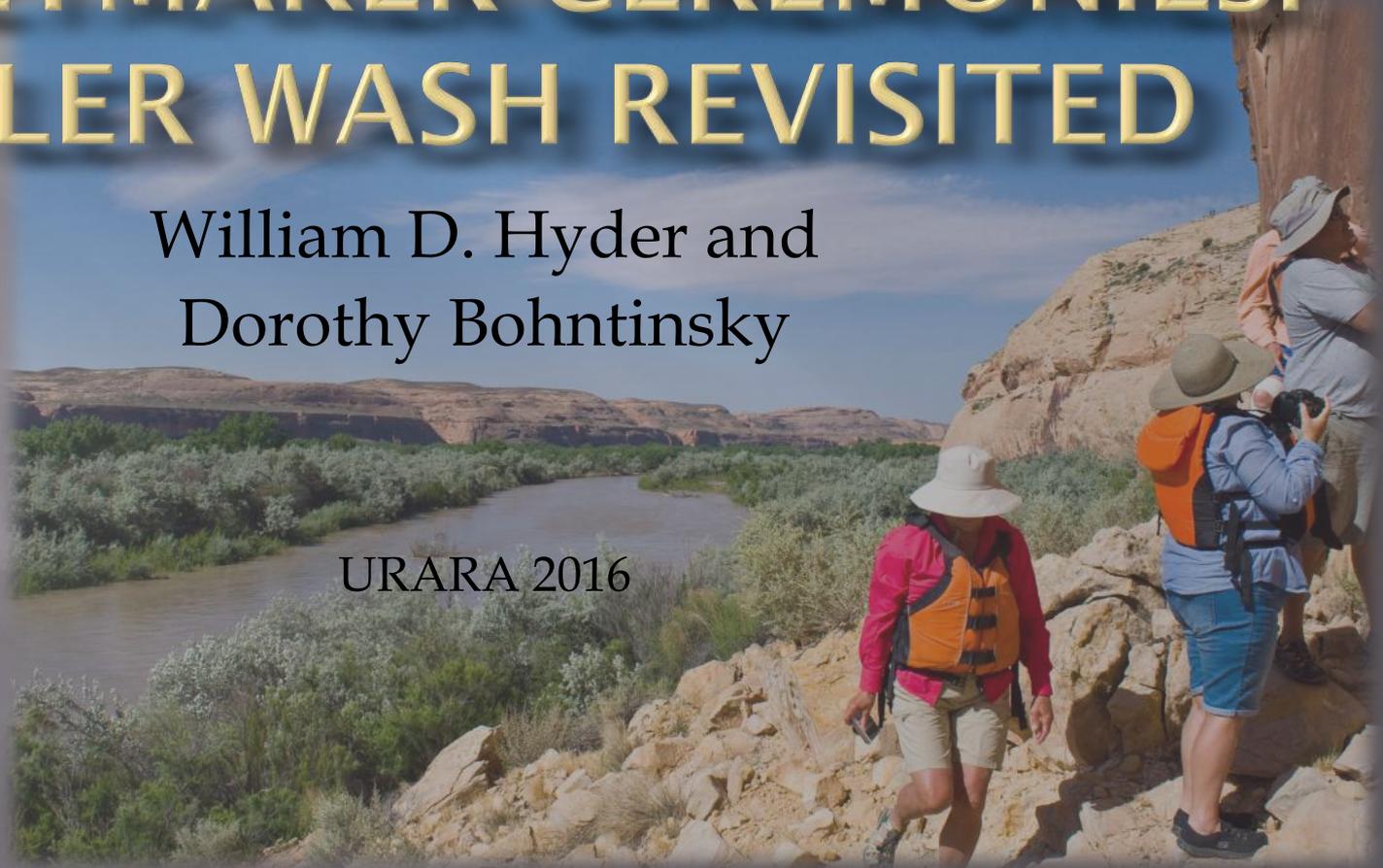


RITUAL AND ROCK ART IN BASKETMAKER CEREMONIES: BUTLER WASH REVISITED

William D. Hyder and
Dorothy Bohntinsky

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Basketmaker Ceremonial Caves

- ▣ Hyder (2002) proposed that rock art images in ceremonial settings were created to commemorate events in small social groups. The elements more or less represented real people, real costumes, and real ceremonies. Rock art was created as a self-referential statement about the actors portrayed or the artist (Rappaport 1999). In time, the images acquired symbolic meaning based on their permanence.
- ▣ Taking a more general approach based on the nature and function of ritual allows one to explore how rock art assumes its role within ceremony, how it acquires and communicates symbolic information, and why it evolves with social change. The focus on ritual also emphasizes the importance of the archaeological context when ethnographic information is lacking.

Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity

Roy Rappaport, 1999

- ▣ Rappaport's "breakthrough book on the academic study of religion" argues that "religion [and ritual] has been central to evolution since the human species appeared and will continue to be central to any cultural advance we may achieve from this time forward." (Huston Smith 2001)

Interpretation

- ▣ Schødt (1986) contends that it is impossible to explore meaning with meaningfulness (speaking specifically to religious meaning) in the absence of appropriate cultural ethnography or cultural analogs. Lewis-Williams (2001), on the other hand, concludes that focused polysemy and multivocality can move us forward in our quest for meaning.

William Strange

Rock Art Poet

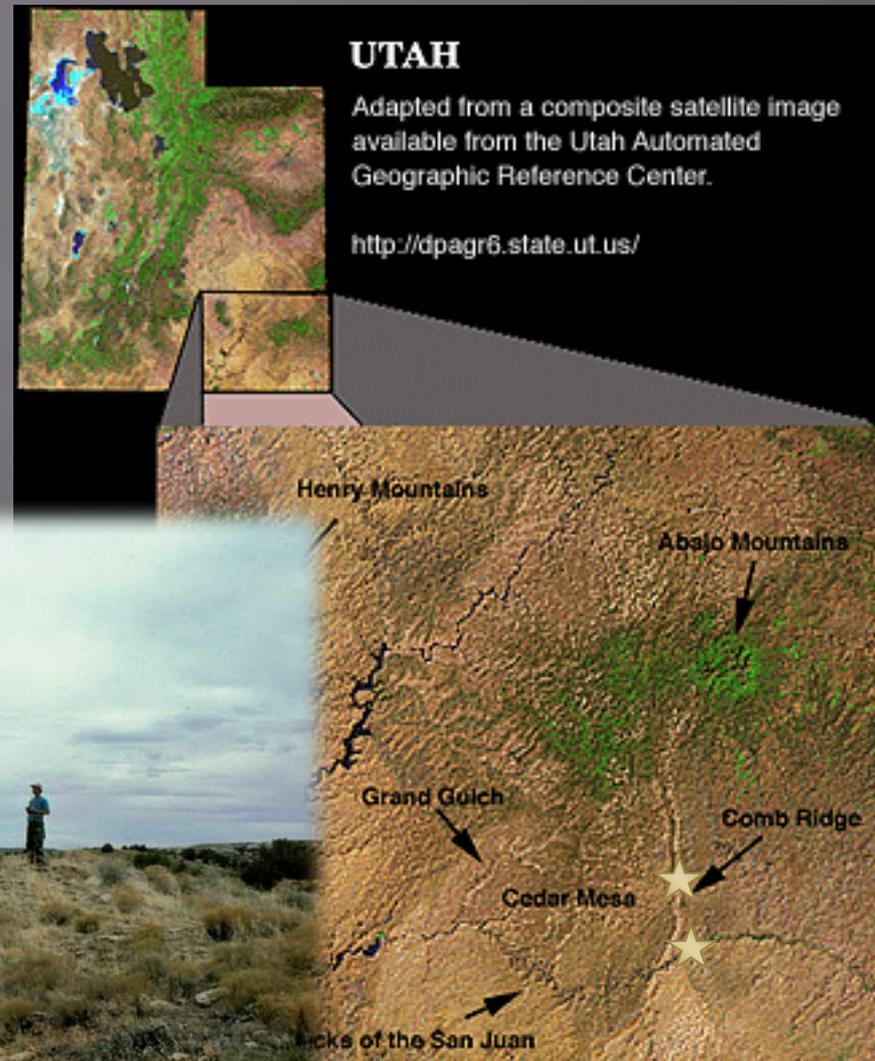
- ▣ Bill Strange taught us that poetry offers the ability to layer words and emotions. Lyrical language creates a cadence that opens us to expressing deeper responses to the art and offers nuanced interpretations of what the images might mean.
- ▣ Inspired by Strange, Dori's poetic offerings to rock art blend together her work as a speech language pathologist, doctoral training and work in non-denominational divinity, her role as a wife and parent, and her experiences as a healer around loss.

