

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SPECIFIC SIGNS FROM SIX ANASAZI SITES WITH MYTHOLOGICAL TIES TO THE PUEBLO WAR TWINS

If "one picture" is truly "worth a thousand words", then pictographic compositions, which are essentially free of the garments of any given language, can be a universal system of inter-communication. If the objective of inter-communication is to convey ideas, then the ideogram may succeed when words fail. Pictographs, however, are likenesses of things, and to recognize these things one must become acquainted with the things that constitute the material cultures of those responsible for a given pictographic composition. Also, because rock art panels are sometimes portrayals of epic events or histories of origin, the mythology of the cultures involved must be carefully studied, if possible.

The interpretations in this study are dependent upon our ability to recognize and identify objects of material culture, and personalities and events from the mythology of the Anasazi. Some material remains of the Anasazi culture are available for study, and the oral traditions and legends of the Pueblo people provide the mythic fragments to enable us to piece together interpretations of *some* Anasazi panels.

The scope and depth of Pueblo mythology are too great for a single mind to organize and explain. We shall focus our attention on one of the most universal myths, the War Twins. These cultural heroes of the Pueblos are not only prominent among the other

tribes of the Southwest, but throughout the continents of the Western Hemisphere. Radin (1950:359-419) called the Hero Twin's epic, "the basic myth in North America".

Perhaps the oldest serious recording of Indian mythology (north of Mexico) was done by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793-1864), an Indian Agent at Sault Ste Marie, Michigan. From Schoolcraft's third book *Algonquian Researches* (1839) Longfellow created the epic *Hiawatha* (Osborn 1942). In most of the Algonquian myths, Wenebojo is the eldest of twins born of Father Sun and Water Maiden. Hiawatha was the idealized representation of the best qualities of the twins (often described as opposites); and, like Wenebojo, the Pueblo Twins are born of Sun and Laughing Water.

Petroglyph panels located in Natural Bridges National Monument and Zion National Park, Utah, have been the subject of earlier papers presented at American Rock Art Research Association Symposia (Harris 1981). Aspects of Pueblo mythology identified with these panels include: birth of the War Twins, their early nurturing and endowment with power from Father Sun, the Twins involvement in Emergence and their destruction of the Monsters.

The two panels mentioned above can provide a basis for comparison with other panels and with specific signs within these

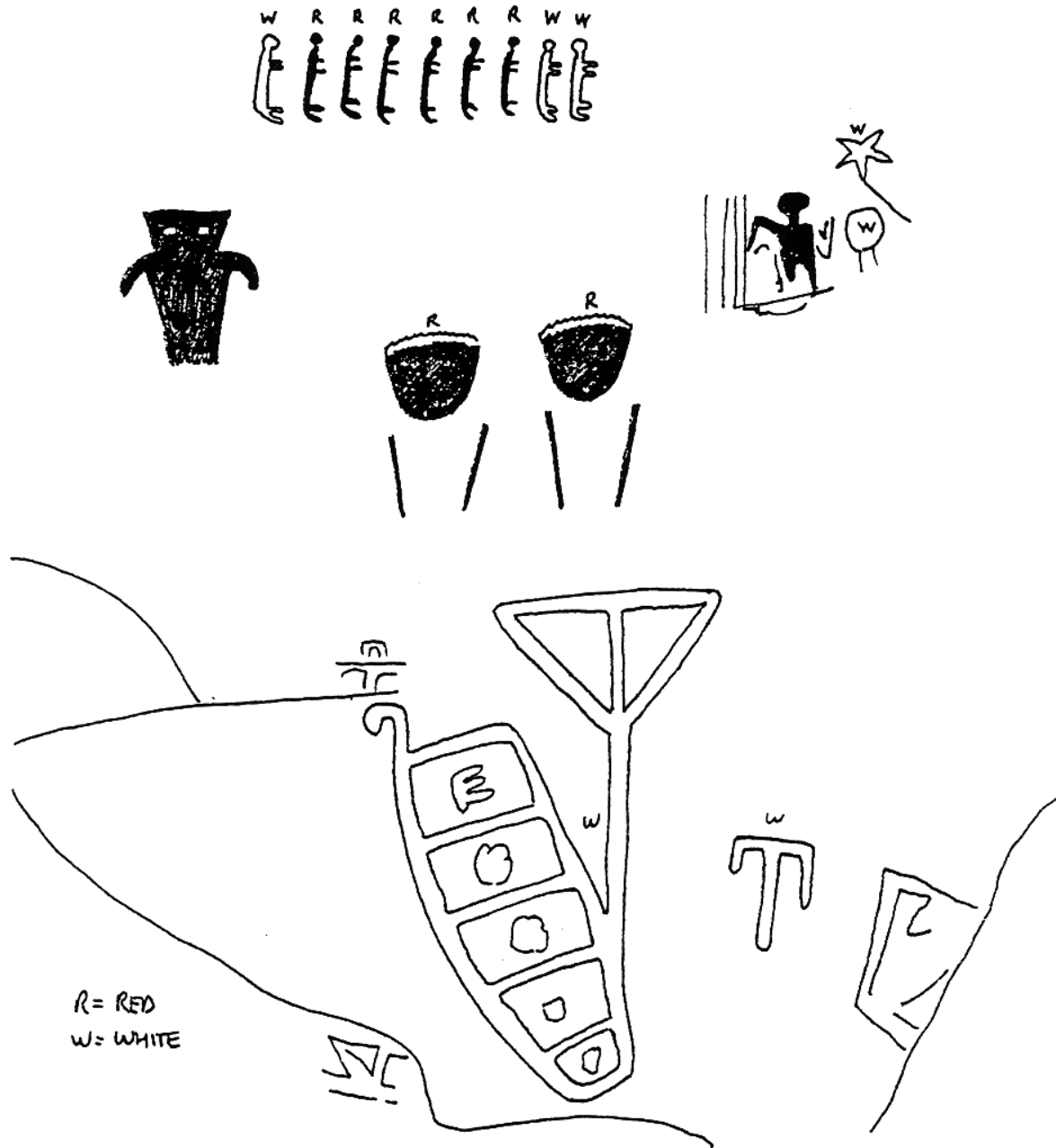
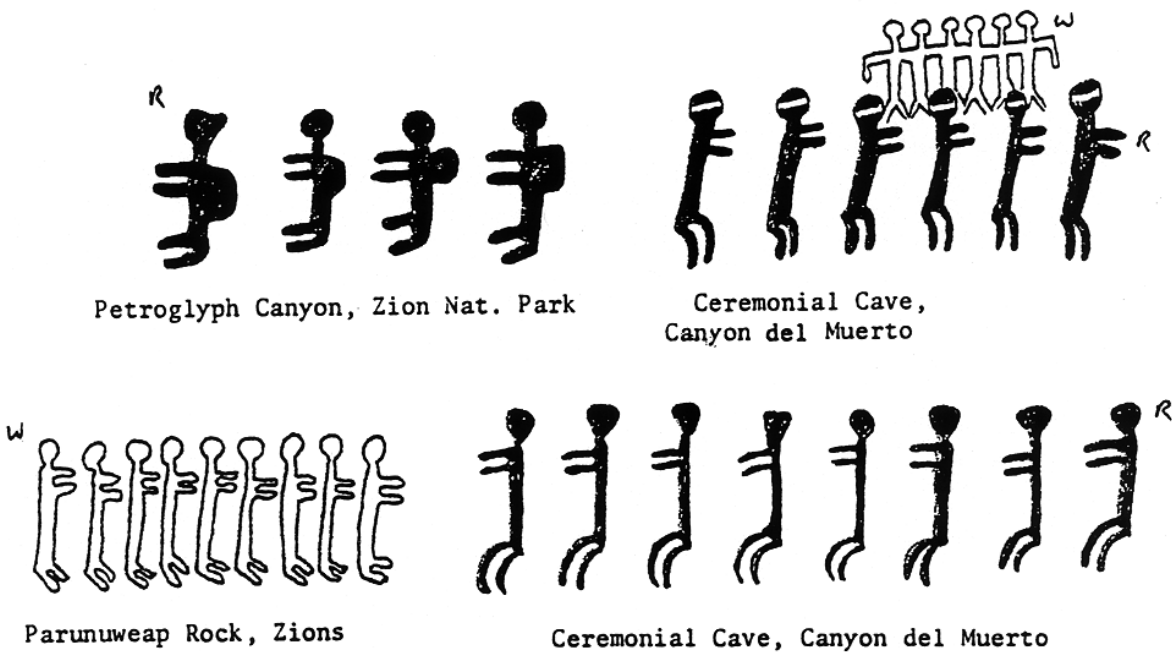


