

GENDER IN STONE: YONIS, PHALLIC STONES, AND MALE AND FEMALE SYMBOLS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ROCK ART

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ABSTRACT

This paper will focus on gender related issues in three areas of appropriate Native American rock art research: the ceremonial fertility sites and the related yoni formations, phallic stones and accompanying archeological data, and male and female symbols found in petroglyphs and pictographs, all of which are common in southern California.

I

Ceremonial fertility sites are found in many locations in southern California, and examples will be provided from near the Mexican border to the Lake Perris and Idyllwild areas. These sites were visited by Indian couples who had not been able to have children. They are characterized by yoni formations, natural geological features having the appearance of human female genitalia (McGowan 1982:1). Often these formations were enhanced by grinding or chiseling. The term yoni, a Sanskrit word for female reproductive organs, is used to indicate geological features, even if enhanced, as contrasted to vulva designs in petroglyphs or pictographs. Because the granitic outcrops in southern California tend to have folds and creases which might be suggestive, the yonis used in the paper will have other features illustrating occupation and/or ceremonial use.

The pioneering study of "Ceremonial Fertility Sites" was undertaken by Charlotte McGowan (1982), and published by the San Diego Museum of Man (Museum Papers No. 14). In 1986 I invited Charlotte McGowan to be a special guest of a Rock Art Caravan I was leading, and to guide us to the Jamul site, where five major yoni formations are located. These yoni formations are associated with a Kumeyaay archeological site, where there are also mortars, metates and pottery sherds. The most famous yoni at the Jamul site is featured in a drawing on the cover of her study, and I have provided a sketch from my photograph (Figure 1). Continuing our caravan after our time with Charlotte McGowan, we also noted yonis at Dubber Spur and several at Piedras Grandes, in the Anza Borrego Desert (Figure 2).

Going on to Indian Hill, located a mile or so north of Piedras Grandes, I looked for the "small yoni formation" noted in McGowan's study. Instead of one, I found several, and members of my caravan discovered others. After a second visit to Indian Hill, which was a major seasonal occupation site with rock shelters, mortars and pictographs, I had located at least twelve yonis and possibly fourteen, with several exhibiting enhancement either by grinding or sculpting. Some had mortars or milling slicks in such proximity as to suggest an effort to be near the yoni feature for extensive periods of time. At the Eleventh Annual Rock Art Symposium of the

San Diego Museum of Man, held on Saturday, November 1, 1986, I presented my findings in a paper entitled, "The Indian Hill Ceremonial Fertility Site Complex" (Gough 1986). Figures 3 and 4 are of yonis which first made me realize that Indian Hill was a major fertility site.

A very distinctive yoni is found at Piedras Pintadas in the Rancho Bernardo area (Figure 5). It is located north of a pool and waterfall, where there are mortars, metates and pictograph panels, including the mazes which typify the Rancho Bernardo style. In southern Riverside County there are several yonis, including a yoni near Radece which faces bedrock mortars (Figure 6). Near Idyllwild, along Highway 243, there is a large yoni boulder with 14 bedrock mortars on top (Figure 7). Because the highway cuts into the incline of earth surrounding the boulder, a ladder is virtually needed to access the top of the boulder to see the mortars. If the normal curve of the slope were sketched in with a single line (see line on Figure 7), it is apparent that the top surface of the yoni boulder would have been easily accessible for milling activity, which tends to be in close proximity to fertility sites. The highway must have gone through an archeological site, early in the 20th century, for immediately across the pavement, behind the State Campground fence, there are additional mortars. Then in Bernasconi Pass several yonis (see Figure 8) are located northeast of the well-known phallic petroglyph boulder (Figure 13), a site investigated by John Rafter (Rafter 1990:33-40).

II

Phallic stones become a second example of gender in stone, and again, the presence of rock art and/or other archeological features, along with ethnographic data, will be regarded as necessary to validate the significance of the rock formation. The phallic stones used in this paper as examples will all have pictographs or petroglyphs on them, or will be in proximity to them. Some of the designs are power symbols also associated with girls' puberty rites, such as diamond chains and nested chevrons. But others have distinctively male symbols (Vuncannon 1983:123), which might be intended to illustrate virility and fertility. The phallic rock at the Lakeside site (Figure 9) in western Riverside County (Smith and Freers 1994:73) is an example with pictographs having known power

symbolism. A phallic stone in Aguanga (Figure 10), across to the east from the Bergman Museum, has not only diamond chains, but also possible male symbols.

