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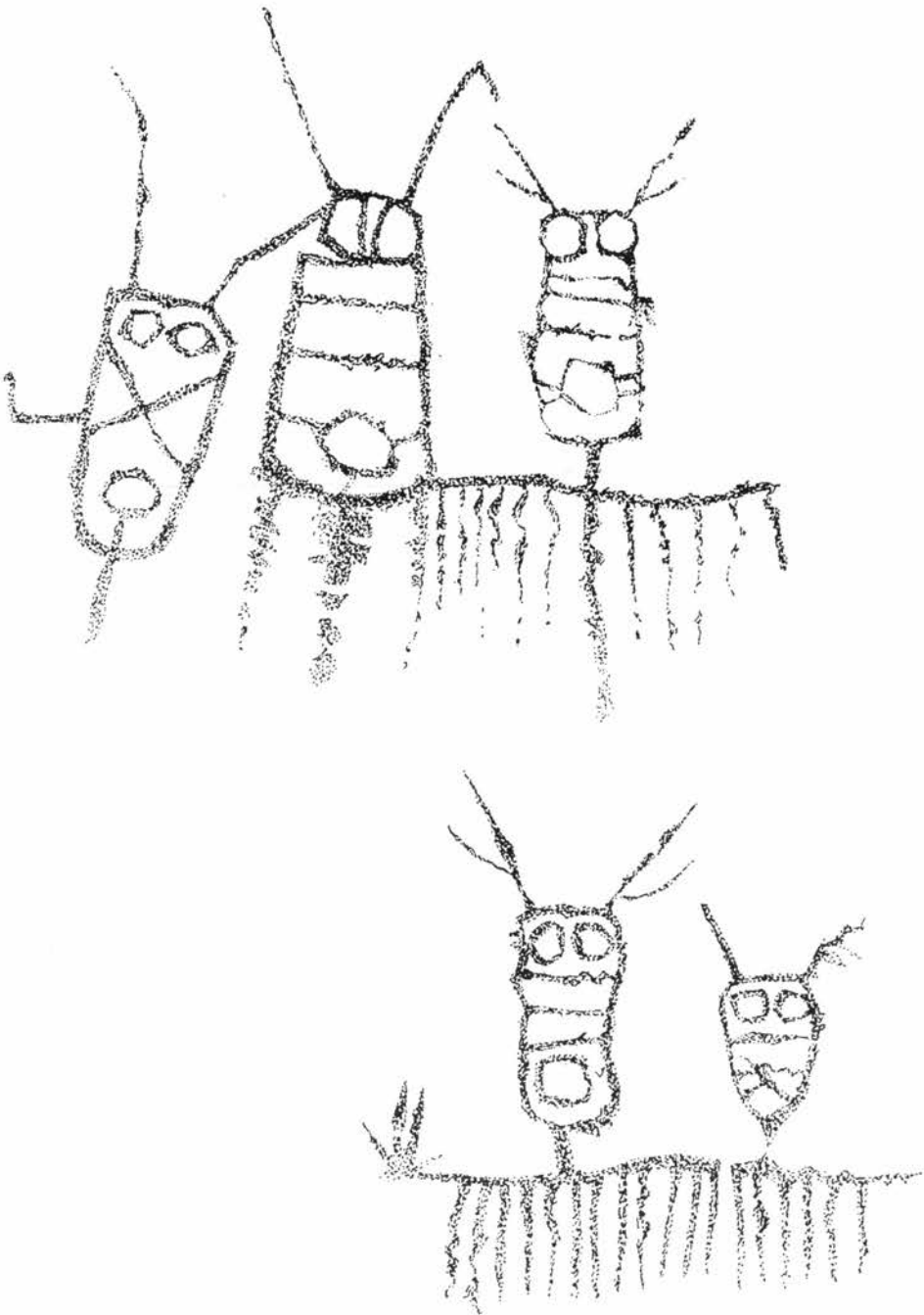


Fig. 119. The "Tecolote" site. Center owl of top row, 71 cm.

GIVING A HOOT: SHAMANISTIC OWL IMAGES IN THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE PALAVAYU ANTHROPOMORPHIC STYLE, NORTHEASTERN ARIZONA

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Introduction

The excitement triggered by Grotte Chauvet, the newly discovered paleolithic cave in southern France, is in part attributable to its portrayal of several rarely depicted animal species, among them the exquisite rendering of an owl (Chauvet *et al.*, 1996, p. 49). Equally exciting to me is the recent discovery of over eighty owl petroglyphs at several adjacent sites in the Palavayu of northeastern Arizona (fig. 120). The ancient Hopi term "Palavayu", literally denoting "Red River", is an apt name for this area in that most of the washes and creeks along which this art occurs drain into the Little Colorado River. Constituting perhaps the highest concentration of rock art owls in North America, these images seem to be part of a late Archaic/early Basketmaker II rock art complex emerging in the vicinity of Petrified Forest National Park which I have termed the Palavayu Anthropomorphic Style (PASTYLE) because of the many patterned-body anthropomorphs that dominate the motif repertoire (McCreery & Malotki, 1994, p. 17). These owls, probably created by hunter-gatherers who also may have marginally practiced corn agriculture, are believed to be of shamanistic origin. Since they stylistically match all the characteristics of this most ancient rock art tradition in the Palavayu, they may be between 4,500 and 2,000 years old. This paper will examine the evidence for this assumed shamanistic origin.

The Owl in Worldwide Folklore

Few birds have generated such powerful emotional reactions and caused more ambivalent impressions on the human mind than the typical owl (Family *Strigidae* of the Order *Strigiformes*). With their large eyes, disc-like faces, and ear tufts resembling horns, they have captured the imagination of human beings for centuries.

Although for many the owl symbolizes positive characteristics, such as wisdom and cleverness, even occasionally being regarded as an omen of good fortune (Sparks & Soper, 1970, p. 166), on balance the negative, even ominous connotations surrounding the owl throughout history far outweigh the positive.

