Some Celestial Rock Art Motifs at Fremont Indian State Park and Tentative Interpretations of Their Function and Meaning by John McHugh
Fremont Indian State Park: Backstory

• Expansion of I-70 through Clear Creek Canyon in the early 1980s necessitated recordation of numerous archaeological and rock art sites

• Clear Creek Canyon Archaeological Project created

• Excavation at Five Finger Ridge
Five Finger Ridge = large Fremont pithouse village
Five Finger Ridge:

View of east finger
Typical Five Finger Ridge rectangular pithouse
Sketch of Fremont Pithouse
Five Finger Ridge:

- Largest Fremont occupation in 13th century AD
- 100 inhabitants
Fremont Indian State Park rock art catalogued by Shane Baker & Scott Billat
Clear Creek Canyon rock art consists of:

- 697 panels
- Over 3000 individual rock art elements (petroglyphs, pictographs, or pictograms)
Sevier Style A (Fremont)

most frequent rock art style at Fremont Indian State Park
Spring 2017

• Dr. John Lundwall suggested we commence an independent analysis of rock art at Fremont Indian State Park

• Focus: potential relationship between Fremont rock art and astronomical knowledge
Author sought:

UNEQUIVICALLY

CELESTIAL

MOTIFS

from Baker & Billat’s rock art compendium
Who are the Fremont?
Who are the Fremont?

• Current mtDNA evidence indicates:

• Fremont are Ancestral Puebloan

• Closest Fremont genetic affiliation: Jemez Pueblo (NM)
Fig. 3. Principal component analysis.
Fremont are Ancestral Puebloan

1. Fremont probably embraced some variation of Ancestral Puebloan religious ideology

2. Utilized Solar-Lunar calendar

3. Conceptualized Sun, Moon, Stars as deities
Hopi Indian Ceremonial Calendar
Tewa Indian Ceremonial Calendar
Tawa = Sun-god
Muyawu = Moon-god
Talatumsi = Dawn-woman
(Childbirth-goddess)
Soyal = Winter Solstice Ceremonies

Personified as Soyal Katsina
Fremont Indian State Park rock art:

• Author has examined approx. 150 panels

• All rock art located ¼ mile or more from the pithouse village of Five Finger Ridge

• 99% of rock art faces Southeast, South, Southwest
Why did the Fremont produce rock art on cliffs that face SE, S, SW?
• Ancestral Puebloans possessed Sun-priests

• Sun-priests witnessed the Sun-god’s movement from its summer solstice “house” to its winter solstice “house”

• Used this solar wisdom to set the ceremonial calendar
Soyal = Winter Solstice Ceremonies

Mischa Titiev: “... the main purpose of the Soyal [ceremonies] is to perform compulsive magic at the winter solstice, so that the sun may be induced to start back towards its summer home and thus bring suitably warm weather to permit the Hopi to plant their fields. At the same time, the ceremony aims to ensure plentiful crops and general prosperity and good health for the next season.”

(1944, p. 146)
Ray Williamson writes: “Winter Solstice ceremonies at all the Pueblos, though they differ in detail, are uniformly designed for the purpose of turning the sun around and setting him on his true northward course.”

(Williamson 1984, 79)
• Fremont probably had Sun-priests akin to the Zuni *Pekwin* (1896)
Why did the Fremont Indians choose to create rock art on cliff walls that face SE, S, and SW?
Fremont interpretation:

- Our religious images (rock art) face the Sun-god’s journey across the sky at the most crucial time of the year (winter solstice).
Fremont Sun-Sheep Imagery
All Sheep point west—the Sun’s directional movement across the sky
Hopi kiva screen depicting the Two-Horned-god, *Alosaka*.

