

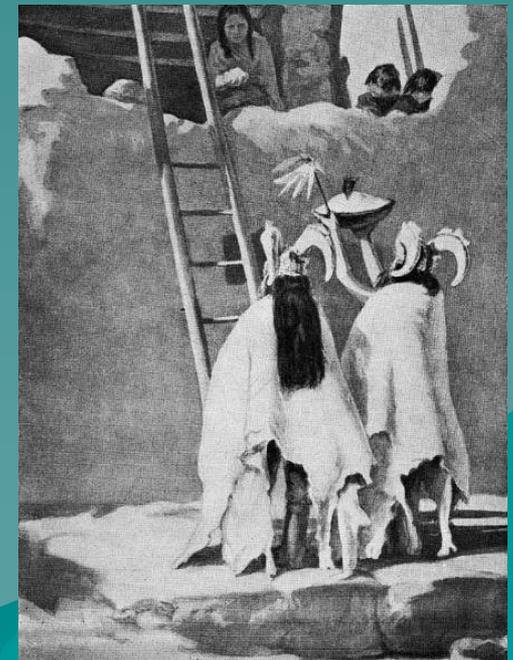
Green River Bighorn Sheep Headdress: Age, Ethnicity, Metaphor

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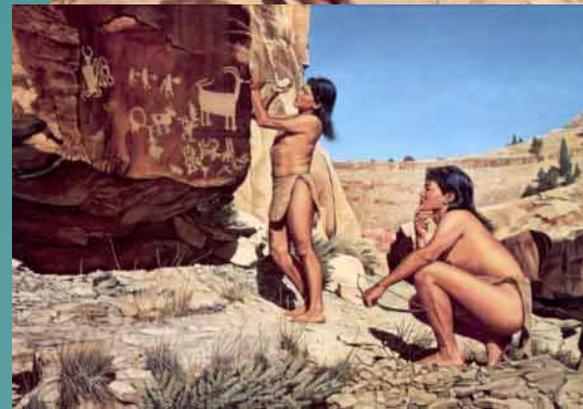
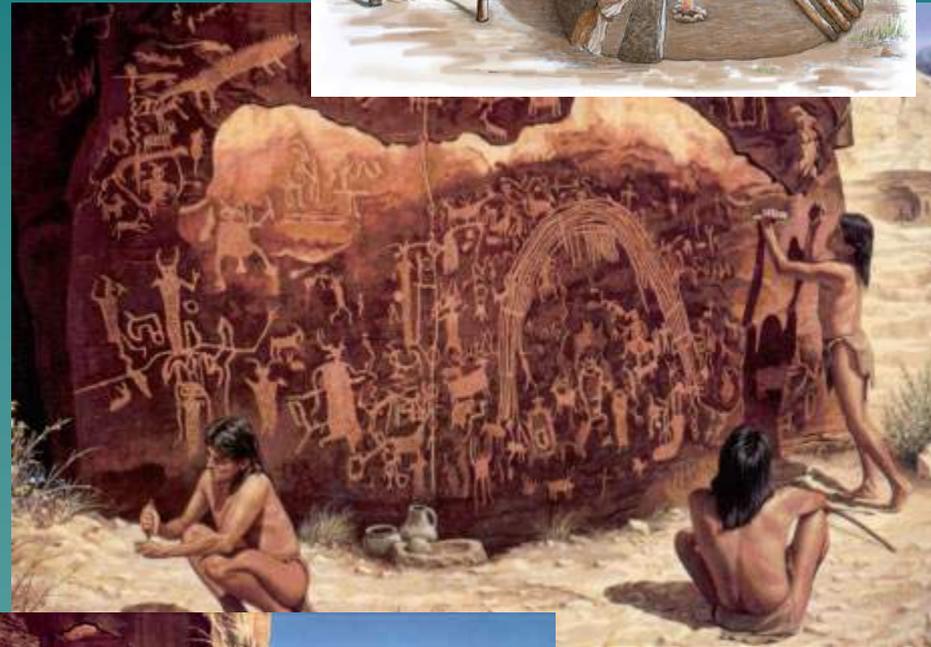
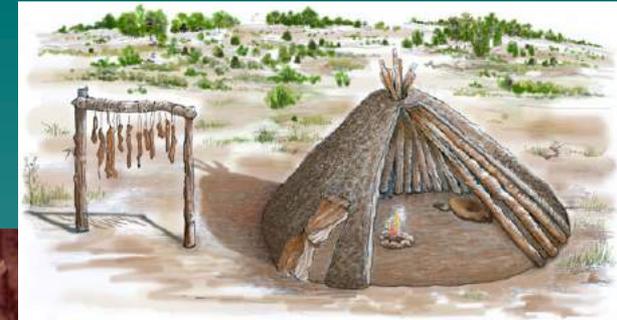
Green River Headdress: Introduction

- ❑ In this presentation we address a prehistoric bighorn sheep, horned headdress from the Tommy Morris Collection.
- ❑ The artifact (aka the Green River Headdress) was formerly exhibited at the Utah State University, Eastern Prehistoric Museum in Price, Utah.
- ❑ This remarkable object was recovered from the vicinity of Robber's Roost in the San Rafael Desert, within an area west of the Green River.



