

A Review and Some Preliminary Reflections on “A Study of the Coso Patterned Body Anthropomorphs” by Caroline S. Maddock 2015.

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Caroline Maddock and the Maturango Museum have performed a great service to the study of rock art and the cultural history of the American West by formally publishing a compendium of images comprised of the enigmatic, yet ubiquitous, corpus of decorated, animal-human images from the Coso Range in the southwestern corner of the Great Basin within eastern California.

As *La Pintura* readers may know the Coso Range has been front and center in many of the debates surrounding rock art in the Far West of North America if not the world. However this is not the focus of the Maddock book. Instead Maddock presents a catalog and index of observations, depictions, and descriptions of an impressively large number of what has come to be known as Patterned Body Anthropomorphs (PBAs) that are found throughout the canyons of the Coso Range.

Fortunately for students of rock art, Maddock’s vast inventory of pen and ink drawings has finally been formally published after many years in the making (Caroline S. Maddock 2015, *A Study of Coso Patterned Body Anthropomorphs*, Maturango Museum Publication Number 26, Maturango Press).

Remarkably, Caroline was able to travel throughout the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station early on in relative freedom. She was, at the time of her research, able to visit several of the canyons and locales of the Coso Range over a 20 year period before base security was ramped up and ultimately made such wide-ranging and free-form excursions a near impossibility.

In her journeys she identified, photographed, mapped and sketched a total of 428 PBAs in five localities: Little Petroglyph (or also known as Lower Renegade Canyon), Upper Renegade Canyon, Big Petroglyph, Sheep Canyon, and Horse Canyon. Her book runs 130 pages, provides 19 photographs, a single map, 600 drawings of individual figures, one table, two appendices and a short reference section with 15 citations.

Maddock's study of "Patterned Body Anthropomorphs" (PBAs) is without embellishment a landmark contribution. This book is a first in the literature for the study of the Coso Archaic in the sense that it is solely object-centered and art historical in structure due to the formal and systematic description and drafting of the figures. It is from this approach that the baseline and/or preliminary categories of types, styles and conventions emerge.

Within an archaeological context, Maddock's volume is representative of the data-driven processual research that necessarily precedes any post-processual analytical and interpretive schema. Another such contribution that might be viewed in this vein is the recent work by Van Tilburg on the Coso rock art of the Little Lake locality (Van Tilburg et al. 2012).

Academicians and rock art scholars could of course quibble with the Maddock study and find fault with her limited application of the robust Coso literature and her lack of contemporary methodological rigor (no precise locational information or scales for her drawings are offered). These are minor deficiencies given the grand scope of her study.

In fact, the missing methodological data in Maddock's book builds a strong argument for continued research in the areas she has covered. It will not be difficult for present researchers to obtain some of the additional baseline data such as the dimensions of the figures, their contextual relation to other figures and the precise locational information because they will be guided by her significant inventory. Additionally, the Maddock volume might be seen as positively unhampered by the thorny and controversial interpretative issues in Coso research and as such, is an objective, unbiased and invaluable source that fosters new research questions and directions thus far not addressed.

What are the important elements of her study are the compilation she accomplished with her inventory and the classifications she developed of the rich visual tapestry of Coso PBA's. Maddock's "sample" actually includes a major portion, if not the lion's share, of the projected total of PBAs known for the entire Coso Range as initially described by the original researchers that provide a rough inventory of all Coso Range rock art ($n = 745$ for the total number of PBAs that Grant and his colleagues inventoried) (Grant et al. 1968).

What is of further note is that Maddock was able to determine that no two PBA's in her inventory are identical. This observation led the senior author of this review to consider that Coso rock art may evidence a culture that embodied the will of the individual agent as well as the community. This idea is echoed in the Coso literature - although from an ecological stance (Hildebrandt and McGuire 2002).

The evolutionary fitness model of show off behavior developed by Hildebrandt and McGuire is in alignment with such a perspective and is based on the assumption that there are opportunities for *individual* achievement that relate directly to the

extensive expression of Coso rock art (Hildebrandt and McGuire 2002). Further, Hildebrandt and McGuire argue that peak production of Coso rock art imagery was associated with distinct evolutionary benefits and costs not tied to immediate families nor driven by community derived prestige but rather by individual achievement.

Additionally, Maddock's data seems to bring into question the male-centered (androcentric) view that Coso PBAs exclusively represent male shamans (Younkin 1998). Caroline tickles us with an unexpected twist on this theme by telling us that her current research interest is "feminine iconography of the Coso". That imbedded twist is a little wrinkle on the academic literature reminding us that a significant portion of her documented inventory of PBAs are perhaps in her estimation females.

If this "gendered" interpretation were to be validated, it would certainly put an interesting spin on the conventional literature that insists Coso PBAs were undoubtedly all male shamans. We believe this interpretation is worthy of investigation and Maddock's volume provides an invaluable aid that can be considered with respect to such research issues relating to gender, agency and cosmology in the Coso archaic (Hays-Gilpin 2004; Molinar 2014).

