

# “Water Glyphs”

Boma Johnson, Kat Johnson and Kay (Feather) Robinson

September 2010

## **Facts:**

Water glyphs are a unique type of petroglyph. They consist of a round circle with a line beginning at one edge and extending through the opposite edge. There is always a dot either inside or outside the circle.

- They are unique to the Arizona Strip with a range from Page AZ to Moapa NV and from the Grand Canyon to St. George.
- They are almost always on a flat rock surface, near the edge of a precipice or cliff, however some have been found on vertical rock faces.
- There have been over 300 water glyphs identified and mapped.
- They have been dated to be from 400 to 4000 year old.
- The directions vary over a wide range on angles.

## **What are they?**

There are a number of widely differing theories regarding the meaning of the water glyphs:

- Direction Finders to water sources – travel from point to point to across the desert. The glyphs would always be by a water source.
- Tar Burners – used to extract pitch or tar from wood. Similar devices are found in the East and Midwest.
- Atlatl symbol – similar but the line on the atlatl symbol is longer and there is no dot associated with the atlatl symbol.
- Fertility symbol
- Direction finders to Gold Treasure
- Blood sacrifice altars.
- Survey markers.

Boma discussed the pros and cons for each of the above theory and then pointed out that all of the above theories are “white mans ideas” about an Indian symbol.



Water Glyph on Little Creek Mesa – this was the glyph that we Did NOT see on the field trip. Note the double circle (2 horizons) .



The other water glyph site located on Little Creek Mesa.

**Sacred Viewing Stations:**

Boma always says, when in doubt, ask the Indians. Feather did that and her Hopi elder and friend said three words – “Look up, Ceremonies”. Feather and Boma went on to explain the importance of relating the position on earth to a position in

the sky in order to find the “center place”. Each tribe had a person who was designated as the sky watcher. It was his job to determine when the conditions in the sky were right in order to begin a ceremony or ceremonies. This was done in order to keep in harmony with nature.

The theory that Boma, Kat and Feather have proposed is that the water glyphs are rather “Sacred Viewing Stations”. The sky watcher would look at the horizon, in the direction indicated by the line. He would then translate that point into the sky. The time to begin the ceremony would be when his target object (planet, star, constellation, etc.) reached the relative point indicated by dot.

Each tribe could have different things to look for and they would have had many different ceremonies and differing times of the year. And, they would have been located at different places. This explains the different directions of the markers.

The key point was to be able to look to the horizon and then to the sky and then coordinated the sky with things on earth. The circle focuses the energy from the sky to the sky watcher enhance his experience.

The key unanswered question is – Why only on the Arizona Strip? Kat and Boma said that tribes in other areas did watch the sky. However they could have done it differently – from the doors of Kivas with “instructions” written on the walls etc.

The following internet references may help:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/index.html?curid=13620004>

<http://waterglyphs.org/>

<http://www.wildernessutah.com/learn/waterglyphs.html>