

David Lewis-Williams has been primarily responsible for elevating a traditionally descriptive and marginalised area of research, rock art studies, to the leading edge of archaeological method and theory.

From the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, Lewis-Williams' research focused on quantitative and statistical study of San rock paintings, reflecting a characteristic of all of his research: careful and rigorous data collection and analysis. By the late 1970s, he had developed an interpretive approach employing symbolic anthropological techniques and ethnohistorical data that resulted in detailed symbolic interpretations of San iconography. In more than 150 scientific articles and 14 books since this time, he has created a large and coherent corpus of interpretations of San art. When combined with the parallel contributions of his students, and the research contributions that his interpretations have stimulated among colleagues and even critics, one realises that southern San rock art is now the best studied corpus of rock art in the world. Lewis-Williams was the catalyst in this development.

In the mid-1980s Lewis-Williams extended his research to include European Upper Palaeolithic rock art. The culmination of this research has been his recent book: *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art*, one of the best-selling archaeological books of recent years. In a fashion typical only of a scholar of his ability and vision, this book addresses not just the meaning of rock art but equally, and as convincingly, the origin of art and human consciousness. It has been labelled "A genuine masterpiece" by leading scholar Jean Clottes.

Lewis-Williams' research and influences have extended far beyond rock art studies. His theoretical concerns have ranged from social theory to the social and political implications of archaeological practice. This has included attention to scientific method as well as the use of functionally-based analogical reasoning in interpretive theories. His work emphasises the need for and value of analytically rigorous symbolic anthropological method and forges new links to the neurosciences. The quality and breadth of his research have made him one of South Africa's most frequently cited scientific writers with more than 1000 citations in fields as diverse as genetics, art history, anthropology and the neuropsychology. Moreover, this has been achieved in a research field that, when he started his career, was marginalised in the extreme: professional rock art research almost did not exist. His work has been instrumental in changing this.

Under his direction, the Institute built up the world's largest archive of rock art recordings and became the world's leading centre for training and publication in the field

of rock art studies. Beyond academic contributions, the greatest mark of Lewis-Williams' impact is social. He has contributed greatly to elevating the southern San into national consciousness. This fact was best expressed when Thabo Mbeki called upon Lewis-Williams to compose the national motto for the new South African coat-of-arms – the centrepiece of which is a rock painting reproduced from a publication by Lewis-Williams.

Lewis-Williams is thus not simply a significant rock art researcher of the first rank. Nor is he just a very important southern African archaeologist. Nor is his work solely research. His career, instead, has influenced the South African social fabric and political ideology, thereby creating an enduring legacy the likes of which few scientists can ever hope to equal.

It is with great pride and pleasure that the University confers upon James David Lewis-Williams the degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa*.