

THE ENCLOSURE: ANOTHER CONCEPT

In an earlier study (Warner 1982), the enclosure was considered as a symbol associated with and used as a motif implying a hunting concept. At that time it was shown that even though the enclosure motif was not used in the immediate vicinity of hunting blinds and attack stations around Venice, Utah, there were extremely large percentages nearby. In rock art, many of these enclosures depict sheep being funneled into or already contained within a coral-like enclosure (Figure 1). These two facts have significant implications regarding

Whatever context, the enclosure is one of those elements that naturally has a suggestive shape. Even without a context, most people would probably associate the prime form of the enclosure with fertility. In the different styles of Utah, the enclosure and its variations have been extended to several additional concepts that, although not obviously fertility oriented, may have a wider relationship with that basic concept. In a study of the limits of variations of the enclosure (Warner 1982), it was discovered

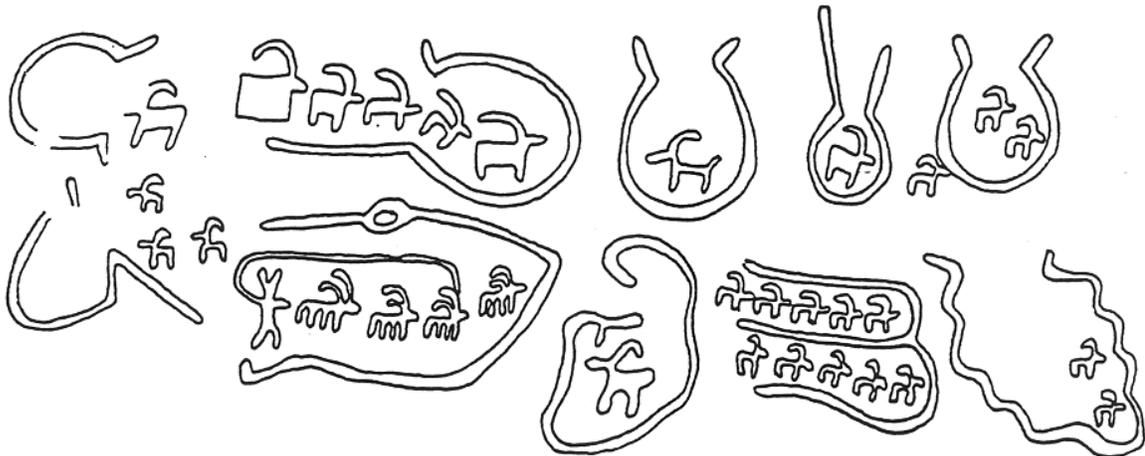


Figure 1



Figure 2

the enclosure, and in that context are indicators of hunting activities. It was also suggested that the enclosure in a hunting context could be an extension of a basic concept of fertility.

that the enclosure was a more elaborate form and variation of the U-bracket (Figure 2). For an element's identification, the form or variation is the prime concern.

Its orientation is secondary and more applicable to its application.

McGowan (1977) has described a form similar to the enclosure as a symbol asso-



Figure 3. After McGowan 1977

ciated with female fertility (Figure 3). She found several variations and applications of the form, from very natural to very stylized, from puberty rites to rites of conception. In Utah there are many different variants of

incorporated vulva forms (Figure 4). The enclosure has also been used in fertility contexts, like some of the forms illustrated by McGowan.

