



# SLAKAIYA ROCK (CA-TRI-1): A REDISCOVERED PETROGLYPH SITE NEAR THE EEL RIVER, TRINITY COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

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*An outstanding petroglyph site (CA-TRI-1) recently was rediscovered by an archaeologically trained CDF for-  
ester during his inspection of a timber-harvesting project along the Eel River in Trinity County, California.  
Subsequent archaeological survey of the area by the authors resulted in the identification of a major archaeo-  
logical site containing two panels of petroglyphs, which display elaborate, multiple, superimposed elements  
representing six discrete styles. Three housepits, a midden deposit, and an abundant scatter of chipped and  
ground stone artifacts were also recorded. The site had first been discovered in 1913 by a U.S. Government  
engineer, but its exact location remained obscure for over 80 years until the recent rediscovery. This paper  
reviews the history of the site, describes its rock art panels, and interprets their styles and cultural affinities  
through comparison with other petroglyph sites in northwestern California.*

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## Introduction

Every California archaeologist can recall a dozen instances when the "system" broke down, where a valuable site was mangled because a small step in the planning flow chart was bypassed or forgotten, or where, because of lack of time or funds, research failed to be conducted before an important archaeological site was damaged or destroyed. For those of us who work in public agency archaeology, this is an all too common occurrence, and we are numbed by a series of regular "losses."

Occasionally, however, public agency archaeologists report a success - a rare example where vigilance, training, sound environmental planning, and individual effort combine to produce gratifying results. It is also a rare thing to report the rediscovery of a site that has been lost to science for 80 years, but the finding of the *Slakaiya Rock* petroglyphs is one such example. In this paper we describe the site's environmental and ethnographic setting, its unique history and early recording, and account for its disappearance from the archaeological record. Finally, we summarize its rediscovery and present a complete documentation of the site, its rock art panels, and propose a classification of six distinctive styles.

## Environmental Setting

The *Slakaiya Rock* petroglyph site (CA-TRI-1) is located in a cluster of boulders on a stream terrace above the east bank of the Main Fork of the Eel River

in southernmost Trinity County. The site lies in extremely rugged and isolated terrain, in a deep canyon, a few miles north of the Mendocino county line (Figure 1). The site is reached by a two-hour drive from Garberville; the last twenty miles or so being traversed on private roads.

This portion of the Eel River canyon is deeply carved and spectacular. In early November, after a dry fall, the main course of the Eel is only 18 inches deep at the site. Scour marks on the nearby banks, however, reveal a height of nearly 20 feet during peak flows. The riverbed is studded with highly polished boulders including sandstone, shale, schist, and serpentine. These are derived from blocks within the Franciscan assemblage (Strand 1962). The schist boulders, on which the petroglyphs are found, appear to be rich in glaucophane, chlorite, and talc, and are of variable hardness. The steep banks are broken only by small tributaries that cascade into the larger stream. Aside from the river itself, the terrain is dominated by Moose Peak (1787 feet amsl) and Little Moose Peak (1650 feet). The latter is the prominent feature to the east and only a half-mile distant. Site CA-TRI-1 lies at about 520 feet elevation.

An oak-woodland vegetation community surrounds the site. Dominant trees are Oregon white oak (*Quercus garryana*), black oak (*Q. kelloggii*), live oak (*Q. wislizenii*), California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), pepperwood (*Umbellularia californica*), madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), and scattered conifers.

The understory is composed of manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* sp.), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversiloba*), and elderberry (*Sambucus* sp.). This area is particularly rich in native foods. These include abundant anadromous fish including salmon and steelhead trout, and diverse terrestrial resources including deer, quail, acorns, pine nuts, grasshoppers, elderberries, buck-eye nuts, and a variety of grass seeds.

### Ethnographic Setting

*Slakaiya Rock* is situated in the territory of the Eel River Wailaki, one of the three major tribelets of the Wailaki people (Elsasser 1978:190-191). The Wailaki, until the mid-nineteenth century, occupied a series of villages along the upper Main Fork of the Eel River, Kekawaka Creek, and most of the Eel's North Fork. The Wailaki were southern Athabaskans who controlled the uppermost Eel drainage to Big Bend, the recognized boundary of Yuki territory (Kroeber 1925). Wailaki economy centered around salmon fishing during winter and hunting and foraging during the other seasons. They had intimate knowledge of their homeland, making abundant use of its rich resources. Powers (1877:117) noted their particular prowess in hunting deer by running them down; this was accomplished by a relay team who alternated hunters chasing their prey until it could be dispatched by clubbing.

In his detailed study of the Wailaki, Goddard (1923:108) was able to account for eighteen separate political units within the group. Each had its own chief, defined territory, hunting and fishing grounds, and capital winter village. The river formed a boundary between groups who held lands to the ridge tops on opposite sides. A total of sixty-six winter villages were still remembered into the second decade of the twentieth century, and the names of many smaller hamlets and places were also recorded.

*Slakaiya Rock* is located within the tribelet territory inhabited by the Slakaiya (or Seyadankaiya). Their upstream neighbors were the Baskaiya; downstream were the Chiskokaiya. The Setakaiya held the west side of the river to the ridgeline forming the west margin of the Eel River canyon. Unfortunately, while Slakaiya tribelet village locations were not precisely pinpointed by Goddard, he does provide their sequence (1923:104) along the east bank (from the upstream boundary):

*akyank'at* — "right here on (?)" a village some distance north of the boundary creek on the river. The

Baskaiya tribelet occupied the area upstream.

*nattalininki* — "step over creek trail" a village taking its name from the creek immediately north of it.

*tcolatcebannan* — "graveyard hillside" about a half mile north of the above creek, near the river.

*taggaskotan* — "cottonwood trail down" some half mile down the river.

*tosekyok'at* — a large village a quarter of a mile downstream.

*t'otcallackyoki* — "grass sour large tail" a village on the north side of a tributary creek.

*sketeclkascanan* — "mush throw away sunny place" a large village a little ways downstream situated at the top of a bank of rock. "The name refers to a place where Panther, in mythical times, threw away mush he had carried on a hunt until he was tired. The mush-like substance appearing on the face of the rock each spring indicates by its thickness the abundance of the year's acorn crop. This substance was washed away during the winter. The rock where this happens is sandstone, and the mush-like substance appeared to contain iron, probably soluble in the winter rains."

*lekk'at* — "smoke on" a village an eighth of a mile downstream.

*kaslenkyobi* — "spring large in" a good rock shelter where a family used to spend the winter. This is on the east side of the river and close to *lekk'at*. Captain Jim, Goddard's informant, was forced to leave his father-in-law to die there when being pursued by white men years earlier.

*kaslenkyodan* — "spring large place" a nearby village on the bank of the river.

*kaitcdantadan* — "Christmas berries place" a village situated a short distance north near the bend of the river towards the west. This is the most northerly of the Slakaiya hamlets. There was a graveyard about a quarter of a mile north of this small village. The northern boundary is marked by a tributary creek, *tciskot*.

In summary, the Slakaiya tribelet was one of 18 autonomous Wailaki groups who occupied both sides of the Eel, fished from small winter villages, and ranged up to the ridge crest during other seasons. Goddard estimates a population of 15 to 30 persons per village throughout the drainage, and an overall population of 1000 to 2000 (1923:108). While Goddard was able to identify specific named village sites, use areas and topographic features for neighboring tribelets, this could not be done for the Slakaiya. We do have the geographic sequence of villages, but no confirmation

of their exact position or number. A trail along the east bank of the Eel River connected these villages, graveyards and use areas. The upstream and downstream boundaries were marked by specific tributary creeks (Goddard 1923).

Given Goddard's (1923:104) references to Slakaiya hamlets such as *kaslenkyobi*, a place with "a good rock shelter" and *sketeclkascanan*, a village with a large ceremonial rock, the occurrence of an important petroglyph site in a rock shelter setting should not be a surprise. It would appear that important ceremonial activity occurred in the immediate vicinity, and while rock art was not specifically mentioned by either Powers (1877) or Goddard (1923), the Slakaiya maintained a mythological connection between Panther and an important rock feature near the *Slakaiya Rock* petroglyph site.

#### Site Description

*Slakaiya Rock* (CA-TRI-1) is a major hamlet on the east side of the Eel River north of its confluence with a small tributary stream. It covers an area some 105 by 55 meters (m) in an open forest setting with numerous large schist, serpentine and sandstone boulders. Three probable housepits are visible on a narrow terrace above the tributary; they average some 3m in diameter and 60 centimeters (cm) deep and seem to be intact. A single midden deposit was noted at the base of a high rock. This area contains dark ashy soil, lithic debris and thermally altered rock, and is located midway between the housepits and the boulders displaying the petroglyphs.

A light scatter of lithics covers the entire site area. Most artifacts seen were chert flakes, although many formed tools were also observed. Artifacts were exposed in game trails, in erosional gullies, and on much of the exposed surface of the site. A green chert projectile point of the Gunther series, several chert biface fragments and projectile point tips, and a wide array of scraping tools and debris were observed. The midsection of a large sandstone pestle was also found. Distinguishing this site from the many other Late Prehistoric Eel River sites, and setting it apart, is the presence of two extensive rock art panels. During the second decade of the twentieth century, one of these panels attracted the attention of an employee of the U.S. government.

