Chapter 15
Spirituality in Rock Art Yesterday and Today: Reflections from the Northern Plains and Far Western United States

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> *Landscape [is] a frame for discourse that encourages the development of metaphors, which enables the exploration of old topics in new ways, and which may provide the framework for the construction of new theories* (Morphy 1995:205).

Introduction

Since the 1960s many cultures throughout the world have become more aware of their heritage and are actively working to preserve it, if not revitalize it, and this is especially true of cultures that have undergone transformations or at least partial acculturations by invading governments, which began in colonial times. For these groups, heritage is no longer just associated with the past, but it is also relevant to the present, and the meaning of *sacred* as associated with past beliefs is reemerging and changing. Often places known as *sacred* to a culture are natural features of the landscape, such as mountain peaks, springs, rivers, woods, and caves (Carmichael et al. 1994:1). Rocks, and especially those where rock art is located, are particularly important spiritual and/or sacred places. These natural features might be a singular element or a larger landscape or viewshed. While all sacred landscapes are physical, not all physical landscapes are sacred, but all hold the potential for being so (Saunders 2004).

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Research associated with rock art is mostly conducted from an etic view, the common method associated with archaeological analyses. In most cases, the culture that made or used a site is unknown or is in such a changed state that an emic perspective of analysis is not possible. In these cases, the living cultures of the known direct descendants no longer know who created or used the rock art; the French cave art is a textbook example of this problem. As Bullen (Chap. 2, this volume) has noted, our brains and those of 30,000 years ago have much in common. Therefore, understanding rock art is not beyond our reach even when it is greatly separated from us in time and cultural connection. However, there are some places in the world where rock art retains close ties to present day people, and in these cases it is important for researchers of an ethnic group to which they do not belong to be cognizant of the emic view of sacred places and consider it in their analysis. When viewing rock art as part of the larger landscape early records (both ethnographies and ethnohistorical sources) provide information that allows a closer approximation of an emic perspective and can augment oral traditions of living descendants or act as an independent line of evidence. Emic views of sacred landscapes can be varied. For example, the following description of a Navajo sacred geography shows an all encompassing landscape view:

> The earth is not just a series of dramatically poised topographic features that incite the wonder of man or beckon for exploitation, but rather a living, breathing entity in an animate universe. The land with its water, plants, and animals is a spiritual creation put into motion by the gods in their wisdom. These elements are here to help, teach, and protect through an integrated system of beliefs that spell out man's relationship to man, nature, and the supernatural (McPherson 1992:11).

Another view of sacred landscape can be seen in the geography of the Wintu of northern California (Theodoratus and LaPena 1994). The religious cosmology of the Wintu interconnects with the environment so that the sacredness of the topographic features of the landscape provides further insight into their mythology. Otis Parrish, a Kashaya Pomo Elder, from Northern California (Parrish, personal communication 2004) has argued that to understand the Kashaya Pomo perspective it is necessary to view the landscape through their "lens." A short story of a family preparing to travel to Great Grandmother's birthplace in the Cherokee nation provides a modern perspective of a sacred landscape regarding what is placed on a map:

> Papa unfolded the Texaco map on the table and found where Tennessee and North Carolina and Georgia came together in three different pastel colors. Great Mam looked down at the colored lines and squinted, holding the sides of her glasses. "Is this the Hiwassee River?" she wanted to know. "No, now those lines are highways," he said. "Red is the interstate. Blue is river." "Well, what's this?" He looked. "That's the state line." "Now why would they put that on a map?" (Clarkson 1998:121).

As researchers, we cannot take for granted that past or present perceptions of the landscape, its uses, or meanings match our culture's view, but that is not to say we cannot strive for an emic understanding of the sacred landscapes of people not of our culture. People throughout the world left clues about their beliefs associated with spirituality and landscapes they found to be sacred. Among those clues, rock

art is one of the best preserved and most widespread, and it is the only artifact we can know for certain was left in the location where it was made to be used. The articles in this book recognize the uniqueness of this trait among archaeological remains, and all have used it to advance our knowledge about rock art and scared places.

Exploring the Term Sacred

When studying sacred, it is important to define what is sacred and what makes a landscape sacred as cultures recognize particular areas on the landscape as having sacredness and not others. A Dakota elder described the occurrence of this difference as "The rain falls in many places but only pools in certain places" (Thomas Sanders, personal communication 2013). The subject of sacredness is a cultural construct with different meanings to different peoples and cultures, and even at different times to the same culture. The dictionary defines sacred as "dedicated or set apart for the service or worship of a deity <a tree ~ to the gods>; entitled to reverence and respect; not secular or profane" (Merriam-Webster 2003:1093). Identifying a specific place as sacred is more than just describing a piece of land or a place on the landscape. It implies associations with religious or spiritual aspects of a culture, or a place where a ritual may have taken place. Additionally, a designation of sacred when associated with a site also carries the responsibility of rules and regulations concerning how people behave relative to it and "implies a set of beliefs to do with the non-empirical world, often in relation to the spirits of the ancestors, as well as more remote or powerful gods and spirits" (Carmichael et al. 1994:3).

