

Climbing Bear, Spirit-Helper: Companion Petroglyphs at Shalabolino (Siberia) and Shavano Valley (Colorado, USA)



Lynda D. McNeil

Thematic similarities in rock art images associated with the bear's journey of ascent at Shalabolino (Siberia) and Shavano Valley (Colorado, USA) suggest an even more widespread underlying connection between Siberian (Evenk and Ket) and North Amerindian (Uto-Shoshonean) cultures. This connection probably dates back thousands of years, presumably to times before the first people came into the New World from Central Asia. Comparative analysis and a diffusionist approach reveal previously unrecognized congruities between Siberian and Ute Indian bear cult magic revival rites. These rites, apparently informed by a common underlying bear-restoration symbolic complex (bear-tree-sun), suggest that an ancient cultural connection accounts for the similarities between these two geographically separated rock art images.

In Siberia (Upper Yenisey River) and western Colorado (Shavano Valley), two rock art panels display thematically identical images of a bear climbing a deciduous tree, raising obvious questions about their possible cultural and symbolic relationship. Using an interactive model, this paper takes into consideration both cognitive-ecological and diffusionist approaches to explain similarities in Siberian and North Amerindian bear cult beliefs about the bear's journey of ascent. While bears are observed to climb trees and hibernate all over the Northern Hemisphere, numerous similarities in bear journey beliefs, rites, and images suggest that in ancient times, Siberian peoples brought bear cult beliefs, symbol systems, and ritual practices with them into the New World. Over the passing millennia, this cultural treasury was widely preserved and adapted by tribal peoples to local environments. In the uniquely telling case of the Ute Bear Dance, this adaptive process preserved what appears to be a complex of Siberian bear cult beliefs and practices largely inconsistent with Ute lifeways and Great Basin ecology.

One notices numerous parallels between ancient Siberian and North Amerindian bear post-mortem and seasonal revival rites, as well as curing rites, related to the bear's ascent or descent. The overwhelming number of these intercontinental similarities, in

Lynda D. McNeil, Ph.D.

*Doctorate in Comparative
Literature from the
University of Maryland.
Recent research has focused
on narrativity implicit in
rock art, as well as in
ceremony and folklore.
Currently teaches
college writing and folklore
at the University of
Colorado, Boulder.*

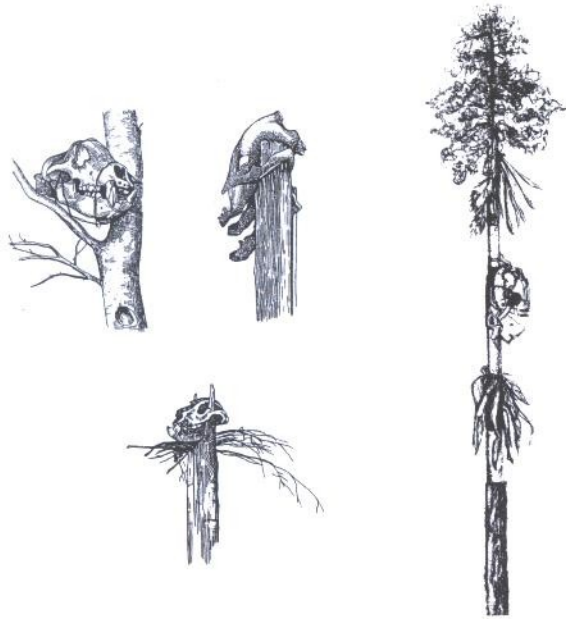


Figure 1. Sketches of Evenk and Nanai bear skulls on cedar trees (in Vasilevich 1971:166-167, Figures 2 and 3). A sketch of a North Amerindian bear skull on cedar tree (in Rockwell 1991:41).

addition to others, suggest that fragments of an original Siberian cosmology, myths, and rites underlie much of the bear ceremonialism of North Amerindians (see material culture in Crawford 1998:9-11; Rockwell 1991:179-183; Shepard and Sanders 1985; and folklore in Boas 1891; Bogoras 1902; Dundes 1967; Hatt 1949; Rockwell 1991; Rooth 1957; Utley 1974). In addition to similarities in material culture and folklore, recent genetic studies point to a kinship between Yeneseian peoples (Ket) and

North Amerindians (see mtDNA and Y chromosome lineages in Lell et al. 1997; Lell et al. 1999; Lorenz and Smith 1996; Schurr et al. 1999; Sukernik et al. 1996; Torroni et al. 1993).

Northern North Amerindians, living in mountainous forested regions, experienced an ecology like the Siberian taiga, including tree-climbing and hibernating bears. Many of these northern tribes also had bear cults associated with hunting. However, an argument favoring in situ creation of these rites is weakened when one considers the weight of evidence of cultural and biological affinities between Siberians and North Amerindians. Also supportive of a theory of diffusion are similarities in a bear-tree-sun symbolic complex between Ute Bear Dance and Siberian, as well as other Great Basin beliefs and world renewal ceremonies.

