

Ritual and Rock Art in Basketmaker Ceremonies: Butler Wash Revisited

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Thirty-one years ago, William Strange introduced poetry into rock art studies at the American Rock Art Research Association conference in Santa Barbara, California. Strange contended that interpretation required a layered, textured, and complementary blend of voices aligned to tell a coherent story. Inspired by Strange's ability to see anew without blinders imposed by current canon, William D. Hyder (2002) explored selected Basketmaker sites in Utah's Grand Gulch through the lens of Rappaport's (1999) theory of ritual and humanity.

According to Huston Smith, renowned authority on world religions, Rappaport's "breakthrough book on the academic study of religion" argues that "religion [and ritual] has been central to evolution since the human species appeared and will continue to be central to any cultural advance we may achieve from this time forward" (Smith 2001:157). Interpretative approaches to rock art have evolved over the past 200 years, sometimes in synch with and often in contrast to evolutionary advances in anthropological and archaeological theory. Popular themes—hunting magic, art for art's sake, animism, semiotic analysis, landscape theory, archaeoastronomy, and shamanism to name a few—oscillate between scientific rigor and the creativity of postmodern humanism.

Dorothy Bohntinsky expresses many of her perceptions and interpretive explorations of rock art through the creative cadence of poetry. "Her poetic offerings to rock art blend together her work as a speech language pathologist, doctoral training and ordination in interfaith divinity, her role as a wife and parent, and her experiences as a healer around loss" (Hyder and Bohntinsky 2016:4).

*Most often we see a site in pieces;
rarely as a whole because we know so little
about the artists and their inspirations.
And we would add that we often know so little
about our own selves and what ignites hunches.*

In 2002, Hyder proposed that "[t]aking a more general approach based on the nature and function of ritual allows one to explore how rock art assumes its role within ceremony, how it acquires and communicates symbolic information, and why it evolves with social change. The focus on ritual also emphasizes the importance of the archaeological context when ethnographic information is lacking. Rock art takes its meaning from the rituals or other social contexts associated with its creation; meaning is not inherent in the symbols themselves" (2002:44).

Schødt (1986) contends that it is impossible to explore meaning with meaningfulness (speaking specifically to religious meaning) in the absence of

appropriate cultural ethnography or cultural analogs. Lewis-Williams (2001), on the other hand, concludes that focused polysemy and multivocality can move us forward in our quest for meaning. So how can we avoid the pessimism of the impossibility of knowing and embrace the promise of finding relevant voices to explore meaning?

What might happen if an archaeologist with expertise in rock art and a speech language pathologist with expertise in improving cognition and communication and a doctorate of ministry and ordination in multi-denominational divinity combined their experiences to explore meaning? While writing and producing a book about being engaged with rock art through essay, poetry, and photography (Hyder and Bohntinsky 2016), we discovered that such layering of expertise offers a form of evidence-based practice that takes into account 1) best evidence from research 2) expertise 3) resources and 4) the needs and perceptions of the subject.

Our approach enhances observation and expands insight in order to generate the most optimal questions and aggregate evidence regardless of the field of practice. We then engaged in what Indologists call rational inquiry, and Johannes Bronkhorst defines as including a "system of rational debate, linked to a systematic attempt to make sense of the world and our place in it. This primarily involves free and uninhibited discussion of all issues, even in the areas that might encroach upon other sources of authority, such as tradition, revelation, or insight" (Wallace 2007:83).

We came to understand this method of investigation as a form of *alignment*. This inspired us to explore the possibility that such an *alignment* could build on our combined experiences of being engaged with rock art. We explored selected sites in a focused attempt to align scientific observations and clinical knowledge with the poetic voice of multi-denominational divinity. Might this be one form of multivocality?

