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SMALL-SCALE STRUCTURES IN THE GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS REGION: IMPLICATION FOR LARAMIDE STRESS TRENDS IN THE PERMIAN BASIN

RICHARD J. ERDLAC, JR.
University of Texas Permain Basin-CEED, 164900 Thomason Dr., Midland, Texas 79703

Abstract Numerous small-scale structures exist in the Guadalupe Mountains region that can be interpreted as Laramide in age. These structures, observed in the Bell Canyon Formation, include tectonic stylolites and associated veins, slickensided thrust and strike-slip faults, and local folding. Within the Guadalupe Mountains, northeast-southwest compression is identified by tectonic stylolite teeth and thrust fault slickensides in Pine Spring Canyon at N28°E and N31°E, respectively. Northward in the McKittrick Canyon region, tectonic stylolite teeth change in trend to N38°E. Eastward in the Delaware Basin a further change in stress field trend is identified from slickensides trending N42°E on a thrust fault. This evidence for northeast-southwest compression is consistent with the trend of Laramide compression found elsewhere in Trans-Pecos Texas.

INTRODUCTION
Research has been conducted within the Guadalupe Mountains region since the first such undertakings by Lieutenant F. T. Bryan in the summer of 1849 (Bryan, 1850). Because of numerous investigations since then, the Guadalupe Mountains are probably one of the most thoroughly studied plots of ground in the world. Though Permian stratigraphy in the Guadalupe Mountains region has been well studied, knowledge of structural styles and tectonic deformation in this area is sparsely documented. Laramide deformation has dramatically influenced much of the Trans-Pecos south of the Guadalupe Mountains, but most geologists believe that this area was generally unscathed by Laramide tectonism. The purpose of this paper is to introduce recent field evidence suggesting Laramide deformation within the Guadalupe Mountains region.

PREVIOUS STUDIES
Previous structural studies in the Guadalupe Mountains region are few, and little direct evidence for Laramide deformation has been presented. King (1948) suggested probable Laramide deformation in the Guadalupe Mountains because of their proximity to Laramide structures in Trans-Pecos Texas, but that tectonic disturbances were small in magnitude because effects due to Laramide compression were not clearly evident. Hayes (1964) described the Huapache monocline (Fig. 1) as a south-west-dipping reverse or thrust fault originating in at least Pennsylvanian time. Hayes suspected Tertiary movement because the monocline affects rocks of late Guadalupe age, but did not state when in the Tertiary this movement occurred. Hayes (1964) also suggested that broad epigenic uplift and northeast tilting of this entire region began during Late Cretaceous or very early Tertiary time. He interpreted major northeast-flowing streams such as Black River, those in Last Chance and Dark Canyons, and Rocky Arroyo that display dendritic drainage patterns as Laramide in age. These structures, observed in the Bell Canyon Formation, include tectonic stylolites and associated veins, slickensided thrust and strike-slip faults, and local folding. Within the Guadalupe Mountains, northeast-southwest compression is identified by tectonic stylolite teeth and thrust fault slickensides in Pine Spring Canyon at N28°E and N31°E, respectively. Northward in the McKittrick Canyon region, tectonic stylolite teeth change in trend to N38°E. Eastward in the Delaware Basin a further change in stress field trend is identified from slickensides trending N42°E on a thrust fault. This evidence for northeast-southwest compression is consistent with the trend of Laramide compression found elsewhere in Trans-Pecos Texas.
FIGURE 1. Tectonic map of the Guadalupe and Delaware Mountains region of Texas and New Mexico. AVA—Artesia Vacuum arch; BFZ—Border fault zone; CBF—Carlsbad folds; DB—Delaware Basin; DM—Delaware Mountains; DU—Dunkan uplift; GM—Guadalupe Mountains; GRA—Guadalupe Ridge anticline; GU—Guadalupe uplift; HM—Huapache monocline; K-M—K-M fault; RA—Reef anticline; RB—Roswell block; S-M—Six-Mile buckle; SRE—Seven Rivers embayment; WS—Walnut syncline; Y-O—Y-O buckle; 6—slickensided thrust in Lamar on Highway 1108; 9—calcite veins in Lamar on Highway 1108. Adapted from Hayes (1964) and Kelley (1971).
angles of 75° to 90° with bedding in the few places where the complete solution surface was visible. In most cases only the trend of the solution surface and the teeth could be measured. The largest amplitude teeth (15 mm) were observed in Pine Spring Canyon.

