

VIRGIN ANASAZI DESIGN: ROCK ART AND CERAMICS

STYLE AND CULTURE

Style, whether on rock art or pottery or other artifacts, has long been used to identify cultural identity—e.g. Virgin Anasazi—and to identify time periods as styles change through time. This ability to identify small slices of time is especially refined in pottery. Indeed, pottery sherds are often used as time markers.

The Museum of Peoples and Cultures is exhibiting artifacts from a site located near Kanab¹. The site is located on private land, and was excavated by the owner. Because we have very little information about the provenience, or exact location from which the artifacts were taken, it was not possible to undertake many scientific or contextual archaeological studies. However, we realized that one possibility was to study the designs on the pottery. I thought it would be interesting to compare the style of the designs on the pottery to those found on rock art in the general vicinity.

By style, I am referring to the techniques of producing designs, the design elements, and the composition or arrangement of the elements. Obviously, the surface on which the designs were placed is totally different in ceramics as compared to rock art. And, techniques of placing the design have differences in scale and procedure. Therefore in this study, I am concentrating on the elements and their arrangement.

Variation in style has interested researchers for a long time. In 1985, James Hill discussed causes of variability, combining two theories, the “social interaction theory” and the “information exchange theory” into a more encompassing “evolutionary framework”. The “social interaction theory” states that style serves no

function in maintenance of societal, interpersonal, or intergroup relations. Aspects of style are simply taught or communicated. Styles diffuse from people and groups to people and groups; the closer and more interaction, the more diffusion will take place and the more similar styles will be. Information exchange theory suggests style is functional and adaptive since it conveys information that fosters group identity, integration and boundary maintenance, social integration and differentiation. The evolutionary framework combines the two theories to make a more comprehensive explanation of stylistic variability and change. Style changes in a process similar to biological evolutionary theory. All aspects of style should be accounted for within an ecological/adaptive framework. (Hill, 1985:362-385). Hegman (1994:4) suggests that style can fill many roles and convey various meanings. She feels that style is mainly a means of marking social identities and expressing social differences.

COMPARISON OF ROCK ART AND CERAMICS

While pottery design and rock art were both important artistic endeavors to the prehistoric inhabitants of this area, they have several inherent differences. Pottery is movable: individual vessels can be traded long distances. The design on the pottery is determined and created by the maker, wherever she may be. The importance of the design to the person to whom it was traded may have been moot if the pot passed through many hands or was brought to its final

owner by traders or other travelers. However, in the locality in which it was made, painted pottery could be manipulated to actively “negotiate the meanings of relationships among individuals, families (kin groups), households (economic groups) and communities (residence groups).” Pottery is portable and can have ritual as well as household contexts, especially in the circumstance of intercommunity feasting. (Webster and Hays 1994:323) Most ceramics in this study are made locally (at least to the general area).

Rock art is non-movable, and rock art sites must have been chosen for specific reasons. Rock art can serve to mark a place as having been the site of intense human experience or can intensify human experience, serving as a point of orientation (Smith, 2001) Rock art is part of a sacred and social landscape (Hays-Gilpin 2004:147). Rock art at the same site may have been made by different people at different times. (Smith 2001). Rock art works at the scale of several communities (Crumley, Carole and William H. Marquardt1987) but may have public and private functions.

Determining the meaning of either rock art or pottery design has intrigued people for a long time. (cf. Martineau 1973, Patterson 1992, Cunkle1993). Unfortunately, meaning is usually not testable, and different sites or panels may have been made for different reasons. Rock art is often correlated with ceremonial practice, including trance, ritual, hunting magic, healing, initiations, and myths. (Hays-Gilpin 2004:165, 177). However, other panels may be simply histories telling a story of what happened. Other glyphs may be locational markers for water or travel routes.

A few studies comparing rock art and ceramics have been undertaken in the Southwest.

