Early Accounts of Birds and Feathers Used by the Southwest Indians

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Interpretation of prehistory is basically dependent upon material culture items recovered in association with features of different time periods and/or areas. Identification of the use of specific objects recovered from ruins to a great extent draws on ethnological studies relating to similar objects. Another source for data of the latter type is archival material. Journals of early observers sometimes provide leads relating to the identification and use of an artifact. This type of source is particularly valuable for prehistoric customs and uses of artifacts in early historic times might have differed considerably from those observed by ethnologists in recent years. Also, in some instances, an ethnic group might have discarded an early historic period practice by the time an ethnologist studied the group. In short, with data from documents, it is possible to determine what changes in custom or use, if any, occurred between the various periods of observation and more recent ethnological studies. In turn, the archaeologist will be able to more accurately postulate use or custom relating to similar objects or features in prehistoric times.

The accuracy of the interpretation, of course, will depend on the amount of detail provided in the documents and the knowledgeability of the recorder at the time. The results of a study of a specific trait or custom through the historic period will produce an ethnohistorical trait use and lineage study. If the same approach is used to reconstruct through time the changes in the culture pattern of an ethnic group, the result will be an ethnohistory. Historical documents are important reference collections, particularly the earliest records if one is attempting to project an ethnohistory back into prehistoric times.

This paper makes no attempt to produce an ethnohistorical trait use and lineage study on feathers. It is strictly a survey of the early documents to determine the variety and amount of information available for, and the feasibility of, such a study on this specific item. If details of the association of feathers with other material items or their relation to specific features and customs are lacking, whether in documents or prehistoric sites, interpretation is severely handicapped and reference must be made to recent ethnological studies for clues to reconstruct the past. If early historic associations or use differ from recent data, change obviously occurred and all the more caution must be considered in projecting into the prehistoric past. If there is a significant sighting of a bird mentioned in the documents that differs from present distributions, such will prove of interest to the ornithologist as well.

Documents of the early historic period, such as those used herein, reflect first impressions. The chroniclers were unfamiliar with the culture of Southwestern Indians, and as a result comparisons were sometimes made to the customs of Mexican Indians or the records of the Spaniards. Such comparisons, attempted by the archaeologist on the basis of the抗拒欧文化背景。 sketches, observations, colloquial terms, and questionable or differing interpretations of the Spaniards tend to further confound the picture. However, this is the material with which we have to work, and perhaps future excavations in historic period sites will help to clarify questionable or incomplete data.

One final note: because the turkey is a New World bird, there was no word for it in Spanish; instead, the word for chicken (gallina) was frequently used. The context, however, usually makes it clear which bird was intended.

Spanish Period of Exploration, A.D. 1540-1609

The first recorded history of Arizona and New Mexico begins with Fray Marcos de Niza's account of his journey into the area. For a reconstruction of his route through Arizona, relating to locales identified below, see Schroeder 1955, 4. While on the lower San Pedro River of southeastern Arizona, Fray Marcos was given quail (cordonces) by the Indians (probably Sobaipiris). In the region between the Tonto Basin and Zuni, he noted partridges (perriches) slightly smaller than those of Spain. He also remarked that the gourd rattle Estevan carried into Pueblo.

Figure 1. Protohistoric Hopi bowl, Jebediah Black-on-Yellow; ca. A.D. 1400-1600. This bowl, with its lively depiction of a bird (perhaps a raven), represents one of several kinds of pottery found in the Pueblo area on the eve of the Spanish entry into the Southwest. It was made at a time of great artistic vitality and innovation, during which depictions of kachina rituals and figures appear for the first time on ceramics and wall paintings.

The Thadalo de las Nuevas account referred to
them as chickens (gallinas) larger (mayores—Winship uses “bigger”) than those of Mexico. Another narrative, the Relation del Suceso, said that these Zunis had some Mexican chickens (gallinas) which were raised for their feathers than for food (this suggests they did occasionally eat turkey) because they made quills (turkey feather robes) of them, lacking cotton there. Castañeda reported both feather and rabbit skin blankets in these pueblos. The above Relation also noted that these Zunis offered plumes to water, usually at springs.

