



FIGURE 1. PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHER, CRAIG LAW, DOCUMENTING THE HOLY GHOST PANEL AT THE GREAT GALLERY. CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK, WAYNE COUNTY.

TOWARD A TYPOLOGY OF BARRIER CANYON STYLE SPIRIT FIGURES: Early Findings of the BCS PROJECT (1991 - 1995)

David Sucec, Director, BCS PROJECT

SPIRIT FIGURE TYPOLOGY

The large anthropomorphic figures (fig. 1), characteristic of the prehistoric Barrier Canyon rock art style, appear in several variations of form. And the recurring presence of similar variants, within the style area, suggests that these variations may not entirely be the result of differences between individual artists. It is probable that the figure variations may be the record of individual artists who were working in the particular manner or convention of their group or time. Such a visual record promises to be a valuable resource, as it has been in the study of other prehistoric cultures, for the scholar hoping to reconstruct the chronological sequence of the style's imagery.

A working typology of Barrier Canyon style spirit figures is being advanced based primarily on visual characteristics—which include:

1. **f o r m**: contour (e.g., concave or convex torso), proportion (width x height of figure parts, e.g. head to torso) and size.
2. **c o l o r**: varieties of red ochre (e.g., different batches of paint) and combinations of hues (e.g., bands of red and white).
3. **i n t e r i o r d e s i g n**: design motifs (e.g., elements such as a vertical line and units of elements such as parallel vertical lines), types of shapes, and patterns—including the spacing.
4. **t e c h n i q u e**: painting (e.g. brushing, finger smearing, throwing), drawing (e.g., direct application of unprocessed ochre), pecking/incising/scratching,

and combinations of techniques.

5. **context**: associated, or proximal, imagery; position in its composition, within its style and its art form (prehistoric rock art).

BARRIER CANYON STYLE ANTHROPOMORPHIC IMAGES

There are three types of anthropomorphic figures in Barrier Canyon style rock art. The fewest in number are the hybrid or composite figures. The second largest group, but still few in number, are the ordinary or citizen figures. The third type with, by far and away, the greatest number are the spirit figures.

Composite Figures

These figures are composed of body parts from different beings. In one instance, the anthropomorphic form (figure 2) has a human body, arms and, perhaps, legs; a sheep's head and horns; a snake's tongue; and, perhaps, bird's feet. The composite figures are generally small (fig. 2 is about 20 cm. tall).

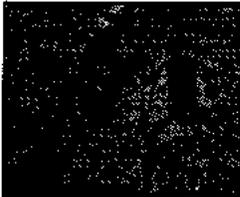


FIGURE 3. CITIZEN FIGURES, GREAT GALLERY.

Citizen Figures

These images have the appearance of ordinary people with arms and legs, always small in size, and usually active. Although the images appear in different degrees of conventionalization—i.e., the body forms may have a peanut or cucumber-shape and the arms and legs tend to be more linear rather than voluminous—they tend toward correct proportion.

Generally, citizen figures are solidly painted or pecked although occasionally they will have interior designs or motifs. Hair styles or head gear may also vary.



FIGURE 4. SPIRIT FIGURE (CENTER) WITH FOUR CITIZEN FIGURES. EMERY COUNTY.

numbers at Barrier Canyon style rock art sites. Although they vary considerably in size, the spirit figure is invariably the largest figure at BCS rock art sites.

SPIRIT FIGURE VARIANTS

Since only 90 sites out of an estimated 160 Barrier Canyon style rock art sites have been visited by the PROJECT it is not possible to know the final number of style variations at this time. But it is apparent that there are sever-



FIGURE 2. COMPOSITE FIGURE. EMERY COUNTY.

Spirit Figures

These figures are commonly without arms and legs but do often have oversized eyes without pupils, antennae, ears, feathers or horns. Spirit figures often have an imposing presence—they are prominent in size as well as in



FIGURE 5. THE HOLY GHOST, SPIRIT FIGURE, WAYNE COUNTY.

al stylistic variations of the spirit figure within the study area. A working typology of nine variants is proposed with tentative designations as follows: 1. Silhouette, 2. Great Gallery, 3. Glen Canyon, 4. Maze, 5. Canyonlands, 6. San Rafael, 7. Eastern, 8. Western, and 9. Northern.

Silhouette Variant

These figures are defined by monochromatic color (red ochre) without brush marks or splatters. The figures appears to be “stained” into the wall. Many images are very faded, some barely visible. Traces of paint can be found on some figures and they appear to be very old. Torso and head forms vary considerably. Figures can range from .5 to 2.5 meters tall.



FIGURE 6. SILHOUETTE FIGURE. EMERY COUNTY.



FIGURE 7. SILHOUETTE/GLEN CANYON FIGURES SUPERIMPOSED BY FREMONT IMAGES. SEGO CANYON, GRAND COUNTY.



FIGURE 8. SILHOUETTE FIGURES WITH SOME INTERIOR DESIGN. GARFIELD COUNTY.

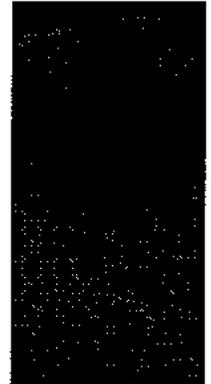


FIGURE 9. SILHOUETTE FIGURE. WAYNE COUNTY.

Great Gallery Variant

These elongated, tapered figures are most often without arms and legs. Images are both solidly painted and with interior design. Some figures appear to have a representation of a crown of evenly spaced, white feathers. Figures often have large, vacant eyes and a ghost-like presence. Shoulder shapes vary with rounded, sloped, and flat contours the most common forms. Some of the figures appear to be very old. The large figures are about 2 meters in height and can be as much as 2.75 meters in height.



FIGURE 10. GREAT GALLERY VARIANT. GARFIELD COUNTY.



FIGURE 11. GREAT GALLERY VARIANT. WAYNE COUNTY.

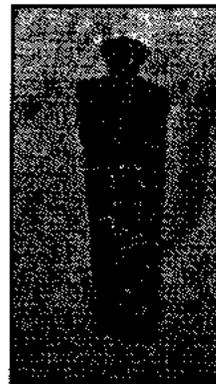


FIGURE 12. GREAT GALLERY FIGURE. CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK.

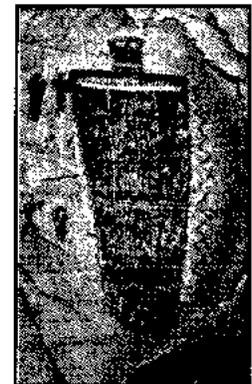


FIGURE 13. GREAT GALLERY VARIANT. WAYNE COUNTY.



