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Three Rivers as Transitional Zone: Considering a Collective Metanarrative in Pueblo Prehistory

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ABSTRACT

The Three Rivers petroglyph site in what is presently south central New Mexico represents important concepts for the study of southwestern prehistory. This site has been studied to a limited degree from the perspective of archaeological site surveys that have categorically classified the motifs represented on the petroglyphs, but at this point very little is known about the cultures that lived and created art in the Three Rivers area. The iconography of these images is remarkably similar to that represented on ceramics at both Mimbres during the Classic period (ca. AD 1000-1150), as well as Casas Grandes during the Medio period (ca. AD 1275-1450). While these similarities cannot be approached systematically due to the decontextualized nature of their cultural ideations, it is possible to consider these similarities through explorations of a proposed metanarrative dependent upon shared cultural knowledge that was in some way transmitted between cultures. Through linguistic theories, archaeological semiotics, and comparative visual analysis, this thesis proposes that Three Rivers was one possible cultural link between Mimbres and Casas Grandes and that all three cultures shared a basic metanarrative that informed the expression of iconography on the media of rock art and ceramics.

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Introduction

This thesis integrates the archaeological evidence connecting Mimbres, Three Rivers, and Casas Grandes with a comparative visual analysis of iconography as expressed through the semiotic properties of material culture. For the purpose of wider iconographic comparison, an exploration of multiple media has been undertaken. In this view, the metanarrative encompasses and transcends media, and wider comparisons are perhaps the only way to dig below the surface of often contrived categorical systems. This methodology builds upon previous scholarship, but attempts to contextualize the system more broadly.

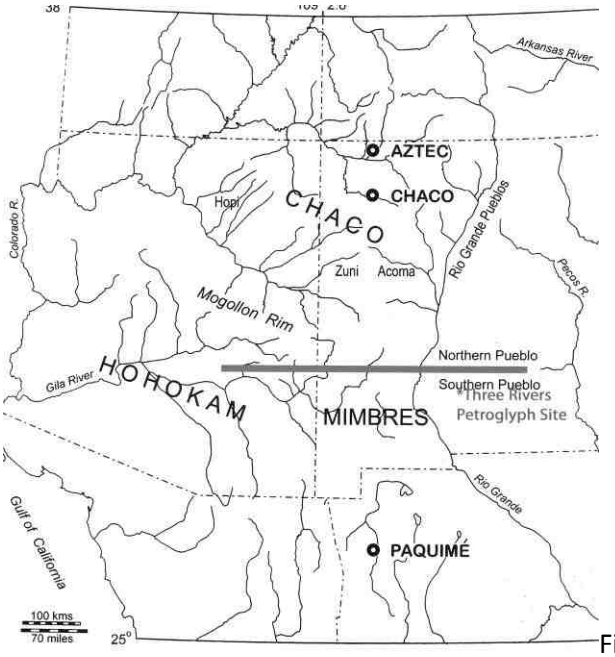

Figure 1

Located on a 1.5 mile long basaltic knoll west of the Sacramento Mountains (between present-day Carrizozo and Alamogordo New Mexico), the Three Rivers Petroglyph site is an intriguing zone of cross-cultural exchange and interaction.[1] In the

centuries following Mimbres collapse and dispersal (ca. AD 1150), the designs on Classic Black-on-white ceramics seem to have been revitalized on the rock art at Three Rivers and the Ramos Polychrome iconography of the Casas Grandes culture at Paquimé. What connected these apparently disparate groups, separated by both time and geography? Though this is a complex question addressed through a number of theoretical approaches, the basic answer is the material performance of a metanarrative. To break this concept down, performance includes iconographic expression, semiotics, choice of landscape and material, as well as human action and interaction. The metanarrative is what it implies – the story that determines cultural cohesion and informs all the other stories that unfold in the form of myths, rituals, and artistic objects.

Through comparative analysis and theoretical exploration, the intent of this thesis is to consider the metanarrative shared between Mimbres, Casas Grandes, and Three Rivers, as well as to explore how it was expressed through the performative aspects of material culture in the media of rock art and ceramics. Though previous scholarship has linked both Casas Grandes and Three Rivers to Mimbres due to superficial stylistic comparisons, never before have the three been considered side by side using an approach integrating archaeological semiotics and semasiography as well as stylistic analysis. In considering this metanarrative as an important component of how iconography and ceremonialism may have evolved in the Pueblos, such considerations are especially important.

Iconography is metanarratological in the sense that it conveys symbolic information, but does so in a way that references broad cultural concepts rather than linear textual concepts. The iconography of rock art and ceramics in the prehistoric

Southwest is, using Jacques Derrida's terminology, "writing in the general sense," and thus expresses cultural meaning independently of glottographic textual information.[2] Though information is expressed linguistically in the sense that symbols are exchanged semiotically, this is not a textual reading and such icons are not discrete units of meaning (as they are so often misleadingly classified in site surveys). The images in this analysis, though taken individually, are also considered as part of a much broader and interconnected system of meaning. They are highly dependent upon cultural context, designating a metanarrative. As such, a large portion of this analysis involves the cultural systems themselves, seeking comparisons between cultural development at Mimbres and Paquimé. In the case of Three Rivers, due to the lack of strong archaeological evidence, such cultural analysis has developed from the idea that a collective metanarrative can inform our limited existing knowledge.

Within the metanarrative and supra-linguistic theory, semasiographic exploration becomes particularly important. Semasiography is a way to approach rock art and ceramic iconography as a system of symbolic information determined by cultural knowledge rather than glottographically based text. Approaching such a system from an outside perspective is extremely difficult, but art historical analysis provides innovative methodologies. Along with linguistic theory, archaeological semiotics have been integrated into the theoretical framework of the project. Building upon the narratological theories of other scholars such as Elizabeth Boone, Simon Martin, and Roland Barthes, the theoretical framework supporting the analytical work of this thesis represents a synthesis of linguistic and archaeological work not previously applied to considerations of Pueblo cultural development and iconography. Little attempt has been made to

determine particular symbolic meaning from motif categories, but it has been shown how symbolic information is imparted through the use of modifiers and hybridity. These concepts, expressed on Mimbres Black-on-white ceramics in the form of various mythological beings integrating the properties of multiple zoomorphic or anthropomorphic forms, are mirrored in Three Rivers and Casas Grandes iconography.

The fact that the rock art at Three Rivers is so entrenched in the physical environment is not a superficial consideration, nor is the physicality of ceramics that formally replicate organic features. By applying the iconography of the landscape to such forms, an active performance seems to be engaged. The outlines of mountains and clouds, as well as apparent celestial phenomena, are repeated ubiquitously. In each of these cultural areas, materials were used in similar and intentional ways. It is through material analysis that ceramics and rock art can be approached as comparable media. In addition to the basic fact that the natural contents of the landscape are integrated into artistic forms, the objects as altered through the application of design and iconography become similarly imbued with material context.

To approach the content and iconography connecting the cultures of Mimbres, Three Rivers, and Casas Grandes, an important step is to consider cultural context at Mimbres and why such particularities would have been revitalized during a process of aggregation or social delineations during later developments at Three Rivers and Casas Grandes. If there is a shared metanarrative, cultural context is the key to understanding it. This is where anthropology informs art history, and why this project is intentionally interdisciplinary.

The Mimbres Classic period was accompanied by swift population growth, as well as aggregation and resource intensification. As the society became more complex, delineation and differentiation were achieved through various means, including the dissemination and control of esoteric knowledge in the form of iconography. Though also present to a limited extent in rock art, this iconography was primarily expressed in the form of Black-on-white ceramics. These pots display complex narrative scenes of various interactions and hybrids, as well as bold and symmetrical geometric designs.

It seems that the acts of pottery production and distribution were viewed as tools of social cohesion at some level, including the possible existence of community events centered around production and distribution. Unfortunately, such evidence is still largely speculative and theoretical. In any case, we know Mimbres iconography expanded and became much more complex during the Classic period, expressing a mythological iconography symbolic of particular cultural complexities.

A similar process appears to have unfolded at Paquimé during the Medio Period of Casas Grandes fluorescence, most often dated approximately AD 1250-1475. During a period of population aggregation and increased social complexity, ceramic styles such as Ramos Polychrome developed as a way to express more complex iconography. This iconography, while not identical to Mimbres Black-on-white, is similar enough to be compelling. In many cases, it appears that symbolic elements that seemed to be abandoned after Mimbres Classic (which ended some one hundred years earlier) were revived on Ramos Polychrome designs.

But were they ever truly abandoned? This is the central question that implicates Three Rivers as a transitional zone between Mimbres and areas like Paquimé. Though

rock art dating is notoriously imprecise, it is quite likely this expression continued after the last Mimbres Black-on-white pots were produced. This would provide one explanation for how Mimbres iconography migrated to distant regions such as Casas Grandes, despite a lack of evidence for trade or co-temporality.

Chapter 1 – Stories in Stone: Narratology at Three Rivers Petroglyph Site

In recent years, Mesoamerican scholars have revisited material culture by integrating visual imagery and textuality. Both iconography and semasiography function as narrative vehicles, and iconographic traces of cultural intent are potentially more powerful tools than data analysis alone. Can these linguistic models be applied to the material culture of the prehistoric Southwest in similar ways? Is a new level of analysis possible through the narrative lens? Petroglyphs have the potential to fulfill all of Roland Barthes' requirements for a structural narrative and as such offer new methods of cultural exploration.[3] Art history presents a disciplinary middle ground between archaeology and linguistics in considering issues of semiotics and iconic meaning from a perspective drawn from analyses of visuality. Within the context of iconography, such images act textually as well as visually. In this way, semiotic and narratological theories can act as useful frameworks. Beyond the sign itself is a broad metanarratological system dependent upon landscape, cultural knowledge, performance, and reception. Such narrative meaning was also expressed in other aspects of material culture throughout the prehistoric Southwest, and comparative study of Three Rivers along with related groups such as Mimbres and Casas Grandes elucidates how a shared metanarrative connects these cultures and contributes to the development of modern Pueblo ceremonialism.

As part of this exploration, field work was conducted at Three Rivers from July 16 to 23, 2011. The purpose of this project was not to add to the field of existing quantitative surveys or motif categorization, but rather to consider the iconographic program at Three Rivers in the context of semiotic and narratological frameworks by

taking photographs and contextualizing style and iconography within landscape and site considerations. In the interest of covering new interpretive ground, though a certain amount of motif categorization was used in my fieldwork, a quantitative analysis of the results has been left out of this discussion. Instead, the focus is on establishing cultural context and applying metanarratological theories to particular images expressing aspects of semiotics, performance, hybridity, and semasiographic content. This field work resulted in the following observations:

1) The boulders at Three Rivers are performative and communicate messages socially and supernaturally, explaining the choice of site.
2) The site shows both similarities to and differences from other semi-contemporaneous Eastern Mogollon sites.
3) The rock art at Three Rivers is more stylistically similar to Mimbres Classic pottery than it is to any other known rock art site in the Jornada Mogollon region.
4) What connects the two styles is narrative intent.

This narrative intent is an important aspect of the public character of Three Rivers and the development of art as public performance. It acts as a cohesive transition in the integration of Jornada and Mimbres iconography with ritual public performance that seems to have developed into later Pueblo ceremonies. Three Rivers is a transitional performative and iconographic zone of influence between areas to the south (particularly in the emergence of Casas Grandes as a dominant regional power) and Pueblo groups to the north in the evolution of Pueblo ceremonialism.

The imagery at Three Rivers points to a time of cultural melding and the need for cultural delineations. Due to its landscape characteristics and location in what is currently south central New Mexico, Three Rivers is an ideal geographic area for interaction between ancient southwestern groups. Petroglyphs in the Southwest were often used as markers of group identity and social dynamics, acting to denote a center space and spatial boundary demarcation.[4] Unlike many other rock art sites that are located in precarious or inaccessible areas, the petroglyphs at Three Rivers are easily reached and visible from long distances. This very blatant choice of open expression indicates that the site was meant to be a zone of publicly accessible information, as well as a marker of identity. In the intentional public display of imagery at Three Rivers it is apparent that the intention was largely to convey messages openly, either specific messages about identity or more general messages about boundaries.

Iconography is essentially metanarratological or what Simon Martin calls a "textscape" – a form of collective consciousness developed in an interpretive community applying cultural memory and context.[5] This explains how symbols are not inherently meaningful but take on semiotic meaning through the larger narrative. A metanarratological system of rock art analysis draws meaning from a much wider pool than the quantitative classifications of archaeological data. Such a system relies on not only the literal translation of icons but also the interaction between landscape and image, including the complex relationship between the creation of the image and its reception among viewers. In this way, the physical characteristics of the landscape, the rocks themselves, and the art as performance become equally important considerations. The

rock art landscape appears to be a performative ritual space, empowered through imagery.

Looking at iconography as part of a larger semasiographic system of communication places these images within a larger frame of intention. David Leon has described a semasiography as the opposite of phonography, "intended to mean, denote or indicate something specific, abstract, conceptual, theological, mathematical, or idealistic."[6] Elizabeth Boone explains that while independent of phonology, "semasiographic systems of communication convey ideas independently from language and on the same logical level as spoken language rather than being parasitic on them."[7] Such logical systems, while still dependent upon systems of graphical encoding and syntax that refer to supralinguistic concepts, are dependent upon cultural knowlege rather than alphabets. In Geoffrey Sampson's terms, petroglyphs are more like "ideographs" than "pictographs," as they are essentially semasiographic signs that denote ideas.[8] Codes of meaning in physical properties, context, design, and style are created in choices that may at first glance appear arbitrary.

Elizabeth Boone points out that semasiographic and glottographic systems developed developed simultaneously, for different purposes.[9] If we use Frank Salomon's definition of writing as "communicating by inscribed marks," then rock art would certainly qualify. Sampson's commonly accepted definition, "to communicate relatively specific ideas by means of permanent, visible marks" would also seem to include petroglyphs.[10] Neither of these definitions requires the representation of spoken language.

Art is essentially a system of visual communication recombining a template of elements to create conceptual meaning. If the denotation of meaningful objects and concepts is what designates a system of writing, then iconography itself is a form of language, a visual language dependent upon a wider system of meaning. In this way, iconography takes on a greater level of interpretive possibilities. It is important to note that images can be both visually expressive and informational at the same time, as indicated by highly iconographic and formally rendered paintings, which also act in a subgraphemic, semasiographic manner in James Elkins' view.[11] This is also indicated by the simultaneous aesthetic and symbolic content inherent to Pueblo ceramics.

Considering rock art in a larger cultural context, it is important to look at its role as a system of writing in the sense that it imparts narratological meaning through units of inscription. It may be more useful to use the term graphics, as Margaret Bender points out that artifacts and images, much like performance accoutrements, are themselves graphical representations of social dynamics. This takes graphic meaning and narrative theory well beyond the bounds of the written "word."[12] Rock art has variously been considered along a phonologically-based spectrum from illiterate graffiti to semi-hieroglyph, generally disregarding the possibility that such imagery may be part of a system drawing upon different communication requirements altogether. Art is most commonly separate from communication in Western thought, though even the most basic considerations of iconography show this to be an oversimplification.

If we have determined that rock art may be conceived as iconographically and semasiographically significant and therefore act within a system combining art and

writing, then how do these components function as narratological units? Contextual knowledge determines rock art narratology. In this conception, we see that each iconic utterance is based upon the context established in the mind of the interpreter, and in this way the pictorialized structure does not need to be representational or glottographic to be meaningful. Narrative is essentialized semiotic exchange, and its indexical nature is a context-based function of graphic representation.

Within Barthes' structural model of narrative, the functional units of meaning in rock art are the images themselves, which act within the larger narrative structure of landscape, symbolic context, and relational proximity to impart meaning. The actions of the narrative are the requirements of broader cultural knowledge in order to set off a chain of signification, requiring both a narrator (the rock artist) and a receiver (the viewer) in a system of meaning that is coded in order to evoke rather than express literally. In Barthes' terms, "to understand a narrative is not merely to move from one word to the next, it is also to recognize its construction in 'storeys,' to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative 'thread' on to an implicitly vertical axis."[13] Art, in other words, is like language an expression of narrative and thus cultural meaning. Icons always refer to a larger narrative, one that is often poorly understood in archaeological hindsight.

Meyer Schapiro's theories about semiotics in visual art also elucidate the concepts of contextual meaning, in which artistic choices contribute. He describes how the choice of surface and materials as the ground for visual representation depends upon common cultural understandings, choices manifested in rock art by integrating rock surfaces and

landscape characteristics into design elements. The effect of local properties on visual impact and the placement of figures are key to semiotic meaning, a "latent expressiveness" that Schapiro explains "corresponds to nothing in nature or mental imagery where the phantoms of visual memory come up in a vague, unbounded void. The student of prehistoric art knows that the regular field is an advanced artifact presupposing a long development of art."[14] Signs have no inherent significance and take on meaning only in their external relationships, and as such petroglyph position is itself a sign system.

