It's been nearly sixty years since Elsasser and Contreras published their article (1958) introducing an eccentric group of seven historic petroglyph sites that had come to the attention of the Archaeology Department at UC Berkeley. Scattered about the Bay Area, Northern California, and Western Nevada, these “Modern Petrographs” appeared to be Euro American in origin and to share an iconography that was largely drawn from a late historic form of Ojibwa/Sioux pictographic writing intermixed with pan-cultural esoteric elements. The sites were similar enough, one to the other, in overall appearance and linear arrangement, that the authors concluded they must be the result of some mischievous or quasi-religious intent. Over the years an increasing number of related sites have come to light with the current roster now including thirty-six locations spread over eight western states. By 1993 those few rock art researchers in California and Nevada who were interested in such things had adopted the term “Western Message Petroglyphs” to describe these petroglyph panels, while a hearty few working independently in Utah adopted the term “Mystery Glyphs” to describe the sites that they were finding in Utah, Nevada, and elsewhere.

In Berkeley, three locations were described among the original seven sites in the Elsasser and Contreras report. Two of these sites, Tilden 1 and Tilden 2, remain largely hidden and ignored in the Berkeley Hills, while a third location, CA-Ala-19, has yet to be relocated, and may have been destroyed by development. Recently, Leigh and Amy Marymor were contacted by a Berkeley resident who wanted to talk about some strange petroglyph carvings he accidently found while out hunting mushrooms up in the hills. At first blush we thought he must have stumbled upon the carvings at Tilden 1 or Tilden 2, or maybe, with a sense of anticipation, we thought he had found the long missing Ala-19 site. As our first phone conversation unfolded it became clear that he was describing a location that didn't relate to any of these known sites, and by the time he sent his photographs, we were able to confirm that this hiker had located a completely unknown Western Message Petroglyph site in the Berkeley Hills. Before we could arrange a meeting over coffee to discuss his find he was back in touch to report that he had gone out into the hills and found yet another location no more than a half mile from the first – also completely new to us. A few weeks later we arranged a site visit under the auspices of the land management agency to confirm and document the finds. During the course of that survey we found a third carved boulder not far from the first find. In keeping with the name styles first utilized by Elsasser and Contreras in the 1950s, we have named the first location “Tilden 3” which has two loci, and the second location we have named Tilden 4. In total, we now know five Western Message Petroglyph sites in the Berkeley Hills. These are approximately two and a half miles from each other at the extremities, and all are laid out in one fashion or another in relation to the old stage road from San Francisco to Martinez that traversed the Berkeley Hills via Claremont Avenue and Fish Ranch Road. We can now refer to a “Western Message Petroglyph District” that encompasses the five sites in the Berkeley Hills. Other WMP panels in the Bay Area overlook the old Mission Pass Road along the Interstate 680 corridor from Mission San Jose to the Sunol Valley, and yet another overlooks the old Emigrant Trail from the Northern Bay Area to Sacramento along a path that is now overlaid by Interstate 80.

Tilden 4 consists of a lone image on an isolated boulder located approximately one half mile from Tilden 3. The image, an “amorphous skull-like shape,” is a signature icon within the Western Message tradition and has been found repeatedly at many of the WMP sites. In this brief report, we describe the Tilden 3 site in some detail.

Tilden 3: Locus 1

Tilden 3 consists of two loci. Locus 1 has two panels carved into a large fractured andesite boulder. Panel 1, on the vertical rock face measures 31” across x 12” high (next page) This panel is a classic WMP arrangement consisting of two lines of text with a total of twelve elements.

(cont'd page 2)
Panel 2 is on a small, fractured and fragile, canted triangular-shaped boulder that sits on the boulder atop Panel 1. Two images are carved one above the other, about 13” apart. The upper image is a circle with a frontal bust carved within it. The lower image is a classic yin yang symbol.

Locus 2 was discovered when Amy Marymor encouraged Su Sheng, a rock art researcher from the China Rock Art Research Association who accompanied our survey team, to investigate an isolated boulder located downhill from Locus 1. Two carved elements on the vertical face of the boulder include a vertically oriented “double axe-head with short handle protruding to the right” that sits above a horizontally oriented “double-axe head with handle pointing downward.”

Panel 2, as mentioned, sits above Panel 1 and consists of two icons:
- circle with frontal bust – Yin / Yang

Panel 1, Line 1 consists of five icons:
- “three vertical dots – 3 lobed cloud – walking legs – three vertical dots – three lobed cloud with rain dashes.”

Panel 1, Line 2 consists of seven icons:
- “abundant drying rack – empty drying rack with teepee – circle with frontal bust – reverse scroll E – three teepees.”

We “read” the two symbols set above in Panel 2 as a heading or title for the two lines in Panel 1 below. Replacing neutral descriptors of the icons with historic published definitions for the Ojibwa/Sioux pictographic elements along with our proposed interpretation for the esoteric “Egyptian Walking Legs” and Yin/Yang symbols we derive the following:

**Obscure (hidden) – Balance (harmony)**
- Feast – Famine – obscure (hidden) – sickness-village (encampment)

Finally, exercising poetic license we arrive at a tentative poetic text for the two panels:

**The Balance is Unclear**
- Three years, no rain, leads to three years of rain
- Feast and famine
- The hidden suffering of our village.