FIGURE 14. GLEN CANYON FIGURE. EMERY COUNTY.



FIGURE 15. GLEN CANYON FIGURE. GRAND COUNTY.



FIGURE 16. GLEN CANYON/SIL-HOUETTE FIGURES SUPERIMPOSED BY FREMONT IMAGES. SEGO CANYON, GRAND COUNTY.

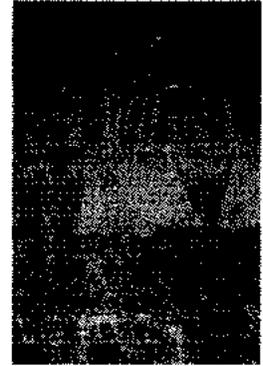


FIGURE 17. WHITE, GLEN CANYON FIGURE. COURTHOUSE WASH PANEL, GRAND COUNTY.

Glen Canyon Variant

Rectangular shaped figures, with short, straight arms and hands emerging from shoulders in an elevated position. The head and neck forms are similar. The figures are stylistically similar to the pecked Archaic *Glen Canyon Linear* style anthropomorphic figure but the size and interior designs may differ. Some figures appear to be very old. Figures about 1.25 to 2.75 meters in height.

Maze Variant

Slender, very elongated figures, minimally tapered, sometimes with severe stylization—both torso and head forms. (fig. 18) Unlike most of the figures of the other variants, these figures often have legs. Some figures appear to have representations of feather crowns on their heads. Representations of arms, when present, are very linear. Torso motifs of vertical, parallel lines (often alternating lines of red and white) are common. Large figures are about 2 meters tall—tallest at about 2.75 meters.

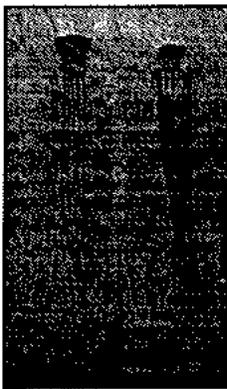


FIGURE 18. MAZE FIGURES. HARVEST PANEL, CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK, WAYNE COUNTY.

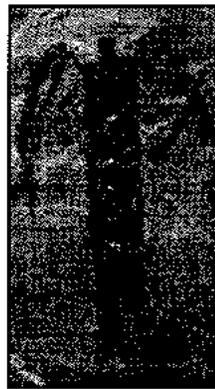


FIGURE 19. MAZE FIGURE. BUCKHORN WASH EMERY COUNTY

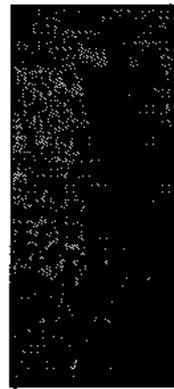


FIGURE 20. MAZE FIGURE. EMERY COUNTY

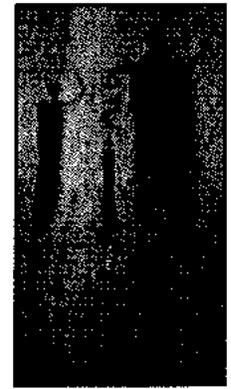


FIGURE 21. MAZE FIGURES. GRAND COUNTY



FIGURE 22. CANYONLANDS FIGURES, GRAND COUNTY.



FIGURE 23. CANYONLANDS FIGURE. GRAND COUNTY.

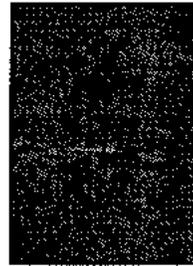


FIGURE 24. CANYONLANDS FIGURE. GRAND COUNTY.



FIGURE 25. CANYONLANDS FIGURE. EMERY COUNTY.

Canyonlands Variant

These figures have shield-like torsos without arms and legs. Parallel vertical lines, horizontal bands and balanced interior designs are the most common interior motifs. Figures with linear motifs appear to have been rendered, whether by painting with a brush or smearing on the color with fingers, with careful attention to the spacing of the lines. (fig. 23) Representations of angled ears, feathers, antennae, or horns are very common. About 1 to 1.75 meters in height.

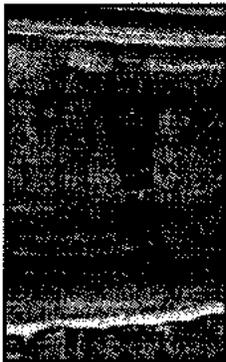


FIGURE 26. SAN RAFAEL VARIANT. BUCKHORN WASH, EMERY COUNTY.



FIGURE 27. SAN RAFAEL VARIANT. COURTHOUSE WASH. GRAND COUNTY.

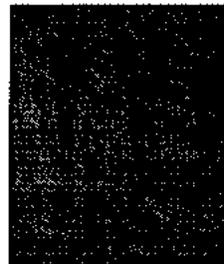


FIGURE 28. SAN RAFAEL VARIANT. EMERY COUNTY.



FIGURE 29. SAN RAFAEL VARIANT. EMERY COUNTY.

San Rafael Variant

These severely tapered figures are identified by their concavity. They are generally without arms and legs. Flat broad shoulders are typical and heads sometimes appear to have representations of ears, antennae, feathers, or horns. The figures are, most often, without interior design. At two major Barrier Canyon style rock art sites, this variant is superimposed on several earlier variant figures. Tallest about 2 meters high.

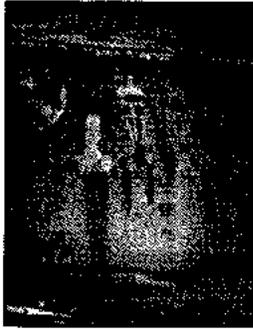


FIGURE 30. EASTERN VARIANT. COURT-HOUSE WASH, GRAND COUNTY.

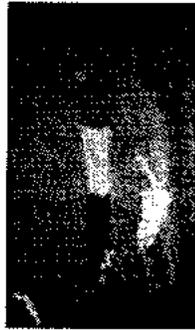


FIGURE 31. EASTERN VARIANT. WESTERN COLORADO.



FIGURE 32. EASTERN VARIANT. GREAT GALLERY, WAYNE COUNTY.



FIGURE 33. EASTERN VARIANT (CENTER IMAGE). EMERY COUNTY.

Eastern Variant

This variant is identified by its slender, carrot-like form. Although the torso form of the figures is consistent throughout the variant type, other aspects may vary considerably. The figures can be seen with head-dress such as representations of long ears, horns, feathers or unidentified forms. They can be monocolored or with interior design—horizontal bands are common. The tallest of all the variants, the largest Eastern figures are about 2 to 3 meters in height.



