KEYWORDS: ***Rock art – Archaeology – History – Cultural heritage – Colonial society – Religion***

BIOGRAPHIES IN STONE: COLONIAL ROCK ART IN NORTHERN URUGUAY

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Abstract. A large area with rock art sites, including thousands of petroglyphs dating back up to 4000 BP, has been defined in northern Uruguay in recent years. Some of the most abundant motif types are 'crosses', which can be attributed to the Jesuit-missionary regime (17th–18th centuries CE). Post-Columbian rock art, as rock paintings and petroglyphs, is found all over America, either on its own or together with pre-Columbian images. Crosses were used to weaken and conquer indigenous resistance, as a way to 'eradicate idolatry' by introducing Christian symbols in areas of indigenous art, or by destroying that rock art altogether (damnatio). This iconography became a form of fighting evil and devilry, as frequently occurred both in Europe and in America. In both cases, it was used as a political tool that remained set in stone. This has allowed us to recover the long history of some of these sites. This article aims to define these representations as local to the north of Uruguay and incorporate them into the realm of Andean rock art.

In recent years, after the discovery of a large area with rock art (petroglyphs) in northern Uruguay, archaeological research projects have learned of a vast, quite depopulated territory where no previous archaeological studies had been conducted. The potential of this area was practically unknown, as still often occurs throughout the Americas. The general models assimilated this area with the coastal evidence on the River Uruguay, considering it a territory of little interest and without any significant elements to understand the regional pre-Historic past. Little by little, research has succeeded in documenting varied evidence revealing a long, complex past. That evidence ranges from a quasi-contemporary 'rock art' of stone pillars with images of cattle engraved on them, or diverse types of graffiti marking a new 'appropriation' of the area, to older images and complex symbologies that used varied artistic techniques and which often display signs of deliberate destruction. Some of the most abundant of these rock art images are the 'crosses' attributable to the Jesuit-missionary regime (17th–18th centuries CE). The study of these images at rock art sites is an interesting way to establish the biography of the sites, as well as to confirm their antiquity. These symbols were placed at sites thought to belong to another world and a culture that had to be hidden (Martínez 2009: 11). In European pre-Historic art studies, crosses are related with a site's history and often help to reveal historical episodes, especially as they sometimes appear in panels with pre-Historic art (Gómez Barrera 1993; Martínez García 2003). The synchrony of these processes in the Americas and Spain, where the majority of those who created the cross symbol come from, reveals the duality of concepts employed for the same purpose: to impose symbols that replace those of the indigenous or ancient cultures (Martínez 2009: 11).

The graphic expressions documented in Uruguay, especially in the Salto area of northern Uruguay, contain numerous rock art motifs that demonstrate the important role of Christian religious elements, especially the cross (Encinas 2014). The significant cultural difference between pre-Historic and Judeo-Christian significance, as well as knowledge of the dates of the conquest and related historical events, is used in this paper as evidence of a new social, political and cultural interpretation of the territory. The meeting of the original population and the Europeans was often recorded on stone across the Americas. This working hypothesis has been taken as the starting point in other parts of the world, where Europeans with their religious symbols marked older sacred spaces (Layton 2012; Oland et al. 2012; Funari and Senatore 2015; Recalde and Navarro 2015; Cooper et al. 2016; Challis 2018). It reflects a historically known timeframe through which to consider the validity of graphic references to ancient populations.

The 'conquest' of different parts of America has yielded a form of Christian rock art, often next to or superimposed on different expressions of the original indigenous population, revealing the different eras of domination and resistance captured at different rock art sites. We can find them all over the continent: in Mexico (Encinas 2014; Rivera Estrada 2014) and the Andean region of Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and