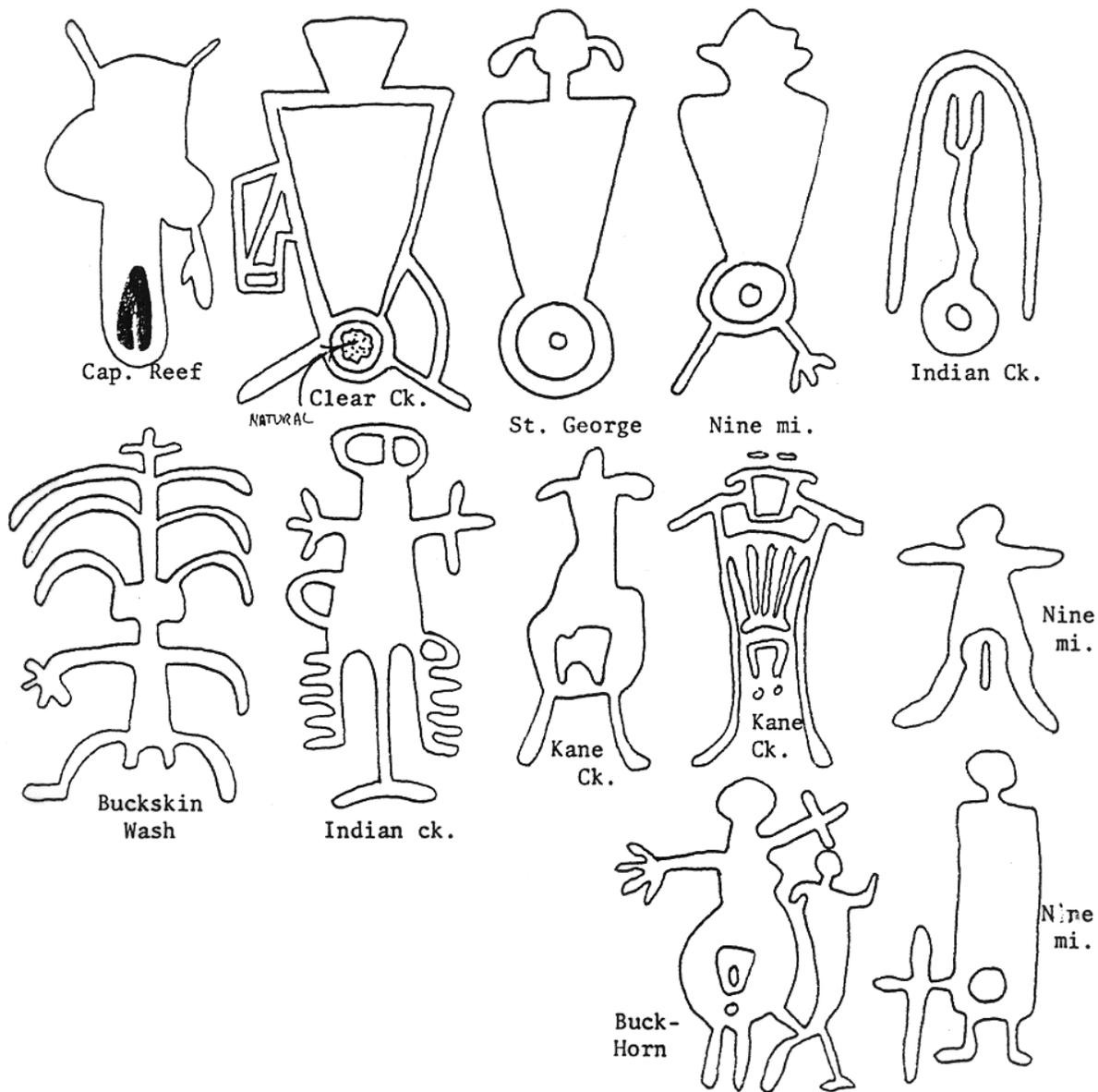


Figure 4.

One panel near Vernal, Utah, provides substantial evidence that the enclosure has fertility associations (Figure 5). The most

prominent evidence is a copulation scene inside an enclosure. Since the enclosure has been used as a vulva variant, this increases the likelihood that the couple within the enclosure are represented in the act of copulation. The enclosure then reinforces the fertility association of this context. Located next to this is an anthropomorph whose possible phallus forms or is joined to three or four alternate and joined enclosures. The first definite enclosure, which is the smallest, is empty. The second, next larger, contains a dot like many of McGowan's and over 26 enclosures at Venice, Utah (Warner 1982). The last and largest enclosure has within it a supposedly pregnant-looking sheep, and another animal with a patinated circle inside its body. Special attention is drawn to this circle because