Governments worldwide are being forced to consider and address the sacredness of land within their boundaries as viewed by all the ethnic groups that comprise their citizenship. Australia is foremost in understanding the existence of Aboriginal sacred sites (Ucko 1994:xv). In 1977, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies made a policy decision to only record sites that the *Aboriginal custodians* wanted to be recorded, sanctifying a "secret" category of information and the inference of an "owned" by indigenous peoples (Ucko 1994:xvi–xvii). The United States has also addressed the issue of sacred land and ethnic groups. In 1996, then President Clinton signed an executive order (#13007), pertaining to federal land, which identified a sacred site in Section 1(b)(iii)as:

> "Sacred site" means any specific, discrete, narrowly delineated location on Federal land that is identified by an Indian tribe, or Indian individual determined to be an appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion, as sacred by virtue of its established religious significance to, or ceremonial use by, an Indian religion; provided that the tribe or appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion has informed the agency of the existence of such a site (National Park Service 1996).

In 2012, the United States Departments of Defense, the Interior, Agriculture, and Energy entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Advisory

Council on Historic Preservation to improve the protection of and tribal access to Indian sacred sites through enhanced and improved interdepartmental coordination and collaboration. The MOU retained the definition of sacred sites found in the 1996 Executive Order #13007. These sacred sites may also be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as historic properties of religious and cultural significance to Indian tribes. The purpose of this MOU was to improve the protection of and insure tribal access to Indian sacred sites on federal land. Although the United States government traditionally has only considered tribal concerns when defining sacred sites, recently other groups have argued that they also have places on the landscape that should have government protection as a sacred landscape, such as the Mormon movement to have the site of Martin's Cove in central Wyoming set aside under this designation (Riley 2005).

In California, the Native American Heritage Commission was established in 1976 with the government passing of AB 4239, with its primary responsibility to identify and catalogue Native American cultural resources, with the charge to thwart irreparable damage to designated sacred sites, as well as to prevent interference with the expression of Native American religion in California. An additional objective of the bill was to insure Native American access to sacred sites, and to inventory such sites on public lands, which continue to have traditional significance to peoples today. In addition to burial sites, these sites include sacred areas where religious ceremonies were or still are practiced or which are central to their origins as a people. They also include areas where Native Americans gather plants for food, medicinal, or economic purposes. A certain measure of protection is provided for such resources by California State Law (California Native American Heritage Commission 2013). In 2002, the California Governor vetoed a controversial bill (SB 1828) aimed at protecting California Indian sacred sites off tribal lands, citing that it gave too much power to tribes in local land-use issues, beyond that of other citizens. Although government recognition of sacred sites can be a positive move for protection and preservation, there is another side to this issue, as has been pointed out succinctly by Thomas King, who cautions "Be careful of what you ask for; you just might get it" (King 2002:1). In an article related to the passage of SB 1828, he notes that in asking for passage of the bill, tribes will be required to prove the sacredness of the site and prove that there will be adverse impact to it. In order to do this, tribes will need to document why a site is sacred, and this may necessitate disclosing information to outsiders that was previously confidential, spiritually powerful information. This bill also means that government agencies and courts of law will have the final say as to what is sacred to any tribe and what is damaging to the sanctity of that site. Before these kinds of bills are enacted groups requesting the sacred designations need to decide if the government protection and control is worth the high price of divulging tribal secrets to a larger audience.

The National Congress of American Indians passed a resolution on sacred sites in 2002 and defined such a site as "places that are sacred to practitioners of Native Traditional religions and that sacred places include land (surface and subsurface), water and air; burial grounds, massacre sites and battlefields; and spiritual commemoration, ceremonial, gathering, and worship areas" (McLeod 1999:4). Thorley

and Gunn (2008) suggested a working definition of a sacred site that transcends borders and is available to all cultural groups, allies and activists, and legislators and policymakers whereby indigenous peoples could recognize their own concept of sacred sites. Their operational definition is summarized as: "A sacred site is a place in the landscape, occasionally over or under water, which is especially revered by people, culture or cultural group as a focus for spiritual belief and practice and likely religious observance" (Thorley and Gunn 2008:5). Rock art sites, worldwide, if placed in a specific place as part of a ritual, would fit within this definition.

Declaring a location or extended landscape sacred is more easily accomplished than explaining why it is. For anthropology this has always been a central question and one that early ethnographers explored (Grinnell 1923; Kroeber 1902, 1908; Lowie 1924, 1935) when recording any culture they studied. However, as archaeology moved into the scientific realm with measurements and experiments dominating the recording process, sacredness fell into the ceremonial category of explanation, which was left behind as the science of the field moved forward. However, the study of sacredness needs to be incorporated into this realm of investigation as there is no better way to protect sacred landscapes and understand them than to study them with the detail we afford other archaeological artifacts. This allows an explanation of why they are sacred based on evidence that can be defended in courts of law, which is becoming more important as protection and preservation are pursued for these landscapes.

