

Julian Hayden

Alpine Texas, results of meeting and symposium of SW Fed of Arch Societies.

Essentially, this symposium was convened to discuss the evidence for and against the presence of pre-Paleo occupation of the Trans-Pecos region, and by extension, its presence or absence in bordering regions and beyond.

Dr J Chas Kelley moderated. Panel consisted of Wm Mayer-Cakes, Don Dragoo, Antonio Andretta, Paul Ezell and Julian Hayden.

Hayden made a detailed exposition of the formation of desert pavement and of desert varnish, and their use as time markers, marking Altithermal periods. Pavements are formed during Altithermal times, and varnish is formed on the pavements and associated artifacts at some time after the pavement formation, but before onset of a wetter time. Such varnish deposits are associated with technological changes in the artifacts, and can be correlated, therefore, with stages of development of the San Dieguito Complex. In the Sierra Pinacate area of NW Mexico, the earliest material is assigned to the "Malpais Phase", a basal stage underlying and leading into San Dieguito I Phase. Evidence is to effect that the Malpais occupation extended through a long period of time in a pluvial period preceding the last Pluvial, and that after an altithermal, the Malpais Altithermal, renewed occupation of the temporarily abandoned region by descendants of the Malpais folk was for a shorter time and with a diminished population (or both). Occupation of the Pinacate region ended with the onset of the last Altithermal period, perhaps about 10,000 BP.

Outside the Pinacate, to the northwest, Malpais has been identified on the San Diego area, on the west side of the Coast Range, and there it is followed by SD I, which appears to have developed rather rapidly into SD II and into SD III, dated at the Harris site at about 9000 BP. This is also true of the northern California deserts, the Mohave region, where SD III is mingled with fluted point material (perhaps from the east, the plains).

In southern Arizona, SD I extends across the state into New Mexico, and the phase ended just before the appearance of true SD II type artifacts.

In the Big Bend country of West Texas, exposure of very extensive deposits of artifacts and fire hearths in very recent years has resulted from deep and broad erosion from heavy rains, diverted by spreader dams from the usual water courses. This erosion has exposed (to consolidate the evidence) heavily varnished heaps of fire-broken stones, associated with generally unifacial artifacts which appear in all respects to be Malpais. With these deposits are basin metates, mortars and manos, all heavily varnished. Such occupation appears to have been related to the presence of ponds and lakes in the basins of the region, and have tentatively been correlated with the shrinking of the lakes with the onset of the Malpais Altithermal, since the deposits seem to follow the receding shoreline downward. They lie, in places, on a surface bearing varnished gravels, possibly the local equivalent of desert pavement.

After such deflation of the area had taken place, and varnish had formed, alluviation occurred with the onset of wetter times. The extensive, varnished hearths were, in places, partially buried by alluvium, and returning people used some of these varnished hearth stones, as well as unvarnished stones, to construct and accumulate new hearths. Tools within this second level are unvarnished, although one heavily varnished basin metate was reused during this time, the varnish being worn away from the basin proper. Tools of this stage are identical to those of SD I to the west.

Continuing alluviation resulted in burial of the varnished hearths and of the overlying mixed hearths, Upper level hearths contain no varnish, and the tools are of SD II. ~~As the evidence indicates, the Malpais occupation was not a single event, but a series of occupations, each separated by a period of time. The Malpais occupation was not a single event, but a series of occupations, each separated by a period of time. The Malpais occupation was not a single event, but a series of occupations, each separated by a period of time.~~

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SD III tools are present, but their association with hearths is not clear to me. Clovis implements and points are numerous, and here I assume that they are contemporaneous. My notes are unclear. Elsewhere in the deserts both SD III and Clovis are lightly varnished, but that marker is absent in the Big Bend region thus far.

Much time was devoted to discussion of the position of these hearths and their relationship, varnished to unvarnished. They often lie at the same level, and occasionally the varnished hearths are above the level of the unvarnished, though not superposed. It was suggested that an undulating ground surface would account for this, for certainly the surface could not be expected to be perfectly plane, nor is it today in uneroded areas.

The discussants appeared to be in agreement that the evidence indicates very strongly, the sequence of San Dieguito phases, from Malpais through SD III; the latter may overlap (and most probably does) the Clovis occupation or use of the region. Clovis people seem to have intruded here, as in the southern Western deserts, as hunters, leaving campsites and tools but not evidence of prolonged and settled occupation.

Dragoo presented evidence for the development of Clovis (Paleo) and succeeding stages of Paleo in the SE and Middle Atlantic states and elsewhere. Ezell commented that Coe had more than a hundred Folsom points from an area in N. Carolina, whereas not more than forty had been found throughout the western region. Discussants were in agreement on this.

Mayer Oakes appeared to be willing to extend the Malpais and SD to Ecuador, but time ran out, and we had to end the symposium (just when it became really interesting!)

These notes are based on very sketchy notes taken, and may be corrected when the tapes of the meeting are transcribed. Essentially these notes are correct.

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