

Endangered Wasatch County Pictograph Site

Ray Bailey

Serious rock art researchers are aware of numerous sites scattered throughout the West which, once viewed, are forgotten or henceforth largely ignored, possibly due to preoccupation with those more spectacular, or a tendency to specialize in a particular style or icon. These "forgotten" panels are no less important in our research, however, and should be documented and protected with the same effort given a "Great Gallery" or "Harvest Scene".

With the news media hype and resulting interest given the Central Utah Project and upon actual commencement of the Jordanelle Dam Project, my interest was piqued concerning two such sites that may well be impacted by the imminent water back-up behind the dam. The dam is now under construction north of Heber City on U.S. Highway 40 at a point where the South Fork of the Provo River crosses at Hailstone Junction after flowing west from Francis through a seven-mile canyon where the two sites are located. Dr. Kenneth B. Castleton (1987) refers to the easterly site as the Kamas site. One elderly resident, presently abandoning his home site of many years, intimates other sites exist in this canyon along U.S. alternate Highway 189. The highway will be closed and rerouted in September 1989. The reservoir will form two arms, one backing northward to Keetley and covering present Highway 40, the other inundating the Provo River and highway for a distance of some four miles east toward Francis. The total cost of the project, incidentally, is estimated at \$78,000,000 upon completion in 1993. The filling of the reservoir is expected to take up to eight years.

To document impact upon the rock art, contact was made with the Provo construction office of the Bureau of Reclamation, where I met with Carol Wiens, Environmental Specialist, and R. Wayne Rich, Civil Engineer in the design branch. Ms Wiens and Mr. Rich were both extremely cordial and cooperative, accommodating me wherever possible. They assured me the required archaeological survey reports had been prepared in the fall of 1987 and a determination had been made that no detrimental impact would occur to cultural sites found there. The survey report, however, only addressed the easternmost site, simply because one site was found and known to exist by the author of the report.

I was furnished a copy of a Bureau of Reclamation topographic map with overlay projections reflecting an ultimate maximum water level of 6182.5 feet. The road level on the canyon floor directly below the westernmost site is measured at 6205 feet, some 17.5 feet above the high water projection. The rock art itself, some 50 feet above the road surface, will be 67.5 feet above water, *if* the Bureau of Reclamation calculations prove to be correct.

The geography of the surrounding area is conducive to human habitation with readily accessible year-round water and abundant fish and wildlife. The flat river plain affords open, grass covered meadows and groves of trees for shade and adequate firewood supply. The surrounding cliffs of frontier sandstone afford overhangs and shallow caves for protection. The site was well known by native inhabitants of the region, as evidenced by cultural lithic scatter on the surrounding hills and benches.

The westernmost site is located within a shallow cave or overhang 50 yards up the cliff, facing south. The site to the east is near the top of the rock cliff face with a three-ported cave, which also faces south. Both sites are done in red paint in what is commonly referred to as Western Utah Painted Style (early Fremont). The panels at both sites include zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures with one handprint at the west site, and abstract designs typical of western Desert Archaic cultures. The site to the east contains a small sunburst and one black, stylized zoomorph. Probably the most interesting are two figures just under the outside overhang of the eastern site which are symmetrical symbols and resemble the sunburst used on New Mexico license plates for many years. Several small glyphs are also scattered along the path at the base of the cliff for some 100 yards east of this cave, one of which is a very distinct 4-inch solitary stick figure anthropomorph. These are all located within or near small recesses in the cliff face. Figure 1 is a composite drawing of figures found at both sites. Figure 2 is a map of the dam, reservoir, and surrounding area, furnished by the State Division of Parks and Recreation.

Both sites show heavy visitation by hunters and hikers, curious about the cave-like overhangs seen easily from the highway below. Potholes are immediately noticeable, as are the bottles, lunch sack remnants, and other discard from our present litterbug society. The sites could be somewhat protected by imminent removal of the present highway and the ultimate lake level, reducing visitation considerably.

A new road, however, is presently being constructed across the valley floor from the hills above, crossing diagonally from north to south adjacent to the site. This road will connect to the old highway just east of the site, to serve Heber City to Francis traffic flow. Access will also be possible from the

rerouted highway north of the canyon, but neither site can be seen from that direction.

