

XI International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences
PRE-CONGRESS SYMPOSIUM C-100: CONSERVATION
RECORDING AND INTERPRETATION OF ROCK ART
Vancouver, B.C. 15-19 August 1983

RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The symposium on the conservation, recording and interpretation of rock art, held at Vancouver B.C., Canada, August 15-19, 1983, within the frame of the XIth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, has been an opportunity for specialists of the above disciplines to meet and discuss urgent problems of common interest concerning rock art studies.

- Referring to and agreeing with the Recommendation issued by the UNESCO Consultation of rock art specialists held in 1981 at Valcamonica;
- Expressing the vote that the international organizations UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICOM and ICCROM will further their interest and concern for rock art conservation, recording and interpretation;
- Considering that IUAES, the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences should take a direct involvement and a stimulating role in the promotion of research and in the dissemination of knowledge of these early conceptual creations of mankind.

The following recommendations are submitted to UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICOM, ICCROM and to the Executive Committee of IUAES:

Inventory and Documentation

1 - Having considered that rock art provides unique insight into the human intellectual elementary characteristics and qualities over at least 30,000 years before the invention of writing; having further evaluated that it is found widely disseminated all over the world, wherever Homo Sapiens Sapiens arrived in every continent, it has emerged that those figures and symbols painted and engraved on rock surfaces constitute a documentation of the utmost significance for the study and comprehension of the cultural roots of mankind. It should be the concern of every man and woman to assure that this truly universal patrimony is preserved, documented, studied and understood, and that it becomes a conscious part of our general culture.

2 - Rock art is very vulnerable and is fast deteriorating. Inventory and documentation should be given high priority in all countries where rock art is present. The international organizations should act as authoritative channels in stimulating national and regional actions, as leaders in coordinating and favoring efforts aimed at assuring the inventory and documentation; in assuring also that the information is published, disseminated, made accessible to all, and be preserved for future generations.

3 - The rapid decay, exfoliation, or other types of deterioration of rock art in many parts of the world make it imperative to progress rapidly with intensive recording, as much as possible and as reliably as possible.

National and local governments should be made aware of their responsibilities as keepers of this human heritage and of their role in making the cultural patrimony of their territories accessible to others.

4 - World cooperation in inventory and documentation of rock art should include the issue of agreement on basic standard requirements that will assure the comparability of data and of documentation. A world survey on the state of knowledge on rock art should be made available to all nations by UNESCO and should be further updated with the constant addition of new discoveries and of new information.

5 - Member states should be stimulated to cooperate and to favor urgent surveys, recording and inventory. A broad campaign should be promoted by the international organizations to explain that any delay, especially in fast-developing regions, may cause the loss of documentation forever.

6 - Inventory and documentation is seen also a necessary base for preservation and conservation, which, in many parts of the world, can hardly afford any further delay.

Preservation and Conservation

1 - Preservation and conservation of rock art is a very delicate matter which should be carried out at a highly professional level. Due to factors of environment, of human intentional or involuntary vandalism, as well as of the variety of agents causing deterioration, each case requires specific studies. In order to develop an efficient network of preservation and conservation services, national governments and international bodies should favor the exchange of experts, of information, and of services.

2 - Rock art usually survives in its original context where it was created by man. The relationship between the rock art creation and its environment is therefore a vital aspect for its understanding. It is therefore recommended that special attention be devoted to this consideration. The relationship between rock art and its surroundings should be given special consideration in preservation and conservation projects, involving the site as a whole rather than just isolated, damaged or endangered specific figures.

3 - The understanding of deterioration processes is vital to assure adequate preservation. In-depth structural analyses on the dynamics of deterior-

ration are strongly recommended as sound bases for any eventual action of protection or conservation.

4 - One of the major problems of conservation which has emerged during this symposium concerns the protection and storage of documentation. Many important collections around the world are fast deteriorating as a result of use of perishable materials or of inadequate storage systems. Color photographs often alter after a few years: tracings, drawings, recordings, and whatever else is based on paper may become altered by time and inadequate storage systems. Documentation which is now disseminated around the world in numerous countries and in different conditions is suffering losses from deterioration every day. Two possibilities have been envisioned to ease this unfortunate condition: A. the implementation of a world data bank where copies of all documentation should be adequately inventoried and preserved; and B. substantial efforts be made by governments and by international organizations to assure that documentation is safely preserved, stored and accessible. International organizations are invited to assist and advise on the preservation and storage of documentation with special reference to color transparencies which are known to deteriorate rapidly.

5 - A world survey on the state of preservation of rock art should be a valuable step for evaluating a situation requiring an international effort. For this purpose, a "State of Preservation" form should be created and disseminated by the international organization, filled in and returned by experts and administrators concerned with rock art sites.

6 - Conservators and restorators around the world should be requested to present short reports, on a standardized questionnaire, on every project or action concerning the preservation, conservation or restoration of rock art sites. Such reports should be collated, made available and disseminated by the international organizations.

Education and Information

1 - The majority of those attending this symposium consider that education, information and professional training in rock art studies are presently inadequate. Specialized training courses, seminars and professional tutoring should be supported by national and international organizations with the purpose of raising the general degree of professionalism in rock art studies.

2 - Congresses and symposia on rock art studies should be held regularly as a means of assuring regular contacts among specialists, exchange and updating of information, as well as an efficient means of disseminating information.

3 - Dissemination of information should be implemented also through publications. National governments and international organizations are urged to favor the publication of reports on rock art studies and their adequate distribution.

4 - Universities should make every effort to include rock art studies in their programs or classes.

5 - The education of the public at large is considered no less important than the training of specialists. National and local governments should make every effort to disseminate information and stimulate the evaluation and appreciation of the rock art sites existing in their territories.

6 - A report on all the recording techniques being currently used would be a highly valuable tool for obtaining a world view on a technical aspect which has occupied several sessions of this seminar.

International Cooperation

1 - Having noted that in several countries the study of rock art appears to be neglected, underestimated or underfinanced, an appeal is made to these states to devote more attention to rock art studies, to stimulate further research and appreciation of rock art and to assure the basic requirements of conservation and preservation of rock art sites.

2 - To assure recording and documentation of rock art should be the duty of those administrations which have jurisdiction of the sites. It is a moral duty of each state to assure that records and documentation of their rock art are accurate, exhaustive, and accessible to all for scientific, cultural and educational uses.

3 - The international organizations should provide, when requested, specialists to advise governments how to deal with the study, preservation, conservation, evaluation and public enjoyment of rock art sites.

4 - The international organizations and in particular UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICOM and ICCROM are urged to develop and further joint efforts and full cooperation for stimulating international action and for assuming the implementation of these recommendations.