‘Indigenous Encyclopedias’: Displacements and the Repositioning of Logics, Voices and Narratives in the Relationship between Museums and Indigenous Groups (Brazil)

Marília Xavier Cury
Museum of Archeology and Ethnology of the University of São Paulo

Abstract: This article seeks to bring value to the claims of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil through ‘encyclopedias’, libraries or dictionaries, forms of expression that indicate respect for elders and ancestors. It is developed within the political context of a struggle for constitutional rights, where land rights are at the center of complex historical issues marked by violence and violations. It recognizes the role of museums as active agents, especially with respect to collaborative actions in which indigenous groups and their representative agencies directly participate in museum actions with their ancestors’ objects. A collaborative experience is described in relation to the exhibition *Resistência Já! Strengthening and Unity of Indigenous Cultures - Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena, MAE-USP*. Throughout the discussion, reflections on museal collaboration are raised and indigenous authors embedded with the aim of expanding the point of view of museums and their working methods with comprehensive and active indigenous participation. The position of indigenous actors on cultural knowledge transmission and the elders’ role results in an increased political appreciation of the ‘encyclopedias’.
[museum collaboration, indigenous agency in museums, ancestry, indigenous curatorship, decolonization in museums]

Introduction

Among the many indigenous claims, three can be highlighted: their current realities, their histories and their self-narratives (speaking for themselves). These issues are recurrent in museums that have been working in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples in Brazil (Cury and Bombonato 2022). Community-based actions are going further, with increased articulation in terms of their collections and the presence of legitimate heirs to take over irreversible positions within museal spaces as a means to (re)signify what they recognize as heritage. Since heritage is part of the disciplinary domain (archaeology, anthropology, museology, etc.), Indigenous Peoples in Brazil have increasingly been taking ownership of this term/concept as a strategy to demand their constitutional rights. With museal collaboration, dialogues between participating agents guide this work into a balance in relationships, repositioning the authorities (curators, museologists, etc.) as a result of indigenous participation.

This article addresses the displacement of museum authorities towards the repositioning of this authority in relation to other participations, above all the indigenous agency in the museum. The challenge lies in the creation of a multivocal text that places indigenous authors at the forefront of the argument, with identified names, and without the goal of revalidating theories and discussions within the academic environment (Makuxi 2022).

This text reflects a collaborative action that has been carried out since 2010. It involves a multilayered action which respects the yearnings to examine the current indigenous context as much as its past and future, understanding the realities in their localities and respecting their right to speak for themselves. In this scenario, museological collections are gaining in contemporary meaning, while museums are beginning to reassess themselves in the face of new challenges, both external (sociocultural, political, and global) and internal (self-transforming).

Collaboration involves joint actions with common goals, dialogue, respect and a relationship of trust among all parties. This is what Indigenous People refer to as a partnership. Partners are people or entities that are committed to indigenous rights, such as museums. Committed to the partnership, this article, written by a researcher at a university museum of archeology and ethnology, takes on a hybrid format which is based on the partnership position and that of the partner and is shaped throughout the collaboration. Among the three claims raised earlier (realities, histories and self-narratives), one aspect occurs repeatedly in indigenous speeches on events and other occasions: the elders, who are in fact knowledge-holders, akin to encyclopedias and/or libraries. In a hybrid format, indigenous speeches are brought into this article through recorded, transcribed, and published testimonies, which also value indigenous efforts to maintain a bibliographic production together with an academic production, highlighting national and international publications by indigenous curators, with their critical views on museums and exhibitions. The objectives therefore rely on collaborations as opportunities for listening and reading aiming at respecting indigenous efforts in terms of reclaiming their rights and valuing their 'elders' within the museum space.

The groups involved in the collaboration action referenced in this article are the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa, Terena and Krenak, who live in the Indigenous Lands (TI) Araribá, Icatu and Vanuíre, São Paulo, as well as others of equal relevance which contribute the idea of valuing the 'elders', the encyclopedias, with knowledge transmission as a political act in advocating land rights, especially after the many deaths resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. We understand Wanda Witoto's speech published on BBC News Brasil as a globalized political act:

> Education takes place in everyday life while observing the doings of the elders. From an early age, children are taken to the fields and learn how to care for and handle nature, which leaves, fruits and roots that they can eat or how to search for rivers, fish and make primary tools. … Therefore, we do not view the survival of

> Hitoto children in Colombia as a miracle. It was the strength of our people's spirituality, knowledge and ancestral wisdom that kept them alive. (Braun 2023)

Tensions and Repositioning

Since 1988, indigenous autonomy has overcome legal relief, and land rights are guaranteed by the constitution. The indigenous political organization, which was conceived before the 1988 Constitution, yet gained momentum after it (Krenak 2022), has progressed over the decades as a demonstration of the resistance of Brazil's Indigenous Peoples. Resistance and rights are key to the growing indigenous struggle in terms of actions and articulations, especially after recent policies carried out against indigenous lives, disrespect for land and territories, illegal mining, deforestation, invasions and reported killings. Within a context of violence and violations the *Marco Temporal* (Time Frame thesis) 'an anti-indigenous thesis which restricts the rights of peoples to demarcate their lands' (APIB Official 2023), becomes yet another threat, since it determines the year of the enactment of the Constitution as a reference for land occupation. It therefore removes the right to demarcate traditional territories, in addition to other risks such as mining and other forms of exploitation on indigenous lands.[1]

