

RED ROCK LEDGE: PLAINS BIOGRAPHIC ROCK ART IN THE PICKETWIRE CANYONLANDS, SOUTHEASTERN COLORADO

BY JAMES D. KEYSER AND MARK D. MITCHELL

ABSTRACT

The Red Rock Ledge site, a scratched petroglyph scene adjacent to the Purgatoire River south of La Junta, Colorado, is a classic example of Plains Biographic tradition art. The drawing, done in the Early Biographic style, shows a warrior leaving a tipi camp and counting coup on an enemy by capturing his coup stick as a war trophy. Based on stylistic criteria, the drawing is dated to the period between A.D. 1800 and 1850. The site demonstrates the close similarities among Historic period rock art sites located across the Plains region, and suggests that the study of Central and Southern Plains rock art has the potential to yield important information about the development of Plains Biographic art.

INTRODUCTION

Biographic rock art is best known from the Northwestern Plains where it has a long history spanning at least three centuries starting in the early 1600s and lasting until the 1920s (Keyser 1987, 1996; Keyser and Klassen 2000; Klassen et al. 2000). On the Southern Plains, Biographic rock art scenes almost identical to those from the Northwestern Plains imply an equally long tradition of Biographic art. The similarities among rock art sites spanning so much of the Plains suggest that local styles may have evolved through similar stages of development, and, moreover, that intertribal alliances and community mobility were important social strategies throughout the Protohistoric and Historic periods.

Rock art of the Protohistoric and Historic periods in the Arkansas River basin comprises at least two and probably three distinct styles¹ whose relationships to one another have not yet been fully elucidated (Figure 1). The earliest of these, known locally as the Rio Grande style² (Cole 1984:25-26; Loendorf 1989:359-361; Loendorf and Kuehn 1991:282-283), includes both outline-pecked and solid-pecked anthropomorphs, often shown with horns or masks; shields and shield-bearing warriors; and a large variety of quadrupeds, including bison (Kalasz et al. 1999). Other motifs include corn plants and shore birds (Reed and Horn 1995). Imagery of this style appears to date to the period between about A.D. 1450 and A.D. 1700, and is thought to be the work of Apachean artists (Kalasz et al. 1999; Loendorf and Kuehn 1991).

More recent American Indian rock art in the Arkansas River basin includes motifs assigned to both the Ceremonial and Biographic traditions

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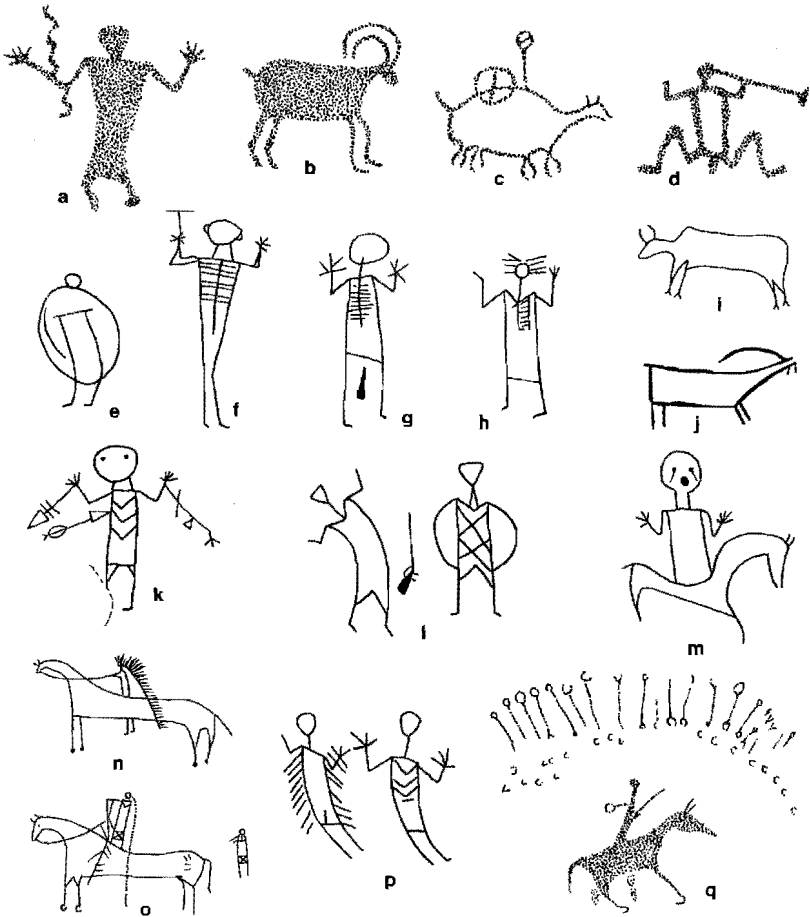