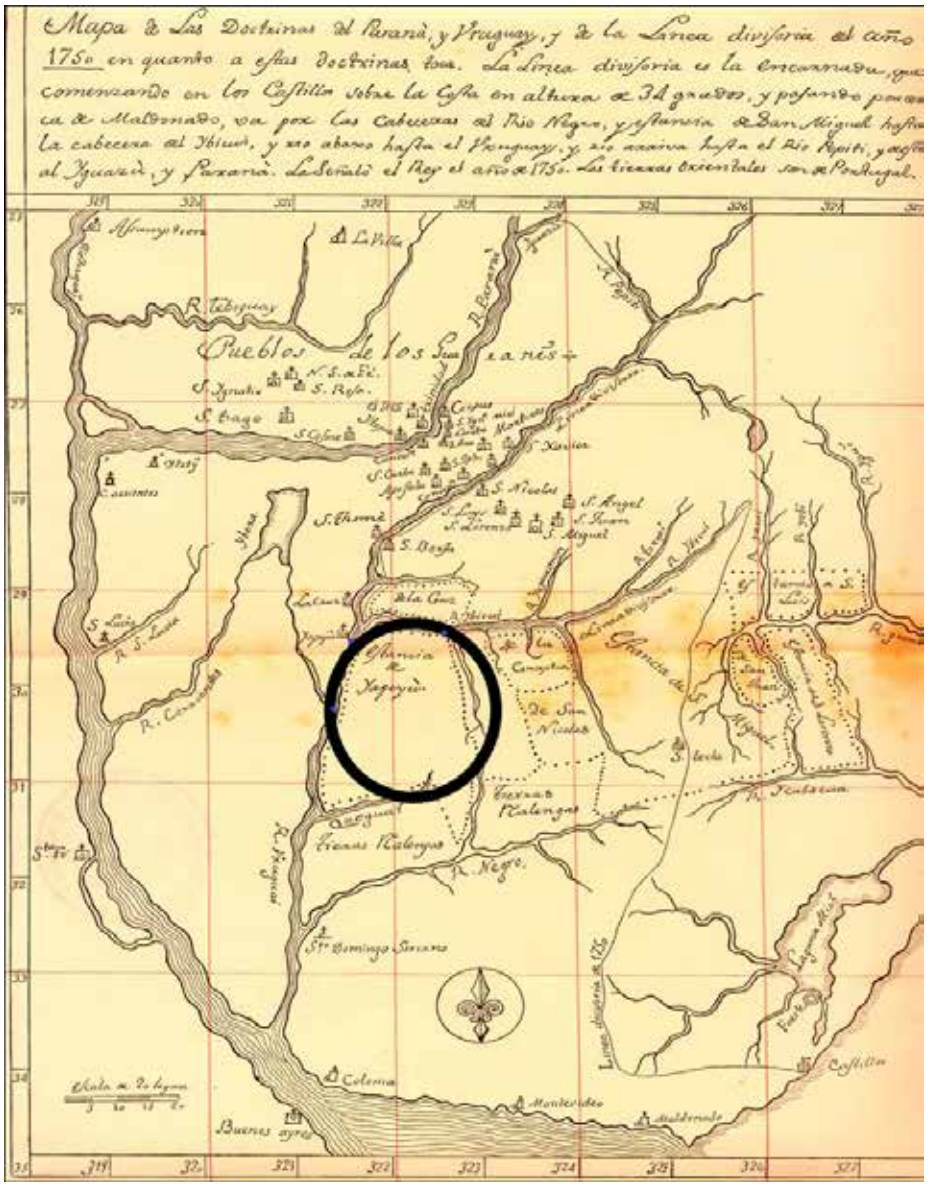

Figure 1. *Map of the Doctrines of Paraná and Uruguay, 1750, with the area of the rock art sites. Following: Furlong Cardiff (1936: XXXIII).*

different production strategies, to be exploited mainly by the indigenous reservation of Yapeyú (Cabrera Pérez 1999). The Company of Jesus carried out the evangelisation of a large area of South America in the early 17th century. The *Provincia Paraguaria* covered part of the modern countries of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay (Wilde 2016). Thirty towns were founded in the region with Guaraní populations and other local ethnic groups. Structures of great social cohesion and powerfully self-identified Christian communities were created, with constant demographic growth until the mid-18th century. Yapeyú was the southernmost mission town on the west bank of the River Uruguay (now in the Province of Corrientes, Argentina). It was founded in 1627 and owing to its proximity to the territories of the *Banda Oriental* (Eastern Bank), now Uruguay, and it was one of the indigenous reservations most closely linked to that stockbreeding land, exploiting the large numbers of untamed cattle native to that region (Levinton 2005: 34).

From the mid-17th century onwards, cattle were driven on foot towards the missions or to the leather tanneries near the southernmost mission towns in the Jesuit community (Fig. 1). By the first third of the 18th century, this exploitation was better organised, with the establishment of permanent ranches run by small groups of missionary natives and their families, and the foundation of chapels or prayer rooms across the north of Uruguay. Together with the cultivation of yerba mate, this resource largely formed the basis of the missionary economy.

Within this socioeconomic context, we can expect that those signs and inscriptions probably belong to that period and result from the practices of 'exorcism' carried out by the Jesuits, in a similar way to other motifs found across the continent. The petroglyphs that we are now 'discovering' did not go unnoticed by the 17th and 18th-century population, either in their existence or in their contents. Therefore, the 'pagan signs' required the addition of Christian symbols to

Brazil (Querejazu Lewis 1992a, 2009b, 1994; Taboada 1992; Hostnig 2003, 2004, 2007; Cartajena and Núñez 2006; Del Solar and Hosting 2006; Arenas and Martínez 2009; Martínez 2009; Fernández Distel 2010; Marques 2010; Ponce Oha 2013; Arkush 2014; Arenas and Odone 2016; among others).

In the case of pre-Historic art in Uruguay, the broad cultural difference between the pre-Historic and Judeo-Christian fields, as well knowledge surrounding the timeline of the 'conquest' and the historical facts that define it, will be used in this text as evidence of the emergence of a new social, political and cultural grammar used throughout the territory. The literature and the presence of crosses in the area of study (e.g. Site CI12b01) are in accordance with the fact that this area, from the 17th century onwards, was affected by Jesuit Paraguayan missions. In the 17th and 18th centuries, a territory was established for stockbreeding using