FIGURE 34. WESTERN VARIANT. GRAND COUNTY.

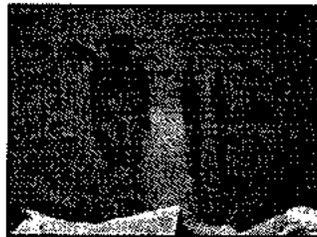


FIGURE 35. WESTERN VARIANT. GRAND COUNTY.

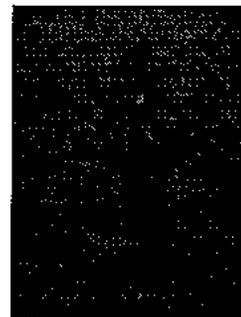


FIGURE 36. WESTERN VARIANT. WAYNE COUNTY.

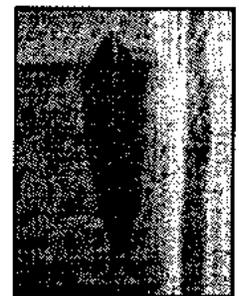


FIGURE 37. WESTERN VARIANT. GRAND COUNTY.

Western Variant

These figures often have distinctive color tones and often appear to have been painted by a very competent artist. Many of these variant images are painted with lighter shades of red ochre than are figures of other variants. The figures can be bullet shaped, with pointed heads, or less stylized with arms and legs. Sometimes they are composed of disparate body parts (fig. 2). Often they are associated with snake, bird and quadruped forms. Smaller than most variants, the largest figures are about 1 to 1.25 meters tall.



FIGURE 38. NORTHERN VARIANT. UINTAH COUNTY.

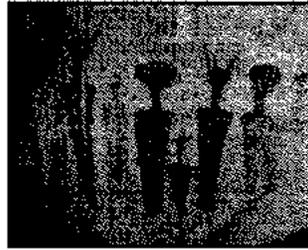


FIGURE 39. NORTHERN VARIANT. WESTERN COLORADO.



FIGURE 40. NORTHERN VARIANT. WAYNE COUNTY.

Northern Variant

This designation seems to be the most tentative and may be, because of its different imagery, two small variants rather than one.

One group of spirit figures has distinctive patterns—interior linear designs and alternating bands of red and white. (figs. 38, 41, and 42) In the farthest north of the style area, the reds tend to be more tinted or lighter in value.

The second group of figures are thickly painted in much darker hues of red as well as in the lighter reds. (figs. 39 and 40) These images are enthusiastically painted but, consistently, less elegantly designed and executed than the best of the banded type.

What is common in the Northern panels is the compositional lineup of diverse, but particular, spirit figure forms painted in one or two distinctive manners—and sometimes, it appears, during the same period of time. In figures of both groups, the relationship between the torso and the various head forms is sometimes awkward. (fig. 39) The tallest figures are about 1.5 to 2 meters tall.



FIGURE 41. NORTHERN VARIANT. UINTAH COUNTY.

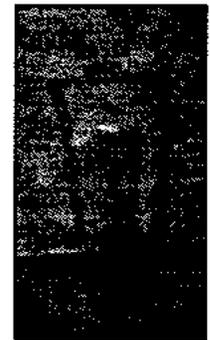
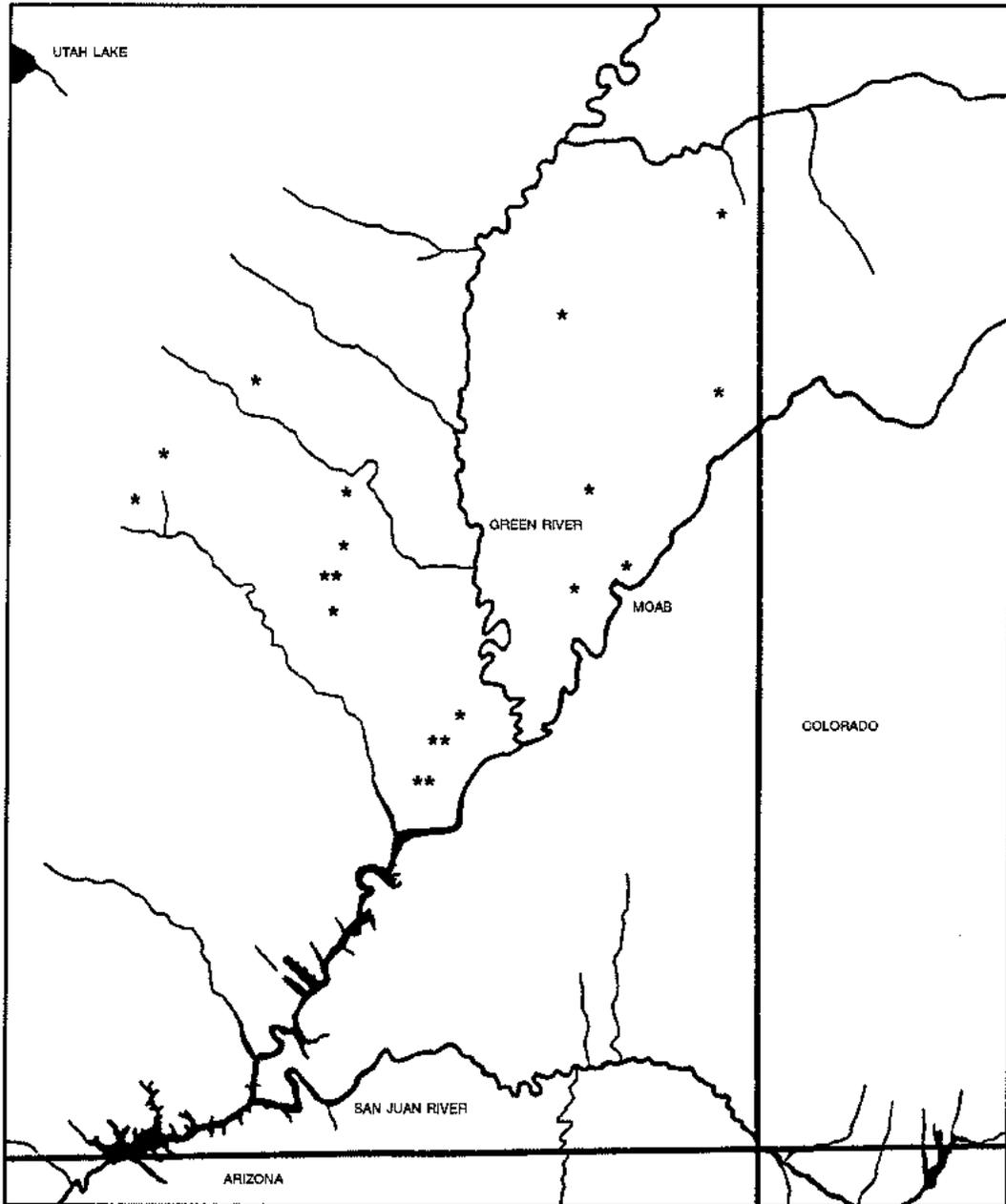


FIGURE 42. NORTHERN/CANYONLANDS VARIANT. GRAND COUNTY.

