

## THREE CHUMASH-STYLE PICTOGRAPH SITES IN FERNANDEÑO TERRITORY

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*There are three significant archaeology sites in the eastern Simi Hills that have an elaborate polychrome pictograph component. Numerous additional small loci of rock art and major midden deposits that are rich in artifacts also characterize these three sites. One of these sites, the “Burro Flats” site, has the most colorful, elaborate, and well-preserved pictographs in the region south of the Santa Clara River and west of the Los Angeles Basin and the San Fernando Valley. Almost all other painted rock art in this region consists of red-only paintings. During the pre-contact era, the eastern Simi Hills/west San Fernando Valley area was inhabited by a mix of Eastern Coastal Chumash and Fernandeno. The style of the paintings at the three sites (CA-VEN-1072, VEN-149, and LAN-357) is clearly the same as that found in Chumash territory. If the quantity and the quality of rock art are good indicators, then it is probable that these three sites were some of the most important ceremonial sites for the region. An examination of these sites has the potential to help us better understand this area of cultural interaction.*

This article discusses the polychrome rock art at the Burro Flats site (VEN-1072), the Lake Manor site (VEN-148/149), and the Chatsworth site (LAN-357). All three of these sites are located in rock shelters in the eastern Simi Hills. The Simi Hills are mostly located in southeast Ventura County, although the eastern end is in Los Angeles County (Figure 1). This region is some 30-35 mi. northwest of downtown Los Angeles. The Simi Hills form part of the geomorphic province known as the Transverse Ranges. These scenic hills are about 16 mi. long southwest-northeast, and about half as wide or less northwest-southeast. The highest point is Simi Peak at 2,401 ft. (732 m). The three sites discussed here are all found in outcrops of the Chatsworth Formation, where small caves and rock shelters are common. Plant communities include coastal sage scrub, chaparral, coast live oak woodland, willow scrub, mulefat scrub, native and non-native grasslands, and riparian forest (King 2000:7-17; NASA 2010:9).

The eastern Simi Hills were an area of major cultural interaction, where the Eastern Coastal (or Ventureño) Chumash, the Fernandeno, and the Tataviam (who lived in the mountains to the north) came together (Grant 1978:509-519; Johnson 1997a; King 2000; King and Parsons 2000:14-17). The principal village of this region was the village of *Humaliwu* (in Chumash), which the Fernandeno called *Ongobepet*, and we call Malibu. Note that when the Spanish established Mission San Fernando in 1797 in the north-central San Fernando Valley, the mission was “staffed” not only with Fernandeno but with many of the easternmost Eastern Coastal Chumash, including many of the people from *Humaliwu* (King and Parsons 2000:13). These people and their descendants became the historic Fernandeno (Brown 1967:8; Johnson 1997b, 2006:5-10; King 2003:2). The (prehistoric) Fernandeno spoke a language that belongs to the Takic branch of Northern Uto-Aztecan. They called their linguistic cousins the Gabrielino *shivaviatam*, which specifically referred to those who “lived on the lower San Gabriel and Santa Ana Rivers” (King 2003:3). King does not use the term Fernandeno, but instead distinguishes between the Eastern Gabrielino, who lived south of the San Gabriel Mountains, mainly in the San Gabriel Valley (these, to some, are the *Tongva*), and the Western Gabrielino, who lived along the western coast of Los Angeles County, from Malibu to Palos Verdes, and included most of the people living in the San Fernando Valley (King 2003:14).

The most important ceremonial events for these people included the Summer Solstice Ceremony, and the fall *Hutash* (in Chumash) harvest ceremony in honor of Mother Earth. Every few years, the final days of the *Hutash* ceremony were dedicated to the mourning ceremony in commemoration of the dead. Following the *Hutash* ceremony, a council was held to discuss the time and preparations for the forthcoming Winter Solstice Ceremony (Librado 1981:43-63; Romani 1981:43-56). The Winter

