



PART 3

Otherness

Sorcery objects under institutional tutelage

Magic and power in ethnographic collections

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Abstract

This essay returns to a discussion of two collections of objects taken from two *terreiros* (places of worship) for Afro-Brazilian cults, namely the *Magia Negra* (Black Magic) collection at the Museu da Polícia do Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro Police Museum) and the *Perseverança* collection at the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de Alagoas – IHGAL (Alagoas Historical and Geographical Institute), in Maceió. In both cases we looked at how members of Brazil's elite are involved in sorcery and how members of this elite circulate in *candomblé*, *xangô*, *umbanda* and other *terreiros*.

In this essay, in particular, we examine the subject of the collections in the context of recent changes arising from heritage-listing policies in Brazil that have decisively affected relations between these objects and institutions charged with protecting and preserving cultural heritage.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian cults, collections, heritage, sorcery, State, elites

Resumo

Nosso objetivo aqui é retomar uma discussão iniciada em trabalhos anteriores acerca de duas coleções de objetos apreendidos nos terreiros de cultos afro-brasileiros, mais especificamente da Coleção de Magia Negra no Museu da Polícia Civil do Rio de Janeiro e a Coleção Perseverança do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de Alagoas, em Maceió, quando o interesse esteve voltado, nos dois casos, para uma reflexão acerca do modo como no Brasil o Estado se imiscui nos assuntos da magia, bem como sobre a circularidade da elite brasileira pelos terreiros de *candomblé*, *xangô*, *umbanda*, entre outros.

Neste ensaio, em particular, retomamos o tema das coleções no contexto

do conjunto de transformações recentes decorrentes das políticas de patrimonialização no Brasil e que afetam decisivamente a relação das instituições de proteção e de preservação do patrimônio cultural com tais objetos.

Palavras chave: Cultos afro-brasileiros, Coleções, patrimônio, magia, Estado, elites.

Sorcery Objects under Institutional Tutelage

Magic and Power in Ethnographic Collections¹

Ulisses N. Rafael
Yvonne Maggie

*Objects express a physical bond
between us and the missing other,
they have a potential for evocation
(Dominique Poulot)*

This essay returns to a discussion of two collections of objects taken from two *terreiros* (places of worship) for Afro-Brazilian cults, one in Rio de Janeiro, and the other in Maceió.

In previous studies of the *Magia Negra* (Black Magic) collection at the Museu da Polícia do Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro Police Museum) (Maggie et. al., 1979; Maggie, 1992) and the *Coleção Perseverança* (Perseverança Collection) at the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de Alagoas – IHGAL (Alagoas Historical and Geographical Institute) in Maceió (Rafael, 2012) we looked at relations between the Brazilian state and magic, and, more specifically, how members of Brazil’s elite were related to Afro-Brazilian religious temples (*terreiros*). We showed that members of these elite were willing to avail themselves of the efficacy of these practices, despite denying their legitimacy. Their ambiguous relationship with belief is analogous to the resigned attitude of those who collected the objects that compose these collections.

The collection at the Rio de Janeiro Police Museum consists of objects seized in the early 20th century by the police charged with persecuting what was called *baixo espiritismo* (literally “low spiritism”). The very institution

¹ The authors wish to acknowledge editor, friend and former advisor Peter Fry for his suggestions and in particular for his patience in the final edition of this paper.

charged with suppressing and controlling Afro-Brazilian cults preserved these objects. On May 5, 1938, just a year after Brazil's Artistic and Historical Heritage Service (past acronym SPHAN, renamed IPHAN) was founded, the collection was listed as cultural heritage to be protected (Case 0035-T-38), and registered as No. 001 in the book of Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Heritage.² For many years, the museum's collection remained in the "Black Magic" museum of the police precinct that sequestered the objects, but was then transferred to Rio de Janeiro's Police Museum in 1945. Correspondence dated November 1945, between the head of SPHAN and the modernist poet Dante Milano, the then director of the Police Museum, included this statement: "... the museum was created as an 'extra-scholastic' body for the study of criminology. Due to certain peculiarities of specimens in its collections, the museum has become an institution in which its learned character predominates, but it also has something of the nature of a museum of folk art to it."³ Dante Milano headed this "scientific" museum for eleven years, from 1945 to 1956. The pieces kept for so long were exhibited in the Police Academy building until 1999.

The Alagoas collection originated from the 1912 riots⁴ led by the *Liga dos Republicanos Combatentes* (League of Republican Combatants), who attacked Xangô's *terreiros* accused of being associated with state governor Euclides Malta. Members of this paramilitary group were the first to sort through the objects and decide which to destroy or burn in the houses where they were found. The rest were carried through the city and publicly displayed to the scorn of locals in buildings occupied by groups opposing the state government - the same pieces, perhaps, that were then cataloged and exhibited at the League's headquarters before going to the museum collection of the now-extinct Maceió store clerks mutual society (*Sociedade Perseverança e Auxílio dos Empregados no Comércio de Maceió*, hereinafter *Perseverança*), where they were virtually forgotten for about 40 years. The collection was finally recovered by members of the

2 The Museum's official website states that heritage listing was requested by senior police officer Silvio Terra. <http://museupoliciacivil.hdfree.com.br/> retrieved June 24, 2012.

3 Letter from director Dante Milano to the head of SPHAN, as in case no. 0035-T-38 in the Book of Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Heritage Listing / Registration no. 001 of May 5, 1938.

4 "Quebra de Xangô" (The Breaking of Xangô) is the expression by which the episode became known in the state of Alagoas.

5 In Maceió the Afro-Brazilian *terreiros* are termed Xangô, pronounced shan-goh.

Alagoas Historical and Geographical Institute, which has been its home to the present day.⁶ The process of listing the *Perseverança* collection as heritage started a hundred years after the notorious 1912 riots.

This essay returns to the subject of the collections in the context of recent changes arising from heritage-listing policies in Brazil that have decisively affected relations between these objects and institutions charged with protecting and preserving cultural heritage. An important point to bear in mind is that it was not until 2003 that we saw a new stance on the subject of heritage and preservation policies in the form of a convention on safeguarding intangible heritage (Cf. Arantes, 2009).

That said, there are some questions that stand out; some of them posed at the time of the corresponding specific investigations, but which may be useful to summarize here. What was the context in which these objects were collected and taken from their traditional place of origin to become museum specimen? How can we explain the paradoxical contrast between search and seizure by violent means and careful conservation in the institutional homes found for them? Which agents or actors were involved in the processes of gathering, cataloging and maintaining these collections and what were their underlying motivations? May this preservationist démarche point to broader aspects of relations between the State and Afro-Brazilian religious practices, and with heritage-listing policies in Brazil?

Objects have a life of their own. Their actions in the world derive not so much from their intrinsic qualities but from the meanings attributed to them. In this new condition, their meaning attributed from outside, objects become factors in social action, as Victor Turner (2005) was to say of the Ndembu symbols. To examine them is to give an account of their journeys, from their enthronement as objects of worship in the sanctuaries from which they were appropriated, through to their transformation into cultural objects based on various processes of identification, collection, preservation and restoration (Gonçalves, 1996).

6 Xangô is the term for Afro-Brazilian cults in the states of Pernambuco and Alagoas, although, as Yvonne Maggie points out, these categories do not reflect the dynamics of the classifications provided by the informants themselves. In one interview, we often saw the use of all these expressions by an informant referring to the same set of ritual practices. Even the use of “Afro-Brazilian” here should be hedged with precautions, as Beatriz Góis Dantas warns, due to the ideological charge associated with it. However we have all continued to use these terms for the lack of anything more satisfactory (Cf. Maggie, 2001 e Dantas, 1988).

In doing so, we hope to contribute to our understanding of nation-building processes. Specifically, the aim is to reflect on the paths that led the state-government bureaucracy to establish intimate relations with magic and how this ambiguous relationship – between fascination and fear – may be reified in museum or ethnographic collections.

That said, we shall proceed to look at the political and administrative situation in Brazil in the early years of the republican period, paying special attention to practices for regulating religious activities thought to be of African origin. This contextualization is needed to understand the meaning behind the decision – often taken by the persecutors themselves – to catalogue and conserve objects that had been obtained through repression, the issue that we shall now proceed to address.

Repression of sorcery in Brazil's "First Republic" period

Since the colonial period, Brazil had developed regulatory mechanisms for dealing with accusations directed at witches or sorcerers in *terreiros* and other places of worship. Unlike many other societies with a strong belief in sorcery, practitioners in Brazil were not usually punished with death. However, the advent of the First Republic saw a decree of October 11, 1890 move the State onto the path of regulatory mechanisms to combat sorcerers through a new Penal Code,⁷ which included three articles referring to the *illegal practice of medicine*, the practice of magic, and banning *faith healing*. The introduction of these articles by the framers showed their fear of evil doing and the need to create institutions and means for combating those who gave rise to evil. Thus they wrote:

Article 156 – Exercising medicine in any of its branches, or dentistry or pharmacy: practicing homeopathy, dosimetry, hypnotism, or animal magnetism, without being qualified to do so under the laws and regulations.

Penalties – one to six months prison and a fine of 100 to 500\$000.
– for abuses committed in the illegal practice of medicine in

7 Penal Code of 1890. Decree of October 11 1890, Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional.

general, in addition to the penalties thus established, perpetrators shall suffer those applicable to the crimes to which they have given rise.

Section 157 – Practicing spiritism, magic and its spells, use of talismans and fortune-teller cards to stir feelings of hatred or love, inculcate cure of curable or incurable diseases, in short to fascinate and subjugate public credulity.

Penalties – one to six months prison and a fine of 100 to 500\$000.

§ 1. If through the influence thereof, or as a consequence of any of these means there results in the patient being deprived of physical faculties, or their temporary or permanent alteration.

Penalties – one to six months prison and a fine of 200 to 500\$000.

§ 2. The same penalty, and being barred from practicing the profession for the same time as the sentence will be incurred by any doctor directly practicing the above-mentioned arts or assuming responsibility for them.

Article 158 – Ministering, or simply prescribing as a means of cure for internal or external use in any prepared form, a substance from any of the kingdoms of nature, thus acting as a faith healer.

Penalties – one to six months prison and a fine of 100 to 500\$000.

– if the use of any substance leads to a person losing, or suffering temporary or permanently alteration of physical or physiological functions, deformity, or inability to exercise an organ or organ system, or, in short any illness:

Penalties – one to six months prison and a fine of 200 to 500\$000.

If it results in death:

Penalty – six to twenty-four years prison.

Based on this republican code, the State began to intervene in matters of magic in the name of the law, energetically combatting witchcraft and suppressing *terreiros*. Special courts were set up and staff trained to identify and distinguish those guilty of wrongdoing or evil. There was no argument over

the reality of spirits, spirit possession, divination, or magic itself. Rather, the law made it necessary to distinguish between good and bad magic, or between black magic and white magic to use the words of the *terreiros* themselves. Over the years, policing institutions were set up to regulate, combat, and punish evildoers. The State was heavily involved in this role in the 20th century, even after the Penal Code was substantially altered in 1940.

How different is this system that recognizes the reality of witchcraft and sorcery from those that deny its existence! The decline of belief in witchcraft in England from the 16th century onwards, documented by Keith Thomas (1973), finally resulted in the British Empire forcing this disbelief on the peoples it colonized, punishing not the alleged healers, but those who *denounced others* for witchcraft or sorcery. Under this system, only the accusers could be brought to justice on account of their manipulation of what were considered spurious beliefs. This can be seen quite clearly in Crawford's (1967) book on sorcery and witchcraft in the former British colony of Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, where the 1890 *Witchcraft Suppression Act*⁸ stipulated punishment for those convicted of accusing witches. After independence in 1980, the law remained in place until 2006, when it was repealed by the dictator Robert Mugabe, once again showing there has to be belief in the supernatural power of producing evil if there are to be regulations on accusations and punishment for wrongdoers. For the people of Zimbabwe, witchcraft was as real as summer rain. British law meant nothing to the subject peoples of the Empire. In republican Brazil on the other hand, judiciary, police and the people in general all shared the same beliefs and thought the State had a duty to punish persons accused of doing evil through witchcraft or sorcery.

Brazil's legislation was impregnated with [belief in] magic and it was incumbent on the State to intervene and separate true "priests" and "priestesses" (*pais-de-santo* and *mães-de-santo*) from false ones; to separate those doing good from those using their supernatural powers for wrongdoing or evil. As the great British anthropologist Sir Edward E. Evans-Pritchard wrote in his

8 The Witchcraft Suppression Act-1897 made it a crime to accuse someone of witchcraft. "Whoever imputes to any other person the use of non-natural means in causing any disease in any person or animal or in causing any injury to any person or property, that is to say, whoever names or indicates any other person as being a wizard or a witch shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding two hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years, or to a whipping not exceeding twenty lashes or to any two or more of such punishments." (Apud Crawford, 1967).

classic *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande* (2004), belief in witchcraft, magic or supernatural powers of doing evil is a system of knowledge used to interpret misfortune, imponderable events, or that which cannot be explained by science; chance. The same belief in magic reigned in 20th-century Brazil in the minds of everyone, rich and poor, black and white, women and men, young and old alike.

Although the State was charged with suppression, the process always started with a neighbor or a client making accusations.⁹ Most criminal cases in Rio de Janeiro began with an accusation posed more or less in these terms:

I have the honor of addressing you even though I have never had the honor of meeting you. Because we know that your Excellency is a champion of morality and of justice, I appeal to your Excellency in writing that you may bring to an end this abuse [illegible] sorcery and fortune telling that infest this city; the victims are many, We shall report a fact that will allow your Excellency to understand the full shamelessness of these people. There is a certain Rocha or Costa on Rua Senador Pompeu, a black man from the Mina Coast who lives off ignorant victims. On the advice of others, a woman came to find the black man to consult him about her missing husband, whom she wanted back. The sorcerer (*feiticeiro*) told her he could make the husband come home through an advance payment of 300\$000. Then the woman began to cry and said she could not [pay him] because she did not have money, and that if he would make her husband come home she would get the money from him. The black man said that was not necessary because she could pay with her body. He pointed to the woman. She left in desperation, and came and told us about it. I was indignant and promised to send a letter to your Excellency denouncing him. There are others in worse conditions, too many to describe. However, I give your Excellency the number and the house so that you can catch them for the immoral acts practiced there in *flagrante delicto*. It is a disgrace. There is one on Monqueiras across from number 49 (...)these men are sorcerers (*feiticeiros*) who say that they could do away with the Republic if they wanted to; certain women use the place for indulgent activities and deflowerings. That one on Monqueiras calls himself Cipriano and is known as Bedé and there is another known as Diogo Mina. These are terrible killers; they give tips on the *bicho*

9 Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard (2004) noted that Azande sorcerers or witches are always among the enemies and these are people close to the accused.

[numbers racket] for a certain percentage. On behalf of the poor ignorant victims of such nonsense, we ask you to look into these matters. In time I shall supply your Excellency with lists of these people and of numbers runners and fortune-tellers.¹⁰

There is a morality to witchcraft or sorcery too. “Azande say that hatred, jealousy, envy, backbiting, slander, and so forth go ahead and witchcraft follows after.” (Evans-Pritchard, 2004: 75). In Brazil, the phrase most often heard is – big eye [jealousy or envy] is worse than a spell – envy is worse than witchcraft (Maggie, 2001: 42). Witchcraft morality disapproves of antisocial vices and approves of virtue. People only try to identify a sorcerer producing evil when a disease or misfortune is severe. There are several methods of finding the name of the real culprit. Among the Azande there was the “poison oracle” as the most important technique for investigating. The diviner ministered a chicken a special potion that might kill it: if the fowl died, the name queried was guilty, if the chicken survived, he was innocent.

Many techniques were used in *terreiros* to find out a sorcerer, but it was in the Republic that the State devised a method that became popular in the form of proceedings brought under articles 156, 157 and 158 of the Penal Code. The oracle was an expert who specialized in analyzing objects seized by the police when they invaded a *terreiro*, place of worship or home of one so accused. Experts analyzed objects to develop techniques identifying those used for evil-doing or false objects belonging to charlatans or fraudsters (*mistificadores*).

From the early days of the Republic, *terreiros* were subjected to a continuous process of regulation through police investigations and criminal proceedings brought under the abovementioned articles of the Penal Code that governed and hierarchized these practices.

Soon after the proclamation of the Republic, the authorities were eager to regulate the activities of religious associations. Law 173 of September 10, 1893, regulated the “organization of associations founded for religious purposes ...” under Article 72, §3 of the Constitution. Article 1 also states that associations founded for religious purposes “... may acquire legal personality by registering their bylaws or articles at the civil registry of deeds in the district in which their headquarters were established.” Article 13 reads: “Associations

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Case 6, C 21 National Archives. Letter kindly provided by Marcos Bretas.

promoting unlawful purposes or used for illegal or immoral purposes will be wound up by a court ruling upon complaint brought by any person or the public prosecutor's office.”

In 1917, before the reorganization of the National Public Health Service, a new law set up a body called Inspection of Exercise of Medicine and Pharmacy. Its Article 35 regulated the use of these public establishments and religious corporations and allowed them to have a pharmacy if licensed by the General Directorate of Public Health. The Service also foreshadowed the changes that came about in the 1920s, when the city's administrators felt they had to carry out another energetic sanitary campaign. Decree 3987 of January 2, 1920, for example, set up the National Public Health Department, reorganized the National Public Health Service, and restructured the supervision of medicine. The decree also set up a health or sanitary police force, enabled by legal formalities freely to enter any public building or private house. Along with the civil police, they controlled rules for hygiene and public health. The 1920s were particularly rich in attacks against spiritist centers and teams were set up specializing in matters relating to practices deemed harmful for public health.

The final part of this history clearly shows which of the persons thus accused were most dangerous when the Penal Code was promulgated in 1942. In the late 1930s, shortly after the 1937 coup¹¹, a section was set up to pursue drug traffic and fraud (*Tóxicos e Mistificações*). A controversy arose over altering regulatory procedures for accusations against sorcerers or witches. Lawyers and doctors debated the three articles of the Code in closed meetings or in the press. When the new code was voted in 1942, Article 157 was amended to classify the crime of “inculcating or announcing healing by secret or infallible means” as “charlatanism”. After heated debates, the category of spiritism was removed from the letter of the law but the doctrine established by this article defined charlatans and described Candomblé and Macumba as dangerous and criminal. These articles remained unchanged until the most recent code. After 1942, persons accused under this article were designated “macumbeiros”¹².

11 In Brazil, the Coup of 1937 launched the historical period known as Estado Novo – a totalitarian regime headed by President Getúlio Vargas, who had been in power since the so-called 1930 Revolution. This regime ended with Vargas' death by suicide in 1945.

12 Decree-Law 2,848 of December 7, 1940 was published in the Official Gazette on 12/31/1940, but only

Since the turn of the century, then, legal, public-health and police institutions had been organized to combat these practices considered harmful to public health and morals. The institutions that waged heavy-handed repression against *terreiros* and places of worship, or mediums whose leaders were accused of using spiritual powers for evil doing in Rio de Janeiro, seized ritual objects and kept in the fine collection of the Rio de Janeiro Police Museum, which we shall proceed to describe.

The Black Magic collection of objects in Rio de Janeiro

In 1938, the Rio de Janeiro Police Museum's Black Magic collection was housed in the section covering drugs, narcotics, and fraud of Auxiliary Police Precinct 1, whose mission was suppressing "low spiritism and faith healing". It was not until some years later, in 1945, for reasons not precisely known, that it was moved to the Rio de Janeiro Police Museum, where it has remained until the present day, although it has not been exhibited since 1999.

became effective in 1942 when the Law of Criminal Misdemeanor was enacted. Articles 282, 283 and 284, in the chapter on Crimes Against Public Health, remained until today, read as following:

Illegal practice of medicine, dentistry or pharmacy – Article 282 – exercise, albeit for free of charge, of the profession of doctor, dentist or pharmacist, without legal authorization or exceeding its limits:
Penalty - imprisonment from six months to two years.

Paragraph One of One: if the crime is committed in order to profit, a penalty of one to five contos de réis shall also be applied.

Charlatanism – Art. 283 – inculcate or announce healing through secret or infallible means:
Penalty - imprisonment from three months to one year and a fine of one to five contos de réis.

Faith healing – Article 284 – practicing faith healing: I - habitually prescribing, administering or applying any substance II - using gestures, words or other means; III - making diagnoses:
Penalty - imprisonment from six months to two years.

Paragraph One of One – if the crime is committed for remuneration, the agent is also subject to a fine of one to five contos.

Qualified form – Article 285 – the provisions of art. 258 are applicable crimes under this chapter except as defined in art. 267.

Meaningful forms of crime common danger – Article 258 – if the felony of common danger resulting in severe bodily injury, the penalty of imprisonment shall be increased by half; if leading to death, doubled. In case of blame, if there is bodily injury, the penalty increases by half; if it leads to death, the penalty applied is for manslaughter, increased by one third.

Illegal practice of medicine, dentistry or pharmacy – Article 282 – exercise, albeit for free of charge, of the profession of doctor, dentist, or pharmacist, without legal authorization or exceeding its limits.

Charlatanism – Art. 283 – inculcate or announce healing through secret or infallible means.

Faith healing – Article 284 – practicing faith healing: I - habitually prescribing, administering, or applying any substance II - using gestures, words, or other means; III - making diagnoses.

Paragraph One of One – if the crime is committed for remuneration, the agent is also subject to a fine of two to ten thousand cruzeiros.

According to the current director, senior officer Cyro Advincula da Silva, the items have been kept in storage since the museum was transferred from the police academy to a building (Palácio da Polícia) on Rua da Relação. The museum is currently closed for repair and restoration work.¹³

The best description of the role of this museum found in official documents is in a 1946 report of the Minister of Justice and Internal Affairs of the Federal Public Safety Department, pages 196-197:

The Police Museum is divided into two sections: History and Technique. The former assembles all material once it has been prepared and classified or modeled as applicable. The latter compiles the history of each piece and divides them by room. The museum aims to be a wellspring of studies and research for specialists, professors and authorities, and a living palpable document to be used as the basis for education of students and the public.

According to the report, the museum's file index comprised the following record cards: obstetrics, 32, narcotics, 36; fortune-telling, 8; evidence, 5; palmistry, 4; false identity cards – foreign, 31; false identity cards – Brazilian, 17; pharmaceutical material, 48; gambling, 91; historical documents, 3; black magic 254.

Items comprising this incredible museum collection are listed in a document that assistant precinct officer Demócrito de Almeida forwarded to the heritage service (SPHAN) in 1940, shown below as originally composed by the anonymous writer:

List of objects comprising the Black Magic Museum, Toxics, Narcotics and Fraud Section, Auxiliary Precinct 1, Federal District Police Force.

Four bass drums (*tabaques*), one ochossi (sic), one exu, one inhassã and one ogum; One statue of Mephistopheles (eixu), the highest entity in the bloodline of the Malei; A clay statue of ossanha (forest spirit) protector of medicinal trees; Three plumes and two helmets worn by *macumbeiros cavalos*, [i.e., 'horses' ridden by spirits, or mediums] and *cambonos* [assistants to mediums in trance] for spells or ceremonies in the *terreiro*; Three glasses containing snakes (spells or ceremonies); A cushion with a skull and two tibia bones with drawings of umulu (sic) (king of cemeteries) the most respected entity of all laws; An oil painting

13 Thanks are due to senior police officer Cyro Advincula da Silva for kindly meeting us for an insightful interview (2012) covering the recent history of the Police Museum and its Black Magic collection.

of a caboclo [backwoodsman or Indian]; A drawing of a root, representing *eixu-tiriri*; One full ogum warrior outfit with two spears, a sword and a shield; An embalmed chicken (for spells or ceremonies); Three *aoxum* (sic) stones; a *inhassã* stone; Two bound candles filled with pins (spell); Two bound figures used to honor an entity; Four candles (festive embers) A stone (*ita iemanjá*); Seven rings worn by *macumbeiros* (when they are on the *terreiro*); Three bowls (*cuité*) for liquor; *aluá* (*mandioca-puba* [cassava], maize and fruits) or *malafa*, also known as *cutimbá* (*cachaça*), 19 pipes (*pito catimbau*) for “smoking” [incense type]; Three cigars (*Pancho*) also used for smoking; Three images of Saint Anthony bound with ribbons, bound to make a marriage match; A metal cone (*cassiri* [fermented cassava]) for chants; Three black *pembas* [chalk with magical properties] (*eixu pembas*); six colored *pembas* (*ochossi pembas*); Three white *pembas* (*orisha pembas*); A black stick of *guiné* (used to free the body of evil); Nine talismans; One roll of tobacco and a pipe (*catimba*) bound with ribbon; A snuff pouch (used to bring the spirit near to materiality); A brass fan (*inhassã fan*); “Saint Mary Magdalen”, used to ward off persecution; A bottle of Paraty (*cutimbá* or *malafa*) used as holy water; Two daggers (*obê* ou *obelê*); loose, used to hold chants; Two images of Saint George on horseback (ogum warrior fighting warrior satan) Two lead shoes (shoes offered by a believer to the orisha oxum) Two images representing Crispin and Chrispiniano; A white metal star (guiding star) A metal fan (oxum fan), “Our Lady of Conception”, used to ward off persecution; A small image of *umulu* (Saint Lazarus), Four amulets ou talismans used by *mussulmis*; An image of Saint Jerome (*pai xangô ogodô*), the axe lightning and thunder man; An image of Saint John the Baptist (*pai xangô locô*); A cutlas (dress sword, *obelê*) costume for *terreiro* festive events; A star fish (*calunga*) of white magic; A dress sword (*obê* or *obelê*), offering to ogum engraved on the blade; A small image of Saint Onofre (*omulu*); A bottle with gunpowder (*fundanga* or *tuia*), used to ward off an evil entity; An image of Saint Barbara (*abodojô*), protector against storms; 30 (*ifá* ou *aburi*), used by *macumbeiros* for chanting, or communicate with a superior entity; Seven Umbanda *cruzeiros* (entity below *umulu*, or *obaloaê* in Nago); *qibandu*, used in *eixu* (sic) chant in order to punish a *terreiro* member not following rules: An image representing the entity *vume* (queen of *efu*), which means death by lightning; Beads (*guiame*) of oxum and *inhassã*; Beads (*guiame*) of oxum with *oxala*; Beads (*guiame*) of *eixu* warrior; Beads (*guiame*) of *zambi-japombo* (meaning supreme god known as *babá*); Beads (*guiame*) of ogum with warrior *eixu*; Master beads (*guiame*); Beads (*guiame*) of *inhassã* or Mary Magdalene; Beads (*guiame*) *nana-buruquê* (Saint Anne).



Figure 1. Yemanjá/sereia:
Photo Luiz Alphonsus

Due to the ambiguous and intricate relationships between accusers and accused, and between the elite and the *terreiros*, the same police precinct that seized the objects during investigations took them for safekeeping in the Black Magic Museum and then at the Police Museum.

When contacted for the first study made by one of the authors of this essay in 1979, the director of the Rio de Janeiro Police Museum said that the objects were seized “in the period of repression” and that he had organized the collection as a whole in the mid-1960s based on the ritual significance of its components. In doing so, he often resorted to explanations given by the “people of the *terreiros*”, to use his own words, and information gathered from books by researchers of Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Edison Carneiro, Roger Bastide and Artur Ramos. There seems to be unanimity in relation to the meanings of objects, but disagreement over the cultural and geographical origins of pieces.