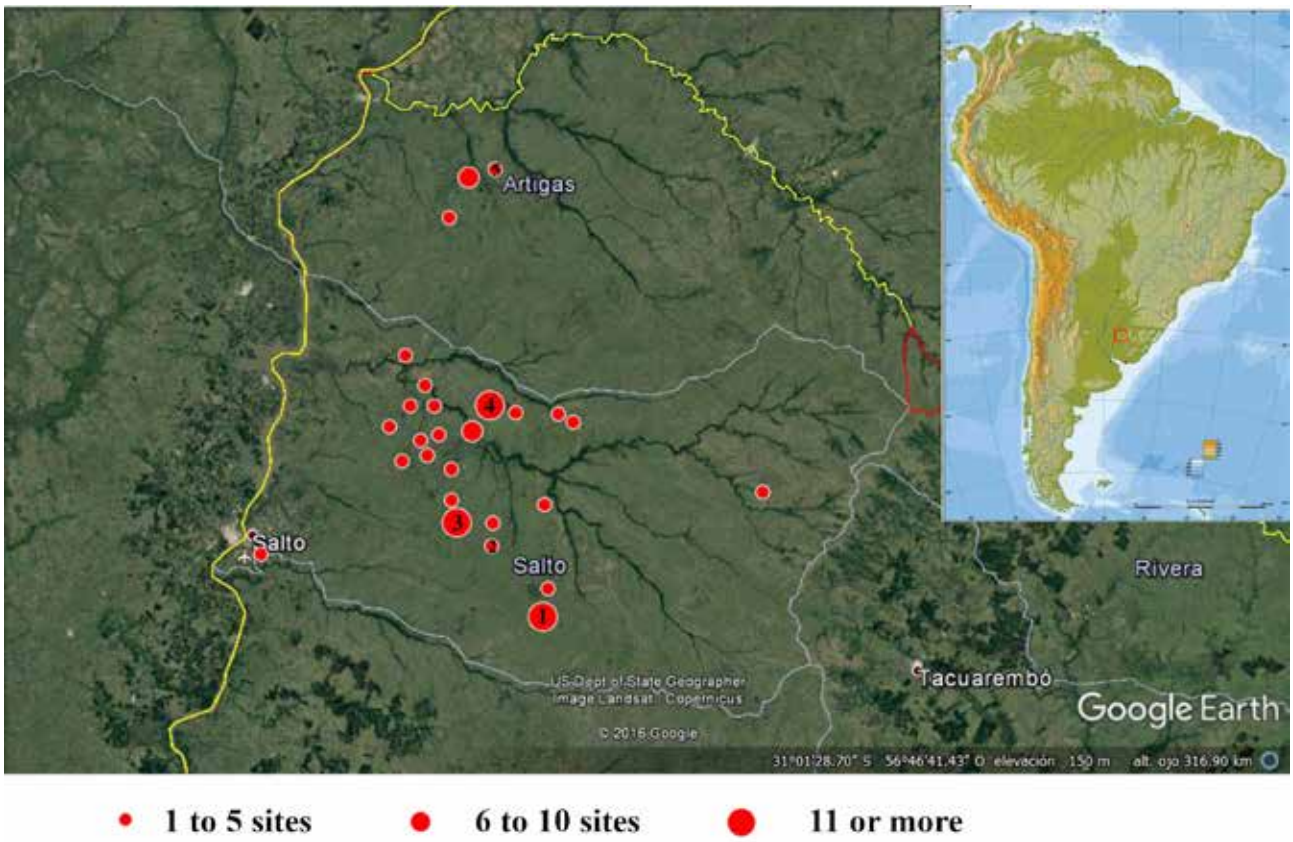

Figure 2. *Distribution map of sites with petroglyphs in northern Uruguay. The main concentrations: 1 - Puntas de Valentín; 2 - Cuatro Cerros; 3 - Colonia Itapebí; 4 - San Luis de Arapey; 5 - Yucutujá.*

counterbalance the heretic beliefs of the 'barbarian' population in the region.

Rock art, past histories, a witness in stone: theory and methodology for the study of petroglyphs in northern Uruguay

Decorated sites are veritable palimpsests subject to the cultural actions of human groups who travelled through, lived in or managed the places of their initial conception. Over time, multiple actions or events may have taken place at these sites. The materiality of stone allows those events to survive and become tools with which archaeology may attempt to generate narratives that recover past 'histories'. However, these palimpsests are hard to interpret. The evidence of different points in time and varied societies is often superimposed in a complex dynamic that reveals the processes, people, uses, customs and multiple histories created over time in those places. Like palaeographers, archaeologists often have to interpret contexts where words are missing or crossed out; texts that are incomplete due to lost pages, poor preservation, the effects of dampness or rodents etc. Imagination can help decode faint expressions of a language rarely used today, but it cannot yield objective evidence in attempts to recover those histories.

Culture should be understood as a series of control mechanisms: plans, formulas and rules that govern our behaviour. Envisaging culture from this point of view begins with a social perspective, where the epicentre of culture is an everyday locale: the home, street, daily chores etc. (Geertz 1987: 51).

> Culture, in the global and anthropological sense of the term, is that set of relationships insofar as they are represented and established, relationships that therefore at the same time display an intellectual and symbolic dimension and a particular historical and sociological dimension through which they are put into practice (Augé 2007: 32).

Archaeologists, particularly in our field, must try to understand past cultural events through the often poor context of remains — the result of numerous social acts throughout history. Consequently, cultural realities are often simplified to an extreme, compacted form and to a great extent suppressed, which is even worse. In this sense, the actions, meanings and complex dynamics that those cultural remains engaged with inevitably stay in the shadows, and the archaeological context is seen as static (Cabrera Pérez 2015). The archaeologist should try to understand the largest number of societal elements being studied and try to access, as Blumer said (1969: 238), 'a world of objects with meaning'. Objects are the product of social interaction, and therefore of different groups; they create distinct worlds which change as the objects themselves change their meaning. To identify and understand the life of a group, it is necessary to identify their most meaningful objects in the terms that they, themselves, used them. This is not an easy task, but it is the essence of an archaeologist's

Motivo	C. Itapebí	Valentín	Arapey	Yucutujá
	5	4	4	7
	1	5	3	6
	2	-	-	3
	24	7	16	13
	7	1	2	5
	1	-	1	5
	4	-	-	5
	1	2	2	2
	-	2	1	5
	2	-	1	3
	4	3	-	2
	-	-	4	2
	7	2	-	2
	2	10	1	1
	2	1	1	5
	2	-	-	4
	3	-	-	-
	2	-	1	-
	1	-	-	-

Figure 3. *Some of the most frequent and identifiable motifs within the different regions (graphic design by D. Rosete and A. Cabrera).*

work. The need to access that world of meaningful objects also becomes dramatic, and tends to be quite elusive, when we aim to study the symbolic or superstructural world (Metcalf and Huntington 1995).

From the many interpretive models for rock art, there are some that analyse fixed social memories on stone and the value of the artefacts' and symbols' biographies. These are the ones that we take as a reference for our work, as we have done before with other cases of study (Parkington 1989; Tringham 1994; Bradley 2003; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003: 1–3; Clarke et al. 2013; Bueno Ramírez 2020). The construction of memories through symbols is a social gesture that defines territories and glues communities together. The superposition of new symbols seems like an effort to erase the past, actively pushing for visible symbols that are only understandable to those who recognise the territories and their link to past communities.

