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A Material Representation of a Sacred Tradition

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This paper suggests an explanation of a circular rock artifact found in northern San Diego County and Orange County. The importance of the object lies in its resemblance to the groundpaintings (or sandpaintings) employed by the Luiseño and other southern California Indians in rites of passage, including the Chinigchinich initiation complex, an idea suggested by Paul Chace (1972). It is the author's objective to suggest correlations between this symbol and the groundpaintings as well as the function of the artifact in a socio-religious context.

Every human society has a world view that includes the structure of the universe and earth, the origin and history of the society, and its aspirations. World view embodies space-time coordinates and embraces symbolic conceptualizations of values.

World view has been expressed in rites of passage surrounding birth, adolescence, marriage, and death. Among southern California societies, such as those of the Diegueño, Luiseño, Juaneño and Gabrielino, world view was reflected in rites of passage, including the Chinigchinich initiation rites for adolescent boys and girls. The ritual dances and costumes worn by youthful initiates and by older functionaries in the religious system were analogous to the dance and costume of Chinigchinich "who taught the elders how to dance" (Boscana 1970:12). The tortures and privations endured by males included whipping, ant bites, fasting,

and doses of a beverage extracted from the roots of Jimson weed. Shamans administered a tobacco concoction to girl initiates (Dubois 1908:94), who underwent ordeals differing from those in boys' initiation.

The groundpaintings illustrated by Sparkman (1908:Plate 20) and Dubois (1908:Fig. 2) were a component of Luiseño ritual; they were symbolic representations of the Luiseño universe (Dubois 1908:88) and the ideal development of an individual in his or her quest to learn group mores and to reach an upper realm of spiritual fulfillment after death. The "paintings" formed part of the Chinigchinich complex including the Jimson weed ceremony and the ant ordeal: they were used to instruct youthful initiates about the origins and structure of the universe. The attributes of the deity, Chinigchinich, found expression in the groundpaintings as in other ritual elements of the saga of boys' and girls' initiation. The "punishers," who occupied positions around the center of the painting, were "Chinigchinich" animals such as the rattlesnake, the bear, "panther," and the black spider, and were capable of inflicting misfortunes upon ritually wayward individuals (Sparkman 1908:Plate 20). The paintings were also used in such mortuary rituals as the *Unish matakish*, during which the clan or "party" chief buried the feathers of a deceased Chinigchinich initiate (Dubois 1908: 92, 93). The doctors or shamans made these abstract and colorful sacred symbols in the ceremonial brush shelter (*wamkish* or *vanquech*)¹ on ritual occasions.

The groundpainting illustrated by Sparkman had three nearly complete concentric rings: each was broken at the same location or the "North." Beginning with the outermost, the broken rings symbolized "Milky Way," "night," and "blood."² A complete circle lay at the center.³ According to Sparkman (1908: Plate 20), the same groundpainting was used in both boys' and girls' initiation.

Dubois' monograph contains two varying

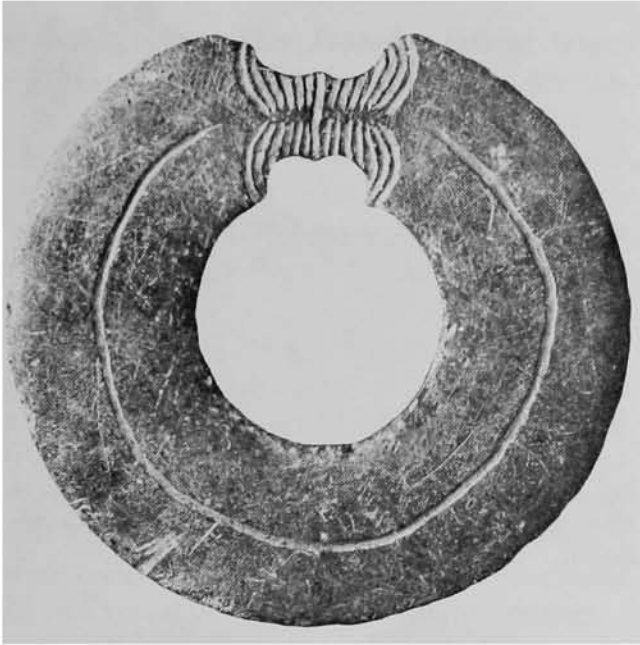


Fig. 1. Chlorite schist disc found on the Cole Ranch.
Cat. No. 2878, Bowers Museum collection.

