

Returning to Ancestral Pathways : the Siraya People

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Indigenous Archaeology with Siraya Community

The Siraya people long resided in Tainan. They have borne the brunt of colonial power upheavals since the 17th century. The recent movement of Siraya Indigenous Archaeological Action is aimed at 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.

Dynamic Archaeological Field Work

The field work involved collaboration and consultation with the Siraya people, collection of historical records and oral tradition ethnography, systematic survey and drilling, and test-excavations. The Siraya people were able to handle shell midden, bronze bells, beads of glass and fish bone, and shell-imprinted pottery. The contact with ancestral relics often triggered waves of nostalgia.

Re - establishing Social Systems

The root-seeking expeditions at former settlements include morning jogging, camp-outs, and group learning activities in an isolated setting. It is a coming-of-age training that marks the first step leaving the private domain to participate in public affairs.

The Siraya people are planning to build a cross-regional alliance and re-establish their council to foster group solidarity and to advocate for their

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With the assistance of archaeology, the Siraya people revisited their colonial past at the juncture of eastern and western imperial contact, regained agency and sovereignty, challenged the mainstream colonial discourse of history, reclaimed ownership to the cultural heritage of former settlements, and demanded recognition of their long existence in Tainan and their legal rights as an indigenous community.

