

## The Morro da Queimada Archaeological Park Project, Ouro Preto, MG - Brazil

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper deals with development of the project for the installation of the Morro da Queimada Archaeological Park in Ouro Preto, MG – Brazil. This project is coordinated by IPHAN and is supported by national and international institutions, as well as religious bodies, NGOs and community associations. It was formally proposed by the Museu de Arte Sacra do Carmo, and was approved by the Conselho Nacional de Incentivo à Cultura – CNIC (National Committee for the Promotion of Culture), under the auspices of MinC – the Federal Ministry for Culture of Brazil. The Morro da Queimada (“Burnt Hill”) is a place of memory, not only because it is intimately linked to the Rebellion of Vila Rica of 1720, but also because it is located on the plateau where mining began in Brazil, an economic activity that gave birth to the City of Ouro Preto. In this city occurred the earliest truly national artistic stirrings, and from which were disseminated the first ideas for independence, facts which have ensured that it is considered the cradle of the Brazilian national identity.

### HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

*The thirst for gold has no cure/ and subjugated to it,/men kill themselves and die, / remain dead, yet not satisfied. (Romance 1)*

*Sleep, my child, sleep/ that the world will end. / Come now horses of fire: / they are from the Count of Assumar. / By the Village of Ouro Podre, / the fire begins to work. (Romance V)*

*When one day you are grown-up/ and passing by/ you will say: “Burnt Hill, / as you once were, I never saw, / but seeing you now/ makes me cry for you: (ibid)*

*For your fallen homes/ for your blackened walls/ for the seared hearts/ in fatal tongues of fires/ for this greed for gold/ that burns in Minas Gerais. (ibid)*

*There is no Count, no force/ nor royal crown/ more secure than these houses, / than these stones of the village / this village of Ouro Podre/ whose master was Pascoal. (Romance V). (Meireles,C.1989,pp. 53-56)*

With their evocative tones, the epic-lyric poems of the poet *Cecília Meireles* dive into Brazil's past and illustrate, in an emphatic, assertive and romantic form, the history of the *Rebellion of Vila Rica of 1720*.



Figure 1 Serra de Ouro Preto [1817-1821]. Watercolour and pencil; Thomas Ender (Wagner & Bandeira, 2000.p.971)

The settlements of Morro da Queimada, also known as “Morro do Paschoal” or the Village of Ouro Podre, constituted one of the earliest settlements in Ouro Preto. It was destroyed in 1720, following the revolt led by *Felipe dos Santos* against the increased taxes imposed by the Portuguese Crown through the prohibition of the circulation of gold powder and the establishment of royal minting houses in what was then the Capitania of São Paulo and Minas Gerais. Ouro Preto, then known as Vila Rica, rebelled during the night of the 28<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 1720. The situation deteriorated, and on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1720, more than two thousand rebels marched on the Vila do Carmo, today Mariana, with the intention of pressuring the Governor to repel the measures of the Portuguese Crown. At this point, the movement had already spread to other communities such as Sabará and Mato Dentro which went on to support the revolt. The principal leaders of the revolt were *Felipe dos Santos*, the Portuguese *Pascoal da Silva Guimarães*, miner, businessman, and senior militia officer, one of the richest men of the time, *Sargento-Mor Sebastião da Veiga Cabral*, ex-governor of the Colony of Sacramento, *Sebastião da Veiga Cabral*, *Dr. Manuel Mosqueira da Rosa*, former prosecutor of Vila Rica, and his son, the *Frei Vicente Botelho*, *Frade Bento* and even the *Frei Francisco do Monte Alverne*. Other participants mentioned included *José Carlos*, *Teodósio da Silva*, *Captain Traquilha*, *Sebastião Carlos*, *Pedro da Rocha Gandavo*, *Frei Pedro de Monte Sião*, *Frei Vicente Boto*, *João Ferreira Diniz* and *Tomé Afonso*.

According to the historian *Diogo de Vasconcelos*, *Felipe dos Santos*, was “the only truly popular leader” (Vasconcelos, D. 1974, p. 182). The uprising lasted around eighteen days. On the 16th of July, the governor, the Count of Assumar, entered Vila Rica at approximately eleven o’clock in the morning at the head of fifteen hundred men.

