

# IFRAO Report No. 25

## THE IFRAO CODE OF ETHICS

### 1. Preamble

1(1). This Code of Ethics describes general guidelines which IFRAO recommends to its members.

1(2). Rock art provides a window to our collective past, helps us make sense of the present and contributes to our future. Some of it has been handed down to us by many generations preceding us, to safeguard it for many generations to follow us. Unless we can trace our lineage directly to those who created the rock art and have retained aspects of its original cultural context, it does not belong to us in any way.

1(3). The cultural significance of a rock art site is embodied in the entire fabric of the site, in addition to the actual art present; in the traditional use of the place and the activities that occurred there; and in the meanings and intangible qualities of the place.

1(4). Understanding the cultural significance of a place is fundamental to its care, and where such understanding is inadequate, any interference may be regarded as inappropriate.

1(5). The 'patina of history' apparent in the fabric of a rock art site is important evidence and forms an integral part of that fabric. It includes natural or artificial changes or traces.

### 2. Definitions

*Fabric* - all physical aspects of a rock art site, including accretionary deposits, the art itself, traces of later human responses, modifications, even traces of vandalism in cases, lichen, and so forth.

*Geomorphic exposure* - any rock surface.

*Graffiti* - collective term describing recent anthropic graphic markings or inscriptions that are incompatible with the known or presumed uses of the rock art on the same panels.

*IFRAO* - the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations.

*Indigenous cultural custodians* - descendants of people who created rock art, who are obligated by their cultural traditions or beliefs to act as the custodians or curators of rock art.

*Management* - administrative control over the management of rock art sites, including preservation, access control, public presentation.

*Massive intervention* - significant changes to the environmental conditions under which the rock art survives. This includes housing in a building, or removal of the supporting bedrock to another location.

*Members* - the members of IFRAO.

*Peer approval* - the approval of an action or proposed action by relevant specialists who have no pecuniary involvement in the project in question.

*Rock art* - the surviving graphic markings of cultural activities found on rock surfaces.

*Traditional owners* - see Indigenous cultural custodians.

### 3. Issues of ownership

3(1). *Traditional owners and indigenous cultural custodians*: In areas where indigenous peoples live whose lifestyles and beliefs continue traditions associated with rock art, members recognise their ownership of the sites, and all research, conservation or management of such sites are subject to the full approval of the traditional owners. In areas where such indigenous peoples and traditions are no longer present, members shall endeavour to understand and promote management practices consistent with such beliefs in so far as they are known from ethnographic or archaeological evidence. In the absence of such evidence to the contrary, provisional concepts of such beliefs (e.g. non-human sources of authority, nature of the sacred, non-linear time/space) should be projected from similar societies and traditions elsewhere.

3(2). *Local antiquities and cultural heritage laws*: Members shall abide by all local, state or national laws protecting archaeological sites and monuments, and comply with heritage protection laws generally.

3(3). *Non-traditional ownership of sites*: Members shall respect the rules, laws or requests of any individuals or organisations possessing legal ownership of the land rock art sites are located on, or the land that must be traversed in order to reach the sites.

3(4). *Copyright and ownership of records*: In regions where traditional indigenous owners exist, they possess copyright of the rock art designs. Members wishing to reproduce such designs shall make appropriate applications. Records made of rock art remain the cultural property of the rock artists, or collectively of the societies these lived amongst.

### 4. Recording of rock art

4(1). *Methods of recording*: Members shall not physically interfere with rock art except as provided in Clauses 5(2) and 6. No substances shall be applied to rock art for recording purposes, except substances that are regularly applied to individual panels by natural processes (e.g.

water at open air sites).

4(2). *Coverage of recording*: All recordings of rock art are incomplete. Therefore rock art recordings need to be as comprehensive as possible, and by multi-disciplinary means.

4(3). *Conduct at sites*: New uses of sites, including for purposes of research, shall not change the fabric of a site, and shall respect associations and meanings of the site and its contents.

4(4). *Conduct in foreign countries*: In addition to other requirements listed herein, researchers working in foreign countries shall do so in consultation with the region's rock art organisation, and shall provide copies of reports and publications to that organisation.

## 5. Removal of samples

5(1). *Archaeological research*: No excavation shall be undertaken at a rock art site unless it forms part of an appropriately authorised archaeological research project. This includes the removal of any sediment to uncover rock art images. Similarly, no archaeological surface remains shall be removed or relocated.