Butler Wash

We selected 2 sites to test our process: the Big Kachina Panel and the Procession Panel located along Butler Wash near Bluff, Utah. Both are well known to rock art enthusiasts. The former is considered a premier example of the San Juan Basketmaker II style dating to approximately 500 B.C. to A.D. 500, while the latter is generally considered to be Basketmaker III/Pueblo I around A.D. 700 or later (Robins 1997). The Big Kachina Panel is recognized as an example of shamanistic themes in Basketmaker rock art (Schaafsma 1980, 1994), ethnic signaling at residential farming locations (Robins 1997), or ceremonial iconography (Hyder 2002). The Procession Panel is an outstanding example of procession figures recognized as common to the Chinle Representational Style of the BM III/P I period (Robins and Hays-Gilpin 2000).

Schaafsma (1980:114) cites the Big Kachina and associated petroglyph panels located along the banks of the San Juan River at either side of the mouth of Butler Wash as “spectacular displays” of the San Juan Anthropomorphic (SJA) style. The dramatic appearance, sharp contrast created by the desert patina, and river location add to the site’s mystique. Yet, as Framer (1992) notes, about 80 percent or more of the SJA rock art sites are painted. Few other examples of SJA petroglyph panels are known besides those found along this stretch of the San Juan River. Visitors today are struck by the power of the figures as they gaze upward from their vantage points at the base of the cliff. Yet, that is not how they were meant to be seen.

*I had once imagined listening for answers
while sitting cross-legged far beneath these figures.
Then you explained how the landscape changed,
once alluvial fields that placed them at eye level.
So, dreaming about flying I rose above
in order to come to these images face-to-face.*

*Indigenous ritual is often active participation
while modern ritual involves a passive audience
for choirs, sermons, sacred text, and prayer.
What would happen if I aligned my mind
to invite the visual perception of action?*

*That is how I came to see it differently.
The big ones in front with the small ones behind
brought forth a new dimension of perception.
Suddenly, I no longer saw them in static pose
each decorated image separate and distinct.
Aligned upon an imaginary wavy plane
they suddenly moved into a new formation.
There they are, active figures moving forward
in a procession coming out of the face of rock.*

*I tried to return to seeing this panel
as if I was the audience observing ancient art
frozen in time.
But now I could only see the eternal movement
of these people proceeding forward.
I showed another who then experienced the same.
And now I wonder if I will ever see inertia again.
Or will rock art now bring to mind ritual in action?*

Visitors typically approach the panels today from the river or by four-wheel drive along the narrow northern bank of the San Juan. Approaching on foot, the river still limits one’s ability to view the panel. The river, however, has changed its course over the past 2,000 years, creating and eroding alluvial fans as it flows

through its wide channel before reaching the meandering confines of the Monument Upwarp (Aton and McPherson 2000). Far upstream, the Navajo Dam limits and controls the river behavior that we experience today. At the end of the 1800s, we would have stood on a broad alluvial floodplain closer to eye level with the Butler Wash panels.

Robins (1997) proposes the alluvial fan supported extensive subirrigated fields that anchored Basketmaker subsistence strategies in the region. A Navajo farmer, Jim Joe, is reported to have been growing 10 to 12 tons of corn at the mouth of Butler Wash in 1904 (Aton and McPherson 2000:85). We doubt the Basketmaker were ever that productive, but recent history demonstrates the potential of the site as a significant place for Basketmaker agricultural efforts. Whether other site attributes typically found associated with SJA rock such as habitation evidence, storage cists, and burials were present cannot be known because the flooding that created aggrading and degrading events would have washed away most of the archaeological evidence.

The Procession Panel site is different. It became popular with the introduction of hiking guides and the general growth in the reputation of Cedar Mesa and Butler Wash as a rock art destination. The panel, first described in print by Manning (1992), appears today much as it did at the time of its creation approximately 1,300 years ago. Located near the crest of Comb Ridge, about 10 miles above the mouth of Butler Wash, the arid draw in which it is found offers little to attract attention or habitation.

