

# ROCK ART

## ANCIENT CULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF LINCOLN COUNTY





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The Nevada Rock Art Foundation

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## INTRODUCTION

PREHISTORIC ROCK ART ABOUNDS IN LINCOLN COUNTY, INTERTWINED with archaeological evidence of the lives of hunter-forager cultures who visited and lived in these lands for more than eight thousand years. Early in prehistory, hunters traveled to the valleys of what is now Lincoln County, ranging from their bases of settlement elsewhere in the Great Basin. These early hunters traveled in small groups that traversed great distances in pursuit of big game. Affording more than game, these hunting forays began the long process of cultural settlement of the region. They provided knowledge of the environment's possibilities and began familiarizing peoples with a landscape that was otherwise peripheral to their core territory.

Thousands of years later, more inclusive hunter-forager bands composed of families began settling the county staying for longer periods than the preceding big game hunters. These bands visited the county seasonally to harvest a wide range of plants and game. They were responding to environmental and social changes that fostered the expansion of human settlement throughout the Great Basin. Over millennia, these seasonal visits changed to permanent settlement of the county as it became the territorial base or home district for numerous households loosely organized into larger kin- and residential-based sociopolitical groups. These bands established winter villages (composed of many households) in wet-

lands and on valley floors, dispersing into smaller family camps during the spring through the fall to hunt and forage in a range of environmental settings. During this long process that ultimately transformed the region from a periphery to the heart of their territory, these ancient peoples created an enduring cultural landscape marked by rock art.

### ART OF THE HUNTER-FORAGER

The rock art made by prehistoric peoples provides insights into their social practices and cultural thought. Rock art is found across the globe and has excited interest since the middle of the nineteenth century when 30,000-year-old art was discovered deep in caves in Europe. These naturalistic images of big game, painted on cave walls and ceilings, prompted early archaeologists to speculate about the cultural significance of prehistoric art, a scholarly tradition that continues today. Yet, after more than a century of study, rock art remains an enigmatic monument that does not easily disclose its cultural significance to the present.

Known by many names, the term 'rock art' has become a widely accepted designation for the markings made by ancient peoples on immovable rock surfaces such as boulders, cliffs, and cave walls and ceilings. These markings were made either as pictographs or



*Le Dolmen du Couperon*, Late Neolithic chambered tomb (ca. 5,000 years old), Jersey, Channel Isles. Monuments are enduring places that manifest past social actions in the present. Although the cultural significance of monuments changes over time, they retain strong emotive power because of their perceived connection with the past. Photograph courtesy of A. Quinlan.

paintings that added pigment, charcoal, or some other substance to a rock face, or as petroglyphs that modified a rock face by pounding, pecking, incising, or engraving an image.

Rock art is generally associated with hunter-forager peoples. The most famous rock art traditions known are from Europe, Australia, and South Africa. As rock art was made on fixed landscape features, it survives in the original place its artists intended. Unlike built monuments, such as tombs and temples, rock art does not physically modify the structure of landscape features to create a cultural experience of space. This distinguishes it from architecture or modern landscape art, which rearrange or add to space to shape the experience. Also, unlike artworks or ceremonial objects, rock art was not placed in a constructed feature, such as a gallery or a shrine.

Yet, like all monuments, its makers intended that rock art would commemorate or symbolize important cultural knowledge. And, like all monuments, rock art's cultural significance probably changed over time as its meanings and symbolism were reinterpreted in response to changes in cultural thought and practices. In our own times and in different parts of the globe, the past's physical remains prompt changing cultural responses, manifested by disputes about historic memorials and statues, and buildings and architectural styles associated with twentieth-century totalitarian regimes. The long-term effect of North American hunter-foragers making enduring symbolic images on the landscape was to create a bridge between past and present cultural practices and thought.

## SYMBOLISM OR WRITING?

Rock art imagery is often difficult for the modern viewer to comprehend because of its tendencies to abstraction and schematism. For the cultures that used it, rock art was a type of symbolism that

communicated a wide range of cultural concepts. Those concepts likely fluctuated over time, as rock art was re-used and reinterpreted by subsequent generations and cultures. For individuals or social groups, being able to demonstrate a special knowledge of rock art's content (and thus a privileged connection to it) may have been as important as the actual cultural information communicated through its symbolism. Today, knowing what rock art's original makers and descendant cultures understood it to mean (its content) is not possible without commentary from those who made and used it. Instead, archaeologists seek to explain rock art's place in ancient society and cultural thought.

In contemporary thought, 'art' has become a very specialized cultural product, defined by aesthetics and representation, ideally confined to special places in the built environment (galleries, museums, town squares). It is practiced by specialists ('artists') free to express their individual creativity, constrained only by concessions to cultural considerations of 'good taste.' Western art is the subject of a special knowledge,

In North America, a variety of early terms to describe rock art made it analogous to western notation systems: 'picture-writing', 'rock writing', 'Indian writing', and the terms 'petroglyph' and 'pictograph' all illustrate the difficulties (or misconceptions) that Euro-Americans had in finding a name for something that lacked a direct equivalent in their own culture. The closest they could come was to view it as a system of communication, similar to writing or hieroglyphics, that communicated visually the

Rock art is not a text or narrative to be 'read' as it encodes a cultural symbolism, not language. Unlike ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, for example, rock art is not a pictorial writing system. Rock art motifs are often likened to glyphs (symbols that convey information nonverbally). These symbols did not represent language, so rock art is not comparable to a text that can be translated or deciphered.

North American rock art was often called 'Indian writing,' by nineteenth century Euro-Americans and sometimes 'Coyote writing' by Indian peoples. The use of the word 'writing' is a Western metaphor to describe a cultural form without precedent in Euro-

### Art and Communication

monopolized by art critics who interpret art to the public.

In contrast, in non-western cultures, artists express cultural forms and ideas, and are not free to choose themes and styles according to their individual whim. Non-western arts too are the subject of a special knowledge that can give standing or prestige to those who can

demonstrate understanding of its underlying cultural meanings. Rock art is distinguished from contemporary western art as it was made in the settled landscape, closely accompanying the rhythms of daily life. Aesthetic impulses were only part of the motivation for making rock art as it also established a cultural field providing a setting for a variety of social interactions and competition for desirable cultural and social resources.

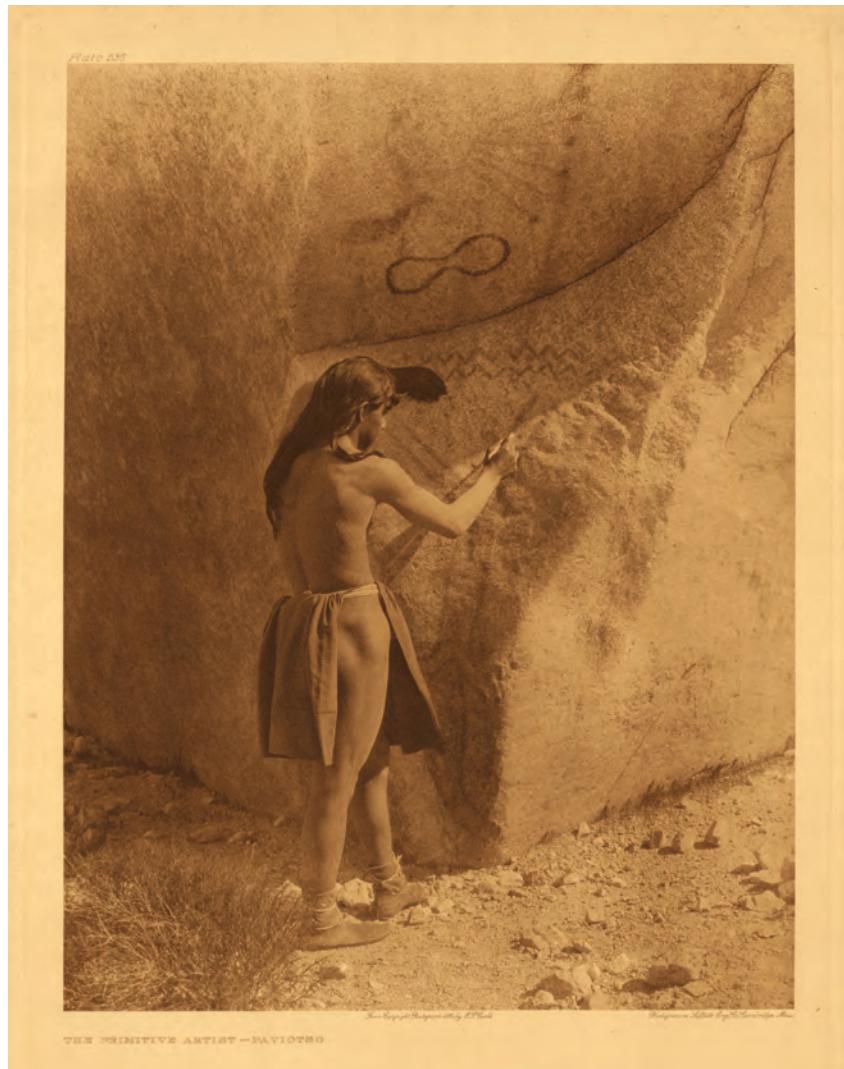
### Rock Art Nomenclature

spoken word through signs and characters with conventional meanings. As the references or meanings of the various signs and characters used are arbitrary, comprehending writing or hieroglyphics is a complex act of decoding (reading), shaped by one's knowledge and language community.

Pictography is a form of writing that uses signs or symbols that resemble what they signify, but still requires some prior knowledge to 'read' (e.g., road signs). Prehistoric rock art, in contrast,

communicates concepts, not language, in a visual way since it does not comprise a delimited set of linguistic signifiers deployed in regular combinations.

'Glyph' is derived from the ancient Greek noun for 'carving' and the verb 'to engrave or carve'. Hieroglyph is ancient Greek for 'sacred writing,' a calque (literal loan-word) of an ancient Egyptian phrase ('god's words') to describe their writing system.



Romanticized photograph by Edward S. Curtis of a Northern Paiute artist making rock art, ca. 1926. The best known rock art traditions are associated with hunter-forager cultures, though traditions made by non-state pastoral and agrarian societies are known. *Photograph: Edward S. Curtis, 1926, The North American Indian: Being A Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States, and Alaska, Volume 15, Plate 536, The Primitive Artist—Paviotso: Plimpton Press, Norwood, Mass.*

American cultures of the time. In ethnographic times, cultural features of perceived antiquity were sometimes ascribed to the exploits of the mythological Coyote by some Great Basin peoples. For example, ancient projectile points were sometimes called ‘Coyote points,’ so ‘Coyote writing’ refers to ancient rock art.

## HERITAGE AND HISTORY

The absence of writing systems does not mean that prehistoric peoples were without history—all people have a sense of history (a narrative of past actions responsible for the contemporary world). It should also not be forgotten that the earliest writing systems were developed as administrative records, not to chronicle history or cultural thought such as mythology.

Cultures without writing systems preserve their history and cultural knowledge through complex oral traditions. The important thing about these bodies of knowledge is that their content is perceived to be unchanging, creating a powerful connection to the past. In fact, content and its performance in social life (as ritual utterances or behaviors) may change with time. It is only with book-based systems of knowledge that content and meaning become fixed. And even writing, although it solidifies content, does not prevent changing readings or interpretations of the meaning of that content.

## WHO MADE ROCK ART?

Rock art is associated with non-state societies, most commonly with hunter-foragers, but also with pastoralists and farmers. Understanding the cultural characteristics of the peoples who made rock art is important for explaining why it was made and

used. In North America, rock art was primarily a cultural feature of hunter-forager societies but was also made by horticulturalists in the Southwest and parts of the Great Basin. The foraging way of life has some fundamentals, most importantly the structured movement of people across a known landscape to harvest and hunt wild resources. In contrast, sedentism (living in one place permanently) is typically associated with cultures dependent on domesticated plants and animals.

There is great variation in hunter-forager lifeways across time and space according to environmental conditions. This influenced the social organization, technology, and mobility strategies through which cultures adapted to their environmental circumstances. The aridity of Great Basin prehistoric environments affected foraging lifeways in culturally distinct ways (see Chapter 2).

### WHEN WAS ROCK ART MADE?

Rock art is not the oldest form of art or symbolism known. Portable art (such as incised stones and engraved animal-bone tools) is known that is perhaps as much as 230,000 years-old. The oldest accepted portable art currently known are 70,000 years-old ochre and decorated shell beads from a cave in South Africa.

Upper Paleolithic (ca. 50,000–10,000 years ago) European cave art is perhaps the most famous and best appreciated prehistoric rock art tradition, and is also one of the most ancient known. Ice Age hunter-foragers decorated caves in France and the Iberian peninsula with painted images of aurochs, bison, mammoths, and horses, as well as hand stencils and abstract designs. The oldest European Ice Age art is as much as 40,800 years-old and was made until around 12,000 years ago. Similarly ancient

rock art traditions are known from Australia, South Africa, and Indonesia.

In North America, the oldest known rock art site is in northwestern Nevada and is at least 10,500 years-old and perhaps as much as 14,800 years-old (page 8). The age of this rock art suggests that it was created by some of the earliest peoples to live in the Great Basin. In general, however, the earliest North American



Reconstruction of an Ice Age painting of bison from Altamira, Spain, where the oldest paintings are around 35,600 years old. Paintings were made at Altamira over a period of 20,000 years. The cave's art was found in 1879 and was the first European cave art to be discovered. Photograph courtesy of Altamira Museum.

*Patina* ~ due to environmental processes, rocks develop a dark-colored patina or weathering rind (desert varnish). Petroglyphs were made by removing this patinated surface, creating a strong contrast with the rock's natural, lighter color. The petroglyph's surface will also weather over time and a new patina will slowly develop over it.

*Petroglyphs* ~ images made by removing the patina of a rock face by pecking or pounding, scratching, or abrading. This is the most common type of Great Basin rock art and it usually occurs in open settings. Petroglyphs are more durable and erode at a much slower rate than pictographs, the other main form of Great Basin rock art.

*Pictographs* ~ images made by applying pigment

#### Common Rock Art Terms

or charcoal to a rock face. Pictographs are very fragile and sensitive to exposure to the elements. They survive best in protected settings, such as caves or rock shelters, and are much less frequent than petroglyphs.

*Motif* ~ individual designs or depictions, such as a circle, spiral, or bighorn sheep.

*Panel* ~ a naturally delineated rock face on which rock art was made, often compared to a 'canvas.' Boulder faces, cliff faces, cave walls and ceilings are the main rock art canvas.

*Abstract* ~ images that bear no formal resemblance to the things or concepts they represent. Abstract motifs exhibit a wide range

of variations based on curvilinear and rectilinear themes.

*Curvilinear* ~ motifs based on variations of curved lines, such as concentric circles, spirals, dots, and serpentine lines.

*Rectilinear* ~ motifs based on variations of perpendicular and angled lines, such as grids, rectangles, rakes, and crossed lines.

*Figurative or representational* ~ images that bear some natural resemblance to the thing depicted and can include portrayals of people (anthropomorphs), animals (zoomorphs), material objects (such as the bow and arrow), buildings, celestial phenomena, and so on.

populations appear to have made rock art very rarely. Based on the age of archaeological remains associated with rock art sites, Great Basin rock art was made primarily during the Middle Archaic through the Late Prehistoric (6,000–150 years ago), but with a marked florescence around the end of the Middle Archaic and the Late Archaic.

### SETTLING THE GREAT BASIN

People first entered North America between 20,000 and 14,000 years ago by crossing Beringia, a land bridge between Siberia and North America that formed when glaciers had captured much of the ocean's water. The earliest human settlement of North America is known as the Paleo-Indian era. Beginning 14,000 years ago, parties of hunters in pursuit of very large game (mammoth and Ancient bison) made forays into the Great Basin.

By 10,000 years ago, mammoth and other very large game had gone extinct and the Paleo-Indian era was succeeded by one based on hunting and gathering a range of plants and game (the Archaic, beginning around 8,000 years ago).

From 8,000 to 700 years ago, hunter-foragers gradually settled most of the Great Basin, eventually living in the region year-round (**Chapter 2**). This generalized period of hunter-forager lifeways is known in the Great Basin as the Archaic and is subdivided into three broad periods: Early, Middle, and Late. This life-way was interrupted by semi-horticultural cultures (Formative era) in areas of the eastern Basin and Colorado Plateau ca. 1,500–700 years ago.

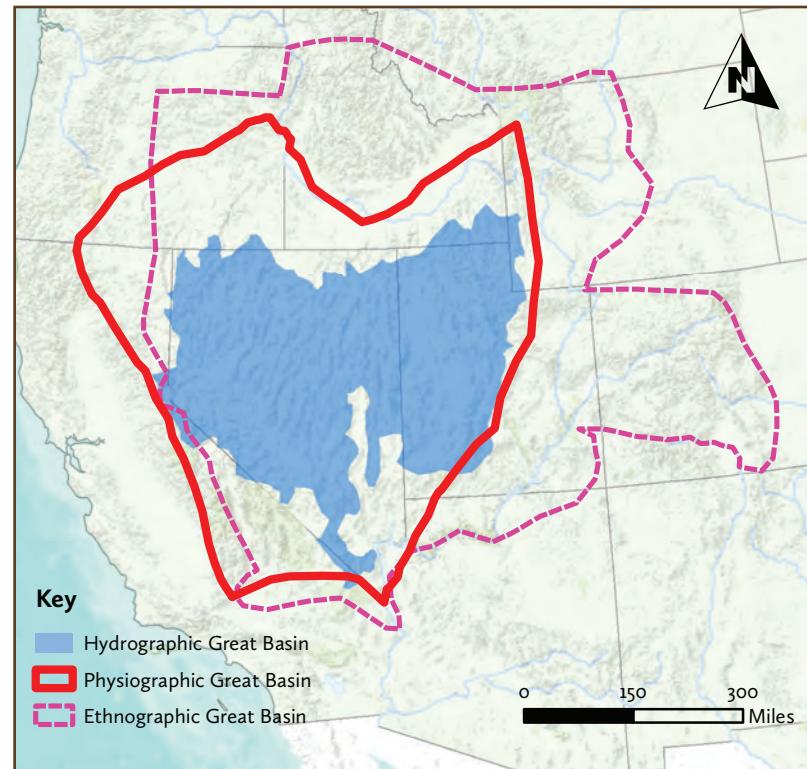
Around 700 years ago (Late Prehistoric), changing environmental conditions made horticultural-based ways of life no longer feasible in the eastern Great Basin and hunter-forager lifeways returned in these areas. This is also the period that archaeologists

### Great Basin Cultural Chronology

Archaeologists divide Great Basin prehistory into various periods that are characterized by specific economies, technology, and environmental adaptations (see page 22 for a detailed summary).

Period	Years Ago	Lifeway
Paleo-Indian	14,000–10,000	Highly mobile hunters of mammoth and big game
Pre-Archaic	10,000–8,000	More generalized hunter-forager way of life adopted following extinction of megafauna
Early Archaic	8,000–6,000	Atlatl adopted Increased reliance on small game and plants
Middle Archaic	6,000–1,500	Introduction of smaller dart points Dramatic population growth
Late Archaic	1,500–650	Bow and arrow adopted Broad spectrum foraging
Formative	1,500–700	Fremont and western Pueblo cultures in Utah, southern Nevada, and lower Colorado drainage Garden horticulture supplemented by harvesting wild plants and animals
Late Prehistoric	700–150	Return to hunter-forager way of life throughout the Great Basin Piñon harvesting central to hunter-forager way of life in much of the Great Basin

believe that peoples ancestral to the Native American cultures encountered by Euro-Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries settled the Great Basin. Native Americans believe that they have always lived in the Great Basin and some archaeologists now debate whether the distinctive way of life recorded during ethnohistoric times (characterized by broad spectrum foraging) evolved during the Late Prehistoric, rather than being introduced by migration.

