

Recent advances and issues in Taiwan Indigenous Archaeology

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Recent advances and issues in Taiwan Indigenous Archaeology

Archaeological sites dated to proto-historic period such as former indigenous villages attest to the continuation of indigenous communities. Their formation and evolution were often affected by colonial wars or relocation policies under state control and management.

These villages, often involuntarily abandoned, bear powerful testimonies to the generational inheritance, cultural sustainability, and living domains and resources of the indigenous peoples of Taiwan.

Abandoned Chana'abus Village of Paiwan People (Taiwan)

The 1953 recollection policy demanded the Paiwan people in Chana'abus village to leave their ancestral home and build a new village in the plain area.



Photo of the Cikusawan Incident (Taiwan).

In 1907, the Ami Cikasuan community was at war with the Japanese army. Their village was burned after they were defeated in battle. They were forced to leave their traditional ancestral lands and homes, to finally resettle in the Huadong Rift Valley.



Indigenous Archaeology and Indigenous Cultural Heritage Sustainability

A wave of self-reflection on its own value and multiple-pronged development could be observed in Taiwan archaeology in recent years. This was partially initiated by the challenges stemming from indigenous peoples' claim of rights involving ownership of sacred relics, repatriation and reburial of human remains, redressing colonial conflicts, historical justice, traditional territory and land, cultural heritage and intellectual property, recognition of long-standing existence and identity.

In this context, the discipline also began to re-examine the colonial legacy imbedded in its theories and practices and embarked on indigenous archaeology and community action plans, focusing less on “pure scientific research” and more on repairing relationship, seeking consultation, and fostering collaboration on a more equal footing with the indigenous peoples. These endeavors meant to break down the power barriers caused by status and knowledge gaps and to work collaboratively to honor the indigenous cultural heritage and its contemporaneity and sustainability.

In recent years, the Kavalan people has returned to their ancestral home on Lanyan Plain and attempted to revitalize their culture, foster group solidarity, and demand recognition of their long-existence and indigenous identity as well as rights to the traditional territory and sacred cultural heritage.



Consultation between NCKU archaeological team and the members of the Taroko community (Yakan branch) to present the potential significance and value of the Ciyakang site (2020.1.21, Ciyakang Tribal Community Development Association, Taiwan)



Kaviyangan group of the Paiwan people voluntarily holding an event marking their return to the old settlement of Jiaping (2020.11.28, Jiaping site, Taiwan)

In Taiwan, recent archaeological news and events often involve indigenous rights to their cultural heritage.

the ownership of the pillars of ancestral spirits from the village chief's traditional house in Kaviyangan of Paiwan people, collaboration on the reparation of sacred ancient pottery and houses of Paiwan villages,

repatriation and reburial of ancestral remains back to Bahuan of Bunun people, investigations in collaboration with the indigenous people in the former Bunun villages in the Lakulaku river basin,

- land rights in the traditional territory of the Truku people, competition and cooperation in the management of cultural heritage at the Ciyakang archaeological site,

- conflicting claim on heritage involving the subjectivity and interpretation of sacred and taboo space in the Cepo' battle between different Amis villages,

- ownership of archaeological objects from former villages and recognition of indigenous identity of the Siraya people.



Photo <https://udn.com/news/story/7314/2546232>

Archaeological Project with the Indigenous communities of Ciyakang

Issues in Archaeological Site Preservation and Indigenous Land Rights

Ciyakang site(4000-2000B.P.)



Archaeological research work at the Ciyakang site (2020-2022) - Excavated jade materials to produce jade artefacts using sawing and cutting techniques.