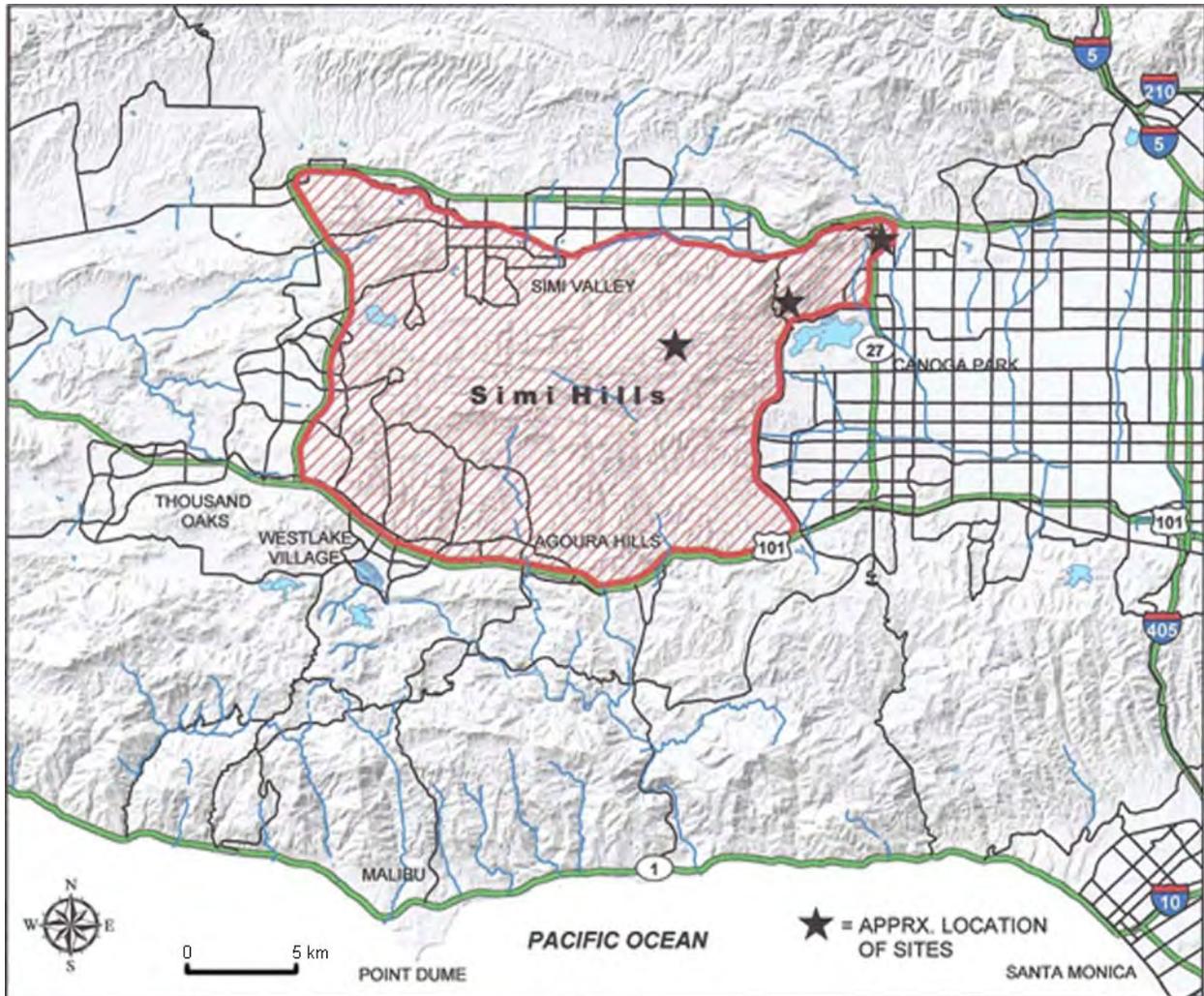


Figure 1. Simi Hills location map (courtesy of Horizon Surveys).

Solstice Ceremony, honoring *Kakunupmawa* (i.e., the sun), was the most important annual ceremony for the Chumash (Romani 1981:52). People came to the host villages for these important ceremonial occasions from a long distance:

An important Ventureño Chumash fiesta, for example, might be attended by sizeable numbers of people from as far away as Gaviota or the Santa Inez Valley, as far east as Malibu or the San Fernando Valley, and as far north as Tejon, while performances by Yokuts dancers were not uncommon [Blackburn 1974:100].

Based upon his research in the area, Romani (1981:91) believed that “the west San Fernando Valley was an area of religious and/or ceremonial prominence for both the Chumash and Fernandño/Gabrielino.” It is likely that the three sites with polychrome pictographs were places where many of the more important ceremonies took place.

All three of these sites are characterized by the presence of a polychrome “main panel.” Based on the observations of Romani et al. (1985), the main panels at the Burro Flats site and the Chatsworth site may have been two of the focal points for village-level observations at the time of the solstices; the Lake Manor site has never been examined for any possible archaeoastronomical function.

The rock paintings of the Chumash include some of the most spectacular and best-known pictographs in California. They were called the Santa Barbara Painted Style in times past, but the style is found well beyond Santa Barbara, including in Ventura County and western Los Angeles County. The style is characterized as having angular and curvilinear elements in roughly equal proportions; circle and dot elements, sometimes in the form of large suns, targets, or mandalas; human, animal, and insect figures; and the “aquatic” motif. The latter presumably reflects the maritime orientation of coastal Chumash culture. The polychrome pictographs at all three of these sites are examples of the South Central California Painted variant of the California Tradition (Whitley 2000:46-48, 50-54, 75-77). Grant analyzed Chumash rock art and described it as having seven sub-styles. He included the Burro Flats site, and therefore by implication the Lake Manor and Chatsworth sites, within his Ventureño sub-style (Grant 1965:74-76).

There are several sites with red pictographs in the region (e.g., LAN-717/H, LAN-748, VEN-195), but no other extant sites in the region have a polychrome pictograph component; this situation may indicate that none of the other regional sites were as ritually important. Note that even though there are over 30 sites with rock art components in the region (Knight 1997, 2001), the lavish use of pigment and the excellent condition of the main panel at the Burro Flats site can only be compared to the rock art some 90 mi. to the west at Chumash Painted Cave in San Marcos Pass (SBA-506), or well to the north in Pleito Canyon (KER-77), or to the paintings in Burham Canyon (KER-273) in the southern Tehachapi Mountains. There is nothing comparable to the east, in Gabrielino territory, or to the northeast in Tataviam or Serrano territory, where pictographs are almost always red-only, and usually consist of mostly abstract motifs such as zigzag lines, chains of diamonds, and net patterns (Bleitz-Sanberg 1988; Edberg 1987; Knight 1997).

