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## ALLUVIAL SITES OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

HERBERT W. DICK

In the upper Rio Grande valley, presence of the Sandia and Folsom cultures,<sup>1</sup> has accentuated two important archaeological problems: that of bridging the gap, no matter how long or short, between the approximate 25,000 year date given for the Sandia Culture and the subsequent period of Folsom occupation;<sup>2</sup> and that of reconstructing some sort of chronology between the Folsom period and the generalized Basketmaker era. The latter perhaps involves an 8,000--10,000 year chronological blank in central New Mexico. Several factors may aid in building up the chronological stability highlighted by these problems: (1) deposits of geologic significance in relation to time and events, (2) animal remains in relation to dating geologic deposits, (3) and culture remains in association with animal remains or alone in geologic deposits. It is in hope of adding an iota of material toward an eventual solution of these problems that the following resumé of part of the earlier work, and the citation of new material, is presented.

In 1938 Bryan and Butler found campsites on the Arroyo de Cordito, six miles south of Tres Piedras, New Mexico, and on a terrace on the west side of the Rio San Antonio, about one mile northwest of the base of San Antonio Mountain. The artifacts found were scrapers, knives and points. The conclusion was advanced that a group having a "plains" type of culture was present in this region.<sup>3</sup>

On the Rito de los Encinos, near Youngsville, New Mexico, a tributary of the Rio Puerco which in turn joins the Chama, Bryan found early, intermediate and late alluvium. In the late alluvium appeared hearths and many flint chips.<sup>4</sup> In the intermediate alluvium an ax, two choppers, and a scraper were found. This Bryan has named the "Los Encinos Culture".<sup>5</sup> In the older alluvium, preceding the intermediate alluvium, Bryan found remains of a proboscidian.<sup>6</sup>

In 1940 a group of surface and buried hearths were found by the writer at Coyote Springs, nine miles southeast of Albuquerque. The

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1. Hibben, F. C., "Evidences of Early Occupation in Sandia Cave, New Mexico, and other sites in the Sandia-Manzano Region." *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, vol. 99, no. 23, pp. 1-42, 1941.

2. Bryan, Kirk, "Correlation of the Deposits of Sandia Cave, New Mexico with the Glacial Chronology." *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, vol. 99, no. 23, p. 59, 1941.

3. Bryan, Kirk, and Butler, A. P., Jr., "Artifacts Made of Glassy Andesite of San Antonio Mountain, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico." *University of New Mexico Bulletin*, Anthropology series, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 7-8, 1939.

4. Bryan, Kirk, "Stone Cultures Near Cerro Pedernal and Their Geological Antiquity." *Bulletin of the Texas Archaeological and Paleontological Society*, vol. 11, p. 13, 1939.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

deep hearths are exposed by a group of arroyos cutting into the alluvium of Coyote Canyon. Three levels of occupation occur: (1) hearths twelve feet below the surface, (2) hearths eight feet below the surface, and (3) surface hearths. Only chalcedony and obsidian chips have been found in the eight and twelve foot levels, but no excavation has taken place.

Several acres of fire-broken stone (quartzite) from the surface hearths can be seen eroding from the alluvium along with accompanying ash, artifacts and mammal bones. The artifact inventory includes large, heavy scrapers, small snub-nosed scrapers, elliptical knives, tanged knives, large, tanged projectile points with oval and pointed bases, fist choppers, T-shaped drills and one-hand manos. Two Socorro black-on-white sherds were found in the burned rock area, although these may be intrusive, lacking association with the other surface material, for no less than six Pueblo pottery sites are located in the near vicinity.

In his report on the archaeology of the Big Bend area Kelley reports the following concerning the Coyote site:

More recently, Kelly and Herbert Dick have found in several small tributaries of the Rio Grande near Albuquerque, a sequence which seems to be identical with that of the Big Bend. The series of three mutually disconformable formations is generally present, although highly calcareous compacted clays similar to the Neville formation have been noted only in the upper Coyote Canyon drainage. The sediments in each case have the type characteristics of the comparable formations to the south. This is not unexpected, since both areas lie in the same river drainage and have approximately similar physiographic and climatic conditions. Kelley found deep, non-pottery sites in an alluvial deposit, presumably equivalent to the Calamity formation, on the Rio Grande near Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

A second site, possibly related to a Coyote phase, was found in a group of inactive transversal sand dunes paralleling lower Tijeras Canyon, six miles east of Albuquerque. Hearths have been found eroding out of the dunes in direct association with flakes, spalls, hammerstones, anvils, large scrapers, heavy fist-choppers, flake knives, one-hand manos, and a flat metate which was thickly patinated with lime. All implements with the exception of a few hammerstones and manos had been made by percussion flaking from a grey-black limestone. One badly disintegrated human skeleton, in an extended position, was found eroding out of a dune.