These negative feelings in much of the Western world often seem to arise from the eerie, low, mournful hooting of many owls, thought by many to be a harbinger of bad tidings, especially of untimely death. This belief in the owl's ominous nature is reinforced by its extreme visual acuity at night and its nearly inaudible flight, enabling it to strike its prey in the dark, without warning. Along with these ominous feelings came a dread of the owl as a sign of witchcraft. As early as Roman times the Latin word *strix*, "screech owl", was used as a cover term for "witch", and at various times, owl feathers

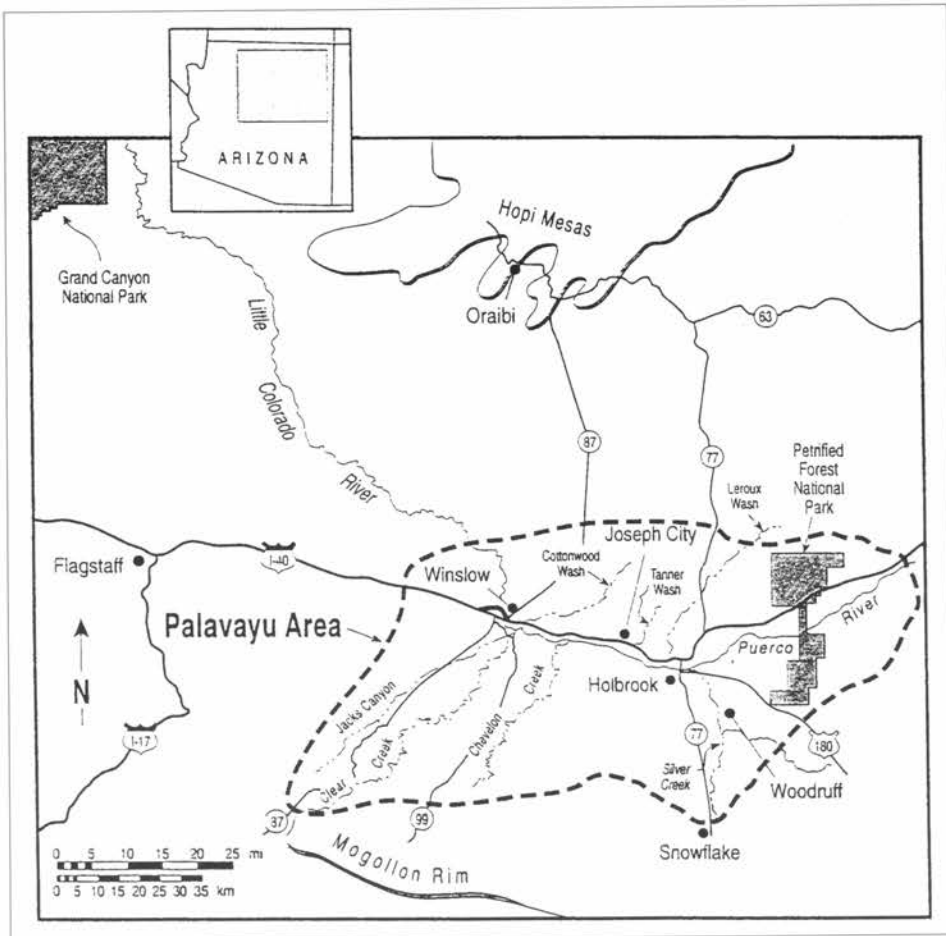


Fig. 120. The Palavayu rock art area in northeastern Arizona.

have played a major role in black magic and were a frequent ingredient of witches' charms and incantations.

The Owl in Puebloan Folklore of the American Southwest

The fundamental ambivalence inherent in the essence of "owlness", fluctuating between extreme positive and extreme negative conceptualization, is also observable in the Pueblo cultures of the American Southwest. Unlike the eastern Rio Grande pueblos, in whose belief systems the owl is almost exclusively regarded as a bird of witchcraft, Tyler (1991) claims a more balanced view of the good and evil sides of the bird's nature for the western pueblos of the Zuni and Hopi. According to him, Zuni hunters invoke the mothlike silence of the owl in order to approach game animals more stealthily (Tyler, 1991, p. 172), and although permitted for the adornment of kachina masks, no owl feathers are employed in the fashioning of prayer sticks (Tyler, 1991, p. 158). Further, the Zuni belief that owls "keep away other birds, and hence keep away the rain" (Parsons, 1927, p. 107) clearly points to the association of the bird with witchcraft.

My own field work among the Hopi essentially corroborates Tyler's observations of a balanced view for the Hopi, as the Hopi make use of owl symbology in both positive

and negative ways. Positive use of owl imagery and concepts is portrayed in two ways—deification of the owl as a kachina and ceremonial usage of its plumage. Based on linguistic evidence, the Hopis seem to be familiar with at least five different types of actual owls, all of which once lived in their ancestral environment. Two of these, *Mongwu*, the “Great Horned Owl”, and *Hootsoko*, the “Screech Owl”, have been cast as supernaturals in the pantheon of Hopi kachina gods (Wright, 1973, pp. 92-111). A third owl kachina, apparently existing only as a supernatural personage, is *Salapmongwu*, literally “Spruce Owl”.

Whereas the residents of the New Mexico pueblos along the Rio Grande have a nearly paranoid fear of owl feathers, owl plumage has a number of positive uses among the Hopi. *Nakwakwusi* or “prayer feathers” are fashioned especially for peach trees to ward off killing frosts, and to ensure continued warm weather and a bountiful crop. Fluffy clusters of owl feathers, known as *mongtsitoma* or *mongtsakwa*, are worn on the masks of various kachina deities, attesting to the powerful positive influence of the bird. Also, owl feathers are typically used to fletch arrows, ensuring a near-silent flight.

Contrasted with these positive manifestations is a clear linkage of the owl to witchcraft. In order to exercise his evil craft, the Hopi *powaga* or “sorcerer” often transforms himself into the animal familiar of his choice, frequently an owl. Due to the owl’s nocturnal habits and stealthy flight, it becomes one of the witch’s preferred means of transport (Malotki, 1993, p. 163). This witch connection is clearly borne out in Hopi oral literature, the bird occasionally being branded *powaqmongwu* or “witch owl”. In the old days, disobedient children were threatened by their Hopi parents with being carried off by an owl. In a story I recorded (Malotki, 1976) such a child, cast outdoors by her mother because of incessant crying, is carried off by the owl to her nest and reared there with the owl’s own offspring, sprouting feathers in the process.