Small cliff dwellings and other Pueblo sites are hidden in other folds and eroded channels in the sandstone spine that separates Cedar Mesa from the Northern San Juan lands to the east. Hand and toeholds extending down the western face of Comb Ridge indicate that the Procession ravine was one point of crossing. Seemingly random placements of petroglyphs nearby in association with what might have been rectangular, low-walled defined spaces along an open cliff face leading to the site are suggestive of prayer seats or herraduras sometimes found in association with ritual roads (McPherson 2009:52). Shrines hidden on and among distinctive outcrops along the Comb suggest that some sites might well be ritual destinations much as today's hikers make their own pilgrimages to these sites.

*Does the land hold the entire story within each grain?
If we are made of the dust of the earth,
is the common denominator what we ingest?
Does water combined with soil and seed
nurture our spirit along with our body
through nutrients and unspoken memories?
I am glad that,
even though just for a moment,
I was barefoot at the Procession Panel.*

The Kachina Panels

The stark contrast of the lightly patinated exposed sandstone substrate with the blue-black desert varnish commands our attention. There are, however, other equally dramatic panels that lack or have lost the darker varnish rind and therefore attract less attention. In some instances, distinguishing one panel from another is an arbitrary exercise of the present day recorder. In other instances, natural features create gaps that would seem to indicate actual loci of different artistic efforts. Was there one point of focus in the past or do different panels represent shifting loci of ceremonial interest or activities over time?

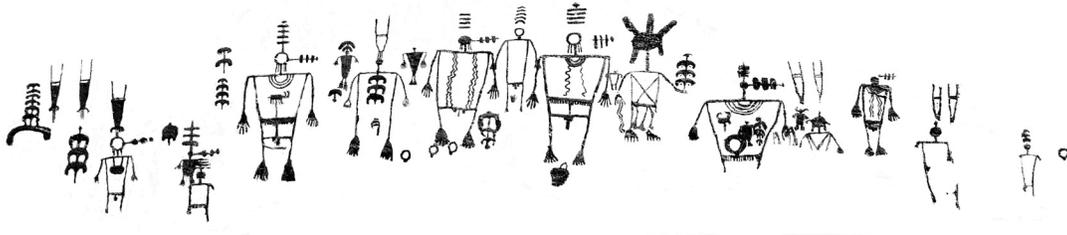


Figure 1: Panel 1 at the Lower Butler Wash rock art panel.

Panel 1 at the popular raft landing along the San Juan River at Butler Wash measures approximately 12 meters long by 2 meters high. Imagery stretches from the Archaic to Pueblo periods, but the visually dominate elements are primarily Basketmaker, the largest almost two meters high. We singled out the Basketmaker imagery in our drawing including 18 anthropomorphs of varying sizes with interspersed ceremonial objects. Although shown as a single image, various elements may predate or postdate our focus on the distinctive anthropomorphs. Six figures are definitely male as indicated by the presence of genitalia. All but two figures have some form of headdress and all are facing the viewer.

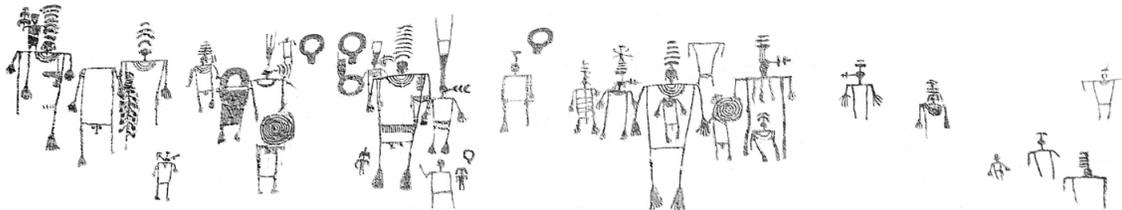


Figure 2: Panel 2 at the Lower Butler Wash rock art panel.

Panel 2 includes 31 anthropomorphs, a few obviously male, but the deteriorated surface and denser occurrence of overlapping images make it more difficult to cleanly separate the relevant Basketmaker images. The panel measures approximately 9 meter long by 1.5 meters high. A thorough recording of the area would include more panels of varying sizes, but these two panels are sufficient to illustrate the SJA style petroglyphs found around the mouth of Butler Wash.

