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AN HYPOTHESIS FOR A PUEBLO IV DATE FOR THE BARRIER CANYON STYLE

The existence of a rock art style distinct from that of the Fremont or Anasazi, as found in the northern half of the Colorado Plateau, was first hypothesized by Schaafsma (1971). Schaafsma proposed that this style be named *The Barrier Canyon Style* after the name of the canyon where the most numerous, and perhaps the best examples, are located.

The Barrier Canyon Style has neither been positively dated nor unequivocally ascribed to any culture. There are two reasons for this (in addition to there being an absence of direct dating methods). First, there is a lack of clearly defined association with distinctly datable artifact material. It appears that all Barrier Canyon Style rock art sites with associated artifact materials, thus far investigated, show mixed occupations, i.e., combinations of Fremont, Basketmaker and Pueblo (Gunnerson 1957, 1969; Lucius 1976; Steward 1941).

Second, there is an apparent lack of any datable or identifiable elements appearing in the paintings. Schaafsma (1971:129) observed that, "Because of the heavy emphasis on anthropomorphic representation, very few objects are portrayed in the paintings. It is of considerable interest that the bow and arrow, which is commonly represented in Fremont art, is absent in all recorded examples of the Barrier Canyon Style". Schaafsma therefore concluded that the Barrier Canyon Style pictographs predated the introduction of the bow and arrow into Utah, which she states took place approximately at A.D. 650 to 700.

Citing these and other evidences, and also noting similarities to the Archaic Pecos River paintings of Texas, Schaafsma attributed the

Barrier Canyon Style to the earliest known occupation, i.e., Archaic. In a later publication she refined this date, "...the Barrier Canyon Style falls late in the Archaic sequence. It may have been, in part at least, contemporaneous with the Anasazi Basketmakers to the South, and a rough tentative dating between 500 B.C. and A.D. 500 is suggested" (Schaafsma 1980:70).

The purpose of this paper is to present evidence that formulates and substantiates a hypothesis that the majority of the presently known Barrier Canyon Style pictographs were painted, not in Archaic times, but in approximately the Pueblo IV period — A.D. 1300 to 1600.

The first possibility for determining the age of the Barrier Canyon Style from elements appearing in the paintings is suggested by one anthropomorphic figure in a panel located in a side canyon of Barrier Canyon. It was recorded in 1973 and has site number 42WN369. (The location given in the original site report is in error. The site is located about two miles south of the described location.) An anthropomorph in the panel (see Figure 1A) has been popularly named the *Blue-eyed Princess*. An adjacent anthropomorph (see Figure 1B) appears to have suspended from its waist a fox pelt pendant.

The fox pelt pendant appears widely in modern Pueblo rites, and its use is well documented by early investigators throughout the Southwest; for example, it is a common feature at Zuni, Shipaulovi, Acoma, Walpi, Taos and Jemez. (Stephen 1936; Parsons 1939; Bourke 1884 and many others). If the

date of the introduction of the fox pelt pendant into the Colorado Plateau and into the Pueblo ceremonies could be ascertained, it would form the basis for dating these pictographs. Unfortunately, this has not been studied nor determined.

Its introduction, however, appears to have been recent, because these pendants have not been described as appearing on kiva walls at Awatovi, where occupation is dated at A.D. 1375 to 1500, and Pottery Mound, where occupation is dated at A.D. 1300 to 1450 (Hibben 1975; Smith 1952:xii). Furthermore, no examples of fox pelt pendants appear to have been reported on earlier elaborately decorated, Sikyatki pottery (Fewkes 1919), nor on Mimbres Pottery, dated at A.D. 1100 to 1200 (Brody 1977). From this information, it would appear that the fox pelt pendant entered into the Pueblo religious ceremonies at these sites sometime after A.D. 1500. Somewhat substantiating this late date is the observation by Parsons that the fox pelt pendant is characteristically associated with the Katchina ceremonial costume (Parsons 1939). It is therefore assumed that the pendant was either incorporated into the Anasazi religion at the same time as the Katchina tradition or at a later date. Schaafsma and Schaafsma (1974) suggest that Anasazi incorporation of the Katchina cult took place between A.D. 1325 and 1350 (This date has not yet been substantiated by archaeological findings).

Although all the above information does not provide an exact date, it does indicate a time frame in the Pueblo IV period for the introduction of the fox pelt pendant into the Katchina Cult and, therefore, a corresponding, or even later time, for the painting of the Barrier Canyon Style pictographs found at the 42WN369 site.

