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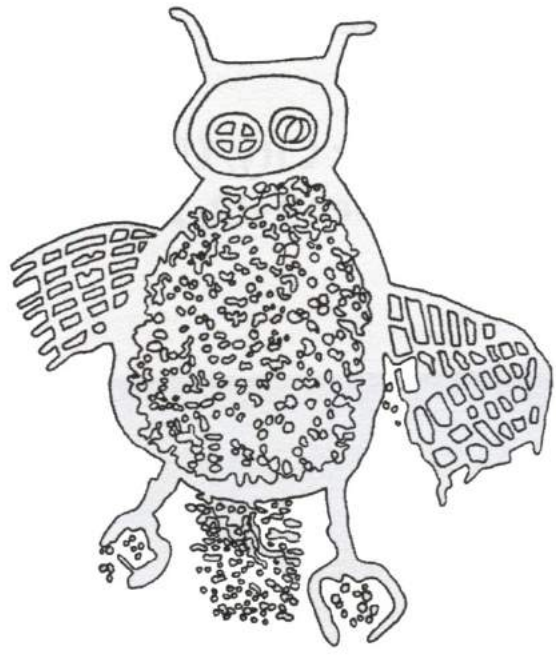
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Bernard M. Jones, Jr

RAINBOWS AND ARCS IN NATIVE AMERICAN ROCK ART..

The rainbow is a symbol in Native American creation stories and ceremonies, and in Katsinas decorations (Patterson-Rudolph 1997:26, 33, 50, 75). Rainbows may represent a bridge between earth and sky (Schaafsma 1986b:226) and a passing of rain (Mallery 1893:612). The most significant clustering of rainbow symbols is found in the San Rafael Fremont sites in South Central Utah (Castleton and Madsen 1981:173). But rainbow symbols are found in other areas in Utah, for example along the Escalante River, and in surrounding states, especially in Arizona at Pictograph Cave in Canyon de Chelly, and in New Mexico at the Three Rivers Site.

Carobeth Laird in her splendid book on the Chemehuevis describes how "When there is a storm in the desert, thunder rumbles and crashes; beneath dark clouds the rain thrusts forward like an advancing army, accompanied by the glare a crackle of lightning; while away from the center of the storm, rainbows arch over valleys or hang their transparent arcs of glory across rugged cliffs (Laird 1976:99).

A remarkable arc of glory is found in Paiute Cave (Figure 1), which is located in the Arizona Strip about thirty miles south of Colorado City. The cave was formed by a collapsed lava tube, with the entrance being an opening at the base of a sinkhole. At mid-day the cave is dark, but Alva Matheson told me that in the early morning sunlight does come through to illuminate the arc.



Figure 1. Paiute Cave Rainbow

Also along the Arizona Strip, located in the Kaibab National Forest southeast of Jacob Lake, at the Red Point Site, there are four parallel arcs with six possible rays (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Kaibab Red Point Arcs

A rainbow painted in six colors is located in Utah at the Red Hole Wash (Figure 3), and is pictured in Castleton's *Petroglyphs and Pictographs of Utah*, Volume One, page 123. He describes the rainbow or arc as "the only one of this kind I have seen, an interesting and most unusual figure." The picture was given to

me by Glenn Stone, who described the location to me as being on the East side of the Molen Seep Range, East of Highway 10, in East Central Utah.



Figure 3. Red Hole Wash Rainbow

In Molen Seep Canyon there is a red pictograph of an anthropomorph and a double arc, with smaller arcs over three figures under the double arc (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Molen Seep Double Arc

In Ferron Box, also east of Highway 10, there is a panel above Ferron Creek, with an apparent arc on the left side. But the best panel, high on the cliffs near the northeast end of the canyon, is a red and white rainbow. Under the rainbow there are anthropomorphs with triangular bodies and a possible deer. A petroglyph arc is to the right (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Ferron Box Rainbow Panel

The dominant figure at the large main panel at Rochester Creek is what Sally Cole, in her *Legacy on Stone*, calls a "rainbowlike motif (probably Fremont in origin)" (Cole 2009:77). This large design is composed of eight parallel lines which arc around dozens of animals and anthropomorphs, including a male and female who may portray conception and birthing. In fact, the large number of living creatures, deer with antlers and mountain sheep with prominent horns bending over their bodies, suggests a celebration of life forms (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Rochester Creek Panel

The Silent Sentinel Site in the talus boulders at the front of the southern slope of Cedar Mountain has a panel with many over-lapping figures, and central among them is an arc or rainbow over an anthropomorph (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Silent Sentinel Site

Some of the anthropomorphs have tapered bodies, and others more square in style or humpbacked, suggesting diverse time periods. A second site, further east, is called Daisy Chain, and has an arc made with two parallel lines. There are also snakes on the panel, as well as historic graffiti (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Daisy Chain arc panel

In Nine Mile Canyon there is a panel with an arc composed of two parallel lines (Figure 9). A possible sun symbol, a deer and other glyphs under the arc are among the representational and abstract designs on the panel.