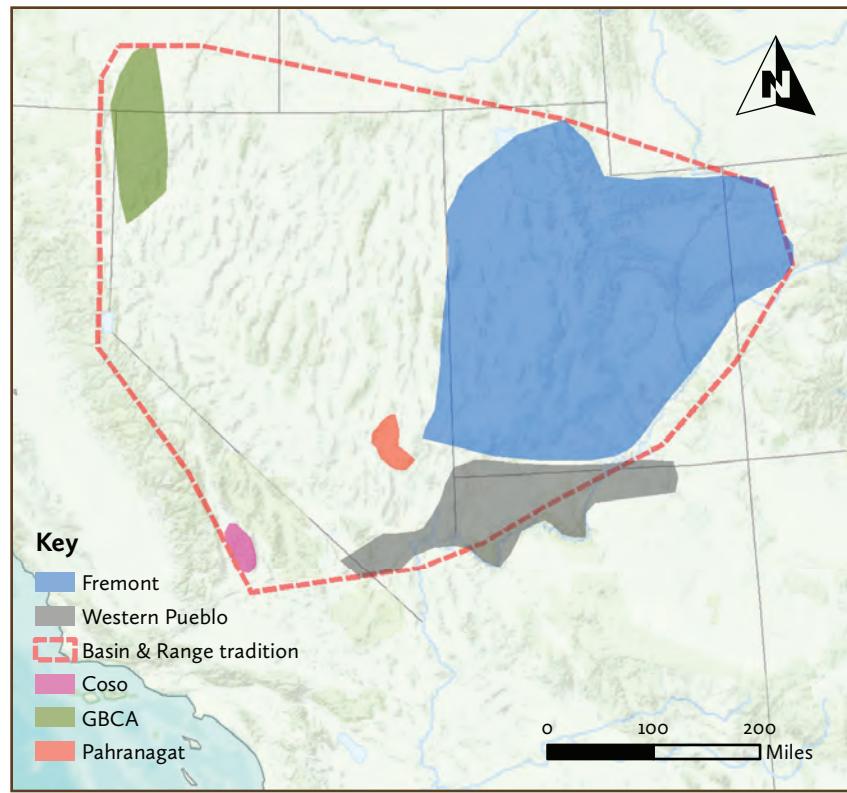


The Great Basin is the largest area of internal drainage in North America and extends north-south from the Columbia Plateau to the rim of the Colorado River drainage, and east-west from the Wasatch Range to the Sierra Nevada and Cascade ranges.

The Great Basin can also be defined by its physical geography as a subdivision of the vast Basin and Range Physiographic Province that covers much of western North America and stretches south into northwestern Mexico. Basin and Range topography is characterized by a series of massive north-south-trending mountain ranges separated by broad desert valleys and basins.

The Great Basin's unique environment and geography prompted a distinctive suite of cultural adaptations that ultimately spread far beyond the Great Basin's hydrographic boundaries. The ethnographic or cultural Great Basin comprises peoples who spoke related languages and shared various cultural attributes and lived as hunter-foragers.

In many parts of the Great Basin, the spread of piñon, with its important nut, aided permanent settlement in previously uninhabitable places or else changed the character of settlement. Piñon entered the Great Basin from the south around 7,500 years ago, spreading to the eastern and central Great Basin around 6,800 years ago, and then to the northern Basin around 500 years ago. In ethnographic times, piñon was an important winter staple as it can be stored or cached. Piñon was the subject of ceremonialism, witnessed by early explorers and anthropologists, which highlighted its cultural and economic importance.



Map showing distribution of major rock art styles in the Great Basin.

## GREAT BASIN ROCK ART STYLES

The earliest people entering the Great Basin are not well represented by rock art; it appears to have been a sporadic feature of Great Basin cultures until the Middle and Late Archaic (Chapter 2). The oldest known sites (Winnemucca Lake, Nevada and Long Lake, Oregon) are both in the northern Basin and have been dated to 10,500–8,850 years ago, and possibly as much as 14,800 years ago. This very oldest rock art is believed to be a very distinctive style of abstract imagery, called the Great Basin Carved Abstract Style, comprising deeply pecked or engraved images that have wide lines and little negative space. This style is found only in the northern Great Basin, where the earliest permanent human settlement of the Great Basin took place.

Figurative or naturalistic depictions of animals and people appear to be a later development in rock art traditions throughout the Great Basin. Distinctive anthropomorph styles that are regionally restricted in distribution emerged in the past 3,000 years or so, accompanying major social and economic changes in the southeastern Basin.

The curvilinear and rectilinear abstract designs that are characteristic of Great Basin rock art are known either as Basin and Range or Western Archaic tradition. Curvilinear designs usually predominate, complemented by rectilinear motifs, stick-figure anthropomorphs, and a narrow assortment of animal species. Bighorn sheep are by far the most common animal portrayed in Great Basin rock art, even though hunter-foragers hunted a wide range of large and small game. This indicates that animals were depicted for their symbolic significance in cultural thought, rather than as reflections of daily life.

The most famous Great Basin styles are dramatic portrayals of anthropomorphs made by Late Archaic and Formative cultural groups in the eastern and southeastern Basin, and stylized big-horn sheep and anthropomorphs made by Middle Archaic and Late Archaic hunter-foragers in eastern California. The anthropomorph styles associated with the Fremont and western Pueblo cultures (ca. 2,000–750 years ago) in southeastern Nevada, Utah, and the Colorado Plateau were made by semi-horticultural groups (**Chapter 2**). Their anthropomorph styles share common attributes of trapezoidal, rectangular, or triangular body shapes. These were often portrayed with adornments such as headgear, jewelry, or decorated clothing.

Sevier Fremont rock art (western Utah but extending into eastern Nevada and Lincoln County) is the most schematic or stylized of these anthropomorph styles. It comprises triangular and trapezoidal anthropomorphs, usually lacking legs, sometimes with arms, and often with headgear and earrings, made as pictographs or petroglyphs. At their most schematic, these are trapezoid outlines that closely resemble the shape of Fremont clay figurines.

Other Fremont anthropomorph styles (Classic Vernal, San Rafael) in eastern Utah and the Colorado Plateau are more elaborate and portray limbs, heads with facial features, and large bodies that are rectangular or trapezoidal. These anthropomorphs are usually elaborately decorated (necklaces, arm bands, earrings) and are sometimes portrayed holding circular objects, and in a few cases what appear to be severed human heads. These have been interpreted as ‘trophy heads’ and evidence of sporadic warfare or violent social conflict in Fremont times. Archaeological evidence of cliff granaries in Nine Mile Canyon and Range Creek, and fragmentary human remains in Fremont living areas or mixed with



Basin and Range tradition rock art from western Nevada. Basin and Range tradition is characterized by its distinctive curvilinear (*top*) and rectilinear designs (*bottom*).



Sevier Fremont anthropomorphs (eastern Nevada).



Vernal Style anthropomorphs made by the Fremont culture in Utah. These figures are depicted apparently holding trophy heads. Photograph courtesy of A. Higgins

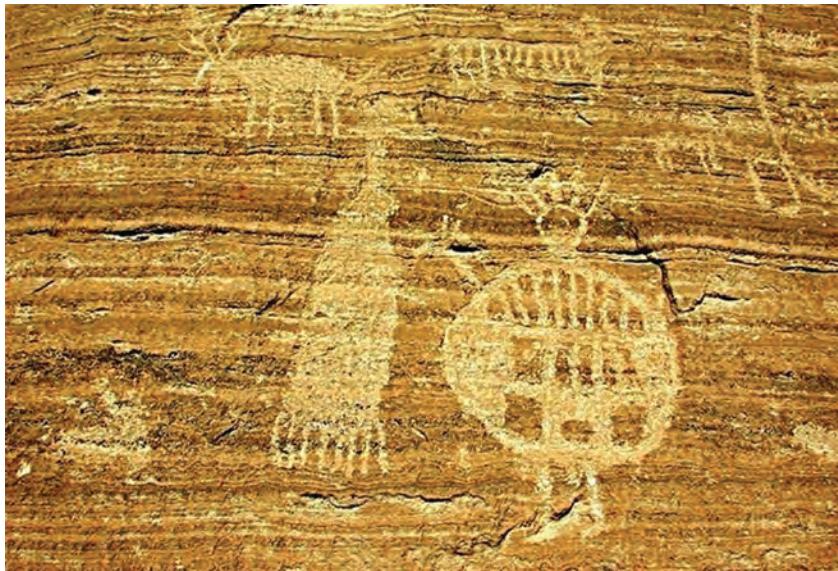
Great Basin and the Plateau, and occur in areas of western Pueblo settlement in southern Nevada, southern Utah, and western Arizona. This shows that individual rock art styles were not necessarily culture-specific nor intended to symbolize cultural identity *vis-à-vis* neighboring cultures.

Western Puebloan rock art in the Great Basin is found principally at sites in western Utah and in Nevada at Valley of Fire and lower Moapa Valley. Anthropomorphs have triangular, rectangular, or hour-glass shaped bodies, sometimes with 'horns' or headgear. These formal attributes are similar to Fremont anthropomorph styles, perhaps suggesting that these cultures' anthropomorphic traditions represent shared social practices. These practices may have symbolized social and cultural positions through clothing and other bodily adornment, and were also commemorated in rock art.

In general, it seems that stylized anthropomorphs developed later, except for the Coso Style made by Archaic hunter-foragers in eastern California. The age of Coso Style rock art is poorly understood but appears to date to the Middle Archaic (ca. 5,000–3,000 years ago). This style is restricted to the Coso Range, where it occurs in massive rock art concentrations numbering

#### Formative era rock art and social change

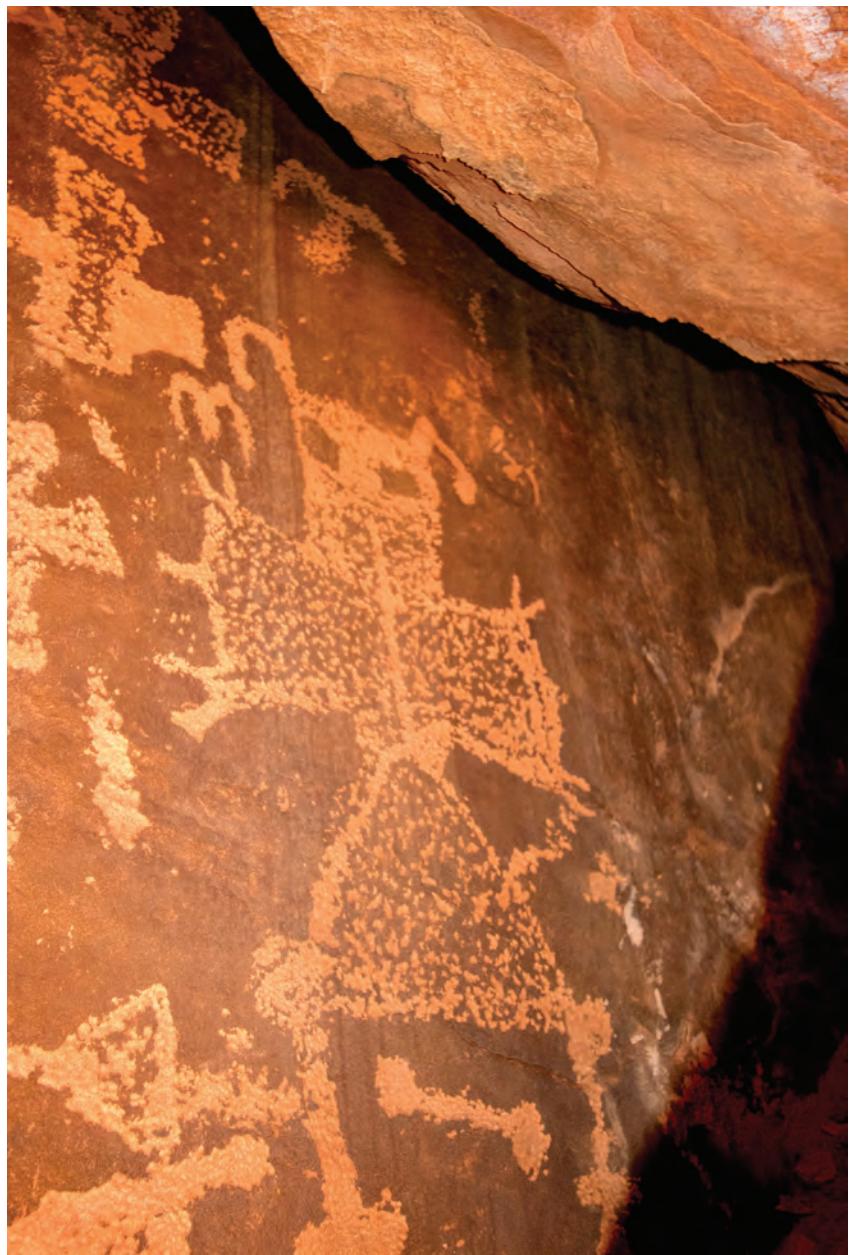
Both Fremont and western Pueblo cultures were dealing with social and economic changes resulting from the adoption of horticulture. These included population growth, more substantial villages, dramatically reduced residential mobility, greater social stratification, and sporadic social conflict. Rock art is one medium where idealized and ideological presentations of world-view may have been expressed to serve social needs, managing social tensions and social competition. These stylized anthropomorphs may have been intended to represent new social positions and statuses that arose from economic and settlement changes (see Chapter 6).



Shield-bearer figure made by the western Pueblo culture in Clark County, Nevada.

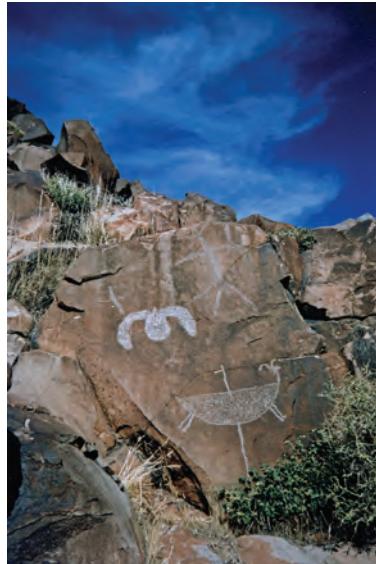


Barrier Canyon Style anthropomorphs are another distinctive representation of people made by the Fremont culture in Utah and parts of northwest Colorado. Photograph courtesy of A. Higgins.



Dramatic western Pueblo anthropomorph, Valley of Fire State Park, Nevada. The figure is concealed in a narrow crevice.

hundreds of thousands of individual motifs. Coso Style rock art comprises life-sized (and larger) bighorn sheep figures that have boat-shaped bodies and horns, often depicted in full frontal perspective, and also portrayed as only heads and horns in full frontal view. These accompany and vastly outnumber elaborate patterned-body anthropomorphs (PBA) that are rectangular, have bodies internally decorated with complex geometric designs, and have heads depicted with headdresses. Like their Fremont and western Puebloan counterparts, Coso PBAs are visually arresting and command much attention. Although atlatls (spear throwers) and bow



*Left*—Coso Style bighorn sheep are distinguished by their boat-shaped bodies and heads depicted in frontal perspective.

*Right*—Coso Style PBAs are defined by the elaborate geometric decoration that adorns their rectangular bodies. Highly stylized anthropomorphs are generally features of Formative cultures. The Coso and Pahranagat Styles (described below) are the only stylized anthropomorphs in Great Basin rock art made by Archaic hunter-foragers. Photographs courtesy of A. Quinlan



and arrows are portrayed frequently in Coso rock art, these are rarely depicted in association with Coso Style PBAs.

## LINCOLN COUNTY ROCK ART

Approximately 250 prehistoric rock art sites are known in Lincoln County, forming a cultural landscape that accompanied the life of hunter-foragers. Particularly impressive rock art sites are found in the general area of Pahranagat and White River Valleys, where extensive sites with hundreds of individual panels are known (Chapter 7). These sites span the history of human settlement in Lincoln County but are mostly Middle Archaic through Late Prehistoric in age.

In contrast with much of the Great Basin, the county's rock art is composed of a much higher proportion of zoomorphic imagery. Portrayals of bighorn sheep make up a tenth of all rock art designs found and three-quarters of all zoomorphic motifs. These are widely distributed but are found as dense concentrations at a small number of sites in the west-central part of the county. Only a limited range of other animal species are portrayed in small numbers (chiefly, canids and deer) (Chapter 5).

The county's rock art is also distinguished by its participation in the Late Archaic cultural tradition of stylized anthropomorphs. The Pahranagat Anthropomorph Style is Nevada's only unique rock art style and seems to have evolved during the Middle Archaic and flourished in the Late Archaic (Chapter 6). This style is evidence that during the Late Archaic hunter-foragers adopted cultural traits associated with neighboring Fremont and western Pueblo cultures.

The distinctive qualities of the county's rock art and archaeology offer rare insights into the *cultural* lives of prehistoric hunter-



Large petroglyph boulders at Ash Springs: rock art is an integral and evocative part of Lincoln County's archaeological landscape.



The two anthropomorph types that make up the Pahranagat Style—*left*, a PBA and, *right*, a P-man or solid-body type.

foragers. Making a living was not defined solely by economic routines. Economic life was informed by underlying social needs and cultural beliefs that shaped the goals of hunter-forager strategies. The economic strategies adopted during prehistory adapted peoples to both their natural and social environments. The following chapters explore the role rock art played in social life and in making Lincoln County a cultural landscape.

#### Cultural landscape

The term cultural or social landscape refers to the associative properties of the physical environment, or landscapes valued for their cultural, religious, and historic associations.

# SETTLEMENT HISTORY

IN POPULAR THOUGHT, PREHISTORY IS UNDERSTOOD AS THE TIME before writing was developed, dividing cultures into preliterate and literate ones. Writing originated for purposes that were mainly administrative rather than for recording narratives of events ('history'). Historians use administrative records and cultural texts (such as memoirs, theologies, and literature) to reconstruct the outline of past events and set these in their long-term social and economic contexts.

Prehistory, in contrast, refers to periods and cultures that are not known from their own documentary sources, and is usually studied from their physical remains by the discipline of archaeology. Archaeologists focus on the socioeconomic and environmental processes that, over thousands of years, shaped culture change, such as the rise of urban life or the origins of agriculture, rather than individuals or events. The remains of the past are the results of repeated social and economic actions that are deposited in the landscape by natural and cultural factors, surviving today as buried artifacts or as standing features (e.g., buildings or ruins).

Archaeological remains of prehistoric life in Lincoln County include stone and bone tools, pottery sherds, dwellings (pit-houses, rock rings), rockshelters, hearths, clothing (fiber and animal-skin garments), plant fossils and animal bone, and rock art. The distribution of these archaeological features in the landscape

and their relationship to each other, provide the information that archaeologists use to reconstruct prehistoric lifeways.

Knowledge of non-Western cultures of the recent past (anthropology) is also drawn upon by archaeologists to understand the material remains of the past. The anthropology of Great Basin hunter-foragers is particularly important in illuminating archaeological thought on the history of human settlement in the region. Archaeology seeks to understand prehistoric lifeways by reconstructing their economic strategies, settlement patterns, kinship structures, technology, and social behaviors from the material remains they left behind.

## HUNTER-FORAGER SETTLEMENT STRATEGIES

Hunter-foragers travel the landscape in structured ways, moving settlements to where wild animals and plants are, adjusting the size and social composition of villages and camps. This strategy, known as residential mobility, distributes people to the places where the resources they rely upon are. The distribution of both animals and plants in the environment varies in time and place. At different times of the year, certain habitats are more productive than others as plants ripen and animals move seasonally through the landscape. Hunter-foragers schedule settlement movements



Painting of a traditional Washoe camp, northwest Nevada, circa 1862.  
Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society.

