

## **Caranqui Cultural Heritage in Imbabura UNESCO Global Geopark, Ecuador.**

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Ecuador is known around the world for its great natural and cultural diversity and beautiful views. From a long time, the Cultural and Natural Heritage richness of Imbabura has been informally acknowledged, but only was officially recognized by an International Organization (UNESCO) in 2019 with the denomination of Imbabura province as the First UNESCO Global Geopark in Ecuador. The Imbabura UNESCO Global Geopark encompasses the entire area of the province bearing the same name (4,599 km<sup>2</sup>) which is situated in the northern part of Ecuador. This recognition plays a crucial role in promoting Education, Geo-tourism, and Protection as the main axis of action. Beyond its incredible importance in geological landscapes, the geopark is enriched with significant cultural heritage, such as the archaeological sites Zuleta, Cruztola, Socapamba, Priorato, Otavalo, Peñaherrera, Urucuquí, and Yachay. These archeological sites date back to the prehistoric era and are presently inhabited by the Caranqui people, along with various ethnic groups. These groups should be celebrated for their distinct traditions and exceptional artisanal expressions. One of the efforts to preserve this rich cultural heritage is the "Preservation of Caranqui Cultural Heritage in Northern Ecuador" project led by Yachay Tech University, financially supported by The United States Embassy. The project aims to protect the local cultural heritage such as the Caranqui Culture by the preservation, recovery, and exposition at the Yachay Museum located at Hacienda San Eloy, San Miguel de Urucuquí. Yachay archeological collection has more than 58000 pieces of lithic material totals 6237 elements, ceramics 44507, malacological material 2241, human remains 3157, faunal remains 710, metals 53 elements, and special finds 1155 that were excavated during the building of Yachay Knowledge City (2014-2020). The preservation and research of cultural heritage is crucial to enriching the history of the Caranqui Culture.

### **Key words:**

Geopark, Caranqui, Arqueology, Preservation, Georadar, Heritage, Imbabura