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## **Two Unusual Artifacts from the Sierra Nevada of California**

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Several years ago a small collection of specimens from near Campbell Hot Springs in Sierra Valley was received at the University of California, Berkeley, for examination and comment. These objects were found by Mrs. Carl Scholberg of Sierraville, California, who kindly allowed the writer to retain them for several months while preparing the present description. The pieces were all taken from the surface of what appeared to be an Indian camp site, adjacent to the mineral springs which are or were the chief attraction of a small resort hotel. The collection consists of about 30 projectile points, mostly of basalt and obsidian, five stone drills, one decoratively incised pebble, and one fragment of a decorated baked clay object. There is no reason to believe that any of these artifacts were imported from other regions as trade items, either in prehistoric or historic times.

The larger basalt projectile points closely resemble those identified as belonging to the Martis Complex (Heizer and Elsasser 1953) which has been estimated to have been in existence locally as early as about 2000 B.C. Some of the smaller points, of obsidian, may be assigned either to the historic period or to the King's Beach culture, suggested by Heizer and Elsasser as representing the prehistoric occupation by ethnographic Washo groups of the region. This culture, according to recent

estimates (e.g., Elston 1971) began about A.D. 500. Checking of the files of the University of California Archaeological Research Facility revealed that the Campbell Hot Springs site had already been recorded and designated as site CA-Sie-30. It was reported several years ago by Dr. Warren d'Azevedo, now of the University of Nevada, Reno, who in turn learned of it from a living Washo Indian who was familiar with aboriginal camp spots in Sierra Valley. There is a native name recorded for the site, which shows the most extensive living deposit of all the prehistoric sites known in this valley. Average elevation of the floor of Sierra Valley is about 5000 feet, hence we may assume that Sie-30 was occupied mainly in the summer time. It has been noted, however, that the Washo occasionally remained in winter camps at higher elevations, for example around Lake Tahoe, which has an elevation of more than 6000 feet (Price 1963).

The incised pebble, of a fine-grained andesitic rock, is tabular in general form (Fig. 1). It measures 9.7 cm. long, 5.9 cm. wide, and varies from 2.0 to 2.7 cm. in thickness. Incisions on both of its flattish surfaces are quite shallow (less than 1 mm. in depth) and for the most part do not exceed 1 mm. in width. Although these scratched lines at first appear to be of almost random execution, closer examination and viewing of the pebble in one particular position reveal that crude human faces, or perhaps face masks may be depicted. The relatively heavy continuous lines, especially on that side indicated as Fig. 1a, seem to form triangles, which without much further imagination could easily be taken for eyes, nose, and mouth. In Fig. 1a the latter is

