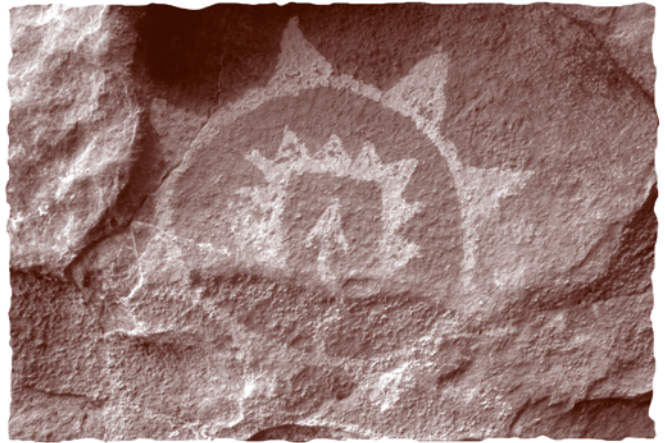




ROCK PAINTINGS

AT HUECO TANKS STATE HISTORIC SITE

by Kay Sutherland, Ph.D.



Mescalero Apache design, circa 1800 A.D.,
part of a rock painting depicting white dancing figures.

Unless otherwise indicated, the illustrations are photographs of watercolors by Forrest Kirkland, reproduced courtesy of Texas Memorial Museum. The watercolors were photographed by Rod Florence.

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ROCK PAINTINGS

AT
HUECO TANKS
STATE HISTORIC SITE



by
Kay Sutherland, Ph.D.

Watercolors
by
Forrest Kirkland

Dedicated to Forrest and Lula Kirkland

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The rock paintings at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site are the impressive artistic legacy of the different prehistoric peoples who found water, shelter and food at this stone oasis in the desert. Over 3000 paintings depict religious masks, caricature faces, complex geometric designs, dancing figures, people with elaborate headdresses, birds, jaguars, deer and symbols of rain, lightning and corn. Hidden within shelters, crevices and caves among the three massive outcrops of boulders found in the park, the art work is rich in symbolism and is a visual testament to the importance of graphic expression for the people who lived and visited the area. The impressive outdoor art gallery, accumulated over the course of thousands of years, belongs to all of us and is a reminder of our connection to the art of ancient peoples.

The oldest rock paintings found here were done by early gatherers and hunters, termed Archaic Indians. Later, an agricultural people (archaeologists call them

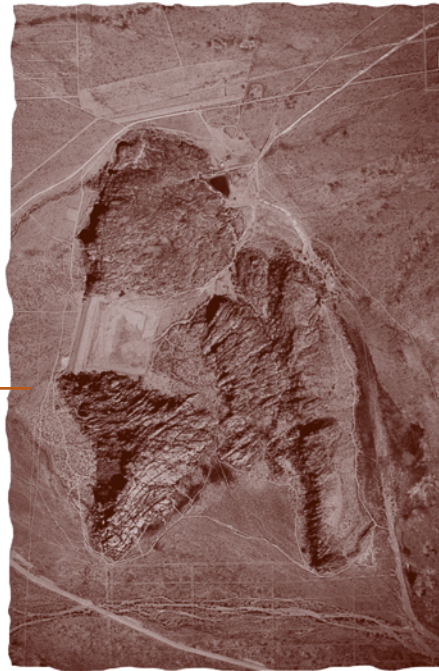
the “Jornada Mogollon”) lived in small villages or pueblos at and near Hueco Tanks and painted on the rock-shelter walls. Still later, the Mescalero Apaches and possibly other Plains Indian groups painted pictures of their rituals and depicted their contact with Spaniards, Mexicans and Anglos. The European newcomers and settlers left no pictures, but some chose instead to record their names with dates on the rock walls, perhaps as a sign of the importance of the individual in western cultures.

Hueco Tanks is no ordinary stopping place. The niches, shelters and caves were places of religious ceremony for Native Americans, from remote prehistoric times until the late 19th century. The Indians filled the hidden and secret places with sacred paintings representing their beliefs and the world around them. Walking among the rocks, climbing the boulders or discovering a hidden niche is the best way to understand what the ancient Indians felt when they





Overview of Hueco Tanks. Rising precipitously to a maximum height of almost 450 feet above the surrounding desert floor, three massive outthrursts form a sacred trinity of cathedrals beckoning the desert pilgrim.



A water-filled hueco. Over thirty million years ago, molten rocks from an underground volcano almost, but not quite, came to the surface. Weathering and erosion exposed and sculpted the present fractured and hollowed-out rock masses. The depressions became the water-filled "huecos" (Spanish for "hollows") for which the site is named.

(Photo by Anna Toness Blubaugh)



came to Hueco Tanks – a place to which their descendants still come to perform religious ceremonies.

Hueco Tanks is a distinctive and striking remnant of a dome of uplifted molten rock (technically called syenite) that cooled about 30 million years ago before it ever reached the surface. Weathering and erosion exposed and sculpted the present rock masses which, as a result, are heavily fractured and recessed with hollows that trap and contain water, attracting animals and humans. These hollows are called "huecos" in Spanish, hence the name Hueco Tanks. Because of available water, stands of juniper and oak, widespread at the end of the last Ice Age, survive here as small relict populations. The surrounding desert, before modernization and overgrazing, was a semi-arid grassland inviting to deer and antelopes. Humans have been coming here for close to 11,000 years, drawn above all else by the water, along with animals to hunt and plants to use.

TECHNICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Two important terms:

Pictograph – an ancient painting or drawing on a rock wall, usually within a shelter. Colors used at Hueco Tanks are often red, black, yellow and white, and sometimes green and blue.

Petroglyph – a carving etched or pecked on a rock surface that is usually weathered or patinated later, creating a contrast in coloration.

What was used for paint?

Colors for painting came from available minerals. Hematite and limonite, for example, furnished red hues. Various shades of ochre produced red and yellow; carbon and manganese were used for black; white clay and gypsum yielded white; while oxides of copper furnished green and blue. The mineral hues may have been enhanced with vegetable dyes and binders – most likely, urine, egg

yolk, plant juices and animal fats. Paints were applied with brushes made from yucca or human hair, or by blowing pigments from reed or bone tubes; finger painting was also employed.



Red-and-green mask (see back cover for actual colors). This is the only example of green pigment (possibly turquoise) at Hueco Tanks. The star eyes are similar to the Star Katchina among the Hopi. This mask is above eye level and not easily noticeable.

(Photo by Anna Toness Blubaugh)

Lumps of prepared color have been found in shelters, along with “paint pots” – small indentations in stone that were used to mix the colors. (In Europe, tubes made of hollow bone and filled with color have been found at cave-art sites.) Although as many different colors were used

in Texas as in polychromatic European rock art, individual pictures using only one color are more common here than in the Old World. That is not to say that polychrome painting is not well developed in Texas – witness, for example, the many varicolored pictographs found in caves along the Lower Pecos and adjoining drainages.

Why do the pictographs last so long?

Rock paintings bind to rock through a process of aging. An experiment done at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site to determine at what point a painting binds to rock found that spray-painted graffiti binds after two years, and that it cannot be removed without removing some of the underlying surface. (Thus, if graffiti more than two years old overlies a pictograph, removal of the unwanted markings unfortunately also entails destruction of the rock art.) This binding of the paint is due to a weathering process that deposits a microscopic mineral glaze over the pigmented area.

The different groups of indigenous inhabitants of Hueco Tanks rarely painted over each other's painting, perhaps out of respect for the existing message. Modern "artists" have not been so respectful and, disgracefully, their names can be found spray-painted over many of the more exposed Indian paintings. Because of remote location, most pictographs and petroglyphs were, until a few years ago, still in excellent condition, despite weathering. Unfortunately, vandalism has now begun to take a serious toll in even the more remote sites.

The First Scientific Recording of the Rock Art at Hueco Tanks

On July 1939, in the heat of summer and with storm clouds gathering overhead, Forrest and Lula Kirkland arrived at Hueco Tanks to record the rock art. It was the last field trip Forrest was fated to make. (A year later he died of a heart attack at the age of 49.) Forrest was a commercial artist, who had discovered and fallen in love with rock art at a

time when few people in Texas knew or cared anything about the subject. Lula, his wife, photographed and searched, while Forrest quickly and adeptly copied the images in watercolor.

Lula was impressed with this “veritable oasis in the desert.” She wrote in her journal, “These huge piles of rocks catch rain water in holes or crevices called tanks and keep it there clean and sweet for many months after the rain.” At that time, Hueco Tanks was owned by Jesus Escontrias who charged people to picnic there. One of the first places the Kirklands found was “Comanche Cave” which, Lula wrote in 1939, “was like walking into an air-conditioned building from a hot street with temperature over one hundred. The air that greeted us was icy cool and so refreshing. On a huge rock up near the top of the cave, a huge slanting crack in the rocks, was one large rock on which someone had printed, no one knows how many years ago, the sign ‘Watter Hear’ and underneath through a gap about four feet wide was a huge cistern of water, ice cold. (The story goes

that it has never gone dry.) The slanting rock leading up to the cistern was polished to a glassy surface by the many feet, Indian and white, that had gone up for water. Reclining on the cool rock with the cool air coming from the cave was a delightful experience after our climbing over the hot rocks looking for pictures, and over our heads on the top ceiling of the shelter the Indians had painted pictographs.” Lula continued, “Comanche Cave is cold and so the Indians had air-conditioned dwelling places in the middle of the desert before white men came to their country.”

As a visitor to Hueco Tanks, you can go to Comanche Cave and enjoy the same refreshing feeling the Kirklands did in 1939. When you near the cave, you will notice a panel of what appear to be dancers, painted in white (*see page 23*). The men are playing instruments, someone is riding a horse, a man is chasing a girl, and the dancers are in a row. This is a historic painting of what is most likely a Mescalero Apache victory dance. It was probably painted some time

between 1820 and 1840 when Mescaleros raided extensively in the area. Someone has painted “1849” over some of the pictographs, the earliest Anglo date at Hueco Tanks. The cool water cistern marked “Watter Hear,” where Lula Kirkland got water for her canteen, is still there.