but related groundpaintings (Dubois 1908: Plate or Fig. 2, Fig. 2, p. 90) associated with Chinigchinich initiation and other rites of passage; these bear a schematic similarity to the design illustrated by Sparkman. One of Dubois' informants testified that the groundpaintings used in boys' initiation differed from that used in girls' initiation, and both seem to differ from Sparkman's design in being more complex; yet, they resemble the latter in that they are circular, have a hole at the center, and employ three concentric components. The girls' painting had an opening or gate to the "North," whereas the boys' painting utilized unbroken circles (Dubois 1908:89, 90).

Other material and more durable artifacts may have symbolized some of the concepts and rites of passage embodied in the Chinigchinich complex. An obscure rock artifact found in Orange and San Diego counties resembles and may conceptually parallel the groundpaintings described by Sparkman and Dubois (Chace 1972); the artifact most closely resembles the painting illustrated by Sparkman.

A complete chlorite schist example of this artifact type (Fig. 1) was accessioned to the Bowers Museum collection in 1937; the author exhibited it in a display unit dealing with sacred behavior in 1972. The artifact is circular ($9\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter), flat ($\frac{3}{8}$ " thick), contains a hole in the center ($3\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter), bears a constriction showing two opposing sets of parallel grooves, one containing seven grooves and the other six.⁴ Another groove parallels the circumference and the two ends of this engraved arc end short of the construction, showing an opening in the circle. The artifact was found on the Cole Ranch, one-half mile south of Wintersburg, now within the Huntington Beach-Fountain Valley area. Chlorite schist (*huula* 'arrow') was a mineral sacred to Chinigchinich (Harrington 1933:135).

John Winterbourne uncovered three steatite fragments resembling this type of artifact in Santiago Canyon (Santa Ana Mountains) during an excavation in 1935 (Winterbourne: (1935). Also, Mr. Frank Wada uncovered several of these ring-like objects in San Mateo Canyon (San Diego County) at a depth of three feet while trenching for water lines on a sandy slope in 1940.

The Forster family acquired three of the artifacts and placed two of them on display in a bank exhibit located in San Juan Capistrano. The Forster specimens may be some of those uncovered by Mr. Wada. One of the Forster specimens found its way into the Heye Foundation collection and is probably one of the three disc-like objects illustrated in a Heye Foundation paper in 1944 (Burnett 1944:Plate XXXVII). A facsimile of this specimen was returned to the Forsters (Jack Maddock, personal communication); the reproduction has red coloring in the incisions, presumably because the original has this characteristic.

Other Bowers Museum specimens are fragmentary (Figs. 2 and 3). The former was manufactured from a fine-grained light brown sedimentary rock. The incisions on this speci-

men (Fig. 2) bear traces of reddish pigment. The fragment originated in Mission Viejo and was accessioned to the Bowers Museum in 1964.

These objects may have functioned as symbols of the Luiseño world view as well as lithic representations of the groundpaintings used in initiation and mortuary rituals. In other words, the rims, circular grooves, and inner rims of these flat ring-like objects parallel the circular designs of the groundpainting as illustrated in Dubois' and especially Sparkman's monographs. The outer circumference of the rock objects may have symbolized "Milky Way"; the groove, "night (sky)"; and the inner circumference, "blood." Also, the grooves at the constriction on the artifact could logically be interpreted as the gate to the "North" in the girls' variation of the sandpainting.

The presence of reddish pigment on one fragment (Fig. 2) suggests a link to initiation ritual. Red was associated with initiation in Luiseño ritual: rocks were painted red as part of the girls' initiation (Sparkman 1908:209). Red pigment was applied to the bodies of Juaneño male initiates (Boscana 1970:24) and to the faces of girls (Dubois 1908:96). Red ashes from fireplaces were used as the red pigment in the groundpainting (Harrington 1933:143).

