

PALEOINDIAN COMPONENTS AT KINCAID ROCKSHELTER UVALDE COUNTY,
TEXAS*

by

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ABSTRACT

Kincaid is a rockshelter and terrace site in the Sabinal Valley of east central Uvalde County. Artifacts diagnostic of the Paleoindian period—Folsom dart points, in particular—were displaced by treasure-seekers digging into the shelter deposits in the late 1940s. Systematic excavations in 1948 by the Texas Memorial Museum and in 1953 by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas and the Texas Memorial Museum failed to isolate a Folsom component *in situ*, but did recover considerable data of relevance to the Paleoindian period. These data included the following: documentation of stratified natural deposits from Late Pleistocene to modern times containing faunal remains as well as a sequence of Paleoindian, Archaic, Late Prehistoric, and Historic cultural materials; recovery of additional Folsom points from disturbed contexts; recovery of other Paleoindian style projectile points including probable Plainview, Midland, Scottsbluff, Angostura, San Patrice, Golondrina types as well as untyped specimens; exposure of an artificial stone pavement of Pleistocene age; and recovery of a small assemblage of chipped stone artifacts on and just above the stone pavement. This latter assemblage has technological affinities with Clovis materials from other localities.

INTRODUCTION

The Kincaid Site consists of stratified cultural and natural deposits in a limestone rockshelter and adjacent river terrace in the Sabinal Valley in eastern Uvalde County, Texas. This setting is in the narrow transitional zone between the Edwards Plateau and the Gulf Coastal Plain in the southwestern part of the Central Texas Archeological Area. At some time in the late 1940s, a great pit was dug into the deposits in the shelter, apparently by someone

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seeking legendary treasure rather than Indian relics (this is inferred because of the large number of collectible archeological specimens left in the backdirt). In December of 1947, Charles E. Mear, David S. Proper, and James Churchwell, students at Southwest Texas State Teachers College in San Marcos, screened some of the back dirt thrown from the large pit and found it rich in archeological materials. Mear returned on several occasions over the succeeding months, usually accompanied by Kenneth Rochat, and screened quantities of the loose, disturbed fill in the shelter. Among the items recovered by Mear and Rochat in 1948 were three Folsom points. The site was then, via Ms. Ellen Quinllin of the Witte Museum in San Antonio, quickly brought to the attention of Glen L. Evans and E. H. Sellards of the Texas Memorial Museum in Austin, and before the year was out, a Museum-sponsored excavation was conducted in a portion of the shelter. Subsequently, in the summer of 1953, Thomas N. Campbell of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Texas held an archeological field school at the site.

In the course of these two excavations, the remaining back-dirt from the treasure-hunters' pit was screened, the area under the rockshelter was completely excavated and a substantial area in the river terrace in front of the shelter was excavated. Deeply stratified deposits containing artifacts diagnostic of the Historic, Late Prehistoric, Archaic, and Paleoindian periods were found in the shelter as well as in the terrace. Although a few notes concerning aspects of the Kincaid Site have been published and an exhibit based on the excavations has been on display at the Texas Memorial Museum for over 30 years, no comprehensive report on the site has been published; also, radiocarbon dating has been attempted for the Kincaid sequence, but the results generally are not satisfactory and no use is made of them in this paper (Sellards 1952; Suhm 1960; Suhm, Krieger and Jelks 1954; Suhm and Jelks 1962; Wormington 1957; Epstein 1963; Johnson 1964; Libbey 1955; Stipp et al. 1962; Tamers et al. 1964; Pearson et al. 1965; Hester 1971, 1977, 1980, 1988; Haynes 1967).

The present, brief report is a preliminary summary of the evidence pertaining to the Paleoindian period recovered from the portion of the site inside the rockshelter. In this area, six geologic strata were recognized and numbered 1-6, from the base upward. Strata 1-4 are of Pleistocene affiliation and strata 5 and 6 are Holocene in character. Cultural materials were found in all but strata 1 and 2. Because of the great size of the treasure-hunters' pit, almost half of the artifacts recovered in the excavation came from its back-dirt pile. Data on the Paleoindian period are of two kinds: (1) diagnostic, Paleoindian artifacts found in disturbed contexts or mixed in with Archaic and Late Prehistoric materials in Holocene-age

strata 5 and 6; (2) diagnostic and non-diagnostic specimens recovered from Pleistocene-age strata 3 and 4. These data are summarized and tentatively interpreted in the following paper.