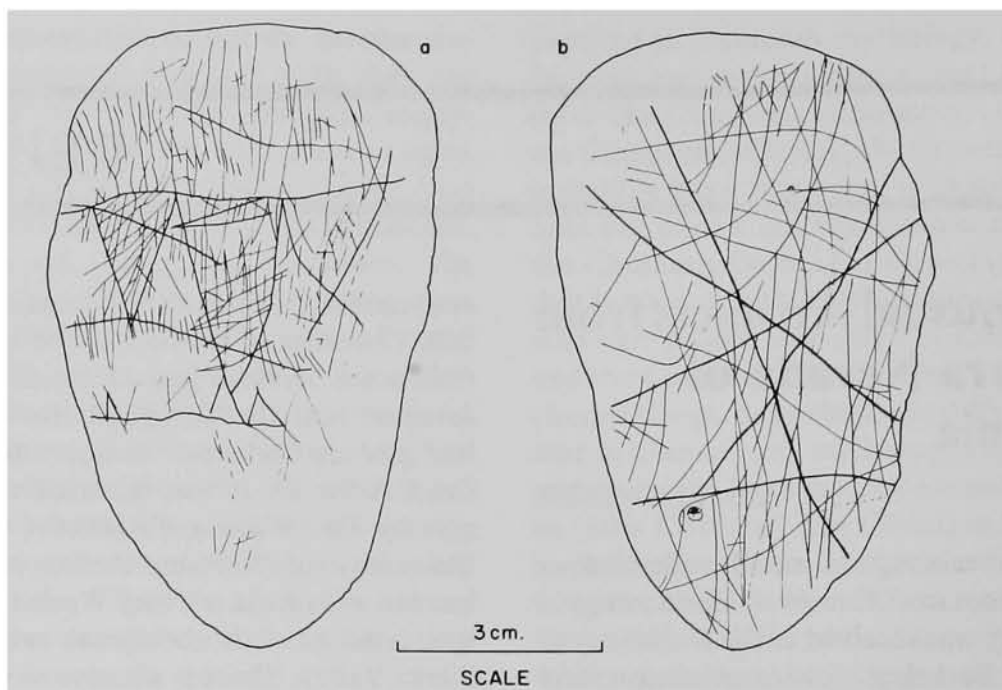


Fig. 1. Incised stone from site CA-Sie-30, Sierra Nevada, California. Drawings and photos of opposite faces. Photos courtesy of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

represented by the seven small triangles (teeth of either upper or lower jaw?) near the bottom of the likeness proposed as a face.

Obviously there is nothing here which

would indicate the sex of the putative human being shown, although the coarse quality of the depiction may suggest male rather than female sex. If these lines truly were meant to

symbolize the human face, then the piece possesses an element which is unusual not only for the northern Sierra Nevada area, but for all of California and the western Great Basin as well. Other decorated stone objects such as inscribed pebbles from these regions bear geometric designs (Johnson 1966:12; Elsasser 1957), but so far no inscribed stones are known to the present author which include outlines of a human face such as that posited for the Sie-30 example. Fired clay figurines from various parts of northern California (Heizer and Pendergast 1955; Davis 1959; Goerke and Davidson 1975; Fenenga 1977), almost all thought to be depictions of human females, are headless, or have only abbreviated heads without faces. These headless figurines usually have been estimated to be several thousand years old. In contrast, much later examples, called Hakataya figurines, have been found in southern California dating probably from around A.D. 1500 (Hedges 1973:27)—these pieces do have faces, and some apparently represented males.

Outlines of human faces carved on pebbles or incised on small pieces of clay are known from the Columbia River Valley, near the Dalles (Anonymous 1959:Pls. 13, 17), but these occurrences are probably too distant to allow any significant comparison with the Sierra Valley specimen. Closer to our region, we may consider the predominant styles of petroglyphs found throughout the western Great Basin and also in several localities in the Sierra Nevada, including some less than 20 miles due south of Campbell Hot Springs and still in ethnographic Washo territory. These inscriptions, where representational, depict mostly features of animals (see Heizer and Baumhoff 1962:207), like mountain sheep, deer, or bear. Where figures taken to be human beings are shown, they are faceless, and hence cannot easily be invoked as a possible source for the use of the human face motif suggested for the Sie-30 pebble.

The "pit" or "cup" component of the Great Basin "pit and groove" petroglyph style of Heizer and Baumhoff (1962:208) has also been observed in many places throughout California and Nevada and is the only style which may be predominantly associated with Martis Complex sites. It has been recorded at at least three sites known to the author which are probably of Martis affiliation, but apparently has no connection with supposed prehistoric or ethnographic Washo sites. Washo informants themselves have largely denied knowledge of this kind of marking or of any other characteristic Great Basin styles of petroglyphs in their home territory (Price 1963:90).

The fragment of baked clay, decorated on one side only (Fig. 2), measures 3.5 cm. in length, 2.1 cm. in width, and is almost uniformly 0.8 cm. in thickness. Its tabular form and the continuous smoothing shown on two edge sections which come together at an angle suggest that it is not a pot sherd, but is more akin to a small plaque or perhaps to a flattened figurine of a human being. Preliminary examination of the clay indicates a tempering agent of what appears to be finely crushed baked clay; the latter is often referred to as "sherd temper." The traces of double zigzag lines enclosing punctations or "dashes" suggest designs which have been observed on baked clay figurines from the north or central coast of California (Heizer and Pendergast 1955:Pl. 63a, b).

