

An AMS Radiocarbon Date for a Steatite Hook/Bird Effigy from CA-ORA-340

Henry C. Koerper and Roger D. Mason

Abstract

This article describes a hook/bird effigy from CA-ORA-340 that was found with a human interment. An AMS radiocarbon date on bone provided a determination of A.D. 420-650, the earliest association date yet for a hook/bird specimen manufactured of steatite. It is postulated that artifacts of the hook/bird effigy genre represent stylized representations of both male and female genitalia. Distribution of these artifacts indicates they were predominantly the creations of Catalina Island Gabrielino.

Introduction

At CA-ORA-340, located in the Wishbone Hill tract of the Newport Coast Planned Community (Figures 1 and 2), excavators with the Newport Coast Archaeological Project (NCAP) recovered a steatite hook/bird effigy (Figure 3) in clear association with the highly fragmented remains of an inhumation (Burial 1) that had been covered over with several sandstone slabs. Used interchangeably but at times discriminately, the etic appellatives “hook stone,” “bird stone,” and “pelican stone,” help distinguish one stylistically varied grouping of effigies from other artifact categories within the portable cosmos of coastal southern California. Group identity revolves significantly on design elements that have evoked morphological comparisons to hooks/barbs and/or particular avian species (see e.g., Abbott 1879:215-216; de Cessac 1951:Plate 1; Lee 1981:102-104, 106, 107; Hudson and Blackburn 1986:200-215; Wallace 1987; Koer-

per and Labbé 1987, 1989; Cameron 1988). Kroeber (1925:630) observed that the “hooks” and other styles “pass through a transition of shapes which retain...a certain decorative...likeness that makes their unity of class certain, but are so variant in structural features as to dispel any possibility of each type having possessed a common utilitarian purpose.”

No formal set of operations exists to identify types/subtypes for what is herein called the “hook/bird effigy genre.” We have avoided incorporating “stone” into the genre name since some small number of the artifacts had been crafted of wood, bone, or tooth (Lee 1981:48).

Direct associations with ceremonial caches (e.g., Van Valkenburgh 1931; Winterbourne 1967:21; Wallace 1987; Desautels et al. 2005; Koerper: 2006: Figures 1, 9, 17) attest to the sacred status of these artifacts. One ethnographic source (Yates 1889:305) detailed the role of some such effigies in rituals performed to effect, for instance, weather control; other sources also demonstrate that some Chumash retained familiarity with these talismans well into historic times (Harrington 1942:13-14; de Cessac 1951:22). While the ethnographic/ethnohistoric literature lacks any reference to the manufacture of hook/bird artifacts, there is evidence suggesting minimal modification to a small number of specimens occurring in post-contact times, presumably

to allow the artifacts to be positioned correctly during ritual employments (see Hudson and Blackburn 1986: Chpt. 20-318.9; Koerper and Labbé 1989:46-47). Interestingly, there is a Spanish period ethnohistoric note on idols, including “stone figurines,” as objects of veneration (Priestly 1937:33). Would some of these figurines have included hook/bird effigies?

The certainty of Native applications of hook/bird effigies to magical and/or religious practices begged questions of imagery and symbology for Koerper and Labbé (1987, 1989) who observed that relatively graphic design elements of particular hook/bird specimens reflected phallic and/or vulvar referents.

Extrapolating to less graphically crafted effigies, they proposed that emically the genre had projected dimorphic sexual imagery, thus providing a vehicle for communicating life-force symbolism (fertility, fecundity, increase). It is significant that hook/bird effigies have been documented from ceremonial caches whose contents included other kinds of effigies that had almost certainly projected sex-based imagery (e.g., Van Valkenbergh 1931; Winterbourne 1967:20-21; Wallace 1987; Desautels et al. 2005; Koerper 2006:97).

Direct associations with human burials (e.g., Abbott 1879:214-216; Putnam 1879a:23, 1978b:219; Holmes

