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## *Exwanyawish*: A Luiseño Sacred Rock

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*EXWANYAWISH* was first described by Constance Du Bois (1908:159):

One of the most striking rocks in this locality of ancient monuments is the painted rock, *Exwanyawish* which was one of the Temecula people, a woman, who turned into this form. Indians suffering bodily pain rub against the rock to obtain relief. It is not known when the painting on the hollowed side was done, nor when the sacred stones, wiala, were poised on top. The oldest man remembers that they were always there, though the touch of a hand might overturn them.

This report presents ethnographic testimony collected 30-40 years ago by the senior author which pinpoints the location of *Exwanyawish*, and provides additional information concerning the pictographs located thereon. Initially, we had some concern about publicizing the exact location of this important feature, but we realized that although the site had been recorded archaeologically many years ago, its ethnographic significance had become confused. Many of the Luiseño elders who knew the details connected with the rock, its pictographs, and its mythological connections have since passed away, so it is important from an ethnographic perspective to fill in as many gaps as possible while the remaining carriers of this knowledge are alive.

It is clear from the context of Du Bois' description of ancestral Luiseño landmarks (1908:158-160) that *Exwanyawish* is located in the vicinity of Potrero, not far from the ancestral home of her informant, Lucario Cuevish (Fig. 1). Another reference is included in her myth entitled "The Dance of the Spirits" (Du Bois 1908:154). A man from Ahoya (Ahuya; near Rincon) stopped at the place Kamak (Potrero) to spend the night



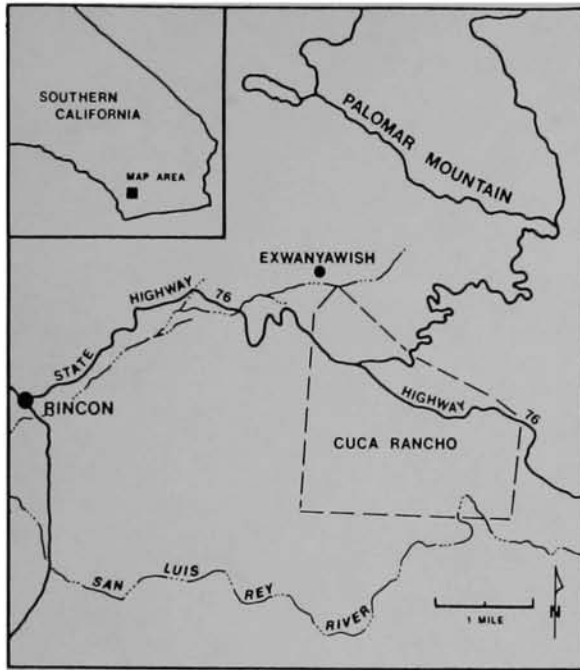


Fig. 1. Location map.

(Fig. 1). The village people were away at the summer village on Palomar Mountain, so he slept alone under a large inverted storage basket. During the night he heard a call for a dance, listened to the participants and could recognize the voices of men and women who had died a long time before. One of these spirits was *Exwanyawish*, the woman who had turned into a rock; another was *Piyevla*, the man who scooped a rock with his fingers (not to be confused with the somewhat undercut underside of *Exwanyawish*). The old man was curious and anxious to see these spirits, and just before dawn he threw off the basket and "immediately all the spirits turned into a flock of birds and flew away" (Du Bois 1908:154).

The rock representing the Temecula woman was first directly identified for one of us (DLT) by a Luiseño consultant (Max Peters) in 1958, but at that time Peters did *not* mention the presence of the pictographs. In the same year, a second consultant, who almost certainly knew the name of the rock

feature and its history, pointed it out as a "special" rock, but did not name it or comment on the pictographs. After it was clear that details of the rock, its name, and its paintings were known, still another consultant with closer ties to the Potrero community acknowledged the pictographs, and provided some important historical information relating to them. This latter consultant, however, even after a number of informal discussions spread over several years, did not identify the rock as the "Temecula Woman" nor provide her name.

As can be seen from the foregoing, the identification and verification of this painted rock as *Exwanyawish* developed in stages, and then only as a result of the information from, and close cooperation of, several Luiseño elders. It is obvious that *Exwanyawish* is a very important local landmark, and not one to be talked about to non-Luiseño in a casual manner.

