

# THE EARED VARIANTS OF THE INVERTED BUCKET HEAD AND THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH BEAR-LIKE ELEMENTS

One of the things that becomes obvious after studying the inverted bucket head type, and the figures with which they are associated, is that several forms occur as recurrent themes. Because of the extensive repetition, some of these themes have become diagnostic motifs. There are actually several independent motifs, which when combined with each other, create a more complete prime form of the compound motif called

the inverted bucket head (Figures 1-2). These include the inverted bucket outline. Sometimes this is surmounted by a restricted crown. In the Vernal area, a square or circle often occurs in the center of the restricted crown. This is often described as a forehead spot. It is more likely that this mark above the forehead is on whatever the inverted bucket, or restricted crown, represents (Figure 1A and E).

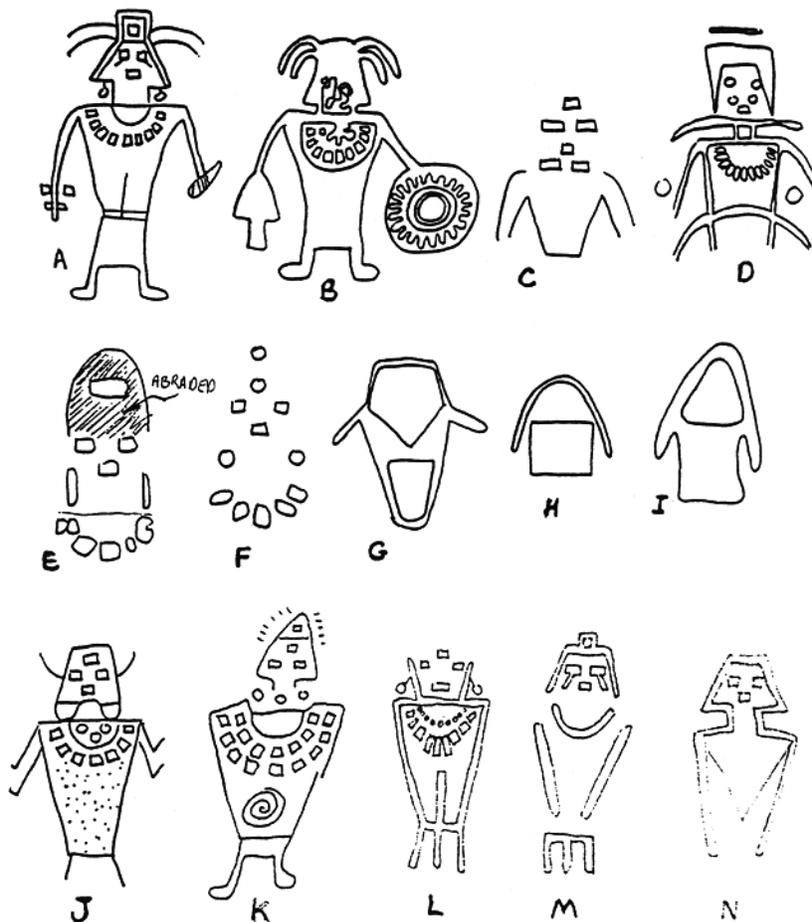


Figure 1.

Other less prevalent motifs include a dividing line, either drawn across the inverted bucket or between the restricted crown and the inverted bucket head itself. This divides the head into two sections. Another motif consists of bilateral arcing, feather-like attachments (Figure 2A). There are also a variety of other elements that repeat often enough, with the prime inverted

bucket motifs, to be considered important parts of this symbolic package. One of these is the paddle form variant (Figure 2B). Another is an unnamed variant with two ear-like lobes at the top, and two lobes extending at the bottom (Figure 2C).

