

## **BLANKET-LIKE GEOMETRIC DESIGNS IN CLEAR CREEK CANYON**

**BY**

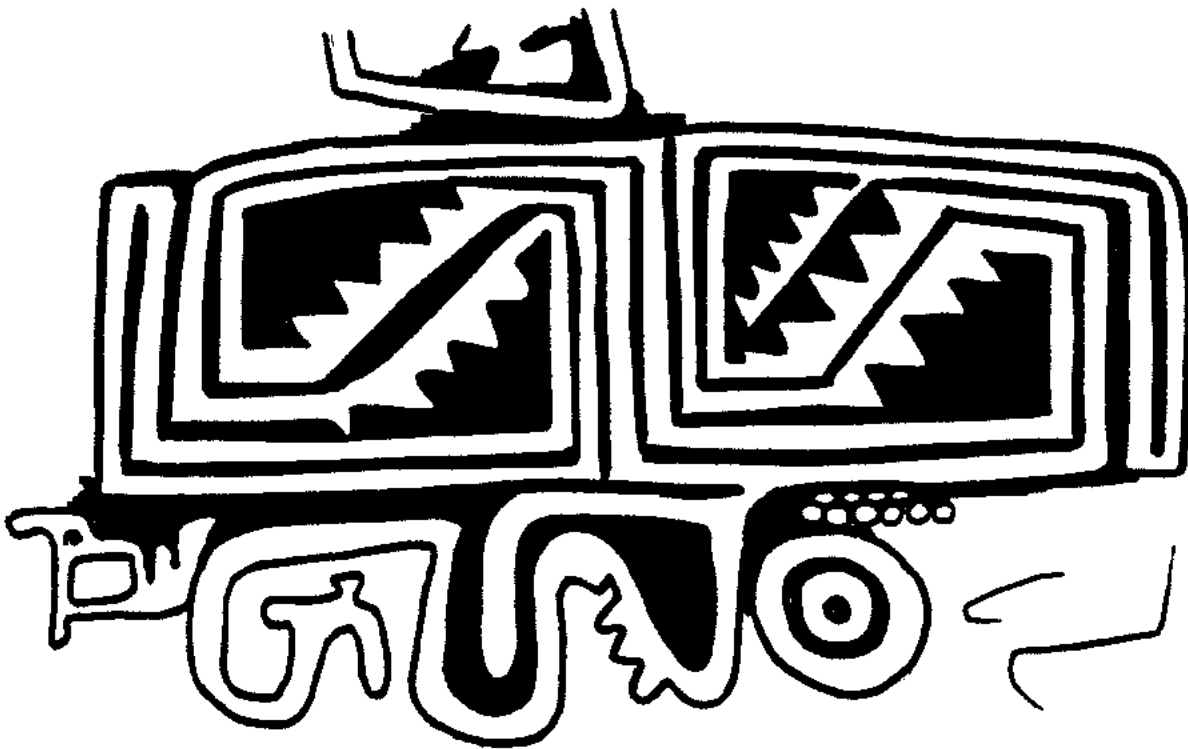
**JUDITH S. WARNER**

The geometrical patterns often called "blanket" designs in Clear Creek Canyon, in actuality may not be "blanket" designs at all, or at least exclusive to loom productions. There are several possibilities for these graceful and delicate geometrical patterns. Some of these include 1)--the possibility that some of these graphic compositions originally did represent textile designs or were at least inspired by textile designs, some having evolved beyond what would be produceable on a loom.

These may have even evolved to become a means of group identification on the rocks to identifying those who have similar designs in fabric. 2)--Some or part of these designs may have also been originally painted on pottery and also may have evolved to become a more complicated type of representation when depicted on the cliffs and similarly used as a means of identification. 3)--Some forms may not be specific representations of either textile or pottery designs but may be derived from other symbols, and thus may be distinctive to rock art alone, and yet retain certain similarities to pottery and textiles, all derived from a common source of inspiration.

After identifying several different types of geometrical representations of what could possibly fall into this category and examining them closely, it is obvious that there are at least four different categories of designs. These include those that are: 1)--Naturalistic or "realistic"--those that look like they could be actual pottery or blanket designs (Figs. 1-4); 2)--Abstracted, less repetitive and balanced geometrical patterning, those that do not particularly seem to be conducive to production on a loom or are typical of known pottery designs (Figs. 5-7); 3)--Scratched rectilinear designs, some of which are fringed (Fig. 9); and 4)--Paired zigzags. These forms reoccur in similar contexts to each other but are different than those mentioned above (Fig. 10) yet still maintain another concept in common--that of an "archaeoastronomical" possibility.

Since there is such an unusually large number of these kinds of representations within Clear Creek Canyon and also within sites outside the canyon, versus the greater "Fremont" areas, it is possible that various forms of these will become diagnostic traits of this variant of the Sevier Fremont Style. Some particular expressions within this vicinity are actually quite involved and complex. Similar types of designs do occur at slightly more distant sites but still within the general style area. Some of those seem to be influenced by or an extension of this centralized area. It is certain that in the near future more of these types of elements will be found in outlying areas. At the present, known examples occur at Richfield, Monroe, Joseph, Sevier, Fool Creek, Parowan Gap, Braffet Canyon and Lion's Mouth (Figs. 3, 11, 16, 17A, B). It is interesting that most of the geometrical



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Clear Ck.

FIGURE 1.

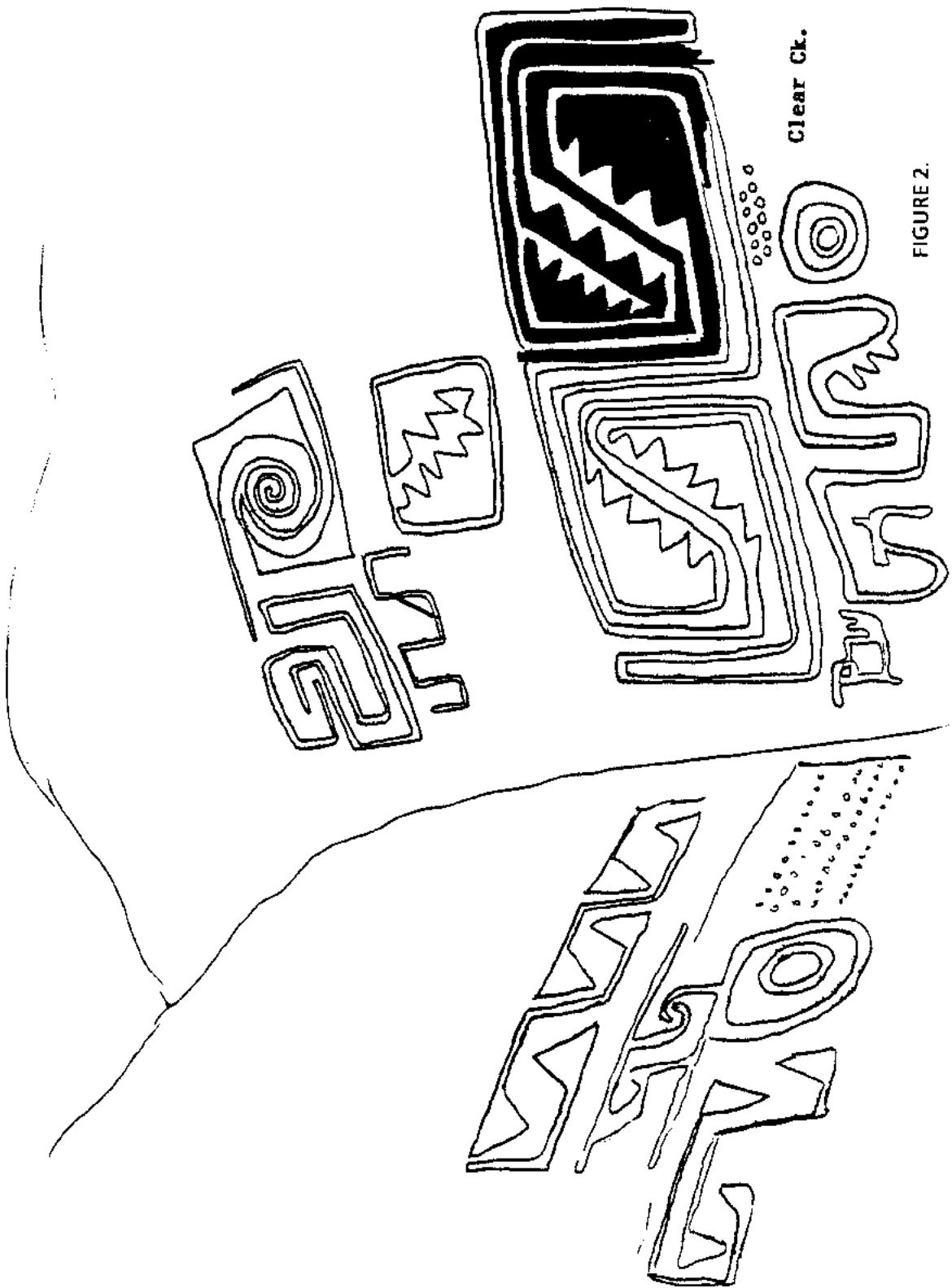
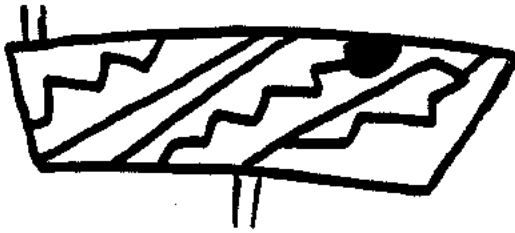


FIGURE 2.