At the Hayfield Phallic Stone site, located in lands to the east recently included in the newly redesignated Joshua Tree National Park, there are vertical petroglyphs like those in Figure 11 (Vuncannon 1983:119), along with paired circles. The phallic stone in the Painted Rock site in the Old Woman Mountains (Figure 12) is related to an extensive complex of petroglyphs around the base of a large monolith, and across from a high cave with polychromatic pictographs. There are also yonis on the monolith across from the phallic stone, and in the painted cave. A phallic petroglyph "pit-and-groove" boulder located in Bernasconi Pass (Figure 13) is near a complex of some nine yonis (Rafter 1990:34-37). Local Native Californians called this phallic petroglyph boulder "Takwish's Genitals," because the petroglyph resembled a large male genital along which water from a mortar above could flow down toward the earth. This phallic boulder provides a transitional feature, leading toward the final gender in stone category in my paper.

III

The final gender in stone phenomenon relates to male and female symbols in pictographs and petroglyphs in the southern California area. The most common male depiction is an anthropomorphic figure with a phallic line extending down between the legs. Because of the widespread presence of such figures, I will give two representative examples, the Lakeside pictograph (Figure 14) and the male anthropomorph in the large petroglyph panel at the Palo Verde Crossing site (Figure 15). The vulva symbol is one of the most common designs in southern California rock art. The pictograph vulvas in Shaman's Cave at Indian Hill are found in relation to other

fertility motifs (Figure 16). At Grass Valley, for example, in the eastern Mojave, vulva symbols are found on a panel (Figure 17) which also has encircled crosses, a puberty symbol of fructification, and an unraveling enclosed cross, the sky window from which germinative elements come down to earth (Patterson 1994:57,62 and 197). (I gave a paper on "Native American Encircled and Enclosed Crosses Having Prehistoric Puberty/Fertility Symbolism" at the 1994 San Diego Museum of Man Rock Art Symposium, but the proceedings have not yet been published.)

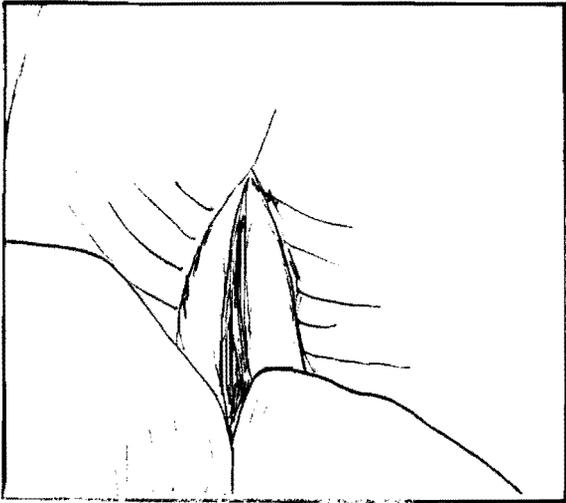
At the Chalfant petroglyph site in the Bishop Loop, there are a large number of female and male fertility symbols. Delcie H. Vuncannon, in her paper on the "Fertility Symbolism at the Chalfant Site, California" points out the large number of vulva symbols scattered across the cliffs, and thickly clustered on some surfaces. She also illustrates the vertical lines, barbed lines and vertical rows of dots, as male symbols (Vuncannon 1983:119-123). My contribution in the as yet unpublished paper on "Encircled Crosses" was to point out this symbol at Chalfant, as an emblem of fructification in relation to male and female symbols at the site. A section of the famous "Cosmos" panel at Chalfant (Figure 18) illustrates female and male symbols in close relationship, and will serve to illustrate gender at the site.

The widespread presence of gender in stone, and the apparent frequency of ritual ceremony relating to fertility, seems to underline the importance and sacredness of procreation in the world view of Native American peoples. Also, there is a healthy-mindedness, and an absence of the pornographic, which makes it clear that the relationship of women and men was viewed within the context of a religious vision, where shamanic ritual and art were combined, the shaman being priest, artist and interpreter of the mysteries of life.

