IS THERE A TAO OF ROCK ART?

BY

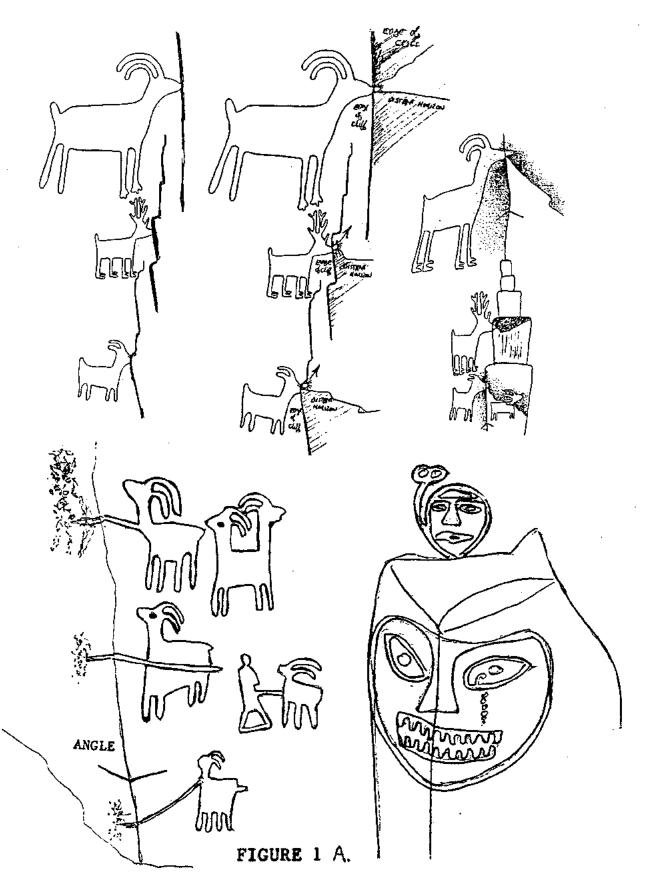
WILMA FREEMAN AND JESSE E. WARNER

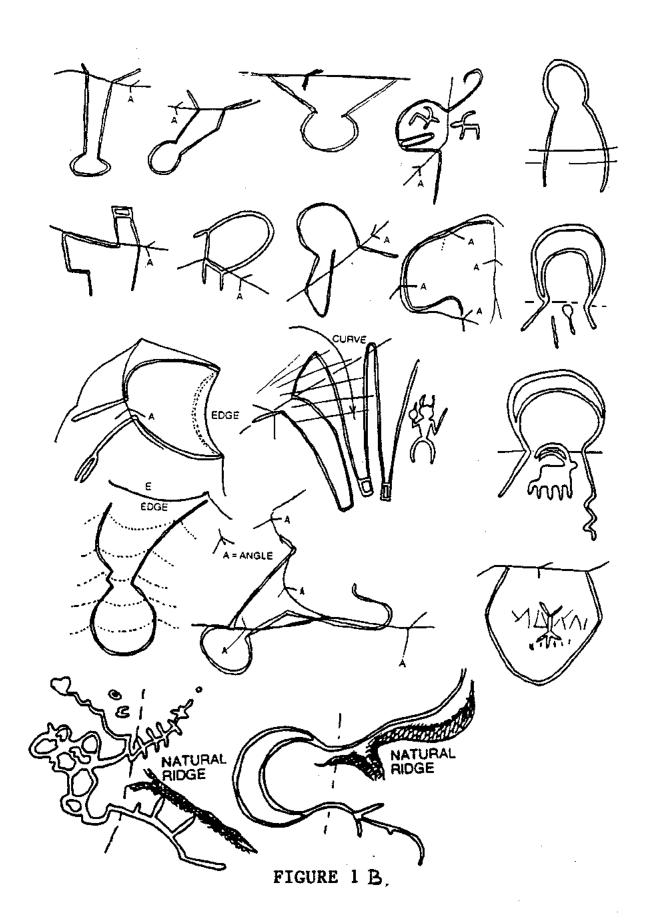
There seems to be several pervading universals in the world that crop up in some places more than others, even though some of these are universals, they only occur in certain kinds of places. The places where one finds them are where the fertile ground of the mind is open, friendly and hospitable to new kinds of seeds that The fields of our western minds have been lead take root there. away from many of the paths of the natural courses of things. often find a lack of sensitivity to the things in nature that are such universal considerations elsewhere. To us these natural ways of looking at things seem so foreign, and so strange. learns to see through the eyes of those that see with the innocence of nature, it is as though we were looking at things with the seemingly sterile mind and distant vision of "civilization" (Pearce 1971: 5,6,25,31,34,55,56,57,63,82,82,92, 97,117,146,178, Krupp 1991:6-8, Hoff 1982:6,24-26,29,50,75 etc.).

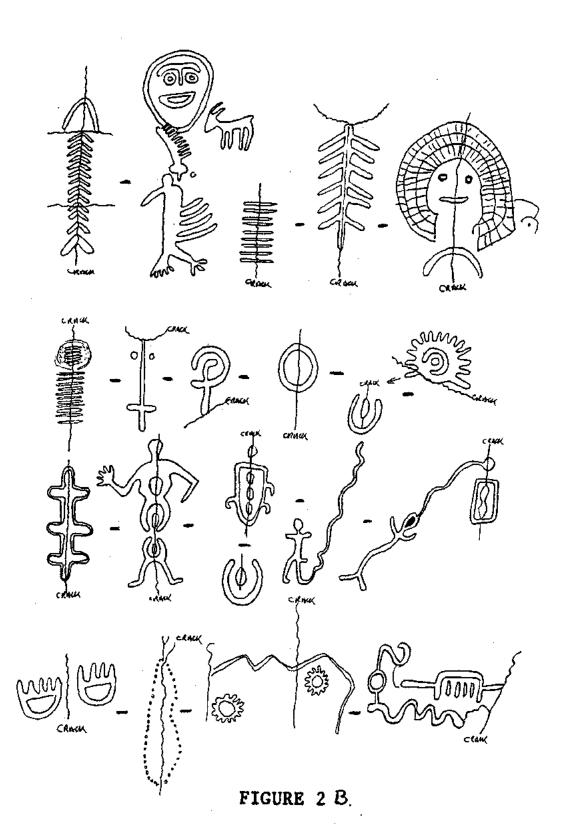
It is too bad that too often those of western descent who spend so much time trying to see with a new and "enlightened" understanding, often read too much between the lines and still do not see what they think they are seeing very clearly. That is the danger. The problem is that, when does what we think we see prostitute the simple truths the creators of the symbolism tried to portray?

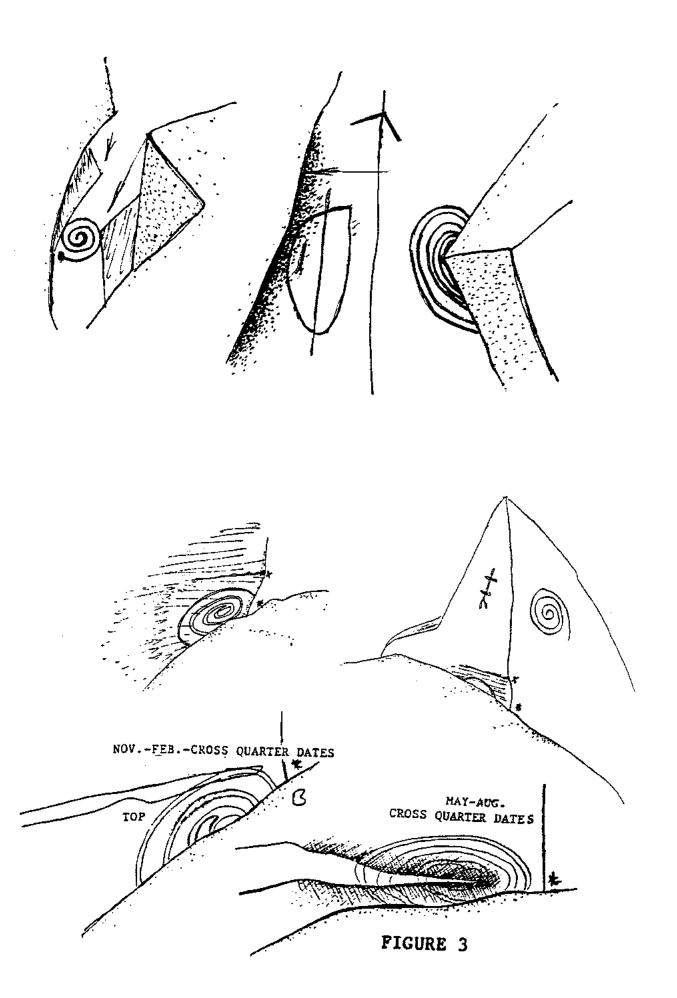
From the ancient Far East to the Eskimos of Alaska and other North American Indians we can find a few concepts that most of our ancestors lost long ago. The Asian concept of Tao is one that would not seem to be so foreign to the Native American as say many of our less sensitive Caucasian ways of looking at things are. In this preliminary exploration to briefly illuminate a concept similar to Tao among the American Indians we will follow the lead of a charming and enlightening explanation of Tao in the Tao of Pooh and Enlightening Remarks on Painting by Shin- T'ao.

