

YOYNAWAKNA:

A Petroglyphic Rain Prayer
at a Post-Spanish Hopi Site
in Northeastern Arizona

The need for rain and its reflection in the iconography of Hopi material and ritual culture is well known. In fact, it may fairly be said that Hopi ritual, in all its detail and complexity, is at its base a prayer for rain and the growth that ensues.

One unique expression of this desire for rain is a rock art panel which has been given the name "Yoyleki," a Hopi word meaning 'falling rain.' This image, typically consisting of clouds, falling rain, and lightning, is the quintessential Hopi water icon, and is used in a number of ritual contexts including kachina masks and altar screens.

Far from any access roads, "Yoyleki" is situated along a terraced mesa spur that projects south from Hotevilla toward Apoonivi, the highest elevation on the Hopi Reservation, and is in perfect condition, unlike the well-known Tutuventiungwu. Approximately 230 cm in width and 125 cm in height, the "Yoyleki" panel probably constitutes the most consciously designed and meticulously crafted rock art tableau in Northern Arizona. Both the stylistic coherence and the thematic integrity of its engraved images convincingly suggest that the hand of a single artist was responsible for this petroglyphic masterpiece (Fig. 1). To facilitate the identification of the iconographic elements, they are keyed with letters on a schematic drawing of the panel (Fig. 2).

With the exception of some petroglyphic images collected by Fewkes (1892) and Stephen (1936:1025–1033) primarily in the area adjacent to First Mesa, not much has been recorded about the rock art in the immediate vicinity of the Hopi villages. Tutuventiungwu, or the "Clan Rocks" site near Willow Springs, as it is generally referred to today, is famous for its linear sequences of Hopi clan symbols. Michaelis (1981: 7), who has provided the most detailed analysis of the location, counts over 2,000 glyphs that are engraved on some forty boulders of red Wingate sandstone. However, the totemic signatures that



Fig. 1 The "Yoyleki" site. Approximate width 230 cm.

were incised here by Hopi men as commemorative devices of their participation in a salt-gathering expedition to the Grand Canyon are found some sixty miles west of the Third Mesa community of Old Oraibi, the ancient departure point for the trek to the salt mines. Featured in many journal articles as the quintessential and prototypic example of Southwestern rock art, the site, which is easily accessible, attracts many visitors each year and has suffered heavy vandalism from Native Americans and Whites alike. Yet the depicted clan symbols are totally atypical when compared to rock art elements at other sites in the general region.

The "Yoyleki" site, then, is unique not only in its condition and nearness to the Hopi mesas, but in its aesthetic integrity as a comprehensive image in support of the need for rain. It is in effect an expanded *yoyleki* in its iconography, an earnest prayer for rain, captured in the Hopi language by the verb compound *yoynawakna*, 'to rain-pray.' It is also unique in its inclusion of a hatted human figure.

Whatever the ultimate verdict may be concerning the role of the hatted

human and what this may indicate regarding the age of the site, the site's iconographic motifs are first and foremost "steeped" in aqueous symbolism which may be interpreted in terms of Hopi ethnography. Nearly halved by an erect maize plant (A) which is rooted in a foundation of clouds and falling rain (B), the panel intrinsically stands for the Hopi *yoyleki*, whose features consist of semicircular clouds, falling rain streaks, and zigzag lightning bolts (Fig. 3). It was this basic configuration of the Hopi rain emblem underlying the entire imagery that inspired the name given to the site. The lightning bolts of the *yoyleki*, represented here by the pantographic sticks of a *talwiipiki* (C), or 'lightning frame,' and a stylized "lightning" snake on the left (D), are matched on the right, almost equidistantly to the corn stalk, by the depiction of the Hopi *Paalölöqangw*, or "Water Serpent" (E).