Even more remarkable than Forrest Kirkland’s accuracy in copying the rock art was his

speed. In ten days, he, with Lula acting as locator for the rock art, painted 27 plates, including 89 masks (of the more than 200 now-known masks at Hueco Tanks). A survey in 1974 (35 years later) by the El Paso Archaeological Society found Kirkland’s renderings remarkably accurate. The original Kirkland watercolors are stored at Texas Memorial Museum in Austin, along with his other artwork.

Cave Kiva. This hidden shelter represents the pinnacle of painting, with its clear stencil-like paintings consciously placed in an undulating row. The eight masks are as bright as the day they were painted. Unfortunately, in 1993, an irresponsible vandal painted his name over the masks, causing Hueco Tanks to be put under greater protection.

(Photo by Gary Duff)

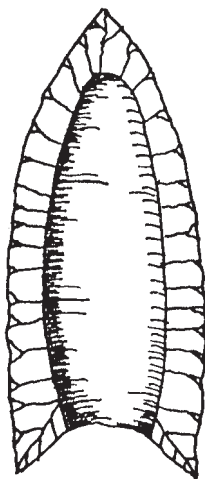


THE FIRST PEOPLE OF HUECO TANKS

The earliest clue that humans were present at Hueco Tanks is a characteristic chipped stone spearpoint called a Folsom point, after a site in New Mexico where it was first identified. Such projectile points are relatively common throughout the Southwest where they are frequently associated with mammoth and giant bison bones dated to between 8,000 and 9,000 B.C. (or 10,000 to 11,000 years ago).

The members of the Folsom culture were Paleo-Indians, that is to say they belonged to the Ice Age peoples that spread across North and South America after crossing the then Bering land bridge between Siberia and Alaska at least 12,000 years and possibly as long as 40,000 years ago. Paleo-Indians depended on and followed the vast numbers of big mammals, such as mammoths, mastodons, giant bison, camels, ground sloths and horses, that browsed and grazed the forests and savannahs below the ice sheets blanketing the northern half of our continent.

None of the rock art at Hueco Tanks can be attributed to the Folsom hunters. However, some abstract designs on rock surfaces in the nearby Franklin Mountains are thought to have been made by Paleo-Indians, mostly because the designs are overpainted by artwork characteristic of the Archaic tradition which occurred several thousand years later.



Folsom Point. This type of spearpoint has been found at Hueco Tanks. Folsom points were made by Paleo-Indians until about 10,000 years ago. The points are found throughout the Southwest, often in association with an extinct form of long-horned bison.

THE ARCHAIC INDIANS

6000 B.C. UNTIL 450 A.D.

Eventually, the plentiful bounty of large game diminished, probably from a combination of changing climate and overkill by humans. The Southwest was drying up as the great ice caps were retreating northward. By 8,000 years ago (6,000 B.C.), mastodons, mammoths, sloths, horses, camels and other large animals were extinct. With the disappearance of the large Ice Age mammals, the human populations that lived after the Paleo-Indians depended more on hunting smaller game, such as bighorn sheep, deer, antelopes, rabbits and rodents. In addition, these people followed an endless

cycle of collecting and processing seasonal grains, nuts, fruits and tubers. At Hueco Tanks, they relied heavily on wild plant foods such as mesquite beans, the fruit of the banana yucca and the abundant cacti found in the area. These nomadic foragers are termed Archaic Indians and they are believed to have lived in extended family groups of 25 to 30 people.

The Archaic way of life was deeply rooted in the desert environment and remarkably uniform in its cultural and artistic artifacts. The rich artistic tradition associated with this culture extended throughout the desert Southwest to California.

Early Archaic style. Abstract polychrome (mostly red) designs are a diagnostic feature. Animals and humans are absent.



We can identify at least two kinds of artistic styles among the Archaic nomads, both of which can be seen at Hueco Tanks. The Early Archaic Style (6000 B.C. – 3000 B.C.) consists of curvilinear and rectilinear abstract designs, such as “comb” designs and parallel wavy lines. It is hard to guess the meanings of these drawings. There are no animal or human depictions in this earlier style.

Certain Archaic groups, down through the millennia, added to the earlier abstract art. This later art, belonging to what is called the Middle and Late Archaic Style (3000 B.C. – 450 A.D.), is characterized by hunting scenes, with animals such as mountain sheep or deer, and humans with headdresses who have shaman-like qualities. The Archaic nomads did not use the bow and arrow. They hunted only with a spear and atlatl (spear thrower). We find specific spearpoints, such as the Shumla, associated with these drawings.

The artwork shows animals on the run and humans standing still. The hunters have thick hourglass shaped bodies with thin arms and legs and a small-to-non-existent head, which has two horns or feathers attached. In some cases, a spearpoint is attached to the arm of the hunter. Hueco Tanks State Historic Site does not have many Archaic hunting scenes, but nearby sites, such as Alamo Canyon at Fort Hancock, have hundreds of petroglyphs depicting hunting activities.

The prehistoric desert foragers are thought to have been animists who believed in the aliveness and value of all of nature, both animate and

inanimate. The art of the Middle and Late Archaic depicted the supernatural power of the horned animals that were hunted and that were associated with the concept of abundance. We find a progressive humanization of the projectile points to the extent that hunters have projectile-point heads and arms. The association of hunter with spearpoint implies a strong spiritual relationship between the killer and the killed. The hunter's



Middle/Late Archaic style. The topmost "shaman" (human-like) figure with running animals is similar to larger such figures in what is called the Lower Pecos art style. These designs are in yellow.



