

## A Close Look at the Harvest Scene

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Figure 1

The Harvest Scene in the Maze District of Canyonlands National Park (figure 1) is one of the largest and most complex Barrier Canyon Style (BCS) rock art sites. Because of its location it is difficult to access and is therefore not seen by as many people as other major rock art sites. The pictographs are faded and spend most of the day in direct sunlight, making it very difficult to see details. The purpose of this essay is to give the reader a close look at all of the artwork at the site. I have divided the site up into eight groups to make it easier to grasp what is there, and I have used DStretch technology to bring out fading details. I will start on the viewer's left and move across the site to the far right. Additional photos can be found in the accompanying Power Point presentation.

I am well aware that the layout and formatting of this essay is not professional in appearance. There are blank areas on pages. The reason for this is that I wanted to maximize the size of the pictures. The purpose of this essay is for you to be able to see the rock art as well as possible.



Figure 2

### **Group One**

Group One (figure 2) is about a hundred yards to the viewer's left (upstream) of the rest of the imagery. The style is different from everything else at the site, which may possibly indicate a different artist or time period of creation. The group consists of four large figures, three anthropomorphs and a large snake, along with parallel lines of dots and what appears to be a zig zag snake. The body of the figure on the left consists of cross hatch lines probably made by the artist's fingers. This style is unusual in BCS rock art, but we will see it again in Group Six. Details of the figures in Group One can be found in slides 3-6 of the Power Point.



Figure 3

### **Group Two**

Group Two (figure 3) is a complex combination of anthropomorphs with one large quadruped, which is probably a bear. The lone figure on the far right is often thought to be a shaman wearing a long coat and holding up things in each hand, but a close look will reveal that there is more than one human in a long coat in this group. Details of the entire group can be found in slides 8-26 of the Power Point. Here I will focus on close looks at the humans that appear to be dressed in long garments.

The tallest anthropomorph in the group (figure 4) leans slightly to the left. The coat or garment appears to have had white trim in places that is mostly faded away. It flairs at the bottom, revealing short, thin lower legs. There is a very thin right arm that holds a long stick upright. The face has no surviving details. The hair is visible sticking out to each side and there are two antenna-like appendages on top of the head. The stick in the hand implies that this person is involved in some sort of narrative, but I have no idea what that might be.



Figure 4

To the right of this person are three smaller anthropomorphs (figure 5). Two have legs; the third doesn't.



Figure 5

The smallest anthro on the right (figure 6) is very detailed. There are eyes and undulating white vertical stripes on the garment. Again we have legs protruding out of the bottom of the garment, which hangs down on either side of the legs. The DStretch image helps us see that the person is holding a snake in each hand.



Figure 6

The next anthro (figure 7) is less well-preserved and lacks detail. The neckless torso and head are topped with white. The arms are very thin and there appear to be two arms on the left side. Short legs protrude at the bottom.

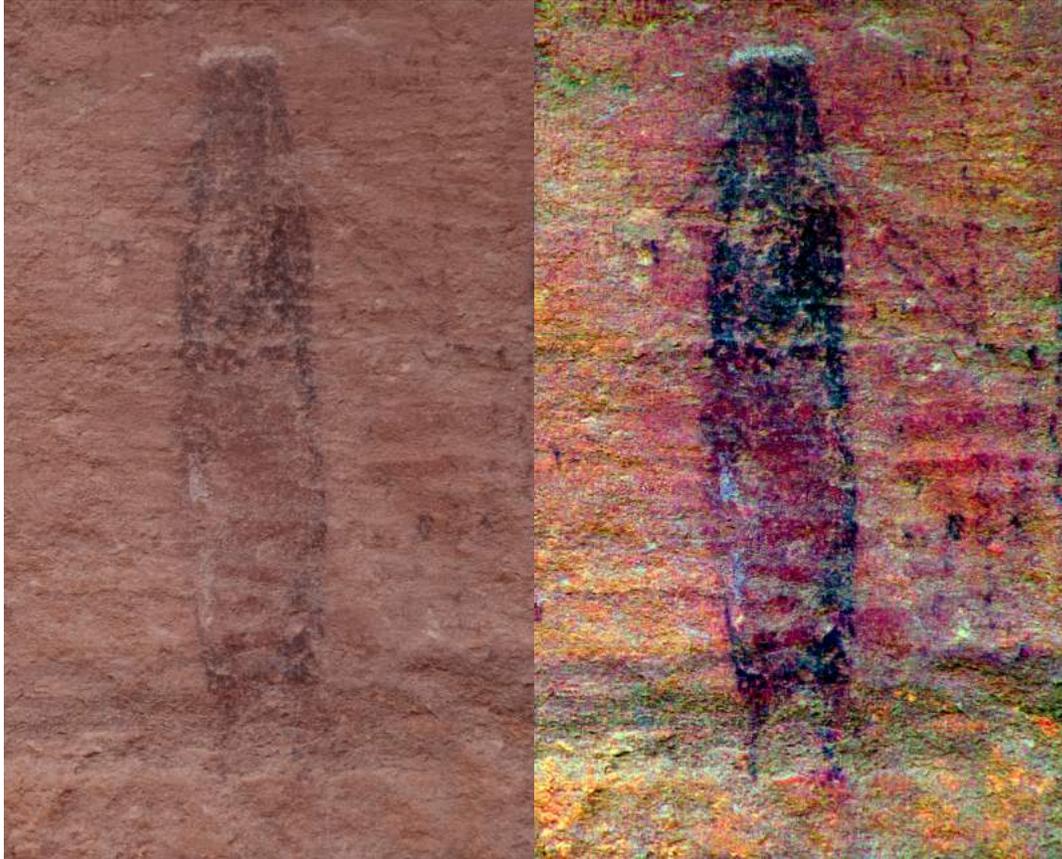


Figure 7

The third anthro (figure 8) is close to three times the size of the other two. The head appears to have had eyes and there are long insect-like antennae. The upper half of the torso has vertical stripes. There are no legs. DStretch reveals that the extremely thin right arm is holding a snake

