

The Woman Group at Gum Tree Valley

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LORBLANCHET, MICHEL. 2018. The Woman Group at Gum Tree Valley. In *Archaeology and Petroglyphs of Dampier (Western Australia), an Archaeological Investigation of Skew Valley and Gum Tree Valley*, ed. Graeme K. Ward and Ken Mulvaney, chapter 6, pp. 489–555. *Technical Reports of the Australian Museum, Online* 27, pp. 1–690.
<https://doi.org/10.3853/j.1835-4211.27.2018.1694>

The Woman Group site

The Woman Group at Gum Tree Valley (GTVW), is located on the rocky plateau that towers above Gum Tree Valley to the south. From here, the valley is not visible, but the vista extends to a grassy flat, about 100 m to the east, 300 m long and 150 m wide, which opens out amid a dark mass of gabbro blocks. Scatters of shells (*Anadara*) and tools have been noted on this open habitable area (Figs 6.1 and 6.2).

The site itself is formed of a scatter of enormous gabbro blocks, whose dimensions are generally greater than the blocks in the valley. Blocks several metres long are abundant; they are separated by deep crevices where some shells and the stone tools of the shell-gatherers who built the coastal middens have been preserved.

Here, unlike what was observed in the bottom of the valley, the GTVW petroglyphs, which total 396, mostly are positioned on the tops of blocks. They were produced by deep-pecking, and often are very weathered and difficult to see. Characteristics of the petroglyph motifs are summarized in the inventory (Table 6.1).

Topographically, the site includes a central depression dominated to the north and south by two parallel hillocks oriented west-east. The northern one is made up of very large blocks, and this has the most important carvings.

Two upright stones, formed by natural pillars driven into a crevice and supported by small blocks stacked around their bases, exist in the north and the south of the Group. The area sampled includes an assemblage of petroglyphs concentrated within a rectangular area about 50 × 30 m.

Distribution maps of petroglyphs and equi-density patterns (Fig. 6.3) show seven sub-groups (Groups I to VII), the five most important of which (I to V) are located

on the northern hillock and aligned east-west following the contours. By contrast, Group VI is located in the depression. The various sub-groups and blocks supporting petroglyphs are listed in Table 6.2.

In addition, two carved, upright solitary stones (SSI and SS2) form a small core satellite in the southeast (Fig. 6.4). These two standing stones are located at the northern margin (SSI) and toward the south (SS2) of the Group.

The Woman Group petroglyphs

Depictions of humans

A total of 102 ‘human’ motifs has been recorded at GTVW. These represent more than a quarter of the total number of Woman Group petroglyphs. They are the dominant representations and their preponderance is very clear. They form a smaller category than that of the Eagle Group and that at the top of Gum Tree Valley. Their average height is 316 mm (Table 6.3).

The histogram (Fig. 6.5) shows the distribution of proportions of occurrence of 27 size classes of motif heights (horizontal (X) axis = size categories in 50 mm increments (Category 1 = 50–100 mm; Category 23 = 1150–1200 mm; vertical (Y) axis = percentage of heights in each size class). The result is characterized primarily by its spread, showing that the dimensions vary widely—the range of variation is 1110 mm and the standard deviation is 182.2—although the tendency is toward lesser heights.

The presence of two main peaks, one for heights ranging from 200–250 mm (Category 4), and another for heights of 300–350 mm (Category 6) reveals the heterogeneity of the heights of the GTVW ‘human’ motifs.