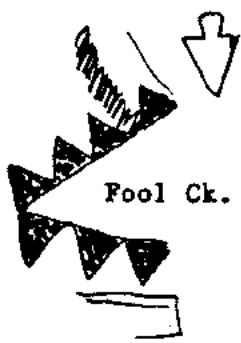
Richfield



Joseph



Joseph

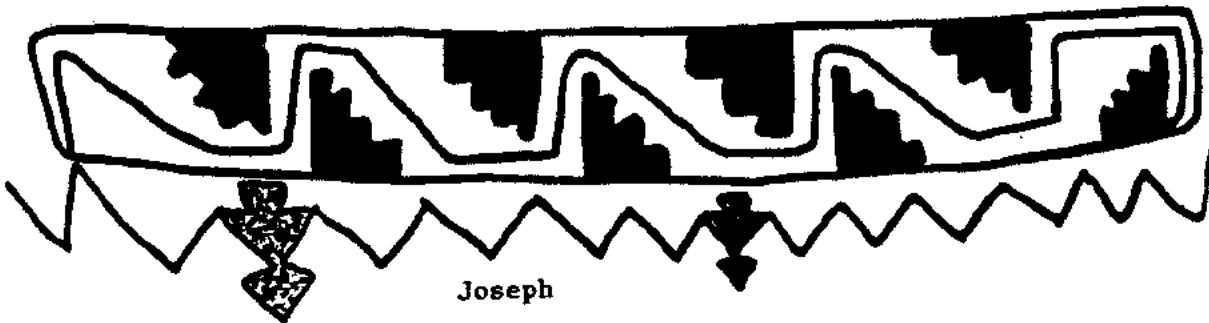
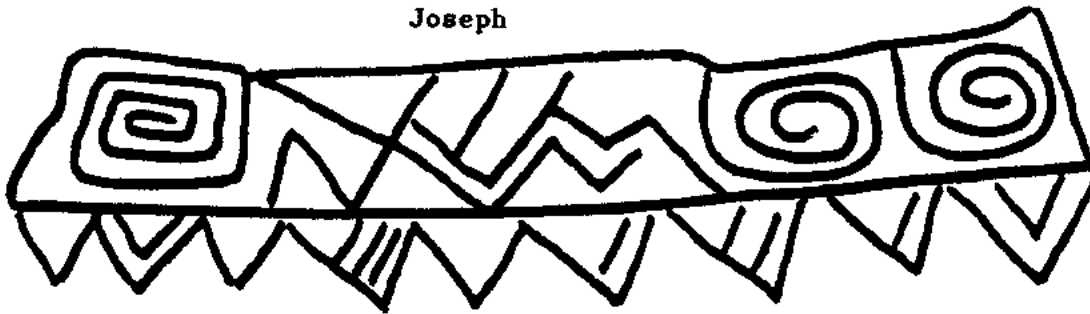


Fool Ck.



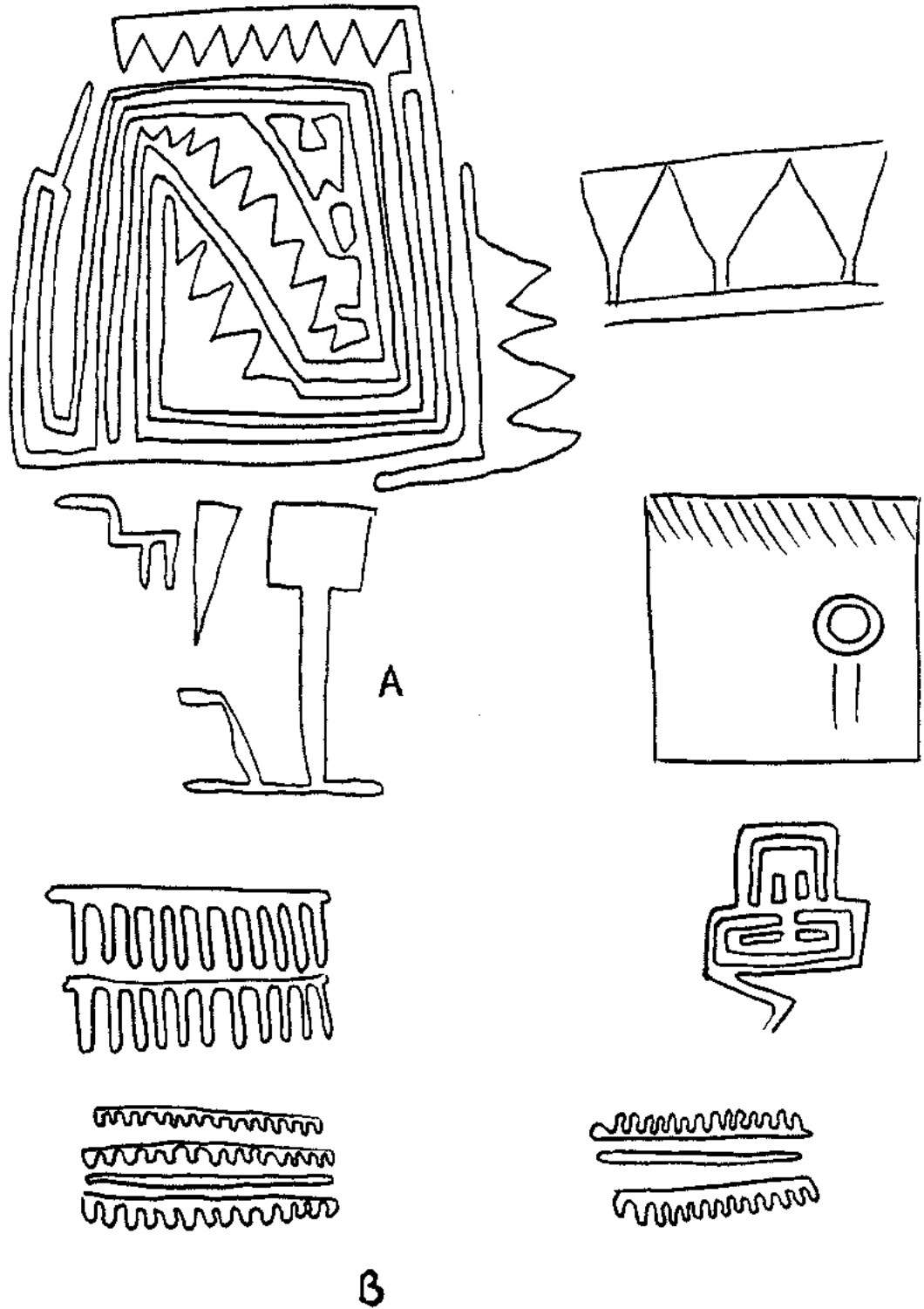
Fool Ck.

Joseph



Joseph

FIGURE 3.



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FIGURE 4.

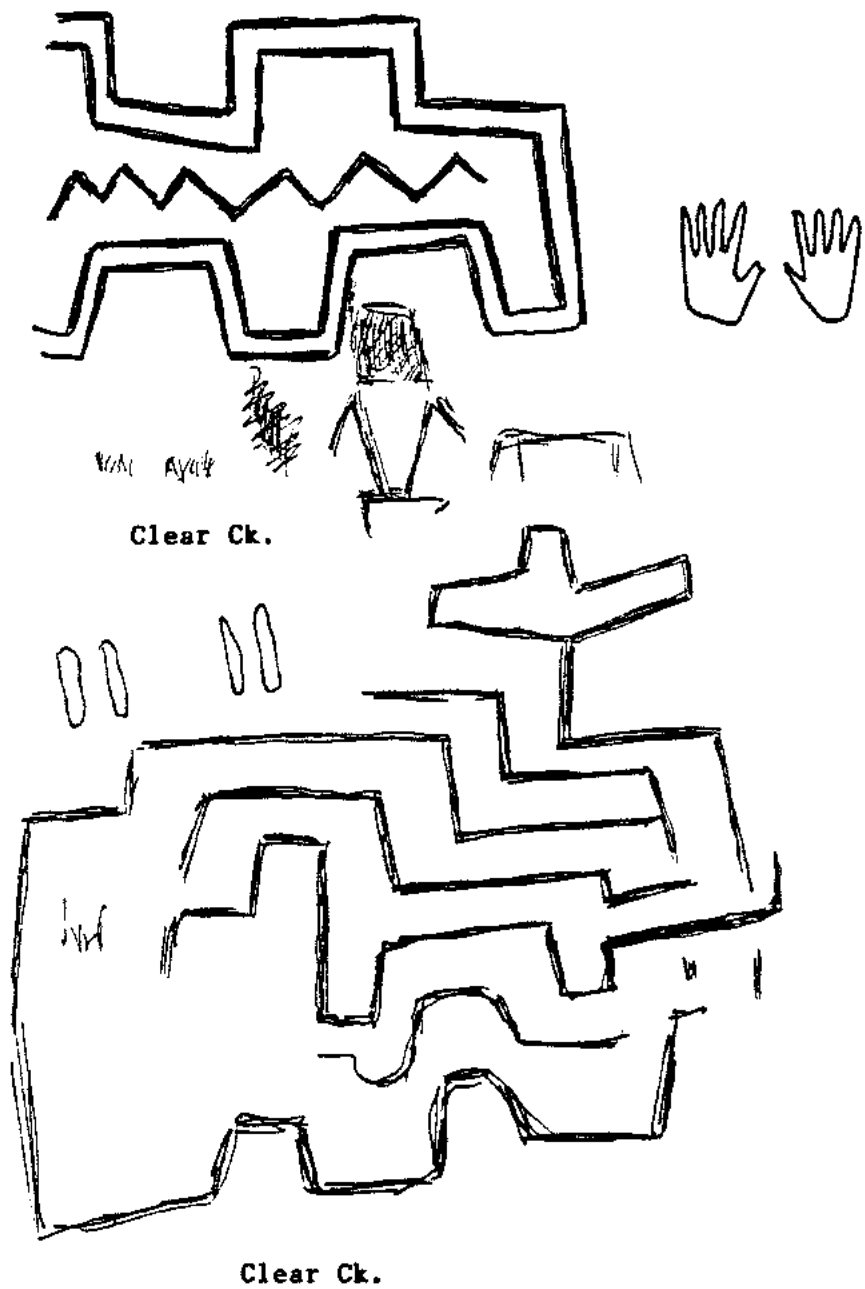


FIGURE 5.

