

Reappraisal of the Cave Valley Style

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The following is a preliminary report of a continuing investigation into the Cave Valley Style rock art of southwestern Utah and adjacent areas. This report covers information acquired over approximately the past fifteen years. During this period, many panels of the Cave Valley Style have been discovered. Many of these panels are in remote areas and not well known.

The Cave Valley Style has been found to extend over a much broader geographical area than first defined by Schaafsma (1970). Rock art sites with Cave Valley Style characteristics have been found as far north as Lehman Caves in Nevada, as far south as Valley of Fire (also in Nevada) and as far east as the Kaibab Plateau in northern Arizona. The number of known sites has also increased dramatically from 1970. There are about seventy-five sites known at present. Most of the sites with Cave Valley Style rock art are of indefinite age. This is because they are pictographs and do not show relative levels of patination. Some of the pictograph panels in well protected caves (Piute Cave for example) appear to have been painted only a little while ago, while others appear to be of great antiquity because they look so old and faded or eroded (Cottonwood Canyon for example). Some of these panels are almost completely lost through exfoliation and erosion.

It is apparent from examining the panels that many variations exist within what has previously been defined as the Cave Valley Style. It appears that the characteristics that define the Cave Valley Style are not uniformly present in panels that

should be Cave Valley Style. At some panels, it appears that other types of figures predominate. These other types appear to represent a style not previously defined. (In the program presented to URARA, 125 slides were shown and discussed in detail illustrating this point. Representative slides were shown from many locations including the following: Cave Valley, Zion National Park, Virgin River, Springdale, Fort Pierce, Black Mountain, Petroglyph Canyon, Indian Canyon, Cottonwood Canyon, Hilldale, Pipe Spring, Lehman Caves, Valley of Fire, Kanab Plateau, and Three Lakes Canyon.) Since what has been defined as the "Cave Valley Style" is present within these panels, it is appropriate to review the characteristics of the Cave Valley Style before defining any stylistic variations.

The site in Cave Valley (42WS69) is the type-site for the Cave Valley Style. This site was first reported by Rudy and Stirland (1949). In their report, the pictographs were not discussed in detail. Later Wauer (1965) described the site in detail. He described the presence of about eighty figures.

The Cave Valley Style was first defined by Schaafsma (1970:116-117). For convenience of the reader the text defining the Cave Valley Style is quoted in detail:

The style is characterized by the presence of a highly stylized anthropomorphic figure to be described in detail below. All figures occurring in the style tend to be simple with few elaborations. The aesthetic quality of line is not developed and complex decorative detail is lacking. Cave

Valley Style panels occur most commonly as paintings, although carved anthropomorphs of the Cave Valley Style have been reported (Schroeder 1955, fig. 19b). The paintings display a wide range of colors including black, red, yellow, green, and white.

The Cave Valley Style anthropomorph may be larger and somewhat dominant over the larger figures in a given panel. In spite of having a triangular or tapering torso, this figure has characteristically a rather pudgy appearance. Arms and legs are generally short and may occur as thick lines or be triangular in form. Fingers and toes are shown in only a few instances, usually being absent altogether. Heads vary in shape from bucket-like to triangular or round. Horns have been reported on some figures although a decorative crown of vertically or horizontal aligned dots is a more usual form of headdress. In some cases a triangular or bucket shaped head is shown with a flat extension across the top that is terminated with downward pointing projections which echo the larger design of the torso and its appendages.

The Cave Valley Style anthropomorph is commonly found in association with smaller elements painted in the same blunt manner. These elements include other human figures, which may be depicted as crude stick forms painted in wide lines and may bear dot crown headdresses like those seen on the large triangular figure. A number of anthropomorphs are shown in profile, including flute players, phallic figures, people running, or lines of stick figures shown with arms outstretched in front of them. Simple and unidentifiable animals associated with this style are usually formless and amoeba-like in appearance. The usual abstract elements occurring in the Cave Valley Style panels are rows of dots, short lines, V's, simple equilinear crosses, concentric circles, swastikas, wavy lines, and possibly handprints (Schaafsma 1970:116-117).

