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## REPORTS

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### **A Birdstone from San Diego County, California: a Possible Example of Dimorphic Sexual Symbolism in Luiseño Iconography**

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**THE** literature of California prehistory records the occurrence of representations in stone of human genitalia. There are numerous references to phallus-shaped charmstones (e.g., Wallace 1978:32; Chartkoff and Chartkoff 1984:132) and phallic effigies (Lee 1981:50-51), and vulva symbolism is described in studies of rock art (Payen 1968:37) and yonis (natural features, sometimes enhanced, resembling pudenda) (McGowan 1982). In contrast, there is sparse mention of dimorphic sexual symbolism, reflecting the comparative rarity of this genre in native California iconography.

In this report, we document an artifact that merges phallic and vulvar motifs, and we offer an explanation of the artifact within the context of the fundamental concepts of duality and unity in Luiseño cosmology. We further suggest that dimorphic sexual symbolism, while rare in prehistoric southern California plastic art, is not as rare as once believed, but has gone unrecognized due to its abstract rendition. The artifact described here, with its comparative realism, allows an interpretation of meaning that might reasonably be extended to similar, but more abstracted, artifacts including perhaps the enigmatic "pelican" stones.

#### **DESCRIPTION**

In the summer of 1985, while conducting archaeological investigations on the Kelly

Ranch at Agua Hedionda Lagoon, northern San Diego County, the senior author was shown by Allan O. Kelly the artifact depicted in Figure 1. The specimen is 14.6 cm. long and 8.2 cm. wide with a maximum thickness of 3.35 cm. The material is a somewhat mottled greenish-gray soapstone. Mr. Kelly was given this "puberty fetish" by a building contractor who years before had recovered it from a sand pit being mined for construction material. The sand pit is in the San Luis Rey River drainage and is located north-northwest from, and within a mile of, the grounds of Mission San Luis Rey (Fig. 2).

Macroscopic and binocular microscopic analysis of trait differentials indicates that the piece probably had a watery and sandy provenience. The finish of one side (Fig. 1a) is smoother than that of the opposite side (Fig. 1b), where harsher striations suggest that this was the side facing down (bottom side) in the river bed. Small, hard, dark crystalline inclusions (almandite?) imbedded in the soapstone exhibit differential wear. On the top surface of the artifact these inclusions are well rounded. They are less rounded on the bottom surface, but within the break on the bottom side (Fig. 1b), the inclusions are angular and subangular, indicating an *in situ* breakage. The kind of differential wear observed on the artifact is unlikely to have been produced by water action in a tumbler or other mechanical device. We have little doubt that the piece is authentic.

The overall appearance of the artifact is that of a phallus flanked by labia (majora on top side, minora on bottom) at the base end of the shaft. There is a tendency in some native American art to create a polymorphic

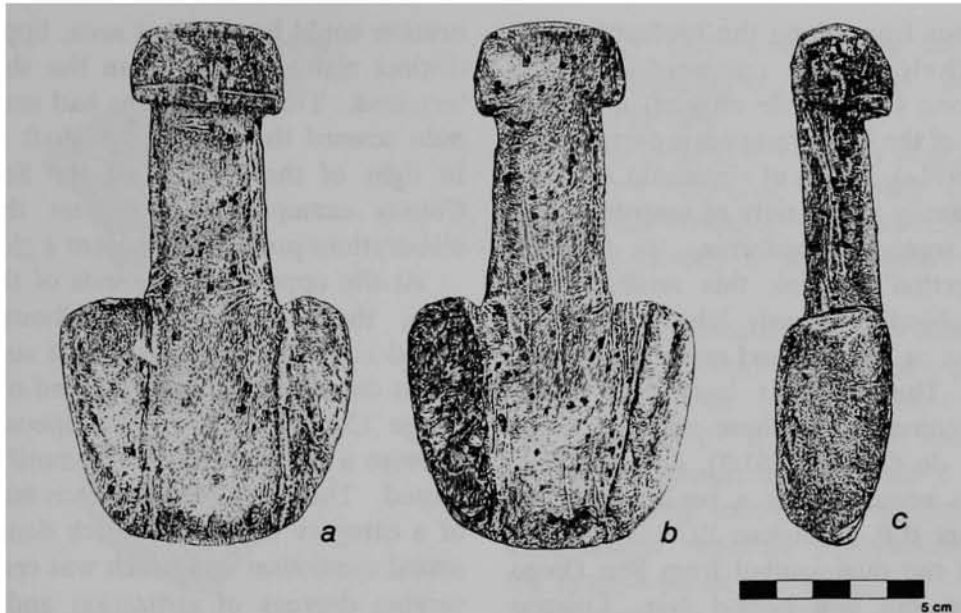


Fig. 1. Top, bottom, and side views (left to right) of dimorphic sexual effigy found in northern San Diego County. Allan O. Kelly collection.

