HABITUAL POSTURES of the MEDIO PERIOD CASAS GRANDES PEOPLE: A COMPARISON of VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS and SKELETAL MARKERS

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ABSTRACT

One of the most distinctive forms to come out of the Medio period (AD 1200—AD 1475) Casas Grandes ceramic tradition were human effigy vessels. These vessels exhibit primary and secondary sexual traits, and the males and the females are seated in different postures. The males are usually seated in a squatted position, whereas the females typically sit with their legs straight out. To see if these vessels reflected real-life habitual postures, Medio period skeletal remains from Paquimé were examined. Habitual actions leave markers on the skeleton, and one such marker is squatting facets. These facets occur on the tibia and talus, and as the name suggests, are indicative of habitual squatting. Given the postures of the male vessels, it was expected that the male skeletal remains would have a higher frequency of squatting facets. This is not the case. Instead, the female remains have a significantly higher frequency of squatting facets. This is likely due to the posture assumed when grinding corn, a traditionally female activity. I suggest that the positions assumed by the vessels are the typical postures for social or ritual activities (not day-to-day activities), and that the ceramic effigy vessels represent specific individuals or specific subsets of the population.