Most commonly, these studies involve representational elements rather than geometric elements. Among them, Fewkes (1898:691-2) identified similarities between feather designs on Sikyaki pottery and in petroglyphs. Separate

papers by Schaafsma and Hays-Gilpin in one volume (Schaafsma 2000) analyze rock art and ceramics (respectively) with depictions of kachinas. Hays-Gilpin illustrates dichotomous decorative styles in Basketmaker portable items (pottery, baskets and woven items) and rock art from the four corners area (Hays-Gilpin 2004:103-104). Stewart, Matousek, and Kelley(1990:307-8) compare rock art and ceramic art in the Jornada Mogollon region, finding some complex geometric designs, specifically meander lines and circle and dot designs that occur both in rock art and on ceramics. None of these studies look at the Virgin area in what is now Southwest Utah.

Southwestern Utah

The rock art Southwest Utah is mostly representational, being largely composed of anthropomorphs and zoomorphs. Purely geometric images are less common. However, many representational images include or are decorated by geometric elements. These elements were included in this study. Petroglyphs are more common than painted pictographs, so color is only occasionally present.

Decorated ceramics from the Talbot site have only geometric designs. The collection contains no vessels with representational elements. Decorated ceramics are mainly black on white, with a significant number of black on red.

Many ceramics from the site show three design types (singly or together) that are missing from, or rare, in the rock art panels.

Design Elements

Many vessels show negative or reserve designs: i.e. the design that catches the eye is actually the area left unpainted (in this case, the white or red). Negative elements are rarely used in the rock art of the area (Figure 1, 2, 3).

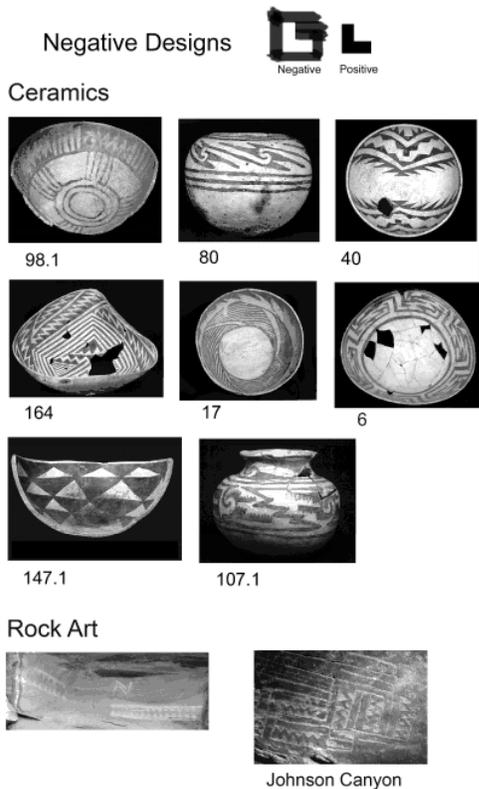


Figure 1. Negative Designs.

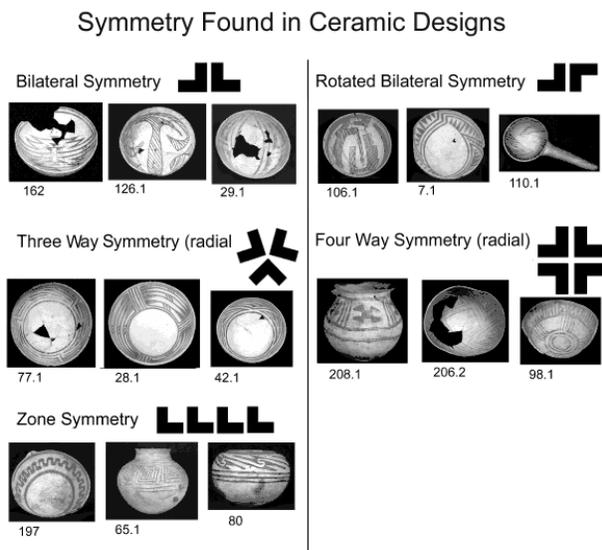


Figure 2. Symmetry Found in Ceramic Designs.

