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Addendum: Large Perforated Stones from San Clemente Island, 1984 Excavations

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In addition to the specimens discussed by Molitor in the preceding paper, 20 more perforated stones were recovered in 1984 (Table 14.1). Of these, eight are from the Ledge Site and add to the 25 examples previously discussed. Two appear to be steatite, presumably of material from Catalina Island. Molitor makes the point that she noted no steatite specimens and that harder stones were preferred. She also comments that steatite has been a generic term used to apply to a variety of island materials. The observation made here is that steatite was sometimes used for these stones, but her general statement is correct in that the softer and less dense varieties were not selected.

Of the remaining specimens cataloged in 1984, two are from Eel Point C and six are from Eel Point B. Most of the Eel Point B specimens are from shallow levels and may not have the age associated with the deeper levels of that site. One fragment, however, was found with Burial 3, which was dated by radiocarbon to a little over 5000 years ago. It is possible that some of the Eel Point B specimens are even older. The four final specimens are from the Nursery Site (SCLI-1215). Two are associated with an excavated pit house and two are from graves adjacent to the house. (Fig. 14.1)

With respect to interpretation, considerable ethnographic data are reported by Latta (1977) concerning such perforated stones used by the Yokuts of the southern San Joaquin Valley and adjacent foothills. Whether these data can be applied to the ancient inhabitants of San Clemente Island, a couple of hundred miles distant and in a very different ecological niche is unclear, but they provide additional insight into two of the possible uses suggested by Molitor: games and shaman's kits. Latta illustrates three perforated stones and offers the following information on the use of such stones in games:

This stone was about three or four inches in diameter and had a hole in the center about an inch in diameter... They shot wooden pointed arrows at the stone as it passed by... This same stone, called *wumwumwus* or thunder stone, was used to straighten their arrows and their shafts for gigging fish (Latta 1977:469-470).

A *Chunut* (Tulare Lake) Yokuts said:

We played another game called *cuh-moom-wits* [editorial note: probably the same term as the above]. We used the stone that is round and has a hole in it like a doughnut... The Winatun rolled the stone on the village game place... They had a point when the arrow

went through the hole... The boys played another game with the same round stone. They set it on some dirt and shot arrows through it.” (Latta 1977:710).

These informants mention magical or shamanist uses, which are further confirmed in other statements. The *Chunut* (Tulare Lake) shaman had a magic stone like a doughnut. “They called it *cuhmumwum weah*, thunder and lightning cry stone,” and they used it “to make thunder and lightning and to make whirlwinds and cool breezes.” (Latta, 1977:691). A *Chunut* shaman’s medicine bag was reported to contain a string of eagle-down, a doughnut stone, a charmstone (plum-

met), a polished crescent stone, and a string bag (Latta, 1977:694.)

In spite of the variations in spelling, it is apparent that these are accounts referring to the same item, well known to the informants. The most significant thing about them is their clear demonstration of multiple uses for the same object, some ritual and some secular. This makes it impossible and indeed unnecessary to seek a single explanation for the function of archaeological finds of this kind. The best that can be done is to lay out a range of possibilities, as discussed by Molitor. The same observation can be applied to many other objects, such as knives, beads, and even mortars and pestles.