The text of the *Discurso Histórico* (1994, p.136) of unknown authorship, albeit in part attributed to the *Count of Assumar*, describes the burning and destruction of the houses of the Hill of Ouro Podre, an action which gave birth to the term “Morro da Queimada” or “Burnt Hill”.

(...) in the execution, to which they completely rose, and they turned to force, demolishing and burning at the same time without exception; in addition, the fire freely spread by means of sparks, finding ready material in the thatch that covered many of the houses, and so the blaze grew, which would have caused greater damage if the captain and the dragoons had not striven, with much effort, more to preserve the houses of the innocent rather than destroy those of the guilty, assembling with shouts and cries the inhabitants, each to protect his own: (...) As the houses of *Pascoal da Silva* could not be easily demolished for reason of the integrity and strength of the large and solid pieces of wood of which they were comprised, the captain gave orders that they were to be set alight (...)

According to *Diogo de Vasconcelos*, *Felipe dos Santos* was arrested on either the 19th or 20th of July, received a summary judgment and was executed. The other leaders of the revolt were transferred to Rio de Janeiro and there condemned to exile in Lisbon, Portugal. At the time, the Governor, the *Count of Assumar*, stated that even the very stones of the Village of Ouro Podre plotted against the Portuguese Crown. As a result of the Rebellion of Vila Rica in 1720, the establishment of the proposed royal minting houses was postponed for four years, and Minas Gerais became an administrative region independent of the Capitania of São Paulo.

On April 18, 1881, during one of his many visits to Ouro Preto, the *Emperor Dom Pedro II* identified an important archaeological site at Morro da Queimada. The illustrious Emperor jotted down on his diary that those ruins reminded him of Pompeii, due to its tragic origin.



Figures 2, 3. View of the ruins on Morro do Queimada, in the mid 20thcentury (left); (Photo from Luiz Fontana IFAC archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil) and view of part of the ruins at Morro da Queimada(right); (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil).

The Morro da Queimada today constitutes an invaluable archaeological site, a concrete record of the first urban architectural typologies of Minas Gerais, evidence of the gold rush at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and a remnant of one of the most dramatic moments in the history of colonial Brazil. Besides the ruins of old buildings, in the area may be found the remains of the many gold mines that dot the hillside: hollowed shelters carved out of rock, long galleries, ventilation shafts, and entrance tunnels. Still found on this archaeological site are mundéus, reservoirs constructed for the washing of ore, small dams, water diversion channels, and hydraulic systems used for transporting slurries of water and mud mixed with gold.

### THE DETERIORATION OF MORRO DA QUEIMADA

In recent decades, Morro da Queimada as an archaeological site has become corrupted due to the chaotic growth of the City of Ouro Preto. In the absence of urban planning, the site was occupied, the ruins being used by the population for building material, and the surviving structures employed as foundations for new constructions. The lack of protection for the archaeological remains on Morro da Queimada in Ouro Preto constitutes one of the more serious cases of neglect of cultural heritage by the various levels of government.

In April, 2003 a technical mission from UNESCO on a visit to the city identified the preservation of the archaeological site at Morro da Queimada as one of the measures necessary to halt the alarming deterioration of the cultural and environmental heritage of Ouro Preto. Following this warning, the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico Artístico Nacional - IPHAN (National Institute for Historical and Artistic Heritage)* established work groups (historical research, property issues, housing, physical planning, and community relations), necessary for the preparation of a pilot project for an archeological park in the area.



Figures 4, 5. Irregular occupation of Morro da Queimada; (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