Most pottery designs show symmetry: glide, bilateral, or rotational. Some vessels are not quite symmetrical, but give the overall impression of symmetry, even though elements aren't placed exactly in the right place or aren't exactly the right size. Rock art shows essentially no symmetry except the bilateral symmetry shown

in the (face-on) anthropomorphic subjects (humans are by nature bilateral). The geometrics in the rock art rarely show symmetry (Figure 2).

Many vessels show bounding lines above and or below the geometric decorations (Figure 3).

Ceramics: Bounding Lines

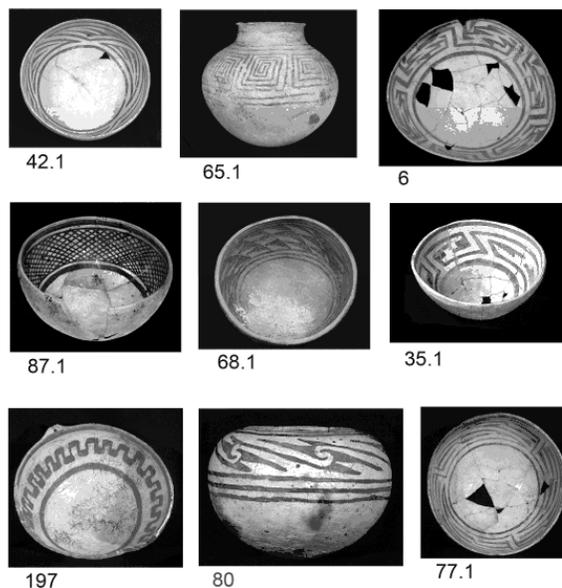


Figure 3. Ceramics: Bounding Lines

GEOMETRIC ELEMENTS

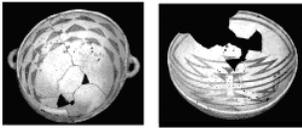
Many geometric design elements are found both in rock art and in the ceramic decorations. A close look at the shared elements, however, shows that they are generally used differently.

Triangles

Ceramics:

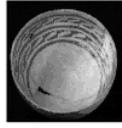
Triangles are very important in both bowls and jars: most vessels' decorations include triangles; some designs are totally composed of triangles. Most triangles are pendant from a line, some are stepped, and some are free floating. Triangles come in all shapes: equilateral, isosceles, and scalene (Figure 4).

Ceramics: Triangles



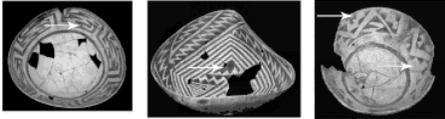
114 162

Double Triangles



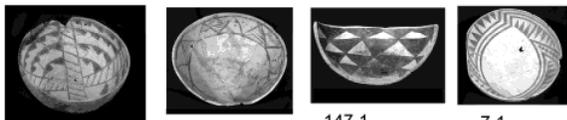
180

Stepped Triangles

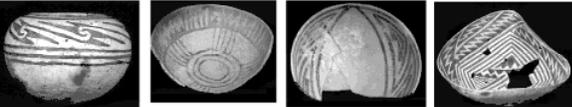


6 164 131

Pendant Triangles



30.1 124.1 147.1 7.1



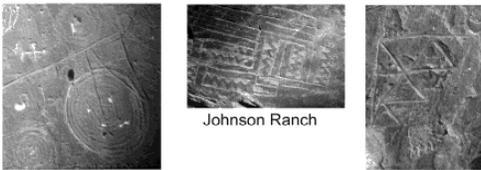
80 98.1 178.1 164

Figure 4. Triangles

Rock Art

The panels contain only occasional triangles: several sets of appended triangles, and two sets of triangle decorations between lines occurred in this sample. There is one example of concentric triangles (Figure 5).