Petroglyphs in northern Uruguay

Petroglyphs have been documented in the north of Uruguay in recent years (Cabrera Pérez 2008, 2012, 2014a, 2019a, 2019b)[1]. This is an extremely flat basalt region with numerous outcrops of silicified sandstone, where thousands of petroglyphs can be found. Over 150 new archaeological sites with rock art have been located during the research currently in progress, and these contain thousands of petroglyphs (see Fig. 2).

The petroglyphs may appear in groups of panels with over 100 motifs per site or isolated and in smaller numbers. The designs are generally of an abstract geometric nature, produced by combining the techniques of pecking and/or abrading (scraping and even polishing) the rock. In many cases, the motifs are emphasised by the greater width or depth of the lines (false low relief) or by hollowing out the figure (Rosete 2013), and in this way create shadows that improve their visibility. The rock surfaces may vary in size from over a metre to just a few centimetres. From a morphological point of view, the designs are composed of both simple and complex motifs, constructed with lines that often conjoin other lines and surfaces into a single figure. Simpler motifs are created by repeating basic figures or complicated designs like meanders or lattices, often without geometric precision, as well as indeterminate and superimposed motifs.

The models established in South America for this type of cultural expression would include the region within the so-called 'footprints style' or 'southern tradition', defined initially by O. Menghin (1957) in the mid-20th century (Schobinger and Gradin 1985; Prous 1992, 2007). This style was conceived in Patagonia, where petroglyphs supposedly represent the prints of the puma, guanaco and greater rhea and human footprints, in addition to '… geometric elements or abundant signs, such as circles, zigzags, spirals, three digits …' (Podestá et al. 2005: 33), with a chronology thought to start in about 4000 BP. This style, with its origin apparently in the central Andes, mainly employs the engraving technique and would have spread over a large area of the continent, including areas of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay. However, some notorious chronological discrepancies exist in those areas. Within a hyper-diffusionist approach, the 'index fossils' that have been identified would be mainly 'animal prints' and 'human feet' (Menghin 1957: 66).

In our area of study, if some of these indicators are present, others thought to be of greater diagnostic value — like the 'footprints' — are missing. Other types of designs are more common, such as circles, crisscross-

1 Since 2009, extensive surveying has been carried out in the north of the territory with the support of the National Agency for Research and Innovation and the Sectorial Commission for Scientific Research at the University of the Republic (Uruguay). It has covered an area of over 55000km^2. Simultaneously, from 2009 to 2011, the *Ecos-Sud* Program was an exchange project (Research – Training of Human Resources) with the Department of Archaeology in the Humanities and Education Sciences Faculty, Institute of Human Palaeontology and the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. This exchange was developed through the Directorate General of Relations and Cooperation in the University of the Republic and the Government of France (Scientific Cooperation Committee for Argentina, Chile and Uruguay) (Paillet et al. 2011a, 2011b).

Figure 4. *Simple crosses. Examples of the first type of motifs found at several sites with petroglyphs.*

ing lines etc., and also occur in the proposed model. A small sample of the real repertory of designs has come to define this phenomenon, and vast territories scarcely documented have also been brought into its definition. We, therefore, believe that this postulation should be considered with prudence and the region should be studied in-depth, within the different chronologies and sociocultural contexts, to avoid influencing possible interpretations which, in our case, appear to be much more complex, dynamic and varied than the rigid model that has generally been applied (Cabrera Pérez 2014b).

Edaphological studies at the excavated sites show that a period elapsed between the occupation and the start of the process that formed the soils, which ultimately covered evidence of past occupations. This, as well as the physical characteristics of the surroundings, would explain the almost complete absence of organic remains and the subsequent issues in establishing chronologies. Despite isolation and a lack of knowledge about the local population of numerous sites in the region, several recent alterations have been observed, actions that have seriously endangered this cultural heritage. In addition to natural geophysical and geochemical alterations, vandalism — intentional or not — has been detected. It has destroyed or at least damaged some panels and even entire sites (Cabrera Pérez 2010).

Among these representations associated with hunter societies, whose chronology dates back to 4000 BP, are motifs corresponding to the 17th and 18th centuries. The motifs identified in this area of study can be classified as 'crosses'. Simple crosses consist of two crossed lines where the vertical line is usually longer than the horizontal. In general, the petroglyphs are well defined but are not carefully executed. They sometimes display a V-shaped cross-section that indicates the use of sharp tools, which may have included metal implements. The simplicity of the motif allows a more relative understanding of a symbol that we interpret subjectively today, although the context requires that we do not dismiss any possibility (Fig. 4).

A cross with a plinth added suggests a Calvary. These forms display elements attributable to Judeo-Christian religion and are sometimes accompanied by letters, numbers or allegoric elements. They are graphic versions of Christian ritual practices from different continents with a precise chronology. A Calvary is defined by a central cross with two smaller crosses at each side. These versions may be more or less elaborate, with plinths, details on the upper part and arms, or with only bases. Alternatively, Calvaries are depicted as three simple crosses, whether linked together by the same transversal line or not. They are particularly important in the ensemble at Site CI12b01, in Colonia Itapebí, Salto Department, which possesses the region's largest known concentration of petroglyphs including different examples of this particular modality. Site CI12b01 exhibits over 170 petroglyphs. At the northern end of the promontory, a petroglyph is formed by a central cross whose arms end in triangles, with two smaller crosses on each side that have triangles at their base. They were produced by percussion (Fig. 5).

