

Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project

Docent Resources

WELLS PETROGLYPH PRESERVE CHRISTIAN CROSSES AND OTHER HISTORIC RELIGIOUS IMAGES ON MESA PRIETA AND AREA

When Juan de Oñate arrived at Ohkay Owingeh on the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro in 1598, he carried with him not only Conquistadors, cattle, sheep, horses, carts and crops: he brought two new religions to this area.

As of mid-2013, perhaps as many as 1500 Christian crosses have been recorded on Mesa Prieta. As well, there are images of churches, priests, crucifixes and possible ChiRhos. The story of Crypto-Jews in New Mexico and elsewhere is beginning to be told: Mesa Prieta also has a few images of Stars of David and menoras. The interpretation of these images is not an exact science.

Crosses are found, often high up on the mesa, associated with trails, lambing pens and grazing areas. They may have been created as protective devices for sheep and shepherds and/or to celebrate religious events such as feasts and holy days. Crosses are often deeply pecked, sometimes with metal tools. They may also be abraded or scratched. They are usually of light repatination.

With the data we have in hand now, we understand that approximately 70% of Christian



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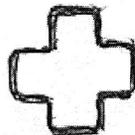
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crosses are Latin crosses, shown below at left. Many of these feature embellishments and variations to the top, transom and base, as well as overall style.

The second most popular style is the Greek cross, the first Christian cross pattern, with bars of equal length. \Categorizing these images as Christian crosses is problematical, as they are



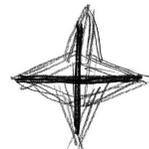
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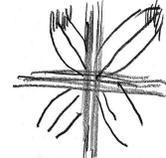
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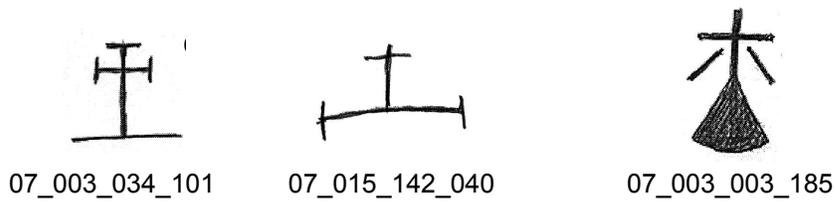


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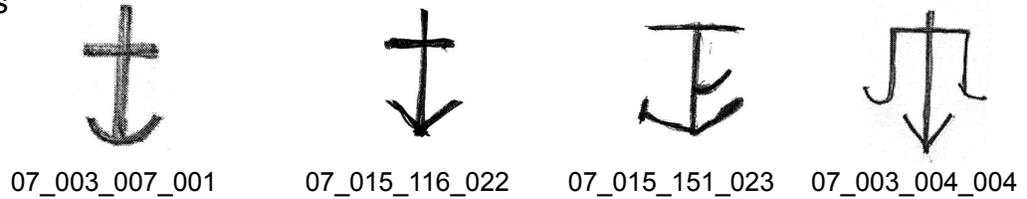
so similar to the Ancestral Tewa "cross or X" pattern. Associated factors must be taken into account: nearby images, repatination levels and method of manufacture. This is also true in categorizing the St Andrew's cross.

Other cross styles found on the mesa include:

The Altar Cross



The Anchor Cross



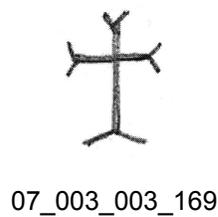
The Cross Crosslet



The Fleurie Cross



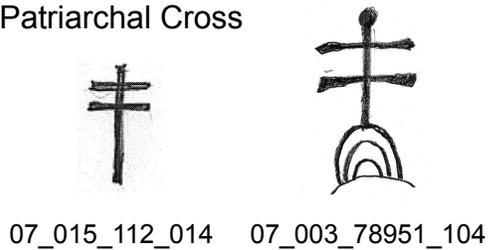
The Fourchette Cross



The Marian Cross



The Patriarchal Cross



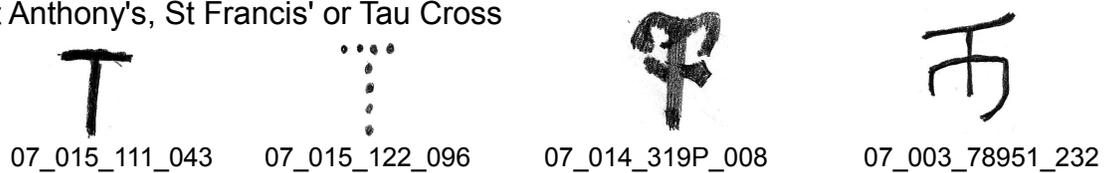
The Pommee Cross



The St Andrew's or Saltire Cross



The St Anthony's, St Francis' or Tau Cross



The St Nino's or Grapevine Cross



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07_015_148_053
upside down



07_001_12-01_007



07_001_12-02_007



07_015_157_014

The St John's, Maltese or Pattee Cross



07_015_122_091



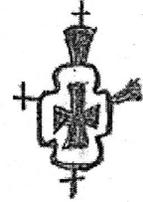
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07_015_157_004



07_014_315P_006



07_003_023_013

The Swastika



07_003_007_001

The Trefoil Cross



07_003_003_031

The Triumphant Cross



07_012_001_049



07_015_083_061

We also find:

Churches, imaged both as structures,



07_003_003_0130



07_003_003_035



07_003_003_072



07_014_319P_028



07_015_114_011

and as spur-like forms



07_015_151_003



07_003_78951_183



07_015_145_069

ChiRho (XP)

(the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek)



07_015_117_050



reversed
07_012_001_032

Calvary Trio



07_015_137_012



07_015_107_049



07_0115_099_059



07_015_113_001

Menora



07_003_031_026

Star of David



07_003_035_034