

Lived and living landscapes in the eastern Chichester Range— understanding a Nyiyaparli taskscape

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Hunter-gatherers do not occupy sites, they inhabit landscapes. The landscape is not a passive backdrop to Aboriginal activity but shaped by ongoing natural and cultural processes that create a 'taskscape'. The surface archaeological record is a palimpsest formed as the result of numerous individual events in combination with natural processes that serve to reveal, conceal or alter the record. In this paper we reinterpret archaeological data, collected as part of place based consultancy methodology as dictated by the Western Australian *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*, as part of a *Nyiyaparli* taskscape. The idea of the taskscape focuses on how landscapes are perceived and experienced not as backdrops or scenery, but in terms of the collection of activities carried out there (Ingold, 1993). Ingold (2007, p. 100) suggests that the lives of hunter-gatherers can be portrayed in terms of the sum of their journeys traced on the ground. The sum of the lives of many individuals is a 'meshwork'. Places then are the knots in the meshwork, connected and formed by the threads of individual journeys. Nyiyaparli country is filled with the marks of these past journeys both from the *Kukutpa* and from generations of ancestors. Individual archaeological 'sites' in Nyiyaparli country sit within a wider locality where activities frequently occurred, or where natural processes reveal or preserve evidence of past activity, or where an activity that happened to involve durable material such as stone occurred. Some evidence at sites is a by-product of activity—'just rubbish'—such as stone flaking, quarrying stone. Other evidence comprises the remains from deliberate actions—fires, shelters. Still other evidence represents deliberate constructive actions—producing art, leaving cores or grindstones at places to be used again, stone arrangements for ceremonies, fish traps, walled niches and the like. All are evidence of the taskscape—the lived and living landscape at the intersection between nature and culture. Understanding the taskscape calls for a shift in focus from individual 'sites' to an 'archaeology of place'.