While the ethnographic approach taken by M. Jane Young in exploring the rock art at Zuni is a method inapplicable to Three Rivers, it offers some important clues into Pueblo conceptions of rock art as a system of meaning. The images are visual cues, reminders, and connections to the ancestors in what she terms a "metonym of narrative."[15] In particular, these modern Zuni reactions show the importance of wider cultural contexts, landscape, and oral traditions in the performance of narrative. It may not be possible to transfer the Zuni translations of worldview and origin myths as symbolized on rock art to the Jornada Mogollon, but a similar system is obviously at work. Young's conversations indicate that rock art is about the invocation and evocation of power through performance. At Zuni, the boulders themselves are considered to be imbued with powers, and in their appearance as various animals take on their actual characteristics in becoming "Beast Gods."[16] Similar anthropomorphized rocks at Three Rivers suggest similar purposes. The capacity of rocks to encompass mythological transformations indicates the performative capabilities of rock art within the landscape.

After six years of field work at Three Rivers focusing on classification and motif description, the 1999 Report of the Archaeological Society of New Mexico Field School claims 100% documentation of more than 21,000 images – making this one of the largest art rock sites (and one of the densest areas of artistic images) in the world.[17] These images have been classified into a range of categories indicating their geometric or representational properties. Earlier studies also used various methods of classification, considering motifs as discrete units rather than part of a larger system of meaning.[18] Though lacking context, from this extensive fieldwork we now have a useful database of images from which to begin art historical analysis.

The broader cultural context that comprises the foundation for a rock art narrative at Three Rivers is based upon these particularities. From the archaeological data we know some key information about the process of artistic production and underlying meaning. Consistent patination (i.e. weathering of the images upon the rock surfaces) suggests that the petroglyphs were created almost entirely during the same period of time.[19] In many cases, rock art sites have been used over a long span of time and superimposed by a variety of cultures, making specific cultural analyses extremely difficult. From the site-coterminous data at Three Rivers, it appears that these images were created by a relatively cohesive cultural group during a relatively short period. The iconographic homogeneity as well as the dating of local ceramics and observations of patination gives this site the appearance of a space conceptualized according to a singular metanarrative. However, as the zone of interaction evolved and new trade relationships developed with other regions at Three Rivers (specifically during the later ascendancy of Paquimé ca. 1250-1400), new imagery may have been integrated for different purposes.

Because rock art dating is so imprecise, it is difficult to determine with certainty whether we are approaching a singular metanarrative or multiple periods of social delineation.

In the early 1000s, Mogollon groups show evidence of increased sedentarism and agricultural expansion, including the development of the Hatchet pueblo site to the west of the petroglyphs.[20] This fact alone is extremely important when we consider explanations for rock art as cultural narrative. This period of transition towards population aggregation led to increased dependence on agriculture, as well as trade for objects unavailable locally. The exchange network that evolved in the southwestern zone of interaction during this time created both the potential for wide cross-cultural exchange and an increased need for cultural boundaries and identifying characteristics. Iconography served this purpose, and rock art is thus positioned as a communicative tool of social identity.

The metanarrative theory allows for a palette model of iconography, in which different groups adopted icons within a wide-reaching visual system according to particular communicative needs. Due to stylistic similarities as well as shared narrative intent, it appears most likely that Mimbres is the primary source of material influence on Three Rivers during the early phases of habitation and agricultural development. Mimbres pottery, like rock art, is known for its ceremonial importance and "narrative events," possibly explaining the easy adoption of its iconography at Three Rivers.[21]

Rock art exhibits deliberate adopted stylistic elements. In the case of Three Rivers, the exploration of these hybridized elements concerns transcultural influences between Mimbres and Mesoamerica, particularly the Casas Grandes region. However,

even if Casas Grandes developed as a center of trade and influence in response to increased complexity within the Chihuahua corridor prior to Paquimé's proposed Medio period of the late thirteenth century, the material evidence from both areas suggest that this influence was filtered through Mimbres ceramics. Indeed, Randall McGuire suggests that the majority of ceramics at Casas Grandes came from the north, i.e. Mimbres, rather than Mesoamerica, and that even if Three Rivers traded for Casas Grandes ceramics, the iconography would still be more closely related to Mimbres than Mesoamerica.[22] The fact that both Three Rivers and Casas Grandes iconography developed to closely resemble Mimbres Black-on-white ceramic iconography suggests a shared metanarrative between these three groups, and the transference of ideologies. Such a shared metanarrative and the performative nature of the materials and iconography employed to express it were also important components of how such ideas evolved in the Rio Grande in the Pueblo IV period.

Iconography is an evocative dialectic tool. The challenge arises in the fact that the available context for interpreting the rock art at Three Rivers is based on archaeological data, landscape, and symbolic interpretations rather than the broad system of cosmological and cultural understanding common to the ancient Mogollon viewer. This analysis will project iconography onto a wider canvas of cultural intent and explore the cross-cultural exchange of ideas between Mimbres, Casas Grandes, and Three Rivers.

Chapter 2 – Expansion of a Mimbres Metanarrative

The metanarrative is a useful framework by which to conduct comparative analysis between Three Rivers and the iconography of other cultural areas. Through this analysis, it becomes clear that Mimbres and Three Rivers shared much more than superficial aesthetic traits, and that observations about one area inform theories about the other. The differences between rock art and ceramics should not detract from a shared ideology as expressed through both media. Such expression is highly dependent upon available materials and other pragmatic considerations. The performative use of rocks at Three Rivers that simultaneously depicted narrative scenes and symbolic elements so similar to the content of Mimbres Black-on-white pots illuminates new ways of considering the metanarrative enacted in the iconographic content of both cultural areas. The styles and iconography characteristic of Classic Mimbres Black-on-white ceramics were likely dispersed to areas like Three Rivers, where they were integrated into rock art as a material suited for mass impact. By depicting symbolic elements on these animated forms, a ritual performance is enacted and cultural messages are imparted through rock art. This chapter addresses the development of the Mimbres Classic period metanarrative, how it was expressed on black-on-white ceramic iconography, and how this metanarrative may have been transferred and enhanced on the rock art at Three Rivers.

All too often images on rocks and ceramics are disembodied and decontextualized through the process of archaeological survey classification, removed from the cultural context that informs their significance and situates them as part of a metanarrative.

Individual images are isolated into discrete categories rather than viewing them as inexorably linked to particular surfaces, panels, galleries, and landscapes. Icons are not discrete units, but rather part of a much larger communicative system in which surfaces, viewers, performers, and icons all interact and create meaning. The concepts of structural anthropology and linguistics inform our view of how art communicates through iconography. These theories transcend literal translations of symbolism and the limitations of quantitative and rigidly delineated motif categories to consider inclusive systems views that build cultural context towards a metanarrative. Theories such as phenomenology and semiotics consider viewer interaction, performance, and temporal particularities beyond the singular image. Even the more categorical approaches of structuralists such as James Deetz and Claude Levi-Strauss integrate a broader contextual view of how cultures express units of communication, including the units of iconography. Along with the narrative theories of Barthes, Boone, and Martin, this structural framework does provide the tools for approaching ancient rock art and ceramics in a way that moves beyond the surveys that isolate art as decontextualized objects. Using these various theories of narrative and symbolic anthropology as the underlying structure of this exploration, we can consider the material aspects of a metanarrative that began at Mimbres, then likely spread to Three Rivers and beyond.

At Three Rivers, the cultural intent seems to have been in large part to carry on the iconographic program narrated in Mimbres Black-on-white pottery. According to Polly Schaafsma, "it is apparent via the rock art of the [Jornada Mogollon] region that Mimbres religious ideology and its associated art forms survived in other media."[23] This choice of medium may have been either by necessity or intent - the resources in the area

seem unsuitable to painted black-on-white pottery, but rock art in this landscape may have also appeared an easy large-scale solution to the problem of iconographic continuity.[24] Though utilizing different materials, according to Brody, "these quite different arts [ceramics and rock art] may be interpreted as aspects of a unified philosophical expression."[25] For whatever reason, Classic Black-on-white was abandoned in the Mimbres Valley after AD 1150. The continuity of the style and its narrative intent at Three Rivers indicates the cultural continuity of Mimbres, and explains better than previous theories how Mimbres traditions would go on to influence the development of Paquimé and the Rio Grande pueblos.

To truly understand the dynamics at play in the evolution of rock art as a perfomative and communicative art at Three Rivers, we must first understand the configuration of Mimbres society and its attendant artistic tradition. The Mimbres population numbered around 5000 by the time of Classic dispersal, ca. AD 1150, which indicates an approximate sixteen-fold growth in the Mimbres Valley between AD 200 and 1150.[26] Movement from pithouses to pueblos with multiple roomblocks suggests social reorganization, and kinship units probably developed at a level between household and community at large.[27] Darrell Creel suggests that social change occurred quite rapidly with agricultural intensification and irrigation after about AD 800, and that evidence shows multiple groups at levels of household, corporate unit, and community.[28] As the population increased past the point of resource availability, there was even greater need for social control and rigid ceremonialism.[29] In response to increasing population aggregation and complexity, Mimbres also developed various artistic innovations and practices, perhaps even early versions of katsina ceremonies.[30]

Ceremonial space could be used as a way to delineate social boundaries, while unequal power and control of ritual knowledge is suggested in the distribution of ceremonial space in the distinction between open plazas and what Shafer terms "corporate kivas" to indicate the use of private, controlled kiva space by smaller delineated groups and the subsequent esoteric dispersal among select members of society.[31] Sarah Clayton also points out that while southwestern societies are often viewed as egalitarian, the evidence of limiting esoteric knowledge in the form of shamanism or ritual negates this purely integrative view and indicates at least some level of social differentiation.[32] This observation leads to the possible role of artists, both potters at Mimbres and rock artists at Three Rivers, as possessors of a unique set of iconographic knowledge essential to a complex cultural configuration. Through these roles at Mimbres, "initial management efforts were affected via iconographically borne ideology carried in the designs of the Black-on-white pottery."[33]

Mimbres seems to have been comprised of various communities of core families with some degree of control and authority over esoteric matters.[34] Ceramics come into play as a tool of information exchange as well as delineating cultural dynamics. While the narrative content of Mimbres Black-on-white pottery suggests intriguing glimpses into the interplay of these components, an exploration of iconography does not lead to direct translation of cultural complexities. While animal icons and other specific markers are indubitably powerful tools of communication and possible marks of identity and social delineation, their specific meaning is not a plausible research query. The approach requires a different starting point altogether, one that considers artistic intent as a social, narrative, and performative tool.

In combination with tools of ethnographic correlations between other likely Pueblo successors to Mimbres cultural elements such as those seen at Zuni, the dynamics of pottery as a cohesive and perfomative social tool are elucidated. This approach must be carefully considered in order to be applicable. One useful method is to apply Edward Dozier's qualifications for ethnographic comparison, which include temporality and "comparable sociocultural organization and economy."[35] The fact that communal spaces within the Mimbres communities grew larger in later phases suggests both a need for larger spaces and a greater degree of public ceremony and elaboration of ceremonial behavior.[36] This idea potentially ties together the artistic intent at Mimbres with the rock art at Three Rivers, despite the differences in media and surface.

The narrative elements of Black-on-white ceramics and rock art may function as tools of this system, in various ways that will be explored. As J.J. Brody describes it, art "structures out" conceptions of the universe, and particular artistic media are chosen for their unique properties to give visual representation to this structured worldview.[37] While the pictorial tradition developed in black-on-white pottery may have come from cultural exchange, at Mimbres it was developed into a wholly unique narrative vision. The style was a combination of abstract and figural designs, a mix of representational and mythological animals, creating multiple layers of hybridity and signification. This union of oppositions may be intricately related to the oral puebloan traditions in which abstraction is both encoding and explicating concepts that transcend literalism.[38]

As Mimbres society became more complex in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the need for such abstraction increased in the explanation of duality and competing forces -

abundance and lack, growth and dispersal. The emphasis on contrasts, balance, oppositions, and transformation increased simultaneously. These are what Rina Swentzell calls "perceptual shifts," seeking balance in duality and manifested in cultural performances such as clowning and katsinas.[39] In some way, "nature was out of balance in the Mimbres Valley, and the basic abstract structures of the people's paintings, as well as much of their iconography, can reasonably be interpreted as visual prayers for harmony and efforts to acquire symbolic control over a deteriorating world."[40]

The amount of Classic Mimbres Black-on-white ceramics at sites in the Three Rivers area is simply not sufficient to explain the stylistic and iconographic adoption of Mimbres design elements in the rock art. For whatever reason, ceramic assemblages in the Three Rivers region suggest that pottery did not convey the same symbolic or narrative messages through figural representations as the rock art. Undeniable stylistic connections make the presence of Mimbres artists a possible theory, but these artists apparently abandoned their previously ubiquitous representational black-on-white pottery in favor of perpetuating the Mimbres iconographic program on rock. The reasons for this shift in materials suggest intriguing explanations for the social purpose served by Three Rivers in the Post-Classic period.

Mimbres cosmology can be very useful in considering enigmatic imagery at Three Rivers. Though also an extremely complex visual system dependent on a context removed from our understanding, the prevalence of Classic Black-on-white imagery and repetitive motifs unfolds a narrative of creation and cosmology that utilizes the symbolism of duality and hybridity. What emerges are tales of interaction between

humans, in this realm and others, and various hybridized beings. The conflicts and resolutions determine the development of Mimbres society and the longevity of the Mimbres people. In particular, the hero twins (themselves the ultimate symbols of duality - weak and strong, alive and dead, later male and female) are depicted in this struggle for emergence and balance in various interactions with other creatures. They die and are reborn, holding an eternal connection to life through a string attached to the head. In this complex imagery, the correlation between Mimbres and Three Rivers is solidified. Not only are there hybridized animals and narrative scenes of humans in conflict with animals (replete with the same geometric body fill), but human heads attached to strings. Whatever stories were being told on Mimbres pots, the same stories seem to unfold on the rocks at Three Rivers.

Susan Short has also compared the iconography of Mimbres and Three Rivers in a way that is useful to this study. Her motif analysis is a useful starting-point for exploring these similarities and using them comparatively. In particular, Short notes the stylistic and compositional similarity between Three Rivers animals and those depicted on the pottery at Cameron Creek and Galaz in the Mimbres Valley, and theorizes that Three Rivers is part of the same style area as the Mimbres Valley.[41] While previous scholars diagnostically differentiated Mimbres from Jornada Mogollon based on the presence of masks as a motif unit, Short disputes this distinction by considering the way masks perform on rock art at Three Rivers as in effect prototypical of the way masks perform in Mimbres ceramics.[42]

A close investigation of the styles at Three Rivers in comparison to Mimbres Black-on-white and in comparison to rock art sites of the Mogollon and Mimbres regions

supports the theory that the rock art at Three Rivers is conceptually tied to Mimbres. Not only is the use of positive and negative space achieved in similar image applications and in a conscious aesthetic manner distinct from other rock art sites, but according to Short's study animals are depicted in nearly identical frequencies to those seen on Classic Black-on-white.[43]

Stewart, Matousek and Kelley note that in most cases rock art and other media, due to their material dissimilarity, are also very stylistically different, and the fact that they are so similar at Three Rivers is quite notable.[44] Short believes that the stylistic similarities at Three Rivers are more pronounced than at Mimbres rock art sites such as Pony Hills (also closely analyzed in her study), and proposes that "analysis of the…basic body shapes of animals, the body fill patterns and the association patterns, provides the basis for proposing a Mimbres stylistic canon."[45] The application of this canon at Three Rivers presents one way to systematically compare the two styles. Working from Short's detailed quantitative analysis (based upon five categories of comparison: uniform perspective and number of legs; uniform identifying characteristics; the combination of elements suggesting infinite variety; three-dimensionality; and variability of associations between figures), a more convincing connection between Three Rivers and Mimbres emerges.

The use of specific motifs, such as the depiction of anthropomorphic figures inside fish bodies, appears unique to Mimbres ceramics and Three Rivers rock art.[46] When fish appear at Hueco Tanks, for example, they are largely ornamental or part of mask imagery. This image, in its composite simplicity, manages to convey a complex

narrative through the use of hybridity. Within such images, the use of geometric patterns (including the immediately recognizable checkerboard pattern so common to Mimbres Black-on-white) for body fill creates an immediate visual correlation between the two. While fill is used to a certain extent for anthropomorphic figures and other Mogollon imagery, nowhere else is it depicted in a manner so stylistically similar to the unique patterning of animal bodies and borders in Classic Black-on-white (except perhaps in Ramos Polychrome ceramics).

