Kawaiisu Mythology and Rock Art: One Example

MARK Q. SUTTON

It is not often that archaeological work can be specifically related to ethnographically known sites. It is less often that one can discuss specific rock art from both an ethnographic and an archaeological standpoint. Teddy Bear Cave (as it has been known for 30 years) may be one such site. It contains rock art, has been investigated archaeologically, and is noted in the ethnographic literature. The site appears to have been important in Kawaiisu mythology and the rock art may be related to Kawaiisu myth.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Teddy Bear Cave (CA-Ker-508) is located in the Southern Sierra Nevada, on the western side of the Sand Creek drainage (Fig. 1). The cave has been considered to be a part of the Phillips Ranch village complex (CA-Ker-230), although it is about 1000 m. east of the village. The large village at Ker-230 has been intensively investigated on two occasions, once by the Archaeological Survey Association in 1954-56 (Price 1954; Battle 1960) and once by Antelope Valley College in 1970-71.

The Ker-230 site generally dates to the protohistoric period and contains numerous rock ring structure foundations (at least one with surviving posts [Price 1954]), numerous bedrock mortars (Antelope Valley College recorded several hundred), rock rings around mortar complexes, ceramics, many *Olivella* beads, glass beads, and a human bundle burial. Glass trade beads, numerous small projectile points, and the burial, with which a manufactured blanket was recorded (Price 1954), are all indicative of this temporal assignment.

Mark Q. Sutton, Bureau of Land Management, 831 Barstow Rd., Barstow, CA 92311.

Of interest is the rock art at Ker-230. It consists primarily of several hundred vertical grooves cut into a soft sandstone strata exposed just above a spring. Some of the grooves appear to have been cut through red pictographs (Cawley 1965). This rock art is noted in Heizer and Clewlow (1973: Fig. 86*e*) and by Price (1954). On a hill just east of the spring are petroglyphs of bighorn sheep and several anthropomorphs (see Sutton 1981).

Teddy Bear Cave, so named because of the shape of several of the pictographs, is located in a large north facing cliff overlooking a small valley. The cave itself is wide and shallow, measuring 9.4 m. wide at the mouth by about 3.0 m. deep. Ceiling height varies greatly from about 20 cm. to 10 m.

The rock art in the cave consists of numerous polychrome pictographs painted in red, yellow, black, and white. There are a number of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic elements present. Two of the anthropomorphs (Figs. 2 and 3) are "Teddy Bear" forms, a third (Fig. 4) is a "devil" form, and a fourth (Fig. 5) exhibits very large "eyes." The

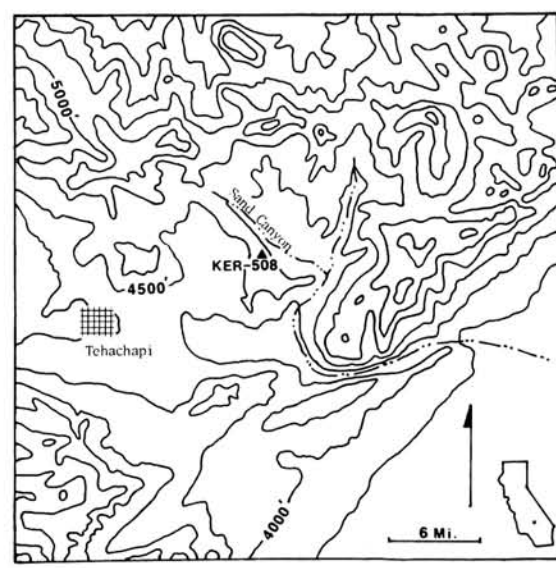

Fig. 1. Location of Teddy Bear Cave (CA-Ker-508) in the Southern Sierra Nevada.

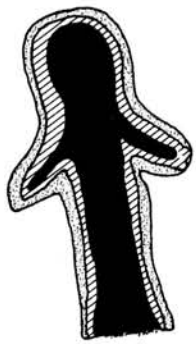

Fig. 2. Main "Teddy Bear" element. Main element is 52 cm. high.

