

Clay Figurines from the Walker Ranch Site, CA-RIV-333, Riverside County, California

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Abstract

Fifteen clay figurine fragments compatible with the Northern Figurine Tradition have been recovered from the Walker Ranch site, CA-RIV-333, a late prehistoric and historic Luiseño village site. The figurine examples from Walker Ranch are stylistically compatible with figurines reported elsewhere in California that are based on a rounded columnar body, are small to moderate in size, and are simply modeled.

Introduction and Site Description

The purpose of this report is to provide additional information concerning a collection of 15 clay figurine fragments recovered from the Walker Ranch site, CA-RIV-333 (P-33-000333). All but two of the artifacts were acquired in salvage excavations conducted in 1988 and 1989 by Archaeological Associates, Ltd. The figurine fragments have been briefly discussed by Freeman and Van Horn (1990:30-31), Brown and Fenenga (2005:39), and Sawyer and Koerper (2006:23, 26).

Walker Ranch, located about 4 km (2.5 miles) south of Sun City in western Riverside County, derives its name from the Walker family who bought the property in 1906 and farmed it until the early 1960s. John Walker and others in his family surface collected and excavated artifacts from the site, some of which were sold or given away. The property has long been frequented by relic hunters and casual visitors.

An illustrated review of privately held collections from Walker Ranch has been compiled by Freeman (1987). Based on findings reported by Freeman and Van Horn (1990) that include obsidian hydration dating and relative dating of projectile points, ceramics, beads, and other items, the Walker Ranch site was a late prehistoric and historic Luiseño village. Additional discussion of Salton Sea Obsidian Butte obsidian samples obtained at Walker Ranch is found in Van Horn, White, and White (2005:159-164). The environmental and ethnographic settings at Walker Ranch are detailed in Van Horn and Freeman (1990).

The Walker Ranch site is located in the southern plains of the ancient San Jacinto River flood basin and situated between the Menifee Valley on the north and the Poloma Valley on the south. The region is geologically and ecologically diverse and is characterized in part by rocky hillocks and ranges of small hills that are surrounded by gently undulating plains and grasslands. RIV-333 occupies a low rise in the landscape and is adjacent to an unnamed intermittent drainage which flows from south to north.

Based on previous Luiseño settlement pattern research (cf. Oxendine 1983; True and Waugh 1982), Freeman and Van Horn (1990) hypothesized that RIV-333 represents a principal village site. Within its geographic sphere of influence are lesser villages and

camp and special activity areas such as knapping and milling stations. The largest cultural deposit near the Walker Ranch is the Christensen-Webb site, CA-RIV-332, located about 400 m to the north (Kowta et al. 1965). The Walker Ranch and adjacent sites are well known for the presence of bedrock mortars and cupule boulders that have been the subject of some contention regarding their mitigation.¹ CA-RIV-634, a milling area and small habitation site, is about 200 m south of the Walker Ranch. Site CA-RIV-340 is located just west of the Walker Ranch village on the eastern slope of a rocky hill. The late prehistoric midden at RIV-340 is not well-developed, but the site includes several cupule boulders and bedrock milling features and a rare example of a “ringing rock.”² No petroglyphs other than cupules have been reported from the cluster of sites on and adjacent to Walker Ranch. There is, however, a single example of a pictograph panel at RIV-333 so faint and weathered that it easily escapes attention.

Figurine Descriptions

Thirteen baked clay figurine fragments were recovered from salvage excavations at Walker Ranch. Two additional fragments, likely from a single effigy, had been previously found on the surface by a private collector. The assemblage is stylistically compatible with the Northern Figurine Tradition of the American Southwest (Morss 1954). The land owner took possession of the artifacts before they were individually weighed and before Munsell color notations were accomplished, but it can be said that all of the items were modeled from clay materials of grayish and brownish types.

No appliqué elements were discernible in the collection, and the head areas and breasts of the anthropomorphic examples were formed directly on the clay by pinching, squeezing, and smoothing. No incised elements were observed in the collection, and punctate elements were exhibited by only two

artifacts. Specimen 8 is the only item with multiple punctations, and single punctations in the breast nipple areas on Specimen 3 appear to have been employed for anatomical emphasis, not ornamentation. The anthropomorphic specimens are devoid of facial features, and none exhibits any evidence of limbs. No recognizably zoomorphic subject was identified. Physical descriptions of the 15 specimens from RIV-333 are presented below.

Specimens 1 and 2, Surface Collected

Two figurine fragments, Specimens 1 and 2 (Figures 1, 2, and 3), were privately collected from the surface of the site. They were found approximately 7 m apart and 5 m south of a pictograph-bearing boulder within the area of a prominent bedrock mortar and cupule complex. The specimens were described by Freeman (1987:32) in an unpublished report concerning privately held collections from the Walker Ranch site. Although they do not conjoin, it is probable that Specimens 1 and 2 are part of the same figurine (Figures 2 and 3). The weathered fracture surfaces do not quite match, although the grayish, sandy, clay material, somewhat rough in texture, seems to be the same. If the fragments are from the same artifact, they were connected by an intervening piece or pieces not recovered by the collector.

Specimen 1 (Figures 1, 2, and 3) is a female torso, 2.7 cm long, and is endomorphic or cone-shaped in body form, the fragment base being wider than the uppermost portion of the torso. The fracture surface at the fragment bottom is almost perfectly circular, 1.5 cm in average diameter, and this is the thickest area of the artifact. Measured immediately below the breasts, the chest is 1.2 cm wide. Seen in profile (Figure 3), the back is very slightly curved or humped. The torso has two conical breasts, each about 0.4 cm in length and 0.6 cm wide at the base. The breasts protrude at divergent angles from the vertical centerline of the torso, about 32 and 38



Figure 1. Slightly oblique view, three female specimens from Walker Ranch, CA-RIV-333. Standing upright, Specimen 13 at left, 2.5 cm long, Specimen 1 in center, 2.7 cm long, Specimen 3 at right, 1.8 cm long.

degrees, left and right breast respectively. Consequently, the breasts have a tip-to-tip separation of 1.2 cm, although the centers of the member bases are only 0.8 cm apart. The top of the figurine torso terminates in a small and featureless “nubbin head.” The breasts below it were formed directly on the wet clay of the torso, as were the breasts on the other female anthropomorphs in the collection. The head of Specimen 1 extends about 0.5 cm above the breasts and bears a concave fracture scar at the back.

Specimen 2 (Figures 2 and 3) is 2.4 cm long and is plausibly the lower portion of Specimen 1. The fractured upper end of Specimen 2 is 1.4 by 1.2 cm in area. The fragment is roughly wedge-shaped in profile (Figure 3), tapering to a horizontal beveled ridge at the front edge of the artifact’s lower terminus, which is 1.1 cm wide. Numerous small, black stains are randomly distributed in a more than 1-cm-long area on what the authors think is the object’s front side (clearly seen in Figure 2). Rather

than asphaltum, these appear to be carbon residue, perhaps resulting from wildfire or campfire, either at or in close proximity to the location where they were found or at another locality. Less conspicuous discolorations may be soil stains.