Robbins (1997) identified the mouth of Butler Wash as the site of regional ceremonies based on the association of large SJA panels with productive agricultural sites as well as the differential distribution of distinctive headdresses on the large anthropomorphic figures. After further consideration, he refined his interpretative scheme by invoking Hayden's (1998) framework of competitive feasting, aggrandizing headmen, and prestige technologies. To wit, dynamic individuals used excess agricultural production to enhance their wealth and power over their own and nearby communities.

While some Basketmaker burials exhibit differences in grave goods that indicate a degree of wealth or elite status (Gumerman and Dean 1989:113), we argue that there is little evidence of sufficient quantities of trade items that would be recognized definitively as prestige goods. Indeed, Gumerman and Dean (1989:112) find little evidence for "higher levels of ceremonial organization that developed later on."

Prestige goods allow agricultural surplus that would otherwise require defensible storage to be transformed into more mobile forms of wealth. Robins asks if the rock art panels might classify as prestige items, but Hayden (1998:16) mostly views rock art as something used in ritual contexts meant to bind members of alliances covering large areas. "[T]hey are low in frequency and/or cost and certainly did not involve major amounts of group surpluses and were not predicated on surplus-based competition."

Robins (2002:392) revised his proposal that distinctive headgear is an emblematic indicator of social boundaries and instead proposes that they are related to ritual warfare and scalping (*sensu* Farmer 1997). Evidence of scalping, full-head scalps, and apparent trophy heads in rock art support the proposition. Hyder (2002), however, proposes an alternative interpretation: the mounted human scalps and similarly mounted bird skins are indicators of a society or cult (cf. Howard and Janetski 1992:131). The evidence can support either interpretation.

Wetherill's Cave 7, located in Whiskers Draw not far north of Butler Wash (Hurst and Turner 1993), is often cited as evidence for Basketmaker warfare and scalping. Hurst and Turner (1993:171) conclude that the burials were the result of a massacre: "The first stratigraphically-identified Basketmakers had been massively beaten, mutilated, scalped, and probably tortured." Robins rightfully draws on the local evidence to build his proposed competitive headman model and the prevalence of violent expressions of power in Basketmaker society. The importance of the rediscovered Cave 7 moved it from obscurity to prominence in a changing view of Basketmaker social relations and the predominance of violent conflict.

A re-assessment of Cave 7 burials based on stable isotope analysis and accelerator radiocarbon dating demonstrates the burials were not the result of a massacre. Instead, they were interred over a period of 500 years (Coltrain, et al.

2012). "Parsimony dictates that rather than a single, anomalous massacre, violent deaths among Cave 7 burials are more reasonably attributed to episodic acts of violence between allied males ... (*ibid.* 2229)." Rather than changing our assumptions about the nature of Basketmaker social organization, Cave 7 appears to be consistent with Gumerman and Dean's (1989) proposition that social relations were marked by episodes of cooperation and conflict in response to localized environmental extremes.

Evidence for proposed competitive feasting sites, as noted above for the mouth of Butler Wash, would have long since disappeared owing to the repeated episodes of erosion and aggradation at the most likely productive agricultural locations. Evidence from Cave 7 is weaker than has been assumed, but it does support "competitive social differentiation likely heightened during periods of resource shortfall leading to intra-group conflict, raiding, and perhaps ritualized acts of violence (Coltrain, et al. 2012:2220)." While not rejecting Robins' proposed "big man" competition model out of hand, we can resolve the lack of evidence and ambiguous data by turning to the more general model of ritual activity as proposed by Hyder (2002).

