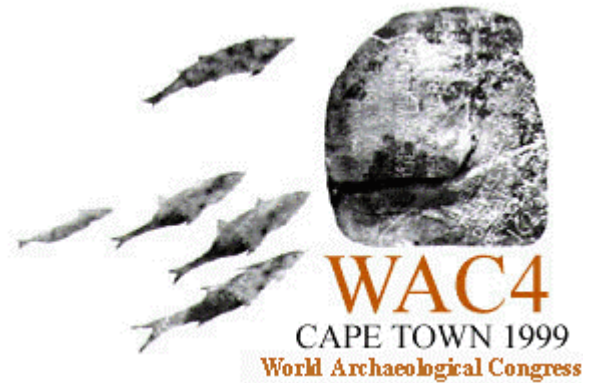


## World Archaeological Congress 4

University of Cape Town

10th - 14th January 1999



### Symposium: THE POLITICS OF PRACTICE

#### *Abstract Package*

##### **Convenors:**

**Claire Smith**

Archaeology, School of Cultural Studies  
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Adelaide, Australia.

**H. Martin Wobst**

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The 'doing' of archaeology at any place in the world is a political act. This is recognised in the second statute of the World Archaeological Congress, which states that the Congress is based 'on the explicit recognition of the historical and social role, and the political context, of archaeological enquiry, of archaeological organisations, and of archaeological interpretation'. The political nature of archaeological research influence field procedures and methods of analysis as well as the selection and presentation of results. Therefore, the session will consider the following issues:

- the manner in which sociopolitical biases bear upon archaeological research;
- the implications of archaeological research for non-specialist interest groups;
- the manner in which a critical awareness of present practices can lead to productive refinements and/or changes in those practices.

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Often, archaeologists view their social impact only in terms of an indigenous 'Other', thus deflecting the discussion of politics from themselves and from their effect on their own system to minimizing or optimizing their effect on indigenous people. However, there are important links between these aspects of the politics of practice. Important questions concerning the sociopolitical nature of the relationships between archaeologists and Aboriginal people include issues of control over research methods, the dissemination of results and whether it is possible for researchers to adopt a neutral position. In some ways, the increase in direct indigenous critiques of archaeological practice have opened up the arena to a wider commentary. Increasingly, archaeology has to be seen to be of benefit to the wider community. Thus, this session will consider the social impact of archaeological practice on:

- the indigenous peoples with whom archaeologists work;
- the socio-political systems within which archaeologists operate and;
- the wider community with which archaeologists interact.

In short, this session will study the politics of practice up, down and sideways...

***Reclaiming the Past*****Sue Anderson and Fred Warrior**

Anthropological Society of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia.

Ngadjuri People's Council, Adelaide, Australia.

The practice of researching, recording and monitoring Indigenous heritage sites can aid in the repatriation of cultural heritage to Indigenous people. In the case of the Ngadjuri people of the mid-north of South Australia, European invasion in the early to mid nineteenth century caused rapid decimation and dissipation of the Aboriginal people of the region as pasturage valuable to Europeans was quickly taken up and the people massacred or forced from their traditional domain. As a result, over the ensuing years, links to Ngadjuri culture gradually were diminished to the point that they seemed to have been all but completely lost. Until a few years ago, Fred Warrior, who was aware of and in touch with his Kaurna ancestry and heritage, was unaware that he also had strong Ngadjuri connections through his paternal great-grandfather, Barney Warrior, a traditional Ngadjuri man who worked with anthropologists in the 1940s. An investigation into the history of the Ngadjuri people was brought to life by a wealth of well-documented and researched archaeological sites, which provide an enduring insight into Ngadjuri culture and which the Warrior family (and others) can now use to reclaim their past.

***Intellectuals, Archaeology and the Construction of Identity in a Colonial State: the Case of Puerto Rico*****Gabriel de la Luz-Rodriguez**

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, U.S.A. &

University of Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico

Archaeology on the island has always been under sociopolitical constraints. In 1952, the establishment of the commonwealth institutionalized Puerto Rico's colonial dilemma under U.S. hegemony.

A new state formation developed under the rubric of "Estado Libre Asociado", and sought to secure itself by furthering consensus within the diverse Puerto Rican society. Populist politics and new economic transformations gave way to the creation of a distinct national culture discourse to shape identity, in the colonial state and the dominant class it represented. I argue that under the guidance of various state sponsored institutions, the construct of "la puertorriquenidad" or "Puertorican-ness" started to take shape. Archaeology played a very important role in this process. In 1952, the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture was founded. Together with the reorganized Department of Public Education and the University of Puerto Rico, these institutions were instrumental in furthering the hegemonic ideology. Archaeology was used as a "value neutral" science that helped to legitimate "Puertorican-ness", by romanticizing the indigenous past. Indigenous imagery provided the symbols of a passive, non-antagonistic essence which supposedly characterized Puerto Ricans.