Specimens 3, 4, 5, 6, Unit 7, Level 0-15 cm

Four clay fragments were found in Unit 7 at the 0-15 cm level. Of these, Specimens 3 and 4 may be fragments of the same effigy; if so, the fragments represent a female torso on a spherically bulbar base (Figure 4). The fractured surfaces nearly match, and it seems likely that only a brief connecting segment is missing. Specimen 3 (artifact 333-0177) is a female torso, the shortest and least robust in the Walker Ranch collection, only 1.8 cm long (Figures 1 and 4). Measured across the breasts, the fragment has a maximum width of about 1.1 cm. Below the breasts, the torso is about 0.9 cm wide and maintains an average of 0.8 cm in thickness. The breasts are low and rounded mounds,



Figure 2. CA-RIV-333 Specimen 1 at top, 2.7 cm long, Specimen 2 at bottom, 2.4 cm long.



Figure 3. Side view, CA-RIV-333 Specimen 1 at top, 2.7 cm long, Specimen 2 at bottom, 2.4 cm long.

only 0.2 cm in length, but are especially distinctive in that each breast bears a single punctation at the point of the breast (most noticeable in Figure 4). The punctate breasts are similar to those on a larger clay figurine torso, later discussed, that was collected in the San Fernando Valley at the Encino Village site, CA-LAN-43.

Specimen 4 from Walker Ranch (Figure 4) is the possible base of Specimen 3, the female torso recovered from the same unit and level and which exhibits the

same type of clay in appearance. Specimen 4 (artifact 333-0176) is spherically bulbar in form, 1.8 cm in length and 1.4 cm in maximum width. One side of the base is fractured, and the nearly circular scar is 1.1 cm in diameter. A smaller fracture at the presumed top of the bulb, to which the remainder of the effigy would have attached, measures 0.8 x 0.6 cm in area.

Specimens 5 and 6 from Walker Ranch (Figure 4) are thought to be figurine fragments, both closely

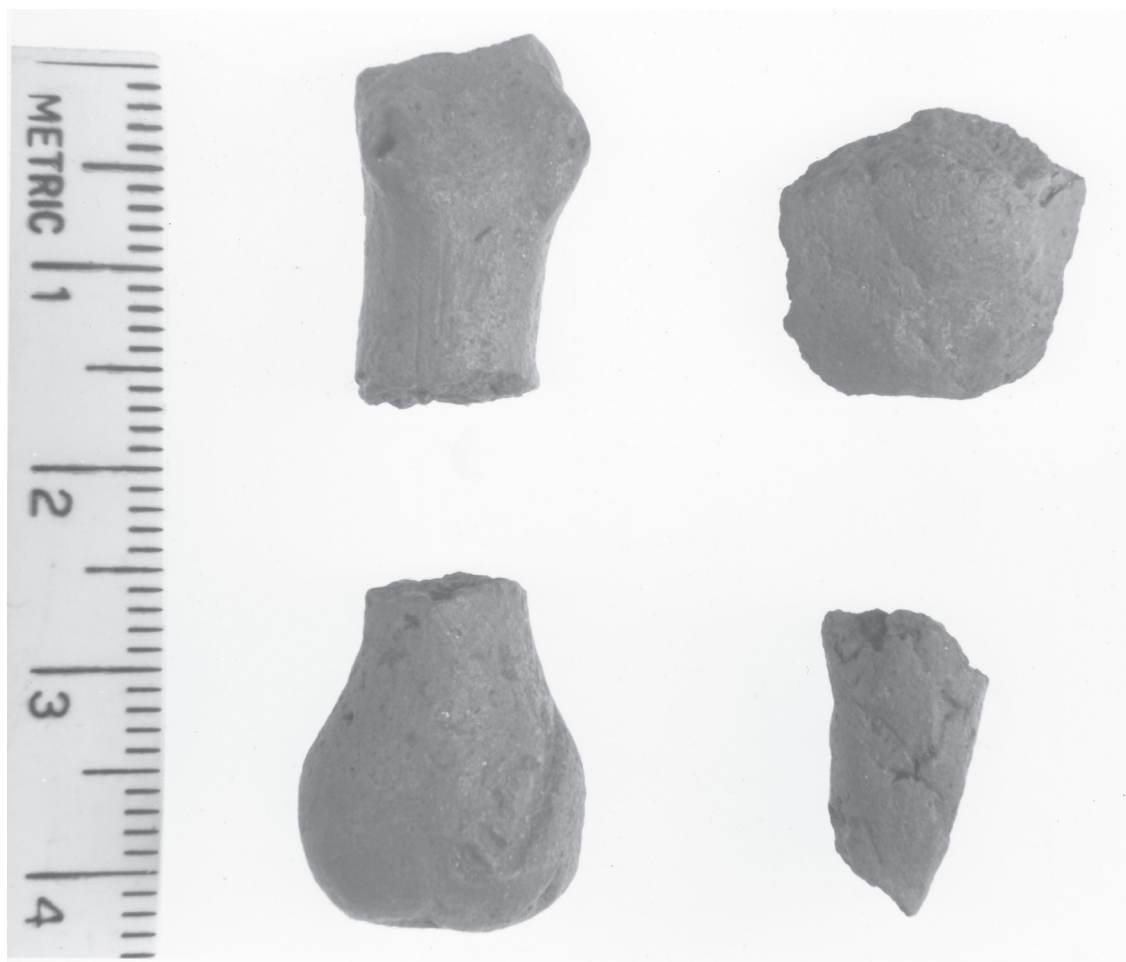


Figure 4. CA-RIV-333 Specimen 3 at top left, 1.8 cm long. Specimen 4 at lower left, also 1.8 cm long, possibly the bulbar base of Specimen 3. Specimen 5 at upper right, 1.5 cm long. Specimen 6 at lower right, 1.5 cm long.

similar in color and texture to Specimens 3 and 4 recovered from the same unit and level and previously discussed. Specimen 5 (artifact 333-0178) is ovoid in cross section and has a maximum thickness of 0.8 cm. The two broadest sides are slightly convex and are equal in area, 1.5 x 1.4 cm. One side is smooth (facing the camera in Figure 4), and the other is fractured. Specimen 6 (artifact 333-0179) is the fourth fragment found in the 0-15 cm level in Unit 7. It is smooth-sided, though exhibiting some cracking, and it is fractured on both ends. It is 1.5 cm long, and the fractured ends have maximum widths of 0.9 and 0.6 cm.

Specimen 7, Unit 9, Level 0-10 cm

Specimen 7 (artifact 333-0276), not illustrated, is an unidentified clay fragment, possibly from a figurine. It is essentially cylindrical. One end tapers to an irregular, roughly formed point, and the opposite end is fractured perpendicular to the long axis. It is 2.4 cm long and, excluding the tip, has an average width of 0.8 cm.

Specimens 8, 9, 10, Unit 9, Level 20-30 cm

Specimen 8 (artifact 333-0321) and Specimen 9 (artifact 333-0319) are identifiable portions of clay

figurines. Specimen 8 (Figures 5 and 6) is a stylized figurine fragment, anthropomorphic or zoomorphic, flattened and fan-shaped and exhibiting punctate designs. The perforations are small, shallow, and closely ordered and are arranged in two horizontal lines, one above the other. The upper line has eight punctations. The indentations in the lower line are not as well defined and may number as few as eight or as many as ten. The object is 2.0 cm long, 1.7 cm in maximum width, and only 0.7 cm in maximum thickness. The fragment was previously reported as a figurine base (Freeman and Van Horn 1990:31), but one of us (RSB) considers it open to question if the fragment represents the upper or lower terminus of the figurine. It is

similar in form to a terminal fragment from San Diego County reported by True et al. (1991: Figure 69-g), later discussed.