We know from ethnographic evidence that Chumash influence was felt across most of the San Fernando Valley, and all of the villages in the western part of the valley had both Chumash and Fernandean names (Johnson 1997a:249-290, 2006:5-10, 30-34; Romani 1981:14-18, 127; Romani et al. 1988:119). One of John Peabody Harrington's Kitanemuk informants stated that

the religion of the *yivar* (*silyik*) was the custom at Ventura and of the Castec (interior Ventureño) people, and of the Fernandean . . . and Gabrielinos, also of the people of Santa Barbara and Santa Inez. . . . The religion of the coast . . . was not here (among the Kitanemuk). It was at Ventura and reached to San Gabriel -- it was very strong at San Gabriel. . . . The Gabrielino sang their long verses . . . in Ventureño Chumash [Hudson and Underhay 1978:30; Librado 1981:17-28, 31, 39-42].

From this we can see that the three sites discussed here would have been near the geographical center of a religious system that included at least the Eastern Coastal Chumash, the Fernandean, and probably the Tataviam as well. Romani et al. (1988:120) believed that

Based on the evidence . . . the ceremonial activities occurring in this area were probably bi-ethnic . . . and manifestations of both groups may be present in the rock art at Burro Flats. . . . The Burro Flats pictograph panel may depict elements of symbolism and ritual from both groups. . . . It should be mentioned . . . that many Chumash stylistic elements occur in the Burro Flats panel, including attention to detail, bilateral symmetry, recurring symbols and particular paintings, such as use of dots, outlining, etc.

These comments are also valid for both the Chatsworth site and the Lake Manor site. Following Romani, then, these sites

possessed a significant ceremonial/religious importance, perhaps having had an integral religious function within the Humaliwu Province. In the proto-Historic and Historic periods, the influence of the Chumash '*antap* cult . . . must have certainly made its presence known within this cultural borderland [Romani 1981:127].



Figure 2. Burro Flats site main panel (photo by Albert Knight enhanced by Tom Robbins).

### **THE BURRO FLATS SITE (VEN-1072)**

The Burro Flats site includes a large, complex polychrome main panel (Figure 2), which incorporates two groups of small cupules. The other rock art loci include: a few polychrome elements; monochrome pictographs in red, white, or black; simple black lines; deeply incised random grooves which are associated with red pigment; multiple loci of cupules; cupules and bedrock mortars together; and one locus with a few pictographs and two sets of two very faint petroglyphs.

According to NASA (2009:1-2),

The pictographs at Burro Flats are a remarkable record of prehistoric Native American art. Archaeologists who have visited the site have said that it includes some of the most dramatic and best preserved pictographs known and is among the finest examples of prehistoric pictographic art in North America. The site's 1976 inclusion on the NRHP (#76000539) reflects its significance. While the main gallery is renowned for its aesthetic mastery, vibrant colors, and good state of preservation, the remaining galleries are generally in a poor state of preservation. Their ongoing degradation is a reminder that archaeological sites are often very fragile links to a knowledge of the past.

John Romani, the archaeologist who has studied the site in detail, felt that the Burro Flats site

is unquestionably ceremonial in nature, although its true complexity awaits proper analysis of the archaeological data. The site has a Late Period component, based on the presence of Spanish trade beads. Although glass trade beads can by no means suffice to confidently date the rock art . . . the well preserved appearance of these pictographs does

show that at least the most recent superimposition (i.e. of the bright red pigment) is probably of recent origin [Romani et al. 1988:112].

The first professional researcher to be made aware of the Burro Flats pictograph site was apparently the anthropologist John Peabody Harrington. Harrington lived in Simi Valley at times and worked for the Smithsonian Institution as an ethnologist from February 1914 until he retired in 1954. In 1916, he visited the west San Fernando Valley with a Fernandeano named Fernando Setimo Moraga. The two visited Charlie Bell at his ranch, where they discussed the western San Fernando Valley, including Bell Canyon. However, there was no discussion of Burro Flats, at least as reflected by the notes (Harrington 1917 Reel 106-117:3:1 to 106-117:5:7; Johnson 2006:24, 28-29, 34-35, 37; King 2000:47).

In 1917, Harrington visited the west San Fernando Valley again. This time he was accompanied by his wife Carobeth, Juan Jose Menendez, and Menendez's wife, Juana Valenzuela de Menendez. Juan was "the grandson of the last Indian owner of Rancho El Escorpion, Odon Chihuya. . . . Menendez's mother was Espiritu, the common-law wife of Miguel Leonis" (Johnson 2006:29). Together, the four toured the northwest and west San Fernando Valley, with Juan and Juana providing names of places and mentioning whatever native history they could recall. One of the places they stopped at was just east of the mouth of Box Canyon. There they visited what are now recorded as sites VEN-148 and VEN-149 (Harrington 1917 Reel #106-151:3:4; Johnson 2006:40-42; McCawley 1996:37). The scenery is impressive, and they must have discussed the mountains above, for Harrington said, "Menendez's grandmother told him that at the *Potrero de los Burros* there used to be a very large rancheria" and that "there are painted caves which [the informant] knows near the *Potrero de los Burros*" (Harrington 1917 Reel #106-153:6:1 and 6:3).