The Ethnographic Approach and Ethnographic Analogy

In parts of North America there are ethnohistorical and ethnographic records that discuss rock art's connection with spirituality and sacredness. Is this use of ethnographic analogy a pragmatic research tool in understanding archaeology and rock art? Ethnographic parallels have been used in rock art studies at least since late nineteenth century when they were introduced as a general way to interpret the Upper Paleolithic paintings (Spencer and Gillen 1899). The parallel for the most part was based on similarities in the presumed function (sympathetic magic) in the cave art of Europe with those of Australian cultures of the nineteenth century. While similar analogies have been applied to rock art in other geographic areas, and to the broader field of archaeological questions, the acceptance of ethnographic analogy as a viable interpretive tool still comes under scrutiny. Questions prevail regarding the determination of cultural continuity, the validity of ethnographic analogies for deep time, and the accuracy of the questioning and recording processes by the ethnographers whose observations are used for the analogies. Yet, ethnographic analogy, where available, is one of the most optimal tools we have for understanding rock art.

David Hurst Thomas defines *analogy* as "a means of reasoning based on the assumption that if two things are similar in some respects, then they must be similar in other respects" (Thomas 1989:648), while further defining *ethnographic* as "the study of contemporary peoples to determine processual relationships that will aid in

unraveling the archaeological record" (1989:654). Rock art studies are largely about "unraveling the past."

Chris Chippindale and Paul Taçon have called for rigorous methods to be employed in the study of rock art. They cite as essential research that includes study with *informed* and *formal* methods and by *analogy*. They identify an informed method as one that "depends on some source of insight passed on directly or indirectly from those who made and used the rock art" (Chippindale and Taçon 1998:6). In other words, the informed method can be applied through ethnographic or ethnohistoric analogy, and there are several examples of this use in the preceding chapters. The formal method applies where no outside information is available, and data are obtained through the attributes of the site itself, which in this case are the images themselves. The formal method is dependent on the archaeological context of the site. Arsenault and Zawadzka (Chap. 8, this volume) rely on both formal and informed approaches as a combination of archaeological and written records in their research. They argue here that this contextual approach allows them to convincingly reconstruct the ancestral spiritual contexts of sites in the Algonquian sacred landscape. An excellent example of the *informed* approach is Carol Patterson's dialogue with her coauthor Clifford Duncan, a Ute elder (Chap. 9, this volume). Maintenance of cultural continuity is displayed in his sharing of oral traditions passed down by his elders. The role of ethnography or oral tradition is also exemplified by Robert David, a Modoc, and his coauthor Melissa Morgan (Chap. 10, this volume). Being familiar with the oral traditions of his people, and specifically with the story about *Old Man Owl*, David, when unexpectedly being confronted in the field by the unmistakable face of an owl, was able to connect the various attributes of the owl (such as the eyes, and their ability to see what others cannot see) with the familiar belief that his people have traditionally used for accessing power during gambling.

Daniel Arsenault in his studies of the Canadian Shield has suggested a formal method that can be applied to rock art studies directed at the sacred landscape. His approach involves examination of how specific ethnic groups think about and designate their natural landscape and then integrate other aspects of the context, such as "social actor's intentions, interests and capacity for symbolism" (Arsenault 2004:80). In addition, he advocates resurveying the physical context and considering such things as interesting rock formations. He also promotes developing new tools to look at the available information regarding aboriginal religious tradition, standardizing field methods, and establishing usable data banks that are accessible to both researchers and indigenous communities. Arsenault suggests that this formal method may help identify new sacred sites.

Robert Layton (2001) examined the work of several prominent rock art researchers, including Polly Schaafsma, David Lewis-Williams, David Whitley, and James Keyser, who have consulted ethnographic accounts to establish an informed interpretation, which in several instances corrected earlier misinterpretations. The entoptic model of David Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson (1988) has been embraced in the studies of researchers around the world working with several different cultures (Clottes and Lewis-Williams 1996; Greer and Greer 2003; Whitley 1994a, b, 1998, 2000). Centered on the role of shamanism in the creation of rock art, and

employing the entopic neuropsychological their model provides an analogy to explain the universality of many rock art elements. Whitley has continued to involve the ethnographic approach in his studies of the rock art in the Coso Range of southern California, specifying that vital to his approach is the understanding and interpretation of metaphors, or the transfer of meaning from one object to another (Whitley, personal communication 2004).

Robert Bednarik (2003), an Australian rock art researcher with a strong empirical approach to research, advocates caution when using analogy in rock art interpretation. Working in Australia, a region with some of the longest known cultural continuity, he outlines several areas of concern based on the etic relationship of those collecting ethnographic information. He offers his own analogy in the example of a set of wooden Russian dolls, where when one is opened, another is always inside it, which implies that there are always explanations within explanations and indicating how difficult, if not impossible, it is to get at the true meaning.