The Relación Pecuaria de Cibola mentions cotton, yucca, and rabbit skin blankets at Zuni and not turkey feather robes, and adds that they possessed some chickens (gallinas). The same fowl (gallinas) are referred to by this source among the Rio Grande pueblos, but in this case blankets made with the feathers of this bird are mentioned (it appears that both statements refer to turkeys).

Hernando Alvarado, ordered to explore east from Zuni, recorded chickens (gallinas) like those of Mexico at Acoma. The Relation del Suceso also mentioned chickens (gallinas) here. Castañeda stated that turkey cocks with very large wattles (gallos de papada muy grandes) were given to the Spaniards at this pueblo. He also noted here a spring by which had been placed a wooden cross of small sticks adorned with plumages and flowers.

Among the Southern Tiwas, Alvarado reported that chickens (gallinas) in great abundance and coats (robe) made with feathers of these birds (gallinas). Coronado stated that these people gave the Spaniards hens (turkeys). The Northern Tiwas of Taos did not raise chickens (turkeys), nor did the Pecos. The Kerr-sanz de Zia, according to Coronado, Solano, and the Hops, according to Castañeda, gave the Spaniards “hens” and “native fowl” (aves de la tierra—turkeys) respectively.

Remarks concerning Rio Grande Indians in general refer to native hens and cocks (gallinas de las tierra y gallos de papada) and that all, including Taos and Pecos, had some feather quills made by fastening them with thread (cordage) to form a smoothly woven blanket. Alvarado noted that these people also offered powders (pollon) or feather, and even blankets they wore to graves erected by the Spaniards. Plumes and roses were put on the arms of the cross, some being tied on with strings.

According to Castañeda, cranes (gallinas—sic for grullas), geese (anascea), cows (cuervos), and thrushes (turdos) were observed feeding in the planted fields along the Rio Grande. He also reported that chickens (gallinas) of the variety (calldas) found in Mexico also occurred in the northeastern part of what is now the Texas Panhandle and that Indians of Mexico traded them to the Spaniards, who used in feather crests to the Indians living to the north (in Arizona?) of New Galicia. (See Schroeder 1983 for locale in Texas Panhandle.) In support of the above statement, it is mentioned that the people took refuge in Gallo de Vaca was in Sonora, he learned that the Indians of The Valley of the Hearts or near vicinity gave parrot (papagayo) feathers in exchange for turquoise to people who lived far to the north in very large houses (Ban-deller 1950).

The Rodrigo-Chamuscado expedition of 1541-42, which came up the Rio Grande, provides information on other groups. Indians above the Conchos-Rio Grande junction gave feathers to the Spaniards. About 13 days travel up the Rio Grande from the above junction, other Indians (perhaps a little below El Paso) gave them two hens made of many macaw feathers. Turkeys (gallinas de tierra) were seen in the southern Piro pueblos where he had his own turkey corral holding 100 birds. These Picos and the Southern Tiwas made corn-flour good with meat of bufalos and turkeys.

Bustamante’s report and Gallegos’ narrative provide additional information on the turkey. This expedition indicates that the Picos had turkeys (gallinas or gallinas de la tierra). Bolten translated this “chickens” while Hammon, de la More, and others translated it as “turkeys” for their own sustenance and that the Southern Tiwas also raised larger numbers. The pueblos in the Galisteo Basin had large flocks of turkeys, many of which were given to the Spaniards with corn and flour. Malagon (San Lázaro?) was one pueblo specifically mentioned by name as having and giving turkeys. These people (Galisteo Basin in general) had sticks adorned with plumes which a dancer who had been lashed gave to the spectators Indians so that they could place them in the fields and in pools of water to bring rain.