(continued on page 4)
In considering the earliest possible date for the carvings at the Berkeley Hills sites we look to their proximity and probable relationship to the carvings found at Tilden 2 where a four-icnoph of WMP text nearly duplicates a similar phrase carved in a draw overlooking the limestone block quarry at Mani, UT. The quarry is the source for the limestone blocks used in the construction of the Latter-Day Saints’ Mani Temple that rose in view of the quarry and WMP site between 1877 and 1888. We propose that the author of the Mani and Tilden WMPs is the same person, or small group of individuals who were “in the know.” For reasons presented elsewhere (Marymor and Marymor, 2016), we believe the WMP author(s) came west with the Mormon expansion and later followed mining and quarry interests throughout the Western United States. Our theory places the arrival of the author(s) in the Bay Area and Northern California no earlier than the episode of carving at Mani, 1877 – 1888, and based on our comparison of WMP conventions with hieroglyphic conventions published by Garrick Mallery in 1893, we believe the likely earliest date for these sites will prove to be after 1893.

Western Message Petroglyph sites tend to be located along historic routes of travel linked to the period of western expansion during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Berkeley Hills sites are a prime example with Claremont Canyon Road and Fish Ranch Road being used as the primary route through the central East Bay Hills from San Francisco to Martinez via Berkeley and Oakland from the 1860s to 1903. We propose that the latest probable date for the carving activity would be prior to the opening of the tunnel from Berkeley to Orinda which moved traffic to the next drainage to the south in 1903. At that time, Claremont Canyon / Fish Ranch Road route faded as the most direct route through the East Bay Hills and faded as a popular travel corridor. As such, we propose the latest date that the author(s) would be likely moving about that Honda Ridge bore an exclusively ceremonial function. Some of the designs resemble images that are ethnographically represented to portray puberty rites and visions experienced during altered states of consciousness. Amid the visual cacophony of imagery, one can pick out a long set of tally marks, stylized animal and marine forms, surrounded by a huge variety of geometric designs. There is even a stylized sailing ship that piques curiosity. The panel is a hit of saturated color, and was surely as impressive to the local hit of saturated color, and was surely as impressive to the local
ashore to feed people in times of food scarcity. The Chumash believed that swordfish were people of the ocean—and told stories of swordfish living just offshore in crystal houses. The people hunted swordfish from canoes, and a 2000-year old Chumash burial in a neighboring village (not on the base), a remarkable swordfish skull headdress was unearthed, complete with mother-of-pearl inlays in the eyes. So clearly, swordfish were a significant part of Chumash culture, and were commemorated on the rock wall at Vandenberg.

Jon Picculolo reports that the "Honda Ridge rock art site was impacted by Vandenberg’s 12,500-acre+ ‘canyon fire’ . Some rock art on the east panel was affected by smoke. The west panel (that’s the larger one, includes the sun disk) is ok. There was significant damage to the site’s visitor infrastructure (viewing platform, railings, benches), but all that can be replaced."

Paranaghat Valley, Nevada

by Chris Gralapp

If you should find yourself near Las Vegas with some time to spare, make your way up into the Pahranagat Valley, about 1.5 hours north of LV on Highway 93. This beautiful valley follows a chain of spring-fed lakes, and is flanked on the west by the Pahranagat mountain range, much of which is incorporated into the Desert Wildlife Refuge, managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM has done a good job of keeping the gravel roads passable, and so the approaches to the sites are fine, and they are open to public visitation.

Some of the sites are adjacent to the highway, and are subsequently a little more vandalized, such as the NO HORSES panel near the White River Narrows, which resides by the edge of a meadow. This corridor was most likely a well-traveled migration route in the past, as it is today.

The primary elements include long strings of tally marks, footprints (anthro as well as cat, bear and bird), the omnipresent bighorn sheep and deer. In one place near the mouth of Weepah Canyon, there is an interesting painted panel featuring three-finger smears in a radial pattern. DStretch helps to clarify these intriguingly expressive designs.

Probably the most iconic of the elements in the valley is the Pahranagat Man, a fire plug shaped figure who makes an appearance in several places, most notably in the Mt. Irish Archaeological District, a 640 acre preserve that ascends to 5100 feet in altitude. P-man typically sports solidly pecked bodies, long claws and goggle-eyes. The Native American groups who settled this area from 4000 years ago to the nineteenth century were efficient and skillful at seasonally moving with their food resources, and taking advantage of climactic differences as they moved up and down the mountains.

Another rich rock art area is Sloan Canyon, or as it is more popularly known, the ‘Shooting Gallery’. The panels are more widely scattered, both in distance and altitude, but are worth the hunt, and are remarkable in their variety and organization. Lithic evidence of tool-making industry abounds near some of the rock art panels. The environment is a beautiful and fragrant example of pinyon-juniper habitat, and odds are visitors will have the place to themselves on most days.

