

# VESTIGES



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Monthly newsletter of URARA, the Utah Rock Art Research Association

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## President's Message

I've received many emails requesting information about the 2006 URARA symposium. The Board looked at several areas. Southeastern Utah doesn't make much sense, since we will be down there in May with the ARARA symposium in Bluff. A couple of areas just out-of-state received a lot of discussion. We also investigated the Escalante-Capitol Reef-Hanksville area, but had trouble finding facilities large enough to accommodate us. The Fillmore area received some attention as a location for accessing the western part of the state. But ultimately we decided to go to Vernal. It has been several years since we have been to that part of the state, there is phenomenal rock art, and there are good facilities there.

I expect that symposium will be held on the Columbus Day weekend in early October, as it has for several years. However, we have not yet booked the conference facilities in Vernal, so that date is still tenuous. We will have more information for you next month. If you have any strong feelings about the date of symposium, please let me know.

Troy Scotter  
2006 URARA President

## Trip Reports

### *Trip Taken by Kat and Boma Johnson, December 2003*

Text and Photos by Kat Johnson

#### **THE NEW PETROGLYPH**

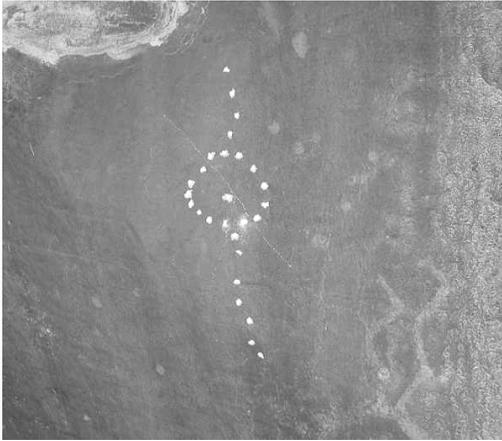
There is a "new" petroglyph pecked into the wall in Kirk's Grotto, in the Gold Butte, Nevada area -- but it is not desecration or vandalism of ancient Native American rock art. NEW petroglyph? NOT vandalism? How can this be? Let me tell you the story.

One weekend in December of 2003, my husband Boma, our friend Steve and I, went to the Gold Butte area, to photograph rock art, and get away from things for a while (not necessarily in that order). We stopped to check on one of our favorite sites, Kirk's Grotto. Most people who have been there will agree that there is the feeling of it being a sacred place. It seemed so to us again as we visited the Grotto that afternoon.

The weather had turned cold and very windy, so we pulled our campers into the canyon on the dirt track for the night, where we would be sheltered. It was too cold for us Southern Utah sissies to sit outside, so we went to bed early.

During the night, while we were asleep, someone drove by our campers, walked into Kirk's Grotto, and left again, without our awareness.

We were up early that morning, noticed the fresh tire tracks, and realized to our surprise that someone had gone by us in the night. We felt slightly uneasy to know that someone had been so close to us while we slept.



*New Petroglyph in Kirk's Grotto*

this had been done by a Native American person, for ceremonial reasons. We never reported our findings. It did not feel right to do so.

Now, almost two years later, the pieces of our puzzle are fitting together. We have found other signs that Native Americans still consider that area sacred, and are still actively using sites for ceremonial purposes. And the Itchy Brain Syndrome that was induced by the symbol?

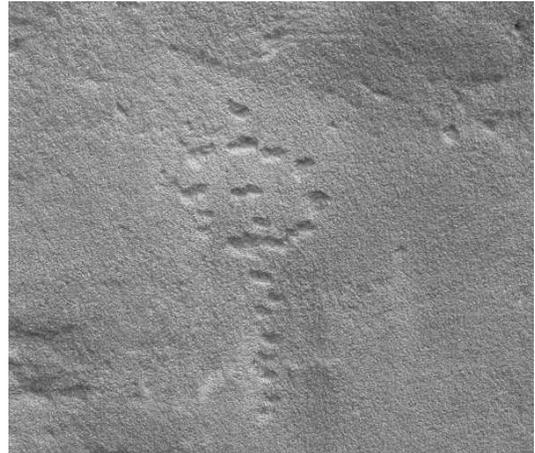
There is a nearly identical petroglyph in Chaco Canyon.