Other Barrier Canyon Style pictographs also have been found in Barrier Canyon, the San Rafael Reef and Buckhorn Wash that have

pendants attached, which appear to be a fox pelt. If this interpretation is correct, it would indicate that a large number, perhaps the majority, of presently known Barrier Canyon Style pictographs are associated with the fox pelt pendant and are therefore of Pueblo IV origin.

These hypothetical dates are, of course, based upon the correctness of the interpretation of the pendant illustrated in the pictographs. It has been suggested that the pendant in the pictographs could represent the white sash commonly found in Pueblo kiva murals, but this is probably not correct, because the artists possessed white paint and used it at 42WN369. If the pendant was intended to be a white sash, they most likely would have portrayed it with white paint. Additionally, this difference in interpretation does not radically affect this indicated late date, because the white sash is as much a part of the Katchina costume as is the fox pelt pendant. Unlike the fox pelt pendant, however, the white sash is commonly found in kiva wall paintings dated in the Pueblo IV period.

These pictographic examples alone did not provide sufficient documentation to formulate the hypothesis that many of the Barrier Canyon Style paintings dated as late as the Pueblo IV period. Additional information indicated that this hypothesis had merit and appeared to substantiate it. This paper will briefly cover five substantive points. The examples presented here are not comprehensive. Others are known, but limitation of space prevents their inclusion.

The first point: The very position and nature of Barrier Canyon Style Pictographs argue against their great antiquity. Almost all the Barrier Canyon Style panels are found in exposed positions on cliff faces and not deep caves; and since almost all examples of this style are paintings, the erosive properties of sand, wind and rain would be expected to

quite rapidly erase this fragile paint. They would weather many times more rapidly than petroglyphs. That these pictographs appear as distinct as they do in their exposed locations suggests that they are of relatively recent origin. Noticeable weathering of several of these pictographs has been observed since their discovery and documentation, which further suggests that some are not very old. Unfortunately, not many Barrier Canyon Style sites were known 20 or 30 years ago, and accurate photographs of sites that could be used for study, that have not been vandalized, are almost non-existent. Four specific examples of what I call *historic weathering* are given here.

(1) At a Barrier Canyon Site in North Wash called the "Moki Queen" is a zoomorph. It was first reported and photographed in 1932 by Julian H. Steward (1941:Plate 128A). Although faded, you could still see four legs, ears and a muzzle in his photograph. In 1979 no evidence remained of these features. Dr. Castleton, describing the site said, "The other figure, also painted in red, has an oval body with a head and tail. It has been referred to as a dog, bird or six legged duck, despite the fact that no legs are visible!" (Castleton 1979:136, figure 4.1, also personal observation).

(2) At a site in Horse Canyon called the "Bird Site" or "Harvest Scene" there appears a small but very detailed painting (Schaafsma 1971:Figure 77). The small figures have weathered so badly since E. J. Bird first copied them, approximately 20 years ago, that they are now almost gone (Personal observation).

(3) In the Museum of Natural History at the University of Utah, there is a copy of the large panel called the "Great Gallery" that is in Barrier Canyon. It was painted by Lynn Fausett as a public works project in 1940. There are two figures near the center of the panel that appear in the painting, but on the

rock face are so faint that they are now almost indiscernible. There is no evidence that Mr. Fausett "enhanced" the figures on his canvas and did not accurately portray them. It is interesting that Pearl Baker, who grew up near Horseshoe Canyon and visited the site many times, said concerning this panel, "It seems to me that the figures are not as bright as they were forty or fifty years ago..." (Baker 1976:152).

(4) A comparison of photographs taken by the author in 1968 at Thompson Wash with those taken again in 1981, and a re-examination of the panel, indicates a general fading of the pictographs, apparently due to weathering.

These examples of historical weathering indicate that these pictographs are eroding away at a visible rate. Their distinct appearance of several of the panels suggests that they were painted in the very recent past and not 2000 or more years ago.

The second point: Another indication of a late date for the Barrier Canyon Style is found in the fact that they are almost exclusively pictographs; very few are petroglyphs. A change in Pueblo graphic arts that appears to have taken place in the Pueblo II through IV periods may account for this difference. This change was due to the development of a new religious entity — the kiva wall paintings. The first paintings occurred at approximately A.D. 1000 in the Pueblo II period (A.D. 800 to 1100). Four well-known early sites with Kiva wall painting are: (1) Alkali Ridge, Utah (Brew 1946); (2) near Cortez, Colorado (Prudden 1914); (3) in Mancos Canyon, Colorado (Jackson 1875) and (4) in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico (Ingersoll 1877). Kiva wall paintings grew gradually in complexity as they spread throughout the Pueblo region, where they appear to have culminated at the artistic, intricate, and beautiful paintings at Pottery Mound, Awatovi, etc.