Lincoln County in Nevada is proud of their rock art heritage, and the Nevada Rock Art Foundation in conjunction with the BLM (local office is in nearby Caliente, the staff is most helpful) have produced a number of well-designed informational brochures to educate about the sites and the cultures.

And, of course for a diversion, the town of Rachel, home of the Area 51 UFO watchers, is not too far over a mountain pass. An Alien Ale at the Ale-Inn won’t go amiss after an energetic day of glyphing!
If you should find yourself in the UK with a yen for prehistoric archaeological adventures, a visit to the Scottish county of Argyll on the west coast is a satisfying destination. The dollar goes a long way, and the vast, open air sites are enticing. The Scots are deeply invested in their heritage, and the rock vestiges in the glen date back to approximately 5000 years BCE.

The British Isles are chockablock with prehistory—it seems that every corner boasts megalithic evidence of occupation and culture. Stonehenge comes to mind immediately when we think of megalithic ritual centers, but Kilmartin Glen is also unusually rich in ancient monuments, arranged in a remarkable miles-long array. Within 6 miles of the little town of Kilmartin there are more than 800 prehistoric sites and counting, making this area of extraordinarily high concentration of archaeological material. Standing stones, cairns, burial cysts, henges, and mounds are clustered within the Glen, some featuring petroglyphs in the familiar concentric circle patterns that are the primary stylistic element. In addition, castle hills called ‘duns’ stud the landscape, and it is easy to imagine them as defensive positions, even if the architecture is incomplete. The climate is wild and wet, and the landscape eternally green, which creates a dramatic backdrop for the stone sentinels erected so long in the past.

The Kilmartin Museum is a good starting gate for exploration of the area’s high points, and it is possible to engage a private guide through them. Of course, it can be visited as a self-guided journey as well.

The Glen itself is a fluvioglacial terrace, created by a huge melt event at the end of the Ice Age. It is comprised of a three-mile long corridor flanked by Argyll highlands mountains. Historically, the center of the Glen is a rocky fortress of Dunadd which was home to the earliest Scottish kings in the 6th and 7th centuries, and which played a big role in the formation of the Scottish nation. There is not much left of the fort, but there is a compelling petroglyph of a footprint pointing east, and one of a Pictish boar, which help to support the notion that Dunadd Fort was a concentration of power.

The monuments within the Kilmartin Glen complex are laid out in a long alignment, thereby creating a super-array of cairns and standing stones, a ‘linear cemetery’. An aerial view is the best way to wrap one’s head around the vastness of the sites, and hints at the rich ritual significance of this unique landscape.

Adjacent to the Glen are several rock art concentrations, incised mainly into horizontal slabs level with the ground surface. Many have been uncovered, but it may well be that many have yet to be exposed from under their blankets of velvety moss. A particularly engaging rock is Ormaig, high on a hillside overlooking the nearby loch. The disconcerting part is that the road to this site is flanked by clear-cut slash, perpetrated by the Forestry Commission of Scotland but the site itself is lovely, and displays a blend of concentrics, labyrinth shapes, cupules, rosettes and some historic additions. The bedrock is black, and glistens with the dew to create a most fetching silvery contrast.

A rock art site called Achnabreck is a massive sheet of cup and rig marks, the largest ground-based panel of its kind in Europe. The surface is epidiorite, a metamorphosed volcanic rock, and which has been smoothed by glacial activity. The motifs are rings and concentrics, characteristic of all the ground-based rock art in the area. This is a particularly fine site, and well-marked by the National Trust.

Standing stones in the area feature cupules, that ubiquitous rock art element found ‘round the world. They stand near to a series of chambered burial cysts, one of which contains a block featuring axe-head motifs, thereby dating it to the Bronze Age (~2200 BCE). It is thought now that these standing stones are apparently not oriented to any astronomical phenomena, so their arrangement (a row of four large upright slabs, 4 meters high) is something of a mystery.

Hats off to the Scots, who are enthusiastic supporters and preservers of their heritage.
If you should happen to be traveling in South Central New Mexico, don’t bypass the Three Rivers Petroglyph site, protected under the auspices of the BLM. Just this May a new visitors’ center was inaugurated, and we stopped in on our way to the ARARA conference to witness the ribbon-cutting and to hike the petroglyph trail. We’ve visited many times, but each outing has shown us something new—and why not? It seems to me that the farther you go along the trail, the more fantastic the creatures appear. Chimeric animals, shamans, bird stories and all manner of lively, thought-provoking images abound. When you have more than 21,000 petroglyphs to parse, it can be good to narrow down the hunt, so I decided to look at birds (and a few beasts).
The New Year marks the beginning of BARARA’s new partnership with the Museum of Northern Arizona. The Museum has agreed to become the Internet host for the newly updated and expanded Rock Art Studies Database inheriting the role following our thirteen years of association with the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley. A new searchable interface is currently in design with MNA’s IT consultants and we are eagerly anticipating the release of the Beta version. Upon release, rock art researchers, students, and the general public will enjoy a robust portal into the World’s rock art literature with access to more than 34,000 citations to the rock art literature. Many citations have been expanded with author’s abstracts, and others now have internet links. Leigh Marymor will continue on as the compiler for the project in his new role as Research Associate with the Museum.