

Dragonfly Petroglyphs and Pictographs

Images of Dragonflies across the Southwest

By
Paula K. Reynosa

I am going to take you on an adventure. But first I must tell you what I'm looking for. It is **the dragonfly**! The native cultures of the southwest have held them with awe and respect and put them in their rock art for a long, unknown how long, time. The adventure we will travel though will show you what has been found and possible written about at this moment. The "looking for" the dragonfly will continue into the future. What is a dragonfly? (See figure 1).



Figure 1. Photograph by Paula Reynosa/in Panama

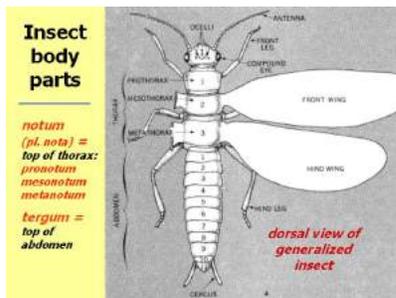


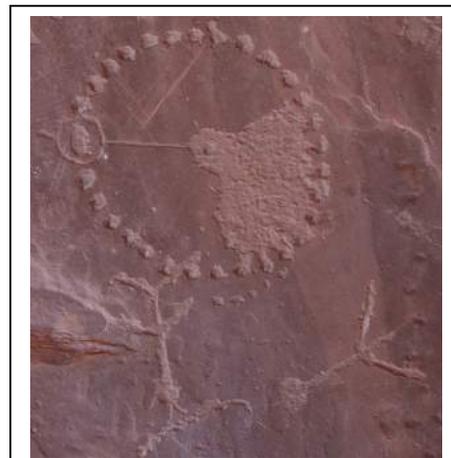
Figure 2. Generic Diagram of a Dragonfly

Here is the cousin, the damselfly. Its wings work differently than the dragonfly. Its life cycle is similar for they both start life as eggs hatching in water.



Figure 3. Photograph by Paula Reynosa

Background



Mansard site, Utah

Figure 4. Photograph by Paula Reynosa

The inspiration for this paper came from my recording of the Mansard Site. (I had had the job of drawing the images on this alcove's floor in Southwestern Utah-(2012-BLM). One square meter of that floor had two

Criteria for Dragonflies should have 3 of the following elements.

1. A line representing the body, thick or thin.
2. Cross bar(s), thick or thin crossing the line or
3. One or two open loops crossing at right angles representing wings.
4. One or two crossing lines having a square, triangle or split tail.
5. A head or a swelling at one end of line representing the head.

Samples



images that I am calling dragonflies. Are there other dragonflies that look similar to these in the Southwest?

My adventure:

Once upon a time, there was a dragonfly. His ancestors have lived on our planet for over 250 million years. They are survivors. They lived and are still living in the age of mammals.

I want to introduce you to my friend, the dragonfly man.



Figure 5. This image was found on Kiva 7 wall in Pottery Mound, NM. He lives in a report by Frank C. Hibben.

He is going to help me find his relatives. He is going to take us on an adventure to see his brothers and cousins and where they lived in the Southwest. As you know, in an excavation, one layer after another is destroyed after it has been documented, so I am showing you pictures of murals that no longer exist.

Usually you don't hear about the dragonfly. Most people look at a mural and see the main images, but if you look at the whole mural, there in the background are the dragonfly images.

Example



Figure 6. Kiva mural in Pottery Mound, NM

Question: What must my brothers and cousins look like? The criteria that I developed goes like this:

A line representing the body; thick or thin. Cross bar(s) thick or thin crossing the line or

One or two open loops crossing at right angles representing wings

One or two crossing lines having a square, triangle or split tail

A head or swelling at one end of the line representing the head.

Dragonfly man's Adventure

We go first to see who is found in the state of California.

Anza Borrego, CA

My first adventure took me to the desert in Anza Borrego. These are dragonflies? Here is the whole ceiling. How many dragonflies do you see?



Figure 7. Photograph by Paula Reynosa.

This site is 25 feet up from an intermittent stream. It includes two grinding slicks and mortar holes, so it shows that it was a residential place for a portion of the year. The ceiling was partly repainted in 1930, according to Ken Hedges. If you look closely, the image in white had a long tail, but in the repainting they made it into a cross or star figure.

Grapevine, CA

The next site is up the Colorado River at Grapevine. My brother or cousin is found at the entrance of the canyon along with other images that welcome the visitors. A short distance away is a shelter with tobacco growing at the entrance overlooking an area that has a slick-rock slide.



Figure 8. Photograph by Paula Reynosa.

Grand Canyon, AZ

From Grapevine we go to the Grand Canyon and here is a picture painted with red ochre from Don Christensen and Steve Freer's book. Notice the heavy flaking on the wall, indicating that the images have been there for a

long time.



Figure 9. Photograph by Steve Freers.