### THE RECOVERY PROJECT

The project for *Morro da Queimada Archaeological Park* is coordinated by IPHAN, developed in partnership with *The Federal University of Ouro Preto – UFOP* and *Municipality of Ouro Preto – PMOP*, and managed by the *Museu de Arte Sacra do Carmo*, based at the *Paróquia de Nossa Senhora do Pilar*. This project is supported by several public and religious institutions, including the following: *The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO*, *The Federal University of Minas Gerais – UFMG*, *The Federal Public Ministry*, *The State Public Ministry*, *State Institute for Historical and Artistic Heritage – IEPHA*, *The State Forestry Foundation – IEF*, *Municipal Chamber of Ouro Preto – CMOP*, *The Gorceix Foundation*, *Parish of Nossa Senhora do Pilar*, *Parish of Santa Efigênia* and *the Sociedade Soto Zen do Brasil*. In addition, there is support from various NGO's, such as the *Associação de Proteção Ambiental Ouro Preto – APAOP (Ouro Preto Environmental Protection Association)*, *AMA Ouro Preto*, *the Amigos do Patrimônio Cultural e Natural de Ouro Preto - AMO Ouro Preto (Friends of the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Ouro Preto)*, *Associação dos Moradores do Morro da Queimada (the Residents of Morro da Queimada Association)* and *the Federação das Associações de Moradores de Ouro Preto- FAMOP (Federation of Residents Associations of Ouro Preto)*. During 2006, 2007 and 2008, various plans for public works were developed, including the following: delineation of the area of the park and creation of the park program, demolition of the recent constructions inside the park; the families concerned were relocated to new homes designed for improved quality of life, creation of an ecomuseum, in line with the requirements of the local population in the nearby areas, so as to encourage social and cultural relationships that would facilitate social development based on the elements of living space, society and heritage; survey of the site together with the *Departamento de Proteção DEPAM/IPHAN* and a topographical survey of the Morro da Queimada comprising a urban area of 125.25 hectares.



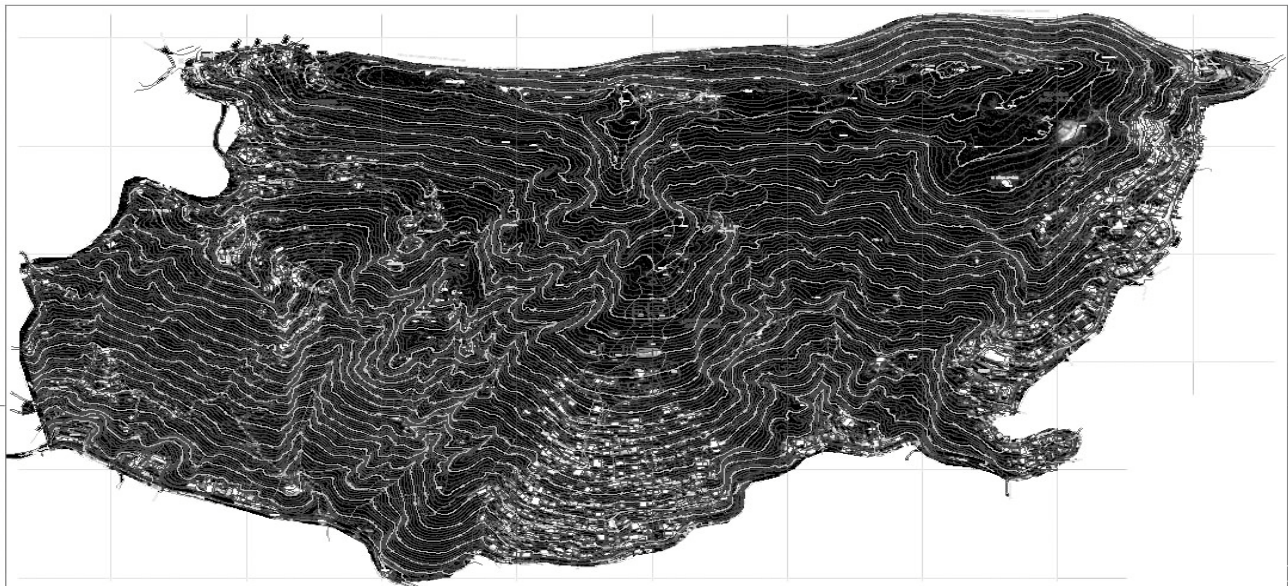


Figure 6. Survey of the archaeological site: area of 125.25 hectares; (*Andinna*, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