5(2). *Sampling of rock art and adjacent geomorphic exposures*: No samples shall be removed of paint residue, accretionary deposits of any kind, or of the support rock, except after the following requirements have been satisfied:

- (a) The sample removal is to form part of a larger and specific research design that has peer approval;
- (b) The sample removal has been approved in writing by two peer researchers (i.e. scientists specialising in the analytical study of rock art);
- (c) The funds necessary for the best possible analytical laboratory support have been secured;
- (d) The analyst has extensive first-hand experience in sampling geomorphic surfaces;
- (e) Traditional indigenous custodians, where they have jurisdiction, have approved the sample removal;
- (f) The relevant local or national authorities have approved the sample removal.

5(3). *Excavation*: No excavations shall be undertaken at a rock art site unless the expertise of identifying rock art-making tools is available to the researchers proposing such excavation.

## 6. Conservation

6(1). *Setting*: The area around a rock art site, its setting, may contain features associated with the rock art and other evidence of its history. The visual, historical and other relationships between a site and its setting which contribute to its significance shall be retained in all conservation or preservation work.

6(2). *Site fabric*: In all conservation, preservation or management work at and near rock art sites, the visual, historical and scientific significance of the site fabric shall be retained. The removal or palliation of 'graffiti' shall be undertaken only after approval of the relevant authorities, and be effected only under the guidance of qualified rock art conservators. Massive intervention is to be reserved for situations of extreme threats to rock art, and shall be

undertaken only after extensive peer review and approval.

6(3). *Protection*: Members will not disclose the locations of non-public and unprotected rock art sites to the general public. Ultimately, the best protection will depend on the awareness of the general public of the value of rock art. Part of any conservation effort should include the education of the public towards respect for rock art wherever it occurs.

## 7. Disputes

7(1). *Conduct*: Members shall endeavour to treat other members in a courteous manner. In regions where traditional indigenous owners exist, members shall ensure that they are kept informed about all aspects of research work, and that copies of completed reports are made available to them. Where such reports appear in technical jargon, ordinary-language versions are to be made available.

7(2). *Plagiarism*: Members shall acknowledge the use of other researcher's recordings, published comments and ideas.

7(3). *Dispute settlement*: Members shall make every endeavour to settle disputes among themselves, as IFRAO is reluctant to settle disputes among its members. Where a dispute cannot be settled and threatens the integrity of IFRAO, application for arbitration shall be made to the President of IFRAO, providing the relevant documentation. The dispute will then be arbitrated by the Council of IFRAO if its resolution is urgent, but preferably at the subsequent General Meeting of IFRAO.

[This Code of Ethics was designed by the IFRAO Ethics Committee appointed in Cochabamba in 1997, and was formally approved by the IFRAO Business Meeting in Alice Springs in 2000.]

## Commentary

The ethical guidelines for rock art research marking the beginning of a new millennium are the result of nearly three years of deliberations by a committee appointed by the President of IFRAO in 1997, Professor Roy Querejazu Lewis. As the original proposer of a Code of Ethics and a member of the committee that designed it I would like to comment on its underlying philosophy.

This Code brings to an end the research ethics that marked the 19th and 20th centuries in this field, which were essentially based on the Eurocentric notion that the world is according to European perception, cognition and scientism, and that alternative ontologies are inferior. This was an aspect of cognitive neo-colonialism, which in the course of the 20th century led to the depreciation of non-European worldview, the globalisation of Western perception and the global rise of academia as arbiter of science.

Palaeoart, which occurs mostly as rock art, is the cultural property of the people who created it, but enculturated concepts of property are not necessarily relevant to it. Most rock art is thought to relate closely to metaphysical or belief systems other than those of the subjective researchers, who themselves exist within a metaphysical system they are barely aware of. Their 'interpretations' are always transgressions, they tend to trivialise and they tend to be false. This Code presents a deontology

addressing the traditional imbalance. It is a blueprint for researchers of how to appreciate their own relativism better.

It also clarifies a few crucial issues. Most particularly, it curtails the assumption that the 'rights' of researchers are paramount. For instance the wish of a researcher to 'know the age' of some rock art is not by itself adequate reason for physical sampling. A precise procedure is defined that ensures that the sample removal forms part of a greater research design, and that it has peer approval. Many archaeometrists have expressed concerns about a recently emerging tendency to sample rock art fairly indiscriminately and without the appropriate expertise being available to complete such projects successfully. Dating information, for instance, can be obtained without sampling. Similarly, excavations at petroglyph sites

need to be limited to projects possessing the expertise of recognising petroglyph-making tools. It would be absurd to allow inexperienced archaeologists to destroy the most important type of stratified evidence from a petroglyph site, by discarding the petroglyph-making tools, the only link between the sediment and the art.

Significant changes in research attitudes are encoded in this document, and it is essential to appreciate that this is not a draft presented for discussion. It has been discussed for years, it has been ratified, and it is now in force, as the recommended minimum standard for the global discipline of rock art science.