The definition of the Cave Valley Style was established by Schaafsma from limited information from eight sites. These are: one site in Cave Valley, three sites along the Virgin River in Zion National Park, one site at Pipe Springs National Monument, one site in Cottonwood Can-

yon west of Kanab, and two sites in Johnson Canyon North of Kanab. Of these panels, only one was reasonably well reported and as Schaafsma noted in the secondary sources used to define the style, "complete panels are only occasionally reproduced" (Schaafsma 1970:112). The site in Cave Valley was therefore the only site that Schaafsma had any reliable information concerning, so the definition of Cave Valley Style came principally from only this one site.

Illustrative of this is that Schaafsma stated, as quoted above, that Cave Valley Style contained "swastikas". In all the panels of Cave Valley Style that I have located only one "swastika" has ever been seen, and that is in Cave Valley. While leading a field trip to Cave Valley, following the American Rock Art Research Association meeting in St. George, Utah, an older gentleman approached me and told me that a small group of bright white painted figures on the west side of the cave were not there when he visited the site many years ago. A close examination revealed that someone had seemingly painted over an older faded Cave Valley Style anthropomorph and had added several figures next to the anthropomorph, which included the "swastika". The "swastika" then is **not** part of the Cave Valley Style. Had Schaafsma constructed a table of characteristics of the Cave Valley Style before defining the style she would have found that only one "swastika" was present and undoubtedly reached the conclusion that "swastikas" were not a defining characteristic of Cave Valley Style. As noted, Schaafsma's definition of the Cave Valley Style appears to have been determined almost exclusively from the one site in Cave Valley.

As more and more panels of the Cave Valley Style were located and examined it appeared, as mentioned above, that there

were different groupings of figures within Schaafsma's Cave Valley Style definition. Several panels were found that contained a collection of only certain of the Cave Valley Style characteristics, as occurring in the panel in Cave Valley. Other panels were also found that contained other characteristics separate from the panel in Cave Valley. This evidence appeared to indicate that Schaafsma's definition of the Cave Valley Style was based upon a location that appears to have contained, not a single style, but a combination of styles. Therefore, the designation of a "Cave Valley Style" and its definition appears incorrect. An updated definition is therefore appropriate.

It appears that one of the primary characteristics of the Cave Valley Style that differentiates it into at least two separate styles is the presence or absence of the triangular bodied anthropomorph. The anthropomorphic figures of the sites that are included in this study have tentatively been categorized into two main divisions. The first is characterized by anthropomorphs composed exclusively of triangles. This then is the primary defining characteristic for one of the "new" styles. Associated with these triangular-bodied anthropomorphs are crude and simple quadruped forms (probably representing deer and mountain sheep), reclining flute players and zigzag lines. The main characteristic of the other "new" style is anthropomorphs that are not composed exclusively of triangles — the figures are trapezoidal. The panel also contains figures that are more characteristic of the Fremont Culture.

To determine an areal distribution upon which to base a re-definition of the Cave Valley Style, all the known panels were assigned a general type style, and then the locations were plotted on a map. The sites appeared to be distributed in definite geo-

graphic areas. The anthropomorphs with triangular bodies are clustered in the west, principally in the vicinity of the Virgin River drainage. Therefore, I propose the name Virgin River Style for these figures. The other style, represented principally by the other anthropomorphic forms, is clustered in the east, primarily in the vicinity of Kanab Creek. Therefore, I propose the name Kanab Creek Style for these figures.

A table listing the characteristics of figures in the proposed Virgin River and Kanab Creek Style panels is in preparation. The table, constructed in the form illustrated in Figure 1, may indicate as anticipated, when complete and as illustrated, that there are elements that are distinctive to each of the two styles, and that there are elements that are shared between the two styles. The table should also show which characteristics are the most common in each proposed style.

One preliminary observation that the data appears to reveal is that the temporal span of the proposed Virgin River Style appears to be from late Archaic to almost historic times. This conclusion is based upon patination levels of petroglyphs and the occurrence of atlatals in panels with heavy patination.

The temporal span of the Kanab Creek style is more difficult to determine. It appears to be associated with the early Fremont and Anasazi Basketmaker period, because of the similar anthropomorphic styles and element inventory. However, this conclusion is only tentative.