A recreational development plan is now being formulated and response has been solicited from the public prior to final approval. The Utah Department of Parks and Recreation proposal includes extensive hiking trails around the perimeter of the reservoir just above the ultimate water line. Plans for the eastern arm of the reservoir, to be known as Rock Cliff, includes a hiking trail, a floating boat ramp, showers, campground, parking area, and ranger station. These improvements are to be located directly below the rock art panels! The area immediately to the north and just above the cliff wall is a prime winter range used by the extensive mule deer population. The immediate cliffs and overhangs contain numerous raptor-nesting sites. The proposed hiking trail would prove to be a disaster from an environmental point of view.

In the final analysis, it appears the sites are critically endangered; if not from possible inundation by lake waters, then from recreational activity, a certainty in the years ahead. It is one of the strange antitheses of our present society how progress toward comfort for the earth's human inhabitants usually means a step backward for ecological, historical, and cultural balance.

REFERENCES CITED

- Castleton, Kenneth B.
1987 *Petroglyphs and Pictographs of Utah, Vol. II* Utah Museum of Natural History, Salt Lake City, Utah (Originally published 1979)
- Wiens, Carol
1987 Cultural Resource Report, Jordanelle Dam Site United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Salt Lake City, Utah (unpublished).

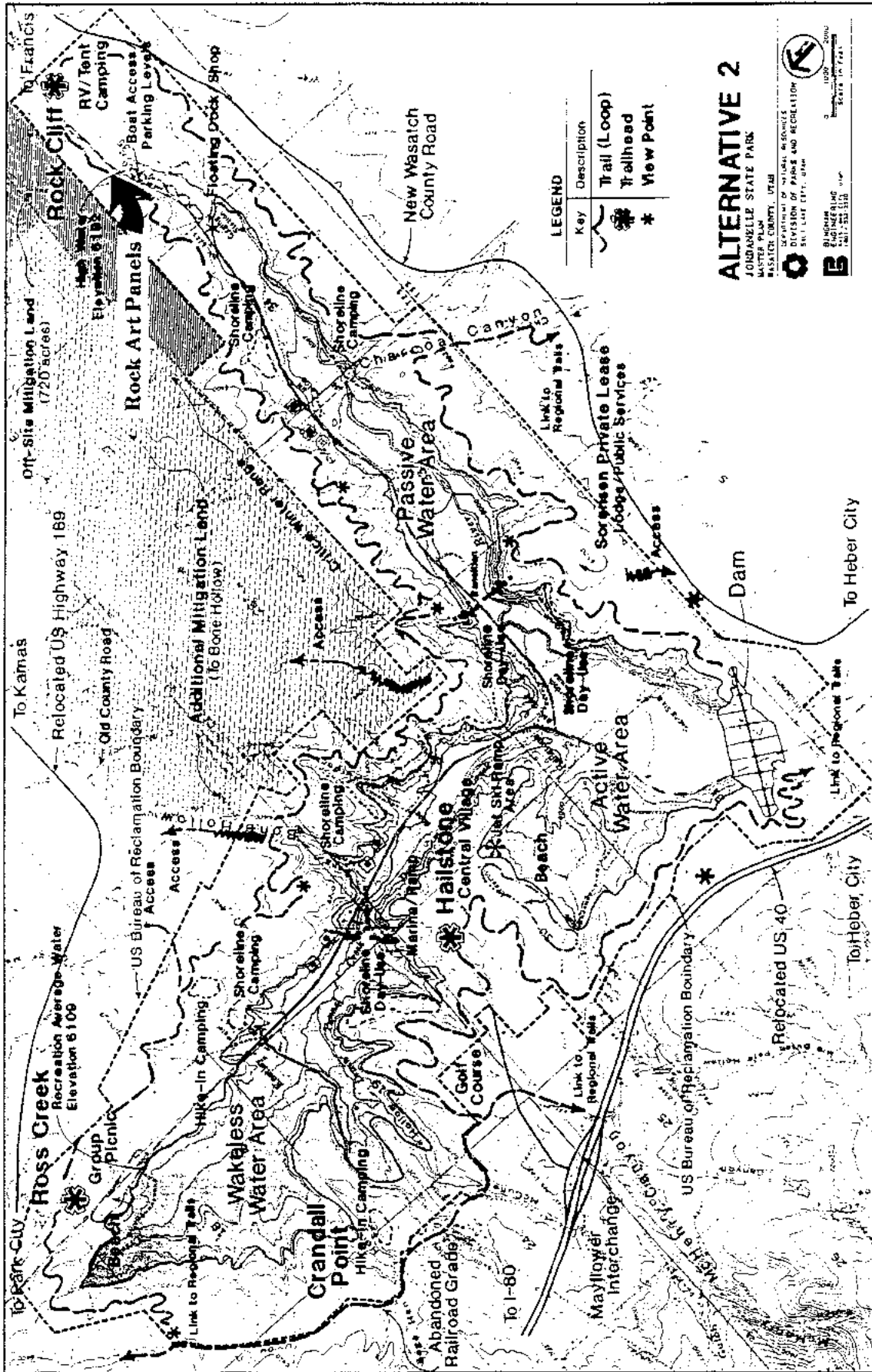


Figure 2.

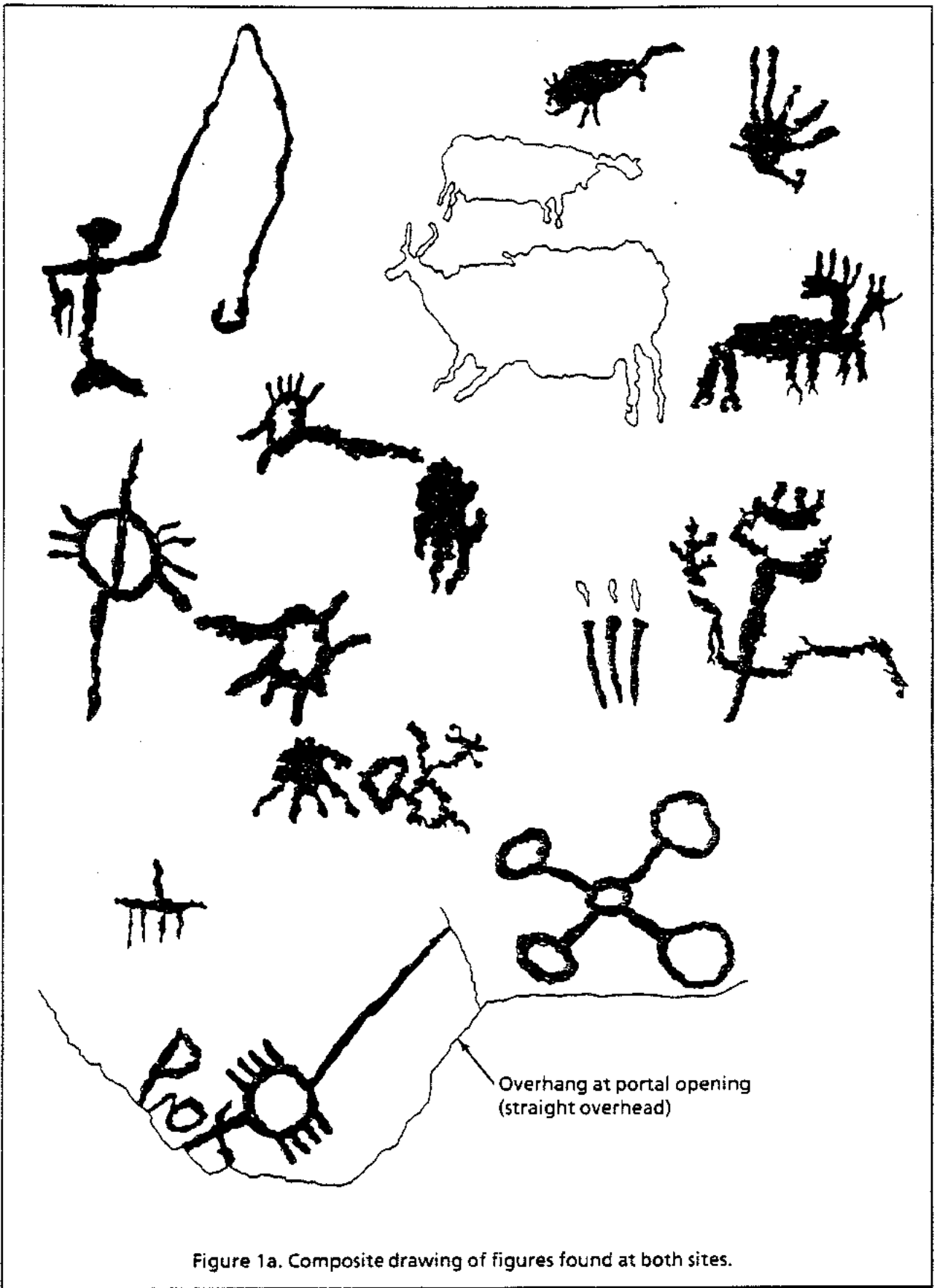


Figure 1a. Composite drawing of figures found at both sites.