The same site includes other rocks with motifs that align with the pre-Historic repertory. One of them is a 'sun' next to which a 'P' is engraved with a shallower groove. This is the only motif of this kind known in the inventory of Uruguayan petroglyphs. It

Figure 5. *Petroglyph of a Calvary-type cross at Site CI12b01.*

Figure 6. *Petroglyph at Site CI12b01.*

resembles a part of the Chi-Rho cryptogram, despite missing the letter 'X' that represents the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Fig. 6). The 'sun' also represents Christ in Christian symbology and has continued to be used in the Catholic Church until the present time. Although we cannot be certain, the association with the 'sun', a frequent motif in the region's pre-Historic repertory, is a possibility. It may have been incorporated with the Christian identification of the site. It was associated with the Chi-Rho, and thus, traditional images were absorbed by and re-interpreted with the new culture.

The two signs, the cross and the 'P', mark the limits of the engraved area: one in the north and the other in the south (Fig. 7). It should be noted that these expressions of colonial rock art are not massive; a single cross engraved in an area with a large number of pagan representations seemingly 'exorcises' the whole area. Therefore, we should not expect numerous depictions of crosses and Christian symbols in the same area.

At another proximate site, CI13c03, a panel occupies a very visible part of the promontory with the petroglyphs. An epigraph within a rectangular shape contains letters and numbers. Below it, a simple cross with a long vertical line is situated inside a trapezoidal mantle. A short line that connects with the transversal line to the right of the observer may be interpreted as a cross with nails, while a horizontal line in the lower part may indicate the geometric decoration of the man-

Figure 7. *Aerial photograph of the Christian symbols described in the text in Site CI12b01, which possesses over 170 petroglyphs.*

tle. Because of its position, it may represent a signature or identification of the person who made the inscription: a Christian. The first letter visible on the left in the rectangle is a capital A, although two faint parallel lines precede it to its left. To its right, a letter of the same height as the previous letter consists of a vertical line with a short transversal curved line at the top on its left side (Fig. 8). If these letters are compared with the regional style of handwriting in the late 17th or early 18th centuries, it may be a 'P' written back to front, but it may equally be a 'T'. To the right, after a separation, appears an apparently numerical inscription formed by four numbers. The one on the left is a line preceded by a double globular line; the second is a vertical line; the third has a significant scroll to its right; the fourth is also linear. The lines are incised and deep and were probably drawn with a metal implement. At both sites, many rock art panels were destroyed intentionally (*damnatio*). Although we cannot say when that occurred, it is not a recent event (Figs 9 and 10).

Figure 8. *Inscription at Site CI13c03, Colonia Itapebí, Salto.*

Another rock with a Calvary should be included in this repertory because, despite being in the territory of Argentina, it is on the bank of the River Uruguay,

Figure 9. *Damaged petroglyphs, Site CI12b01, Colonia Itapebí.*

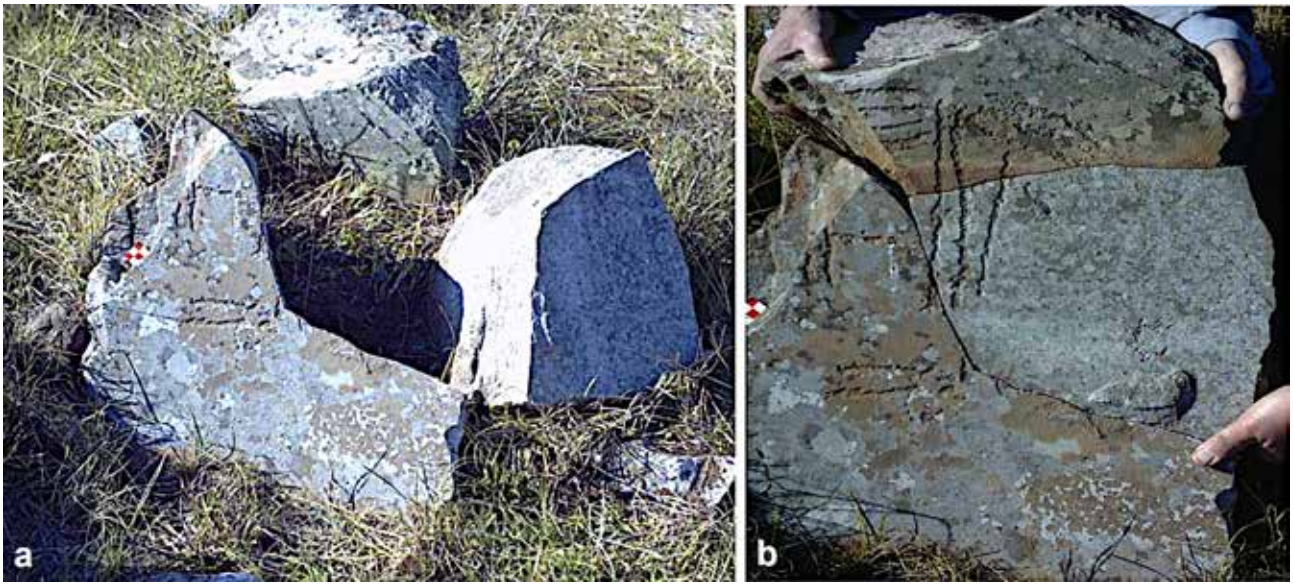

Figure 10. *Damaged petroglyphs, Site CI13c03, Colonia Itapebí.*

Figure 11. *Petroglyphs at Yapeyú, Corrientes, Argentina (photograph by Carmen Curbelo).*

Figure 12. *Boundary stone with a cattle symbol.*

in Yapeyú, Province of Corrientes, the place of a well-known Jesuit mission. In the course of being studied by our colleague Fernando Oliva, and cited by Schobinger and Gradin (1985: 90), the panel is on a horizontal surface and combines several Christian symbols made by scraping and very superficial pounding (Fig. 11). It is worth noting that the figures are not together but dispersed as if they were the result of different actions. The crosses vary from the simplest forms to versions with a plinth, which supports the hypothesis that they all represent Christian symbology, despite the nuances that can be established from the simplest motifs. Some of the crosses with a plinth have a triangular base. Others display a circular shape in allusion to the formula of the *globus cruciger*, which is more indicative of the 18th century than the 17th. A 'sun' is engraved in the centre, repeating a similar association to the one described at Site CI12b01 in Salto.

