

A Luiseño *Atulku*

Discovered by Bill Magee

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Abstract

About eight decades ago, Samuel Cary Evans' passionate interest in cogged stones inspired the former Riverside mayor to visit locally celebrated cattleman Bill Magee, then living near San Juan Capistrano, Orange County. Like Evans, this rancher was an avid collector of Indian relics. Neither man realized at the time that one of Magee's Luiseño finds photographed by Evans was a ceremonial object used in girls' puberty rites. Only later did the ex-mayor learn the artifact was a sacred *atulku*, this revelation possibly the result of some communication between Evans and the academy (e.g., A. L. Kroeber, J. P. Harrington) or a Native American consultant.

Herein, formal documentation of Magee's *atulku* includes reproduction of Evans' long sequestered photograph of the specimen, an illustration of the artifact based largely on two Los Angeles Times halftones showing the *atulku* among other Native manufactures, and a snapshot showing Magee holding the crescent-shaped stone. Also, notice is taken of an ethnographically documented Cupeño *atulku* presently curated at the Logan Museum, Beloit College, Wisconsin.

Introduction

Recent *Quarterly* articles (Koerper and McDearmon 2010, 2011) reported on the determination of Samuel Cary Evans, Jr. to document the function(s) and meaning(s) of cogged stones. These testaments to the four-term Riverside mayor's near obsessive engagement with the sacred artifact developed largely from study of certain correspondence, notes, photographs, and ephemera accumulated by Evans in the final decade of his life (1923-1932).

Evans also recorded limited information on other kinds of ceremonial artifacts. For instance, Koerper and Cramer (2011) called attention to a letter and

photograph from the Samuel Wayne Evans collection (Riverside Metropolitan Museum, Gift A1524) that revealed the circumstances surrounding the discovery and subsequent disposition of a unique, bifacially decorated discoidal housed at the Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, that had gone without provenance or any record of chain of ownership. It turns out that this artifact had been discovered in the 1910s in association with a mixed cache of cogged stones and discoidals at CA-ORA-85, the Eberhart site, and had subsequently entered a private collection.

The present article similarly draws upon certain written and photographic documentation produced by S. C. Evans and donated by son Samuel Wayne to the Riverside Metropolitan Museum (Gift A1524). These materials were the outcome of a meeting between Samuel Cary Evans and cattleman Bill Magee (Figures 1 and 2), a local celebrity who was then living in housing at the Santa Margarita Ranch headquarters near Ortega Highway, close to the San Juan Creek crossing in the San Juan Capistrano area. Evans' automobile journey to Orange County was occasioned by the fact that Magee owned cogged stones. The photograph of Figure 3 taken by Evans shows one of those cogged stones, a fish vertebra type (see Underbrink and Koerper 2006), but it also shows a much rarer ceremonial artifact, a crescent-shaped *atulku*. "*Atulku*," a Diegueño word, has generic application to similarly crafted objects from other linguistic tribes (see Koerper 2007).

The section to follow showcases Magee's *atulku* (Figures 3-5), discovered in the 1920s or earlier on land traditionally held by the Luiseños. A description of the artifact follows notes on its provenance. Until now, the specimen had gone unheralded, never receiving a level of attention commensurate with either its rarity or significance.

Another section offers a cursory selection of ethnographic documentation regarding the role of the *atulku* in girls' puberty rites, following which there is a quick interpretive revisit of *atulkus* (Koerper 2007) by reference to sexualization-sacralization theory (see Koerper 2006a, 2006b). Mention is given a Cupeño *atulku* specimen obtained unethically by Horatio Rust (see Koerper 2007:85-86; also Militello 2009:16-17) after he had observed the object in ritual use. Rust provided some ethnographic context regarding the artifact.



Figure 1. Drawing of Bill Magee (1879-1951); after sketch by famous western artist Clyde Forsythe, in E. Ainsworth (1951). Magee was many things—tourmaline and kunzite prospector, star football player at Stanford University and the University of Santa Clara, cattle-puncher, amateur naturalist, amateur historian, western barbecue chef supreme, and two-and-a-half decade manager of the Santa Margarita Ranch for Jerome O'Neill.

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Another section provides biographical notes on Bill Magee, speculations on how Magee and S. C. Evans might have come to link up for the ex-mayor of Riverside to view and photograph the piece, and ideas on how Evans might have initially acquired knowledge of the *atulku* genre. This same section also carries content relating to Smithsonian ethnologist J. P. Harrington. Our article closes with a summary.