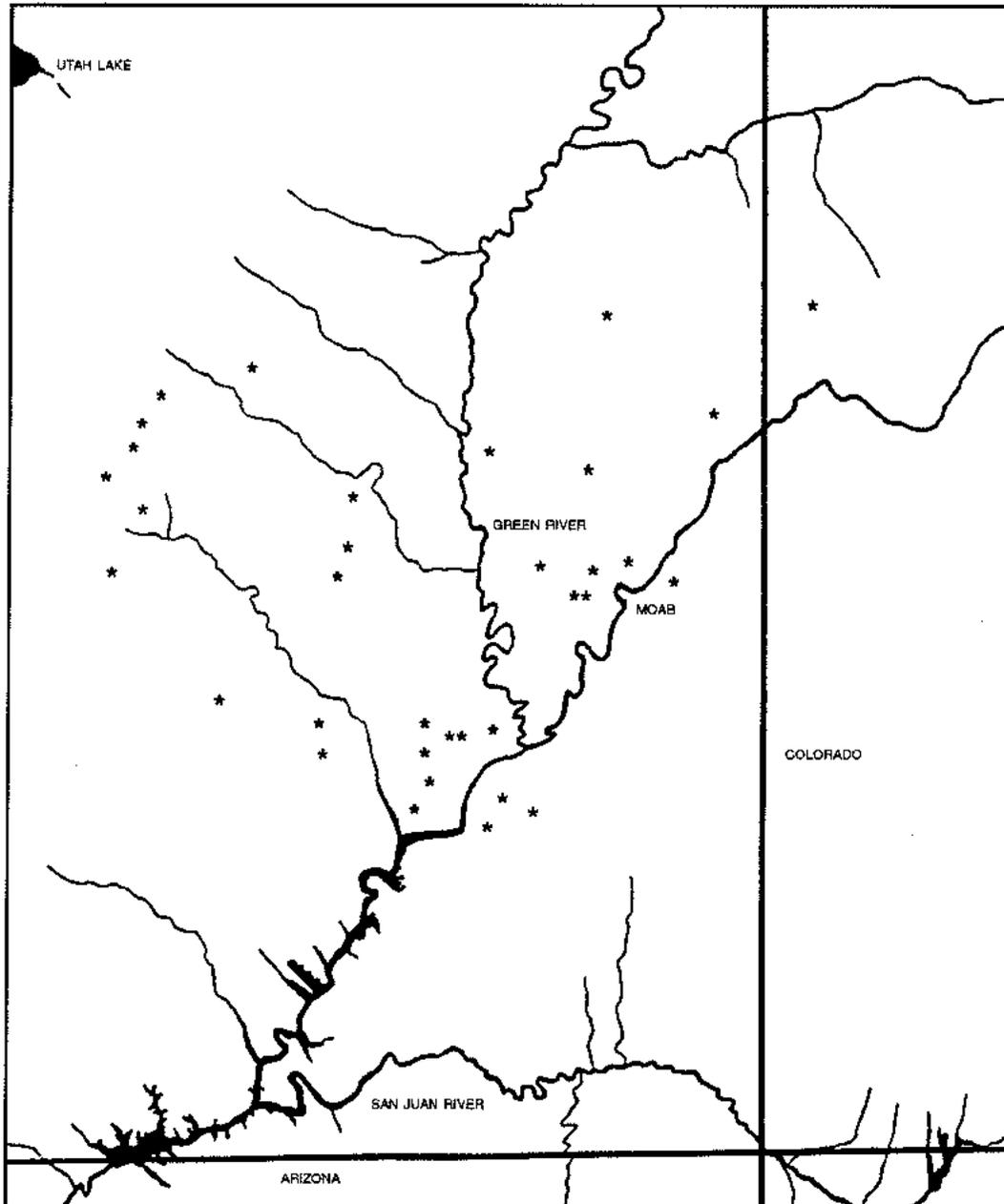
FINAL REMARKS

Although only 90 (estimated 160 total) Barrier Canyon style rock art sites have been documented by the BCS PROJECT; it is evident that there are, at least, several variations of the distinctive spirit figure. A working typology consisting of nine, perhaps ten, variants has been advanced. Tentative variant designations have been proposed based on the visual qualities of the figures including form, color, design, technique and compositional/stylistic context.