Thus, researchers have used several approaches to define and identify sacred sites associated with rock art. In the following sections we present examples from the Northern Plains and adjacent mountains and from California in the far western United States (Fig. 15.1) to demonstrate how rock art as part of sacred landscapes was viewed by different cultures at different points in time. Although uses and beliefs associated with rock art differed from one tribe to another prior to westernization of the continent, for most tribes today, regardless of the function of a rock art site in the past, these locations are considered spiritual places by these ethnic groups. How and why this change occurred and under what circumstances reflects the larger cultural landscape within America and how spirituality and rock art serve as an important link to cultural identity. Jamie Hampson (Chap. 7, this volume) through ethnographic literature has shown us not only that some beliefs are widespread, but also that many *persist*. He instructs researchers not to assume a change through space and over time, but their responsibility is to demonstrate such change.

A View from the Northern Plains

The rock art of the North American Northern Plains and adjacent mountains was made for a variety of purposes through time, but association with religion has always been recognized as the function of some of the sites (Conner and Conner 1971; Francis and Loendorf 2002; Greer 1995; Greer and Greer 2003; Keyser 1977, 1979, 1984; Keyser and Klassen 2001). Rock art in this region spans a time depth from Paleoindian, about 11,000 BC to early historic times, mid-1800s (Francis and Loendorf 2002; Greer 1995; Keyser and Klassen 2001; Tratebas 1993), so ethnographic and ethnohistorical information about rock art covers only a small percentage of that made and only at the very end of the timeline. Unlike other places in the world, this region has limited written records directly related to rock art production and use, so archaeological analysis methods have been necessary for functional determination. For these early sites, made by cultures whose users are from the deep past and whose

Fig. 15.1 Map of North America showing the locations of the Northern Plains and the state of California in the far western United States

descendants no longer know and practice those beliefs, the site's place on the landscape plays an instrumental role in determining a sacred function for a site.

When landscape is teamed with site contents a function model can be created with a high level of confidence. For the Northern Plains a *Ceremonial Function Model* includes all sites used for any kind of activity associated with the

supernatural (Greer 1995:208). Sites within this category could have been used for a variety of activities associated with religious practices including shaman activities, vision quests, fertility rituals, hunting magic, or burial ceremonies. Based on analogy these rock art sites may have served as mnemonic devises for rituals or songs, depictions of visions experienced during a trance whether for a shamanistic ceremony or a coming-of-age vision quest for a guardian spirit, or tributes to a particular supernatural entity for help with or in payment for aid with a personal or group problem. Images associated with religious activities in this region include headdresses, anthropomorphs with upraised arms, skeleton figures, heart lines, bears and bear paws, snakes, and anthropomorphs in a flying position. Geometric and abstract designs are known to be associated with ceremonial activities in later times, and this function for these figures may be pushed back in time based on the setting in which they occur. Sites associated with religious or ceremonial activities in this region are most likely to be in landscapes with east-facing caves or rockshelters, impressive distance views from either an open cliff or the mouth of a cave or rockshelter, and difficult access to the site. Within this region early religious sites encompass a wide range of public and private activities, and private religious activities can either be for the public good or private power (Greer 1995:246–247). In all these cases, the rock art in these settings results in the landscape being sacred at these site locations.

The above characteristics suggest that sites in this region that most fit the religious model are painted sites located in the mountain island areas within the general plains topographic environment, such as the Little Rockies, Little Belt Mountains, Bighorn Mountains, Pryor Mountains, and Black Hills. These landscapes provide caves and rockshelters in isolated locations with grand vistas and difficult access. Crystal Cave (24CA102) in the Little Belt Mountains of central Montana is an excellent example of such a site. The location in a cliff above the river provides a commanding view of the mountain valley both up and down stream, and it is accessed by a walk along a narrow ledge (Figs. 15.2 and 15.3). Analysis of the sites in the Smith River drainage of central Montana (Greer 1995) supports this theory of how to identify a site associated with ceremony and ritual on the Northern Plains and adjacent mountains, which would have been considered a sacred landscape at the time of use. However, at that time, it is unlikely that rock art sites made for other functions within this region, such as those marking territory or recording events, were considered sacred by the cultures that made and used them. However, by the time early traders and trappers entered the area in the 1800s and began recording their observances of the tribes in the area and by the time ethnographers start to record the memories of those still living in the changed social environment of the early 1900s, rock art of all functions was moving into the sacred realm.

First person accounts made at the time of early white contact with tribes on the Northern Plains and adjacent mountains were written mainly by traders and trappers. Although there are many government records from this time period reporting on the distribution of annuities and relationships with various tribes, these are of little help in learning about sacred sites since their orientation was toward material goods and warfare and often centered around life at a fort. During these early years, this area received little attention from missionaries, so records from these people, who are assumed to have been more attuned to the spiritual beliefs of the people

Fig. 15.2 Crystal Cave (24CA102), Montana. People are standing in the entrance to the painted cave located in the cliff face. Photo by John Greer, 2000

they were working among, are also scarce. Thus, for this region, there are few references that refer directly to people making or interacting with rock art, and these mostly discuss rock art sites that already exist and not about the creation of them.