The first archaeologist known to have visited the Burro Flats site was Mark Raymond Harrington. M. R. Harrington knew J. P. Harrington and was occasionally his boss, but they were not related. According to a note found by the author in the UCLA Rock Art Archives, M. R. Harrington visited the Burro Flats pictograph site when it was still private property, probably in the 1940s but perhaps even earlier (Apostolides 1978; Knight 2001:48). The author does not know if M. R. Harrington left any notes that mention this visit, but his papers may contain some mention of it.

The first archaeological excavations at the Burro Flats site were performed by the Archaeological Survey Association of Southern California (ASASC) in 1953 and 1954. Unfortunately, although many artifacts were recovered by the ASASC, no report was ever produced. However, an artifact list was published as an appendix to Curtis' Arroyo Sequit report (Curtis 1959:Appendix V). The Burro Flats collection was stored at the Southwest Museum of the American Indian for many years (Steele 1982:184). Romani, following Curtis, listed the artifacts from the Burro Flats site as including

concave base points, knives, blades, flake and core scrapers, drills, portable mortars, pestles, manos and metates, steatite bowls, sandstone bowls, hammerstones, perforated stones, stone beads, pendants and incised painted stones, arrow shaft straighteners, steatite beads, shell beads, pendant and disks, fish vertebrae beads, ochre, cremations, bone awls, and glass trade beads in the top levels [Romani 1981:109, 111].

One of the first people to describe the rock art at Burro Flats was Charles La Monk, who worked with the ASASC. As part of his research, La Monk made full-scale reproductions of some of the art on canvas (Anonymous 1963:57; La Monk 1953:87; Steele 1982:106-109). Gordon Redtfeldt also worked with the ASASC and with La Monk, and he made a number of sketches of some of the Burro Flats rock art (Redtfeldt 1954).

During the years 1959 and 1960, Charles Rozaire conducted the first general survey of the site complex. The features and areas he recorded became VEN-151 through VEN-161 (Rozaire 1959:2-6). Rozaire stated that the Burro Flats main panel was most like "those in the west-central coast ranges of Santa Barbara, Kern, Los Angeles, and Ventura Counties" (Rozaire 1959:4). Also in 1959 and 1960, Rozaire conducted excavations using a field class in archaeology from San Fernando Valley State College (now California State University Northridge [CSUN]) (Romani et al. 1988:111).

By the mid-1960s, the Burro Flats site was slowly becoming known to a broader spectrum of people. Campbell Grant, for example, visited the site several times, and he recorded the rock art at the main panel as his Ventura-4; he classified the pictographs as being Ventureño Chumash (Grant 1965:74-76, Plates 25 and 30).

In October 1973, Franklin Fenenga conducted the second general field survey of the Burro Flats site. Fenenga saw the Burro Flats site as one large complex, so he did not use Rozaire's earlier multisite designations. Fenenga estimated that the midden area covered 525 by 215 m and was as deep as 1.5 m in places, based on his visual observations of old excavation units that had not been backfilled (Fenenga 1973:6). Fenenga (1973:12) concluded that

because of its magnitude, the complex of features which are integral to it, the dramatic physiographic location, the unmodified natural landscape, and the fine state of preservation [it is] one of the major examples of aboriginal American art, one of the most important archaeological sites in America [and] it certainly meets the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historical Places.

Based on his recommendation, and with the assistance of Clement Meighan at UCLA, the site was nominated to and listed on the National Register in 1976. Other visitors during the 1970s included, in particular, Georgia Lee, who visited on September 9, 1978, when she made a few field sketches of selected examples of the rock art (Lee 1978).

On June 23, 1979, following the summer solstice, an interested group of researchers visited the Burro Flats site at the urging of John Romani, then a graduate student at CSUN. Romani and his party received access to the site because the husband of one of the CSUN professors (Nancy Walters) worked at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) and he arranged for access (Danny Larson, personal communication 2010). These researchers included John and Gwen Romani, Danny Larson, Rick Wessel, Bob Edberg, Arlene Benson, Edwin Krupp, Travis Hudson, Tom Blackburn, Charlie Cook, and Fred Couture of the SSFL. Several of these individuals subsequently wrote papers on the Burro Flats site (i.e., Benson 1980:16-19; Benson and Sehgal 1987:10-13; Edberg 1985:65-92; Krupp 1983:129-132; Romani et al. 1985:93-108).