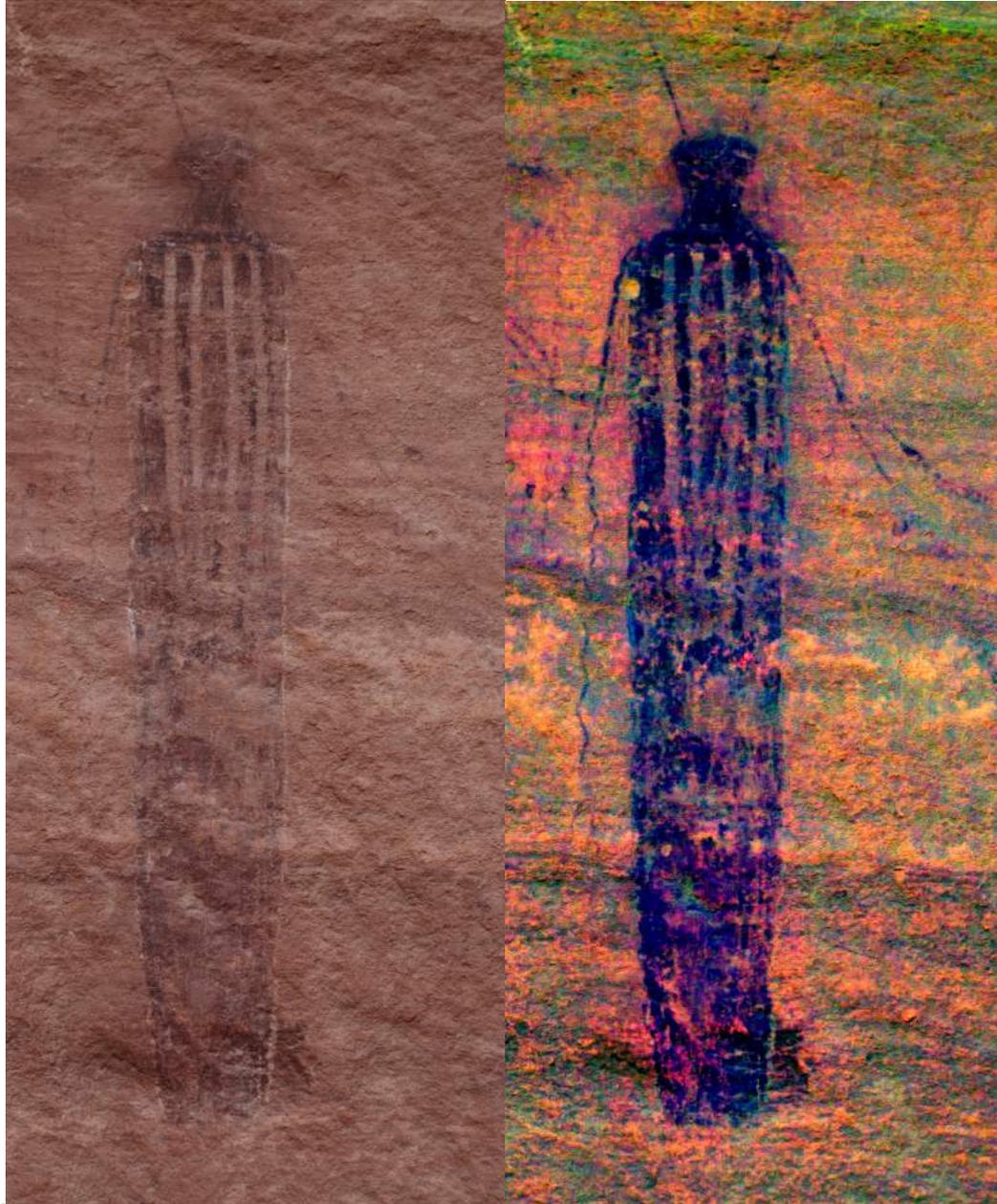


Figure 8

The last anthro that we will examine from this group is located far to the right of the rest of the group (figure 9). This one looks like a human wearing a dress-like garment and a mask. The body proportions are appropriate for a human. There appear to have been many details in white. The head has widely spaced antennae or feathers. The mask has goggle-like eyes with something hanging down in the form of white dots. Below the knee-length garment are legs that end in white feet or possibly some kind of shoe. Most noteworthy are the things being held up. The right hand has a long stick with something white attached to it, possibly a feather. Next to it is a hovering bird. The left hand has a plant. The lean to the left hints at motion. It appears as though there is a ceremony in session, perhaps with this person

interacting with the rest of the group in some way. It reminds me of Group Two at the Great Gallery, where a similar anthro with a stick with a feather in his or her right hand is located to the right of a group of more supernatural-looking anthros.

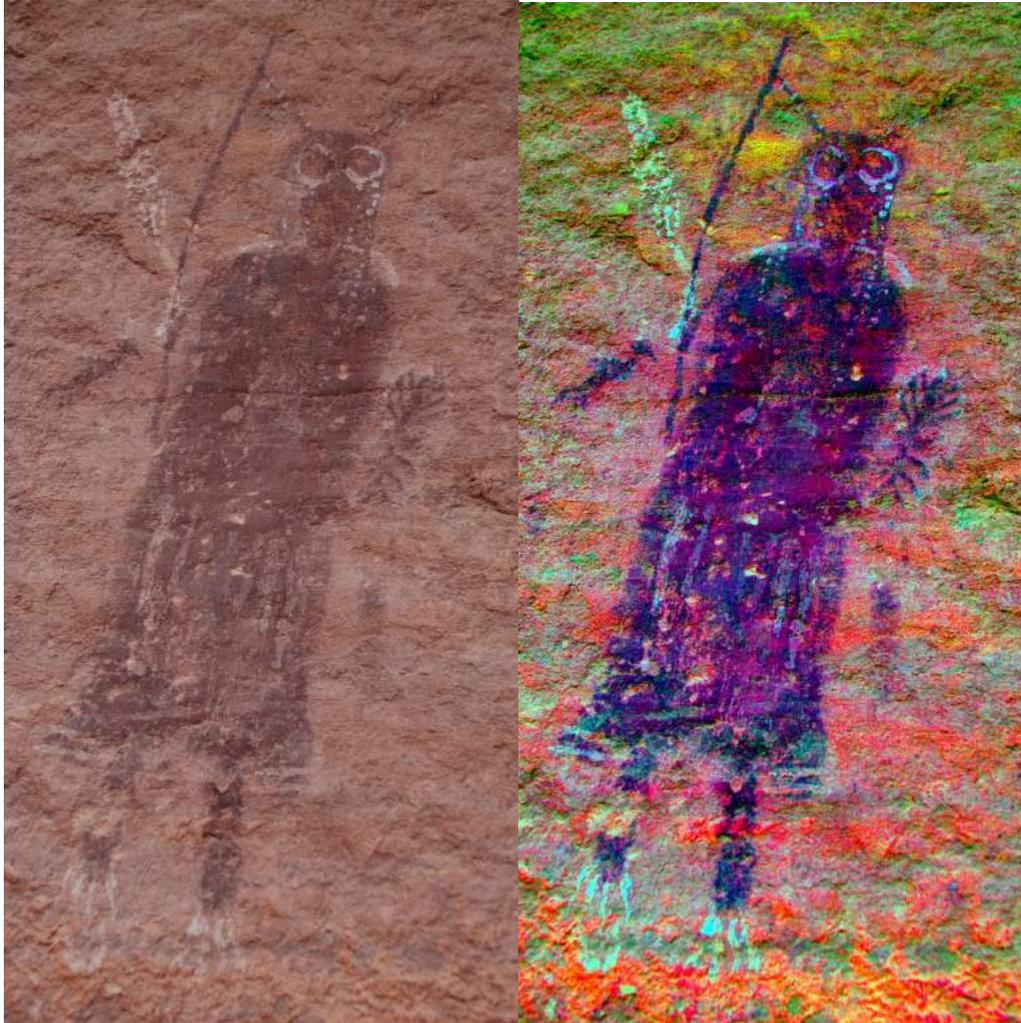


Figure 9

### **Group Three**

Group Three (figure 10) consists of three poorly painted shapes that don't seem to be related to the rest of the imagery at the site. They may have been created at a different time by a different culture.



Figure 10

#### **Group Four**

To the naked eye, Group Four (figure 11) appears to be a tall anthro with something that looks a clothes pin on the far right. But here is where DStretch retrieves faded images to recreate a busy scene of birds and plants (figure 12).



Figure 11

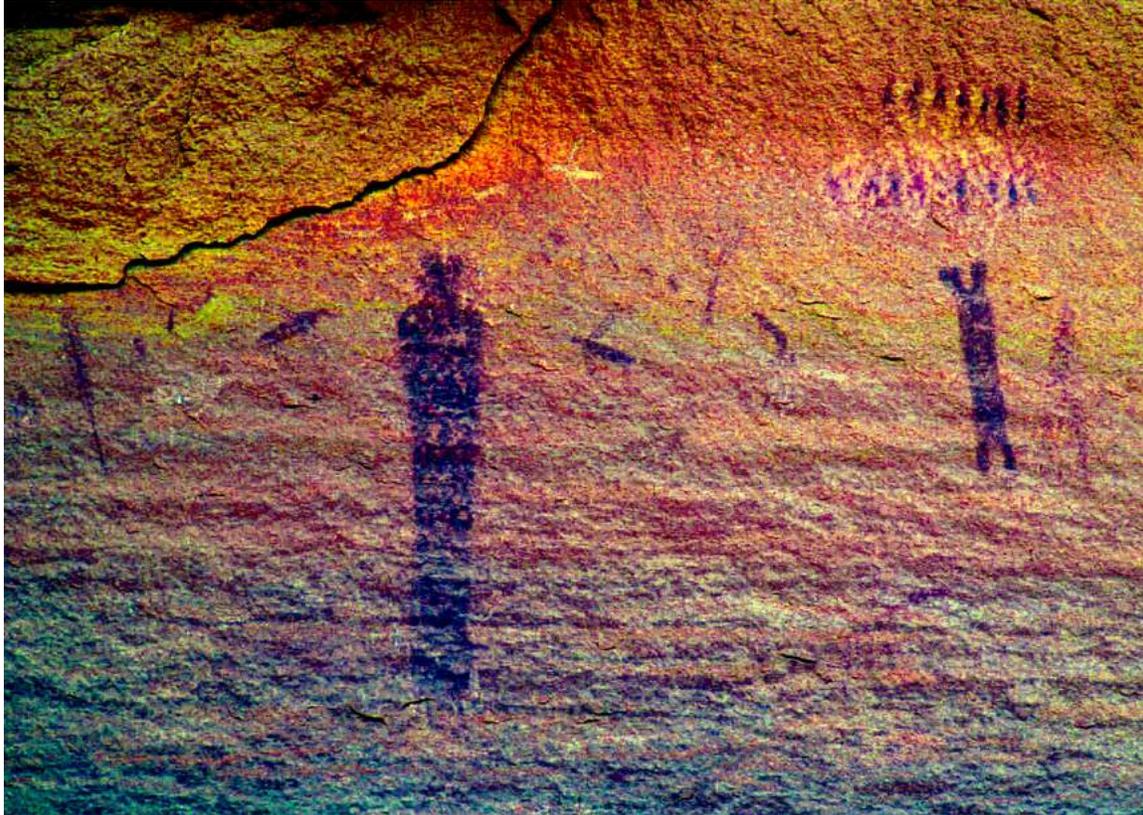


Figure 12

Close examination of DStretch details reveal at least 20 birds, two plants and another small anthro. Be sure to check out all of the details I have put in the Power Point, slides 29-41. Here I will show a couple of details. Figure 13 is the upper left hand corner of the group. Two faded birds in flight can be seen, along with a plant on the left. Figure 14 is a DStretch of the same photo showing at least six more birds and giving much greater definition to the larger birds and the plant. Note that one of the large birds has wings made of dots. Were these dots on wings of another color, or were the wings originally made exclusively of dots?



