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## Two Cast-Iron Pots from Aboriginal Contexts in Southern California

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**EXAMPLES** of historic native American use of Euroamerican manufactured goods are well known. Woodward (1965:2) noted that trade goods entering California included a great variety of items, such as various cloths, beads, brass rings, wire, kettles, knives, and other goods. Wire was used to bind poles for construction (Ritter 1980); iron was used for projectile points (Fowler and Matley 1979:65, Fig. 51a-b); other items served more elaborate functions such as the use of glass beads in wealth displays, as part of ceremonial dress, and as mortuary offerings (Meighan and Riddell 1972:39; Hester 1978:498).

Such artifacts are usually traceable as to their origin, being standard trade goods (e.g., glass beads, iron points), recognizable and easily obtainable materials (e.g., baling wire), or materials discarded by Euroamericans (e.g., cans). Some historic material, however, is not easily identifiable, and may predate extensive Euroamerican contact.

Fragments of iron pots noted at two archaeological sites in San Diego County, California, fall into this last category and are described herein. We recognize that large iron pots were widely used by California and Great Basin Indians during the latter half of the nineteenth century (cf. Bean 1978:Fig. 2; Bean and Shipek 1978:Fig. 4). We also believe that in some cultures such pots supplemented or replaced some ceramic, stone, and/or basketry vessels.

### THE POT FRAGMENTS

D. L. True collected a rim fragment of a cast-iron pot from the surface of Rincon-67

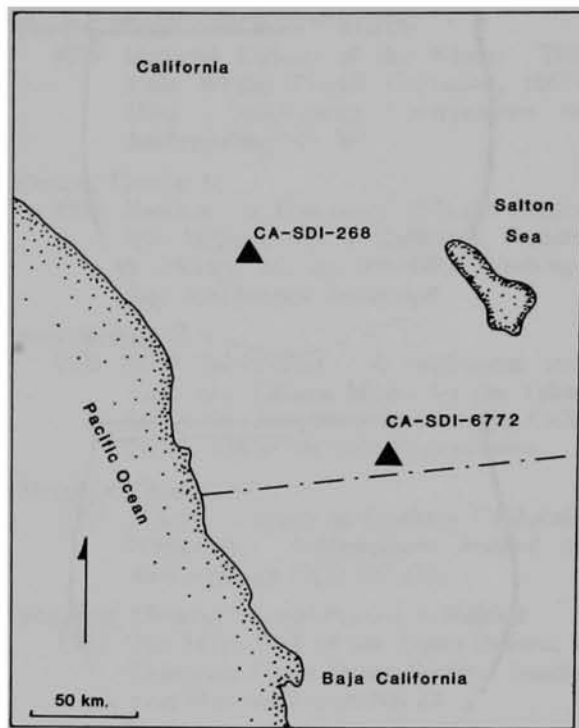


Fig. 1. Location of the sites discussed in the text.

(CA-SDI-268), apparently the ethnographically known Luiseno village of *Yapicha* or *Japicha* (Fig. 1). The complete pot (Fig. 2, upper) would have had an external body diameter of approximately 16.0 cm. and an internal rim diameter of approximately 14.6 cm. The rim thickness is 0.6 cm. and the body thickness is 0.3 cm., though it varies slightly. A series of small incised lines is present under the rim of the piece.

The village of *Yapicha* contained a well-developed midden but is now mostly destroyed (True et al. 1974:89). Artifacts noted at the site included Tizon Brown Ware ceramics, but no rock art as occurs at the second site discussed below. The village also was noted by Du Bois (1908:152) and Sparkman (1908:192). The presence of the brownware ceramics suggests that the site was occupied during late prehistoric to proto-historic times, since ceramics were introduced into the region very late in time