These efforts followed ideas presented by Romani in his 1981 Master's thesis. Romani stated that "Archaeoastronomy, as a means by which information on native Chumash/Fernandeño astronomy and ceremonialism can be gained, is the main focus of this thesis" (Romani 1981:5). Romani's primary research questions were: 1. Does archaeological evidence for a native astronomy exist within the sites under investigation? 2. If so, what level of sophistication and precision do the data suggest? Romani (1981:1) pointed out that previous studies of prehistoric astronomy (outside of California) had been focused on agricultural societies, because it was believed that only in these societies would there be a functional need for astronomy, which would have stemmed from a necessity to establish an accurate calendar to regulate the planting and harvesting of crops to seasonal cycles. Romani (1981:2) noted:

Several recent publications (Blackburn 1963, 1974, 1975; Hudson, Blackburn, Curletti and Timbrook 1979; Hudson and Blackburn 1978; Hudson and Underhay 1978; Hudson, Lee, and Hedges 1979) have presented a body of ethnographic material which strongly suggests that for the Chumash, as well as other native California groups, a sophisticated astronomy and ritual calendar existed, which at historic contact . . . formed the nucleus for ceremonial integration on a regional scale.

Of his research, Romani (1981:131) said:

The specific research questions posed for this study parallel those expressed in other California archaeoastronomical studies. A major divergence from these studies relates to the complexity of the sites within this study area. The previous California studies have centered on isolated rock art features and their astronomical relationship to geographic features and/or the indirect effect created on the rock art during solstitial rise and set. Such solstitial elements are certainly a major focus of this present study; however, the

scope of analysis is far more complex since the sites chosen for this research represent major rock art/ceremonial complexes as well as peripherally related sites.

Romani et al. (1988:129) believed that astronomically based ceremonialism may have played a dominant role in the highly stratified, socially and technologically complex cultures the Spanish encountered in south-central California: “our central thesis is that an astronomically-based yearly cycle of ceremonial gatherings is not strictly bound to local environmental fluctuations. In fact, every year, whether the harvest was good or not, the ceremonies had to take place to maintain the balance of the universe.” They concluded by saying,

through our studies in the west San Fernando Valley, we are not only attempting to document and measure astronomical alignments, but also to discover the internal organization of the Malibu politico-religious province. . . . By these means we hope to reveal the structure of Chumash ceremonialism in our study area [Romani et al. 1988:131].

This line of research is worthy of additional study by a new generation of researchers.

Romani (1981:92-93, 97, 100-101, 126-127, 139) believed that the northern component of the village of *Huwam* (in Chumash), or *Jacjauybit* (in Fernandño; i.e., LAN-413) was the host village for the regional *Kakunupmawa* or winter solstice festival, in honor of the return of the sun. *Huwam/Jacjauybit*, which was located at the mouth of Bell Canyon, was “a moderately large inland village” with midden up to 1 m deep. “Analysis of temporal . . . artifact types, specifically shell beads and projectile points, indicate a terminal middle, late to historic date of occupation” (Tartaglia and Romani 1978:2). Romani observed that almost 30 percent of the ecofactual material was comprised of marine resources (resources which, unfortunately, he does not specify), which showed that *Huwam* had a close relationship with people on the coast (some 10 mi. to the south), in particular with the large village at *Humaliwu/Ongobepet*; he noted that the presence of shellfish correlates well with the optimal season for shellfish consumption along the Chumash coast: late fall and winter. Romani also discussed the archaeological materials recovered from *Huwam/Jacjauybit*. Based on the materials recovered, Romani hypothesized that “this location was the ritual public viewing point for the solstitial event. . . . It may have been the location for the erection of the sacred *silyik* enclosure” (Romani 1981:170-173).

Romani et al. (1985:100-106; NASA 2010:22) also examined the existing archaeological materials from the Burro Flats site. Their 1985 paper is important because it discusses the archaeological materials that were excavated during the years 1953-1960. It is clear that much of the excavation took place in what Rozaire recorded as VEN-151. Romani et al. (1985:101) noted that there was “a rather large quantity of artifactual and ecofactual materials . . . including cores and core tools, antler-tip flakers, projectile points, biface preforms, and one hammerstone.” Ground stone tools were uncommon, but they pointed out that there were quite a few bedrock mortars and cupules at the site. They observed that the site may have been established as early as A.D. 900 and was occupied as recently as 1820, and that the archaeological deposit “contains evidence of a range of activities indicating that it may have been a permanently occupied village” (NASA 2010:22).

The next article to mention Burro Flats was “Astronomy, Myth, and Ritual in the West San Fernando Valley,” by Romani et al. (1988). In this paper, Romani et al. continued their discussion about the archaeoastronomical aspects of the Burro Flats site, and they compared it to two other nearby sites with ceremonial components: the Castle Peak bead-shrine site (LAN-511), and the Chatsworth site (LAN-357). Romani et al. paid special attention to finding cupules and other small loci of rock art, and they succeeded in locating a total of 21 loci. The authors pointed out the similarities of the Burro Flats and Chatsworth sites, especially in that “both sites have one panel which is inescapably more elaborate and larger than the others” (Romani et al. 1988:112-114).

