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# Heads or Tails? Modified Ceramic Gaming Pieces from Colonial California

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**Abstract:** Modified ceramic disks have been recovered from historic-era sites across the Americas. Small unperforated disks are commonly interpreted as gaming pieces and larger perforated disks are often classified as spindle whorls. Here, we examine these interpretations in light of collections from three colonial-era sites in central California: Mission San Antonio de Padua, Mission San José, and the Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe. We argue that the small unperforated disks from our study sites were two-sided dice. These gaming pieces facilitated the social cohesion of Native people living in the large, multiethnic Indigenous communities that formed around Spanish colonial missions and later Mexican-era ranchos.

**Keywords:** Gaming Pieces, Ceramics, Dice Games, Colonialism, California

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