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Two Painted Stone Artifacts from Shasta County, California

ELAINE SUNDAHL

Two stone artifacts displaying vestiges of "painted" designs were collected by Shasta-Trinity National Forest personnel in 1977. That year, the second of a two-year drought in California, the waters of Shasta Lake receded to their lowest level since the reservoir was initially filled in the 1940s and a

concerted effort was made to inventory and evaluate archaeological resources thus exposed. Eleven sites recorded prior to reservoir construction were revisited and some 54 new sites were recorded, including the two containing the decorated stones. These artifacts were collected and are currently housed at the Shasta College Archaeology Laboratory in Redding.

Shasta Lake is located in the southeastern portion of the Klamath Mountains geologic province. Both painted-stone sites, CA-SHA-31 and CA-SHA-954, are located in the pool area below the normal drawdown level of the lake (Fig. 1). The CA-SHA-31 site lies on a terrace adjoining the west bank of the now inundated McCloud River at an elevation of 840 ft. above sea level and more than 200 ft. below the maximum lake level. Although numerous large terraces border the McCloud, most of the surrounding country is steep and dominated by coniferous vegetation. CA-SHA-954 is located approximately 13.7 km. (8.5 mi.) farther south at an elevation of 980 ft., less than 100 ft. below the maximum lake level. Situated on a small flat adjoining the east bank of Jones Valley Creek, the site lies

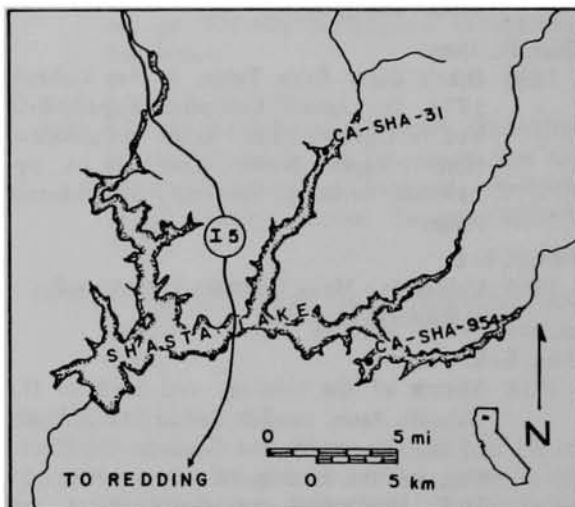


Fig. 1. Location of painted stone sites, Shasta County, California.

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in an area of gently rolling hills in an ecological transition zone between conifers and oak-grasslands.

Both painted stones were surface occurrences, each found with its painted face downward. The smaller artifact (Cat. No. 05-14-58-73-30), found at CA-SHA-31, is a small, flat, creek-smoothed stone of a dark gray metamorphic material, measuring 66 by 42 by 14 mm. The design, executed in a reddish color (Munsell 10 YR 5/8) with a wax-like texture resembling that of a crayon, is formed by two slightly curving lines joined by four shorter lines like rungs of a ladder (Fig. 2a). The design can barely be seen against the dark color of the stone and precise measurements are difficult. The long lines forming the sides of the ladder are approximately 33 and 23 mm. in length and the short connecting lines 9 mm. long. All line widths are approximately 3 mm.

The larger stone (Cat. No. 05-14-58-127-1), collected from CA-SHA-954, is an almost perfectly round, water-smoothed cobble of granite, measuring 89 by 86 by 38 mm. Both faces are fairly flat and the face with the design may have been ground. The design, executed in a dark red color (Munsell 10 YR 3/6) that stands out in distinct contrast to the pale surface of the cobble, is composed of three broad lines, two of which diverge from each other and are connected by the third at the point of their furthest divergence like a heavy lintel balanced on two not quite parallel posts (Fig. 2b). The latter lines measure 56 and 54 mm. in maximum length and the former 62 mm. The connecting line is the widest, measuring at its maximum 17 mm. in width while both the other lines measure 11 mm. Outlines are not distinct, but whether this is a factor of time, inundation, or execution cannot be determined. A faint presence of reddish color suggests that there once was a fourth line midway between the two diverging lines. The

