

Bows and Arrows

The perplexing enigmas in our research are those things that seem to stay just beyond the grasp of our understanding. In determining the limits of our ability to retrieve certain information, we have come to assume there are certain aspects associated with any symbol that will always remain just beyond the reach of our fingertips. That is a fact of working with rock art we need to learn to accept. There are certain parts of a glyph, however, where we often feel we can gain some kind of a meaning, which seems to emerge through that cloudy mist separating their worldview from ours. Then, it seems, there are a few aspects where we are sure we know what is going on. However, I believe, that knowing is never a real knowing, a knowing of what they were really thinking and doing. It is a false security, a flaw in our thinking of what we think we know, but how can we tell?

If that is the case, what is there in the thinking that we understand something we think we know? That question *first* of all relates to what that knowing, or lack of, makes or allows us to see within just the graphics themselves and thus record about a panel. *Second*, it is what makes or allows us to see in it that is beyond the images themselves. Those subliminalities, however accurate, simply translate out in our mind as the values or affinities we have with it.

Let me take you through a certain set of signs, if one only sees them as signs and at face value or if one has a broader vision, the symbolism believed to be associated with them. Illustrating some of the problems of working with rock art is the purpose for this presentation. Bows and arrows and the act of shooting is just the vehicle to transmit those ideas. It isn't the validity of the information I have chosen as the vehicle to pur-

sue this point, but the idea that if we are not more diligent we can miss the possibilities of what this information has the potential to contribute, beyond what a closed mind or a dogmatically objective approach would have discovered and then recorded.

Let us begin by asking, "What is there in knowing that an isolated bow and arrow was placed on a panel (Figure 1)? The immediate answer is nothing. What is there to know? That nothing, is not just a simple meaningless nothing, it's a profound nothing, but not based on the absence of any other facts, but on the inability of observers to use their imagination, to see any valid potentialities.

The presence, form and location of that element are all that most recorders would note. Is there anything more that we could or should record about this situation? It is obvious, I believe, that there must be more or I would not have belabored the point, but what is there we have the potential to know if we just thought about it a little longer and a little deeper. If we did, what could we notice and record about it to help us understand more about what is not immediately obvious? What facts could they be and what could they suggest, with any real objectively acceptable certainty? The answer to that could provide additional clues that would eventually increase the nothing we know or what we do not know that we do not know. After all not knowing is just a false security for thinking that we know there is nothing more to know and thus what possible meanings or intents they may possibly suggest, relate to or at least be allowed as likely considerations to enlighten us about what we think we don't know.

Even though that element may be interesting to some it may not be to others. Should an interest

in a particular element make any difference in what that may influence different recorders to note about it? Selective interest, I have been told, may lead to an emotional partiality that assumes subjectivity. What has been emphasized in the recordation of elements has mainly been their form and position or relationships to other elements. That is a short sightedness in that that type of attitude fails to really look at what is going on in the panels and to look beyond the elements themselves, the panels and the confines of their compositions.

It would seem to only be those who find it interesting who may sit down at the side of that flat, horizontal rock and look out along its horizontal surface, who may see that the arrow is pointing out across the canyon (Figure 2). If a recorder was open minded, considered all of the possibilities of why elements were placed where they were and really wanted to record everything possible about a panel, he or she might realize that it would be pointing out in the general direction for Winter Solstice sunset (Figure 3).

The astute may also note that other elements on that rock also seem to point out to positions on key date sunsets. What does all that tell us or add to what we did not know we did not know before? For one thing, it implies they may have marked various dates with different kinds of figures than archaeoastronomers usually note. Let me reiterate that again a little more bluntly. Most recorders would never have noticed those facts. How can I say that so profoundly? Simple, no one has ever suggested what that bow and arrow or the other figures point out to before (Figure 4a, b, c); and how many of those that would have thought about it would believe that could have been intentional since these seem so unusual. Would they really consider these seriously, or just figure that the position is a coincidence, but is it; and how can we ever know for sure? The answer to that is significant repetition, but how will any one know or even

remember if there is any repetition unless it was first recorded?

That knowledge comes from not just asking questions, but testing them. We would not ask a plumber about brain surgery, but that is not that different with what we expect to learn from just any of the many Native Americans whom we ask, "What does this mean?" and automatically assume they know everything.

Two other panels express a concept relating to this bow, its arrow and the sun. Two Ute warriors (Figure 5) considered as possible supplicators with arms reaching out to the sun also have rifles pointing out in that direction. This may not have seemed to relate to this if I had not mentioned the sun (Figure 6). How many would have even considered the sun in these two cases like the bow and arrow in Figure 1?

Those who do not prepare themselves to see or believe that there is something out there to see are *made*, or even constrained, not to see what they look at. In other words, they have been programmed not to see what they are looking at.

