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## A SECOND STONE SCULPTURE FROM THE BROWNE SITE

By ROBERTA S. GREENWOOD

READERS of THE MASTERKEY will remember the great interest which resulted from the announcement in these pages (Greenwood 1962: 4-7) of the carving of a frog which has been considered by some to be possibly the oldest work of three-dimensional stone art so far known in the New World. Compounding the artist's delight and the archaeologist's dilemma, a sec-

ond stone effigy has recently been found at the same site in Ventura County.

The earlier figure was thought to be a frog or toad, although some viewers see it more as a fish. The new discovery appears to be clearly related, perhaps a tadpole or other metamorphic form. It has a broad, thick head with two protuberant eyes set farther forward than those of the frog. It is flatter, and the tail is tapered to a single point rather than bifurcated.

The new sculpture is smaller than the first, 13.2 cm. in length, 7.2 cm. in greatest width just slightly forward of the mid-point, and 4.1 cm. in height. It is generally ovoid in plane view. In profile the upper surface is convex, tapering from the blunt head to the thinned tail; the under surface is slightly concave. The lithic material is a laminated, blackish diorite gneiss with inclusions of feldspar, quartz and probably hornblende. The rock has been artfully handled so that the bands of varying color parallel the longer axis of the piece with one broad stripe passing through each eye. Evidence of prolonged weathering is present over the polish, particularly on the sides. The raw material probably originated in the transverse ranges of the San Gabriel Mountains, the same location which supplied the dark hornblende diorite employed in the effigy found earlier. The second carving was recovered 150 feet south of the frog, an area more central within the site.

The tadpole—if such it is—has been shaped by grinding and polishing. It is visibly shouldered where plane surfaces intersect on the ventral to lateral, and dorsal to lateral, aspects. While it is smoothly polished all over, it is less well finished on the ventral surface, as is also the case with the frog. The surface is broken only by a pecked depression roughly central on the back; this pit measures 2.5 cm. by 1.8 cm. When the figure is held in the hand, with the head pointed forward, one's thumb fits naturally into this dimple. It was perhaps not sufficiently appreciated at the time, but the frog has a similar depression located off-side on the back, closer to the tail, where this larger, bulkier object might have been grasped. Since the frog was pecked into shape, rather than ground, it is not clear whether that pit might only be a natural defect in the base cobble,



A side view of the Browne Site sculpture.

but the depression in the tadpole is certainly deliberate, man-made, and reminiscent of the pits found on so many of the manos from the Browne Site.

When the earlier discovery was announced its age was estimated at 5,000 years. Subsequent research seems to have confirmed the validity of this approximation for the Browne Site and its two most remarkable artifacts. Although the sample of charcoal submitted for radiocarbon dating was too meagre to yield any result, the hydration layers of obsidian samples have been measured. Five artifacts produced measurements within a range of 4.4 to 6.0 microns. In the absence of a firm chronological conversion scale for Southern California, these may be compared to a reading of 5.7 microns for an Early Mainland site in Santa Barbara which has been archaeologically dated at 6,000 years, and to measurements of 3.8, 4.7, and 6.5 microns for samples from Glen Annie Canyon, an Oak Grove site in Santa Barbara. The latter has Carbon-14 dates from shell ranging between 6,380 to 7,270 years. Since the Browne Site is unmixed and undisturbed it seems reasonable to assume that the effigies are of comparable antiquity.

The article describing the earlier find gave rise to a most thought-provoking exchange of papers which speculated on the symbolism of the frog itself, the significance of the style of execution, the psychological overtones of the shape, and the very origins of primitive art (Eisenbud 1964; Greenwood 1965). Interested readers are referred to these discussions. In brief, Dr. Eisenbud has suggested that the frog may be interpreted as a breast symbol with all its implications of security and nourishment, and that the sculpture was a handcharm related to magical and religious practices. Greenwood replied that the historical, technological and cultural contexts should also be evaluated before assigning a symbolic content to either the animal represented or the shape in which it is modeled.

The second effigy is even more likely to have been a handcharm than the first one since its shape, size, weight and polish all greatly enhance its tactile appeal. It bears no scars of abuse, is clearly related in form and substance to the frog, and probably carries the same connotations of ritual value. To the artist it is a superb work of sculpture—to the archaeologist it is the second piece of evidence suggesting a tradition of stone art in our local base culture, the milling stone horizon.

#### REFERENCES

- EISENBUD, JULE  
1964 A Recently Found Carving as a Breast Symbol. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 66: 141-147. Menasha.
- GREENWOOD, ROBERTA S.  
1962 A Stone Carving from the Browne Site. *The Masterkey*, Vol. 36, No. 1: 4-7. Los Angeles.
- 1965 Frogs, Breasts, and Primitive Art. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 67: 1549-1555. Menasha.

#### OBITUARY

In the past few months the Southwest Museum has lost three of its staunchest friends and supporters. On May 31st Mr. A. C. Rubel passed away. A trustee since 1962, Mr. Rubel was always intensely interested in Museum activities and did much to further the work of this institution.

Mrs. Florence Dodson Schoneman, another long-time friend, died on June 2nd. Descended from an early Spanish California family, Mrs. Schoneman was the first hostess of the Casa de Adobe and had been on the Casa Committee since its founding.

Mrs. Turbese Lummis Fiske, daughter of Charles F. Lummis, founder of the Southwest Museum, died on May 11th. Over the years the Museum has received many gifts from Mrs. Fiske and has benefited greatly from her continued interest.