During the summer, uplands may be productive places for hunting large game (such as deer and bighorn sheep) by small groups of hunters. In the fall, these same uplands may be good sources of piñon, gathered by mixed groups of women and men, with the latter also taking the opportunity to do hunting. In contrast, during the late fall and early winter, lowlands or valley floors are good places for rabbit and pronghorn drives, hunted collectively by large groups from winter villages.

#### Settlement strategies and economic goals

These two broad strategies result in settlement systems that either move villages regularly throughout the year, or integrate villages in a system of satellite logistical camps. The former typifies high residential mobility and is characteristic of a way of life based on hunting large game by following herds of game during the year. The latter is characteristic of low residential mobility, where hunter-foragers rely on plants and small mammals.

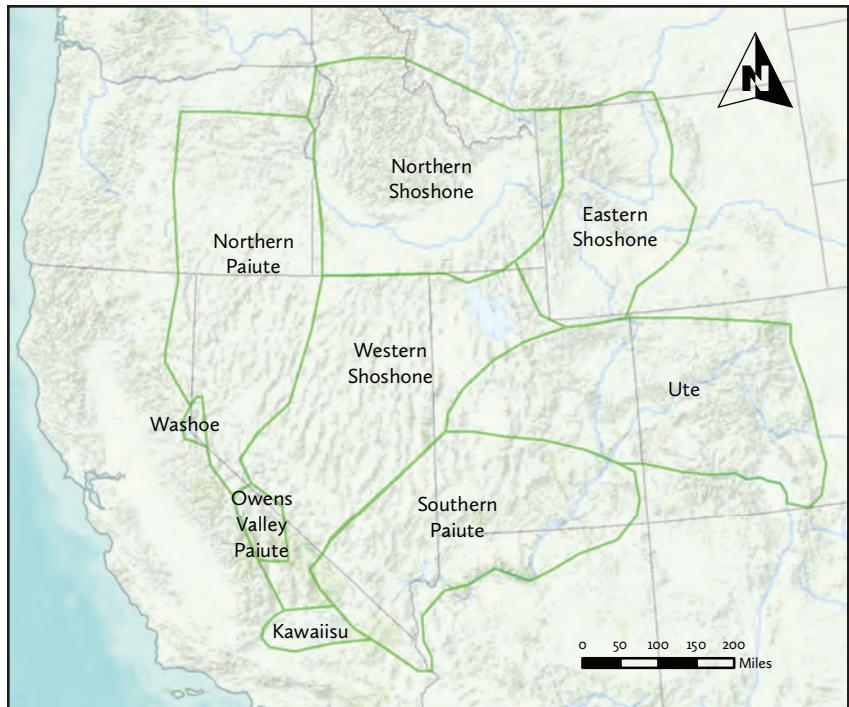
These strategies are affected by the scale of settlement and the size of human populations

and group dispersal seasonally, choosing at different times of the year to move to resources or bring resources to the village.

#### ECONOMIC LIFE

In ethnographic times, the general pattern of family life observed in the Great Basin was centered on related family households that cooperated for economic and social purposes. These lived in camps composed of a small number of closely related kin (generally 2–3 households) at various times during the year. These households were economically self-sufficient for much of the year, and were socially and politically independent. Married couples were economically reliant on each other, as men largely focused on hunting animals and women on gathering plants. At certain times, men and women worked together collecting plants or on collective game drives. Men also helped women gather and process plant foods when they were in camp. Women also fished and hunted small game when they foraged for plants. Men were chiefly responsible for making hunting equipment, while women made tools for harvesting plants and domestic items, such as basketry,

in a region, determining whether circumscribed territories have developed. The freedom to range over expansive areas is increasingly reduced as populations grow and human settlement expands throughout the landscape. In general, two goals are most important to hunter-foragers—maintaining mobility (which provides economic flexibility and helps prevent the development of social hierarchy by allowing families to split from villages and join new ones) and economic production sufficient to allow regular, and at least annual, large social gatherings.



Map showing the approximate territories of Great Basin peoples at the time of contact with Euro-Americans.

mats, and clothing. Men's and women's activities were complementary to the economy of individual families and were supplemented by the household camp and village.

The size of residential camps and their social composition varied according to seasonal movements to hunt and forage. During the winter, larger gatherings of household camps of related and more distant kin formed villages. During the spring through the fall, people dispersed from their villages into small household camps for hunting and foraging. Camps were relocated as needed to take account of seasonally available plants and animals. Both villages and camps were advised by a headman (an older man) on what to harvest and the timing of residential movements. The



*Ka-ni-ga, the Camp Ground (1873): photograph of a typical summer camp composed of several brush shelters. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (Inventory # 9574400).*



Photograph from the 1930s showing Paiute women with large burden baskets, winnowing trays, and long poles that were used to knock pine cones from piñon trees. Photograph courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society.

headman was selected based on his wisdom and success, and had influence but not political authority.

Periodically, various villages gathered for specific events, such as dances, communal hunts, social gatherings, or other activities. These events, which could last several weeks, were organized and managed by temporary leaders with a reputation for conducting successful events. At these larger events, village headmen talked together and assisted the event leader by exhorting village residents to behave, enjoy themselves, cook for everyone, and help with collective endeavors.

Plants were the major food source, supplemented by large and small game, and fish. Pine nuts, seeds, fruits, roots, tubers, bulbs, and grasses were gathered; birds, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, mule



Slab milling stone and handstone used to shell pine nuts from their hard seeds. Ground stone tools such as these were used throughout the Great Basin to process a wide range of hard seeds and roots. Photograph courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society.

deer, rabbits, pocket gophers, and ground squirrels were hunted. Fish were an important food in well-watered areas and people traveled great distances to fish. Pine cones were stored in caches near winter villages to sustain families through the lean winter months.

Pronghorn and deer were the most important large game hunted in much of the Great Basin. A variety of practical and cultural measures facilitated pronghorn hunting, such as using special technology (corrals and traps) and the enlisting of supernatural processes. A ceremonial specialist organized and led the hunt, using spiritual powers to charm or capture the soul of the quarry. Deer and bighorn sheep, when hunted by large parties, might also have a hunt leader who drew on spiritual powers to ensure success.

More commonly, deer and bighorn sheep were hunted by small hunting parties or solitary hunters. In ethnographic times, deer and bighorn sheep hunting was more important than pronghorn hunting in Lincoln County, perhaps because the animal's range and abundance had been affected by ranching activities.

Among some Great Basin peoples, hunt leaders wore a head-dress made of pronghorn antlers or deer skin and antlers. Bighorn sheep horns were used in hunting headdresses in some parts of the Great Basin. These were made of ewe's or juvenile ram's horns as adult ram's horns were too heavy to wear. Solitary hunters also sometimes wore a headdress made of antlers as a disguise.

### HUNTER-FORAGER COSMOLOGY

Hunter-forager cultures often believe in an impersonal animating power underlying the natural world and the agency of spirit-beings whose help can be secured or propitiated to be successful in social life. In many cultures, animals may symbolize or personify agents and processes that brought the world into being and are still active in its workings. The cultural significance of certain animals is often accompanied by ceremonialism, such as hunting rituals or dietary restrictions. Symbols of social groups, particularly their founders and patron spirits, sometimes take the form of animals that are contrasted to those of rival social groups (see page 68). These two broad cultural roles that animals may play in society are often intertwined as mythology informs thinking on social categories and group affiliation. Mythology may provide an explanation of how the world of lived experience came into being and the agents and processes still at work in it, describing how people should interact with these forces, usually through prescribed ritual behaviors.



Portrait of two Nuaguntits (Las Vegas Paiute) men, crouching on the ground, wearing breechcloths and caps, and holding bows and arrows. Photograph taken by John Hillers, 1873. Courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (Catalog number N30022).



Antlered quadruped, possibly a stylized mule deer (Mount Irish). Animals have cultural significance among hunter-foragers beyond their economic value.

#### Settlement and Social Organization

The general residential pattern established two principal units of economic cooperation: that of the family camp and that of the village. Although people also recognized a larger social identity of culturally related villages, this did not constitute a tribe as it did not form the basis for economic and social cooperation. Accordingly, during the year, the needs of the camp economy versus those of the village economy were met by changing the size of social organization and settlement.

Camp and village modes of production emphasized differing scales of economic cooperation, with individual household agency to the fore at camps and collective actions at villages. Great Basin hunter-foragers had a range of cultural behaviors that encouraged sharing economic products beyond the family camp. The kin-based nature of camp and village social organization also minimized the risk of selfish hoarding and not reciprocating gifts.

## PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT

The history of human settlement in Lincoln County is a long one that tells the story of peoples adapting their ways of life to changing environmental conditions. Hunter-foragers gradually adopted strategies that reduced the distance traveled annually as human settlement became permanently established and territories emerged. Eventually, the settled landscape was structured around winter villages on valley bottoms, near wetlands and perennial springs. During the spring through the fall, the village dispersed into smaller groupings of family households who lived in camps in surrounding uplands and lowlands resource patches.

Beginning 15,000 years ago, the colder and wetter climate of the *Late Pleistocene* began changing to a hotter and drier one. Beginning 8,000 years ago, alternating periods of hot conditions and persistent drought followed by cooler, wet periods became a general climate pattern throughout the Great Basin and persists to this day. Over many thousands of years, permanent settlement was established as lifeways changed from ones focused on big-game hunting in *Paleo-Indian* times to ones based on various generalized foraging and hunting strategies during the *Archaic*. As populations grew, the landscape came to be filled by a network of villages, campsites, and trails that distributed people to the natural resources upon which they depended.

#### Paleo-Indian and Pre-Archaic Periods (14,000–8,000 years ago)

The climate encountered by Lincoln County's earliest hunter-foragers around 12,000–8,000 years ago was cooler and wetter than today's (though warmer and drier than the preceding Late

Pleistocene). Wetlands and marsh areas in Pahranagat Valley and along the White River were at their greatest during this period. The first Paleo-Indian peoples to visit Lincoln County were small parties of hunters ranging from their distant home territory. They made short expeditions to hunt mammoth and Ancient bison. These hunters used large projectile points (Clovis and Stemmed Points) hafted on spears to pursue their quarry.

By 10,000 years ago mammoth and Ancient bison had gone extinct in southeastern Nevada. In response, Paleo-Indians shifted to hunting small and medium game, waterfowl, and foraging for a variety of tubers and roots. Settlement was largely based on wetlands and perennial water sources. Paleo-Indian peoples

#### Residential Mobility

Hunter-forager settlement strategies are a continuum ranging from high residential mobility at one extreme, to low residential mobility at the other. High residential mobility moves the residential base (village) to the animal and plant resources that are relied upon. This is practiced in environments where resources are predictable but clustered in distribution and hunting large game is the basis of economic life. Moving the residential base to these resource patches involves traveling great distances as settlement moves are scheduled to follow the seasonal migration of animal herds. The travel 'costs' of this highly mobile lifeway are offset by the lower effort required to process and acquire economic resources.

At the other end of the hunter-forager continuum is a strategy that brings resources to the village (logistical mobility). At various times in the year, small work parties range from the village and base themselves in small satellite camps. This strategy is practiced in relatively varied and unpredictable environments where resources are abundant but labor-intensive to harvest and process. This processing 'cost' is offset by the shorter distances traveled to hunt and forage. As traveling great distances to resource patches is not an option, storage is important for meeting shortfalls in harvesting and hunting yields, particularly in sustaining the village during the winter.



Paleo-Indian Clovis spear points.

did not live permanently in Lincoln County and the region was a frontier beyond their home territory.

These earliest visitors do not seem to have left behind a legacy of rock art, or at least none that can be definitively associated with Paleo-Indian sites. Lincoln County's rock art does not contain any themes relating to highly mobile big game hunting (such as depictions of mammoth or Ancient bison). Also, Paleo-Indian archaeological remains are not found at rock art sites. Perhaps because Paleo-Indian peoples only made infrequent, fleeting visits to the county that was peripheral to their wider settlement pattern, the region lacked cultural resonance for them.

#### Early Archaic (8,000–6,000 years ago)

During the period 8,000 to 5,000 years ago (the **Middle Holocene**) temperatures rose and aridity increased, leading to periods of drought that saw marshes and springs drying. Piñon entered the Great Basin and had reached Lincoln County by at least 6,600 years ago. These changing conditions prompted a gradual shift to more generalized foraging strategies as Early Archaic peoples

Years Ago	Epoch	Environment	Cultural Era	Economy	Technology	Settlement
18,500	LATE PLEISTOCENE	Wetter and colder conditions than the succeeding Holocene Extensive lakes and mountain glaciers Mammoths and other megafauna Cold-adapted plant species	Paleo-Indian 14k-10k y.a.	Highly mobile hunters following herds of mammoth and Ancient bison	Large spear points Ground stone tools largely absent Tools made from stone collected from far flung places	Ca. 18.5k–15.5k Beringia land bridge connected North America to Eurasia allowing people and animals to cross from Siberia
11,700		Rising temperatures and greater aridity compared to the Late Pleistocene but cooler and wetter than the present Lakes and wetlands at their Holocene maximum By ca. 10k y.a. all megafauna extinct			Rock art first appears in northern Great Basin at Winnemucca Lake by 10.5k y.a. at the latest	Short-term hunting expeditions by groups based outside the Great Basin
7,500	MIDDLE HOLOCENE	Pleistocene mammals replaced by modern species of mule deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, elk, buffalo, and a range of small mammals	Pre-Archaic 10k-8k y.a.	More diversified hunter-forager economy Small and large game hunted Harvested tubers, roots, and wetlands resources	Ground stone tools found at Great Basin archaeological sites regularly for first time	Settlement intensified Lowland lake shores and marshes primary settings for camps and villages Most of the Great Basin still peripheral to Pre-Archaic settlement
4,500		Hotter and drier climate than today Cycles of hot, dry conditions followed by cooler, wetter conditions Wetlands contracted Lakes at their lowest depths Piñon entered the Great Basin from the south, reaching Lincoln County by at least 6.6k y.a.				
	LATE HOLOCENE	Wetter and cooler climate Piñon-Juniper woodlands expanded and found at elevations far lower than their current levels Unstable environment with significant climatic fluctuations Major droughts Lakes and wetlands receded Ca. 2k y.a. rising temperatures, greater extremes in temperature, and increasing aridity	Middle Archaic 6k-1.5k y.a.	Seasonal hunting and foraging across all elevations with uplands environments used intensively for first time By end of Middle Archaic all environmental zones included in the settled landscape	Smaller dart points and large bifaces made from quarried stone Settlements comprise substantial residential features such as house pits, hearths, and food caches	Dramatic rise in populations Growing territoriality Residential mobility reduced Village sites moved less frequently Logistical camps moved frequently to harvest resources from a wide range of environments Rock art becomes a regular cultural feature Emergence of zoomorphic symbolism in material culture and rock art Origins of the Pahranagat Anthropomorph Style in rock art

Years Ago	Epoch	Environment	Cultural Era	Economy	Technology	Settlement
1,500	LATE HOLOCENE	General trend of increasing aridity	<i>Late Archaic</i> 1.5k – 650 y.a.	Greater focus on small game supplemented by large game in lowlands  Broad spectrum plant gathering  Economic intensification with all environmental zones used  Labor-intensive resources	Bow and arrow introduced  Ground stone tools become more common  Florescence of Pahranagat Anthropomorph style	Population density increased  Residential mobility reduced further  Territorial circumscription as the Great Basin fully settled  Density and size of residential bases increased  High altitude summer villages in some parts of the Great Basin
			<i>Formative</i> 1.5k – 700 y.a.  Fremont	Garden horticulture (maize, beans, and squash)  Small-scale irrigation  Hunting and foraging of greater importance than to western Pueblos	Grayware pottery, baskets, moccasins, trough milling stones  Distinctive anthropomorphic symbolism in rock art and as figurines	Permanent and semi-permanent villages in Utah that had pithouses and granaries  Frontier presence in Eastern Nevada marked by small logistical camps  Only Fremont village in Nevada is Baker Village
		Ca. 1.2k y.a. conditions stabilized and extreme climatic fluctuations ended  Drying trend made horticulture no longer feasible	<i>Formative</i> 1.5k – 700 y.a. western Pueblo (Virgin Branch ancestral Pueblo)	Garden horticulture (maize, beans, and squash)  Small-scale irrigation  Supplementary hunting and foraging	Longer use of atlatl  Sandals and distinct textiles  Grayware, corrugated, and black-on-gray pottery  Distinctive anthropomorphic symbolism in rock art	Small sedentary communities on the lower Colorado River drainage  Pit houses and adobe surface structures
750–150		Last 500 years cooler and wetter than preceding 7k  Piñon spread to the northern Basin by 500 y.a. at the latest	<i>Late Prehistoric</i> 700-150 y.a.	Return to foraging economy in eastern Basin  Shift to green cone processing  Hunted small game supplemented variably by large game	Similar to Late Archaic tool kits  Small arrow points  Pottery used for cooking and storage	Winter villages at valley floors and perennial water sources  Spring through fall villages dispersed into family household camps



Paiute man holding an atlatl with spear. The atlatl went out of use in the Great Basin around 1,500 years ago, but in ethnographic times this lost technology was apparently revived by a few hunters. Photograph courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society.

began to make more regular and longer visits to Lincoln County. Stone tools (ground stone) that were used to process piñon, hard seeds, and tubers became a more prominent part of forager technology and show that foraging parties now included women as well as men. The spear was replaced by the *atlatl*, a technology that propels darts or spears and is best-suited for close-range hunting and ambushing by groups of hunters.

Early Archaic peoples appear to have concentrated on specific habitats (or niches), particularly well-watered lowlands and marshes. Small game like jackrabbits were hunted and uplands were visited to hunt deer and bighorn sheep, though not as regularly or as intensively as in the succeeding Middle and Late Archaic. Populations were growing but low in density and Lincoln County (like much of the Great Basin) seems to have been only sparsely inhabited during the Early Archaic. The county likely remained a sporadically used economic zone until the Middle Archaic, as settlement focused on the Colorado River to the south, which provided both water and transportation.

Few, if any, rock art sites in the county can be definitively claimed as Early Archaic, based on the age of associated archaeological remains at rock art sites. Substantial human settlement waited until populations in southeastern Nevada grew sufficiently during the Middle and Late Archaic to make territorial expansion

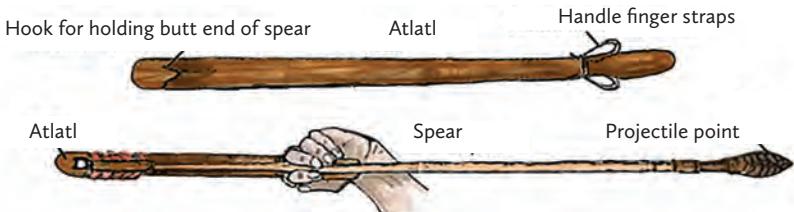


Illustration of an atlatl, courtesy of the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center and Kendal Hunt Publishing Company.

necessary, an expansion that was facilitated by changing environmental conditions.

From around 5,000 to 2,300 years ago (the Late Holocene), wetter conditions and cooler temperatures prevailed, making the environment more moderate and attractive for human settlement. Significant alternating cycles of wet periods and droughts still occurred about every 1,500 years, prompting flexible Middle and Late Archaic foraging strategies that were attentive to these climatic fluctuations. Wetlands and marshes expanded during this period and small lakes were recharged. Piñon also dramatically expanded in range with piñon-juniper woodlands growing at elevations well below their modern levels. These moderate conditions ended around 2,300 years ago, replaced by rapid shifts between extreme wet-cold and hot-dry (drought) conditions that lasted until around 1,200 years ago.