Pueblo-Type Rock Art Owls of the Palavayu

In the light of the extensive owl lore prevalent among the Hopis and Zunis, and the fact that their villages are roughly equidistant from the core region of the Palavayu, it comes as somewhat of a surprise that rock art owl depictions stylistically conforming to Pueblo II-Pueblo IV type iconography are rather sparse. An inventory of hundreds of rock art sites with tens of thousands of individual glyphs, the overwhelming majority of which are pecked, has to date yielded only a handful of petroglyphic owls of this late period in the Palavayu.

The PASTYLE Rock Art Complex

Given the relative scarcity of rock art owls in the Pueblo horizon of the Palavayu, the recent discovery of over eighty petroglyphic images of the bird within a relatively small area of the same geographic region is almost sensational. All the more so, in my opinion, since they stylistically match all the characteristics of the most ancient rock art tradition in the Palavayu, that of the late Archaic or early Basketmaker II period. Showing all the hallmarks of what I formerly termed the Palavayu Linear Basketmaker Style (McCreery & Malotki, 1994, p. 18), and now call the PASTYLE, the owl images may be between 4,500 and 2,000 years old. There is increasing chronometric evidence for a new “long chronology” for Basketmaker II (Schaafsma, 1994, p. 45) in the southern reaches of the Colorado Plateau. A series of new radiocarbon dates for maize falls in or very near the 4th millennium B.P. (Smiley, 1994, p. 173). In the total absence of any archaeological survey data for the area in which the newly-found owls are

Paleo-Indian Period	9,500 B.C. to ca. 7,000 B.C.
Archaic Period	7,000 B.C. to ca. 1,500 B.C.
BM II-BM III Period	Linear ca. 1,500 B.C. to ca. A.D. 1
	Majestic ca. A.D. 1 to A.D. 700
BM III-PI	A.D. 700 to A.D. 950
PII-PIII	Early A.D. 950 to A.D. 1100
	Late A.D. 1100 to A.D. 1300
PIV	A.D. 1300 to A.D. 1450

Fig. 121. Tentative chronology of culture stages in the Palavayu.

located, the early portion of the chronological sequence of culture stages given in fig. 121 must remain speculative and subject to revision.

The newly-emerging PASTYLE rock art complex, a descriptive overview of which is presented in McCreery & Malotki (1994, pp. 13-29), iconographically shows striking resemblances to Turner's Glen Canyon Style 5 and Schaafsma's San Juan Anthropomorphic Style (McCreery & Malotki, 1994, pp. 18-23). I believe, however, that the regionally developed focus of the PASTYLE complex goes beyond these stylistic affiliations and is part of a much larger, Western North American rock art tradition, which may embrace, in addition to the above-mentioned Glen Canyon and San Juan manifestations, the imagery of the Barrier Canyon Style in Utah, the Dinwoody Style in northwestern Wyoming, and the Lower Pecos River rock art in south Texas. The general stylistic uniformity which underlies these regional rock art corpora in spite of regional differences may also suggest a degree of homogeneity in social, political, and religious ideologies. Anchored in a hunter-gatherer lifeway, its cognitive roots may ultimately be traceable to Paleolithic Asia.

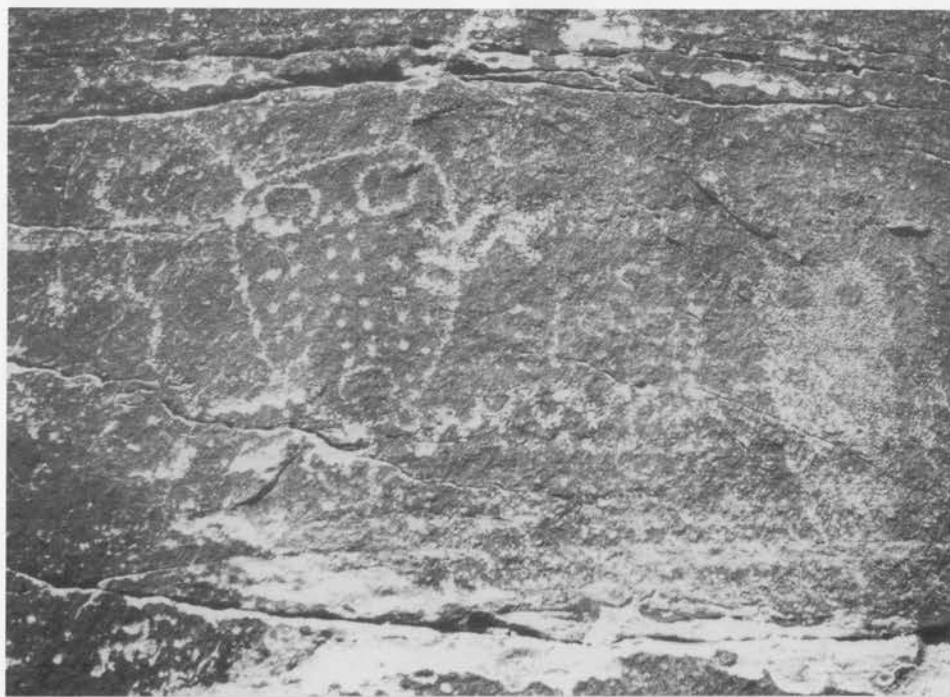
In spite of its conceptual indebtedness to a pan-Western Archaic matrix, the PASTYLE complex has unmistakable properties of its own. Its idiosyncratic commonalities set it off from all other early rock art horizons. In addition to being restricted geographically, with clearly demarcated boundaries, the range of motifs is also fairly restricted. Following in part a taxonomic schema proposed by Siikala (1984, p. 69), Palavayu's inventory of graven elements is divisible into two broad categories. Labeled "animate" and "inanimate", the former is subdividable into animal (zoomorphic) and human (anthropomorphic) forms, while the latter embraces figurative (footprints, handprints, staffs, weapons, etc.) and nonfigurative elements (phosphenes or entoptic phenomena). In addition to the quadrupeds (elk, deer, pronghorn antelope, and bighorn sheep), the zoomorphic group contains a subclass of nonquadrupeds consisting of snakes, dragonflies, and birds.