#### History of Site Documentation

The largest rock art panel (Panel 1) at *Slakaiya Rock* was first discovered in 1913 by Mr. O. W. Degen, a civil engineer employed by the U.S. War Department. Degen made his discovery while surveying along the Eel River

for construction of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad and the mile-long Island Mountain Tunnel, which was completed the following year, in 1914 (Carranco and Beard 1981:312). He reported his find in two letters to Dr. A. L. Kroeber of the University of California during October, 1913 (Connick 1973). With the exception of the deletion of specific Section numbers (to avoid disclosing confidential site locations), Degen's two letters are quoted verbatim as follows:

Dear Sir: Enclosed you will find a photograph of hieroglyphic writings on a large granite rock near the entrance to some caves found in Trinity County. As near as I've been able to find out, this rock has never been examined by scientists, or its location been known except to one lone settler. The rock in question had to be cleaned of moss before the inscription could be brought out clear. The inscription seems to depict the mythology of the Wailaki Indians. The upper lines represent two snakes, the other figures representing man in dead and life position, deer, trees, other snakes and various other subjects. I also found the remains of a large Indian village with lots of caves formed by boulders and large rocks hollowed out for grinding acorn flour. I would like to find if this rock is known by the University or if it has ever been explored.

Dear Sir: In reply to your letter of Oct. 23 in regards to the photo I sent you of the inscribed rock in Trinity County, the rock is located in T[ ]S, R[ ]E, Section[ ] on the north side of the Eel River on the 30,000-acre ranch of Mr. Spring, the Oakland banker. The rock is about sixty yards from the bank of the river amongst a large lot of boulders; right here was a large Indian village. The Eel River is very wide at this place and must have been alive with fish; close by are three large boulder caves formed by large number of boulders where I found all kinds of arrow heads and remains of deer horns, etc., also a large number of mounts. About 1/2 mile north of this rock is the largest of these caves where a horse can be driven in. The boulder with the hieroglyphic inscription is about 16 feet wide and 12 feet high with a very hard polished face. The inscription takes up nearly the entire face. There seems to be a small piece of rock split off in the right hand corner. I enclose

an enlarged photo of this rock for record in the museum. The scratches near the bottom of the center were made by Indians sharpening arrowheads, etc. The inscription is made many hundreds of years ago. If the rock was cleaned by acid all the inscriptions would be brought out clear. The second photo I enclose is of a large Indian acorn flourmill with 2 holes cut into the rock and a large roasting space between. This rock I found in amongst the remains of a large Indian village on the north bank of the North Eel River in T[ ]S, R[ ]E, Section [ ] adjoining [ ]. Here once a large settlement of Indians existed—what accounts for the large number of mounts and rock caves. This section is very interesting, besides here where natural fastness of large perpendicular rocks easy to defend when attacked. Near here is a large open field where arrowheads could be picked up by the dozens. I am naturally interested in these relics as I have a large Indian collection myself. Hoping this will interest you (Connick 1973).

Kroeber was indeed interested in Degen's information. He transmitted the material to Pliny Earle Goddard, who at that time was one of Kroeber's graduate students, and who was studying the Wailaki. Goddard shared Degen's information with Julian H. Steward, who was compiling his pioneering inventory of rock art sites in California and adjoining states. *Slakaiya Rock* was listed in Steward's (1929) landmark inventory as site PT.2; one of Degen's photographs is included as Plate 22a.

The University of California Archaeological Survey was created in July, 1948 under the direction of Robert Heizer; Franklin Fenenga and Francis Riddell served as archaeologists. The initial objective of the inventory was to compile site record forms and assign designations to archaeological sites identified in existing literature. One such site was Steward's PT.2. Although the archaeological site record form for CA-TRI-1 lists Goddard as the recorder and November 8, 1913 as the date it was recorded, the form was actually prepared by Fenenga and Riddell in 1948 without having revisited the site (Francis Riddell: personal communication). The November 8, 1913 date was documented by Steward (1929: 57) as the date of Goddard's letter, which transmitted to him Degen's information and photographs. Of course, all this came about before there were accurate USGS topographic quadrangles

to plot site locations, and when such maps did become available, the exact position of CA-TRI-1 on a USGS quadrangle was unclear.

In 1973, Robert Connick, a chemistry professor at the University of California at Berkeley and an active rock art enthusiast, relocated the site using Steward's information and Degen's letters. Professor Connick took color slides of Panel 1 and compiled field notes during his survey. Although Professor Connick did not find the moss-covered petroglyphs now identified as Panel 2, he did discover a cupule boulder on the edge of the river a short distance below the site. Professor Connick, however, did not transmit his information to the California Archaeological Inventory, and the exact location of site CA-TRI-1 remained uncertain for another twenty years.

From 1980 to 1993, Dave Drennan, a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) with an active interest in local archaeology, and who has received archaeological training from CDF, searched for the site during his reviews of numerous CDF projects in the area northeast of Island Mountain. Unfortunately, without accurate site location information, he could not relocate Degen's petroglyphs. The reason Drennan failed to find CA-TRI-1 is that he was searching in an area some five miles northeast of its actual location. Inaccurate "corrections" made to the site record subsequent to its first recording erroneously placed the site in the wrong Section. Finally, in October, 1993, Drennan rediscovered the main petroglyph panel during an inspection of a timber-harvesting plan along the Eel River. He organized an archaeological survey team including the authors to conduct a reconnaissance of the site area and to prepare a complete record of the site and its petroglyphs. This task was completed in November, 1993 (Foster et al. 1993). We named the site *Slakaiya Rock* in honor of the Wailaki tribelet that inhabited this section of the Eel River canyon. Photographs confirm that *Slakaiya Rock* is the same site discovered by Degen in 1913, reported by Steward (1929:57) as PT.2, and formally designated as CA-TRI-1 by Fenenga and Riddell in 1948.

#### Recording Methods

On November 9, 1993, a survey party consisting of Drennan, the authors, and CDF Forester Ernie Rohl, waded across the Eel River to evaluate the site. An intensive reconnaissance of the immediate area was

conducted as well as a brief search for the pitted boulder petroglyph reported by Professor Connick to occur nearby. Approximately six hours were spent surveying and recording the site; its location was accurately plotted on a USGS topographic map, and a detailed site map was prepared. Diagnostic artifacts were examined and illustrated but not collected. A careful inspection was made of both rock art panels and numerous photographs (color slides, color prints, and black and white prints) were taken. Finally, a detailed recording of the petroglyphs was made using large 3-millimeter (mm) plastic sheets and felt markers (Figure 2). A tracing of both panels was made, maintaining accurate scale and groupings of elements. The plastic sheets were later reduced to 8 1/2 by 11-inch size at an engineering blueprint laboratory to produce a complete, highly accurate, scaled illustration of both petroglyph panels (Figures 3 and 4).

#### Description of Rock Art Panels

Two separate rock art panels were found at the *Slakaiya Rock* site and both appear to be in nearly pristine condition. The only evidence of either natural or cultural deterioration was the presence of modern letters "RA" and "A" carved into Panel 1 above the prehistoric carvings. This graffiti does not appear in either of Degen's two photographs but does appear in one of Connick's photographs so it must have been created between 1913 and 1973.

#### Slakaiya Rock Panel 1

The largest and most elaborate rock art panel at *Slakaiya Rock* (Panel 1) occurs on a vertical surface of a large schist boulder at the north end of the site. Part of the panel is located within a rock shelter, although it also extends outside on a fully exposed vertical rock surface. Panel 1 measures 253 cm from side to side and 150 cm from ground level up to its top. The panel contains a complex grouping of pecked abstract curvilinear figures overlain by a multitude of both shallow and deeply cut incised lines. Numerous examples of superimposition indicate that the two styles of incised line petroglyphs were carved into the rock after the pecked designs were created. The panel is dominated by numerous large, pecked, abstract curvilinear motifs formed by tightly clustered pecking, probably made by punch and hammer stone. These figures include long wavy lines, "zigzags", circles, linked circles, linked diamonds, "tally mark" designs

and other more abstract shapes (Figures 5, 6 and 7).

A total of 39 "dot" or small circular elements are pecked into Panel 1. These range in size from 1.0 to 2.4 cm in diameter but most are smaller than 2.0 cm and are about 0.4 cm deep. These are linear arrangements of small pecked dots, different from the cupule petroglyphs found at Panel 2 and other cupule sites in northwestern California, as they differ in size, spatial patterning, and method of creation. Many of these dots are clustered to form orderly rows forming zig-zag motifs. The individual dots appear to have been created by 10-16 impacts by punch and hammer (Figure 8).

In addition to the controlled pecking which formed dots and abstract curvilinear elements and motifs described above, Panel 1 also contains areas of extensive pecking, which did not produce designs. Hundreds of individual dints occur, sometimes clustered into groups, but often, the appearance is given that the aboriginal artist made no attempt to form an element or motif. The tight clustering of peck marks indicates that some of the elements at Panel 1 were made with a punch (possibly an antler tip) struck with a stone or bone hammer. This left a small, sharp individual peck-mark. Other elements appear to have been pecked "free hand" without the aid of a punch. Some of the peck marks have a small "tail" as though they were made with a glancing blow to the punch tool that caused it to be deflected horizontally. One grouping of these marks clearly indicates this was deliberately done, perhaps for artistic effect (Figure 9).

A multitude of fine scratched lines occurs on Panel 1. These appear to have been formed by a single stroke or scratch made with a sharp-edged stone tool, perhaps a chert flake or biface (Figure 10). Like the deeply incised lines, which sometimes occur in the same groupings, these line figures occur in tight parallel clusters and are vertical; oriented perpendicular to the ground surface. They differ, however, in method of manufacture: only a single scratch is made, not the repeated cuttings executed to form the deeply incised lines. They also differ in that oblique orientation of clustered lines occurs. Also, there are locations at Panel 1 where only fine lines exist with no other motifs. These clues suggest that the fine line petroglyphs could represent a style distinctive from the deeply incised line petroglyphs.

