

## THE ROCHESTER CREEK PETROGLYPHS

### A POSSIBLE CORRESPONDENCE WITH EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHS AND ICONOGRAPHY

by

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#### Summary

The petroglyphs at Rochester Creek, Utah, contain certain elements that are not well accounted for simply as Amerindian Rock Art. Egyptian impact of some type seems to be present in the glyphs. The glyphs in question do not appear to be of recent origin. When the characters on the Rochester Creek panel are viewed as a result of an intrusion by a pre-Columbian Mediterranean culture with iconography the same or similar to that of ancient Egypt, it is possible to obtain a homogeneous, coherent reading. The Rochester Creek petroglyphs are designated as belonging to Fremont culture. Questions relating to the origin of Fremont people, and certain influences that helped shape their culture, are still, in part, unresolved.

#### Location of the site

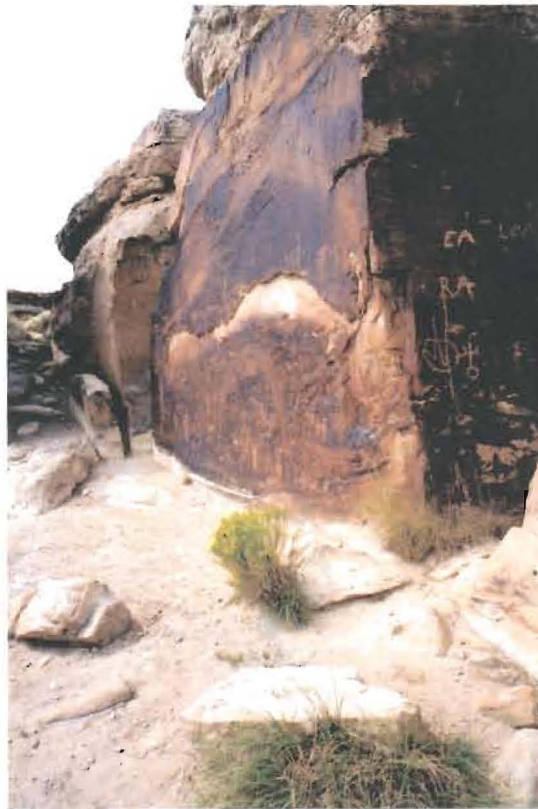
THE ROCHESTER Creek petroglyph site (hereafter designated RC) is located in an isolated region of central Utah on a promontory overlooking the confluence of the Muddy and Rochester Creeks. (Fig. 1). The main panel is situated on the east face of a large sandstone block on top of a spur that juts southward from its parent mesa. (Fig. 2). The climate of the region is arid, with temperatures during the winter reaching

below zero degrees Fahrenheit, and with summer temperatures exceeding 100 degrees. The vegetation in the vicinity of RC consists of sagebrush and short grasses. Mountains, cut by canyons containing good habitat for wildlife are nearly ten miles to the west.

RC is situated well within the territory where the people of the Fremont culture once lived. Before entering into greater study of the RC petroglyphs, it is therefore necessary to look at the Fremont people, and their relationship



**Fig.1: The Confluence of the Muddy and Rochester Creeks**



**Fig.2: The Main Panel on the East Face of a Sandstone Block**

with other contemporary cultures of the Southwest region of North America, in more detail.

### **The Ancient Southwest**

Archaeologically, the prehistoric cultures of America's Southwest are divided into three major groups, (Hohokam, Mogollon, and Anasazi), and two minor groups, (Patayan and Fremont), which extended over most of present-day Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, and also into portions of Colorado and northern Mexico. The major groups began to emerge some 2000 years ago. Linguistically, these cultures are classed under the general heading of Uto/Aztec.

THE FREMONT culture was so named by Noel Morss, an archaeologist whose major research had been undertaken in the Fremont River drainage during 1928-29. It is now viewed as a peripheral culture that developed in Utah possibly as a consequence of Anasazi influence, although others see it as originating as the direct result of Anasazi migration into the area. However, Morss had originally formulated the theory that the Fremont people belonged to an entirely different culture. He was the first to recognize the culture as a distinctive archaeological complex, and noted a number of distinct traits that appeared to distinguish them from the Anasazi. These included the use of leather moccasins (rather than the woven fibre type of the Anasazi), cultivation of a geographically constrained type of maize, the construction of pit-house dwellings (as opposed to masonry dwellings), and the manufacture of clay figurines, the purpose of which is unclear.