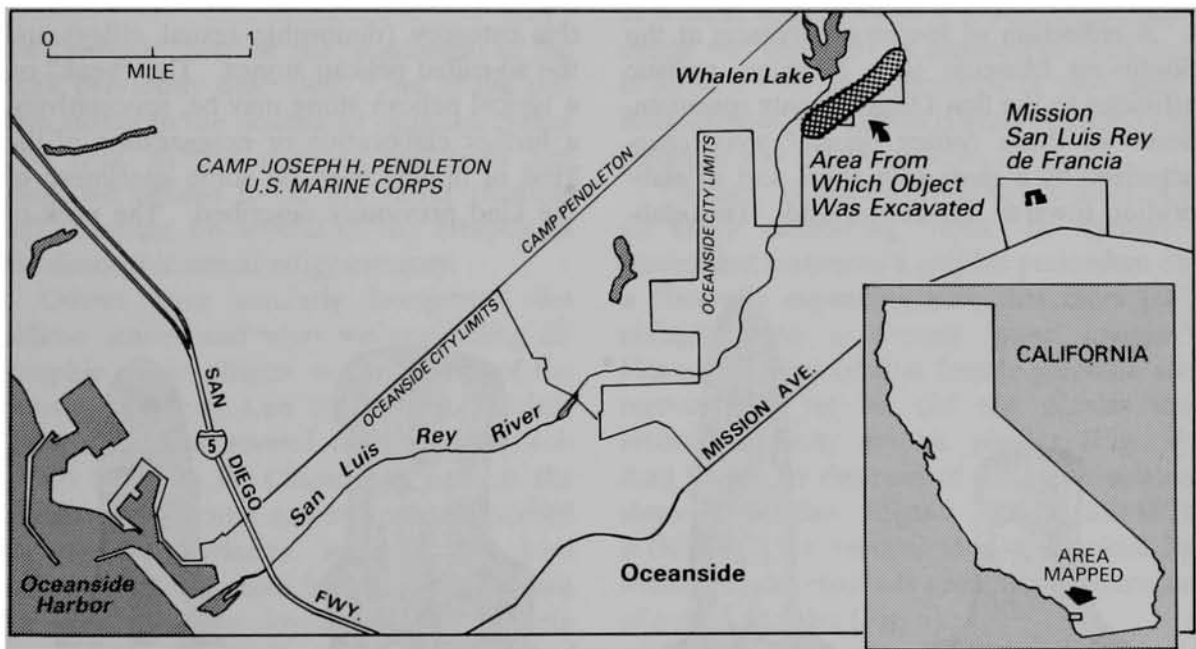


Fig. 2. Approximate location of discovery of dimorphic sexual effigy.

intent (e.g., Labbé 1980, 1982, 1986), that is, to produce a form that when viewed from a different perspective symbolizes another meaning, perhaps even an opposite meaning.

Thus, one side of the vulvar element here might double as a testicular element.

The object's phallic element is stylistically distinct from Millingstone period

charmstones from along the southern coast. Comparatively realistic representational art in soapstone (e.g., whale effigies) is a phenomenon of the Late Prehistoric period (e.g., Hoover 1974a), a time of significant increase in the quantity and variety of soapstone artifacts in southern California. In the following section we link this artifact to a class of objects variously labeled "hooks," bird stones or effigies, and pelican stones or effigies. There are at least two ethnographic references to these objects (Yates 1889:305; de Cessac 1951:2), and one bird effigy was unearthed in a burial dating to 1,000 years B.P. (Meighan 1976:27). Thus, we assign the dual symbol from San Diego County to the late period (*viz.*, Luiseño occupation).