Bighorn sheep appear to be the most common animal depicted at Three Rivers, and even a cursory exploration of Mimbres imagery turns up countless examples of these animals, with the same style and in the same positions. One of the most well-known boulders at Three Rivers shows a sheep pierced with an arrow, another active narrative scene. Importantly, a very similar bighorn pierced with arrows is shown on a Classic Black-on-white pot from Cameron Creek.[47]

A useful starting point for analyzing the animal motifs utilized is based on ethnographic continuity, in the sense that Zuni and Hopi classify animals according to their game, prey, or water-bringing properties.[48] According to Short, "seventy percent of the animal subjects depicted in the [Mimbres] bowls are members of the modern Pueblo 'water-bringers' group, whose role is to serve as intermediaries between people and the spirit world to ensure adequate rainfall and prosperity."[49] Birds are the most common in her image group, followed by fish and insects.[50] Further bolstering the idea that such images were used as tools of social differentiation, Short believes "there is substantial support for the idea that these animal images were tropes for central, social, religious, and

political ideas for the Mimbres people," and that the same agenda was purposefully enacted at Three Rivers.[51]

As Short discovered in her research, the same configuration of elements is closely mirrored at Three Rivers – a discovery corroborated by the observations in this study. While Mimbres rock art sites such as Pony Hills show similar distributions of subject types as Classic Black-on-white ceramics, there are different concentrations of animal types, indicating different communication intent.[52] This suggests that the symbolic elements depicted in the Black-on-white ceramics of the Mimbres Valley were more similar in intent to Three Rivers than other Mimbres rock art sites, further bolstering the case for direct cultural continuity.

In using modern ceremonial ethnography to consider Mimbres iconography, Short explains that such game animals are also the most common in ceremonial Pueblo dances, including their depiction on tablitas and poles.[53] The predominance of certain animals over others suggests the importance of animals such as pronghorns in ceremony. She believes that such animals shown in ceramics and petroglyphs represent the same stylistic canon between Mimbres and Three Rivers, one that binds sacred poles, cloud terraces, and game animals such as antelopes and pronghorns together in a complex of symbolic performative meaning.[54]

Certain other motifs, such as goggle-eyed figures (offering intriguing suggestions of the broad adoption of Mesoamerican motifs such as Tlaloc), are present at other Mogollon sites, as well as northern Mexico, and therefore are not quite as useful as comparative diagnostics. They may have also been used intentionally as both markers of

identity and ritual/performative tools. Other motifs such as the cloud terrace, seen at both Hueco Tanks and Three Rivers, may have been introduced to the Eastern Mogollon from Mimbres.[55] Later Pueblo designs also include cloud terraces, often in combination with faces or masks.[56] This composite is seen in several images at Three Rivers, where animals stand with ceremonial accoutrements and cloud terraces, suggesting symbolic ceremonial properties. Another image, similar to Mimbres pottery, shows a human in the same pose in conjunction with a cloud terrace, possibly connecting the imagery to the modern pueblo tablita and considerations of ethnographic continuity.[57]

Specific ceramics developed at Mimbres, such as effigy jars, are in fact quite similar in appearance to rock art figures as depicted on individual boulders, indicating a similar intent.[58] Such narrative intent utilized materials to approach an ideal union of oppositions, in which "that hidden nature sometimes appears to be depicted as a parallel universe, where present, past, and future were simultaneously accessible."[59] Along with an indication of rather strict social control and differentiation, figurative images have led to a suggestion of a Mimbres "cult of the dead" and the representation of realms beyond the physical worldly plane.[60] Art thus becomes an atemporal tool of communication between realms, connecting the ancestors and the multiple levels of the universe.

Artifactual connotation is particularly difficult at Three Rivers due to the lack of material evidence, and therefore dating methods are speculative. Stylistic analysis becomes the most important tool for analyzing the abundant material evidence represented by rock art. Most scholars have worked from the theory that Three Rivers and Mimbres were roughly contemporaneous due to these stylistic similarities, indicating

a fluorescence before the Mimbres dispersal ca. AD 1150. However, it is also possible that the absence of Classic Black-on-white trade ware and the appearance of new petroglyph styles indicate a post-Classic period migration. It is generally thought that migrants from Mimbres traveled south and east after the Classic period collapse, and multiple sites around Three Rivers are likely destinations.

Working from the theory that Three Rivers represents a possible migration of Mimbres artists, rock art takes on the power suggested by George Nash as a way to control both space and knowledge and a sign of legitimacy.[61] There is a differentiation of space in the largest pueblo site in the area, containing nine roomblocks with twenty to thirty rooms of various sizes indicating possible social distinctions.[62] The residential areas in the Three Rivers region date from the pithouse to Pueblo IV periods (ca. AD 750-1400, including the wood beams dated to AD 1347), indicating a long-term presence.[63] However, the rock art is stylistically cohesive enough to suggest a shorter period of artistic production.

Short believes that the architectural and ceramic evidence suggests primary site usage after AD 1200, including the dispersal of ceramics in the habitation sites, including Chupadero Black-on-white, Three Rivers Red-on-tan, and El Paso Polychrome - all commonly found at post-Classic Mimbres sites.[64] The lack of Mimbres Classic Black-on-white ceramics at Three Rivers calls into question the idea that the presence of ceramics informs rock art iconography. However, the fact that petroglyph iconography at Three Rivers is intriguingly similar to Mimbres iconography as depicted on both rock

surfaces and ceramics suggests the presence of Mimbres ideology at Three Rivers, possibly in the form of migrants rather than portable items of material culture.

In a certain sense, these new interpretations also draw upon analyses of landscape, semiotics, and performance to create a cohesive picture of a cultural system. According to David Schneider, "culture...forms the unifying principle(s) for the total normative system by providing a single set of symbols and meanings to which each differentiated part of the normative system is related," developing generative and productive semiotic functions in derivations, changes, and innovations.[65] The suggestion of Mimbres artistic presence at Three Rivers establishes a previously inaccessible ethnohistorical framework for locating cultural continuity and solidifying the contextual basis of this site-specific rock art. In this way, the archaeological semiotics of previous scholars applying ethnohistorical continuity models to their particular locations of study may be applied here as well.

One area of semiotics by which Three Rivers can be explored in detail is in the performance of ritual within the landscape. Solveig Turpin writes: "The ritual activity in turn contributes to the sanctification of nodes or centers of cyclical nucleation, defining sacred spaces or places that are recognized by the community and affect its physical and social configuration."[66] Turpin suggests that sacred spaces were developed as societies evolved from foragers to increasingly sedentary communities, and that rock art indicating a settlement nucleus was "part of a symbolic system generated to compensate for increased population density."[67] This "Schaedelian Model" is one way of viewing rock art as a landscape marker. It also integrates the exploration of rocks as physical entities

integrating characteristics of the environment, which is particularly notable at Three Rivers. Landscape context is key, and, as Thomas Heyd asserts, "rock art is utterly dependent on, and hence in dialogue with the place it is in."[68] This corroborates Polly Schaafsma's theory that the more prolific use of rock art in the Jornada Mogollon region and the later Rio Grande Pueblos may be an attempt at larger scale performance of ancestral continuity than was possible through the relatively limited visual exposure of ceramics.[69] Though these art forms are quite different in form, function, and artistry, their utility as tools for expressing a shared metanarrative relates them in important ways.

Turpin believes that rock art size and complexity indicates ritual and group participation, and the size and extent of the Three Rivers site would certainly qualify under these guidelines.[70] All rock art may not be sacred or used to mark shrine areas, but all may convey messages about the land. In the case of the Jornada Mogollon and other early Pueblo groups, these messages may concern a central place or emergence site. Evidence from rock art sites and modern pueblo ethnographic studies indicates that more emphasis is placed on natural shapes than man-made shapes, and that cracks in boulders may be important features and symbols of an inner realm (*Figure 2*).[71] The proclivity towards trapezoidal boulder shapes mirrors the depiction of trapezoidal anthropomorphs (often compared to Tlaloc figures when accompanied by goggle-eyed heads), and also the appearance of bodies attended to the funerary practice of being wrapped in white "cloud-like" cloths.[72] In the wide-reaching symbolism of rain, mountains, underworld, and regeneration symbolized throughout the Southwest, various ceremonies were performed near mountains as an evocation of the properties associated with such deities.

While there are also similarities between Three Rivers imagery and that of other Eastern Mogollon sites such as Hueco Tanks, the difference in style and intent is notable. Not only is Three Rivers one of the most prolific rock art sites in the world, it is also one of the most open and accessible.[73] Its art is quintessentially public.

Figure 2

Figure 3

Compare that to a site such as Fort Stanton, deep in a canyon and isolated to a single boulder, or especially Hueco Tanks, where the plethora of painted images are largely hidden from view. In many cases they can only be seen by scrambling up a random group of boulders and looking up at the ceiling of a tight crawlspace.

As various world rock art scholars such as Jon Nygard note, the shapes of rocks and unusual formations may also indicate a preferable location.[74]

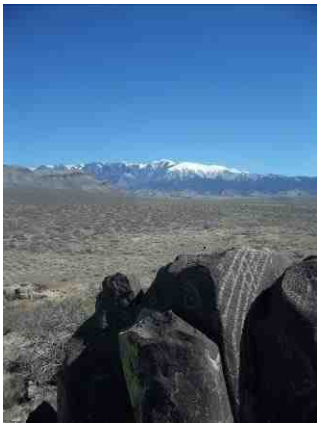

Figure 4

View of the Three Rivers site with the Sacramento Mountains in distance

This is certainly true at Three Rivers, where a field of basalt boulders starkly marks the site apart from the surrounding desert and mountains. According to George Nash, "rock art establishes a place (from space). A place requires the basic of human responses, that of experience. The act of initially choosing the place, using the place and then visiting the place requires a high degree of social organisation."[75] This speaks to the application of Mimbres social organization and proto-puebloan ritual dynamics. Such a site thus becomes part of the landscape, in which features act as signs for time, belonging, and meaning. Indeed, "the construction of landscape becomes a critique; a collection of chapters that are chronologically and geographically ordered. With each moment in time, individuals add more to these chapters, creating this sense of meaningful space."[76] Cognitive structure is created from landscape and objects within the landscape.

The more time spent at Three Rivers, the more patterns emerge that hint at answers to what at first seem hopelessly enigmatic questions. It does not take long to observe that the boulders were conceived as active objects, and it is a reasonable assumption that they conceptually transformed into organic beings in a performative sense. This is visible from the first mask pecked to integrate the rock features into facial features, giving the appearance of a boulder about to come to life.

Figure 5

Not only do the images appear to have been arranged thematically to a certain extent, but also into viewing galleries in which discrete narratives take place. Short's fieldwork at Three Rivers used this technique within a sampling strategy to isolate elements, panels (containing related elements), and galleries (containing related panels).[77]

The performance, whether acted out with live human interaction or viewed in the images on individual boulders or panels, combined complex semiotic factors into a tangible exposition of a Three Rivers culture that integrated Mimbres cosmology with elements adopted from other Mogollon groups. It was itself a hybrid, responding to the challenges or cultural transition by making intentional artistic statements about continuity and change. We are not the intended audience for this space, and thus for us the performance will always lack a key component. However, in the continuity and exchange between Mimbres and other Mogollon groups, certain ideas are elucidated. We start to see in the narrative intent of Classic Black-on-white pottery the precursors of communicative tools enacted at Three Rivers. Both art forms attempt to tell a story to a wider audience, an audience dependent upon the story for information on how to function as a society.

Working from modern ethnographic models such as the various studies at Zuni, ritualistic uses of rock art within the landscape take shape. Dario Seglie explains that "rock art is to be considered the tip of the iceberg of the great category of the sacred," defining and expanding other understandings of sacred practices within a culture.[78] Short thinks that images such as animals holding poles depict actual ceremonies similar to those of the modern pueblos, and that abstract designs may be symbolic.[79] The propensity of boulders to take on physical characteristics, seen both at Zuni and Three Rivers, may relate directly to the role of katsinas. According to Polly Schaafsma, "the rock art in the landscape similarly indicate that one specific function for kachina figures on high points of land, in rock recesses, and in secluded shelters was to tie the deceased into the cosmic forces that inhabit these realms."[80] Employing the same diagnostics used to compare Mexican deities, Schaafsma claims characteristics such as geometric designs symbolize clouds and lightning and correlate to the physical presence of Tlaloc in a "shared ideological matrix."[81]

The conception of Three Rivers as a performative narrative space within a particular landscape depends upon a careful consideration of physical semiotics. As boulders take on the physical characteristics of organisms, change with the weather and shifting environment, cast shadows, develop cracks and transform in various ways just as humans and animals do, they also take on semiotic functions.


Figure 6

As templates for artistic and communicative functions, the application of iconography upon boulder surfaces enhances and integrates these characteristics. Images may take on the properties of the rock, particularly at certain times of the day or the year when they are struck in particular ways by the light in a version of "environmental theater."[82]

In this way, the theories of phenomenology (most simply defined as "being-in-the-world") also play an important role.[83] Even geometric and abstract designs, ubiquitous within the most figurative art at Three Rivers (and Mimbres Classic Black-on-white ceramics), may, in fact, represent images of visual phenomena.[84] It is possible that the performative use of rock art at Three Rivers was part of a complex system of phenomenological particularity, much like the cave art of prehistoric Europe that seems to have depended upon firelight for the reception of the animals depicted on the walls. It is certainly possible that similar performative considerations were at work at Three Rivers and other Mogollon sites. In George Nash's terms, such images were meant to "come alive" during different times of the day.[85] Whether affected by firelight or simply the shifting rays of the sun, a cursory visit to the site reveals images that shift and

perform in different ways over time. Thomas Heyd compares this performance to music - "scores awaiting realisation in actual performance."[86]

Individual viewer phenomenology also dictates the experience and interpretation of rock art. The way light hits particular rocks at certain times of the day changes the viewing experience, as does the sequence and mental connections established based upon complex aspects of individual context. George Nash points out that in most cases, rock art is studied without consideration of these individual reactions, both of the researcher and the intended audience. The importance of phenomenology is that it attempts to move beyond empiricist approaches to consider experience and subjectivity.

The mere presence of more than 21,000 images at Three Rivers means that each viewing experience is different, and each individual viewer could visit the site hundreds of times and see different images and connections every time. The prehistoric artists and viewers of this site had an esoteric knowledge of placement and image relationships about which we can merely speculate. It appears that in many cases sections were thematic (i.e. one grouping of abstracted spirals or horns, one section of water-bringing quadrupeds, etc.) , and a careful exploration of the site uncovers patterns and dialectic connections.

Figure 7

This relates to M. Jane Young's ethnographic study at Zuni, in which she noted that, "if rock images have power, a power that can be imparted to the places where they are made, then several images placed in close proximity to one another might make that place even more powerful."[87]

Nygard sees rock art images as instructions for behavior and ritual, metaphorical and transcending theories of "hunting magic" in that it tends to depict animals not hunted.[88] As such, both image and placement of image are equally important. B.K. Swartz points out that North American archaeologists tend to fall into two opposing schools of thought regarding petroglyph meaning - either that it is aesthetic and ceremonial or a pragmatic marker of directions, maps, identification, signals, or instructions.[89] Taking a semiotic approach makes both these communication intentions simultaneously possible as aspects of the metanarrative.

Within the realm of metanarrative, particular iconographic choices act graphically and symbolically. According to Carl Jung, "a symbol is always the best possible expression of a relatively unknown fact."[90] Symbols are therefore the tools of semasiography by which complex facts are imparted through symbolic expression and multiple levels of context. Common rock art icons such as animals may act as metaphors, rhetorical devices, and representations of contradictions.[91] They also act as tools of phenomenological distinction and semiotic exchange, according to cognitive archaeologists (Renfrew et al.).[92] Animals used metaphorically in different positions and relationships develop symbolic meaning in the connotations of images and communicate

cultural continuity and the ethnohistorical framework, including possible power relationships denoted by the access to iconographic knowledge.[93]

Figure 8

"Combination animals" such as quadrupeds and pronghorn sheep/bird images at Three Rivers may indicate clan relationships, marriages, or various other social identification markers.[94] Abstract designs may also be clan markers or other symbols more closely related to language than previously understood. The metaphorical, graphical function of animals as symbols and modifiers is suggested in their transcendence of "hunting magic" categories. Even though animals such as rabbits were a common source of meat, their presence is relatively rare in the rock art at Three Rivers or on Mimbres Black-on-white ceramics.[95] This speaks to the action of a "material metaphor" as "a representation or group of representations that encapsulate in material form certain kinds of moral or social or ritual relationships, or certain kinds of interaction, by means of either a simple metaphorical or complex proverbial portrayal of objects or creatures."[96]

As Dusan Boric observes, "the role of the body as the site of ontological differentiation between different kinds of things" is achieved through animality and hybridity often practiced in shamanism or a cosmologically tiered worldview such as that of the pueblos.[97] Culture is inclusive but bodies are differentiated, and, according to

James Deetz, culture is a gestalt comprising the mental template that creates an object.[98] Boric uses the term "Amerindian perspectivism" to explain the belief he sees inherent to Native North and South America that all beings are embodied by the same spirit, but the body (i.e. the embodied icon) is the site of differentiation and therefore semiotic meaning as achieved through imagery and icon-making.[99] He goes on to explain that "the mimetic process of image-making should not be considered a naturalistic representation or copy of the mundane reality of early prehistory, but can be more appropriately connected to the desire to expose the true structure of being, or, in terms of Amerindian perspectivism, the soul counterpart of the body in another world."[100] This allows an understanding of rock art that moves beyond informational or functionalist approaches to include shamanism and metaphor.

