

Latin America and the Caribbean *Amérique latine et les Caraïbes*

## Proposed World Heritage Cultural Landscape in the Argentinian Andes and the Involvement of Local Communities: Pintoscayoc, a Case Study in Quebrada de Humahuaca

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**1. Introduction**

Quebrada de Humahuaca is a long and large rift valley system located in the South Central Andes in north-west Argentina, close to the border with Bolivia. It belongs to the eastern ranges of the Andes which extend from Bolivia to Argentina (Fig. 63). Quebrada de Humahuaca borders the high plateau to the north and west and the lowlands to the south and east, where the tropical rain forest begins (Fig. 64). The rift valley system is in the shape of a tree, with the main trunk located in a north-south axis, through which the main river flows southward along a 166 km course (Fig. 65). It begins at an average altitude of 5,000 m MSL from Puna and ends southward at 1,500 m MSL where the rift system meets with the Yungas (Fig. 66). Quebrada de Humahuaca therefore straddles two very different environments and is a gateway to both geographical regions. In the past, these regions were the birth-place of related human traditions and cultures which are still alive today.



Quebrada de Humahuaca

The rift valley system itself is a geographical and cultural unit that can be described as a 'continuing cultural landscape' according to the UNESCO classification (UNESCO, 1972, 1994). This consideration is based on the concentration of material and non-material evidence of a long history of human

occupation, spanning more than 10,000 years. The clearly close and changing relationship between human societies and this specific territorial entity left evidence of cultural landscapes that had been continually 'repainted' throughout history. The present result is the existence of a continuing cultural landscape that has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment, while playing an active role in contemporary society, closely associated with the traditional way of life. The cultural landscape is also impressive in terms of natural beauty. Its significance is aesthetic, artistic, scientific (geological, geographical, archaeological, historical, anthropological and sociological), symbolic and social, and all these values are recognized by different human groups, including local communities, the scientific community, visitors and tourists, many of whom have different and sometimes contradictory interests.

The value and potential of the region have been presented in previous papers (Hernández Llosas, 1999, 2001). Although the local and national authorities developed the idea of nominating Quebrada de Humahuaca for inscription on the World Heritage List, they did not fully recognize the importance of designing a comprehensive management plan involving all the social actors in the process. There are several reasons for this. First, the dominant concept of heritage is still tied to the old view that considers cultural heritage to embody only specific material remains linked to the colonial and republican past. Second, the political, economic and social crisis the country has faced for several decades is reflected in the lack of good policies and programmes for heritage management. The access to heritage management and policy is restricted to politicians and government officials who are not specifically trained in these particular topics and whose dialogue with other social actors is scarce.



Puna or High Plateau



Basin or Lower Rift Valley



The Yungas or Upper Tropical Rain Forest

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Within this scenario, and even though we have presented a schematic proposal for the general management of the whole Continuing Cultural Landscape of the Quebrada de Humahuaca (Hernández Llosas, 1999, 2001), it is obvious that such an enterprise is a long-term, vast and difficult task. Taking this into account, we perceive the joint interpretation and management project at Pintoscayoc, a specific site within Quebrada de Humahuaca, as a model to be extended to the wider context of the Quebrada. In Pintoscayoc a comprehensive archaeological project, initiated by the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET), the Argentine National Council for Scientific and Technological Research, in collaboration with local communities, yielded knowledge about the geology, archaeology, history and anthropology of the place (Hernández Llosas, 1998, 2000). The community living there today comprises herders and farmers, an extended family group that belongs to a larger group of 150 inhabitants of the surrounding area, whose culture is tied to Andean traditions. We believe that linking the scientific knowledge with the community's traditional knowledge of the place is the best way to interpret and manage this particular cultural landscape.

This paper presents the project to interpret and manage the heritage values of Pintoscayoc. The objectives of this project are to promote the creation of a working group that serves to integrate the local community, scientists and other scholars and social actors, to share knowledge (traditional and scientific) about the place and to decide how and which part of that knowledge is appropriate to be shared with a broader group of people, and to explore the possibility of promoting tourism in the area. The idea of promoting tourism or attracting visitors is based, first, on the necessity of finding ways of sustainable development for the local community and, second, on the opportunity to bring that knowledge to the general public as a means of promoting the revalorization of the heritage on a broader social scale.

First, however, we need to discuss some key issues relating to the following topics. What is heritage all about? Whose heritage is it? Which part of the past and present are considered heritage? What have archaeology and archaeologists got to do with heritage? Can archaeology help in the search for a local and national cultural identity? How can this be related to local sustainable development?