The painted rock location was recorded in the 1950s as site SDi-312 (Rincon 106 on a site survey sheet filed at UCLA in 1959 by DLT). SDi-312 consists of three pictograph rocks located on a steep hillside north of the northerly branch of Potrero Creek, at an approximate elevation of 2,800 feet above sea level. The aggregate of boulders that includes *Exwanyawish* is very near to or may actually straddle the boundary between the La Jolla Indian Reservation and the Pauma Rancho (USGS Boucher Hill 7.5' quadrangle 1950). Oxendine (1983:129) speculated that *Exwanyawish* might be located at SDi-617 (Rincon 7) but the two sites are quite distinct: SDi-617 is approximately one-half mile south-southwest of SDi-312, at a lower elevation of 2,500 feet above sea level.

Based on field notes made some 30 years ago, a few details relating to the paintings are presented below. By no means are these short comments meant to substitute for a systematic recording by an archaeologist

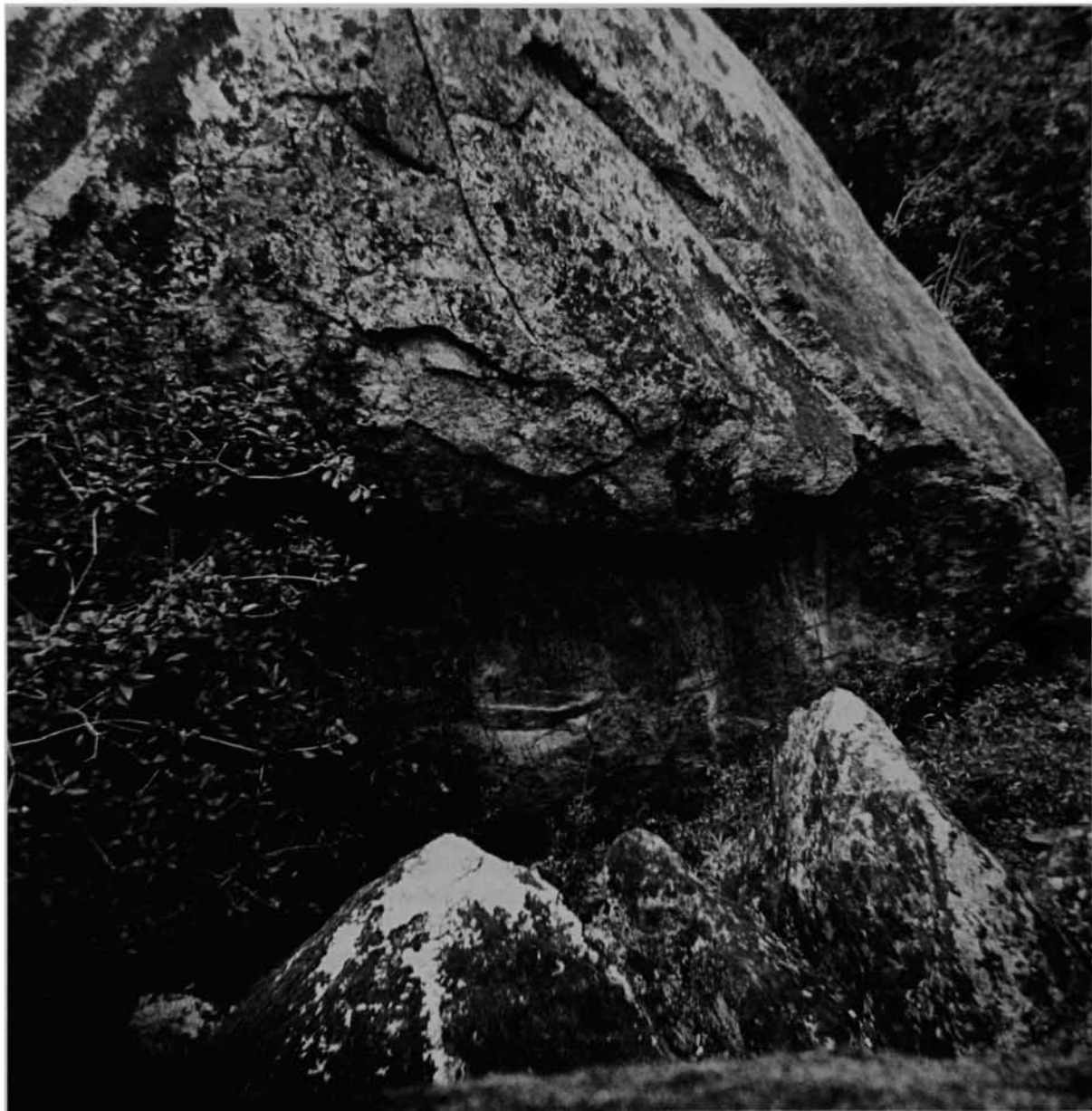


Fig. 2. Painted area of Exwanyawish.

with special interest in pictograph motifs.