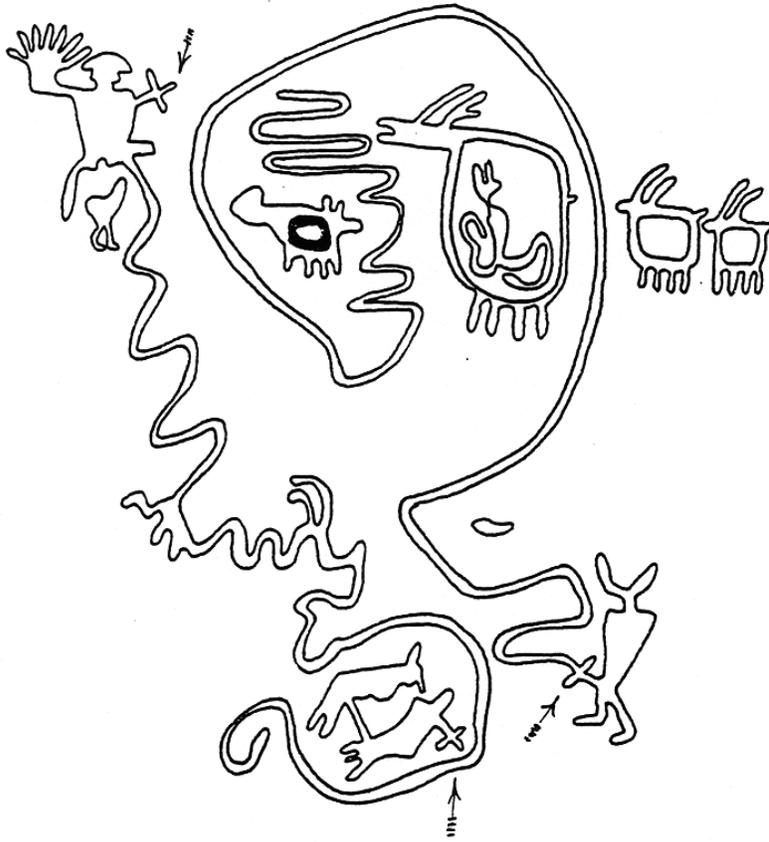


Figure 5. Near Vernal, Utah.

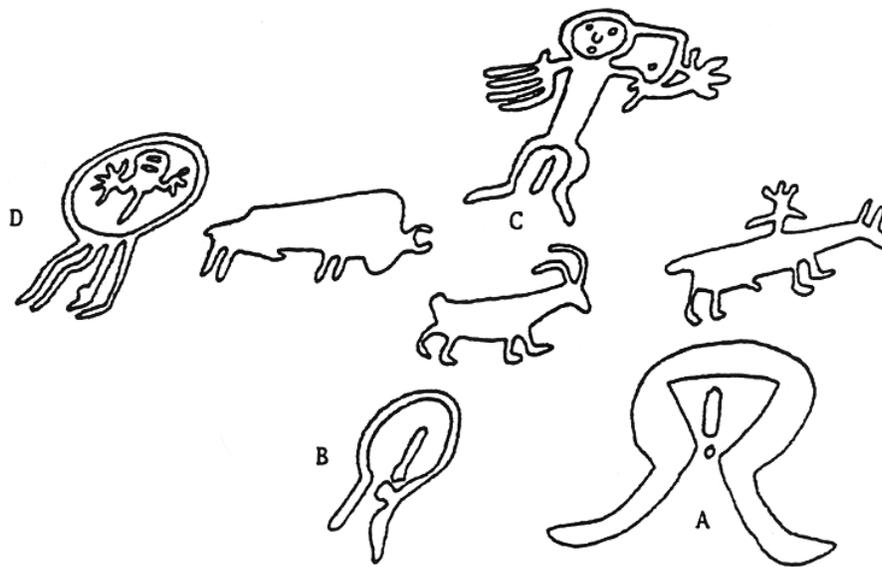


Figure 6

it has been produced as a negative (un-pecked) element. These examples seem to provide after-the-fact evidence of the copulation scene, plus the end of the extension from the anthropomorphs phallus. These provide several concrete concept associations.

In the upper part of Courthouse Wash, Utah, another panel provides substantial evidence that the form of the enclosure was used as a vulva. Located there are four possible enclosure variants of the vulva form. If Figures 6A, B and D were the only ones present, there would not be sufficient concrete contexts to provide the needed concept associations. However, a fertility concept could be assumed for Figures 6A and B because of their similarities to other vulva forms. The lower body of Figure 6C, however, copies Figure 6A. It thus seems to incorporate a vulva form as if it were the hips, legs and feet themselves. This provides a more concrete association, which is needed before any confidence in identification can be made. Since the legs and feet of Figure 6C copy the opening, proportion and form of the unincorporated enclosure (Figure 6A) exactly, it is assumed that the graphic duplication was intentional. Figure 6D suggests a wombed anthropomorph.