Red mountain sheep, deer and horned human figures resembling spearpoints.

Middle/Late Archaic style. A hunter with arm as a spear extension symbolized the power to kill.



A Shumla point. This is a triangular spearpoint commonly found in the Lower Pecos area. It resembles the one shown in the rock painting.



Projectile points and Archaic hunters from Fort Hancock, Texas. The distinction between hunter and projectile point is blurred when body parts are replaced by projectile points: hunters with projectile-point bodies, projectile-point headdresses, and arms with projectile points. The hunter's body looks so much like a spearpoint that it is often hard to tell the difference between the hunter and the point. The association of hunter with spearpoint strongly implies a powerful spiritual relationship between the killer and the killed.



power to take animal life in order that people may live can be seen as a transformation of the hunter's kill into food for the group. This metamorphosis from death to life was probably the focus of Archaic religions. The spiritual counterpart of this physical process – the transference of the animal's spirit to the human's – was accomplished by skilled and sensitive individuals, called shamans, who had access to the animal spirit world through trance and dreaming. Both the skilled hunter and the skilled shaman faced the possibility of “dying” in order that others might live. The hunter faced the possibility of death in order to kill, and the shaman's body “died” (went into trance) so that the animal spirit could be brought to the group.

Some good examples of this hunting-oriented shamanistic art can be found in Utah, California and the lower Pecos River in Texas (Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site near Comstock, Texas has some fine examples of Lower Pecos cave art.)

THE AGRICULTURISTS

THE JORNADA BRANCH OF THE MOGOLLON — 450 A.D. – 1400 A.D.

Evidence from central Mexico suggests that corn was fully domesticated between 5000 B.C. and 3400 B.C. Such domestication entailed a long period of experimentation and mutation and eventually a conscious selection by humans that improved certain species of wild grasses. Domesticated corn along with beans, chili peppers, squash and cotton spread north from the Valley of Mexico, reaching the El Paso area by 2000 B.C. It took almost two thousand years to achieve a balance between gathering, hunting and planting as a means of existence in the arid Southwest, as Mogollon farmers learned to adapt planting to erratic rainfall, consisting of long periods of drought followed by sudden downpours that wiped out crops and carved new arroyos.

In the Southwest, corn could never be the secure food supply that it was in the lake-filled valley of Mexico or the rain-heavy tropical jungles further south. Initially, the approach to corn might have been

similar to that of the Apache Indians in the nineteenth century who planted corn, left it unattended, and returned to see if there was anything growing. Corn supplemented their traditional wild plant diet, it did not replace it. In a good year of rain, there was a surplus, but it was not reliable. The early Mogollon people were probably similar in their habits; they planted corn but then they might move away.

The unpredictability of localized food supplies in the desert environment made commitment to



A jaguar figure next to a solid mask with an antelope-horn headdress shows Mesoamerican influence. Colors used are red, black and white.

Quetzalcoatl mask with plumed serpent on top showing jaguar teeth. This headdress is similar to one at Fort Hancock, Texas. Note the conical helmet, an attribute of Quetzalcoatl, with "step-fret" designs.

(Drawing by Dave Parker)



Cave of the Masks. The paired paintings show strong Mesoamerican influence as indicated by the presence of the conical helmet that symbolizes Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent.

(Photo by Anna Toness Blubaugh)



settled life difficult. Not until about 200 A.D. (to judge from the evidence of pithouses) did permanent residences become established in the area.

Thus, beginning in the early centuries A.D., with crude dwellings and small-scale corn cultivation, the first agriculturists who lived in this area developed lifestyles not unlike Pueblo peoples today, such as the Hopi, Zuni and the people of the upper Rio Grande pueblos. As corn yields were improved, more people could be fed and the population grew and began to concentrate into villages. (There is archaeological evidence of a small village at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site around 1000 A.D.)

Sometime around 450 A.D. (at the beginning of what is called the Jornada Mogollon Tradition), a strong religious influence diffused to this region from Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America), possibly through merchant traders searching for precious turquoise. They were followers of the cult of Quetzalcoatl, one of the most important deities of Meso-american cultures. Quetzalcoatl took the form

of a plumed serpent and incorporated the characteristics of a bird, serpent and jaguar, all of which were associated with the priesthood and ruling class as far back as 1500 B.C. in Mesoamerica. Quetzalcoatl represented a moving energy that unified a dualistic universe, but the deity also incorporated the concept of regeneration, crucial to the Mesoamerican vision of the cosmos. Pairs are frequently depicted in Jornada Mogollon art, representing the dualistic nature of the Mesoamerican universe. Equal in influence to Quetzalcoatl was Tlaloc, a rain deity who was both beneficial and destructive, and who was associated with sacred mountains.

Tlaloc was characterized by goggle eyes and a blunt, rectilinear body with no arms or legs. The Tlaloc figure fused with the trapezoidal spearpoint-shaped body of Archaic hunter art, a natural fusion because both concepts were associated with masculine forces (hunting and the destructive part of rain). Along with examples of Quetzalcoatl and Tlaloc at Hueco Tanks, there are many symbols associated with water, crucial to planting corn in the desert.

