

**DISTRIBUTION AND CULTURAL AFFILIATION OF  
LARGE, TWO-STRANDED, PENDANT NECKLACES  
IN THE ROCK ART OF THE COLORADO PLATEAU:**

**A Preliminary Report**

**BY**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The existence of representations of large, two-stranded pendants in prehistoric rock art, both as necklaces and as apparent abstract elements, was first discussed by Manning (1983:61-65). It was stated that large, two-stranded pendant symbols were found on the chest of both Fremont and Basketmaker anthropomorphs. The objective of this report is to present additional evidence for cultural affiliation of these elements and to provide additional examples of their distribution.

**BASKETMAKER AFFILIATION**

The Basketmaker affiliation of the large, two-stranded, pendant symbol is most readily demonstrated by the presence of the symbol in panels of petroglyphs along the drainages of the San Juan River in southeastern Utah. Examples from two site locations are discussed below. The first is at Sand Island and the second is in Butler Wash. At both locations pendants are shown below pecked images that appear to be representations of painted faces.

The classic example that demonstrates that people of the Basketmaker Culture painted their faces, and which associates the petroglyphs with the Basketmaker Culture, is the "scalp" or entire head skin that was excavated from a basketmaker site in northern Arizona (Kidder and Guernsey 1919) (see Figure 1). This artifact was excavated from a cave in Marsh Pass. It was found in a burial cist underneath the left shoulder of a young woman about 18 years of age. The body had been wrapped in a fir-string robe. At the side of the woman's body, and partly under her right arm, were the remains of a cradle board. On and around the cradle were the bones of a baby (Kidder and Guernsey 1919:80-81). The skin and hair of the human head was found beneath the woman under the left shoulder. The "head" lay face upward. There were faint traces of a woven fabric between it and the woman. Fastened to it were the remnants of two strings, the ends of which extended toward the woman's neck. Because of the importance of this artifact as it relates to the cultural affiliation of the rock art discussed here, and the difficulty in obtaining this out of print reference, it is appropriate to quote the entire descriptive text.



Figure 1 Marsh Pass Head/face Skin From Bureau of American Ethnon Ethnology Bulletin 65

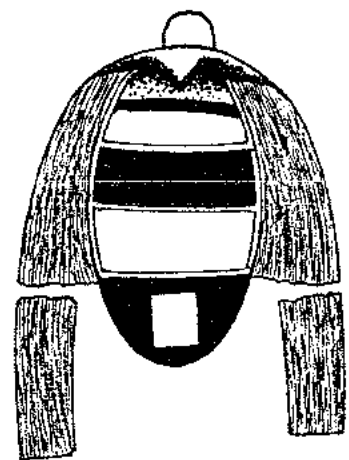


Figure 3 Green Mask from Grand Gulch

Figure 2  
Sand Island Petroglyphs

"It is the entire head skin of an adult, with the hair carefully dressed. In its preparation the scalp proper, including the ears, was removed from the skull in one piece; the face to the mouth in another; and the chin with the lower cheeks a third. After drying or curing, the three sections were sewed together again, one seam running across the forehead and one down each side in front of the ears; the horizontal seam which joins the upper and lower face piece crosses at the region of the mouth, but the skin along this sewing has been so trimmed, probably in order to assure a straight seam; that no sign of the lips remains. The eyes and nose, though shriveled, are plainly recognizable; the eyebrow and eyelash hairs are still in position. Although thorough examination under the brittle 'side-bobs' of hair is impossible, one can make out the shrunken ears; through the lobe of each there runs a bit of yucca string, the attachment cords presumably for pendants which now have disappeared. The hair is arranged as follows: a 'part' 1 inch wide, from which the hair has been clipped, runs up to a large semilunar tonsure at the crown. The brow tresses on either side are gathered together in 'bobs' that fall in front of or over the ears and are tied up with wrappings of apocynum(?) string. The long hair from just behind the tonsure is braided into a thin plat, whose lower end is doubled back on itself and bound with hair string. The remainder of the back hair is made into short fat 'bob,' string-wrapped, that falls to the nape of the neck. The face has been colored rather elaborately: the 'part' and tonsure are painted with a pasty, greenish-white pigment: up the center of the 'part' and across the tonsure runs a narrow streak of yellow. Just under the forehead seam there is a thin, horizontal band of red. From this to a line drawn across the face half an inch below the eyes is a zone of white. A band left in the natural color of the skin extends from here to just below the nostrils, whence to the bottom the white paint is continuous, except for a broad median band of red running downward from the mouth seam.