There are analogies to this artifact in Diegueño initiation ritual in which "crescentic" stones were shown to girls (Rust 1906). Also, according to Kroeber flat stones were placed on the stomachs of Luiseño girl initiates at Pauma (Strong 1972:299). These references tend to support the proposition that the artifact under discussion was used in Luiseño initiation ritual and had a sacred quality.

The groundpaintings (and by inference the ring-like artifact) were schematic representations of the oval sacred enclosure (*wamkish*), where initiation and other rites were carried out. The constriction on the rock object and



Fig. 2. Fragment bearing reddish pigment found in Mission Viejo. Cat. No. 32486, Bowers Museum collection.



Fig. 3. Fragment found in Mission Viejo. Cat. No. 32489, Bowers Museum collection.

the opening representing "North" in the paintings may have been analogous to the opening of the *wamkish*. The concentric circles of the rock artifact and groundpaintings may have paralleled the enclosures of the *wamkish*. The enclosure had an outer and inner precinct, including a fireplace and mounted coyote pelt at the center (or the hide of a "montes gato"). Birds' claws and other sacred objects filled the hide and may have been symbols of the various "punishers" represented in the groundpaintings (Boscana 1970:16). The reference to coyote and wildcat pelts can be explained in terms of an aboriginal moiety system (Strong 1929:289, 290).

The Luiseño *wamkish* and its Juaneño and Gabrieliño counterparts (Reid 1968:21) were an earthly reflection or microcosm of the earth

and universe. The Juaneño village (clan) leader, or *Not*, a ritual successor of Chinigchinich (Boscana 1970:12), occupied a domestic unit near the center of the village and adjacent to the *wamkish* with its fire hearth and coyote or wildcat pelt, symbols corresponding to the navel of the universe (Boscana 1970:15). This was probably the case in Luiseño and Gabrieliño villages as well. Even the circular or oval floor plan of the domestic unit with its centralized hearth stones was a humble reflection of the pattern of heaven and earth, the *wamkish*, and the village community. Circularity seems to have been the dominant structural theme in world view, the sacred enclosure, house plan, and groundpainting.

Moiety organization bears upon the problem. Strong argues that Luiseño society once had a dual organization composed of Coyote and Wildcat divisions; also, black and red were color symbols of this binary structure (Strong 1929:288-290). It follows, therefore, that one might expect these colors to appear in the groundpaintings. According to Dubois' informants the color scheme of the groundpainting was as follows: the outer circle was white ("Milky Way"); the middle circle, red ("night, sky"), and the inner circle, black (Dubois 1908:88). The faces of girl initiates were also painted these colors (Dubois 1908:96). Hence, the groundpaintings as well as the artifact under discussion may have been material symbols of the social order, a dual system through which everyone passed to reach the "Milky Way." Also, in the author's opinion the presence of red pigment on two of the artifacts is no historical accident but explainable in terms of Luiseño social organization and sacred tradition.

The elements of the groundpainting and the ring-like artifact may have represented the stages of ritual development of the individual. This deduction is based on the meanings of the groundpaintings in rites of passage. The central hole in the paintings means "origin" or

"root" which seems to infer the birth of the individual (Dubois 1908:80). The punishers and the color symbolism in the painting suggest initiation of the individual. The opening to the "North," the route of souls after death (Sparkman 1908:225), as well as the application of the term "Milky Way" to the outer ring are obvious references to the transition occurring at death.

That the groundpaintings were used in initiation rites as well as mortuary ritual suggests the idea that the elements of the paintings represent stages of ritual development of individuals.

Initiation itself may have included stages in a ritual progression. The *Anut* ceremony (ant ordeal) seems to have been separate from the drinking of the Jimson root derivative: both ceremonies included the groundpaintings (Dubois 1908:91). Also, Boscana observed that some youths drank the hallucinatory beverage whereas others did not: perhaps Boscana observed two groups of initiates, one at a more advanced stage than the other (Boscana 1970:24). In legend, Chinigchinich progressed through phases paralleling the evolution of the individual from a non-initiated stage through the highest rank of ritual development (Boscana 1970:7, 8). He established the *puplem*, the privileged group of ritual specialists, the form of the sacred enclosure, the costumes, dances, and paraphernalia, and gave commands prior to his journey to the "Milky Way" (Boscana 1970:12, 13).

