

BOCKS CANYON AS A HUNT AND DRIVE SITE

BY

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In the mountain ranges west of Parowan, Utah is a narrow canyon that breaks through a basalt ridge and flows to the west past a Lake Bonneville bench out onto the valley floor below. The water flowing down this wash comes out onto the old dry bed of Rush Lake, where the shore line is still very distinct. The canyon, previously unnamed, is now referred to in our files as Bocks' Canyon. It was named after Frank and Alice J. Bock, members of the American Rock Art Research Association who have taken the initiative and responsibility to come from California to fully record this and a few other sites nearby.

The rock art at the mouth of Bocks' Canyon begins as soon as the basalt breaks free from the alluvial plain. Rock art occurs on both sides of the wash until the canyon funnels into a narrow, high-walled gorge. The inscriptions are clustered in the areas where the rock surfaces are most suitable, occurring in groups or loci (Fig.1). Loci three through six are the only areas obviously concerned with the subject of hunting and the drive situation dealt with in this paper.

The physiographic setting of Bocks' Canyon is ideal for a drive situation to ambush game. Out in front of the narrow gorge, the wash begins to widen as it bends around a loci 4, forks and flows around an extension of a flat, boulder-strewn flood plain. North of the flood plain are three caves, set in some cliffs where the wash starts to turn before it enters the gorge. Within the gorge there is a small trail at the base of the talus slope that bypasses several areas where the wash becomes difficult for passage. Along both sides of the canyon there is plenty of natural cover and concealment for hunters. The area by the three caves is probably the location where hunters had their first attack station (Fig.1), since this is the first location where retreat of the game could be blocked. In the fifth area, there is a glyph of an archer posed with bow drawn to shoot down into the wash from the large, boulder-strewn talus (Fig.7A).

If any game escaped these two attempts to contain them, their path would have taken them into the gorge itself where the wash becomes a difficult, slick, boulder-strewn passage. Above this area on the southeast, Jay Crotty, on a field trip of the American Rock Art Research Association, found a possible hunting blind. Within just a short distance of the mouth there are several small jumps. The first would present a considerable obstacle to passage if the trail were blocked. The game could be directed back into the wash with little difficulty. If the hunters desired, the game could simply be allowed to naturally go or be driven up the wash to the last jump, which is an effective corral. This jump is essentially a box, and impassable because of the vertical walls. At this point we are not certain if the game were driven or whether the hunters simply laid in wait for the game to naturally move through this passage.

The setting alone makes the hypothesis of a hunt or drive situation feasible, but this is not sufficient to indicate whether or not that was the actual use of the site. There are two ways to provide this information. The first of these is the considerable remains left within the three caves, which has been all but totally destroyed by pothunters. The high concentration of ungulate bone in the spoil dirt should be analyzed.

The second is the symbols left virtually undisturbed along the wash. Bocks' Canyon is a large rock art site, several styles present indicate that the site was used by more than one stylistic group during more than one time period. Among the symbols present there are at least two obvious themes seeming to display the topics of concern of the glyphmakers.

There are six panels that involve solar symbolism. So far three of these panels have been observed as active solar panels which interact with light and shadow. Many of the panels at the site contain symbols similar to hunt and drive situations found at sites recorded earlier which are east of Richfield, Utah (Warner 1982:104). Many of these glyphs occur in what we refer to as a prime form (see below) (Fig. 2 A-F,Q). This site is very important because it has so many prime form enclosures, quite some distance from the area which is that symbol's major center of concentration. An enclosure is a concept expressed as a bulbous-shaped, corral-like form with wing-like approaches. The prime or typical form of this concept is an expression with a majority of consistent features without great variation (Bocks' Canyon, Fig. 2., Venice. Fig. 4., Elsewhere, Fig. 3).

There are only a few sites in the state with numerous occurrences of this symbol. Most of these are located just northeast of Richfield. There are many sites, however, with only one or two. Bocks' Canyon has about 20. This site is not only an addition to those with many enclosures, but many of the examples here provide additional insights into the use of this symbol. Several distinctions that occur here were not observed to occur elsewhere until the distinctions were first examined here. Some of these are just subtle differences but others are major distinctions, and so far some occur only here.

Enclosure glyphs occur in four loci, 2,3,4 and 5. Locus 3, around the caves, contains most of the enclosures. One of these enclosures contains a sheep corralled within the enclosure itself. This is a context of symbolic association that could be called a prime association. This composition is similar to many of those near Richfield. Several of these enclosures occur in contexts which were not noticed among the earlier examples, because just one of those sites has over 100 examples, with over 200 in the area. The presence of this phenomenon was also much more subtle at the site near Richfield (Fig.4). Each of these contexts at Bocks' Canyon was created by placing the enclosure on a very specific rock surface incorporating natural features, which seem to enhance the intent of corraling thus increasing the significance of these enclosures.

