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Polly Schaafsma

Images and Power Rock Art and Ethics

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Images and Power

Rock Art and Ethics

 Springer

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Series Editor's Foreword

The *Anthropology and Ethics Series* seeks to foster honest, respectful, and scholarly dialogue on topics that have proven to be contentious. Recent publications have encouraged anthropologists to reflect on the ethical ramifications of their research activities (Chacon and Dye 2007; Chacon and Mendoza 2007a, 2007b, 2012; Dreger 2011; Gregor and Gross 2002, 2004). In order to provide a venue to further address ethical issues, Springer's Teresa Krauss requested that I create this new series. Volumes in this series are designed to document and promote investigative protocols which honor the ethical obligations that anthropologists have toward their colleagues, the discipline, and their study populations.

Polly Schaafsma is the author of the first publication in the series titled *Images and Power: Rock Art and Ethics*. Her deep respect for Amerindian rock art is reflected in her long-standing commitment to its preservation. In the 1980s, she played a key role in the establishment of the Petroglyph National Monument (see Schaafsma 1987), and she remains an internationally recognized advocate for the protection of Amerindian cultural heritage. Since many present-day Native Americans consider rock art to be a source of supernatural powers, Schaafsma points out that these images are more than mere archaeological "resources" to be recorded and catalogued. As such, Schaafsma values Native American perspectives on anthropological matters, as evidenced by her collaboration with Amerindian scholars (see Schaafsma and Tsosie 2009).

Schaafsma's *Images and Power: Rock Art and Ethics* documents the many threats to rock art ranging from vandalism, theft, unbridled development to the commercialization of Amerindian images. Native American rock art motifs are now found on everything from key chains and paperweights to computer mouse pads. This commodification extends into the New Age Movement which has co-opted rock art to further its own marketing agenda.

This book also sheds light on the complicated task of interpreting rock art. This endeavor often exposes fault lines between Western science and contemporary Native American worldviews. Moreover, this investigation shows how various tribes

have differing opinions and attitudes toward rock art. Therefore, there are no blanket rules with regard to ethics and rock art. Instead, Schaafsma argues for a judicious case-by-case analysis of what is to be considered ethical.

Most significantly, Schaafsma calls for the full disclosure of research findings. For her, the obfuscation of data (no matter what the motivation) violates professional ethical standards and harms Amerindians in the long run (see Chacon and Mendoza 2012 for similar conclusions). As such, when interpreting rock art, anthropologists should honestly adhere to what the data allow. To do otherwise is to desecrate the images and to tarnish the legacy of the Amerindians who created them. In short, she discourages anthropologists from eschewing their roles as scholars for that of social activists.

Images and Power: Rock Art and Ethics will likely have significant impact on policies dealing with Amerindian rock art preservation. Therefore, it is imperative that anthropologists form respectful and mutually beneficial partnerships with Native Americans. However, for these partnerships to be valid and fruitful, all parties should be allowed to freely express their viewpoints.

Dr. Richard J. Chacon
Series Editor of Springer's Anthropology and Ethics

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