#### STYLISTIC PARALLELS

A collection of soapstone artifacts at the Southwest Museum (Fig. 3) shows stylistic affinities to the San Diego County specimen. Some of these "effigy figures" were characterized by a shaft with some sort of elaboration towards the narrow end. This elab-

oration could be a raised area, lipping, or a distinct element wider than the shaft at its terminus. Three specimens had small raised nubs toward the end of the shaft (Fig. 3c). In light of the realism of the San Diego County example, it is evident that these elaborations probably represent a glans penis.

At the opposite, wide ends of these artifacts, there are oblong, bulbous and/or raised and folded elements that suggest the forms described for the wide end of the San Diego County object. We speculate that likewise a vulvar (testicular?) motif is represented. Thus, the Luiseño piece may be one of a category of artifact which denotes dual sexual symbolism and which was rendered in varying degrees of stylization and abstraction.

We believe that there are clear morphological parallels between some attributes of this category (dimorphic sexual effigy) and the so-called pelican stones. The "beak" on a typical pelican stone may be, speculatively, a further elaboration or exaggeration of the kind of lipping seen on some specimens of the kind previously described. The neck of

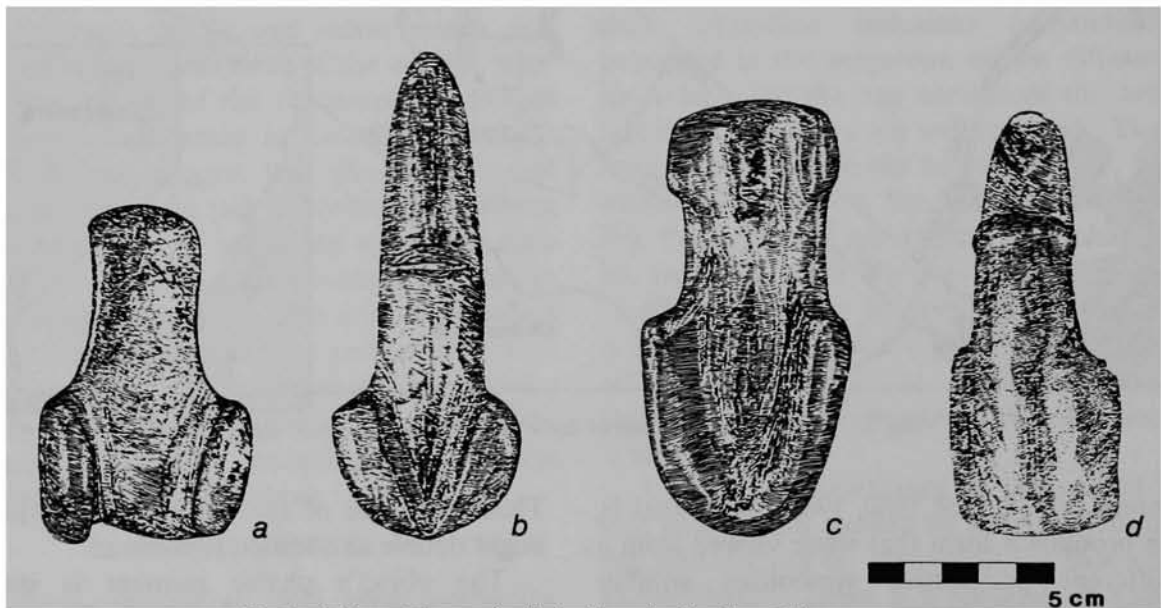


Fig. 3. Dimorphic sexual effigies from the Southwest Museum.

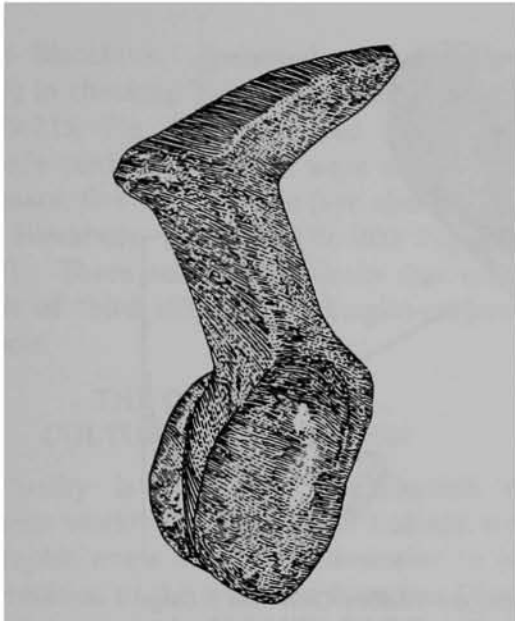


Fig. 4. "Pelican effigy" showing affinities to dimorphic sexual effigy. Southwest Museum. Shown slightly reduced.

the "pelican" may be the equivalent of the shaft previously described. One of the pelican stones in the Southwest Museum collection (Fig. 4) has rounded elevations like those we believe to be the vulvar (testicular?) element on several of the artifacts in the dimorphic sexual effigy category.

