

How to Complicate a Simple Circle, Part 1

*The Man who goes beyond appearance
is a searcher after truth.*
Francis Huxley

The appearance of a circle, as the cover of a book or the contents of the box Pandora opened, holds untold things that only the real seeker of truth (those who are to ever overcome all of their obstacles) will ever stand face to face with. Anyone who is less concerned with finding what the truth really is, not knowing what reality is really like, will have to deal with life without knowing that hope still remains in what was really a little seemingly empty circular jar instead of a box with square corners (Ashton and Whyte 2001:39).

An axiom in the world of journalism states that there is no truth, which is why they call them stories. This also applies to those who are not that concerned with what really hides behind a symbol. That is not just its meaning, but also its intent. It is also its source, what areas of symbolism it has been and can be applied to or extended into and what part, beyond these, it plays in the plot of the bigger picture of which it is just a very small part.

Circles may really seem like another one of those odd subjects to tackle, mainly because one may wonder how much can really be said about something that seems so "insignificant", so "nothing." The original paper was cut into two parts because it was becoming too involved. *Part 1* looks at just a few introductory remarks and then gets into circles in rock art. Part 1 is for those people who really do not care to know all that much. Those, I believe, who at rock art conferences prefer the off-the-cuff papers and pretty pictures to entertain them so they don't have to think that hard, as opposed to

those who don't mind if papers are read which are able to deliver more to really think about.

Part 2 is the best part; it is the purpose of this exercise. It is a meatier treatise, considering more of what really makes a circle a circle. Part 2 is for those students who really want to know more about what something is, what it has the potential to be, and what, symbolically speaking, makes it tick. That section will be submitted to another volume.

Circles in rock art are hardly ever noticed. When they are, they seldom evoke more than just a little response. That's unfortunate because of all that something as seemingly simple as a circle can hold, hide and then reveal if we but take the time to look at it a bit closer and think about it a bit longer. Together these two parts are an in depth presentation of what is behind this seemingly insignificant but very complex form of a line without an end. Much of this may seem irrelevant to what is in rock art, but be patient. If one is to really understand the ramifications of what something is, one must understand how it was used in many different times and contexts throughout many different cultural perspectives. Because of the nature of this symbol and its less specific forms, the concepts of universal symbolism may apply here more than we may think it applies in other more specific areas of symbolism. In many cases, based on the nature of this symbol, there are innate areas that nearly all people share.

As has just been suggested, one of the problems is that there are many people who really do not want to spend much time thinking about rock art symbols. The reason seems to be the same for those who never really notice them in the first place. Too many are too impatient. Others, it seems, do not really care to know but I

believe that it is more the fact that they only want a quick and simple answer. Quick fixes in symbol analysis really are not possible because symbols and their meanings really are not that simple. What is it then that people like about rock art that is so fascinating, if they are not that curious to find out more about it, let alone all that we have the potential to find out about what it really is?

For those who really are interested and are willing to think about it, we will look at a few comparative examples that will stretch the limits of our mind. In some extreme instances these limits have been known to have driven men crazy trying to solve the problems of so innocent a looking form we simply call a circle and what lies behind it (Aczel 2000).

Let us begin by asking: "What really is a circle?" We need to spend a few minutes considering how we visualize forms and then how we verbalize them. It is more than the fact that the area of this enclosed space is the square of the radius multiplied by pi or a form of reasoning in which the conclusion is unwarrantably assumed in the hypotheses. It is more than we have ever thought about. If we can crack the roles this image plays we'll understand more than we would have ever imagined, because it permeates nearly every aspect of symbolism. What is so wonderful about circles is that they open the doors to limitless possibilities. What creates a problem with circles is that they open the doors to limitless possibilities. It is said that one is the ultimate number and yet it is only the potentiality of what manifests itself as the ultimate, the circle, the zero.

Etymologically speaking a circle is a small ring, and it evolved through the Latin form of *circus*. It ended up giving us many words, two of which are *circulate* and *circumscribe*. Even search has its origins within the form and meanings of a circle (Ayto 1990:114). Is that coming around, full circle, in our search for meaning? That alone provides us with a clue that any ideas behind what we assume a circle can mean

could have been extended far beyond any real meaning of some, if not all, of its contexts. We must always remember that like any circle, any word only meant what its user meant it to mean, whatever that meaning was. Consider Humpty Dumpty as a glyph maker. He said this about understanding, "When I use a word, (as a symbol) it means just what I want it to mean-no more and no less" (Lewis Carol from *Through the Looking-Glass*). That is true in too many places in our lives. It is so true; we are too often people of exclusives. Most people never allow for other possible meanings!

Before we can really determine what a circle is, we must first attempt to determine what a circle is not. If one can determine what a circle is not, then what is left over has the potential to suggest what all of the other possibilities are. When a circle isn't a circle, what else can it be or what can it imply? When we know more about what a circle can be, we will not necessarily know if this knowledge can be applied to all circles in all contexts. One reason for this is that an object's meaning is not always derived from the source of the object. That is the principle of extending concepts into another area of application and it is referred to as *concept extension*.

One of the problems we have with circles is that a circle is not a form that is readily identifiable to what could be considered as its source. That is like most abstracted images, which do not often lend themselves to being easily traced back to a source - the beginning of their abstracted state. In reality there are many natural forms that have a circular aspect associated with them that could all be equally represented as a circle. There are also many circles, circular things or concepts that may not really be a circle as such, and so may not be represented as a circle. I will mention a variety in a moment. This leads us to the next problem.

The problem is that this form, more often than not, probably deals with something from the conceptual realm of symbolism (metaphysical)

rather than something that is naturalistic and from our mundane, physical world. Remember that everything, whether natural or abstract is representational. There really is no such thing as a representational element or style, because every element represents something, if nothing more than the idea behind it that was in the mind of its author.

The world of material things as a conceptual realm is the organic level of symbolism, instead of the superorganic level of the subjective, more spiritual, Otherworld. What gets confusing is when something from the real world comes to represent a concept that is metaphysical. In such cases, it is not always "naturalistic" in its form any longer, but is also not "naturalistic" in its meaning and intent either. If that is the case then, what other forms can be considered to be a circle?

Let us begin this discussion with another aspect of symbolism and the problems of interpretation with what may seem to be a ridiculous extreme to set the stage of our thinking. We may wonder about an *oval* possibly being a circle (which will be continued in Part 2), but, for now, consider whether or not a *square* could ever be a circle, and then what about a *triangle*? The answer to those two seeming absurdities should be obvious. We would immediately say no. They, we have to believe, are beyond the limits of their variations. But wait a minute as we consider this. First, in symbolism we are dealing with the human mind with its wonderful capacity for imagination and eccentricity.

We must learn to expect the unexpected, because anything is possible. I have said before that everything, in one aspect or another, seems an exception to one or another of our supposed laws. That is especially true with bipolar symbolism, when one symbol and its concepts are being used to represent its opposite extreme in special, often ritualized settings (Reichard 1963:7-8,183, Wilson 1971:205). Opposite means a 180 degree turn in the other direction where right becomes left, male becomes female,

white becomes black, a virgin is a whore and reality is something else that is just not real.

Let us consider halos as an example of the problems of shapes. Halos going around the heads of immortals, enlightened beings or saints are always circles, are they not? Is it a good assumption that a thing going around something is a form of a circle? And squares are one thing we would not assume would go around anything? Our language is not physically able to deal with many aspects of reality because of the biases it has been given over time. An example of this is that we do not say they go square ahead, and, after all, a circle goes around things, and a circle going around a head is always a halo, right? What then do we do with *squares around* or that encompass heads? Remember that compasses can make perfect squares if you know how. Can squares really go around anything if there really isn't a roundness to them? Sure they can, so are there such things as square halos? Yes, there are. In those contexts, because of "ethnography", we know that they really are halos and some really are square.

In Christian iconography, a *square* halo represents a saintly person who is exemplary, but who is still living when the work is produced. A *triangular* halo represents the trinity and worn by God the Father and images of the Christ child (Fisher 1995). Two joined equilateral triangles can also be used to form the Vesica Piscis (VP), instead of circles, illustrating that circles and triangles are intimately related and that what can be done with one geometrically, as well as symbolically speaking, in some respects, can be done with the other. There is a big clue there. That form was also used in a study of Odd Eyes (Warner 2002:66-68, Figure 5, B, D).

Then, personages representing virtues are depicted with *hexagonal* halos (Fisher 1995:92-3). Why a hexagon for virtues instead of God? One interpretation of Revelations 4:5 says that God's throne is a hexagon composed of seven lamps (circles) or spirits. These spirit circles

were seen as little suns or moons encircling the seat of spiritual intelligence, through which God was believed to be approached (Hamilton 2001:30). In other religions, and even in shamanism, halos of light can surround heads as well. In one "shamanic vision", the image of one's guardian animal appeared on a Christian-like cross with its head in the center of a circle of light (Allen and Sabini 1997:220, Ovason 199:268, Williams 1992:161,164,166 and 238, Cowan 1993:38-9).

If round halos are only supposed to occur on saints, what about the halos on a set of seemingly carnal lovers sculpted in the architecture of a Catholic chapel at Maillezais, France, questioned as a set of "holy lovers" (Weir and Jerman 1999:90). It seems strange that "holy lovers" would describe a situation where she is holding his male organ. Their view seems to be based on a statement of a similar nature they made of the union of two saved souls rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, versus an "Unholy Union" (Weir and Jerman 1999:84-5). It really does not seem that we have quite literally or even figuratively grasped the full significance of the symbolism of these older images. While this was being written, I overheard a grandmother ask her newborn grandson who just turned a smile into a frowny face, "What's the matter," she said, "do you have a square bubble"? Bubbles are usually round, I believe, unless they are the ones that cause real discomfort, and then logic says they must be square.

Geometrically, a circle is the only shape that does not have any divisions and is often (mathematically speaking), but not always (symbolically speaking) alike at all of its points. Because of that, it can literally mean anything. A few meanings are perfection, wholeness, completion and completeness. It is also a symbol of strength, protection and unity as in the Arthurian Round Table and the modern Olympic Rings (Ryan 2002:151). The circle (female/womb) over a cross (male/phallic) in ancient Egypt was the symbol of unity, like interlocking yin with yang within a circle. In ad-

dition, each male contains a smaller circle of the opposite color (Tresidder 2000:135,148). The circular aspect as an analog of the womb is to bring seed (or thought) into fruit, to enclose, protect and give birth to. That is also the pin in the circular brooch, and the pin in the well that will be discussed in Part 2.

A circuit or a circumference is the outer boundary of anything, and that periphery is called a circle, even though inaccurately, as that name denotes the space contained within the circumference. So theoretically, a circle can be an oval or whatever else it encloses. Even a shade made to protect one from the hot sun or its shadow was considered as a "circle" of protection to a Navajo in non-familiar surroundings (Reichard 1963:536, Ryan 2002:151).

What is fascinating is that a shadow's form, except in one case (which is not a circle casting the shadow) is never a circle. Its circular aspect was only a mental construct created beyond whatever irregularity the shadow happened to take. Its form or shape was not even an important consideration. It was the shadow's concept and affinity that had a referent to the associated concept of a circle and the protection it offered as a circle. Another interesting thought is that the frame of that shade was either a square or a rectangle. Wrap that around your imagination and see if any other irregularities can become a circle in the minds of its maker and/or an observer, just as well as or even more so than any real circular elements. I believe the answer is that it would seem to be so.

Ancient Irish kings made an inaugural sunwise circuit of a spring and a stone near Uisneach known as the navel of Ireland; both symbolized the center. Remember that any center has boundaries that are roughly equidistant, suggesting a somewhat circular form. To the Irish, and I am half Irish, Ireland was viewed as the center of the world. Like any other world view, they placed themselves within the center of the view of the horizon around them, thus it could

be said that that location was roundly in the center rather than squarely in the center. We need to remember, however, that a square also has its center. The Irish Isle symbolized the circle to its people just as much as the circle and hoop symbolized the nation to Black Elk. His people were only one hoop of many other hoops which made up a larger circle (Campbell 1974:187).

That spring was also the vagina of the land, the center of all creation. The pillar was phalloid. This sunwise *circum-ambulation* takes the power from that which is circumambulated and vice versa, and in that, there was connubiality i.e., a marriage between the king and the land. *Circumvoluting* the land bonded him to it as a wedding ring binds the bride and groom. This idea occurs all around the ancient world (Brenneman and Brenneman 1995:32-4, Devereux 1994:117, Ryan 2002:85,189). Besides defining and sanctifying a sacred place, circumambulation places the participant "in tune with cosmic rhythms and symbolizes a gradual progression toward self-knowledge and enlightenment" (Tresidder 2000:149). In that sense the process (or journey) of making a circle or anything else is just as important as the finished destination or object, if not more so.

Another example of this to the Navajo is *circumlocution*. On the reservation, I learned if I wanted to get information out of someone, I needed to make him or her feel more important than what it was I wanted to know. In so doing, I needed to spend some time "beating around the bush" so to speak, before I could even think to begin asking anything about what I wanted to know. That "beating-around" aspect of the bush may seem unnecessary, but it is a ceremonial action of literally and metaphysically creating a circle. Many of those obscure conversations, in the beating around the bush, may have seemed *obtuse*.

How does one know when it is the right time to begin asking their questions? That depends on when that part of the conversation ends so the

other part can then begin. It is when the conversation comes full circle and has (now note this) ceremoniously spiraled inwards sufficiently to create that sacred format of providing a path of protection for the one being questioned, as well as of the one asking the questions. In other words, that creates a situation where the withdrawal of that information can then be done in an **arena** of protection and safety for both parties.

Without laying the groundwork for that process which creates a spiral ending at its destination, it is something like Zeno's paradox of never being able to cross a room if you only go half way each time. That is, in a way, closing the circle, entrapping one's self within the subatomic level of its logicalness that becomes a circle of frustration for those whom that circle passes over, spinning around their heads without any understanding or enlightenment. That is the level of part two of this set of papers.

This is similar to the circumambulation just mentioned a moment ago. How is it possible to do that? It is possible because the groundwork was laid and something was given for something to be received. In that way, one also binds one's self to another (a ceremonial bonding), in establishing a circle of trust, a lower level of ceremonial obligation. In addition, what was given comes back multiplied, as several ears full of kernels rather than just as the one kernel that was given or planted. That is an ancient law of universal order and harmony – giving a thing the shape (a circle) of order and harmony that smoothes it out. That was demonstrated to me once by a Navajo in rubbing the palm of the upper hand around with the palm of the lower hand in a circular motion, indicating that something was smooth. Remember that round bubbles are smoother and thus flow easier than square ones. The idea behind this is that to make something round out of a solid or plastic material it had to be smoothed, and that was accomplished by rubbing it (we call it sanding) in a circular motion, with an

abrasive if it was rock, or a wet hand if it was clay.

Is a circle a thing without any corners, like "Casa Rinconada", the house (casa/house does not particularly mean Kiva) without corners in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico? A circle has no corners for bad things to be caught in or places to hide secrets and lies metaphorically speaking like people's relationships that are created without that sacred enclosing spiral.

This act can also be called a part of the law of compensation. Along with that is the law of increase, ever enlarging that circle. What is given comes back around in the colloquialism of what goes **around** comes **around** to complete the circle or cycle. It is also casting your bread upon the waters. When it comes full cycle, it has been increased and continues to increase with each fruitful wave, spiraling in from the outer edges of that seemingly empty circle. Compare that with the continued spiraling retaliations that plague the relations between Israel and Palestine. It works both ways. That is a part of the power of a circle and the power of creating a circle either properly or improperly.

Circles are heads (Figures 1A, 1B), thus circles are also parts of human anatomy. Even though in sacred geometry and mysticism, squares and cubes are male and father, circles and spheres are female and mother. To the Navajo, heads can represent the sex of an individual. In Navajo symbolism, male heads are round and female heads are square. However, that's not that cut and dried. Sometimes they are reversed. Without knowing the situations for exceptions and what may fall into what could be termed a form of bipolar symbolism, how is one to know what one is looking at? In such cases, an observer is ignorant of the real identity and its significance of the sex and the meanings in situations of reversed symbolism (Reichard 1963:7, 8, 183). Is that a form of creating a hermaphrodite, often symbolic of the creative forces of nature (Campbell 1949:152-4, 16971)? Many heads in the Classic Vernal

Style are either very square or round. What is the reason for those differences?

The combining of both male and female into one form or giving the form of one to the other, is, it seems, a part of squaring the circle, of uniting opposites, the forms of the mind and body (Leon 2000:60, 62-3, 75). Could that also be an example of giving an object or a being the power of its opposite? There is power in the fusing of opposites (Mabille 1998:53). That is also the power seen by many cultures in an androgynous or hermaphroditic form, which in many cultures is an expression of a powerful being, deity or creator/createx: Maat in Egypt was later given the form of a hermaphrodite (Classen 1993:22, 28, 190, Shlain 1998:58) and Kuan Yin, the Chinese Goddess of Mercy, was transformed from a god into a goddess and Hatshepsut, the queen of Egypt, took on the male role of Pharaoh and even gave Osiris feminine traits (Shlain 1998:200).

Circles are eyes (Figure 2) (In part two we will consider those on the sides of an animal's body), but how many eyes have been given circular forms to give them that greater power of sight, like that with the power of shells to see far off? If not far off, do they allow one to just see more or better?

Circles are mouths (Figure 3). Does speaking with a circular mouth make those words all that more powerful/mystical or does it simply represent the power of what is spoken, or are they just mouths? The sound ts'os in Navajo is not a word, but the name of a sucking sound made during a kiss. Poking your lips out (forming a circle with them) and saying ts'os is in a sense the kissing of not (actually) kissing. It is also the form of the mouth in forming the sound of the creative force, the breath of God, the sound of OM. The mouth is also a vulviform (Weir and Jerman 1999:112, Warner 2002). To the Aztec, a figure of Tezcatlipoca with an open round mouth signified the wind (Campbell 1974:154).

Circles are breasts (Figure 4). Some of the symbolism of the circle overlaps those of breasts. There is nourishment both physical and



Figure 1A. Circles as heads.

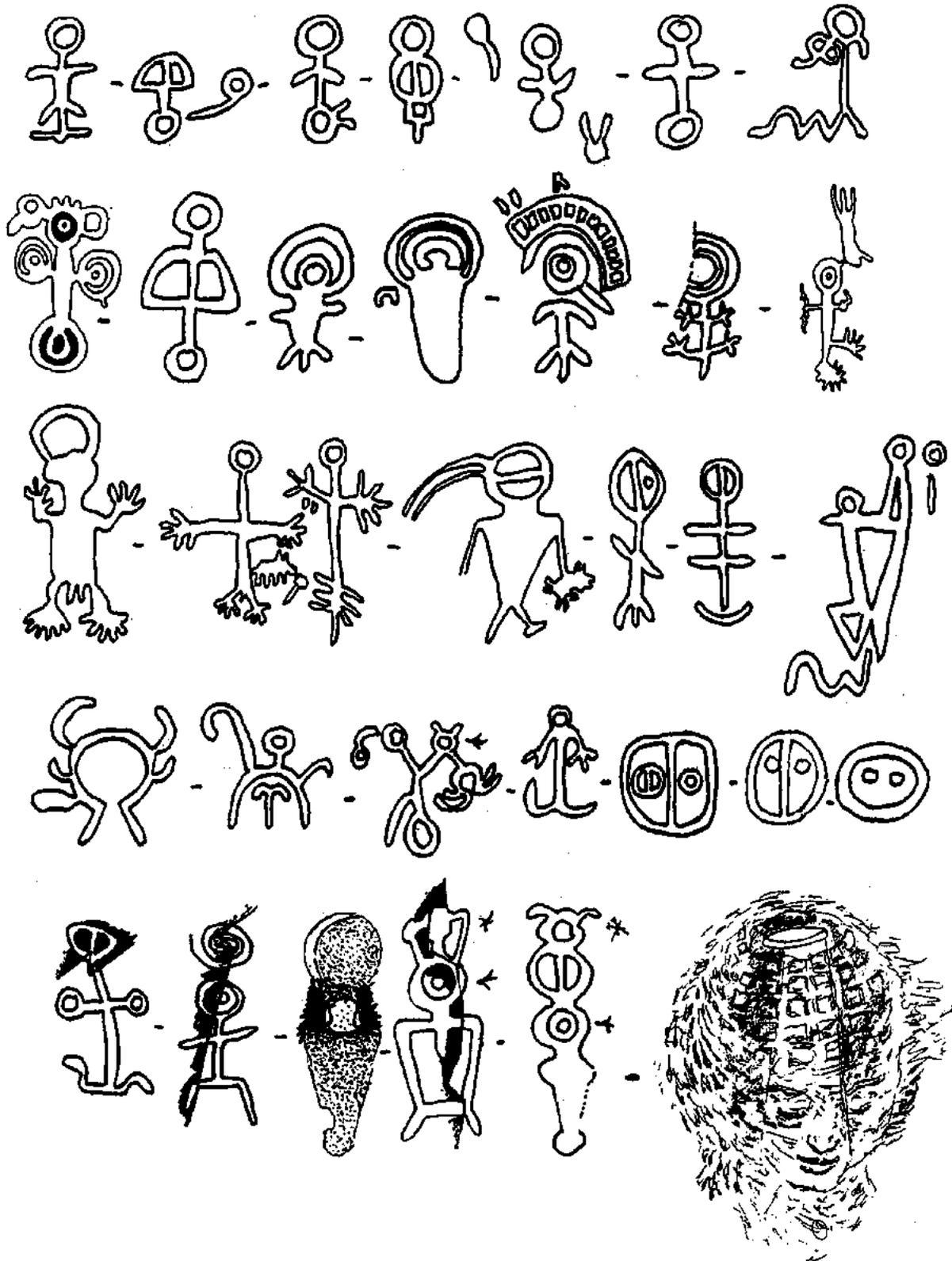


Figure 1B. Circles as heads.



Figure 2. Circle as eyes.

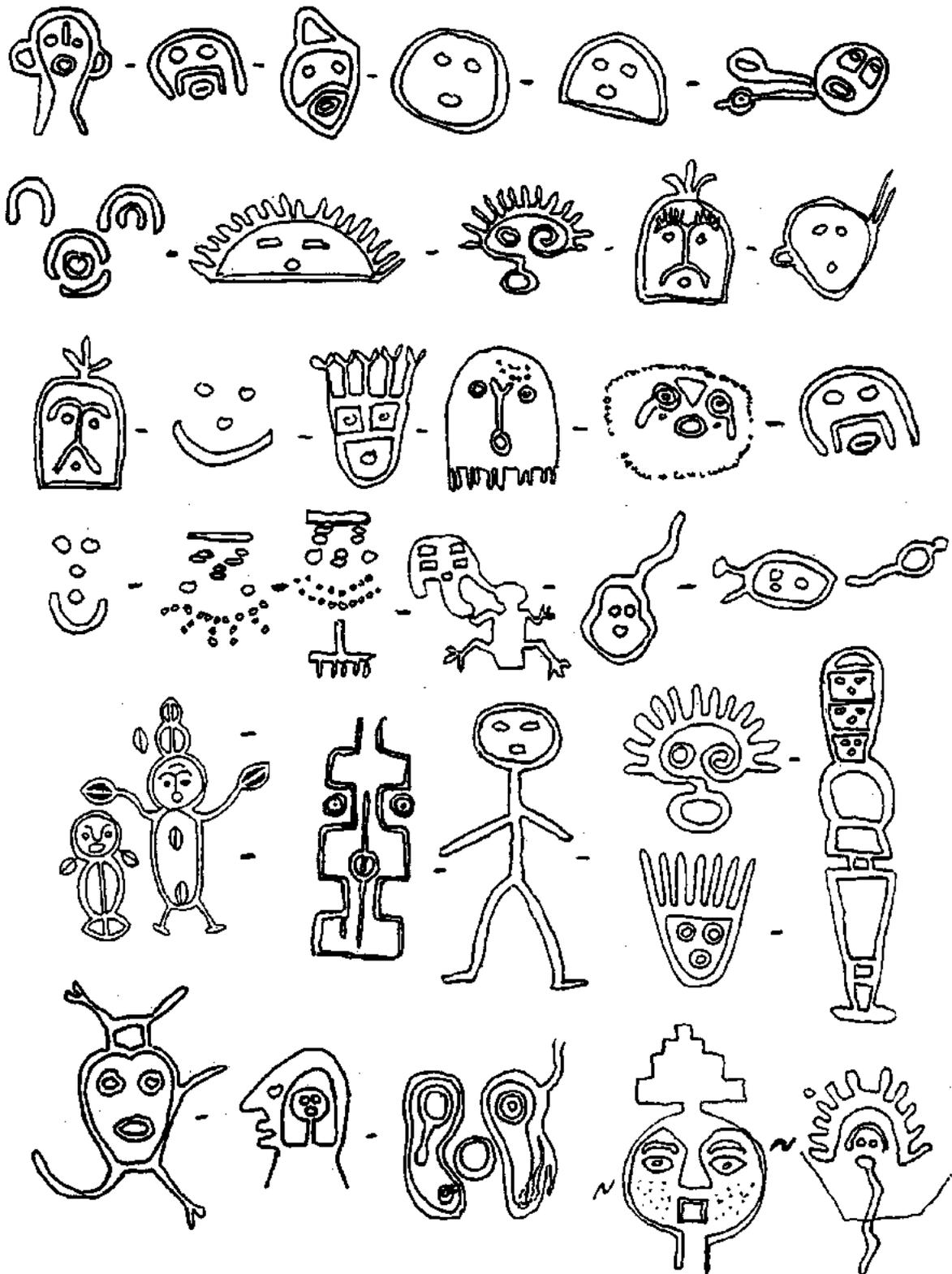


Figure 3. Circles as mouths.

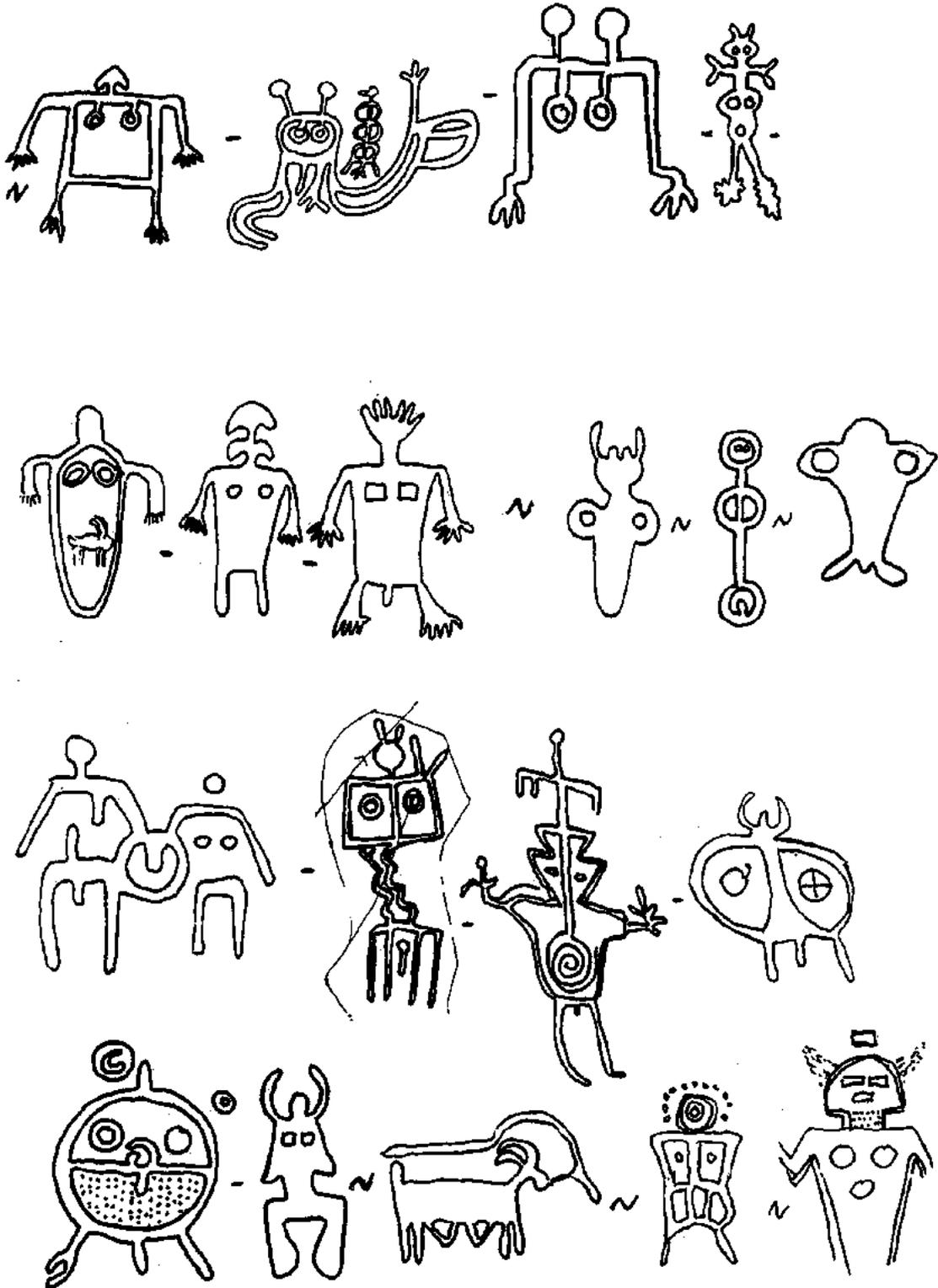


Figure 4. Circles as breasts.

spiritual from the breast if the feminine is a symbol of wisdom (Sophia) (Camphousen 1999:216, Neuman 1974: facing p.19, Leon 2000:27, 33-34, 37-38, 55, 58, 72, 82). Breasts and the VP are also the symbol of magnesia, the memory bank of nature, the white light of stars transmitted into wisdom, nurturing the soul. What the infant drinks from that breast is the unspoken mystery like a circle we face in life (Ovason 1999:139-42, 181, 531). It provides us with what is necessary to face the evils of Pandora opening up or breaking the circle.

Circles are navels (Figure 5). Belly buttons are naturally circular so they may not seem to have the power of the circle added to that part of the body, but the navel is a center of Great Power in and of itself. Navels are also an analog, a synonym of vulviforms (Figure 5). Remember that the navel of Ireland, previously mentioned, was also a symbol of the vagina of the land. As the center of the body, navels are also the center of the earth and the universe (Ryan 2002:188-9). The Oracle of Delphi was one of many navel stones. Remember, that if you put your arms and legs out, like Leonardo's man in a circle, the navel is basically at the center, opening the door as a portal to another world of mysticism. If the lower of two joined triangles forms the pubic mound, then the navel occurs at the top of the upper triangle (a bipolar aspect). The center of Siberian ground paintings are also the navel or umbilicus through which the shaman is believed to pass in a trance state, as we do at death (Ryan 2002:188-9).

Circles are hands (Figure 6A). When do hands symbolically become circles and when are hands holding a circular object, and in some cases is there a difference? Look at what happens to the circles in the palms of the hands of two figures with the light and shadow in 6B. With the hands of a Buddhist image of Prajna-paramita joined in a gesture known as "link of increase", she has her two middle fingers forming a circle called "opening in a link". The two

middle fingers are brought together to symbolize the coincidence of opposites. To understand this or to think of it is paradoxically, according to Campbell, not to think of it. The reason for that is that all thought is conditioned in *maya* or concepts and their labels, where the reference of this is beyond labels and even beyond 'being' and 'non being' (Campbell 1949:215, 220).

Circles are wombs or groins (Figure 7). Wombs have already been discussed, but the potential of renewal and transition/transmission is always underlying both forms. The intent of any circle is giving birth when its intention comes into fruition. If you drop the center point of the circle of Leonardo's man in a circle (the navel) down to the groin, it gives you the center of the (male) square that sits inside the circle. That is just the beginning of the mysticism that I just mentioned. Try creating four Fibonacci spirals with straight lines out from around that point.

Circles are feet (Figure 8A). Why do the examples in Figure 8B have such large circular feet? Which of the many various and different meanings of circles fits best here. It would seem that if the shoe (circle) fits, wear it. Do the exaggerated legs or feet of the first examples in the bottom row of 8B, without circles, represent the same basic idea as all of the others on this page? That was a trick question. It is doubtful if all of the others really mean the exact same thing, but how can we be sure?

To the Navajo the symbol of creating a circle in a form that can be held, such as a hoop or a wheel, is also a symbol of movement from one place to another. Long before their adoption of wagons, the hoop was used as a portal or a vehicle into another realm. It was a physical means to bring a desired result into manifestation. It represented the act of going from one state of being into that of another. The hoop symbolized leaving behind that which was no

longer desired and movement towards or entering into the realm of that which was desired.

That is no different from a baptismal font in one set of religious systems or a coffin among oth

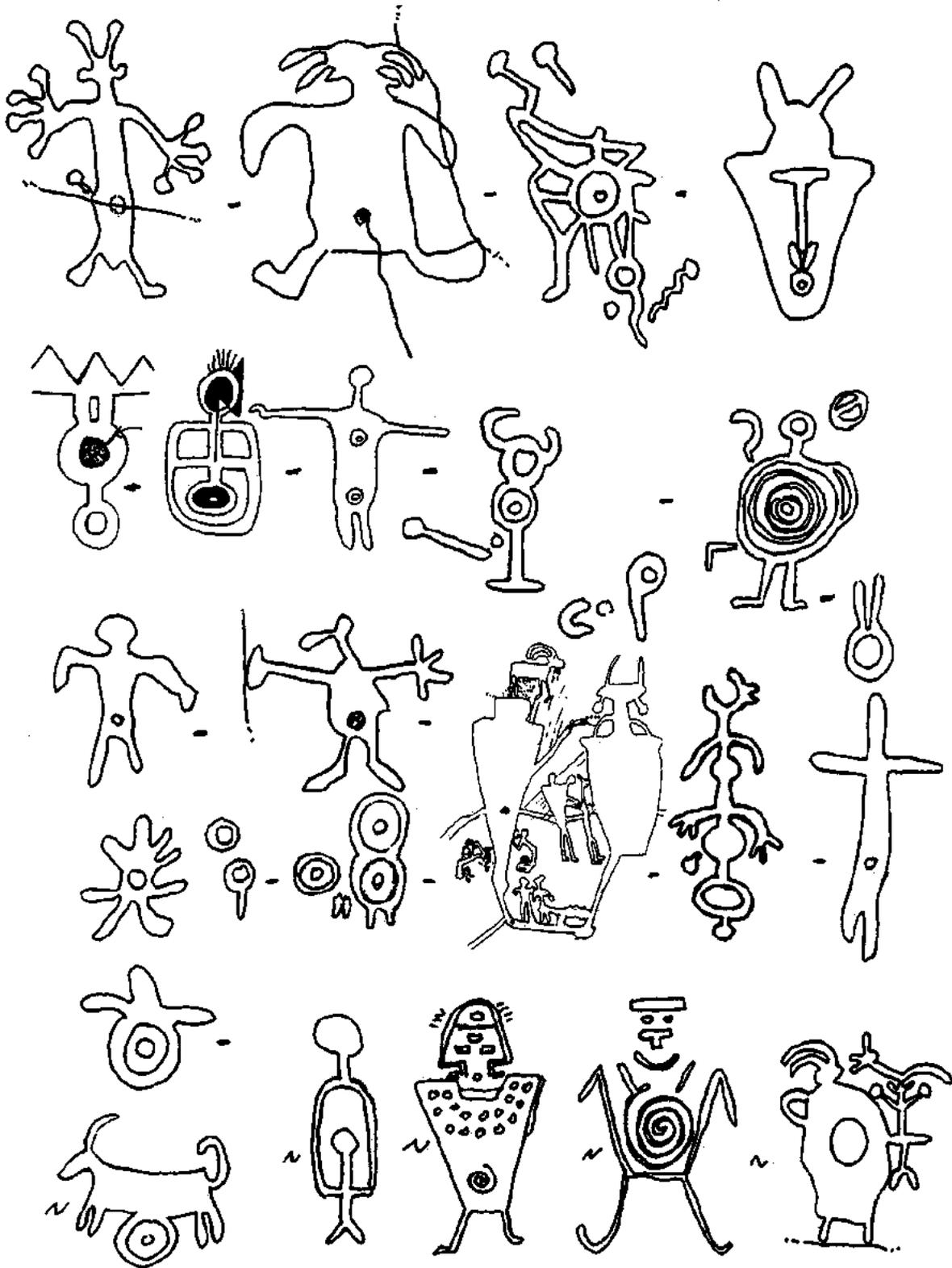


Figure 5. Circles as navels.

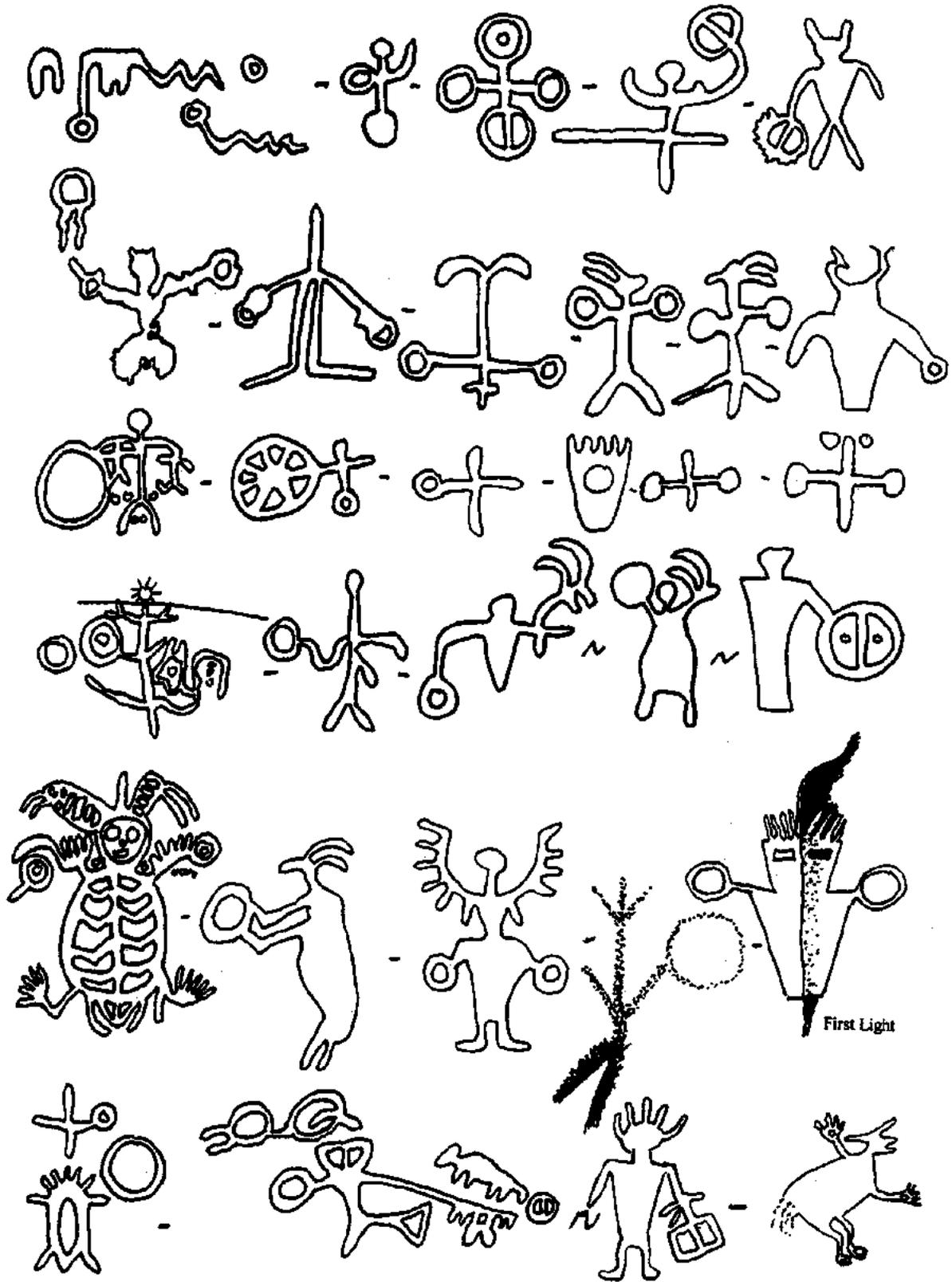


Figure 6A. Circles as hands.

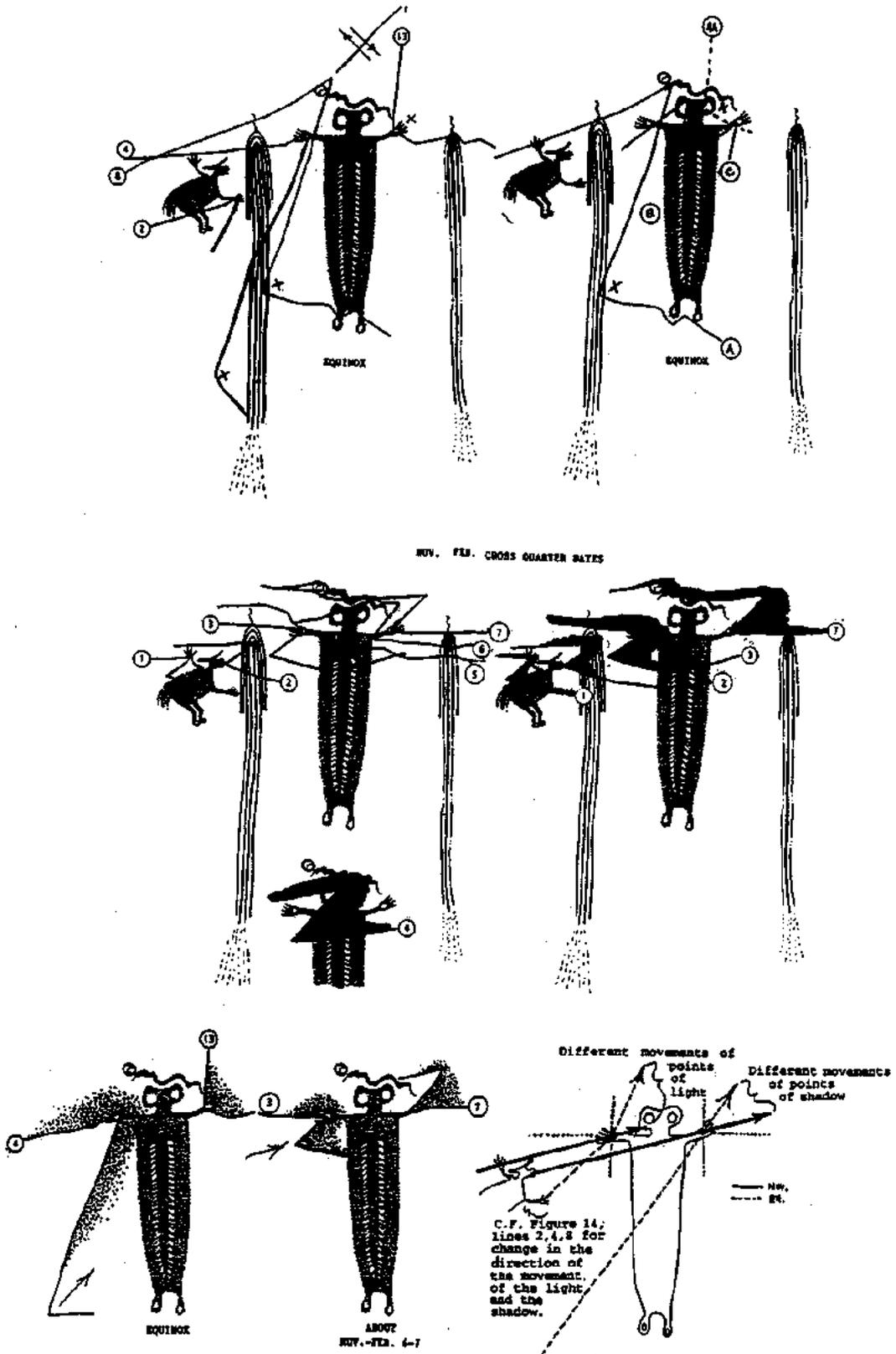


Figure 6B. Circles as hands.



Figure 7. Circles as wombs and vulvae.

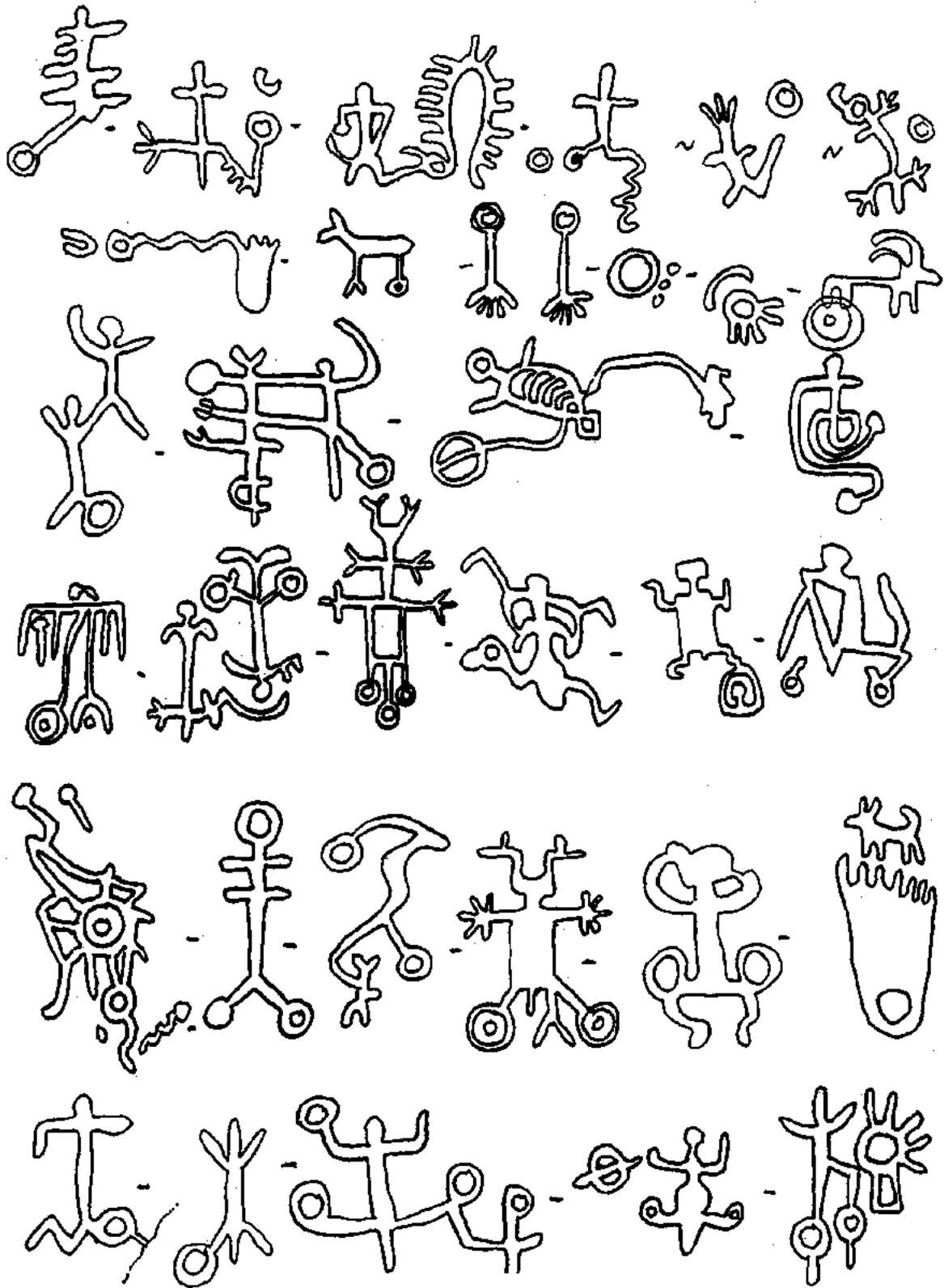


Figure 8A. Circles as feet.

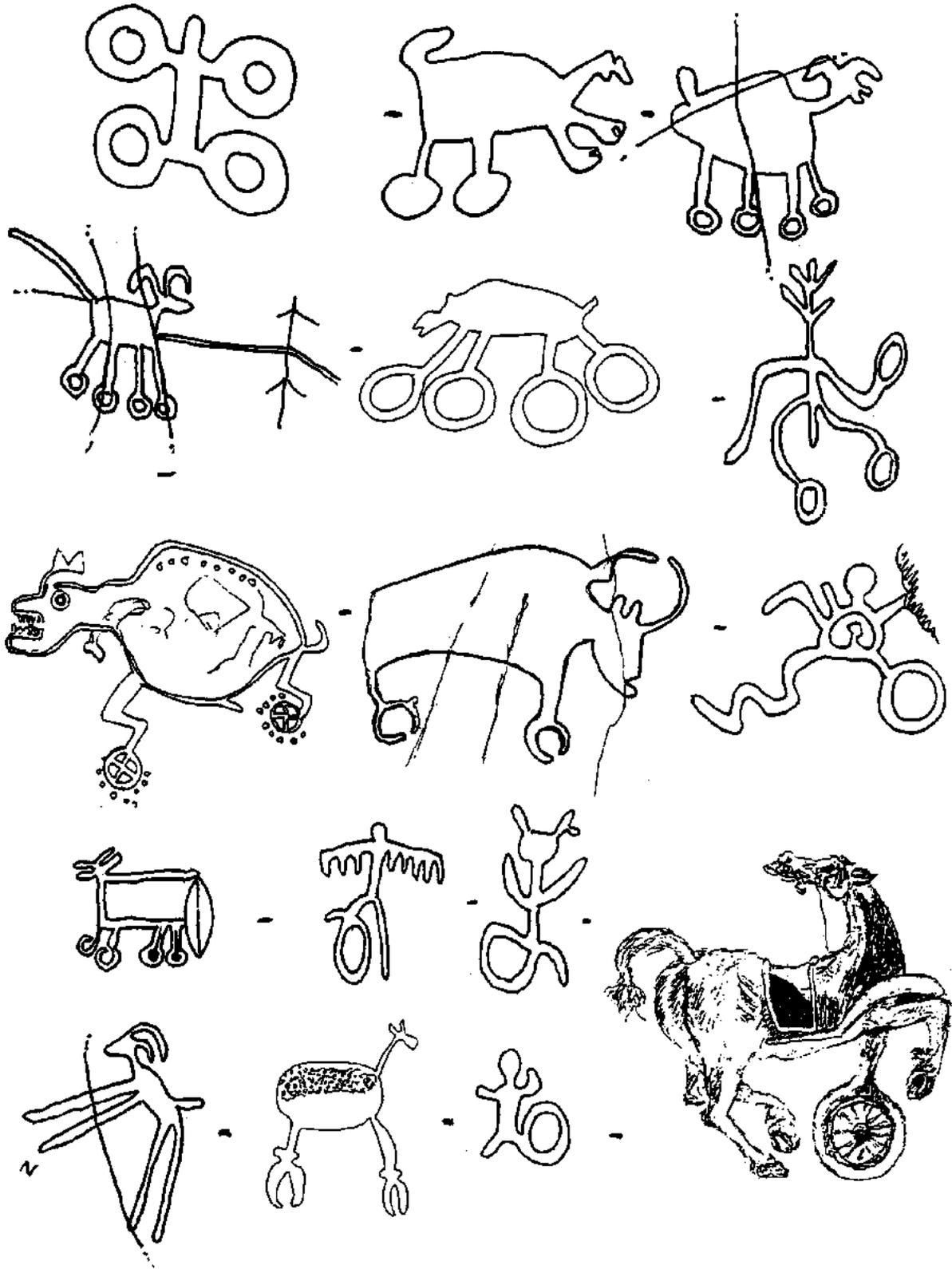


Figure 8B. Circles as feet.

ers as an act of transition in an initiation process. This rough analogy illustrates that we do not really need to know what a symbol actually means to gain a better understanding of it or just its intent or purpose. Knowing just that, we can get a feel for the rest.

In line with the meaning at the root of the term for wheel as being movement or transition, is the transporting of an individual through or by means of what that wheel was transforming him, by its literal or metaphoric movement or meaning through or into. Is that a part of this circular feet concept? So, are these animals transformed mystics who walk with the many different meanings of what the circle can provide in a search for the unknown? Are the human forms with large circular feet on their way to the same destination but without more obvious transformation or transitional aspects? Look at the symbolism in Dali's horse with one leg as a wheel in Figure 8B. Note that it is not comprehensible unless you know the time frame and the setting in which it was created. Note the running board. The head as a skull, holding a phone in its teeth and its looking backwards. The horseshoes are also backwards. Would the term "buggy whip technology or mentality", used for outdated business techniques, fit that picture as a caption?

Circles can also be the whole body (Figure 9). If a circle is a god, where he lives or the portal through which he can be approached, what is that form when found within or as a man's or a woman's body form? What is a man or a woman and what is a god? Neither a man nor a woman can be a complete circle without the other. That is not becoming an androgyne, except symbolically united as in the two become one flesh. Some believe that the One (others believe that it's a 2 or a 3) is the potential of the other (1, 2 or 3). Some believe that these are extensions of the others, that man/woman, or at least their soul, is the circle that circumscribes

God, and others that God is the circle circumscribing man and woman.

Silesius stated, "God is my center when I close him in, my circumference when I melt in him" (Campbell 1949:64). Clement of Alexandria said that the Word of God (the circle, the 'word' formed by the circle, the 'mouth' of a greater circle, God') (a three ringed concentric circle) became man that we may learn from a man how we might become (as) God; a more multiple-ringed circle. That is also the view of a more perfect circle like the polygon of Nicholas of Cusa. Is Christ then the circle or an extension of the circle or the portal through which God can be approached? He is represented by the joining of the two circles to create the oval in a VP as both the mouth and the womb.

In Figure 10, there are two similar Symbolic Solar Interactions on two different round-bodied images. They may be possible Headless Figures (Warner 2003). Here they could be considered as round bodied or shield figures. The lower one is likely a sun-like figure with a shaft of light aligning with his possible phallus. If that's the case and the outlined cross represents the Hero Twin, it may relate to the Divine Connubium and/or the conception of that being (Figure 10, g).

The upper shield-like figure's phallus also aligns with a spiral that is associated by another angle of light with two twin-like figures (Figure 10a). The twin figures are also associated with a Bisected-Circle sun-like symbol (Figure 10, b). In Figure 10, c, the "twins" are also associated with the spiral, symbolically associated with the phallus of the shield-like figure. These will be considered in a treatment of the significance of the site that the upper figure comes from when those observations are complete.

In world myths, the hero is the incarnation of god and as such, the navel of the world, the metaphorical door providing the womb of rebirth. He is the umbilical point "through which

the energies of eternity break into time" (Campbell 1949:41). Christ is the hero to

Christianity. This philosophy created such terms as anthropocosmic and anthroposopic.

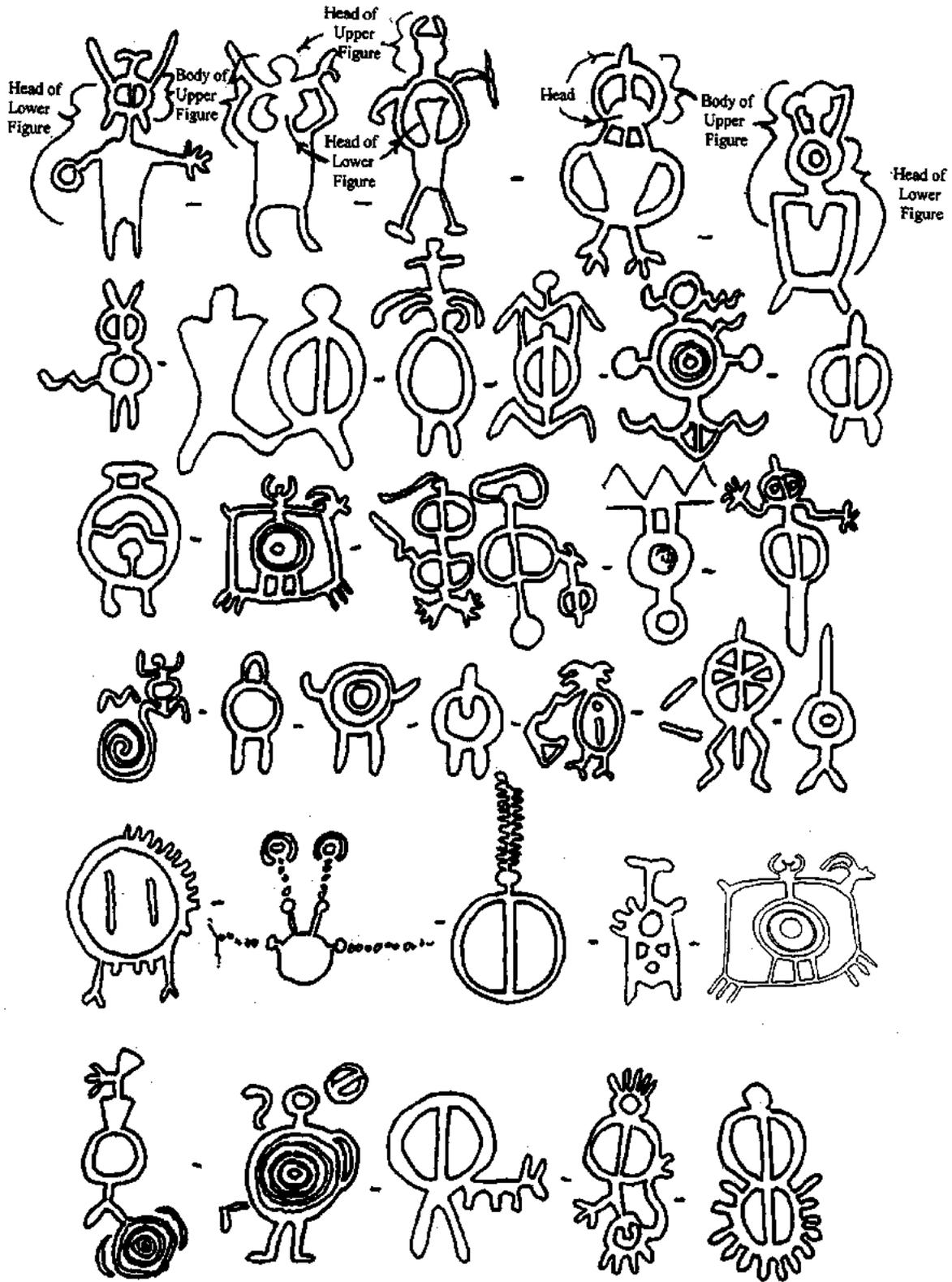


Figure 9. Circles as bodies.

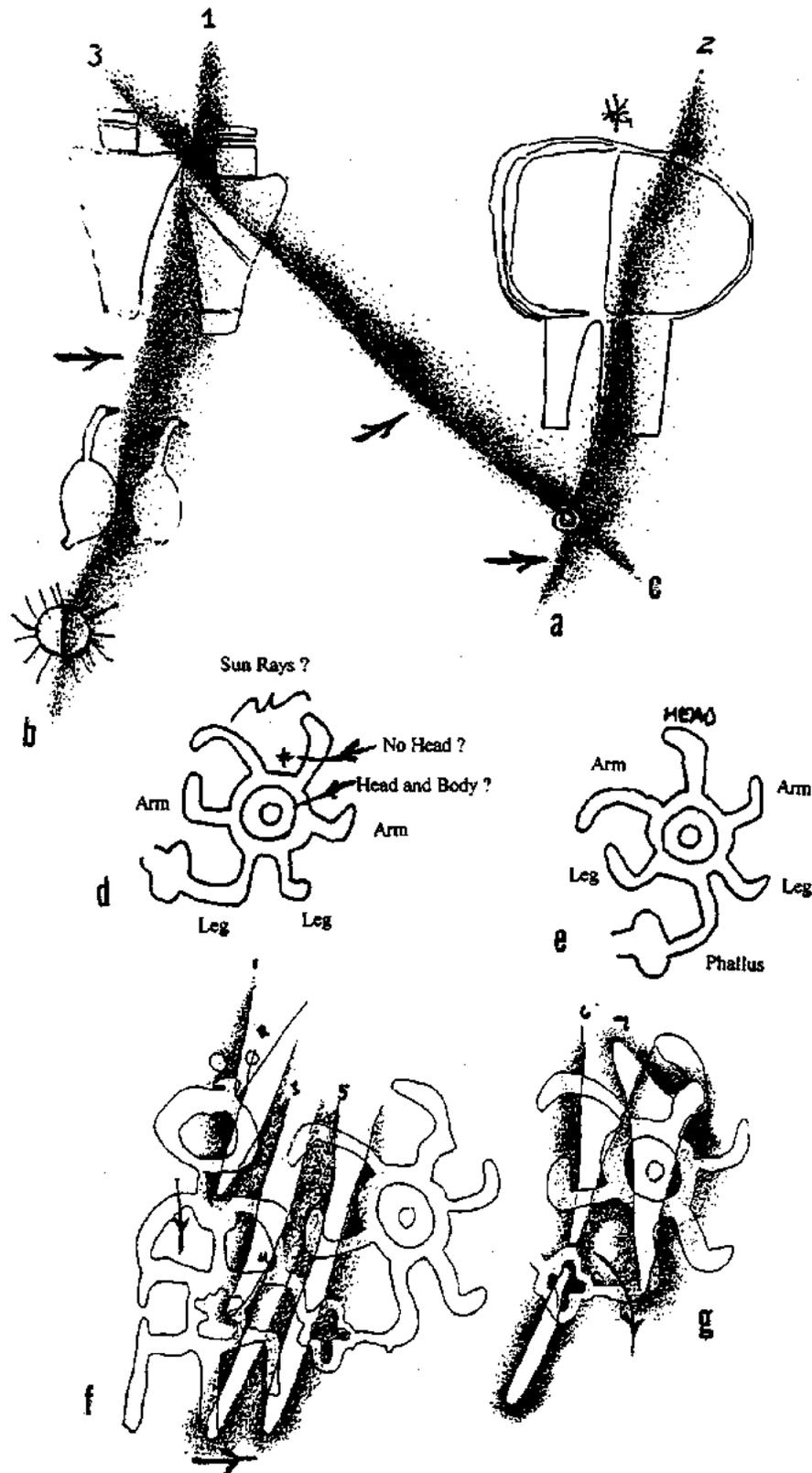


Figure 10. Circles as bodies.

The alchemical analogy is molten lead or glass, which when dropped into water forms perfect circles, because a molten mass finds its own center of gravity, like water drops in a weightless state. It is also a symbol of equilibrium, of balance. This harmony results from the analogy of contraries, as the dead center where the opposition of opposing forces being equal in strength are joined, it is where rest succeeds motion. It alludes to the fact that the infinite within it must first be concealed before it can be revealed (Leon 2000:9).

Remember that the spiritual side of man/woman and their souls are also considered as circles and that according to Blake, "Man's body is not distinct from his soul, because what is called body is a part of the soul. Energy is the only life and it comes from the body and Reason is the limit or exterior circumference of energy. Energy is the eternal law" (Mabille 1998:36).

Mabille also asks, "How can we apply our visual thought patterns, which are products of time and space to what lies beyond time and space?" (Mabille 1998:50). He then considers an analogy of one in a self-sequestered state to ponder creation through the medium of mathematics. To begin this meditative process he suggests a girl pondering the simple numerations of childhood, "Without the slightest understanding of how it contains within it a summary of all problems". The beginning point is with zero or in our case, a circle. "The separation point between the negative and positive number sequences...", is in our case with what is within or without that circle, within its frame of reference. In other words what it has been added to or subtracted from.

The next step is to move on to unity-one. That is the enclosing of that negative space and the creating of a positive presence of context. That is the pecking of an individual with his arms raised and joined above his head, but only when we consider it as a use of both positive and negative space. In doing that, "the distance crossed

is inconceivable," since the "observer, has arrived at total existence from nonexistence, and also at the end of counting, because, having reached unity, the thing is complete". From this, one can go on to number, identify and label all of the beings and things in the universe, to have the vision that raising and joining the hands seem to represent. "This infinity can be located in both positive sequences of realities and in the negative sequences of virtual images. Moreover, if after extending the exploration to its limits, she wishes to close the circle, she can multiply infinity by zero, and the result will again be one: unity. As elementary as it is grand, this assertion demonstrates how unity is the product of nonexistence times the total of all possible existences" (Mabille 1998:50). That is the unlimited potential of symbolism.

This theorem, Mabille states, "is the basis for integral calculus. All modern engineering depends upon it. Thus the most abstract metaphysical assertion is, at the same time, the most useful intellectual acquisition." Once the first principle of numeration is established, the next problem is the drama of even and uneven (like round verses non-round) which, he suggests comes to symbolize the joint action of male and female forever uniting and separating for continuous procreation (Mabille 1998:51).

There are affinities here between the search for reality and infinity through metaphysics and symbolism and in both realms the circle slips comfortably between the two like the two circles that form the VP and the portal its overlapping creates (Figure 11, last two examples in the top row).

There are many overlapping circles in rock art, but these last two are more intriguing and seem to contain at least some of this symbolism. Remember that to mystics, unity was the oval formed by the VP, which is not $1+1=2$, but $1+1=1$, a divine one-ness, the silver salmon (ichthos) of knowledge and one phase in the union of the ovum or pro-nucleus with the en-

larged head of a sperm cell after losing its tail to produce a zygote.

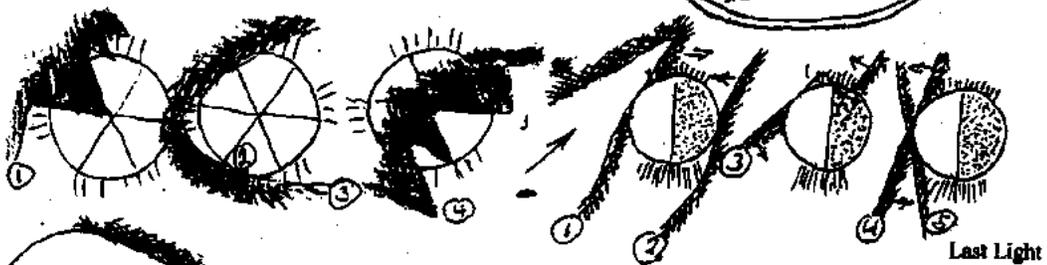
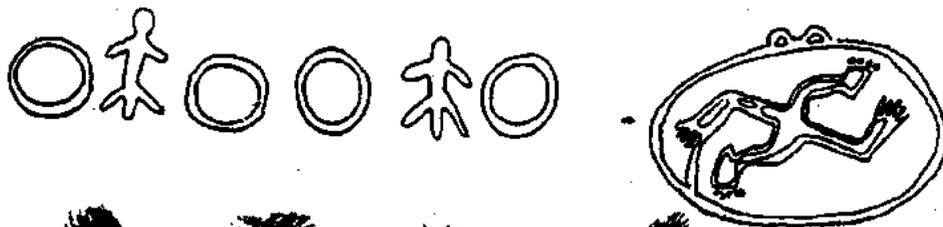
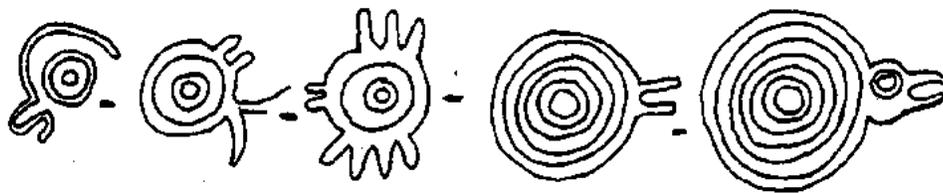
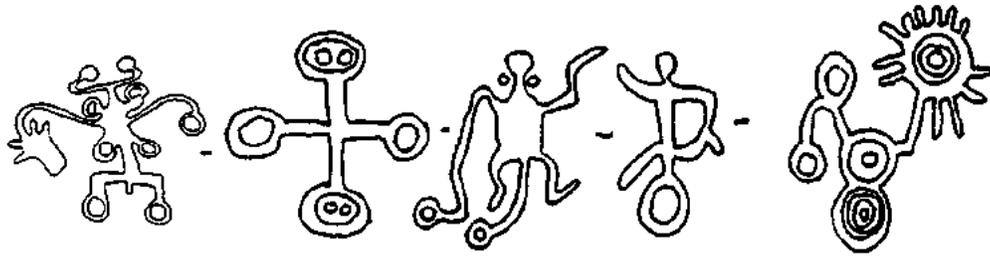
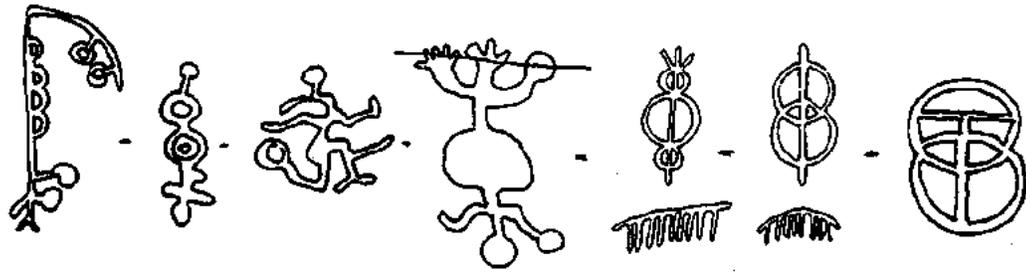


Figure 11. Interrelated contexts of circles.

Understanding the reality or validity of this does not depend on whether one can understand it or not. What its validity depends on is one's faith that it is understandable to someone else who knows more and is familiar with the landscape of those ideas. If it is understandable to others, then it can eventually be comprehensible to anyone, if they can just learn to see. This brings us back to our original statements. This is the difference between appreciating someone reading a paper at a rock art conference versus preferring them simply describing pretty pictures, talking off the top of their heads, a state that does not allow them to create any depth of meaning. It all depends on if all one wants is a few interesting comments and some pretty pictures to be entertained with or if one is really hungry to understand more than that. If you want more, the meat and marrow of these symbolic bones which creates the structure of symbolism, then you can't be satisfied with anything less than what can give you more. The off the cuff papers simply describing the voluptuous curves of an image are not a complete circle where those which are read can be made to be complete at that moment.

Circles can be natural things such as the sun, moon, ecliptic, zodiac and periods or cycles of time, whirlpools, rainbows, the horizon around us, dust/ash devils, tornados, cyclones, what a dog does before it lies down and most bird nests, to name a few (Drummond 1996:345). In one rock art panel, concentric circles have been suggested to be symbols of the universe and/or a representation of the three or five world universes of the Chumash (Figure 12). They can also be the night sky, the Milky Way, the spirit or soul, and the world as a referent (Edberg 1985:70-4). The Navajo also represent successive universes or worlds as concentric circles (Reichard 1963:14).

A Pawnee priest during the Hako ceremony draws a circle with his toe to represent a nest. He does that because an eagle makes his nest

with his talons. Imitation of that act has a power of its own, but there are other meanings. One is a reenactment of Tirawa making the earth for people to inhabit. It also stands for kinship and tribe (Campbell 1949:41-2, 1974:187).

Circles can also represent conceptual images. One of these is the *uberous*; the tail-biting snake forming a circle, or great circle. The ancient Greek vision of Oceanus (the heavens) as the *uberous*, is a symbol of the psychic state at the beginning, an ancient archetype of recurrence and unity within the symbolism. Consciously structuring this form may be our closest glimpse into eternity (Ryan 2002:12). This paradox of both destructive and creative forces, of positive/negative, male/female are where elements of consciousness meet, where elements hostile to consciousness and unconsciousness intermingle (Neumann 1974:18-23). It is also a symbol of philosophic regeneration preceding the birth of the Phoenix. Even the word philosophy carries the roots *ophi* and *soph*, serpent and wisdom, the snake and the circle as mother. In the Kabbalah the serpent with its tail in its mouth is said to encompass holiness, the demon who watches, searches out and seeks a place where he can gain entry into holiness.

That is the witch circling the Hogan (Wilson 1971: 227,288,386). He represents Saturn and is centripetal and not centrifugal. He is destruction as opposed to creation (Leon 2000:24-5). It also contains a symbolism of cycles of time, eternity and the "indivisible, self sustaining character of Nature" (Tresidder 2000:148, Wilson 1971:462).

So, how does one complicate a circle? That can be done by simply stripping it of all its labels. If you want to keep it simple, simply label it and that will restrict its ability to mean anything else in the mind of the one who labels it and those who use that label. Without a label, it can be and mean literally anything. Without a label, it means nothing, and that nothing encompasses

everything just like God does. With a label it can only be and mean what that label encircles

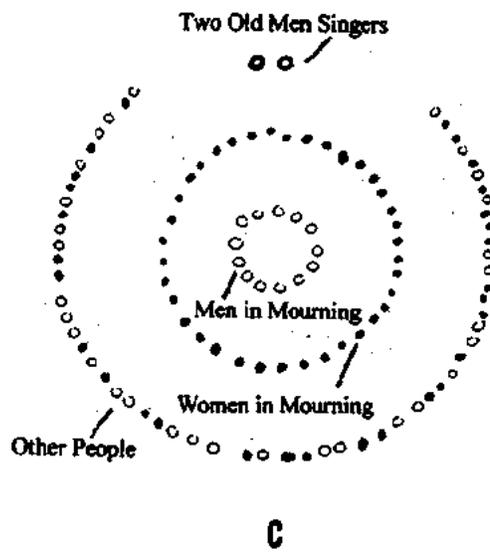
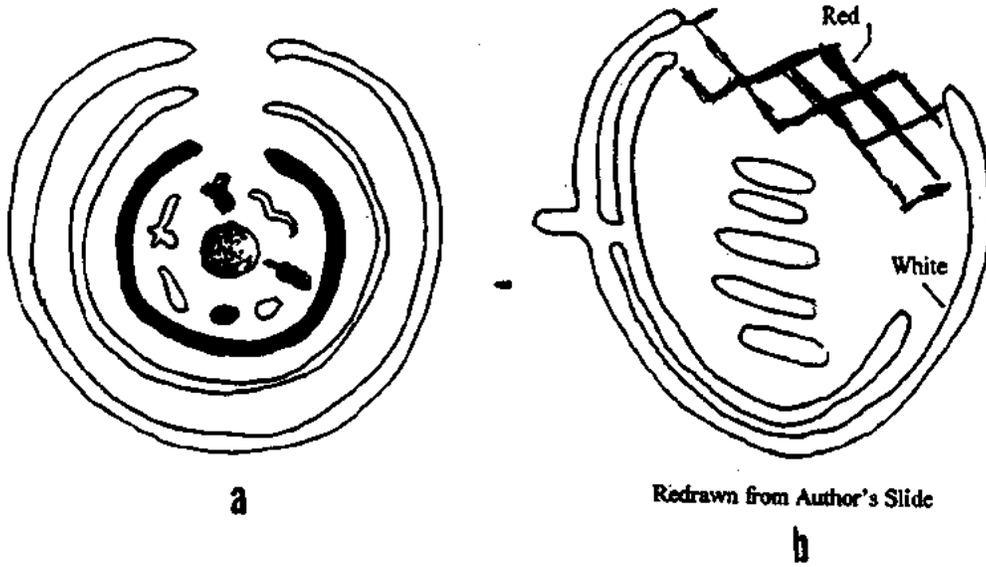


Figure 12. Concentric circles as symbols of the universe

its meaning, like a coral, to be (Warner 2000). Look at the circle of our lack of understanding as the tip of an iceberg (Figure 13). Any one element or its symbolism is like an iceberg. There is so much that we will never understand. It goes deep into the dark waters of cultural subconsciousness of those who made it. All we see is the tip and the *distorted* forms just below the surface. Just below the surface, the blackness of our ignorance clouds our vision in our primal subconsciousness. It is our inability to see and grasp it that distorts our understanding. There is so much we will never know, that comparatively speaking, what we really think we know is relatively nothing at all.

By labeling or making any interpretations we draw a line that encircles all of the possible meanings for this symbol. If we do not use a generic all encompassing term, we exclude everything else (the rest of the iceberg that is below the surface and what it has the potential to represent), and then we are out of harmony/sync or not at one with the spirit of the power of that symbol. Is that equitable to the lack of understanding and real observations that sunk the Ti-

tanic? That means we will not be fully receptive to what it has the ability to be and the full potential it can offer. We then have missed more than just a point at the heart of its circle-ness.

There are far more possibilities in what it has the potential to mean than has been touched on here. However, this has scratched the surface of the iceberg, which has the form of a circle (Figure 13). The word circle itself is a mask like that discussed in *Looking Versus Seeing* (Warner 2000:17) where, if that last mask is ever removed, we will fall through that portal into eternity. Remember that true meaning has to be revealed (from within), it can never be explained. Figures 14 and 15 are a few other things to think about that are offered like Buddha and the Zen priest offered the rose to a group of students to think about without any further comment. Let them rattle *around* in your mind for a while. Part 2 will contain much more than this.

This paper was inspired by and written for Kanoe who has the courage and spirit to continually stick her head through that ring of power.

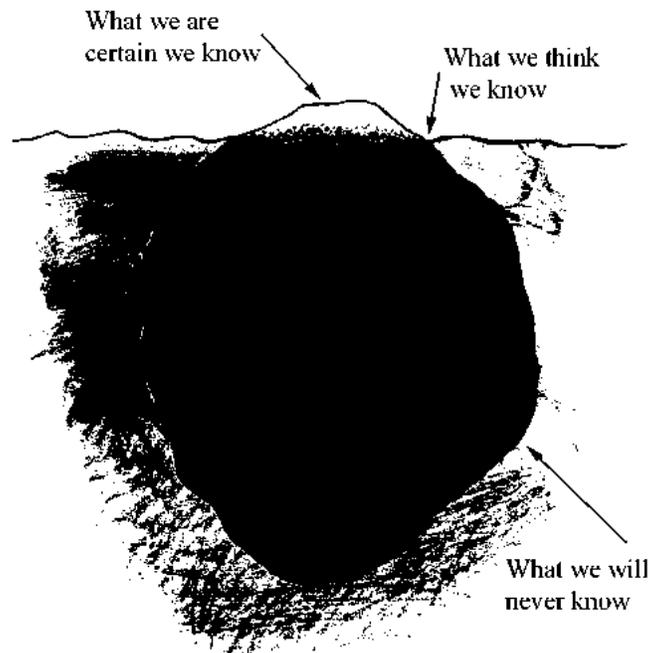


Figure 13. The Symbolic Iceberg. The circle of our lack of understanding.

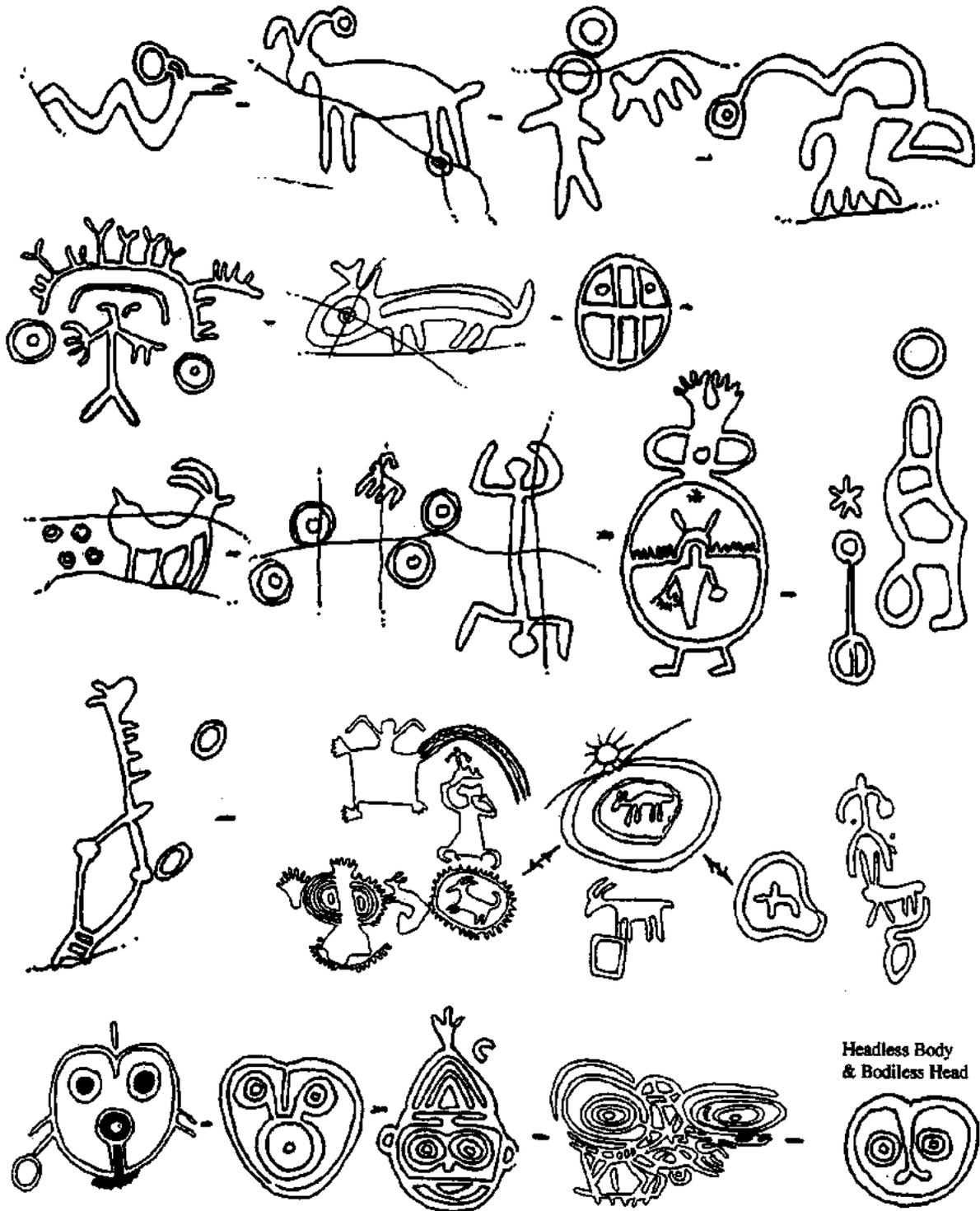


Figure 15. Things to think about.

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