Recovery of a decorated baked clay object in any site in the northern Sierra Nevada is unusual, no matter what its functional classification. There have been to my knowledge no previous finds of prehistoric baked clay objects from the immediate region. A single decorated baked clay object similar in some respects to the Sie-30 specimen was reported from the upper levels of the Wakemap site on the Columbia River (Strong, Schenck, and Steward 1930:67, Pl. 11j). Closer to Campbell Hot Springs, but still not in the Sierra Nevada

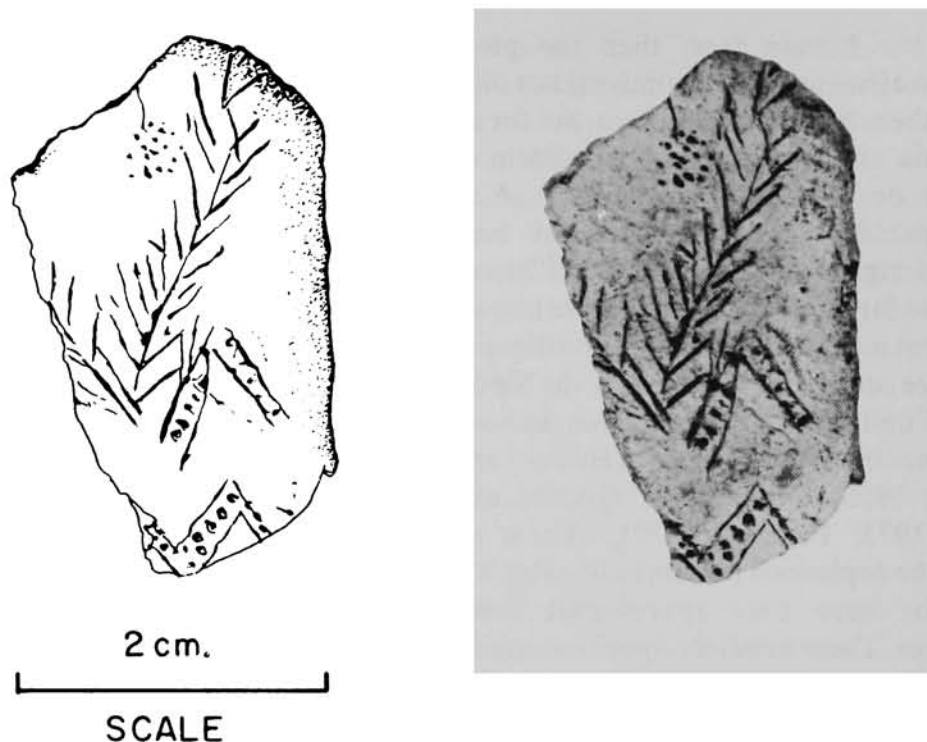


Fig. 2. Drawing and photograph of incised baked clay tablet from site CA-Sie-30, Sierra Nevada, California. Photo courtesy of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

geomorphic province, two other finds of baked clay have been made. These were at the Lorenzen site, near Fall River Mills, about 100 miles northwest of Sierra Valley, and at the Karlo site, about 70 miles to the north of the valley. Six or seven sherds, all presumably from one vessel, were excavated by M.A. Baumhoff (personal communication) at the Lorenzen site. It seems likely that this pottery is related to the wares called Shoshoni Ware or Owens Valley Brown Ware, which is characteristically found in the southern Sierra Nevada and adjacent parts of the Great Basin. Such pottery is usually dated as no older than about A.D. 1300 or 1400 in California (Elsasser 1960:31).

Baked clay figurines from the Karlo site are without decoration, but seem to depict human females (Riddell 1960:59). These were thought to be equatable in time to similar objects found in central California archaeological sites, apparently dated from around 1000 B.C.-A.D. 500 (Beardsley 1954). The Martis Complex of

the Sierra Nevada has also been suggested as at least partially coeval with the Middle Horizon (Heizer and Elsasser 1953:21), although Elston (1970) has published some recently calculated dates of about 2000 B.C. which he suggests may represent the beginning of the Martis culture.

