

DEVELOPING A DATING SEQUENCE OF ROCK ART IMAGES

by
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As of this time there is no reliable method of scientific testing that will give a correct date on the rock surfaces.

The archaeological method of dating cultural remains next to or at the level of rock art sites is unacceptable to me. Archaeology deals more with the dating of cultural remains, and that does not tell us how long the rock art was used. I think that some of the rock art was used over very long periods of time. Some of the archaeology in the Bluff area is PII and PIII which is 750 AD to 1150 AD. The point is that the rock art we are looking at from this area is possibly 2500 years old, and those dates do not correspond with the age of the archaeology in this area.

The ethnographic method deals with the historic aspect of the rock art, but it leaves much to be desired when you go back to the age of the Anasazi or Fremont. Some of the myths like the creation and emergence are seen in early rock art. These myths cannot be used in the dating process of the anasazi and Fremont, because we do not know their origin.

Patination is not a reliable method of dating rock art, because a panel can be affected by wetter or drier places, or the amount of exposure to sun and wind on the same rock face or whether the panel is in a cave or shelter. It is also apparent to me that some figures were intentionally placed under water flows in order to take advantage of the water, much in the same way that archaeoastronomy places a figure under the light of the sun to take advantage of the shaft of light.

Christy Turner in 1963 was on to something, but he got off the track when he attempted to align rock art dating archaeologically; he rated the glyphs as style 1 through style 5, style 5 being Glen Canyon 5. Style 1 was historical Navajo, Paiute and Ute. Style 2 was Hopi and Pueblo IV. Style 3 was late Pueblo III. Style 4 was Pueblo II and III. Style 5 was pre-Pueblo II and pre-pottery, starting as early as 100 B.C. He revised this dating in 1971 to 4,000 - 8,000 B.C. because of then recent discoveries of the split twig figurine in Grand Canyon and other archaeological finds after his papers were published. At least Glen Canyon 5 became archaic at that time.

In Diamond Valley north of St. George, the oldest rock art is at the bottom and the newest rock art is at the top of the panel. At Indian Creek and Newspaper Rock, the old archaic is at the side and bottom of the panel, and the middle rock art which is old is superimposed with newer Ute horses. On the right side higher up and away from any previous rock art the Ute have placed their rock art as part of the total panel. Most of the panel is Ute, leading you to believe that the entire panel is Ute. Upon closer inspection, you find the older rock art, which says that the Ute Indians were only one of the groups that used this panel.

Style has been controversial but you have to have some way to talk about it.

Dating by style is confusing because you are putting the name of a place on it, such as Kayenta, Cave Valley, Fremont, Northern San Rafael, Barrier Canyon, Classic Vernal, La Sal Abajo, Glen Canyon and San Juan Basketmaker. Question: What if the same style of rock art appeared in nine of the mentioned areas? Was it a time on the Colorado Plateau, rather than a place?

The name Fremont cannot possibly cover the time span of 2,500 years or more of rock art production. As the Fremont are subdivided we become even more enlightened to the people, where they were and what they were doing. How do we separate by style?

What is interesting about Christy Turner's designation of Glen Canyon style is that most of the symbols that make up that style can be found in the San Juan River drainage. I went through Glen Canyon in 1948 and I can tell you that there is very little Glen Canyon style rock art in Glen Canyon. The San Juan Basketmaker style of rock art can be classified as one of the Archaic styles, which can date from 500 B.C. or earlier. When you get into style definitions, the books tell you there is a Glen Canyon Archaic. I would like to invite you to come over to the site at Cedar Point and see from the evidence that is presented on this rock how the Glen Canyon style 5 predated the San Juan Basketmaker style.

The panels (Figs. 1-4) I will show you, are in the Cedar Point area. These are big boulders that have come down the hillside. I will show you how one of these rocks was used over the ages and show you how we can separate cultures, these being Glen Canyon 5 and San Juan Basketmaker, by means of which angle they are on the rock after the rock rotated a quarter turn.

Somehow over time the rock has moved (Fig. 1 and 2). The writing on the rock shows that the different artists who made the petroglyphs used two different styles of rock art. The duck-headed figure, two lobed circles and flute players are figures that I believe are after the Basketmaker time. The position of the rock has changed to where we can put the styles into a sequence, and I believe that this same thing happened in other places. This method of dating is preferable to any dating methods we have right now. This turning of the rock shows an absolute separation in the time the figures were placed on this rock.

All along the San Juan River drainage there are lobed circles, and these are common on this panel. There is also an abundance of turkey figures, which I believe can be related to the turkey blankets found in the archaeology of this area. There are a lot of dots on the rocks in this area as well. I will now show you the Glen Canyon Linear section of the boulder (Fig. 2). Glen Canyon 5 Style covered a huge area, all across the Colorado Plateau. Figure 3 shows a bug-eyed figure which is typical of the Glen Canyon style 5. The figures also have large hands and the pecking is not as deep as the Basketmaker rock art.