As powerful controllers of all bodies of water such as springs, pools, lakes, rivers, and the oceans, the deified Water Serpent is both feared and revered by the Hopi. Endowed with cervid horn, avian feathers, and reptil-

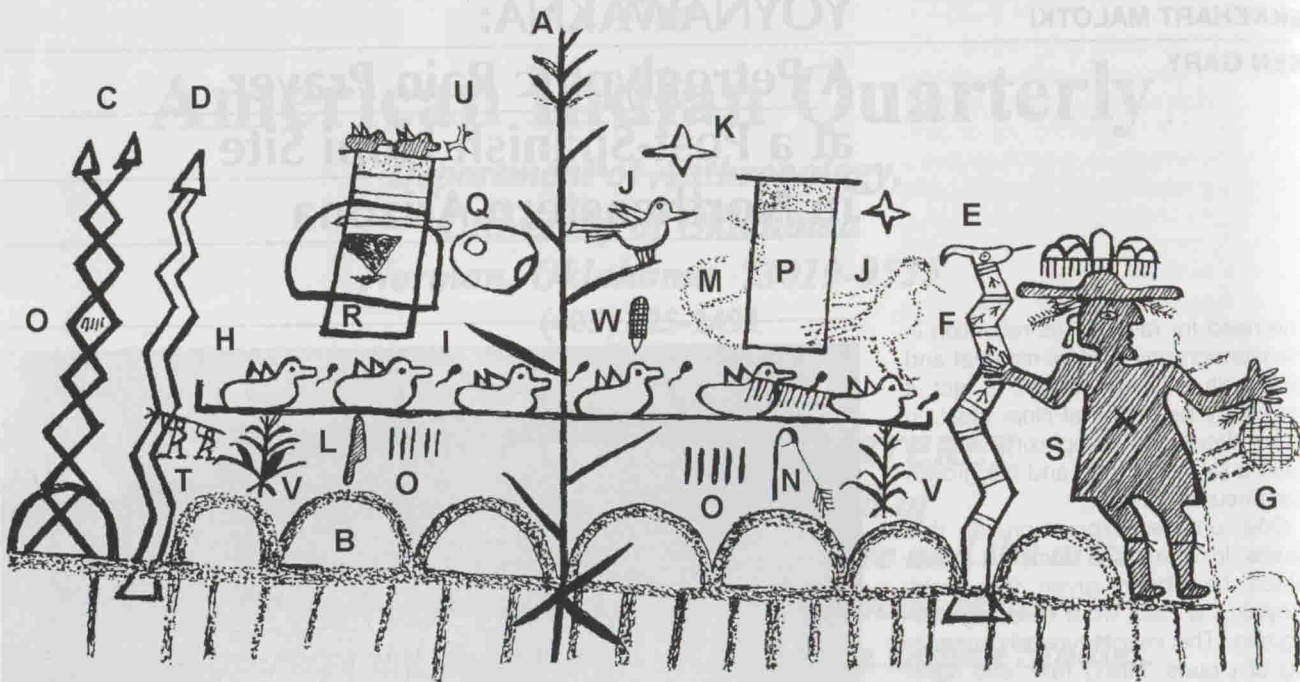


Fig. 2 Schematic drawing of "Yoyleki" site.

ian body, the hybrid creature, in its linkage to water, so fundamental to the sustenance of all animal, vegetal, and human life, represents one of the most powerful embodiments of fertility in Hopi religion and mythology. In addition to the horn, the head of the animal is crested with a tuft of ochre-stained feathers, similar to those worn by members of the Snake society, and by a fan of eagle tail feathers. Bulging eyes and a tongue protruding from its dentate mouth complete the monster's appearance.

The horn, a widely-diffused symbol of supernatural power and male sexual potency, is bent backward in its portrayal at the "Yoyleki" site. The same is true for a serpent petroglyph from a rock art gallery at Old Oraibi (Fig. 4).²

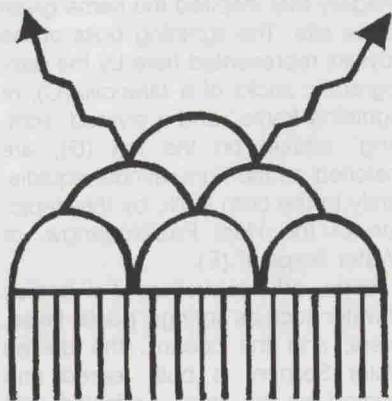


Fig. 3 Schematic drawing of yoyleki symbol.

