

A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ROCK ART OF CA-SBN-12

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ABSTRACT

The recent accidental draining of Hernandez Reservoir in San Benito County provided a rare window of opportunity for further research and study of this key rock art site. This chlorite schist boulder was flooded in the 60s, and is one of the more than 80 identified PCN (Pecked Curvilinear Nucleated) sites in the coastal ranges of California. It contains a full spectrum of the element styles that occur at other PCN sites. This paper will discuss the diversity of these styles and compare this site with the variety of styles that occur on neighboring PCN boulders, with no attempt to interpret the meaning.

INTRODUCTION

In the archaeological record of the north and central Coast Ranges of California are found concentrations of a rock art style most commonly referred to as PCNs or Pecked Curvilinear Nucleated elements. This style petroglyph is characterized by oval or circular pecked grooves which produce a raised center. Nearly all of the now documented 85 sites have been worked on blue-green chlorite or similar schist material. The style was first identified in 1972 by Virginia Hotz (now Hotz-Steenhoven) when geologist Salem Rice showed her markings, which she identified as cultural (Hotz and Clewlow 1974) on a boulder on Ring Mountain in Tiburon. A project was undertaken by Teresa Miller and Reed Haslam to identify additional similar sites within Marin, Sonoma and Mendocino counties, and became the basis for Miller's M.A. thesis, which ascribed the name "PCN" and presented a predictive model for locating additional sites (Miller 1977). Researchers place the antiquity of the PCN-style at 5,000 to 8,000 B.P. (Gillette 1998:92).

This study compares the elements found on boulders containing PCN-style petroglyphs which are located in surrounding counties with the elements occurring at CA-SBN-12, a major PCN site, located in a now re-flooded reservoir in San Benito County. Comparative sites included in the study are CA-ALA – (no trinomial yet assigned), CA-SCL-48 – Ogier Ranch, CA-SCL-63 – Silver Creek, CA-SCL-279 & 281 – Santa Teresa Hills,

CA-SCL-503 – Henry Coe State Park, and a second unrecorded site also in Henry Coe State Park.

DESCRIPTION OF SITES

CA-SBN-12 - Hernandez Reservoir

The first archaeological visit to this site, located in the Hernandez Valley (now a reservoir site), was in 1950 by A. Pilling and R. Drake (Pilling and Drake 1950). They identified the large boulder as being of steatite and measuring 30 ft. in diameter and 15 ft. high (the original site record indicated the measurements in feet). They noted that certain areas of the boulder had been used for a bowl quarry. They also mentioned bedrock mortars (BRMs), but questioned whether the "metates" they observed were created by natural weathering and erosion. In 1961 Robert Heizer sent Jay von Werlhof to visit the site. At the suggestion of von Werlhof the site was re-classified from a petroglyph site to a steatite bowl quarry. Covered by water in the reservoir in the early 1960s, the boulder has been visible only a few times during drought years. During these periods CA-SBN-12 has been visited by members of the Bay Area Rock Art Research Association and others, and has been the subject of studies that were included in articles and papers by several researchers (Freeman 1987; Mark and Newman 1989; Parkman 1988, 1993; Sonin 1993). In 1986 Mark, Newman, and Rogers re-examined and photo-recorded the site, and

established the lithology as Franciscan-assemblage blue schist, rich in chlorite and glaucophane, instead of the previously identified steatite (Mark and Newman 1989). They also noted probable quarry scars, and numerous grooves, cupules, cup-and-single-ring glyphs, and BRMs, in addition to the many PCN-style ovals and circles.

After developing a relationship with the current property owner in the fall of 1996, this researcher was contacted by him in the spring of 1997 concerning a break in the gate of the dam, which proceeded to empty the dam and expose the boulder. Referring to a 1950 photo taken of Pilling at the site and then comparing it with the boulder that is now exposed, Evelyn Newman and Gillette have determined that silt from the dam now covers approximately one and one-half meters of the previously exposed boulder, which contained numerous PCN elements, according to the early photograph. Several site visits took place while the boulder was exposed, and have resulted in a detailed study and tracing of the elements by a group of researchers, including Christine Gralapp, Garry Gillette, Elanie Moore, and the authors.