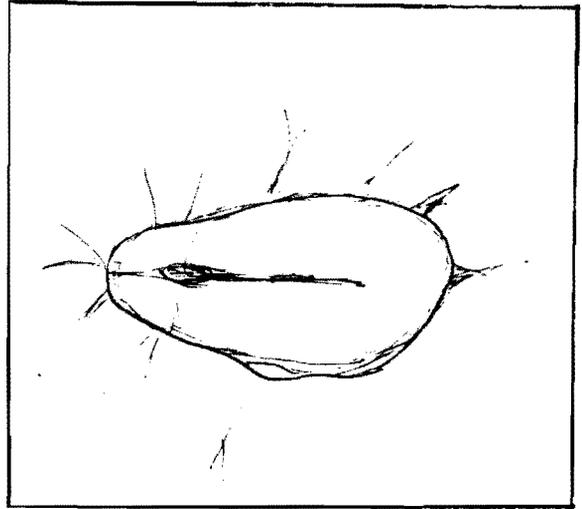
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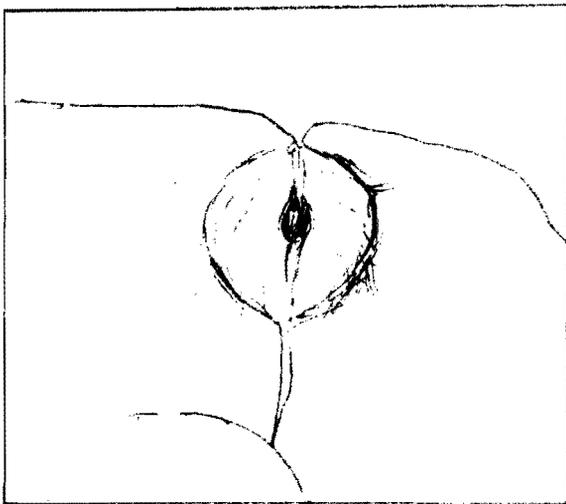
FIGURES



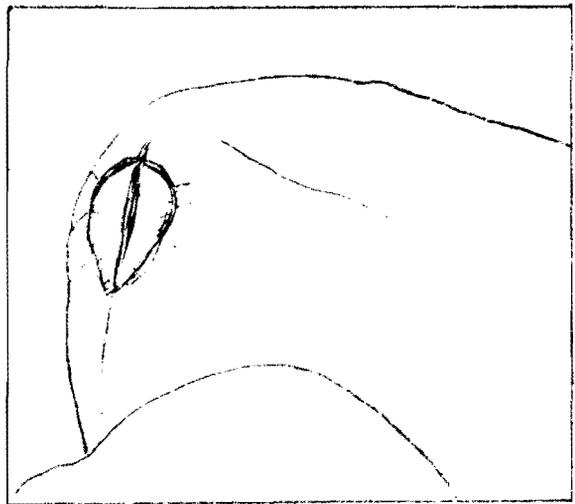
1. Yoni at Jamul



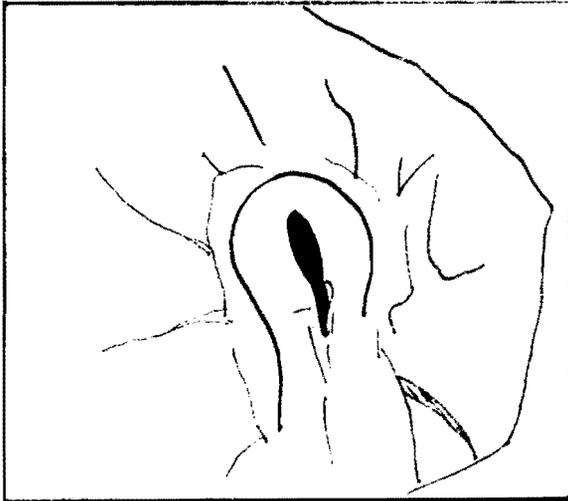
2. Yoni at Piedras Grandes



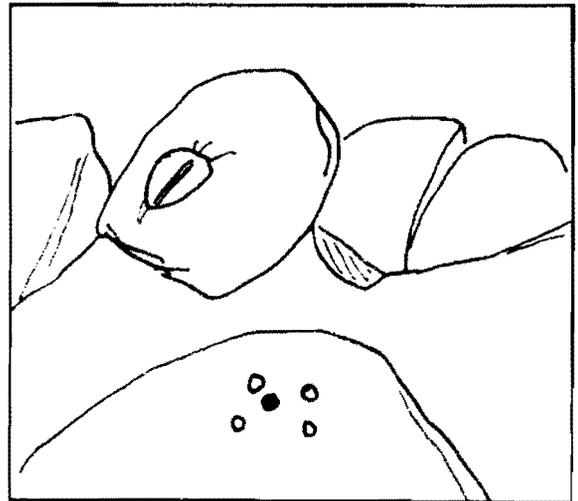
3. Large yoni on boulder north of main rock shelter at Indian Hill