FIGURE 1. Arkansas River basin rock art shows Ceremonial style motifs (a-j), Proto-Biographic style motifs (k-m), and true Biographic style motifs (n-q). Motif q is a pictograph, all others are petroglyphs. Motifs a-d are pecked, e-p are incised. Some images are re-drawn from Loendorf and Kuehn (1991), and McGlone et al. (1994).

elsewhere on the Great Plains (Buckles 1989; Cole 1984:26-38; Keyser 1977a, 1987, 1989; Loendorf 1989:361-362) but sometimes lumped together and simply called Biographic in the Arkansas River basin (McGlone et al. 1994). Dating to at least the Protohistoric period, and continuing into historic times, the earliest images include incised animals, shield-bearing warriors, and V-necked and rectangular-body humans. Over time these images were augmented with illustrations of horses and guns. Static, juxtaposed groupings of these large human and animal figures gradually gave way to crudely-drawn horses and riders and then, somewhat later, to complex action scenes composed of small rectangular-body horsemen and pedestrians shown with a variety of weapons, horse tack, tipis, and even cattle, wagons,

and buildings. Some Ceremonial tradition motifs such as shield-bearing warriors and large rectangular-body humans are shared with the roughly contemporaneous Rio Grande style (where they are pecked rather than incised), suggesting a possible relationship that has yet to be defined.

Growing out of the “Proto-Biographic” action scenes between shield-bearing warriors and V-neck humans, true Biographic rock art began to appear on the Northern Plains between A.D. 1725 and 1775 (Keyser 1987, 1996). In this tradition, the horses, riders and warriors that are its principal subjects are frequently arranged into “scenes” depicting a series of events. Representational conventions are used to indicate the identities of the participants, and the structure and outcome of the event. In particular, such conventions are used to depict the major “plot” elements of the event, including success, death, action, and the passage of time. In the Arkansas River basin, this same transition began with stiff action scenes between shield bearers and V-neck warriors that gave way to fluid combat scenes composed of rectangular-body horsemen and pedestrians (Loendorf and Kuehn 1991; McGlone et al. 1994:50-56).

True Plains Biographic rock art scenes are typically divided into two temporal groupings: Early Biographic art, produced most frequently at the end of the eighteenth century and the first few decades of the nineteenth century; and Late Biographic art, produced after about A.D. 1840. Early Biographic art depicts simply-drawn horses with few embellishments (Figure 2). Riders are frequently shown “standing” on the backs of their horses, or with both legs on the same side of the animal. Flintlock rifles are a frequent subject, as are V-necked warriors, tipis, travois, and a variety of zoomorphic figures (Kalasz et al. 1999). Late Biographic art generally consists of finely-incised or scratched depictions of horses, warriors, camp equipment, weapons, and other items of material culture (Figure 2). Late Biographic scenes are often tightly composed depictions of actual events, which portray the activities of particular individuals. Both horses and humans are drawn in a rounder, more realistic style. Other elements (e.g., weapons, costumes) are also frequently depicted in intricate and realistic detail. Particularly for Late Biographic rock art, researchers have been able to study contemporaneous perishable art such as hide paintings and ledger book art, and develop a “lexicon” of images by which the people and events depicted in rock art can be identified and understood (e.g., Keyser 1977a, 1987, 1991, 2000; Keyser and Klassen 2000; Parsons 1987; Sundstrom and Keyser 1998).

Unfortunately, only a small handful of Southern Plains Biographic sites are published in detail (e.g., Boyd 1990; Labadie et al. 1997; Loendorf and Kuehn 1991; Parsons 1987; Turpin 1988, 1989a), although collections of site photographs and drawings hint at dozens of other sites awaiting professional recording and study (McGlone et al. 1994; Dale Wedel, personal communication 1992). The Red Rock Ledge site (5LA8463) is one such site, first recorded by USDA Forest Service Passport In Time volunteers in the summer of 1998. During the summer of 1999 the authors revisited, evaluated, and re-recorded the images. The site demonstrates the close similar-