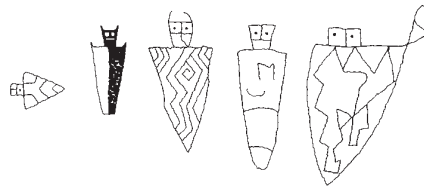


Also at the Cave of the Masks is a painting of a jaguar with a conical helmet. An association of the jaguar with Quetzalcoatl can be traced back to the Olmecs, one of the earliest (about 1500 B.C.) of the Mesoamerican civilizations.

(Drawing by Dave Parker)



Shown here is the geometric figure of goggle-eyed Tlaloc. Associated with Tlaloc are "step-fret" designs and symbols of rain and abundance, including a turtle, a rain altar, a solid mask and a mountain sheep. Black, red, white and yellow were the colors used.



(Drawings from (left to right) Alamo Canyon, Lucero Canyon, Alamo Mt. and Smith Ranch.)

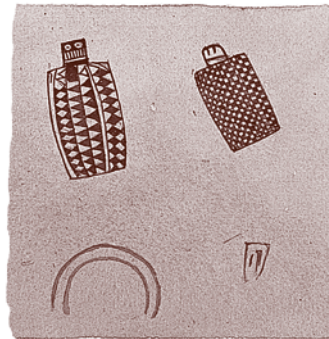
The projectile-point body merges into a goggle-eyed anthropomorph. The increasing "personification" of the projectile-point hunter to the more humanized Tlaloc with its goggle eyes, and the eventual evolution into stylized masked spirits demonstrates a transition of religious thought: the idea that spirits can take human form rather than the ancient animistic belief that humans take animal form.

This large (two-meter-long) black-and-white Tlaloc figure is on the ceiling of a low shelter. Lying on a rock, you can look up and see the blank, skull-like goggle eyes staring down, surrounded by smaller Tlaloc figures. The main Tlaloc figure has step-fret designs coming from the head and a flattened snout. The art work is so complex that it forms a continuous line.

(Photo by Anna Toness Blubaugh)



Two Tlaloc figures in red with “blanket design” bodies and two solid masks. The characteristic blank goggle eyes in both suggest a close relationship between Tlaloc and the “solid” style of mask with blank eyes.



The most common of these are the “step-fret” or “step wedge” designs representing flowing water, energy and lightning.

Most of the rock paintings at Hueco Tanks were drawn by settled agriculturists of the Jornada Mogollon Tradition. As mentioned, the religion of these people centered around the desire for and control of rain essential to the growth of crops. One can see water symbolism in many paintings, such as the rain altar, which consist of two lightning symbols coming together and the step-fret designs on the Tlaloc figures. Representations of this deity show the dualism of celestial abundance, represented by water from the sky, and terrestrial abundance, represented by water stored underground.

It appears that, at Hueco Tanks, Mesoamerican gods, many of whom manifested different aspects of the same elements, combined with the earlier animistic concepts of the desert Archaic peoples to create a new religious force, manifesting itself in a religion of masked spirit beings.

For, besides the Quetzalcoatl and Tlaloc figures and the water symbols, the Jornada Mogollon peoples left a tremendous artistic legacy of painted masks. These represented their ancestral spirits, as do the katchinas of today's Pueblo peoples, such as the Hopi and Zuni. The largest concentration of Indian painted masks in North America (more than 200) is at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site. These masks are significant because their designs and the religion they represent influenced the rest of Southwestern art. The pueblo designs that are so familiar to us were, perhaps, first seen in the Southwest at Hueco Tanks. And, like the Pueblo designs characteristic of the Katchina Cult, the Hueco Tanks masks are representative of the fusion that occurred between Archaic animism and Mesoamerican polytheism.

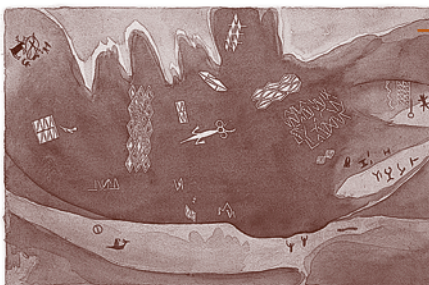
To elaborate further: the meaning of the mask for the prehistoric Mogollon must have been similar to its meaning to the present-day Hopi and Zuni in their katchina dances. More than any other part of our body, the face is the gateway to abstract thought. In putting on the mask, the masked dancer becomes



A Tlaloc figure with footprints on the face, a symbolic association found in Mesoamerica.



A Tlaloc figure with step-fret designs representing lightning.

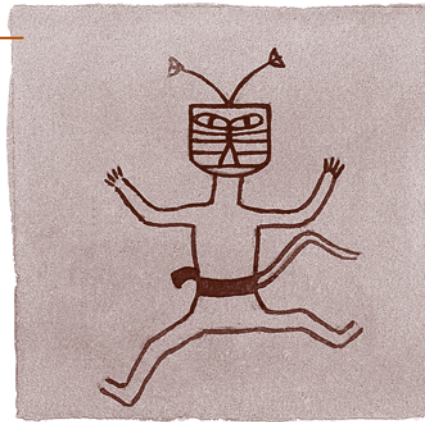


"White-blanket" designs still seen in southwestern art today. This panel is completely blackened with soot.