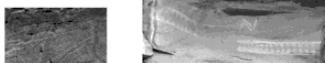
Rock Art: Appended Triangles



Johnson Ranch

Johnson Ranch

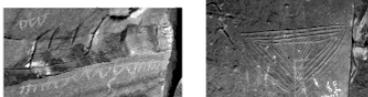
High Cave



Le Baron Ranch

Le Baron Ranch

Concentric Triangle



Johnson Ranch

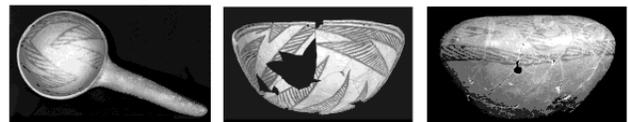
Figure 5. Geometric Decorations.

Geometric or Curvilinear Designs with Internal Hatching and Cross Hatching

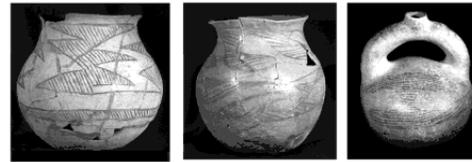
Ceramics

This design element is very important in ceramics; many bowls and jars have this type of decoration. Cross-hatching only occurs on two vessels; in both cases it occurs as a simple band. The designs that are hatched may be complex curvilinear or rectangular geometric with hatching set off from the undecorated (plain) sections. In some vessels, the hatching occupies about half of the surface (Figure 6).

Ceramics: Hatching



110.1 20.1 166.1

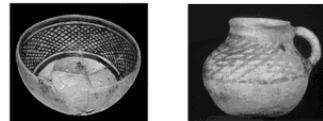


36.1 117.1 111.1



26.1 126.1 124.1 106.1

Cross Hatching



87.1 220.1

Figure 6. Cross Hatching

Rock Art

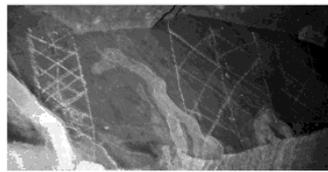
In rock art we find rare, sparse cross-hatching between vertical lines; hatching is used only in one panel to fill in representational images (Figure 7).

**Rock Art
Hatching**



Paria

Cross Hatching



Le Baron Ranch

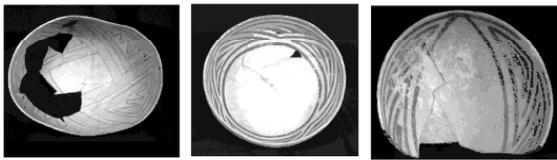
Figure 7. Hatching and Cross Hatching.

Spirals

Ceramics

A round spiral occurs on only one bowl. There are several triangular or square spirals on other vessels (Figure 8).

Ceramics: Triangular Spirals



206.1

42.1

178.1

Square Spirals



65.1

164

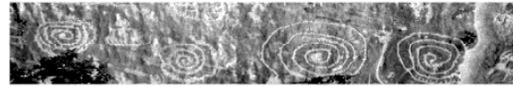
Figure 8. Triangular Spirals.

Rock Art

Round spirals are very common. They often occur in groups, with several near each other. Some groups of spirals are connected by a line. The spirals often resolve into something: a snake head, a person, or just an amorphous pecked area; sometimes spirals are bisected by a line. There are two examples of square spi-

als: one set is arms and legs of an anthropomorph (Figure 9).

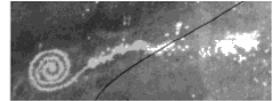
Rock Art: Spirals



Bull Pasture



Bull Pasture



Bull Pasture



Bull Pasture



Bull Pasture



High Site



Coyote Buttes

Square Spirals



Bull Pasture



Oak Canyon

Figure 9. Rock Art Spirals.