The consistency of the enclosures and the association of enclosed sheep near Richfield suggests a natural or artificial corral or box canyon used in game acquisition. Three enclosures in Figures 2A and Q incorporate natural but unusual aspects of the rock surface in such a way as to indicate geographical features. In two situations the bulbous sections of the enclosure were composed so that they opened along a ridge-like extension rising out of the rock. One wing-like approach was pecked out along the top edge of these miniature cliffs to take advantage of the natural barricades.

As a natural barrier these features would funnel the game into the corral portion of the pecked enclosure which would represent the cliffs within the gorge (Fig. 2 P,Q). By echoing the physical features of Bocks Canyon, it acts as a miniature creation of the site. This is not quite an ironic congruence (Jack Steinbring, 1987 personal communication), but it poetically and "ceremonially" recreates the intent of the site.

Several of these enclosures both here and near Richfield, have ticked lines on one or both of the winged approaches and the bulbous section. William Strange (personal communication, 1987) after having looked at similar situations expressed the hypothesis that the ticked line may possibly represent a boundary, border, or natural precipice or other geological barrier. The occurrence of the ticked line on so many enclosures, especially on the one with the incorporation of a natural barrier (Fig. 2Q), becomes a feature that seems to add credence to Strange's idea.

Many of these enclosures have the junction of the wing approaches and the bulbous section of the enclosures placed so as to break the angle of the symbol over the angle on the rock surface (Fig. 2B,C,D,P,Q). These are similar to many near Richfield (Fig. 4). In several respects this use of the rock surface adds to and redefines the symbolism of surprise, funneling and enclosure.

There are three enclosures containing a curving inner line within the back of the bulbous part of the enclosure (Figs. 2B,C,Q). The significance of this doubling of the bulbous back line is uncertain. There is evidence of differing degrees of weathering and repatination suggesting glyph maintenance. It is felt that in some situations like this the re-pecking or reuse of the symbol may suggest that this location and glyph were used over an extended period of time. It may also suggest that the process of manufacture was an important part of the glyph's intent or function, and may be as important as the glyph itself.

This possibly has a strong relationship to similar situations in Clear Creek Canyon where the intent of the design seems to include being used and reused over a long period of time. The ceremonial or ritualistic action in the creation and possible re-creation of the glyph, preparatory to game entrapment, may have been an important part of a cognizant pattern of behavior representing the actual entrapment of the game itself (Eve Ewing, personal communication, 1987).

At Bocks' Canyon there are several isolated barred grids, some of which are associated with enclosures (Fig. 5). Previously the barred grid was a more or less unidentifiable symbol, because we had not given it much thought, and because we knew of no associations indicating an obvious, positive concept for that symbol. For some time we have stressed the need of what we refer to as a concrete concept association. Before the concept of a symbol can be determined with any degree of confidence, it needs to occur in an association with a known symbol, or in a natural or understandable situation.

This association is often provided by aboriginal artists to create a more understandable or identifiable concept association. The association indicates the idea behind a more abstract symbol. This phenomenon of association of a more natural or known symbol with more abstract or unknown symbols of the same concept occurs with several symbols at this site (Fig. 7). The most distinctive is the abstract pair in Figure 7B. The left one has more human-like attributes while the right one looks like what is usually labeled

a scorpion or one-pole ladder on many element lists. By comparing the two it is possible that the right one is simply a more abstract, less detailed form of the more human-like one to the left. In another situation, a barred grid was placed within the bulbous section of an enclosure (Fig.7C). This combines two differing forms of different symbols expressing what we now feel share a common concept. Subsequent research seems to verify the accuracy of this assessment. That evidence will be the subject of a separate presentation.

If the barred grid is a different symbol representing the same basic concept, then the combination of both would identify that association to one not familiar with one or the other symbol. Figure 5D (also Figs. 6E,L) shows an animal superimposed on and another near a barred grid. This demonstrates the association of the concept behind the barred grids as one that is used with animals. Figure 7E is a barred grid-like symbol (the lower edge formed by the edge of the stone) attached to a double enclosure. One of the enclosures has a grid or net-like pattern within the enclosed area. This again enhances the belief of: 1 - the association of these two graphic symbols as having a common concept and 2 - the use of the site as a drive or hunting station.

One final example of a symbolic association that adds support to the idea of game acquisition occurs with anthropomorphs next to or enclosed within the enclosures (Figs. 2H,I), and other such figures as Figure 2J which is an anthropomorph with a whip-like extension from the arm. This is similar to one form near Venice which stands next to an enclosure (Fig. 3A) as though he is driving sheep.

