

A FLUTED LANCEOLATE POINT FROM EL INGA, ECUADOR

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Introduction

Near the end of a brief field session in Ecuador carried out by Mayer-Oakes in February of 1967, he was introduced to both the specimen herein described and its owner, Colonel William R. Cameron. Cameron had obtained this specimen by direct purchase from Sr. Segundo Salazar, the tenant farmer who lives at the El Inga site and cultivates part of it. Salazar stated to Cameron that the point was found by him at the El Inga site. Cameron retained the specimen in his private collection from the time of purchase in early fall of 1966 until October, 1967 when it was sent to Mayer-Oakes at the University of Manitoba for description, study and the preparation of this report.

Line drawings of the point were made by Leo F. Pettipas in May, 1969. We are grateful to him for his skillful rendition of the flake scar details of the point. The description and report were written in May, 1969. In preparing this statement, the senior author has followed the format established in his 1966 description of the complete points gathered from the El Inga surface in 1960. In the present report, however, we have tried to present our description in a less narrative style, hoping to increase objectivity, or at least clarity.

Description

Material

Color: Smoky.

Opacity: Transparent.

Texture: Glass with "dirty" parallel planes visibly included.

Fracture: Crisply conchoidal.

Rock type: Obsidian.

Form

Faciality: Completely bi-facially worked.

Maximum width: Point of maximum width is approximately halfway from tip to proximal end (base).

Symmetry: Bi-laterally symmetrical from edge to edge about longitudinal axis, bi-facially asymmetrical about longitudinal axis

with fluted face (A) convex, reverse face flat. Greater mass and width of point contained between mid-point and tip.

Edge shape:

Lateral: Left edge (face A) regular curve broken by deep, irregular chipping between mid-point and base. Right edge regular curve from mid-point to tip, essentially straight line from mid-point to base.

Base: Irregularly straight, left basal corner broken off.

Shoulder: Very slight suggestion of shoulder on left edge (face B) at point about 2 mm. distal from mid-point.

Stem: Slight overall appearance of "Hellgap" style of stem.

Basal thinning: Two narrow (1.0-1.5 mm. wide), short (2.0-5.0 mm.) shallow flake scars, one on each side of the major channel flake scar. At least three other thinner and smaller thinning flake scars.

Channel flaking: One major channel flake (or "fluting") scar, on face A. Maximum width 8 mm., minimum width 4 mm. (at distally terminating hinge fracture). Maximum depth 1 mm., maximum length 28 mm. Surface of channel flake scar shows "interrupted" pattern of distribution of grooved shatter lines (Meyer-Oakes, ms.). See fig. 2.

Original flake surface: One large, flat surface appears near the tip in the center of face B. This probably is the only still visible portion of an original flake used for the blank from which this point was derived. Two other possible original flake scars are noted on this face.

Dimensions

Maximum length: 53 mm.

Maximum width: 25 mm.

Maximum thickness: 6 mm.

Chipping

Flake scar dimensions: Most edge trimming flake scars in the 2-5 mm. range for width, shallow depth. A number of these expand to widths of 5-10 mm. when they extend to the center line or near it. Minority of short, narrower scars, most near distal end.

Flake scar patterns: Rather irregular, but generally parallel from edge towards centerline.

Platform: Only evidence is the trianguloid shaped flake scar at base on face B. This may be an original flake surface and could have functioned as part of a striking or pressure platform for channel flake removal.

Channel flake scar: A clear and distinct scar, characteristics as presented above under "form." Distinct negative "bulb of force" present at proximal end of this flake scar.

Hinge fractures: One major hinge fracture present on each face. Face A hinge is at distal termination of the channel flake. Maximum depth is approximately .5 mm. Face B hinge is to left and below the original flake surface. Maximum depth approximately 1.0 mm.

Reworking evidence: On face A, the left edge from mid-point to base is deeply scarred and almost serrated. These scars do not appear to be "fresher" than any others. Rather, this seems to be a response to a zone of differential fracture quality. These scars all intersect one of the two areas of planiform, rough or "dirty" inclusions which characterize the texture of the obsidian used in this point. This is probably not reworking at a later time than the original manufacture of the point, but it may well represent an imperfect result at the time of original manufacture.