Finally, we concur that the best way to conclude our summary and review of the Maddock book is to identify some of the more remarkable of her PBA line drawings that are so compelling, provocative and potentially informative.

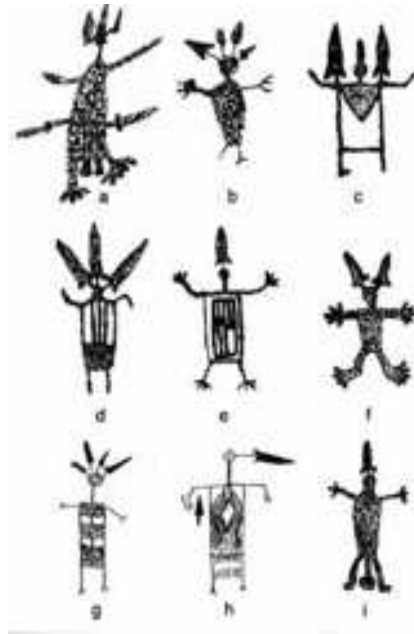


Figure1. Coso Patterned body anthropomorphs (PBAs) with projectile point adornments from Garfinkel and Pringle 2000. Figure a appears to us to be a female based on the depiction of her pendant labias. Figure i is perhaps another female as the form emanating from the figure's genitals has typically been considered the representation of a birth (see Slifer 2000:63, Figure 58b, 122e). Both a and i have rounded bodies also considered typically feminine attributes.

In the section of the book that centers on Ceremonial Implements, we see slender poles being held by PBA figures (Maddock 2015:17-28, Figures 7, 8 and 9). Some of these rods are topped by inverted triangles, spatulate orbs or diamond shaped appendages (Figure 7s, Figure 8 b, e, f, g, o, and p, Figure 9cc, ee, ff and Figure 10g; see below for in-text Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5). The latter appear to us to be somewhat akin to the implement carried by a petroglyph figure in Largo Canyon, New Mexico identified as *Ghanaskadi* by the Navajo (see below for an in-text illustration within the present review identified as Figure 8, leftmost figure). This wand and triangular appendage, in the latter instance, is sometimes conventionally identified as a seed-beater, digging stick or planting stick. This *Ghanaskadi* deity is known to the Navajo as the supernatural in charge of seeds and mist and indirectly rain and fertility.



Figure 2. Selected PBAs from Maddock 2015, left to right p. 22, Figure 8f; p. 23, Figure 8p; p. 21, Figure 7s



Figure 3. Selected PBAs from Maddock 2015, left to right p.22, Figure 8b; p. 22, Figure 8e; p. 23, Figure 8o



Figure 4. Selected PBAs from Maddock 2015, left to right p. 26, Figure 9cc; p. 26, Figure 9ff; p. 26, Figure 9ee



Figure 5. PBA from Maddock 2015, p. 29, Figure 10g

Figure 7h in the Maddock volume (below, 1st row leftmost figures) shows what appears to be mist, rain or seeds emanating from a seed beater, digging stick, or power wand. Maddock Figures 15d, k and o (below) all appear to inform the viewers that the Coso artist may have intended to create a portrait emphasizing the concepts of increase and a prayerful invocation for continued vitality and “life essence” employing what appears to be a depiction of rain, mist, or seeds - as Maddock (2015:23) similar alludes to in her narratives.

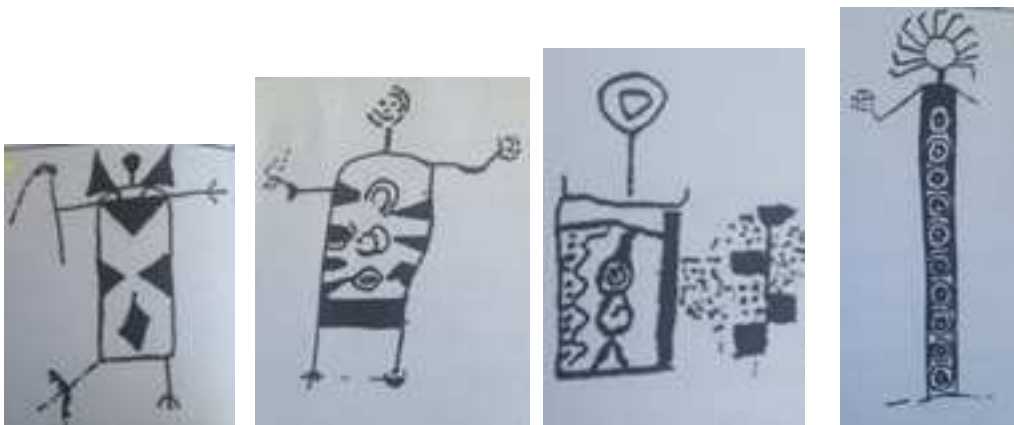


Figure 6. Selected PBAs from Maddock 2015, left to right, upper row: p. 20, Figure 7h; p. 40, Figure 15d, p. 41, Figure 15k; lower row, p. 41, Figure 15o