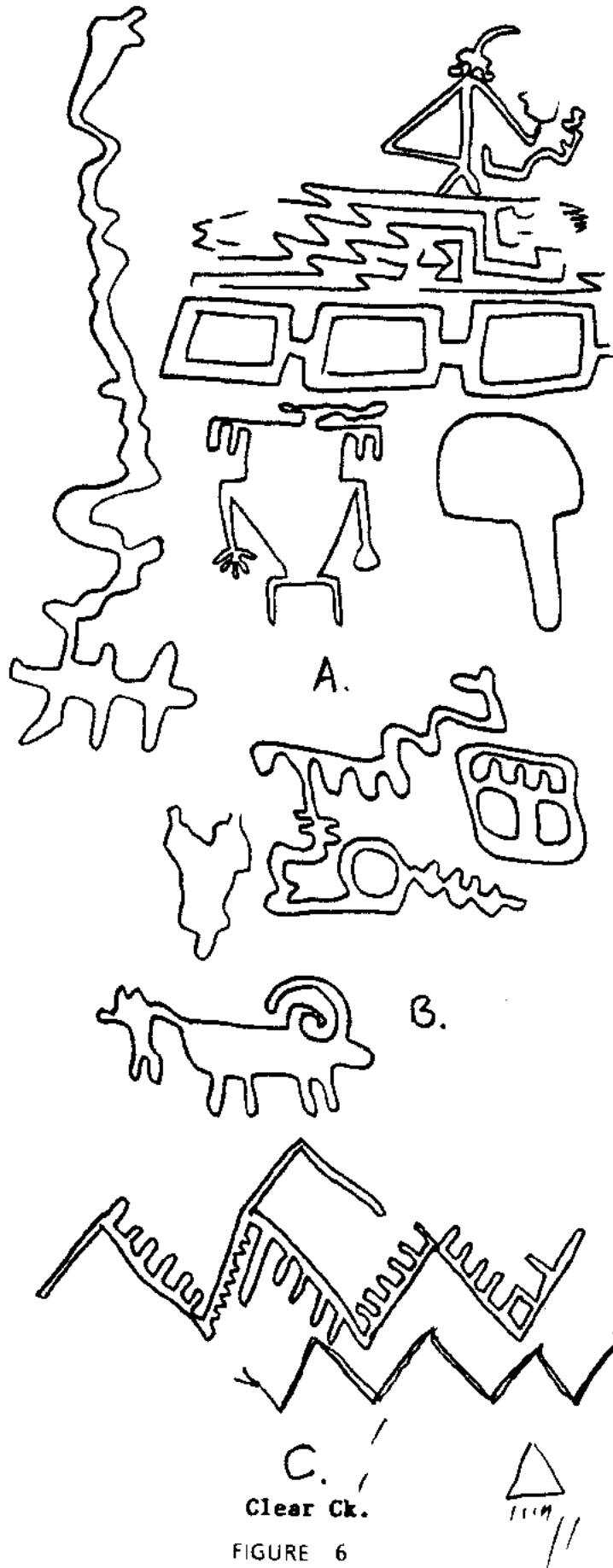
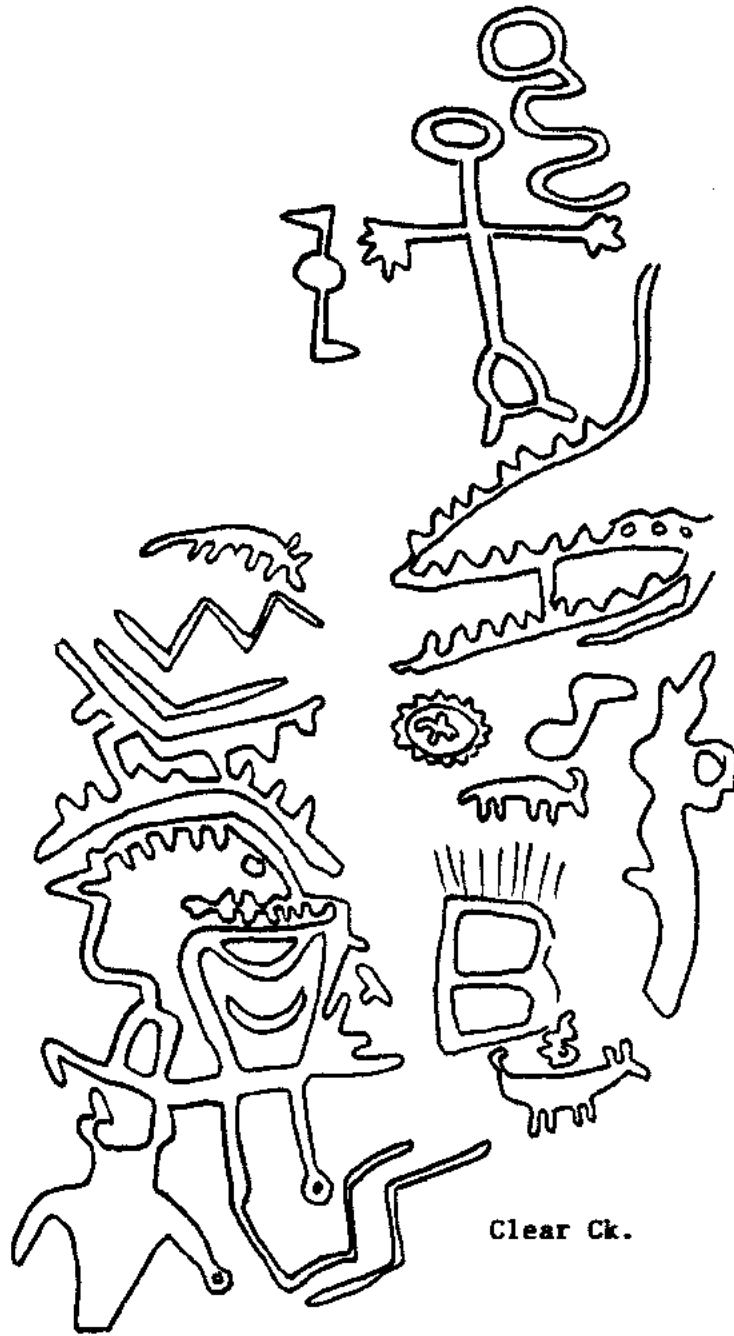


FIGURE 6



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FIGURE 7.