Specimen 9 (artifact 333-0319), seen in Figure 5, is a recognizable figurine base, spherically bulbar in form, that was recovered from the same Walker Ranch unit and level as stylized Specimen 8. The two items are similar in color and texture and may be fragments of the same figurine. Specimen 9 is 2.5 cm in length, and the bulb width varies from 1.3 to 1.4 cm. The bulb tapers to the fractured end of a 0.7 x 0.8 cm wide projection (a presumed part of the figurine midsection) that projects about 0.5 cm from the modeled spheroid



Figure 5. CA-RIV-333 Specimen 8 at top left, 2.0 cm long, and Specimen 9 at bottom, 2.5 cm long, may be the upper and lower portions of the same figurine, although it is possible that Specimen 8 is actually a figurine base. Specimen 10 at right is 1.3 cm long. All three items recovered from the same unit and level.

base. Also note that Specimen 9 is of the same type and relative size as bulbar Specimen 4 from Unit 7 (compare Figures 4 and 5).

Specimen 10 (artifact 333-0320), also recovered from the 20-30 cm level of Unit 9, is an unidentified figurine remnant (Figure 5). It is smoothly textured and conical, 1.3 cm long, and seemingly the tapered lower portion of a larger object. It is horizontally fractured at the top, where it is 1 cm wide.

Specimen 11, Unit 9, Level 30-40 cm

Specimen 11 (artifact 333-0443) is a small fragment of a female effigy's upper left torso, including one intact and rounded breast. The fragment is 1.3 cm high, 0.8 cm wide, and 0.6 cm thick. The item

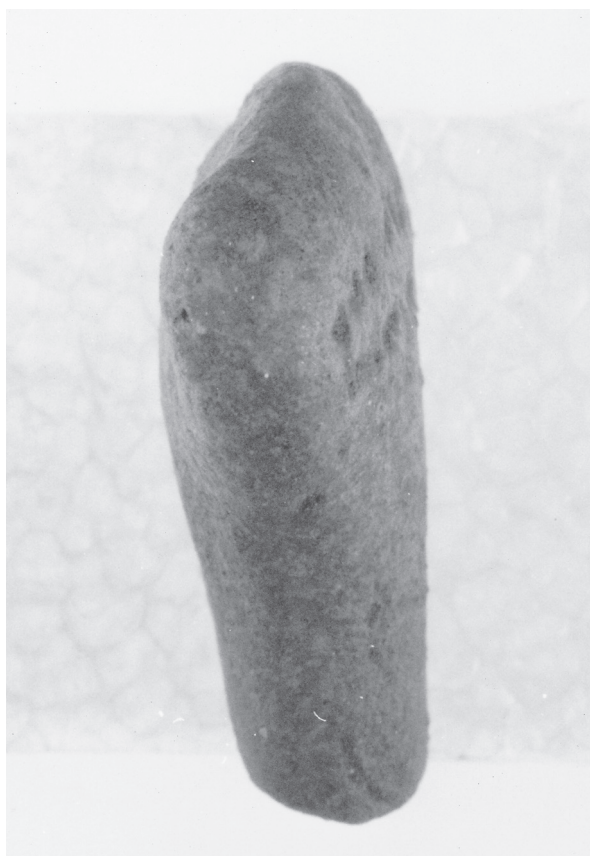


Figure 6. Side view, Specimen 8, 2.0 cm long, CA-RIV-333.

was photographed out of focus, and the land owner reclaimed it before it was photographed again.

Specimen 12, Unit 11, Level 20-30 cm

Specimen 12 (artifact 333-0493), not illustrated, appears to be the smooth and modeled rim of a flattened object. The fragment is 2.4 cm long, 0.7 cm wide, and varies from 0.6 to 0.4 cm in thickness. It resembles the rim area seen in punctate Specimen 8 from the 20-30 cm level in Unit 9.

Specimens 13 and 14, Unit 9, Level 0-10 cm

Specimen 13 (artifact 333-0570) is the torso and head areas of a female figurine, 2.5 cm long (Figures 1 and 7). Measured immediately below the breasts, it is 1.3 cm wide and 1.2 cm thick. The fractured surface in the waist area is 1.1 cm wide and 0.8 cm thick. The breasts are divergently angled an accentuated 34 degrees from the long axis of the body and extend beyond the sides of the chest, and here the artifact attains a maximum width of 1.6 cm. The head area is a simple triangular terminus, fractured at the top and devoid of any features. The back of the fragment is relatively flat and straight. The area incorporating the upper chest and front of the head is highly smoothed, slightly concave, and about the size of a fingertip. The head is slightly upturned and angled slightly to the rear, and the image overall conveys a rather demonstrative posture. As later discussed, the effigy form is strikingly similar to a San Diego County specimen reported by True et al. (1991:Figure 69-g).

Specimen 14 (artifact 333-0571), also found in the 0-10 cm level of Unit 9, appears to be a lower remnant of the female figure (Specimen 13) just described. As seen in Figure 7, it is 1.2 cm long, 1.2 cm wide, and has a maximum thickness of 0.8 cm. The assumed front, back, and sides are smoothed, and the top and bottom are fracture surfaces; thus, the fragment is an intermediate section of the original clay object.



Figure 7. CA-RIV-333 Specimen 13 at top, 2.5 cm long. Specimen 14 at bottom, 1.2 cm long.

Specimen 15, Unit 9, Level 30-40 cm

Specimen 15 (artifact 333-0608), not illustrated, is a small terminal fragment, most likely the lower terminus. It is conical in shape, 1.2 cm long, 1.1 cm wide at the fractured base, and 0.5 cm wide near the rounded top. The sides and top of the cone are highly smoothed.

Discussion and Comparisons

We refer to four anthropomorphic figurine fragments from RIV-333, and they are all identifiably female, specifically, surface collected Specimen 1 and excavated Specimens 3, 11, and 13. The only characteristic that distinguishes these items as female is the presence of breasts. There are instances, however, in which similar elements on other figurines have been interpreted as possible abbreviated arms. Short protuberances were initially reported as “arms” on a “male” clay effigy unearthed in 1924 in a shell midden on Tiburon Island, Marin County. Frank Cliff, a member of a relic hunting party that dug up the object, soon after contributed a photograph and an account of the discovery to the *Oakland Tribune*. More than a half century later in a published commentary about the effigy reported in the yellowed newspaper clipping, Fenenga (1977:309) offered a contrary opinion, stating that “comparison with the other specimens from the area leaves little doubt but that breasts of a female are represented.”

Wallace and Taylor (1960:15-16, Figure 4) reported a headless torso of a fired clay figurine from Indian Hill in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, San Diego County, that is equipped with “rudimentary arms,” although the conical appendages appear in a photograph to be quite breast-like in form and proportion. The left member is positioned on the side of the upper torso, and the right one is anchored nearly that far on the opposite side and projecting slightly forward; the impression persists, however, that they are most likely breasts, though imprecisely positioned by the maker. The researchers state that the figurine “has no head,” but the description and photo do not reveal if the image was sculpted that way or if the head was broken off. The authors also fail to include any measurements or any indication of even relative size. The figurine form reduces to a tapered lower terminus that is similar to Walker Ranch Specimen 2 and some

other examples cited in the present paper, including the female effigy described immediately below.