Fremont groups have been classified into five regional variants. However, precisely who they were and where they came from is still a matter of considerable debate. One theory suggests that Fremont Culture evolved from the primitive hunter-gatherers of the Great

Basin and Colorado Plateau area who had learned to use agriculture to supplement their hunting and gathering economy. The impetus for such change is seen as being the result, as stated above, of contact with the Anasazi living to the south. However, the mechanism by which the people of the Fremont culture acquired the agricultural techniques necessary to overcome the severe restrictions imposed by the Great Basin region, where no river drains the area externally, and lakes and streams are dry for most of the year, remains a mystery. As Dean Snow, Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York at Albany, has pointed out, 'nothing equivalent to Fremont culture was ever established prehistorically in this vast area'.<sup>1</sup> It must be stressed that, in reality, neither the origins nor the demise of the Fremont culture are clearly understood. In the words of Parr, Carlyle, and O'Rourke, 'The ultimate fate of the Fremont culture is as enigmatic as its origins.'<sup>2</sup> All that is known for certain is that from about 400 to 1300 AD. the Fremont people inhabited most of Utah north of the Colorado River. Fremont tradition collapsed during the 14th century, to be replaced abruptly by an archaeological tradition known as the Paiute-Shoshoni. Although the true fate of the people remains unknown, it has been suggested that their demise was the result of droughts.

EVEN THOUGH the vast majority of archaeologists now accept that the evolution of the Fremont was due to some form of interaction with the Anasazi, there is some doubt as to the true extent of that influence. It has been said, notably by Gunnerson<sup>3</sup>, that Morss was working with limited material that led him to 'overemphasize the Fremont-Anasazi differences.' Whilst it is true that later archaeological research has shown that the Fremont and Anasazi shared many traits, this is largely applicable to Fremont groups that were geographically close to the Anasazi core area. Fremont groups that inhabited northern Utah are clearly distinguishable

from the Anasazi. Also, certain differences and original traits are detectable in sufficient number to distinguish the Fremont from being a mere Anasazi offshoot. For instance, specific styles of anthropomorphic pictographs appear to be unique to the Fremont culture. We shall deal with this aspect in greater detail in the second part of our paper. In this section we should like to present evidence to support our contention that, besides the Anasazi, there appears to have been another source of influence upon Fremont culture; an influence that seems to manifest itself most strongly in certain motifs on the RC panel.

### **Unusual elements of the RC panel**

THERE ARE MORE than a dozen panels of petroglyphs in the immediate vicinity of RC. These have a wide range of ages, but most of them, unlike RC, have only a few glyphs. Lawrence Loendorf dated a charcoal lens that partially covered the front of the RC panel. The mean corrected charcoal date obtained was 23 AD, but Loendorf finally dated the panel to between 500 AD and 700 AD.<sup>4</sup>

The Claflin-Emerson Peabody Museum Expedition, to which Morss was affiliated, first reported RC in 1930, and a number of investigators have commented on it since because of its unusual nature. In his *Petroglyphs and Pictographs of Utah*,<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Castleton notes, 'It is one of the best, most complex, and certainly one of the most interesting sites in the state.' It could even be said that the RC site is one of the most complex and interesting in the entire U.S.A.

The most prominent panel at RC is crowded with provocative petroglyphs. **Figure 3A** is a photograph of the main panel, and **Figure 3B** is a drawing in which the most important elements, (the majority of which are dealt with in the ensuing text), are isolated. A group of peculiar zoomorphic figures in the upper left corner have attracted considerable