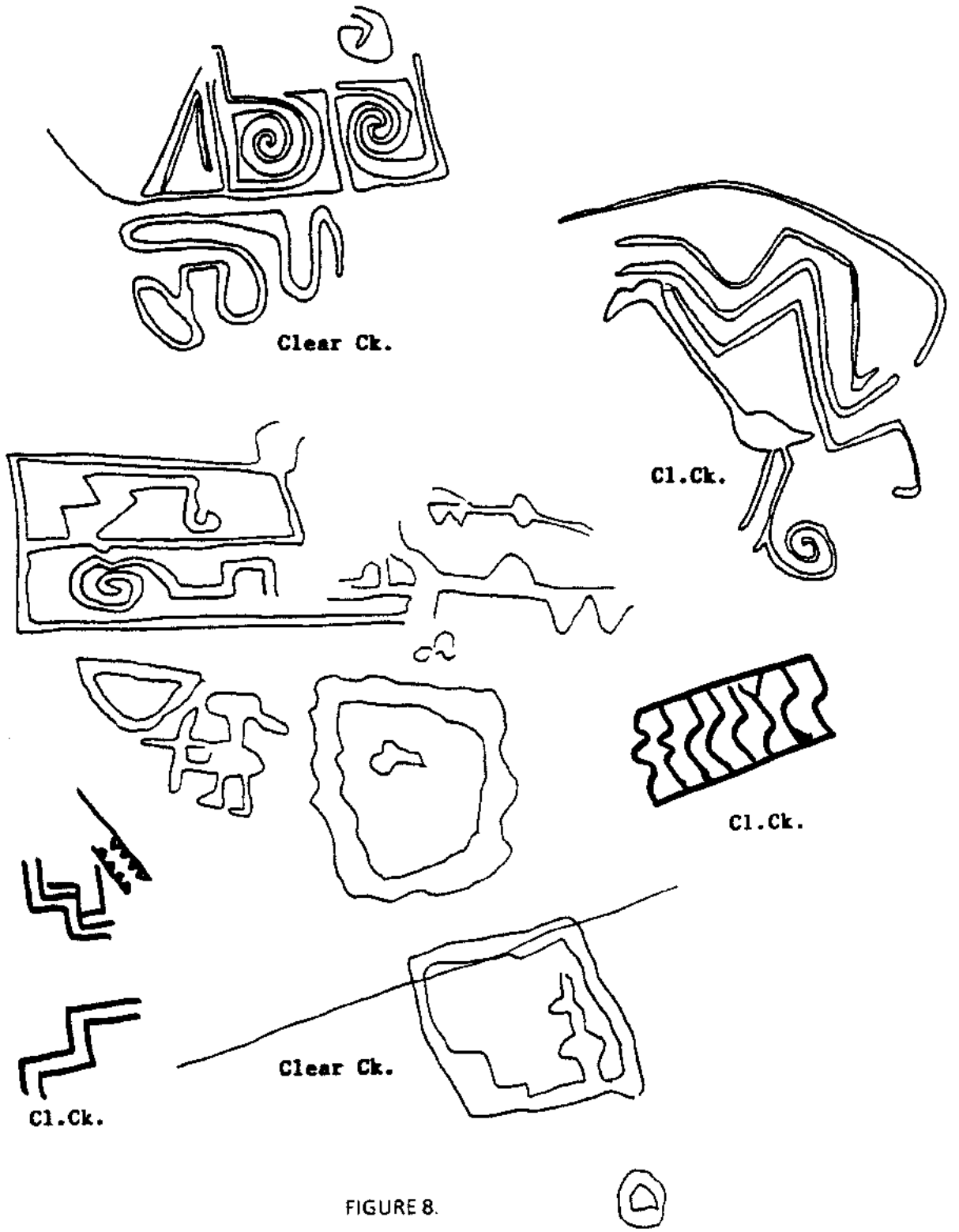
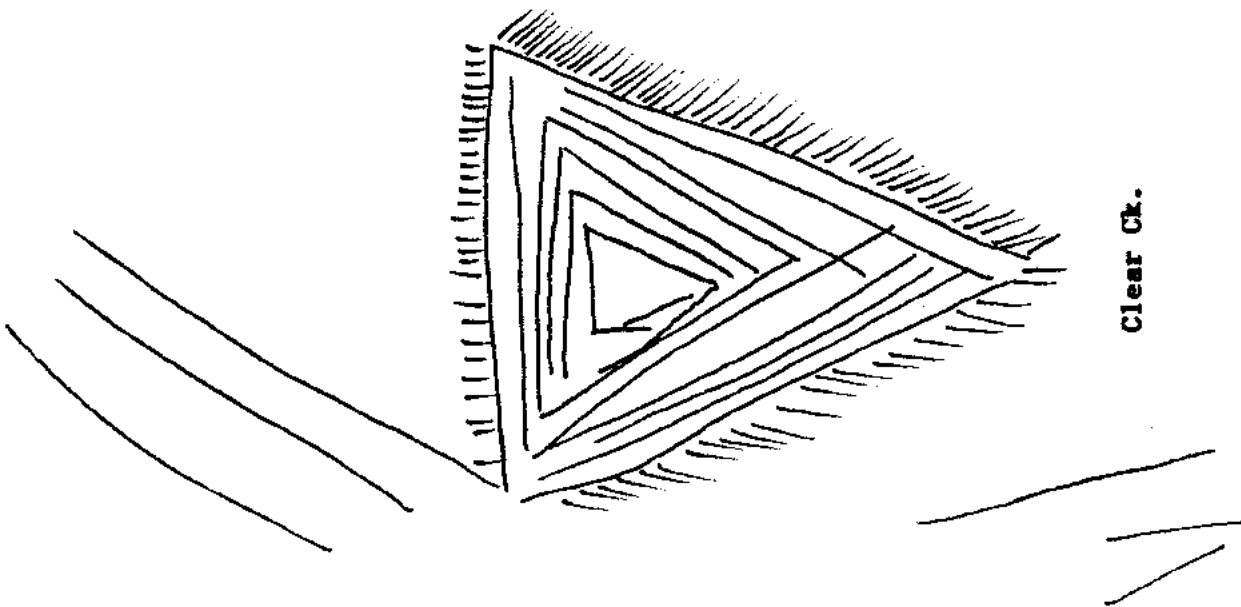
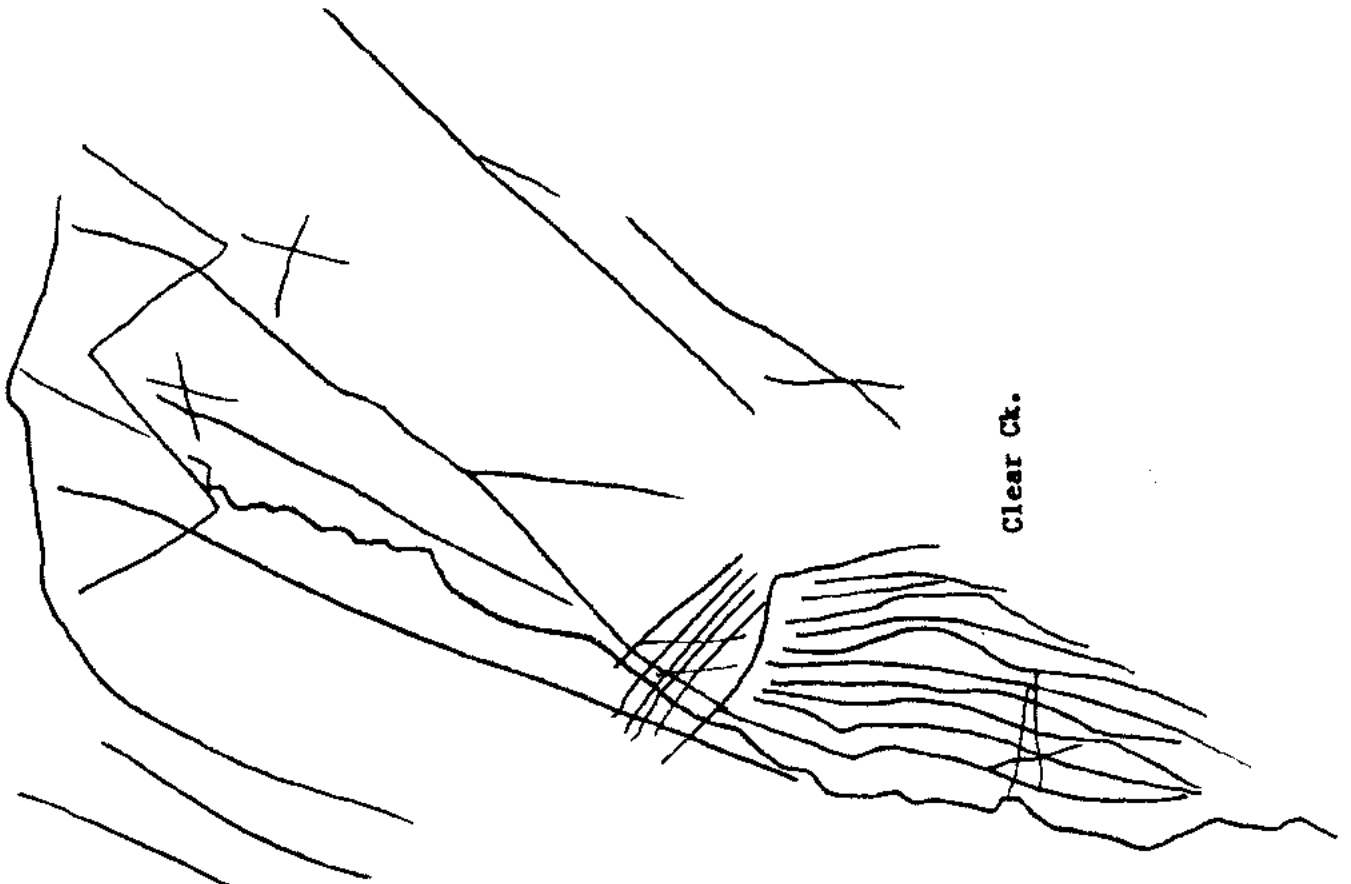


FIGURE 8.



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FIGURE 9.

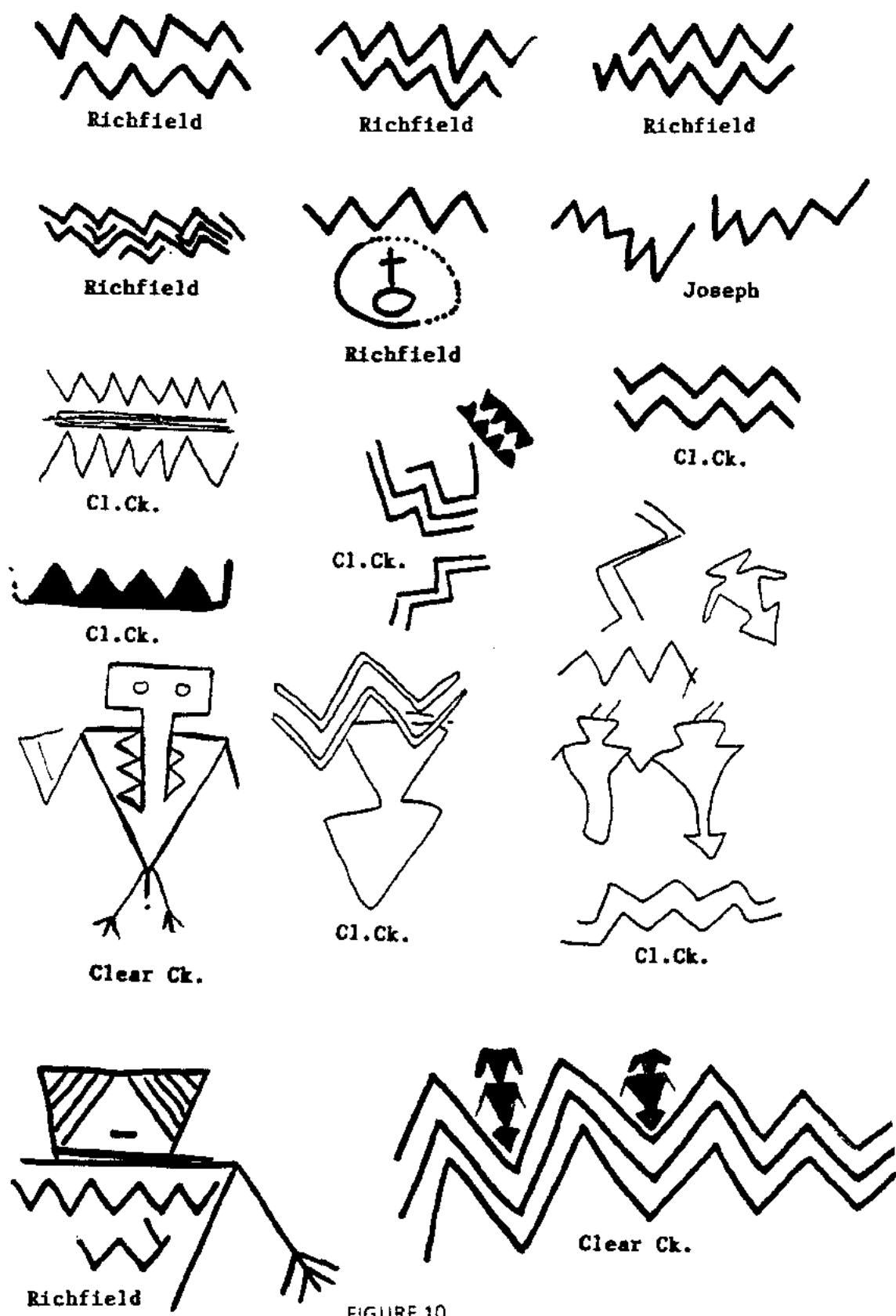


FIGURE 10.

"blanket"-like examples outside of this area show up west of the mountains dividing the plateau from the eastern edge of the basin, while other different elements distinctive of Clear Creek Canyon symbolism associated with these forms in Clear Creek Canyon show up more to the east.

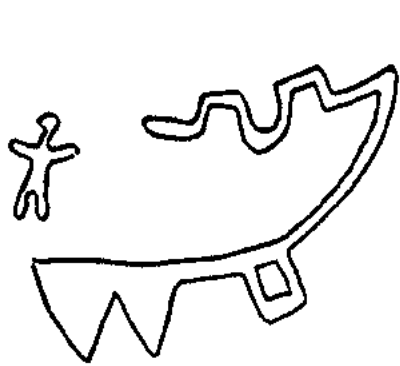
Even though the phenomena of concentrated geometrical decorations from Clear Creek is unique to Fremont territory, similar types of designs do occur in somewhat concentrated locations in Washington County around St. George, Utah (Figs. 11A,B). These lie about 120 miles to the south. Many of these do seem to fall into more blanket-like types of designs and they are typically less complex. It seems that there are roughly similar percentages in each area that have various types of border-like lines. As of yet, a relative dating is not certain.