The alternative idea of Figure 6C as a phallic male seems illogical. The exclamation point-like form possibly

indicating the phallus, identical to several representations in Figure 2, is detached. Lines identical to this detached vertical line are represented in many vulva forms. Such a representation undoubtedly depicts the vulva and anal opening.

As at Vernal, a Rochester Creek copulation scene takes place within a rainbow-like arc—somewhat suggestive of the basic inverted U-bracket vulva form. Although this composition has a rainbow instead of the U-bracket, these two elements are similar in shape and probably overlap somewhat in meanings. It seems logical that a symbolism of fertility could be interchangeable with several elements sharing a basic shape and concept. The identification of the Rochester arc as a "rainbow" is not definite.

Also enclosed in this arc are five "vulva-", "bird-", "bird-track"-like forms (Figure 7). The problems in identifying these forms as

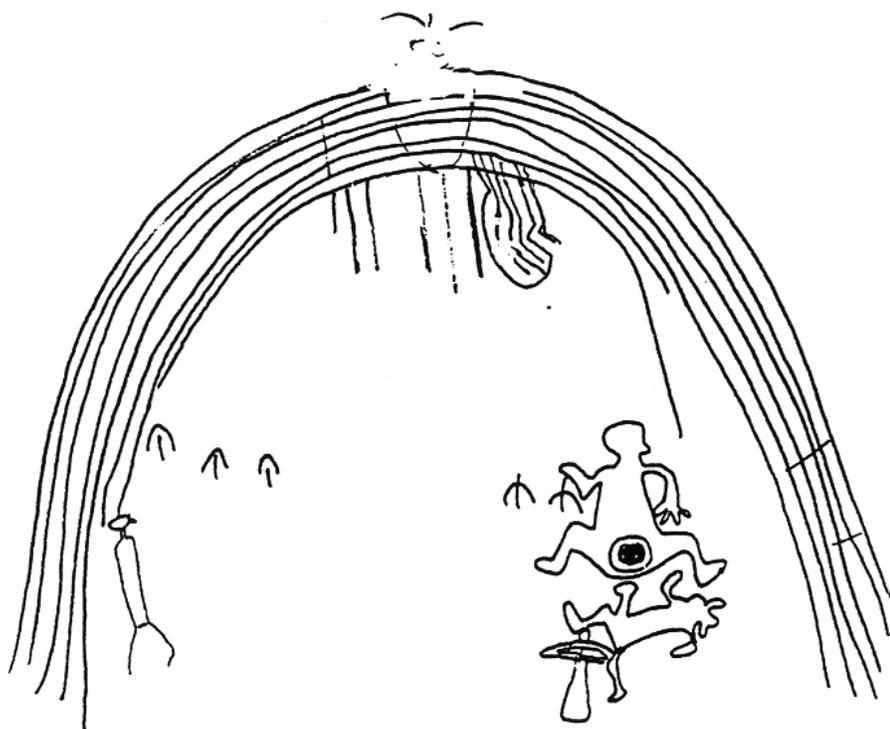


Figure 7. Rochester Creek.

stylized birds, bird tracks or vulva forms are problematical, since there are at least thirteen birds present in the panel. The possibility of these representing birds or tracks cannot be ignored. However, with the presence of three copulation scenes, the possibility of a vulva form cannot be ignored. Many of these birds either represent owls or have owl-like traits. After an examination of the numerous bird representations in Utah, it becomes obvious that with many there is an underlying theme of fertility.

In Nine Mile Canyon an inverted U occurs in the vulva area of two females in an implied copulation scene (Figure 8). What