In 1986, Edwin Krupp of Griffith Observatory started making semi-regular observations of the solstices at the Burro Flats site (see Krupp 1988). Krupp is one of the leading experts on ancient and modern astronomical systems, and he pointed out that the Native Californians’ sky traditions have far-

reaching implications (Krupp 1983:132): “they tell us, at least in part, who some of the ancient skywatchers were and what motivated their vigils.” Krupp (1983:132) believed that

The Chumash shaman must have waited alone -- or with at most a few attendants -- solstice shrines are not suitable for large public gatherings. Our own observations of sunrises and sunsets on different sites demonstrate how difficult it is for a crowd to witness the event. Instead of great assemblies at these events, we must imagine a lone shaman striking out into the spirit lands of the soul from the privacy of a sacred shrine decorated by his own hand.

During the early 1990s, the author of this paper had the opportunity to visit Burro Flats with Dr. Krupp. These visits resulted in the recordation of four previously unrecorded sites: VEN-1065 through VEN-1068. The author subsequently consolidated all 15 sites into a one site, which became VEN-1072, with the 15 former sites now classified as loci, and he also completed site record supplements for several of the rock art loci (Knight 1995:11-12, 1997:39-40, 112-114, 2001:11, 47-48).

All three of the sites discussed here are listed in *California Rock Art: An Annotated Site Inventory and Bibliography* by Bill Sonin (1995:75-76, 227-228). Although Sonin's book has become a must-have guide to the rock art of California, much of the information Sonin provided for Burro Flats is incorrect. His description of VEN-151, for example, is actually a description of VEN-160. Sonin also stated that VEN-152, VEN-153, and VEN-154 have pictographs, which is not the case (Hyder 1996:9; Knight 1995:11-12).

The next significant mention of the Burro Flats Pictograph Site was in *The First Angelinos*, by William McCawley (1996). McCawley introduced no new research, but he did an excellent job of summarizing J. P. Harrington's research on the eastern Simi Hills and the western San Fernando Valley (McCawley 1996:35-38). McCawley discussed the Burro Flats site, and he illustrated the main panel in his Plate 3. A photograph of an important Gabrielino site in San Gabriel Canyon (LAN-164) with red-only pictographs was also provided (McCawley 1996:Figure 9). This is the first significant rock art site east of the three polychrome sites discussed here, and the differences in style are obvious: Chumash multicolored, largely naturalistic motifs, as opposed to the usually red-only, mostly abstract motifs in areas to the east, in areas occupied by speakers of languages in the Takic branch of the Northern Uto-Aztecan sub-family.

### **THE LAKE MANOR SITE (VEN-148/149)**

VEN-148 is recorded as a midden site on the west side of the main (unnamed) drainage flowing south from Chatsworth Peak. VEN-149 is recorded as polychrome and red monochrome pictographs that are located on the east side of the drainage (Figure 3). Both sites were recorded by Rozaire during the period when he was doing research at the Burro Flats site, and VEN-148, like VEN-1072, was excavated by Rozaire in 1960. Apparently no description, report, or artifact catalogue has ever been prepared for this collection, the location of which the author could not determine. This site is located on multiple private residences near Chatsworth Reservoir.

J. P. Harrington visited the site in 1917 with his wife Carobeth, Juan Menendez, and Juan's wife, Juana Valenzuela de Menendez. Juan was related to the Domec family (one-time owners of the ranch), and the group parked at the deserted Domec ranch house. Harrington said, “Although he [Juan] did not [know] the Ventureno [Chumash] name of that rancheria [in Spanish it] was *El Escorpion de las Salinas*” (Harrington 1917 Reel #106-152:1:7).

We walked up the arroyo which comes down from the Santa Susana Mountains. . . . We crossed the arroyo bed just downstream from a spring and waterbox for cattle and on the other side crossed a small and nice flat. . . . A short distance beyond the flat we reached a locality of great boulders. . . . On the cave-like wall of one we found . . . Indian paintings [i.e., VEN-149] . . . among the boulders a hundred feet Mugu-ward of the rock paintings. . . . Menendez called my attention to fragments of bone and shell, also of flint and



*Figure 3. Lake Manor site main panel (photo courtesy of Devlin Gandy).*

arrowheads on the surface of the ground [i.e., VEN-148]. . . . Menendrez volunteered . . . that one long rancheria extended from where we were a couple of miles to the southwest and that fragments of shell, etc. . . . are picked up [along] this whole stretch [Harrington 1917 Reel 106-152:1:7; Johnson 2006:40].

The actual boundaries of the site remain undetermined today. The rock art is illustrated in Harrington (1917), Johnson (2006:41, Figures 23-24), Knight (1997:111, Figure 33), and Sanberg et al. (1978:33, 36, Figures 3-4, 6). Multiple field checks of this site by the author have shown that pictographs, cupules, artifacts, and midden are present on both sides of the arroyo. An especially large bedrock mortar is located on a low boulder ca. 100 ft. east of the main panel. The main panel at VEN-149 is similar to the

main panel at Burro Flats, but it is much smaller (3+ m wide at Burro Flats vs. less than 2 m wide at Lake Manor).