Circles and Concentric Circles

Ceramics

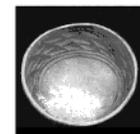
Few bowls have a decoration that is mostly or all concentric circles. A larger number have several bounding lines that technically are concentric (these bounding lines also occur on jars, but the impact is that of parallel lines, not concentric circles). One bowl has concentric circles in its center. This element is very easy to fit in spherical structure of bowls: however, it is quite rare (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Concentric Circles.

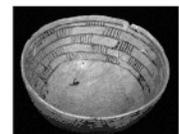
Ceramics: Concentric Circles



98.1



68.1

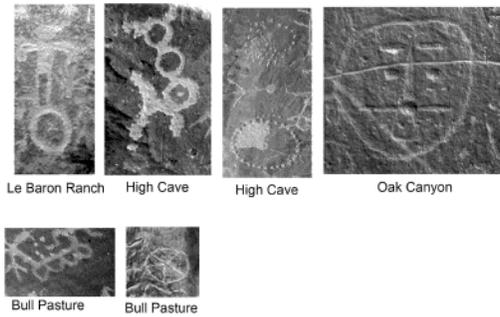


14

Rock Art

Concentric circles are an important element found at several sites. Sometimes several are scattered in the same panel; they are comprised of varying numbers of circles. Sometimes there is a dot in the middle, sometimes not (Figure 11).

Rock Art: Circles



Concentric Circles

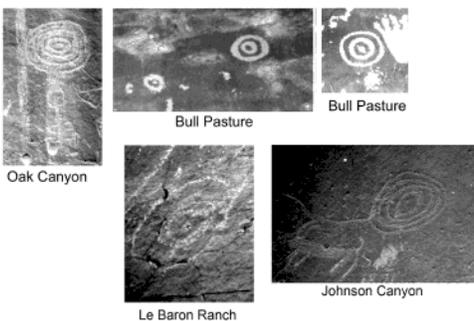


Figure 11. Rock Art in Concentric Circles

Zigzag or Wavy lines

Ceramics

Zigzag lines are used occasionally in a variety of ways: around the rim, forming the pattern, bounding triangles, and negative zigzags formed by parallel lines of pendant triangles (Figure 12).

Ceramics: Zigzag

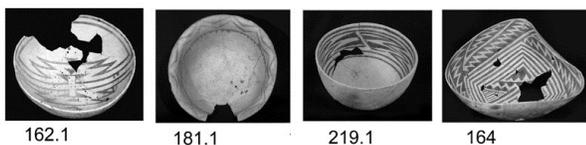


Figure 12. Ceramics: Zigzag Lines.

Rock Art

Zigzag lines, some deteriorating to merely irregular wavy lines, are very common in rock art panels. They vary from purely geometric to making up parts of representational images; sometimes there are several roughly parallel zigzag lines; some zigzag lines are vertical, some horizontal, and some are at an angle (Figure 13).

Rock Art: Zigzag

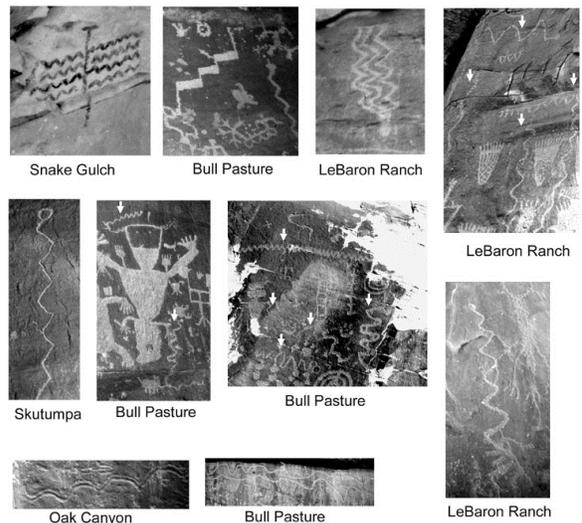


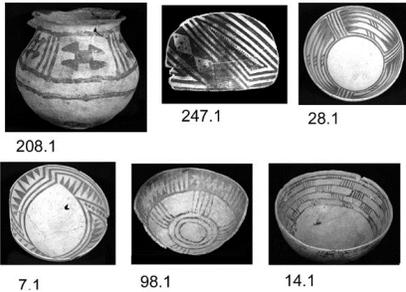
Figure 13. Rock Art: Zigzag Lines.