As an overview, Siberian-like bear cult hunting and seasonal rites associated with the bear's journey of ascent were widespread among northern North Amerindians (Hallowell 1926:61-80; Teit 1900:347). The post mortem and seasonal rites, apparently informed by a bear-tree-sun symbolic complex, include (1) the hunting post-mortem rite of "seeing the bear off" (Figure 1) by placing the bear skull on a sacred tree or pole (birch or cedar); (2) conducting seasonal revival or curing ceremonies in a specially-constructed log enclosure including a tree or pole (Figures 2 and 3); (3) conducting bear pantomime dances associated with reviving the slain or hibernating bear; (4) ritual tobacco use to feed the bear

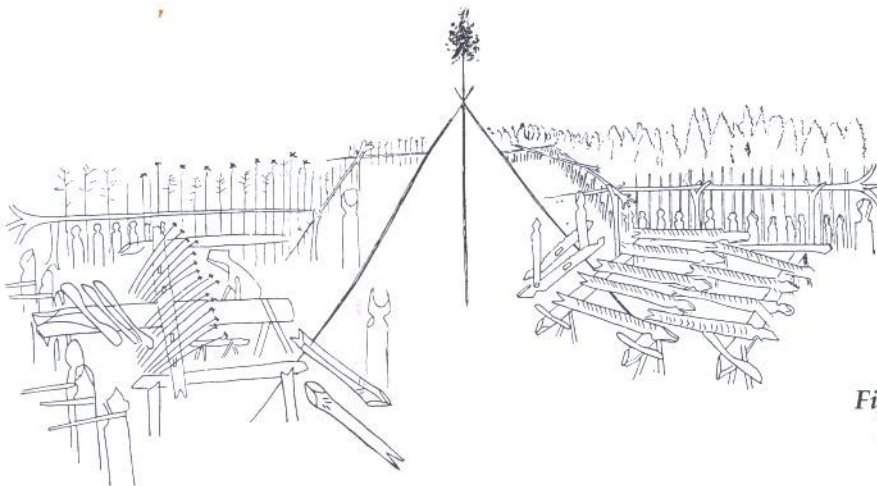


Figure 2. Sketch of an Evenk shaman's tent (in Anisimov 1963:94, Figure 8a).

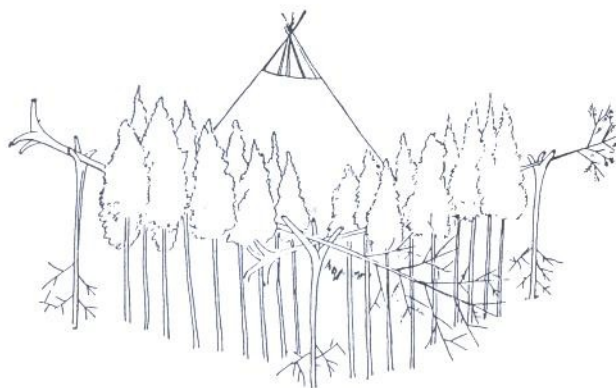


Figure 3. Sketch of larches guarding the shamanistic clan-river (in Anisimov 1963:90, Figure 4).

on its journey and ceremonial smoking to send messages to deceased ancestors or for self-purification; and (5) and ritualistic drawing or pecking of a standing or climbing bear (Alekseenko 1968; Eliade 1964; Frazer 1890; Hallowell 1926; Hatt 1949; Kálmán 1968; McNeil 2000; Rockwell 1991; Teit 1990; Vasilevich 1971).

UTE BEAR DANCE

North Amerindians have bear pantomime dances for a variety of reasons: successful hunt, healing, initiations, protection from bears, and celebration of the harvest (Rockwell 1991:149–150). Of most interest here, the Ute Bear Dance (*mama-kwa-nhkap*) was performed to restore the health of their bear-ancestor after hibernation, to prevent certain illnesses, to communicate with dead ancestors, and to create a venue for courtship and exogamous marriages. While late nineteenth century ethnographer, Verner Reed correctly asserted that the Bear Dance is “the oldest of all the Ute ceremonies” and there was “no tradition antedating the dance itself on which the ceremonies are founded” (Reed 1896:237), his perspective was clearly limited to Utes.

The Ute Bear Dance shares some basic cosmological beliefs, site design, and dance conventions with Columbia Plateau Prophet Dances and Great Basin Round Dances. For instance, all three dance types are world renewal circle-dances that often take place around (or

near) a central pole for the purpose of restoring the natural environment as well as to communicate with deceased kinsmen. Furthermore, the location and distribution of the Columbia Plateau Prophet Dance and the Great Basin Round Dance suggest that the diffusion of these dance forms occurred from the Northwest or Columbia Plateau into the Great Basin region (Spier 1935:1, 5, 13–16).

In this way, continuities in world renewal cosmologies and dance forms were apparently preserved, while Northern Hemispheric bear cult connections—like the Ute Bear Dance’s bear pantomime—appear to have been lost in most, if not all, cases. The exception, northern Columbia Plateau “Prophet Dances” (Spier 1935:59–61), refer to mythic beliefs about the seasonal return of the “Old Man (One)” (a common reference to the bear ancestor, animal spirit-helper), the “Chief of the Dead.”¹ The allusion to an important bear figure in these myths points to a common origin for Northwest Prophet Dances and the Ute Bear Dance, both of which may have been transmitted independently from Paleolithic or Neolithic Siberian bear cults.

I propose, then, that the Ute Bear Dance may offer a rare glimpse at resilient myths, rites, and ceremonial practices transported into North America from Siberia (*contra* Hallowell 1926:145, in fn. 627; *contra* Reed 1896:237). With the migrations of Yeneseian (Siberian) peoples possibly as early as 25,000 to 14,000 B.P. (Crawford 1998: 12; Mochanov 1978; Szathmáry 1996), widespread bear cult beliefs and rites may have been adapted in innumerable ways among dispersed Siberian peoples, especially in the form of bear cult-related world renewal circle-dances. More than any other North Amerindian seasonal revival or world renewal dances, the Ute Bear Dance has preserved numerous aspects of ancient Siberian bear cult beliefs and rites, *despite their inconsistencies* with Great Basin ecology and Ute adaptive strategies.