In design characteristics and diminutive size, a female figurine excavated at site CA-RIV-102 near Hemet, Riverside County (Figure 8), is stylistically similar to the set of female anthropomorphs recovered at Walker Ranch. The Hemet effigy is reported and illustrated by Langenwaller (1980) and Sawyer and Koerper 2006:25, Figure 13-h). Langenwaller identified it as one of three items that may have originally been part of a possible shaman's cache or sacred clan bundle; the other two items were a quartz crystal and a nearly complete pipe made of basalt. The clay effigy is 2.2 cm in length, 1.1 cm wide and 0.5 cm thick. It has two modeled breasts and exhibits the same type of nubbin head as three of the identifiably female figurines from Walker Ranch. The lower end of the effigy is tapered and terminates in a rounded and off-center

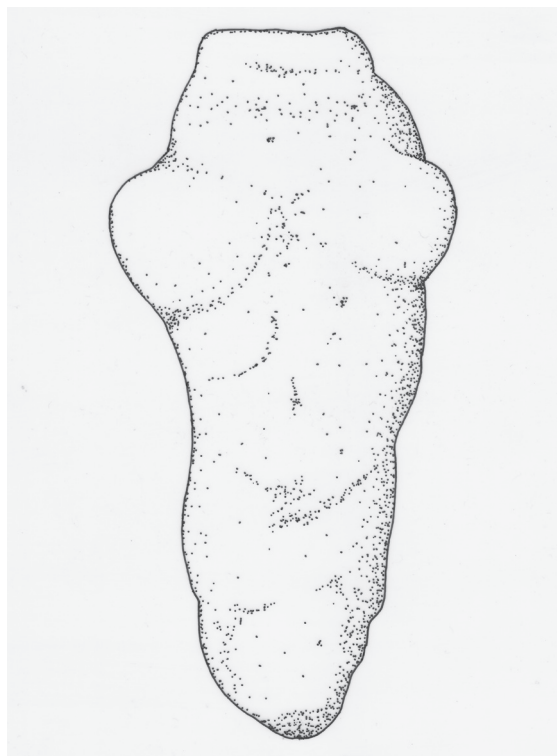


Figure 8. Figurine, 2.2 cm long, Hemet site, CA-RIV-102. After Langenwaller (1980).

point. Specimen 2 from Walker Ranch is also tapering in form but ends in a narrow ridge at the bottom (see Figures 2 and 3). Unlike the figurines from Walker Ranch, the Hemet figure is intact, although Langenwaller (1980:237-238) wrote that, "It appears that the lower portion broke off and was reattached when the clay was wet with an incomplete joining of the two sections." The reattachment of the broken lower section seems to account for the off-center position of the pointed lower end. Site RIV-102 was first recorded by Hal Eberhart in 1951 as one of a complex of seven late prehistoric Cahuilla villages (Oxendine and Pink 1978, cited in Langenwaller 1980:333). The site is in an area of interaction between the Cahuilla and Luiseño, and it is possible that the figurine may have originated with the latter group.

Well within Luiseño territory, 13 clay figurines and figurine fragments and one possible fragment were recovered during excavations at the Cole Canyon site, CA-RIV-1139, about 19 km southwest of Walker Ranch (Keller and McCarthy 1989). Based on absolute and relative dating techniques, the site was first occupied between the approximate dates of 834 and 994 AD; San Luis Rey II (the late prehistoric period from which clay figurines are numerous reported) and possibly San Luis Rey I are represented among the cultural deposits. One of the two intact figurines is a female with breasts (Keller and McCarthy 1989:38-39, Figure 13-a), and the report authors commented that the figurine "somewhat resembles the 'Venus' figurines of Europe." The artifact was excavated from the 20-30 cm level of Unit 5. These authors further state it is 4.9 cm long and has a neck and head in addition to breasts. The shape of the head is not described but appears as a rounded and bulbar termination in the published drawing. "Two incised lines encircle the neck, and three 2.5 mm punctate dots are located on top of the head, resembling two eyes and a nose" (Keller and McCarthy 1989:38-39). On both front and back of the figurine, three parallel vertical lines of punctations run from the base of the neck

to the bottom of the body, and one additional line of punctations descends vertically from the tip of the left breast to the bottom of the image (Keller and McCarthy 1989:38-39, Figure 13-a).

We have not seen the actual figurine or any photographs, but it appears to us that the component identified as the head is really the bulbar base of the figurine. This is opposite of how the effigy is interpreted and orientated in the description and sketch in the Cole Canyon report (Keller and McCarthy 1989:38-39, Figure 13-a). When the drawing is inverted (Figure 9), the image is compatible with examples of bulbar based figurines and with figurines with tapering upper termini in which neck and head are blended together. Some

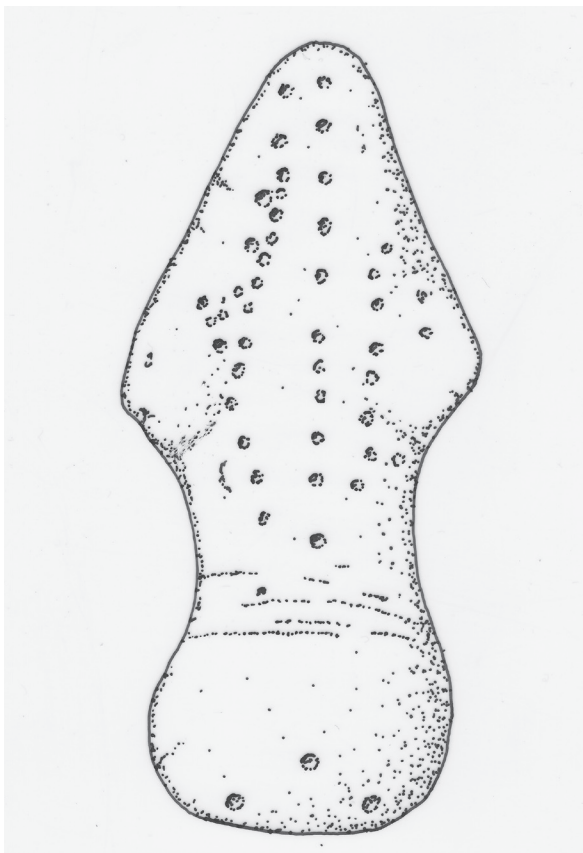


Figure 9. Front view, female figurine, 4.9 cm long, CA-RIV-1139, Cole Canyon, orientated in the manner that the present authors believe to be correct, bulbar base at the bottom. Revised from Keller and McCarthy (1989).

PCAS Quarterly, 46(3)

instances of amalgamated neck and head structures referenced herein include Specimens 1 and 13 from Walker Ranch and a female figurine, later discussed, that was recovered from the Tom-Kav site in San Diego County and reported by True et al. (1991).

In the absence of photographs or (as later explained) any future prospect of examining the actual artifacts, the present authors offer no alternative explanation for the punctate dots that Keller and McCarthy (1989:38-39) identified as possible eyes and nose features “on top” of the bulbar section. No conjectures about the incised and punctate lines on the front and back of the figure are offered in the Cole Canyon report (Keller and McCarthy 1989). Punctations, indentations, incised lines or a combination of these and other devices on reported figurines have been suggested by various researches as representations of tattoos, scars, body paint, necklaces, bands, hair, headdresses, clothing, etc. The present authors suspect that punctate, incised, and other design devices in some instances have no representational purpose at all and are merely examples of decoration for the sake of decoration; an example of this may be the multiple punctations on Walker Ranch Specimen 8.

The project sponsor relinquished the entire Cole Canyon figurine assemblage to the Pechanga Band of Mission Indians for repatriation after the project was completed in 1989, and that action negated any further opportunity for examination. Keller (personal communication 2011) has informed us that a number of tribal members involved in the project requested that the figurines not be photographed, and that is why photographic documentation does not appear in the report.