#### Middle Archaic (6,000–1,500 years ago)

During the Middle Archaic, peoples began gradually settling the southeastern Great Basin and Lincoln County on a more permanent and intensive basis. Throughout the region, populations appear to have increased dramatically, leading to territorial expansion into upland environments that had attracted little settlement or economic use in preceding periods. Villages and family camps incorporated more substantial dwellings and other structures. Storage of foodstuffs in caches (in cists, pits, and caves) became widespread as reduced mobility meant over-wintering had to be provisioned from stored foodstuffs, rather than food needs being met by moving to food resources. The frequency and types of ground stone tools increased, indicating that a wider range of plants were harvested.

By the end of the Middle Archaic, all environmental zones were incorporated into the settled landscape, in contrast to the reliance on lowland habitat niches and specialized resources evident during Paleo-Indian and Early Archaic times. This suggests populations had grown to the point that foraging territories were now beginning to become circumscribed by those of competing social groups. This promoted more intensive use of a wider range of environmental resources within the available, reduced territory. Annual mobility would have been greatly reduced (compared to preceding periods) and peoples lived in bounded territories. Rivalry between different groups for access to environmental resources likely was negotiated through cultural practices.

The general settlement pattern that typifies subsequent periods of lowlands winter villages and uplands logistical camps, was firmly established during the Middle Archaic. Economic pursuits that required collective cooperation (such as jackrabbit and prong-



A storage bin on the banks of the Colorado River, southern Nevada, ca. 1880s. Photograph courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society.



Deeply pecked curvilinear abstract designs: these may be the earliest form rock art takes in the Great Basin and Lincoln County.

horn drives) were generally focused on valley floors. In contrast, activities based on individual agency or the cooperation of small groups of households (such as solitary hunting of large game, the gathering of pine nuts, fishing) were focused in uplands, foothills, and lowlands resource patches. As household and logistical camps were not necessarily confined to specific geographic zones (i.e., not restricted to uplands) they had cultural associations related to their social distance from the village as well as environmental ones.

Rock art emerged as a consistent feature in the settled landscape during the Middle Archaic, based on the age of associated archaeological materials at rock art sites. Its initial form was almost exclusively abstract, showing that the landscape had cultural value and that rock art may have played a role in socializing or making familiar places that previously had been little visited (see **Chapter 4**). Later during this period, animal imagery developed, possibly related to a wider Great Basin phenomenon identified by archaeologists of social competition among men centered on bighorn sheep hunting. In Lincoln County, though, this competition seems to be family based as rock art is not restricted to landscapes used exclusively for bighorn sheep hunting. Some changes in rock art's themes likely reflect the region's growing cultural resonance as settlement expanded and intensified.

#### Late Archaic (1,500–600 years ago)

The distinctive anthropomorphic imagery of the late Middle (2,500 years ago) and Late Archaic (1,500–700 years ago) appeared during a time of warmer temperatures and greater extremes in climatic fluctuations. Populations and settlements appear to have grown significantly, marked by the increased density of villages

and camps, and their greater size. Territorial ranges became further circumscribed and residential mobility further reduced.

This ‘in-filling’ of the landscape completed a process begun some 12,000 years ago by the first Paleo-Indian hunters to visit the region. What had once been an open expanse was now inhabited permanently by competing hunter-forager cultures. Late Archaic hunter-foragers responded to the pressures of climate change and increasing population by intensifying their economic practices. They harvested and hunted a wider range of resources from more habitats in territories smaller than those of preceding periods. There was a greater reliance on small mammals and resources that were laborious to process that in preceding periods were of little economic significance.

The most striking technological change during the Late Archaic was the introduction of the bow and arrow. The bow and arrow used smaller projectile points hafted on to shafts that could be propelled farther than by using an atlatl. The bow and arrow allowed more efficient solitary and ambush hunting as it can be effectively used when crouching. Plant and seed processing tools became more elaborate and more common at villages and family camps, indicating a wider range of plants was gathered. These changes show that technological innovation was one strategy used to intensify economic practices.

#### Formative Cultures (1,500–700 years ago)

Lincoln County was a frontier between Late Archaic hunter-foragers and Formative cultures—the Fremont to the east and the western Pueblo (Virgin Branch ancestral Pueblo) to the south. Both the Fremont and western Puebloans were horticulturalists (to widely variable degrees) who lived in permanent vil-



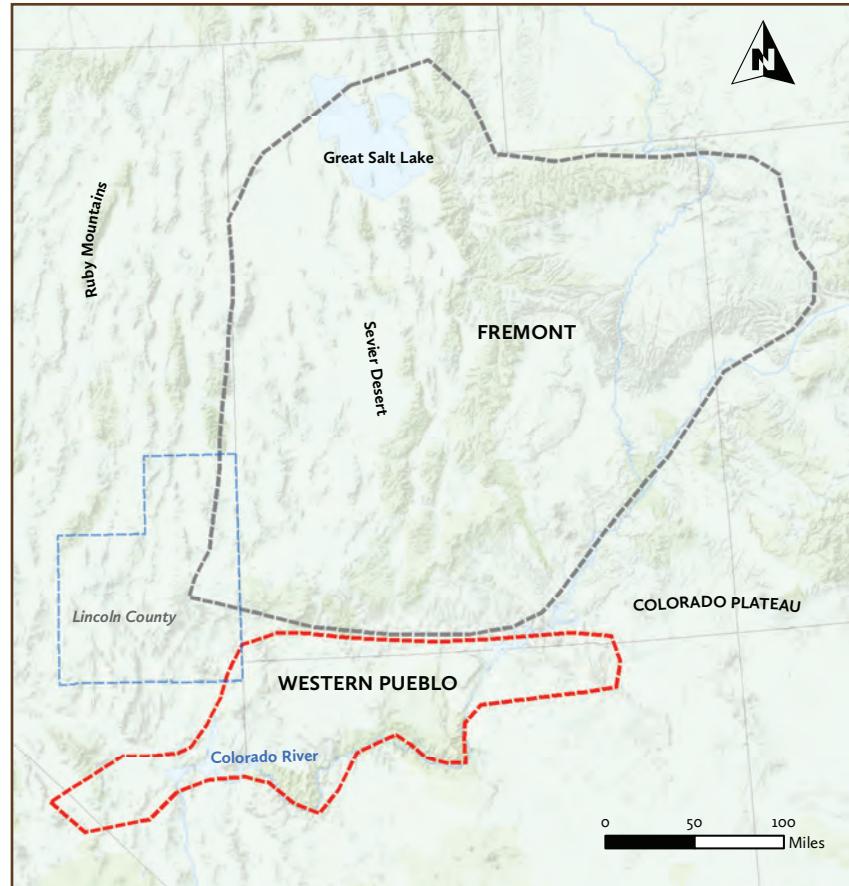
A young Nuaguntits (Las Vegas Paiute) man kneeling and shooting a bow and arrow. He wears a fringed hide shirt and a hide cap. Photograph by John Hillers, 1873. Courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (Catalog number N337522).



Reconstruction of a western Pueblo village, Lost City Museum, Overton, Nevada. Photograph by A. Woody.



Reconstruction of a pithouse. Photograph courtesy of A. Higgins.



Map showing the extent of Formative-era cultures in the southeastern Great Basin.

In North American archaeological chronologies, it is traditional to term the first cultures that relied on agriculture and had permanent towns or villages as "Formative."

lages composed of substantial pithouses and adobe structures. Both cultivated maize, beans, and squash but supplemented their diet by gathering some wild plants and hunting. Foraging and hunting was much more important to Fremont economies than those of the western Puebloans. Pottery made by these Formative cultures is found throughout Lincoln County, indicating trade and communication with Late Archaic hunter-foragers, as well as a Fremont frontier presence in Meadow Valley Wash. Both Formative cultures made distinctive styles of anthropomorphs in rock art that may have influenced Late Archaic peoples in Lincoln County (Chapter 6).

Western Puebloan settlement was focused on the lower Colorado River drainage, particularly Moapa Valley, the Virgin River, and Las Vegas Valley. Puebloan groups in southern Nevada reached their peak about 1,000 to 950 years ago but then declined until they disappear from the archaeological record about 750 years ago. Although the Fremont heartland was Utah, they had a frontier presence in eastern Nevada, marked by short-term logistical camps. Baker Village, some 200 miles north of Lincoln County, is the only known Fremont village in Nevada. About 70 miles east of Lincoln County, in Parowan Valley (Utah), dense Fremont settlement is known marked by large villages with substantial architecture. The Fremont way of life disappeared around 750 years ago.

#### Late Prehistoric (700–150 years ago)

From around 700 years ago, Late Prehistoric hunter-foragers resettled Fremont and much of western Puebloan settlement areas. They relied on broad spectrum foraging that closely resembles that practiced by Native American peoples witnessed by ethnographers in the nineteenth century. The last 500 years may



Winnowing tray used to parch and winnow pine nuts. Photograph by Margaret W. Wheat. Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society.

have been cooler and wetter than at any other time in the last 7,000 years, partly explaining Late Prehistoric economic changes. Economic intensification took the form of a shift to piñon green-cone processing, bulk processing, improved storage (via pottery), and collective hunting (particularly of pronghorn and jackrabbits).

In Pahranagat Valley, small gardens in wetlands may have been tended by hunter-foragers. Pronghorn seem to have been uncommon in the area and, instead, bighorn sheep and deer were the main large game hunted. These were hunted in uplands with stands of piñon-Juniper woodlands where pine nuts could also be collected. People continued to live at villages near wetlands and perennial springs during the winter, dispersing into small groups of family households during the spring through the fall.



Two stylized bighorn sheep figures depicted with unnaturally long legs. Archaic hunter-foragers did not seek to represent a naturalistic picture of the natural environment in their rock art.

## ANIMALS IN CULTURAL THOUGHT

The cultural importance of certain animals is made evident in prehistoric art, as these are not depicted in proportion to their place in the economy or environment ([Chapter 5](#)). For example, split-twig and stone figurines, which range in age from 3,000 years ago to the recent past, depict birds (particularly owls), deer, pronghorn, grasshoppers, and bighorn sheep—a wider range of animals than depicted in rock art. Prehistoric faunal assemblages generally record that after Paleo-Indian times small mammals were the focus of hunting but supplemented in increasing numbers over time by pronghorn, deer, and bighorn sheep (particularly during the Middle and Late Archaic). The economic importance of small mammals generally remained constant, but the hunting of large game seems to have fluctuated and varied locally.

Yet, small mammals, such as rabbits, which provided much of the meat component of prehistoric diets, are not portrayed in art. Animal imagery in art is not reflective of the economic importance of animals hunted by prehistoric hunter-foragers. Animal

Brown and green cone processing refers to two different strategies for harvesting piñon. One method is to collect pine nuts when the cones are dry and brown in late fall. The cones are beaten with a stick, knocking the cones or seeds lose from the cones, falling to the ground where they can be collected. The drawback of brown cone processing is that the pine nuts are collected as the cones are beginning to open and fall from their tree, making them at risk from frost and animals.

Green cone processing collects the pine nuts when the cones are still coated with a sticky resin, beginning in the late summer. To extract the nuts from the cones, the cones have to be lightly scorched to burn off the resin and loosen the nuts. The cones are then dried in the sun and beaten to release their pine nuts. Although more laborious than brown cone processing, green cone processing avoids the risk that harvest yields will be affected by loss from frosts or animals.



Reconstruction of a Late Archaic split-twigs figurine that represents a deer. Photograph by A. Woody.

#### Expansion of the settled landscape into uplands

It is possible that visits to what had previously been remote uplands was also cultural, particularly where these had rock art. One possibility is that some uplands hunting was motivated by participation in Middle Archaic prestige hunting of bighorn sheep (page 26). The results of hunting in uplands would have been far less reliable than those hunts conducted collectively in the valley bottoms. Such hunting expeditions would have made most economic sense if they were accompanied by secondary activities, such as gathering upland piñon. As ground stone is usually found at rock art sites in uplands hunting environments, it seems likely that the retreat of piñon to higher elevations during the Late Archaic may also have been a consideration in this upland settlement expansion.



Typically rugged upland setting with stands of piñon-Juniper woodland. These environments were visited for a range of hunting and foraging activities, and for making rock art.



Heavily weathered rock art panel comprising complex curvilinear abstract designs. Rock art appears to be closely associated with the activities of family camps.

figurines are largely Late Archaic in age, suggesting that animal symbolism is related to period-specific cultural practices rather than being simply an art for art's sake.

### ROCK ART'S PLACE IN THE SETTLED LANDSCAPE

Determining the age of Lincoln County rock art is usually based on the age of archaeological materials found in association. It is reasonable to assume that archaeological remains of daily life that accompany most rock art sites are contemporary with it. Surface artifacts of known age, such as projectile points and pottery, found at rock art sites range in age from the Middle Archaic through the Late Prehistoric. This shows that the use of rock art in the region is related to the beginnings and development of intensive settlement.

Certain places, particularly Shooting Gallery and Mount Irish, were heavily marked by bighorn sheep images, highlighting the prominence of this animal in the region's rock art traditions. Distinctive anthropomorph styles (Pahranagat and Fremont styles) developed during the Middle and Late Archaic (**Chapter 6**), perhaps displacing the cultural significance of bighorn sheep imagery for a time.

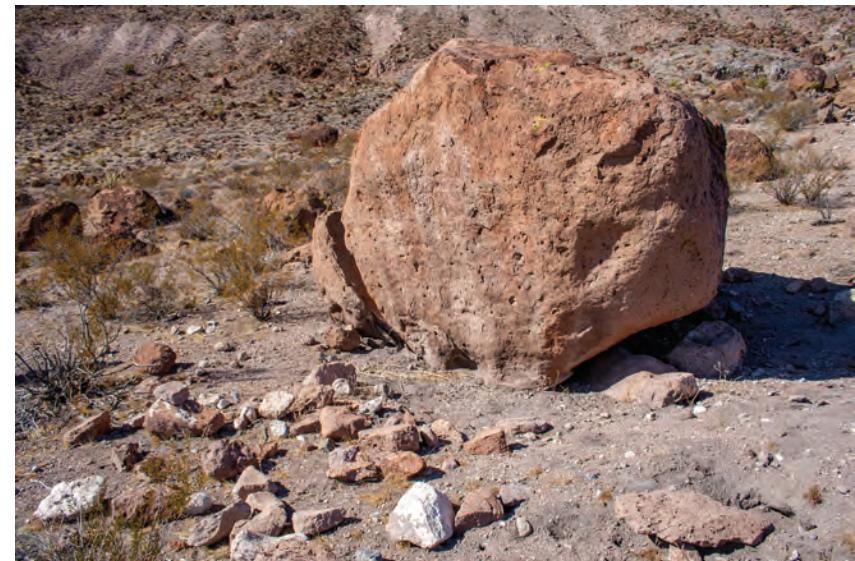
Associated archaeological features and general environmental contexts illustrate that rock art sites are in places in the settled landscape associated with family camps rather than villages. Sites are found mostly in valley bottoms, on and around the slopes of low hills, in canyons, and upland settings, rather than mountain ridges and peaks remote from settlement. Although a third of rock art sites (mostly small-scale) are not directly associated with other archaeological features, they are near places used for at least short-term settlement and economic activities.

Around a third of rock art sites are accompanied by stone artifacts that represent a wide range of small-scale, short-term, logistical foraging and harvesting activities performed by work parties ranging from villages or family camps. Sites associated with this evidence of minor economic activities are small, often comprising 15 or fewer rock art panels. These sites are mostly within 5 miles of another rock art site that has ground stone or habitation debris indicative of a family camp.

Ground stone, ceramics scatters and more substantial settlement debris (middens, rock rings, and lithic scatters) left behind from harvesting, food preparation, and a wide range of other economic activities are found at around a quarter of rock art sites. The scale and character of these archaeological materials are indicative of camps used by family households to range from for specialized foraging or solitary hunting.

Even very large rock art sites are generally accompanied by settlement archaeology indicative of family camps. Rock art appears to have been made in places visited by households after winter villages dissolved. Rock art was used primarily by kin-based household camps where economic cooperation focused on the individual and small groups.

These family camps are not restricted to uplands suitable for bighorn sheep and deer hunting, and harvesting piñon. Family camps with rock art are also found on valley floors in wetlands and along transportation corridors. There is little discernible difference in rock art styles and themes between uplands and lowlands sites. This suggests that rock art does not simply reflect the economic routines performed at these places. Whether rock art represents the economic routines performed at these places and the significance of rock art's relationship with the social and economic life of the family camp are explored in the following chapters.



Rock art boulder and scatter of slab milling stone fragments.



## §3§

# A WINDOW ON THE PAST?

ROCK ART IS SOMETIMES CALLED A ‘WINDOW ON THE PAST,’ BUT whether it provides insights into daily life or cultural beliefs and practices varies across the globe. Lincoln County rock art has a small number of apparently narrative scenes and motifs thematically related to hunting, animals, and people. Are these themes and designs an art of everyday life, portraying a representative sample of mundane economic activities, or are they something more symbolic instead? Although rare, narrative themes illuminate the cultural choices made by artists in selecting what was depicted in rock art and, through these choices, whether these themes were intended to be symbolic or represent daily life.

The handful of scenes and designs in rock art that appear to depict daily life are selective, largely restricted to hunting. If some rock art is an art of the hunter, does it depict a representative range of hunting practices? From the Middle Archaic onwards, small mammals always made an important contribution to the meat component of the diet, variably supplemented by large game such as bighorn sheep, mule deer, and pronghorn (**Chapter 2**). Communal hunting to capture rabbit and pronghorn was a significant form of hunting at various times in the past. Deer and bighorn sheep were most likely hunted by lone hunters or small hunting parties by tracking and ambushing. What references to

these two hunting practices (collective and solitary) can be discerned in the county’s rock art?

## COLLECTIVE HUNTING IN ROCK ART

In ethnographic times, rabbits were taken in very large numbers in collective hunts by using very long nets (hundreds of feet long) set in semicircles or a V-shape, into which the rabbits were driven by parties of men, women, and children. In much of the Great Basin, pronghorn too was hunted by large hunting parties who surrounded the quarry, drove it over cliffs or into corrals, or directed it to waiting hunters by using V-shaped fence lines. Game drive fences were made of brush or lines of stones, or were formed by lines of fire or even people. Pronghorn was little hunted in Lincoln County during ethnohistoric times because it was not common.

Depictions of communal hunts, their associated hunting technology, and quarry are uncommon. V-shaped designs enclosing game (which could be construed as portraying animals being driven by game fences or corrals) are very rare. Obvious depictions of rabbits and pronghorn are scarce in rock art (see **Chapter 5**). Long rows of short vertical lines (‘tally marks’) and rakes (rows

of connected short lines) are the best candidates for references to collective hunting as these could be schematic representations of game drive fences. Some rows of tally marks have circles hanging at the bottom, approximating ethnographic reports of fences embellished with sagebrush bushes to make the fences more of a visual barrier to the animals being driven. Occasionally anthropomorphs with raised arms are depicted standing by a ‘fence’. Ethnographic accounts described people standing beside game drive fences to provide an additional barrier. In rock art, fences (if, indeed, these are game drive fences) are only occasionally depicted in association with animals, usually with bighorn sheep. This association is presumably not naturalistic as bighorn sheep were

unlikely to have been hunted using drive fences because of the rocky terrain the animal uses to avoid predators.

At White River Narrows, very long rows of tally marks and rakes are found in a canyon well-suited for game drives due to its narrow entrances. Game could have been driven through the canyon to hidden hunters and its narrow entrances blocked by brush fencing. But, animals on the same rock art panels generally do not appear to form a scene with these possible drive fences. Also, little archaeological evidence of collective hunting has been found in this part of White River Narrows.

