

The Destiny of documents?

About the meaning of archives in rock art research

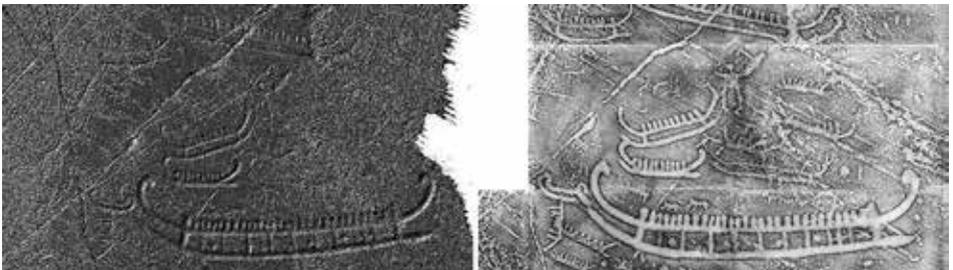
Focus in this preface is not the field documentation of rock art, rather it discusses what happens to the documents over time, when completed. This discussion connects to a culture of documentation, which has a long tradition, not least, in Scandinavia.

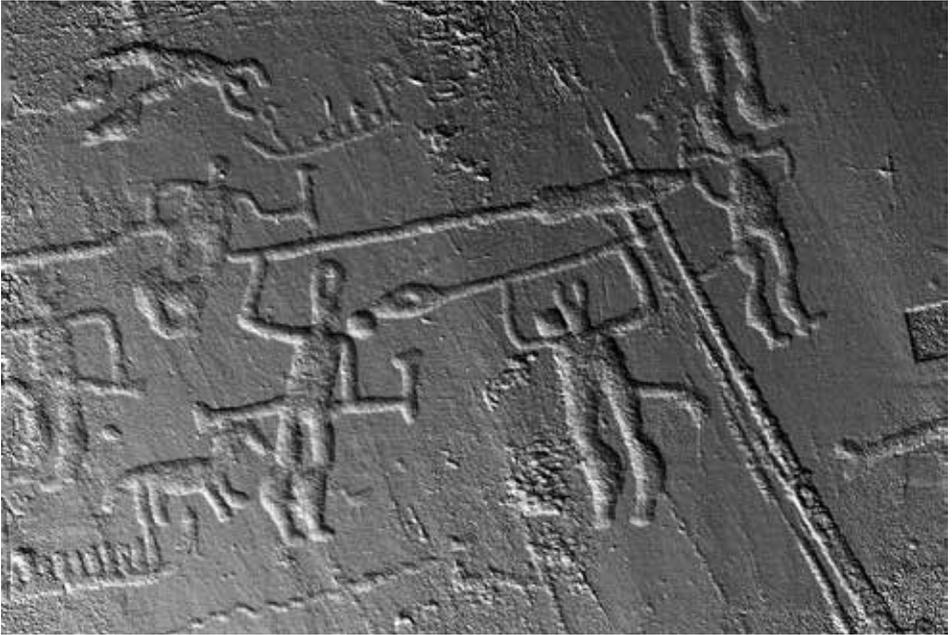
Documents become a part of a tradition of memory and reference, which is contiguous and to some degree borderless, and in our days open and accessible to a general public. At the earliest, the handling of antiquarian documentations, was emulating and royal ecclesiastical routines to keep accounts, law texts, diplomatic agreements and commands in an orderly manner. The archives thereby formed, were seen as parts of the sovereign's and church's body and could be packed for journeys and transfers between residences. In the manner of the Renaissance it is evident that a new view of the Royal archives is developing through reflecting attitudes of where records could be kept, their handling, order and control. It is possible to have a presentiment of a science of archives to come.

Archives are meant to take care of and present records in a constructed way to permit serviceableness in the present. Certainly archives are conservative as they preserve and make their objects institutionalized. At the same time – and as a paradox – they change in volume and direction in relation to what was once the basis of the archive. The archive is consequently not a passive receiver of what may be recorded. The type of archive here discussed is not a depot, which is kept in what with Derrida is called “a house arrest” (Wortham 2014), where new acquisitions are prepared in advance as classifications, catalogues and book shelves through a metaphoric “slot”, which forces a new object to land correctly in the arrangement. The principle of organization of records can be chronological, geographical or person-based and, not least, after events of origin.

The documents are often arranged after size, labels or possible depositories. Different sorts of padlocked cabinets are in the beginnings seen as boxes, where the

The three dimensional methods, SfM and laser triangulation scanning (left) and the rubbing technique (right) complement one another. @ Tanums Hällristningsmuseum, Underlös.

