Technical Reports of the Australian Museum, Online (2018) No. 27, pp. 557–668.
ISSN 1835-4211 (online)
https://doi.org/10.3853/j.1835-4211.27.2018.1695

The Summit of Gum Tree Valley[1]

Michel Lorblanchet

Directeur de Recherches au CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scentifique, 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)

Lorblanchet, Michel. 2018. The Summit of 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 7, with addenda by Jacques Evin and George Kendrick, pp. 557–668. *Technical Reports of the Australian Museum, Online* 27, pp. 1–690. https://doi.org/10.3853/j.1835-4211.27.2018.1695

The Gum Tree Valley Top Group

The group called 'Gum Tree Valley Top' occupies the zone uphill from the valley right up to its eastern extremity—the Summit of Gum Tree Valley. Stretching over 270 m in length, it reaches as far as the saddle, which is 70 m in altitude. This overlooks the marshy areas of Fenner Creek that are accessible by a steep ravine that falls sharply away to the East (Figs 7.1–7.4).

This part of the valley becomes much narrower and, at the bottom of the slope, the width is reduced to about 10 m (Fig. 7.1). Here, there is a considerable increase in the incidence of carvings (which appear at the start of this narrowing). All the carved surfaces were itemized and photographed, and almost all were traced, using the methods described earlier (Chapter 1: *Methodology*).

My study of the 105 carved surfaces resulted in recordings of 418 graphic units; all were examined in detail. Artefacts (379 stone tools and flakes) were listed, described and plotted on a map and left as found on the site. The same was done for about 50 shells. The overall map of the site (Fig. 7.4) shows the locations of the carved blocks, which are numbered from 1–102; the incidence of the stone artefacts, numbered from 1–379; and the small mass of shell fragments (300 g in all).

The comparison of density curves (according to Jekhowsky's (1964) method) of the carvings, artefacts, and shell fragments produced the following results (Fig. 7.5):

1 The majority (73%) of the carved blocks is situated on the southern slopes, and the remainder on the northern slopes. This contrast between the number of carvings on the northern and southern slopes also was found in other areas of Gum Tree Valley. The southern faces, which get more sunshine, have the larger proportions of carvings. This observation supports the idea that the site was mostly frequented during the winter months (we will return to this), whereas in summer, the heat plus the radiation from the rocks made a stay of any length of time unbearable at the bottom of the valley;

2 The distribution of the carved blocks across 12 heterogeneous groups of various carvings (I to XII) is shown in Table 7.1. Groups I and II, at the centre of the site, are the most compact. The first group stretches over 30 m around an artificial mound and a standing stone (Panel 10 {p. 623}). It is made up of 29 carved blocks. The second cluster is situated about 50 m east of the former, and is a small group of about 12 m in length, consisting of only 12 carved slabs. All groups are listed in Table 7.1. A few carvings are set apart (Figs 7.4 and 7.7). Panel 29 {p. 634} is at the far eastern end of the summit; Panel 68 {p. 654} is halfway up the southern slope, and Panel 82 {p. 660} on the northern slope; and

3 Artefacts are most numerous in the bottom of the thalweg (the longitudinal outline of the dry riverbed) at the foot of the slopes, but they are present also in the fissures and gaps between the carved blocks. Their distribution, which is heterogeneous, reproduces almost exactly that of the carvings (Fig. 7.5). There are seven distinct clusters. Clusters A and C, the most important, correspond to Group I of the carvings, which is also the densest.

Artefact Clusters B, D, E and F correspond respectively to the carvings Groups V, II, VI and III (Fig. 7.5). Cluster G is small, and only noticeable by an indentation in the density