Chapter 9
Concepts of Spirit in Prehistoric Art According to Clifford Duncan, Ute Spiritual Elder

Carol Patterson and Clifford Duncan

Introduction

Ute History

The Ute Indians ranged across much of the northern Colorado Plateau beginning at least 2,000 years B.P. The very name “Ute,” from which the name of the state of Utah was derived, means “high land” or “land of the sun.” The Ute language, Southern Numic, belongs to the Numic group of Uto-Aztecan languages shared by most of the Great Basin tribes. The Utes, however, included mountain-dwellers as well as desert nomads.

Bands in the mountainous eastern regions subsisted by hunting large game and by fishing, while bands in the arid western and southern regions adapted to their environments by wandering widely and taking advantage of the periodic abundance of food and material resources in different eco zones. The arrival of Utes in the Four Corners area came later, but most anthropologists agree that by 1,500 A.D. they were well established in the region.

Prior to their acquisition of horses the Ute traveled on foot, moving through known hunting and gathering territories on a seasonal basis. Men hunted deer, antelope, buffalo, rabbits, and other small mammals and birds. Women gathered seed grasses, piñon nuts, berries, roots, and greens in woven baskets, and processed and stored meat and plant materials for winter use. Ute families lived in brush wickiups and ramadas in the western and southern areas and used hide tepees in the eastern

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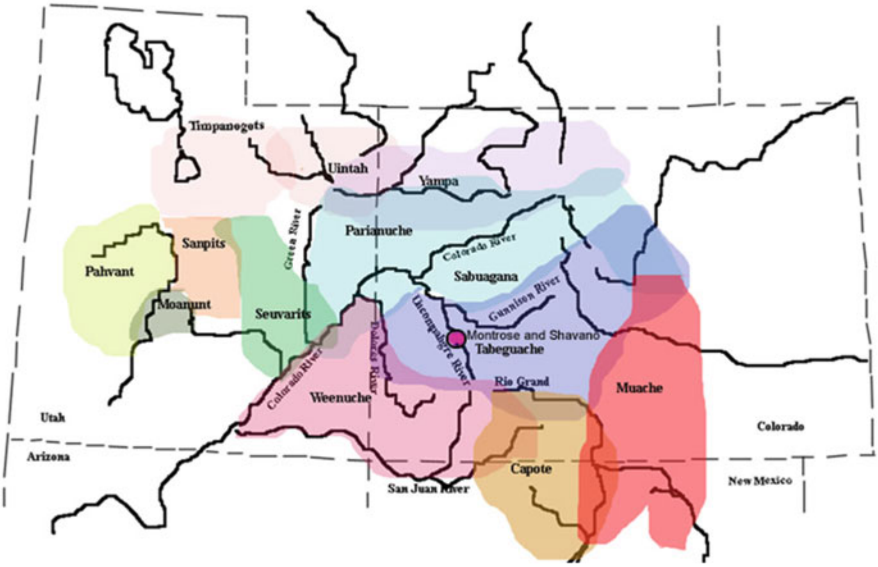

Timpanogots
Uintah
Yampa
Parianuche
Green River
Colorado River
Sanpits
Pahvant
Sabuagana
Moanunt
Seuvarits
Gunnison River
Uncompahgre River
Dolores River
Montrose and Shavano
Tabeguache
Colorado River
Rio Grand
Muache
Weenuche
Utah
Colorado
Arizona
Capote
San Juan River
New Mexico

Fig. 9.1 Ute Bands in Utah and Colorado with location of Montrose and Shavano (drawing by Carol Patterson after Simmons 2000)

reaches of their territory. Of all the Ute bands, only the Pahvant were cultivating food plants at early contact.

Once they obtained Spanish horses and livestock from the Pueblo peoples of northern New Mexico, the Ute began to raise horses, cattle, and sheep, and became involved in raiding and trading. In eastern areas in particular, Utes became respected warriors and important participants in the southwestern slave and horse trade. In the north, they remained largely independent of colonial control until the arrival of Mormon settlers, who pressured the Utes to settle down and farm (Fig. 9.1).

One of the Ute bands that live in Western Colorado were called the *Tabeguache* derived from a descriptive Ute term, *Mogwatavungwantsingwu*, which means "cedar-bark, sunny slope people." The Tabeguache Band was the largest Ute band, consisting of 500–1,000 or more who hunted and foraged throughout the Rocky Mountains and Western Colorado living in small extended family groups with leaders of their own lodges. The natural resources of this region made it a popular place to camp, with plenty of grass for their horses, old growth forests within which to build wikiup villages, pinyon nuts, berries, seeds, and game.

The United States persuaded the Utes to sign the treaty of 1868, eventually placing the Utes on a small reservation south of present-day Montrose in the Uncompahgre Valley. There, the Tabeguaches became more commonly known as Uncompahgre Utes. While living in that area, some farmed, but they still hunted and wandered at will.

Soon, the presence of white miners, in the San Juan Mountains within the reservation, exacerbated problems. In the aftermath of the Meeker Incident in northwestern Colorado, all of the Uncompahgres, which included Tabeguaches with familiar names like Chipeta and McCook and Shavano, were moved to the Uintah

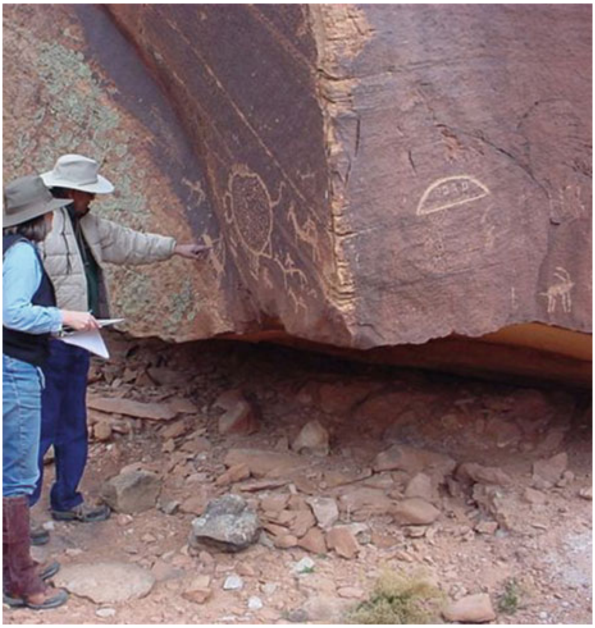


Fig. 9.2 Clifford Duncan and Carol Patterson at Big Dominguez Canyon examining a Ute panel depicting the 1881 military extradition of the Uncompahgre Utes out of western Colorado to the Ouray Reservation in Utah (photograph by Karen Derick)

reservation in Utah. The Uncompahgres/Tabeguaches became leaders in the consolidated Uintah and Ouray Reservation (Simmons 2005).

Present-day Utes occupy a tiny fraction of their former territories. The Northern Ute live on the Uintah-Ouray Reservation near Fort Duchesne in northeastern Utah. The Southern Ute live on a reservation in the southwestern corner of Colorado near Ignacio. The Ute Mountain Ute are descendants of the Weminuche band who moved to the western end of the Southern Ute Reservation in 1897. Their reservation is located near Towaoc, Colorado, and includes small sections of Utah and New Mexico.

The Ute bands of Western Colorado and Eastern Utah left hundreds of painted and pecked rock art galleries at the convergence of rivers, canyons, and major trails. This author has documented over 350 rock art sites in Western Colorado, of which over 100 are Ute. Typical Ute rock art panels depict trail maps, hunting strategies (Duncan 2011a, b, 2012), episodes in Ute myths and folklore (Patterson and Watchman 2005; Patterson and Duncan 2007), historic battle scenes and raids, rabbit hunts (Patterson et al. 2006), deer and elk ambush sites (Patterson and Williams 2010), and sacred medicine and healing sites (Patterson et al. 2006) (Fig. 9.2).