The west side of the main rock art at Cedar Point has what seems to be another petroglyph style or another time, which seems to be after the San Juan Basketmaker time. It is entirely different. Another boulder to the west (Fig. 4) shows some rock art of this same later time. This style is consistent with the style of rock art on the first rock that faces the same direction, so it can be dated by its association with that rock.

Figure 5 is a Glen Canyon style 5 panel located next to the San Juan River at Mexican Hat. Figure 6 is the Butler Wash panel. Figure 7, which is showing possibly Hopi symbols such as flutes and hair buns is located in Montezuma Creek, and Figure 8 which is historical Ute or Navajo, is located in the town of Bluff, Utah. This I believe is showing a sequence of rock art for the Bluff area, which is done not by archaeology but by defining rock art styles from the oldest to the most recent in a particular area.

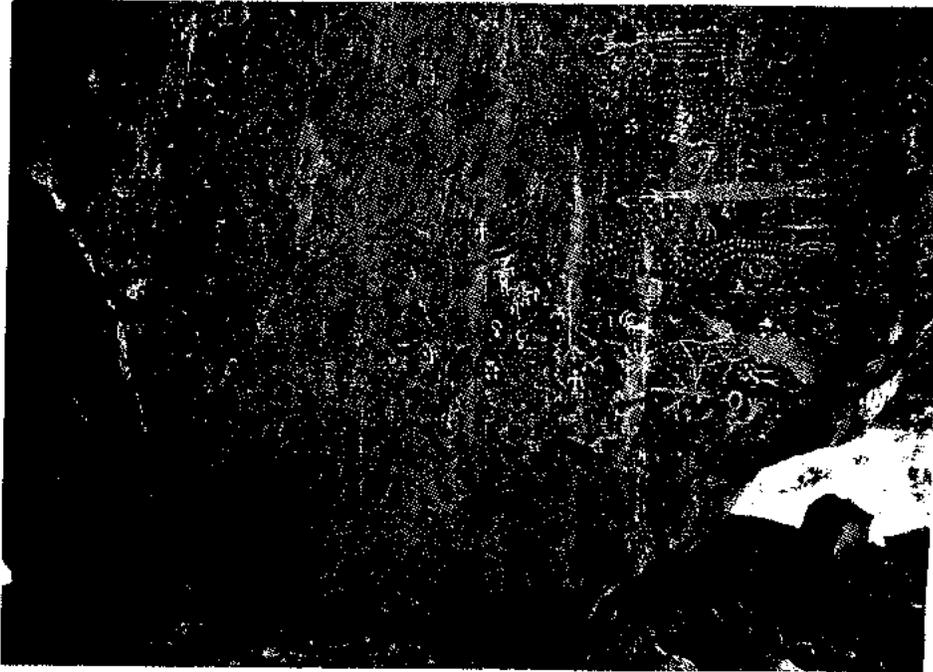


Figure 1. Cedar Point, the Rock Art Panel that turned on it's side.



Figure 2. Cedar Point close up.



Figure 3. Cedar Point, East Rock Panel.

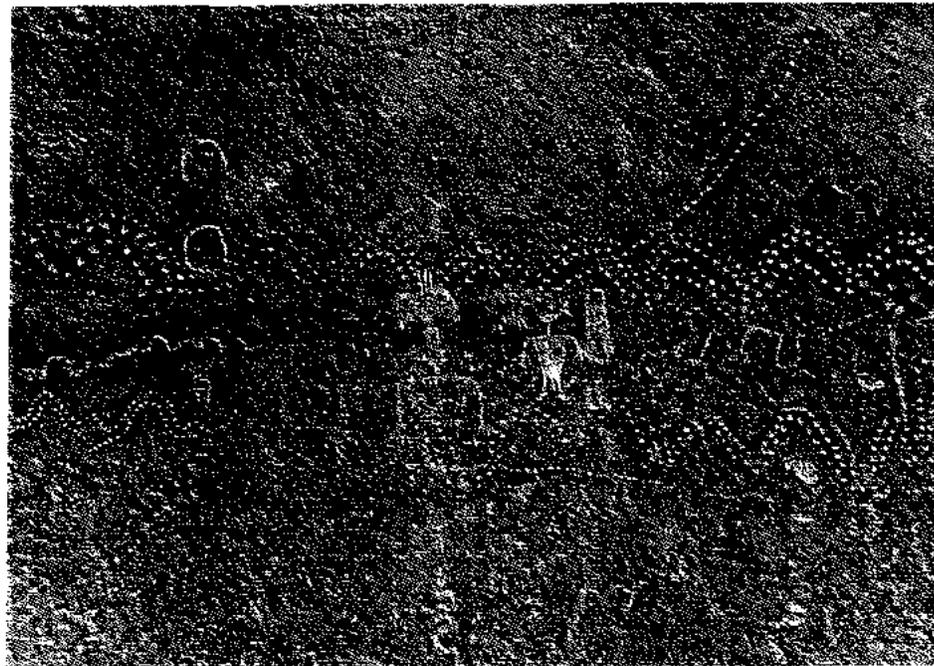


Figure 4. Cedar Point, West Rock Panel.