Bill Magee's *Atulku*

The crescent-shaped artifact shown in Figures 3-5 was discovered by Bill Magee at an Indian village site in the San Luis Rey Valley, not far from Mission San Luis Rey, this according to a newspaper story (Los Angeles Times, 3 July 1934:6). S. C. Evans' note (ca. 1930-1932) that Magee recovered the artifact "a few miles northerly and westerly of San Juan Capistrano"



Figure 2. Bill Magee on his favorite mount. This photograph was taken when Magee participated in an "honoree" survey party traveling the proposed route of Ortega Highway. A photograph of that party with Magee at the center was published in *Two Hundred Years in San Juan Capistrano: A Pictorial History* (Hallan-Gibson 2005:119). Courtesy Bob Stauss.



Figure 3. Photograph taken by S. C. Evans of a cogged stone and *atulku* owned by Bill Magee. Ca. 1930. Courtesy Riverside Metropolitan Museum, Samuel Wayne Evans Collection, Gift A1524.

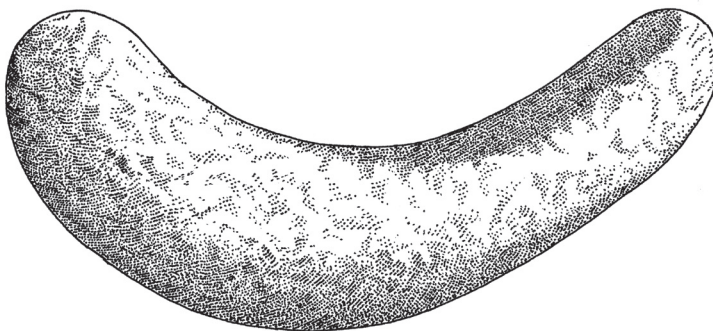


Figure 4. *Atulku* owned by Bill Magee. Drawing after two newspaper halftone photographs (see, LAT 3 July 1934:6, LAT 13 November 1936:14).



Figure 5. Bill Magee with the *atulku* and the vertebrate type cogged stone seen in Figure 3. This snapshot may have been taken on the occasion of S. C. Evans' visit with Magee at the ranchman's home near San Juan Capistrano. Courtesy Bob Stauss.

was clearly in error. One suspects a miscommunication between the two men revolving on vague reference to a mission.

The LAT 1934 article carried a picture of Magee's young teenage daughter, Jane, posed just to the left of and behind the *atulku* which was displayed among a number of other stone artifacts, all positioned on a flight of stairs. It is from that news photo, another newspaper image (LAT 13 November 1936:14), and a circa 1930 snapshot showing Magee also holding the cogged stone seen in Figure 3, that the curvature of the *atulku* might be better gauged than from what one sees in Figure 3. One of us (JC), using the 1934 and 1936 LAT images, rendered the drawing of Figure 4. The *atulku* was referred to in the 1934 Times article as a "crescent grinder," and thus we understand that Bill Magee was then uninformed regarding its true function. The 1936 Times article reported Magee's answers to an interviewer's curiosity about function. Magee first stated that the curved artifact "was carried on the hunt and used to grind up bird meat and bones for the old codgers who didn't have any teeth." He added, "It also served as surgical equipment to aid the arrival of the stork" (LAT, 13 November 1936:14). These statements reveal an enduring unfamiliarity with actual function as well as one cowboy's sense of humor.

Unfortunately, Evans' notes accompanying his photograph (Figure 3) provided no measurements, and there is no formal scale. However, if we assume that the diameter of the vesicular basalt Fish Vertebra type (see Underbrink and Koerper 2006) cogged stone seen in Figures 3 and 5 measures to around the average diameter for cogged stones (possibly ≈ 78 mm) (see Herring 1968:Table 2), then 22 cm or somewhat longer seems a reasonable estimate for the straight-line, tip-to-tip length of the *atulku*. However, with the newspaper image of Jane Magee (LAT, 3 July 1934:6) serving a rough scale function, then we venture an estimate of around 25 cm.