Building upon linguistic and iconographic theories, archaeological semiotics comprises the framework for determining the metanarrative at Three Rivers. According to Jean Molino, semiotics simply means "something stands for something else, takes the place of something else, plays the part of something else, refers to something other than itself."[101] Within this most basic definition lies a range of interpretive possibilities. Levi-Strauss, building off the linguistic work of Saussure, sought meaning in systems and relationships between cultural units similar to linguistic units, seeking a system of "bricolage" in which events and structures fit together and yet are also constantly in the process of breaking down and reforming in different configurations and relationships.[102] This explains how images act linguistically within an artistic and cultural system "to offer a series of intermediate forms which insure the transition from symbol to meaning, from magical to normal, from supernatural to social."[103] Structural linguistics seeks

relationships and systems, systems comprised of units (like linguistic components such as phonemes) of kinship.[104] Levi-Strauss and his followers have shown how symbols work in a system of duality, which is intrinsic to an understanding of puebloan prehistory and worldview.

Semiotics paved the way for "symbolic anthropology," a cultural system in which meaning is understood through symbols, "a system of symbols by which humans confer significance upon their experience."[105] In a sense, each person is also a unit within a culture as a "system of symbols and meanings."[106] Within this system events and symbols, from an icon to a cockfight, can be read graphically (or semasiographically). This is where the concept of semasiography as a language of signs dependent on metanarratological knowledge and context applies to the discussion of art. Individual units of meaning take on linguistic characteristics and properties. Significantly, Keith Ray calls such units "material metaphors."[107]

For James Deetz, "factemes" and "formemes," like the minimum phoneme unit in language, constitute the "minimum class of objects that has functional significance" in archaeology.[108] According to Victor Turner, symbols are similarly discrete units of ritual context.[109] Within social structure, objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures, and spatial units inform the symbols which impart such structural ritual meaning. As post-structuralism developed in linguistics, so too did a greater archaeological semiotic interest in rhetorical devices such as symbols and metaphors.[110] Working from these ideas, the iconography at Three Rivers can be approached from both a performative and a

linguistic context, applying the rubric of semiotics onto concepts of metanarrative and semasiography.

Christopher Chippindale's theory of "generative grammar" is particularly useful for the semiotic approach to rock art as well as basic stylistic analysis in which concepts of style play a role in prehistoric meaning discerned through analogy and inference.[111] This theory basically states that pictures have meaning somewhere between artifact and text, meaning that can be translated through an understanding of the context and underlying morphology. Each discrete unit or image is functional within its semiotic function in a particular generative grammar.

The presence of particular elements at Three Rivers (such as horned quadrupeds and circle-dot motifs) suggests a generative grammar distinct from other contemporaneous Mogollon sites, as well as a particularized site use and ideation.[112] The comparison of Mimbres ceramic iconography and Three Rivers iconography makes clear that similar generative grammars were at work. Birds, more likely in both cases to be independent of other images, were similarly depicted on both media.[113] Other animals, such as fish and bighorn sheep, are depicted in ways that suggest they are part of a grammar that requires modifiers (such as abstract patterns) to establish meaning.[114] Chippindale also points out that patterns can be found in any artifact, and without context the threat of misleading connections must be avoided.

Certain motifs at Three Rivers, in their placement, repetition, and ubiquity, appear to express meaning for surrounding images or image panels. These motifs potentially act as modifiers within the generative grammar, denoting particular expressions of action and

information within a uniquely conceptualized semiotic system. The most prominent of these symbols is the circle-and-dot, depicted more often than any other motif at Three Rivers.

Figure 9

One of the many examples of a circle-and-dot at Three Rivers

It is also notable as a motif relatively unique to this site - while it has variants at other Mogollon and Rio Grande sites, nowhere is it so prevalent or so uniform. The repetition of the circle-and-dot in a variety of scenes and alongside a variety of image categories indicates its presence as a modifier. It may act in a broadly semasiographic manner or even semi-glottographically, similar to the glyphic systems of Mesoamerica. Within a semasiographic interpretation, the circle-and-dot would be a broadly recognizable sign corresponding to its placement and context. A more glottographic reading introduces the possibility of geographical notation, dating, or numerical systems, and other identifying modifiers often used in the glyphic cultures. Other possible examples at Three Rivers include alternative lines and dots in sequence and even possibly animal tracks and other modifiers.


Figure 10

It is quite possible that Three Rivers represents a communicative system that draws from multiple levels of communication. In any case, the modifying motifs also function as art, as icons. Artistic interpretation is equally dependent on visual literacy. A Baroque still life may be nothing more than an opulent table of lemons and oysters without the proper context to interpret its meaning. It is not within our grasp to attempt interpretation for ancient rock art, only to put a finger on its functionality as a cultural system and use that knowledge to broaden our view.

As tools of performance, rock art utilizes iconography in specific narrative ways. In terms of the generative grammar, stylization and abstraction may be used as shorthand for representational concepts such as animals or their cosmological properties. The use of abstractions such as meander lines, circle-and-dot designs, continuous linear patterns and the like may be much more expressive of representational concepts than they appear to the decontextualized eye. One example of this at Three Rivers is the broken spiral, one of the motifs found within a thematically unified zone. At first glance this pattern appears as an elegant abstraction, but closer inspection reveals the possibility of stylized linked horns of a pronghorn or antelope.

Figure 11

Though not as prevalent or unique, other modifiers are suggested in their location and repetition. These include symbols similar to the circle-and-dot, such as concentric circles and spirals. Circles tend to be interpreted as celestial phenomena at any rock art site, regardless of supporting evidence. In certain cases this connection seems solid, such as the spiral at Fajada Butte in Chaco Canyon that is neatly bisected by a beam of sunlight at the winter solstice. Such obvious connections to celestial phenomena have not been observed at Three Rivers. However, it is also possible that celestial symbolism informs the meaning brought to such motifs as part of a larger grammar. Messages about continuity, connections, or even basic directionality may be imparted in their depiction.

Other possible modifiers such as bird, animal, and human tracks seem to represent directionality more clearly. They are also most commonly depicted near other images of animals or masks, or alongside action panels. Another intriguing image that may relate to counting or act as a numerical modifier is a series of solidly filled circles connected together in a line. Similar images are present at Hueco Tanks and are also common in the Central Mexican codices as counting devices.

The use of the circle-and-dot motif as a modifier is strongly suggested in its integration with anthropomorphs in a variety of scenes. One example is a boulder depicting a very simplified stick figure anthropomorph whose head is a circle surrounded

by dots. Another example is the breathtaking monumental panel of a mountain sheep ridden by an enigmatically smiling anthropomorph, also crowned by dots.

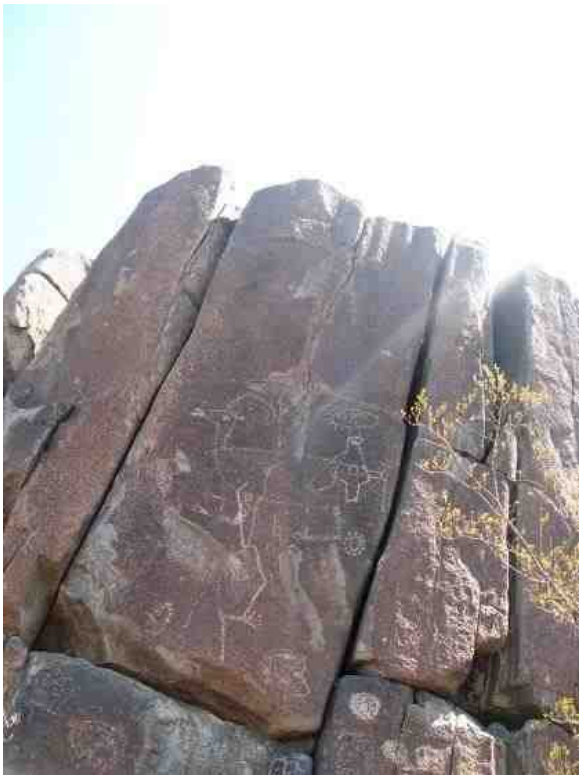

Figure 12

This progression suggests how increasing abstraction or geometricization was, in fact, a shorthand for more realistic imagery and even the most abstract designs may convey significant meaning.

It is also commonly believed that the geometric patterning ubiquitous to Mimbres Classic Black-on-white pottery is symbolic and part of a broader system of signification. If this is the case, the Three Rivers use of geometric body fill serves the same purpose and is itself a communicative modifier. Compounds and hybrids may also act as modifiers. In the same way linguistic compounds put together syllables to create words or contrast words to express contradiction, hybridity may be used in this visual system to

express more complex ideas. The properties denoted by a particular animal in a particular context are complicated by the addition of properties from another animal or anthropomorph.

Iconography was used in a performative manner in both ceramics and rock art, which is particularly notable in the Mimbres region and extending to the Jornada Mogollon. Even abstract and geometric designs represent the conjuring of forces and ritualistic symbolism. In the landscape this symbolism expresses meaning and identity, narrated through the invocation of water and mountains within an agricultural pantheon rooted in the social concepts established in the Mimbres culture.

Chapter 3 - The Casas Grandes Connection

From iconographic analyses of the material evidence at Casas Grandes in the northwestern region of present-day Mexico, it is apparent that there are notable similarities between this group and the Mogollon groups to the north.[115] This is particularly applicable to the considerations of Three Rivers as a transitional zone. These observations lead to several key points that relate to Three Rivers. The majority of material evidence, as will be developed below, shows that Casas Grandes traded predominantly with the north, particularly the Mogollon region, rather than south to Mesoamerica as has been widely speculated. Within this larger framework, other theories such as semasiography explain how communication was achieved through art forms such as ceramics and rock art.

The Ramos Polychrome ceramics of the Medio Period at Casas Grandes have distinct similarities to both Mimbres and Three Rivers, in apparent intent as well as content. Within the iconography that connects the puebloan cultural systems under discussion, the expression of an individual pot or image on rock is simply one component, one performer, of a much larger system of signification, also known as the metanarrative. Abstraction and modifiers were used in a similar generative grammar as part of the narrative intent connecting these cultures, expressed in the ritualistic and communicative nature of symbolic art. The revitalization of antiquated Mimbres designs at Casas Grandes bolsters our knowledge of narrative intent as a tool for social integration. The use of effigy forms also enhances the view of objects as performers of narrative intent. Transitional sites such as Three Rivers provide the continuity necessary

to transmit Mimbres ideologies. The longevity of rock art as a medium also guarantees the expression of the ideologies over many centuries. As such, antiquated imagery could easily be integrated into later iconographic programs, such as the one at Casas Grandes.

Though various groups populated the Casas Grandes region during the first millennium of the common era, it was only during the Medio Period that major population increase occurred at Paquimé (currently part of the state of Chihuahua in northwest Mexico), and the site rose to prominence as a major cultural trade center and locus for trade and production. Most scholars now date the Medio period from around 1250-1475 (e.g. Dean and Ravesloot, 1993; Rakita and Raymond, 2003). It is possible that Three Rivers (as part of a broader Jornada Mogollon dispersal) was transitional during this time to the development of Casas Grandes culture, whether in the form of migrating populations or the transference of iconographic information.

Whatever interaction occurred between Three Rivers and Casas Grandes, it is possible that the evolution of the Mimbres iconographic program at Three Rivers was transitional to the integration of similar iconography at Casas Grandes. According to the new chronology, by the time of Ramos and other major polychrome innovations at Casas Grandes, Mimbres Classic Black-on-white had not been produced for one hundred years or more. In addition, there are very few examples of it in the region. How did Ramos Polychrome come to so closely resemble Mimbres Classic Black-on-white in style and intent? The answer to this question may lie in transitional zones such as Three Rivers. By considering certain commonalities not necessarily outwardly apparent using the

methodology of semiotics applied to iconography and form, these connections can be explored from a new perspective.

Casas Grandes developed as a regional trade center and locus of influence in the Southwest during the Medio period. At some point around 1200, there was a notable increase in the population of Paquimé, likely due to migration from other areas in the Southwest, notably the Mogollon.[116] The "great town" of Paquimé, with its large-scale public architecture, macaw-breeding facilities, and ballcourts, was built sometime after 1300.[117] Charles Di Peso dated the site 1060-1340, making it seem contemporaneous with Chaco Canyon and throwing off considerations of various migrations and cultural interactions.[118]

Archaeological data also shows that Mogollon culture was very influential to the development of Chihuahuan cultures, particularly Casas Grandes.[119] In fact, prior to the ascendency of Paquimé, Polly Schaafsma concludes that northern Mexico farming cultures were very similar to those of the Mogollon.[120] As early as 1936, scholars suggested Mogollon influence in ceramics and architecture at Casas Grandes, when E.B. Sayles wrote that "the cultural development of Chihuahua was due, almost exclusively, to impulses from the north and no single feature which occurs in the Southwest can be traced definitely to a southern origin."[121]

In these ways as well as through stylistic and ritual comparisons, Casas Grandes and Mogollon cultures share a distinct cultural heritage. Puebloan aspects are prevalent particularly in domestic architecture, in which households were combined with courtyards.[122] This is particularly compelling in terms of theories like Stephen Lekson's

that great kivas, and the development of the katsina cult in the Rio Grande Pueblos, are likely related phenomena.[123] Lekson also notes characteristics such as an apparent rectangular great kiva at Paquimé as evidence that, "after AD 1300, all these areas were part of the ancestral Pueblo region."[124]

Robert Lister concludes that "the Casas Grandes culture developed from a Mogollon base and, under Pueblo influence, spread eastward from the mountains and into northwestern Chihuahua and southwestern New Mexico."[125] During this phase, Casas Grandes culture developed traits that integrated elements from both north and south and subsequently spread into the larger Southwest.[126]

The southwestern connection is confirmed by scientific studies such as Christy Turner's informative dentition report of the crown morphology of the Southwest and Northern Mexico that indicates that some of the closest genetic similarities exist between Casas Grandes and Mimbres.[127] Ralph Beals suggests cultural continuity between Northern Mexico and the region now comprised of New Mexico based on horticultural similarities, social organization, and religious societies.[128] The fact that these cultures developed so similarly makes it all the more important to consider the multi-faceted sources for material development.

Lekson calls Paquimé "the largest of all prehistoric pueblos."[129] Additionally, the largest amount of imported ceramics at Casas Grandes came from the north, suggesting that even if Three Rivers traded for Paquimé ceramics, the iconography would still be more closely related to Mimbres than Mesoamerica.[130] Not only was Jornada brownware extremely common in the Medio period ceramic distributions, but earlier Red-on-brown

ceramics from the Viejo period closely resemble Jornada ceramics.[131] Even though "distant-stimulus models" that emphasize the influence of groups such as Central Mexican traders have been predominant in Casas Grandes scholarship, these overlook the idea of cultural continuity with groups such as the Mogollon.

Although the evidence clearly shows ethnic and cultural continuity with the Southwest, the influence of Mesoamerican cultures has been widely proposed by scholars such as Di Peso who thought the site was in fact a Toltec outpost on the route of pochteca traders moving from Mexico into the Southwest. It is true that Paquimé does contain material evidence tied to Mesoamerica, notably ball courts, shell, copper, and macaw breeding. However, there is little evidence of direct Mesoamerican interaction.[132] In fact, very little trade is apparent between Mesoamerica and Casas Grandes, and even though it may have been a large-scale local trade and distribution center, it is unlikely to have served this purpose for Mesoamerica. Studies working from Di Peso's extensive 1974 excavation data have largely looked to the south rather than the north for sources of influence, meaning that many aspects of early Pueblo culture may have been overlooked in the search for pochtecas.

The pochteca model proposed by Di Peso and others has been widely disputed in archaeological literature, and it is beyond the scope of this project to review these disputations. Undoubtedly there was some degree of Mesoamerican influence on the development of Paquimé. Whether this was filtered through the Hohokam cultures to the west rather than proscribed via pochteca traders, through migration or the spread of material culture, does not take away from the fact that Central Mexican traits are apparent

and part of the evolution of culture at Paquimé. The cults of Tlaloc and Quetzalcoatl have both been theorized to exist at Casas Grandes, as well as within the Jornada Mogollon and Mimbres regions, as part of the spread of maize and other agricultural production.[133] Indeed, "it is difficult to imagine that the seed and the techniques for growing corn were transmitted without added instructions as to the gods and rituals believed to be essential for an eventual harvest."[134]

Beals writes that "the random resemblances found among the farming peoples of the Greater Southwest are primarily due to selective reworking and adaptation of elements belonging to an earlier widespread cultural stratum of series of cultural influences."[135] This suggests a cultural palette approach, in which variant groups selected from widely divergent sources in order to develop according to particular cultural and socio-economic needs. In this context, Ramos Polychrome developed in the Medio period among various other polychrome styles, all of which were evidence of increasing cultural complexity manifested in the proliferation of iconography expressive of a socially integrative metanarrative.