First Mesa renderings of the excrescence, on the other hand, usually depict it as being forward-pointing (see Fewkes 1892:16; Stephen 1936:302, 1010-1011). The same seems true for Second Mesa. Lomawyewa (Mike Kabotie), a Hopi artist from the Second Mesa village of Shungopavi, typically paints his Water Serpents with forward bending horn (Broder 1978:91, 103). However, due to the sparsity or lack of comparative Paalölöqangw data from the other Hopi villages, it is presently impossible to conclude whether the direction of the serpent's horn is random, or whether Mesa differences apply.³

While no feathers cap the Serpent's head in the "Yoyleki" panel, the avian aspect of the hybridized god may be symbolically represented in the bird tracks adorning three segments of its body (F). Other interpretations of the tracks are possible, however. Depending on the degree of roundness or angularity, the tracks are identified as either frog (Stephen 1936:650), or duck (Fewkes 1891:79). The tracks, standard emblems also on the Water Serpent image decorating the kilts of Hopi Snake dancers (Wright 1979:29), are interpreted as dinosaur tracks by Look (1981:8), an obviously totally absurd conclusion.⁴

The attention that Hopi religion and mythology pay to the Water Serpent is most impressive. Dramatizations of the god's fertility aspect, acted out in

marionette-like puppet dramas, have been reported in the literature in great detail.⁵ The field work compiled by Malotki (in Lomatuway'ma, Lomatuway'ma, and Namingha 1993:1-23) provides a few new insights into the lore that surrounds the beast-god. These are summarized below.

One important Hopi belief is that new springs can be created by burying in the ground a *paa'u'uypi*, or 'water planting instrument,' with a Paalölöqangw inside. Such a *paa'u'uypi* may actually be illustrated by the round container (G) in the "Yoyleki" panel rather than the netted gourd carried by Hopi priests. Conversely, removal of the Serpent from its watery abode leads to the drying up of a spring.



Fig. 4 One-horned head of Hopi Paalölöqangw or "Water Serpent" from rock art site near Old Oraibi.

To avoid contamination of the precious water source, a number of stringent taboos regulate Hopi conduct at a spring. For example, all play activities by children by or in a spring, including bathing and swimming, are strictly prohibited. Among the taboos with the most dire consequences are those which address behavior that might tempt the Serpent sexually. Thus, a strict dress code applies to women to prevent them from exposing their genitals to the god. Any kind of flirting or love-making in or by the spring is equally outlawed. Females who transgress this taboo become impregnated by the god. As a result, they perish when their bloated bellies burst.

In addition to being the nurturing god of all bodies of water across the land, the Paalölöqangw, as bringer of floods and causer of earthquakes, is also believed to be a destructive force. To placate the deity's fury, he is notoriously associated with human sacrifice. While in the majority of recorded tales children seem to be the chosen victims, a Hopi legend recorded by Malotki features the sacrifice of a beautiful virgin. On the advice of a shaman she is offered to the Serpent gods in the village well when the community of Old Shungopavi is affected by a series of devastating earth tremors (Lomatuway'ma, Lomatuway'ma, and Namingha 1993: 25-45). This legend was still unrecorded when Luckert pointed out a connection between the Hopi Paalölöqangw ceremonies and a Maya-type Water Serpent (1976:156-166). It is a significant piece of evidence supporting his theory about the Middle American origin of or influence on the Hopi Paalölöqangw cult.

On an apocalyptic level, finally, Paalölöqangw is expected to initiate the purification of evil Hopikind on the last day of this world. Released by the Pöqangw Brothers, who will have controlled the mighty god until that day, he will trigger earthquakes of such magnitude that all of the land will turn over and be flung into the sea.

In addition to the dominant theme of the water serpent, other rain or moisture symbolism is readily discernible in the panel. Besides Paalölöqangw, Stephen lists ducks, tadpoles, and snipes as pet animals of Oomaw, "Cloud" (1936:306). Collectively, these animals are known as *paavapkot*, 'water pets,' or *katsinmuy pokmat*, 'pets of the kachinas.' Six ducks (H) are clearly visible on the horizontal bar dissecting the corn stalk and con-

necting the snakes in the "Yoyleki" panel. Two of these six ducks, on the extreme right of the bar, seem to be linked by a pluvial symbol similar to the pendant rain portion of the *yoyleki* emblem. Two more ducks sit on the top of the rectangular object with a triangular insert (R).

