and (4) many investigators fail to consider the entire body of available data for a region. Also, it is not unusual for individual investigators to disagree on the classification of projectile point types.

Comments are given here on problems with Ensor's (1990: Figure 1) dart point chronology, and Patterson's (1990: Table 2) dart point chronology is discussed in some detail. It is shown that there are too many problems with Ensor's chronology for it to be of general usefulness.

Comments on Ensor's chronology

There are several problems with Ensor's (1990: Figure 1) proposed chronology for projectile points in Southeast Texas. The placement of time periods is confusing because of the differences with other published chronologies for this region. Ensor does not have a Late Paleo-Indian period, but instead pushes the Early Archaic period farther back in time. This in turn results in an unusually long Middle Archaic period, not synchronized with any other published chronology. Angostura, Plainview, and Golondrina points are shown slightly earlier than 8000 B.C. These point types actually all occur in the Late Paleo-Indian period of 8000-6000 B.C. and perhaps even to 5000 B.C. Ensor's placement of the San Patrice point before the Early Side-Notched point is not correct. Early Side-Notched points start earlier than San Patrice in Southeast Texas (Patterson et al. 1987). Early Side-Notched points also occur with San Patrice points (Patterson et al. 1987; Webb et al. 1971).

An Early Expanded Haft Cluster, consisting of Yarbrough, Trinity, and Carrollton point types, is shown by Ensor (1990: Figure 1) at 5000 B.C. This is a reasonable starting date for Trinity and Carrollton points, but it should be noted that the Carrollton point is a straight stem type, not expanding stem. The Yarbrough point is placed too early, based on a reference to Turner and Hester (1985). This will be corrected in the next issue of the book by Turner and Hester (E. S. Turner, personal communication) to show a later placement of this point type. The Yarbrough point is commonly found in the Late Archaic and Early Ceramic periods in Southeast Texas (Patterson 1989b; Hall 1981). Ensor seems to have missed a decimal place in having a Palmillas Cluster at