At present, the Historical Research Group is working on the bibliographic classification of manuscript, published and iconographic sources and on the preparation of interview itineraries for the preliminary stages in collecting the oral history of the area. After a critical reading and analysis of the sources and bibliography, a work methodology will be established for drawing up a basic text on how to make a qualitative approach to the space. Providing information on the old residential units built on the hills of Ouro Preto, as well as justifying the archaeological work, allows us to get closer to the urban life experienced in this area since the initial occupation phase, creating a picture of the Morro da Queimada across three centuries of history. According to *Sylvio de Vasconcellos* (*Vasconcellos S.1977, pp.127-128*) the greater number of houses on the hills “are, similar to the farmhouses, of one room, with approximately 15 square metres, opened to the outside by a door and window in the main facade. (...) More complex are the dwellings of four rooms, two larger and two smaller, respectively a living room, kitchen, principal bedroom and a bedroom for the children.” By means of a bibliographic survey and an examination of the historiography of the *Rebellion of Vila Rica of 1720*, it is possible to detect several important factors for an understanding of the space in question as a Place of Memory and to undertake the incorporation of themes related to establishing it as a symbolic location in national memory. Research in archives, libraries and technical reports on the history, historiography and information management of the Morro do Queimada will assist in making diagnoses that will orient the process of setting up archaeological park, as well as in drawing up the central theme to be incorporated in the urban planning directives for the City of Ouro Preto.

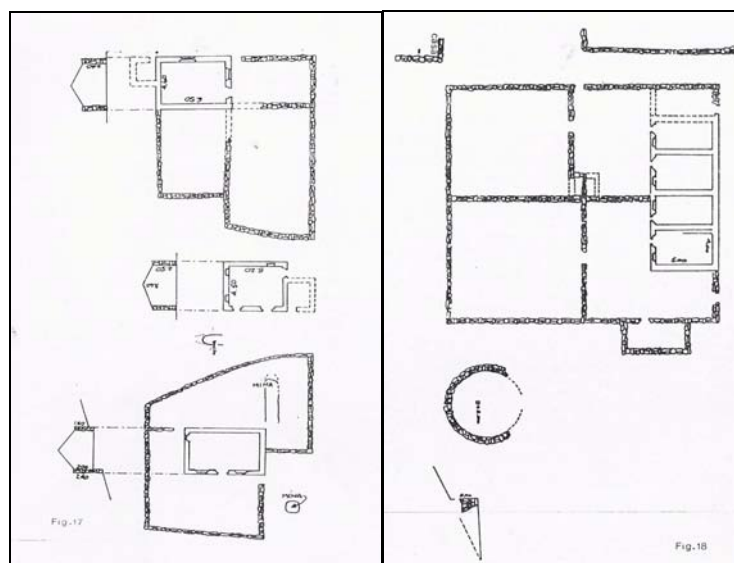


Figure 7. Hillside house; (*Vasconcellos, 1977, pp.126,127*)





Figures 8, 9. Demolition of irregular constructions; (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

The Property Issues and Housing groups have already carried out the survey, transfer and new architectural projects created for those families that lived in the area designated for the creation of the park. The families were compensated and can opt to buy dwellings or lots for the construction of new houses. The projects were developed with the participation of the *Programa de Arquitetura Pública (Public Architecture Programme)* of the *School of Architecture of UFMG (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais)*, which seeks to align the education of its students with the Brazilian reality, using both theory and practice.

The Physical Planning Group has the responsibility of making interventions in a site of exceptional natural beauty and significant archeological, historical and natural value. The first stage, already in progress, consists of drawing up proposals and studies for the creation of the park, taking into consideration its archaeological, historical, constructive, social, visual, environmental and functional aspects, so as to obtain information and subsidies for carrying out the projects that involve physical intervention. The interventions involve the identification, protection and consolidation of the archaeological structures and remains, as well as proposing solutions for environmental recovery, and guaranteeing the protection, surveillance and security of the archaeological site. Identified are the principal points of access to the area, the already existent pathways and trails and the most appropriate locations, from an environmental and scenic point of view, for construction of the buildings. These points are located near the boundaries of the Park and access points, and, as well as allowing for better control of the park, leave the central areas free, where the greater part of the archaeological remains and original vegetation can be found.