Lujan’s narrative of the Antonio de Espino expedition of 1582-83 adds more data. The Pataubehues on the Conchos River had a large lock of hair on the crown of their head to which they fastened white and black feathers of geese, cranes (grullas), and sparrow hawks. The Otomoxes on the Rio Grande above the junction with this river gave the Spaniards “women’s hats” made of colored feathers which they traded from the direction (west) of the sea (Navajo). The Pinos, who raised turkeys in quantity, made turkey feather quilts, especially for sleeping use, and used similar quilts in place of cloaks. These Indians gave the Spaniards turquoise and hens (gallinas) and mentioned shrines, in the Piro pueblos and in the middle of the roads, to which they sacrificed sticks and feathers. At a pueblo visited near the end of the mountains (Abo or one nearby) Lujan noted that the Spaniards that they were given more turkeys. When among the Southern Tiwas, many turkeys were noted and referred to as daw-lapt cocks and hens. Here (Abo) dressed one of their women with a “feather crest” like that worn by the woman who cap- tured her from the Spaniards who had obtained her from the Hops where she also had been a captive.

The journal of the Gaspar Castaño de Sosa expedition of 1590-91 also mentions receiving turkeys (gallinas) and quills during their stay. As well as at the Tewa pueblos of Nambe and Tesuque. Reference also was made to turkey (gallina) feather robes at Pecos and to a sighting of a magpie (coruca) in December near Cerrillos, the hivernoir from Pecos.

Chronicles dealing with Juan de Oñate’s first colony in New Mexico and explorations outward mention turkeys at Acoma. At Zuni they only received rabbits, but do record these Indians offering to the Spaniards, that which they offered to their idols—corn meal, which was also scattered on the ground beneath it.

The Verde Valley of central Arizona was reported as a warm land in which there were parrots. The Quere- chos (Apache in the area of present-day Laguna) dressed one of their women with a “feather crest” like that worn by the woman who cap- tured her from the Spaniards who had obtained her from the Hops where she also had been a captive.

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Near the edge of and in the Verde Valley, "Castilian partridges" (guai?) were recorded, and the valley proper was said to have great numbers of birds. In general, the Pueblo land was said to be plentiful with native turkeys, and the people had the practice of worshipping with feathers and offerings of almost everything, including birds.

The Valverde inquiry, which reviewed the results of Oñate’s coloni- zation in New Mexico to 1601, stated that the only domestic animals were the native fowl of Mexico (gallinas) and quails, while the birds which are called turkeys (pasos) in Spain are called turkeys (pasos) in Mexico in "native hens" (gallinas de la tierra).
la tierra). These were said to be raised for feathers to make blankets rather than for food or eggs. The Indians gave the Spaniards a few as a tribute. Oñate also sent his men out for fowl and blankets. Also mentioned was the offering of small birds of various colors to sculptured idols of stone or wood. If the idol was a god of the fowl, it had some feathers tied to the head with a string. It was also reported that when the Spaniards went out to obtain tribute from the Indians, they would desert their pueblos and take their fowl with them, but leave the other provisions.

On a stream (Arkansas River?) near Quivira (in Kansas) were Cas- tilian quail and turkeys, according to this report. Another investigation in 1602 recorded a statement by Mi- guel, an Indian captive taken from the Quivira area to New Mexico in 1601, that a turkey like the one shown to him also occurred in his home area on the plains. Brief reference also was made to the Pueblo people wearing cotton and feather blankets and raising native fowl.

A review of Vicente de Zaldívar's services under Oñate in New Mexico also mentions Cas- tilian partridges and turkeys, specifically along the rivers of the plains, and also that the Keresans of Zia and Acoma gave turkeys (gallinas) to the Spaniards.

The group of documents covered in the above survey are those of the Spanish period of exploration. These have been purposefully selected as a unit because the indigenous cultural practices and materials in use at the time probably had not been affected by the brief Spanish contacts of the exploratory period. For this reason they will serve well for comparative studies relating to more recent indigenous developments or to those of prehistoric times. Data from the initial Spanish colony of 1589-1609 also are included.

These early historical data cover a large area of the Southwest and neighboring territory and provide coverage relating to all the pueblos as well as some other ethnic groups. A detailed study of later historical records might well add sufficient information on several of these ethnic groups over a period of several centuries to reconstruct a trade use and lineage study on feathers from A.D. 1540 to the time of the most recent ethnological studies. The data that follow are a sampling of the documentary material from later periods which provide information relative to the subject matter treated above.

