

Rock Art of Dinetah: Stories of Heroes and Healing

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The Navajo rock art of the Largo Canyon area was made recently enough that ethnography can aid in identification of much of the artwork. This essay will look at this Navajo rock art in relation to Navajo mythology and ceremonies. Even today, Navajos would immediately associate many of these rock art images with particular characters and stories in their mythology. I will delineate these connections and tell a few stories along the way.

This project started when I went on a URARA field trip to Dinetah led by Dave Manley and Tom Hahl. I had spent fourteen years on the Navajo reservation at the beginning of my teaching career, but I had never been to the Largo Canyon area to look for rock art. As I looked at the images on the rock surfaces, I realized that, for a change, I actually knew some of the cultural connections related to the rock art. I had taught traditional Navajo literature to Navajo students for years, and during that time I read everything I could find on the subject, as well as talking to Navajo elders in my community. I have looked at fantastic panels of Archaic rock art and wished I knew the stories and ceremonies connected to them, but this time, with the Navajo images, I actually felt that I knew some of the cultural connections to the iconography.

Dinetah is the old Navajo homeland. The word literally means "among the people." (Young 1980:817) Dinetah is located in northwestern New Mexico, east of Farmington and south to about Chaco Canyon. It is focused around the Largo and Gobernador drainages. Included are two sites very sacred to the Navajo, Gobernador Knob, birthplace of Changing Woman, and Huerfano Mesa, the place where her children, the hero twins, were raised.

In the 1600's and 1700's Dinetah was occupied by Athabaskan speakers who were joined by Puebloans, many of whom were seeking refuge from the Spanish around the time of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. These two cultures coalesced to form the culture that is today's Navajo culture. Many of the Navajo ceremonies are considered to have originated during the occupation of Dinetah. Images of Navajo deities and other important cultural symbols are depicted in rock art at locations throughout the canyons where the ceremonies took place. In the late 1700's the Navajo left Dinetah and moved west to an area centered around Canyon de Chelly. Images for ceremonies were then made only in sandpaintings, a practice which continues into the present (Schaafsma and Tsosie 2009;18-19)

Since the core of Navajo culture has remained relatively stable since it was first observed by anthropologists in the late 1800's (Stevenson 1886; Matthews 1883, 1897, 1902) it is possible to examine the cultural context of the rock art imagery by using ethnographic materials to aid in analysis. So my approach is ethnological, not archaeological. I taught Navajo literature to Native students in Kayenta, Arizona from 1980 to 1994. As most Navajos would do, when I look at the rock art imagery I immediately think of the stories that are associated with the characters depicted. Navajo literature is indeed voluminous. If all of these stories and the others that branch off from them were told in their fullest versions, they would fill a few thousand pages. They provide a solid foundation for Navajo culture, for its history, spirituality, morality, and much more.

As we look at the rock art of Dinétah, we have to see it in this cultural context. This essay will relate the rock art of Dinétah to the stories, which are still very much alive in Navajo culture.

The Navajo Origin Story

It's time to review the basics of the Navajo origin story in order to give the rock art images some cultural context. The stories vary with each storyteller and with each clan, but the essential elements are consistent. The origin story has appeared in print in many versions (Zolbrod 1984; Matthews 1897; O'Bryan 1956; Klah 1942; Fishler 1953; Haile 1981; Benally 1982). My two primary sources for this summary are Zolbrod (1984) and O'Bryan (1956). When I taught traditional Navajo stories in Kayenta, Arizona in the 1980's and early 1990's I used Zolbrod as my primary text. The Zolbrod text is a rewrite of the myth as it appears in Washington Matthew's 1897 *Navaho Legends*. Matthews was a physician and a well-respected pioneering ethnologist, but he was not a skilled writer. Zolbrod cleaned up his text and provided proper Navajo orthography. Matthews' consultant was Hatathli Nez or Tall Chanter. O'Bryan provides a more concise and coherent account of the first four worlds. His collaborator was Sandoval.

Most of the Navajo clans believe that today we are in the fifth world. A few agree with the Pueblo belief that we are in the fourth world. The first world was black. First Man and First Woman were there, along with two Coyotes and many insects. These are all supernatural beings. Human beings will not be created until the fifth world. The first world is crude with a great deal of fighting, so everyone moves up to the second world.

The second world is blue. The new creatures here are birds. The Navajo word for blue is "dootl'izh," which encompasses both blue and green. (I apologize to my readers who can read Navajo. My computer does not have the capability to provide proper Navajo orthography.) The birds found in the second world have blue and green colors, including blue jays and swallows. Again there is too much fighting and everyone moves up to the third world.

The third world is yellow. There are rivers and sacred mountains. After a while the men and women get angry with each other and decide to live on opposite sides of the river, feeling that they can get along without each other. Their separation results in unnatural births, creating monsters that will have to be dealt with by the hero twins in the fifth world. After the men and women are reunited, Coyote steals the babies of Teehooltsodii, the water creature. She becomes enraged and floods out the third world, causing everyone to escape up a reed into the fourth world.

The fourth world is white. Coyote returns the babies to the Water Creature and the flooding stops just below the surface of the fourth world. This world is soggy from the flooding below and looks to be sterile. Everyone moves on up to the fifth world.

The fifth world is our present day world. It is the multi-colored or glittering world. The place of emergence is thought to be a small island in the middle of a lake in southwestern Colorado. Early in the fifth world a lot of basic things are established. Coyote creates death. Day and night are agreed upon. The sacred mountains are set in their places. The sun and moon are created, along with other things that are fundamental to life on earth. The well-known Coyote stories take place, culminating in the tragic story of Changing Bear Woman. The people encounter the Great Gambler in Chaco Canyon, just south of Dinétah, and an epic gambling battle takes place. We will look at some of these stories in relation to rock art images below.

Eventually Changing Woman, the primary figure in Navajo myth, is born. Her parents are Mother Earth and Father Sky, but she is raised by First Man and First Woman.

She is called Changing Woman because of her age. Her age is cyclical, just like the seasons in nature. So sometimes she is old and then becomes young again. When she is born she is proportioned like an adult, but the size of a baby. She matures very rapidly and is soon impregnated by the rays of Johonaa'ei, the Sun Carrier. He is a character much like Zeus in Greek mythology. We will see his image in the rock art. Changing Woman gives birth to the hero twins, Monster Slayer and Born for Water. Their job is to rid the world of monsters in preparation for the creation of human beings. The slaying of the monsters is a major epic, parts of which are depicted in Dinetah rock art.

Some humans are created by First Man, First Woman and the Ye'ii. The Ye'ii are a class of very powerful supernatural beings. They put ears of corn under a blanket. They sing and dance over this blanket and Nilchi, the wind, comes and blows through the new people and brings them to life, as the wind continues to do to this day. We can see the evidence of the wind blowing through us in the swirls of our fingertips and toes and the swirl of hair on top of our heads. Changing Woman creates other people by rubbing skin from her body and molding humans from it.

The story continues with the creation of the clans and finally works its way into what we would consider to be history.

Two Ye'ii

There are a few easily recognizable characters who appear repeatedly in the rock art of Dinetah. Probably the easiest to identify is Ghaa'ask'idii (Figure 1), known in English as Humpback. He is identified by his hump, mountain sheep horns, and a staff or digging stick (Schaafsma 1980; Hadlock 1980). The hump is a cloud held in place by a rainbow which is often fringed with eagle feathers (Young and Copeland 2018:20). The hump contains mist and seeds. Humpback is one of the Mountain Sheep People and is associated with the harvest. As we see in Figure 2, he can appear without horns or a staff, but he always has the hump.

The Navajo Ye'ii are immortal supernatural beings who reside in a world parallel to ours. The term "Ye'ii" is usually translated "Holy People," which is actually the translation for "Diyin Dine". I prefer the more literal translation of "Supernatural Powers People" for "Ye'ii." (Young 1980:756) The word "holy" implies that they are always good and pure, which is often not the case for the Ye'ii.

Song, dance and visual imagery are used to attract the Ye'ii to healing ceremonies so that they can return the patient to proper physical and spiritual balance. Humpback is most closely associated with the Nightway and the Mountainway (Reichard 1950:443; Faris 1990; Hadlock 1980:185), but he has a lesser role in many other ceremonies. We will look more closely at Navajo ceremonies and the role rock art plays in them below.

Zaha'doolzhaai is another Ye'ii commonly seen in Dinetah (Figures 3 and 4). The English translation is Fringe Mouth. The name comes from the fringe of fur around the mouth of the mask worn by his (or her) impersonators at ceremonies (Olin 1979:146). Fringe Mouth is most easily identified by the head and torso having different colors on the right and left sides. There is often a pointed cap (Schaafsma 1980:318). Fringe Mouth is not one person, but a class of beings. There are Fringe



Figure 1. . Two images of Ghaa'ask'iddi, the Humpback Ye'ii. He has mountain sheep horns, a digging stick, and a hump on his back that is filled with seeds and mist.



Figure 2. Humpback can appear without the mountain sheep horns or the staff.

Mouths of the Land and Water (Young and Copeland 2018; Reichard 1974:438-9). Olin (179:148) says the Fringe Mouth of the Land is red on one side and black on the other, and the Fringe Mouth of the Water is yellow and blue. Ceremonies involving Fringe Mouth include Nightway, Big Godway, Plumeway, Coyoteway, Beadway, and Waterway (Olin 1979:146) Both Fringe Mouth and Humpback are often depicted in the rock art in lines of dancers that are associated with ceremonies.



Figure 3. Fringe Mouth has different colors on the right and left sides of his or her face and torso. There is often a rattle in one hand and a bow in the other. The DStretch enhancement on the right is LAB.

The Hero Twins

Images of the hero twins of Navajo mythology are very common in Dinétah. Most often they are represented by their symbols (Figure 5). Naayee Neizghani is Monster Slayer, the elder of the twins and the aggressive one. His symbol is the bow. Tobajishchini, Born For Water, is the younger of the twins and is more passive than his brother. His symbol is the hourglass figure or scalp knot. The masks worn by



Figure 4. Fringe Mouth often has a conical hat. The DStretch enhancement on the right is YRD

ceremonial impersonators of the twins (Figure 6) reveal some of their physical characteristics. Monster Slayer, on the left, has lightning arrows as his most potent weapon. The lightning is occasionally seen on his face (Figure 7). His bow is next to his mask. Born for Water, on the right in Figure 6, is usually depicted in red and his face is decorated with the hourglass figure.



Figure 5. Symbols of the hero twins from Crow Canyon. Monster Slayer is represented by the bow and Born for Water is represented by the hourglass or scalp knot.



Figure 6. Head and face masks of the hero twins. Monster Slayer is on the left and Born for Water is on the right. (Haile 1947:64)

Monster Slayer can be depicted in a wide variety of ways. He can have his bow in his hand like a warrior (Figure 8) or he can have the bow symbol on his clothing or his shield. Born for Water is often depicted in red and he can have a triangle on his face (Figure 9). The twins are an important part of most of the ceremonies. They appear very frequently in today's sandpaintings.