***Politics in Practise: recent developments in relationships between Indigenous Australians, archaeologists and the wider community***

**Richard Hunter**

Mannum Aboriginal Heritage Committee, Mannum, Australia.

In this paper I will talk about relationships between Indigenous Australians, archaeologists and the wider community. I will discuss the history of these relationships, where we stand today and where I hope we will go in the future. There was a lot of progress during the 1980s and early 1990s. In the last few years, however, serious problems have emerged that are preventing both Indigenous Australians and archaeologists from being able to look after Indigenous cultural heritage effectively. In part, this is because of political events that have happened in Australia. Archaeologists can help Indigenous Australians by being more politically active. They need to take this on as part of the responsibility of working with the cultural material of another people.

Working together, Indigenous peoples and archaeologists can achieve a wider understanding of, and respect for, Indigenous cultures.

*Archaeology as Social Charter for the West*

**Alice Kehoe**

Department of Anthropology, Marquette University, Milwaukee,  
Wisconsin, U.S.A.

Archaeology, like academic history, is a bourgeois science (Hayden White's term) functioning as a Malinowskian social-chartering myth to demonstrate the claimed universality of cultural evolution climaxing in Western European bourgeois hegemony. This archaeology postulates human monogenesis in support of universality for the cultural evolution trajectory, and the corollary that human cognition ideally works in the logic of empirical rationality valued as science. Other cognitive schemata and cosmologies are devalued as delusional or derived from inadequate comprehension of empirical reality. Only one valid reconstruction of the past can exist, supported by citation of natural and physical sciences' data.

Challenges to this hegemonic reconstruction of humanity's past are posed in terms of property law who owns the past? or as conflicts between scientific knowledge and Eliadean 'mythic peoples' incapable of comprehending scientific argument. Neither position challenges the hegemony of the West. The validity of 'other pasts' has significant consequences for court cases involving indigenous nations' sovereignty and economic claims.

*Archaeology and the Media: Engaging the Public*

**Ruth Mathis**

Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst,  
U.S.A.

My paper will address the ways archaeologists have used social constructions of race in the archaeological past while engaging the American public. Various forms of media have effectively reached large segments of the American public, introducing archaeology to popular culture, particularly groups of people who socially and financially support archaeological research. Visual images from textbooks, popular magazines, and popular books will be utilized to discuss the use of race to perpetuate white supremacy and to promote nationalistic and colonialist perspectives within the United States.

*The Persistence of Memory, The Politics of Desire: Archaeological Impacts and Aboriginal Concerns in Canada*

**George P. Nicholas and Catherine C. Carlson**

Department of Archaeology, Simon Fraser University/Secwepemc  
Education Institute Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada

The desire of archaeologists to understand the past, whether their own or of others, defines the discipline. The products of archaeological research reveal unknown aspects of past human behavior, and supplement historical or scientific sources of information. For such reasons, archaeology has become a powerful tool for indigenous peoples worldwide as it illuminates past cultural diversity, helps to correct false images of the past, and is a powerful tool for addressing issues relating to land claims. However, archaeology also channels our understanding of the past into a set of theories about what happened and why. What do

our interpretations do to the knowledge that aboriginal people may already possess, independent of archaeology, through oral history, world view and other means? This paper examines aspects of the process of doing archaeology in Canada, especially the degree to which archaeologists may be unintentionally imposing their ideas about the past, and the reaction of aboriginal people, many of whom are satisfied with their memory and knowledge of their own past.

### *Community Archaeology as Collaboration and Critique*

**Claire Smith and Mark Staniforth**

Archaeology, School of Cultural Studies, Flinders University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia.

This paper outlines a collaborative project which focusses on the origins of multiculturalism in colonial Australia. It is based on a case study in Burra, South Australia, the place where the Australian ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter) was first developed. The project extends an existing collaboration between Flinders University (FUSA) and a range of government and community organisations. It arises from a unique disciplinary combination of archaeological and cultural tourism within the School of Cultural Studies at FUSA.

Community needs and the development of public interpretation will form an important focus. It is hoped that the project will provide a model for best practice in integrating the heritage research needs of university, business, industry and community organisations as well as Local, State and Federal Governments. The model should have national and international applicability. The project will contribute to the quality of Australian culture through expanding public understandings of the inherent complexities of our colonial heritage and contemporary identities.

## *Archaeological Practice and the Governance of Indigenous Identity*

**Laurajane Smith**

Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre, University of New South Wales, Australia.