Figure 9. Nine Mile Canyon Arc

In Dry Fork Valley, northwest of Vernal, there is a panel with a white anthropomorph and designs with red pigment on either side. To the left is what appears to be an arc composed of two red parallel lines, above what could be the head and shoulders of an anthropomorph (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Dry Fork Valley Arc

Possible rainbow arcs appear over the head of a figure at Buckhorn Wash (Figure 11). Carol Patterson-Rudolph, in her *On the Trail of the Spider Woman*, refers to a rain deity at Buckhorn Wash, and that a "third diety has a rainbow over his head, which represents the sky" (Patterson-Rudolph 1997:75).



Figure 11. Buckhorn Wash Arc

Possible arcs appear above the heads of some human figures in Horseshoe Canyon (Figure 12), but the sequence of such arcs or wavy lines raises a question as to whether they are really arcs, which illustrates the difficulty in identifying arcs and rainbows with certainty, where no ethnographic evidence is available.



Figure 12. Horseshoe Canyon Arc?

The Dancing Circle Site along the Escalante River, west of the town of Escalante, has two arcs or rainbows to the right side of the panel (Figure 13). The flute player, dancing circle and figure with the crook hooking down the rain drops, would seem to relate to the ethnography of rain making ritual, which could validate the rainbow symbolism.



Figure 13. Escalante Dancing Circle

Rainbow Bridge (Figure 14), according to Karl Luckert in Navajo Mountain and Rainbow Bridge Religion, was a site for Navajo offerings and rituals for rain necessary for growth and increase of crops. He also tells of a Navajo, Buster Hastin Nez, going to Rainbow Bridge at about 1935 to hold a major ceremonial requesting rain. Nez stated that the prayed-for rain actually started falling as the party was returning from the ceremony (Luckert 1977:131-132). Rainbow Bridge was first visited by non-Indians in 1909, with Native American guides. John Wetherill and Neil Judd were in that party, and Judd tells of seeing an altar or shrine there on his earlier visits (Judd 1967:39).



Figure 14. Rainbow Bridge Site

At Picture Canyon in the Dead Mountains, in California just west of the southern tip of Nevada, there is an arc of three to four parallel lines over a water seep (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Arc at Dead Mountains

West of Stoneman Lake, in north central Arizona, there is an arc or rainbow made of two parallel lines over a human figure (Figure 16). The rock is lightning struck, according to Al Matheson, with the lightning mark going nearly all the way around the rock.



Figure 16. West Stoneman Lake Arc

At Canyon de Chelly, in Pictograph Cave, there are two flute players under rainbows, with a large bird and two smaller birds along with a hand print and an anthropomorph (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Twin Flute Players Under Rainbows at Canyon de Chelly

Also, there is a seated flute player under a rainbow, painted in red and white, with other figures (Figure 18).



Figure 18. Seated Flute Player

These pictures, given to me by Jim Duffield, a former URARA member, date from the climactic rock art period in Canyon de Chelly (Grant 1978:247).

The cloud terrace with rain, rainbow and lightning is a frequent symbol in New Mexico, with several versions at the Three Rivers site. The most familiar features a corn plant, with the cloud terrace, rain, rainbow and lightning, and a bird on top (Figure 19).



Figure 19. Panel at Three Rivers

Along the upper Rio Grande watershed a majority of the rock art sites have water related imagery, with the rainbow being a frequent feature (Slifer 1998:4,212-213).

In conclusion, the role of the rainbow in Native American story and mythology is well illustrated in Carobeth Laird's book on *Mirror and Pattern: George Laird's World of Chemehuevi Mythology*. After her marriage to ethnographer John Peabody Harrington dissolved, she married her Chemehuevi informant, George Laird, who was the source of her Chemehuevi Indian research. Among the stories he told her was the following: "When Coyote, standing lookout at the mouth of the tunnel, had sighted the advancing host of Bear People, he likened them to rain; and that, George explained, is the reason Wolf wore the primary rainbow, 'because the rainbow always comes when the rain goes away.' He went on to say that 'there are always two rainbows - a bright one you can always see, and a dimmer one above it that is hard to see or sometimes invisible.' This secondary rainbow is Coyote's warclothes. Coyote took only four colors and put them on one at a time, but 'Wolf took all the colors together.' Wolf's warclothes is one name for the primary rainbow" (Laird 1984:80).

So again the prominence of the rainbow imagery is illustrated in Native American stories and culture.

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