The elements occurring at CA-SBN-12 have been divided into the following styles:

PCNs

- 1) oval - some very small
- 2) circular – tend to be larger
- 3) vulva style (bisected with line)
- 4) round with cup placed in center - modification
- 5) oval with cup placed in center – modification
- 6) cup placed off-center - modification
- 7) superposition of PCNs – modification
- 8) bisected with random lines - modification

Cupules

- 1) plain
- 2) bisected with lines (at later date)
- 3) placed on ridge line

Random Dots – no discernable pattern

Pie Plates

- 1) horizontal sides
- 2) slanted sides

Large Basin-like depressions

Lines

- 1) grooves
- 2) incised lines
- 3) scratches

BRMs

- 1) round
- 2) oval
- 3) embellished with cupules
- 4) PCNs in close proximity

Historical graffiti

CA-FRE-2485 – Swallow Rock

This site was initially recorded in 1939 as CA-MNT-239 by Hewes, reflecting its location as being in Monterey County. In 1940 Hewes filed additional field notes which are on file with the California Division of Forestry. In 1990 Daniel Foster, John Betts, Bill Johnson, and Lou Deford relocated the site, using the Hewes record and report, and filed a correction of the site location to Fresno County from Monterey County (Foster and Betts 1994). Foster and Betts identified seven rock art styles at this site, which included a large (36m x 24m) schist boulder broken into three parts containing four panels of petroglyphs. They identified the styles represented as:

1) - Abstract curvilinear – consisting of several dozen abstract motifs, found on all panels. This style is reminiscent of the entoptic elements identified by David Lewis-Williams (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988) and others (Whitley 1994; Hedges 1982).

2) Grooved oval – The PCN-style petroglyph. Sixteen of these oval grooved elements appear mostly on one panel. Foster and Betts noted that many of the centers had been removed or quarried.

3) Cup-and-ring – These 18 elements consisted of a cupule in the middle of deeply grooved rings (possibly PCNs).

4) Deeply incised lines – Hundreds of these deeply-incised lines, often in parallel lines, occur on the same panel as the PCNs.

5) Scratched lines – Hundreds of these very shallow scratched lines appear also on the PCN panel, and occur in complex motifs, as in Style 1.

6) Pecking – appears on several panels, but primarily on the PCN panel, in both crude abstract and random fashion.

7) Cupules – These 12 elements are scattered randomly over the panels

CA-ALA- (new site – no trinomial assigned at this time)

This site, located on the eastern side of the Diablo Range, near the San Joaquin County line, is the most recent PCN site to be documented. It was noted during a survey of lands being acquired for enlargement of a California State Park. Joe Hood (1997) reports that the schist boulder contains 66 PCN-style petroglyphs of varying sizes and 12 cupules, which are placed randomly on the boulder and in the center of some of the PCNs. Several incised lines are also present.

CA-SCL-48 - Ogier Ranch

Located north of Mount Hamilton in the Diablo Range, this site was first referenced in several 1933 newspaper articles (*Oakland Tribune, Daily Cal, C.S. Monitor, S.F. Chronicle, and Berkeley Gazette*), and in a site record dated 1958, by J. Davis (Davis 1958). Between 1957 and 1963 site records were filed by Davis (Davis 1958), Plotnicov (Plotnicov 1957), and Stirling (Stirling 1963). According to an article written by Albert Elsasser (Elsasser 1985) the site was visited by several persons from the University of California in the 1950s. He related that in 1974 he introduced Virginia Hotz (now Hotz-Steenhoven), the first rock art researcher to identify the PCN-type phenomena on Ring Mountain, to the site, and Hotz visited the site in 1975 (Hotz-Steenhoven 1986; 182-183). In 1984 Hotz returned to the Ogier Ranch site with photographer Jon Steenhoven to record the elements on the boulder. A group from the Bay Area Rock Art Research Association visited the site in 1985, and assisted in removing lichen from the petroglyph area to facilitate recording (Elsasser 1985). Hotz-Steenhoven presented a paper at the San Diego Museum of Man annual Rock Art Conference (Hotz-Steenhoven 1986:182-183), where she identified the boulder as schistose, and

measuring 17.2m long (not counting a gap where the boulder is breaking apart). Hotz-Steenhoven related that the elements at CA-SCL-48 consist of several circular or oval grooves (PCNs), both with and without cupules, concentric circles (may be cup-and-ring), and numerous cupules and grooves. Also noted were several BRMs similar to those at Canyon Trails (CA-CCO-152).

CA-SCL-63 - Silver Creek

Though no mention of the occurrence of PCN elements is included in the site record on file, Katherine Flynn (1997) brought this site to the attention of this researcher. Located next to a year-round creek, this large chlorite schist boulder contains 6 PCN elements, many cupules, and small BRMs. Originally recorded as a BRM station (Deitz 1973), Flynn's re-examination in 1978 revealed the presence of the PCNs.

CA-SCL-279

This boulder in the Santa Teresa Hills contains 3 PCN elements and 4 cupules. Recorded by Roop (1977), the rock type is sandstone, an anomaly for the type of boulder traditionally utilized for PCN elements (another exception would be SCL-281).