Bird Depictions in PASTYLE Imagery

Unlike the depicted quadrupeds listed above, which are all desirable food and game animals and could therefore be regarded as evidence for compulsory magic and a hunting hypothesis, snakes, dragonflies, and birds are primarily not part of the game or food category. With the exception of the owls and a few wading birds, possibly representing cranes or herons (McCreery & Malotki, 1994, p. 80), the remaining birds are not identifiable. On two panels they occur as tiny, fluttering creatures. Executed probably by the same artist, they are spatially associated with shamanic-type PASTYLE



Fig. 122a-b. The "Red Ribbon" site. Size of single owl, 49 cm. Leftmost of owl trio, 39 cm.



imagery and may thus function as “soul-birds” on extracorporeal journeys (McCreery & Malotki, 1994, p. 6). There is ample evidence in contemporary Pueblo ethnography that birds were primarily acquired for their plumage. The extensive usage of feathers as votive offerings by the Southwestern Pueblo Indians is well documented. This also holds for owl feathers, especially among the Hopis and Zunis, whose secular and ceremonial interests in them were pointed out above.

To date, a total of eighty-six PASTYLE owl depictions has been recorded at twenty different sites in the Palavayu. All sites, located in the canyon depths of two of the four Palavayu tributaries draining into the Little Colorado from the south, are riverine, either directly adjacent to water from seasonal runoff or within walking distance of permanent pools. Due to periodic flooding of the gorges, which sometimes partially or totally submerges even the rock art panels, no habitation sites ever seem to have been established along the occasional dry sections bordering the watercourses, nor have I ever come across any artifacts on their banks.

All of the owl motifs are pecked, some meticulously so, suggesting that they are the result of both direct and indirect percussion techniques. Many of the depictions have acquired various degrees of repatination that, in some cases, rivals the original varnish, vouching for their great age. Ranging in size between 20 cm and 88 cm, most of the



Fig. 123. The “Stakes” site. Size of topmost owl, 37 cm.



Fig. 124. The “Owltown” site. Size of rake-bodied owl, 52 cm.

images fall into a middle size range of 35-65 cm. Some, however, are so positioned along precarious ledges that they cannot be reached without sophisticated climbing equipment. They have therefore not yet been measured.

Only two of the owls are portrayed in relatively naturalistic form (fig. 122a-b). All of the others show distinctly unnatural or supernatural features, such as decorations on their ovoid bodies and insectlike antennae projecting from their heads (fig. 123).

Five are anthropomorphized, and at least five are highly abstract in that their torsos are constructed of rakes (fig. 124). Quite a few occur individually or in groups, constituting separate panels as in figure 119, others are embedded in the context of anthropomorphic and/or entoptic motifs. Splendid examples are the panels in figures 125 and 126. Figure 127 graphically summarizes the range of stylistic variation.

Interpretation of PASTYLE Owl Imagery

Observing that most studies of American rock art had been much too simplistic, Hedges (1976, p. 126) also claimed that much of the art was "directly related to shamanistic beliefs and practices". Today, nearly twenty years later, there is general agreement among a number of rock art specialists that a great deal of the Archaic rock paintings and engravings encountered throughout western North America is shamanistic in origin. Paradigmatically developed by Lewis-Williams & Dowson (1988) in the context of South African San rock art, with neuropsychological insights into the human brain and ethnographic information from Bushman hunter-gatherer cultures complementing each other, the shamanistic hypothesis is meeting with very positive resonance in its applicability to western North American rock art. Found to have a great deal of heuristic potential, the neuropsychological bridge that it provides allows us to cross the deep chasm, formerly marked by frustration and sometimes despair, which lay between the recording and interpretation of rock art of hunter-gatherer vintage.

Whitley, who worked with Lewis-Williams in South Africa, was among the first to transplant the seminal findings of this neuropsychological model to the United States. "This model of the mental (and ultimately graphic) imagery that may result from an ASC (altered state of consciousness) is based on the premise that the human neuropsychological system is a biopsychological universal. The neuropsychological effects of ASCs, therefore, are universal and cross-culturally experienced because all *Homo sapiens* are 'hard-wired' in the same way" (Whitley, 1994a, p. 85).

In applying this model to his rock art research in the Great Basin, Whitley (1994a, p. 92) comes to the conclusion that a shamanistic rock art origin associated with altered states of consciousness was widespread among hunter-gatherer groups, and that this pattern may indeed "represent a fundamental aspect of New World religions".

Schaafsma (1994) has posited a generalized shamanistic framework as "the most useful model" to better understand the Barrier Canyon Style and the San Juan Anthropomorphic Style within the confines of the Colorado Plateau. In similar fashion, Turpin (1994) has convincingly argued that many of the Lower Pecos River Style pictographs reflect mental imagery resulting from shamanistic trance or altered states of consciousness.

I should like to submit that the neuropsychological model is also applicable to the PASTYLE rock art of the Palavayu. Much of its iconography—a plethora of entoptic phenomena, both replicated and construed, patterned-body anthropomorphs in phosphenic designs with associated animal spirit helpers and an array of power objects, therianthropes and other fantastic depictions—perfectly matches the paradigm of trance-

imagery. It consistently fits the visionary hallucinations that typically originate from altered states of consciousness, as demonstrated by the neuropsychological model.