The evidence from an examination of these designs alone and a tentative assessment of the authorship of these panels, with associated archaeological remains, seems to indicate an earlier existence of these designs to the south. In other words, the influence seems to be from the southern Anasazi to the more northern Fremont. At the moment, however, this still remains unsubstantiated.

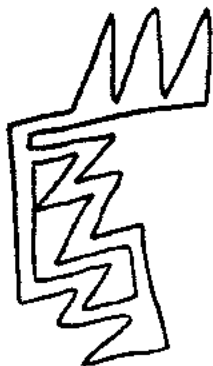
The strength of these patterns with a heavy concentration in both areas strongly implies their importance within both cultures. The differences in the distinctive types and specific patterns reflected in their various concentrations and elaboration in both the Virgin River area and the Clear Creek area, however, seem to be evidence of a great importance within their extremely localized societies. There needs to be a considerable amount of research in both areas to provide comparative dates to analyze similarities and differences in types, associations and application. Until that is done, too many questions will remain unanswerable.

#### POSSIBLE CONCEPTUAL APPLICATIONS

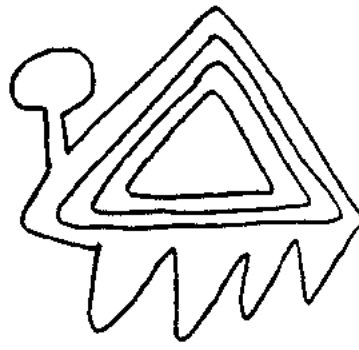
No definite, identifiable, or concrete conceptual associations have been identified for the representations in Clear Creek or those near St. George. Because of the nature of many of the glyphs and their contexts and associations, in addition to their main intent, some seem to be expressions made in such a way that as a by-product they can be used as a means of group identity. It is possible that this local area specialized in either weaving or pottery making, more than any others in the region, or were simply known by such symbols. Similarly, there are many areas of the Navajo Reservation today, for instance, that are diagnostically known for their weaving, while others are known for their silverwork and their weaving is not as regionally diagnostic. Also there are marked differences in both technique and patterns that create many and vast stylistic differences in their weaving practices. Because of modern technology and ease of contact and movement on the Navajo Reservation they have created a more contiguous, continuously interacting and regionally less diversified culture than either the Fremont or Virgin-Kayenta Anasazi would have been. It seems important that there are several other traits that are associated with these Clear Creek representations that do not occur where these types of designs occur elsewhere. The most prominent of



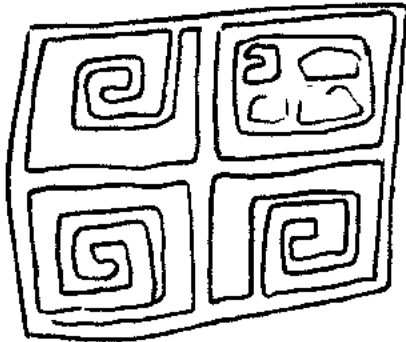
Gunlock



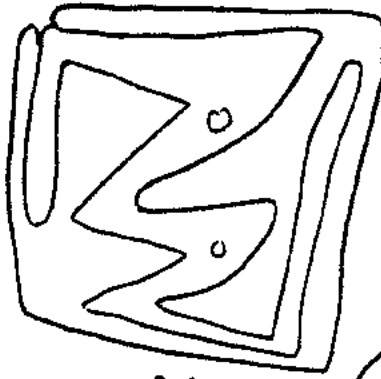
Ft. Pierce



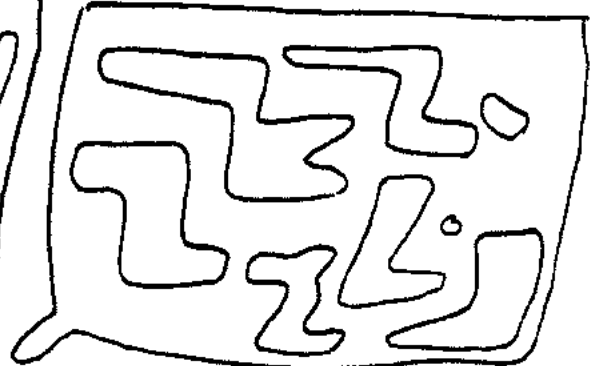
Quail Ck.



St. George.



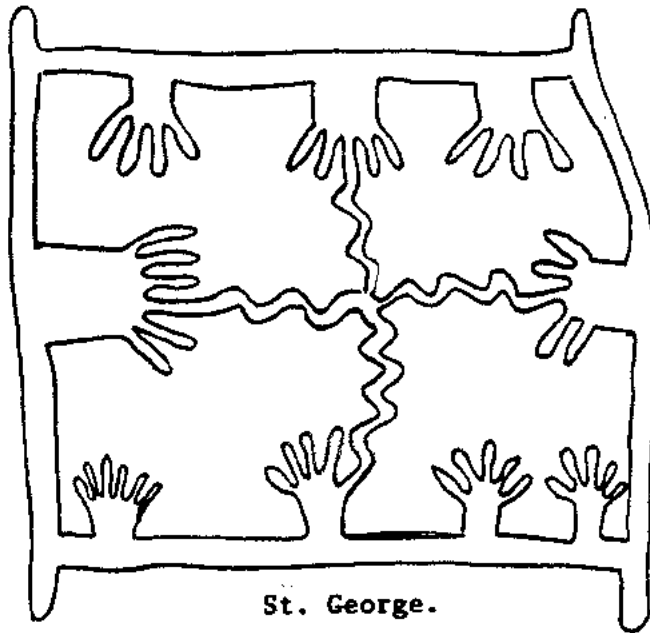
3mi.



Gunlock

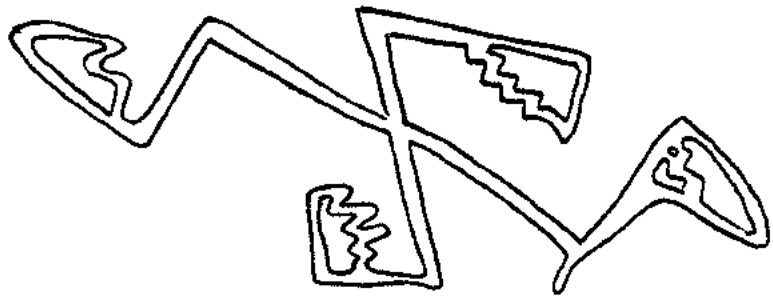
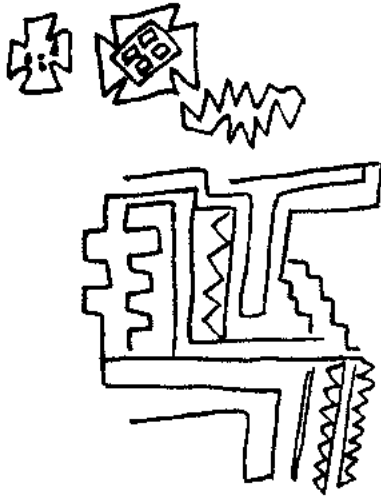
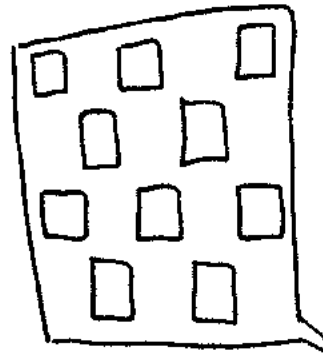


St. George

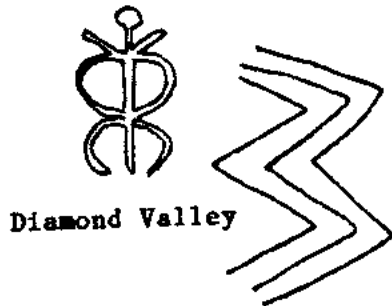
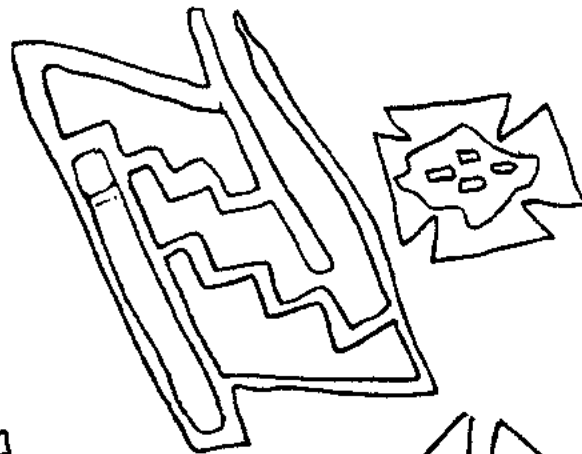


St. George.

FIGURE 11. A



Santa Clara



Santa Clara

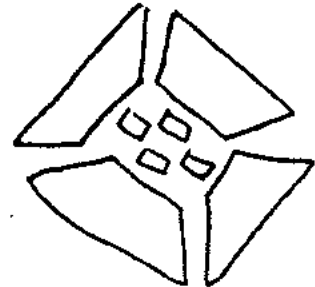
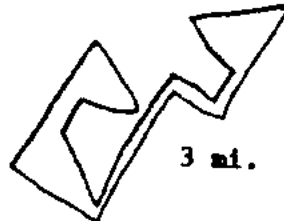
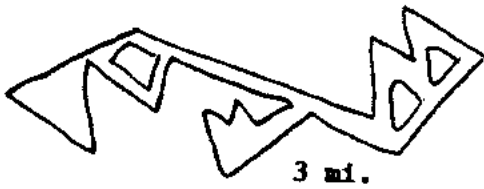


FIGURE 11. B

these include hand-holding couples, expanded hip figures, "Badger Clan" symbols, etc.

At Waterflow, New Mexico, there is another extremely heavy concentration of "decorated blocks" which in many cases are felt to be blanket designs (Fig. 12). Nearly all of these occur within a border and some actually have corner tassels. Many, if not all are felt to be related to the concept of fertility rites or may be consummation scenes. Some occur in direct association with fertility representations (Judith Warner 1986:29). At Waterflow, it seems the elements that decorate the blocks are derived from a source that has direct conceptual affiliations with fertility. These distinctive club-or sprout-like designs have also been incorporated into many other elements that also seem to stress fertility.