Developing Basketmaker family-based social groups relied on adapting a maize agriculture subsistence strategy as they moved into marginal environments in the San Juan region of the Southwest. While we know little of their actual roots, we can assume they confronted the problems of environmental stress, resource conflicts, and episodic intra-group violence with rituals designed to reduce the impacts of conflict and to enhance ethnic similarities that bound them as an emerging cultural identity. "According to Harvey Whitehouse, the esteemed Oxford anthropologist, rituals are the 'glue that hold social groups together.' Even microcosms appear to exhibit ritual behaviors as a way to transmit information and knowledge. ... Rituals create a primitive form of unity consciousness, where all of the brains in a group begin to fire in similar ways. They allow us to lose the distinction between self and other and feel an intense oneness or connections to everything" (Newberg and Waldman 2016:227).

*Ignited by sensations within the absence of judgment,
I think of that state of being where concerns disappear
into some delicate flame of intimate contentment.
Can I return there by taking in art from this perspective of intimacy?
So, I tried it while gazing upon my own paintings
hanging upon my own walls;
one's own creations often the most difficult not to judge.
Suddenly, I no longer saw individual details
but entered into one and then another much differently.*

*This is how I began to understand ritual more deeply;
when something is engaged in the absence of the vocabulary
of judgment and criticism.*

*Suddenly, the ordinary that has surrounded me for decades
became extraordinary as something new clicked in.
It is beyond merely engaging some element,
be it organic or inorganic,
but as if something in me became aligned with it.
That is when a new thought came to me: alliance.*

Robins identifies important elements in the Butler Wash panels. The distinctive anthropomorphs and their headgear likely represent historically significant individuals representing allied family groups. We accept that they travelled relatively great distances for the time to gather at a place of extraordinary resource productivity for ceremonial activities. What role does the rock art play? In documenting rituals, rock art serves to distinguish ordinary space from extraordinary space (Rappaport 1999:210).

The evolution of Robins' thinking demonstrates the difficulty with rock art interpretation. Seemingly powerful anthropological models often succumb to problems with fuzzy evidence. Can we evaluate the validity of one interpretation over another when relying on weak and ambiguous data? A more generalized model—in our case one based on ritual—in the absence of specific ethnographic or other reliable physical evidence helps us understand the multitude of ways rock art might function within a society regardless of which interpretative story one prefers.

Starting with Robins' supposition that the mouth of Butler Wash was a productive agricultural area supporting periodic feasts bringing together widely spread groups, how might we re-conceptualize the rock art? If ritual distinguishes ordinary space from extraordinary space, then we can view the panels with the large, distinctive anthropomorphs as records of rituals performed during feasts. Ritual plays a role in society to reduce conflict and support inter- and intra-group cohesion. When viewed anew, the panels represent ritual participants marching towards the viewer, closer actors larger, more distant actors smaller. In our conception, the panels at first document action and in time commemorate action before evolving into an active, mythic backdrop for future ceremonies.

Seeing the figures in action and moving forward may be similar to visual interpretation based on figure/ground segregation explained by Bruce Bridgeman (2003). He discusses artistic "tricks" where double interpretations exist and "[t]he perception is bistable, with each alternative suppressing the other; only one solution is allowed at a time. "Not to go into how this happens, it may be important to note that when it does happen "the image properties react with internal cues of visual analysis to yield the perception." In order for this kind of visual interpretation to occur, the visual images "must all work simultaneously in parallel" (Bridgeman 2003:258-261). While, we can never know if this bistable perception of the Big Kachina panel was created purposely, figure/ground segregation does exist.

*The lines were so much deeper
when pecked out a millennium ago.
The language and ritual practices of the artist
so clear to the audience then
have few absolutes now.
Yet, there must be something very universal
because I long to touch this even more
now that you have raised such questions.*

*This takes me to another question.
Does this art transport me to a place
of artistic thought where reason bows
to creative imagination through the senses?
Am I suddenly within a virtual reality
where mystery silences vocabulary,
making insight and analysis needless?
What does it mean to explore rock art this way?
Am I encouraging my mind to become creative?*

The Procession Panel

The Procession Panel is situated on a patinated vertical surface near the top end of an impressive sheer cliff that defines the northern flank of the draw leading to the panel. The panel's location affords a view to both the eastern and western expanses demarcated by Comb Ridge. The actual path crossing the Comb sits well below the panel in the draw and is symbolically defined by hand and toe holds leading up the western face of the Comb and a line of hand and toe holds running along a horizontal stretch of slick rock near the mouth of the draw leading to the site from the east. Other symbolic paths have been recorded elsewhere in Butler Wash (McPherson 2009:51). These non-rock art features emphasize the apparent importance of procession imagery and ceremonial paths or (later) roads.