Dozens of deeply incised lines occur at Panel 1 (Figure 11). These are nearly identical to the incised

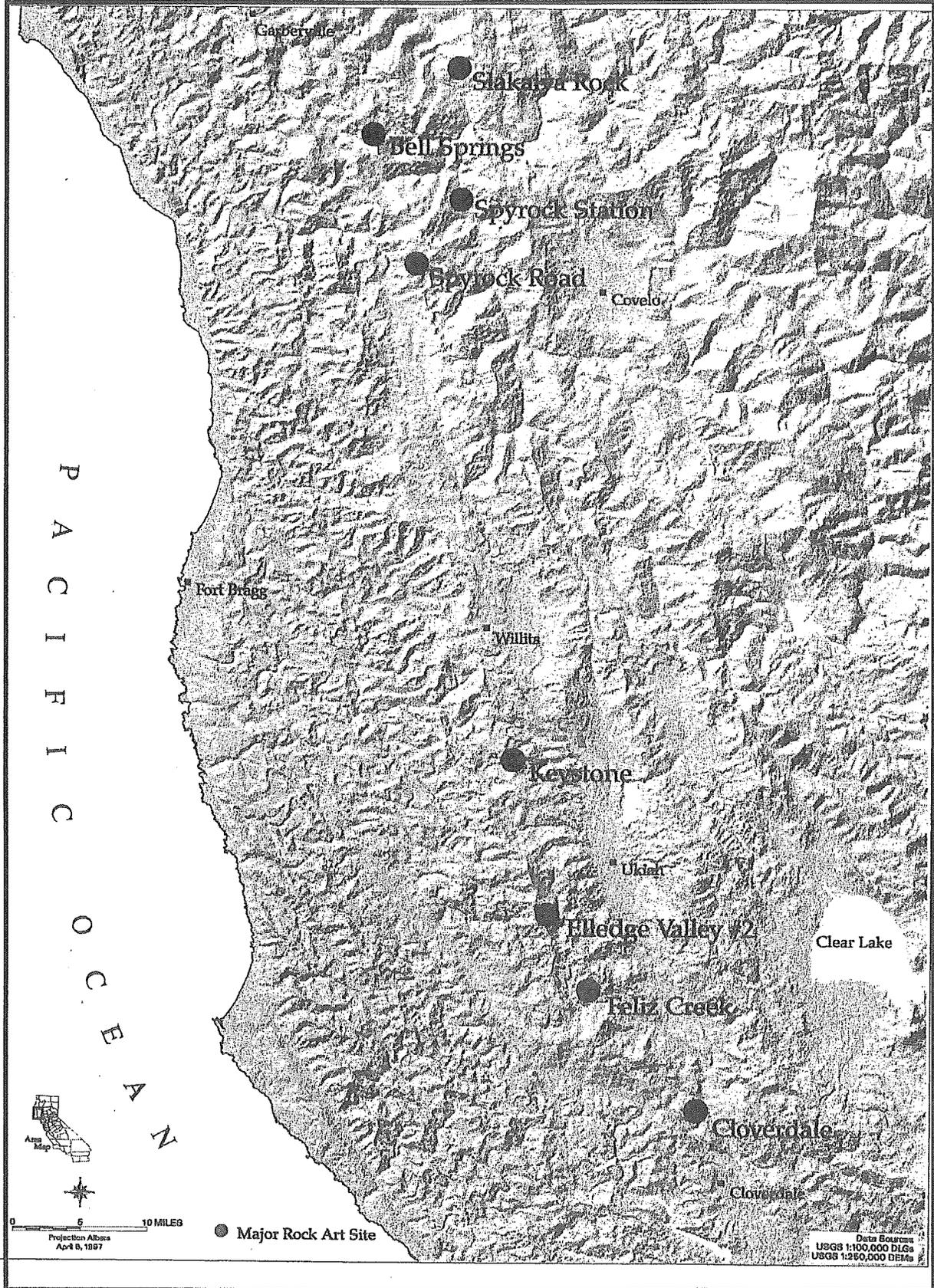


Figure 1: Discussed site locations.

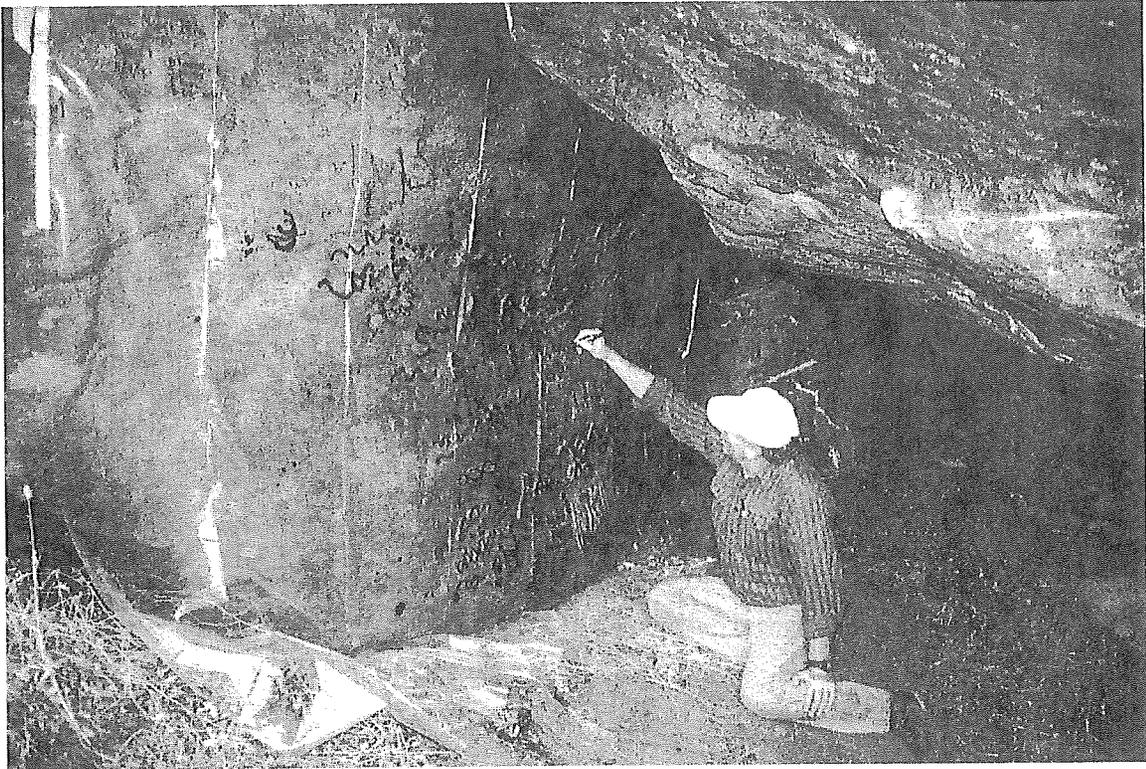


Figure 2: Recording procedure used at Panel 1. The petroglyphs were traced onto a 3 mm plastic sheet using felt markers.

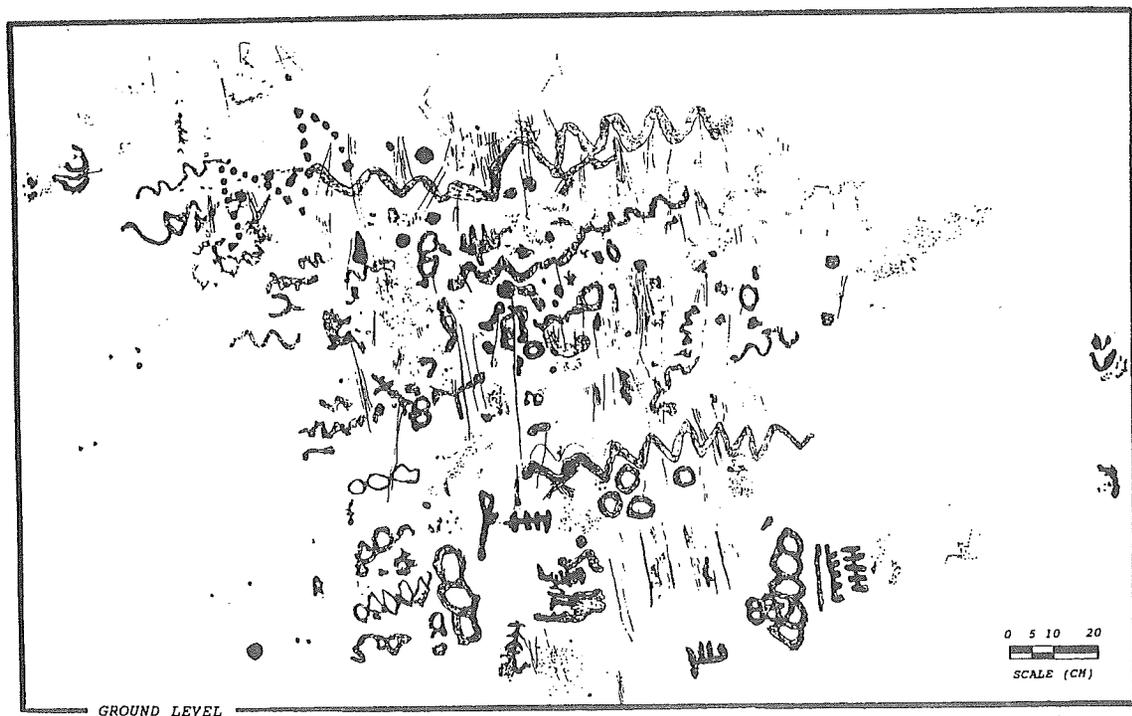


Figure 3: Illustration of petroglyphs at Slakaiya Rock, Panel 1.