Figure 1. Paruneweap Rock, Zion National Park.

panels. Four additional sites provide material appropriate for this kind of comparison. The first of these is located in Zion National Park (ZNP1).

The central point of ZNP1 consists of nine identical anthropomorphs (identical in shape, not color) all facing the same direction (Figure 1). Six are red, and three are

white. Below this row of anthropomorphs are two larger figures that appear to be possible twin figures. In addition to appearing in context, as on ZNP1, they appear next to similar figures on the Zion National Park Petroglyph Canyon panel and at Ceremonial Cave in Canyon del Muerto (Figures 2 and 3).



Petroglyph Canyon, Zion Nat. Park

Ceremonial Cave, Canyon del Muerto

Parunuweap Rock, Zions

Ceremonial Cave, Canyon del Muerto

Figure 2. Seeds Personified and Carried Throughout the Earth by the Maidens.

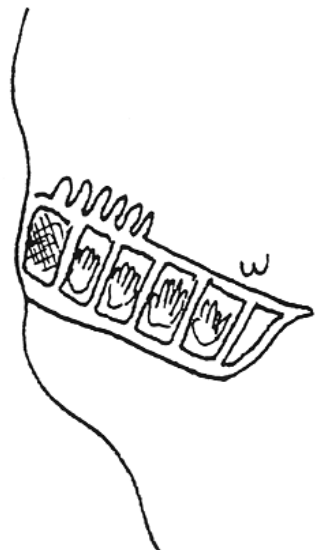


Figure 3. Pictograph Cave, Canyon de Chelly.

The numbers, shapes and orientation of these rows of small figures suggest some strong possibilities for interpretation. Humped backs on the four figures of the

Zion Park panel suggest packs of seeds to be carried to the four quarters of the earth. The near identical shape of these figures compared with those at ZNP1 and Ceremonial Cave would suggest a similar function, i.e., seed carriers or seed personification. The number of these figures would also suggest the Corn Maidens and their Sisters: Squash, Beans and Melons. Corn Maidens can be four, as identified with the cardinal points, or six, as identified with the six directions (north, east, west, south, up and down). When the Corn are joined by Squash, Bean and Melon Maidens, the number can be nine (Tyler 1964:144-145; Parsons 1939:99, 582). The significance of eight maidens will be considered in detail below. All of these numbers are found in the examples illustrated here. The proximity of these figures to twin figures would also suggest that these panels depict some of the mythological ties of the Twins to the Corn Maidens.