Figure 13

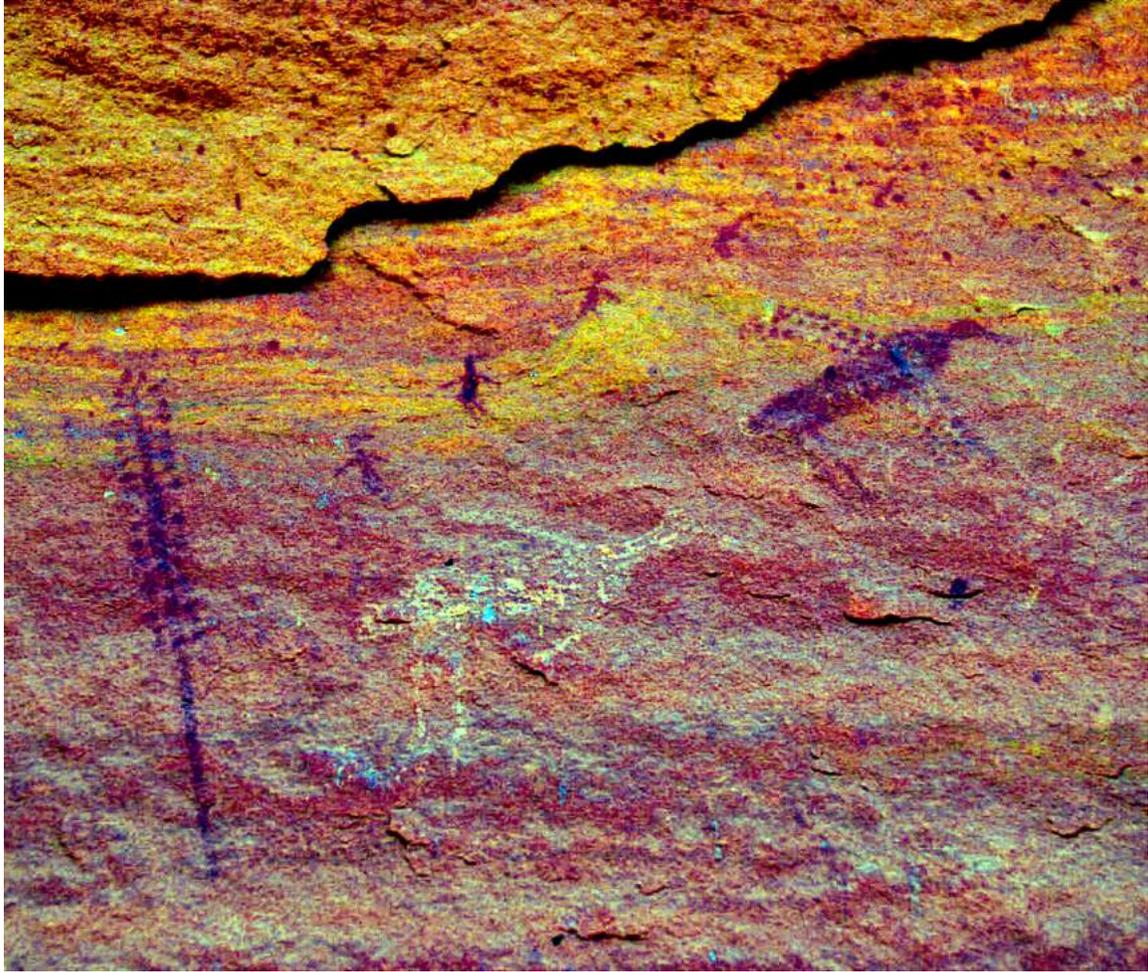


Figure 14

Another detail show the power of DStretch. Figure 15 appears to be a section of rock surface that might have some faded paint on it. But with DStretch several birds, a plant and a strange curvy anthro appear (figure 16).



Figure 15



Figure 16

One more DStretch detail puts together the most active part of the group (figure 17).



Figure 17

In all, Group Four is a busy scene with birds buzzing around a stationary tall anthropomorph. Two different plant species are present, along with the enigmatic clothes pin on the right. It is a fascinating composition that is seldom noticed because it is so faded.

### **Group Five**

Group Five (figure 18) is just to the viewer's left of large groups of anthros at the downstream end of the site. There are three main parts to the group: a couple of petroglyphs that were probably painted in a fugitive color, a trio of anthro, bird and canine, and a group of three or four anthros on the right. Details of the entire group can be found in the Power Point in slides 42-51.



Figure 18

The petroglyphs (figure 19) are on the left. They don't make much sense as petroglyphs, but they could have been decorations on the torsos of fugitive pigment anthropomorphs.



Figure 19

The trio of anthro, dog and bird (figure 20) is very well preserved. There is no need for DStretch here. There is a long smudge of red paint on the left, but everything else is very well defined. There are feathers on the wings of the bird and the dog's mouth is open slightly. The anthro has a single antennae-like appendage on the top of the head. The right arm has something hanging from the elbow.



Figure 20

The third section of Group Five (figure 21) has three anthros of varying size and possibly a fourth that is faded. The smallest anthro on the left has arms up in a look of surprise or awe. The middle anthro has a poorly defined body with small circles on either side. The largest anthro on the right has bug eyes and is very long and thin. Both sides have a fringe of short lines with dots on the end. DStretch brings out some of the details (figure 22).



Figure 21



Figure 22

The remaining three groups (figure 23) are comprised of one continuous group of imagery, the group that people remember best after a visit to the Harvest Scene. The figures are large and imposing, lined up to greet the visitor, reminiscent of the imagery at the Great Gallery in some ways, but also very distinctive in other ways. My division of the imagery into three groups is somewhat arbitrary and is done for convenience, but each of the three groups does have its own characteristics. Details of these groups can be found in the Power Point in slides 52-127.



Figure 23

### **Group Six**

The primary characteristic of Group Six (figure 24) is the presence of six tall and extremely thin anthropomorphs. There is also a dog on the left and a unique pictograph that looks like some kind of structure.



Figure 24

The dog (figure 25) faces the group. It has the tail curled up over the back that is so characteristic of dogs in BCS rock art. DStretch reveals that its mouth is open, as if it barking at or alerting the large group of anthros that it faces.



Figure 25

Next to the dog is a very unique image (figure 26). I don't even know what to call it. Because of the repeated right angles it looks more like a man-made structure than something from nature. DStretch reveals the extent of the groups of four parallel marks, probably made by the artist's fingers, that surround the image. The bottom part looks like a spider web. The entire image looks like a pole with boards attached to it at right angles.



Figure 26

As we move from left to right in the group, the first of the six anthros (figure 27) has a super thin body with a vertical line made of two repeated parallel marks on either side.