One important discovery, and one that perhaps would help define the meaning of the triangular figure in the Virgin River Style, and perhaps determine its origins, was made north of Kanab. A typical triangular shaped anthropomorph was located on a panel that was previously

buried. The panel was uncovered with a bulldozer or backhoe. The anthropomorph was pecked with a heavy outline, forming the typical triangular shape. Within the triangular outline was a stick figure of an anthropomorph (Figure 2). This figure is illustrated in a method reminiscent of a child drawing clothes on a stick figure. The triangular outline feature appears to be a representation of some type of covering or physical adornment, a robe perhaps or garment, that covers the human figure.

Many research questions have been proposed because of this figure. Is the triangular anthropomorph in the proposed Virgin River Style a representation of a physical object covering a person? Is the interpretation that this feature represents an object of clothing (like a robe) correct? Is this robe or covering a symbol representing a person of significant importance or status, i.e., a religious leader or "medicine man"? A determination of what this apparent symbol represents, or even if it physically exists, would be difficult. Perhaps archaeologists working in this area may discover physical evidence of such a garment. Additional information to answer these questions may be found in the future in the context in which this anthropomorphic type occurs.

An additional discovery is that some of the characteristics of the Cave Valley Style occur with polychrome anthropomorphic figures in the far eastern range of the Cave Valley Style characteristics. These figures appear to be Fremont but they are far outside of the defined range of the Fremont. At this time, a rough estimate is that they are from a Basketmaker period, and that this people greatly influenced or interacted with the Fremont.

Finally, the origin and meaning of the shared elements between the proposed Virgin River and the Kanab Creek Style is an important research topic. If these two styles represent differing, yet coexistent ideologies, then there may be a common root for the styles, or a common ancestral cultural affiliation. Decidedly, more research is needed to answer these questions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Nina and Craig Bowen, Kenneth Castleton, Douglas McFadden, Owen Severance and Mary Allen for site location information and for guiding me to rock art sites.

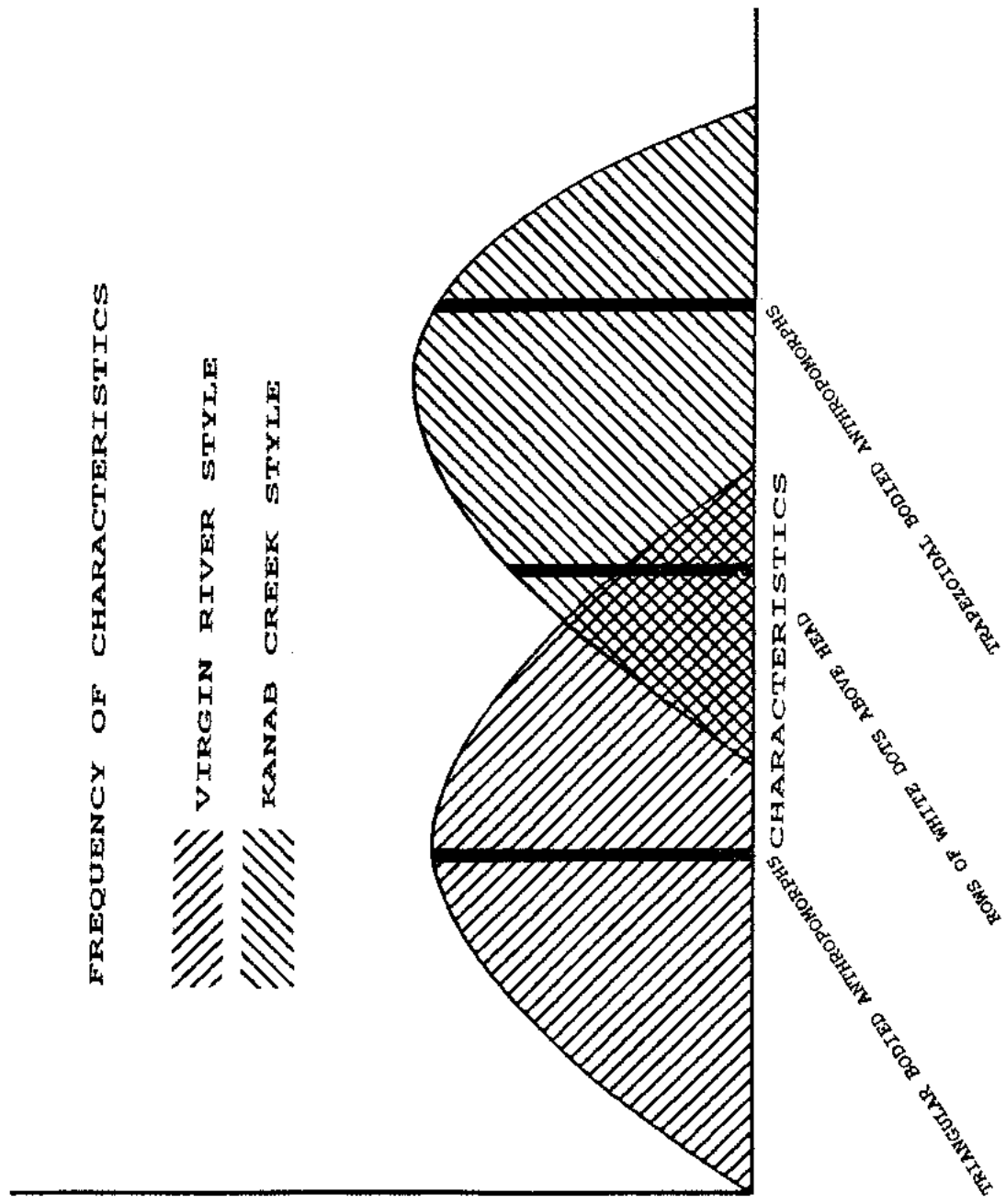
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FREQUENCY OF CHARACTERISTICS