The blanket-like designs at St. George do not obviously seem to have the same Waterflow suggestions of fertility. The Clear Creek and Washington County designs may be farther removed stylistically and are more distant in time from the expressions at Waterflow. In both Clear Creek Canyon and in Washington County the designs differ more within each of their own areas with a lack of differences within the Waterflow panels. Each area and time used similar ideas but regionally and temporally expressed them differently. The basic designs from Clear Creek and the areas around St. George have not been broken down and incorporated into other elements like those at Waterflow. This seems to give the latter southwestern Virgin-Kayenta Anasazi and a somewhat contemporaneous Fremont a closer relationship than there is between the Virgin-Kayenta Anasazi around St. George and the older San Juan Representational (Basketmaker) Style at Waterflow, New Mexico.

In studying these Clear Creek Canyon designs many questions have surfaced. Some of these include: 1)--Were these designs representative of something mythical, non-tangible, or conceptual? 2)--If they did not represent something in the conceptual realm, then what were their physical counterparts if any? 3)--Why was there such a heavy concentration in this area and not in other Fremont areas? 4)--Whatever the case, what was their social implications?

After a close examination it is felt that to varying degrees, the idea that the inspiration for these designs may come from textiles, pottery, fertility, and elements marking solar symbolism, as well as being distinctive to rock art alone could all be possible. At this point without sufficient archaeological evidence it is difficult to tell. There is also the probability that other, as of yet unidentified concepts were relevant. It is also felt that at least a few representations could be totally symbolic or mythological. In such a case they could simply be based on a non-tangible mental construct that could, in general, relate the designs on both textile and pottery, yet be specifically related to neither. Two examples are men within the design, that may represent ideas similar to a "man in a maze", a popular theme, with many variations to the south (Figs. 3C, 5A) vs (Fig. 13).

Since a few of the designs incorporate elements that are somewhat similar to the sprout-like designs near Waterflow, New Mexico, it is possible that fertility may be an integral or interrelated parts of some concepts. By using

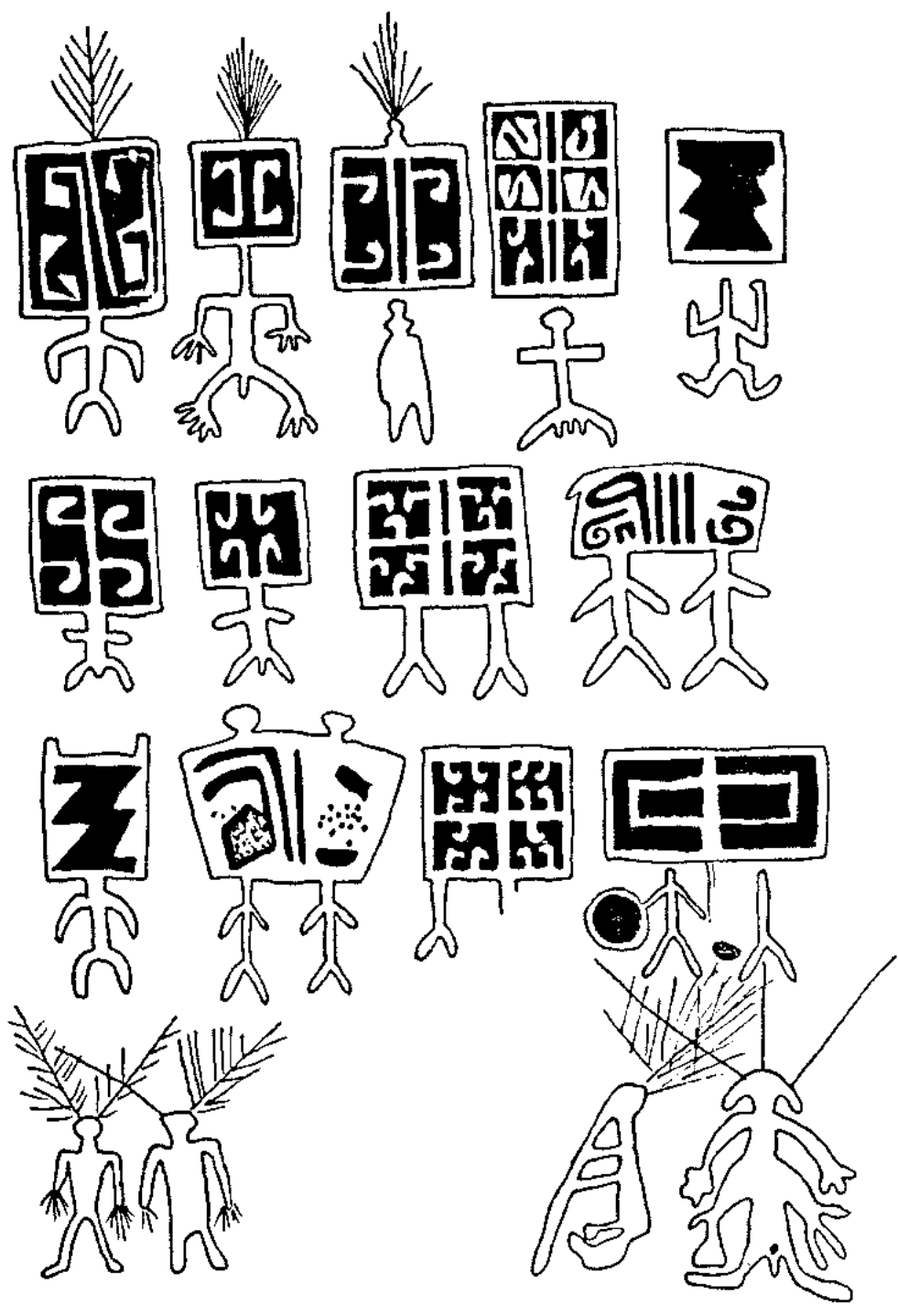


Figure 12- B



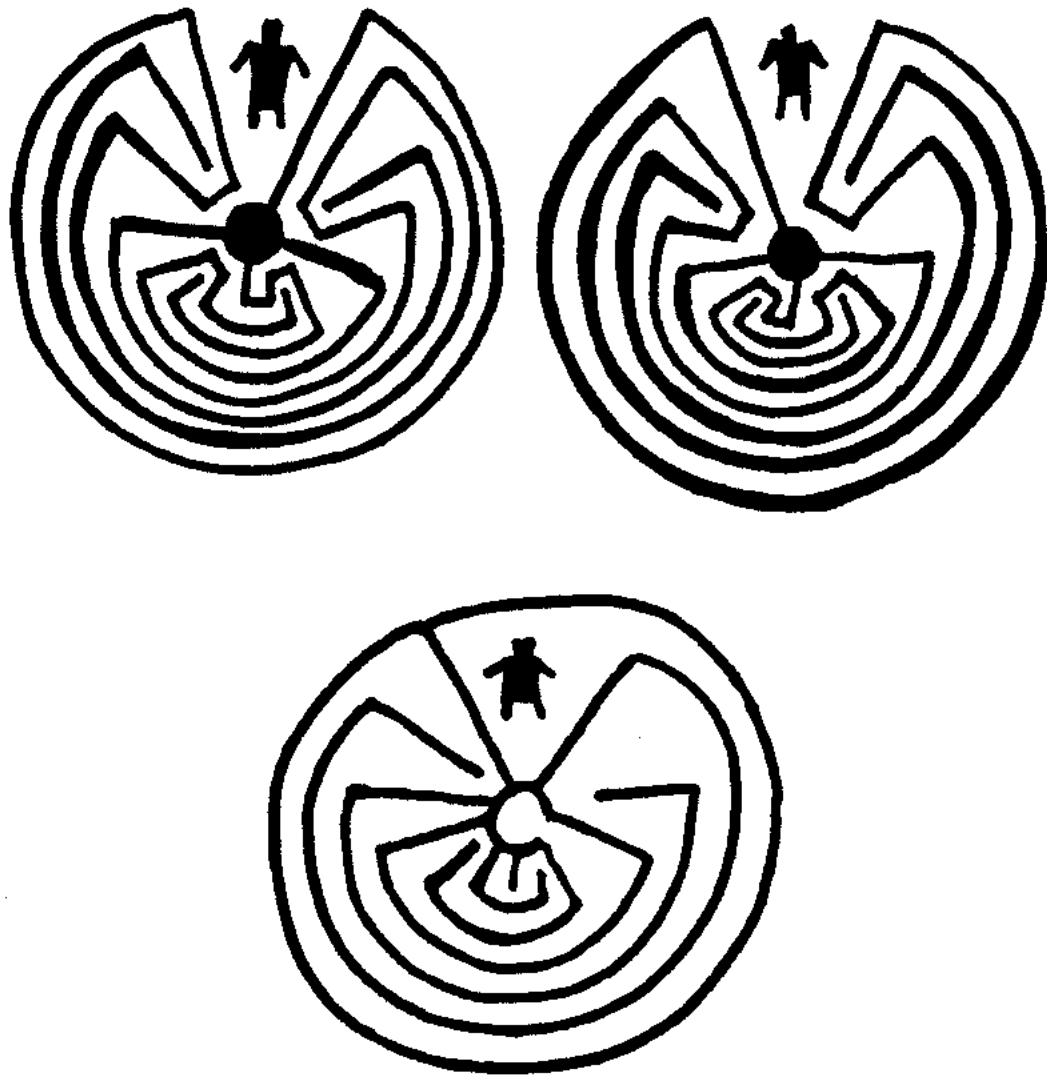


FIGURE 13.

the word "fertility" many areas of concern could be referred to. These include both human reproduction, an area that has been extended from possible plant growth and development, with at least the possible sprout- or plant-like designs (c.f. Warner 1986:29), to water resources that support all forms of life including human, animal and plant. Within this there is probably an interplay of symbolism extended from spirals which have different connotations associated with all such areas, water, fertility and solar symbolism.

Water aspects of this can be assumed because of the fact that many of the paired zigzags (especially the red painted forms) occur in cavities in "bubble rocks" in situations where approximately 90% are very close to small, natural water holes (Francez Sorenson, personal communication). In other words, the zigzag variety or other more rectilinear forms, may simply be indicators or locators of small sources of (sacred) water. The step-fret type of designs incorporated into several decorations may have reference to either the mountain formations or cloud-like symbolism expressed further south (Warner 1982:9), in which case water or water catchers could be an underlying associated concept. In some situations, however, some are now felt to be solar markers.