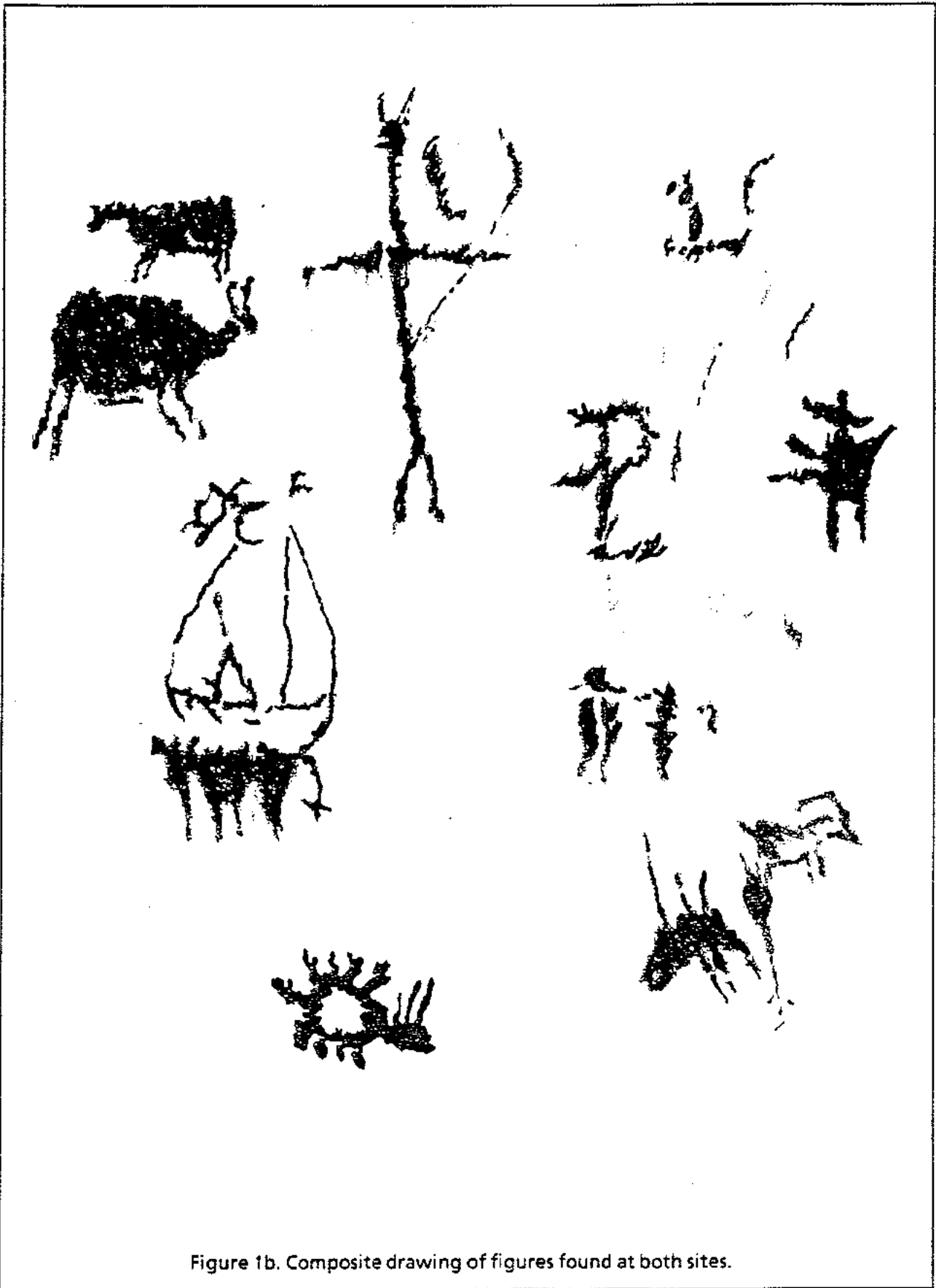


Figure 1b. Composite drawing of figures found at both sites.