

# “Rock Art of the Coso Range”

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The Coso Rock Art District is the largest concentrations of petroglyphs in North America. The petroglyphs are thought to date from the end of the ice age to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The petroglyph site is located in the California desert on the Naval Surface Warfare Center at China Lake. Because the site is on a military base, all visitations must be made with an advanced reservation that includes a background check. A guide must be with the group.

Ron described the petroglyphs in “little petroglyph canyon”, that is one of many locations within the overall Coso site.

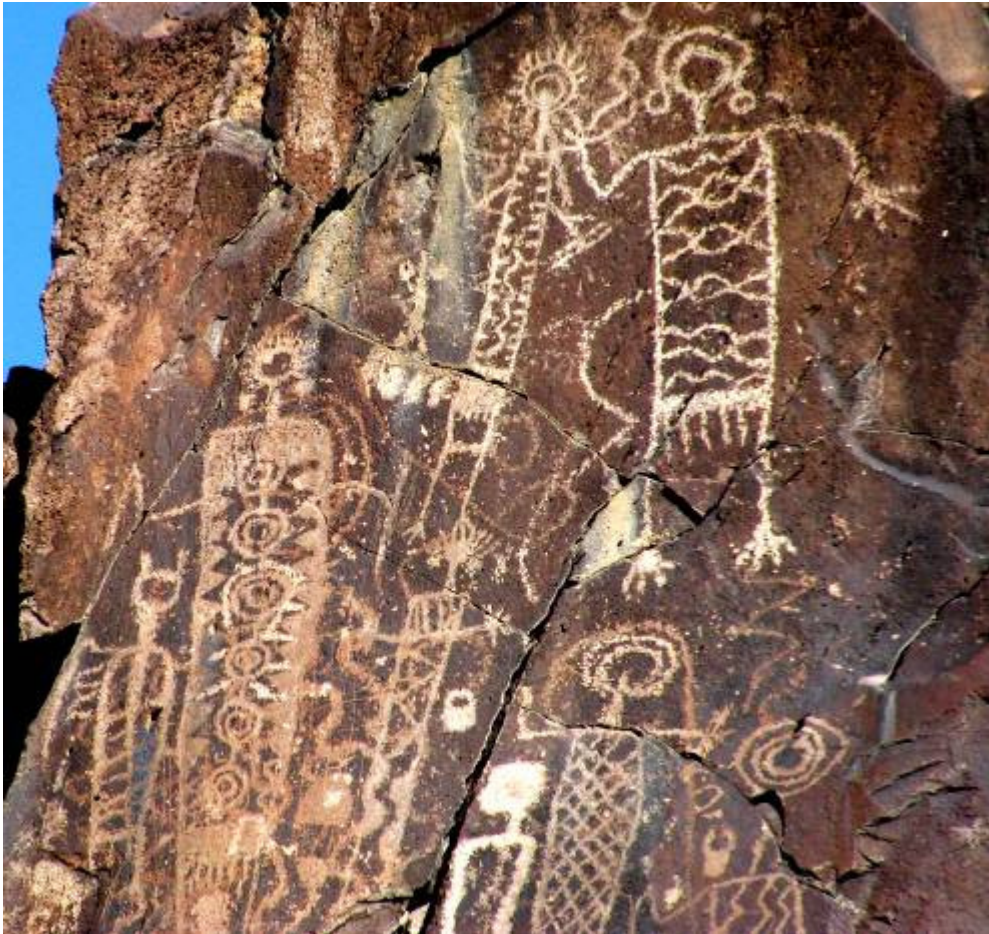
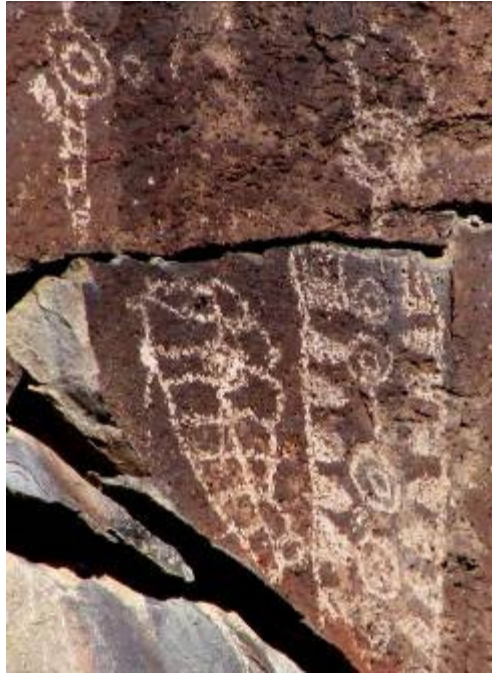
The glyphs at this site are unique a number of characteristic features:

## **Anthropomorphs:**

The anthro designs are unique for their head dresses, body shape and body decoration. The following figures are a number of examples.









## Sheep:

This area is noted for the number of sheep illustrated in the rock art. The sheep are present in a number of different body styles and positions, but unique to the region is the position of the head. Many of the sheep have a front view of the head, as if the sheep is looking at you, as opposed to the typical profile view. The following are a view examples of the sheep at Coso.







## **Hunting:**

It is thought that one purpose of the glyphs at Coso was to use the sheep panels in ceremony to promote a successful hunt.

There are glyphs that depict hunting scenes as shown in the following examples.





### **Warfare:**

Warfare scenes are also depicted as shown in the following example.



### **Miscellaneous Glyphs:**

The three examples below are thought to be cloth or woven baskets. Again, the design is unique to the glyphs at Coso.

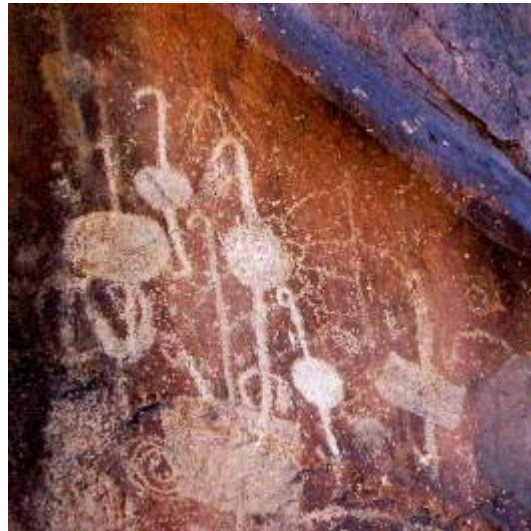




The example below shows a number of circular shapes, some with dotted lines forming what may be a handle, similar to a purse or handbag today. There is a figure (center left) that appears to be an animal of some sort – sheep horns, circular body, but only two legs.



The example below is of a series of circular shapes having a hooked line going through the shape. This design motif is found in a number of panels.



The following example is of a “processional”. While not unique to Coso, this motif was only found one time at this site.



**Summary:**

To learn more about the Coso rock art go to <http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/coso/index.php>. This reference has extensive photos along with technical interpretation of the rock art. A technical reference paper can be found at [http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/coso/dr\\_alan\\_p\\_garfinkel\\_coso.php](http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/coso/dr_alan_p_garfinkel_coso.php).

John Mangels

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