Green River Headdress: Introduction

- ❑ This region is considered to be the former homeland to both Desert Archaic and Fremont Native peoples.
- ❑ Both Native groups regularly hunted bighorn sheep.
- ❑ Both indigenous peoples created rock art imagery (both rock drawings and paintings).
- ❑ These rock art sites feature horned anthropomorphs, the depictions of bighorn sheep, and bighorn hunters armed with atlatl, spears and bow and arrow.
- ❑ A significant element of these panels are figures / ritualists that look to be wearing a horned headdress.

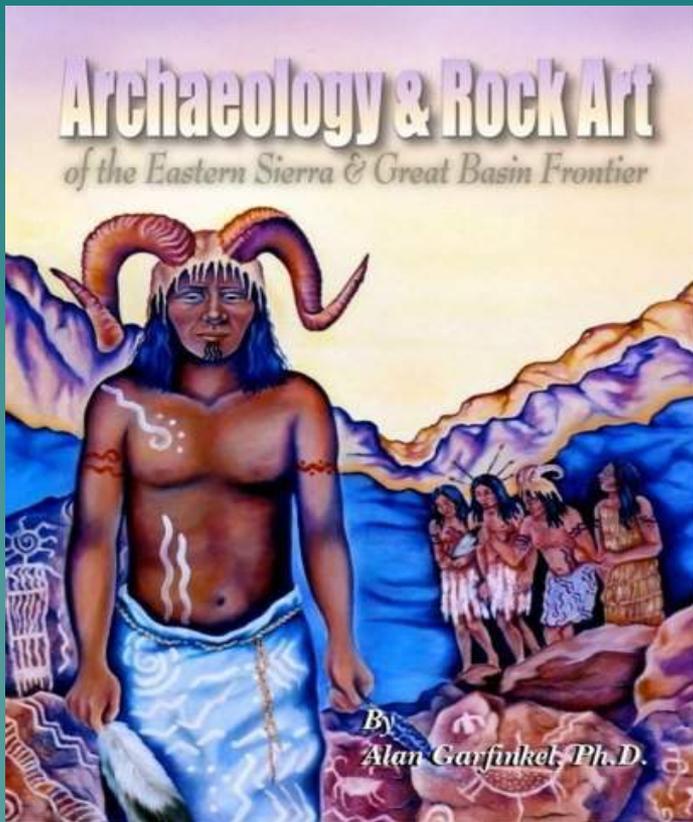


Green River Headdress: Introduction



- ❑ Green River headdress, as it appeared in the display case in the Prehistoric Museum, was tied together with Native cordage (*Asclepias*) and decorated with six purple olive shell (*Olivella biplicata*) beads.
- ❑ The display configuration was a partial reconstruction of what Tommy Morris museum curators thought the headdress might have looked like when it was in use.
- ❑ It does not appear to be representative of how the artifact was originally discovered in the 1960s.
- ❑ It is clear that the shell beads and cordage used in reassembling the artifact were found in direct association with it at the discovery site.

Green River Headdress: Introduction



- Notes at the museum document that the headdress was found in two pieces with drilled holes noted in the cranium and with six *Olivella biplicata* shell beads scattered around it.
- Originally called the “Horned Headdress,” this object was loaned to the museum in 1969 by Tommy Morris of Price, Utah, along with baskets, snares, projectile points, beads, and other artifacts.

Green River Headdress: Introduction

- ❑ In 1989 a special case was built for the headdress with inner support for the horns to elevate the headdress off the floor of the case.
- ❑ At this time curator, Pam Miller, tied the left horn with contemporary sinew and replaced the shell beads; three with new milkweed cordage and two with original cordage to duplicate a 1981 file photograph.



Green River Headdress: Introduction



- ❑ Provenience for the discovery site of the artifact comes from a 1991 report.
- ❑ That report was drafted by unknown museum personnel and states that the headdress was found in Robbers Roost Ranch / Ekker Ranch area near the Green River in Utah.
- ❑ The discovery location is within a region sometimes referred to as the San Rafael Swell.

Green River Headdress: Introduction

- ❑ Ekker Ranch, the discovery location, is a small parcel of private land on the Roost Flats in the heart of the Robbers Roost area.
- ❑ Preservation of the headdress in this area seems highly unlikely, as it is a rolling upland with very little down-cutting and lacking in natural rock shelters.
- ❑ This area of the Roost Flat is between the canyon systems of the Dirty Devil River and the Horseshoe Canyon Region of the Green River. Both of these areas are deeply incised canyon systems with many side canyons and innumerable overhangs.
- ❑ It is much more likely that the headdress was encountered along one of these drainage systems than the rolling uplands that separate them.



Significance of this Research

- ❑ No formal study of this remarkable object had ever been completed and/or published.
- ❑ The rationale for the present study is due to the rarity of such a find in the archaeological record. It is also to report on its character to clarify (and perhaps correct) some of the assertions (misimpressions) in the literature concerning bighorn sheep regalia and related ceremonialism.
- ❑ Incorporated into our study were dating the object, describing its construction in some detail and placing it in proper anthropological and archaeological context regarding meaning, function, and cultural affiliation.



Could a Bighorn Sheep Headdress Ever Exist?