### 2. Addressing the Issues

The concept of heritage is closely related to the significance that particular things have for specific groups of people (Pearson and Sullivan, 1999). Heritage comes from

the past and links past objects, events and beliefs with present people, becoming the inheritance of the present people.

In regions where colonialism has been part of the historical process in recent centuries, as in the case of the Americas, the recognition of particular objects, events and beliefs as heritage has been restricted by the colonial domination of the previous inhabitants, the original people. The result of this has been the recognition of colonial and republican times as the local past, history and heritage. The European past, traditions and beliefs became the roots and the model to follow. The Aboriginal past was, and still is, perceived as an extension of nature and is considered to be part of the natural history rather than the history (see Byrne, 1991, for similarities in the Australian context). Thus, when defining 'archaeological heritage' many scholars and politicians, as well as the general public, perceive the 'archaeological record' or 'archaeological remains' (sites, objects, etc.) as 'heritage', although they only recognize the scientific values. This dominant ideology ignores the basic definition of heritage which requires a group of people to recognize something as their own. Only then does the concept of heritage come into play as a social value (Ballart, 1997).

In Argentina, the consequences of this way of thinking are manifold and become apparent at the social, political and economic levels. However, they are particularly visible in the distinct lack of any modern heritage legislation, the paucity of policies and strategies to protect and manage archaeological heritage, and the lack of dialogue among political and local authorities, local communities and scientists. In this context, the local communities, mainly the Aboriginal and mestizo ones, are perceived by the authorities and the scientists as groups of people that have to be taught the values of the natural and cultural heritage, the scientific aspect of them being the only important values. In doing so, they are failing to recognize the importance of traditional knowledge, local values and the points of view of the community.

One of the arguments in favour of this position is the difficulty in proving a direct link between these communities and the archaeological remains. Again, this approach not only fails to recognize the basic concept of heritage as a social value, but it also denies the historical drama that led to the present situation. The indigenous people were subject to massive killings, forced assimilation and marginalization, the result of which was that the original owners of the land were chased off and their material culture and physical remains transferred from the landscape to museum collections. Their present descendants are perceived as uncultured. They were dispossessed of life, their culture, land and past, and their absence from the landscape removed them from sight, putting into question the notion of authenticity of the landscape.

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### 3. Re-Establishing Visibility

#### 3.1 When part of the past has been erased, how can it be brought back?

There are several ways to re-establish the visibility of a past that has been erased. To begin with, the dominant notion that links the Aboriginal past with natural history has to be changed in favour of the notion that the original people's past and present are part of the cultural history.

One way to promote this notion is to restore the knowledge of the continuity of human development in a particular land and the cultural construction of that land, also referred to as the *continuing cultural landscape*. To bring back that knowledge, there is a powerful tool known as *interpretation*. These are two key concepts that require further elaboration.

#### 3.2 Continuing cultural landscape

The concept of landscape has lately been considered and referred to as a cultural construct (Ashmore and Knapp, 1999; Bender, 1994; Bradley, 2001). Within this perspective, landscape is perceived as being different from environment itself, and is regarded as the place where culture is displayed, providing evidence of the culture. A particular landscape today appears as a palimpsest because it contains traces of the interrelationships between places, events, people and the setting throughout history. The changes over time have given rise to layers which appear today in different ways. It is 'the landscape as a whole – that largely man-made tapestry – in which all other artifacts are embedded ... which gives them their sense of place' (Lowenthal, 1981). Conceived in this way, the landscape is a significant reminder of the past and can inform and enlighten us on social history and on the way our predecessors were involved in landscape-making. The landscape also has the ability to promote a sense of place, to create links with the past and to develop a sense of continuity with the present. In this paper, we take the World Heritage category of 'continuing cultural landscape' to have been conceived along these lines.

