



BRIEF REPORTS

The earliest wagon image identified from the Jizzakh region, Uzbekistan

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Introduction

This article provides a detailed discussion of the earliest wagon image identified at the Suzmoyilotasoy site in the Jizzakh region. In addition, a description is given of the wagon depiction carved on this rock as well as of other images located in its immediate surroundings. The Suzmoyilota rock art site is located on the mountain slopes in the northern part of Jelli-G'ulli village, Sharof Rashidov District, Jizzakh region, at an elevation of 490–631 m a.s.l. (Fig. 1). The site was first identified in 2016 during archaeological field survey investigations conducted by A. Kholmatov et al. (2018). As a result of our research carried out in 2024, additional rock art images were documented in the mountain streams situated on the northern slopes of Jelli-G'ulli village.

Rock surface patination levels of the petroglyphs in the Jizzakh region were studied and classified into four groups. Petroglyphs classified as Patination Level 1 (PL.1) have a surface colour that fully blends with the natural colour of the rock. Such images are characteristic of the earliest petroglyphs identified among the rock art of the Jizzakh region. The second group, designated as PL.2, includes petroglyphs whose colouration is influenced by the natural rock surface but is distinguishable primarily by darker hues, ranging from dark grey to dark brown, compared to the surrounding patinated rock. Petroglyphs belonging to the third group, PL.3, are lighter in colour relative to the rock surface and are clearly visible even from a considerable distance. The fourth

group, referred to as PL.4, consists of petroglyphs whose engraved surfaces appear almost white, making the images highly visible and well defined.

The study of the manufacturing techniques of the rock art in this region was conducted by classifying them into six categories:

- T.1. Applied to motifs created by large, regular or irregular impact marks (probably *stone tools*).
- T.2. Applied to motifs formed by small or uniformly sized regular or irregular impact marks (probably *metal tools*).
- T.3. *Incising (scratching)* – applied to motifs characterised by linear marks produced using a sharp tool.
- T.4. *Abrasion (rubbing)* – applied to motifs created by rubbing a tool across the surface.
- T.5. *Combination* – applied to motifs executed using more than one technique.
- T.6. *Reworking/retouching* – the renewal or modification of earlier images through re-pounding over pre-existing motifs.

Description

At present, wagon imagery within the territory of the Jizzakh region has been identified for the first time exclusively at the Suzmoyilota site. At this location, one complete wagon depiction and several images resembling wagon wheels were recorded.

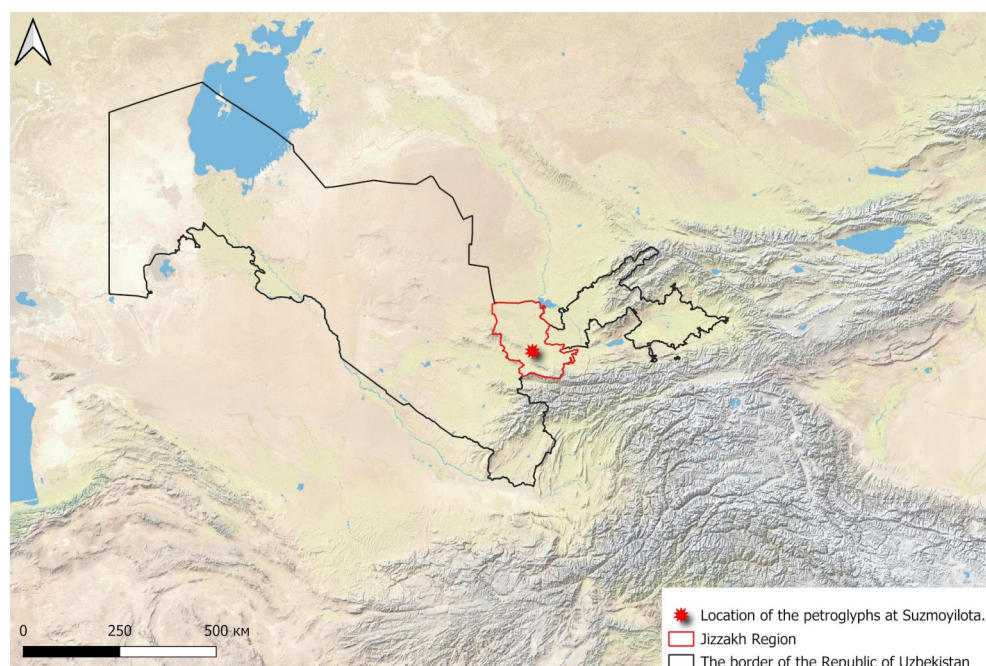


Figure 1. Map of Uzbekistan.



Figure 2. Images of a human figure and wagon wheels.

On the surface of stone No. Suz.2.8, a human figure is depicted standing with arms raised to both sides, accompanied by two wagon wheels. One wheel displays five connecting radial lines, while the other shows four such lines (interpreted as wheel spokes). On the lower outer part of the wheels, indistinct oblique lines are depicted, seemingly intended to represent elements of connection or attachment, though their exact meaning remains unclear. In addition, several indistinct motifs were pounded into the central area of the rock surface. The patination level of these images was classified as PL.1, and their manufacturing technique was identi-

fied as T.2 (Fig. 2).

At the Suzmoyilota site, rock No. Suz.3.32 measures 100 × 130 cm and is oriented southwards. The surface of this rock bears pounded petroglyphs (Fig. 3). Note the extensive evidence of compressive-tensile rock markings, especially near the panel's right margin (Bednarik 2023).

Particular attention is drawn to the wagon image located in the central upper part of the rock. However, certain differences in its overall appearance raise some doubts as to whether it represents a two-wheeled wagon. These uncertainties can be observed in the following features: on the left side, half of an arched cargo platform is depicted. From this, a long line (possibly representing a wooden shaft) extends toward the animal. The wheel is divided into four segments from its centre. A wagon-pulling animal is portrayed with an elongated body, an indistinct head, two legs, and a long, slightly curved tail, suggesting an unidentified animal. The surfaces of this animal and the adjacent animal figures



Figure 3. Human figure, 'mountain goats', animals 'pulling a wagon' (horses?), a 'dog', 27 circular cupules and several 'unfinished' motifs.

have darkened to the same degree as the rock surface (PL.1) and were pecked at an almost uniform depth in a relatively coarse manner. The traces of the tool used are clearly visible, indicating the use of technique T.1.