*Most often we see a site in pieces;
rarely as a whole because we know so little
about the artists and their inspirations.
And we would add that we often know so little
about our own selves and what ignites hunches.*



Study Area

Butler Wash, to the east of Comb Ridge as seen below from Comb Wash looking southeast.



Big Kachina Panel, Mouth of Butler Wash



Procession Panel, Comb Ridge



Butler Wash Panel Context

- ▣ Typically approached from the river.



- ▣ At one time, a large alluvial fan spread out below the panels supporting rich agricultural fields.



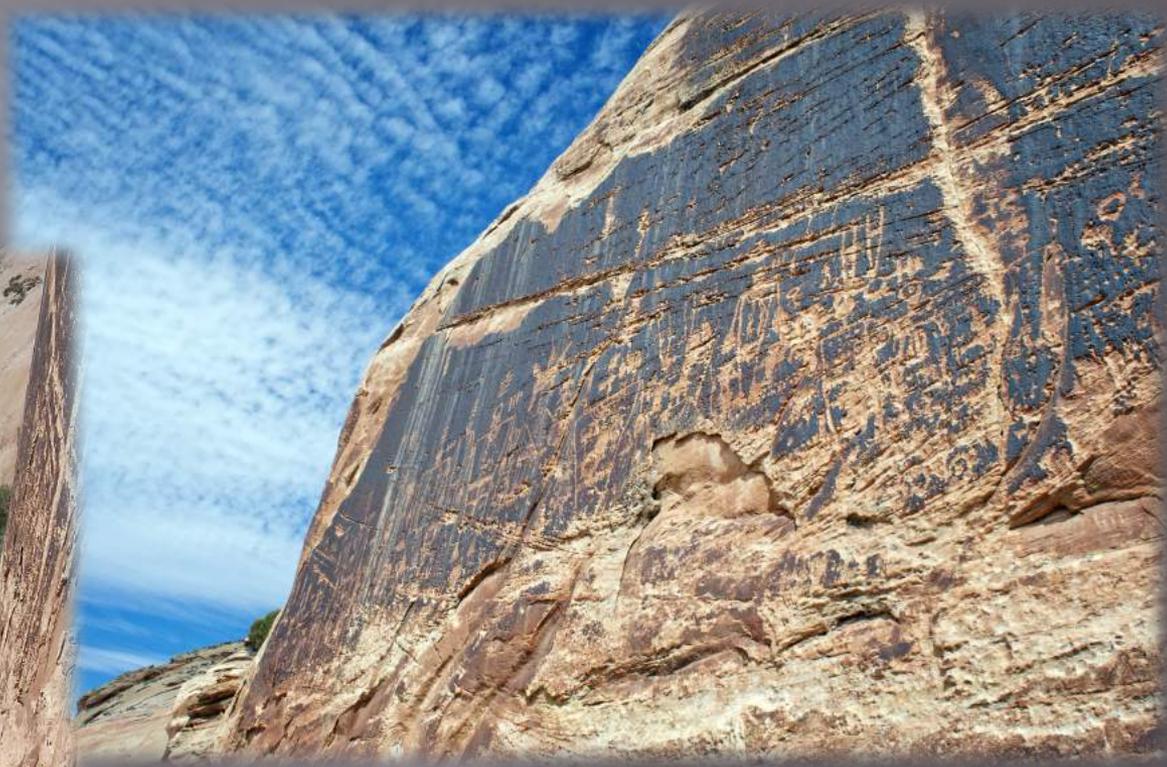
- ▣ Today, the river cuts close to the site.