The most striking similarities Utes share with ancient Ket and Evenk bear’s journey of ascent beliefs, rites, and myths include (1) bear festival site construction with circular

enclosure and central cedar or pine pole; (2) the ritual drawing of the picture of a standing or climbing bear on a piece of muslin and attaching it to the central pole; and (3) the bear pantomime dance, including smoking to transmit messages to deceased ancestors and to prevent illness. These similarities, as well as myths about the bear matrilineal ancestor as the original instructor in the bear dance and about the bear dance's power to revive the bear and bring "bear medicine" to the people, have already been discussed elsewhere in detail (McNeil 2000:15–17).

UTE BEAR DANCE: SITE, IMAGE-MAKING, PANTOMIME DANCE

Like the Evenk shaman's tent enclosure (Anisimov 1963:94–95), Native American world renewal ceremonies, including Prophet and Round Dances, often take place in a circular enclosure with a central pole (Hultkrantz 1981, 1986; Park 1941; Rockwell 1991; Spier 1928). Similarly, the Ute Bear Dance takes place inside a circular corral that is constructed with either upright forked cedar trees (Lowie 1915:826; Reed 1896; Steward 1932) or with piled sticks and logs (Reed 1896). Its opening faces east, and a pole of cedar or pine is set either in the center of the entrance or inside the corral (Figure 4) (Lowie 1915:827). In one reported case (Lowie 1915:827), a tree appeared in the center of the entrance to the dance site, a sprig that is temporarily planted there at one stage of the performance, recalling the *turu*, Siberian sacred tree (cedar, larch, or birch) of clan emergence. To Utes, the dance corral has been referred to as a "cave of sticks," like the bear's den.

The Ute Bear Dance enclosure's composition, orientation, and bear-clan symbolism all suggest an ancestral connection to Siberian sacred bear cult sites that mark the place of clan emergence (Anisimov 1963; Jacobson 1993), the liminal boundary between the human and spirit worlds. Another Ute Bear Dance element, a "bottomless wooden case" that appears a short distance from the musician's pit, is reminiscent of the Siberian Ket bear feast's cedar



Figure 4. Bear Dance painting on buckskin. On display at Ute Indian Museum, Montrose, Colorado. Photo by J. A. McNeil.

box used to hold the bear head or drawn image. In addition, Lowie reported that at a Ute Bear Dance (at Navajo Springs, CO), there were traces of fires all around the dance grounds, most likely to illuminate the dance space at night, recalling the Siberian Ostyak bear feast fire and the Evenk curing rite's fire pit (Alekseenko 1968:188; Anisimov 1963:86; Lowie 1915:827). In addition to lighting the dance space, the inclusion of fire in the ceremony also suggests the preservation of similar ancient Siberian rites involving bear-tree-sun (fire) symbolism.

As reconstructed by Russian ethnographer E. A. Alekseenko (1968), in ancient Siberia ritual bear-image painting occurred before the Ket bear feasts. We might also infer that Siberian petroglyphs depicting bears (on the Upper Yenisey River in Ket territory) may also have been drawn (incised) before or during seasonal revival festivities, which are believed to have taken place at certain rock art sites. With respect to Utes, there is no recollection or record of bear hunting being a crucial part of the Ute economy or of post-mortem painting rites (Stewart 1942:240–243, 336). Despite this absence, a Siberian-like pre-ceremonial, ritual painting of a bear has been reported:

"Before the ceremony the picture of a bear is made on cloth and fastened flag-fashion to a tall staff, which is set in the rear of the dance ground" (Lowie 1915:827; Steward 1932:267).

Ute Bear Dance flags depict images related to a standing, climbing, or dancing bear or bear "family," facing a male Indian standing in front of a cedar tree (Uncompahgre Ute flag; Figures 5 and 6). Like the Siberian ceremonial cedar tree whose branches are cut off

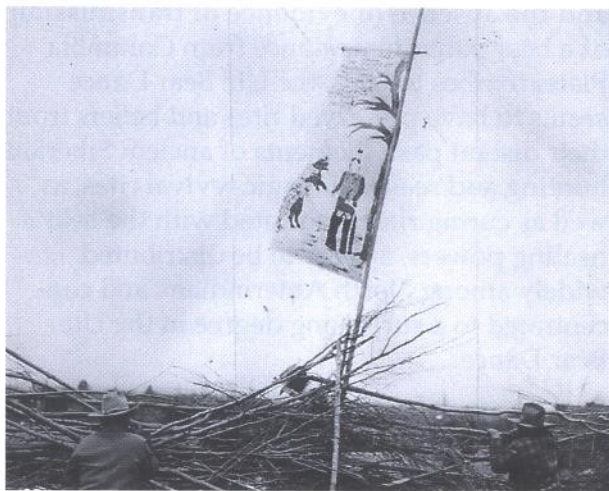


Figure 5. Uintah Ute Bear Dance flag, Whiterocks, Utah (date unknown but presumably around 1900). Courtesy of University of Utah Library, Special Collection, photo #1322A.



Figure 6. Ute Bear Dance muslin flag. On display at Ute Indian Museum, Montrose, Colorado. Photo by J. A. McNeil.

except for a tuft on the top, the Uncompahgre Bear Dance flag tree image suggests a shaved cedar. Other images show a bear standing in front of a newly leafing deciduous tree (Uintah Ute flag). While these images clearly suggest Siberian beliefs in the bear's journey of ascent up the sacred tree of clan emergence, Ute ethnography is silent about related beliefs. Nonetheless, what appears to have been preserved is the bear-tree-sun symbolic complex.