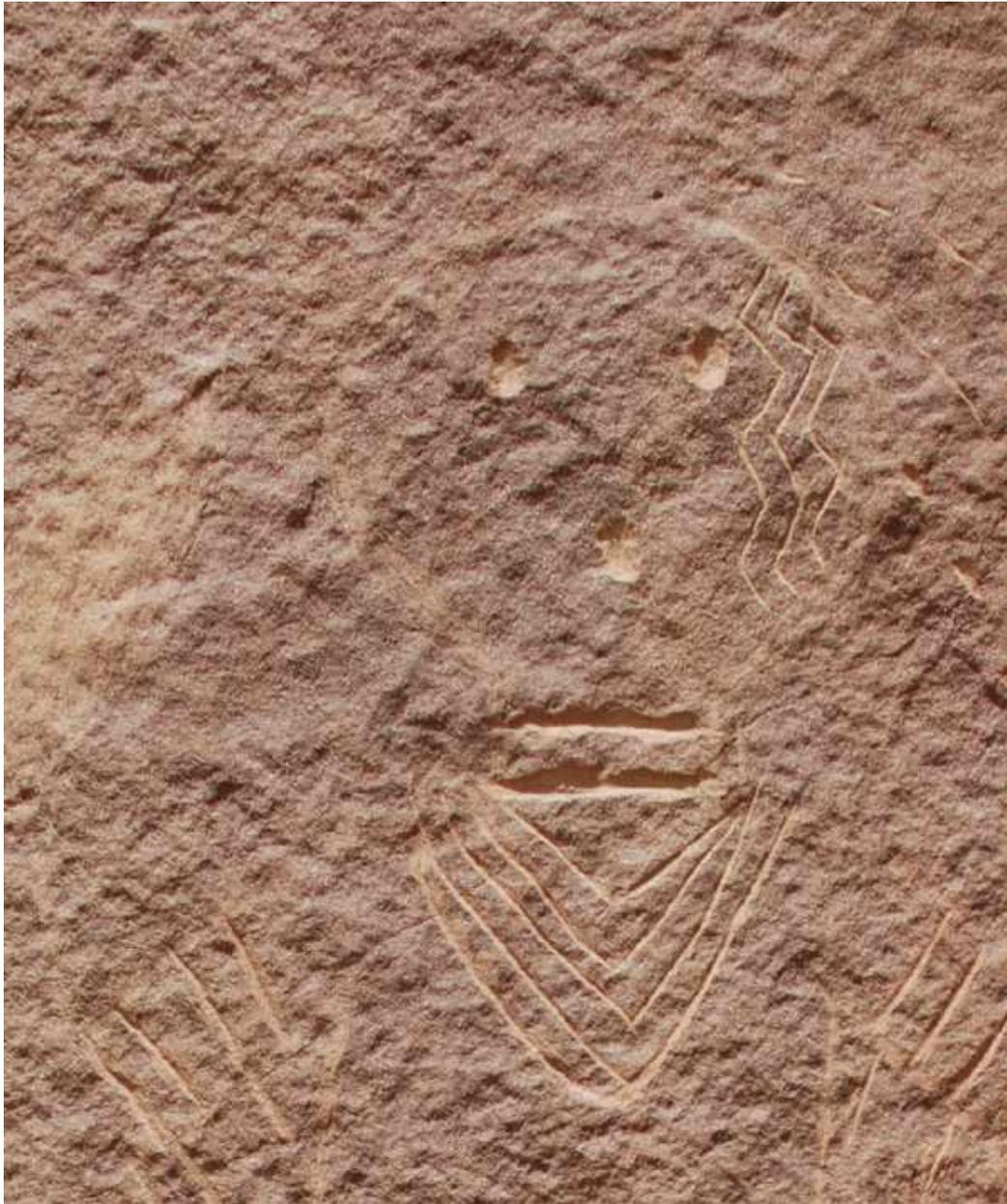


Figure 7. Monster Slayer with lightning depicted on his face.



Figure 8. Monster Slayer with bow in hand. Crow Canyon.

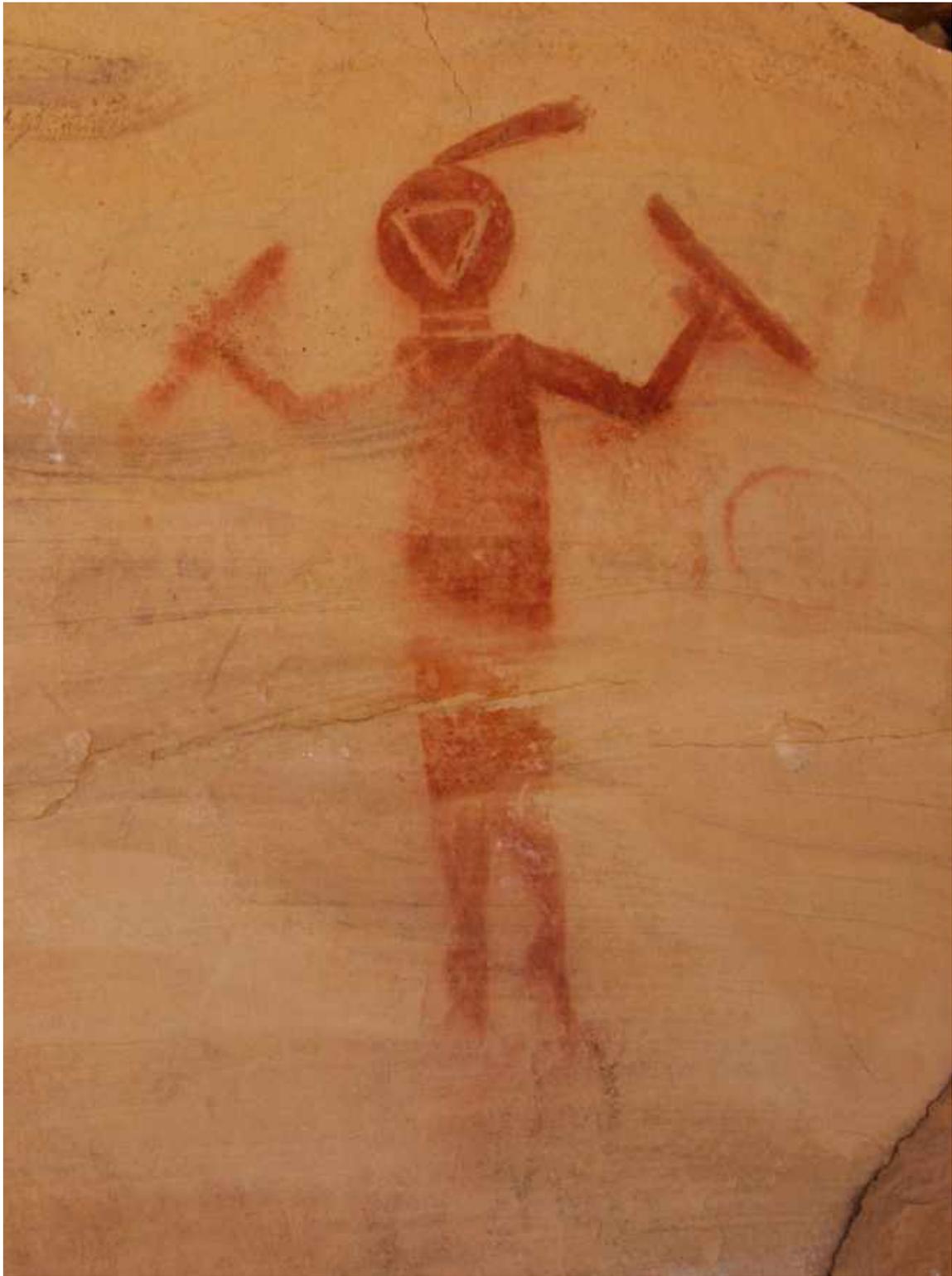


Figure 9. Born for Water. Photo by Dave Manley.

One interesting image from Largo Canyon is a petroglyph/pictograph combination (Figure 10). It is about four feet tall. On the face of the image is the symbol of both of the twins (Figure 11). So who is this? Perhaps it could be their mother, Changing Woman. She is rarely depicted in rock art or sandpaintings, but this might be one of those rare occasions. It might also be their father, the Sun Carrier.



Figure 10. Large petroglyph/pictograph with characteristics of both twins.



Figure 11. Detail of Figure 10 showing on the face both the bow symbol of Monster Slayer and the hourglass symbol of Born for Water.

Sun and Moon

The carriers of the sun and moon are depicted in a Dinetah canyon within about one hundred meters of one another. Johonaa'ei is the sun carrier (Figure 12). He is a young, vibrant man with long, shiny hair. Like Zeus, his weapon is the lightning bolt, and again like Zeus, he is a bit of a jerk. He has impregnated females all over the earth, including Changing Woman. His sons, the hero twins, seek him out far to the east. When they meet him he tries to kill them. When they are able to withstand his attempts, he acknowledges that they are in fact his children. He gives Monster Slayer lightning arrows and flint armor so he can kill the monsters (Figure 13). The first monster the twins go after, however, is Ye'itso or Big Giant, who is also a son of Johonaa'ei. After a gruesome battle, Johonaa'ei himself kills his giant son with a lightning bolt.

The moon carrier, Tl'ehonaa'ei, has a minor role in the myths. He is depicted as an old man with gray hair (Figure 14). Remember that both of these characters are just carriers of the sun and moon, not the actual sun and moon. Like Apollo, Johonaa'ei carries the sun across the sky each day and returns to his home in the east. Tl'ehonaa'ei carries the moon each night.



Figure 12. The Sun Carrier is a young man with long, shiny hair. The DStretch image is YBK.



Figure 13. Monster Slayer behind the flint shield given to him by the father, the Sun Carrier.



Figure 14. The Moon Carrier is an old man with gray hair. The DStretch image is YRD.

Animals and Birds

Animals and birds play a prominent role in Navajo myth, and they appear in the rock art throughout Dinetah. In mythological times, animals had more human characteristics. They could talk and help make important decisions. Ma'ii the Coyote is the best-known animal character in the Navajo stories (Figure 15). The Navajo coyote stories are used to teach children proper behavior by providing examples of where bad behavior leads, but there are also very serious stories involving Coyote, and he is a part of some important decision-making. After everyone emerges into the present fifth world, Coyote invents death (Zolbrod 1984:82-83). He says we need death because without it there would be too many of us. I guess this makes Coyote our first environmentalist.



Figure 15. Ma'ii the Coyote is a prominent character in Navajo stories.

We all carry a bit of Coyote with us. When the first human beings are created, First Man, First Woman and the others are putting the finishing touches on the human body (Zolbrod 1984:177-179). They fashion the sex organs and put them on the male and the female. But Coyote thinks they don't quite look right, so he takes a bit of his fur and decorates each one, creating our pubic hair. So we all have a bit of that reckless Coyote with us at all times.