Clifford Duncan is a Northern Ute elder and the tribe's retired historian. He is an artist, a former museum director, and currently the cultural resource advisor to the Northern Ute tribe. He was born into a traditional family and lived all his life on a reservation except for a few years while he was in the armed forces during the Korean conflict. He has lectured at many conferences and various colleges and universities and traveled abroad to countries including Chile, Peru, Norway, Greece, France, and Germany on behalf of the Native American Traditions. He lives near Roosevelt, Utah.

For nearly 8 years, Carol Patterson, a PhD anthropologist and rock art scholar, has been accompanying Clifford to many petroglyph sites in Western Colorado and eastern Utah. She has captured on tape Clifford's interpretation of Ute and protohistoric Ute petroglyph sites. The spiritual nature of these sites is of primary interest and Clifford is candid on explaining just what he understands from a traditional Ute perspective. The following are quotes from Clifford from 2009 to 2012 concerning Ute spiritual beliefs pertaining to Ute petroglyphs throughout Western Colorado.

Rock Art

Clifford: "Take it into consideration that times have changed. The prehistoric way of thinking by the Native Americans was different than it is today. We should try to look at the rock art from both prehistoric and historic world views. We may not be accurate, because today we are looking at the rock art from only our present day perspective."

"Rock art is something sacred and that is because it has a spirit. This is what made my parents and relatives always say to the younger ones not to bother the rock art sites of the *Moquich*."

"My parents would say that you should stay away from these places and don't touch them. So after awhile you begin to feel that what they say is real, a way of life, and that you should always leave them alone. They have nothing to do with you. They are associated with life after death."

"A lot of people want to know what a rock art panel means 'up front' and spend a lot of time trying to figure it out. But we are told not to bother with all that because it's depicting a different world. Perhaps they thought that you would disturb a spirit of another world. This could be bad. So, most of us don't pay much attention to rock art. The meaning is behind rock art. It has to be interpreted from the point of view of the author or people putting it there. Those people were not just ordinary, they had some kind of special experience or background to produce those drawings. You can't just draw something like that just for the sake of drawing. Only the trained people oriented to the spiritual aspects can make the rock art."

"What draws me to rock art are two things:

First, that whatever those drawings are suppose to represent, for this place, is for the life on the earth as it is today. Second, it is like an identity—it is serving that purpose too. To say: 'People were here'. This is their story of the beginning, from these people, in a certain place."

"The spirit is within the rock art and it shows a story that is talking to us. So you listen to the rock art. You listen with your soul and you listen to it with your eyes barely scanning the panel as you look into it. What you are receiving is this….. After you have pulled it out, there are other things attached to it. So you are actually trying to break it down into smaller bits that you can understand."

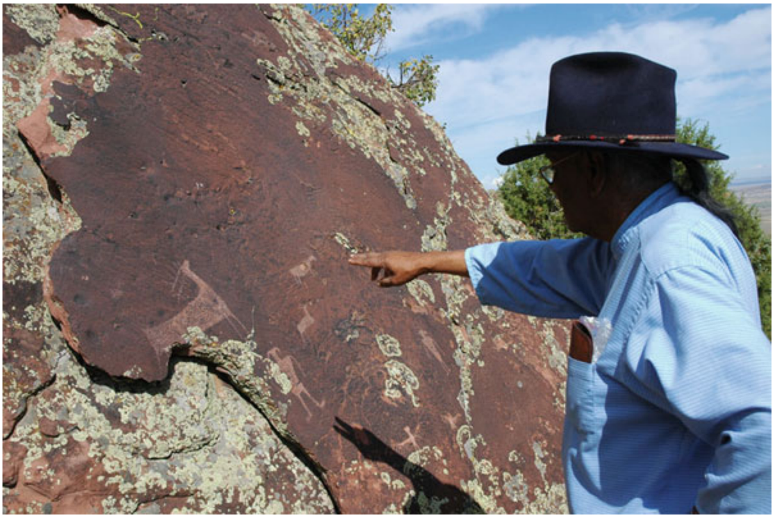


Fig. 9.3 Clifford Duncan at the Cross Mountain petroglyph site in northwestern Colorado with Clifford talking to the petroglyph (photograph by Carol Patterson)

"You say to the rock art, "I want to feel what you feel", yet you're scared, so you hold back. So you find other ways to understand what it means. For example, I would take some Indian paint and I would put it on my body, somewhere. Then I would say "protect me from evil" By saying this, it also means that I believe the rock art is bad too. But if I said, "Protect me so I can do it right." Then it means if I don't do it right, it can harm me. So these things are part of how I approach rock art or what I call 'sacredness'."

"Sacredness can mean glorified. But lots of people think sacredness means you feel peaceful all over your body, your mind, your soul. Perhaps that is what it is, I don't know, but I often look at it, like it contains both. So I have to pass through whatever is there, and if it shows negativity, I still have to keep going to reach the other side."

"After I have studied rock art over a period of time I begin to feel relaxed and at ease with what I see. Then, I say, I think I have completed my journey. Each rock art panel is a journey. Every little thing that you see is a journey. It could be just one little drawing or one drawing that contains a lot of little things; it could be made to throw you off and cover something simple that is really there." (Fig. 9.3).

"So using a long description of what I think rock art is, I see that it is sacred. It's alive, and tobacco is my way of communicating with the spirit. I find that it too needs the same to communicate with me. So I give tobacco to say thank you and also for blessing the lands, and other things around there. Sometimes I use cornmeal. Some people use cornmeal or corn pollen, to open a pass from you to the light or you to whomever you want to communicate with. They use it in a straight line. When they get through, they rub it off, and that closes the pathway."

"By that I also mean that as long as rock art remains somewhere in the world, it is doing something. That's why I want to record and document it, because you have a chapter to add in their history. That is what it is for. Then I make my offering."

Shavano Valley Rock Art Site

Shavano Valley petroglyph site is about five and a half miles west of Montrose, Colorado, located on a high escarpment of Dakota sandstone overlooking a fertile valley sheltered between the Uncompahgre Plateau on the west and Spring Creek Mesa on the east. A gentle graded trail winds up 200 feet to the rim where the petroglyphs are located on the cliff face and on detached boulders that have tumbled down the slope (see map, Fig. 9.1).

Shavano Valley petroglyph site is a world-class rock art site with the added value of its access to native interpretation. It is still within the memories of the Ute people who know and understand the symbolism exhibited there. It has well preserved petroglyphs from the Late Archaic to the Historic Ute era.

Clifford Duncan was born on the Uinta/Ouray Ute Reservation in Utah, but his father was an Uncompahgre/Tabaguache Ute. Clifford returns to the Uncompahgre Plateau in Colorado many times each year. Shavano Valley petroglyph site is one of his favorite places to visit and remember the teachings of his parents and pay respects to the spirits of his ancestors and those spirits who still dwell in this site. The petroglyphs are highly symbolic and difficult to interpret by an outside culture. But in this case, Clifford has provided a Ute perspective. The following are conversations Clifford has shared concerning the Shavano Valley petroglyph site.

"If I go to Shavano, I begin with an introduction to the 'people who live there'. I become it in order to see it. I see it as part of the creation of the world." …. "What I am looking for is a thinking pattern. What is it that is hidden in that picture? Those drawings are depicting something that is still there—still faintly there today. They have a spirit that throws out a certain feeling if you are looking for it. It is just a matter of unlocking yourself from the inside to read it." (Fig. 9.4).

The Shavano Valley petroglyph site was used by early prehistoric hunters and gathers and more recently by Ute bands because of the presence of artesian springs and game trails that crossed back and forth through the valley from the Uncompahgre Plateau. Ancient Ute trails converged at this site, one running off the top of the mesa down to the valley, and others that ran up and down the valley, and east and west through the Uncompahgre Plateau (Fig. 9.5a, b).