'The Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB) is an instance of the agglutination and national reference of the indigenous movement in Brazil' (APIB Official 2023). Since 2005 it has maintained the highly visible national mobilization work of Acampamento Terra Livre (ATL). The newly created Ministry of Indigenous Peoples reflects the recognition and promotion of indigenous rights in the current federal administration. Led by the minister whose last name refers to her people, Sonia

1 Indigenous Peoples defeat the Time Frame thesis! STF [Superior Tribunal Federal] overturn the ruralista thesis by majority vote. 'We have indeed emerged victorious from the Time Frame thesis, but there is still much to be done to ward off all the threats that are also pending in the Senate, through the law proposal 2903. We remain mobilized, we continue to fight because we need to ensure and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.' Dinamam Tuxá. Apib's Executive Coordinator. (APIB Official 2023). The Senate Plenary approved, this Wednesday (September 27), the project that regulates indigenous rights over their lands (PL 2,903/2023. Source: Senado Agency). PL 2903 is a genocidal project sponsored by agribusiness and therefore Apib sent President Lula arguments for the proposal to be completely vetoed. This Friday (20), Lula partially vetoed the proposal, contrary to the indigenous movement's request.
Now, Lula's partial vetoes will be analyzed and voted on by the National Congress in a joint session between Deputies and Senators. Parliamentarians will decide whether to accept the vetoes or not. If the vetoes are maintained, the law will be approved removing the parts mentioned in the veto. If the vetoes are overturned, the previously vetoed sections will be disregarded and the law will be approved with all the threats to Indigenous Peoples. In other words, the National Congress can approve the law disregarding all the vetoes made by Lula. Apib reinforces the need for constant mobilization of the indigenous movement in villages, cities and networks to prevent this project from being transformed into the law of indigenous genocide. **The fight continues and tell the people to move forward!** (APIB Official 2023).

Guajajara[2], initially the Ministry rejected the derogatory designation of 'índio', replacing it with 'indigenous' (of the place), and it does not use the term 'ethnicity' on its website (Ministry of Indigenous People 2023). FUNAI has removed the word 'índio' from its past designation, becoming the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples, and thus strengthening the political character of its peoples. In addition, the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), an important civil society organization of public interest, which carries out actions for Indigenous Peoples, among other activities (ISA 2023) setting up the *Povos Indígenas no Brasil – PIB* website (Indigenous Peoples of Brazil) and the *Socioenvironmental Headlines*. Both the latter feature current news on Indigenous Peoples as a means to bring light to public opinion on the socio-environmental agenda, a paramount task given that opposing published information often places Indigenous Peoples in a misconceived, incorrect, or discriminatory position.

As pointed out by the APIB and the ISA, there are common issues in defense of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, such as land, traditional territory, the Marco Temporal (Time Frame thesis) and the right to exist; deforestation, livestock and agribusiness; illegal mining, with its environmental degradation and contamination; risks to human life, armed attacks, threats, and killings. All these issues and others are intertwined. The indigenous struggle and the support from organizations have multiple roles and actions across Brazil, depending on the risks involved.

Among increased political and social tensions, which Indigenous Peoples in Brazil have been experiencing for centuries and which has worsened in recent years, are museums and institutions that are marked by colonialism.

The intertwined relationships between sociocultural groups and museums places us – museum managers, researchers, and professionals – in a new position, one that has become progressively more and more aware of new museal horizons to be reached and disciplinary boundaries to be overcome. We are examining dialogic relationships which require different attitudes to groups that find inside museums part of their past heritage musealized, which they see as a place for creating collections for future generations. When they uncover how museums work, indigenous groups understand the benefit of musealization, based on their choices.

We have been practicing collaboration between knowledge fields, yet we also strive for collaboration between museums and groups related to the collections. Collaboration requires a close understanding of decolonial processes, recognizing old theories and practices which remain present in museums (Sadongei 2021). One example is collection studies, where 'original categories and [the] underlying values on which they rest often remain in place' (Harrison 2013:12) without deep changes generated from collaborative relations. Another occurs when actions constitute 'assimilative and neocolonial moves' (Phillips 2021:201) without underestimating the instrumental use of collaboration, such as the state's *modus operandi*, which in multiple ways continues

2 Sonia Guajajara took office on January 1, 2023.

to control (de)coloniality in favor of politically dominant discourses (Weber-Sinn and Ivanov 2020). As regards the term 'decolonization' itself, 'over-repetition is evacuating it of its meaning' (Phillips 2021:201).

The external political power is always greater than that of the museum. Yet, it does not mean that there are no social movements that are deeply articulated, as is the case in Brazil:

> These resistance phenomena are similar to springs of water, which, as demonstrated by geology, are outflows of a process that is highly comprehensive and complex. It is part of an intricate network that is created and maintained below ground, thus protected from exterminating action, and at some point, it discharges itself and emerges on to the surface. The idea of infiltrating an apparently solid structure is how decolonial practices consolidate. The crisis in our identity is something that one has to take on, and this entails acting out of one's own range of possibilities. The solid, insurmountable structure is our national identity, which every inhabitant shall take on by law.' (Makuxi 2022:18)

A crucial point for museums is the representation questioned by the potential for self-representation which the collaboration prompts (Cury and Bombonato 2022). In this sense, other epistemologies begin to integrate museum discourses, expanding references with other voices, previously mediated by, e.g., anthropologists, archaeologists, museologists and educators, and set in the third person (he, she, they). Knowledge holders of their own cultures create narratives for themselves and their groups (me, us), yet also do so for social recognition, a polysemic and dialogic process (Martín-Barbero 2009) for which the museum itself is an area of possibilities.