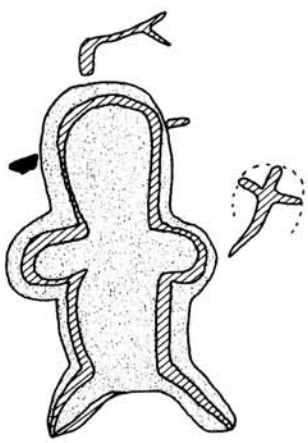

Fig. 3. "Teddy Bear" element. Main element is 66 cm. high.

Fig. 4. "Devil" anthropomorph. Main element is 64 cm. high.

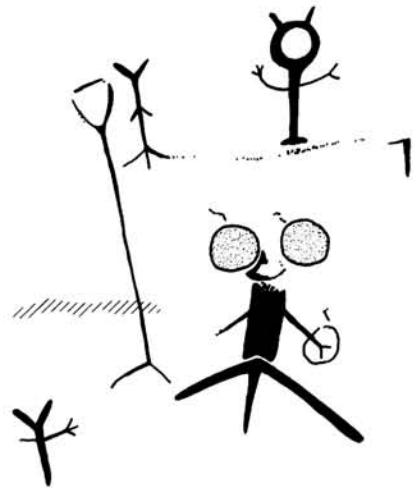

Fig. 5. Panel with "large-eyed" anthropomorph. Panel measures 86 cm. high by 70 cm. wide.

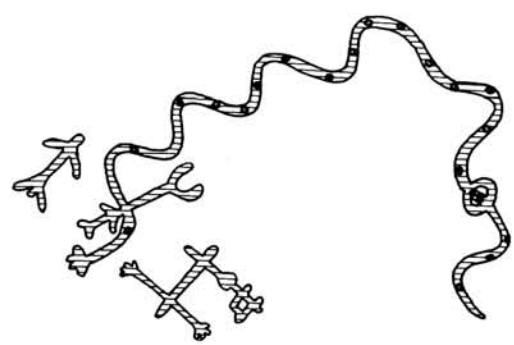

Fig. 6. Snake element with associated figures. Snake is 344 cm. in length.

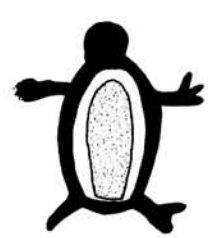

Fig. 7. Turtle or Bug element. Figure measures 27x12 cm.

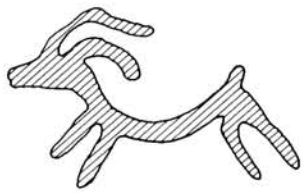

Fig. 8. Bighorn Sheep. Element measures 15x10 cm. See key for Figs. 2-7.

remaining anthropomorphs are painted in red only. Zoomorphic forms include a snake (Fig. 6) which is about 16 feet long (although Cawley [1965] felt the figure was a map of some kind), a turtle-like or bug-like figure (Fig. 7), and a bighorn sheep (Fig. 8) (cf. Sutton 1981). A group of black concentric circles is also present along with other paintings too numerous to detail here. Cawley (1965) visited the cave in 1963. He noted that many of the pictographs had been, or were in the process of being, destroyed by vandalism. The author first saw the cave in 1970 and the elements (at least those not previously destroyed) appeared in excellent shape. Some of the art may have been vandalized prior to 1970 (as Cawley [1965] notes) and there may have been more elements present at one time.

Teddy Bear Cave was "discovered" in 1952 by Charles LaMonk, Gordon Redfeldt, and one other person. An Indian ranch hand told them where the site was located, and the site was undisturbed at that time (Charles LaMonk, personal communication 1980). Later, in 1954, a bundle of painted arrow shafts was removed from the east end of the shelter (Charles LaMonk, personal communication 1980).