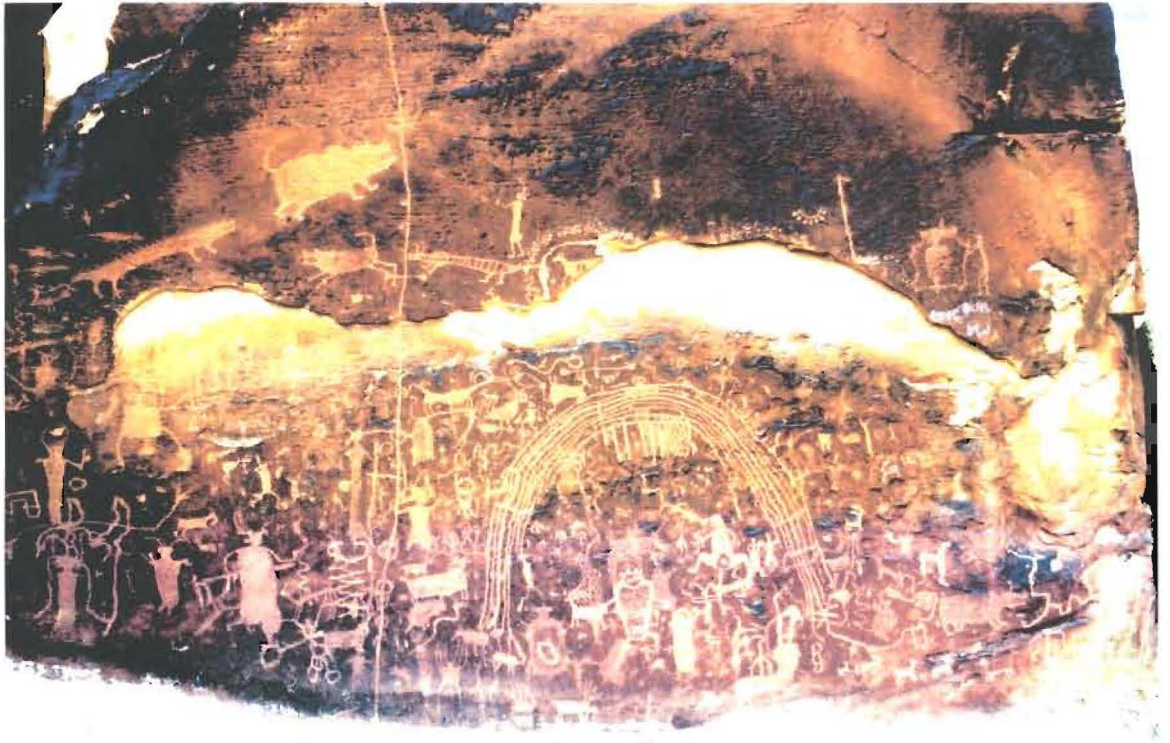
attention. Writers have been reticent about pointing out their similarity to creatures foreign to the region of the site. Miller<sup>6</sup> describes them as 'one resembling a reptile (either a lizard or an alligator), a hippopotamus-like creature (**Figure 4**), a dog, and a horned bug. It should be noted, for instance, that the common species of the hippopotamus is found in the rivers, lakes, and estuaries of tropical Africa, and it is possibly for this reason that some commentators, notably Gunnerson,<sup>7</sup> are of the opinion that such renditions at RC are of recent derivation. However, Schaafsma<sup>8</sup> states that 'field inspection of the site indicated that on the basis of patination and technical execution, these figures are not recent and are an integral part of the original panel.'

Furthermore, research undertaken by Phillip Leonard has brought to light some possible similarities between the RC glyphs and Egyptian hieroglyphs. Whilst this might be considered as being highly speculative, and certainly not endorsed by mainstream archaeologists, the correspondence seemed so strong that opinions were sought from people trained and experienced in the art and archaeology of Egypt. The support received was encouraging, and led to more detailed comparisons. As a result, in the first part of this paper we shall attempt, despite the controversial nature of such a hypothesis, to interpret the RC panel using meanings normally assigned to Egyptian iconography. In the second part we shall investigate the possibilities by which these traits may have been transferred from the Old to the New World before the time of Columbus. We shall also present certain genetic data in support of our thesis.