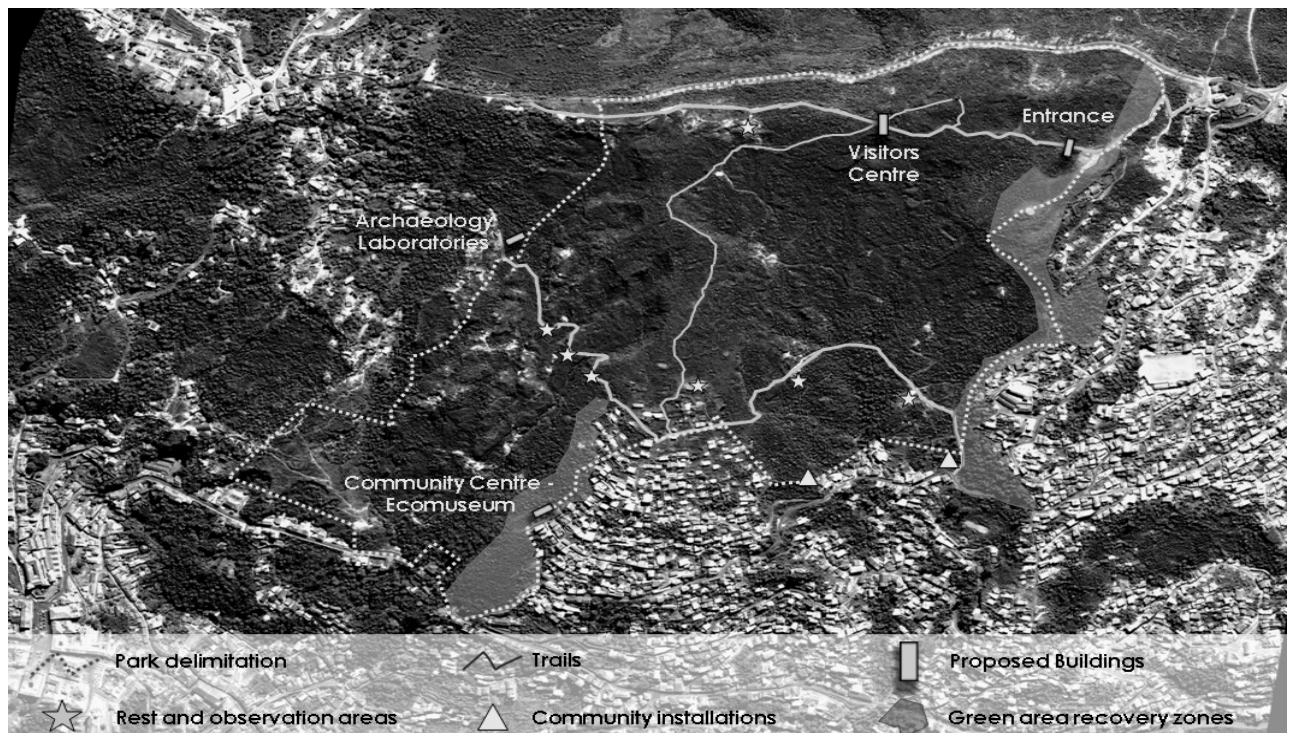


Figure 10. Preliminary plan for the creation of the park; (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