In indigenous epistemologies, knowledge transmission takes place between the oldest and the youngest throughout their lives. Each indigenous elder is recognized and respected by his group as an encyclopedia or library, which depicts their deep knowledge of traditions and the stories they hold. However, these processes enter museums in multiple ways. With collaboration, they gain additional weight and must be observed, respected and integrated into the institutional routine, prompting in-depth changes (even if fragmentary, discontinuous and slow). Among them is the integration of speeches, narratives and indigenous points of view in the records referring to collections. These follow indigenous logics, which require new structures in the document system, which remain saturated with the representation categories of others. This involves a professional exercise that requires a great deal of effort and investment, since doing things differently is not easy, such as giving up centralized practices. Relocating the museum authority and personnel involved requires valuing other authorities, such as those of the *pajés,*[3] *caciques,*[4] elders, teachers, and researchers of their own cultures with their own means.

3 Shaman, spiritual leader.
4 Cacique, political leader of indigenous land.

An article, depending on its elaboration, has a hybrid aspect between orality and written text (Martín-Barbero 2009). The article by indigenous activist and artist Jaider Esbell Makuxi (1979-2021), TI Raposa-Serra do Sol (Roraima), can shed further light on the necessity of a new format:

> The exercise of wandering through these memories, having in them my bibliographic reference, allows me to take advantage of other methods. It would be an extension of the practice of orality, although I have to strategically use the cultured language of the colonizer [Portuguese]. I do not feel indebted for not including names, dates and circumstances in the footnotes, yet I invite you to consider my signature as a representative of a people who still values the validity of what is narrated. If this text does not fit within editorial lines, we would in fact understand that the willingness to fulfill decolonial performance practices in academic environments and spaces would still not be a reality. (Makuxi 2022:24)

We must not disregard the indigenous agency in the relationship with museums, a topic of great complexity, when dealing with the methods of acquisition of objects in the museological collections of the past, when Indigenous People were often ignored or deprived 'of their agency as conscious and active subjects of the relationship with non-Indigenous People'[5] (Bottesi 2021:58). Nevertheless, 'At what point does indigenous agency become a matter of specific intentionality in relation to the museum? Under what circumstances can we speak of indigenous agency occurring, and in relation to what?' (Harrison 2013:7). We can look to the future based on the present, developing processes in which the indigenous agency expresses itself politically in the museum, beginning with requalified collections (resignified and recontextualized), exhibition curatorship, creating collections and by methodologies that strengthen indigenous authors. The objective of this is to shift the viewpoint and reposition it not as a dispute or substitution, which would be fruitless, but towards a triggered dialogue that includes diversity, deadlocks, controversies, conflicts, negotiations and hybridizations.

The hybridization can also take place through audiovisual and hypertext structures (Martín-Barbero 2009), so that indigenous resources are associated with others for the expression and preservation of indigenous knowledge:

> … with these journal records, I mean records of videos, we start to get into this digital age after almost a hundred years of Nimuendaju's journey, where he wrote down ethnographic records through the book he published,[6] a technology, and today we have digital technology. Thus, reflecting on this moment which we are experiencing, videos come from another recording format. (Oliveira et al. 2020:65)

The Nimuendaju journey mentioned above is that of Curt Unckel (1883-1945), born German, but baptized by the Guarani Nhandewa in 1906 and naturalized as a Brazil-

5 The author is referring to the Makuna of Brazilian Amazonia.
6 (Nimuendaju Unkel:1914).

ian in 1921, when he took on the name of Curt Nimuendaju. Through his baptism he joined this group and is remembered by all more than a century later. He is also recalled for his advocacy work, which culminated in the creation of the TI (Terra Indígena) Araribá (SP) in São Paulo in 1913. The book, which was published and translated into Portuguese, is a reference for teachers at the Aldeia Nimuendaju Indigenous State School and contained identified photos of Indigenous People.

According to Guarani Nhandewa Tiago de Oliveira, pedagogy coordinator at the Aldeia Nimuendaju School, the records are also a dialogic resource for non-Indigenous People, a diplomatic policy in which the indigenous museum takes part, with a hybrid format bringing together knowledge and memories of the group and dialogues with non-Indigenous People, along with the social technology for a cultural strengthening between museology and the indigenous museum:

> So, I believe we are going to create a selection of memories, which records we will pick, yet they shall reach an audience beyond our community, who will also have access to this space, the external audience, which comes from outside. So, the selection of this work, I believe that it considers all audiences. From memory to pedagogy activities and fun games. I think that this will be one of the contents which we will be exhibiting within this space [Museu Nhandé Manduá-rupá[7]]. (Oliveira et al. 2020:65)

A museological exhibition can be a form of hybridization, since it concentrates elements, languages and sensorialities, while it concurrently allows interpretations and resignification carried out by indigenous curators, based on unlimited expographic circuits within the museum space, with its pauses, leaps, detours and advances. The exhibition is also hybrid, and in its institutional materiality there is a way of telling a story to someone within the self-narrative of Indigenous Peoples.