- Some researchers have asserted that a bighorn sheep headdress could never have existed.
- Whitley (1998:119) states in a discussion on the rock art of the Coso Range in eastern California, that with respect to the hunters that appear in Coso rock art panels to be wearing bighorn sheep headdresses (see Whitley 1998:119; Figure 6), he states:
 - *“Native American informants have denied the use of bighorn headdresses or hunting disguises because they were too heavy to wear. This suggests that these are not humans but humans partly transformed into sheep.”*



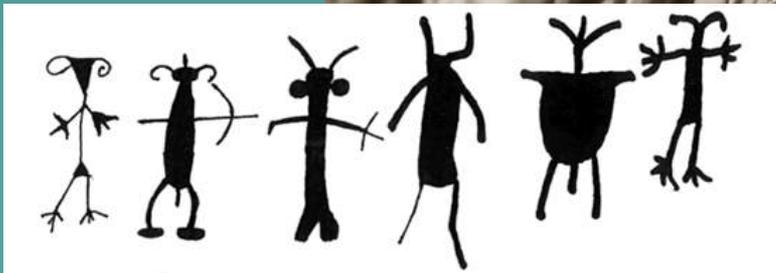
Coso Representational petroglyph panel, with bighorn sheep headdress adorning the hunter of a bighorn sheep. Hunter is using a bow and arrow and the panel dates to a time from ca. AD 1 to 1000/1300. This petroglyph panel is located in Sheep Canyon, Coso Range, Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, Ridgecrest, western Mojave Desert, California.

Could a Bighorn Sheep Headdress Ever Exist?



- More recently Keyser and Whitley (2006:19), re-assert their belief that a sheep horn headdress is impractical and likely could not and would not have been fashioned.
- They posit, because of the weight and configuration of a bighorn sheep's horns and the heaviness of the cranium itself, such a headdress would have been nearly impossible to fashion.
- “The third line of evidence involves the iconography itself. (A petroglyph figure) shows a putative Coso archer wearing a bighorn sheep hunting disguise (cf. Grant et al. 1968).
- “Ethnographic evidence again discounts this interpretation as the bighorn sheep rack was acknowledged as too heavy to be used in this fashion (Fowler1992; Steward 1941, 1943; Stewart 1941).”

Could a Bighorn Sheep Headdress Ever Exist?



The Issue

- ❑ Were the depictions of horned anthropomorphic figures in rock drawings and paintings meant to represent disguised or adorned humans ?
- ❑ Or, alternatively, were they self-depictions of shamans memorializing visions of themselves as animal-humans during encounters with the supernatural?
- ❑ Or both?

Broader Theoretical Questions



- ❑ In general, with respect to anthropological study of Native peoples, controversy surrounds the role of hunting cults and large game procurement in the prehistoric Great Basin.
- ❑ Great Basin and American Southwestern indigenous cultures appear to have at times emphasized large game and were especially focused on the hunting of bighorn sheep (especially during the Archaic Period ca. 2000 BC to AD 1).
- ❑ Ritual rock art traditions, animal ceremonialism (cf. Yohe and Garfinkel 2012), and hunting “cults” appear to have been characteristic of some prehistoric foragers (cf. Garfinkel 2006; Garfinkel et al. 2016).

Construction and Design



Reverse (obverse) of the Green River bighorn sheep, horned-headdress. Scale in cm (centimeters). The base of the headdress is 13 cm. wide. Horns from tip to base measure 53 cm. long.

- According to Matheny and colleagues (Matheny et al. 1997:73), the bighorn sheep headdress horns were divided in half to minimize their weight and were then sewn to the skull to ensure permanent attachment.
- *Olivella biplicata* shell beads were attached to the Green River headdress and the regalia may have been used with a hood, though there is no indication of this in the form of extra holes or other points of attachment (cf. Goldsmith headdress).
- It has been hypothesized that the headdress could have served either as a ceremonial accouterment or as a more utilitarian hunting disguise (Matheny et al. 1997:73, Figure 3). Thus, it could have been employed both in a ritual and more practical function.

Construction and Design



Reverse (obverse) of the Green River bighorn sheep, horned-headdress. Scale in cm (centimeters). The base of the headdress is 13 cm. wide. Horns from tip to base measure 53 cm. long.

- ❑ Further examination of the headdress corroborates much of the initial description.
- ❑ The horn sheaths are the key elements of the headdress.
- ❑ They have been split lengthwise leaving over half of the sheath extracted or missing and maintaining the appearance of a complete horn when viewed from the front.
- ❑ The cut edges have been smoothed in most places and exhibit polish in some areas.
- ❑ The horn sheaths expand near their base, providing a nearly complete circumference around the horn core on the cranium.

Construction and Design



- ❑ The cranial element itself includes the base of the horn cores and the portion of the skull between the horn cores themselves.
- ❑ Some of the lateral portion of the right horn core is missing, though it is unclear if this occurred during manufacture or post-deposition. The base of the portion of the cranium between the horn cores is roughly cut.
- ❑ The upper portions of the horn core interiors have been cleaned and overlap the base of the horn sheaths by two or more centimeters. There are numerous drilled holes on the cranium and horn sheaths with the characteristic taper associated with stone drill bits.

Dating: AMS Radiocarbon Assay



- ❑ In order to obtain the most accurate age for the headdress, we discussed the dating process with the analysts at Beta Analytical Radiocarbon Laboratories.
- ❑ It was decided that dating would be conducted directly on the milkweed cordage.
- ❑ The AMS radiocarbon age for this material (Beta-343500) provided a 2 sigma range, the radiocarbon calibrated date converts to a calendar age of AD 1020 to 1160 (cal 930 to 790 years BP).