VIRGIN RIVER STYLE
 KANAB CREEK STYLE

FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE
 100
 90
 80
 70
 60
 50
 40
 30
 20
 10
 0



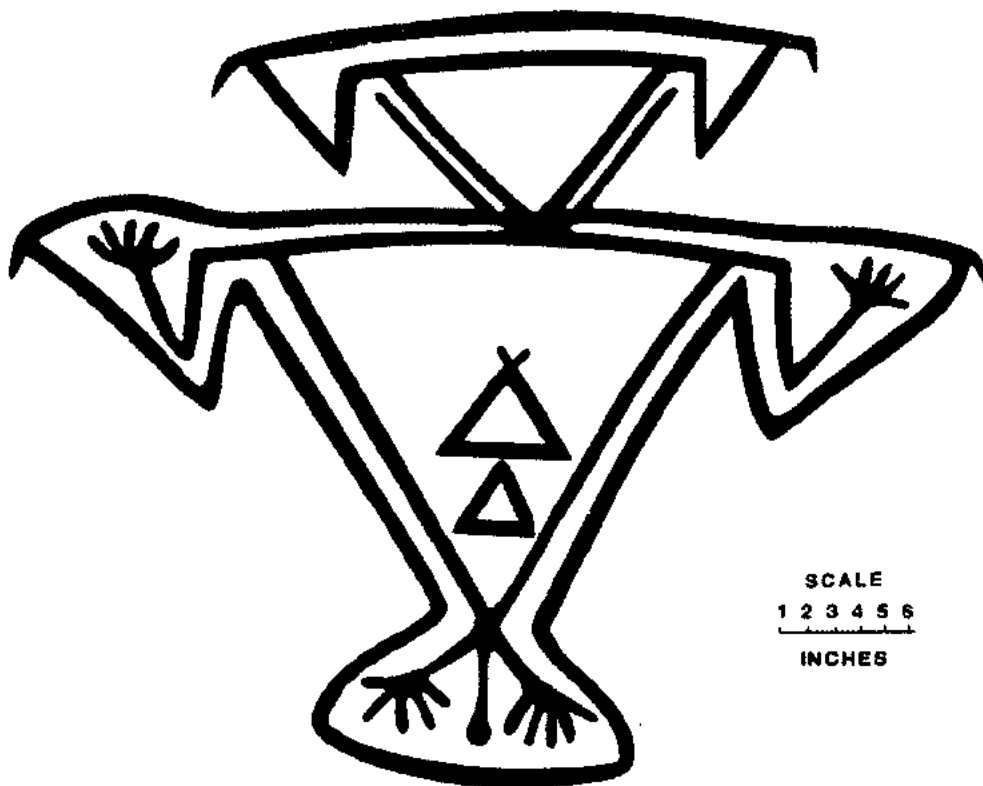


Figure 2