In what we call the "rock art" of the Native American we find many examples similar to situations that can be explained by some of the philosophies of Tao, of where the one who produced the images were probably inspired by what was already there where the









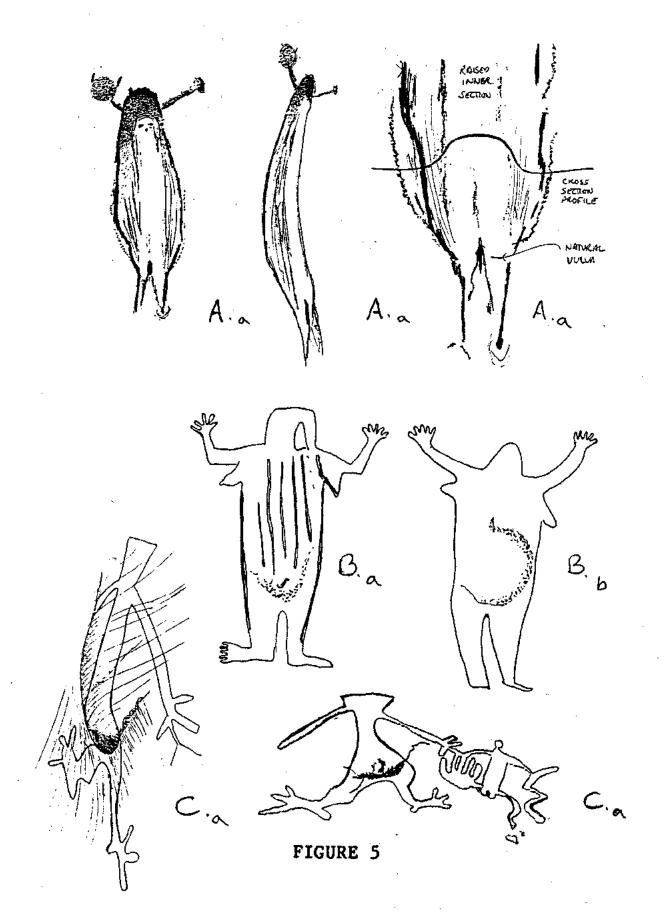


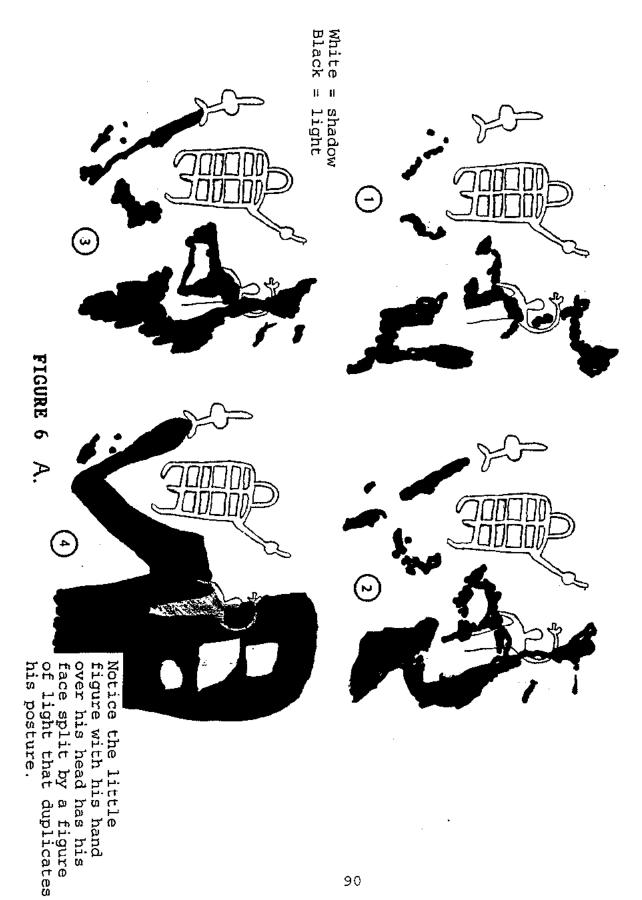
images were eventually placed. In other words, we believe that before many "rock art" figures were made, there was something there, that was beyond any human influence that suggested to their minds what was to be pecked or painted where it is found today. What is immediately hard to believe is that it is often something that is not always visible when one happens to stand there looking and wondering at the mysteries that are there before us.

There are several different thoughts about how what we call "rock art" was created. 1- The first and most popular assumption is that they just found a surface that was of a suitable size, and of a suitable condition to place what they felt was suitable to express. That idea, however, leaves too many unanswered questions. For instance, why do so many panels occur on a less suitable surface when there are many other better surfaces near by? Why are many figures wrapped around corners, in, over or around cracks, nooks, awkward depressions or run off into places where it is difficult to place them (Figs. 1-3)? 2- Another popular idea is that sometimes they searched for a place that would best frame and accentuate what needed to be said with a more powerful format (Fig. 3- Recently we have suggested that they not only searched for those Places of Power but further enhanced what they had to say by using natural features of rock incorporation or the incorporation of interacting light and shadows. These latter factors are those that are not always visible when we stand in front of them (Figures 5-6 A,B), (Hedges 1990:63, Johnson 1993 A,B,C, Warner 1993, Warner, Warner 1993). 4- We now suggest that in many of these situations, like a few others are suggesting (Eve C. Ewing, Bill Strange personal communications) that they listened to the place, felt the place, and let the place reveal itself to them as to what needed to be placed there.

These concepts can manifest themselves in several different ways; First, is that they would just stumble onto an obvious place. If it was one with the western point of view (the lower and less significant aspect of this) that had simply happened on to a nice piece of rock that suggested a particular thing in their mind, they could then simply create that concept. With the western point of view, we would say, "Oh look at that, that looks like ---- (a concept). I could make that there and wouldn't I be real clever."

The bicameral point of view is that if they desired to create a panel that contained a specific concept, they would go and search for the "right" place to put it. To our minds this seems less reasonable, but in actuality is more probable. In this situation







they would have to expend a considerable amount of time and energy to find such a place that had something there that would suggest the fact that they could do what they wanted to do. The reason that is harder for our western minds to accept is because it contradicts our primary cultural programmed bias that "primitive," non western society is foolish if they expended more energy than the non economic activity would return. In other words we find it less logical that they would have to purposefully find a suitable place rather than just stumble onto one.

Second, on the other hand, the non western (bicameral) mind would more likely believe that they were lead to the specific spot and would probably say, "Oh look at that, there is the place where the spirit of -----(a concept) resides. The Holy Ones have lead me here and revealed it to me, and I will honor them by creating the images that will let others know the power that they have, that they have been here forever and I will help preserve the truth of what and who they are."

Whatever the means, they would have to use what was there to create not only the concept of the final graphic production, but how it was to be placed there.