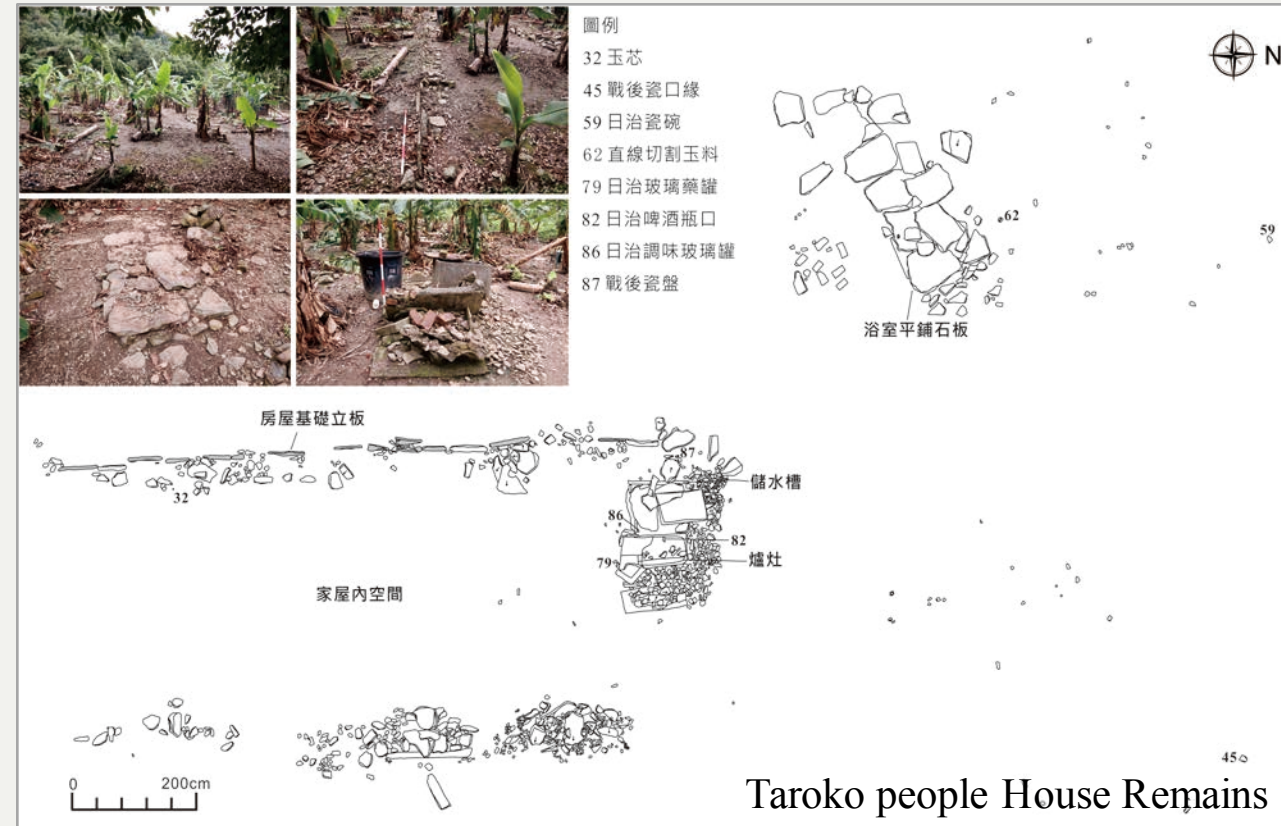


Takaday- Taroko traditional land

- 1934: Japanese colonial government moved the Taroko people to the current village of Ciyakang pretexting an improvement of their living environment.
- Taroko people continued farming and hunting in the mountains and forests



Artefacts and archaeological remains from Taroko people living in Takaday (Ciyakang site) from 1914 to 1934.



Why a Taiwanese Indigenous community, such as the Yagan group of the Taroko people, feel that they are not closely related to the Ciyakang site? Why did they not take the initiative to claim the ownership of the cultural heritage of the site?



Ciyakang Initiative

- Meetings on the evaluation of the Cultural Heritage of Ciyakang Archaeological Sites (2020 to 2022)
- Principles of partnership, equality and reciprocity, openness and transparency of information, and protection of land rights of landlords
 - promote the practice of public archaeology on the field of Ciyakang
 - transfer archaeological expertise into the daily life of the communities
 - try to understand the long-term history and cultural diversity of various ethnic groups in the area
 - deepen both the understanding and the recognition of the Ciyakang site by the Indigenous community itself
 - train some members of the Ciyakan peoples with archaeological skills
 - promote the long-term management and preservation of the Ciyakan site
 - and enhance the cultural and economic sustainability of the Indigenous community



An archaeological project with the Indigenous communities of Ciyakang

Hoping to rebalance the power relationship between archaeology and indigenous peoples