Carved glacial boulders occur in the north-central portion of the Northern Plains and are found primarily in northeastern Montana, northwestern North Dakota, southeastern Alberta, and southwestern Saskatchewan. By the time these boulders occur in the ethnohistorical literature, they are all known as shrines (Ewers 1952). The boulders were carved either completely into the shape of a bison or were covered with individual images, dominated by hoof prints. Ethnographically some were described as "A complete buffalo of stone, with hump, horns, ribs, and other parts, half of it underground, has been seen by the Gros Ventres, and many offerings and prayers have been made to it" (Kroeber 1908:281). Thus, it is quite likely that these carved boulders, some of which were subsequently painted, were made only for religious purposes. Excavations around the bases of carved boulders have revealed offerings, including Avonlea arrow points (Steinbring 2012), which date AD 600–800 and are some of the most beautiful and finely made points ever produced. A tooth found at the base of one boulder yielded a C14 date within the Avonlea age bracket, and a bone at the base of another boulder also dated to the Avonlea era. Although this does not confirm that the boulders were made by Avonlea people, it does suggest they used the boulders as sacred locations where offerings were left.

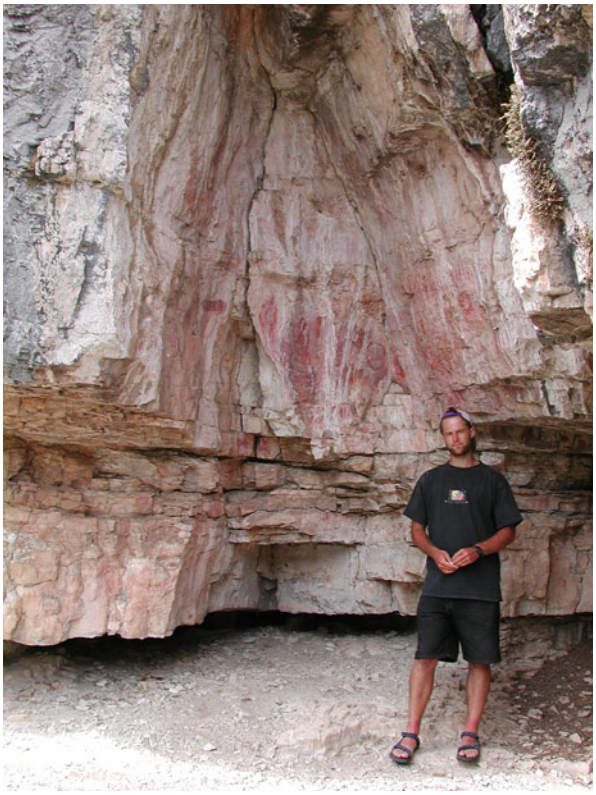

Fig. 15.3 Images in Crystal Cave (24CA102), Montana. The superimposed images are dominated by abstract designs, most of which are high on the wall; Brian Greer, shown in the photo, is over 6 ft (1.8 m) tall. Photo by John Greer, 2000

Thus, the Avonlea culture may have found rock art made for an unknown function in the past and deemed it to be worthy of sacredness in their time. By the 1800s onward these carvings were considered sacred and offerings were left at them to the supernatural by the Blackfoot (Ewers 1952:51), the Cheyenne (Grinnell 1925:263), and the Gros Ventres (Cooper 1956; Kroeber 1908:281).

Images placed on rock were also placed on other media within the region such as hides, tipi covers, clothing, horses, and people. Studies of these designs in other media have been used as an interpretive guide for understanding what the images represent and the stories they tell (Keyser 1987, 1989; Keyser and Klassen 2001). For example, in the early 1900s Kroeber (1907:311–313) talked with a middle-aged northern Arapaho man who had two pieces of painted hides with designs on them referring to stories of creation and tribal ceremonies. One strip contained figures in blue with two red spots. He told Kroeber that a straight line diagonal along the length of the buckskin strip represented the extent of the world and the course of the sun. On it were shown both the sun and the moon. The sun was a small solid circle,

and the moon was an arc of a circle. Four blue dots, two on each side of the line, represented four old men, and beyond the end of the line a blue outlined ovate figure represented a mountain-goat horn spoon from which the four old men were fed. A solid blue circle represented the heart, and around the heart were four short lines forming an outlined square. The four lines represented the lines painted around the wrists and ankles of the old men in the tribal ceremonies. The four old men were thought to maintain the life of the people, and the four bars depicted the men themselves. Just beyond them is a small crescent representing the half-moon, and near it is an outlined circle representing either the sun or a sundog, while an oval red spot denotes paint. The symbols described are at one end of the larger strip of skin and show how complicated interpretation of any panel of geometric images can be. However, it helps us understand that the geometric symbols within a rock art site, especially one in a landscape setting known to support a sacred site, have meaning beyond their literal descriptions.

Hoebel describes the Northern Cheyenne holy men as priests more than shaman because the way they mainly obtained power was through acquisition of knowledge regarding rituals, which were learned from someone who was already a priest, and not through vision quests, although that was occasionally done, especially in times of distress. Hoebel (1960:86) records that the Cheyenne are action oriented in their pursuit of spirituality and not introspective as many eastern religions are, and rock art associated with such views would result in more public oriented displays than private.

