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Notes on the Coso Petroglyphs, the Etiological Mythology of the Western Shoshone, and the Interpretation of Rock Art

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IN 1959 Robert Heizer and Martin Baumhoff suggested that the production of Great Basin petroglyphs was related to aboriginal hunting practices. Specifically, these researchers posited that petroglyphs were the manifestations of magical activities related to deer hunting. This was based in part on associations of rock art sites and game trails (Heizer and Baumhoff 1959, 1962: 210-225). Since the introduction of this hypothesis, this interpretation has been applied to many sites and regions in the Great Basin (cf. von Werlhof 1960, 1965; Ritter 1970; Nissen 1974; Thomas 1976), and has been used in the interpretation of the Coso Range petroglyph assemblage of east-central California by Campbell Grant (1968, 1980). Grant (1968) initially suggested that the bighorn, or mountain sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) petroglyphs were the product of a sheep-hunting cult and, based on a sequence of hunting-element depictions associated with the sheep motifs, hypothesized the florescence of this cult ca. A.D. 300-1000. In a later article (Grant 1980), he reviewed bighorn sheep petroglyphs found throughout the western United States, suggesting that the bighorn sheep may have served as a venerated animal deity to the ancestral Coso Shoshone, and that the migra-

tion of Shoshone-speaking people out of the Coso region (cf. Lamb 1958; Fowler 1972) may have been a factor in the appearance of the sheep motif in other regions of the West.

Although the Grant hypothesis is provocative, the absence of any remains indicative of intensive sheep hunting in the excavations of the Rose Spring, Stahl and other sites in the region has been problematical. An examination of the etiological mythology of the Numic speakers of the western Great Basin, however, provides insight into the symbolic significance of the bighorn sheep to the historic aboriginal inhabitants of this area. This suggests that while the hypothesized, formal sheep-hunting cult may be an oversimplification of the prehistoric situation, there was an ideological and mythological preoccupation with hunting specifically the bighorn sheep, and this animal served as a symbolic referent to male sexual and hunting success.

ETIOLOGICAL MYTHS OF THE SHOSHONE

As a result of fieldwork conducted by Robert Lowie and Julian Steward, aboriginal origin myths were collected from 12 regional Great Basin groups in the early part of this century (viz., the Shivwits and Moapa, both Southern Paiute [Lowie 1924]; Paviotso

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[Lowie 1924]; Northern Shoshone [Lowie 1909]; Northern Paiute from Bishop and Big Pine [Steward 1936]; and Western Shoshone from Panamint Valley, Death Valley, Beatty, Ash Meadows, and Big Smoky Valley, and Gosiute from Skull Valley [Steward 1943]). With the exception of the Shivwits, Moapa, and Paviotso versions, the origin myths of these peoples are similar in terms of the personalities involved, the activities and incidents they engage in, the outcome of their actions, and the general underlying symbolism. Some variations are present, as would be expected in any recorded series of oral traditions, but Steward (1936: 358) has noted that the toothed vagina theme is central to all etiological myths of Great Basin groups, as it is in the myths discussed here, although the elements of the tale are not consistently well-unified throughout the region. Of the tales recorded by Steward, those of the Death Valley and Beatty Shoshone and the Skull Valley Gosiute contain symbolic elements that are of significance to the symbolism of the Coso Range petroglyphs. According to Steward's (1943: 262-263) Death Valley consultant:

Coyote had a home. He hunted rabbits to make a rabbit-skin blanket. When he had a great many skins, he started to make the blanket in his house. While he was working on his blanket, he saw a shadow pass the door. He went out the door to see what it was, and saw a woman running. She had a rabbit's tail on her buttocks. He chased the woman, and she ran towards the west. Coyote ran fast, but could get no closer to her. He chased her to the ocean [i.e., a large lake].

The next section of the myth recounts Coyote's adventures in crossing the lake, which include sexual advances towards the woman. This section is omitted here. The myth continues:

When Coyote got to the other side he found a tree and made himself a bow. He

took the green stringy stuff from the water which he put on the back of the bow instead of sinew. He made the bowstring of the same thing. Then he found some cane, made arrows, and began to shoot ducks. He took the ducks to the woman's house.

There were two women living at this house, the woman he had followed and her mother. The women were sitting outside their house. They told Coyote to go inside and sit down. When Coyote went in, he saw quivers of fox skin hanging all over the wall.