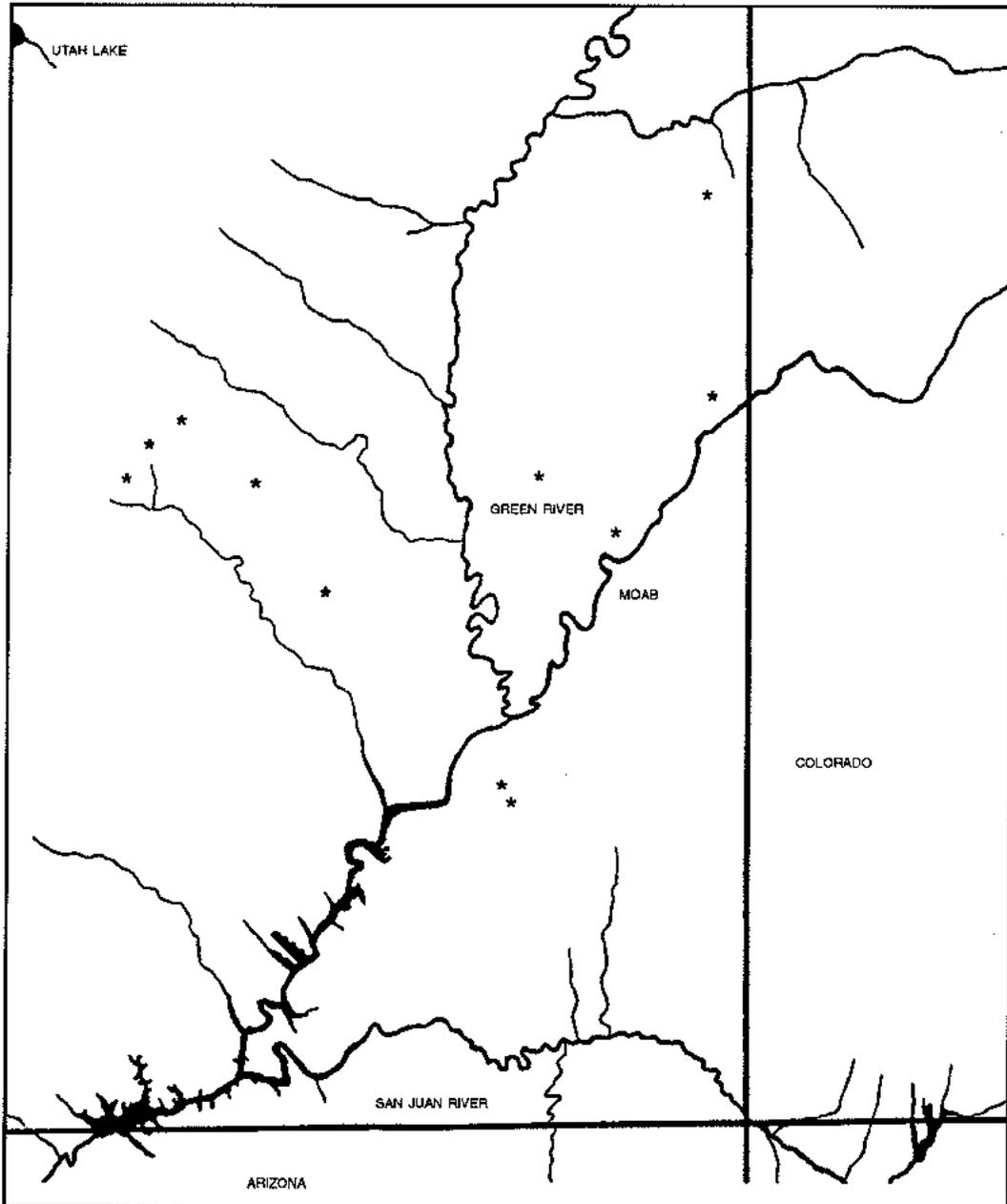
The intention of this proposal is to encourage investigation into the variations of the Barrier Canyon style spirit figures. Obviously, this proposal will remain incomplete until all the BCS rock art sites are visited. And many issues will need to be resolved before the typology may prove useful as a resource in the study of Barrier Canyon style rock art. When resolved, perhaps, the typology may also prove useful in helping to clarify the spatial relationship between the probable subdivisions of the Barrier Canyon culture and the temporal sequence of its epochs.



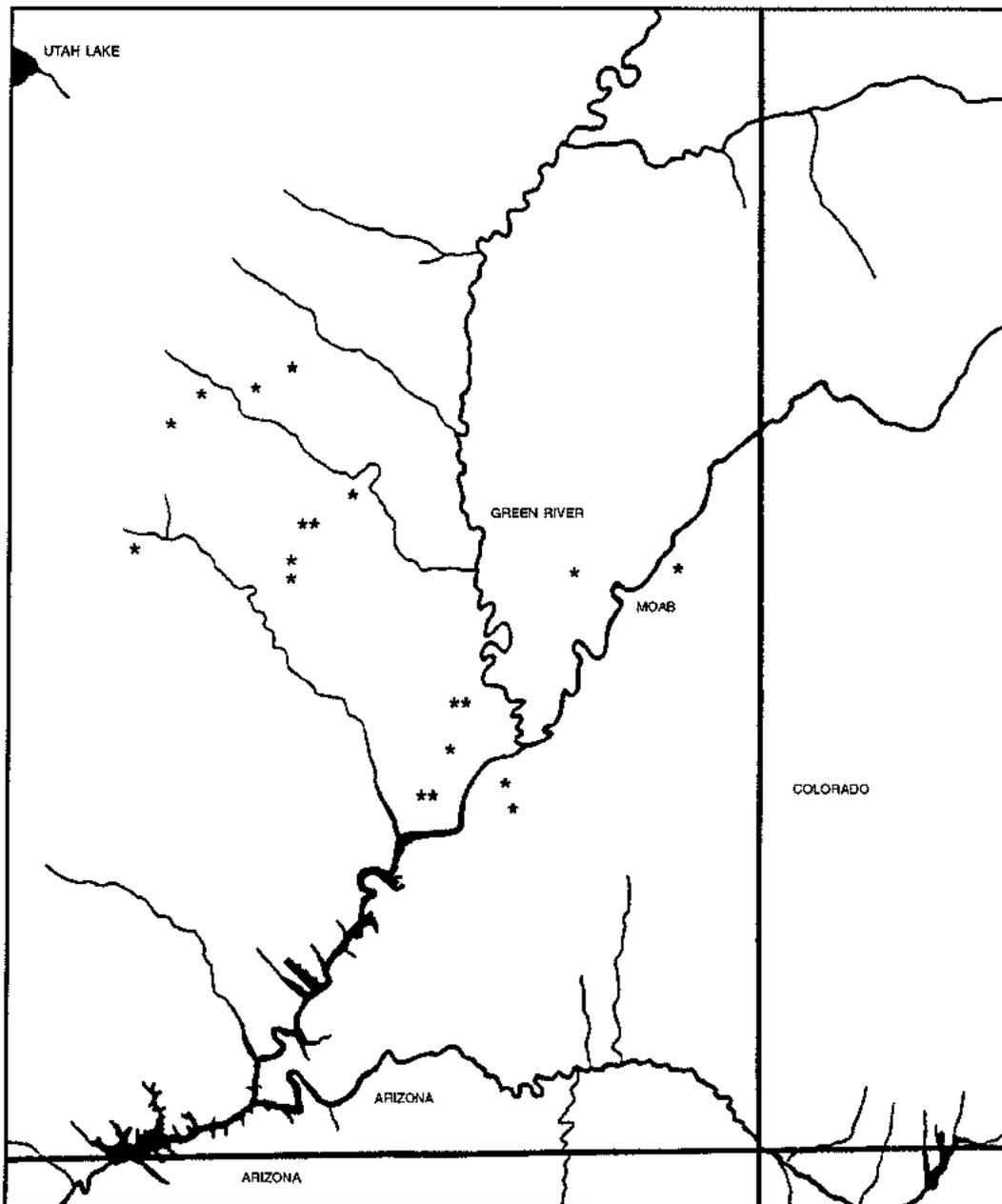
DISTRIBUTION MAP 1. SITES WITH SILHOUETTE VARIANT FIGURES.