In contrast, on the right side of the wagon, half of the cargo platform and half of two lines extending toward the animals, apparently intended for harnessing (possibly wooden shafts), are depicted, along with a second wheel divided into four segments from its centre. This wheel is neither aligned nor parallel with the first one. The second 'animal' depicted as pulling the wagon, connected to the left-side wagon structure, does not resemble a clearly identifiable animal; its legs are not represented. The surface colouration of these figures differs from that of the rock, appearing in brownish or yellowish tones and standing out clearly (PL.3), indicating a lack of surface patination. The execution technique of these images is comparatively finer (T.2), and traces of abrasion (T.4) are visible on the wheel surface. This situation may suggest that these images were produced later than those on the left side, or that earlier motifs at this location were reworked or renewed. However, in most of the images on this side, remnants of ancient tool marks are not visible. Typically, when ancient images are reworked, at least some traces of earlier tool marks remain discernible. Such traces can be partially observed on the horns and bodies of the goat depicted on the left side, on the lower part of the body of the unidentified animal, and within the circular cupules on the right side. These features appear to have been reworked by later individuals, with older marks still visible beneath the newer ones. The colouration of the reworked areas is similar to that of the renewed images on the right side.

In the central area of the rock, below the wagon's cargo platform, a human figure is depicted in frontal view. The figure stands with legs placed shoulder-width apart, a broad and complete torso, a round head and arms raised above the head with fists overlapping. The surface of this figure has darkened to the same degree as the surrounding rock (PL.1), and the remaining traces of tool marks from pounding are relatively coarse, similar to the technique used for other images on the left side (T.1). These characteristics indicate that this figure was likely created during the Bronze Age.

Dating these wagon depictions presents certain challenges, as none of them represent all components of an actual wagon. Within Uzbekistan, two wagon images have also been documented at the Sarmishsoy site. However, these are depicted as four-wheeled wagons harnessed to horses and camels. Additionally, wagon depictions have been identified at the Zarabog' rock art site (Oynazarov 2024). In G'elonsoy, two-wheeled wagon images with cross-shaped spokes were recorded and dated to the Late Bronze Age (Oynazarov et al. 2025). Notably, among the wagon wheels identified at Suzmoyilotasoy, the presence of cross-shaped lines (spokes) is significant, as similar

features have been observed in wagon depictions from Qoraqiyasoy (Khujanazarov 1995). Furthermore, in eastern Kazakhstan, within the Moldajar area of the Tarbagatay Mountains, two wagon depictions harnessed to horses were recorded (Novozhenov 2024). These wagon wheels are represented with thin rods (spokes), while, in contrast, the human figure is depicted above the wagon body.

Similar wagon depictions can be observed at several other sites in Central Asia: Qoraqiyasoy in Uzbekistan (Khujanazarov 1990), Eshkiolmes in Kazakhstan (Novozhenov and Rogozhinskii 2019), Arpauzen (Rogozhinskii and Novozhenov 2018), Saymali-Tosh in Kyrgyzstan (Sher 1980), Kalbak-Tash in Altai (Kubarev and Matochkin 1992), Elangash Valley (Novozhenov 2012), and Siin-Churek in Tuva (Devlet 1982). At these sites, wagon images are depicted with two animals harnessed and feature two wheels. Importantly, the wheels are divided into four segments in a cross-shaped pattern (spokes). Scholars specialising in petroglyph studies have attributed these wagon depictions to the Bronze Age.

Initially, the earliest wagon depictions did not include thin rods (spokes) connecting the hub to the outer rim of the wheels. That is, the wheels were represented as solid without open spaces. Later, wagon images began to incorporate wheel spokes (Devlet 1982). The issue of dating wagon depictions based on the presence of wheel spokes remains a subject of scholarly discussion, with most researchers supporting their use as chronological indicators. It is suggested that wagons depicted in profile (side view) generally belong to the early Bronze Age, whereas wagon images rendered in plan view (from above) are typically associated with the late Bronze Age (Esin 2012). The wagon identified at Suzmoyilota is depicted in plan view, with wheels illustrated using thin rods (spokes), indicating that this image may have been created during the later phase of the Bronze Age.

The origin of two-animal-drawn wagons remains a subject of scholarly debate. Successive radiocarbon analyses have suggested connections to the Near East (Novozhenov and Rogozhinskii 2019). The invention of wheeled wagons and their use with horses, oxen and camels enabled ancient humans to travel over large distances. Horse-drawn wagons also served as a means of controlling large herds during seasonal grazing and migration to other areas. They played an important role in searching for fertile pastures and exploring steppe regions beyond military and religious functions (Novozhenov and Sydykov 2019). Hunters may also have used wagons for hunting purposes. During excavations of burial mounds in Taranovsk District, Kostanay Region, Kazakhstan, two horses buried parallel to each other were discovered. These paired horses were interpreted as having been intended for pulling wagons. Evidence also suggests the presence of religious practices associated with their use (Usmanova et al. 2019). Thus, it can be inferred that

horses were not only utilised for daily life in ancient societies but also played a role in the performance of religious rituals.

'Mountain goats' are pounded on both the left and right sides as well as the lower part of the wagon depiction. These goats are represented with one or two horns, some with long necks and others with short necks, two or four legs and short tails. According to the style of execution, they are depicted in shadowed and schematic styles. The patination level and manufacturing technique of the goats located on the left and lower parts of the wagon are nearly identical to those of the wagon itself, with PL.1 for patination and T.1 for technique. This indicates that these goats were pecked almost contemporaneously with the wagon depiction. The goats depicted on the right side of the wagon, however, show patination and execution characteristics similar to the renewed portions of the wagon, suggesting that they were carved later. These figures are classified as PL.3 for patination and T.2 for technique. Above the 'goats' on the left side of the wagon, a 'dog' is depicted. It has two ears, a long body, three legs and a curved tail. The depiction is executed in a shadow style using pounding. Its technique and patination closely resemble those of the wagon and 'mountain goats' on this rock.

To the right of the human figure depicted in the lower part of the wagon, there are three rows of circular depressions pounded into the rock surface. The first and third rows contain nine depressions each, while the second row contains ten, totalling 27 depressions. These motifs were retouched and are therefore classified with a patination level of PL.3 and a technique of T.6. It has been suggested that these cupules may have functioned as a calendar. A similar depiction has been documented at the Qoraqiyasoy site, where 40 depressions were recorded. A. N. Kholmatov associated this motif with religious rituals, interpreting it as a place designated for offerings. One reason for this interpretation is the presence of a 'goat' depicted nearby, apparently tied. A second reason is that even today, local inhabitants continue to perform offerings at this location, venerating it as an ancient sacred site (Kholmatov 2019). A comparable tradition can be observed at the Suzmoyilota site, where rituals are performed around two hearths located near the rock face. Fires are lit, offerings are made, wishes are expressed, and other ceremonial practices take place. This indicates that the rock has long functioned as a sacred site for veneration, and this tradition has been preserved to the present day (Khujanazarov and Kholmatov 2018).