For Élisabeth Kaine, Aboriginal curator at the Université du Québec in Chicoutimi (Canada):

Being involved in the work of developing an exhibition is a privileged tool for promoting the individual and their culture. The immersive character, the multiplicity of channels and means of communication and the presence of artistic languages combine to allow the exhibition to become a self-construction tool for people in a minority position, victims of colonialism, yet at certain times and within certain parameters. (Kaine 2021:116)

Associated with the museum's new issues and obligations, the collaboration involves a hybridization of thoughts and practices, a mix that is created through a back-and-forth reflexive interest that shifts and replaces authorities and relationships. In turn a new museum ethics is shaped through direct work with Indigenous Peoples involving the 'twin themes of identity assertion and the decolonization of exhibitionary com-

7 Aldeia Nimuendaju, TI Araribá.

plexes' (Adams 2020:68) and the 'twin tropes of "indigeneity" and "ethics"' (Adams 2020:69) in a process that involves rights and values. For Jessie Ryker-Crawford (2021), indigenous curator at the Institute of American Indian Arts – Santa Fe (USA), there is need for action by 'Re-Adjusting Museum Theoretics (and Hence, Practices) to Include Indigenous Community Needs and Values'

> … when research methodologies and curatorial theoretics are deeply ingrained with the ethics of careful and mindful methods of collaboration. That through these ethical methods, what is yet to be explored is how Native American culture is multi-faceted…. (Ryker-Crawford 2021:139)

New museum ethics are being designed, yet with continuous collaborative work that entails deep listening to indigenous speeches, a process which also includes written production.

The Collaboration Context

We have been speaking about an action related to museal collaboration with the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa, Terena and Krenak that has been carried out since 2010, research that is based on the relationship between Indigenous People and museums.[8] Throughout the collaborative work, three indigenous claims have been previously mentioned: Indigenous Peoples' current realities, their histories and their self-narratives (speaking for themselves). Yet it was over time that the idea of collaboration as a partnership was consolidated. We are partners as long as we are able to fulfill agreements, which are established orally and in work that offers concrete results, such as an exhibition or publication.

After years of interactions, many questions were raised, and the work advanced with new proposals. A few discussions are relevant, such as restitution, repatriation and human remains in museums, to mention a few examples which demonstrate that we need to address museal criticisms without restrictions. As stated by Kujá (Kaingang pajé) Dirce Jorge (TI Vanuíre): 'I know how the objects got here, but we can work together.' As stated by Susilene Elias de Melo, Kujá's assistant, about human remains: 'I know that it's here [within the visited museum]; you'd better show it to me.'

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8 Research funded by FAPESP: 'Ethnographic collections and collaboration with indigenous groups – past, present, and future: Knowledge production and innovations in museological management policy' (proc. 2022059972). Research funded by CNPq: 'The "things" and their owners – indigenous curatorship and collection management policies' (proc. 309622/2022-0); 'University museum and indigenous museum – uses and access to indigenous collections: new challenges for museums' (proc. 40759920185); 'The indigenization of the museum - Perspectives for indigenous collections' (proc. 30481020177); 'Museums – requalification of collections' (proc. 44368320158).

There is no intention of reconciliation or reparation, since this is a role to be performed by the government, yet that of creating dialogues which result in agreements put into practice at the museum. There is no intention to 'heal', which would be very arrogant from the standpoint of the museum, especially in the presence of *pajés*, who are indeed responsible for healing through spirituality, including of museum professionals. However, we can speak about careful curatorship, that is, caring for museological objects in their materiality and information, caring for people and their ethical integrity, caring for institutional discourses and narratives, and caring for communication formats through exhibitions and museal education based on collaboration. For Kaine, the relationship between museum and people will be decolonized when the institution considers Indigenous People as comprehensive and active actors. It is up to the institution to put into practice the deep changes which this new relationship requires, 'since an incomplete process will do more harm than good' (Kaine 2021:116).

In the partnership, the museum is a strategic place of struggle because of the visibility it offers in large urban centers and for its connections, such as those with universities. It is a place of indigenous activism, and it will increasingly be so. For Carlos José F. Santos, Casé Angatu, Tupinambá de Olivença (Bahia), 'An exhibition with Indigenous People in the leading role is more than an exhibition' (Santos 2020:119). It was because of its expected visibility that the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena agreed to participate in the exhibition *Resistência Já! Strengthening and Unity of Indigenous Cultures at the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology* of the University of São Paulo (MAE-USP). It is considered a political title as defined by the indigenous participants involved, after a discussion between them on WhatsApp.

With the following, we will try to answer the questions: 'At what point does indigenous agency become a matter of specific intentionality in relation to the museum? Under what circumstances can we speak of indigenous agency occurring, and in relation to what?' (Harrison 2013:7)

The work involved collections from three groups collected in the territory where they live. The oldest and most problematic is the Kaingang, formed between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, when the west of the state of São Paulo was colonized, a process involving extensive violence (Cury 2021). It also involved four anthropologists: Curt Nimuendaju, who defended the Guarani Nhandewa in the early twentieth century; and Herbert Baldus, Harald Schultz and Egon Schaden who formed the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena collections in 1947, a crucial moment in the development of anthropology in Brazil, which involved the museum and its expansion into the university (Cury 2022).

For the exhibition, we followed the practice of reaching into the archives, as curator Paul Basu did for the exhibition '[Re:] Entanglements: Colonial Collections in Decolonial Times'[9] (Borgatti 2023). To do so, we outlined the trajectory of objects (Cury

9 Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA), University of Cambridge. June 22, 2021–April 17, 2022.