Others have similarly interpreted the pelican stones and what we are calling dimorphic sexual effigies as a variation of the same genre (e.g., Lee 1981:48-49). Heizer (MS) described several such artifacts collected by Leon de Cessac and now at the Musée de l'Homme as birds, and accounted for stylistic variation seen in the bird category as differences in degrees of realism (or abstraction) employed to render multiple genera of avifauna. For Heizer, one kind of bird was definitely a pelican. Hoover suggested that particular avifaunal species might even be identified by size and orientation of the "beak" on "pelican stones" or "hook" effigies, "assuming these objects were actually intended as representations of birds"

(1974a:34). Other scholars have also found a bird interpretation problematical (e.g., Barnett 1944:42).

Drawings and photographs of many of the Musée de l'Homme specimens appear in Hudson and Blackburn (1986:200-215), where most are labeled as bird effigies or pelican effigies.

While it is documented that local Indians told de Cessac that such forms represented birds (hence de Cessac's [1951:2] term, "pajaritos"), it is possible that these informants identified the objects at only one level of abstraction or, anticipating an ethnocentric reaction, purposefully evaded the issue of sexual symbolism.

Interestingly, one of the most abstract effigies pictured in Hudson and Blackburn (1986:215, Fig. 318.9-61) "has an incised line in a form suggestive of a vulva." This specimen was collected by Barnard in 1882 and is housed with the collections of the American Museum of Natural History in New York (Hudson and Blackburn 1986:181).

Further, Hoover (1974b:32-34) described an effigy resembling "hook" or "pelican" stones that possesses a graphic pudendum on a "laterally expanding base that flairs [sic] abruptly into a convex lower margin." Hoover recognized that female genitalia are represented, yet he did not discuss the artifact's equally graphic phallus (Fig. 5). And finally, at the base of a steatite pelican stone from San Miguel Island (SBMNH #132-13A-1) a vertical incision flanked by wider parallel channels gives the appearance of a stylized vulva (Fig. 6).

Ethnographic notes shed some light on the magico-religious function of at least the kind of "bird effigy" shown in Figure 7.

. . . twenty of them were arranged in a square, five on each side, in the center was a bowl of water, beside which stood the medicine-man, with a long stone pipe

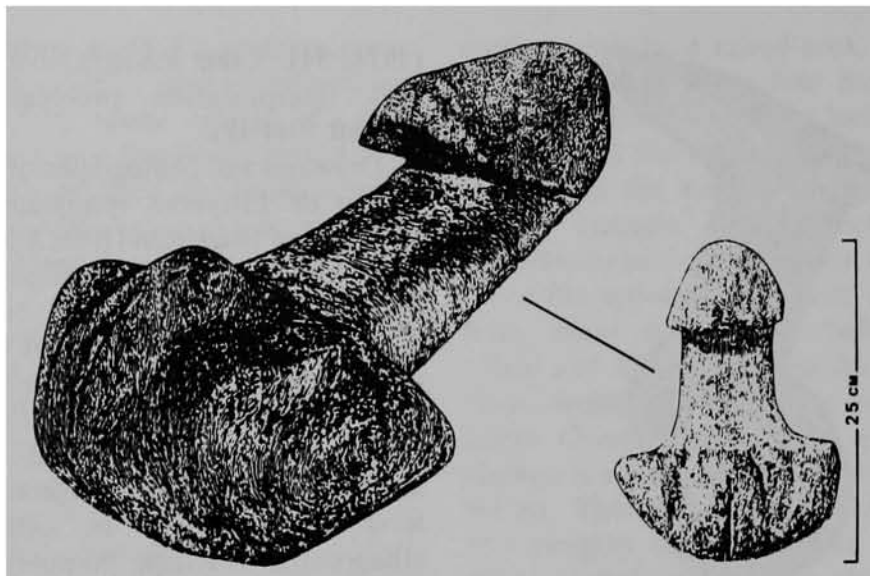


Fig. 5. Unusual dimorphic sexual effigy from the Glidden Collection. Large rendition after photograph provided courtesy Catalina Island Museum; small rendition after Hoover (1974b:Fig. 1).