This ritual bear-image making practice suggests that ancient (Neolithic or older) Siberian hunting or seasonal rites have been preserved in the Ute spring revival bear festival and may also be expressed in petroglyphs. Another subtle hint that the Ute Bear Dance might have ancient connections to the bear hunt (in addition to the ritual pre-ceremonial painting) is suggested by Clark's report of a man urging another to start the Bear Dance by saying, "I want to shoot your back with arrows" (cited in Lowie 1915:826). In more recent times, the sign to start the ceremony is the first thunder heard in the spring. Martynov (1991:21) reports that the word for "bear" in Siberian languages (Tungusic) embodies "thunderer," the personification of the thundering sky." The primary musical instrument for the Ute Bear Dance is the morache (rasp), which is used to imitate the sound of thunder (McNeil 1999:137, Figure 4).

Reminiscent of sacred trees (typically cedar or birch) upon which a bear skull or birch bark image were hung (Ket) or poles tied with ribbons or with a banner outside the Evenk shaman's tent, a flag-bedecked cedar or pine pole was erected at the center of the entrance or in the rear of the Ute Bear Dance corral. Lowie (1915) reports that a teacher (Mrs. Molineux) at the Uintah Reservation (Utah) and the Ignacio (Colorado) schools, described a picture, drawn by one of her pupils, in which a tree appears in the center of the entrance to the dance site and stated that a sprig is temporarily planted there (Lowie 1915:827). While unstated in ethnographies of the Ute Bear Dance, this pole suggests the clan tree (deciduous) that symbolically dies and is reborn with the season, at the sacred site of

emergence. The tree or pole, then, recalls the widespread Siberian beliefs in trees as symbols of rebirth (Kosarev 1978:94), as well as in the clan tree (the *axis mundi*), used by the bear spirit-helper to travel between worlds.

The Ute Bear Dance pantomime dance, which typically lasts over four days, purports to imitate the bear after hibernation (Callaway et al. 1986:350-353; Lowie 1915:829-831; Pettit 1990:91-93; Reed 1896:240-242; Steward 1932:265, 272). Like the she-bear, who is the aggressor in courtship and mating, Ute women choose their male dance partners and lead in the dance—a line dance with women and men on opposite sides facing each other. In addition, all the dancers move their arms imitating the motion of the forepaws of bears or put their arms around each other in a bear hug. While dressing in a bear robe has not been widely reported among Ute peoples, Uintah Ute dancers were observed dressed in bear robes and masks (Steward 1932:272), while imitating the back-and-forth movement of bears marking trees, often before mating.

Reminiscent of Siberian spring revival curative rites, some Bear Dance practices serve a healing function, such as to charm dancers from the danger of death from bears and to heal certain forms of sickness.² While the Ute bear shaman (female or male) played an important role in the culture (Stewart 1942:280, 317), in the Bear Dance the role as healer is minor and mainly symbolic within the context of an even more ancient matrilineal, possibly pre-shamanic, ceremony (Jacobson 1993:179-180). As needed, the shaman tends to or “doctors” (Reed 1896:242; Steward 1932:265) fallen, exhausted dancers who may not arise until treated with ceremonial gestures that spare them if confronted by a bear in the wild.

Congruent with the Siberian belief in the bear’s role as intermediary and messenger between human and spiritual worlds, several times during the four days of the Ute Bear Dance male participants pass a pipe filled with native tobacco. Like Siberian beliefs in the power of tobacco smoke to ascend to the spirit world, for the Ute the smoke carries messages to friends and relatives in the Land

Beyond.³ The Bear Dance also includes a medicine ceremony to protect the smoker from pneumonia or consumption, in which several of the men smoke dried kinnikinnick leaves, ostensibly to protect deceased relatives and friends, as well as the living. Throughout the ethnographic past of both Siberia and North America, spring revival rites conclude with courtship and socializing during an intertribal gathering over several days.⁴

In sum, despite ecological inconsistencies and the absence of evidence of transmission of a bear pantomime dance from Columbia Plateau tribes to Utes, the Ute Bear Dance seems to have preserved rites and beliefs from their distant past. Elements of ancient Siberian hunting and seasonal magic revival rites, as well as curing rites associated with the bear’s healing powers, appear to be distributed widely among North Amerindians and concentrated to a surprising degree in the Ute Bear Dance.

ROCK ART IMAGES OF CLIMBING BEARS

Separated by about 12,000 miles and at least half as many years, petroglyphs on opposite sides of the Bering Strait depict bears ascending a leafless tree. The older ones in Central Siberia on the Upper Yenisey River are dated to the Neolithic (Martynov 1991:25; Pyatkin 1998:26-30; Pyatkin and Martynov 1985:159, Figure 11), while the more recent one in western Colorado (USA) suggests the historic reuse of an Archaic site from about 2,000 B.P. (*contra* Cole 1990:82-96, 238; McNeil 1999:137-138).

