

*Published in Rock Art and Posterity, Occasional AURA Pub. No. 4, pp. 115-16 (1991). The concept and structure of this paper were mine but John K. Zancanella, affiliated with the Bureau of Land Management, was a co-author providing BLM support for these ideas. Views differing from those in the original version this paper were later expressed by J. K. Clegg. I took the prerogative as co-editor of the full volume of juxtaposing his essay with ours as a debate.*

## **THE MANAGEMENT OF RECORDING PROCEDURES IN THE PRESERVATION OF PETROGLYPH RESOURCES**

**By B. K. Swartz, Jr. and John K. Zancanella from [selected writings](#)**

The authors of this paper contend that the most reasonable approach to the preservation and management of petroglyphs is intensive and systematized recording. In the long term, protection cannot be an effective approach to preservation since publicly known petroglyph exposures must be continuously monitored (a prodigious expense) because of their accessibility and visibility.

A large number of prehistoric and historic petroglyphs and pictographs occur in that portion of the western United States known as the Great Basin. The majority of this arid to semi-arid landscape is public land administered by several federal agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. As wards of the public domain, these agencies are responsible by law to identify, manage, and protect all cultural resources under their jurisdiction, including rock art. This is no easy task considering the amount of time and effort involved in documenting this type of archaeological manifestation and the fiscal realities most cultural resource managers must cope with from year to year. The larger and more impressive sites, and a growing number of smaller ones, are known to local inhabitants and archaeologists. For a variety of reasons most of these are in various stages of recording. This situation creates a need to organize and manipulate the available data in a comparable fashion for management, as well as analytical (scientific) Purposes.

As a result of the senior author's fieldwork in Nevada, U.S.A., we offer as a management tool a set of recording levels to rank the kinds of data gathering performed at individual sites. Such rankings will allow agencies (and other researchers) to readily identify and set priorities and objectives for incompletely or inadequately recorded sites.

The apparent indifference to recording is not only a problem in the Great Basin, and North America generally, but also internationally. A general observation has emerged from the soliciting of papers for this Congress, namely, there is limited interest in the techniques of recording and virtually no interest in the problems of recording standardization. Only two papers at this Congress deal with these two areas, this being one.

Petroglyph researchers have confused the operations of recording and explanation. An example of this confusion is stated by Schaafsma in Volume 8 (1985) of Schiffer's high-powered series "Advances in Archaeological Theory and Method." In defending problem-oriented research and attacking systematic recording she evokes the well-known philosopher Thomas S. Kuhn and quotes him to wit:

In the the absence of a paradigm or some candidate for paradigm, all of the facts that could possibly pertain to the development of a given science are likely to seem equally relevant. As a result, early fact-gathering is a far more nearly random activity than the one that subsequent scientific development makes familiar (Schaafsma 1986, p. 241).

From this she concludes that the paradigm of study will determine what records (not data), **but records**, should be collected. Schaafsma is, perhaps, the foremost leader in what I choose to call, using Kuhn's phraseology, the Rock Art Paradigm. If petroglyphs are rock art one is concerned with their "style of rendering," but need not be concerned with utilitarian relationships--an important matter for interpreting petroglyphs as part of informational systems. Locational records are of little significance for the former, but become crucial for the latter. Anyone is entitled to pursue his or her's paradigm, but not to warp the database by limiting recording on the basis of their theoretical outlook. In stark contrast to Schaafsma a plea for systematic recording and inventorying has been made by some (e.g. Turner 1963).

The purpose of this paper is not to present a check list of things to record, the ACASPP minimum recording standards (1980, 1981) does this admirably, but to establish procedure to organize and systematize recording activity so that the results can be effectively inventoried and managed. The concept of inventory as an activity in public land management is stated in Section 201a of U.S. Public Law 94-579 - Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976: "The Secretary [of the Interior] shall prepare and maintain .....an **inventory** [our emphasis] of all public lands and their resources and other values....., giving priority to areas of critical environmental concern."

Unfortunately this act does not prescribe procedures for undertaking such an inventory. The critical operation for effective inventorying is recording (or in federal jargon--recordation). Ritter (1978:2) lists additional U. S. federal legislative acts pertinent to rock art protection. But beyond specific recording comparable units must be established so that assessment and evaluation can be done. The cook-book approach, such as advocated by Clegg (n.d., this volume), precludes proper inventorying procedures.

The following set of recording levels is presented as an aid to this end:

*Level 1* - Noting the existence of petroglyphs at a site which is located on a map (in the United States presumably, but not necessarily USGS).

*Level 2* - Photographing of petroglyphs. This is the usual level of avocational recording.

*Level 3* - Sketching a map of the site which locates panels, and the sketching of individual panels. Recording at this level is that of past traditional professional practice.

*Level 4* - Recording individual panel information, e.g. panel number, direction, dimensions, inclination, distance to other site panels, relation to surroundings, establishment of site and panel points.

*Level 5* - Recording of specific design elements of a panel, e.g. size and relationship to other elements. Recording up to this level requires no highly technical equipment and conforms to the American Committee to Advance the Study of Petroglyphs and Pictographs minimum recording standards (though almost never done by either avocational or professional archaeologists).

*Level 6* - Recording petroglyphs with highly technical equipment. This usually entails problem-oriented research such as chronometric calibration, etc., rather than comprehensive recording. An exception is videotaping which expands Level 2 performance, but with lower resolution imaging. Recording at this level would also include mapping by use of an alidade or transit. This is seldom done since petroglyphs by themselves need not be excavated.

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