Robert G. Bednarik  
Convener of IFRAO  
RAR 17-556

## MINUTES OF THE 2000 IFRAO BUSINESS MEETING Alice Springs, Australia

Organisations present: American Committee to Advance the Study of Petroglyphs and Pictographs (ACASPP), represented by B. K. Swartz, Jr. (U.S.A.); Associação Portuguesa de Arte e Arqueologia Rupestre (APAAR), represented by Mila Simões de Abreu (Portugal); Association de Amis de l'Arte Rupestre Saharien (AARS), represented by Jean-Loïc Le Quellec (France); Association pour le Rayonnement de L'Art Pariétal Européen (ARAPE), represented by Jean Clottes (France); Australian Rock Art Research Association (AURA), represented by Robert G. Bednarik (Australia); Centro de Investigación de Arte Rupestre del Uruguay (CIARU), represented by Mario Consens (Uruguay); Centro Studi e Museo d'Arte Preistorica (CeSMAP), represented by Dario Seglie (Italy); East African Rock Art Research Association (EARARA), represented by Fidelis T. Masao (Tanzania); Eastern States Rock Art Research Association (ESRARA), represented by Jack Steinbring, proxy (U.S.A.); Grupo de Investigación en Arte Rupestre Indígena (GIPRI), Mario Consens, proxy (Columbia); Institutum Canarium (IC), represented by Friedrich Berger (Germany); Mid-American Geographic Foundation (MAGF), represented by Jack Steinbring (U.S.A.); Rock Art Association of Manitoba (RAAM), represented by Sandra Steinbring (Canada); Rock Art Research Association of China (RARAC), represented by Su Sheng (China); Rock Art Society of Indian (RASI), represented by Giraraj Kumar (India); Sociedad de Investigación del Arte Rupestre de Bolivia (SIARB), represented by Robert G. Bednarik, proxy (Bolivia); Società Cooperativa Archeologica Le Orme dell'Uomo (Le Orme), represented by Andrea Arcà (Italy); Société Préhistorique Ariège-Pyrénées (SPAP), represented by Jean Clottes (France); Verein Anisa (ANISA), represented by Piero Ricchiardi (Austria).

The President of IFRAO, the representative of AURA, chaired the meeting. The representative of ACASPP was appointed as recording secretary. The meeting was held at the Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, Australia, and commenced at 11:45 a.m. on 14 July 2000.

1. *Apologies and declaration of proxies.* There were no apologies, and three proxies were declared as listed above.
2. *Confirmation of the previous meeting.* The minutes of the IFRAO business meeting of the IRAC at Ripon College, Wisconsin, U.S.A., 29 May 1999, were not distributed and therefore not acted upon.
3. *Matters arising from these minutes.* Not applicable.
4. *Reports of the IFRAO Representatives.*

RASI: Some significant Pleistocene cupule sites were discovered in India. It is requested that members of the international rock art community visit these sites. An Australian-Indian commission may study the localities in

2002. It is planned to have a project on chronometric dating and conservation management of Indian rock art with Australian scientists and scholars then. An Indian government agency, DGSAI, has requested that RASI inform IFRAO that a UNESCO team is to evaluate Bhimbetka for nomination as a World Heritage rock art site. RASI requests that the President of IFRAO makes inquiries and possibly secure funds to help accelerate this process.

APAAR: Progress for the building of a post-Côa dam is under way in northern Portugal, on the Sabor river. The impact of such construction on vulnerable rock art is not yet known.

Le Orme: More than seventy new engraved rocks have been recorded at Paspardo (Valcamonica) and a new general area of petroglyphs has been found. Cupules have been discovered at La Bessa. The proceedings of the 2nd European Congress of Rupestrian Archaeology, organised by Le Orme, will appear in late 2000. *Tracce* now has a rock art bulletin, [www.rupestre.net](http://www.rupestre.net).

CeSMAP: Abstracts and papers were published of the NEWS95 IRAC Congress, Turin, on CD-ROMs. A touring exhibit and international catalogue of Siberian rock art in Italian and English has been completed. IFRAO aegis and support is requested for the *European Alps: a high cultural-natural area*, proposed to the UNESCO World Heritage List by Italy, France, Switzerland, Australia and Slovenia.

CIARU: Research projects in Uruguay have been stopped by actions of the National Heritage Commission and the President of the National Archaeological Commission. Rock art sites are used as political targets. These difficulties have recently been explained in *INORA*. UNESCO experts were invited to the areas where CIARU was working. Ethical codes, intellectual property rights and academic/professional relationships were not taken into account. The only response given to CIARU's claims was to ban members from research funds.