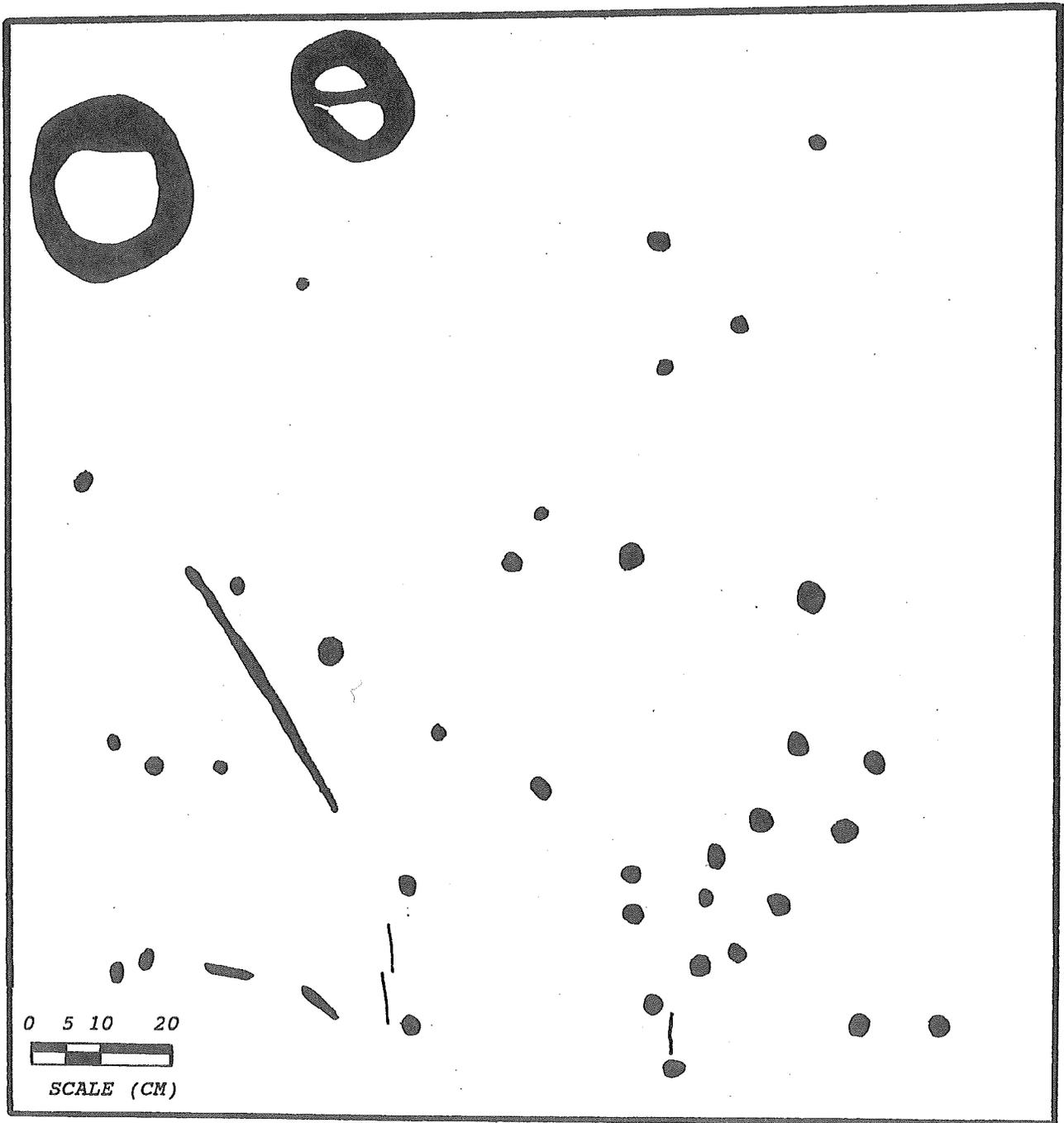
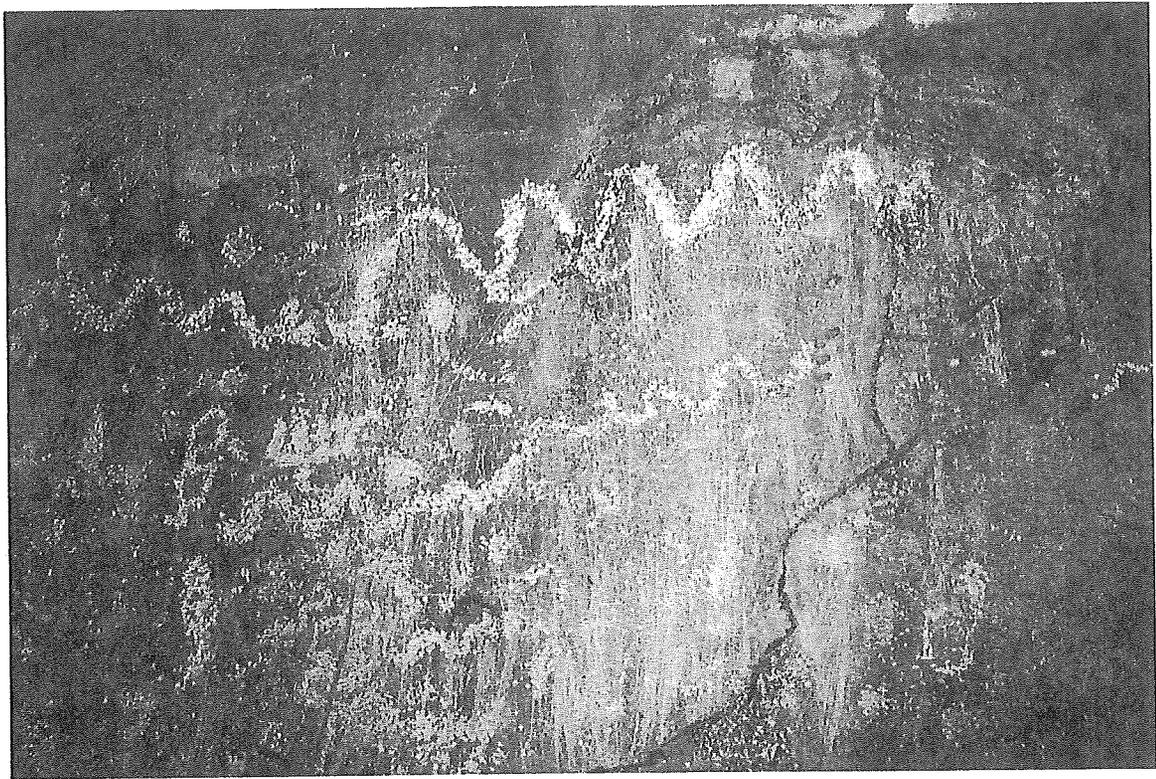
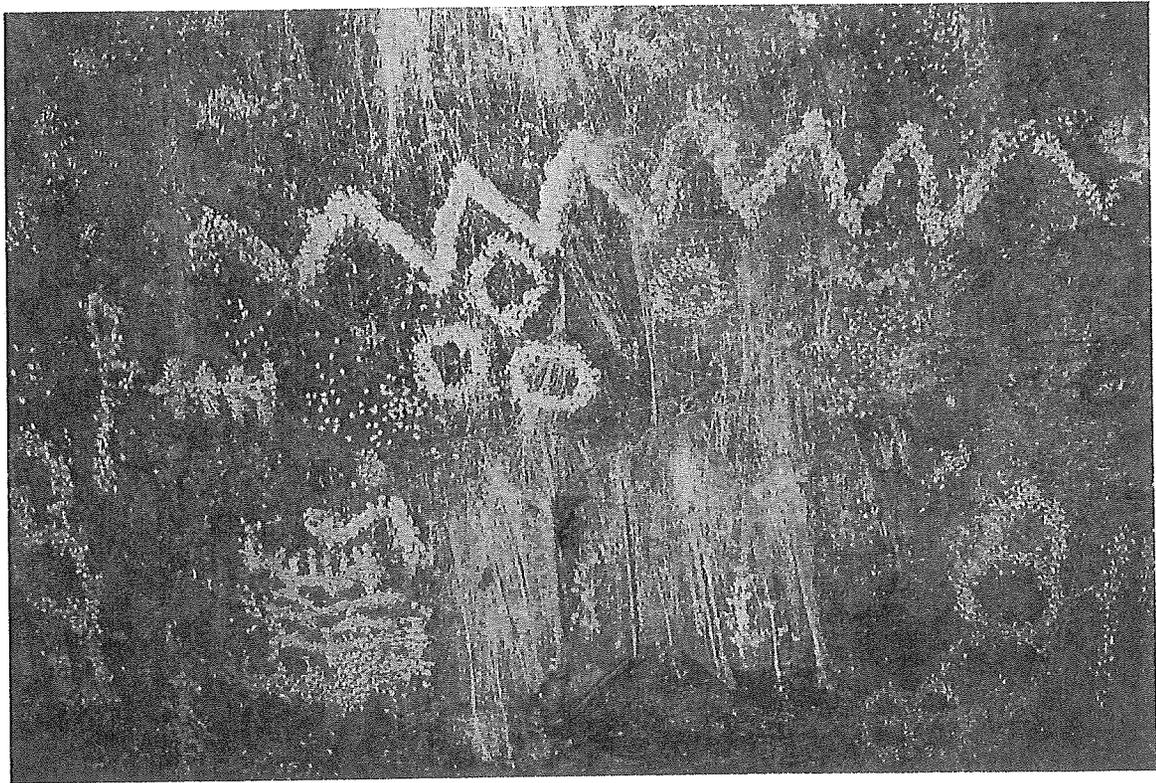


Figure 4: Illustration of petroglyphs at Slakaiya Rock, Panel 2.