A list of objects comprising the Black Magic Museum, made by the head of the Auxiliary Police Precinct and forwarded to the heritage body (SPHAN) in 1940, gives the impression of having been compiled by someone with intimate knowledge of Afro-Brazilian religious practice and belief.

Along with the ritual objects and belongings of mediums and their leaders (*pais-de-santo* and *mães-de-santo*) assembled at the Police Museum were other items seized such as artifacts used by counterfeiters for fraud, toxic substances, or operators of the illegal numbers racket (*jogo do bicho*). In addition, there were objects taken from “angel makers” (this term appears to have been used, depending on the region, for women informally involved in abortions, or in assisting childbirth, or in caring for the newly born in precarious conditions) as well as photographs of victims of notorious criminals in Rio in the 1950s, such as Luz del Fuego and Dana de Tefé. In 1979, the Black Magic collection was arranged next to flags of the *Integralistas* (neo-fascist movement of the 1930s) and objects belonging to famous communists, such as Luis Carlos Prestes’ typewriter.

Interestingly, the Police Museum’s Black Magic collection was arranged in the layout of a *terreiro*, where the spirits of light are kept carefully segregated from the spirits of darkness, Images of exus were separated from those of other orisha deities, drums from images, and artifacts used in favorable spells or interventions were placed on a separate shelf to those used against adversaries (Cf. Lody, 2005).

The history of this collection and how it was first organized demonstrates the wealth of detail and complexity of a repressive activity within the field of beliefs that included members of all social classes. The fact that SPHAN listed it as heritage in 1938 shows the significance of these beliefs for the policemen who investigated the *terreiros* and impounded their ritual objects, the judges and prosecutors, who tried the cases, as well as the intellectuals who founded the heritage preservation institutions, a point we shall return to below.

The *Perseverança* collection at the Alagoas Historical and Geographical Institute and memory of the 1912 riots

This collection was assembled, as noted above, after a mob led by the League of Republican Combatants took to the streets in Maceió on the night of the February 1, 1912 and pursued members of the main Xangô *terreiros* in one of the most violent episodes ever in the history of these cults in the state of Alagoas, or perhaps anywhere in Brazil.

The origin of the episode lay in opposition to the oligarchic group headed by Euclides Malta, whose political maneuvering helped keep him in power

for a period of nearly twelve years often called the “age of the Maltas”, including an interim mandate (1903/1906) for his brother Joaquim Vieira Malta.

During the election campaign of 1912, Euclides Malta was accused of close relations with the followers of Xangô, being referred to as “*leba*” and other “derogatory” terms. *Leba* is a variant of *legbá* that, according to Verger’s analysis of the meanings of African orishas, was part of the pantheon of the exus whom ancient travelers associated with the god of fornication, due to format shown as a mound earth in the shape of a man squatting, adorned with an exaggerated phallus. According to Verger, “this erect phallus is nothing more than the assertion of his truculent, bold and shameless character and desire to shock decorum.” (Cf. Verger, 1981). According to Bastide, this Dahomean *legba* should not be confused with the exu of the Yoruba; in their country his phallic character is seen on the staff of the Nagô exu, but not the *legba* priests’ dramatized coitus in public ceremonies with a large wooden phallus. (Cf. Bastide, 1971: pp. 348/349). This would be an initial first association between the xangôs of Alagoas and the Dahomean influence. Unfortunately, among the objects seized that are now in the *Perseverança* collection, there is no ritual sculpture of exu that might show the origin of the entity worshiped in Alagoas, based on the characteristics described above. Coincidentally or not, this was one of the few objects seized that was totally destroyed after being displayed and mocked by onlookers. I shall return to this issue below

According to local reports, people could not sleep in peace in certain streets of Maceió at the height of the political crisis confronting Euclides Malta. The noise of drums and *zabumbas* from Xangô houses was apparently taken as provocation by many of the state capital’s inhabitants, who were dismayed by Malta’s administrative excesses. It was widely reported that he assiduously sought the help of sorcerers to obtain more protection and stay in power. Now religious practices of this type had always enjoyed much acceptance in the state, not only among the populace as a whole, but also among the established authorities. Afro-Brazilian practices rarely featured in police reports. This was all to change when certain temples were accused of defending and supporting the “tribal chief of the big forest” (*Soba de Mata Grande*), another of Euclides Malta’s nicknames. These *terreiros* were accused of straying from their role of resolving affliction to sponsor evil doing, a kind of “cheap witchcraft.” But the wrecking Xangô houses was part and parcel of the struggle against the political authority of the Malta family and their oligarchy; putting



Figure 2. Oxum Ekum.
Photo: Marcelo Albuquerque

an end to an abominable practice, without ever doubting its efficacy. Failing to punish those who use their powers for evil purposes would be inadmissible.

In June 1915, a few years after the party headed by Euclides Malta was soundly defeated in the 1912 elections, his portrait was slashed symbolically to eliminate any trace from memory of the evil he represented. This assault took place during a ceremony held at the Alagoas Historical Institute to mark another anniversary of the government of his successor, Clodoaldo da Fonseca. Much later, in the 1950s, the pieces that were to comprise the *Perseverança* collection were finally moved from the basement of the Maceió Commerce Employees Perseverance and Aid Society and taken into the possession of the Alagoas Historical and Geographical Institute. Among them were no images or sculptures associated with former-governor Malta, if only because they had been destroyed when the *terreiros* were wrecked immediately after his forced removal from power.

This selective destruction points to a certain ambiguity. On the one hand, it was the expression of a revolt against a political representative who, in those circumstances, was the personification of evil. On the other hand, they were remnants of services performed in those magical-religious places, of all



Figure 3. Oxalá.
Photo: Marcelo Albuquerque

they retained of sacred and ceremonial in opposition to evil-doing magic. A decision was taken to conserve some of these sculptures, namely oxalá, oxum-ekum, oyá, omolu, iemanjá, obabá, ogum-taió, xangô-dadá, xangô-bo-mim and xangô-nilé,¹⁴ instead of those representing entities such as the “horned idol” leba, as “the spirit of evil”, or “ali-baba, the saint in the form of a boy who presided over lively activities and pleasures,”¹⁵ which were burned in the many fires started during those nights of 1912. The preservation of African pieces, to the detriment of others such as those the leba, with whom the Governor was associated not only stood for the victory of good over evil but also sought to remove them from their original locus, where they might continue to be manipulated for witchcraft. By placing these objects in a neutral environment, their efficacy would kept be under control.

14 According to Raul Lody (1985), xangô nilê, the name of an entity that in Alagoas was syncretized with Saint Anthony, who is also associated with the orisha Ogun in other Brazilian states, comes from a Nigerian title known as Onin Irê, from which the terms Onirê and Nire came as corrupted forms. In relation to the syncretism of Santo Antônio [Saint Anthony] with ogum nilê or ogum onirê, one of seven names given to this orisha in Brazil, see Verger (2000: 157/158).

15 *Jornal de Alagoas*. “Bruxaria”. Maceió, 07/02/1912, p. 1.



Figure 4. Uncle Salu.
Jornal de Alagoas. Maceió,
 February 13, 1912

Note that most of the pieces found in the former Xangô *terreiros* in Maceió retained many links with African tradition. As Abelardo Duarte stated, many of them came from interchange between these houses and Candomblé houses in Bahia and Africa instigated by the famous leader (*pai-de-santo*) Tio Salu, who had traveled in Africa and brought back to Alagoas many of the pieces now in the *Perseverança* collection (Duarte, 1985: 6).

In the aftermath of the 1912 riots, a veil of silence was drawn over Afro-Brazilian religious practices in Alagoas. As a legacy from those dark times, a quieter or more reserved ceremonial format was introduced, omitting drums or any instrument that would be noted in the neighborhood. On a visit to Alagoas several years after the events, Gonçalves Fernandes witnessed this type of worship which he called “Candomblé in silence” (among other terms), and chapter 1 of his book on religious syncretism in Brazil *O Sincretismo Religioso no Brasil* was entirely on the subject of “A New Afro-Brazilian Sect – whispered Xangô,” after seeing some houses of worship in Maceió in June 1939, almost thirty years after the fateful “Operation Xangô” (1941: 09-28).

Two collections, two experiences of persecution

A first point to note on comparing the two collections, has to do with the context in which persecution of Afro-Brazilian religious practices developed. In the early part of this article, we looked at the general context of the regulatory system for repression of witchcraft in the First Republic period, recalling that it was this period that saw institutionalized repression of magical practices by an entire legal apparatus, based on Article 157 of the Penal Code. However, we must not forget that although the model stipulated regulation of all magical practices everywhere in Brazil, in practice the system had a more direct effect on groups and communities who bore some kind of proximity to the seat of power, at least geographically, as in the case of the *terreiros* in Rio de Janeiro and other major state capitals such as Recife and Salvador.

The very idea of the republic as a federal system did not appear to have extended much beyond these major cities, especially Rio de Janeiro, the center of administrative power. It was as if the rest of the nation had remained under the control of more traditional power structures. An example of this was the fragility of the Alagoas republican leaders when they tried to oppose the old politicians surviving from the imperial past. In the more remote states of the federation, such as Alagoas, members of the elite who had emerged from the cadres of the Monarchy to set up the institutional basis of the First Republic, were not guided by the scientificist discourse and technical competence that marked the generation of Republican positivists in Rio de Janeiro (Cf. Sevchenko, 1988).

As we have already observed, during the early years of the Republic, most of the judiciary, police, and the general public shared a common belief in spirits, spirit possession and the powers of magic. They therefore had no interest in eradicating the temples, but to punish those who were thought to use their spiritual powers for evil ends. But in the early years of the Republic there were considerable regional differences, as the distinct paths taken in Rio de Janeiro and Maceió suggest. In *Medo do feitiço* Maggie argued that *terreiros* in Rio were systematically persecuted by police under the aegis of the State, through initiatives against specific individuals accused of practicing magic, faith healing, or “low spiritism” at varying intervals of time. Many *terreiros* were legally persecuted by the police, as seen in the *Diário de Notícias*

headline: “Seventy ‘*terreiros*’ searched and eighty ‘*macumbeiros*’ arrested.”¹⁶ In Alagoas, however, things were different. The unique aspect of the Alagoas case, lies in the fact that the usurpation of the *terreiros* and the capture of their ritual objects resulted not from police repression, but by members of society at large.

The League of Republican Combatants was chiefly responsible for the attacks on Afro-Brazilian places of worship named “Operation Xangô”. Unlike the events in Rio de Janeiro, where the persecutory campaign was developed under the complacent eyes and the aegis of the State, which intervened in the affairs of magic in order to regulate the process of accusation, witchcraft-related accusations and revenge developed with the consent of broader society in Alagoas, absent the State and official organs of justice that were totally disorganized in those circumstances. The process of persecution was unleashed by the League with the consent of the population, who swarmed into civic centers to support the candidate opposing Euclides Malta, and it took place in a completely arbitrary manner.

This aspect also helps clarify another point of convergence that enables us to compare the two collections in terms of their constitution and organization. Although both resulted from repressive procedures and seizures, in the case of the Black Magic museum collection, it had at all times developed on institutional levels, whereas the Alagoas collection came into being through the initiative of the League of Republican Combatants. In Rio, the objects were brought in by the police, and stored in a space created specifically for this purpose, where they remained available to public for visits until 1999 when the Police Museum was transferred (to Palácio da Polícia, as mentioned above) and never again exhibited, awaiting the end of restoration work on the century-old building. In 2008, part of the collection was seen in an exhibition of photographs at the José Bonifácio municipal cultural center in Gamboa. The photographs were taken by Wilson da Costa with Roberto Conduru as curator ¹⁷.

16 *Diário de Notícias*, April 1, 1941, p. 1.

17 See the catalog of the collection titled *Multicolor Reliquary* - The collection of Afro-Brazilian cults of the State of Rio de Janeiro Police Museum. Curatorial design by Roberto Conduru, head of the José Bonifácio municipal cultural center, Carlos Feijó; photography Wilson da Costa; exhibition design Carlos Feijó, supported by the Carlos Chagas Filho Research Support Foundation of the State of Rio de Janeiro, 2008.

Reports filed by a journalist who covered the riots in a series of articles on witchcraft helped to reconstruct part of the process that led to the destruction of the leading Xangô houses of Maceió and the surrounding area. He wrote that the material collected during the riots against the Xangôs, was initially displayed at the headquarters of the League of Republican Combatants, with the collaboration of one of the many Afro-Brazilian practitioners (*filhos de santo*) who went to see the “precious spoils,” certainly a member of one of those *terreiros* that had been destroyed. The latter “explained everything and the League jotted down on paper the various mysteries of that flood of bric-a-brac.”¹⁸ The second approach to classifying came when the collection was taken to the Alagoas Historical and Geographical Institute under the auspices of two well-known local intellectuals, Theo Brandão and Abelardo Duarte, the latter producing an illustrated catalog of the *Perseverança* collection.

It could be said, then, that when the exhibition was first assembled at the League’s headquarters, the selection of objects was designed to exhibit the malevolent relationship between the ruling political elite and the Xangô *terreiros*. Later on, however, when the objects arrived at the Historical Institute, they were classified according to the scholarly criteria in the tradition of the new host institution. In this second phase, in particular, classification was based on the provenance of the pieces, in particular their remote African origin. Perhaps it was nostalgia for the past that guided the classification of pieces by Historical Institute scholars as the “mythical celebration” that Beatriz Góis Dantas saw in the regionalist discourse of writers such as Gilberto Freyre, (Dantas, 1988:160).

Interestingly, except for Duarte’s catalog, there are no known writings that deal more systematically with the Afro-Brazilian cults of Alagoas. This lacuna is even more surprising given scholars from Alagoas, such as Manoel Diegues Junior and Arthur Ramos, whose renown and research on Afro-Brazilian religion extended beyond the borders of the state yet did not write about Alagoas in general, let alone the 1912 riots. Maybe this is why the Xangôs of Alagoas were so vulnerable to repression during the long period after the overthrow of Euclides Malta.

On the Police Museum collection, mention must also be made of the important role of the modernist intellectual Dante Milano as director, a

18 *Jornal de Alagoas*. “*Bruxaria*” [newspaper article on witchcraft], Maceió, 07/02/1912, p. 1.

position he held from 1945 to 1956. Milano shared the antiracist approach characteristic of part of the intelligentsia of the period, so he rid the museum's Black Magic Collection of the pernicious amalgam between evil and satanic cults with expressions of black culture of African origin. As a writer, poet and director of the Afro-Brazilian Magic collection – thus renamed due to his influence in 1945 –, he contributed decisively to lend the collection its significance as Brazilian cultural heritage, together with other expressions of culture of African origin.¹⁹

A different way of classifying objects in the Black Magic collection was subsequently identified by Maggie *et al.* (1979), in the form of intervention of the Museum's director, who had decorated altars for Umbanda centers and *terreiros*. His religious experience was put to use as to classify these objects in 1964, using references from specialized literature on the subject.

Thus, the criterion that determined conservation seem to be directly associated with the pieces' mystical aspects and a widespread belief in magic.

The “witchcraft objects” shown at these museums are living proof of sorcery and show that witchcraft is not imaginary but a reality.

By way of conclusion: disputed meaning of objects and their history.

In the early history of these collections, meanings were attributed to objects from the standpoint of repression. In Rio de Janeiro, the objects entered into the custody of the police who were responsible for suppressing *terreiros* accused of practicing wrongdoing. The objects testified to the existence of black magic and served as trophies standing for the victory of the police force over “*macumbeiros*” who practiced “low spiritism.” In the 1930s, especially after the SPHAN heritage institution was founded, they took on the meaning of assets representing the African past, Afro-Brazilian culture and Brazilian culture tout court. The founders of SPHAN shared a project for the nation that was first posed by Mario de Andrade and Rodrigo Mello Franco de Andrade, who fought to preserve what stood for Brazilianness in the version of the author of *Macunaíma* (Andrade 2000). The SPHAN project, according to Rodrigo himself, was based on the first of its kind previously conceived by Gilberto

19 For an analysis of the relationship between the modernist poet and the Black Magic collection, see Correa (2009).

Freyre for Pernambuco, which also influenced the state of Bahia's institution for preservation set up by Anísio Teixeira (Cf. Guimaraens, 2002).

In Alagoas, the objects asserted the power the Afro-Brazilian religions to lend power to the governor/candidate. The *Perseverança* collection was initially kept at the headquarters of the same League that had led the riots, as a trophy and symbol of the wrongdoing of the oligarch Euclides Malta. For a long time it was held by the *Perseverança* mutual aid society and stored in a museum finally, in 1950, it gained the status of art to be preserved as heritage of cults of African origin, by the most prominent anthropologists of the period in Alagoas.

This ambiguous relationship between the elite and Afro-Brazilian cults is not new. In his 1906 book *As religiões do Rio*, João do Rio had formulated a terse metaphor: "We live in dependence on sorcery... it is us who ensure its existence with the affection of a businessman for an actress lover ..." (Rio, 2006:35).

But the collections were also generated by widespread belief in witchcraft and here let us quote Raimundo Nina Rodrigues in his *O animismo fetichista dos negros baianos* of 1897:

... all classes in Bahia, even the so-called higher classes, are apt to become black. The number of whites, mulattoes, and persons of all colors and hues who consult black sorcerers for their afflictions and woes, who publicly believe in the supernatural power of talismans and spells, who in much greater numbers mock them in public but secretly listen to them, consult them, this number would be incalculable if were not simpler to say that generally it is the population en masse, except for a minority of superior enlightened spirits who have the true notion of the exact value of these psychological expressions. (Rodrigues, [1897] 2006, p. 116)

The process that led to these two collections was based on fear of sorcery and therefore a belief in the efficacy of magic. As we write, a new interpretation of the collections arises from the perspective of identity politics. It is now argued that the objects preserved there are symbols or representatives of Africanness, the origins of a people, or a "segment of the Brazilian people." As the collections joined the ranks of the institutions that represent Africanness in Brazil, so the intellectuals were joined by the social movements in promoting them.

Translated by Izabel Murat Burbridge

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Rio de Janeiro Police Museum Collection

Photos by Luiz Alphonsus, 1978

This rich collection is no longer on display and some items were lost in a fire in the 1990s. During restoration of the century-old police building on Rua da Relação, where the museum was eventually relocated, the objects were put into store.

Photo captions were composed by one of the museum directors, a member of an Umbanda community who specialized in decorating altars for terreiros in the 1960s. The museum director often quotes from books by renowned anthropologists who have studied these beliefs.

Photos taken by Luiz Alphonsus in 1978, during the first research project with Marcia Contins and Patricia Monte-Mór conducted at Museu da Polícia Civil do Rio de Janeiro [Rio de Janeiro Police Museum] with support from the National Foundation for the Arts (Funarte).



Photo 1
Plan of the police museum's main hall. Objects comprising the Black Magic collection are placed alongside others seized by the police in Rio de Janeiro, such as flags bearing swastikas or photos of famous criminals of the 1950s.

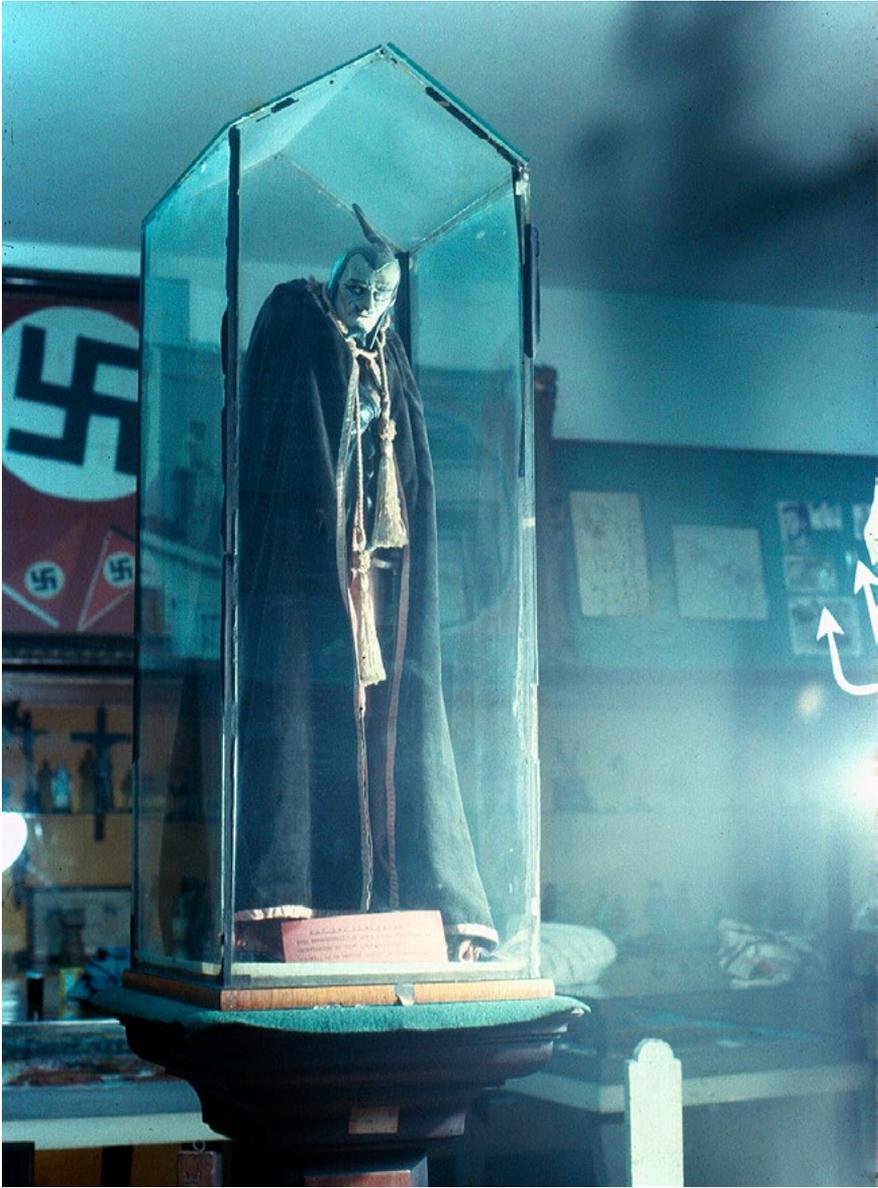


Photo 2

Eshu Sete Capas [Eshu of seven cloaks]. This representation of Eshu is typical of the influence of Christianity in the Afro-Brazilian cults. However, the match is somewhat oblique. While the Satan of Christianity is depicted as an undesirable entity cast out from paradise, Eshu in the Afro-Brazilian cults is depicted as a kind of ambassador of men to the court of the Orishas.

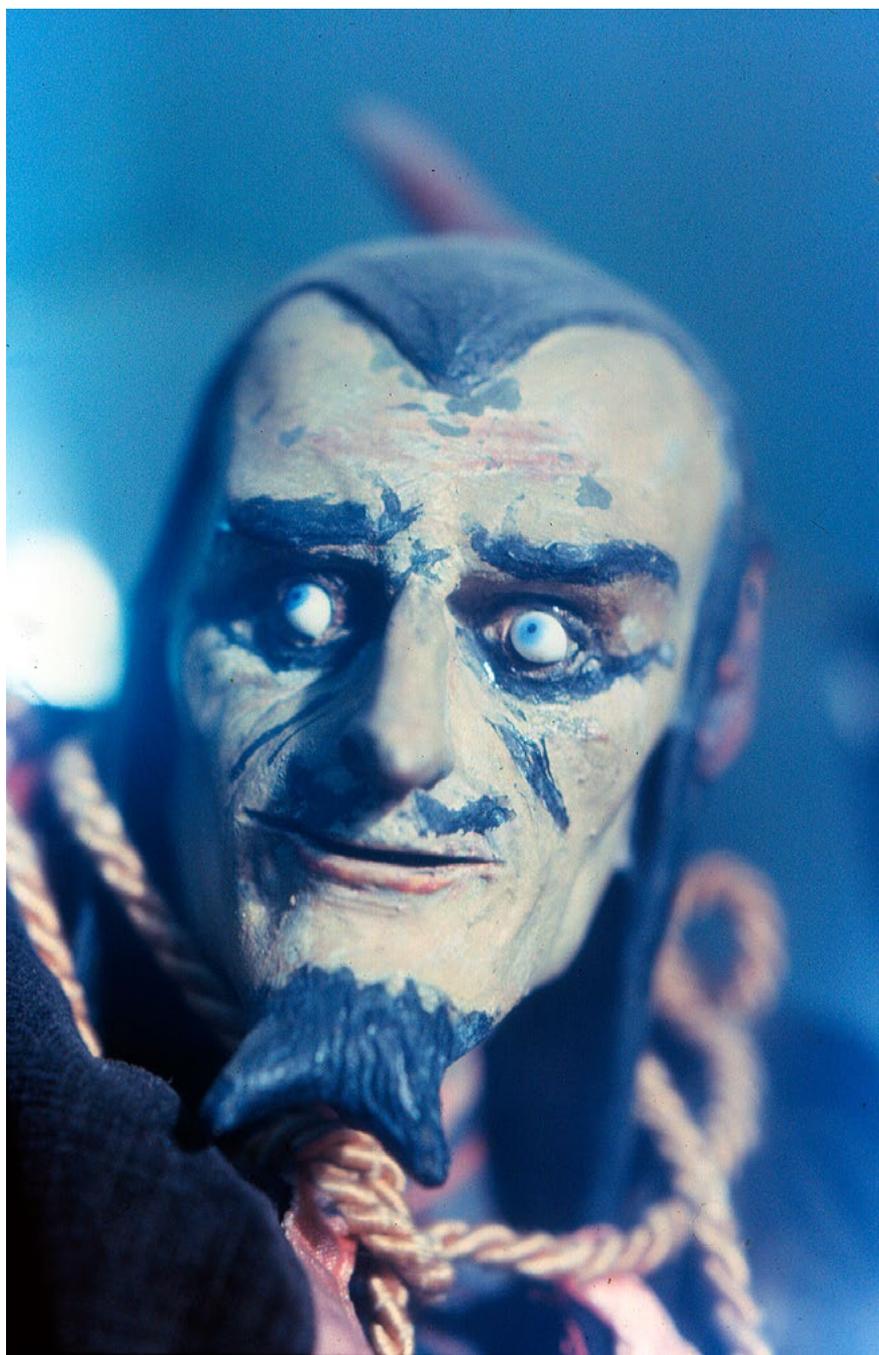


Photo 3
Detail of the face of Eshu Sete Capas



Photo 4
Eshu Tiriri. Unfired-clay figurine representing Eshu Tiriri, made with soil from all the cemeteries of Rio de Janeiro.



Photo 5
Offering to Eshu - Eshu Marabô figurine sculpted in unfired clay



Photo 6
Bust of Eshu Alequeça - crudely shaped in unfired clay.



Photo 7
Offering to Eshu – bust of Eshu Alaguetô. Female fetish of Eshu Maria Padilha - sculpted
in unfired clay.



Photo 8

The cult to Yemanjá, the mermaid and marine ornamentation are examples of the influence of European folklore on the Afro-Brazilian cults. Legend has it that the mermaid is a femme fatale who brings death to those who see her or hear her singing. Yemanjá represents water, but not the ocean, and symbolizes fertility and reproduction of the species. The photo features an obvious disfigurement. (References: *Os africanos no Brasil*, Nina Rodrigues – *Candomblés da Bahia*, Edison Carneiro).