Some stylistic traits not commonly associated with the inverted bucket head, often

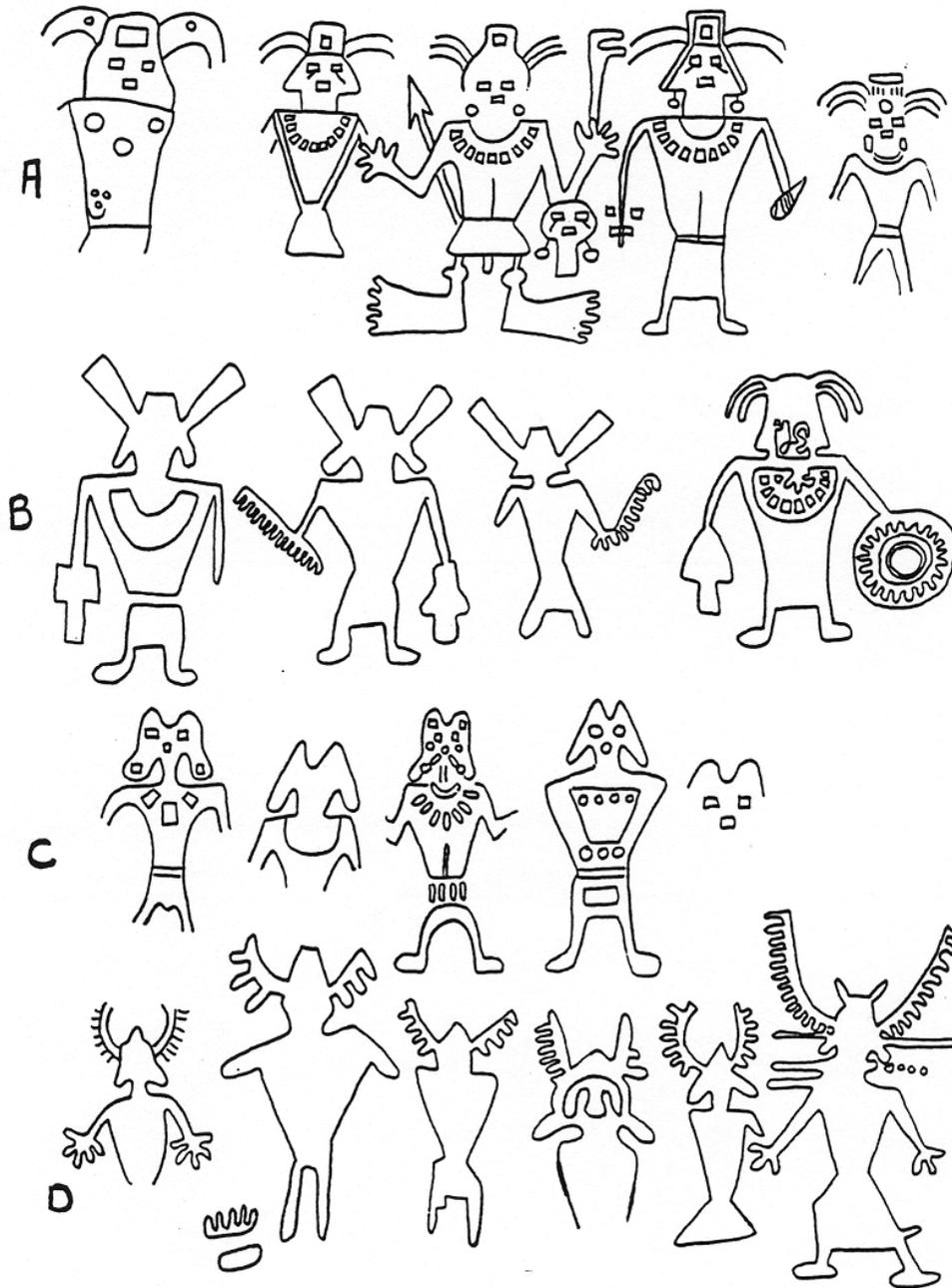


Figure 2.

occur with the inverted bucket head figures. One example is the wing or rake-like attachments on some inverted bucket head figures (Figure 2D) (Warner 1983; 10, Figure 7). Conversely, there is also an interesting phenomenon consisting of diagnostic inverted bucket head traits occurring with other head forms, such as the minimal occurrence of the forehead spots on bucket, square and circle head forms (Figure 3). Some up-raised, eared head forms (Figure 4A) have this square above the head and between the ears. This is evidently a variation of the forehead spot.