The tracks of Shash the Bear are depicted in Figure 16. I suspect that you probably don't really think that those look like bear tracks. But, of course, there is a very well-known story to explain why those are indeed bear tracks. Bear is a very human-like creature, proportioned like us and able to stand on two legs, so it is not surprising that his footprints might resemble our handprints. But if we put our hands out in front of us our thumbs are on the inside, whereas in Figure 16 the thumbs or short toes are on the outside. Bears do, indeed, have their thumb-like toes on the outside, and this story explains why. It also explains the origin of day and night.



Figure 16. These handprints with thumbs on the outside are the tracks of Bear.

Early in the fifth world basic things were being established. The day-time animals wanted it to be day all the time, but, naturally, the night-time animals wanted it to be night all the time. They decided to gamble for it, winner take all. The game they played is called the Shoe Game or Moccasin Game. It is still commonly played today, usually on long winter nights with a large number of exuberant players on each team. The game goes on all night. Each team has four shoes, boots,

or moccasins, a small ball that will be hidden in one of them, and 102 yucca stick counters. One team hides the ball in a boot and then fills all four boots with sand. The other team guesses which boot the ball is in. While they are deciding which boot to pick, their opponents sing the Shoe Game songs as loudly as they can to distract them. If they get it on the first guess, they get a number of the other teams' yucca stick counters. If they get it on the second or third guess, they get fewer sticks. The object of the game is to get all of the other team's yucca stick counters, so usually no one wins. But there is a lot of betting on the side to keep things interesting.

In the first shoe game with the day-time animals against the night-time animals, Bear provided his large feet to be used as his teams' boots. The game went on all night with no one getting far ahead. Everyone was so absorbed in the game that they didn't notice that it was getting light out. The night animals were afraid to be caught out in daylight, so they all rushed out of the hogan when they saw the sun was about to come up. Bear quickly grabbed his shoes and was in such a hurry that he put them on the wrong feet. So his feet have been on backwards ever since. And a petroglyph with thumbs on the outsides of the hands is the human-like tracks of Bear.



Figure 17. The image of a bat evokes the story of Bat Woman.

Jaa'abani is the bat (Figure 17). "Jaa" is "ear," and "aba" is "buckskin", so the name for bat is "buckskin ears." The story of how Bat Woman got her name brings us into the story of the hero twins and the slaying of the monsters (Zolbrod 1984:236-241). But first we need to get some background on the bat and the

buckskin ears. Early in the fifth world when things were being established, First Man, First Woman and the other leaders decided it was time for the animals to decorate themselves. Different types of coverings were provided and all the creatures were called together to choose what they wanted to wear. The mammals liked the fur, the reptiles preferred the scales, and the birds went for the brightly colored feathers. Everyone had a great time and at the end of the day they all went home. But Bat Woman missed the whole thing! She slept all day in a cave and forgot to show up to get her feathers. When she came out at dusk everyone was gone and the only things left were a few pieces of ratty buckskin. She put the buckskin on herself and felt terrible about the way she looked. She decided that she would never let anyone see her. She would sleep in hiding all day and only come out when the day animals have gone home to sleep through the night. In our terms, she has a major problem with self-esteem based on how she feels about the way she looks.

Bat Woman also plays a role in the story of the twins and the monsters. After slaying the Big Giant and the Horned Monster, the twins decide to go after the Monster Birds. These birds live on top of Shiprock, known in Navajo as the Rock with Wings. The Monster Birds pick up a person, fly to Shiprock and dash the person against a cliff at the top of the rock. The dead person falls to the base of the cliff, providing food for the baby monster birds below. Monster Slayer allows himself to be picked up by one of the adult birds, but because he has supernatural help he is not injured when he is thrown against the cliff. He talks to the baby birds and they tell him when their parents will return. When they come back he slays the adult birds and turns the baby birds into the raptors that we have in the world today.

Everything is going well for our hero until he realizes that he is on top of Shiprock with no way to get down! As it is getting dark he sees Bat Woman down below. He calls to her three times, asking for her to help him get off of Shiprock. She refuses each time. She doesn't want anyone to see her, and certainly not a macho man hero like Monster Slayer. She would be totally humiliated in his presence. The fourth time, though, he makes an offer she can't refuse. He tells her if she helps him get down, he will give her the magnificent feathers of the monster birds, feathers of every possible color and shade. So she agrees, but on one condition. He cannot open his eyes the entire time she is carrying him down. He agrees, and she flies up with a large basket that he will ride in. On the way down, however, Monster Slayer opens his eyes. Bat Woman is infuriated and totally embarrassed. The mighty Monster Slayer has seen how ugly she is! He keeps his end of the bargain and gives her the large bag of feathers. And he tells her not to walk through the field of sunflowers nearby. She says that he didn't comply with her request, so she won't comply with his, and she walks right into the sunflower field with the bag of feathers on her back. What she doesn't realize is that as she walks through the sunflowers, the little birds of the world are pouring out of the bag, all decorated in the spectacular colors of the monster birds. When she finally notices what is happening, she looks in the bag to see that all the feathers are gone. So Bat Woman remains her ugly self, and to this day she sleeps all day in caves and comes out only at night so that no one will see her.

And so what does this have to do with rock art images? Even today, seeing an image of a bat will bring this story to the mind of almost any Navajo. The cultural

trappings of these images go far beyond the simple idea of representing a bat with a picture.

Many birds are represented in the rock art of Dinétah. In Figure 18 we see a heron, turkeys, an eagle and a hummingbird. Of course, all these creatures have their stories, but I will just tell one (Newcomb 1970:81-88). The hummingbird was one of the birds that flew out of Bat Woman's basket. It was much larger than it is today. It was a glutton, eating all the flowers around. The other birds didn't approve, so they made the hummingbird much smaller and gave it a long, thin beak so that all it could do was sip the nectar of the flower.



Figure 18. Identifiable birds of Dinétah rock art include the heron, turkey, eagle, and hummingbird.

An unusual bird image is found in Figure 19. A raptor appears at the top of a disk, which tops a series of ever-widening rectangles, reminiscent of an inverted Pueblo step-cloud design. Young and Copeland identify this as a Navajo sun-eagle (2018:100).

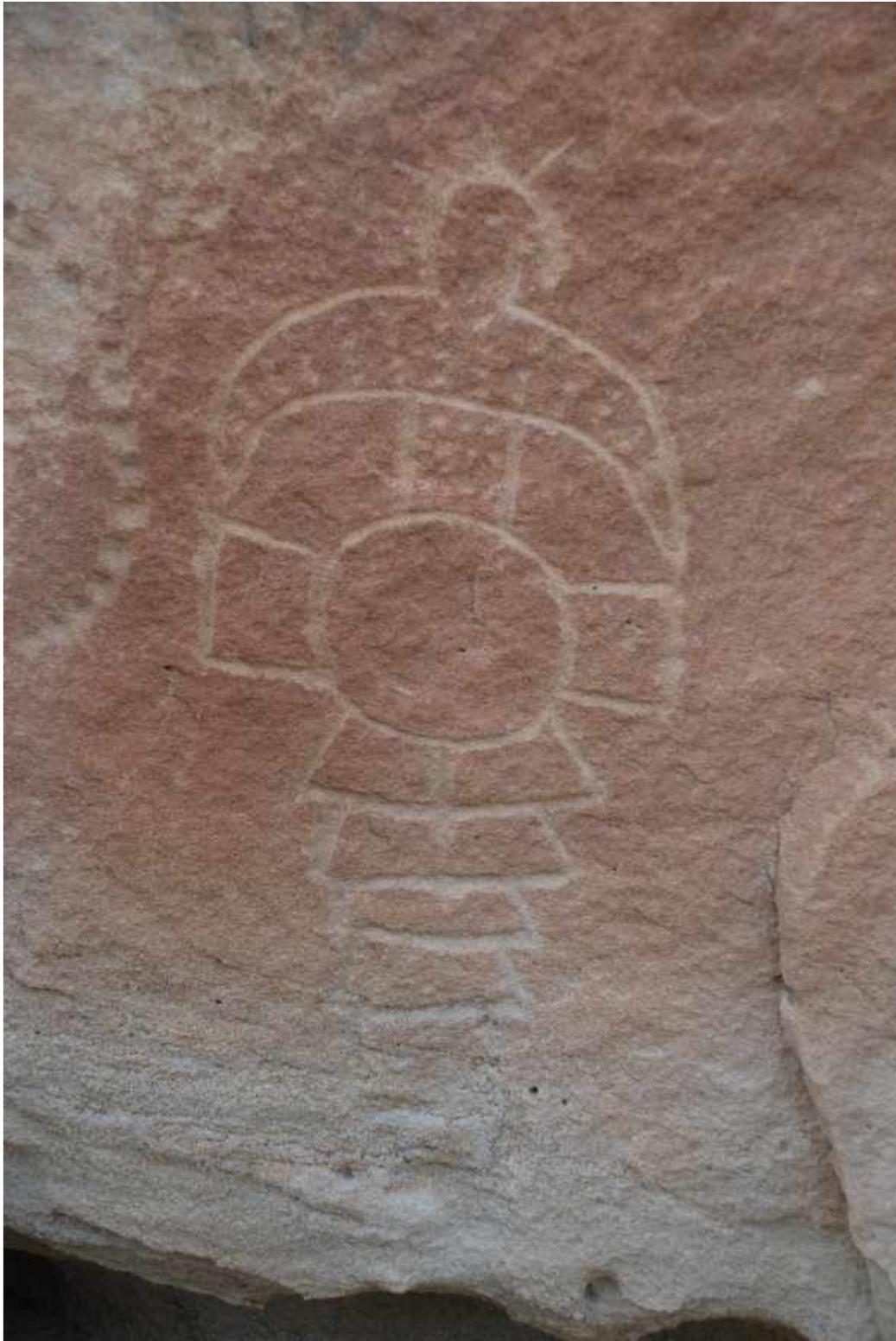


Figure 19. Raptor from Blanco Canyon

Constellations

Patterns of dots appear on rock art panels throughout Dinetah. They are easy to ignore, but many of them depict constellations, and, of course, every constellation has its story. A great deal has been written about Navajo starlore (Haile 1947; Chamberlain and Rogers 2001; Maryboy and Begay 2010; Salabye and Manolescu 2015; Young and Copeland 2018). But much of this information is difficult to apply to the night sky. Young and Copeland (2018:63), however, have provided a clear explanation of a starlore panel in Blanco Canyon (Figure 20). The images at the upper and middle right of the panel shaped like an inverted L are what we know as the belt and sword of Orion. To the Navajo it is called First Slim One, Atse'etsosi. The two dots close together in the upper middle are known as the Pinching Stars. The seven dots in a V shape in the middle of the panel are Dilyehe, known to us as the Pleiades. The word "dilyehe" means "seed-like sparkles" (Maryboy and Begay 2010:40). It is the most prominent constellation in Navajo art, appearing often in sandpaintings. The pattern in the lower right is the Rabbit Tracks, Gah Heete'ii. And the circle on the left is Hastiin Sik'ai', Man with his Legs Spread Apart. It corresponds to the Western constellation Corvus.