This *atulku* had been fashioned from a large shard that had either broken out of a deep basin metate or, more likely, out of a mortar/bowl. Evans (ca. 1930-1932) provided no identification of material. It appears to be basalt, less likely andesite, and certainly not glaucophane schist, this according to lithics expert Andrew Garrison (personal communication 2011) of Scientific Resources Survey, Inc. (Orange office). The inside surface is smoothly ground, the consequence of milling in its original function, but the visible bordering edges of the shard had been uniformly pecked to effect a pleasing symmetry. One of the long-edge, lateral panels carries an incised, saw-tooth motif. Does the design represent a snake? Rattlesnake imagery did play a role in the Luiseño girls' ceremony according to J. P. Harrington (see Oxendine 1980:42, Note 16, p. 48).

Atulkus

A recent article by the senior author (Koerper 2007) broached the question of the aetiology of the *atulku*. "*Atulku*" is a Diegueño term (see Waterman 1910:286; Kroeber 1925:716) for the ground stone crescent-shaped artifact employed in Diegueño (Ipai-Tipai) puberty rites and in some Shoshonean-speaking peoples' puberty rites—the so-called "roastings" of girls. Horatio Rust left detailed descriptions of these first menses, womanhood initiations (1893, 1906). There is a comparatively robust literature on the subject of roastings by ethnographers who came after Rust (see Oxendine 1980; Koerper 2007).

In describing the Tipai girls' puberty rites at Campo, San Diego County, Rust explained that these ceremonies prepared girls for marriage. His detailed observations indicate much fertility/fecundity symbolic content. For instance, as the girls were being "steamed" in a pit, seeds were broadcast onto the initiates with the express intent to cause the young initiates to go forth and be prolific (Rust 1906:28-29). Following their roastings, the girls were led to a hillside where

they were shown the sacred stone and were told that it represented “the female organ of regeneration.” Strong (1929:299), in reviewing Rust’s scholarship, added that seeds were also scattered over the place where the *atulku* was reburied at the end of the puberty ceremony.

A crescent-shaped Cupeño *atulku* specimen from the Agua Caliente/Warner’s Ranch area, San Diego County, is previously published (Rust 1906:Plate VII; Koerper 2007:Figures 2a and 3; Militello 2009:Figure 3, also PCASQ cover). This approximately 33 cm by 38 cm artifact (Figure 6) is curated by the Logan Museum, Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin (Catalog No. 17924).¹ Sad to say, it was through theft that Horatio Rust was able to obtain this cultural property. This *atulku* was said to be fashioned from a mortar (Rust 1906:Plate VI, 1; see also Koerper 2007:85-86). A number of crescent-shaped objects suspected of being at least the functional equivalents of *atulkus* appear to have been shaped out of broken mortar fragments (see Koerper 2007). One

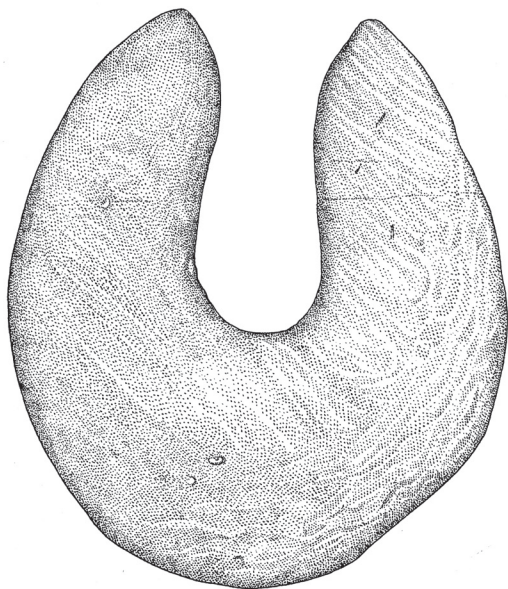


Figure 6. *Atulku* reportedly made from a mortar (see Rust 1906; Militello 2009:16-17), but the authors propose the possibility that it was made of a deep basin metate. Rust gave its dimensions as 13 x 15 inches (33 cm x 38 cm). Logan Museum catalog #17924, Beloit College, Wisconsin.

might wonder whether the Logan Museum specimen had actually been fashioned out of a deep basin metate.

A conceptual process proposed to account for how a number of coastal southern California ceremonial objects came by their sacred status has been labeled “sexualization-sacralization” (Koerper 2006a, 2006b). This aetiological process applied to the *atulku* was addressed in detail in a separate article (Koerper 2007). A very quick revisit to the sexualization stage of *atulku* aetiology offers basic observations adequate to the purposes of this essay.