Interpretations

- ▣ The Big Kachina Panel is recognized as an example of shamanistic themes in Basketmaker rock art (Schaafsma 1980, 1994),
- ▣ ethnic signaling at residential farming locations (Robins 1997),
- ▣ or ceremonial iconography (Hyder 2002).





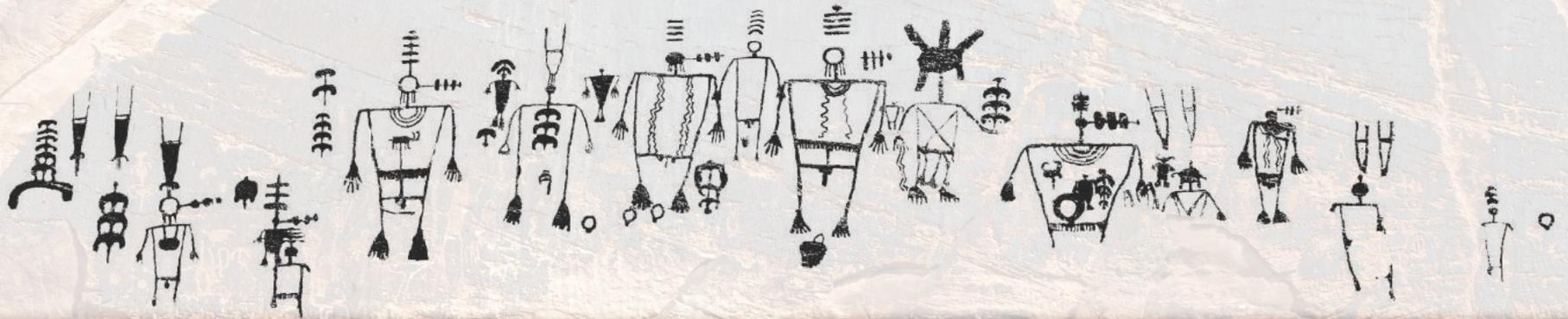
*I had once imagined listening for answers
while sitting cross-legged far beneath these figures.
Then you explained how the landscape changed,
once alluvial fields that placed them at eye level.
So, dreaming about flying I rose above
in order to come to these images face-to-face.*



*Indigenous ritual is often active participation
while modern ritual involves a passive audience
for choirs, sermons, sacred text, and prayer.
What would happen if I aligned my mind
to invite the visual perception of action?*



*That is how I came to see it differently.
The big ones in front with the small ones behind
brought forth a new dimension of perception.
Suddenly, I no longer saw them in static pose
each decorated image separate and distinct.
Aligned upon an imaginary wavy plane
they suddenly moved into a new formation.
There they are, active figures moving forward
in a procession coming out of the face of rock.*



*I tried to return to seeing this panel
as if I was the audience observing ancient art
frozen in time.*

*But now I could only see the eternal movement
of these people proceeding forward.*

I showed another who then experienced the same.

And now I wonder if I will ever see inertia again.

Or will rock art now bring to mind ritual in action?

Big Men?

- ▣ Robins (2002) refined his interpretative scheme by invoking Hayden's (1998) framework of competitive feasting, aggrandizing headmen, and prestige technologies.
- ▣ Is rock art a prestige technology reinforcing the power of the Big Man?
- ▣ Hayden (1998) mostly views rock art as something used in ritual contexts meant to bind members of alliances covering large areas. "They are low in frequency and/or cost and certainly did not involve major amounts of group surpluses and were not predicated on surplus-based competition."

Dominate Big Men?



- ▣ Robins (2002) revised his proposal that distinctive headgear is an emblematic indicator of social boundaries and instead proposes that they are related to ritual warfare and scalping (*sensu* Farmer 1997).
- ▣ Evidence of scalping, full-head scalps, and apparent trophy heads in rock art support the proposition. Hyder (2002) proposes an alternative interpretation: the mounted human scalps and similarly mounted bird skins are indicators of a society or cult (cf. Howard and Janetski 1992).