The Procession Panel extends approximately 7 meters at eye-level across the northern wall of the ravine. Standing at the panel, one looks down into the floor of the draw where travelers would have actually walked. The panel would not have been visible unless the visitors made the effort to climb up to see the panel. Approximately 200 figures approach a large circle from the east, west, and south. Other anthropomorphs and zoomorphs approach from the lower southeastern quadrant. How the later figures relate to the procession theme and whether they are contemporaneous is worthy of further discussion. Ground pits at distinctive points on these figures can be found on selected panels throughout the region and likely indicate a later ceremonial re-use of the rock art.



Figure 3: Procession Panel.

Environmental changes in the centuries that fell between the Big Kachina and Procession Panel forced the Basketmakers to further refine their reliance on agriculture. The productive alluvial fans eroded and farmers moved away from the river as they selected seed corn better adapted to dry farming and increased their reliance on hunting, bolstered by the more efficient bow and arrow technology. Beans and pottery introduced another source of protein into their diet. Families gathered into rudimentary hamlets that required them to develop new leadership hierarchies as local population densities increased. In addition to technological advances, some larger hamlets or local communities built large communal structures such as dance circles and proto-great kivas.

Current thought supposes the creation of new rituals changing the focus from geo-centrism to socio-centrism (Wilshusen, Ortman, and Phillips 2012:209). Rappaport (1999:32) would argue that new rituals are grounded in existing ritual or they will likely fail. Wilshusen, et al. build on Robins and Hays-Gilpin (2000) to suggest the changes in rock art “implies a shift in the aspects of social life deemed most salient, from an early focus on shamanism and rites of passage to a later focus on group ritual.”

We take a different approach and propose that the location of Basketmaker II feasting ceremonies moved to more productive dry-farming localities as alluvial fans eroded. By the time climate changes again favored the formation of alluvial fans, the locations of rituals had changed, but the underlying basis for community ritual feasting and ceremonies had not. With renewed agricultural productivity helping fuel population growth inspired by aggregating populations, old rituals evolved new characteristics. Perhaps ephemeral dance circles had always existed and were now defined with slab-lined walls that are visible in the archaeological record. Dance

circles may have eventually been replaced with subterranean kivas modeled after pithouses. Dance and ceremony moved underground.

Sister Mary José Hobday, a Seneca elder and world lecturer considered by many to have been an expert on Native Tribal Nations ritual, contends there are three great traditions with variations among tribes. These are the vision quest, sweating, and dancing. “The highest form of ritual is the dance.” In 2004, Bohntinsky spent five days under her tutelage and learned that when we are thinking Native American ritual, we must think circular. According to Hobday, it is more embracing and harmonizing (Bohntinsky 2016:101-102.).

The directions (north, east, south, west, up, down, and within) are integrated into the circle. In this way “all have an equal view and equal power with the intention of recreating a mindful consciousness.” The dance is a way of honoring accomplishments and doing something extra for the strength and the power. The body is considered to be an “amazing musical instrument that moves in melody, harmony, and rhythm.” The dance is considered to be the “highest way that body, mind, spirit, psyche, and all artistic talents move together in ways that can heal and rebuild the individual and community... Even the animals were invited into the dance by making the animal’s sound” (Bohntinsky 2016:102).

The Procession Panel commemorates one such ceremonial gathering that must have become a regular event owing to its location at a distinctive site permanently marked by a path ground into bedrock, something repeated at other locations in the region. While the figures are no longer heraldic nor marching towards the viewer, the procession lines are a ritual form of dance and the animals are moving in unison as well.