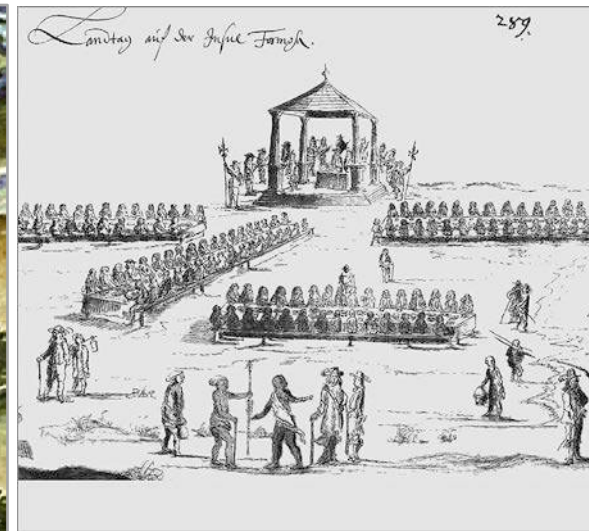
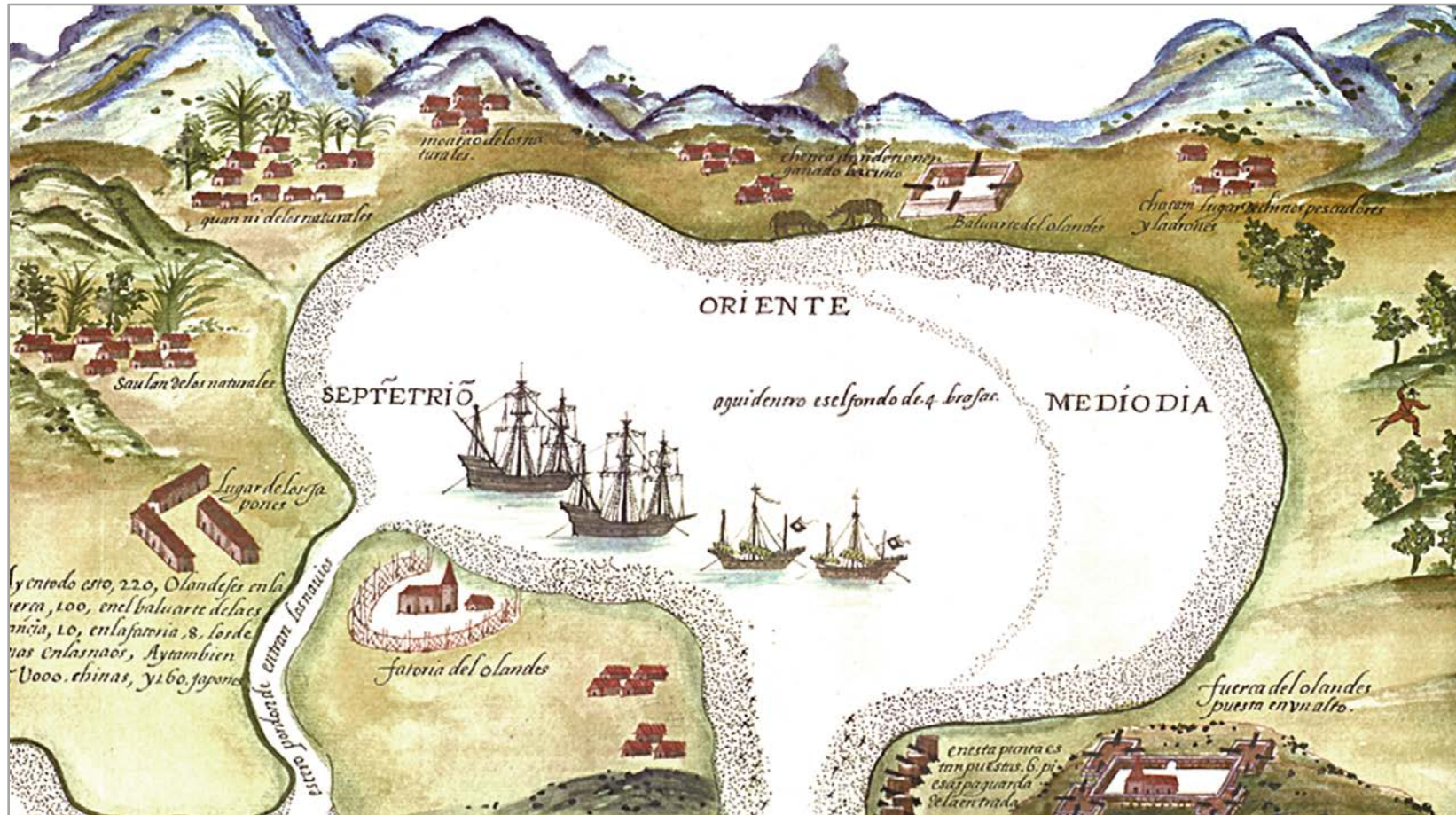
- seeking to hear **multiple voices**
- establish reciprocity and cooperation with indigenous peoples aiming to **give back power and control** over the historical narratives and over the land;
- jointly discuss the **value of cultural heritage in term of sustainability**;
- avoiding archaeology being a vassal of colonial and capitalist policies as it used to be, even though we are aware that the very nature of archaeology as it exists today is **still largely extractivist in nature**;
- promoting the **rights** of contemporary Indigenous peoples over the **land and over traditional areas**.