Dancing figures with masks appear in many of the rock art compositions at Hueco Tanks. This is a selection put together by Kirkland. The figures are early indications of what would become the Katchina Cult among present-day Pueblo groups.



Masked dancer. This figure clearly shows the use of masks during ritual dances.



the intermediary between the human world and the spiritual world. Frank Water in his *Book of the Hopi* says that when the dancer puts on the mask, he becomes the ancestral katchina spirit. The masked katchina dancer, like the shaman, experiences transformation, “for he too is a god.” Unlike the shaman, however, the katchina dancer sublimates his individuality into the “selfless and fleshless communion” of a communally believed creation, not an individually interpreted religious experience. Like the shaman, the dancer is “part bird, part beast, part man” who “wings into the sky” during the dancing, vulnerable, “naked and defenseless.” In this sense the dancer is an extension of the shamanistic experience, but the katchina dancer’s religious experience – unlike the shaman’s – is induced by communal dancing. The masks represent the central role of the human in bringing opposing forces into harmony. Thus did the communal, polytheistic religions of Mesoamerica combine with the shamanistic-animistic beliefs of the Archaic hunter-gatherers to create the new religion of the Southwest – the Katchina

Cult. This cult is expressed at Hueco Tanks in the many masks painted on its rock surfaces.

The fundamental appeal of the Mesoamerican cosmovision was the idea of man's ability to predict (through scientific understanding of the movement of the sun and Venus) and to that extent control rain and plant growth. The evolution of the spearpoint hunter to Tlaloc the rain god is a visual turning point that cannot have expressed more clearly man's godlike ability to destroy. The Mesoamerican-derived masked spirit cult espoused man's central role in the continuance of the cosmos. The Mogollon accepted a central role for the human in the cosmic scheme, but the myths and ceremonies that accompanied planting were downscaled for desert adaptation and then incorporated into the existing religion of the desert foragers.

The mask became the symbol for the intermediary role humans played. Before the masked dancer could put on the mask, he had to go through a purification process. Once the dancer put on the mask,



Dancers with mountain-sheep head-dress are similar to Mountain Sheep Katchina among present-day Pueblos. This ritual shows a combination of hunting and agricultural beliefs.



Two solid red masks in hidden niches are painted to the curve of the wall.

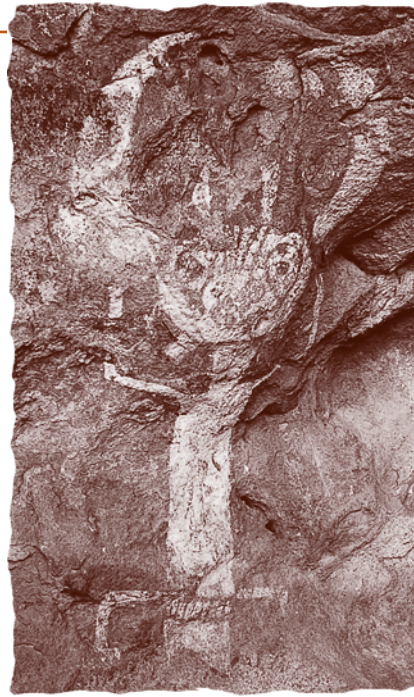


Solid red mask with blank eyes, similar to Tlaloc.

(Photo by Kay Sutherland)

White horned dancer with mask-type face and goggle eyes. The horned dancer is specific to the Jornada Mogollon. (Horned masks are not found in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica.) The horns are an indication of the combination of hunting symbolism with Mesoamerican-derived masks.

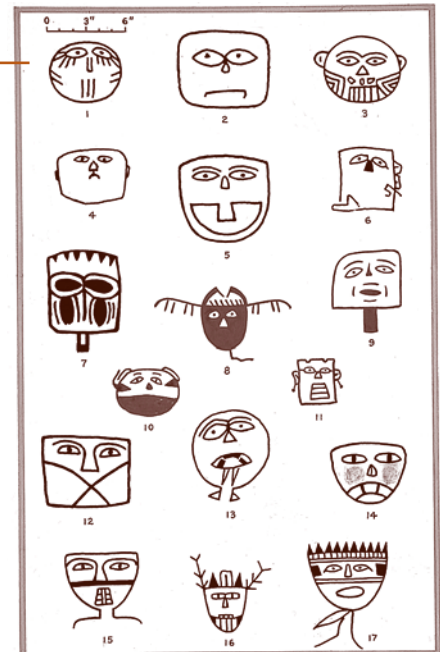
(Photo by Anna Toness Blubaugh)



he became the katchina spirit, acting as an intermediary with the ancestral world of “cloud people” who helped to bring rain. All of the contemporary katchina dances of the Hopi and Zuni today are performed to bring rain and balance to the community.

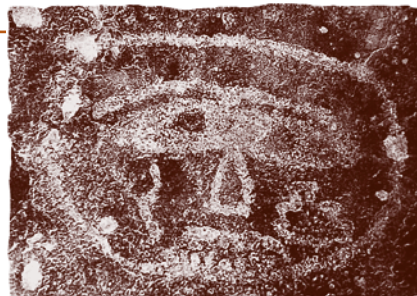
In hunting cultures, the hunter accommodates himself to the movement of the animal. In planting cultures, the plant doesn’t move; it is the rain that moves; humans must accommodate themselves to the larger forces of nature

Plate of outline masks. Diagnostic features of Jornada Mogollon outline masks are the almond-shaped eyes and wedge-shaped nose.