#### 3.3 Interpretation

Interpretation has been defined as 'a communication process, using a variety of approaches and techniques, designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural and natural heritage to the public through first hand experience with an object, artifact, landscape or site' (Vancouver Island Regional Interpretation and Information Plan, Evans, 1985, cited in Sullivan, 1996). This communication process involves at least three stages: (a) recovering the information; (b) giving meaning to that information; (c) presenting that information to others. The whole process has a high level of subjectivity and is related to the value system of the actors involved. One category of key actors is the scientist, who can recover scientific informa-

tion about the past and present landscape. Other key actors are the local communities. It is important to state the obvious here because, as was explained before, the dominant perception of heritage values is connected to scientific and Western values and these undermine the relevance of working with the community on heritage topics. It is also important to consider the characteristics of local communities, because the perceptions of heritage will be different among Aboriginal and mestizo people, and the ties of these people with traditional ways of life will be stronger than among the recent immigrants to the area. As with any communication process, the interpretation of a particular landscape will convey a certain message, and it is important to be conscious that the message and the interpretation are, by their very nature, subjective (Sullivan, 1996).

#### 3.4 Constructing visibility

Interpretation is the tool used to show the past and the present of a particular continuing cultural landscape that comes from the joint effort of a group of people who wish to display and share their knowledge (traditional and scientific), their values and their points of view with others. The aims of interpretation are numerous. Communicating values and showing the significance of a cultural landscape are the core objectives, but enhancing the cultural experience of visitors and protecting and conserving the heritage are no less important concerns. The practical implementation of the interpretation can adopt many forms. In dealing with complex situations, such as the interpretation of a cultural landscape, there are many options available and these include the development of a detailed project, an assessment of the places to be shown, the physical protection of these places, the setting-up of interpretation centres and/or museums, the development of interpretative trails, etc. In these terms, interpretation is one effective way to construct (or re-construct) visibility of a past that was erased or hidden, potentially giving access to that knowledge to a broader group of people (local and national visitors as well as foreign tourists). Interpretation is a powerful tool that has to be used with care, conscience and a sense of ethics. With this as a starting point, the interpretation has to be developed within the framework of a management plan and will ultimately constitute a very important part of that plan.

### 4. Pintoscayoc Archaeological Project

Pintoscayoc is a locality set in the upper sector of Quebrada de Humahuaca, a high rift valley at an altitude that ranges from 3,000 m to 4,100 m above sea level. This upper location has particular characteristics in topography and resources quite different from those that can be found in the basin, or lower sector, of the rift valley where altitudes range from 1,500 m to 2,900 m MSL (Fig. 67). Pintoscayoc is a typical high rift valley environment, with a steep topography, outcrops with rock shelters, a scarcity of spring water, and characteristic wild plants and animals.

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This land and its resources have been used by human societies from around 10,000 years ago.



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**Upper or High Rift Valley**

Since 1982, a comprehensive archaeological project has taken place here. The project was directed by the present writer, carried out as part of a CONICET research programme and implemented by former archaeology students from various Argentine universities. The team also included specialists from a variety of disciplines. The aims of the project were to research a specific location which was perceived as a cultural landscape in order to investigate the relationship between human societies and the land of the region over time, to analyse the changes in the ways of occupation of this particular area throughout the course of history, and to evaluate the causes of these changes.

Several archaeological sites varying in nature were found. Some of them have rock art and/or archaeological deposits (Fig. 68). These were recorded, excavated and studied. Information on the human occupation from 10,700 years ago until the present day was recovered, showing a changing relationship with the land, which can be traced over time, but also showing that a basic traditional way of life remained constant (Hernández Llosas, op.cit.). Even though the present community does not openly recognize



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**Rock art from the first encounters with Spanish Conquerors**

the archaeological remains as those of their direct ancestors, there is an implicit recognition and respect for their forebears as they refer to them as *los antiguos* (the elders). During the 1980s, when the scientific investigation of the area commenced, the dominant scientific paradigm was to carry out basic archaeological research. Within that framework, the objective of the original project did not take into account the possibility of working together with the local community on heritage topics. Even if the relationship between the archaeologist and the local inhabitants was always very close at a human level, any efforts to combine traditional knowledge with the knowledge gained through scientific research was only devised and designed much more recently.

### 5. Towards Joint Management and Interpretation of Pintoscayoc Continuing Cultural Landscape

Since 1997, when the excavation phase of the project finished, the team started to develop the idea of a joint management plan for the whole site, to be designed and carried out together with the local community. One year earlier, an anthropologist from the group, Pablo Masci, initiated several activities with the community in order to form a co-operative to sell local produce to people visiting the area as cultural tourists. The visitors were students of the University of Buenos Aires who went there as part of a recreational programme. The results of these preliminary activities were encouraging, not only because of the interest that this type of tour generates among visitors, but also because of the new types of relationship that the co-operative generates among the local people. The results were excellent in two ways: the students gained a lot of knowledge and the local people increased their potential for economic development.