Ceramics are the most abundant material remains recovered from Paquimé (as well as most other Southwest sites), indicating their importance within the developing society.[136] At least eight different polychrome types have been recognized at Paquimé, and the frequency increased throughout the Medio period in all regions.[137] They were, in fact, part of a larger semiotic system in which all parts of Paquimé contributed to a message of cultural fusion, integration, and hegemony, in which "the images of Casas Grandes pottery are part of a new physical environment of which the architecture of

Paquimé is also a principal expression."[138] In effect, as during the Mimbres Classic period, the use of iconography on Ramos Polychrome during the Medio Period at Casas Grandes acted as a tool of social cohesion and stabilization.[139]

Ramos Polychrome accounted for twelve percent of the ceramics collected during Di Peso's 1974 excavation, and is thus the most useful style for comparison and analysis.[140] The complex interaction of specific iconography on Ramos Polychrome ceramics engages the performative characteristics of Mimbres Classic Black-on-white and Three Rivers petroglyphs. While there are many examples of this dynamic in the art of the Southwest, these cultural groups represent connections that have been suggested tentatively through similarities in imagery, but not systematically explored through particular iconographies and the performative nature of material shown through formal analysis. The early ceramics at Paquimé were a Mogollon-style brownware, useful in a utilitarian manner but ineffective for expressing meaning.[141] From a survey conducted in 1936, Robert H. Lister concluded that "Chihuahua's earliest pottery-making culture was derived from a source in southern New Mexico of Mogollon affiliation, then received influence from the Mimbres area of southern New Mexico."[142]

The production of polychrome ceramics at Paquimé was possible due to the availability of high-quality white clay.[143] Globular jars are the most common form, resembling the effigy jars that were also an intrinsic part of the ceramic corpus.[144] The superficial similarity of Mimbres Classic Black-on-white to both Three Rivers rock art and Ramos Polychrome has been suggested in previous scholarship. These speculations are compelling, indicating connections between groups seemingly disconnected by time

and geography. However, they fail to bridge the gap to explain why these connections exist. While archaeology has provided valuable clues regarding the dispersal and development of material culture, artistic analysis that considers the metanarrative binding cultures that express an art imbued with narrative intent may work towards bridging that gap.

The development of expressive Ramos Polychrome at Casas Grandes shows distinct connections to Mimbres Classic Black-on-white ceramics, a fact that has often been noted in previous scholarship.

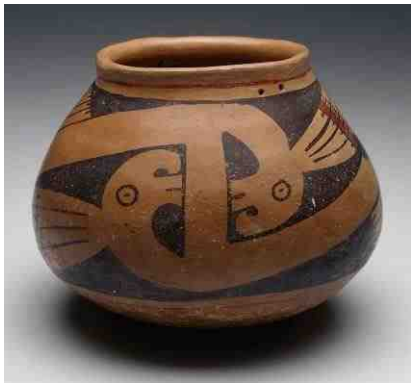

Figure 13

Figure 14

Rabbit iconography on pots from Casas Grandes (left) and Mimbres (right)

However, the conception of these ceramics as performative ritual tools in relation to both cultures has not been tied to these connections. More notably for the purpose of this research, the connection between the transference of Mimbres stylistic principles onto the rock art at Three Rivers and the underlying narrative/performative intent has not been explored for how these elements were also integrated into the art of Casas Grandes. Ramos Polychrome relates to Mimbres Classic Black-on-white ceramics in rather

obvious ways, and by extension to the rock art at Three Rivers in ways that have already been explored.

El Paso Polychrome from western Texas and southern New Mexico dating from around AD 1150 has been found at the Tinaja site near Paquimé, suggesting that the Mogollon influence in the area was well established before the Medio Period and likely played a significant role in the evolution of Ramos Polychrome.[145] El Paso Polychrome is by far the most common nonlocal ceramic found at Paquimé from the Medio Period, comprising ninety-four percent of the nonlocal assemblage.[146] This further solidifies the theory of a northern rather than southern trade focus. The number of Mesoamerican sherds at Paquimé is very small, and in fact decreases between the Viejo (dated ca. AD 700-1250) and the Medio period (dated ca. 1250-1475).[147] As early as 1936 E.B. Sayles proposed stylistic similarities between Mimbres and Casas Grandes, along with comparing Chihuahuan Red-on-brown to Mogollon Red-on-brown.[148] Applying a stylistic analysis of the "maze" and "meander" motifs common at both Mimbres and northwestern Chihuahua, he determined that the two cultures are closely connected.[149] What is compelling is the lack of Mimbres Black-on-white pottery at Paquimé during the Medio period.[150] Obviously new explanations are needed for the similarities between the two styles, such as the theory of Mogollon transitional cultures.

Schaafsma also notes the similarity between petroglyphs in the Casas Grandes region [and] Jornada-style rock art in New Mexico.[151] It seems that such similarities and communicative intents were independent of medium, corresponding equally to both ceramics and rock art and necessitating an exploration of the two in ways previously

unconsidered. Marc Thompson suggests that similar motifs may have proliferated from a shared ideology expressed widely as visual metaphors indicating shared consciousness between Mimbres and other prehistoric regions such as Casas Grandes.[152] This is why considerations of a palette model of iconography developed from an ancient shared Mesoamerican heritage are, in fact, germane to this discussion. As an example, Thompson describes the depiction of rabbits to be a shared lunar conception, prevalent at Mimbres as well as the Rio Grande pueblos.[153]

Mimbres Classic Black-on-white set the stage for the ways these common stylistic and iconographic tendencies played out on various media. Essentially, "these types of imagery combined and recombined component parts in a seemingly endless series of design possibilities, yet all adhere to certain basic ordering principles."[154] This is a concise explanation of how stylistic similarities can be identified among different cultural groups, despite large temporal and geographic discontinuities. Not only can similar designs be discerned from Ramos Polychrome, but also similar ordering principles - just as we have seen at Three Rivers.

This suggests a Mogollon approach to design and ordering that extended to the Casas Grandes region. It also characterizes the palette model for iconography and design. Barbara L. Moulard considers Casas Grandes designs to be intentionally archaizing older Mimbres forms.[155] Stylistically, Ramos Polychrome resembles Mimbres Classic Black-on-white in important ways that will be discussed below, and seems to represent an intentional identification with an archaic art form. This concept of Paquimé revitalization/reconceptualization of antiquated Mimbres designs helps to elucidate how

Three Rivers may have also used such designs as deliberate tools of identification with an earlier period of Mimbres fluorescence.

If iconography functions to set social standards and order the universe for increasingly complex and diverse societies, then iconographic analysis allows an approach to such concepts. Anne Woosley contends that "the symbolism of the vessel forms and designs most likely served to reinforce a social identity, while visually translating shared beliefs in the secular and divine structure of their creators' universe."[156] The same stylistic synthesis was enacted at Three Rivers, indicating similar iconographic needs if not shared ancestry. The evidence of external materials during the Medio period at Paquimé indicates interaction and identification with Mogollon groups to the north. This evidence strongly suggests a Three Rivers/Paquimé interaction sphere and possible destination for small or large-scale migration. Ramos Polychrome revitalizes ancient traditions with local innovations.

This type of archaizing is well-known as a Pueblo strategy for identification and revitalization. Both Three Rivers and Paquimé may have wanted to solidify ties with Mimbres, and the fact that this cultural continuity was maintained at Three Rivers in the centuries following post-Classic migrations is likely an important link to how the legacy was maintained at Paquimé. The legacy of migration and cultural reconfiguration was essential to concepts of cyclicality, movement, and hybridity.

Such paradigms of action are seen in the forms and iconography of Ramos Polychrome pottery. Effigy vessels in particular, some of the most distinctive examples

of Ramos Polychrome, are examples of how the performative aspects of iconography played out on animistic objects.

Figure 15

Though the effigy vessels crafted at Casas Grandes are quite literal depictions of ceramics imbued with the properties of life forms, in a certain sense all pottery comes to symbolize animated figures and exudes the essence of organisms that are born, breathe, affect change, and eventually die. This connection is apparent in examples such as the "kill holes" made in Mimbres pots accompanying burials, and is also present in cosmologies associating pots with properties of animistic beings or even natural elements infused with energy and power, such as caves and the cracks in rocks. In these properties can be found the performative qualities that connect pottery with rock art and make early puebloan dynamic expressions take on form. These vessels show evident standardization, notable for humans and animals in combination with geometric patterning and cross-hatching.[157] Also similar to Mimbres pots and Three Rivers rock art, animals combining various traits are common, displaying an emphasis on hybridity and expression through multiple features.[158]

Anthropomorphic vessels took on a variety of forms, perhaps indicating shamanistic or other ritualistic properties. These human effigies often display the same characteristics and stylistic components as the jars, along with abstract designs as body fill (so similar to both Mimbres Classic Black-on-white and Three Rivers human and animal figures).[159]

Figure 16

Figure 17

Animals displaying geometric body fill on Mimbres effigy vessel (left) and Three Rivers panel (right)

Di Peso believed that the terraced headdresses found on some anthropomorphic vessels and stone figures represented Tlaloc.[160] He used such figures as evidence that the precursors for these effigies were in Mesoamerica, but other diagnostic characteristics such as the distinctive body fill more strongly correlate Mimbres and transitional Mogollon groups.

Effigies are extremely important purveyors of symbolic information because they are less abstract than other ceramic forms, regardless of painted designs. These forms can clearly be read as expressions of particular forms, whether birds, animals, or humans. The precise interpretation of such formal intention is speculative, but the form itself indicates that ceramics were conceived as symbolic in form as well as design, much like

the choice of boulders for their shape and physical properties. The ritualistic use of effigies is also found in many contemporary Pueblos, as well as Anasazi traditions, suggesting a long legacy of performative use.[161] These effigy vessels functioned to impart symbolic and ritualistic information to the Casas Grandes population.

Anne Woosley contends that "effigies are tangible revelations of the Casas Grandes universe, which was inhabited by supernatural, human, and animal actors."[162] The use of the term "actor" in this context is quite compelling, as it further bolsters the argument that these vessels were conceived as performative implements, part of a larger ritualistic system. Objects of material culture such as ceramics and images convey particular agency, "with features that set them apart from other objects and closer to the ways in which people interact with other people and deities."[163] Animate objects such as effigies and images imbued with human or animal features are especially powerful. The common use of composites and hybrids upon these vessels speaks to the function of effigies as components of the same iconographic program at work at Three Rivers. Effigies are particularly dynamic vessels that possibly reflect archetypes of human behavior, social status, and values.[164] These objects transcend representation to quite literally *become* the beings they represent.[165]

In the Ramos Polychrome effigy vessels, animals were combined in various forms stressing their distinctive properties, and other forms such as "Janus pots" clearly show duality and themes of opposition.

Figure 18

These pots have a face on both sides, either the same face depicted twice or opposing faces on each side.[166] Not only is a narrative enacted in the turning of the vessel, but cycles of duality and reemergence are implied in the constant shifting of faces. It is literally two sides of the same vessel, but symbolically a cycle of interaction that mirrors human relationships and the movement of the cosmos.

Henry Jerome Walt's study of the effigy cache found in the Cliff Valley of the Mimbres region sheds light on how effigies reflect larger concepts of material culture agency in Mogollon and, by extension, Casas Grandes society. The designs on these figures, e.g. geometric fill, show distinct similarities to Mimbres painted ceramics and suggest that the two types of vessels are conceptually linked. The cache contained both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic carvings in stone and wood, similar to anthropomorphic effigies found at Pecos and other Pueblos in the Galisteo Basin.[167] Walt calls these objects "ideotechnic artifacts," designating their properties as active components of ideological concepts.[168] As an example of these properties among effigies, Walt sites the discovery of effigies in the Cliff Valley that seem to have been inserted in the ground, against a ritual backdrop.[169] This sounds remarkably like a stage and invokes aspects of performance.

Duality is a force by which complex aspects of existence can be worked into an explainable worldview. While present to a certain extent in all cultural binaries (good vs. evil, strong vs. weak, human vs. supernatural, and so forth), southwestern worldviews and iconographic depictions are particularly notable for the use of duality, hybrids, and composites. This can be seen in a variety of ways at Three Rivers, including images which are composites of multiple animals and the fusion of animals with anthropomorphs or the generative grammar of geometric abstraction. The same expressions of duality are also present at Casas Grandes, in very similar communicative functions. Just as the rock art at Three Rivers transferred the iconography of Mimbres Classic Black-on-white ceramics to a medium more suitable to the location, so too did Casas Grandes develop a material culture that expressed similar ideas through the most suitable media, in this case the polychrome ceramics of the Medio period. In all cases the performance of concepts of duality and balance was achieved through intentionally expressive implements, whether pots, boulders, or effigy vessels.

Duality shows social complexity and the need for new social delineations. Within the Casas Grandes iconography, there was a focus on combining diverse elements to create a coherent whole.[170] In these ceramic examples, the themes of narrative intent as expressed in the continuity of an iconographic program that had its roots in the Mimbres Classic period are expressed. Duality and hybridity are primary examples. Like Classic Mimbres, geometric and abstract designs are the most common elements found on Ramos Polychrome pots, and these paired designs suggest both balance and duality of relationships such as those enacted in the various realms of the cosmos and symbolic animal characteristics.[171] Such efforts attempt balance and cultural equilibrium through

duality, and "Casas Grandes mythological creatures are created by blending characteristics of disparate creatures, especially birds and snakes, into a meaningful whole."[172]

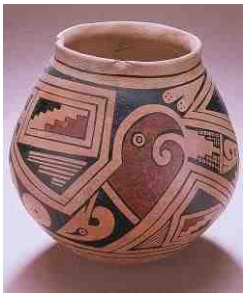

Figure 19

In this way, widely understood symbols such as the water/fertility properties expressed in both Mesoamerica and the Southwest are used intentionally as markers of both identity and ritual/performative tools that integrate symbols such as the "Tlaloc" figure present at both Mimbres and Three Rivers, as well as composite figures at Casas Grandes where duality and water were two of the most important symbolic markers.[173] Polly Schaafsma relates these characteristics adopted in southwestern ceremonies as a broad correlation of traits not directly adopted from the Mesoamerican Tlaloc.[174] At Paquimé, birds associated with water rituals, such as owls, were often used in combination with other birds such as macaws, emphasizing certain traits to express particular messages and perhaps relating such birds to the properties of Tlaloc due to their water-bearing properties.[175]

Figure 20

Using evidence such as the wooden effigies resembling Tlaloc found in Stanton Cave (in the Jornada Mogollon region), she suggests that as part of the oldest and widest Central Mexican symbolism, related to rain, mountains, the underworld, regeneration, and mountaintop clouds, southwestern ceremonies and material objects relating to these dynamics are also connected to Tlaloc.[176]

Propositions of a pan-cultural cult of Tlaloc are compelling in the sense that Tlaloc is a representative of a wide variety of properties achieving balance through the control of water. However, this balance was invoked throughout the region in a variety of material expression and ritual. Certainly these cultures all borrowed from a shared heritage and iconographic template, but the application of this template must be contextualized in a more carefully comparative manner in order to usefully isolate connections between regions, styles, and iconographic meaning.

Shared cosomological and iconographic origins, such as a deity exhibiting cosmological powers related to the regulation of water, are certainly likely throughout the prehistoric artistic traditions of the Southwest and Mesoamerica. The fact that these divergent groups confronted similar problems of fertility and balance along with a shared heritage goes a long way towards explaining similar iconographic solutions. It may be that "the appearance of these symbols and beliefs in the Southwest does not indicate

proselytizing by missionaries of specific central Mexican cults but does indicate the northernmost extent of a basic set of beliefs and symbols that were variously combined in different cults."[177] This palette approach is useful in considering the similarities between cultural developments in divergent groups such as Three Rivers, Casas Grandes, and the Rio Grande Pueblos, and sets the foundation for the implementation of iconography for the expression of such beliefs and symbols.

While the goggle-eyed "Tlaloc" figure is also present at Three Rivers and on Mimbres Classic pottery, it seems more likely that these divergent cultures developed regional versions of a figure common to their cultural heritage – i.e. a powerful deity controlling the connected properties of water, mountains, and sky - appearing as a figure with goggles and jaguar fangs in Central Mexico, and a blocky, square-eyed figure often filled with abstract designs at Three Rivers, Mimbres, and Casas Grandes. This figure representing the balance of water in the cosmos does not necessarily indicate a continuing exchange of material culture beyond ancient shared origins.