Photo 9

Oshossi chalked symbol – Worship of the god of hunting, of an enduring character. Note, however, that the symbol was not outlined with pemba chalk. Thus, according to Afro-Brazilian belief, it does not have the same strength as a magic symbol chalked with pemba to call up the orisha (deity). Figurine of the orisha of hunting, Oshossi is the name for Saint Sebastian in Afro-Brazilian liturgy.

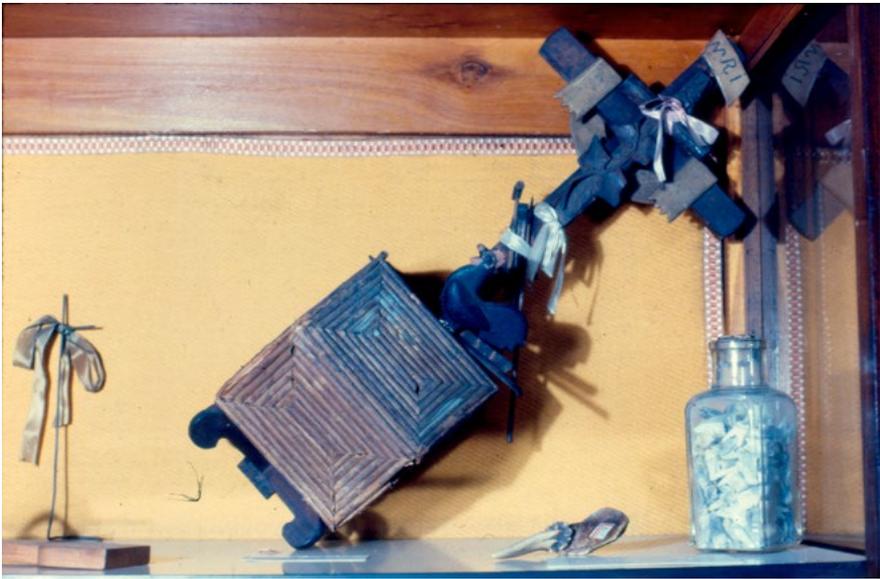


Photo 10

“Spells cast – Bottle containing pleas for Oshossi’s power to intervene. Spell cast on a miniature cross. Small wooden “Calvary” attached to the upper part of a polygon -shaped alms box.



Photo 11
The steel-chested Ubiratã



Photo 12

Case containing two shelves. The upper shelf contains objects described thus: Headdress used in Candomblé terreiros. Made of colorful feathers. The guinea fowl - food of the orishas (gods) - stuffed for black magic spells; only the largest of which is actually stuffed, while the others are miniatures made of feathers from the birds they represent. Fundanga - gunpowder used to ward off evil entities from a terreiro. Gunpowder was formerly used to unmask false priestesses. Aspirants were submitted to fire burning their hands. Offering to female spirit (Pomba-gira) - lead slippers. Human skull used for terreiro ritual - image representing Eshu. The lower shelf contains terreiro offerings described in photos 5, 6 and 7



Photo 13
Previous photo shot from a different angle.



Photo 14

Images from Catholicism. Metal star: Christianity's influence in Afro-Brazilian liturgies. Piece of a tree trunk with a niche and holy man used as altar. "Tree - among the Jeje in Africa, lôko always showed the dwelling place of a god, a symbol that the latter would like to become an altar, hence its sacred character. In Brazil, however, the tree itself is a god." (Candomblés da Bahia, Edison Carneiro – p. 230)



Photo 15

Religious syncretism. "... assimilation with Catholicism continues to take place today, and on a larger scale even: having begun as a subterfuge to dodge police persecution... Thus we find Catholic altars in all Candomblé places of worship; all orisha deities correspond to Roman Catholic saints; the cross, the host, the chalice, the episodes of the ark, of Christ's birth and baptism..." (Candomblés da Bahia, Edison Carneiro, p. 44/45). Images of Saint George, Saint Anthony, Our Lady, Jesus Christ, etc..



Photo 16

Worshipping the caboclo is a religious recognition of the Amerindians and has its origin in a backwoods legend of an enchanted native who came back to life. The caboclo is represented by figurines or of Amerindians in terreiros.



Photo 17
Figurines - vegetable fiber and wood. (a) Caboclo Rompe Mato. (b) Caboclo Guarany. (c)
Female caboclo Jurema. (d) Female caboclo Jacyra



Photo 18

Small wooden gourds (coités or cuités) - mostly for fermented beverages, all showing symbolic images and figures. Gifts for Eshu to intercede with deities. Eshu head crudely carved from a log. Metal figurine symbolizing the Eshu who blocks paths. Believers see Eshu as the men's messenger to the gods. Eshu has various names and has been widely depicted in Afro-Brazilian art. Identified with the devil through influence of Catholicism in the Afro-Brazilian cults.



Photo 19
Magic spell cast with Eshu symbol



Photo 20

Worship of Ogun (Saint George) - Orisha of metal and war. Each object on this shelf represents a favored dwelling of this Ogun. The only direct representation of a deity occurs when a believer possessed by him becomes his instrument, in other words the "horse" of Ogun.

Miniatures of Ogun's paraphernalia: ladder, hammers nails, etc..

Dagger-shaped Ogun crosses.

Set of metal items: machete, axe, cross, sign of Solomon, sword, chain and ring.



Photo 21
Guinea fowl - food of the orishas (gods) - stuffed birds for black magic spells, although only the largest of them is actually stuffed, while the others are miniature made from feathers of the bird represented.



Photo 22

African figurine used as fetish for Quimbanda ritual.

(palmer cane) - terreiro heads have parental responsibility and apply punishments.

Tobacco - placed in "old black man" (preto-velho) pipes.



Photo 23

Figs [crossed fingers] - defensive objects used to ward off the evil eye.

Table showing appointments paid for at the Choupana de Tupinambá [Tupinambá's Hut]



Photo 24

These bottles are purchased from stores. But no mystical value is attached to them until they have been blessed in a terreiro. The influence of Roman Catholicism and the mermaid legend may be noted in this relatively recent cult.

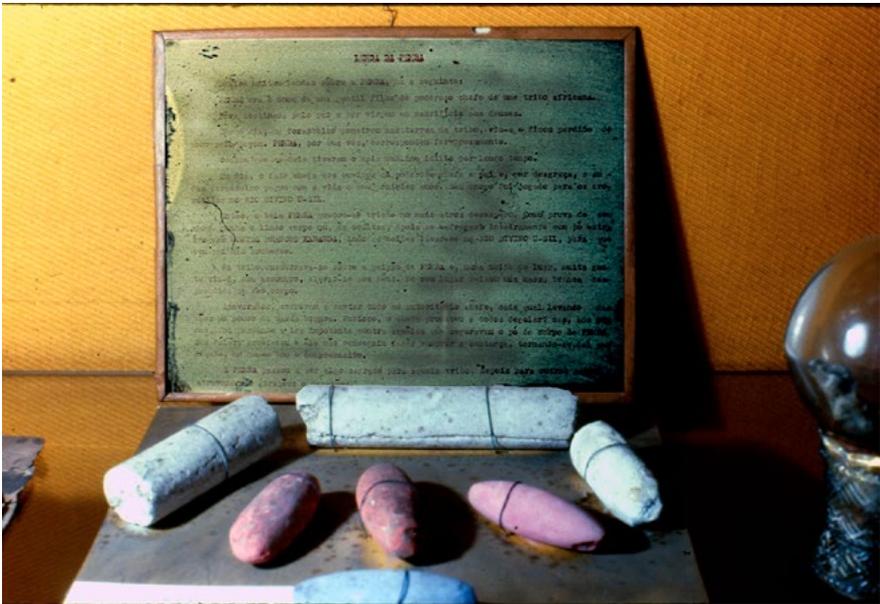


Photo 25
Legend - pemba [ritual chalk]



Photo 26

Pemba - a type of chalk used by the head of a terreiro to draw or scratch a magic symbol as part of a ritual to summon the orishas (gods). There is a special symbol for each orisha. Each also has its own matching color.



Photo 27
Spell . Cast to free up a person's way in life.



Photo 28

Pemba chalk made from clayish substance used in Macumba identified with Bahia:
 blue – Ogum / yellow – Oshum / white – Oshalá / green – Oshossi / black – the devil,
 crossroads, evil spell / red – Inhassã (female) / pink – Nanã (female)



Photo 29
Xerê - percussion instruments for Shangô (Saint Jerome)



Photo 29
Xererê - percussion instruments for Shangô (Saint Jerome)



Photo 30

Palm-leaves and bracelets for the ritual of Oshum (the daughter of Ogum (Dressed in yellow, she wears these adornments to complete her outfit). Each of the orishas (gods) has a characteristic palm-leaf added to their costumes worn during ritual.



" FERRA DE SAKIMBAI "

CACHIMOS UTILIZADOS COMO DEFENSAS PELOS
"PAIS DE SANTOS" E "PRETOS VELHOS" PARA
AFASTAR OS MAUS ESPÍRITOS .
SÃO INSTRUMENTOS DE DEFESA, CONSIDERADOS
MAIS PODEROSOS DO QUE AS GUIAS (SERPENTE DO
"CAVALO" SOBRE O BALE DO CONSOLETO) .
NOTA: O FERRA é o nome que se dá aos
e são usados nos trabalhos de Umbanda

Photo 31

Pipes smoked to ward off evil spirits, used by priests (pais-de-santo) and old black men (pretos-velhos). As means of protection, they are considered more powerful than the necklaces that are used by mediums (defense of the "horse" against evils brought by the person who has come to consult them).



Photo 32
Rings worn by heads of terreiros. Gourd cases for storing objects of those who act as helpers to the heads of a terreiro)



Photo 33. Ritual vestments - Ogum, Saint George.



Photo 34. Vestments worn for Macumba ritual: brown is for Shangô (Saint Jerome): red and black, the Eshus.



Photo 35. Ogum - Saint George. Items used for Umbanda ritual: Swords, clothes with name engraved in stone. Stole and sword of Saint George (Ogum). Saint George (Ogum) helmet worn on feast days.

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Challenges to digital patrimonialization

Heritage.org / Digital Museum of African and Afro-Brazilian Memory

Livio Sansone

Abstract

Historically subaltern groups envisage new possibilities for the creation of community museums and exhibits. This seems to be particularly true of the Global South and, even more so, of Sub-Saharan Africa and the African diaspora to Southern America – two regions of the world where, when it concerns ethno-racial minorities and social movements, presential museums and “actual” archives have more often than not been poorly funded, ill-equipped, and underscored. This article teases out the process of creating such a digital museum that focuses on African and Afro-Brazilian heritage. It is a technological and political experiment that is being developed in a country experiencing a process of rediscovery and of the patrimonialization of a set of elements of popular culture, within which “Africa” as a trope has moved from being generally considered a historical onus to (Western-oriented) progress to become a bonus for a country that is discovering itself both multiculturally and as part of the powerful group of BRIC nations.

Keywords: Intangible, digital, technology, identity, visitation, Afro-Brazilians

Resumo

Em nossa época os museus digitais e as novas tecnologias da informação parecem oferecer novas oportunidades para a preservação do patrimônio e sua divulgação e visitação. Grupos historicamente subalternos enxergam novas possibilidades para a criação de museus e exposições comunitárias. Isto parece ser ainda mais válido no ‘Sul Global’ e, de forma especial, na África subsaariana e na diáspora africana na América do Sul – duas regiões

do mundo onde museus presenciais e arquivos propriamente ditos, quando se trata tantos das minorias de cunho etno-racial quanto dos movimentos sociais, têm recebido poucos fundos, equipamentos e pessoal qualificado. Este texto descreve o processo de criação de um destes museus digitais, que enfoca o patrimônio e memória africana e afro-brasileira. Trata-se de um experimento tecnológico e político que foi desenvolvido em um país que está vivenciando um processo de redescoberta e patrimonialização de um conjunto de elementos da cultura popular, no âmbito do qual o status do ícone África mudou de ser historicamente considerado um ônus para o progresso (pensado de forma ocidental) para um bônus para um país que está se descobrindo tanto multicultural quanto pertencendo ao poderoso grupos dos nações BRICS.

Palavras chaves: Intangível, digital, tecnologia, identidade, divulgação, Afro-Brasileiros

Challenges to digital patrimonialization

Heritage.org / Digital Museum of African and Afro-Brazilian Memory

Livio Sansone

Over the last decade new communication technologies seem to have changed and broadened the horizon for museum exhibits as well as for heritage preservation more generally. A process that began in the more technologically developed nations has begun to make inroads into the Global South too, and the purpose of this short text is to introduce the Digital Museum of African and Afro-Brazilian Memory. The Digital Museum is a concrete intervention in the geopolitics of knowledge, an attempt to reverse the tradition of dividing the world into places where research is performed and popular culture is produced, and places where information and artefacts are kept, archived, and “secured,” which tend to be where “Art” (with a capital A) is created and enshrined. The Digital Museum initiative is important to the knowledge and memory of African art and culture more generally, and in two ways: on the one hand, it concerns the rediscovery or perhaps the reinvention of Africa in its own diaspora; on the other hand, through a number of collaborative projects with African institutions (Mozambique Historical Archive, INEP-Guinea Bissau, IFAN-Dakar, University of Cape Verde) it relates to the establishment of a digital heritage for Africa and the rest of the Global South – emphasizing a critical and yet positive perspective on digitization itself and its preservation and circulation on the web. Our project has emerged from the currently contradictory cultural and multicultural politics of Brazil, where a new configuration is beginning to define itself by interaction between new communication technologies, state intervention within the sphere of the production of culture and identity, and new demands by historically subaltern groups that they be recognized.

Background: Brazilian Cultural Politics

In Brazil, at least since its independence, the State and elites have defined certain national characteristics and celebrated them by recourse to use of the term “the people.” Since the 1930s the categories of “people” and “popular” have been settled through the production of a list of artefacts with the prospect of patrimonialization, by the National Foundation of the Arts (Funarte), the National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN), and museums.¹ Although the people were in fact kept at a distance from power, in a complex process part of popular culture became an essential component of the ideals of the nation. Within that process, “the African” assumed a symbolically central position, followed by “the Negro” and “the Indian.” As Lilia Schwarcz showed,² after 1830 the national debates of the Historical and Geographical Institute rewarded and celebrated the contribution of those “Others” to “Brazilian-ness.” It was an incorporation of excess, more cultural than social and economic, in a process that created expectations between the subordinated and the racialized.³

The symbolic process of inclusion as representative of the nation has increased greatly, albeit in a context where, for decades, the State has been less obviously present and there has been more involvement by other agents, both physically present and virtual. Incorporation of the popular into the national began during Vargas’s nationalist-populist government, when certain features associated with Africa were incorporated and the “Afro-Brazilian” was invented. We can point to the concrete cases of samba and carnival, but also to capoeira, cuisine, and even the variant of Portuguese spoken in Brazil. The second phase occurred from 1994 to 2002, during the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was the first president to acknowledge racism as a national problem and denounce it. However, it was during the Lula era from 2003 to 2010 that new conditions and actors emerged, and with them possibilities for identity politics. I will mention just a few here: television and commerce discovered the Negro (although not the Indian); the institutionalization of the ideas and icons of multiculturalism, including the

1 Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2001).

2 Lilia Schwarcz, *The Spectacle of the Races: Scientists, Institutions, and the Race Question in Brazil, 1870-1930* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996).

3 Livio Sansone *Blackness Without Ethnicity. Creating Race in Brazil* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), chapter 2.

implementation of Law 10369/2003, which made the teaching of “History and Cultures of Africa and Afro-American Populations” compulsory at all levels of education; the policy of university quotas for poor and black students, and other measures inspired by affirmative action. As well as that, a focus on programmes of bilateral collaboration known as a *Sul-Sul* (South-South) perspective in external politics inspired the celebration of Africa and aspects of the African origins of the Brazilian people. There was a slow but steady growth in African studies, especially of the continent’s history and anthropology, in Brazilian universities, which for the first time recruited specialists in their fields – many of them young. Attention was given to collective land rights on ethno-racial bases, to maroons, riverines, as well as traditional indigenous populations, while at last a new cultural politics sprang up whose guiding principle can be expressed concisely as the inclusion and patrimonialization of both concrete and abstract – or tangible and intangible – culture. The Brazilian Ministry of Culture and the State Secretaries of Culture launched a series of projects using completely new terminology within the sphere: Creative Commons, a new museum policy, cultural sites, territories of identity, ethnic tourism, and so forth.

As a result, the term “diversity” has now become a fixture in the Portuguese language, as something positive which should be maintained, being seen nowadays as a bonus for the Brazilian nation. For the first time in the history of the country, old “problems” such as Africa, the Negro, and the Indian have become, albeit gradually and contradictorily, a bonus. To that we may add the development and popularization of the notion of abstract or intangible culture, with a growing list of artefacts – such as *samba de roda*, the carnival parade of the Sons of Gandhi in Salvador, the Brotherhood of the Good Death in Cachoeira (Bahia), and musical instruments and traditional rhythms that had previously always been defined as essentially regional. It is a list whose tendency is to grow at an exponential rate, above all when local governments begin to discover that their culture “has value,” as in the case of the municipality of São Francisco do Conde, the richest of the State of Bahia because of the royalties deriving from the huge oil refinery in its territory, which, in 2006, proclaimed itself the “Capital of Culture.”

The new questions of the social verticality of a historically unequal country, with the emergence of more sophisticated and more specific demands of citizenship, create new sensitivities in the fields of authorship and

intellectual property, image rights, authenticity, reparation demands, willingness to become a subject and to speak for oneself. All that puts limits on the freedom with which, when seeking to legitimize themselves, the various elites can appeal to the people.

All such novelties, sometimes at odds with each other, make possible a new configuration not only of the constructive process of collective identities, but also of memory, as much of subaltern groups as of the State, which alters and broadens the range of symbols within which identities are recreated, as much sectional as national. As mentioned, the process goes hand in hand with the rediscovery and reinvention of Africa.⁴

Now let us consider in more detail how, within a context of complex and changing cultural politics where many actions can be developed for the first time, the task of creating a type of ethno-racial museum, or rather an ethnographic one, might be more complex than first thought, even if in a digital format as in our case.

Preserving African and Afro-Brazilian Memory

The Digital Museum of African and Afro-Brazilian Memory began as a digital version of an anthropological archive and was therefore initially called the Digital Archive of Afro-Bahian Studies. Then, as it developed, it incorporated historians, curators, and library scientists into its team and network. The term “African” was included in the name to reflect the establishment of a series of exchanges with African archives and museums operating within a context that enriches the project in two ways. First, they have a great deal of documentation and material stemming from the colonial and – unfortunately to a much lesser extent – post-colonial imagery of Africa and black people there. Second, they are eager to develop new approaches and technologies for preservation, to ensure accessibility of documents, and to create digital exhibits. As regards the latter, for example, some of the staff of the Historical Archives of Mozambique have received training in the critical use of digital technologies in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, and it is hoped that in the near

4 On this process of the patrimonialization of aspects of popular culture together with a new reinvention of Africa, see, among others, the two recent anthologies edited by the author: Livio Sansone (ed.), *Memórias da África. Patrimônios, museus e políticas das identidades* (Salvador: Edufba, 2012); Livio Sansone (ed.), *A Políticas do Intangível. Museus e patrimônios em novas perspectivas* (Salvador: Edufba, 2012).

future something similar can be organized for the staff of INEP, the main research centre of Guinea Bissau. Those institutions receive various equipment from foreign donors, but the local staff are not trained in what to digitize, nor how to do it and why, for example because information might have some use in the future even if it seems to have little use now. Also, there is hope concerning the production of an open-source prototype of a digital museum that could be used by African researchers to make their own museum, if they wish, in partnership with our Museum. Such a digital museum could also be the engine for joint semi-presential training and even graduate courses – where the same language, Portuguese, rather than an end in itself, comes to represent a useful tool. Distance learning at graduate level, in association with our digital museum galleries – each of which produces documents, courses, material, animation, and so on⁵ – is a new frontier that could be of special interest in regions such as much of Brazil and Africa.

It is worth noting that Brazil is one of the countries in the Americas with the closest connections to the African continent, where ancestral links emerge in our everyday life in an intense way, often leading us to think of them as authentic Brazilian manifestations, so much so that we forget their real origin. To that may be added the effort the current Brazilian government is making to become diplomatically closer to African countries, and of course commercial interests in pursuit of new markets for Brazilian goods, services, and technologies are a key factor. Yet all of that goes together with policies and practices that stimulate academic and scientific exchange with African institutions, as well as increase the number of grants to encourage the exchange of students and scholars – especially Lusophone – between African and Brazilian academic institutions for research and experience purposes. Until recently Brazil has traditionally been a country that received a good number of scholars from the North, but very few Brazilians ever gained experience of research abroad – certainly not in the Global South. Even though the situation is not free from self-interest, especially when it concerns large companies now investing in Africa, there is a fair degree of genuine curiosity and potential generosity towards Africa among many Brazilians.

The Digital Museum can be understood as a democratizing zone in

5 In July 2013 we plan to launch our first national digital exhibition, called “Brazilian Houses;” in 2014 we will have our second one: “Blacks and Football.”

which relations of otherness and constructions of identity are produced, that is, forms of recognition of local, regional and national emotional affiliations. By its very nature, it is also an easily accessible, dynamic, and interactive device that mirrors the daily life and culture of different communities, ethnic minorities, and marginalized groups that are recognized by their common values, traditions, and local affiliations, and their individual and collective memories.

The Museum is also a conceptual space that stimulates the use of the social memories of ethnic minorities and social movements, and of national memory in general. In that sense, the idea of constructing an archive and museum of living memories, transmitted on the Internet, demands a meaningful dialogue on matters related to both tangible and intangible ethnic heritage involving different users. Such a proposal will contribute to the integration of classical and popular culture, while also permitting a younger audience – the primary consumers of new technology – access to cultural benefits as a strategy to create new sensibilities and knowledge.

The preservation of the memory and intangible heritage of the Afro-Brazilian population and the question of image rights represents a more than current issue. In Brazil, little has been done to preserve the memory of the conflicts and daily life of the Afro-Brazilian population; indeed, their museums, galleries, archives, and centres of documentation are few in number and in poor condition. The effort required to preserve such memory is still lacking within the large institutions that should perform that function, above all the National Library (BN) and the National Archive (AN), but also within the more specialized archives such as the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation (Fundaj) in Recife and the Edgard Leuenroth Archive at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp) in São Paulo state. I anticipate that our Digital Museum project will try to raise the awareness of those institutions too, in the sense of getting them to include among their priorities the “black issue,” meaning race relations, racism, and Afro-Brazilian culture. They must review their collections, and change their indexing systems to include terms such as race or colour, racism, Negro, Afro-Brazilian, and Africa. Finally, priority must be given to those topics in their exhibitions and publications.⁶

6 The special issue of the National Archive’s magazine, *Acervo*, published in 2010 and dedicated to the Negro is indicative of a positive change.

Although it can be difficult and painful to recall the time of slavery, above all when it has left its long-lasting mark in contemporary inequalities such as racial discrimination, and especially when it still affects the majority of the population, it is now positively necessary to do so.⁷ The federal law of 2003 that demands the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian cultures as a part of the social sciences cannot be effectively implemented without the preservation of collections of documents, visual images of all sorts, and audio-visual materials including interviews with black *mães/pais-de-santo* – who are the priestesses and priests of Afro-Brazilian religions – activists, politicians, and intellectuals; or sound recordings of *samba de roda* groups, *congadas*, *ternos de reis* and so on. In other words, one way of giving visibility to the Afro-Brazilian population is to ask oneself what is the best form of nurturing their memory and their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. We must ask too what use to make of such memories, for there is a variety of possible uses, including academic, within the context of activism, documentary, or purely commercial.

Along with the need to preserve memories, sounds, and images, there are other developments in Brazilian society that must be confronted fully and openly. In the recent years of the consolidation of democracy in Brazil, the notion of citizenship has been expanding in the sense of incorporating the desire for greater control by the individual over public use of the image of the citizen, above all the black citizen. What then is the best way to understand and overcome the dilemma that seems to set the duty to preserve the collective memory of the Afro-Brazilian population's experience against a growing demand by them for the right to control how photographs, images, lyrics, and songs produced by blacks or associated with them are published and circulated?

Our Digital Museum project considers that tension and so works by a code of conduct that safeguards the individual's right to images while realizing the need to exhibit them, and to listen to recordings and read texts produced by blacks. We must satisfy the growing curiosity about African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture which exists throughout the extensive layers of the population, and we must reveal above all those who, until now, have not been properly represented but have been condemned to silence or invisibility. And how do we cope with the new tensions that result from the

7 Livio Sansone, "Remembering Slavery from Nearby. Heritage Brazilian Style," in: Gert Oostindie (ed.), *Facing Up to the Past: Perspectives on the Commemoration of Slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe* (London: Ian Randle/James Currey, 2000), 83-89.

process by which certain cultural forms, finally “discovered” and, at times, defined as intangible heritage, pass suddenly from invisibility to hyper-visibility, such as happens when, for example, a hitherto very “local” samba de roda group is introduced to play in the media spotlight (samba de roda is a genre of samba recently registered on the list of intangible heritage maintained by the IPHAN)?

To patrimonialize Afro-Brazilian heritage also implies, in some form, defining what that culture is, from what elements it is composed. The need to determine the particular traits of a culture is in tension with the dynamic notion of culture that is today canonical in all the social sciences. In fact, we need to build a consensus around what we might call the common denominator of Afro-Brazilian culture.⁸

Other challenges are offered by the large size of the Afro-Brazilian population, which, far from being a minority, comprises more than half the total population of Brazil, and the huge variety of cultural expressions associated with the black population. There is also the importance of the “black question” in Brazilian history. The dilemma is that, far from being able to reflect such grandeur and complexity, our Digital Museum must necessarily make a selection of expressions, themes, and areas case-by-case and region-by-region but without thereby falling into the trap of reductionism.

New communication technologies have a profound impact on the construction of collective memory and its relationship with the process of identity. The assumption of an identity today is not a process or project carried out by the same methods as were used before the popularization of the Internet and the mobile telephone, and all their digital trappings. It is necessary to reflect more closely on the interface between technology and the way we remember, celebrate, choose, and organize our ideas as much in our own minds and thoughts as in relation to those of others.

Virtual or digital museums should not be seen as substitutes for physical ones; digital and physical visits – or tactile and digital experiences – should be seen as complementary rather than adversarial. However, I am acutely aware of the irony by which digital museums, as well as intangible heritage, seem in some way to be the “solution” to the historic lack of museums in the Global South, as it is the Global North that focuses more on tangible heritage and

8 Livio Sansone, “Que multi-culturalismo para o Brasil,” *Ciência e Cultura* (SBPC) 59 (2007), 24-29.

physical musealization. I do not believe digital technology to be the solution in itself, but, without any doubt, it provides a new context and offers new possibilities. It should not, however, become a sort of sacred cow, and it must always be understood within the logic of politics – digital politics. The digital medium is a means, not an end in itself; in fact, we could say it is rather like learning a foreign language – useful only if you have something to say in it.

More than an antidote, the Internet reflects inequalities – and it makes them clear for others to see and interpret. Information passed via digital media, in the quantity and organization – or disorganization – that it restores, as Baudrillard would say, is a dilemma of a new aphonia opposite the new plethora of information, in which knowing how to choose becomes a question of status – knowing how to choose defines one of the principal characteristics of the new intellectual elite. Facing these new challenges and possibilities may be similar to what Gramsci suggested in relation to activism: we need to be (techno) sceptical, but allowed to be moved by the optimism of digital action.