EARARA: A proposed workshop on recording and conserving rock art in Tanzania will be organised by EARARA. It would probably span five days and include

site visitation and sessions led by resource specialists.

RARAC: Difficulties are reported relating to development projects in China, which, like in other countries throughout the world, affect the preservation of rock art sites in that country.

MAGF: In association with ARARA (American Rock Art Research Association), the 1999 International Rock Art Congress was held at Ripon College, Ripon, Wisconsin, U.S.A. MAGF meets monthly and schedules numerous public lectures. Two 'open houses' were conducted (half-day events). Several archaeological investigations were undertaken as mitigation efforts. The MAGF newsletter was issued and circulated.

AURA: Much of the efforts of AURA in the last two years has been focused on the preparations for the Third AURA Congress. The publications of AURA (*RAR*, *AURA Newsletter*, *Occasional AURA Publications*) were published regularly, and AURA has several Internet home pages. The recent appearance of Volume 10 of the *Occasional AURA Publications*, dealing with rock art dating, was also reported.

#### 5. Matters submitted for consideration.

5.1. *Code of Ethics*. The second draft of the IFRAO Code of Ethics was distributed. Le Orme moved to omit the second sentence of Section 1(4). Motion passed. CIARU moved to replace the word 'petroglyph' with 'rock art' in Section 5(3). Motion passed. ACASPP objected to the tone and vagueness of the document and suggested that an in-house instructional guide be substituted. Acceptance of the Code of Ethics document was moved by CIARU and passed by unanimous vote, with ACASPP dissenting.

5.2. *IFRAO Standard Scale*. AURA moved that the IFRAO scale be reprinted. Motion passed.

5.3. *Report by IFRAO-UNESCO liaison officer*. The outgoing IFRAO President had on 13 July 2000 nominated a committee to deliberate IFRAO - UNESCO relationships, to comprise: CeSMAP (Seglie, IFRAO - UNESCO Liaison Officer, Chair), AARS (Le Quellec), EARARA (Masao), RASI (Kumar).

5.4. *Incorporation of IFRAO*. The outgoing IFRAO President had on 13 July 2000 nominated a committee for constitutional reform, to comprise: CeSMAP (Ricchiardi, Chair), ACASPP (Swartz, author of founding constitution), AURA (Bednarik), CIARU (Consens), MAGF (Steinbring).

5.5. *Publishing partnership*. The proposal of a major Belgian publisher, Brepols, was tabled by the IFRAO Convener, offering a formal partnership. Discussion was favourable and members perceived significant benefits. Questions asked included whether the agreement would extend to proceedings of past con-

ferences and whether it could include the production of journals. ARAPE offered to review the current work of Brepols and the Convener was requested to circulate an agreement text to all members for review. It was also mentioned that the contract should be a non-exclusive arrangement so as to preserve the autonomy of members. MAGF moved that the Convener be instructed to negotiate an agreement with Brepols, motion seconded by APAAR. Motion passed.

6. *The 2002 IFRAO meeting in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*. Concerns expressed previously at the Ripon meeting about the circumstances of the proposed Skopje congress were reiterated by several members, and were discussed in some detail. Consensus emerged that there were reservations about the organisers' experience in conducting a major international conference, and about what were felt to be nationalistic sentiments on the part of the Skopje committee. It was also emphasised that the country concerned was to be identified by its United Nations name and not simply as Macedonia. The meeting decided to request that three nominated member representatives be invited to travel to Skopje to inspect facilities, logistical and organisational infrastructure, and potential field trip destinations. The representatives of MAGF, APAAR and CeSMAP were nominated by the meeting for this purpose, they accepted the nominations, and the Convener was instructed to liaise further with the Skopje committee. Relevant motions were passed.

7. *Meeting locations for 2004, 2006*. For 2004, Japan was suggested as a possible host country, and India as a possible alternative. For 2006, Brazil could be considered, a possibility that will be explored by CIARU.

8. *New business*. The Convener tabled an invitation by the Ngai Tahu Tribe in New Zealand to hold a conference in their country, and their proposal as well as that of the Bushman/San delegates of the Third AURA Congress to join IFRAO. The possibility of relaxing the non-discriminatory conditions for IFRAO affiliation to allow the admission of tribally or ethnically based groups was discussed but was rejected by most delegates and the Convener was instructed to write to the two organisations concerned to explain this decision.

9. *General matters*. APAAR wishes it be stated that they will not support any IFRAO policies that are associated with governmental nationalism.

10. *Adjournment*. MAGF moved to adjourn at 13:45. Motion passed.