

Peopling Central America: Stone Tool Technologies, Site Distributions, and New Understandings of the Earliest Occupants of the New World Neotropics

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Stone tools and other remains dating to the Terminal Pleistocene have been recovered from dozens of sites across Central America. However, only a very small handful of sites contain assemblages with diagnostic lithic specimens including complete points, manufacturing failures, or associated toolkits. These sites are disproportionately important for helping archaeologists infer possible cultural influences and processes involved in how the land bridge connecting the Western Hemisphere was settled. Current evidence suggests that culture-bearers from South and North America intermingled across at least parts of Central America between 13,000 and 12,000 years ago, that neither coastline was preferred as the exclusive route for movements, and that regionalized populations were established at least by this time. This paper summarizes available data, including latest findings from August Pine Ridge, Belize, which likely represents the largest assemblage of material culture currently available from Central America for this period.