Rigby (1953) suggested that these stylolites developed along previous northwest-trending joints; however, reanalysis of the stylolites suggest their formation independent of joints. The stylolites often form left- or right-stepping en echelon zones (Fig. 4). Where individual stylolites overlap near their ends there is a tendency for these surfaces to bend toward each other. This stylolite overlap and subsequent change in trend is common when cracks (tensile or compression) form and propagate laterally toward each other (Kranz, 1979).

Another reason for suggesting stylolite formation independent of joints is the orientation of tooth trend with the overall trend of the stylolite surface. In cases where previous joint formation is suspected, the tooth trend often makes an angle of 75° to 90° or less to the solution surface (Ramsay and Huber, 1987; Erdluc, 1988) and is evidence that the stylolite has formed along a previous joint surface. However, the teeth trends measured in Pine Spring Canyon have angles between 80° to 90° with the solution surface, providing additional evidence for independent formation of these stylolite surfaces.

Calcite veins are often associated with tectonic stylolite formation (Fletcher and Pollard, 1981). In Pine Spring Canyon calcite veins were found nearly perpendicular to the trend of stylolites, suggestive of contemporaneous formation of both features under identical loading conditions (Fig. 5). By their nature, stylolites represent surfaces where calcite has been removed by going into solution, whereas the local formation of tensile cracks in the principal compressive loading direction represent sinks where this dissolved calcite is precipitated. This is especially true at this location, where some of the calcite veins die out away from stylolite surfaces (Fig. 5). The association of stylolites and calcite veins in this way defines pure shear with simultaneous shortening in one direction and elongation at right angles to the shortening direction.

Rigby (1953) discussed the trend of stylolite surfaces, but of far greater importance is the trend of stylolite teeth because the teeth indicate the principal stress loading direction that existed locally at the time of stylolite formation. A histogram plotting tooth trend versus tooth frequency (Fig. 6) shows that all but one tooth measurements trend in a northeast direction. The stylolite tooth frequency shows a normal distribution slightly skewed to the east. The mean of these teeth trends strongly suggests a local trend of about N28°E for compressive stress (Table 1). This orientation of stress is consistent with a northeast trend of Laramide age compression. The single stylolite surface with northwest-trending teeth may or may not have formed contemporaneously with the northeast-trending stylolite teeth. Several interpretations are possible but are beyond the scope of this paper.
A total of 33 tectonic stylolites were measured in McKittrick Canyon, within outcrops of the McCombs, Rader and Hegler limestones of the Bell Canyon Formation, and in the Capitan Limestone (Fig. 3). According to King (1948, pl. 3) the McCombs Limestone crops out in the canyon floor near the entrance to McKittrick Canyon (Fig. 2), where the present McKittrick Canyon trail crosses the stream bed. Numerous stylolites were found at this location with calcite veins nearly perpendicular to stylolite surfaces. Although most of the stylolite teeth trend northeast, two measurements were made on solution surfaces with teeth trending northwest. This was the most prolific location for tectonic stylolites in the canyon, with 16 solution surfaces being identified.