The long time range, perhaps more than 3000 years, indicated as a possible maximum time for the occupation of site Sie-30 makes chronological placement of both of the unusual artifacts found there difficult. Similarities between the "portable" art (the inscribed pebble) and the local petroglyphs of Great Basin affiliation are admittedly generic rather than specific, and equation of the baked clay piece with central California figurines characteristic of the Middle Horizon is tenuous. Nevertheless, the older segment of the time range, i.e., that occupied by the Martis culture, possibly between about 2500 B.C. and A.D. 600, is offered as the best choice in estimating the age of the specimens.

Whatever the case regarding placement in time, the purpose of these two unusual specimens is unknown. The assumption that depiction of female secondary sexual characteristics refers to beliefs or practices designed to promote fertility does not enter the question here, as no symbols of definite sexual traits may be noted on either artifact. An alternative suggestion is that these objects may have had some supplementary curative function, and in this may lie at least a partial explanation for their presence near mineral springs. The Karlo site (CA-Las-7) has already been mentioned in discussion of baked clay figurines. It is not known for certain, however, whether the "warm springs" near or at Las-7 had or have any reputed curative qualities. At the Hobo Hot Springs site (NV-Do-12) in the Carson Valley of Western Nevada, Martis Complex and probably King's Beach (prehistoric Washo) materials have been excavated (Elsasser 1960). Included in the finds were a chipped stone "crescent" and a fragment of a peculiar perforated stone disk, both of which conceivably could have had some practical function, but which just as well may be looked upon as ceremonial objects.

All of this does not mean to suggest that artifacts which have been called "ceremonial objects" may have had a curative function in this region, nor that all such objects are to be found at hot springs, which is assuredly not the case. However, the writer has examined a great number of sites in the northern Sierra Nevada which have been with good reason identified as representing the Martis Complex. The usual collection from these sites is almost monotonously of quantities of crude bifacially chipped or wasted basalt flakes, together with lesser numbers of complete and fragmentary projectile points and drills, mostly of basalt. Perhaps the unusual artifacts described herein were contained in shaman's kits, and the hot spring sites were simply the abodes or "headquarters" of certain shamans.

#### NOTE ADDED IN PROOF

After this article was set in print, the author was reminded of a fired clay figurine found in Beckwourth, Plumas County, California, only about thirty miles north of Campbell Hot Springs. The figurine has a grasshopper-like head, but the lower parts, without limb representations, are humanoid, showing female breasts and a distended abdomen. Incisions and punctuations like those of Central California are present, and some of the incisions are formed in butterfly-like sets of triangles. The incisions on the Campbell Hot Springs baked clay piece are not unlike some on the Beckwourth figurine. The Beckwourth piece was described by R. L. Stephenson in the *Nevada Archaeological Survey Reporter* 2(2), Feb., 1968.

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## Prehistoric Ceramic Objects from Catalina Island

C. E. DROVER

The primary objectives of this paper are to discuss the context, chronology, and significance of two fired clay objects (Fig. 1) recovered from excavations at the Little Harbor site on Catalina Island. The ceramic items described here were recovered from the 1973 excavation of the Little Harbor site conducted by Nelson Leonard, III. The Little Harbor site (Ca-SCaI-17) was initially excavated and described between 1953 and 1955 by Clement Meighan (1959).

In 1959, the Little Harbor site represented not only the first archaeological site report from Catalina Island, but also the first site report to exemplify Wallace's 1955 concept of an Intermediate Horizon (Meighan 1959:383). The lack of large, flat milling stones and the presence of mortars, pestles, and large projectile points are typical both of this period and of this site (1959:383-388).

The ecological implications of this site report, resulting mainly from faunal analysis, are most noteworthy. Meighan (1959:400-403) postulates a maritime subsistence pattern based on 81% cetacean, 16% pinniped, and only 3% land mammal bone, combined with