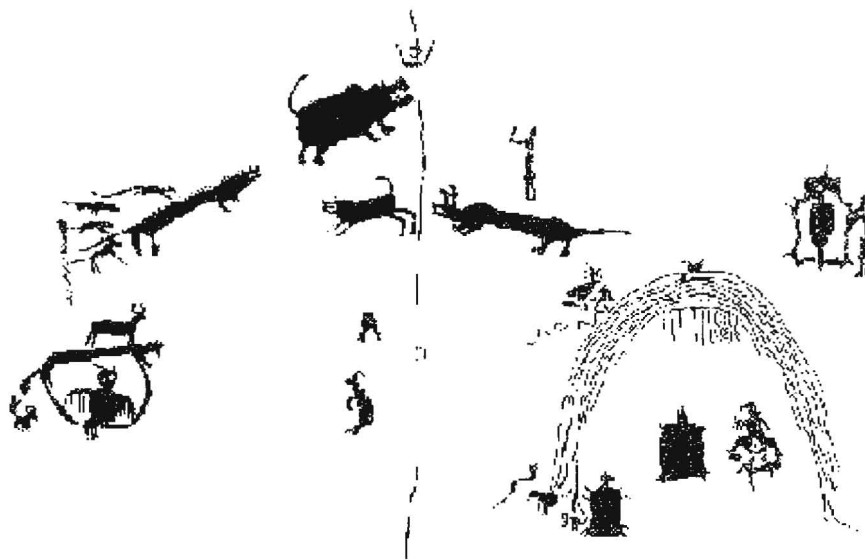
### **Egyptian correspondences.**

The Egyptians saw heavenly bodies and their movements as on a stage. That stage was the sky, where the drama of their mythology could be played. Nearly all of the recognized





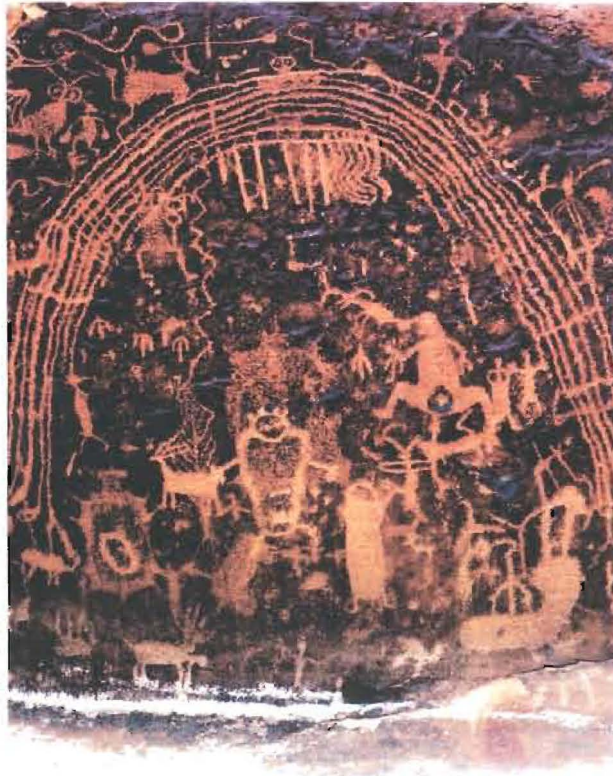
**Fig.3A: A Photograph of the Main Panel**



**Fig.3B: Drawing of the Most Important Elements**



**Fig.4: A Hippopotamus-Like Creature**



**Fig.5: A Large Rainbow-Like Arch**

similarities between Egyptian symbolism and the RC panel deal with the journey, and the attendant perils, that the soul encounters in reaching its final resting place in the nether world. These depictions fall into two primary groups, and are somewhat narrative in nature. The first relates to the daily sun cycle, its concomitant mythology, and the daytime journey of a deceased's soul. The second is the mythic drama represented by the northern constellations of the night sky in association with the soul's night-time journey.

SYMBOLISM and duality of meaning played an important role in the spiritual lives of the ancient Egyptians. The sun, moon, and stars have the names of the gods of the Egyptians, who saw the motion of these bodies as the acting out of the mythic roles assigned to both the celestial figures and the deities.

This celestial drama is seemingly duplicated on the RC panel. For instance, a large rainbow-like arch, possibly representing the dome of heaven, dominates the right side of the main RC panel. (**Figure 5**). Located within the confines of the arch is a female figure with her legs bent and drawn to either side, exposing her birth canal containing a light coloured circle. Shown beneath her is a reclining male figure with an erect penis. (**Figure 6A**). Ancient Egyptians believed that the goddess Nut gave birth to the sun each morning, in which act she was often depicted. Nut was also shown with her consort Geb, who fathered the sun, reclining beneath her with legs flexed, penis erect, one arm touching the earth and the other reaching toward heaven. **Figure 6B** shows these figures as they appear in Egypt. Compare this with the corresponding scene from the RC panel (Fig 4A) which suggests a transmission of the original thematic elements.