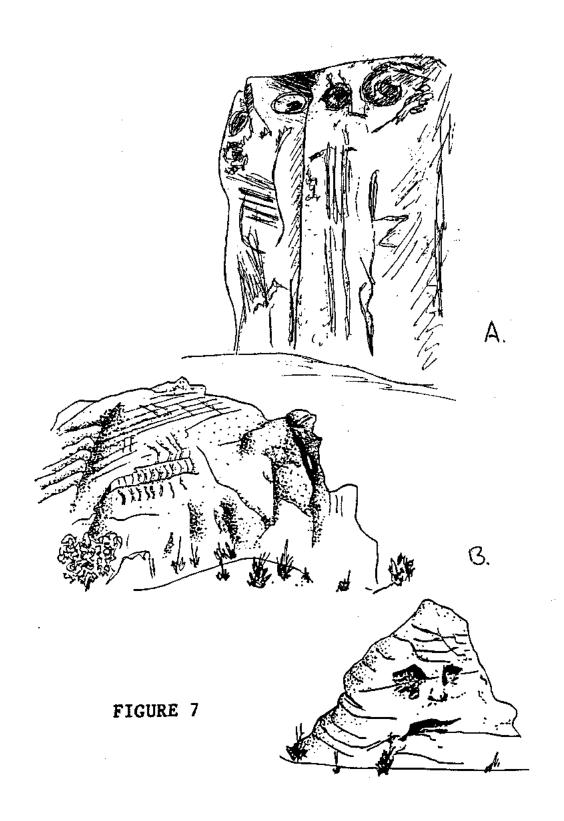
If they were lead to that spot, then that is one aspect of what may be called the Tao of "Rock Art." How can you tell when or how or if that occurs or what made them pick that place? Read the Tao of Pooh (Hoff 1982) and then you will be better able to know. And then when you see what they saw, the way they saw it, you will know why they did what they did. And then when you begin to understand those principles you can then begin to predict some of the types of things that they saw. One thing though that we as a western mind set have a hard time believing is the spirit of an object. That understanding is exemplified in the Chinese jade carver, the Eskimo ivory carver or the Salish flute carver who hold the raw material close to them and listened to the spirits within. They listen to what those spirits have to say. Likewise the Appalachian wood carver simply starts whittling until what ever is inside that piece of whittlin' wood reveals it self to him and predicts what needs to be carved away. And how does he know what to carve away? It's simple, "if a duck reveals itself, you just carve away everything that isn't a duck," that's what they would say. I also read once that before making a ring for a piece of amber, a silversmith carried it around in his pocket for a week, just to feel and understand the personality of the stone. Not all of us are foreign to that idea.

But we're sure you still think that they are just eccentric. You are probably still having a hard time believing that there is really the spirit of a duck in that object. It is only an inert object, a piece of jade, ivory, wood, or rock. Sure it may have some obvious characteristics suggestive of a duck or something. Coming from your perspective that is an understandable opinion. Let us illustrate that with one more example. Anyone who has gone into Canyon De Chelly with a Navajo guide has seen things that were probably pointed out like the owls that stand as ominous silent sentinels to a side canyon. They look like a pair of owls (Fig. 7 But nature carved them without any self will on the part of the rock you think. But what is important is that the Navajo believe that the reason they were weathered out in the form of owls is that the spirits of the owls within the rock resisted the factors of erosion thus allowing themselves to be revealed. "proves" to their minds that there are spirits of things not seen with a casual glance within these houses of stone, ivory, or wood. Even the great sculptor Michael Angelo was credited with saying that the spirit of the one who he was about to carve lay sleeping within the marble block. Others that are not as obvious need to be manifested through the power of P'u, in Tao. That is the principle of the uncarved block.

As Pooh would explain, "So here we are, about to explain P'u...we wont try too hard to explain too much, because that would only Confuse things, and because it would leave the impression that it was all only an intellectual idea that could be left on the intellectual level and ignored..... The essence of the principle of the Uncarved Block is that things in their original simplicity contain their own natural power, power that is easily spoiled and lost when that simplicity is changed" (Hoff: 1982:10).

This may seem to contradict the fact that, natural situations and their simplicity is possibly changed or lost with the addition of a symbol to an unusual or uniquely suggestive piece of cliff. Remember that the Native Americans were not Taoists, but Native Americans, and the principle of Tao or P'u is only an analogy. It is not an exact correspondence, but they share many features. Because of all the many additions of glyphs that were placed on what seem to be such obviously powerful places, the Native Americans must have believed that they were either adding to that power or simply using it, without loosing or spoiling its effectiveness.

In discussing what Eliade termed the hierophany -- the



manifestation of the sacred, Hedges states that in his case the sacred revealed itself through the patterns of light which occur at ritually significant times, and the rock art was placed to interact with the light patterns. He then continues to explain that situations which would create the patterns of light that were "discovered is potentially more significant than one which is made." (Hedges 1985:27,29). Figures 6 A and B, I believe, illustrate that idea.

Pooh explained the idea of how to find something you wanted to find like this. "If we are looking for something that we want to find but can't find it and keep finding something that we don't want to find, then if we look for the thing that we don't want to find, then maybe we will find what we want to find, "which would be a Good Thing, because then we might find something that we weren't looking for, which might be just what we were looking for, really" (Fig. 7.B), (Hoff 1982:13). Tony Hillerman places similar thoughts in the actions of Jim Chee which would sound something like this. If you asked him what he was looking for, he would probably answer that he wouldn't know exactly what it was till he found it. If he only looked for just one thing he wouldn't find what is really there to be found or anything else that would be helpful, or something like that.

To help you understand these concepts a little better, a similar example of spirits living within the rocks was described in The Unobvious Symbolism of Coppermine Spring, Arizona where a young Navajo girl and her Ute suitor were turned to stone (Fig. 7 B) (Warner 1992).

These things only become obvious to those who have learned to see them. But how does one acquire that ability? Hill and Stone (1977:95-97), explain that seeing is a learned process. "'what we see...is always an interpretation of the mind. We have to train the mind to interpret what we see'... This observation is backed up by science. 'Most of the process of seeing is not done by the eyes at all,' says Dr. Samuel Renshaw, in describing the mental process of seeing. 'The eyes act as hands which reach 'out there' and grab meaningless 'things' and bring them into the brain. The brain then turns the 'things' over to the memory. It is not until the brain interprets in terms of comparative action that we really see anything.' " They then say that "to see mentally is to think." This is one way in the western method of explaining this.

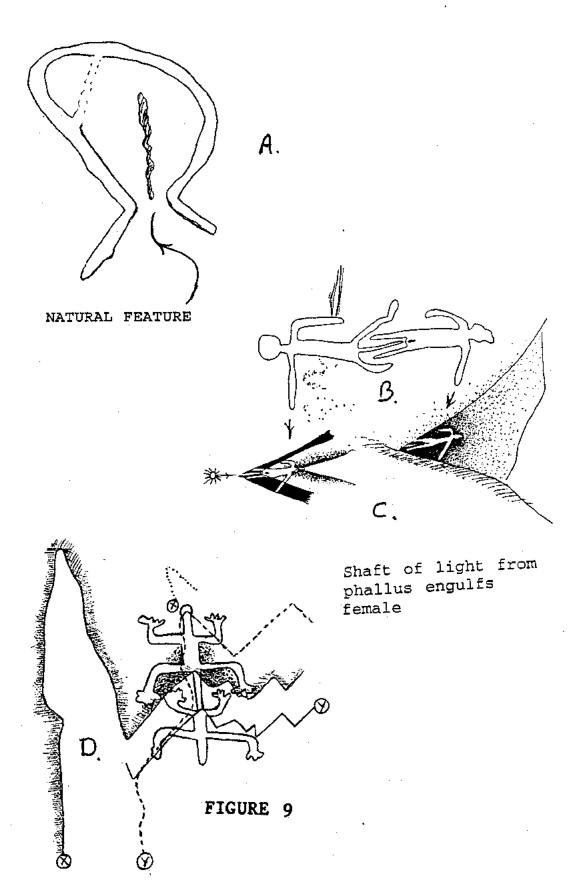


To Winnie-the-Pooh and the Tao method they would say that to find something or to see it just relax and listen and you will hear it calling to you. That is what is meant by how those that made those special panels in special places were lead to them. Or since knowledge and experience don't necessarily speak the same language, you simply be sensitive to circumstances and let things take their natural course (Hoff 1982: 14,29,57,68,75,80, 85).