Among the Northern Cheyenne "the greatness of the major spirits is not in their ability supernaturally to create and manage things, but in their wisdom about the working of things" (Hoebel 1960:83). In order to keep the group strong and compatible with their environment, it was necessary to perform sacred acts correctly and in the proper order (Hoebel 1960:84). Rock art is ideal for serving this purpose. Placing it in a site used for religious rituals, the information will not be misplaced during a nomadic lifestyle or forgotten should the people who conduct these ceremonies die, and they would be safe within a sacred landscape.

Sleeping near rock art panels to communicate with the supernatural was a use of these sites in historic times. In about the 1870s, Curley Head, a Gros Ventres, had the following experience:

> Then we crossed the Missouri River and camped at the mouth of a creek, which empties into the river. Here the Little People had made paintings on the cliffs and in the caves nearby. I decided to sleep near one of these cliffs to see if I could obtain some power. I prayed and cried until I fell asleep. I had a dream that the Little People were coming for me with a big kettle of boiling water and each one was picking a part of my body that he wanted to eat. I woke up and left that place right away. People always have bad dreams when they sleep near painted cliffs (Pohrt 1937).

A Blackfoot woman passed down another story about sleeping at a rock art site that was told to her by her father, Old Man Mandan (Clark 1966:295–297). As a boy her father slept at the base of a rock art panel at Writing-on-Stone in southern Alberta for several nights as part of his vision quest. His vision granted him the power to become a brave warrior and a chief. It also gave him the power to heal the

Fig. 15.4 Monument Boulder (24PH1005), Montana, was moved to a roadside display shelter, but it is still considered a sacred rock art site by local tribes. Many people visit it to leave offerings of tobacco (in the form of commercial cigarettes), pieces of red cloth, coins, and even utilitarian items. The black tube is part of a tire snow chain used in this northern area throughout the winter; it represents an important modern winter necessity. The boulder is covered with petroglyphs, including many bear paws. Photo by John Greer, 1994

sick and to foretell the future. As part of his vision Old Man Mandan was told that the drawings were made by birds of different colors.

A Gros Ventres informant discussed rock art site locations and meanings with John Cooper in the late 1930s, and Cooper (1956:20, 418–419) reports that they distinguished between pictographs made by spirit beings and those made by Indians. From the information available it appears that rock art made by spirit beings (Little People, birds, etc.) were probably those panels that were not event records, such as the Biographic style of the Northern Plains that tell of horse raids, capturing of other tribe members (mainly women), and warfare. Panels that predate the style of the historic period, placed on the landscape in areas deemed sacred by the tribes of the region and containing images known in other contexts to be religious, were those attributed to artists of the other world, who were probably the religious practitioners of their tribes.

Thus, by the mid-1800s rock art sites of the Northern Plains and adjacent mountains had become sacred to the tribes of the region. This sacredness continues in the area to the present time, and it is often demonstrated to the public by leaving offerings at the site. For example, at Monument Boulder (24PH1005) it is not uncommon to see offerings of coins, tobacco (in the form of commercial cigarettes), pieces of red cloth, and other more practical utilitarian items (Fig. 15.4). These offerings are

left despite being housed in a roadside highway display in northeastern Montana, which indicates that a sacred landscape does not necessarily mean a pristine landscape. Another example in the Americas of this practice of retaining a landscape as sacred through conducting rituals or leaving offerings at the site is offered by Turpin and Eling (Chap. 11, this volume) for northern Mexico.

A View from the Far West (California)

At the time of contact in California the landscape supported indigenous groups that reached a population of approximately 300,000, speaking nearly 90 languages representing at least 23 language families, and belonging to perhaps 500 distinct ethnic groups. With the diversity of languages—referred to by Moratto (2004:530) as the "Babel of ancient America"—the rock art of California reflects a variety of styles or traditions, including painted and engraved sites, and represents a broad spectrum of time. Whitley (2000:47–69) argues that by referring to different types of rock art as a "tradition," the classification of rock art according to ethnolinguistic groups where style is defined by "terms of formal and technical attributes" and is often time limited, is removed (Whitley 2000:126). The use of the term tradition recognizes the ability for variability in the production and use of rock art within an ethnographic group. The use of the term "tradition" also allows similar appearing rock art to transcend cultural boundaries. The understanding of rock art in California is often dependent on the use of ethnography.

Thanks to the Department of Anthropology of the University of California, Berkeley, and the visionary work of Alfred E. Kroeber (1876–1960), with the support of Phoebe A. Hearst, who saw the indigenous cultures of California disappearing and changing at an alarming rate, California has an extensive and rich collected works of ethnographic literature available to researchers. Between 1903 and 1964 the university published the *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology*, which provides a wealth of ethnographic data. Hearst is known for her generous donations to the anthropological museum and for her funding of the *Ethnological and Archaeological Survey of California*, providing invaluable contributions to the ethnography of the region. The University of California between 1937 and 1973 also published *The Anthropological Record*, whose first issues contained the listings of the Cultural Distribution Elements. These lists, compiled under Kroeber's direction, investigated various California tribes and identified the presence or absence of material culture traits, with little emphasis on social organization.