Sanberg et al. (1978:34) examined the rock art at the Lake Manor site. They reported that the pictographs included

a surrealistic figure with rake-like appendages . . . , an incomplete three-digit stick figure, and several red lines, a surrealistic representation with four upward-angling appendages . . . this time in white. . . . Each of the four main extremities is unique. . . . The upper right extremity makes use of an oval depression painted red, from which nine spokes radiate. The lower left appendage also carries a three-digit extension which ends in finger-paint dots. Three small white dots in triangular formation are placed below the appendage. . . . There is also a ten inch irregular, incomplete circle, containing red and white dots as well as other small red pictographs.

Sanberg et al. (1978:28) stated, “An attempt was made to determine their [i.e., LAN-357 and VEN-149] relationship to one another and to the rock art of adjacent areas. . . . This is particularly true in regard to the northern section of the boundary between the Chumash and the Fernand $\tilde{e}$ no . . . for which there are several conflicting definitions.” They specifically stated that VEN-149 includes examples of all “five styles of Chumash painting as discussed by Heizer and Clewlow (1973:41): Type I (outline style), Type II (Linear red style), Type IIA (Linear black or white style), Type III (dotted style), Type IIIA (dotted polychrome style).” They pointed out that the use of rakes and the upward-angling appendages is indicative of Chumash rock painting, citing Heizer and Clewlow (1973:34). Line drawings of some of the VEN-149 rock art are illustrated in Heizer and Clewlow (1973:Figure 6).

The current property owners at VEN-149 have discovered several artifacts while tending to their property. During mid-2011, they invited Colleen Delany-Rivera of California State University Channel Islands to bring her students and two volunteers (including the author) to test-excavate the midden; the results of this excavation are pending. The author himself has seen a Santa Catalina Island steatite *comal* fragment, a Santa Catalina Island steatite bowl rim fragment, quartzite cores, quartzite scrapers, numerous quartzite flakes, a small black fused shale bird point, black fused shale flakes 1-4 cm in size, one 1 cm long obsidian flake, very few Monterey Chert flakes, much burnt rock, and a few small mammal bone fragments, some of which were burnt. An examination of the adjacent house lots to the south and west showed, most unfortunately, that the midden in those locations has been scraped away to level the lots.

### **THE CHATSWORTH SITE (LAN-357)**

This site was apparently an important ceremonial location, part of the village called *Momonga* in Fernand $\tilde{e}$ no, and *Calucsoho* in Chumash (Johnson 2006:15-23). The site has both fresh water and sulphur springs, which remain active today. The site includes numerous rock outcrops, rock shelters, and occasional small caves, many of which are decorated with rock art, including pictographs and cupules (Figure 4). When it was fully extant, the main panel may have been as impressive as the main panel at Burro Flats. The paintings are located in a very shallow sandstone rock shelter that is not well-protected from the elements, and natural exfoliation has destroyed much of the panel. The site includes a large, artifact-rich midden.

Robert Pence (from Pierce College) and Ken Kraft (from El Camino High School) directed the excavation of this site during 1970-1974. Pence and his students excavated again in 1976 (Romani 1981:115). According to Sanberg et al. (1978:30), “the site itself is 0.4 x 0.2 kms in dimension. The midden is black and well defined.” The artifact collection from the Chatsworth site is curated at the Pierce College Anthropology Laboratory in Woodland Hills. During 2008-2010, Pierce College students under the direction of Professor Noble Eisenlauer catalogued the collection, and sorted, measured, and weighed the artifacts, recording them in an electronic database. Recovered artifacts include

bone awls, hammer stones, tarring stones, steatite bowl fragments, manos, pestles, metate fragments, hammer stones, blades, choppers, beads (*Olivella* and steatite), pendants,



Figure 4. Chatsworth site main panel (photo courtesy of Devlin Gandy).

projectile points made from rhyolite, fused shale, chert, chalcedony and obsidian, flakes, 843kg. of burnt rock . . . and some 8000 faunal specimens [Nupuf 2010:1].

Sanberg et al. (1978) examined the rock art at LAN-357 and noted that the colors at the main panel include red, white, and black. Given the size and shape of the rock face, it can be estimated that the main panel was once about 3 m wide by 1 m in height. Motifs include anthropomorphs, raked anthropomorphs, aviforms, the aquatic motif, groups of short parallel lines, curvilinear lines, groups of dots, and other forms (Sanberg et al. 1978:30, 32, 35-36). The pictographs are now extremely weathered, with perhaps as little as 10 percent of the original panel still being clearly visible. Sanberg et al. (1978:28-32) stated that on the panel

naturalistic figures, typified by appendages that project away from the body with no bending, or bending down, and three digits on the arms and legs, are common. Rakes, unconnected groups of lines, and extremely abstract rectilinear alignments are seen. There are some curvilinear designs. These are all excellent examples of the Santa Barbara style associated with the Chumash. . . . Of some interest are the pecked pits, ground circles, and lines. . . . With the lack of rock art in any reported form from the Fernandeano-Gabrielino area, except at some considerable distance, it may be safe to assume this site to be the product of the Chumash with their near at hand comparable examples.