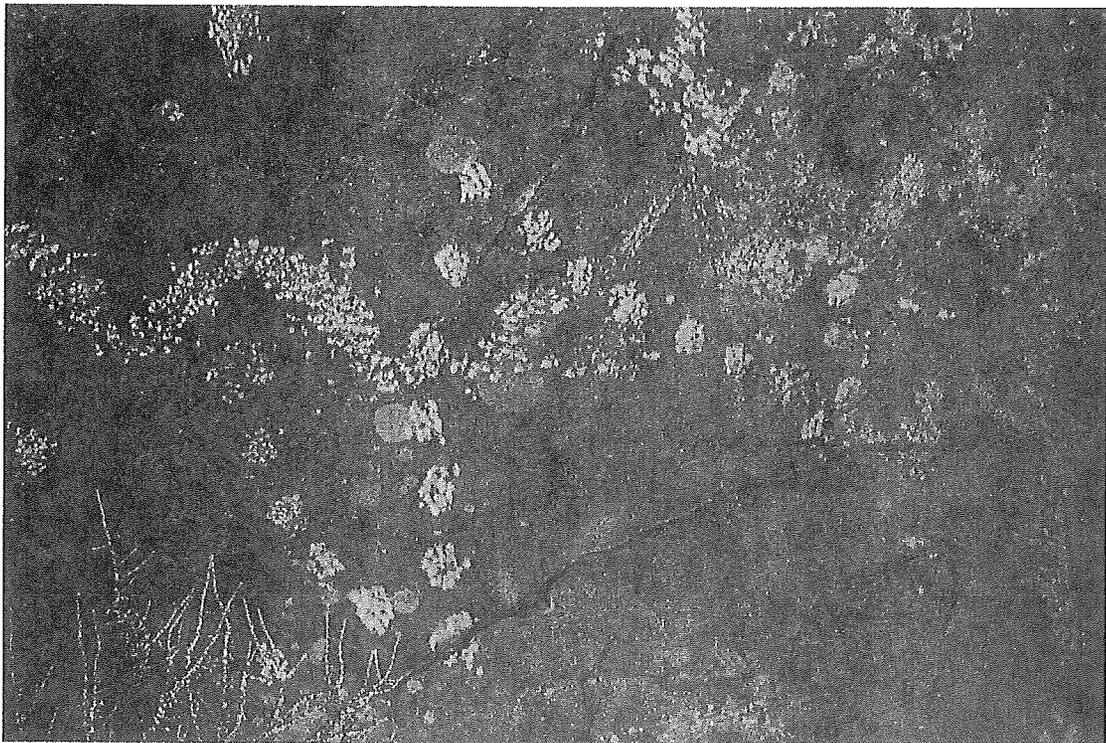
**Figure 5:** Pecked abstract curvilinear petroglyphs (SR Style 4) at the top of Panel 1. Note the wavy lines, rows of dots and abstract shapes.



**Figure 6:** Pecked abstract curvilinear petroglyphs (SR Style 4) in the center of Panel 1. Motifs include “zigzags,” circles, linked circles and extensive pecked areas.



**Figure 7: Pecked abstract curvilinear petroglyphs (SR Style 4) in the lower left Portion of Panel 1. Motifs include more linked circles, linked diamonds, "tally marks" and abstract shapes.**



**Figure 8: Rows of pecked dots (SR Style 4) at the top of Panel 1. These dots are arranged to form a large "zigzag" motif.**

line petroglyphs found at numerous sites in northwestern California, especially farther south in Mendocino and Sonoma counties (Heizer and Clewlow 1973; Clewlow 1978). These are deeply cut lines, probably made with a chert biface, and consistently oriented perpendicular to the ground surface. One prominent line is 71 cm long, 1.5 cm wide, and 1.0 cm deep, forming a sharp, "V-shaped" profile. These figures often cut through earlier petroglyphs, the superimposition suggesting at least two episodes of petroglyph making by Native Americans.

#### Slakaiya Rock Panel 2

Panel 2 is a small, moss-covered grouping of deeply abraded petroglyphs. It occurs on the opposite side of the same complex of boulders at the northeast end of the stream terrace and is markedly different from Panel 1. The pecked abstract curvilinear art, deeply incised lines, and fine scratched lines common at the larger panel are completely absent. Differences in subject matter, relative repatination, and method of execution are also readily apparent. Prior to its discovery this panel was completely concealed by a 2 cm-thick layer of moist green moss. The rock revealed a grouping of cupules, grooved circles, and grooved lines. The panel containing the petroglyphs measures 147 by 135 cm on a gently sloping, nearly vertical surface of a large schist boulder. It extends 16 cm below the present ground surface.

Two large circular elements, situated side by side on the upper portion of the panel, have been deeply abraded into the boulder (Figure 12). One of the elements is formed by a deep, wide circular groove, which encompasses a bulbous center. The largest of these two petroglyphs measures 27 by 24 cm; the groove is 5 to 8 cm wide and 3 to 5 cm deep. Its center measures 13 by 15 cm. As is the case with many of these distinctive grooved carvings, the center of the large one at Panel 2 appears to have been partially hollowed (quarried) in a manner similar to that described at Swallow Rock (Foster and Betts 1994) and several similar sites in northwestern California (Parkman 1993). The smaller example is 20 cm away from the larger one. It measures 19 by 16 cm, with a groove ranging from 3.5 cm to 5.5 cm wide and 3 to 4 cm deep. Its center measures 11 by 7 cm. Although it has not been hollowed, it exhibits an unusual grooved line, which bisects the raised center.

Thirty-six cupules are found at the Panel 2, occurring in a randomly scattered grouping extending from

the pair of grooved circles down to and even slightly below the present ground surface. Like all of the petroglyphs on this panel, they are highly weathered and completely repatinated, giving the appearance of being quite old (Figure 13). Most are abraded or chiseled into the boulder and most of the cupules are ground smooth. If they were initially pecked, they were later abraded as individual peck-marks are absent. This trait sets them apart from the dot figures at Panel 1. These cupules range in size from 2.5 to 5 cm in diameter, and from 1.5 to 3.5 cm deep.

Six linear grooved elements are deeply carved into Panel 2, including one very large example which measures 42 cm long, 1.5 to 2.2 cm wide, and 1.0 to 2.0 cm deep (Figure 14). It is abraded and has a smooth polished surface. Like the cupules, individual peck-marks are absent. The other five linear grooves are shorter and are situated near the base of the panel (at or slightly below ground level), and measure approximately 6 to 8 cm long, 0.2 to 0.4 cm wide and 0.2 cm deep. Although quite narrow, these five grooved, linear petroglyphs should not be confused with the deeply incised line figures at Panel 1. The linear elements here were not cut into the rock, but were abraded, or pecked and abraded to finished shape. They are much broader and exhibit a "U-shaped", not a "V-shaped" profile when examined in cross-section.

#### Stylistic Classification

We believe that at least six different petroglyph styles are present at *Slakaiya Rock*. These separate styles can be identified by the following attributes: (1) method of creation; (2) subject matter; (3) repatination; and (4) evidence of superimposition. For the purpose of this paper they are designated Slakaiya Rock Styles 1-6. These stylistic designations are not intended to imply a formal relationship with similarly designated California rock art styles although possible associations with nearby sites are reviewed.

Several previous studies including Clewlow (1978), Heizer and Baumhoff (1962), Heizer and Clewlow (1973) and Steward (1929) have classified known petroglyph sites in northwestern California into a single "style" such as the so-called *North Coast Petroglyph Style* proposed by Clewlow (1978:622), whose only common denominator seems to be geography regardless of stylistic content. The validity of a single petroglyph style for all of northwestern California was first questioned by Foster (1983) in his description of the Spyrock Road petroglyphs (CA-MEN-1912), a site

dominated by ancient concentric-circle motifs carved in *bas-relief*. A possible explanation for this misinterpretation was also suggested:

Since the *North Coast Petroglyph Style* area was proposed based upon only eight recorded sites, the identification seems premature because very few surveys have been conducted in the region. The Spyrock Road site is a complex petroglyph assemblage, which sharply contrasts with the tentative identification of a *North Coast Petroglyph Style* as defined by Clewlow (1978:622). Since the Spyrock Road site is not likely to be aberrant example, several unique styles could also be recognized within this area if additional site data were available. It is hoped that future research in northwestern California will test this possibility and that more meaningful interpretations will be presented (Foster 1983:53).

Rock art surveys during the past decade have indeed demonstrated that northwestern California is far more complex and infinitely more variable than can be accommodated into a single-style classification. A total of 178 petroglyph sites have now been documented from within the Pomo, Yuki, and Coast Miwok ethnographic territories alone (Leigh Jordan: personal communication). Several major rock art sites such as *Slakaiya Rock*, Spyrock Road, Spyrock Station, Bell Springs (CA-MEN-433), Feliz Creek (CA-MEN-793), Cloverdale (CA-MEN-1800), and Keystone (CA-MEN-2200) contain petroglyph assemblages which are inconsistent with the originally proposed single-style and support the view that the region contains multiple, distinctive styles. Superimposition of elements at these complex petroglyph sites, combined with documentation of difference in repatination, may provide researchers with the initial inventory of elements needed for the identification and organization of the different styles found in the region. The following six discrete styles are found at *Slakaiya Rock* and are designated Slakaiya Rock (SR) Styles 1-6.

