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**Review of *The Art of the Warriors: Rock Art of the American Plains*
By James D. Keyser**

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The Art of the Warriors: Rock Art of the American Plains. By James D. Keyser. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2004. 128 pp. Photographs, maps, notes, references. \$45.00 cloth.

The Art of the Warriors is a beautifully designed and lucid introduction to Plains rock art. Written by one of the foremost authorities on this subject, Forest Service archaeologist James D. Keyser, it neither mystifies nor oversimplifies. This glossy, oversized volume will appeal to three primary audiences: those who love the Great Plains but know little about rock art, those who love rock art but know little about the Great Plains, and scholars who enjoyed Keyser and Klaasen's *Plains Indian Rock Art* (2003) but longed for color photos. Useful endnotes and an extensive bibliography complement the lavishly illustrated text.

The first chapter introduces Plains peoples and landscapes. Keyser situates the Plains rock art tradition in changing cultural and historical contexts by quoting Cree warrior Sahkomaupée, who in 1787 described the advent of horse and gun warfare on the northeastern Plains. Keyser then introduces the many reasons Plains people made rock engravings and paintings and the reasons

archaeologists should take rock art seriously as evidence for past lifeways. Brief discussions of farming, hunting, ritual practice, and warfare introduce nonspecialists to Plains culture. Useful and attractive maps show general locations of rock art sites mentioned in the text, distribution of historic tribal groups, extent of agriculture on the Plains, and distribution of bison kill sites by time period.

The second chapter discusses how Plains rock art was made, what it depicts, and how it can be dated. Keyser reviews 16 major art traditions, from Early Hunter petroglyphs of Archaic (and possibly Paleoindian) times to the widespread historic Biographic tradition that closely parallels hide painting and ledger art. Keyser provides distribution maps and site names without directing potentially destructive visitors to specific locations, thus balancing information with conservation. Although he notes in some photo captions that “chalk was applied by an unknown photographer,” I would have advised a strong admonition that professional archaeologists, conservators, land managers, and descendent communities object to chalking, rubbings, and other recording techniques that damage rock art.

Chapter 3 explains and applies ethnography and the direct historical approach to understanding what Plains rock art is all about. Rock art literature of the 1960s and 1970s tended to apply one favored interpretation, from astronomy to writing systems, to all images from all times. In contrast, current research applies an ethnographically informed approach that recognizes many reasons for making rock art. Keyser concludes that the rich and varied corpus of Plains rock art refers to vision questing, activities and visions of shamans, particular ceremonial practices, hunting, fertility, warfare, and personal biographic episodes. Perhaps one of the most exciting conclusions is that, like robe and ledger painting, some Plains rock art records tribal histories, including Native-European encounters. Significantly, rock art narratives are tied to specific landscape features, territories, and trails. **Kelley Hays-Gilpin**, *Department of Anthropology, Northern Arizona University*.