Some of the places where this is most obvious, where we can probably recreate the thought process of the one who produced the graphic designs are in examples of rock incorperations and especially when used in association with light incorporations or what has been called Symbolic Solar Interactions. One outstanding example of rock incorporation is in the paleolithic cave paintings of Pech Merle, France. Here it is easy to visualize where, when someone was probably exploring the dark and shadowy interior cave surfaces with a torch he possibly gasped when he saw an image in the natural stone. He probably stepped back in fright a moment at first glance. Holding his torch out and seeing what he saw at first, he may have known that there he would paint a horse (Fig. 8 A). Maybe he placed his head to the panel to listen to what it would tell him, maybe banging rocks in the caverns sounded like hoof beats (cf. Waller 1994) and the air passing through the narrow corridors may have sounded like its labored breath. Maybe he just placed his hand there to feel the power of the muscles of the horse ripple in the stone. And with the flickering of the light from the little torch he could probably see and feel the cold stone wall flex its muscles like a living breathing animal.

But look at what he did. He could have painted a horse with the natural features in the rock as its body outline like the engraved figurines from the Salt Flats of Western Utah (Fig. 8 B). Instead he painted a horse within the naturally occurring stone one. Did that suggest to him that the painted one was the spirit residing within the other natural form? Or is it a representation of the spirit of the animal at all? Was that what he was about to kill? Did he came here within the womb of the earth, the appropriate place, to placate for that gift? And through the atoning act of ritual and his painting, the animal would return for him to kill over and over again so that he could survive (Campbell 1988:XVI, 72, 79).

Whatever the case, he created a figure within a figure, a kind of a Double Entity (Fig. 8.C). Look at the dots outside the painted horse. They are similar to the ones that he painted within



the painted horse. Do they suggest that these are similar dots to those painted on the painted horse, that this natural horse needs to have dots as well? Does that identify that it is another natural and real aspect beyond the painted horse to their minds? Also look at the legs. Are there two bifurcated legs on each extreme or are there four legs one set for each animal? We will never know. Likewise we will never know if this rock is the portal to the spirit world of his slain kinsman to enter and return through.

How much difference is their between this and the pregnant looking figure painted on a bulge of rock in Painted Cave in the Pecos, Texas (Fig. 5 A) or the two from Baja, California (Fig. 5 B), or the one from south central Nevada (Fig. 5 C). Who are they and what do they give birth to?

Look at the natural slot in the lava in Figure 9 A. Why was the inverted U bracket enclosure drawn around that elongated bubble-crack? With the added graphics the crack now probably becomes a vulva-form. It is in an enclosure, a symbol common to both vulviforms and drive site symbolism in this area. At sites in the vicinity there are almost 200 enclosures, many with sheep enclosed within the corral-like form, but none quite like this one. This is the only one like this to be wrapped around a natural crack almost suggesting the more natural vulva form that may have been what the idea of the enclosure was extended from. It also becomes a concept association for the concept or source that it was extended from (Warner 1983, 1984 A,B). The thought process that may explain that was suggested by Eve Ewing and Joseph Campbell (Warner 1986, Campbell 1988). The idea is that if you kill your quarry within a symbol of "rebirth," cave or enclosure, the animal will be more able or willing to return into and out of the spirit world (beyond the crack) for you to take its life again. That may have been what went through a hunters mind when he may have been looking for a place to placate the spirits for a successful hunt.

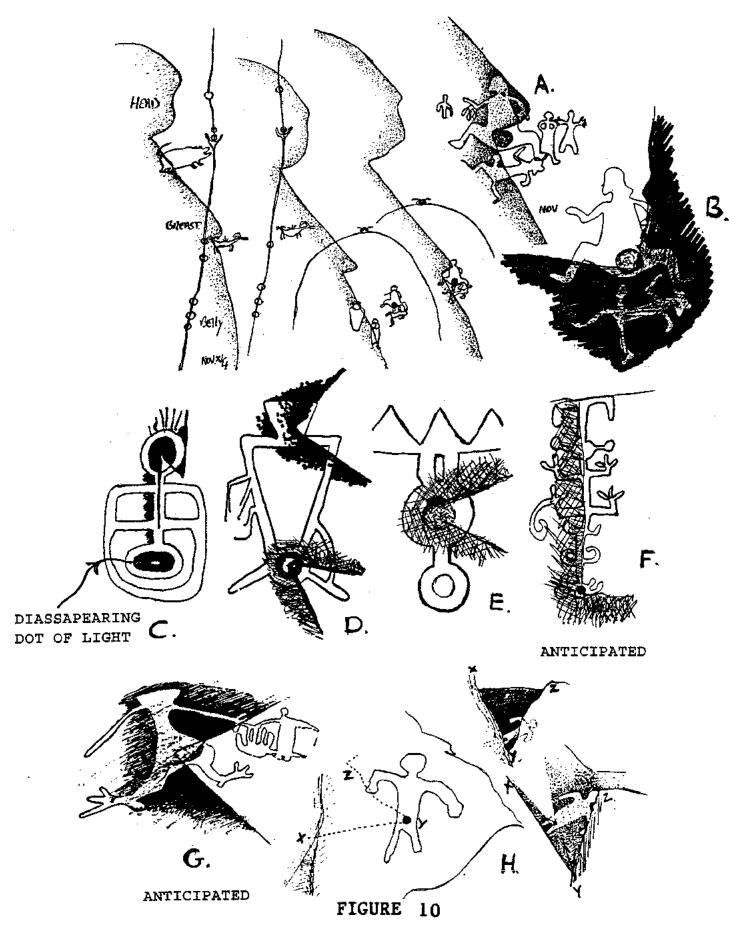
If that is the case look at a similar but smaller bubble slot on a lava boulder that was used as the genitalia creating a female figure depicted in a copulation scene (Fig. 9 B). Just looking at the rock itself (Fig. 9 B) doesn't provide the clues that stepping back and getting the bigger picture does (Fig. 9 C, right). Figure 9 C, left, illustrates the fact that at sunset on a key date a shaft of light produced by the two converging boulders to the left will touch the tip of the male phallus, enter her and then engulf her with light. That better expresses the feeling of the situation

that they saw before they produced those figures. That created what needed to be produced there, rather than what allowed them to produce. To find a natural feature for a vulva isn't that uncommon, but to find one that will have the additional power and symbolism of a shaft of light come out of the natural groin on a key date isn't that common. That happens at several places that are illustrated in Figure 10. One of those is a shaft of light that will come out of a natural groin composed of a white crystal (Fig. 10 E).