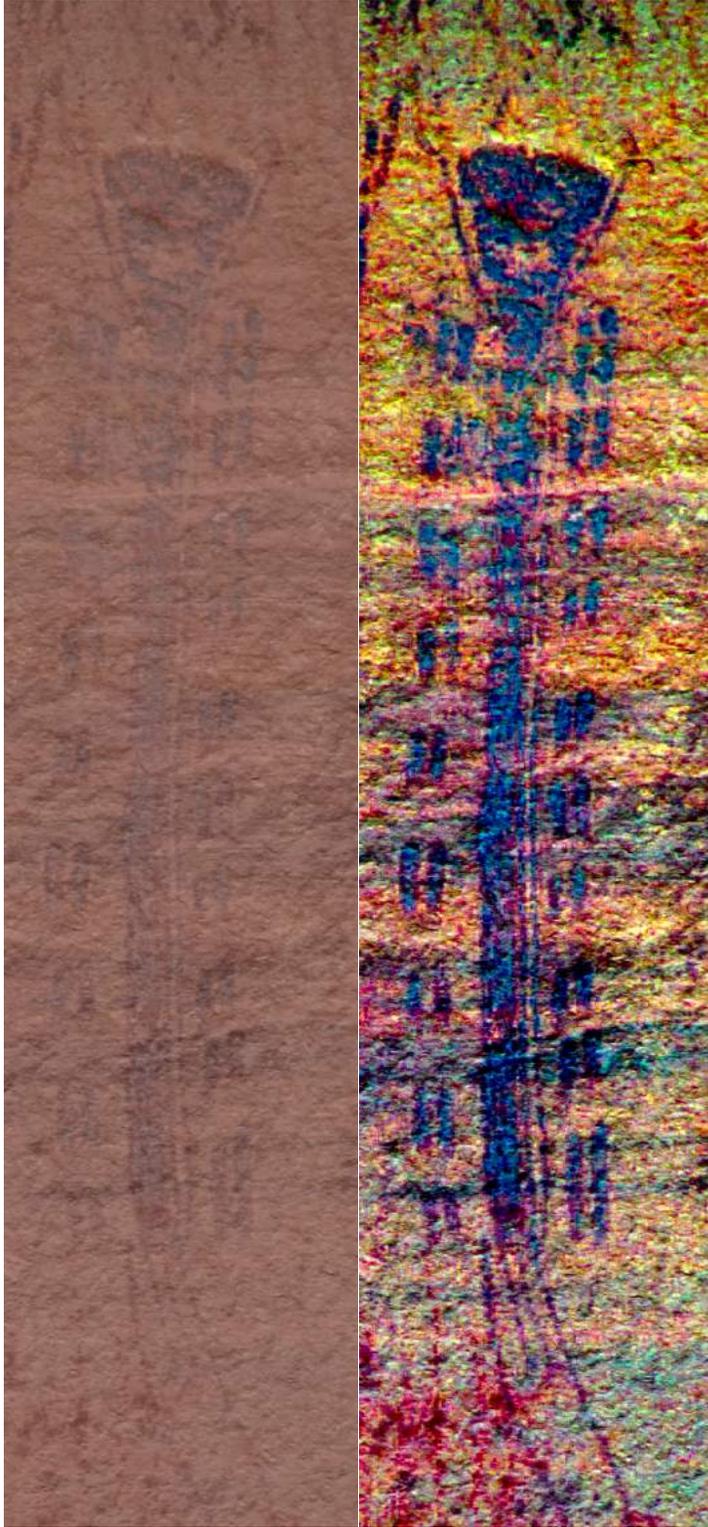


Figure 27

The head is triangular (figure 28). It appears to have had a white trim on the top. On either side of the head is a line. DStretch reveals that the line is topped by what appears to be a feather, so the line was probably part of a mask or costume.



Figure 28

The next anthro is larger and less faded (figure 29). The body is made up of nine vertical stripes, alternating red and white. There are thin legs that are an extension of the outermost stripes of the body. Again we have a vertical line of two parallel marks on each side of the body, nine on one side and eight on the other.

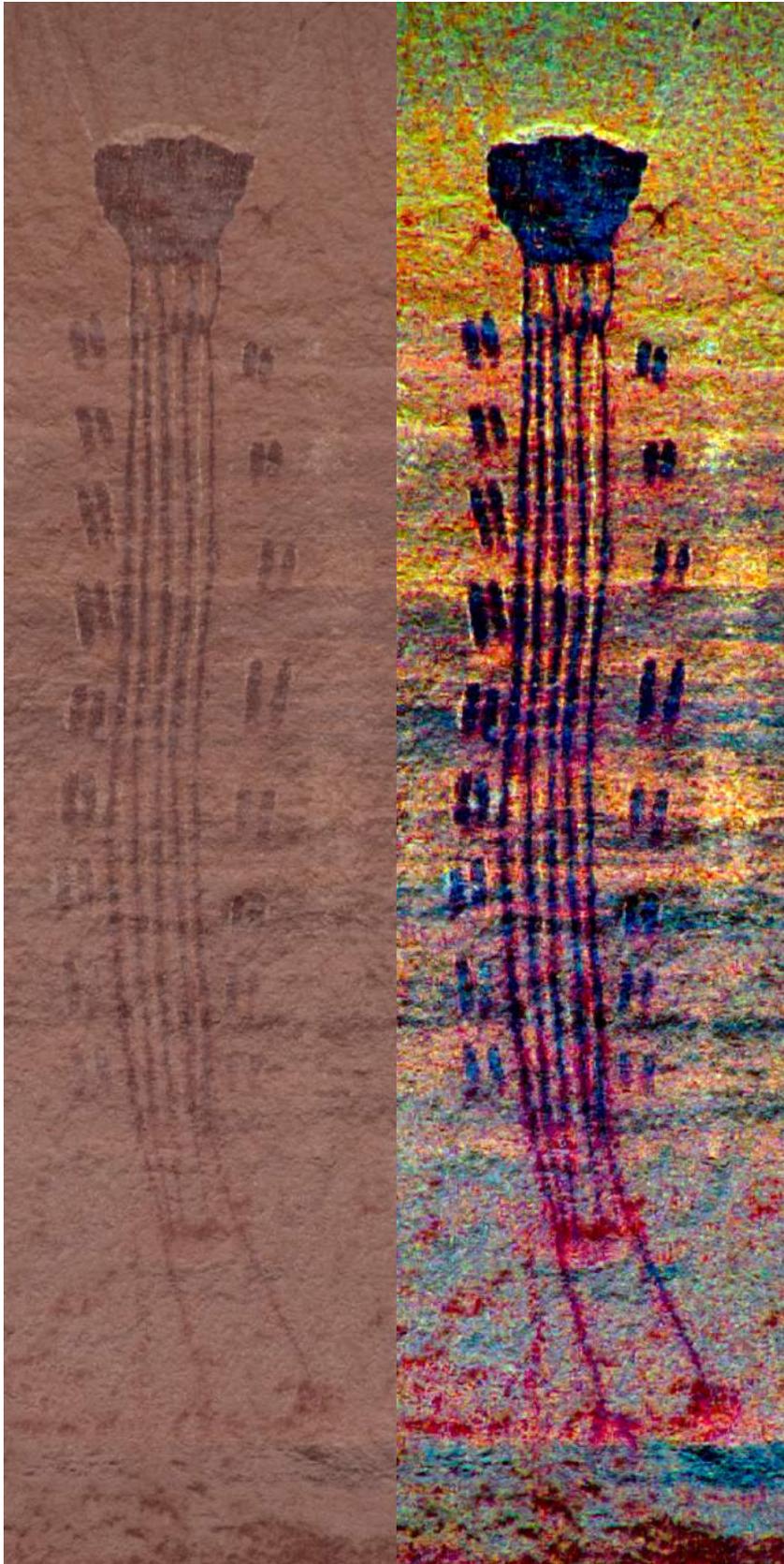


Figure 29

A close look at the head (figure 30) reveals that it was topped in white with a white antennae-like appendage on each side. There is a bird hovering on each side of the head. The bird on the right looks to me like a hummingbird.



Figure 30

The next anthro (figure 31) is more highly decorated. The long, thin torso has vertical red and white stripes in the chest area. Below that the torso is solid red with short, curved legs at the bottom. The arms lack hands. At the end the arms hold, or maybe transform into, snakes. There is a red undulating snake at the end of the left arm and a white one at the end of the right arm. There is a parallel snake or white line that extends up into the armpit.

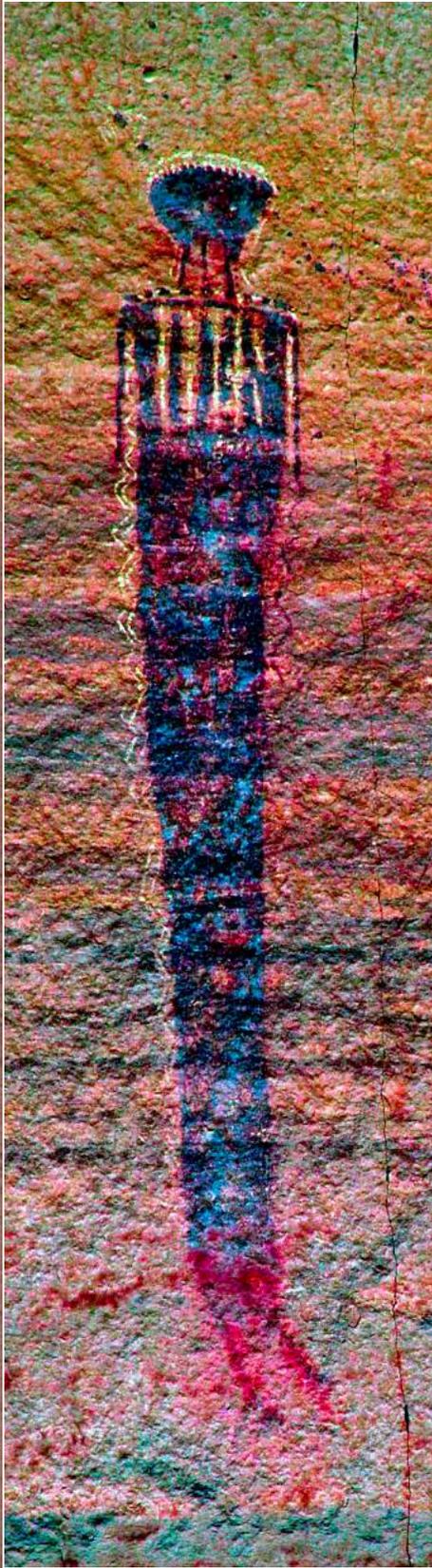


Figure 31

A close look at the head (figure 32) reveals decoration on the top of the torso, the neck and the top of the head. Note also the crane-like bird above the head.