Credit is also due to John P. Harrington (1884–1961), who began collecting ethnographic and linguistic data on California Indians in 1915, under the auspices of the Smithsonian Museum Bureau of Ethnography. Harrington did extensive field research during the first half of the twentieth century. Many others also contributed to the ethnographic record in California (Aginsky 1939; Barrett 1908, 1952b; Gifford 1928; Gifford and Kroeber 1937; Kniffen 1939; Loeb 1926; Stewart 1943).

Not all ethnographic work in California was by professional anthropologists. While not academically trained in ethnography, others have made significant contributions through recording Native American cultures in the central California area. John W. N. Hudson (1857–1936), married to an artist who specialized in indigenous paintings, gave up a medical practice in Ukiah, California, to collect Pomo baskets. Both Hudson and his wife, Grace Carpenter (Davis), could be considered ethnographers, due to the information she documented in her paintings with most of her subjects being local Pomos from Ukiah, and with the data he amassed in his dealings with the local indigenous population. After just a few years, Hudson gave up his medical practice and focused on collecting Pomo baskets for the Field Museum in Chicago and the Fred Harvey Company. Amassing thousands of notes, he passed away before he was able to publish. Hudson's notes are available to researchers at the Grace Hudson Museum in Ukiah. The Lakeport Museum in Lake Country contains the archives of Henry Mauldin (1900–1981) and an unpublished collection of 10,000 index cards and over 50 binders of typed oral histories, including information on informants, giving much insight into the indigenous population of Lake County.

The numerous ethnographies in California have provided an informed approach to understanding rock art found throughout the state. The ubiquitous cupule, which is especially prevalent in California, provides an example of the multiple uses and interpretations of this basic element by different groups of indigenous peoples. Among the uses addressed are weather control, girl's puberty rites, and fertility rites. Breck Parkman (1993a) has explored rock art (cupules on boulders) as part of the rain making process in Northern California. A Shasta petroglyph boulder, known as the Gottville "rain rock" was covered with pits and grooves, with the cupules (pits) believed to bring rain and wind, and the grooves to bring snow (Heizer 1953:35). Heizer relied on ethnographic work of Roland Dixon (1907), who reported that cupules were made from pounding on the boulder with a pestle to make thunder sounds. Parkman (1993a) also found several other culture groups statewide with examples of "rain-rocks." Cupules are worldwide, and Zhang (Chap. 6, this volume) discusses a variety of suggested functions for cupules associated with ritual and spirituality in China. Functions include seeking help from the supernatural to increase fertility (reproductive worship), access points to the celestial world where ancient alters await, and use as containers for sacrificial blood.

The Luiseño Girls Ceremony or puberty rites are the subject of several ethnographic accounts (DuBois 1908; Sparkman 1908). These recordings include the painting of rocks (pictographs) in their descriptions of the ceremony. Joan Oxendine (1980:37–48) reported on two early unpublished ethnographic accounts from the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian, by H. W. Henshaw (1884 or 1892) and by John P. Harrington (about 1933). These recordings report that the puberty rites conclude at the end of the several days of ceremonies with a race or running to a boulder where the girls paint on a boulder. The designs they paint are the same as those they painted on their faces during the ceremonies. The traditional territories of the Luiseños (and sites of nearby groups) have many boulders on the landscape that contain red marks (especially diamond chains) similar to those reported by Harrington.

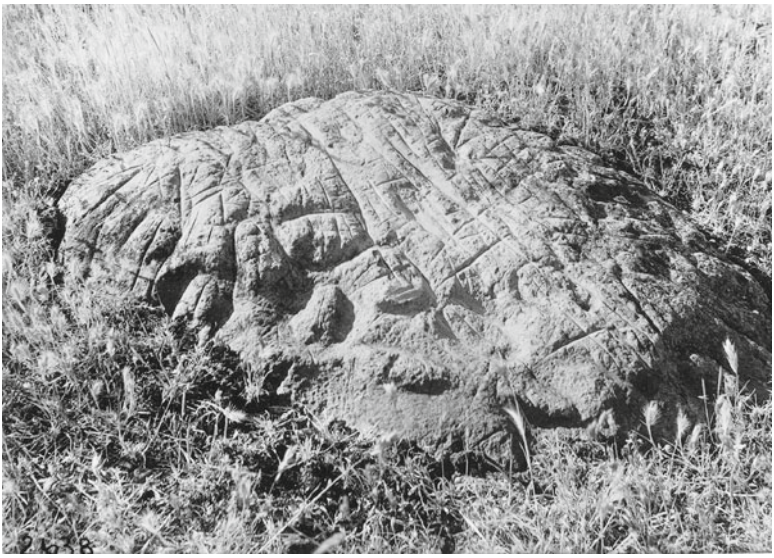

Fig. 15.5 The Pomo Baby Rock, in Knight's Valley, California, 1904 photo. Courtesy of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California—photographed by Samuel A. Barrett (Catalogue #15-2638)