Such Mesoamerican analogies are intriguing because they broaden the scope of dualistic conceptions to potentially include other cosmologies such as the importance of Venus as symbol of duality and rebirth. Indeed, "Mesoamerican and Southwestern cultures shared a constellation of traits associated with concepts and graphic depictions of Venus."[178] Within Pueblo and Mogollon cosmologies, Venus is represented by both a cross and a four-pointed star, and such Mogollon cruciforms go back to the period of AD 800-1300 (including Mimbres petroglyphs and designs on Classic Black-on-white bowls).[179] Various motifs at Three Rivers, possibly including the ubiquitous circle and

dot, also suggest Venus symbolism. In this context, such symbols are related not only to Venus as a star, but also to warfare and feathered serpents similar to the Mesoamerican Quetzalcoatl figure. In an interesting link to concepts of duality, Quetzalcoatl also means "precious twin."[180] According to Thompson, "modern astronomers say that Venus may be described as Earth's twin because the two planets are so similar in size, density, and composition," and it cycles around as both the morning and evening star depending on the season.[181] At Paquimé, the "Mound of the Cross" (along with other serpentine earthenware structures) is a possible Venus effigy mound, and various cross-shaped ceramics suggest a similar connection.[182] However, horned and plumed serpents depicted on Casas Grandes ceramics and rock art actually resemble those found at Mimbres and Zuni Pueblo more than the typical Mesoamerican feathered rattlesnake.[183] Such horned and feathered serpents, as well as the combination of macaws and other bird species, are components of hybridity that expresses complex composite messages.

How do we confront pan-cultural iconography such as horned and plumed serpents? The avanyu horned serpent is extremely important to Rio Grande Pueblo cosmology, and Mimbres pottery also shows horned serpents.[184] Such horned serpents are potentially related to both Tlaloc and Quetzalcoatl, as Tlaloc is also associated with snakes.[185] The icon emerged throughout the Southwest ca. AD 1000, soon appearing on Jornada Mogollon rock art.[186] Serpents, though they may connect to conceptions of Quetzalcoatl, are nearly universal in western North America.[187] Plumed serpents are used as effigies at both Hopi and Zuni, as well as in the imagery of most modern Pueblos.[188] In other words, icons such as Tlalocs and horned serpents are ubiquitous, but may have had slightly different meanings. This does not detract from the suggestion of expressive

grammars that impart important messages about balance and signification, perhaps drawn from earlier Mesoamerican conceptions as filtered through various cultures. Diagnostically, at both Casas Grandes and Mogollon the horned serpent is shown with horns facing forward, which potentially connects these two cultural traditions.[189]

Within puebloan cosmologies, animals act as messengers and companions between realms and are thus essential symbols and active participants in ritual.[190] This may be seen in the use of conches as trumpets in ceremonies at Casas Grandes and other areas, where it is apparent from modern ethnographic evidence that conches were used to invoke the voice of a serpent.[191] Animals are depicted in various configurations, as representational images that imply potential mythological figures.[192] Birds, humans, and serpents are the most common figures depicted on Medio period ceramics, and birds appear essential to the ceremonial system at the heart of Casas Grandes culture.[193]

Macaws and other avian species became an intrinsic part of Casas Grandes cultural expression. The predecessors for this development exist throughout the Southwest and Mesoamerica, including at the Mimbres sites. In general, birds as purveyors of complex signification are central to Casas Grandes as well as Pueblo worldviews. Birds are some of the most common animals depicted on Mimbres pots, and their ceremonial importance to Mimbres is shown by the feathers recovered from caves used for rituals.[194] Macaw feathers were also found among the effigy cache in the Cliff Valley.[195] As previously shown, the performative characteristics of Mimbres ceramics were probably transferred to the rock art at Three Rivers. This artistic program as a

means of communicating complex symbolism, such as the significance of various birds, was further developed and transformed in the material culture of Casas Grandes.

Also present at Three Rivers and Mimbres, macaws are the most common bird images at Paquimé, often shown together with snakes and further indicating duality and dichotomy.[196] Snakes are thought of as pan-Mesoamerican, symbolizing rebirth and transformation, and macaws represent the sun, southerly direction, and corn in the modern Pueblos as well as apparently at Casas Grandes.[197] In the Pueblos, birds are often related to directional colors, and are thus extremely important ceremonially.[198] In terms of duality, birds relate to the sky and upward movement and snakes relate to the underground realms and downward movement, and as such the two are necessary companions to achieve cyclical balance. The common hybridization of these species at Mimbres, Three Rivers, Casas Grandes, and the Rio Grande Pueblos indicates what Schaafsma calls the "Mimbres-Jornada-Rio Grande continuum."[199]

Such symbols act as part of the generative grammar of iconography, where "these quite different arts [pottery and rock art] may be interpreted as aspects of a unified philosophical expression."[200] Within the metanarrative, icons act as linguistic units. As the generative grammar at Three Rivers was expressed through modifiers such as abstract body fill and connecting elements that consistently complicate and add layers of meaning to a seemingly realistic depiction of an animal or human figure, such generative grammar was also used in the iconography of Southwest ceramics. Similar combinations of abstraction with figurative elements have already been noted at Mimbres, and they are present in Ramos Polychrome as well. In this way, the icon of a bird cross-hatched with

lines or geometric shapes is a symbol rather than a simple picture. Along with the other icons on the pot it represents a semasiographic concept. Archaeological semiotics and symbolic anthropology lay the groundwork for how to approach such art. In all three culture areas, compounds and hybridity are used as modifiers within the generative grammar, as a way to establish more complex ideas. Animals that combine multiple species seem to be representative of properties that transcend one particular species.

The landscape itself is an actor in this semiotic system, an idea expressed not only in the depiction of abstract and figurative images related to the landscape, but also in how the landscape informs conceptions of the worldview underlying the metanarrative. At Casas Grandes, this relationship is expressed in Ramos Polychrome pots with complex ideas conveyed through largely abstract imagery. As seen at Three Rivers, landscape symbolism also acts as a part of this system, and "objects [act] as symbols within a specific setting."[201] This can be explained broadly in both the Southwest and Mesoamerica as a "diverse system of signs and symbols that speak of an ancient dialogue with the forms of life seen in the surrounding landscape."[202] Like Mimbres, even effigies and figurative images at Casas Grandes integrate abstract expressions of cloud terraces, mountains, possible celestial observations, and animals in dialogue with nature. The narrative that is enacted has less to do with literal stories on a material surface than the invocation of an entire system of beliefs and interrelationships set into motion between artist, viewer, and viewed. This is what is meant by narrative intent. Previous scholars who have noted the lack of "human interaction" in such images fail to take this dialectic into account.[203]

As established through the importance of Tlaloc and serpent imagery, water was key to such landscape symbolism. Water rituals included precious objects such as turquoise and copper as well as a complex iconographic system based on horned serpents and other cosmological figures common to Mimbres and Three Rivers images.[204] This relates to the importance of ceremonies invoking the properties of duality and hybridity, such as Plumed Serpent rituals. According to Mills and Ferguson, "like kachina religion, the Plumed Serpent imagery and use of shell trumpets corresponds to a time in which there was a major shift in the predictability of rainfall at the regional scale."[205] As such, "Quetzalcoatl is a sky serpent whose job it is to get rain where it is needed, but horned serpents are water serpents of the underworld. In functional terms, Quetzalcoatl equates more or less to kachinas, whereas horned serpents are part of the realm of Tlaloc and relate to moisture before it leaves the underworld to become rain."[206] Such conceptions indicate the communication between realms, in which Quetzalcoatl, macaws, and rain come from the sky and plumed serpents, Tlaloc, and water come from under the earth.

The Casas Grandes worldview is communicated through such aspects of material culture, and the view that emerges is a culture defined by ritual and the performance of objects within the landscape. Cyclical views of the cosmos are logical in the maize-based agricultural societies of the Southwest and Mesoamerica, and are dependent on the interventions of intermediary forces. This worldview spans the realms of lower/middle/upper cosmos and binds the universe.[207]

Ceremonial behavior in oral societies, particularly those based in cyclicality, relies on tension, forces in contact, and a dialogue between realms. According to VanPool and

VanPool, "in these societies the natural world set the stage for myths, rituals, and ceremonies, thereby affecting how the natural and spiritual forces were perceived and manifested in more mundane aspects of life." This statement relates to the general concept of material culture as performance, and connects Casas Grandes to the development of ceremonialism in the Southwest during the Pueblo IV period largely rooted in the Mimbres and Three Rivers iconographic programs.

This is the context in which human ceremonial figures and their enactment of ritual through action or iconography can be approached. In this way, "ritual is an arena in which agency and memory collide."[208] Whether shaman, priest, or other ritual participant, human intervention between materials and between realms is the key to this semiotic system. This can be seen in depictions of shamans on Ramos Polychrome, such as seated effigy figures who are smoking or "cloud blowing" as intermediation between earth and the cosmos.[209] This is similar to the ritual of conch-blowing. Though this practice existed throughout the Southwest, the fact that the largest number of shell trumpets were uncovered at Paquimé indicates that this practice may have been particularly common there and related to other aspects of ritual practice attempting cosmic equilibrium.[210] Indeed, "Shamans must be dialecticians, agile and capable of maintaining exactly the right relations between the opposites they bridge."[211] This indicates the perpetual tension between natural forces, human actors, and material objects acted out on the stage of material culture. Barbara Myerhoff explains, "the shaman is a paradoxical figure. His problem - and his profession - is one of equilibrium and mediation, and his balancing occurs simultaneously on several levels."[212]

Within the theory of phenomenology, shared assumptions that underlie social reality are created through a shared knowledge of symbols (and through a shared knowledge of a broader metanarrative).[213] In this way, "symbols and figures take on recognizable meaning through common, recurring usage, which affirms cultural identity."[214] Symbolism and iconography take on life and transcend the boundaries of aesthetic conceptions, become complex entities with life histories that inform and interact semiotically. This is important in highly ceremonial societies, because "ritualism is most highly developed where symbolic action is held to be most certainly efficacious."[215] The treatment of boulders at Three Rivers and pots at Mimbres as animate objects are similar examples, binding the three cultural developments and suggesting strong communicative requirements manifested in the particular objects of material culture. These connections will be considered more fully in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 4 – The Roots of Pueblo Ceremonialism

The development of each of the societies under consideration reflected particular aspects of a culture as expressed through the symbolism underlying the metanarrative binding these societies, as imparted through a broad range of icons signified in their interaction as part of a generative grammar. While the aesthetic similarities of these various art forms (Mimbres Classic Black-on-white pottery, Three Rivers rock art, and Ramos Polychrome ceramics from Casas Grandes) have been noted in previous scholarship, their similar implementation of narratives has not been viewed comparatively for how it reflects the cultural systems that evolved into the ceremonialism of the Rio Grande Pueblos, particularly in the form of katsina iconography and ritual. The connection between Three Rivers, Mimbres, Casas Grandes, and the evolution of Pueblo ceremonialism can be seen in a variety of ways. In much of the shared cosmology and symbolism already under discussion, shared cultural roots are also apparent. All of these groups drew from a shared cultural palette in some way informed by Mesoamerica and dispersed to Mimbres and beyond. The ubiquity of certain particular icons (such as Tlalocs and horned/plumed serpents) at all of these areas are indicative of such connections if not entirely diagnostic. Such considerations contribute to an understanding of how the Pueblos of the Rio Grande integrated not only diverse migratory groups but also their art and iconography into new cultural hybrids. The act of intentional revitalization of older or distant forms is also a statement of identity and establishment of continuity with a broader metanarrative. This concluding chapter draws correlations between the performative nature of material culture as explored in previous

chapters and the continuously changing and integrating nature of such art and performance in the modern Pueblos.

Katsina ceremonialism in the Rio Grande appears to reflect the same components of performance that were enacted at Mimbres, Three Rivers, and Paquimé, as well as a broadly shared metanarrative rooted in social aggregation and agricultural balance. The iconography that developed at Mimbres for such purposes was integrated and revitalized in each of these areas in performative ritualistic ways that transcended media. This expressive grammar evolved into katsina ritual as the Rio Grande Pueblos became more complex during the Pueblo IV period.

The development of katsina ritual activity, judging from the development of rock art imagery, appears to have occurred around 1250-1470, during a period of severe drought and active migration patterns.[216] The fact that the earliest and most ubiquitous material examples of katsina ceremonies in the Rio Grande region come from rock art further solidifies the connection between this medium and the performance of ritual. It is also compelling that many of the same icons expressed in rock art are reflected in modern katsina clothing, indicating that both media are probably part of the same performative matrix.

Rock art is by far the most common medium for expressing katsina imagery in the Rio Grande.[217] It is possible that the dearth of katsina imagery on pottery relates to the more performative qualities inherent in rock art as a medium, in the ways we have already explored at Three Rivers. However, as has been shown on ceramics from Mimbres and Casas Grandes, such shared iconography also indicates the performative

attributes of these objects. Both Roxanne Swentzell and Susan Short see similarities between the narrative events depicted on Mimbres bowls and modern Pueblo stories, as well as the narrative scenes at Three Rivers.[218] Not only are effigy vessels animated in their invocation of organic forms, but all ceramics take on these properties to a certain extent in their ritual use as well as their iconography. What modern katsina ceremonies show us is how the iconography of a Pueblo metanarrative is quite literally performative – an idea that has been strongly suggested through material analysis at Mimbres, Three Rivers, and Casas Grandes, but unproven due to the lack of accepted ethnographic continuity to determine which rituals were performed in these areas.

Did the Rio Grande katsina cults emerge from the evolving ideology of the Jornada Mogollon, expressing the invocation of ideas at least partially drawn from a Mesoamerican source, filtered through Mimbres, and applied through the performative nature of ceramics and rock art? Were these ideas filtered through the population of areas like Paquimé and Three Rivers, where they were already utilized for the purposes of social integration and metanarrative expression? In the exploration of material culture as performance, the connections seem more evident. According to Susan James, "cutting across clan lines and acting as an integrating factor in a usually polarized society, the katsina cult was the glue that held together the disparate cultures of peoples who had recently joined in new combinations in the name of survival."[219]

Utilizing the ethnographic continuity methodology proposed by Edward Dozier, these connections become even more applicable and have been used in a variety of ways to suggest connections between the modern Pueblos and ancient southwestern puebloan

groups. Indeed, there was a temporal overlap between the Jornada Mogollon and the Pueblo IV Rio Grande, along with an attendant exchange of ideas between communities, especially during the fourteenth century. It is also quite likely that the Rio Grande populations continued to visit Jornada Mogollon rock art sites (such as Three Rivers).

As already discussed in the previous chapters, such movement and reorganization was an essential component of southwestern history and narratology, and certainly a hallmark of the Pueblo IV period in which many diverse populations aggregated in the Rio Grande area, revitalizing and recombining cultural traits.[220] As part of this system, katsina ceremonialism emerged as an integrative tool, where "the kachina organization draws its membership from the entire village, crosscutting kin-based ties and thus serves as an important mechanism for socially integrating a Pueblo community."[221]

Such ethnographic material does not necessarily prove a connection between these groups, but it does strongly suggest it in the form of ideological if not genetic continuity. Along with the tools of social integration, the art of survival was in large part dependent on integrating iconography known to be efficacious for invoking rain and assuring bountiful harvests. Schaafsma suggests a strong connection between Tlaloc and the emergent katsina cults in the Rio Grande Pueblos, indicating that "the Kachina complex of the protohistoric farmers in the Pueblo Southwest is a northern peripheral manifestation of a Mesoamerican constellation of ideas in the realm of Tlaloc" as an invocation of rain and a consolidation of a wide range of cultural beliefs.[222] The wooden effigies seen by Brody as antecedents for katsinas are also possibly related to the Tlaloc complex, in their use as ritual objects bringing forth the rain.[223] Many of the masks seen

in Pueblo IV Rio Grande rock art are decorated with rain-related imagery, suggesting a connection between masks, Tlaloc, and rain-bringing ceremonialism.[224] Katsinas are commonly thought of as ancestors emerging in the form of clouds, where they "derived from concepts underlying rituals and funerary practices in Mexico that involved integrating the spirits of the dead with natural forces in order to transform the deceased into rainmakers."[225] Thompson also suggests a wide-ranging connection between such imagery and Quetzalcoatl, including the Twin War Gods, water, and katsinas.[226] Such images are also often associated with kiva rituals, along with their broader connection to water invocation.[227]

Schaafsma believes that katsina iconography first emerged at Mimbres during the Classic Period, then spread from Mogollon rock art into the Rio Grande region in the fourteenth century, corresponding with social aggregation.[228] In fact, she claims that painted Mimbres ceramics are the earliest examples of katsina imagery, though katsinas on pottery are relatively rare in the Rio Grande region.[229] She also claims that masks on rock art are an important diagnostic tool for identifying the early presence of the katsina cult in the Rio Grande, where certain small toothed masks resemble katsina masks currently in use in Pueblo ceremonies.[230] Importantly, such small toothed masks are also found at Mimbres, Three Rivers, and Casas Grandes.[231] Thompson believes that such mask depictions probably related to a later katsina development.[232] Masked figures from the Pueblo IV period at Cerro Indio are similar in appearance to Mimbres pots as well as preceding examples from the Jornada Mogollon, suggesting continuity between these groups and bolstering Schaafsma's Mimbres/Jornada/Rio Grande continuum.[233]

It seems likely that the Rio Grande katsina cult developed from the Mogollon rock art tradition. Along with the imagery at Three Rivers and other sites, apparent katsina imagery also appears on Mimbres rock art around AD 1050-1200.[234] According to Schaafsma, "Rio Grande masks show well-established typological relationships to those in Jornada Mogollon rock art (AD 1050-1400)."[235] The common depiction of masks is suggested by Schaafsma to be the earliest form of katsina imagery, in which "the Jornada masks strongly suggest the presence of a conceptually related complex that just precedes the appearance of katsinas among the Pueblos."[236] Schaafsma also ties earlier masks (such as those at Mimbres) on both pottery and rock art to the emergence of the Rio Grande katsinas, indicating that their properties and functionality transcend media and locating them as ritual implements in whatever form.[237]

Such performative qualities tie not only katsina imagery but also its accompanying ceremonialism to the performance of metanarrative enacted at Mimbres, Three Rivers, and Casas Grandes. One of the ways to approach these similarities is in the expression of shamanistic performance at these sites and its connection to material culture and iconography. As we have already seen at Casas Grandes, not only were effigy vessels probably physical invocations of how shamanistic properties were expressed in artistic form, but they were also ceremonial tools indicating the performance of ritual. In their identification with animal spirits, shamans, priests, and katsinas acted as intermediaries in agricultural Pueblo societies in order to communicate with larger forces.[238] Christine VanPool relates the transformation of a shaman from human to animal at Casas Grandes to a similar Zuni ceremony in which a shaman became a bear (this also brings to mind M. Jane Young's exploration of the "beast gods" at Zuni, as well

as Zuni fetishes).[239] In each case, the material properties of the object have allowed the shamanic transformation, and inanimate objects have been animated. It is quite possible that boulders were conceived in the same manner as katsinas - or as effigies - at Three Rivers and other rock art sites.