The women started to cook the ducks. They ate the ducks; both women ate. Coyote was singing. He made a hole in the house and watched the women. After eating the meat, the women disposed of the bones . . . Both of them did this.

They went into the house to sleep. Coyote made advances to the woman he had pursued. He was frustrated . . . In the morning, Coyote went and got a hard stick. It was a kind of hard sage brush. He hid it by the house . . . The next morning, Coyote hunted mountain sheep. He killed a small one and took the bones from its neck. He put the neck bone in the house in the same place he had hidden the stick . . . He made successful advances that night. . .

The remainder of the myth indicates that Coyote's action with the sheep neck left both women in a gravid state, and details Coyote's efforts at spreading the offspring of his proletaneous union with these two women.

Note that the deletions indicated by dots are omissions made by Steward, based on the social mores at the time the transcriptions were made. He notes (1943: 261):

In this and subsequent versions of this tale, the familiar *vagina dentatum* theme is used to explain Coyote's amorous advances. Coyote remedies the situation by using a piece of wood or a sheep neck. The theme is also used to account for the disposition of part of the food eaten by the women.

In a similar vein, Lowie (1909, 1924) chose to record such delicate passages *in toto* but translated into Latin.

The Death Valley Shoshone version of the

myth suggests the following notions. First, Coyote was a successful and resourceful man, as indicated by the facts that he had his own hut and that he was able to fashion a bow and bowstring from algae collected by the lake-side. Importantly, he was also a very capable hunter and provider: he hunted enough rabbits to make a rabbitskin blanket and he shot enough ducks for a feast for the two women. Second, although he was resourceful and a good hunter, these two attributes were alone not sufficient for him to consummate his sexual relationship with the women, and thereby populate the world. Other hunters had courted the women but these men had met their demise due to the women's guiles, as indicated by the foxskin quivers hanging like trophies on the walls of the hut. That these previous hunters had also been exceptional hunters is suggested by the fact that the quivers were fox skins, a difficult skin to obtain. Hence, success in hunting and the ability to be an adequate provider were, alone, not sufficient for fulfilling a man's duties nor for establishing his virility.

Rather, it is only after Coyote hunted a mountain sheep, and in fact a small one, that he had sufficient power or mechanism to overcome the toothed vaginas of the women, thereby impregnating them and populating the world. According to the Beatty, Nevada, Shoshone version:

That night Coyote's advances were frustrated. . .

In the morning the old woman said to Coyote, 'You go and hunt again. Hunt mountain sheep. There are arrows outside. Take them with you, Coyote said, 'I am a great hunter. All right. I will go.'

Coyote walked up into the mountains. Coyote was a smart man. Halfway up the mountain he saw a mountain sheep. It was young and small and had short horns that were still soft and weak. Coyote went after the small sheep and killed it at once. He shot it. He butchered and prepared it. He wanted a piece of the neck, because the neck

is strong. He cut off a piece of the neck and said, 'I do not want to give this to the women.' He hid it.

Coyote went back to the women's house that night. The old woman met him and took the sheep. She looked it over and said, 'Coyote, what did you do with the neck?' Coyote said, 'I threw it away.' The old woman said, 'It is good to eat.' The old woman and the girl boiled the meat. They ate it, and when they were through it was dark.

The old woman said, 'You two make a bed.' The girl made a bed. Coyote was still lustful. The girl was very fine; she was a good looking girl . . . Coyote went to where he had hidden the mountain sheep's neck. He returned bringing it with him . . . He visited both the girl and the old woman . . . [Steward 1943:264].

The emphasis on the young mountain sheep is also made in the Gosiute tale, in which *Sinav* was substituted for Coyote as the main actor of the myth (Steward 1943:267):

Sinav killed two mountain sheep, an old one and a young one. He first used the neck of the old one . . . then the neck of the young one. . .

These three myths suggest very strongly that hunting bighorn sheep was of symbolic significance in the attainment of manhood, the ability to take a wife in all senses of the word and consummate the marital union, and in a general sense establish a man's virility. That emphasis was made on the fact that the sheep was a young male suggests that the power attained from hunting this animal was so much greater than that of any other animal that even the killing of an immature animal would suffice for symbolic purposes.