This seems to indicate the independent nature of

these component traits. It also reveals patterning in the selection, incorporation and interchangeability of many of the above associated motifs. The areal consistency in the preference for certain combinations of motifs, seems to imply that the Classic Vernal Style was composed of several distinct groups. Some of these (particularly the inverted bucket head group) were head-hunters, who preferred, what seem to be,

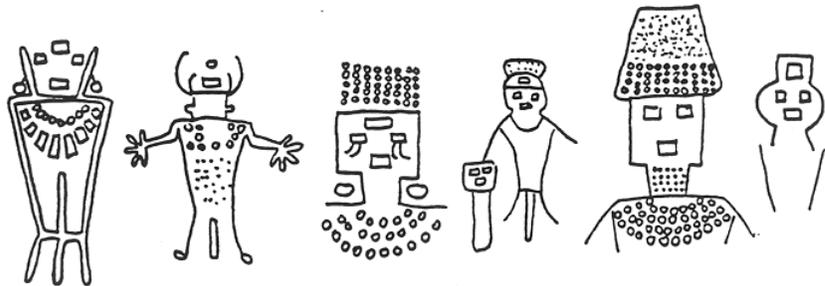


Figure 3.

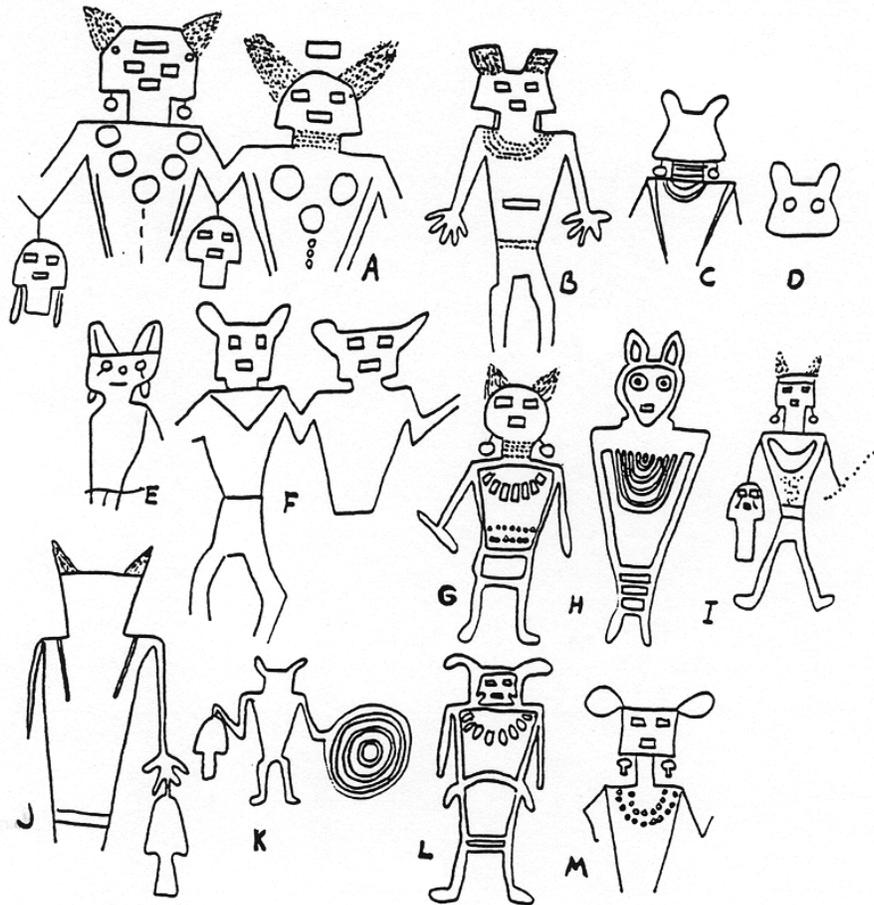


Figure 4.