**Initial Spanish Settlement, A.D. 1610-1620**

In the 1620s, Zárate Salmerón mentioned feather blankets, for which the Indians raised many tur- keys (gallinas de la tierra), and further that Pueblo Indian food in- cluded “wild chickens” (sic—gallinas montavors—translated “wild turkeys” by Lum小组赛 1608). He also mentioned partridge and quail larger than other places.

Father Alonso de Benavides, who served in New Mexico in the 1620s, noted that observed on wood gathering expeditions, the Pueblo people took turkey feathers with them to place as offerings in ant hills as well as on heaps of stone which nature had formed in a curious manner (wishing shrines?). Women attempting to re- duce offered some small feathers, meat, and other things to a stick or stone they set up as an idol. He also stated that a Tewa from Santa Clara, who was an apachino (Navajo) as an emissary, had an arrow with a colored feather instead of a point at its tip and that the Tewa also gave this Indian a pipe made of red (cane cigarette). These feathers were also valued. However, how far down they had smoked. The arrow was to be shot to the Apache (Navajo) when the party reached them, indicating that it would come in peace. He also re- ported that at Zoni, tall Indians, apparently of tall stature, came into a room wearing plumed headdresses and carried arms in a warlike fashion.

In the middle 1600s it was re- ported that the Zunis or Hopis of “Jornopay” had an acorn and turkeys. In an underground kiva on the west side of the church at Isleta, kachina masks were worn. Beneath one was a wreath of flowering grass, some feathers, and a short petticoat with a border of beads. In the province of Las Salinas, east of the Manzano Mountains, it was claimed that the padre used Indians to hunt prairie chickens. Here, also, a dance was described in which one Indian fests and later distributes feathers to those he knows. Another source adds to the above, stating that another In- dian placed feathers and floor on the ground upon which the man who fastened stations himself and that this act was to dance over the earth, and south (Hackett 1937, vol. 3).

**Permanent Spanish Settlement, A.D. 1639-1456**

There are numerous documents and Spanish publications relating to this period and reference is made only to a few to illustrate the con- tinuance of customs relating to feather- ers and birds as well as to indicate the type of data available on birds in general.

Espinoza, in remarking on the habits of the Pueblo Indians im- mediately after the Pueblo Rebellion of 1699-92, stated that they were now accustomed to kill all wild and tending their sheep, swine, chicken, and livestock, the basis for this statement being derived from Hackett (1942, vol. 5). It was the claim of the San Juan Indians, at this time, that one of the reasons they rebelled was because of Spanish efforts to abolish the ancient practice of placing offerings, including feathers, ground maize, and almonds, on stone piles (Espinoza 1942).

Father Luis Velarde wrote in 1716 that at San Xavier and other ran- cherias, the Pimas raised many mac- caws with “feathers of red and other colors, almost like those of a pew- cock,” which they striped from the birds in the spring for use in adorn- ment. He also noted that the Pimas offered feathers to departed ones.

Fray Juan de Torquemada in 1733 published a work on the Indians that included the Southwest. He noted that the natives along the Rio Grande raised many turkeys (gallinas de la tierra) and made robes from their feathers. They also offered plumes to coarse rocks that they had built up (wishing shrines). He referred to a “temple,” a high room measuring 10 by 30 feet, all painted, wherein there was an idol of stone or clay seated on the right side of the temple with a basket with three eggs of a turkey (gallina de la tierra) in it.