Chance favors the prepared mind. Those who allow themselves to see more are thus *allowed* to see more by their attitude. Their minds let them have the ability or permission to really see (not just look at) what they would not have otherwise seen. I believe these warriors relate to much of the same concepts behind the bow and arrow. Notice that they are crouched over at 90 degrees like many supplicators (Figure 7). They have one hand reaching out to where the sun will rise on equinox. In their other hands are rifles pointing up in the exact same direction. Rifles and bows are both weapons which shoot and are pointing out to the sun. Notice how the two warriors duplicate each other. Figure 1 is probably also a Ute production. The precision of the repeated details of these two warriors stresses the fact that they are a duplication of the same intent and meaning. How many budding scholars or even just the curious neophytes to this higher level of learning ever noticed this on Freestone's Ute Reservation Field trip in

1994 or on the bow first shown? Why are there so many who just look but do not see, instead of the few who really are seeing more. Why are not more people noticing these repetitions? Why are not more questioning contexts and relationships? That is the real purpose for URARA and our field trips, to increase public awareness to what is really going on. Our hope is to stimulate enough curiosity so that more will begin to not only start questioning, but stir up the courage to try to find answers. Why are so few making any connections? I know that it is hard to do and hard to know where to start, but there are so many simple questions that have never been tackled. Is URARA failing in its mission or should we accept and be satisfied with the status quo? If so or even if not how can we better stimulate real interest and learning? And how much time is there before another panel hiding the clues to break into another new idea will be destroyed by another ignorant vandal, development or just natural causes before one who would have seen a connection won't be able to because it's gone?

It seems that by not attempting to record or just photograph or notice anything beyond the image itself, we're thwarting our efforts to make this area of research more definitive and thus more understandable. Dr. Jennings' argument for not wanting me to waste my time with rock art as a Masters Thesis prior to Schaafsma's *Rock Art Of Utah* was that he didn't consider rock art to be definitive, not assignable to a culture, not datable, not understandable or interpretable. To him it was no more than doodling or sympathetic magic. This is still the basic attitude of many of those who do not look beyond the elements themselves. In reality, it seems a majority of panels have some kind of directional implications implied by the presence of specific and repeated numbers as indicated by Nal Morris and actual elements pointing out to a position beyond the panel as indicated by Warner 2003a, b.

After all, it is only what we can "see" that predicates what we record, no more and no less. According to what those who would refuse to record even what they see, and there are some like that, especially one who said she didn't believe they would do something like that (meaning use light and shadows and have directional implications); this type of effort, they believe, is too subjective to pursue, and thus we have no access to a wider world of viable possibilities.

Is that a form of racial prejudice, a form of ethnocentric superiority? Such attitudes speak to Native Americans that we believe they were too stupid to have been able to see the kinds of things that a few others have had the vision to see. That is sobering and there is a message there. Then what is our real duty and responsibility in recording rock art?

Is what lies out beyond the edge of the rock those elements were placed on worth recording?

That was the theme of another paper I presented at ARARA summarizing current research by some of the greatest and well-accepted minds in rock art research (not all of the greatest minds are that well accepted by all).

Because that paper was over 10 pages, the one I submitted it to requested that I cut it down since ten pages was felt to adequately cover a fifteen minute presentation. Rather than sacrifice information I felt too important to cut, which would have decreased the value of that work, it was withdrawn from their publication to be published elsewhere. Is that type of restrictive attitude similar to just recording and reporting a bow and arrow or two Ute warriors on the rock and nothing more? It sure seems to be. Both are limiting potentially valuable information.

What is it we need to know about a site? What do we have a right to know? What is there we can objectively know? Is there a limit to what we should even attempt to determine, record or print? If there is someone, who is it that has the authority to say where those limits are to be drawn? It is my belief that we should attempt to

record everything possible under the circumstances. Who knows what will be important in the future, based on what we could have recorded, especially in areas where vandalism and removal will prevent our ability to gather any more information.

That seems to imply that our inability to record rock art because of vandalism is no different than our inability to record rock art because of having a closed mind or a fear to try to do something new or different, especially something which may rock a well established boat (such as the idea that rock art is more than some want it to be, because if it is then they would have to do something with it or even more than note its presence, and even try to protect it). I have come to believe that the only limits on what we can do with rock art depends on the limits of what we are able to see in it, which directly relates to what we call it and thus record about it.