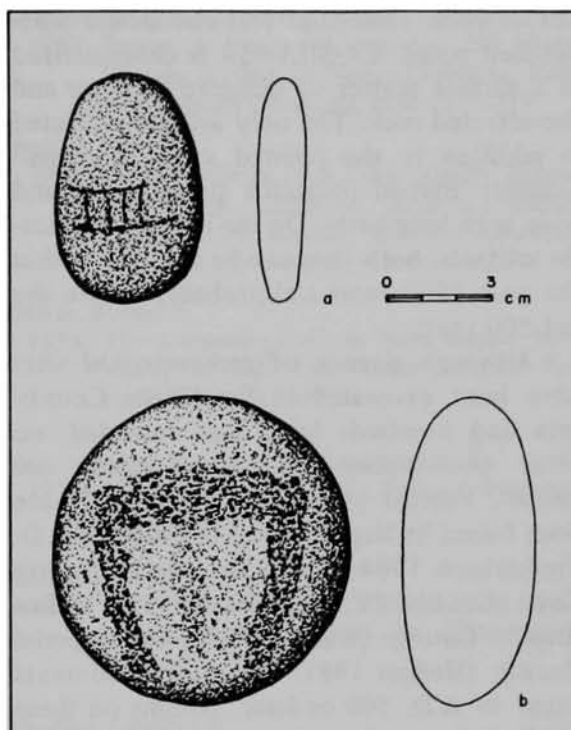


Fig. 2. Painted stones from Shasta County sites; a: Cat. No. 05-14-58-73-30 from CA-SHA-31; b: Cat. No. 05-14-58-127-1 from CA-SHA-954.

reverse side of the stone may have the same or a similar design executed in a gray color that barely shows against the granitic stone. Three faint lines seem to be converging toward a point beyond the edge of the stone. However, no connecting line is visible. This design may also have been originally done in red, the color having leached out because of greater exposure to the air or reservoir waters.

The CA-SHA-31 site is recorded as being over 800 m. in length, quite large for a site in Shasta County. Discontinuous exposures of midden containing possible housepits could be observed in 1977 between patches of lake silt. The midden features an extensive deposit of flaking debris and fire-affected rock. Forty-six stone artifacts collected in addition to the decorated stone include a number of Gunther Barbed projectile points, and one

Cottonwood Triangular and one Desert Sidenotched point. CA-SHA-954 is characterized as a surface scatter of obsidian debitage and fire-affected rock. The only artifact collected in addition to the painted stone is a small Gunther Barbed projectile point, short and wide with long barbs. On the basis of diagnostic artifacts, both sites can be dated to within the past 1500 years and probably within the last 500 years.

Although dozens of archaeological sites have been excavated in the Shasta County area and hundreds have been recorded, no other occurrences of painted stones are known. Painted pebbles and "tablets" have been found in Napa County (Heizer 1953; D. Fredrickson 1984: 514, Figs. 10-13), Contra Costa County (V. Fredrickson 1977), Los Angeles County (Walker 1957), and Imperial County (Hedges 1981: 103), all in contexts dated to A.D. 500 or later. Designs on these artifacts, most of which are painted in red, do not show a close similarity to those from Shasta County. The Contra Costa County specimens are tentatively interpreted as gaming pieces or as representing male and female elements for use in fertility rites (V. Fredrickson 1977: 115).

A sizable series of incised stones was recently described from several sites in the upper Sacramento River canyon 10 to 15 mi. northwest of the McCloud River. Generally made from small flat fragments of metasedimentary rock, these artifacts feature abstract designs composed predominantly of parallel, random, or multidirectional lines, cross-hatching and chevrons. Stratigraphic contexts indicate a temporal placement prior to late prehistoric times (Raven et al. 1984: 96-109). None of the illustrated specimens show any resemblance to the painted stones described above.

No pictographs are known for the general Shasta County area. Three fairly extensive petroglyph sites have been recorded, one of

which, CA-SHA-39, is located within 12 km. (7 mi.) of Shasta Lake. Design elements at CA-SHA-39 are predominantly abstract curvilinear with simple motifs such as meandering lines, rows of dots, concentric circles and other abstract patterns (Grant: 1971: 238-240). An examination of published (Heizer and Clewlow 1973: 273-279) and unpublished (Eric W. Ritter, personal slide collection; Shasta College Photo File) drawings and photographs of rock art at CA-SHA-39, CA-SHA-217, and CA-SHA-168 revealed no close similarities in design to the painted stones, although some long, horizontally aligned, ladder-like elements were noted at the last-named site.