Wetherill's Cave 7: Evidence for Warfare

- ▣ Hurst and Turner (1993) conclude that the burials were the result of a massacre: “The first stratigraphically-identified Basketmakers had been massively beaten, mutilated, scalped, and probably tortured.”
- ▣ Robins (2002) rightfully draws on the local evidence to build his proposed competitive headman model and the prevalence of violent expressions of power in Basketmaker society.

But.....

- ▣ A re-assessment of Cave 7 burials based on stable isotope analysis and accelerator radiocarbon dating demonstrates the burials were not the result of a massacre. Instead, they were interred over a period of 500 years (Coltrain, et al. 2012).
- ▣ “Parsimony dictates that rather than a single, anomalous massacre, violent deaths among Cave 7 burials are more reasonably attributed to episodic acts of violence between allied males ... (*ibid.*).”

- ▣ Evidence from Cave 7 is weaker than has been assumed, but it does support “competitive social differentiation likely heightened during periods of resource shortfall leading to intra-group conflict, raiding and perhaps ritualized acts of violence (Coltrain, et al. 2012).”
- ▣ While not rejecting Robins’ proposed “big man” competition model out of hand, we can resolve the lack of evidence and ambiguous data by turning to the more general model of ritual activity.

Ritual and Rock Art

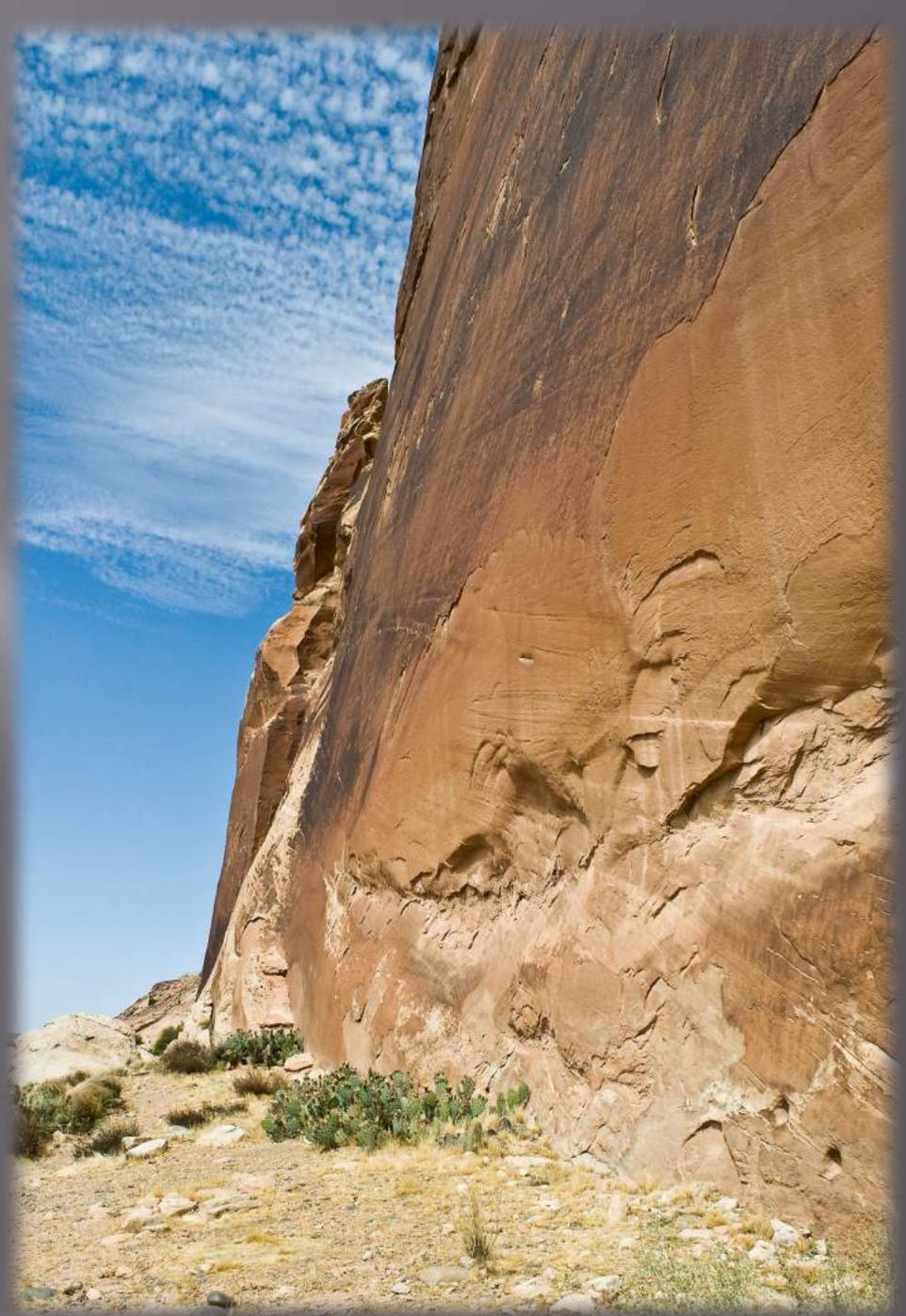
- ▣ The distinctive anthropomorphs and their headgear likely represent historically significant individuals representing allied family groups.
- ▣ They travelled relatively great distances for the time to gather at a place of extraordinary resource productivity for ceremonial activities.
- ▣ What role does the rock art play? In documenting rituals, rock art serves to distinguish ordinary space from extraordinary space (Rappaport 1999).