Other Lines

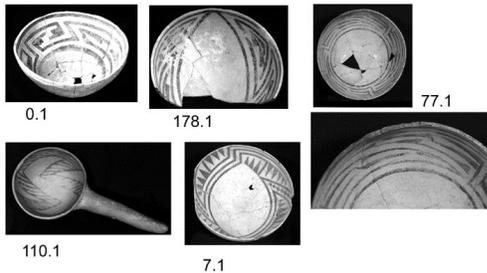
Ceramics

Bounding lines, horizontal lines above and/or below the zone of decorations, are very common. They may be single or multiple, thick or thin, and are found on both bowls and jars. Lines on a few pots form interlocking designs. Bands of parallel lines form part of the design on several pots (Figure 14).

Ceramics: Parallel Lines



Running Lines



14. Ceramics: Parallel Lines.

Rock Art

Geometric patterns formed from lines include two “mazes” or “basketry designs” and one “net” shaped design (Figure 15).

Rock Art: Mazes

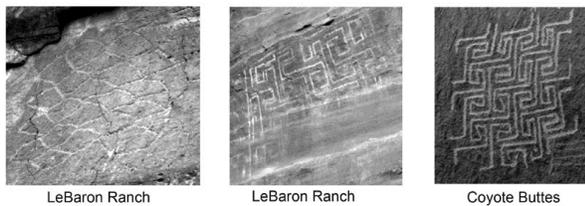


Figure 15. Rock Art: Mazes.

Dots

Ceramics

Dots are found in the centers of squares and within rhomboids; in one case a line of dots parallels one edge of a large triangle (Figure 16).

Ceramics: Dots

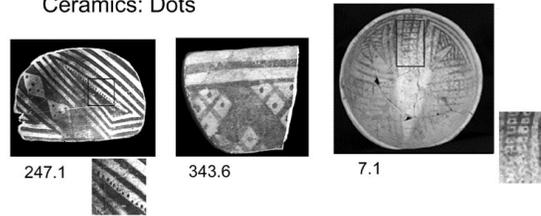


Figure 16. Ceramics: Dots.

Rock Art

Dots are used both to form figures and to decorate the insides of representational images. They are also found at the center of some concentric circles (Figure 17). In one element, dots form eyes and a nose.

Rock Art: Dots

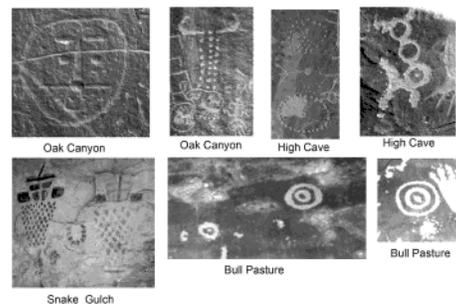


Figure 17. Rock Art: Dots, Pendant Dots and Short Lines (on one side of a line) and Ticks (protruding on both sides of a line).

Ceramics

Pendant dots are found on a few vessels; ticked lines occur rarely (Figure 18).

Ceramics: Pendant Dots and Ticked Lines

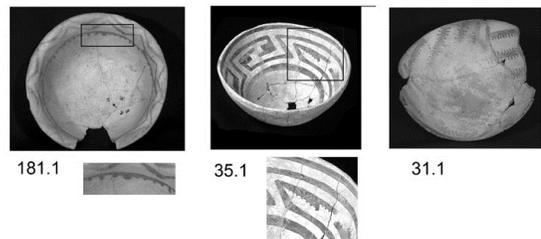


Figure 18. Ceramics. Pendant Dots and Ticked Lines.