Three Bears Panel at Shavano Valley

The "three bears panel" is the principal panel of the site. It is found on a vertical sandstone cliff face on the rim of Shavano Valley. There is a well-drawn "bear" shown in profile. Below this bear are two more bears and two trees. The one on the right is

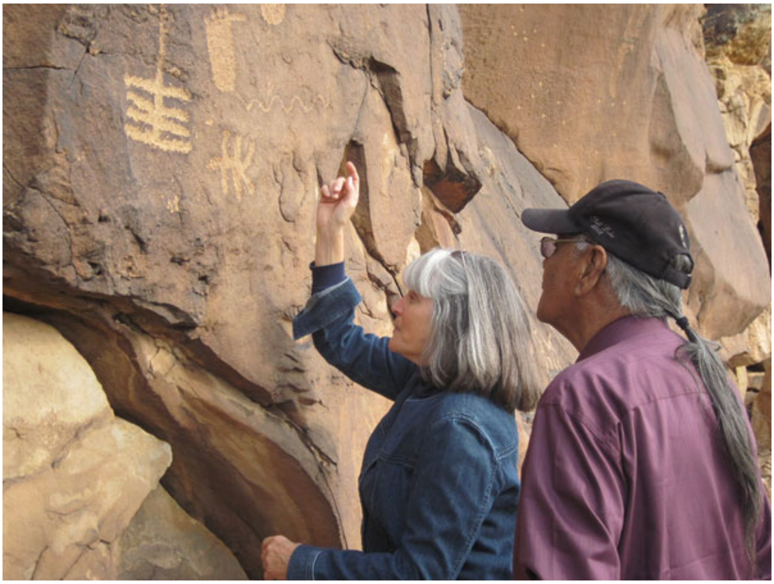


Fig. 9.4 Carol Patterson and Clifford Duncan looking at the Shavano Valley petroglyphs depicting the Bear Dance using sign language symbols (photograph by Josh McDaniels)

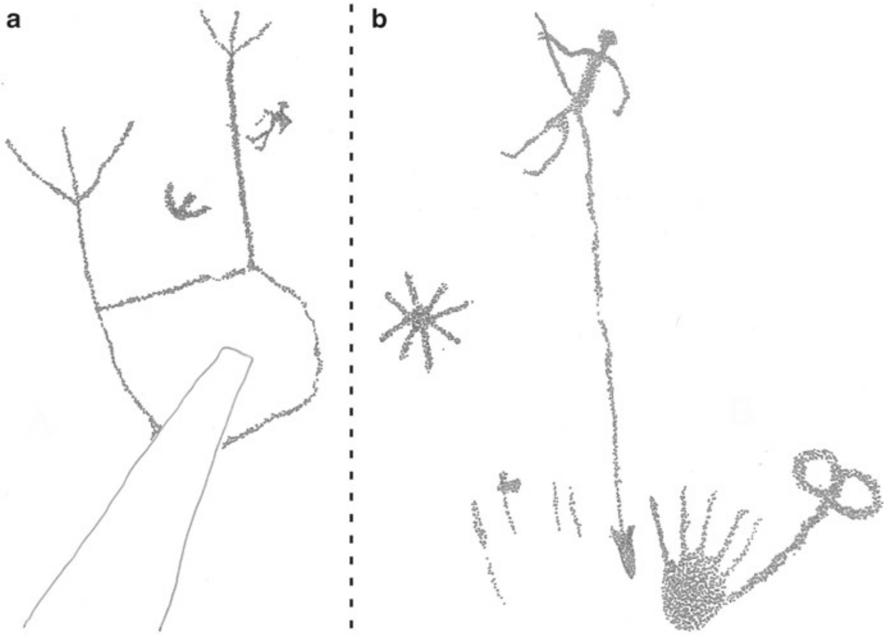


Fig. 9.5 Archaic petroglyphs at Shavano: (**a**) Archaic food gatherer is shown walking on a trail with her burden basket and digging stick; (**b**) an archaic hunter with his atlatl spear and archaic dart point. These panels are very faint and date 2,000–4,000 B.P. (drawing by Carol Patterson)

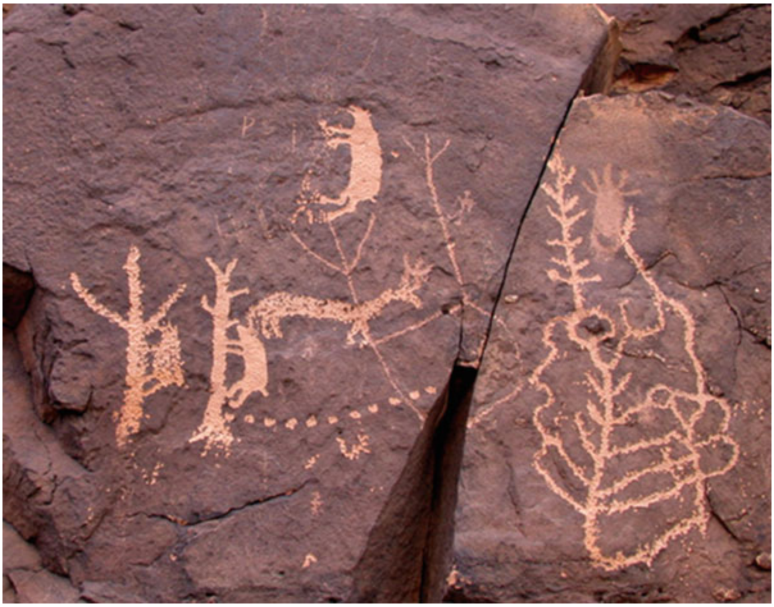


Fig. 9.6 Three Bears Panel at Shavano (photograph by Carol Patterson)

hard to distinguish, but the second one resembles a bear with a short tail. There are small dots representing "tracks" leading up to this bear, from a natural crevice in the rock face. This is a convention used by native people called "rock incorporation." Natural features of the rock are used to illustrate concepts such as "caves" or "mountains" or "canyons" as part of the narration. This panel is an illustration of a bear that comes out of its cave and walks up to a tree and stands there holding it (Fig. 9.6).

This panel has at least three episodes of production on the surface. The first episode is archaic and consists of a thin line that forks at the top. A small human figure is "walking up the faint, trail," with a burden basket and digging stick. The second episode of production of this panel is that of the bear climbing the tree and the elevated bear. These elements are characteristic of dense pecking and of note are the three roots descending below and the fork at the top of the tree. The rock incorporation of cracks and crevices is used to refer to the natural features in the landscape that are important in a creation story. The small dots represent the bear's tracks as he emerges out of a cave and goes up to the tree. The crevice also mimics the tunnel cave below. Together the tracks may indicate "emergence from the Underworld in the spring" (Figs. 9.7a–c and 9.8).

The elevated bear is drawn "diagrammatically." That is, it is shown in profile (side on) but its paws are shown front on. This is a technique commonly used in picture writing to give clarity to the identity of the subject. The author wants the viewer to know it is a bear, and not a squirrel on a tree.