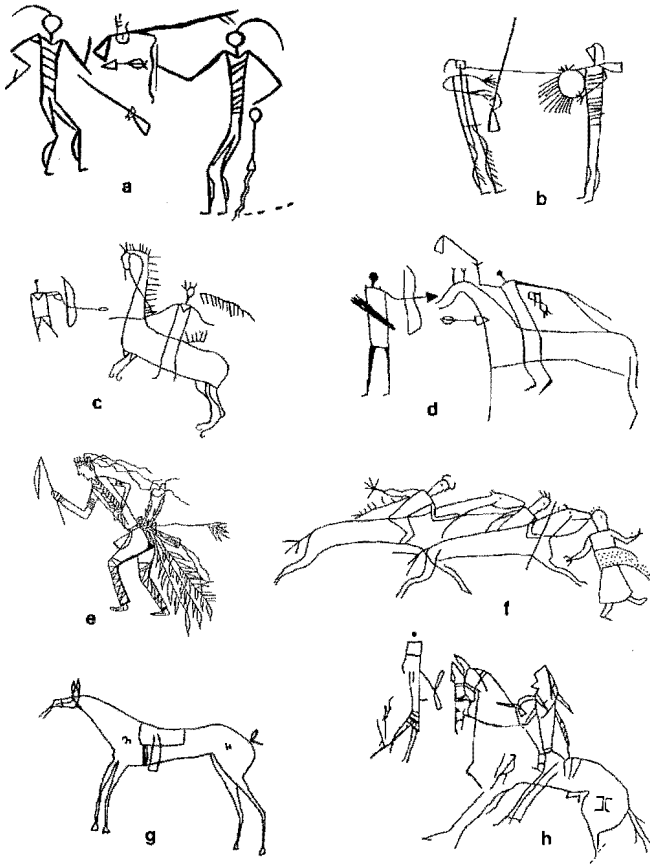


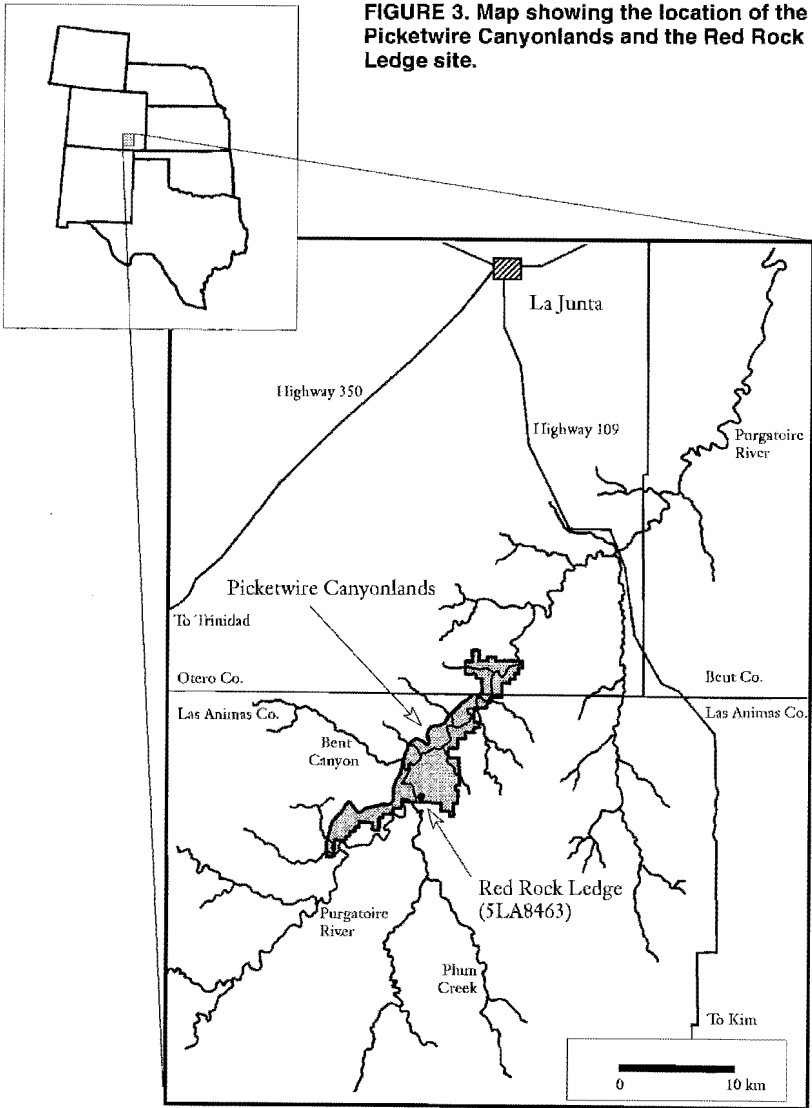
FIGURE 2. Northwestern Plains Biographic rock art, all incised petroglyphs. a-d, Early Biographic style; e-h Late Biographic style. a, Castle Butte (MT); b, Pine Canyon (WY); c, Verdigris Coulee (Alberta); d, Writing-On-Stone (Alberta); e, g, Joliet (MT); f, Spur Canyon (WY); h, North Cave Hills (SD).

ity of Southern Plains Biographic rock art to the more well-studied examples from elsewhere on the Plains.