A Museum without Owners

The Digital Museum began in 1998 at the dawning of the International Advanced course in ethnic and racial studies called “Factory of Ideas” (www.fabricadeideias.ufba.br), at the Center for Afro-Asian Studies, Candido Mendes University, in Rio de Janeiro. Since 2002, the Factory of Ideas has been part of the Graduate Program in Ethnic and African Studies at the Center for Afro-Oriental Studies at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). The museum began with a collection of newspaper and magazine articles in the Brazilian press about a Negro movement, racism, and Africa. The pieces were initiated under the coordination of Carlos Hasenbalg, and received funding support first from the Mellon Foundation and later from the Sephis Programme for the rescue of archives in danger. Our Digital Museum project intends to take advantage of the international network of almost 450 researchers, developed thanks to the sixteen editions of the International Advanced course. Ideally, each of the researchers will be able to become a collaborator in our interactive museum project – providing the digital copy of documents as well as suggestions, criticism, and contacts. Our Digital Museum is, indeed, desperately keen to acquire a large network of reception antennas.

Our Digital Museum has already received support from important national and international groups, including the Prince Claus Foundation, the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), the Co-ordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), Financier of Studies and Projects (FINEP), and the Research Support Foundations of the States of Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and Maranhão. We have established a series of institutional partnerships with the Brazilian Association of Anthropology, among other bodies. We are participants in the network of the Virtual Memory of the National Library Foundation (FBN) and are developing a partnership with the National Archive (AN), which means we shall soon be able to prioritize the question of the Negro, since the AN recently highlighted the subject of torture during a fascinating digital exhibition. Through the Dspace platform, the FBN will be our digital repository and, with continually updated resources, will hold high-definition digital copies (300 dpi) of all the documents our Digital Museum makes available.⁹ The documents in our Digital Museum can be used freely for educational and research purposes, it being sufficient to cite the original text and our Digital Museum. Anyone requiring high-definition copies, perhaps for publishing purposes, will be able to obtain them from the appropriate sector of the FBN.

Our collection is as much “inherited” from already extant archives as it has been created from scratch through new research and document acquisition. Inheritance of documents refers to the digital copy recuperation process, be it total or partial, from collections already present in the archives – copies that we can exhibit in themed galleries composed of documents from various archives.¹⁰

In order to describe what is involved in the creation of our collection, it is useful to refer to four policy concepts that guide our work: digital repatriation, digital donation, digital ethnography, and digital generosity.

Digital repatriation: We suggest to foreign archives that they continue to conserve original documents, but urge them to be altruistic with the digital copies, which we believe should be circulated freely without any significant

9 Initially, they will be in a lower resolution (64 dpi) to allow quicker navigation, or owing to copyright restrictions.

10 This is an idea developed at a meeting with the AN team in 2009, where the director, Jaime Antunes, proposed that our DM could also function as an archive of archives.

cost of reproduction, thus permitting researchers to analyse documents without necessarily having to interrupt their work to travel abroad.¹¹

Digital donation: We intend to inspire a policy and practice of making available documents that were previously difficult to access or entirely inaccessible. We mean to do that through our homepage, by means of a digital transfer tool already available there, and, indicating the National Library as a digital repository, through the Dspace platform. We do not wish to keep original documents nor items, but only to digitize them, archive them, and display them as museum pieces in our virtual galleries. The originals will be returned to their owners, after cleaning if necessary, using improved methods of storage according to the criteria of the most up-to-date archival science. We aspire eventually to be a museum without owners. In certain cases, especially when there is a risk that original documents might be lost or suffer damage, perhaps through poor earlier preservation or because they might be sold abroad or lost to private collections, then retention of such items can be mandated within an archive or public library as documents of public interest, both in order to avoid their being sent abroad – as often happened in the past – and to facilitate the sourcing of resources for proper conservation. The value of correct conservation processes cannot be over-estimated, above all in relation to the north-east of Brazil, where there is a grave shortage of public institutions, whether public archives, libraries, or museums. Furthermore, north-east Brazil seems to be a region where the public visit such facilities much less, as Myrian Santos has noted.¹² That is why that region, with its large black population, is where we will focus our attention, although of course with no detriment to other regions, in our campaign to raise awareness of digital donation.

11 We already have copies of documents from leading researchers (see website), either repatriated or donated, with the support of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC, the Archive of Traditional Music at the University of Indiana at Bloomington, the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center at Howard University, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library, the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies at Northwestern University, the UNESCO Archives in Paris, and the AEL at UNICAMP, in the case of Donald Pierson's collection. We are slowly perusing/researching those collections of great interest to us in Brazil, in the BN, AN, Fundaj, and other smaller archives (such as the Geographical and Historical Institute of Bahia, the Jair Moura da Capoeira Archive, the private collections of researchers, activists, Candomblé houses, trade unions, and collectors). We completed the first national inventory at the seminar to launch our DM on 10-11 June 2010.

12 Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos, "Museums Without a Past: The Brazilian Case," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6-2 (2003), 180-201.

Digital ethnography: This method addresses the reception of documents and at the same time the awareness of specific communities, in the sense of adhering to the movement for digital donation. We will do this through research in the field by means of a mobile digital scanning station and, later, a sort of travelling museum, permanently under development and never seeming to be finished, searching out its audience and creating moments of drama, for example about memories of slavery in the Bahian Recôncavo.

Digital generosity: This point sets out from the premise that we are experiencing a new and growing anachronism in the process of creating the diffusion of knowledge: today, more books than ever, and texts in general, of an academic nature are being produced and edited and they can be more easily and quickly translated than before too. However, the use and interpretation of such information is not so easy to put into context; indeed, text and context go hand-in-hand less than ever before. Was it ever possible to trace the genesis of a text and complete an authentic archaeological investigation of its production process without being able to base our reflections on field notebooks, notes, writings, sketches, and the exchange of letters that the archaeology of knowledge thinks it is today? Hypertext is already penetrating our research practices, and the daily exchange of opinions between colleagues. Few bother to save their emails, which are always too often and frequently written according to what the philosopher and writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger, in referring to the late 1960's European community talk-radio stations, called "filthy discourse" – grammatically imperfect and full with jargon, invented terms and dialect.¹³ On the other hand, in its exploration of new methodological frontiers the Internet could well become a great new way to share research experience. Learning to share both secondary and even primary data where possible, suggestions, tips, questions, answers, annotations – all this is possible through the Internet. In some cases, perhaps as a way of becoming the subject instead of just the object of research, our own sources will be able to have a presence on the Digital Museum's homepage, at least the key ones will, those who care most about maintaining contact with others who are researching their subjects' individual and collective reality. In that sense, a prototype portal might be created where researchers could

13 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *The consciousness industry: On literature, politics and the media* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

exchange their experiences within a sort of chat room inside our Digital Museum – collective curatorship that benefits from the opportunities created by the internet for new forms of crowdsharing and crowdsourcing.

With respect to copyright, we believe in the philosophy that guides the Creative Commons movement: citation is necessary, but payment is not. As part of our Digital Museum’s work, questions of copyright arise with the use of software in accordance with image rights, the safeguarding of privacy, and the digital reproduction of a document and its subsequent availability on the Internet.

Documents in the Digital Museum

We began the Museum with a series of collections featured in the United States and France which, until then, had not been available to a wide Brazilian audience because they were either not digitized or were unavailable online. The virtual “repatriation” of those records, in cooperation with foreign institutions that provide digitization and availability through the Internet, has been the first stage of our programme, although it is still incomplete because many pieces remain in the collections of foreign researchers which are more difficult to access.

It is important to specify what we mean by a document in the context of our Digital Museum. It is, of course, well known that the term “document” is polysemic and that every document is in fact a monument. As far as digitization is concerned, which documents we select are the results of policy, decisions, and processes of monumentalization and patrimonialization. Specifically, the documents to which we give priority are taken from a wide range that obviously includes written sources, but is not limited to the written record in the narrower sense. We are interested in printed material such as newspaper articles, minutes of meetings, unpublished original texts, private documents, letters, poetry, traditional recipes both culinary and medicinal, photographs, iconography, sound recordings and music scores, testimonials both pre-recorded or produced ad hoc by our own team, prayers, tunes, reproductions of cultural objects or artefacts, and film footage and recordings of cultural or political events. Above all we consider:

1. Documents, whether already in archives or private collections. That is as much the files “about” the Afro-Brazilian population as, to a lesser extent,

- the records produced by Afro-Brazilian anthropologists, intellectuals, artists, activists, religious leaders, and so on. We can be a Museum of Museums and an Archive of Archives: for example, we can hold temporary exhibits alongside pieces from different archives or museums – pieces that could then be exchanged through a digital lending policy.
2. Documents secured or produced by researchers which we then circulate online, authorizing either their partial or full publication during or after the completion of research.
 3. Documents created from scratch, above all their appropriation when there are no previous records. These may be testimonies, photographs, music recordings, and so on. It might refer also to previously produced documents recording or registering as a determined group or community receives our project and researchers – as people receive, comment, and sometimes dramatize images and documents about their own reality that we present for them. This last form of acquiring documents and registering the Afro-Brazilian memory we should like to call “the barnstorming museum” – the type of museum as mobile, as it is eternally unfinished, seeking and in fact creating its own audience.

How we Choose the Records

For the recovery of the Afro-Brazilian memory, well-known figures in the social, political, and intellectual life of Brazil interest us as much as do the anonymous and unknown ones – for example, *mães/pais-de-santo*, or the first classes of students admitted to a public university as a result of the new quota system.

The site, with dynamic ideographic screens, will be continually updated as new material is produced so that subjects and researchers can communicate about documents already online and add others according to the principles of generosity and digital donation. In that sense, our project provides constant research and the updating of software or more adaptable platforms to facilitate content management and the creation of digital repositories.

In the first instance at least we consider documents and materials produced by people who identify themselves as black or Afro-Brazilian, because that is where the main need resides, and alongside them we look for material on Afro-Brazilian religious leaders, black activists, trade unionists, classical

and popular musicians, capoeira schools and teachers, maroon community leaders, NGOs concerning the Afro-Brazilian population, the Catholic Church (especially the Pastoral Care of the Negro) and some Pentecostal churches, and the personal archives of components of the black elite.¹⁴ Important too will be records still unpublished or, if already published, to which access is difficult, records produced “about” or “for” blacks or Afro-Brazilians, records of race relations, and more general material about a variety of figures either from the professional or intellectual worlds who have observed the reality of circumstances throughout the history of Brazil. Of interest too are travellers, missionaries, diplomats, faith workers, essayists, journalists, anthropologists, and other social scientists.

Internal Structure: A Head Coordinator and a Network of Collaborators

We are working with regional teams that enjoy full autonomy, based in four of the Brazilian states, namely Maranhão, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, and Bahia.¹⁵ Our Digital Museum is a research instrument with the characteristics of a public service and works with a headquarters team of researchers and technicians, and then a wider network of collaborators. They include active researchers in the academic field, and with them collectors, self-taught researchers, activists, and curators. However, our Digital Museum should be more than a digital archive. We hope visits will be made on various levels, and there will be interaction between users and the Museum, including the creation of points of memory and document reception in the public spaces. We want to operate through the Internet, with the support of our advisory board, which unites researchers, curators, intellectuals, artists, and activists from various countries and meets periodically via videoconference, as well as with the support of an association of friends of the Digital Museum, who can be relied upon and will

14 We are relying here on the research of Angela Figueiredo and Ivo de Santana, both associated with our research group.

15 Thus far, our DM has teams from the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE), the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), and the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). Each team has its own homepage, but all are synchronized with the project's homepage and they use the same software, differing primarily only in their graphic appearance and the way in which they musealize documents or favour the recovery of certain endangered files, or the creation of new documents, or even the organization of galleries on the basis of documents already present in paper archives.

inspire a virtual discussion of our Museum, on our homepage.

Collaboration can take various forms. Digital material can be donated, there is suggestion and criticism, or someone can take on the job of constructing and curating a virtual gallery consisting of a set of documents focusing on a specific topic made available to the Museum from various sources. Our policy is to ask individual researchers to be responsible for the construction of “their” gallery.

Challenges

Our first phase of activity has brought with it a series of enormous challenges. We had to make quick decisions about dealing with things such as authenticity (what is an authentic document?); originality (which documents to choose within frequently quite large groups?); property (which property to recognize or reject? And to what extent?); exclusivity (that phenomenon finding expression among historians as the category “my documents” and among anthropologists as “my informants”); copyright, image rights, and privacy (can everything be made public? What is public or private; why, for what purpose; and whom to ask for authorization?); the status of the researcher (what to do with the self-taught ones); whether and how to incorporate the archives of social movements, associations, and NGOs; what type of exchange to weave with other virtual or digital museums; what relationship to maintain with projects of archive digitization, for example in Africa – it must be for the exchange of technology or of documents on subjects of transatlantic importance, such as miscegenation, elites or colonists of colour, and racist iconography.

Our Digital Museum will also be a museum of race relations and hierarchies such as that of racism. The testimony of both blacks and whites will be as important as records found in documents, processes, or newspapers. To place racism into the context of a museum, even a digital one, naturally demands that we reflect on what it means to contemplate pain and evil. Reflections on the Holocaust and slavery, and museums of apartheid, will therefore be a source of inspiration.

Finally, our project is challenged by having to develop new forms of virtual musealization, creating galleries that take advantage of documents and pieces of our own and other digital archives, to make them dynamic and

somehow spectacular. In short, how does one make a contemporary virtual museum thrilling to a wide variety of audiences?

Our Digital Museum, through it all, is as much a public service as it is a tool for research and to stimulate reflection upon the social sciences and their applicability, particularly to the questions raised by the development of the new Brazilian-style multiculturalism, and the relationship between new communication technologies and the use of human memory. We want to make a concrete contribution to the creation of a new geopolitics of knowledge. To create museums and archives from the South and from a *Sul-Sul* (South-South) perspective, even in the case of digital or virtual experiences, will contribute to reversing traditional ways of associating place with knowledge and with the preservation of knowledge. Therefore, we believe it is sensible to start thinking about a new, more critical and less “natural” conservation policy – one that will question the current relations of power surrounding the process.

Translated by John A. Mundell

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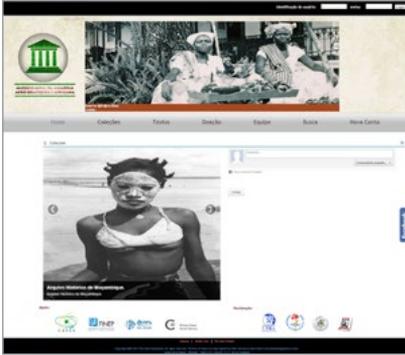
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A glimpse of our digital collections

The entire set of collections, with documents from a vast variety of sources relating to different time periods , can be browsed on the websites of the four stations of our digital museum:



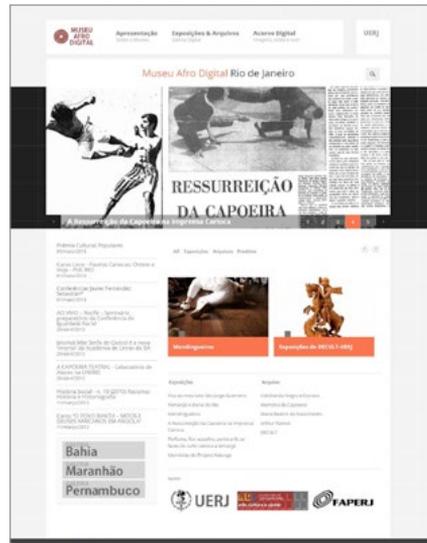
Bahia
www.museuafrodigital.ufba.br



Maranhão
www.museuafro.ufma.br



Pernambuco
www.museuafrodigital.com.br



Rio de Janeiro
www.museuafrodigitalrio.org

Selection from the Bahia station collection

The following photos have been made available to our Digital Museum by 'digital donation' or 'digital repatriation' resulting from collaborative projects with a number of institutions and individual scholars in Brazil and abroad. In some cases, such as with the Schomburg Center, digital photos and the right for 'one time use', for posting on our website, have been purchased, generally at a reduced price because we are a non-profit user. I thank Jamie Anderson, graduate student at the Program of Ethnic and African Studies, Federal University of Bahia, for helping to contextualize Landes' pictures.



Figure 1 Woman with chalk paste on her face – about 1990

Collection African bodies

Source Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique (AHM)



Figure 2 Scarification in Northern Mozambique about 1965

Collection African bodies

Source Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique (AHM)



Figure 3 Slaves in the Bahian hinterland about 1880

Collection Digitalization Project of the State University of Feira de Santana (UEFS)



Figure 4 Portrait of E. F. Frazier

Collection E. Franklin Frazier in Brazil
Source Moorland-Spingarn Archive,
Howard University, Washington DC.



Figure 7 Woman in yard of the Gantois candomble house, Salvador, Bahia 1940.

Collection E. Franklin Frazier in Brazil
Source Moorland-Spingarn Archive,
Howard University, Washington DC.



Figure 8 Offer to the orixas, 1941

Collection Melville Herskovits in Brazil

Source Schomburg Center, New York Public Library System



Figure 9 The Bomfim Pageant, 1941

Collection Melville Herskovits in Brazil

Source Schomburg Center, New York Public Library System



Figure 10 1907 - 2 de Julho Square – Fresh water sellers

Collection Alvaro dos Santos Collection on the History of Salvador
Source Alvaro dos Santos' Private Collection



Figure 11 1930 - Aclamação Square

Collection Alvaro dos Santos Collection on the History of Salvador
Source Alvaro dos Santos' Private Collection

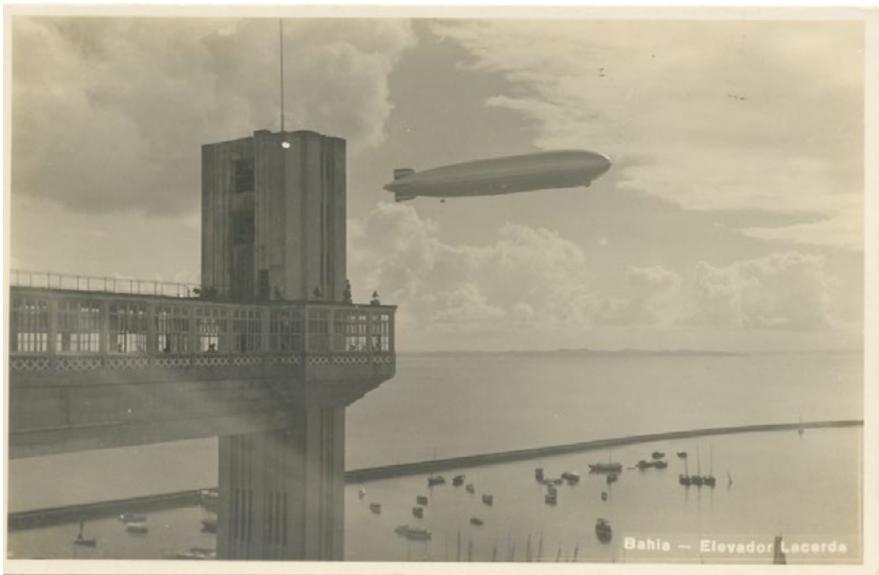


Figure 12 1930 – Zepelin over Salvador

Collection Alvaro dos Santos Collection on the History of Salvador

Source Alvaro dos Santos' Private Collection



Figure 13 1935 – Barra lighthouse

Collection Alvaro dos Santos Collection on the History of Salvador
Source Alvaro dos Santos' Private Collection



Figure 14 Comercio propagandista de rua 1 - Street advertising about 1930

Collection Alvaro dos Santos Collection on the History of Salvador

Source Alvaro dos Santos' Private Collection



Figure 15 Offer to the Orixas about 1950

Collection Alvaro dos Santos Collection on the History of Salvador
Source Alvaro dos Santos' Private Collection



Figure 16 Cable-car worker about 1920

Collection **Black Workers in Bahia**

Source **Cristiane Vasconcelos' Private Collection**



Figure 17 Cable-car workers, ticket control, about 1920

Collection **Black Workers in Bahia**

Source **Cristiane Vasconcelos' Private Collection**



Figure 18 Eulalia in her home, October 1938

Collection Ruth Landes in Brazil

Source National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institute, Suitland, Virginia



Figure 19 Osidagan, oxalá robe, Aché", October 1938

Collection Ruth Landes in Brazil

Source National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institute, Suitland, Virginia



Figure 20 Maria José with her daughter”, September 1938

Collection Ruth Landes in Brazil

Source National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institute, Suitland, Virginia



Figure 21 “Martiniano do Bonfim, Bahia”, August 1938

Collection **Ruth Landes in Brazil**

Source **National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institute, Suitland, Virginia**



Figure 22 *Mãe Menininha*”, Gantois, September 1938

Collection **Ruth Landes in Brazil**

Source **National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institute, Suitland, Virginia**



Figure 23 Sabina dressed as Iemanjá/baiana”, September 1938

Collection Ruth Landes in Brazil

Source National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institute, Suitland, Virginia

Kuahí

The Indians of the Lower Oiapoque and their museum

Lux Vidal

Abstract

In recent decades we have witnessed a proliferation of museums, including indigenous museums, with an emphasis on regionalization and active participation of the collectivities in which they are inserted. This article involves the implementation of the Museum of the Indigenous Peoples of Oiapoque, which was a request made by the four ethnic groups that inhabit the region – the Palikur, Galibi Kali'na, Karipuna and Galibi Marworno – to the governor of Amapá in 1998. Since then, projects and actions have been realized for the revival and strengthening of the cultural heritage of these peoples that inhabit the far north of Brazil, on the border with French Guyana. We present these actions, their consequences and the articulation among partnerships (with indigenous organizations, government agencies and NGOs), which led to the development and operation of a regional museological institution that is dedicated to housing, preserving and promoting the cultural archives of these peoples, and to training indigenous museology technicians, teachers and researchers. Finally we address the importance of the different collections about these indigenous peoples that have been formed over the past two decades and report of the exhibitions mounted at the Kuahí Museum in Oiapoque and at the Museum of the Indian in Rio de Janeiro, emphasizing the specificity of each.

Keywords: museum of the indigenous peoples of Oiapoque (Amapá); revival and strengthening of the cultural heritage; collections and exhibitions; tangible and intangible heritage.

Resumo

Nas últimas décadas assistimos a uma proliferação de museus, inclusive museus indígenas, com ênfase na regionalização e participação ativa das coletividades onde estão inseridos. Este artigo trata da implantação do Museu dos

Povos Indígenas do Oiapoque, solicitado pelas quatro etnias que habitam a região – Palikur, Galibi Kali'na, Karipuna e Galibi Marworno – ao governador do Amapá em 1998. Desde então se desenvolveu nas aldeias indígenas projetos e ações de resgate e fortalecimento do Patrimônio Cultural desses povos que habitam o extremo norte do Brasil, na fronteira com a Guiana Francesa. Apresentamos essas ações e seus desdobramentos, com a articulação entre parcerias (organizações indígenas, órgãos governamentais, ONGs) para o funcionamento e desenvolvimento de uma instituição museológica regional, que pretende abrigar, preservar e divulgar o acervo cultural dessas populações, incentivando a capacitação de técnicos em museologia, professores e pesquisadores indígenas. Abordamos, por fim, a importância de diferentes coleções sobre esses povos indígenas, formadas ao longo das duas últimas décadas e um relato das exposições montadas no Museu Kuahí em Oiapoque e no Museu do índio, no Rio de Janeiro, ressaltando a especificidade de cada uma.

Palavras-chave: museu dos povos indígenas do Oiapoque (Amapá); valorização e fortalecimento cultural; coleções e exposições; patrimônio material e imaterial.

Kuahí

The Indians of the Lower Oiapoque and their museum

Lux Vidal



Photo: Francisco Paes

Introduction

In the 1980s and 1990s large ethnographic exhibitions were organized in Brazil and abroad, giving visibility to the material productions of indigenous peoples, especially the aesthetic of art made with feathers. In 1980 the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo presented an exhibit curated by artist Norberto Nicola, whose tapestry art was strongly influenced by indigenous featherwork. In 1992 a show called “Indians in Brazil: alterity, diversity and cultural dialog,” was part of a broad cultural program to celebrate 500 years of “discovery” of the Americas. The Bienal de Artes of 1983 had a display of indigenous art; and the Rediscovery Exhibit in 2000, mounted at Oca in Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo to commemorate Brazil’s 500th anniversary also highlighted a module called Indigenous Arts, to mention just a few. The large exhibition (1980-81) “Arte Plumária do Brasil” [Feather Art of Brazil] was presented at Itamaraty in Brasília, at the National Museum of Bogotá, at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, at the Anthropological Museum in Mexico City, in Madrid and at the Fundação João Miró, in Barcelona. At that time, this contributed to giving greater visibility to indigenous peoples from a new perspective. Nevertheless, these exhibitions belong to the past, given that, according to environmental preservation laws, it is expressly

prohibited to hunt birds and sell products with feathers, which indicates the importance of the oldest collections of these artifacts, which are now preserved in museums.

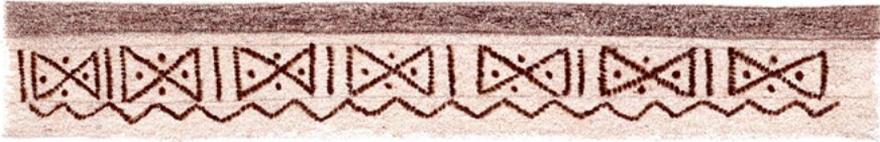
In academic circles, to the degree that studies about indigenous societies have advanced, the essential role of tangible and intangible expressions in the understanding of the dynamic and reproduction of Amerindian societies has become evident. These expressions include body painting, ornaments - especially feathered ones - masks, musical instruments, song and narratives.

This entire context encouraged many students to take interest in these issues among indigenous groups, resulting in courses, seminars, and in the 1992 publication of the book “Grafismo Indígena,” [Indigenous Graphics] with various contributions, and which is now a reference in the issue. Over time, it became increasingly clear that the study of the objects and aesthetic manifestations of the indigenous peoples constitutes a very promising field of investigation.

Recently, many researchers, influenced by perspectivism and by the concept of agency, in addition to conducting long periods of field work reinforced the cosmological aspects of indigenous art which is intimately related to shamanistic activities. For the Amerindians, art originates in the world of the invisible beings and their tangible manifestations are not only representations, but living things, beings that have agency. When art is defined this way, it becomes a fundamental factor in understanding how the Amerindian societies present themselves and represent the world. The result of these ethnographic and analytical efforts has been the production and publication of excellent monographs, articles and videos, which have made an important contribution to the anthropology of art.

All of these productions, however, take place only in the urban world, essentially in the academy and in traditional museums, far from the local contexts of the indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, in the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of the struggles for recognition of their lands and constitutional rights, there was a significant increase in the participation of Indians on Brazil’s national scene.

Today the indigenous peoples and their organizations include the category of culture in the preparation of their “life plans” or “sustainable development programs,” along with topics such as healthcare, education, territorial and environmental management,.



Doc 2 Graphic pattern of the Kuahí fish. Photo: Esther Castro.

On the other hand, since the enactment of Brazil's Constitution of 1988, Indians have the right to a differentiated education through the teaching of indigenous language and culture. Since today, in the villages, most of the teachers hired by the state are Indians, there is an interest and even a need to promote reflections about how to organize and transmit a significant archive of traditional knowledge, which is specific to each people and produce pedagogical materials that can be used in indigenous schools and cultural events. In this context, the indigenous museums perform an essential role by configuring themselves as institutions, although as independent spaces that are more free, informal and interactive and dedicated to the development of innovative actions and activities, places for experimentation. The indigenous museums also promote a range of partnerships for the concretization of projects and a more just and participative insertion in Brazilian society.