Beyond the colonial world

The study of the rock art sites in northern Uruguay, where no previous information about the phenomenon was available, is currently identifying situations in the record that reflect potentially different periods and social events in the region. In this vast territory — a marginal area for research with a very low population density — the evidence has multiplied, alluding to changes in the area (some quite recent). Multiple contexts of occupation can, therefore, be recognised, representing different eras and new points of view about this long series of events, which has resulted in the palimpsests cited above. 'Historic' rock art can be added to 'indigenous' rock art. This process also reflects different situations and interests: graffiti that refer to personal actions and histories, cattle symbols turned into 'heraldic' signs that accompanied the enclosure of the land and successive divisions of the property, from natural thousand-hectare estates in the 18th and 19th centuries to modern enclosed properties of the 20th century (Fig. 12). This 'rock art' may be found on high promontories in the landscape and, more commonly, on simple marker stones shaped *exprofeso* to mark properties or indicate the access roads to those properties. The motifs were usually made by linear incision with metal tools and/or by abrasion. The rock type is the same one used for the ancestral petroglyphs, silicified sandstone.

In the area of Colonia Itapebí, Salto Department — where one of the largest concentrations of Uruguayan petroglyphs is located — a large number of engraved rocks were damaged intentionally, sometimes with considerable violence, significantly altering the original petroglyph. Sometimes the fragments of stone scattered around the site can be refitted, and the original motif can be reconstructed. On other occasions, however, this would be difficult, as many pieces may be missing and only a partial reconstruction would be possible, if that. While this destruction can be attributed to different human groups over several periods, some evidence

references the colonial period when, because of the difficulties in destroying monumental rock art sites, unusual practices were proposed, such as expropriation or burning. The basic idea was to 'purify' the sites and impose the marks of Christianity on them (Martínez 2009: 25). We know that breaking up the rocks was one of the ways in which the images of the indigenous past were eliminated: 'Let them be demolished and crushed, the idols on big stones, and let their fragments be thrown into said river and those that are unbreakable, put crosses on them'[2]. In our case, consequently, crosses are indeed found at the sites where evidence of destruction is most common.

Christian symbology in South America

Colonial rock art differs from pre-Hispanic expressions mainly by the iconographic repertory employed, the meaning of the icons, the style, the pigments used in paintings, and the engraving techniques. Although it was aimed to eliminate any representations that evoked or related to the ancient beliefs of the inhabitants, the destruction was often partial, as the 'eliminators' did not come to an agreement about the nature of those representations (Querejazu Lewis 1992b: 28).

There are few studied cases in South America; therefore, the hypothesis about Bolivia is a useful reference. Querejazu Lewis (1992: 6–7) postulates three main reasons for post-Columbian rock art in Bolivia: narrative, religion (with the fusion of Christian and pre-Columbian elements) and iconoclastic and/or exorcism motives (Bednarik 1988; Hostnig 2004: 208).

Querejazu Lewis initially cited a 'narrative' rock art which only 'represented' the new events, missionaries, horses, ships etc. The second type of colonial rock art was produced by iconoclast activity. Spanish missionaries were aware of the ritual and sacred nature of the places with native rock art. Parietal art formed part of the *huacas* belonging to Andean popular religion, seen by the missionary Catholic Church as an example of pagan idolatry. While the conquest of America was being carried out with satisfactory results for both the conquistadors and the Spanish Crown, the spiritual conquest encountered resistance that, albeit largely passive, was unshakeably tenacious. In order to weaken and overcome that resistance, a policy of eradicating idolatries was enacted, above all in accordance with the decrees of the Provincial Council held in Lima in 1567 (Querejazu Lewis 1992a: 6).

The third type of colonial rock art is defined by expressions that incorporate a religious concept. They combine Christian elements and symbols with native motifs possessing deep pre-Hispanic cultural roots. They thus reveal evident religious syncretism. This type of rock art was produced at the same time as the mestizo religious architecture that began in the late 17th century and continued until the 19th century and beyond. For example, Hostnig studied rock art that is predominantly religious or sacred in Espinar, Peru, and maintains that it must have fulfilled several functions: an ecclesiastic or educational catechism function, using art as a vehicle for religious expression and Christian learning. At the start of colonisation, many of the crosses would have been painted or engraved with a missionary function, first by clergy and local catechists and later by indigenous people converted to the Catholic faith. In certain circumstances, the painted or engraved cross also aimed to remove the magic or diabolic nature of 'gentile' places. It is also possible that both the cross and other Christian icons were sometimes painted or engraved in a votive action by local inhabitants (Hostnig 2004: 208).

Colonial rock art, in the modalities of painting and engraving, is found across the Andes, either alone or next to, if not superimposed on, older images (see Fig. 1). Despite its widespread distribution, it has either been ignored or avoided in research or studied very superficially, with researchers deeming it less important than Pre-Columbian rock art. This tendency is supported by the idea that all rock paintings are by default attributed to the time of hunter-gatherers (Hostnig 2003: 189, 191).