Is it important to even try to understand any meaning behind these symbols? It seems to be or IFRAO, ARARA, the San Diego Museum of Man and URARA would not have gatherings like this. If that is the case, where should we draw the line on what we record or do not record? We would normally think that it should be that if some want to record more than another, let them. However, there is an undercurrent that believes that any subjectively oriented data, not quantifiable by their definitions, should not pollute site reports. In that case, this paper and many others here are not acceptable. There are some extremists who do not feel any interpretation, what so ever, is valid. If so, where do we draw the line as to what is acceptable for us to record and for the general public to know by their standards as well as according to many Native Americans who object to our interference and then, what if anything isn't objectionable?

Beyond the different camps of Native Americans who are watching what we are doing (some of which are more militant than others),

that has been a contention between different camps of those who just record these remains versus those who go one step farther and do additional research. This is becoming an ever-constant and important issue.

I personally believe there are areas in which we should not trespass. I have been told by different Native Americans that there are areas that if we can determine and earn that knowing, it is our right. But, in certain situations, that knowing should not be shared with the public. That is the privileged information of the initiate. Then there are areas that are welcomed since they educate the public to the intelligence and spiritual nature of these ancient so called artists who are more often than not, enlightened mystics. With our research, we not only have a stewardship but also need to consider the ethics of what we do. That has been considered with reproducing rock art in various art forms, but hardly in the area of research. Is just presenting more sacred information that permeates our proceedings too sacred to present in that format? We could use the excuse that it only has a limited circulation. That is an area that will always be a sore spot to traditional Natives, and one that the cold researcher never considers. In many of my previous papers I have been told that I have trespassed that line by some Native Americans, but I often point out that I only consider those things that are at the lower levels and do not consider what, in my mind, are the more sacred levels of that information that could be considered. That is what I believe is the real privileged information.

For those who believe there is more we can objectively know, what is there we need to know, to understand what we think we know, to make that knowing acceptable to others? For one thing, it's repetition. It is the repetition of any element and its context that needs consideration if they are to ever be considered important; but how many times and with what types of variations does it take to be acceptable, to confirm or validate that knowing?

Naturally, one would assume the more an element or context repeats, the better. A sizable number of repetitions not only implies the significance of that element and its context, but that significance in an aerial and statistical conventionality. That is equal to its percentage of repetition within various areas of its total area of distribution. What is so surprising is the numbers who seem to have never considered the ramifications involved in element repetition beyond simply mapping out element distribution. Some time ago, I began to consider certain contexts as motifs as well. Within those repetitions, there will also be a good range of the limits of their variations. These limits of variation provide the boundaries of a symbol. They illustrate the areas where any symbol ceases to be one object or idea and begins to become something else. Compare the limits of the variations of examples of bow-like figures in Figure 8.

What is there then, in the knowing of the fact that not far from the bow and arrow just mentioned, there is a bow and anthropomorph-like combination pecked on an edge of a cliff (Figure 9)? What is there in knowing that the tip of the arrow touching the very edge of the cliff also touches the sun on one day during equinox at sunset (Figure 10a). That is so precise, that only on one day, will the tip of the arrow touch the center of the sun when it is in the junction of a vertical and horizontal wall across the canyon (Figure 10b). I'm sure that its relationship with the edge would not have been noted and I know its interaction with the sun would not have been recorded on a site form, but because it doesn't have an arrow that crosses the bow and is attached to the string-like body, would it have even been identified and recorded as an archer?

It is abstract enough that some I have shown it to have not been able to identify it as such until that possibility was suggested and other evidence at the site considered. There was still one person that disagreed with that possibility. Situations like this teach us there is something here from which we can learn.

That lesson comes in the answer to the question of, why does it have such an abstract nature? Another archer just down the cliff is more natural and provides a probable concept association for the abstract archer being an archer, but it shoots a sheep in the neck (Figure 11a, b). There are several reasons for its abstract nature, but for now, note that Figure 10a is the first supportive example of the first bow seeming to shoot a celestial body. How many other supportive examples would one suppose could be found to add additional support and details of meaning in their variations? Are these the only ones or are there others? Finally, how many similar examples will it take to be convincing that these all repeat the same basic symbolism and that they suggest something special and unusual.

The examples in Figures 12-14 help to suggest that this is not just a simple random occurrence.

The idea of shooting the sun is only the tip of symbolic iceberg. The concept will eventually be part of what a select group of researchers on a major project has begun to consider. Evidence from all around the world will be searched for answers to the question of what is the significance of this act of shooting. Concepts that are being discovered to be associated with this is its use in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, sending the soul to the land of the dead, mythical reenactments, marking the 52 year cycle and the binding of the years, the New Fire Ceremony and possibly, even the procession of the equinoxes.

With these thoughts in mind, I now lay down a challenge to those of you who have never presented a paper, but who have made a discovery, no matter how small; to pursue your idea(s) where you are sure you know what is going on with something somewhere. The main motto of URARA is that everybody knows something, nobody knows everything, so let us share what we know and we will all be better off for it. The next motto is that we all agree to disagree. In a subsequent presentation, the event involv-

ing the bow and arrow in Figure 1 will be explained in more detail.