The Introduction of kiva wall paintings led to the development of greatly improved painting techniques, such as: fine detailed lines, great complexity, pigments of many different colors, etc. Barrier Canyon Style Pictographs exhibit these same characteristics. Even the same colors were used, e.g., reds, oranges, greens, purples, and whites. When kiva wall painting became an accepted practice in the Pueblo areas, this influence may have spread to the Barrier Canyon Style artists, and they could have turned from the mediums of pecking, incising, and chiseling to painting. Kiva wall painting was in full swing in the 1400's and 1500's, at the time when it is hypothesized in this paper that the majority of the Barrier Canyon Style pictographs would have been painted.

The third point: Schaafsma observed that the design and technique of the Barrier Canyon Style appeared to exhibit a sophistication not found in other rock art in the Colorado Plateau (Schaafsma 1971). This has an important implication. This observation suggests that these pictographs would have been painted late in time, during what is considered to be the cultural apex of the inhabitants of the Colorado Plateau, and not in Archaic times. The cultural height of these inhabitants was reached in the Pueblo IV period.

Also an important consideration is that if the Barrier Canyon Style was superior to others in the area, did some outside culture have a direct influence on the artists, or did the artists come from somewhere else or did they develop this "sophistication" by themselves? Possible answers to these questions will be discussed below.

The fourth point: There are many similarities between the Barrier Canyon Style and rock art associated with Anasazi Pueblo IV material reported as occurring only in Arizona and New Mexico; and, therefore, they

appear to be related. Some specific comparative examples are:

(A) The rain cloud symbol appears in Barrier Canyon Style panels in Barrier Canyon (from author's photographs in 1972; Smith 1980), and in the Maze district of Canyonlands National Park (Lucius 1976). The rain cloud symbol is found in common use throughout the modern Southern Colorado Plateau pueblos (Mallery 1893). The rain cloud symbol has not been reported as appearing in Fremont rock art, nor in Anasazi rock art in Anasazi occupation areas of Utah, yet it appears several times in the Barrier Canyon Style in Utah. Thus it would appear that the rain cloud symbol came into common use in the Colorado Plateau, and among the Arizona and New Mexico pueblos, after Anasazi "abandonment", or lessening of the population in Utah, which took place about A.D. 1200 to 1300.

(B) An anthropomorph adjacent to the "Blue-eyed Princess" has a chevron torso decoration. Multiple chevron torso decorations have not been reported as occurring in Utah Fremont or Anasazi rock art (Castleton 1978, 1979), but have been found as a decorative element in New Mexico and Arizona pueblos (Fewkes 1919).

(C) The unusual and distinctive eye treatment of a figure called "The Great Ghost" (indecorously called by some "The Holy Ghost") in the Barrier Canyon, finds a close parallel in Canyon de Chelly in Arizona (Grant 1978). The Arizona figure is in proximity with Pueblo IV material.

(D) On another anthropomorph near the "Blue-eyed Princess" there appears to be a representation of a "squash blossom" hair style (Figure 1C). Schaafsma also suggested the appearance of an example of this hair style on a Barrier Canyon Style pictograph in Black Dragon Canyon. This is an Anasazi Pueblo characteristic, and indicates a strong

association of the Barrier Canyon Style artists with the late Pueblo culture.

(E) There are a large number of birds that appear in the Barrier Canyon Style paintings. This stands in contrast to the relatively small number of birds on other rock art panels in the Northern Colorado Plateau. The following may account for this difference.

In the Developmental Pueblo period, there began to be an increased interest in birds in Pueblo ritual and ceremony. Hamilton A. Tyler in *Pueblo Birds and Myths* said,

The Pueblos have been watching their birds for centuries and during that time have incorporated these creatures into every aspect of community life. Even...mundane tasks...require the presentation of feathers from particular birds, while in the rituals that support religious cremonialism, birds and their feathers become counters that keep a complex symbol system in order. As signs, birds relate to goods, act as messengers between men and gods, or stand as signals between man and man. As a part of the surrounding world, birds relate to all manner of natural phenomena and to weather control [Tyler 1979].

The existence of many birds in the pictograph panels, and the importance given to them by the Barrier Canyon Style artists, suggest that these artists were participants with the Pueblos in the incorporation of birds into their social and religious orders. Since this incorporation took place sometime after A.D. 1300 the implication is, that the Barrier Canyon Style pictographs would have been painted during or following the Pueblo IV period.