Figure 20. Constellation panel from Blanco Canyon

So how did all these constellations get up there? First Man and Black God were making the stars and putting them in place in careful, meaningful arrangements. Many of the stars were already in place and the others were on a blanket, awaiting placement. But Coyote, the embodiment of impatience, just couldn't wait that long. He grabbed the blanket and flung the stars up into the air. They remained where they landed, and now the sky has a few carefully placed constellations and the rest of the stars are just a big mess (Zolbrod 1984:92-93). Coyote is symbolic of chaos, and the stars are symbolic of the relationship between order and chaos in the Navajo universe (Chamberlain and Rogers 2001:57). The Athabaskan hunter-gatherer roots of Navajo culture mix with the orderly, agricultural Pueblo roots in the patterns of stars above us.

Corn

It is quite possible that Navajos were first introduced to idea of growing corn when Pueblo people joined them in Dinetah. Since then, corn has become an integral part of the culture. Corn pollen and corn meal are often used for blessings and for offerings. Corn, beans, squash and tobacco often appear in sandpaintings. And corn shows up often in rock art in Dinetah (Figure 21). Young and Copeland (2018:22) identify male corn as crooked and female corn as straight, and I have been told the opposite is true. But I think Caroline Olin (1984:50) has the answer. The male plant has the tassel on top. Anyone who grows corn would be aware of this. Note that the plant on the left has constellation dot patterns and the panel on the right has the hourglass symbol of Born for Water.



Figure 21. Two images of corn plants.

Puebloan Influence

In addition to corn, there are many images that show the Puebloan influence on Navajo culture during their time in Dinétah (Copeland 2001:39). A famous petroglyph known as Big Warrior (Figure 22) is a large man standing behind a huge shield. The defined calves on the legs are often seen in Navajo sandpaintings; the calves tell which way the person is moving. The large shield was characteristic of Pueblo art of the time. Figure 23 is an image from the kiva murals at Pottery Mound Pueblo in New Mexico (Schaafsma 2007:145). The warriors with huge shields are similar to the Big Warrior of Dinétah. Pottery Mound is a Pueblo IV site, occupied only a couple of centuries before the Navajo occupation of Dinétah.



Figure 22. Big Warrior, a Navajo shield warrior.



Figure 23. An image from the Pottery Mound kiva murals, showing Pueblo IV shield warriors (Schaafsma 2007:145)

Another petroglyph showing extensive Pueblo influence is known as the Buffalo Warrior (Figure 24). It is a lone anthropomorph about four feet tall. A detail (Figure 25) shows how carefully made the artwork is. The head is similar to a kachina mask.

The same motif can also be used for characters who are definitely Navajo in origin. Figure 13 is a shield warrior, but the warrior is Monster Slayer, the hero of Navajo mythology (Roessel 1983:6). When the twins went to visit their father, the Sun Carrier, Monster Slayer was given flint armor. Here we can see his flint shield.



Figure 24. Petroglyph known as Buffalo Warrior. It is about four feet tall.



Figure 25. Detail of Figure 23 showing the fine workmanship of the Buffalo Warrior.

Shields

Shields also appear without a warrior standing behind them. Figure 26 shows two of the four shields at one site. The shields are the only prominent rock art at the site. The bottom shield has a hole drilled in the center of it. Holes like this in rock art images probably held prayer sticks (Schaafsma and Tsosie 2009:22), making this site a likely location for some kind of ceremony. Shields of the hero twins were often decorated with feathers (Schaafsma 1992:31), which we see on the shields here. The story of Monster Slayer is involved in almost every ceremony, so it would be very difficult to determine which ceremony may have been held here.



Figure 26. Shield figure of Monster Slayer with his flint armor.

Another shield-like design appears in Figure 27. A consultant of Caroline Olin has identified it as symbolic of Hajiinai, the Place of Emergence. The middle of the circle is the place where the people emerged into the fifth world, and the zig-zag lines represent both the coming migrations and the lightning arrows of Monster Slayer.

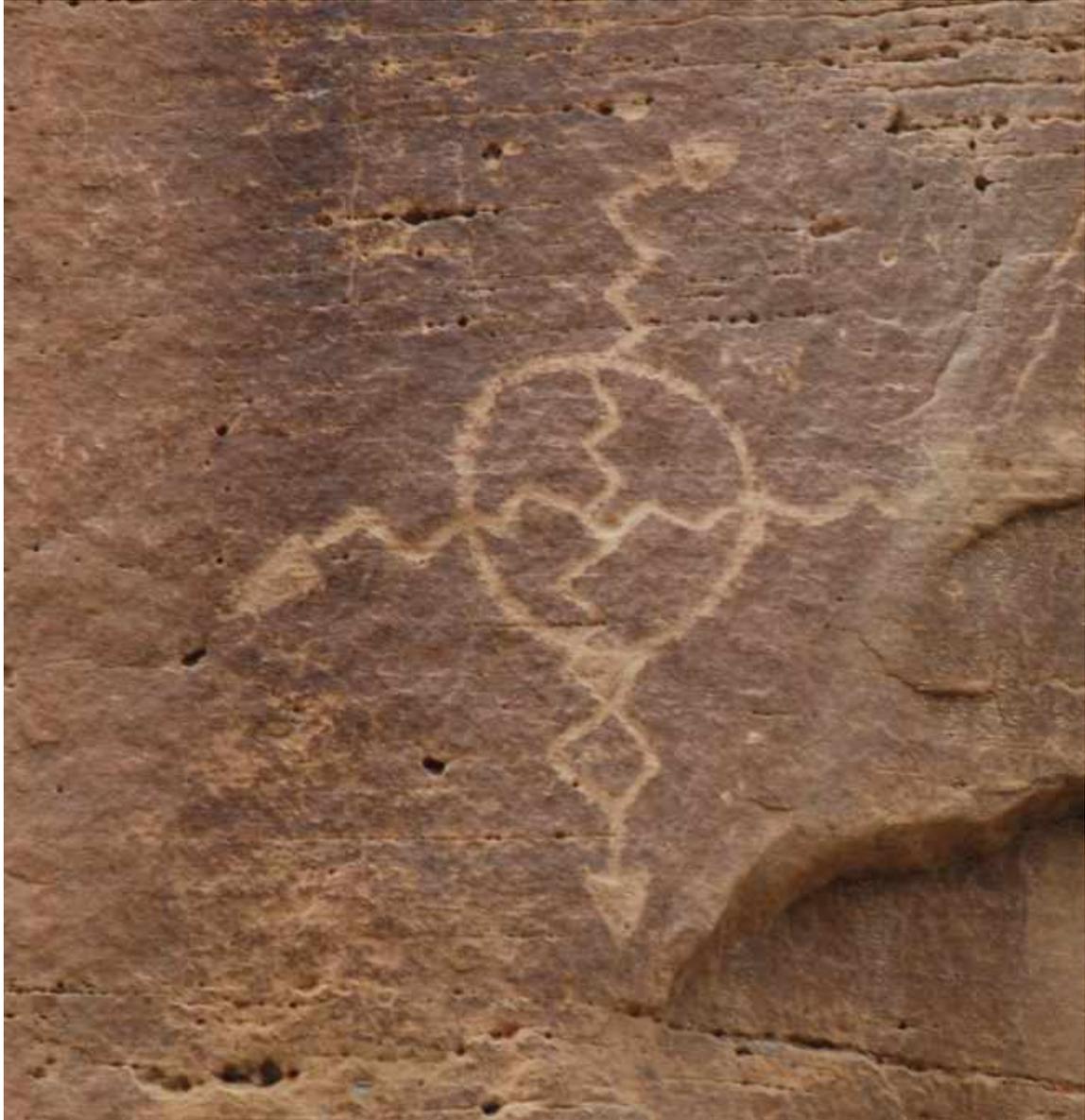


Figure 27. Hajiinai, the symbol of the Place of Emergence.

The Kicker

Figure 28 is large, complex panel. Much could be discussed here, but I will focus on one image that appears to illustrate a well-known Navajo myth. The detail (Figure 29) shows an upside down person with wild hair. He appears to me to be falling. Navajo rock art images generally don't show any details of loose, unruly hair,

so this emphasis on hair is something out of the ordinary. I think this falling man is Tse dah hodziiltalii, known in English as the Kicker.



Figure 28. A large, complex panel which appears to contain a reference to the myth of Monster Slayer and the Kicker.

The story is part of the epic cycle of the slaying of the monsters by the hero twins. It has appeared in print in many versions (Zolbrod 1984:242-244; Matthews 1897:122-123; Khah 1942:92-93; O'Bryan 1956:94-95; Reichard 1950:445-446). We have already been introduced to one of these stories, the story of the Monster Birds and the rescue of Monster Slayer by Bat Woman. Later in the epic, Monster Slayer decides it is time to go after the Kicker, who spends his time sitting alongside a trail at the top of a mountain pass. He appears to be friendly as travelers approach him, but as they pass, he kicks them off the trail and over a cliff. They fall to their death, and the Kicker's children, who are waiting at the bottom of the cliff, eat them. Monster Slayer confronts the Kicker and has no trouble killing him. When he throws him off the cliff, he finds that the Kicker's long hair has grown into a crack in the rock, which is why no one has been able to defeat him by throwing him off the cliff. Monster Slayer cuts the hair and throws the Kicker down. Precisely this moment is captured in the rock art image. The Kicker is falling down with his long hair showing. When he lands at the bottom, his children eat him. Monster Slayer goes below and kills all of the children but the last one, which he turns into a buzzard.



Figure 29. Detail of Figure 28 showing the Kicker falling down the cliff.

The Great Gambler

Another unusual petroglyph illustrates a scene from a well-known Navajo myth. The image (Figure 30) shows a man with a large hoop. The person in the petroglyph has a look and posture that is very uncharacteristic of Navajo rock art imagery. Older photos show that he had an erect phallus that someone has since tried to rub out. While an erect phallus is common in Ancestral Puebloan rock art, I have never seen it in Navajo artwork. Roessel (1983:119) has associated this site with the story of the Great Gambler, and I agree. The main character in the story of the Great Gambler is a foreigner, one who causes a lot of trouble.

The story is one of the most commonly shared of the Navajo narratives, told, I'm sure, because of its moral of the evils of greed and self-centeredness. It appears in most of the collections of Navajo stories (Zolbrod 1984:99-112; Matthews 1897:82-87; O'Bryan 1956:48-62; Anonymous 1982:62-69) The story takes place in Chaco Canyon, which is just southwest of Dinetah. The main character is

Naahwiilbiihi, which means “He Always Wins.” He is described as being light-complected, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, and cocky (Beeshligai 2014:9). He speaks a different language, but is able to communicate.



Figure 30. Image depicting the Great Gambler of Chaco Canyon.