Rove through two small holes in the tonsure is a narrow thong for suspension. In this part of the scalp there is a small rent carefully sewed up, probably a wound or cut made in skinning.

This interesting specimen seems to have been

prepared and used as a trophy. The dressing of the hair was probably done after the skin had been cured; its arrangement is peculiar and, so far as we know, is not similar to any known style used in recent times in the plateau. Partial head shaving and the long, braided scalp lock are suggestive of Plains coiffures. The head was presumably that of an enemy, though there is no way of telling it was an enemy of the same or of a different stock. It may be mentioned, however, that in what are apparently Basket Maker pictographs in the 'Monument' (fig.100) and in Grand Gulch, some of the figures are represented as wearing 'side-bobs' very much like those of the present specimen. As to the clipping or tonsuring of the hair nothing definite can be said. It may have been done post-mortem in the preparation of the trophy. The forehead of the 'mummy' with which it was found, however, shows distinct signs of clipping, the hair having been removed forward of a line drawn over the crown of the head from ear to ear. Montgomery also states (1894:230) that a 'mummy' from the Grand Gulch district (which, from the description of its grave and the nature of the objects found with it, we take to be Basket Maker) had 'the hair closely cut from the front half of the head, thus leaving the back hair only.' If hair cutting was a common practice, it may account for the extraordinary abundant use of human hair in the various arts of the Basket Makers [Kidder and Guernsey 1919:190-192]."

The petroglyphs at Sand Island, shown in Figure 2, appear to be representations of detached heads. No body is shown, only a head is depicted. The broad blocked out areas on the face appear to be representations of painted areas. The hair depicted in the petroglyphs appear to be nearly the same form as on the detached head i.e., the long hair hangs down on both sides of the head. Finally, small loops above the center of the hair or scalp are depicted in the petroglyphs. Since all these characteristics parallel the human head skin excavated by Kidder and Guernsey, they provide evidence that these rock art figures date from the Basketmaker time period.

In addition to petroglyphs, painted representations of what appear to be detached human heads also occur in rock art. One of the best examples of a painted head, which correlates with the Marsh Pass Basketmaker "head" is found in Grand Gulch (see Figure 3). This pictograph is found at Green Mask Spring. It is analogous in appearance to the "head" excavated by Kidder and Guernsey. Across the face there are two broad green bands. One is in the area of the eyes, and the other is across the chin. Like the Marsh Pass "head" there is an unpainted area between the two broad green lines. In the center of the chin, there is an unpainted area which corresponds to the red painted area in the Basketmaker "head". Across the top of the face there is a narrow line of

green paint - apparently corresponding to the narrow red line in the Basketmaker "head". At the sides of the face in the paint representing the hair there appears to be a band of missing pigment. There may have been some paint in this location that represented the ties on the hair of the Marsh Pass "head". There is a loop on top of the head.

Grand Gulch also contains several other examples of isolated painted faces. The most prominent of these, located to date, is at Lion Tracks Spring. Here a line of nine heads with white painted faces and gray/green long hair are situated under a cliff projection.

These examples indicate that both painted and pecked heads exist in rock art that correlate with the Basketmaker scalp from Marsh Pass. This correlation thus provides evidence that these rock art figures are associated with the Basketmaker Culture of southeastern Utah.

#### ASSOCIATION OF BASKETMAKER "HEAD" WITH LARGE, TWO-STRANDED PENDANTS

The isolated head petroglyphs at Sand Island exhibit slightly different facial painting characteristics than the Marsh Pass head skin. Not all isolated heads have broad painted lines across them, and not all anthropomorphic figures lack broad painted lines. There are several examples where anthropomorphs have broad painted lines across the faces. Apparently then there are some variations in the painting characteristics. These anthropomorphic figures appear also to be of Basketmaker affiliation.

A petroglyph panel in Butler Wash accords an excellent example of Basketmaker face painting associated with the large, two-stranded pendant. The pendant occurs in the center chest area of an anthropomorph (see Figure 4). In addition to providing definitive archaeological evidence for an association of Basketmaker painted faces and the pendant, this figure also provides evidence for cultural affiliation for the illustrated anthropomorphic form.

Throughout the San Juan River drainage many other examples of the two-stranded pendant occur (Figure 5). These examples appear to occur consistently with Basketmaker style anthropomorphs.