At the bottom left terminus of the arch can be seen a figure that may represent a beetle. (**Figure 7**). The Egyptian scarab beetle (or dung beetle) was associated with the rising sun, and one signified the other. Like a dung

beetle rolling a ball of dung across the ground, the Egyptian God Khepri was believed to roll the sun across the sky.

Also at lower left, but just outside the confines of the arch, is a figure of a serpent (**Figure 8A**) holding the front end of its body erect like the Egyptian cobra hieroglyph. (**Figure 8B**). His neck is shown flared and the general body position is typical for a cobra but not for any New World snake. Egyptian iconography depicted souls of the deceased being carried on the solar barque across the heavens and the celestial Nile to the western horizon where cobras would pull the solar barque downward to its destination in the nether world.

Another figure, at the apex of the dome, is shown peering over an object possibly representing a raft or boat. (**Figure 9**). This could be a soul, or "ka", of the dead riding the solar barque across the heavens on his way to the nether world. Associated with this theme is a figure of an owl in lateral aspect that can be seen outside of the dome to the left of the peering face. (**Figure 10A**). Below the owl is an ovate mass. Either side of the Owl is a man in a seemingly distressed state. The Egyptian hieroglyphic spelling of the word for death is shown by Bates<sup>9</sup> as an owl representing the letter M and a loaf of bread for the letter T. Together, with vowels supplied, they spell *Emmet* meaning *DEATH*. The figure of a distressed man serves in Egypt as a determinative to clarify the meaning of the hieroglyphic text. (**Figure 10B**).

BENEATH THE OWL complex appears a coiled serpent facing the dome. This may correspond to the many-coiled serpent of Egypt who attacked the souls of the dead and who lived in the celestial Nile.

### The ascent of the "Ka"

As can be seen in *Figure 3*, near the centre of the main panel is a vertical line that runs





**Fig.6A: A Reclining Male Figure With an Erect Penis**



**Fig.6B: Figures as They Appear in Egypt**

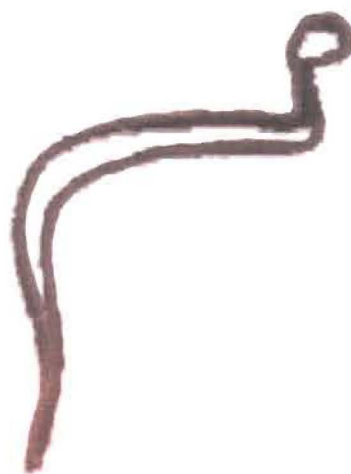




**Fig.7: A Figure That May Represent a Beetle**



**Fig.8A: Figure of a Serpent**



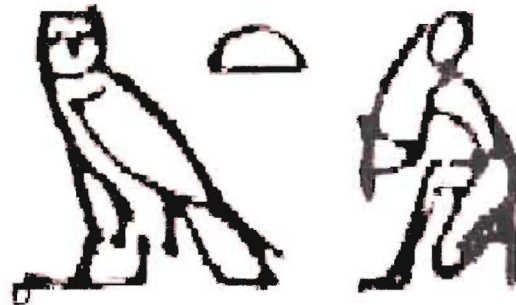
**Fig.8B: Egyptian Cobra Hieroglyph**



**Fig.9: A Figure, Shown Over Possibly a Raft or Boat**



**Fig.10A: The Figure of an Owl**



**Fig.10B: Egyptian Hieroglyphic Spelling of the Word for Death**

bottom of the rock face. On the line, just above the hippopotamus-like creature, is a head framed by a pair of upraised arms. **(Figure 11A)**. Above the head is a rectangular object. In Egyptian iconography a pair of arms and variants of this type represent the soul (“ka”) of the deceased. **(Figure 11B)**. It was believed that the soul of the departed could reach its heavenly destination by climbing a rope ladder to the square plate of the floor of heaven. There, the commoner could spend his afterlife as a star accompanied by Thoth the lunar god.

