

Western Message Sites in Tilden Park Revisited

Leigh Marymor

In December 2001 (BARA News 19:2) Leigh Marymor and Richard Schwartz reported on a visit to the Western Message petroglyph site, Tilden 2, in Berkeley. We published a faithful documentation of the petroglyph panel taken from an acetate tracing which we created on site. We also located a pecked oval petroglyph with radiating spokes on a nearby boulder which we also traced on acetate and published in the article. This element seems unrelated to the Western Message petroglyph tradition. The scale of the oval element and its method of manufacture both are quite different from the known corpus of Western Message elements, so we concluded that this glyph though proximal in location, is unrelated to the others. We were not, however, successful in relocating a second panel of Western Message glyphs that occur on an adjacent knoll. Described by Elsasser and Contreras in 1958, these elements include a cloverleaf, swastikas, and the letter "M" set in a carved handprint in-filled with red hematite. The handprints have not been visible for many years.

Recently, Robert Messak, an enthusiastic Western Message Petroglyph researcher who currently resides in Petaluma, contacted me seeking information concerning the Tilden Park petroglyphs. As a result, I directed Robert to the Tilden 2 site. Due to my inaccurate directions, Robert failed to locate Tilden 2, but with unerring

luck, he managed to locate the elusive Tilden 2A glyphs. On June 17th, armed with good directions to all of the Tilden sites, Robert, Amy Leska and I revisited the three Western Message loci in Tilden Park: Tilden 1, located in Claremont Canyon, and Tilden 2 and 2a, located on the ridge overlooking Contra Costa County.

Western Message panel, Tilden 2, in 2001 (left) and with vandalized, abraded swastika motif in 2008. An intervening visit by Leska and Marymor in 2005 predated this damage. The damage to the swastika motif would appear to be a reaction to the swastika symbol in its Nazi/Holocaust context, though most observers believe these symbols were rendered prior to the Holocaust, perhaps in the 1850s:

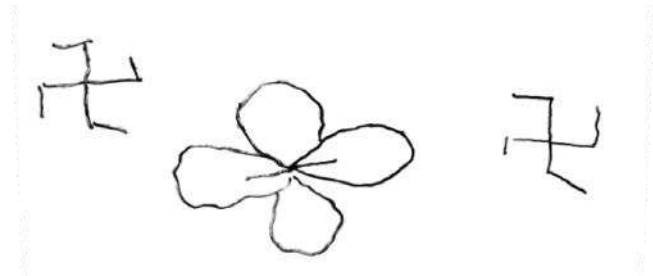


Figure 1 Tilden 2a: Western Message Petroglyphs



The “M” motif at Tilde 2a – the hematite hand is no longer visible (nor retrievable with digital enhancement):



The main panel at Tilden 2a – relocated:

