



INSTITUTE OF PREHISTORY FOR UWA

An Institute of Prehistory specialising in Aboriginal archaeology will be established at the University in the near future.

The Institute, which is likely to begin operation by the commencement of the 1983 academic year, will provide a focal point for the study of prehistory in Western Australia. Staffed by a Professor of Prehistory—yet to be appointed—and a senior lecturer and lecturer currently teaching prehistory in the Department of Anthropology, the new Institute will provide a unique opportunity for the study of Western Australia's extensive collection of prehistoric rock art—one of the richest in the world—and the State's many prehistoric sites, which include some of the most ancient known to man.

The idea for the proposed Institute developed from an offer by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in Canberra to fund a Chair in Prehistory, first mooted in 1974 and revived in 1979. UWA was selected after applications were received by the AIAS from a number of other universities. Discussions of the implications of accepting the AIAS' offer led to a decision late last year to establish the Institute of Studies in Prehistory as an independent centre within the Faculty of Arts.

The Institute will initially be established for a period of six years. The University will meet establishment costs and fund the Chair from its Development Fund after the AIAS grant expires at the end of the third year of operation.

It is envisaged that the new Institute will receive additional funding from sources outside the University, particularly by conducting archaeological research on a contract basis. The Institute would in this respect be following the example of several departments of prehistory in North American universities which have set up offices of contract archaeology.

The WA Museum, at present the main supplier of contract archaeologists, is currently in the process of withdrawing from the role, which could as a result be taken over by the new Institute.

The sets of concentric circles on this three-dimensional engraving from the Burrup Peninsula, in the Pilbara, are arranged to represent a human head. The Burrup, currently undergoing development for the North-west Shelf gas project, contains a great concentration of ancient engravings. Its art is being investigated by the Sites Department of the WA Museum, and University students and staff members have contributed to the programme. Areas such as the Burrup, says Senior Lecturer in Archaeology Mrs Sylvia Hallam, offer limitless prospects for research.

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