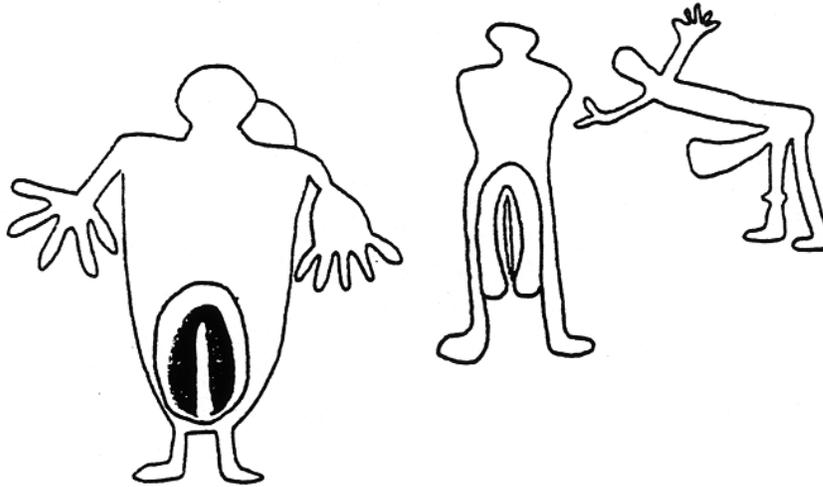


Figure 8.

is interesting is that associated with this panel there are three owls. Another very abstract owl-like figure in Nine Mile (Figure 9) has an incorporated enclosure in the vulva position—like the one from Courthouse Wash. Like many others, this vulva-like form has an enclosed dot. Whether this is an owl is uncertain, but it has several features that are very owl-like.

With the 250 Venice enclosures, direct involvements with concrete fertility applications are rare. Only two representations may have associations that imply fertility. These, however, are extremely sketchy.

Figure 10A has an enclosure formed around natural features in the rock's surface, suggesting its intent as a vulva. Mrs. Avery, a local resident, suggests Figure 10B is a vulva, joined in copulation with a phallus and testicles.

Beyond the 44 representations, with 116 mountain sheep at Venice, 45 representations are associated with a dot. Twenty-six dots are centered within the enclosure. Eight have a dot outside, while eleven are attached to the enclosure's line. There are 126 isolated enclosures without any association. Thirty have enclosed an unidentifiable abstract design. These examples do not provide a satisfactory concept association

because they are abstract and do not restrict their isolation from several other concepts. Just because there are 126 enclosures without an association does not mean that some are not concerned with fertility.

At Connor Springs, Utah, there are three "Venice Style" enclosures on one boulder

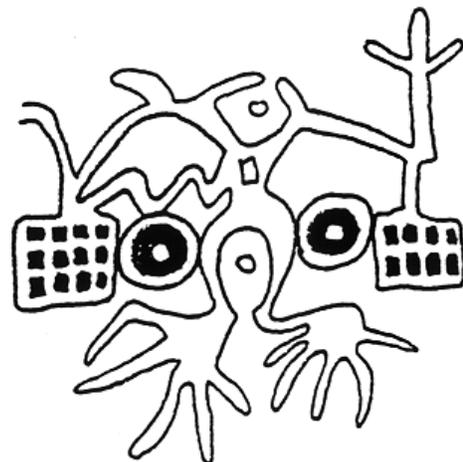


Figure 9. Nine Mile.

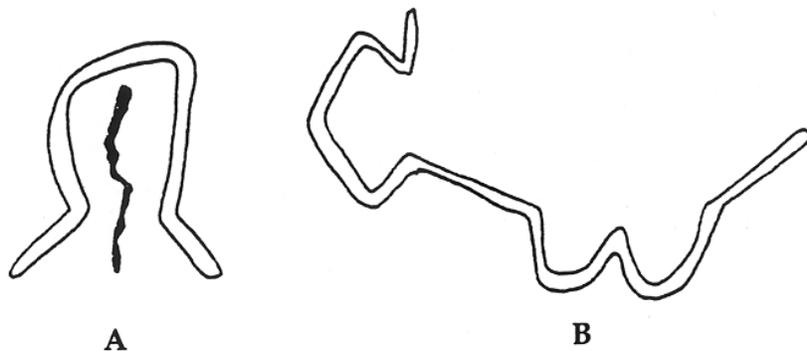


Figure 10.

that incorporate several dots and one-horned, two-legged sheep identical to those at Venice (Figure 11). These occur directly above an anthropomorph whose phallus descends and is attached to an abstract form. This is reminiscent of an anthropomorph at Waterflow, New Mexico, whose phallus descends into a concretion (Figure 12). Several other concretions at Waterflow were used to imply the vulva form (Warner 1984). The direct association of the enclosure, a symbol established as a fertility motif, with the phallic figure increases the potential of the artist's concept relating hunting with fertility.

The main idea presented by Warner (1982:104-115), a report on the Venice

enclosures, was that this motif could have at least three or possibly four applications or extended concepts. Because this type of phenomenon occurs with many different glyphs, I have tried to be careful in the terms and concept identification and to look for concrete associations.