THE SHELTER

Kincaid rockshelter is a southeast-facing overhang in a bluffline of Anacacho limestone. The shelter is roughly 10 by 10 meters in horizontal extent. Anacacho limestone at this locality is only moderately hard and contains no chert. Upstream, the Sabinal River crosses harder, chert-bearing Edwards limestone and other lithologies.

STRATIGRAPHY

From the base upward, the stratigraphy in the Kincaid Rockshelter consists of 6 zones. Cultural materials were found in all but the lowest two. The lower 4 are considered, on the basis of faunal evidence, to date from the late Pleistocene. Holocene fauna were found in zones 5 and 6; artifacts diagnostic of the Archaic were found in Zone 5, and Late Prehistoric and Historic materials were found to prevail in Zone 6.

Zone 1. The full thickness of this zone was not determined, but excavation penetrated the upper 1.8 m. It consists of a fluvial silt with a few thin stringers of small, rounded pebbles; it yielded no faunal or cultural remains.

Zone 2. This is a silty, fluvial deposit up to 1 m in thickness. No cultural materials were present in this zone, but a fossilized jaw of a horse (*Equus*) indicates a Wisconsinian age for the zone.

Zone 3. A ponded clay deposit that formed in a low area in the shelter is designated Zone 3. This deposit is up to 50-cm thick and contained numerous distinct laminae of clay and fine silty clay, resulting from deposition in a placid, spring-fed pond with intermittent episodes of riverine flood deposition. Travertine against the back wall of the shelter interbeds with this zone, and attests to the presence of the spring which maintained the pond. The zone is fossiliferous, with multiple individuals of horse as well as remains of mammoth, jaguar, another large cat, ground sloth, camel, bison, wolf, antelope, raccoon, alligator, and two genera of turtles. Three flint flakes, all small in size, were recovered from this zone.

Stone Pavement. The upper surface of Zone 3 clay was paved over with large stones while it was still

highly plastic. The stones used in this pavement include rounded stream boulders of Edwards limestone and other lithologies that clearly do not derive from the shelter roof. No explanation other than deliberate capping of the sticky clay by humans can account for this stone pavement. In places, the stones are stacked two deep, and small stones were used to "chink" spaces between larger stones. The edge of the pavement toward the front of the cave had been cut away by erosion, and the great pit had destroyed a portion of it, but an area of more than 10 square meters was intact at the time of the excavations. Based on the number and size of stones present, it is estimated that between 1.75 and 2.0 metric tons of rock were used in its construction. Sparse cultural materials and Wisconsin fauna rested on the stone pavement and in the overlying Zone 4. In limited areas, Zone 4 was eroded from the stone pavement, and Zone 5 was in contact with the pavement.

Zone 4. The major culture-bearing deposit of Pleistocene age in Kincaid Shelter, Zone 4 rests directly on the stone pavement over most of the extent of the pavement and consists of three facies—travertine near the back wall of the shelter, ponded clay with inclusions of limestone "grit" in the central part of the shelter, and primarily "grit" in a sparse clayey matrix near the front of the shelter. The "grit" in the two forward facies is small angular to sub-angular pieces of limestone. This configuration of Zone 4 is believed to have resulted from ponding of seep spring water near the back wall of the shelter and the action of moderately swift Sabinal River flood waters encroaching from the front of the shelter. The upper surface of Zone 4 is an erosional disconformity which, in places, completely removed Zone 4 and exposed the stone pavement. This disconformity marks the break between Pleistocene and Holocene deposits in the shelter. The travertine facies of Zone 4 is in places 30 cm thick, the clay facies is only about 8-12 cm thick, the grit facies is up to 30 cm thick. Animal bones and teeth, in poor condition from exposure, are present in and on Zone 4 and include extinct taxa of bison, horse, mammoth, alligator, and turtle.

Zone 5. A substantial silty, midden-rich deposit containing remains of Holocene fauna and cultural materials diagnostic of the Central Texas Archaic period, is the next deposit in the sequence. In places, Zone 5 is up to 1.1 m thick. It rests unconformably on Zone 4, except in limited areas where it is in direct contact with the stone pavement. From the lower few centimeters of Zone 5 were recovered a few non-diagnostic specimens with Zone 4 matrix

adhering to them as well as a fragmentary Clovis preform which refits with a fragment found in situ in Zone 4. These data suggest that some blurring of the boundary between zones 4 and 5 resulted from the erosion of the surface of Zone 4 and the nature of the initial deposition of Zone 5.