REFERENCES CITED

Warner, Jesse E.

2003a Evidence Often Missed: Seeing More Than Just the Graphics, or More Than Just the Obvious. Parts 1 and 2. On file with the author.

2000b Beyond What They Placed on the Rocks: Panel And Site Context. Originally presented at ARARA's 1999, Phoenix Congress. On file with the author.



Figure 1 (top), Figure 2 (lower left), Figure 3 (lower right).

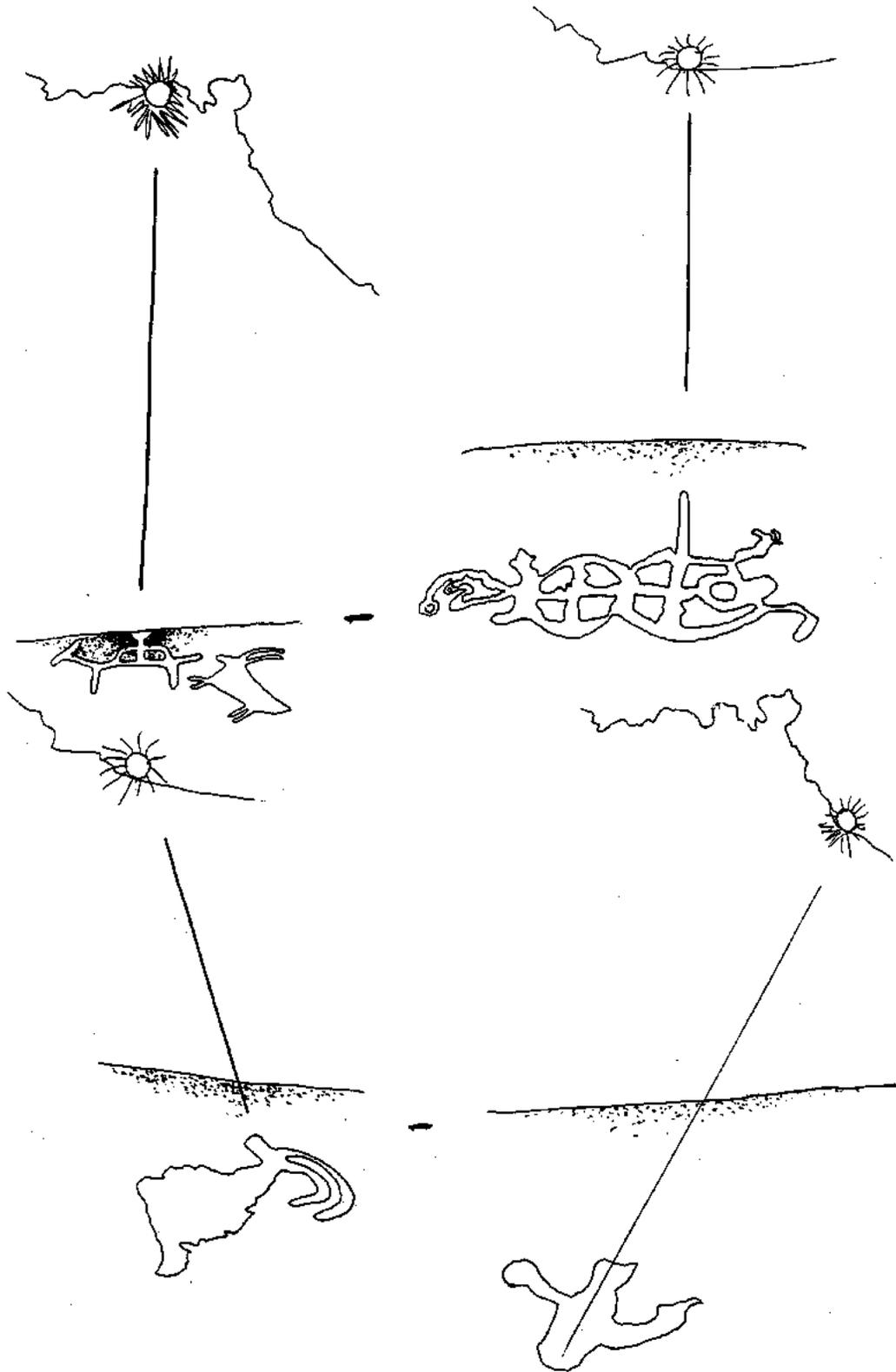


Figure 4.