As noted previously, the killing of the bighorn sheep and the use of the sheep neck as a *membrum virile* characterizes the versions of the myth recorded for the Death Valley and Beatty Shoshone, and the Skull Valley Gosiute. Unfortunately, the events immedi-

ately after Coyote's discovery of the toothed vaginas and the choice of an implement he employed as a surrogate *edea* were completely deleted from the Panamint Shoshone version. Similarly, the Big Smoky Valley Shoshone tale only includes the final portions of the myth and, hence, no mention of the events leading up to the women's pregnancies, while the Ash Meadows Shoshone version recounts the use of the neckbone as a fake penis, but is ambiguous as to the animal from which this item was obtained.

Myths recorded by Lowie (1924) also have a bearing on the false *membrum virile* used by Coyote. Although the origin myth of the Shivwits and the Moapa vary in general content from that summarized above, both groups' versions include the *vagina dentatum* theme, Coyote's initial failure, a subsequent hunting trip, and the ultimate use of an animal vertebra in successful coupling. According to the Shivwits' version, Coyote succeeded in impregnating the woman after killing a very young male sheep, like the versions recounted above, and using the neckbone as a penis. In the Moapa tale, a deer vertebra was substituted, representing the only clear instance in which another animal neck other than a sheep neck was employed by Coyote in his nocturnal task.

In the remainder of the versions of the origin myth, transcribed from the Northern Paiute and the Northern Shoshone, both the final hunting trip and the use of the animal neckbone are absent. Rather, Coyote leaves the hut at night, gathers a stick or stone implement, and uses one of these for his male organ. It can be noted that Lowie (1924) recorded a Paviotso myth which he entitled "Coyote begets Indians," (which he distinguished from the origin myths of these people) that is similar in content and form to the version summarized above. This Paviotso version is equivalent in terms of specific attributes to the Northern Paiute and North-

ern Shoshone versions of the myth.

The etiological myths of these 12 regional groups, then, can be viewed as symbolically suggesting that success at simple hunting alone was insufficient to establish virility and to insure success as an adult member of the aboriginal community, in terms of the ability to produce offspring. In a general sense, an extra degree of cunning was required of the male. Among the Shoshone of east-central California and southwest and south-central Nevada, the hunting of the bighorn sheep served symbolically as an indication of this cunning. In the myths it is literally only after Coyote had killed a bighorn sheep that his relationship with the young woman could be consummated, and only because of his success at hunting the bighorn sheep that he established his virility, in distinction to those previous suitors whose attempts led to their demise. Thus, the bighorn sheep can be viewed as an important male symbol amongst the Western Shoshone, serving in a general sense as a mark of both sexual and hunting prowess.¹

ROCK ART OF THE COSOS IN LIGHT OF MYTHOLOGY

The rock art of the Coso Range is characterized by an unusual concentration of bighorn sheep figures, occasionally in association with human hunters, as well as large anthropomorphic petroglyphs and a variety of other element types. It is the emphasis on the bighorn sheep motifs, along with the depictions of hunters, atlatls, and shaman designs, that led Grant (1968) to hypothesize that the rock art was produced as part of a sheep-hunting cult. In fact, the depiction of both the atlatl and the bow and arrow caused Grant to suggest that the introduction of this last weapon (with its inferred increased hunting efficiency) resulted in an overkilling of the sheep and the ultimate demise of the hunting cult. In this interpretation, a hunting cult can

be presumed to mean a formalized religious complex with specific attendant rituals and esoteric paraphernalia.

The origin myth discussed above provides a clear indication of the underlying symbolic meaning of this animal as a concept. The application of this interpretation to the Coso bighorn sheep petroglyphs lies on strong theoretical grounds in terms of either a structuralist or a psychoanalytical approach to ethnic art. Additionally, the close correspondence between the distribution of groups having the specific origin myth in question and the major concentration of Great Basin Representational Style rock art sites (see Wellman 1979: Map 5), as well as the continuity in the use of the bighorn sheep as a rock art symbol into the historic period argue for a congruence between the symbol as expressed in the myth and in the rock art.