Zone 6. This is a 70 cm thick midden deposit consisting of loose ashy dust, charcoal, burned rock, bone, shell, and various artifacts of stone. Artifacts diagnostic of the late Archaic, Late Prehistoric, and Historic periods were recovered from this zone.

PALEOINDIAN ARTIFACTS

This brief report considers approximately 80 artifacts, either on typological or contextual grounds (or both), to relate to the Paleoindian Period. These include projectile points, preforms, cores, flakes, a piece of ochre, a cobble, and a subspherical pebble. Unfortunately, at least 25 chipped stone items, mostly flakes, documented as having been collected from Zone 4 are unaccounted for in the collections at present. The provenience data on selected artifacts are summarized in Table 1.

Projectile Points

Group A. These 5 specimens are all proximal fragments of lanceolate points with moderately contracting basal portions, concave bases, and lateral grinding. They would probably fit best into the group, Angostura (Suhm and Jelks 1962; Turner and Hester 1985).

Group B. Two specimens are similar to those in group A, but converge more strongly toward the base. Bases are narrow concavities; lateral edges are ground. These, too, probably fit best into the group, Angostura (Suhm and Jelks 1962; Turner and Hester 1985).

Group C. Three specimens are similar to those in group B, except these are even more strongly convergent toward the base; bases are very narrow concavities; lateral edges are ground. Again, these probably would classify as a variant of Angostura (Suhm and Jelks 1962; Turner and Hester 1985).

Group D. Three Angostura variants with moderate shoulders and concave bases. Lateral edges are ground (Suhm and Jelks 1962; Turner and Hester 1985).

Golondrina. These are basal fragments of four lanceolate dart points with recurvate, ground basal

edges and concave bases (Johnson 1964; Turner and Hester 1985).

San Patrice. Two specimens with short stems, weak shoulders, deeply concave bases, and grinding of the edges of the base and stem conform to the type, San Patrice, (Suhm and Jelks 1962; Turner and Hester 1985).

Folsom. Five classic Folsom points, all complete except for minor impact-related fractures on 3, were recovered from disturbed context (Wormington 1957).

Unclassified. Eleven specimens exhibit one or more attributes of Paleoindian point types. Except for one small, thin point resembling a Midland type, these are fragmentary pieces. Five are unclassifiable and, in addition to the Midland-like specimen, one each resembles Golondrina, Plainview, Scottsbluff, and Barber, but are too incomplete for certain classification (Turner and Hester 1985; Suhm and Jelks 1962; Wendorf et al. 1955; Johnson 1964; Wormington 1957). The final specimen in this group has expanding lateral edges, a concave base, heavy grinding, and is made of a variety of obsidian comparable in trace-element composition to obsidian from the Queretaro region of central Mexico (Hester et al. 1985).

Clovis. One resharpened dart point is fluted on both faces and has heavily ground lateral edges. The base is slightly concave and lacks the distinctive nipple characteristic of Folsom points. The piece was made from a much wider preform, and flattish flake scars characterize both faces. The lateral edges are beveled bifacially. This piece was found in the fill thrown out of the treasure-hunters' pit. When found, this specimen was completely encased in travertine matching that making up the facies of Zone 4 near the back wall of the shelter. It was partly cleaned, but there is still some Zone 4 matrix adhering to it. Like many specimens, the typological affinities of this point are close to both Plainview and to Clovis (c.f. Leonhardy and Anderson 1966), but the degree of fluting, in our opinion, indicates Clovis as the more appropriate classification.

Other Artifacts

Fluted preforms. Two basal fragments of bifaces each exhibit a single flute. One of these broke during removal of the first flute when the channel flake hinged through the preform; the other preform was successfully fluted the first time, but the piece was broken during subsequent percussion thinning of the

preform (Tunnel 1977; Storck 1983; Gardener 1983). Both pieces of this preform were recovered, the distal fragment—which is pointed—was found in situ in Zone 4 and the fluted base was found in the bottom of Zone 5 adjacent to the stone pavement.

Biface Fragments. Pieces of two large, thick bifaces were recovered in Zone 4. Each of these may well be a Clovis preform in an earlier stage of bifacial reduction than the two fluted pieces. Each was broken during soft-hammer percussion thinning.

Modified flakes. Four large flakes with marginal retouch were recovered from Zone 4. These appear to scraping tools rather than cutting tools as the edge angles are low.

Cores. There are four irregular cores of local chert cobbles, one from the surface of, and three from within, Zone 4.