specific forms for personal and group identification. These forms include: one, the recurrent association of inverted bucket head figures with square, circular headed and eared figures; two, the presence and combination of inverted bucket traits on other head forms; and three, the presence of other repeated traits from area to area. This repetition of associations seems to verify that these smaller groups were integrally related parts of the larger Classic Vernal Style.

### Associations With Bears

It is very interesting that all of these different combinations of head forms occur with bear-like representations or have variations

of head shapes with bear-like traits. The inverted bucket head type, out of all the Classic Vernal Style figures, seem to have played with and stressed more the bear-like symbolism with head gear than any other group. Since many eared figures seem to be inspired by an animal form and occur in the vicinity of many bear representations, there may be a significant association between the two representations.

A unique type of association consists of a row of figures superimposed on top of bear figures (Figure 5A, B). In Figure 5A some lines forming a bear were used to form integral parts of the anthropomorphs themselves. This duplication suggests an intended symbolic association. When

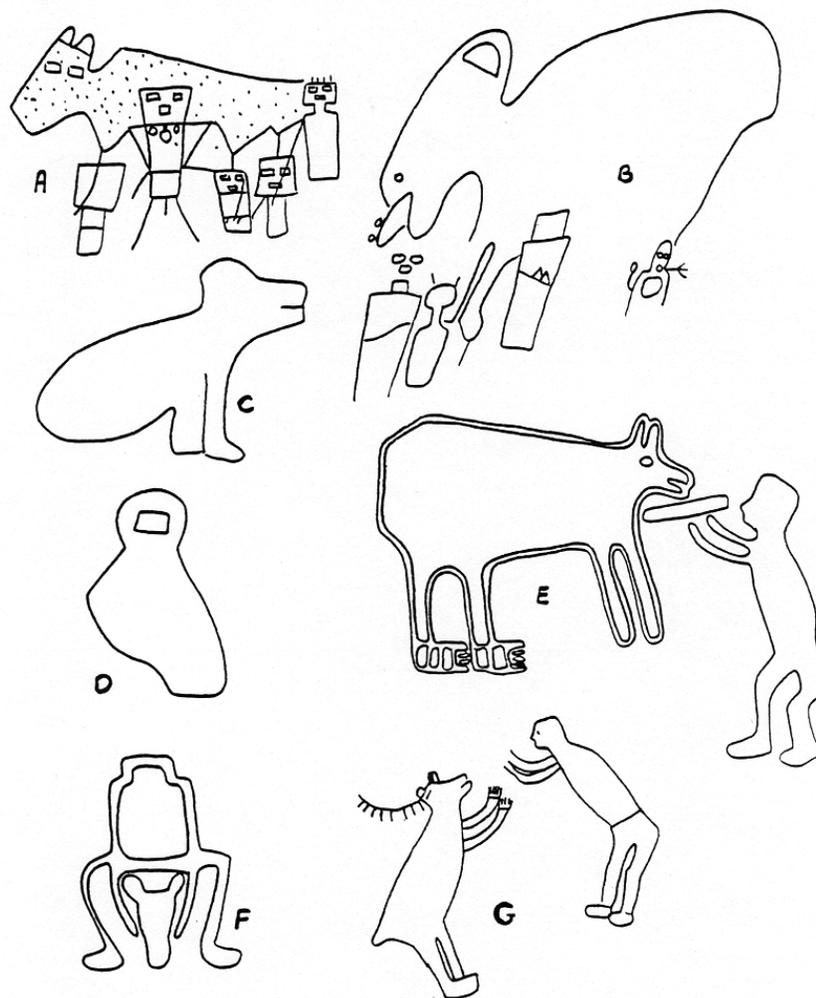


Figure 5.

considered with the other associations and combinations of men and bear-like symbols in the Vernal area, this association, relationship or identity is even more compelling (Figures 4, 5, and 9).