Pastyle Style Area, AZ

Have you heard of Palavayu Anthropomorphic Style (Pastyle for short)? It was first named by Ekkehart Malotki. It is found in Arizona. There are three dragonflies in this image. Can you find them? Twenty years ago, Ekkehart wrote an article on the dragonflies in this area.

"I really have no idea what kind of people created these dragonflies, would guess however that they were pre- Basketmaker or late Archaic. They are part of a complex that I have named Palavayu Anthropomorphic Style (Pastyle for short) for which no reliable scientific dating's exist." (Ekkehart Malotki, personal communication).

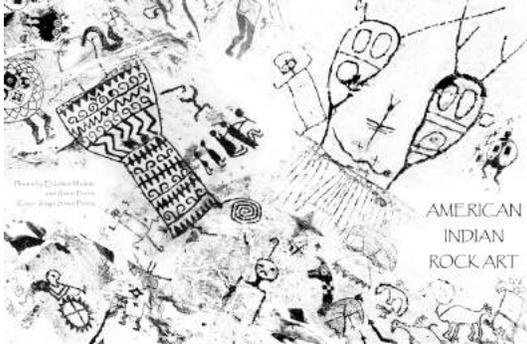


Figure 10. Permission from Steve Freers.

Tucson Area

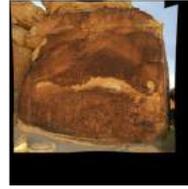
I am now taking you to Tucson, where there is a site with seven hills. Much has been written about the Flower World images in these hills lately. Here is my brother who lives among the Flower World images.



Figure 11. Photograph by Nina Bowen.

I am now leaving Arizona and flying to meet my cousin at Rochester Creek, a very old site with many images. If you look closely in the right place, can you find my cousin? Somebody pecked over part of him. The superimposition indicates that the dragonfly image is older.

Rochester Creek



Figures 12 & 13. Gigapan by Robert Marks



Central Utah

The next site is in Central Utah. Here are two flying helpers waiting on the central figure.



Figure 14 Photograph by Gary Burningham.

Southwest Utah

Black Mountain

In the same area at Black Mountain, there is this image. Is it a dragonfly or a cross?



Figure 15. Photograph by Nina Bowen.

If you put it in context with the panel it is found on, then you may want to label it a dragonfly. Here it is in context with other representational images that include the sign for water. But it is not a dragonfly for it doesn't have 3 qualifying elements.



Figure 16. Photograph by Nina Bowen.

Paria River

On a cliff overlooking the Paria River are these two dragonflies diving. The one on the left has some missing parts, but fits the criteria of a dragonfly. It looks as though it is diving into the river below.

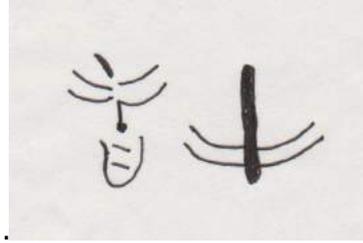


Figure 17

My Hopi brothers had a Dragonfly Clan. It is listed as extinct. Some of the possible dragonfly images have been put in with the butterfly clan at the Willow Springs site in Arizona. (Tutu). The site records Hopi travel to the Grand Canyon for salt.



Figure 18 Photograph by Nina Bowen.

New Mexico

In the area of **Silver City** in the Mimbres region, we find this image along the Dragonfly Trail. Notice the square tail in the design.

We are going far up the Rio Grande River Watershed to **Cuba Rock Shelter** in New Mexico. On the mesa overlooking this spring/alcove are Puebloan ruins.

Here the Navaho put dragonflies on the ceiling with star images. There a possible 20 such site with this combination. A question that has been asked is this Puebloan or possible Apache influenced?

The first dragonfly has square wings, the second one is red ochre with square wings, and the third one has shaped wings that have outlined in black charcoal.



Figure 19, 20, 21. Photographs by L. L. Loendorf

How were they photographed? Here is Mark Willis at work.



Figure 20.
The images were recorded, with a camera and a pole.

Here is how to measure.



Figure 21.

The Apache influence may have extended as far south as **Chaco Canyon**, where I have another brother.

He is very realistic in a different way from that of the Barrier Canyon Style. He is similar to a dragonfly on a pre-contact shield found at **Writing on Stone in Canada**. Here they are for comparison.



Figure 22. Photograph by Paula Reynosa.

Chaco Image, New Mexico



Figure 23. Photograph by Paula Reynosa. Writing on Stone, Canada

Central New Mexico in the **Jornada/Mogollon area** is where you will find my brother along the Galisteo Dike.



Figure 24. Photograph by John Forethe

Just south of Albuquerque and to the east is **Arroyo Del Macho**. It has five dragonflies, four of which are connected to other images. Only one stands alone, not connected to other water images.

