

Blackrock Concave Base (BRCB) In the Central / Southern Great Basin

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Introduction

The Blackrock Concave Base Paleo point of the Great Basin is a very poorly understood type that is only starting to get recognition and study in the Archaeological community. Age-old debates on these varieties of points still tend to focus on referring to them as “non-fluted” points. Metrics used for comparison include basal concavity depth even though it is clear re-basing / rejuvenation easily alters the basal depth disguising the original mental template. This study focuses on the technological / manufacturing process (the flaking) that inevitably defines the thickness profile. This is one aspect that would be altered the least by re-sharpening or re-basing. Once the flaking is understood it becomes very clear the BRCB is not related to fluted points of the Great Basin so any inferences on technological evolutions, temporal or regional relationships is likely meaningless. Flaking technology must be considered (random/collateral/pressure/percussion/etc) that can be quantified visually, or result in some measurable physical attribute such as width/thickness ratios or cross-section (plano-plano vs plano-convex vs convex-convex, etc.) This renders evaluating or identifying such points from photographs particularly problematic since photos only show two dimensions. Here I make a brief attempt, to provide some useable information specific to this topic for the Blackrock Concave Base Paleo point of the Great Basin to raise common understanding of what a BRCB is, and what it is not.



Figure 1 BRCB from Central Nevada

Blackrock Concave Base Point Compared to Similar Paleo Projectiles

The BRCB point *should be* one of the easiest paleo points to identify in the Central Great Basin. They are extremely rare in the Central/Southern Great Basin. These small and thin points were most likely introduced from the east. Technologically (flaking) they appear related to Goshen points from the northern plains. They are subtly different from Plainview points. BRCB points, like Goshen, are very thin, with a plano-plano cross-section. Many Plainview points have similar horizontal flaking in appearance but Plainview thinning flakes typically do not extend past the midline resulting in a thicker or more lenticular point. (Huckell, Merriman, 2017) Figure 2 (taken from Knudson, 2002, page 120) illustrates this well. This discriminating aspect seems to be sometimes overlooked in literature but seems important as an intentional aspect of manufacture. The Goshen point exhibits transverse or collateral pressure flaking, basally thinned, has a slight concave base. (Waters, Stafford 2014) This is much more consistent with BRCB. Goshen appears to represent a complex that is contemporaneous with middle and late Folsom. (Waters, Stafford 2014) It seems likely there is some relation or at least influence across Midland/Goshen and BRCB. The most recognizable BRCB pattern involves flakes in the stem area that orient nearly

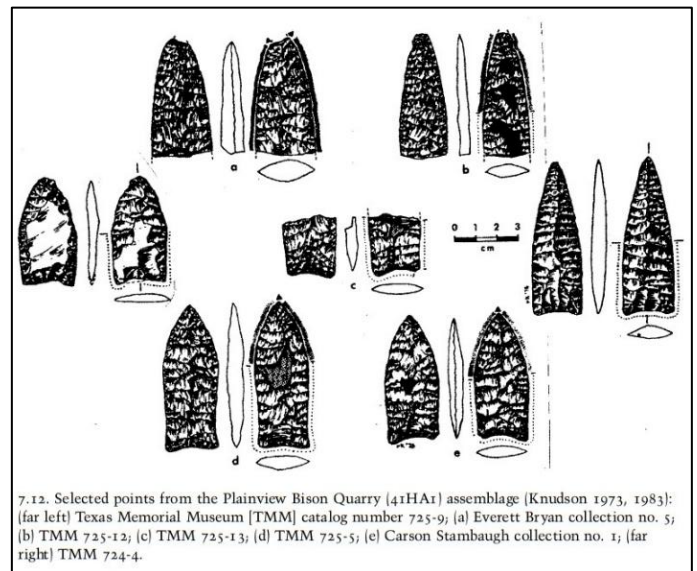


Figure 2 Plainview Points showing cross-sections

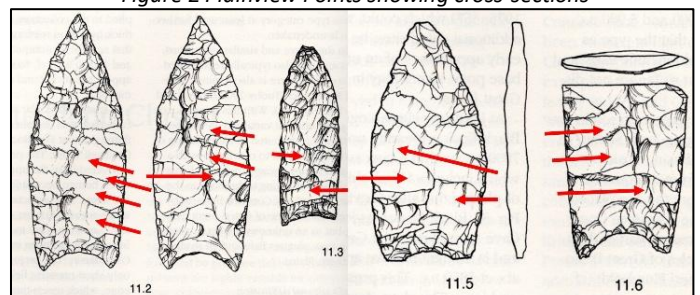


Figure 3 BRCB Horizontal Collateral Pressure Flaking

perpendicular to the long axis and commonly go past the mid-line as can be seen in figure 3, taken from Justice with arrows added for emphasis. (Justice 2002, p. 82)

Figure 4 shows a typical BRCB between two Mill Iron Goshen points. The right side of the image shows their profiles. Comparing the similarly sized BRCB to a famous Midland point from Blackwater Draw and a Plainview point from Texas is shown in figure 5. Figure 6 includes all the maximum thickness vales for the points discussed.



Figure 4 BRCB with Two Goshen points



Figure 5 BRCB with Plainview and Midland

Other Aspects About Blackrock Concave Base

Like Paleo points from the region most are laterally ground although in some areas a significant number of BRCB points are not. (Rondeau 2017, p. 233) BRCB point makers in the Great Basin tended to avoid volcanic stones compared to fluted and western stemmed point makers. They are frequently heat-treated giving them a shiny luster.

This aspect deserves further study to compare with other similar types. It is a technique that also sets BRCB apart from other early Great Basin projectiles. They are frequently found with finely-crafted flake scrapers and other tools, also commonly from heat-treated crypto-crystalline stones. They generally do not exceed one inch in width. Lateral margins generally taper to the base, in some cases very steeply as is observed on many California examples that have been frequently and incorrectly identified as Clovis. Some Great Basin examples also taper steeply. The significance of the taper angle is not understood and may represent some significant discriminator. Possible re-basing for different hafts might be a secondary reason. Rondeau believes Tulare Lake varieties are local manifestations. And, there are two peculiar forms; one with steeply tapering stems that are longer than the distal section of the point (like a Lake Mojave with a concave base), and a variety that is shouldered. (Rondeau 2017, p. 239) Thickness data on these is not available. Further study would be welcome to investigate this local variant.

This assessment will be updated as more insight is gained.

Maximum Thickness for Depicted Points (in mm)	
BRCB	4.57
Goshen #1	5.33
Goshen #2	4.83
BWD Midland	4.57
Plainview	7.62

Figure 6 Thickness Data

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