In another aspect of ceremonialism, "the mask became the symbol for the intermediary role humans played [in an agricultural society]."[240] Claude Levi-Strauss describes how "mask cultures" use aspects of duality in their art, as we have already seen at Mimbres, Casas Grandes, and Three Rivers. He lists binaries such as human/animal, ancestor/contemporary human, and masked/unmasked to explain the connection between masks, duality, and shamanism in these cultures. In terms of the metanarrative, "their [linguistic] function is to offer a series of intermediate forms which insure the transition from symbol to meaning, from magical to normal, from supernatural to social."[241]

Such animation occurs not only at the level of shamanic transference, but also semiotic exchange. In this system, "prehistoric inhabitants had symbolically tied the built and natural environments into a highly orchestrated cultural landscape with the 'supernatural' and 'natural' as a single complex that could be manipulated by humankind, especially by shamans."[242] As part of the integrative function of ceremonialism during Pueblo IV, "unlike Mesoamerican shamans, Pueblo ritual participants could be any initiated male, and none was conceived of as supernatural or divinely ordained."[243]

The stylistic and iconographic continuity of materials with longevity – particularly rock art – between these ancient areas and the modern Pueblos indicates a transmission of performance as well. In this way, exploration into katsina ceremonialism

may shed new light onto the performance of rock art and ceramics in ancient puebloan societies. This is an important query for future art historical research.

Conclusions

The metanarrative that developed in the Mimbres Valley during the Classic Period, ca. 1000-1150, was extremely influential, not just to the expanding Mimbres population, but also for important components of burgeoning puebloan cultures that would develop over the next several centuries. The Mimbres style and iconographic program appears in a plethora of Classic Black-on-white ceramic designs. This iconography was adopted by various puebloan groups in an apparent attempt to revitalize antiquated designs and identify with the Mimbres metanarrative.

The concept of the metanarrative provides us a way of comparing disparate cultural groups that goes beyond quantitative data analysis. While iconography and artistic materials represent the concepts of metanarrative, such representation is non-literal and impossible to translate through a modern, decontextualized lens. Iconographic interpretation is uselessly reductive without approaching the underlying metanarrative, yet all too often art historical and archaeological analysis of ancient Native American art attempts just such an approach.

In each iconographic feature or attribute of generative grammar, meaning is expanded and made more complex. The knowledge of what such attributes connoted is particularly esoteric, dependent upon the context of a well-established and shared metanarrative. The fact that each of these groups shared such complex forms is extremely strong evidence of the connection between them. One of the comparative tools used to connect these cultural groups is an exploration of how such generative grammars were similarly developed, in the form of complex imagery or unique combinations and recombinations of motifs. While there are still huge gaps in our knowledge of puebloan

prehistory (particularly the Jornada Mogollon), it provides a starting point. Visual analysis that builds upon cultural knowledge may also help to fill in some of the gaps unapproachable through traditional quantitative methodology.

Unlike the Mimbres Valley and Paquimé, very little is known about the cultural context of the Three Rivers area. However, what we do have are over 21,000 rock art images for comparative visual analysis. The stylistic and iconographic similarities between Mimbres, Three Rivers, and Casas Grandes cannot be overlooked. Perhaps we do not know much quantitatively about the groups that lived and created art at Three Rivers, but we can theorize similar communicative intents and a shared metanarrative based upon the visual comparison of iconography, so intrinsic to the expression of culture at Mimbres and Casas Grandes. Much effort was invested at Three Rivers to impart a similar iconography to that expressed on Mimbres pots.

Another important component of how a metanarrative was established and can be compared is through considerations of the landscape, both its physical context as a canvas and backdrop and its symbolic representation as iconography. Rain and mountains are particularly intrinsic to puebloan worldviews, a concept clearly evidenced in the iconography at Mimbres, Three Rivers, and Casas Grandes. In each chapter, the landscape has been considered as a key player in the semiotic exchange, and the similarities between these performances have been explored. Boulders are not lifeless forms but rather vibrant and imbued with energy and agency, affected by the environment and changing with the seasons.

This interaction between human artists, natural materials, and artistic forms is an important aspect of semiotic exchange in Native American art. Though not unique to

Three Rivers, Mimbres, and Casas Grandes, it is another useful perspective by which to consider the issues of production and reception, especially within systems expressing narrative and performative content through static media. The narrative intent of these objects is amplified through the active properties of their materials. In the application of iconography to the surface of a boulder, the properties not only of the images but also the rock surfaces are engaged. This can be seen clearly in the integration of particular rock features in imagery at Three Rivers, as well as the conception of cracks and other evidence of natural phenomena to be efficacious for expression and agency. It can also be seen in ceramic forms, especially effigy vessels. In these objects, the connection between rock art as expressed at Three Rivers and ceramics is more visually apparent, not only in design choices but also in the integration of form with iconography. These materials thus transcend mere surfaces for iconography, instead becoming active performers of the metanarrative.

All of these factors contribute to a view of puebloan cultures that are perhaps more closely related than previously considered. Working from quantitative evidence alone, it is unlikely that such a connection would be proposed. Through formal visual analysis that transcends categorical approaches to motif units, stylistic comparisons are unearthed. However, visual analysis is only truly useful when accompanied by cultural context, an approach informed by both anthropology and art history. Theorizing a metanarrative shared between Mimbres, Three Rivers, and Casas Grandes requires an integrative methodology, one informed by linguistics, archaeological semiotics, and cultural history as well as formal visual theories. Though these approaches have been applied to varying degrees in other explorations of Pueblo prehistory, integrating them

into the framework of a metanarrative represents a potentially innovative way forward for the interdisciplinary field of Native American art history.

Image Analysis

While theoretical frameworks provide context, image analysis uses specific visual examples to describe how art is a representation of the metanarrative. An art historical approach needs to be integrated into previous archaeological surveys by utilizing the tools of metanarrative context as well as formal image analysis. Applying this approach, the metanarrative has been divided into four broad image categories which correspond to their primary functions. The images below are discussed in relation to these functions, as well as comparatively in terms of how such functions connect the cultural intents of Three Rivers, Mimbres, and Casas Grandes.

Material Semiotics

The fact that artforms take on the properties of their materials can be seen clearly in Pueblo art, whether rock art or ceramics. In the case of Three Rivers, the boulders chosen as unique components of the landscape were integrated in many different ways, emphasizing their physical characteristics. In this way, the boulders were transformed into actors upon the stage of landscape, interacting both iconographically and semiotically with the surrounding features and viewers. The narrative function of imagery is enhanced through the enlivened surface, as a temporal dynamic unfolds in the process of viewing and interacting with the rock. The same process unfolds in the turning of a ceramic vessel in which dynamic imagery imparts a particular narrative dependent on symbolic form and expressive iconography. Masks, effigy jars, and the integration of features such as bumps and cracks are particularly obvious examples of the

perceived vitality of material, but it is just more proof of the performative nature of Pueblo material culture.

Figure 21

Various boulder features have been integrated into the design of images at Three Rivers. This suggests that the boulders themselves were conceived as active participants in the process of signification, imbued with their own unique characteristics and seemingly organic properties. In this example, a protruding knob of rock has been outlined and filled in the same manner as the design to the right, both being variants of the many circle motifs found at the site. The design on the left is accompanied by a stepped pattern, used as a type of modifier. The use of the rock feature itself is, in effect, a type of modifier. Though the two images are nearly identical, the raised characteristic of the circle on the right clearly differentiates it from the one on the left. Something is being expressed about it in contrast to the other circle. This is perhaps similar to the duality of Ramos Polychrome "Janus" pots, where each side shows a face that is either identical or in opposition to the other side.

Figure 22

This is another example of how the circle-and-dot motif has been developed into a uniquely modified unit of signification. Though it is quite similar to the conjoined circles-and-dots used to describe the function of generative grammar within the combination of motif units, in this case the protruding rock feature has been integrated into the design. Whatever symbolic message was established through this composition, its effect visually contributes to the overall grammar of the composite image. The crack in this rock is also potentially significant in terms of using physical features in order to convey meaning.

Figure 23

The boulder field at Three Rivers is a relatively unique geographical feature, likely denoting it as a suitable location for the vast swath of artistic images found at the site. Within this choice location, it is apparent that certain boulders were more amenable to certain types of images and galleries. There are several outcroppings along the southern edge of the site that are notable for their monolithic boulder configurations, and it is in these locations that the most cohesive (and often the most narratively expressive) panels are located. This panel, located very near to the sheep-and-rider previously discussed, is particularly prolific in terms of image concentration. Though most of the design elements appear to be quite abstracted, their configuration in relation to one another on the boulders implies cohesion and symbolic organization. The content of such

configurations is likely related to the significance of geometric design elements on Mimbres Black-on-white pottery. It seems that such towering boulders were chosen for their linear verticality as well as their uniform flat surfaces, which were ideal for such a design. The panel extends across two boulders, which appear conceptually cohesive. The individual elements are laid out in uniformly spaced rows, exuding symmetry and order.

Generative Grammar

Iconographic units were combined in a variety of ways on the rock art at Three Rivers in order to create specific statements of meaning through combination and recombination. Unlike the use of glottographically based language to express concepts through discretely understood units, the generative grammar of rock art iconography is part of a semasiographic system in which individual units take on meaning in relation to other units and in the context of their location and reference to a larger system of signification. In this way, motifs such as circles-and-dots are sometimes shown as individual units and sometimes are combined with various modifiers or degrees of figural elements in order to transfer their symbolic significance to more complex imagery. Hybridity also plays a role in the generative grammar, in which the characteristics of various animals are combined into a composite being that expresses meaning developed from a broader collection of traits.

Figure 24

The circle-and-dot is expressed in a variety of combinations. In this case, two of these elements have been joined with a line. Both contain a solid inner circle surrounded by a ring and with an outer circle of dots (this configuration is common, though there are variants throughout the site). The visual effect of these images is definitely in resemblance to celestial phenomena, of light radiating from a central orb, star, or planet. This brings to mind the symbolism of Venus as a representation of duality in the two conjoined orbs. The modification of these particular elements is used elsewhere at the site, particularly in the sheep-and-rider panel, in various manifestations of a particularized generative grammar.

Figure 25

Animals with varying degrees of abstract body fill designs are extremely common at Three Rivers. Most commonly this fill resembles the geometric designs derived from Mimbres Black-on-white ceramics, in the form of zig-zags, triangles, and other permutations. This example of an unidentifiable animal is relatively rare in its integration of a spiral as the central motif. This is the only example I have uncovered (at the site or in the survey literature) where a spiral has been modified as an animal composite, but it does have similar precedents in Mimbres designs. On closer inspection, it appears that the end of the spiral has been modified into a serpent head, making it a hybrid image as well. The enigmatic shield-like image to the right and the paw image to the left (a possible clan marker) further identify this panel as a complex image expressed through generative grammar. In the conflation of figural aspects with abstract designs, in this case the serpent and the spiral, the symbolic correlation between the two is expressed, along with a suggestion of how serpent characteristics were conceived as symbolic units. Such conflations can be intriguing hints to broader meaning.

Figure 26

Perhaps nowhere else at Three Rivers is the stylistic connection between the site and Mimbres Classic Black-on-white so apparent. The design unfolds across the rock, integrating repeating images of sheep heads in profile at uniform distances with abstract diagonal and stepped designs. The entire panel is symmetrical and uniform, giving the appearance of a ceramic design much more than the commonly asymmetrical character of rock art. While individual motifs – such as spirals or circles-and-dots – are often symmetrical, when included on a panel with other elements the balance of the design is not ordinarily the priority. This panel solidifies the design correlation – not only between rock art and ceramics – but specifically between Three Rivers and Mimbres (as well as Ramos Polychrome). As a generative grammar, the sheep heads appear to act with these abstract elements to express particular meaning.

Hybridity

As conceived on Mimbres Black-on-white ceramics, hybridity was a way to combine the various properties symbolized by different animals in a nearly endless combination of iconographic elements. By considering the properties of these various groups of animals (quadrupeds, anthropomorphs, birds, or from other classifications such as those animals that are "water-bringers," etc.), their symbolic content is suggested, but it is complicated by the use of hybridity. The true contextual knowledge required for the visual literacy necessary to "read" these complex images is dependent on a knowledge of the metanarrative underlying esoteric cultural knowledge at Mimbres and Three Rivers. The theory that this metanarrative was, in fact, shared between two groups (and also revived at Casas Grandes) is further supported by the similar composition of hybrid animals, as well as the composition of animal imagery in general.

Figure 27

These large goggled eyes are seen in a variety of configurations at Three Rivers. They are commonly used in the depiction of hybridity (other figures are commonly hybrids of dragonflies, serpents, and birds), and their use in various settings and with various types of figures indicates both standardization of transferable icons and the application of such icons as part of a generative grammar. In this image, the head of the anthropomorph has been entirely replaced by huge, protuberant eyes. The arms are raised, visually expressing some kind of pronouncement or call to action. The vaguely trapezoidal body shape is similar to the way "Tlalocs" are represented at other Jornada Mogollon sites, as well as Mimbres. The solid body fill also resembles how anthropomorphs are represented on Mimbres Black-on-white ceramics.

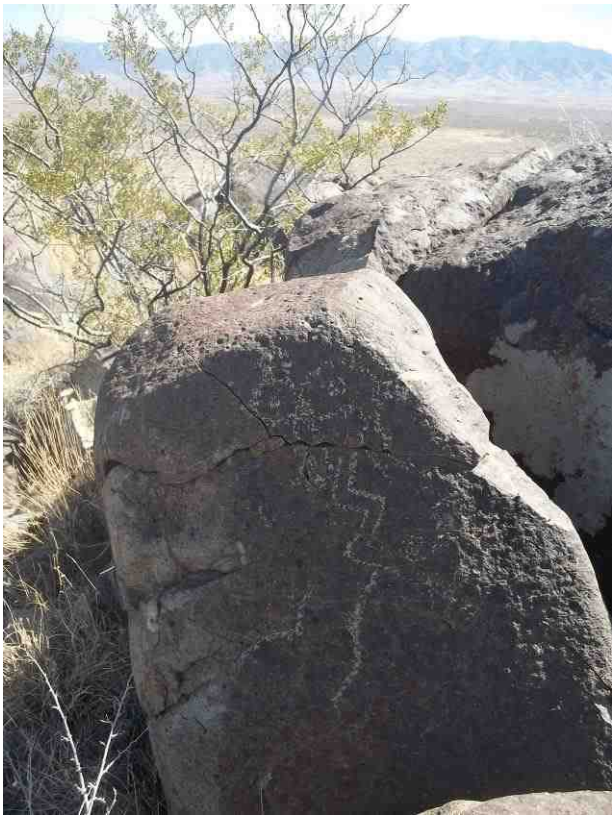

Figure 28

Though horned and plumed serpents are not nearly as common at Three Rivers as at Casas Grandes, they also appear to have been included in the iconographic program. Interestingly, though the direction of the horns has been used as a stylistic diagnostic tool to compare cultural similarities, two examples in close proximity at Three Rivers show horns facing opposite directions. It is unclear whether these images relate to water symbolism in any literal or directional way, as has been suggested at other sites. This image points southeast.