Dating: Time Sensitive Shell Beads



Photograph of all six of the original shell beads from the headdress. The beads are *Olivella biplicata*, split-punched beads (Types D1 and D2 Bennyhoff and Hughes 1987).

- ❑ Six *Olivella biplicata* shell beads were originally identified in association with the sheep horn headdress.
- ❑ Two of these beads were mailed to Chester King, and he confirmed that the *Olivella biplicata* shell beads were fashioned by perforating or punching holes in the shell walls.
- ❑ These beads are then what has been described in the California bead typology as split-punched bead types (Bennyhoff and Hughes 1987; Types D1 and D2).
- ❑ One hundred twenty strung beads of the split-punched type are displayed at the nearby Coombs site, a northern Puebloan occupation dating to AD 1160 - 1235.

Dating: Time Sensitive Shell Beads



- ❑ Composite photograph of various images relating to the *Olivella biplicata* shell beads adorning the Green River Bighorn Sheep Headdress.

Dating: Time Sensitive Shell Beads



- ❑ The punched beads from the sheep horn headdress collection exhibit ground edges.
- ❑ Edges of these beads were probably ground during their journey to Utah and possibly immediately before placement on the headdress
- ❑ It will be important to discover if there were Fremont occupations that date later than the use of punched beads. Possibly the end of large *Olivella* bead manufacture at the beginning of the Southern California Late Period was the result of the loss of the Utah market.

Similar Headdress Discoveries

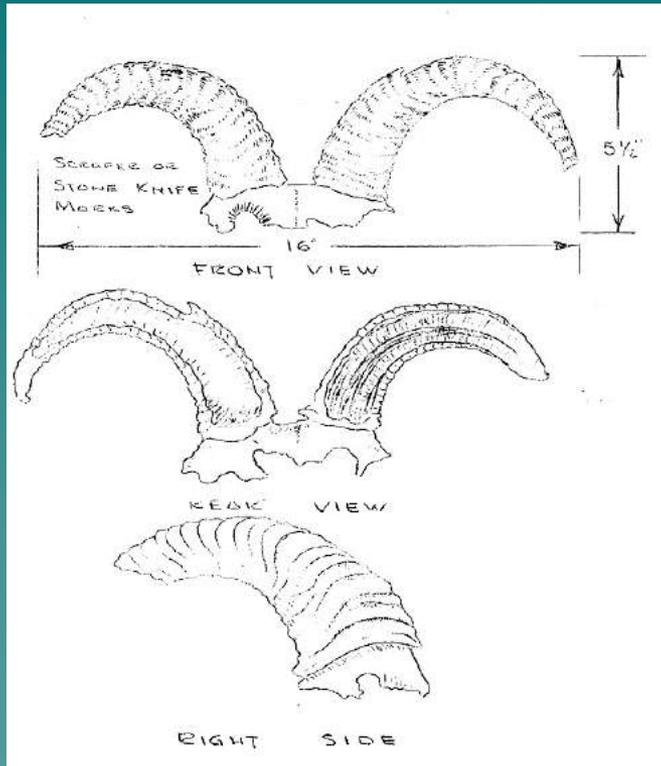


Reverse (obverse) of the Green River bighorn sheep, horned-headdress. Scale in cm (centimeters). The base of the headdress is 13 cm. wide. Horns from tip to base measure 53 cm. long.

Mobley Headdress

- ❑ There is a report of a similarly modified bighorn cranium headdress, reported along the San Rafael Reef, in one of the canyons about 65 km northwest of the Robbers Roost area (Tripp 1967). “A Mountain Sheep Skull Exhibiting Unusual Modification” in the journal “Utah Archaeology”.
- ❑ This headdress was discovered by Bill Mobley of Green River, Utah. Mr. Mobley took the headdress and other artifacts to the University of Utah where they were photographed and sketched resulting in a short article by Tripp (1967).
- ❑ The article appears *without accompanying drawings or photographic details. However it does describe a similar splitting of the horn sheath.*
- ❑ Much like the Green River specimen, there is reportedly clear evidence of cutting damage along the base of the remaining portion of the cranium.
- ❑ Mr. Mobley sent the possible headdress to Georgia State University. Unfortunately, there is no record of any bighorn sheep headdress artifact from Utah in these collections.

Similar Bighorn Headdress Discoveries



Pen and ink sketch of possible bighorn sheep headdress elements. This artifact was discovered near Capitol Reef National Park, Utah and this drawing is based on a brief report by its author (Allen 2002).

Allen Headdress

- Another possible bighorn sheep headdress artifact was found near Capitol Reef National Park (Allen 2002).
- This third bighorn sheep headdress consists only of the horn cores attached to a drilled and cut skullcap.
- Cutting of the dorsal face of the horns and drilling of holes in the cranium bolsters an attribution as a fragmentary example of another bighorn sheep horned headdress.