So, what is it? Ah, maybe that's the most interesting part of this story. It is most likely a ceremonial gourd rattle, like ones used by most Native American tribes today. Did Native Americans come into the Grotto, near the time of the Winter Solstice, and carve this symbol? We believe this to be so. Did they have the right? Of course they did.

Many Native Americans believe that the ceremonies that they so devotedly perform, are for all of us, to ensure the continuation of life. According to Thomas Banyacya, a Hopi Elder, the rattle symbolizes the world, and the shaking generates heat and germination of seeds. This is not the place to get into a long discussion of the Hopi prophecies. But one has to wonder- if we all shake hard enough and long enough, will we all emerge like fresh seedlings into a brand new Fifth World?

We traced the tire tracks in the soft sand to where they ended and changed to boot prints. The boots headed for Kirk's Grotto, so we followed. When we went into the Grotto, we found the new petroglyph- not defacing other glyphs, just boldly, newly THERE. Yet we had no punch-in-the-stomach feeling that comes from fresh vandalism. There was something.....something about that symbol that reminded us all of *something else*....a bothersome something that made all our brains itch.

And so we left, quietly, not sure what to think., but with a "gut feeling" that



*Chaco Canyon Petroglyph*



*Hopi Gourd Rattle*

## The Helioglyph

*Reprinted from the 2005 issue of Crate, the literary journal at UC Riverside.*

Submitted by the author, Erica Olsen,  
[ericaolsen@earthlink.net](mailto:ericaolsen@earthlink.net)

Drive-up rock art is not unknown in southern Utah. I've done some of my best petroglyph-spotting while navigating the washboard of a San Juan County road. The boulders cluster in sociable groups, their sandstone as blank-slate tempting as a chalkboard. Sometimes you see the graffiti first, the scratched initials and dates. Sometimes you see the bullet holes. The perfect spiral may turn out to be a lichen, perfect in its way.

And once, a boulder took my breath away. It was the proverbial right place and time: early October, mid-afternoon. I'd left the car to hike through some gray and blue badlands that fanned out from the base of a high cliff. Halfway up a gully, a fragment of corrugated pottery caught my eye. I made my way to the top of the hill to see where this bit of Anasazi cookware had washed down from. The ground up there was strewn with potsherds, and two or three low ridges to the south, a quarter-mile away, something was shining.

It was a bighorn sheep—or rather, the image of a sheep. The silhouette hovered on one of the house-sized boulders that has detached itself from the cliff face. It was a frontal view, the body an elongated oval topped by two curved horns. The outline was clear and symmetrical. On that cloudless day, the whole thing was radiant, as bright as the flash off a car windshield.

I knew about the sun dagger that marks solstice at Chaco Canyon, but I'd never heard of an entire image—call it a helioglyph—made out of light. I sat down to watch. I felt lucky, and awed, to see this transfiguration: boulder to sheep. There is a school of thought that holds that rock is a doorway to another realm. Shamans go there. I'd never know if Anasazi came here to view the sheep made of light. The potsherds at my feet wouldn't say.

In ten or fifteen minutes, the sun moved off the corner of the boulder, which went back to being a rock. I could see how the image was created. Two planes of rock gave the horns their curve. I began to doubt what I'd seen. Could it have been so bright? So distinctly sheepish in its attitude? Maybe the helioglyph was a chance abstraction, no more significant than an image in a cloud.

The next day, rafting on the San Juan, I was the first in our group to see the herd of wild sheep. They were browsing in the brush on the other side of the river, their elegant horns bent to the task of eating. The river brought us close, then carried us away.

[Editors' note: Erica lives in San Francisco, but has spent many summer and fall months in Bluff. Her non-fiction pieces have appeared in many literary journals, as well as the newspaper High Country News.]



## Regional Activities

For Details of the following on-going activities see *Vestiges* December 2005

- **The Nevada Rock Art Foundation** offers tours at Valley of Fire State Park, north of Las Vegas, on the second Saturday of each month through May.

