

The Kangaroo Group at Gum Tree Valley

MICHEL LORBLANCHET

Directeur de Recherches au CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, retired 1999),
Centre de Préhistoire du Pech Merle, Cabrerets, France, and, during the studies reported here:
Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, Australia (1974–1977)

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The Kangaroo Group site

The Kangaroo Group (GTVK) is situated, as is The Woman Group (GTVW), on the hilltops covered by the chaos of gabbro blocks dominating Gum Tree Valley in the south. It is 200 m to the west of GTVW. At between 60 and 65 m above sea level, it is about 15 m lower than the Woman Group. The site is composed of a plateau sloping slightly towards the west and facing west along a depression oriented north-northwest to south-southeast (Figs 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3).

The presence of small clusters of trees and bushes form islands in the middle of the block formation and characterize the site. My research has shown that some of these natural islands were being transformed into camp sites by the former inhabitants of the region. Importantly, the site included two living sites (Huts A and B), the second of which, Hut B, dominates the south-facing plateau and affords an extensive view of the marshy stretches of Fenner Creek, which today are the site of the salt works of the company ‘Dampier Salt’.

The petroglyphs located here, while thinly scattered in this area, form five secondary concentrations (Figs 5.1 and 5.4). The map of distribution of the petroglyphs (Fig. 5.4) reveals three major concentrations, numbered Groups I, II, III. Groups II and III are richer, each comprising 12 carved blocks, while Group I has only ten.

These concentrations of often huge carved blocks dominate depressions (*a–f* on the plan, Fig. 5.1). The depressions are characterized by blocks that are markedly smaller and are devoid of any petroglyphs.

The map of the distribution of the petroglyphs themselves (Fig. 5.4 lower) based upon the number of motifs on each stone slab, reveals the same concentrations and confirms that the richest grouping is Group II (the ‘contour level 10’ indicates that it has more than 50 petroglyphs). Group I is at

‘Level 9’ and Group III, ‘Level 7’. The centre of maximum density of the site, therefore, is located midway (about 20 m) between the two living sites, Huts A and B. The much less dense IV and V concentrations can be interpreted as satellites. There appears to be a connection between the living sites and some of the petroglyphs.

In addition, a standing stone, comparable to the two dressed stones at GTVW, is in evidence at the southeastern edge of the Group (indicated by asterisk on Fig. 5.4).

Finally, linked to the GTVK group is an isolated panel, south-facing and standing a few hundred metres from Hut B in an area where petroglyphs are very sparse. This deeply patinated example consists of five ‘human’ stick figures, in profile, deeply weathered, holding with extended ‘arms’ five ‘hooked boomerangs’ (Fig. 5.6). This impressive petroglyph is located on the general map of Skew Valley and Gum Tree Valley (Chapter 1, ‘13’ in Fig. 1.3), that is, among the isolated petroglyphs that are near but outside the main petroglyph clusters.

The Kangaroo Group Petroglyphs

Depictions of humans

The GTVK Group features 30 ‘human’ figures (Fig. 5.5). These represent a little more than one tenth of the total Kangaroo Group petroglyphs (Table 5.1). Depictions of human forms therefore are less abundant here compared with other zones of the Gum Tree Valley complex or the nearby Skew Valley Group. Among the regions studied, GTVK contains the fewest ‘human’ motifs. They are three to four times less numerous at GTVK than, for example, at Skew Valley, and at the entry to Gum Tree Valley (GTVS).

Their average length is 280 mm. The smallest figures