While shamanism, “the most ancient of humankind’s religious, medical, and psychological disciplines” (Walsh, 1990), is almost universally believed to have been associated with hunter-gatherer societies, it was not discontinued with the emergence of maize cultivators in the Southwest. It must have been practiced by Basketmaker II people, for it lasted, in vestiges, into modern Pueblo times. PASTYLE artists have been extinct for several thousand years. Nothing is known about their beliefs, myths, rituals, and world view. It is not possible to debrief the artists as to whether they executed the rock art in their role as shamans, whether they used hallucinogens to achieve trance, or whether rock art sites were vision quest sites. Nor can we investigate many other questions that perplex rock art researchers. The cardinal question, therefore, is whether present-day ethnographic information from the Southwestern Pueblos, presumably descendants of the Basketmaker people, can be used to shed light on their ancient rock art practices.

In my own field work among the Hopis, who today live only 100 km to the north of the northernmost perimeter of the Palavayu, I have been able to retrieve a sizable body of ethnographic data, a small percentage of which relates to the topic of shamanism. Above all, in addition to recording narratives featuring such shamanistic themes as death and rebirth in the initiatory act of becoming a shaman (Malotki, 1974), I have been able to collect a good amount of surviving witchcraft lore. Presented in bilingual fashion to preserve the cultural authenticity of these important source materials (Malotki, 1993, pp. 149-184), they contain many elements and practices for which only

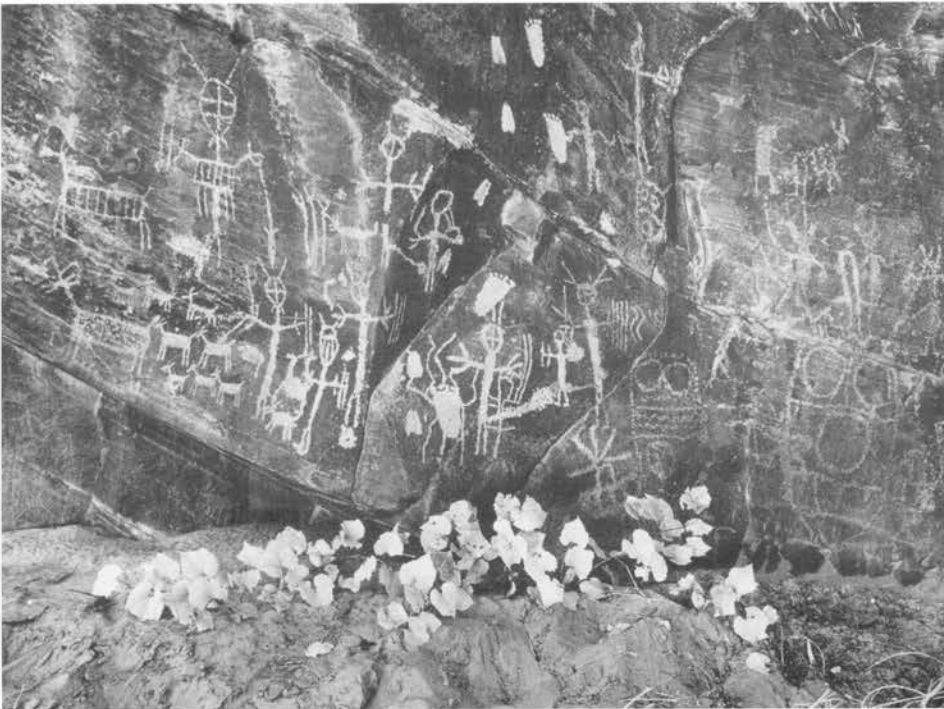


Fig. 125. Panel A at the “Hootenanny” site. Owl on left, 28 cm.

the term *powaqa*, “sorcerer, witch”, needs to be exchanged for *tuuhikya*, “medicine man” or *poosi’ytaqa*, “shaman”, to grasp their significance in this context. Among others, the cited passages allude to the sorcerer’s ability to change himself into various animals (Malotki, 1993, texts 24, 43), travelling nocturnally in the guise of birds and insects (Malotki, 1993, text 40), and acquiring power from his “pets” or animal familiars (Malotki, 1993, texts 48-49). Furthermore, they refer to witches who possess charming songs used to attract sexually desirable females and game animals (Malotki, 1993, texts 60-63), who influence the weather (Malotki, 1993, texts 64-65), and cause crop failure (Malotki, 1993, text 66).

Povosqa (PL *povosyaqam*), the Hopi Second Mesa term for “shaman”, which is known as *poosi’ytaqa* (PL *poosi’yyungqam*) in the Third Mesa dialect area, are in themselves insightful bits of information. All shamans, at one time, had to be members of a curing society known as *poswimi* (Curtis, 1922, p. 53). Its initiated members, termed *poovost* or *poswiwinkyam*, were basically “men with X-ray vision”. Etymologically connected to *poosi*, “eye”, *povosqa* literally translates “one who does seeing”, whereas *poosi’ytaqa* means “one who has an eye”. “Seer” thus perhaps best captures the notion of the Hopi shaman, with “seeing” relating of course to the diagnosing and curing of illness and disease. As a rule, this “seeing” is enhanced by the use of a *ruupi*, or “crystal”, the shaman’s “third eye”. In addition, the Hopi shaman is said to have consumed a specific *ngahu*, or “medicine”, which may have heightened his visionary command and the diagnostic faculties of his all-seeing eye. Though nothing is known about the substance that was taken or its possible ingredients, it may have involved *Datura wrightii* or *Datura stramonium*. Bunzel (1922, p. 533) corroborates this healing approach also for the Zunis. To aid his diagnosis, the medicine man drew on the use of a crystal or partook of a vision-inducing drug. Bunzel also suspects that the latter was “Jamestown weed”, an Anglo term for *Datura*. La Barre (1975, p. 35) adds the interesting observation that at Zuni the plant was also used as a device for divination. Thus, medicine men supposedly gave the plant to clients to discover thieves. Parsons (1939, p. 196) relates a similar Zuni belief about two brothers who live inside the plant and reveal “in trance the whereabouts of lost persons or articles”.