The Gambler challenges everyone to play games against him and bet heavily. True to his name, he always wins. He is a really good cheater. He wins all of the Chaco people’s possessions, their wives, their children, and ultimately all the men of Chaco as well. He orders the men to build more large buildings, including his house, which we call Pueblo Alto. The Navajo name for it is Gambler’s House. The greatest possession the people of Chaco have is a huge turquoise disc. After he wins the disc, the Sun Carrier asks the Gambler to give it to him, but the Gambler says, “I won’t give it to you, but I will gamble with you for it!” This act of hubris sets the rest of the story in motion.

The sun calls together the Ye’ii and other powerful supernatural beings and they hatch a plan to defeat the Gambler. A young man is chosen and trained in how to beat the Gambler in all of his favorite games. The young man will, of course, have plenty of supernatural help. All of the games are played, and the Gambler loses every one. On the last game he bets himself, which is all he has left. And he loses again. The young man, with the help of some of the supernatural beings who aided him in the games, ties the Gambler to a huge arrow and puts it on a bow equally large. The whole time this is going on the Gambler is cursing everyone and saying that he will return to get revenge.

The Gambler is launched into the sky and disappears from sight. He lands near the moon at the home of Begochidi, a mysterious and mischievous Navajo deity. Begochidi helps him out and sends him back to earth in Mexico, where he is said to become the leader of the Mexicans. If so, he does indeed return for revenge when the Spanish and Mexican troops come north to raid the Navajos for slaves.

Looking again at the petroglyph, I think the image depicts the Gambler at one of his favorite games, hoop and pole. In this game, a large hoop is rolled out and the player has to throw the stick or pole through it. The man in the petroglyph has a hoop in one hand and a decorated staff in the other hand, which may be the pole he throws through the hoop. The large hoop might also represent the large turquoise disc. In terms of the potential connections between Chaco and gambling, the cover story of a recent edition of *American Archaeology* highlights the unusually large number of gambling materials that archaeologists have found at Chaco (Witze 2018:12-17).

Navajo Ceremonies

Many rock art sites in Dinetah are thought to be associated with ceremonies. Schaafsma (1980:310) reports that a Navajo resident of the area indicated to her that ceremonies were still conducted at sites in the Dinetah area until the 1950's. Navajo ceremonies are conducted for healing. There are seasonal restrictions, but, unlike Pueblo ceremonies, Navajo ceremonies are not tied to the calendar. They are performed when a patient needs help or, in the case of the Blessingway, to prevent future harm.

What needs to be cured is not just the physical illness a patient might have. The issue at root is spiritual imbalance and the problems it brings. Images are made to attract the supernaturals to the ceremony so that they can help in the healing. "Supernaturals," includes the Ye'ii, but also other supernatural beings that aren't Ye'ii. We were introduced to the Ye'ii above when we looked at Humpback and Fringe Mouth. They are the two easiest Ye'ii to identify. There are images of other Ye'ii or supernaturals, ones not as easy to identify, throughout Dinetah. Four of them appear in Figure 31.

Presumably these images were originally made on rock at places where ceremonies were to be held in order to attract the supernaturals to the site. In time, sandpaintings took the place of rock art images. Figure 32 shows four Ye'ii with a plant in the middle. The Ye'ii are standing on a long rectangular platform. In sandpaintings, this is called a foundation bar. This image looks like a sandpainting put on a rock face. (Schaafsma and Tsosie 2009:21; Wyman 1983:40) After the center of Navajo settlement moved from Dinetah to the Canyon de Chelly area around 1750, rock art images of the Navajo deities were no longer made, replaced by sandpainting images.

The transition to sandpaintings was made in part because sandpaintings are easy to control. The images are made, used for healing, and then ritually removed and discarded. Because they are permanently displayed on the rock surface, the power of rock art images could be improperly used for evil purposes, for witchcraft (McPherson 2014:144-145). With sandpaintings, these potent images could be

controlled. It is possible that both rock art and sandpainting images were used in Dinetah, but as yet archaeologists have found no evidence of sandpainting in the area.



Figure 31. Four unidentified Ye'ii or other supernaturals.



Figure 32. The Four Ye'ii panel is very similar to a sandpainting composition.

The goal of all ceremonies is to bring the patient back into spiritual balance. “Navajo oral traditions recount that during the creation, the Holy People were immediately present among the Navajo . . . and they taught the Navajo the ceremonies necessary for survival and readied the world for living. A central theme of their teaching was how to achieve and maintain *hozho*—beauty, balance, and harmony” (Schaafsma and Tsosie 2009:15). Ceremonial narratives involve a hero or heroine who undergoes trials, gets injured or ill, is cured by the supernaturals, and then returns to teach the healing ceremony to the Navajo. Five of these ceremonial stories will be discussed below in relation to the associated ceremonies: Blessingway, Nightway, Beadway, Mountainway and Beautyway. It is important to remember that the story is the taproot of every ceremony. Any sandpaintings or rock art associated with a ceremony are in some way related to the ceremony’s story.

The two most important words in Navajo philosophy are “hozho,” and “k’e.” As mentioned above, “hozho” refers to beauty, balance, and harmony. Not physical beauty and balance, but spiritual beauty and balance. K’e is proper relationships, not just with people, but also with nature and the spiritual world. The goal of all ceremonies is to bring the patient back into hozho and k’e.

Healing is achieved through the arts, primarily through song, visual art and dance. The sandpainting and presumably the rock art panel are portals or membranes through which the patient can directly encounter the supernaturals and be cured (Wyman 1983:33). Today the patient sits in the middle of the sandpainting and sometimes the sand is rubbed all over his or her body. Obviously a person couldn’t sit in a rock art panel on a cliff face, but the location of the rock art was a place where the supernaturals could be met.

Ceremonies can last as long as nine nights. There is singing by the medicine man, known in Navajo as a hatathli or singer, all night. The songs recount the

narratives associated with the ceremony. Copeland (1998:58) writes that every ceremony has a Monster Slayer song. Some of the major ceremonies have a dance with impersonators of the supernaturals that can be attended by the public. Most of the remainder of the ceremonial activities are attended by family and people close to the patient.

There are several locations in Dinétah that appear to be associated with particular ceremonies. We will look at some of the associated rock art and the story connected to each ceremony.

Blessingway

Hozhooji is a commonly performed ceremony. It is known in English as the Blessingway. It is an anomaly among Navajo ceremonies in that it is not done for healing. The ceremony is performed as a blessing in association with births, weddings, new homes, and other life transitions. The purpose is to provide health and spiritual balance for the future. Brugge (1977:15) notes that the Blessingway is one of the ceremonies most closely tied to the Athabaskan root of Navajo culture. This difference might explain why it has a different orientation from the other ceremonies.

The Blessingway is associated with plants and the earth. Anderson Hoskie (2017:6) identifies two of the main panels at Crow Canyon as being related to Blessingway. Figure 33 shows one of those panels. The small comma-like things are germinating seeds. Nearby is the other panel (Figure 34), part of one of the best-known sites in Dinétah. A corn plant is centered. On the viewer's right is Humpback, the harvest deity. The concentric circle next to him is identified as a cornfield. The original Navajo cornfields were round. There are two hourglass symbols of Born for Water. The three zig zag lines on the left could be symbolic of flowing water or of Monster Slayer's lightning arrows.



Figure 33. A panel related to Blessingway with germinating seeds.



Figure 34. Blessingway-related panel with Humpback, a symbol of Born for Water, and a round corn field.

Changing Woman, the primary character associated with this ceremony, is rarely depicted in rock art or sandpaintings. The purpose of the images is to attract the supernaturals to the scene of the ceremony. Changing Woman, the personification of the earth, is considered to always be present in all places (Schaafsma and Tsosie 2009:21) The narrative associated with Blessingway is the story of Changing Woman. The fullest versions of her story are found in Wyman (1970), but an account of all the stories would fill a very large book. I only have room for a short segment from the end of the narrative of the twins slaying the monsters (Zolbrod 1984:256-264). After the hero twins have killed many monsters, Monster Slayer returns home and, in frustration, tells his mother (Changing Woman) that he doesn't think he can kill them all. There are just too many. She tells him not to worry; she will take care of it.

Changing Woman goes outside of their mountaintop hogan. She has five hoops and five knives that the Sun Carrier gave to the twins. She rolls the white hoop to the east, the blue hoop to the south, the yellow hoop to the west, and the black hoop to the north. She spits through each hoop as she pushes it away. The fifth

multi-colored hoop she throws straight up into the sky and throws the knives after it.

A violent storm that she has created is about to begin. Monster Slayer covers the hogan with layers of cloud and fog. The first layer is fastened to the ground with rainbow, the second with sunbeams, and the last two with sheet lightning and chain lightning. The storm rages on for days. When it is finally over, Monster Slayer cuts loose the protective layers of cloud and fog. First the two types of lightning shoot into the air. Then come the sunbeams and, finally, the rainbows. Changing Woman and the twins step outside under the rainbow-filled sky. What had before been lush, green meadows and mountains was now a beautiful, carved rock landscape. The erosion caused by the storm has created the landscape of the Colorado Plateau as we know it today. Only four monsters survived the storm: Old Age Woman, Cold Woman, Poverty, and Hunger. Those four are with us to this day.

The story is an indication of the power of Changing Woman, the same power that presides over the Blessingway.

Nightway

Tl'ee'ji, the Nightway, is performed to cure paralysis, blindness, deafness, and maladies of the head (Faris 1990:32), which were ailments related to the trials experienced by the protagonists in the ceremony's origin stories (Denetclaw 2015; Faris 1990; Matthews 1902; Spencer 1957). The Nightway is also known as the Yé'iibichai, because that is the name of the public dance held on the last night of the ceremony. "Yé'iibichai" means grandfather or leader of the yé'ii. That personage is Hasjelti or Talking God, the leader of the yé'ii and the leader of the dance. The Nightway was the first Navajo ceremony to receive attention from ethnographers (Matthews 1902; Stevenson 1891). Caches of materials related to the Nightway have been found in Dinétah (Hester 1962:60; Schaafsma 1992:36).

Schaafsma has identified multiple rock art sites with imagery related to Tl'ee'ji, the Nightway (Schaafsma and Tsosie 2009:20). Figure 35 shows a group of yé'ii from one of the sites. Humpback is on the left, and Fringe Mouth is second left. This could be a group of dancers. Hadlock (1980:183–185) reports that Humpback is the main yé'ii associated with the Nightway.

A petroglyph site in Crow Canyon contains multiple Nightway-related images. Figure 36 has Humpback on the left and a large image of the female goddess of the Nightway, Haashch'eeh Ba'aad. She is wearing a mask with indentations on the sides. It is through these indentations that the wind can give her advice (Young and Copeland 2018:21).

Other Ye'ii at the site are shown in Figure 37. Although I can't solve the mystery of the image, I have to include the famous 44 panel from the site (Figure 38). A ye'ii stands next to the 44 image, which as far as I know is completely unique in Navajo rock art.

As I mentioned above, the health problems that each ceremony cures are related to the trials that are experienced by the protagonist in the narrative associated with the ceremony. The character's ailments are cured by the yé'ii and other supernaturals that the character encounters in the story, and then he or she

learns the ceremony that effected the cure and comes back to teach the ceremony to the Navajo people.