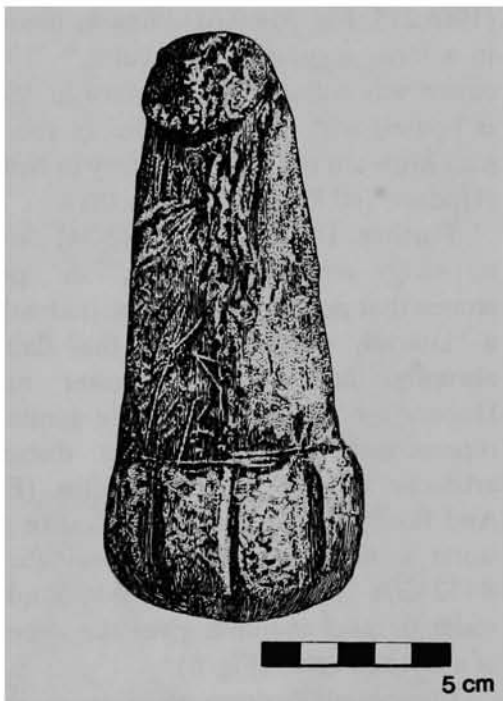


Fig. 6. Pelican stone with probable stylized vulva. Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

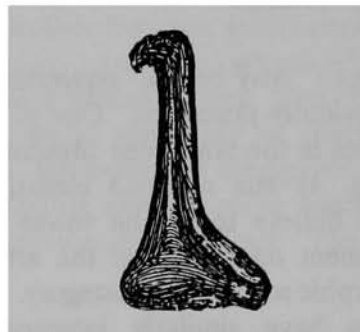


Fig. 7. "Bird stone" after Abbott (1879:215). Shown approximately actual size.

shaped like a cigar, in which an herb, called *pispivate* by the Mexicans, resembling southern wood, was smoked. The smoke was first directed toward the bowl of water, then toward the stones. The people came and moistened their faces with the water of the bowl, which had been made holy by the previous ceremonies. This ceremony brought rain, caused death to enemies, and various other things [Yates 1889:305].

Some scholars have assumed that the "twenty" artifacts of the above quote refers to charmstones (e.g., Grant 1978:514), but

Tom Blackburn (personal communication 1987) in checking Yates' reference to Abbott (1879:215, Fig. 96) discovered that it was actually bird stones which were arranged in a square, five on each side (see also Hudson and Blackburn 1986:171, 179, 200, Fig. 318. 9-38). There seems little doubt that other kinds of "bird effigies" are magico-religious objects.

### THE QUESTION OF CULTURAL ATTRIBUTION

Duality is a salient characteristic of Luiseño world view, and hence Luiseño ethnographic notes might add dimension to interpretation of the specimen from San Diego County, particularly if the artifact was manufactured locally. Presently, there are no chemical characterizations available for local soapstone/schistose, but using macroscopic inspection we tentatively suggest a San Diego County origin for the green-gray piece found near Mission San Luis Rey. The material is unlike the generally higher quality, fine-grained steatites of the dimorphic sexual effigies from the islands and northern mainland. Rather, it is somewhat more coarse with crystalline (almandite?) inclusions. Parenthetically, other materials for these effigies include bone, tooth, yellow ochre, wood, schist, serpentine (Lee 1981:48) and shell.

There are several steatite quarries in San Diego County (Polk 1972; Shackley 1978; O'Neil 1983; Parkman 1983), where soapstone commonly was obtained (True 1966; Parkman 1985:36). Coarse green-gray material occurs at Stonewall Quarry in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park (Polk 1972:7), but it is too fine-grained to be confused with the material of this specimen. Hard inclusions occasionally are described for San Diego County steatite (Rogers MS; Parkman 1985:32). We think it more likely that the

artifact was manufactured by a Luiseño artisan, but until chemical characterization is available for local steatite/schistose, a definitive statement is not possible.