At this sacred site that we studied, ancient hunters and herders conducted a variety of religious ceremonies. Similar depictions have been recorded in the Palomera cave at Alkesar (Lopez 2017), where such motifs are interpreted as having possibly served as barriers for controlling livestock. Additionally, similar cupule motifs have been found at the Betpakdala site in Kazakhstan, which is believed to have been a

location designated for ritual offerings (Bedelbayeva et al. 2023). Comparable circular cup-shaped depressions were also identified at the Sauskandiq site in Kazakhstan (Samashev et al. 2014) and have been attributed to the Bronze Age.

Conclusion

The wagon image identified in the Jizzakh region can likely be dated to the late Bronze Age. This is supported by the presence of cupule motifs on the same rock, which share similar patination and technique characteristics and are attributed to the Bronze Age. Moreover, the patination of other images on the rock, which belong to later periods, differs noticeably from that of the wagon depiction. Additionally, the presence of wheel spokes on the wagon and its analogies with other regional examples further support this dating. The discovery of a Bronze Age wagon depiction in this area provides evidence that ancient populations made use of wagons in their daily lives. These wagons may have served a variety of functions depending on their needs, including transportation, herding livestock, hunting, conducting religious ceremonies, military purposes and seasonal migration.

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RAR 43-1509

First radiocarbon date of rock art painting in the interior of the Atacama Desert. The case of Santa Bárbara 110 (Alto Loa, north of Chile)

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Abstract. We present the first radiocarbon date obtained from a polychrome anthropomorph, Santa Bárbara 110, in the upper Loa River basin in the interior of the Atacama Desert (northern Chile). Following in situ physicochemical analyses using portable X-ray fluorescence, the black paint sample was characterised in the laboratory using Raman spectroscopy and scanning electron microscopy with energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy. Our findings confirmed that charcoal was used as a colourant, thereby enabling direct radiocarbon dating of the pigment. We also briefly discuss the implications of this result for understanding the rock art of the Late Pre-Columbian period in the shared territory of the Atacama Desert and northwestern Argentina.

Introduction

Determining the chronological placement of rock art remains a primary challenge in its study. This issue has been addressed through a growing range of techniques, some of which now allow direct dating (Steelman and Rowe 2012; Bednarik 2025). In Chile and Argentina, however, only a limited number of direct dates have been obtained, mostly associated with coastal and terrestri-



Figure 1. Map of Santa Bárbara 110 in the Atacama Desert, north of Chile.



Figure 2. 2A: Panoramic view of panels with polychrome anthropomorphs; 2B: Panel III; 2C: Panels IV and V.

al hunter-gatherer groups (Romero Villanueva et al. 2025). As a result, the temporal framework for rock art in these regions relies heavily on relative chronologies. For example, manifestations dated between 1300 and 1500 CE correspond to the Late Intermediate (950–1450 CE) and Late periods, the latter associated with the Inca presence (1450–1550 CE). In the interior of the Atacama Desert and northwest Argentina, these anthropomorphic figures are frequently depicted frontally, wearing distinctive clothing, including quadrangular tunics with various decorations, shield-shaped garments, or feathered attire (*emplumados*). Some motifs also portray costumes interpreted as personifications of weapons or metal axes (Hernández Llosas 1983; Vilches and Uribe 1999; Aschero 2000; Berenguer 2004, 2009; López Montt and Pimentel 2009; Podestá et al. 2013; López Campeny and Martel 2014; Martel and Giraudo 2014; Rodríguez and Angiorama 2019; Cabello 2023; Romero Villanueva et al. 2025; among many others). As these motifs spread across distant locations, they have been considered emblems of local community identities, including those of caravanners, and as symbols of power as the Inca incorporated these territories into Tawantinsuyu. Our research examines several sites in these regions that share such representations. Here, we present the first radiocarbon date obtained from a painted anthropomorph at the Santa Bárbara 110 site in the upper Loa River basin, in the Atacama Desert, Chile.

Polychrome anthropomorph motifs at Santa Bárbara 110

This site is in the upper reaches of the Loa River, approximately 65 km from the present-day city of Calama, at an elevation of 3079 m above sea level (Fig. 1). In this area, the river canyon reaches a depth of 100 m. The painted panels are located on the upper part of the western bank.

Previous studies have defined the Santa Bárbara Style 2, attributed to the Late Intermediate and Late periods (Berenguer 2004). This style is characterised by anthropomorphic motifs painted on rectangular and shield-shaped tunics, using a broad colour palette of red, black, yellow and green (Berenguer 2004; Cases and Montt 2013; Cabello et al. 2022). Additionally, pathways and groups of small walled structures and offerings suggest that the painted rock art of Santa Bárbara is part of a caravan ritual, personifying individuals closely associated with the movement of camelids carrying goods (Berenguer 2004). The site's proximity to the Inca Road, or QhapaqÑan, also makes it a crucial hub in the Inca trade network (Berenguer et al. 2005). In summary, determining the chronology of the rock paintings at this site presents a significant challenge, as it is vital for understanding the interactions between local populations and the Inca in the region.

Methodology

Initial in situ measurements were conducted with a portable Olympus Vanta VMR X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectrometer, using three modes: 40 kV at 100 μ A, 10 kV at 200 μ A, and 50 kV at 80 μ A, with

each beam applied for 20 seconds. In the laboratory, further analysis was performed with a WITec Alpha 300 RA Raman spectrometer equipped with a 532 nm laser, calibrated on a silicon plate with a 50× objective, and with the silicon band maximum set to 520 cm^{-1} . Raman spectra, recorded with 32 accumulations per measurement, were collected from various sample areas and measured in triplicate. The resulting spectra were processed using Wire 3.4 and OriginLab Pro 2016 software. For microscopic and stratigraphic characterisation, a portion of the sample was embedded in resin and examined with a scanning electron microscope (SEM) coupled with energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDX), FEI Quanta FEG250 model. For radiocarbon dating, the black pigment sample was sent to the CIRAM Laboratory in France, and the resulting date was calibrated using OxCal v4.4.4 software (Bronk Ramsey 2021) and the SHCal20 calibration curve (Hogg et al. 2020). The analysed and dated figure corresponds to an anthropomorphous motif on panel V (Fig. 3).

Results

The black pigment showed greater variability in chemical elements, including iron, strontium, calcium, zirconium, arsenic, and copper (Fig. 4A), with strontium exceptionally high. The elemental composition closely resembles that found on rock surfaces. Notably, no chromophore element, such as manganese (Sepúlveda 2021), was identified as the source of the black colouration. Because this analytical method could not detect charcoal, micro-sampling was conducted.