Diagrammatic illustrations are not meant to be viewed as "naturalistic." A majority of the indigenous picture writing around the world and especially in North America use this technique to describe something, rather than just draw a picture of

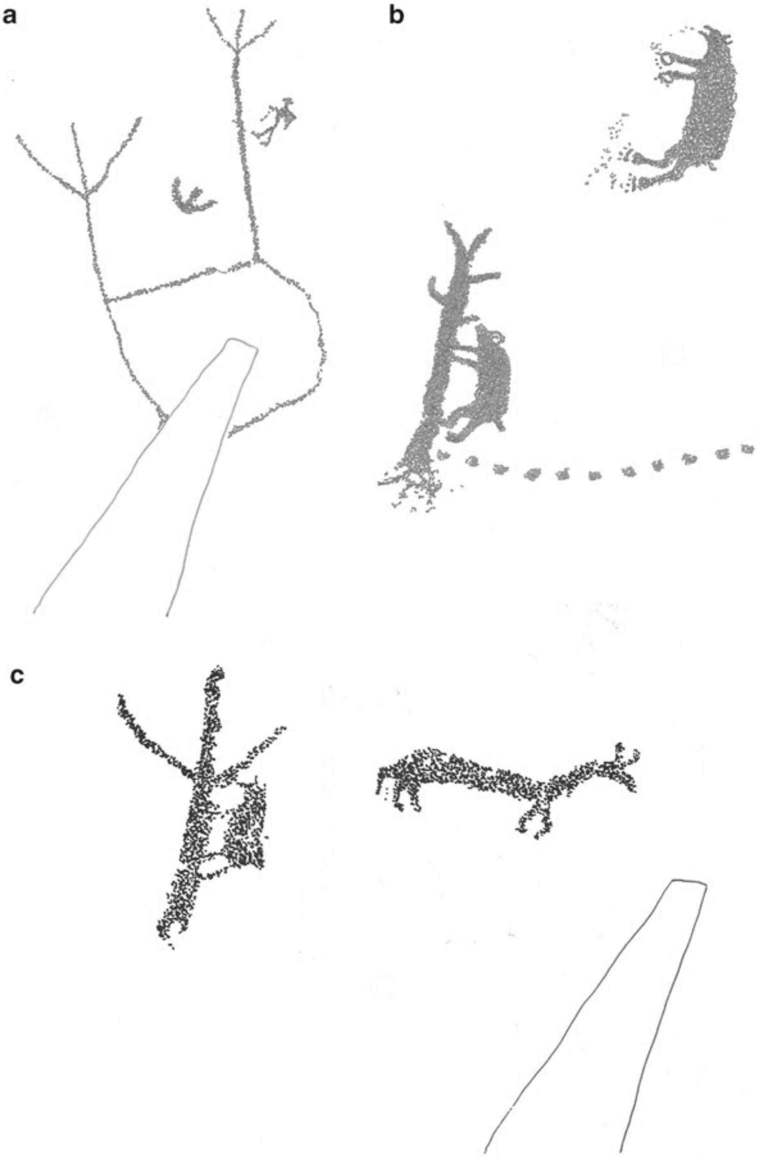
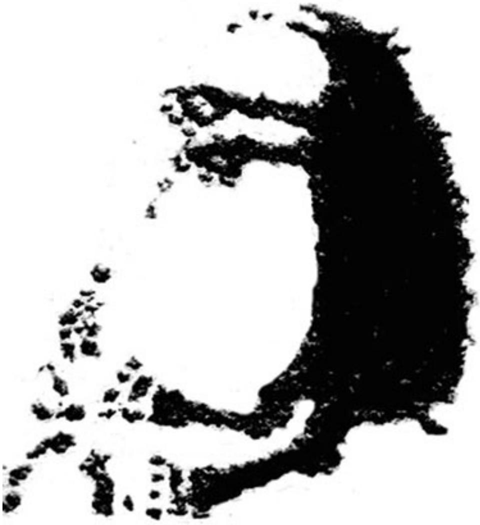


Fig. 9.7 Line drawings of the "three bears panel" showing the three episodes of production, (**a**) Archaic, (**b**) Proto-historic and (**c**) Historic eras (drawings by Carol Patterson)

it. It is referred to as "drawing what one 'understands' rather than what one 'sees'." There are dots coming from its mouth that may represent blood. "*Sometimes (during the Bear Dance), the Utes would apply red paint around their mouth to look as though blood were dripping from the jaws, suggesting the ferocity of the bear*" (Densmore 1972:57) (see Fig. 9.8).

Fig. 9.8 Bear with flexed paws and spit coming out of its mouth showing ferocity and power (black and white drawing by Carol Patterson)



The third episode is that of a cruder tree and bear. There are no roots or a fork at the top of the tree. A typical Ute horse with elongated neck and body and shortened legs has been added. These elements, the tree, bear, and horse, are produced with an iron tool that would have been available in the late 1800s (see Fig. 9.7c).

The Bear Dance is the central theme and is specific to Ute cultural traditions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, after the relocation of the Uncompahgre Utes out of Colorado and onto the Uinta/Ouray Reservation in Eastern Utah in 1881.

Clifford explains the bear paw motif: "Places like Shavano have symbols of bear paws. The bear is always connected to something, either by sight, body or the spirit. That is why the bear stands up. A bear normally walks on all fours. But when there is something interesting, or something that a bear wants to see, it stands up. That is why he leaves his prints on the wall, because he was standing up. The bear prints on the wall mean that they are talking about something."

"Sometimes we see a bear standing upright to a tree. The only way to interpret it is through a spiritual connection. That's my way of looking at it. After you are through studying books on rock art the way you are suppose to study it, try studying it through your soul." (Fig. 9.9a–c).

The Tunnel Cave at Shavano

The Tunnel Cave has very old engravings on the walls and suggests a mythological theme of the underworld. The south panel has serpentine lines and distinct bear paw tracks. The north wall has linear motifs that are interpreted as a "spirit line" that crosses horizontally over this earth and then journeys vertically skyward (Fig. 9.10).

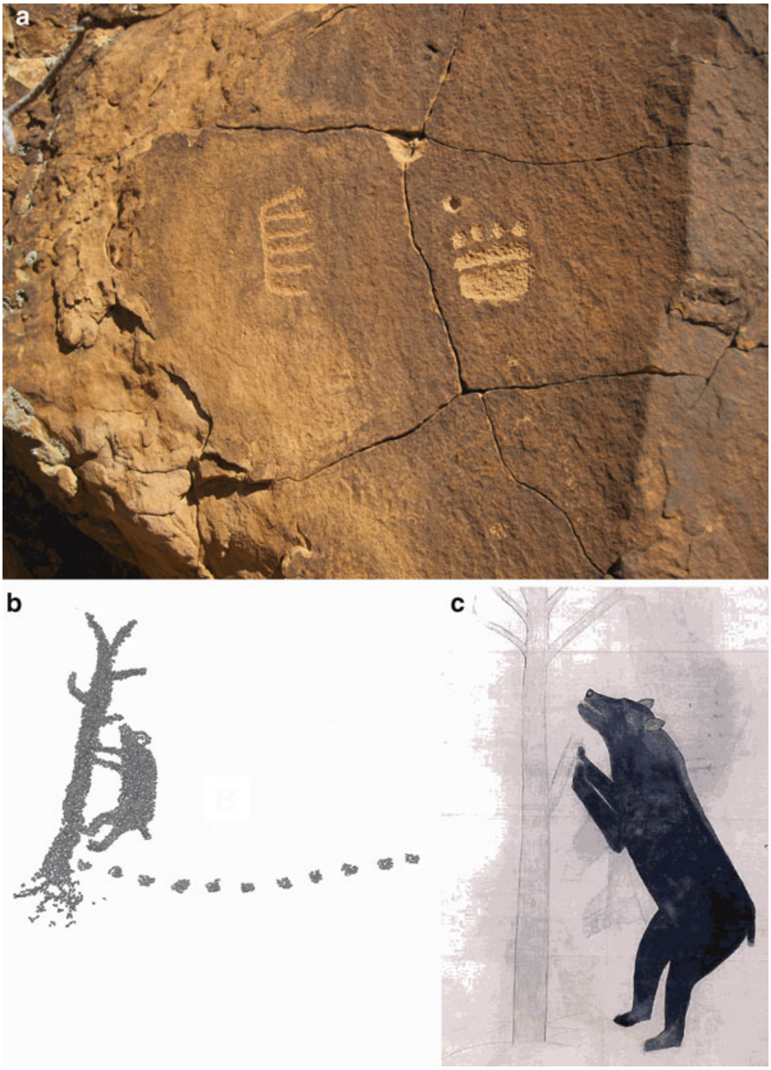


Fig. 9.9 (**a**) Bear paw at Shavano, (**b**) bear and tree at Shavano, (**c**) Ute painting of the bear and tree (photograph and drawing by Carol Patterson)

"In Numic mythology the brothers are known as the big and little wolf or "the wolf brothers." *Sinav* to the Ute is wolf who appears occasionally as a cultural hero and is generally a benign and responsible fellow, a kind of a mythological counterpart to the Supreme Being. Coyote, besides being the greedy and licentious character described in myths, is responsible for many cultural institutions and natural conditions. He secured the fire and the pine nuts, released the game impounded in a cave, caused death to occur, and imparted to man knowledge of arts and crafts" (Hultkrantz 1986:638).