For painted rock No. 1, the primary painted area faces almost due west and all of the design elements appear to have been in red. All elements were faded when observed in 1958. Identifiable motifs included diamond chains and diamond chains enclosed

in vertical zig-zag lines, single "X" and "O" figures, and a simple sunburst element. In at least one instance, a single "X" was superimposed over a faded and unidentifiable design. Two rows of dotted squares were noted, with a least 12 recognizable elements. A second painted area on the same



Fig. 3. Close-up of pictographs at Exwanyawish.

rock faces in a southwesterly direction, and in 1958 it consisted of a faded row of diamond elements, a small vertical row of crosses (darker and more distinct in color), an unidentified blur of paint, and a poorly preserved remnant of a dotted design.

The designs on rock No. 2 were better preserved (more recent?), and most elements were clear and relatively bright. The primary panel faces in a westerly direction, and the recorded motifs included vertical diamond chains, vertical rows of dots, horizontal rows of dots, single horizontal lines, ladder forms, vertical zig-zag lines, a sun figure, a concentric circle design (faded), and two cross-

like figures which *may* represent birds or insects. Another sunburst (faded) was recorded along with an irregularly shaped outline filled in with single diagonal lines. Single "X" elements were present, as was another motif consisting of solid vertical lines in rows. Several blurs of red paint were noted but could no longer be interpreted. The southerly exposure of the same rock had another panel of very faded and blurred geometric designs in red. No details were recorded for this panel.

The third rock represents the Temecula Woman *Exwanyawish*. It has, by far, the most elaborate paintings and is the best

preserved (Fig. 2). The principal panel here has a southerly exposure protected by a moderate overhang which is the source of the "hollowed side" referred to by Du Bois' consultant (1908:159). Because of the protection afforded by this overhang, the design elements were very clear and bright and appeared almost new. Variations in color intensity could be discerned along with considerable evidence of superposition.

The elements recorded include vertical rows of chevrons, vertical zig-zags, single "X" forms, sun motifs, vertical rows of dots, asymmetrical sunburst figures, vertical rows of closely spaced dots, ladder forms, several hand prints, and many other more elaborate combinations of elements better seen than described. Figure 2 shows the overhang and the primary painted area, and Figure 3 is a closeup of the panel. The field notes for this site mention the presence of a small bedrock mortar cup, and it is not clear whether it is an isolate (paint mortar), or part of a pitted rock element. A single tiny mortar is directly associated with the painted rock at Molpa (SDi-308), approximately 1.5 miles southeast of SDi-312 (True et al. 1974), and such associations are not uncommon in this part of San Diego County.

The last point we want to make relates to the origin of the pictographs on *Exwanyawish*. Du Bois' consultant claimed not to know the origin of the paintings (Du Bois 1908:159), but it is clear from all the data gathered on pictographs since that time that many, if not most of, such features were part of Luiseño ritual activities, not the least of which was the girls' initiation ceremony. It might be argued that because of the special status of the "Temecula Woman" (*Exwanyawish*), the pictographs there were related to, or part of, some more exotic ceremonial activities. This is not impossible, but the idea is negated to a substantial degree by information provided

by an important and reliable Luiseño consultant 30 years ago, who reported that the rock was used as part of the girls' initiation, and that in fact, the participants in the last known girls' initiation ceremony at Potrero, in the late nineteenth century, raced to that particular rock. The last surviving participant in that race was still alive in the late 1950s. It is noteworthy that the last survivor is said to have been the winner of the race, a fact that supports the Luiseño belief that the winner would always live the longest. In deference to the privacy of the surviving family, the name of the consultant and the participants are not revealed.

None of the informants consulted from 1940 to 1960 mentioned curing properties attributed to the boulder, nor did we discuss the significance of the two rocks poised above *Exwanyawish* in Du Bois' photograph (1908:Plate 19, Fig. 2A). It also is unclear whether the various attributes of the boulders were interactive or separate. Was it used for the girls' initiation ceremonies because it was already a sacred site, or were the two features independent? Does the same relationship hold true at other pictograph sites? Whatever the response, it is clear that this group of boulders was an important part of the regional as well as local Luiseño cosmogony.

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