Ducks are important birds connected with water in the Hopi world, as evidenced by the existence of a duck kachina, *Pawikkatsina*, a depiction of which can be found in Fewkes (1903: pl. XV) and Wright (1973:163), who states that he is a prayer for rain or moisture and often comes in June when there is a great need for it. Stephen (1936:470) quotes a Hopi, Masi, who states that "Duck is the uncle (*taaha'at*), ancestor, of all the kachina and also of the Hopi. He will listen to our song, see our acts, and go direct to Cloud and ask him to send clouds and rain to the Hopi. Our waters are scant now and the sun is very hot." The songs the kachinas sing are moisture-related. In addition to this symbology, duck feathers are used in prayer sticks, for example the circlet prayer stick used in the Flute Ceremony (Stephen 1936:802).

Tadpoles (I) are obvious water symbols, being the embryo form of frogs who live in and near ponds. Their use in this manner dates back at least to the time of the ancient Hopi village of Sikyatki, where tadpoles were used to decorate pottery (Fewkes 1898:pl. CXXXIII, following 676). In the Snake ceremony, bits of cottonwood branches called *pavakhooyam* ('little frogs') are rubbed with clay and cornmeal and inserted into clay nodules called *mungqöngö*, trimmed with duck feathers. These are left by water courses, and when rain comes the bits of cottonwood will live and move and become *pavatya*, 'tadpoles' (Stephen 1936:707). Similar nodules and sticks are made during the Flute Ceremony, which has many analogues with the Snake Ceremony (Stephen 1936: 809-810).

The snipe (J) is also important in rain symbology. There is a Snipe Kachina, Patro, depictions of which can be seen in Wright (1973:102) and Fewkes (1903:pl. XVIII, following 98), and the snake puppet and screen used in the Paalölöqangw drama are replete with snipe tracks (Stephen 1936:figs. 169-172, pls. X, XI). Representations of the snipe/sandpiper also dart back and forth along the top of the screen (Titiev 1944:123). Snipes, sandpipers, and other longbilled, long-legged birds that frequent the

shore of bodies of water are all subsumed under the name *patro*. The larger bird, due to its size, might also be interpreted as the *kwaahu*, 'golden eagle,' *kwaayo*, 'hawk,' or *yoywiikwa*, 'night hawk,' also considered "kachina pets" (Stephen 1936:307).

The star (*soohu*), is considered a supernatural being in Hopi culture, and for this reason is deified as a kachina, depictions of which can be seen in Wright (1973:125) and Fewkes (1903:pl. XXVIII). These kachinas normally occur in pairs, which may relate to the fact that two are depicted on the panel (K). When they come this way, they are then known as Nangöysohut, a constellation of two stars chasing each other. While not directly relating stars to moisture, Curtis (1922:161) relates a taboo on drinking water at meals adhered to until about 1890. When the need to drink became imperative, one went out with an uplifted face and "inhaled the spirit of the stars," thereby equating this spirit with water. In addition, there is a star connection with rain through the sky deity Sootukwnangw (star rain god), a deity especially petitioned for rain.

One additional element (L), though not directly related to rain, is indirectly related through its connection with the husbandry of corn. This knife-like element to the left of the central corn stalk bears a strong resemblance to the ceremonial hoe in Wright (1979: 126), generally carried by Kuwanhehey'a kachinas when they perform in a regular plaza dance. It is said to be modeled on the wooden implements known as *wiikya*, used to weed corn fields before iron hoes were obtained from the Spanish.

One remaining element above the "duck bar," and several elements below it do not seem to be related to the theme of water. These are the *nakwatsveni* or 'friendship symbols' (M), the small crook staff *ngölöshoya* (N), also known as a *wukwtuvoyla*, 'old age marker,' signifying longevity, to the right of the large vertical corn stalk, and three sets of multiple "tally marks" (O), one set of which is inside the *talwiipiki* at the left of the panel.

The rectangular and circular figures at P, Q, and R are not understood, although R bears a fleeting resemblance to the mask worn by Angwusnasomtaqa or "Crow Mother."