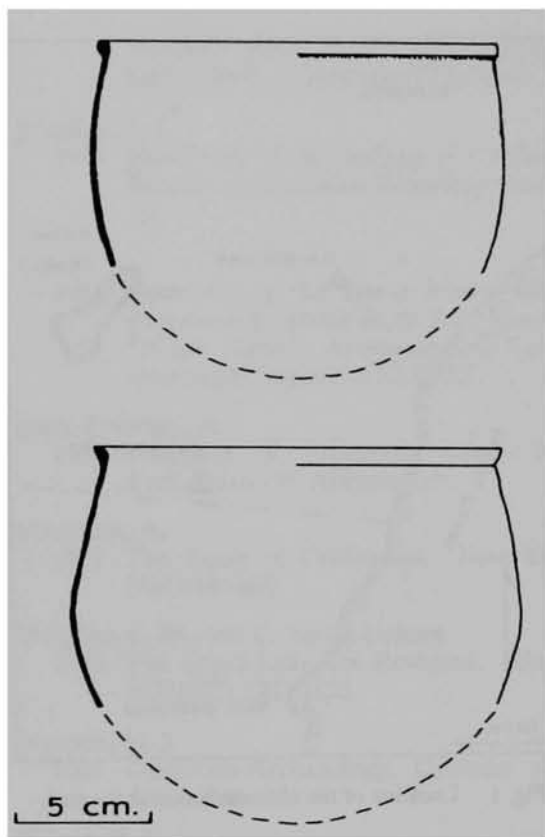


Fig. 2. Reconstructed views of the metal pots. Upper, from CA-SDI-268; Lower, from CA-SDI-6772.

(cf. Meighan 1954; True and Waugh 1981:87).

A second cast-iron pot rim fragment (Fig. 2, lower) was collected (by Ritter) from CA-SDI-6772 (Fig. 1; also recorded as SDM-C-457 and is included within Rogers' C-128 site area) in 1976. The pot would have had an external diameter of approximately 17.0 cm. and an internal rim diameter of approximately 14.2 cm. The rim is 0.5 cm. thick, and the body thickness varies from 0.18 cm. in the neck to 0.25 cm. in the main portion of the body.

This second piece was found on the surface of a small rockshelter some 10 m. away from a second shelter containing black and red pictographs. The site is located on the south side of Table Mountain (*Hwi-nip-shish*), in *Kumeyaay* territory. May (1976) recorded the site as a permanent *Kumeyaay*

village (site D-17) consisting of bedrock mortars, three rockshelters, a midden deposit, trails, ceramics, and hearths.

#### DISCUSSION

The small size of these two broken pots may support a Spanish or Mexican and not a Euroamerican origin. Euroamerican pots (after ca. A.D. 1847) were generally two to three times larger and were used primarily to cook soups and stews over open fires (L. Ross, personal communication 1983). It was common that such iron pots would have had two lugs on the rim to support a wire bail, and three or four small legs cast onto the bottom. Neither of these characteristics were noted on either specimen, although the incompleteness of the fragments does not preclude their original presence.

If the pieces are of Spanish or Mexican origin, there would have been 300 years in which they could have been obtained prior to extensive Euroamerican contact. Spanish contact in the southern California area began about A.D. 1540 along the coast and Colorado River, although the Mission at San Diego was not established until 1769. In that same year, Portolá led an expedition along the southern California coast (Carrico 1977), and six years later Fages traveled through Jacumba Valley (Bancroft 1887), passing very close to CA-SDI-6772.

Iron pots in aboriginal contexts are uncommon (e.g., not noted by Putnam 1879), but are not limited to southern California (although early Spanish and/or Mexican examples may be). Other examples have been reported in northern California (at CA-TEH-247 [site record completed by Francis Riddell in 1964]), in a Yokuts burial (Walker 1947), and in the Sierra Nevada (L. A. Payen, personal communication 1986). Deetz (1963:193) listed an iron pot from the smithy of the La Purísima Mission but provided no illustration. It may be associated with

Indian use (see also Schuyler 1978:72).

These pots are indicative of European influence on an aboriginal population that increasingly came to rely on imported goods. The examples reported herein add one more piece to the interaction puzzle.

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Lester Ross, of the San Bernardino County Museum, was most helpful with his analysis and illustration of the pot fragments. D. L. True kindly allowed us access to his notes and observations from CA-SDI-268 and provided an opportunity to examine the specimen from that site. We thank Jan Townsend for her assistance in obtaining site records, and D. L. True, Robert Hoover, and anonymous reviewers for their comments.

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