- **The Museum of Northern Arizona** has organized a series of Saturday and Sunday presentations to dovetail with its exhibit of Stories on Stones. [This exhibit is scheduled to close January 31, the lectures continue through the summer.]
- **Old Pueblo Archaeology Center, Tucson, AZ** is offering a Dig for a Day.
- **Sierra Club Rock Art trip to Snake Gulch** in the Kaibab National Forest in Northern Arizona, May 15 - 19.

## Conservation and Preservation

Chairperson Jan Gorski

For all interested in educational material ..... there is a book available as a free download (4 MB English, 2 MB Spanish) and a flash version online (36 pages). Beautiful photography and great information on the Traditions of the Sun as they pertain to Chaco Canyon.

<http://www.traditionsofthesun.org/books.html>

Traditions of the Sun: The Sun-Earth Connection at Chaco Culture National Historical Park  
An educational children's book that explores ancient solar practices and modern scientific research within the historical and cultural context of Chaco Canyon.

Developed for 4th-6th grade students, the book matches California science education standards. The book was developed by NASA's Sun-Earth Connection Education Forum and Ideum with assistance from the dedicated staff at Chaco Culture National Historical Park.

Another Website referred by Jan Gorski: [www.print.google.com](http://www.print.google.com) . This is an amazing website. If you search for "Rock Art" it finds hundreds of rock art references in printed books and displays the page for you to see. A great way to find more books on rock art or search books in general (and spend a lot of time on the Internet.)

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## Think About It!

"Barrier Canyon Style does not fit the mold of individualized, secluded rites and specific-group knowledge usually associated with shamanic practices. Most of the imagery was there for the public to see, and the consistencies of subject matter, organization, and modification indicate widespread knowledge of iconography and ritual use. These characteristics seem more closely associated with ceremonial activities that define, build, and maintain social alliances than with the activities of shamans operating on a relatively independent group or band level."



And from the paper's conclusion the author states, in part: "Barrier Canyon Style rock art includes colorful and intricate imagery that remains in place and highly visible centuries after it was made. Patterns of distribution, site location, subject matter and organization, and image use indicate that the rock art was socially communicative and cohesive across a broad expanse of territory and diverse environments. Regional style variation is identifiable, but there is remarkable consistency revolving around the dominant subject, human-like forms."

Cole's concluding statement touches on one of the controversial issues surrounding rock art. She states "Shamanism has been offered as an explanation for Barrier Canyon Style but is unlikely to have been the foundation given the public nature and broad distribution of the iconography. Archaeological context and historic uses of rock art and pigments suggest that Barrier Canyon Style functioned to illustrate and reinforce traditional knowledge and the society and world view that supported it over time and across a varied landscape."

*New Dimensions in Rock Art Studies*, Edited by Ray T. Matheny, Museum of Peoples and Cultures, Occasional Papers No. 9; Brigham Young University, 2000, "Origins, Continuities, and Meaning of Barrier Canyon Style Rock Art", Sally J. Cole pp. 66-67. [Editors note: This extract is from a 72 page paper, by far the longest of the 8 papers included in this book. It is an excellent, well-researched discussion of the Barrier Canyon Style. It includes over fifty figures. The comprehensive set of references includes over 150 names among which are some well known to us: Mary Allen, Steve Manning and Jesse Warner.]

## URARA Christmas Party



The URARA Christmas party was a pleasant gathering of good friends. Barbara Saxon and Barbara Green arranged the pot-luck dinner while the Clapps made sure that we had a place to meet. Barbara Green once more provided a holiday rock art video for our post-dinner viewing pleasure. Thanks to all who attended and helped organize this annual event!

## ARARA Online

WELCOME URARA:

Welcome Utah Rock Art Research Association! On behalf of the ARARA Board of Directors and ARARA members, I want to welcome the Utah Rock Art Research Association's membership to ARARA Online - our organization's new e-newsletter.