2021, Cury 2022). Unlike the exhibition by Paul Basu, which highlighted the activities of W. Thomas in southern Nigeria and Sierra Leone between 1909 and 1915 (Borgatti 2023:82), at MAE-USP anthropologists are briefly mentioned in the panel at the beginning. However, the exhibition was not based on them, but on indigenous narratives, except for the Guarani Nhandewa time-spiral which Vanderson Lourenço and his students recorded in the encounter of this group in the past with Curt Nimuendaju at the beginning of the twentieth century. Another aspect of the methodological strategy adopted is that, unlike Basu, we are all curators, professionals and Indigenous People, strengthening with this characteristic the ideal 'curatorial responsibility', 'which arises out of a nexus of interests' (Harrison 2013: 5), where, with collections that are closely related to the indigenous past, present and future, indigenous participation becomes paramount in the museal discourse.

In this way, we limit the risks taken, like those previously highlighted: '… even when I felt heard at the beginning of my mandate, their listening rarely materialized into the exhibition' (Kaine 2021:118). In spite of an agreement, the feedback provided may not match the expectations of the collaboration:

> Many decisions end up being taken internally, and at the first opportunity, the institution resumes compliance with its old reflexes: centralizing decisions, 'doing everything instead of doing it'. (Kaine 2021:118)

As one of their 'curatorial responsibilities', the three groups met with the objects of their ancestors at MAE-USP (Cury 2022). During these opportunities, which were continuously driven by a great deal of emotion, we were also moved, as the museum was able to show the curatorship working (caring for) the objects.

The people who participated in the work with the collections were selected by each group, approximately twenty of them, composed of the elders (and all they know) and the *pajés* (spiritual leaders, communication between enchanted entities and all they know) (Cury 2019). In addition, the *caciques* (political leaders who participate in the partnership, stressing the importance of reuniting with museum objects), indigenous teachers (researchers of their own culture through multiple resources, who bridge the gap between traditions, children and young people through the school and its resources), health professionals (who experience the issues faced daily on indigenous lands), and young people (with their expectations, restlessness, and dilemmas). Museum professionals got organized and structured the work, showing how they carry out the curatorial work and what was done by the museum with the objects over decades or a century in the Kaingang case. As an interdisciplinary team, each sector (conservation, documentation, exhibition, and education) had or has the challenge of rethinking itself through collaboration. All work sessions were filmed, so that these videos remain available in the museum for future generations of each group. They will make up a shared catalog, an agreement established with the groups, bringing together revised transcripts of the videos and other information from subsequent discussions on indigenous lands, territories where the objects were collected in the past,

a route which is very much supported by the expographic process and ethnographic information.

For Tiago de Oliveira,[10], one of the curators of the exhibition, actions with Indigenous People in the museum 'bring owners closer to their objects, thus diminishing the feeling of loss of something that was displaced from the place where it belonged. I could say that it is a form of repatriation of the cultural assets of that people' (Oliveira 2021:39).

> In these museums [such as MAE-USP], we were able to find many artifacts and objects from our ancestors. Several of them are from their collections or donations by researchers who were in our communities' decades or centuries ago collecting these pieces, as is the case of anthropologist Egon Schaden in 1947, when he was in the Araribá Indigenous Reserve among the Guarani Nhandewa. Some of the objects collected by these researchers are sacred and valuable to us. Seeing them again or getting to know them is like going back in time, when we establish a reconnection with our ancestors. (Oliveira 2021:38)

The museum had no intention to seek information with the groups involved, for example as a way to complete catalog data, although data were recorded at some point. There was also no direction in terms of controlling information, yet some information was presented or verified, and occasionally they were corrected when they did not match what the elders, *pajés* and teachers confirmed to us. Moreover, we did not perceive the Indigenous People having feelings of control over their history: on the contrary, we often heard the phrase repeated by *pajé* Terena of the TI Icatu Candido Mariano Elias and others: 'I only speak of what I recognize and what I know', which coincides with what Zimmerman (2010:34) narrates: 'If you work with Indians long enough, one of the most common phrases you'll hear is, ''I only speak for myself, not for anyone else in my tribe''.' In the works centered on indigenous contributions to the exhibition, there were exchanges of individual testimonies that were shared and listened to, always respecting others, but no indigenous person ever corrected or completed what the other was saying. It was the sum of overlapped speeches that resulted in three self-narratives for the exhibition, with the participants and the selection of objects and their labels created from their contributions. This is why there are occasionally two speeches by two different people on the same label. Since the work groups were hosted at the same place and in shared rooms, the conversations continued, without the presence of museum staff. That is, the discussions and exchanges continued at night and returned to MAE-USP the next day, and we were not aware of what was discussed. Indeed, it could hardly be any different from this scenario. Or could it have been? What is being noted here is what is private to them and the relationship of trust with us. Not everything we come to know should be revealed by the museum. An example happened with Cacique

10 Tiago de Oliveira has a Master's degree and is a doctoral student in Social Anthropology at USP.

Jazone de Camilo. We were reviewing a transcript of a video. The Cacique then asked to cut a section. When I asked why, he explained: 'I said that because you asked me, but it wasn't meant to be published.'

