

GRAND CANYON GUIDE no. 4

... excerpted from Grand Canyon Explorer ... Bob Ribokas

AN AMATEUR'S REVIEW OF BACKPACKING TOPICS

FOR THE

T254 - EXPEDITION TO THE GRAND CANYON - MARCH 2007

Humans in the Canyon

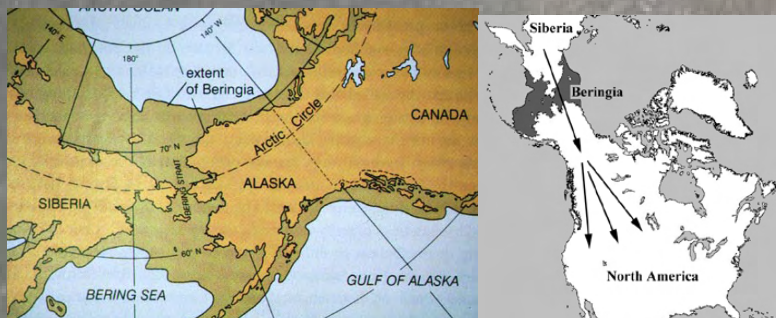
The earliest human arrivals and their physical and cultural descendants, collectively called "Paleo-Indians" (meaning "ancient" Indians), appear to have occupied the Americas, including the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Probably throughout their history, the Paleo-Indians moved as nomadic bands across the landscape in response to the rhythm of the seasons and the availability of resources. Carrying their belongings on their backs, they traveled by foot in extended families of perhaps two dozen individuals, including grandparents, descendants, in-laws and a few children. Over time, bands scattered widely, throughout the Americas.

Much earlier human settlements have been excavated in the Middle East. Migrations through that region, over time, have resulted in establishment of cultures throughout Asia and the Far East, as well as other regions of the world.



The Levant is an imprecise geographical term used by anthropologists historically referring to a large area in the Middle East south of the Taurus Mountains, bounded by the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and by the northern Arabian Desert and Upper Mesopotamia to the east.

During the glacial maximum of the last Ice Age, so much water was tied up in ice sheets that the sea levels were appreciably lower, allowing a land route for human migration from Asia to North America across what is now the Bering Strait.

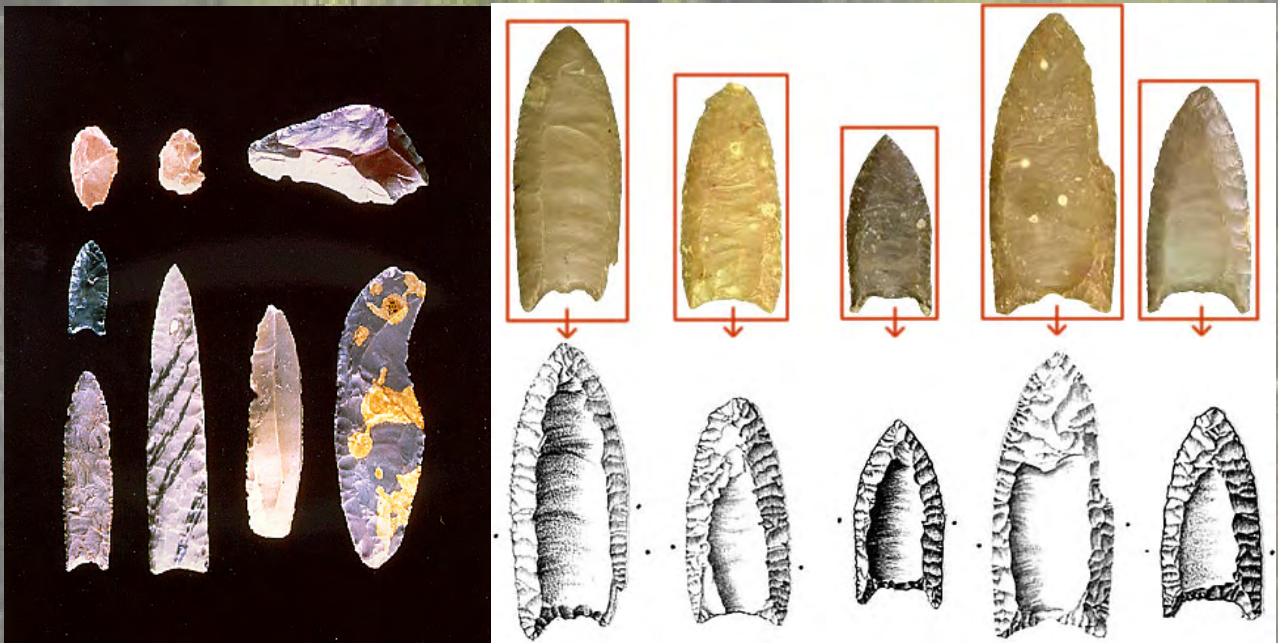


The Paleo-Indians made simple stone tools, using "flint knapping," or stone chipping, techniques similar to those of ancient people in northeastern Siberia to shape raw flint and chert into crude chopping, cutting, gouging, hammering and scraping tools. They fashioned other crude tools, including pointed implements, from the bones of animals. They used flat milling stones to process plant foods, grinding seeds, for example, into flour. They made other tools and camp and personal gear from sources such as wood, plant fibers, mammoth and mastodon tusks, large animal horns and intestines, but most such artifacts have perished and disappeared over time.