Overall, despite its economic and social importance, it appears that collective hunting and its quarry are rarely directly represent-



A very long rake-like design at White River Narrows, possibly representing a game drive fence. The only animals depicted in association with the possible fence are bighorn sheep, which in ethnographic times, were not hunted using drive fences.

ed or alluded to in rock art. If some rock art was intended to depict everyday hunting, then we might expect a representative range of game and hunting methods used to be represented. Instead, the most common hunting themes in rock art center on bighorn sheep hunting by lone hunters or small hunting parties (see below). Deer were also hunted by solitary hunters and small hunting parties and their habitat overlaps with that of bighorn sheep. Yet, deer hunts are not directly represented in rock art. These are all indicators of something other than an art of daily life depicting naturalistic portrayals of a locale's distinctive environmental features and settlement activities.

## WEAPONS IN ROCK ART

Weaponry is rarely portrayed in hunting scenes and is almost exclusively limited to depictions of bow and arrow hunting. Circles bisected by a straight line have long been identified as schematic or stylized representations of atlatls (page 24). Atlatls were most effective when used by hunting parties ambushing game. In rock art, atlatls are never depicted in hunting scenes making the identification of this motif type with the atlatl somewhat speculative. Instead, atlatls are depicted in isolation or being held by Pahranagat PBAs. The latter are never depicted holding this design in a posture representative of the way atlatls were actually used (Chapter 6). It is possible that Pahranagat PBAs are holding some other object and not an atlatl.

Possible depictions of atlatls by themselves are found widely dispersed throughout the county but in small numbers. They are found at sites in uplands and lowlands settings, indicating that they are not limited to hunting landscapes where their use would have been most efficient.



Depiction of an atlatl in rock art, Mount Irish. A circle bisected by a straight line (*top of photograph*) is conventionally identified as an atlatl. Two bighorn sheep are depicted near the atlatl but no hunter is shown wielding the weapon.

## HUNTERS IN ROCK ART

Readily identifiable hunting themes are generally Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric in age, as these comprise anthropomorphs holding a bow pointed at an animal. One archer even appears to be taking aim at another anthropomorph. Unlike the atlatl, the bow and arrow was depicted in the act of use rather in isolation. Scenes of bow hunters are very rare, probably fewer than ten such scenes throughout the entire county. There are also a few bighorn sheep depicted with a straight line extending from their body. These lines could be construed as representing a dart or arrow shaft but are not accompanied by slanted lines suggestive of fletching.



Petroglyph depicting an archer figure seemingly taking aim at a stick-figure anthropomorph.



Kneeling hunter holding a bow, facing a quadruped. The few hunting scenes in Lincoln County depict solitary hunting using the bow and arrow.



Stick-figure anthropomorphs ('horned') depicted with possible antler headdresses, perhaps portraying disguised hunters.

A number of stick-figure anthropomorphs (some 50 or fewer) depicted with short curved lines extending from their heads could possibly be Late Archaic or Late Prehistoric hunters, based on ethnographic accounts of hunter disguises made of antlered headdresses used by solitary hunters and hunt leaders (**Chapter 2, p.18**). Assuming that 'horned' stick-figures represent disguised hunters, it is notable that they almost never wield weapons and rarely are depicted in scenes in which they interact with animals. The rare exceptions include a pictograph of a horned anthropomorph holding a bow and arrow facing a line of quadrupeds.

Horned anthropomorphs are usually portrayed on rock art panels as just one of many design elements. Usually they are not visually prominent, being small and few, and rarely are the focus

of a composition. If these did indeed represent disguised hunters, they depicted hunters absent their weapons doing something other than hunting.

## OTHER HUNTING REFERENCES

Other possible hunting scenes include a small number of scenes that seem to represent the hunting of bighorn sheep using dogs. In ethnographic times, dogs were used to drive or run to ground pronghorn, and, more rarely, deer and bighorn sheep. Among these rare scenes of bighorn sheep being chased or harassed by dogs are a couple that include a stick-figure anthropomorph seemingly directing the dogs.

## SELECTIVE THEMES OF DAILY LIFE

Altogether, these hunting scenes largely focus on solitary hunting, with hunters mostly absent or depicted not in the act of hunting. If intended as representations of daily life, these are highly selective in depicting activities related mostly to solitary male hunters and bighorn sheep hunting. Gathering plants, hunting small mammals, and communal hunting are not directly depicted, despite their importance to economic life. Likewise, activities such as processing plants, cooking, and making tools are not represented in rock art, despite their obvious importance to sustaining daily life.

Those components of rock art that could be viewed as an art of everyday life are, in fact, an art unrepresentative of the main routines and rhythms of daily life. Instead, ‘narrative’ art appears to celebrate the lone hunter and men, in pursuit of a quarry valued not solely for its contribution to the diet (otherwise other game would



A stick-figure anthropomorph with bighorn sheep and a possible canid (bottom left), possibly depicting the use of dogs to drive game.



Bighorn sheep being chased or harassed by several dogs or canids.



Pictographs that depict a possible hunting scene. The left side of the panel portrays a small 'horned' stick-figure anthropomorph pointing a bow and arrow in the direction of a row of quadrupeds. In the upper right corner of the panel there is a large Fremont Style anthropomorph (see Chapter 1, p.9). This is one of the few times that a 'horned' stick-figure is depicted in an apparent hunting scene.

be depicted in similar proportions to bighorn sheep). Identifiable references to women's economic activities, plants, seeds, small mammals, and collective economic organization are absent. This indicates that Lincoln County rock art was not intended to representing scenes from daily life. Rather, a more symbolic and idealized representation of cultural life was depicted in rock art.

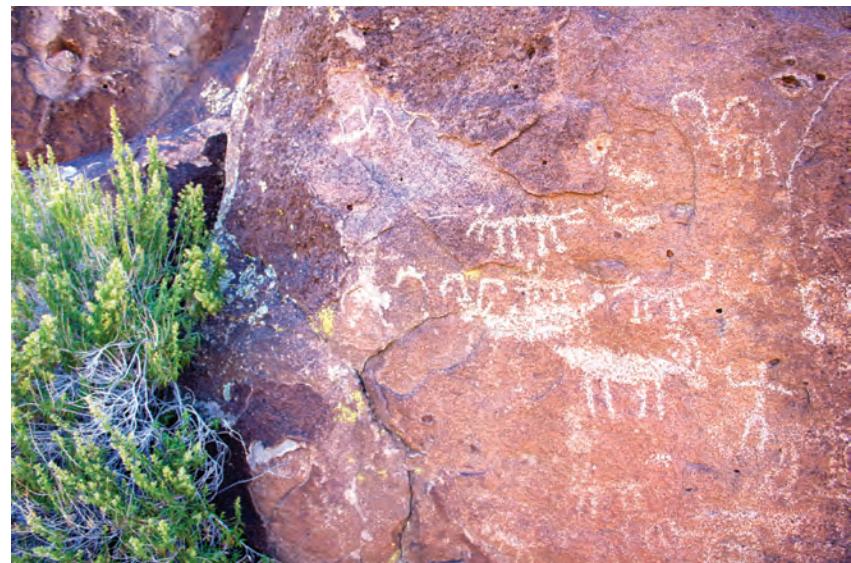
## EXPLAINING ROCK ART

If rock art is not necessarily a window on past daily life, what insights into past cultural thought and practices does it provide? For archaeology, the 'meaning' of rock art is explaining its cultural role rather than reconstructing the original meanings of individual motifs. As a system of visual communication that conveyed cultural concepts rather than representing spoken language (writing), it cannot be translated or read like a text (*Chapter 1, p.2*).

Instead, archaeologists seek to understand rock art's social functions in the prehistoric cultures that used it. The Ice Age art of the European caves prompted French archaeologists in the early 1900s to question why hunter-foragers, who they believed lived in harsh glacial conditions, would have devoted time to a non-utilitarian cultural practice. At the time archaeologists misperceived life in non-western cultures, particularly hunter-forager ones, as "poor, brutish, and short," as Thomas Hobbes famously declared in 1651. (Hobbes was describing an imaginary time of primitive anarchy or state of nature.)

## HUNTING MAGIC

Archaeologists resolved the apparent contradiction between supposedly impoverished Ice Age hunter-foragers on the brink of



Bighorn sheep being corralled by three canids directed by a stick-figure anthropomorph. The canids are probably dogs, based on their long, narrow bodies, long tails, heads with pronounced muzzles, and upright ears. Hunting scenes depicting the use of dogs are rare in the rest of the Great Basin.

### Symbolism of bighorn sheep in rock art

As bighorn sheep is the dominant animal depicted in rock art (*Chapter 5*) it is possible that they were a shorthand for solitary hunting and thus individual actions. In ethnographic times, bighorn sheep were hunted almost exclusively by lone hunters or small parties of hunters far from villages, while communal hunting took place in the core of the settled landscape. As collective hunting is a more productive and predictable source of game, cultural considerations may have partly motivated bighorn sheep hunting despite its economic inefficiency. This is one reason that archaeologists elsewhere in the Great Basin have identified Middle Archaic bighorn sheep hunting as a form of prestige hunting practiced more for social reasons than economic ones.



Two Southern Paiute women using a milling stone to process nuts, hard seeds, and tubers. Depictions of plant harvesting and processing are absent in rock art.

starvation and their economically wasteful artistic production, by discovering an underlying practicality to prehistoric rock art. The painted European caves were explained as evidence of prehistoric beliefs in the efficacy of magic. The elaborately decorated cave walls, with their representations of a wide range of Ice Age animals, were believed to have been made as a sympathetic magic to enlist the aid of supernatural processes to secure game and ensure their abundance. This approach also established a long-term trend in archaeology of looking at rock art as an exclusively male cultural symbolism (made by either hunters or ceremonial specialists). In the Great Basin, it also began the process whereby animals and hunting symbolism were perceived as rock art's primary themes.

Great Basin archaeologists once believed that hunting magic explained where rock art was found in the landscape and what it depicted. A close relationship seemed to exist between hunting environments and rock art sites, as these seemed to be in settings where large game would have been hunted. Rock art appeared distant from villages and household camps and instead was found at animal trails and ambush spots, associated with hunting blinds and drive fences, dart and arrow points, and debris from small hunting camps.

Hunting magic raised the economic significance of large game over plants in prehistoric diets by implying that hunting needed magical aid, but foraging for plants did not. Yet, in hunter-forager cultures animals are only the primary source of food in environments (such as subarctic ones) where plants are practically absent. Even Great Basin peoples who historically followed the huge buffalo herds (a way of life enabled by the reintroduction of the horse to North America by Europeans) gathered plants and fished.

As bighorn sheep are by far the most common animal in Great Basin rock art (see **Chapter 5**, p.65), archaeologists be-

lieved it was the chief subject of hunting. Through hunting magic rituals, hunters sought to make it easier to capture their desired quarry and ensure game thrived in the natural world. Abstract motifs were also explained as symbols of game and other economic resources, although archaeologists could not identify their actual subjects. Hunting magic cult was envisaged to be practiced by lone hunters or ceremonial hunt leaders, similar to those of ethnographic times. As these places were used primarily by men for hunting, it suggested that rock art was used and seen mostly by men, something that seemed to be supported by the character of these camps as ground stone (an archaeological proxy for female activities) was supposedly absent.

Hunting scenes could thus be explained as expressing the desired-for successful kill. Yet, these scenes are so few in Lincoln County that if hunting magic was practiced, it was rarely directed at ensuring success in the hunt. Instead, making sure bighorn sheep were abundant seemed to be the primary concern of the county's rock art given its numeric ascendancy over other game. As plants and other game that were important to economic success are not depicted in rock art, the magical aid believed to have been sought through rock art was apparently very discriminating.

## SHAMANISM

The other main approach archaeologists have used to explain Great Basin rock art also associated it exclusively with male cultural practices. Traditional doctors or shamans were argued to have recorded the mental imagery they experienced during trance states in rock art. These healers have a special relationship with spirit-beings that take animal form and communicate with shamans in trance states (usually ordinary dreaming). The mental imagery



Depiction of a bighorn sheep herd at Mount Irish. Hunting-magic explained such scenes as enlisting magical aid in hunting or to ensure game was abundant.

experienced by shamans performing their ceremonial roles was believed by archaeologists to be the inspiration for abstract designs and figurative representations of shamanic themes and concepts. For example, bighorn sheep imagery was interpreted as representing spirit-helpers; bird imagery as a metaphor of shamanic soul flight; and hunting scenes as visual metaphors for entering trance (as shamans commonly liken entering trance to 'dying'). Elaborately decorated anthropomorphs were understood to represent shamans wearing their ceremonial regalia. Abstract designs could be explained as portraying mental imagery experienced in trance states.

Shamans were believed to have made and used rock art as a visual record of important cultural knowledge (forgetting shamanic lore was potentially harmful to a shaman's health). Rock



Petroglyph boulder with curvilinear and other geometric designs. Abstract elements are explained by the shamanistic approach as a record of shamanic knowledge and rock art sites as places where power was sought.

art sites were also believed to be places where shamans acquired shamanic or supernatural powers by undertaking a vision-quest. Because they were the source of potentially dangerous powers that only shamans could harness, rock art sites were considered to be distant from villages and camp sites. Even when settlement debris was found at rock art sites, it was argued that shamans and family households visited these places at different times of the year. Rock art, according to this approach, was used and viewed by a small group of male ceremonial specialists whose spirit-helper most commonly took the form of a bighorn sheep. That is, rock art encoded a privileged body of cultural knowledge that was controlled by men.

If bighorn sheep images symbolized the spirit-helpers of shamans, it would suggest that bighorn sheep was the only animal that functioned as a spirit-helper, something that is not borne

#### Great Basin Shamanism

In ethnographic times, Great Basin peoples believed that the natural world was suffused by supernatural power that was an animating force. This power could be concentrated in specific places (such as certain mountains, caves, or springs), animals, or landscape features associated with mythological characters. Individuals could either avoid this power (because it was potentially dangerous if not controlled) or enlist it as a source of good health, success, or a desired skill. Power generally came unsought in dreams but could be sought out at places of power that were far from villages or camps. Most people acquired a little power from a single source to assist them in daily life. Those who obtained considerable powers became *shamans* or traditional doctors.

Shamans derived their power from their control over spirit-helpers. These normally took the form of an animal and gave the shaman supernatural powers and knowledge. This knowledge included a special song used by the shaman to summon the spirit-helper to assist his or her healing practices. Some shamans could also exert control over animals to facilitate hunting. Shamans could be influential but were not political leaders and had no specific authority.

out by either Great Basin ethnography or the anthropology of shamanism more generally. Hunting scenes could be explained as a shamanic metaphor of entering a trance (through the trope of death). Yet, as noted earlier, these scenes are so few that they highlight the widespread absence of actual scenes of animals dying at the hands of hunters. Scenes of game drive fences at White River Narrows, for example, could be explained as a shamanic metaphor that indirectly represented death and thus entering a trance state. But, it is hard to imagine a place of potentially dangerous power being directly on the route of such a public trail.

Both shamanism and hunting magic took the same set of themes and images in rock art, its associated social and economic contexts, but derived different explanations of rock art's cultural functions. Both approaches explained why rock art is found where it is and why its content takes the form it does. Although disagreeing on its cultural functions, both approaches concurred that the content of Great Basin rock art was dominated by animal and hunting imagery because it depicted cultural knowledge restricted to male customs. Both, however, offered static explanations representing Great Basin rock art as playing a single cultural function throughout its history.

Yet, as we have seen, direct hunting references are rare and candidates for visual metaphors of shamanic lore are far and few between. One would expect that rock art would depict a wide range of game or those that played a spiritual role as spirit-helpers. The dominance of bighorn sheep in Lincoln County rock art suggests these are symbolic of something other than hunting or shamanism.



Petroglyph boulder depicting several bighorn sheep. The dominance of a single species in rock art suggests that it likely did not symbolize shamanic themes.

## ROCK ART AND THE FAMILY HOUSEHOLD

The place of rock art in the settled landscape is not concordant with the expectations of either hunting magic or shamanism. Rock art is neither remote from settlement nor found exclusively in hunting landscapes ([Chapter 2](#)). Instead, it is closely associated with household camps indicating that the cultural knowledge embedded in it was not necessarily restricted to male hunters or ceremonial specialists such as shamans. Looking at what rock art imagery apparently portrays in isolation cannot disclose its social



Group of Pahranagat PBAs holding atlatls, a weapon associated with collective hunting. The zoomorphs are much lighter in patination indicating that they are younger than the PBAs.

and cultural meanings (or functions). But, when placed in its archaeological and environmental contexts, rock art's place in prehistoric social landscapes becomes better understood. Rock art's connection with the social organization of family households was an enduring one, the reasons for which are introduced by considering the properties of abstract art in the following chapter.



Complex abstract imagery, Mount Irish. Abstract imagery is often overlooked in archaeological explanations of rock art.



## §4§

# ABSTRACT ART

ROCK ART APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME A REGULAR FEATURE OF cultural life in Lincoln County as human settlement became permanently established during the Middle and Late Archaic. Paleo-Indian peoples only made rare visits to the county and for Early Archaic (8,000 to 6,000 years ago) peoples the region remained marginal to their settlement pattern ([Chapter 2](#)). As the region was intensively settled from the Middle Archaic onwards, people became increasingly familiar with the county and it developed cultural resonance as the environment was perceived as part of the settled landscape rather than a peripheral economic zone.

### GROWTH OF TERRITORIALITY

During the Middle Archaic, populations grew, settlement intensified, and territorial ranges were becoming circumscribed by those of competing cultural groups. By the beginning of the Late Archaic, people lived in increasingly bounded territories requiring more intensive use of a wider range of environmental resources ([Chapter 2, p.26](#)). These boundaries were doubtless increasingly ambiguous as one moved away from the center of a cultural group's core territory. That is, the heart of a culture's territory was probably easily recognized and acknowledged by neighboring groups, but its peripheries and who had use-rights in such places was presumably not.

Competition between different groups for access to environmental resources, therefore, was likely negotiated through cultural practices, which sometimes may have involved the use of rock art. Rather than marking boundaries, rock art may have been cited as evidence of the presence of a group's ancestors in their core territory to establish and legitimize their exclusive land-use rights to it. Rock art and other signs of past settlement activity create a bridge between the past and present, making evident a history of cultural practices in the present. As noted earlier ([page 3](#)), in ethnographic times some Great Basin peoples ascribed ancient artifacts and other cultural features to the doings of the mythological figure Coyote.

### ABSTRACT ART AS SYMBOLISM

The earliest Middle Archaic rock art in the county seems to have been almost exclusively abstract. Abstract art conveys concepts without having any resemblance to its subjects, unlike figurative or 'representational' art. Because abstract rock art does not directly depict its subject does not imply that it did not have meaning or cultural resonance. In fact, abstract and figurative styles of art both represent cultural information but encode it in different ways. Abstract art's meanings cannot be inferred simply by examining the way it looks. Instead, knowledgeable commen-



Densely packed rock art motifs on a cliff-face, White River Narrows.

tary and observation of its cultural use provide the main ways of clarifying abstract art's meanings and themes.

In contrast, the most basic meaning of representational art can be inferred by identifying their subject, which probably was the most trivial level of meaning intended by the artist. It would be like identifying the 'meaning' of Emanuel Leutze's painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851) as simply a picture of men in a boat. Comprehending art's deeper meaning requires some knowledge of the broader cultural context in which it was deployed. Abstract art is usually the subject of a restricted body of cultural thought (or a special knowledge) that explains its meanings. Also, abstract art may have been understood as figurative or representational in its own cultural context for depicting conventionalized meanings and themes in schematic ways that a knowledgeable observer could easily understand (i.e., a visual shorthand).

Abstract art has the capacity to function as open-ended symbols and be the subject of almost unlimited interpretation and reinterpretation. Special knowledge of the meanings of abstract art traditions often becomes a source of standing for those recognized as authentic interpreters. Such status may have been limited to the cultural field of comprehending rock art, not necessarily conferring prestige or authority in other cultural fields.