Accompanying this petroglyph is a scene of ferocity with figures that seem to be attacking the soul on the rope ladder. For instance, a crocodile-like creature is shown. **(Figure 12)**. Page<sup>10</sup> reports the same style of representation of a crocodile in Egypt. Opposing the crocodile-like creature appears a canine bearing its teeth and tongue **(Figure 13)** in a manner which also has a precedent in Egypt. To the right of the rope ladder stands a man raising a stick above his head **(Figure 14A)**, similar to the Egyptian hieroglyph meaning to **DRIVE BACK**. **(Figure 14B)**. Egyptian mythology relates that the soul of the deceased, on its journey to the nether world, is attacked by a creature that was part crocodile and part hippopotamus. This creature was known as the Devourer of the Unjust. To determine if a person had led a just life, the god Thoth would weigh the heart of the deceased. If the person was deemed to have been just, the canine god Anubis, Protector of the Dead, would protect the soul from the attack of the Devourer of the Unjust.

BENEATH THE TAIL of the crocodile is a noteworthy creature. It walks on all four legs, has a canine head, a long tail, and a thick chest. The dog-faced baboon not only looks like this, but was believed by the Egyptians to rule the night sky. Below him is a bovine quite unlike the New World bison. It too fits into the scheme of the Egyptian night sky where its presence, as described by Nuttall<sup>11</sup>, alluded to ‘the nocturnal heaven and its

shining city’. Both the baboon-like and cow-like creatures can be seen in the lower two petroglyphs of **Figure 15**.

#### **Further important correspondences on an adjacent panel**

A SHORT DISTANCE from the main panel, just to the south, is another panel containing an important correspondence that deserves mention, and which continues the theme of the night sky.

A row of dots nearly encircles a man shown in lateral view. **(Figure 16A)**. A similar figure, Tet, is shown by Nuttall<sup>12</sup> and Budge<sup>13</sup>, and is said to represent eternity and eternal circling or revolving. It is therefore a symbol for the pole star, or night sun, one of the forms of Horus. **(Figure 16B)**. To the right and rear of the Tet figure is a serpent with upraised arms that are held in the typical Egyptian position of adoration. Just below this figure are three birds with wings. The birds appear to sport whiskers like those of the family known as “Caprimulgidae” which include Whippoorwills and Nighthawks. These birds fly after dark when the North Star would be visible.

Also on this panel there are many more apparent correspondences between the iconography of RC and ancient Egypt. They are too numerous to detail here, and for a full description the reader is referred to the chapter on Rochester Creek in *Ancient American Inscriptions: Plow Marks or History*.<sup>14</sup> However, particularly worthy of note is a depiction of a rather rotund-looking bird pictured spread-eagled above a ram and encircled by a cartouche-like frame. The monument of Harendontes contained a coffin that bears a close likeness to this fat falcon representation of Horus, as reported by Neugebauer and Parker.<sup>15</sup>

Even the goat standing erect on his hind legs **(Figure 17A)**, and the pair of walking legs attached to a small circle **(Figure 18A)**,