#### SR Style 1

“Pecked Curvilinear Nucleates” (PCNs): The two grooved circle figures at Panel 2 are similar to numerous rock art features originally described by Miller and Haslam (1976) and more completely by Miller

(1977) as “Pecked Curvilinear Nucleates.” Parkman (1993) has recently presented a thorough discussion of the distribution and function of this group, which he terms “PCN-Style Petroglyphs” or PCNs. Although implied in its name, this style of petroglyph does not always give the appearance of having been created by pecking. If they were initially pecked, the elements often appear to have been later abraded to form deep grooves, which removed evidence of pecking. It is equally possible that most PCNs, including these two at *Slakaiya Rock*, were not pecked at all but were created entirely by deep abrasion. While this distinction may seem insignificant, it is important to recognize that evidence of a truly pecked style does exist at this site. *Slakaiya Rock* is one of the northernmost examples yet reported for this group, although Drennan (personal communication) recently reported discovery of a PCN petroglyph site in southern Humboldt County, which extends their range even further north. There is a concentration of PCN petroglyph sites in Mendocino, Sonoma, and the Bay Area counties (Parkman 1993: Table 1). This distinctive style has also been recently reported as far south as western Fresno County (Foster and Betts 1994). Like many of the grooved circular elements at other PCN-Style petroglyph sites, one of the examples at Panel 2 appears to have been quarried to remove its soft, schist center. Reed Haslam (1986) has suggested that quarried centers removed from PCN petroglyphs have been used as blanks for the creation of carvable artifacts. Examination of carved artifacts recovered near PCN sites has revealed that schist pendants (Foster 1990:7), charmstones or small ornaments (Parkman 1993) or shaft straighteners (Foster and Betts 1994), are the most common objects, which may have been created from them.

#### SR Style 2

Cupules: The grouping of 36 cupules at Panel 2 is thought to represent another distinctive style at *Slakaiya Rock*. Cupule petroglyphs are extremely common in northwestern California. Recent rock art surveys have suggested these petroglyphs may be associated with both Archaic and Late-Prehistoric/Historic cultural traditions in the region. Some of these cupules appear to be quite old, others seem to date to a middle period (Gary and McLear-Gary 1988), and others appear to have been created in the historic period (Barrett 1952). Although this assessment is pre-

liminary, the cupule petroglyphs at Panel 2 appear to be very old, perhaps early Holocene age.

Many researchers have interpreted all cupule-bearing rock outcrops in northwestern California to be either "Baby Rocks" in Pomo territory (Barrett 1952:387) or "Rain Rocks" in the Klamath River region (Heizer 1953) based upon presumed associations to the type-sites. Recent studies have demonstrated, however, that such broad functional interpretations should be applied carefully. Hedges (1983a), to cite one example, has shown that in spite of the terms "pits" and "cuppings" recorded in ethnographic accounts describing the Pomo fertility ritual (which suggests cupules), known Pomo "Baby Rocks" he visited always contain deeply incised line petroglyphs, but at one site (Elledge Valley Baby Rock No. 2), only a single cupule was present. This may indicate that deeply incised line petroglyphs are more likely associated with the fertility ritual described in ethnographic accounts than are cupules. Hedges (1983a:20) provides this assessment:

Judging from the baby rocks so far examined, cupules are not essential to the function of a site as a baby rock. Incised grooves, sometimes very deep, are found in all of the sites examined so far, and are consistent with the described activity of grinding powder from the rock to make a paste.

The "Rain-Rock" interpretation for SR Style 2 petroglyphs seems unlikely when, upon careful examination of the Gottville boulder (CA-SIS-183), the type-site for "Rain-Rocks" (Heizer 1953), revealed the presence of numerous bear-track motifs along with remarkably large cupules, which are dissimilar to the cupules, recorded at *Slakaiya Rock*. Neither bear-track motifs nor huge cupules occur at site CA-TRI-1; hence, little evidence exists to suggest that it is a "Rain-Rock".

### SR Style 3

**Grooved Lines:** The six grooved linear figures at Panel 2 are considered to represent another distinctive style of art at *Slakaiya Rock*, although, in fact, SR Styles 1-3 may be culturally-linked — that is, made by the same group of people during the same time period. The fact that all three groupings are clustered on the same remote panel, are fully repatinated, and

are of similar manufacture (abraded, not pecked, scratched or incised) suggests that they are of similar age. Grooved linear petroglyphs (which are not incised or scratched) are extremely uncommon in northwestern California although they have been seen at three sites: CA-MRN-193 located within Olompali State Historic Park, along Ward Creek near Cazadero, and in Napa Valley (Parkman: personal communication).

### SR Style 4

**Pecked Abstract Curvilinear:** This assemblage consists of all forms of the pecked rock art at Panel 1, such as the rows of dots, wavy lines, circles, linked-circles, diamonds, and other abstract curvilinear designs. This style includes the extensive pecked motifs not shaped into elements or motifs. There appear to be two different ages of pecked designs: some are completely repatinated, while other pecked elements, (sometimes part of the same motif) appear vividly fresh, exposing the white-colored schist subsurface. This observation may indicate a pattern of renewing ancient petroglyphs by later peoples. If SR Style 4 elements were renewed or "re-pecked," this must have occurred prior to 1913, as no change is noted since the photographs taken by Degen in that year. It probably also occurred prior to 1900 since Goddard's informants seemed to not know about the site. It could be argued that Goddard's Wailaki informants chose not to disclose information about sacred places such as this petroglyph site. We believe this explanation to be unlikely. Goddard's informants did provide detailed information about *sketeclkascanan*, and other ceremonial sites known to surviving Slakaiya elders (Goddard 1923:104). Apparently they were unaware of the petroglyphs. It seems more likely that re-pecking of SR Style 4 petroglyphs occurred in the earliest historic period (circa 1850-1900), which would explain the difference in repatination of stylistic elements on the same panel.

The possibility should be considered that some of the pecked designs were made with a square nail used as a punch. Several very small elements appear to have a "star-shaped" peck. This may be the result of impact from an iron nail or some other metal tool. Perhaps the artists at *Slakaiya Rock* acquired a star drill from one of the old mining camps in Trinity County. Star drills were typically made of tough steel and designed to be hammered into the rock to make

holes for explosive charges. They were most commonly used in remote areas where heavy mechanized drilling equipment could not be delivered. The name derives from the cruciform or star-shaped bit face. The star-shaped and whitish-colored peck marks at Panel 1 could have been made in historic times with such a tool. Other peck-marks exhibit a round impact scar and are often fully repatinated.

Sites containing SR Style 4 petroglyphs are extremely rare in the region, however, a few others are known. One of these is the Spyrock Station site, which contains many examples of SR Style 4 pecked abstract designs (Connick 1960). Located 10 miles upstream on the Eel River, this petroglyph site exhibits pecked wavy lines, linked circles, zigzags, and abstract figures, as well as dozens of cupules. On one panel, it appears that many cupules have been placed over, and therefore must be later than, the SR Style 4 petroglyphs (Figure 15). The difference in their ages is confirmed by a distinctive difference in the degree of repatination. Another site possibly containing SR Style 4 petroglyphs is the Klamath River site (Steward's PT.1) that appears to contain pecked wavy lines and pecked dots (Steward 1929:57, Plate 22b).

#### SR Style 5

**Fine Scratched Lines:** Hundreds of fine scratched lines occur at Panel 1 and are thought to represent a discrete style in northwestern California. Published rock art literature for this region does not often describe this group separately from deeply incised line petroglyphs, but we believe this style is well represented in the region. The Cloverdale boulder (CA-MEN-1800), to cite one example, contains similar scratched lines as well as complex groupings of deeply incised lines and cupules (Hedges 1983b).

#### SR Style 6

**Deeply Incised Lines:** This grouping includes dozens of deeply incised lines, all occurring on Panel 1, and is possibly the most common style of rock art found in northwestern California. The style has been unfairly characterized by an oversimplified description that the group is made up of "...artistically unconnected angular lines..." "which"... "appear as random scratches"... "forming"... "no particular pattern"... (Heizer and Clewlow 1973:29), but as Hedges (1983b:58) reports in his description of the Cloverdale

petroglyphs, this is not accurate. Deeply incised line petroglyphs often do occur in complex, patterned groupings in northwestern California.

Stratigraphic analysis at *Slakaiya Rock* reveals the deeply incised line petroglyphs are cut through groupings of fine scratched lines, and thought to be a separate and later style. At Swallow Rock (CA-FRE-2485), a major petroglyph site in the southern Diablo Range, two separate styles of incised lines were also recorded. These are fine scratched, and deeply incised lines. Stratigraphic analysis revealed that the fine lines are older than the deeply incised ones (Foster and Betts 1994). This is consistent with the stratigraphic relationship of these two groupings found at *Slakaiya Rock*.

As mentioned earlier, deeply incised line petroglyphs are linked to female fertility rituals in Pomo territory to the south, and it seems reasonable to propose a similar functional interpretation for the *Slakaiya Rock* examples, especially if these were made by the Wailaki. Elsasser (1978:190) provides the following description of the cultural relationship between the southern Athabaskans and the Pomo:

Although the Cahto of the upper South Fork Eel River region, south of the Sinkyone and Wailaki, spoke another dialect of the Nongatl-Sinkyone-Lassik-Wailaki language, culturally they were not typical of the southern Athabaskan enclave but were more closely allied to Central California (specifically the Pomo) than to Northwestern California, with which the five components of the enclave are usually associated.

Elsasser's comments suggest that the cultural tradition of rituals designed to cure female infertility linked with incised line petroglyphs may have spread from the Pomo through the Cahto to the Eel River Wailaki. Regardless of their function, these petroglyphs must be very late in age. Superimposition of styles at Panel 1 reveals these to be the most recent petroglyphs at *Slakaiya Rock*. Parkman (1993:351) suggests that this style dates to circa 350 B.P., and Barrett's observations of the Pomo (1952) indicate that the tradition of deeply incising lines onto schist boulders continued into historic times. The following description of the Pomo fertility ritual was provided by Barrett (1952:386-387):

The sterile pair went to one of these rocks and there a prayer for fertility was made. Then, by means of a pecking stone, some small fragments were chipped from the sides of one of the grooves or cuppings in its surface. These were then ground into a very fine powder, which was wrapped in some green leaves and taken to some secluded spot. Here this powder was made into a paste and with it the woman's abdomen was painted with two lines, one running from the top of the sternum to the pubes, the other transversely across the middle of the abdomen. Some of this paste was also inserted into the female. Intercourse at this time positively assured fertility, due to the magic properties of this rock.