Notwithstanding the wealth of aqueous imagery, the most extraordinary element in the panel is the human figure (S) on the right (Fig. 5). Executed in an intaglio technique not normally



Fig. 5 Close-up of hatted figure.

found in the rock art of the area, it reaches out to the Horned Water Serpent with its right hand, while the left holds what looks like a round container (G). Stipple-pecked and gridded in its interior, the container probably represents a *mongwikoro*, or 'chief's water jug.' This ceremonial vessel, consisting of a gourd enclosed in a net, is used by Hopi priests to carry consecrated water.⁶ The human figure may thus portray a "priest." Most remarkably, his rather naturalistically profiled head is topped by a Spanish-style hat. Above the hat rests another *yoyleki*, consisting of a double set of clouds. This combination of Hopi and Spanish elements both presents an opportunity for dating the panel and raises questions of intent on the part of the artist.

Hatted anthropomorphs are extremely rare in the rock art of north-eastern Arizona. While the early nineteenth-century Navajo painting of a Spanish cavalcade in Canyon de Chelly is well known (Schaafsma 1980:330), there is only one known depiction of a hatted figure in the entire Palavayu. Discovered by Malotki and located at the "Datura Crescent" site several miles east of the Homol'ovi ruin complex, it may be significant for the dating of certain rock art images at the neighboring "Cottonwood" site (Fig. 6).

Contemplating the age of the "Yoyleki" site, the hat provides a convenient *terminus post quem*. Obviously of post-contact origin, the question is whether the site can be assigned to a more specific time slot within the long historic period. The Hopi, initially contacted in 1540 by a contingent of the Coronado Expedition under Pedro de Tovar, were not subject to intensive Spanish influence until 1629

when, in an effort to Christianize them, Franciscan missions were established at Awat'ovi, Shungopavi, and Oraibi (Hargrave 1932:5). After the well-orchestrated rebellion of 1680, during which most of the Pueblo Indians united to rid themselves of the Spanish yoke, regular Spanish contact with Oraibi, which lies only five miles east of the "Yoyleki" site, nearly ceased. Why a hat, presumably a symbol of Spanish political and religious oppression, would therefore adorn a possible Hopi "priest" is difficult to answer. However, a number of hypothetical scenarios can be advanced.

A Hopi friend of Malotki, who pointed out the site, theorized that the figure represented "a Spanish priest who was taking away the water to cause a drought with ensuing famine."

This interpretation is hard to accept, especially in light of the fact that eagle down and other feathers, typically worn by Hopi ceremonial participants, are attached to the figure's hair. It appears highly unlikely that Spanish priests would have imitated this ritual custom. Nor would they have used ceremonially the Hopi sacred water vessel of the netted gourd. With its high density of religious symbolism, the site could more readily be seen as a pictorial gesture of protest and resistance. While outwardly accepting Spanish political domination, symbolized by the hat, the rest of the "Yoyleki" imagery demonstrates the Hopi religion's continuance and vitality under a repressive and intolerant regime. Obviously, such an interpretation cannot be proved, and it would point to a pre-1680 origin for the site.

Nor are the coat and the knee-length pants liturgical garments. Rather, they represent Spanish secular dress items reminiscent of the late colonial period (Simmons, pers. comm., 1993).⁷ The low crown hat, on the other hand, was typically worn by the clergy.⁸ The cross on the coat, drawn in the shape of the St. Andrew's cross, may simply have been added to establish the Hispanic element in the figure.

Simmons (pers. comm., 1993) suggests that the rain symbolism in the petroglyph could be linked to one of the droughts the Hopi suffered in the eighteenth century. A decade of dry years from 1770–1779 culminated in such severe drought conditions that many Hopi were forced to emigrate to Zuni and Sandia (Levy 1992:85). Simmons claims they got so hungry that they had to sell their children to neighboring tribes for food. Spaniards, only a century earlier consid-



Fig. 6 Head with Spanish-style hat from the Datura Crescent site near Winslow, Arizona. Approximate height 15 cm.

ered the "best-hated people" in the Southwest, now, under Governor Anza from Santa Fe, brought the Hopi famine relief. The "bi-ethnic" figure in the petroglyph, half Indian, half Spanish, standing under the rain cloud, may therefore express that the Hopi were calling both upon their own and the Spanish gods to seek reprieve from the drought. Iconographic syncretism of this type is not uncommon in Southwestern rock art. The incorporation of Roman Catholic elements into otherwise Native rock art could have been part of the shaman-artist's endeavor to achieve the desired results by adding foreign iconography to his own (Hedges 1976:137). Such an interpretation in conjunction with the above-mentioned drought would place the origin of the panel in the late 1770s.