A Zuni myth describes a time when people behaved in unseemly ways—committing adultery and neglecting their children. Often the maidens are the object of someone's lust. A priest, who is placed to guard and protect them, tries to seduce them, and they go away. Their usual reaction is to say, "We are your mothers, our flesh is your flesh, how can you wish us to lay with you?" (Benedict 1935:20; Tyler 1964:145-6; Cushing 1979:356-7). The moral of the story is that incest and inter-clan sexual relationships are taboo. Disgusted and disappointed, the Corn Maidens left the people and returned to the paradise under the lake. Their absence resulted in famine—the corn would not grow while they were gone. Something had to be done. Of course, the little Twin War Gods would be sent to find the maidens and return them to Zuni.

In some renditions, a long list of heroes are sent to find the maidens, and all fail, including the Twins, until *Ne'we-kwe* Youth (*Paiyatemu* Youth) enters the scene. In

these renditions it is *Ne'we-kwe* who leads the Maidens back to *Itiwana* (Zuni). Notwithstanding the powers of the War Twins, they needed additional help to find the Maidens. Their major assistance came from the great White Duck. White Duck knew all the trails and never would get lost—no matter how bad the weather or dark the way. A scene from Pictograph Cave shows the Twins standing before the White Duck (possibly to receive instructions) (Figure 4). The final entry into paradise, where the Maidens are hiding, requires added assistance of Rainbow Worm, who humped his back with the Twins riding thereon, allowing them to enter the portals of Paradise (Figures 4 and 5). After finding the Maidens, the Twins are unable to persuade them to return, but they are persuaded to send back their masks, which are to be worn by impersonators at the proper season. The Maidens also promise to be present in spirit when they are properly revered (Benedict 1935:20-43; Tyler 1964:145-6; Cushing 1979:356-62).

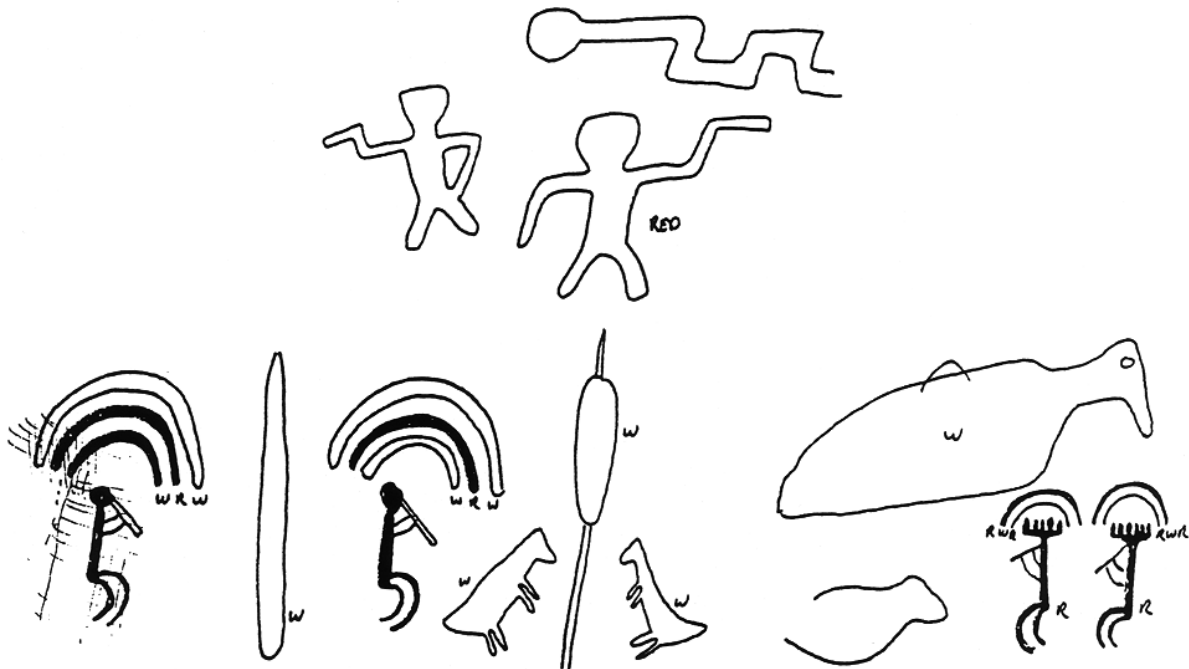


Figure 4. Pictograph Cave, Canyon de Chelly.

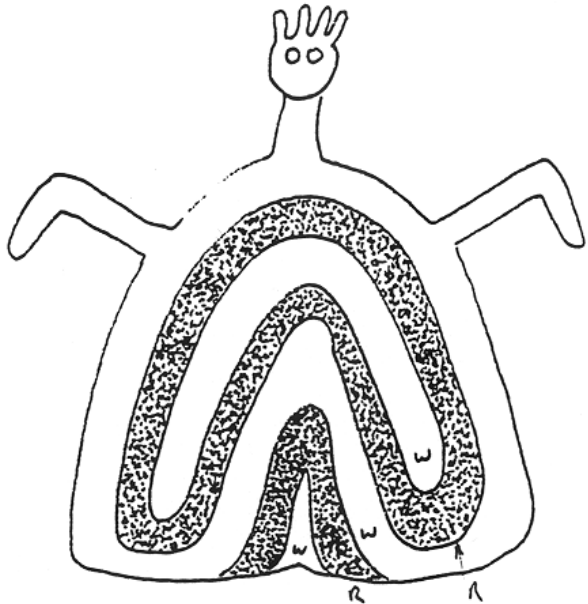


Figure 5. Rainbow Worm.

The wispy-bodied Twins are frequently portrayed as misty figures, and during their pursuit of the Corn Maidens they are described as descending a ladder, and when they reach the fourth (four is the magic number) rung, the whole ladder moves down to the center of the Universe. They have found Kachina Paradise. This beautiful place has many names. It is Wenimats, home of Shiwanna (the dead who are now rainmakers). It is "Listening Springs" or *Ko'thluwala'ua* to the Zuni, or it is "The

Lake of the Dead" in which resides the Council of Gods. The symbols at the bottom of ZNP1 fit the description of such a ladder moving to the center of the universe (Figure 1).