The success of these preliminary activities reinforced the idea of the importance of utilizing the knowledge and the archaeological collection acquired during the scientific project in a broader programme that considers management and interpretation, but is oriented towards sustainable development by promoting it as a cultural attraction for different target groups of visitors. With this in mind, the idea of developing a new project to manage and interpret the whole Pintoscayoc locality (integrating all the natural, archaeological and historical remains together with the present fields that are used or inhabited today) arose as a joint initiative between the scientists who have worked there and the community. The actors of the project have yet to formally organize the working group and communicate the initiative to the local government in order to work with it in arranging the legal and bureaucratic aspects. At this stage, the design of the management plan is being developed as a priority, together with the schedule of activities, and the fund-raising programme that supports the project. CONICET, an agency that supports scientific investigation, is not directly involved in the project, but does support this type of initiative at an academic level. As this is a joint project in spirit and practice, both parts of the working group will train each other in raising awareness of Pintoscayoc's values. In doing so the local community, working together with the archaeologist and anthropologist, will decide which of these values are to be shown to the visitors and how.

To co-ordinate and facilitate the interpretation, a project to build an 'interpretation centre' in the main part of the locality (close to the present school facilities) has been proposed. This centre aims to centralize the display of knowledge about the site and to show and organize the different sites that can be visited by trekking (geological outcrops, caves with rock art, herding stations, etc.) and which are to be prepared as interpreted cultural trails (Fig. 69). To present the scientific information, the local community must first agree

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on what to display, and then display it in a public-friendly way. This display will include geological, geographical, biological, archaeological and historical information. To present the traditional knowledge about the place, the local community will propose and decide which aspects of that knowledge (from craft techniques to religious beliefs) they would like to share and how. The interpretation centre and visitor management will be in the hands of the community, the representatives of which will act as the custodians of the archaeological collection deposited in the museum of the interpretation centre.



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**Goats and sheep, traditional herding station**

### 5.1 Interpretation

To display the information and knowledge about the place, ten main themes will be presented, not only at the interpretation centre, but also through cultural teaching trails crossing the Pintoscaiyoc landscape:

**Theme 1: *The creation of the land (geology).*** How the place came to be what it is today / the Palaeozoic basin / the Miocene, Pliocene and Pleistocene elevation process, orogenic complexity / the resulting elevated basin, the ongoing geological process / the dynamics of the rift valleys / the selection of sites in the landscape with a high visibility and exposure of the past geological process.

**Theme 2: *The land (ecology).*** The gifts of nature. What nature offers today / the desert environment and its similarities with other deserts of the world / water: the crucial resource / the particular climate (Buitrago and Larran, 1994) / the native flora (steppe species and the very characteristic cactus) (Cabrera, 1957a; Ruthsatz and Movia, 1975) / the native fauna (large and small mammals, herbivores and predators) (Cabrera, 1957b) / the importance of the camelids / the native fauna domesticated / plants and animals introduced after Spanish colonization.

**Theme 3: *The first humans enter the land.*** The genesis of the cultural landscape by people who hunt and gather c. 11,000–7,500 years ago (c. 9050–5500 BC). Pleistocene – Holocene edge: the first entrance of humans into the region as a local phenomenon of a global process (Gamble, 1994) / exploration, colonization, effective occupation of the land (Borrero, 1994; Hernández Llosas, 2000) / the hunter-gatherer way of life and beliefs. The abandonment of the land c. 7,500–5,000 years ago (c. 5500–3000 BC). Middle Holocene: drastic reduction of the humidity, abandonment or occasional occupation of the land (Yacobaccio, 1997).

**Theme 4: *Changing relations with the land.*** The cultural landscape of the first people to produce food c. 5,000–3,000 years ago (c. 3050–1050 BC). The beginning of the Late Holocene: the different way of returning to the land / the starting point of a new relation with the land / triggers of the process / the impossibility of maintaining a hunter-gatherer way of life / the adoption of new ways of life in economy, social and ideological aspects (Hernández Llosas, 2003).

**Theme 5: *The productive land.*** The cultural landscape of people who intensively produce food c. 3,000–550 years ago (c. 1050 BC–AD 1450). Development of the Late Holocene: the intensification in the use of the land / changes in social relationships / causes and consequences of the process at social, political and ideological levels (Hernández Llosas, 2000; Nielsen, 1997).