We are dealing with an exhibition divided into three parts. Interestingly enough, the expographic self-narratives followed different paths. The Kaingang (TI Icatu and Vanuíre) organized two sequences, one with ancient objects and the other with their current reality, manifesting continuity through knowledge transmission by the elders. Among the pieces presented are two dance outfits (male and female) used in group rituals led by Kujá Dirce, deliberate donations for the museum to keep for future generations. The Guarani Nhandewa (Aldeia Nimuendaju, TI Araribá) selected the objects and articulated them among themselves. They opted for the production of objects with their current uses as a means to strengthen cultural continuity. These objects, produced by teachers and students of Aldeia Nimuendaju School, were donated to the museum. The Terena (Aldeia Ekeruá, TI Araribá, and TI Icatu) preferred to organize themselves around tradition and the objects in the collection, reclassified with support from the elders and *pajés*. Rodrigues Pedro donated a belt which he got from his mother during his youth. When he handed it to me at TI Icatu, I told him to keep it for his grandson, and he replied, 'Keep it in the museum'. None of the groups manifested any intention to reveal the oppression they experienced and still experience: on the contrary, they deliberately preferred to show resistance, valuing the old, elders and happiness. Nor were they interested in exposing how anthropologists worked or how the collection took place or the damage they suffered as a result of coloniality, options which Paul Basu would question (Borgatti 2023). Possibly it is the museum's responsibility to understand and explain itself. And it is.

For Dirce Jorge, it is 'our exhibition' in the sense of a partnership. Using the first person – us – she refers to the indigenous groups and people who participated, as well as the MAE-USP team. That feeling doesn't explain everything, but it's a good summary of the process.

In a way, it may seem that the exhibition was consonant and unruffled work, yet it was not. Important as it is to deal with the principles of the process, it is also vital to deal with controversies, conflicts, contradictions, mistakes, successes and disputes which involve everyone, which have multiple transforming expectations as the collaboration. However, this is a project in a museum (MAE-USP) that has nineteen researchers on its staff, each with their own perspectives, to highlight that the metadiscourse is part of this university institution in a very complex way.

Our challenging problem relates to the museum and its relationship with Indigenous Peoples: throughout the process, the museum did not give up its authority, yet it did reposition relations. The Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena were treated in the process as comprehensive and active actors (Kaine 2021), and a consensus was reached among all those involved about the indigenous agency in the process and their demands regarding history, reality and self-narrative. Furthermore, one of the most emphasized and respected points which was brought up in the curatorial work of this

exhibition was the role of the elders in cultural knowledge transmission, which we highlight as the 'encyclopedias'.

Ancestors and Elders: The 'Encyclopedias'

> 'In 2016 we experienced a great loss.[11] Well, she was our dictionary. And we spent night after night until dawn, researching her, studying, while she taught us.' (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:85)

Encyclopedia, dictionary and library are ways in which Indigenous Peoples in Brazil refer to their elders. For Makuxi (2022) it is bibliographic reference and cultural knowledge transmission which uses just one method: orality. No wonder they use Western references to express the importance of the elderly to traditional cultures. Concurrently, as they show us, non-Indigenous People, the value of their in-depth references, they also explain the importance of indigenous knowledge, which begins with their knowledge of the past.

Research and cultural learning go hand in hand in the relationship with the elders, as in the strengthening of the Kaingang culture, or creating ritual clothing for the group led by Kujá Dirce Jorge:

> … during the day we were going to do research with our older women, and one was Candire, so that we would know what instrument we would be able to use in our culture. So, we had to know [make] the clothes, the material for the instruments, for the dance, we had necklaces, so we were gathering everything, we were learning. (Melo and Pereira 2021:23)

Candire, an important Kaingang (TI Vanuíre) who lived through the twentieth century, left an heir, José da Silva Barbosa de Campos. According to him, his grandmother told him:

> You must hold on strong through the fight. Because I'm leaving. Yet this doesn't end. I want you to go on and take charge. That is, join the Kaingang peoples. Take it on, gather those who want to follow along with you. Who believe in you. Tell them what I left behind, I passed it on to you. (Campos 2016:61)

A similar message was given by Kujá Jandira Umbelino to her daughter Dirce Jorge, concerned about cultural knowledge transmission: 'I'm leaving, but don't cry, work.' (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:85).

11 The loss refers to the death of Jandira Umbelino.

For the Guarani Nhandewa Tiago de Oliveira, all knowledge is stored and transmitted by 'living libraries',

> … the *Nhaneramõi kwery* – these subjects are the elderly and the elders within an indigenous community. When we need to consult them about a specific subject or knowledge, they are the ones we look for, to teach us and pass on that ancestral knowledge. (Oliveira 2021:35)

Guarani Nhandewa, then director of the Aldeia Nimuendaju School, Creiles Marcolino, recalls his grandmother Maria Luciana, known as vó Pipoca, who died at the age of 125. She experienced the journeys of this group in the state of São Paulo, Itaporanga, Barão de Antonina, Rio Feio and the Rio Verde, until they reached what is now TI Araribá, the history of the Marcolino Honório family. Grandmother Maria Luciana

> … is our mother, … she is the one who started everything, she is my father's mother, my grandmother on my father's side, Francisco's mother, Calaí, … they are not among us today, we miss them very much, wonderful memories of the time we lived with them, we lived only a few years with them, let's say by their side, yet everything that we lived is kept inside us. (Oliveira et al. 2020:59)

The elders are living libraries and are greatly responsible for cultural knowledge transmission. What youngsters and children know they learn from the elders, even if this takes place through indigenous schools, with other resources such as publications and videos, or in museums. When they pass, their descendants take over the continuity of what they know and what they learned from them.