Figure 32

The next anthro (figure 33) is considerably taller than the previously three. The torso has no decorative details. Both arms hold snakes that hang down for nearly the length of the body. On the torso's right are 25 dots in a vertical column. A few more may be missing. There are short, simple legs at the bottom. The head is flat on top with four antennae-like lines extending upward.

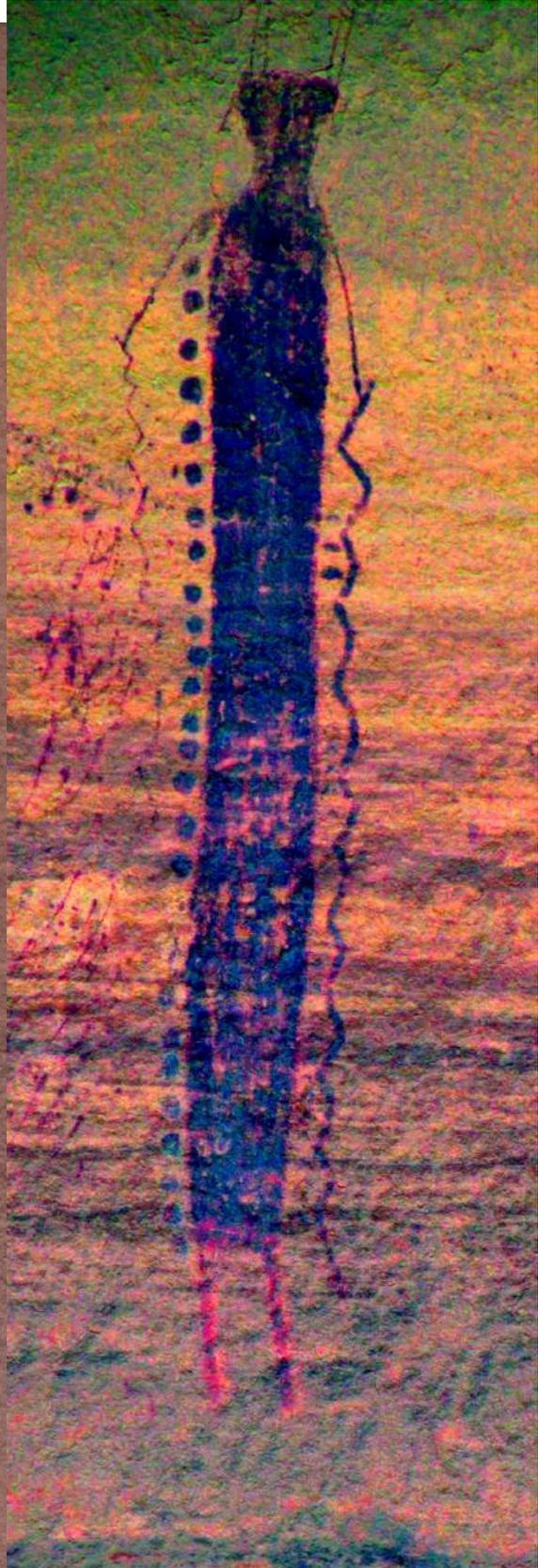
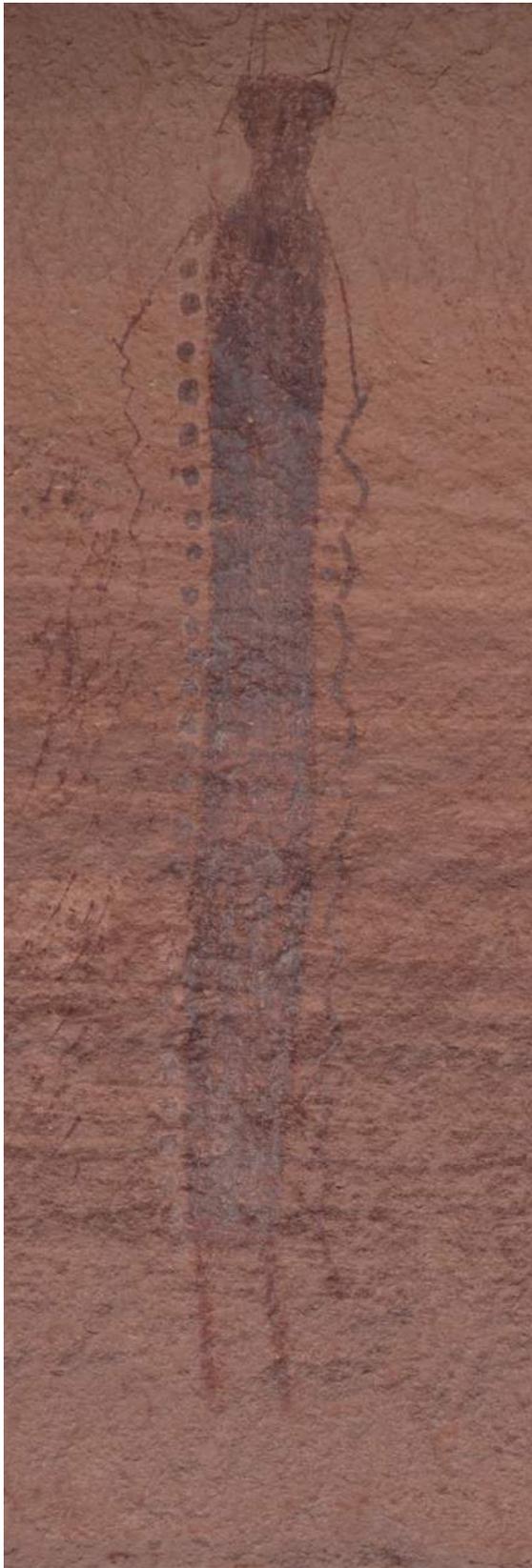


Figure 33

The fifth anthropomorph of the group (figure 34) is the smallest one. There are no decorative details. The head has horns and the shoulders are narrow and square.



Figure 34

The last anthro in the group (figure 35) is the largest. The body appears to have had white dots for decoration, but they are almost completely gone. Again there are short, thin legs. Of interest here are the snakes on each side of the body and the hyper-thin arms. There appear to be two arms coming out of the left shoulder and one of them has a strange, fingerless hand.