This paper examines the mechanics and implications of how archaeological knowledge and practice has been used in negotiations between governments and Aboriginal people in South-Eastern Australia over notions of Aboriginal political legitimacy. It is argued that policy perceptions of Aboriginal cultural identity play a part in the negotiation of political power given to and obtained by Aboriginal interests. Governments and their policy makers have used expert knowledge, including that of archaeologists, to both understand and define the legitimacy of Aboriginality and thus the political legitimacy of Aboriginal interests. Archaeological knowledge and its claims to 'expertise' have become reinforced through archaeological practices, in particular that of cultural heritage management (CHM). It is the practices of CHM in particular which have facilitated the institutionalisation of notions of archaeological professionalism, stewardship of the past and expertise. Through the practice of CHM archaeological knowledge may be directly employed in 'governing' Aboriginal cultural identity by bureaucracies and governments. This process also places archaeological knowledge and archaeological practitioners into positions of conflict with Aboriginal interests who may wish to challenge the governance of their cultural identity.

## *Archaeologists as Implements*

**H. Martin Wobst**

Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst,  
U.S.A.

Significantly more resources are dedicated in the contemporary United States for unearthing the social relations of past material worlds than for understanding how the material world helps to constitute the social relations of the present. This paper chronicles how the typical

archaeological flowchart, from research design to publication, helps to constitute the contemporary society of which the archaeologist is a member, while at the same time deflecting from the material constitution of that society. At a time when archaeologists (and members of indigenous societies) are becoming more aware of significant archaeological impacts upon indigenous societies, it becomes ever more important to sponsor environmental impact assessments on the effect of archaeologists upon their own society. It is that society after all, that is a major factor both in the lives of archaeologists and members of indigenous societies.

***'Indigenous Involvement in the Forestry Industry in Tasmania: a change towards the recognition of Aboriginal values and archaeological resources in forests.'***

#### **D. West**

The Tasmanian forestry industry has been widely criticised for its focus on economic values in its management of the state's forests. The general public's increasing concern with environmental issues and the need for responsible exploitation of timber resources has also raised awareness of the significance of forest areas to Aboriginal people. To ensure that these values are given due recognition, and that Aboriginal sites are adequately protected in areas that could be disturbed by forestry operations, the Tasmanian Forest Practices Board has instituted a mandatory code. This code regulates forestry operations within State Forests and includes Aboriginal site protection regulations which timber harvesters must adhere to or face prosecution by law. The Forest Practices Board employs an Aboriginal Heritage Officer to assess the Aboriginal values and make recommendations regarding the future management of these. This paper discusses some of the political problems faced by the Aboriginal Heritage Officer in undertaking the assessment and follow up procedures. These problems arise from foresters' negative preconceptions about the Aboriginal community, conflict between the Aboriginal community and archaeologists, and also in part from dissent within the Aboriginal community itself. Some changes are suggested in forestry management practices which may reduce the conflict over sites and places of Aboriginal significance in Tasmania's State Forests.

***Aboriginal Ecotourism and Archaeology in coastal NSW, Australia***

W. Beck , M. Somerville, A. Smith (University of New England, NSW, Australia) & D. Murphy together with other members of Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation

Places of significance in the area of the Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation (mid-north coast of NSW) are being researched using a range of methods including archaeology and oral history to find out how Aboriginal people have related to a number of different sites over time. Data collection and analysis are being carried out on site under the direction of Aboriginal people, overcoming the critical problem of appropriation of knowledge and material remains by outsiders. Information from multiple sources will be integrated within an Aboriginal perspective and the outcomes will be used by Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation to produce a range of interpretative leaflets, educational kits and information booklets for a sustainable ecotourism enterprise. Yarrawarra believe that educating and informing people, especially tourists, about local Aboriginal culture is an important enterprise for the future. It gives Aboriginal people a pride in their past, and this is important because 'we can't have a good future until proud of our past'. It is especially important for older people to feel that their knowledge is valued and appreciated. Yarrawarra members have a good knowledge of their oral histories but want to extend their history further back into the past and need accurate information for tourists. Margie Lardner says "Tourists want to know the facts." Yarrawarra feel a need to change the way that people, especially tourists think about Aboriginal people. For example, four percent of Australia's Aboriginal population lives in north-east NSW. This is the most concentrated Aboriginal population in Australia. Yet most tourists think of Aboriginal people as having black faces and living in Central Australia or Arnhem Land. This perception needs to be challenged. Yarrawarra serves as a model for other Aboriginal community organisations but there are unresolved issues (such as whether the demands of ecotourists will be different to those of school and educational groups). We are exploring these issues within the project.

Note: As there will hopefully be four voices for this presentation we would like to request approx. 40 mins to present this paper.