Paula Reynosa has internet friends. Some of them have been very helpful and found some of my brothers and cousins in their collections of pictures.

Here are some of those that have contributed. Michael Redford has pictures from the **La Cienega site** that he has shared. In La Cienega there is a very long ridge with many petroglyphs on volcanic material.

Here is my brother and two brothers that were put together, and a very nice split tail dragonfly.



Figure 25. Photograph by Michael Redford



Figure 26, 27 Photographs by Michael Redford

This image is found in the Cheyenne culture. They put it on their horses, hides and teepees.

This is the only example I have found with the split tail design. La Cienega is not known to be Cheyenne territory.

Polly Schaafsma wrote in her article about this area:

“It should be noted that in addition to generalized ceremonial figures, elements related to the rain-making complex, such as Katsina masks, the stepped cloud terrace, and dragonfly, are so pervasive that I have not included them in this distributional complex”.

Mrs. Reynosa’s friend John Forsythe shared his Facebook picture of a rock with seven dragonflies near **Taos, New Mexico**. One has a straight tail, four have box tails and two have triangle tails.



Figure 26. Photograph by Michael Redford.

Before I go to Petroglyph National Monument, I would like to take you to the **Pecos River in Texas**. A distant cousin is found on painted walls there.

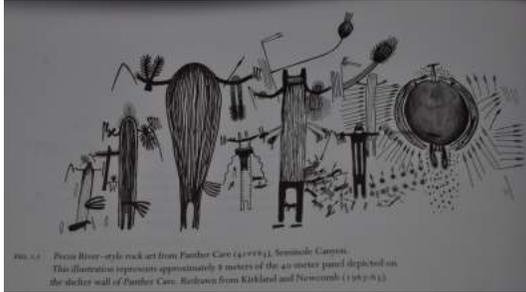


Figure 27.

Petroglyph National Monument

All of the following photographs are by Paula Reynosa.

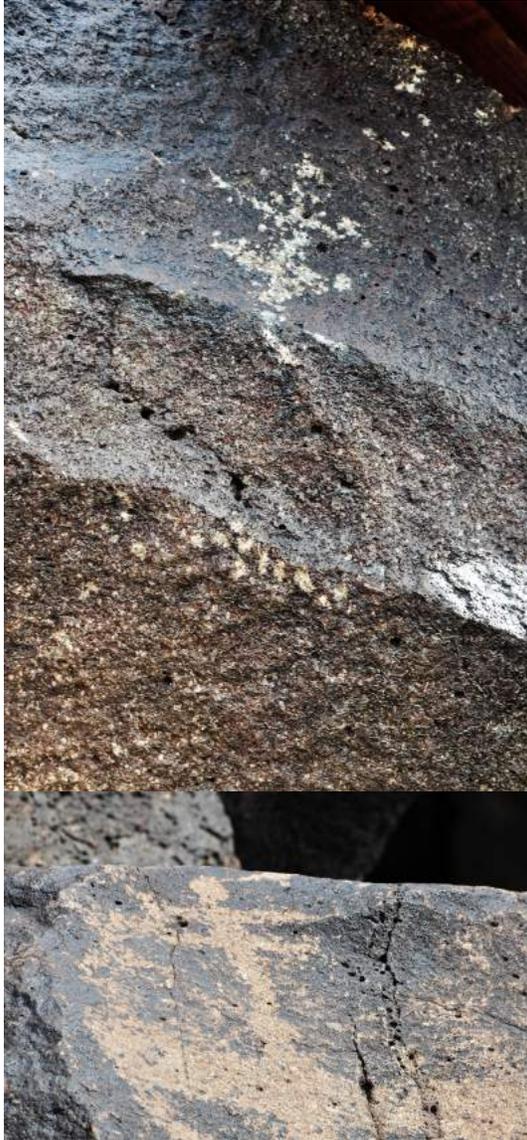
The 1 ½ mile ridge at **Petroglyph National Monument** contains 48 dragonfly images. They are given a Puebloan ancestry. Here are a few.

The first is the same as the one found in Polly Schaafsma's book *Rock Art in New Mexico*. The Pueblo Indians that farmed along the Rio Grande used the dragonfly symbol in their spiritual life.



Here there are two together.





Here “dragonfly” is found grouped with another avian image.



The last dragonfly is connected to the nighthawk symbol found in their myths.

The Puebloan ancestors used the dragonfly image in/on their pottery.

Alex Patterson shows more dragonflies found on their pottery in his book *Hopi Pottery Symbols and their Meanings*.

Frank Hamilton Cushing tells in his book *Zuni Breadstuff* of the creation myth of dragonfly with the commitment to incorporate “dragonfly” into their pottery for all time.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Mrs. Reynosa’s friend Nina Bowen for helping us on this adventure.

This category “dragonfly” undoubtedly needs some refinement with future research and as new locations are found and noted.

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