

10/10/10
CWI 104

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

It has been said the two greatest inventions were the wheel and the art of controlling fire...however, I would add a third - the development of writing. Without a system of writing, no matter how wise or sublime the thought, once uttered it is gone forever (in its original form, at least) as soon as its echoes have died away.

The many systems of writing which have been developed at different times by various peoples during mankind's long history all grew by steps which we can and shall trace, out of man's ability to draw pictures.

PICTOGRAPHS (Caveman and American Indian)

50,000 years ago no one could write. There was no alphabet. If a caveman wanted to communicate he could only talk. He had few words some of them only grunts and noises, but he could get an idea across. He had no way of conveying a message to someone who wasn't there. Man began to make pictures in very early times. We call pictures that are used to tell stories "pictographs". Some of these pictures were drawn on pieces of bark or bone and have been lost. Many have been drawn on the walls of caves and can still be seen. We can only guess what these pictures meant, however, the American Indians who still live here have explained to modern scholars the meaning of some of their picture writing.

The American Indian had a very expressive picture writing. They sent messages and recorded important events on birch bark and on the skin of animals. Paintings and carvings on the face of rocks also preserved the story of Indian life in some sections of North America.

Another form of Indian writing was done with wampum, the shell beads the Indians used for trading. Pictographs were woven into wampum belts to record

Important events such as peace treaties between the tribes. The belts were considered to be valuable records. Indian picture writing is no longer widely used, but it served a very real purpose in the past. The American Indians who still live here have explained to modern scholars the meaning of some of their picture writing. Here are some pictures I think will interest you.

Picture B.

There is a famous petition in pictures that Chippewa Indian chiefs sent to the United States Government in 1849. These Indians lived in Wisconsin, near Lake Superior. They wanted the Government to allow them to settle near some small lakes where they could harvest wild rice. There they proposed to live peaceably.

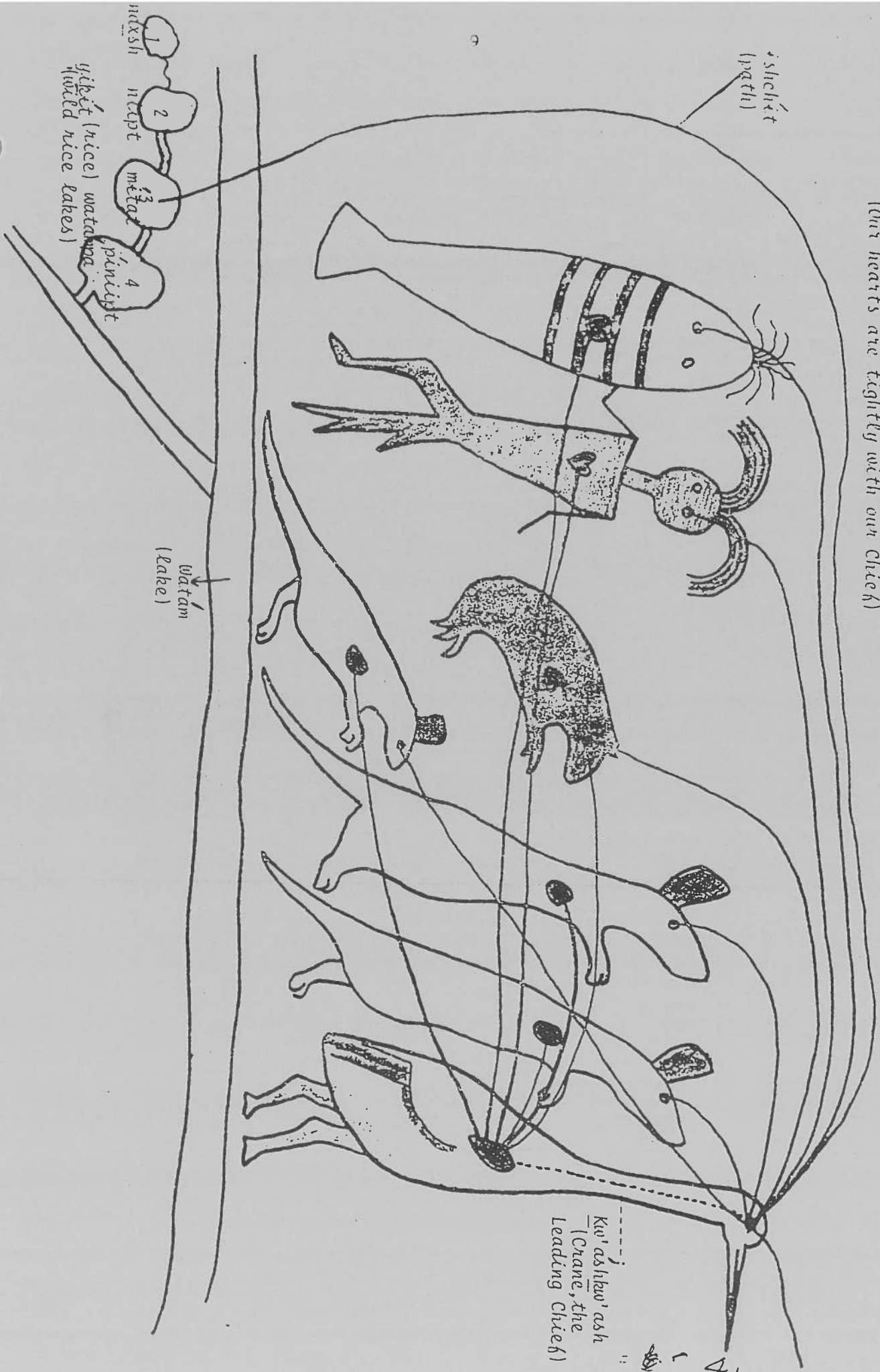
In the first picture, the chiefs are represented by the animals or birds that were their own chosen symbols. The leading chief is represented by a crane. Lines extend from the eyes of all the other animals to the eye of the crane. This means that all the chiefs see "eye to eye." They agree on the petition.

The heart of each animal is also connected by a line with the heart of the crane. These lines show that all the chiefs feel the same way about the petition and have the same purpose in sending it.

Long parallel lines indicate Lake Superior. A path leads from the lake to the four small "rice lakes" where the Indians propose to settle. From the eye of the crane a line extends forward, toward Washington, D.C., the destination of the petition.

How could more be said in a single picture?

ʔ ni mi' t̄i ma k̄o a a t̄ (with) mi y' a a a x
 (Our hearts are tightly with our Chief)

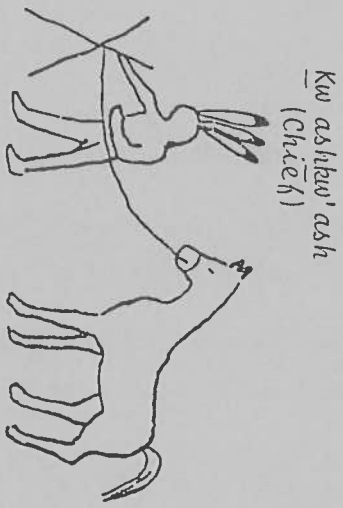
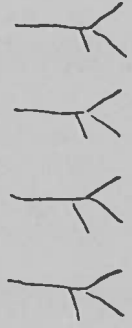
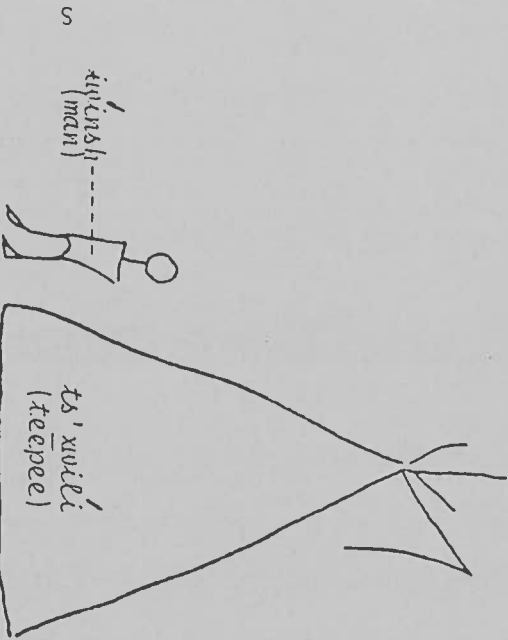


FIRST PICTURE OF CHITWA INDIAN CHIEFS' PETITION

Pict

Ko' ash'aw' ash
 (Crane, the
 Leading Chief)

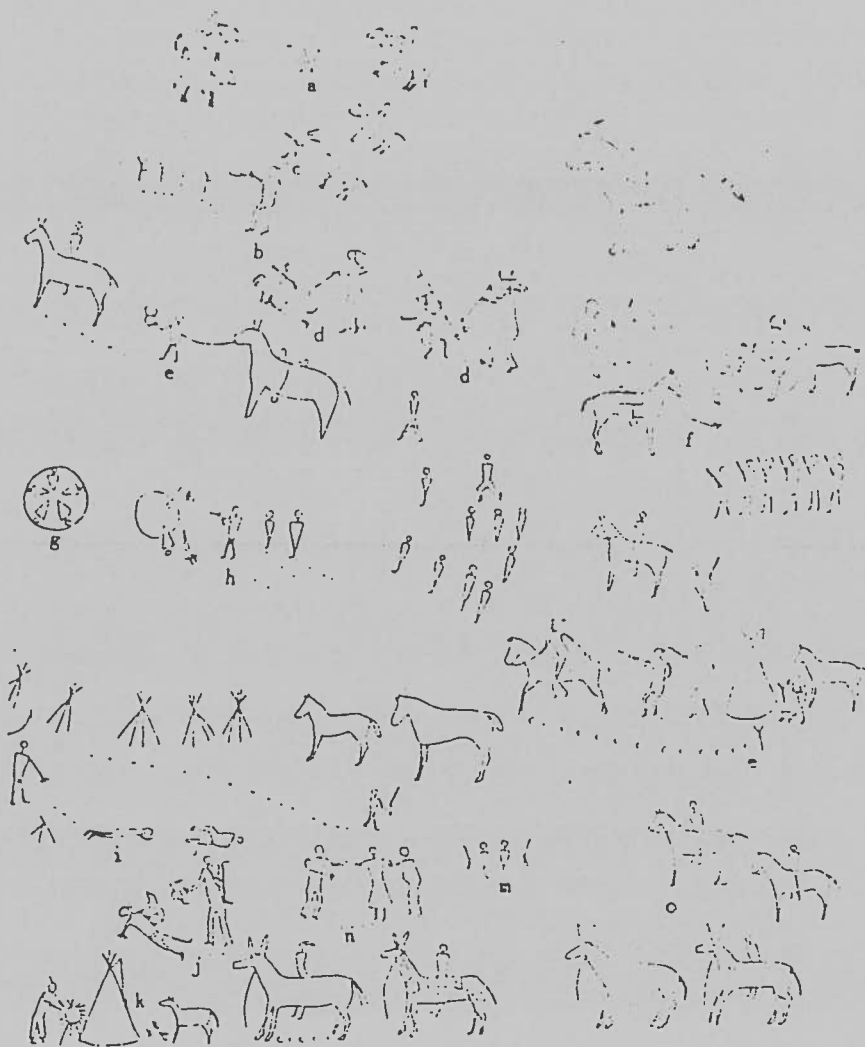
4.



(The Blackfoot Indians tyantepma h'usi h'usi took by force the horses)



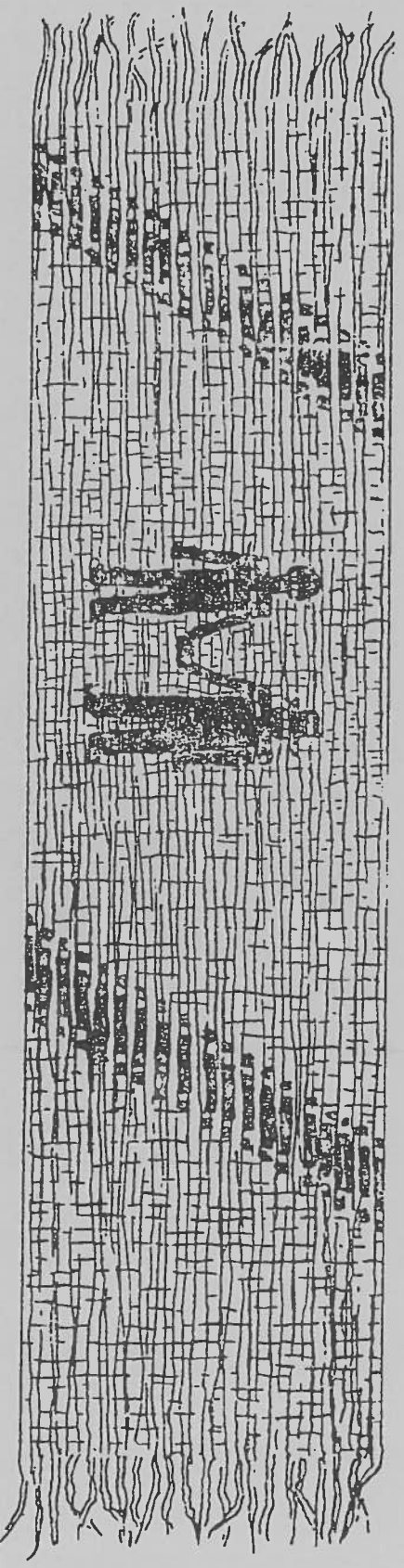
THE CAPTURE OF HORSES AS RECORDED ON A TEEPE COVER, BLACKFOOT



War episodes as depicted on a tepee cover, Blackfoot:
 a, Bear-chief, afoot, escapes from Assiniboin Indians; b, Double-runner cuts loose from horses; c, he captures a Gros Ventre boy; d, he and a companion kill two Gros Ventre; e, he picks up a war-bonnet dropped by a Gros Ventre, counting as a coup; f, he takes a gun from a Crow; g, he killed five Flathead; h, a Cree took shelter in some brush, but Big-nose went in for him; i, a Cree killed while running off Blackfoot horses; j, Double-runner, with medicinepipe, took a bow from a Gros Ventre and killed him; k, he took a shield and horse from a Crow and was pursued; m, he killed two Gros Ventre and took two guns; n, he captured a Gros Ventre woman and a boy; o, he took four mules.*

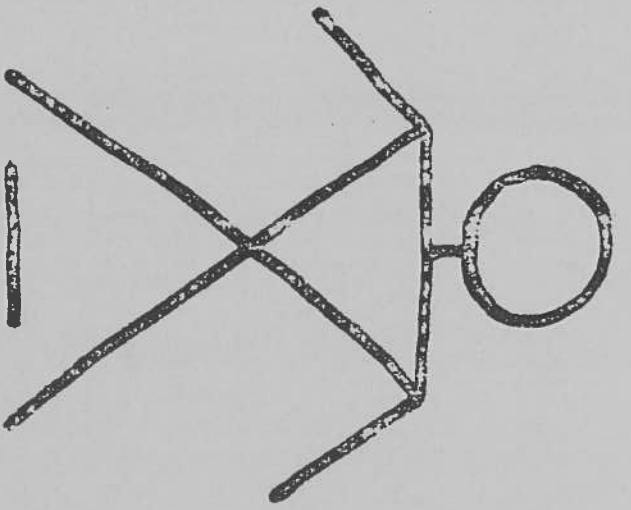
*Indians of the Plains by Robert H. Lowie. McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1954
 Reproduced by permission of the publisher.

Another form of Indian picture writing was done with wampum, the shell beads the Indians used for trading. Pictographs were woven into wampum belts to record important events such as peace treaties between the tribes. The belts were considered to be valuable records. The most famous treaty belt is the one Indian chiefs presented to William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, on the shore of the Delaware River in 1682. This belt shows an Indian and a white man holding hands in a gesture of peace and friendship that was never forgotten by either Penn or the Indians.



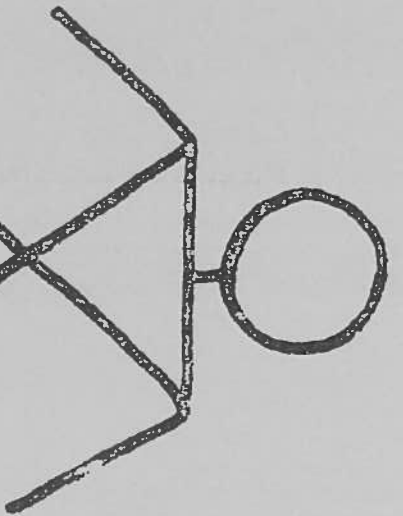
WAMPUM TREATY BELT

T'álgat Pa'aníxwat-walats'wikawas

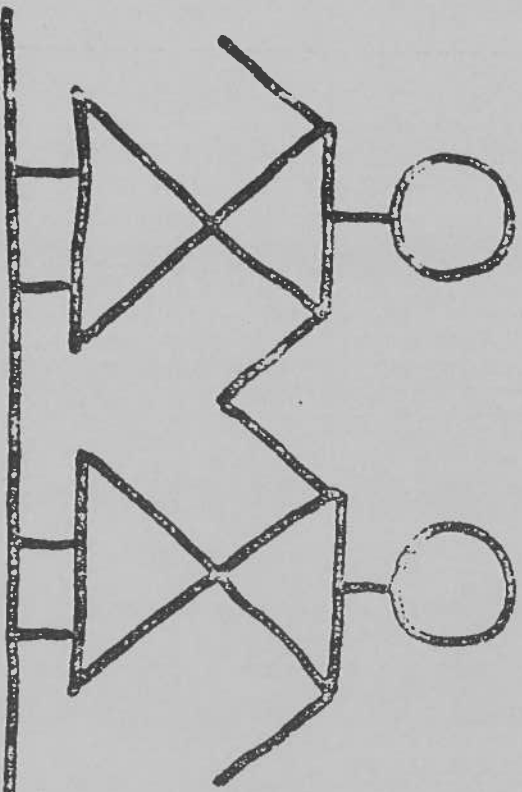


three men

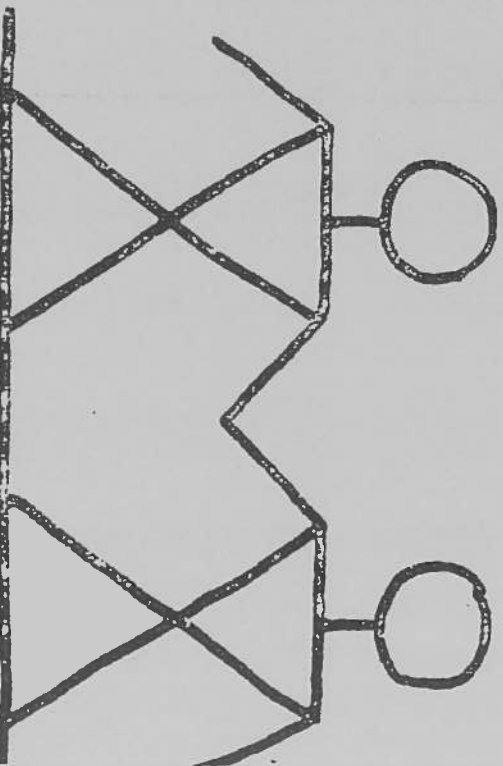
5



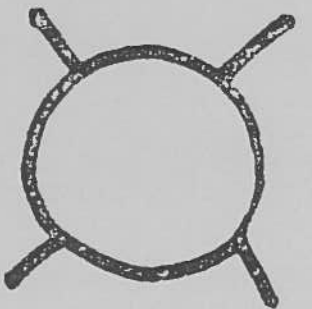
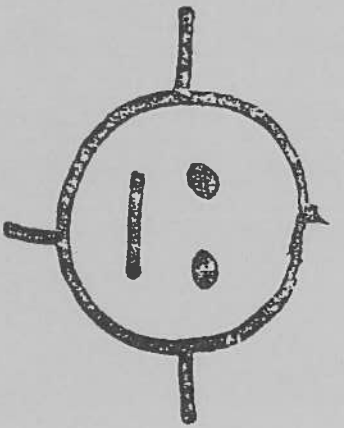
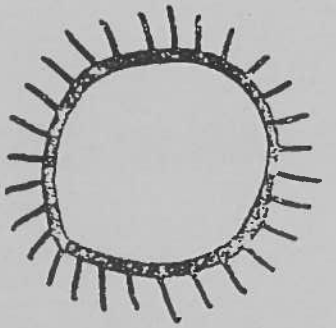
five women



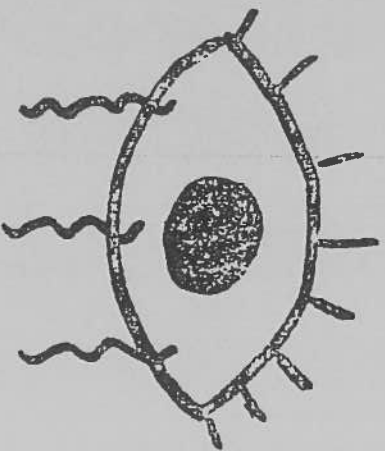
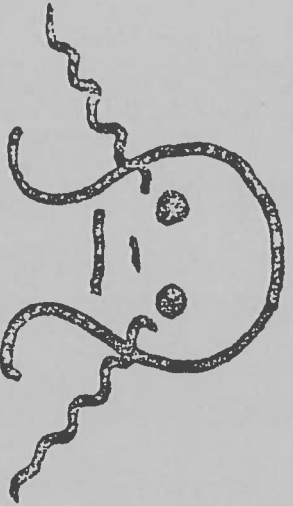
sisters



brothers



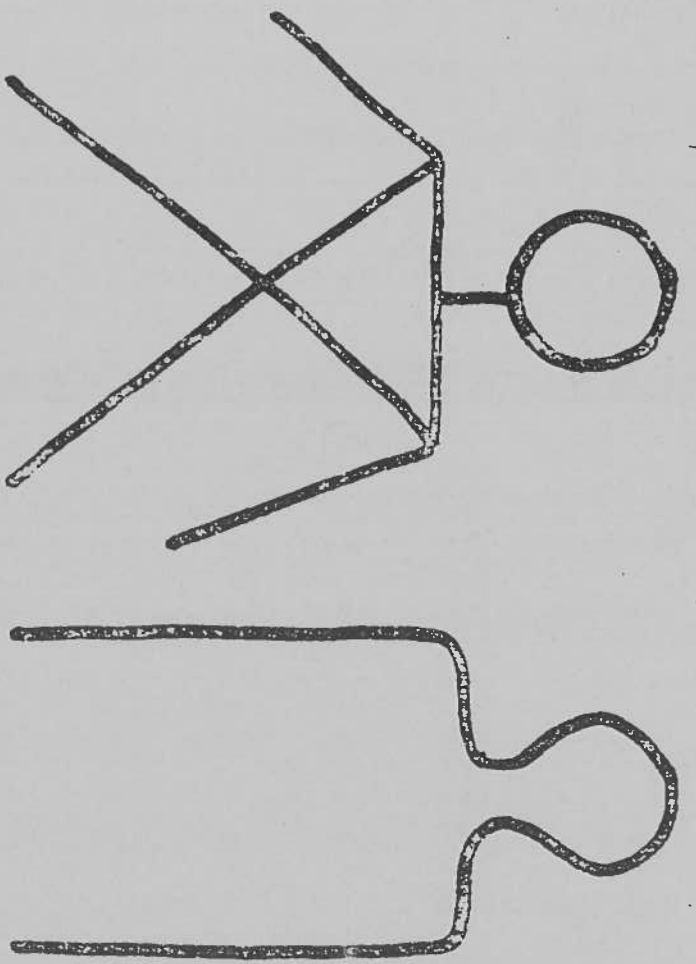
Examples of Indian pictographs for the "sun"



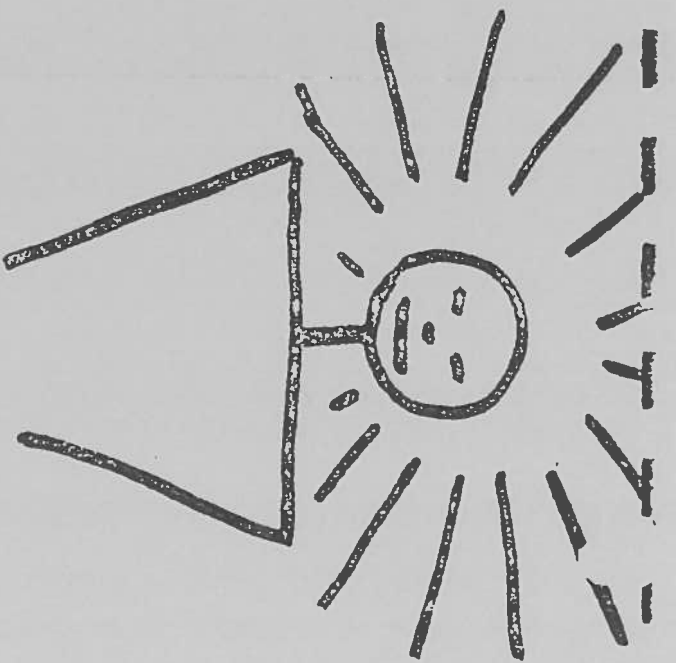
Indian signs for crying



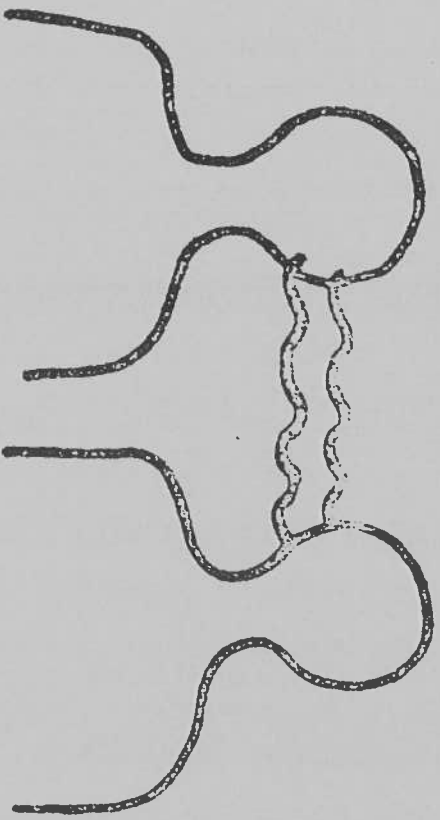
water



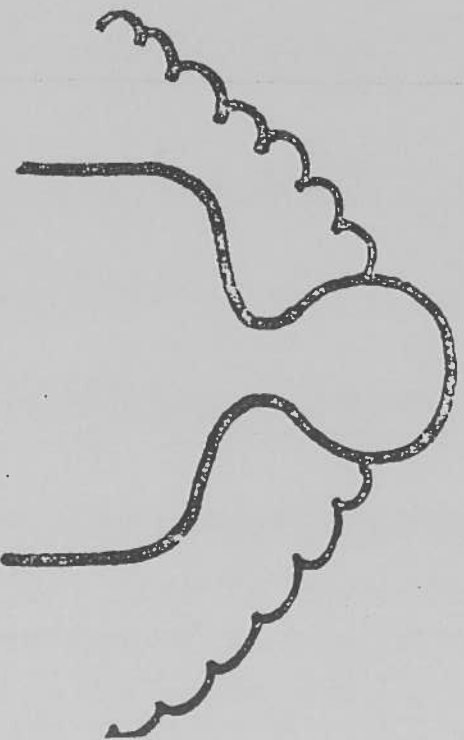
Two figures for "man"



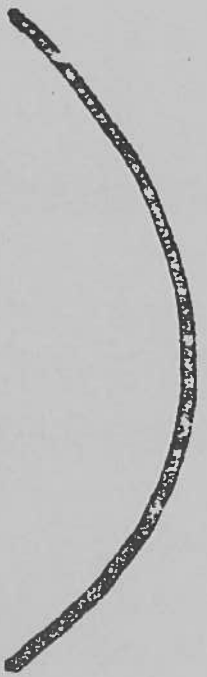
a wise man



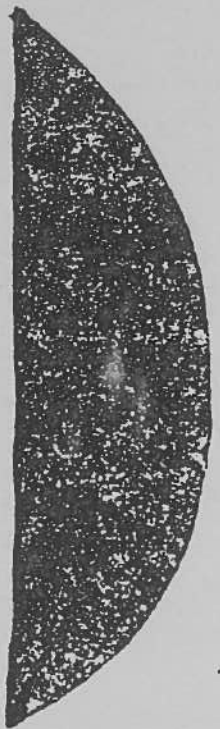
Two people talking



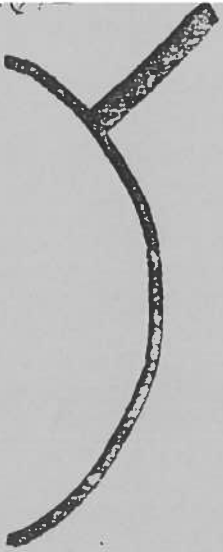
man listening



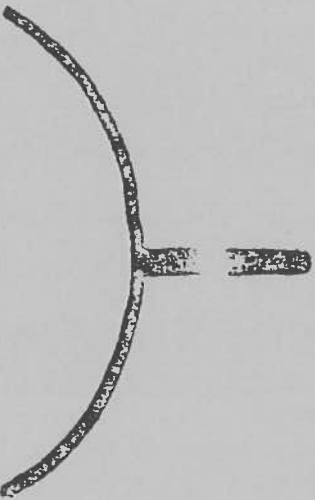
"sky"



blackened sky means "night"



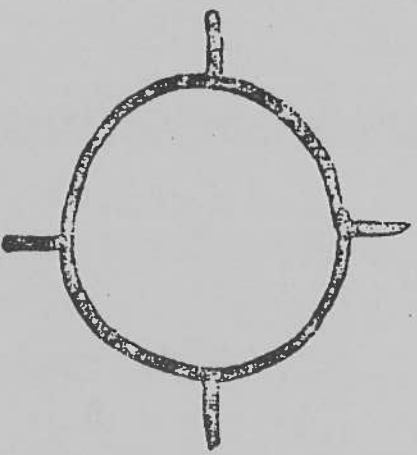
sunrise



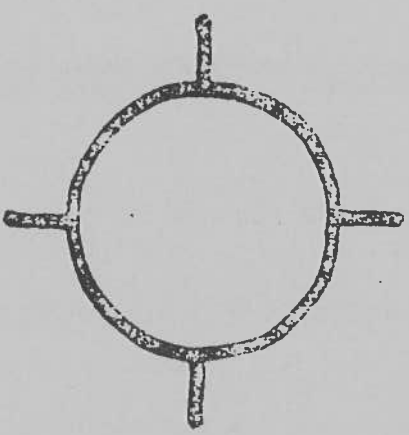
noon



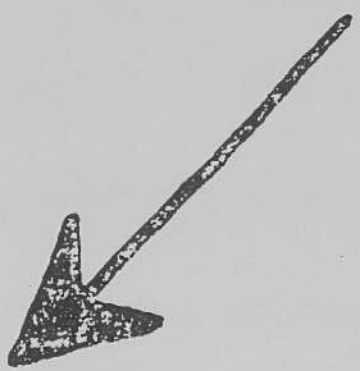
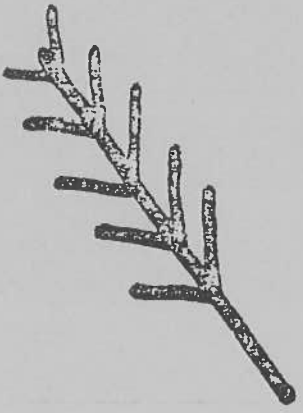
sunset



third day - me'ta' thau'i



sixth day - tamaita' a'abt



"Peace" symbol