Public archaeology at the Ciyakang site (2022-2023)



The Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Action

Issues of legality of identity and ownership
of the heritage of abandoned villages



The Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Action

Archaeology has helped the marginalized indigenous communities to claim political rights since 1980, such as ownership to land and sacred heritage and legal rights as indigenous communities.

The Siraya people long resided in Tainan. They have borne the brunt of colonial power upheavals since the 17th century.



The Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Action

Archaeologists and the Siraya people have collaborated on the Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Action. It is aimed at repairing and re-balancing the relations between archaeologists and indigenous people, examining and modifying archaeological practices as a pure western science, promoting multi-vocality and diversity, encouraging journeys back to ancestral home, and revitalizing the Siraya age and assembly hall system.

The initiative advocates for recognition of Siraya as an indigenous group, their rights to the social domain in the traditional territory, and the ownership of archaeological and ancestral remains and relics. We have worked collaboratively to promote cultural heritage and sustainability.

Photos: The Siraya indigenous council discussed an MOU with the Tainan Branch of National Museum of Prehistory on the ancestral relics found in the Tainan Science Park. The collaboration would focus on revitalizing the traditional material culture and advocating for the subjectivity of the Siraya people as a long-existing indigenous group.



The Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Action

Siraya peoples

+

archaeologist

Sea Ceremony + Night Ceremony



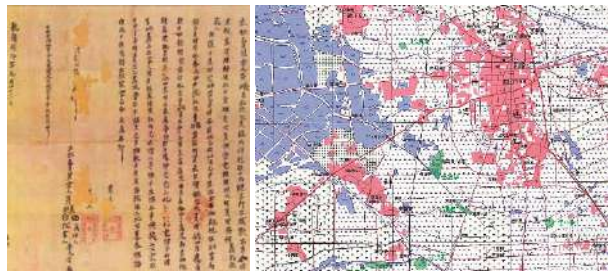
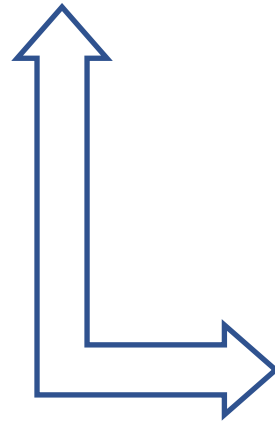
Siraya Indigenous
Archaeological Action

Ethnological field work

- Land contracts and archives
- Household registration records

Archaeological field work

- Surface investigation
- Drilling
- Text excavations

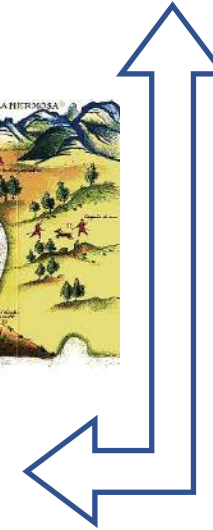


Back to Soulangh



Siraya 2024
Siraya age system
Siraya council
Indigenous identity
Declaration on
traditional territory