The two Central Siberian petroglyphs appear near the villages of Shalabolino and Ilyinka on the right bank of the Tuba River, a tributary of the Yenisey River. They are located in ancient Ket (Yenisey Ostyak) traditional territory, as well as within access of Yenisey River and Prebaykal Evenks’ ancient habitation sites.⁵ This location—on south-facing cliffs overlooking a river—suggests the sun symbolism associated with the Siberian Ket diety Es (Jacobson 1993:184), as well as the

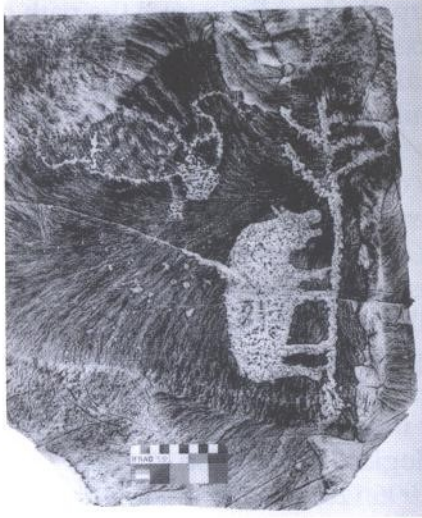


Figure 7. Petroglyph of bear climbing a tree at the Shalabolino site in the Upper Yenisey River region, Siberia (in Pyatkin and Martynov 1985:159, Figure 11).

clan sanctuary sites for Siberian Ostyak “Old Man with Claws” winter solstice and spring revival rites (Martynov 1991:42). Its cultural attribution, based on bear cult-related mythology, symbolism, and location, appears to be Neolithic (or older) proto-Ket, although Prebaykal-Yenisey Evenks also ranged in this territory.

The earliest images at this site consist of “an assemblage that is typical of the Neolithic period”: elk, aurochs, wild horses, deer, wild boar, bears, fish, boats, and anthropomorphic figures wearing horned head-dresses (Pyatkin 1998:29). Of 22 bear figures (some with offspring), five are standing, one is climbing a tree, and the rest are standing or walking on all fours (Pyatkin and Marynov 1985:159). The petroglyph of most interest here, the one depicting a bear climbing a leafless (deciduous) tree, recalls the Ket and Evenk bear totemic matriclan ancestor making its journey of ascent to the upper world via the clan tree (Figure 7). The second image of two bears standing upright appears to the left of a natural fissure in the rock that resembles a tree trunk (Figure 8). Also, images of boats at this site recall the Ostyak myth about the soul’s journey by boat to the lower world, as well as the shaman’s descent (in the form of his bear spirit-helper)



Figure 8. Petroglyph of two bears standing upright (“female and offspring”?) at the Shalabolino site in the Upper Yenisey River region, Siberia.

back to this world via the clan river (Eliade 1964:226; Mikhailov 1894:67).

On the south-facing rimrock overlooking the Shavano Valley in the western Colorado Uncompahgre Plateau region, a petroglyph panel depicts two separate tree-climbing bears and a third upright bear appearing to hover above the other two (Figure 9). Stylistically



Figure 9. “Climbing Bears” petroglyph panel at site 5MN5 in the Uncompahgre drainage of west-central Colorado. This solid and stipple-pecked panel is considered Late Historic Ute Indian Style, ca. 1830-1880 (Cole 1990:238). Photo by J. A. McNeil.

dated as Late Historic Ute Indian Style about A.D. 1830–1880 (Cole 1990:82–9,; 238), this panel shows possible historic reuse of an Archaic panel. Attributed to the Uncompahgre (Taviwach) Ute, the panel (from left) depicts two images of a bear climbing a tree. While the first tree-climbing bear is more lightly and roughly pecked, the second bear shows more recent (re)pecking, and is especially interesting because of a dotted path leading from a natural fissure in the rock (to the right of the image) to the base of the tree. This narrative feature recalls the Siberian belief, only hinted at in Ute bear hibernation folklore, of the bear's descent back to this world through a portal in the rock face at the clan sanctuary (Martynov 1991:41-43).

Further to the right and just off-center and above the other two bears is the visual centerpiece of the panel. This more elaborately detailed, third bear is standing (or dancing) above the other two and appears to be situated at the pinnacle of a forked path or tree top (a tree is the path in Siberian myths of the journey of ascent and forked trees were used in Evenk ritual site constructions). While the first two bears appear to be in the process of ascending the clan tree, the third bear (perhaps cosmic or spirit) appears to have arrived at the end of its path or journey in the spirit realm. Its finely detailed Uncompahgre-style paws (a Ute stylistic signature) and liquid or breath spewing from its mouth suggest the bear is giving the gift of "bear medicine."

The Ute mythology apparently alluded to in this petroglyph may be a variant of Siberian bear cult myths about the reincarnated bear spirit-helper who brings regenerative magic ("bear medicine") to the clan or tribe and who also can be reborn to life through its ascent up the clan tree (forked cedar trees or poles) after death. According to a Ute myth, the bear in the primordial past brought people instructions in how to do the Bear Dance and through this ceremony how to reap the benefits of "bear medicine" (Buckles [1971:1072–1074], as quoted by Smith 1974:221). Recalling the Siberian belief in the bear's role as intermediary to the spiritual controller of animals (for food), a

quadruped (deer) lies across the path of the spirit-bear, possibly as a gift from the animal spiritual controller.

While similarities between these two widely separated petroglyphic images may be merely coincidental, in light of ongoing discoveries about genetic and cultural kinship shared by Siberian and North Amerindian peoples, a diffusionist theory may hold more credibility today than in the past. Consequently, it may be safe to say that the two peoples responsible for these thematically similar images shared a culturally-based, mythological "normalform" (Georges and Jones 1996:128, 138-139) related to bear cult beliefs about the bear's journey of ascent.