The identity of the dark figure to the left is unknown. The dark and white outlined figure to the right of the Twins could be Paiyatemu, who bears the shield of the sun on his journey. The figure in white to the right of this figure may be a sun shield (Tyler 1964:142-3).

The extensive panel in Ceremonial Cave displays a certain consistency with the mythology associated with ZNP1. In one rendition of the myth, the Corn Maidens are kept from being discovered by the efforts of Father and Mother Duck. The latter conceals them under her wings (three on each side) for four years. Father Duck relieves her from time to time so that she may eat and clean her feathers. Notice in the upper left of Figure 6, two white duck-like figures flank the twins (whose opposite natures are showing). Both ducks are looking in the direction the maidens are moving. The bird to the right seems to be in a brooding position. The movement of the maidens is to the east, hopefully towards Itiwana. The

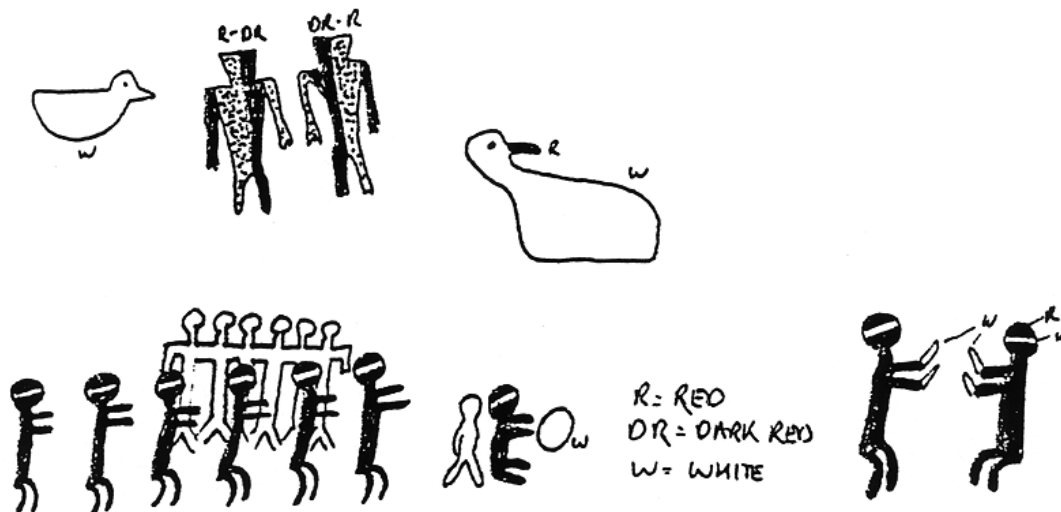


Figure 6. The War Twins Search for the Six Corn Maidens.

six maidens are being led by a small anthropomorph with a white ghost-like double behind him. In front of him is a white, nearly round-shaped object that could be a sun shield, suggesting again the role of Paiyatemu Youth or *Ne'we-kwe* Youth leading the Maidens towards Itiwana. The reddish figures of the maidens and *Ne'we-kwe* may represent kachina impersonators, and the white doubles would seem to represent the spirits that travel and dance behind each kachina impersonator. The Maidens agree to send their spirits to dance behind their masked impersonators. The same condition applies to Paiyatemu Impersonator, who is followed by Paiyatemu's spirit (Tyler 1964:146).

Further to the right two red maiden-like figures dance with corn in their hands. They fulfill the Maiden's wishes that the

dancers hold ears of corn, which represent the Corn Maidens during the dance (Benedict 1935:24, and note 1).

The row of eight maidens, moving in the opposite direction, may be another aspect of the same tradition (Figure 7). Paiyatemu had eight evil sisters. Like the Corn Maidens, they are seed and possibly more. However, they are portrayed as evil because they demand sacrifice. Death is required to bring life. These "Evil Sisters" demand that two young children of the priest be sacrificed, or they cannot bring the rain that will produce new life. The children are killed and buried, and as promised, the rains come. With the rain, new life begins, and the very children that were killed, spring out of the earth alive and well. So also with the rain, the corn that is buried springs forth in new life (Tyler 1964:ff, 144).