Figure 5. Mexican Hat, next to river.



Figure 6. Bluff Utah, Butler Wash,
San Juan River.

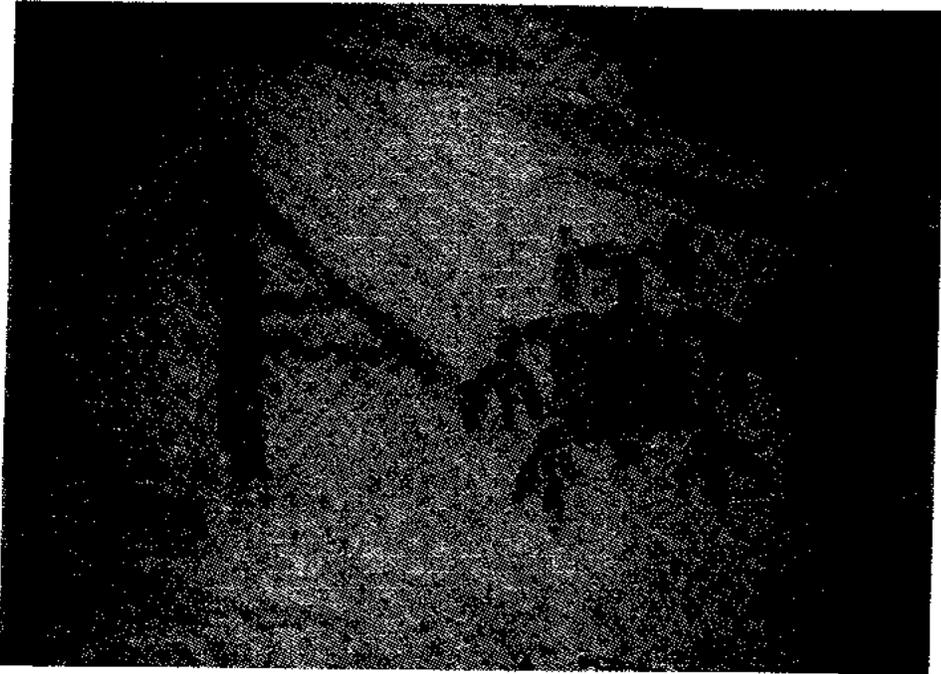


Figure 7. Montezuma Creek.

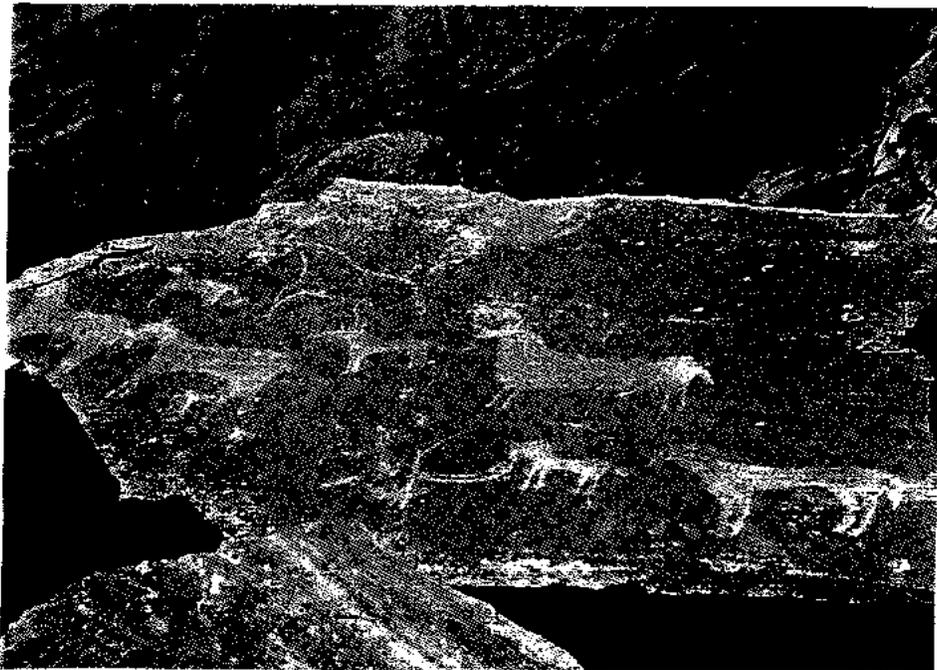


Figure 8. Bluff, Historic Ute or Navajo.