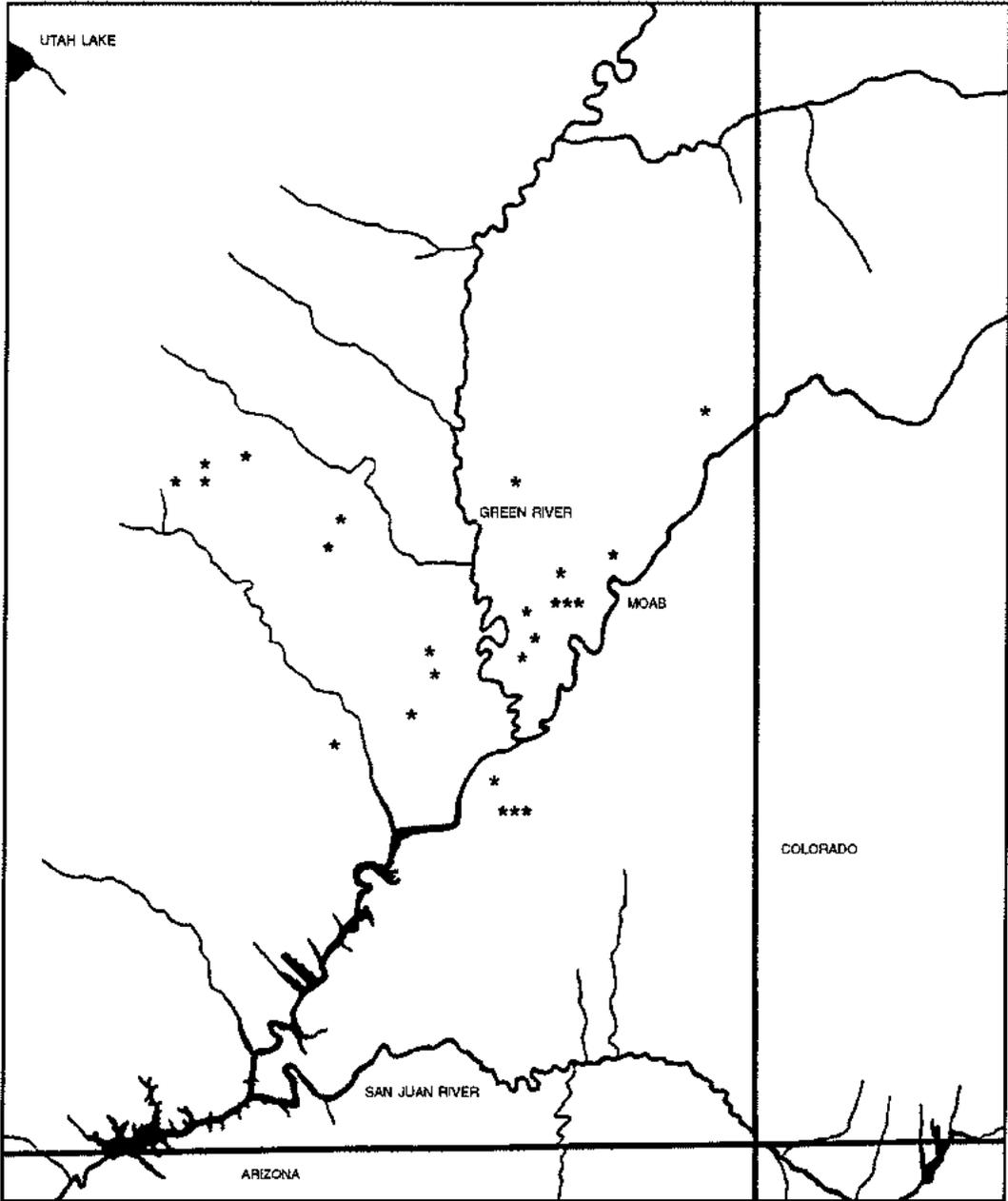
DISTRIBUTION MAP 2. SITES WITH GREAT GALLERY VARIANT FIGURES.



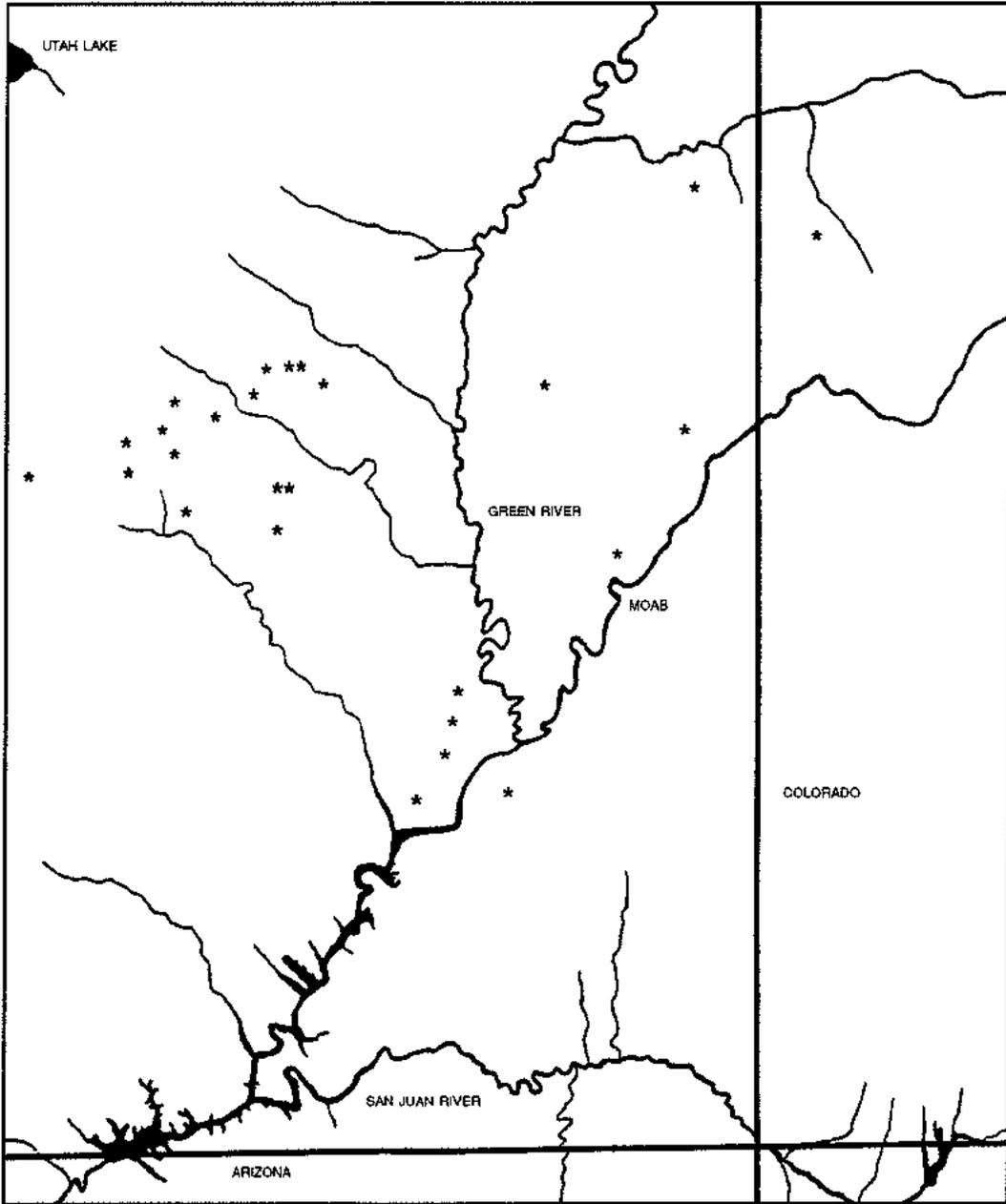
DISTRIBUTION MAP 3. SITES WITH GLEN CANYON VARIANT FIGURES.