The reason we have created the definition of a prime form is that in many motifs the form occurs with many variations. Some take the form and change it enough that it may be unrecognizable to us as a symbol representing the same concept. At what point does a symbol cease representing a specific concept and when does it begin another representation? (Warner 1983). Elements in Figure 8 include abstracted Bocks' Canyon enclosures that may (or may not) represent the corralling-drive situation, or may now begin representing something entirely different. The reason these elements need to be considered are: 1) they are similar enough to prime forms to still be enclosures; 2) because of our unfamiliarity, we do not know where to draw the line; and, 3) someone else may find a more concrete association for them.

An example of that possibility is one odd form not readily identifiable as an enclosure which only occurs once at Bocks' Canyon. This symbol also occurs in ten compositions at a site near Richfield (Warner 1982). Every boulder at that site contains one of two elements, one, the enclosure, and the other an abstract figure of a bird-like head, all being similar (Fig. 2K). Since every panel at that site contains one of these two motifs, there is a strong correlation between panels. There are 10 enclosures in all, and 12 bird-like heads. The fact that there are sufficient repetitions that are similar emphasizes their significance, association with each other, their associated functions, and the intent of the symbols at the sites. This is also evidence of a connection between Bocks' Canyon and the site near Richfield.

As much as we would like to think that this information proves the hunting-drive hypothesis for this site, it doesn't. However, the evidence lends considerable support. We are firmly against the interpretation of fine details, but by identifying the consistency, repetitions, variations, and associations in the contexts in which they were used, we have provided a more substantial basis for the concepts these symbols could have represented.

A cross-cultural comparison will provide a few insights to better understand the situation. In Nevada, Thomas (1976) has found several similar symbols at a drive site. She refers to these glyphs as a "horseshoe" motif. This motif is almost identical to McGowan's vulva symbols from California (1977). Even though there was a preponderance of symbols suggesting fertility at the drive site in Nevada, there was no question in Thomas' mind that the horseshoe motif was related to the hunting concept. Although she recognized the vulva similarity she questioned whether or not her horseshoe motif was only a hunt-related motif at attack stations rather than a vulva symbol (1976:71). The same situation occurs at Bocks' Canyon with enclosures, but with a slightly different form. The enclosure occurs in concrete concept associations as a vulva form elsewhere (Warner 1984:21-28), as well as in less specific fertility contexts used with hunting associations at drive sites, such as the site near Richfield mentioned (Warner 1982), and at Bocks' Canyon. These examples provide considerable support for use of the enclosure as a symbol representing the drive situation in these cases, and we believe that was an important activity at Bocks' Canyon.

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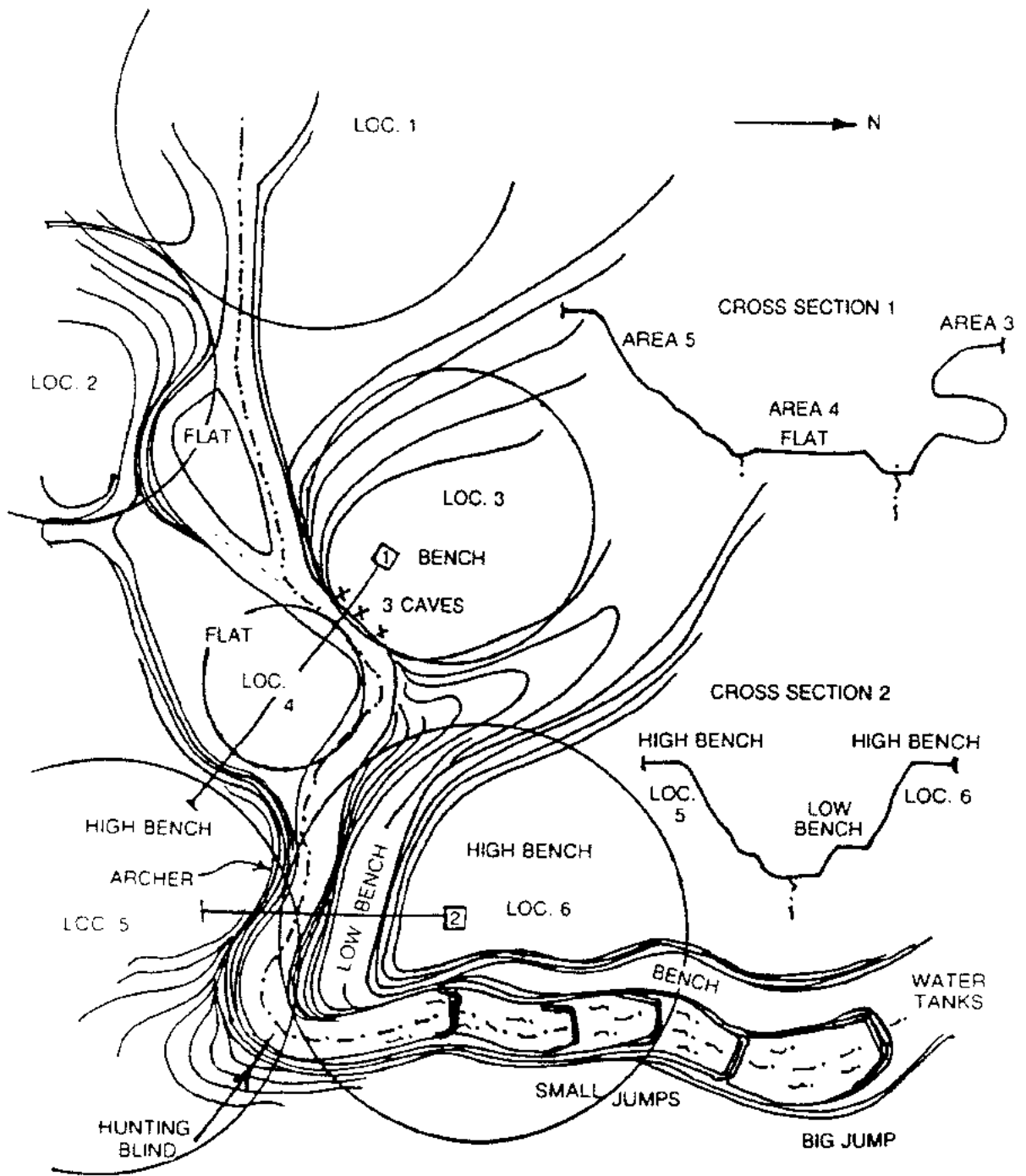