Twice monthly ARARA Online updates ARARA members on the latest events, action alerts, news items and general items of interest to the rock art world. We thought it would be of interest for URARA members to receive our "e-blasts" as we run up to the Annual ARARA conference scheduled for May 19-22, 2006 in Bluff. The Bluff Conference is particularly exciting for both of our organizations as we work closely together in co-hosting the event. URARA will be organizing the opening session on Utah Rock Art, co-sponsoring the pre-conference conservation workshop and community education event, and is playing an important role in helping to select and guide many of the pre-and post-conference field trips to some of the most exciting rock art sites that the State of

Utah has to offer. The Bluff conference affords a great opportunity for ARARA and URARA to deepen our connections and strengthen our shared goals in rock art research, education and conservation.

To assist your planning, the latest breaking conference announcements will be posted here in ARARA Online. In addition, registration forms, calls for papers and posters, and other conference information will be continuously available to you at our website - [www.ARARA.org](http://www.ARARA.org). We look forward to seeing you all in Bluff!

Best Regards,  
Leigh Marymor, President  
American Rock Art Research Association

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URARA has an extensive library of rock art publications, a collection of articles, and Clifford Rayl's photo collection, which are available for use by members. URARA also has educational materials.

## URARA Membership Information

Membership is open to anyone interested in the study, protection, enjoyment, and preservation of rock art. Cost is \$17 for one person, \$20 family, \$12 student, for one year's membership. The membership form, including liability release, is available on our website at [www.utahrockart.org](http://www.utahrockart.org). If you don't have access to the Internet, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the URARA post office box address listed above.

### Address Changes

Please send change of postal or email address promptly to the URARA address above, or email to the secretary.

## Field Trip Leaders For ARARA

In May, ARARA will be holding its annual symposium in Bluff. This is a great opportunity to highlight the best rock art in the United States. I need some volunteers who are willing to show off what we have to offer in the four corners region. Some field trips will be as simple as going to Sand Island or Newspaper Rock. Others will be longer. A few field trips will also be planned outside the region, in Moab, the San Rafael Swell, Nine Mile Canyon, Horseshoe Canyon, etc. Please contact Troy Scotter at 801-377-6901 or [troyscotter@comcast.net](mailto:troyscotter@comcast.net) if you would be interested. We can discuss the list of field trips sites. Thanks!

## Editors' Message

We extend our warmest best wishes for the New Year. May it be a successful and happy year for all.

January 14 our new Board of Directors gathers for its first all-day meeting. Needless to say this is a key gathering as critical issues will be addressed and important decisions made regarding the goals and plans for the year. We speak for all in expressing our thanks and appreciation to those who have accepted the responsibility to serve us in their Board membership responsibilities. We extend our symbolic hand of appreciation and support on behalf of everyone. We hope that as members are called upon to support the Board in achieving the URARA objectives for the year they will be quick to step forward when and where needed. Your *Vestiges* editors are committed to keeping you informed throughout the year regarding the relevant decisions and actions by the Board.

With the coming of the New Year we want to remind readers that we are very interested in your contributions to *Vestiges*. We welcome articles, opinions and questions. And field trip leaders we encourage your timely trip reports with pictures. We also point out that the Think About It! feature is intended to provide a place to share information that will stimulate our interest in and understanding of rock art. We select material which we hope is of general interest. However, much has been and is being written about rock art which never comes to our attention.

Our goals are to support our leadership, inform our membership and stimulate all our good URARA folks with respect to the knowledge, understanding, appreciation and protection of our wonderful Utah rock art heritage. In trying to do this we attempt to keep in mind the key operative word in the title of our organization—Research. Though we may not all be knowledgeable experts in this vital endeavor, we should take every opportunity to participate and support this goal. It may be something like site recording. Or it could be more complicated. Consider, for example, trying to research issues revolving around shamanism as a key factor in understanding the motivation and meaning of rock art across the various styles that have been identified in Utah. Perhaps not coincidentally, Think About It! in this issue makes an important point in this regard.

We look forward to a great 2006 for URARA.

Happy trails to all!

Steve and Marion Robinson

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