The above report suggested the addition of the enclosure to representations of the hunting concept (typically expressed by the portrayals of hunters) was logical. However, the enclosure variations of hunting concepts contain additional implications that are extensions of the fertility concept. This may include, not only the concept of "fertile" hunt, but the idea of the game being fertile and capable of replenishing.

This strengthens the comments of Thomas (1976) who found identical forms of McGowan's U-bracket fertility forms—although they were used in hunting contexts. She acknowledged the vulva form similarities and theorized whether or not the "horseshoe" (her descriptive term) is only

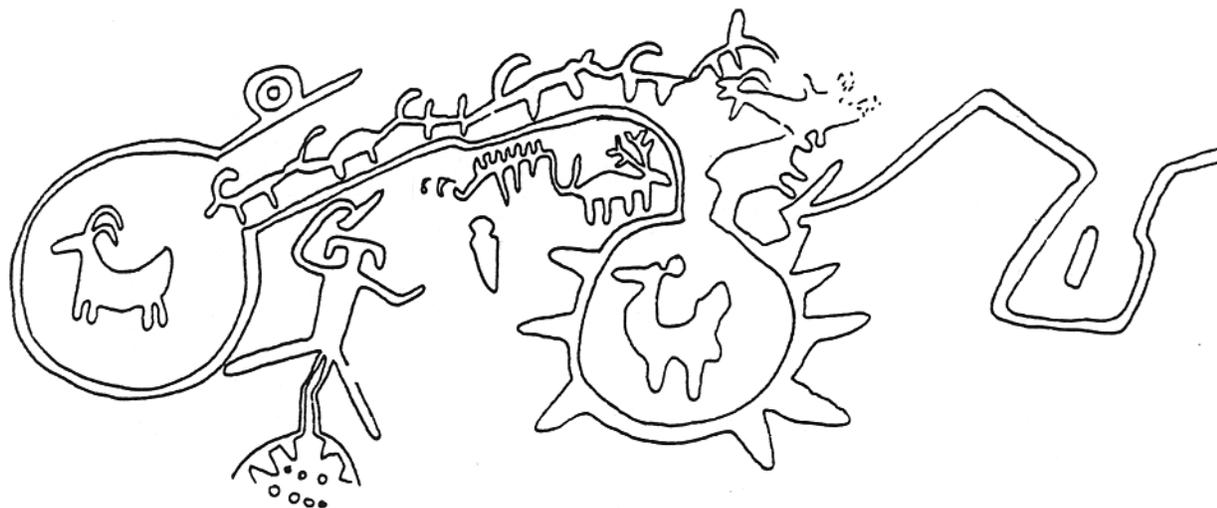


Figure 11. Connor Springs.