The fifth point: There are numerous similarities between figures in the Barrier Canyon Style pictographs and figures in the Katchina

Cult of the Pueblo Indians, as reported from ethnographic data recorded in the historic Pueblo V period of A.D. 1540 (when the first Europeans came into contact with the Indians) to the present time. Two examples are given here.

(1) **Figures holding snakes:** Anthropomorphic figures holding snakes appear at major Barrier Canyon Style rock art sites. Figures appearing with snakes are found on numerous rock art panels in the Colorado Plateau, but only in the Barrier Canyon Style are they commonly found holding snakes in their hands.

These pictographs exhibit a striking resemblance to Hopi snake dance ceremonies where snakes are held in the hands of performers (Hough 1902). A relationship between the Barrier Canyon Style Pictographs and the Hopi Snake Dance has also been suggested by Martineau (1973).

(2) In 1899 Fewkes collected a series of drawings made by native Hopi artists of Katchina figures. There are some striking similarities between these drawings and the Barrier Canyon Style pictographs. This comparison becomes very impressive when the meaning of the Katchina figures is understood. Fewkes said, "The Hopi Indians represent their gods in several ways, one of which is by personation — by wearing masks or garments bearing symbols that are regarded as characteristic of those beings" (Fewkes 1903). Some figures of the Barrier Canyon Style, especially those of The Great Gallery, appear to represent the symbols depicted on these masks and clothing and may well represent early Katchina figures. Additionally, the Barrier Canyon figures appear to be in parade formation, with individual figures standing alone, much the same as a Katchina ceremony.

All the above evidence points toward a conclusion that some, perhaps many, of the

Barrier Canyon Style pictographs date more recently than archaic times, and that there was a definite and close association between the late Arizona and New Mexico Pueblo Anasazi culture and the Barrier Canyon Style artists. What exactly this association was and how it functioned are not completely clear at this time. Neither is the question of who were the Barrier Canyon Style artists. Perhaps they were Fremont people who abandoned Central Utah in the general exodus around A.D. 1300, to live with the Pueblo people in the Northern Arizona—New Mexico area for a time, and then returned periodically to paint on the cliffs symbols of a newly acquired religious belief. Or perhaps they were painted by Anasazi Pueblo people who left Northern Arizona in Pueblo IV times, to travel throughout the Northern Colorado Plateau. Or perhaps a more plausible explanation is that they were painted by people who never left. Archaeologists have told us that this region of the Northern Colorado Plateau underwent complete abandonment by the Fremont and Anasazi people during the years A.D. 1200 to 1300 (Jennings 1978:235, Wormington 1947:80, and others); and that no one else was in the area until the Shoshoni language speakers came in the 1600's, i.e., the Ute, the Piute and the Gosiute (Goss 1965).

That idea has been questioned by several investigators (Rudy 1953:169; Taylor 1957:163-6; Cordell and Plog 1979:418). This area may not have been completely abandoned. It is much more likely that there was instead a very large reduction in the population. A few hardy people likely remained, people who could have been the Barrier Canyon Style artists. These people could easily have been in contact with the Pueblo culture to the south, and they could have been influenced by the thriving Katchina Cult. These people did not, perhaps could not, because of economic conditions (drought, sparse food supply, etc.), build permanent dwelling places, and, therefore,

had no kiva walls to paint, so instead placed their paintings upon cliff walls.

We are here faced with numerous speculations about who these artists were and where they came from. These speculations will remain just speculations until more archaeological data is gathered.

Another explanation that the data presented here does not refute, is that some of the characteristics of the Katchina Cult — the fox pelt pendant, the rain cloud symbol, etc. — could have been developed by the Barrier Canyon artists and taken by them, in the Pueblo IV period, to the Southern Pueblos.

The late date hypothesized in this paper for the Barrier Canyon Style may be very difficult to substantiate for two reasons:

(1) If conditions in the Colorado Plateau, at the time the pictographs were painted, were as Jennings (1978) postulates, that is, a change of the climate, which forced a corresponding change in the cultural subsistence patterns, back to a nomadic hunting-gathering way of life, away from farming, permanent dwelling construction and difficult-to-move implements; then evidence of this culture would be difficult to find, identify, and date.

(2) Vandalism poses a very real threat to the gathering of information. Publicity, the public's interest in antiquities, ease of access, more off-road vehicles, all have increased vandalism and artifact collecting to devastating proportions in the Northern Colorado Plateau. Many of the Barrier Canyon Style painting sites are now heavily visited. Sites in Buckhorn Wash and Thompson Wash are badly vandalized. An attempt to totally destroy some Barrier Canyon Style pictographs in Courthouse Wash was recently made. Black Dragon Canyon pictographs have been repeatedly defaced with heavy chalking. Sites in Horseshoe Canyon, the Maze District, and the San Rafael Reef are

now showing signs of vandalism. If Barrier Canyon Style rock art is of recent origin, then cultural material needed to date these pictographs would most likely be found on or near the surface. It is these easily visible artifacts that people collect that are vanishing rapidly. At the present rate of destruction, in a few years, no untouched Barrier Canyon Style sites with datable artifacts will remain.