That same theme is perhaps evident in Maddock Figure 18i (below in-text Figure 7) that appears to depict a decorated animal-human and another smaller animal figure to the right, the larger decorated figure might be interpreted as in an adorational posture and the other smaller entity appears to be depositing seeds or mist into a basket. Could these Coso decorated, animal-human figures (the PBAs of the Cosos), besides representing shamans, also be representing an Animal Master or Mistress or perhaps even a God/Goddess of the Harvest? Such an assessment would certainly be innovative and provocative but yet also not inconsistent with various interpretations previously presented on this subject (Garfinkel 2006; Garfinkel and Austin 2011; Garfinkel et al. 2009; Molinar 2014; also see extended discussion by Slifer 2000:90-92).



Figure 7. Maddock 2015, p. 50, Figure 18i.

The senior author's research noted a surprising and surely remarkable similarity between what Grant and his associates described as an "unusual figure" found in Parrish Gorge of the Coso Range (Grant et al. 1968) and the Navajo petroglyph described above and found in Grant's (1978) book on the rock art of Canyon de Chelly (in text, Figure 8 below, left Navajo, figure right Coso Parrish Gorge). A side-by-side comparison of the figures immediately raises questions concerning the possibility of a cohesive visual culture that spans centuries of time and a rather large, multi-cultural region (Molinar n.d.).



Photo from Grant et al. 1968.

Figure 8. Side by side comparison. Leftmost figure of Ghanaskidi, Navajo Yei, Largo Canyon, New Mexico. Rightmost figure of Parrish Gorge Coso Region figurative panel in Parrish Gorge, Coso Range, California

On the feminine side there are a number of animal-human, images that do appear to us to be women. Figure 39s in the Maddock volume is what we feel could be interpreted as a female with what appears to be a similar hair-style akin to that of the Hopi "butterfly" or "squash blossom" hair whorls. This suggestion was also made (decades ago) in the Grant et al. Coso volume (Grant et al. 1968:122-124) and reiterated in an even more interesting set of comments penned by Julian Steward. He speculated that there might be an ancestral connection between early Coso ancient rock drawings and the historic Hopi as they may have migrated out of eastern California and into the American Southwest (cited and included in Grant et. al. 1968:124 as a personal communication from Julian Steward).



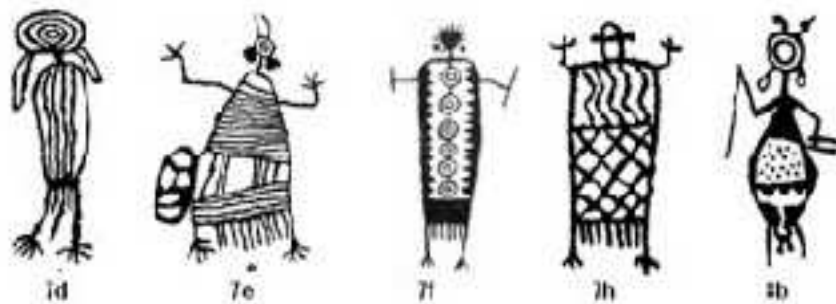
Figure 9, leftmost figure from Maddock 2015, p. 89, Figure 39s; right figure from Grant et al. 1968:122, a. Figure from northwestern Arizona with side-lock hair dressing originally identified as after Kidder and Guernsey 1919; b. Figure from Big Petroglyph Canyon, Coso Range, California.

Among the Uto-Aztecan affiliated Hopi we recognize what might be such a similar hair-style (if this is indeed a hair style as depicted in the Coso rock drawings). We recognize that this Hopi cultural element was an embellishment indicative of the coming of age of a post pubescent, yet unmarried, woman on her first menstruation.

The Coso imagery (Maddock 2015, Figure 39s above as Figure 9 leftmost figure) appears to have, what some might interpret, as such hair “buns” and also what certain rock art scholars have interpreted as a menstrual flow (cf. Slifer 2000:64-68, Figure 68; Figure 9 leftmost in-text illustration as above in this review).

In addition there are a number of PBAs that seem to convey a feminine body type (see above for the Projectile Point petroglyph animal-human figures, Figures 1a and i) particularly Figures 7e and 8b from the series illustrated below (Figure 10). Figure 8b appears to be holding dart fore-shafts and a long slender rod (*poro*) perhaps associated with the Mistress/Master of Game. What is even more interesting is that in lieu of the fringed skirt, this figure could readily be seen as in the last stages of pregnancy, if not in the act of giving birth (Molinar 2014).

Figure 10. Images compiled from Maddock 2015.



The Maddock study is a treasure and we recommend it heartily as an informative bounty full of delightful eye candy for those interested in art history, symbolism, iconography, the study of aboriginal rock art, and the emerging disciplines of visual culture and cognitive archaeology. Her volume provides a rich assemblage of images to be mined for its vast details which generate new paths towards our understanding of prehistoric cultural behaviors and also opens a small window to the minds and sensibilities of the ancient Coso artisans.

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