Representational designs may have been similarly open-ended; an image of an animal could depict the natural world, a cultural concept (e.g., a mythic agent), a social group (e.g., a clan or lineage), or have several meanings. A contemporary observer may find it satisfying to identify a glyph's meaning based on inferring a resemblance to a real thing, but this may have little to do with its original meanings or deeper cultural significance. Archaeologists try to understand rock art by placing it in its wider context, relating it to where it is found in the landscape, what archaeological re-



Representative Basin and Range tradition motifs in rock art: a rake (top), handprint (center), and spiral (bottom).



Curvilinear and rectilinear designs at Mount Irish. Abstract designs such as these were made over a long period, with figurative themes emerging later in Lincoln County's rock art traditions.

mains it is associated with, and the distribution of styles and motif types. Lincoln County's rock art illuminates a wider Great Basin stylistic evolutionary sequence from abstract to figurative imagery. The very oldest rock art traditions are found in the northern Great Basin (where intensive human settlement is documented from Paleo-Indian times onwards) and are exclusively abstract in style (Chapter 1, p.5). Abstract imagery was supplemented over time by representational or figurative designs in rock art traditions throughout the Great Basin and the Southwest. Abstract imagery was probably made over a much longer period than representational art, evidenced by its greater abundance and wider distribution.

The prominence of abstract imagery in the oldest rock art traditions is culturally meaningful as these designs took great technical skill to make—representational art did not gradually evolve because prehistoric artists finally learned the necessary skills to make it. Rather, the cultural knowledge embodied in rock art changed over time, making naturalistic symbols necessary to communicate changes in content and theme.

### Styles of Rock Art

Styles of rock art are identified by considering how artists made it and what they chose to portray. The choices that prehistoric artists made were constrained by their *cultural beliefs*. Archaeologists try to assign different styles to specific periods and relate them to known *archaeological cultures*. But it is not straightforward to attribute specific rock art styles with individual archaeological cultures. Individual cultures usually have several styles of art that are used for different purposes, similar to having different styles of ceramic vessels for different functions. Styles of art and artifacts are also the result of cultural and social practices that may be *shared by different cultures* (such as the nineteenth century Ghost Dance movement).

### Place and rock art

As people adjusted to new ways of living and new territories during the Middle Archaic, rock art illustrates that the environment had associative values referred to as a social or cultural landscape by archaeologists. The natural world was not regarded as simply composed of economic resources. Instead, marks of cultural agency in novel landscapes, whatever their original purpose, may have helped establish a sense of history of human settlement. Rock art, by manifesting in the present evidence of the cultural actions of one's ancestors, helps establish a history of cultural relationships to place. Cultural conceptions of place and past would have added to the emotive and social power of the bodies of cultural knowledge believed to be expressed through rock art.

## BASIN AND RANGE TRADITION

The style of abstract-dominated art in the Desert West is known as *Basin and Range tradition*. Beyond saying it is the earliest form of rock art, it is very difficult to discern stylistic evolution in its abstract elements. The building blocks of Basin and Range tradition are geometric elements that were combined to make a range of curvilinear, rectilinear, and schematic motifs and designs. Curvilinear motifs are formed by combining curved lines (or arcs) into motifs such as circles, concentric circles, semi-circles, dots (or small in-filled circles), ovals, spirals, wavy lines, etc. Rectilinear motifs are formed by combinations of angled lines to form squares, rectangles, asterisks, rakes, chevrons, crossed lines, triangles, zig-zags, etc. Simple straight lines are also part of this tradition and are often arranged as rows or columns of short lines. These design elements are expressed with almost unlimited stylistic variations, such as having external lines, internal decoration, being connected to other designs, by repetition, grouping, and reflection.

Using neutral language to describe individual motifs helps prevent identifying their meaning based on speculative subjective identification. For example, a label such as ‘circle with external radial lines’ is more conducive to consistent identification and comparison than ‘sunburst.’ Whether this motif type has any association with the celestial body is not something that can be determined simply by considering its appearance.

Lincoln County’s regional expression of Basin and Range tradition shows a heavy bias towards curvilinear abstract forms, which make up a third of motifs, followed by various simple linear types; rectilinear abstract design types are less common (about a tenth of all motifs). Compared to other parts of Nevada, curvilinear motifs



Circle with internal radial lines.

occur in a smaller proportion in the county, as elsewhere nearly half of all motifs are curvilinear.

These types of abstract motifs are generally found together at sites. Various types of circles make up almost two-thirds of all curvilinear motif types, with circles connected by a line, joined at their disks, circles with external radial lines, and concentric circles particularly common. Wavy lines are the next most prominent curvilinear motif found in terms of frequency, closely followed by meanders. These motif types are often very precisely made and are found throughout the county. Rectilinear designs are represented most commonly by rectangles (often with internal decoration) and rakes. Both of these general types are widely distributed. Treatments distinctive to the county are the exceptional length of many rakes, the best examples of which are at White River Narrows (**Chapter 3**).



Rectilinear and other motifs at White River Narrows: a long rake, a zigzag, a small back-to-back rake, bighorn sheep, and an anthropomorph.

A component of abstract art appears to have been important more for the act of making than aesthetic reasons. These take the form of short lines and apparently random peck marks that do not form larger designs, often informal in style of execution. These suggest that leaving a mark on the landscape was an important underlying motivation for making some rock art.

Because these three broad abstract motif classes co-occur at individual sites, they were probably made contemporaneously. Also, these are widely distributed, further indicating that they are a distinguishable entity that was made for a long period. Tracking the stylistic evolution of abstract imagery is very difficult without reliable estimates of the age of individual motif types. In the past, curvilinear motifs were believed to be the oldest form of abstract rock art, with rectilinear motifs supposedly developing later and supplementing curvilinear types. Today, it cannot be determined whether one is older than the other, but based on their general co-occurrence it seems likely that both types were made at the same time from the time that rock art began to be made.

## ABSTRACT MEANINGS

Some abstract motifs may be schematic representations of material culture items. As noted earlier (**Chapter 3**, p.36), lines of tally marks and rakes have sometimes been interpreted as depicting game drive fences and circles bisected by a straight line as atlatls. The division between abstract and ‘representational’ art is perhaps best thought of as a continuum of schematized depictions, some of which sufficiently resemble the things they were intended to represent more closely than others. For example, serpentine lines resemble snakes, but in the absence of additional features, such as a bifurcated line at one end (for the tongue), it

is not possible to definitively make such an identification. In any case, such identifications may have little to do with an image's deeper symbolic meaning.

There are a number of internally decorated rectangles and ovals that bear a passing resemblance to masks. At their most basic, these are simply ovals and rectangles that enclose smaller geometric elements. At their most elaborate, however, these motifs begin to take on an anthropomorphic appearance, with the best examples found in the White River Narrows area. Here, internally decorated ovals also have external radial lines and perhaps resemble masks or headdresses. Yet, based just on a consideration of their appearance, there is no way that such an identification can be definitively made. Masks have never been found in the region's archaeological record, although headdresses incorporating antlers or feathers were cultural features during ethnographic times. It is best to raise the possibility that these designs possibly represent masks or headdresses but allow for alternative interpretations.

Some internally decorated rectangles can plausibly be identified as perhaps depicting clothing, as these often resemble Pahranagat Style anthropomorphs that have rectangular bodies that enclose a wide range of geometric motifs ([Chapter 6](#)). It is also possible that some of these are highly schematic portrayals of PBAs. Again, it is not possible to definitively identify these decorated rectangles as such based only on their appearance. In their original cultural context it is likely that the meaning of these internally decorated designs was not immediately apparent just from looking at them.

Some curvilinear designs have been interpreted as depicting celestial bodies, particularly the sun and stars. Circles that have their disks surrounded by short straight lines (supposedly representing rays of light) are perhaps the best example of this. These are a common motif type, found widely throughout the county,



Internally decorated ovals that perhaps resemble masks.



Group of internally decorated rectangles, possibly highly schematic or stylized anthropomorphs.

that are small in scale and are never part of a scene (i.e., to suggest day or night). Whether or not these were intended to convey cosmological thinking on celestial bodies is difficult to know in the absence of informed commentary from the art's original and descendant interpreters.

## ROCK ART AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

As noted earlier ([Chapter 2](#)), rock art seems to have become a consistent cultural feature during the Middle Archaic when intensive settlement of Lincoln County began. Rock art seems related to the expansion and intensification of settlement into places that were peripheral to Paleo-Indian and Early Archaic peoples. But rock art is only found at environments used for logistical economic purposes, accompanying family household camps on valley floors and at uplands. These settings were used at various times from the spring through the fall when the larger social group (the village) dispersed into small groups of related households. This indicates that rock art was primarily associated with places

### Hidden meanings

Trying to identify the meaning of abstract rock art imagery highlights that familiarity with the body of cultural knowledge that gave these motifs meaning was necessary to comprehend them. Access to the inner meanings of such bodies of knowledge is restricted or protected by the form its vehicles of symbolization takes. As abstract motifs have little formal resemblance to the things they signify, their meanings would have been known only by those trained to understand it. Privileged access to the body of cultural knowledge through which rock art was interpreted could have conferred prestige, achieved by demonstrating a command of rock art's hidden meanings. This is comparable to professional status in contemporary societies being demonstrated by a special knowledge of a body of cultural thought and a command of an argot or special language.

away from large social aggregations and village life and instead had connotations related to individual actions and cooperation among family households.

It could be suggested that because rock art first appears as a consistent archaeological feature in association with the establishment of intensive settlement, abstract images may reflect everyday or domestic life. But, as we have seen, domestic scenes portrayed in rock art are selective (**Chapter 3**) and rock art is specialized in its place within the settled landscape, associated with camps and logistical settings rather than villages (**Chapter 2**). So, if it was an art of the everyday, it depicted only the routines of family households and not those of the village. Also, everyday objects and themes are, at best, only depicted ambiguously or not at all. The rarity of narrative scenes and the selective depiction of solitary hunting are striking, implying something other than a mundane art of daily life (**Chapter 3**). Instead, abstract imagery indicates that rock art likely functioned as a cultural symbolism that served social purposes.

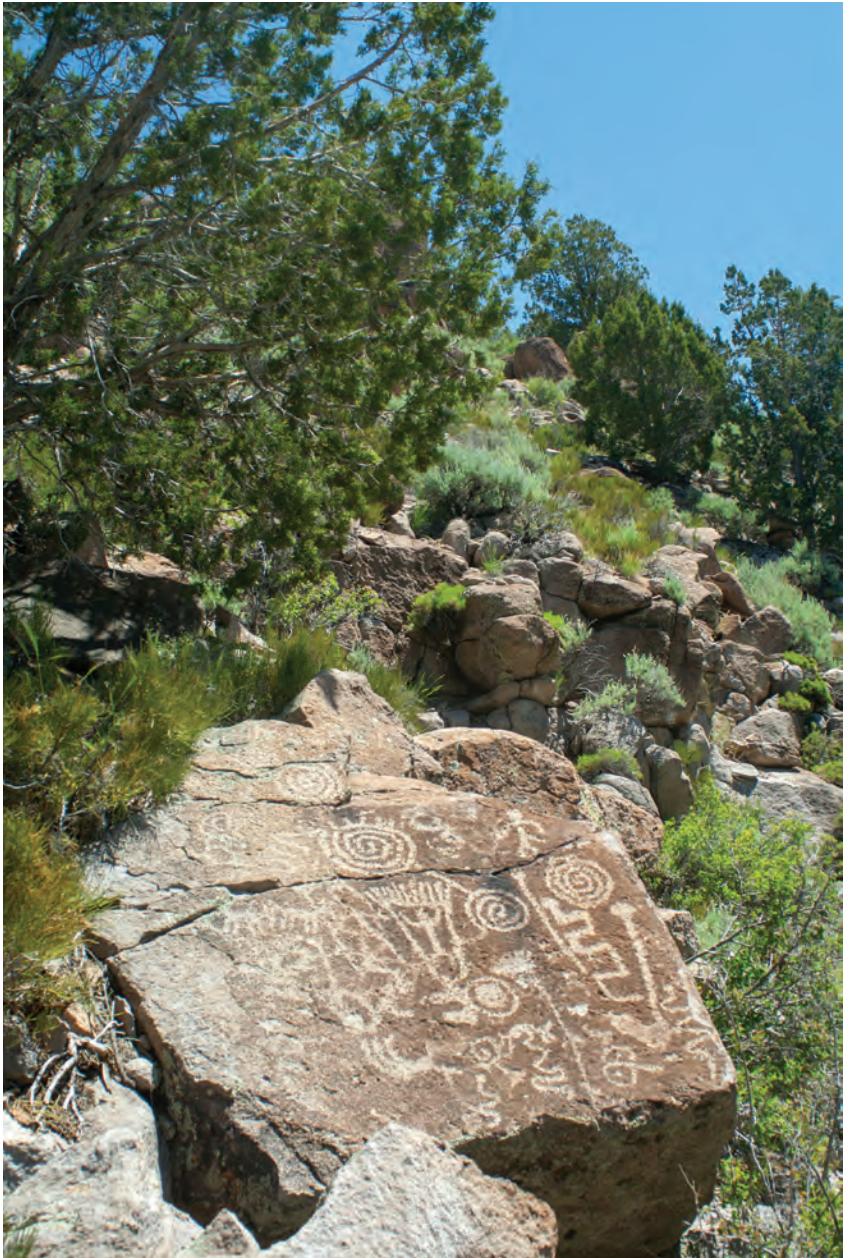
One aspect of this Middle and Late Archaic settlement expansion is that the composition of groups dwelling in Lincoln County broadened over time from Paleo-Indian male hunting parties to inclusive family-based social groups by the Late Archaic. This change is perhaps related to the spread of piñon and a gradual economic shift that made plants the primary staple rather than hunting game. Hunter-foragers who rely on plants are less mobile than those focused on hunting who follow animal herds. Reduced mobility would have been reinforced by territorial circumscription and Middle Archaic peoples would have been the first to become truly familiar with the county and consider it as their core territory or home district. Abstract rock art makes evident the growing



Circles with their disks ringed by external lines are sometimes identified as depictions of celestial bodies, such as these examples at Crystal Wash.



Enigmatic abstract designs at Mount Irish. The subjects and meanings of most abstract designs cannot be inferred simply from their appearance. In their original cultural context, some familiarity with the body of knowledge that gave these images significance would have been necessary.



Highly formal rock art panel comprising, most notably, spirals, concentric circles, denticulated lines, and anthropomorphs.

cultural resonance of the landscape to the Middle Archaic peoples who established permanent settlement in the region.

If rock art was made at both at villages and family camps then we might explain its earliest function as making culturally familiar, or socializing, a novel landscape that was increasingly thought of as a home district. Instead, we can only speculate that perhaps family camps were now commonly in uplands settings previously only visited occasionally by hunting parties in pursuit of deer and bighorn sheep. It is also possible that small groupings of family households was an unfamiliar unit of economic cooperation in which people now spent much of the year. In the preceding Early Archaic people spent more time organized in villages, making logistical expeditions to nearby lowlands resource patches and occasional hunting forays to uplands. Or maybe rock art and other cultural behaviors helped establish individual household districts within the wider territory of the village. Whatever the original motivation was, rock art appears to be associated with settlement expansion into previously peripheral economic zones only infrequently encountered by family households.

### MONUMENTS OF PAST SOCIAL ACTIONS

During the Middle and Late Archaic, it appears that rock art accompanied social and economic reorganization associated with broad-based foraging and hunting strategies that were increasingly interdependent compared to Paleo-Indian and Early Archaic times. One consequence of making a tradition of abstract rock art was the creation of a lasting but ambiguous monument in places used by family households. This enduring imagery would make visible the past cultural actions of a group's perceived ancestors. With the passage of time, abstract imagery likely developed addi-

tional cultural associations and uses. It would have made rock art as a field of cultural action amenable to competition, conferring a limited status to those with a special knowledge of its meanings. The emergence of representational imagery later during the Middle Archaic and the Late Archaic seem to show that some social standing was achieved by demonstrating a command of cultural thought and symbolism, as explored in the following chapters.



Curvilinear images that overlooked the daily life of a family camp at Ash Springs.



## §5§

# ANIMALS IN ROCK ART

ANIMALS HAVE TREMENDOUS CULTURAL AND SYMBOLIC importance in hunter-forager cultures (Chapter 2, p.30). Lincoln County rock art illustrates this, as it neither reflects the range of animals that were hunted nor their relative economic importance. The portrayal of animals in art is culturally specific and the county's rock art shows that ancient artists depicted cultural values rather than simply representing the natural world in which they lived. Around 3,000 years ago, animals became a theme in figurines and other art. It is likely that this is when zoomorphic imagery became common or more prominent in Lincoln County rock art.

Lincoln County shares with the rest of Nevada rock art the portrayal of only a narrow range of animal species. Bighorn sheep are portrayed in the county's rock art in much larger numbers than anywhere else in Nevada and are by far the most common representational theme in rock art. Other animal species are depicted in much smaller numbers than bighorn sheep and are found at fewer sites.

## CANIDS

Lincoln County is unusual for having a relatively significant number of canids (dogs or coyotes) depicted in rock art; elsewhere in Nevada this species is very rarely depicted. About a tenth of sites have canids depicted, generally fewer than five at an individual site, and are concentrated in Pahranagat Valley and the Hiko Range, often in foothills or uplands. A small number of canids is depicted apparently chasing bighorn sheep, perhaps suggesting hunting scenes (Chapter 3, p.39).

In Great Basin ethnography, in contrast with the loyal dog is the troublesome coyote. The oral narratives of Great Basin Indian peoples portray Coyote as a trickster, a supernatural being responsible for many of life's problems. Although it cannot be excluded, it seems more likely that most canids in rock art represent dogs rather than Coyote the mythic character. Canids, when not depicted in hunting scenes (and presumably representing dogs) are small-scale, not central to a rock art panel, and do not form scenes that could be interpreted as representing events in mythic time attributed to Coyote or Wolf.



*Top and bottom*—Canids pursuing bighorn sheep: this theme is repeated at several sites in Lincoln County. Although not common, this theme appears to be very rarely depicted elsewhere in Great Basin rock art.

## DEER AND PRONGHORN

Deer are widely depicted in Lincoln County rock art, albeit in small numbers, and are rarely represented as deer tracks, in contrast to elsewhere in Nevada. Deer motifs are found at a tenth of sites and are slightly wider in distribution than other zoomorphs other than bighorn sheep. They are found in numbers of five or fewer at individual sites, in uplands and on valley floors in Pahranagat Valley, White River Valley, and Meadow Valley Wash. They are not depicted in hunting scenes even though deer was an important quarry in ethnographic times, usually hunted by a solitary hunter or a small group of hunters by tracking and ambushing. The distribution of deer motifs in rock art is not restricted to the animal's



Possible depiction of a male mule deer identifiable from its antlers (Mount Irish).

prime habitat (uplands). Pronghorn are very rare in the county's rock art despite its significant contribution to the meat component of the diet at various times in prehistory (Chapter 2, p.18). The relatively infrequent depiction of deer and pronghorn in rock art suggests that what animals were represented in rock art had little to do with portraying a naturalistic representation of the environment or economic life.

## REPTILES

Lizards are generally uncommon in Lincoln County rock art, occurring in numbers of four or fewer at a small number of sites. In part this may be because depictions of lizards can be difficult to distinguish from portrayals of people as both take stick-figure forms only distinguished by bodily posture. Lizards usually are depicted with a stick-figure body, four bent legs with splayed digits, and a long line for a tail. Stick-figure anthropomorphs, therefore,

We might expect both bighorn sheep and deer to be depicted in rock art in similar numbers as its habitat overlaps with that of bighorn. Both are found more often in rugged mountains and uplands, rather than flat valley bottoms inhabited by pronghorn. Hunting deer and bighorn sheep in uplands would have been most efficient when done by solitary hunters or small hunting parties. In contrast, pronghorn were most efficiently hunted by large, collective hunting groups. The environmental settings where bighorn sheep and deer were hunted were associated with family camps; in contrast, pronghorn were hunted in settings strongly associated with villages. Bighorn sheep and deer both could have been associated with concepts of individual pursuits (solitary hunting) as opposed to group ones (collective hunting). Yet, although deer had the capacity to bear similar economic, environmental, and social associations as bighorn sheep, the cultural resonance of deer was apparently weaker. Otherwise we would expect the two to be depicted in similar proportions.