The Kuahí Museum

We have recently observed the proliferation of indigenous and regional museums throughout the world, a model that has been emphasized because it has specific characteristics, including active participation of the communities where they are inserted.

To better understand the specificity of the Kuahí Museum, it is important to offer some preliminary information about the region and the people that live there. First, the term Kuahí refers to a small fish found in the region and to the name of a graphic pattern that is commonly used in the decoration of a wide variety of artifacts (figure 1).

The indigenous peoples of the far north of Amapá, – the Karipuna, Palikur, Galibi Marworno and Galibi Kali'na – residents of the Uaçá River Basin and of the Lower Oiapoque River, are the result of various migrations and ancient and more recent fusions of different ethnicities, even non-Indians. They are bearers of heterogeneous cultural traditions, histories of contact and differentiated trajectories, as well as languages and religions.



Doc 3. Birds and heron in the flooded savannah. Photo: Fábio Maffei.

Over time these people have been able to coexist and construct a space for interlocution, particularly through their annual assemblies, which bring together the four ethnicities and their indigenous organizations. Despite their differences, a visible solidarity prevails among these people because they inhabit a single territory, they experience a common geopolitical situation, and maintain and reactivate relations of kinship and mutual assistance, as well as struggle together for land, healthcare, education, and infrastructure. They share a specific indigenous cosmology, which is Carib, Aruak, Tupi and also Christian, a distinctive factor that the Indians define as “our system.”

These people total a population of 7.000 Indians distributed in various villages and smaller localities on the indigenous lands of Uaçá, Galibi and Juminã, which have been demarcated and legally registered, configuring a large continuous area, which is cut on the west by federal highway BR-156 which links Macapá to Oiapoque.

Much of the indigenous population of the lower Oiapoque communicates in various languages; Portuguese and patois or *kheoul* (the regional *língua franca*), a native language of the Karipuna and Galibi Marworno; while the Palikur and Galibi Kali’na speak their respective languages in the villages. Some Indians also know how to speak French.



Doc 4. Photo: Lux Vidal.

The landscape typical of the region inhabited by the indigenous peoples of the Oiapoque is a flooded savannah, bathed by three large rivers the Uaçá, the Urucauá and the Curipi, in addition to countless tributaries, igarapés and lakes. The Oiapoque River marks the border between Brazil and French Guyana. The western portion of the indigenous territory has tropical forest with rich vegetation with many palm trees and meets the Tumucumaque Mountains; to the east are the Cassiporé River, Cape Orange and the Atlantic Ocean. The villages and the plantations occupy different islands. It is a region with many birds.

This territory is primarily a living space. The Indians have a refined knowledge of this vast rich and diversified region, which is always present in their myths and narratives. This entire landscape, according to the Indians, is inhabited by human beings, animals and vegetation and also by beings “from the other world,” which is manifest by the intermediation of the *pajés* or shamans. This is a predominantly aquatic world, whose cosmology emphasizes invisible supernatural beings that inhabit “the center of the forest and the depth of the waters.” The ancient cartographers called the region the “pays sous l’eau”, *peí ába dji ló*, in patois.

The indigenous communities maintain very close contact with the city



Doc 5. Village on a small island along the Curipi river. Photo: Lux Vidal

of Oiapoque and even with Saint Georges, in French Guyana, where they sell their agricultural products and artifacts, usually in the street or on the river bank.

Today, many infrastructure works are being executed in the region: the paving of federal highway BR-156 (which cuts through the indigenous territory) and will involve the removal of eight villages along the highway; the construction by the federal electrical company Eletronorte of a transmission line along the highway and the construction of a bridge, which has been completed, over the Oiapoque River, between French Guyana and Brazil.

History of the Museum

In 1997, after some indians traveled to Germany, France and Portugal accompanied by federal deputy Janete Capiberibe, indigenous leaders from the region proposed the creation of a museum in Oiapoque, at the center of the city, to give visibility to the indigenous culture and serve as a center of reference, memory, documentation and research for the Indians from the Lower Oiapoque. This proposal arose from the Indians' increasing desire to



Doc 6. Civic festival in the city of Oiapoque, in front of the Kuahí Museum. Photo: Marina Zacchi

participate, on equal grounds – even if in a differentiated manner – in regional and national life. Aware of their cultural and environmental wealth, of the possibilities for production and ethno-scientific, artisan and artistic promotion; and also aware of the possibilities for sustainable development and the urgent need for better school programs, the indigenous peoples of Oiapoque proposed the Kuahí Museum as a space that would encourage a vast range of activities, research and actions to benefit the indigenous communities and their initiatives as a whole.

The museum would also allow closer relations between the Indians and the population of the municipality of Oiapoque. The proximity with the indigenous villages, in turn, would insert the museum in its regional context facilitating the understanding of the collection, but remaining just far enough from the communities to allow a separation from daily life, leading the Indians to a more critical vision of themselves and their cultural heritage. In addition, it would allow the exchange with indigenous peoples and museums in Brazil and abroad, through agreements with institutions and universities.

Another objective of the museum would be to create alternative income

sources by means of planned sales of craft production. The museum would give visibility to the artifacts produced in the villages and above all, promote the knowledge of the master craftsmen and craftswomen and artists, and raise concerns about the sustainability of the raw materials used in their material productions.

Various Indians from the region have been to the Paraense Emilio Goeldi Museum in Belém and have seen photographs of the Magüta Museum of the Ticuna Indians on the Solimões River. These were the sources of inspiration for the preparation of the proposal for the construction of the Kuahí Museum.

The concrete proposal for the construction of the museum was presented by the indigenous leaders to the government of Amapá in 1998 and was formally included in the Sustainable Development Program of then Governor João Alberto Capiberibe.

Construction of the museum was initiated in 2000, and the Indians, with assistance from myself and Lucia H. van Velthem of the Paraense Emilio Goeldi Museum, presented the government a set of documents: a justification and objectives for the museum, by-laws, a list of equipment and related items. It was an innovative proposal because it was not a museum about Indians but by Indians.

As planned, the museum would be maintained by the Amapá state government and administered by the Indians themselves directly involved in all the activities. Courses and training workshops would be offered for the training of museology technicians to people selected by the indigenous communities. Effective support of a non-paternalistic nature for the indigenous communities and their cultural manifestations was expected from the government, understanding that the construction of the Indians' citizenship is based on their own values, dynamic and historic process.



Doc 7 Rear view of the Kuahí Museum. Photo: Lux Vidal.

The implementation of the Museum

Although the Kuahí Museum was only inaugurated in 2007, its presence had been felt since 2001 with the realization of the first training course in museology for a group of 20 indigenous people who were chosen by the communities themselves based on the schooling and interests of each participant. These courses were given in Oiapoque and Belém, at the Paraense Emilio Goeldi Museum and at the Museum of Art. In Belém, they also visited the Museum of the State, the Museum of Sacred Art, art galleries and locations in the city of historic and cultural interest.

In parallel, two cultural projects undertaken in the villages were of significant importance for stimulating the cultural revival that these indigenous peoples had witnessed. They involved two projects: “Cultural Revival and Strengthening,” undertaken by the Indigenous People’s Association of Oiapoque (APIO) in partnership with the Demonstration Program for Indigenous Populations of the Ministry of the Environment (PDPI/MMA); and “Cultural Heritage Managers Training,” undertaken in conjunction with indigenous teachers who work in the villages along federal highway BR 156, conducted by the Indigenous Educational and Research Institute (Iepé), in partnership with the program Petrobras Cultural.

The Cultural Revival and Strengthening project (APIO/PDPI), undertaken



Doc 8: Training workshop at the Museum Goeldi in Belém. Photo: Francisco Paes.



Doc 9: Training workshop in the Parochial House in Oiapoque. Photo: Lux Vidal.



Doc 10: Elderly shaman giving instructions to a young craftsman carving a ritual bench.
Photo: Lux Vidal.

with the Indians, sought to encourage the old craftsmen and women, in their own villages and places of traditional production, to transmit to the younger generations their knowledge, information and techniques related to a wide variety of material and immaterial artistic and craft manifestations. The goal was to guarantee the transmission of knowledge that was at risk of extinction, given that only a limited number of people still had this knowledge and most of them were quite old. This project considerably stimulated indigenous craft production in all the villages of the region.

According to Marina Zacchi who coordinated the project (Zacchi:2012), because of the way that it was conceived, the project would promote the transmission in the villages of knowledge that few people held, or that some held in a special manner. It was decided, however, to not use a workshop format. The project designated the detainer of knowledge as a master, giving him or her a distinctive status, suggested a small number of apprentices and supplied the needed material. It was up to the “master” to name the apprentices, and determine how, when and at what pace the transmission would be conducted. During the process, the anthropological coordination accompanied and registered the choices made.

The most interesting aspect of this experience was to observe the appropriation of the project in the villages, which was possible, actually, thanks

to the program's openness to the alterations suggested by the indigenous participants. Finally what was important was not if the cultural expressions would continue to be practiced or not. This necessarily is, and would continue to be, a choice made and remade by their producers, according to the meanings that the cultural expressions acquire in the course of history. The purpose was important to place the indigenous cultural expressions on the agenda to provoke a reflection on them.

Foreseeing the growing interest in the indigenous cultural expressions that resulted from the immaterial heritage policies instituted by Dec. 3551/2000 and promoted by its instruments, this project proposed preparing the Indians of the Oiapoque to assume the initiatives of promotion and diffusion of their cultural heritage and to give them a basis upon which they could chose the orientations for proposals made by possible partners.

In turn, the objective of the "Cultural Heritage Managers Training" – Projeto Iepé/Petrobras Cultural, was to prepare indigenous researchers to act as managers of their material and immaterial cultural heritage, by learning the procedures for selection, preservation, research, registration and internal and external promotion of their cultural goods. The villages located along federal highway BR-156 were chosen for the realization of this project due to their high vulnerability caused by the paving of the road that linked Macapá to Oiapoque and for which reason the villages would be removed. The project led to the appropriation on another level of the knowledge that these people held. It wound up stimulating reflections about the issue of ethnicity and others, such as the condition of indigenous women and the relationship between youths and elders. In each one of the villages, the formation of researchers acquired a format dictated by the local dynamic, although the dynamic of the project led the different ethnic groups of the Karipuna, Galibi Marworno and Palikur to dialog among each other.

These projects also stimulated initiatives and innovations by the Indians in the villages. A good example is the work with gourds, which are common artifacts in the daily rituals and religious contexts in the villages, and which serve many varied uses and which had not been previously considered as the object of an intervention project. But this wound up taking place, because of the initiative of craftswoman Edilene from Manga, a Karipuna village. What is interesting is that Edilene was not concerned with teaching the technique of engraving or dyeing gourds, which is known



Docs 11, 12, 13, 14: Gourds with figurative and traditional geometric engravings, representing local flora and fauna. Photos: Paulo Copolla (11-13) and Lux Vidal (14)

by many people. Edilene proposed researching the traditional markings, consulting the most elderly and registering the information obtained. Since she was a Galibi-Marworno who had lived for many years in a Karipuna village, she adopted as a procedure designing the gourds on paper and noting if the markings were related to both ethnic groups and if there were differences in the names attributed to them. In her research, she also registered the markings and information that she obtained in dreams about older relatives who had died, utilizing a traditional creative mechanism in which the aesthetic creation is linked to the invisible.

Another interesting aspect is that with the recent introduction of figurative motifs in the ornamentation, some men also began to engrave the gourds, an activity that in the past was exclusively for women. In the work by men, like that of Getúlio from the Kumarumã village, there are ornamental plants and animals and strong war scenes and shamanic confrontations. Also in the Kumarumã village, Manoel Azemiro Charles adopted his own way of working. Instead of engraving the motifs and later using *cumatê* paint, he engraves over a gourd that has been completely painted by his wife, so that

the design appears in white, standing out more than usual. The innovations introduced do not annul, but reposition the gender differences in the graphic expressions. These two examples show how the Indians, encouraged by these projects, began to take their own initiatives in relation to their cultural goods, conducting systematic surveys and introducing innovations.



Doc 16 – 19: Engravings applied by a man on gourds previously covered with kumatê paint by his wife. Photos: Paulo Copolla.

From inauguration until today

The Kuahí Museum was inaugurated on April 19, 2007 – the National Day of the Indian – with the presence of indigenous people, state governor Antonio Waldez Góes da Silva and other government authorities, representatives of the Amapá State Secretariat of Culture– Secult/AP, as well as the local population.

The museum is a public not-for-profit entity, with indirect government management, linked to the organizational structure of the Amapá State Secretariat of Culture.

The museum's inauguration, with a significant inaugural exhibit that occupied all of the spaces, would not have been possible without agreement 158/2005 between Secult/AP and the Ministry of Culture – MinC. This agreement allowed Secult/AP to furnish and equip the various installations. The museum now has exhibition rooms, proper storage space, an auditorium that is equipped and suitable for its public, a document processing room, a library, reading room, research room and pedagogy room. At the entrance, a large hall welcomes visitors and also includes a shop that sells crafts. There are also outdoor spaces such as a large veranda, which is used quite often. Thus, the museum has established an exhibit of indigenous crafts available to all the indigenous peoples and residents of Oiapoque, a collection that is quite representative and that is growing through new contributions. The books and magazines from the library have been increasingly requested by indigenous teachers and students to help them in courses. Indigenous teachers from other ethnicities in the region such as the Wayãpi and the Wayana, who are students at the Federal University at Amapá and who are taking courses offered in the city of Oiapoque, also use the library, and leave artifacts for sale in the museum store.



Doc 20: Reading room. Photo by Lux Vidal.



Doc 21: Research room. Photo by Lux Vidal.



Doc 22: Indigenous staff of the museum and assistants. Photo: Lux Vidal.

The agreement between Secult and Minc allowed the revival of an extensive and intensive professional education process, in museology and museographics for seventeen indigenous students who now work at the museum as technicians contracted by the Secretariat of Culture of Amapá State. From April 2007 until July 2009, work was conducted to train the staff members for the specific museum sectors for which each indigenous student planned to work. This process had the assistance of anthropologist Francisco S. Paes, who was hired by the Secretariat of Culture.

In 2007 the indigenous technicians at the Museum attended training courses in preventive conservation, history of indigenous America and of Amapá and administration and management. In 2008, training modules were offered in anthropology, archeology, community journalism and newsletter editing, textual reading and production, audiovisual language, museology, documentation, educational action and research methods.

Collections and Exhibitions about the Indigenous Peoples of the Oiapoque

An interesting aspect of the cultural revival activities in the villages, from the inauguration of the Kuahí Museum and the request for 250 objects for



Doc 23: Craftsman Joel dos Santos documenting a collection of ritual benches.
Photo: Lux Vidal.

the exhibit “The Presence of the Invisible – daily life and ritual among the Indigenous Peoples of the Oiapoque,” mounted in 2007 at the Museum of the Indian in Rio de Janeiro, is the formation of various collections, at different times and which when compared with each other reveal a lot about the history of the indigenous peoples of the Oiapoque, the role of the museum, documentation, anthropological research and the effective actions of cultural valorization and strengthening. From a comparative perspective of the various collections, each one acquires its own relevance, which reveals the characteristics and value of each one in relation to the others.

The Museum of the Indian in Rio de Janeiro has an old collection, from the 1940s and 1950s about the indigenous peoples of the Oiapoque, essentially about the Palikur. It includes valuable objects collected by Eurico Fernandes, a former employee of the SPI in the region and other indigenists. The documentation is deficient and the description is summary. There are pieces of feather art that the Indians no longer produce, or do so with different forms of decoration, as well as old clarinets, the famous *turé*, and delicate objects that serve as invitations for the rituals, in addition to small wood artifacts that the women used during rituals to ask for rain. There is also a collection of fishing equipment; which have not changed until today, they are the same artifacts made in

wood, *taboca* [a bamboo], *curuá* thread and hammered iron. In 2007, they had the same shapes and methods of regular use as in the 1940s and 1950s. On the other hand, comparing the typical Palikur hats, while in the past the neck covers, made of stripes of *buriti* palm trees, were always decorated with geometric shapes, today the indians paint more figurative designs with mythic themes or those of daily life, or even inspired from covers of magazines or DVDs.

We know that there is a Palikur collection in Europe, at the Museum of Gothenburg, but we have not consulted it. It is composed of objects collected by Curt Nimuendajú in 1926, when he studied in the region. There is also a small collection at the Paraense Emilio Goeldi Museum, which is not substantial and has little documentation, but has some Galibi-Kali'na ceramics from Oiapoque, crafts that are no longer produced, which were brought by the anthropologist Exedito Arnaud in the 1960s.

The first more systematic and documented collection, donated to MAE at USP was one that I conducted among the Palikur, Karipuna and Galibi-Marworno in the 1990s. The Indians made few artifacts for sale, mainly necklaces, but they used decorated gourds, baskets, especially for working with manioc, as well as graters and sculptures for the *turé* festivals - staffs and benches - as well as musical instruments.

This collection of 260 pieces was not based on an a priori plan, but resulted from field research that began in 1990 in the region by teachers and students of the anthropology department of the University of São Paulo, linked to the Nucleus of Indigenous History and Indigenous Studies. There is a good representation of all the categories of crafts, the objects are well-documented, but from an aesthetic perspective it is weak. The project of cultural revival had still not been started nor the research about the markings on the various mediums. Thus, it was a historic moment, it was the first collection that reviewed the beginning of studies among the indigenous peoples of the Oiapoque. It followed a theoretical line that emphasized the history and processes and recognized the heterogeneity of the cultural manifestations in the region. This collection is inserted among that older one, at the Museum of the Indian and of the two collections mentioned below, which are the fruits of the cultural valorization projects in the villages, and the research about indigenous cosmology, shamanism, immaterial culture and heritage, with the training of indigenous researchers, and the construction of the Kuahí Museum.



Doc 24. Photo: Paulo Copolla.



Doc 25.
Photo: Lux Vidal.



Doc 26 – 27: Feather hat used by men during the turé ritual with geometrical and figurative scenes. Photos: Lux Vidal.

Doc 28: War club. Photo: Miguel Chaves.



The collection of the Kuahí Museum includes more than 300 objects, which were produced in the villages for the Museum and which represent all of the most expressive artifacts of daily and ritual use as well as pieces made for sale. The collection also includes some archeological artifacts and wooden sculptures from the Palikur people, which are directly related to indigenous astronomy. At the large inaugural exhibit for Kuahí, in 2007, the Indians wanted to display the entire collection that they had. They mounted the exhibit, with little museological criteria, but which expressed a cosmological dimension, the relationship of the objects with the invisible. A *caxiri* beer vessel was placed on top of a support pillar and appeared like a *karuanã*, an enchanted object that dominated the other artifacts, especially the sculptures of supernatural beings. But in 2010, the museum team reorganized the exhibit. They did something very beautiful, but I was surprised, because now everything was divided, daily life in one place, and ritual life in another. And for each category exhibited, there was just one little thing, just one object. The Indians said that the way that it was before they could not explain to the school groups and other visitors the order of the exhibition. Thus, all the large sculptures, representing invisible and dangerous entities, were taken to the technical reserve space. On the week of the Indian of 2011, however, the Indians mounted in the Museum Hall a complete structure for the realization of a *turé* ritual, when those sculptures were placed again in that sacred space, indicating that in addition to being museum pieces, they are entities, people present in that context.

In sum, both for the collection of the Kuahí Museum and for the exhibition “The Presence of the Invisible,” at the Museum of the Indian, two large and very high quality collections of ethnographic artifacts were produced, a fact that surprised everyone, even the Indians themselves. When the artifacts collected in the villages along the various rivers reached the Kuahí Museum and were stored in two rooms while waiting for their destination, the group of objects caused quite an impact. Some Indians said that they had never seen certain artifacts, they did not know them. Others did not stop asking questions and taking pictures. In fact, they did not know that all these things still existed and could have value in other contexts. The artifacts gathered under the form of a collection represented something new for them, especially the collection for exhibit in Rio de Janeiro.

In the museum storage there is yet another collection, the result of the



Doc 29: Collecting objects in the villages. Photo: Francisco Paes.



Doc 30: Arrival of the collection at the Kuahí Museum. Photo: Francisco Paes.



Docs 31 – 34: Collected artifacts for exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, assembled at the Museum Kuahí.
Photos by Francisco Paes.





Doc 35. Geometrical symbolic patterns on basketry. Photo: Lux Vidal.



Doc 36. Carving of a shaman's bench representing a bird. Photo: Lux Vidal.

Cultural Revival project APIO/PDPI – MMA. While the elders passed on their knowledge to the younger ones, the artifacts produced were taken to the offices of APIO and stored in a room. They are valuable pieces, many of them experimental and testament to the great effort at the transmission of knowledge among the generations. The collection includes very old pieces that are no longer made, but also innovative pieces, both in terms of form and design. In 2007, this collection was included in the archives of the Kuahí Museum, but as a specific and separate collection, a witness to this work of revival.

In the same year, the Museum of the Indian, in Rio de Janeiro displayed the large exhibition mentioned above, “The Presence of the Invisible – daily and ritual life of the Indigenous Peoples of the Oiapoque,” an exhibit organized in partnership with Iepé – the Institute of Indigenous Research and Education, with support from BNDES.

At the time, the book was published *Povos Indígenas do Baixo Oiapoque – o encontro das águas, o encruzo dos saberes e a arte de viver*, [The Indigenous Peoples of the Lower Oiapoque – the meeting of the waters, a crossing of knowledge and the art of living], which was a publication made for the Indians and indigenous schools.

This exhibition was a risky but successful adventure. After the inauguration of the Kuahí Museum and the end of the Cultural Revival project, we thought of giving greater visibility to the shamanic, ritual and artistic expressions of the indigenous peoples of the Oiapoque. José Carlos Levinho, director of the Museum of the Indian – Funai (Brazil’s National Indian Foundation) who was responsible for the revitalization of this institution, suggested presenting a large exhibit. I had a specific conceptual proposal in mind and we assembled a team to execute it. A beautiful collection was



Doc 37: An outdoor turé dance at the inauguration of the exhibit at the Museu do Índio, Rio de Janeiro in 2007. Photo: Acervo do Museu do Índio.

acquired from different indigenous peoples of the region, and was collected and wrapped at the Kuahí Museum under the orientation of Francisco Paes, who was also responsible for bringing it to Rio de Janeiro with help from the Brazilian Air Force. To assemble the exhibit, we used older pieces from the archives of the Museum of the Indian, gathered in the 1940s and 50s by inspector Eurico Fernandes of SPI. Thus, old and poorly documented collections were reinserted in the museuographic context and served as a model for the Indians of today.

The central idea for the exhibit was to reveal the cycle that ran from diagnosing and curing the ill, the work that the shaman conducts in his home, in the *tocai*, smoking, singing, playing the *maracá*, conversing with the *karuanã*, the invisible, assisted by the *paliká* and an attentive audience, to the collective ritual, when this shaman organizes a *turé*, a public ritual, in which the invisible beings who helped in the cures are called to participate in the ceremony and honored with songs, dance and lots of *caxiri* beer. Among these two poles, where the cosmic dimension of the cures and festivities are emphasized, all the artifacts are presented that participate in this context, with their beautiful forms and ornamentation, the marks. The large hats stand out, as well as the ceramic dishes, the sculpted benches, the engraved gourds,



Doc 38: General view of the turé dance. Photo: Acervo do Museu do Índio.

the basketry and the musical instruments: the *cutxi* noise horns, the *turé* clarinets and the *maracás*. From the domestic environment are sacks of flour, hammocks, football trophies, the banner of the Holy Ghost, and a family altar with their saints, candles and colored ribbons.

Thirty Indians came to the inauguration, after having helped in the finishing touches and the mounting of the *laku*, a sacred space, in the Museum's outdoor grounds, where at night they presented a *turé*. The travel from Oiapoque to Rio in the rainy season along the rutted BR-156 had not been easy for them. But a visit to the Cristo Redentor made up for all the sacrifices.

In 2009, using the vast material produced during the execution of the Iepé/Petrobras Cultural project, a traveling exhibit was assembled with banners that circulated through the villages. This exhibit was the result of a workshop and publication (Iepé/Museu Kuahí:2009) related to the *turé* ritual complex, which is very present in the region, and which emphasized the cosmological aspects of this manifestation, the fabrication of the objects present in the ritual and their ornamentation, as well as the dance and music performance itself.

In 2009, the Kuahí Museum received an exhibit about the social organization of the Waiãpi, "Jane Reko Mokasia," encouraging greater approximation and exchange among the indigenous peoples of Amapá. This allowed the regional population and the Indians of the Oiapoque to have contact with that



Doc 39: Preparatory workshop of the cross-border exhibit, in the village of São José do Oiapoque. Photo: Anne Courtois Vidal.



Docs 40 – 41: The indian team of the Museu Kuahí preparing a new exhibit. Photos: Lux Vidal.

interesting material and know another cultural reality.

In 2010, on the day of the Indian in April, a cross-border exhibit was inaugurated, “Kali’na Tilewuyu Memory and Identity,” which was divided into two parts: “They left for the country of the white man - 1882 and 1892” and “The Galibi Kali’na Tilewuyu of Brazil - 1950-2010.”

This initiative was part of the educational activities of the indigenous researchers and of the cultural registration and valorization that was being conducted by the Iepé, in the realm of the project Strong Points of Culture “Art and Life of the Indigenous People of the Amapá and northern Pará,”

financed by the Institute of National Historic and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) of the Ministry of Culture (Minc).

Due to a greater approximation among the Indians on both side of the border, the idea arose to conduct a cross-border exhibit between Brazil and French Guyana, which would present historical facts about the Galibi Kali'na of French Guyana and the life and history of the Galibi Kali'na who migrated to Brazil in 1950, addressing different times and places, such as Brazil, French Guyana and Europe, from the universal exhibitions of the late 19th century until today. With these two faces, the historic and the contemporary, in different spaces, the exhibition was quite rich, because in reality it presented different histories, events and sea voyages in time and in space and encompassed various exhibitions organized since the 19th century, which were articulated with each other over time.

In May 2011, the Kuahí Museum received the ethnographic exhibit "Weaving Art, Weaving Life: Tiriyó and Kaxuyana women," organized by Iepé and the Museum of the Indian – FUNAI and assembled by the staff of Kuahí. The exhibit, which portrays the art of weaving with cotton, seeds and beads of the Tiriyó and Kaxuyana women, who live on the western portion of the Tumucumaque Indigenous Park in Pará, is the result of a program of cultural valorization underway since 2006, among women ranging in age from 12 – 80, from more than 20 villages. This exhibit was very much appreciated by the Indians and by the Oiapoque population due to the importance of the beads used both in making traditional indigenous artifacts and in contemporary jewelry.

In 2010 and 2011, as part of the activities of the project called Cultural Strong Point - Art and Life of the Indigenous Peoples of Amapá and northern Pará, the Iepé promoted a series of workshops about the production and sale of cassava flour, which resulted in the organization of a new exhibit at Kuahí and in a publication prepared by the Indians themselves.

The research activities were organized to join in the workshops the indigenous researchers of the Kuahí Museum and farmers from the villages. This procedure of integration produced a rich and varied collection of information, which came from the four indigenous groups of the Oiapoque, with narratives of daily experience and also narratives permeated by individual or group memories.

