

AN UNUSUAL WESTERN UTAH PAINTED STYLE PICTOGRAPH
IN TIMPIE VALLEY, UTAH

BY

MARK E. STUART

The purpose of this paper is to document and describe an unusual rock art site containing a single, red pictograph of a triangular-bodied, shield bearing anthropomorph painted in a cave on the Southwest margin of the Great Salt Lake, Utah. Rock art sites recorded from the Great Salt Lake region are relatively few in number when compared to other regions in Utah (Schaafsma, 1971 and Castleton, 1979). It is hoped that the documentation of this new rock art site may make a valuable, albeit small, contribution to the study and understanding of this subject.

The pictograph site is located in the SE1/4 of the SW1/4 of the SW1/4 of Section 27, Township 1 South; Range 7 West; of the Timpie Northwest, Utah 7.5 minute USGS quadrangle map. It lies at the northern end of the Stansbury Mountains which form the boundary between Skull Valley to the west and Tooele Valley to the east. Here the Stansbury Mountains open up into a small horseshoe-shaped basin known as Timpie Valley. Timpie Valley is drained by an intermittent stream which drains northeast into the spring-fed marshes bordering the Great Salt Lake in northwestern Tooele Valley.

Access to the site can be reached by following Utah Highway 40 from Grantsville, Utah five miles northwest to the Dolomite plant. About 1/2 mile west of the Dolomite plant, a dirt road leaves the main highway and goes west about one mile to a turnoff, heading southwest and following the intermittent stream draining Timpie Valley. Here the road becomes quite rough and rocky and is passable to truck or four-wheel drive traffic only. About three quarters to a mile up this road, a small unnamed canyon is seen entering Timpie Valley from the west (right). Traveling 3/4 miles west by foot and entering just inside the canyon, the visitor will observe the site in a small cave in the limestone formations 200 yards up the rock-strewn talus slope which forms the south wall of the canyon.

The site consists of an apparent wave-action cut limestone cave on the highest level or terrace of ancient Lake Bonneville. The cave has a north-east exposure with an excellent view overlooking the springs and marshes at the mouth of Timpie Valley. The cave is about 12 feet high, 8-12 feet wide and approximately 30-35 feet deep beyond the drip line. The floor of the cave slopes slightly from front to back and is uneven, being comprised of bedrock along the northwestern wall and sloping about 2 feet to the southeastern wall where the floor is made of water-laid eolian sand. The cave floor here appears to have approximately 18 inches to 2 feet of fill (possibly more) based upon observation of an old pot hole dug near the back of the cave. Observed in the pot hole spoil dirt were a couple of pieces of large ungulate bone and several flakes of charcoal.

The cave is roughly the shape of a lopsided triangle with the relatively flat southeast wall leaning and slightly arcing to form the ceiling of the cave before abutting the northwest wall. It was here on the flat southeast wall that the prehistoric artist chose to execute this unusual painting.

The unusual characteristics of this pictograph (Fig. 1) are its large size, being 3 1/2 feet high and 3 feet wide, and finely executed detail generally not found in pictographs of the Salt Lake Region.

The anthropomorph wears a stylized headdress of 4 curving lines which probably represent feathers. This headdress is similar in many respects to painted anthropomorphs found by Steward (1937a:87-88) at Promontory Cave 1 and Stuart (1983) at 42Wb278 at the mouth of Taylor Canyon east of Ogden. The figure is also adorned with what appears to be ear-bobs hanging to each side of the head.

The anthropomorph holds in his left hand a circular object which has been interpreted by some scholars (Wormington, 1955; Aikens 1966 and others) on other pictographs as representing hide shields. In the right hand, the figure holds a pole which appears to be a spear. At the upper end of the pole is what appears to be a spear or lance point.

The pictograph is in a good state of preservation, the only area in which the red ochre pigment has blurred is across

the shield portion of the figure where minerals leached out of the rock by occasional moisture have caused the red pigment to streak.

Even though there is plenty of flat, empty, protected space available, for reasons unknown, no other pictographs were executed within the cave. A brief survey of the immediately surrounding area revealed several other caves, all of which showed signs of occupation, but no other pictographs or petroglyphs were observed. The smoke-stained ceilings and walls, lithic debitage, burned and unburned bone and presence of a projectile point and bifaced fragment seem to indicate that these nearby shelters were probably hunting camps for the procurement of large game such as deer and mountain sheep in the Stansbury Mountains. This situation is probably similar to that reported by Madsen (1983) at Black Rock Cave in the northern Ochre Mountains on the northeast side of Tooele Valley.

The Timpie Valley pictograph belongs to a tentative category of rock art first defined by Schaafsma (1971) known as the Western Utah Painted Style. As defined, this style is distinguished by the simple painted representation, usually in red, of a Fremont-like, triangular bodied, horned anthropomorph. This style is best represented in the Great Salt Lake Region of northern Utah, but also occurs in Utah as far south as Fool Creek and Clear Creek in west-central Utah.

There are also other types of paintings from the Great Salt Lake Region recorded by Sleight (1946), Steward (1937a:87) and Stuart (1983), consisting of circle clusters, plain and bisected circles, dot rows, ladders, zig-zags, parallel-lined motifs and diamond-shaped designs, all of which are prominent elements in the Great Basin Curvilinear Style, but are also found in Fremont panels throughout Utah.