A female figurine, fully intact and only slightly more than 3.5 cm long, was excavated at CA-ORA-1405B in the San Joaquin Hills, Orange County. It was reported by Sawyer and Koerper (2006), who referred to it as the San Joaquin Hills Venus (Figure 10). The image is armless, legless, and headless by

design. In addition to breasts, the effigy has a protruding belly with a naval indentation, well modeled and proportioned, that was thought by Sawyer and Koerper (2006) to indicate fertility and fecundity. The torso, despite the emphasized midsection, has a definite and gracefully modeled waist with a moderate and subtle abdomen. In addition to the naval, the figurine is decorated with 48 punctations distributed over the front of the torso, though the breast nipple areas are not punctate like Walker Ranch Specimen 3. The anthropomorph is terminated at the lower front with an essentially horizontal ridge just about where the legs would join and is reminiscent of the roughly wedge-shaped Walker Ranch Specimen 2 in side view.

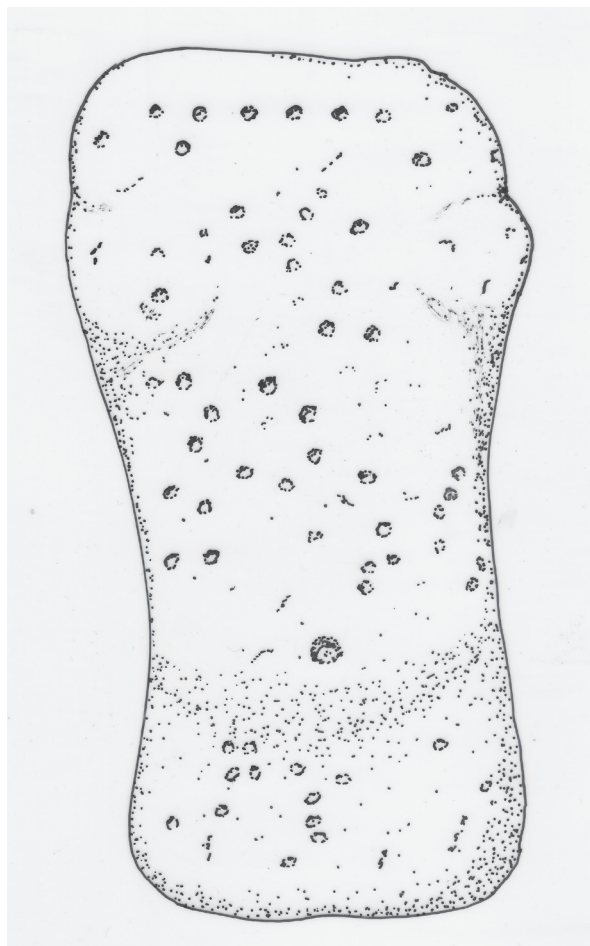


Figure 10. The San Joaquin Hills Venus, CA-RIV-1405-B, 35.5 mm long. After Sawyer and Koerper (2006).

The head and torso fragment of Walker Ranch Specimen 3, the smallest anthropomorph in the collection, is 1.8 cm long and, in its original condition, would have presumably been somewhat longer than the San Joaquin effigy if similarly terminated. As Sawyer and Koerper remarked, the image from San Joaquin Hills is artfully rendered and pleasing to the eye. Based on site stratigraphic analysis and radiocarbon dating of *Mytilus* shell from the same excavation unit, Sawyer and Koerper (2006:13-14) proposed that the artifact dates to the Middle Holocene even though it possesses “basic morphological congruence with some Late Prehistoric subject matter.”

Sutton (1979) reported three figurine fragments from two sites, CA-LAN-771 and CA-KER-303, in the Antelope Valley area of the Mojave Desert. One of the two items from KER-303 is about 3.5 cm long, and the single figurine example from LAN-771 is a little less than 2.5 cm long. Both show multiple punctations over most of their obverse sides and are described as slightly S-shaped in profile (Figure 11), and both have at least one tapering terminus that is pointed at the end. Given that exact interpretation of the original forms is difficult, Sutton (1979) observed that they may be zoomorphic or anthropomorphic and may even be representative of atlatl spurs or *Amsinckia tessellate* seeds, called fiddleneck, a common desert annual that terminates in a shape that resembles the curves of a violin scroll. A cache of *Amsinckia tessellate* seeds was recovered with other plant materials, including matting and cordage, from Eggshell Cave, CA-KER-341, near Rosamond³ (O'Donnell et al. 1997). These authors speculate that the recovered seeds were being used for their hallucinogenic value in religious activity. Conjecture that a plant seed or inanimate object might be one of the possible subjects of a figurine is a rare departure from human-like or animal-like interpretations. We note that the S-shaped artifact from KER-303 also resembles a swollen abdomen in side view, although there are no breasts, genitalia, or any other gender indicator evident. The other figurine

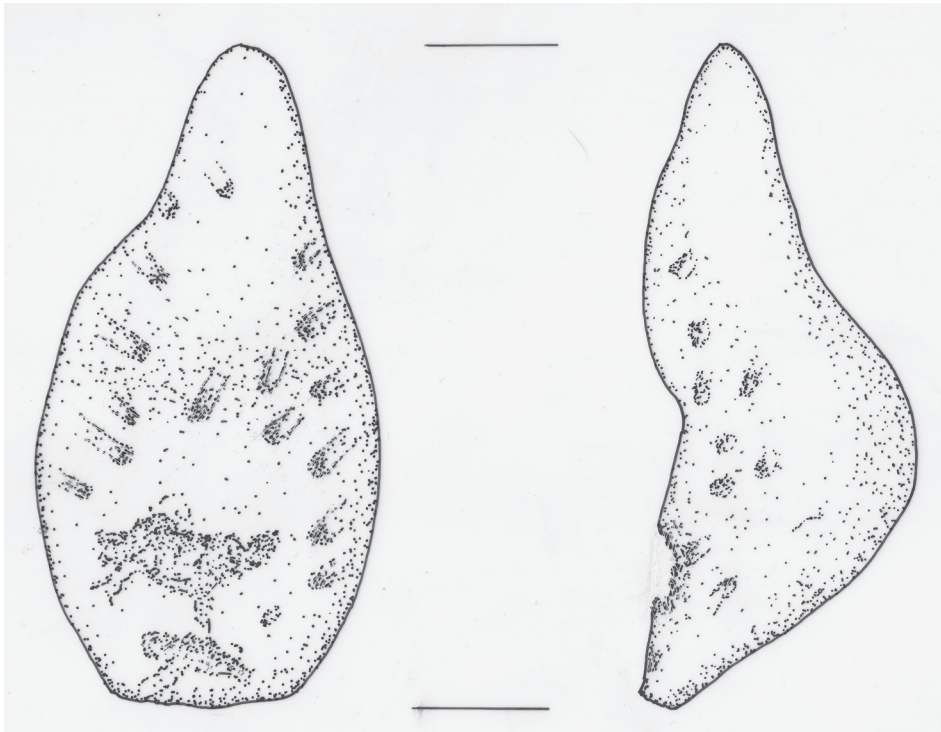


Figure 11. Front and side views, one of two figurines, 3.5 cm long, from CA-KER-303. After Sutton (1979).

fragment from KER-303 is quite different in form and design from the other two subject artifacts reported by Sutton (1979) and is probably anthropomorphic. It is about 4.5 cm in maximum length and tapers from the fractured end to a flattened and rounded terminus (semicircle shape). Oddly, both the front and back of the artifact have single punctations in what would be the naval area of an anthropomorph (Sutton 1979: Figure 1 at top). The figurine is otherwise unembellished. KER-303 has been dated by radio carbon assays to between 500 BC and 1700 AD (R. W. Robison, personal communication, as cited in Sutton 1979:367). Sutton (1979:367) states that LAN-771 probably dates to the last thousand years “and seems to have been abandoned prior to the protohistoric period.”