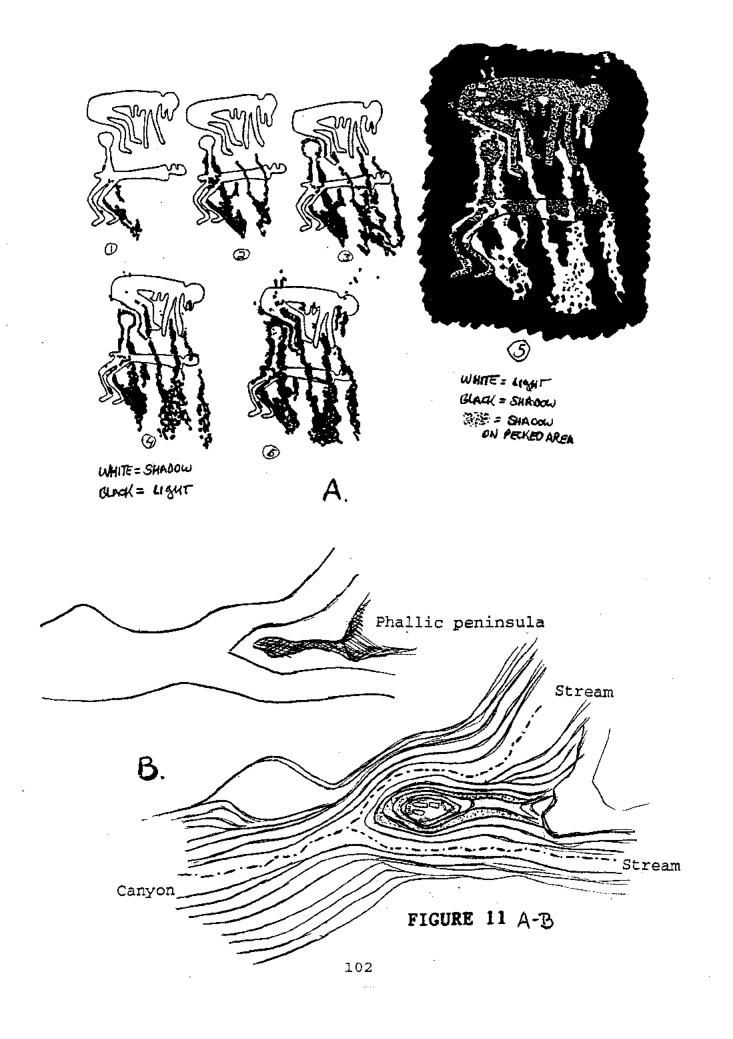
After seeing what was doable at these places, the artists then knew what they had to do. When the possibility of the shaft of light coming out of the natural groin at "Nampaweap," was explained to several there on that day, they lightly passed it off as a wild imagination, but just after that as we moved around the next corner there was another couple in a similar act of intercourse with a shaft of light that had just passed over the point just predicted for the previous copulating couple (Fig. 9 D). That occurred on a date that divided Spring Equinox and the Summer Cross Quarter date in half, a 16th date.

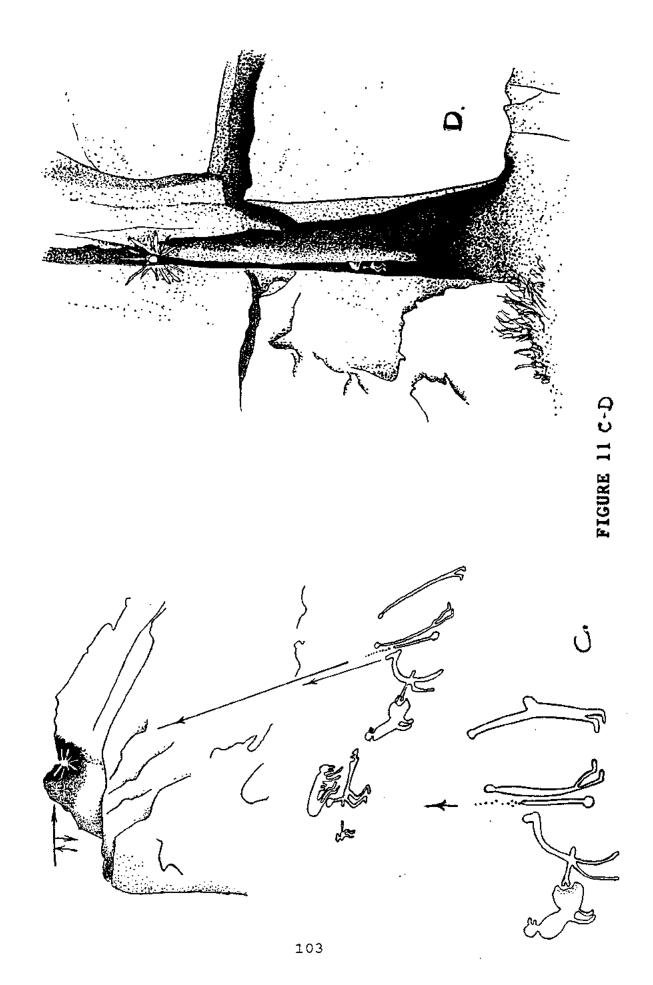
Notice that the placement of the phallus and body of the male in Figure 11 A, allows the sun to place a sheath of light that grows up around the phallus, and creates "arms of light," and "words of light" from the mouths of both couples. The place where the phallus was pecked would have been just one line of light. would have also been the widest of all the lines of light. After watching the light come onto the cliff there, the possibilities of representing that Divine Canubium was revealed to the "Artists," and he pecked the phallus along the largest ridge. By pecking off the crest of that ridge for the phallus it created two smaller ridges and thus lines of light. These are the right one on the outside of the pecked line, and the left one on the inside edge of the pecked line. That allowed the phallus to be ensheathed with light. We believe the artist would have to have seen the light and shadow move across the rocks first before he would know exactly where to place the body and the phallus, arms and speech of light to best transpire. But that is probably not what he said in describing that discovery.

Just looking down on the site from the mesa up above he probably saw the phallic peninsula of rock out in front of him penetrating into the groin of mother earth. That groin is formed by the junction of Rochester and Muddy Creek as her legs (Fig. 11 B). The bigger canyon formed at that junction that flows out to



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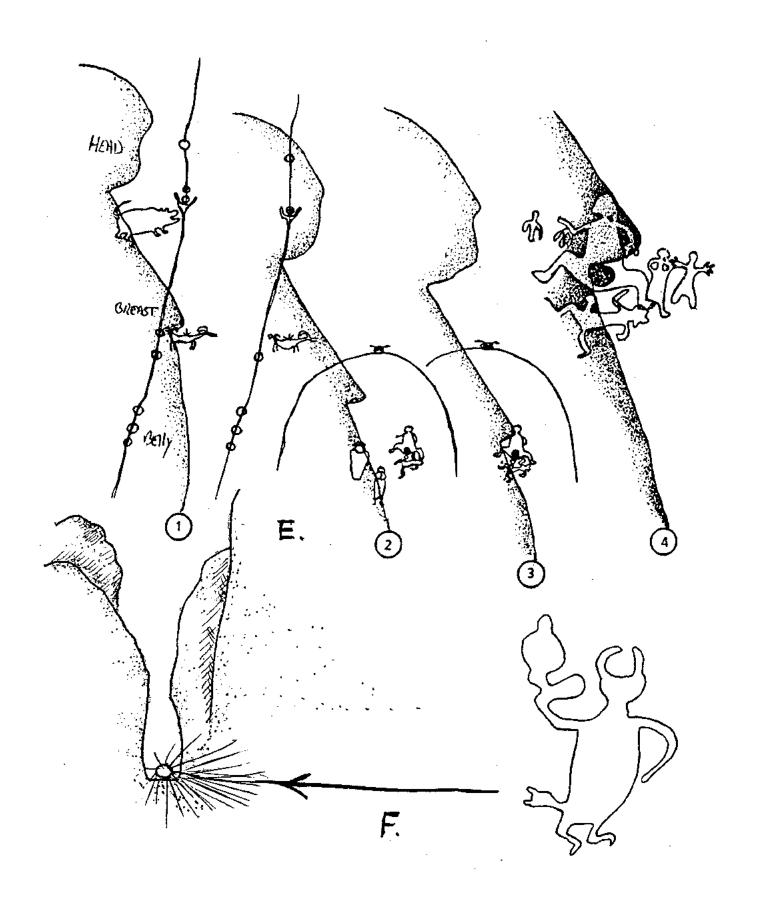