Containing the powerful alkaloids hyoscyamine and scopolamine (Schultes and Hoffmann, 1979, p. 110), the violently hallucinogenic and toxic plant was and still is the most common psychotropic source in the area (Schultes, 1972, p. 46). Although *tsimona*, the Hopi term for *Datura*, is today vehemently shunned and decried as a *nukustusaga*, that is, “evil grass” (Malotki, 1983, p. 207), Whiting (1966, p. 89) lists it as one of the Hopi medicinal herbs -supposedly it was used to cure meanness- and reports that “the root may be chewed to induce visions by the medicine man while making a diagnosis”. According to Curtin (1965, p. 186), the Zunis employed *Datura* as a narcotic, anodyne, or anesthetic. Pulverizing its blossoms and roots, they applied it externally on wounds and bruises. Zuni rain priests chewed the root of the plant to ask ancestral spirits to intercede for rain (La Barre, 1975, p. 35). Ethnographic information like this suggests strongly that the plant was also known and used as a psychoactive stimulus in the Southwest in prehistoric times. Hallucinatory visions resulting from the ingestion of the medicine may then have been incised on rock surfaces in the form of rock art.

One of the classic metaphors for the shaman’s out-of-body experience in his attempt to gain access to the spirit world is that of flight. It therefore comes as no surprise that Hopi witchcraft lore contains many allusions to the sorcerer’s ability to fly. Notable

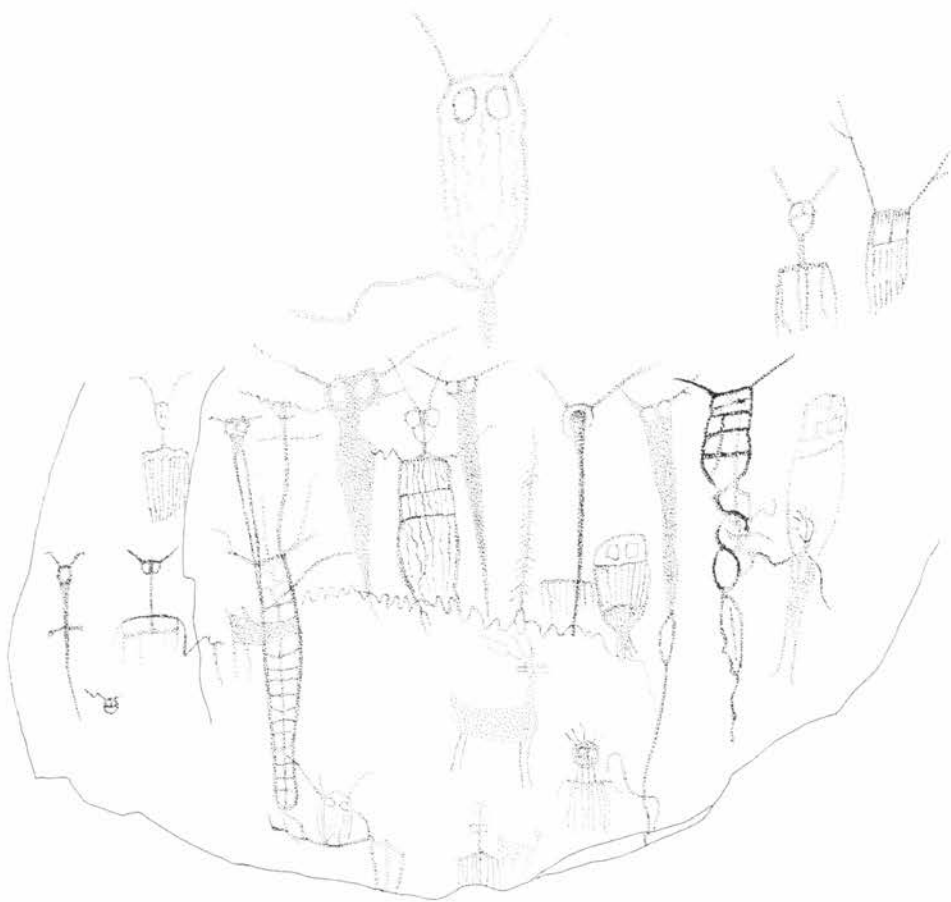


Fig. 126. Panel B at the "Hootenanny" site. Owl at bottom edge, 16 cm.

among the animal familiars that he employs to this end are crows, owls, eagles, bats, and skeleton flies. The standard way of changing himself into one of them is somersaulting over a hoop, which itself may well be a symbolic act for the entering of an altered state (Malotki, 1993, pp. 165-166).

There is no doubt in my mind that the ethnographic information referred to above constitutes almost irrefutable evidence that shamanism was once very much part of the Hopi cultural fabric. The big question that remains, however, is whether these ethnographic data can be extrapolated into the past to postulate the existence of shamanism in late Archaic and early Basketmaker II times. While I personally believe that this question can be answered in the affirmative, it must be pointed out again that there are no Hopi or Zuni ethnographic accounts that address the subject-matter of rock art itself, for example, the motivation for its production, or its function in the private or communal sphere. Nor is there any paleoethnographic evidence in existence that convincingly proves that shamans were the artists that created it. I believe, however, that the thematic content of many of the iconographic motifs unequivocally points to a shamanic origin for this art. One clear example of pictorial evidence is recognizable in the PASTYLE owl images.

Owls are birds, and shamanism is replete with bird symbolism (Eliade, 1974). The connection between birds and shamanistic power seems already established in Stone Age art. This connection is clearly evident in the celebrated "Bird Shaman" of Lascaux (Bataille, 1980, p. 113), and in the view of La Barre (1990, p. 410) the "Dancing Sorcerer" of Trois Frères wears an owl mask. Further, Breuil (1979, p. 166) maintains that "the bird shaman can be traced from Magdalenian to modern Siberian times". Wellmann (1976, p. 101), in his observations on the bird motif in North American rock art, points out that the bird may either lead the shaman's soul, "acting as psychopomp, or the shaman's soul may itself change into a bird". Owl depictions are therefore an obvious allusion to flight as a symbolic expression for the shaman's extracorporeal journey in quest of visions or other supernatural responses to mundane needs. Owl feathers may have been regarded as sources of spirit power, and imitating the bird's call may have contributed to the shaman's magic success.