In brief compass the sex-based communications of the *atulku* developed from morphologies and kinetics associated with certain food processing equipment. With regard to kinetics, if an *atulku* had been fashioned from a mortar/bowl rim shard, the complementary artifact would have been a pestle. However, had an *atulku* perhaps been crafted out of a metate fragment, the complementary artifact would have been a mano. The sexual double entendre should be obvious when mortar and pestle operated in tandem, and the double entendre developed when a mano is moved to-and-fro in the concavity, or trough, of a metate is far from abstruse.

With the part (modeled mortar or metate shard) standing for the whole, the first level referent of an *atulku* would project either mortar imagery or metate imagery. Regarding the Magee specimen, we favor the former over the latter. The more significant second level referent in any case would be the female anatomy. As a point of interest, crescent symbols that adorned girls’ faces in the ritual maturity practices are said to represent the moon (see Oxendine 1980:42-43). Perhaps the *atulku* phenomenon involved nested concepts that incorporated both the moon and female anatomy. If so, then the shared connection possibly turned to some degree on the periodicity associated with each. Again, a detailed discussion of the aetiological process as it related to the *atulku* occurs in Koerper (2007).

Bill Magee, S. C. Evans, and J. P. Harrington

Evans' notes accompanying the photograph of Figure 3 identified William Magee as the finder of both the crescent-shaped *atulku* and the cogged stone. Close scrutiny of the photograph confirms that Evans had taken the picture. The thickness/quality of the photographic paper, image lighting, relative sharpness of composition, and overall general quality of the print are all consistent with certain other photographic images of artifacts produced by the amateur anthropologist (Evans ca. 1930-1932).

Ever peripatetic in the service of his cogged stone passion (see Koerper and McDearmon 2010, 2011), the ex-mayor apparently drove from Riverside County to meet with Magee. Well prior to this trip to the San Juan Capistrano area, Evans would likely have had some acquaintance with the name Bill Magee and/or some knowledge of the historical prominence of his family.

Bill Magee's California historical roots are indeed noteworthy (see e.g., Ainsworth 1951). His Spanish-born, maternal grandfather, Miguel de Pedrorena of San Diego, supported the 1846-1847 American cause in California. He was one of 48 signatories to California's first constitution adopted by the territorial government in 1849 which made California a free state (see e.g., Rolle 1969:239-243).

Miguel's daughter, Victoria de Pedrorena (ca. 1843-1886), married Henry Magee who had arrived in California via the Horn route in 1847 as a lieutenant with the 1st Regiment of New York Volunteers. Victoria and Henry made their home at Condor's Nest Ranch in a watered valley on Palomar Mountain, about five miles above Pala, where they produced ten children, equally divided between boys and girls.² This brood grew up among Luiseño children whose parents and grandparents held great affection for Victoria, owing to her kindness and good deeds toward Indian people.

Perhaps through their shared passion for collecting southern California Indian artifacts, Evans and Magee had crossed paths prior to the Capistrano get-together. Certainly they must have had mutual acquaintances/friends, including John Peabody Harrington. Evans and Harrington were well enough acquainted (see Koerper and McDearmon 2011).

A major point of interest is that in July 1932, Bill Magee and his twelve-year-old daughter, Jane, attended a three-day Indian event at Rincon, where J. P. Harrington was also in attendance (LAT July 1932:Part I, 4). The first day was given over to the Ceremony of the Dead, which included clothes burning rites. The following day, Jane was "initiated" into the tribe. According to the Times article, she received the name "Hummingbird," and at the same time Harrington became a tribal member, receiving the name "Morning Star" (Figures 7 and 8).

At the time S. C. Evans traveled to San Juan Capistrano to meet with Bill Magee, the rancher was managing Rancho Santa Margarita for Jerome O'Neill, son of Richard O'Neill. The ranch was then one of the largest in California. Then, Magee would not have been living at Condor's Nest Ranch above Pala where he had grown up and where he returned to live out most of his senior years, beginning some time in the 1940s. Rather, home was the previously noted ranch house near Ortega Highway. His name does not appear in the San Juan Capistrano City Directory, because he did not own this house. His name does appear at this time on the voter rolls for the San Juan precinct (Susan Berumen, personal communication 2011).