Similar Bighorn Headdress Discoveries

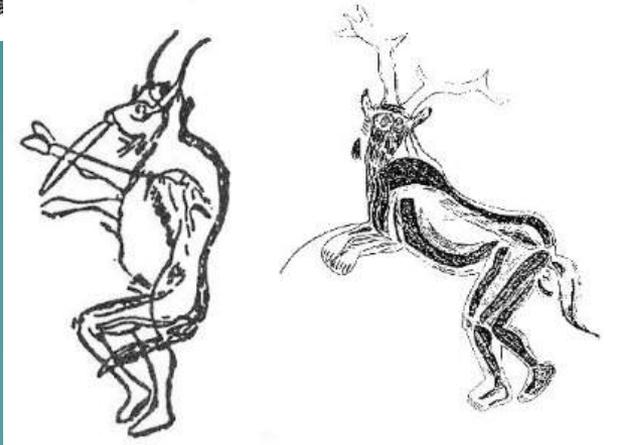
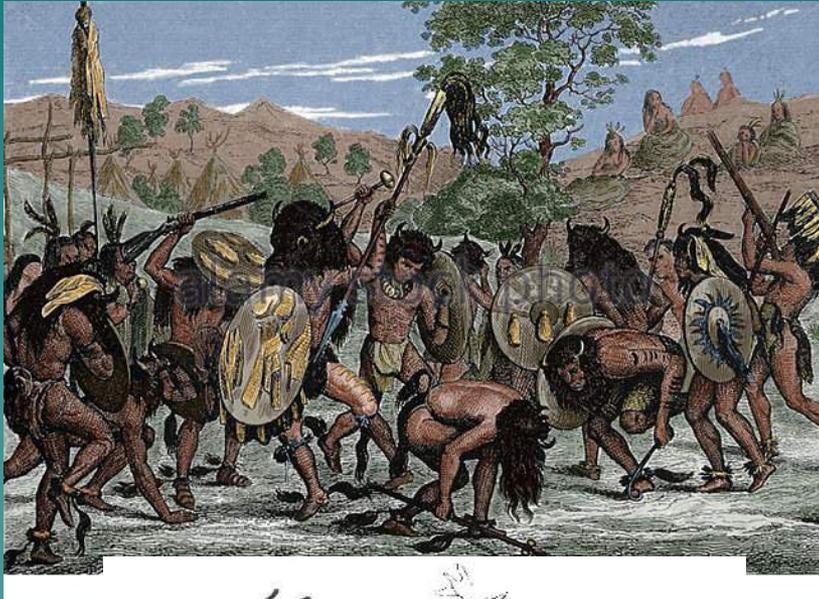


Headdress from private party putatively associated with an early assemblage of material identified as coming from the Pectol family from Capitol Reef, Utah.

Goldsmith Headdress

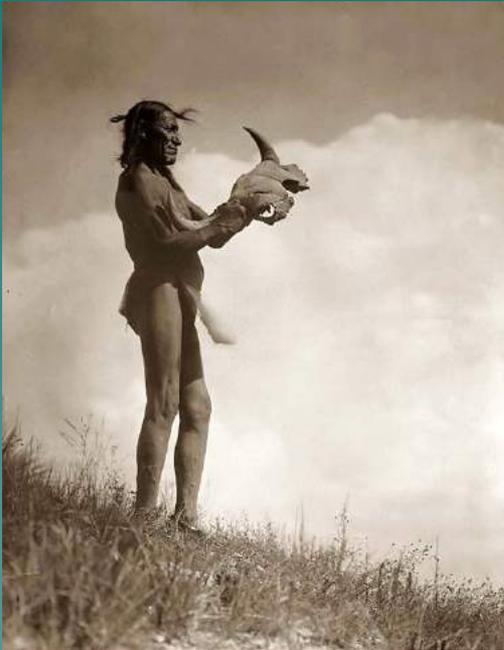
- ❑ Cinematographer Paul Goldsmith, who crafted the documentary film *Talking Stone: Rock Art of the Cosos* (Goldsmith and Garfinkel 2013) informed us about another headdress (the 4th) and provided a photograph.
- ❑ The [bighorn sheep] headdress was discovered in a cave in 1929 in the Capitol Reef area [of Utah] prior to it becoming a park. [It was] found in conjunction with Fremont perishables.
- ❑ The headdress was purportedly found by an Indian guide who worked for the Pectol family of Utah (who are somewhat famous from the days of "cowboy archaeology").
- ❑ It appears to have had an attached cape and/or head covering to it. It is in possession of a private party who wishes to remain anonymous. (Paul Goldsmith personal communication 2016).

Ceremonialism and Animal Imagery



- ❑ A recurring motif in rock art worldwide is a depiction of a figure (therianthrope or animal-human conflation) adorned with a wild animal's horns.
- ❑ This suggests a ritual where a person attempts to become or meld with the spirit identity of a wild animal. The idea of transformation from human to animal is common to hunter art worldwide.
- ❑ Hunters are attuned to the qualities of animals and they become symbols for agility, survival, and power.
- ❑ Fertility (aka increase rites) and world renewal ceremonies regularly feature animal costumes, masks, and headdresses. These employ the skins, heads and horns of large game animals.

Ceremonialism and Animal Imagery



- ❑ If the intention of the headdress manufacturers was to magically control the habits of bighorn sheep, ensuring success in the hunt, then wearing the skin, crania, and horns of the animal and fashioning bighorn images in rock art would certainly be a sensible way of getting into the mindset of the bighorn sheep.
- ❑ Alternatively, it appears that in some cultures bighorn were also thought to be spirit helpers or animal guardians for medicine persons.
- ❑ Native people would attempt to communicate with the animals through telepathy, and this process would routinely produce concrete expressions in personal health, success, and physical rewards.

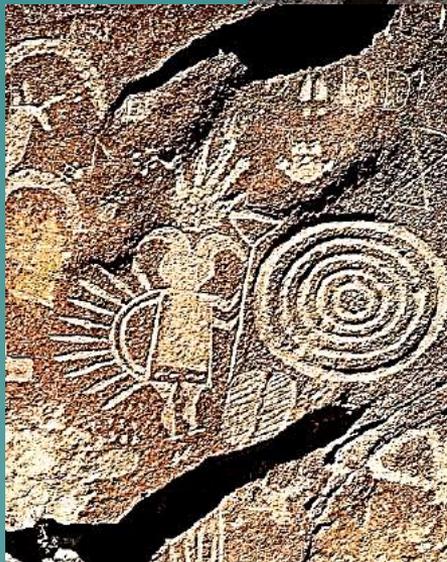
Ceremonialism and Animal Imagery



- ❑ Ake Hultkrantz (1986:633) indicates that spirits, sometimes in animal disguise, were some of the supernatural beings recruited by Numic individuals to provide success in hunting.
- ❑ Ethnographic references attest that the head and horns of sheep were also used as hunting disguises for the Great Basin Numic (Paiute and Shoshone) peoples

Lithograph from “Mountains of California” by John Muir (1894). Sheep hunting disguise. Horns and hood can be noted in this drawing.

Possible Rock Art Depictions of Bighorn Sheep Headdresses



- ❑ Throughout the Coso Range of eastern California there are numerous (n = 200+) anthropomorphic figures wearing what appear to be bighorn sheep headdresses.
- ❑ In some cases they are better identified as animal-humans supernatural some with avian feet.
- ❑ In northern New Mexico (Largo Canyon) there are petroglyphs and paintings of humans in ceremonial attire with bighorn headdresses.

Possible Rock Art Depictions of Bighorn Sheep Headdresses



- ❑ The rock art of the San Rafael Swell and eastern Utah appears to support hypotheses about shamanic hunting rituals using a bighorn headdress, and may link some ethnographic traditions to the prehistoric past.
- ❑ Barrier Canyon style rock art has been suggested to date to approximately 3000 to 1500 years ago (and possibly as early as 5000 years ago)
- ❑ It commonly includes large wispy, limbless figures with wavy lines, animal familiars, snakes and birds. These figures are often interpreted as spirit figures, shamans or hybrid animal-human deities.

Possible Rock Art Depictions of Bighorn Sheep Headdresses



- ❑ Rock art in Eastern Utah attributed to the Fremont archaeological culture also features anthropomorphs adorned with bighorn sheep headdresses (Matheny et al. 1997, 2004). This is prominently seen in Nine Mile Canyon, particularly in the well-known panel called the *Great Hunt Panel*
- ❑ Many other Fremont-attributed rock art panels closer to the San Rafael Desert also contain horned anthropomorphs. Several of these panels from the Price River area, the San Rafael Swell, and the Capitol Reef area.

Ethnographic Accounts: Ute and Southern Paiute

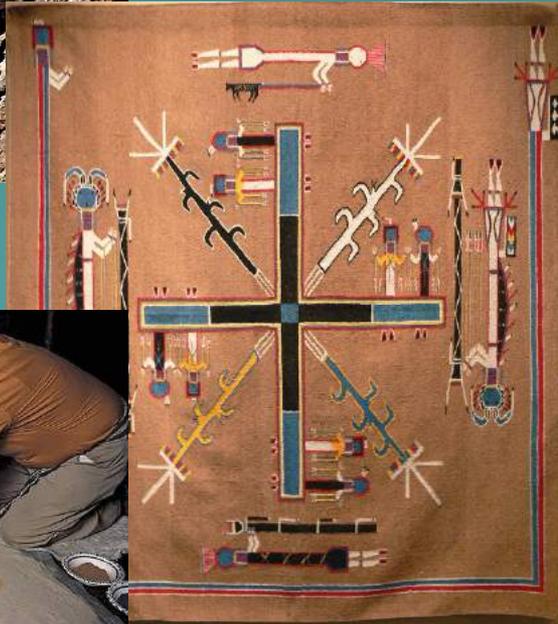
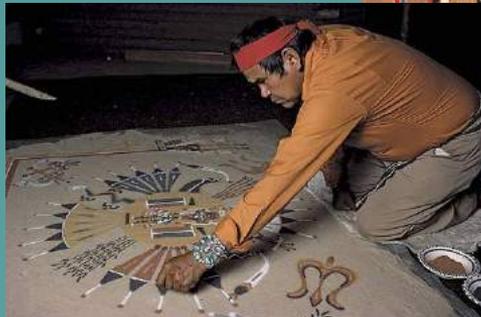
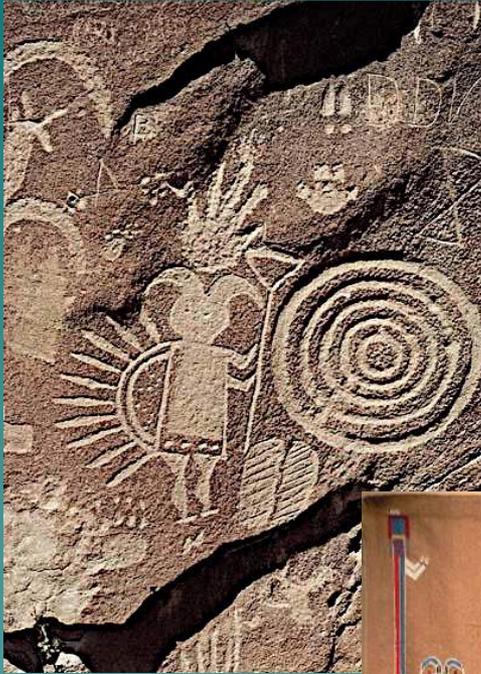
HUNTING MAGIC

- Eastern Utah was home to several Ute tribes, or *Nuche*, first identified when Spanish explorers visited in the 1700s. The region where the headdress was found was probably Ute territory, though also close to the Kaiparowits Plateau Region frequented by Southern Paiute bands.
- Southern Utah, mountain sheep were hunted year-round by Southern Paiute bands (Kelly 1976).
- Southern Paiute had special "game-dreamer" songs. The sheep song was given to the singer in a dream, a gift from the mountain sheep. The "dreamer-singer" would dream about killing game, food for sheep, rocky places, rain, bows and arrows, and sometimes arrows turning into male mountain sheep.



Contemporary Havasupai Ram Dancers. They are Yuman speakers and not related to the Ute or Southern Paiute.

Ethnographic Accounts: Navajo



WORLD RENEWAL/ EARTH FERTILITY

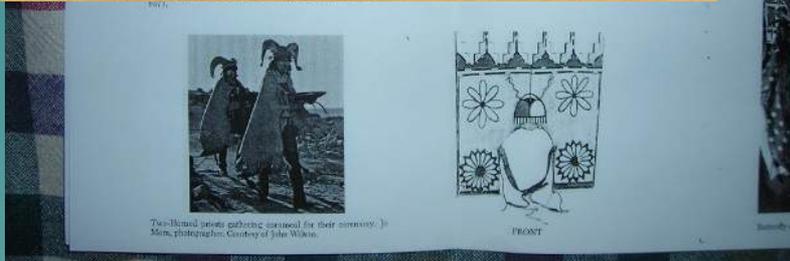
- ❑ The Navajo of the Governador District in northern Mexico have an important deity known as *Ghanaskidi*. This god is in charge of the harvest, plenty, mist and mountain sheep and this god makes these resources available to the people.
- ❑ *Ghanaskidi* is one of the most frequently depicted deities in the Navajo pantheon both in rock art and sand paintings. Bighorn horns grow from his head.
- ❑ *Ghanaskidi* is the owner/ controller of bighorn sheep (animal master) and plays a prominent role as a deity bearing the seeds of all vegetation and also controls mist.
- ❑ This deity is a principal in the Night Chant healing ceremony. Rock art imagery from Largo Canyon depicts this immortal with a sheep horn headdress, staff (digging or planting stick), and eagle-feathers adorning a rainbow on his back

Ethnographic Accounts: Hopi

HEALING, HUNTING, HARVEST



- ❑ The Hopi of the American Southwest have a secret society or sodality known as the *Ahl*.
- ❑ *Ahl* members wear the horns of the mountain sheep on their heads and this fraternity directs the November New Fire Ceremony
- ❑ The *Ahl* **solicit the ancestors for rain, health, abundant harvests, and also feast in honor and reverence for their ancestors.**
- ❑ This ceremony is also associated with a rite of passage for young Hopi boys to become men - symbolic of the beginning and **renewal of life.**



Research at the 14th century Hopi village of *Homol'ovi* in northern Arizona indicates that occupants regularly used nonlocal bighorn sheep. This was recognized archaeologically by burned and painted bighorn skulls and Lamotta, attests that the skulls were regularly used by the Hopi for their ceremonial headdresses (Lamotta 2007:10).

Ethnographic Accounts: Eastern Pueblos



Hunting Priest and Mountain Sheep Dancers

ca. 1917-1920 Awa Tsireh Born: San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico Died: San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico watercolor and pencil on paperboard sheet: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Corbin-Henderson Collection,

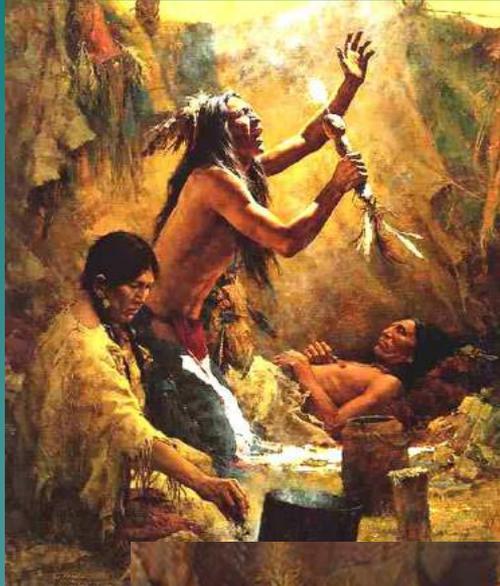
ANIMAL AND HUMAN FERTILITY

- A repeating theme in the Eastern Pueblo Indian literature, for Isleta, Santo Domingo, Santa Ana, Zia, Santa Clara, San Felipe, Laguna and others, is that the leader of the local hunter's society is responsible for the successful reproduction of game animals, which usually included bighorn sheep.
- Dress for these dances often required ceremonial regalia that included headdresses with the horns and antlers of various large game animals.



Mountain Sheep Dance Jemez Indians
1932 Pomona Public Library

Affiliation and Context



FREMONT

- It seems likely that the headdress was part of the Fremont religious repertoire.
- The use of rare *Olivella biplicata* beads and the possible placement of the object into a small rock crevice or shelter point to ritual significance.

Symbolism



SACRED ANIMAL-HUMAN POWERS

- ❑ Esther Jacobsen reminds us that by donning the animal headdress, the ritualist became the animal itself and was reborn into its body and knowledge.
- ❑ In general, the ritualist adornments (especially the headdress) “*effectively represent a reassignment to themselves of the signs and symbols of an ancient pantheon formulated in the bodies and powers of sacred animals*” (Jacobsen 1993:173).
- ❑ Eliade (1972) spoke of a ritual adept’s costume as representing “*a religious microcosm*” and Jacobsen (1993) emphasized that such dress was a testament to this *animal-human conflation and the power invested in the generative forces of nature.*

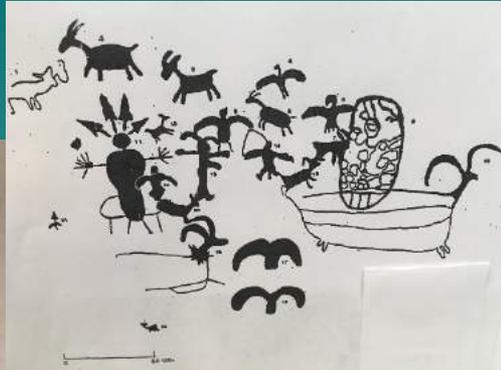
Symbolism

HUNTING MAGIC



- Recent research on San Bushman ritualist hunting and its relationship to head adornments suggests that wearing animal caps presupposed *an intimate and reciprocal relationship with game animals.*
- Only ritualists who “possessed” such animals were entitled to wear these vestments. These were the specific ritualists who possessed the superlative skill to lure an animal to the hunters for the kill.
- Employing such an adornment was recognized as a type of “*hunting magic*” *symbolically echoing the wearer’s ability to influence game animal behavior.*

Symbolism



ANCESTOR DEITIES & SOUL FLIGHT

- ❑ Shells adorning the Siberian headgear (in this case perhaps an analog for the small shell beads attached to the Green River headdress) were identified by Native consultants as birds.
- ❑ These little birds dangling as they were above the eyes of the ritualist appear in a fringe-like fashion as metaphoric stars and celestial bodies in the heavens.
- ❑ The wearer of the headpiece is then reminded of the central element of shamanism – to fly into the heavens up into the sky via a “soul flight” to commune with the ethereal divinities and ancestor deities.

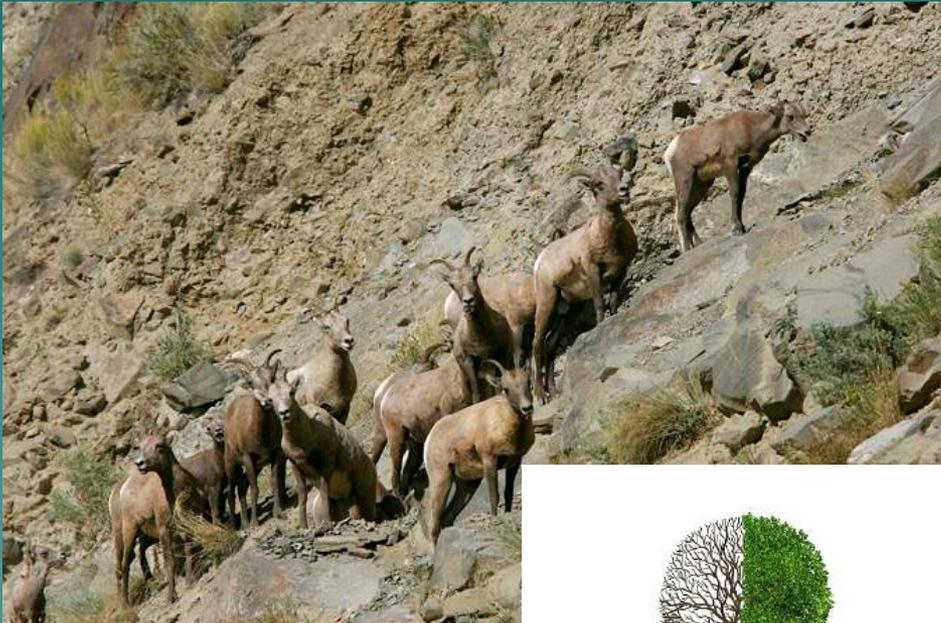
Summary

BIGHORN SHEEP



- *The bighorn sheep* with its habitat in the elevated crests of high, often rugged mountains, typically occupies an uppermost frame in the minds of native people of the Great Basin and the Southwest.
- Scholars conclude that bighorn sheep serve as *a topmost symbol* to many indigenous people due to their association with mountain peaks.
- The *power and energy* of the universe is often concentrated on mountain tops within these uppermost realms. These are typically places of awe and majesty and often homes of *immortals* (Miller 1983:70).

Summary



BIGHORN SHEEP

The bighorn appears as a powerful metaphor applying to mastery of large game and as a means of *supernaturally ensuring an abundance of game*

Further, the bighorn is seen as a creature that provides *assurance of renewal* - from sickness to health, from drought to rain, from infertility to fecundity in human reproduction and assurance of a successful harvest of plants and proliferation of game.

In essence, the bighorn sheep seems to have been a *timeless cultural symbol for the cosmic regeneration of life in all its various facets.*

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