**Fig.11A: A Head Framed by a Pair of Upraised Arms**

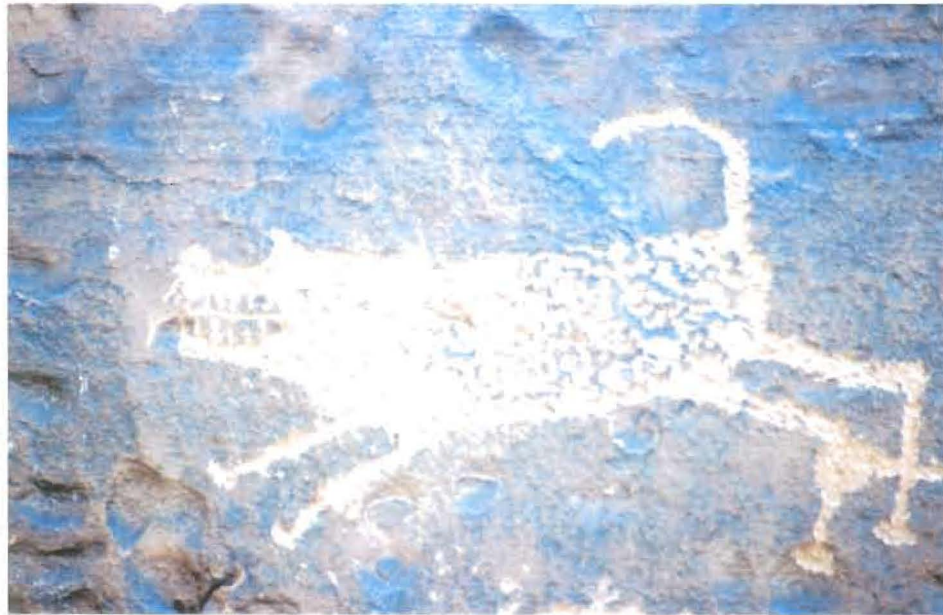


**Fig.11B: In Egyptian Iconography a Pair of Arms Represents the Soul**





**Fig.12: A Crocodile-Like Creature**



**Fig.13: A Canine Bearing Its Teeth and Tongue**



**Fig.14A: A Man Raising a Stick Above His Head**



**Fig.14B: Egyptian Hieroglyph Meaning to DRIVE BACK**



**Fig.15: Baboon-Like and Cow-Like Creatures**



**Fig.16A: A Row of Dots Nearly Encircles a Man Shown in Lateral View**





**Fig.16B: Tet Is Said to Represent Eternity and Eternal Circling**

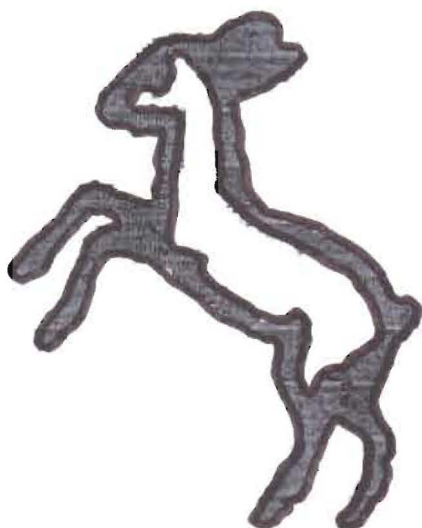


**Fig.17A: A Goat Standing Erect**



**Fig.18A: A Pair of Walking Legs**





**Fig.17B**



**Fig.18B**

**Fig.17B + 18B: So They Are to Be Seen in Egyptian Iconography**

although not associated within the mythical context outlined above, are to be seen in Egyptian iconography. (**Figures 17B and 18B**).

The RC panels also contain non-Egyptian figures that may well have been made by those a few generations removed from the Old World, indicating a fusion of cultures.

#### **Lateral aspect**

ONE IMPORTANT final observation needs to be made. The similarities also extend to the manner in which the glyphs are presented. For instance, anthropomorphs in Fremont rock art are virtually always shown

in frontal view. On the EC panel, many figures are shown in lateral aspect. Such presentation also corresponds with the features of Egyptian art.

#### **Support from others**

Despite the far reaching implications, and what many mainstream experts may consider to be an impossibility, support for the authors' interpretations has come from David Kelley, Professor Emeritus of Archaeology, University of Calgary. With regard to the zoomorphic cluster inherent on the RC panel, Kelley has stated that they 'are a cluster which does occur, even though not in the same physical format, in Egypt. I know nothing like it in any of the things I am

Swansea, Wales, has also supported the basic premise regarding Egyptian relationships.

### **Conclusion**

THE RC SITE shows a number of remarkable similarities to ancient Egyptian iconography in their proper mythical context. Whilst there are indigenous Indian elements to be considered, an attempt to explain the panel solely in terms of Amerindian origin would prove difficult, and would also require

an explanation for the many close correspondences to Egyptian iconography that we have described. One thing that seems evident from all of this is that the RC site has something in common with both the Old and New Worlds. The mechanism by which certain elements, seemingly deriving from an early Old World Egyptian sphere of influence, may have reached the Fremont people will be the subject of the second part of this paper where a study of other Fremont sites may provide clues.

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