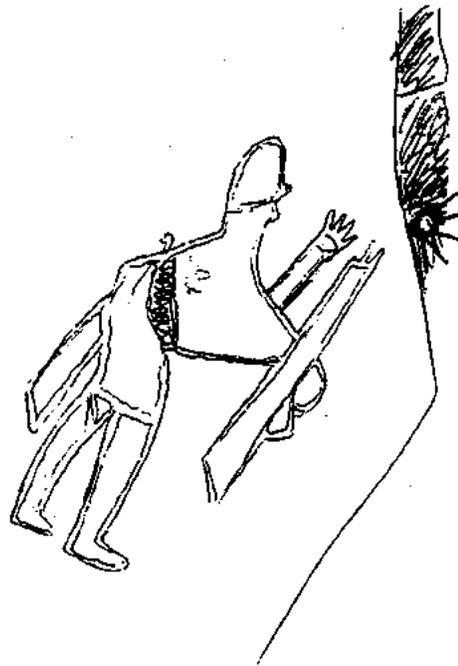
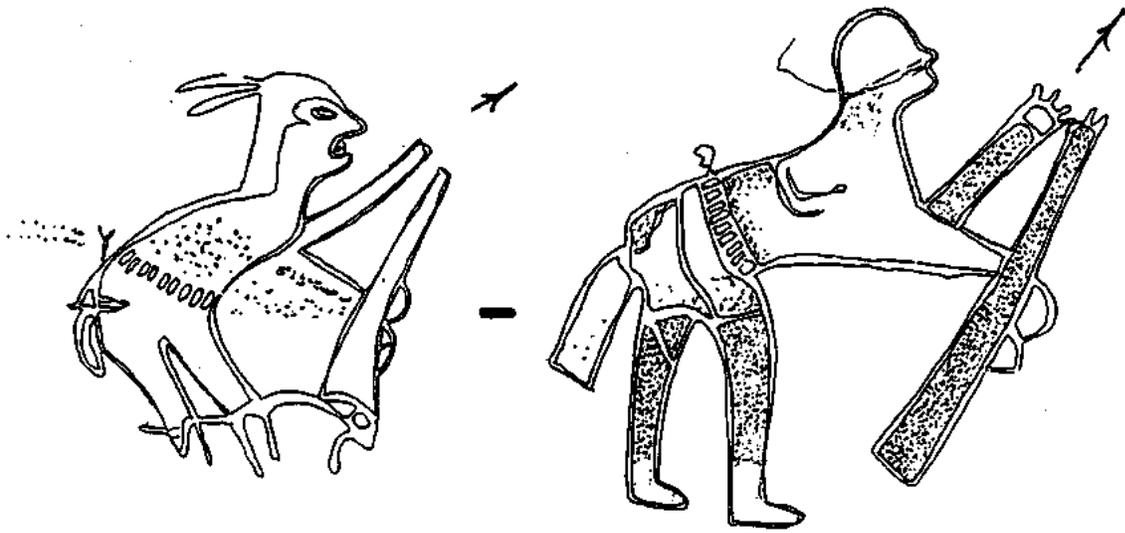


Figure 5 (top) Figure 6 (bottom)