THE PETROGLYPHS

The Red Rock Ledge site is a small petroglyph scene lightly scratched onto a low sandstone cliff adjacent to the south bank of the Purgatoire River, approximately 50 kilometers south of La Junta, Colorado (Figure 3). It is located just downstream from the confluence of the river's main stem and one of its major tributaries, and near the Box Canyon site (5LA8464), a very complex Biographic rock art composition (Keyser and Mitchell 2000). The site is adjacent to a historically well-documented crossing of the Purgatoire River. Major Stephen H. Long, searching for the headwaters of the Red River, crossed the river at this point on July 25, 1820 (Friedman 1988). Edwin James, who accompanied Long, commented that the party passed

FIGURE 3. Map showing the location of the Picketwire Canyonlands and the Red Rock Ledge site.



“in the course of the day, not less than four or five paths leading southwest, towards the Spanish settlements. Some of them appear to have been recently travelled by men with horses” (Thwaites 1905). Later, the earliest Hispanic settlement in the valley would be founded at this location, followed closely by Anglo homesteaders who would occupy the area for more than a century.

The lightly-scratched petroglyphs at Red Rock Ledge compose a Biographic scene showing a pedestrian bowman who has traveled from a tipi village to engage an enemy represented by a “crooked lance” or coup stick (Figure 4). Beginning at the right margin of the scene, and following the



FIGURE 4. Biographic scene scratched at Red Rock Ledge. Note date superimposed over coup stick, warrior's body, and tracks. Scale bar is 15 cm.

action to the left, the composition consists of four major elements. At the far right is a group of nine triangles with forked tops representing a camp of tipis. One other incomplete figure probably represents a tenth tipi with one side no longer visible. A series of seventeen more or less horizontal dashes and four "C" shapes extends from the tipi camp toward the bowman. Based on comparisons with other Biographic drawings in various media, the dashes represent human footprints and the "C" shapes represent horse hoofprints. The third element, the bowman, is a simply drawn, rectangular-body figure with a circle head. His legs are shown with thighs, calves, and feet. The short, diagonal lines that extend outward from the front of each leg indicate fringed leggings. In his right hand he carries a carefully drawn recurved bow that is shooting an arrow with a large triangular point. The fourth element, located at the far left of the scene, is a horizontally-oriented crook-neck coup stick, from which trail four groups of paired streamers or feathers. Each group extends diagonally downward to the left, and the four groups are spaced about equidistantly along the shaft, with the last at the end of the crook.

Later Hispanic and Anglo rock art is also present at the site (Figure 5). The Biographic scene is superimposed by a deeply chiseled date of A.D. 1878. Immediately below the date are the letters "MARC" and the numeral "4." Two portrait-like busts also have been incised into the panel, one of which includes the initials "A.E.C." and the date April 11, 1886 in Spanish. The initials A.E.C. (and the accompanying bust which is apparently a self-portrait) may identify Aurelio Chacon, an early Hispanic resident of Cordova Plaza, located adjacent to the site. Chacon left his name and other sets of initials (associated with dates ranging from 1878 to 1884) at another rock art site nearby (5LA116).

The key significance of the Euroamerican rock art is the 1878 date, the numerals of which superimpose the coup stick, the warrior, and his track sequence, providing a minimum age for the Biographic scene (Figure 4).