During the ethnographic period, western Shasta County was inhabited by the Wintu (DuBois 1935: Map 1), the northernmost of California Penutian-speaking groups. Although their tenancy within the McCloud and Pit River basins is believed to have been fairly short, it was probably of at least 500 years duration (Sundahl 1982: 196). The contexts in which the painted stones were found are characteristic of the Shasta Complex (Meighan 1955: 32-33), which in this area is attributed to the prehistoric Wintu (Treganza and Heicksen 1960: 42-43). CA-SHA-31 may be the Wintu village recorded ethnographically as *Tsurupanti* (Guilford-Kardell and Dotta 1980: 70). Although the use of body paints (Voegelin 1942: 83-84) and the crushing of "paint rocks" in burials (DuBois 1935: 77) are reported for the Wintu, no ethnographic reference is known for the painting of designs on stones or other artifacts.

It has been suggested (Winfield Henn, personal communication 1985) that the design on the larger painted stone resembles the chin tattoos worn by Wintu women (DuBois 1935: 48; Voegelin 1942: 84; Knudtson 1977, Frontispiece drawing by Hank Ford). It is interesting to note that each surface of an elongated incised pebble found in Lassen

County contains a design interpreted as a human motif with the head represented by a horizontal bar with vertical bars – three on one face and four on the other – extending above it (Pilling 1957). The distance between the vertical bars increases with distance from the horizontal bar in both cases, however, rather than decreasing as in the case of the Shasta County painted stones.

No functional interpretation is offered here. The occurrence of two painted stones from two different sites some 13.7 km. apart suggests more may have existed in the interval. Both were found in an area attributed to the McCloud Wintu (DuBois 1935: 6) and they may represent a localized trait of this dialectal subgroup whose prehistoric territory is now largely under the waters of Shasta Lake.

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An Incised Soapstone Object from Johnson's Landing, Santa Catalina Island, California

ROBERT J. WLODARSKI

A fragmented, incised soapstone object (Fig. 1) was recovered from a large coastal site on Catalina Island during a research project in February 1983. The site had previously been excavated by Paul Schumacher in the 1870s and Ralph Glidden in the 1920s. The object was found at Johnson's Landing, which lies at the western end of Emerald Bay on the leeward side of the Island, approximately three miles west of the Isthmus (Fig. 2).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Paul Schumacher (1877) and Ralph Glidden (1920, 1927) excavated over 243 burials from the cemetery at Johnson's Landing. Notes, photographic material, and artifactual data curated at the Peabody Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Museum of the American Indian, and the Catalina Island Museum indicated that, in addition to the skeletal remains,

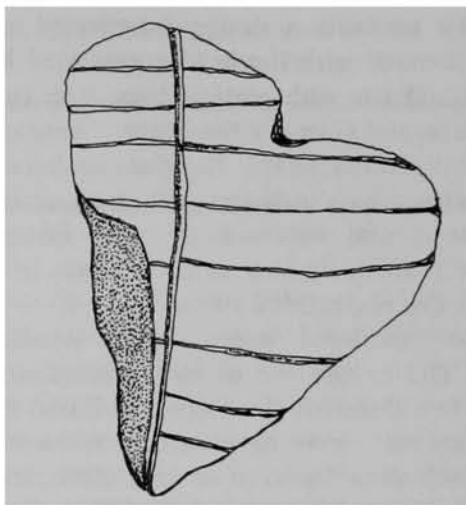


Fig. 1. Incised soapstone object from Johnson's Landing, actual size.

a large quantity and variety of burial goods were also collected from the cemetery.

A preliminary inventory of materials collected by Schumacher and Glidden indicated that the bulk of artifactual material removed from the burial area consisted of shell and stone bead necklaces; comals; mortars and pestles; soapstone bowls; and shell, bone and stone ornaments; however, effigies, quartz crystals, and several small, grooved and incised soapstone and serpentine objects were also found in association with some burials.

The incised, fine-grained soapstone object recently recovered from Johnson's Landing appears similar to other forms discussed by Abbott (1879), Pond (1968), Hoover (1973), Wlodarski (1974), and Lee (1981). However, several of these objects are large and bulky (some exceeding 15 cm. in length) and appear to represent broken comal and bowl fragments which were reworked and incised. Smaller, more delicate incised objects appear to be pendants or charmstones, while the larger "tablets" may have served more specific functions. As Pond stated:

The Malaga Cove tablets are heavy slabs without any means of attachment. Incised

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