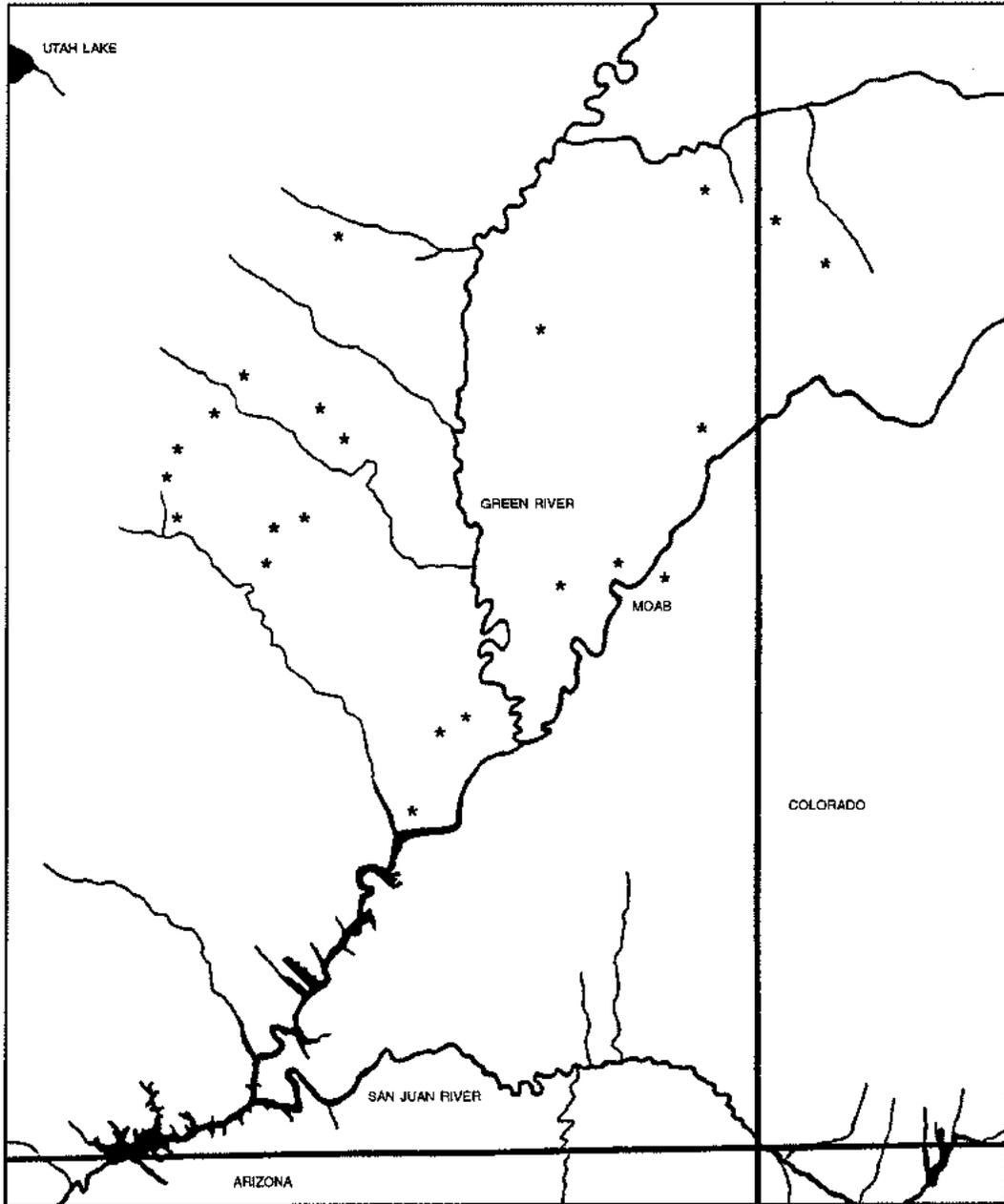
DISTRIBUTION MAP 4. SITES WITH MAZE VARIANT FIGURES.