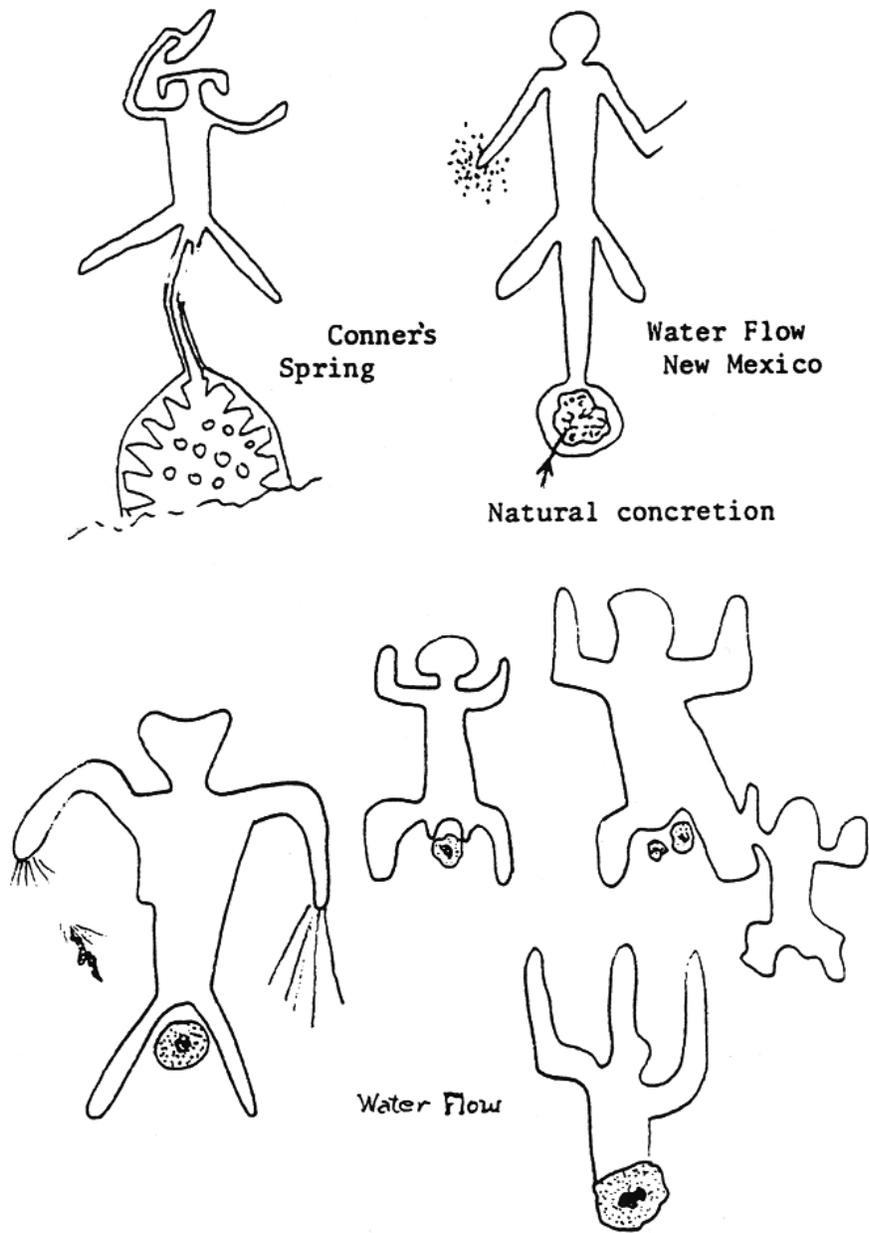


Figure 12.

used as a hunt-related motif at attack stations and drive situations. She goes on to state that because of the intimate association of the basic form with both fertility and hunting, this, "motif actually carries with it a broader concept of 'plenty' relating not only to fertility and increase, but also the mechanics of a complex and highly productive hunting system" (Thomas 1976:71).

McGowan (1977) has demonstrated the basic concept of the inverted U-bracket. Thomas (1976) has shown that the same form extended from the pure concepts of human fertility and reproduction could be applied to the context and concept of game acquisition. The concepts in these new applications may still, however vague, retain roots of its earlier association. In this report, I have shown that the enclosure, as a variant of the U-bracket, has been used with

other variations as a vulva form. This association occurs in contexts strictly associated with copulation and fertility. Evidence also shows (Warner 1982) that like the inverted U-bracket or "horseshoe motif" in Thomas' examples, the enclosure may be extended and applied to hunting concepts.

I fully believe that when a Fremont stylistic group has a distinctive symbol system with similar elements, but with different forms and contexts than other Fremont styles, we must not impose terms that presuppose just one interpretation. We must allow and expect symbol evolution and further extension of concepts.

For those who may object to my comparing vulvas and enclosures, or comparing symbols used as vulvas versus the same symbol used as a corralling device, as being like "comparing grapefruits and condominiums", may I state that they are truly comparable. The reason is simple. Both symbols occur in at least two different contexts and represent two different concepts. The term

"enclosure" is the type of term intended to depart from very restrictive terms implying interpretation wherever it occurs, whether as vulva, corralling device, grave maker, or connotations.

REFERENCES CITED

- McGowan, Charlotte
1977 Female Fertility and Rock Art.
American Indian Rock Art 4:26-40
- Thomas, Trudy
1976 Petroglyph Distribution and the Hunting Hypothesis in the Central Great Basin. *Tebiwa* 18(2):65-74
- Warner, Jesse E.
1982 The Enclosure Petroglyph Motif: One Possible Interpretation. *American Indian Rock Art* 7 and 8:104-116.
- Warner, Judith S.
1976 An Intuitive View of Waterflow, New Mexico. *American Indian Rock Art* 10:29-39.