Outline mask with expressive face. Lighting design on one cheek; rain altar on the other.

(Photo by Kay Sutherland)



(storm, wind, rain). Destructive elements are stronger, larger, more unpredictable and seemingly more controllable than animals. In hunting cultures, the individual hunter or shaman confronts the animal. A planter can't "identify" with a storm nor can he "be" the rain in the same way that the shaman can become the animal spirit. But a planter, like a shaman, can go into "dance" and "transform" himself into that which controls plant growth through the wearing, of the mask. The masked dancers' cult of the agricultural Mogollon was a



Plate of solid masks. These are distinguished from outline masks by not having the face outlined and by the use of solid, separated blocks of color. Solid masks are only found hidden in niches, suggesting that they are more sacred than outline masks which are located on exposed surfaces. Hueco Tanks may have been a sacred center for the Jornada Mogollon, since solid masks are rarely found anywhere else.



In this grouping of solid masks, some of the solid masks have "outline" features, suggesting some intergradation between the two types.

Paintings in a large open shelter containing both outline masks and solid masks along with other designs. The outline masks were often painted in large open shelters such as this. Inside this shelter is a paint dripping (where the artist spilled the paint). Note the almost comical faces of the outline masks. The significance of the large outline figure in the middle is uncertain.



Yellow solid mask with line in cheek similar to Flute Katchina.



combination of animistic beliefs and Mesoamerican deities related to rain and corn growth.

Forrest Kirkland copied the rock paintings in 1939. His work was published in a book written by W.W. Newcomb called *The Rock Art of Texas Indians*. He recorded 89 masks and painted 6 composite plates, each with an arrangement of masks from various sites. Kirkland was the first to systematically study the masks and to describe them as “solid” and “outline” masks. “There are two distinct types: 51 are drawn in outline in the conventional manner; 38 are built up of solid masses of color, as if made with a stencil.” These two types are found together in some of the shelters. They vary in size from 4 to 8 inches in width and 6 to 12 inches in height. “The workmanship of the outline masks is generally much cruder than that of the solid type. Nearly all of the solid masks were painted with a thin liquid color that seems to have soaked into the rock like dye. Each individual block in the masks is sharp and distinct; and the designs themselves reflect considerable artistic ability.” Kirkland per-

ceived that the outline masks appeared in only four colors (red, black, gray and white) while the solid masks are in seven colors (red, black, white, brown, yellow, blue and green). The outline masks “are quite realistic, showing eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Some have amusing expressions, reminding one of comic strip faces... in all but a few cases, the features of the face can easily be recognized. The solid masks, on the other hand, are highly conventionalized at best. Many of them barely retain the features of the face; more than 15 are lacking such features and can only be classified as masks because of their general resemblance to the more realistic examples.” The vast majority of the masks (70 of his 89) are found, he writes “in small niches, crevices or shelters too small for habitation; (they)... were reached with difficulty, and were copied while lying flat on the back.”

Kirkland identified the masks at Hueco Tanks as resembling current katchina masks. “Like the mask paintings, there are two types of katchina masks – more or less realistic faces and highly conventional-

ized faces. Some katchina masks totally lack facial features like many of the mask paintings. There is a general similarity of decorations on the face – the lines on the cheeks, around the mouth and on the chin.” He noted that the rain-altar symbol, the star emblem, and the crescent-rain symbol were on



Solid mask with lines coming down across the cheeks.



Two solid masks. The left mask is “female,” because of the fringe design along the bottom associated only with female katchinas.

katchina masks as well as the Hueco Tanks mask paintings.

The outline masks are facial images with almond-shaped eyes showing pupils, a triangular nose and a semi-circular mouth area, sometimes with teeth. They are, more often than solid masks, located in large, open shelters and associated with other motifs, such as Tlaloc figures and animals.

A pair of masks from among the eight at Cave Kiva. Other pairs of masks exist at Hueco Tanks, but this pair shows a special connection through incomplete eyes on facing sides. The pair strongly hints at the ultimately holistic nature of dualism, a core concept of Mesoamerican cultures diffused to the Southwest during the Jornada Mogollon period.

(Photo by Kay Sutherland)



The solid masks are more abstract than the outline facial images, giving the former an other-worldly quality. The eyes are blank-looking (resembling the Tlaloc goggle eyes) and blocks of color are laid precisely. Almost certainly, these masks were used for ceremonial purposes. We have evidence of such a ceremonial cave (similar to the underground kivas of present-day Pueblos) at a site called Cave Kiva, where eight masks, in alternating red and orange colors, are arranged in an undulating pattern along one wall (*see page 4*). This cave may have been associated with the cycle of the planet Venus, sacred among Mesoamericans, since eight is the numeral often connected to this planetary cycle.

Many of the designs you see at Hueco Tanks, such as masks, plumed serpents, and Venus and solstice symbols, continue in the Katchina religion of present-day Pueblo peoples. The artists who made these designs and symbols, the Jornada Mogollon, abandoned the El Paso and Hueco Tanks area about 600 years ago for undetermined reasons.