Some solar aspects can be assumed because of both circular and rectilinear forms of spirals and concentric circles and square symbolism found in so many situations that are anticipated to not only be solar observation indicators, but solar interactors. Some of these are now being found to mark and tick off specific periods of time. It is obvious that these designs did not represent one idea or concept or were depicted to intend one purpose or to have just one function. Each category of different types of designs, probably have their own variations of intent and meaning just as different as their form and context. There is no reason why a symbol of personal identity could not also mark "numbers of migrations", a "specific solar period" and be oriented to identify the location of sacred water tank.

After a close examination of some of the painted designs on pottery from the canyon (Fig. 14), it is assumed that pottery could be just as logical a source or similar counterpart as textiles. If the body decorations in Figure 15 are realistic and not just an abstract means to fill space then these designs may have also been just as logically produced in textiles. This illustrates that the symbolism of several different areas of application can have a deep rooted similarity in several different but related concepts.

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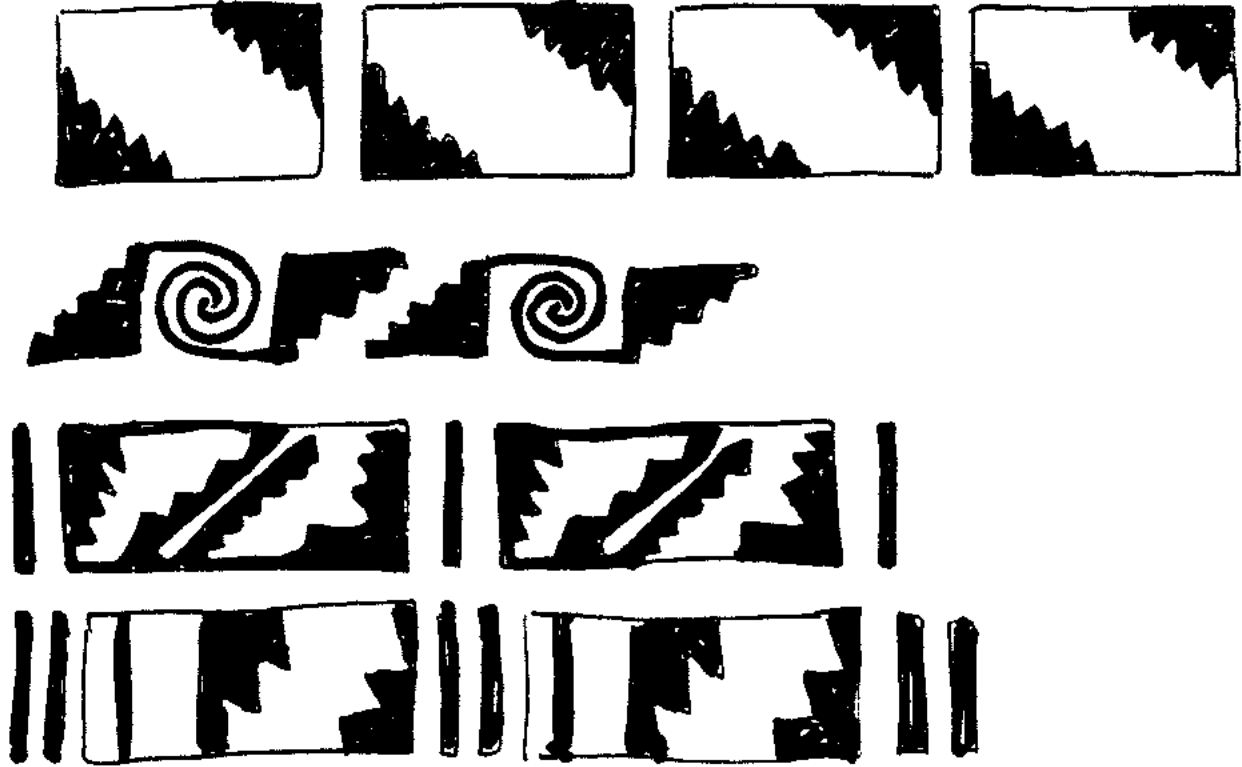
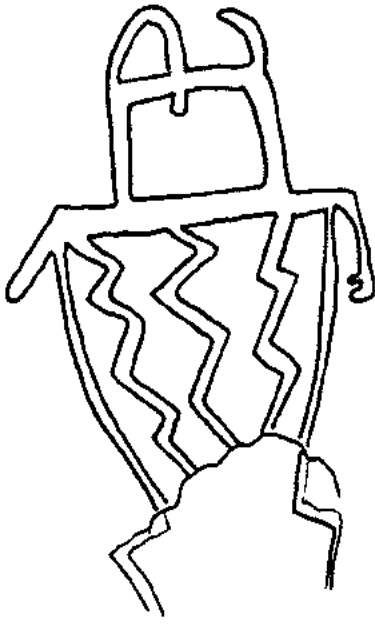
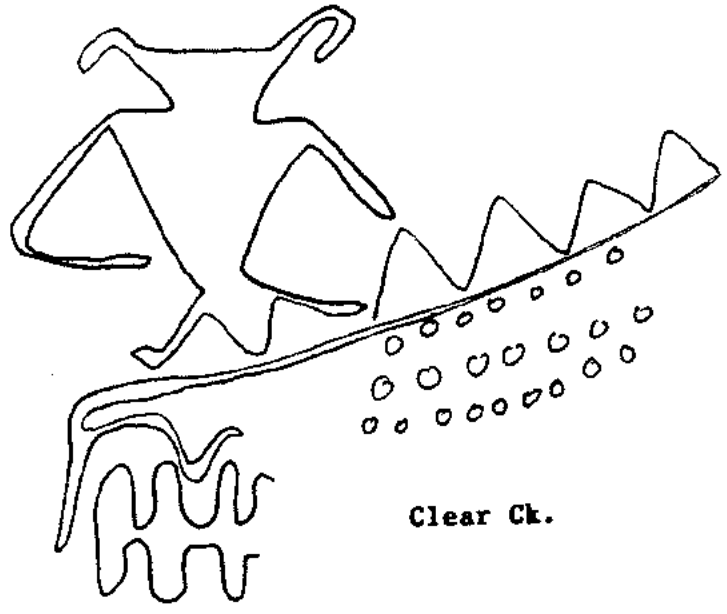


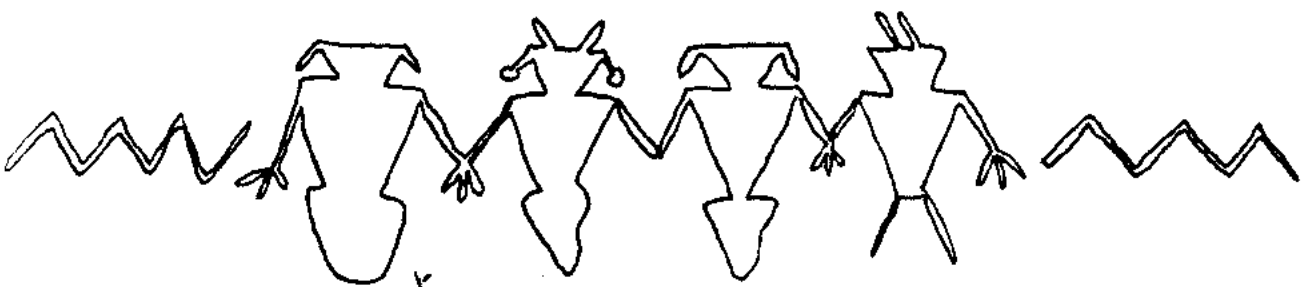
FIGURE 14.



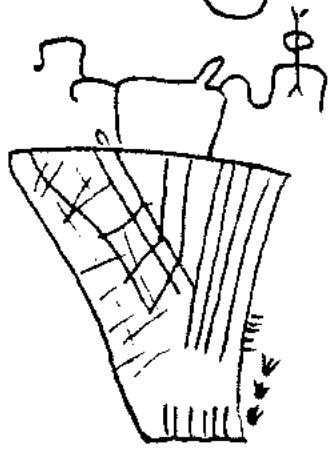
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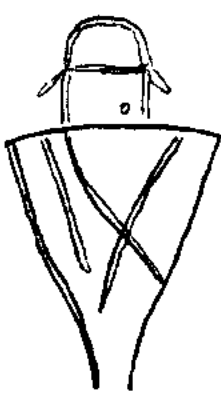
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Clear Ck.



Cl.Ck.