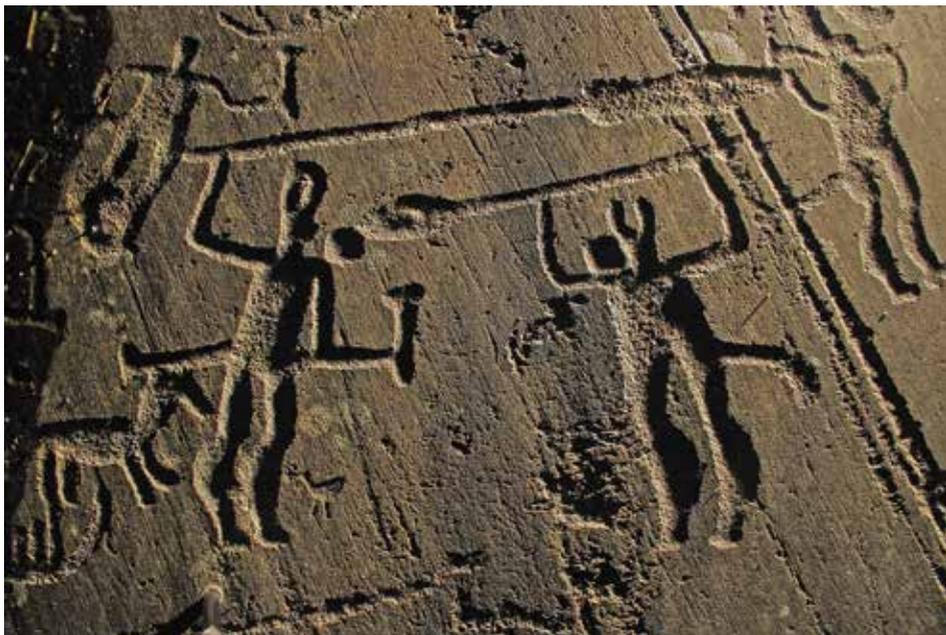




3D documentation @ Tanums Hällristningsmuseum, Underlös. Ellen Meijer/SHFA.

The figures are painted with quartzpowder suspended in water. Quartz is one of the elements of granite and don't harm the surface. @ Tanums Hällristningsmuseum, Underlös.





Hardly visible or strongly weathered figures are identified by night by artificial light.

The rubbing method provides every details of a surface of a rock. The degree of weathering of the rock surface varies a lot from one rock panel to the next, and even in the same panel. Some surfaces are intact with undamaged carvings like thi – others are totally weathered.



available space delimits new organizations and affects the documentary world. The documents and the objects must of course be interpreted. The textless objects must be named and be investigated in their materiality.

A special difficulty is to determine what is important and unimportant – and this must be done at every moment. That an object is seen as not important doesn't mean that it can be rejected, depending on context and kind of question one is asking.

Generally, the archive is seen as a sort of rescue-station, where the classification order allows us to rediscover documents and objects together with similar acquisition, be used for their contents of information – and then be restaged.

That the archives would be seen as an object of research *per se*, is a later experience. Archives become over time an evident tool of power, where specially trained personnel are responsible for quick retrieval and the judging of documents which are important in relation to a certain question.

What may different objects and documents offer here? By establishing conventions for observations and languages of description, ways of measurements and visualization, comparisons are made possible – in the archives and in the laboratories.