The location of the panel on the summit of the Comb is unusual as evidence of BM III sites to the west of the ridge is sparse while vibrant, large communities are found to the east. Nevertheless, evidence for multiple clans or lineages being present in the panel can be found in the rock art of the western region. Possibly the archaeological signatures of the BM III/P I transition were less well defined to the west or populations were much smaller. One analysis of the panel suggests the ceremonial participants coming from the east represent much larger households than those from the west (Throgmorton 2016). The participation of groups from the west in the greater regional ceremonial cycles remained a critical component to geographical and social wellbeing.

We believe Robins was correct in his initial interpretation of lineage identities being represented in distinctive attributes of anthropomorphic figures. Distinctive attributes include one arm up and one arm down, a stylistic attribute found to the east in Hovenweep and to the west in Grand Gulch (Hyder 2004:96-97). Examples of the distinctive posture extend into the Pueblo period. Bird-headed figures are ubiquitous throughout the region, and figures carrying staffs are more restricted in their appearance.

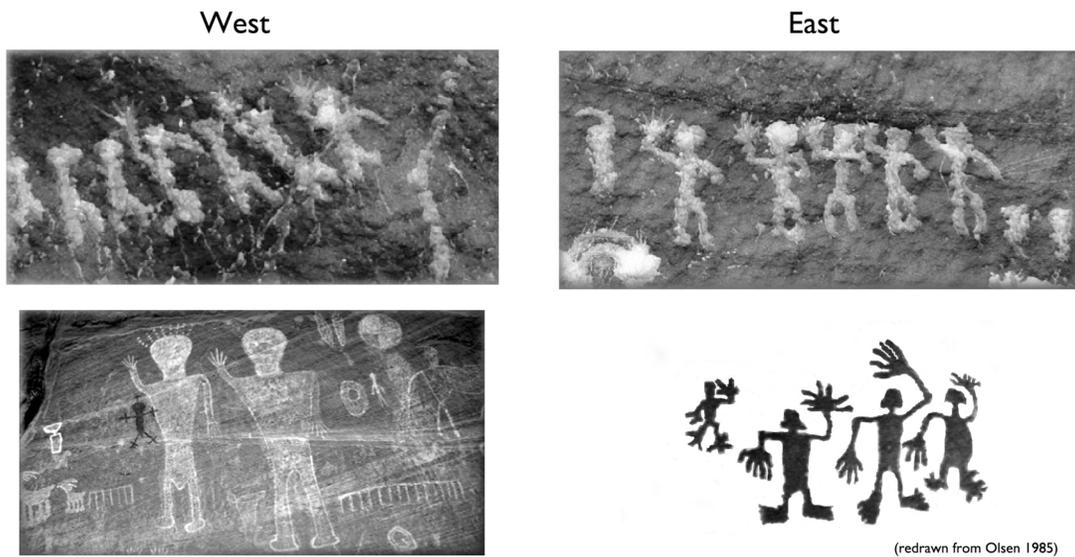


Figure 4: Examples of the one arm/one arm down figures on the west and east sides of the Procession Panel and representative examples from Grand Gulch (west) and Hovenweep (east).

The Procession Panel reflects the changing nature of the communal ceremonies. Where the Big Kachina Panel marks, commemorates, and plays an important role in the ceremonial activities, the Procession Panel marks and commemorates one significant waypoint on the path to the ceremonial location or Center Place. Van-Dyke (2008:63-70) proposes the Basketmaker past “figured prominently in the construction of Chacoan ideology and worldview.” Further exploration of this idea is the topic for another paper, but we argue here that the roots of the processional ceremonies can be found in the emergence of Basketmaker II ritual.

