



## 1. The Archaeology of Narratives or Towards a Narrational Archaeology

### 16219 - Origin Narratives, Land and Resource Title, and Persistent Places in Heiltsuk and Wuikinuxv Territories

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** McLaren, Duncan (*Hakai Institute and University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada / Kanada*)

The territories of the Heiltsuk and Wuikinuxv First Nations are situated on the on the central Pacific coast of Canada. In this region, archaeological sites along the shoreline tend to have very long records of repeated use, with several sites having evidence of 10,000 years or more of occupation. Overall the cultural history of the region is characterized as demonstrating cultural continuity. This paper explores traditional systems of land and resource title as a means of gaining insights into the cultural factors that could have contributed to these patterns of long term occupation. Of importance is the interrelated traditional system of narratives, prerogatives, crests, and titles inherited through descent from an original ancestor by a village or local group. Through remembering, re-enacting, and relating the origin narratives and displaying crests at ceremonial events, this system of title is reasserted by chiefs and their families. The system of narrative-based land and resource title is very different from the colonial system imposed on the region in the last 150 years, arguing that it is at least centuries old. As the system is tied to narratives of original ancestors and ceremonially re-enacted generation after generation, it is likely even older, and can be viewed as a possible and testable cultural factor contributing to the long term patterns of occupation found in archaeological sites in the region. Despite the upheavals of the colonial era, this system of rights and title continues to this day and is ceremonially reasserted at potlatches.

## **16109 - Rock art, narratives and reframing concepts of significance: adopting the concept of multiple ontologies from post-colonial museological theory**

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** Jones, Tristen (*Department of Archaeology and Natural History Australian National University, Canberra, Australia / Australien*); Wesley, Daryl (*Department of Archaeology and Natural History Australian National University, Canberra, Australia / Australien*)

In order to move towards a narrational archaeological perspective within the discipline of rock art studies, rock art researchers need to shift their perspectives of how they assert a hierarchy of significance within their data collection strategies. To truly do this one must move beyond the combination of both a scientific and ethnohistorical approach, as they in themselves are only singular narratives, and embrace the plurality of narratives inherent in the archaeological object. Adopting theoretical approaches from post-colonial museological theory, rock art researchers can enhance the archaeological record through creating complete biographies of the archaeological objects. A biography that acknowledges the life history and agency of the object, and the fluidity of cultural knowledge (Herle 2000, Turnbull 2000). To succeed in changing the conceptualisation of rock art research in this way integration must be adopted the form of data capture and categorisation, as it is this “expert” knowledge and record which becomes incorporated into the identity of the object, and subsequently affects all future interpretations and representations (Srinivasan et al, 2010).

This presentation will present rock art data collected as part of the George Chaloupka Fellowship 2014.

Herle, Anita. 2000. Torres Strait Islanders: Stories from an exhibition. *Ethnos* 65:253-74

Turnbull, David. 2000. Masons, tricksters, and cartographers: Makers of knowledge and space. Amsterdam, Harwood Academic.

Srinivasan, Ramesh, Katherine M. Becvar, Robin Boast and Jim Enot. 2010. Diverse Knowledges and Contact Zones within the Digital Museum. *Science, Technology, and Human Values*, Vol. 35, No.5 (September 2010), pp.735-768.

## **16049 - Dreaming narratives in the rock art of the Western Desert, Australia**

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** *McDonald, Jo (Archaeology/Centre for Rock-Art Research and Management University of Western Australia, Crawley, Australia / Australien); Veth, Peter (Archaeology/Centre for Rock-Art Research and Management University of Western Australia, Crawley, Australia / Australien)*

The Canning Stock Route (CSR) is one of the longest linear cultural landscapes in the world, an 1800 km series of wells through the desert tracing pastoral connections between the Kimberley and Goldfields of Western Australia. This historic Stock Route relied on an Aboriginal network of water sources through the desert – and most of the 50 numbered wells are named features in Aboriginal dreaming sagas (Tjukurrpa). Many of the well-watered ranges intersected by the CSR are particularly important nodes in the Tjukurrpa – and the rock art and general archaeology allows us to track such narratives across space and through time. This paper describes several such intersections between Indigenous and western knowledge systems, demonstrating the recursive utility of rock art in this process – and the interplay between natural features and rock art in the curating of people's knowledge about place.