Figure 7

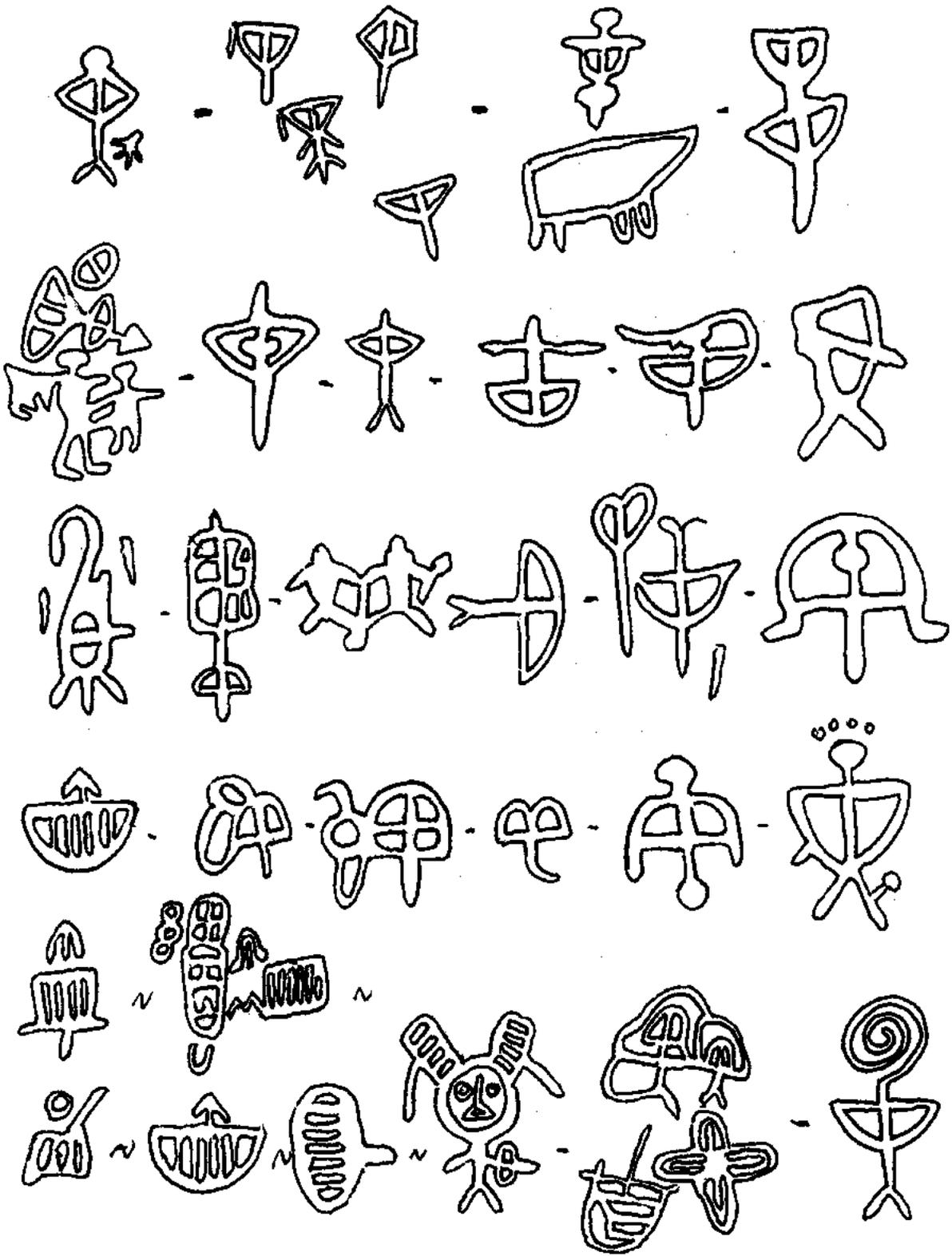


Figure 8.