Other outcrops in the canyon where tectonic stylolites were found are 300 m upstream in McKittrick Canyon from the McCombs Limestone site where the Rader Limestone crops out in the canyon floor; in the Capitan Limestone 700 m upstream from the Rader Limestone site; in the area near the Pratt Lodge where the Hegler Limestone crops out (King, 1948, pl. 3); and south of the "Grotto" (trail location) in the Hegler Limestone where the stream forms a sharp S-shaped valley west of hill 6933. (Note: Field mapping in McKittrick Canyon should not be attempted off-trail unless the Park Service has been informed in advance.) Rigby (1953, p. 267) also identified tectonic stylolites in the south wall of McKittrick Canyon "about a hundred yards below the junction of North and South McKittrick Canyons, near the valley floor." Although tectonic stylolites were observed along this south canyon wall, the vertical nature of the wall made it impossible to accurately measure the trend of the stylolite surfaces or the teeth. The exact location described by Rigby was not located and may now be covered.

All stylolite teeth measured in McKittrick Canyon are plotted in a histogram (Fig. 7) to compare their frequency distribution with stylolite teeth measured in Pine Spring Canyon. A normal distribution also describes the stylolite teeth in McKittrick Canyon, but the mean northeast trend of data is greater at about N38°E (Table 1) and the normal distribution is broader in its range as signified by the larger standard deviation.
deviation in McKittrick Canyon compared to Pine Spring Canyon. This larger standard deviation may result from fewer stylolites measured in McKittrick Canyon. The mean trend for stylolite teeth is again consistent with a northeast-directed Laramide compressive event.

**Lamar Limestone roadcut**

A third site of tectonic stylolites, not identified by Rigby, is located about 1.5 km northeast of the entrance to McKittrick Canyon along U.S. 62/180 (Fig. 2). This outcrop exposes the thin-bedded, black Lamar Limestone of the Bell Canyon Formation. Fifteen stylolites were identified and measured, although many more exist that could not be properly measured. Stylolite teeth are on the order of 1 mm or less in amplitude and thus are small and difficult to find.

A histogram of these teeth measurements (Fig. 8) displays a normal distribution with a standard deviation similar to that found in Pine Spring Canyon (Table I). The mean tooth trend, however, is about N38°E, and thus is statistically identical to the mean trend of teeth in McKittrick Canyon. The change in mean tooth trend from Pine Spring Canyon to the area covered in McKittrick Canyon and the Lamar roadcut is interpreted as local variations in the regional stress field responsible for stylolite formation. Stress field variations of this type are probably common and have been observed elsewhere in the Big Bend region of Texas (Erdlac, 1988, 1990). I contend that the majority of tectonic stylolites observed at these three locations are the result of regional northeast-oriented Laramide compression.

**THRUST FAULTS**

Much of the faulting presented by King (1948) is related to late Tertiary Basin and Range extension. However there are faults in the Guadalupe Mountains region not easily accounted for by this deformation period. My own field work in the southern Guadalupe Mountains has identified thrust faults not previously mapped by King (1948). These faults are small in extent and magnitude of offset, but still important in determining the structural styles expressed in this region.

**Pine Spring Canyon**

In the Pine Spring Canyon arroyo south of Devils Hall and north of the "Roman Stairs" (Rigby, 1953, p. 265) a small thrust fault was found in the Hegler Limestone (Fig. 9). This fault is oriented at N52°W, 28°SW with slickensides trending N31°E, nearly perpendicular to the strike of the fault plane. This thrust requires northeast-southwest compression to account for the slickenside trend. The amount of offset across this fault is uncertain, but the lack of any breccia development precludes any large offset. I would estimate this offset at 1 m or less.

**Lamar Limestone roadcut**

In the Lamar along U.S. 62/180 (Fig. 2) a thrust fault was observed in conjunction with Lamar folding (Fig. 10). These limestone beds display minor folding throughout the formation, with dips varying from as little as 5°SE to nearly 30°NE, with strike ranging from N57°E to N57°W, respectively. The thrust fault, at the western end of the roadcut, is accompanied by folding of the Lamar to assist in contraction. No well-defined fault plane was measured, but the ruptured beds and associated folds indicate the location of the fault on the north and south sides of the road (Figs. 10A and 10B, respectively). The fault trends about N45°W, with an estimated dip of 45°NE. Although this thrust was previously interpreted as soft-sediment deformation (e.g., Harms and Pray, 1985), the trend of the thrust and fold axis, and fault dip, are not consistent with soft-sediment deformation from gravity sliding or slumping. Joints at this outcrop are longitudinal and fan outward from the fold axis, suggesting their formation during brittle deformation (Ramsay and Huber, 1987). In addition, the recognition of tectonic stylolites at this outcrop demonstrates that tectonic compression oriented northeast-southwest has deformed the Lamar at this outcrop. The amount of offset along this fault is estimated to be 1 m or less.