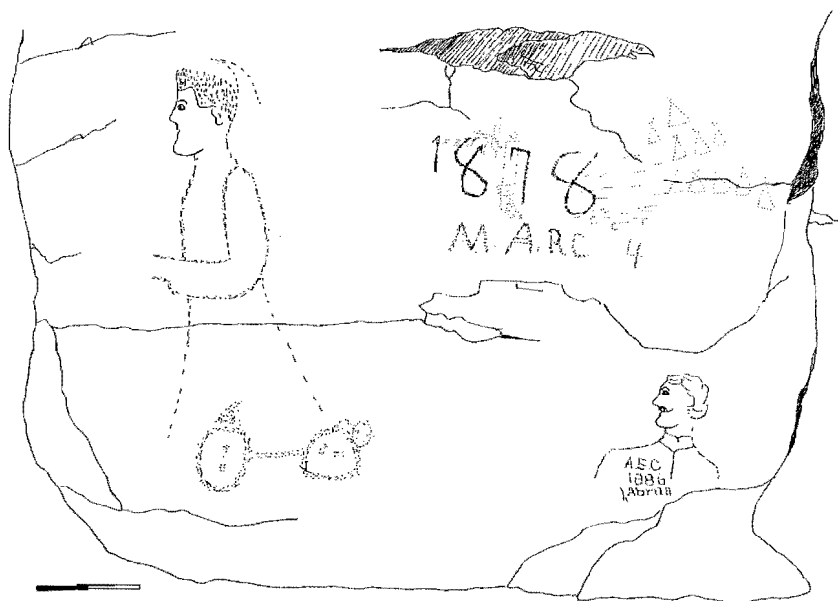


FIGURE 5. Main petroglyph panel at Red Rock Ledge. Note historic initials, dates, and human bust portraits. Scale bar is 30 cm. After original sketch by Mary Harsh.

The numeral *1* and the first numeral *8* superimpose the coup stick, with the *8* cutting through it in two places. The numeral *7* superimposes the warrior's body, and the second *8* crosses one of the horizontal dashes and terminates another. Only the tipis are not superimposed, but they are lightly scratched in exactly the same manner as the other elements of the composition, and certainly were contemporaneous with them. Given the similarity of all these marks, their contemporaneity predating 1878, and the absence of any other similar scratched imagery on this panel, it is clear that they constitute a narrative scene typical of the Biographic compositions known from hide painting, ledger art, and rock art panels located elsewhere on the Plains.

COMPARISONS TO OTHER BIOGRAPHIC ART

In style, composition, and structure the Red Rock Ledge petroglyphs are analogous to other Biographic drawings found in rock art and ledger art from the Northern and Central Plains. The tipis are similar to rock art images at Writing-On-Stone (Keyser 1977a:Figures 7 and 15, 1977b:61) and the Little Popo Agie site in Wyoming (Keyser and Klassen 2000). In ledger art, similar tipis were drawn in quite similar scenes by two Flathead warrior artists, Chief Ambrose and another unnamed man, in 1842 (Keyser 2000).

Nearly identical track sequences, including both human footprints and horse hoofprints, can be found in numerous other Biographic rock art scenes (Keyser 1977b:58, 101, 1987:67-68; Keyser and Klassen 2000); in robe art (Brownstone 1993:56-67; Horse Capture et al. 1993:101, 103; Keyser

1996:42-43; Maurer 1992:163); and in ledger art (Afton et al. 1997:125-143, 227, 277; Heidenreich 1985; Keyser 2000). Frequently these sequences show multiple lines of tracks indicating the presence of multiple participants in a scene (Afton et al. 1997:181, 277; Brownstone 1993:56-61). The mix of horse and human tracks in a single sequence also occurs and can indicate either that both pedestrians and horsemen were involved, or that the pedestrian dismounted to engage his foe. In this case, because a continuous line of human footprints extends between the tipis and the warrior, we suspect that the artist intended to show that both pedestrians and mounted warriors left camp to be involved in this fight.

The warrior is quite similar to others illustrated in robe art, rock art, and ledger drawings. Rectangular bodies and circular heads characterize humans in many Biographic scenes, and this one is nearly identical to those drawn by the Flathead ledger artists Ambrose and Adolphe in 1842 (Keyser 2000). Similar, though somewhat more detailed, warriors are shown on two Sioux robes dating to the first half of the nineteenth century (Taylor 1998:48-49, 62-63), and some of these warriors also wear fringed leggings. Closer to the area, the posture and form of the warrior are much like that of a combatant in an 1853 ledger drawing by the southern Comanche chief, Yellow Wolf (Ewers 1982:43).

The warrior's recurved bow is similar to those illustrated in numerous Biographic drawings, including those of Ambrose (Keyser 2000), and several illustrated on the Sioux robes noted above (Taylor 1998). The Dog Soldier (or Summit Springs) Ledger Book, drawn by Cheyenne artists living on the Colorado plains, includes numerous examples of recurved bows identical to this one (Afton et al. 1997). A Gros Ventre war shirt from the upper Missouri River region shows a recurved bow, track sequence with horse and human footprints, and rectangular-body warriors wearing fringed clothing (Taylor 1998:28-29). Elsewhere in rock art, depictions of recurved bows are restricted to the Historic period (Keyser 1977a:38; Keyser and Klassen 2000), consistent with the association between horse tracks and the warrior's bow at Red Rock Ledge.