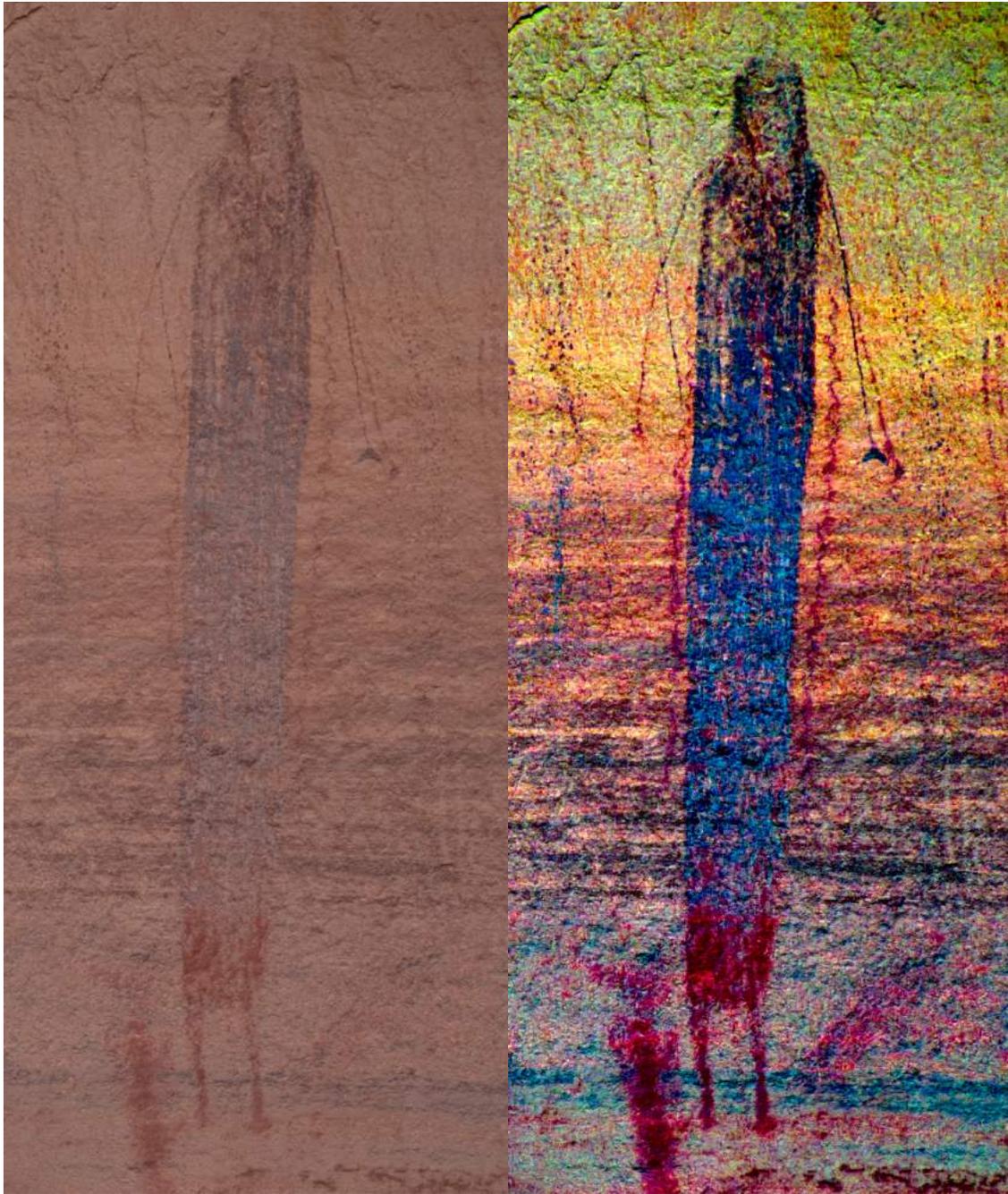


Figure 35

### **Group Seven**

Group Seven (figure 36) contains three large, multi-colored anthropomorphs. It is in the middle of a large group of anthros, and the size of this middle group draws the eye to them first. They are the ones that greet the visitor to the Harvest Scene.



Figure 36

The large striped anthro on the left of the group (figure 37) is the most colorful image at the site. The entire length of the torso is striped. There are twelve red stripes. Seven wide white stripes fill in some of the gaps between the red stripes. Four of those gaps are left unpainted, leaving the native color of the rock. The shoulders are a straight line.



Figure 37

A close look at the head (figure 38) reveals many dots and stripes. The DStretch image shows multiple colors, so the head and its upright appendages may have had more colors than just the red and white.

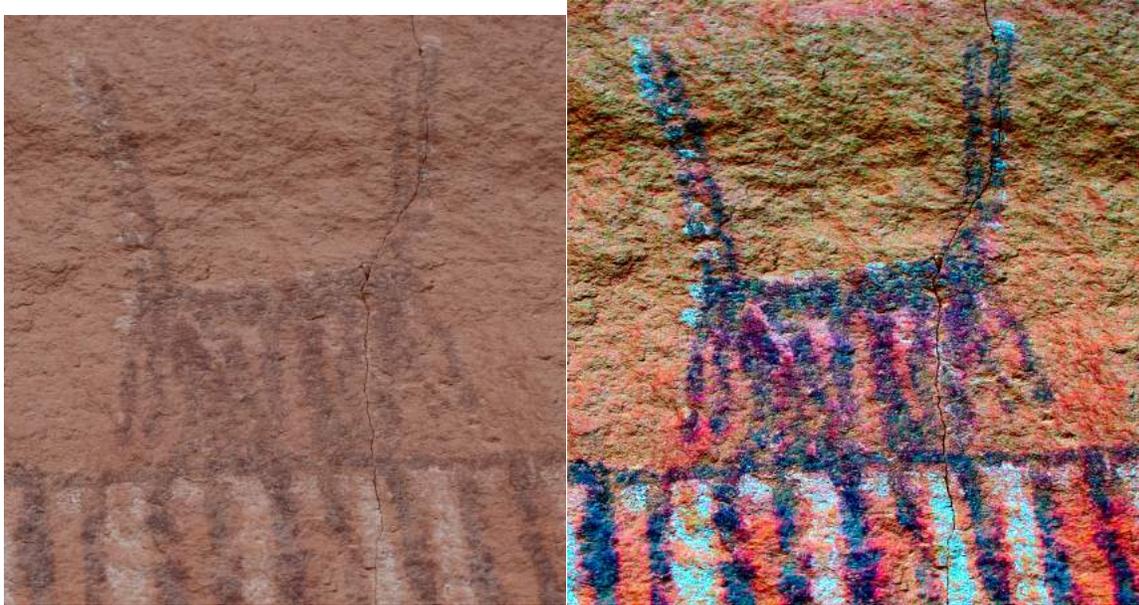


Figure 38

On the right shoulder stands a strange creature (figure 39). It appears to me to be a hybrid of a human and an animal. A large eye is prominent and the thin arms reach out.

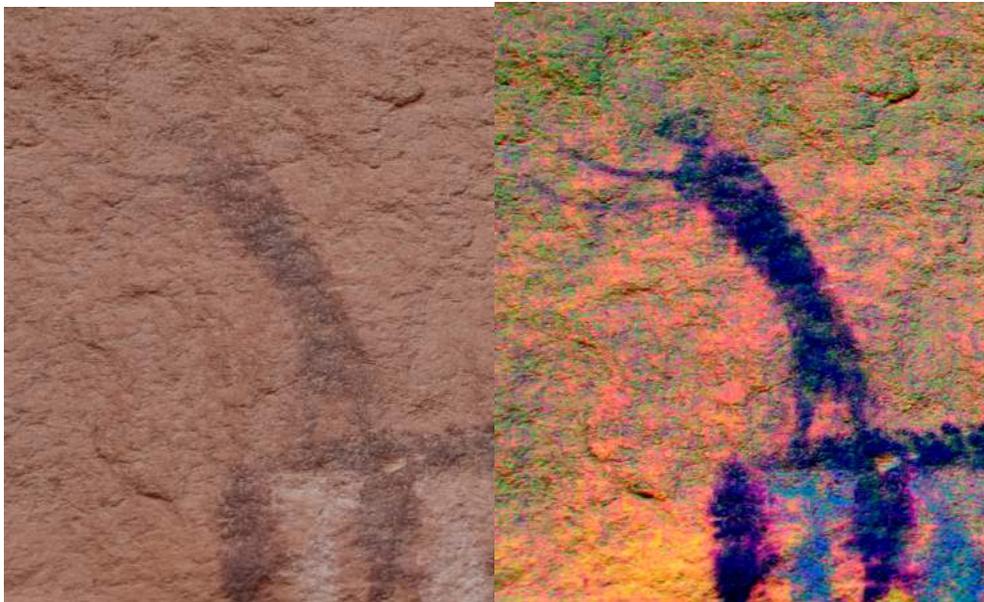


Figure 39

The middle anthropomorph of the three (figure 40) in this group is barely anthropomorphic at all. The legs give it away as a human-like form. The torso is bending to the right and there is no real head, just a narrowing to a rounded top. There is one straight line sticking straight up from the top of the head.