If ritual distinguishes ordinary space from extraordinary space, then we can view the panels with the large, distinctive anthropomorphs as records of rituals performed during feasts. Ritual plays a role in society to reduce conflict and support inter- and intra-group cohesion. When viewed anew, the panels represent ritual participants marching towards the viewer, closer actors larger, more distant actors smaller. In our conception, the panels at first document action and in time commemorate action before evolving into an active, mythic backdrop for future ceremonies.

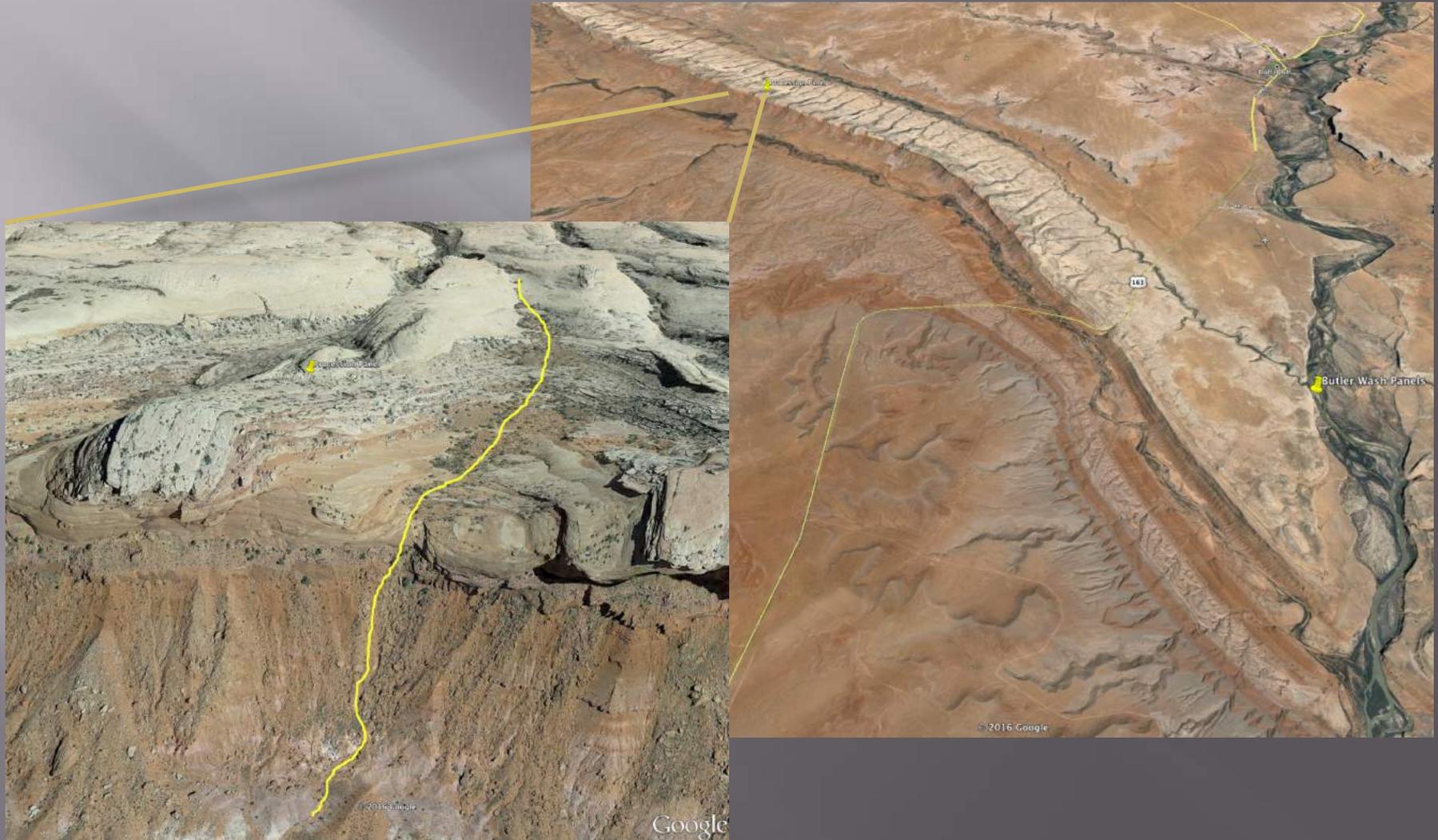


*The lines were so much deeper
when pecked out a millennium ago.
The language and ritual practices of the artist
so clear to the audience then
have few absolutes now.
Yet, there must be something very universal
because I long to touch this even more
now that you have raised such questions.*

*This takes me to another question.
Does this art transport me to a place
of artistic thought where reason bows
to creative imagination through the senses?
Am I suddenly within a virtual reality
where mystery silences vocabulary,
making insight and analysis needless?*



Procession Panel





The directions (north, east, south, west, up, down, and within) are integrated into the circle. In this way "all have an equal view and equal power with the intention of recreating a mindful consciousness." Dance is a way of honoring accomplishments, and doing something extra for the strength and the power. The body is considered to be an "amazing musical instrument that moves in melody, harmony, and rhythm." Dance is considered to be the "highest way that body mind, spirit, psyche and all artistic talents move together in ways that can heal and rebuild the individual and community... Even the animals were invited into the dance by making the animal's sound." (Sister Mary José Hobday, personal communication 2004).