But the owl may signify more than that. I propose that it represents a succinct metaphor for the shaman himself. This would imply that the modern Hopi belief that witches will transform themselves into owls also holds for the ethnographically non-attested past. To be sure, the temporal gulf that separates the present-day Pueblos from hunter-gatherer bands and Basketmaker II people is enormous. Extreme Pueblo conservatism in matters of religion would similarly justify cautious extrapolation of present-day ceremonial attitudes and practices to those of ancestral populations in prehistoric times. I would posit, however, that there is an ideological continuity that can be projected back from present-day witchcraft lore to one-time Archaic and Basketmaker shamanic practices.

Many of the behavioral traits of the owl have immediate relevance for the shaman. The owl is nocturnal, and shamans seem to prefer the dark of the night for serious curing sessions. Because of the bird's legendary ability to hunt efficiently in the dark and to spot and discriminate potential prey with an almost sonar positioning ability, it is easy to understand that the owl might have come to represent in the minds of hunter-gatherer people a sort of shamanic ability to "see into" the other, hidden world of spirits or "see beyond" the ordinary, visible world. A liminal creature that is at home in the realms of both light and dark, just like the shaman who commutes between the secular and supernatural world, the owl is singularly predestined to become the metaphor par excellence for the shaman.

The PASTYLE owls can thus be regarded as self-portraits or alter egos of the shaman. I believe that this identification with the bird may have been the ultimate motivation for portraying the bird with such frequency in the rock art of late Archaic and early Basketmaker II times. Compared to the paucity of owl images in the Pueblo periods, as was pointed out above, this might indicate a possible cognitive shift in the perception of the owl over time. As legitimate shamans began, during Pueblo times, to compete with equally or more powerful practitioners of black magic, their shamanic animal familiars, when associated with witches and sorcerers, eventually became feared and perhaps even tabooed. This may have led to hesitation on the part of shaman artists to depict the bird.

In scrutinizing the petroglyphic portrayals of the PASTYLE owls it is notable, first of all, that all of them are rendered in rigid, frontal posture. None are shown in profile or with spread wings. Many have faces with large, prominent eyes and equally striking circular mouths in place of expected longitudinal marks for the beaks. Of the manifold physiological symptoms that have been observed in victims of *Datura* intoxication,

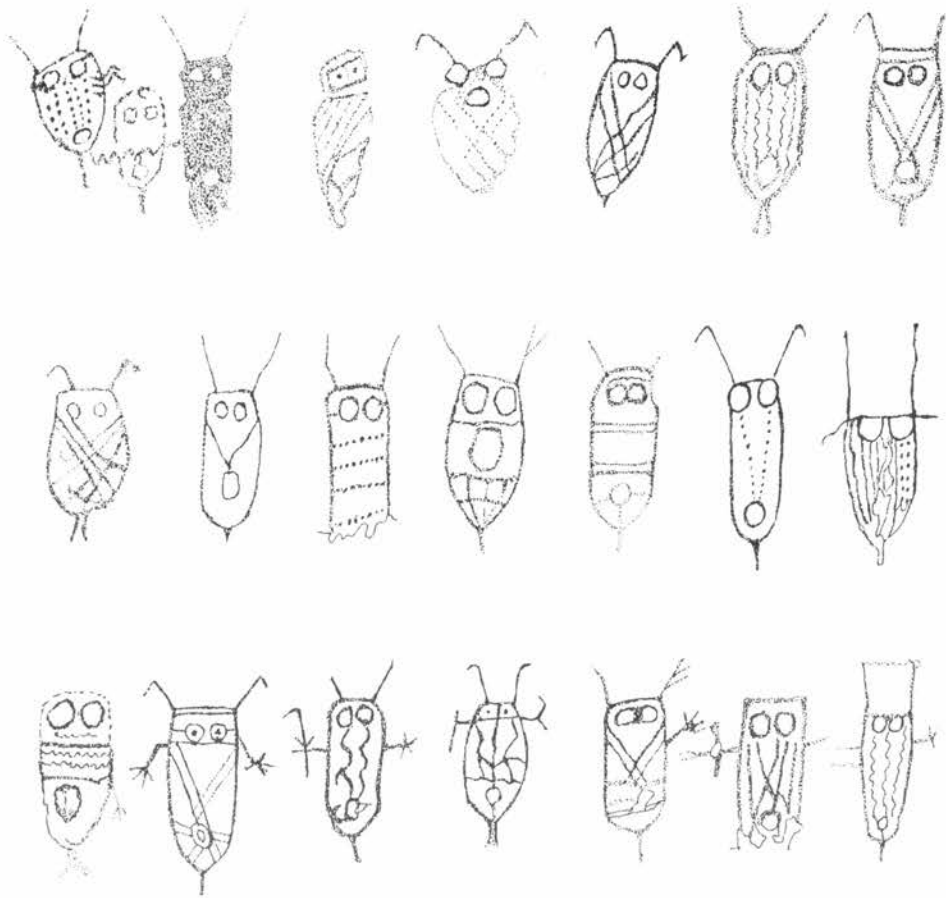


Fig. 127. Stylistic range of PASTYLE owl variation. Drawings not to scale.

pupil dilation may have been a motivating factor for the PASTYLE shaman-artist to select the owl as one of his alter egos. Extreme pupil dilation causes photophobia (Millsbaugh, 1974, p. 502) to a point that a patient will gain the ability to see clearly at night, but be abnormally intolerant of daylight (Cooper, 1797, p. 35). The frequent occurrence of owl depictions in PASTYLE art can thus be seen as indirect evidence that some of its shaman-artists may have resorted to the psychotropic properties of *Datura* to achieve trance states. This effect of *Datura*-triggered pupil dilation may, ultimately, also explain why so many PASTYLE anthropomorphs are bug-eyed, i.e., rendered with eyes that are wide open and staring.