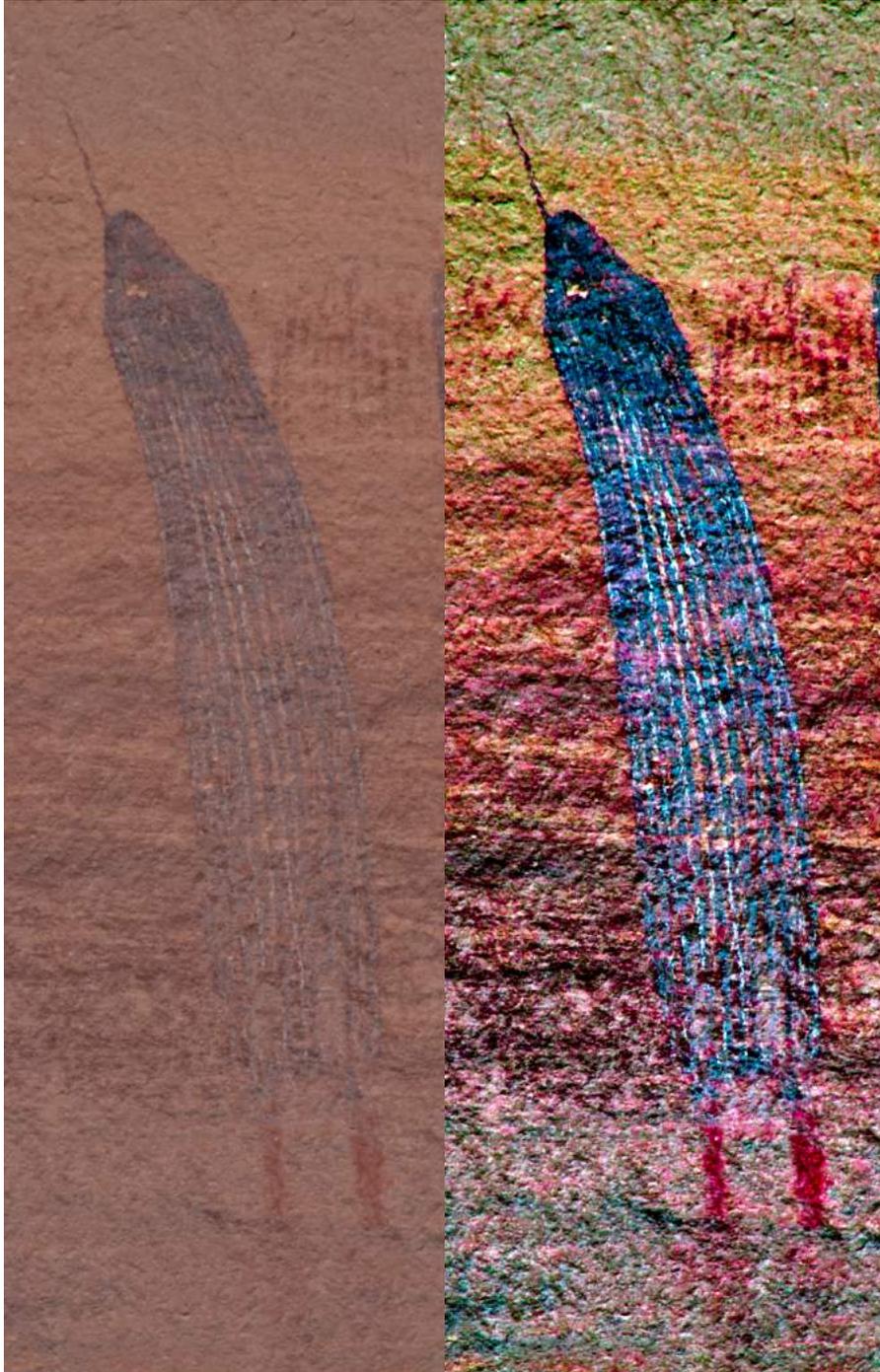


Figure 40

The last anthro of the three had a zig zag pattern on the body done in white (figure 41). The legs are sturdier than those on the other anthros. There is a vertical line across the shoulders.

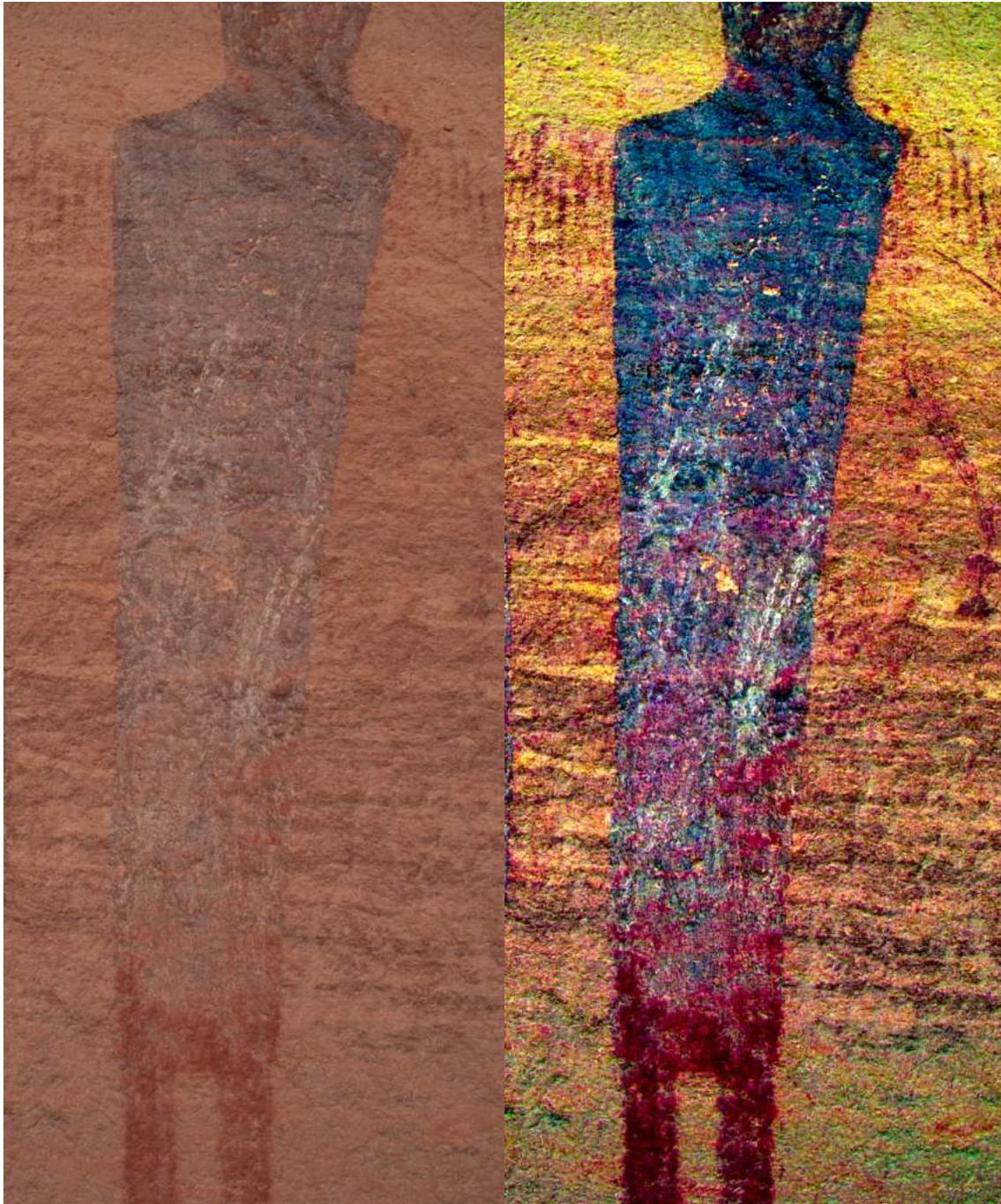


Figure 41

The head and shoulders are asymmetrical (figure 42). There is a hint of white decoration on top of the head.



Figure 42

### Group Eight

Group Eight (figure 43) is the one that most visitors remember best. It contains the fantastic anthro with the plant growing from his finger, and it is in fact a harvest scene. The distinguishing characteristic of this group is that the anthros have a blank spot rubbed into their torsos. It appears as though the torsos were painted first and then a spot was rubbed in. This could have been done the day after the original painting or several thousand years later by another culture.



Figure 43

We start on the left side of the group with a small, detailed anthro followed by two pairs, each consisting of a tall, horned anthro with a harvester (figure 44).



Figure 44

The anthro on the left (figure 45) isn't too impressive to the naked eye, but DStretch brings out intricate detail.

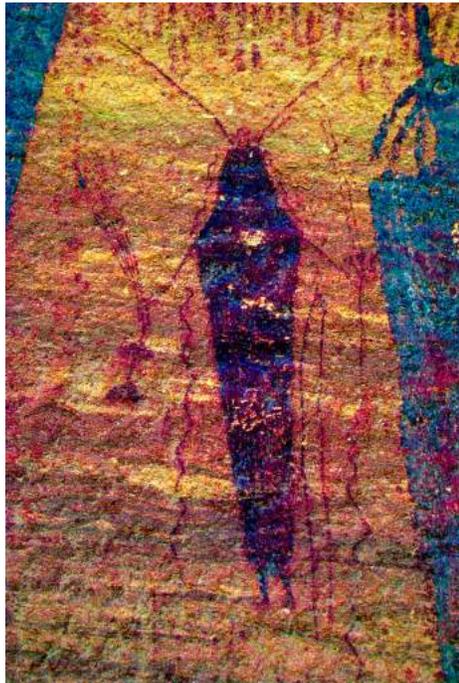


Figure 45

The head is topped by two long, insect-like antennae. There are snakes on either side of the body. A closer look at the upper half of the body reveals that each hand is holding a different plant (figure 46).



Figure 46

There is also a something round on top of the head with an “x” inside it. These details were painted in very fine lines.

The next two images are a tall anthro and a crouched harvester extending a tool. These two are then repeated with slight changes. In the first pair (figure 47) the anthro is more upright and the harvester has a curved tool. The anthro had eyes and possibly a nose. The horns are long and the hair looks something like dreadlocks. I assume the harvester has a burden basket on his or her back.