> Well, I have a lot to be thankful for, for all I know. She [Jandira Umbelino] is not in flesh today, yet she is in spirit. Yes, she is with us. She is overlooking our work. Because she passed, we sought for a great deal of strength to be able to keep up this work. (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:85)

When the elders pass, there is a blow, as these are 'irreparable losses. In the same way that we learn to be strong, this is taught to younger people with the passing of a relative: '… we have to pass it on to our children that they have to be strong, to be stronger' (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:86), and experiencing the culture is the best way to do that. Therefore, a passing means the loss of an encyclopedia that was continuously consulted and no longer is, hence the questioning of Susilene Kaingang:

> … if you lose your elder, what will it be like if you didn't learn from him? What are you going to do if you haven't learned how to sing, dance, speak, cook? (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:86–87)

Living together with the family is a reason for learning about many intertwined issues, where they were also taught to be active in indigenous causes and where they have examples of women leaders, such as Letícia Yawanawá (TI Rio Gregório, Tarauacá, Acre):

'I am the daughter and granddaughter of leaders, my father was a *pajé*, and I carry inside of me a few of the examples of my father, who was a leader' (Yawanawá 2022:121).

It is the lack of consultation of encyclopedias that is a cause for great concern, as it is pointed out by Letícia Yawanawá, who is concerned about indigenous health. For the latter to be distinguished, it needs traditional knowledge related to health.

> They are missing out on a great deal when they don't listen to our cries to 'acknowledge it'. I do this because my father has passed. My father used to say: 'My daughter, if you know the plants, at least some of them, you will save your family, your children, your grandchildren.' The elderly are here among us, and no one cares. They are all worried about bringing in more medication, yet not with this knowledge which our relatives have. (Yawanawá 2022:130)

The living encyclopedias will pass. Yet, for Indigenous People who live with their spirituality the passing of a relative is not the end, since these relationships are maintained through spiritual communication.

> It's like my grandmother [Candire] is speaking to me now. … We talk to several people. … Everything comes from people who have passed away and are with us spiritually. (Campos 2016:61)

No one chooses to be a *pajé*. 'The Creator is who will name them, he will direct and point out who will be a *pajé* and who will not be one' (Babosa et al. 2020:43), according to the explanations of Gleidson Alves Marcolino, professor at Aldeia Nimuendaju School and assistant to *pajé* Guarani Nhandewa Gleizer Alves Macolino (TI Araribá). Tiramoi 'has a huge load of knowledge and can pass it on, teach many people, especially the children' (Babosa et al. 2020:44).

The *pajé* still 'releases his body so that the forces of heaven can come in', like angels or guides, says Gleidson:

> We say *Ywyraidjá*, who comes to teach us, to tell us things that we can't even think of, which only relates to what happened back then. They come and tell us in person. The spiritual leader releases his body to the person who has passed and left this land, to offer their knowledge which has gone with them. (Babosa et al. 2020:43)

Kujá Dirce Jorge continuously values the role of parents and grandparents, yet she never forgets her responsibility for cultural and spiritual education:

> How are we going to pass it on [the culture] to our children? Let's start with our cultural night. So that we can gather in circle and start to explain it to them. Because we already have our culture. We have already taught our language, we sing, we dance. However, we can strengthen it all through our cultural night. To be able to further strengthen. … Have more strength. So, that is it: we must strengthen our children.' (Pereira 2016:55–56)

Everything is connected at home and in the family, including traditional culture and spirituality in Dirce Jorge's statement, with which Cledinilson Alves Marcolino agrees. Cledinilson (teacher at Aldeia Nimuendaju School and assistant to *pajé* Gleizer Alves Marcolino) advises us that, where he lives (TI Araribá), the community works through the indigenous school on the relationship between parents and children to strengthen children and youngsters and protect them from non-indigenous influences, whether they come from technology or from living outside the indigenous land which allows contact with other values.

> Outside, the world is different, the view is different. His vision will depend on, he will follow his own path; the direction he will take will depend on what he has as a foundation. If he doesn't have a basis that is ready and prepared, he'll simply go astray and learn everything he wants to know. And the spiritual part or spirituality, in general his contact with what is sacred, makes reference to this system. It also provides support, treatment, as long as it is introduced from the basis, from when they are born. … So, they go out to the city, often to study or to work, they distance themselves from this cultural system and end up not forgetting but setting it aside, the act of evoking – if I may use this word – their spiritual sense. Or they can rather look for that spiritual feeling that they have inside and know how to use it from a young age. (Babosa et al. 2020:44–45)

It is out of this process that comes respect for the encyclopedias, libraries and dictionaries that indigenous museums reveal, supporting the processes of cultural strengthening.

Indigenous museums have their own characteristics. They differ from other museums due to their self-management and the fact that they relate to a sacred territory (Oliveira 2021). They are museums beyond four walls:

> Many museums are open air, they can be in a forest, in a house of prayer, in a school or in a building which we now also denominate indigenous museum. These museums are in constant motion, where the material and immaterial merge to complement the message that the objects or artifacts on display are conveying. (Oliveira 2021:39)

Kujá Jandira Umbelino did not know why she was keeping objects. Before passing away, she participated in a meeting (15 August 2015) among the Kaingang to speak about the Worikg Museum (TI Vanuíre). On 9 February 2016, she passed away. Yet it was only on 9 November 2017, that the Museum exhibited the Jandira Umbelino collection for the first time, on the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Kaingang cultural group. According to Susilene Kaingang:

> It involved a great deal of suffering for me and my mother, because my grandmother's pieces were all tied up, wrapped in cloth, with a bag, cotton cloth, there were pieces that belonged to my grandmother that were placed inside four bags plus a