In the laboratory, Raman spectroscopy subsequently confirmed the presence of charcoal, as indicated by characteristic bands at 1583 cm^{-1} and 1351 cm^{-1} (Fig. 4B). SEM-EDX analysis revealed three distinct layers: the first associated with the support, the second corresponding to the charcoal paint, and the third domi-



Figure 3. Anthropomorph with a microsample indicated with a black point.

nated by sulphur and calcium, identified as a surface patina (Fig. 4C). Organic material found between the support layers and the surface salt coating enabled direct radiocarbon dating of the painting by AMS. The resulting date, 738 ± 30 BP (CAMS 25838), calibrates to two possible ranges: 1270–1323 CE and 1350–1389 CE,

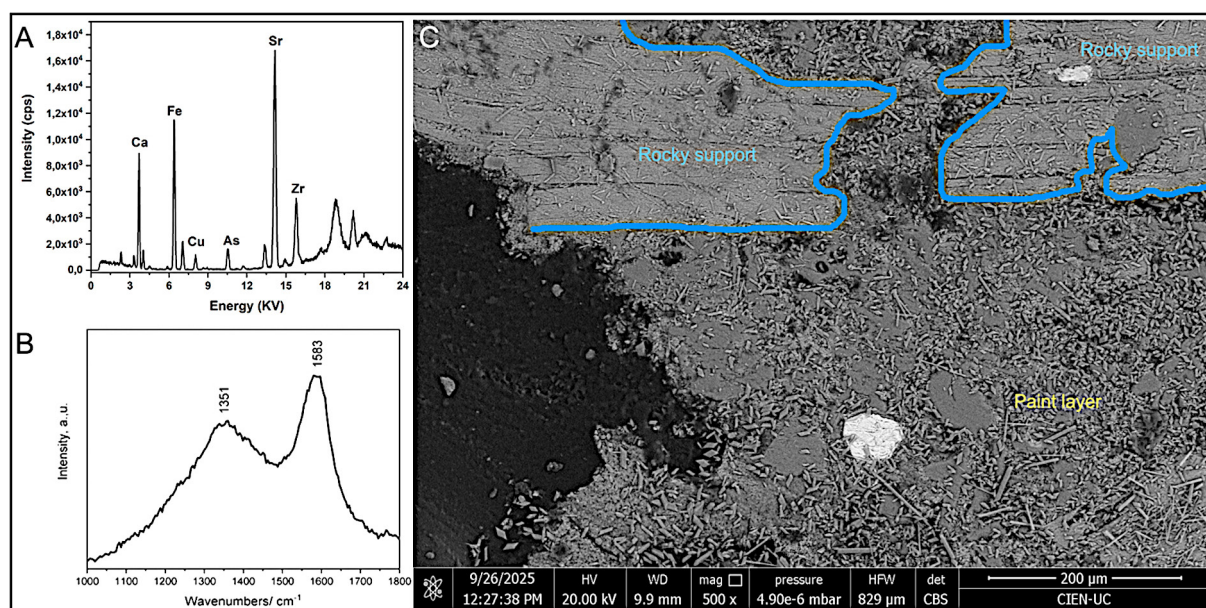


Figure 4. 4A: FRX spectra; 4B: Raman spectra; 4C: SEM-EDX image BSE mode.

both of which fall within the Late Intermediate period.

Conclusion

The radiocarbon date confirmed that this motif was painted during the Late Intermediate period (Berenguer 2004). It can then be associated with caravanners who must have possessed considerable power and recognition (Berenguer 2009). In material terms, representing themselves with such a wide palette of colours required managing different recipes and the knowledge to produce them, as well as obtaining the necessary materials (Sepúlveda 2021). The practice has been shown to have local roots among the communities of the Atacama Desert (Sepúlveda et al. 2023). Our project is ongoing, so new analyses and radiocarbon dates will be published in the future.

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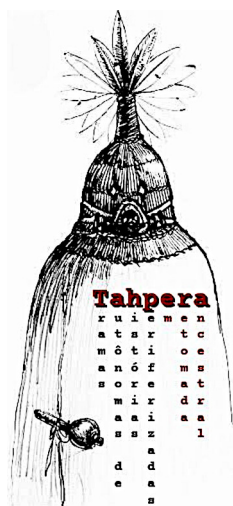
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ORIENTATION



The Tahpera Letter *An intercultural manifesto for the Indigenous and Indigenist retaking of Brazilian northeastern archaeologies*

'On top of fear, courage!'
(Chief Xicão Xukuru)

This letter is about retaking¹. It describes retaking, reclaiming, and resumption of deep and marginalised Indigenous histories, in light of ancestrally contemporary belonging, an idea partly inspired by the

Krenakian proposal of Ancestral Future (Krenak 2022), which defends, in a coarse interpretation of it, that ancestral, Indigenous, traditional, native ecological, spiritual and cosmopolitical knowledges are keys to possible sustainability and future existence facing the Anthropocene. If the future is ancestral, it becomes necessary to consider, reclaim and defend the autonomy of ancestry, culture, customs, ways of life, knowledge systems and Indigenous worldviews. Therefore, we align with the ideas of this Native contemporary thinker, considering that resumptions are grounded in historical, ethnographic, and spiritual elements that have ancient and uninterrupted roots in both the past and the present, projected onto the future.

By using the expression ancestrally contemporary, we convey that the processes discussed in this letter reflect political and cultural dynamics whose current expressions are inheritances of social reactions, critical thinking and political actions that hark back to historically situated anti-colonial resistance dynamics—that is, inherited and transformed from a past ancestrally experienced in the present. It is a political

and philosophical counter-proposal to the idea that Indigenous groups in Northeastern Brazil are ethnogenic reinventions more closely connected to the social and political dynamics of the backlands in the present historical period and the recent imperial and republican past than to long-term Indigenous histories before and after the European invasion. On the other hand, Ailton Krenak's idea of an Ancestral Future brings a convergent spark, in the sense of a subversion of the Western temporal logic with its linear succession of past-present-future, when the knowledge systems chained to the past in the logic of Capital (Indigenous/wild/primitive knowledges) are precisely those that present the most sophisticated solutions for the present-future of climate resilience and sustainability in the Anthropocene. That exemplifies the insurgent effectiveness of Indigenous epistemic temporalities in counteracting colonial time framing.

Therefore, to retake is not to prove ownership; it is not to empower; it is not to enterprise; it is not to appropriate; it is not to resignify or reinterpret; it is not to register as a heritage asset; it is not to invade, nor to be defined by colonial invasion; it is not resurgence, but it is insurgency. To retake is to resist; it is to refuse erasure and extermination; to retake is permanence; to retake is a way of continuing to live, in union, within, near, similar and different, traditional and creative. To retake the land, to retake the mountains; to retake the river; to retake the bodies; to retake memory, to retake knowledge; to retake historical narratives; to retake the paths; to retake the archaeological past in the ethnographic present, or simply put, to retake life and time. Retaking—an action always (in the) present, especially when retaking the future kidnapped in History.