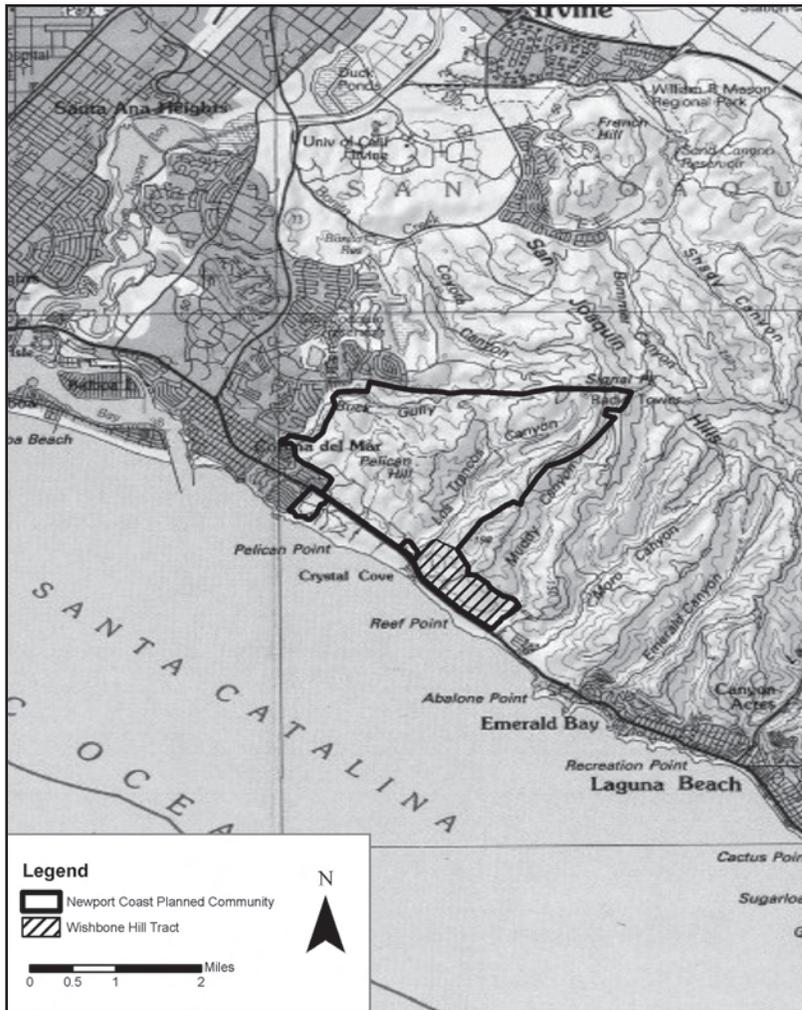


Figure 1. Location of the Wishbone Hill tract of the Newport Coast Planned Community.

1902:184, Plate 47; Van Valkenburgh 1931; de Ces-sac 1951:2; Saylor 1959:171; Elsasser and Heizer 1963:28; Decker 1969:Figure 4; Meighan 1976; Cameron 1984:22, 1988:56-57, 2000) further speak to the sacred nature of the hook/bird genre. In the present study, adding to this list, there is the evidence from CA-ORA-340 (Figures 1 and 2).

The primary purposes of this article are description of the ORA-340 mortuary offering shown in Figure 3 and reportage of its temporal placement based on accelerator mass spectrometer (AMS) radiocarbon

technology. Preceding this is an overview regarding site background, and following the descriptive and temporal information is a discussions section that first covers radiocarbon derived dates for other hook/bird examples. Only one hook-like artifact has been directly assayed, this because it was fashioned of bone; its surprisingly early (ca. terminal Middle Holocene) date precipitates some reflection regarding the aetiology of the hook/bird genre. Other food for thought in the discussions entails a revisit of the question of symbolic meanings attaching to the effigies and a consideration of the distribution of the genre. A

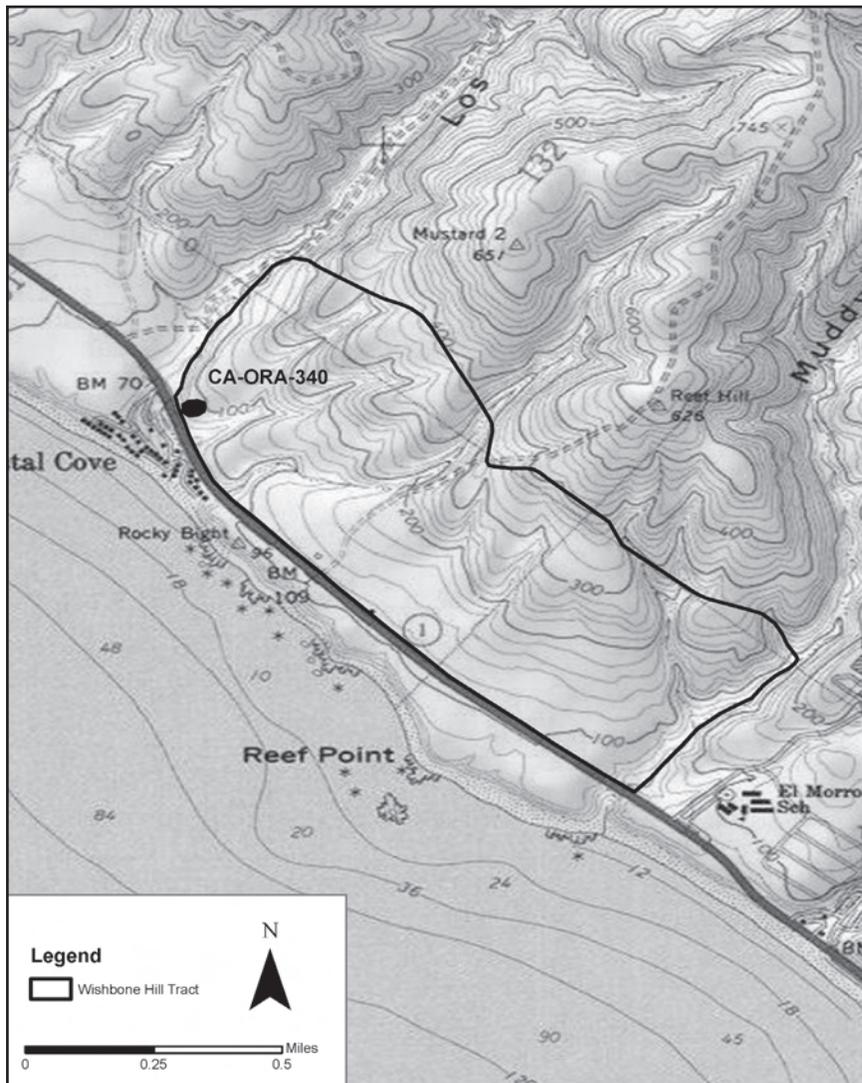


Figure 2. Location of CA-ORA-340 within the Wishbone Hill tract.

summary and concluding remarks section rounds out our essay.