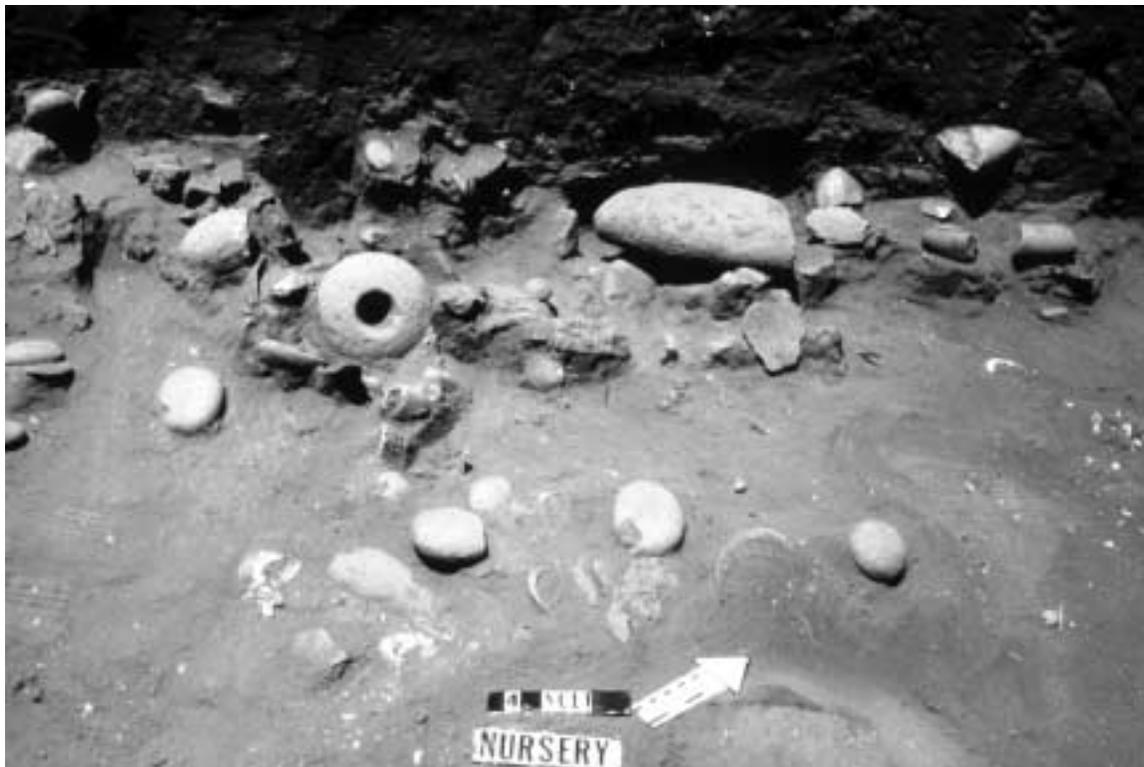


Fig. 14.1. Artifacts scattered on house floor at the Nursery Site (40 cm deep). Large perforated stone (16.5 cm diameter) found among the millingsstones.

Table 14.1. Perforated Stones from San Clemente Island, 1984 Season.

Unit	Level (cm)	Material	Size (cm) Diameter	Thickness	Perforation	Remarks
Ledge (SCLI-126)						
P-26	Surface	Chlorite schist	6.0*	2	2.0*	Fragment
R-32	Surface	Chlorite schist	9.5	3.8*	2.5	Polished one side
R-32	Surface	Steatite	5.0*	4.5*	3.5*	Polished one side
R-30	Surface	Steatite				7 small fragments
R-30	15-30	Basalt	7.0*	4.5*	4.0*	Fragment
R-30	Surface	Chlorite schist				3 small fragments
Site	Surface	Chlorite schist	6.0*	2.5*	3.0*	Polished one side
Site	Surface	Basalt	9.5	3.8	2.5	
Eel Point B (SCLI-43B)						
R-33	20-30	Basalt	8	5	2	
L-13	15-30	Basalt	4	2	2.5	Small, not doughnut stone?
L-13	105-120	Basalt	4.5	2.8	1	Half
L-13	105-120	Basalt	5	2.8	1	Half
E-1	84-100	Basalt	7*	3*	1.5	Fragment, with Burial 3
Q-22	55	Serpentine	7.7	3.3	2.2	Polished and incised on one side
Eel Point C (SCLI-43C)						
F-15	100-115	Serpentine	7*	1.5*	2.2	Polished fragment
G-15	115-130	Basalt	7.5*	4	2.0*	Half
Nursery (SCLI-1215)						
House	40	Basalt	8.5	5	3	Polished one side, with Burial 1
House	40	Diatomite	11	4.2	3.6	With Burial 3
House	40	Steatite	5	5	3	Fragment with red stain
House	40	Basalt	16.5	9.5	2.5	Feature 3, floor
House	50-60	Basalt	8.5	7.5	2	half barrel
House	50-60	Basalt	9	4.6	0.0*	half
House	40	Basalt	10.0*	6	2.0*	half

* = measurement on fragmentary specimen (the maximum size is greater than this by an unknown amount).