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7. Kelley, J. Charles, Campbell, T. N., Lehmer, Donald J., "The Association of Archaeological Materials with Geological Deposits in the Big Bend Region of Texas." *Sul Ross State Teachers College Bulletin*, vol. xxi, no. 3, p. 156, 1940.

The upper half of a Yuma point was found on the surface about one hundred yards directly east of the dunes. No relation or special significance is attached to this find, and due to the nature of the site the skeletal remains, of course, cannot be chronologically oriented.

At Ojo Las Huertas Springs, seventeen miles southeast of Los Lunas, New Mexico, are surface campsites similar to those found at Coyote. These center around two groups of active springs, and perhaps cover thirty acres. No less than a dozen inactive springs, characterized by small mounds of travertine, occur in the immediate vicinity. The material found at these campsites is similar to that found at Coyote, namely: flakes and spalls, round, concave and square-based projectile points which are tanged but are thick and poorly worked, oval-based drills, tanged knives, oval knives, hammerstones, anvils and one-hand manos.

The main arroyo at Ojo Las Huertas, which contains a spring, has bisected a small bog in which eroding mammal bones may be seen at a depth of six feet. A complete jaw from the bog has been tentatively identified as *Bison* sp. At several places in the arroyo above the bog there are bones exposed at a depth of twelve feet. No indication of human occupation has yet been found in association with the bones, but no excavation has yet been attempted. Several small, patinated snub-nosed scrapers were found near the inactive spring. These closely resemble scrapers found in the vicinity of Isleta Cave.

In 1940, William McConnell discovered a camp-site ten miles due west of Isleta Pueblo, in a basalt and volcanic cinder field. The artifacts were found near the mouth of a lava tunnel, in which occurred mammoth, bison, horse, camel, bear, lion and antelope bones, together with atlatl shaft butts. Other artifacts, mentioned by Hibben,<sup>8</sup> consist of fourteen snub-nosed scrapers, similar to patinated ones found at Ojo Las Huertas Spring, and projectile points unlike those found at the previous listed sites. The projectile points are of two types: (1) those with an oval base which equals one half of the total projectile length and which broaden out into rounded shoulders and close to a point, (2) and those with the same shape and the same proportions of breadth and length, but with a flat base. The writer can see no resemblance of these projectile points to a "Folsom-shaped" point.<sup>9</sup>

The evidence of these sites shows much promise. At least a beginning has been made geologically, archaeologically, and paleontologically in filling the lacuna between the Folsom and Basketmaker periods. Central New Mexico lacks the precise and clear-cut picture of this intervening period such as Sayles and Antevs have contributed in southeastern Arizona and southwest New Mexico,<sup>10</sup> or as Kelley,

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8. Hibben, F. C., *op. cit.*, p. 37, 1941.

9. *cf. ibid.*

10. Sayles, E. B., and Antevs, Ernst, "The Cochise Culture." *Medallion Papers*, no. xxix, Globe, pp. 1-81, 1941.

Campbell and Lehmer<sup>11</sup> have produced in the Big Bend region, or such as that of the Abilene area.<sup>12</sup> The sites not heretofore reported have been included in hope that they may be examined or excavated by other students involved in the study of these particular problems.

The filling-in of the two chronological blank spots mentioned will doubtless be a long and arduous process. The more promising sources of information are (1) small cave sites, (2) the exposed and eroded vertical banks of arroyos and (3) the surfaces peripheral to functioning or dried-up springs. At least in the area around Albuquerque, it appears that the latter variety of site has been largely ignored. However, this may be due to the difficulty of fitting into proper chronological position the artifacts found scattered on the surface.

For several years the writer has contemplated the feasibility of excavating a cross-section through the mound of calcareous material deposited around one of these old springs. At first consideration, the plan appears to be forbiddingly laborious, and limited by prospective labor expense. On the other hand, there is every reason to believe that, near a water source of the nature of that adjoining the Coyote site, artifacts dropped on the surface would gradually have become embedded in and subsequently covered by the calcareous deposit formed by the water. It seems probable that the still-functioning spring at the Coyote site is responsible for the accumulation of surface artifacts in the immediate vicinity. Perhaps a sequence of artifacts dropped near the outlet, throughout the history of the calcareous development, would overcome in part the present lack of chronologic identity in this type of site. Studies along these lines are contemplated at the first opportunity.

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12. Leighton, M. M., "Geological Aspects of the Findings of Primitive Man near Abilene, Texas." *Medallion Papers*, no. XXIV, Globe, 1936.

11. Kelley, J. C., etc., *op. cit.*, pp. 1-176, 1940.