**Theme 6: *The land conquered.*** The cultural landscape during the Inca domination c. 550–450 years ago (c. AD 1450–1550). The spread of the Incas from the Central Andes / the regional form of the general process (Raffino, 1993) / the Waka at Pintoscaiyoc (Hernández Llosas, 2002).

**Theme 7: *The land invaded.*** The landscape disrupted by the Spanish conquerors c. 450–350 years ago (c. AD 1535–1635). Invasion and resistance / the drastic end of the Aboriginal era / the integration into general world history since then (Martínez Cereceda, 2000) / the local manifestation of the process (Hernández Llosas, 2001).

**Theme 8: *The land as a Spanish colony and the Republic.*** A syncretic cultural landscape c. 350–100 years ago (c. AD 1635–1900). The Spanish colonial way of life / the forced change in living on the land and attitudes / the last century's wars of independence and the birth of the nation-state (Busaniche, 1973).

**Theme 9: *The land today.*** A changing cultural landscape tied to the past c. 100 years ago–present (c. AD 1900–2000). The ongoing process / adaptation to the present historical conditions / the maintenance and reinvention of the traditional way of life / the interweaving of the Andean and Spanish worlds.

**Theme 10: *The land tomorrow – the future cultural landscape.*** The uncertainty of the future / the risk of losing traditions, the heritage and the land / danger and ways of protecting the continuing cultural landscape of Pintoscaiyoc (Fig. 70).



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**Present people, uncertain future**

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### 6. Politics, Science, Community: A Dialogue to be Established

Throughout recent decades, a deeper awareness and understanding of the relevance and values of our cultural and natural heritage has reached different social groups at a global level. This awareness has brought with it new possibilities to 'use' that heritage for different purposes, most attention being focused on sustainable development projects. This awareness has also brought with it some dangerous situations where powerful economic groups want to take advantage of the economic potential of the heritage for their own benefit. Some projects proposing the exploitation of the natural and cultural heritage by private groups have been put forward to the political decision-makers in a search for financial support with the initial investment, such as a French proposal for cultural tourism in north-west Argentina (Reboratti, pers. comm.). The benefits of these projects for the local communities relate to the job opportunities that the projects could offer them (e.g. hotel attendants, tour guides, drivers, etc.). This type of project is a real danger all over Latin America, given the political and economic crisis in most of the region and the resultant susceptibility of politicians, and the desire of local and foreign private economic groups to take advantage of that.

In these circumstances and with a view to avoiding such situations, it is even more important to develop understanding and co-operation between politicians, scientists and local communities in favour of positive management practices that regard the community not just as a target for development, but as having a primary active role in the process. The idea of sustainability based on heritage is especially important today, when the economy of the country is deteriorating so rapidly that the most vulnerable social groups, such as these communities, are the most severely affected. We believe that the use of natural and cultural heritage sites for sustainable development purposes can only be achieved if all the social actors are involved, particularly the local communities, and, if the heritage management is based in these communities, with the help of local authorities and other interest groups (e.g. scientists). With this in mind, we agree with UNESCO's belief that heritage can be seen as a 'resource' only if its valorization aims to achieve 'the flourishing of human existence in all its forms and as a whole' (Isar, 1998). It is clear then that heritage should be seen as a potential source of spiritual and material growth for the local and international community.

In this light, management and presentation can be seen as the pathway to 'sustainable development' if the interpretation of heritage results in the 'attractions' offered as part of a cultural tourism development programme.

### 7. Conclusions

At this stage, it is important to go back to the necessity of giving visibility to a past that has been erased. The idea of bringing heritage knowledge to the general public is important given the almost total lack of information that the average person in Argentina has about the country's Aboriginal past and its significance. This lack of knowledge is a hangover from the official education and other policies followed in the past. These policies, which started in the mid-nineteenth century with the birth of the nation (together with the massive killing of the Aboriginal people of Pampa and Patagonia, and the immigration programme to bring Europeans to populate the country), were based on a belief in the creation of a new nation with new people. This belief created a myth of a nation, and built a segregated past, resulting in the nation being dispossessed of its past and the creation of a national identity crisis.

The only way to face the national identity crisis is to recognize and promote the multicultural heritage of the country. To heal the rupture with the untold past, it is necessary to develop a reconciliation process, to discover the social significance of how the 'different' pasts have shaped the nation, and to promote a new perception of the past including all the diverse social and cultural groups. Archaeology and archaeologists can help in this process by working with and for the community, to encourage the pursuit of a new national identity with a new common future rooted in the true past of our land and our people.

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