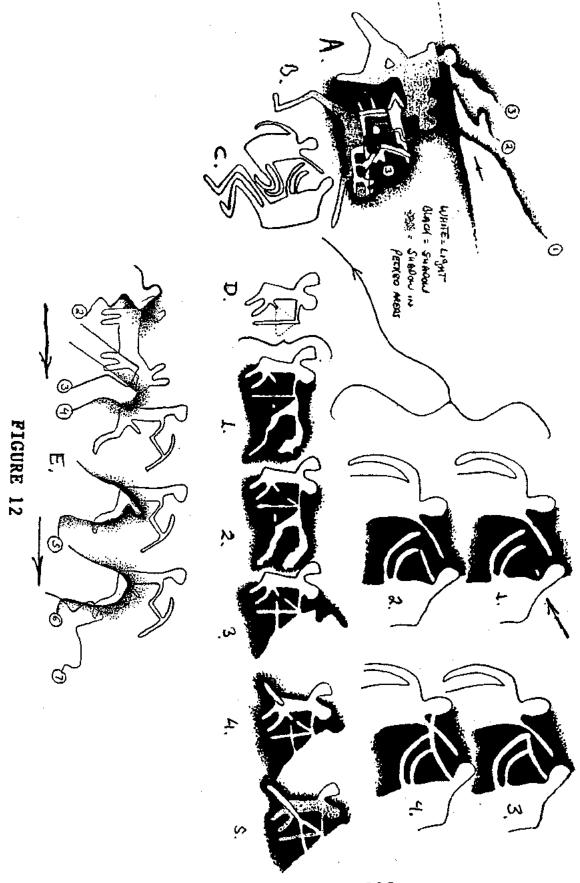
FIGURE 11 E-F

the south would be her torso. Just seeing that, he could probably feel, sense and otherwise tell that there needed to be a fertility shrine at the point of that mystical phallus. It just so happens that there are other powerful things that happen there as well. Figures 10 A and B and 11 C-F illustrate a few that deal with copulation.

Other examples also include the flute and phalli of light in Figure 12. The natural composition occurs as Figure 12 A-D are placed. Each interact with light. Study the interactions on Figures 12 C, D and also Figure 12 E from 9 Mile. The placement of other vulva related enclosures where the rock brakes to another surface or where it provides a natural depression for the enclosures to wrap around in Figure 1 B are less obvious examples of the kinds of things that were not directly taken advantage of. But, in many of those cases the sun can be seen to set into the vulva-like form on important dates (Fig. 13). In those situations we are sure that more was intended than simple game acquisition. The solar flair from the edge of the stone floods into the opening of the womb-like chamber almost seeming to provide the ability for a mystical rebirth.

There are other types of less obvious examples that were also not directly taken advantage of. Figure 14 was discovered by Wilma Freeman. Stop reading and study it to see if you can see what is there. If you can't, look for a bird, now stop and look again. Remember, just let it happen, don't try too hard to see it or it will hide from you. It is outlined in Appendix A. Also study Figure 15, there is something else hidden in that picture. Stop and study it. It is outlined in Appendix B. Don't cheat now.

The buffalo that is behind the Ute horses there, was created by a discoloration in the color of the cliff. Wilma was the only one to immediately see it. Was that something that predicated the location or placement of the horses? It could have been very It would be almost like they were chasing the obvious to them. ghosts of the buffalo like the unobvious animals that Bev Doolittle paints hidden in her pictures. This illustrates another problem in our trying to interpret these panels. On a shirt purchased at the Fort Hall Indian Reservation there is a group of horses running through a hoop or a circle. That picture is much like the one that The Buffalo is a symbol of the occurs on the natural buffalo. circle of life and the circle that it and we have to go through on that path to complete our lives (Brown, 1956:6,9,13). There is no telling what the full potential of meaning was for the artist who



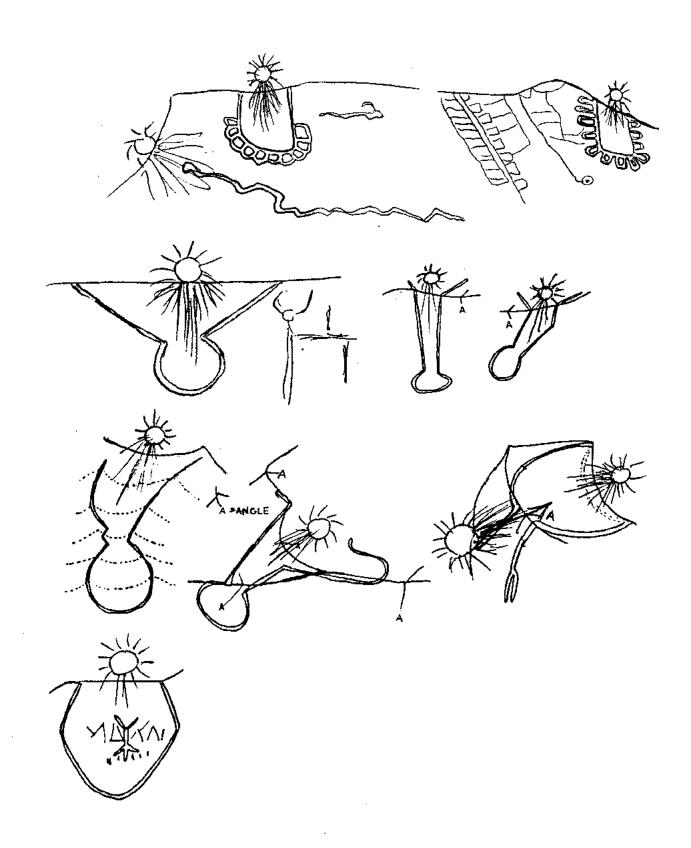
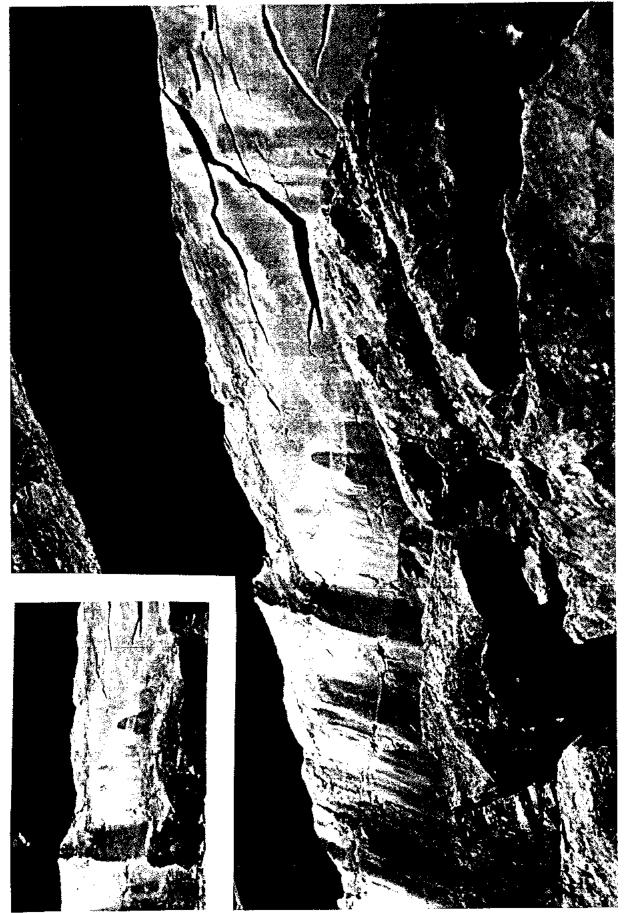