In summary, the Timpie pictograph of a red shield-bearing anthropomorph belongs to the Western Utah Painted Style. This pictograph is unusual in its large size and remarkable execution and detail generally not found in the Great Salt Lake Region. Another curious aspect of this pictograph is its apparent isolation in the midst of flat protected space ideally suited for the addition of other rock art within the cave. A brief survey of the immediate area surrounding the pictograph revealed several caves which probably served as hunting camps, but it located no other rock art. The Timpie pictograph is an unusual piece of Fremont rock art and its apparent isolation remains a mystery.

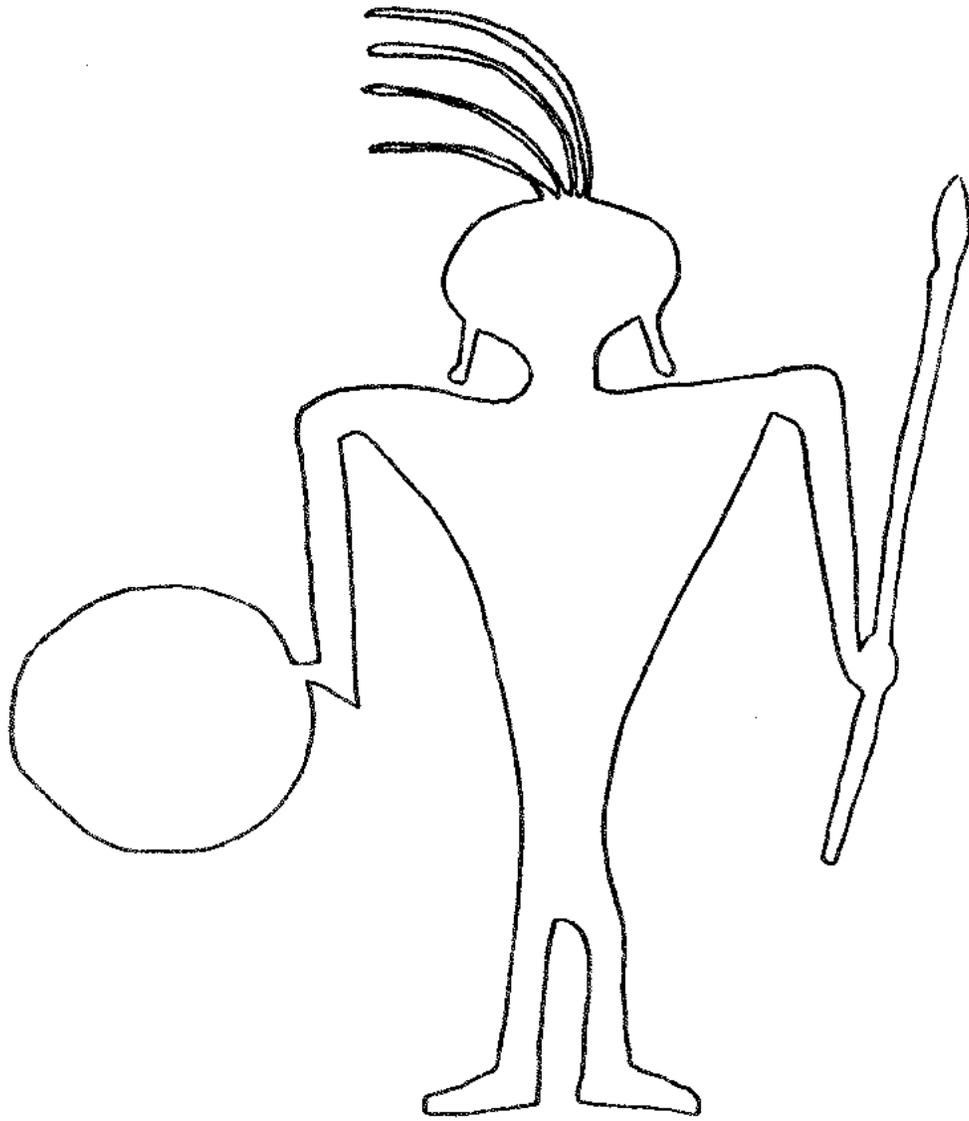


FIGURE 1

REFERENCES

AIKENS, C. MELVIN

1966 Fremont-Promontory-Plains Relationships. University of Utah Anthropological Papers, No. 82.

CASTLETON, KENNETH B.

1979 Petroglyphs and Pictographs of Utah, Vol. 2-The South, Central, West and Northwest. Utah Museum of Natural History.

MADSEN, DAVID B.

1983 Black Rock Cave Revisited. Bureau of Land Management Cultural Resource Series, No. 14. Salt Lake City, Utah.

SCHAAF'SMA, FOLLY

1971 The Rock Art of Utah--From the Donald Scott Collection. Papers of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Vol. 63, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

SLEIGHT, FREDERICK W.

1946 Comments on Basketmaker-Like Pictographs In Northern Utah. The Masterkey, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp 88-92.

STEWART, JULIAN H.

1937 Ancient Caves of the Great Salt Lake Region. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 116.

STUART, MARK E.

1983 Site Form for 42Wb278, Weber County, Utah. On file Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

WORMINGTON, H.M.

1955 A Reappraisal of the Fremont Culture. Proceedings of the Denver Museum of Natural History, No 1d.