Documentaries
Special exhibitions
Publications



Siraya subjectivity

Siraya as a continuous and long-existing group

Siraya traditional territory in Soulangh

Repatriation and reburials of relics and remains

Ownership of cultural heritage and knowledge of Soulangh

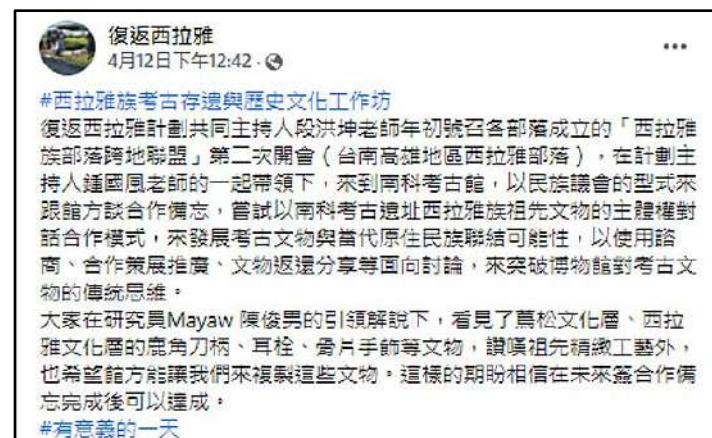
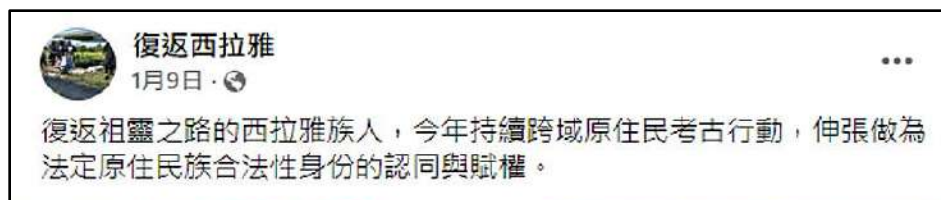
Rights to manage Soulangh site

The Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Action

Rebuilding Social Systems

Encouraging the Siraya people to return to their ancestral land in Soulangh and to get in touch with their heritage by investigating and excavating former settlements. Training was provided and steps taken to re-establish the age hierarchy and indigenous council as means to foster group identity and social-cultural systems.

- Age hierarchy
- An indigenous council
- Consultation and consents
- Participation and collaboration
- Information transparency



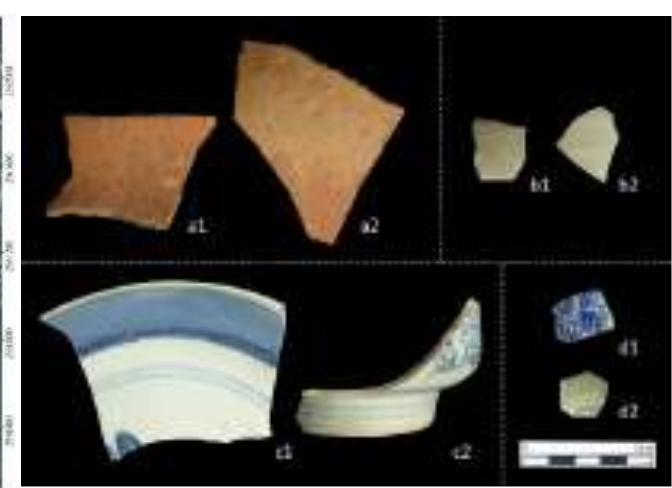
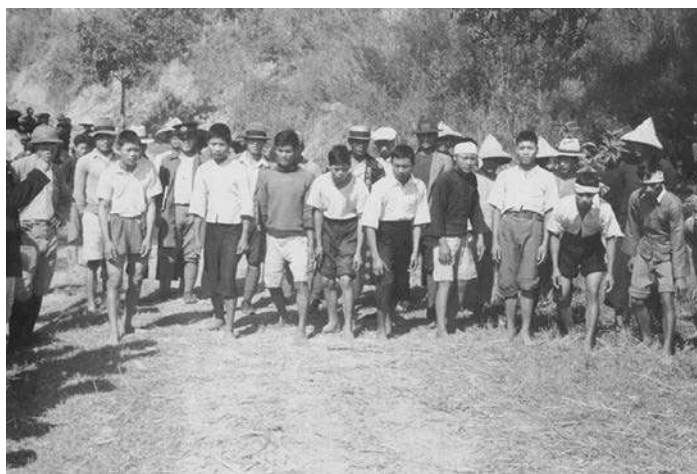
Multi- vocality + diverse methods