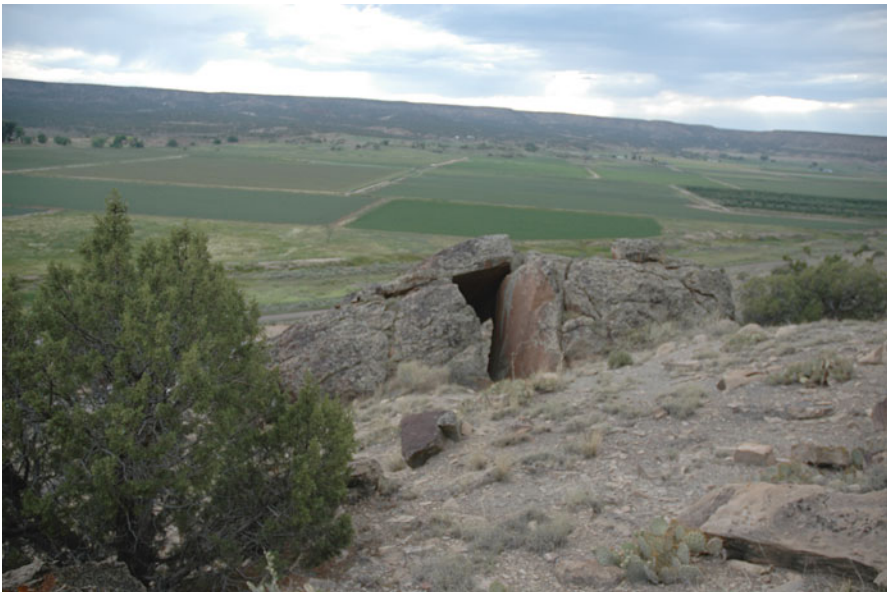


Fig. 9.10 The Tunnel Cave at Shavano Valley rock art site has very old engravings on the walls that are difficult to see. Some are very faint and old and demonstrate the great age of some of these panels (photograph by Carol Patterson)

According to Clifford, *Sinav* is the creator figure that greets you after death. In this panel, a canine figure (wolf) faces toward the lines. Clifford believes that the "Tunnel Cave" petroglyphs are related to ancient creation stories. A wolf or a coyote is featured along with many linear motifs, animal tracks, and bear paw prints. The cave walls depict bear paws pointed down as the bear descends into the underworld, and pointed up as the bear emerges out every spring. The "tunnel cave" may be metaphoric for a womb-like portal from which the bear emerges from the underworld (hibernation) to upper world (Fig. 9.11a, b).

Clifford has never entered this cave, noting that "I'm not ready to meet my maker just yet" (Duncan 2008). The tunnel cave may be the equivalent to the underworld realm where spirits go after death. "The path to the other world followed the Milky Way but was sometimes described as an underground passage ending with a bridge over a terrific chasm…" (Hultkrantz 1957:78). "The domains of the dead lie in the south, north or west and are situated on the other side of the ocean or up in the sky." The ruler is Wolf, for the Ute and Southern Paiute…. Wolf and the Father have been interchangeable concepts… Wolf has to wash the newly dead and even escort them to the other world" (Hultkrantz 1986:637).

Caves and other named localities, which remained sacred sites for shamanistic power quest, are believed to have served formerly as entrances to the legendary underground pathway. The recurrent theme in these stories is the adventures of a hunter following a wounded animal to the lower world and his return after a time

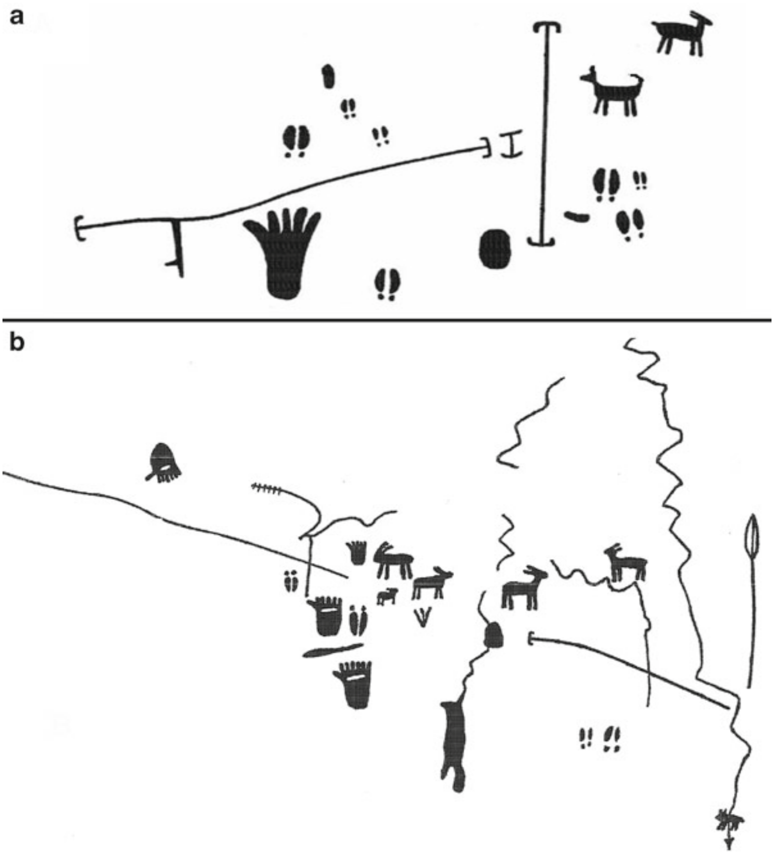


Fig. 9.11 Drawings of the petroglyphs on the (**a**) north and (**b**) south walls of Tunnel Cave (drawings by Carol Patterson)

spent with the dwellers down below. The underworld is also similar in concept to the underground cave that bear hibernates in through the winter, and emerges from in the spring (Pettit 1990:73).

The Ute buried their dead in rock crevices and cave entrances. The passage to the underworld was known as *Na-gun-tu-wip*, where departed spirits dwell. When passing through, owls hoot, wolves howl in the distance, and grizzly bears' foot prints can be seen in the sands. At the end of the passage a bridge crosses to the "beyond the chasm" (Pettit 1990:73).