Figure 1

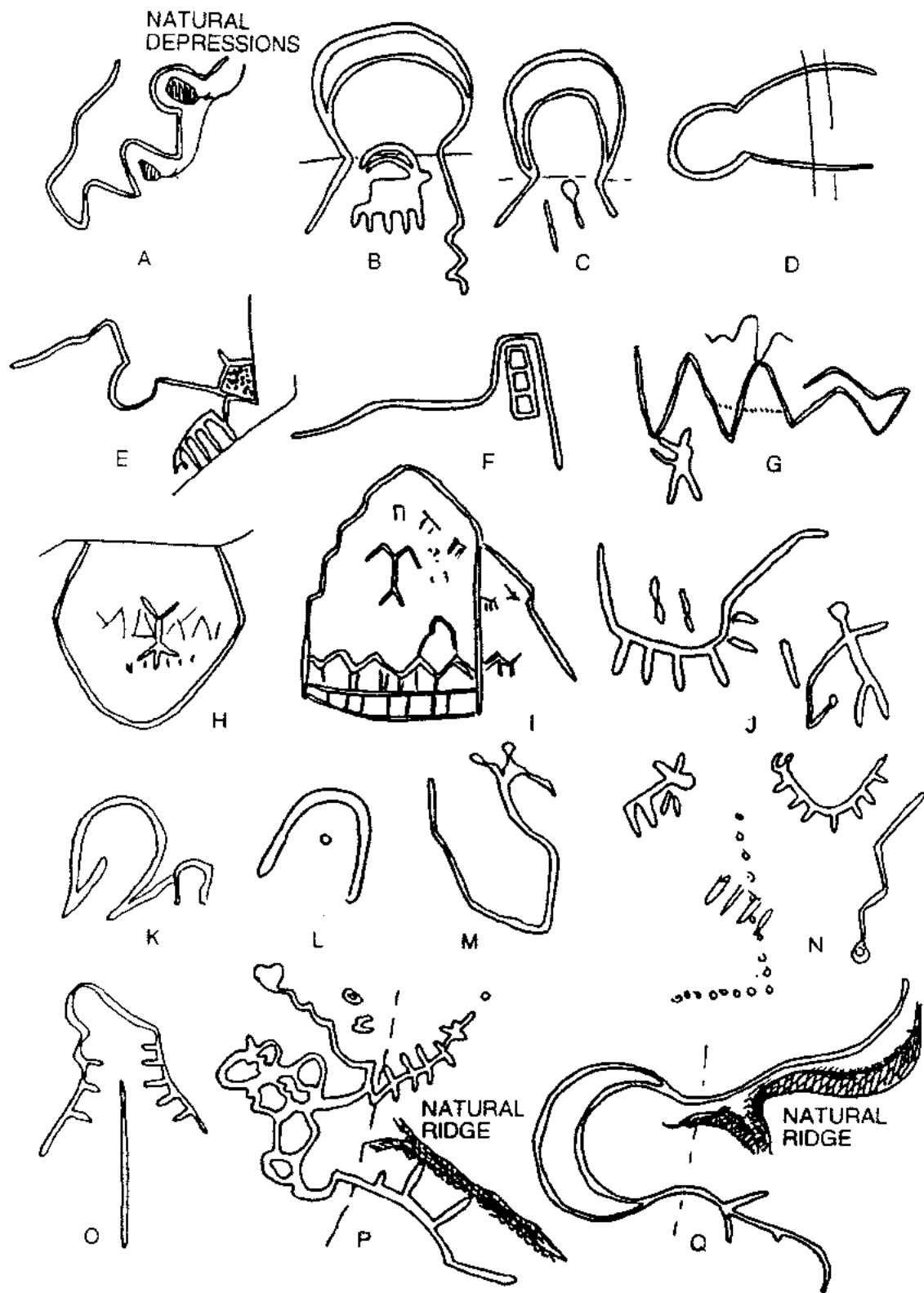


Figure 2

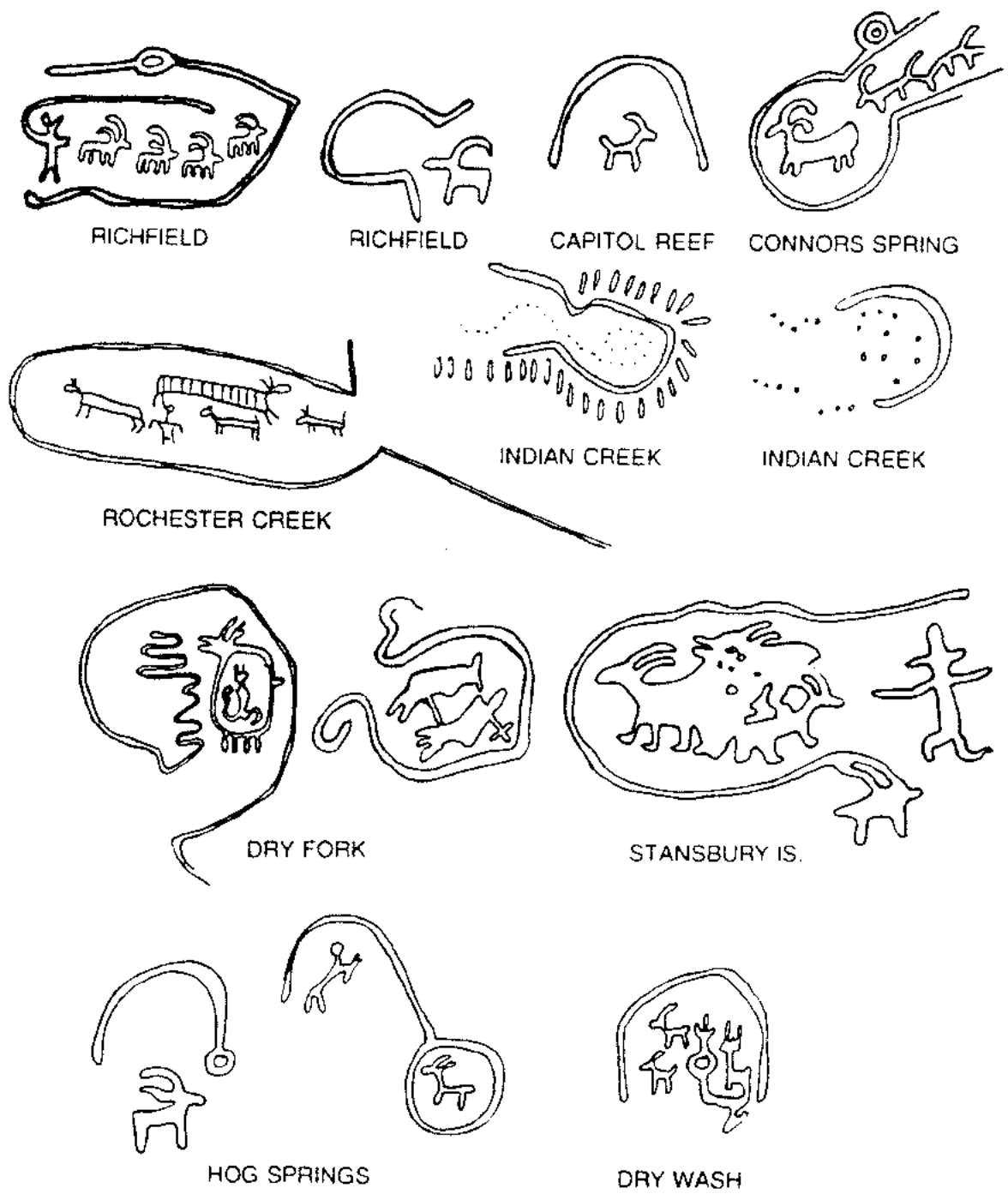