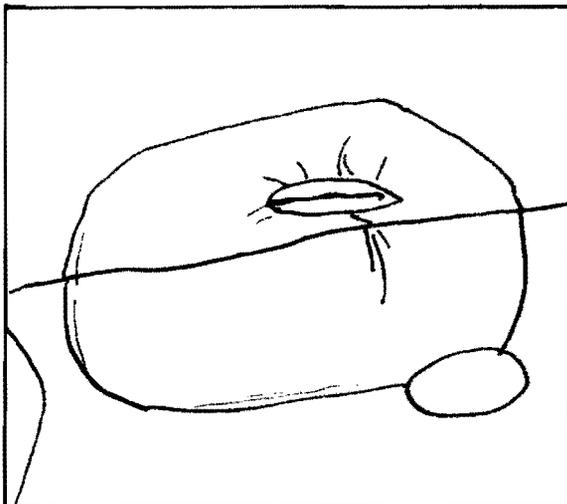
4. Yoni on southwest corner of same boulder at Indian Hill



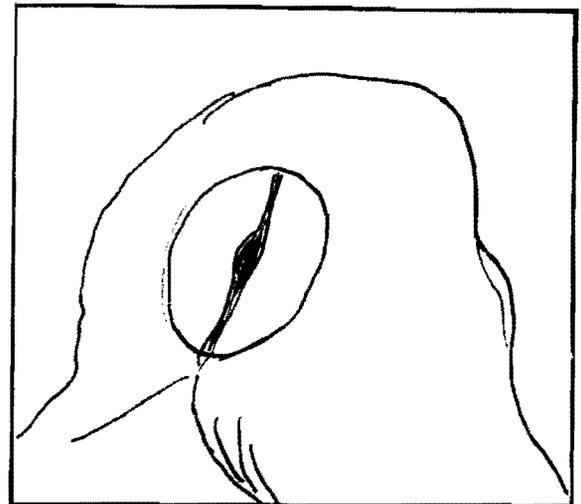
5. Piedras Pintadas yoni



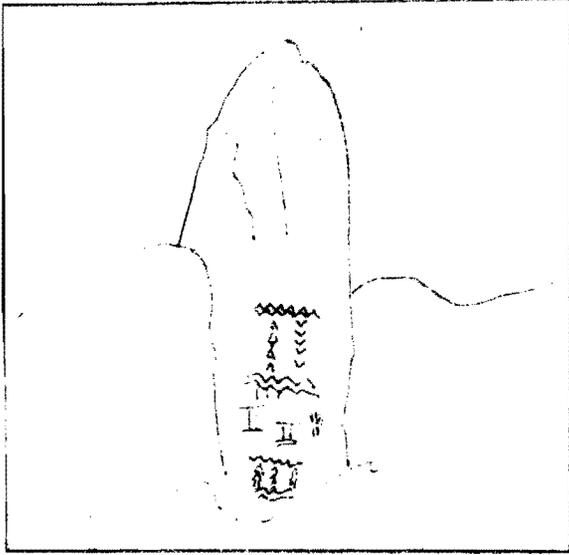
6. Radee yoni and mortars



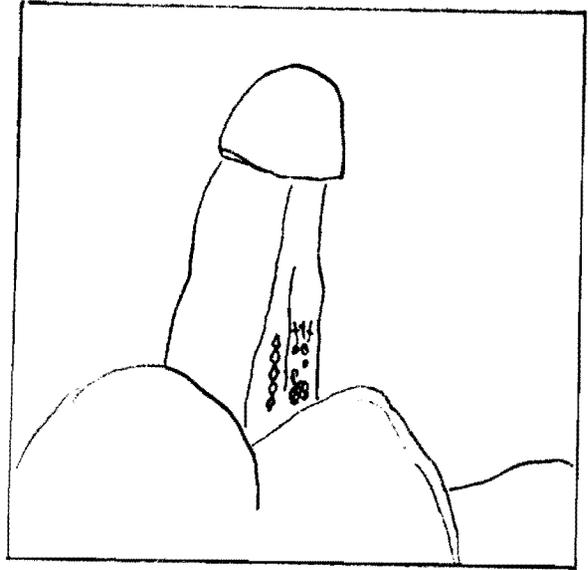
7. Yoni near Idyllwild



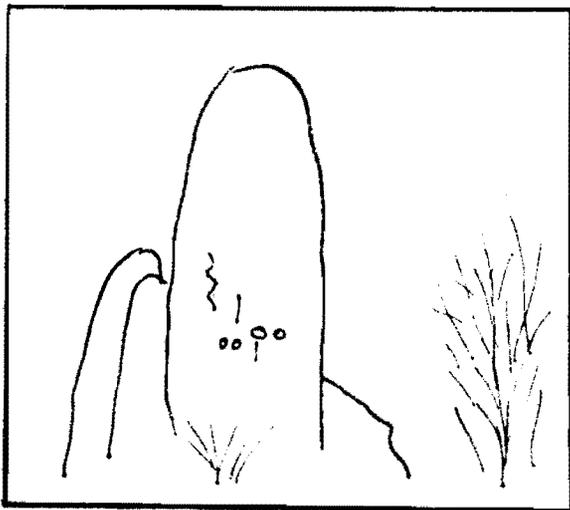
8. A Bernasconi Pass yoni