CONCLUSIONS

Elements of widespread and ancient Siberian (Ket and Evenk) hunting and seasonal revival rites (probably Paleolithic in origin) acted as a kind of "normalform" informed by the bear-tree-sun symbolic complex that is still in evidence, to varying degrees, among Amerindians from the Northwest Coast to South America. Similarities in bear cult beliefs, myths, and rites on both sides of the Bering Strait that pertain to the bear's journey of ascent include the following:

- The post-mortem bear feast or spring revival site, a specially-constructed log (cedar or larch) enclosure or gateway with east-facing entrance and including a symbolic tree or pole "path" to the upper world.
- Ritually drawn images (on birchbark, animal skin, fabric, cedar wood, stone, etc.) of the bear, standing or tree-climbing, for the purpose of restoring its "soul" to life or full health and of bringing "bear medicine" to the people.
- The post-mortem practice of "seeing the bear off" by attaching the bear skull to a tree (cedar or birch), facing east and of feeding the skull with tobacco. An adaptation, observed among some Native Americans (for example, of the Columbia Plateau and Great Basin)

was to set a tree or pole inside the east-facing ceremonial enclosure. On a pole inside the enclosure, a flag was raised with the painted image of a standing bear in front of a cedar or deciduous tree (Ute).

- Bear shaman curing rites that involve the shaman calling upon the bear spirit-helper, smoking native tobacco, becoming transformed into a bear, dancing like a bear, traveling to another realm (the Land Beyond), and experiencing a trance-like death and rebirth.
- Bear pantomime dances that enact the narrative of the bear's mythic journey (e.g., the bear hunt and death, its journey of ascent to the upper world by climbing the clan tree, and its seasonal return to this world, restored to health).
- Spring bear dance ritual tobacco use for the purpose of sending messages to deceased ancestors and to the spiritual controller of all animals, as well as for soliciting the bear's protection from danger and illness.

While Siberian bear cult ritual practices were ecologically and culturally "apt" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999:72–73) to their own and to most northern North Amerindians' forested ecology and hunting lifestyles, it is less clear why Puebloan and Great Basin Uto-Shoshonean peoples, from Archaic to Historic times, privileged the bear over other more economically important animals in their myths and revival or curing ceremonies. Archaic Uto-Shoshoneans were Great Basin people (Aikens 1994:40) who lived in an semi-arid environment, leaving forested higher elevations relatively unused (Harper 1986:52–55). And grizzly and black bears, while admittedly part of the Great Basin ecology, did not play a prominent role in Ute economy as a food, medicinal, or clothing source (Fowler 1986:79–81; Smith 1974:215, 221, 262; Stewart 1942:240–243, 336), at least not to the extent that they obviously generated a cosmology and bear cult, much as they did in the Siberian taiga.

Such inconsistencies between the ecological and the religious importance of a species

for a particular culture have been explained in the light of "cultural lag" (Benedict 1935:xiv–xv), whereby beliefs and ritual practices persevere over time despite obvious adaptive discrepancies. This appears to be the case with respect to the importance of the Bear Dance to Uto-Shoshonean peoples. In the New World where selected elements of an ancestral and cultural normalform from Central Siberia were preserved and adapted by many North Amerindian tribes, one of the best preserved appears to have been the Ute Bear Dance.

Acknowledgments. A shorter version of this paper was presented at ARARA 2000 in Phoenix, Arizona. I thank John Greer for his thought-provoking comments. Thanks also to several institutions who gave permission to use images of artifacts, photos, or drawings from their collections: The University of Toronto Press; the University of Utah J. Willard Marriott Library; the Ute Indian Museum, Montrose, Colorado; and Roberts Rinehart Publishers. Special thanks to Ekaterina Devlet at the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, and to Elena Miklashevich at Kemerovo State University and the Museum of the Archaeology and Ethnography of South Siberia, Kemerovo, for providing materials pertaining to bear cults and rock art in Siberia. Elena Kostoglodova, Instructor in the Slavic and Germanic Languages and Literature Department, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, translated the Russian articles into English. Finally, Jim McNeil generously offered his time to comment on the longer version of this paper and readily accepted the role of photographer on our rock art field trips.

END NOTES

¹ Based upon Spier's accounts, Prophet Dances and related mythologies of the Thompson River, Shuswap, and Lillooet Indians of the Columbia Plateau reveal the strongest similarities to the Great Basin Round Dance as well as to the Ute Bear Dance (Spier 1935:59–61). Some of these similarities include the return of an important ancestor from the dead, mid-winter (January) or early Spring (February/March) dancing in a circular enclosure, dancers in a circle or two arches around a central cedar pole, and dancing believed to convey messages

from the spirit world. The Sahaptin Indians at the mouth of the Snake River (WA) are reported to have participated in a kind of back-and-forth Prophet Dance (Spier 1935:19), resembling the Ute Bear Dance. However, unlike the Ute Bear Dance, Northwest Prophet Dances and Great Basin Round Dances were never, as far as I can tell, bear pantomime dances.

² Notably, bear medicine that focuses on healing is widespread among most Native Americans, extending from the US-Canadian border south into Plains Indian and Puebloan cultures, especially that of the Zuni (for whom “bear” means “doctor”) and Keresan peoples (Bunzel 1933:1028–1030).

³ The Finnic bear ceremony involves a funeral festival (Hallowell 1926:98); the Ostyak’s second and third bear dances involve lamentation over the death of the bear-kin and its resurrection; the Nivkhi bear festival includes a lament for deceased kinsmen; and the Ute Bear Dance (sometimes called the Mohave Dance) sometimes includes a Mourning Ceremony among Great Basin peoples from Colorado Plateau to Wind River, Wyoming (Spier 1928). The Utah and Colorado Utes smoke pipe tobacco to carry messages to their deceased loved ones during the Bear Dance festivities.