Figure 3

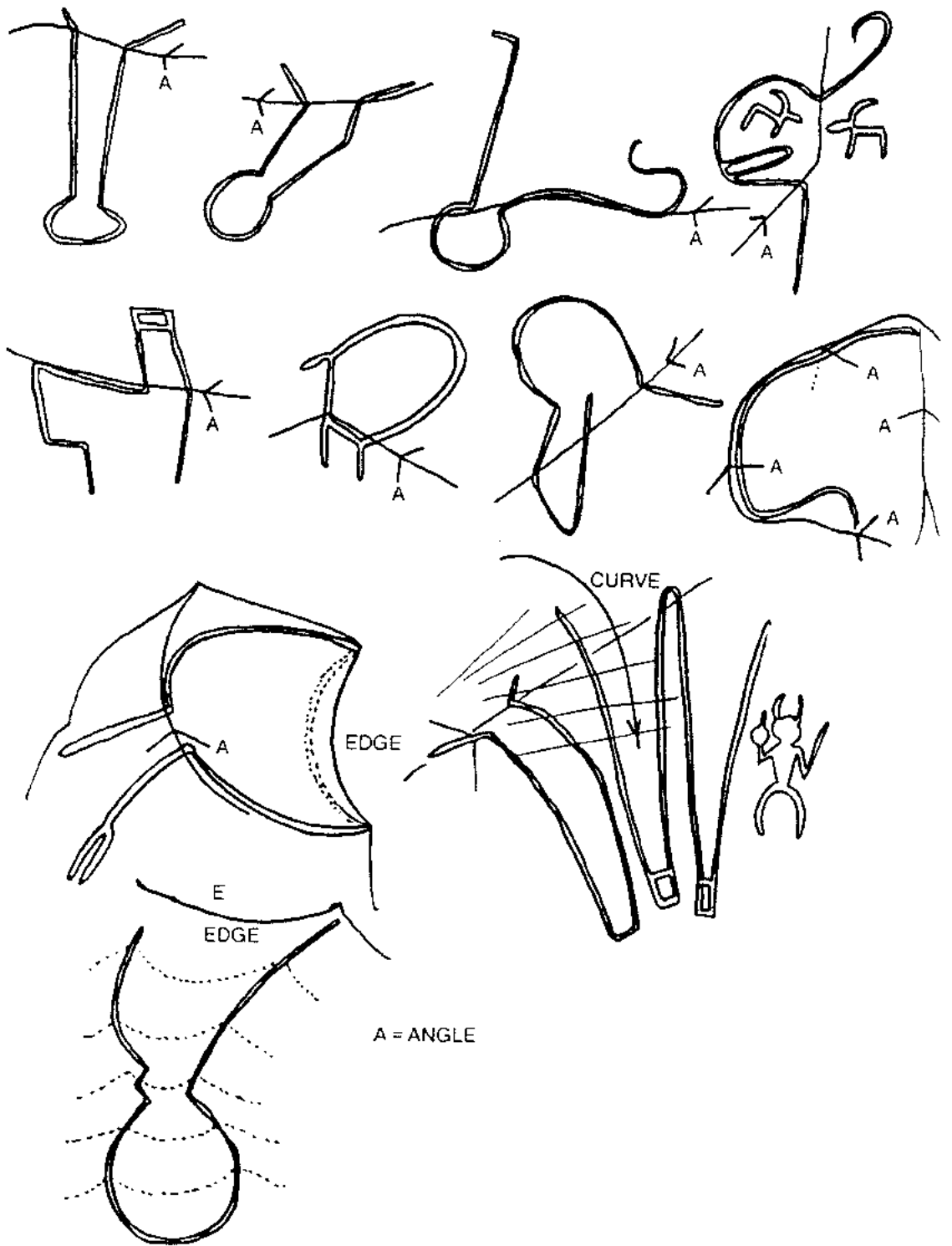