Background of CA-ORA-340

Brief Overview

ORA-340 was a nearly 1200 m², Late Holocene, multi-component site located in the Wishbone Hill tract of the Newport Coast Planned Community in coastal Orange County (Figures 1 and 2). It was one of 38 sites where data recovery was carried out as part of the NCAP to mitigate impacts from residential development (Mason et al. 1991). The site was located on a marine terrace overlooking Crystal Cove (Figure 2). It was surrounded by coastal sage scrub on gently sloping terrain at an elevation of about 30 masl. ORA-340 is about 210 m from the ocean and is just south of Los Trancos Canyon, a major drainage that descends from near Signal Peak to Crystal Cove.

Hunter-gatherers in the area had access to several terrestrial and marine habitats which provided access to a variety of plant foods, terrestrial animals, fish, and shellfish. The site yielded only a small number of arrow projectile points, a few large bifaces, debitage, some fragments of animal bone, and marine shell; the site was at most a small temporary camp (Mason et al. 1991:232). However, two inhumations found at ORA-340 demonstrate that the site was also used for burials and associated mortuary rites. One of the two inhumations (Burial 2) was that of an infant inurned within an andesite receptacle (Cat. No. 10908) (Figure 4). The other was the previously mentioned highly fragmented Burial 1, which was covered by sandstone slabs discovered in Units 19 and 20. The two inhumations were in undisturbed midden, or anthrosol, which occurred in depressions in the sandstone bedrock at 20 to 50 cm below the surface. The sediments above the bedrock, which also contained archaeological material, were Aeolian in origin and had been disturbed by early twentieth century agricultural operations.

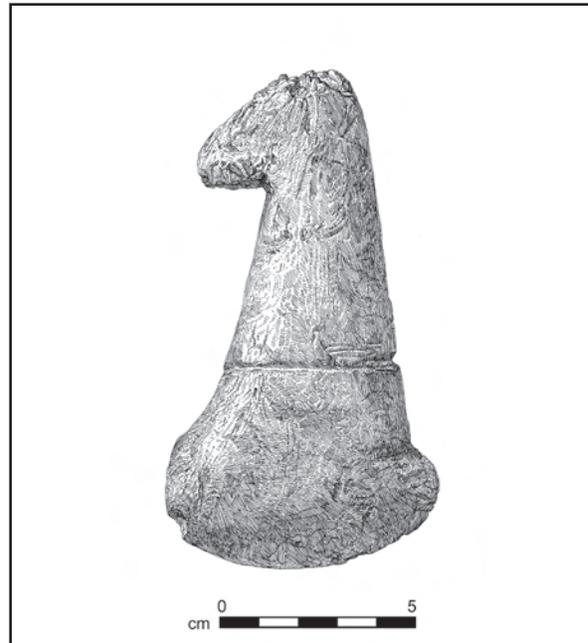


Figure 3. Micaceous steatite hook/bird effigy from CA-ORA-340.

Site Radiocarbon Chronology

Two conventional decay counting radiocarbon dates were secured from *Argopecten* samples submitted during the test phase for ORA-340. Both samples were collected out of surface scrapes within Units 6 and 7. One (Beta-23815) gave a calibrated date of 1124 ± 76 B.P. The other (Beta-23814) yielded a calibrated date of 1276 ± 67 B.P. (Mason and Peterson 1994: Appendix I-D).

Two additional conventional dates resulted from the mitigation phase program. A *Mytilus* sample from the 10-30 cm level of Unit 5 (Beta-43391) provided a calibrated date of 3199 ± 85 B.P., and an *Argopecten* sample from the 40-50 cm level of Unit 5 (Beta-43392) yielded a calibrated date of 667 ± 76 B.P. (Mason and Peterson 1994: Appendix I-D). The four radiocarbon ages reflect the generally mixed nature of deposits at ORA-340, a result largely of agricultural plowing during the early twentieth century. Unit 5 was

not far from Units 19 and 20, the location of Burial Feature 1 (see Mason et al. 1991:Figure 10). The AMS date on this burial is reported below.

Time-Sensitive Artifacts

The evidence of time sensitive beads (Mason et al. 1991:137-159, Appendix B) and arrow projectile points lends support to the view that the majority of activities occurring at ORA-340 played out during the Late Prehistoric period. Robert Gibson (Mason et al. 1991:152) analyzed eight larger *Olivella* cup beads and one *Mytilus* disc bead, placing them in the L1 period (A.D. 1150-1500). (Gibson's temporal frame of reference is the bead chronology developed by Chester



Figure 4. Archaeologist Ruth Reeves holding andesite urn from CA-ORA-340 that contained the remains of an infant.

King [1981, 1990] primarily for Chumash territory but applicable in arguable degrees for the territory occupied historically by coastal Tadic peoples.) There were seven smaller *Olivella* cups and four *Olivella* thin lipped beads which Gibson (Mason et al. 1991:152-153) placed in the L2a period (A.D. 1500-1600). Twelve spire-altered *Olivella* beads, 10 spire removed and two oblique removed, were catalogued. The former type has little temporal significance, but the latter type possibly indicates M1 or M2 times (between 1400 B.C. and A.D. 300) (Mason et al. 1991:147-148; see also King 1981:Table 1).

One hundred thirty-four *Olivella biplicata* wall disc beads were recovered from the nine 1 by 1 m block excavation units used to recover the burials. It is likely that these beads were associated with the burials.