Blade core. One polyhedral blade core was found in Zone 4. It has scars from the removal of at least 5 blades, and the platform has been repeatedly rejuvenated.

Flakes. Unmodified flakes were present in strata 3 and 4. A small number of those occurring in Zone 4 were collected, and all three of the ones found in Zone 3 were saved. Most of the flakes found in Zone 4 are not accounted for in the collection at present, but the three from Zone 3 are present. They are very small, thin fragments of non-cortex flakes of local chert. They are unquestionably of human manufacture, but their small sizes and low number is considered more likely the result of intrusion from above than of any significant human presence in the shelter prior to construction of the stone pavement.

DISCUSSION

Ironically, the treasure hunters' pit which led to the discovery of Kincaid as an important archeological site with Paleoindian components present, also displaced at least two-thirds of the Paleoindian diagnostics. The site-provenienced

Table 1. PROVENIENCES OF SELECTED PALEOINDIAN ARTIFACTS
FROM KINCAID SHELTER

Artifact Category	Backdirt	Zone 6	Zone 5	Zone 4/5 contact	Zone 4	Zone 3	Total
FOLSOM	5						5
“A”	4		1				5
“B”	1		1				2
“C”	2	1					3
“D”	2		1				3
SAN PATRICE	1	1					2
GOLONDRINA	2		2				4
CLOVIS	1						1
UNTYPED	5	2	2	1	1		11
CLOVIS			1		1		2
PREFORM							
BIFACE	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3		n/a
FRAGMENT							
MODIFIED	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4		n/a
FLAKES							
CORE	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	3		n/a
BLADE CORE					1		1
FLAKES	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	25+	3	n/a

diagnostics and all of the specimens from Pleistocene contexts do provide some important information on Paleoindian manifestations in this part of Texas.

First, it is clear that use was made of Kincaid Shelter by early groups making a variety of types of dart points (affinities with Angostura, Barber, Clovis, Folsom, Golondrina, Midland, Plainview, San Patrice, and Scottsbluff have been noted among the 36 Paleoindian points in the collection). The five Folsom points stand out in two regards. First, three exhibit the kinds of damage that result from impact, but none is broken. Second, no Folsom manufacturing failures were recovered. These are more characteristic of assemblages from kill than from habitation sites. Unfortunately, the nature of the Folsom component will remain a matter of speculation because it was evidently totally disrupted by the treasure-hunters' pit, which further indicates that it was restricted in horizontal extent. The majority of the other early forms are represented by basal fragments of broken, finished points; many of these are also damaged by heat, and a few of them are reworked. This configuration is suggestive of a habitation site.

Perhaps the most important data to derive from the excavations at Kincaid Shelter are those indicating a Clovis site where the manufacture of Clovis points transpired. One complete but resharpened Clovis point was recovered from the backdirt pile of the treasure-hunters' pit, but it can be confidently assigned to Zone 4 on the basis of adhering matrix. Two fragmentary bifacial preforms in early stages of soft-hammer percussion thinning were found in Zone 4. By themselves, these are not diagnostic, but they are suggestive in outline and size of antecedent forms to two other broken preforms. One of the latter is a thinned biface without edge trimming that was broken in the initial fluting attempt when the channel flake hinged completely through the biface. The other was found in two pieces and was broken after the first flute was successfully removed. This break occurred as the result of continued soft hammer thinning of the biface roughly midway in its length. Also suggestive of Clovis affinities is a polyhedral blade core from Zone 4. It is smaller than those from which most documented Clovis blades were struck (Green 1963), but somewhat similar in overall form. The one item from Zone 4 that is not obviously part of a Clovis assemblage is the base of the obsidian dart point. As discussed in previous accounts of this specimen (Hester et al. 1985) its typological affinities are not clear. It is of a size, thickness, and general outline comparable to Clovis, and it does have basal thinning flakes on one face. Also, of the obsidian Paleoindian points in Texas and eastern New Mexico, the most common type is Clovis (Hester 1988)). In short, this dart point fragment is not totally incompatible with a

Clovis assemblage, even though it is probably not classifiable as a Clovis on the basis of its form. A further implication of the interpretation suggested here that the Zone 4 assemblage at Kincaid Shelter represents a Clovis habitation site is that the stone pavement is related to that occupation. A substantial architectural feature as part of a Clovis habitation site raises questions of group size and length of stay. These and other questions will be part of the ongoing inquiry into the early cultural manifestations at Kincaid site.

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