Both ecclesiastic and civil colonial authorities across the continent recommended extirpating idolatries from the original populations. The order was to eliminate all trace of adoration and plant crosses in place of pagan symbols. References to the program of repression enforced by Spanish colonial authorities and evangelists are well known (Duviols 1977: 297–298; Maeder 1987). In particular, the written instructions given during the second half of the 16th century have been cited repeatedly. For instance, Viceroy Toledo of Peru stated:

> … because of the old custom the Indians have of painting idols and figures of demons and animals, whom they would depict on their *d**ú**hos*, *tianas*, glasses, roads, walls and buildings, blankets, blouses, lamps, and on almost everything that was necessary for them. It seems that in some way they maintain their ancient idolatry. Let it be known that as we enter each reservation, none of our officials is to engrave or paint on those figures from now on, or else they are to be gravely punished. These condemnations are to be executed on their person and their wealth if they should otherwise behave. And the paintings and figures found on their homes and buildings and the rest of their artefacts, let them be removed in good faith and without harm and signal them with crosses and other Christian symbols, on their houses and buildings. Let them be erased, the animals that the Indians paint anywhere. And as said, naturals do also adore species of birds and animals, and for that reason they paint and engrave them on the vases that they make to drink from, and in silver, and on the doors of their homes and they weave them on the frontispieces, altar cloths, and they paint them on the

2 *Y asi mismo* ***todos los ydolos de piedras grandes balomosos se demuelan y quiebren*** *y sus fragmentos se echen al dicho río* ***y en los ydolos que no se pueden quebrar se pongan cruses****. (We have emphasised parts of the text in bold type; Duviols 2003: 686).*

Figure 13. *Main sites with colonial rock art in South America.*

> walls of the churches: I order and mandate that they be shredded and taken off the doors where they might be found and you forbid that they will not be woven on the clothes for dressing.[3]

The most common and oldest motif is undoubtedly the Christian cross, a symbol that was represented in a wide range of morphological variants. The Latin cross predominates, formed by a single horizontal arm and a longer vertical arm. The crosses appear alone or in association with other ecclesiastic, profane figurative or abstract motifs. Floral or plant motifs form a large part of both religious and profane colonial iconography, in textile art, on pottery and also in rock art (Hostnig 2004: 202). The process can be viewed as the selective appropriation of Christian symbols transferred to the system of rock art (Arenas and Odone 2016). Latin crosses and their variants were the most represented symbol. It should also be noted that, in connection with the 18th century indigenous rebellions, military narratives were constructed in the rock art system. These discourses form a possible *semiosis*[4] as a consequence of those events.

The coincidences and differences of the various modalities in the Andean region can be summed up as follows: in both cases the Christian cross predominates while other frequent images emerge, like 'horses', 'riders on horseback', 'men' with 'pikes' or 'guns', playing the 'trumpet' or 'flute', 'in movement', or 'interacting with others in warlike confrontation'; 'churches', 'roads' in the form of sinuous lines, and 'palm leaves associated with the churches'. The most common technique in both regions is painting, in which the iconographic repertory is more varied than in petroglyphs. The narrative and religious character of colonial rock art, as well as the mixture of pre-Co-

3 *"… porque de la costumbre envejecida que los indios tienen de pintar ídolos y figuras de demonios y animales a quien solian mochar en sus dúhos, tianas, vasos, báculos, paredes y edificios, mantas, camisetas, lampas y casi en todas cuantas cosas les son necesarias, parece que en alguna manera conservan su antigua idolatría, proveereis, en entrando en cada repartimiento, que ningún oficial de aquí en adelante labre ni pinte las tales figuras so graves penas, las cuales executareis en sus personas y bienes, lo contrario haciendo. Y las pinturas y figuras que tuvieren en sus casas y edificios y en los demás instrumentos* ***que buenamente y sin mucho daño se pudieren quitar y señalareis que se pongan cruces y otras insignias de xptianos*** *en sus casas y edificios. Que se borren los animales que los yndios pintan en qualquier parte. Y por quanto los dichos naturales tanbien adoran algun genero de abes e animales, e para el dicho efeto los pintan e labran en los mates que hasen para beber de palo, y de plata, y en las puertas de sus casas y los tejen en los frontales, doseles de los altares, e los pintan en las paredes de las yglesias:* ***ordeno y mando que los hagais raer, y quitar*** *de las puertas donde los tubieren y prohiuireis que tanpoco los tejan en las ropas que visten…"* (we have emphasised the words in bold type) (National Archive of Bolivia, ANB Ms. 1764, No. 131, Year 1574. Transcription of the orders of Viceroy Toledo, given in the city of La Plata, Bolivia).

4 *Semiosis* is any form of activity, behaviour or process that involves signs, including the creation of a meaning. It is a process that takes place in the mind of the audience; it begins with the perception of the sign and finishes with the presence of the object defined by the sign in their mind.

lumbian elements, is another common denominator between the Bolivian sites and the rock art ensembles in Espinar (Hostnig 2004: 214).

Superimposition of symbols: resilience and re-interpreted pasts

The Christians employed two ways to control the indigenous decorated panels: the crosses engraved or painted in greater or smaller numbers, at different levels of intensity, visibility and conservation; and *damnatio*, which caused considerable harm to some panels by totally or partially smashing them. Both actions demonstrated a political strategy that both aimed to assimilate the past by creating new images to associate with it, and eliminated the evidence of that same past through deliberate violence against its most representative images. This is a seemingly contradictory situation whose explanation must be sought in the archaeology of the sites, as well as in the historical events of local and regional significance.

Regarding the meaning of the cross in post-Columbian rock art, Bednarik (1988) cites the interpretations of several scholars and establishes the cross as a symbol of Christianity, conquest and occupation during the colonial period. Additionally, as it was combined with 'important elements of pre-Hispanic religion', it became a symbol of the new 'popular Andean religiousness'. Large areas of the territory belonged to the Church during the colonial period, and the profound religiousness and frequent pastoral visits of the local population under the dominion of the priests partly explain the continuance of rock art with religious motifs in the area (Hostnig 2004: 208).