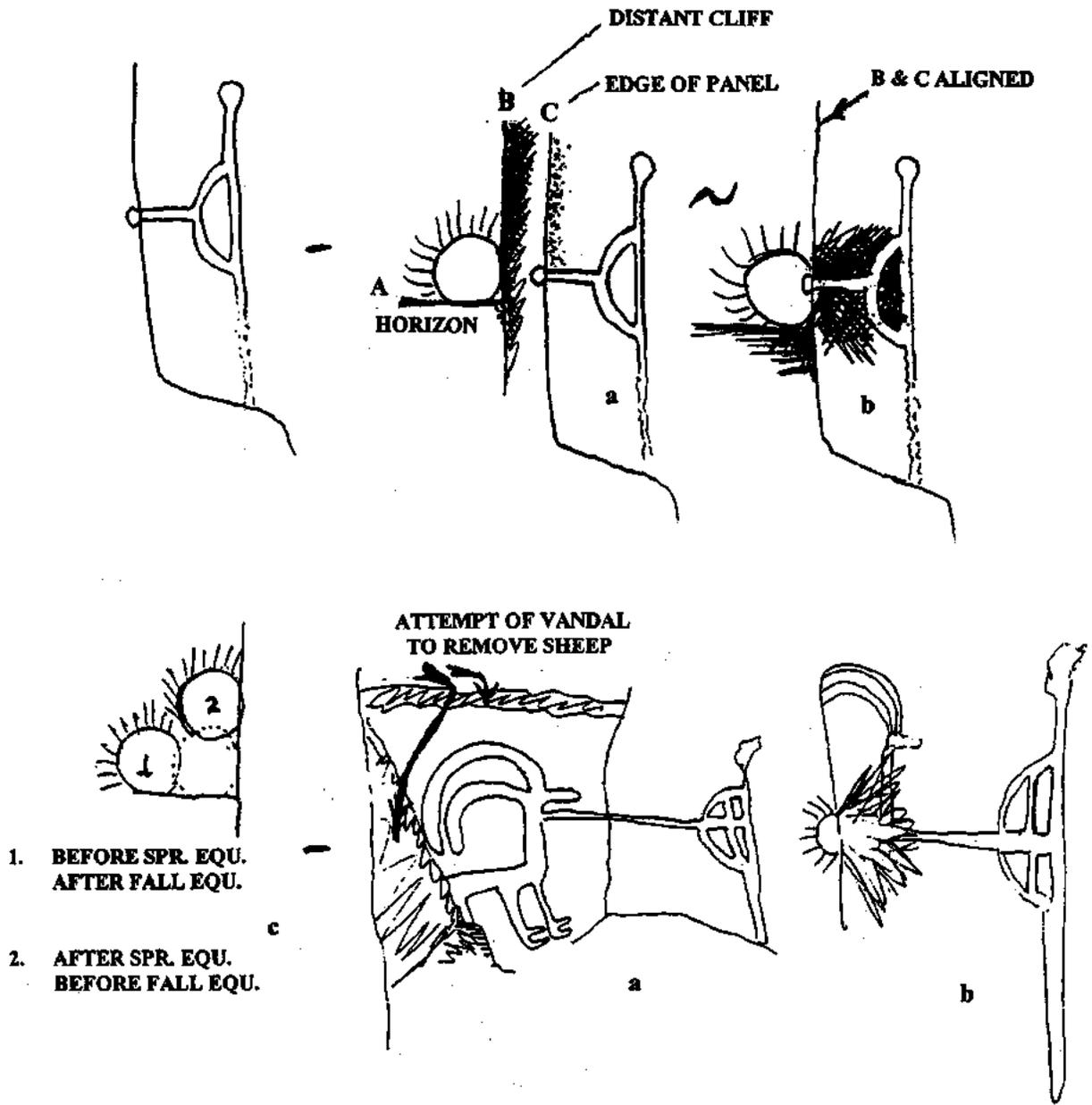


Figure 9 (top left), Figure 10 (top right and lower left) Figure 11 (lower right).