At some point, the Paleo-Indians invented or borrowed (possibly from eastern Siberian cultures) the revolutionary idea of using spears with stone points in the hunt. Armed with tipped spears, the Paleo-Indians changed over time, from primarily foragers into primarily big game hunters, preying on the Ice Age mastodons, mammoths, long-horned bison, horses, camels and giant sloths. Simultaneously, they raised the craft of flint knapping to a new level, producing some of the most beautifully worked stone projectile points and tools in all of American prehistory. They often used flint from stone quarries hundreds of miles distant, presumably having acquired the raw flint or chert through trade. Spear points would become the Paleo-Indian big game hunting cultures' signature artifact.

Likely, hunters often laid in wait near a lake or a bog for quarry to come to water. Seldom able to inflict a fatal first strike with spears, they would have used their weapons to wound a big animal like a mastodon or a mammoth, and they would have tracked and harried the failing animal, continuing to inflict wounds as opportunities arose until they finally brought their quarry down. A hunter probably threw his spear as a projectile or used it as a lance to drive it into an animal's flesh. Conceivably, he used a device called a throwing stick, or atlatl, to hurl his spear with greater propulsive force. (We know with certainty that later prehistoric hunters used the atlatl.) Dangerous business and hard work, killing a mastodon or a mammoth with a spear, but it would have yielded a high profit: abundant meat, skin, ivory, bone, sinew, gut. Like the historic Plains Indians who preyed on the modern buffalo, the Paleo-Indians wasted little of a big game animal's carcass.

The spear points labeled as "Clovis" and "Folsom" rank among the most well known of Paleo-Indian artifacts. The Clovis points, approximately 2 - to 5-inch long, lanceolate-shaped, with a concave base and partially grooved, or "fluted," sides, were first discovered, in association with Ice Age animals, at the famous Paleo-Indian Blackwater Draw site in eastern New Mexico, a few miles south of the city of Clovis.



Clovis points

Folsom points

Possibly the oldest of the known Paleo-Indian spear tips, Clovis points have since been found not only throughout our western deserts but across the northern hemisphere. Folsom points, similar to the Clovis points but generally smaller and more exquisitely made, were first discovered, in association with Ice Age bison bones, in northeast New Mexico, near the small community of Folsom. Folsom points have been found most frequently on the Great Plains, but they occur in our western deserts as well.

Based on the spear points, the other artifacts, extinct big game associations, site distributions and other evidence, archaeologists have postulated that the Paleo-Indian bands wandered, not aimlessly over the landscape, but in annual circuits. Bands would time their moves to capitalize on the seasonal availability of game and edible plants and the need for winter shelter. Individuals owned little, no more than they could carry in a move. Bands interacted with neighboring bands, hunting, trading, intermarrying, gossiping. They maintained a broad, if slow, communications network as evidenced by the continent-wide distribution of similar spear points. They became master naturalists as a matter of survival, intimately acquainted with the seasons and the animal and plant life of their environment. They buried their friends and relatives with love and care. They changed slowly over thousands of years, like the Ice Age glaciers.

We may never be sure of when or how the Paleo-Indians came to the Americas or what routes they followed across the continents, for example, into southwestern America and northern Mexico. We can do little more than guess about such things as their beliefs, their spirituality, their celebrations, their rituals, their medicines, their mournings, their music, their dance, their band structures, their language, their family relationships or their child rearing. Artifacts seldom speak clearly to those dimensions of life. The Paleo-Indians, who finally faded from the American scene, are likely to remain as elusive as shadows in the night in American archaeology

The Anasazi was an ancient Indian culture that inhabited various sections of the Grand Canyon between A.D. 700 to around A.D. 1150. The Anasazi followed or evolved from the Archaic or Desert culture which originally inhabited the Canyon between 2000 and 1000 B.C. Split twig figurines which have been found in many caves in the Redwall Limestone are among the oldest record left behind by the Desert Culture peoples. The early Anasazi, dating from A.D. 1 to around A.D. 800, lived in pithouses in the area surrounding the Canyon, but they are not believed to have dwelt in the Canyon itself. They were primarily hunter-gatherers and had not yet developed a skill with pottery, but instead wove intricate baskets using the leaves of the yucca plant. This period is often referred to as Basketmaker.

Sometime around A.D. 800 the Anasazi are thought to have entered their building phase and as a result, this marks the beginning of the Pueblo period, *pueblo* being the Spanish word for *town*. Around this time the Anasazi also began making crude pottery which eventually evolved into a much more sophisticated craft. They also started to blend their hunter-gatherer traits with those of a more agricultural nature. Areas such as Unkar Creek Delta and Obi Canyon in the inner canyon and Walhalla Glades on the north rim have provided archaeologists with numerous agricultural features, such as irrigation ditches, granaries, and stone tools such as metates and manos. Anasazi is a Navajo word that translates into English as meaning "enemy ancestor". The Hopi people are believed to be the modern descendants of the Anasazi.

The Hopi peoples that inhabit the Grand Canyon area today can trace their ancestry all the way back to the Anasazi culture that occupied the Canyon between A.D. 1 and A.D. 1200. The Hopi Mesas to the west of the Grand Canyon are thought to have been established following the Anasazi departure from the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon holds a very special spiritual significance to the Hopi as this is where their legendary Sipapu, or place of emergency, is located. The Hopi believe that this is the fourth world and that they came to this world through the Sipapu after being forced to abandon the third world, the one directly below.

The Havasupai Indians are the only indigenous Canyon peoples that continue to live in Canyon today. They originally lived and farmed at present-day Indian Garden but were forced to leave this area when Grand Canyon achieved National Park status in the early 1900's. They now occupy a reservation that abuts the western side of the park and the village of Supai, on Havasu Creek is the tribal center. The lifestyle of the Havasupai has remained almost completely unchanged since the Havasu Creek area was originally settled by their ancestors around A.D. 1300. Their name, Havasupai, means "People of the blue-green water" which describes the color of Havasu Creek.