

## Four Books by Thomas F. King: A Joint Review

### Reviews Counterpointed by Thomas F. King<sup>1</sup>

It is a real honor to have not one, not two, not three, but four of my books reviewed in these pages, and all by people whose opinions I respect. I appreciate their generally positive comments and will take their criticisms to heart. Let me comment on a few of the latter, however.

To begin at the beginning, Larry Van Horn's introduction seems a tad defensive to me. Van Horn notes that I am critical of the National Park Service (NPS), which is certainly true, and on many more grounds than the terminological issue to which he alludes. He plunges into what seems to me a rather complicated argument for the breadth and legitimacy of NPS terminology and approaches. He concludes that perhaps we really ought to recognize three rather than five kinds of cultural resources. Maybe, but I actually favor, oh, maybe 17.5. Lump them; split them, I do not care. I simply think we ought to be attentive to all the aspects of the cultural environment about which people are concerned. It is the concern that matters, not the category into which something falls. Unfortunately, rather than having a law that simply says to be careful about stuff that people care about, we have a bunch of laws that deal with different kinds of stuff about which people may or may not care. Because we must satisfy these laws, to an extent we must categorize, but as responsible professionals we should try to not be preoccupied with such categorization and cast our net as broadly as possible, focusing on what is really important to people and not fret more than is necessary about what to call things.

Fred York implies something like this in his review of *Essays From the Edge* when he notes the need to recognize "cultural values that are not necessarily tied to or even compatible with land as a commodity." I agree, of course. York also suggests that my "edge" essays are not really so edgy at all, that they are really pretty centrist. I have seen a similar (not yet published) criticism by Kurt Dongoske. This may be the basis for York's contention that developing a cultural resource management (CRM) that "involves contemporary communities and integrates their needs and perspectives" may require "a more critical perspective than even the 'Chief Curmudgeon of CRM' has presented." I wish I thought that my perspectives were in the mainstream, but in my

experience, mainstream CRM perspectives do not extend far beyond the next archaeological survey transect or the next effort to attain State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) approval of a report. If someone has a more critical perspective they would like to share, I wish they would publish it, or at least beam it around cyberspace.

Eric Petersen's review of *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice* highlights the importance of process in CRM, and I do not disagree at all. The bulk of my practice and my cogitation about how to do CRM have been devoted to matters of process. I think the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended, if properly carried out, is a work of genius. I think it is a shame that SHPOs and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation staff do not get regular training in the processes of alternative-dispute resolution. What I object to is getting so hung up on the fine points of a particular process (the right words to use at step "a" to elicit the appropriate response at step "b") that we fail to attend to the purpose the process is supposed to serve.

Peterson also suggests that *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice* would have been improved by giving more consideration to the problems experienced by SHPOs and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), but he acknowledges that this would have been hard to do given the numbers of players involved. Precisely! There is another book to be written there, maybe an edited volume with 59 chapters (gasp). Someone ought to do that. NPS ought to fund it, but NPS is far too busy publishing feel-good magazines and promoting tourism at National Register of Historic Places properties.

Like Larry Van Horn, Jacilee Wray seems a bit defensive about NPS institutions in her review of *Places That Count*. She points particularly to the National Register and NPS's *Management Policies 2001*, which apparently direct that attention be given to cultural resources not eligible for the National Register. She also wonders how properties can be protected and how agencies can defend their decisions if they do not gather essentially the information necessary for nomination to the National Register.

I think that NPS employees really need to understand that the rest of the world, in fact, most of the world, is not a national park. The options available to folks working on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or Forest Service (USFS) land, on hydroelectric reservoir projects and wireless telephone towers, on Section 404 permit projects and interstate pipelines, are simply different from those available to NPS people. On the other hand, what the NPS does, in the context of park management, can affect people working in other contexts. If the NPS says that some particular type of thing is not eligible for the National Register but will be dealt with under its *Management Policies 2001*, the only things that resonate outside the parks are ineligibility and loss of protections afforded by Section 106. This is one of the major reasons the National Register and its related external programs do not belong in the NPS at all; what can work in a park does not necessarily work elsewhere. As for the notion that agencies have to gather a lot of data to defend their decisions, I can only say, "It depends." In a case that is likely to be controversial, where one may need to defend one's decisions, then sure, lots of data are needed for justification. In my experience, however, people decide that they need lots of data without reference to what kinds and levels of controversy may be expected; then the data requirements themselves generate controversy. So my suggestion is to collect as little data as one thinks one can get away with; then if one needs to collect more, go get it.

Finally, I agree with Darby Stapp's review of *Federal Planning and Historic Places* about the rottenness of my indexes and about the Alta Mira Press policy that (along with my incompetence in the task and unwillingness to cough up the money to hire an indexer) causes them to be the way they are. I also agree that it would be nice if more anthropologists of the socio-cultural persuasion (not just archaeologists) would get involved in CRM. I would really like to see some academic program in applied anthropology assign students to play the CRM game – not to nominate things to the National Register or to work with CRM firms in the field, but to have students comment on regulations, help draft legislation, and critique environmental assessments (EAs) and environmental impact statements (EISs). Above all I would like to see students help indigenous groups, low-income groups, and minority groups express

themselves so that their voices are heard in the Section 106 process. This might lead government agencies to pay more attention to the "needs and perspectives of contemporary communities" and to those of cultural professionals as well.

We have the kind of CRM we have today in large part because in the 1970s a number of archaeologists – myself certainly included, but notably Bob McGimsey, Larry Aten, Carl Chapman, Adrienne Anderson, Stan South, well, the list goes on and on – set out to make sure that archaeological sites were properly dealt with in the then-developing federal and state environmental and historic preservation programs. We learned the language of government; we wormed our way into government jobs; we wrote letters and white papers; we pushed for legislation and wrote regulations and guidelines. Whether we succeeded in taking care of archaeology is open to debate, but there is no question (at least in my mind) that whatever success we enjoyed was at the expense of other kinds of cultural resources. The archaeologization of CRM is for me a matter of considerable regret, and I wish it could be otherwise. It could be, if cultural anthropologists would stop thinking about CRM as something that archaeologists do and get busy working on it themselves. CRM does not have to be as much an archaeological enterprise as it is, but to make it more than that, other people – notably cultural anthropologists – need to learn about the laws and how to interpret them more broadly than archaeologists are wont to do.

I thank all the reviewers and editors for putting together this multi-review. Thanks, too, for the many kind comments and constructive criticisms offered. I also appreciate the opportunity to respond. I hope my responses have not offended, but after all, I am supposed to be a curmudgeon.

#### Notes

1. Thomas F. King received his Ph.D. in anthropology in 1976 from the University of California at Riverside. His past experience as a federal employee in cultural resource management now serves him in his private practice as a consultant, teacher, and writer. He may be contacted at [tfking106@aol.com](mailto:tfking106@aol.com), at 240-475-0595, and at P.O. Box 14515, Silver Spring MD, 20911-4515.