The researchers were responsible for registering traditional knowledge,



Doc 42 – 43: Preparing the exhibit on manioc fields and cassava flour production. Photos: Lux Vidal and Esther Castro.

organizing the data, editing and entering the texts, and for producing designs and photo albums. This research was published in the book, “A Roça e o Kahbe – Produção e comercialização da farinha de mandioca” (Iepé: 2011) “The Planted Ground and the Flour House – Production and Sale of Cassava Flour” and was conceived for use in indigenous schools.

It was quite significant to begin the workshop with the most subjective aspects: personal statements of each participant, memories of childhood and of the elders, the expression of emotions and feelings, at times explicitly ambivalent, something that wound up characterizing and differentiating each person in the light of their personal experience and life history.

The participants in the workshop did not feel foreign to the theme studied, but as protagonists of the research that expressed the importance that the indigenous peoples of Oiapoque attributed to agricultural activity, which is considered a central element of indigenous culture and as the principal means of subsistence and income, one that is reliable and sustainable.

The participants also agreed about the need to pay tribute to agricultural work and the farmers, while recognizing that the work is hard and tiring, which the myths reveal and confirm. The workshop and the promise of a publication and exhibit also had a positive repercussion in the villages, as it did among the indigenous teachers. Since the participants were representatives of the four ethnicities that inhabit the region of the Lower Oiapoque, there was an effort, to the degree possible, to register in the four native languages (Portuguese, patois, Palikur and Galibi) the name of the artifacts, the sequence of work in the fields, and the steps for processing cassava. The statements reveal the variety of procedures among the different ethnic groups.

An environment of mutual cooperation was created in the workshop



Doc 44 – 45: – Visitors from Brazil, French Guyana, Surinam and Guyana at the inauguration of the exhibit on manioc fields and cassava. Photos: Luís Donisete B. Grupioni.

activities, small workgroups were formed among the museum employees (who themselves are farmers in their communities, when they are on vacation) and the participants from the villages, who are fulltime farmers and recognizably better informed about the practices involved in the production of a variety of agricultural products. The information provided by these farmers caused admiration and respect. On the other hand, the museum employees, who are younger, better trained for research and the museographic activities such as registration and documentation, helped the indigenous people from the villages to record their talks by transcribing and translating narratives and myths, and typing and organizing the data, which pleased the people of the village, given that in most cases they were “relatives.” Everyone felt inspired and “at home” at the Kuahí Museum.

The curatorial proposal of this new exhibition was to make even more clear the steps of these continuous and daily activities, which extend from the field to local or regional commerce. A folder was organized and published at the time, to be distributed at the exhibition.

The scenographic project was conducted in two steps. A first with a scenography workshop realized at the Kuahí Museum in February 2012, when the indigenous researchers had the opportunity to receive instructions about theoretical issues and practices of mounting exhibits, such as measures and proportions of objects and use of space. They made models and miniatures of artifacts and reflected on the options to express the theme of the exhibition.

Later, at a second moment, in July 2012, an exhibit was assembled at the Kuahí Museum. The indians decided to use many panels with images and a few written panels. Aware of the command that they had of the theme, they preferred to present the exhibit as a script in which they, as the protagonists,

could communicate with the public orally. In the exhibition space, the objects that allow and supported these activities were displayed on stands, which were also restored and painted by the museologists from the Kuahí Museum. Choices must evidently be made in an exhibit, but certain themes were emphatically chosen by the Indians, such as the myths and symbolic practices related to the cultivation and processing of manioc.

All of the panels in the exhibit were translated to French, on separate cards, for the many tourists from French Guyana, who come especially in July and August. The part of the educational activities also deserved special attention.

In April of 2012 space was open to the public for the exhibit “Art and the Knowledge of the Masters.” It was an exhibit curated entirely by the Indians. From the choice of the theme, intellectual conception and scenography, it was conceived of and realized by the group of the Indian museologists of the Kuahí Museum.

The theme of the exhibition is the memory of the Demonstration Project of the Indigenous Peoples (PDPI), in which, at workshops in the villages, the master craftsmen taught the youth apprentices who were interested in the traditional arts.

This process resulted in a separate collection, called the PDPI Collection, which is now exhibited in the main exhibition hall of the museum. The artifacts exhibited present this experience of cultural revival and valorization undertaken in the villages between 2004 and 2007.

Just a few years ago it was common to hear the elders say that much knowledge ran the risk of disappearing because it was dominated by just a few masters who were already quite old. This exhibit shows the work and performance of the masters and their apprentices that gives continuity to their craft and artistic practices and which are promoted to the broader public that attends the Kuahí Museum. Since the artifacts are made by apprentices in conjunction with the masters, the exhibit shows various examples from different categories such as basket making, wooden sculptures, ceramics, indigenous jewelry, musical instruments, gourds, the hammock and its implements, in addition to the recording of litanies in Latin and the songs of the *turé*.

This exhibition also reveals the importance that the Kuahí Museum staff attributes to its own museographical archives, which was recently constituted, understanding that this collection represents the legacy of the recognized masters in indigenous lands as great craftsmen. It displays an awareness of

the importance of transmitting the knowledge between the generations and recognition of the work of the youths that participate in these activities. It is also a recognition by the museum staff of the importance of respecting the most elderly since they are the bearers of a tradition that can be lost if it is not periodically revived.

As an example of this curatorial proposal a room was reserved to present the works of a Mr. Wet, an excellent Palikur craftsman and artist and his disciples, highlighting their creations related to astronomy, such as sculptures about the constellations related to the rains “and to the great rituals, such as the Dance of the Flutes, the *aramtem*. In these dances, the shamans sculpt constellations in the form of wooden benches. To sit on the bench of the Great Snake, is thus to see the world from the perspective of this creature. The sculptures, in a certain way, become a way of seeing the world as did the stars of the rains.” (Green, Lesley and Green, David: 2011).

Another small room was reserved to exhibit only one Galibi Kali’na piece of great value, which was recovered during the project: a white cotton hammock made by two Galibi Kali’na women, one older and another younger, although it is an object that is no longer in use in the village. This single hammock is exhibited in a specific space, accompanied by a basket that has a wad of cotton and the spindle used to prepare the thread.



Doc 46: Basket with wad of cotton and spindle for preparing the White hammock. Photo: Lux Vidal.

These two craftswomen died in 2012 and there is no one else among the Galibi Kali'na of Brazil capable of spinning cotton and weaving this kind of hammock, for this reason this artifact reffers already to the past, although a recent one. A banner, with some explanations and photos of the two crafts-women, completes this spare and moving installation, which is important for the Indians of the region, and especially for the Galibi Kali'na.

Conclusion

These projects allow the Kuahí Museum to perform a role of great importance, by presenting the change in perception of the indigenous people about their own cultural production. From objects of common usage that can be sold or discarded, the artifacts of the collections are transformed into objects that serve as documents. This is a way to reconstruct the world of objects, leading to a process of reinterpretation and creation of meanings. This new positioning of the cultural production allows a different eye, which is distant and critical of this production. At the same time, it makes the administration of the cultural production more interesting and integrated to the modern world. The Kuahí Museum is also inserted in its regional context and close to the villages, so there is no danger of an extreme decontextualization, given that these artifacts continue to be used in the daily life of the indigenous communities.

The Kuahí Museum has been visited frequently and praised by the indigenous visitors, residents of Oiapoque and of all of Amapá, in addition to numerous tourists, especially from the Guyanas and France. The educational activities of the museum for the local elementary and high schools of the city



Docs 47 -48: Schools visiting the Museum Kuahí. Photos: Ana Paula N. Fontes.



Doc 49 : The America's Cup exhibited in the Kuahí Museum with the presence of local authorities. Photo: Lux Vidal.



Doc 50. A view of the main street of Oiapoque, from the Museum entrance hall. Photo: Lux Vidal.



Doc 51. Oiapoque public event held at the Museum. Photo: Lux Vidal.

of Oiapoque have also been important.

Another interesting aspect in relation to the Kuahí Museum is that the delay in its implementation led the Indians to appropriate it for themselves, as they made repeated calls for the government to inaugurate it. The museum thus appears to them as another conquest of the indigenous movement. As a consequence of this process, the Kuahí Museum is now considered to be one of the indigenous institutions in the region, along with the indigenous associations and FUNAI (which are also administered by the Indians), that is, the museum has become a political subject in the institutional indigenous context of the region, and has a power of representation. Moreover, many events in the city of Oiapoque are held at the museum, because of the good quality of the space that it offers, which also adds to the prestige of the Indians in the



Doc 52: Visitors meeting in front of the Museum. Photo: Lux Vidal.

urban and municipal context.

A question to be considered relates to the documentation. There is a concern about which documents should be included in confidential archives and only be accessible to the indigenous peoples, and which should be accessible to the public. That is, the museum raises a series of very current discussions about intellectual property and forms of documenting and promoting indigenous culture, not abstractly, but very concretely.

Translation: Jeffrey Hoff

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The Peoples of Oiapoque and the Kuahí Museum

Available at <http://vimeo.com/51218597>

Anthropologist Lux Vidal talks about her work with the indigenous peoples of Oiapoque, who belong to a variety of ethnic groups and her experience at the Kuahí Museum. . In 1998, leaders of those groups asked the Government of the State of Amapá for a museum. Since then, this museum has been a place for mediation and articulation between the indigenous peoples, the State and civil society. The possibility it opened up for conceiving and setting up exhibitions about different themes in indigenous daily life, has been a major force for the Peoples of Oiapoque, and their affirmation of ethnic identity.

Director: Regina Abreu. Interviewee: Lux Vidal. Editor: Luciana Lima. Photographer: Noilton Nunes. Archive Material: Kuahí Museum; Iepé; Museum of Indigenous People (Museu do Índio); Socio-Environmental Institute (Instituto Socioambiental). Music: Povos do Oiapoque. Translator: Luciana Lang. Year of Completion: 2012

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Anthropology in the Museum

Reflections on the curatorship of the Xikrin Collection

Fabiola A. Silva, Cesar Gordon

Abstract

This article reflects upon the curatorial management process of the Xikrin ethnographic collection and proposes the importance of anthropological interest in the deepening collaboration amongst anthropologists, indigenous peoples and museums, with particular attention to the anthropological study of ethnographic collections. This is true for the anthropological study of objects (and their various meanings and interpretations by the social actors who utilize and appropriate them) and for the understanding of the formation and conservation of ethnographic collections (with their diverse motivations and contexts). Since this type of shared curatorial management style is only now spreading throughout Brazil, the experience is a timely opportunity to develop nuanced perspectives on the anthropological significance of ethnographic collections.

Keywords: museums, indigenous peoples, ethnographic collections, objects, material culture, knowledge and recognition

Resumo

Neste artigo pretendemos apresentar algumas reflexões em torno do processo curatorial da coleção etnográfica Xikrin, evidenciando as potencialidades das relações entre antropólogos, povos indígenas e museus, especialmente, no que se refere ao estudo antropológico das coleções etnográficas, tanto em termos da compreensão dos objetos (e de seus múltiplos níveis de significação para os diferentes sujeitos que deles se apropriam), quanto em termos do entendimento da formação e preservação das coleções etnográficas (com suas múltiplas motivações e contextos). Este tipo de curadoria compartilhada começa a se difundir em nosso país, de sorte que o relato dessa experiência é uma oportunidade de estimular estes novos olhares sobre as coleções etnográficas.

Palavras-chave: museus, povos indígenas, coleções etnográficas, objetos, cultura material, conhecimento e reconhecimento

Anthropology in the Museum

Reflections on the curatorship of the Xikrin Collection

Fabíola A. Silva, Cesar Gordon

Introduction

This article describes the approach to the curatorial process of the Xikrin ethnographic collection in the Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia (Archeological and Ethnological Museum) of the Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP Brazil, and analyzes the potential of these new relationships between anthropologists, indigenous peoples and museums, particularly for the anthropological study of ethnographic collections. The goal of the following reflections is to deepen the understanding of objects (and their various meanings and interpretations by the social actors who utilize and appropriate them) and for the understanding of the formation and conservation of ethnographic collections (with their diverse motivations and contexts). As the shared curatorial style is currently spreading throughout Brazil, our experience may help to foster new perspectives on the subject. On the one hand, the Xikrin Collection is a witness of a part of the history of Brazilian anthropology; on the other hand, it is a material representation of certain moments of history, the cultural trajectory and way of life of a Brazilian native population. We understand the collection as a combination of diverse perspectives and our task during the curatorial process has been to make these visible. Further, with the possible overlapping and fusing among these perspectives, we have made their mutual influences explicit. Part of the collection's curatorial process took place in collaboration with the Xikrin people whose insight and knowledge enriched the work by giving life to the anthropological objects and new meanings to the collection.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section consists of a brief historical sketch of the relationship between anthropology and museums within the international and Brazilian contexts. In the second section, the Xikrin collection is introduced and described (for more detailed

information on the collection, refer to our previous work Silva & Gordon (Orgs.), 2011). The third section deals with the curatorial process itself and gives an idea of the procedures and steps taken by the authors, specifically regarding the participation of the Xikrin Indians. The fourth section recounts the reflexive analysis that the Xikrin participants provided and focuses on typical cultural misunderstandings which, in our opinion, illustrate in a singular way the style of curatorship we intend to undertake, one that makes explicit the polemical, relational and disputed dimensions of the entire curatorial process.

Museums and Anthropology

Collections of ethnographic objects are fundamental to the formation and the history of the institution of the museum worldwide. Starting from the curiosity cabinets that made up private collections of cultural artifacts, flora and fauna specimens, fossils and minerals collected in the wake of European colonial expansion between the 17th and 18th centuries¹, museums became places of conservation, investigation and exhibition of objects (Ribeiro & van Velthem 1998; Nash & Feinman (Eds) 2003; van Velthem 2012). The Brazilian case was no different and ethnographical collections date back to the 1818 establishment of the Royal Museum, initially specializing in agricultural plants (Kodama 2009). In its first issue in 1839, the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute (IHGB) published “Suggestions as to what the members of the Brazilian Historical Society should seek in the provinces to send to the society’s headquarters in Rio de Janeiro” and asked for “information on the customs of the Indians, their religious habits, their civilization, their estimated population, their artifacts ...”. The Institute was also looking for “information on minerals, animals, fowls, birds, fish and other specimens, labeled, if possible, according to their scientific taxonomy...wood used for building, exotic plants... useful fruits, balms and oils, and their employment in medicine”. After many years of debate, in 1847 the IHGB proposed the establishment of a Section on American Archeology

1 Several authors attribute the origin of museums and other modern anthropological institutions to Curiosity Cabinets. The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology at Oxford University was established in 1683 from donations of objects kept by John Tradescant and donated by Elias Ashmole to the University of Oxford in the UK (Fowler 2003:13).

and Ethnography. In 1851 the new statute updated the institutional perspectives according to contemporary scientific progress and in its first clause announced that the IHGB had the “responsibility of collecting, classifying, publishing and archiving documents on the history and geography of the [Brazilian] Empire and on the archeology, ethnography and languages of its native peoples” (Ferreira & Noelli 2009).

By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, Natural and Anthropology History museums put great effort into forming, studying and exhibiting collections of objects from nature as well as from native societies and cultures. In the United States, professional anthropology was born around museums, such as the National Museum, the Smithsonian Institute, the Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology (at Harvard University), the Field Museum (in Chicago), the American Museum of Natural History (Patterson, 2001). Even under the influence of the Boasian project, which, up to a certain point, helped transfer the center of anthropological practice from the museum to the university, the complementarity of ethnographic research and museumology remained. In fact, several scholars endeavored to map out new areas of research by developing comparative regional projects that were materialized in new ethnographic collections while they intensified studies within existing lines of research.

Within the Brazilian context and with regard to the formation and analysis of collections, the relationship between Anthropology and Museums was defined by a specific manner of practicing anthropology, which, in its turn, implied different collecting practices. The first Brazilian anthropologists were museum professionals and thus directly or indirectly responsible for the acquisition of the extant ethnographical collections current in the country’s museums, such as, for instance, the Museu Nacional (National Museum) of Rio de Janeiro, the Museu Paulista (Museum of São Paulo), the Emilio Goeldi Museum in Belém (Pará) and the Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia da Universidade de São Paulo (Archeological and Ethnological Museum of the University of São Paulo). The first phase of collection in Brazil, ranging between the last decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, was marked by studies on native populations. Anthropology was mainly related to the natural sciences in the context of encyclopedic and multidisciplinary research. Several collections of human remains were built parallel to ethnographic collections that were organized

from a conservational point of view. During this period one of the main aims of museums was the collection and preservation of material testimonies to indigenous populations thought at that time to be close to extinction or cultural assimilation. As from the last quarter of the 19th century, the most important figures in the Brazilian anthropological collectionism were Ladislau Neto, director of the Museu Nacional of Rio de Janeiro from 1870 to 1893; João Barbosa Rodrigues, who founded and supervised the Museu Botânico do Amazonas (Amazon Botanic Museum) from 1884 to 1890; Emílio August Goeldi, manager of the Museu Paraense (The State of Pará Museum) between 1891 and 1907; Hermann von Ihering, director of the Museu Paulista between 1894 and 1915; and Curt Nimuendajú who collected numberless objects produced by several indigenous peoples from different Brazilian regions under the aegis of national and international museums (Grupioni, 1998; Abreu, 2005; 2008; Ferreira, 2010). The beginnings of anthropological research on ethnographic objects deposited in museums may be characterized primarily by classification and descriptive work on collections and their organization by evolutionary, comparative or historical heuristics according to the researchers' theoretical interests (Collier & Tschopik Jr. 2003 & Fowler 2003). At this time, then, Brazil followed closely the trends of international anthropology and museology.

With the preeminence of British structural functionalism in the 1920s and 1930s, interest in the study of ethnographic objects in museums was replaced by a focus on deep fieldwork and the functional logic of social life. Although an important factor for the descriptive and theoretical interests of the evolutionist and diffusionist traditions in anthropology, material culture did not retain its former importance and gave way to the type of sociological analysis envisaged by the British School. In fact, social anthropology was more concerned in studying social organization, kinship structures and political systems (Kuper 1973). In the United States, the new Boasian generation moved towards the psychological and mental dimensions of culture as Ruth Benedict's Configurationalism and the Culture and Personality School demonstrate (Stocking 1976). Motivated by the new research interests, anthropologists, as a rule, tended to abandon the study of artifacts in museums and in the field. Since Brazilian anthropology followed these international trends closely, the displacement of the discipline from museums to universities occurred there as well.

There is no need to review the discipline's history. It is enough to point out that the greatest reduction of importance given to museums and their contents occurred during the 1960s with the arrival of post-modernism which not only problematized field research and ethnographic writing but also strengthened the idea that museums were instruments of colonial glorification (Gordon & Silva 2005). These ideas began to shift during the final decades of the 20th century which saw the surge of anthropological interest in the study of material culture. A series of reasons, external and internal to the discipline, caused a return to objects and museum collections in anthropological research, especially as they started to be understood analytically as mediators and materializations of diverse social relationships, agencies, subjectivities, knowledge, memories, that circulate in and help to manage different regimes of meaning and value within the most varied social, cultural and political contexts (Appadurai (ed.) 1986; Miller 1987; 2005; Thomas 1991; Gell 1998; Myers 2001; Fabian 2004; Pasztory 2005; Henare et al 2006; Santos Granero (ed) 2009). In fact, we are still in the middle of this renewed anthropology of objects (for more recent discussions, see Gonçalves 2005).

Divergent ways of conceptualizing ethnographic collections arrived later and were mainly motivated by new anthropological perspectives on the concepts of the museum and its collections. Furthermore, they were also stimulated by an understanding of the transformations which occurred between colonized peoples and these institutions within post-colonial conditions (Pearce (Ed.) 1999; Hallam & Street (Eds.) 2000; Peers & Brown (Eds) 2003; Barcelos Neto 2006; Fabian 2010; Broekhoven, Buijs & Hovens (Eds) 2010; Silva & Gordon (Orgs) 2011). During a long period, the relationship between museums and source communities was asymmetrical since professional researchers were the protagonists or leading agents of knowledge on these sources. They based their curatorial practice only on Western scientific traditions and on preservationist presuppositions that viewed indigenous populations, their way of life and their cultures, as destined for extinction or cultural assimilation (Shelton 2000; Hallan 2000; Peers & Brown 2003; Nicks 2003). However, such a relationship has recently become more inclusive and symmetrical in many museological contexts as greater agency is practiced by indigenous populations, whose values and perspectives on sources and museums provide new and enriching perspectives (Peers & Brown (Eds) 2003; Broekhoven, Buijs & Hovens (Eds) 2010; Silva & Gordon (Orgs) 2011).

It is highly interesting to note that during recent years several studies have investigated the contexts in which these collections were formed, taking into account the historical, social and cultural milieux of the collecting process, the collectors' motivations and their management of the collections over a long period of time. Studies have shown that collections are not necessarily formed intentionally. Some scholars purposely form collections, which thus have more structure and adhere more tightly to certain themes, types of objects and chronology. Non-intentional collections, on the other hand, are those formed without previous planning. It may occur that these collections may have been perceived as such by their collectors after a certain lapse of time. In this case, collecting may become a conscious action and certain objects may be collected for a specific goal. Another important aspect that should be taken into consideration is that when the motives for the formation of collections are debated, they reflect the occupation of the organizer. The collected items are also vectors that express a certain lived experience (Belk 1999). Collections may have been formed because the collectors wanted to demonstrate their relationship with certain people or preserve certain objects as history and give continuity to a determined experience or achievement (Formanek 1999). In this case, the objects accumulate yet another meaning which enrich their interpretive possibilities and potential angles of research (Pearce 1999a; 1999b; Grupioni, 1998; Nash & Feinman (Eds), 2003; Hallam, 2000 & Shelton, 2000).

The Mebêngôkre-Xikrin ethnographic collection

In our view, a collection of ethnographic objects allows diverse interpretations. It is, after all, the result of a certain collector's perspective and decisions, embedded within a complex context of interaction with those who produced the objects at a specific historical moment. At the same time, it is made up of objects with their own specific courses and agencies, with multiple meanings and interpretations including those attributed by the cultural systems that produced them and the museological institutions with their own paradigms of classification and analysis. The plurality of interpretations necessitates multiple levels of analysis that can only be performed by many different actors contributing their perspectives, and thus requiring the participation of various specialists, both academic and indigenous (Silva & Gordon 2011a).

The Mebêngôkre-Xikrin ethnographic collection was donated to the Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia da Universidade de São Paulo (MAE-USP) in July 2001. The collection was formed by the anthropologist Lux Boelitz Vidal during her thirty-year research among the Xikrin Mebêngôkre Indians, a thousand strong indigenous group living near the Carajás Mountain Range in the northern state of Pará, Brazil, linguistically and culturally similar to the Kayapó (who refer to themselves as the Mebêngôkre). Vidal started her ethnographic research among the Xikrin in the late 1960s when only scanty information was available. Her doctoral thesis was the result of her cumulative research, which in turn, was published as *Morte e Vida de uma População Indígena* [Life and death of an indigenous population] (Vidal 1977), followed by a series of other publications on the same subject. However, Vidal's relationship with the Xikrin went beyond purely academic interest. She became involved in advocacy for the Xikrin and participated actively in the demarcation process of the Xikrin Indigenous Land of the Cateté in the 1980s, as well as in a non-governmental organization for the protection of Indigenous persons. She acted consulting anthropologist during the planning of the Projeto Grande Carajás (Project Grand Carajás) of the Vale do Rio Doce mining company, with tremendous social, political and economical impact on the southern region of the state of Pará and on the history of the Xikrin population (Gordon 2003; 2006). During her decades among the Xikrin, Vidal collected objects manufactured by the community, which she received as presents, exchanged or bought. The items were part and parcel of her academic activities and her life as an anthropologist. They were kept at her home, utilized as illustrations in her lectures and lent out for several expositions. They are currently kept at the MAE at the University of São Paulo.

The collection is composed of approximately 400 different and relatively well-preserved items. They comprise body ornaments made of bird feathers (bracelets, head-dresses, necklaces, breast plates, earrings and sashes), cotton fibers (bracelets, head-dresses, belts), straw (bracelets, belts, crowns), wood (lip ornament, ear expanders), animals' teeth and bone (necklaces), beads (necklaces, belts, sashes, wrist bands), seeds (belts, sashes, wrist bands, necklaces), shell (earrings, necklaces); musical instruments made from animals' nails (rattles), reeds (horns and pipes), gourds (maracas), straw (whistles), wooden weapons (cudgels), palm tree (arches and arrows), bamboo (arrows), straw, resin and fiber toys (small animals); utensils and

bone tools (needles and scarification instruments), earthenware (spindles), seeds (spindles), animals' nails (scarification instruments), wood (scarifying comb, containers); woven items (carrying baskets, pocket-like baskets, case-like baskets, small baskets, hammocks, mats, manioc strainers, masks), and prime materials (feathers, seeds, vegetal fibers).

The collection was formed unintentionally and without any previous planning, as opposed to other collections at the MAE-USP that were intentionally shaped by collectors who ordered and purchased the items. According to Vidal, she obtained and kept the items without any intention of making a collection. In fact, they were acquired during her research work and through mutual relationships with the Xikrin. However, the anthropologist was always eager to register (mainly ethnographically rather than from a museological point of view) and preserve the objects for donation to a museum, as in fact occurred. It may be said that the collection has a double meaning: 1) as the product of several years' work among the Xikrin Indians, it may be interpreted as a witness of the history of Anthropology in Brazil, since it represents and contextualizes part of the ethnologist Lux Vidal's research; 2) it also represents cultural traces of the Jê people through the material expression of their life styles. It should be noted that several items in the collection have a detailed history recorded throughout the years in Vidal's written registers (Silva & Gordon 2011b).

The curatorial management process

According to Prown (1999), the museological analysis of a collection's objects may be divided into three steps: description, deduction and speculation. The descriptive stage outlines the objects' most generic and physical aspects, such as, measurements, weight, materials used and the way they were manufactured (for instance, welded, stitched, glued etc). Decoration is evaluated and the objects' three-dimensional aspects are analyzed. The deductive stage consists of verifying the objects functionality and their relationship with their formal characteristics. At the speculation stage, the researcher tries to understand the objects cultural meaning and the social context of their production, distribution, and use.

On the other hand, according to Pearce (1999; 1999b), when researchers investigate an artifact, they try to answer the following questions: What?

How? Where? When? By whom? Why? Consequently she divides research into the material, environmental, historical and significant spheres. The combined understanding of these contexts sheds light on an object's interpretation. The material sphere comprises the constructive aspects of the object, its design and characteristics in terms of origin and technique. In this way, it is possible to construct a preliminary inventory of descriptive and comparative features. In the case of environment, the object's relationship with available natural resources on production and collection sites is elaborated. Studies on the landscape and local resources should be undertaken for this purpose. Regarding the historical contextualization of the object, the researcher should try to recover information on the artisan that manufactured the object, its contextual usage, and the history of its collection and exhibition. For significance, the researcher should understand the object's social and symbolic role within the context of its production and usage.

As curators of the Xikrin Collection, the current authors adopted the above-mentioned museological methods for the study of the collection and the analysis and classification of ethnographic material produced by other researchers devoted to the study of ethnographic collections². Further, the ethnographic experience and the scientific production of researchers who worked among the Xikrin³, the knowledge of museum professionals (stewards, photographers, archivists, technicians), the perspective of scholars on material culture from other areas of knowledge (archeologists and architects) and the insights gained from the collaboration of Xikrin individuals were added to the authors' efforts. From the beginning of the research, Wagner Souza e Silva, a professional photographer, assumed responsibility for all documentary reports. Having documented the whole curatorial process, he is co-author of the book *Xikrin: uma coleção etnográfica* [Xikrin: an ethnographical collection]. (Silva & Gordon (orgs) 2011). A brief description of the process will be given below since the process as a whole has already been detailed in other publications (Gordon & Silva 2005; Silva & Gordon 2008; Silva & Gordon (Orgs) 2011).