Figure 35. Nightway panel with Humpback and Fringe Mouth.

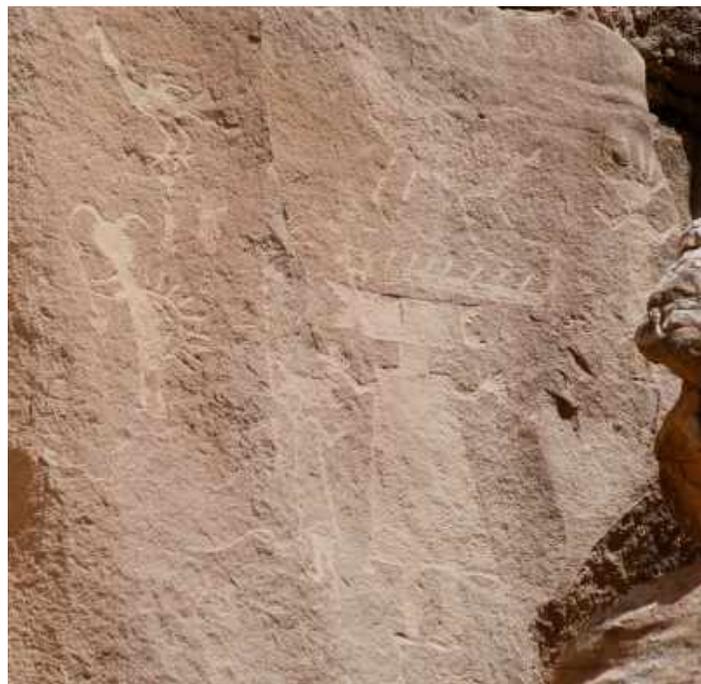


Figure 36. The female ye'ii of the Nightway is in the lower center.

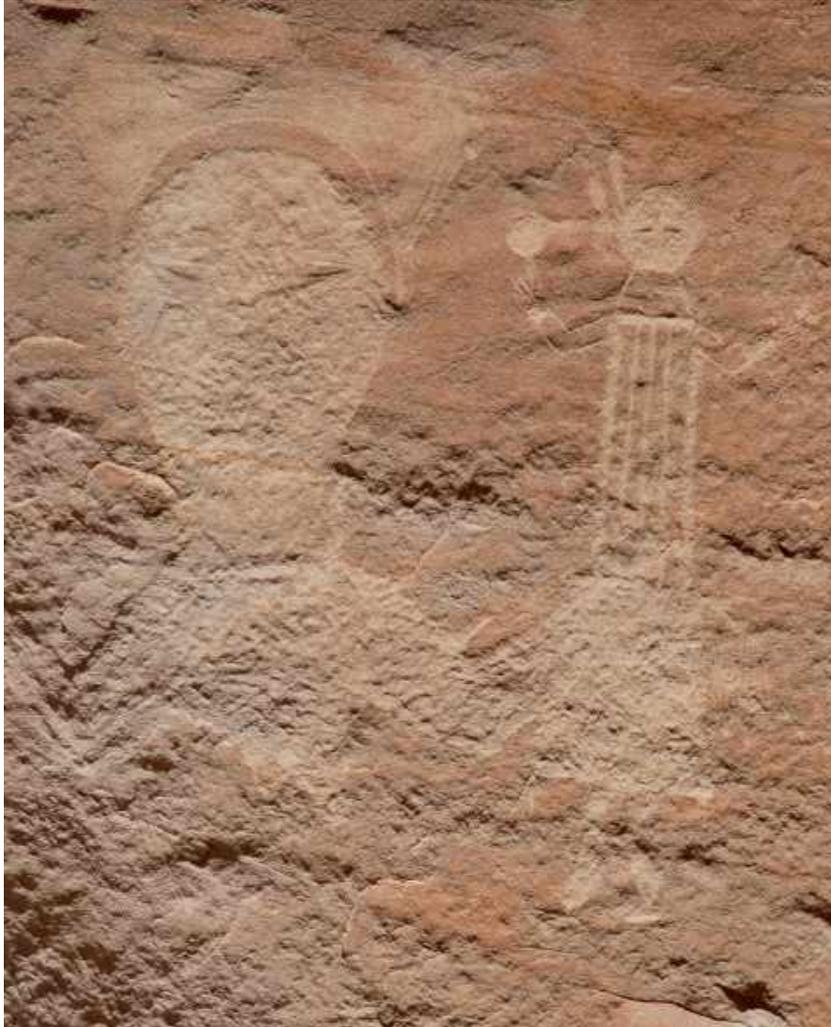


Figure 37. Other Nightway-related ye'ii at the site.

The main branch of the Nightway narrative is the story of the Visionary (Matthews 1902; Spencer 1957; Denetclaw 2015; Faris 1990). He is the youngest of several brothers. He has informative visions, but his brothers disregard them and show him no respect. He follows behind them when they are hunting and gets lost. When he tries to kill a mountain sheep, he is temporarily paralyzed. He is adopted by the sheep, who are the Mountain Sheep People, the group to which Humpback belongs. The Visionary has many other adventures (and misadventures) with the supernaturals, and his injuries are cured by them with their ceremonies. One of the adventures involves floating down the San Juan River inside a hollow log. He learns the ceremonies that cured him and returns to his people to teach them how to make the cures.

A branch of the narrative is the story of the Stricken Twins (Matthews 1902:212-265). They are born to a poor girl; their father is Talking God. They are disobedient and get injured; one becomes blind, the other lame. The blind one carries the lame one on his shoulders and they travel looking for a cure. The

supernaturals agree to cure them, but they are disobedient again and it takes a second try to get a cure. They return home and teach the ceremony to the people.



Figure 38. The enigmatic 44 panel.

Beadway

Yoo'ee, the Beadway ceremony, is closely related to the Eagleway, and both ceremonies treat maladies caused by exposure to eagles. The illnesses treated include head diseases, skin diseases, anorexia, nausea, and swollen legs. People were usually exposed to eagles through hunting and trapping. Since eagle hunting and catching aren't often done anymore, the Beadway is seldom performed today (Wyman 1983:27).

A panel in Crow Canyon (Figure 39) is considered to be Beadway-related (Olin 1984:67; Young and Copeland 2018:41). It appears to illustrate a scene from the Beadway story (Spenser 1957:194-201; Olin 1984:69) The hero is often called Scavenger or Beadboy. He is captured by Pueblos. They force him to be lowered into an eagle's nest to steal eaglets. After he throws down the eaglets they are going to leave him there to die. After being lowered into the nest, he refuses to steal the eaglets and the eagles protect him. The eagles send dust to the Pueblo people below, causing disease. The eagles, with the help of Fringe Mouth and snakes, take Beadboy up through the sky hole to the home of the eagles and other animals and birds. It is

this scene that is illustrated in the rock art. Beadboy is holding an eaglet while being lifted by an eagle.

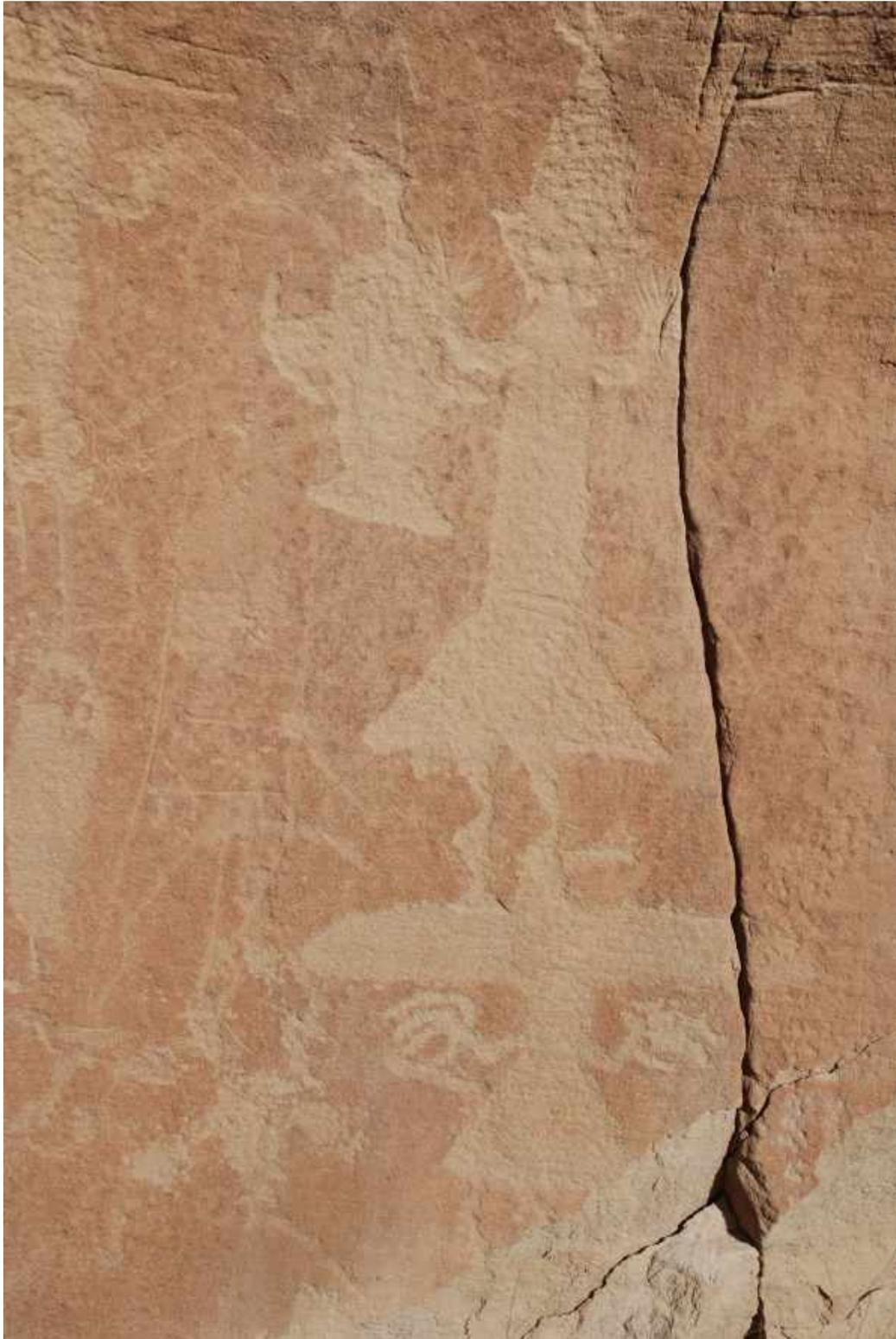


Figure 39. Beadboy lifted into the sky by an eagle.