Clifford: "From the Ute perspective, Man has to walk through darkness for a long period of time and then walk into the light, and then back into the darkness. Like the sunrise, the sun rises out of dark and then sets into the dark. Some of our beliefs are this: The spirit is born and told to travel in total darkness for 9 months inside your mother. Then you are born into this world from your mother and born into the light. Prior to that, you don't remember. I don't believe there is energy that

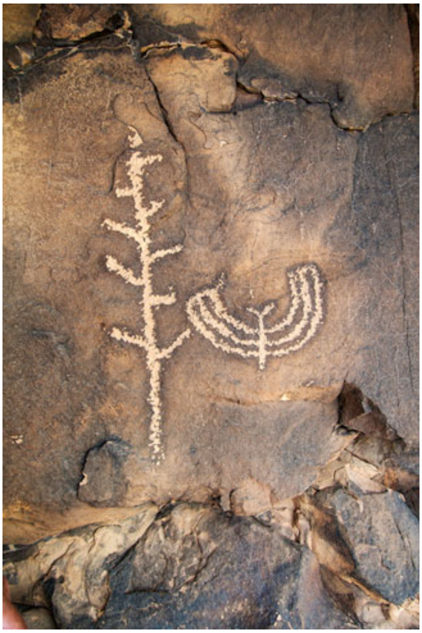


Fig. 9.12 Cosmic Tree and Levels of the Universe (photograph by David Manley)

is invisible that has no beginning; they all have to have a beginning somewhere. Beyond beginning is another beginning. So that is what makes 'spirit' come to this world. When a family becomes civilized, in so called civilization they began to write and record things in the petroglyphs, and that is what keeps man in this light. It is during this time of light that they put this information on the rocks."

Ute "Cosmic Tree" at Shavano

Shavano Valley petroglyph site has a remote petroglyph perched high up on the rock face. On the left side is a "cosmic tree." It has three roots below it and a fork at the top. On the right side is also a tree with three tiny roots below and a fork at the top. The three arcs around it represent the three levels of the earth (terrestrial) and two celestial representing the sky and the underworld (Fig. 9.12).

The Ute view the cosmos as a series of circular planes. This comes from the experience of looking out at the horizon that forms a semicircle around the viewer. The upper world and the lower world logically follow this model. The way in which to diagram the three cosmic realms bisected by an Axis Mundi or "tree" would appear like in Fig. 9.12.

Dr. James Goss studied the language and mythology of the Southern Utes for over 50 years. He writes:

> Five is a very important ritual number for the Ute. Five colors match the five levels of the Cosmos. These in turn are matched by five shamanistic clans. Each clan "boss" is the

> "boss" of the logically appropriate level of the Cosmos. Eagle rules over the white world of the sky. Mountain Lion rules over the Upper earth, the cold world which is lighted by the yellow light of sunrise. Wolf rules over the Center Earth of grays, greens, and blues, the focus of the primary vegetation. This is the main realm of man, too, where the greatest variety of resources is available. Weasel is the ruler of the Lower Earth, which is red, dry, and warm, with occasional oases which open to the Underworld. Rattlesnake rules over the Underworld, the domain of darkness under earth and water (Goss 2000).

The tree at the center of a ceremony or a painted composition is part of a body of myths, rites, images, and symbols which together make up what is called "symbolism of the Centre" by Mircea Eliade (1964). He believes that through time, man has always had an obsession with the origins of things and it is reflected in all mythologies. In the symbolic language of myth and religion, the tree acts like a vertical axis, the "cosmic axis," or "axis of the world" (Axis Mundi) which connects the cosmic zones of sky, earth, and underworld. It descends through the discs of the earth into the world below. This idea of the cosmic axis and the "center of the world" is extremely ancient (fourth or third millennium B.C.) and widely diffused around the world.

The tree roots are key to the identification of this image. It is the roots that penetrate the underworld while the fork at the top of the tree penetrates the sky world. The three levels of the earth are bisected by the spiritual conduit of this tree motif.

According to Clifford and the Utes, the tree is sacred in many parts of Ute culture. The sacred tree was used by the bear as part of a transformation between worlds. The tree possesses all kinds of Indian medicine (Duncan 2005). For Clifford the image in this panel signifies: "The tree is the most important motif within the Bear Dance theme. It is the Bear that leads you to the Tree. The tree is related to the bear, and he is related to the tree."

"The Tree is a birth place of certain rituals, and it has the power. The bear, emerging out of hibernation, comes out and marks the Tree, and while he's doing that, there are songs that come out of the Tree. Because in the spring time fresh new life is coming out of the tree. That is where the bear gets a new song and creates the bear dance."

"The Tree represents vegetation and all things that grow. At the beginning, it was the animals that were the teachers for early Native Americans as to what was right and what was wrong, and what types of plants were for medicinal use."

"My grandmother told me that life is like a tree and each branch is a gift a person is born with. At the end of your life time all that remains is the very top of tree. That is the place of the little container that we are born with and that never dies. It comes with us when we leave. If we get to the top of the tree there is an amazing sense of happiness, like we have never known, and we will want to have that happiness all the time. This is what we all yearn for in our lives."

The Ute Bear Dance

The Ute Bear Dance is called *mamaqui mawats*, meaning to dance forward and back or mamaqui niqap, "Forward-backward dance" (Opler 1941:25). It is believed that the Bear Dance is originally a Ute dance. It was practiced by all Ute bands at the

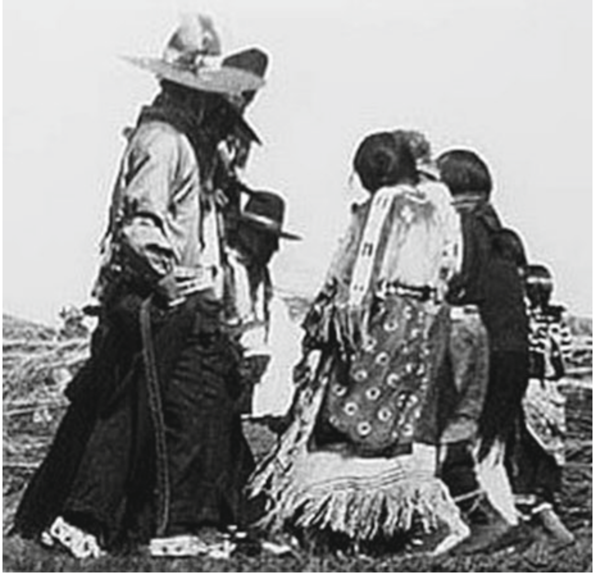


Fig. 9.13 Ute Bear Dance (Colorado Historical Society, public web site)

time of contact, preformed in the late winter toward the end of February or beginning of March. Each band would have one and also invited others to participate. The host band provides food and builds a large circular brush enclosure for the dance. The Bear Dances lasted from 4 to 10 days and consisted of a group of men playing musical rasps (a notched stick and unnotched stick) that was placed on the top of a drum resonator. This encouraged the dancers by stimulating them to dance. It imitates the calls and sounds of the bear as it emerges from hibernation in early spring (Jorgensen 1986).

Shamanizing was important as was the notion that bear dancing was curative. All of the Ute religion is charged with faith healing and ritual curing. Individuals constantly sought supernatural power for their own well-being, as well as for control of power to help others (Jorgensen 1986:60) (Fig. 9.13).

Preparations were made all winter: Around the campfires the storyteller told tales of the way of life and the singers practiced songs which had come in dreams. As the time came near the men prepared the Bear Dance corral and did other necessary work, while the women made the family's clothes for the dance. In the spring the bands would come and set up camp. The men and women would enter the corral wearing plumes of feathers that signified their worries. At the end of the dance on the fourth day, the plumes would be hung on a cedar tree at the east entrance of the corral and they would leave their troubles behind.

The Bear Dance today is almost identical to the precontact version of the dance except that menstrual lodges for pubescent are no longer constructed near the brush-enclosed dance grounds. The Ute Bear Dance was slightly altered in the 1870s and 1880s, only to be restored to a form close to the original by the 1890s.

The origin of the Bear Dance is told this way. Two brothers were hunting in the mountains and stopped to rest. One of the brothers saw a bear clawing and singing as he danced around a tree. As one brother went on to hunt the other watched the bear who taught him the dance and the song. The bear told him to teach this to his people as a sign of respect for the bear's spirit which gives strength (Jorgensen 1986). "The dance is held in a large circular brush corral of cedar trees gathered every year by the men. The corral entrance faces the rising sun in the east. Two cedar trees are positioned on either side of the entrance just inside the circle. Men sit on the north side of the circle, and the women sit o the south side. The singers made booming thunder sounds to accompany their songs by running a stick across a long wood rasp over the hole. On the first day of the dance, the bears heard this "thunder" in their dens and woke up (Rockwell 1991:158).

