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1974 Co-Traditions and Convergent Trends in Prehistoric California. San Luis Obispo County Archaeological Society Occasional Papers No. 8.

Lillard, J. B., R. F. Heizer, and F. Fenenga

1939 An Introduction to the Archaeology of Central California. Sacramento Junior College Department of Anthropology Bulletin 2.



Rock Art Treasures of Ancient America: The California Collection. Dave Caldwell, producer. Hayward: Dave Caldwell Productions, Inc. Videotape, 25 min., \$495.00 plus tax and shipping.

Reviewed by PHILIP J. WILKE
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"The California Collection" of American Indian rock art, as described in this film, includes three media in three separate regions: the pecked petroglyphs of the Coso Range, the giant ground figures or intaglios of the Colorado River lowland, and the painted cave art of the Santa Barbara coast. Quality photography portrays the rock drawings and ground figures in their natural settings in each of these regions. Lay persons and beginning students of rock art will therefore benefit from an excellent visual presentation.

The narrative of the film centers on symbolic aspects of the art with references to mythology. The case might be strongest for the Chumash region, where the ethnography of that tribe is documented in greater detail than perhaps that of any other North American Indian group. Moreover, studies of the rock art of the Santa Barbara coast and of Chumash astronomy and cosmology have resulted in what appears to be a very convincing argument of the link between the natural

and supernatural worlds of the Chumash. Although the paintings are not dated, they are probably not of great antiquity, and the prehistoric record does suggest a long tradition of cultural continuity in the region.

The same cannot be said for east-central California, however, and considerations of time are all but ignored in the presentation on the Coso Range. A case is made for the Coso rock art symbolically representing the exploits of mythic Coyote, whose conquest of toothed vaginas with a mountain sheep neck bone as a penis sheath is ultimately responsible for the origin of all Shoshonis (see Whitley 1982). The myth is recounted by a Shoshoni, but to my knowledge it was actually recorded only in other regions occupied in historic time by other Shoshoni groups. And at least half of all scholars interested in the linguistic prehistory of the Great Basin would argue that the Numic (Shoshoni, Northern Paiute, Southern Paiute) groups have not occupied that area for more than about a thousand years, while much of the rock art may be a great deal older than that, maybe several times as old. If those linguistic prehistorians are correct about the length of Numic occupation in the Basin, the rock art might have been there before they ever arrived, unless of course the Coso Range is the true Numic homeland and the proto-Shoshoni would also have spread the Coso style of rock art elsewhere as they swarmed over the Basin. This notion is not supported by an inventory of the rock art styles and motifs in other parts of Shoshoni territory.

This illustrates an important problem with the text of the film: not enough time is given to the possibility that rock art may have served several, or many, separate functions in any given region over time, and that the ethnographic present and interpretations linked to it may not apply to all of the time represented by the archaeological record. Simple explanations are seldom adequate, unfor-

tunately, for complex problems, and the origin and meaning of Coso rock art is a very complex problem. The point to be underscored is that the film presents one view, and there are others.

The intaglios of the Colorado River lowland would not be considered rock art *per se* by many scholars, but the film provides some excellent aerial views of giant human forms, snakes, quadrupeds, and the Topock Maze. Here an interpretation is provided drawn from Mohave myth (by a Tarahumara narrator!), and the criticisms offered above for the Coso region also apply. The only real difference is that we know far less of the prehistory of the Colorado River lowland because of the paucity of quality archaeological data from that region. The quadruped figures seem to portray horses, however, and this would suggest that at least part of the complex of ground figures dates to the sixteenth century or later. Cultural continuity is seemingly established for that time depth, but connections with myth are still difficult or impossible to present in a convincing manner. There is, for example, no compelling reason to believe that ground figures of humans must portray the character Mastamho in Mohave myth.

The film presents outstanding photographic documentation of the rock drawings and ground figures, and one investigator's (David Whitley, writer of the text of the film) interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the art, but I had trouble relating the two. I also have trouble with the notion that all rock art must have a symbolic meaning. Be that as it may, those departments and institutions that can afford to acquire the film should no doubt find that it will generate a great deal of inquiry and discussion among beginning students, and therein may lie its main value. The film is available in three videotape formats: $\frac{3}{4}$ in., $\frac{1}{2}$ in. BETA, and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. VHS. Order from Dave Caldwell Productions, Inc., 26934 Halifax Place, Hayward, CA 94542.

REFERENCE

Whitley, D. S.

- 1982 Notes on the Coso Petroglyphs, the Etiological Mythology of the Western Shoshoni, and the Interpretations of Rock Art. *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 4(2): 262-272.



Rock Art Papers Volume I. Ken Hedges, editor. San Diego: San Diego Museum Papers No. 16, 1983, 104 pp., 94 illustrations, \$10.95 (paper).

Reviewed by ERIC W. RITTER

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There is an increasing flow of literature devoted to the study of prehistoric art in its various forms. Studies of petroglyphs and pictographs are a major focus in this regard. Numerous reasons are evident for this trend in rock art studies, including visibility and accessibility, relatively low expenditures of the funding and labor necessary for study, the expanding awareness of the art's informational potential, and public interest. San Diego Museum of Man's initial volume of rock art papers is a result of the growth in rock art research and interest.

Within this volume are 14 short articles on current rock art research and study based on papers presented at the Museum's 1982 annual rock art symposium. Many represent the outcome of preliminary studies; others are brief notes regarding particular details of interpretation or summarize results of ongoing projects. The papers are organized areally: Baja California, Arizona, southern California, northern California, and northern Mexico.

The first article, by James Workman, is