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An Analysis of San Clemente Island Pendants and Ornaments

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Pendants and ornaments comprise one of numerous artifact classes uncovered during the 1984 excavation conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles on San Clemente Island. Considerable diversity was exhibited within this class, as would be expected from sites that span at least 9,000 years. Ethnographic data indicate that these objects were status items worn for personal display. They denote the social position of an individual and, along with their use as bodily ornaments, may have functioned to maintain the existing social order. Comparisons of similar materials from cultures in the same geographical region can show degrees of similarity and suggest the extent of social interaction between groups.

Background

Some studies relevant to these San Clemente ornaments include the typology of shell artifacts developed by E. W. Gifford (1947) from a collection housed in the University of California at the Lowie Museum of Anthropology. This work was based principally on material from the Southern Coast, Delta, and San Francisco Bay areas and, while it provides a broad typological frame, its usefulness for San Clemente is limited. A more pertinent study is contained in C. King's (1981) dissertation on the evolution of Chumash society and his comparative study of artifacts from the Santa Barbara Channel region. In addition, a descriptive account of the pendants and ornaments excavated during the 1983 field season for the Eel Point sites is included.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to provide descriptive data on the pendants and ornaments and to identify various types. Their relative distribution in time and space is examined and they are compared to Chumash and proto-Chumash material from Santa Barbara Channel sites.

Data Base

The data base for this project consists of shell, stone, bone, and wood pendants and ornaments found during the 1984 field season excavations. They were recovered from: Ledge, Nursery, Eel Point B and C, and Xantusia Cave. One surface find, discovered in an area just adjacent to Eel Point B, is included. A total of 63 specimens is represented in the artifact inventory including three *Haliotis* blanks that were sufficiently worked so that their intended manufacture as artifacts is fairly assured. Table 8.1 indicates the various materials used, the number in each category, and the percentage of the total.

Description

Table 8.2 provides descriptive data concerning the pendants and ornaments, site locations, dates based on

Table 8.1. Distribution of pendants and ornaments.

Material	Number	Per cent
Wood	1	1.5
Bone	2	3.2
Stone		9.6
Slate	1 (1.5%)	
Serpentine	1 (1.5%)	
Steatite	4 (6.6%)	
Shell		85.7
Meguthura	1 (1.5%)	
Mytilus	3 (4.8%)	
Haliotis	44 (69.9%)	
Unidentified	6 (9.5%)	
Total	63	100

C14 results (with the exception of SCLI-126, which is based on artifact similarities and historic information), and corresponding types based on Gifford's typology, as well as comparable Chumash material when applicable. The following descriptions provide additional relevant data.

Wood

The wood pendant is a small piece, oblong in shape with two holes drilled at either end. It does not appear to have been reworked and has a natural shape.

Bone

Two bone artifacts have been classified as pendants. One is a shark tooth specimen with a drilled hole at the end closest to the root. Shark teeth are present in the Chumash material and correlate with King's Late Period examples; however, shark teeth, including fossil teeth, are found in earlier sites throughout southern California, so they are not in themselves indicative of a cultural period. The other pendant, made from bird bone, was not available for analysis.

Stone

As indicated in Table 8.2, six of the pendants are stone. Two are long, narrow objects made from slate and serpentine. One has a top perforation which is still intact while the other was presumably likewise drilled but the perforated end is missing. The other four are made from steatite. One is trapezoidal with incised lines running vertically and horizontally. A large central perforation facilitated stringing (Fig. 8.1a). A second consists of a top fragment with curved, grooved lines on both the front and back sides. Of considerable interest is the surface find previously mentioned which appears to be the head and neck portions of an effigy figure. There is a large perforation positioned for an eye to give it the appearance of a bird or small animal. The sixth item was unavailable for analysis.

None of the stone pendants show similarities to the Chumash material with the possible exception of the partial stone specimen.

Shell

As indicated in Table 8.1, shell ornaments and pendants make up the largest portion of the data base.

Three pendants are made from *Mytilus* shell. One has most of the epidermis remaining and is rounded in shape with irregular sides. It has a single perforation and a rather crude appearance. The other two are small, roundish artifacts with single perforations. King does not include *Mytilus* shell pendants among the Chumash collections he analyzed.

One *Megathura* ring is present in the collection. A considerable amount of shell remains surrounding the aperture. One end appears to have been slightly squared off. It corresponds most closely to Gifford's type H2aII and resembles a Late Period Chumash pendant in size and ratio of aperture-to-remaining-

Table 8.2. San Clemente Island pendant and ornament site location and cultural correlations.