However, an interpretation of the etiological symbolism of the Western Shoshone provides a slightly different perspective on the bighorn sheep petroglyphs than that suggested by the hunting-cult hypothesis. Ideologically, the bighorn sheep can be viewed as a symbol of virility and male success and, although the animal is relatively rare in the mythology of the Western Shoshone, it should be noted that when this animal is present, an element of male-female conflict is also present. Thus, if the petroglyph assemblage from the Coso Range is viewed as the remnant of the symbolic system relating to the ideology of the prehistoric inhabitants of the region, the bighorn sheep petroglyphs can be interpreted as being symbolic of male success in hunting and/or sexual endeavors. This is in contradistinction, but not necessarily in contradiction, to the interpretation that the petroglyphs are the result of a hunting cult focused solely on the bighorn sheep. The interpretation of the symbolism of the bighorn sheep as a generalized concept, rather than as part of a specific cult that can be presumed to have had

attendant ceremonial paraphernalia and activities, is more in keeping with the ethnographic evidence for this region. As Steward (1968: ix) noted concerning the ethnography that he studied during the early part of this century, the inhabitants of the Coso region had no ceremonialism, nor remnants of such, as would be suggested by the hunting cult hypothesis. Additionally, the more generalized interpretation obviates the need for arguments concerning a cultural devolution in this region, as would be required to substantiate the alternative hypothesis.²

In regard to this more generalized interpretation, three areas of concern need to be addressed. The first relates to the reliability of using myths or oral traditions as reflections of the symbology and ideology of a prehistoric group of unknown age that produced a rock art record. While some controversy exists concerning the length of time during which an oral tradition is thought to persist, with some folklorists arguing for a relatively short time-span (cf. Raglan 1960), Pendergast and Meighan (1959) and Meighan (1960) have substantiated the notion that such traditions can last for an extended period. They cite a specific example to support the contention that certain Paiute traditions of southern Utah may be almost a millenium in age. Thus, the use of recently recorded oral myths for purposes of symbolic comparison with the rock art of the Coso Range is justified, particularly in light of the fact that at least some of the aboriginal petroglyphs are historic in age.

As regards the age of the Coso petroglyphs, Grant (1968: 58) suggested that the petroglyphs were produced until ca. A.D. 1000, a date that he himself admitted was an arbitrary choice made to coincide with his hypothesized Shoshonean migration out of the area due to the decimation of the sheep herds. Heizer and Baumhoff (1962: 234) suggested a slightly longer span of production

for the Great Basin Representational Style in general, to ca. A.D. 1500. Recent evidence suggests that Heizer and Baumhoff were closer to the mark than Grant as regards the termination date for this petroglyph style, although they too may have been short of the mark. Bard (1979) has provided evidence of historic rock art production in the Death Valley region, consisting of depictions of wheeled carts, and elsewhere I have illustrated a horse and rider petroglyph, pecked in the Representational Style, from the Coso Range (Whitley 1982: 170-176, Fig. 67). This element, from Birchim Springs, is an unequivocal rendering of a horse or mule and rider wearing a Euro-American style hat. Additionally, I have identified other possible horse-and-rider motifs in both Lower Renegade and Sheep Canyons in the Coso Range, although the identification of these elements can only be considered tentative. Clearly, however, some Representational Style petroglyph production did occur in the Cosos historically; this is to say after A.D. 1500.

The continuity in rock art production into the historic period in the Cosos has been noted by Garfinkel (1982). Based on the striking correspondence between the motif types found in the so-called Coso Painted Style sites and the petroglyphs of the region, Garfinkel has argued for an *in situ* continuity in the rock art of the area. That is, although the technique of production may have shifted from pecking to painting, the Coso Painted Style sites exhibit a strong emphasis on anthropomorphic figures, 'shields,' concentric circles and, importantly, bighorn sheep limnings, as do the petroglyphs. Horse-and-rider motifs indicate that most of the Painted Style sites are historic in age.

Finally, based on traces of red pigment present in many of the petroglyphs of Lower Renegade and Petroglyph Canyons and the presence of a pictograph site in Lower Renegade Canyon with paintings of anthropo-

morphic figures and bighorn sheep, it can be inferred that the Coso petroglyphs continued to have symbolic importance after their pecking and that the petroglyph canyons continued to be used as ritual locations into the (ostensibly) historic period during which pictographs were produced (Whitley 1982: 277). Consequently, given that at least some of the Coso petroglyphs were produced historically, and that the symbolism of these petroglyphs continued to be used in historic pictographs in the region, the use of symbolism identified in historic oral traditions can reasonably be applied to the Coso rock art.