These Fremont artists were well aware of the principle of combining various elements to form extended concepts. Many human or animal forms were combined with other elements to express additional or extended concepts that add to the semantics of the original idea. By these innovative compositional techniques, unique situations are usually indicated. For instance, Figure 5F reinforces association in a different context. Here a figure sometimes called "The Rodeo Rider" crouches over or partially embraces a bear-like head. This relationship is more abstract than that expressed in Figure 6A. In that situation several stylized paw prints are incorporated into a headdress echoing the form of the claws of the paw prints next to that figure (Figure 6A and B). The association between bear tracks and heads is

reinforced by Figures 6C and A, which have bear-like prints over their heads. Huscher and Huscher (1940:25-57) show several similar prints that they identify as bear tracks. The eared variant of the inverted bucket head is probably closely related to the association between bear-like symbols, such as ears, muzzles, etc., and head forms. Figure 6B shows a unique association. This figure, with bear tracks for feet, has the symbolic implications that when walking he would be making bear tracks. The analogy of who makes bear tracks is: bears do, or people do—using bear symbols as identification. These are interesting associations, suggesting that they may have belonged to a group or clan associated with, and identified by, bear-like symbols—much like the Hopi Bear Clan.

While it is true that these last few examples are not actual inverted bucket head figures, they need to be considered to show that there are a wide variety of ways that this man-bear association is accomplished. The

association of bear-like symbols with the head gear of the inverted bucket head figure, seems to be a much more rigid and formalized method of identification, since that type of association occurs more often than other examples. These non-inverted bucket head examples may be an earlier, less formal expression of what may have later existed as the inverted bucket head group. This may also be a regional expression. These concepts, however, cannot yet be fully determined at this time by an examination

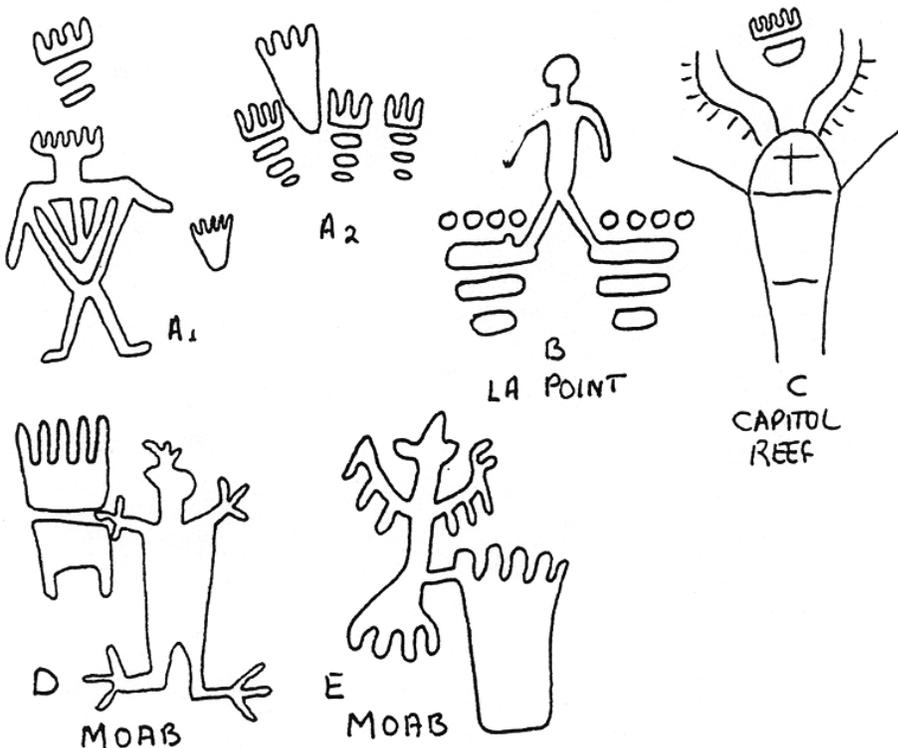


Figure 6.

of rock art.