The first step consisted of an inventory, numbering, technical and morphological description and cataloguing of the objects. The objects were

2 Stewardship project was funded by FAPESP (2003/12316-0).

3 Researchers who collaborated in current investigation wrote monographs on the same indigenous population (Vidal 1977; Gianinni 1991; Silva 2000; Cohn 2000; Gordon 2003; Paes 2006).



Observation and design of Xikrin basketry (Photo by Wagner Souza e Silva)

photographed one by one and their main formal and technical characteristics emphasized. Initial photographic documentation aimed at constructing a database of images for future studies. All objects were registered on a standard card prepared by the Collection Management Department of the MAE (DAP)⁴. Besides providing information with regard to its place in the museum, the card also contains a description of the item with its morphological, functional and historical characteristics. It may also provide information on its state of conservation, on the researcher who collected and studied it, and on the available bibliography and the population that produced it. All descriptions and sketches of the items were undertaken after consulting works by Ribeiro (1980; 1985; 1987; 1988), van Velthem (1998), Frickel (1968), Chiara (1986) and Chiara & Heath (1978).

Reviewing, correcting and revising the descriptions from information provided by researchers and by Xikrin Indians brought to São Paulo constituted the second step. Through a series of conferences, Lux Vidal gave information on the history and life cycle of several objects of the collection. Other

4 DAP - Departamento de Apoio à Pesquisa (Department for Research). Project of Research Infrastructure (FAPESP - Process 96/10598-3).

researchers explained the cultural significance (social, ritual, economical) of different objects and the Xikrin Indians furnished the indigenous native terms, identified the objects' prime materials, production techniques, usage and meanings. They also gave details on rights of property, different styles of the artisans and histories and narratives of their origin. Both the curators and the Xikrin themselves documented all this work in audio and video.

When the field is the museum

Anthropologists normally travel to the regions where native populations they desire to study live. In contrast, in this case the Xikrins traveled to the "anthropologists' region" during the authors' curatorship. The museum became the ethnographic field. Ethnography was in the hands not only of the professional anthropologists but also of the Xikrin Indians who documented with their cameras everything they thought relevant to show to their peers in the ancestral village upon their return (for instance, MAE's resources and labs, the researchers' work, the supermarket shelves, the showcases full of beads in the Rua 25 de março in São Paulo).

The Xikrin chose two members of their community to go to São Paulo to participate in the curatorial process. Kengore Xikrin belonged to the social category of mature males with grandchildren (*mebegnêt*) and was considered a good artisan by the Xikrin, with vast experience and knowledge on the objects' manufacture, usage and meaning. He had actually worked with other anthropologists in the formation and stewardship of Xikrin ethnographic collections in a museum in Europe⁵. The second Indian curator, Tamakwaré Xikrin, belonged to the category of male adults with many children but no grandchildren (*mekrare tum*). He was younger than Kengore, with a reasonable knowledge of material culture, and great importance within the community shown by his specific political involvement (he was brother to a chief of the male group and cousin of the village's elders). Since Tamakwaré had significant experience in political relationships between the Xikrin and non-Xikrin, his participation lent political legitimacy to the enterprise.

The curatorial work started with a visit to the MAE's archives and deposit

5 Kengore Xikrin had already worked in the curatorship of Xikrin objects together with René Fuerst, a researcher of the Xikrin people, affiliated with the Musée d'Ethnographie de la Ville de Genève (Fuerst 2006).



Study and documentation of the objects by the research team
(Photo by Wagner Souza e Silva)

(Reserva Técnica). During the one-day visit, the Xikrin saw how objects from different ethnic groups were stored in the cabinets. They could specifically identify Xikrin and Mebêngôkre items that made up most of the deposit and which was their main interest. Disdain was their first reaction, as the Xikrins' attitude usually is (a sense of humor not unmixed with sarcasm), when they saw the drawers full of old artifacts. They remarked they were astonished that we kept all those old objects which belonged to people already dead, that it was better to throw everything away and that it would be more interesting to keep only the feathers and plumes for the manufacture of new items. In fact, it seemed to them that our keeping such old and decrepit items in the Deposit was the result of some type of morbidity on the part of the white Brazilians (or *kuben*, which is the mebêngokre native term for white Brazilians and for non-Xikrin people in general). It is customary for the Xikrin to bury a person's material belongings together with the body itself. According to the Xikrin, personal objects are part of the person and invested with his or her subjectivity or agency. They may actually bear part of the dead persons' spirit (which is usually expressed by the mebêngokre word *mekaron*) and may eventually be transformed into dangerous pathogenic vectors. They

were really astonished that we had made it a point to store so many different sorts of cultural objects manufactured by the Xikrin people and other items of diverse indigenous populations. However, after these first impressions, the two Xikrin men started to show some interest in the collection. By the end of the day they suggested that it was a good idea to collect and preserve some objects in the museum, especially those that were no longer manufactured in the village. For better or for worse, it was worthwhile to preserve that part of their history enclosed within the museum's drawers.

During the days that followed the visit to the Deposit, the Xikrin representatives assisted the authors in the curatorial processes in the strict sense of the term. This comprised a revision of the initial classification of the objects in the collection during which the two Xikrin participated willingly, patiently and even enthusiastically. We met in the Laboratório de Etnologia (Ethnology Laboratory) for the following ten days with several researchers, students and staff of the museum during the first stage of our work⁶. Daily work consisted of selecting a set of objects on which the Xikrin and researchers could speak and discuss with regard to their material features, techniques, usages and cultural meanings. The researchers first presented their knowledge of the objects and then the two Xikrin representatives confirmed or dismissed the information presented. They would correct and complement data and settle doubts on the prime matter used, utilization, names and the objects' manufacturers.

It should be noted that during the whole curatorship work the Xikrin thought and spoke freely on any and all objects in the collections. They highlighted the difference between the objects which were considered beautiful and correct (*mejx*, *kumrenx*) and others that were considered ugly (*punure*), fake or sham (*kajgô*) or pseudo-original imitations (*ka'âk*). Additionally, other objects reminded them of personal experiences as in the case of certain types of weaving which had been produced by Bep Karoti - a late but important Xikrin chief who is still remembered as a highly sophisticated artisan. Some objects caused unease while others caused admiration. Some were considered dangerous, like the breast decoration made of the Crax curassow's (mutum) head

6 Besides Tamakware and Kengore Kirin, there were: Researchers (Lux B. Vidal, Cesar Gordon, Fabíola Andréa Silva, Clarice Cohn, Francisco Paes, Isabelle Vidal Giannini, Ester Castro); students (Bruno Marcos Moraes, Daniel Tibério Luz, Chen Chih Cheng); technicians (Gedley Belchior Braga, Sandra Lacerda, Regivaldo); photographer (Wagner Souza e Silva).



The Xikrin examine the pieces and restore certain items (Photo by Wagner Souza e Silva)

skin. And others were no longer manufactured in the village, like the scarification instruments made from the claws of the harpy eagle (*harpia/gavião real*). Other items, especially plume ornaments, were identified as the property or wealth (*kukradjà*) of certain persons or groups of individuals (Gordon 2011).

It should also be underscored that the Xikrin assembled some objects and repaired others, such as the feather ornaments and the rattles made from tapir nails. One of the most interesting, albeit somewhat tense, moments in the curatorial process occurred when the two Xikrin started to disassemble one of the parts of a magnificent plume ornament (*krokoktire*) (they slightly damaged it in the end), which, in our opinion, had great aesthetic, historical and ethnographical value; a masterpiece of the collection. According to the Xikrin, because the headdress had been restored and assembled incorrectly by a restorer hired by Lux Vidal some time ago and it should be repaired so that it would be once again not only beautiful but also correctly assembled. Working under the observation of the researchers and a concerned Vidal, the Xikrin transformed the object. In the opinion of the MAE curator, it became another object (Silva e Gordon 2008), although it was then the true/correct object, according to the Xikrin. Our position, as curators, was that it was transformed into a richer and more complex object.

When Vidal commented later on the event, she slightly criticized our attitude:

“In my opinion, the Indians’ participation was fundamental for the work done. However, a more structured discussion on the precise role of each within the curatorial process would have been worthwhile. Greater preparation and previous planning could have controlled better for the different variables that would result from the collaboration of the Xikrin with the MAE. What did you want from the Indians? Why were they required at that particular moment in the research? What should their contribution have been?” (Vidal apud Silva & Gordon 2011b, p. 42).

Although we recognize that Vidal’s critique was pertinent from her perspective and from the conservation stance in general, we would like to insist that the experience mentioned above evidences that anthropological practice in the museological context may (or should) also comprise the same uncertainty and imponderability as in the ethnographic fieldwork. In the field we are constantly mobilized by the indigenous persons’ agency so that the anthropological endeavor would never be merely that of the anthropologists but also that of the ‘natives’. Regardless of our theoretical and methodological choices and the definition of our research aims, it is always necessary to revise our investigative parameters and, should it be appropriate, transform our perspective vis-à-vis the perspective of the “Other.” Precisely, if the leading role of Kengore Xikrin and Tamakwaré Xikrin in this specific episode left us motionless in the first place, on the other hand, and in the end, they provided more coherence to our proposal for shared curatorship. In this sense, as Lúcia Hussak van Velthem (2012:64) points out:

“The association of indigenous people with interpretative practices of collections would deconstruct the point of view of collectors and current museum techniques and would reconstruct a new perception. The collection of ethnographic objects as artifacts provided with functions and meanings would undergo a qualitative change since it would bear an evocative and mediating power. From this point of view, ethnographic objects would be collected less as remnants of traditional cultures and more as aids for discourse regarding identity of peoples long muted by those institutions”.

We would like to insist that the above-mentioned episode, even as a

misunderstanding and coupled to its polemic and contestable possibilities, strongly embodies the curatorial approach we would like to put into practice.

Conclusion

An ethnographical collection is formed by the selection and collection of objects that have a cultural meaning and value within a determined context. When the objects are displayed in a museum, they accumulate other meanings and are inserted into other value systems. They become objects that will be preserved, seen and studied by different persons who, in their turn, will provide them with other meanings according to their focus and experience. Pearce (1999b) states that museum objects are plurisemantic and as material reality their meanings will be re-elaborated and constantly revised and contested.

When campaigns in the defense of material and immaterial indigenous heritage become more widespread, research will be undertaken to document and record the populations' cultural manifestations (Gallois, 2006). Social and cultural transformations experienced by them will also show that the maintenance of ethnographic collections, principally in anthropological museums, is a highly important task not merely for the institutions' professionals but for the populations concerned. This is the motivation behind the emergence of indigenous initiatives for the construction of their own museums and collections. The Kuahí Museum for the Indigenous peoples of the Oiapoque (Vidal 2008), the Magüta Museum of the Ticuna Indians of the Solimões, the Mawo Museum of the Ikpeng Indians of the Xingu, the Museum of the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro (FOIRN) in São Gabriel da Cachoeira and others are ground breaking. We are already far from the colonial and conservationist origins of ethnography. Current anthropological and museological perspectives must maintain a lively dialogue with indigenous perspectives on museums and collections.

Within the new modalities of museum curatorship, the embodiments of knowledge, requirements and demands of native peoples on ethnographic collections necessitate, in the first place, the acknowledgment of the importance that objects have in the process of the re-construction of identities and, in a wider sense, in their regimes of social reproduction. At the same time, there is the issue of the legitimacy of their claims on intellectual property and cultural

ownership of the museum objects. There is the possibility of the subversion of power structures within the museum context when ethnographic collections leave their status as “trophies,” or valuable fossils of fast vanishing worlds or prizes of Western expansion and morph into the loci of contact between different perspectives and world visions, the memories and the cultural heritage of living autonomous peoples living and producing dynamic cultures. Ethnographic museums do not merely say something about the past but are witnesses of the present and perhaps the future of indigenous peoples.

On one hand, researchers and museum professionals are challenged in their roles as specialists and within their scientific and institutional authority, and on the other, museological institutions acquire a space for multicultural reflections on the management of these collections. It is an opportunity for exchange and diversification of knowledge, a more symmetrical possibility for the meeting with the “Other” (Peers & Brown 2003). The meeting will provide a space for negotiation between indigenous peoples and museums so that the former may achieve their goal of cultural revitalization and self-determination especially because many objects kept in museums are still present in the daily life of different peoples (Bolton 2003). When indigenous peoples go to museums, they make it clear that the items do not evoke a lost and nostalgic past since they continue in use many of these items in everyday life and they remind them of specific and personal histories, myths, songs, dances, people and events (Cruikshank 1998; Nicks 2003; Fienup-Riordan 2003; Silva & Gordon 2011a).

The Xikrin ethnographic collection demonstrates the indigenous life style and, at the same time, reveals our relationships with the objects and the persons who created them. In spite of the fact that non-indigenous frameworks are increasingly becoming of fundamental importance to the Xikrin Indians, the latter are not willing to abandon completely their way of life. The Xikrin collection may thus be a witness of a certain period and of the transformations of indigenous life. This is its true importance. When we look at these objects, we see the Xikrin people of the past and the present. And what about the Xikrin? We hope that they look at these objects and see through them the everlasting Xikrin spirit.

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Xikrin Collection

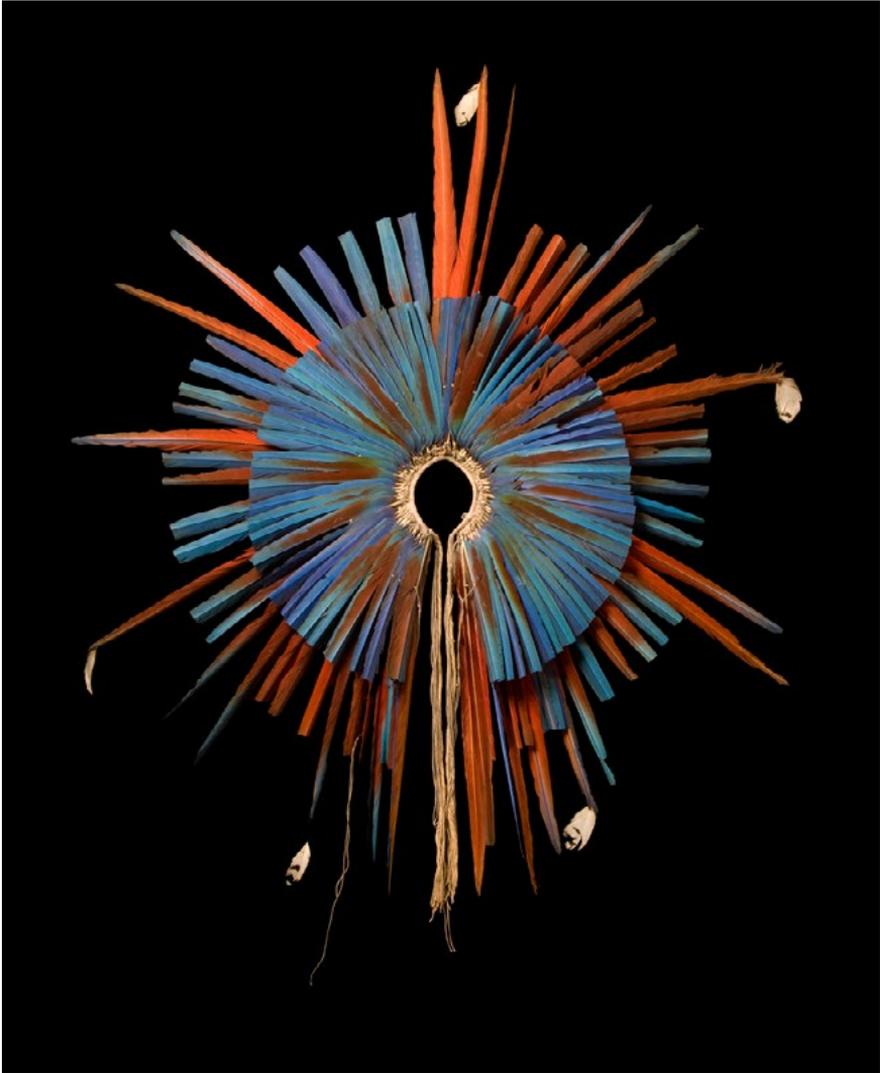
selected pieces

Photos by Wagner Souza e Silva

MAE-USP, 2011



Large occipital circular headpiece (Àkparidjé rajx)



Large occipital circular headpiece (Àkparidjé rajx)



Dorsal pendent made from Macaw feathers (Màt jamy jakrô)



Armband of woven feathers (Padjê kajêti pin kà kam yry)



Case for feathers (Potikpu)



Globe-shaped maraca rattle (Ngôkon)



Rope belt (Āpredjā)



Vertical headdress (Kruapu)



Feathered armbands (Padjê kajêti)



Scarifying equipment (Djwa)



Feather armband woven with a snake motif (Padjê krã kangati'ôk)



Rattling belt made with tapir claws (Kraj predjà mry nhy ty)



Woven zoomorphic toy with a monkey motif (Kukonh karon)



Anthropomorphic mask toy (Mekaron)



Shaft of a feathered arrow (Buri)



Tipití (Krin'ò)



Bag-like basket (Mokà)



Bandolier with feathers and fruit seeds (Kamôkti arapê jabu)



Occipital disc for headdress (Kèjkry)



Vanity set with Oropendola [japu] feathers (Pejati jamy meàkà)

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Visible art, invisible artists?

The incorporation of Aboriginal objects and knowledge in Australian museums

Ilana Seltzer Goldstein

Abstract

The creative power and the economic valorization of Indigenous Australian arts tend to surprise outsiders who come into contact with it. Since the 1970s Australia has seen the development of a system connecting artist cooperatives, support policies and commercial galleries. This article focuses on one particular aspect of this system: the gradual incorporation of Aboriginal objects and knowledge by the country's museums. Based on the available bibliography and my own fieldwork in 2010, I present some concrete examples and discuss the paradox of the omnipresence of Aboriginal art in Australian public space. After all this is a country that as late as the nineteenth century allowed any Aborigine close to a white residence to be shot, and which until the 1970s removed Indigenous children from their families for them to be raised by nuns or adopted by white people. Even today the same public enchanted by the indigenous paintings held in the art galleries of Sydney or Melbourne has little actual contact with people of Indigenous descent.

Keywords: Australian Aboriginal art; Indigenous art; anthropology and museums; 'artification.'

Resumo

A pujança criativa e a valorização econômica da arte indígena australiana surpreendem os estrangeiros que dela se aproximam. Desde os anos 1970, vem se constituindo, na Austrália, um sistema que compreende cooperativas de artistas, políticas de fomento e galerias comerciais. O foco do presente artigo recai sobre um aspecto particular desse sistema: a gradual incorporação de objetos e conhecimentos aborígenes pelos museus. Com base na bibliografia existente e em pesquisa de campo realizada em 2010, apresentarei exemplos concretos e discutirei o paradoxo da onipresença da arte aborígene no espaço

público australiano. Afinal, trata-se de um país que, no século XIX, permitia atirar em qualquer aborígine próximo a uma residência de brancos e que, até os anos 1970, removia crianças indígenas, para que fossem criadas por freiras ou adotadas por brancos. Até hoje, o mesmo público que se deleita com pinturas indígenas em museus de Sydney ou Melbourne tem pouco contato com pessoas de ascendência indígena.

Palavras-chave: Arte aborígine australiana; arte indígena; antropologia e museus; ‘artificalização.’

Visible art, invisible artists?

The incorporation of Aboriginal objects and knowledge in Australian museums¹

Introduction: from artefacts to artworks

Activities more or less similar to what we call artistic practices were traditionally omnipresent among Indigenous peoples living in the continent today known as Australia. These activities were associated with an intense ritual life: dance, body painting, rock painting, earth drawings and music. However the adaptation and recreation of some of these practices for the appreciation and consumption of white people are historically and socially situated processes. The construction of the contemporary Indigenous art system in Australia is the outcome of diverse agencies over the course of the twentieth century. And although it engenders a series of unresolved tensions, it has attained institutional and commercial levels unimaginable to many readers from other countries.

It may be useful to provide some quick examples. A painting by Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, from the Anmatyerre language group, who live in the Australian desert, reached the final selling price of 2.4 million Australian dollars at an auction held by Sotheby's in July 2007. The work was purchased by one of the country's most important fine art institutions, the National Gallery of Australia. Made in 1977, the large canvas painting condenses various mythic fragments called Dreamings in the Aboriginal English. Between the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, works by Emily Kame Kngwarreye, also from the Anmatyerre people, known for her large brush strokes and her refined sense of colour, were shown next to paintings by Mondrian, Miró and Kandinsky in the exhibition 'On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century,' at MoMa in New York.

The anthropologist James Clifford (1998: 224) developed a model that allows objects from traditional societies to be positioned in four 'zones,' based on the utilitarian or aesthetic purpose attributed to them, and on the degree

¹ This article is an enhanced version of a paper presented at the 28th Brazilian Anthropology Meeting, held between the 2nd and 5th of July 2012 in São Paulo, Brazil.

of proximity to their original context of production. The 'zone' of 'authentic artworks' includes items valued by artists, curators and collectors; the 'zone' of 'authentic artefacts' comprises examples collected by researchers, held in historical and ethnographic museums; the 'zone' of the 'inauthentic artworks' includes falsifications; and finally the 'zone' of 'inauthentic artefacts' comprehends tourist souvenirs and mass-produced objects for everyday use. Clifford argues that an object can shift from one 'zone' to another, changing its value and status, which increase as it moves from 'cultural artefact' to 'artistic object' and from 'inauthentic' to 'authentic.'

The sociologist Roberta Shapiro (2007: 137) proposes a similar approach with her concept of 'artification,' referring to the potentially infinite transformation of objects and practices previously considered non-artistic into art. The producer starts to be called an artist, fabrication becomes creation and observers are turned into audience. This is not just a discursive strategy: these reclassifications lead to the emergence of exhibition spaces, new forms of legitimization, new artistic forms and the broadening of the criteria used for acquiring works for collections.

Such processes can be very clearly observed in the case of Australian Indigenous arts. A change of 'zone' occurs, for example, when the same traditional iconography that populates desert traditional paintings is used to decorate sandals and keyrings in souvenir shops, or waste bins and cash machines in Australian big cities. Or when paintings made with natural pigments on tree bark, collected as 'authentic artefacts' by Baldwin Spencer in his field work in Arnhem Land, between 1911 and 1920, are exhibited in fine art museums. The process of 'artification' is also revealed when we realize that the same works by Indigenous Australian painters rejected in the 1990s by the Cologne Art Fair, whose organizers refused to accept that an Aborigine could use acrylic paint and brushes, are today present in this kind of event without any problem.²

Departing from the reflection on changes in the meanings of objects, associated with their circulation in new spaces and networks, the first part of

2 At the Cologne Art Fair in 1994 the participation of the gallery owner Gabrielle Pizzi was vetoed with the following argument: "you do not exhibit authentic Aboriginal art" (McDONALD 1994: n.p.). At this time, 'authentic primitive' art was supposed to be created only in order to meet the artist's own spiritual needs without any relation to the surrounding society.

this text describes the history of how objects produced by Aboriginal³ peoples in Australia have been received by the white population, as well as the mediations that have enabled the circulation of Indigenous arts in the country. The second part, based on my own field work experience,⁴ explores the ways in which the artistic production of Aboriginal peoples makes its presence felt in white Australia today.

1 The legitimization and institutionalization of Indigenous arts in Australia

From the start of colonization⁵ until the First World War, ethnographic collectionism reigned in Australia: weapons, adornments and other utensils collected by travellers were used to represent the material culture of the Indigenous peoples in ethnographic collections and anthropological books. Among the items collected at the end of the nineteenth century are the first records of eucalyptus bark paintings.

From 1920 to 1940, traditional Aboriginal iconography was incorporated by the Australian modernist movement, somewhat similarly to what happened in Brazil. White Australian artists and designers, led by Margaret Preston, were inspired by the Aboriginal visual repertoire to forge an Australian national identity, incorporating the native iconography into their

3 In Australia, the term *Indigenous* is used to encompass all the traditional peoples living both on the continent and on the Torres Strait Islands. The term *Aborigine*, in turn, refers specifically to those groups inhabiting the continent. Despite the huge linguistic variety, the Aborigines of the continent share a mythic complex called the Dreaming, as well as various similarities in their kinship systems. The Torres Strait groups, on the other hand, located in the far northeast of the country, are culturally closer to the peoples of Melanesia. I adopt this terminology in my own work.

4 I stayed in Australia between January and April 2010, funded by a scholarship from CNPq, as a visiting student at the Australian National University, under the kind supervision of Howard Morphy. The trip formed part of the research culminating in my doctoral thesis, presented at UNICAMP (Goldstein 2012).

5 The European colonization of Australia is relatively recent. On 29th April 1770, Captain Cook of the British Royal Navy anchored at the location where Sydney lies today. Systematic colonization would begin after the independence of the North American colonies in 1783. The British wanted to make clear that the newfound southern land already had an owner. But above all it needed a solution to its large prison population: in 1787 the British Parliament approved the deportation of 200 convicts to Australia. Many other waves followed. From 1851 onwards the colony experienced a burst of economic growth with the discovery of gold, which supplemented sheep breeding, introduced in 1797. The Commonwealth of Australia was formed in 1901, uniting six independent states and a territory under a single Constitution. On the history of Australia, consult among others Teo & White 2003, Dennon et al. 2000, Davison, Hirst & Macintyre 2001.

objects, prints and paintings – without, though, being interested in their traditional meanings (Edwards & Peel 2005).

The 1950s saw the first inclusion of an Aborigine painter in the Euro-American art system: Albert Namatjira successfully sold his watercolours depicting the desert landscape. He was also the first Indigenous person to obtain Australian citizenship, after becoming famous. While Namatjira's work provoked criticisms because of its use of a technique and a style popular among whites, he only painted trees and mountains symbolically important to his family and his clan. The so-called Hermansburg School started by Namatjira perpetuates his style even today (French et al. 2008).

In 1958 the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney acquired and displayed a collection of sculpted funeral hollow logs made in Arnhem Land in the tropical north. The fact generated controversy in the press, for it was the first time that an Australian art museum included Indigenous works in its collection.

At the beginning of the 1970s the foundation of Papunya Tula Indigenous cooperative led to the emergence of a new artistic movement in the desert. This took place one year after the white art teacher Geoff Bardon had encouraged his Indigenous pupils and their relatives to use acrylic paint on paper and canvas to reproduce designs traditionally applied on the earth and the body (Myers 2002, Johnson 2006). At first the cooperative was ignored and it encountered considerable resistance, taking around ten years to establish itself on the art market. Later, however, the success of Papunya Tula led to the proliferation of Indigenous arts and crafts cooperatives and to the multiplication of regional substyles over the ensuing decades.

Still in the 1970s, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam of the Australian Labour Party launched a campaign supporting the 'self-determination' of Indigenous peoples – instead of their "assimilation", which was the former official ideology. In 1973 the Aboriginal Arts Board was created by the government. Composed also of Indigenous representatives, this entity regularly bought works for public collections over a twenty-year period, some of them presented to embassies and museums around the world, others included in national and international exhibitions. The objective was to open up the market for this kind of production, while educating the gaze of the public, curators and collectors.

