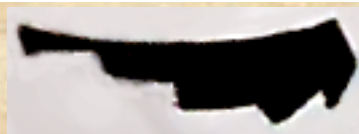


Brightest of the Great Comets at Magnitude -1 *

NASA's List, Magnitude -1 Great Comets: A.D.1976, 1665, 1664, 1532, 1132, 1066 HC**, 390, 374 HC**, 141 HC**



It's Astronomy!



Great Comet of AD1132: [seen 24 days*]

It is tempting to want to ascribe this Mimbres bowl design as being of a *comet* (black 5-pointed figure) near *Ursa Major* (long-tailed bear) under the north pole (6-pointed line-figure as magnetic north between the Little Dipper and Draco's tail a thousand years ago), where the constellations do not set and *turn in a huge circle* all the time. And so, the great comet of 1132, some 13 years before some say the Mimbres painting culture ended in AD1145, might be a suitable geometrization and subject for this bowl as the 5-pointed object under this long-tailed bear constellation. This bowl, however, does not have the exquisite thin rim-lines often associated with the Classic Mimbres period, so this design might be of an earlier celestial apparition deemed worthy of commemoration within the Mimbres cannon.

For our purposes of understanding, however, the description of the great comet of AD1132 from Gary Kronk's Cometography is interesting: "This comet was first detected on 1132 October 4, according to the *Chin shih* ..., when Chinese observers saw it at ... Ursae Majoris...[when] the comet probably rose in the east at sunset and set in the west at sunrise, so that it was visible throughout the night." [Kronk 1999:198-99] The comet was also written of in texts from Japan, Korea, and Germany.

In Mimbres sign language, the plaited form on the bear appears to mean "celestial" or ecliptic but not the Milky Way—which would be a checkerboarding figure instead, though this comet was configured to have passed thru both the Milky Way and the ecliptic plane of the planets in its journey southward.

* Yeomans/NASA list of "Great Comets in History." The April, 2007, update includes Comet McNaught, Jan. '07, magnitude -6, best seen in the southern hemisphere and largely ignored by American media but with great photos on the Internet!

**HC = Halley's comet perihelion visits

"I maintain that behind every 'decorative' layout lies the hidden visage of a breathing icon giving life (animation) to the design.... Perhaps this explains the current emphasis on cultural syntax or grammars rather than the decoding of iconography and symbolism. Shouldn't we try to escape this mental prison of our own ethnotaxonomy of form...? *Meaning often lurks where we expect it least.*

Hence we need to pursue the 'archaeology of signification,' even in symmetry. Otherwise symmetry analysis becomes mere[ly]... theoretically interesting, but of limited cultural significance..." [Peter G. Roe, Washburn 2004:98]

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