On the basis of these associations and other considerations, there appears to have been at least one major segment of the Classic Vernal society that expressed its relationship to or identification with bears by bear-like symbols. Only part of this group was the inverted bucket head headhunters. It must be noted, however, that other styles, not previously discussed, also used bear-like symbols. Since these expressions are not always the same as those just considered, it seems to demonstrate additional differences between styles.

The fact that many of the associations of bear-like symbols with Fremont anthropomorphs obviously are not limited to inverted bucket head figures led to an examination of all known representations of bears and bear-like elements. Interestingly, this examination showed that such representations particularly from Capitol Reef, Se-go and Moab (Figure 6C-F), come from panels with heavy Classic Vernal Style indicators. Most of these associations, however, continue to come from the core of the Classic Vernal Style area, or pockets of heavy concentration of that style.

The separation or distinction of the inverted bucket head, and what it represents within the Classic Vernal Style will be the subject of another study. At this time, the symbolism of one seems to be synonymous with the other, when associated with other inverted bucket head indicators.

The inverted bucket type has shown a variety of direct stylistic derivations from the form of the bear to the human. Notice that the ears of the bears in Figure 5-B and D (which are in direct association with inverted bucket head figures) contain spots representing a half-circle and rectangle. Whenever a part of a figure is stressed, it provides a clue to its symbolism or signifi-

cance. With an intentional divergence from the more natural ear's form, and the inclusion of the spots on Figures 5B and D from those in Figure 5A, E, F and G, some form of symbolism is suggested.

### One Possible Source

To find the source for the stylized ear shape and its associated ear spot, comparison can be made with other similar forms. Figures 5B and C do not have a natural ear shape like Figures 5A, D and E. Since Figures 5B and C are stylized and closer in shape to the restricted crown of the inverted bucket head, there is some significance in this association. Also, when the stylized mark in the ear of Figure 5D, takes the shape of the spot on the forehead of the inverted bucket head, as opposed to a more naturally shaped spot in a bear's ear (Figure 4H), additional support for an intended association is given. Even though the ear shape of Figure 5D is more realistic, it still includes a rectangular spot that is stressed to various degrees as the forehead spot on inverted bucket heads and other related figures.

Consider Figure 7A as a possible bear's head, with facial features typical of an

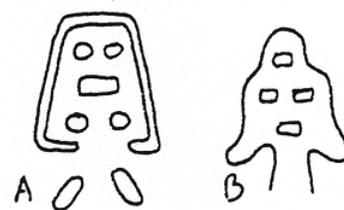


Figure 7.

inverted bucket head variant. This suggests that the hairless spot in the bear's ear (Figure 5B and D) is a source of the concept of the inverted bucket head forehead spot. This feature could be a conceptual idea or something more physical like a conventionalized mnemonic device placed on a tapered fur-covered cap to identify certain individuals as having an association with the bear.

Considering these associations with bears, it seems plausible that if a spot on the forehead is a variation or continuation of the ear spot, it may show identity by a special group with the bear. Whether it does or does not have such a meaning, a repeated phenomenon of some kind is occurring on foreheads over a wide geographical area that is roughly synonymous with the Classic Vernal Style.

When a convention has a wide distribution with a significant percentage of repetitions, it is likely that it was of major importance for those who made it. It is also assumed that a motif, with a large number of variations, was probably in existence longer than one that had very few variations or none at all. This does not imply that it was older. In the case of the inverted bucket head symbolism, it seems that various component parts of this symbolic package spread over a wide area fairly quickly. Consideration of all the similarities and differences can give some idea of their concepts.