While in the home of the eagles he is told not to do certain things. Of course, he does them, suffers the consequences, and is cured by the eagles. A few examples: he is turned into a coyote, captured by a spider, and he spills a water jar and causes excessive rain. He is not thought of too highly by the eagles. But then he helps the eagle warriors defeat the stinging insects and rolling weeds. He is rewarded by being allowed to stay with the eagles and marry one of their maidens. He returns to earth and teaches his brother the Eagleway and Beadway ceremonies that the eagles used to cure him. While back home he cures the diseased Pueblo people and gets their valuable jewelry in return. Then he returns to live in the land of the eagles.

Mountainway

The last two ceremonies that I will examine in relation to rock art are the Mountainway and Beautyway. They are related in that they both are connected to the same myth, the story of two sisters who don't marry well.

Dzil latajhi, the Mountainway, is one of the better known Navajo ceremonies, probably because it features the public Fire Dance, as well as ten other dances (Matthews 1887:441). The main character marries Bear, and she is exposed to bear illness and illnesses from other animals she encounters. Bear-related illnesses are arthritis and mental disturbances. Illnesses from the other animals encountered are gastrointestinal and genitourinary problems (porcupine), cough (squirrel), skin disease (turkey), and deafness and eye trouble (mountain sheep) (Wyman 1983:26).

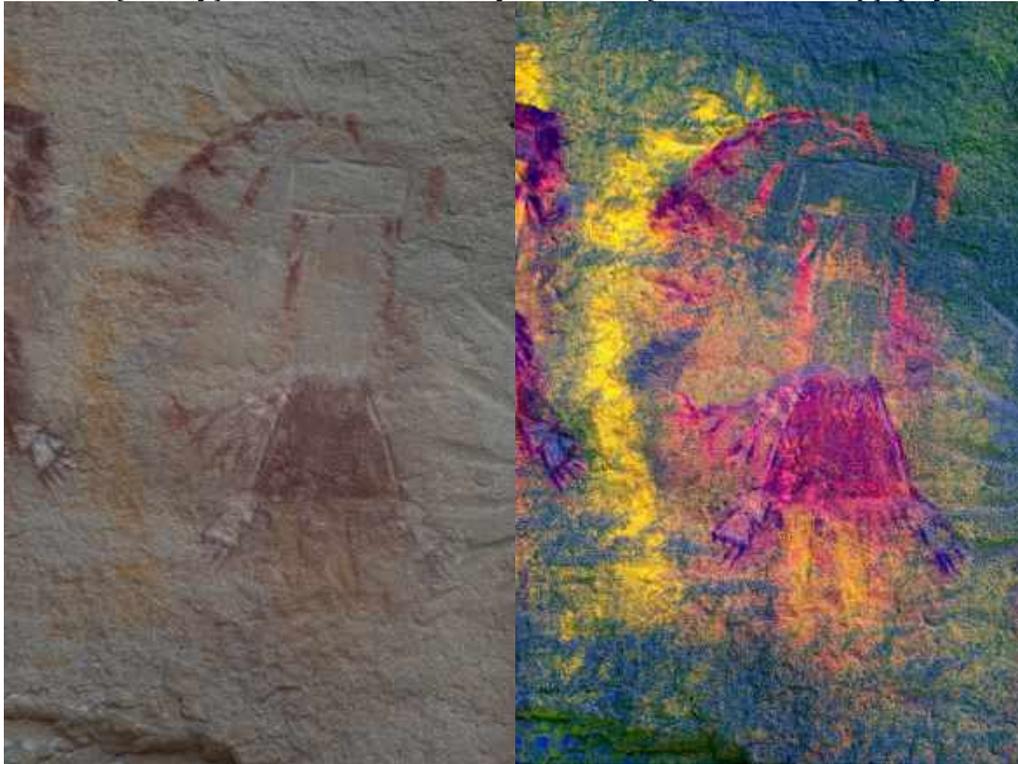


Figure 40. Dancer showing the long headdress associated with the Mountainway. The DStretch image on the right is YBK.

Mountainway dancers can be recognized by headdresses that extend all the way to the ground (Griffin-Pierce 1992:10; Wyman 1975:90-94). Figure 40 shows such a dancer. In sandpaintings, males have round heads and females have rectangular heads, so I assume this dancer is female. The entire line of dancers (Figure 41) shows four female dancers with Humpback and Fringe Mouth on the right. This is some of the finest artwork that I have seen in the rock art of Dinétah. A closer look at the female dancers (Figure 42) shows that first a petroglyph was made and then paint was applied over it. This reminds me of a technique used in present day sandpaintings. When a person is made in a sandpainting, first a tan body is made. This is a naked person, which is then “dressed” with the colorful clothing that the viewer sees. In this rock art, the “naked” petroglyph is dressed with painted clothing. Note that all of the dancers are different and distinctive. The artist did a masterful job!



Figure 41. Line of dancers with Humpback and Fringe Mouth on the right.

The story of the Mountainway is well-documented (Matthews 1887; Wyman 1975; Spencer 1957). Two sisters are courted by old men whom they reject. Then two young, handsome men come to court them and the sisters agree to run off with them and marry. Afterwards, the two young men change back to the original old men—Bear and Big Snake. The Mountainway narrative is the story of the older sister married to Bear. She escapes from him and meets many supernaturals along the way. She suffers misfortunes and is healed, and she learns the ceremonies. After returning to Bear and escaping again, she returns home and shares the ceremonies—the Mountainway—which cure the maladies she experienced in her trials. Back home, she marries and has a child and the story continues with his adventures.



Figure 42. Detail of Figure 41 showing the fine worksmanship of the rock art. The DStretch image is LAB.

Beautyway

The story of Hozhonne, the Beautyway, is the story of the other sister who married Big Snake. Remember that “hozho” means spiritual balance, harmony, and beauty. So Beautyway could just as easily be called Balanceway or Harmonyway. The ceremony cures snake related issues: snake bite, snake nightmares, rheumatism, sore throat, stomach trouble, kidney and bladder trouble, and skin diseases or sores (Wyman 1957:16-17; 1992:26).

There is a great deal of snake lore and snake phobia in Navajo culture. My students associated snakes with lightning, and I think close to 100% of them were afraid of snakes. A consultant of Franc Newcomb claimed that at the time of their creation, snakes traded their arms and legs for power over death (Newcomb 1940:19). Figure 43 shows a petroglyph of a coiled snake. This is Endless Snake, a major character in the Beautyway story (Schaafsma 1992:30). Reichard points out that in Navajo art there is always a way out of the design so that the artist will not get trapped. Endless Snake is an embodiment of the enclosing circle, one that will not let you out and trap you for good (Reichard 1950:454). Figure 44 is a sandpainting design from the Beautyway showing Endless Snake (Wyman 1957:Plate 6). It is almost identical to the petroglyph. The diamond on the snake’s forehead is the location of his power (Wyman 1957:190).



Figure 43. Endless Snake from the myth of the Beautyway.

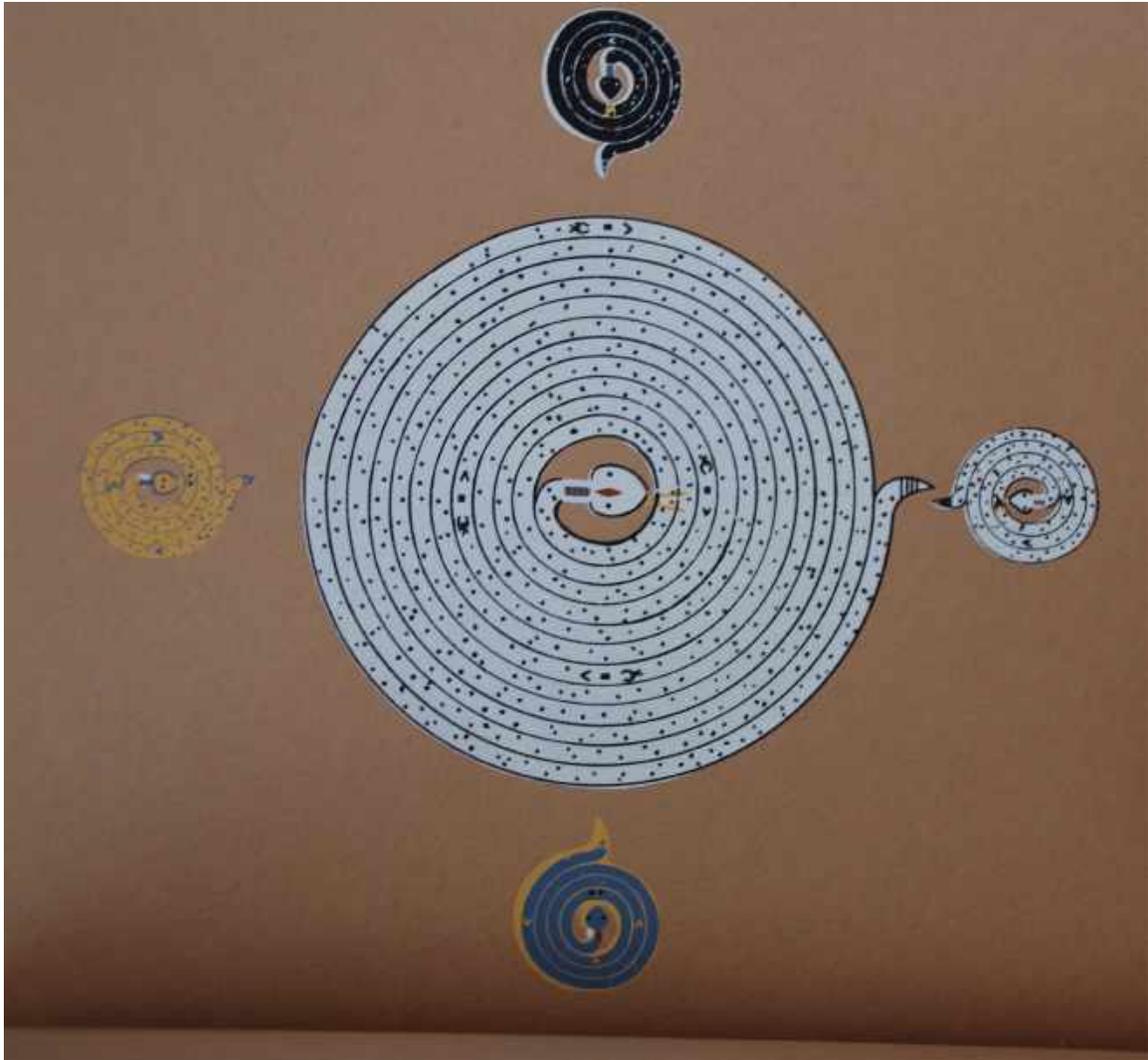


Figure 44. Endless Snake in a sandpainting from the Beautyway (Wyman 1957:Plate 6)

Big Snake is the character that our unfortunate sister in the myth runs off with. Endless Snake is either a variant of Big Snake or a close relative (Reichard 1950:454). A consultant of Robert McPherson's identifies Comb Ridge as the embodiment of Big Snake in the landscape. Its alcoves are the holes through which he breathes (McPherson 2009:64-65). Figure 45 is a petroglyph depicting Big Snake. Big Snake is always depicted as a short, thick snake. Like most characters in Navajo mythology, Big Snake can appear in multiples and as either sex. A sandpainting image from the Beautyway (Figure 46) shows four Big Snakes (Wyman 1957: Plate 1). The crooked snakes are male; the straight ones female.