CA-SCL-281

Recorded by Swift, Simmon, and Roop (1977), this group of three separate rocks contains two PCN elements, one on each of two boulders. The largest boulder contains a PCN element measuring 1 cubic meter in mass size; the smaller boulder is less than 0.25 cubic meter in mass size. As in the case of CA-SCL-279, located nearby in the Santa Teresa Hills, these elements have been pecked in sandstone.

CA-SCL-503-Bura Bura Peak

Located in Henry Coe State Park, this site was recorded by E. Breck Parkman and John Kelly (Parkman and Kelly 1982). It consists of a very large (15m x 15m) glaucophane schist boulder with a reported vein of soapstone. Parkman and Kelly reported petroglyphs on two loci of the rock. Locus 1 is located on the top of the boulder, and consists of three or more PCN style petroglyphs, with most having their nuclei slabbed off or quarried. Locus 2 is located on a large vertical face on the northern side of the boulder. Parkman and Kelly reported hundreds (or thousands) of

incised/scratched petroglyphs. Newman and Mark questioned whether many of these incised petroglyphs are cultural, and suggested they are most likely tectonic striations created during the formation processes of the boulder (Newman and Mark 1986). Parkman and Kelly also noted several moderately large depressions located in and among the lines which appear to represent quarry scars, and they suggest that they may have resulted from former PCNs that have had their nuclei removed. Below the panel in the duff they reported a number of possible quarry tools (including hammerstones and a quartz blade) and discarded quarry blanks.

CA-SCL - unrecorded (#A-8 on Henry Coe State Park list, Lee's [Simms] Rock)

This unrecorded site was shown to this researcher by Evelyn Newman and Bob Mark in 1995. Located in a remote area of Henry Coe State Park, it consists of two chlorite schist boulders separated by a deep crevice. The rock grouping measures 5.8m x 2.2m high, and faces north. The elements that occur at this site are approximately 30+ cupules, two cup-and-ring (round form with cupule in center) PCNs, and 6 PCNs. A few grooves are also present. The PCNs range from 11cm to 30cm in length. There is no evidence of quarrying, and the chlorite contains mica.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SITES

- All sites contain circle and oval PCNs.
- Most sites also contain cupules and scratches (exception is one of the Santa Teresa Hills sites)
- All boulders are schist or other soft rock (exception is Santa Teresa Hills - sandstone).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SITES

- The smaller boulders do not contain as many styles of elements as are found at the larger sites - CA-SBN-12, Swallow Rock, and Ogier.

- Swallow Rock is the only site with abstract curvilinear element.
- Concentric circles are found only at the Ogier Site.
- CA-SBN-12 shows the most variety of PCN styles and sizes.
- CA-SBN-12 and Ogier are the only sites with basins.
- BRMs are found only at the CA-SBN-12 and the Silver Creek site.
- The Ogier site seems to be primarily cup and ring style, while other sites that contain cup-and-ring - CA-SBN-12 and Alameda - appear as more minor elements.
- The Alameda site is the most typical site in comparison with other major PCN sites - elements appear more oval than circular - this site is very similar to those north of the Bay Area in Marin, Sonoma, and Mendocino Counties.

CONCLUSIONS

- All sites in the study area contain elements other than just PCNs - cupules and scratches - except one of the Santa Teresa Hills sites.
- The Santa Teresa Hills sites are an anomaly, on sandstone, and may represent the possibility of a need to continue a tradition where no soft stone was available.
- Due to the variety of elements and sizes, CA-SBN-12 and Swallow Rock may represent utilization over an extended period of time.
- Due to variety of styles, other than circular, and the location, Swallow Rock may represent use by several cultural groups
- BRMs at the CA-SBN-12 site may be for ritual use - grinding of powder