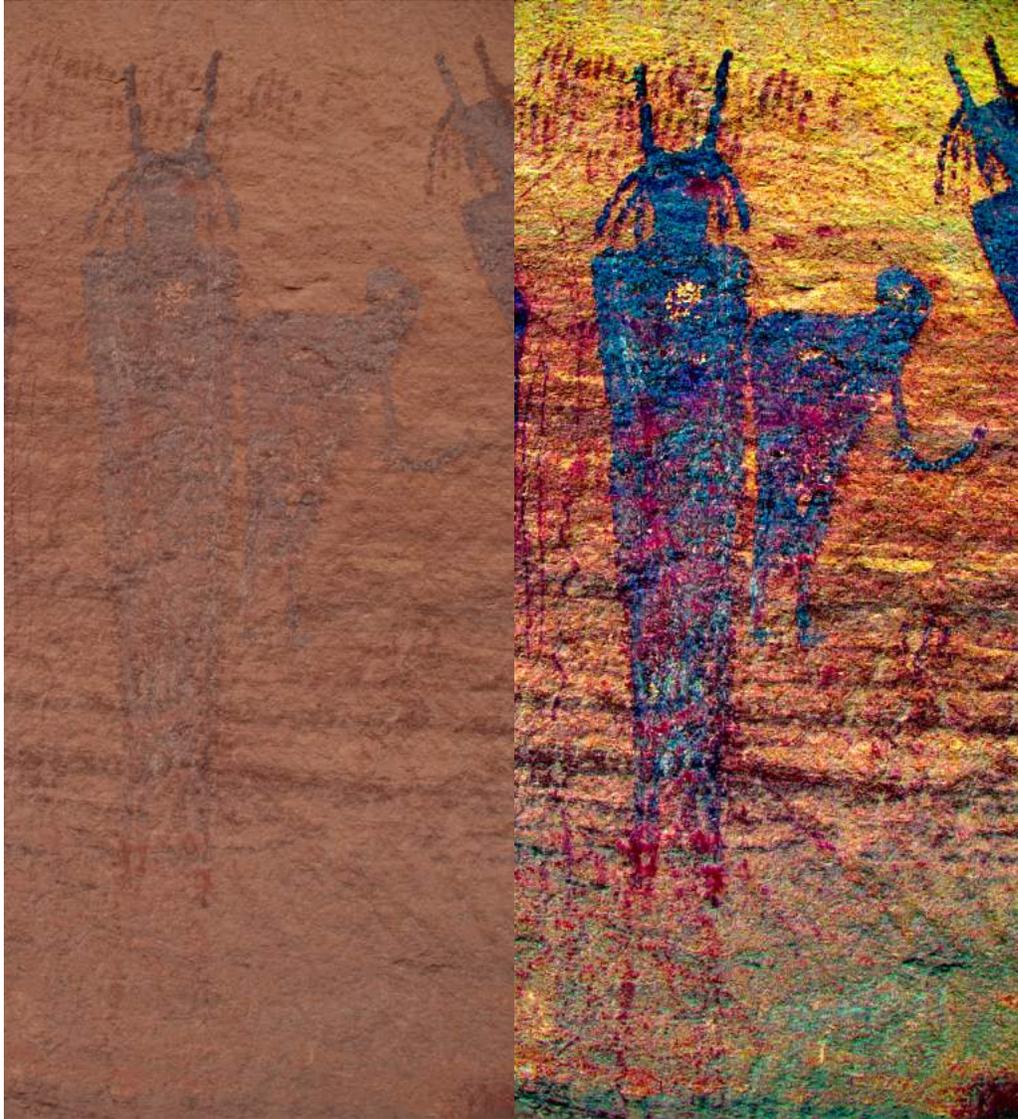


Figure 47

In the next pair (figure 48) the anthro is leaning to the left and the harvester has a different tool made of two long sticks. The lower part of the anthro is more distinct, showing legs and what appears to be the lower part of a garment. Otherwise, this pair is very similar to the first pair. (I think the line across the lower part to the anthro's torso is caused by natural erosion.)



Figure 48

Next is one of the most unique and complex images in BCS rock art (figure 49). A large anthro extends a long right arm and a huge hand with a plant growing out of the middle finger. Four animals hover above.



Figure 49

At the bottom we see what appears to be roots instead of legs (figure 50).

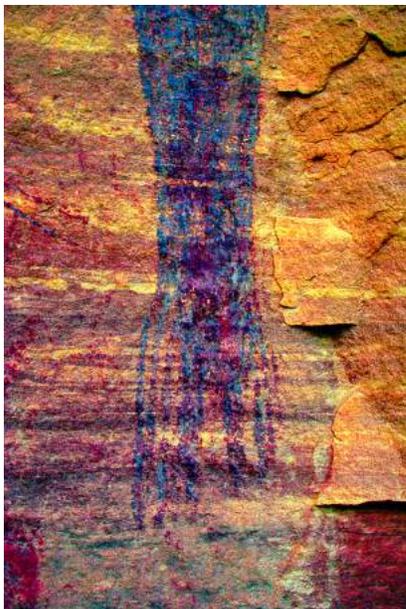


Figure 50

A close look at the the upper torso and long arm reveal a horned head like the two tall anthros to the immediate left (figure 51). There is no visible left arm. The body leans to the right and reaches over one of the crouching harvesters.



Figure 51

A close up of the plant (figure 52) shows how much attention was paid to detail here. The plant is recognizable as Indian rice grass.



Figure 52

The four animals (figure 53) are all distinctive. Recognizable are a bird, a jack rabbit, and a dog. The fourth animal is a quadruped with a long tail.



Figure 53

Below this scene is a crudely made anthro (figure 54) that I suspect was made by a later visitor to the site. It lacks the execution of the artists who created the rest of the Harvest Scene.

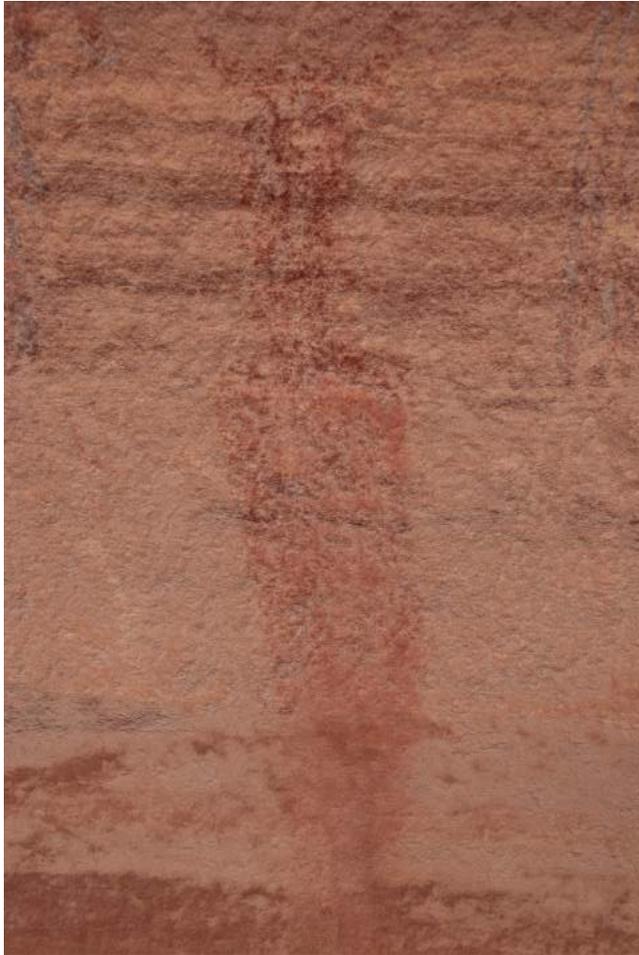


Figure 54

Last are two anthros (figure 55) just off to the right which are badly faded and lack detail. Note that there is a spot rubbed into the torso here as well.



Figure 55

## Conclusions

So what do we make of all this imagery at one site? There is no definitive proof of age or cultural affiliation, so I will make no comments regarding these issues. I assume the site is Archaic in origin, but my conclusions are not based on that assumption.

1. Groups One, Two, Four and Six through Eight appear to be compositions, probably created by one artist or a group of artists working together.
2. There is no hunting imagery here; no one has a bow or atlatl. There is not even one bighorn sheep at the site.
3. Plant imagery appears in Groups Two, Four and Eight.
4. Anthropomorphs are prominent in all eight groups.
5. Considering the above conclusions, the Harvest Scene site is oriented to humans and their interaction with the plant world. The site was likely a location for shamanistic ceremonial activity related to plants.