Rock Art

Ticked lines (and some pedant dots or lines) occur in several rock art sites. Some are purely

geometric; others form parts of representational figures (Figure 19).

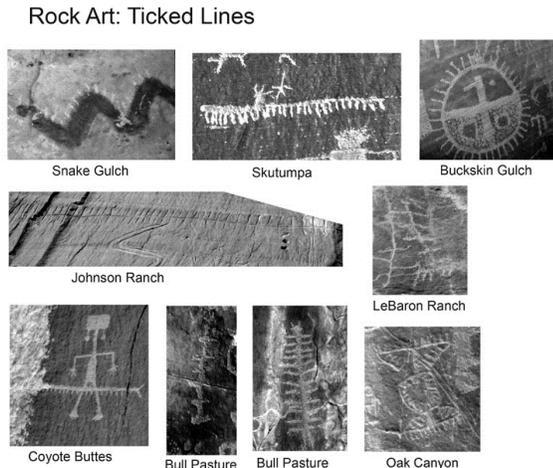


Figure 19. Rock Art: Ticked Lines.

Squares, Rectangles And Rhomboids

Ceramics

These elements are relatively uncommon; they vary from small to large, and may be negative or positive. They are often combined with other elements (Figure 20).

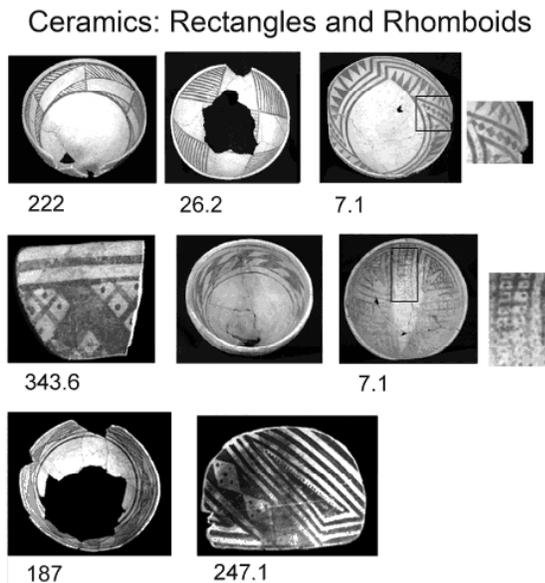


Figure 20. Ceramics: Rectangles and Rhomboids.

Rock Art

These elements are relatively uncommon; they are used as internal decoration or stair-stepped together (Figure 21).

Rock Art: Squares and Rectangles

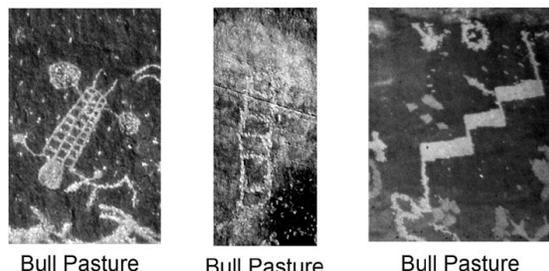


Figure 21. Rock Art: Squared and Rectangles.

CONCLUSIONS

While various geometric elements are used both in ceramics and rock art, there is very little overlap in the arrangements or styles in which the elements are used. Negative elements, bounding lines and symmetrical arrangements are largely confined to ceramics. The question then arises as to why there should be such a difference in art styles in these two media.

Technique does not seem to be a limiting factor. The rock art designs painted and pecked into the walls could easily be painted on the pottery, even with the constraints of the curved limited surface, and pottery designs could easily be painted or pecked on the rock faces as well.