Original form evidence: One large scar near the center, tip of face B has been suggested as the surface of an original flake. The adjacent large scar separated by a deep hinge fracture may also date from an original flake form. The triangular scar (or facet) seen at the base of face B may also represent a portion (at a different angle) of an original flake form. All three of these possibilities lie on face B, the "plano" face of a "plano-convex" longitudinal cross-section of the point.

Grinding

Lateral edges: Viewing face A, the right proximal portion demonstrates smoothing from the arrow to the base. This is apparent visually as grinding and is most noticeable tactilely as smoothing. The left edge feels sharp and rough. Some grinding is visible, however.

Basal edge: Feels distinctly sharper than the most smooth lateral edge. Visually, multiple micro-scars can be seen to complement, on the face B side, the smallest thinning scars visible on face A.

Class Characteristics

This point probably fits within the range of variation of the five types of lanceolate points already defined for El Inga. It is most closely similar to the asymmetrical lanceolate type, and may in fact indicate that the base-tip orientation I chose for two of these points (Mayer-Oakes, 1966, figs. 15c and d) is incorrect. It is perhaps less possible that this fluted point is an example of the "pointed base" lanceolate type.

The most distinctive departure from the previously described points is in the presence of the channel flake scar. Such scars have been reported on the "Fells Cave Stemmed" points from the site (Mayer-Oakes, 1966, figs. 7a, 8a, 9b, 10a and b) but in none of these cases are the channel flake scars as definite and distinctive as on the presently described lanceolate point.

Interpretation

Both Bell (1965) and Mayer-Oakes (1963, 1966) have suggested that an early occupation of the El Inga site was related in certain projectile point attributes (fluting, edge grinding) to North American "Early Man" point styles. On the basis of the new point from El Inga obtained by Cameron and described above, we have additional support for this view. Heretofore, the evidence for "fluting" was best demonstrated by the several complete specimens of the "Fells Cave Stemmed" point style which had distinctive facial thinning or fluting flake scars. The surface collections from El Inga (as yet unreported) contain "fluted" bases that may be from points either lanceolate or stemmed in overall form. Now, for the first time, El Inga has produced a complete lanceolate point with clear and obvious "fluting."

It is significant that the lanceolate shape used on the El Inga fluted example is not one of the typical North American early lanceolate shapes. This fact tends to support the contention that the techniques and technology of "fluting" and "edge grinding" were both more important than point form in the inter-relationship between North America and South America at an early time period.

Our observation of the pattern of grooved shatter line distribution over the surface of the channel flake scar is probably the first such observation. The significance of differences in such patterns is not yet clear in detail. Initial experimental observations designed to clarify this suggest that pressure-derived scars are represented by a more consistent pattern of GSL distribution than are percussion-derived scars. On this basis the channel flake on this point was probably derived by percussion.

A limitation of unknown significance to this evidence for a

fluted point from El Inga lies in the fact that the point was not found under controlled conditions. Beyond qualms resulting from recognition of the characteristic hustle to pick up and sell specimens from El Inga and vicinity that has developed among the local people in recent year, however, we have no strong reason to doubt that Sr. Salazar did in fact find the point at El Inga.

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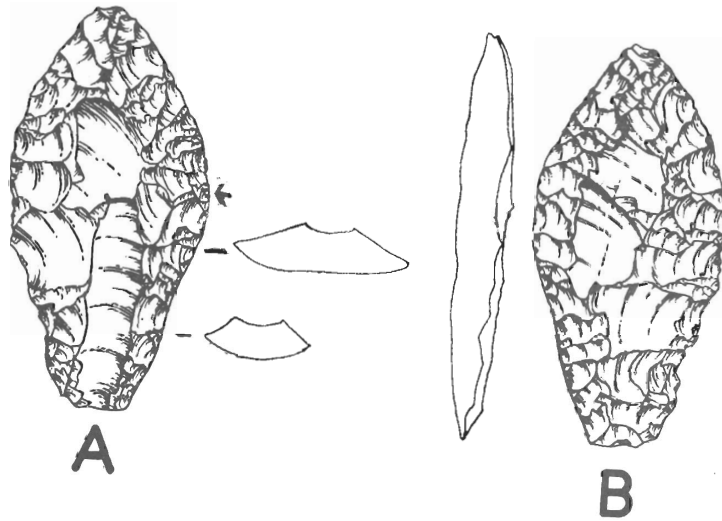
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Plate XXXI. The fluted point. Fig. 1, drawings; fig. 2, surface of the channel flake scar; fig. 3, photograph.