

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

GENDER, CONTEXT, AND FIGURINE USE: CERAMIC IMAGES FROM
THE FORMATIVE PERIOD SAN ANDRÉS SITE, TABASCO, MEXICO

By

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ABSTRACT

Ceramic anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines occur abundantly throughout Mesoamerica during the Middle Formative period. At the site of San Andrés in Tabasco, Mexico, archaeological excavations have recovered such figurines. The context in which they were found indicates that they were used in household areas, some of which may have been related to ritual or feasting activities. A comparison of Formative period figurines from other areas in Mesoamerica demonstrates their occurrence in household areas, and as being mostly of the female gender, particularly during the Middle Formative period. The strong similarities between figurines from San Andrés and the nearby Middle Formative center of La Venta provide evidence of close interaction between the two sites and suggest that ritual behavior at San Andrés was influenced by La Venta Olmec ideology. The combination of the physical characteristics of the figurines, the contextual information, and well as ethnohistorical and ethnographic sources suggest that the San Andrés figurines may have been used for life events involving pregnancy, birth, injury or illness, or for depicting mythical or historical events. This study proposes that the ceramic figurines from San Andrés may have functioned to embody animate forces or beings of the supernatural realm that were called upon to ensure productive and reproductive success for the inhabitants of this area during the Middle Formative period.