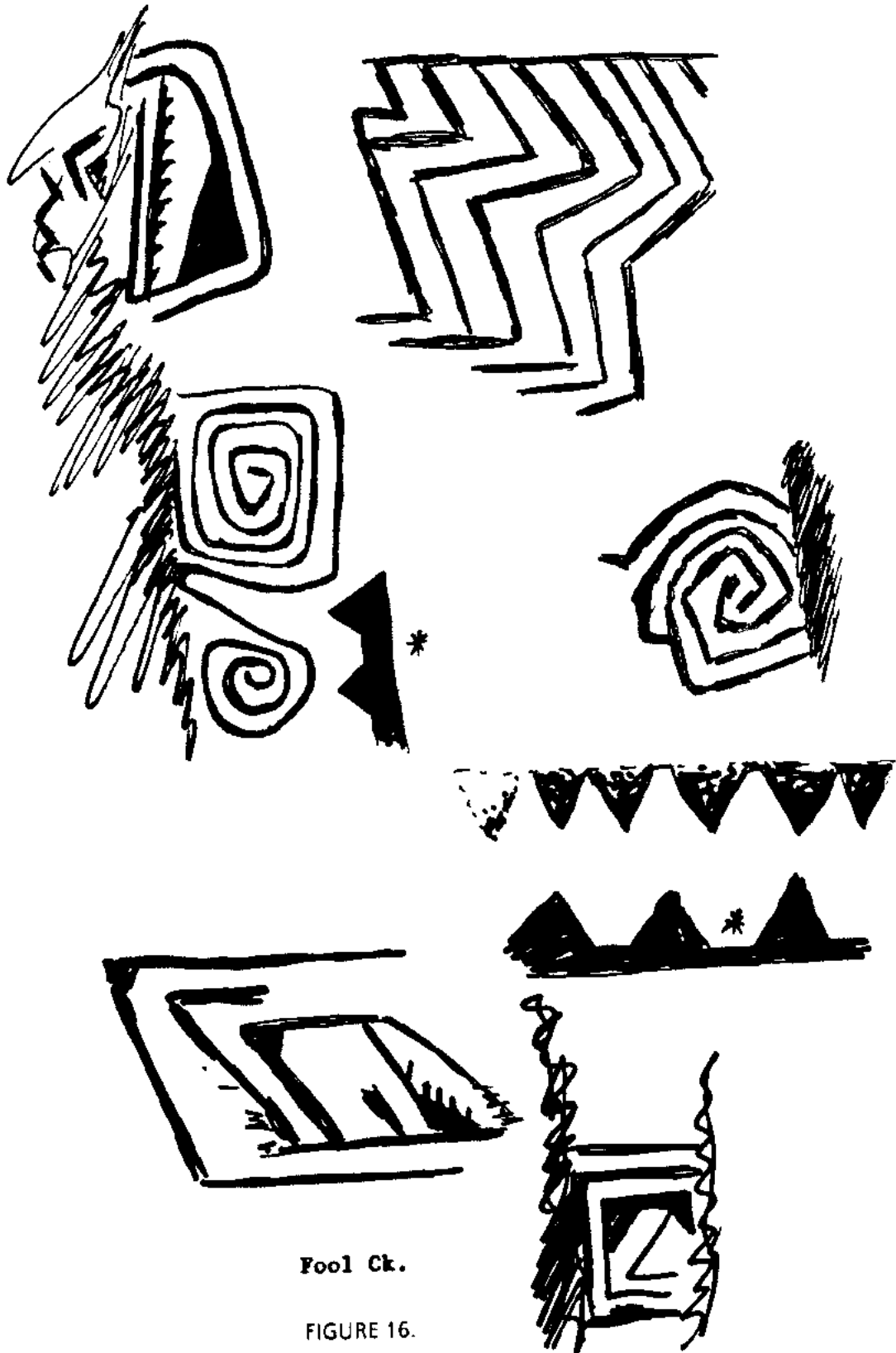


Clear Ck.



Cl.Ck.

FIGURE 15.



Fool Ck.

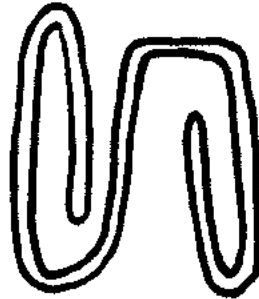
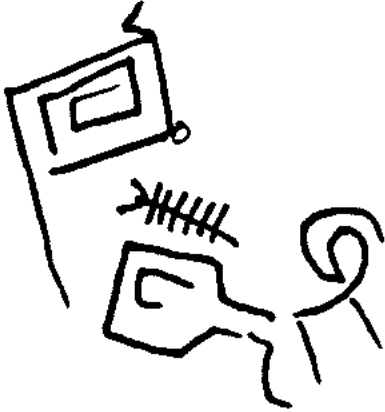
FIGURE 16.



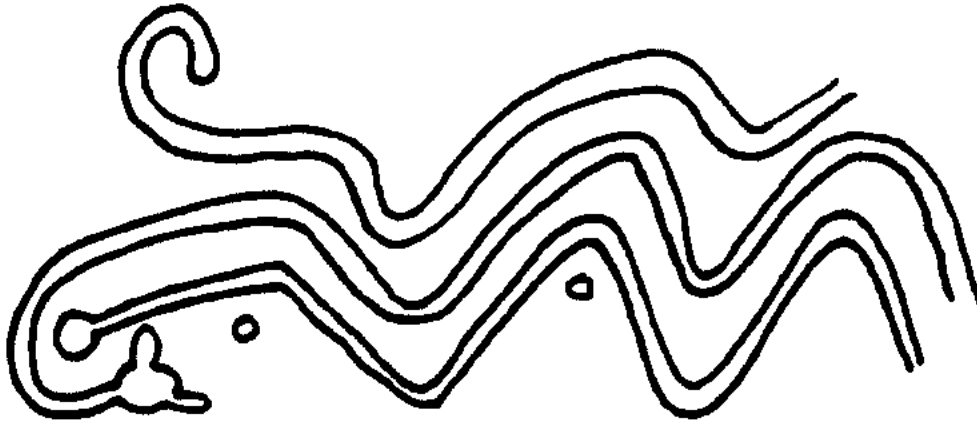
Lions Mouth



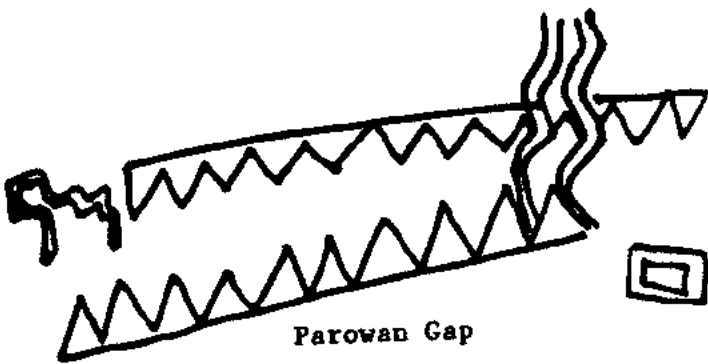
Lions Mouth



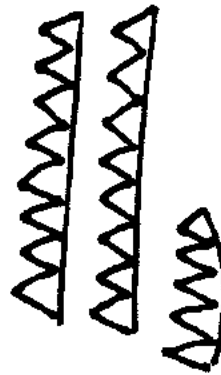
Braffet Can.



Braffet Can.



Parowan Gap



Parowan Gap

FIGURE 17.

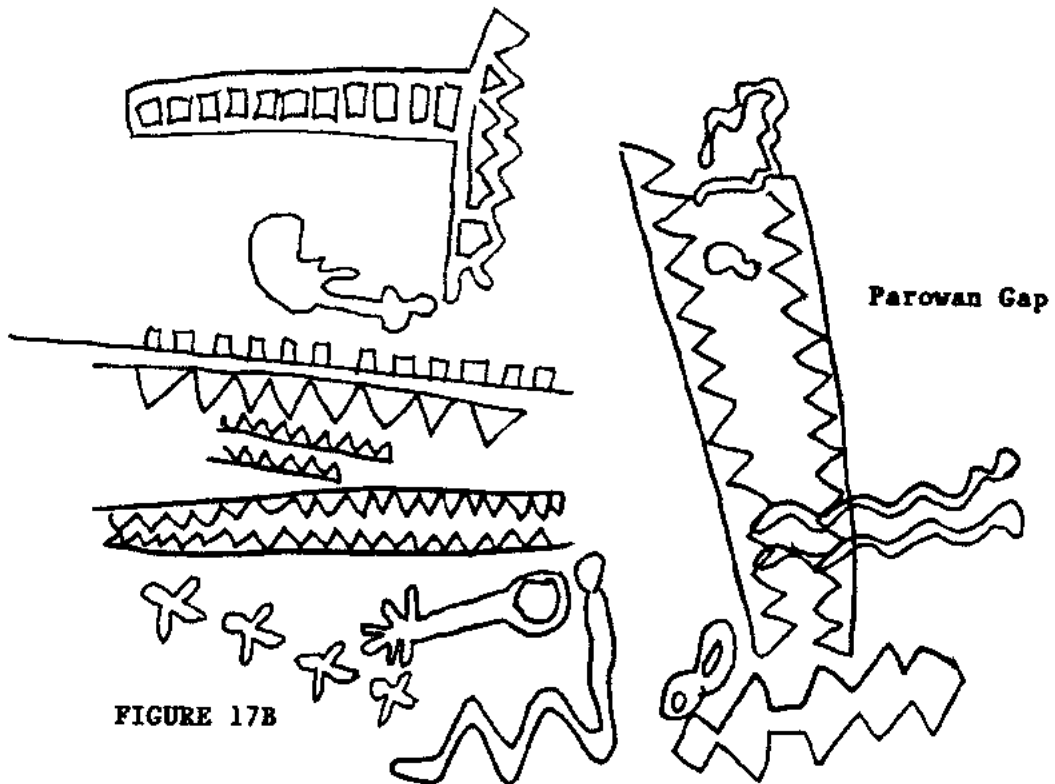
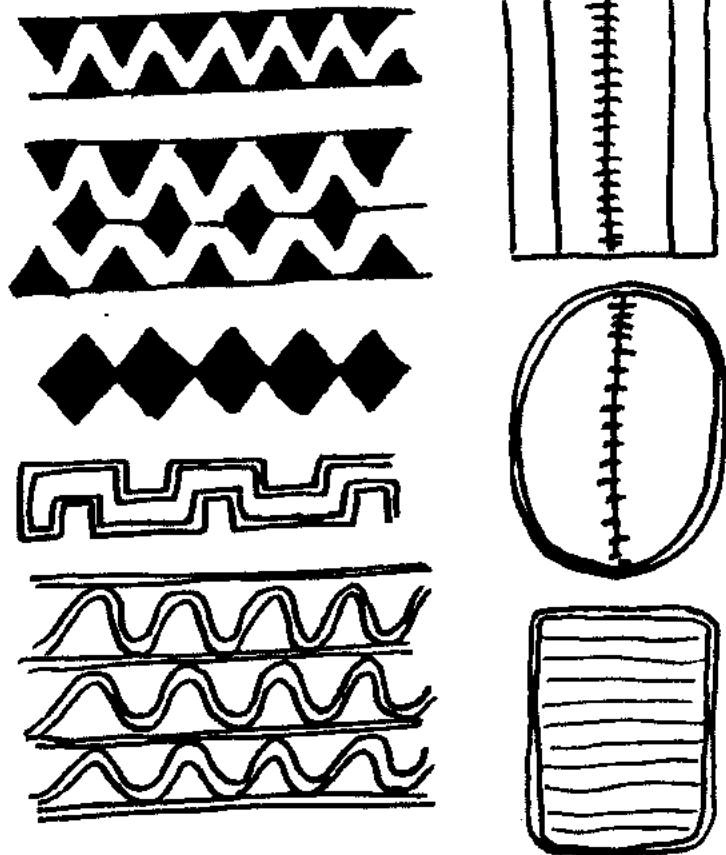


FIGURE 17B