## 16025 - Landscape's Storytellers

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** *Bell, Hannah Rachel (Bush University, White Gum Valley, Australia / Australien); Porr, Martin (Universtiy of Western Australia, Crawley, Australia / Australien)*

It has been widely recognised that stories or narratives are central to Australian Indigenous societies. In this context, the most well-known are probably the so-called 'Dreamtime' stories, which are generally regarded as deep time and fundamental creation myths. As such, they are conceptually quarantined to a realm beyond the everyday with little relevance to day-to-day, practical and economic activities. In and with our presentation, we want to question this view and want to argue for a more radical recognition of the importance of story and narrative in Australian Aboriginal hunting and gathering societies, which also has to have an impact on the employed epistemology and forms of representation. We want to illustrate our argument with reference to the philosophy and worldview of the Ngarinyin (Kimberley, Northwest Australia) and want to explore the ontological status and logic of story in Aboriginal society.

What Westerners call 'land' refers to that part of the earth's surface not covered by water; the visible, concrete physicality of rocks and soils. 'Landscape' refers to the appearance of land in a visible vista of classified shapes and vegetations. The words 'land' and 'landscape' often carry the modifier 'the', which changes their meanings from earth mass to denoting specific subject or object. However, to enter landscape in the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia you will enter a unique biodiversity all of which is known, named, its meanings absorbed, fully internalised and communicated in a combination of necessary and equally important languages by local countrymen. We listen to, observe and feel our way in this country. The crack of a stick, rustle of grass, a bird cry or wind gust, a smell, a disturbed pebble underfoot all talk to us as companions in country. All are recorded in the languages of story, song, dance, painting up and painting in a rock shelter, as we learn and absorb Wanjina, Wunguud and their manifestation in landscape. We don't study, write, think or chatter. We listen deeply, feel sensitively, and open ourselves to the conversation in Nature. In Australian Aboriginal culture this includes the apprehension of landscape as dynamic, the living expression of Dreaming, Country in which all 'countrymen' – humans and non-humans – are participants. In this realm the languages of art, dance, song and chant, ritual and ceremony, the meaning of colours and ochres in the context of their origins, and the significance of the ochre and colour stories that attach to place carry unique cultural ascriptions and meanings that cannot be reduced to oral and written communications. They are complex, interactive, dynamic expressions that convey meanings in and of their contexts'.

We argue that the Ngarinyin engagement with Country, landscape, the so-called environment, material culture and art fundamentally questions assumptions about the relationships between the material world, the non-material world and human cognition.

## 16015 - Reflections on CB08-500

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** *Bird, Caroline (University of Western Australia and Archae-aus, Fremantle, Australia / Australien); Hook, Fiona (University of Western Australia and Archae-aus, Fremantle, Australia / Australien); Rhoads, James (University of Western Australia and Archae-aus, Fremantle, Australia / Australien)*