*Top*—two quadrupeds: on the left, one that resembles a mule deer and, on the right, one that seems to have antlers like pronghorn (Mount Irish).  
*Bottom*—possible deer tracks depicted as inverted U-shapes, as well as other designs, including a footprint (White River Narrows).



Top—lizard depicted in stick-figure style.

Bottom—Schematic representation of a snake: a serpentine line capped by a circle

## MISCELLANEOUS ANIMALS

Other animal species are depicted only very occasionally in Lincoln County's rock art. Images of birds, or their tracks, are very rare and seem restricted to Pahranagat Valley and White River Valley. Eagles, culturally significant ethnographically, are not readily identifiable in rock art imagery. Instead, the few birds depicted appear to be wading species, yet these are not found at sites in wetlands (the best examples are found at uplands such as Mount Irish and Shooting Gallery).

Likewise, bears are very rarely depicted in rock art and only by their paws. The few sites where they are depicted are found in the Hiko Range and Meadow Valley Wash and its tributaries.

Small mammals were an important part of the meat component of prehistoric diets from the Middle Archaic onwards, supplemented by meat from large mammals (pronghorn, deer, and bighorn sheep) (Chapter 2). Rabbits, like pronghorn, were hunted collectively on valley floors and individually by men and

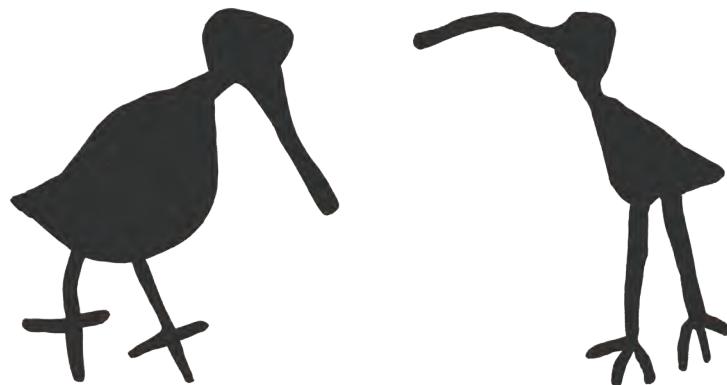


Illustration of wading birds from two sites in uplands settings.

women when living in family camps. Yet definitive depictions of staples such as rabbits (and fish, where available) can rarely, if ever, be found in the county's rock art imagery.

The absence of small mammals in rock art is another strand of evidence that rock art neither reflects economic interests nor depicts a representative sample of daily life. Their absence highlights that the animal species most frequently depicted (bighorn sheep followed distantly by deer) were associated strongly with solitary hunting, rugged upland landscapes, and family camps. Yet, rock art depictions of these animals are not restricted to their prime habitat (uplands) and sites with very large numbers of bighorn sheep images are also found on valley floors. As animals in rock art were not depicted in only their primary environmental settings, it is unlikely they were intended to simply represent the natural world.

## BIGHORN SHEEP

Bighorn sheep are the dominant species in Lincoln County rock art and make up a much larger proportion of rock art assemblages here than anywhere else in Nevada. About a tenth of all rock art motifs are of bighorn sheep and approximately three-quarters of all animals depicted in the county's rock art are bighorn sheep. This makes Lincoln County one of the few places in Nevada where bighorn sheep are visually prominent and abundant in rock art. Other animal species are never found in large numbers at individual sites. In contrast, bighorn sheep are much more widely distributed, generally occurring in numbers of ten or fewer at individual sites but also clustered in huge concentrations numbering in the hundreds in Pahranagat Valley (particularly at Mount Irish and Shooting Gallery).



This bear paw glyph is unique as it is worked around a spalled rock face and only the claws have been added. In many instances it is difficult to distinguish footprints from those of bear paws.



Many zoomorphs, such as this one, are enigmatic and difficult to identify to their species.



Herd of bighorn sheep



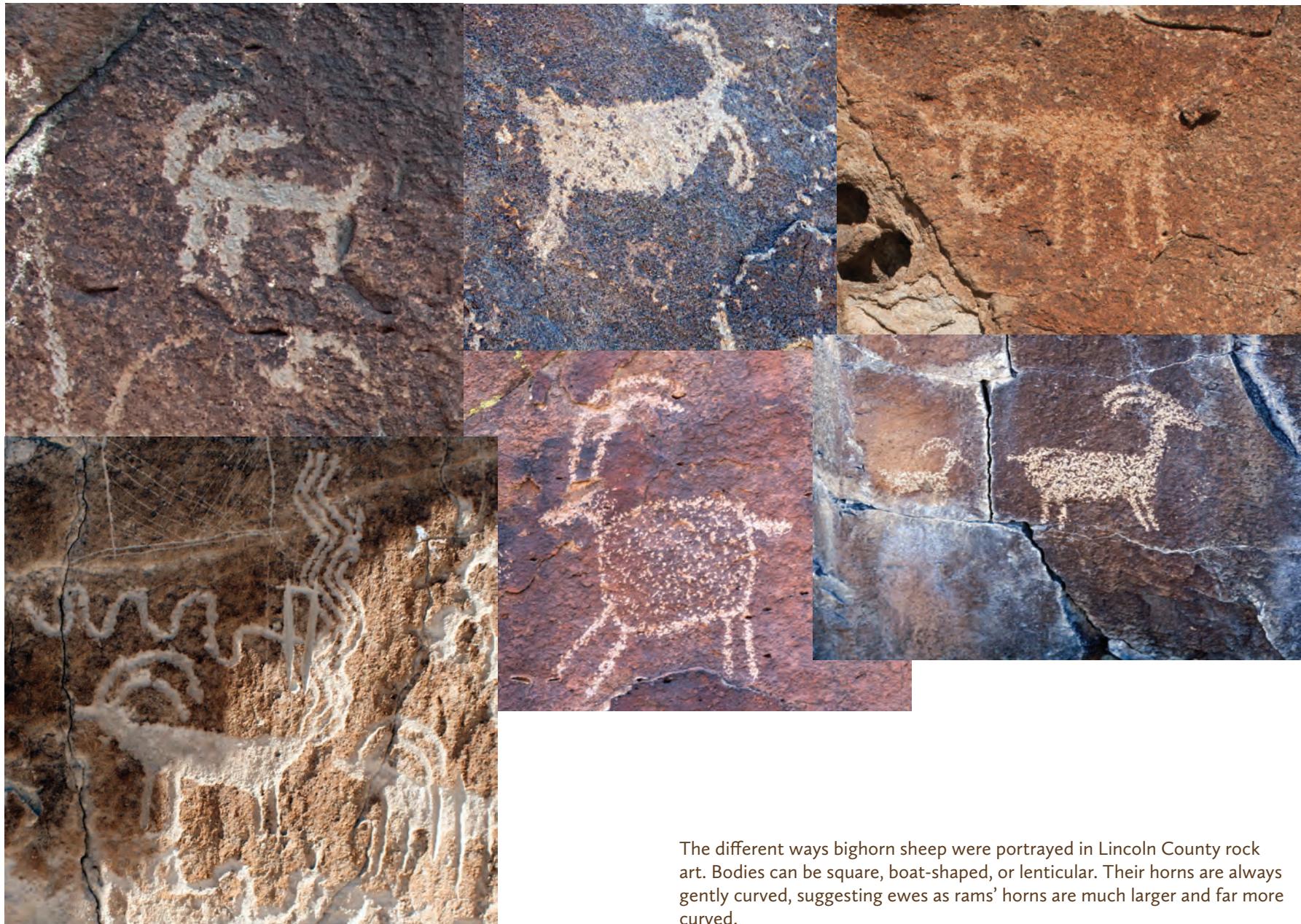
Large-scale bighorn sheep figures, probably ewes, with bifurcated hooves and curved horns (Mount Irish).

Around half of all the county's rock art sites have at least one bighorn sheep. Not only is the preference for bighorn sheep as the primary zoomorphic subject striking, but also its prominence in a rock art tradition otherwise dominated by abstract images. The overwhelming preference for bighorn sheep is not mirrored in portable art, such as figurines made of stone, unfired clay, or split-twigs (Chapter 2, p.30).

Three-quarters of sites that have bighorn sheep images have ten or fewer of these figures. Only around a tenth of sites have twenty or more bighorn sheep figures. Sites with several hundred bighorn sheep figures are rare, principally places such as Shooting Gallery, Mount Irish, and a few sites in Pahranagat Valley. These impressive concentrations of bighorn sheep images are not restricted to prime bighorn sheep habitat as they include sites in lowlands environs.

Because sites with representations of bighorn sheep are not restricted to settings where bighorn sheep were most abundant, their depiction in rock art likely was not intended to provide a naturalistic reflection of the natural environment. This is supported by the limited range of animals depicted in Lincoln County rock art, the overwhelming preference for one animal species, and the rarity of narrative scenes (such as hunting scenes). Instead, they were made for symbolic reasons, expressing cultural knowledge, in places

Bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) are found across western North America, ranging from southern Canada to northwestern Mexico at their peak. Rams have large, curved horns and ewes shorter, straighter horns. They tend to live in rugged, rocky country such as alpine meadows, mountain slopes, and foothills. The adoption of the bow and arrow during the Late Archaic may have made bighorn sheep hunting (as well as that of deer) more efficient.



The different ways bighorn sheep were portrayed in Lincoln County rock art. Bodies can be square, boat-shaped, or lenticular. Their horns are always gently curved, suggesting ewes as rams' horns are much larger and far more curved.



Map showing the hypothetical distribution of animals in rock art made to symbolize social or cultural group identities. Each group is identified by a species unique to it. This is the dominant animal depicted in rock art in that group's territory. In this example, the territories of four groups are variously marked by symbolism focused on deer, bighorn sheep, coyote, and dragonfly.

considered particularly apt or potent for bighorn sheep imagery, rather than habitats where bighorn sheep were most abundant.

## SYMBOLS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY?

Because a single species predominates in rock art, it is unlikely that animal imagery symbolized individual social groups or cultures. Usually, when animal subjects are used to symbolize social categories or cultural groups, these are opposed to the symbols of other social groups. This means that although a wide range of animals is depicted in art, individual groups are uniquely symbolized by one animal species. The territories of individual groups can be identified from their use of a homogeneous group symbol that is different from the homogeneous symbols of neighboring groups.

## PRESTIGE HUNTING

In other parts of the Great Basin, archaeologists have explained the emergence of symbolism dominated by bighorn sheep images during the Middle Archaic as evidence of prestige hunting engaged in by men. This venue for social competition allowed men to gain prestige and other desirable cultural goals through their hunting prowess. In Lincoln County, though, this cultural movement seems to have been the venue for social competition by family households.

Rock art at uplands is found in piñon-Juniper woodlands, associated with camps that also have ground stone, indicating piñon harvesting by women accompanied bighorn sheep hunting in these environs. Lowlands sites with large number of bighorn sheep images are also accompanied by small-scale camps indicative of household economic activities. The symbolism of prestige

hunting is neither restricted to landscapes used primarily by men for hunting, nor to places where bighorn sheep were most abundant and thus most likely to be successfully hunted. This suggests a form of social competition engaged in by households that gained status *vis-à-vis* less closely related households.

The household's capacity to support the economic costs of prestige hunting may have been one source of social standing. Knowledge of the symbolism and cultural thought that gave prestige hunting its social resonance may have been another source of status. The emergence of anthropomorphic imagery as an important theme in rock art suggests that at some time during the Late Archaic prestige hunting declined in importance. Anthropomorphs in rock art appear to have represented social categories accompanying Late Archaic social change and interaction with Formative cultures (Chapter 6). As the following chapter explores, one source of prestige during the Late Archaic was by demonstrating a connection with distant Formative cultures through knowledge of their cultural practices and access to their exchange networks.



Herd of bighorn sheep with a bird hovering above the back of one of the sheep (Shooting Gallery).



Two stick-figure anthropomorphs flanking two bighorn sheep.



Row of bighorn sheep being followed by a squat canid.

## §6§

# PEOPLE IN ROCK ART

THE LATE ARCHAIC IS ONE OF THE FEW PERIODS WHEN SPECIFIC rock art styles can be attributed to individual cultural identities. Lincoln County's hunter-foragers and Fremont horticulturalists produced different anthropomorph styles that are mutually exclusive in distribution. These distinctive anthropomorphs emerged during late Middle (2,500 years ago) and Late Archaic (1,500-700 years ago) when changes in climate, technological innovation (introduction of bow and arrow), and culture change (the advent of bordering Formative cultures) led to a period of social and economic re-orientation. Populations increased significantly, evidenced by greater settlement density. Territorial ranges became more circumscribed and residential mobility was reduced. During the Late Archaic, hunter-forager settlement may have retreated from the eastern half of the county, replaced by a frontier Fremont presence. Prestige hunting of bighorn sheep that provided a venue for social competition by the end of the Middle Archaic appears to have been replaced during the Late Archaic by a prestige system centered on knowledge of Formative cultural practices and access to their goods.

The county's distinctive anthropomorph styles are associated with a frontier Fremont presence in Meadow Valley Wash and in Pahranagat Valley, with Archaic hunter-foragers responding

to their position on the border of Formative cultures to the east and south. These anthropomorphic styles probably reflect local expressions of regional practices and beliefs that crossed cultural boundaries. Their emergence is part of a wider regional pattern in the Southwest and eastern Great Basin of making idealized representations of the human form and is strongly associated with ancestral Puebloan and Fremont cultures.

### GREAT BASIN STICK FIGURES

Great Basin stick-figure anthropomorphs (GBSF) are the most common and schematic representations of people in Lincoln County rock art. They probably are a Late Archaic development as they might represent in a more stylized way the social and cultural processes that underlie the production of the distinctive Fremont and Pahranagat Anthropomorph Styles in southeastern Nevada. Alternatively, they may represent the broader trend in Great Basin rock art of the gradual emergence of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic themes expressed through more naturalistic or figurative forms. The widespread distribution of GBSF and the absence of discernible variations in their formal attributes (i.e., their homoge-

neity) means that stick-figure anthropomorphs cannot be assumed to have symbolized different cultural identities.

The fundamental components of a GBSF include a head, a body, arms, legs, and rarely indicate the sex of the person. It should not be assumed that stick-figure anthropomorphs were made out of a lack of skill—instead they were a stylistic choice of how to present cultural information. Schematism is common in Lincoln County rock art, indicating that the use of a visual short-hand to represent cultural concepts was widely practiced.

Stick-figure anthropomorphs are widely distributed throughout the county, but usually are not found in large numbers at individual sites. They generally are smaller than Pahranagat and Fremont anthropomorphs, as well as zoomorphic imagery. They greatly outnumber these elaborate anthropomorphs because they are found at many more sites, but they are often not visually prominent, being just one of many elements depicted on individual panels (see page 38). They usually are found at sites with big-horn sheep figures but rarely are depicted in hunting scenes (see pages 37–39 for the exceptions). In contrast to other parts of the Nevada, stick-figures are much more common in Lincoln County. This is part of a regional trend where anthropomorphic and zoomorphic themes ('representational imagery') become more prominent as one moves from northern Nevada to the southeastern part of the state.

Stylistic variation in the form of GBSF include elaboration of the head, width of the body, posture of arms and legs, and details of hands and feet. The head of GBSF is most often shown as a dot, but a subset have curved or straight lines extending from the head, suggesting antlered or horned headdresses. These 'horned' stick-figures may represent disguised hunters wearing antler headdresses (page 38). In ethnographic times, hunts were also



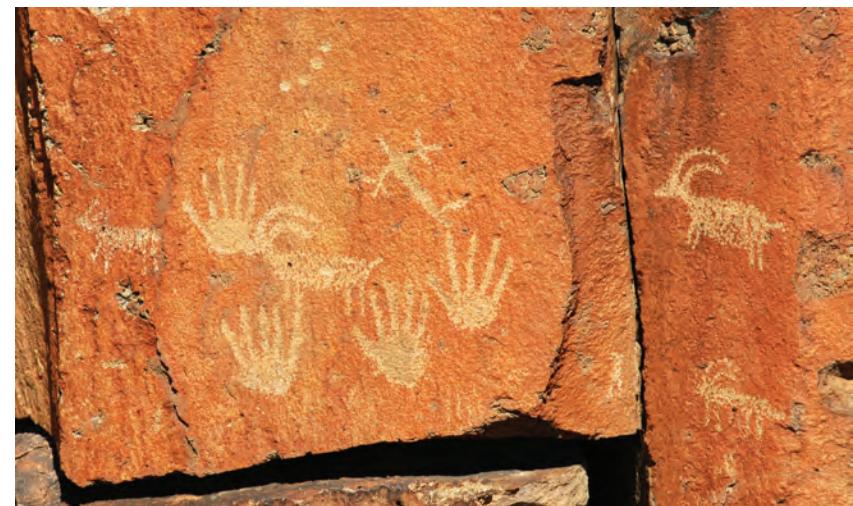
Stick-figure anthropomorphs with out-stretched arms and hands (Crystal Wash).

sometimes led by a man who had the power to control the quarry by charming it (page 18). The antler headdress, in such cases, was part of a social performance that signaled the unique social position of the hunt leader, a social position that only existed for the duration of the hunt.

A small number of GBSF have gender indicated; usually, anthropomorphs do not indicate the gender of the person in ways that can be easily discerned. Ash Springs, for example, is very unusual in having a small number of female anthropomorphs. This does not mean that most stick-figures portrayed are men or that they portrayed women. In its original context, the gender of the person depicted may have been well-known so that there was no need to reference it visually. This could suggest that anthropomorphs that indicate the gender of their subjects do so to highlight a departure from the normal and, when gender is depicted, it is usually male.



A column of footprints ascending a rock face. Footprints can sometimes be difficult to discriminate from bear paw prints if they are depicted with long toes and are not tapered at one end to suggest a heel.



Handprints in rock art: handprints can be readily identified by their naturalistic depiction of the palm and fingers, although the thumb is not always indicated and the number of fingers is not always five.

Other anthropomorphic imagery includes the representation of hands and feet. It is difficult at times to distinguish a human footprint from a bear paw print, but Lincoln County does not have a significant number of bear paw prints, unlike other regions in the West. Both footprints and handprints are more naturally portrayed than the schematic GBSF, and are fairly common in the county. Footprints and handprints occur both singly and in groups, sometimes in association with other abstract and representational images. Occasionally footprints are portrayed in pairs and arranged in lines, as if climbing the outcrop on which they were made (e.g., as at Mount Irish).

### PAHRANAGAT ANTHROPOMORPH STYLE

The Pahranagat Anthropomorph Style is found only in Lincoln County and is Nevada's only unique rock art style. The style comprises two anthropomorph types that are highly evocative. The most common of these is the Patterned Body Anthropomorph (PBA) that has a rectangular body, usually decorated with grids, dots, lines, and rows of dots, or other geometric motifs. The PBA is frequently terminated by short vertical lines on the bottom line of the rectangle ('fringed'). Long lines may extend vertically from the top corners of the rectangle. The figure often lacks a head but has stick-figure legs and short arms. About a third of PBAS are depicted holding a circle bisected by a vertical line that is conventionally identified as an atlatl. Over 200 individual examples of PBAS are known. Far less common is the Pahranagat Man or solid-body type that has a solid-pecked ovoid or rectangular body, large eyes made by using negative space, and a short line extending from the top of its head. Its arms are often portrayed down-turned with



Illustration of the two distinct Pahranagat Style anthropomorph types: *left*, a PBA and, *right*, oval and rectangular versions of the solid-body type. Approximately a third of PBAS are depicted holding what looks like an atlatl. The solid-body type is rarely, if ever, depicted holding an object.



Solid-body Pahranagat Style anthropomorphs are often depicted together, as here at Pahranagat Valley. When they are portrayed with PBAS they often superimpose them. This suggests that the solid-body type is a later phase in the evolution of the Pahranagat style.



Three solid-body Pahranagat anthropomorphs depicted above two bighorn sheep. The eyes of these figures were created by using negative space and they have long, down-turned fingers, all characteristics of this style of anthropomorph.

long fingers and rarely, if ever, is depicted holding an object. Some 60 individual solid-body figures are known.

Although the two types of Pahranagat style anthropomorphs do not look alike, they are usually found together and regarded as variants of a single style. They are known at 30 sites, mostly in the Pahranagat Valley area, and are present in very large numbers at only a handful of sites. This style appears to have its origins in the Middle Archaic based on the PBAs depicted holding an atlatl. Also, the sites at which this style are found can often be dated by their associated archaeological features. These are Middle and Late Archaic in age but were used most intensively during the Late Archaic.

The larger Pahranagat Style sites are associated with family camps, continuing the Middle Archaic tradition of rock art not being a cultural feature of villages. The smaller sites are associated with small-scale task activity areas, such as plant processing stations or hunting locales. These settings indicate that Pahranagat Style sites were visited by family households when they had dispersed from winter villages for a variety of hunting and foraging activities.

Based on their distribution and numbers, these two types represent distinct phases in the evolution of the Pahranagat Anthropomorph Style. At some time during the Late Archaic, PBAs were either complemented or replaced by the solid-body

Atlatls are ancient weapons that preceded the bow and arrow (Chapter 2, p.21). The word atlatl comes from the Nahuatl language of the Aztec, who were still using them when encountered by the Spanish in the 1500s. An atlatl is essentially a stick with a handle on one end and a hook or socket that engages a light spear or 'dart' on the other. The flipping motion of the atlatl propels a light spear much faster and farther than it could be thrown by hand alone.



Pahranagat PBA shown holding what is conventionally identified as an atlatl. If correct, this indicates that this style originated during the Middle Archaic (Pahranagat Valley).

type. As PBAs are found in much greater numbers and are more widespread, these were likely the original form taken by the Pahranagat Anthropomorph Style and were made for a long period. The solid-body types, based on their small number and more limited distribution, were likely made for a much shorter period. As these are never depicted holding an atlatl, it assumed they are likely more recent and Late Archaic in age.

### FREMONT ANTHROPOMORPH STYLE

Fremont anthropomorphs in eastern Nevada were made by the Sevier Fremont people whose core territory was western Utah. Their anthropomorphs have triangular or trapezoidal torsos, triangular or rectangular heads and were often made as outline forms. In their core territory, Fremont anthropomorphs often have bodily adornment, such as earrings or short lines extending from the head ('horns' or headdresses). In southeastern Nevada, Fremont anthropomorphs are more schematic, often represented as outlined or in-filled trapezoid bodies, square heads, and no limbs. This anthropomorph style closely resembles the shape of clay figurines that are a well-known part of Fremont material culture. It is possible that the rock art anthropomorphs and the figurines both represented the same cultural concepts.

In Lincoln County, the distribution of Fremont-style anthropomorphs is concentrated in Meadow Valley Wash. Isolated Fremont-style anthropomorphs are known at a few places in Pahranagat Valley and at White River Narrows. At least 40 sites are known in Lincoln County that have this type of Fremont anthropomorph. They are rarely found in large numbers but are often visually prominent, found in small rockshelters or at small



Fremont anthropomorphs with outlined trapezoidal body and rectangular head (top) and triangular body and head with limbs (bottom).



Fremont anthropomorph made by using negative space. Fremont anthropomorphs have trapezoidal or triangular bodies, and triangular or rectangular heads. The figure on the right is unusual for having another Fremont figure inside created by negative space. The figure on the left is depicted with arms, fingers, and legs rather than just the body.



Fremont anthropomorph formed by dots: Fremont figures are usually found at rockshelters and small open camp sites.



Illustration of a row of painted Fremont anthropomorphs: these closely resemble the shape of clay figurines made by the Fremont.

open sites that functioned as short-term logistical campsites for small work parties.

Like Archaic hunter-forager rock art, these small Fremont rock art sites were made by work parties making forays from larger Fremont villages some 100 miles away to the north and east. But, unlike their hunter-forager counterparts, these were small, specialized work parties, not groups of family households.

It is possible that these Fremont work parties were exploring for lands suitable for future settlement expansion or were searching for specialized resources to supplement their horticultural economy. It is striking that Fremont visits to Lincoln County (far from their core territory) were accompanied by social and cultural behaviors that left behind a record of visual symbolism that could be interpreted as territorial marking or socializing a peripheral landscape.

A small number of Fremont motifs are known in Pahranagat Valley and White River Narrows. These are evidence of cultural contact between Archaic hunter-foragers and Fremont peoples, not the presence of Fremont settlers. Fremont and Puebloan ceramics are found in the Pahranagat Valley area in quantities that are suggestive of occasional trade rather than settlement. The domestic architecture of Fremont and Puebloan groups was very different from that of Archaic hunter-foragers and is absent from the western and central portions of the county. In the east, particularly Meadow Valley Wash, it seems that during the period of Fremont settlement, Archaic hunter-foragers had reduced their territory to the western half of the county, either because of displacement by Fremont peoples or because it had become peripheral to their economic and settlement strategies.

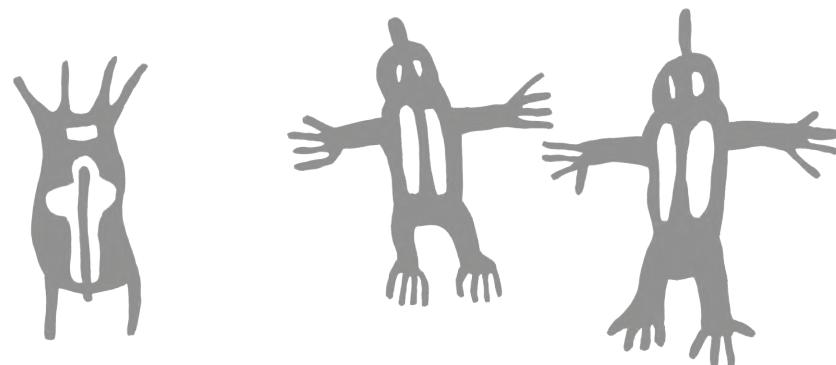


Row of Fremont anthropomorphs, zoomorphs, and stick-figure anthropomorphs overlooking a deep canyon.

## ANTHROPOMORPHS AND SOCIETY

The Pahranagat Style is probably reflective of the localized expression of social practices associated with cultural developments in the southwest and eastern Great Basin. Its cultural affiliation is presumably Archaic hunter-foragers adapting cultural traits associated with the social practices of Fremont and western Puebloan groups to the east and south. The distinctive anthropomorphic imagery of these cultures reflected social changes and new modes of prestige acquisition accompanying the adoption of horticulture. In Lincoln County, familiarity with Formative cultures was expressed by novel anthropomorphs (Pahranagat Style) and exchange in Fremont and Puebloan ceramics, which seem to have been valuable social and economic resources during the Late Archaic. Demonstrating a connection to these distant cultures, through knowledge of their symbolism and access to their material goods, was a source of social distinction.

By adapting the symbolism of Formative anthropomorph types to their own circumstances, Lincoln County's Late Archaic hunter-foragers also indirectly signaled their cultural identity. Some references of the Pahranagat Style may, therefore, have been concerned with marking territory and asserting a long settlement history, evidenced by the enduring signs of the cultural practices of a group's ancestors. The internal social dynamics addressed by the Pahranagat Style may have reflected the development of new social positions and the acquisition of prestige from participation in an exchange network with Formative cultures that clearly included trade items (such as pottery) as well as knowledge (anthropomorphic symbolism). In other cultures, status can be achieved and maintained by demonstrating an exchange partnership with individuals from distant societies. Access to far-flung goods and knowledge became the currency of prestige in Late Archaic Lincoln County, apparently displacing the preceding system centered on bighorn sheep hunting and the household's capacity to support the economic costs of prestige hunting.





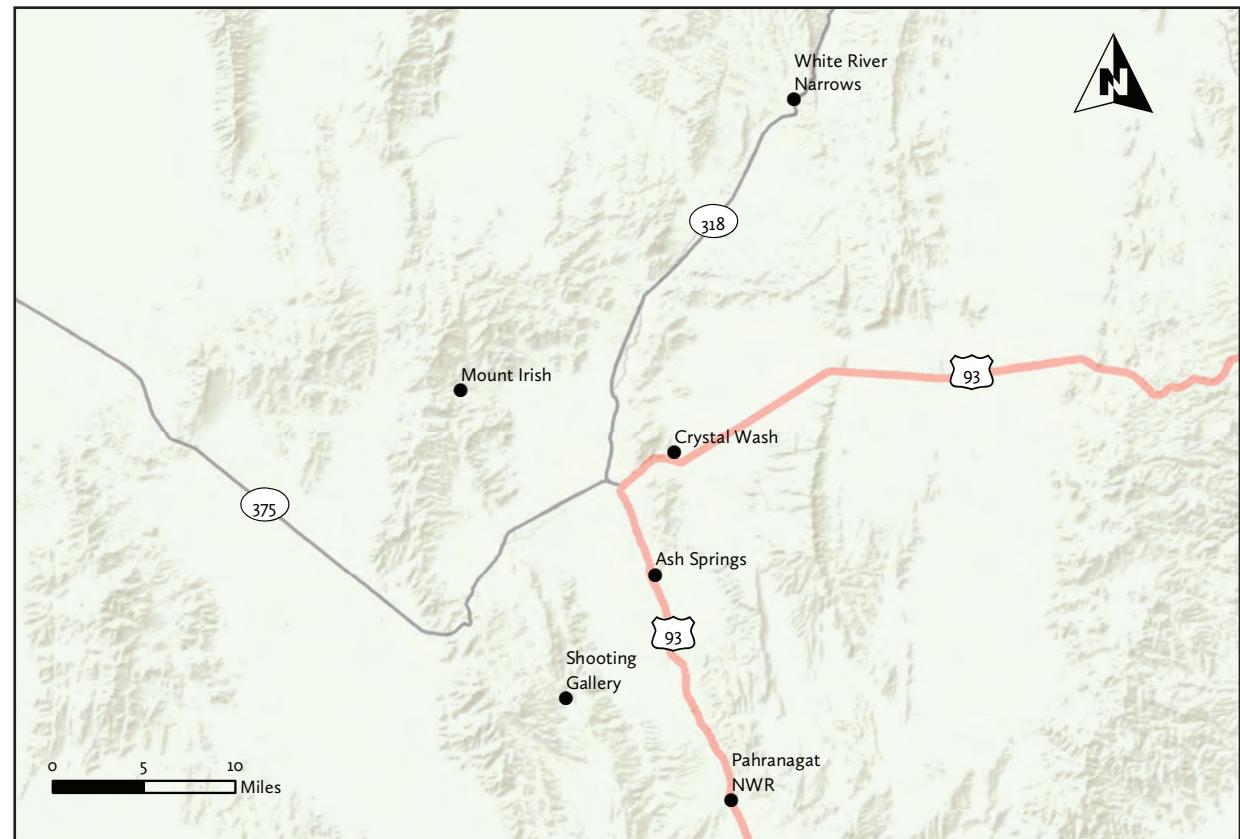
Anthropomorphs that do not belong to any defined anthropomorph style. Unique artistic expressions of the human form, such as these, are not uncommon in Lincoln County.



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## PUBLIC ROCK ART SITES

THERE ARE FIVE ROCK ART COMPLEXES on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management that are interpreted for the public to experience. These five complexes all provide prehistoric rock art that illuminates the themes of this booklet. Orientation to Pahranagat Valley's distinct environmental features can be found at the Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge visitor center, which is an excellent source of information on the region's natural and cultural history.



Map showing publicly interpreted rock art sites and Pahranagat NWR visitor center.



Large petroglyph boulder at Ash Spring: Ash Springs is located at the southern end of the Hiko Range and overlooks Pahranagat Valley.

## ASH SPRINGS

Ash Springs is a large rock art site at the southern flank of the Hiko Range. A nearby hot spring was a favored spot for prehistoric hunter-foragers, as well as early American ranchers and settlers. Ash Springs was also a camp for family households who visited this spot beginning 6,000 years ago, though its peak use began around 1,000 years ago until the coming of Euro-American settlers. The site has an interpretive trail and guide available from the visitors' register box.

Repeated visits to the site for logistical camping are marked by grinding slicks, small stone flakes, pottery, hearths, and rock alignments. The latter were probably foundations for brush wind-breaks or shades. The character of this habitation debris suggests that several family households camped and lived at Ash Springs for several weeks at a time.

The site's rock art is dominated by abstract motifs accompanied by a small number of zoomorphs and anthropomorphs. Abstract imagery includes circles, rectangles, and large complex abstract designs that cover entire boulders. Anthropomorphs include unusual types such as one with upraised arms and exaggerated hands that encircle the figure's head. Animal species depicted include bighorn sheep, coyotes or dogs, snakes, and an elk.



Anthropomorph with upraised arms and hands encircling its head: the most distinctive anthropomorph at Ash Springs.



Overview of the Crystal Wash environment: Crystal Wash is a landscape of eroding tuff boulders that were decorated with rock art, overlooking the daily life of family camps.

## CRYSTAL WASH

Crystal Wash, located at the west side of Sixmile Flat, comprises two discrete rock art concentrations, approximately a third of a mile apart, and habitation debris from small camp sites. These are situated on tuff boulders and outcrops that flank a shallow wash. Both rock art sites have interpretive trails and trail guides that are available from visitor register boxes.

Projectile points, stone tool fragments, pottery sherds, hearths, and ground stone tools all provide evidence of Crystal Wash's enduring use as a camp site from around 6,000 years ago until the coming of Euro-American settlers in the nineteenth century. Daily life took place against a rich backdrop of rock art symbolism that can sometimes be difficult to fully discern as the tuff landscape it was made on is friable and slowly weathering away.

Crystal Wash's rock art is dominated by curvilinear and rectilinear abstract designs, particularly circles, complex meanders, spirals, and grids. These ambiguous designs are complemented by stick-figure anthropomorphs and bighorn sheep. A small number of Pahranagat Style anthropomorphs were placed in prominent places at Crystal Wash that overlook the center of the camp. This intermingling of daily life with symbolic culture is a recurring theme at Lincoln County's rock art sites.



Possible Pahranagat Style PBA at Crystal Wash.



Overview of the Mount Irish Archaeological District: home to one of the largest concentrations of bighorn sheep imagery in Nevada, as well as some of the finest examples of the Pahranagat Anthropomorph Style.

## MOUNT IRISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISTRICT

The Mount Irish Archaeological District, located on the eastern flank of the Mount Irish Range, covers some 640 acres and provides a vista of prehistoric rock art and habitation sites, set in a dramatic landscape of tuff knolls and outcrops, alluvial fans, and washes. The District is a complex of archaeological and rock art sites made by hunter-foragers as they visited the area for bighorn sheep hunting and piñon harvesting. The three largest rock art sites in the District have interpretive trails and trail guides that are available at visitors' register boxes at these sites.

The Mount Irish area was used by hunter-foragers from the Middle Archaic through the Late Prehistoric. Many rock art sites are accompanied by the remains of campsites and foraging activities. Rockshelters, middens, stone tools, and tool fragments show that rock art accompanied the daily routines of the family camp.

The Mount Irish area has fine examples of Pahranagat Style anthropomorphs as well as one of the largest concentrations of bighorn sheep images in Nevada. Both PBAs and solid-body Pahranagat anthropomorphs can be found on tuff outcrops in the District. The abundant bighorn sheep imagery is heavily concentrated at one hill in the District, suggesting that the cultural connotations of specific places were taken into consideration in choosing what to depict.



Pahranagat solid-body anthropomorph at Mount Irish: the area contains numerous Pahranagat Style anthropomorphs that overlook Archaic and Late Prehistoric camps set in a dramatic tuff landscape.



Bighorn sheep in rock art at Mount Irish.



Overview of Shooting Gallery's rugged landscape: Shooting Gallery rivals the Mount Irish Archaeological District in its numbers of bighorn sheep figures.

## SHOOTING GALLERY

Situated on the east flank of Badger Mountain, Shooting Gallery is an archaeological district rich in prehistoric rock art, hunting sites, and campsites. Used as far back as 6,000 years ago, but, most intensively visited during the past 3,000 years, the site provides evidence that small groups of related households visited the area to hunt, gather wild plants, and to make and use rock art.

Dart and arrow points, tool fragments, pottery sherds, and ground stone tools attest to Shooting Gallery's long use by family groups for hunting and harvesting plants.

Two styles of rock art can be found at Shooting Gallery. The most common is Basin and Range tradition abstract and representational designs. The most commonly portrayed animal is bighorn sheep and Shooting Gallery contains one of the largest concentrations of bighorn sheep figures in Nevada. Hundreds of portrayals of this animal can be seen singly or in groups on Shooting Gallery's tuff outcrops. A few examples of the Pahranagat Style can also be found here.



Bighorn sheep in rock art at Shooting Gallery: the area has hundreds of bighorn sheep figures, some portrayed as frontal depictions of the head and horns.



Petroglyph boulder with a wide range of abstract designs and zoomorphic imagery.



One of the longest rock art panels at White River Narrows: the area is famous for very large rock art panels composed of densely arranged designs and its wide range of abstract and figurative motif types.

## WHITE RIVER NARROWS

Located in lower White River Valley, White River Narrows is one of the largest concentrations of prehistoric rock art in Lincoln County. The winding canyon of White River Valley was carved by the White River during the Pleistocene. The Narrows forms a natural travel corridor used by ancient Native American cultures and, more recently, it was the route for unpaved SR38 until 1980. The importance of the Narrows' archaeological heritage is recognized by its listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The numerous rock art concentrations in the Narrows are notable for their large-scale panels composed of densely arranged individual motifs. Long rakes, rows of bighorn sheep, and finely made complex abstract designs abound at the Narrows. Some anthropomorphs exhibit Formative-era influences, providing evidence of cultural interactions between Late Archaic hunter-foragers and the Fremont.

The Narrows is also distinguished by the unusual style of many of its zoomorphs, portrayed as having long, narrow necks, and thin bodies. There are also several figures of miniature bighorn sheep that may represent a rare case where the work of an individual artist can be identified.



A complex panel at White River Narrows, densely packed with designs such as anthropomorphs, bighorn sheep, circles, concentric circles, curvilinear meanders, rakes, zigzags, and wavy lines.



# SUMMARY

ALTHOUGH ROCK ART IMAGERY MAY TELL MANY STORIES AND have numerous meanings for contemporary observers, this booklet has explored the archaeological tale that Lincoln County rock art provides on ancient society and cultural thought. The county's rock art is associated with the growing cultural resonance of the region as it became a place of permanent settlement, particularly from the Middle Archaic onwards. The prominence of zoomorphic imagery, especially bighorn sheep, and the unique Pahranagat Anthropomorph Style, are highly distinctive features of the county's rock art traditions. Yet, in common with much of the Great Basin, skillful regional variations on abstract designs are the most frequent rock art themes. These appear to have been the earliest form of rock art traditions in the county, accompanied later by zoomorphic and anthropomorphic imagery. The rare narrative scenes show that ancient artists generally did not depict a representative picture of their economic life or the natural world. Instead, the county's rock art was bound up in social life and cultural thought and is an enduring record of a long history of cultural actions in the settled landscape.





LINCOLN COUNTY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INITIATIVE PROJECT

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