The coup stick represents one variation of the crooked lance, occasionally illustrated in all biographic media. The weapon, probably best known among the Cheyenne and Sioux, was carried primarily by members of a specific military society (among the Cheyenne called the Crooked Lance or Elkhorn Scraper Society in recognition of the weapon's shape). In one form, armed with a large spear point on the straight end, the weapon was capable of inflicting a mortal wound on an enemy and was used much like a lance in combat. The other form lacked the spear point, and instead the curved crook-neck end was used to strike an enemy, but not to inflict a mortal blow. In both forms the staff was decorated with feathers or streamers, and usually wrapped with fur strips (Berlo 1996:201; Blish 1967:110; Maurer 1992:235).

A crooked lance with spear point is clearly illustrated counting coup (point first) on an enemy warrior on the Lewis and Clark Mandan robe and

on a Mandan war shirt (Maurer 1992:189, 223), and on a Cheyenne war shirt from the Musée de l'Homme (Barbeau 1960:108). Other examples are being carried by Cheyenne and Sioux warriors on painted hides (Horse Capture et al. 1993:105), and in ledger drawings (Barbeau 1960:137, 152, 162; Maurer 1992:253). Coup sticks without a point are clearly illustrated on several painted Sioux and Cheyenne robes, either being carried aloft or used to strike an enemy with the crooked end (Barbeau 1960:88; Horse Capture et al. 1993:103; Szabo 1994:11; Tillet 1976:16). Ledger art illustrations of this weapon occur among the same tribes (Afton et al. 1997:219; Szabo 1994:101; Tillet 1976:35). In rock art, two examples (Figure 6) are known: one held aloft by a warrior in the Red Canyon Battle Scene near Lander, Wyoming (Keyser and Klassen 2000), and the other in a Crow warrior's tally of captured weapons at Nordstrom-Bowen (Keyser and Cowdrey 2000).

At Red Rock Ledge any point on the weapon would have been obliterated by the superimposed numeral 1, but the weapon's orientation suggests to us that it most likely represents a coup stick without a lance point. The weapon is not carried by the bowman, but rather "floats" in space with its crooked end extended toward him. In the instances where such coup sticks are shown striking the enemy on robes or in ledger drawings, the crooked end touches the warrior on whom coup was counted (Afton et al. 1997:219; Horse Capture et al. 1993:103; Maurer 1992:241), suggesting that this weapon was thrust toward the bowman by an unillustrated opponent.

Given the absence of an illustrated antagonist, this coup stick is an example of the "floating weapon" convention in Biographic art (see Keyser 1987:63), and represents the bowman's captured war trophy rather than a victor's weapon counting coup on the bowman. This is consistent with the coup stick not actually touching the bowman, and the detail associated with the warrior, his camp, and his movement from the camp. Although not as common as combat between two fully-depicted warriors, a warrior counting coup against an enemy represented only by a weapon (or, most likely in this case, a captured war trophy) is occasionally illustrated in both ledger

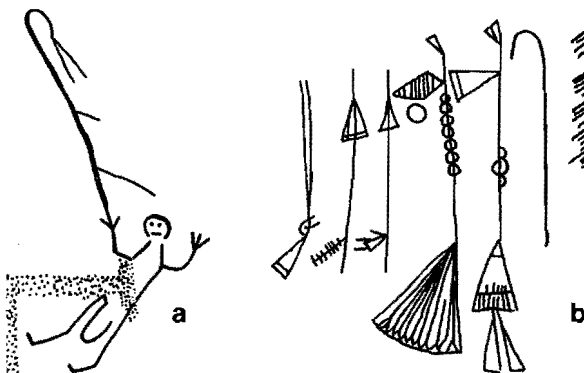


FIGURE 6. Other coup sticks in rock art: a, Red Canyon Battle Scene (WY); b, [second from right in tally of captured weapons] Nordstrom-Bowen (MT). Stippled area on "a" is part of modern letter C. No scale.

art and rock art. Probably the most similar examples are war trophies captured by Ambrose and illustrated in his ledger drawings (Keyser 2000), and warriors facing ranks of enemy weapons in both rock art (Keyser 1977a:Figure 15; Loendorf and Kuehn 1991) and ledger drawings (Berlo 1996:109, 213; Ewers 1982:43; Keyser 2000; Maurer 1992:202-203).

DATING

Several lines of evidence suggest that this petroglyph scene was carved in the first half of the 1800s. The superimposed A.D. 1878 date provides a definite minimum age for the petroglyphs at the Red Rock Ledge site, and the horse hoofprints definitely place it after A.D. 1650 when the first horses were obtained by Indians living in this area of the Great Plains (Haines 1938). The representation of a recurved bow is consistent with this Historic period assignment. However, additional historic and stylistic data can be used to narrow the date within the Historic period.