The Coastal Ranges of California from Oregon to Santa Barbara (and perhaps beyond) contain over 120 identified sites of marked boulders that are part of the PCN Tradition (Gillette 2011:2–3). Analysis of this rock art style has benefited from the use of ethnographic information. The PCN (*P*ecked *C*urvilinear *N*ucleated) name was assigned to this kind of marked boulder by Teresa Miller (1977), PCNs are characterized by oval or circular grooves, which produce a raised center, and are pecked into high-talc blue/green schist-like boulders which are part of the Franciscan Formation. Many of these sites have cupules and grooves associated with the PCNs. Whether these marks retained the same meaning through time cannot be determined, and perhaps fertility referred to the fertility of the world or world renewal. The ritual uses of these boulders (perhaps for quarrying powder for use in the rituals) are explained in several ethnographies. Testament to the power of these rocks can be seen in the following quote about a man who had no children with seven wives, but his luck changed when he visited the rock with his eighth wife and performed the following ritual:

> The sterile pair went to one of these rocks and there first a prayer for fertility was made. Then, by means of a pecking stone, some small fragments were chipped from the sides of one of the grooves or cuppings in its surface. These were then ground to a very fine powder which was wrapped in some leaves and taken to some secluded spot. Here the powder was made into a paste and with it the woman's abdomen was painted with two lines, one running from the top of the sternum to the pubes, the other transversely across the middle of the abdomen. Some of this paste was also inserted into the female. Intercourse at this time positively assured fertility, due to the magic properties of this rock (Barrett 1952b:387).

These marked boulders are believed to date from 5,000 to 8,000 years BP based in part by their geographic distribution and that the PCNs are always the lowest elements stratigraphically (Gillette 1996, 2011; Miller 1977; Parkman 1993b). The addition of cupules, grooves, and incised lines (sometimes superimposed over the PCNs) may indicate a change in a fertility ritual over time (it is easier to remove powder from a groove). One of the PCN sites known as the Knights Valley Pomo Baby Rock (Fig. 15.5) was explained by an informant of Samuel A. Barrett providing insight into the making and meaning of the marks:

> The girl sat down near one of these rocks and remained there in a pensive mood for a long time. Her brother endeavored to find out what made her do this, and to ascertain what she wanted, enumerating beads and other valuables. Finally he asked if she wanted him, to which she nodded. He then made upon the surface of the stone a large carving representing a genital. This, even yet, is the most prominent of the many marks upon this rock. Since that day this, and other similar rocks, have been employed in the cure of sterility (Barrett 1952a:386–387).

It was explained by the informant that the couple sitting on the rock were mythical bird people from the nearby village of *mu'yamaya*, and are a part of Pomo oral tradition. This and other accounts from the area refer to the ritual use of similar boulders as cures for sterility or to assure fertility. By using a reference to mythical birds, the Pomo were able to explain their presence of the marked boulder on the landscape, perhaps as needing to explain the inexplicable. This marking was done long ago and no one knew when because it had always been there. Linguistically, the Pomo are recognized as maintaining a cultural continuity within the area. The viability of linking ethnographic information into deep-time, as mentioned earlier, is problematic, but it does provide an explanation that may be applicable to prehistoric people as they endeavored to understand the world around them.

Although creating petroglyphs and pictographs was widely practiced in the past, we know the tradition continues in various places around the world, especially in Australia and Africa. Rock art is not made by most ethnic groups in the United States today, but recently there have been second-hand reports of the current use of a "baby rock" in Mendocino County. However, these reports have been confirmed by a young man at a meeting of the Society for California Archaeology, who shared that he had personally gone to a specific boulder and made a cupule in the surface of the rock "to carry on his tribal tradition." Thus, this spiritual belief and ritual are active just as they are in Africa as Zubieta reports (Chap. 4, this volume) regarding a rites of passage ceremony in Africa, although this practice has changed from the past and earlier elements (including the creating of rock art) are no longer present, but much of the symbolism remains.

Conclusions

Sacred landscapes are often associated with rock art throughout the world. Examples in this book clearly indicate that a location that is sacred at one point in time by one culture is not necessarily a location that will remain a sacred site throughout time

and associated with all cultures. However, rock art can help to change a landscape into sacred ground, and its presence influences later cultures to continue viewing that environmental setting in that light. This is clearly the case with many sites in the Americas as well as in examples from ancient China and southeastern Asia (Chaps. 5 and 6, this volume) where even though there is a change in the culture of the area and the deities being worshiped, the same landscapes continue to be sacred. Although the meaning associated with a sacred site may not be an exact copy of what it was in the past, it does not make the site less sacred when the new group occupies the area.

The definition of a sacred site can impact the use of the site in the future from a legal perspective today as well as a spiritual perspective. Throughout the world people work to keep their sacred landscapes from changing, and to do this they must allow their beliefs to have a public audience even if it was a closed society in the past. Views of religion from only an etic standpoint cannot elicit the same level of empathy for protection as those viewed emically, so it is necessary to allow people in when there is no other means of preservation. Religion is an important link to cultural identity for people of all cultures and for many of them rock art serves as an important link to the manifestation of their religion.

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