The Bodo Ensayo, in addition to describing the environment and ani- mal and plant life, mentioned a number of birds of Sonora (north to the Gila River) prior to 1763 and gives the Indian names as well. Brackets below are mine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bird</th>
<th>Indian Name</th>
<th>Pueblo</th>
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<td>taguara</td>
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<td>Sparrow-hawk</td>
<td>daquagutari</td>
<td>muhu</td>
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<td>Turtledove</td>
<td>naumadad</td>
<td>teruma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rose-sucker</td>
<td>hucuc</td>
<td>coci</td>
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<td>Coot</td>
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<td>occoci</td>
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<td>tupa (Opata)</td>
<td>cihu (Opata)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hummingbird</td>
<td>burbon</td>
<td>ceron (Opata)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greylag</td>
<td>grey goose</td>
<td>white goose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crane</td>
<td>(with black feathers)</td>
<td>(with gray feathers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duck</td>
<td>(with gray feathers)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Pfefferkorn's treatise on Sonora, of the same period as the last (though completed in 1730), also presents a coverage of the animal and plant life and gives a similar (but different) listing of birds for interior Sonora. Some of his descriptions in several cases do not appear to be too accurate and should be considered with caution.

I have not seen material of the Mexican period (1821-1846) that provides much, if any, data relative to Indian use of birds and feathers. Documents relating to the Santa Fe
Trail (1830 to 1846) should be considered as well as the narratives of the early trappers and visitors in the Southwest, such as James O. Pattee, Thomas James, W. C. Jones, Otis P. Corwin, John Gregg, etc. At best, these latter will provide an occasional reference of interest concerning the Indians and their use of feathers. One source that spans the late Spanish period and the Mexican period is the work of the Franciscan priests (Godines). "Partridges, partridges of different kinds, wild hens (wild turkeys)" (gallinamos de los tierras) and grouse (gallinetas) in connection with hunting in New Mexico (Carroll and Haggard 1941). The Early American Period Many of the early American exploring expeditions had on their staff capable scientists who described the geology and the wildlife of the country through which they passed. See for example the zoological listing of birds by the Expedition of Zavala and Hidalgo in 1802. When he accompanied Gen. Joseph C. Ives' party (1861). These bird specimens are described in the General Report on Birds, vol. 8 of the Pacific Railroad Report, which includes the results of other explorations and surveys. Others, such as Abbott's New Mexico Report of the middle 1840s, contain references to the environment and the birds of certain areas and occasionally record Indian use of birds, i.e., turkeys and tame macaws at Laguna (1845) 1862). Reports of early U.S. Army scouts and campaign officers and Superintendent of Indian Affairs reports contain much of interest relating to Indian traits and customs. Of pertinent interest to this paper are the observations of John Bourke about 1880 among the Southwestern Indians. In the following data I omit his references to chickens, unless of specific association interest, and have arranged the data on the pueblos into linguistic groupings for more ready reference and comparison. However, I must consult Bourke's journal text since he often makes general comparisons from one pueblo to another in regard to customs. Zuni. Here Bourke saw a pet raven, wooden dolls with feather ornaments on the back of the head (Kachina dolls), and a picture of eagles kept for their feathers in wicker cages on the ground, boxes containing feathers of sparrows, hawk, blue jay, turkey, and eagle wrapped in paper, old man tying feathers to sticks to make turkeys in their fields to plant them in the ground to insure good crops and bring rain, and men wearing eagle and turkey feathers on their hats or head. He observed eagles being plucked on May 18 and saw owl, pottery forms. He learned that the Zunis had "parrot" (pigeon), eagle, crane (grulla), and roadrunner (piedilla) clays, kept turkeys and chickens but the last were not eaten for meat or eggs but raised for sale, caught eagles when they were young, had clowns who used feathers in their dances, did not burn owl feathers near their fields for fear of causing drought or bringing winds and hail, and painted eagles on their pottery or shaped pots in this form. Apparently they did have parrots (most probably macaws since Bourke uses "huacama mono" most of the time). Acoma. No eagles were seen, but the eagle clan as well as "huacama mono" (macaw) and turkey (gallina de la tierra) clans were represented. Feathers from their turkeys were planted in their fields to insure good crops. Laguna. Turkeys were observed here as well as turkey forms in their pottery. They also planted feathers in their fields and used them to tickle their throats to induce vomiting. This pueblo had eagle, huacama mono, turkey (largest clan), and roadrunner clans. Zia. The only bird clan here was the turbedo. An eagle was kept in an abandoned house and turkeys were observed, feathers of which were buried in the corn fields. Santa Ana. Many turkeys were seen as well as four or five eagles in cages. The turkey, turbedo, and eagle clans existed here. San Felipe. Two or four eagles were noted as well as many turkeys, but only the turkey and turbedo clans were recorded. These people had feather boxes and huacama mono obtained from Sonora which were kept in cages. They too buried feathers in their corn fields. Santo Domingo. Like San Felipe, these people had Sonoran huacama mono in cages. Cochiti. Eagle and turkey clans existed here, but only turkeys were seen. Jemez. Three caged sacred eagles were seen on top of the houses and a few turkeys in the village. The eagle clan was represented and the kivas had paintings on the walls depicting eagles, ducks, and turkeys, including a hunting scene of Indians shooting turkeys in trees. These Indians buried feathers in their corn fields. Sandia. A bundle of parrot feathers was noted in one house. Isleta. The parrot (pajaro azul de afueria) and eagle clan were recorded here and they also had parrots. Isleta del Sur. A bundle of eagle feathers was seen in a house. These people had eagle, turbedo, and gosso (ganso) clans which they called gallina de la tierra as opposed to turkey or gallina de la tierra. Taos. Three caged eagles were seen here. Fiebris. A tame eagle in a cage as well as an eagle clan were noted. These people were turkey, eagle, and owl feathers in their hair and planted them in their fields to bring rain. Their arrows were plummed with owl feathers. San Juan. Their last eagle died three years prior to Bourke's visit.
Pojaque. These people formerly had parrot or macaw feathers. Namble. Huacamayo feathers had been seen in all pueblos (Tewa) except Pojaque, and here they were kept in little long boxes of cedar (juniper?) or cottonwood. He also saw eagle, turkey, and sparrow-hawk feathers.