Previously mentioned, the punctations on the points of the breasts (the nipple areas) on Walker Ranch Specimen 3 (Figures 3 and 4) are similar to those on a larger clay figurine fragment, 3.2 cm long, collected from the Encino Village site (CA-LAN-43) in the San Fernando

Valley, Los Angeles County (Figure 12). The breasts on the Encino specimen (site artifact 28856) were applied in appliqué and exhibit single deep punctations in the nipple areas that are about 2 mm in width and depth and are wider, deeper, and more noticeable than those on Walker Ranch Specimen 3. In addition to the two deliberate punctations, there are five minuscule pits scattered on the front of the Encino fragment, but these either resulted from air bubbles or tiny cavities resulting from dislodged inclusions in the clay. Like the Walker Ranch female specimens, the more voluptuous Encino effigy is devoid of facial features and has no limbs. Unlike the nubbin heads exhibited at Walker Ranch, however, it has a distinctively elongated head (a kind of amalgamated neck and head region) that is terminated by a small horizontal fracture scar on top. Most of the effigy bottom and a portion of the left side of the abdomen are missing, however there is some material evidence remaining on the lower right side and lower back that the figure had a bulbar base, probably more irregularly ovoid than round.



Figure 12. Female figurine, 3.2 cm long, from the Encino site, CA-LAN-43.

The second of the two identifiably female figurines from Encino site LAN-43 (artifact 3701, not illustrated) is 4 cm long. Like the companion female figure from Encino, it also has an elongated and featureless head that bears a small fracture scar on top. Only the left breast remains, also applied in appliqué, but it is sharply pointed and not pierced, unlike the breasts on the other female form. There is a shallow depression where the right breast was located. Except for the missing breast and a small portion of the tapering lower terminus, the limbless effigy is nearly intact. Franklin Fenenga was in the process of examining and sketching the 27-piece Encino collection of figurines and assorted other clay objects prior to his death in 1994, and he gave one of us (RSB) the opportunity to inspect and photograph the items. A full report is now being compiled.

Other examples of female figurines with punctations in the nipple areas include one specimen collected near the Estero site in Marin County (Heizer and Beardsley 1943:202, Figure d) and a female figurine fragment from CA-MRN-365 north of San Francisco Bay in Marin County (Elssasser 1963:118-119, Figure 1-b). The item from the Estero site is 5.3 cm long, and the body is decorated with three vertical zigzag lines. The MRN-365 specimen has a 5 cm long torso, fractured on top, and from which the head area, if it had one, has been broken away. In addition to piercing in the nipple areas, it also bears a possible naval punctation (though not located with complete anatomical accuracy) and four impressed horizontal lines on the abdomen and a possible representation of a string of shell beads between the breasts.

An inventory of often referenced clay figurines reported from California has been documented from sites in the watershed of the San Luis Rey River in northern San Diego County (True 1957; True et al. 1974; True et al. 1991). Walker Ranch female Specimen 13 (Figures 1 and 7), is quite similar in form and general impression to a smaller figurine fragment (Figure 13, left herein) excavated at CA-SDI-682, the Tom-Kav village site, by True et al. (1991:Figure 69-g). The Walker Ranch artifact is 2.5 cm long, and the Tom-Kav specimen, as judged from the published illustration and bar scale, is only about 1.5 cm long. Both figurine head areas are simple triangular projections devoid of any features, and both artifacts have breasts that are divergently angled from the chest and extend beyond the sides of the torso.

Also excavated at the Tom-Kav site is a fan-shaped, or inverted triangle-shaped, fragment a little more than 3 cm long. It is orientated in the published illustration as a figurine base (True et al. 1991:Figure 68-f), although it could as well be the upper rather than lower terminus of the image. The artifact (Figure 13, right) bears no punctations but is decorated with a

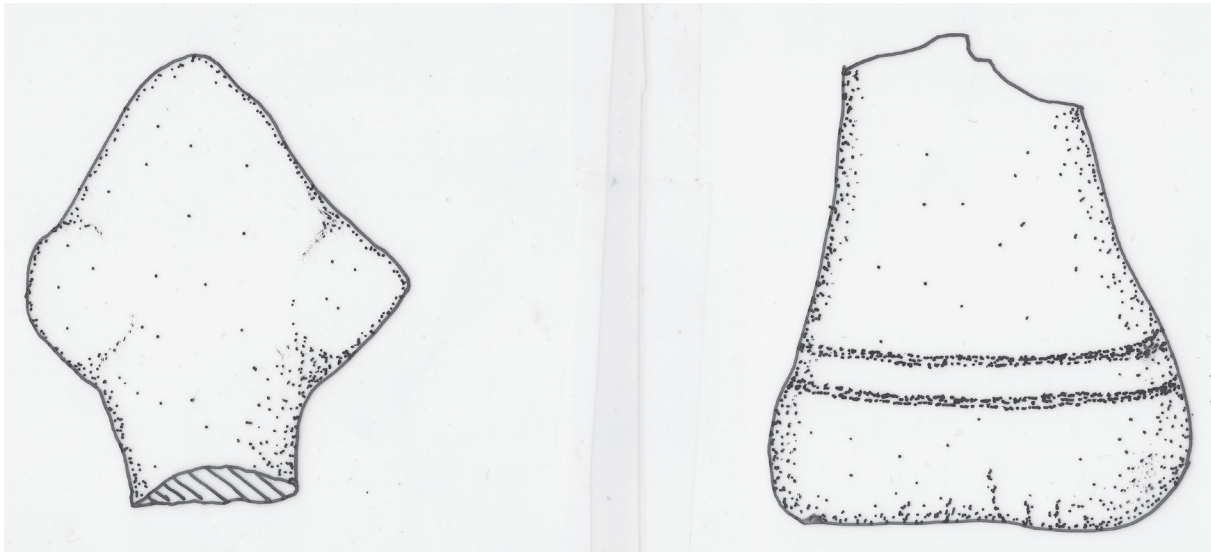


Figure 13. Fragments from the Tom-Kav Village site, CA-SDI-682. Left: female fragment about 1.5 cm long. Right: triangle-shaped (fan-shaped) fragment a little more than 3 cm long, either the upper or lower portion of a clay figurine, subject undetermined. After True et al. (1991).

single incised horizontal line that completely encircles the object. The fragment is similar in outline to fan-shaped and numerous punctated Specimen 8 from Walker Ranch (Figures 5 and 6), which is also the upper or lower terminus of a figurine of an unknown subject and is stylistically distinct from the rest of the Walker Ranch collection.

The largest collection of figurines from the San Luis Rey drainage area was reported by True (1957) and consists of 17 figurines and figurine fragments acquired from eight sites and tentatively dated to the late prehistoric period. According to True (1957:292), anthropomorphic forms predominate, and only three zoomorphic figures were reported. Two anthropomorphs are identifiable females with breasts but are otherwise unlike the female representations from Walker Ranch in size, detail, and general impression. One is an intact female (True 1957:292, 295, Figure 1-A) that has breasts, a bulbar base, and a crudely modeled head with eyes and features that True described as “muzzle-like.” It is 8.9 cm long. The other female with breasts (True 1957:293, 295, Figure 2-a) is 7.2 cm

long with an intact torso and bulbar base, but the head area has been broken away. The torso is decorated on the front with three incised grooves, and True points out a “slight puncture” between the two lower lines that may indicate a navel. Another fragment described by True (1957:293, 295, Figure 2-c) is the 3.7 cm long basal fragment of “a probable female figurine” with “a possible indication of female genitalia incised into the base.” No genitalia, male or female, are evident in the Walker Ranch collection.