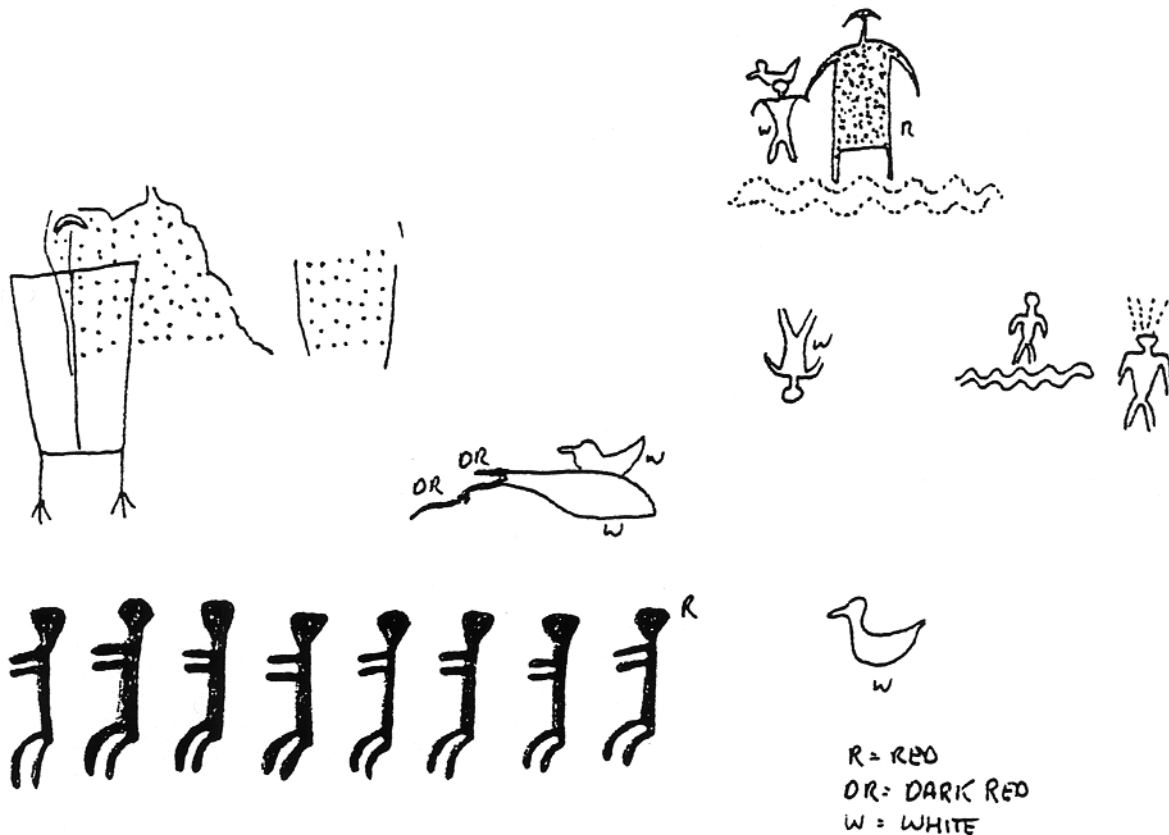


Figure 7. The Evil Sisters of Paiyatmu Demand the Sacrifice for New Life.

The eight maidens in the Ceremonial Cave panel (Figure 7) move to the west to bring the rains (which may be indicated by the cluster of dots above their heads). The small anthropomorphic figure shown upside down, and the beheaded white bird with blood flowing from the neck, could represent sacrifice. Further to the right, and above a serpent (earth), an anthropomorph of the same size as the upside down (deceased) figure stands erect, i.e., alive; and still further to the right, personified corn appears.

Several details that are major considerations in some versions of the myth seem to be clearly represented on the Pictograph Cave panel in Canyon de Chelly. On the extreme left of the panel at Pictograph Cave and on the extreme left of Figure 3, is a sign resembling the "ladder" on ZNP1. This figure looks more like a boat than a ladder, and hand prints appear to be represented between the rungs. It is less erect and may have six ears of corn sticking up above its upper rail. Whether boat or ladder, it would seem to have the same function, i.e., to convey its occupants to Paradise. The shores of a lake are strongly suggested by the distinct line dividing the upper dark colored rock from the lower light colored rock. The large spiral, (moving to the right across the panel) just above the "water line" and flanked by cattails, may represent the place of Emergence.

Flute-playing activities are very important aspects of the Corn Maiden myth. The song of the flute germinates seeds, causes rapid growth, generates sexual excitement and transforms creatures from one shape to another—such as a man to a butterfly, or an ear of corn to a beautiful maiden (Tyler 1964:83, 126, 143, 147; Cushing 1979:360). The help of a potential ally may be secured by the wistful sound of the flute. Such may be the objectives of the twin figures, shown

serenading young ducks or eagles (center of Figure 4), who conspire (as did Father and Mother Duck) to hide the Maidens on the marshy shores of the lake (note the cat-tail suggesting the lake location), or eagles enlisted to search every corner of the sky for the Maidens (Benedict 1935:4). On the far right of Figure 4, twin flute players woo the favor of the Great White Duck, who knows all the trails, is never lost and can surely show them the way to the Maidens.

In some renditions it is Paiyatemu or *Ne'we-kwe* Youth who,

...journeys on, no longer a dirty clown but an aged, grand god, with a colored flute, flying softly as the wind he sought for. Soon he came to the home of the Maidens, whom he greeted, bidding them, as he waved his flute over them, to follow him to the home of their children (the Zuni) [Cushing 1979: 360].

The *Ne'we-kwe* (Clown Society) provides the impersonator of Paiyatemu during the Corn Dance.

In other renditions of the myth, it is the Twins who lead the Maidens, like the "Pied Piper", to death and rebirth every spring. The twins have upside-down rain rakes above their heads (one five pronged and one six pronged). The rake may represent radiance or magical feathers—suggesting that one twin was more powerful or radiant than the other. Rainbows and rain are frequently associated with the Twins—who are rainmakers. The rain rakes above their heads are turned upward, possibly to indicate a time of drought, for the Corn Maidens have not yet returned and there is no rain. There will be no rain until the Corn Maidens return to Itiwana and the Corn Dance is properly concluded (Benedict 1935:24, 41-43).

The Zuni myth concerning the Duck who leads the kachina to Paradise City under the Lake of Death, indicates that the Twins have limitations, which require them to enlist the help of specialists, like the great White Duck and Rainbow Worm. On the

formed, "...and with these (gods) came the little ones (lost children) who had sunk beneath the waters, well and beautiful and all seemingly clad in cotton mantles and precious neck jewels" (Tyler 1964:61-5).