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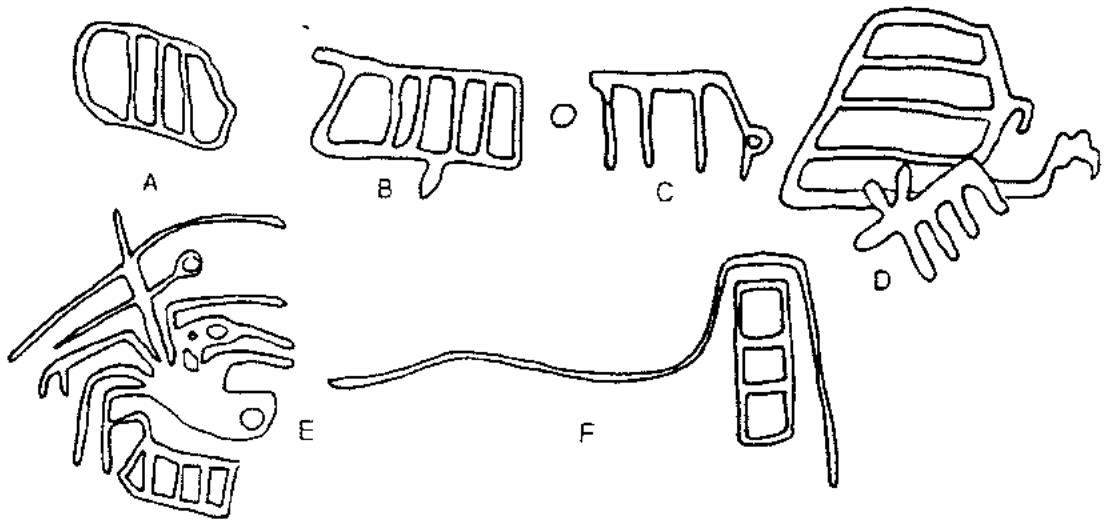