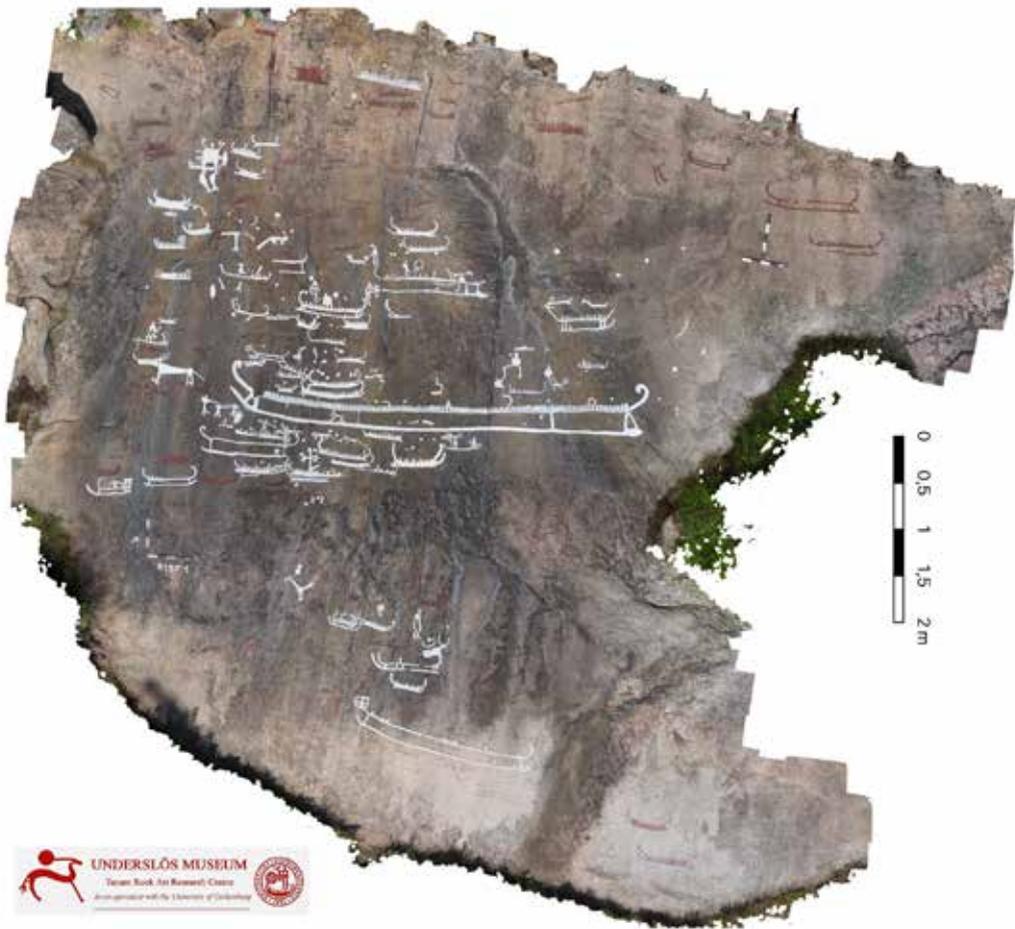
All these activities make it possible to create and control a source material, which has been activated because someone has formulated a research question. At the same time, rock art research is affected as the objects in the landscape and in the archives (or the knowledge about them) are taken out for further observation. To bring the observations indoors for intellectual regrouping is also a loss, where *observanda* reaches a new form of existence – as data or single document. But rock art archives permit comparisons to be done and big data to be treated in one context – and if you prefer – independent of time and place. The localization in a terrain and the relation

to other finds are filling up with new ground data, which strengthens the archaeological phenomenon as a historical remnant. It is important that the archive can be functional – also in an unknown future (Derrida). The archive is more than a chance to make copies. It is – again – important to realise, that what we have observed and achieved is often passing in character and may be not obvious to those people who were once the producer and users of the objects we have found.

An archaeological find is not only the physical object found, but also the notes, pictures, maps, analyses made and stories, which bind the find in a web of growing relations. The documents' Curriculum Vitae is thought of as a companion forever and an admission ticket to the antiquarian world.

Finally, archives contain not only our accidental knowledge, but also secrets, that is: what has been known to us, but maybe been forgotten later, and, for the future, all potentials which are waiting for us. Gaps may be discovered, which once were filled with other documents and left-overs. So, an absence may also be a historical quality. The thoughts above are supposed to point at ourselves as workers in the field of prehistoric rock art and our own efforts to search new knowledge. However, this demands both energy and economy. In a longer historical perspective, you can see how collections have been created, but also dissolved or swallowed up by other collections. Every collection then exists of other collections, which have been integrated and normalized. In our modern times, it is easy to believe that collections are formed automatically. But collections may have very different backgrounds and fitting structures. Those qualities give a more plural or "true" situation of sources, if you are of the opinion that research should comprise more than the activities of state institutions.

The Museum of Underslös, in Tanum, reflects such a situation, where more than half a century's engagement in discovering, documenting, educating, and making re-



Kville 157:1 Torsbo. Tanums Hällristningsmuseum, Underlöss.
 Orthophoto from 3D image based model using structure from motion method. Model by James Dodd (central section) and Kasandra Boguslawska (upper and lower sections) Processed in Metashape software by Aarhus University and Tanums Hällristningsmuseum, Underlöss, using Agisoft Cloud service.

search on the very special prehistoric rock art material, is preserved and maintained. Which possibilities to follow such a continuous enterprise are not collected here? Which personalities, which discoveries, which source criticism, which inspiration to research, conferences and publishing do we not have at our disposal in this unpretentious, welcoming centre? As a user you will be very influenced and thankful!

To paraphrase the Archive of Underslöss Museum: This is a most evident proof of

fulfilled, voluntary, democratic, qualified archaeological field work; being a gift to future research, where scientific questions can be formulated, tested, circulated and hopefully winning new people. Make your own slots!

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