The small size of the wall discs indicates they were manufactured between A.D. 700 and 1500 (Mason et al. 1991:151; King 1990:Table 1). This corresponds with the LP1 period (1350-650 B.P.) and the early part of the LP2 period (650-200 B.P.) in Orange County chronology (Koerper et al. 2002:68). The block excavation also yielded 18 spire-removed *Olivella* beads that were probably also associated with the burials. However, these are not temporal indicators, having been produced during all time periods in the Chumash area (Gibson 1992). There were 18 additional spire altered *Olivella* specimens that Gibson did not analyze. These all belonged to a bead concentration associated with Burial Feature 1.

Four biconically drilled *Haliotis* disc ornaments were associated with Burial Feature 1, and 11 more came from the block excavation area that contained the burials. The edges of the discs were chipped rather than ground, leading Gibson (1992) to conclude that they were unfinished ornaments or blanks, because the edges of *Haliotis* disc ornaments in the Chumash area are ground to produce smooth edges (Mason et al. 1991:151). We are skeptical of the idea that these 15 *Haliotis* discs were "blanks" and suggest that they

may only have represented less than accomplished workmanship, at least by Chumash standards. *Haliotis* discs in the Chumash area date from A.D. 700 to 1150 (King 1990:Table 1; Mason et al. 1991:155) which corresponds to LP1 in the Orange County chronology (Koerper et al. 2002:68).

The *Olivella* wall disc beads had very likely been grave goods associated with Burial Feature 1. Certainly the concentration of 18 spire-altered *Olivella* beads and four of the *Haliotis* disc ornaments, and perhaps an additional 15 abalone discs, had been grave goods. A bone awl was also recovered beneath the sandstone slabs. Fragments from three steatite bowls and a biconically drilled plummet-like charmstone fragment were found in the block excavation area. The most spectacular mortuary find from Burial Feature 1 was a steatite “pelican stone” (Mason et al. 1991:87) (Figure 3) in unequivocal association with the deceased. Its description follows.

The ORA-340 “Pelican” Specimen and Its Dating

Physical Description

The ORA-340 hook/bird effigy (Cat. No. 10846) (Figure 3) was manufactured of micaceous steatite (talc-mica schist), material so soft that it is easily scored simply by drawing one’s thumbnail across the surface (Mohs = 1). When scraped with almost any stone, such steatite reduces to powder. Texture of the stone is somewhat platy. Macroscopic inspection of the greyish–white, almost silvery material allows a quick source determination, that is, Santa Catalina Island.

Bowl sherds of identical quality are commonly encountered in Orange County Late Prehistoric village sites, and occasionally a shaft straightener is found that is made of the same material (e.g., Koerper 1985). Regionally, most straighteners and most hook/bird effigies are crafted out of the darker, denser grades of steatite that were quarried from Santa Catalina Island.

The artifact in Figure 3 weighs 481.4 g. Its height is 123 mm. Maximum width at the larger end is 67 mm, and maximum thickness at the bulbous end measures 43 mm. The specimen was reburied at the direction of the Most Likely Descendent, Jim Velasquez.

Temporal Placement

A 272.3 g bone sample from Burial Feature 1 was submitted to Beta Analytic, Inc., Miami, Florida, for AMS radiometric analysis. The sample (Beta-73500; CAMS 14067) yielded a measured ^{14}C age of 1400 ± 60 B.P. The conventional radiocarbon age is 1520 ± 60 B.P. ($^{13}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$ ratio = -17.6 percent). The calibrated result at 2 sigma is A.D. 420 to 650, which corresponds to the end of the Intermediate Period in Orange County (3350 B.P. to 1350 B.P.) (Koerper et al. 2002).

Discussions

Effigy Time Placements

The Malibu Site Hook/Bird Effigy

Meighan (1976:27) reported on the first conventional radiocarbon date that firmly placed a hook/bird talisman (Figure 5a) in time. The steatite specimen was discovered in clear association with Burial 35 at CALAN-264, the Malibu site. Collagen obtained from the deceased’s ribs yielded an uncorrected date of A.D. 706 ± 60 years. Factoring in calibration and then taking into account two additional radiocarbon assays from the Malibu cemetery, Meighan (1976) proposed an A.D. 850 date for Burial 35 and the associated artifact. Interestingly, Burial 19 at LAN-264 also contained a hook/bird effigy (Cameron 2000:43).

Two Morro Canyon Hook/Bird Effigies

Cameron (1983:65, 1984:21) reported that a tiny birdstone (22 mm long) (Figure 5b) was recovered from CA-ORA-327, a Morro Canyon site in what

is now Crystal Cove State Park. It was said to have been from 13 cm below ground surface (in Level 2), and a shell radiocarbon sample was collected from the same unit level. The radiocarbon assay yielded a corrected date of A.D. 1180 ± 110 , or A.D. 1070-1290 (at one sigma; the uncorrected date is 940 ± 80 B.P.) Cameron (1988:55, 58) later switched the depth of the assay sample to Level 1 (0-10 cm). She also reported that the charcoal sample from Levels 4 and 5 (30-50 cm) of the same unit yielded an uncorrected date of 570 ± 70 B.P. Cameron (1988:58) averaged the two dates (the older held superposition over the younger) and came up with an age of A.D. 1180 (*sic*). Just what such an average is supposed to demonstrate is beyond our comprehension.