FIGURE 13



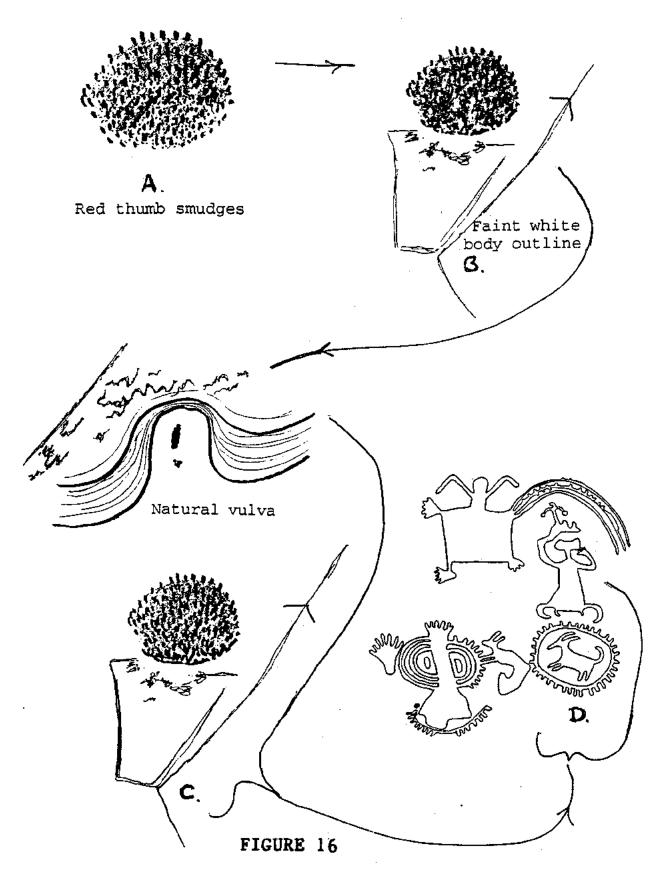


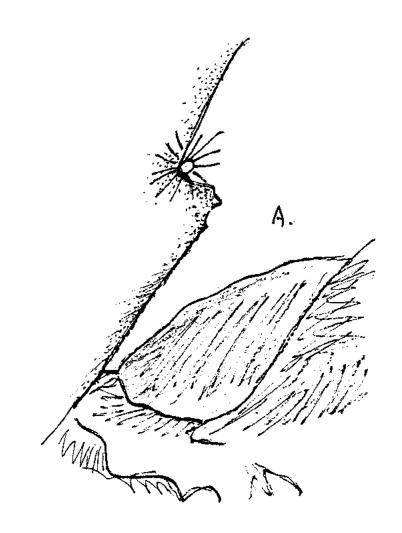
placed it there, possibly encripting part of the meaning in a metaphor or an allegory, a simple picture of horses pecked for the symbolic inept to see and enjoy, but with a much deeper significance for the more symbolic astute. Those are the ones who think like the Taoists think. It could simply be just something to be expressed between him and his creator, the one who made him and his brother the buffalo. Is this attempt to retrieve possible intents or concepts in the area that we described earlier, like those who we felt read too much between the lines? No, because we see Native Americans playing with these ideas and we never said that that is the case, but it is getting close to the boarder, in that it can not be proven by scientific means. They are, however, highly suggestive.

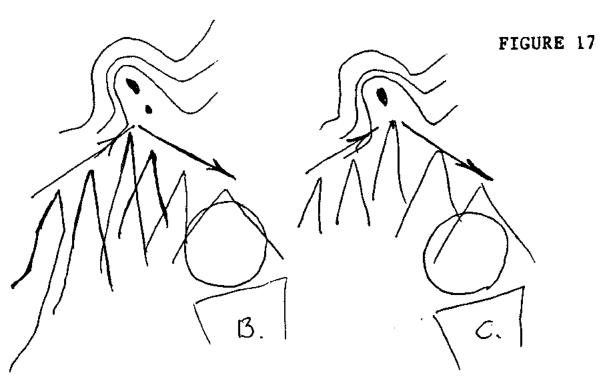
These last examples are no different than a figure that at first just looks like a beautiful and unusual sun symbol made of thumb smudges (Fig. 16 A). Those who are a little more observant, a little more in tune with really looking at what is there rather than just clicking your camera and running on to the next panel will notice that it is the head of a faint white trapezoidal Fremont figurine body form (Fig. 16 B). Then for the very astute, those that suck the marrow out of each of these bones, the skeleton of the old myths and stories that they told, the revelation comes. It is then that the "Eureka experience" occurs (Pearce 1972:64). The revelation that opens up to your mind is almost a theopathic ecstacy. You think "Oooh My Gosh!!! Look at that!" You stand there speechless as the reason why the Sun-headed figure was placed where he was floods through your mind.

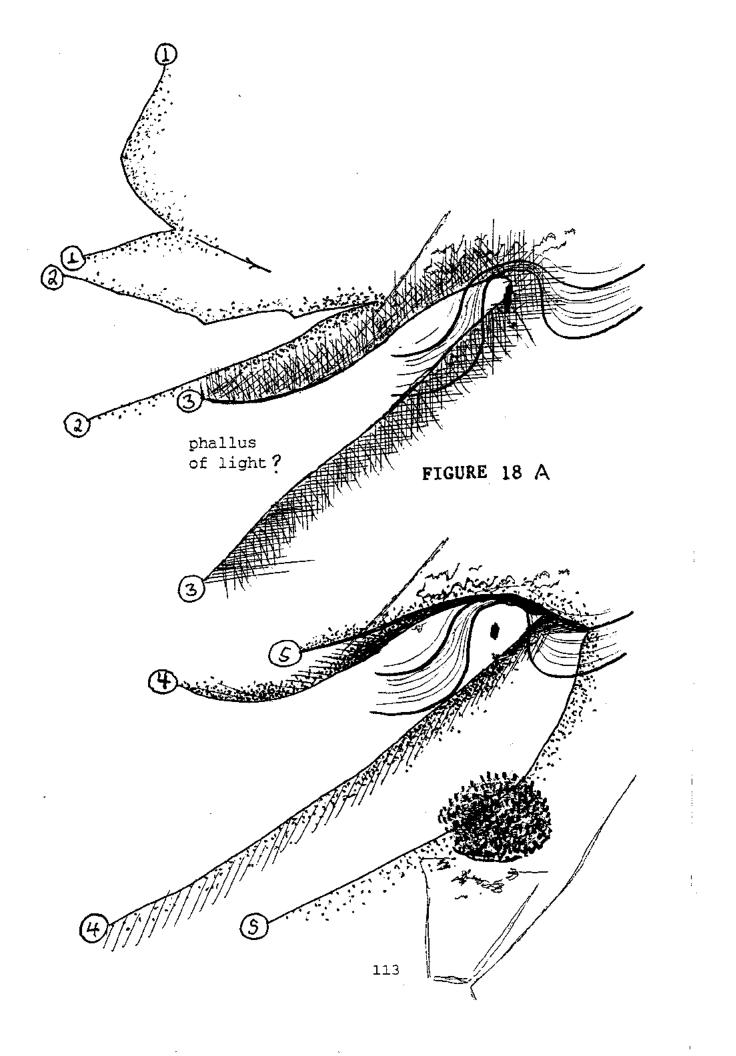
There within a very faint but definite set of natural formations of ocher colored lines is the form of a totally natural vulva with two dots inclosed within the U bracket enclosure-like folds (Fig. 16 C). The sun or sunheaded man seems to be in a position to represent its either entering the womb of the earth as a representation of the Divine Canubium or it's being born from a great mother like the one at the base of Cedar Mountain (Fig. 16 D). That is one of those things that we have been looking for, and through the doing of not doing it is found by both the Native American and used and us to add to that category of graphic and Symbolic Solar Interactions.