Second, while this paper cannot begin to review other forms of archaeological evidence in any depth, it can be noted that in the five reported excavations in and around the Coso Range (see Meighan 1953; Harrington 1957; Lanning 1963; Hillebrand 1972, 1974; Panloui 1974), little or no evidence of sheep hunting was collected, as has characterized midden deposits in other areas of the west which contain large concentrations of sheep petroglyphs (cf. Schaafsma 1980: 148). These sites cover a wide temporal span and include both open air and cave deposits. While the almost complete absence of bighorn sheep bone may in part be the result of poor preservation in the soils of the excavated middens, the absence of other related artifactual materials, such as atlatl weights and spurs, is more problematical in light of the sheep-hunting-cult hypothesis. While this negative evidence by no means disproves the hunting-cult theory, it again suggests that a more generalized interpretation of the symbolism of the rock art of this region is warranted.³

Third, the ever-present problem of chronology needs to be emphasized in any attempt at interpreting a rock art assemblage. Grant (1968) based a portion of his argument concerning the hunting cult on the notion that the large, elaborately dressed anthropomorphic figures of the Cosos represent sha-

mans. Thus, the implicit assumptions that these shaman figures were coeval with the bighorn sheep elements and that both types of figures resulted from the same ritual activities suggested some form of formal cult activity. The critical assumption here is that these two element types are chronologically equivalent. It should be noted that in what appear to be scenes, or panels that contain both sheep and anthropomorphic figures hypothetically of the same age and rendered as if interacting, the anthropomorphic petroglyphs are invariably stick-figure humans with bows, rather than the shaman figures. Additionally, an analysis of the superimpositions of the various element types from the Coso Range indicates that the bighorn sheep peckings are the second latest of the representational renderings, with the shaman figures somewhere intermediate in the chronological sequence (Whitley 1982). While such an analysis admittedly provides no metric for an absolute calibration of the chronological ordering, such that the production of the two element types may actually be relatively close in absolute antiquity, the evidence at this point suggests that the bighorn sheep and the shaman figures are not coterminous in age. Inferences based on the presumed temporal equivalence of these elements are therefore questionable. Thus, it can only be emphasized that when a variety of elements from a rock art assemblage are interpreted as part of a single religious or ritual complex, some assurance that these elements date from the same time period needs to be provided.

A final issue can be raised in regards to the interpretation of rock art, in a general sense, relative to the specific example from the Coso Range presented here. This concerns the use of mythology in the interpretation of petroglyphs and pictographs. In California the trend has been towards the identification of specific rock art sites as illustrative of particular myths. While worldwide ethnographic evi-

dence indicates that specific sites are occasionally identified with specific myths (cf. Gould 1969; Moore 1971), the definition of the correlation between individual sites and individual myths can be very difficult to establish. Among other problems inherent in this particularistic approach, the acceptance of such a correlation requires the identification of a unique set of actors in a given myth (that is, a set of actors that are only found in combination in one myth), and the demonstration that all of the iconographic elements thought to represent the actors in the myth are equivalent in age. Given that these methodological problems may be overcome, the particularistic approach still stops short of providing real insight into the ideology of the creators of the rock art. Obtaining such insight requires an analysis of the myth itself in terms of the ideological norms and standards of cultural behavior, thereby resulting in an anthropological, albeit humanistic, context for the rock art. Therefore, it is argued that a symbolic approach to the analysis of rock art in light of mythology is more likely to provide useful interpretive results than particularistic correlations between myths and specific rock art sites.

While a review of symbolic approaches to analysis cannot be presented here, suffice it to say that the various approaches may vary tremendously (see Silver 1979 for a recent review of this topic), and may have varying applicabilities to rock art studies. For example, the particular interpretation detailed above can best be termed an analysis at the iconographical level, using Panofsky's (1955) terminology. Thus, an attempt has been made to relate visual motifs to appropriate cultural referents; specifically looking at the bighorn sheep petroglyphs in light of symbolic themes derived from mythology. Consequently, no attempt has been made to look for other aspects or actors of the origin myth in the rock art of the Coso Range, such as Coyote,

the first woman, or the toothed vaginas. To do so would miss the point of symbolic analysis. Rather, the attempt has been to get at the meaning of the bighorn sheep motif. As Silver (1979: 279) has noted, such can only be achieved in the symbolic analysis of artforms when they are viewed within their cultural context. The origin myths of the Western Shoshone provide this cultural context for the Coso petroglyphs. They do this by illustrating the symbolic significance of the bighorn sheep as a concept of these people. Alone the symbolism of the origin myth says little about the veracity of the hunting-cult hypothesis; however, when the symbolism identified in the myth for the bighorn sheep is viewed in light of archaeological and ethnographic evidence from the region a more generalized view of the bighorn sheep motif is suggested.