A second relatively small ORA-327 birdstone (40 mm long) was located during a Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) excavation when Eloise Barter's DPR crew extended their Unit 2 to recover a metate first encountered at the 20-30 cm level (Cameron 1988:55, 58). The birdstone was revealed somewhere within the 0-30 cm level of the extension. At the 50-60

cm level, and underneath the metate, mussel shell was gathered for radiocarbon dating; the uncorrected result was 2700 ± 70 B.P. Cameron (1988:50) stated that the *Mytilus* sample occurred 30 cm below the birdstone, but her description was not sufficient enough to allow placement of the shell sample at "30 cm" below the small effigy. The specimen is not included in Cameron's list (2000:Table 12.5) of southern California "animal effigies with a dependable provenience."

A San Nicolas Island Artifact

A San Nicolas Island hook/bird-like object (tool or effigy?) (Figure 6) crafted of marine mammal bone was AMS dated to 3480 ± 60 RCYBP (UCR 2456/CAMS No. 12349) (Koerper et al. 1995). The calibrated age at one sigma is 1882 to 1733 B.C. This surprisingly old radiocarbon determination may be the consequence of a San Nicolas Island artisan having collected old bone to carve. (There are "pelican" effigies in the collections of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History that had been manufactured of fossil sea mammal bone [Hudson and Blackburn 1986:180-181,

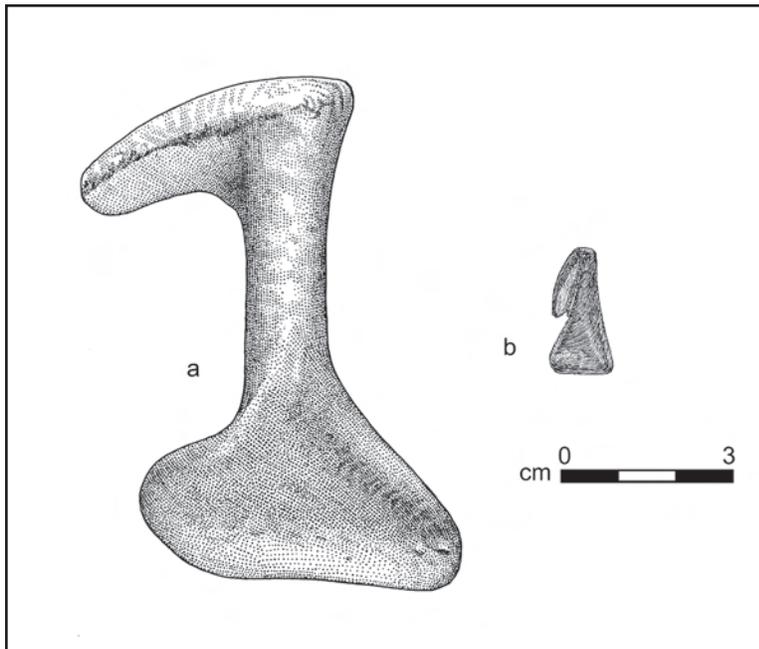


Figure 5. Steatite hook/bird effigies. (a) Specimen associated with Burial 35 at CALAN-264, the Malibu site (after Meighan [1976: Figure 1c]); (b) Specimen from CA-ORA-327, Morro Canyon (after Cameron [1984: Figure 3]).

Figures 318.9-58 and 318.9.59]). Another possibility is that this and similar non-lithic San Nicolas Island specimens (Koerper et al. 1995:Figure 2) were utilitarian objects, perhaps connected to fishing or hunting activities, whose morphologies had provided the inspiration and initial templates for the varied permutations of styles in what became the hook/bird effigy genre—more on this in discussions to follow.

Hook/Bird Effigy: Transmuted Tool?

In a recent article, Koerper (2006) identified, described, and explained in some detail a process of culture change that he referred to as “sexualization-sacralization,” to account for the aetiologies of certain talisman or talisman-like effigies from the portable cosmos of coastal southern California. Here, we revisit one idea from among the tangle of elements and causal linkages said to characterize the process, to wit, the evolutions of these sacred objects were rooted in

imagery developed from artifacts that had functioned directly or indirectly in food procurement activities or directly in food processing activities.

We discussed above a hook-like artifact (Figure 6) that had unexpectedly dated to the late Middle Holocene. The temporal conundrum here revolves around three questions: (1) does its surprisingly old AMS date bespeak a nearly four millennium (or even greater) history for such artifacts as sacred/symbolic objects?; (2) does the date reflect that an artisan had selected old bone as the medium for crafting a magical amulet or religious effigy?; and (3) had the AMS dated artifact actually been a utilitarian object, perhaps one used in food procurement behaviors, whose shape and/or dynamics subsequently served as inspiration for the varied permutations of styles in what became hook/bird/pelican stones? Others have considered utilitarian components in their interpretations. Witness Charles Abbott who wrote:

A number of peculiar implements...have been obtained from graves in the vicinity of Santa Barbara, and the adjacent islands, but until implements of similar forms are noticed in actual use, or are found under such conditions as may suggest their application, it is hardly worth while to do more than call attention to them. That they are implements and not ornaments is apparent from the signs of use which they all more or less exhibit. Among the most interesting of these are several hook-like implements which vary in size and also somewhat in their form, but they all have a hook-like projection at one end, with the opposite end more or less thickened, as if intended for a handle [Abbott 1879:214].