Conclusion

In 2006, Bohntinsky’s dissertation explained her development and validation of a multi-denominational process of problem solving that enhances creative thinking by integrating cognition with emotional awareness (layering reason with inspiration). “Each person’s current situation is always changing because all living beings are one with nature. Life is nature, and nature is change. Change happens on all levels from the microscopic quarks and photons to macroscopic planets and galaxies. However, mankind is resistant to change. This resistance can result in a deep sorrow that can lead to an aggressive holding on to past perceptions regarding how life ought to be. This holding on is counterproductive to nature and can result in destruction; destruction of self-esteem, relationships, the land and water, and even Earth herself” (Bohntinsky 2016:83). Individual and community ritual provides a stabilizing space, inner and outer, that can promote successful adaptation

to change by helping to manage the accompanying stress in the most optimally creative ways.

Bohntinsky concludes that when people learn to use all that life brings and view change as an opportunity to grow in understanding and compassion, humanity can learn to communicate in ways that are benevolent to all. This aligns with Hobday's teachings that "the space of ritual is that place where the way to proceed is never offered directly in verbal teachings. The way of ritual provides us with opportunities to embody the essence of everything as part of our spirit and soul." Bohntinsky writes, "It is my experience that ritual is the embodiment of life and the expression of what I am, and this ritualized embodiment connects me to the Earth" (Bohntinsky 2016:122).

This is not a static process that demands strict adherence to tradition, but as Parson's noted in *Pueblo Indian Religion*: "And so rites combine and recombine, the rite itself fixed or conventional but the combination less rigid; indeed the elasticity of Pueblo ritual is ever so marvelous" (Parsons 1996:478). Such could be considered a layering approach that integrates present conditions with ancient practices.

*"Life is a journey, not a destination."
Imagine my surprise
in discovering that a quote attributed to modern sages
is credited to Ralph Waldo Emerson.
Yet not getting caught up in authorship,
I want to stay with some emerging question.
The design of The Big Kachina and Procession Panel,
so different in how lines portray humans,
can still suggest something consistent when viewed as action.*

*What might these designs be communicating
that is so important to have carved the message into stone?
Do such images offer layers of possibility
when ritual can be sifted for broader interpretations
that might set one upon a new journey towards historical truth
and authentic tradition?
When the sieve becomes the concept of movement
ritual can be perceived as voluntary repetitive action
within this never-ending journey.*

*And if such behaviors coincide often enough
with some Force of nature revealing Its pleasant side,
the mind might just journey into the imagination
where actions become sacred
and symbolized through word and image.
Then when group participation heightens natural prosperity,
continuing repetitive actions along with conscious intent*

*evolves neural pathways for engaging this force.
Is this how new levels of intention might evolve through intellection
in order to align the mind and body with this Force?*

*When continued success is experienced through complexity,
the mind's quest turns to simplifying approaches and methods.
It makes sense that the creation of a simpler process of ritual
that still successfully merges conscious intention with action
frees individuals to use their time for movement differently.
Maybe this is the transformation of very involved rituals
into meditation where gazing upon the images of the acts of ritual
combined with silent words of intent becomes sufficient.*

*The sacred remains in everyday life
even though greater time can be spent on comforts;
maybe, even for building grander dwellings and kivas
like at Chaco Canyon.
Yet, the beginnings of such a progression of a people's evolution
in merging their movements with this mysterious Force
remain upon these stone faces for any to ponder
and then consider remnants existing in actions
within modern societies on the perpetual journey of life.
Yet, such an exploration can only begin
by entertaining a new idea –
that images such as these might portray rituals
of a people engaged in unified complex movements.
The intent is not to come to a conclusion or destination;
it is to continue on the journey of discovery.*

In this paper, we have attempted to explore and demonstrate how layering our knowledge and understanding can help us to see “anew without blinders imposed by current canon.” This is how we have come to consider certain pieces of rock art, like the Procession Panel and Big Kachina Panel, as documenting ritual practices that brought people together for benevolent purposes and had a lasting impact on the development of Pueblo societies. Together, using this process of multivocality, we will continue to explore themes of ritual in other rock art images.

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