Based on this discussion, it can be seen that it is possible to interpret this panel in light of Hopi ethnography as a coherent prayer for rain, the ultimate benefactors of which will be the two small human figures (T) to the right of (D). The tiny human figures were identified as "brother and sister" by my Hopi consultant, and may symbolically represent "Hopikind," that is, humankind, whose survival is assured through the intercession of the "priest" and the magic powers of his animal familiars, assuring the abundance of the life-sustaining water. In essence then, this petroglyphic rain prayer addresses human survival through the means of animal (U), and vegetal (corn) (A, V, W) fertility and growth.

NOTES

For research assistance with Hispanic-style clothing in the Southwest I would like to thank Marc Simmons and José Cisneros. Helmbrecht Breinig and Nicholas Meyerhofer commented on style and content. Above all, I am indebted to Ken Gary who agreed to co-author this paper with me. In addition to restructuring my initial thoughts and observations on the "Yoyleki" site, his artistic talents also provided accompanying illustrations.

The spelling of all Hopi words conforms to the phonemic writing system devised for the comprehensive Hopi dictionary currently being compiled by a joint team of scholars at Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona. All Hopi words occurring in citations have been respelled using this orthography.

1. This lightning snake, with its triangular head, has survived into modern Hopi altar iconography, as is evident from a sand painting in the Antelope kiva at Walpi (Stephen 1936:pl. XVII).
2. This backward-pointing direction of the horn is also confirmed by the Hopi folk-statements I collected in the course of my ethnographic work on the animal (Lomatuway'ma, Lomatuway'ma, and Namingha 1993:3-18).
3. Horned serpents from prehispanic sites in New Mexico present a mixed picture, with horns occurring both forward and backward pointing (Renaud 1938:pls. 17, 18; Hibben 1975:48). Historic Avanyu portrayals from the New Mexico Indian Pueblo of San Ildefonso, on the other hand, all show the horn curved backward (Bunzel 1972:123; Hoffmann 1985:160). Horned serpents from Texas seem to prefer a forward orientation of the head excrescence (Schaafsma 1980:219, 229).
4. The poor scholarship of this obscure publication can easily be judged by the author's own illustrations. Thus, the kilts of the Snake dancers, referred to as "aprons" in the caption, are painted blue instead of reddish-brown, the customary background color. Sadly enough, Look's statement that "the appliqué on the aprons strongly resembles dinosaur tracks" is copied without questioning by Lockley (1991:186) in his otherwise academically sound book on *Tracking Dinosaurs*. The webfooted outline of the duck's footprint may have prompted the nonsensical "dinosaur" interpretation.
5. Ceremonial Paalölöqangw performances are staged in a variety of forms. The *Kuy-sip-lölöqangw*, or 'Water-vessel-snake,' features single serpent marionettes rising from water jars. Other, more elaborate dramatizations are described as *Paalölöqangwt timu'yyungqam*, the 'Water Serpents who have offspring,' and *Paalölöqangwt naanaywaqam*, 'the Water Serpents who are fighting.' The manifold aspects of these theatrical exhibitions have been reported in great detail by Fewkes and Stephen (1893) and Fewkes (1903) for First Mesa, and by Geertz (1987:217-252) for Third Mesa.

6. Photographs of netted water jugs made from gourds can be found in Broder (1978:43) and in Wright (1979:77).
7. Cp. Nunis (1972:111), who reproduces a painting by Ignacio Tirsch of a California conquistador from Baja California around 1760.
8. Cp. the drawing of Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, ca. 1700, in Cisneros (1984:53), and the color plate of Father Escalante in Bolton (1950.)

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