Abbott apparently gave less than adequate consideration to the observation that most of these hook-like artifacts, being of soft stone, were quite vulnerable to breakage in most conceivable labors. Elsasser and

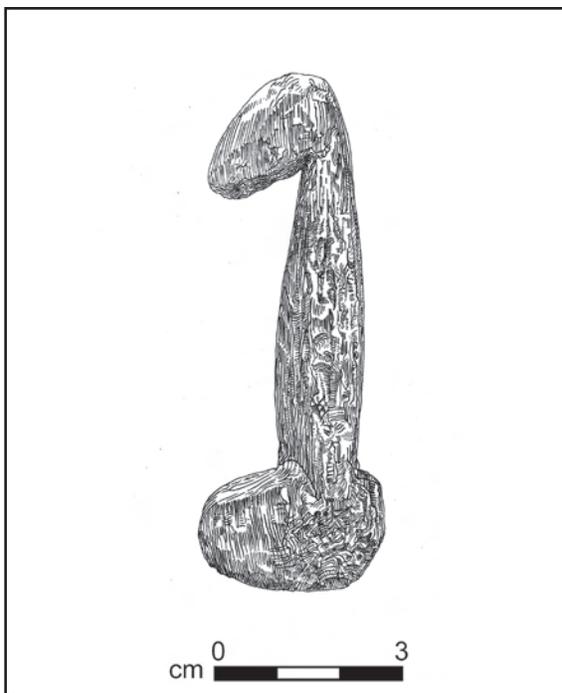


Figure 6. AMS dated bone hook-like tool or effigy from San Nicolas Island.

Heizer (1963:28-29) thought that the hook-like appendage of hook/bird effigies bore some similarity to curved fishing hooks. Their comment appeared in an article about the trove of ceremonial/ritual objects from Bowers Cave, Los Angeles County (see also Bowers 1885; Van Valkenburgh 1952; Koerper et al. 2008:62-63). Among the many sacred objects sequestered in Bowers Cave, there was a 214-mm-long curved oak “hook” (Elsasser and Heizer 1963:Plate 6c) (Figure 7).

This “hook” was described as asymmetrical in long section since one side shows tapered surfaces while the opposite side is nearly flat. The tapered look is achieved by a combination of beveling at the head

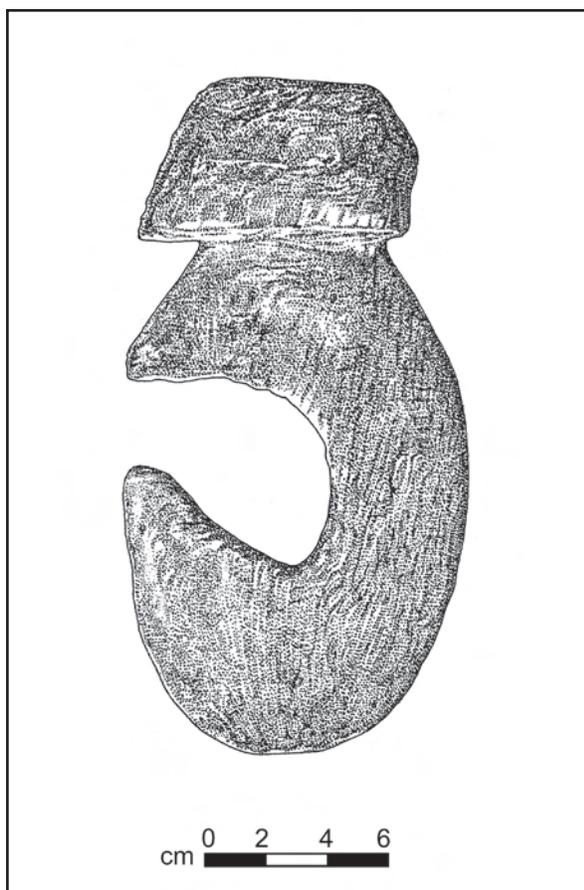


Figure 7. Wood “hook” from Bowers Cave, Los Angeles County (after Elsasser and Heizer [1963:Plate 6c]).

and “grooving and subsequent carving or abrading between the head and the shank of the hood” (Elsasser and Heizer 1963:28). Elsasser and Heizer (1963:28) invited their readers to view the artifact in an “upside down position,” this in order to see a “slight resemblance to the smaller steatite specimens which have been found in burial association in the Santa Barbara region.” We suggest the readers rotate Figure 7 by 180 degrees.

Other utilitarian artifacts possess design elements not unlike those seen on certain hook/bird effigies. For instance, the hook-like device on many of the effigies resembles the penetrating ends of some fish spears and harpoons (e.g., Abbott and Putnam 1879:224; Yates 1900:362.5.7; Loud 1918:Plate 21.3; Gifford 1940:224, 233; Orr 1947:127; Bennyhoff 1950:Figures 1, 2, 3).

More Food for Thought: Symbology

Meighan (1976:26) referred to the stylistically varied hook/bird artifacts as “enigmatic hook-shaped objects” and noted the general belief that they were “abstract representations of birds.” However, the UCLA professor proposed that certain artifacts that he called “spike” effigies (Meighan 1959:Figure 5b, 392, Figures 10a-c; see also 1976:28; Lee 1981:Figure 24b) might have been the forerunners of hook/bird objects as well as other sorts of effigies. The “spikes” of which he speaks appear crudely fashioned, yet it is not unreasonable to speculate that they had been intended to communicate phallic/testicular imagery.