"If someone should fall in exhaustion, the dance chief would revive both of them by rubbing the musical rasp on their bodies. The dance terminated with a feast sponsored by the host band" (Pettit 1990:92).

"The dance is in imitation of the bear as he steps forward and backward with each thrust at a standing tree. Altogether this creates a rhythm which quickens the flow of blood in the body and renews the zest for life" (Annabell W. Eagle, Southern Ute Drum in Pettit 1990:93).

Clifford Duncan tells another version:

"The Bear Dance is called "*mo waka wi*" in Ute. Laterally "forward/back" dance. The lady imitates the bear. A woman was kidnapped by a bear and she had a child. The child ran away and got back to the people. The people want the mother back to the tribe. The brush arbor or circle has the bear (man in a bear skin) in the middle. The woman dances toward the bear. She likes it. It's a seductive dance. These are old stories. The Bear, Circles, are all old. The Bear is not just an animal. It has spiritual powers. A person gains power from the bear. In the old days, the Grizzly was abundant in this land. It was a made person. It possessed objects for rituals. We make objects but must get permission from the bear to use them" (Duncan 2005).

"Certain bears can climb a tree, but other can't. A Black bear can climb a tree, but Grizzly won't, because he doesn't' know how to climb. So you have to pick out which one you want. The Grizzly is more powerful in that way, and is given the tobacco. That's why they were given tobacco in that pipe" (Duncan 2011a, b) (Fig. 9.14).

"This skin painting at the Ute Indian Museum depicting the Bear Dance shows the line of dancers in the middle. At the top are the musicians seated around a resonator or hollow table, playing the marches, and a "tree" stands near them. On the other side near the entrance is another "tree with a forked top" (Duncan 2010a, b).

"Goshutes have a story of two youths, hunters who went out into the woods and they heard the bears in an open space surrounded by pine trees. They watched from a hill. They heard the songs the bears were singing; *rum rum rumm*. They listened to the song, and they caught it. Then they picked up another song the bears were singing. They took the songs back to the village and sang the songs and then created

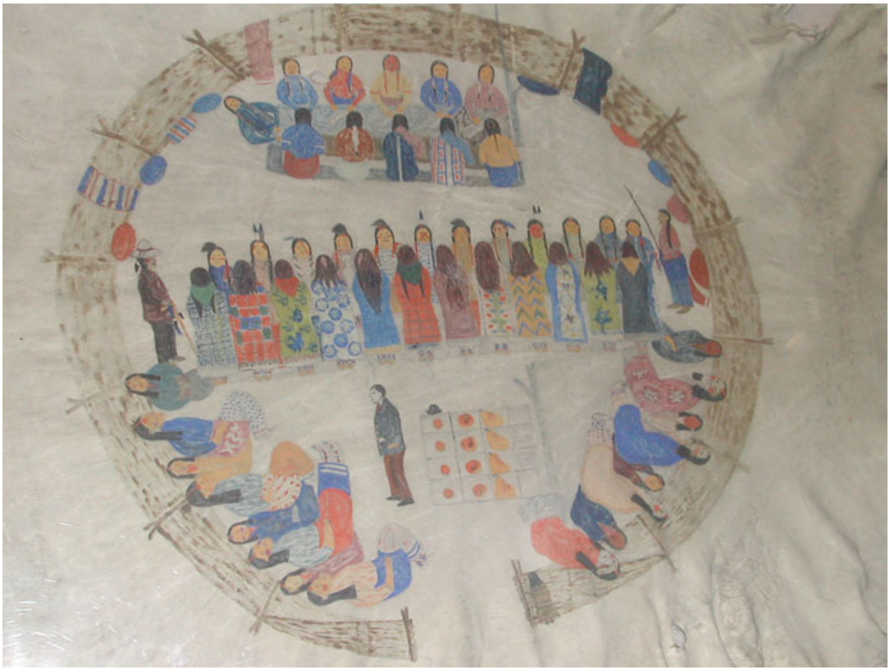


Fig. 9.14 The Bear Dance scene painted on buckskin is detailed showing the corral, people seated at a table playing moraches, (bear growlers), 12 pairs of men and women in facing dance lines with male "whippers" (Cat men) at either end, seated spectators on both sides of the corral entrance, fruit on a table beneath a leafless tree, a White man facing the spectators, and a girl clothed in a blanket peering into the corral at the right of the entrance. Collected about 1890–1900 by Thomas Mckee. Colorado Historical Society 1894.170 (photograph by Carol Patterson, Ute Indian Museum collection)

a spring celebrating. Then one year during the time of that dance, the bear came back to the village prowling around looking for that song. A woman is singing it and she gave it back to the bear" (Duncan 2010a, b).

"In rock art, the bear and ritual is symbolized by the bear paw. The songs for the dance were inspired from the sound of thunder in the sky. The singing is about that. The women select a partner. On the last day is the appearance of the bear, a man with a cape and bear head. People dance to one side and say 'the bear is coming'. Kids hide behind their parents. The bear comes into the corral and moves all around while the dance is going on. Then a man comes to the center of the circle to east, singing a song, rhythm and sound. A woman dresses up in buckskins goes to the center of the enclosure and holds her hands up. She becomes the 'bear' and the bear is the 'tree'. The woman dances around the man (bear), several times. The song ends and the bear/man goes away. The last night of the Bear Dance, they dance all night into the morning. The sun comes up and they all line up and face the East. The medicine man says prayers and fans each one and then excuses them. Then our parents go home. They take a branch of willow and walk around the house, talking to the 'little ones' the crawling things. They say 'bugs, we are going to live here with you. You help us, and we help you. We all live close to nature'" (Duncan 2012).

Clifford has a special affinity to animals. He says:

"Animals all have a special gift. *Pachuk*—is Otter, and he lives in the water, swims like a fish, comes out of the water, goes out on the land, plays on the land, and does many things. When Otter gets to the water, he rolls around, and is very playful. So many Indian medicine men really like that animal and they will connect to Otter and say, 'I want you to be my teacher.' You have to talk to these animals in such a way that they will become your teacher. You say, 'Teach me how to talk to people, or teach me how to doctor this sickness, or teach me how to identify plants. Teach me about signs I should watch for, Animal Teacher.' You select the animal you like, maybe magpie. Then say; 'Magpie, I have come to you, I want you to teach me how to read rock art.' Over time they will come and say 'yes' or 'no', or else you are not ready. Most of the time you are not ready" (Duncan 2008).

"Mountain sheep in rock art are different. You (Carol) as a person, have studied many drawings of sheep, and learned they are not all the same. They are different in many ways. They are telling a story to you, and eventually you will pick up the idea that they are not really what you think they are. They are people. Animals are people. They tell you what the people are doing" (Duncan 2012).

"Rock art that depicts animals, is really talking about something that is not really dead. Rock art is not a place of dead drawings. They are very much alive. The animals depicted make it alive. When I look at bird or an animal like an Elk, I will talk to that Elk and say, 'well, I am not supposed to do this, but I can talk to you, so you can listen to me for awhile.' Then I go on and talk to it. The rock art is actually communicating with me. A lot of people say *praying*, but it is not. You are actually throwing it out to the rock art. That's what the difference is. We've picked up this idea of praying and make it sacred, but we only use praying at certain times. In this case, it is actually talking and communicating" (Duncan 2011a, b).

