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A Clovis-like Point from the Southern Sierra Nevada, California

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IN the spring of 1983, a fluted Clovis-like projectile point of obsidian was discovered on the surface of site CA-KER-300, located at an elevation of 3,100 ft. (940 m.) in the southern Sierra Nevada northeast of Bakersfield, California (Fig. 1). The site consists of numerous loci including bedrock milling stations, midden areas, lithic concentrations, house pits, hearths, burials, and several rock shelters with pictographs, all distributed over an area of approximately 80 acres.

The full extent of the age, depth, and content of the deposits at the site currently is unknown, but use of the site may span many millennia. Desert and Rose Spring series projectile points dominate the surface assemblage, although earlier materials (e.g., Humboldt, Pinto, Elko, and apparent Northern Side-notched points and several crescent fragments) are present.

The fluted point was found on the surface of Locus D, located on a small, gently sloping ridge in the center of the site. Numerous granite boulders are present on this ridge, and the fluted point, as well as other artifacts, was discovered among the boulders. Several Humboldt Concave-based projectile points (not collected) also were found on the surface of this locus.

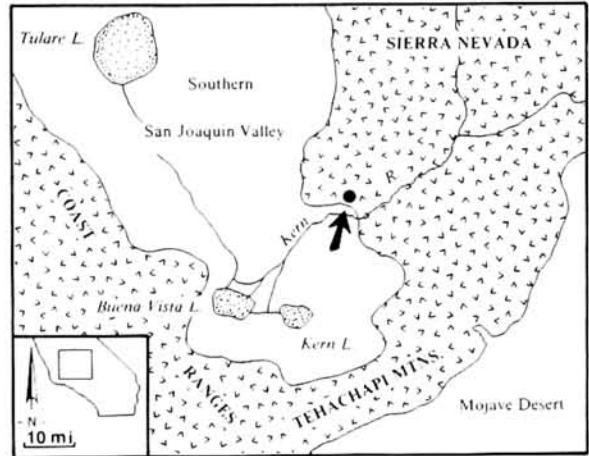


Fig. 1. Location of the CA-KER-300 site.

The specimen (Figs. 2 and 3) measures 53.5 x 22.0 x 6.5 mm., and weighs 8.4 g. Grinding is evident on both edges, extending 18.5 and 25.0 mm. up from the base. A remnant detachment scar is evident midway up one edge of the specimen (Fig. 2, arrow). The size and position of this scar, whose lines of force run perpendicular to the length of the specimen, are consistent with that which would result if the original flake had been removed from a large biface or bifacial core.

On one face the fluting attempt was successful and a large thinning flake was removed, resulting in a large scar or flute channel measuring 34.0 x 11.5 mm. In addition, two smaller thinning flakes were removed from each side of the main flake. The thinning process was less successful on the other face, in spite of several apparent attempts, resulting in a flute channel of 18.0 x 8.0 mm. This may perhaps be due to a flaw in the stone or to the presence of the original detachment scar. No scratches (possibly for adhesive [Fagan 1984:2-3]) are evident within the channels.

The point is sandblasted so that no mean-

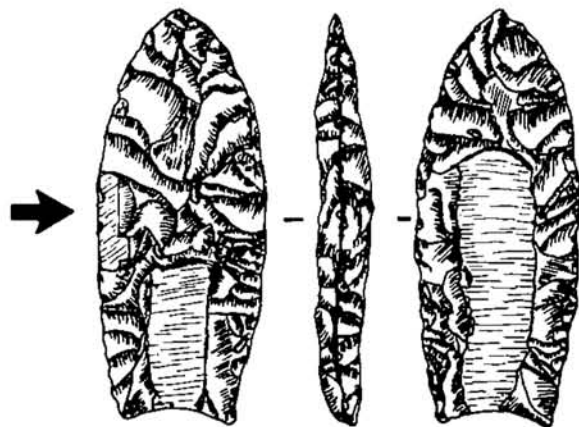


Fig. 2. Line drawing of the CA-KER-300 fluted point (actual size).

ingful measurement of the hydration rind can be obtained. The source of the obsidian was determined by X-ray fluorescence as Casa Diablo, located on the eastern side of the Sierras some 160 miles north of the site.

DISCUSSION

Only one other Clovis-like point is known from the southern Sierra Nevada (Glennan 1972). Others are known from the desert to the east (e.g., Davis and Shutler 1969; Davis 1978; Sutton and Wilke 1984; Jenkins 1987), the San Joaquin Valley to the west (Riddell and Olsen 1969), and from other localities in California (e.g., Borax Lake [Harrington 1948] and coastal California [Erlandson et al. 1987]). Such fluted points generally are dated to about 11,000 radiocarbon years before the present (Moratto 1984:79-88).

As the source of the obsidian (Casa Diablo) is fairly distant, the presence of a generally widespread network of trade and/or movement within California at an early date may be indicated. However, since the point was found on the surface and thus not in a firm primary context, it is possible that the specimen was transported to CA-KER-300



Fig. 3. Photograph of the CA-KER-300 fluted point. The piece was coated with ammonium chloride powder to enhance detail (actual size).

well after Clovis times. In this regard, the presence of other early material at the site, particularly the crescent fragments, supports the idea that the point was discovered where it had been lost or discarded during Clovis times.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Paul Bouey of the University of California, Davis, for conducting the obsidian sourcing, Robin Novickas for drawing Figure 2, Philip J. Wilke for producing Figure 3, and anonymous readers for their useful comments. The specimen (KER-300-415), along with other material from CA-KER-300, is stored at California State University, Bakersfield.

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The Putnam-Kroeber Relations in the Development of American Anthropology

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WHILE a student at Columbia University, Alfred L. Kroeber (1876-1960) served as a volunteer worker in the Department of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, under the direction of Frederic W. Putnam (1839-1915). In 1899 Kroeber was an assistant to the Jesup Expedition for the study of Arapaho Indians sponsored by that museum; the following year he was made assistant for the Jesup Expedition report and awarded the Hagen Fellowship upon recommendation of Putnam.

In 1901 Putnam, Curator of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, and part-time Curator of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History, was made chairman of an Advisory Committee to develop a department and museum for Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. (For biographical sketches of Putnam, see Boas 1915; Tozzer 1935.)

In September, 1903, Putnam was given the title of Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Museum of Anthropology, all sponsored by Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst. Putnam had a leave of absence from the Peabody Museum to spend part of his time in California, and beginning in 1904 he resigned his part-time position at the American Museum in order to spend three months of each year at the University of California (Dexter 1966a, 1966b, 1976).

At first, Mr. G. J. M. E. d'Aquin served as secretary of the committee overseeing development of the anthropology department