Léon de Cessac believed that the effigy stood for a species of bird, but his native informants could or would not supply a species name (Elsasser and Heizer 1963:28-29; see also de Cessac 1951:2). Pelicans and cormorants have been suggested (Heizer n.d.; Hoover 1974a:34; Lee 1981:48-49, 55; Cameron 1983:65, 1988; Hudson and Blackburn 1986:200-215) and even owls (Wallace 1987:59). We believe that Hoover’s

(1974a:34) additions of heron, loon, grebe, and raven to the species list possibly involved observations of effigies of dubious provenance. He provided neither illustrations nor museum catalog numbers that would allow assessment of these claims.

Yet, Hoover (1974a:34) also expressed skepticism that birds were represented at all. Burnett (1944:42) seems to have rejected that idea. Lee (1993:204, Figure 7) singled out a somewhat distinct style of effigy many scholars have taken to be bird-like (e.g., Hudson and Blackburn 1986:181, Figure 318.9-46), even owl-like (Wallace 1987:59), and she suggested in a figure caption that overall design is anthropomorphic. Lee (1993) made clear that this was not a nod on her part to Koerper and Labbé's (1987, 1989) dimorphic sexual symbol hypothesis; rather, pointing to a longitudinally raised area ("backbone-like form") on one side of the object (Lee 1993:Figure 7) (Figure 8a), she drew a comparison with a human face in profile.

Lee's "anthropomorphic" example is quite similar to four San Nicolas Island "bird effigies" illustrated in Hudson and Blackburn (1986:Figures 318.9-44 and 318.9-46). The "backbone-like" raised area of Lee's "anthropomorph" is similar to that of the example in Hudson and Blackburn's (1986) Figure 318.9-46. We submit that these devices might mimic the *corpus spongiosum penis* on the venter surface of the male organ as seen in its tumid state (see Gravel 1995:69-70). Anatomical correctness in this specimen, then, observes the sudden expansion of the *corpus spongiosum* toward the proximal extremity of the penile body, that is the conical enlargement known as the "bulb of the penis." The opposite side of the "anthropomorphic" specimen (Figure 8a) recorded by Lee (1993) from a private Santa Barbara collection shows a concave area, or carved out depression, flanked by curvilinear elements that we maintain stand for vulvar labia. The nub at the upper end, we believe, represents the *glans clitoridis*. The stylistically similar effigy of Figure 8b is from a large spectacular cache of sacred objects

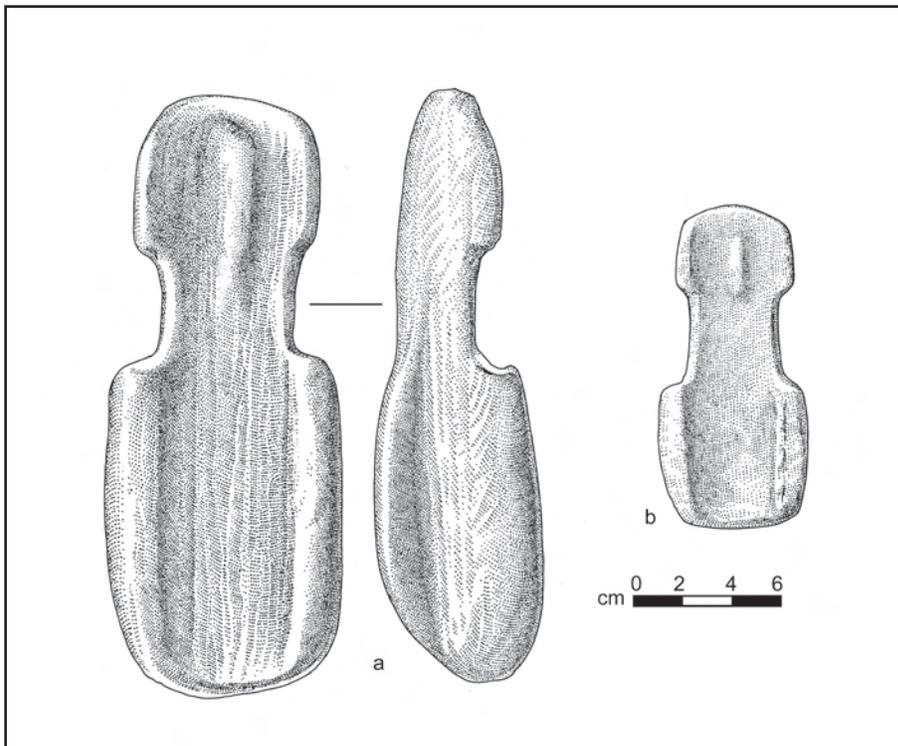


Figure 8. Steatite hook/bird specimens. (a) Private collection, Santa Barbara (after Lee [1981: Figure 26 and Lee 1993: Figure 7]); (b) Pacific Palisades cache (after Wallace [1987: Figure 8-right]).

discovered by workmen constructing house foundations near the mouth of Santa Monica Canyon, Pacific Palisades (Wallace 1987). If one were to imagine the absence of the laterally placed indentations seen in Figures 8a and 8b but continuation of the lower raised sides to conjoin with the raised margins surrounding the top of the piece, the imagery of the voided area (lateral indentations) would seem, perhaps, to effect at the upper end the look of a glans penis when the artifact is viewed at its opposite side. The curvature seen on the male surface of some specimens (see Hudson and Blackburn 1986:318.9-44, 318.9-46) is appropriately directed for communications of virility/fertility.