Solely on the basis of distribution of objects falling to the bird/pelican/hook category, one might suggest that the San Diego County artifact could have been a trade item from a more northerly point on the mainland or from an island. The majority of these effigies are found in the area occupied historically by Shoshonean groups, particularly the islands of San Clemente, Santa Catalina, and San Nicolas, but they also occur on mainland and island property held by the Chumash. The largest single clustering of pelican/bird stones (25) was discovered near the mouth of Santa Monica Canyon at Pacific Palisades (Wallace 1986) in Gabrielino territory near the Chumash border. Only two dimorphic sexual effigies were found in Orange County, both discovered on the coast at Corona del Mar (Works Progress Administration 1938) and nearby Crystal Cove Park (Cameron 1984). Even if it was not manufactured locally, the effigy from San Luis Rey might have been imported because its symbolism was compatible with Luiseño cosmology.

### THE SYMBOLIC CONTEXT

Assuming a Luiseño cultural attribution is accurate, the symbolic content of the artifact might be interpreted with reference to fundamental concepts of dualistic oppositions and unity. Applegate (1979) explained that a salient feature of Luiseño myth, ritual, and world view is an extensive system of polar opposites united under higher principles (see also Levi 1980). He cautioned that, while duality is readily perceived, "the evidence for unifying principles becomes progressively more speculative as we move from color and direction symbolism through ritual to con-

cepts of the soul" (Applegate 1979:71). Extensive male-female dualism found in the creation myth, the origin myth of the *no:tuš* (concerning mourning ceremonies), and elsewhere, was discussed in detail by Applegate, and he summarized (1979:86) its position in Luiseño cosmology:

The central theme is the complementarity of the male and female principles, which are unified and transcended by the spirit. This basic conceptual triad is represented visually by the color triad black, red and white, and structurally by the pattern of concentric circularity. The master symbol of the Luiseño cosmos is the ground-painting, whose three concentric circles condense a number of diverse elements into a basic tripartite organization.

Given this background, it is reasonable to suggest that the dimorphic sexual aspects of the soapstone artifact are symbolic conceptualizations of the sacred belief system described above. The two sexual elements, the oppositions, conjoin in a single object, effecting a complementarity through copulation.

Copulation as a unifying principle for binary oppositions is not restricted to the Luiseño. In few instances did North American Indians depict copulation in rock art (but see Vastokas and Vastokas [1973:86]; Wellmann [1974, 1979: Plates 29, 647]; Hedges [1976:134]). In the ceramic arts, dimorphic dualism frequently is depicted in the geometric designs painted on vessels of Anasazi, Mogollon, Hohokam, and Casas Grandes traditions. The dimorphism is rendered in innumerable variations of interlocking elements such as triangles, crooks, frets, and other geometric motifs. The dyadic character of these design elements is emphasized by painting an element one color and its complement a second color, or by drawing one element as

a solid and its complement as hachured. Ample references in the ethnographic literature indicate that all such dyads essentially are viewed as interlocking male and female forces denoting the interplay of complementary dualities and invariably connoting fertility and dynamism (e.g., Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975; Labbé 1980; Roe 1982).

These dyadic geometric design elements derive from a widespread geometric symbol tradition utilized by certain Indian cultures extending from the American Southwest to Argentina. There is a cross-cultural consistency in the basic denotations and connotations applied to homologous design elements by informants from cultures as diverse as that of the Hopi of northeastern Arizona (Waters 1963), the Kogi of northern Colombia (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1985), or the Desana of the northwest Amazon (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971).

With respect to dimorphic sexual renditions in clay, soapstone, jade, and other materials, the greatest frequency of depiction is to be found in the prehistoric cultural art of groups extending geographically from Ecuador to Mexico, with marked decreases in frequency of depiction as one moves south of Ecuador or north of central America. Again, true dimorphic sexual renditions in the art of California Indians are relatively rare, but perhaps not as rare as once believed.