#### FREMONT AFFILIATION

Throughout the Uintah Basin of northeastern Utah large, two-stranded pendant necklaces occur abundantly. In this region they are found in petroglyphs (Figure 6). Here the large, two-stranded pendants are associated with anthropomorphic forms of what has been defined as an entirely different style than along the San Juan River. They occur in petroglyphs of the Classic Vernal Style, which is attributed to the Fremont Culture (Schaafsma 1971). If a correlation is made between anthropomorphic types of the Classic Vernal Style and the anthropomorphs of the Basketmaker Culture along the San Juan River Drainage it will be seen that there are many similarities. A discussion

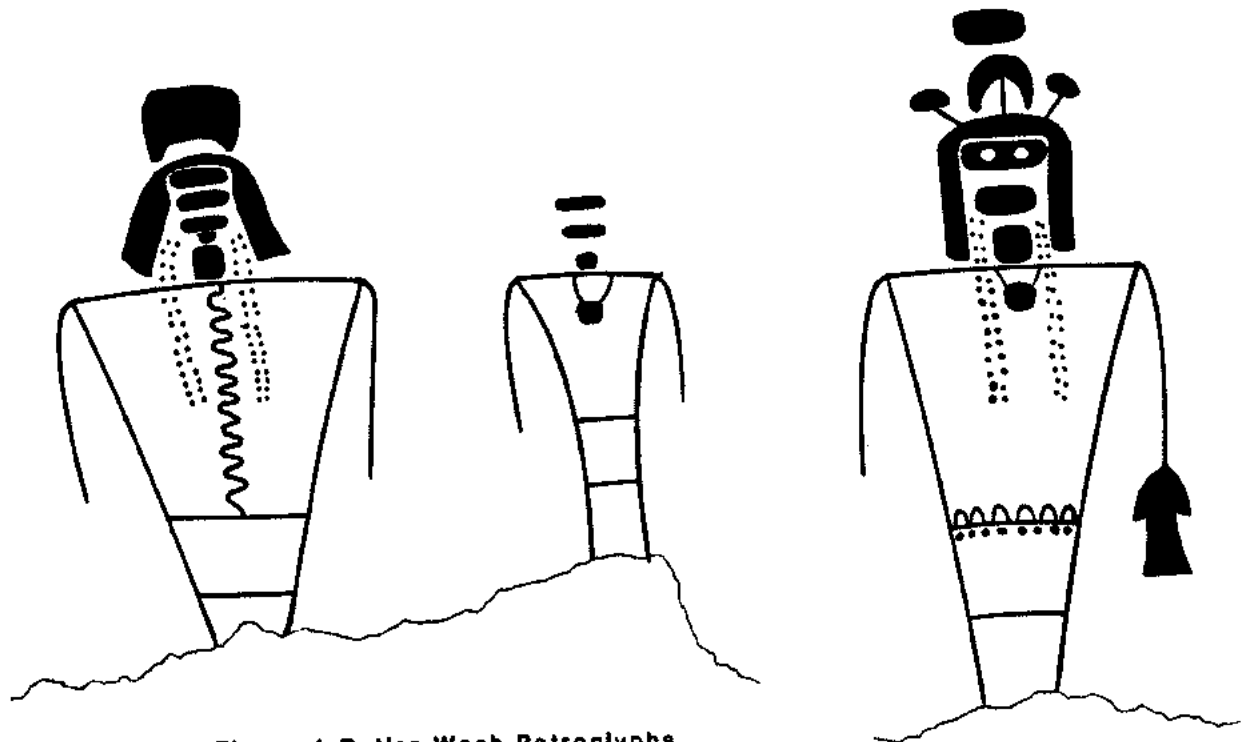


Figure 4 Butler Wash Petroglyphs

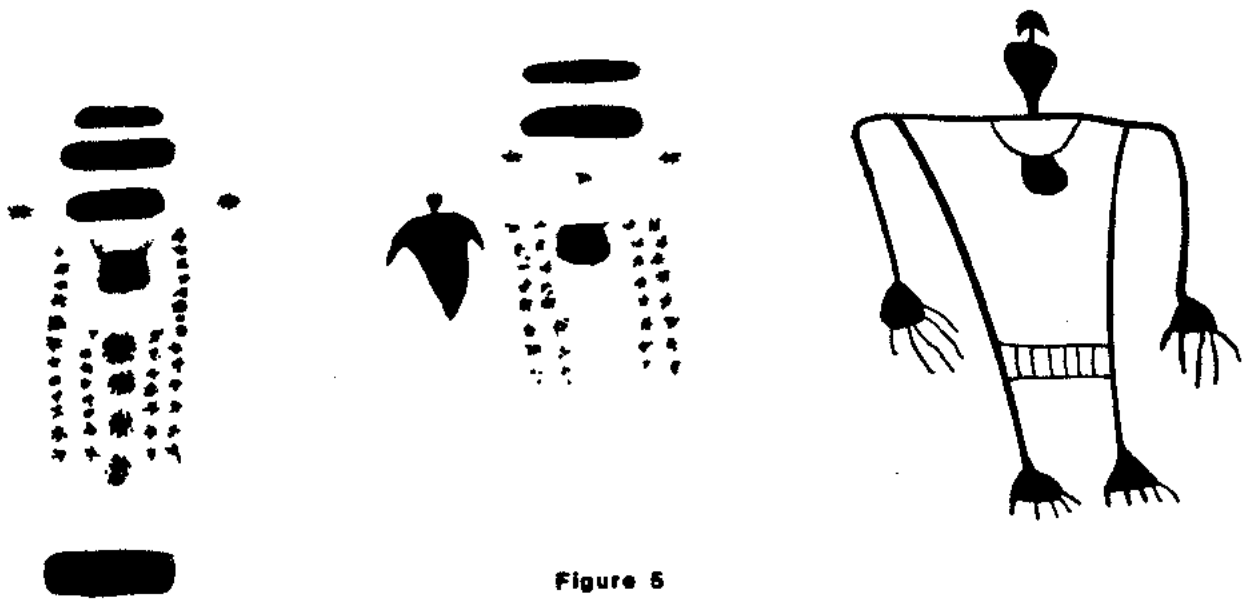


Figure 5  
Petroglyphs from San Juan River Drainage



Figure 6 Fremont Anthropomorphs

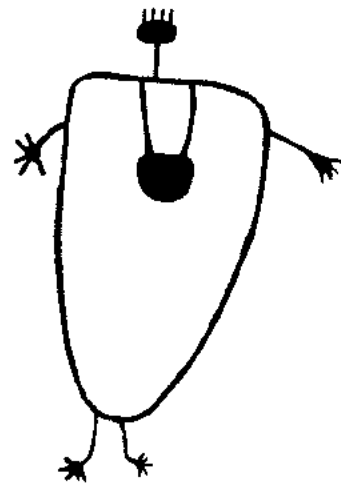
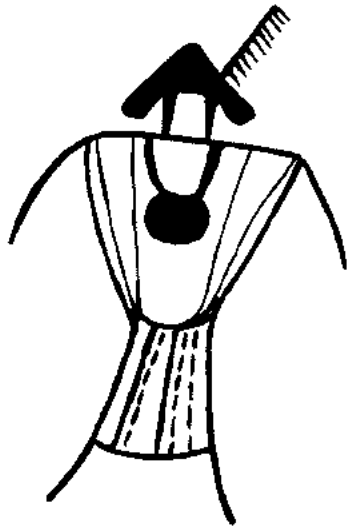


Figure 7 Kane Creek Anthropomorph

of similarities and differences between these different cultures and what these similarities and differences may mean is undergoing preparation.

#### POSSIBLE PRE-BASKETMAKER AFFILIATION

About midway between the Uintah Basin of northern Utah and the San Juan River of southeastern Utah the large, two-stranded pendants occur on the chests of yet another anthropomorphic style. The body of these anthropomorphs are formed with an outline, generally oval in shape. Figure 7 shows the pendant in the chest area of one of these anthropomorphs. This panel is found along the Colorado River near Moab, Utah. Also depicted in the same panel is an atlatal. It is protruding from the side of a Mountain Sheep or goat. The presence of the atlatal further substantiates a Basketmaker affiliation for the large, two-stranded pendant. However, there are problems with using this panel, based solely on the presence of the atlatal, to demonstrate basketmaker designation for the pendant and the anthropomorphic style. While it is true that atlats were used in Paleoindian times, the use of the atlatal persisted even after the introduction of the bow and arrow. Therefore, it would appear that the use of large, two-stranded pendants could have existed long before the Basketmaker period. However, this is inclusive. There are however additional observations that can be used, besides the presence of the atlatal, to provide some indication of a date for the panel. The anthropomorph has an outlined body that is similar to Turner's Glen Canyon Style 5 (which may be as old as 5,000 years, but this has yet to be substantiated) regardless, the style is unquestionably Archaic in origin. However, the levels of patination on the figures in this panel are not the same as on the many Glen Canyon Style 5 panels that I have seen. It is less patinated, and therefore may not be archaic. However, patination is not a reliable indicator of age. Patination forms at different rates depending upon variation in environmental location. All things considered then, the evidence is inconclusive concerning the date of the panel and the possible Archaic presence of the large, two-stranded pendant.