Artifact description	Site	Dates	Gifford type	Channel Island correlations (King)
Wood pendant	Xantusia Cave	4750 - 6100 BP	-	-
Bone pendants				
Shark tooth	Xantusia Cave	4750 - 6100 BP	-	L2b
Bird bone	Eel Point C	1050 - 4300 BP	-	-
Stone pendants				
Slate (narrow top perforation)	Eel Point C	1050 - 4300 BP	-	-
Serpentine (perforation missing, 90-105 cm approx)	Eel Point B	7000 - 8000 BP	-	-
Steatite (trapezoidal, 30-40 cm approx)	Eel Point B	3000 - 4000 BP	-	-
Steatite (small grooved front and back)	Eel Point C	1050 - 4300 BP	-	-
Steatite (effigy)	Eel Point B adjacent (surface)	No Date	-	-
Shell Pendants				
Mytilus (irregular sides, epidermis remaining)	Nursery	1450 BP	-	-
Mytilus (rounded)	Nursery	1450 BP	-	-
Mytilus	Eel Point C	1050 - 4300 BP	-	
Megathura	Nursery	1450 BP, AD 1150 - 1250	H2aIII	L1a
Unidentified	Eel Point C	1050 - 4300 BP	-	- (set of 5)
Unidentified	Eel Point B (55-70 cm)	5000 - 6000 BP (approx)	?	?
Haliotis				
Triangular (epidermis intact)	Xantusia cave	4750 - 6100 BP	-	-
Teardrop	Nursery (in burial)	1450 BP	AF3	M3, Similar but with significant differences
Dorsal fin	Nursery	1450 BP	AE3C	Similar to
Whole shell	Nursery	1450 BP	-	-
Whole shell	Nursery	1450 BP	-	-
Whole shell	Eel Point B (63-78 cm approx)	5000 - 6000 BP	-	-
Ornaments				
Haliotis				
Rectangular (double perforation)	Eel Point B (associated with burial)	9500 BP, AD 1650 - 1782	-	L2b
Rectangular (double perforation)	Nursery	1450 BP, 200 BC - AD 300	S6aIII	M2b

Table 8.2 cont. San Clemente Island pendant and ornament site location and cultural correlations.

Artifact description	Site	Dates	Gifford type	Channel Island correlations (King)
Rectangular (double perforation)	Eel Point B (15-30 cm approx)	3000 - 4000 BP, AD 700 - 900	S6aIII	M4
Rectangular (single perforation)	Nursery	1450 BP	-	-
Rectangular (single perforation)	Eel Point C	1050 - 4300 BP, 200 BC - 300 AD	S2aI	M2b
Rectangular (single perforation)	Ledge	AD 1600 - 1800	S2aII	-
Rectangular (blank)	Eel Point C	1050 - 4300 BP -	-	
Disc (serrated edges)	Eel Point C	1050 - 4300 BP	K3bII	EZ, Similar (but with significant differences)
Disc (incised)	Nursery	1450 BP, AD 1782 - 1804	K1f	L3
Disc (single perforation)	Eel Point C	1050-4300 BP, AD 700 - 900	-	M4
Disc (incised)	Ledge	AD 1600 - 1800, AD 1150 - 1250	-	L1

shell amount. The shape also appears to be similar, although the Chumash specimen is difficult to see in the available publication.

The unidentified shell pendants constitute a set of five, which are graduated in size. They were all found in the same excavation pit at Eel Point C, in the same 10 cm level, and can be presumed to have been strung together. The smallest three are rectangular but with only slight dimensional differentiations that give them a rather square appearance. The second largest is elongated and a definite rectangle. The largest has only part of the lower portion but apparently was more or less teardrop in shape. All have single perforations very close to the top edge but the perforation sizes vary (two are illustrated in Fig. 8.1b). As King's Chumash illustrations include only limpet, abalone, clam, and large pelecypod shell ornaments, comparable material is not presented.

The *Haliotis* pendants and ornaments are the most widely represented and exhibit considerable variety in size, type, and shape.

Of particular interest are approximately 25 rectangular pendants found in association with a burial at Eel Point B. The exact number was difficult to ascertain as many are fragmented, but any error in number would be on the conservative side. All were apparently double-perforated at each end. Three were still whole and five were complete enough to discern the perforation pattern. They were probably strung together lengthwise to form a multi-stranded necklace. They are similar in size and placement of perforation to Chumash Late Period 2b pendants. Six others from various proveniences are rectangular. Two are pendants, three are presumed to be ornaments, and one is a blank that, based on its size, was probably also intended to be an ornament. The epidermis has been removed on each. In general, the rectangular ornaments and pendants most closely resemble the Chumash Middle Period material. More specifically, the Eel Point C ornament corresponds to an M2b Chumash specimen in size and location of perforation but with a slightly different shape. The same applies to a Nursery Site ornament in that it is comparable in

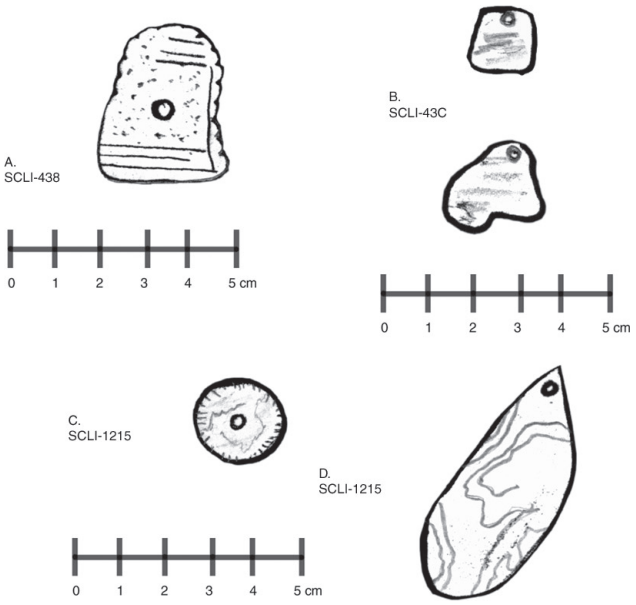

Fig. 8.1. San Clemente Island pendants and ornaments.