Figure 5

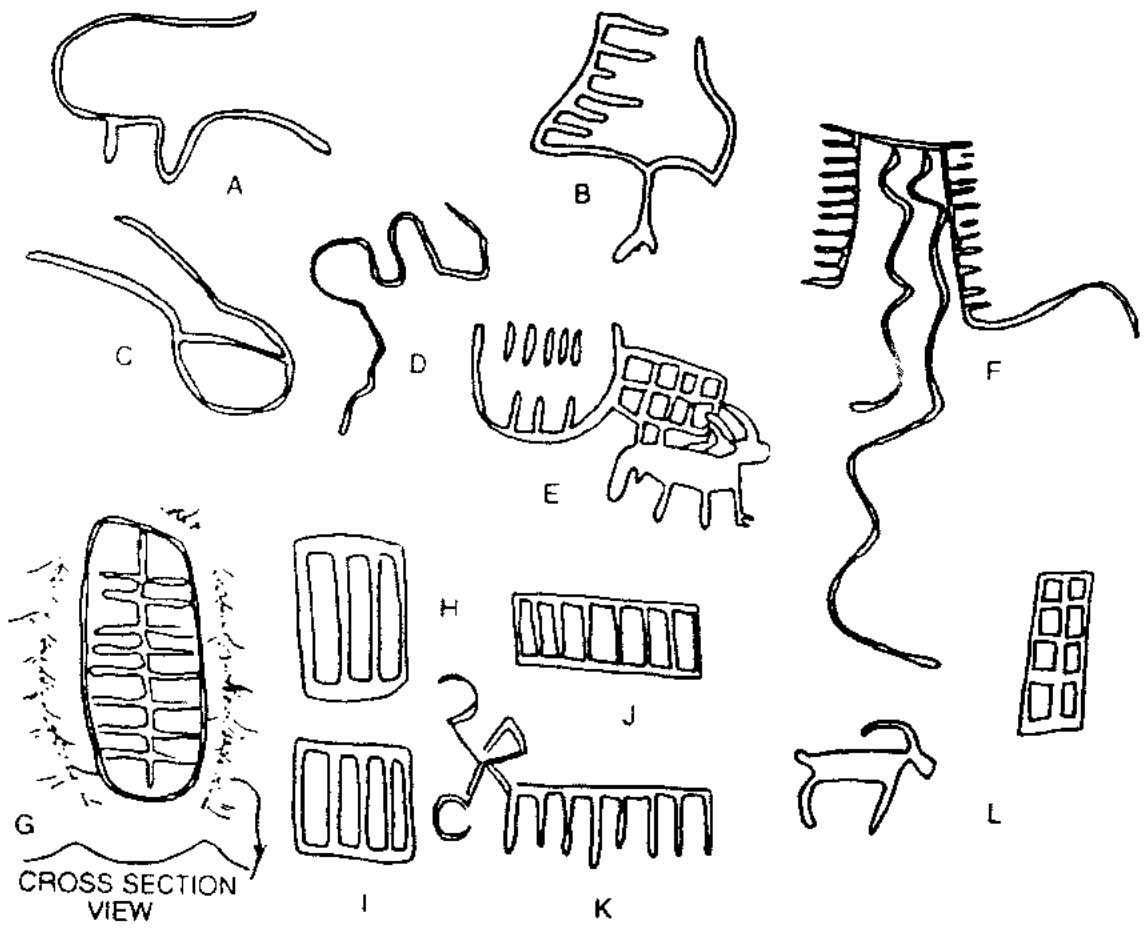
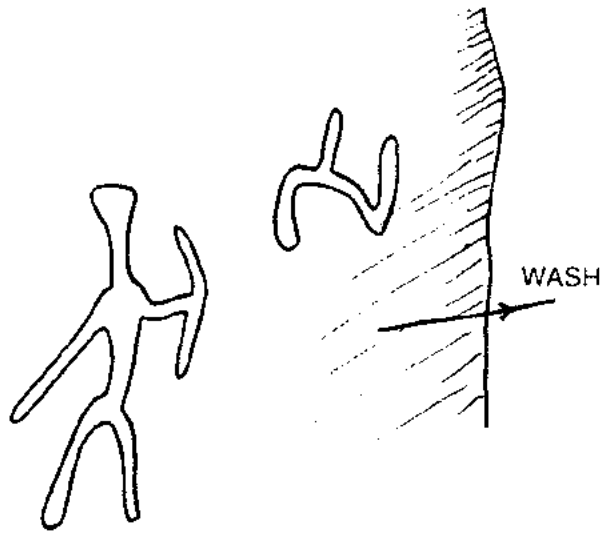