The style of this anthropomorph, and others in the Moab, Utah area, appear to be a style that has not been defined. Therefore I propose to call these figures, for ease of identification, the Kane Creek Style. This name was chosen because of their occurrence around Kane Creek. This designation is offered as tentative, pending additional information and research.

#### DISTRIBUTION

The preceding examples are all from the Colorado and Green Rivers and their tributaries (The San Juan River is a major east bank tributary of the Colorado River). The utilization of the large, two-stranded pendant in prehistoric rock art appears to be distributed along a corridor formed by the upper Colorado River and lower Green River drainages. This may have implications for sharing of cultural traits between the two areas. The distribution of the large, two-stranded pendant outside of this area, which is the survey area, is unknown.



## MEANING, PURPOSE, AND FUNCTION

The presence of the large, two-stranded pendant in both the Basketmaker and the Fremont cultures suggest a previously undefined relationship between these cultures. Both groups portrayed the symbol in the same way i.e., as a pendant around the neck of anthropomorphic figures. Both cultures then apparently shared a common use of the large, two-stranded pendant. Thus they may have shared the same meaning for whatever it is that the symbol represents. Methodologies for determining common meanings of these pendants are limited. About the only option is to compare parallels of utilization in the rock art. Several ideas are presented below which suggest meanings for the pendants.

The presence of the large, two-stranded pendant, as an apparent object of adornment, appears to indicate that it was a physical object that was being portrayed. However, there may be an alternative explanation for its meaning. These pendants also apparently occur as an abstract and isolated figure in Indian Creek (Manning 1983). (By isolated I mean, not apparently joined to an object - for example an anthropomorph's chest). The pendants were placed on opposite sides of a steep walled canyon drainage at two different locations. The appearance of isolated pendants and their placement would suggest that the pendant had other meanings in addition to, or entirely separate from, that of adornment. Their specific placement in the canyon indicates that the pendant symbol itself had a definitive meaning to the individual(s) who placed them there. They were not placed at random. Also, the placement itself had a specific meaning. The pendant symbol appears to divide the canyon up into sections, thereby suggesting some form of division. In this context the symbols could represent boundaries, or boundary markers. Boundaries would likely be marked with some symbol unmistakably associated with, or representative of, a particular person, group (i.e., clan, cult, tribe), religion, etc. In this instance, and because of the pendant's distribution throughout a large region, the symbol most likely would not represent an individual. The above line of reasoning suggests the pendants characterize a type of affiliation symbol.

Another possibility suggested by the distribution and occurrence of the large, two-stranded pendants (and one that is allied to the above) is that they represent an ideological concept. The symbol might represent a position of status, or power, such as is associated with shamans or medicine-men. Substantiating the view that the symbol represents an ideological concept, rather than a physical object, is the observance that apparently physical pendants of this form are almost non-existent. To this date I have been unable to locate any recovered from Fremont or Basketmaker sites.

Finally, if the pendants did represent an actual object, it must have been something that was perishable. Given the numbers of pendants portrayed in rock art (and I am continually finding additional figures) there should have been discovered many physical evidences of their existence. An alternative to the pendant being made of stone or shell is the possibility that it was constructed of perishable materials, such as leather, plant materials, or textiles. For example it could have represented a medicine bag. If this is the circumstance then it could have functioned both as a physical object and a symbol of religious or shamanistic affiliation or power. Perhaps the

symbol of religious or shamanistic affiliation or power. Perhaps the anthropomorphic figures wearing these pendants represent individuals with religious power. Superstitions have a tendency to spread if successful outcomes are attributed to specific actions. This would explain the uniformity of use in various cultures over the Colorado River drainage. Certainly there are a number of possibilities for meaning associated with the large, two-stranded pendants.

#### CONCLUSION

This paper presented information that only answered several questions. Certainly there are many questions yet to be answered. For example: in what time period did the large, two-stranded pendant necklace initially come into use? The presence of the pendant in association with an atlatl and an anthropomorph similar to Glen Canyon Style 5 raises the question of how far back in time the use of the pendant existed. Is the pendant only associated with the Basketmaker and Fremont Culture?

The Fremont Culture flourished between roughly A.D 500 to 1250. The Anasazi Basketmaker culture flourished between roughly A.D. 1 to 750. Does this imply that the use of the large, two-stranded pendant originated among the Basketmaker people of the San Juan area and spread to the Fremont people? Clearly more research needs to be conducted before any of these research questions can be addressed.

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