The 1980s were marked by the inauguration of new wings exhibiting Indigenous art in Australia's leading public museums. Little by little they began to dedicate some rooms to permanent exhibitions or temporary shows of Indigenous art and set up specific departments and curators for this type of production. The influx of Aboriginal painting into commercial galleries in the big cities during the 1980s was another watershed. Gabriele Pizzi opened the first gallery of this kind in 1982 and sealed a contract to represent the Papunya Tula cooperative in Melbourne. In 1987 she also began to sell the work of artists from the Yuendumu community. In 1991 Pizzi organized shows of Aboriginal artists in various countries like the Soviet Union, Italy, India, Spain and South Korea. She revealed names that are nowadays famous, like John Marwurndjul and Emily Kngwarreye. Other commercial galleries subsequently opened: Alcaston, also in Melbourne, and Hoggart in Sydney, for example.

An event in New York in 1988 was the first landmark in the international diffusion of Australian Aboriginal art: the show 'Dreamings: the art of Aboriginal Australia' united 103 sculptures and paintings. Enthused by the show, the entrepreneur John Kluge began a private collection that over the course of the 1990s became one of the most important in the world and today belongs to the University of Virginia (Peterson et al. 2008).

In the 1990s and 2000s Aboriginal curators and 'urban' artists appeared on the scene. Artists and curators of Indigenous origin, raised in the cities, fluent in English, aware of their rights and often educated at universities, started to produce works and critical discourses with a political tone, influenced by the post-colonial debate. In the mid-1990s Sotheby's held an exclusive auction of Australian Aboriginal art. At the same moment the first legal disputes emerged in which gift and textile companies were accused of using images produced by Aboriginal artists without permission and without due remuneration (Janke 2003).

It was also at the end of the twentieth century that Aboriginal art established itself internationally. In Europe the exhibition 'Aratjara' was inaugurated in Germany and later taken to England and Denmark between 1993 and 1994. In 2001 and 2002 a show of bark paintings, 'The Native Born,' organized by the Aboriginal curator Djon Mundine, toured throughout the world, including Brazil. In 2006, the Musée du Quai Branly was inaugurated in Paris with permanent interventions by eight Aboriginal artists from Australia



Figure 1. Poster and folder for Emily Kngwarreye's show in Japan. Publicity photo.

included in its edifice. The commission responsible for curating this project also included two professionals of Aboriginal descent, Hetti Perkins and Brenda Croft (Australia Council for the Arts 2006). In 2008 an individual show by Emily Kngwarreye, organized by Margo Neale, an Aboriginal curator, attracted large crowds in Osaka and Tokyo.

Today there are more than 100 cooperatives of Indigenous artists spread across Australia, and a similar number of commercial galleries in the state capitals and tourist cities. The indigenous segment corresponds to 15% of the total art market sales in Australia, moving 300 million Australian dollars per year (Altman 2005). The number of Indigenous artists who define themselves as such in Australia is estimated to exceed 7000. There are also dozens of distinct regional and individual styles (Mundine 2005, Healy 2005, Myers 2002, Könnig 2002, Mclean 1988 and Morphy 2008).

1.1 The diverse agents involved and the mediations required

Among the main social actors helping to maintain what is called the Indigenous Arts Industry in Australia we find the arts centres, cooperatives

directed by representatives from Aboriginal communities and often run by outside staff hired by them. In addition to promoting local artistic production, the arts centres which I visited,⁶ as well as those on which ethnographic accounts exist, not only store and publicize artworks produced by community members, but they also perform the role of health centres, schools and political venues where meetings are held, demands are formulated and trips organized. Sometimes, it is true, the coordinator of an arts centre – normally white – may interfere too much in what the artists produce, making recommendations based on what pleases the market and ignoring local cultural questions. But in principle the Aboriginal directorate can dismiss the coordinator if the associated artists are unhappy.

Two regional associations were set up to represent, advise and train indigenous artists and arts centres. The Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists was founded in 1987. Based in Darwin, ANKAAA's members include 5000 individual artists. Its statute defines its objectives as strengthening indigenous cultures, supporting the development of the art production chain, fomenting new talent, and training young professionals to work in the sector. Meanwhile the Association of Central Australian Aboriginal Art and Craft Centres, Desert, was founded in 1990 to provide assistance to arts centres in the Central Desert. Based in Alice Springs, it supports initiatives that certify the origin of artworks, pass on most revenue to the Aboriginal population, support the sector's professionalization and promote ethics in commercial relations. The strategies of both organizations, which receive direct public support, range from the organization of art fairs to the provision of management training

6 I have been to the Warlukurlangu Arts Centre, in the Yuendumu settlement, in the arid region of the Central Desert, where artists use colourful acrylic paint on canvas, and the paintings usually function like a sort of aerial map of the region, highlighting sacred places, as well as the deeds of the ancestors in those places. I also visited Buku Larrngay Mulka, in the Yirrkala settlement, in the tropical region of Arnhem Land, where artists make bark paintings, wooden sculptures, paper prints and pieces woven from fibre. At Yirrkala, besides its spiritual dimension, artistic production sometimes assumes an eminently political role. At Yuendumu, the predominant ethnic group is Warlpiri, while Yirrkala is traditionally Yolngu land. My stay at both art centres was short due to visa problems, but before, during and after the trip I was lucky to have valuable and generous interlocutors, some of whom I take this opportunity to thank publicly: Howard Morphy, Adrian Newstead, Alison French, Beverly Knight, Bryan Hooper, Cath Bowdler, Cecilia Alfonso, Chrischona Schmidt, Christina Davidson, Christine Godden, Diana James, Franchesca Cubillo, Gnarnayarrahe Waitairie, Helen Hansen, Hetti Perkins, John Altman, John Carty, Laura Fischer, Margo Neale, Merryn Gates, Otto Jungarrayi Sims, Philippe Peltier, Robyn Mckenzie, Wally Caruana, Will Stubbs and Wukun Wanambi.

courses, including the organization of a national network and the creation of communication channels.

Neither can the role of anthropologists be ignored. They have participated and still participate actively in the process of consolidating the recognition of Aboriginal art as fine art, working as curators, writing essays for catalogues, producing documentaries and biographies of individual artists, and publishing critiques in the press – the case, for example, of Christine Nicholls, Fred Myers, John Altman, Howard Morphy and Marcia Langton (Fisher, 2012).

Moreover Indigenous art has become an arena in which forms of individual and collective emancipation can be experienced and political positions expressed. Eloquent examples include the bark petition typed and then elaborately painted by Yolngu leaders in 1963 in protest against the installation of a mining company in the northeast of Arnhem Land (Morphy 2008); the baticks made by the women of Utopia between 1976 and 1978 to prove that their community was economically viable and capable of surviving autonomously when they received the right to land (which came in 1979); or the irony of the urban artist Richard Bell, who won the Telstra Award, Australia's most important prize for Indigenous art, with a painting sarcastically entitled 'Aboriginal art is a white thing' (2003).



Figure 2. 'Scientia e Metaphysica (Bell's Theorem) or Aboriginal art is a white thing.' Richard Bell, 2003. Acrylic on canvas. Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

Although Richard Bell's theorem is exaggerated – since contemporary Aboriginal art is *also* a white thing but not *only* a white thing – the artist raises a genuinely paradoxical issue. The works of Aboriginal artists are bought, studied and displayed by whites, while motifs from the traditional iconography decorate tourist souvenirs and even the airplanes of the national airline, Qantas. Yet the indigenous communities continue to face serious housing and health problems: their average life expectancy, for example, is 17 years less than that of the white population, and black people are practically unseen in the streets of Sydney and Melbourne. In the next section I shall look to how the presence of people of Indigenous descent in the Australian public sphere is inversely proportional to the importance of Indigenous artworks in Australian collections and museums.

2 Indigenous works and values in the Australian exhibition circuit

As mentioned in the previous section, the process of Australian museological institutions acquiring works by Aboriginal artists was slow, becoming visible only at the beginning of the 1990s. The collector and curator Wally Caruana recalls that in 1984 so little was known about Aboriginal communities and their artistic productions that a Sydney newspaper published a lengthy report on “a painter called Oenpelli” – when, in fact, this is the name of an entire community in Arnhem Land.⁷ Also in the 1980s, the National Gallery of Australia refused to purchase Aboriginal acrylic paintings made in the Western Desert, alleging that it “already possesses an example of that kind of technique” (Johnson 2006: 39).

Today the main Australian museums have a department of Indigenous affairs. In the art museums and science museums alike, the Aboriginal viewpoint is now usually taken into consideration in different ways. In Melbourne, for example, the entire ground floor of the Ian Potter Centre, an annex of modern and contemporary art at the National Gallery of Victoria, is dedicated to the Indigenous peoples of continental Australia and the Torres Strait Islands. Diverse media, languages and artistic regions are represented in both traditional and unusual formats. There are video projections with statements from Indigenous artists about their creative process and the

⁷ Interview with Wally Caruana conducted by the author on 08/03/2010, in Canberra.

meaning of the works. The labels contain detailed information, including the artist's name and ethnic group, the region where he/she lives, date of birth and the date the work was acquired.

At the Melbourne Museum, which specializes in history and science, Aboriginal societies are considered as producers of knowledge. Displayed on the wall of one of the lobbies are two gigantic tapestries, called Federation Tapestries, designed and embroidered collectively by whites and Aborigines. Next to them a video is shown explaining how the tapestries were made, a kind of "book of images with relevant passages of the nation's history." Inside the museum the Bunjilaka space is exclusively dedicated to the Aboriginal societies of Victoria state, with exhibitions selected through public competitions aimed at Indigenous artists. Bunjilaka's opening was preceded by six years of discussion with Aboriginal representatives from the region and marked by a smoking ceremony, traditionally important in events such as births and funerals.

In the 'Forest Gallery' of the same Melbourne Museum a text explains: "Aboriginal peoples and scientists both describe the role of water in modelling our landscape." Next to the graphics on the water evaporation cycle from the physical viewpoint, there is a video with an elder from the Wurundjeri ethnic group telling how the Yarra river was created by ancestors. In the section on the seasons of the year, both the Euro-American and the Aboriginal divisions are explained – the latter comprising between five and seven seasons, linked to floods, dry spells and the presence of particular plant and animal species.

The National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, for its part, inaugurated a new wing in 2010 to hold its collection of Australian Indigenous art, announced as the largest in the world. There are 11 galleries with natural lighting – similar to the light in which the paintings are made – where 600 works are on permanent display. In contrast to the rest of the museum, entry to the Indigenous art wing is free. According to Franchesca Cubillo, former curator of the National Gallery of Australia, visits have increased by 20% since the opening of the new wing (personal communication 2011). Interestingly when I visited the National Gallery, Aboriginal paintings were also on display in the abstract minimalism room. This was the case of John Marwurndjul [c. 1952], of the Kuninjku ethnic group, displayed next to Ian Fairweather [1891-1974], a white Australian. Figures 3a and 3b, shown on page 12, are not exactly the same ones I saw in the museum, but they give an idea of the type of dialogue intended.



Figure 3a. John Murwurdjul.
'Mardayin - theme 1,' 1997. Natural
pigment on tree bark. Annandale
Galleries.



Figure 3b. Ian Fairweather. 'Monastery,' 1961. Acrylic paint and gouache on card and wood. National Gallery of Australia collection.

The National Gallery of Australia also hosts an Indigenous Art Triennial, the first version of which presented the work of 30 artists from all Australian states, encompassing a variety of languages and media, such as acrylic on canvas, natural ochre on bark, textile works, sculpture, basketry, multimedia works, photography, printing and installations. The theme chosen by the curator Brenda Croft, herself of Aboriginal origin, was 'Culture Warriors.' The show, exhibited between October 2007 and February 2008, was accompanied by the publication of a catalogue with critical texts. The works displayed were acquired by the museum.

The National Gallery of Australia is a signatory and promoter of a set of guidelines for public collections of Indigenous art, the *Indigenous Australian Charter of Principles for Publicly Funded Collecting Institutions* (2009), which among other precepts establishes the following:

1. When undertaking any dealing with an Indigenous artist or his or her representative or community, a publicly funded collecting institution has regard to relevant domestic and international laws, studies existing codes of ethics, and consults the parties involved at all stages.
2. Public collections respect not only the moral and intellectual property rights established by law, but also the specific cultural rights, in order to determine and implement the appropriate treatment of any culturally sensitive information, including the citation of a deceased person's name. This applies to exhibitions, promotional material, websites, catalogues and so on.
3. When acquiring or commissioning a work of art from an Indigenous artist or collective, the terms of the contract must be clearly explained and recorded in the way that contracted party wishes. These records must contain the sum paid and form of payment, the purpose, the type of work acquired or commissioned, etc.
4. The institutions commit to avoid becoming involved in anti-ethical initiatives or those harmful to Indigenous individuals and communities, such as the divulgence of inappropriate information and representations.
5. Public collections should only acquire Indigenous artworks when the origin has been verified and after certifying that the rights of the artists have been and are being respected.⁸

8 The complete charter is available at: <http://nga.gov.au/ATSIART>. Consulted on 13/05/2011. Two other



Figure 4. Smoking ceremony in the opening of the exhibition 'Marnti Waranjanga: we are travelling,' at the Museum of Australian Democracy, in Canberra. Photo: Ilana Goldstein, 2010.

In addition, smoking ceremonies (Fig. 4) were held at the exhibition openings which I attended at various institutions.⁹ Green leaves chosen by the host group – responsible for the local Dreamings – are burnt, the smoke covers those present to purify and strengthen their bodies, also clearing the negative energies from the place. At the end the reasons for the smoking may be mentioned, and then the ceremony is usually closed with songs and percussion (produced by beating boomerangs and clapsticks).

At the Sydney Biennale, it was only in the 1980s that the presence of Indigenous artists began to increase. At the penultimate version of the event, there were works by 'remote' Aboriginal artists, i.e. who live in communities far from the major cities, as well as by 'urban' artists of Indigenous descent raised in big cities.

documents contain guidelines for museums in Australia: 'Taking the time: Museums and galleries, cultural protocols and communities. A resource guide,' and 'Previous possessions, new obligations.'

9 Smoking is common to various ethnic groups in Australia. The smoke is produced by burning plants native to the region. At funerals the deceased person's siblings are responsible for the smoking. On other occasions the elders lead it. Smoking is also a way of welcoming visitors. This became recently recurrent at civil and commemorative events in Australia (Pascoe 2009).



Figure 5. 'Jumping Castle War Memorial.' Brook Andrews, 2010. Installation for the 17th Sydney Biennial. Publicity photo.

Figure 5, above, shows an installation by an artist living in Melbourne, who is also a university professor and editor. Produced especially for the 17th Sydney Biennale, it involved an inflatable castle, an allusion to the aristocratic European monuments, decorated though with designs from the Wiradjuri – the artist's ethnic group.

One provocative detail was that only adults over the age of 16 could play on this kind of trampoline, suggesting that responsibility and a fully-formed spirit were needed to face the challenge. The inflatable walls were encrusted with replicas of Aborigine heads, often decapitated by the English colonizers and sent back to Britain as trophies.

There are also specific awards in Australia for Indigenous arts, which help legitimize Aboriginal artefacts as *art* and end up dictating trends and influencing the work of new artists. For the past 27 years the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin has held the most important event of the kind, the 'Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards' (NATSIAA). Sponsored by a telecommunications company, the Telstra award serves as a stage for new artists and may launch individual careers. Around one hundred works are pre-selected. The award categories are: painting, tree bark painting, work on paper and three-dimensional work. The winners receive \$30,000 each. The Art Gallery of Western Australia in Perth also promotes a 'Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards,' worth \$45,000. In the

state of Queensland the 'National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) Northern Rivers Region Aboriginal Art Awards' takes place and in Victoria the 'Victorian Indigenous Art Awards.'

Meanwhile the Araluen Cultural Precinct, in Alice Springs, hosts a large event each September called 'Desert Mob'. It comprises an exhibition of artists affiliated to Indigenous art centres, accompanied by a catalogue. Each art centre chooses ten works to send to the exhibition and, at the end, the Araluen Cultural Precinct acquires some of them for its collection. An open-air art fair and a symposium of artists and art centre representatives, with simultaneous translation, are organized in parallel. Since 1990 the 'Desert Mob' functions as an opportunity for the face-to-face interaction between Aboriginal artists, researchers, curators, commercial gallery owners and private collectors.

Canberra's National Museum of Australia, for its part, recently supported an interesting initiative combining artistic production, oral history and job generation. The 'Canning Stock Route Project' reconstructed memories around an old and remote Australian road and, at the same time, generated professional training opportunities for Aboriginal photographers, filmmakers, curators and administrative assistants, culminating in an exhibition. The Canning Stock Route was constructed between 1908 and 1910 in the north of Australia to enable cattle to be transported across desertic regions. Using forced Aboriginal labour, water sources were identified and wells built along a 1850 kilometre stretch of road, cutting across the territories of nine ethnic groups. The road ended up being seldom used because the wells that had been built on sacred water sources were later destroyed by the Aborigines of the region and cattle hands were killed during the first crossings. The government rebuilt some wells in the 1930s and carried out maintenance on the road during Second World War in case an evacuation from the north was required. Today the Canning Stock Route is only used by adventure expeditions with 4WD vehicles. But for groups who lived in the area, the construction had tragic consequences – including slave labour, forced change of homeland and violent police reprisals.

In order to recuperate these experiences, even today absent from official history, a non-government entity from Perth called FORM organized, in 2007, trips from representatives of the nine ethnic groups affected by the construction of the Canning Stock Route to areas close to the road, encouraging them to tell the stories that they know and to paint them. Aboriginal consultants



Figure 6. Curators preparing the exhibition for the 'Canning Stock Route Project.'
Photo by Ross Swanborough, 2008.

and translators were hired to help with logistical, geographic and cultural issues. Aboriginal apprentices in photography and video documented the entire process under the supervision of experienced professionals. Well-known Aboriginal artists were invited to run workshops with the painting apprentices who took part in the project. Nine art centres and an anthropologist were also involved (Webster 2009). Together with the National Museum of Australia, the sponsors were the Aboriginal Lands Trust of the Federal Government, an aluminium and bauxite company, and the Western Australia State Lottery. The museum bought the 100 pictures produced during the project and produced an exhibition, which later travelled from Canberra to Beijing.

In the photo above (Figure 6), the line marked in the centre of the warehouse is a way for the curators, while organizing the exhibition, to represent the road and thereby situate where each painting was made (Webster 2009).

Some other facts deserve mention. In the city of Alice Springs, the capital of the desert, I have found around 40 commercial galleries selling Aboriginal paintings from the most quick-made to the most impressive and sophisticated ones. The New Parliament in Canberra is located in front of a mosaic designed by Michael Jagamara Nelson, a member of the Walpiri people from the Central Desert. According to the artist, the colourful mosaic, structured in concentric circles, indicates that it is a site for important meetings. Inside the Parliament building Aboriginal paintings hang on the walls, too. During the celebrations for the opening of the Sydney Olympics in 2000, the *Leitmotiv*



Figure 7. Vibe Hotel, Darwin. Photo by Ilana Goldstein, 2010.

was Aboriginal dance and songs. The benches along the famous Bondi Beach, in Sydney, are decorated with traditional Indigenous motifs. Finally, Vibe, one of Darwin's most chic hotels, located on the seafront, has Aboriginal paintings on its walls, as it can be seen in the image above (Figure 7).

All the forms depicted above through which Aboriginal arts and cultures are inserted in the exhibition circuit, in public spaces and in the market in Australia help to construct the national imaginary and reflect – even if upside-down – the nature of the relations between the national society and its Others (Robins cited in Peterson 2008).

According to Ivan Karp (1991), two strategies are typically used to represent other societies and their respective artistic productions: exoticization, which emphasizes differences; and assimilation, which approximates the Other of the spectator through idealization. The first strategy (exoticization) tends to deny rational calculation to nonliterate societies, while the second (romanticized assimilation) usually projects virtues valued by ourselves onto these societies, such as ecological awareness.

The museological approaches observable in Australia do not fit well into either of these poles. Instead they seem to combine logics and elements of diverse societies, at least at a symbolic and discursive level. In fact this is a tendency shared by other post-colonial museums in search of reflexivity, aware that the ways of displaying objects are not neutral and that the museological discourse must be multivocal, without ignoring the political questions involving the collections (Duarte 1998).

This new theoretical and ideological approach of those responsible for museums and exhibitions inspires the adoption of innovations, among which the expansion in the commissions responsible for organizing exhibitions. They tend to be formed by multidisciplinary teams that include not only different professionals from the museum, along with the conservation staff and anthropologists, but also in some cases members of the ethnic groups to whom the displayed objects belong (Duarte 1998: 21).

In fact there exist between 20 and 40 Indigenous curators working in Australia today at public institutions or as independent consultants. According to Hetti Perkins, former curator of the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, the only comparable situations are in Africa and the United States. At first the Indigenous curators in Australia were voluntary, but now they have succeeded in getting equal pay and have earned respect from their colleagues.¹⁰

Margo Neale, curator of the Aboriginal Department of the National Museum of Australia in Canberra, told me that Australia's Indigenous curators can come from different backgrounds, having begun their careers either in art centres in remote communities, which is the case of Djon Mundine; in commercial galleries, like Hetti Perkins; giving art classes in schools, like herself; or in ethnographic museums, as occurred with Franchesca Cubillo.

Franchesca Cubillo, a former curator of Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, narrated to me her family and personal trajectory, which I shall summarize here since it strikes me as emblematic. Her grandmother, who lived in the Borrooloola community in the Northern Territory, was taken to a mixed shelter for children where she studied up to basic primary school level. She learnt how to clean and cook and was then sent to a white family. She married and had a daughter, Franchesca's mother, who lived most of her life in Darwin, studied up to advanced primary school level, became an auxiliary nurse in a hospital and, at the age of 40, gained a degree with support from a university program for Aborigines. Franchesca, in the third generation, studied anthropology in Adelaide. She began her career as a volunteer at the South Australian Museum where she discovered her vocation. She moved to Canberra to work at the National Museum where she was responsible for repatriation requests. In Darwin she became the senior curator of the city's

¹⁰ Information obtained in individual interviews with three Aboriginal curators: Franchesca Cubillo (Canberra, 08/03/2010), Margo Neale (Canberra, 15/03/2010) and Hetti Perkins (Sydney, 26/03/2010).

main art museum. Later she received an invitation to assume the post at the *National Gallery of Australia*, in 2009, where I have met her. In 2012 the last news I had was that she had left her position in order to undertake her doctorate.

Franchesca Cubillo explains her double position as curator and Aborigine as follows: “An Indigenous curator always considers an artwork within its cultural context. I see Aboriginal art within Aboriginal culture. I try to convince museums to make acquisitions on the basis of the meaning of the pieces” (Cubillo, personal communication, 2010). Margo Neale, for her part, told me that the space for them is increasing because, today, “the Australian museological institutions must have Aboriginal curators. It is the protocol, it is also politically correct” (Neale, personal communication, 2010).

Conclusion

The valorization of the Indigenous artistic production in Australia reveals an attempt at ‘Reconciliation’ – the official term used by the federal government – between white Australia and Aboriginal Australia. Contemporary Australian Indigenous art seems to be a channel of negotiation between colonizers and colonized. However, it is worth remembering that from the start of English occupation until the mid-twentieth century, Indigenous children, especially the ‘half cast’ (considered more capable of assimilation), were forcibly removed from their families. It was believed that they would have more chances for development in reformatories or when adopted by white families. Australian colonial laws like the 1816 Martial Law in New South Wales, allowed white men to shoot if they saw Aborigines carrying bows and arrows or too close to their houses. In addition, the ‘Citizenship certificates’ for Indigenous peoples that came out in the 1940s were given only to those who promised to abandon traditional life completely and to keep a distance from other Aborigines (Cameron 2000).

If the visibility and the support for Indigenous arts in Australia enable the intercultural dialogue and, above all, make national society more aware than before of the cultural wealth and the rights of Indigenous populations, they cannot erase tragic events of the past or even solve some of the problems of the present. One of these is the abusive consumption of toxic substances, especially alcohol and petrol, which leads to complications like diabetes, high blood pressure and neurological damage. This situation – tragically similar

to that of other national post-colonial contexts – arises from the ‘social suffering’ generated by the lack of meaning in everyday activities and the sensation of permanent outside control (Schmidt 2005). A large part of Indigenous lives became regulated by laws and mechanisms imposed by the whites. And although Social Welfare funds allow the purchase of food, medicines, blankets and so on, they end up worsening the vacuum left by the steady abandonment of traditional activities as hunting and ceremonial life. Chrischona Schmidt (2005) uses the term *boredom* to describe the state of mind that leads Aborigines to intensify the consumption of drugs. In these altered states, they may become violent and engage in acts of vandalism, which trigger more control measures from the government, generating a vicious circle.

As a specialist in human rights of Indigenous descent aptly summarized, “whites can see Aboriginal art, however they are incapable of seeing Aboriginal peoples. They like Aboriginal painting, but do not want to protect the artists (...). We are at risk of being seen as something merely symbolic” (Berendt cited in Carvalho 2012: n.p.).

‘Samson and Delilah’ (Thornton 2009), an Australian film that won awards at the Cannes and Dublin film festivals, shows precisely how the day-to-day life of Aborigines can be difficult. The film’s protagonists are Warlpiri and Arrernte young people without previous experience in acting, but they perform surprisingly well. In the storyline, Delilah and her grandmother live together in a remote community of Central Australia, in a relation of affection and respect. A white trader appears occasionally, bringing canvases and paints. He takes away the ready paintings and hands over a tiny percentage to the elderly artist. When the grandmother dies, the girl decides to flee from the desert to the city with her boyfriend Samson. The young couple end up living under a viaduct, close to a stream, in Alice Springs. Delilah tries to sell street drawings for the two of them to survive but fails. She starts to steal. Samson begins to sniff petrol the whole time. The health of both deteriorates. They hardly exchange a word, communicating by gestures and looks. The film is at once beautiful and sad, like the reality that inspires it.

It is true that the creativity of Australia’s Aboriginal peoples, along with their capacity to give fresh meanings to traditional objects and practices, signalize that to some extent a two-way relation exists between Indigenous artists and the national society. It is also true that the visibility of the artistic creations of Australia’s Aboriginal peoples attracts sympathy from a section

of the white population to the Indigenous cause, and stimulates Indigenous communities to invest time and energy in a culturally significant and economically profitable activity.

At the same time it is important to keep in mind that the nation that now implements initiatives aimed at the cultural valorization of Aborigines also works to make their lives meaningless.¹¹ Neither can it be forgotten that whites' economic interests move the Indigenous art market and influence the public policies concerning this artistic production.

In sum, the forms, designs, colours and even fragments of the worldview of Indigenous peoples find themselves dispersed throughout the museums, the art market and shops of Australia. But this phenomenon amounts above all to the aesthetic appreciation of objects and to the museological presentation of cultural fragments. Flesh-and-blood Aborigines are still seldom visible or influential in Australian society. It remains to see whether their incorporation in the art system and in the exhibition circuit will be a first step to enabling new forms of participation and exchange, or whether it will function merely as a balm.

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¹¹ In 2007, for example, the implantation of a policy called the Northern Territory Emergency Response caused revolt among anthropologists and activists. Based on rumours of mistreatment of children in communities in the north of Australia, this policy established interventionist measures, such as: increasing the police contingent in the region, restricting alcoholic drink, directing the funds for social programs to purchasing goods that the government deems to be priorities, lessening the autonomy of the recipients, and rescinding the need for permission to enter Indigenous land.

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