

# Mud Wash, Kirk's Grotto and Babes Butte

This field trip was to Kirk's Grotto in the Gold Butte area of Southern Nevada. The trip consisted of visiting a number of sites in the Kirk's Grotto area.

As you view the photo's, observe that the style of the glyphs appear quite different from site to site, even though they are all within about 1 to 2 miles of each other.

## Mud Wash Site:

The petroglyphs are high on a red rock wall that is adjacent to Mud Wash.

These glyphs are very similar in design to some at Kotha Circus and at the Whitney Hartman (Falling Man) site.



Figure 1 – The Main Mud Wash Panel



Figure 2 – Close up of the left portion of the Main Panel



Figure 3 – Close up of the center portion of the Main Panel



Figure 4 – Close up of the right portion of the Main Panel





Figure 5 – A Secondary Mud Wash Panel

### **Kirk's Grotto:**

The Kirk's Grotto site consists of a number of panels in different locations in the same general area (about ¼ mile diameter). The site consists of a relatively flat, sandy area between two groupings of red rock outcroppings (Figure 6).



Figure 6 – The Grotto Site



Figure 7 – The Grotto



Figure 8 – Location of the Main Panel

The Grotto is really a slot canyon (Figure 7) at the back of the center - right outcropping.

The main panel at the end of the Grotto (Figure 8) at the top of a rock pile. The main parts of the panel are shown in Figures 8, 9 and 10.

It appears that this panel was created at different times or at least by different authors. The left portion of Figure 8 is done in a completely different style than the right portion of Figure 8 and of Figure 9. The glyphs are not drawn as precisely and the line quality is less defined. The images in Figure 10 are very different from those in either Figure 8 or Figure 9, even though the line quality is about the same as Figure 9.



Figure 8 – Left Portion of Main Panel



Figure 9 – Center Portion of Main Panel



Figure 10 – Right Portion of Main Panel

The main theme in Figure 10 is the upside down corn plant. Around this image are rain symbols and a rainbow. The interpretation is that the corn is dying and the people are asking for rain.

A separate panel outside the Grotto, on the north face of the outcropping, again shows an image of dying corn plants (Figure 11). The prayer for rain and lack of food is a central theme in many of the rock art sites in the Gold Butte area. Remember, the survival of the Anasazi was “All about the Rain”.





Figure 11 – Dying Corn Plant Panel on the North Side of the Grotto Outcropping

There are other rock art images inside the Grotto; however they appear to be isolated images of abstract designs and in general are in very poor condition. Many appear to be older than the images in the main panel.

Outside the Grotto, on the east wall of the Grotto outcropping are a series of panels (Figures 12 to Figure 18) extending for about 50 feet.



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

The condition of the images in this area was very poor due to erosion of the cliff face. The images consist mainly of abstract designs with a large number of circles and connected circles (portals). There are some linear designs which are likely rain symbols.

The panel in Figure 14 contains two anthropomorphs who have very large ears or hair bobs. One is shown in detail in Figure 15.





Figure 17



Figure 18

On this wall there were two pictographs (Figure 17 and 18). The one in Figure 17 is done in red paint, while the one in Figure 18 was done in black; however there may be some very faded red in the design.

Absent in all of the images in the Grotto or on the Grotto outcropping was any images of spirals (the symbol for journey) or any images of animals, especially sheep. There were very few anthropomorphs or spirit people. This was surprising because these symbols are relatively common in other areas of Gold Butte, especially Kotha Circus. One may conclude that the people here were suffering from poor crops and were praying for rain, but they were not desperate enough to leave (no spirals) and no prayers to spirit helpers.

There was one panel (Figure 19) very high on the west face of the outcropping to the north of the Grotto outcropping. This panel is a completely different style than the others vies thus far, and is more typical of what is seen on Gold Butte. There are images of an anthro, a sheep, a stylized sheep or coyote, a horizontal journey symbol and an anthro with two circles or spirals on his arms / legs.



Figure 19 – High Panel on North Outcropping



Across from the Grotto in the East Outcropping is a large alcove where there is a large “newspaper” rock (Figure 20).



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22

The glyphs on this rock are more “typical” with anthro’s, sheep, bear paws, etc. Absent again are spirals.

Walking away from the Kirk's Grotto complex about ¼ mile to the northeast around the east outcropping is a site consisting of two large boulders.

The first panel (Figure 23 shows some circles (portals), some spirit beings, and a rain symbol (on the bottom right). Central to the panel is an hour glass shape and an oval shape with cross hatching. The oval could be an upside down burden basket and the hour glass could be a burden basket in two positions, up and down. This could relate to the theme in Gold Butte of draught and poor crops. The hour glass shape could be a full basket becoming empty with the oval shape being an empty basket.



Figure 23

The second panel at this site consists of two separate areas. Figure 24 is at the top of the boulder and the glyph is mainly a large cross hatched area perhaps representing the sky or the Milky Way.

The bottom portion of the boulder has two glyphs shown in Figure 25. The image on the left is a parabolic in shape and could be a burden basket. The image on the right is a circle with a cross in the center with some lines radiating from it on the bottom. There appears to be something attached at the top of the circle. This could be an image of the sun, a shield or something else. The images on this boulder appear to be more deeply pecked than those in Figure 24, perhaps because of the different patina on the rock.





Figure 24



Figure 25

### **Babes Butte:**

About ½ mile from the Kirk's Grotto site is Babes Butte (Figure 26).



Figure 26

The main panel is shown in Figures 27 and 28. The top portion of the panel consists of a sheep next to an image that looks like a pendent on a necklace. It is however a series of dots that eventually lead in to the main portion of the panel in Figure 28. This likely represents a journey, perhaps made by the sheep clan. Coyote may be seen along the way. The dots in the “pendent” could represent the number of days that were spent at a particular area.

In the bottom area, we see some concentric circles (portals), a spiral, a sun image, some spirit beings, a hand print and other images. This likely represents the story of a long and complicated journey.



Figure 27



Figure 28



There were some other, smaller panels, but one stood out (Figure 29). It shows two images of a single sheep and one of a turtle all upside down. These are possibly clan symbols and could mean that the clans died out or perhaps left the area. That would play into the Gold Butte theme of draught and famine.



Figure 29

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