⁴ Like Ute bear festivals, the Ostyak Bear Holiday is celebrated in recent times by having a communal (territorial) gathering for the purpose of socializing. With political reorganization into territorial communities, the former sacred clan spirit has been replaced with the secular community. For example, the Evenks’ Shaman’s Tent curing rite has been described as a “clanwide ceremony” (Anisimov 1963:116–117) and, in the same spirit, Utes make the bear festival an intertribal social, as well as religious, affair. The Siberian and Ute ceremonies end with a communal feast, “an event of great social importance and neighbors are bidden (to join in)” (Hallowell 1926:146; Reed 1896:241).

Cross-culturally, these gatherings facilitate courtship among the young; allow for simple, exogamous wedding ceremonies; and encourage games and sports after the communal feast (Hallowell 1926:110; Reed 1896:240, 244). Regarding the courtship function of the Bear Dance, Lowie (1915:829) raises the possibility that the Bear Dance included exchange of wives and Spier discusses the inclusion of “marrying dances” into Prophet Dance ceremonies (Spier 1935:13, 60).

⁵ The tree-climbing bear petroglyph (Figure 7) was last officially reported in 1977 when investigated by the Petroglyph Group of Kemerovo University led by B. N. Pyatkin. Elena Miklashevich, at Kemerovo State University, informed me that in 1998 she did not see it during a Siberian Association of Pre-historic Art Research (SAPAR) field trip to the Shalabolino site and heard rumors that it may have been destroyed during a local dam(n)ing project.

REFERENCES CITED

- Aikens, M. C.
1994 Adaptive Strategies and Environmental Change in the Great Basin and its Peripheries as Determinants in the Migrations of Numic-speaking Peoples. In *Across the West: Human Population Movement and the Expansion of the Numa*, edited by D. Madsen and D. Rhode, pp.36–43. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City.
- Alekseenko, E. A.
1968 The Cult of the Bear among the Ket (Yenisei Ostyaks). In *Popular Beliefs and Folklore Tradition in Siberia*, edited by V. Dioszegi, pp. 175–191. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Anisimov, A. F.
1963 The Shaman’s Tent of the Evenks and the Origin of the Shamanistic Rite. In *Studies in Siberian Shamanism*, edited by H. N. Michael, pp. 85–123. Arctic Institute of North America Anthropology of the North: Translations from Russian Sources/No.4. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Benedict, R.
1935 Zuni Mythology, Vol 1. *Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology* 21. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Boas, F.
1891 Dissemination of Tales Among the Natives of North America. *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 4, 13–20. Reprinted in *Race, Language and Culture* (1940), pp. 437–445, New York.
- Bogoras, W.
1902 The folklore of northeastern Asia, as compared to northwestern America. *American Anthropologist*, 4, 577–683.
- Buckles, W.
1971 *The Uncompahgre Complex: Historic Ute Archaeology and Prehistoric Archaeology on the Uncompahgre Plateau in West Central Colorado*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Colorado, Boulder.
- Bunzel, R. L.
1933 Zuni Texts. *Publication of American Ethnological Society*, vol. 15, edited by F. Boas. G. E. Stechert and Co., New York.
- Callaway, D., J. Janetski, and O. Stewart.
1986 Ute. In *Handbook of North American Indians: Great Basin*, vol. 11, edited by W. L. d’Azevedo, pp. 336–367. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.
- Cole, S. J.
1990 *Legacy on Stone: Rock Art of the Colorado Plateau and Four Corners Region*. Johnson Books, Boulder, Colorado.
- Crawford, M.
1998 *The Origins of Native Americans: Evidence from anthropological genetics*. New Cambridge University Press, York.
- Dundes, A.
1967 North American Indian Folklore Studies. *Journal de la Société des Americanistes*, 56, 53–79.