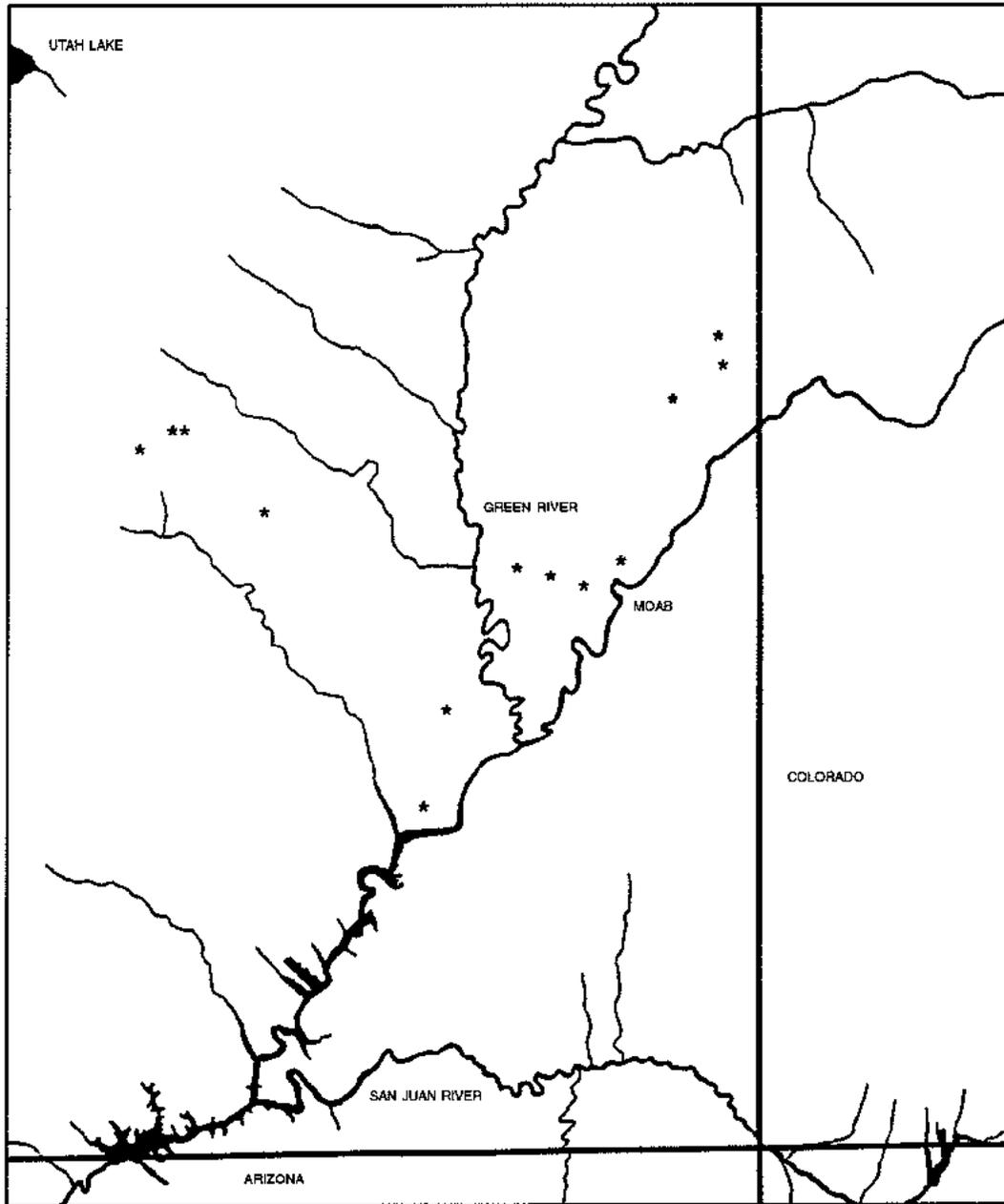
DISTRIBUTION MAP 5. SITES WITH CANYONLANDS VARIANT FIGURES.



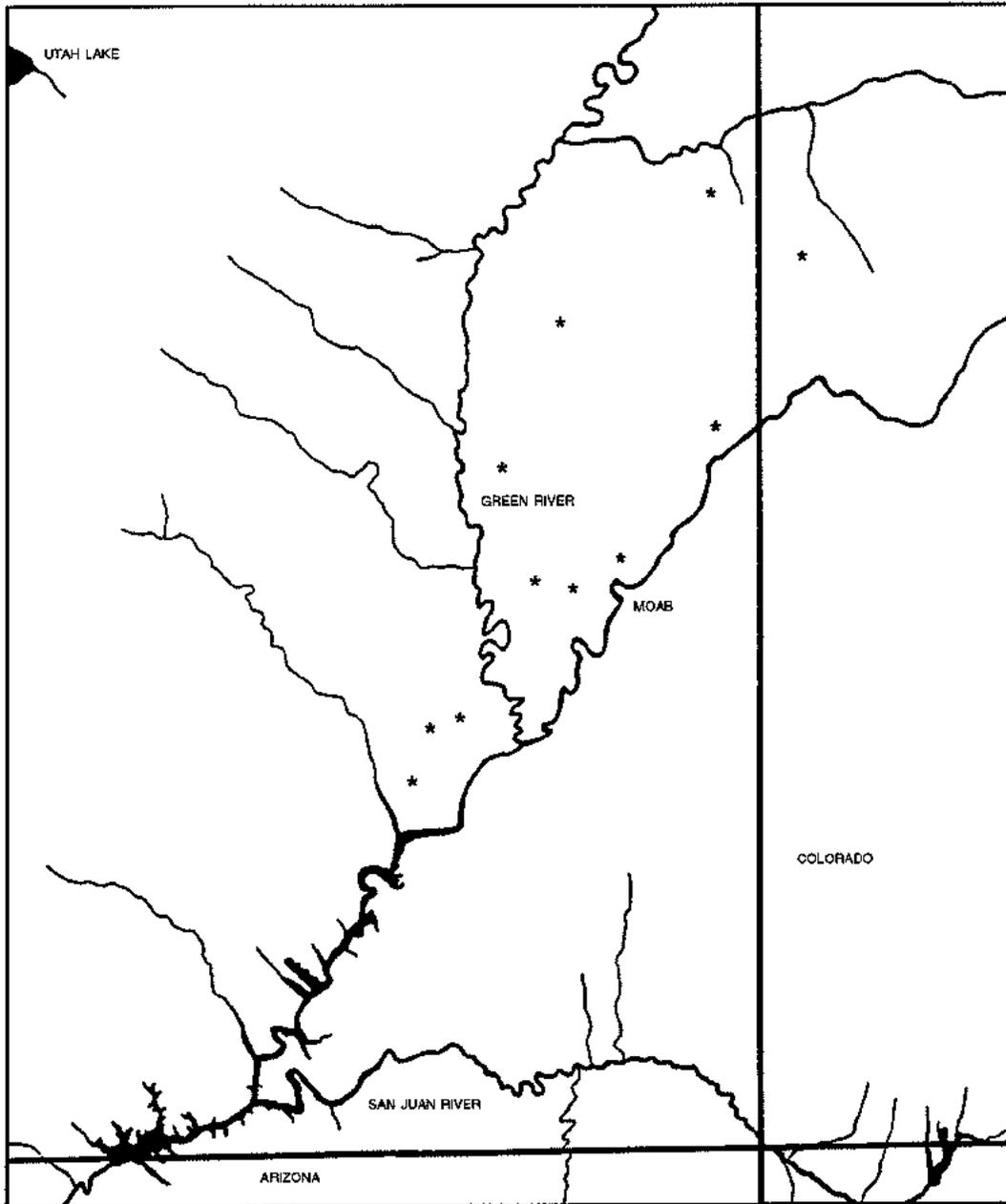
DISTRIBUTION MAP 6. SITES WITH SAN RAFAEL VARIANT FIGURES.



DISTRIBUTION MAP 7. SITES WITH EASTERN VARIANT FIGURES.



DISTRIBUTION MAP 8. SITES WITH WESTERN VARIANT FIGURES.



DISTRIBUTION MAP 9. SITES WITH NORTHERN VARIANT FIGURES.