Historical
documents

Ethnography

Oral history

Archaeological
field work





Back to the former village where ancestors first landed and settled



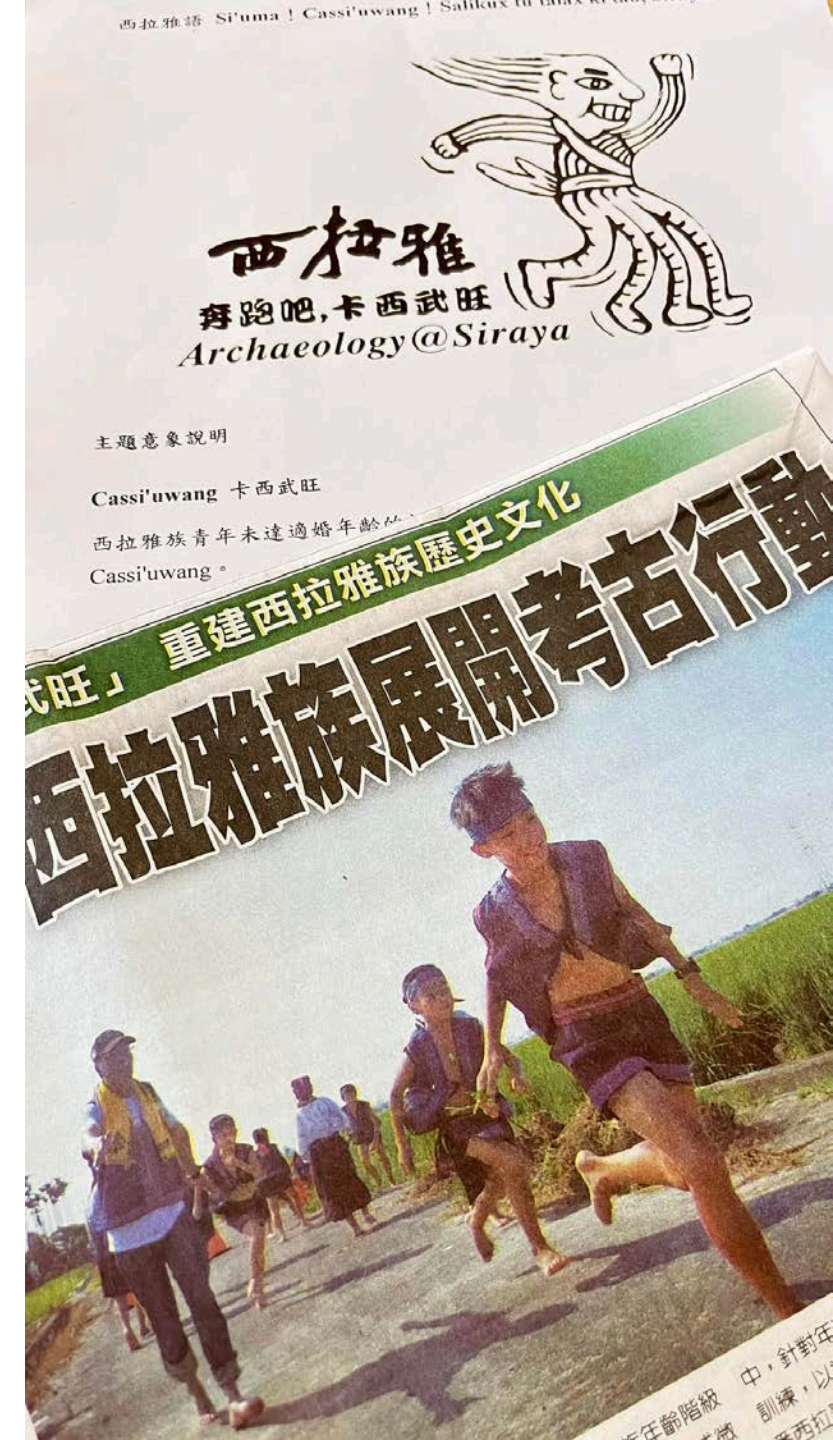


archaeology at the trowel's edge
Ancestral relics
Contact with past
Meanings
Rights
Sustainability



The Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Action

- Archaeologists and the Siraya people have worked together on the Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Action to repair and re-balance relations, examine and modify archaeological practices as a pure western science, and promote multivocality and a dynamic methodology.
- We have collaborated on an archaeological action that encourages journeys back to the former settlement and revitalizes their age and assembly hall system.
- We have advocated for the Siraya's indigenous identity and rights to former settlements, traditional territory, archaeological relics, and ancestral remains and discussed the contemporaneity and sustainable value of their ancestral cultural heritage.



The Ciyakan and Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Project

Conclusion

1. Gradual application of indigenous archaeology in Taiwan

2. Re-adjustment of methods and attitude in the discipline

- Seeking consultation and consents
- Information transparency
- Equality, reciprocity, and collaboration
- Multi-vocality and diverse methods
- More time for work, less on immediate results

3. Practices of indigenous archaeology - a focus on indigenous rights and priority

- Land and traditional territory
- Repatriation and reburials (artifacts and remains)
- De-colonization and recognition of indigenous identity
- Tangible and intangible cultural assets



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