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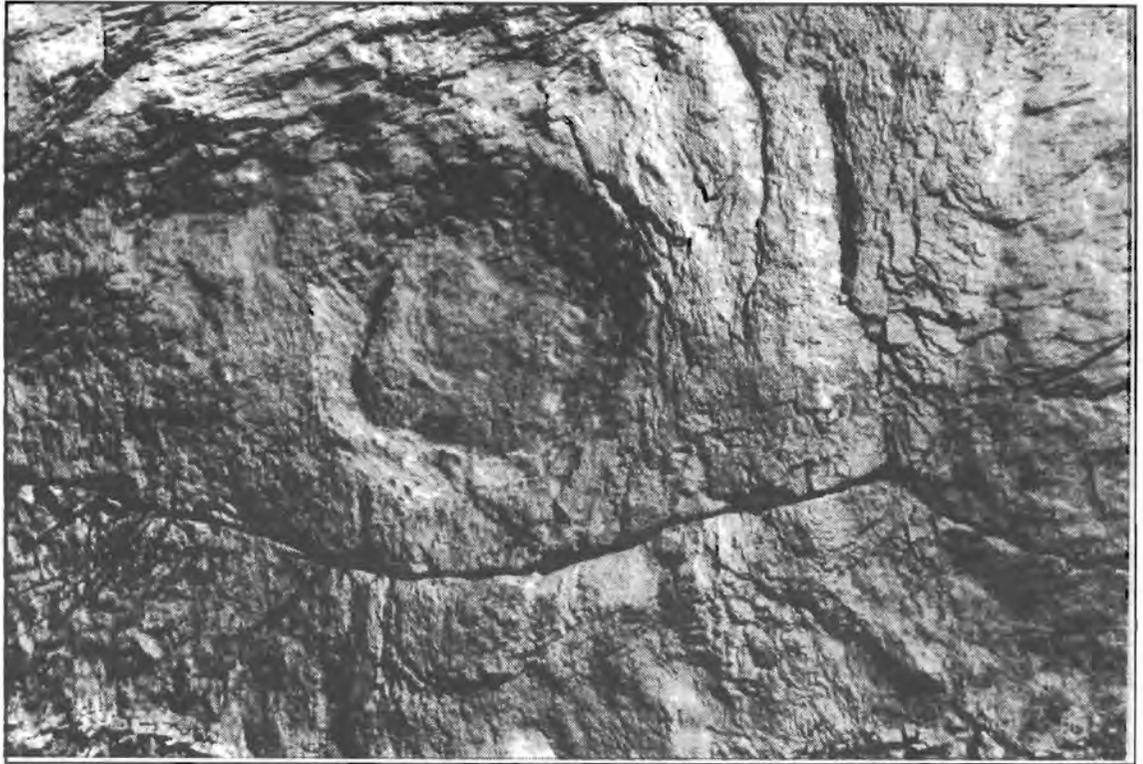
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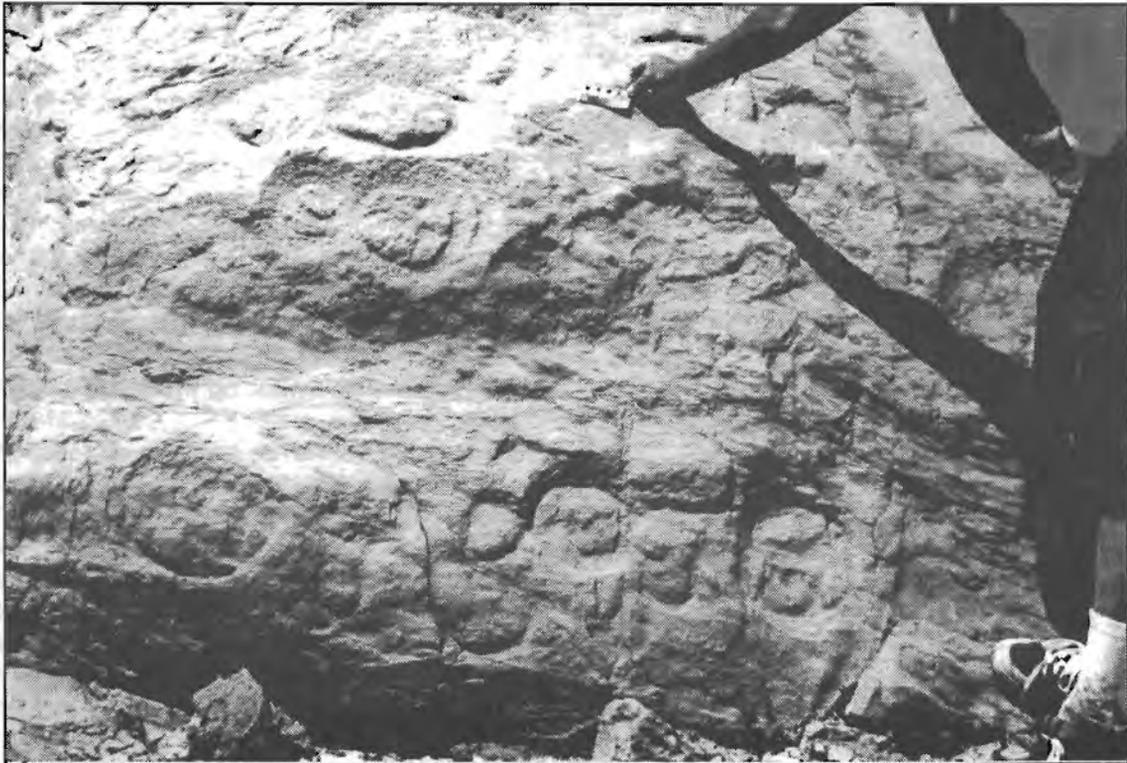
Rock Art at CA-SBN-12



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