Dead Men Speak: What Fremont Burials say about Fremont Society

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Dead Men Speak
What Fremont Burials say about Fremont Society
Rachel Hansen
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Objective: Around 1000 years ago, a group of Native Americans called Fremont, lived throughout Utah. This project examined Fremont burials to determine whether or not the Fremont were a rank society—a society with one governing leader and social status based on relation to that leader (Renfrew and Bahn 2012:171).

Research: Through the study of site reports, published works on the Fremont, and articles, a collection of 102 Fremont burials in Utah was created. Analysis was conducted on the age and sex of the individual, orientation and position of the body, grave goods, location of the burial within the site and site location within Utah.

Results: Typical Fremont burials consisted of adult human remains, in flexed positions (in a fetal position), with no grave goods. 23% of the burials had grave goods with them, most with a couple of artifacts. One burial stands out from the rest because it contained a ceramic sherd placed over the cranium, a great horned owl skull facing the human skull, remains of a fibrous mat, bone tools, ceramics, a metate, and magpie remains situated in a possible belt (Dodd 1982:121-212). The bird remains found with this burial indicate that this individual was likely a shaman (Redish and Lewis 2009).

Conclusion: The data show that there are not elaborate burials with many grave goods therefore the Fremont are not a rank society. It appears that the Fremont did have religious leaders (shamans), however, religious leaders do not make a society rank.

References