We maintain that morphological evidence unequivocally supports the idea that the hook/bird genre carries sex-based symbolisms, as do associations of these artifacts in caches containing other kinds of effigies linked to sex-based communications (e.g., Van Valkenburgh 1931; Winterbourne 1967:20-21; Wallace 1987; Desautels et al. 2005; Koerper 2006:97). But what do we make of Native American statements that the artifacts represented “little birds” (de Cessac 1951:2)? Koerper and Labbé (1987:113) considered the question when they observed that “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 object at only one level of abstraction or anticipating an ethnocentric reaction, purposefully evaded the issue of sexual symbolism.” Koerper later elaborated:

It might also be speculated that if prudence had guided the informants’ answer, possibly this circumscription was couched in double entendre. “Pajarito,” after all, was then, and remains still, a slang term for a small child’s penis (Cobos 1983:124). Parenthetically, in French, “oiseau,” or “bird,” is a common vulgar referent for penis. Also, in Latin and Italian, “bird” and “sparrow” are colloquial for

the male organ, and in German “bird” is basic to the F-verb “vögeln” (Schneir 1952:112; Johns 1982:70), literally “to bird.” Several English language examples, most epithetical (e.g., pecker, cock, dick/dickey, and possibly “wazoo” as a corruption of the French “oiseau”), draw the same sorts of associations, including one often conveyed in folk gesture (i.e., the “digitus impudicus”). Also, in European folklore, babies are delivered by storks, and not some short necked, short beaked fowl. Plastic and graphic representations of phallus as bird in Roman Imperial culture commonly served apotropaic and related functions (e.g., Johns 1982:70, 150; Thorn 1990:16,58). The bird-phallus motif continued into the Medieval period, appearing, for instance, on amulet jewelry to ward off infertility (Thorn 1990:22, 62). Conflation of avian wings and feet with penis appears in more recent art, such as that of Eugène le Poitevin, Von Daniel Griener, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (Thorn 1990:26, 61, 85) and Martin van Maele (Hill and Wallace 1992:84). Against such avian imagery embedded in Western tradition, it is curious that local scholars are only now alerted to the possibility that the intent of “pajaritos” may have been to amuse as well as to inform. We suspect that some amount of prudery on the part of ethnographers has obscured much sexual content in Native California narratives and other traditions [Desautels et al. 2005:115].

Perhaps regional Native American peoples either looked upon birds generally or only certain avian species as fecund animals. We are unlikely to ever know unless perchance such insight should emerge from heretofore untapped ethnohistoric records. This study reiterates the caution that the dimorphic sexual symbol and avian referent hypotheses are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Distribution

In researching this study, our attention was drawn to the distribution of hook/bird figurines. The carvings occur in great frequency on the southern Channel Islands (e.g., de Cessac 1951 Hoover 1974b; Hudson and Blackburn 1986; Cameron 2000). At least seven have been recovered in Orange County (see Winterbourne 1967:20-21; Cameron 1983, 1984, 1988, 2000; Desautels et al. 2005; Koerper 2006:97, 114). Far more have been found on the Los Angeles County mainland, the most notable locations being the Palmer-Redondo site (CA-LAN-127) (Van Valkenburgh 1931; Cameron 2000), CA-LAN-222 (Cameron 1988:57), the Malibu site (LAN-264) (Meighan 1976; Cameron 2000), at Pacific Palisades (Wallace 1987), and at CA-LAN-1010, Chilao Flats in the San Bernardino National Forest (Rozaire 1958). The genre turns up in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties Chumash sites (e.g., Abbott 1879; Cameron 2000), but it is uncommon from the northern Channel Islands (see Cameron 2000:48). Outliers include a specimen of San Diego County steatite from the lower San Luis Rey River, San Diego County (Koerper and Labbé 1987, 1989), and two hook/bird effigies are said to have been discovered near Cranston Ranger Station at the foot of Idyllwild grade, San Jacinto Valley, Riverside County (Anonymous 1999).

Summary and Concluding Remarks

The micaceous steatite artifact from ORA-340 is assigned to the hook/bird effigy genre within the regional portable cosmos. A calibrated AMS date of A.D. 420-650 (2 sigma) run on bone from Burial Feature 1 establishes the figurine as the oldest stone hook/bird effigy dated using a radiocarbon assay; in this, regional prehistory has a new minimal date for the early crafting and trading of effigies made of Catalina Island soapstone.

This study has also offered food for thought on issues concerning both the aetiology and the symbology of

the hook/bird genre. Arguments supporting the idea that many regional talismanic or talisman-like objects had their inception in food quest or food preparation technology (e.g., Koerper 2006) inspired our suggestion that the hook/bird effigy might have been a transmuted tool, physically and ideationally reconfigured for purposes of magico-religious practices. Any specific utilitarian antecedent remains elusive; however, some sort of hook/barb function seems a reasonable idea. Our discussions regarding symbolic content of hook/bird figurines advocate the idea that the genre communicated dimorphic sexual meaning for regional Native peoples, but we do not dismiss the possibility that avian imagery had perhaps played into the emical take on such effigies.

We suggest that the Catalina Island Gabrielinos produced the majority of hook/bird effigies. Gabrielino generally and mainland Chumash received the carved figurines in exchanges with the southern Channel Islands. The dearth of hook/bird effigies on the northern Channel Islands is yet to be explained

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