Changing Communal Ceremonies



West



East



(Olsen 1985)

We believe Robins was correct in his initial interpretation of lineage identities being represented in distinctive attributes of anthropomorphic figures. Distinctive attributes include one arm up and one arm down, a stylistic attribute found to the east in Hovenweep and to the west in Grand Gulch (Hyder 2004).

Conclusions

- The Big Kachina Panel marks, commemorates, and plays an important role in communal Basketmaker ceremonial activities.
- The Procession Panel reflects the changing nature of the communal ceremonies, marking and commemorating one significant waypoint on the path to the ceremonial location or Center Place.
- As Van-Dyke (2008) proposes, the Basketmaker past “figured prominently in the construction of Chacoan ideology and worldview.”
- We argue here that the roots of the processional ceremonies can be found in the emergence of Basketmaker II ritual.



*The design of The Big Kachina and
Procession Panel,
so different in how lines portray humans,
can still suggest something consistent
when viewed as action.*



*The sacred remains in everyday life
even though greater time can be spent on comforts;
maybe, even for building grander dwellings and kivas
like at Chaco Canyon.*

*Yet, the beginnings of such a progression of a people's evolution
in merging their movements with this mysterious Force
remain upon these stone faces for any to ponder
and then consider remnants existing in actions
within modern societies on the perpetual journey of life.*

Modern herradura (ca. 1990) found along the Moqui Dugway.



The End.