Historic data show that the area had a mixed population of American Indian, Anglo, and Hispanic residents and visitors from 1860 to 1878. The first domestic livestock were brought into this portion of the Purgatoire River valley in 1863 by Thomas O. Boggs and L. A. Allen (Friedman 1988:30). In 1867, William Bell, a surveyor with the Kansas Pacific Railroad, noted flocks of New Mexican sheep and goats in the area. Later that same year Juan Cordova, along with his family, established Cordova Plaza on the floodplain immediately adjacent to the Red Rock Ledge and Box Canyon sites. By 1878, Cordova owned four horses, three asses, 180 head of cattle, and 4,000 sheep (Friedman 1988:31-32). The mid-1870s saw large numbers of both Hispanic and Anglo homesteaders living in the immediate vicinity. In 1874, roughly 450 people are reported to have been living within a few kilometers of Red Rock Ledge, although that number dipped to about 200 by 1882 (Friedman 1988:36).

But American Indians also lived in and visited this area, at least into the 1870s. Prior to 1860 there would have been little impediment to tribal groups using this river crossing and carving rock art in the area. The river valley here, with excellent pasture for horse herds, would have been an attractive location for a camp or village. After the mid-1860s, competition and conflict between American Indians and Euroamericans would have increased but, in 1867, William Bell observed Utes camped near the confluence of the Purgatoire and Arkansas rivers (Friedman 1988:41). The next year federal troops from Fort Lyon were called to protect Hispanic ranchers living in the vicinity of the Red Rock Ledge site, and in 1874 a group of some 43 American Indians, probably including Kiowas, Comanches, and Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos, visited Cordova Plaza (Friedman 1988:43). It is therefore possible that the Red Rock Ledge petroglyphs were created as late as the mid-1870s but, if so, the Indian artists would likely have come into contact with Anglo and Hispanic settlers.

We suggest, however, that the site predates these historic Hispanic and Anglo settlements by ten to fifty years. Stylistically, the scene is most

similar to Early Biographic art (Keyser 1987:48, 60, 1996:30), which characterized Northwestern Plains rock art during the century between approximately A.D. 1750 and 1850. Furthermore, structural similarities with dated robe art from the period between A.D. 1800 and 1850 (Keyser 1996; Keyser and Brady 1993; Maurer 1992:184-195), and ledger drawings that date from 1842 to 1853 (Ewers 1982:43-44; Keyser 2000), suggest that the scene was scratched on the cliff between A.D. 1800 and 1850.

As previously noted, the drawing is nearly identical to Early Biographic art that is well-dated to the first half of the nineteenth century. Humans drawn on dozens of robes and war shirts by Cheyenne, Crow, Sioux, and Assiniboine artists, and in the earliest ledger drawings by Flathead and Ute artists, show the same simple form as the one at Red Rock Ledge. Especially relevant are the unelaborated rectangular body, simply drawn arm and legs, fringed leggings, and circular head without facial features. In fact, the featureless, circular head, simple rectangular body, and linear limbs with no or poorly defined hands and feet are the hallmarks of the Early Biographic style (Ewers 1968:7-8). Clothing such as the leggings is more common on more recent examples of the Early Biographic style.

In strong contrast to the images at Red Rock Ledge are ledger drawings from the period between 1865 and 1885 (see Afton et al. 1997; Heidenreich 1985; Maurer 1992:200-143; Petersen 1971; Szabo 1994) that show the full development of the Late Biographic style. In these drawings by Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Sioux, and Crow artists, human bodies and legs are significantly more lifelike, more naturalistically rounded, and drawn in more fluid postures. Clothing is almost always drawn and hair is also usually shown. Most important, however, facial features are always depicted—sometimes just a nose and chin but often including mouth, eyes, and face paint. The earliest documented attempts to draw such profiled facial features were done by the Mandan artists Mah-to-tope and Yellow Feather in 1833, an unnamed Blackfoot artist in 1846, and the Comanche chief Yellow Wolf in 1853. Though sometimes stylized and awkward when the artist tried to show a face in front view as on Mah-to-tope's robe (Taylor 1998:13), or in three-quarter profile as in Yellow Wolf's drawing (Ewers 1982:43), these examples definitely show the earliest transition to Late Biographic art and ledger art. A few rock art sites show fully developed Late Biographic art, indicating that this transition was also made in that medium (Keyser 1987:49, 1996:33).