The cave was formally investigated on two occasions, once by the Archaeological Survey Association in 1956 and once by Antelope Valley College, under the field direction of the author, in 1971.

The Archaeological Survey Association worked at the cave in 1956 as part of their overall investigation of the Phillips Ranch region. A brief summary of the materials recovered from the cave at that time is offered below for comparative purposes.

The most prominent artifacts recovered at the cave in 1956 were beads. A total of 95 beads was collected, 47 blue glass hexagonal, 34 red glass, 4 white glass, 8 shell beads (species or type unknown), and 2 steatite beads. A single *Haliotis* sp. ornament was also recovered. Other artifacts recovered include 89 flakes, an obsidian projectile point, a drill tip, a slate artifact, an unidentified bone tool, and 93 small pieces of bone. A number of perishables was also recovered. These include 11 fragments of cordage, 4 arrowshafts (type unknown), 2 basket fragments (type unknown), and a wooden pin (?). Some historical material was also recovered.

The dominance of glass trade beads in the assemblage suggests that the occupation and/or use of the cave dates to the protohistoric period (this does not, of course, necessarily date the rock art). It would appear, then, that the cave was used concurrently with the main habitation site (Ker-230) at Phillips Ranch. It is interesting that no ceramics were found at the cave although they are fairly common at Phillips Ranch.

Teddy Bear Cave was again investigated by the author in 1971. It was known that the cave had been excavated previously, and it appeared that there was no intact deposit remaining. However, a low overhang containing a large rat's nest was located in the eastern part of the cave and our efforts were confined to that area. The nest was slowly dismantled and artifactual material was collected. Seven pieces of basketry, 5 arrow mainshafts, an arrow foreshaft, a chalcedony blade, and a mano were recovered.

All of the basketry recovered in 1971 was twined. While the basketry material has not been formally identified, willow (*Salix* spp.), either split or unsplit, was the favorite mater-

ial used in twined Kawaiisu baskets (Zigmond 1978). Two pieces of large burden basket rim were recovered and show some evidence of burning. A third fragment was pitched, probably with pinyon pitch (Zigmond n.d.), and may have come from a water bottle. The other basket pieces recovered are from unidentified forms. Zigmond (1978) notes that decorative baskets were invariably coiled and that work baskets were generally twined. The arrow mainshafts were made from a small reed, probably *Phragmites australis* (Zigmond n.d.).

ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

The Sand Canyon area is mentioned fairly frequently in Kawaiisu mythology. Coyote and Mountain Lion were said to have a winter house in Sand Canyon (Zigmond 1980:69). In a different version of the same myth Coyote and Leopard (Mountain Lion) "lived in a brush hut above Sand Canyon" (Zigmond 1980:74). In another myth "Coyote often went to Sand Canyon" (Zigmond 1980:117).

Caves and rockshelters are also mentioned frequently in Kawaiisu myth. These references are usually general although specific places are sometimes identified. The cave identified in a version of "The Giant Grasshopper" myth is "at *supitabuve*, above Sand Canyon" (Zigmond 1980:161). A different version of that same myth states that "the cave" (not named) can still be seen from Inyokern (Zigmond 1980:160). A specific cave in the Panamint Mountains is mentioned in another myth (Zigmond 1980).

Teddy Bear Cave appears to be mentioned specifically by Zigmond (1977) on at least two separate occasions (Zigmond always refers to the cave as a rockshelter in his accounts). The first time is in reference to pictograph sites. Zigmond (1977) notes that Rock Baby is responsible for painting pictographs and states that "Both the Rock Baby and his pictographs are 'out of bounds' for people. The paintings may be looked at without danger, but touching them will lead to quick disaster" (Zigmond 1977:71). Some physical dangers were believed to be involved, such as if one would touch the paintings then rub his eyes, he will not sleep again but will die in three days. Photographing the paintings would break the camera. The main Kawaiisu concern regarding disaster was in Rock Baby himself, whose mere presence can bring death (Zigmond 1977).