Navajo. Their war bonnets were decorated with eagle or turkey feathers. The buckskin masks worn in their dances had two eagle feathers and a crest of horseshoe. Though they ate wild turkey, they cared little for chicken.

In general, it would appear from this spot check survey that there is a considerable amount of data in the documentary and published records bearing on feathers and birds' interest to the ethnologist and to the ornithologist seeking information on birds of earlier periods. A more intensive investigation of the records should add substantially to this study. Obviously, the same type of investigation could be made on other objects and customs of Indians throughout the historic period. The same applies to archaeological trait distribution studies, which we sorely need.

Three-space studies of specific traits in the documents not only will serve to form a pool of comparative information, but will contribute a considerable body of data essential to any study of cultural change. If combined with similar distributional studies of Southwestern archaeologi- cal material, anthropologists will have a 2,000 year timespan over a large area of the Southwest on which they can trace development and diffusion of specific traits, traits assemblages, trait complexes, and ultimately patterns.

Bibliography

The following list enumerates the sources for the early explorers' accounts by chronological period. Figures interspersed are locating Spanish corrales of the same names, see Schroeder 1905.—Ed.

Spanish Period of Exploration, A.D. 1540-1585

Alarcon, Hernando de (1540 and Rey 1940)

Alvarado, Hernando de (1540)

Bustamante: see Rodriguez-Chavez Expulsion of 1515-82

Gallegos: see Rodriguez-Chavez Expulsion of 1515-82

Loyos, Diego Perez de: see also Pecos Expedition 1549-53

Miguel (as Indian captive): see Olachea

Niza, Fray Marcos de: see Hammond and Rey 1940

Castaneda: see Coronado

Coronado: Francisco Vázquez de: see Hammond and Rey 1940, Washburn 1946

Diaz, Melchor: see Coronado

Espino, Antonio de: expedition of 1549-50: Hammond and Rey 1929, 1935

Gallegos: see Rodriguez-Chavez Expulsion of 1515-82

Loyos, Diego Perez de: see also Pecos Expedition 1549-53

Miguel (as Indian captive): see Olachea

Niza, Fray Marcos de: see Hammond and Rey 1940

Olachea, Juan de: see Hammond and Rey 1940

Rodriguez-Chavez Expulsion of 1545-82: Hammond and Rey 1940

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Bibliography for Illustrations


