



Figure of a standing woman

On display

Title/Description: Figure of a standing woman

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Earthenware

Measurements: h. 413 x w. 232 x d. 130 mm

Accession Number: 777

Historic Period: 500 BC-AD 500

Production Place: Ecuador, South America, The Americas

School/Style: Jama-Coaque style

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1980

This piece is a large and beautiful example of the 'Chone' figurines manufactured in the Jama-Coaque region of coastal Ecuador. It is moulded made from burnished, buff-coloured clay, hollow and with a single vent between the legs. The figure represents a woman wearing a simple wrap-around skirt, a multi-strand collar, wide wrist bands, and standard Ecuadorian jewellery: a nose ring, lip plug, and a series of rings through the edge of the ear cartilage. These ornaments are painted yellow, and there are bands of the same fugitive, post-fired paint at the top and bottom of the skirt and the arms above the wrist bands. In contrast to the Bahia figure (UEA 789), the bands of colour continue around the back. The treatment of the head is almost exactly like that reported by Garcilaso de la Vega, a thousand years later, for the region between Jama and Manta. In this area of the coast '[they] deformed their children's heads from birth by placing boards on the forehead and nape and tightening them daily until the children were four or five years old... [their hair] was never combed or smoothed, but left rough and unruly to add to the monstrous appearance of their face' (de la Vega, 1966: 560). The present figure may have its hair curled in this manner, but is more probably wearing a feathered turban.

The Jama-Coaque region is archaeologically almost unknown, but it is clear that the north and central coasts of Ecuador participated in a single figurine tradition with many local variants. The posture of this figure resembles that of a common type from La Tolita, to the north, where one example has a radiocarbon date of AD 367 +/- 200 years (Stirling and Stirling, 1963: 5). Jama-Coaque also had its contacts with the south, and Chone figures were exported to the Bahia region. Saville (1910: pl. CII) illustrates a typical example from near Caraquez.

Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from John Stokes, New York, on the advice of Robert Sainsbury in 1980 out of income from the Sainsbury Purchasing Fund.