The Chatsworth site was discussed by Romani (1981:118-119, 140, 147-151, 161-169) in his Master's thesis. As at Burro Flats, Romani posited that some of the rock art, especially the main panel, was placed so as to help mark solstice events, but in this case sunsets, not sunrises as at VEN-1072. Romani observed that there is a single bedrock mortar on top of the outcrop where the main panel is located, and he used the mortar as a datum point to make direct observations of the winter (1978-1980) and the summer (1979) solstice sunsets. When standing at the mortar above the main panel, the summer solstice sunset occurs behind a high peak above the northwest corner of the San Fernando Valley (possibly Rocky Peak), while the winter solstice sunset occurs behind one of the highest outcrops at nearby LAN-89, or Stoney Point (Romani 1981:147-151, 161-169; Romani et al. 1988:119-122). To Romani, this showed that Native Americans had knowingly located the mortar, and therefore the polychrome painting below, on the particular rock formation from where, looking west, the sun would set no farther north than the highest peak to the northwest (at the summer solstice sunset), and the sun would set no farther south than the highest peak to the southwest (at the winter solstice sunset). As to the nature and date of the site, Romani et al. (1988:113-114, 118-119, 122) stated that

Archaeological information suggests that LAN-357 . . . appears to have been occupied from the Middle Period (1500 B.C. to 500 A.D.) until historic contact. . . . Historic occupation is based on the presence of Spanish trade beads. . . . The extensive rock art at the site suggests that it had a significant ceremonial component which distinguished it from other villages.

Romani (1981:167) also pointed out that

The presence of a sulfur spring -- often considered sacred and medicinal -- coupled with the extensive presence of rock art, clearly establishes a sacred/ceremonial value to this site. . . . The sanctity and magical power of rock art strongly implies that this is not a village of commoners or a more secular assortment of individuals, but rather a highly prestigious village occupied by high status individuals.

## DISCUSSION

The three sites described here (VEN-1072, VEN-149, and LAN-357) all have rock art components that are most similar to Native American polychrome pictographs as seen across Chumash territory. All of these sites also have other rock art, including other pictographs, multiple loci with cupules and, at VEN-1072, one locus with red pictographs and four simple petroglyphs, which is the only group of petroglyphs in the region. All three sites also have well-developed, artifact-rich middens.

Primary research questions about these sites include: Why are there only three sites with polychrome pictographs in this region, which has dozens of small caves and rock shelters? Why are the sites with polychrome pictographs located where they are? From the size of these sites and the complexity of the archaeological remains, including the large number of artifacts recovered, the sites were apparently important places. Why? Who occupied these sites and made these particular pictographs? How long ago? What are the source areas for the many artifacts that have been recovered from these sites? Are the material types from which the artifacts were made the same, or different?

The sites discussed here are located in a region with multiple ethnolinguistic groups, and these groups shared many material and ideological traits. The sites are found in the eastern part of what has been referred to as the Chumash Interaction Sphere (Hudson and Blackburn 1979:24). All three sites were probably important ceremonial locations, and they were near the northern edge of influence of the large village on the coast at present-day Malibu, some 10-12 mi. (ca. 20 km) to the south. *Huwam/Jucjauybit*, at Bell Canyon, was a part of the Malibu Province, which was comprised of the villages from somewhere east of the large villages at Point Mugu (*Muwu*) at the west end of the Santa Monica Mountains, and included the villages at Century Ranch (*Ta'lopop*), Westlake (*Hipuk*), and Thousand Oaks (*S'apwa*) (Librado 1981; Romani 1981:18-25; Romani et al. 1988:110; Whitley and Simon 1979).

The reason for the presence of elaborate rock art at certain villages was explained by Yokuts natives who live in the foothills of the west-central Sierra Nevada Mountains as follows:

The Wukchumne said that the paintings generally were placed at an important village site, one which was inhabited permanently or at some place where ceremonies were performed. They stated that tribal equipment, such as symmetrical bowls or mortars and pestles used for mashing and cooking jimson weed (*Datura*) roots, and for grinding Yokuts tobacco, or costumes for tribal ceremonies, often were concealed near these paintings. . . . The idea furnished was that the paintings added prestige to the spot, indicated that it was tripne (supernatural) and served to awe the lesser characters of the tribe and instilled in them respect for the equipment concealed there [Latta 1977:600].

It seems likely that this statement is also true of the sites discussed here, and, if so, this supports the contention that all three eastern Simi Hills polychrome pictograph sites were important ceremonial locations.

In the future, it will be possible to study the archaeological assemblages from these important sites without doing any new excavations, since collections already exist that have never been analyzed or described in any detail. (It is assumed that the collection from VEN-148 will eventually be located.) Any number of studies could be done with these materials, especially the beads, projectile points, and any obsidian artifacts. The collection from the Chatsworth site has only recently been catalogued (Nupuf 2010). I feel that the clear similarity of rock art at these three sites, and the location of all three sites on the Fernandefio side of the Eastern Coastal Chumash/Fernandefio border, suggests that the archaeological collections will include many common elements as well. Research should be conducted that describes the collections from each site, and these materials should be reviewed and examined in light of the regional archaeological record. This information should be made available to local Native Americans, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, etc., so as to encourage future research.

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This paper is dedicated to the memory of the John Romani (1950-2011).

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