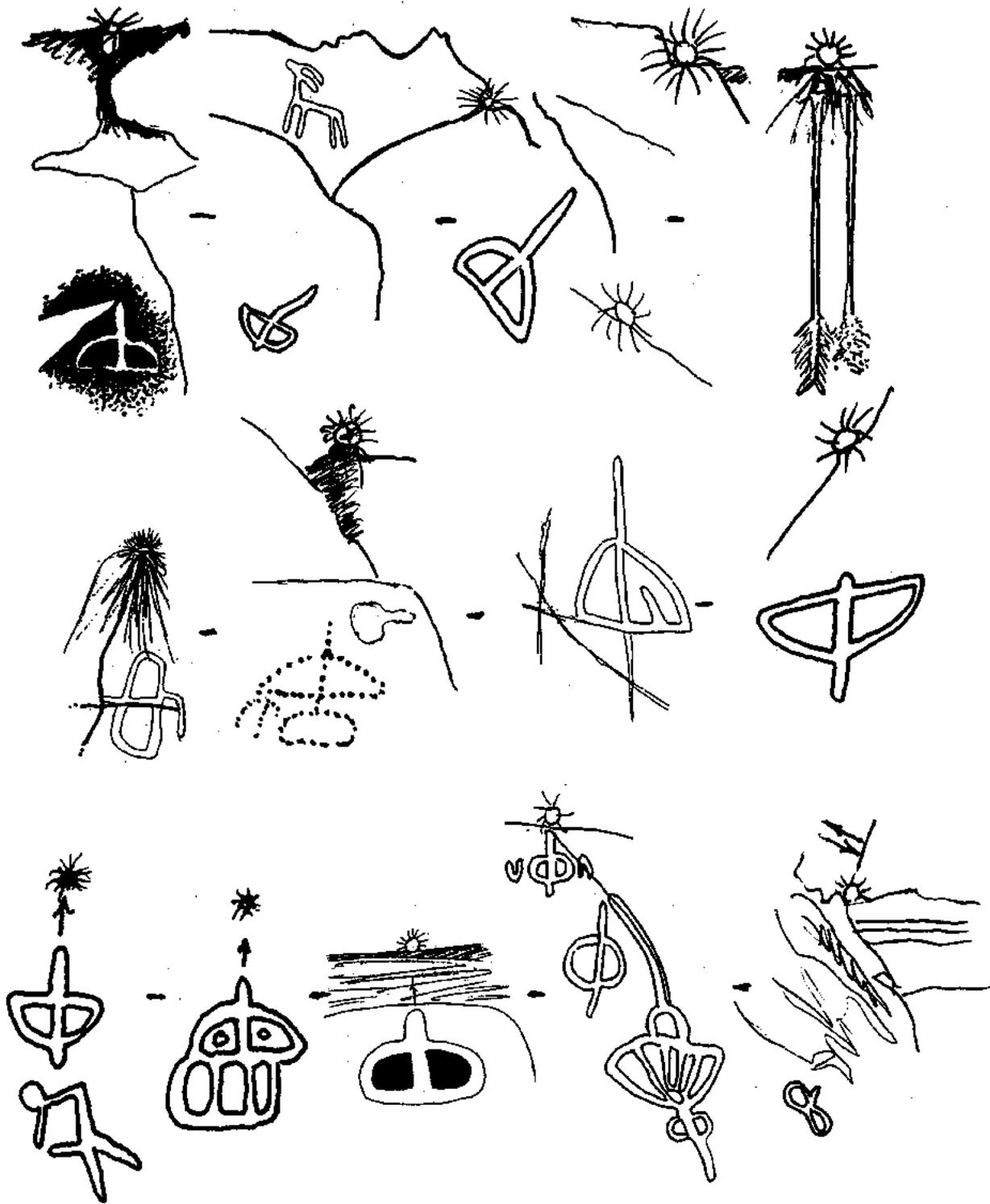


Figure 12.

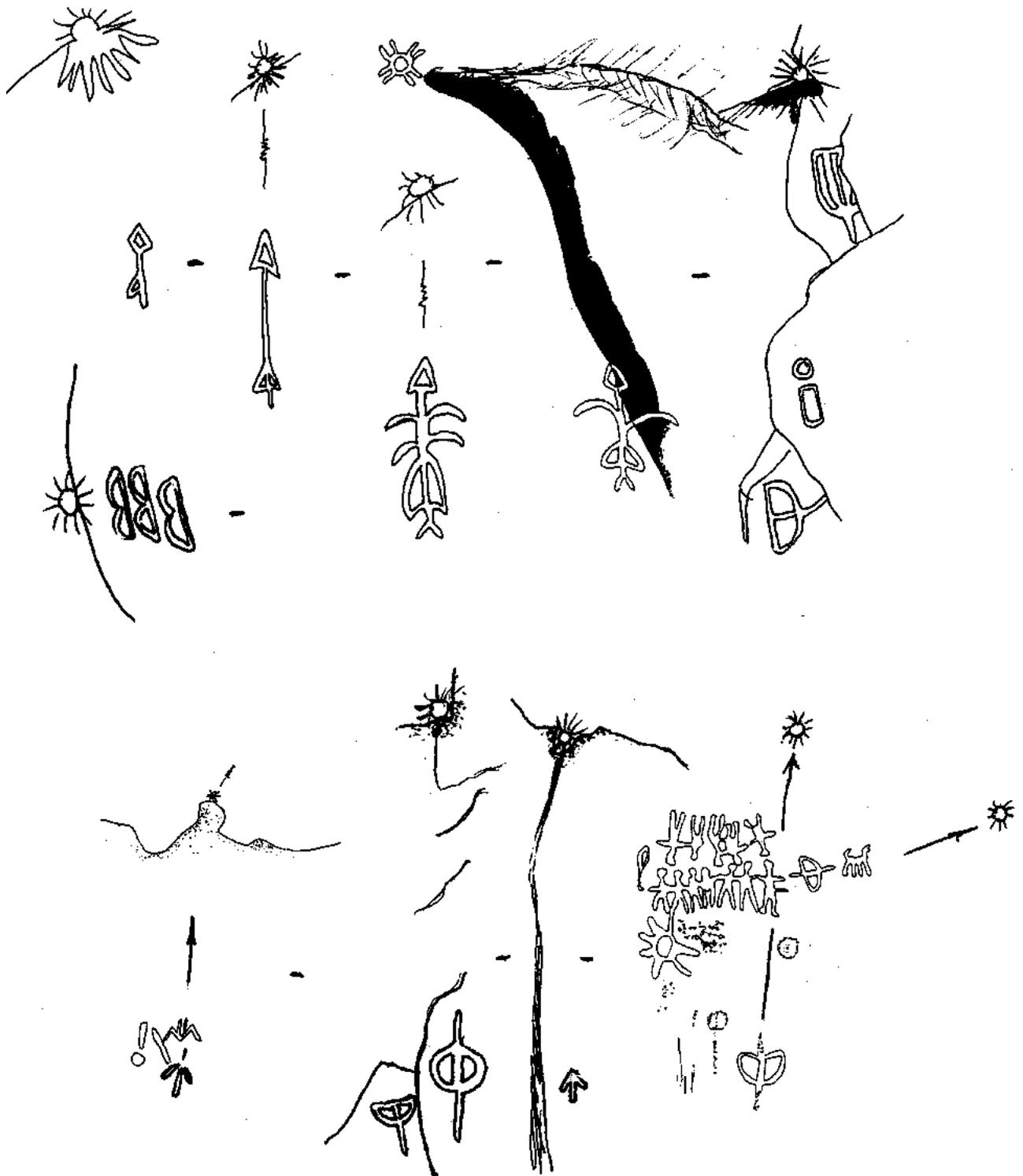


Figure 13.