Several, sometimes non-exclusive, reasons can be postulated. The difficulty we face is determining which is correct. The most obvious reasons that come to mind are that both rock art and ceramics were decorated by different groups of people, or that they were made for different purposes that required different styles.

Rock Art And Ceramics Were Decorated By Different Groups Of People

Because the rock art and ceramics principally are of the same age and from the same general

location, and based on previous archaeological work, we can confidently say that they were made by the same culture. Thus, different groups within the culture would have been responsible for the designs.

Who made rock art? Scholars have generally assumed men made it. Hays-Gilpin (2004: 85) reports that ethnographically both men and women are reported to have made it. Rock art is often attributed to shamans: again, both men and women are shamans (88-89). Rock art is produced by young women at their puberty rites in California (91). In general, there are very few eyewitness accounts of making rock art; some of the few are of females. (92). Robins and Hays-Gilpin report that contemporary Hopi men identify rock art as a masculine production; their research has also shown that worldwide men make more rock art. (2000: 231-232)

Who made pottery? Scholars have generally assumed making pottery was women's work. Robins and Hays-Gilpin report that women make most pots and baskets in cultures where such trades are not carried out by full time practitioners (2000: 231-232).

In her search to determine the importance of gender in rock art creation, Hays suggests,

If we assume two dominant gender categories corresponding to our concepts of "men" and "women" in past societies, we can search for binary patterning in content, style or both. If we find dualistic patterns, we can then hypothesize that gender has something to do with them. (Hays-Gilpin 2004).

Following this line of reasoning, if women made most pottery and men made most rock art: we can expect them to show different styles. The dichotomous styles found in the two technologies, fits the pattern Hays-Gilpin has proposed as one that would indicate gender differences.

However, other factors could cause dualistic patterns as well. Shamans or ritual practitioners could be another group of people who made rock art but did not decorate pottery. In most cultures, shamans can be either men or women. They might be especially associated with panels that involve curing, hunting magic or myths. Or, dualistic patterns could result from other divisions. For instance, it is documented ethnographically that some sites are important in the initiation of young girls or boys.

Ceramics And Rock Art Were Made For Different Purposes That Required Different Styles.

No one would argue that rock art and ceramic media have different meanings or purposes. Rock art is often postulated to have ritual meaning (at least in some cases); this may involve shamans, puberty ceremonies, hunting magic, myths, or other symbolic meanings. Rock art may be telling a story of something that happened or may be a way-finding aid. Rock art may be clan symbols. Rock art has important ties to the location where it is situated.

The purpose or meaning of ceramic design is rarely discussed, especially when the design is geometric rather than representational. While most archaeologists that study design feel it has a social or functional role, they are not able to break down the design to determine the meaning. While books claiming to offer keys to reading the designs are available (cf. James Cunkle for pottery and Alex Patterson or LeVan Martineau for rock art), these mainly refer to representational images, and, in any case are not universal, since many elements have multiple meanings.

This study points out significant differences between the pottery from a site near Kanab, Utah and rock art from several sites nearby. Several possible reasons for such differences are postulated, however, determining the cause of these differences will require much more research.

NOTES

1. Lanny Talbot, Kanab, has graciously loaned this collection of ceramics to the Museum of Peoples and Cultures.
2. Staff, students and student aides at the Museum of Peoples and Cultures, BYU took the pictures of the ceramics.
3. Nina and Craig Bowen, members of URARA, have a huge collection of rock art photos from this area. They graciously let me choose relevant photographs from their collection, both for this study and for the exhibit at the Museum of Peoples and Cultures. Photographs of some 35 panels of rock art panels from 11 sites were chosen from the hundreds of photographs because they contained geometric elements. Panels that did not include geometric elements were not included in this study. The sites are scattered, but all are within a few tens of miles from the Talbot site. All but two of the rock art photographs were taken by the Bowens.
4. Bob Ford kindly provided a photograph of a negative design (left photo in Figure 1), and I took the other (right) negative design photograph.

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