> tied piece of cloth. And I looked at it and said, 'Wow, grandma tied it all up so well, grandma kept it all so well'. And when she kept it away, when we took it, we didn't know what to do with it. And I always say that it will all be enlightened, and it points to the direction of what we should do, and we unwrapped all the pieces, then we cleaned all of them … I didn't know how we were going to set up our exhibition. So, with the help of Professor Marília, we went on and built the exhibition, we cleaned the pieces, and put everything on display. (Melo and Pereira 2021:27–28)

For Dirce Jorge and Susilene Kaingang, managers and curators of the Worikg Museum, '… the heart of the village [*aldeia*] is the Museum, it is where our memories are kept, it is where the memory of my grandmother is kept, and that of my great-grandmother …' (Melo and Pereira 2021:28). Looking at the present and the future, 'to show it to my children, for my children to show it to my grandchildren, to show it to my great-grandchildren, it is very important' (Melo and Pereira 2021:28).

At the Worikg Museum, 'we have to know the story to tell it' (Melo and Pereira 2021:29) to the community and non-indigenous visitors.

> That's why, when we talk about a museum, we have to go back there to come forward. The museum is particularly important for that. Because often the story ends up being erased, the person ends up not being interested. Now, having a museum, we have to know the story so that we can tell it. (Melo and Pereira 2021:29)

At the Worikg Museum, the narratives are in the exhibition of the Jandira Umbelino collection, yet they are in the territory, on the Tonha track, 'to listen to the birds singing, so people can explain the leaves and trees and what they are used for. And there are *tutó* leaves in which we roast fish, so we can explain everything' (Melo and Pereira 2021:24). It is a different museum, with other sensibilities and sensorialities: '… it is a Museum you can enter barefoot, with your feet on the ground, it is all about the ground, the earth, the thatch, the bamboo, it is not made out of [other] material.' (Melo and Pereira 2021:24)

Mestre Cacique Sotero is a collector of his own culture. It was because of his concern for the present and future of the Kanindé People (Aldeia Fernandes, Aratuba, Ceará) that he understood the potential of a museum and the collection that he has been building for decades. Since its creation in 1995, the Museum has become 'an essential element of indigenous identity of the people within a perspective of collective construction, by showing Kanindé's own vision of their version of history' (Santos 2021:54). The Kanindé Museum, according to its managers and curators, constitutes a:

> … living space, which gathers prayers, *pajés*, *benzedores*, midwives, leaders and ancestors, becoming the place where the old trunks narrate their memories to new generations, having an intimate relationship with the territory, since their activities are not restricted only to physical spaces, but to sacred places, ecosystems, cultural heritage and archaeological sites which exist in the territory. The museum

> for the Kanindé speaks of their stories not only in the past, but also in the present, highlighting the struggles and resistance undertaken. Because of this, it becomes a privileged place for recording the memory of old trunks.' (Santos 2021:58)

Lidiane Damaceno, teacher at the Índia Vanuíre State Indigenous School and Krenak leader, highlights the creation of the Akãm Orãm Krenak Museum (Novo Olhar Krenak, TI Vanuíre): 'This museum aims to integrate the oldest with the youngest through the exchange of cultural knowledge' (Afonso, Oliveira, Damaceno 2020:66). The museum wished to 'further disseminate the culture, seeking greater recognition and appreciation of Indigenous People in the territory of western São Paulo'. This was to be a means

> … to shift paradigms relating to the stereotype of indigenous people in the media. indigenous people portrayed by the media are only those from the Amazon. Only the ones from Xingu. The indigenous people in the media have straight hair and slanted eyes. And so, indigenous people have to walk around naked and with a feather on their heads. (Afonso, Oliveira, Damaceno 2020:66–67)

The manager and curator of the Akãm Orãm Krenak Museum, Helena Cecílio Damaceno (Tomiák), mother of Lidiane, is creating the basis of the museum with her husband, João Batista Oliveira (Burum rím). Thus, Helena summarizes their proposal:

> … the tiny door of our tiny museum is open, and children are always going in and seeing things we make and keep there, and I'm sure that it will stay in their memory for a long, long time … and whenever someone needs a bow, an arrow, a *borduna* [handmade needle-shaped wooden weapon], something that we make and leave there, the day we don't have it here anymore, they'll take that piece and they'll make it, they won't need to run to other museums, we already have one there … they can go over there and get those pieces and make one just like it. So, it wasn't difficult for us to create that tiny museum. It's not a fancy museum like the ones they have in other places, it's a simple museum, but it's ours, and it was made with a great deal of love, a great deal of affection while thinking about the future of our children. This is what I want to say. (Afonso, Oliveira, Damaceno 2020:70)

Indigenous museums are a reference intricately linked to indigenous groups that experience them, often with the collaboration of universities (Cury 2020). However, it is this process that respects intergenerational relations, as well as the cultural knowledge transmission and exchanges that museological institutions can carry out to strengthen their culture, especially when they are linked to a broader social struggle. Yet in fact nothing can be achieved without indigenous prominence being at the center of museal management concerns, which entails new cultural policies that recognize indigenous rights to musealization.

> Our cultures and our histories are there, in a relationship with time that is not only that of the past, but that of the present as well, it is a relationship of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It is a paradigm shift, because now these are 'living museums', since indigenous presence is actually present within it, no longer in pieces or images, but physically and spiritually through our presence, that has become increasingly current and active in this space. (Oliveira 2021:38)

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