

Geoparks and indigenous cosmology

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Geoparks have been identified as some of the geologically and topographically most interesting places on Earth. They are defined by their geographic uniqueness and their relationship to nearby human inhabitants. These special places are recognized by the scientists and authorities of the countries where they are found, and they are often important tourist attractions. This paper intends to examine the meaning of these special places for the original indigenous human inhabitants. Geoparks are awesome features, such as volcanoes, caves, waterfalls and rapids, faults and cliffs, places that leave human beings with a sense of wonder. These features are usually recognized by indigenous peoples as places of power, fear and origination, revealing common human cosmological beliefs that cross boundaries between very different and often distant cultures, beliefs that have endured throughout history, migrations and civilization changes. This paper suggests that UNESCO seek out and display these unique cultural commonalities and ways of believing about these centres of power in the Earth's crust which all humans find so inspiring.

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