- Eliade, M.
1964 *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Translated by Willard Trask. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.
- Fowler, C.
1986 Subsistence. In *Handbook of North American Indians: Great Basin*, vol. 11, edited by W. D. d'Azevedo, pp. 64-97. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- Frazer, J. G.
1890 *The Golden Bough: The Roots of Religion and Folklore* (Two Volumes in One). Avenel Books, New York.
- Georges, R. A. and , M. O. Jones
1996 *Folkloristics: An Introduction*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Hallowell, A. I.
1926 Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere. In *American Anthropologist* (NS) 28:1-163.
- Harper, K.
1986 Historical Environments. In *Handbook of North American Indians: Great Basin*, vol. 11, edited by W. L. d'Azevedo, pp. 51-63. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- Hatt, G.
1949 *Asiatic Influences in American Folklore*. Historisk-Filologiske Meddelelser, vol. 31, no. 6. Ejnar Munksgaard, Copenhagen.
- Hultkrantz, A.
1981 *Belief and Worship in Native America*. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York.
1986 Mythology and Religious Concepts. In *Handbook of North American Indians: Great Basin*, vol. 11, edited by W. L. d'Azevedo, pp. 630-640. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York.
- Jacobson, E.
1993 *The Deer Goddess of Ancient Siberia: A Study in the Ecology of Belief*. E. J. Brill, New York.
- Kálmán, B.
1968 Two Purification Rites in the Bear Cult of the Ob-Ugrians. In *Popular Beliefs and Folklore Tradition in Siberia*, edited by V. Dioszegi, pp. 85-92. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Kosarev, M. F.
1978 O Kul'te dereva u Kulaytsev [On the Tree Cult Among the Kulay (people)]. In *Ranniy zheleznyy vek zapadnoy Sibiri [The Bronze Age of Western Siberia]*. Tomsk State University Press, Tomsk.
- Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson.
1999 *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. Basic Books, New York.
- Lell, J. T., M. D. Brown, T. G. Schurr, R. I. Sukernik, E. B. Starikovskaya, and D. C. Wallace.
1997 Y chromosome polymorphisms in Native American and Siberian populations: Identification of founding Native American Y chromosome haplotypes. *Human Genetics* 100:536-543.
- Lell, J. T., T. G. Schurr, R. I. Sukernik, E. B. Starikovskaya, and D. C. Wallace.
1999 Y chromosome haplotypes reveal distinct migration patterns in Siberia and Americas. *American Journal of Human Genetics*, Supplement 63(4):A215.
- Lorenz, J. G. and D. G. Smith.
1996 Distribution of four founding mtDNA haplogroups among Native North Americans. In *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 101:307-323.
- Lowie, R.
1915 Dances and Societies of the Plains Shoshone. In *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 11(10):803-835.
- McNeil, L. D.
1999 Ute Indian Bear Dance: Related Myths and Bear Glyphs. In *American Indian Rock Art*, vol. 25, edited by S. M. Freers, pp. 133-139. American Rock Art Research Association, Tucson, Arizona.
2000 The Bear Spirit-Helper's Journey of Ascent: Siberian and North Amerindian Myths, Rites, and Images. Ms. on file, University Writing Program, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.
- Martynov, A. I.
1991 *The Ancient Art of Northern Asia*. Translated and edited by D. B. Shimkin and E. M. Shimkin. University of Illinois Press, Urbana.
- Mikhailov, V. M.
1984 Shamanism in Siberia and European Russia. Translated by O. Wardrop. *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 24:62-100.
- Mochanov, L. A.
1978 The Paleolithic of northeast Asia and the Problem of the First Peopling of America. In *Early Man in America from a Circum-Pacific Perspective*, edited by A. L. Bryan, pp. 67-89. University of Alberta Press, Edmonton.
- Park, W.
1941 Cultural Succession in the Great Basin. In *Language, Culture, and Personality: Essays in Memory of Edward Sapir*, edited by L. Spier, A. I. Hallowell, and S. Newman, pp. 180-203. Sapir Memorial Publication Fund, Menasha, Wisconsin.
- Pettit, J.
1990 *Utes: The Mountain People*. Johnson Books, Boulder, Colorado.
- Pyatkin, B. N.
1998 The Shalabolino Petroglyphs on the River Tuba (Middle Yenisei). In *International Newsletter on Rock Art (I.N.O.R.A.)*, no. 20, edited by J. Clottes, pp. 26-30. Ministère de la Culture Foix, France.
- Pyatkin, B. N. and A. I. Martynov
1985 *Petroglify iz Shalabolino [Petroglyphs from Shalabolino]*. Krasnoyarsk University Press, Krasnoyarsk.
- Reed, V.
1896 The Ute Bear Dance. *American Anthropologist* 9:237-244.

- Rockwell, D.
1991 *Giving Voice to the Bear: North American Indian Rituals, Myths, and Images of the Bear*. Roberts Rinehart Publishers, Niwot, Colorado.
- Rooth, A. B.
1957 The Creation Myths of the North American Indians. *Anthropos* 52:497–508.
- Schurr, T. G., J. T. Lell, R. I. Sukernik, E. B. Starikovskaya, and D. C. Wallace.
1999 Reevaluating Siberia as a source area for ancestral Native American populations. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Supplement 28:245.
- Shepard, P. and B. Sanders
1985 *The Sacred Paw: The Bear in Nature, Myth, and Literature*. Viking, New York.
- Smith, A. M.
1974 *Ethnography of the Northern Utes*. Museum of New Mexico Press. Santa Fe.
- Spier, R.
1928 Havasupai Ethnography: Dances. In *Anthropological Papers American Museum of Natural History*, 29:261–274.
1935 The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance. In *General Series in Anthropology*, No. 1, pp. 1–74. George Banta Publishing Co., Menasha, Wisconsin.
- Steward, J.
1932 A Uintah Ute Bear Dance, March 1931. In *American Anthropologist* 34:263–273.
- Stewart, O.
1942 Culture Element Distributions: XVIII Ute-Southern Paiute. *University of California Anthropological Records* 6(4):231–362.
- Sukernik, R. I., T. G. Schurr, E. B. Starikovskaya, and D. C. Wallace.
1996 Izmenchivost' mitochondrial'nyh DNK u korennyh zhitel'ei Sibiri vrekonstruksiyei evolyutsionnoi istorii amerikanskikh indeitsev (restriksionnyi polimorfizm) [Mitochondrial DNA variation in native Siberians, with special reference to the evolutionary history of American Indians. Studies on restriction polymorphism]. *Genetika* 32:432–439.
- Szathmáry, E.
1996 Ancient Migrations From Asia to North America. In *Prehistoric Mongoloid Dispersals*, edited by T. Akazawa and E. J. E. Szathmáry, pp. 151–164. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Teit, J.
1900 The Thompson Indians of British Columbia. *Memoirs, American Museum of Natural History* 2, part 4.
- Torrioni, A., R. I. Sukernik, T. G. Schurr, E. B. Starikovskaya, M. F. Cabell, M. H. Campbell, A. G. Commuzzie, and D.C. Wallace.
1993 mtDNA variation of aboriginal Siberians reveals distinct genetic affinities with Native Americans. In *American Journal of Human Genetics* 53:591–608.
- Utley, F. L.
1974 The Migration of Folktales: Four Channels to the Americas. *Current Anthropology* 15(1):5–27.
- Vasilevich, G. M.
1971 O Kul'te medvedya u evenkov [Regarding the Evenk Bear Cult]. In *Collection of Writings of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography*, pp. 151–169 (in Russian). Saint Petersburg (Leningrad).