Retaking articulations

Since the VII Meeting of the Brazilian Association of Rock Art (ABAR), held in the city of Diamantina-MG in 2018, particularly in the thematic session 'Indigenous Knowledge and Rock Art', research on this topic, within broader archaeological investigations,

¹ In the sense of reclaiming and reoccupying, taking direct action towards landback and cultural reactivation processes, as part of past and ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples in Brazil seeking their existential rights and reparative justice. We choose a direct translation of the Portuguese expression *retomada* (retaken), faithfully corresponding to the way the Brazilian Indigenous movement approaches it. It bears a similar sense to the English reclaiming or resumption of something back, but more specifically refers to the collective reoccupation of a stretch of land deemed ancestral and thus sacred, rather than only petitioning and waiting for the state to grant their constitutional territorial rights.

has been discussed, planned, practised and communicated more often alongside Indigenous experts, mainly from the Amazon, but also from the Brazilian Northeast and other regions. At that meeting, ABAR named the Indigenous intellectuals and leaders Poani Higino Tenório Tuyuka (in memoriam) and Jairo Saw Munduruku (speakers in the thematic session) as its honorary members. In practice, these two leaders were acknowledged as the first Indigenous researchers of rock art in Brazil, creating conditions to advance an inter-regional, critically intercultural and counter-colonial articulation on rock art studies and territorial wellbeing. This followed a larger, growing trend of intercultural and Indigenous research within Brazilian archaeology and social sciences that has been ongoing for the last two decades or so, catalysed by (but not dependent on) the increasing presence of students from Indigenous and traditional communities in Brazilian public universities in the past fifteen years, especially in anthropology and archaeology undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, interventions in events, publications, projects, and other knowledge-building strategies—with the fundamental participation and protagonism of Indigenous researchers and members of traditional communities—intensified markedly, becoming a decisive driver of transformations in Brazilian archaeological thinking and practices. Throughout this process, Indigenous peoples of Northeastern Brazil actively engaged and contributed to the diversification and deepening of these transformations. Thus, over the last eight years or so, we have observed a growing and consistent process of Indigenous and pro-Indigenous retaking of archaeology in Northeastern Brazil, supported by a similar prior process that has been underway in the Amazon and other parts of the country for some time.

In this context, interventions by Indigenous and pro-Indigenous delegations at various archaeological events in Brazil were of paramount importance. We will cite a few significant examples of this collaborative process from the last two years. In 2024, the ABAR Webinar 'Rock Art and Indigenous Cultural Rights', featuring Indigenous representatives from the North and Northeast regions, brought first-hand emphasis to archaeology as primarily a matter of Indigenous cultural rights in Brazil, and for the first time put forward the formulation towards Indigenous Archaeological Rights. In the aftermath, the VIII meeting of the Northeast Subsection of the Brazilian Archaeology Society (SAB-NE) in Delmiro Gouveia, Alagoas State, received an impressive contribution from Northeastern Indigenous peoples, marking a watershed moment in regional archaeology, where Indigenous anthropologist Cícero Jeripanko (in memoriam) delivered an overwhelming speech denouncing ongoing colonial practices in regional archaeology.

In 2025, the VIII ABAR Meeting in the Cariri region of Ceará State, held in June in the city of Nova Olinda,

hosted a thematic session and workshop focused on Indigenous participation, storytelling, denouncing and healing practices addressing past and present traumas, related to archaeological heritage management practices that disregard Indigenous cultural rights to that heritage (when the Tahpera articulation was officially born). Later came the I Symposium on Indigenous Archaeology at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) in Belo Horizonte, held in August, which was most dedicated to the presentation of academic works by Indigenous students in archaeology. Also in 2025, the Working Group on Cultural Heritage of Indigenous Peoples, organised by the National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) and divided into regional stages, afforded that agency, for the first time, a broad process of listening to the archaeological demands of various Indigenous peoples from the Northeast.

In these events, the eloquent presence of powerful delegations of Indigenous leaders and researchers from the Northeast region, deeply immersed in processes of retaking their territories and cultures, had a great impact on the respective audiences.

Through these diverse interventions and intercultural dialogues between Indigenous leaders and representatives of the following peoples: Kariri of Poço Dantas and Tremembé of Barra do Mundaú, in Ceará; Kapinawá, Xukuru, Pipipã and Pankararu Opará of Pernambuco; Otxukayana (Tapuias Tarairiú of the Paiacu ethnic group from Apodi, Caboré from Beira do Rio da Cobra do Seridó and others in an urban context), in Rio Grande do Norte; Jiripankó, Kraunã and Wassu Cocal of Alagoas; Tapuias of Bahia; Munduruku of Pará state and Tukano from Amazonas; together with pro-Indigenous archaeologists working in various regions of Brazil, these efforts led to the formation of a critical and counter-colonial political, intellectual, scientific, artistic, intercultural articulation called: *TAHPERA – Autonomous Weavings of Peripheralised Histories in Ancestral Retaking*².

The central objective of the Tahpera Network in all these opportunities for encounter and confluence, listening and deliberation, has been the reclaiming of the 'old house' (one of the possible meanings for the Tupian term *tahpera*) through the formation of alliances to promote, strengthen, and expand the reach of Indigenous voices, bodies, thoughts, and actions in the field of rock art studies and archaeology in Northeast Brazil. We have been problematising the invisibility, opacity, or even erasure of the rights of Indigenous peoples, as well as their knowledge about rock art and archaeological heritage in this country, recognising that these processes do not only affect Indigenous peoples.

In short, we are discussing the archaeological rights of non-Western peoples and societies, the right to have their own Archaeologies respected, as prac-

2 From the Portuguese, *Tramas Autônomas de Histórias Periferizadas em Retomada Ancestral* - (Tahpera).

tices and theories radically different from Western monoepistemic archaeology. It is therefore necessary to think from radical epistemological and political alterities, not only indigenous, but also *quilombolas* (descendant communities of runaway enslaved peoples), *caatingueiros* (traditional communities from the northeastern semiarid hinterland called caatinga—white/grey forests in Tupi), and other traditional peoples, that challenge the limits of what we could conceive as archaeology through an eurocentric lens. The Western perspective of rationality and knowledge, despite undeniable advances and contributions, has also historically proven detrimental to indigenous and traditional peoples, sometimes leading to absurd pseudoscientific claims that insist on reappearing in some contemporary discourses and practices, such as the eugenicist ‘scientific’ thought that conceives and objectifies human remnants (material and biological) and indigenous ancestries, using the racialised and anachronistic category of Paleo-Indian, reinforcing the idea of extermination, temporal annulment, and silencing of the ethnic and cultural resistances and continuities of these peoples to the present day.

We seek to articulate agendas in all possible aspects, available to the debate. Connecting dots, filling gaps and crossing the lines that divide Indigenous knowledges from the archaeology, ethnography and archaeometry of the material and immaterial realities of original and traditional peoples in the past, present and future. We have addressed the multiplicity of ethnic, ethical, and temporal perspectives, both in local and regional movements, as well as national and South American ones. The study, conservation, and management of the archaeological record need to intertwine with the processes of defending Indigenous and traditional rights, through the defence and protection of territories and landscapes that are utterly sacred and strategic for the knowledge and life of these societies, thus constituting a true Indigenist archaeology, in firm alliance with the archaeologies of these peoples.