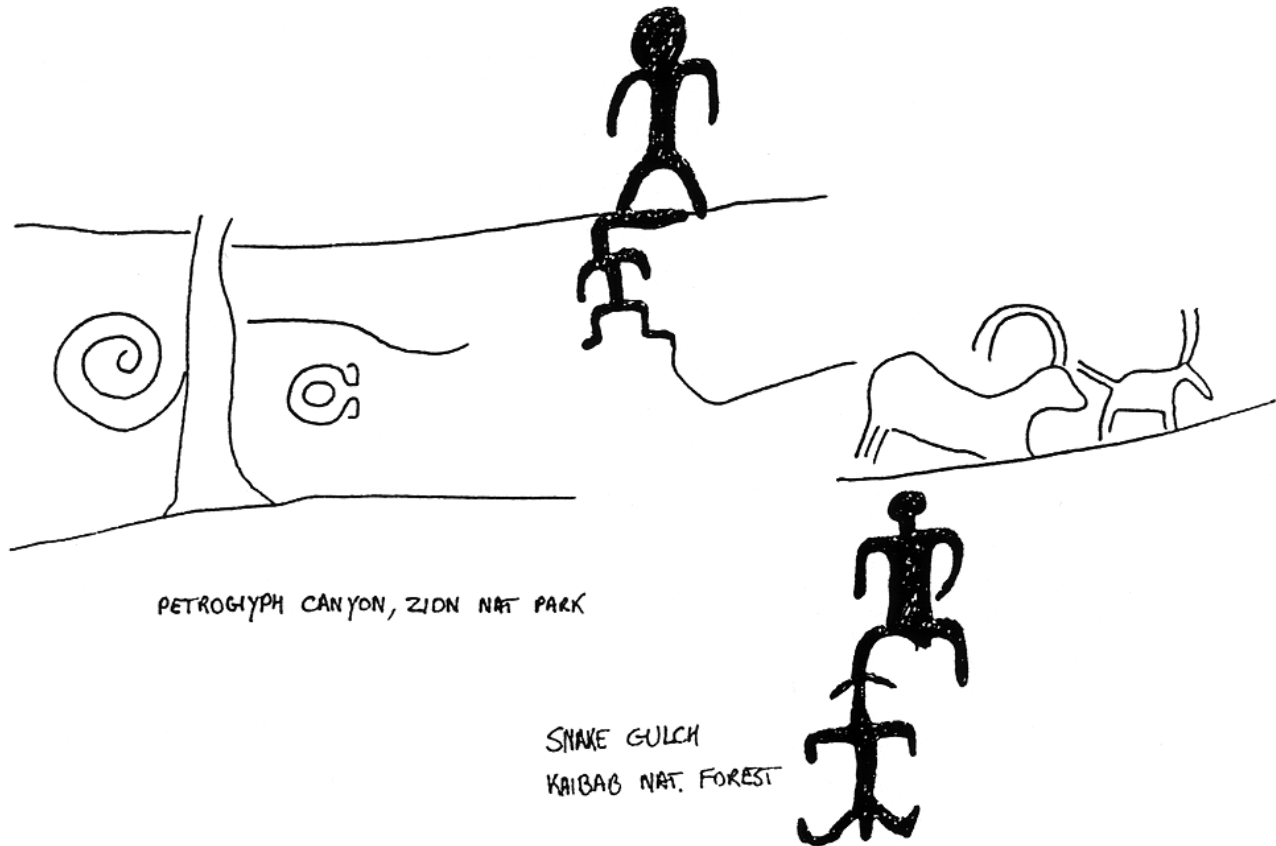


Figure 8. Emergence scenes at Petroglyph Canyon and Snake Gulch.

Pictograph Cave panel, and in the myth, the additional help is given by Rainbow Worm (Figure 5). Rainbow Worm flattens his back to allow the seeker of Paradise to mount; he then humps his back in a rainbow position, raising his passenger to the Matrix Portal of Heaven.

Near the Matrix Portal of Heaven was the Lake of Death and the Magic Ladder of Reeds. Those entering the lake would let themselves down the ladder. When they had gone four steps down, the ladder lowered them into Paradise. The gods then proclaim the Dance of Good to be per-

The orientation of the large white duck and the rainbow, which seem to be larger and higher up than all the other figures, would justify the conclusion that all activities center on them. Twin figures and, in particular, the little war gods are also in the center of activities on the Pictograph Cave panel.

Near the northeastern edge of the Kaibab National Forest, in a cave facing east on the west ridge of Snake Gulch, is a panel some 20 feet in length (Figures 8 and 9). Compared with the Zion National Park Petroglyph Canyon panel, the emergence of the

