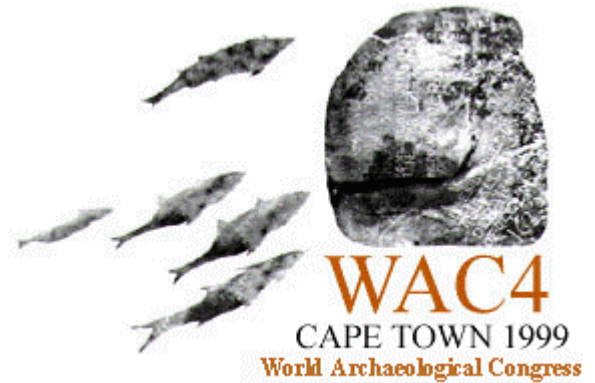


## World Archaeological Congress 4

University of Cape Town

10th - 14th January 1999



## Symposium: Mindscapes

### *Abstract Package*

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The term 'mindscape' is partially encapsulated within the general body of theory known as 'cognitive' archaeology. The term is constructed so that an emphasis is placed on present and archaeologically observed thought. Though all material culture/objects has the potential to contain such cognitive information, certain objects are more amenable to such a study than others. For example, rock art imagery is often theoretically informed, Middle Stone Age lithics is often theoretically recondite. Webster (1996) points out that archaeologists often tend to over-interpret objects, many of which were probably just mundane with little symbolic significance. 'Mindscape' archaeology endeavours to select objects, sites and so forth that were firmly entrenched within the realm of conscious, planned, symbolic activity. Thus, like the closely allied discourse of 'landscape' archaeology, mindscape studies may offer us the opportunity to cross-cut intra-disciplinary boundaries and grant more insightful perspectives on known, received knowledge. One has to be very careful of becoming hyper-relativist (cf. Bernstein 1983) - not all interpretations are equally valid, in fact, very few interpretations are considered authoritative in practise. The WAC4 mindscape session is not intended as a catch-all for all 'symbolic' papers but as a session in which symbolic meanings in the past may be understood by reference to firm, empirical data. It will also be task of the mindscape of the session to investigate the term 'symbolic' and what is meant by this often vague, seldom precise term.

### References

Bernstein, R.J. 1983. *Beyond objectivism and relativism: science, hermeneutics and praxis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

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***Pattern, enigma and the quest for "mind" via San rock art***

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Rock art, though largely undated, has always seemed to offer the possibility for investigating "mind". This enterprise has inevitably comprised various assumptions about "human nature", about "art" and about the nature of the remainder of the archaeological record. It remains unclear how rock art, rather than artefacts (for example), offers superior opportunities for pursuing an archaeology of "mind". Various questions and problems will be considered, with especial reference to San rock art and research.

***Pattern and Petroglyphs: Their Meaning Within the Landscape***

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The spatial unity of analysis corresponding to the present paper includes a microregion in the central sector of the Vinchina Valley in the west of La Rioja Province (Argentina). Likewise, the time unity in question corresponds to a period extending between 600-1200 A.D., represented in this region of northwestern Argentina by the Aguada and Sanagasta cultural entity. A strategy in the installation at "Rincón del Toro" site is analyzed, not only as far as the use of resources is concerned, but also in its relation to the landscape, taking into consideration the processes of social complexity, exercise of power, ideology, communications, etc. (Criado Boado et al. 1990/91). Many of the flat rocks, located between the enclosures that make up the site and placed on the slopes of the hills, were used as a support for the making of petroglyphs. We are interested in examining their distribution within the site, with the purpose of reflecting subsequently on their meaning. The different decorative motives and elements are presented, emphasizing those which characterize the Aguada cultural entity. Repetitions and differences with other expressions of rupestrian art are established. Finally, some materials recovered excavating three enclosures are commented and illustrated.

***Rock Art and Ancestral Dreaming***

Julie Drew  
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Recently there has been an increasing awareness of the connections between today's indigenous people and past material culture. This paper reports two seasons' research into such connections among Wardaman people of Aboriginal Australia.

Presentations will focus on present day Aboriginal people's interpretations of Rock art images as symbols in The Dreaming Tradition. Discussion will follow on how these animal forms relate to social organisation and cut across regional boundaries as they connect Ancestral Dreamings.