size, number of perforations, and lack of epidermis, but the San Clemente specimen has the perforations slightly off-center on a slight diagonal while the Chumash perforations are aligned on a straight line axis. A third rectangular ornament corresponds to King's M4 classification. A fourth example from Ledge shows similarities to several rectangular pendants from the Middle Period in a number of attributes but does not correlate with any other pendant in all aspects. A fifth pendant would probably be more accurately described as a bead.

Disc pendants and ornaments are represented by four specimens with the epidermis removed. One has serrated edges and a double perforation. Another has incising on one side and a single central perforation (Fig. 8.1c). The third is an oval with a large perforation near the top. The remaining ornament is a small blank with one side incised. The double-perforated ornament from Eel Point C seems to correlate most closely with a Chumash Early Period ornament having two large central perforations of equal size. King notes, however, that the edges are incised but usually not serrated. The Eel Point C specimen has serrated edges. In addition, the Chumash example shown is about 0.75 cm larger. The incised single-perforated ornament corresponds to a Late Period Chumash artifact with the possible exception that the incising on the San Clemente artifact results in a serrated edge on part of it which King does not mention for the corresponding Chumash ornament. The oval ornament does not correlate with either Gifford's types or the Chumash material.

Another specimen is roughly triangular with the epidermis intact. The edges have been worked and rounded and the natural siphon holes were apparently used for stringing. It does not appear to correspond to any Chumash ornament nor to any in Gifford's typology.

A particularly interesting pendant is one that could be called teardrop because of its shape. It has a single large central perforation and the epidermis is visible on one side (Fig. 8.1d). It does not correspond directly to the Chumash material. It is similar in shape to a Middle Period pendant, but there are significant differences in size and the presence of epidermis. King notes that this artifact is the "only one known" in his collections.

The largest of the *Haliotis* pendants has a dorsal-fin shape with a single perforation at the top. The epidermis has been removed from both sides. It most resembles Gifford's type AE3c. The shape and position of the perforation are like a Late Period Chumash pendant but the San Clemente specimen is approximately 1.5 cm larger. King mentions that these period pendants are usually incised on one side, but the San Clemente artifact is not incised.

Also included in the sample are what were originally three whole abalone shell pendants that now have

small portions broken from them. Each are small with central perforations. They do not correlate with any type mentioned by Gifford nor to any temporal placements indicated by King.

In addition to the above, four other shell pendants are cataloged but are not part of the available data. Three are described as *Haliotis* and one is made from an unidentified shell.

Analysis

As indicated previously, Table 8.2 shows the distribution of the pendants and ornaments in this study according to site, C14 dates, and correlations with Gifford's types and King's Santa Barbara Channel temporal spans. An analysis of the dates leads to some interesting observations.

Haliotis pendants and ornaments represent about 70 per cent of the artifacts in this study and, not surprisingly, were present in all of the five sites. All except Xantusia Cave have rectangular ornaments. Disc ornaments were found at Ledge, Nursery, and Eel Point C. Nursery had the widest variety of *Haliotis* specimens.

Stone pendants are missing from Xantusia Cave and Nursery. Their absence from Nursery is interesting in view of the wide variety in types and materials within the shell classification.

Few pendants and ornaments were uncovered at Ledge during the 1984 field season as most of the excavation took place during the previous season when a much wider variety of these artifacts was excavated.

One of the most unusual finds was the effigy pendant from the surface adjacent to Eel Point B. Since comparable Chumash material is absent from King's work it would be interesting to examine museum collections containing southern California specimens for similar artifacts.

Correlations with the Santa Barbara Channel material is somewhat difficult in that King's work does not provide illustrations of any stone pendants, which constitute about 10 per cent of the San Clemente items. The shark tooth pendant shows similarities with a Channel specimen that belongs to the latter part of the Late Period, which is much later than the temporal span of Xantusia Cave.

The best basis for correlations lie within the *Haliotis* and *Megathura* sphere which provide a comparable base for about 45 per cent of the project material. In order to obtain an unskewed basis for the Channel affinities, the set of 25 rectangular pendants from the burial at the lower level of Eel Point B is counted as one occurrence. There are thus nineteen possible correlations between the San Clemente and Channel materials and eight were made. In two further instances there were some similarities exhibited, but with significant differences and in nine none were indicated. Consequently, this results in artifact correlations occurring in only eight out of nineteen possible instances, or less than 50 per cent.

Conclusions

In view of the above data, especially when temporal periods are taken into consideration, correlations between the San Clemente Island pendant and ornament data base included in this project did not result in significant similarities. It is suggested that an expanded data base for both San Clemente Island and Chumash material will be necessary before any further conclusions can be drawn.