Teddy Bear Cave may be one of two sites where Rock Baby did not paint the pictographs, although no other originator is suggested (Zigmond 1977). Zigmond (1977) also mentioned that the rock art at the cave was quite different from other rock art in the area. The other site mentioned is described as a small shallow cave. It may be that the Cache Creek caves (Ker-93) is the second site, as it fits the physical description and contains polychrome pictographs. It is interesting to note, however, that between Teddy Bear Cave and Cache Creek the style of painting may be quite different (Georgia Lee, personal communication 1980).

Teddy Bear Cave seems to be the place where the Kawaiisu world was created:

> In mythological times the animal-people held celebrations at both these locations [Teddy Bear Cave and Cache Creek (?) cave]. It may be that each of the participants painted his own picture. In any case, it was at the rockshelter [Teddy Bear Cave] that the world was created. A mortar hole marks the spot. It was Grizzly Bear who called the animals together although, according to one version, he was not the chief. He still lives in the rock and there is a fissure through which he can come and go. He is known to have growled at a non-indian woman—and perhaps chased her—when she approached too near. Here the animals decided what they wanted to be [Zigmond 1977:76].

Even though the reference seems specific, Zigmond (personal communication, 1980)

points out that the cave is not mentioned in the "Earth-Diver" creation myth (Zigmond 1980:27) and that some of the people he talked to (e.g., Emma Williams) did not refer to the site at all.

Zigmond was taken to the cave in the 1930s by several Kawaiisu.

> When Sam Willie and John Marcus took me to the rock-shelter site, they stopped a few hundred feet before we reached our destination and told me that, before we could proceed farther, it would be necessary for each of us to make an offering to an animal whose representation we chose to see. Otherwise we would see nothing. Unnoticed by me, Sam had picked some juniper berries along the way. He now divided them among us, and I was instructed to name the animal I wanted to see and then scatter my berries in the general direction of the site. Sam and John did the same. After having performed this ritual, I was assured that we should see pictographs—which we did. They told of a non-Indian woman who had come to see the pictographs but made no offering (possibly she was ignorant of the custom!). She heard the growl of a grizzly bear, fled, and never returned. According to one version of the story, she was actually chased by the bear [Zigmond 1977:79].

Zigmond recorded several Kawaiisu myths where various animals gathered together and decided what to be. The myth "Discussion of the Animals" (Zigmond 1980:41) is the most extensive of these. Each animal stated in turn what each wanted to be and what it would eat.

Zigmond had stated (1977:76) that the animal-people held celebrations at the cave, that it was there where they decided what to be and that each of the participants may have painted their own picture. It is important to note, however, that the "Discussion of the Animals" and similar myths do not specifically mention the cave.

The existing rock art in the cave appears to represent a variety of forms and/or animals. Snake and Bighorn Sheep are definitely present. Convincing arguments as to the identity of other forms are impossible, but the variety of elements may argue for a variety of intended forms. The Kawaiisu who took Zigmond to the cave in the 1930s specifically mentioned that the rock art (at least some of it) represented animals (Zigmond 1977:79).

The ethnographic data appears to be specific that the world was created at Teddy Bear Cave. It is less specific, but still suggestive, that the animals met there, decided what to be, and painted their own pictures. The diversity of the rock art itself may support this interpretation.

The reference of Coyote and Mountain Lion having a winter house in Sand Canyon (Zigmond 1980:69), coupled with the supernatural use of the cave, is suggestive that the cave may be associated in some way with winter solstice ritual (Hudson *et al.* 1979). Hudson *et al.* (1979) believe that many such observations may exist, although during the research for this paper there was no special effort to explore such a possibility.

The archaeological data are confusing. Since the cave was an important sacred site, it would seem unusual that normal domestic activities would have occurred there. The diversity of the types of artifacts recovered (flakes, a projectile point, a drill, a mano, etc.) does not suggest a ceremonial site. Perhaps important is the fact that while there is a diversity in types of artifacts, only one of each was found. It is also interesting to note that a mortar hole (cf. Zigmond 1977:76) is located at the western end of the cave.