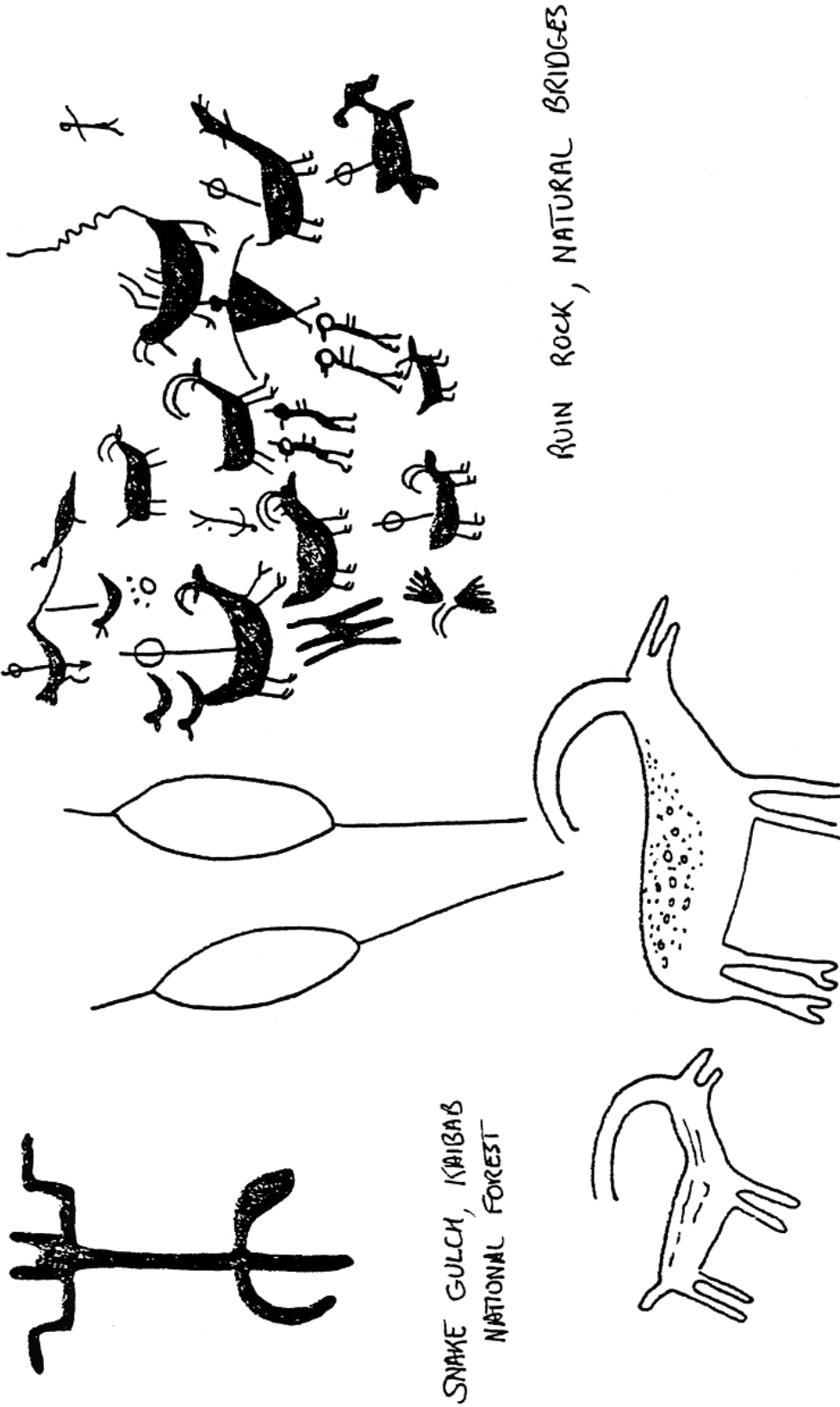


Figure 9.

twin figures is remarkably identical, and the technique of using a natural fissure in the rock to represent a division of one sphere from another seems evident in both panels.

Further to the right, the twins are not visible, but twin atlats point to the back of a monstrous bovine—not unlike the monsters of the Ruin Rock panel at Natural Bridges National Monument (the bovine's back appears to be bleeding). The scene to the right, beyond another vertical fissure in the rock, shows smaller animals of the same type. The monsters are dead, but their smaller, normal-sized children live on (Figure 9).

Frank H. Cushing is sometimes criticized for embellishing his interpretations of Zuni myths. But even his critics seem to agree that he may have captured the spirit of Zuni mythology more than any other scholar. His assessment of the War Twins is placed as a final observation to what cannot possibly be the last word on the War Twins. Cushing said: "Two favorite figures who appear are the Twin War Gods, *Ahaiyuta* and *Matsailema*, otherwise known as 'Our Beloved', the 'Terrible Two', and the 'Boy-Gods of War'. Fathered by the Sun and brought forth out of a patch of foam on the waters of the world, these two figure in the origin myth as guardi-ans and guides who lead the people out of the underworld wombs into light, and later protect them in their struggles and wanderings. Armed, "with the rainbow for their weapon and thunder-bolts for their arrows—swift lighting shafts pointed with turquoise, they were the greatest warriors of all in the new (young) world". Their role as invincible protectors of the Corn People (Zuni and Classic Pueblo cultures), carries over as well into mythology in the form of their services in killing off various monsters. Here, however, another side of their character becomes equally important, i.e., the side

of pure impulse, impishly playful and frequently destructive, even of the humans who chance to get in their way. Olympian-like, child-like or like a natural force (on this side of their natures) they are quite without judgment or feeling with respect to their impact—they simply act (Cushing 1979: 336-7).

In all renditions of the myth, the people look to and pray to the Twins to bring the Maidens back. The Maidens are, in some renditions, brought back by Paiyatemu (*Ne'we-kwe*) or by Pautwa but, "In all renditions it is the Twins that either bring the Maidens back or tell the people how to get them" (Milford 1937:13). The War Twins are still the heroes of the traditional southwest.

ADDENDUM

Some of the figures on the Pictograph Cave panel that have no connection with the Corn Maiden myth, but which can be identified from Zuni mythology, are listed below.

Figure 10.

Earth Mother stands next to Rainbow Worm, for he is the bridge between earth and heaven. Rainbow's head is above all other figures in the "Village" and he touches the upper sphere, i.e., the strip consisting of

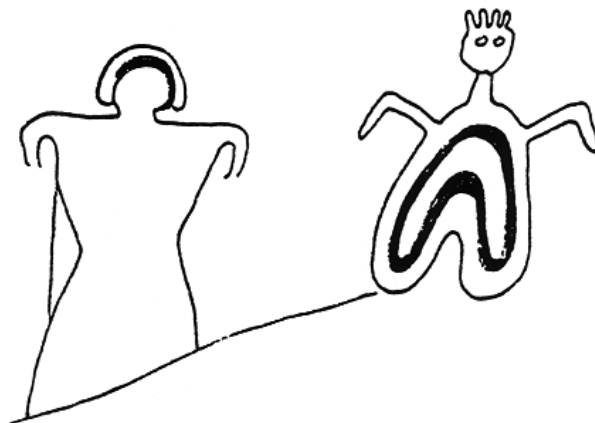


Figure 10.

a darker shade of red above his head. Earth Mother is large and pure white. She is considered to be the mother of all animals (among the Hopi and Tewa) who are her constant concern (Parsons 1939:540). Among the Zuni the turtle is frequently a symbol of earth (Parsons 1939:n.t., 182). Hard Beings Woman, identified with beads and shells, i.e., the hard substances of earth and somewhat distant or lofty, can also be identified with the turtle-like figure (Tyler 1964:82) (Figure 11).