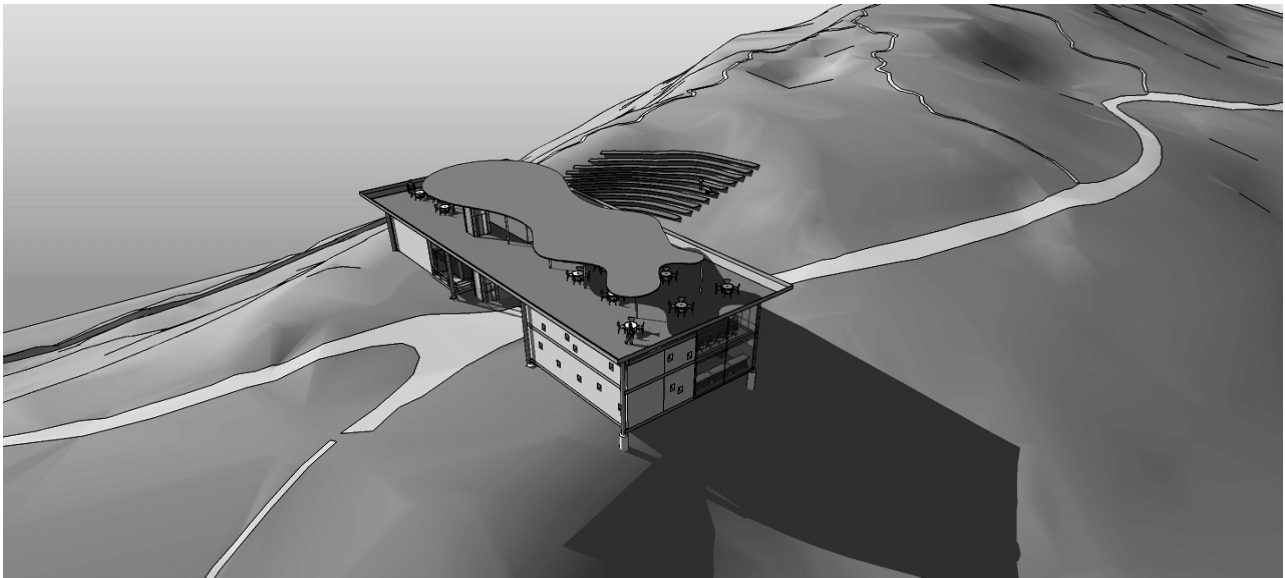


Figure 11. Preliminary plan of the visitors centre; (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

The new structures will shelter programme activities and will be grouped in conformity with their separate functions and by functional and environmental affinities: parking, entrance and access, visitors centre, archaeological laboratories, community centre and ecomuseum. To articulate and connect these spaces, roads and interpretative trails will be created that will impart the values existing in the park and its creation. Rest and family areas, signage, and various types of communication, visual, mobile and lit, will be installed.

The architectural solutions adopted are sustainable, such as, for example, the construction of the walls by reusing discarded stones in the area. The architectural design proposes buildings that will be simple, transparent and inserted into the natural surroundings, taking on expressive and technological aspects appropriate for contemporary architectural languages, but that also make reference to the typological and traditional construction characteristics. The proposal must create a fruitful dialogue between the natural elements and the constructions in such a way so as to produce a renovated and restated landscape on the Morro da Queimada.

The Community Relations Group is working with various initiatives to involve the neighboring communities in the project of creating the archaeological park. For this the principles, concepts, methodologies and actions of the Ecomuseum will be used, so as to meet the needs and desires of the neighborhoods that surround the archaeological site. The principle function of this group is to establish a participative inventory of activities for the purpose of diagnosing local potentialities and educational activities in the art education field; creative arts, theatrical arts, music, dance; handicrafts; sports and leisure. The expected result is a community project aimed at a receptive tourism, sustainable culture, by means of the experiences of an ecomuseum integrated with the archaeological park.



Figure 12. View overlooking Ouro Preto from Morro da Queimada; (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)





Figure 13. View from Morro da Queimada; (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

## CONCLUSIONS

The *Morro da Queimada Archaeological Park Project* seeks to create a substantial and positive impact on the *City of Ouro Preto* by means of the following:

- expansion of historical research and the creation of programs for archaeological excavations, facilitating a wider knowledge of mining history and the material culture of the period;
- protection and classification of the ruins dating from the earliest settlements in Ouro Preto;
- preservation of the memory of *Felipe dos Santos* and of the Rebellion of Vila Rica in 1720;
- creation of a Ecomuseum (Community Museum) and archeological museum for the towns which emerged during the "Gold Cycle";
- creation of a unusual option distinct from the traditional tourist circuit, to encourage visitors to extend their stay in the area;
- protection of a meaningful part of the landscape, including the urban and architectural complex of Ouro Preto;
- improvement in the quality of life and social inclusion of the nearby communities, creating new employment and business opportunities, as well as ensuring the economic sustainability of the project.

The challenge – to implant in the community a modern approach to sustainable development that takes into consideration the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the city – requires concerted action from all parties concerned. Morro da Queimada is a site endowed with rare natural beauty, from where it is possible to obtain a unique view overlooking the historical centre of Ouro Preto, and the Peak of Itacolomi, which guided the first European settlers, the bandeirantes, to the area, and, still to this day, a symbol of the city.

The creation of the archaeological park of Morro da Queimada is one of the most important recent undertakings in Ouro Preto, and the realization of this project will be as important to the city as the Acropolis is for Athens or the Palatine Hill and the Ancient Forum are for Rome.

The creation of the archaeological park of Morro da Queimada will establish a setting favorable to the recovery of the cultural and environmental heritage of the city, a new start in the place where the city began: the village of Ouro Podre where once *Paschoal* was master (Meirelles, C, p.55).

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