Figure 6



A



B

Figure 7

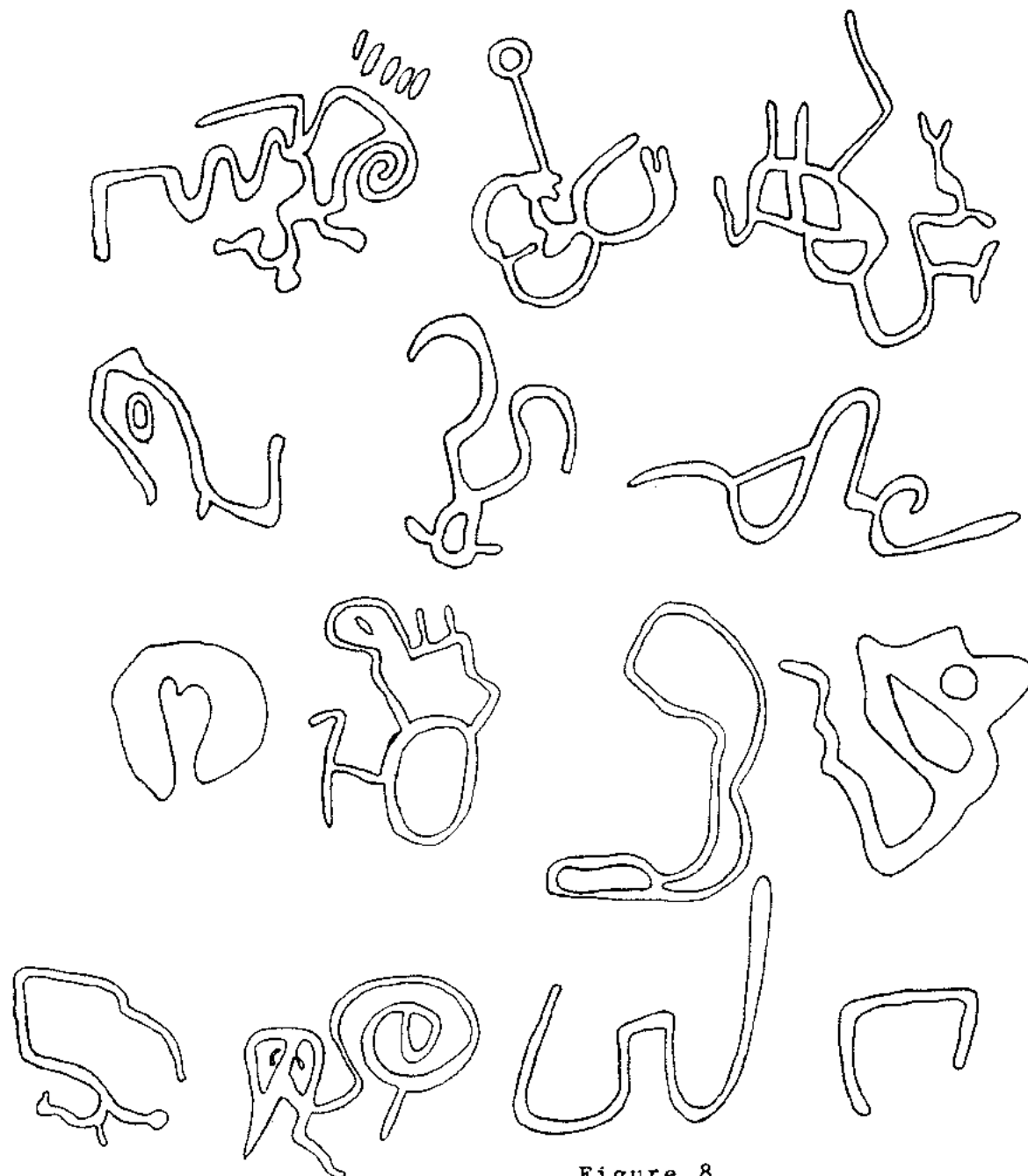


Figure 8