It is important to emphasise that, in the context of the indigenous and indigenist retaken of archaeology in Northeast Brazil, the direct contributions of native and traditional peoples are the starting point and are fundamental to the development of the powerful dialogues and debates that have taken place in the interventions made at the aforementioned events and in the constant meetings for exchanging perspectives within the articulation that shapes this manifesto, as well as through the intercultural research and community-based projects conducted by various people involved in this articulation. Next, we will address the Temporal Framework thesis, which directly affects the backbone of our concerns: the archaeological rights of native peoples.

On the temporal framework

Despite the Supreme Federal Court (STF) again

declaring, on 19 December 2025, the unconstitutionality of the section of Law 14.701/2023 that sought to establish a temporal framework³ for the demarcation of indigenous lands, the anti-indigenous, agro-for-export logic that permeates the formation of power structures in Brazil is very much intact and overarching. We are still a society and state very far from a culture of respect for native peoples, as a macro-extractive, de-indigenising political, social and economic mentality operates hegemonically among us. Assimilationist and integrationist in the ethos of Brazilianness, this mentality historically rejected the differentiated right to collective indigenous possession of parts of Brazilian territory, considering it a factor that weakens national unity and security.

Showing off its alignment with this mentality by insisting on the temporal framework thesis (PEC 48 and Law 14.701 of 2023), the majority of the current National Congress reveals itself to be conservative, belligerent, seditious, and ‘terribly evangelical,’ driven by particular financial interests and with a strong rural agro-export foundation. In this sense, it endorses the mass extermination and systematic, centuries-old and continuous displacements imposed on the original peoples by the genocidal, ethnocidal and epistemicidal structuring of Brazil for 525 years. They seek to erase the complex and long native histories before colonisation and stifle the future of the Indigenous peoples, extinguishing their inherent right to the land, established by the constitutional recognition of the originality of their territorial occupation, before the Brazilian state. Despite having already been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Federal Court in 2023, the thesis was raised again by the National Congress through the aforementioned Law. The Supreme Court opened the door to a contradictory and fallacious conciliation between rural landgrabbers and Indigenous peoples, aimed at negotiating non-negotiable Indigenous rights enshrined in the Federal Constitution. Not only did both legislative houses approve the bill preceding the temporal framework, but the Federal Senate also approved Constitutional Amendment Proposal 48, altering the pro-indigenous Article 231 of the Federal Constitution to include it in the Constitutional Text. The attacks on Indigenous land rights have been numerous and reiterated.

If the right to land is equivalent to the right to life, and to Indigenous memories and histories, it is imperative that Brazilian archaeology deepen its self-critical analysis as a legitimising force in the formation of a nation-state with a hegemonic de-indigenising Eurocentric historical-cultural and political heritage, and consolidate itself as an ecosystem of resistance and confrontation against these repeated

3 ‘The Temporal Framework thesis establishes that the right to the demarcation of Indigenous Lands in Brazil is restricted to the peoples who occupied the claimed lands or were physically disputing them on the date of the promulgation of the current Federal Constitution, 5 October 1988.’

neocolonial processes of erasure, epistemicide and genocide. Indigenist and Indigenous archaeologies are, at the very least, tools to support and fight for, and together with, original peoples who, among other things, demonstrate their presence in various territories in the country, long before the European invasion. Issues such as the temporal framework thesis and the political articulation that formed in its defence and attempt to enforce it should become a central topic of the themes reflectively addressed by archaeology in present-day Brazil because, among other things, the demarcation of Indigenous lands guarantees the preservation of archaeological sites, sacred landscapes and relevant areas of complex socio-biodiversity. On the other hand, it is necessary to consolidate the recognition of archaeological and rock art elements in living articulation with indigenous knowledge as supporting foundations for demarcation processes (e.g. Heckenberger 2004).

In this manifesto of retaken, we understand that the political and institutional conditions that fostered Constitutional Amendment Proposal 48 and Law 14.701 of 2023 are one of the greatest threats to Indigenous peoples in contemporary Brazil and, consequently, to indigenous and indigenist archaeologies, carrying transversal implications to the intertwined aspects that we will address below and that triangulate the navigability of the other ongoing discussions and actions.

The archaeological denial of contemporary Indigenous belonging and its epistemic contradiction

Archaeology, as historically practised in the oldest Euro-colonised regions of Brazil, such as the Northeast, has been acting up to a few years ago, mostly as an instance of denying the claims of ancestrally contemporary belonging of indigenous people to archaeological heritage. This process opened theoretical, ethical and political wounds that have not healed and remain open to this day.

Indigenous peoples such as the Kapinawá (PE), Otxukayana – Tapuias Tarairiú (RN), and Xakriabá (MG) see their claims of ancestral connection to archaeological heritage and sacred landscapes related to these contexts relativised or questioned by Western scientific knowledge. The central argument for this violation is that a supposed radical historical discontinuity, caused by the genocidal process of colonisation, miscegenation and geographical displacement, would have broken any direct link between contemporary Indigenous populations and the producers of pre-colonial material culture. In this view, the belonging claimed by Indigenous peoples between them and archaeological remains is reduced to a subjective and contemporary ‘reinterpretation’ of the past, affectively and emotionally valid but historically unfounded and not recognised as evidence of cultural continuity or connection, which historically has weakened the legal validity of many of these claims, as interpreted by the national state and justice system.

Interestingly, this same Western archaeology recognises, in its theoretical and methodological practice, a structural limitation: it is notoriously incapable of attributing, with certainty and accuracy, specific ethno-linguistic authorship to most archaeological remains produced by contexts situated beyond the reach of ethnography and ethnohistory. Thus, archaeology identifies ‘traditions,’ ‘styles’ and ‘phases,’ or ‘techno-complexes,’ but, in the vast majority of cases—especially the further back in time one goes—it cannot determine which ethnic group produced a particular ceramic or painting. That happens because the tools of this archaeology are insufficient to interpret the causal relationship between stylistic or technological patterns and a particular ethnic identity, since the production of material patterns can reflect a myriad of multiple factors and variables such as gender, age, status, knowledge or exchange, interacting in complex ways, not simply and directly designating only ethnic affiliation.

A glaring epistemological contradiction then arises: how can a discipline that claims not to know who did something claim the right to assert, with apparent certainty, who did not? The negationist assertion, which delegitimises claims based on oral tradition, social memory and ethnohistorical narratives, lacks the same empirical foundation that prevents it from making a positive identification. This stance is not merely a logical problem, as it results in a process of ethnopositional invisibility and archaeological de-indigenisation. It ends up acting as a mechanism of double erasure: first, it cuts the roots of the present in the remote past; then, it prunes the branches of continuity in the colonial period (arguing, for example, that the Barbarian Wars⁴, in the 17th and 18th centuries, interrupted cultural transmission in its totality and profound dynamics).

