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New Observations on a Clovis Point from the Central Mojave Desert, California

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In 1936 Malcolm J. Rogers collected a fragmentary Clovis point from an archaeological site that he recorded as M-130A (CA-SBR-5350 in the California Archaeological Inventory) and attributed to the San Dieguito complex. The site is located near Bitter Spring in the northern portion of the Tiefert Basin (Fig. 1), north-central San Bernardino County, California. The setting is a small north-south trending ridge of residual lake deposits overlain by sand. In addition to material he attributed to the San Dieguito complex, Rogers (unpublished fieldnotes) noted the presence at the site of several hearths and also some material he recorded as "Pinto."

The specimen consists of two articulating fragments of an obsidian Clovis fluted projectile point remnant. It has been described only briefly in the literature (Brott 1966: 170; Davis and Shutler 1969: Fig. 3f). The desire for a more complete description, and new data on the source of the obsidian used to make the specimen, warrant this brief note.

The sandblasted point remnant (Fig. 2) consists of two fragments now glued together. Abrasion of the edges of the fracture indicates

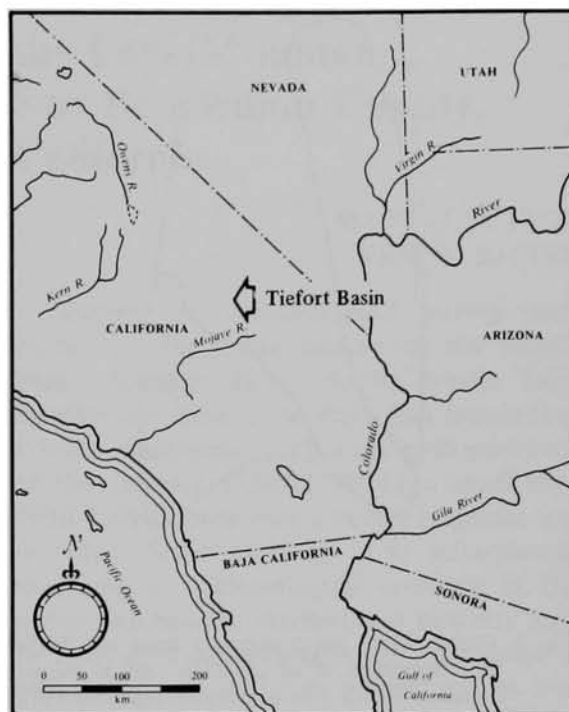


Fig. 1. General location of the Tiefert Basin.

that breakage occurred in antiquity. It is not known under what circumstances Rogers actually collected the two fragments nor who is responsible for joining them together. One side of the base is broken away, and the distal end is also missing; the latter was detached in an apparent impact fracture that burinated one edge. The nature of the fractures suggests that the point was broken in use. As no other fluted points were recovered at the site (Dennis Jenkins, personal communication 1984), the specimen may not be related temporally or contextually to the primary use of the site. The specimen now measures 35.0

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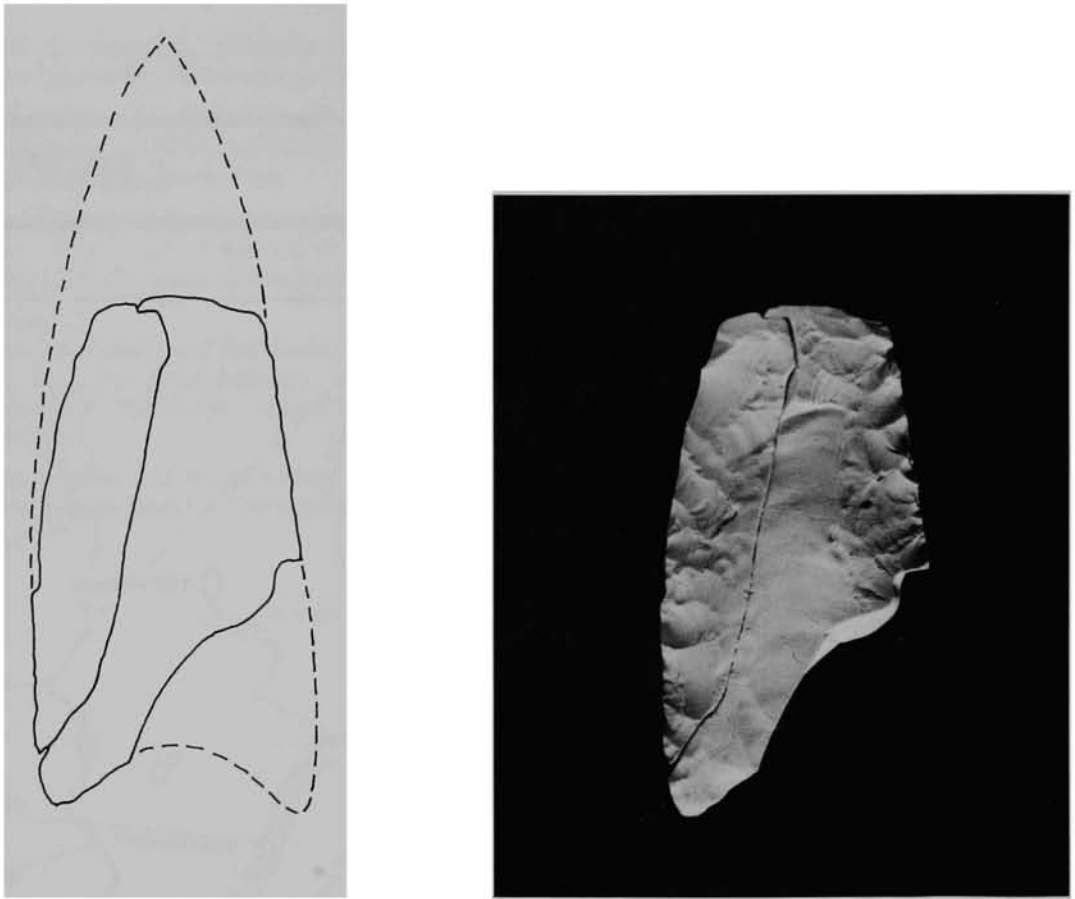