Note the *Sun-god/Tawa* image lower-right.
Attributes of *Alosaka*:

J. Walter Fewkes writes:

- *Alosaka* represented by a Bighorn Sheep
- *Alosaka* “is intimately associated with the sun”
- *Alosaka* functions as an ceremonial escort for other deities

(Fewkes 1899, p. 532 n. 2, p. 544, p. 534, pp. 524-25)
Potential interpretation of Sun-Sheep motif:

Like *Alosaka*, the Sun-Sheep may serve as a directional “escort” which conveys the meaning that the Sun-god is indeed “moving westward.”
Prototypical Fremont Anthropomorph:

- Bucket-shaped head
- Horned
- Earbobs
- Frequent armlessness
- “Rakes” or “Combs” where one would expect feet
Pictoglyph:

Horned

Bucket-shaped head

Rakes/Combs
Zuni Thele’wekwe (Wood Society) Altar (ca. 1900)

Note the seven stars of the Big Dipper in top-center part of wall
• 2016 URARA presentation

• Jim Farmer

• Rakes depict ephemeral waterfalls seen during thunderstorms
Author’s conclusion:

• The priests that created Fremont Anthropomorphs were imbued with wisdom seen on the Zuni Wood Society altar.
A Case for Fremont Lunar Knowledge:

Pithouse 57
Pithouse 57

• Extra-large Five Finger Ridge pithouse

• Roof beam radiocarbon date: 1295 AD
3.9 cm pink-lavender rhyolite Pendant
“Moon” Pendant

13 holes = 13 lunar cycles

Waning Crescent Moon

Waxing Crescent Moon
New/Waxing Crescent Moon

Appears on western horizon after sunset
Waning Crescent Moon

Appears on the eastern horizon before sunrise
13 lunations commenced in a year
Interpretation:

- Moon-pendant encrypted with essential attributes of the Moon-god
Vestige of the Warrior-Twin Battle in the *Popol Vuh*, or the Hopi Dawn-Maiden Goddess *Talatumsi*?
Fremont petroglyph depicts a One-Armed Anthropomorph with Waning Moon motif
• Warrior-Twins embody Venus at dusk and dawn.

• A scene from the Mayan *Popol Vuh* recounts that the elder Warrior-Twin had his left arm torn off in a battle with Seven-Macaw (Big Dipper).

• Keresan-speaking Pueblos (Zia, Santa Ana, Laguna, and Acoma) recall a similar mythical battle, except that Seven Macaw has been transformed into a Bear/Giant called *Cko yo*.

(Thompson 2000, p. 100)
This Mimbre phrase (1000-1150 AD) Mogollon bowl motif depicts younger Warrior-Twin (Venus) in battle with an avian Giant, attempting to retrieve the elder Warrior-Twin’s missing arm (beneath Giant’s mouth).
The waning moon confirms that the scene takes place on the eastern horizon at dawn.
• Venus (Warrior-Twins) is the “morning” star.

• If the One-Armed Anthropomorph depicts the elder Warrior-Twin (Venus), then this petroglyph may contain a vestige of the “lost arm” vignette from the Popol Vuh.
• Stone effigy from great kiva at Hooper Ranch Pueblo (1230 AD)

• Right arm broken off in ancient times

• Abducted legs and deposition in a crypt in the kiva floor may suggest the Hopi “Dawn-Maiden” (Talatumsi)
• If the stone effigy represents “Dawn-Woman”/Talatumsi.

• The One-Armed Anthropomorph beneath the dawn moon may depict a Fremont equivalent to “Dawn-Woman.”

• Hopi elders inform that right arms were broken off clan deity (wu’ya) or clan fetish (tiponi) effigies so that the god’s malevolent powers could not be utilized.
Dual-Suns-with-Crescent-Moon Icon
Dual Suns with Waxing Crescent Moon
Ancient corn cob beneath petroglyph (circled)
Ancient corn cob (approx. 2.5 in) beneath petroglyph
• Elsie Clews Parsons recounts how, on the fourth day of a Soyal (i.e., Winter Solstice) ceremony a sun-symbol is placed on a kiva roof only to be replaced the following dawn.

  (Parsons 1939, II, pp. 704-705)

• Mischa Titiev elaborates on this practice: “[it] dramatizes ... the placing of the new sun in the sky ...”

  (Titiev 1944, p. 149)
Dual-Sun with Crescent Moon may face winter solstice sunset (red oval)
Author’s interpretation:

The Dual-Sun with waning moon motif depicts the “new sun” leaving its southern house at winter solstice and moving northward again.
You already know where I’m going to be at sunset, on December 21st!

THANK YOU!!!
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