#### METAPHORIC/AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

Each culture and tradition leaves its own peculiar stamp on its material artifacts. All too often, the Western researcher observes such objects from his or her own ethnocentric perspective and ignores the distinct underlying perspective directing the eye and hand of the non-Western artist. A clear de-



viation in perspective can be distinguished between the typically linear, literal realism of the Western researcher and the typically abstract, impressionistic and metaphoric perspective of many native American artists. Western civilization is marked by a perspective that emphasizes dualities of opposition perceived in absolute terms. For instance, the strong are opposed to the weak and good is opposed to evil. The individual human being is additionally dichotomized into a higher and lower nature. Mankind is seen as struggling with nature and ultimately dominating nature through exploitation. This perspective ultimately derives from philosophical movements arising in Asia Minor, probably Iran, and is epitomized by Zoroaster's concept of the Lord of Light, Ahura Mazda, in combat with the Lord of Darkness, Ahriman, a concept mirrored in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. On the other hand, many American Indian traditions hold that the world is composed of complementary dualities and that oppositions are always resolved on a higher level. Dualities are relativistic and form continua.

The basic Western perspective was formulated sometime between 1200 and 800 B.C. but only became widely adopted after 600 B.C., particularly in Greece and the Middle East. Western art consequently became increasingly less abstract and metaphoric and increasingly more realistic in its depictions. Perfection of line and form became the ideal whether the depictions were of real forms or geometric constructs. Formative-level native American art, however, derives from another perspective. It often is better to suggest than to define, to be metaphoric and symbolic rather than realistic, to depict qualities of imbalance and imperfection rather than those of balance and perfection.

The ability of the Western researcher to discern the essentially native stamp on arti-

facts and works of art enhances his/her ability to assess the authenticity of the object. The basic form of the artifact reported herein and the manner in which individual components of the object were integrated with one another indicates manufacture by a non-Western artist.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Many prehistoric artifacts from California and elsewhere have been removed unscientifically from their original *in situ* contexts, and hence they lack provenience and usually cannot be dated using radiometric or other absolute dating methods. Scholars should not ignore such potentially important material, but if one is to incorporate an unproven piece into a study, its authenticity must first be established. Here we employed physical as well as metaphoric/aesthetic criteria to support the probable authenticity of an unusual example of dimorphic sexual symbolism found near Mission San Luis Rey. Documentation of similar artifacts in museum collections helps corroborate our previous assessment regarding authenticity.

The general form of the specimen found in Luiseño territory places it with an artifact type that we label "dimorphic sexual effigy." The comparative realism of this piece is the key for interpreting and categorizing specimens from the Southwest Museum, San Diego Museum of Man, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, the Musée de l'Homme, and other collections. Available information makes the type a southern California island and mainland phenomenon, with northern San Diego County distribution now documented. Another southern California island and mainland type, the "pelican stone," is most likely a variation of the dimorphic sexual effigy.

More elaborate ritual paraphernalia help

set the Luiseño apart from other Takic groups (Bean and Shipek 1978:550), and the San Diego County object considered here is an addition to that inventory of ritual equipment. This is not the first time that an attempt has been made to interpret a prehistoric artifact with reference to Luiseño cosmology (see Irwin 1978), and, with anticipated future discoveries, we hope that it will not be the last time.

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Joseph Cramer produced the drawings of all artifacts. Pat Lynch produced the map (Fig. 2), and Karen Koerper and Dale Krage typed the paper's several drafts. We especially thank Allan O. Kelly of Carlsbad, California, who allowed us to study the unusual artifact from his collection.

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## A Fluted Projectile Point Fragment from the Southern California Coast: Chronology and Context at CA-SBa-1951

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**RECENT** archaeological research on the Santa Barbara coast yielded a fragment of a fluted projectile point among a larger lithic assemblage from CA-SBa-1951. The available data suggest that the fluted point has no direct temporal relation to the remainder of the site assemblage, which was obtained from a large low-density site that appears to date primarily to King's (1981) Early period. Although small, the fluted point fragment exhibits attributes common to classic Clovis-like points found elsewhere in California (e.g., Harrington 1948) and western North America. While similar fluted points have been reported from many interior California sites (Davis and Shutler 1969; Glennan 1971; Carlson 1983; Moratto 1984), only one coastal specimen has been reported previously. This was a Clovis point from the northern California coast (Simons et al. 1985). The CA-SBa-1951 fluted point extends the geographical range of Clovis points in North America and represents an extremely rare occurrence along the Pacific coast.

This paper discusses the geological and archaeological context of the fluted point from CA-SBa-1951, describes the technological and material attributes of the specimen, and explores two alternative hypotheses for the derivation of the point.