Instead of ear tufts, in the majority of cases the owl images possess antennae projections from the head, some of them quite long and terminating in hook-shaped tips. The depiction of antennae or horned heads is one of the outstanding hallmarks of over 1,800 PASTYLE anthropomorphs that I have recorded to date. Commonly assumed both to denote spiritual power and to represent conduits for vital force, the straight-lined antennae may also symbolize the potency activated by the shaman when entering a trance, or it may depict his spirit on the point of departing on extracorporeal travel. Whitley (1994b, p. 26) notes that such head emanations are "common somatic

hallucinations” during altered states of consciousness. This unmistakable semblance to PASTYLE anthropomorphs is immediately apparent in that the owls generally occur in the company of human figures with cephalic projections. Additional similarities to the latter can be detected in the owls’ torsos. Most of them are decorated with entoptic designs such as dots, flecks, sinuosities, and single or double lines that cross each other in bandolier-fashion. It should also be noted that many Hopi and Zuni kachinas are similarly endowed with horns and other head emanations and frequently sport bandoliers as part of their ceremonial upper body make-up.

Several of the owls have been anthropomorphized, which is clearly evident from the addition of digitated hands. One, at a site I call “Hootenanny Cliff”, actually holds a crook staff in one hand (fig. 128). Another, at a site I have labeled “Choirboys”, holds a staff and a rattle (fig. 129). Commonly considered to symbolize power, staffs of this kind also survive among contemporary Hopi ritual paraphernalia (Wright, 1979, pp. 92-94). Interesting in this connection is the observation that in some instances the ovoid shape of the entire owl, in itself conveying the impression of a mask, has become the head of an extended humanized shape (fig. 130). Humanized owls can be considered therianthrope in nature, more specifically “avianthrope”.

Five of the owls are graphically conceived on bodies that constitute rakes. Fantastic images of this sort are typically generated in the third or iconic phase of the three-tiered shamanistic model (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1988, p. 204). Generally interpreted as a rain sign, (Malotki, in press) rake motifs are also held to represent outstretched wings (Hedges, 1985, p. 89). While the latter interpretation would once more point to the



Fig. 128. The “Hootenanny Cliff” site. Size of owl approximately 50 cm.

shaman's capability of magic flight, the former could be seen as a symbolic reference to the owl as a rain-shaman. As was pointed out above, the Hopi kachina pantheon contains three owls, and kachina gods are essentially supernaturals responsible for the production of life-empowering moisture in the form of rain.

Conclusion

The unusual find of a large number of owl images in the late Archaic/early Basketmaker II rock art horizon of the Palavayu is not accidental. Rather, it must be seen as integral to the shamanistic iconography that clearly differentiates this art from the art of later Pueblo periods in the same region. While no claim is being made that all the elements in PASTYLE rock art are of shamanic origin, the owl, defined here as a particularly appropriate metaphor for the shaman, can be seen as one additional piece of evidence for the applicability of both the shamanistic hypothesis and the neuropsychological model in an attempt to better understand this fascinating art



Fig. 129. The "Choirboys" site. Size of owl in bottom right-hand corner, 23 cm.

complex. While the actual meaning of the rock art owls to their ancient creators may elude us, they can certainly not be seen as products of idle painters or lessons in ornithology. Nor were they game birds, *bons à manger*, “good to eat”, to refer to Lévi-Strauss’ famous observation. Rather, they must have been selected because they were *bons à penser*, “good to think”. Contemporary Hopi ethnographic information provides a strong argument for the latter, even though there is a tremendous temporal gulf between the ideological system of the artists that engraved the owls and that of modern-day Hopis. Using current ethnographic data and extrapolating them back several thousands of years into the past is certainly risky. However, while Hopi owl lore may not be directly applicable to the understanding of the ancient PASTYLE owl depictions, despite the fact that the Hopis are in part descendants of the Anasazi Basketmakers, it is one tool that allows us to shed some light on the owls. By gaining a better understanding of the conceptual framework that ultimately may have triggered their pictorial renditions, new and valuable insights are established that can no longer be ignored in the study of Archaic and Basketmaker II or other populations in the prehistoric Southwest.



Fig. 130. The “Flint Trail” site. Size of owl, 66 cm.

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Riassunto

Il complesso d'arte dell'Alto Arcaico o del Basso Basketmaker II, in fase di scoperta nell'Arizona nord-orientale, è stato chiamato "Stile Antropomorfo Palavayu" (PASTYLE). Il componente zoomorfico del suo inventario simbolico conta, tra gli altri elementi, un grande numero di uccelli facilmente identificabili come gufi. Nel contesto dell'ipotesi sciamanistica, che

può essere impiegata in maniera convincente per l'interpretazione di gran parte dell'iconografia del PASTYLE, i gufi vengono visti come una prova grafica a sostegno della detta ipotesi: i gufi possono essere interpretati come metafore simboliche dell'artista-sciamano, oppure come *animales familiares* che lo rendono capace di assicurarsi il potere soprannaturale del mondo degli spiriti.

Summary

The Late Archaic/Early Basketmaker II rock art complex that is emerging in northeastern Arizona has been termed the "Palavayu Anthropomorphic Style" (PASTYLE). The zoomorphic component of this motif index features, among others, a large number of birds that are readily identifiable as owls. In the context of the shamanistic hypothesis, which can be convincingly employed for the interpretation of much of PASTYLE iconography, owls are seen as a significant piece of internal evidence for this hypothesis. They are interpretable either as graphic metaphors for shaman-artists themselves, or as animales familiares empowering them to secure supernatural powers from the spirit world.

Résumé

L'art rupestre Archaïque Supérieur/Basketmaker II Inférieur qui est en train d'émerger en Arizona du nord-est a reçu le nom de "Style Palavayu Anthropomorphe" (PASTYLE). La section zoomorphe de son répertoire de motifs représente, entre autres, un grand nombre d'oiseaux qui sont promptement indentifiables comme des hiboux. Dans le contexte de l'hypothèse chamanique, qui peut être utilisée d'une façon convaincante pour l'interprétation de la plupart de l'iconographie PASTYLE, les hiboux sont considérés comme une partie importante de preuve intrinsèque pour cette hypothèse. Ils peuvent être interprétés soit comme des métaphores graphiques de l'artiste-chamane, ou comme des *animales familiares* qui lui donnent le pouvoir de contrôler les forces surnaturelles du monde des esprits.