



- Localities
- ∩ Country_Borders
- Vegetation colder (MIS 4 and 6) [after Ray & Adams 2001]
 - Tropical extreme desert
 - Tropical semi-desert
 - Tropical grassland
 - Semi-arid temperate woodland or scrub
- Sea level (MIS 4)
 - - 80 m

During the Middle Stone Age of Southern Africa, technological and behavioral innovations led to significant changes in the lifeways of modern humans. The glacial episode of Marine Isotope Stage 4, about 57-71,000 years ago, resulted in cooler and drier climatic conditions and the expansion of grassland vegetation. Sea level dropped by as much as 80 meters below its current level. During this period the cultural phase known as the Howieson's Poort appeared across much of Southern Africa, peaking at about 60-65,000 years ago, and then disappeared. The lithic industry of the Howieson's Poort is exemplified by changes in technology, such as the use of the punch technique, an increase in the selection of fine-grained silcrete, and the predominance of retouched pieces including backed tools, segments, scrapers and points. Segments are the type fossil of the Howieson's Poort and represent multi-purpose armatures that were hafted onto wooden spear shafts. The standardized design and refined style of segments convey information about the behavior of their makers and provide insight about group identity. Increasing use of ochre, the presence of engraved ostrich eggshells, and a bone tool industry are associated with these stone artifacts. Also evident is an intensified use of space. Taken together, these behaviors suggest that the Howieson's Poort represents a clear marker of modern human culture.