### Another Possible Source

Other different, more naturalistic, bear-like representations could be alternatives to indicate bear symbolism other than a single spot on the forehead. Several inverted bucket head figures and other head forms have two bear-like ears (Figure 4). Often the interior of the ear is filled with continuous sets of dotted lines or completely pecked at random. This gives them a hair-like quality similar to the body of the bear in Figure 5-A.

Other forms have ear-like lobes hanging down on each side of the neck (Figure 7B). Some similar head forms combine the upraised and lower lobes (Figure 2C). It should be considered that when several of the Inverted bucket heads with lower lobes are reversed, they assume the shape of the upraised lobes (Figure 8). This may be the significance of the lower lobed form with

upraised ears. It has been noticed that there is the probability that this style used the principal of head and or facial feature reversal in their art (Warner 1984). However, this form may actually represent an eared cap over a bobbed hairdo. The two ideas may also be combined in each form.

If the restricted crown and forehead spot does carry the concept of ears, like Figure 5B and D, then many of the eared types in Figure 4 may be a less stylized, more naturalistic variant. Notice that Figure 4B, C and D have the basic inverted bucket head form without forehead spot, while it is absent in both characters in Figure 4A. Instead of representing a single ear, these forms have two ears. The width of the jaw, undoubtedly derived from the inverted bucket head, could also be the width of the inverted bear's head. Observe the width of the bear's head in Figure 5F. If reversed, this could be an alternative choice to represent the concept behind the restricted crown—with or without a forehead spot.

Lines across the lower lobes of Figure 1J may be forms similar to the lines across the bear's ears in Figure 5A. They may also represent side bobbed hair. This, however, seems less likely. Both occur close together. It is awkward to conceive the lower lobes as representing ears, unless they are a

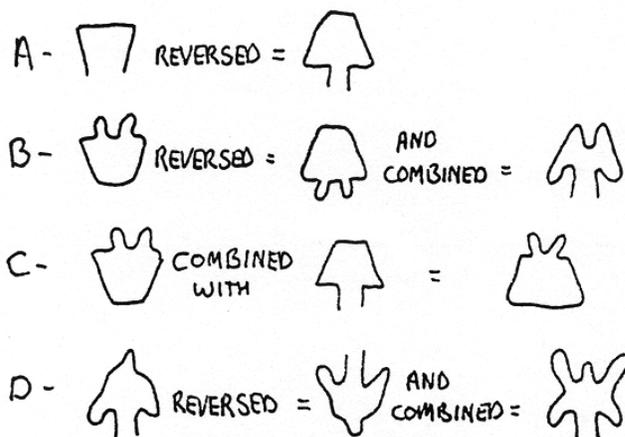


Figure 8.

part of a more naturalistic figure that has a bear's headdress (Figure 9). Loosely fitted with the nose in the air, the mouth would be above the forehead and possibly represent the forehead spot on the inverted bucket shape head. As seen from the front, the ears hanging down and outward at the side of the neck would then form the silhouette shape of the heads in Figures 1H, I, J and 7A and B.

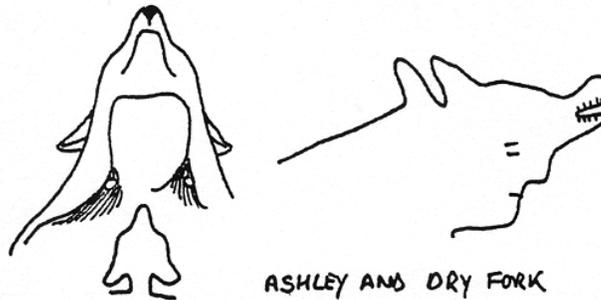


Figure 9.

another. Thus, concepts and symbols were added to and changed as time passed.

Like the examples of bear ears, variations of one symbol may also represent a similar concept. Whichever way it might have been, it is interesting that just one form of the inverted bucket head stresses

several different bear-like traits. These different traits could be derived from different parts of the bear, the restricted crown being a stylized bear's ear with forehead spot and/or a bear's muzzle with ears at the side of the neck (Figure 7 and 9). These concepts could have been represented more naturalistically with two upraised ears (Figure 4). The origin of the regular bucket form seems to have been an older concept. This could have been a culturally accepted stylized convention that was later adapted as a reversed element, similar to Figures 1K-N, and 8.