THE HISTORIC PERIOD

APACHE PLAINS WARRIORS — CIRCA 1500 A.D. – 1879 A.D.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, various nomadic Indian groups acquired European horses through raiding and trading from the Spanish-occupied pueblos of the Southwest. The Apaches, Comanches and other Plains Indians, no longer limited to moving on foot, developed into superb horsemen. And, thanks to the Indians' newly acquired equestrian skills, their hunting and raiding became considerably more efficient.

What are believed to have been mounted Mescalero Apaches visited Hueco Tanks and left drawings of their ceremonies and victory dances, such as the white dancers shown here. The Apache figures are fluid and curvilinear, lending sensuality and animation to the dancers. Newcomb says that “among the Chiricahuas, whose ritual life was almost identical to that of the Mescaleros, there was some loosening of conventional sexual behavior, if not outright license, during their ceremonies, raising the possibility



Probable Mescalero Apache panel with giant white snake, horses and horse and rider.



Panel possibly depicting a Mescalero Apache victory dance. Shown are snakes, horses, dancers with musical instruments and sexual behavior.

that the Mescalero practiced the same customs.”

Archaeologically, the Historic Period is characterized by items indicating European contact. In rock art, this contact is reflected in the portrayal of horses, cattle, churches and people in European dress.

Spanish settlement in New Mexico began in the early 1600s. Thriving villages were in existence by 1640 along the upper Rio Grande, but the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 led to Spanish retreat and the establishment of several villages of refugees

in the immediate El Paso area, including the Ysleta del Sur settlement in Socorro. Anglo settlement in the El Paso-Hueco Tanks region did not begin until the mid-19th century.

The earliest painted date at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site is 1849. Hueco Tanks was a stopping place along what was called the “Upper Immigrant Road.” Between 1858 and 1860, the famous Butterfield Overland Mail route also used this route before being shifted northward due to the Civil War. The stage stopped at Alamo Mountain, Cornudas Mountains and Hueco Tanks, and then traveled the remaining 30 miles to El Paso. At each of these stops, travelers would often paint their names, together with dates, on the rocks. Interestingly, the Anglos and Spanish would inscribe their names where the Apaches had painted, not where the early Mogollon had depicted their sacred art. This was probably because the name painters used open shelters at ground level, whereas the Mogollon masks are found higher up in hard-to-find places.

Historic inscriptions from westward travelers usually give the person’s name and date of inscription. This Anglo and Spanish tradition continues today in “love” messages and gang insignia.

(Photo by Kay Sutherland)



S U M M I N G U P

Hueco Tanks has one of the largest concentrations of Indian rock paintings in North America. Such an impressive array testifies to the importance of this site to prehistoric and historic Indians. Hueco Tanks is also the only site in North America that has such a large number of painted masks, making this site a unique and outstanding gem in America's cultural heritage.

Along with the beauty bequeathed to us, comes a duty to preserve and protect this very special historic gallery. Over the years, some of the rock art has been damaged or defaced. Most of the destruction has been accidental, from fires built in shelters where visitors could not see the pictographs, or from people placing their names on rocks without noticing the faint and ancient paintings they are defacing. Lately there has also been

an increasing incidence of deliberate vandalism. Hopefully, this will be stopped in the future through stricter enforcement of the Texas Antiquities Code which forbids all defacement or removal of rock art. After all, how many 8,000-year-old traditions are there for our children and grandchildren to learn from and enjoy?



Pictograph showing a decorated figure and two masks.

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In addition, persons interested in articles on rock art will enjoy the *Artifact*, a publication of the El Paso Archaeological Society.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kay Sutherland (1942-2002) received an undergraduate degree from the University of Texas - Austin and a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Illinois - Urbana. For more than 25 years, Dr. Sutherland specialized in recording and interpreting the rock art of West Texas, southern New Mexico and northern Mexico. She was especially interested in the Jornada Style and the transmission of belief systems from Mesoamerica into the Southwest. Dr. Sutherland wrote numerous technical and interpretive articles and monographs.

For this publication, she made a special effort to share her insights on the significance of the rock art at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site with the general public.



Dr. Kay Sutherland and
park ranger Dave Parker at
Hueco Tanks State Historic Site.

The author gratefully acknowledged her many discussions with Dave Parker, a former park ranger at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site, whose sensitivity to the rock paintings contributed a great deal to the ideas expressed in this book. Much of the field work underlying the notions expressed here was done with the help of the El Paso Archeological Society. Their support has been and continues to be exemplary.

Experience the wondrous rock paintings at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site through the eyes of a professional anthropologist, as she unveils the art's hidden meanings and its religious connections to ancient Mexico and southwestern Pueblo culture in general.

The water in the natural catch-basins formed by the eroded rocks of Hueco Tanks has attracted humans over the millennia and the centuries. Archaic Native American hunters, early agriculturalists and historic Indian groups have covered the site's rock surfaces with over 3,000 paintings, including several hundred mask-like images reminiscent of present-day Pueblan Katchina Cult designs.

Generously illustrated with photographs of the renowned 1930s watercolor renderings of the site's paintings by Forrest Kirkland, the book clearly reveals to both mind and eye the story behind a unique and ancient Texan art gallery.



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