This archaeology, with such a denialist inclination, dissonant and detached from the lived reality in the territories, also violates the matrilineal continuity of indigenous cultures. The ‘Caboclas Brabas’ (resistant, out-of-colonial-law, indigenous women), violently ‘caught under horse hooves and by dog teeth’, great warriors of the indigenous resistance in the Caatinga (semiarid shrub forests), should not be remembered

⁴ Settled between 1650 and 1720, the War of the Barbarians was a massive systematic genocide imposed by Portuguese and Neo-Brazilian settlers, aided by coastal Tupian native troops, against the indigenous peoples of the northeastern hinterlands of Brazil, from Bahia to Maranhão states, by then hereditary captaincies. Those backlands Indigenous groups, from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds, were generally called by the colonisers, after a Tupi designation, as the Tapuias. This expression was reproduced by chroniclers of the period and reinforced by official historiography, resulting in a reductionist dichotomisation between Tupian language groups living on the coast (firstly contacted by Europeans) and the Tapuias (non-Tupian) language groups living in the hinterlands; reputedly, with ferocious and historical enmity between them.

in a reductionist way, merely as biological matrices forced to populate the backlands. They are the mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers and great-great-grandmothers of the indigenous retaking process in the Northeast. Their bloodlines are alive inside and outside the territories, in the cities and the countryside. The Caboclas Brabas are, therefore, living indigenous resistance, often silent, but always striking in customs, in the knowledge, in the ways they relate to the grey forests, in the strong tobacco pipe, in the medical science of the mountains and valleys, in the work of midwives, healers, herbalists, potters, in strength, in struggle, in blood, in spirituality, and, above all, in their capacity for social and political organisation. It is no coincidence that important indigenous land reclaims and reoccupations in the states of Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará, and Alagoas are also led by women, as is the case in Apodi, Seridó, Jaguaribe and Cariri Indigenous resistance movements.

One of the pillars of this denialism is the premise of an insurmountable temporal gap, bearing its apex of rupture in the European invasion and colonisation, but which is also conceived as a form of natural, or naturalised process, grounded on a shallow transference of the evolutionary principle of change over time to the relationship between culture and History—the idea of a uniform and gradual process of cultural change in time scale. It is, thus, assumed that hundreds or thousands of years of discontinuous material records necessarily imply ethnic discontinuity and identity rupture. This premise stems from a simplistic and essentialist view of culture, which ignores the dynamic, symbolic and political nature of ethnogenesis. An ethnic identity is an emic and etic phenomenon; internal and external. It is a continuous process of self-attribution and social recognition, whose symbolic contents (such as a spiritual association with a place of ancestral paintings) can persist and be reinstated by generations without leaving any unequivocal material trace.

Archaeology, by privileging material remains as valid evidence and disregarding, or relativising, the historical agency of indigenous peoples in maintaining their ethos, commits a serious reductionism. Therefore, the denialist stance long adopted and still felt in part of Brazilian archaeology regarding ancestrally contemporary Indigenous belonging reveals itself as a fragile edifice. It is built upon the paradox of denying with apparent certainty what it cannot rigorously affirm, and upon the fallacy of imposing a model of cultural change that ignores the resilience and internal transformation dynamics of identitarian processes. In doing so, it transcends its epistemic competence and assumes the role of judge of others' historicity. The difficulty of truly respecting and supporting the connection claimed by Indigenous peoples, in the absence of a concrete capacity to prove otherwise, is not scientific neutrality. It is, rather, the perpetuation of a colonial epistemic violence that insists on confining Indigenous peoples to a present without a profound

past, robbing them, once again, of the authorship of their own histories.

Therefore, to recognise that Western archaeology in Brazil is not capable, at *prima facie*, of identifying specific ethno-linguistic identities in pre-colonial vestigial material culture without the support of indigenous knowledge, ethnography, and ethnohistory, constitutes a minimal act of reparative archaeological justice. At best, starting only from material culture, it can make hypothetical approximations, which, in isolation, cannot have legal validity to delegitimise claims of ancestrally contemporary indigenous belonging in relation to archaeological heritage. Archaeological hypotheses cannot turn into parameters for the removal of Native peoples' rights, period. Recognising that, in most cases, Western archaeologists do not know the language and culture of those who made the paintings or ceramics, constitutes basic intellectual honesty.

Prior, free and informed consultation with Indigenous peoples regarding interventions in archaeological sites, sacred landscapes and Indigenous territories

One of the main international treaties safeguarding the rights of indigenous peoples and traditional populations is Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), linked to the United Nations (UN). Brazil has ratified this fundamental framework for guaranteeing human, indigenous and socio-environmental rights. Among other essential rights related to the original presence in the territories, it determines, in Article 6, the need for prior, free and informed consultation with indigenous peoples and traditional communities, given the possibility of deleterious impacts on their ways of life and cultural landscapes caused by development works and projects. ILO Convention 169 has the force of law in Brazil and the status of a constitutional norm, as determined by Article 5, § 2 of the Federal Constitution. Thus, according to the hierarchical principle of norms, all ordinary and supplementary laws must be in accordance with ILO Convention 169, which then assumes constitutional content with immediate effect.

The content of Convention 169 is significant and carries multiple implications. Given that the vast majority of archaeological heritage in Brazil is directly and indirectly linked to deeply continuing Indigenous Histories, it is urgent to recognise the principle of ancestrally contemporary belonging and the profound, uninterrupted, complex and inseparable relationships between native peoples and archaeological sites, while respecting the autonomy and constitutional right to self-determination of Indigenous peoples, including their archaeological territories. In short, Indigenous peoples and traditional communities need and deserve acknowledgement as subjects of differentiated archaeological rights.

We understand that representative organisations of regional networks of indigenous peoples and tradi-

tional communities should be consulted, particularly in the absence of specific ethnic groups claiming territorial and/or cultural rights in areas where academic or contract archaeology projects are foreseen to occur. The central point is that it is necessary to create and legally implement a culture of archaeological respect for Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, materialised, among other things, in an effective culture of prior consultation with these peoples as a mandatory practice for archaeological research on native peoples' historical and cultural heritage. Furthermore, we emphasise the importance of an active role for the National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) in the process of prior, free and informed consultation, established as a precondition to the issuance of authorisation decrees for archaeological research. This provision, however, was not included in the IPHAN Normative Instruction No. 6 of 2025, and we believe it is a fundamental disposition for the institution to guarantee the constitutional rights of Indigenous peoples in their archaeological dimension. It is necessary to reinforce the consultation and participation of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities within the archaeological component of Environmental Licensing, considering that this process has currently been weakened by Bill 2.159/2021 (the Devastation Bill). Furthermore, archaeological methods are limited, and if considered in isolation, can lead to the erasure of intangible relationships of belonging between ancestrally contemporary Indigenous knowledge and archaeological heritage. A simple prior and informed consultation can lead to the identification of sacred/strategic places and archaeological sites in the DAA (Directly Affected Area) and ADI (Area of Direct Influence) of projects, in anticipation of any archaeological prospecting.