Figure 11.

Figure 12.

Thinking Woman is the Zuni procreator of mankind. In Sia Pueblo she is called *Ses'sustinako*. She "thinks" everything into existence (Tyler 1964:82; Stevenson 1898:40-41). This figure may also represent the Hopi Childbirth or Child-Water Woman. Parsons explains the relationship as follows:

The name, *Tihkuyi Whute*, Child-Water Woman, may refer to the incident of the misdelivery of her child, "woman with the protruding child". It is the Child-Water Woman who sends women their children by projecting into them infant images (Parsons 1939: 183).

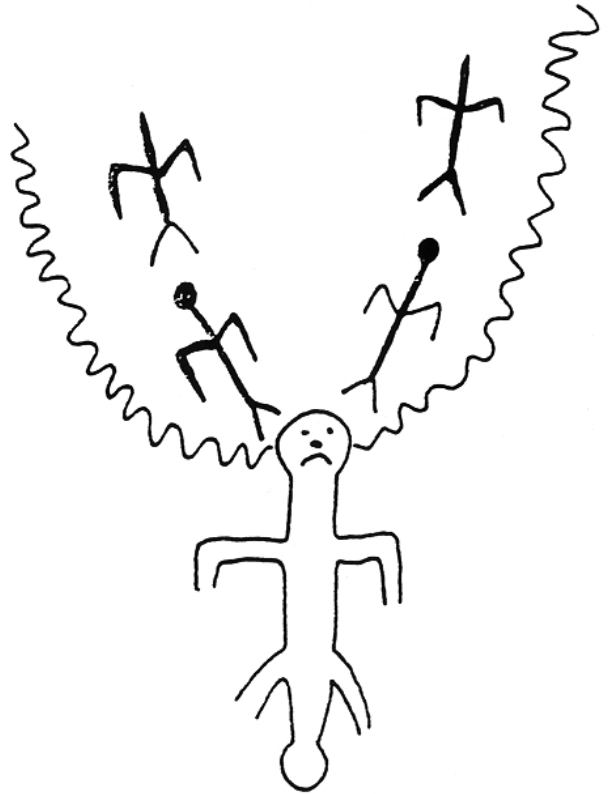


Figure 12.

A constant problem with all mythology is the absorption of characteristics and attributes between strong gods and goddesses at different times and in different places. Consequently, loose identifications are more realistic and valuable than are tight inflexible labels.

Figure 13.

This figure represents the War Twins in their Storm God aspect. The War Twins may intercede to bring rain and are also given power to act for Storm Gods, such as *Sho'tokunungwo* (who has a storm cloud-like horn rising from the middle of his head) or *Cotukvnangi*, who gave the Twins lightning and thunder and taught them how to kill their enemies, who are generally the common enemies of all mankind (Tyler 1964:100-102; Fewkes 1903:120, pl. LXIII). The Twins represent the Storm God, as the War Chiefs represent the Twins.

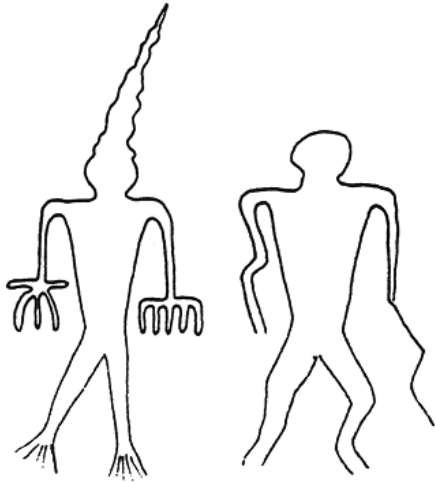


Figure 13.

REFERENCES CITED

- Benedict, Ruth.
1935 *Zuni Mythology*, Vol. 1, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Cushing, Frank H.
1979 *Zuni*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London.
- Fewkes, J. Walter
1903 *Hopi Kachinas, Drawn by Native Artists*. Bureau of American Ethnology, 21st Annual Report, 1899-1900, Washington D.C. Reprinted 1962, Rio Grande Press, Chicago, Illinois.
- Harris, James R.
1982 The War Twins Petroglyph and a Tentative Interpretation. *American Indian Rock Art* 7 and 8:165-176
- Milford, Stanley J.
1937 The Twin War God Myth Cycle. *El Palacio* 43(1-2-3):1-13 and 43(4-5-6):19-29.
- Osborn, Chase S. and Stellanova Osborn
1942 *Schoolcraft, Lonfellow, Hiawatha*. Jacques Cattell Press, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
- Parsons, Elsie C.
1939 *Pueblo Religion*. Two Volumes. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Radin, Paul
1950 The Basic Myths of the North American Indians. *Eranos-Jarhbuch* Vol. 17. Rhein-Verlag, Zürich.
- Schoolcraft, Henry R.
1839 *Algic Researches Comprising the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians. First Series. Indian Tales and Legends*. Two Volumes. Harper Press, New York.
- Stevenson, Matilda C.
1898 Zuni Ancestral Gods and Masks. *American Anthropologist* Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.
- Tyler, Hamilton A.
1964 *Pueblo Gods and Myths*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma.