

Uintah Basin Basketmaker II Anthropomorphic Style:
Antecedent and Ancestral to Classic Vernal Fremont Style Rock Art

(Slide 1: title page incl. CV image) Spectacular Classic Vernal anthropomorphic style rock art is associated with Eastern Fremont culture in the Uintah Basin (UB) of northeast Utah. However, the question regarding what attributes characterize this rock art style and the geographic extent of its distribution continues to puzzle and prompt debate among rock art researchers. In a 2016 article in Southwest Lore, Keyser conducted a detailed attribute analysis of Fremont rock art styles in the greater UB area and concluded that Classic Vernal (or Uintah Basin) Fremont style rock art has a range that extends east into NW Colorado (Vermillion Canyon area), north into SW Wyoming (Rock Springs area), and south to the San Rafael area of central Utah (Slide 2: Keyser's map). In particular, he took issue with Schaafmas's parsing of Classic Vernal anthropomorphic style rock art into three variants: outline and non-outline pecked (now understood as the result of fugitive paint), and solidly pecked--a distinction without a difference--which he decries as having led to “confusion among rock art researchers as to what a Classic Vernal style anthropomorphic actually is.” Further contributing to this confusion, in Keyser's view, Schaafsma (1971: 29-31) describes Northern San Rafael style Fremont anthropomorphs as having attributes that are identical to figures she included in Classic Vernal style, that is, having solidly pecked, trapezoidal bodies with headdresses of long horns or rake-like antlers” (Slide 3: Solid-body figures).

In this paper, I agree and expand upon Keyser's claim that Classic Vernal anthropomorphic style encompasses both solid-body and outline pecked styles and has a wider range of distribution than previously thought. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, I attempt to ferret out the origin and subsequent transformation of the Classic Vernal (UB) style over space and time. Is there a local or alternatively a more distant, antecedent for this rock art style and, in the latter case, can we track it using multiple lines evidence? The evidence suggests that a continuous stylistic sequence exists—and

that it correlates with continuity in language and material culture-- spanning EBM II anthropomorphic rock art in SW Colorado and NW New Mexico and Classic Vernal style rock art in the Uintah Basin. Tabot and Richens (1996) suggest that the presence of Basketmaker cultural traits and maize in the Uintah Basin is probably the result of the small-scale migration of Eastern Basketmakers to the Uintah Basin through linguistic and archaeological evidence examined in Ortman and McNeil (2017 in press) regarding the ethnolinguistic identity of EBM people and their connections to E. Fremont people who created Classic Vernal anthropomorphic style rock art. This connection is explained in terms of a small scale migration of EBM II people with corn and material culture to the Uintah Basin by about 250 AD.

1. What is the archaeological evidence for BM II presence in the Uintah Basin? (Slide 2: MAP)

Talbot and Richens (1996; also see Simms 2008) cite the earliest evidence of pre-ceramic culture (bell-shaped pits for corn storage and human internment, and pithouses) and maize agriculture and dietary dependence (45-50% of diet) in the UB at the Steinacker Gap to about 250 AD (based on maize pollen samples). In the 1950s, Breternitz argued that sites in Dinosaur National Monument (DNM) spanned 100 to 1250 AD, that is, early to classic Fremont based upon two non-local pottery sherds. This idea was overturned in 1993 when Truesdale radiocarbon dated a wooden post at Burnt House "Village" (Cub Creek in DNM) to 69 AD, which squarely fits into BM II. [*Note that in 2019, researchers at Utah State in Logan, Utah, used a more precise dating method that arrived at late BM II (~450 AD) for the Burnt Village site; see Finley and Robinson, American Antiquity 2019 (?) with new dates for DNM.*] About 10 miles to the south of DNM, near the modern town of Jensen, Cackleburr Wash was identified as a pre-ceramic site with BM II material culture and maize.

These UB BM II communities were contemporaneous with BM II groups to the south, a fact that Talbot and Richens (1996:180) believe is consistent with the northward small-scale migration of farmers during BM II. This idea of UB Basketmaker connections with people immediately to the south

is further supported by Wormington's (1955:87) analysis of similarities in pithouse structures at Burnt House village (Cub Creek), at the Turner-Look site near Cisco in east-central Utah, and at the Sandy Ridge site in Moab, east-central Utah.

Regarding evidence of the Early Fremont period ~400-600 AD in DNM, the Lowell Spring site produced evidence of a material connection to the Turner-Look site, near Cisco, Utah as well as to the Uncompahgre Plateau in west-central Colorado as suggested by the presence of Turner-Gray: Cisco variety pottery and Uncompahgre Complex points (Wormington 1955:87). Several other early Fremont sites in DNM area that were radiocarbon dated by Truesdale (1993) include: Juniper Ledge Shelter where a juniper bark basket containing 104 *Zea mays* kernels (408 AD); the Pool Creek site (400-600 AD), Wholeplace Village, Wagon Run, and the Dam site (~610-650 AD). Later, Classic UB Fremont sites span 600 to 1300 AD, such as Caldwell Village.

A topic for future research (see McNeil and Shaul 2019) might involve examining the Gateway material culture in west-central Colorado for evidence of a rapid small-scale migration of EBM farmers from southwest Colorado to the UB. It is important to note that these BM II and Early Fremont sites in DNM are within view of UB BM II rock art site, a topic that I will discuss more fully later.

2. **Is there linguistic evidence suggesting that Eastern Basketmakers and E. Fremont people shared the same language, material culture and genetic history?** In this section, I give a brief overview of the linguistic and archaeological evidence presented in Ortman and McNeil (2017) to build a case for the **stylistic and ethnolinguistic origins** of Classic Vernal style rock art harkening back to EBM people and culture. (Slide 6: Harrington quote; Slide 7 Map of N.Amer. Language; Slide 8: the **Kiowa Odyssey 4 Qs**) Using the historical linguistic method, Ortman reconstructed the Proto-Kiowa Tanoan (PKT) speech community homeland in the Rio Grande Valley with the KT dialect community occupying the northern most end of this dialect chain. (Slide 9: PKT Tree) His analysis was based upon

sound correspondences in consonants and vowels, morphohonemic alterations, noun class and inverse-number marking system (Slide 10). By correlating a Rio Grand Valley cultural inventory and related words reconstructed to PKT, Ortman concluded that the Kiowa dialect group split from the PKT parent speech community during BM II and before BM III. (Slide 11: words for BM II and BM III cultural inventories) This slide shows on the left side a list of PKT words reflecting a BM II cultural inventory including maize and basketry. In contrast, the list to the right shows Proto-Tanoan words that reflect a BM III cultural inventory including pottery and bow and arrow, words that are notably absent in the KT dialect suggesting that KT speakers had left the PKT community before BM III (Slide 12: BM III artifacts)

If this is correct, then where might the KT speech community have move? Words specific to the KT dialect (but absent in PKT) reference mountain forest uplands of southwestern Colorado (KT words: ponderosa pine, blue spruce, and quaking aspen, plus wild potato) suggesting that KT speakers who already lived on the northern end of the RGV moved into the upland environment of SW Colorado (Slide 13: Map SW Colorado). A second line of evidence pertains to painted turtles whose habitat include the RGV but are absent in the archaeological record of the MV area of SW Colorado. While both the word for 'painted turtle' and the species are present in Tanoan dialects along the Rio Grande, but are absent in the KT dialect whose speakers resided in SW Colorado by BM II ~300 BC. What this suggests, and is key to my argument regarding the origin of Classic Vernal style rock art, is that the KT speech community homeland (after splitting from PKT) overlapped with the EBM cultural area in southwest Colorado and east-central Utah. E making it reasonable to assume that EBM spoke the KT dialect. This piece of the puzzle is key to constructing an understanding of how and when EBM farmers arrived in the Uintah Basin and evolved into UB Fremont (Slide 14: Map with migration arrow). A pressing question for future research might investigate whether there is a material connection between this proposed small scale EBM migration to the UB and Gateway culture in west-central Colorado.

3. So what is the evidence connecting EBM II and Eastern Fremont culture and people? (Slide 15)

- Fremont follows EBM II chronologically
- EBM II site distribution overlaps the Fremont area, including the UB (especially DNM) area
- Spread of maize, pit houses, bell-shaped storage pits from the Puebloan area (Rio Grande) to the Eastern Fremont area, including the UB.
- MtDNA shows close genetic ties between Fremont and Jemez Pueblo people at north end of PKT homeland.
- Basketry (**click**): In contrast to WBM basketry, EBM basketry is similar to Fremont whole rod foundation, interlocking stitch and half rod-and-bundle stacked foundation, non-interlocking stitch.
- Fremont Dent corn reflects the adaptation of BM corn (*Zea mays*) to colder-drier conditions.

4. The last line of evidence which is central to this paper, explores the evidence of stylistic and iconographic continuity across EBM II, Uintah Basin BM II, and Classic Vernal styles of rock art?. (Slide 16: Map of WBM, EBM, and E. FR rock art distribution). A comparison of body pecking techniques, appendage depiction, and headdress motifs reveals clear differences between WBM and EBM styles: outline vs. en toto pecked body, straight vs. wavy arms and extended vs. splayed feet. (Slide 17: comparison of SJA and UB BM figures). In addition, our analysis of over 500 WBM (San Juan Anthropomorphic) and EBM figures revealed significant differences in headdress motifs (reported in McNeil and Shaul 2016). (Slide 18: contrast of WBM (SJA) and EBM headdress motifs.) While

Archaic headdress motifs depict horns, rake-like wings, and other stylized natural entities related to a hunter-gatherer lifeway, WBM-SJA headdress motifs employ a distinct repertoire of single forms, (crescents, bars, plumes, tabular, duck silhouette) to depict stylized representational entities, some of which clearly relate to maize agriculture (corn plant with tassel, stacked rain clouds, etc.) and others are more symbolic in meaning. Also, unique to SJA style, single headdress motifs are combined to form compound motifs.

In contrast, what is the style and technique of UB BM II anthropomorphic style rock art? (Slide 19 EBM II style and technique; Slide 20 Cub Creek photo; and Slide 21: Photos of 4 UB BM anthros) It is characterized by 1) trapezoidal or rectangular shaped, solid pecked body forms, 2) featureless solid pecked, round head, 3) headdresses depicting two-horns, a rectangular “box” on top of the head, or no headdress (in contrast to SJA style headdress motifs, single and compound designs; 4) wavy arms (outlined pecked), and 5) solid pecked, splayed feet. Bas relief, a fairly common technique used in West Mexico and Mesoamerica to craft stone figurines and monumental art, appears in only a few cases in SJA rock art and in UB BM II style.

In UB BM II and III, we see the earliest expression of an **iconographic complex** that will culminate in Classic Vernal Style. It includes a complex of themes related to Warrior Art: bear impersonation/masks, weepy eyes, and war shields. On some Fremont panels this warrior art complex is mixed with Puebloan agricultural themes such as winged headdresses associated with rain-making. At the Cub Creek rock art site (Slide 22: BM II, bear ancestry), a UB BM II style figure contains a smaller bas relief figure in “her” abdomen depicting a standing bear, with its head turned in profile, a possible allusion to a bear ancestor. At a Rainbow Park site near Split Mountain, a BM III rock art panel depicts what may be the earliest known example in the region of a bear-human transformation narrative. (Slide 23: Rainbow Park panel) Notice the line of bear paws across the bottom that move from right to left in the direction of a small shelter to the viewer's left (out of view here). These bear

paws alternate with human foot prints that move from left to right, as if emerging from the shelter. The central, bear figure appears to protect a smaller figure (perhaps human) under its right arm while to its left a winged rain-making figure, recalls a Puebloan rain-making figure, and interestingly call to mind the Hopi Pour-Water-Woman katsina, who is carrying overflowing water jars in each hand. A prominent rock art researcher who saw this panel interpreted it as depicting one of the oldest iconographic narrative to recount a story of bear-human transformation. I would add that it may also recount a part of the Kiowa ethnogenesis story when KT speaking hunter-gatherers adopted corn agricultural, while at the same time honoring their bear ancestry.

5. Finally, with regard to the Classic Vernal Fremont style rock art, it appears to represent the end point in a process of in situ transformation of a local UB BM II variant. **If correct then where might solid-pecked body Fremont anthropomorphs that Keyser identified fit in this stylistic sequence?** Given its proximity to Early Fremont habitation sites in the Cub Creek area of DNM and a few cases where Classic Vernal style is superimposed over it (Vermillion Canyon), I maintain that the solid-body style represents a transitional style bridging UB BM II and Classic Vernal. If this stylistic and temporal sequence is accurate, then Keyser's solidly pecked anthropomorphs in the greater UB region which extends into southwestern WY, western CO, and the San Rafael area of central Utah may represent an Early (pre-Classic) Fremont expression (~400-600 AD) that bridges UB BM II and Classic Vernal styles. Thought plausible, future research is needed to confirm the idea that the solid-body style marks the dispersal of UB early farmers in search of more sustainable farming land.

In close proximity to pre-ceramic UB Basketmaker sites (e.g., Burnt House Village, radio carbon dated 69 AD [corrected to ~450 AD, I identify a mixed Late BM II-Early Fremont **anthropomorphic style which combines** attributes characteristic of both UB BM style (solid pecked body, splayed feet, wavy arms, headdress) with later Classic Vernal Fremont decoration such as

necklaces and a new repertoire of headdress motifs that suggest the use of single or multiple feathers. (Slide 24: Early Fremont Transitional Style; Slide 25: Keyser's examples again). These figures are located near early UB Fremont agricultural sites ca. 400-600 AD, small family homesteads where plain and corrugated utility wares such as Turner Gray are produced, and turquoise and shells for necklaces are imported.

The Classic Vernal Anthropomorphic Style represents the apogee and sadly the swan song of Fremont farming culture in the Uintah Basin, which (at least archaeologically, if not culturally) disappears by 1300 AD. With roots reaching back to EBM II rock art, it reflects the process of in situ transformation of UB Basketmaker II style, a local variant of the EBM II style in southwest Colorado and NW New Mexico, into the Classic Vernal Fremont iconographic complex (Slide 25: Iconographic complex; Slide 27 CV Shield Bearers; Slide 28: Masked bear impersonators in UB and Henry's Fork, WY). The Fremont solid-body anthropomorphic style most likely reflects a transitional style bridging BM II and Classic Vernal. (Slide 29: Attribute Chart)

In conclusion, I propose that Classic Vernal style marks the apex in a long process of in situ development of an iconographic complex that documents the process of Kiowa Ethnogenesis. (Slide 30: McConkie Ranch) Kiowa ethnogenesis, that is, the emergent sense of Kiowa tribal identity, is best expressed in the Classic Vernal Fremont “Sun Carrier” panel at McConkie Ranch which, in my view, iconographically attests to WHO they've become: people who give homage to bear warrior/ancestors (on the left) and rain-making farming ancestors (on the right). The centrality of the shield-bearing and feather headdress figure speaks to his chiefly status and the presence of trophy heads or scalps and the dead or unconscious captive in bas relief makes Kiowa power palpable (Click: Flicker Headdress from Mantles' Cave) (Slide 31: E. Fremont and NW Plains Connection; Slide 32: Kiowa Art, Shield bearing warrior with weepy eyes; Slide 33: Kiowa Tribal Identity). THANK YOU!