The great majority of artifacts recovered consisted of either shell or glass beads and perishables. Again, the basket fragments were all twined, as in work baskets, not coiled as in decorative baskets. While it is difficult to interpret the artifact assemblage, one should consider the possibility that the archaeological materials, or some of them, may have been left as offerings. This would be especially

applicable to the beads. It is apparent from Zigmond's account of being taken to the cave that offerings were normally made. It is possible that some of the materials (e.g., the basketry?) could have been brought in by pack rats and may not represent aboriginal activity at the site. Due to the quantity of the material in the cave, it would seem more likely that the cave served as a storage area.

Several other Kawaiisu ceremonial sites located north of Sand Canyon have been investigated recently (Schiffman 1980; Garfinkel and Schiffman 1980). Large numbers of fragmented beads are reported in both cases. The glass beads at Teddy Bear Cave were not fragmented, and the site's function would appear somewhat different than the other two.

There are a number of qualifiers which must be mentioned at this point. While the archaeological material dates to the protohistoric period, the rock art is not firmly dated. It is possible that it predates the Kawaiisu occupation of the area. If this were true, it may or may not support the perceived relationship of the rock art to Kawaiisu mythology. It is also possible that the various elements could have been executed at different times or by an outside group. The ethnographic record itself is also a problem. There are many inconsistencies and differences which are not understood.

In spite of these cautions, the current data suggest that Teddy Bear Cave was an important site in Kawaiisu mythology and that the rock art may represent a Kawaiisu creation myth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is an expanded version of an earlier paper presented at the 1980 Rock Art meetings at the San Diego Museum of Man. I am indebted to Maurice Zigmond, Georgia Lee, Thomas C. Blackburn, Travis Hudson, R. W. Robinson, Alan P. Garfinkel, Robert Schiffman, and Judy Barras for their advice, help, and comment. Special thanks are due Gordon Redtfeldt for making a summary of the A.S.A.'s 1956 archaeological materials available to me. Figure 7 was redrawn from Gordon's notes. Georgia Lee assisted greatly by drawing the figures.

REFERENCES

Battle, Don
1960 A Labor of Love. Westways Magazine, August, 1960, pp. 26-28.

Cawley, John
1965 Notes on Pictographs and Petroglyphs, Mostly in Kern County. Manuscript No. 386 on file at the University of California Archaeological Research Facility, Berkeley.

Garfinkel, Alan P., and Robert A. Schiffman
1980 Archaeological Mitigation of Parcel Map 5118, CA-Ker-983. Report on file at Robert A. Schiffman and Associates, Bakersfield.

Heizer, R. F., and C. W. Clewlow, Jr.
1973 Prehistoric Rock Art of California (2 Vols.). Ramona: Ballena Press.

Hudson, Travis, Georgia Lee, and Ken Hedges
1979 Solstice Observers and Observatories in Native California. Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology 1(1):38-63.

Price, Clyde
1954 The Phillips Ranch Site. Archaeological Survey Association Newsletter 2(2):9-10.

Schiffman, Robert A.
1980 Excavation at Ker-1151. Paper presented at the Society for California Archaeology Fall Data Sharing Meeting, Northridge.

Sutton, Mark Q.
1981 Bighorn Sheep Rock Art from the Southern Sierra Nevada. Masterkey 55(1):13-17.

Zigmond, Maurice
n.d. Kawaiisu. Manuscript in author's possession. Chapter to be included in Handbook of North American Indians, Great Basin Volume. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

1977 The Supernatural World of the Kawaiisu. In: Flowers in the Wind, Thomas C. Blackburn, ed., pp. 59-95. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 8.

1978 Kawaiisu Basketry. Journal of California Anthropology 5(2):199-215.

1980 Kawaiisu Mythology: An Oral Tradition of South Central California. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 18.