

## LEGEND AND FOLKLORE SYMBOLS: ESTANATLEHI

*The Navajo's changing woman travels through different lives and is the ruler of the dead in the western realms, where only good things come from.*

**E**stanatlehi is the 'Phoenix' of Navajo mythology, who journeys through life from youth to old age where she renews herself and starts again. The Navajo call her the Goddess of Change.

The legends of her birth vary. In some myths she is found by the first man and woman who had observed a black cloud descending on a mountain. When they went to the mountain they found a baby girl who grew into a young woman in 18 days. In other stories, the baby girl is found beneath a mountain by the ancestral goddess Atse Etsan, who raises her to be the saviour of humankind.

### Walk into the horizon

Estanatlehi's youth and age is thought to be linked to the seasons: she is young in the summer and grows old in the winter. When the goddess is old she walks towards the horizon and is met by her younger Self walking back and so she is renewed.

*As Estanatlehi grows old she walks into the Sun and her younger Self walks out.*



### SYMBOLISM OF ESTANATLEHI

In another variation of her story of origin, the Navajo describe how Coyote the Trickster found a baby girl, who was born out of the darkness and dawn on top of Spruce Mountain. The baby was wrapped in clouds and surrounded by three rainbows. Her cradle

***If your magic invokes change, paint a scene to represent Estanatlehi behind your altar.***

was secured by sunbeams and lightning and she was fed on the Sun's energy, clouds and flower pollens.

The symbolism of all the elements in this story may be used to call upon Estanatlehi for help with your magic. For example, you can make charms of the Sun and clouds or leave offerings of flower stamens sprinkled on your altar.

Estanatlehi is shown as a beautiful woman between the ages of 12 and 18, wearing a rainbow-gown and a white-feathered cloak adorned with shells and turquoise.

She is a sky goddess and married to the Sun, who visits her at night in her turquoise palace to the west. The Chiricahua Apache call her the Turquoise Woman.