It is our responsibility to make a complete and accurate record of these sites if we find them—without disturbing any artifacts—and report them to the appropriate land management agency—and also to the State Antiquities Office—before they are totally destroyed and the recordable information lost forever.

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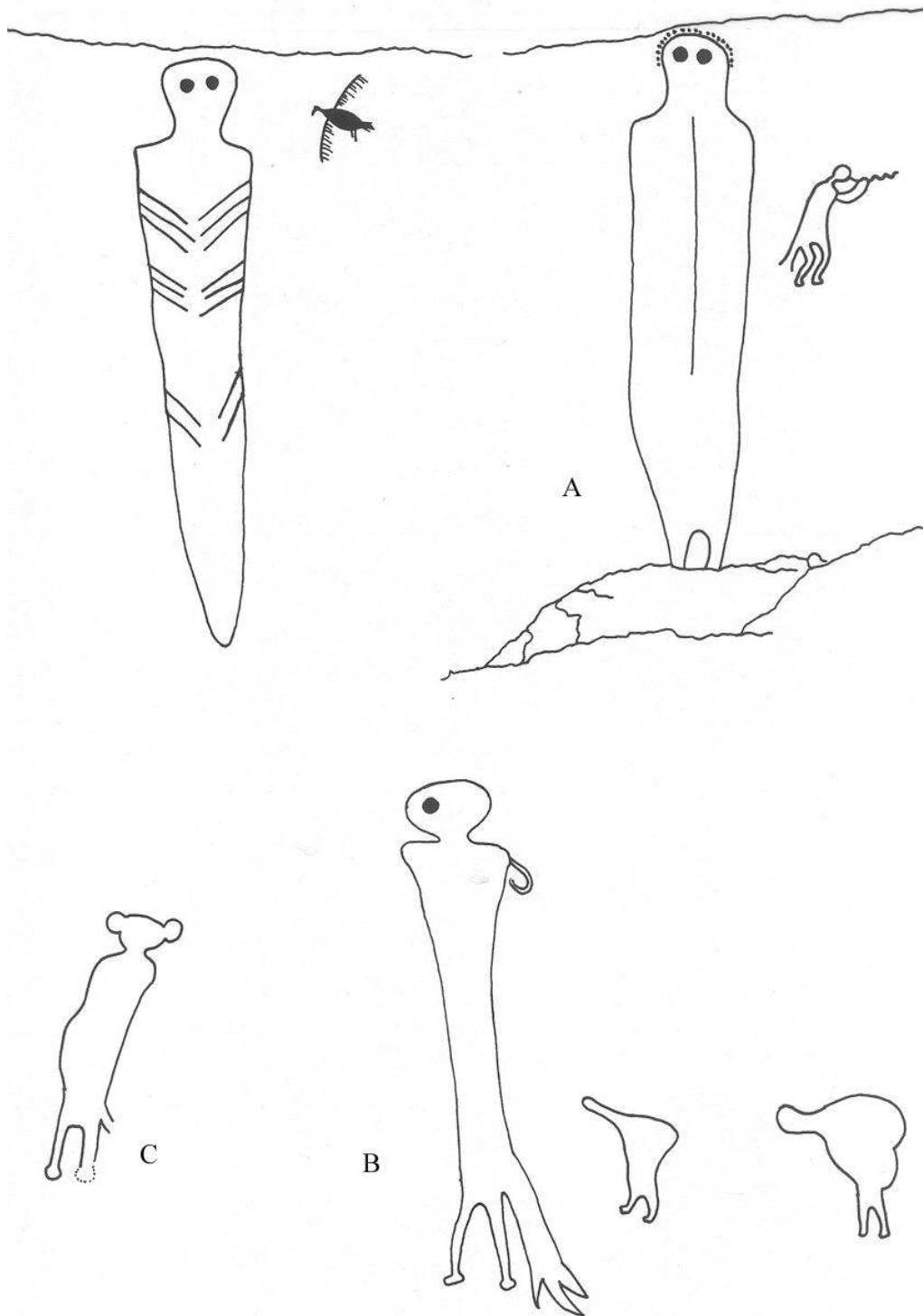


Figure 1
42Wn369, "The Blue-eyed Princess" Panel.