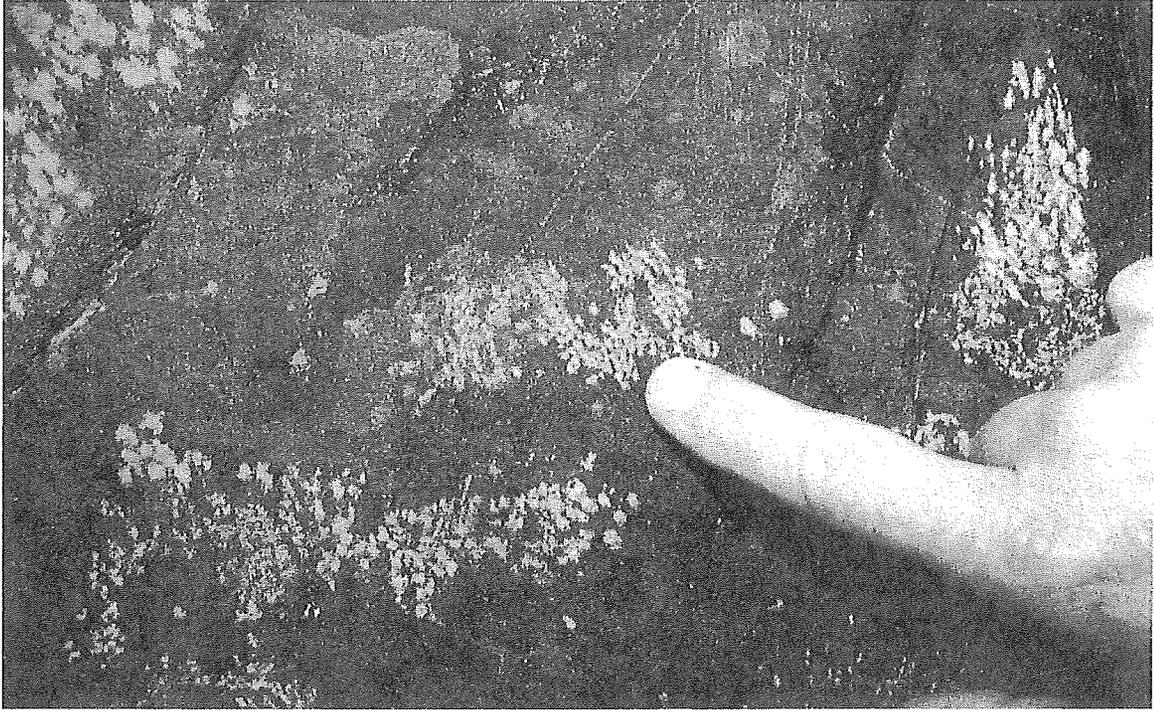
We suggest that the frequently observed pattern of deeply incised lines oriented perpendicular to the ground surface results from repeated cuttings with a chert biface with a cupped hand held below the line to catch schist powder used in the fertility rituals. This functional interpretation of the SR Style 6 petroglyphs is supported by Loeb's description of the Pomo "Baby Rock" ritual where he reported the use of a "flint knife" in repeated "cuttings" upon the rock. His graphic account, which illustrates the importance Pomo cultures places on the number four, is as follows:

If a woman wants a child she fasts for four days, taking only a little mush after dark. On the fifth day she goes alone to the rock at daybreak, taking with her a small flint knife. She walks around the rock counter-clockwise four times, then clockwise four times. Then she stops, facing the carved surface of the rock. She raises both hands and extends them before her, the finger tips level with her eyes, then draws them in and lays them on her breast, finger tips meeting. This is done four times. Then four times she bends her knees. The fifth time she sits back on her heels. With the flint knife she makes four motions as though to cut the rock. Then four times she really cuts it and with the dust she has ground from it she marks upon her body two long lines from lower lip to navel, from left armpit to right, and then a circle upon the forehead where the parting of the hair begins. Then she speaks to the rock, asking for a

child. There are no set prayers for this. She rises, and beginning again with the lifting of her hands, goes through her ritual four times. Then four times she walks about the rock counter-clockwise, then clockwise four times. She stops where she has been crouching, turns her head to the left four times and then goes home. Four times on the way she stops and turns her head to the left, but on no account must she look back. All this must be kept secret from every one (Loeb 1926:247).

### Conclusion

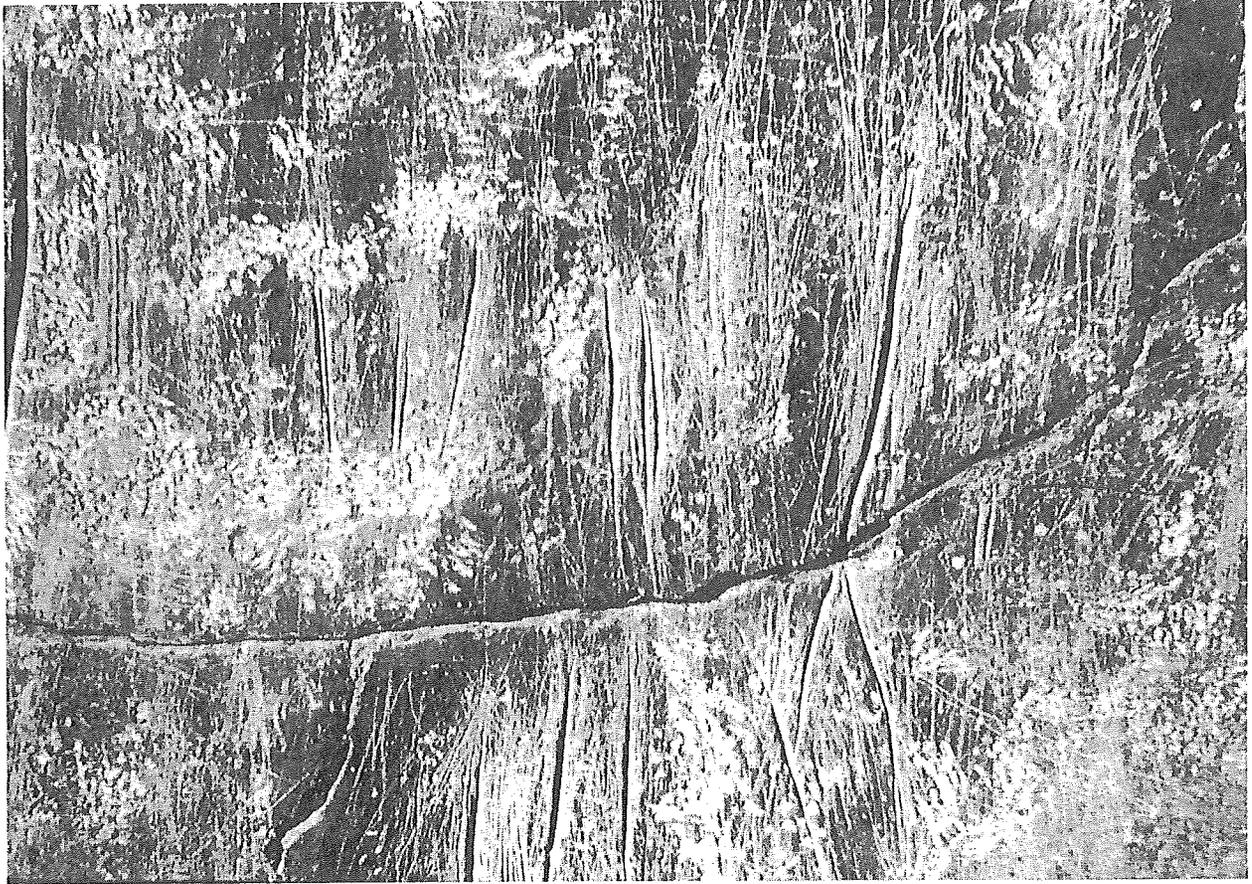
Based upon our observations of the horizontal and vertical positions of groupings at the site, the subject matter, evidence of repatination, and comparisons with other sites in the region, we propose the following relative ages for the six styles. SR Styles 1-3 are probably the oldest of the six, and probably of similar age, but their temporal relationship to SR Style 4 is unclear. Many of the SR Style 4 petroglyphs also give the appearance of being quite old (Figure 16). We know that SR Style 4 is older than SR Style 5 and both are older than SR Style 6 petroglyphs. This sequence is clearly revealed by superpositioning of styles at *Slakaiya Rock* Panel 1. The Spyrock Station site contributes another style to this sequence by revealing a pattern of cupules placed over SR Style 4 elements. We believe the Spyrock Station cupules to be younger and of a different style than the fully-repatinated cupules at *Slakaiya Rock* Panel 2 designated SR Style 2. This age difference is proposed not only from the superpositioning but also by a noticeable difference in repatination. We propose the following sequence: SR Styles 1-3, followed by SR Style 4, followed by Spyrock Station cupules, followed by SR Style 5, and finally, SR Style 6. A final episode of renewing earlier petroglyphs during the early historic period is also possible. The sequence proposed here is remarkably consistent with the sequence of styles proposed by Gary and McLear-Gary (1988:3) from their investigation of the Keystone petroglyphs in central Mendocino County. They report a sequence of 1) abstract curvilinear petroglyphs grids, concentric-circles, parallel wavy lines, and parallel zigzag elements,