Magee owned a large collection of Indian artifacts that he showed to Evans. Obviously, working ranch land put Magee in proximity of many Indian sites, some with surface artifacts easily spotted from horseback and on foot. Yet more revealing is the fact that William Magee actively sought out Indian relics. A newspaper article (LAT, 3 July 1934:6) reported that he searched



Figure 7. Rincon initiation of Jane Magee and John Peabody Harrington, July 1932. Left to right: Captain Joe; twelve-year-old Jane Magee in face paint; Willie Calac; Chief Juan Sotelo Calac; J. P. Harrington, Smithsonian ethnologist. Courtesy Bob Stauss, son of Jane Magee. Photographer, Tommy Welles.



Figure 8. Rincon, July 1932. Far right, Captain Joe standing next to Chief Juan Sotelo Calac, both men wearing owl feather headdresses. Unidentified woman stands between Jane Magee and J. P. Harrington during initiation ceremony. Courtesy Bob Stauss. Photographer, Tommy Welles.

from San Diego County and into Los Angeles County for Indian manufactures to add to his collection.

How had Evans heard about Magee's ownership of cogged stones? Southern California artifact collectors interacted with one another to trade, buy, and sell, and so directly or indirectly (e.g., through mutual acquaintance with someone like Herman Strandt) (see e.g., Koerper and Chace 1995; Koerper et al. 1996:11-15; Koerper and McDearmon 2011:32, 35-36) at least one man should have been cognizant of the other's hobby. Perhaps the ex-mayor had sent a handbill and/or flier with cogged stone content (see Koerper and McDearmon 2010:Figures 3 and 4, 2011:Figures 3 and 4) to Magee. When and if Evans' diaries become available, detailed collector networkings might be revealed.

Evans' annotations indicate that at some point he came to understand that the curved stone served in a non-utilitarian venue. Identifying the specimen (Figures 3-5) by an Indian name, *atulku*, he described the "crescent heating stone" as an artifact "used by the Diegueños of southern San Diego County in motherhood rites."

Evans' notes contain the following: "The *atulku* is the only one the author knows of, there being no specimen in the University of California Museum." This hints that perhaps A. L. Kroeber or Edwin Gifford had been queried about the function of the curved stone. Since Evans had made reference to Diegueño "motherhood rites," one suspects that he had contacted Kroeber since the Berkeley professor had explained (1922:313, 1925:716) that the puberty "roastings" at first menses were supposed to promote future health (see also Driver 1941:36-37). Kroeber had written:

...the Diegueño use the *atulku*, a large crescentic stone, heated and placed between the girls' legs to soften the abdominal tissues and render motherhood easy and safe. These stones have been spoken of as sacred. No

doubt they were. But their use was a practical one, in native opinion, not symbolic or esoteric [1922:313, 1925:716].

Perhaps Evans had merely read Kroeber. There are other sources that might have informed Evans regarding roastings (see Koerper 2007:84-85), but almost certainly he had not availed himself of Rust's writings (1893, 1906). Had he received his information through his friend, John P. Harrington, or had Evans perhaps obtained his information from a Native American acquaintance? Evans' diaries may one day offer some answers.

Summary

This article formally documents what may be the only Luiseño *atulku* recognized for what it is, a sacred object employed in traditional girls' puberty rites. Three images of this artifact are provided above (Figures 3-5). The majority of the Bill Magee collection is divided among family members; however, the *atulku* specimen is presently unaccounted for.

A second *atulku* (Figure 6) carries ethnographic documentation (see Koerper 2007), and its present whereabouts is known—Logan Museum, Beloit College, Wisconsin. An unethical lapse on the part of Horatio Rust accounts for its surreptitious removal from a Cupeño hiding place and subsequent transport out-of-state.

End Notes

1. Figure 2 in Koerper (2007) shows not just the Beloit College specimen (Koerper 2007:Figure 2a) but three other crescent-shaped objects (Koerper 2007: Figures 2b, c, and d). There is a scale accompanying Koerper's (2007) Figure 2, but it was not supplied by Koerper in the original art work and paste up. Rather, persons unidentified added the scale without informing the author, even though the figure caption clearly

stated that the several artifacts were “not to scale.” There was similar egregious treatment of Figure 4 in Koerper (2007).

2. Of the ten children Bill was the next to the last to pass away. The last survivor of that generation of siblings was Louis Magee, who died in 1964.

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