

Richard Jenkinson

A Close Look at the Shaman's Gallery

Dixie Archaeology Society Meeting

Wednesday May 10 2017

Richard Jenkinson has been teaching English composition for twenty years in the Moab district and 17 years in Kayenta on the Navajo Reservation. He is a past president of the Utah Rock Art Research Association (URARA) and has published many articles in their Proceedings. His approach is to examine rock art closely and report on the details of his observations without assuming a particular theory or method of interpretation. This leads to very careful and detailed readings of the rock art.

The Shaman's Gallery is located in a canyon on the north side of the Grand Canyon. It is a difficult hike, dropping 1700 feet in 7.5 miles. The panel is dated as Archaic, that is, over 2000 years old. Its style however is not necessarily an Archaic style but rather Grand Canyon Polychrome, which is defined by only 30 sites of which this is the best known. There is a short ledge in front of the gallery from which the best pictures are taken lying down and shooting upward.

The panel is filled with figures some 6-8 feet tall. Richard divided them into eight groups reading right to left and used D-Stretch for each section and individual figure. The following is a survey of what can be seen with the naked eye and also enhanced with D-Stretch. The presentation was fully illustrated by photos from the latter of two attempts at capturing the panel for analysis. (Note the following transcriptions do not cover all the details and observations mentioned during the talk.)

- 1) Three round images, one in green—perhaps faces or masks.
- 2) An anthropomorph with another anthro “inside”; elk or sheep
- 3) Lines and Xs superimposed over sheep, a deer; anthropomorphs on the right with small arms and a “crown” on the head; deer laid down both under and over a patch of white; a large mass of “squiggly” people that look like a moving set of bodies—perhaps swimming, floating, or having shamanistic trances

4) Twelve tall anthropomorphs with round or long heads, all jammed together, wearing fringed headdresses, decorated bodies, and large feet; a figure reminiscent of a “turkey baster;” green “squiggly” lines behind these figures—maybe the green squiggles hanging off the heads is vegetation; two “suns” in green with dark radiating lines from a central dot; incredibly small details around the panel that look like “Mayan” glyphs

5) Round pipettes or “test tubes”; four or five circles and “scales” or part circles collected together on the pipettes; a large central figure with a rectangular body and a head-like shape on the top

6) An unclear panel with no identifiable imagery

7) A set of anthropomorphs, one with four arms, two of which have vertical lines, the other two seeming to come from behind the body; other bodies with rectangles inside, heads, and small arms; a figure with a three-lobed “head,” one lobe with eyes and eyelashes, the others with dots inside and snake-like lines

8) A scene that was lost containing repeated short lines in a horizontal row

Richard recommended the book on the Grand Canyon style of rock art by Don D. Christensen, Jerry Dickey, and Steven M. Freers, Rock Art of the Grand Canyon Region, San Diego, CA: Sunbelt Publications, 2013.

In the question period he mentioned that singing was an important gesture of respect for Native Americans while approaching rock art, that acoustics were an important part of a panel’s setting, and that the alcove of the Shaman’s Gallery could have hosted ceremonies with singing and drumming as accompaniment.