Another well-known group of figurines and figurine fragments is attributed to Mason Valley in San Diego County, although the question of provenience is clouded. The objects were privately acquired by Herman F. Strandt, either by field collection, trade, or purchase, and eventually deposited at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, Orange County. The 15-piece collection was first described in detail by McKinney and Knight (1973) and later reexamined by Dixon (1977). Provenience information is limited to the Mason Valley area in general, and it is unknown if the specimens were recovered from one or multiple sites.

After discussing the provenience uncertainties, Dixon (1977:83) judged that the odds were “somewhat in favor” that the figurines had been acquired in Mason Valley and were “most likely late prehistoric or protohistoric Diegueño,” but he added that there was no proof. He also speculated that the figurines may have originated elsewhere, possibly at the Fairview site, CA-ORA-58, in Orange County, one of the sites from which Strandt collected. Hedges (1973:28) wrote that the Mason Valley collection seemed to be “part of the central California figurine complex and, ultimately, of Northern Tradition derivation.”

The entire Mason Valley collection is photographed in McKinney and Knight (1973:45, Figure 1). Two of the figurines, both 3.8 cm long, are headless anthropomorphic females with breasts. Both images have single distinctive vertical grooves that begin about midsection on specimen 1-a and rather lower on item 1-b and nearly extend to both effigies’ lower terminations. Two other fragment specimens in the collection, seemingly anthropomorphic, exhibit similar grooves, and a fifth specimen (McKinney and Knight 1973: Figure 1-g) may have also had the vertical groove but is too deteriorated in that area to be sure. The rest of the illustrated artifacts are cylindrical or columnar and may be fragments of anthropomorphic representations without gender indicators.

McKinney and Knight (1973) described the vertical dividing line in the lower portion of both of the identified female effigies as a “slit” and offered no explanation. Based on his own examination at the Bowers Museum, Dixon suggested (1977:74) that the vertical groove may “represent the division of the legs.” That is, though explicitly modeled legs are not apparent, the partitioning vertical groove implies the presence of legs on either side of it. A completely divergent conclusion was offered by Sawyer and Koerper (2006:26-27) who commented on the Mason Valley collection in the stylistic comparisons section of their paper concerning the San Joaquin Hills

figurine from ORA-1405B in Orange County. Their study contains a very useful and superbly illustrated review of numerous California figurines, and they considered some of the Mason Valley items to be compatible with what they call Category 3 figurines, “whose salient design factors are sex-based.” Sawyer and Koerper disagree with Dixon’s appraisal that the vertical groove components exhibited in the Mason Valley effigies are meant to convey the impression of legs; rather, the authors (Sawyer and Koerper 2006:26) interpreted the grooves as “oversized vulvar slits.”

Brown and Fenenga (2005) had the opportunity to examine and photograph a much larger figurine, 9.8 cm long, excavated by Elizabeth Campbell about eight decades ago at a male cremation site, CA-RIV-3888, in what is now the Joshua Tree National Park (see also Campbell 1932; Schroth and Schneider 1992). The body of the Campbell effigy (reburied soon after Brown and Fenenga’s last examination in 1992) very convincingly exhibits a continuous leg division indicator groove that extends vertically downward across the lower front, crosses the bottom, and then ascends the lower back. This design device is suggestive of examples in the Mason Valley collection, especially of the two nearly intact female figurine specimens. We, as did Brown and Fenenga earlier (2005:140), favor Dixon’s assessment that the vertical separation line was used to imply the presence of legs in the Mason Valley artifacts. Nevertheless, some of the figurine remnants photographed in the McKinney and Knight report (1973:Figure 1-f especially) could be construed as exhibiting exaggerated female genitalia if it were not for the clarifying presence of the two nearly complete Mason Valley effigies that display the leg separation line. One of the nearly whole figurines and one of the grooved fragments are illustrated here in Figure 14.

None of the figurine torsos from Walker Ranch are attached to their original lower sections. As previously

noted, however, it is probable that surface collected Specimens 1 and 2 (Figures 2 and 3) are the upper and lower sections of a figurine of the tapering lower terminus type. Also, Walker Ranch Specimens 3 and 4, both recovered from the same unit and level, may represent a female torso on a spherical base. The spherically bulbar forms exhibited by Walker Ranch Specimens 4 and 9 are thought to be figurine base sections (Figures 4 and 5).

All spherical bases are bulbar, but not all bulbar bases are sufficiently rounded to qualify as spheroids. For example, ten of the 17 illustrated clay figurines and figurine fragments originally reported by True (1957) have “blunt or rounded terminations.” Six of the illustrated bases are clearly bulbar in form, but none duplicate the distinctly spherical shape of Walker Ranch Specimens 4 and 9. Four additional figurine base fragments from northern San Diego County are reported by True et al. (1974:66-67) from excavations at CA-SDI-308, a protohistoric

site identified as the village of Molpa by Luiseño informants. The specimens are not illustrated in the report nor are any measurements presented. The artifacts are reported as “bulbous figurine base fragments,” all smoothed and one possibly polished. As described, it is not wholly clear if the fragments are from one base or three, but it does seem that no more than two bases are represented. Three fragment interiors (it would seem from one base) contained “an impression of a seed, probably an acorn kernel,” and the authors speculated that if figurines with bulbous terminations “...are intended to represent pregnancies in some symbolic sense, then it is not completely out of reason to suggest that they were in fact part of some ritual activities tied to increase ceremonies.”

Assuming that the inclusion was deliberate, an acorn in the interior of a female figurine, bulbar-based or not, is indeed strong evidence of symbolic pregnancy, and it is also reasonable to think that fruitfulness or