Fig. 2. Clovis fluted point remnant from the Tiefert Basin, north-central San Bernardino County, California. The specimen is of obsidian and is shown actual size, coated with ammonium chloride powder to enhance detail. The accompanying sketch illustrates the probable original configuration of the specimen.

mm. wide, 8.6 mm. thick, and we estimate that it had an original length of about 90 mm.

The point is fluted on both surfaces. One of the channels, that on the surface shown in Fig. 2, had an original length of about 56 mm. The opposite fluting channel is less well-defined, and is now difficult to study because of sandblasting and breakage, and because the catalogue number is painted on the specimen in that area. It appears that the point was edge-ground. The remaining portion of the base, although weathered, seems to display such treatment, although the lateral edges are sufficiently sandblasted that any edge-grinding they might once have exhibited is now obliterated.

Of particular interest is the scratching evident in both channel scars. The scratches are very faint, having been nearly obliterated by sandblasting. They are not clearly visible in the accompanying photograph. Scratching in the channels of fluted obsidian projectile points is not uncommon. Of the 16 fluted obsidian points from the Borax Lake site, seven display channel scratches (Harrington 1948: Fig. 22). Such treatment is also evident on some of the obsidian Clovis points from the Dietz site in south-central Oregon (Fagan 1984). The channel scars may have been scratched to enable some form of adhesive used in the hafting process to better adhere to the glassy surface of the obsidian (Fagan

1984: 2-3, John L. Fagan, personal communication 1984).

Although the point is too sandblasted to yield a reliable obsidian hydration measurement, Clovis points are generally associated with cultural deposits dating to about 11,000 radiocarbon years before the present. The specimen was, however, sourced by X-ray fluorescence to the obsidian deposits near Coso Hot Springs (the Coso, or Sugarloaf source; Ericson, Hagan, and Chesterman 1976) in southwestern Inyo County, about 150 km. northwest of the site where the point was found. This suggests that use of the obsidian deposits near Coso Hot Springs began perhaps as early as 11,000 years ago.

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A Basket Fragment from the Lava Mountains, San Bernardino County, California

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During an archaeological survey conducted by the junior author for the Randsburg - Spangler Hills - South Searles Lake Geothermal Area of western San Bernardino County, California (United States Department of the Interior [USDI] 1976), a small cave (SBR-1206) containing a basket fragment was recorded. Since basketry is so infrequently recovered in archaeological contexts in the region and because attributes of basketry may be helpful in delineating group boundaries as well as regional activities, a brief analysis is in order.

The site, one of a dozen rockshelters and caves recorded in the immediate vicinity, is a small endogenic cave located along the northwest face of a rocky ridge at the west end of the Lava Mountains (Fig. 1). The cave is a narrow fissure formed beneath a large boulder and measures approximately five meters wide, two meters deep, and one-half meter high. A large woodrat nest is present in the cave.

Recovered near the mouth of the cave, the basket fragment is "C" shaped and measures 9.0 x 8.6 x 0.7 cm. (Fig. 2). The piece

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