### Other Possibilities

With this consideration, it is possible that the spot on the forehead may not always represent the ear. It may be more likely that the symbol could have been the muzzle; at least in the cases where the ears are at the side of the neck. It is also very possible that both of these ideas, derived from the anatomy of the bear, may have been used as the source for the forehead spot. It is natural to assume that many variations occurred in the process of establishing a motif. During this process, variations and discrepancies would occur with an established motif—depending on the amount of cultural support for its convention.

There is no evidence to support cranial deformation as the concept behind the inverted bucket head (Wormington 1955:40). An alternative source for the inverted bucket may have simply been a type of hair style (Figure 10). Two figures at McKee Springs have the outside shape of the inverted bucket, but retain the inner form of a square head style. This may be due to the style of hair. At present, this

Because of the regional diversification and personal preference, there would be no universal way of representing or deriving one meaning from any one symbol. I believe that with the injection of individualism, including: symbol prejudice and preference, areal divergences, later innovations and style change, one symbol often represented very different concepts or various degrees of the same concept. Symbols also changed through time. Some became more stylized and diverged to incorporate other concepts. Some often stressed one trait while others stressed



Figure 10.

conclusion lacks sufficient evidence for serious consideration.

A final possible alternative for the inverted bucket form may be that instead of a symbolic representation, it actually represents a type of hat or helmet. In the Vernal area there are several panels that contain figures illustrated with possible caps or helmets. On individuals where a real helmet obviously seems to be indicated, the forehead spot is absent—unless Figure 10A represents this idea. On some of these, however, the restricted crown is present. The idea of the restricted crown as a hat is very reasonable. The possible explanation of reversed bucket form, hair style or helmet does not account for the symbolism or significance of the forehead spot. This stresses the conclusion that the restricted crown-with-spot are two separate elements joined to create a compound motif.

By using the comparisons of similarities and differences, I have posed questions that otherwise would have been overlooked. I have also suggested possibilities that otherwise may not have been considered. As a result, I have enjoyed exploring the possible significance of these glyphs, which has greatly increased their value. By showing interrelationships that exist between various elements, types of head shape, head gear, and their associations with bear-like elements, I hope to have stimulated some thinking along the lines of a possible relationship between these elements. Rather than interpreting the glyphs, relationship and significance can be shown to be important without considering semantic content (Marshack 1979:312). When interpretations are present, it is important to understand that all possibilities and alternatives should be considered.

Marshack (1979:315) also suggests there is a danger in, "naming and recognizing an image in our terms". It is obvious that we

will never know exactly what happened. We have an ambiguous record that was left relating to these most interesting incidents in the way the artists felt most appropriate. It is the expression of the artist's feelings of what was appropriate that we have to work with. From this, with enough evidence, we may be able to recreate possibilities of what existed that has not been able to be recovered from more conventional archaeological techniques.

## REFERENCES CITED

### **Huscher, Betty H., and Harold A. Huscher**

1940 Conventionalized Bear Track Petroglyphs of the Uncompahgre Plateau. *Southwestern Lore* 18:14-18.

### Marshack, Alexander

1979 Upper Paleolithic Symbol Systems of the Russian Plain: Cognitive and Comparative Analysis. *Current Anthropology* 20(2):271-311.

### Warner, Jesse E.

1983 Concrete Concept Associations. *Utah Rock Art*, second printing, 2:3-13.

1984 An Analysis of Head Form and Head Gear of the Inverted Bucket Head Hunters. *Utah Rock Art*, second printing, 3:77-90.

### Wormington, H. M.

1955 *A Reappraisal of the Fremont Culture*. Proceedings of the Denver Museum of Natural History, No. 1. Denver.