The impact of evangelisation and the process of eliminating idolatries on the continent is also seen in this rock art. It is possible that in many communities, under a persistent evangelisation process, most of these sites gradually fell into disuse or were directly demonised, as seems to occur even today, according to ethnographic accounts in many places (Gallardo et al. 1990; Castro and Gallardo 1995–1996; Morales 1997; Hostnig 2004: 52; Cruz 2006). Both the places and the images they contain are considered 'dangerous' and require visitors to perform rituals for their protection. In many places, however, the rituals and the actions to extirpate pagan representations continued during the 17th and 18th centuries (Martínez 2009: 20).

Pagan graphic representations were, for the evangelists (and we may suppose for the colonial administrators), a reason for attention and concern. Non-religious representations fell into what was called the 'second kind' of idolatries, and the general theory of their elimination applied to the Greeks, Romans and many other peoples, including the Amerindians; thus, we can imagine that they cannot have been indifferent to rock art. The images, whether painted, sculpted or engraved, were placed in the same semantic field. Faced with the paintings or petroglyphs, and the unintelligible nature of the representations ('some letters that cannot be understood'), there appear to have been two possible reactions: to remove them by destroying them. This is what Viceroy Toledo (Martínez 2012), the Corregidor Carabuco or the priest of Cango ordered, to mention a few well-known cases; or to appropriate them, to subsume them within a new evangelising narrative (Martínez 2009: 24). The idea was to essentially 'purify' the sites and impose the marks of Christianity on them.

As can be seen at many sites, numerous attempts to scrape, rub out or cover images with incisions and scratches using metal objects, or engrave and paint crosses, were applied to the paintings themselves. They aimed to demonstrate the apparent superiority of Christian symbols over the pagan signs, as Querejazu Lewis (1992a: 6–7) has pointed out. As a consequence of this type of action, it can be supposed that a part of what might be called colonial visual practices were involved in the destruction, whether carried out by Spanish or local priests or, as Hostnig (2004: 52) suggests, by converted indigenous people (Martínez 2009: 26). Although the evidence of these practices indicates that they were not intensive, some records of this action have been preserved. It may be possible to study them as a specific subset within the field of rock art representations: the 'iconoclast style', as defined by Querejazu Lewis (1992a: 6–7).

It has been recently maintained that post-Columbian rock art can serve as another form of evidence of indigenous populations, other sacred sites in the rural landscape (Challis 2018), or hybridisation (Mabardi 2010). The rock art would have enabled local communities to express ideas and perform rituals without the Spanish and Creole authorities knowing. However, the difficulty in precisely dating rock art tends to limit the understanding of such uses (Arkush 2014: 585).

Post-conquest rock art production developed new images and styles that reflect the religious, social and political changes that began in the 16th century. It favoured religious motifs, such as crosses, 'churches', 'priests' and 'dances'; 'riders with European clothing' like wide hats; and 'soldiers with European weapons' sometimes 'fighting in battle'. All these images can be attributed to the post-conquest period and often demonstrate a concern for Hispanic domination (Querejazu Lewis 1992a, 1992c; Taboada 1992; Medinaceli et al. 2003; Hostnig 2004; Strecker and Taboada 2004; Arenas and Martínez 2009; Martínez 2009; Martínez and Arenas 2009; Ponce Oha 2013).

The new significance given to rock art sites has often reached the present, as mentioned above. Those places are seen as both 'powerful' sites to be reused for worship, and a cemetery with periodic rituals, often far removed from the pre-Historic evidence at the site but identified ideologically through their recognition and re-signification. In rural parts of the north-eastern Brazilian states of Piauí and Ceará, the archaeological sites with pre-Historic rock art were revisited or reused by Christian followers encouraged by the religious

spirit. The cross, the Christian emblem, appears at all the sites and in some ways affirms the consecration and re-conquest of those sites in the present. These interferences at rock art sites can occur on different levels. Some affect the rock art panels directly, while others appear in the surroundings of the outcrops or places that were painted or engraved. The customs and ways of life of the different cultures are subjected to processes of continuity or change, which can be caused by intra-ethnic events and/or inter-ethnic contacts (Marques 2010).

The use of Christian iconography marked a change in the faith and the possession of important sites, as well as the recuperation of supposedly pagan places where it was suspected that heretic activities were held. This iconography became a way of fighting evil, the devil, as so frequently occurred both in Europe and throughout the Americas, at many different sites. In the Old World, we can find examples at the sites of Puerta del Río, La Moral del Río, Las Cabezotas (Villamayor), Cueva de Rascones (Valverdón), Valdepelayos, Peñas del Pico, El Torrejón and Peñas de la Sal in Salamanca, Spain. In these cases, Christian and medieval symbols in the form of crosses, with or without a plinth, resemble those represented in medieval hermitages in Urarte, in Álava, Basque Country, El Montico de Charratu, in Valladolid, and in the Condado de Treviño, Burgos, as well as the series of three engraved reticules on the rock walls at El Torrejón, Huelva, Spain (Gómez-Barrera 2008: 375). Many others are found in Europe at such emblematic sites as megalithic monuments (Bueno Ramírez et al. 2009).

We propose a research strategy that uses this iconography in conjunction with the classic system of determining the chronology of rock art. Crosses are a form of *post quem* evidence with an age that can be determined, while their presence authenticates places marked in this way as pre-Historic ensembles. The typology of the crosses indicates specific traits related to their age and the territorial expansion of the Catholic religion, for which relatively precise information is available. Therefore, this iconography can be a very useful tool to establish a repertory of panels whose symbology is older. This will confirm chronologies older than the conquest as well as territories of great importance for the indigenous population.

The *damnatio* indicate a different degree of intensity. The presence of crosses and *damnatio* action together can be assessed geographically and chronologically to understand the phenomenon of replacing one set of symbols with another and the intermediate situations that arise as unique solutions. All these considerations can be used at other rock art sites as a means for reflection.

A biography of the engraved images in different parts of South America may provide more evidence to determine the main areas of the 'symbolic frontier' and the critical moments in the ideological conflict between the original peoples and the newcomers.

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