SUMMARY

The abstract design of this artifact resembles the structure of the Luiseño universe, the structure of the ceremonial enclosure, and the groundpaintings utilized in rites of passage. A concentric circularity was an underlying structural thread linking the stages of individual development, the ritual development of Chinigchinich, the enclosures of the *wamkish*, the design elements of the groundpaintings,

and the artifact described in this paper.

Our species has expressed sacred concepts in material symbolizations for millennia. The tabernacle of the Hebrews in the time of the Judges is a case in point: an earthly structure was a reflection of heavenly and eternal realities. In southern California, sacred concepts were rendered in a variety of media including basketry, sedimentary rocks, steatite, and granite. In the author's opinion, the artifact described in this paper was one of the media used to express the ritual life cycle of the Luiseño initiates, the structure of the sacred enclosure and the universe. Also, the artifact may have played a direct role in Luiseño ritual and therefore functioned as a ritual object.

The artifact is one of those rare occurrences in prehistoric archaeology in which a material remain can be explained in the context of a dimension of sacred behavior of historic ethnic groups, in this case the Luiseño and Juaneño.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Paul Chace was the first, to the author's knowledge, to realize the significance of the artifact which is the subject of this paper (*ca.* 1963). He delivered a paper on the topic in 1972. John "Jack" Maddock has maintained a continuous interest in the discs since the 1960's; he contacted Frank Wada, who provided important details concerning the discovery in San Mateo Canyon. Mr. Maddock brought to the attention of Paul Chace several of the rock discs belonging to the Forster family. I am indebted to Jack Maddock for suggesting that I write this paper in 1976 and encouraging me to complete it. Claudine Young carried out archaeological field work in San Mateo Canyon at the site of the 1937 discovery and was instrumental in bringing about its preservation.

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NOTES

1. According to Strong (1929:295) the *wamkish* was one of the inner enclosures contained in the sacred enclosure, whereas Boscana used the term *vanquech*, a cognate of *wamkish*, with reference to the entire sacred structure.

2. Kroeber (1925:662, 663, Fig. *b*) interprets the middle broken circle as "night (sky)".

3. The "navel" may bear a distant conceptual relationship to the *sipapu*, the symbolic passage of the emergence in the Hopi kiva; southern California groundpainting has distant Southwest affinities (Kroeber 1925:661).

4. Paul Chace (1972) refers to this design element as a "butterfly." A species of butterfly was associated with the *wamkish* (Dubois 1908:106).

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“Coso” Style Pictographs of the Southern Sierra Nevada

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Two recently discovered pictograph sites have similarities indicating common origin to the “Coso” style petroglyphs identified by Grant, Baird and Pringle (1968). These sites were located during field reconnaissance in the Southern Sierra Nevada. The two sites appear unique for two reasons: (1) they date to the late prehistoric and historic periods which previously have not been noted as containing “Coso” style rock art; and (2) “Coso” style *pictographs* are exceedingly rare and are unknown for these periods.

Grant, Baird, and Pringle (1968) defined a peculiar petroglyph style found within the Coso Range located in the western Mojave Desert. Petroglyphs are found on patinated basaltic cliffs and boulders and display a wealth of representational zoomorphic and anthropomorphic forms. The most recurrent zoomorphic form and that which has come to characterize this locality is the full front-facing horned and boat-shaped bodied bighorn sheep.

Grant, Baird, and Pringle (1968:18) say of this pattern:

This method of drawing the horns (often with ears added) is probably the most characteristic feature of the Coso sheep. Both these features are extremely rare in other parts of the west. A few isolated examples in Texas may be laid to independent invention, but a single example in Nevada east of the Sierra Nevada and numbers of horn-front sheep from the middle Columbia near Vantage suggest a northern extension of Coso ideas.

Pictographs in the Coso style are rare and none seem to be attributable to the late period. Grant and his associates state that

In the Coso Range, there are six sites where