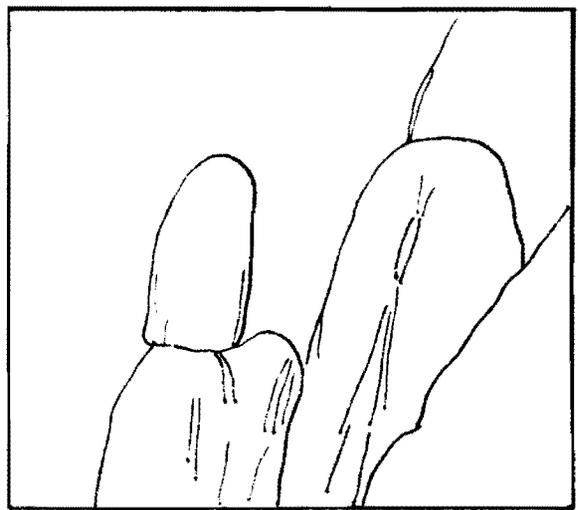
9. Lakeside phallic stone



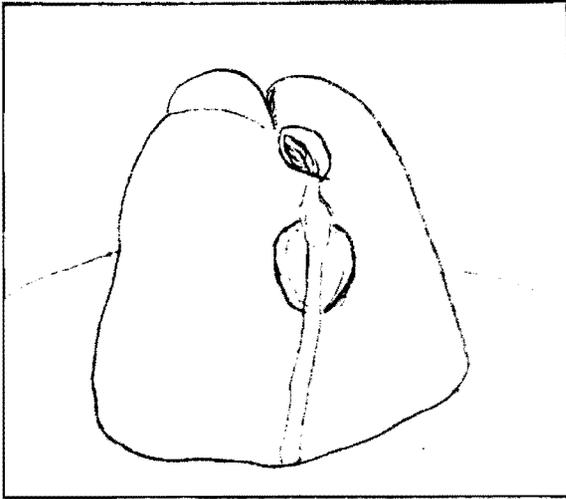
10. Aguanga phallic stone



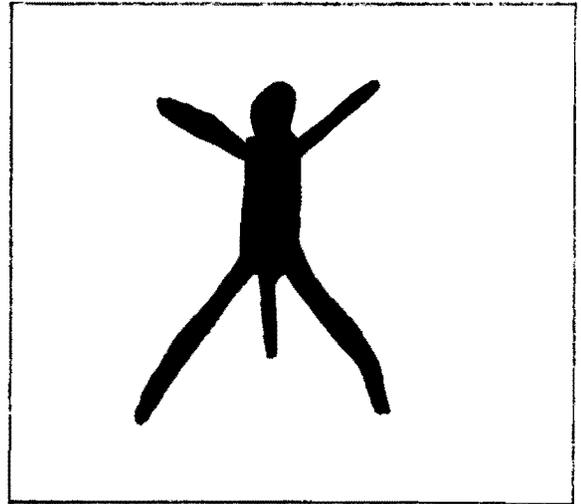
11. Hayfield phallic stone



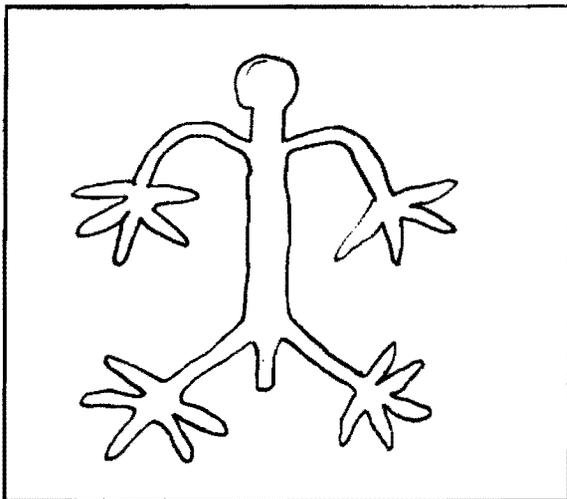
12. Painted Rock complex



13. Bernasconi Pass Rock



14. Lakeside male symbol



15. Palo Verde Crossing



16. Shaman's Cave