This paper reflects on two alternative accounts of CB08-500, a rockshelter in the inland Pilbara region of Western Australia. The site was identified and recorded as part of compliance work associated with the development of Fortescue Metal Group's (FMG) Cloudbreak and Christmas Creek iron ore mines and has now been destroyed. The conventional archaeological account of this site emphasises its recent date and its typical character in relation to other sites in the region. An alternative account of CB08-500 was developed for inclusion in a community book about sites in Niyaparli country developed as part of a research project funded by FMG. This account speculates on connections between CB08-500 and recent historical events and highlights an imagined snapshot of past activity at the site, based on the excavated evidence. While no Niyaparli narrative has been obtained for the site and there is no evidence that use of the site is remembered today, Niyaparli generally view archaeological sites as indicating their connection to country and providing information about the lives of their ancestors. The alternative accounts raise issues about how archaeological sites are assessed as part of the registration of sites under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972/1980 and how they are interpreted for clients and the wider public. Archaeological investigation in the Pilbara region over the last thirty years has overwhelmingly occurred in the context of development associated with resource extraction and has mainly focussed on site documentation rather than analysis. There have been few attempts at regional archaeological synthesis and assessment of archaeological significance has been narrowly focussed towards questions of antiquity, and particularly towards overarching archaeological narratives relating to the colonisation of the continent, the impact of environmental change on human groups, particularly the Last Glacial Maximum, and mid Holocene changes in technology and social organisation. However, most sites in the region cannot be connected to these overarching narratives. The Aboriginal Heritage Act, as currently interpreted, requires sites to meet a relatively high threshold of significance and importance to the State of Western Australia to be placed on the Register—criteria which expose the conventional archaeological narrative as wanting. The alternative narrative focus on the integrity, information content and connection with recent history suggests how archaeologists might more effectively engage with clients and the wider community to address questions of significance assessment.

## **16013 - Yooddoodoom**

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** *Doohan, Kim (Mintupela/DAC, Albany, Australia / Australien)*

This presentation seeks to enlarge upon the ethnographic context of the rock art of the northwest Kimberley. Its phenomenological approach is based on the recollections of a senior Worrorra woman when she was a child living a largely subsistence existence with her older kin, most of whom were born before the coming of missionaries at the turn of the twentieth century. This glimpse into the ways these Indigenous people engaged with their rock art and interpreted it in their daily lives is a counterpoint and a contribution to the current resurgence in the archaeological study of this acclaimed tradition. The presentation is located in Mrs Janet Oobagooma's narration of her experiences and knowledge working with Dr Kim Doohan. Mrs Oobagooma and Dr Doohan have prepared this presentation which will be delivered by Mrs Oobagooma's granddaughters Crystal and Crystabell Oobagooma and Ms Leah Umbagai and Dr Kim Doohan.

## **16001 - Socio-spatial characteristics of prehistoric land use in the Pilbara, NW Australia**

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** *Rhoads, James (University of Western Australia and Archae-aus, Fremantle, Australia / Australien); Bird, Caroline (University of Western Australia and Archae-aus, Fremantle, Australia / Australien)*

As Gamble noted, the investigation of prehistoric hunter-gatherers best begins, in theory, from a societal rather than a settlement or a campsite perspective. Locales and regions, not sites, serve as primary levels of analysis. The socio-spatial structuring of Australian hunter-gatherer communities is most relevant to this viewpoint, as it aligns well with the critical ethnographic observations (see works of Meggitt, O'Connell, Memmott and Pickering).

This model is not a prominent feature of archaeology in the Pilbara area of NW Australia, where compliance archaeological studies predominate. Hunter-gather archaeological sites here are most often explained by referring to group mobility and aggregation events.

This style of interpretation is understandable. Compliance archaeology projects, which have arisen as a consequence of two decades of iron ore mining, comprise the dominant means by which the region's archaeology is explained. Sites have become administrative 'units' whose meaning and, thereby, significance is measured and applied to establish site avoidance strategies. The importance of surface archaeological sites, which make up most of the archaeological record, is rarely credited.

This paper reports on research carried out at the Christmas Creek mine (Chichester Range, Pilbara region). The area's traditional owners, the Nyiyaparli, requested the Fortescue Metal Group to fund the work as a means to preserve their cultural history. This research also seeks to develop a landscape-focused framework that may address the shortcomings of current site-based models and improve significance assessments of Aboriginal heritage places.

Archaeological information from more than 1000 sites was comprehensively recorded during a 100% survey of the study area. A selection of rockshelters was excavated and numerous surface artefact scatters were salvaged. Our analyses demonstrate the area was, for the greater part, inhabited during the Late Holocene. Moreover, particular clusters of rockshelters and nearby surface sites share common archaeological signatures that notably differ from other similar site aggregations.