**Figure 9: Clustered peck marks at Panel 1. Some of these have a “tail” as if created with a glancing blow to the punch tool.**



**Figure 10: Fine scratched lines (SR Style 5) at Panel 1.**



**Figure 11: Deeply incised lines (SR Style 6) at Panel 1. These are thought to be associated with female fertility rituals.**

**Figure 12: PCN-Style petroglyphs (SR Style 1) at Panel 2. The one on the right has a grooved line bisecting its nucleated center.**

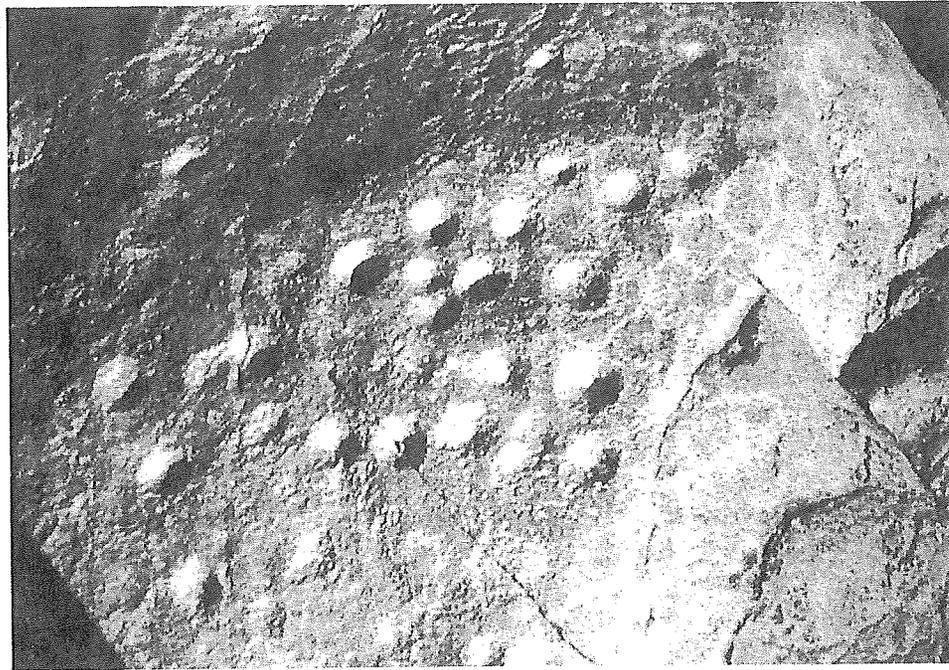




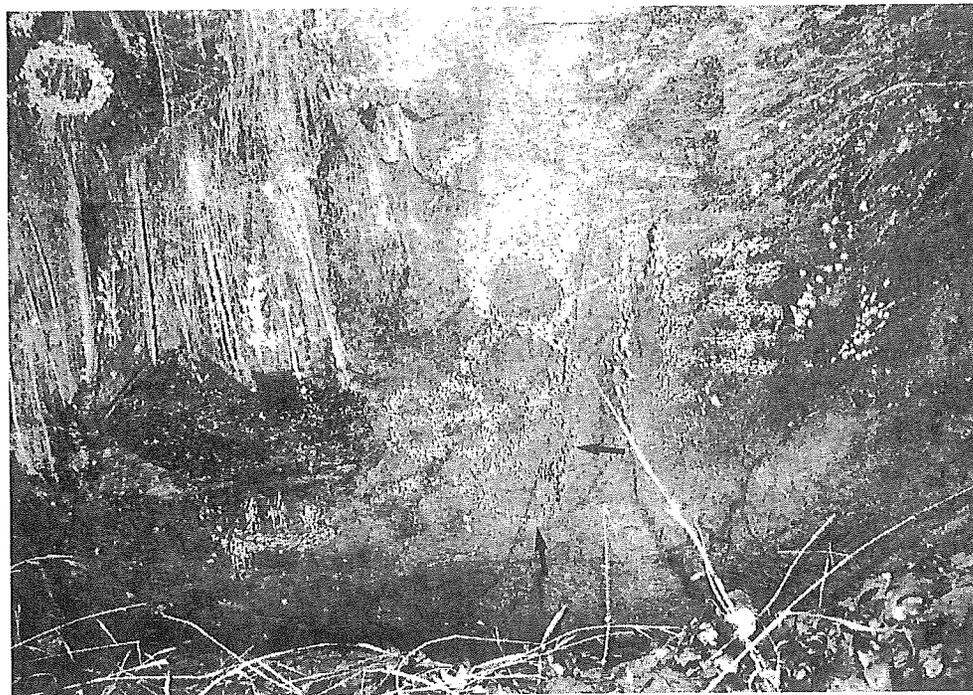
**Figure 13:** Arrows point to two PCN petroglyphs (SR Style 1) at Panel 2 with a coin placed on their raised centers. Below them, 36 cupules (SR Style 2) were found.



**Figure 14:** Arrow points to the largest grooved line petroglyph (SR Style 3) found at Panel 2.



**Figure 15:** Petroglyphs at the Spyrock Station site revealing two distinctive styles. The cupules appear to be superimposed over the pecked curvilinear elements. There is a noticeable difference in repatination as well. Photo by Robert Connick, 1960.



**Figure 16:** Differences in repatination of pecked elements at Panel 1. Arrows point to section of linked circle motif which reveals fully repatinated peck-marks. The top two circles on the same motif reveal whitish colored peck-marks showing no repatination. This could indicate that SR Style 4 petroglyphs were renewed (repecked) by historic Wailaki groups.

- 2) cupules, small circles, and ovals (PCNs) and
- 3) incised lines. To quote from their report:

More than 100 instances were observed of incised lines occurring over everything. This is strong evidence that incised lines are the latest motif to be applied. The remaining superimposition is mainly cupules placed on shields, circles, and concentric circles (Gary and McLearn-Gary 1988:3).

*Slakaiya Rock* reveals similar superpositioning and suggests that the temporal patterns proposed at Keystone also occur in the upper Eel River. A significant difference is that the concentric-circle motifs found at Keystone, Spyrock Road, and Feliz Creek, from Mendocino County, thought to be one of the county's oldest styles, seem to be absent. Another difference is that *Slakaiya Rock* appears to contain a panel of PCNs and cupules, which may be older than those, found at Keystone. In the Eel River region, the oldest petroglyphs appear to be PCNs, SR Style 2 cupules, grooved lines, and pecked abstract curvilinear elements. These are followed by fine scratched lines (SR Style 5), and lastly, deeply incised lines (SR Style 6). The Late Prehistoric - Historic pattern of deeply incised line petroglyphs, thought to be related to female fertility rituals, extends into Trinity County, and into Wailaki territory.

*Slakaiya Rock* is a remarkable site in nearly pristine condition. Its two petroglyph panels display multiple styles, some of which are superimposed on earlier styles. With six distinctive styles present and outstanding evidence of superimposition, this site presents unique opportunities to investigate the relative chronology of prehistoric rock art of northwestern California. Further studies may also contribute to our understanding of the Slakaiya tribelet of Athabaskan-speaking Wailaki who inhabited this remote section of the Eel River.

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Hidden Reservoir project during the summer of 1971. We are fortunate to have learned much about California archaeology from him during the past 25 years. This study of the *Slakaiya Rock* petroglyphs is dedicated to Franklin, who had originally given the site its permanent designation (CA-TRI-1) in 1948, the first year of the University of California Archaeological Survey. Its methods are those prescribed by Fenenga in his 1949 report "Methods of Recording and Present Status of Knowledge Concerning Petroglyphs in California."

Many colleagues provided assistance during this study. Robert Connick sent us copies of his slides and field notes and duplicates of Degen's original photographs. The reproduced photographs were provided by Eugene Prince of the Hearst Museum of Anthropology. Since Degen's original letters to Kroeber are now missing from the files at the University of California, Connick's transcriptions of them, recorded in 1973, represent a now irreplaceable source of information about *Slakaiya Rock* and nearby sites. Professor Connick also provided the photo of the Spyrock Station site (Figure 15) and one of the photos of *Slakaiya Rock* used in this paper (Figure 11). Mark Gary provided us with his data on the Keystone site and Deborah McLearn-Gary sent slides of other Mendocino county rock art sites used during this research. Albert Elsasser and Clement Meighan made important contributions to the initial recording. Francis Riddell, William Wallace, L. Kyle Napton, and Brian Dillon helped us trace the earliest years of the University of California Archaeological Survey and the initial recording of site CA-TRI-1. Leigh Jordan provided information on the number of known rock art sites within northwestern California compiled from her Masters thesis research. Mark Fleming loaned us his copy of *Genocide and Vendetta*, which is out-of-print and hard to find. Stephen Ellen of the U.S. Geological Survey provided helpful information concerning the geology of the Eel River canyon. Mark Gary, Breck Parkman, and John Betts offered suggestions concerning the stylistic classification proposed herein. Ernie Rohl discovered the petroglyphs at Panel 2 and without his keen observations, this report would have been missing Styles 1-3. He also helped prepare the site map included in the site record. Brian Dillon, L. Kyle Napton, Breck Parkman, and Michael Moratto took the time to carefully review and edit the manuscript and each made numerous improvements to it.

Dave Drennan deserves special recognition. Not only did he rediscover the site but also obtained permission from the private landowners for us to revisit the area in order to carry out this research. As those of us who have conducted research on private land know, this permission is sometimes difficult to obtain, and without it, the site would be completely inaccessible. Lacking Dave's extraordinary efforts, this paper could not have been written, and we would still be searching for *Slakaiya Rock* in a remote area five miles distant from its actual location. The authors assume full responsibility for any errors or misinterpretations.

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