Fig.29


Fig.30


Fig.31

The goggle-eyed characteristics of Tlaloc are integrated into a variety of forms at Three Rivers. Along with anthropomorphic hybridity, many different animals have also been supplemented with the traits of Tlaloc. The first image is a serpent body (alternatively interpreted as a lightning bolt, though the imagery is related) attached to goggle eyes. The second is a nearly identical pair of eyes attached to what appears to be a dragonfly body, as depicted elsewhere at the site (notably, the attributes of a dragonfly are quite similar to the diagnostics of Tlaloc, and these images may in fact be representational of one or both of these figures). Figure 31 appears to be an owl or other bird, though the body shape also resembles certain anthropomorphic figures and suggests there may be a degree of hybridizing bird and human forms. In this image, the goggle-eyes are square-shaped instead of round. Both shapes are seen in nearly equal quantities at the site. They appear interchangeable, though it is possible that each shape imparted different significance as part of the generative grammar. As previously noted, the connection between Tlaloc and owls has been proposed in other contexts, and this image is strong evidence that such correlations did in fact exist at Three Rivers.

Narrative Intent

Narratives unfold in the way individual images are positioned in relation to one another. Though it is difficult to determine when – or if – panels were conceptualized as a cohesive and singular narrative unit, there are visual indications in composition that convey interaction between images. The fact that this is perhaps less than literal and linear in puebloan rock art does not detract from the likely presence of such narratives and the connection between them and broader concepts of symbolism and ritual. Such figural interaction is also common in Mimbres ceramics, one of the stylistic components

connecting Mimbres and Three Rivers. While the content of such stories may be lost to ethnographic discontinuity (or may have been intended in a purely metaphorical rather than literal way), the fact that these stories are performed indefinitely on rock is an enigmatic glimpse into the development of the metanarrative.

Figure 32

On one of the most towering monolithic panels at Three Rivers, this scene of an anthropomorph apparently riding a sheep takes up the middle portion of the panel (essentially taking center stage). Not only is it one of the largest single images at the site, but also depicted with some of the most figural elements. There is a complex configuration of elements playing out in this scene, culminating in an expressive and vibrant narrative. Both the anthropomorph and the sheep closely resemble the

characteristics common to Mimbres stylistic diagnostics. The anthropomorph in particular more closely resembles the human figures on Mimbres pots than humans seen elsewhere in Jornada Mogollon rock art, either as masks or figural representations. Both figures in this scene are smiling enigmatically, seeming to engage the viewer. The anthropomorph's oval-shaped head is surrounded by a corona of dots, very similar to the more abstracted circle-and-dot motif, indicating this motif's potential as a complex modifier communicating something specific about the figure in relation to how circles-and-dots have been developed into more complex imagery elsewhere at the site. The narrative intent is indicated both in the interaction between these figures and their apparent movement – multi-directionally within the picture plane. Other images on different parts of the panel may also contribute to its overall significance.

Due to the lack of animal domestication at either Three Rivers or Mimbres, it is unlikely that this is a literal translation of an earthly interaction, but rather a mythological conflation of symbols, modifiers, and relationships contextualized through knowledge of a metanarrative.

Figure 33

This is another example of an anthropomorph with unique characteristics interacting with an equally stylized animal. Apparently a quadruped of some sort, this animal displays a body fill of zig-zagging lines as well as the straight, linear tail commonly seen in other locations at the site. It is reaching out to grab a pole or staff held by the anthropomorph, who seems to be hybridized with another animal, displaying both human and animal characteristics. Though highly patinated and difficult to see, another animal appears to be attacking the anthropomorph from behind. This narrative action panel therefore proceeds from both directions, culminating in a central scene of interaction that keeps the eye moving across the boulder. It is possible that the duck-like head depicted in mid-squawk to the right of the action panel also contributes to the narrative message.

Figure 34

As part of the dialogue enacted between figures on the rocks at Three Rivers that establish a continuous stage for narrative performance, these masks (comprising something of a mask gallery) appear quite literally to be in dialogue with each other. All three integrate the protruding edges of the boulder surfaces to create animated faces that

seem to extend beyond the rock. In terms of semiotics, the viewer is included in this dialogue by entering the scene. Again, unlike the hidden nature of such masks at Jornada sites like Hueco Tanks, these masks are extremely exposed and accessible. It is apparent that interaction was intended, not just in a shamanic sense, but also from all visitors to the site.

Three Rivers & Mimbres – Comparative Image Analysis

#1 Humans Interacting with Fish

Figure 35

As a small subcategory of narrative scenes developed through the interaction between humans and animals, examples from both Mimbres and Three Rivers show human figures in direct contact with fish. In this scene on a Mimbres bowl, a human figure with the standard black body with white band around the eyes is shown either riding atop or standing near a large fish, performing some kind of action to an apparent blowhole (Brody suggests that the fish is actually a beached gray whale).[244] In any

interpretation, the narrative plays out in the interactive dynamic between human and fish. In terms of stylistic intent, the geometric body fill of the fish is mirrored in the decorative band of the bowl, both harmonizing the design and suggesting intentional significance for the choice of design. The scene is contained within the circular lines that also contribute to the visual effect, giving the appearance of a discrete panel (or stage) of action.

Figure 36

This image on a free-standing boulder at Three Rivers is a unique depiction of human/animal hybridity, in this case more a narrative interaction similar to the Mimbres pot. The choice of a single boulder denotes this as a self-contained scene, much like the scenes inside Mimbres bowls delineated by rim lines. The narrative is intriguing – a simple pecked anthropomorph (nearly a stick figure, but clearly human) appears to be floating inside the body of a fish. The fish also has legs protruding from the bottom of its body, suggesting further aspects of hybridity. The positioning of the open mouth near the

edge of the boulder imbues this image with even more vitality than its narrative, as the fish appears to be poised to move beyond the picture plane and into the landscape.

#2 Decapitation

Figure 37

This is a complex scene of hybridity and narrative interaction. There are two human figures, one lying prone and apparently dead, the other seated above and holding some kind of indiscernible hoop or container, or possibly a knife or a blade. The seated figure also has a horned serpent either floating behind or attached to his back, creating a composite figure with ambiguous interpretive possibilities. As the horned serpent was also used at Three Rivers and particularly at Casas Grandes with a variety of properties

related to water, war, and regeneration, similar symbolism is also possible here. The action of the scene pivots around the severed head floating away from the prone figure, who wears a type of costume differentiating him from the other figure. The fact that each of these elements exists at Three Rivers is an intriguing glimpse into the metanarrative.

Figure 38

The similarities between disembodied heads at Mimbres and Three Rivers is one of the most compelling correlations between the two areas. This image is significant because it also displays characteristics common to mask imagery at Three Rivers. Notably, the surface of the rock and its protruding edge have been integrated into the structure of the face, again imbuing the image with vitality and interaction beyond the

picture plane. Like the head on the Mimbres pot, this image has some kind of string or line, a motif replicated in several other locations at Three Rivers. In this case, the line extends up the side of the head to resemble a serpent body. Most interestingly, the serpent head is simply two large goggle-shaped eyes. This use of a particular modifier suggests unexplored relationships between these disembodied heads, masks, and Tlaloc/serpent imagery. It also relates this imagery to more abstracted or differentiated imagery at Three Rivers, such as serpents or dragonflies with similar characteristics.

#3 Human/Animal Hybrids

Figure 39

This scene combines many different elements of the semiotic components underlying Mimbres narrative. The figures are both anthropomorphic (human head, arms, and legs) and animalistic (posture, tongue, antennae, wings), apparently human/insect composites. The bodies of these creatures are comprised of geometric fill,

common in painted animal figures but not humans. The wings are designed with an entirely different pattern. The scene is bounded not only by concentric lines but also two solid areas centered by cross shapes, adding another visual as well as interpretive component to the scene. The two figures face each other and appear identical, bringing to mind duality as seen so often in both Mimbres and Casas Grandes pottery. In particular, the two faces on opposing sides of Ramos Polychrome "Janus" pots perform a similar cyclical dialogue.

Figure 40

This is another possible human/animal composite, but in this case one with extremely ambiguous characteristics. The body and head shape of the figure, as well as its posture, are diagnostically Mimbres in style. The figure appears either attached to or riding atop a simplified form with either a fin or a tail. The arm is raised in an invocation of action, and the entire effect is one of riding from one place to another. There also seems to be another indiscernible figure extending from the front of the composite figure, giving the appearance of further hybridity.

#4 Quadrupeds and Effigies

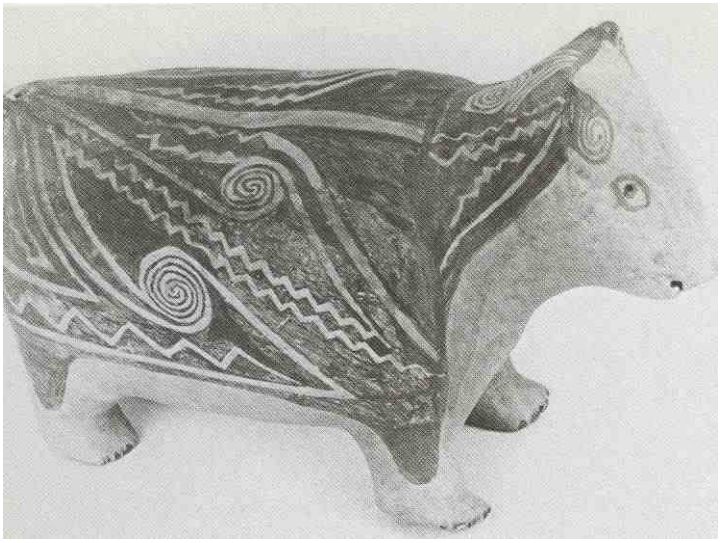

Figure 41

This figure relates to the stylistic development at both Three Rivers and Casas Grandes and shows how all three are similar in intent. The effigy form is an obvious connection to Ramos Polychrome, as is the particular use of solid space alongside geometric designs that appear abstract but may express meaning semasiographically. The use of such design creates a figure that transcends literal interpretation to impart significance in a layered manner, as part of a larger metanarrative. Its use on an effigy figure implies that such animals were conceived as active, as agents of some kind, and a similar design application on two-dimensional surfaces suggests a similar conception.

Figure 42

In this gallery at Three Rivers, quadrupeds were created on individual boulders, differentiating them and relating them at the same time. These two boulders in particular seem to interact and instigate collective motion as the eye moves between one boulder and the other. It is even possible that they represent the same animal in different moments of motion, a compelling reinterpretation of temporality as used for narrative intent. These two animals are slightly different – the one on the left is boxier, with a longer and more rigidly linear tail. They also have different body fill. The figure on the left is designed with a checkerboard pattern, and the one on the right is comprised of jagged lines. However, if they are conceived as an animal in transition or even two closely related animals, this potentially illuminates how body fill acted as a modifier in the generative grammar. There seems to be a specific message expressed in this particular iconography, along with an action expressed between the two figures.

Three Rivers & Casas Grandes - Comparative Image Analysis

#1 Modified Serpent Images

Figure 43

This boulder from Three Rivers shows a stylized serpent alongside a square adorned with abstract designs resembling a possible horn (as seen in other locations). The body of the serpent is filled with a zig-zag pattern, likely both a modifier of some kind and a visual representation of movement and physical properties. The serpent tail consists of three parallel lines, similar in appearance to birds or dragonflies depicted elsewhere at the site. The combination of these characteristics designates this as a hybrid, and also as expressive of a generative grammar consisting of multiple modifiers.

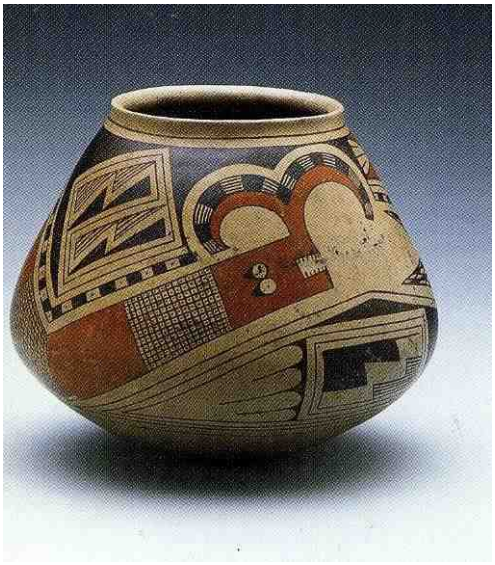

Figure 44

There are many similarities between the serpent boulder at Three Rivers and this Ramos Polychrome horned serpent pot from Casas Grandes. This serpent is also accompanied by abstract designs, adding both aesthetic interest and iconographic content. There is a suggestion of mountains, lightning, and feathers in the abstraction. The body of the serpent also contains abstract fill, in this case a box of cross-hatched lines. Again, the fill is both visually compelling and potentially symbolically evocative. The designation of properties identifying this image as a horned serpent makes it a hybrid as well, clearly modified by its accompanying iconography.

#2 Anthropomorphs with Terraced Headdresses

Figure 45

One of the clearest comparisons between Ramos Polychrome pots and the rock art at Three Rivers comes in the form of these anthropomorphic figures adorned with terraced headdresses. This effigy vessel from Casas Grandes is a typical human effigy form, integrating the characteristic Ramos Polychrome abstract forms and globular shape with human features. The face is denoted by protruding nose and mouth hole, along with curiously outlined eyes (somewhat resembling goggles). Not only are the cheeks adorned with step patterns, but the figure is wearing a similarly terraced headdress with dot-in-square and checkerboard patterning.

Figure 46

The anthropomorph at Three Rivers is part of a motif category that creates hybrids of various animals attached to cloud terraces. Other examples include frogs and a Tlaloc-like figure. The human on this boulder appears to hold a stalk of corn or other plant. The face is marked with unidentifiable freckle-like features, and a cloud terrace extends from the top of the head. The use of marks and abstractions for facial features is also diagnostic of Ramos Polychrome effigies.

#3 Anthropomorphs Modified with Abstract Designs

Figure 47

This anthropomorph from Three Rivers has been almost entirely abstracted into a figure resembling a blanket design. It remains human in its extending arms and highly patinated suggestion of a head at the top of the body, as well as the characteristic trapezoidal shape. It is a good example of the relationship between realism and abstraction at Three Rivers. The features present on representational figures provide clues to abstracted features in other contexts (such as the circle and dot motif). In this case, the body is largely a solid fill, along with multiple triangles of different sizes. Again, this suggests both decoration and modifiers. A narrative is enacted in the placement of flanking figures - another apparent anthropomorph and some form of serpent hybrid.

Figure 48

The female anthropomorphic effigy from Casas Grandes is not nearly as abstracted as the image from Three Rivers, but does show similar components of abstraction in the body decoration. It could be argued that the utilization of vessels for

effigy bodies in fact fulfills the same purpose, i.e. varying degrees of geometrical fill connecting the figurative with the abstract. As figurative images on rock art suggest that all images were conceived as individually symbolic rather than decorative, so, too, do human effigies suggest that all vessels were evocative and imbued with animistic properties. The iconography painted on this figure contains squares adorned with corner decorations, themselves similar to the more abstract human figure at Three Rivers.

#4 Human Features

Figure 49

Finding boulders with physical properties resembling particular features, especially in the creation of masks, was obviously a top priority at Three Rivers. This can be clearly seen in a large number of mask depictions, which is one of the most common motif categories at the site. In this example, a skull-shaped face with goggles (resembling the human Ramos Polychrome effigy previously discussed) is shown protruding from the corner of a boulder. The nose and mouth are both created by this feature, the mouth further enhanced by outlining an apparently naturally occurring hole in the rock. The entire effect is a figure imbued with life and movement. Whether or not this mask is in narrative dialogue with surrounding figures (there are other figures on this

rock, but it is unclear whether or not they interact), it is undeniably animated. An interaction is necessarily set in motion between mask and viewer.

Figure 50

Such motion is also enacted in this example of a Ramos Polychrome "Janus" pot. In this case, the same face is depicted on the opposite side. The physical properties found naturally in the rock face have here been sculpted, creating a mouth and nose similar to those on human effigy vessels. The shape of the face is merely suggested through a limited number of lines. Once again, a sense of dialogue exists between pot and viewer and the pot itself, in the opposing placement of its faces. In the same way the viewer must walk around a boulder to experience its full effect, a narrative naturally unfolds in a vessel that must be turned to see its different sides, enacting temporal movement, change, and cyclical change.

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