**Delaware Basin thrust fault**

In the Delaware Basin along Highway 1108 (Fig. 1) the thin-bedded, black Lamar Limestone crops out as a low ridge, locally oriented N60°E, 3°NW. Where the road crosses this ridge is a small thrust fault oriented N39°W, 22°NE, with slickensides trending N42°E. Several small calcite veins were oriented at N48°E, 87°NW. The trends of the slickensides

A. North side of roadcut. Fault strikes roughly N45°W with fault surface dipping northeast. Note camera lens cap in upper left quarter of photograph for scale. This fault projects across the road to the south side of roadcut. 

B. South side of roadcut. This photograph is a reversed image of the actual roadcut in order to show the relation of the fault and fold on both sides of the road. Note camera lens cap to the left of center for scale.
and calcite veins suggest formation due to northeast-southwest compression.

**STRIKE-SLIP FAULTS**

In addition to thrust faults, two localities in Pine Spring and McKittrick Canyons display strike-slip faults.

**Pine Spring Canyon**

In Pine Spring Canyon, at the south end of the narrow Devils Hall (Fig. 2), a series of en echelon calcite veins trends N82°W, with individual calcite veins trending N53°E (Fig. 11). The orientation of the calcite veins requires the maximum principal compressive stress to be northeast-southwest, resulting in sinistral shear across the zone. This stress trend is consistent with regional trends for Laramide compression. The west wall of the canyon displays little to no affect of the shear, but the east canyon wall shows an increase in fracture frequency where the shear zone projects into the wall.

**McKittrick Canyon**

In McKittrick Canyon strike-slip faults in the Hegler Limestone (near the canyon floor, east of hill 7170 and south of the Pratt Lodge) are oriented at N64°E, 77°NW and at N12°E, 73°SW (Fig. 2). Both fault surfaces are undulatory with varying dip. The N64°E-trending fault displays a single set of slickensides raking 18°NE, whereas the latter fault displays two sets of slickensides raking 13°NE and 5°NE (Fig. 12). An acute angle of 52° between the strike of these two faults suggests that they may be conjugate, with the possible compression direction being the bisector of this angle at N36°E. The near horizontal rake of these slickensides requires a strong component of strike-slip movement on these faults.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF STRUCTURES FOR LARAMIDE DEFORMATION**

Many different types of structural features are identifiable in the Guadalupe Mountains region. Some of these structures, such as slickensided thrust faults and tectonic stylolites, require a northeast-southwest compressive stress for their origin, consistent with a Laramide origin. A summary of various structures and possible trends of principal compressive stress are listed in Table 2. The orientation for suspected Laramide compression associated with these structures ranges from north-northeast to northeast. The stress trends associated with tectonic stylolites and slickensided thrust faults of all these structures are most consistent with Laramide compression. Because these structures are within the Bell Canyon Formation, the only age constraint on their development is that they are post-Guadalupian. The interpretation of Laramide age for these structures is based on the contention that a post-Guadalupian northeast-southwest compression was most likely to result from Laramide tectonism. This compression direction is consistent with trends of similar structures in
Cretaceous limestones of the Big Bend region, which are interpreted as Laramide age (DeCamp, 1981; Moustafa, 1988; Erdlac, 1990). This study is not the final analysis of Laramide tectonism in this region but only a beginning. Further detailed structural investigations are needed to determine the extent of Laramide deformation in the Guadalupe Mountains region and to explore the regional extent of Laramide compression.

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