In summary, we reinforce the need for prior, free and informed consultation with indigenous peoples and traditional communities, and the explicit consent of the peoples and communities consulted, within their own terms and respecting their consultation protocols, as a fundamental precondition for planning irreversible interventions in archaeological sites, sacred landscapes and indigenous territories that have cultural, historical, symbolic and spiritual value for these communities and peoples. In such cases, indigenous, quilombola and traditional communities must exercise their self-determination and autonomy, elaborating their protocols for prior consultation and collaborative territorial protection, based on their interests and perspectives. These juridical artefacts are becoming major tools to instruct how non-communitarian researchers would best proceed.

Shared, intercultural and sensitive management of archaeological sites/sacred places/significant places/strategic places

Archaeological sites and indigenous sacred/strategic places, in areas undergoing processes of terri-

torial and cultural reclamation by these peoples and traditional communities, or in territories not directly claimed but considered of spiritual, historical and memorial importance, should be treated as part of the ancestrally contemporary record of strategic and significant places of knowledge for these peoples and communities, inserted in their current processes of continued resistance and within the sphere of their ethnopolitical, cosmopolitical, cultural and territorial rights.

Every pre-colonial and colonial Indigenous archaeological site is an ancestrally contemporary sacred place. A lithic workshop is sacred; it is a strategic place because it contains indigenous knowledge and human and non-human agencies ecologically and spiritually articulated across multiple temporalities. The management of archaeological sites and sacred places, in these contexts, must necessarily be shared with Indigenous peoples and traditional communities. The ritual, metaphysical, sacred, spiritual, mytho-historical and symbolic dimensions of these places need consideration. Ancestrally contemporary indigenous peoples cannot be separated from the management process of their sacred, significant and strategic places, even when outside demarcated Indigenous lands or in the process of demarcation. The conservation, management, and care for the well-being of archaeological sites must urgently include Indigenous knowledge in the development of public policies for the shared, intercultural critical, and counter-colonial governance of these sacred landscapes.

In this process, several demands from the indigenous peoples of Northeast Brazil are of particular importance. We cite, for example, some significant cases: the Kariri people, from the community of Poço Dantas, Nova Olinda-CE, who claim culturally contextualised access to the rock art sites of the Araripe National Forest and its surroundings, for the purpose of carrying out their ritual practices; the Kapinawá people, who claim the right to culturally sensitive access to the rock art sites of the Catimbau National Park-PE, overlapping with their territory, also for the purpose of carrying out their ecological-ritual practices; the Tremembé people of Barra do Mundaú-CE, fighting to protect and manage their archaeological collection within their own community, given the state's inefficiency in curbing and punishing pseudoscientists who loot sites located in indigenous territory; the Anacé people of the Paranamirim Village, in Caucaia-CE, in the affirmation and reclaiming of their sacred places and means of existence taken over by large landholdings; the Tapuia Paiacu people of the Sertão do Jaguaribe-CE/Apodi-RN, for the right to memory, truth, justice and historical reparation regarding sacred and sensitive places, material objects, ancestral heritage, and resistance in the face of the massacres suffered during the infamous 'War of the Barbarians', perpetrated by the perverse colonial structure, reiterated to this day in the land tenure sys-

tem of the region; the Otxukayana (Tapuia Tarairiú) people of Seridó-RN, in their fight against racism, for the return of their material culture that is outside their territory, and their struggle against large renewable energy projects, photovoltaic and wind power, which cause great destruction and threaten the preservation of sacred landscapes and sites with rock art, dwellings and burial places endowed with spiritual significance in their territory, overlaid by the Seridó Geopark, which has not been sufficient to safeguard their cultural and historical landscapes.

The indigenous claims for the resumption of traditional uses of archaeological sites, sacred landscapes, and indigenous territories mentioned in the previous paragraph refer to non-invasive indigenous actions on the materiality of rock paintings and engravings, as well as on other types of reclaimed archaeological sites, such as ceramic and funerary sites. However, even when Western archaeology and conservation science understand that ancestrally contemporary indigenous practices, depending on their nature, may impact the conservation of archaeological remains and places, instead of adopting a prohibitive attitude, dialogue for intercultural management, sensitive and respectful listening, with a binding effect on decision-making, should never cease.

Action plan

Our actions are organised into a five-axis plan to persuade the State to recognise and implement Indigenous archaeological rights in Brazil. These axes are: 1. Consultations; 2. Resumptions; 3. Projects; 4. Theory-building; 5. Political and legal consequences. These are detailed below:

1. Consultations: expansion and deepening of regional consultative processes with Indigenous peoples regarding their archaeological demands and initiatives.
2. Resumptions: support for further Indigenous archaeological retaking/reclaiming processes in self-determined and culturally specific ways.
3. Projects: establishment of intercultural projects focused on developing Indigenous archaeological research and on shared management of cultural heritage across multiple territories and with multiple peoples.
4. Indigenous and intercultural theoretical construction: investment in collaborative thinking and writing about the results of these concrete experiences, with the aim of elaborating and publishing relevant literature.
5. Political and legal consequences: strengthening and improving social and political pressure on the federal heritage agency and other federal parliamentary, executive, and judicial bodies to create or improve laws and mechanisms that protect, recognise, and promote Indigenous control and self-determination over research and management of Indigenous archaeological heritage in Brazil.

Finally, although we recognise that most contemporary Brazilian archaeology aligns with many of the positions advocated here, some experiences persist in disagreeing with these principles. Therefore, we express our fierce opposition to these anachronistic archaeological practices and ideas, as well as to superficial, extractive and opportunistic approaches to Indigenous peoples and Traditional communities, which we could call pseudo-indigenist 'alliances'.

This letter is a preliminary synthesis of the discussions, which does not exhaust the wealth of critical themes addressed in the various opportunities developed over the last eight years. It is the result of a permanent process of collective retaking built from careful listening, conversations and deliberations among leaders, intellectuals, artists, researchers, archaeologists and anthropologists from various Indigenous peoples and non-indigenous archaeologists, anthropologists and researchers working in various parts of Brazil, coherently reflecting, albeit with noise and imperfections, the principles advocated here. *The territories are alive! The Maracá will awaken the sleeping ones!* We are the Tahpera Articulation, and this is the first of our manifestos.

The Tahpera Articulation 31 December 2025



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THIS MANIFESTO IS ENDORSED BY:

**The following
signatory
organisations
endorse this
Manifesto:**