This paper examines these findings further using a socio-spatial analysis based on Gamble's hypothetical model for hunter-gathers. The organisation of Aboriginal communities noted in key ethnographies is employed as the testable framework against which the Nyiyaparli heritage places are assessed.

## 15973 - Thinking through story: Archaeology and narratives

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** *Porr, Martin (University of Western Australia, Crawley, Australia / Australien); Matthews, Jacqueline (University of Western Australia, Crawley, Australia / Australien)*

This paper will provide a short introduction to the motivations behind the session, 'The Archaeology of Narratives or Towards a Narrational Archaeology'. Narratives appear to be central elements of all Indigenous or hunting gathering societies. They structure and communicate knowledge and guide engagement with the physical and social world, prioritising experience, relationships, contexts and processes. However, academic frameworks that are employed to understand hunter-gatherers and their material culture through archaeology are traditionally embedded in Western classificatory frameworks, which prioritise inherent qualities of all aspects of the world and tend to negate narratives as "just stories" or as representing a false, incomplete and superficial understanding of reality. The disjunct at play here has, we argue, serious implications for archaeological practice. In this paper we will begin to explore the ontological status of narratives in Western and Indigenous contexts and seek out ways to begin to remedy the problem identified. We will discuss why thinking through stories is valuable for archaeology and will explore some of the implications for our understanding, interpretation and representation of material culture in hunting and gathering societies and, consequently, the deep human past and human evolution as well.



**15908 - Hunting and Gathering as narrative ritual in Ten Canoes: thou shall not covet thy brother's wives, or, beware of what you wish for.**

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** Allen, Brenda (*University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand / Neuseeland*)

In the feature film *Ten Canoes*, which was inspired to some extent by the works of Thompson following his visit to the Ramingining area in the 1930s, we are given two stories, both of which reveal clues to the probable shape of some early Aboriginal narratives. The film's story within-the-story is a didactic tale told by an older man to his younger brother, who, it is clear, covets the older brother's youngest wife. The structure of this tale resembles a tree, with a main line that can only be explored gradually as the listener is judged ready, and many branches that delay the delivery of the moral. While that tale is gradually unfolding we witness another story based directly on hunting and gathering goose eggs. These eggs must be gathered early in the season and preparations for the hunt are not only complex in themselves, but tied to the progression of the seasons. That hunting story is a re-enactment of an older tradition and was designed by the people of Ramingining after much consideration of its suitability for sharing and its value as worth preserving. This paper will examine that narrative's progression through the film and compare its shape with the shape of the story-within-the-story. To support the findings of that comparison the paper will refer to brief passages of writing by Central Desert healers and fragments of contemporary Australian Aboriginal poetry that references older, oral forms of Songpoetry.

## **15762 - Oral Tradition as Data: An example from the Great Papuan Plateau, Papua New Guinea**

Presentation type: Oral presentation

**Author(s):** *Barker, Bryce (Univeristy of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia / Australien)*

This paper explores the links between stylistically identical rock art from two geographically and linguistically separate horticultural foraging groups; the Gebusi and the Kasua from the Great Papuan Plateau region of Papua New Guinea. The detailed Kasua oral narrative which relates the movement of creator ancestors across the landscape from east to west into what is now Gebusi lands, clearly links this art to Kasua, while Gebusi disavow ownership or knowledge of its meaning. The traditional origin narratives as related to the author not only led to the 'discovery' of unique rock art sites, occupation caves and rockshelters as well as important 'natural places' of ritual significance but also provided a rich layer of contextual meaning to these locations through time and space allowing sense to be made of how and why these places came to be. The paper discusses the importance of Kasua and Gebusi oral narratives of their pasts to archaeological praxis, arguing that a meaningful synthesis of the archaeology of the Papuan Plateau is impossible without incorporating the Indigenous world view in archaeological interpretation.