SUMMARY

An examination of the etiological mythology of the Numic speakers indicates that among the Western Shoshone centered in east-central California and southwest and south-central Nevada, the hunting of the bighorn sheep played an important symbolic role in the establishment of male success and virility. Specifically, the origin myth of the Shoshone speakers in the vicinity of the Coso Range indicates that the world could not be populated until after Coyote had killed a bighorn sheep and used its neckbone as a penis or penis sheath to overcome the toothed vagina of the first woman, even though Coyote had already proven his prowess in hunting and shown himself to be an adequate provider. An interpretation of the symbolic significance of the bighorn sheep based on this myth and in light of the absence of archaeological evidence for intensive sheep hunting, as well as the hypothesized temporal difference in the production of the sheep petroglyphs and the shaman motifs, suggests

that the interpretation of the Coso petroglyphs as the result of a formal hunting cult, in particular, may be too narrow an interpretation. Rather, the evidence points to the bighorn sheep as symbolic of male success in hunting and in sexual activities in a general sense, and not to the prehistoric existence of a cult with attendant ceremonial regalia and esoteric rituals. This generalized interpretation of the Coso bighorn sheep petroglyph elements is, thus, more in keeping with the ethnographic record from the region, which lacks evidence of aboriginal ceremonialism, and is consonant with Levi-Strauss' observation that "certain natural species were selected . . . as the subject of rock art not because they were 'good to eat,' but because they were 'good to think'" (Conkey 1981: 17).

NOTES

1. Although the Owens Valley Paiute versions of the origin myth make no reference to the bighorn sheep, this group also considered the hunting of this animal, along with success at gambling, as a measure of male achievement. Steward (1934a: 425) noted such symbolic significance for the bighorn sheep when recording the life history of Jack Stewart from Big Pine.

2. The fact that the existence of a prehistoric hunting cult would require recourse to hypotheses of deculturation/devolution in the region is of major significance in terms of the cultural history of the western Great Basin, although archaeologists have been slow to realize the implications of such a notion. However, based on the use of absolute dates for the Coso petroglyphs obtained by a new dating technique by Ronald Dorn and on estimates of the time required to produce individual petroglyphs, elsewhere (Whitley 1982) I have estimated yearly average production rates and energy expenditures for the Coso petroglyphs. Even taking into account a variety of possible sources of underestimation in my figures, I was led to only one conclusion: the vast concentration of Coso petroglyphs could very easily have been produced over its known span of production by a population size and structure similar to that recorded by Steward in the region historically. In conjunction with the absence of archaeological evidence for intensive sheep hunting or a hunting cult, this further

substantiates the idea that the bighorn sheep served as a generalized concept rather than as an animal deity associated with a hunting cult.

Argument might be made that the origin myth of the Shoshone suggests that hunting bighorn sheep may have served as a form of puberty rite for males, and that pecking rock art may have resulted from such a ritual. Very little has been recorded concerning male puberty rites for this region, although Parcher (1930), in discussing the Owens Valley Paiute and (to some degree) the Coso Shoshone, noted that the male puberty rite consisted of going on a hunt for a number of days until the boy could successfully bring back game, and thus be admitted to the ranks of the males. His brief note makes no implications about rituals, *per se*, and whether the above can be construed as a formal rite is a question of interpretation. Steward (1934b: 293-294) is somewhat more explicit as regards male puberty rites for the Owens Valley Paiute. He notes (1934b: 294): "... a boy of 16 or 17 years brought his first killed deer to the sweat-house, not being allowed to eat it. His grandfather cut flesh from inside its ribs in a loop form and lowered it over him to the ground without touching him, 'talking' that he might be a great hunter. He smoked for the first time and commenced to sleep at the sweat house."

3. That the aboriginal inhabitants of this region did hunt bighorn sheep and that they were successful cannot, however, be denied. Wallace (1976: 151) quotes a nineteenth century journalist who recorded this activity, and its apparent degree of success, in detail. Recently, Brook (1980) has concluded that the hunting of these animals was the primary hunting focus of Saline Valley, California. However, given that the petroglyphs of Saline Valley are cited as supporting evidence for Brook's hypothesis concerning the aboriginal hunting patterns in this area, the inclusion of Brook's inference into an argument in support of the hunting-cult hypothesis *vis-a-vis* the rock art of the western Great Basin would require rather circular logic.

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