Spiritual Discussion

Clifford's conception of spiritual matters involves: "When you start thinking about spirit, you center your thought on what is really your existence. Is it a spirit that brought you here or is it inside your body? You have two that are parallel. When you start thinking about it in this manner it becomes clear that the spiritual part of a human is actually coming from the past into this world and will continue on into the beyond. So in that sense, it is an everlasting spirit. While it is here on this earth, the spirit takes on a body. The important thing is that all things on this earth do have spirits. That is why when a Native American is procuring plants for medicinal uses, they are selecting the plant spirit also. It is the spirit of that plant that's going to do the healing. It is the spirits that are part of whatever we do in life" (Duncan 2010a, b).

"Those were the teachings of my great-grandfathers. You have to actually take it step by step because it all cannot be acquired overnight. It has to be taught from the

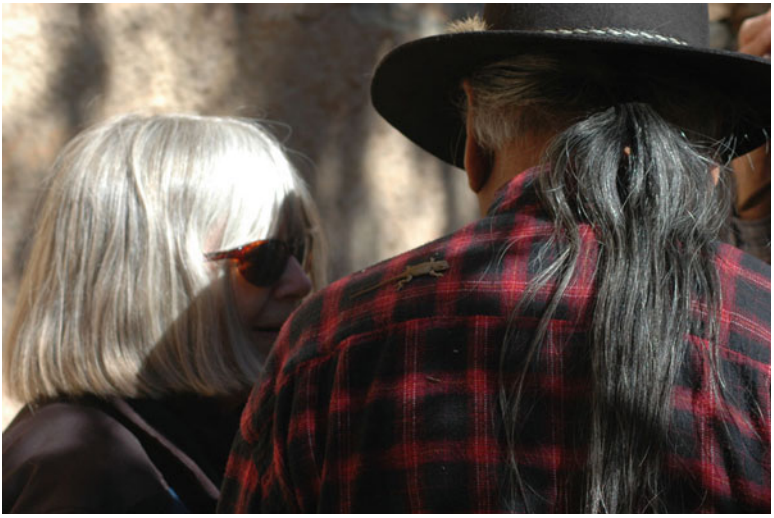


Fig. 9.15 Clifford talking to Polly Schaafsma. A little lizard jumped up on his shoulder (twice) pictured here. Clifford calls "Lizard" his spirit helper (photograph by Carol Patterson)

very first day of life on this earth and taught step by step. All the things that you must acquire will take a life time of teaching" (Duncan 2010a, b) (Fig. 9.15).

"So the respect for humans then is on the spiritual level, not as a person. You don't just look at a person as being a person, you have to look within that person and know how they feel. My father used to say that the color of the skin does not really make a difference because the color of that spirit comes first and you will have to learn how to recognize what is inside the person. But we're in a world that the first thing that we do in the morning is look at ourselves in the mirror. In the mirror you are really looking at the surface of your face, your body, not your spirit. Its the spirit that is behind that face or inside that body so you have to learn how to pull that out and look at that first, when you look at that mirror" (Duncan 2010a, b).

"That's the way I was taught. It's the same way with sacred space. When we are going to perform a certain type of ritual or ceremony, we create a sacred space. We do that by bringing all spiritual things into one world, and we say, this is a spiritual space and this is what we are going to use this for. Upon completing that ceremony, what we came together to do, we then have to close that space up. Yet it's the same world. It is how we look at things that are invisible, and learn how to see with that invisible eye, rather than this eye. These are the teachings of my elders and my ancestors, who passed it on to the next generation. There are very few of us now who are actually part of that world so this is my explanation as to how we should respect people. This is what we have to be part of, and coming to the conclusion that I am part of the universe, I therefore belong to the universe and everything that is here I am part of. I am not separate. This is something that we all have to strive for" (Duncan 2010a, b).

Song Is a Spirit

Clifford continues in a similar manner regarding the role of song in a spiritual context: “The Song is a spirit. It moves like thinking, like a thought. From this to this, it jumps around. So one day you’re are sitting there and it jumps into you. And the song says “Sing me”. So you sing it. Two minutes after you get through with that, it’s gone, and you don’t remember, because it’s a spirit, it is gone away. So that’s why I catch that and put it in a tape recorder. And it doesn’t get away from me, and I keep going back to that, and I’ve got it. And I say, ‘Ok I’ve got you, you are a spirit, and I want you to teach me how to be like you’. So that song becomes part of me and I sing it. That’s how that goes” (Duncan 2009) (Fig. 9.16).

Sacred Landscape

“The songs I sing are an opener. They open things up. Songs are derived from the landscape and from the sounds of nature. If a certain place feels a certain way, it’s because there is a song for it. It comes into your mind and you start singing. It is a means of exploring. When we go to a rock art site, and you tell me the site

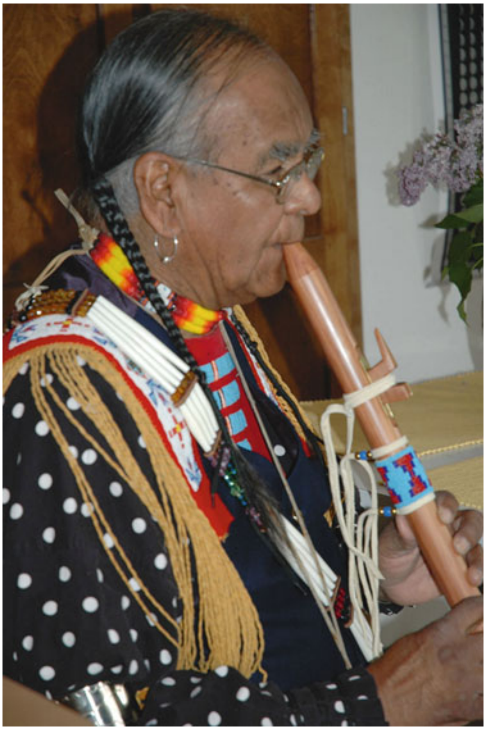


Fig. 9.16 Clifford Playing the Flute (photograph by Carol Patterson)

is on top of that hill, a song comes into my mind I start singing it. I start humming that sound. What I am doing is throwing the song up into that area on the hill. It kind of like clears the way for me. It is also like a prayer" (Daniels 2010).

"Each place in the landscape has its own song. They are especially Indian songs that don't have words. We call them chants. Some people say they don't make any sense. *Heeyaayaaa*. It is not even a word. But it has to be repeated the same way every time. A song can be the sound of a wind. When you go up into the mountains and sit in an area with lots of pine trees, the wind blows through there and makes a song. It is this singing that you pick up on. And when you sing these songs, they bring back the feeling of that place. That is why we sing songs in each place that we go. It is not really planned. It just happens. I like it. I like songs. I think that is why I sing all the time" (Daniels 2010).

"In ceremonies we say we don't own a song, *the song owns you*. Don't say you own that song—that is the wrong way of thinking. I don't own the land*, the land owns me*. That is the way of looking at life prior to the Europeans. How could you own something that owns you?" (Daniels 2010).

Summary

Clifford Duncan has spent most of his life following the teachings of his Ute religion, conducting ceremonies for the spiritual well-being of others and studying Ute petroglyphs and paintings throughout Colorado and Utah to better understand his cultural history and prehistoric world view. His perspective provides a unique aspect of rock art interpretation for nonnative scholars. Rock art enthusiasts are always curious about "what it means." Perhaps we can never know the whole truth, but for Ute rock art panels in Western Colorado, there still is a connection to the living culture that created it. These interpretations by Clifford Duncan remain invaluable.

As with many religious traditions around the world there are three modes of expression: the mythological narrative, the visual iconic display, and the ritualized performance. Shavano Valley petroglyph site provides a unique example of a prehistoric visual display of the Bear Dance ceremony that Clifford retells in his versions of the Bear Dance myth. It serves as the ceremonial grounds for the gathering of Ute bands each spring, to recite myths and spiritual beliefs, sing songs, and dance for many days, paying their respects to the bear and reverence for the "tree." Medicine men perform healing ceremonies for the benefit of the community. Shavano Valley petroglyph site is indeed a sacred landscape.

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