There are several sources for the story (Wyman 1957:41-142; Spencer 1957:150-155; Pavlik 2014:256-260). The Beautyway narrative is the account of the younger sister from the Mountainway story who ran off with and married Big Snake. She tries to escape, but fails. She is told not to do certain things but always does them. For example, she is told not to light a fire at night, but she does so and looks

around to see that she is surrounded by huge, coiled snakes. On another occasion she wanders from home and is shot with a dart by Toad. She is cured of the problems caused by her transgressions by the Beautyway ceremony, which she takes home and teaches to the people.



Figure 45. Big Snake. Photo by Bob Young



Figure 46. Sandpainting from the Beautyway ceremony with images of Big Snake (Wyman 1957:Plate 1)

Other Ceremonial Imagery

Dinetah contains a great deal of imagery that appears to me to be ceremonial in content. I cannot connect the panels in this section to particular ceremonies, but the imagery is worth a close look.



Figure 47. A rock art panel which probably has ceremonial connections.

The artwork in Figure 47 is bordered on the top by a zig zag line that is reminiscent of a Pueblo cloud design. It also reminds me of the type of border that often surrounds sandpaintings. In the center of the panel is a circular design with what appears to be six feathers inside of the large circle and ten cloud designs outside the circle. On the right side of the panel is a shield design with a bow and arrow in the center, probably symbolic of Monster Slayer. There are also large germinating seeds like those we saw in one of the Blessingway panels (Figure 33).

Figure 48 is a row of eight ceremonial dancers. There is a Fringe Mouth at each end of the line. Inside of Fringe Mouth at each end is a Humpback. In the middle are four dancers. One is obscured, but the other three have rectangular heads, so I presume that they are female dancers.

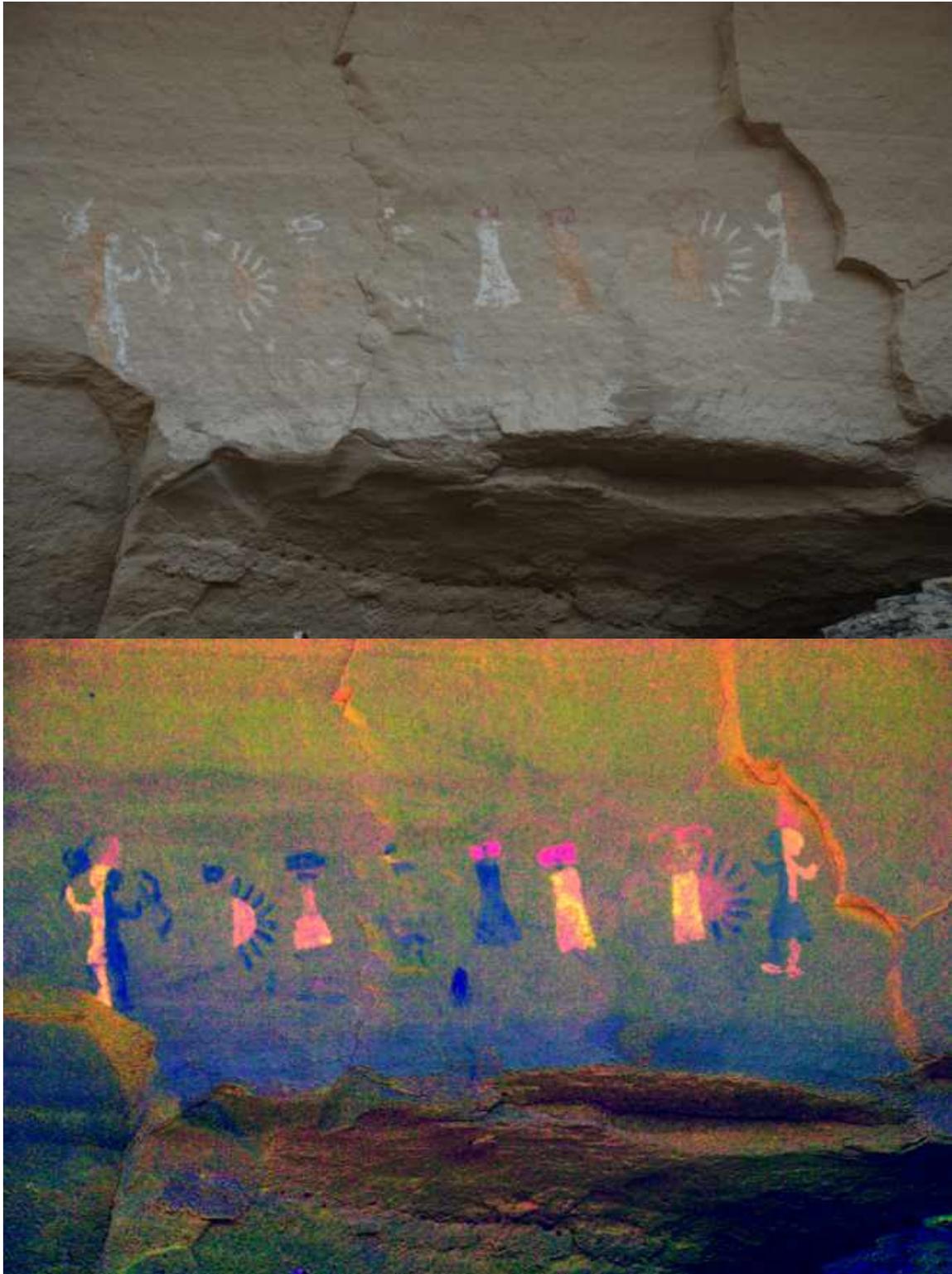


Figure 48. A row of ceremonial dancers. The DStretch image is ybk.



Figure 49. A shallow alcove with intriguing pictographs.

Figure 49 is a shallow alcove with a multitude of pictographs, many of them faded beyond recognition. A closer look at the four anthropomorphs at the top of the panel (Figure 50) reveals two pairs, possibly twins. There are many twins in the Navajo stories, and I have no idea who these characters might be.



Figure 50. Detail of Figure 49 showing paired anthropomorphs.

Highly decorated dancers appear at another site (Figure 51). Female dancers in their dress-like garments alternate with male dancers in decorated kilts. The males have sashes at the waist, and all four have tassel-like objects hanging from their wrists.



Figure 51. Four dancers. The DStretch image is LDS. Photo by Dave Manley.

Final Remarks on Navajo Ceremonies

The five ceremonies that I have commented on in this section are but a fragment of the total number of Navajo ceremonies. Wyman and Kluckhohn listed

58 ceremonies in 1938 (Wyman and Kluckhohn 1938:36). The Morgan and Young dictionary has names for 65 (Morgan and Young 1980:421). There is no way to determine how many ceremonies were active during the Navajo occupation of Dinetah.

Each ceremony ends with positive thoughts. The singer, the patient, and those present are all focused on a positive outcome for the ceremony and for the patient. I will close this section with some famous lines from a Navajo prayer from the Male Shooting Chant. Remember that “beauty” is “hozho,” meaning spiritual balance, harmony and beauty.

With beauty before me may I go about,
With beauty behind me may I go about,
With beauty beneath me may I go about,
With beauty above me may I go about,
With beauty all around me may I go about,
With my speech under control may I go about,
Restoration-to-youth According-to-beauty I have become,
Restoration-to-youth According-to-beauty
Perfection,
These I have become again.
It has become beautiful again.
(Reichard 1944:93)

Conclusions

Like art in its traditional functions worldwide, paintings and carvings on stone are yet another form of visual legacy created to communicate and reaffirm symbols and metaphors of stories, cosmologies, and worldviews, projecting conceptual universes, cultural values, and social concerns. Within such complicated and dynamic frameworks, it was the role of the artist to create a network of metaphor and analogy connecting social and cosmological dimensions (Schaafsma 2013:4)

In this paper I have focused on traditional stories because that is what I know best in relation to Navajo culture. Joseph Campbell wrote, “I would say . . . the basic theme of all mythology [is] that there is an invisible plane supporting the visible one” (Campbell 1988:71). In fact, Campbell’s first book, written with Maud Oakes, was about Navajo mythology and sandpaintings (Oakes and Campbell 1943). The Navajo rock art of Dinetah often refers to that “invisible plane,” and because the rock

art was made in historic times and much is known about Navajo beliefs, we are able to use the rock art as a window into the intellectual and spiritual culture of the Navajo people.

Traditional stories bring with them a different way of thinking. We are accustomed to the hyper-rational, scientific way of thinking established during the Enlightenment in Europe. But mythological thinking has a different logic. When I taught traditional Navajo stories some of my most traditional students thought primarily in the mythological mode. They did not speak English outside the classroom and there was no media at home pushing the white man's way at them. For them time was more cyclical than linear, logic was based on association, and that "invisible plane" was easily accessible. These students were usually confused by most of their schoolwork, but they were completely at home with Navajo stories.

Science is able to explain complex notions about the world through reduction and generalization. The natural world is too vast to grasp without simplification. But art, including rock art, takes a different approach. Through the use of metaphor, symbol, and analogy, the arts open us up into the mystery in all its complex, incomprehensible glory. Polly Schaafsma's quote at the beginning of this section identifies the role of the artist in pointing the way.

It is through the use of ethnography that we can get some of this insight into the "invisible plane." Tacon and Chippindale (1998:6-7) delineate two methods for rock art research. Informed methods gather direct information through ethnography. With ethnography we can "explore the pictures from the inside." Formal methods have no inside knowledge. The primary formal method is archaeology.

I was able to use ethnography and my own experience with Navajos to gain insight into the rock art of Dinetah. I am not in any way criticizing the use of archaeology. In most cases it is all we have to provide context for the artwork. But whenever it is possible to get information directly from the culture that made the artwork or from that culture's ethnographies, that information provides a more informed approach. David Whitley (2005:80) wrote, "All symbols have multiple levels of meaning, and identifying the social meaning of rock art is the goal of interpretation." It might not be the only goal, but it is certainly a primary one.

In this essay I have tried to identify the social and spiritual connections of the rock art of Dinetah to Navajo culture. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could look at a site like the Great Gallery and be able to know the stories and ceremonies connected to it! But we can't. Those cultures are long gone. I feel privileged that I have been able to have experience with Navajo culture and pass on some of what I have learned to you.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Dave Manley and Tom Hahl for leading URARA field trips into Dinetah. Dave led me on a second trip and shared his extensive knowledge of the area and the rock art. A shorter version of this essay was submitted for publication in *American Indian Rock Art*, the publication of the American Rock Art Research

Association (ARARA). I would like to thank the editing crew at ARARA: Richard Rogers, Evelyn Billo, Robert Mark, Ken Hedges, and especially Anne McConnell.

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