The only well-documented examples of the retention of Early Biographic style drawings after 1850 are by Blackfoot artists who painted robes and muslins, wrote pictographic signatures, and even incised petroglyphs in this style as late as the 1940s (Brownstone 1993; Ewers 1968:10, 1983; Klassen et al. 2000). Given that Blackfoot territory is located more than 800 miles north of this site, and that they only very rarely traveled or raided as far south as the Arkansas River during the last half of the nineteenth century, it is very unlikely that this is a Blackfoot petroglyph. Instead, it almost certainly was drawn by a Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, Arapaho, or possi-

bly Ute artist and, from what we know of these tribes, they used the Early Biographic style prior to 1850. Had this petroglyph been carved by an artist from one of these groups after 1850, it almost certainly would have been done in the Late Biographic style.

INTERPRETATION

The narrative aspects of Biographic art have been well documented (Afton et al. 1997; Ewers 1968; Keyser 1987, 1989, 1996, 2000; Keyser and Klassen 2000; Petersen 1971), and the ability to “read” the story lines of these scenes has been demonstrated in numerous instances (Afton et al. 1997; Keyser 2000; Maurer 1992). By using the extensive lexicon developed for this art it is possible to understand much of the narrative represented by the Red Rock Ledge petroglyphs.

The warrior with bow and arrow is the victor of this encounter, and likely represents the panel’s author. There is no specific indication of his ethnic affiliation. He left the village as one member of a larger party of warriors, some on foot and others on horseback. Because he carries no quirt and the human footprints extend directly back to the village, it seems likely that he was not one of the party originally riding (or leading) a horse. Encountering an enemy, which is represented by the coup stick, he was victorious and took the coup stick from his foe. The absence of an illustrated opponent, and the fact that the coup stick “floats” in front of the bowman, suggests that this weapon was captured as a war trophy. Among the Cheyenne and Sioux, bearers of this sort of coup stick were noted warriors with leadership positions in high-status military societies. Such an opponent would have been an important man, and capture of his coup stick would have been a particularly noteworthy coup.

CONCLUSION

The Red Rock Ledge site joins a small but growing list of recently documented Central and Southern Plains Biographic rock art sites (Boyd 1990; Keyser and Mitchell 2000; Labadie et al. 1997; Loendorf and Kuehn 1991; McGlone et al. 1994; Parsons 1987; Turpin 1988, 1989a). Though not numerous, these sites show almost the same developmental stages as the better known Northwestern Plains Biographic rock art, and they exhibit many of the same conventions of the Biographic art lexicon that have been documented in the nearly 100 Northwestern Plains sites studied so far (e.g., Conner 1980, 1989; Conner and Conner 1971; Keyser 1977a, 1984, 1987; Keyser and Klassen 2000; Keyser and Mitchell 2000; Klassen 1998; Sundstrom 1990). The occurrence of these sites across a wide area of the Central and Southern Plains suggests to us that there quite likely are many more awaiting discovery, description, and analysis. That these may contain significant additions to the Biographic art lexicon and important information about the evolutionary history of Biographic art seems obvious from just the few well-studied examples (Keyser and Mitchell 2000; Parsons 1987; Turpin 1989b). Expanding on a view recently expressed from the perspec-

tive of Northwestern Plains rock art (Keyser and Klassen 2000), we suggest that the Central and Southern Plains have the potential to yield rock art discoveries of equal significance to those made on the Northern Plains during the last quarter century.

Acknowledgments

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NOTES

¹ Currently, published rock art descriptions and interpretations for southeastern Colorado are limited, and no regional synthesis has yet been attempted. Following Loendorf (1989:75-80), most researchers have utilized the concept of "style" to classify rock art elements and motifs. In contrast, Keyser and Klassen (2000), in a more general synthesis of Plains rock art, utilize the notion of "tradition" to classify what appear to be regionally-identifiable entities for which temporal and broad cultural continuity can be demonstrated. Traditions include one or more locally-defined styles which may be correlated with a specific cultural or ethnic group. As the research presented here demonstrates, such broad comparisons are warranted and necessary. However, because no large-scale synthesis has been produced for southeastern Colorado and adjacent regions, we retain the locally-defined style names when referring to specific examples of Arkansas River basin rock art. The term tradition is used here to refer to larger-scale constructs developed for the Northern Plains, which may include some or all of the rock art in the Arkansas River basin. In the end we would argue that the amount and variety of rock art found in the region requires a detailed descriptive and analytic synthesis.

² Faris (1995) assigns a variety of Arkansas River basin motifs, including horned heads, bison, and heartlines, to what he terms the Regional style, rather than to the Rio Grande style, arguing that they represent a widespread Plains rock art tradition, rather than a modification or adaptation of a Puebloan rock art tradition. However, Faris does not fully define what constitutes Regional style rock art and this terminology has not been adopted by other rock art researchers in the region.

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