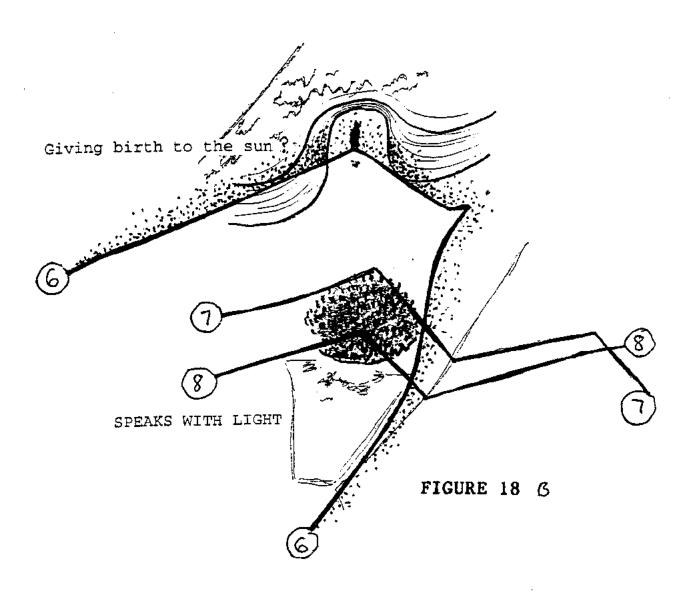
With that vision still in your mind, if you are rally in tune with what has happened there, you turn around and look out and see a notch in the cliff that will cast a shaft of light on these figures (Fig. 17 A). It looks like the point of light could come











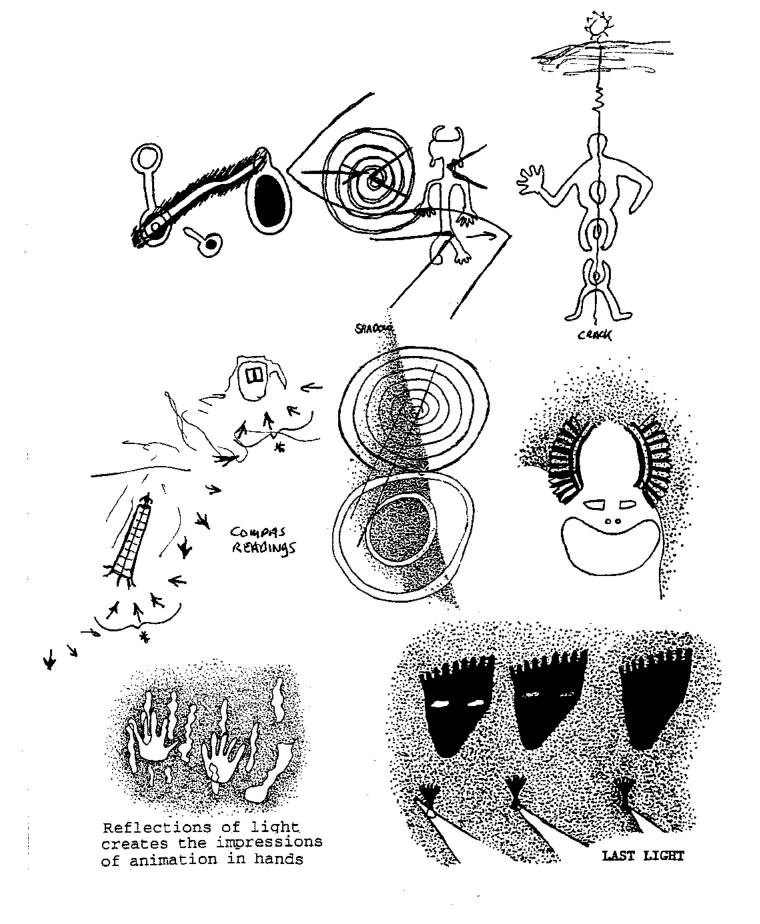
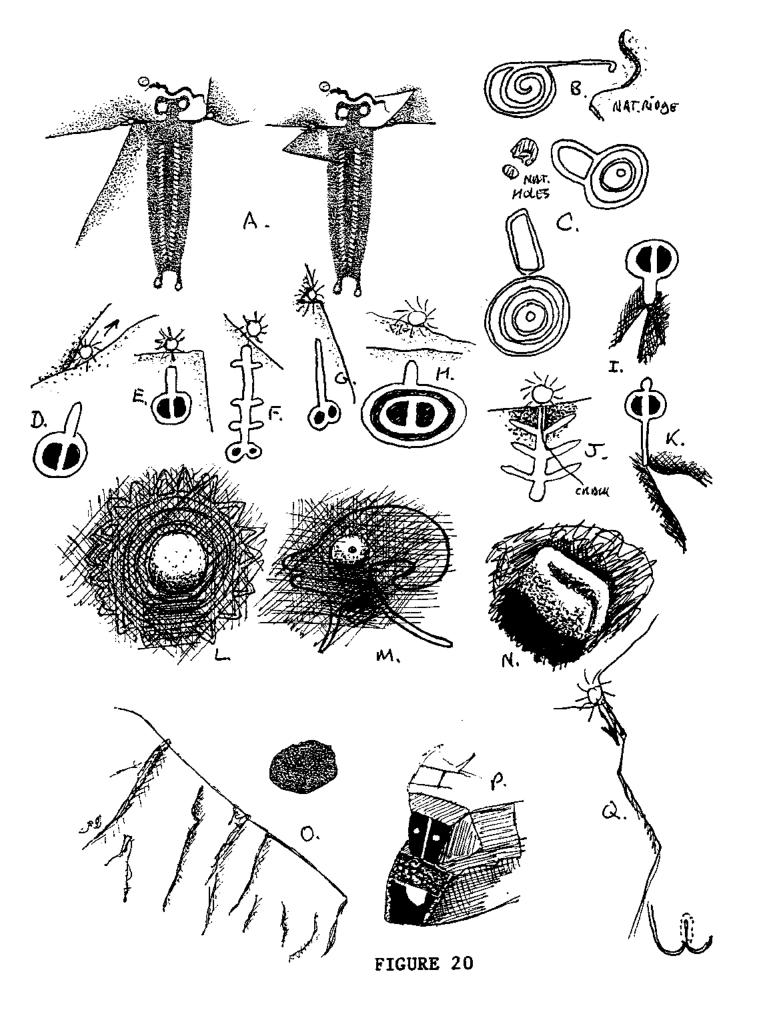
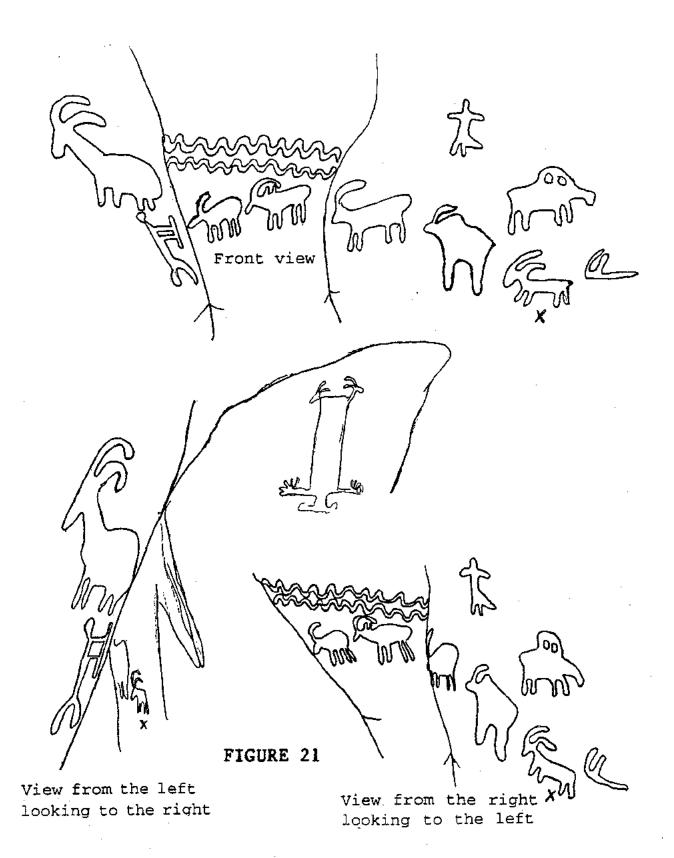


FIGURE 19





out of the natural womb and fall or move across the Sun-headed figure. It also looks like it could bracket the sun head or come out of the area of its mouth. Figure 17 B illustrates what happened two days before fall Equinox, 1994. From that interaction, by lowering the sun and moving the point up accordingly, the hypothetical interaction in Figure 17 C was felt to be possible on the date of Equinox or after one or the other Equinox. The next observation was two days before Spring Equinox, 1995 which would be equal to two days after Fall Equinox. Figure 18 A,B illustrates the difference those four days make in the shape and movement of the light and shadow. Observations on the date of Equinox have yet to be made.

There are many, many more examples out there that we could go on and on with, but we simply offer to you a few in the manner of holding up a rose (Campbell 1988:) (Figs. 19 to 23). Can you see what is there, what others see?

Look without looking and you will eventually see what there is to see.

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