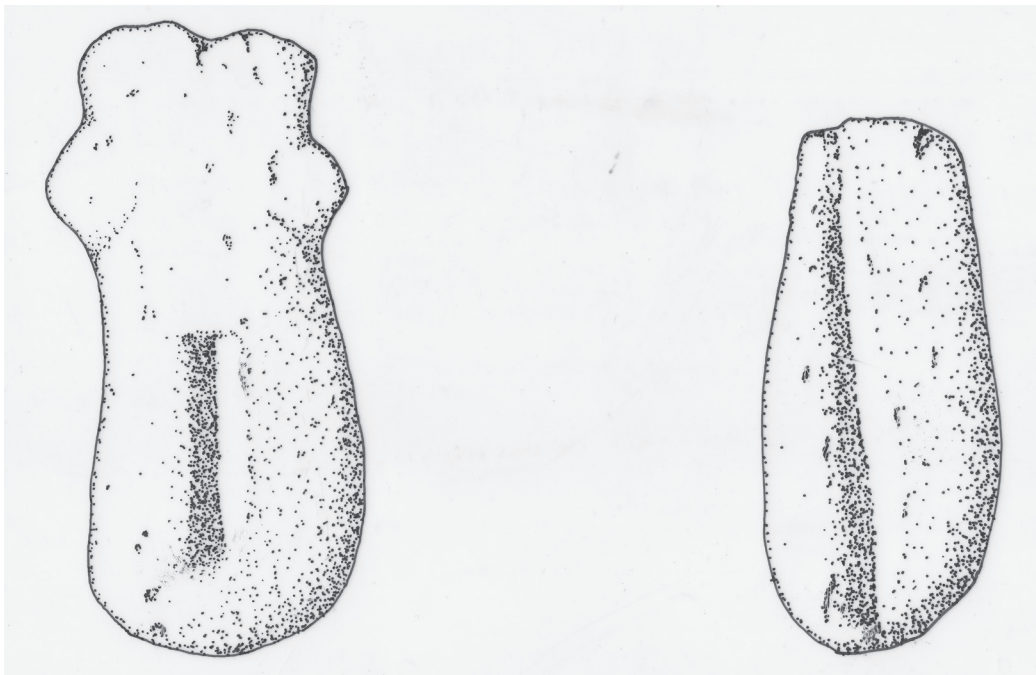


Figure 14. From the Mason Valley collection. Left: female figurine, 3.8 cm long. Right: grooved figurine fragment, thought to be anthropomorphic, less than 2.5 cm long. After McKinney and Knight (1973).

pregnancy is represented by some percentage of bulbar bases solely by their shape. That said, the impression of pregnancy or fecundity seemingly evidenced by the swollen abdomen on the San Joaquin Venus described by Sawyer and Koerper (2006) is more anatomically realistic and clear than a bulbar base that may project as much to the rear and sides as it does to the front.

We mention here as a side note that there is a manipulative advantage of bulbar bases of the small and uniformly spheroid type discovered at Walker Ranch, intended by their maker or not. Unless inserted into the soil or another suitable matrix, the bulbs on Walker Ranch Specimens 4 and 9 are too rounded on the bottoms to provide stable pedestals for upright display, as some bulbar bases may be. Held between thumb and forefinger, however, a small, sturdy, and evenly rounded bulb could have been used (probably was) to easily hold and manipulate a small figurine in an upright posture, even spin it from side to side, without grasping the more vulnerable upper portion of the artifact.

Seven clay figurines from California locations were reported nearly seven decades ago by Heizer and Beardsley (1943). Central and northern California are specified in the title of their paper, and five of the subject artifacts are from Shasta and Marin counties. However the complete study group includes, without explanation, one male effigy fragment from Imperial County in southern California. As earlier described, a 5.3 cm long Marin County female (Heizer and Beardsley 1943:202, Plate XXVI-d) has punctations in the breast nipple areas similar to Walker Ranch Specimen 3 and two other comparative examples cited herein. Two of the female figures, both collected in Shasta County (Heizer and Beardsley 1943:201, Plate XXVI-a and b), exhibit small cone-shaped variations of featureless heads that can be described as nubs, though they are clearly distinct from the head shapes seen in Walker Ranch Specimens 1, 3, and 13 and in

the previously mentioned examples reported by Langenwalter (1980) and True et al. (1991:24, Figure 69-g). One of the two cone headed figures is also included in Sawyer and Koerper (2006:27, Figure 15-c).

Decoration with red ocher pigment was utilized on one female fragment from the Marin County McClure site (Heizer and Beardsley 1943:200, 203, Plate XXVI-g), and the use of incised lines, some of which seem to represent clothing and necklace items, is variously seen on four other Marin and Shasta County specimens (Heizer and Beardsley 1943:200-203, Plate XXVI-a, b, d, f). No pigment and incised line adornments are exhibited by any of the Walker Ranch figurines, and only fan-shaped Specimen 8 has multiple punctations of a seemingly decorative purpose. The punctations in the breast nipple areas on Walker Ranch Specimen 3 are anatomical rather than decorative. More information concerning northern California figurines from Marin, Sonoma, and Humboldt counties, some of which are extensively decorated with punctate and incised motifs, is reported by Heizer and Perdergast (1956).

Concluding Remarks

This report is essentially descriptive in content and is intended for the fundamental purpose of introducing additional clay figurine examples into the California literature. Various other figurines are mentioned for comparative purposes, but our report is not intended as a general exposition and commentary on the artifact type. As more artifact examples are recovered and reported, broader data-supported studies of function, typology, and distribution can continue to be made with growing assurance and clarity, and it is toward that end that we have contributed the descriptions and illustrations contained in this report. While morphological details vary in the statewide collection (as in the shape of the heads, when present), it may be said that the figurine examples from Walker Ranch are in general stylistic compatibility

with figurines reported elsewhere in California that are most frequently based on a rounded columnar body, are small to moderate in size (easily held and manipulated by the fingers of one hand), are simply modeled (though some are well shaped and embellished with punctations, incised devices, and occasional other elements), and are more often than not devoid of facial features and limbs. Though some similarities occur, they are generally more fragile and distinguishable from more robustly constructed examples of both three-dimensional and flat-bodied types of Southwest figurines reported from California by True and Warren (1961), Hedges (1973), Koerper and Hedges (1996), Brown and Fenenga (2005), etc., some of which appear to be imports.

As to the meaning and function of figurines, suggestions have been made that range from the varied use of figurines as magico-religious objects (they doubtless were) to possible children's toys (also believable). Indeed, some artifacts identified as simple figurines or figurine-like artifacts could be the result of clay modeling practice or (human nature being what it is) even idle doodling with the clay. Meighan wrote (1955:896) in his review of Morss (1954):

As distressing as it may be to the archeologist, it seems clear that we cannot accurately reconstruct the cultural meaning of figurines any more than we can recover an unwritten language from an archeological site. The best we can hope for is a well-reasoned approximation to the truth...

Notwithstanding the increased number of recovered figurines and all that has been written about them since Meighan wrote his commentary, his observation continues to be valid.

The RIV-333 site property is currently owned by the County of Riverside and is protected by a chain link fence and guarded by a member of the Pechanga

Band of Luiseño Indians. Figurine Specimens 1 and 2 are still possessed and carefully preserved by the private collector who found them on the site surface many years prior to formal salvage operations, and they may eventually reemerge and become available for future study. The late Tom Pegg, who owned the property after the Walker family, acquired the rest of the figurine fragments yielded by the site, 13 items, and held them as legal possessions. Mr. Pegg is now deceased, and the specific whereabouts of those 13 figurine fragments is currently unknown to us, and there is plausible but unsubstantiated information that the objects have been dispersed to various unidentified private collections.

Endnotes

1. Confused by the advice of various parties concerning proper treatment of archaeological features, the land owner at CA-RIV-339 hired a bulldozer and had a prominent cupule boulder pushed down a hill and buried face down in water at the bottom of a dozer-dug pit. The episode is reported by Van Horn (1989:1-2) and Freeman and Van Horn (1990:5).
2. The bell rock (ringing boulder) at CA-RIV-340 at Walker Ranch is a diorite boulder of moderate size and angular shape that produces a metallic and high-pitched ringing sound when struck with a cobble. The rock bears seemingly old and weathered battering scars on one side and is thought to have been used for ceremonial purposes (Smith et al. 1990:7,8,14, including a photo of the rock; see also newspaper article by Hillinger 1991, including photo). The boulder is small enough to be twisted and tilted by one man and lifted by three or four. A much larger (seven ton) ringing boulder from Bell Canyon in the Mission Viejo area of Orange County, California, and now on display in the patio at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, was reported and shown in a photograph in a paper by Knight (1979).

3. The trinomial designation of Eggshell Cave, CA-KER-341, was mistakenly published as CA-KER-308 in Sutton (1979:368).

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